

SJ Ongoing Formation Programs in Jerusalem Presentation

In considering the future of the mission of the Pontifical Biblical Institute – our House in Jerusalem – it has seemed useful to introduce new programs for Jesuits that take advantage of this very special City and Land. This draft would like to offer a brief presentation of the different possibilities being considered. The proposals for now are targeted only towards Jesuits, but very soon we will propose programs for our Universities (either for the students and/or for teachers and professors), for the leaders of our Institutions, and for the many collaborators who share our Mission.

A. Vision

- In our way of proceeding, the dynamics of the Contemplation of the Incarnation of the Spiritual Exercises [101-109] is crucial. I would like to go briefly through that first Exercise of the “second week” to show how the dynamics of the Contemplation of the Incarnation can illustrate the journey that will take place in Jerusalem.
 1. [**Unifying perspective**] We need to *contemplate a history* from above, from God’s point of view, and we need to *contemplate how* the Incarnation is the way chosen *to save the human race* [102].
 2. [**Connecting global with local**] The journey through this land makes it easier to understand how here *the great extent of the circuit of the world with peoples so many and diverse* connects to *the house and rooms of Our Lady, in the city of Nazareth in the province of Galilee* [103].
 3. [**Experiencing Bible story as History**] The dynamics of *seeing* and *listening* [106-107] can be well understood here in the relationship between the Bible as the “Written Story” and the living experience of events, geography, climate, that actually shaped that history and those narratives.
 4. [**Reflection**] As group of Jesuits getting through the program, it is then very important the possibility of *considering* [108] the experiences, through study sessions and sharing workshops in which a discussion on our way of proceeding for our mission today, can improve mutual knowledge among Jesuits and our typical sense of internationality. The final *colloquy* [109] reminds us that the journey has a fundamental “prayer attitude” as Jesuits, “contemplatives in action”.
- Since Jerusalem has a very special significance for the Society of Jesus, the Program offers a journey in both the footsteps of Jesus and Saint Ignatius.
- Indeed, this is a very special land. Being here, the biblical narratives come alive as they are read in their geographical setting and with the necessary historical background. This is true for both the Old Testament, and the historical Jesus. At the same time, Jerusalem held an important place in the hearts and minds of Ignatius and the first Companions [cf. Autobiography nn. 8.9.12.16.29.34.36.40.42-48.50.55.78.85.93. Cf. also the meditation on two standards Sp.Ex. [137-148] about the symbol of Jerusalem]. Jerusalem was the place to which Ignatius tried all his life “to arrive” and the place where he “started from” until the Society was shaped in the desire to be sent.

B. Goals

Having formation programs in a place like Jerusalem is an important opportunity to help the process of formation of the Jesuits, especially focusing on these formational goals:

- **Making explicit the bridge between Spiritual Exercises and Bible.** To experience a retreat here is to live and sense directly something only imagined abstractly before. This journey can provide a lasting and concrete horizon for a person's prayer life since it allows to connect with the humanity of Jesus through contact with the history and geography of His earthly experiences;
- **Broadening the exposure to the Holy Scripture.** We sometimes see a growing attitude of a sort of "spiritualization" of the Bible (understood, perhaps, as a type of database of inner, "philosophical" or "spiritual" texts), and sometimes even a tendency to minimize the importance of the Bible, choosing other spiritual texts or "catechisms". This Land offers a unique opportunity to experience the way God chose to reveal Himself in history and especially through the Incarnation. The more our world becomes technological and virtual, the more important it is to stay in touch with the historicity of this Land and of the Bible;
- **Integration and Inculturation.** Living in the midst of a complex place where Judaism, Islam and Christianity co-exist very closely, and where different Christian denominations share the same Holy places, can assist in the process of a personal Integration of the need for Inculturation, which the Society demands of us in accomplishing our mission. Nowadays Holy Land compels to face the complexities of inter-religious dialogue and the challenges of personal religious integration in a multicultural reality. The Ignatian legacy can help to create bridges between Gospel/Cultures/Social Justice;
- **Internationality.** The programs in Jerusalem bring Jesuits from around the globe to a common place of faith and history and invite them to meet what Fr. General considers the specificity of the internationality of the Society of Jesus. Workshops, personal interactions and sharing faith experiences will help participants to get to know each other, and become familiar with their different cultures and apostolic goals. This is one of the reasons for having the program in English (as in Compl. Norms n. 97)