



# THE TANTUR ECUMENICAL INSTITUTE

## New Beginnings in the Summertime

*Dan Koski, Tantur Staff*



A remarkably mild late spring and early summer has finally passed, and with it, we are in the full heat of summer. Ramadan has just begun, and from our hilltop, we watch and listen in the late afternoon as the surrounding Muslims communities break the fast and begin their evening meal, known as *iftar*.

The spring and early summer are always busy periods for us, but this year has been exceptional. First, this past May, we had the visits of both Pope Francis and Patriarch Bartholomew, with Pope Francis completing his first ever pilgrimage to the Holy Land marked by a warm reception in Bethlehem, then proceeding to embrace Patriarch Bartholomew as their respective predecessors did in 1964. We are happy to

note that Tantur was represented at the Papal mass in Bethlehem's Manger Square by two staff as attendees in the VIP seating section, and other staff and visitors were enthusiastically involved in different events throughout the weekend. Needless to say, we are encouraged by this renewal of commitment to the spirit of ecumenism that Tantur was founded on, and see great potential for the next leg of the journey, especially as Fr. Russ McDougall prepares to begin his tenure as Rector of Tantur this month. This is an exciting time for the work and vision of Tantur, as we mark fifty years on the path of ecumenism made possible by an embrace on the Mount of Olives, and look to the next leg of the journey in the days to come.

## Tantur at a Glance

June 2014 Continuing Education Program



Our June Continuing Education Program was blessed with 16 participants from the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, with an extraordinary mix of national identities, religious vocations, denominations and experiences to share with one another.



The One-Month Continuing Education Programs attract a wide range of attendees, from ministers and educators taking advantage of summer holidays, to retirees and those on extended sabbaticals. The program is designed to balance between lectures, trips, fellowship, and time to relax.

## Transitioning in a Significant Way: A Testimonial

2014 Six Week Program Participant Tom Hampson recently retired from his post as Director of Donor Relations at Church World Service ([cwsglobal.org](http://cwsglobal.org)). He lives in Granger, Indiana.

Participating in the Tantur Six-Week Program was my retirement gift to myself. After working for the international humanitarian agency Church World Service for over thirty years, I knew I wanted to mark that transition in a significant way - a rite of passage you might say.

Tantur beckoned for several reasons. As a Notre Dame grad in theology ('71) I'd heard about Tantur over the years and had friends who had studied and worked there. And while I had traveled widely during my work in education, communication and fundraising for CWS, I'd never visited the Middle East - a longtime dream of mine. Finally, as a person of faith and a student of church history, I cherished the opportunity to walk in the land we call holy.

The physical location of Tantur seemed particularly appropriate. On a hilltop between Jerusalem and Bethlehem with the Israeli security wall easily visible from our windows and rooftop, Tantur sits at the border of Israel and Palestine. It is a meeting place for ecumenical and interfaith dialogue on the toughest of issues dividing the peoples of that conflicted region. Our extraordinary presenters came from a variety of traditions and perspectives, inviting us to consider the competing narratives that inform the conflict.

The participants in the program were memorable, too. An international and ecumenical crew, they hailed from Australia, New Zealand, India, Canada, England and the USA and represented a wide array of



*"Participating in the Tantur Six-Week Program was my retirement gift to myself."*  
Tom Hampson (center) with two fellow program participants on the Sea of Galilee.

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## Tantur Computer Lab Renewed and Online!



Miguel, a Tantur scholar from Portugal, tries out our new computers in our PC lab. The lab will soon be fully installed and connected to our Xerox photocopier for the benefit of all our residents and visitors.

When Tantur Institute was built in the 1970s, phone booths were installed for the benefit of our international guests to communicate home, and international post was the principal means of correspondence. Much has changed in the last 40 years, and with ever-increasing speed.

