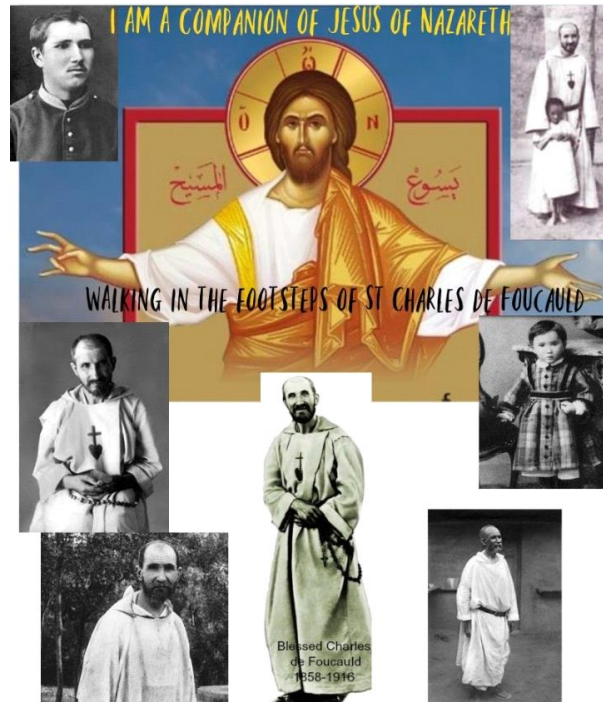


At the writing of this revised vision statement, (4/5/2021) we are awaiting the date for the canonization of Charles de Foucauld within this year 2021.



The Companions of Jesus of Nazareth-a new family In the footsteps of St Charles de Foucauld

"Never worry about numbers. Help one person at a time and always start with the person nearest you."
— Mother Teresa

1. Who are The Companions of Jesus of Nazareth?

Walking the way of Jesus in the footsteps of St Charles de Foucauld, we are a fraternity hidden in the heart of the world.



"The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into about sixty pounds of flour until it worked all through the dough" (Mt. 13:33).

"You are the salt of the earth" (Mt. 5:13).

Like yeast permeating dough to rise into bread and salt cutting bitterness to increase food flavor, we endeavor to allow Jesus of Nazareth to mystically present himself in our "own little world" to raise it up and cut its bitterness.

It is difficult in a world whose mentality and customs are dominated by a spirit contrary to the Gospel, to live in accordance with Jesus' teachings on renunciation, poverty, chastity, and obedience without from time to time translating this fidelity into actions that go beyond Our Lord's actual commandments. To some Jesus says: "If thou wilt," and here one is no longer confronted with an obligation but rather a solicitation of love.

Directory, p. 41

**References to the Directory: The original "Directory" by Bl. Charles is not translated into English. The word "Directory" is better translated in English as "handbook." However, parts of it were used when the Lay Fraternities updated Bl. Charles' Directory or handbook, and privately published it for the European Lay groups. The Lay groups eventually took the name of Secular Fraternity in the 1970's. The name was again changed to The Lay Fraternities.*



The family of St Charles de Foucauld has grown and evolved over time, with religious congregations beginning and developing in a variety of countries throughout the world. The Little Sisters of Nazareth,

for instance, were founded in Belgium and are primarily Belgian women. Religious congregations have been founded in Vietnam, as well as lay communities in several other countries. They came into existence as a zealous response to concrete needs.

One such unique community was developed by a Parisian French priest, Jean Francois Six. It was, and remains, a way for isolated people from many countries to connect and receive a formation and nourishment from the spirituality of St. Charles. It was an attempt to create an invisible community at the time, and multilingual, since most of the beginnings were in French. It never existed in most English-speaking countries, because everything needed translations.



A time for something new? A new branch, another way to belong, another way to connect. Only time will tell how and if this endeavor is to become a new extended family of the Jesus Caritas worldwide community.

- *One of the many reasons we are being called to this newer adventure, is the fast growing interest of English speaking people to know at last the historical life of St Charles de Foucauld and the living of a true contemplative life outside a formal cloistered religious congregation. The call to profound contemplation is innate in our Baptismal vows.

