

Sacred Heart Parish

Vicariate of Amman
(English-Language)

A Ministry of the Society of Jesus (Jesuits)

ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2018 **January – December**

Welcome to the Annual Report for 2018.

Sacred Heart is a personal parish, rather than a territorial parish, which means that with the exception of the Francis Xavier Chapel at the Jesuit Center where we celebrate a morning Mass 6 days a week, we do not have a permanent structure of our own. Thanks to the generous cooperation of St. Mary of Nazareth Church, Sweifieh and St. Jean Baptiste de LaSalle Church in Jabal Hussein, we are able to celebrate the Sunday Mass on Saturday and Sunday evening.

But a parish is not a building but rather the people, and Sacred Heart, albeit a most unusual parish, is filled with wonderful people with extraordinary backgrounds, great generosity and varied interests

Some of our programs and activities do not have neat start and stop dates, so the narrative report includes some activities up to the present. There is both a print and an electronic/online version of this report. The latter has a number of pictures which simply do not reproduce well.

Fr. John R. Sheehan, SJ - Pastor

MINISTRIES AND PROGRAMS OF THE CHURCH

SACRAMENTS – In 2018 there were 5 baptisms, and 12 receiving their First Holy Communion (2 who were baptized, confirmed and received Communion over the Easter weekend). There were 2 Confirmations, no weddings, no funerals, and no ordinations. Confessions were heard before Mass, and whenever an appointment was made, during the monthly Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and whenever the Xavier Chapel was open for prayer. The Sacrament of the Sick was administered on request and there was one “Healing Mass” at which it was also available.

EUCCHARISTIC CELEBRATIONS – Because Sacred Heart is a personal parish, rather than a territorial one, we say Mass in a number of different places. We have regularly scheduled Masses every day but Sunday at the Jesuit Center at 8:30 AM, a weekly Mass at 5 PM at St. Mary of Nazareth, Sweifieh, and on Sunday at 6 PM at St. Jean Baptiste de LaSalle Church, Jabal Hussein. We also provide occasional assistance to the Filipino Chaplaincy at the Church of the Annunciation at Jabal Weibde and St. Joseph’s Church, Jabal Amman.

There have also been Masses for special events and holidays. For instance, on March 17 there was a special Mass in the Jesuit Chapel celebrating St. Patrick’s Day with members of the Irish community in Amman and a memorial Mass in French, among others.

PARISH REGISTRATION – During 2018 we improved the system of registration of families. It made it possible for individuals or families to update their own records, and added areas where more information could be voluntarily provided. At last the end of 2018 we have 134 families and individuals registered. One registration may mean a single person, or a family of 5. Our best estimate would be that we probably have 350 people included in the registration and probably another 30 to 50 who attend Mass regularly but are not registered. We encourage people to indicate or let us know when they are leaving, but that is not always accurate.

HEARTBEAT, the weekly newsletter. The weekly newsletter is available in print and online at the website and on our Facebook page. HEARTBEAT is currently mailed to 140 Email addresses. We print 85 copies each week and they are available at the Jesuit Center, at both weekend Masses and for a regular study group that meets each week.

FACEBOOK – We are in the age of social media, and so we have our own Facebook group page. It is not open to the public, but anyone who asks to be admitted probably will be. Currently there are 46 members.

PARISH CALENDAR – The second edition of the Sacred Heart Parish calendar was published before Christmas, and once again proved very popular. Advertising and sales meant that it paid for itself, and if next year’s edition has more advertising, we might be able to provide it for free or a lower price. We printed 800 copies and gave away at least 75.

THE PARISH WEB SITE – The website has 22 pages on average (we had a special section for both Lent and Advent, for instance, and the number of photographs available can change over time). We provide maps and directions to all the Churches where we celebrate Mass, and links to several other useful Catholic sites, including Abouna.org, the registration page for the parish, and Universalis, where you can get the readings for the day or any day you wish. The site is updated at least once a week, and includes notes from the Pastor, a calendar of activities, reminders of special events, the Holy Father’s monthly prayer intentions and the video he issues each month, as well as galleries of photos of special events. In 2017 the web site had 993 visitors, making 3,313 visits. In this calendar year we have had 13,001 visitors who made over 40,000 visits.

