



THE CHURCHES OF ANTONIO BARLUZZI

**Compiled for The McCabe Educational Trust
By Canon Peter C Nicholson**

ANTONIO BARLUZZI
1884 – 1960

ANTONIO BARLUZZI – ARCHITECT IN THE HOLY LAND – 1884-1960

The McCabe Educational Trust's Resources Centre is constantly being asked for information about people and places in the Middle East. Sometimes this information is readily to hand in one of the many books in the Trust's Library. Sometimes a Factsheet on the subject can be despatched. On a few occasions, however, the centre has to start from scratch and probably spend many months tracking down snippets of information before finally being able to help the enquirer.

In 1994, The Revd Andrew Daunton-Fear, returned from a visit to the Holy Land full of admiration of the work of the architect Antonio Barluzzi. He had seen the churches brilliantly planned and executed by this extremely competent and versatile designer and builder and he wanted to know more about him. It has been said that in Israel there are three types of architecture: Graeco-Roman, Byzantine and Barluzzi! So Barluzzi obviously made his mark. So the request came: 'Couldn't the Trust provide a brochure or even write a book about this elusive builder of so many of Israel's beautiful churches: Mount Tabor, Dominus Flevit, the Flagellation Chapel, Shepherds' Fields, Bethany and others'?

Well, we set about the task with much enthusiasm but quickly discovered that very little is known about him. There was one book: 'Monuments to Glory' which had been published in the USA in the 1960's but no book searchers could turn up a copy. So we wrote to the Biblical Archaeology Society hoping that a back-number of this journal had published an article about Barluzzi. Molly Dewsnap, the associate editor, replied saying: 'if he had worked there 2,000 years ago I might have better luck but a quick check in our library has revealed absolutely nothing.' The Institute of British Architects had nothing in their files and the Association of Engineers and Architects in Israel did not reply to our enquiry.

We wrote then to the well-known former mayor of Jerusalem, Mr Teddy Kollek; we thought he might have known Barluzzi and worked with him. He sent us a most courteous reply and referred us to the Franciscans.

However, as we were about to give up all hope, a reply came from the Christian Information Centre in Jerusalem. It was in Italian! But never mind! The papers had a picture of the architect and seven pages of script which, when translated, would reveal much, we thought. A kind friend at Westminster Cathedral managed to get the papers translated into English. The writer in Israel, Father Claudio Baratto, has since become a very good friend of ours and we have visited him in his workplace just inside the Jaffa Gate in Jerusalem. We print his papers in full as they make very interesting reading.

No wonder we couldn't track down the book: 'Monuments of Glory' it was written for children and so it was listed under 'Children's Literature' and no one had thought of looking there. The book was written in 1964 by Daniel M Madden and it was published by Hawthorn Books. Should we ever trace a copy? Well, we eventually found one but that story must come later!

So why is Barluzzi's work so interesting and captivating. Ronald Brownrigg, in his guide to the Holy Land: 'Come, See the Place' and Norman Wareham in his excellent pocket guide: 'Guide to the Holy Land Gospel Sites' tell us why. They both point out that Barluzzi always tried to make his churches expressive of the events they commemorated. For example, the roof of Dominus Flevit church on the Mount of Olives has four tear phials on the four corners of the dome to remind all visitors that this is where our Lord wept over Jerusalem. The Priest, standing at the alter to celebrate Mass, does not face east but Angels in the Shepherds' Fields at Bethlehem reminds us of a Bedouin tent such as the Shepherds who 'watched their flocks by night' would have used. The Chapel of the Flagellation in the Via Dolorosa, with its huge crown of thorns up in the dome, causes us to think deeply upon the passion of the Son of God. The purple glass in the Church of All Nations over the Rock of the Agony creates at once inside the church an atmosphere of sorrow and mourning; 'Will ye not watch with Me one brief hour?' On Mount Tabor the roof of the church was originally of alabaster which let the light through to remind all the visitors of the Transfiguration. Unhappily it also let in the rain and had to be roofed over. But look up next time you are there and you will see the first roof on the inside.

What did Antonio Barluzzi look like? We are fortunate enough to have his portrait and that helps us a lot. It is not a very clear one but it will suffice. But why is so little known about this man who, before putting a pen to paper, would meditate for hours on the mystery his next church was to commemorate.

We discover that Barluzzi lived the life of a Franciscan monk, a simple, holy life. He lived with the monks out of the public gaze. He did all to the glory of God and has never concerned about personal acclaim or recognition. He had been showered with high honours but he never talked about them. He was a faithful servant of his Master and all he did was done with the one intention of honouring him – surely a lesson for all of us to learn and put into practice as we look again and again at the wonders Barluzzi created through his devotion to Christ. This is probably the best reason that we have for studying the life of this saintly man. As Father Pacifico Gori has written: 'he renounced the advantages which his profession could have bought him, and wanted only to live and die poor in the company of the Franciscans of the Holy Land. To the many who knew, esteemed and loved him, it is comfort to think that the man who dedicated his life so nobly in honouring and glorifying the earthly Jerusalem cannot but have been called by the Father to become a living stone in the heavenly Jerusalem.'

A LIST OF BUILDERS DESIGNED, BUILT OR RESTORED BY ANTONIA BARLUZZI

1. The Church of All Nations in the Garden of Gethsemane.
2. The Church of the Transfiguration, Mount Tabor.
3. The Church of the Hospice of the Good Shepherd, Jericho.
4. The Church of the Flagellation, Jerusalem (restoration).
5. The Church of Visitation, En Karem.
6. The Cloister of Bethlehem (restoration)
7. The Church of St Lazarus, Bethany.
8. The Church of the Angels, Shepherds Fields, Bethlehem.
9. Dominus Flevit, Mount of Olives.
10. The Church at Bethphage (restoration)
11. A School for girls in Jericho.
12. A hospital in Amman, Jordan.
13. The Kerak Hospital, Jordan.
14. The Church of the Beatitudes, Galilee.
15. The Armenian Catholic Patriarchate, Beirut.
16. Churches and other related buildings in Amman and Madaba, Jordan.
17. The Parish Churches in Beth-Saur, Irbid and Zerka.
18. A new house for the Carmelite Fathers of Haifa.
19. The Church at Mount Carmel.
20. The Convent of St Antony, Jerusalem.
21. The Ethiopian Monastery (restoration).
22. The Italian Legation premises at Teheran (restoration).

23. Terra Santa School, Jerusalem.

24. The Greek Church of the Holy Face and St Veronica, Jerusalem (restoration).

THESE NOTES WERE KINDLY SUPPLIED BY THE CHRISTIAN INFORMATION CENTRE, JAFFA GATE, JERUSALEM.

'The *Custodia di Terra Santa* had the wisdom and good fortune to enlist as director of its arts endeavours in Palestine the fine Roman architect Antonio Barluzzi. The architect, endowed with profound religio-artistic sensibility, understood the need to relive the Christian drama *in situ*, and to draw inspiration for his artistic designs from the echoes of the voice of Christ resounding in those mountains, in those valleys, and in the Lake of Genezaret.' (Cardinal Celso Costantini)

The last photograph of the distinguished benefactor of the Holy Places, executed by the artist Professor Noni.

Antonio Barluzzi 1884-1960

On 14 December last, at the age of 76, the architect Antonio Barluzzi passed away serenely in a small room of the Delegation of the Holy Land Rome. Present at the funeral, celebrated in the Basilica of Sant'Antonio, were H.E. Cardinal Gustavo Testa, the procurator General of the Franciscan Order, two general *definitori* (?), and a numerous crowd of relations, friends, and religious.

Antonio Barluzzi, born in Rome in 1884, began his studies at the College of S. Maria and received his secondary education at the Liceo Umberto where he was a pupil of Giulio Salvadori. He then entered the Apollinare, without, however, attending lectures there. From 1902 until 1907 he attended the University of Rome, obtaining a degree in engineering. During his military service he was at Castel S. Angelo, overseeing the archaeological excavations.

From 1909 to 1912 he worked with brother Giulio on various construction works at the Zoological Garden and at the Verano. Unsure of the way forward, he considered the most varied options: 'Foreign missions, in the most deprived parts of Italy: religious, secular, priestly, lay.'

In order to find a way out of his uncertainty, even temporarily he willingly accepted an offer from professor Schiapparelli to go to Jerusalem to help his brother, who at the time was directing the construction of the Italian hospital on behalf of *Italica Gens*. He stayed in Jerusalem from 1913 to 1914. The outbreak of World War I obliged him to return home.

Having decided to follow the advice of his confessor he entered the Seminario Romano di S. Giovanni on Low Sunday, 1915 'without enthusiasm', but, as he relates in his diary, 'The cassock gets in his way', his will was firm, but he suffered. He adapted himself to everything, but it took effort. He alternated between certain bouts of fervour and the usual painful uncertainty. The call to arms put an end, for the time being, to his anxiety. As sergeant he served at Taranto, then at Belluno as sub-lieutenant at the Fortifications

Office. The ups and downs of military life did not cause him to neglect daily Mass and Communion. In May 1918 he was called to the Ministry, and sent to join the Palestine Detachment. His ship was torpedoed below Malta, and the shipwrecked crew were picked up by an English trawler. He joined the Detachment at Rafah near Gaza, from which he set off to join the Italian Mission, together with Professor Paribene, in order to take part in the official allied entry into the Holy City.

Providence had brought him back once more to Jerusalem. There he decided to remain.

In 1919 Fr. Diotallevi was the guardian of the Holy Land. Among the first decisions of his new term of office was to build the basilicas of Gethsemane and Mount Tabor. In order to bring this about he turned to Barluzzi, who, somewhat taken aback, asked for time to think. He often returned to Italy to clarify his future once and for all. We follow the account in his diary: 'I go to Fr. Corrado, the confessor of my youth, I explain my circumstances and ask what I must do. 'Go and build the Sanctuaries, and then we'll talk again.' My heart leaps for joy, and I say: 'it is Gods will'. It is like liberation. I return to Jerusalem with my plans, in order to demobilize. The great honour of the task entrusted to me is matched by adversities, difficulties, misunderstandings, bitterness and sorrows.'

In this way he began a life dedicated to the building of shrines in the Holy Land.

The plans for Gethsemane and Mount Tabor, already approved by Frs. Vincent and Lagrange, were also accepted by the Father Guardian of the Holy Land, who without further ado gave the order to commence work. Difficulties of all kinds having been surmounted, the two basilicas were consecrated by H. E. Cardinal Giorgi, in May and in June 1924. From this moment a whole succession of works followed. For the *Custodia di Terra Santa* in 1924-5 he built the little church and the hospice of the Good Shepherd at Jericho. In 1928-9 he carries out restoration works at the Flagellation in Jerusalem; in 1933-7 in two sessions he carried out building work on Mount Calvary; in 1952-3 he built the Shrine of St. Lazarus at Bethany; in 1954 the Shrine of the Shepherds near Bethlehem; still in 1954-5 the *Dominus Flevit* on Mount Olivet, and he restored Bethphage.

World War II found him in Italy, where he was obliged to remain until 1947. During this time he was not active; he carried out work in Sardinia for the Franciscan and Capuchin Fathers. And at this time he worked out a grandiose plan for the Shrine of the Incarnation at Nazareth. That project, conceived as a monument to the humanity of the incarnation of the Divine Word, he thought of as a kind of swan song. But Providence had other plans.

Still during the War, in collaboration with Archbishop (or architect?) Marangoni, at the suggestion of the Apostolic Delegate, Mgr Testa, he drew up a plan for a great Temple at the Holy Sepulchre (*Il Santo Sepolcro di Gerusalemme – Splendori – Miserie – Speranze*, Bergamo 1949)

Besides his work for the *Custodia di Terra Santa* our architect also worked for the *Italica Gens* at whose request in 1924 he built the girls' school in Jericho: in 1926-8 the

Hospital in Amman, in 1931-33 the Kerak Hospital, and in 1937-8 the Shrine of the Beatitudes.

