

THE TANTUR ECUMENICAL INSTITUTE

Ringling In the New Year?

Dan Koski, Tantur Staff



The morning air is crisp, clouds are once again in the sky, the days are pleasantly warm, and the olive harvesters are in the fields: autumn is once again here at Tantur. It's been a busy autumn as well, for besides all of the Jewish feasts in the months of September and October, Eid al Adha continues to work its way into the Roman calendar year, and thus coincided with Yom Kippur for the first time in decades.

We've had our own festivities at Tantur to contend with as well. Besides the start of our annual Three Month Sabbatical program this September, we held a reception for our new rector, Fr. Russ McDougall, C.S.C., who began work in the late summer months. After nearly a year without a rector, we felt a

celebration was in order, and were happy to discover that we were not alone in this thought, given that well over a hundred people attended the event! Indeed, this autumn it truly does feel that we are celebrating the New Year along with our Jewish friends and neighbors as an atmosphere of new beginnings has permeated throughout our community.

Tantur is ultimately a community of transition; of permanent comings and goings. While the goings are often present with mixed emotions, the comings are generally happy ones. Such has been our autumn so far: a new year with new people, new communities, and new possibilities for our mission and vision.

Tantur at a Glance

September 4th, 2014 Rector Reception



On a warm September evening, Tantur Institute held a reception for Fr. Russ McDougall, C.S.C. as we welcomed him as the new rector of Tantur. Leaders, representatives and members of dozens of Christian churches, communities, religious orders and institutions were present, as were innumerable members of various Jewish and Muslim religious communities, consulates and civil society institutions. We were especially honored by the presence of His Beatitude, Greek Orthodox Patriarch Theophilos of Jerusalem, whose presence gave the event a tremendous atmosphere of ecumenical community.



Fr. Russ McDougall, C.S.C. with
His Beatitude Patriarch
Theophilos III of Jerusalem

One Of the Righteous

A Journey to the Grave of Oskar Schindler at Mount Zion

Rev Glenn de Cruz, C.Ss.R.

Some years ago I came across a book by Thomas Keneally, entitled "Schindler's Ark". It was indeed a page turner and I had a problem putting it down. It was about a flamboyant German industrialist by the name of Oscar Schindler who grew into a legend to the Jews of Cracow, many of whom were murdered in the hell hole of the concentration camp at Auschwitz. He was a womaniser, a heavy drinker, but to them he was a saviour. As the story goes he made a lot of money and he rubbed shoulders with top government officials and most notably with top Nazi Officers in the army. He himself was a member of the Nazi party. Later he realized what was going on with the deliberate annihilation of the Jews by the Nazis, many of whom he knew.

Oscar Schindler then tried to save the Jews by bringing them into his factory that was building weapons for the German army. He risked his life to protect Jews in Nazi-occupied Poland, and was transformed into a man with a mission and a compassionate one at that. By the end of the war, Schindler saved about 1,200 Jews from certain death. They later came to be known as the 'Schindler Jews'.

Later a movie came out, called 'Schindler's List', directed by Steven Spielberg. It was a most powerful movie with actor Liam Neeson portraying Oscar Schindler. At the end of the movie, the

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Rev. Glenn de Cruz, C.S.s.R. (Redemptorist Congregation) of Singapore at the grave of Oskar Schindler in the Catholic cemetery of Mount Zion in Jerusalem. Oskar Schindler died on October 9th, 1974 in Germany; his remains were subsequently brought to the Holy Land shortly thereafter.

Dining Hall Makeover

If you ask someone in the know what would be the worst time in the year to come to Tantor, the response will almost certainly be the month of August, when the Dining Hall closes!

The closure was not without consolations this year, as we took the annual outage to purchase new serving islands, kitchen equipment, crockery and patio furniture for our outside seating. The Dining Hall seating area was also outfitted with new tablecloths, which has also added to a brighter, fresher dining experience. The kitchen staff are pleased with the upgrades, as are our residents and guests. You can see more photos of the changes by visiting our [Facebook page](#).



New serving islands, kitchen and serving equipment, crockery, patio furniture and tablecloths were here to greet our residents and program participants when the kitchen re-opened in September.



The Landed Gospel

Fr. James Lunn

Fr. James Lunn of Australia participated in the 2013 Three Month Sabbatical Program. A year on, he shares his experiences and the process of learning during a Tantur program.

For the theological traveller, having landed in Tel Aviv, the drive by shared taxi to Jerusalem evokes Isaiah: come let us go up to the mountain of the Lord (Is 2.3).

For a person who loves the Scriptures and the faith of Abraham, the opportunity to visit the Holy Land is like a whole new insight into someone that we have grown up with but begun to take for granted. For a Christian to be able to visit the places of Christ's life and ministry is a rediscovery of the Gospel. Originally I had thought to call this short reflection on Tantur 'The Fifth Gospel' but I could not find a reference in the works of St. Jerome to correctly attribute the quote to him. But the idea is a worthy one: that the pilgrim meets Christ in a new way through the Holy Land. Yes, the Holy Land enters the heart. Even if you are uncomfortable with the word 'pilgrim', the time at Tantur allows a reconnection with the Gospels and Scriptures; and not as a mere tourist.

Tantur as an Ecumenical place of study was known to other pastors in my local church and hence had easily been approved for its sabbatical program. We were very blessed to be a group of a dozen people from all over the world (Philippines, America, Germany, Romania, England, Canada and Australia), from different faith traditions, and yet able to travel together and be enriched and blessed by one another's company. Perhaps the human interaction of meeting other people, and learning from them, is the greatest blessing of an international study program.

