



# EYM SEPTEMBER 2019



CASA DEL DIVINO  
ASHRAM  
ASSISI

FROM 6TH TO 8TH SEPTEMBER 2019



# PROGRAMME

Bhajans

Meditation.

Interactive session entitled  
"The other is Me".

Seva & silence in the  
Ashram.

Visit to St. Francis &  
St. Claire.

# FRIDAY, 6



Visit to Grace Kitchen in Rome

With great anticipation, Friday 6th of September had finally arrived. Several devotees across Europe had flown in for the EYM and we all gathered in Grace Kitchen - Rome, where the Italian team had kindly prepared a beautiful lunch for us all. What better way to start off the EYM by breaking bread together. The diligent care of the Italian team made everyone feel at ease and it was time to set off to the sacred town of Assisi. Throughout the 2.5 hour van journey, we all sang bhajans to keep the divine energy flowing and in no time we had arrived at the Basilica of Santa Maria degli Angeli - Assisi. Before going up to the ashram that is situated in the outskirts of Assisi town, we visited the Porziuncola, the beautiful tiny little church that Saint Francis had built and

# FRIDAY, 6



stayed for in the most part of his life. The guided tour gave a lot of insight into his life and teachings. We then proceeded to the ashram. As we entered inside, we were able to immerse ourselves in the divine energy that was present and a state of deep calm was experienced. This put us in good stead to finally reach Casa Del Divino Ashram - as we know, these Ashrams are not situated in easily accessible places. This is also the case with Casa Del Divino, however this creates a yearning within each of us to reach the sacred place. This yearning we experience, is so we can truly connect to oneself. Everyone was now seated in the ashram and we proceeded with a bhajan (devotional songs) session. The purity that was felt was the basis of the retreat and to ensure each of us could experience a sense of peace. As the bhajans concluded, Brother

# SATURDAY, 7



Victory and Brother Salvatore gave a brief introduction to the EYM, they reiterated the purpose of the meet and mentioned a few house rules to ensure we can maximise the benefit of our stay. Dinner was shortly served and it was time to rest.

## Rise & Shine

The gents were fortunate enough to reside in the Ashram, and woke up to the picturesque view of Mount Subasio, what a sight to start the day. We sat around the table and had our breakfast with a special accompaniment of Uncle Ampelio who shared his personal experiences with Swami over the years.

# SATURDAY, 7



Such profound stories had our ears and eyes wide open and this reinvigorated the focus on our master.

The ladies arrived shortly after and with the group whole again, we started off with suprabatham (morning prayer) and bhajans. This was a perfect start to the interactive workshop held by Sister Giovanna & Paola about Selfless Service.

The workshop was split into 3 parts: Head, Hand and Heart starting off with the Head, Sister Giovanna got us all thinking about our personal drive to do seva. She then reinforced the negative impact of the ego that may occur during seva and thereby being constantly aware of our thought in the act of service.

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In addition to this, we discussed the expectation of service and that whether it was deemed successful or not wasn't up-to our judgement but only that of the Lord. The second part was the Hand - the hand signifies one's action in selfless service. Selfless service requires attention, reliability, continuity and cooperation. These facets enable the seva to be dealt with with utmost care.

The mild afternoon drizzle accompanied by a cooling breeze with the mighty Subasio playing hide and seek with the clouds in the background - seemed choreographed by the Creator to remind us that nature is always busy rendering the service of supplying extraordinary peace to its witnesses. After a delicious lunch it was time for all of us to disperse to perform our individual afternoon service activities. When many hands help the work, needless to say it gets done faster.



# SATURDAY, 7

After completing service activities, while the cooking volunteers finally caught a breath with a freshly brewed afternoon cappuccino, many of the youths, having woken up early, were knocked out one after other like dominoes for an afternoon siesta. Eventually, we were herded back and the ladies for the workshop were back. This time they spoke about how to tune the hands and the heart towards



and during service. The workshop was fast paced and highly interactive. They made the youths practise smiling with three types of smiles – serene smile, happy smile and compassionate smile. These three were such that the smile lead and was felt reaching into our eyes. This taught us how to identify and smile in a way that radiates most Love, while observing the difference in smiling from the heart and smiling from the eyes. By doing so the different smiles were felt internally too by us. This we were told helps in listening, cultivating empathy and compassion. In support of compassion, we also watched a short clip of the movie on Dr Patch Adams, the



# SATURDAY, 7

paediatrician who made terminally ill children laugh by introducing clown therapy as palliative care. Using the hands to help were also covered.

