**Connor Pilgrimage 2013 – Day 2 by the Very Rev John Mann**

Just imagine - 25 degrees, bright sunshine, blue sky and a still day, a view over the old city of Jerusalem and excellent company of fellow pilgrims, and you have the picture of the Connor group on top of the Mount of Olives at 8.30 a.m. this morning [Wednesday November 12].

We walked down the path that Jesus took on Palm Sunday towards the Kidron Valley and onward up to Jerusalem itself.  On the way we remembered our Lord crying over the City.  A beautiful church has been build there with a roof that looks like teardrops.  Inside the ceiling seems to stream in tears.

As we reached the Garden of Gethsemane Bill and Eleanor Boyce read the story of Jesus and the disciples; the one praying, the others sleeping. Now the tears of agony of Jesus are like blood falling to the ground.

But we were not even through the morning when we went to the site of the High Priest's house and climbed down into the pit of a prison cell beneath it.  Just imagine the darkness in which Jesus spent the night of that Thursday before his trials and crucifixion the next day. Here we read Psalm 88.

A morning of hosannas and tears!

Lunch was at a beautiful convent a few miles from Jerusalem; we rested and ate and wiled away the time, until we returned to the coach for a final visit of the day: to Yad Vashem, the holocaust museum and memorial.

Once again the wordless challenge of image and imagination brought us to our knees in silent contemplation of the enormity of humanity's ability to inflict suffering.  The memorial to the children is most moving of all, as gradually the one and a half million names are read out, one by one. The memorial hall is in darkness and with candles and mirrors whatever way you look the lights float on for ever.

Tomorrow [Thursday] we are going to sing.  We haven't yet, but I have a feeling that there is a great pilgrim choir in the making here.  If you hear echoes of ‘How great thou art’ in Larne or Belfast, Lisburn or Portstewart it is just us warming to the theme of praising God for all that we are experiencing here in the Holy Land!