

Palestinian/Israeli program at The Canticle

Written by Sallyann McCarthy
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“How could one not be shocked ...?” asked Jan Cebula OSF, former president of the Clinton Franciscans and convener of the Clinton Franciscan Center for Active Nonviolence and Peacemaking, in describing her experience on an Interfaith Peace-Builders (IFPB) delegation study tour of Palestine/Israel.

Just returned from the two-week journey through the conflict zone during the olive harvest, Sister Cebula will report on her experiences at a free, public presentation beginning at 6:30 pm, Thursday, November 29, 2012, at The Canticle, home of the Clinton Franciscans, 841-13th Avenue North Clinton, Iowa

Sister Cebula and the 21 other participants on this delegation had the unique opportunity to hear directly from Palestinians and Israelis regarding the role of the US government in promoting a resolution to the conflict in their homeland. The delegation also focused on the Palestinian olive harvest which takes place each autumn and is an occasion of particular cultural and economic importance for Palestinian communities and a time when tensions between Israeli settlers and Palestinian residents of the West Bank run high.

Describing her reaction to the delegation, Sister Cebula wrote, “I was shocked by the pervasive, systematic discrimination and oppression of the Palestinian people and the impact on their daily lives. Travel restrictions, checkpoints, the wall separating Palestinians from one another and their olive groves, demolition and eviction orders, mushrooming illegal Jewish settlements strategically planned to prohibit expansion of Palestinian villages, highways upon which only Israelis can drive, harassment by settlers and soldiers, endless court battles, denial of permits to build, limited or no access to electricity and water. All these horrors are obviously designed to send messages about inferior status and keeping people separated and fearful, and are used to try to force people from their land,” said Sister Cebula.

Sister Cebula also cited many positive elements of the situation in her online report to IFPB such as, “witnessing the resilience, courage and strength of the Palestinians and Israelis who are resisting the occupation, working for change, assisting with court challenges, engaging in nonviolent resistance, forming cooperatives, empowering youth and refusing to act as enemies by building bridges and relationships. They were truly inspiring. In them lies the hope despite the overwhelming reality of occupation and inequality,” she said.

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In her presentation, Sister Cebula will explore various avenues that US citizens can take to forward the peace process in the region. “We who were privileged to make this delegation are determined to tell the stories of our Palestinian brothers and sisters who feel abandoned by the international community,” she explained.

This Interfaith Peace-Builders (IFPB) delegation was the 42nd such experience organized by IFPB since 2001 which have educated approximately 800 North American citizens about the Middle East and deepened their understanding of its conflicts through eye-witness experiences.

For more information on the November 29th presentation, contact sisters of St. Francis, [563-242-7611](tel:563-242-7611), or visit www.clintonfranciscans.com

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