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Israel's President Shimon Peres addressed the German Parliament on January 31st, Holocaust Memorial Day, with touching words of reconciliation. A few days later Palestine's President Mahmoud Abbas came to Berlin to strive for peace. Let us hope and pray!

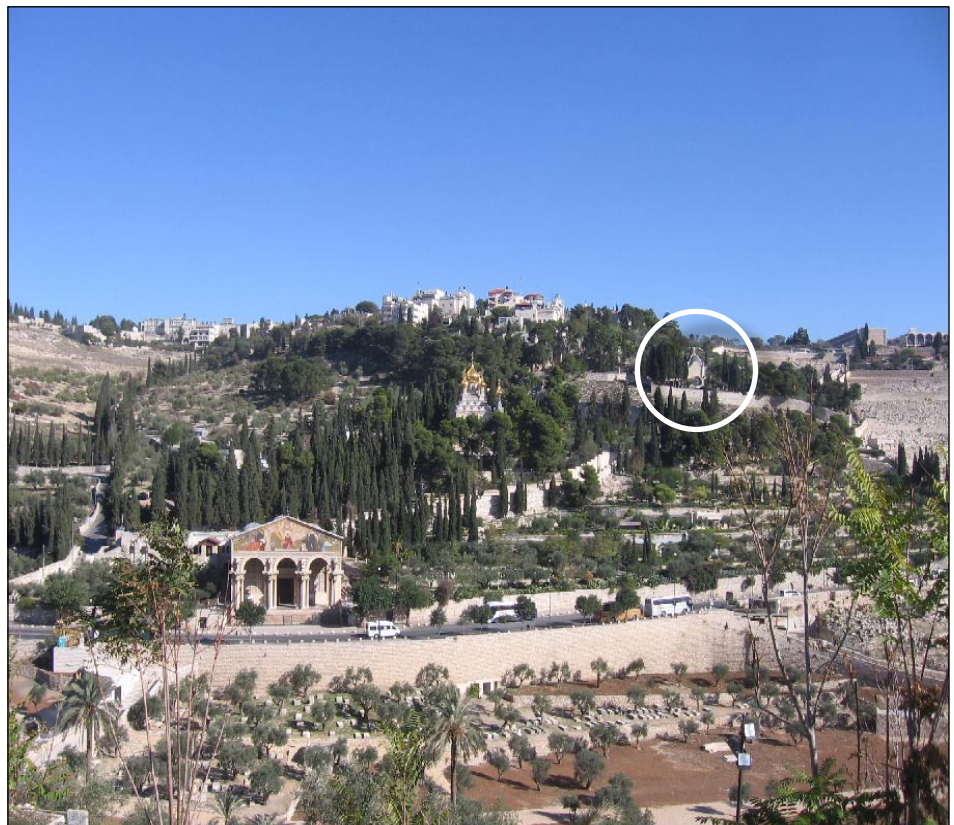
Chris Schuster

Guest writer
Fr. Robert Jauch OFM

Jerusalem: Jesus is still weeping

About
the Chapel of »DOMINUS
FLEVIT« (= Jesus Wept)
situated on the Mount of
Olives, one of the most
impressive holy places in
Jerusalem

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Jerusalem: The view looking out towards the Mount of Olives seen from the Golden Gate. This shows the setting of the Chapel DOMINUS FLEVIT. The wall below is adjacent to an old Jewish cemetery. However the bigger and more recent burial fields can be partly seen at the right side of the picture.

Jerusalem: Jesus is still weeping

The Chapel of »DOMINUS FLEVIT« (= Jesus Wept) is situated on the Mount of Olives, one of the most impressive holy places in Jerusalem.



DOMINUS FLEVIT: *The roof of the chapel is shaped like a drop as a reminder of the tears Jesus wept here at the Mount of Olives.*

Franciscan frater Robert Jauch OFM tells why this unique place urgently needs help

The window of the chapel DOMINUS FLEVIT on the Mount of Olives is hardly ever left out in any illustrated books of the Holy City. It seems that many tourists and pilgrims regard the view taken from the window as an indispensable keepsake. This is most apparent when one watches visitors' jockeying for best vantage point to photograph the iconic image: how disappointed they are if the chapel is closed for Holy Mass.

The simple view of the Old City of Jerusalem and the Golden Dome doesn't seem to satisfy the flood of visitors. They

want the view through the very window with its ornaments of thorns and the chalice which was designed by Antonio Barluzzi. It seems that those who fail to take a picture from this unique spot, don't feel that they been to the Holy City at all!

However the window itself and the small chapel of which it forms a part, erected in 1955/1956 on the remains of a late Byzantine church, are in urgent need of renovation. What the pilgrim to the

site can't see is that the stone vases on the unique tear shaped roof are brittle and tend to fall off.