The life and spirituality of Blessed Charles has remained French in many ways. Many of the Foucauld resources are not yet available in English. The Companions of Jesus of Nazareth are beginning as a seed in North American as a virtual community in an English-speaking world quickly changing technologically, politically, socially, and culturally. As former traditions have been tossed away, we are like Jeremiah standing at the crossroads.

“Stand by the ways and see and ask for the ancient paths, Where the good way is, and walk in it; And you will find rest for your souls” Jer.6:16).

For the Companions, then, St Charles stands with Jeremiah and points the way down ancient paths that walk with Jesus in Nazareth. The way is open to expand in time beyond these small national borders to other parts of the world, to grow into a beautiful ecumenical catholicism that is the real Catholicism of the Acts of the Apostles.

*Now we must use every available resource of the new social media to redefine our world and bring the healing and care that Jesus Christ has given to every person as their birth right.

As the diminishing of religious congregations sadly continues, many communities are finding new ways to continue the work and charism of their founder. Consecrated virginal religious communities are now in the process of recreating themselves, to include associate members, and these associate members may well become a new form their congregation or community. Lay members with their families might become the remaining remnant of once large religious congregations. Changing times and culture are demanding new forms of bringing Christ into a hollow world.

The Companions of Jesus of Nazareth seeks to be a new form, a new branch, of the Foucauld family. The experience of the Covid virus has changed the world, and this tragic experience has necessitated new forms of work and sharing, and communication.





PRAYER OF ABANDONMENT

Father,
I abandon myself into your hands;
do with me what you will.
Whatever you may do, I thank you:
I am ready for all, I accept all.
Let only your will be done in me, and
in all your creatures.
I wish no more than this, O Lord.
Into your hands I commend my soul;
I offer it to you
with all the love of my heart,
for I love you, Lord,
and so need to give myself,
to surrender myself into your hands,
without reserve,
and with boundless confidence,
for you are my Father.

- Blessed Charles of Jesus



Blessed Charles



2. Who is called to belong to The Companions of Jesus of Nazareth?

We are all Companions on the journey, Companions means with bread, feeding each other with the living bread that is the living Christ Jesus.

Anyone may belong. We are brothers and sisters to all. All are invited in this way. Who may belong to our little group? If you are reading this, you probably already belong.

The Companions of Jesus of Nazareth are exactly that: Jesus is our source and center. The Gospel, as radical as it is, is our mandate. There is no right way, or wrong way to be with us. If you are a lover of Jesus Christ, if He is your beloved brother and Lord, as Charles de Foucauld said so many times, you might be on the same page. But we add, “in the footsteps of Charles de Foucauld”. This gives a taste and a lens to see our personal life. It is this charism that we need to learn and understand. There is no mold that each of us must fit into, to be Christlike, to be a living Gospel, a tabernacle of divine presence in a crazy world.

Priests, sisters, lay people, no distinction. Sinners, saints, mystics, contemplatives, and Christians of all types. And non-Christians are also included.

The Companions are Roman Catholic in orientation but ecumenical of heart and welcome. We follow the Sacramental life of the Roman Catholic Church, but anyone is welcome. St Charles de Foucauld wanted to be a universal brother, loving others without judgement, and including everyone in his love, where he saw JESUS in all human friendships. Jesus is the living sacrament of the Bible, the Sacrament of the Eucharist and the sacrament of the brother and sister. As Roman Catholics we are centered on the Eucharist, both in liturgy and adoration of the reserved Sacrament.

As an inclusive community of Christians, we welcome Christians of all creeds, those actively practicing their faith and those who are not. We welcome you if you “inside or outside” of any Church. Following Jesus and living the pure Gospel as best as you can, is what brings us together and holds us together, and an authentic love for St Charles Foucauld. We are sincere as people who have fallen in love with Jesus and eat his every word. We are limited in our love and fall a hundred times a day.

