



THE TANTUR ECUMENICAL INSTITUTE

The Holy Sepulchre, Renewed

Dan Koski, Tantur Staff



This past Easter in the Holy Land was yet another testament to the endearing hope of greater Christian love and understanding between the different confessions. First, all churches were blessed to have celebrated Great Lent, Holy Week and Easter on the same dates, an occurrence which happens approximately every three years and is generally received with unanimous approval by all, due to the complications a "split calendar" creates for church and civic administration, international pilgrims and the local Christian community alike. Yet more important was the re-dedication of the Holy Aedicule, the structure around the burial site of Christ within the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, which had been dangerously unstable for well over a century and has since been stunningly restored through the cooperative efforts of the Armenian, Franciscan, and Greek Orthodox caretakers as per the Status Quo. Additional work to rehabilitate the foundations of the church still need to be done, but this monumental step has been internationally recognized as a step forward in improving practical relations at the heart of Christian witness in the Holy Land.

Christ is Risen! Indeed, He Has Risen!

Tantur at a Glance

St. Albans Diocesan Readers' Pilgrimage



In March of 2017, Tantur was pleased to host and organize a Diocesan Readers' Pilgrimage to the Holy Land.

The program was co-organized by two Tantur alumni, Revd. Ysmena Pentelow, Vicar of Church of St. Mary the Virgin in Ware, and Lauryn Awbrey, Reader Ministry Officer, both of the diocese of St. Albans (Church of England). The program included nearly 20 clergy and readers from across the diocese, who spent their pilgrimage following a diverse, engaging itinerary of tours, encounters with the local Christian presence, educational presentations on a range of subjects and reflection on their vocations. The program was not without its moments for rest and relaxation as the first signs of spring - budding trees, chirping birds, and blooming flowers - emerged across our campus before all returned to prepare for Holy Week and Easter services. Best wishes to all program participants as they continue their ministries with a new or renewed understanding of the Holy Land and its role in their vocation!

Photo: St. Albans Diocesan Readers' Pilgrimage in the Chapel Seminar Room at Tantur this past March.

On A Hill Near Bethlehem

David Andrews Brown

Climbing up a hill through an olive grove to Tantur, the visitor can see, to the east, the Israeli settlement of Har Homa, and beyond this, the Mountains of Moab across the Dead Sea, lying invisible at the end of the lower Jordan Valley. Remembering that it was from Moab that Ruth set out for Bethlehem, proclaiming that the Hebrew People would be her People, and their God her God, the visitor can also see, from the grounds of the spiritual oasis that is Tantur, that very Bethlehem. There Ruth's grandson, David was born, and there too the long awaited Messiah pitched his tent amongst us in humble birth.

It is in this way that Tantur offers an almost unique picture of biblical geography. At the same time the institute offers a visible geopolitical background to the Holy Land as it is today. For Bethlehem, now a largely Moslem town administered by the Palestinian Authority, is within easy reach, yet partitioned by the nearby Separation Wall.

Something of this unique setting was in my mind during my first visit to this ecumenical center in the days when Donald Nicholl was rector. His book *The Testing of Hearts* describes, in an engagingly quiet way, the value of Tantur as the unprejudiced vantage point of which I write. For here one may see the Holy Land and its Peoples in better perspective.

At his weekly "At Home" gatherings over quintessentially English tea, Donald did not expound so much as listen, and listening is a key to

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Lost, Then Found

A rare photo capturing a historic moment in the early years of Tantur is rediscovered

This past winter, a photograph of a meeting between His Holiness Pope Paul VI and Rev. Jean Jacques von Allmen, Vice-Rector of Tantur from 1972 to 1973, then later Rector from 1973 to 1974, was discovered pasted to the backside of a stock photo of the Tantur chapel in a discarded folder. A stamped date from a photo development shop in Rome coincided with an entry in the Tantur Annual Yearbook of 1972/1973 in which Vice Rector von Allmen discussed an audience with Pope Paul VI on April 14th, 1973 as part of a closing remark for his assessment of a year in review. In the entry, von Allmen recalled the enthusiasm with which the Pope received the news of the start of the work of Tantur, and his emphasis that Tantur must remain an ecumenical institution.

