

CENTENARY of the CONSECRATION of the CHURCH of OUR LADY OF THE ARK OF THE COVENANT (1924-2024)



In an exceptional event reflecting deep historical and religious heritage, on August 31, 2024, we celebrated the centenary of the consecration of the Church of Our Lady of the Ark of the Covenant, belonging to our Congregation, alongside its reopening after the completion of restoration work that has restored its brilliance and authenticity.

This church, one of the oldest and most significant religious sites in the region, serves as a crossroads between ancient history and the deep faith of both Jewish and Christian peoples. Today, the church is renowned for its remarkable architecture, featuring imposing stone walls, elegant arches, Byzantine mosaics, and exceptional acoustics, making it an ideal venue for musical concerts. Located in the town of Abu Gosh, approximately 10 kilometers west of Jerusalem, the site is widely believed to correspond to the ancient biblical city of Kiryat Yearim, where the Ark of the Covenant was kept for twenty years before being transported to Jerusalem by King David, according to biblical tradition.

The restoration project was undertaken to preserve the church's unique architectural heritage while strengthening its structure to welcome visitors and pilgrims from around the world. This reopening

represents a renewed invitation to reflect on shared values of faith and to promote interreligious dialogue, making Our Lady of the Ark of the Covenant a symbol of encounter and tolerance between peoples and cultures.

The centenary celebration on August 31, marked by the inauguration of the restored church and the consecration of the new altar, was a solemn ceremony attended by His Eminence Cardinal Pizzaballa, Patriarch of

Jerusalem, along with local religious figures, international guests, religious congregations present in the Holy Land, and an unexpectedly large number of Christian faithful from the region. The turnout was so overwhelming that there was not enough space in the church to accommodate everyone! Most of the attendees were connected to and accompanied by our Sisters—an extraordinary sight! It was as if heaven had descended upon the earth.



Everyone expressed their admiration for the efforts made to restore this church to its rightful spiritual and historical place and for the magnificent day we celebrated together.

Friends of Saint Émilie, who had the privilege of participating in this memorable event, share their testimony with us:

"I will not describe this celebration, as it was photographed, filmed, and broadcast in several countries. Instead, I prefer to share a few words about the emotions this event awakened in me.

While waiting in the courtyard for the arrival of the Patriarch, bishops, and priests, I observed the crowd: there were religious men and women from various communities, as well as dozens—perhaps even hundreds—of laypeople from all over the Holy Land: from Nazareth and across Galilee, from Jerusalem, Bethlehem, and Ramallah. One thought, or rather a wish, crossed my mind: this celebration brings together and unites so many Christians, both religious and lay... This CHURCH must remain a place of gathering and unity for Christians. This beautiful church must continue to be a magnet that attracts and unites Christians in the Holy Land."



"First and foremost, it is a special place, far from the hustle and bustle of the city and its crowds, inspiring prayer and reverence. The Mass was solemn and well-organized. The church's consecration program and ceremonies were truly magnificent."

"My heart was filled with joy, love, and humility before this holy house. A feeling of respect, grandeur, and admiration arose for all the preparations, which did not overlook even the simplest details—Mass, choir, words of welcome, and hospitality arrangements."



"We ask His Beatitude the Patriarch, the bishops, priests, and religious communities to safeguard all the holy sites in the land of Jesus, just as we deeply appreciate all the monasteries that surround us in the Holy Land. May God grant us all the ability to work for the good and for peace."

"On August 31, we, the Friends of Saint Émilie de Vialar from Nazareth, accompanied the Sisters of Saint Joseph of the Apparition to attend the centenary celebration of the church in Kiryat Yearim. The ceremony was presided over by His Eminence Cardinal Pizzaballa, in the majestic presence of monks, nuns, and believers from all over the world who gathered with

reverence and faith for this occasion. The closeness and love of our honorable Sisters of Saint Joseph made us appreciate the day even more. We wish them continued presence and dedication in preserving this sacred Christian heritage."

"I wanted to share what we felt during the celebration of the Mass in Abu Ghosh.

First, I felt as if angels were hovering in the church, joyful and watching over us. When the altar was anointed with oil and consecrated, I felt as though the gates of heaven were opening. Every time I looked at the image of the Virgin, the Ark of the Covenant, positioned to the left of the altar, I saw the Virgin Mary happy and smiling, her eyes shining with joy. I experienced an overwhelming sense of joy, as if heaven itself belonged to me."

The centenary and reopening of the Church of Our Lady of the Ark of the Covenant in Abu Gosh was far more than a mere ceremonial event. It marked a moment of profound communion among the faithful, uniting both religious and laypeople in a celebration imbued with faith and hope. This sacred edifice, a witness to a century of history, remains a living symbol of spirituality, dialogue, and fraternity among peoples.



May this church continue to be a place of prayer, peace, and encounter, drawing all those who seek to draw closer to God and rekindle their faith. May it remain a radiant beacon of Christian heritage in the Holy Land, inspiring present and future generations to preserve and honor this sacred legacy.

Moreover, Sister Joséphine had already envisioned the future of this Holy Mountain in visions: "I saw a crowd rushing toward the Basilica. I saw priests, nuns of our Order, and women of the world who were even more pleasing to God than all the others—holy souls shining like stars. I went to the chapel to offer myself to the Lord for whatever He desired, and He clearly made me understand that there was no need to worry, that I should wait for His time and offer Him the basilica."

And if we are that future... of course, we are!

When she had a vision of the Virgin Mary, at the very place where her statue now stands above the church, the Blessed Mother appeared with outstretched arms, signaling to Sister Joséphine that she wished to radiate her graces to the ends of the earth! So many graces await to be bestowed from this holy place. Let us ask for them... and **you, Sister Joséphine, we ask you to accompany us in entering into the mystery of Christ, to discover Him, to welcome His revelation, as you did, as a veil lifting, allowing us to glimpse and perceive the fire of God's Love.**

We conclude by inviting you to the next gathering:

[September 1, 2027: the centenary of Sister Joséphine's entrance into heaven!](#)



*Les Sœurs SJA
de la Province Israël - Palestine*