On behalf of the Holy See he built the Armenian Catholic Patriarchate at Beirut as well as churches and related buildings in Amman and Madaba. For the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem he prepared the designs of the parish churches of Beth-Saur, Irbid, Zerka. The Carmelite Fathers of Haifa entrusted him with the building of their new house and the restoration of the Shrine of Mount Carmel in 1930. The Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary asked him to build their convent of St. Antony in Jerusalem. The Abyssinian monks turned to him for the restoration work needed on their house. From 5 October 1925 until 10 February 1926 he went to Tehran, where he restored the seat of the Italian Legation.

It was a vast amount of work which could have occupied not one but several architects. It was all the more remarkable when one considers the innumerable difficulties he encountered: lack of adequate materials, scarcity of water, of roads, of qualified and competent staff. How often he must have had to double up as Architect, assistant, guardian, labourer!

The initial enthusiasm which engulfed him like holy fire, when his confessor directed him to 'build the shrines' accompanied him throughout his long artistic career. This enthusiasm left its mark on his prolific correspondence and it sustained him during those difficult times of misunderstanding and opposition. 'The work is carried out with the enthusiasm of a mission' he wrote to a friend. And in another letter: 'To be able to dedicate all my life to the Shrines of the Holy Land, which had captured my mind, my heart and my entire soul...' And in another letter we read: 'I feel even today the invincible wish to give myself still to the Holy Places, if God wills...in the conviction that I was predestined, not to display my own abilities, but the marvels that the Lord can accomplish with the most humble of means.' His enthusiasm was founded on the conviction that in this way, and in this way alone, he was carrying out God's will. 'I am not looking for remuneration, and the facts speak for me: I am more interested in an eternal reward. Ultimately the works themselves declare that the Lord can use even such as myself to render him glory. Understand, Most Reverend Father, that for me it is not a question of bread (which is never lacking for someone who works seriously), but rather soul, which seeks to interpret the Will of God. (Letter to the Revd. P. Bello, minister General, O.F.M.)

Having reached this point, it is useful to call to mind the criteria which guided our architect in suggesting the inspiration for the various shrines and in conceiving their respective designs. Writing to Commendatore Giuseppe Barluzzi he says, among other things: 'The Shrines of the Holy Land have a value altogether superior to any other temple world. I am speaking of the principal ones, of course. They are the Catholic Temples par excellence. Everyone complains about the lamentable and sometimes disgraceful condition of these shrines. Whenever possible – as now – it is the duty of all Christians to save these relics and to give them the honour that is due. And in this I do

not believe that too much can be done, since no materials or work could be precious enough to be worthy custodians of such holy treasures.’

Another principle which inspired our architect is sobriety. In the same letter quoted above, he says the following: ‘In order to obtain the grandest, most solemn, and most moving artistic effects, care has been taken to achieve maximum simplicity of line; those profound and universal qualities have been sought that would produce maximum results with a minimum of fuss, almost an attempt to translate into architecture the majesty and simplicity of the Bible: these works have been carried out more with the heart than with science, seeking out the soul of things and cutting out the inessential.’

Did Barluzzi succeed in transforming into stones the sentiments of his heart? Let the critics reply. We know that the opinion of critics is never unanimous. But we know that Barluzzi was not seeking the consensus of the critics. He wanted to achieve harmony between the old and the new, between tradition and originality in such a way that each building would emerge with characteristics appropriate to the place and to the mystery recalled there. He wanted most of all that his architecture should be a factor in awakening that religious devotion that is a perennial reminder of a visit to the Holy Places. And there is no doubt that the consensus of the pilgrims has been almost unanimous. Until a few months ago one used to see groups of pilgrims and individuals, most recently the directors of the Turin UCID, on returning from the Holy Land, coming to shake hands with the venerable architect, both parties greatly moved, and congratulating him not so much for having been able to build such beautiful shrines, but above all telling him that in those shrines they had been able to pray with real devotion.

It was natural that the merits of the distinguished architect should attract the attention of Governments and institutions. He was honorary vice-consul of Italy in Palestine; in 1922 he was named a Knight of the Italian Crown; the following year he became a Commander of the order of the Holy Sepulchre; he was a knight commander of the Sovereign military Order of Malta; he was a member of the Archaeological Advisory Board of Jerusalem; he was a member of the Pontifical Academy of Virtuosi at the Pantheon, and finally, on 24 July, 1957, he was awarded the honour of Grand Officer of the Order of Merit of the Italian Republic.

This brief account would be incomplete without some reference to Barluzzi’s character. Barluzzi was above all a man of faith, of prayer, of profound interior life. He meditated at length on the Gospel, so as to discover its divine secrets and to draw from it inspiration for his artistic designs. On leaving Jerusalem at the outbreak of the first World War, in a state of uncertainty about the future, he wrote: ‘O God, your will be done. He sought comfort from his faith in that particular sad hour when he had to give up his most precious dream of building the Shrine of the Incarnation at Nazareth.

Another feature of Barluzzi’s personality was his extreme simplicity. As far as possible, he lived with religious communities as a religious himself; he took part gladly in the community life; he never drew attention to himself. He never spoke of his many

distinguished decorations, and he was never seen wearing them. And, still by virtue of this desire for simplicity, he renounced the advantages which his profession could have brought him, and wanted only to live and die poor in the company of the Franciscans of the Holy Land.

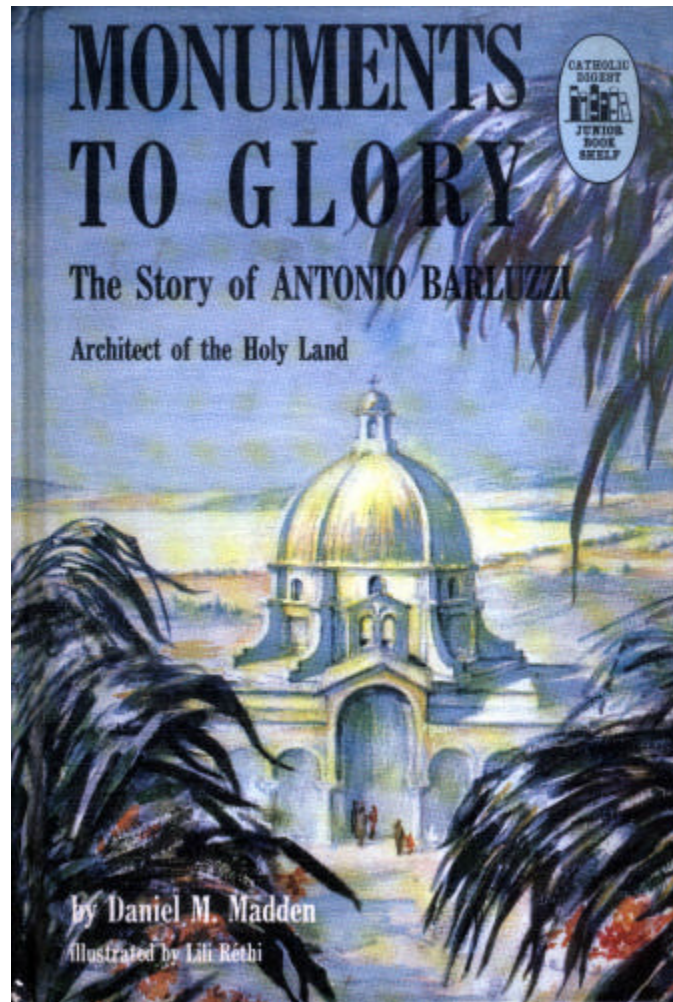
To the many who knew, esteemed, and loved him, it is comfort to think that the man who dedicated his life so nobly in honouring and glorifying the earthly Jerusalem cannot but have been called by the Father to become a living stone in the heavenly Jerusalem.

Fr. Pacifico Gori

A COPY OF 'MONUMENTS TO GLORY' IS DISCOVERED

Thanks to the Inter-Lending Department of the Public Libraries service, a copy of Daniel Madden's book, 'Monuments to Glory' was tracked down. It turned out that a copy was in the James White Library in Andrews University, Berrien Springs, USA. The British Library kindly obtained the copy and sent it down to Uxbridge Library. We were thrilled to get the phone call saying that it had arrived.

We were not allowed to take the book out of the library and we were allowed to photocopy only 5% of it. So, thanks to Margaret Thomas, who gave us a small room in which to work and plied us with excellent coffee, I dictated a précis of the 167 pages to my wife. We worked solidly until we had completed the task as the book had to be sent back almost immediately to the United States. Here is the condensation. I makes fascinating reading.



A LIFE OF ANTONIO BARLUZZI – architect in the Holy Land (1884-1960)

Antonio Barluzzi was born in Rome. He lived with his parents close to the Vatican.

Barluzzi's father and grandfather had been MINUTANTES who copied special documents and handled the filing of diplomatic correspondence between the Papal State and other governments. In 1868 Barluzzi's father, CAMILLO, married MARIA ANNA BUSIRI-VICI, the architect responsible for maintaining the Basilica of St. Peter's in Rome. (Here Camillo and Anna's first two children were born). The Barluzzi's had been married for 16 years when, in 1884, the last of their sons was born. They decided to call this 13th child ANTONIO.

From the age of 5, Antonio produced remarkable sketches of churches. He attended the Santa Maria School where every year he would win a medal for one subject or another. On Sunday afternoons Signora Barluzzi would take the younger children to a different part of the city to acquaint them with various buildings and sites.

In 1920 Barluzzi graduated from school at the age of 18 and told his mother he wanted to become a priest. He had read every book on religion he could get his hands on. However, his confessor felt that he should wait before making a final decision, especially as his father had died at the young age of 59 and half a dozen of the children were still living at home. His oldest brother, GIUSEPPE, had followed his forebears into the Vatican. Another brother, GIULIO, was already an architect so Antonio decided to enter the University of Rome's Engineering School and study to become an architect, like his brother. Giulio was offered a commission to design and build the first Catholic Church built for Italian people living in Peking. Antonio liked the copies of the drawings of the church and was proud of the designing skill of his older brother. When Antonio graduated from University with his Engineering Degree, he then had to do a year's military duty at the age of 24. He also worked with Giulio on various commissions which were by now pouring in. The most exciting prospect of all was the invitation to go to Palestine to build a 100-bed hospital in Jerusalem for the Italian Missionary Society. Giulio arranged for him to carry out this project under his supervision. They visited Cairo on the way and Antonio was fascinated by the bright whiteness of the buildings and the slender minarets. The site for the new Italian hospital was just outside the old city walls along the street of the Prophets which led down to the Damascus Gate. Giulio and Antonio Barluzzi reached Jerusalem in the first week of October 1912, and Antonio's career as an architect in Palestine had begun. He and his brother had been asked by Father RAZZOLI, the head of the Franciscans in the Holy Land, to submit plans for building a basilica on Mount Tabor.

World War I broke out in the summer of 1914 and Italian nuns were evacuated from Palestine. The Turks closed all schools operated by Europeans. The Italian Consul suggested that Antonio should leave for home while he could. When he returned to Rome, in the early part of January, 1915, he reported to Professor SCHIAPARELLI as to where matters stood on the hospital project. He is now 30 years old, and on the Sunday after Easter in 1915 he entered the Roman Seminary alongside the Basilica of St. John

Lateran, to study for the priesthood. He did not adapt easily to his training and bursts of fervour alternated with thoughts of terrible uncertainty. On 25 May he joined the Italian army.

