

Father Paschal's reflection: Called to spread the Word

I asked the priests in the group to share their some of their reflections on the pilgrimage. Here's one from Benedictine Father Paschal Morlino. - CG It has taken me a couple of days to gather my thoughts and reflect on them. It was 30 years ago since I was there and so much has changed. The suffering of the Palestinians is so much in evidence now. The Wall [separating Israeli settlements from the Palestinian Territories] is a symbol of so much mistrust and lack of desire to create peace. Bridges build peace and trust and walls only alienate. First of all, the numbers of people on pilgrimage in every place we visited astounded me - It shows the great thirst to walk where Jesus walked.



Benedictine Father Paschal Morlino, in black habit, carries the cross along the Via Dolorosa during the Stations of the Cross Oct. 15, 2010, in Jerusalem, while on pilgrimage with Bishop Denis J. Madden, right, and a group of priests from the region. (Catholic Review photo | Christopher Gunty)

But it was in the quiet places where I felt the most moved especially by the words spoken to us in the well-prepared homilies given by Bishop Denis Madden. He made the places we visited and where we prayed so often come alive and have such a moving effect on me. When we visited the place of the Baptism of Jesus in the Jordan amidst all the folks there I had the sense that the same Holy Spirit that came upon Jesus was hovering over us. It was guiding us along the way to see more clearly the true spirit of the place we visited. It was very evident that we had been called, as the bishop said so often. What was it that we were being called too? The Mount of Beatitudes gave us the answer: Called to holiness of life and a sharing of that life with those to whom we minister. Acknowledging the same Holy Spirit that came over Jesus in the Jordan will guide us as we struggle each day with all our shortcomings to live out that teaching of Jesus to us in the Beatitudes.



Bishop Denis J. Madden, auxiliary of Baltimore, preaches the homily in the chapel of

St. Jerome, just a few yards from the site of the Grotto of the Manger. It is believed that St. Jerome worked on his translation of the bible in this cave. (Catholic Review photo | Christopher Gunty)

Another place where I felt so moved was in the cave of St. Jerome in Bethlehem during the Mass I had the distinct feeling that I was in very holy place and needed to just be present to Jesus in a very special way and it brought me to tears. Something about the place and what had taken place there with God's Word just got into me in a way I had not ever felt before. I was truly spiritually moved and it has made me think of how the Holy Spirit moved St. Jerome and is still moving us to spread that Word. That Word that has moved so many over the centuries and the need for that Word to be proclaimed particularly in the Holy Land where so many do not know it, have not heard it and need it so badly. Finally, it was truly a spiritually moving event in my life. As time passes to go back and reflect, the words spoken to us and the affect they are having on my own spiritual life are a very rewarding experience. **Fr. Paschal Morlino, O.S.B.** *Pastor, St. Benedict Parish, Baltimore Oct. 25, 2010*