


**Holy Land Pilgrimage
DeMelo Group
Christopher Cross, KHS
February 2 to 13, 2025 Itinerary**

Day 1

Sunday Feb 2

We will depart from **St Charles Borromeo Catholic Church** in Visalia, and proceed to Los Angeles on a chartered Bus.

Once we arrive at LAX, we will go to the **Bradley Terminal (Terminal B)** and meet any additional Pilgrims who might be joining us from other cities or locations. Thereafter, we will proceed as one group to the **EL AL  Airlines** terminal for Group Check-in.

Security at the EL AL check-in will ask me questions about the group and may ask selected members of our group questions to ensure that security of the flight is maintained. We will discuss this in greater detail when we have our GO meeting, approximately one month prior to Departure.

We will proceed through TSA and board and depart on **EL AL flight LY006** at approximately 2PM. This direct flight takes about 14 hours.

Day 2

Monday February 3

We arrive at Ben-Gurion Airport in **Tel Aviv** around 1:50 PM, local time. We will proceed as a group to a set of Passport machines, which will scan our Passport, take a picture and issue an admission ticket to be shown to a Passport Control Officer. Thereafter, we will collect our luggage at the designated carousel, go through customs and exit into the nonsecure area, where we will meet our guide Christopher Cross and our Bus Driver. We will travel by Motor Coach to **Jerusalem**, a trip that takes about 45 minutes.

If we have Pilgrims meeting us at Tel Aviv, so long as their flights arrive prior to our flight, they will join us on the Bus. If their flights arrive after our flight, then they will take a Cab to Jerusalem. The cost calculated per cab, not per person, is around \$100 + tip.

We will check in to the Jerusalem to our Hotel, and our luggage will be unloaded and delivered to our rooms. Dinner will be around 6:00 to 6:30 PM in the dining room. Our group will have reserved seating with a sign on the tables that are for our use. There will be other groups dining at the same time at other tables. Overnight in Jerusalem.

Day 3

Tuesday February 4

We attend Mass early in the morning at the **Church of the Holy Sepulchre**, celebrated either in the Tomb or at Calvary, however we might be scheduled. *Final Mass schedules will be available when we have our Go meeting prior to the Pilgrimage.*

(Catholic Masses can only be said between 4:30 AM and 6:30 AM in the Holy Sepulcher). **We strongly encourage everyone who can, to attend these Masses, because after or before the Mass, we will explain all the Holy sites and articles located within the church. Some might be too tired and need to sleep in, and of course personal needs take priority.**

Leaving the church we get a chance to meet our **local Tour Coordinator Jamal Dejani**. He is a very important part of our Pilgrimage. He makes sure the logistics of the Pilgrimage regarding accommodations, travel, and meals are set and revised as situations arise that require it. We visit his shop, after each visit to the Holy Sepulchre in the morning, and you will have the ability to have coffee, go to the restroom and browse or purchase religious souvenirs before we return to the hotel and have breakfast. We go to Jamal's for about 30 minutes each early morning while in Jerusalem.

A Note about shopping: This is a religious Pilgrimage. We appreciate that Pilgrims will want to purchase religious items, souvenirs and gifts for themselves and others. For this reason we stop at Jamal's shop before breakfast, so that when we are out and about on the

Pilgrimage we are focused on the walking in the footsteps of Jesus. We patronize only a couple shops as a group: In Bethlehem we also patronize the Catholic shop of the **Nissan Brothers**. These two shops have the utmost integrity in their representations of quality and value especially in the case of religious jewelry.

Also in these shops, or any where we go where a purchase can be made, your identity is secure and you can use a credit card. If there is a church run shop near a major Holy Site, your purchases are also secure. Elsewhere, as you walk about on your own in the Old City or elsewhere, buyer discretion is advised. Be prudent when choosing to use a credit card and do not flash large amounts of cash.

Plan to leave the hotel each day around 8:30 AM. We will travel to **Bethlehem** to visit the **Church of the Nativity**, the birthplace of Jesus, and tour the church. We will celebrate Mass at the Basilica. We will say a decade of the Rosary. We will also visit the **Milk Grotto**, where tradition has it that Mary fed the child Jesus breast milk. We will have lunch in Bethlehem.

In the afternoon, we will likely have a chance to visit the **Nissan Brothers Bethlehem shop** and see various olive wood workings and beautiful Nativity sets.

We and then return to Jerusalem where we will visit the **House of Caiaphas**, the high priest, and the site of Peter's denial. We will get a chance to see and understand where and how Jesus spent Holy Thursday. There we will see a set of steps that Jesus walked on that evening after His arrest.