News from the Palestine Expeditionary Force made him want to join the unit serving there. When the Italian Army Personnel Department realised that they had an engineering officer who had already spent two years in the Holy Land, they sent him to join the Allied Expeditionary Force there. On July 10 he set sail for the Bay of Naples and just beyond the island of Malta his ship was torpedoed by a German submarine and he lost all the 1,001 items which a busy architect liked to have at his finger-tips. An English coastal vessel picked up Antonio and the 18 other Palestine detachment members and took them to Malta. Another English ship brought the detachment to Tripoli. After a week or so in Tripoli, he boarded the Italian ship 'Minghetti' and sailed for Alexandria with stop-over's in several ports where he visited the properties of the Italian Missionary Society. In Alexandria, he and other officers of the Italian detachment, stayed at Hotel Roma for several days. Here he met Father NAZZARENO JACOPOZZI, a Franciscan friar from Florence. The detachment was sent by road to join the Expeditionary Force at the Palestine Boarder. Early in October, Antonio was sent on duty to Cairo for a few days. Here he met Count RANEIRI VENEROSI of Pisa, the Italian town with the famous leaning tower. By November the Allied Expeditionary Force was on the move to Jerusalem. They captured Gaza, Beer-Sheba, Hebron and Jaffa. Jerusalem was captured from the Turks and Antonio was able to make a careful inspection of the hospital which he had almost completed three years before. It had not been badly damaged. He made a report for the Missionary Society in Rome. Army HQ assigned a senior officer to supervise the job of getting the hospital back into service so Antonio made contact with him straightaway. The Allied High Commissioner specifically gave permission to help the Missionary Society at the Spanish Consulate and there he also found the building plans for the hospital. The Allied victory had paved the way for the biggest building programme in the Holy Land since the days of the crusaders and there he was in the thick of it. An immense church had been planned for the summit of Mount Tabor and another in the Garden of Gethsemane. Father FERDINANDO DIO TALLEVI, the new Father Custos, told Antonio about the building plans. The Franciscans guarded 75 holy places, often with their blood. When Antonio visited Father Dio Tallevi he saw to his astonishment his plans for Mount Tabor church which he had presented in August 1914 to Father Razzoli. The Father Custos sought his views and Antonio laid them before him. 'In Palestine,' Antonio said, 'every holy place has a direct reference to a definite Mystery of the life of Jesus Christ. It is only natural, then, to avoid the general type of architecture which constantly repeats the same word and, instead, shape the art so that it expresses the feeling called forth by that Mystery. In this way, the faithful entering a Sanctuary will easily be able to reconstruct in their own minds the Gospel story and to concentrate their meditation on thoughts appropriate to the Mystery created there. Rather than choosing the art from first, and bend everything else to suit it, I think it is more fitting to establish the basic religious concept of the Holy Palces for which the Sanctuary is being built, and tailor the architecture to it.' The Father Custos agreed entirely and appointed Antonio architect for the two projects.

In May 1919, Antonio returned to Rome to ask Father Corrado's advice as to whether he should proceed or return to the Seminary. The old priest, who had been his confessor since boyhood, said 'Go and build the Sanctuaries and then we will talk some more about it'. Antonio was overcome with relief and joy.

Antonio recruited CESARE FILIPPI, a 21-year old Venetian. Antonio's colleague, PIERRE RICCI, meanwhile had been working for about a year on the Gethsemane project. Antonio and Fililli visited Mount Tabor together, a hard journey in those days, and Antonio realised that marble, granite, and other building materials would have to be hauled to the construction site on the summit on the long carts drawn by mules. He bought a horse for Filippi. In no time, the workforce began shaping up. Filippi was the general superintendent of the project and the building foreman was a husky man called DE REGIBUS, who came from Piedmont in North Italy, and two of his cousins were in charge of the stonemasons. All the sculpture work was put under the direction of a man from Romagna. A good natured Calabrian from Southern Italy headed up the pick-and-shovel workers. 350 Palestinian Arabs, all recruited locally, made up the workforce for the construction of this immense church. Antonio himself worked hard and long. One day, looking at his cuts and blisters, he jokingly said to Filippi 'you can see why my handwriting is so bad'. While the church was being built, mosaic workers and other skilled artisans travelled between Tabor and Gethsemane as the church at the latter place was being erected at the same time. As the work progressed on Mount Tabor, 100 camel-driving Galilee farmers, known as 'felaheen', were taught the art of sculpturing stones taken from the mountainside for the apse of the basilica. At Gethsemane, a similar school was also set up to introduce the Palestinians to new working skills. Unlike other employers in the country, Antonio ensured that if any worker became sick he was taken to the hospital in Nazareth and his pay continued. He also built huts for his workmen to save the long trips up and down the mountain each day. The workers idolised him, calling him 'MALMI', meaning 'my master'. He was always at Mount Tabor for pay day and paid the workers himself in gold pieces bought from the bank in Jerusalem. At last the church on Mount Tabor was finished and Cardinal GIORGI, who had been sent from Rome to consecrate it, pinned the gold medal of Pope Pius XI on Antonio's white linen jacket. The church at Gethsemane was consecrated a month later, in June 1924. It had 12 cupolas, the number of the 12 apostles, and the windows were of purple glass to portray the darkness of Christ's agony as he knelt on the bare rock now below the altar of the church. Antonio's brother, Giulio, who had started Antonio on his architectural career, came from Rome for the occasion.

Meanwhile, Antonio had sent Ricci to Jericho to build a church and a pilgrims' hospice there, and to erect a girls' school. While on a day trip to Mount Nebo, on the other side of the Dead Sea, Ricci's horse bolted and Ricci suffered severe head injuries. Filippi took him to Madaba where a priest made him comfortable. Ricci was brought to Amman and then to the hospital in Jerusalem. He had to be moved very carefully because, in addition to broken ribs, he had suffered internal injuries. Antonio was heart-broken at the news of the accident to his friend and assistant.

Antonio revisited Rome early in 1925 and met up with his old friend and teacher, professor GIULIO SALVADORI, who told him that Mother CELESTINA, of the CALASANTIAN congregation, wanted to establish a House in Rome. Before returning to the Holy Land, Antonio gave the Calasantian Sisters 200,000 lire for their new Children's Centre.



Barluzzi's Chapel of the Flagellation

In December, 1925, Barluzzi set out for Teheran, to supervise the rebuilding of the Italian Legation's mansion which had been severely damaged by fire. This entailed a journey of almost 1,000 miles across the Syrian Desert. While in Teheran he worshipped daily in the parish church of the Vincentian Fathers. Ultimately he departed from Teheran, his mission accomplished, in a snowstorm that lasted two days. In Baghdad, earth and sand were churned into a sticky batter that clung to wheels of their car like glue. This car was their home for five days as they remained stuck in the rain-soaked sand.

Meanwhile, Ricci's health had never been the same after the riding accident. During his convalescence in Rome he had prepared the plans for the Children's Institute of the Calasantian Sisters. At the same time, Barluzzi was building the new hospital for the Missionary Society in Amman, in Trans-Jordan. (Amman was known to early-day Greeks as Philadelphia, that is, 'the city of brotherly love'). Only 15,000 people lived there. The dirt streets were thronged by Bedouins and there were Circassians, in their splendid black fur hats. The hospital built by Barluzzi was the first major Catholic institution in this new country 'across the Jordan' from where the people of Israel had entered the Promised Land.

An earthquake struck Jerusalem in the middle of the afternoon of July 14th, 1927, and there was damage to the house where Barluzzi and his nephew were living. His nephew, another Camillo, had just graduated from the Rome University as a Civil engineer, at the age of 23.

At Jericho they discovered more serious earthquake damage. With many dead and injured in Amman as a result, Barluzzi was relieved to see his new hospital intact, while the Government hospital had collapsed completely. Dr. TESIO, a young doctor from Salt, a main town in the Trans-Jordan area, arrived in Amman and opened the Missionary Society Hospital, ahead of time, to take care of the earthquake victims. The people of Amman warmly appreciated the Christian charity shown by the Missionary Society's hospital during the country's hour of tragedy and the hospital's reputation spread rapidly all over the country.

Barluzzi regularly attended the 6am morning mass at the hospital, worked all morning, and prayed for two hours every afternoon, only to return to his drawing-board to work until late in the evening. Often he would not draw a single line but would sit at the huge table and think. His friend, Ricci, returned from convalescence and obtained a position on the archaeological team excavating Jerash in North Trans-Jordan. As Ricci had won his place from over 40 other candidates, Barluzzi was very proud of him. Alas, Ricci died on November 22nd, 1928, at the age of 31. The summer, Barluzzi's oldest brother, Guiseppe, also died, as did Professor Salvadori, Antonio's friend and teacher. Ricci was buried in the new cemetery on the mount overlooking the city of Amman.

The hospital at Amman had to be expanded and other work was pouring in. In 1928 Barluzzi was designing schools for Carmelite missions in Syria and Lebanon. Constructions had been started in Jerusalem on the Franciscan monastery at the site of the Flagellation where Christ had been scourged. The shrine adjoining the monastery was to

mark the First Station of the Via Dolorosa. Engineer Filippi was Barluzzi's chief assistant at the Flagellation shrine. One of the most beautiful features which they planned to add to it was a tall square bell-tower. When the Flagellation project was under control, Barluzzi returned to Rome for the opening of his new Children's Centre. He was disappointed as the Centre would have places for only 25 little girls. He rushed to his drawing board and produced a new set of plans for enlarging the Centre to twice the size. He then arranged for his nephew, Giorgio Argenti, to take charge of the expansion programme.

Now, in 1935, Italy was back in North Africa, this time in colonial war in Ethiopia, and Barluzzi, at 50, thought he might return to the Army. But a visit by Father BELLO, the head of the Franciscan Order, ensured that Barluzzi would give all of himself to the Lord and he never set foot inside it again. He was asked to repair the crusader cloister alongside the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem. Refugees streamed into the Holy Land and the internal conflicts in Palestine over this immigration became increasingly bitter. In mid-May, 1948, the new state of Israel was proclaimed. After much fighting, the western half of Palestine was occupied by the new state of Israel and the eastern half became the new state of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. The old city of Jerusalem, and Bethlehem, was cut off from Nazareth and Galilee, and hundreds of thousands of Palestinians were uprooted from their homes and transformed into hopeless refugees.

Barluzzi had been working on his plans for the new Basilica at Nazareth for over 10 years when, in the autumn of 1949, his vision became blurred. At Christmas-time his health worried his friends. Monsignor TESTA, the Apostolic delegate, took him in his own car to the hospital in Amman. On Ash Wednesday, 1959, Barluzzi attended Mass in the chapel and a pilgrim Bishop who had celebrated the Mass told him that he had said a special prayer asking Our Lord to preserve Antonio's sight, so that he could do more work in the Sanctuaries of the Holy Land. His cataract operation was eventually performed at the Sisters of Wisdom's private hospital on the Corso d'Italia in Rome. The operation was a success.

By the end of 1959 Barluzzi was living with the Friars in Bethlehem and making designs for a church at Bethany. During the work, which was to start in the following summer, Barluzzi moved to Bethphage, lived in the monastery there, and designed the new altar for the nuns in the Convent of the Pater Noster. By now he was having problems with his heart but although close to 70 years old he had no thought of retiring. Father VIRGILIO looked upon Barluzzi like a father and drove him everywhere in a jeep. After completing the church at Bethany, Barluzzi was commissioned to build churches in the Shepherds' Fields and on the Mount of Olives, and, as always, he adapted the architectural style of each church to the Divine Mystery with which the holy place was associated. Bethany's new church, for example, recalling as it did the resurrection of Lazarus from the dead, had a severely sombre look on the inside that was lightened, successively, by bright bands of mosaics telling the biblical story. The Shrine on the Mount of Olives, meanwhile, was designed in such a way that a priest saying Mass there gazed out over the city of Jerusalem over which Jesus had once wept. In the field where the men watched the sheep and had shielded their eyes on seeing the shining light in the sky, Barluzzi

shaped the chapel like a shepherd's tent and had it decorated by UMBERTO NONI with vivid frescoes. Noni had been a student at the Academy of Beaux Arts in Rome, in 1923, when he was engaged to help prepare the mosaic designs for Barluzzi's basilica on Mount Tabor.

The first stone for the Shepherds' Fields church was blessed on Christmas Eve, 1953, and was inaugurated a year later. The sand for the frescoes had to be brought from the Sea of Galilee, a 100-mile trip. Because of the Armistice lines from the Civil War, only a handful of the highest-ranking people were allowed to go back and forth across the lines. But, not to be out-done, Barluzzi arranged for the sand to be delivered from Galilee in someone's chauffeur-driven limousine. Oil lamps had to be used and the artist had to be careful not to move the lamp too close to the freshly-prepared wall so that it would not dry too fast. But if he kept it too far away he could not see what he was doing.

