



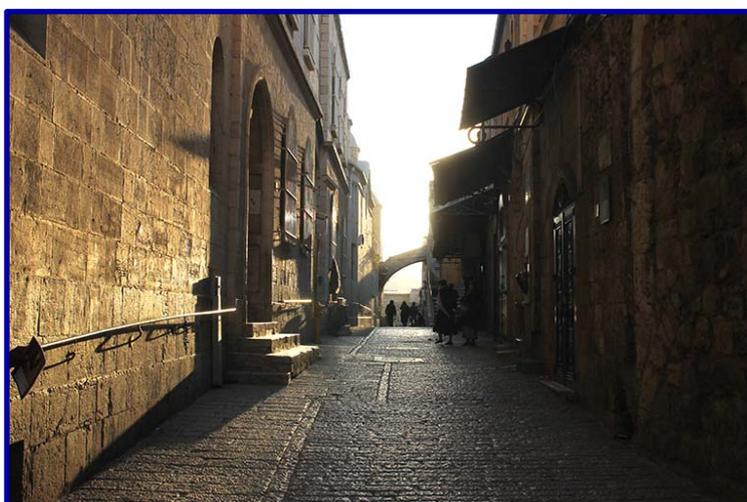
EASTER IN JERUSALEM

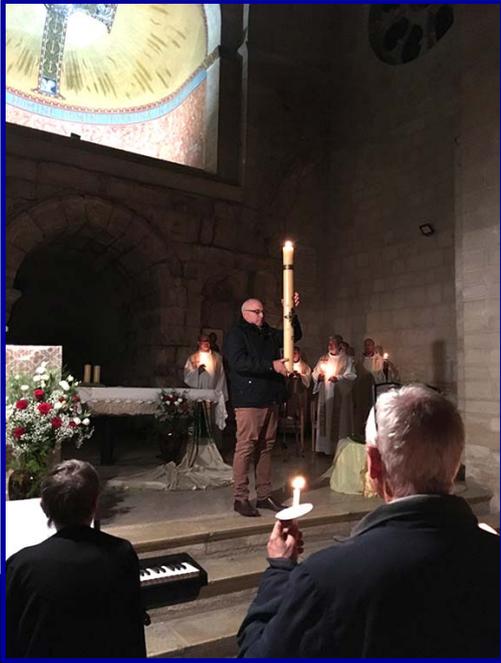
Mr Tony Haintz, Assistant Principal - Catholic School Culture at Damascus College Ballarat, was awarded a partial scholarship by the Sisters of Our Lady of Sion to study Scripture in Jerusalem. Each year the Sisters of Our Lady of Sion offer four such scholarships across Victoria to teachers of VCE Text and Traditions and VCE Religion and Society. Tony chose to participate in "The Passover and Easter Study Program". The course focuses on the biblical texts in their geographical and historical contexts, with opportunities given to experience the current reality of Israel and to learn more about Judaism and Islam through meeting resident Jews and Muslims. Tony writes about his experience:



The Passover and Eucharist Program held in 2019 across the Easter celebrations of Latin, Eastern Rite, Coptic, Armenian, Syrian and Orthodox Christians and the week-long Pesach of the Jewish people was an insight into the land, the book and its people. The Sisters of Our Lady of Sion conduct the Centre for Biblical Formation on the Via Dolorosa in the Old City in Jerusalem. The centre designs programs that seek to link participants with the sense of the place named holy by three of the great world religions and with the book that gives life and focus to the faiths of Christians and the Jews. The centre also intends that programs offer a chance to engage the peoples for whom this land is sacred and home.

So we gathered at a convent named Ecce Homo ("behold the man" Pilate's words to Jesus' accusers [Jn. 19:5]) from Australia, Europe, North America, Asia and Africa. At the touching place of the central narrative of Jesus' passion, we were students of John's Gospel and of its interpreter for us, Fr Scott Lewis SJ, Dean of Regis College in Toronto, Canada. His extensive presentation was intermingled with quality presentations from liberal Jewish scholars on aspects of Passover and its significance in their story. There were also lectures by people working in the Jewish-Christian dialogue and a talk with an Islamic Palestinian woman who is employed by the Sisters at Ecce Homo. Excursions in the old city and to Galilee were included in the program.





Being one of the few sites in the Old City that celebrated the Roman Easter rites in English, our group took on responsibility for preparations and many of the ministries. The Easter Candle became my responsibility in a ceremony of light that was performed on a rooftop overlooking Jerusalem and only a few minutes walk to the place of the original morning of resurrection witness and joy. The procession to the Basilica in the lower ground floor and the liturgy that followed were unforgettable; "Christ our Light. Thanks be to God."

The Sisters, the Religious Education Centre of the Diocese and Damascus College made this extraordinary experience possible. A time of grace and gratitude.

