



THE TANTUR ECUMENICAL INSTITUTE

Buildings Old and New

Dan Koski, Tantur Staff



Somehow, we are already in late August and are already looking towards the start of our Three-Month Sabbatical program. July came and went with Ramadan, and before we knew it, our last guests were out the door and onto the next leg of their journey.

August is always a quiet time at Tantur, but since the considerable uptick in program activity and guests in the past few years, the quiet is so much more noticeable as we take a break in programs, shut down our cafeteria and dormitory and give our staff a chance to take their summer holidays. It's also a time of heavier cleaning projects and renovations as we take advantage of the closure. At over 40 years of age, our facility is no longer in the first flush of youth,

although a spritely young figure in comparison to our neighbor, the monastery of Mar Elias. True, our tower and front wall do date from the Ottoman Era, but even that is a relative newcomer compared to some of the foundations of buildings found in Jerusalem and Bethlehem, all within a short distance of our Hill.

In this edition two towering Irishmen, Fr. Eamon Collins L.C. and Fr. Patrick Gaffney C.S.C., offer their insights into the history and future of just two purpose-built facilities in the Holy Land: the Magdala Center and Tantur. Their observations remind us of how buildings often take on the characteristics of the people and organizations that made them. May our buildings, institute and the people therein be happy and well for years to come!

Tantur at a Glance

July 2014 Continuing Education Program



Our July Continuing Education Program was a full billet! 27 participants from 6 countries, and 4 denominations, comprised of clergy, laity and religious communities. Five of our participants were Church of England ordinands whose program participation was supported through the Tantur British Trust. Despite increased tensions in the region due to the conflict in Gaza, our program participants stuck it through and continued their program with a few adjustments to their itinerary. It was a lively bunch—a great group with which to end our spring and summer schedule!



"This is what the Lord God showed me; behold, a basket of summer fruit." – Amos 8:1.

Duc In Altum: The Magdala Center

Fr. Eamon Kelly L.C. shares the story of one of the Holy Land’s most ambitious pilgrimage infrastructure projects to date.

In 2004 the Vatican asked the Legionaries of Christ to take responsibility for the Pontifical Institute Notre Dame of Jerusalem, a place of hospitality serving peoples of many diverse faith convictions. A dream was born then to create a similar facility in Galilee. Over the following years, 20 acres were purchased on the Sea of Galilee in Magdala; just 3 miles north of Tiberias.

After many centuries of inactivity, we are now reopening a biblical site, Magdala, the town of Mary Magdalene, for public pilgrimage with significant ecumenical and inter-faith relevance. In August 2009, our archeological excavations at the site of the project revealed the remains of the first Synagogue excavated from the very time of Jesus in the area where he walked. It is a promising stimulus for increased tourism to Israel and in the areas of ecumenical and interreligious understanding. We also found numerous other buildings such as ritual baths and homes. Lately, we have discovered a section of the harbor of Magdala.

The archeological discoveries made during initial construction preparations are of extraordinary importance and have already enhanced our original vision for this Center which foresaw an ecumenical approach. Now, through the First Century Synagogue



“A promising stimulus for increased tourism to Israel and in the areas of ecumenical and interreligious understanding.”

The altar of the Magdala Center, located north of Tiberias on the Sea of Galilee.

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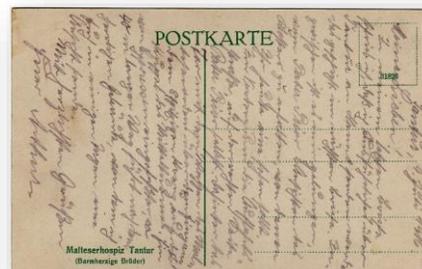


