

Orthodox Christian Explains Spiritual Significance of Decor in Israeli Temples

When a 70-year-old woman approached college student Peter Nassif on campus at Loyola University in sub-30-degree weather and told him, “You’re going to the Holy Land,” Nassif was understandably taken aback. What he didn’t know is that this was his first step toward an unforgettable experience in Israel, through the Passages program.

An Orthodox Christian, Nassif already had more understanding of Jewish culture than many students visiting Israel.

“From my personal experience with my Antiochian Orthodox identity, I have found that a lot of people walk into these large churches—Church of the Holy Sepulchre, Church of the Nativity, which is a Catholic Church (however, very similar to what an Orthodox church would look like)—and they don’t exactly understand, per se, the icons, all the money, quite frankly, spent on all of the glitz and glam of the church.

“So, for me to go there and for me to be able to talk with students to be able to help them understand why icons are the way they are, why we as Orthodox and in the Catholic churches as well choose to spend money and devote our time to creating what churches are—it’s very important to me to be able to explain ... that that’s our way of creating heaven on earth. We believe that His church is supposed to be our Mass on Sundays, is supposed to be God coming down to be with us and to celebrate.”

To hear more about Nassif’s experiences in Israel, such as how God awakened a new spiritual desire in him during his visit to the Garden of Gethsemane, listen to the rest of the episode here.

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