The most visitors came from the United States (3,515) followed by visitors from Jordan (2,978) and then in much smaller number, German, China, the United Kingdom, France, Australia, Russia and Canada.

PARISH COORDINATORS – Certainly one of the strongest groups in our church is the group with the simple title of “Coordinators.” This is a group with tremendous experience, seemingly boundless energy, vast goodwill and abilities I am constantly discovering. Now lest that sound too intimidating, the current members would like to welcome anyone interested in joining this merry band so please do not hesitate to step forward. Currently there are 10 active coordinators and several others who have indicated an interest.

LECTORS – Given the importance of the Ministry of the Word, we have continued with training workshops for Lectors, to help improve the ability and confidence of our Lectors, and to standardize how the readings should be presented in our parish. Currently we have 24 names on our roster, and Coordinators are also Lectors and usually read the Prayer of the Faithful. We do not always immediately know when people have left, and several readers who do read at Mass have yet to take the workshop and be formally installed. Most of our trained Lectors are at Sweifieh, although at Freres we now have some who have taken the workshop, and other volunteers who regularly come forward to read.

EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS OF HOLY COMMUNION – In this Vicariate, we have the special privilege from the Bishop of being able to use lay Eucharistic Ministers. Because of local custom, they must be men. We had several workshops to prepare Eucharistic Ministers, and currently there are names 8 on our list. Because the size of the congregation at Freres Church is usually small, Eucharistic Ministers are generally not needed.

ALTAR SERVERS – This important ministry in the Church is open to boy and girls, and right now we have 6 names on our list, which for a Parish of our size is very low. We have added three this year but we have also lost some as families move or emigrate.

MUSIC MINISTRY – In 2018 there was a short-lived attempt to bring together a group to provide additional music for the Masses at Sweifieh and for special liturgical events like Holy Week. After the summer months, when people returned from vacations and some permanent moves had taken place, there was a very small response for calls for people to come and sing. The communities at both of the weekend churches sing with enthusiasm and strength, so the music at Mass is usually quite good. But the lack of a regular a capella choir is certainly one of my failings.

CARE FOR THE POOR – This is one of the most active groups in the Parish, helping to reach out on behalf of the members to those who need some help. In 2017 we offered free flu shots to 260 high risk individuals in the refugee community, mostly children and senior citizens. We started an Advent Basket program, collecting food and clothing and blankets that were delivered to two different groups in 2018. Because of the generosity of people who contributed money, we were able to substantially enlarge what we were able to provide. A separate report on those projects is included elsewhere in this report. We also provided an Iftar dinner during Ramadan, and have quietly helped individuals and families who were in need and not yet established with formal relief agencies. We started a project to provide inexpensive heating for poor families, which was implemented at the beginning of 2019.

COUNSELING & SPIRITUAL DIRECTION – During the year a number of people came to the Jesuit priests for either counseling or spiritual direction.

ADULT EDUCATION – There is a weekly gathering of around 15 adults to discuss and learn more about the Bible, the Catholic Church and related topics of interest to the group. Fr. John serves as the resource person for this group and occasionally does more formal presentations.

ASK FATHER JOHN – In response to individuals asking questions about the faith, Fr. John created an evening event called “Ask Father John.” Hosted in private homes, the format is simply open question, and no question is out of bounds. It has attracted parishioners, Catholics not in our parish and some who are not Catholic who are interested in learning more about the Church.

EVENTS AND HIGHLIGHTS DURING THE YEAR

LENTEN ACTIVITIES – During Lent, there was a group reflection every Saturday after the 8:30 Mass, a day of recollection, and the chapel was open at different hours during the week for private prayer and confession. A daily Lenten reflection was emailed to all who requested it (56 names on that mailing list), and the reflection was also available on the Facebook page each morning. We did have a small singing group who added to the music for the celebrations of Holy Thursday and Good Friday.

