

Just a few weeks to go before the Circuit Pilgrimage to the Holy Land begins on May 9th! There has been much prayer and planning to reach this point, with Covid 19 restrictions still overshadowing the trip. But as the departure date draws closer, excitement and anticipation are building and confidence is growing.

What new things will we discover about Jesus, and ourselves, as we follow in Christ's footsteps visiting some of the places where he ministered? Will we experience the power of God's miracles in Cana or the lingering smell of fried fish on the beach at Lake Galilee or feel the pain of Christ as we walk the Via Dolorosa, the way Jesus carried his cross? Or will we be so overwhelmed by the intrusion of modern day activity, the bustling crowds, the traffic jams in the ancient streets, and the commerciality of the souvenir sellers, that we will find it hard to relate the present day reality with the gospel accounts of the past?



My guess is that we might meet with Jesus in the unexpected places, the quiet of an olive grove, on the boat on Lake Galilee, in the people we meet, or in the graffiti of the separation wall. For his presence is with us now, through the power of the Holy Spirit.

We have just journeyed through Lent, and followed Jesus on Palm Sunday as he rode into the Holy City acclaimed by cheering crowds, who soon turned against him. Going forward through Holy Week to Easter, we shared in the solemnity and divine mystery of the Last Supper and the betrayal by Judas, the agony of Jesus in Gethsemane, his trial and suffering, all of us pilgrims following every painful step on the way to crucifixion and Christ's cruel and shocking death. But the journey does not end there. When we are past Good Friday, well into Easter Day, astonished at the miracle of resurrection, the appearances of Jesus to his disciples, we are on the road to Pentecost and the coming of the Holy Spirit in power. That same Spirit is with us today, inspiring us and leading us in our mission work for Christ.

Pilgrimage is a journey of faith, a journey that does not stop on the plane back to the UK from the Holy Land but continues all through believers' lives. Every person of faith is on a lifelong journey to know more of God and to show their faith through acts of kindness and the way they live their lives. My hope for those that join in this Circuit Pilgrimage is that they will experience a deepening of their

faith in Christ and a closer relationship with God through travelling to the Holy Land. And hopefully they will have the opportunity to share some of their experiences with their churches, friends and families, to inspire others to discover the precious places of the Holy Land and experience more closely the amazing things God has done and continues to do for us all!

God bless.

Claire

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Lake Galilee

(photographs : Mark Hargreaves 2004)