The photo appears to have been taken at the end of the meeting. Pope Paul VI fell asleep in the Lord in July of 1978; Rev. Jean Jacques von Allmen in 1994. The original photo has since been digitally archived by the Communications Office of Tantur and the University of Notre Dame.



Dr Fleming's display, once housed in an ancient building in the grounds of Tantur, from the photo archives of David Andrews Brown. David has been an active participant in the life of Tantur for more than half of our existence as a functional Institute.



His Holiness Pope Paul VI with Rev. Jean Jacques von Allmen, Vice Rector of Tantur in April of 1973. The meeting was documented in the first Tantur Annual Yearbook of 1972/1973.

Springtime in Jerusalem

Valerie Hess



In the spring of 2017, my husband and I had a chance to do an extended stay in Jerusalem. We had been to Israel/Palestine many times but never by ourselves and never for this long. Since our first trip there in 1993, this had been the only item on our “bucket list.” We came primarily to experience Lent, Holy Week, and Easter as well as Passover. We were especially thrilled that this spring, Holy Week for Eastern and Western Churches as well as Passover all happened in the same week. It was a memorable ten days!

We also came to absorb Jerusalem at a slower pace, to savor favorite places without concern for another’s interest or needs, and to discover new places, which we did up to our last day there. As a bonus, we discovered the library at the Rockefeller Museum as well as the rich offerings of lectures at the various institutes and study centers, the multi-lingual church community at the Redeemer Luther church compound, and the delight of watching pilgrims while living on the Via Dolorosa. We took the bus for a day trip up to the newly excavated site of Magdala, just north of Tiberias and did a guided hike through Wadi Qelt, ending up in Jericho. We spent a day visiting Taybeh, one of the few Palestinian Christian villages left and toured Bethlehem, Beit Sahour, and Beit Jala with a friend. We also took the light rail and bus out to Ein Kerem, a lovely village that was the home of John the Baptist but mostly, we focused our time and energy on Jerusalem. . It is amazing how many friends we made in three months. (I wrote a blog while we were there which can be viewed at www.valeriehess.com.)

I had been receiving the newsletters from Tantur and knew that it was one of the places I wanted to visit. Shortly after we arrived, I contacted Tantur and was immediately invited for a tour, dinner, and the Tuesdays at Tantur lecture happening in a couple of days.

Arriving after a short public bus ride, a Tantur staff member met us as we entered the lovely and peaceful property. It was good to finally have a sense of a place I had only known through newsletters: the size of the grounds and buildings, the extensive library, the view of the wall surrounding Bethlehem in the distance, the accommodations and dining room, and the close proximity to the Old City. The lecture that first night was given by people from the U.N. about their role in helping keep the peace in that region. What an insight to have as we began our 12-week sojourn!

Tuesdays at Tantur became a regular event in our stay. Gathering every Tuesday in the parking lot of the Notre Dame center across the street from the New Gate of the Old City, we rode the free shuttle out to each week’s lecture, meeting Tantur volunteers as well as lecture

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Springtime in Jerusalem

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"regulars." We had good conversations ranging from why other people were in Jerusalem to the lecture we had just heard that night. Talk about a wide range of topics! Everything from political to religious to cultural offerings made each week a unique experience. We heard things we would never have known about and were challenged in our thinking on many different topics. As with so many lecture series, the question-and-answer times were an important part of the evening.

We also enjoyed the collaborative events Tantur did occasionally with the WF Albright Institute of Archeological Research, sometimes held at Tantur, sometimes at the Albright. Those evenings broadened the audience and the focus of discussion.

