

EYM JAN 2019



CASA DEL DIVINO ASHRAM
ASSISI

18TH TO 20TH JANUARY 2019



PROGRAMME OUTLINE

Meditation.
Spiritual talks.
Interactive sessions
post introspection.
Outdoor Seva activities.
Visits to S. Francis and
St. Claire.

FRIDAY THE 18TH

The arrival at the European Youth Meet on the 18th of January 2019 was a transition from a busy life and world to the beautiful landscape and nature of Assisi around the Ashram. The communion with so many dear souls had a wonderful, peaceful, joyful and purifying effect. It was immediately confirmed how good it is to meet with all these companions again, to see each other again, to share ideas and talk to each other. The Sai consciousness began to be reactivated and the common goal revived. It was very touching when the two vans that came to pick up the youth from the airport also made a stop to pick up Italian devotees in Rome who were very kind to prepare lunch packs for everyone during the drive to Assisi.



It was incredibly touching how the Italian team again so lovingly organized and prepared everything for us. Special thanks also to the persistent team in the kitchen, which spoiled us several times a day with delicious meals, which were very elaborated. The hospitality of our dear Italian hosts was again very admirable and very touching.

FRIDAY THE 18TH



The meet opened with a wonderful bhajan session by the devotees from Italy. On the day of arrival we were told before going to Swami's room that just a few nights ago the heating in the room was off overnight, but the room still felt very hot. All the youth was led to the room and given the opportunity to take padanamaskar before Swami in His chair. The atmosphere felt very pious and sanctified and everyone respected it instinctively. The highlight of the introduction to the meet was the message from Swami we were to contemplate upon for the duration of the meet:

"By Living for God one attains the next stage living with God which finally leads one to living in God".

The day ended with a delicious dinner after which everyone retreated to rest until the next day.

SATURDAY THE 19TH



We left for Casa Del Divino after a good breakfast, ready for our first full day all together. Once at the Ashram, we started with a Rudram chanting session and a guided meditation lead by brothers Fabio Gobbo and Victory Craxi. The energy and atmosphere were perfect to calm our minds and spirits and to prepare us for the day. The speaker of the morning was Sister Giovanna who put us at ease with her kindness, she was so happy to see us again!

She started her speech with a comparison of St. Clair's and her own life. They were both born into a wealthy family, and were offered marriage by many suitors... But they were both already in love with God and completely devoted to Him.

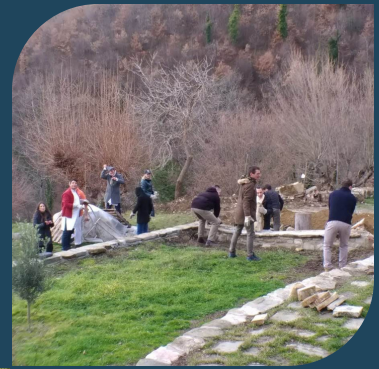
Sister Giovanna then went on with a story of St. Agnes, Clair's younger sister. Agnes was only a teenager when she decided to follow the example of her sister and St. Francis, so she ran away from home to St. Damian church, where her sister was.

SATURDAY THE 19TH



Knowing her uncle was following her there to bring her back home, Agnes asked Clair to pray for her. Clair prayed and prayed, and when their uncle and his men came for Agnes, they were not able to pick her up and bring her home, her body was suddenly very heavy, and one of her uncle arms got paralyzed. Since it was clear that they could not bring Agnes back home, they gave up and left them. Sister Giovanna then told us that during her life she traveled a lot and met a lot of important spiritual figures. On one of her trips, she once met a girl who asked her if it was a good thing for her to be born. The answer is important for all of us, so difficult and easy at the same time: Of course it is good, because God has a plan, a path, for us.

SATURDAY THE 19TH



Sister Giovanna repeated what she already told us during our last meeting: We are a dream of God and we have to live our dreams and never give up. After this illuminating speech, since it was a beautiful and sunny day, we all got dressed and went outside, ready to go help out around the ashram. We divided into groups and helped collecting large stones scattered around, which will be used during the construction of a wall. All of us working together made the time pass by quickly and productively and we all had a lot of fun helping out..

SATURDAY THE 19TH

At the end of the morning we were muddy, happy...and ready for lunch!!

After the lunch in the ashram we took cars and minibuses to reach our pilgrimage destinations. The first one was the Basilica of St. Mary of the Angels, which encloses an older church called 'Porziuncola', one of the first churches restored by St. Francis and his fellows. This anecdote on St. Francis' life was told by friar Alessandro, who welcomed us, when we arrived. St. Francis, who was called 'King of feasts' by his friends during his youth, received a message: "Rebuild my home", while he was praying. From that moment on he started to rebuild some abandoned places of worship, left in ruin. Amongst them was the St. Damiano church, original seat of the well-known crucifix.



SATURDAY THE 19TH

The Porziuncola is a place dedicated to the purification of human souls: if a person, repented of his sins, crosses its doors at any moment, he will be forgiven for everything. St. Francis obtained this grace as a reward from Jesus. After St. Francis resisted temptations by throwing himself on the thorny shrubs that turned into a rose without thorns (the only species in the world still existing and originally from Assisi, as also recalled by Swami on a private occasion). Jesus then said to Francis to choose any boon. St. Francis did not ask for himself, being a man of God and of goodness he asked for all humanity, that all who entered the Porziuncola could have all their sins forgiven.

