

Reflections While Walking

Olive Trees

The rosary's sorrowful mysteries remind me of a pilgrimage I made to Israel several years ago, particularly the agony in the garden. There is a relatively steep climb to the summit of The Mount of Olives and the garden of Gethsemane. On the ascent you pass by a centuries old Jewish cemetery with acres of rectangular white stone monuments marking the resting places of thousands of Jews. The graves serve as a foreshadowing of the events unfolding in Jesus life that began on this very mount. Arriving at the summit you have a spectacular view of the city of Jerusalem. It is not too difficult to stretch your imagination and envision the view of the city that Jesus might have had that Passover evening as he prayed to His Father for relief from the unfolding horrific events. In contrast to the sobering tombs and the angry mob coming for Him, the dimly lit, flickering shadows of families celebrating Passover in the city below might offer Jesus hope.



Also, at the summit, in a fenced in area, are eight incredibly old olive trees. Tradition has it that these eight trees were silent witnesses of Jesus' prayer and suffering on the evening before His crucifixion. While I don't believe that these very trees were present when Jesus was praying and agonizing to the point of sweating blood, I see in them a symbolic image of the torture that he had to endure. The trunks of these olive trees have a twisted, gnarled, fractured, and knotted appearance looking as if they too had undergone some horrendous torturous ordeal. It's as if God created them that way to serve as a constant reminder of the suffering His son underwent for us. There are many different symbols that we use to aid our reflections on the mysteries of the rosary; these olive trees are one of mine.