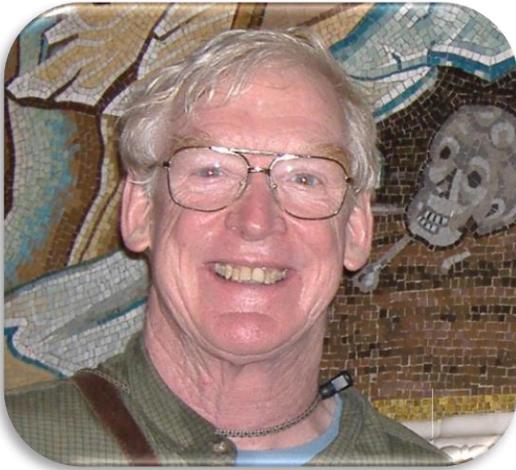
This postcard shows the former Tantur hospital of the Sovereign Order of Malta, whose tower and front wall are still in existence. The postcard is dated from July 1916 and was sent by “Arthur,” written in German. The message on the backside, translated by a 2013 Three Month Program participant, indicates that the robed figure in the foreground of the image was the prior of the community at the time.

Echoes from the Past

A postcard sent from Tantur in July...1916.

Earlier this year, a Commander of the Order of Merit of the Order of Malta sent to our office a hi-resolution scan of a postcard of Tantur sent from Jerusalem in 1916, a year before Ottoman gave way to British rule in Jerusalem. This exciting historical find is one of the clearest pictures we have of the original hospital and the foreground of the path leading to the Tower, and is a welcome addition to our historical archives. We hope to release a full “then and now” article related to the postcard and other historical Tantur paraphernalia in July of 2016.





In the Holy Land

Fr. Patrick Gaffney, C.S.C.

Fr. Patrick Gaffney, C.S.C., has been tasked with writing the history of the Tantur Ecumenical Institute through its inception until the present. An anthropologist by vocation, he is on faculty at the University of Notre Dame and has published numerous articles on subjects related to religion, politics, ethnicity, conflict and peacemaking.

In the Holy Land, the past and the present are not always easy to separate. Memories can be selective and can serve many functions, sometimes inspired by miracles of long ago and sometimes stirred by the dreams of an uncertain future. The Tantur Ecumenical Institute is now approaching the symbolic threshold of its fiftieth anniversary. Although the building was only formally dedicated in 1972, after a saga of postponements, the vision that launched the project dates from 1964. It was in this year that Pope Paul VI and Patriarch Athenagoras met and shared a fraternal embrace on the Mount of Olives. That historic encounter started the process which shortly afterwards led to the lifting of the mutual excommunications that had tragically separated the eastern and western Christian world since 1054. This half-century mark has several implications for Tantur, one of which is the anticipated renewal of the contract between the University of Notre Dame, which oversees the institute, and the Vatican which owns the land on which it is built.

In view of this transition and in recognition of the need to take stock of how the institute has lived out its mission in changing times over the past decades, the University of Notre Dame appointed one of its faculty members to explore the history of Tantur and to tell its remarkable story, especially for the benefit of those who have only known it in passing, from a distance, or just in its most recent form. Fr. Patrick D. Gaffney, C.S.C., of Notre Dame's Anthropology Department, a Middle East specialist with a long standing interest in the Orthodox Christian world, has been asked to research the development of Tantur from its beginnings up to the present. Since January of this year, he has been living at Tantur, primarily engaged in uncovering the story of how Tantur has sought to respond to the initiative of Pope Paul VI who entrusted this grand project to Fr. Hesburgh at a time when the concept of "ecumenical theology" was still a novelty to most Catholics. In its first years, Tantur attracted some of the world's leading theologians who came together for months at a time to live, work, and pray together, with the objective of overcoming the artificial barriers that were responsible for making Protestants, Catholics, and Orthodox strangers to each other.

But this endeavor also included the participation of students, pilgrims, pastors, missionaries, teachers, and other seekers who have gradually become more central to the work of Tantur, leading to its current mix of programs which combine scholarly opportunities with spiritual renewal sessions and holy land discovery courses. Throughout the several stages of its history, Tantur has made a significant impact on hundreds who have experienced its conferences, its instruction, its excursions, and its hospitality, owing in large part to the initiative of some remarkable rectors, including the brilliant British historian, Donald Nicholl, and later, the resourceful pioneer of ecumenical encounter, Fr. Thomas Stransky.