HOLY WEEK – Following the evening Mass on Holy Thursday at the Church of St. Jean Baptiste de LaSalle, with the permission and cooperation of the police, we took the Blessed Sacrament in solemn procession through the streets from the Church to the Jesuit Center, where an Altar of Repose had been set up in the Francis Xavier Chapel. People were able to pray there until midnight, and during the day on Friday, except for the time when we had the Good Friday Service. There was an abbreviated Vigil Service at St. Mary of Nazareth on Holy Saturday early in the evening. The full Vigil Mass was held at St. Jean Baptiste de LaSalle, and one person was baptized, confirmed and received her First Holy Communion. Another catechumen was baptized in the river Jordan on Easter Sunday morning, received the sacraments of initiation, and his son was also baptized. The Solemn Mass of Easter Sunday morning was celebrated at the Jesuit Center, in the large classroom. (One of the disadvantages of not having a particular physical Church is that Mass schedules are always coordinated by others, and sometimes the available times don’t meet the needs of the English community. This year, we felt it was better to have our Mass at the Jesuit Center, and it worked out very well indeed.)

2019 FIRST COMMUNION AND CONFIRMATION CLASSES – The First Communion class (who will receive the sacrament in 2019) numbers 16 this year, a significant jump from the three who received the sacrament in my first year. Class is held every Saturday beginning in September for one hour prior to the evening Mass. There is one Confirmation candidate, who will hopefully be ready for the Sacrament during 2019.

JESUIT ALUMNI MASS & RECEPTION – For the second year, Sacred Heart Parish was invited by the Upper Northeast Province in the United State to take part in an international celebration of Jesuit Alumni, with a special Mass and a reception, at which the works of the Society of Jesus might be made more well-known. We had alumni from 34 Jesuit schools and organizations from 11 different countries. Included were a number of alumni from Baghdad who continue to be very supportive of their school and will be hosting an international reunion in 2019.

FATHER ROBERT McCHESNEY, S.J. – Fr. McChensey arrived in Amman on January 10, with the specific assignment of working with the refugees. Unfortunately, he had to return to the States briefly when his father died on February 3. Although not officially a member of the Parish, he has helped out at Masses, especially with the Filipino community at the request of Fr. Gerald.

VISITING JESUIT NOVICE – For several months, one of the Jesuit Novices of the Middle East Province lived and worked in our community, as part of his formation training. Michael Ghobrial had been a pharmacist before entering, and so in addition to his energy and enthusiasm, his practical experience was a great value in our flu shot program, visiting the sick and his experience and organizational skills were used in several different projects and activities. He has since taken his First Vows as a Jesuit, and is now in Philosophy studies.



PARISH RECEPTIONS – Because we do not have control over the Church Hall, it is not practical for us to try and have a weekly gathering after Mass. But periodically – once a month on average – we try and have a reception at St. Mary of Nazareth following the 5:00 PM Mass. We provide coffee and drinks, and sometimes wine, and often a cake if there is a special celebration, and parishioners bring food to share, and there is almost always an abundance of food. It is a chance for people to get to talk to one another, to learn something about the faces seen each week at Mass.

MINI PILGRIMAGE – On October 26 the parish had a mini-pilgrimage to Macchaerus, Madaba and Mt. Nebo. The original idea had been to focus on the young people of the parish, with a couple of adults along but several adults were so attracted by the idea that we had a nice mix. The weather the day before had been very bad, with flash floods in the area and the tragic death of several school children and adults who had been on an outing. There was some concern, but we went and the weather was fine, the roads were clear and we had a very good time.

