

Journey to Jesus' Footsteps

Edited Journal of Holy Land Pilgrimage by Janice Donahue
Lent, 2008

Day One: February 21, 2008 Thursday

4:30 PM. I am just waiting to board Alaska flight 440 from Portland to Ontario and eagerly anticipating the upcoming journey to the Holy Land with quiet excitement. I studied my pilgrim's map. Can't find Mt. Tabor. Where is it? Prayed for Holy Souls in Purgatory. Incoming flight is late. Read newspaper, studied Hebrew and Arabic words. Called family. A little tired. Will say Rosaries on the plane and rest. Quiet mood.

5:15 PM--Flying east over the Gorge, most spectacular views of Mt. St. Helens, Mt. Washington, Mt. Rainier! Completely clear, visibility hundreds of miles. Passing Mt. Hood now. Amazing! O God, how great is your creation! The late afternoon sun hits Mt. Hood face--on. The snow cover glows in reflection. Just how our Blessed Mother reflects her Son..... Beautiful.

5:55 PM--30,000 ft. and a total lunar eclipse has begun. Bird's eye view out plane window. God comes through again! Right off wing of the plane, eclipse at about 20%.

6:56 PM--Eclipse at 99%. Just descended below the clouds and the moon is gone. But, OK! Tremendous experience following the moon the past 2 1/2 hours. No Rosaries completed. Contemplated instead. Wow. Praise be to God! Such a Gift. God is good.

Day Two: February 22, 2008 Friday

8:42 PM. Aboard British Airways flight 280, Mom and I are seated, 47 B&C, 7 rows from back of plane. Excitement. Anticipation. Observing everything. Met Fr. Mike Manning coming up plane aisle. Got last chance to phone Jim, Megan and Justin by cell.

10:15 PM, 11:55 PM, 1:45 AM...no sleep, just watching our flight progress past Boston, south of Newfoundland, 3:30 AM, due south of Greenland, 5:45 AM PST, 51 minutes to London, 33,000 ft., over Ireland's west coast just north of Kilarney. 5:57 AM PST, just switched watches to London time-- 1:57 PM, crossing Irish Channel towards Bristol, 40 minutes to London.

Out the window, there is no sign of Lode England. Sitting in Terminal One. Not very attractive. There is trouble with gate. Switched to Terminal Four. Long meandering walk, labyrinthine hike to a "lift" for Mom's wheelchair, more security, then bus. Finally situated in terminal, 7--hour layover. It is fun to look around. Everybody splits, checking out different things. Several head into London to sight see. They have more trust in rapid transit and rush hour traffic than I do. Bought 2 biscuits, 4 waters-- \$20 American.

Expensive. Don't expect authentic fish n' chips dinner here!

4:32 PM--Hard to say set prayers with all the change & distraction. I read. Others sleep. We visit a bit with Brother Steve. Great personality. With Fr. John. So funny! He's a comedian. Makes us laugh. With Fr. Soney. So gentle and kind. They are all special. Hard to consciously focus on prayer so I let my heart pray & give thanks for safety, and joy, good company, new experiences, and for all the lovely English people who have served us... and friendly folks we are meeting here.

10:07 PM--Heathrow, Gate 22, and awaiting departure to Tel Aviv. Highlights: Fish n' chips dinner courtesy of Brother Stephen and Mom. So kind! Sent 4 post cards, got some English coins, Fr. John showed me the "Quiet Room" where he & Fr. Soney were resting in the peaceful dark on lounges. I joined them, fell immediately to sleep after an opportunity to focus and pray a little. Discovering what an international little group we are: India, Vietnam, Poland, Texas, and America! What a Gift this is! My body is completely confused. No idea what time of day it is.

11:37 PM--25,000 feet, tail wind 105 km, will arrive Tel Aviv 6:05 AM on the morning of 2/22. Alleluia! Now over the English Channel headed towards Luxembourg. Will pass over Dunkirk! Historic. In minutes, we cross over the French shoreline, the demarcation between utter blackness and the lights of coastal cities. Tremendously exciting! Still on London time. Eight--hour difference between London and LA. Two hours difference between London & Tel Aviv. Outside air temp. --77 degrees Fahrenheit.

4:12 AM--Israeli time just passed over the Balkans into Turkish airspace, south of Istanbul, west of Ankara. If only National Geographic could see us now. 774 miles to go.

5:37 AM—We are quickly descending, still over far east Mediterranean. We see glimmers of the red glow of sunrise across the horizon over the landmass to the east. 37 miles to destination headed southeast, 46 degrees f. outside plane, trajectory turning due east, and 128 mph. We just crossed the Israeli coastline. It is bright enough to see some details, streetlights. 5:44 AM-- touchdown! In the Land of the Prophets.