

8 TRAVELOGUE - HOLY LAND

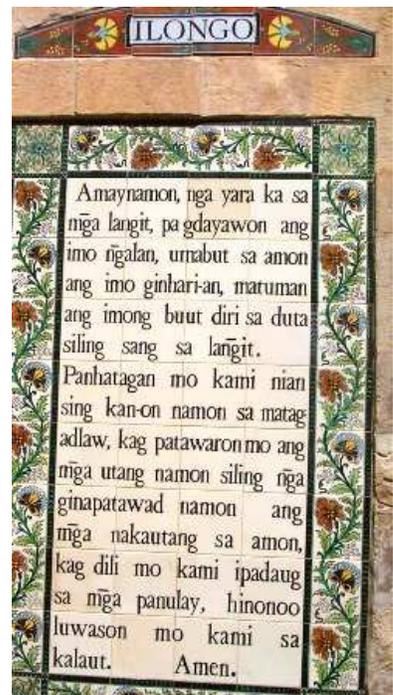
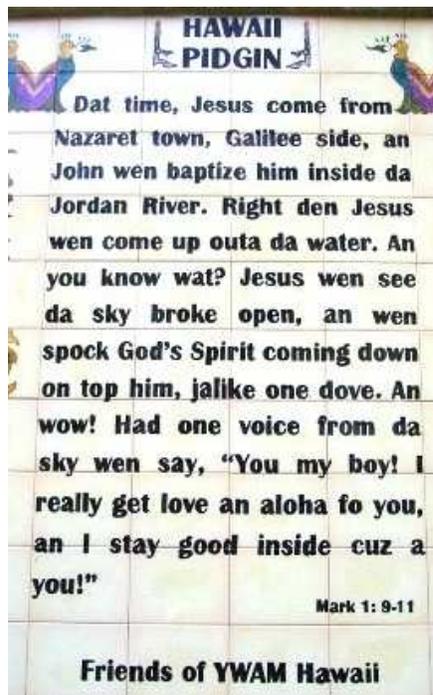
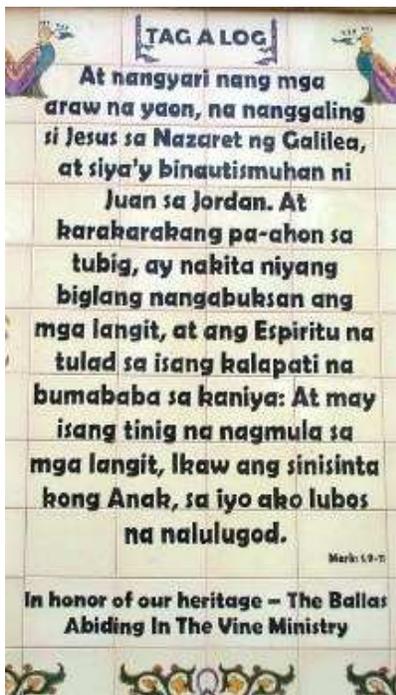
The following pictures and captions are not in order, but give an idea of what we went through and what else we visited during our pilgrimage.



Above, I'm being baptized again by Fr Robin, using water from the Jordan River that he blessed. Picture at right shows part of our group witnessing the baptism by immersion by a group from Nigeria. They were very exuberant and sang like the dickens, and Exie joined them in their singing, then later taught us the song.



There were many places with plaques and prayers in different languages. The first two below are at the River Jordan baptism site. I always was fascinated by Pidgin, center picture. Compare that to Tagalog on the left. The picture at right is the Lord's Prayer in Illongo at the church of the Pater Noster, where it is translated into 184 different languages. We had four languages represented.



In 1991, Mt Pinatubo erupted, and caused a worldwide cooling of up to 2 deg C. According to Exie, this resulted in rare snow falling on the barren hills south-east of Jerusalem that winter, and when spring came, the place bloomed all over with yellow flowers. Picture on right shows the area, on the way down to the Dead Sea.



Barely visible are the sheds of the semi nomadic Bedouins where they tend to goat and sheep.



Aside from the Dead Sea, there were three other “seas” we visited. Above left is the Sea of Galilee where we rode on a boat, and ended up singing and dancing on the deck (not on the water!). Above right is after a long drive to the City of Haifa where we visited the Stella Maris Church. The view overlooks the port city and the Mediterranean Sea. And there was the Red Sea coming in from Egypt.



Picture on left is after all 6 couples had their renewal of marriage vows at the Church at Cana. And this was complete with exchange of rings, arras, cord, veil, and signing of certificates, all caught on camera couple by couple by the others in our group. The Filipino nuns in the church thoughtfully retained the church décor from a grand wedding earlier that day. There were lots more activities for the rest of the two days in Israel, such as the visit to Mt Tabor where the transfiguration took place, The Mount of Be-

tititudes, the Church of the Multiplication of Loaves and Bread, Capernaum, the Sycamore tree which Zaccheus climbed. And we ate pork at an Israeli Kitbutz. There was a great controversy when they first started raising pigs, as it would defile the ground, so they agreed to raise the pigs on wooden platforms. And of course, we ate St Peter’s fish, which was nothing but Tilapia.



Many sites were monuments to war and peace. On the right is the bullet-scarred gate at Mt Zion. The two mid-millennium architects who built the place were later hanged because it was in the wrong location, not within the walled

city. But as Exie says, there must have been a divine plan, as the area became a staging ground and watch tower (see right) for Israeli soldiers who kept vigil over the walled city of Jerusalem nearby, from 1948 until 1967 when they regained the city. Below is the Wailing Wall, segregated, men on left and women on right. We went to touch, and pray.



On left is the Sycamore tree in Jericho. This view isn't that impressive, but the top branches spread and into a large canopy that looked really massive and old. Zaccheus had no problem climbing the tree.

On our last day, Wednesday, we went through the Sheik Hussien bridge, changed buses as we entered Jordan, see below, and left via the Amman Airport. We skipped the Memorial to Moses at Mt Nebo, as we were running quite late.



Unlike the bus in Israel which was an even bigger (compared to that in Egypt) 54 seater Mercedes, this Jordan bus was a 22 seater China made one, which literally crawled, speed-wise. Jordan seemed even more backward than Egypt, and as we drove on and on towards Amman, our guide said there is no restroom available until an hour later. We suggested a stop behind the bushes, by the roadside, and the guide readily agreed (he was waiting for the cue to come from us).

German-made equipment is common in Israel, despite the hold-out of some Jewish individuals. Our Israeli bus was driven by an Arab, and at first I thought he was even better than the Egyptian driver as gear shifting was smooth and superb, then I realized the bus had an automatic transmission.

This was one of the more memorable tours we have taken.

Overall, for the price we paid, we think it was well worth it. Seems like tours originating from the Philippines are more advantageous.

Danny Gil, Sep 2007