Barluzzi moved from Bethphage, across the armistice lines in Nazareth, but objections were being voiced against his designs for the new church there. His first two designs were rejected and ultimately a new architect was appointed. In a letter to the 'Little Sparrows', he said that 'The Bullfinch has lost its feathers'. Friends in Rome knew how broken-hearted he was, and offered him a room in The Christ the King Rest Home, but Barluzzi stayed on in Nazareth as he thought about what he would do next. The Father Custos was one of the few people who could go back and forward across the armistice lines, as often as he wanted, He was Fether Alfredo Polidori. The Custos promised Barluzzi that if he intended to return to Italy he could choose whatever accommodation he wanted there, be it clinic, monastery, or private quarters with his family. Barluzzi packed his belongings into five wooden boxes and made a 2-page inventory of them. Box 1 contained plans, sketches and photographs of work done for the Franciscans at Mount Tabor, Gethsemane, Jericho, St. John's-in-the-Desert, Visitation, Bethlehem and Nazareth. The other items in the box were a suit, a cloth bag, and a stonemason's water-level. Another box contained books of artistic or architectural subjects, and also religious ones. In the same box were photographs of artistic and architectural subjects, correspondence with artists and private individuals, and guidebooks of the Sanctuary of Gethsemane, a clothes-brush, a shoe-brush, a pair of shoes and a pair of slippers. The three other boxes contained Barluzzi's working materials. His friend, Doctor MARIO ROSI, director of the Haifa hospital, gave him the good news that he could make the plane journey to Rome and the doctor himself drove Antonio all the way to the airport outside Tel Aviv.

For several months, during the summer of 1958, Barluzzi stayed in the 3-room apartment of his sister THERESA, on the Via Cavour, near Rome's Coliseum. Whatever the weather, he would get up for early Mass. Eventually, he moved into the Franciscan monastery which also served as an office in Rome for the Friars of the Holy Land. Barluzzi would work in his room, go to the chapel with the Friars, and join them at prayers. When he could not move from his bed, a Friar would open his room door each morning so that he could hear Mass by listening to the priest's voice being carried across the garden from the chapel.

Antonio Barluzzi died on the evening of December 14th, 1960. Among those at his funeral was the former Apostolic Delegate in Palestine – now His Eminence Cardinal Gustave Pesta – who had been kind to him always. In the Holy Land, the Father Custos decided that every friar was to celebrate a Mass in Barluzzi's memory, and that each brother was to remember him in his prayers. One month after Barluzzi's death, Father Polidori – the Father Custos – celebrated a Memorial Mass in the Basilica of Gethsemane where, 35 years before, Barluzzi had received a papal medal. Father Polidori headed a procession, of more than 100 friars, through the narrow streets of Jerusalem, across the Kidron valley and into the Basilica, while diplomats, government officials, priests, nuns, and members of every religious community, crowded into the church. Everyone, including little orphan boys and girls, listened solemnly as a friar delivered a eulogy, listing Antonio Barluzzi's half-century of artistic toil in the land of the saviour. Since the days of the Crusaders, no builder had left such a deep and loving mark on the face of Palestine.

BASILICA OF GETHESEMANE

Mr Paul Towers drew out attention to a paragraph in H.V.Morton's book, 'In the steps of the Master'. In April 1962, Morton wrote in the introduction to the book:

As I travelled about on both sides of the frontier, I was impressed by the striking new churches which now cover nearly all the shrines in the custody of the Franciscans. This imposing architectural scheme was just beginning when I wrote this book: now it is almost complete. The churches are the work of one dedicated man, Antonio Barluzzi, who died in 1960. They are remarkable for their originality and the variety of their design, which owe less to any architectural style or tradition than to the piety of their creator. All Barluzzi's shrines attempt to express an emotional response to the Gospel story. For example, one should compare the majestic gloom of his basilica in the Garden of Gethsemane with joyful little Christmas carol of a church in the Shepherds' Fields at Bethlehem. The same contrast may be seen in his Church of the Visitation at Ain Karem and his basilica on Mount Tabor.

Barluzzi will be recognized as a genius in years to come through, strangely enough, little has yet been written about his work or his life. In 1958 he learned that his design for a new basilica in Nazareth had been rejected. On the night when he heard this bad news he suffered a heart attack which brought on cerebral deafness and pulmonary emphysema. Desperately ill, poor and cold – he was given a cell in the Terra Sancta Delegation. There I saw him a few weeks before his death in 1960. I found it a painful ordeal. He was a magnificent old man, tall, gaunt and grey-haired, but suffering had transformed him into a dying saint by El Greco or Ribera. His memory had gone and he was blind. Conversation was not possible; and all I could do was to stand at the foot of his bed and, remembering the beauty he had brought to the Holy Land, to wonder why the life of this devout Christian should end in such martyrdom. Soon after my visit, the Franciscan who had taken me to see Barluzzi wrote to tell me of his death on December 14, 1960.'

BASILICA OF THE TRANSFIGURATION – MOUNT TABOR

In Galilee, at the eastern end of the green and gold valley of Esdraelon, the great peak of a mountain rises 1,929 feet above the surrounding plain. Its name is Mount Tabor. On its crown, visible for miles around in the area known as 'the breadbasket of Israel', is a cluster of buildings, having as their main glory the majestic Basilica of the Transfiguration. Within the building itself, we are immediately struck by the skill of an architect who could seize on the essentials of a site, a situation and a mystery, express its meaning in stone, mosaic and bronze, and illumine it all through alabaster with the light of the sun itself. It is small wonder that many people think the basilica to be finest in the Holy Land. It is so sad that the alabaster roof, letting in the light, had to be roofed over some years after building, because of problems encountered. But the idea was a brilliant one. When first built, the church must have glowed with radiant light, a constant reminder of the glory of the Lord on the Mount of Transfiguration.

Climbing the zig-zag road to the mountain top or coming up in one of the many taxis round nineteen hairpin bends (thank goodness the road was metalled and improved in 1996!) you enter the area through Bab el-Hawa: 'The Gate of the Wing'. Even in the summer, there are cool breezes here; but it is the enthralling view of a great area of Galilee and beyond that makes you realize that you are now truly close to the skies.

Tabor has impressed man's religious sense, far over and above its value as a citadel. In fact, warriors and fighters have seemed loath to contest its possession for very long. The great stone fortifications you see round the mountain top were hardly used by the Saracen builders at all (1212-1218). Here, on the other hand, religiously minded people have lived intermittently from the Stone Age to the present day, adoring the Lord of Creation, who seems so close, with sacrifice, prayer and singing.

Long before the Hebrew people came, Canaanites here poured out the blood of animals in sacrifice to their gods. Centuries later, the prophet Hosea had to chide his own people for performing similar pagan rites (Hosea 5: 1-7). From this mountain, Barak, under the inspiration of the prophetess Deborah, led down his troops in a most unstrategic move, but was granted the victory which gave the enchanting valley of Esdraelon to the Hebrews and united their northern and central clans.

In Hebrew poetry, three mountains are lined up in praise of God: snow-capped Hermon in the north; Tabor itself; and the 'little mountain' – Mount Zion – in Jerusalem (Psalm 41 (42):7). Tabor, with Hermon, is constantly regarded as a special manifestation of God's glory on earth, where his very voice seems to be audible. 'The north and the south, thou hast created them; Tabor and Hermon shall rejoice in Thy Name'.

In Christian tradition, an event of great splendour and joy also occurred on a mountain: the mysterious transfiguration and wonderful change in the personal appearance of Jesus, linking him directly with the Law and the Prophets, Moses and Elijah, and, as such, expressly approved by the countenance was changed, and his raiment became dazzling white. And behold, two men talked with him, Moses and Elijah, who appeared in glory and spoke of his departure, which he was to accomplish at Jerusalem' (Luke 9: 29-31)

Which was the mountain: one of the sacred three, Hermon, Tabor or Zion? Its name is nowhere written in the New Testament. Christian memory alone can decide, and it is certain, that, very early, the great event was linked with Tabor. Already in 150, the apocryphal Gospel according to the Hebrews had it so, and by the year 350 the association was taken for granted. The modern church houses ancient architectural monuments to this long tradition.

Coming down the cypress-lined drive from Bab el-Hawa, one's attention is soon fixed on the façade of the basilica, seen through the iron gates of the enclosure. A curiously-worded notice on the left gatepost discourages any visitor who may feel an urge to leave his or her name for posterity on the church walls. A visit to the northern outside wall will explain the reason for this terse text: 'if you believe in God, you are welcome to pray...If you are vain and callous about the rights and property and feelings of others, write your name on our walls.'

The basilica is Roman-Syrian in style, a type of architecture which flourished particularly in the fourth and fifth centuries. Built on 1921-1924, its cream stone is still fresh. The structure of the façade sets the main theme. It is triple, recalling the three great personages who appeared in the Transfiguration. Thus the two towers house age-old shrines dedicated to Moses and Elijah, and are made distinctive by the entrance which is separated from the main building, forming a narthex or porch open to the sky. Oriental motifs in decoration and two alabaster windows in the towers introduce us to other features which Antonio Barluzzi showed himself a master.

The bronze doors are huge, weighing one and a half tons each. Just inside the left door is a marble plaque reminding us of the purpose of the church and recalling the date of its consecration (June 1, 1924), and also recalling that it was built with money contributed especially from North America.

The interior of the church is a striking vision, a wonderful transfiguration of stone, marble and mosaic. The central nave gives us a full view of the eastern apse. It has two levels, the upper level commemorating the divine nature of Christ, and the lower recalling different manifestations of his humanity. The great mosaic above shows the three disciples awestruck at the sight of Jesus in glory, accompanied by Moses and Elijah. The face of Jesus in the design is lifted as if he is in conversation with God the Father and is full of gentleness and peace. The natural light of the sun illumines all. The man responsible for the creation of the mosaics is Antonio Villani and he too, like Barluzzi, will always be held in reverence here.

Twelve steps lead down to the lower altar. Above it in the apse, peacocks form the symbolism of the main window, recalling the immortality which Jesus guarantees. The peacock is a common emblem in Eastern Christian art. The lower sanctuary preserves centuries old Christian monuments to the mystery in the form of low walls surrounding the altar. Those further out are from the time of the Crusaders, while those immediately around the altar represent the apse of the fourth century church. So as we pray here, we are in communion with thousands of fellow worshippers of Christ through the ages, many of them, no doubt, now possessed of eternal blessedness themselves. The murals around the lower altar remind us of other 'epiphanies' of Christ's human nature: in his Nativity, in the Eucharist, in his Death, in his Resurrection.

Two small trapdoors in the floor can be opened to reveal the actual bedrock of Tabor's peak. If you ask him, the Franciscan friar will take you beneath the floor and show you the remains of Canaanite places of



The Basilica of Transfiguration

The first Basilica upon the plateau of Mount Tabor in honour of the Transfiguration of Jesus Christ was built in the 4th century. The present Basilica was built by the Custody of the Holy Land in 1924. The Basilica has three naves divided by massive pillars and robust arcades and the chapels dedicated to Moses and Elijah.

Worship thousands of years old, now laid bare by archaeologists.

The soaring height of the Church's interior serves to raise both eye and mind and heart toward the heavenly realm of the Transfiguration. Over a mosaic band is spaced a series of small columns. These ingeniously carry the great roof beams, the wood having been

especially imported from Czechoslovakia. The arcades graciously dividing the building into three aisles are decorated with Roman-Syrian symbols, often found only in the ancient synagogues of Galilee. The five-fold cross of Custody of the Holy Land appears frequently.

In each side aisles, a stairway leads to the alter above. That on the left is dedicated to the Blessed Sacrament, while that on the right is dedicated to St Francis, whose sons reclaimed Mount Tabor for Christian worship through the favour of a benevolent Emir, Fakh-ed-Din, in 1531.

