

## Basilian Peace and Justice Pilgrimage to the Holy Land

September-October 2018

Our thirteen pilgrims, led by Fr. Maurice Restivo and Fr. Bob Holmes, travelled to the Holy Land visiting, reflecting and praying at the Holy sites where Jesus was born, taught, died and rose, but also visited the holy people who today are working to bring peace in this conflicted land. Below are some learnings from four Christian Palestinian peacemakers we met.

### Cedar Duaybis



A founding member of Sabeel in Jerusalem – an ecumenical grassroots liberation theology movement among Palestinian Christians – Cedar described the effect of the *Nakba (catastrophe)*, which began in 1948 and is on-going today, on the Christian communities of Palestine. The establishment of the

state of Israel made possible by the displacement of three quarters of a million Palestinians, which included Cedar and her family, was a human *nakba*. Being placed under military control and discriminated against by Israeli law she describes as an identity *nakba*. And reading the Bible with Palestinian eyes has been a theological *nakba* – is God a tribal god or the God of all? Hence the need for a Palestinian Theology of Liberation. See <https://sabeel.org/>

### Daoud Nassar

The Nasser family has title to their 100 acre farm on a hilltop near Bethlehem which goes back to Ottoman times. But being surrounded by five constantly expanding Israeli settlements seeking to squeeze them off their land has been a constant threat. Their access road has been blockaded, they receive no water or electrical service, anything they build is immediately issued a demolition order by the Israel army. But their response is – “We refuse to be victims. We refuse to

hate. Our Christian faith is central to our lives. We refuse to be enemies. We believe in Justice. We espouse creative, active nonviolent resistance.” And with international support it is working! See <http://www.tentofnations.org/>



### **Sami Awad**

Sami is the founder of Holy Land Trust in Bethlehem. How do you build “trust’ in the Holy Land today when the constant message is “fear”? Palestinians live in fear fed by 70 years of on-going *nakba*. Jewish Israelis, always recalling the holocaust, are taught “Never Again – To Us!” Both suffer from a narrative of historical trauma which feeds fear. Holy Land Trust is committed to nonviolence, trauma healing and nonlinear thinking. Linear thinking leads to decisions based on past experience. Nonlinear thinking seeks decisions shaped by future dreams and



possibilities. Jews and Palestinians need to hear and accepted each other’s trauma narratives but then move on to questions of justice and equality for all who share the land. From this a new narrative can develop which can lead to possible political solutions. See <https://holylandtrust.org/>

## Elias Chacour

Elias is the retired Melkite archbishop of Haifa and lives in Ibillin at *Mar Elias*, the school he founded in Galilee. “We Palestinian citizens of Israel don’t want to be tolerated, we want to be accepted with equal rights. The land doesn’t belong to Jews or Palestinians, the people belong to the land – we are blood brothers, children of Abraham. Peace can only be built on justice.”  
*Abuna* Elias begged for our ears, our voices, and our solidarity – to be both pro-Palestinian and pro-Israel.



See <http://www.pilgrimsofibillin.org>

There were many other peacemakers we met – Jewish Israelis, Palestinian Muslims, Internationals – learnings from these will follow.

Peace, Fr.Bob