On the front cover of “Walking In His Footsteps” you can see the stairs leading to Caiaphas’s House. We will be back at our hotel before 5 PM. Dinner and overnight in Jerusalem.

Day 4

Wednesday February 5

We attend Mass early in the morning at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and visit other portions of this church.

After Breakfast we will visit the Jewish town of **Ein Kerem** located a short drive outside of Jerusalem. There we and see the church built over the lower **house of Zechariah** where St. John the Baptist was born. We will celebrate Mass at the upper house of Zechariah, where Elizabeth spent time in seclusion. It was there that the Virgin Mary ascended to visit Elizabeth. We will celebrate **Mass at the Church of the Visitation**. Lunch in Jerusalem.

This afternoon we will go to the **Church of the Dormition**, a Benedictine Abbey commemorating the sleeping (death) of Mary, the Mother of the Lord. We will visit the **Room of the Last Supper** located just across from the Dormition Abbey. We do several scripture readings in the Room of the Last Supper, before we descend from Mt Zion to visit the **Western Wall**. We will also visit the uneven stairs, on the **South side of the Temple**, leading up to the entrances used by the Holy Family for the Presentation. We will read a couple passages from scripture. We return to our hotel for dinner.

We will have a **Holy Hour Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament** this night (or on Thursday) from 8:30 PM until 9:30 PM at the very spot where Jesus told his apostles, “Could you not stay awake for one hour with me.” We will have a chance to go to confession during the holy hour. Overnight in Jerusalem.

Day 5

Thursday February 6

We attend Mass early in the morning at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and visit other portions of this church.

After enjoying breakfast at our hotel, we drive to **Mt. Scopus** (East Jerusalem) with its many churches built in memory of Jesus’ Ascension. We will visit the **Mosque of the Ascension** from where it is believed Christ ascended into heaven. We then proceed to the **Church of Pater Noster** built by St Helena over the spot where Jesus taught the Our Father prayer. We continue down following the **Palm Sunday route**, pausing at the **Church of Dominus Flevit** the site where Jesus wept over Jerusalem. After continuing our walk down the Palm Sunday route we arrive at **Gethsemane** where we will celebrate Mass at the Church of All Nations. We then will break for lunch as all the churches are closed from noon to 2:00 PM each day.

In the afternoon, we take a tour around the **Old City** visiting each of the historical gates – *Jaffa Gate, Zion Gate, New Gate, Damascus Gate, Dung Gate and St. Stephen’s Gate.*

We will visit **St. Anne's Church** (birthplace of the Blessed Mother) and then see the **Pool of Bethesda** where Jesus healed the lame man on the Sabbath. We will see the "Ecce Homo" arch and visit the **convent of the Sisters of Zion** and see the *Lithostotos* where Jesus was mocked and scourged.

We will celebrate our own Way of the Cross procession along the **Via Dolorosa**, if time permits -or if not, then one morning before breakfast while in Jerusalem. The procession will cover the Stations until we arrive at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. Our bus will meet us at Jaffa Gate and take us back to our hotel. Overnight in Jerusalem.

We will need to pack as we leave the hotel Friday morning for the Sea of Galilee. Keep your swimsuit with you if you intend to float on the Dead Sea on Friday.

Day 6

Friday February 7

We attend Mass early in the morning at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and then proceed to breakfast.

We depart Jerusalem and pass through the Judean desert and view **Jericho**, the oldest city in the world. On the way we stop and recall the **Parable of the Good Samaritan**. We then proceed to the **Baptism site of Jesus**, and renew our Baptism vows. We pass by **Qumran** and point out the cave where the Dead Sea scroll were found, before we proceed to the **Dead Sea**. If weather permits there will be an

opportunity for those who wish, to float on the in the Dead Sea. In Jericho we view the **Sycamore Tree** where Zacchaeus climbed to see Jesus. Lunch in Jericho.

We then continue up to the Sea of Galilee. We should arrive in time to visit **Magdala** where we can **celebrate Mass** overlooking the Sea. After we proceed to our hotel on the Sea of Galilee for check-in and dinner. We overnight in Tiberias.

Day 7

Saturday February 8

We head southwest about 40 minutes away to the town of **Nazareth**, the boyhood town of Jesus. We celebrate Mass in Nazareth and visit the **Basilica of the Annunciation** as well as the **Church of St Joseph**, built over where Joseph had his carpentry business. We will also visit the **Synagogue in Nazareth** where Jesus unrolled the scroll of Isaiah announcing that He was the messiah. Lunch in Nazareth.

