



Sister Joan Sobala, SSJ, (left) and Isobel Goldman comfort each other after visiting Yad Vashem Holocaust Martyrs Memorial Aug. 2. The memorial was established in 1953 by a special Knesset law.

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 nority within a minority.

Sister Susan Nowak, who studied at Yad Vashem Holocaust Martyrs Memorial last year, introduces the last speaker, Sister of Charity Gemma Del Duca, director in Israel of the Catholic Institute for Holocaust Studies of Seton Hill College/Yad Vashem. Students and clergy from the United States attend her program.

It is largely outsiders who work in Israel toward dialogue, she explains. She firmly believes that by focusing on the Holocaust teachings, an appreciation for one another as persons will grow.

Sister Del Duca gets nods of support when she quotes Johannes Metz, "If anybody tries to teach you theology without the event of Shoah, doubt the theology."

Michael Schnittman later comments, "I never knew there was a Catholic institute for Holocaust studies. This is fantastic."

Rabbi Katz leads a farewell to Sabbath ceremony, blessing the gift of fire, wine and sweet spices. The Jewish holiday of Tisha B'av, which commemorates the days the First and Second Temples were destroyed, starts tonight. And every year more than 10,000 Jews go to the Wall to commemorate it.

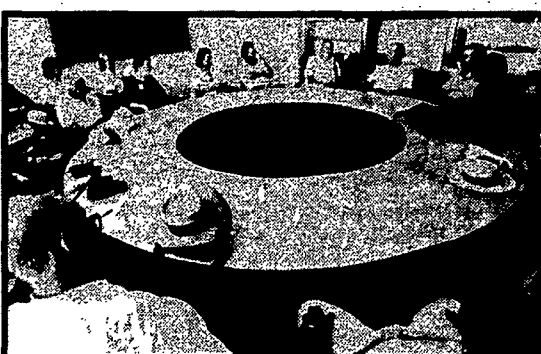
AUG. 2, DAY 3: A group of Jews and Christians goes to Holy Sepulchre, where the bishop offers Mass. Returning here 35 years after his first visit has sparked reflections that will be ongoing; rarely will he be seen without pen and notebook in hand. For Rabbi Katz, Holy Sepulchre is a high point. "Never in my wildest dreams would I imagine I would be sitting in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre with the bishop of my local community saying Mass, and then the welcoming attitude he presents to include as many people as can be included."

Deacon Brian McNulty takes a couple of minutes alone in the tiny cavelike room representing Christ's tomb to light a candle for his parish, the Catholic Community of the 19th Ward. Noting that people had told him they would be praying for him, he is doing likewise. The candle symbolizes that others are praying with you, he says, "As yours goes out others are added. It's a continual symbol of prayer."

This day is a medley of experiences. Soon we are



Michael Schnittman (second from left), Father Dan Tormey, Bishop Matthew H. Clark, Neil Jaschik, Deacon Brian McNulty, and Sister Susan Nowak, SSJ, tour Masada and the remains of King Herod's desert retreat Aug. 4.



The pilgrims took part in a roundtable discussion with the Ehud Olmert, mayor of Jerusalem, Aug. 2.

meeting with Jerusalem Mayor Ehud Olmert at the Jerusalem Municipality. He talks only briefly, saying there is much less conflict in his city than the media presents, but also that the diversity of 42 denominations presents a challenge. "To live with this diversity and the richness that comes

from it is not easy," he says.

Back at the hotel for lunch, Sister Nowak speaks passionately about the Holocaust, and about our next stop, Yad Vashem Holocaust Martyrs Memorial. When we arrive at the site, she mentions that she could have been with Yad Vashem scholars in Poland at this time, exploring ongoing controversy at Auschwitz. But she chose to be with this group from her local community at this important time of bonding and increasing understanding.

In making our way through the blackness of the children's memorial — lit only by five burning memorial candles that create an illusion of infinite lights of other souls — we hear names, ages and homes of some of the 1.5 million children who died in the Holocaust.

Michael Schnittman hears the maiden name of his mother's family. "It knocked me over," he says. Although he is unaware of any loss in his family to the Holocaust, he wonders about distant relatives.