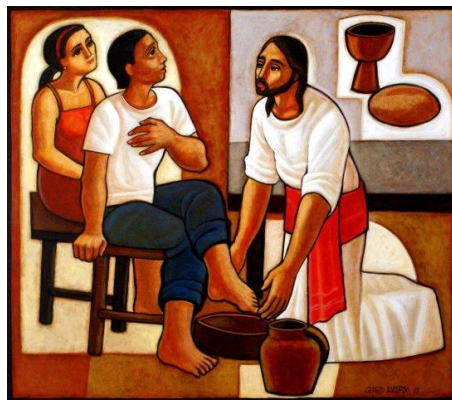
It is entirely free to become a member of this growing family. >Becoming a member begins with a monthly reading program, after which you may take a private promise (not a vow) to live your Foucauld vocation in a hidden and yet dynamic way, whatever your state of life may be. Consider it a call within a call. The lessons for the several months consist primarily of writings about St. Charles and the spirituality of living the gospel in a life of intimacy with JESUS. Br. Charles, then, is simply like a signpost directing us to see a new way that happens to take place right where you live. It is an obscure, quite simple way in your own little sphere of the world. Upon this ordinary, hidden way, one is driven by love for Jesus in every person and place He lives.

But our own little world is the tiny space where we experience and know that we are connected to all creation. We are interconnected, now living in the United States of the WORLD, loving above class, race and nations. Every injustice in our world in some way is done to us, in the person of another member of my body. St Charles was called the UNIVERSAL brother, and so share this longing of his heart.

We are not seeking perfection; we are seeking God. We are a community of sinners, as is the entire Church and so we are part of this. We are a microcosm of the macrocosm, a drop of ocean water containing the entire ocean in this one tiny drop. If the universal church were as perfect as we might want it to be, there would be no room for us. St Charles de Foucauld saw this clearly. He made no excuses for the injustices of the country he loved until death, France, and called on the Church to work against slavery with the French government.

But are in need of some formation, that is an understanding of how Charles de Foucauld becomes the lens through which we can live as more authentic Christians.

We invite you a self-directed reading program and ask you to make every effort to join us for our once-a-month fellowship and sharing.



What articulates the “charism” of following Jesus of Nazareth in the footsteps of Blessed Charles?

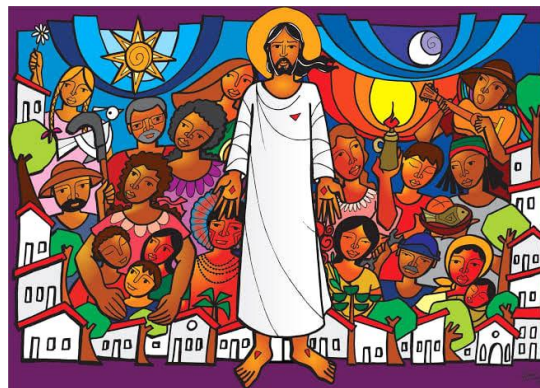
Jesus invites us, drawn by the charism of St Charles to Nazareth. He invites in this little way. A charism is just a particular way of living the Gospel discerning how I can “put on Christ” within my own human

character. St Charles did not feel called to be a preacher, or teacher as many people are called to live the charism of the public ministry of Christ. So there are many charisms within the church, beautiful different ways of living our Christian faith. Some charisms are called Franciscan, Carmelite, Dominican and a hundred other ways of imitating Jesus and working with others in a symphony or team for the building of the Kingdom of God here and now.

Here, Jesus calls us as His Companions to love for his own sake. To love Jesus for his own sake is to love him because he is our beloved brother, Lord, and is lovable, and worthy of all our love. It is to love Jesus not for our gain, but because we feel a passionate and dynamic love for Him. We want nothing from Him but to live in His Sacred Heart.

“Were not our hearts burning within us...”

The members of the Fraternity have come together “for Jesus’ sake” in the literal sense of the term, and to learn to know Him, to love Him more, and to pray to Him better.



They have come together also “for the Gospel’s sake”, because they have, each in his own way, received a call from God to conform their lives more to the teachings in the Gospel, and in particular, Our Lord’s precept:

“This is my commandment, that you should love one another, as I have loved you.” Directory, p. 39

By our entry into the Fraternity, we are bidden to live according to the spirit and example of Brother Charles of Jesus. In other words, we recognize St Charles of Jesus as our guide for his having received the grace to transmit to us a certain spirit and to help us to live by it. This ideal must therefore be defined, for this pursuit can alone give the Fraternity its true character and bring about unity in its members. The example of St Charles of Jesus is not only a lesson for us; it is also an instigation to live in the total generosity which was his.

