

Craig Morrison and Patriarch of Syrian Orthodox Meet in Damascus

Craig Morrison, O. Carm., spent this past September at the Monastery of St. Ephrem in Damascus, Syria, where Mar Ignatius Zakka I Iwas, Patriarch of the Syrian Orthodox Church, resides.

Craig teaches Aramaic (the language spoken by Jesus) and Syriac (a third century dialect of Aramaic) at the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome and his sojourn in Syria allowed him to learn more about the culture and languages that he teaches.

The Syrian Orthodox Church preserves Aramaic in its liturgy and in its daily life. Because some of the monks at St. Ephrem's speak a classical form of Aramaic, Craig had the chance to converse with the monks using this classical language. He also traveled to Maaloula, a Christian village about 60 miles from Damascus where a modern form of Aramaic is still spoken.

These Aramaic-speaking Christians remind us that while the gospel spread west of Jerusalem among Greek speaking Christians (the ancestors of our Western Church), it also spread east of Jerusalem in



Craig Morrison, O.Carm. with Patriarch Mar Ignatius Zakka I Iwas, Patriarch of Antioch and all the East. Seated beside Fr. Craig is Severio Salba Tuomo, Bishop of Zahle/Lebenon.

the language that Jesus himself spoke. Even the Greek-writing evangelists remembered Jesus' native language in their gospels: to the dead girl Jesus announced "Talitha qum" (Mark 5:41); to the deaf man he spoke "Ephphatha" (Mark 7:34); and from the cross he cried out "Eloi, Eloi lema sabachthani" (Mark 15:34).

The Syrian Orthodox Church preserves a living memory of the culture in which Jesus lived and in doing so it provides a historical link for all Christians, but especially for Christians far removed from this Semitic world, to the memory of Jesus, the first

century Palestinian Messiah.

Pope John Paul II, who has encouraged dialogue with the Eastern Churches, but especially with the Church of the East (formerly known as the Nestorian Church) and the Syrian Orthodox Church (inaccurately referred to as a "Monophysite" Church), is expected to visit Damascus and the Monastery of St. Ephrem after Easter.

Anyone interested in learning more about the history of these Churches and their current situation can read Michael Dalrymple's book "From the Holy Mountain: A Journey among the Christians of the Middle East" (New York: Henry Holt, 1992).

1500 Attend West Texas Monastery Dedication

The sun-drenched desert of Schleicher County south of the City of San Angelo, Texas, was the setting for the 1500 persons who participated in the dedication ceremonies for the new Our Lady of Grace Carmelite Monastery on February 3-4.

Bishop Michael D. Pfeifer, OMI, of San Angelo presided at the Mass and Blessing of the new religious house and its chapel.

After the Dedication Eucharist the benefactors and supporters of the Carmelite Nuns offered tours of the new monastery. Several councils of the Knights of Columbus supplied a meal for all the guests.

Mother Margaret Mary Sticka and Sr. Joseph Marie Bedard of the sponsoring

monastery, Carmel of Mary, in Wahpeton, North Dakota, participated. Family members of several of the Sisters came from Ohio, Arizona, Illinois and Texas for the weekend-long events.

Under construction for two years, the architecture of the monastery reflects the style of the earliest Indian Missions in Texas. Fr. John-Benedict Weber, Delegate for North America, presided at the Sunday Eucharist in the new chapel for 300 persons who were joined by another 300 later in the day for the open house and tours.

The community at the new monastery includes Sisters Mary Grace Erl, Mary Imelda Kenzinger, Marie-Therese Spade,



Pablo Osornio seals the cornerstone of the Carmelite Monastery of Our Lady of Grace with mortar during the dedication ceremony.

Mary Michael Nerlinger, Madonna Morales, Mary Annunciata Braun and Mary Agnes Tremblay.

The community was originally established in February, 1989. The Sisters moved into their still incomplete monastery in the desert last May.

Pictures of the new monastery as well as information about the Carmelite Nuns are on the web at: home.att.net/~carmelite