

# Tantur Ecumenical Institute

## Newsletter

Moving Masada and Missionary Meanings

by

*Juan Ledwidge Flanagan, SVD*

### Latest News and Events:

- *Moving Masada and Missionary Meanings by Juan Ledwidge Flanagan SVD, originally from Dublin, Ireland but resides in México City, México*
- *“The Global Ethic” by Rev. Glenn De Cruz, C.Ss.R, Singapore*
- *To See or not to See Tel Aviv? by Keith Begg, (Tantur), originally from Limerick, Ireland*
- *A Reflection for September by Pastor. Bronwyn Spilsbury, Calgary, Canada.*



Magnificent Masada, a place of reflection and meaning



I was deeply impressed by the hundreds of Israeli young people who had climbed in the darkness of the night the 450 meters to the top of the fortress of Masada, by a winding and difficult path called the trail of the snake, there to listen again to, the impassioned speech of the leader of the rebels, Eleazar Ben Yair, in which he convinces the leaders of the community that it would be better to take their own lives rather than live in shame and humiliation as Roman slaves. “Since we long ago resolved never to be servants to the Romans nor to any other, than to God

himself, who alone is the true and just Lord of mankind”...I cannot but esteem it as a favor that God hath granted us, that it is still in our power to die bravely and in a state of freedom...”

And I found myself very moved by those young Israelis, who were seeking, in that same place, to imbibe the spirit of Ben Yair. And sometime later, still moved, when we made a stop at Ein Gedi, and our guide read for us from the first book of Samuel (24,1-3) “When Saul had returned from following the Philistines, he was told “Take note! David is in the Wilderness of Ein Gedi. Then Saul took three thousand chosen men from all Israel, and went to seek David and his men on the rocks of the Wild Goats. So he came to the sheepfolds by the road, where there was a cave...” And I looked up at those hills, and the wild goats, and at the sheepfolds, and the caves and I thought how those young Israelis would have felt: These are my hills, this is my land, here God, in my history and in my geography is working out his promised salvation. Here I am, Here indeed I am.

And I seemed to remember certain passages of the Second Vatican Council’s decree *Ad Gentes*, and its counsels for missionaries.

Christ..., transcends every peculiarity of race or nationality and therefore cannot be considered foreign anywhere or to anybody. Missionary activity is... a manifesting of God's decree, and its fulfilment in the world and world history, in the course of which God, manifestly works out the history of salvation... Whatever truth and grace are to be found among the nations, as a sort of secret presence of God, the missionary frees from all taint of evil and restores it to Christ its maker. And so, whatever good is found to be sown in the hearts and minds of men, or in the rites and cultures peculiar to various peoples, not only is not lost, but is healed, uplifted, and perfected for the glory of God. The missionary should be a member of the group of men/women among whom he/she lives; sharing in cultural and social life by the various undertakings and enterprises of human living; They should be familiar with their national and religious traditions; and gladly and **reverently lay bare the seeds of the Word which lie hidden among their fellows**, so that they themselves may learn by sincere and patient dialogue what treasures a generous God has distributed among the nations of the earth. They borrow from the customs and traditions of their people, from their wisdom and their learning, from their arts and disciplines, all those things which can contribute to the glory of their Creator, (Cf. AG 8, 9, 11)

Should not we, then, gather together every evidence of the saving action of God in our own history, in our own geography, in our literature, our own poetry, the speeches of our heroes? Perhaps there will come the day, when young people of each nation will come together in their own way, to hear and relive, trembling with emotion, the will of God expressed by the lips of their own heroes, in their own history, in their own culture.

A small act of kindness can influence many. Let's hope peace between the two people is not too far away. On the image below the Hebrew for Peace is Shalom and in Arabic it is Salam – Not such a big difference



The festival of Sukkot when many Hassidic Jews make a pilgrimage to the Temple of Jerusalem



Hezekiah's Tunnel running under the City of David, Jerusalem



## “The Global Ethic”

by

Rev. Glenn de Cruz, C.Ss.R

Quite some years ago, I was fortunate enough to join the Israel Study Program organised by the Catholic Theological Union in Chicago. The program itself ran for about two and a half months, accompanied by Scripture Scholars from the said Theological Union.

One day a group of us went to explore Hezekiah Tunnel in the city of David outside the Dung Gate, accompanied by a Jewish guide. The tunnel itself is an intricate patchwork of underground pathway that was built before 701 BC during the reign of Hezekiah of Judah to defend the City of David from an impending siege by the Assyrians

It was the end of the festival of Sukkot also known as the Feast of Booths or the Feast of Tabernacles by which, the Hebrews were commanded to make a pilgrimage to the Temple of Jerusalem. While there we had the opportunity to see a procession of Hassidic Jews who were carrying the Torah and singing, celebrating the end of the feast, with the joy of the Torah, which begins with Rosh Hashanah, the New Year. Just then a group of Palestinian children, who were playing in the yard, scrambled to get away from the singing group making their way through the crowded streets of Jerusalem. One little girl fell as she made her escape injuring her face and legs and there was blood gushing from a deep cut on her cheek.