The roof of the sacristy leaks. The power supply needs to be modernized. Fifty years after its erection the stones need cleaning and restoring. Finally, the famous window of the chapel requires major renovation. It would be unthinkable to replace it with modern double glazing units without replicating the original shape.

Sun, rain and storm have left their marks on the glass and its frame. Furthermore vandals have played their part in the destruction, too.

Later additions to the chapel in as part of the building of an annex for the sacristy were not well done. Power lines and telephone wires criss cross the venue. At the end of the restoration all pipes and cables will be underground and the cobble stones will be realigned. At the end of the project DOMINUS FLEVIT will be preserved for decades to come.

Ugly concrete canopies cover the ancient burial sites and the Byzantine mosaic besides the chapel; they will be replaced with more suitable protection.

The little Cloister

A small church was erected at the upper part of the area bought by the Franciscan Order on the Mount of Olives in 1891. The church was located in the garden, north of a mosque commemorated by a memorial stone now. The church DOMINUS FLEVIT was mentioned as early as in the late C13th or in the beginning of the C14th. In the C16th a mosque stood. It was called EL MANSURIYYEH and has been recently rebuilt. The famous architect Antonio Barluzzi 1884 1960 designed a new Chapel of Grace in 1955. This



The famous window at the chapel DOMINUS FLEVIT is highly popular with tourists as frame for their shot of Jerusalem and the golden dome.

undertaking led to a major change. The church was converted into a cloister. A domestic chapel, a common living room and a kitchen were installed as well as a toilet and a tool shop. An adjacent room was called *Maison du Gardien* according to a plan from 1911. Obviously a custodian or a brother lodged here in former times and took care of the chapel. The upper floor of the cloister contained three cells and a bathroom.

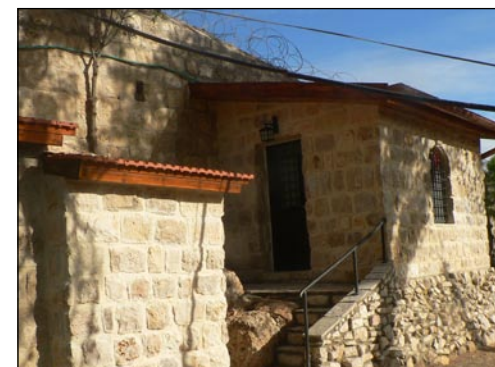
For 50 years this was near perfect for the monks – a maximum of three brothers could live there. However they had no heating. It doesn't rain a lot in Jerusalem but strong winds, even storms, batter DOMINUS FLEVIT. Now, a common living room will get an open fire and each of the three cells will be fitted with a shower and WC. The tool shop has been remodeled as a laundry. The former *Maison du Gardien* has become an apartment for volunteers. Barred windows and fences are essential because burglary and van

dalism is a risk factor on the Mount of Olives. Since 2008 there have been kennels at the Hermitage. Two German shepherd dogs, the cross breeds *Al Jazeera* and *Yadira*, were a gift from Bet Jala. The watchdogs have deterred thieves successfully so far.

The cost of the entire renovation is estimated at 300,000 Euro. On completion the site will be very pleasant.

The Garden

Apart from the main entrance to DOMINUS FLEVIT there is a small gatehouse next to the large Jewish cemetery. The custodian looks after the visitors and takes care of the garden, the chapel and toilets for the pilgrims. Plans for improvements to the canopies and roofs of the sarcophagi, ossuaries and other antiques were postponed. A former chicken hut is now a tool shop, another shed adjacent to the wall of the Benedic



The Hermitage was recently set up adjacent to the neighbor's wall: The barbed wire might hamper intrusion over the roof.



An efficient alarm system:
watchdogs Al Jazeera and Yadira
take care of DOMINUS FLEVIT



tine nunnery serves as an Hermitage: it is hardly recognisable after the conversion. A room with shower and toilet was added for the use of the various residents. In addition to the construction works on buildings, several fences were put up along footpaths to stop trespassing at the property. This has become important because many visitors tend to stroll around the garden, step on the lawns and flower beds. They even take olives, acacias and rosemary. The walkways have been reshaped and unpleasant bottlenecks removed.

Donations in our offering box do not cover the cost of renovation. Therefore, we are seeking a contribution from visitors to this website, too.

