

On The Way to Pentecost in the Holy Land “A Virtual Easter Retreat Experience”

Sunday, April 11: The Garden of the Resurrection at the Holy Sepulcher



“Thinking he was the gardener, Mary said, “Sir, if you have taken him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will go and get him.” Jesus said, “Mary!”. She cried out, “Rabboni!” (Jn 20: 15-16)

This guided tour by Hana Bendcowsky, will focus on gardens in the Holy land and the “gardens” of the tombs of where the Church of the Holy Sepulcher was built. Following this virtual tour will be time for spiritual reflection and prayer led by the Tantur team. A garden is a place of liveliness, the flowers in varied colors, spreading aromas, their leaves moving in the wind, and the seasons growing new plants. During the tour, we will get to know some gardens in Jerusalem and its surroundings, which will lead us to a garden where life defeated death. We will visit the garden in the Benedictine Monastery in Abu Ghosh dedicated to Cardinal Aaron Jean-Marie Lustiger whose quotes about man’s relationship with God are written, and, the rose garden, which contains 400 species of roses from all over the world. We will pass in the garden in the Valley of the Cross where the tree, according to medieval tradition, from which the cross was made, was taken, and we will reach the garden, where Jesus was buried, and where he appeared to Mary on Sunday.

Sunday, April 18: On the Road to Emmaus: “Seven Miles from Jerusalem: Walking the Land of the Bible”



“That same day two of Jesus’ followers were walking to the village of Emmaus, seven mile from Jerusalem. As they walked along they were talking about everything that had happened. As they talked and discussed these things, Jesus himself suddenly came and began walking with them.” (Lk 24: 13-16)

We learn in Luke 24:13 that two of Jesus’ disciples journeyed from Jerusalem to Emmaus immediately following the crucifixion and resurrection. They clearly had many important issues to discuss along the way, but what if the biblical passage had related more about their physical experience as they walked? How difficult would the route have been? What would they have seen on the path? Which elements of nature might they be able to appreciate in that particular

region? And perhaps most importantly, what historical events played out there that would be known to these Jews 2,000 years ago? In this session we'll focus on the geographical, ecological and historical context of the story of Emmaus, adding color, vibrancy and relevance to an already fascinating moment. Jared Goldfarb will guide participants on a tour of the hill country surrounding Jerusalem so as to gain a view and understanding of what these disciples would have experienced as they walked that road to Emmaus questioning all that had happened. It will be followed by spiritual reflection on "hearts burning within us" and prayer time by the Tantur team.

Sunday, April 25: Judas, Thomas, and the "Valleys" of the Holy Land



Biblical Topography as a Metaphor for Our Spiritual Journey

*Out of the Depths I Call to You, O Lord (Psalm 130) -
"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I
will fear no evil..."*

(Ps 23)

The betrayal of Jesus by his disciple Judas is a theme echoed over and over again throughout the Hebrew Bible and New Testament, calling upon us to reflect on our character, our actions and our relationships with those around us. But if we pay close attention to the textual references, we might notice another theme developing in parallel, that of the geographical and topographical context of these passages, and the symbolism of the particular spaces in which these events transpire. What stories happen atop the mountains and hills of Judea, versus those that take place in the valleys or lowlands? Is it a coincidence that the Field of Judas (Akeldama) lies at the lowest point in Jerusalem, beneath the magnificent Mountain of the Lord? What other biblical narratives use the Land of Israel as a powerful backdrop to a moment of spiritual reflection? How might we be inspired by these texts with a greater understanding of their physical environment? Hilltops have significance in scripture as places where God speaks. Jared Goldfarb will lead us through the "valleys" of the Holy Land and the significance that they play in scripture. The Tantur team will follow this guided tour of the valleys of the Holy Land with some spiritual reflections on how we can understand the "valleys" in our spiritual lives and in our road to Pentecost.

Sunday, May 2: The Transfiguration on Mt. Tabor



“Don’t be afraid! Go tell my brothers to leave for Galilee, and they will see me there.” (Mt.28:10)

Buckle-up, we’re climbing 2000 feet to one of the most fascinating sites of the Holy Land: Mount Tabor, the site of the Transfiguration of Jesus. We’ll discover the importance of the site from the Old to the New Testament, and all the way to the modern basilica. This 2000 feet above sea level journey will take us to the most important high-altitude sites to the north of the Holy Land: Mount Carmel, Mount of Beatitudes, and Mount Hermon; sites of high spiritual, and at the time political and social intensity. The Resurrection narratives in the New Testament have Jesus inviting His disciples to return to Galilee where they will experience Him alive. Mr. Nizar Halloun will guide us to Mt. Tabor and the surrounding Galilee area with a focus on the Transfiguration and what that experience points to in the Risen Christ. The Tantur leadership will provide some spiritual reflection and prayer time to assist us in how we are invited to live out the mission Christ entrusts to us in Pentecost.

Sunday, May 9: The Resurrection Experience at the Sea of Galilee



“Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore of the Sea of Galilee but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus.” (Jn 21:4)

The sea of Galilee is the second home of Jesus, and today the home of a number of churches related to important miracles and events that took place during His ministry and after His resurrection. The scenery combined with the history of the events described in the Gospels inspire awe and invite us to look deeper into the why and how of the events and miracles. Our walk will lead us to Capernaum, but on the way we’ll visit Magdala, Tabgha, Primacy of Peter, Mount of the Beatitudes, while diving into the events that lead and follow the Resurrection. This Sunday’s virtual tour of the Holy Land, presented by Nizar Halloun, focuses on the Sea of Galilee (Lake of Tiberias) and those areas surrounding it that are reflected in the Gospels. Spiritual Reflection will include the significance for all of us of experiencing the Risen Christ on the shore and what He asks of us in our journey to Pentecost.

Sunday, May 16: Jerusalem, City of Prophets



“You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere.... Why are you standing here staring into heaven?”
(Acts 1: 8, 10)

Egeria, the 4th-century traveler, writes about the Imbomon a place on the top of Mount of Olives from where Jesus was ascended to heaven. She describes a few occasions on which the bishops and worshipers were praying there, except for the fortieth day after Easter, Ascension Day, then, she writes, they prayed in Bethlehem. Since when the feast of ascension is celebrated in the Imbomon (from Greek “on the hill”) How the Christian site became a mosque where 5 different communities are celebrating next to each other? In our tour, we will try to answer the questions and we will also visit the place where the two men appeared to the disciples, and the Pope and the Patriarch of Constantinople met 900 years after the Great Schism. Hana Bendcowsky will lead our virtual tour to those areas in Jerusalem dealing with the Ascension Jesus and the decent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles. She will also present the significant role of “Jerusalem” in Scriptures. Spiritual Reflection and input for personal prayer by the team from Tantur will assist in our preparations for the Feast of Pentecost.