As with St Charles of Jesus, Christ must become the very center of our lives. We must learn to live both for Him and by Him. To forget ourselves; to accept, or even sometimes to seek what comes hard to us; to persevere courageously in prayer; to keep our hearts always open to others and full of understanding readiness; to love at our own expense those who are close to us and broaden our hearts to the dimensions of humankind – such is the effort, and we understand quite easily the necessity of it.

Directory, pp. 46-47

Companions of Jesus of Nazareth form a community of the Gospel and the Eucharist without any grandiose ideals to change the world, but with humble acceptance to change one's own world. The Gospel calls "our own little world" Nazareth. In this home, the conversion of myself is the conversion of those around me. We may not be called to public leadership in any way, but the hidden, sometimes monotonous, and boring daily life is where I find Jesus in my own Nazareth.

To repeat: While the Companions live our Nazareth fed by the Sacramental Life of the Roman Catholic Church, we lovingly include all of those who see themselves outside of the institutional church, for whatever reason. They are joined with us by the one Jesus, who is Lord of all. We judge no one unworthy of our love, for no one is unworthy of the unconditional love of God poured out in the Blood of Christ. We see each person as worthy of our love just as is God Himself.

We are fed by the Eucharist (especially if we can attend daily Mass), meditate on the daily Gospel from the lectionary, and attend to the Eucharistic Lord exposed upon the altar whenever possible. Yet, we remember that even Brother Charles was deprived of daily mass and adoration months at a time. This deprivation was sustained by a constant longing of the heart to sit before the Lord again in this privileged way. Both the Eucharist and the daily Gospel are the one table where Jesus feeds us, and reveals Himself to us, in an intimate heart to heart exchange.



This communion with Jesus is also found in a dynamic sharing with all the people of the entire world, knowing they are the living body of Christ. Our spirituality is never a privatized spiritual life, for there is

no true union with Jesus without a union with others. If one person is not free, all of us are not free. When one person is hungry, we are all hungry. We are one body, with living members of our own body.

Like the model and pattern provided by Brother Charles of Jesus, our love is fraternal, rather than paternal love. We are equitable and inclusive friends of every person, little brothers, and sisters of everyone. As St Charles of Jesus loved to think of himself as the “universal brother,” so the Companions of Jesus of Nazareth embrace a brotherly and sisterly love, which avoids any sense of arrogance, judgment, or condescension. The charism of Brother Charles deeply rejects the sin of paternalism, clericalism, and nationalism that he found in his time. Nationalism may lead to a sense of superiority that breeds a paternalistic attitude to the unique differences of others. We honor and encourage the differences in other cultures. We are to be, as Brother Charles called himself, the universal brother.



We are especially called to engage the periphery. For Brother Charles, the periphery was among the Tuaregs. The periphery consists of the people who least matter to anyone: the invisible poor, the marginalized, and those who do not fit. We look at, love, and accept the persons in front of us. We interact with them as they are at this moment in front of us. Whatever the past or present life's issues are that may define them, we accept and bond with them as the tangible love of God for them - and as Brother Charles would have done. The Tuaregs in the Sahara where Brother Charles lived never understood him or his mission. His love for them was never dependent on their returning that love. As blood and water flowed from the pierced side of Christ, so our love is that love of Jesus poured out for those invisible poor who have no power or prestige. The Tuaregs may live on our street or even be within our families. New forms of poverty in our own century are not only economic moral issues. We can see and acknowledge many new tragic forms of poverty: loneliness, rejection, homophobia, and sexism among the many. Through this Christ-like process that engages social peripheries, we

Companions of Jesus of Nazareth reject this “us vs them” and with the Beatitudes try to become united in a fraternal “we.”



The Message of Charles de Foucauld: “Let us return to the Gospel”

Following the way of the great saints who, like Francis of Assisi, are raised up by God to recall Christian people to the demands of the Gospel, Charles de Foucauld restated the most essential: “Let us return to the Gospel. If we do not return to the Gospel, Jesus will not live in us.” To return to the Gospel is to allow Jesus of Nazareth to live in us through a life of poverty of spirit and of availability to all by putting ourselves in the last place and committing ourselves to humanity. Brother Charles, filled as he was with the passionate love of Christ, was wholeheartedly committed to the Gospel. It is from that source that we, members of his Family but many others with us, draw strength and inspiration.

