



# EUROPEAN YOUTH MEET NOVEMBER 2022

CASA  
DEL  
DIVINO  
ASHRAM







## **Friday, 18**

*First a glance, then a smile and finally recognition. This is what happens when a group of people, united by the same thread of love and devotion, meet. We meet again without ever having lost each other, knowing that we are part of the same Source. It is said that the sun kisses the beautiful, if this is true then that Friday afternoon there was plenty of beauty. A beam of light shone down on the golden Virgin of the Basilica of St. Mary of the Angels, our meeting point. A structure of a simple but majestic architecture, as if to remind us that strength lies in essentiality, in simplicity.*





After a few moments we moved toward the rose garden, passing through the right aisle in the direction of the courtyard and a statue of the saint with a real snow-white dove beside it. The story goes that St. Francis in a moment of apparent temptation decided to throw himself onto the thorny rose bushes, and from that moment they turned into thornless roses so as not to hurt him. To this day it is the only garden in which this variety of flower is born and grows naturally. The tour of the basilica ended in the Chapel of the Roses, which was originally Francis's home and in which there are frescoes depicting moments in the saint's life, including the dream in which he asked God to make the Porziuncula a place of indulgence.







Once outside, we gathered in several cars and began the short journey to the Eremo delle Carceri, the place where the saint would retire in meditation after his days of service to the needy.

By now darkness was upon us and the atmosphere even more surreal. Along with the cold and dampness emanating from the caves there was a strong sense of sacredness. In the driveway there was a statue with a wonderful Sarvadhama, a symbol of Sathya Sai Baba's teaching that all religions lead to the same destination.

The interior of the hermitage is characterised by small spaces, small doors, small passages, a world in closure to external distractions and in openness to the inner light, by means of contemplation. Outside there was a forest in which Francis and his brothers walked in prayer.



*Then came the time to go to the Ashram. For some of us it was the first time and perhaps it was for this reason that the desire to get there grew more and more. The exact moment, when barefoot you take your first steps inside, is the same moment when you feel you are home and you realise that along with the shoes you have taken off your armour.*

*It is a succession of emotions, so rapid and profound that it is vain to attempt to describe them in this brief narrative. After a few moments of acclimatisation each of us took our place in the hall where, shortly thereafter, the bhajans, or devotional chants, would begin.*





We were all there, divided between men and women, as tradition dictates, but united as never before in the name of the Divine. We let splendid voices warm our hearts, moved, vibrated and smiled, at the thought of Swami rocking in his chair and keeping time on the armrest with his hand.

With some difficulty returning to presence we then moved to the dining room, with joined hands and with gratitude we prayed and satiated ourselves with a dinner prepared for us with immense love. Here, as in all ashrams it is good custom to do seva, or selfless service, so some of us were enlisted for washing dishes, cleaning the dining room, etc.

The last part of the day, before going to the B&B, where we would spend the night, was devoted to a time of sharing, of brotherly reunion. Between smiles and sighs there was a sense of lightness and comfort in the air. Blissful faces could be seen, quivering at the idea of being able to be the pure embodiment of love for a few days, without the influence of a society that tends to inhibit such deep contact.

Once we reached the place of our overnight stay, we tucked ourselves in and thankful to God we welcomed Morpheus.



## **Saturday, 19**

*We woke up on Saturday morning in the remote hills of Assisi.*

*A wonderful welcome from the B&B, with a hearty breakfast in a rustic and enchanted setting.*

*In the morning at the Ashram, through the vibration of the 21 AUMs, the primordial sound that evokes the beginning of creation, we participated in true awakening praying for us to adhere to our spirituality, abandoning what is not needed. From prayer, to silence and later onto contemplation.*

*Shortly after, taking the pathway towards the surrounding forests, we united to gather wood for the fireplace.*



*This was followed by a walk in the woods, a walk in mindfulness, bathed in the blessed wonder that descended down from the sky and gave abundance of water, of life.*

*After some singing (and before lunch), we chanted the food prayer and enjoyed the healthy and delicious food that the fantastic "team" of cooks had prepared for all of us. In the afternoon, we watched a video in which Swami was speaking and in which we could perceive beauty, the call of unconditional love, gratitude, and the "spirit of observation that looks and goes beyond all our limitations."*



Some of the messages received where:

"We are in the world, but not of the world."

