

ECUMENICAL Theological Research FRATERNITY

in Israel

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Newsletter No. 20 November 2000

Dear Friends,

"A light is most useful and appreciated in darkness." This has been our encouragement over the past two months and we hope that our news will convey also to you some 'rays of hope': our focus since the beginning of the academic year.

ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES

The Lecture Series "To Cure the Wounds that Divide Us

October 26, when the Greek Orthodox Church celebrates the return of the body of St. Sabbas to the Monastery in the Judean desert -a gesture of 'healing a wound'- **Prof. Justin Taylor** of the *Ecole Biblique* presented the Fraternity's first lecture, "The Authority of Scripture: Canon and Community". It included an overview of the current project' of the *Ecole Biblique* to translate and annotate the Bible and will give more space than was done in the Jerusalem Bible and in its successive revisions to the traditions which have received the Bible. While canon and community are inter-connected, the canon depends on the subjectivity of each community. If you want to learn more about it, the full text of his lecture is available at the offices of the Fraternity (\$1) or via email.

New Releases:

Two new publications in the 'Occasional Series', available by December 14. The first book is one you've always wanted to have: *The Fraternity 2000: A Compendium of the Ecumenical Fraternity 1966-2000* (63 pp.@\$5). It includes a comprehensive index of lecture topics, lecturers and members of the ETRFI since its foundation.

The second book is the compilation of the 1999/2000 lecture series: *Medical Ethics in Judeo-Christian Tradition* (140 pp.@\$10). It includes an appendix of 'help resources' -for practical responses to ethical challenges! Both books were compiled and edited by **Natalie Posti** and can be ordered through our offices.

Gracing the covers of both books are outstanding watercolour pictures by **George Kosinski**, the modern-day *Roberts* of Jerusalem-art fame. George has recently published a collection of his artwork in a beautiful hard-cover edition of "Journey in Watercolours (Jerusalem 2000)". It is available at *Claire's Gift Box* at the American Colony Hotel (02 627 9722) or online at <http://aquarelles.com>. All of the images in the book will soon be available, for \$9.95 each including shipping.

In Preparation: The David Flusser Symposion

We greatly mourn the loss of our friend and colleague, **Prof. David Flusser**. Organized by the *Fraternity* and co-hosted by *Ratisbonne Pontifical Institute* and *Tantur Ecumenical Institute*, there will be an international conference entitled, "David Flusser: Innovator and Leader in New Testament Studies", at the end of May, 2001. Donors of \$100-\$400 will be honoured as **Contributors** and donors of \$500+ as **Sponsors**. We look forward to this occasion in sincere appreciation of the legacy left by Prof. Flusser and thank our first Sponsor, the **Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church of the USA** **The Most Rev. Frank T. Griswold** and the first Contributor, **The Sisters of Zion in Israel**.

CHARITABLE SERVICES

Rays of Sunshine

Despina is a special 9-year old Syrian Orthodox girl from Bethlehem. Since she was diagnosed with *Marfan's Syndrome* at the age of 3 she has been travelling to and from *Hadassah Hospital* in Ein Karem, Jerusalem, for treatments and sometimes even hospitalization. One of the symptoms of this disease is *progressive scoliosis* which untreated, is life-threatening. In Despina's case, the scoliosis had reached a critical stage at which the only option was immediate action to correct the severe curvature of her spine. The family was assisted by an organization in the UK in covering the substantial expense. Despina was able to have the operation, on November 5! Two weeks later, most of the pain has subsided, she is walking, a smile on her face as she goes to school! Despina's parents are simply overwhelmed by the excellent care at *Hadassah*,

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at a loss for words at the sight of their beaming daughter.

As if this was not enough 'sunshine', we have the honour of communicating that we had yet another opportunity to forward help to a family of our Orthodox friends. Their son **Sami** (not his real name) also has a chronic illness, having suffered from *Cystic Fibrosis* since he was an infant. Today he is 17 years old, although smaller than other boys of the same age. His constant need for medical care is necessarily a significant expense -Sami's parents turned to us for help. In response to the appeal which we sent out,

Kindermisissionswerk in Aachen responded with a substantial donation, to cover the immediate debts. Such occurrences are beyond any doubt, answers to prayer not only for the families involved but also for us at the *Fraternity*.

At the end of the previous academic year, the students of *Studium in Israel* packed their suitcases with much less than with what they came with when they returned to Germany. It turned out to be a full carload of clothes which we happily passed on to the needy Ethiopian Orthodox community in Jerusalem. Thanks to all of you!

CHURCH ACTIVITIES

A Special Garden Party

Beit Avraham, the Jerusalem branch of the Darmstadt, Germany 'Sisters of Mary' celebrated its 40th Anniversary on October 5 by extending an invitation to a truly ecumenical group of friends, gathering in their beautiful garden on Ein Gedi Street. Local leaders of both the Jewish and Christian communities came in great numbers, a sign of their appreciation of the service of hospitality the Sisters have provided, to survivors of the Holocaust over the past four decades.

The Sisters of Mary are the initiators and principal organizers of the *Jerusalem 2001* conference on April 17-19, termed as: *A time to reflect, to repent, to get right with God and our elder brother Israel...to write a new page in the history of Christianity.*

DIPLOMATIC FUNCTIONS

The Christian Visas Affair

The Fraternity 'Visa Committee' has so far sent two letters to the Israel Ministry of the Interior, concerning the new policy for permits granted to Christian volunteers. In reply, a letter dated Nov 12 states: ~Christian volunteers may receive visa renewals up to 48 months ~Citizenship or permanent residence status will be granted to

Christian clergymen...in the condition that they have been residing in Israel for over 15 years.

FRATERNITY COMMUNITY NEWS

In Live Colour

A special treat for video-viewing enthusiasts -You can watch the whole Fraternity family in action: *A Miracle of Faith: Two Millenia of Christian Heritage in the Holy Land*. Only a few copies remain at the office, available for \$25.

Old & New Friends

~ **Ake & Lena Skoog** are returning to Sweden after a 20-year stay in Israel! Veterans at the *Swedish Theological Institute*, we remember with appreciation Ake & Lena's leadership of the Fraternity for more than a decade. They have requested to remain in close contact with us, as 'overseas members' of the Fraternity.

~Welcome back to Israel, **Fr. Peter Ashton OFM!** Our dear friend can now be reached at *St. Peter's Church* in Tiberias.

~**Rev. Dr. Ross Jones** has been appointed Dean of *St. George's College*. Rev. Jones comes to us from the USA, with an infectious zeal and determination that is sure to inspire the students now under his wings!

Joys and Sorrows

~We remember in prayer our Vice-President **Canon William Broughton** at this difficult time as he has returned to the States in order to be near his brother and sister-in-law who are both severely ill.

~**Fr. Bargil Pixner OSB** has recovered nicely from nasty fall that left him unable to walk for a time. He sincerely thanks all those who made the ordeal so much easier for him. So much so that he is busy now writing a new book!

~**Fr. Thomas Stransky CSP** is still recovering from a terrible car accident in Rome which left him with his leg broken in four places. The good side of it is that now he says he has enough time to brush up on his Italian and to read every day all of the many international dailies.

~**Sr. Abraham**, our *Student Christian Forum* Director, has just returned from a trip to Ethiopia for the 14th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies at the University of Addis Ababa. She was interviewed the very first day by the Ethiopian TV, in Amharic!

Yours in Hope, Rev. Petra Heldt