Outside the church you will see the remains of hermits, caves and traces of defensive walls built by the Jewish general and governor of Galilee, later to become known as the great historian Josephus Flavius.

The remains of the massive walls you see all around the summit of Tabor were built in 1211-1212 by Sulatn Malik al'Adil. But were dismantled in Benedictine monastery, destroyed by the Sultan in 1212. You can still make out the main parts of the structure: the chapel, the refectory and the common room. Remains of much older, fourth century church are to be seen in the mosaic floor of the Elijah chapel in the south tower, and also in another mosaic now halfway down the southern side of the exterior of the modern basilica, probably the floor of a baptistery.

THE FOLLOWING INSCRIPTION CAN BE SEEN ON A WALL TABLET OUTSIDE
THE CHURCH AT MOUNT TABOR

Ad Antonio Barluzzi – Architetto (1884-1960)
La cui arte e pieta elevo Santuari insigni nella Terra Santa

Le religiosi della Visitazione
Le Zelatrici dell' Apostolato della preghiera
Il Diretto di Lucca Italia
Con animo grato a memoria perenne

23 Settembre 1972

...the translation of which is:

To ANTONIO BARLUZZI – Architect (1884-1960)
Who through his art and piety raised
Illustrious sanctuaries in the Holy Land

The Religious Order of the Visitation
The Religious Order of the Apostolate of Prayer
The Director of the Diocese of Lucca, Italy
With gratitude and everlasting memory

23 September 1972

THE CHURCH OF ALL NATIONS IN GETHSEMANE

Also known as THE BASILICA OF THE AGONY

The mysteries of Christ's suffering and death are commemorated chiefly in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in the Old City of Jerusalem. The further mystery of his full acceptance of this ordeal is associated, in Christian tradition, with the valley to the east of Jerusalem, outside the walls. Today, as one looks across from the Temple Mount, one sees something on the hillside which is comparatively rare here: trees, olive trees. It was in a garden at the foot of the low Mount of Olives that Jesus prayed to be spared the trial of torture and death, and where, finally, among trees, he consented to it all, thus making his passion, literally, the supreme sacrifice. The spot is still known as Geth-semene (from the Hebrew term for 'oil press'), and a majestic church, together with a lowly grotto chapel, mark the site of Christ's agony.

The task of building and adorning this church posed a fundamental challenge to Christian art. The theme is so filled with mystery that it could never have been adequately expressed in some obvious or realistic style. The representation had to be essentially abstract, yet impressive and edifying, evoking a sincere response in the mind and heart of the beholder, setting his inspiration free. Artists intimately acquainted with the mysteries themselves were needed. Providentially they were found.

Antonio Barluzzi was the architect. In his great church on the summit of Mount Tabor he had used to the full the element of light. In Gethsemane, he dimmed light almost to the point of obscurity, to bring to mind the near-night of the soul which Jesus entered there. Some people have thought the interior of the building too dark, but a right approach helps us to appreciate the architecture which is really something quite unique.

It is perhaps a mistake to enter through the main doors. The façade is cut off too abruptly by the main road for a suitable approach to the whole monument. For about ten minutes inside, the eyes will see very little of detail. The strong, natural light from the outside will destroy the essential sombre atmosphere of the interior. It is far better for the visitor to enter by the side entrance from the garden of the eight ancient olive trees. These trees still bear their fruit and the stones are used to fashion beads to be sent out from Jerusalem to be made into rosaries for people in all parts of the world.

So, passing through the sacristy, you immediately see the main feature of the whole shrine: the large, bare, sandstone rock in front of the altar, traditionally the stone on which Jesus knelt to pray during his agony. Light from above focuses attention on it. Gradually, as the eyes become accustomed to the darkness, other elements in the decoration of the church become clear. The first is the great iron wreath, in the shape of a crown of thorns, which surrounds the rock and which is expressive of the suffering of

mind and heart undergone by Jesus. His innocence and helplessness is symbolized by a white dove caught in the spikes and slowly dying in agony. The bitterness of his experience is again brought out through the symbolism of two birds, one standing on each side of a plain chalice. Their look of startled dismay on sipping the contents of the cup is wonderfully portrayed.

After the rock, the large mosaic above the altar should be contemplated, for it graphically interprets the central story of Gethsemane. High above, in the first register, the hand of God the Father appears, bearing the wreath of eventual victory, the assurance that Jesus is not wholly abandoned. In the middle, the comforting angel comes down. In the main mosaic, Jesus is shown leaning against the rock. His face is strained with deep fatigue, with bewilderment perhaps, but still quite calm. This masterpiece by **D'Achiardi**, sets the high standard of adornment throughout the whole church. It has been described by an expert, Dominican Father Vincent, as 'a marvel of art and of lofty religious inspiration.' Two great olive trees frame the central figure of Jesus, while the three weary disciples sleep beside one of the gnarled tree trunks. This painting in small mosaic stones has a vocabulary of its own which no other medium can really rival.

Turning now to the body of the church, we see how, in detail, Barluzzi has ingeniously created the atmosphere of the central mystery. Six monolithic columns support the ceiling, which is in the form of little domes adorned with olive branches and the stars of a clear night sky. Through the alabaster windows, translucent but not transparent, filters a violet light, the liturgical colour of mourning and penance. Other mosaics bring out the great paradoxes of the story of the Agony at its end: that of the kiss of the betrayer Judas, and that of Christ's majestic declaration, 'I am' with attendants falling to the ground before the claim to divinity implicit in these words understood according to the overtones of St John's Gospel (John 18:6) The main altar. With its sombre colour, shot through with veins of red, is in itself a symbol of the 'bloody sweat' of Jesus in this place, while the side altars, through necessarily of smaller dimensions, are not wanting in elegance and strength.

The coats of arms of many countries appear on the ceiling and in the mosaics, reminding us that the church was built through the generosity of Christians everywhere. For this reason it is called 'The Church of All Nations'. A closer look at the wrought iron wreath around the rock will reveal a discreet inscription in Latin: '**Geradi** fashioned it; Australia gave it.'

As so often happens, the floor of the church is a reminder of the long tradition which lies behind the shrine. As will be noted, clear evidence of a fourth-century church on this site came to light during preparatory excavations for the new church. These remains can be viewed by lifting the mats which cover the present church floor.

Coming at last to the main entrance outside, we can study some of the magnificent detail of the façade. In sight of Jerusalem's Golden Gate and of the Dome of the Rock on the site of the ancient Jewish Temple, the theme here is that of acceptance by God of Christ's supreme sacrifice. The priesthood of Christ is celebrated majestically. The Latin text

below the great tympanum reads, 'Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, and he was heard for his godly fear' (Hebrews 5:7) The large mosaic shows members of the human race working and suffering, surrounding a sympathetic Christ and placing their trust in him. Above, a cross crowns all, but it is flanked by two stags symbolizing the words of Psalm 42:1, words of confidence amidst near despair: 'Like as the hart desireth the water brooks, so longeth my soul after Thee, O God.' Statues of the four evangelists stand above the magnificent capitals which crown the multiple supporting columns of the façade. The ironwork of the surrounding railings is gracefully wrought, showing in some panels the fish-scale motif common in early Christian churches. During the day, with the sun behind, it throws a pleasant pattern on to the nearby pavement.

The antiquity of the site and the continuity of the tradition here has been demonstrated in later times by careful excavation. In 1891 and 1901, the remains of a Crusader church called St Saviour's was discovered. In 1920, when the deeper foundations of today's church which Aetheria visited and described as 'elegant'. The archaeologists brought to light clear traces of three aisles, a sample of a fine capital, and parts of a rich mosaic floor as well as mural decorations. There were traces of the foyer or antrium with its cistern intact. Direct contact with this ancient church is evident in today's church where the design of the old pavement is closely followed and the water motif is expressed in white and green marble.

Because it was built outside the walls of Jerusalem, the Byzantine church was one of the first to be destroyed by the Persians in the year 614. Topsoil gradually covered the sacred rock but Christians continued to bury their dead nearby, thus prolonging the age-old memories and helping to preserve it from further destruction.

GERARD BUSHELL OFM



CHURCH OF THE VISITATION, EIN KAREM

Here the Christian tradition places the memory of a most joyful event in the Gospels: the meeting of Mary and her cousin Elizabeth, symbolized and summed up in the MAGNIFICAT (Luke 1: 46-55)

Antonio Barluzzi was the architect of the fine building we see here today and, of all his churches, this probably has the most festive atmosphere. However, skill as well as artistry was called for. As on many other biblical sites, he had not only to commemorate in fitting fashion the main mystery in view, but also to respect and incorporate the remains of other churches which had stood on the spot in times past. Thus, the building is dual: an upper church and a crypt, linked together in one harmonious whole.



Archaeological studies have revealed that this site was inhabited in very ancient times, as early as the 13th century B.C in fact. A spring was its attraction and, to reach its source, a tunnel was cut back 25 feet into the living rock. The earliest definite remains of human buildings date from Greek times and are in the forms of courses of masonry which were part of a room, this in itself having some relationship with the passage cut back towards the spring. The shape of an oil press can also be seen. That people were here in the time of the Romans is proved by the discovery of coins and pottery fragments.

In the 5th or 6th century A.D., buildings with a religious purpose were erected here. Fine, yellow stone was used, and a well was dug at the end of the grotto within the rock. Its overflow was carried in baked earthenware pipes to a cistern of generous dimensions (7.07 metres long and 5.70 metres wide) it is clear that the construction was on a fairly large scale. The Christians character of the building is shown by crosses scratched on the original plaster, by the remains of a liturgical inscription (‘Age, eternity’), by marble fragments of a reliquary, and especially by pieces of a plate with the abbreviated wording in Greek: Jesus Christ, Son of God. For John’s and Paul’s (salvation).

Ancient writings support the evidence of the excavations. The apocryphal **Protoevangelium of James** (22:3) dating from the end of the 2nd century, tells how Elizabeth fled into the hills to save her son John from Herod’s massacre of the children. Other early references make mention of Elizabeth’s ‘cave’ and a western pilgrim, Theodosius (A.D. 530) states definitely that the ‘house’ of Elizabeth was placed by tradition at Ein Karem. **The calendar of the Church of Jerusalem lists places of**

pilgrimage frequented in the 7th and 8th centuries. It has this entry: ‘August 28th. In the village of Einquarim, in the church of the worthy Elizabeth, commemoration of her.’ This church is most likely the Byzantine shrine, the remains of which lie under the present church of the Visitation.

Soon after their arrival, the crusaders set about building a worthy monument on the spot. The Byzantine chapel became the crypt of a fine, upper church, the masonry being quite massive. The south wall was so thick (3.35 metres) that a staircase leading to the church above (still in use) was fashioned outside it. A fortified monastery was built around the church, and the whole construction was protected by a correspondingly strong wall. However, the formidable stonework was relieved by delicate frescoes commemorating the central mystery of the Visitation.

The upper church was 20.30 metres long and 7.80 metres wide, with one apse. All the south façade can still be seen, as well as four courses of the apse and part of the north corner, and it has been suggested that it represents the ephod (an apron-like vestment worn over the chest), which was in use among Jewish priests (Exodus 25:7). However, the interpretation is uncertain, there being apparently sixteen squares instead of the ritual twelve. Traces of two rooms fashioned within the very walls of the apse are another reminder of the strength of the whole structure.

With the fall of Jerusalem as the Crusader capital, this church in Ein Karem began to suffer. The Armenians held it for a time but, after they were expelled by the Moslems between 1469 and 1483 the whole structure fell into ruin. Only the grotto was occupied by local inhabitants. In 1679, the Franciscans got possession of the site and occasionally held services there. After innumerable setbacks, they obtained permission to refashion the crypt in 1862. The rebuilding of the whole sanctuary began in 1938 but, due to the disturbances of the Second World War, it was not completed until 1955.