We are home now but many of those lectures continue to ruminate in our minds. Tantur was one of the good and grounding gifts God gave us during this rare window of opportunity we had. If you will be traveling near Jerusalem, we highly recommend that Tuesdays at Tantur be added to your itinerary!

For a full account of Valerie's three-month pilgrimage to the Holy Land, please visit www.valeriehess.com.

On A Hill Near Bethlehem

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much that has been accomplished at Tantur. For here the resident scholars ideally arrive with open minds, prepared to share their collective religious experience, and to learn from others who love this Holy Land. It is at Tantur that one remembers the prayer of Jesus that, "they all may be one; as thou, Father, are in me, and I in thee."

It was also at Tantur that I learned so much from American biblical geographer Dr. James Fleming whose relief map of the Sea of Galilee can still be seen on the premises, and whose imaginative display, pictured in the photograph that accompanies these few lines, suggests the lifestyle of Jesus.

It was at Tantur that I met Archbishop George Appleton, a former Anglican Bishop of Jerusalem, who spoke to me of his conviction that prayers, in the city's St George's Cathedral, as well as in London, were answered in Egyptian President Anwar es-Sadat's historic visit to the Holy City.

And it was during a Peace Academy conference at Tantur that a visiting Moslem from North Africa told me that he and others did not recognize the legitimacy of the State of Israel, but that, "We do not kill illegitimate children."

Might it be that only in settings such as that at Tantur that such considered sentiments can be freely expressed?

David Andrews-Brown is a freelance writer and broadcaster who has extensively worked in the Holy Land, South Africa and the Netherlands.

Staff Shot

Diana Sayegh



Visitors to Tantur have very often been greeted by a new member of our staff since December of last year! Diana Sayegh of Jerusalem is our newest member of our receptionist team, which is responsible for greeting our visitors, directing incoming phone calls, and assisting our guests with various needs such as organizing taxis, offering advice on independent travel in Bethlehem and Jerusalem, and more. Prior to coming to Tantur, Diana worked at the American School in Jerusalem and the St. John Eye Hospital. Diana is married to her husband Michel and has two adult daughters. Diana enjoys the work and being part of the community, and especially loves our courtyard garden and the olive grove!





TANTUR CONTINUING EDUCATION PROGRAM "CLASS OF 1989" REUNION

For nearly thirty years, the fellowship of three Tantur program participants has only grown with time.

When Rosemary Grebin Palms of America, Ivor Rees of Wales and Judith Elgey of England first walked through the gate of Tantur during Great Lent in 1989 as part of one of our first Continuing Education Programs, they were open to experiencing all the possibilities that their time in the Holy Land may bring to them. Little did they know that by time they departed, a friendship had been formed between the three of them that would span across four decades. Yet this is precisely what occurred, with their most recent visit occurring this spring in Keswick, England in the English Lake District. The three Easter pilgrims have managed to remain in contact through regular written and email correspondence, attendance of Tantur reunions held in the United Kingdom, and the collective memories of their pilgrimage, the highlights of which included lectures on the Parables by the recently departed Tantur lecturer Ken Bailey, celebrating an Anglican Eucharist one early morning on the Sea of Galilee, a trip to Sinai, a Passover dinner with Jewish families in Jerusalem, and simply, "the location" (of Tantur). Two members of this unique group also remain in contact. "It was a life-changing experience for me," Ivor reflects. May it be so for many more!



Rosemary Grebin Palms, Ivor Rees and Judith Elgey at Keswick, England in the spring of 2017, reflecting on their experience at Tantur as part of one of our first Continuing Education Programs in 1989.

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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Tantur has begun the process of transitioning its e-list for events and the newsletter to an automated email system. Our local event announcements will now be distributed through the e-service "MyEmma," with the possibility of the newsletter list also being delivered as such in the near future.



"He is not there, for He Has Risen." – Tantur Ecumenical Institute community wishes all a blessed Easter from the Holy Land, unified and celebrated by all confessions in 2017.

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