

Chronicle V of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity in Jerusalem

By Martin Hoegger

Jerusalem, Wednesday, January 25, 2023.

A place of refreshment



A stone's throw from our hostel is the "Garden Tomb", where its director **Simon Holland**, an Anglican pastor, awaits us. He explains to us that the purpose of this peaceful place is to allow visitors to meet the Risen One. The emphasis is on the story of his resurrection, not so much on the historicity of the place, even if there is some archaeological data.

Volunteers come from all over the world to welcome and accompany the many visitors. " *It is a place of refreshment of faith, but also of revelation. Jews and Muslims also come here,*" he tells us.

We introduce him to the JC2033 initiative, which he welcomes with great interest, and ask him if he plans to mark the beginning of the " *decade of the resurrection* " during the celebration on Easter morning. He replies that he will do it with joy. This celebration will take place on April 9 at 6.30 and 9.30 and will be broadcast by CBN. We planned to participate.

Translating the Bible into Modern Hebrew

The Bible Society in Israel is located at the beginning of Jaffa Street, not far from the gate of the same name. Our friend **Victor Kalisher** receives us and, after offering us a coffee, gives us the latest news. Daniel and I had already met him four years ago during Unity Week. But as I was also director of the Swiss Bible Society, we have known each other for a long time. The current major project of this organization linked to the United Bible Societies is the translation of the Bible into modern Hebrew, which should be completed in 2024.

Why a modern Hebrew translation? Because the non-religious Israeli hardly understands biblical Hebrew. It's almost another language! But the religious believe that such a translation is a betrayal: " *Traduttore ... traditore* "! " *This version will be as literal as possible and as dynamic as necessary* ", affirms the Secretary General who wants to take up the challenge of a translation that is both faithful and beautiful. A Facebook page and a

website regularly publish excerpts. haktuvim.co.il. And the major newspaper Haaretz reported on it last week.

About the "decade of the Resurrection", Victor will discuss it with the leaders of the " *local Messianic Body* ". He also gives us the names of a few key people.

The next day, he invites us to his home, for the " *Kabbalat Shabbat* " (the entry into Shabbat), where we meet his wife Esther who has prepared a feast! **Gili**, one of his four daughters, aged 15, tells us with conviction that it is obvious to her that the celebration of 2033 must take place in Jerusalem.

We also meet his brother **Meno Kalisher**, pastor of the *House of Redemption* congregation in Jerusalem. For him, everything that contributes to making the Gospel known is good. So JC2033's approach is good because it puts the name of Jesus at the center.



The next day, Shabbat, Victor invites us to participate in the worship service of his community.

This is an opportunity for us to experience a beautiful time of worship and teaching, followed by the Lord's Supper around the tables in the community hall, immediately followed by a meal. At our table, we meet Pastor **Eli Smadja** who spent part of his childhood in our country of Vaud.

Discovering the JC2033 initiative, he tells us that the important thing is to love the risen Jesus more than the idea of 2033. This symbolic date is only a pretext to better center ourselves on him. I replied that he had understood the spirit of this initiative, whose aim is above all to vivify our faith in the resurrection of Christ!

The mission of the churches in the Holy Land



But back to Wednesday, which ends with prayer for unity in the Cathedral of the Latin Church. Its patriarch **Pierre-Baptiste Pizzaballa** comments on the theme of this week, recognizing that it constitutes a great challenge, particularly in the Holy Land.

For him, divisions and conflicts always begin in the hearts of men. There is not only political violence, so present in this country, but also in our communities and our interpersonal relationships. But meeting Christ personally has opened our eyes to suffering and commits us to " *do good and seek justice* ", also to " *confront the doer* ", as the verse chosen for this week says (Isaiah 1,17). .

" What does it mean to work for justice in Jerusalem ? We are always at the crossroads between denouncing injustice and not judging. We cannot remain silent in the face of injustice, but we must be indwelt by the peace of Christ. And our goal must be forgiveness and reconciliation. It is not the mission of a particular Church but of all the Churches and of all the Christians in the Holy Land who have one faith, one baptism " .

His homily can be read here:

<https://www.lpj.org/posts/homily-for-the-week-of-prayer-for-christian-unity-2023.html>

At the exit I greet him by telling him that we had met him twice, in particular during the pilgrimage on the road to Emmaus in January 2020, where he had told us about the meaning of this path. Hearing the name "JC2033", his face lights up! A little later, during snack time, he tells us that he reads our news; he invites us to give him ideas for the " walk towards 2033 " in Jerusalem and encourages us to continue our ecumenical pilgrimages to Emmaus.

Photos of the prayer for unity celebrations can be found on the website of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem:

<https://www.lpj.org/fr/gallery/week-of-prayer-for-christian-unity-2023.html>

Four "Worthy Women"

The book of Proverbs sings of the virtues of a worthy woman: *"A valiant woman is a real find! It is more valuable than pearls"* (31.10). We met four of them during this week. Each, in her own way, witnesses to the Gospel.



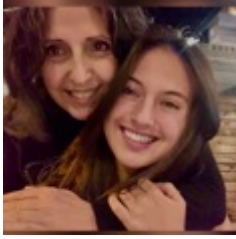
Rachel Netanel welcomes hundreds of visitors to her extraordinary home in Ein Karem and prepares them a "Moroccan couscous", at the beginning of the Shabbat.

Rachel hosts one meeting a week with an average attendance of 50 persons, weekly group meetings for 10 to 20 people, one meeting every other month for 100 to 200, and daily meetings that provide for one-on-one relationships. To her numerous guests she does not fail to say that *"the Son of Man is the Master of the Sabbath"*!

At Jaffa Gate Jerusalem and on the web, **Tikvah Ott**, a "sabrah" (a Jew born in Israël) shares her faith with Israelis, instructing various groups in circle dances of Israel which contain Hebrew prophecies of the Messiah, and thus speaks to the hearts of His people.



The name Tikvah means hope. She has hope for the salvation of her people. She will accompany us on one of the marches on the road to Emmaus next April and will teach us a Jewish circle dance. See <https://jc2033.org/fr/eventsfr/emmaus-2023.html>



Sonia Martin Khoury visits the poor and makes the orphans happy by bringing them clothes and toys, in the neighborhood of Bet Hanina . We got to know her thanks to her daughter **Jessica**, whom we met through the Association Coexistence in Lausanne. Aged 20, she already speaks five languages: Arabic, Hebrew, English, French and Turkish. She puts her gift of languages at the service of dialogue projects between Arabs and Jews.

Whether they are Jews or Arabs, they have a passion for living their faith in their families and are happy with this journey towards 2033 that we are telling them about. We hope to stay in contact with them.