In his reconstruction of the crypt, it was **Barluzzi’s** intention to suggest the family atmosphere of a simple dwelling, the house of Elizabeth. At the same time, he wished to preserve the feeling of ancient tradition, of memories of Christian devotion shown down the ages. Thus, while the interior was made a little more regular and the alter recess enlarged, the corridor to the ancient well was kept, as also the small niche housing a stone with a captivity in its centre – said to have hidden St John when his mother, Elizabeth, fled Herod’s massacre. It is protected by a grille of wrought iron. In the north wall, two rooms were fashioned to serve as a sacristy and a small choir. The marble alter has a frontispiece in the shape of a lamb above a stylized crown of thorns, symbol of Christ’s sacrifice. This, together with the tabernacle, crucifix and candlesticks, adorned with singing birds, is the work of Antonio Minghetti. A rich mosaic forms the background to the alter and shows nature – stars, animals and flowers – venerating the cross. The two figures in prayer are Elizabeth and Zacharias. The floor is done in carpet-style mosaic, to emphasise again the atmosphere of close home life. However, the pavement of the ancient corridor leading to the well is in the form of a stream full of all kinds of fish, with the whole enclosed in a border of lotus flowers.

Most impressive are the three frescoes by **Angelo della Torre**, in early Renaissance style. One is of the Visitation, the meeting of the two holy women against a background of household activity in preparation for an important visitor. The second fresco represents St John being hidden from Herod's pitiless slaughter of the Innocents. The third shows Zacharias in his priestly vestments.

Crypt and church are harmoniously joined by the expedient of a ramp outside the building, which leads the visitor through olive trees, cypresses and shrubs, keeping one in close contact with nature until the upper shrine is reached. Here the theme of exuberant life is lavishly suggested by the rich decoration of the whole church: stars, animals and flowers joining in joyful praise of the Virgin. The windows themselves set the theme. They are in the form of delicate marble tracery, representing palm leaves and fruit. This was a common symbol of fertility in ancient Palestine, and thus the decorated windows themselves discreetly recall that the joy of Mary and Elizabeth was that of mothers-to-be. The altar rails and the candlesticks on the altar itself continue the palm motif. The walls, floor and ceiling are richly adorned with frescoes, which are undoubtedly the most striking feature of the church.

On the wall of the apse, behind the altar, Mary is pictured glorifying the Lord and surrounded by angels. In lower registers, the faithful on earth are shown worshipping at the most famous of our Marian shrines. The right (south) wall is one great mass of colour, five great frescoes covering the whole area. They celebrate Mary's traditional title of honour: Mother of God (Council of Ephesus), Dispenser of Grace (Marriage of Cana), Refuge of Sinners, Help of Christians (Battle of Lepanto), Immaculate Conception (Disputation by Duns Scotus in Paris University). All these are the work of **C. Vagarini** and are executed in the style of the later Italian Renaissance, but, at the same time, they are indicative of a strong, artistic, original personality: correct form varied by differing postures, set in peaceful surroundings (even on the deck of a flagship at Lepanto), all inviting to prayer, the chief object of church art. Above each picture the meaning of the symbolism below is brought out by a smaller representation of Mary, while various womenfolk of the Old Testament, famous for their songs, are pictured in the intervals. The areas between each picture frame carry verses from Mary's own canticle, the Magnificat, inscribed in Latin. On the opposite side of the church, alternating with the beautiful windows, are pictures of angels by **F. Manetti**, after the style of Fra Angelico. The floor is one rich mosaic, showing symbols of nature in all its forms glorifying God. The roof is painted in diamonds and squares in the Tuscan manner of the 14th century. The great bronze doors are the work of **Mistruzzi**.

In the small courtyard in the front of the church we can admire the skill of the architect in fitting the dual church into a closely circumscribed area. The four storied bell tower lifts our eyes heavenward, but it also reminds us that the church could have appeared unduly high in contrast to its width. This was corrected by fashioning a colonnaded porch so as to form a base and thus to reduce the impression of height. However, the main feature, designed with the same basic motive but immensely impressive in itself, is the beautiful mosaic occupying most of the façade and representing Mary's arrival from Nazareth. She is seated on a small donkey, accompanied by angels aloft and afoot. The whole great

picture was fashioned in the Vatican Mosaic Workshop according to a design by **Biagio Biagetti**.

Leaving the church grounds, we are reminded once more of the joyful canticle which sums up the mystery commemorated here. It is in the form of a rock wall bearing over thirty plaques, on which the Magnificat is written in the chief languages of the world. The idea originated with a Franciscan, **Father Aurelio Borkowski**, and the whole presentation was made possible through the generosity of Catholics of Polish origin in the United States of America. Space has been left for many additional plaques.

The gates of the property are tastefully done in open iron work. Above is the Holy Land cross with bronze figures of Elizabeth and Zacharias. So entering and leaving this wonderful shrine we are impelled to repeat the greeting Mary once heard from her cousin: 'Blessed art thou amongst women.' (Luke 1: 42)

GERARD BUSHELL OFM

CHURCH OF ST LAZARUS IN BETHANY

One peculiarity in the story of Jesus is that, so far as we know, he never spent a night in the city of Jerusalem. In the Kidron valley below the Mount of Olives, within sight of the Temple, he had a favourite retreat for prayer. His regular lodging place, however, was over the mountain and eastward on the Jericho side, in a small village called Bethany. Here he found a true home. Here, even more than in Nazareth, we know how warmly he was received within a family circle. And here, not surprisingly, he proclaimed to dear friends some of the deepest truths of all his teachings.

For many centuries, the exact site of Bethany was not known. Guides made vague mention of the town, placing it somewhere beyond Mount Olivet. It was not until the Franciscans undertook archaeological excavations in 1949 that the history of the place was resurrected. The patient and expert labour, directed and reported by Fathers Saller and Bagatti, remains one of the best examples of such careful excavations in all Palestine.



In 1952-1953, the site of the Gospel narratives was crowned by a beautiful church, another masterpiece produced by the versatile genius of architect **Antonio Barluzzi**. As often happened during his long career of building in the Holy Land, Barluzzi was faced with dual task of erecting a suitable monument to the particular mysteries commemorated while respecting their historical context by preserving the remains of traditional veneration there. In Bethany, such vestiges were particularly elaborate, previous monuments comprising four successive churches and a large monastery. A study of the detail of these helps us to appreciate centuries of devotion to Jesus who here graciously revealed himself as Friend, Master, and Lord.

The very nature of the memories associated with Bethany create a tension for anyone committed to commemorating them permanently. Here are recalled the close friendship of Jesus with Lazarus and his sisters, Martha and Mary; the promise of eternal resurrection made to Martha; the raising of Lazarus from the grave, and the feast in the home of Simon where Mary anointed Jesus. A little to the west is shown the actual tomb

where Lazarus had been laid to rest. Thus, these memories converge in sharp contrast: one facet is dark and sombre, as of the tomb; the other is iridescent, hopefully bespeaking resurrection from the grave. As light and shade are used in visual art, so the architect of this church utilized the contrast to bring out the same joy of survival over and above the sadness of death. In this sense, **Antonio Barluzzi** here combined in one monument what he had done at Tabor, with its wonderfully sun-lit basilica, and with that what he achieved in the Church of All Nations in Gethsemane, where he dimmed light by use of the violet shades of mourning. Moreover he was limited by the existing elements of the site, in the sense that he had to respect the relics of former buildings by allowing them to contribute to the venerable traditions commemorated, and by leaving them open to the view of faithful Christians, scholars and others.

The modern church is fairly small. It takes the form of a Greek cross, with an internal length of 17.70 metres, and a square under the cupola measuring 7.70 metres on each side. The building is isolated from its immediate surroundings, except for the sacristy which joins it to a nearby residence. Its walls are almost hermetically sealed and windowless. The dome is solidly incorporated into octagonal drum overhead. All this suggests a subterranean vault, lonely as a grave. However, this architectural simplicity is relieved by the nobility of the materials used and by the fine sculpture and mosaic decoration.

Coming up the drive from the main road, the visitor will be able to study the church from many points of view. The north-east corner is marked by a slim, unadorned tower, austere as an obelisk. Passing around to the façade (west side), we see that, as in the case of the other three end walls, it is divided into three panels. It is built of hard stone from the Bethlehem area and dressed into two different degrees of fineness. The bronze door has six panels, each containing a circle surrounded by endless tresses, symbolic of immortality. Above, three mosaic panels represent the saintly persons associated with the site: in the centre, Lazarus, the patron of the church; then his sisters Martha and Mary on each side. Over this is a sculptured cross which serves also the practical purpose of allowing air to circulate in the interior. Otherwise, the main entrance is quite plain. The eastern wall overlooking the road from Jerusalem to Jericho is similarly decorated with three mosaic panels, showing Lazarus in the centre flanked by two angels with trumpets, recalling his resurrection from the dead. The other two outside walls have no decoration at all.

Inside the building, the eye is struck by the three dimensions of the decorated floor, the highly ornamented walls, and the opening at the top of the dome which is the sole source of light. The extremities of the cross-shaped building are also seen, and we are given a pleasant impression of generous dimensions, over and above the actual size. The inscriptions, and this, in turn, forms the base of the barrel vaults at the piers of the central square are united by smaller spherical ones, which effect the transition from the square to the circle of the dome. At the base of the cupola, variety is introduced by the mosaic inscription on a golden background. The arches are of a yellowish, ivory-like stone from Bethlehem, while the ribbing and panels of the dome are all adorned with mosaic. Thus, the upper part of the building is resplendent with light, while the vaults are shaded. We

can see how the architect, **Barluzzi**, used simplicity of line, plainly coloured stone and reduced height, to create a sense of severity and sombreness in the lower half of the church, while the soaring higher elements, crowned by the dome with its flood of light, suggests the joy of intense hope and optimism. The details of the decoration bears out this dual theme.

Directly opposite the entrance is the main altar. On its front there are two small pilasters of Bethlehem stone and, between them, a sculptured slab showing two angelic figures drawing aside a curtain to reveal an empty tomb and a folded shroud. This recalls the grave which Lazarus left. The reredos behind the altar is of desert stone of a red-violet colour, with brown and green spots, producing a fine, natural effect. The other two altars, at the north and south arms of the church are in the form of a sarcophagus or stone coffin, reminding us once again of the basic theme of the sanctuary. Their only ornamentation is small circular medallion in front, showing figures of Martha and Mary.

The decoration of the semicircular areas above the altars spells out the symbolism below. Over the high altar, a mosaic shows Jesus, with all the majesty of his being, addressing Martha, Mary, and friends: "I am the resurrection and the life." These words, and others which complete the story of Lazarus' resurrection (John 11: 17-44), are written in Latin along the lateral walls. Over the side altar to the left (north), we are along the lateral walls. Over the side altar to the left (north), we are shown Jesus in the intimacy of the family circle instructing Martha in the paradoxical priorities implied by friendship with Christ. The inscriptions remind us of the main texts: "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to help me. But the Lord answers her: "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things; one thing is needful. Mary has chosen the good portion, which shall not be taken away from her." (Luke 10: 40-42)

Above the side altar to the right (south), we see Jesus raising Lazarus from the grave, in the presence of his sisters, the apostles, the Virgin Mary, and friends. The text below explains the picture: "Then Jesus, deeply moved again, came to the tomb;...so they took away the stone. And Jesus lifted up his eyes and said: "Father, I thank Thee that Thou hast heard me"...When he said this he cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" the dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them: "Unbind him and let him go." (John 11: 38-44)

Finally on the entrance wall over the door there is a picture of the supper in the home of Simon, with Mary anointing Jesus. Again, a seeming paradox is supported by Christ, as the words of the text remind us: "And while he was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he sat at the table, a woman came with an alabaster jar of anointment of pure nard, very costly, and she broke the jar and poured it over his head...But Jesus said, "Let her alone; why do you trouble her?...She has done what she could; she has anointed my body beforehand for burying" (Mark 14: 3-8)

At the base of the dome, the circular cornice carries these words against a golden background: "He who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and whosoever

lives and believes in me shall never die” (John 11: 25-26). To suggest the realization of this promise, the forty–eight divisions of the cupola are adorned with white doves in upward flight, symbolizing souls freed from the earthly prison and risen to a new existence full of light and life. The designs for the fine mosaics of this church were done by **Cesare Vagarini** . The work itself was carried out by the firm of **Monticelli**, Rome , which was also responsible for the mosaic decoration in the churches in Tabor and Gethsemane.