We then drive to **Cana**, the site of Jesus' first sign where he turned water into wine. It is here that the **married couples can renew their marriage vows**. After Cana we go back to **Magdala synagogue**, and then back to our hotel. Overnight at the Sea of Galilee.

Day 8

Sunday February 9

We will visit the Church of the **Multiplication of the Loaves and Fishes** where Jesus fed 5,000 me. Depending on Mass time we will visit **Capernaum** before or after Mass.

Capernaum is the city where Peter, Andrew, James and John sailed to fish. There we will visit the **house of St Peter** and the **centurion's synagogue** where Jesus preached the Bread of Life discourse.

We celebrate Mass outside on top of the **Mount of Beatitudes** overlooking the Sea of Galilee. Lunch near the Sea of Galilee.

We will have a one-hour **boat ride** on the Sea of Galilee and read the scriptures associated with the sea. After the boat ride we will take an easy bus ride all around the Sea of Galilee and visit **Kursi**, the site where the swine ran into the Sea of Galilee and the Church of **Peter's Primacy**. We will see the Golan Heights and explain its historical significance.

After Dinner - we will have an **important mandatory meeting** at the hotel to discuss **Free Day options** for Tuesday Jerusalem, so that Jamal can help if needed. We will also **collect tips** for the Bus Driver and Guide, for presentation to them at our going away dinner. Overnight at Sea of Galilee.

Day 9

Monday February 10

This is our final morning on the Sea of Galilee and we will **check out of the Hotel** early and drive to **Caesarea Philippi**, where Jesus after inquiring about who people were saying who He was, blessed St Peter's response by giving him the keys to the Kingdom of Heaven. We will see the huge **rock**, a temple to Pan, which served as a backdrop for the Apostles when Jesus declared Simon Peter to be the rock.

We then proceed to Mt. Tabor, site of the **Transfiguration**. Everyone will enjoy the ride to the top of the mountain. We have to take small taxi cabs because our bus is too large for the narrow switchback road used to ascend the mountain. We will celebrate Mass on the Church at top of the mountain.

We continue onto Jerusalem, again through the Jordan Valley with lunch in Jericho and then proceed to our Hotel in Jerusalem. Overnight in Jerusalem.

Day 10

Tuesday February 11

Early morning Mass in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. This will be your last Mass in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

FREE DAY - This day is **open** for each Pilgrim to enjoy and they might. It is available for a number of activities, that were discussed at the evening meeting on Sunday.

It is a chance for last minute shopping in the Old City or revisiting your favorite Holy Site. We need to have lunch on our own.

After returning to the Hotel, **consider beginning to pack** before dinner for the long trip home, as we check out of the hotel first thing Wednesday. Medications and Valuables will need to be packed in such a way that they can be stored and retrieved from inside the bus. Overnight in Jerusalem.

Day 11

Wednesday February 12

This is our last day in the Holy Land for all of us. We will spend Wednesday with all our suitcases in the belly of the bus, with the compartment locked until arrival at the Airport.

We have to be out of the hotel before 10:00 AM. We go to **Bethany** and visit Mary and Martha's house, and Lazarus Tomb. We return to Jerusalem for lunch and try to arrange a tour of the Holy Shroud Museum at the Hotel Notre Dame.

We will celebrate our **last Mass** in the Holy Land late afternoon and then go to a **farewell dinner** in Jerusalem. We have a chance to thank our tour guide and bus driver for the past week and beautiful memories.

We will then ask our priest to
bles ✝ **all our religious articles.**

From the Restaurant we proceed to the **airport in Tel Aviv**. After checking in, and obtaining our flight ticket, we proceed to an the area where we scan our Passports for exiting Israel, then security and then finally we enter a common area, where we can have refreshments or food, before going to the gate.

For those of us going to LAX, we depart Tel Aviv on **EL AL flight LY005** at 00:45 (just before 1 AM) to arrive at 6 AM (US time).

Day 12

Thursday February 13

Once we arrive, we will go through Passport Control and then retrieve our suitcases. There we will likely say goodbye to those who wish to remain in the LA Basin area. We will all make our way through customs. The custom declarations are digital now, no paper. When all of us are through customs, I will contact the Bus driver to pick us up at an agreed place. The Motor Coach will take us back to Visalia, after a brief stop to eat at a halfway point. The plan is to arrive mid-afternoon at St Charles Borromeo Catholic Church.

The Pilgrimage at that point will have ended, but the memories will last forever!