

## FROM THE PASTOR

*Dear Brothers and Sisters*



Church of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, Israel

We departed JFK in NY the night of Sat July 9th, heading for Israel. Praying evening prayer together in the departure lounge, we then boarded the 11-hour flight to the Holy Land.

One hundred youth accompanied by two priests, and catechists. Arriving in Israel on Sunday evening, we travelled to a Kibbutz outside of Nazareth to spend the night. Before sleeping, we celebrated the Eucharist at the Kibbutz, a beautiful experience.

The first day of the pilgrimage, we travelled to Nazareth, and prayed at the Basilica of the Annunciation. It was in this very place that the Angel Gabriel appeared to the Virgin Mary, announcing that she would conceive by the Holy Spirit and give birth to a Son - Jesus.

The Basilica of the Annunciation is built over the very site where the Holy Family lived.

From there we travelled to the west, to Mount Carmel, the place where the Prophet Elijah slaughtered the false prophets of Baal, who had been invited by King Ahab and his wife Jezebel. Fr. Aquilino, the Carmelite priest who is the current resident Pastor, let us in to the church even though we arrived when the gates were being closed. We had a Penance Celebration there, on the terrace above the little church, with views over the Jezreel Plain to the east and the Mediterranean to the west.

Just as the prophet Elijah vanquished the 450 false prophets and the idols of Baal, we received in that same place the Sacrament of Reconciliation and the forgiveness of sin, the Victory of Christ over our Baals, our false Gods.

We travelled to Mount Tabor, the site of the Transfiguration, and also the place where Deborah overcame the enemy king Barack in the Old Testament. Walking down Mt. Tabor, we then travelled to the Sea of Galilee, and prayed at the site where Christ appeared to the Apostles after the Resurrection, when He asked Peter three times 'Do you love me?'

May our love for Christ be enkindled during these days. We are praying for all of you and your intentions. Please pray for us.

*Fr. Sean*