And so to symbolize the love of God and God forever awaiting His children, the doors of the Porziuncola are always open. Because God awaits His son with open arms....always. After telling this story, Friar Alessandro made us think about what we would have asked if we had been in the shoes of the saint.



SATURDAY THE 19TH

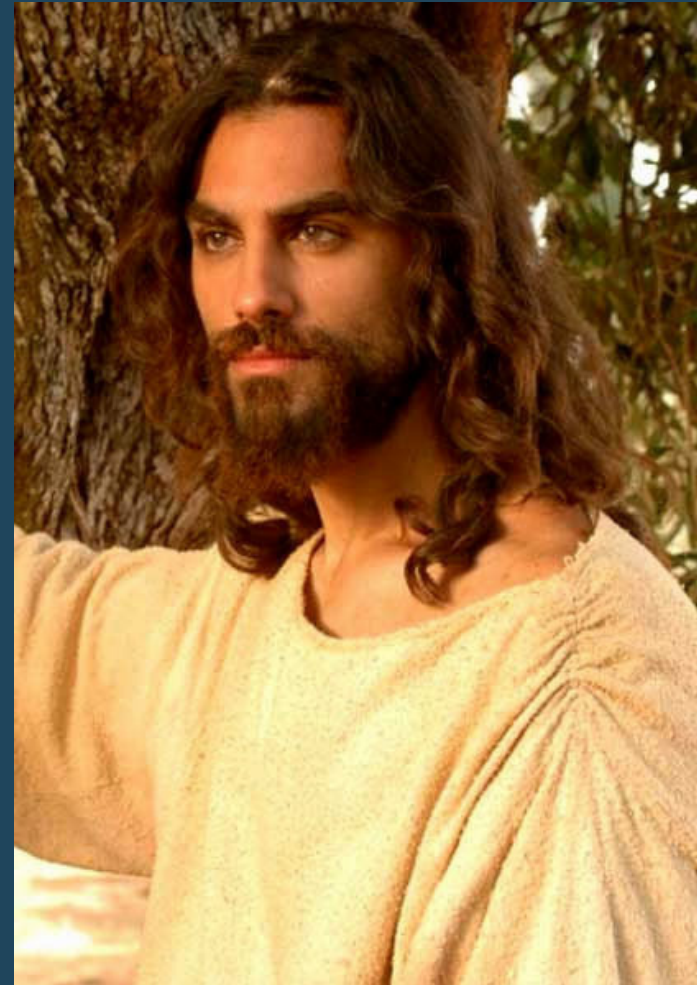


The franciscan then told us about the life of St. Francis: a rich young man aspiring to be a knight, defeated during the war, captured, imprisoned, saved by the wealth of his father from jail and then transformed in the exemplification of love and rectitude, as we know him today, by his painful experience and by his meeting with God.

The last part of the sharing with the friar was about the possibilities offered to young people in the basilica: life orientation, accompanying courses at the wedding and voluntary activities. Then we had time to pray in the Porziuncola silently. The second stop of our pilgrimage was the St. Claire church, where we visited the remains of the saint, concealed in the inferior level of the church, with deep devotion. Then we prayed in front of the St. Damiano crucifix that is now present here. Once outside the church we found the time to take some photos and to walk before leaving to return to 'Casa del Divino'.

SATURDAY THE 19TH

The evening started with the dinner cooked by volunteers, while some tasks, like the distribution of food, the preparation and cleaning of the dining room, were shared among youth in harmony and unity. The second part of the evening was spent watching a movie, entitled '7 km to Jerusalem' that told the story of an advertiser going through a crisis, Alessandro Forte who travels to visit places where Jesus had lived. While on this journey he has an experience and conversations with Jesus in the subtle form. The movie exemplifies the relationship between Master and devotee, representing it from a modern point of view, in a very approachable mingled with a strong irony. A film full of good food for thought on existential issues, on the different ways to face them, on the personal path of transformation and on the way it affects our life and the lives of people around us. At the end of the movie we returned to the hotel to sleep.



After an early breakfast at the picturesque Bed and Breakfast, we returned to the "Casa del Divino", where we started the morning with a guided meditation led by brother Victory, which helped us clear our minds and find stillness within. We then chanted the Vēdas and sang melodious bhajans which opened our hearts and synchronized our souls.

Afterwards, we listened to a beautiful talk by Mrs. Sylvie Sarda Craxi, one of the first Europeans to meet Swami, long-time devotee and mother of Victory. She gave us her insights from her 43-year-long experiences with Swami, both in the physical and the subtle form. She explained how it is not about the amount of time one has spent with Him, but about the quality, depth and intensity of the relationship. Her short stories conveyed a message of hope, faith and joy, which left us inspired, uplifted and grateful. We then had an interactive session around the topic that Swami had given us for this Youth Meet, which was: "By Living for God one attains the next stage living with God which finally leads one to living in God".



SUNDAY THE 20TH

Swami's beautiful message got many of us thinking how it relates to our personal experience and how we can make the necessary steps as we shift through the various stages. Some brothers and sisters shared their understanding and experiences and we benefited immensely from the exchange and group discussions. As always, our Italian brothers and sisters provided a delicious home-cooked lunch, which was only saddened by our forthcoming departure, as no one wanted to leave the divine place. The group photos and goodbyes in the ashram garden were a great chance for laughter and jokes that cheered us up and made us looking forward to the next Youth Meet, as soon as possible! Thank you to Swami for having made this amazing weekend possible. Until next time! Sairam





LOVE ALL
SERVE ALL