



### **Montfortian Pilgrimage to Holy Land** *"The Word was made flesh and lived among us"*

**BETHLEHEM, Israel** - For almost three years now, it has been the desire of the Montfort Missionaries through the Association of Mary Queen of All Hearts (AMQAH) to have an International Pilgrimage. This desire is rooted in the very life of St. Louis-Marie de Montfort with a very special intention for vocation. The Annual National and Local Pilgrimages are regular activities of the Montfort Center of Spirituality in Manila and the Mission Team in Cebu for more than 25 years now. As always, we submit to the will of God with the belief that in any desire, if it is in accordance with God's will, He will shower His blessing in His own way and in His own time.

And indeed, last year, the appointed time came to take a risk to have the First International Montfortian Pilgrimage and God blessed it abundantly. It was Marivic Sayco, an AMQAH member, whom God use as an instrument to prepare the realization of such desire. With her acquaintance, Ms. Merly Ducenas Cabrera, owner of JTY DREAM TRAVEL & TOURS, the idea to pursue this desire began its realization. Then Rev. Fr. Federick Yumang, SMM was introduced and started the long preparation and the rest is history.

The invitation to this First International Montfortian Pilgrimage was sent not only in Manila but also in Cebu. By August of this year, thirty-four pilgrims from Manila and Cebu confirmed their commitment to be part of this pilgrimage. So last September 14, 2019, the Feast of the Exultation of the Cross, the

pilgrims gathered at the chapel of Mary Queen of All Hearts for the celebration of the Holy Eucharist to entrust this activity to God through the loving hands of Mary. After the Mass, the group had an orientation about this pilgrimage with Ms. Ye and the two Montfortian chaplains, Fr. Fed and Fr. Rene Bustillo, SMM, head of the Cebu Mission Team. The preparations continued and the joyful anticipation of the day of the pilgrimage filled the hearts of the pilgrims.

On November 7, 2019, the 34 pilgrims and the 2 Montfortian chaplains met at 3:00 am at Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA) Terminal I, for their flight to Muscat, Oman, then from Oman to Cairo, Egypt. After almost 12 hours of travel, the group arrived safely in Cairo, Egypt. From November 8 to 10, the group stayed in Egypt and visited different places such as Church of Abu Serga, Hanging Church dedicated to Mary, Underground Crypt where Mary, Joseph and Jesus rested when they flee to Egypt, St. Serguis Church, Pyramids of Giza and Sphinx, Egyptian Museum, cruise at the Nile River, Mt. Sinai, Spring of Moses, St. Catherine Monastery, Place of the burning bush and Arava desert. In the afternoon of November 10, the group transferred to Taba border to cross Israel and around dinner time, the group arrived in Bethlehem, Israel.

From November 11 to 15, the group stayed in Israel and visited different places such as Mount of Olives, Church of Dominus Flevit, Church of Gethsemane, Mt. Zion, Dormition Abbey, King David's Tomb, Upper Room of the last supper, Church of St. Peter in Gallicantu, Church of the Nativity, Shepherds Field, Milk Grotto, Sycamore Tree in Jericho, Dead Sea, Qumran, Dome of the Rock, Holy Sepulcher, the Wailing Wall, Annunciation Church, Cana Church, Jordan River, Mount of Beatitudes, Taghba, Capernaum, and Sea of Galilee. Then after breakfast on November 15, the group transferred to Sheikh Hussein border for Amman Jordan and arrived in the evening. The group stayed in Jordan from November 15 to 17 and visited places such as City of Petra, Madaba, Monastery of St. George, Mt. Nebo where Moses viewed the Promise Land and by 9:00 pm, the group left Amman for Muscat then, from Muscat to Manila. The group arrived in Manila on November 18, past 9:00 am.

It was a grace-filled experience. These twelve days were spent in a deeper encounter with God of history through the visit to these holy places, daily celebration of the Holy Eucharist, daily meditation of the mysteries of the Holy Rosary, praying of the Little Crown of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Way of the Cross, sharing of life experiences among the pilgrims, renewal of the baptismal promises in the Jordan River, the renewal of the marriage vows of 7 couples in Cana, a deeper encounter of husbands and wives, mothers and daughters, brothers, friends, and most especially with Jesus through Mary.

May this Holy Land Pilgrimage be a reminder always to all the pilgrims of the loving mercy of God throughout history and the love of Eternal Wisdom to humanity, manifested in His incarnation in the womb of Mary to be with us, to journey in the ordinariness of life, to proclaim the Kingdom in fidelity and to offer Himself on the Cross for our salvation. May we all be like Mary and always be ready to participate in the plan of God, not only in our personal lives but also in our families, in our communities and in the society. In this manner, our lives will always give Glory to GOD ALONE!

*Fr. Federick Yumang, SMM*