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In the Holy Land

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Tantur's extraordinary location in Jerusalem, or more precisely, on the city's far southwestern edge within easy walking distance of Bethlehem has also been a major influence in its evolution, as it has witnessed the transformation of its status and has sought to respond to the living challenges of Jewish and Muslim awareness. But amid these expanding horizons the institute has never strayed from its central vision which is to promote greater theological understanding among Christians belonging to different traditions and to seek a fuller realization of the unity to which the gospel calls those who follow the way of the Risen Lord .



Anyone who has recorded their own experience while at Tantur or who would like to relay stories about their stay are kindly encouraged to send them to Fr. Gaffney, who is eager to learn more about this history from those who have lived it over the decades. Fr. Patrick can be reached at pgaffney@nd.edu.

The Magdala Center

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discovery with the oldest Menorah on stone ever found, an inter-religious dimension for this site has emerged. Here we are encouraged to discover our commonality, something which is not without significance for the general efforts to foster long term mutual understanding especially between Catholics/Christians and Jews.

On Monday, May 26, we had the pleasure of hosting Pope Francis as he blessed the Tabernacle of the Duc in Altum Spirituality Center in a private ceremony in the Notre Dame chapel. On Thursday, May 28, we also inaugurated the first stage of the Magdala Center! Hundreds were in attendance at the inauguration of the Archeological Park as a ribbon cutting ceremony was held in and around the first century synagogue.

Afterwards, a Dedication Mass was held in the Duc in Altum ("Put out into the deep") Spirituality Center. It was a beautiful experience and we were able to provide a live stream of the Dedication Mass to viewers all over the world! Here, people from all walks of life will come together in a place which will be a center point of interreligious dialogue and ecumenism. We are very grateful for Pope Francis' blessing as things continue to progress at Magdala!

To learn more about the Magdala Center, visit: www.magdalacenter.com

Further Journeys

After three years at Tantur, MESP heads to Jordan.



Tantur has been host many organizations over the years that have shared the same vision and spirit of searching for interdenominational, interfaith and intercultural understanding in the Holy Land. The Middle East Studies Program (MESP), run by the North American-based Council of Christian Colleges and Universities, is one such program for undergraduate students who spend an academic semester of immersion study in the region. In 2011, the program relocated from Cairo to Tantur following the eruption of the "Arab Spring" there. For three years, MESP and its program staff and students have been a vibrant part of the life of Tantur, using a satellite building on our grounds as their office and study center, and frequently utilizing our chapel, library and other facilities. As of this month, however, MESP has permanently relocated to Jordan. MESP Director and Program Administrator, Dr Doug and Patti Magnuson, send their greetings and the following message on behalf of MESP participants who have lived at Tantur:

"We love the people at Tantur; we love the food at Tantur! We love the setting; it has been a GREAT place for MESP to be based, and we will miss you all, and will miss being there!"

In Memoriam: Reverend Clarence Musgrave, 1939-2014

Former pastor of Saint Andrews Scots Memorial Church in Jerusalem was tireless advocate for the Holy Land.

Reverend Clarence Musgrave was born in Belfast, Northern Ireland in 1939. A minister of the Presbyterian Church of Scotland, he studied in Glasgow and San Francisco, later spending 14 years in Zambia. After 20 years of parochial service in Scotland, Rev. Clarence came to Saint Andrews Scots Memorial Church in 2000, where he remained throughout the turbulent years of the Second Intifada and beyond, retiring from active ministry from Jerusalem. While in the Holy Land, he became a fixture as both the pastor of the Scots Presbyterian community, and became involved

with numerous concerns related to living presence of Christianity in the region. In retirement he continued to bring groups of pilgrims to Jerusalem, with a special focus on the West Bank, until his last pilgrimage in November 2013 was cancelled due to his declining health. Rev. Clarence passed away April 27th, 2014 in Edinburgh, Scotland. Married to his wife Joan, with whom he had three children, Reverend Clarence will be remembered for being a tireless advocate for the importance of the Holy Land in the Christian faith.



Reverend Clarence Musgrave spent more than 40 years of activity ministry in Scotland, Zambia and the Holy Land.

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

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Best wishes to all during the summer months!



You can also follow us on Facebook and become a "friend" of Tantur:

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