Menachem tells us Israelis must come to the memorial three times during their lives — during elementary and high school, and while training for the army, "not to make them brutal killers, but to help them be sensitive .. so they know what they are defending and why." He, too, served in the military as a paratrooper and says he is in the reserves for life.

At the stark and stifling Hall of Remembrance the group offers prayers during a service where a cantor from the memorial leads an extraordinarily haunting Hebrew chant. Sister Sobala and Fred Jefferson lay a wreath over the ashes of Holocaust martyrs; we watch from a platform, and read on the floor below the names of the 22 largest Nazi concentration and death camps.

Rabbi Katz has said that he's never found a religion whose basic teaching is hatred, and that if people continue to teach the good of religion, "then when somebody is hurting, somebody needs help, that's what you do."

He notices at Yad Vashem there "wasn't a person who wasn't deeply moved"; Lois Posner of Rochester's B'rith Kodesh synagogue says she had no idea Christians cared so much.

AUG. 3, DAY 4: The day begins at Bethlehem, where the group's scholar, Father Joseph Brennan, offers Bible readings outside the Church of the Nativity

which looks like a medieval fortress. We stoop to enter the huge church through the Door of Humility, and explore the Armenian, Greek Orthodox and Franciscan sections; hanging candles everywhere cast light on the icons, ancient paintings and looming pillars. Excited voices echo in the spacious church; "too much talk," chastises a Protestant minister with us. Some visit a cave below where Father Brennan explains St. Jerome translated the Hebrew and Greek Bible into the Vulgate.

"This is what it's about," says Goldman. "We are seeing history through your eyes." Soon she will be holding hands with

Catholics during a Mass Bishop Clark celebrates with Deacon Brian McNulty's assistance — to the tune of jackhammers outside preparing for the onslaught of visitors in the millennium. The bishop invites reflections.

Father Brennan talks of the comfort it brings to know that our prayers go up to the same God, although we often cannot share in such settings.

Sister Sobala notes that the jackhammer perhaps is symbolic of our struggles to listen to one another amidst the noise of life.

Later, Jews and Christians cross the aisle to hug and kiss on another and to offer the peace of God.

The spirituality is the same, Larry Fine, Jewish Federation executive director, later comments, but Jewish services don't include such sharing. "It would be wonderful if we could hug and wish each other well," he says.

Father James Lawlor and Sister Sobala start us off singing "Silent Night" to end the service.

After awaiting the end of an Armenian service in the grotto below, we proceed downstairs to crowd around the altar marking the site Jesus' birth; another marks where the manger would have been. Heavy brocaded tapestry hangs around this cave-like room and the group sings, "Hark the Herald Angels sing." Christians kneel to kiss and to touch the silver 14-point star commemorating Jesus' birth.

We then proceed to the municipal building to visit Mayor of Bethlehem Hanna Jamil Nasser, a Roman Catholic. People find him candid.

He says his \$3 million budget should be \$15 million. The 1 million tourists a year is skyrocketing to 3.5 million a year with the impending millennial celebration. Unemployment is high — 35%. The Israelis are imposing unbelievable restrictions, he says. Special permission is needed to go to Jerusalem. Families, hospitals and institutions suffer from a water shortage; the water flow is controlled by Israelis. Huge complimentary bottles of cold water are being passed around for us.

He speaks of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. "The prime minister doesn't believe in this peace process. He doesn't want this peace process," he says. "He is not respecting the signature of his predecessor."

"We are not against the Israeli people," he says. "But if the peace process drags on day to day to day, I am afraid there will be an opportunity, a golden opportunity for extremists on both sides, Israeli and Palestinian, to be more powerful."

"I am telling you the truth," he emphasizes — as do almost all the people we will hear throughout our visit.

Outside an Arab restaurant where we have lunch, Father Lawlor is pleased to notice a peace pole like that planted across from St. Mary's Church in downtown Rochester where he served for 17 years. "May Peace Prevail on Earth," it reads.

On to Ofra, a Jewish settlement in the West Bank