



Swifts and The Tree of Hope

Reprinted from Jerusalem Scene Winter 2016

Swifts of Hope Fly for St John - *By Mark Coreth*

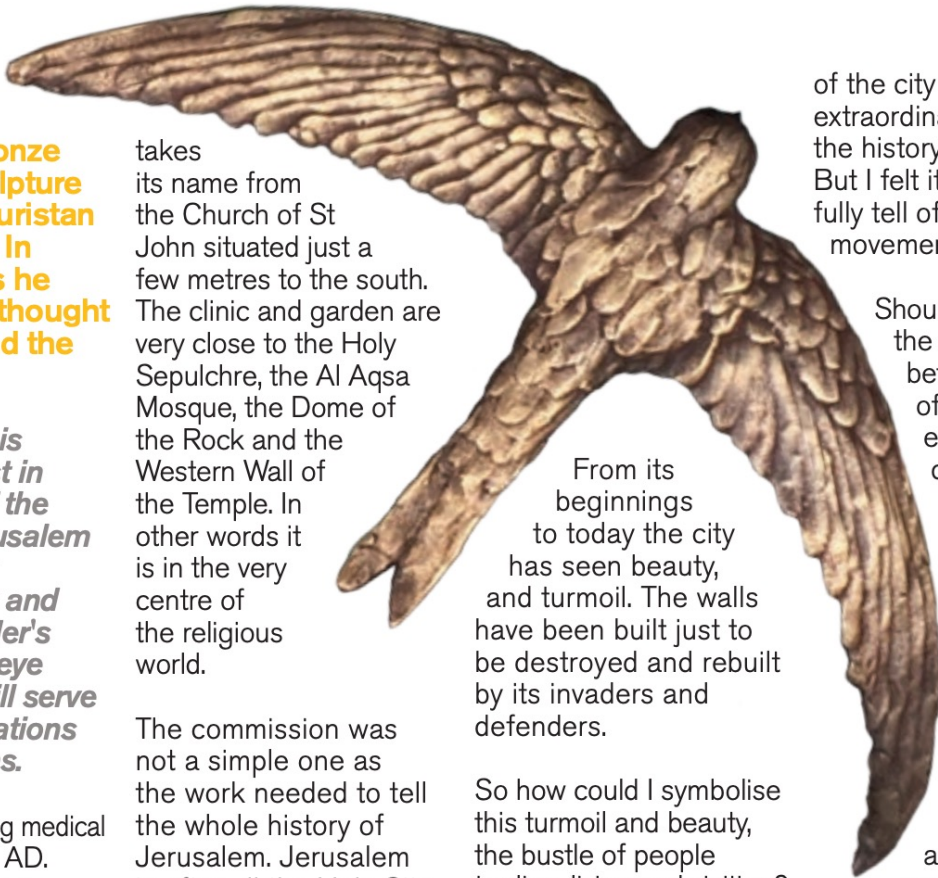
Mark Coreth has designed a life-sized bronze Olive Tree sculpture to go in our Muristan Clinic Garden. In his own words he describes his thought process behind the commission.

"The Muristan is situated almost in the bullseye of the Old City of Jerusalem where the four Quarters meet and beside the Order's newly opened eye clinic, which will serve people of all nations and all religions.

The area has a long medical history from 700 AD. The Order of St John

takes its name from the Church of St John situated just a few metres to the south. The clinic and garden are very close to the Holy Sepulchre, the Al Aqsa Mosque, the Dome of the Rock and the Western Wall of the Temple. In other words it is in the very centre of the religious world.

The commission was not a simple one as the work needed to tell the whole history of Jerusalem. Jerusalem is after all the Holy City.



From its beginnings to today the city has seen beauty, and turmoil. The walls have been built just to be destroyed and rebuilt by its invaders and defenders.

So how could I symbolise this turmoil and beauty, the bustle of people trading, living and visiting?