The Lab has been a part of the life of Tantur since the start of this century, mostly to assist our guests with checking email, help prepare documents for chapel service, and to check news from back home. Our Lab has been a modest one, but until recently capable of meeting our basic needs. While many of our guests have now switched to using personal devices, the tried-and-true desktop computer workstation still is in popular demand at Tantur, and we have acquired two new PCs running on the most modern version of Windows. This is being done in conjunction with our long-term plan to make most of Tantur a wireless facility, a tricky project due to our stone walls and sprawling campus, but we are making progress.



## John 21

Fr. Michael O'Dwyer

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Fr. Michael O'Dwyer was able to complete a longstanding dream through his participation in the 2014 Easter Encounter program: to visit the Sea of Galilee to better understand a passage from the Gospels that has been a source of inspiration to him for more than thirty years of the priesthood.

To walk, sit or even paddle on the shore of the Sea of Tiberias, where the events of John 21 took place, was beyond my dreams, but to then be able to proclaim the Gospel passage and speak about why it is so close to my heart was an added blessing.

I had chosen thirty-two years ago part of this story for my First Mass: Gospel 21:15-22. I have always put myself in Peter's place and walked – I always presumed they walked – and answered the questions of Jesus. "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." This was my prayer and meditation all those years ago living in the seminary, cut off from the world. Over the years I have grown to learn that saying "I love you" is easy – it is the consequences of loving that is difficult at times – feed, look after – my sheep, my lambs – all the people put in my care by God and all those who cross my path. There's the rub! Some days that is easy – I'm in good form, top of the world, and no demand, no problem, no day is long enough to serve God's people, and even those who claim they are not God's people. But there are days when I'm tired, when the world has only one inhabitant, me! and I don't want to be disturbed – that is the day when feeding and looking after is demanded too. And when I look back I realise that on some of those days I have been more fully alive in God and God in His/Her own mysterious way has been present to me and the person or persons who sought me out.

And this is true of anyone who loves, who is a lover – pastor, parent, teacher, social worker, volunteer – when we love there are consequences and the consequences are full of Resurrection, full of life, full of possibility.

When I was ordained deacon and then priest, I promised obedience to my ordinary, my bishop and his successors. This is echoed in verse 18 – only with deeper significance – it is Peter and me being told to place ourselves in God's hands. God works through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit in the mind of the bishop. And I am grateful that that partnership has sent me to parishes and people, that I might not have chosen to live among and work with, in proclaiming the Good News.

And there is another sense to Jesus' words. God has led me to encounters and situations, to experience new ways of encountering this same God with people of various Christian traditions, and through my Tantur experience with people of various faith traditions, and learning to accept new structures of working with God's people – God's word is ever old and ever new, it is full of possibility because it is full of the Holy Spirit. And if the Risen Christ can transform weeping women, doubting apostles, fearful disciples into messengers of Good News that led them from what they knew so well in Jerusalem and Galilee to what was totally unknown to them – then we and I should be more trusting of God – God's ways are sure and safe!

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## John 21 (Continued from Page 3)

The conversation of verses 20-22 between Jesus and Peter, Jesus and me has always reminded me that God has called me to a special ministry that only I, and no-one else, can fulfil – a ministry that will in some small way, in whatever part of God’s creation I find myself, help bring about God’s Kingdom. Others have their part to play and live out in God’s plan and I have mine. And all I have to do is do as Jesus says “Follow me.” How can I repay the Lord for his goodness (love) to me; my vows to the Lord I will fulfil before all God’s people.



## Transitioning in a Significant Way (Continued from Page 2)

ministries: local pastors, teachers, musicians, nurses, writers and more. The diversity assured thoughtful and lively discussions.

We saw and learned a lot. I came to have a much deeper appreciation for the struggles of Palestinians in the face of occupation. I also was moved by the efforts of some Israeli Jews to understand and ally themselves with Palestinians for a just peace.

One of the most memorable conversations of our six weeks was with a rabbi who lives at Gush Etzion, a cluster of Jewish settlements between Hebron and Bethlehem. Born in the US, he’s lived in Israel since he was 18. A devout man with a passion for his adopted country, he has begun to see that his narrative is incomplete and, seeing that, struggles with very uncomfortable questions — in his words:

“My fulfillment is their catastrophe; how do I live with that?”

