

PILGRIMAGE

To the Holy Land

In late January, I journeyed with 33 others from across this Diocese to the Holy Land, a place of mysterious beauty.

We moved from bustling, populated areas full of life, to river valleys with rich, fertile soil, and then to the desert. Whether it was the twisted branches and trunks of olive trees in the Garden of Gethsemane, the poppies that lined the path of the Via Maris, the sweeping vistas from the Mount of Transfiguration or the isolation of the barren landscape in the Judean Desert, all in our group were touched; prayers lifted us to a level of unexpected tranquility.

Along every step of the way, the evidence of human life over millennia and history that spans long enough to have covered an array of dynasties and civilizations was around every corner. And yet, modern life goes on. Those who make the Holy Land their home, visitors from myriad countries, and multitudes of pilgrims swirl into a milieu of human experience that testifies to the intrigue and holiness of the land. Young Palestinian boys selling gum on the street, the kind and welcoming smiles of the people of East Jerusalem, the bustle of shopkeepers, the solitude of shepherds, the Muslim residents who quietly said hello and bowed their heads to our group as we prayed.

Throughout our pilgrimage, Scripture came alive. It was moving beyond words to listen to the spring of water bubbling forth from Mary's Well; to lay our hands and heads upon the spot of our Savior's birth; to visit the cistern where Jesus healed the 10 lepers; to experience the transcendent divine presence that radiates at Mt. Tabor; to sip water from Jacob's well, where Jesus offered the Samaritan woman "living water;" to press our backs against the cold walls of the stone cell where Jesus waited for trial; to sit on the shore where Jesus instructs St. Peter to "feed my sheep;" to kneel and touch the rock of Calvary where Jesus suffered and died; and to kiss the stone where they laid his body for three days before death and the grave were vanquished.

Each day, we rose early, always starting in prayer. Prayer for the Diocese, our families, those who labor, those who work for peace and those who endure oppression. We worshipped and prayed with the people of Christ Anglican Church in Nazareth, singing and praying in Arabic and English. Often, we had unexpected encounters with the Risen Lord; prayers have been answered and paths will unfold. Have faith, Christ is moving in this world and in our lives.

- Bishop Daniel