"Brother Charles invites all faithful to seek the strength to nourish their spiritual life and to proclaim the Gospel to the men and women of our time in the contemplation of Christ and in an intimate relation with him," the Pontiff explained. "In this way, they will become servers of the meeting between God and humanity." (Zenit.org, 2001)

It is the purpose of the Fraternity to help its members to respond to the call Jesus has made to them; and it is owing to the fact of such a call that it is possible to speak of a “vocation” to the Fraternity.

The call can, however, vary in its form. At the least there must be a feeling of uneasiness at leading just an ordinary Christian life lacking in veritable generosity, together with a determination to get oneself out of one’s mediocrity. Others will feel more definitely impelled to a more generous gift of self in prayer, poverty, and charity. It is here that the call may be differentiated, especially in the beginning, according to situations, temperaments, and the liberty of grace. To enter the Fraternity, it is necessary to have decided to make a sincere and loyal effort to live the ideal it proposes. The individual starting –point is of little matter; the sole condition is that one shall have made up one’s mind to start out, with that confidence which comes from the certainty of answering a call from the Lord. Directory, p. 42



The process

Looking at our formation before private promise

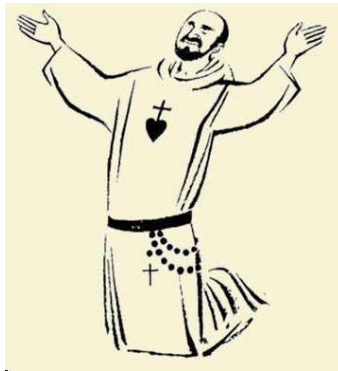
After reading, meditating, or digesting the month’s lesson from the provided reading program, you are asked to give your response, in any way appropriate to you. How can we make ourselves responsible to be students again?

The monthly study syllabus is not simply about accumulating intellectual knowledge. Rather, it is the ongoing story of who we are as unique Foucauldian family within the Church, and how we may belong to it.

The period of formation is several months. In reality formation should never end. Each month we engage in a new lesson oriented to deepen a life of the Gospel, learn the charism of Brother Charles, and live-in a hidden communion and intimacy with Jesus; growing in our own Nazareth, just as Jesus grew up in that tiny village. Most everything needed for the school of Nazareth is available for you on the Internet. You can choose to purchase several books available. You can begin the formation period

any time. But at this point in time, we are following the monthly syllabus by our first Sunday of the month Zoom meeting. An email reminder is sent out with the link directly to the meeting.

Br. Charles wrote that “prayer is thinking of God while loving him.” The process of growth in prayer is a dance between knowledge and love. This program aims to foster a deeper life of prayer by building a minimum of theological knowledge to waltz with love. Through this growth, one ultimately aims at contemplation.



Promise, not a vow

At the end of the formation period, you may, with the discernment of your spiritual director, make a promise to be a part of the Jesus Caritas family for one year. At the end of this year, you may make the promise indefinitely. The promise is private. It is not a vow, and it is not binding under Roman Catholic canon law. One doesn't need the permission of a priest or other ministers of the Church to discern your little call to the Companions. Since the promise is private, it is between you, St Charles of Jesus, and God. Use of a spiritual director is most important. It is desirable that the promise is made before, during, or after Mass, and especially on an important feast of Solemnity. Such holy days become holy waypoints in one's own spiritual journey. The praying of the promise occurs in the hidden cell of your heart. The self-directed promise is a hidden and secret bond between the beloved and The Beloved, like Nazareth.

For those not in a Roman Catholic tradition your promise will be expressed in a way according to your hearts lead.

Better than any other means, an act of consecration expresses the attitude of adoration in which we propose to answer Jesus' call.

Such an act constitutes a gift of self which can be made only to God. Consecration is, indeed, a way of delivering over to God an object, a promise of oneself in such a way that the object or person offered shall belong to Him in a manner that is fitting to God alone. This offering of ourselves to the Lord with our promise is the best answer we can make to His call.