"Every living being follows their own path, every man follows and nurtures his own Dharma."

"What is fundamental is to put limits in keeping the company of those who do not follow healthy paths and at best to hope and pray for their well-being."

"Does man still live in caves? Rhetorical question, of course not. Then why does he eat meat? Why is he forced to kill other beings to satisfy the tongue and keep them in his stomach? The stomach is not a graveyard for animals; it is a center that generates love."

"Every being, even the smallest is a respectable being, don't kill it."

"Nature knows how to behave, always. She is stronger than any human intervention. Man can only learn and follow, keeping up with her pace."

"Swami told of a spiritual ritual (yajna) he had attended in which man's illogic emerged. Two fake model horses had been used (because they were too expensive) and then, at the close of the same ritual they wanted to sacrifice a goat because it was inexpensive compared to horses and so they justified themselves saying "its just a goat."



Another gift received on Saturday, this time after lunch, was the artistic experience, together with Torquato Stefanelli. After choosing one of the four tunes he proposed (everyone chose his own and listened to it on headphones during the workshop) we created our drawing and paintings on a sheet of thick paper, supported by cardboard. Torquato kindly provided us with the materials: markers, sketch pens, pastel colours, pencils, pens, glue etc.

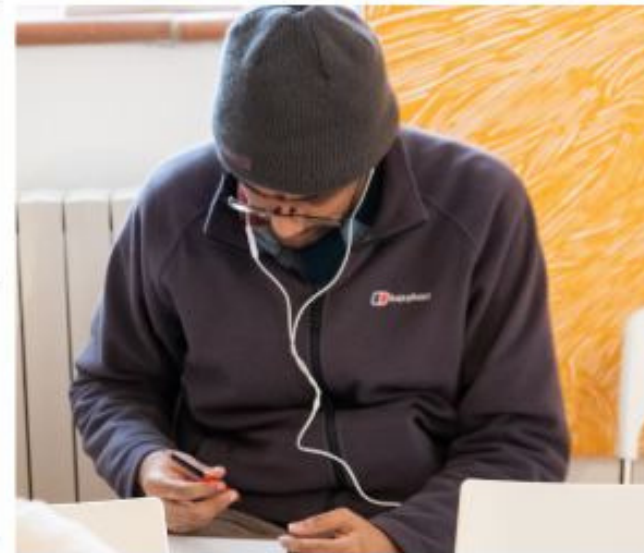
In this workshop, the idea was to let the emotions and feelings flow, so that even the hand could flow along with the heart, choosing the medium with which to manifest our essence, our free-flow art, without fear of judgment, without worrying or thinking about the result.







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*This was followed by an exchange of opinions and some interpretation of the drawings, for those who felt the need.*

*With all the drawings, paintings and collages placed around Sai Baba's altar, we went back to chanting mantras, filling the ambience and the heart with sound. Then silence, as a backdrop to the prayers: it gave space to a common dialogue, a common feeling from the heart.*

*The dinner was delicious. Each of us cooperated to ensure that there was well-being and harmony.*

*Heading back toward our dormitories, we had one more experience, an awakened consciousness, the ability to manifest love in all freedom.*



## Sunday, 20

The third day of our European Youth Meet in Assisi started as usual with morning prayers and bhajans, followed by a group game of fill-in-the-blanks of some of Sai's Divine messages. The group that finished first received a score increase, after which only when each group gave correct answers to each sentence did they receive an increase in their score, if not, their score decreased.







Swami mentioned a story, that the student referred to in his letter, while he wrote to Swami. The story was about a game of catch the ball played by Rama, Lakshmana in one team and Bharata and Shatrughna in the other. While playing the game, Rama noticed that Bharata and Shatrughna were losing, which was making them sad. Noticing this, Rama deliberately started missing some catches. Lakshmana got angry and asked Rama why he was doing this. Rama explained to Lakshmana “if we win, only we two can be happy, but if they win, all four of us can be happy”. This was the Spirit of sportsmanship of Rama.







*Before the end of our youth retreat, some shared their personal experiences of the past three days, how we had a great time learning about ourselves and others and how important it is when we feel this unity: what a joy it is for all!*

*This was followed by a visit to Swami's room in the Ashram, which left us speechless and with warm memories of yet another Youth Meeting in Assisi. The farewell to our brothers and sisters left us desiring to return as soon as possible and to be in the Divine's presence.*



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