We were taught that giving help should be considered as an enabling activity where rules are followed, impartiality is maintained and all efforts are focused on accomplishing the task at hand. Questions were taken at the end where practical experience of working with disabled were shared, how to react in life threatening situations during service, how to serve without attachment and expectations were also discussed.

At the end we concluded with Baba's message : Serve to Grow, Grow to Love, Love to Serve. After this engaging session, we all again dispersed for a mindful stroll. Akin to forest bathing exercise, this stroll took place on the 31 acre property of Casa del Divino.



# SATURDAY, 7

Everyone chose their own quiet spot, soaking in the last beams of the setting sun and listening to the gurgle of the stream nearby. All of us then reassembled for Bhajans, much energised by engaging the senses in reactionless observation and absorption. After the Bhajan session, there was a talk and interactive session with Mr Ampelio Veleda. Mr Veleda is the holy guardian of Casa del Divino. He embodies the spirit of



# SATURDAY, 7

service and is a true example of the cultivation of divinity through service. With a voice that is never raised, a smile that never fades, he knows what the youth face in the real world today.

Mr Veleda's generosity of Heart, humility in character and unflinching gaze that reflects the strength of his connection with the Creator is worth emulating for all youths. Coming from a man of very few words, the session was the highlight of the evening.

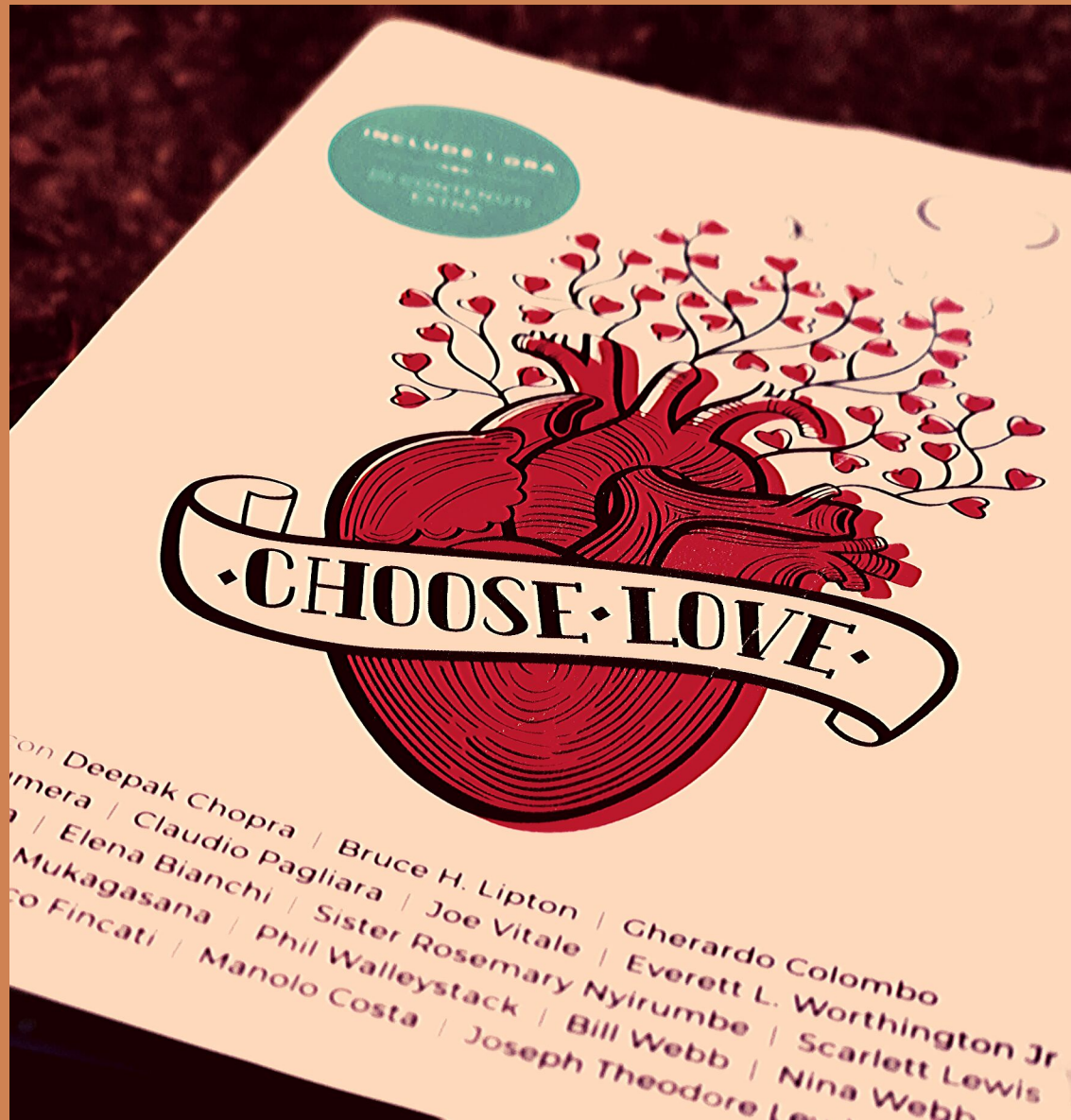
In the Question and Answer session he mentioned the four principles that can nurture our spiritual strength. These were recapitulated from an interview with Sai Baba many years ago. They are: to never lie, never falter on doing what is right in every situation, to always face life and to never forget that Life is just a game. He also spoke about the significance of the sacred ash (Vibhuti) and that Truth must only be spoken when it does not hurt the other person.