We could, of course, respond without giving our answer in the form of a consecration or promise, generous though it may be. Nor is this required for the Fraternity. It nevertheless remains both the natural expression and term of a true intimacy with Jesus and of a loving adoration of His Divine Person, as proposed and lived by the Fraternity in the footsteps of St Charles of Jesus. Many people need to formalize in some concrete form a commitment to a way of life. Just as with religious vows it adds nothing to our baptismal promise, which remains the foundation of Christian life. On the other hand, it defines better what is aimed at in its actual realization and in its employing of certain means in order to more surely achieve the perfection of charity. Directory, p. 44

Charles de Foucauld meditated frequently on the cross. In a letter to his sister, he wrote:

“Through the cross we are united to Him, who was nailed on it, our heavenly spouse. Every instant of our lives must be accepted as a favor, with all that it brings of happiness and suffering. We must accept the cross with more gratitude than anything else. Our crosses detach us from earth and therefore draw us closer to God.”



NAZARETH

The basic attitude of Nazareth is the fraternal love of a brother or a sister.

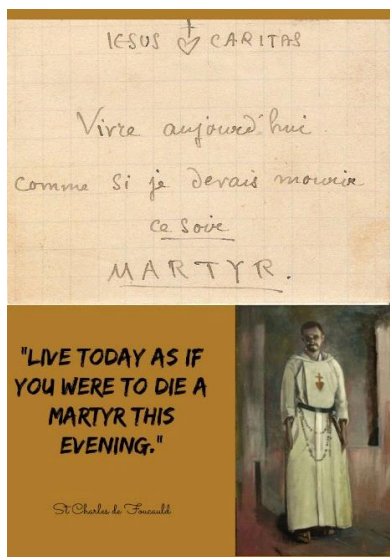
It is this face of Jesus that has seduced us; it is in his steps that we want to walk, by choosing to live among the simple people, among the poor. But people sometimes say to us, “You are deluding yourselves. And anyway, whether you like it or not, you are not like the poor”. And that is true. Even for those of us who come from modest families, the education we have received, the guarantees of security that the community gives us, the absence of worry about the future of our relatives, distances us from the situation of the real “little ones”. What are we to do?

Perhaps we should begin by saying that destitution and certain forms of deprivation and poverty (physical, cultural, educational) are evils that we need to combat. It is not destitution that I choose, but I

choose to live with people who suffer from destitution, to struggle with them to get out of it, seeking with them. That means that I refuse to take myself out of it on my own and that I accept, out of friendship for them, the deprivations they suffer from. Struggling against these deprivations, while bearing them with them, is not, perhaps, totally foreign to the attitude of offering our life from day to day.

A second thing that it is necessary to say is that, in any case, it is not a matter of being like the poor, but of being with them as brothers and sisters. And there, we are not the only agents: although there is an effort of adjustment on our side to make to be as close as possible, another part of the process does not depend on us. We cannot be "like them", in many ways we are not "in the same gang", but if they feel in us the desire to join them, it is they who take us by the hand to bring us to their side and welcome us into their life; and they 'forgive' us all our riches and securities. There are so many examples many of us could give of this true welcome that takes no account of differences.

From The Universal Brother, published by Living City Press. See the syllabus for references.



Nazareth in Biblical History

in the time of Jesus, the city of Nazareth was most likely a small and insignificant agricultural village. However, recent archaeological excavations within the convent belonging to the Sisters of Nazareth, that is across the street from the Church of the Annunciation, uncovered artifacts and the remains of a first-century courtyard house that reinforce the argument that Nazareth was an "early Roman Jewish settlement that was larger, and perhaps slightly wealthier, than is often envisaged." Nazareth was