The olive tree is central in the lives of all peoples in the Holy Land. It is mentioned in all the great texts as a symbol of peace. But when you look upon an old olive tree you see a tired, battle worn trunk... age is evident in its form. The trunk in places is dead and yet as a whole is full of life! This gives the perfect description

of the city walls and the extraordinary symbol of the history of Jerusalem... But I felt it did not quite fully tell of the dynamic movement of people.

Should you visit the Holy Land between the ends of March until early June, as I did, you witness the migration of the swift. The swift flies from Sub Saharan Africa through the Holy Land and onto both Europe and Asia as far as Beijing. Some swifts nest and breed in the Walls of the Old City and have done so since the days of the first Temple.

But more than this, they demonstrate a total mastery of their environment, a fearless confidence and a dynamic measure of hope... Their presence provides anticipation for summer ahead and further for the passage of time.

Continued



The sculptor Mark Coreth (right) with his son Jamie Coreth posing with his son's award winning 'Dad Sculpting Me' painting, read more inside.





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continues

It is for this reason that I decided to make the canopy of my bronze olive tree not out of leaves but out of swifts... The sculpture was now to be a tree full of life and a symbol of hope.

Circumstance took me to a garden just outside of Bethlehem called Tantar. It is a garden that past belonged to the Order of St John but now belongs to the Order of Malta and is part of their hospice for pilgrims. I found there a beautiful tree that gave me the balance of age and future, which I moulded and cast a copy of in bronze. I then made and cast one hundred and fifty swifts which I placed on 'flight lines' and formed those into the canopy of the tree.

The story does not however end there. I have positioned around the walls of the Muristan and through the Jerusalem Hospital flights of bronze swifts, in groupings of three that tell of the three faiths and of the hope of unity whatever that might be.

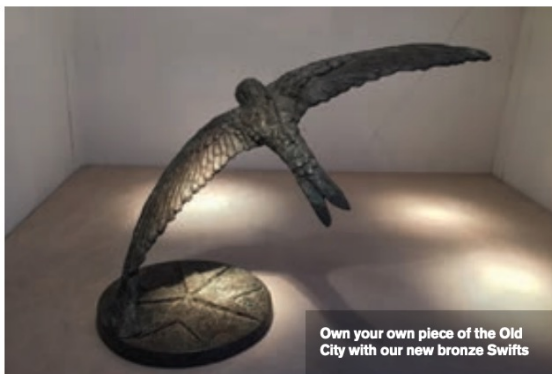
My intention is to place more in all of St John's hospitals, clinics and headquarters and with a fair wind into those of the Order of Malta from whom I moulded the tree and who have so generously offered to support the Muristan Clinic.

Now let me take this a stage further... I want to spread the swifts right across all parts of the world. Every swift that migrates to the far reaches of the world will stretch this message of hope for the Holy Land throughout the world, it will also in a practical way raise much needed funds for the St John Eye

Hospital, a cause that is so valuable.

It is my fervent hope that the Olive Tree, its swifts and its message will in some wonderful way take on a life of its own and that the trio of swifts can symbolise a unity in the religious world - but like Jerusalem, and its history, only time will tell."

Mark Coreth



Own your own piece of the Old City with our new bronze Swifts



**St John of Jerusalem
Eye Hospital Group**



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About the Artist

Mark Coreth is an internationally acclaimed artist (the lifesize sculpture of Frankel at Royal Ascot, unveiled by HM the Queen is among his work). He can count many of the Royal Family, as well as the Natural History Museum in London, amongst his collectors. His son recently won the BP Young Artist Award 2016 for his painting entitled 'Dad Sculpting Me' (pictured on cover), a portrait of Mark sculpting a bust of his son, which is currently exhibiting in the National Portrait Gallery.

Mark kindly agreed to create a magnificent sculpture for our Muristan Garden completely free of charge, which will go on to be a beacon of hope for St John supporters worldwide.

Represented by The Sladmore Gallery for over 20 years his next exhibition will be in 2017.

