

Continued from page 9

anyone can get, giving us an idea of daily living and rituals through the pottery, mikvah, coins and other remains.

AUG 6, DAY 7:

A day to explore the Sea of Galilee and the Golan Heights, and celebrate three services at holy sites. At the Mount of the Beatitudes the Rev. Dick Gilbert, minister of the First Unitarian Church, reads the Beatitudes and talks of service to the poor beneath the shade of trees overlooking the sea.

Rev. Gilbert quotes E.B. White as saying he began each day torn between enjoying the world and saving the world, "which made it hard to plan a day, and I would add, to plan a life." The group, also, is enjoying its visit while working to connect it to the work awaiting them back in Rochester.

Rabbi Katz says later, "Here you are at a holy site and it doesn't matter whose holiness it is. Dick started with Psalm 121, and in my mind I started a tune (sung to Psalm 121). The message is so powerful. It doesn't matter what religion you are. Anybody could sit here and get a message from it.

"Whether it is or isn't (the place Jesus taught), this is the place that is accepted. I think of those words and what I am reminded of what our mission in life is to do."

On to Tabgha, where Jesus multiplied the fish and the loaves: Inside the modern Church of the Multiplication of the Loaves and Fishes, lies a restored ancient mosaic of two fish flanking a basket of loaves, at the foot of the altar.

Joe Posner, a Jew associated with B'rith Kodesh, stays to light a candle and place it with others before an icon of Mary and her child.

"This was for my non-Jewish friends," he says. "They're special friends, and asked me to do something holy for them. I was looking for the right place. I thought this was a good area for them to be blessed by God to take care of them."

"I was brought up with the philosophy a good relationship is the goal of life. There is nothing more powerful, more rewarding. In honor of our relationship, I burn a candle for them."

Father Dan Tormey is beginning a Mass around the courtyard. The site reminds him of John 21 — particularly meaningful for him, he says. It tells of Jesus' appearance to his disciples after his resurrection, when he had them re-cast their nets into the sea. Here, Jesus asked of Peter three times, "Do you love me?" and asks him to tend his sheep.

Here Father Tormey prays, "As we continue our journey on to Jerusalem and ultimately our own homes in Rochester and that area, bring peace to our hearts, strength to our minds and the firm conviction Peter had when he said, 'You know I love you.'"

An emotional thank you for the privilege of offering Mass follows, Father Tormey explaining he'd been ordained 43 years and had never been to Jerusalem.

The last service is nearby at the Primacy of Peter where small stones are handed to everyone getting off the bus. The Rev. Paul Womack, a United Methodist and president of the Greater Rochester Community of Churches, gathers everyone around a stone altar and begins with Psalm 102. We soon learn what the stones are for; Sister Sobala literally gasps at the symbolism. While stones can symbolize fortitude and character they can also mean burdens, regrets and dashed dreams, Womack says. Bring them forward and leave them, he says, "for whatever weighs on you this day and receive bread. None of you should be too wasted to receive bread."

This is a service, many point out later, for each and every person — Protestant, Catholic, Jew or Universalist-Unitarian. Bo Clark, an Episcopalian, says later, "We've all been there for each other's prayers, but this is one thing we all could participate in at one level, and that is what this is all about."

Father Brennan insists on time for people to spend at the water's edge; "This is real important," he tells the guide.

We move on to Capernaum, where Jesus lived after leaving Nazareth, to see soaring columns of an ancient limestone synagogue and nearby small stone houses.

Jane Napier, a diocesan Catholic, lets her imagination run, saying, "When you come here, there is life. This is where people had children, buried their parents. I think about the bakers, in this heat of 110," she added.

"In the area outside Mount Beatitudes, a lightbulb went on in my head. All of this Jewish tradition, Jesus was simplifying things. It really moved me up there. It was the same water he looked at, the same mountain he looked at, the same heat he walked in."

By afternoon we have driven north past the remains of a Crusaders fortress, over the Jordan River where people are kayaking and rafting, past rows of mango trees. We arrive in Israel's highest city, Safed, 3,000 feet above sea level and since the 15th century a center for studying holy texts. Safed became known as the capital of Jewish mysticism, and still draws religious Jews for pil-



Sister Joan Sobala, SSJ, swims in the Dead Sea Aug. 4.

grimages. We sit in the Josef Caro Synagogue amidst shelves of sacred old books behind glass, which Jews cannot throw out, and listen to our guide. Here the group shops for artists' paintings, drawings, candles and other items.

We return to Kibbutz Nof Ginossar, which has several guesthouses and a beach on the Sea of Galilee, for our second night there.

AUG. 7, DAY 8:

Some tour the kibbutz, whose business is tourism, before leaving to return to Jerusalem. We stop at Yardenet, where we take empty water bottles to fill with water from the Jordan. A few people stop to read a plaque on a tree, "Close to where Jesus was baptized."

The river has sections where groups can congregate to baptize members, and this is going on to our left. Bishop Clark is blessing some items a few pilgrims have bought.

The water is green and filled with small fish. Father Joe Brennan, just before being overcome with emotion at seeing his companions drawing water from the Jordan, says he has a couple of baptisms coming up and "it will be kind of wonderful I can tell people I am using this with regular water."

"This is really very special and it's not even us," a fascinated Lois Posner comments.