“My existence is predicated on injustice to someone else; how do I live with that?”

He’s begun meeting with his Palestinian neighbors to learn a different narrative. Palestinians are no longer invisible to him. And that makes his spiritual life in the settlement, and even within his family, a bit uncomfortable. But as he says, “We need to learn what we are doing to each other.”

Like the rabbi, my assumptions were challenged during my time at Tantur. I will be reflecting on those learnings and questions for years to come. What a remarkable gift it was!

*A blog about Tom Hampson’s time with the Six-Week program can be found here:*  
<http://stop2looknlisten.blogspot.com>

## Further Journeys

Brian and Hannah Barrett depart  
Tantur for Switzerland



For the last academic year, Brian and Hannah Barrett have been a vibrant part of the Tantur community, acting as coordinators for two different Jerusalem undergraduate programs for the University of Notre Dame. It has been an exciting time of renewal for this important link between the University and Tantur. Sadly, however, the time has come for them to move on.

The scholarly couple are no strangers to Tantur, with both having studied at Tantur in years past prior to their marriage. Brian and Hannah’s year in the Holy Land has been one of milestones. Brian and Hannah had the birth of their first child, Lucie, this past January. This past May, Lucie was Baptized at Saint John the Baptist Church in Ein Karem, the same church in which they were married three years before.

Brian and Hannah are finishing their respective doctoral thesis papers in the year to come, with Hannah having received a Fulbright scholarship to study in Fribourg, Switzerland. Along with Lucie, they will reside in Fribourg for a full academic year.

The Tantur community will miss Brian, Hannah and Lucie, but wish them well in their future endeavors, and look forward to future visits.

## A Life in the Holy Land

### Father Hieronymus Brizic OSB, 1921-2014

It is with great sadness that the Tantur community learned of the passing of one of the Benedictine Fathers at Dormition Abbey at Mount Sion in Jerusalem.

Father Hieronymus was born Petar Brizic on the island of Brac, Croatia in February of 1921. He arrived in the Holy Land in 1933, and was received into the Order of Saint Benedict (OSB) on June 9<sup>th</sup>, 1938.

At the time of his passing, Fr. Hieronymus was the oldest member of the Benedictine community in the Holy Land, having been the last living person to have known Fr. Maurus Kaufmann, the first Abbot of Dormition Abbey.

Abbot Gregory Collins describes Fr. Hieronymus as having been "An institution in the Holy Land," known for fluently speaking nine languages. Having spent much of his life in the Galilee, Fr. Hieronymus has been accredited with maintaining the Benedictine presence at Tabgha monastery during the tumultuous period of 1948, and was known for distributing fruits from the monastery to the Christian communities of Galilee during periods of hardship. His funeral service was conducted at Dormition Abbey, in the same church where he had been received into his beloved community just over 69 years before – a wish of almost every Benedictine. May his memory be eternal!



Father Hieronymus Brizic spent more than 80 years of his life in the Holy Land, having been received into the Order of Saint Benedict in 1937.

*Tantur is an institute for ecumenical and theological studies, situated on a beautiful hill in Jerusalem near Bethlehem. It serves as a welcoming place in The Holy Land for visitors who come from all over the world seeking an oasis of learning, community, and hospitality.*

#### TANTUR ECUMENICAL INSTITUTE

PO Box 11381  
91113 Jerusalem, Israel

*Best wishes to all during the summer months!*



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[www.facebook.com/Tantur.Jerusalem](http://www.facebook.com/Tantur.Jerusalem)

International Phone: +972 2 542 29 00

International Fax: +972 2 676 09 14

General Inquiries: [tantur@tantur.org](mailto:tantur@tantur.org)

Program Inquiries: [apohlen@tantur.org](mailto:apohlen@tantur.org)

Newsletter and Media Inquiries: [dkoski@tantur.org](mailto:dkoski@tantur.org)

[www.tantur.org](http://www.tantur.org)