

Reflections on Our Gathering with Roots-Shorashim-Judar,

By Sister Margaret Carney, OSF President Emerita of St. Bonaventure University

When our interfaith mission travelled to Israel in 2017, organized by the BJF, one component of our trip was the interaction with groups working to change the culture of animosity between Israelis and Palestinians.

ROOTS/Shorashim/Judar was the first such group to host us. As we gathered in their center on the outskirts of Jerusalem, one had the sense of being in the presence of people who dared to embrace a prophetic stance. They were willing to cross the divide of years of bitter conflict to establish “bridges” between peoples. Their work did not flow from a theory, but from the power of personal encounter and personal conversion of attitudes and beliefs. Any opportunity to expand awareness of the work of ROOTS here in the U.S.A. is a powerful chance to become a friend to these brave architects of a new future for both groups. By literally bringing these two leaders –Rabbi Shaul Judelman and No’or Awad-- into our living rooms through the power of ZOOM, I hope that we opened some new doors—and hearts—to the hidden work of peace- making and justice- seeking that our ROOTS friends conduct day by day.

Hearing their stories of bridging the divides of “exclusivism” based on nationality and religion reminded me of the struggle in Northern Ireland. Seamus Heaney, a poet whose life unfolded in that context, wrote once that he wanted to be a citizen of the “Republic of Conscience.” Surely, ROOTS might be included in the list of the “embassies” of that republic where people strive for peace against the odds and seek to create informed consciences. It has been our privilege to meet them and to offer the hand of friendship to them.