situated a gentle five mile walk from Sepphoris. Here were discovered a wider range of imported artifacts. This leads to a second conclusion that those closer to this latter community embraced more Roman cultural influence, while “those closer to Nazareth chose a strictly Jewish material culture, perhaps denoting a more conservative attitude to religious belief and concepts of purity and rejecting ‘Roman’ culture as a whole.” Nazareth most likely embraced a vigorous anti-Roman sentiment. That Nazareth may have been slightly larger and wealthier than often presumed, then it would have been the kind of “small town” that a craftsman like St. Joseph would reside. “Jesus’ family was in the artisan class and likely near the bottom of the economic ladder. He would have known what it meant to be poor, and to dwell among those eking out a living” (Martin, J.). Nazareth was a backwater town, but it “was in the middle of a complex series of roads and trade routes in Lower Galilee.” (Martin, J.) Nonetheless, it had little economic importance, nor religious significance. It was not mentioned in the Old Testament or other ancient texts. It was obscure, a conservative shadow of the bigger, more cultured Sepphoris. Other archaeological excavations indicate Nazareth was settled continuously from 900 – 600 BCE, with a break in settlement until 200 BCE, from which time it has been continuously inhabited. Quotes are from the following article: Dark, K. (2015) Has Jesus’ Nazareth house been found?

Biblical Archaeology Review, 41 (2). pp. 54--63. Martin, James. Jesus: Pilgrimage. Harper One, 2017. pp. 70-95.

Nazareth, the Home of Mary and Joseph

During the lifetime of Mary, Joseph, and Jesus, it is believed the population did not exceed 500. Nazareth was a small Jewish village where people knew one another, and like Jesus, lived, prayed and studied in the Jewish tradition. They gathered in the synagogue, meeting for prayer and holidays. To this day, visitors can see the Synagogue Church, dating from the Crusader period, which was built to commemorate the spot where it is believed Jesus prayed and preached (see Nazareth sites and attractions). The New Testament mentions Nazareth many times, referring to it as the place of the Annunciation, the home of Mary and Joseph, the town that inspired Jesus during his childhood and early manhood, and the location of his clash with fellow citizens who disapproved of his non-conventional way of thinking.



Nazareth and

Early Christianity

From the 1st to the 4th century AD, the small Christian presence in Nazareth was often persecuted for their beliefs. It was only later towards the 6th century, when legends of Mary's life began spreading, that the town of Nazareth became the Christian pilgrimage site it is to this day. During this time, the Byzantines built one of the first churches on what was believed to be the site of the Annunciation. With the arrival of the Crusaders in 1099, an era of growth began, and they built a magnificent church in Roman style. With the defeat of the Crusaders in 1291 by the Muslim army, and during Ottoman Rule (1517 – 1917) Nazareth fell into decline. It was only in 1720, when the Franciscans built a new church, that the site of the Annunciation was again revived. In 1955, the church was demolished to carry out archaeological excavations and was finally rebuilt in 1969.



Nazareth Today Nazareth, Israel.

Today modern-day Nazareth is a bustling, growing city believed to be located very close to the origins of the ancient village. It is home to the largest Arab community in Israel and has a new quarter, Nazareth Illit, populated mainly by Jews. Amongst a fascinating array of churches of many denominations, a variety of cafes and restaurants has sprung up to make Nazareth a hot spot of tourism. When you take a day tour, you can walk the cobble-stoned streets of the Old City, visit the famous spring believed to be that which fed Mary's well, and see the remains of a cavern believed to be Joseph's carpentry shop. The life of Jesus of Nazareth comes alive as you witness the development of Nazareth through the ages, from an isolated village of little importance to the seat of one of Christianity's most important sites.

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Resources

WEBSITES FOR THE USA AND CANADA

<http://charlesdefoucauld.info/> USA website

<https://www.companionsofjesusofnazareth.com/> USA website

<http://www.jesuscharitas.info/> United Kingdom

www.charlesdefoucauld.ca/home-english.html Canada

www.youtube.com/watch?v=gxgFgd849NY YouTube presentation on the life of Bl Charles

Communities of Blessed Charles de Foucauld

+ Little Sisters of Jesus

<http://www.petitessœursdejesus.net/en> International website

<http://www.littlesistersofjesus.org/> USA Website

psjmontreal@yahoo.ca Petites Soeurs de Jesus

+ Lay Fraternities

Canada: www.charlesdefoucauld.ca/home-english.html Website

USA and Canada: jesus.caritas.montreal@hotmail.com

United Kingdom: moira.ukcdf@gmail.com