# SATURDAY, 7

Following a sumptuous dinner, we watched a documentary with the title “Choose Love”, this contained a catalogue of real world examples from exploited native Aboriginal tribes, interviews from justice personnel on the need to modify the punishing nature of prisons and narratives from victims on how to overcome trauma through forgiveness with the message of “Nurturing Healing Love”.

The bottom line remained that Love leads to more “Love based” actions and is the only way to make the world a better place.



# SUNDAY, 8

After breakfast in the morning, we assembled again at Casa del Divino for the Suprabhatam and Bhajans. After offering a final Aarathi to Swami in the bright morning sunshine, we proceeded to say our farewell and seek permission to leave from The Real administrator of the Ashram - Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba's unmistakable presence in His specially designated room. As per His instructions jam prepared from fruits and berries on the property were distributed as consecrated return gifts amongst all participants.

Towards noon we proceeded to meet Sister Giovanna at the Chapel of Padre Giovanni maintained by the noble family and built using stones from the Subasio mountain, housing a crucifix from 1400 AD. She spoke to the youths about St Francis's principles of Purity, Chastity and Obedience and how true marriage is companionship with God. Like always, she inspired the youths to cultivate interiority of the Heart meaning that the Heart is also like a cave and how it is the true residence of one's Divinity.



# SUNDAY, 8

She spoke about the purity of the mind, purity of the heart, the cultivation of a pilgrim's attitude of humility and acceptance and finally of learning to surrender to God like a helpless completely dependent infant. This aspect of surrendering to the Divine Mother like a child was brought to special attention since it was also Mother Mary's birthday celebrated as Feast Day amongst the devout Catholics. Snaking through the steep paths of Assisi, on the way buying last minute souvenirs we then proceeded to St Francis's basilica where some of his remains are consecrated. In contrast to the bright sun outside, the candle lit interiors reflected the Franciscan spirit of simplicity and humility. Tiny chits of paper stuffed through the railings by the devout were reflected by the lights from the lanterns surrounding the tomb. This scene exemplified the potency of the place to grant petitions for peace and we were very grateful to be granted this opportunity.



# SUNDAY, 8

As we sat in our cars and proceeded towards airport drop offs, the very thoughtfully packed lunch packets were torn open. Not forgetting to chant Brahmaarpanam, our prayer of thanks- we feasted on a delicious and so lovingly prepared lunch. Alternating between napping and singing high pitched Bhajans on the way, we reached the airport in no time. This brought a very momentous trip to an end and all participants hoped that many more people like them would get to experience the sanctifying vibrations of the place of Assisi and Casa del Divino and the company of selfless organising team. Jai Sai Ram!