Rev. Cook reads Matthew 4:1, "to simply remind us what we are taking from this place as we fill our bottles with water from the Jordan. We take away incongruity, polarity. Immediately after Jesus was baptized, that glorious event with God, he was led into the wilderness to be tempted. ... We will be met with mundane, difficulty. ... Each and every time there is a mountaintop experience, there is a valley waiting for us." He prays a prayer of thanks to God for every ounce of courage and the ability to choose the good in life.

Back in Jerusalem, Menachem walks us through Me'a She'arim Quarter, Jerusalem's ultra-Orthodox neighborhood, the second built outside of the Old City, in 1874. The neighborhood is dirty and poor; men pass us carrying their towels after cleansing for the Sabbath in a mikvah, some wearing striped outfits of the ultra-Orthodox, their earlocks long and curled. A father and two small sons in bright green shirts seem to meet us at every corner; he has told our guide he appreciates his straightforward explanation of the area. There are no TVs and advertising is in the form of posters on wall billboards: "The Torah obligates every Jewish daughter to dress modestly," one reads.

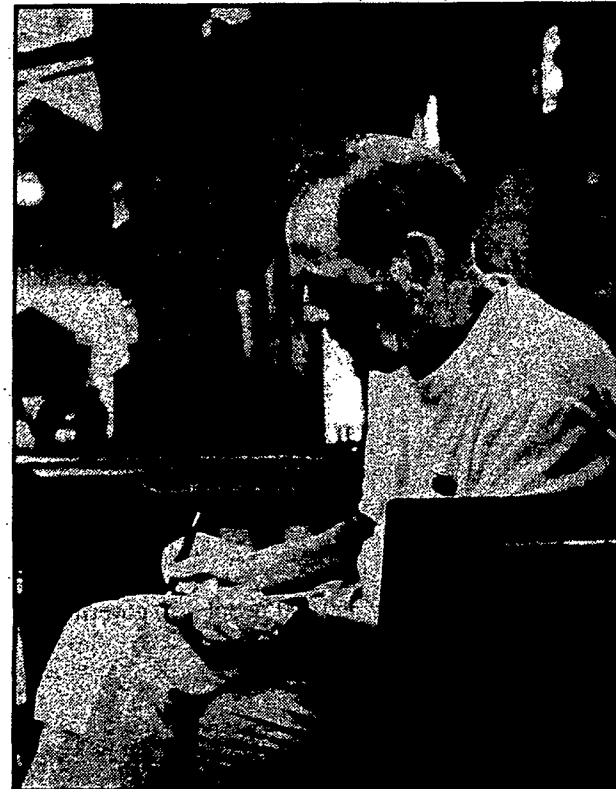
We drive on to Church of All Nations and the Garden of Gethsemane, where Sisters Joan Sobala and Pat Schoelles, and Suzanne Schnittman offer devotions among the olive trees and rosemary bushes. Schnittman speaks of Jesus questioning God though he was willing to accept his cup. We all question God, she says, but in the end must accept God's will in the best way we can.

Sister Schoelles notes the themes of violence and suffering so concentrated throughout the land during our visit. She speaks of wanting a "Messiah of magic" to fix things, of "wanting God to straighten out what we ought to be doing."

Following a walking meditation, pilgrims return to the tree, place open hands on their neighbors' open hands as Sister Sobala prays a pledge of the heart, to pick up the cup "knowing you are on the other side."

We make our last stop at the Wailing Wall. Isobel Goldman feels strong emotions here.

"We started here last weekend before we knew what this week would be," she says. "It was an incredible week we had. This is like the culmination right now. ...



Bishop Clark reflects after devotions at the Basilica of the Annunciation in Nazareth.

All these relationships have changed, there are so many new challenges, new connections, new opportunities to continue to pray together for whatever we want to do in our lives."

"We are all concentrated on what we can bring back, but it is what we can't share that's so special. How to take back what's deep in our hearts is so challenging to do, maybe an impossible task."

AUG. 8, DAY 9:

This afternoon at the hotel, David Horowitz, editor of the *Jerusalem Report*, gives the most lucid picture of Jerusalem. What colors everything about Israel, especially politics and peace, he notes, is the country's size, about that of New Jersey. The nation is divided on what kind of country to build from within, as well as how to deal with the Palestinians.

People are confused about whether to trust Palestinian leader Yasir Arafat, he says.

At the same time, he noted, "We are very confused about our prime minister...what he is up to...all adds up to incredible obsession."

Bishop Clark has been asked to summarize at a final discussion before we check out of the hotel. As he stands to speak, emotion overwhelms him a couple of times and the group is silent as he stops to regain his voice.

The point has been to better understand one other's tradition, he says, to better work together, promote greater harmony, and strive for a deeper appreciation of the land of Israel for ourselves, for our traditions and for interfaith relations.

"I'm very pleased we have moved toward those goals," he'd said that day talking with me. "There is no magic to something like this, it doesn't heal longstanding wounds, or close chasms of misunderstandings and separation it has taken centuries to build up. On the other hand without taking positive steps like this we don't make any progress. So I think this has been very productive.

"I hope ... that people will see my decision to come here as an expression of something I believe in, and as a commitment to which I call others in the diocese as they can and circumstances allow."