

Messed It Up

Spiritual tourists come from all corners of the earth to visit our Holy Land. Whether you're a Muslim, Christian, or a Jew we have something for you! Each according to his or her beliefs, we have the rock from which Prophet Mohammad ascended to heaven and connected with God. We have the exact places where Jesus Christ was born, crucified, buried, and resurrected, along with the spots where he performed miracles and preached. We have the Western or the Wailing Wall, which has been a site for Jewish prayer and pilgrimage for centuries. Apart from this, we have the sites and shrines of just about every prophet and veracious person who walked on this land and was mentioned in the Quran and both Testaments. This is of course not to mention the landscape, including all the valleys, mountains, and lakes mentioned in the holy books. Welcome to the Holy Land.

Aside from the geography, the sites, and the monasteries, the Holy Land is practically the spiritual center of all monotheistic religions. For Muslims, Jerusalem is the first *qibla* (direction of prayer), and Al-Aqsa is the third holiest site in Islam. Jerusalem remains one of the holiest cities for the Muslim faith. For Christianity, this is place where it all started, and for the Jews, their religious identity is defined in relation to this land.

Throughout modern history, politics has played a major role in shifting the central place of the monotheistic faiths. Not intending to open Pandora's Box here, but a very close Muslim friend of mine has often asked me why it is that today that the Vatican seems to be the spiritual center for Christianity when it should be here. Naturally, during those debates the question of a Greek church patronizing the local Orthodox Church emerges. Answers to those queries are surely beyond the scope of this short column, but are certainly worth discussing.

Call it what you wish, but the fact remains that this is the Holy Land, blessed by God and by the prophets who have visited and lived here. Unfortunately, this bestowed honor has also brought wars and misery to this land, which seem to last forever. I personally do not have faith that there will be peace in this troubled region any time soon, and I believe that this is because we all have missed the pure and noble essence of our faiths. We definitely need divine intervention again since we have basically messed it all up!

**Warmly,
Sani P. Meo
Publisher**