# SUMMARY FROM TWO OF THE YOUNGEST PARTICIPANTS (15 YEARS OLD)

Friday afternoon we went to the Basilica of Santa Maria degli Angeli. Together with Antonello, our guide, we entered the Basilica that was built to preserve the Porziuncola, the place where Jesus appeared to St. Francis. We then went to the Ashram Casa del Divino and sang Bhajans (devotional songs) that were followed by a sumptuous dinner. When it was all over, the boys went to sleep on the top floor of the Ashram, which is located above Sai Baba's room and the girls in a nearby B&B.

Saturday morning, we youth who slept there woke up at 7am and had a hearty breakfast. We sang the Suprabhatam, Victory then led us into meditation and finally we sang Bhajans. After a short break we started a wonderful workshop entitled "The other is me" led by Giovanna Battaglia and Paola Cappabianca. It was about service and a great learning experience for us. We also had a great time thanks to interactive games, that helped us understand the concepts related to seva activities. In the morning we started from the head, or thought, and in the afternoon we discussed the hand that corresponds to the action, and last but not least the heart, the feelings. The way I see it, it is an experience that must be lived by the person to progress internally and it was very much worth it. After a delicious lunch and a short nap in the afternoon we resumed with the workshop and it's interactive sessions that lasted until 5.30 pm.



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The theme was concerning service; on how to do it and how to live it, continuing the aspects related to the hands (actions) and the heart (feelings). In the first part we followed the slides and the explanation of games that helped us delve deeper into the understanding of how we should behave towards another person. In the first game one's confidence was tested: we had to take turns and fall backwards without looking behind us trusting that 4 people would catch us. We then moved on to a larger room and performed another game, this time to practice attention: we had to mirror ourselves with a partner and then in turn copy the other's movements. The last game that represented one's actions and we learned empathy because we had to take turns in tying a cloth over our eyes while 2 people had to protect us from the others while we simulated being in a metro train. In this part of the workshop we understood above all why we should be empathetic and available to others in times of need. In the last part of the workshop we focused on the heart, on how we should be kind and understanding towards each other, because when doing service we must think about making each other feel good without having selfish thoughts. After the explanation, full of simple but important examples, the main message was that while doing service we must be (true to) ourselves.

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An hour's time was then dedicated to savor and contemplate the energy of the place in absolute silence, taking a walk around the property. Once we got back to the ashram we sang Bhajans (devotional songs) and 15 minutes before dinner we had a Q&A with Mr. Ampleio, the curator of the ashram. At 9.00 pm we watched "choose love", a documentary that emphasizes how love is a choice not only beneficial for oneself, but also for the relationship with others and the whole world. The documentary focused on forgiveness, on the experiences of certain people who only found forgiveness, even though they had gone through great suffering, and peace and strength to go on, because it is useless to be tied to the past and give power to the negative experience since our body is nourished by the emotions we feel, in fact he who forgives lives healthier and longer. The journey is not easy, it is long, but it leads to more and more awareness. The day ended at about 10:40 PM. The next morning after breakfast we sang the Suprabhatam and the Bhajans and at the end of which Victory and Salvatore spoke about the next youth meeting. Before saying our goodbyes to the Casa del Divino Ashram we rearranged the house and greeted Swami in his room. We were given vibhuti and fruit jam (Sambuco) made from trees that grow in the Ashram. We then took a group photo in the garden and reluctantly left the Ashram. We went to the chapel of "Casa Papa Giovanni" and met sister Giovanna who told us the history of the place

# SUMMARY FROM TWO OF THE YOUNGEST PARTICIPANTS (15 YEARS OLD)

and her experiences with Swami. After that we went to the Basilica of San Francesco, where there is his tomb, and finally we went to pay our respects to Santa Chiara in the Basilica of Saint Claire. It was time for lunch and everyone ate the packed lunch prepared in the Ashram.

It was a fantastic weekend that had something to offer to everyone who attended, the message of Sai Baba was passed on very well. These were unforgettable days of love and sharing. Over 35 youth will carry these unique moments in their hearts and await the next meeting to be held on 24/25/26 January.

NEXT YOUTH MEET:  
FROM 24 TO 26 JANUARY  
FOR INFO & REGISTRATIONS,  
WRITE TO US AT

SAIDARSHANASSISI@YAHOO.COM