Two nuns in our group picked up the crying girl and cleaned her cut with a handkerchief. As her worried mother arrived on the scene, the Torah singing group were gaining on the injured child. One of Hassidic Jews came forward and spoke in Arabic to the mother, giving her a bottle of water for the pale looking girl to drink and to wash the wound. He advised the mother to bring her to the hospital. The mother thanked him. He then went back to the singing group leaving the mother and child perplexed but grateful and was deeply moved by that simple act, when you consider a Jew helping a Palestinian in need. I am sure there were other good acts by both sides, but it was the first I have witnessed. There is goodness and kindness in every society and it is happening all around us. To me that is the epitome of the Global Ethic, the Golden Rule, found in the scriptures of all the great religions in the world, “Treat others as you would like to be treated”, or “Do not treat others as you would not like to be treated.” (Tobit 4:15, Matt. 7:12, Luke 6:31, ‘Hadith’ Sayings of Muhammad No.13).

It is a poignant message that even in an area that is often portrayed as Muslim against Jew, Israeli against Palestinian that this small act of kindness demonstrates the inherent goodness in people despite their creed, beliefs, and nationality. Human nature always wins out and at the same time restores our faith in the inherent goodness of man and woman kind



## To See or not to See Tel Aviv?

by  
*Keith Begg*

Jerusalem is addictive. It is a place that attracts millions of visitors each year like bees to honey. It is enchanting and beguiling and once you see the Old City and all it has to offer you then become captivated by its allure. For those of us who have the luxury of living in this living museum it can be hard to drag oneself away and as a result many people miss out on the other exciting gems that Israel/Palestine has to offer.

Tel- Aviv is the complete antithesis to Jerusalem. It reminds me of a school friend your parents warned never to hang around with in the school playground because they invariably lead you in to trouble, but you have a lot of fun along the way. Tel Aviv is like that raucous friend in the playground. I don't think there are two cities on the planet in such close proximity to each other where lifestyles, cultures and ways of life are poles apart. Religious conservatism vs vibrant nightlife, every prayer house under the sun vs every beautiful beach under the sun, kosher food, where even the Big Mac gets no cheese vs a virtual melting pot of eateries.

Tel Aviv is known as the Capital of Cool, The Big Orange, Shabby Chic and even the Miami of the Middle East offering the visitor a multitude of galleries, shopping, restaurants, beaches and above all a place where Arab and Jew seem to sit side by side in relative peace and tranquility. While Tel Aviv is no Barcelona or Istanbul when it comes to architectural charm it does however offer the visitor an insight into some of the most eclectic architectural styles of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Tel Aviv's 'White City' a UNESCO World Heritage site is a hotchpotch of Bauhaus architecture created by many of the visionary and talented German & Austrian Jews fleeing the economic crisis of the 1920's and Nazis oppression of the 1930's. It covers a wide area and houses many galleries and local synagogues stretching from Allenby Street to the South of Tel Aviv heading East towards Gvirol Street and across the Yarkon river in the North before looping back to the Mediterranean Sea on the West coast. After years of neglect the now savvy city council have restored many of the buildings to their former glory turning this part of Tel Aviv into a cool, hip and happening district where boutiques, cafes and galleries more akin to Paris all add to the vibrancy of Tel Aviv. The city is a mélange of cultures all within a short walking distance of each other. The Yemenite Quarter just off Allenby St houses the world famous Carmel Market that bursts at the seams with shoppers, goods and little Yemenite eateries dotted all over this district. Not far away is fashionable Sheinkin St and Rothschild St where the heart of the German & Austrian émigré population still lingers on as can be seen from the names on the quirky little boutiques and cafes serving some of the best apple strudel and sachur torte imaginable. A trip to Tel Aviv cannot be completed without visiting Tel Aviv's beautiful and charming neighbor, Jaffa the home of the Jaffa orange an ancient port city with its amazing Ottoman Empire architecture, winding cobbled streets and a port filled with bopping fishing boats and little shops just like a scene taken from Arabian nights. The view is spectacular from Jaffa to Tel Aviv with beach after beach stretching into the horizon. The looks of both cities could not be more different with Tel Aviv skyscraper towers lining the view giving the city its Miami feel. Equally beautiful is the view from the central beach district of Tel Aviv where Jaffa appears like a mirage its beautiful ancientness springing up like a hologram to offset an over modernized Tel Aviv beachfront. To See or not to see Tel Aviv?.....Well that is the question!

The contrast between Jerusalem and Tel Aviv could not be more different except for Tel Aviv's sister city, the beautiful, ancient and beguiling Jaffa.



"If I were a Rothschild" – One of Tel Aviv's swankiest street where cool little cafes and quirky shops keep the visitor amused.



Tel Aviv's eclectic Bauhaus architectural styles brought by visionary German and Austrian émigrés add to the brazenness of this city where it earns its name as "The White City"



*A Reflection for October by Pastor Bronwyn Spilsbury*

Amid rubble and dust, between gnarled olive trees and gleaming lemons, on crowded crossroads beside the Jaffa gate and paths by the Jordan, we pilgrims look for signs. Signs taking us back to the beginnings of being. We walk the wall, the wadi, the wilderness and all along the way we wait for whispers in the wind, words filling our longing for belonging. We are pilgrims wanting rock-solid permanence. But the way of the pilgrim is an impermanent one. No matter how many edifices are built on high hills, how many times we put our hands into the holes of history, how much holy fire sweeps over our hair, we hover near permanence but can't hold on to it. The pilgrim way is not one of hanging on. One Person hung onto a cross at the crossroads, and that cross became a sign. We visit that place, kneeling, touching, praying at the white rock of Golgotha. But even this rock isn't permanent. We light a candle and move on, just as He did. And that is the pilgrim way. We are flames in the wind, the scent of incense blowing into infinity. In moving, we mark the path deeper and it becomes almost permanent, leading to God, Who is forever.

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