Veneration of the mysteries of Bethany is ancient. Proof of this is the fact that here, more frequently than on any other single site except Nazareth, five successive churches were built in their memory, together with an elaborate monastery. The remains of three of these churches have been studied in detail. With a little imagination, we can take our bearings from the modern building and picture the extent and beauty of those which were here before.

The present main altar in the east arm of the church marks the exact site of the apse-sanctuary of the second and third churches. So looking back towards the entrance, we are to think of a building twice the length of today’s church, starting here with a central nave and two side aisles, with sacristies on each side of the sanctuary. The width was the same as today’s building. These overall dimensions take us well beyond the present main door, and the remains of some of the piers which supported the ancient upper structures are still to be seen in the courtyard in front of the façade,

Apparently, this church was highly decorated with plaster and paint. This was especially noted by the Russian Abbot Daniel (1106) and by others who came after him. Traces of the ornamentation have been discovered by archaeologists, particularly crosses of various shapes inscribed on the piers. These latter, in turn, most probably supported a dome, which is also mentioned by Daniel. However, the most striking feature of the decoration of all Bethany’s churches was that of the floor. Parts of the mosaic designs of this second church have been recovered by scholars. They were comparatively simple in form, almost all geometrical, though pictures of fruit were evident. Three main colours were used, white, black and red, with a sprinkling of yellow and brown cubes. The floor of this church also gives some clue as to the date of the whole building. It has no crosses at all. This suggests that it was laid down after the year 427, when the Emperor Theodosius forbade the placing of crosses on pavements, presumably because it was thought to be sacrilegious for people to tread on the symbol of Christ’s saving act? The floor is also very much worn, as is indicated by the numerous repairs made to it, not only with new mosaic cubes but also with slabs of marble and even ordinary stone. Literary sources , particularly liturgical Ceremonials, refer to the Bethany church as one of the main sanctuaries of the Jerusalem area, and especially as the starting place of the traditional procession of palms on Palm Sunday (a ceremony forbidden by Caliph Hakim in 1008, but resumed with the Crusaders came). Thus, all things considered, it is probable that the second church at Bethany was in use for a very long time, from the 5th to at least the 12th century.

The third church was identical in plan with the second and was really a variation on the former. Some of the alterations were quite notable and they provide a clue as to the

period in which the work was done, the major change took the form of strengthening certain elements of the second church: the buttressing of the north wall and the reinforcing of the piers with new masonry. The purpose of all this must have been to support a much heavier load, and the roof must have been much more elaborate. Perhaps stone was used in its construction, in contrast to the wood and tiles of previous buildings. Two domes may have been built. The masonry shows the characteristic diagonal dressing of the Crusaders and serves to fix the time of the construction fairly accurately. This, combined with literary notices, suggests that the church was in use from the middle of the 12th century onward for some two hundred and fifty years. By about 1350, however, the dome (or domes) must have fallen in, and the building hence forward attracted little attention, As we shall see, the memories associated with it migrated partly to the eastern end of the village and partly to the west.

The second and third churches at Bethany were but a dim reflection of the most beautiful of all, the first which was built on this site. Following the close work of the archaeologists, we can now visualise something of its detail. If one stands just inside the apse-sanctuary of the first church. Thence, a single nave ran out through what is now the courtyard and into the area occupied by the neighbouring mosque. Nineteen metres wide (the same as the present building), it must have been about 35.5 metres long. At the end, there was probably an open space to serve as a courtyard which was linked to the tomb of Lazarus to the west.

The most striking feature of the first church was the mosaic work on the floor. The archaeologists found that it had been damaged in places by the sinking of the bed itself, by the building of the piers for the second and third churches, and by holes made for tombs and a cistern. Still, the great mass of detail has been preserved and this makes the mosaics of Bethany one of the finest discoveries on the whole site.

The nave was decorated with a single panel of white flowers, black leaves and black and red crosslets, all on a background of red. The overall effect was that of a carpet divided into large diamonds throughout the field. The side aisles and the northern sacristy were similarly adorned, but in quite distinctive patterns, all rich in many colours – black, blue, yellow and red. A panel in the southern aisle was the richest and most intricate of all. Besides reminding us of the great beauty of the building, the detail of the mosaic designs helps us to date its construction. From parallels with other buildings, notably the pavement of the synagogue of Apamea in Syria (391), it is possible to conclude that the whole structure probably was erected in the fourth century. This is confirmed from literary sources, mainly St Jerome's translation of Eusebius' ONOMASTIKON. From changes in wording made by St Jerome, particularly his reference to "a church which has now been erected there (Bethany)," we can infer that the first construction dates from about 375 A.D.

It is natural to wonder why were the mosaics preserved so well here. It is likely that the first church was destroyed in an earthquake quite soon after it was built. Among such

disasters recorded in history is that of 447, which date would fit in well with archaeological information on the first Bethany church. After it collapsed, a second church was designed to take its place, but the site of this was moved thirteen meters eastward, to a slightly higher level. Thus, the rich mosaics of the floor of the first church remained buried, and therefore protected, until they were discovered and interpreted by scholars in recent years.

All of these churches mentioned were intended, directly or indirectly, to mark the tomb where Lazarus had been buried. This lay to the west of the buildings and was always noted by visitors to the site. However, about the time when the third church was erected, the western part of the whole sanctuary seems to have assumed distinct importance, so that a separate, fourth church came into being with the tomb of Lazarus as its crypt. Archaeologists have not been able to examine the western site in detail since it is all now Moslem property. When the foundations for a new minaret were being prepared in 1954, however, there were discernible traces of a church apse which must have been the central one of three. In addition, arts of the northern wall are visible in the chapel of the Greek Orthodox nearby. Literary sources stress the importance of this church during the Middle Ages. From the report left by Theodoric (1172), it is clear that the Eastern Church was then dedicated to Martha and Mary (or to Simon the leper), while a separate building to the west marked the actual tomb of Lazarus. Forty years later, according to another visitor, Wilbrand, there were still two churches. By 1347, however, the upper part of the church of St Lazarus had become a mosque and soon disappeared from Christian records. Yet, the crypt was still revered and kept in good repair.

This subterranean shrine was made more easily accessible to Christian worship when, between 1566 and 1575, the Franciscans cut twenty-two steps down from the north side into the traditional tomb. At the bottom of these, one enters a vestibule, then goes down two more steps into a narrow passage leading to the burial chamber proper. Here, niches in the rock indicate the vaulted, shelved type of grave which was a common Jewish type. The whole design fits the terse description given by St John (11:38): a cave with a stone laid over it, blocking the entrance to the burial place which was lower than the vestibule floor. On this latter Jesus was standing when he delivered the majestic order, "Lazarus come forth" (St John 11:43).

Continuous Christians worship at Bethany's churches cannot fully be explained without mention of the great monastery which was once attached to them. As a result of excavations, we know that it was very ample in size, covering about 62.5 meters from east to west about 50 meters from north to south. It flanked the whole area of the Bethany churches on their south side and once had direct access to the crypt containing the tomb of Lazarus the remains of the monastery were scattered about during the centuries, so that it is no longer possible for archaeologists to make a completely detailed reconstruction of it. However, the stone work shows that it was a typically massive Crusader building, and some of the blocks still bear the medieval masons marks. An idea of the lavish decoration can be gained from the numerous capitals, parts of columns, and chancel posts which lie here and there about the site. There is no reason to believe, for instance, that the cloister was of very fine stonework, such as we still see at St Catherine's in Bethlehem. Two

towers were part of the defences surrounding the abbey, and vestiges of these have been studied in detail. They were similar to so many others built by Crusaders all over Palestine, marking the site of the Latin fortresses.

Ancient documents help us to fill out the picture of the abbey. William of Tyre (1095 – 1184) has much to say of the foundation of the institution. Originally entrusted to the Canons of the Holy Sepulchre at the beginning of the twelfth century, the monastery was greatly enlarged by Queen Millicent, whose sister, Yvette, was a member of the Benedictine community of nuns at St Anne's, Jerusalem. Sisters from this convent took possession of the Bethany monastery in 1138, and the document of transfer to King Fulk of Anjou, husband of Queen Millicent, is still in existence. The deed was confirmed by Pope Celestine II in 1144.

The first abbess was named Mathilda, but she was later succeeded by Yvette, and this was the reason for further lavish endowments on the part of Queen Millicent. These naturally presuppose a worthy place of worship and a liturgy corresponding to the dignity of the shrine. The valuable property was surrounded by stout walls, and one tower is especially mentioned by William Tyre.

With the fall of the Crusader kingdom, the nuns had to abandon the site. It was probably the painful task of the fourth abbess, Melisende, to lead her sisters into exile at Acre in 1187, whence they never returned. By 1347, the abbey was in ruins, though it was still marked by the formidable tower. This remained the sole vestige of the great institution until the modern work of excavation revealed in some detail the glory of its past.

Gerard Bushell OFM

The Church of the Beatitudes in Capernaum

The central programme of Christ's preaching is set out in three chapters of the Gospel and is known as the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7). Here are the basic themes of the message which Christ, another Moses and great prophet, derived from the past, and which he distilled and perfected and often preached from a "mountain top". Here is the fundamental teaching about God, our Father and universal



Provider, about our brotherhood with all human beings, about interior motivation, about true spiritual life, about the need to choose the right road, putting into practice a sublimation of all that is best in Old Testament morality. But, none of it is presented in such abstract terms, for it was delivered against the background of the Lake with all its daily coming and going.

Most remarkable is the opening of the Sermon, a close summary of what God's rule on earth means for Christians. Each of the Beatitudes describes, in its first part, what true members of the kingdom are like and, in second, tells us something of the kingdom itself. Like the preface of the Book of Psalms (Psalm 1), its keynote is joy, the "good luck" of those who willingly chose for God. This light heartedness is the theme of all the Beatitudes: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven...Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth: (Matthew 5: 3, 5).

Just across the road, northwest of the gate of the Primacy sanctuary at Tabgha, there is a small, abrupt rise covered with dressed stones. The casual visitor will miss this all together, yet it is probably the where Jesus often spoke on things contained in the Sermon on the Mount. It overlooks his favourite spot, the Tabgha delta. It was an apt setting for public speaking, the terrain acting as a natural amphitheatre and sounding board where the human voice carries far and clearly. From here, there was a view of lakeside life in all its diversity. Looking slightly to the right, the audience could see the city – modern Safed – on a hill so prominent that it could never be hidden.

The Franciscans got possession of this site, and in 1935 Father Baggati made excavations there. He brought to light a little church with a single nave, decorated with mosaics, built towards the end of the fourth century. Adjoining buildings are probably those of a monastery. All this points to a hill mentioned by Aetheria as the traditional place of much of Christ's preaching, a fitting stage for a Sermon on the Mount.

Nowadays, the memory of the Sermon is preserved not at the lakeside but a mile further westward up the mountain. Here, the architect of Tabor's basilica, Antonio Barluzzi, built

another prayer stone, the Church of the Beatitudes. Commissioned by the National Association to Aid Italian Missionaries (the owner of the property), the architect has most happily achieved his double aim: to build a place of worship, and preserve the impression of really standing on the Mount of Beatitudes. In memory of the eightfold sayings of Christ, the church is octagonal, built mainly of black basalt stone native to the region mixed with imported materials. The walls support a copper – covered dome. All around the building proper, there is a portico, to break the glare and to provide a fitting vantage point for contemplation of the marvellous view.

Inside, the walls are simple, done in grey marble, but the interior of the dome glitters with gold mosaic against a background of blue. Over each of the windows is inscribed the text of the Beatitude. The mosaic floor is covered with symbols of various Christian virtues. The altar stands right in the middle of the church. Around the inner sanctuary there is an ambulatory encircling the whole area.