The Significance

Visitors to DOMINUS FLEVIT are fascinated by the ambience of the location with its breathtaking view on the temple rock and the Old City of Jerusalem. Looking back from the City to the Mount of Olives, the view has been admired for centuries. Patriarch Sophronius 634-638 was overawed by the scenery:

»City of God, how joyful is the view of the Mount of Olives.«

In the old church we believe that Jesus' words on the destruction of Jerusalem and the world Mt 24, Mk 13, Lk 21 was a revelation of the secrets of redemption, for the apostles and His closest friends. In the early days the liturgical celebration of these mysteries was held in a grotto close to the hilltop of Mount of Olives. Later the celebration was held at the ELEONA BASILICA built at Emperor Constantine's request. Unfortunately the basilica was never completed. Afterwards the ELEONA BASILICA became known as the PATER NOSTER CHURCH, mentioned by Eusebius of Caesarea in the early 4th.

The liturgical celebration of the mysteries was held each Passion Tuesday. According to the pilgrim Egeria, »Everybody went to the church on the Mount of Olives on this night. Upon arrival the bishop stepped into the grotto where our Lord used to teach his followers, took the gospels and read aloud the words of our Lord.«

During the time of the Crusades 12th this same church served as a reminder of the words of the Lord's Prayer, the Pater Noster. Ruined parts of the church were found not far from the CHURCH OF THE ASCENSION in 1911. It is obvious that DOMINUS FLEVIT lies on historically important land.

During the building of the new Chapel in 1953 the archaeologists P. Bellarmino Bagatti OFM and T. J. Milik excavated gravesites from Canaanite times 14th-16th BC. They found Jewish graves from Jesus' time as well as later ones 2nd-3rd and a Byzantine Arabian cloister from the 7th-8th. Experts have praised the huge discovery of sarcophagi and ossuaries.

ies in the excavated burial fields. Some of the items bear inscriptions and symbols from the Jewish/Christian period. When Antonio Barluzzi built the chapel DOMINUS FLEVIT in 1955 he used some of the remains of the Byzantine church, but he changed its orientation. The altar now

every side. They will crush you to the ground, you and your children within you, and they will not leave within you one stone upon another; because you did not recognize the time of your visitation from God. (Luke 19, 41-44)



First-century

CE Jewish ossuaries at the DOMINUS FLEVIT with floral and geometric decoration engraved .

An ossuary is a stone box that would hold the bones of a deceased person after they had been in a tomb long enough that the flesh had decayed. In earlier Israelite and Judean burials i.e. prior to the Hasmonean period these bones would be collected in a common repository pit, usually under one of the burial benches in the tomb.

During the Hellenistic and Roman periods this practice was replaced by secondary burial in individual ossuaries that would be placed in any available corners around the tomb.

Photo and Text courtesy to Prof. Ian W Scott, Toronto.

faces the city of Jerusalem instead of the classical East /West alignment.

Even if we cannot show Jesus' genuine footprints, we provide a wonderful representation of the report in the Bible that Jesus wept over Jerusalem.

Jesus wept over Jerusalem

As he drew near, he saw the city and wept over it saying: **If you, even you, had only recognized on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. Indeed, the days will come upon you, when your enemies will set up ramparts around you and surround you, and hem you in on**

Jesus only wept once more, in Bethany, when as the Bible tells us, his friend Lazarus had died John 11, 1-45 . The tears of our Lord Jesus represent his closeness to us. Which other religion can give such an overwhelming demonstration of human love by its God?

DOMINUS FLEVIT could serve as a focus for the great solidarity and unity of the Church. The Papal charity *Aid to the Church in Need*, founded by »Speck pater« Werenfried van Straaten after WW II at Königstein/Ts, a place near Frankfurt/Main, features its own website www.wherethegodweeps.org. This is concerned with the crises and turmoils on earth and within the Church. God still weeps because people are persecuted, tortured and killed for their faith. Jesus' tears

are more than an episode in his time. Jesus' tears also serve as a reminder of the circumstances of Christians in the Holy Land. With only two percent of the population they are a tiny minority. Christians have hardly any influence in society and they feel squeezed between fundamentalist groups of Jews and Muslims.

Jesus wept over Jerusalem but what happens today is for many people still a reason for screaming. The tears of our Lord Jesus can provide a source of spiritual power. In DOMINUS FLEVIT we want to transmit the spiritual power to the pilgrims. This is our mission. But we must be aware of arrogance! Hieronymus 347 420 warned us to be aware of temptation he surely knew what temptation was like. He wrote in a letter: »Having been to Jerusalem is no reason for self felicitation, but having lived honestly in the city is a grace ... «

The holy places of the Cross and the Resurrection help only those who bear their cross, rise again with Christ daily and behave respectfully toward these places.

Hieronymus' conclusion is like a mirror for the Franciscans in the Holy Land when dealing with pilgrims. He wrote. »Don't think your faith is any less if you haven't seen Jerusalem, and don't think I am better because I live there. Here and somewhere else you will be equally rewarded according to your deeds for God.«

Fr. Robert Jauch OFM

Please donate

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Frater Robert in Jerusalem

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