For each of the participants at Tantur there was sufficient space in the schedule to allow for an engagement with the life of the Spirit: whether that was the ecumenical prayer life of Tantur; the participation in ecumenical faith events for prayer (such as Prayers for Syria at the Church of Gethsemane); prayer with a Sunday community of one's own or another's faith tradition; or praying at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre or the Church of the Nativity. So whether from a Bible Tradition or a Sacramental Tradition, or somewhere (or nowhere) in between, there was room to flourish.

The program itself is a mixture of day trips and lectures covering a wide variety of topics and experiences. Those lectures are not just about Christian history and Scripture but also about Jewish and Islamic faith and history, about geography, about law, about politics, about people. It seems that almost every rock in Israel has layers of history buried beneath it. From our visit to Tel Megiddo we learned that the digs had revealed twenty-three layers of civilisation, suggesting there is no concise history of this land that has seen the ebb and flow of empires and peoples over the millennia. But very importantly this learning is not just about the past but also about the now.

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The Landed Gospel

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That 'now' engages the conversations and tensions between the peoples of the Holy Land. I think the learning experience is to see that within every situation there are many different factors at work and that the simplified observations of outsiders may not be doing justice to the complex reality on the ground. The program at Tantur is quite open about the notion of a double narrative: there are (at least) two stories to be told. I think it would be fair to say that most people would like to live quiet and peaceful lives with physical security; with access to their workplaces, homes and public utilities and with a recognised right to ownership of property. For all the people of the Holy Land the land is important and our growth in wisdom was to learn about people's love for the land.

And as for going up to Jerusalem to the Mountain of the Lord? Well, as one of our super-energetic Jewish guides noted, it's not the Holy Mountain, it's the Holy Basin. And if you want to know why it is the Holy Basin: you'll have to land at Tel Aviv, go up the mountain, and find out.

One of the Righteous

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actors who played some of the real characters in the movie lined up with the surviving members in arm, walking down towards the grave of Oscar Schindler, who is buried on Mount Zion in Jerusalem. Both the actors and the survivors each placed a stone on his grave. It was a very moving scene.

Many a time as I visited Israel over the years, I always wanted to visit his grave, but never found the time. But in 2009, when I attended the Tantur program in June, I made it a point to visit his grave. On top of the iron grill gate to the cemetery are the words, "To Oskar Schindler's Grave". And I placed a stone on top of his grave among the many already there, as a sign of respect. The Hebrew words inscribed on the tombstone reads: "Righteous Among the Nations", an award bestowed on him by the state of Israel on non-Jews. Schindler, who died in 1974, is the only member of the Nazi Party to be honoured in this way. The German inscription reads: "The Unforgettable Lifesaver of 1,200 Persecuted Jews".

I am always moved by people who help others who are being judged unfairly, whether it's because of their race, or colour or creed, or who are treated cruelly for just being who they are. I am even amazed that these people even put their lives on the line by doing so. One such person was Oscar Schindler.

Staff Shot

Welcoming Sandy Dides to the Tantur Administrative Staff



Along with all the excitement of having a new rector at Tantur this past summer, we are doubly-blessed with a new staff member joining us as an administrative assistant.

Sandy Dides is a Palestinian Christian from Jerusalem. She brings to Tantur many years of professional experience in office administration and hotel management. Besides her native Arabic, she is fluent in both English and French along with some Hebrew. Sandy's responsibilities include assisting both Fr. Russ McDougall and Operations Director Tony Pohlen with various tasks for both the day-to-day management of Tantur and the clerical responsibilities of our Programs Office. She is also assisting both Guest Services and our facilities staff members, drawing on her substantial language and occupational skill set to help other staff complete varied tasks. The Tantur staff are delighted to include Sandy into our team. For her part, Sandy has a special love of our courtyard garden, where she can frequently be seen enjoying her breaks.

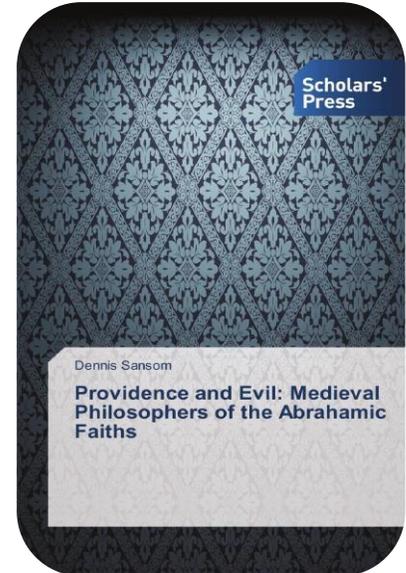
Welcome Sandy!

Providence and Evil

Professor Dennis Sansom of Sanford University publishes new book on Medieval philosophers of the Abrahamic Faiths; Sansom was a Tantur scholar in 2011.

We are pleased to announce the publishing of another theological work by a member of the Tantur scholastic community. Professor Dennis Sansom of Sanford University, a resident scholar of Tantur in the spring of 2011, has published *Providence and Evil: Medieval Philosophers of the Abrahamic Faiths* through Scholar's Press. In his most recent work, Professor Sansom compares three

Medieval Christian, Jewish and Muslim philosopher's respective findings on the relationship between divine providence and evil. Sansom researched and wrote much of the book during his sabbatical at Tantur. We congratulate Professor Sansom on his achievement and wish him well in his future scholarly pursuits. For more information on *Providence and Evil*, visit the [Scholar's Press](http://www.scholarspress.com) website.



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.

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Please note that our former PO Box of 19556, 91194 Jerusalem has passed its grace period of re-routing mail to our new address. All mail will now be returned to its sender by the Israeli post service.



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

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