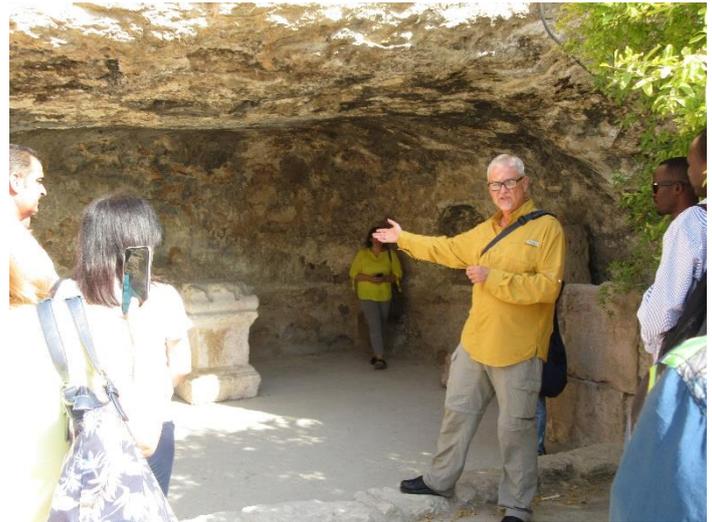


SR. JOANA CARNEIRO, S.M.C. – Sister Joana had been in Amman for about a year and a half, working with several groups but primarily increasing her fluency in Arabic. She was a physician, and entered into the lives of many in the area. Shortly before she was to leave for her new assignment in South Sudan, she renewed her vows, and the parish hosted a farewell reception for her at the Jesuit Center.

FATHER JOHN IN CONCERT – As a professional actor and singer, Fr. John has appeared over 1,000 times on stage in different roles and production, and has sung solo concerts in 13 different countries and songs in as many languages. He presented his first solo concert in Amman on October 8, and sold out the Bank Al-Etiihad auditorium. He raised over 1,400 JOD which was designated to go to the Care for the Poor program at the parish.



On a trip to the orphanage at Ajloun



Above Left: Delivering blankets and food
Above: Fr. Michael sharing his knowledge of Amman
Left: Building the Advent Basket cans
Below: The First Communion Class of 2018
Below Left: One of the 150 heating units we distributed in 2019.



A BRIEF CALENDAR OF THE PAST YEAR

- January 4 – Fr. Schineller left to begin a new assignment in the U.S.
- January 10 – Fr. Robert McChesney, SJ arrived to join the Jesuit Center
- January 15 – Ask Father John
- January 26 – Showcase of the Arts Program at the Jesuit Center; Father John was Emcee
- February 2-4 – Blessing of candles and blessing of throats at all Masses
- February 8 – Condolence gathering for the Mother of Michael Marrah and the father of Fr. Robert McChesney
- February 9 – Delivery of food and blankets to ten families and subsequent providing clothing and household goods to families whose buildings had collapsed. Coordinated with JRS and the local government
- February 10 – Lector workshop
- February 17/18 – Mass celebrated in Latin in both churches
- February 18- 23 – Fr. Provincial and the Consultors for the Near East Province visit Amman
- February 19 – Ask Father John
- February 20 – Lector workshop
- February 21 – Distribution of Ashes at morning and evening Masses and during the day
- February 27 – Workshop for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion
- (Throughout the year there were workshops for the various ministries; each one is not listed)*
- March 3 – First Confessions; RCIA Penitential Rite; Mass of Anointing at Sweifieh
- March 4 – Michael G nSJ leaves (add explanation)
- March 9 – Mass for Children
- March 18 – RCIA 2nd Scrutiny at the 6 PM Mass
(Holy Week and Easter services, see the notes above.)
- May 24- Iftar Dinner hosted by the Parish, approximately 80 guests were welcomed and served.
- July 22 – Vow renewal, and farewell party for Sr. Joana, a Comboni sister who was moving to a new assignment in South Sudan.
- July 31 – Special Mass and reception in celebration of St. Ignatius Loyola on his feast day. Activities included special films both on the feast and the day before.
- August 11 – House blessing
- August 15 – Engagement celebration at the Dead Sea
- August 29 – Meeting of parents for 2019 1st Communion program
- September 22 – First class for the 2019 1st Communion program
- October 8 – Fr. John Sings – a solo concert with the proceeds going to the Care for the Poor program
- October 9 – Trip with Jesuit Center staff and others to sites associated with St. George
- October 13 – Children’s Mass
- October 16 – Trip to the orphanage at Ajloun
- October 26 – A parish-sponsored one-day pilgrimage to Machaerus, Madaba and Mt. Nebo, with lunch included. 21 people participated, many young people.
- November 1-10 Fr. John was away on retreat
- November 24 – Launch of the Advent Basket program for 2018
- November 30 – Baptism at the Baptismal site at the Jordan River
- December 8 – Children’s Mass
- December 24 – Abbreviated Vigil Mass at St. Mary of Nazareth Church
- December 25 – Mass of Christmas morning at the Jesuit Center