In its general lines, the church resembles others with a circular plan, for instance that of San Vitale in Ravenna, Italy. However, the architect has shown his genius for expressing the mysteries of Christ, especially by the use of light. (We say again that Barluzzi meditated for hours upon the mystery to be commemorated in each church a long time before he ever put pen to paper). In buildings of this type, it is normal for the central features to be well lighted, while the side areas remain in semi-darkness. Here we find the opposite. The walls of the ambulatory are each broken by a large picture-window at eye level, offering an enchanting view of the sloping mountain, the waters of the Lake, the surrounding hills and the blue sky over all.

The central feature of the sanctuary, the altar, is a work of dignity. It is made of solid marble and bears a prominent tabernacle, to serve also as a throne for the Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament. The whole is surrounded by a baldachino, supported by four delicately wrought columns. Marble and semi-precious stones from Carrara, such as onyx and lapis lazuli, form the background for the other works of art. The panels of the baldachino have sculptures of the Crucifixion, the resurrection, the Ascension of Christ, and representations of the Blessed Virgin Mary and St Peter and St Paul. A silver dove hangs from the apex, calling to mind the Holy Spirit.

Thus, we have a sanctuary worthy of the mystery it commemorates, the simplicity, dignity and joy of the Beatitudes themselves, “and architectural essay in atmosphere and symbolism.” Nature and art are here combined to bring home the beauty of the original message, Stone, metal and mosaic form a lasting monument, but they blend with the background, the very one that Jesus knew. The mountains are the same as they were twenty years ago, covered in spring with flowers of the field. The birds, of the air are still fed by the universal Provider. The Lake is as blue, its surface broken only by questing fishes. Here more than anywhere else, we are drawn to ponder a central saying in the Sermon on the Mount: “But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well” (Matthew 6:33).

Gerard Bushell OFM

Dominus Flevit

Teddy Kollek, the former Mayor of Jerusalem, in his book, "My Jerusalem" – Twelve Walks in the World's Holiest City," has a very succinct description of this delightful sanctuary on the slopes of the Mount of Olives. He says:

"Because of the steep slope of the hill, the climb was prohibitive for the less-than-fit pilgrims. We thus helped build a narrow road which would enable pilgrims motorized access to Dominus Flevit and the Church of Mary Magdalene below it."



The black dome with the four tear-ampullae is the Chapel of Dominus Flevit, meaning the Lord wept. It was here that Jesus wept and foresaw the destruction of Jerusalem. The present edifice was built in 1955 by the architect Antonio Barluzzi, atop the ruins of an ancient church, attested to by the Byzantine mosaic floor and other remains. The view of the Old City through the church windows makes a visitor rue having to leave.

Michael Sichor, in his guide to Jerusalem, tell us to look for ornamentation over the window which includes Jesus' cup of tears and crown of thorns. He also points out that while most churches face east, this one faces west so that the window above the high altar can provide a view of Jerusalem as Jesus saw it.



A view of Jerusalem from the window above the altar of the Church of Dominus Flevit.

St Catherine's Church Franciscan Cloisters, Bethlehem

The Franciscans of Bethlehem, representatives of the Latin (Roman Catholic) Church, having been deprived of the right to function in the Great Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem, were obliged to erect their own building for public worship and as a centre for the large Latin parish of the town. The Church



of St Catherine now stands beside the Basilica, and it has its own entrance to the Grotto of the Nativity.

The site is ancient, for the canons of St Augustine built a church here in the time of the Crusaders. In 1880, the present building was erected. It was refurbished in 1949. The western visitor will feel at home in the graceful Romanesque structure, which is furnished simply enough in the manner of many churches in occidental countries. The arched roof is gracefully supported by a series of small columns built into the wall above the main pillars below. The organ and choir appear above the main altar, in front of which is a painting of St Catherine of Alexandria who, according to tradition, was martyred in 307 under Emperor Maximian II. The pulpit, of Hanna (John) Rock of Jerusalem, is beautifully carved in the form of a tree, with full-leaved branches over the canopy, similar to that found in St Peter's Church in Jaffa. On the panels in front are bas-reliefs of episodes in the infancy of Jesus. The marble Baptistry, with the sculptured figure of an angel, was done in Palermo, Italy, in 1754. The bronze doors are a recent addition (1949), bearing reliefs of the great monastic personalities associated with Bethlehem: St Jerome, St Paula, and St Eustochium. Towards the end of the church, a stairway goes down to the newly-restored grottoes beneath. Yearly, at Christmas, Roman Catholics from all over the Holy Land join their Patriarch of Jerusalem in celebrating Midnight Mass here, and history was made in 1967 when the ceremony was televised to the whole of the Northern Hemisphere by means of satellite Telstar and by the Israel Broadcasting Service to the radios of the world.

North of the Basilica is a beautiful medieval cloister. When St Catherine's was built, this structure suffered somewhat, adding to the ravages of the time, fire and deliberate destruction it had experienced throughout the years. In 1947, the versatile and skilled architect, Antonio Barluzzi, was commissioned by the Franciscans to restore it. The main problem was to recover some of the balance lost in the building of St Catherine's, and Barluzzi succeeded admirably. On the three sides where work was possible, he brought

back to view the delicate symmetry of the original, and the quadrangle is now one of the main attractions outside the basilica itself.

Graceful, dual columns, some dating from the medieval times, support Crusader arches. The most interesting detail is the capitals, twenty of the sixty four originals have been recovered and used as models for the others. The style is medieval French, and no two are alike in decoration. Four are real gems, evidently set at one time in the wall of the basilica. Their ancient, inside section was thus quite well preserved and this is now displayed as the main feature. A large terra-cotta statue of St Jerome reminds us that his room is close by, being connected to the restored cloister. Over the main portal, there is a graceful statue of the Immaculate Virgin. Of the whole restoration it may be said that the Holy Land Custody has added another jewel to the crown of sacred buildings with which the Franciscan love of architecture has marked the Holy Land ever since the end of World War I.

Gerhard Bushell OFM

The Chapel of the Flagellation- Via Dolorosa, Old City Jerusalem

We are indebted to Kay Prag, author of the Blue Guide to Jerusalem (A & C Black) for a description of this important site.

“The Monastery of the Flagellation. Crusader churches of the Flagellation and Condemnation of Jesus were located here, and the traditions were particularly strong in the 14th century when the Antonio escarpment above was inaccessible to Christians; Pilgrims in the 17th century say the building was being used as a stable by the



Ottoman Mustafa Bey (c. 1623-40). When he had a room for his harem built above it, the building collapsed at once (Roger, 1632). In 1719 it was being used by a Turkish weaver, but pilgrims were admitted on payment of a candle. The Franciscans were given the site by Ibrahim Pasha and they restored and enlarged the Chapel in 1839. It was completely rebuilt in 1927-29 (architect Barluzzi). In 1901-03 they excavated the remains of a nearly square three-aisled medieval chapel in which four columns had supported the dome over the Roman pavement. This was later rebuilt as the Chapel of the Condemnation.”

On entering the Chapel of the Flagellation, a single aisle chapel, you will look up at the golden dome over the altar. It is decorated with a huge crown of thorns. Antonio Barluzzi is using the building he had designed to bring home to us the appalling agony which our Lord must have undergone at the hands of the Roman soldiers. But the thorns are studded with bright stars for Jesus by his Cross and Resurrection brought victory over sin and death. The three stained glass windows depict Jesus scourged at the pillar, Pilate washing his hands and Barrabas.

Terra Sancta

In his admirable book, “ My Jerusalem” (Weidenfeld and Nicholson – 1990) Teddy Kollek, the long serving former Mayor of Jerusalem, tells us on page 130:

“Facing east, towards the Old City, the impressive building on our right is the Terra Sancta.”

The design of the well known Italian architect, Antonio Barluzzi, who designed Dominus Flevit and the Church of All Nations in Gethemane, Terra Sancta was built by the Catholic Church in 1927 as an institution of higher learning. Intended mainly for Arab boys, it had a smattering of Jewish students because the Church Schools were known for the fine education provided.



Terra Sancta College Jerusalem

The Shepherd Fields and the Churches of the Angels

Three excellent books published by Phaidon in 1979 give us lots of information about The Shepherds Fields and the Church of the Angels. They are, “the Glory of the Holy Land”, “The Glory of Jerusalem” and “The Glory of Bethlehem”. In the “Glory of Bethlehem” by Bargill Pixner and George Hintlian, we discover a good deal about Antonio Barluzzi’s church here in the Shepherd Fields.

“Another site venerated by tradition is not far away. In travel literature it is known as Siar al Ghanam (sheepfold). The site belongs to the Franciscans and was carefully excavated, revealing a vast monastic agricultural establishment, cisterns, and grottoes.

According to evidence in the field, an early church dating from the 4th to 5th century was enlarged in the 6th century, and stones from the octagonal construction of the Basilica of the Nativity were employed in the construction of its apse. The cave with an altar was traditionally looked upon as having been inhabited by the Shepherds. (Pilgrims will notice that the ceiling of the cave is very soot-blackened from the many fires which must have been lit here).

Eusebius of Caesarea, bishop and scholar, writes that the Tower Eder (Tower Flocks), a thousand paces from Bethlehem, marked the place where the Shepherds received the message of Jesus’ birth. This was understood to be Migdal Eder mentioned in Genesis 35:21. St Jerome was of the same opinion. The Calendar of Jerusalem (7th – 8th century) indicates that to the east of Bethlehem was a monastery called Poemnum (of the flock), where the angel appeared to the Shepherds. The Abbot Daniel calls the place A gia Pimina (holy pasture), and Peter the Deacon, in 1137, calls the church, which had a grotto with an altar, Ad Pastores. After the period of the Crusades, the church fell into ruin.

The present sanctuary, which was erected in 1953-54 (the foundation stone was laid on Christmas day 1953 and the church was constructed on Christmas day 1954), stands on a large rock. It is built in the shape of a tent, a polygon with five straight and five projecting sides. The light which floods the interior reminds one of the strong light which was present when the angels announced the divine birth. (“...and glory shone around”). Inside the church, the frontal and the upper parts of the altar are decorated with fifteen panels depicting various scenes from the Annunciation to the arrival of the Holy Family in Egypt. On the door lintel there is a fine bronze relief of an angel. The church was designed by the celebrated architect, Barluzzi. Three apses contain glorious paintings of the Holy Night.”

The compiler of these notes had the immense privilege of celebrating the Eucharist here in January 1996 as pilgrims ringing the altar sang “While shepherd watched their flocks” – a never to be forgotten experience. The Eucharist is also celebrated by pilgrim groups in the cave. On one visit, a fine soprano from an Eastern European pilgrim group sang “There were shepherds abiding in the field” from Handel’s “Messiah” – another unforgettable experience.

So once again we make the point that Brownrigg and Wareham both make: Barluzzi's churches are designed to bring to our minds very forcibly the events they commemorate. Here is the dazzling light coming down from the ceiling. Here is the church made in the shape of a shepherd's tent. Outside, the angel, cast in bronze, reminds all who enter of what happened here on the holiest of holy nights.



The Greek Church of the Holy Face and St Veronica- Station VI of the Via Dolorosa

We are indebted to Norman Wareham, a veteran pilgrimage leader with McCabe Travel and author of a superb pocket guide to the Holy Land Gospel Sites, for information about this church he writes:

“Reputed to be on the site of the home of St Veronica who, according to tradition, used her veil to wipe the face of Jesus. The imprint of his features remained on the cloth. The veil is said to have been responsible for a number of miracles and since AD 707 it has been preserved in St Peter’s in Rome.

To identify the Station look for a wooden door with studded metal bands on it. The centre panel bears the Roman numerals VI. The chapel behind is not open to the public but in meters further on, up a flight of steps, the Greek Church of the Holy Face and St Veronica can be viewed through a metal door. This delightful chapel built in 1882 on the site of a sixth century monastery, was tastefully restored in 1953 by the Italian architect Antonio barluzzi. It belongs to the Little Sisters of Jesus, a Greek Catholic Order.”

