



# YOUTH MEET SEPTEMBER 2020

CASA DEL DIVINO ASHRAM - ASSISI

11 / 13 SEPTEMBER







Upon arrival at Assisi, welcomed by an unusually blessed sunny and warm September day, we, the "Youth" met in front of the "Basilica of Santa Maria degli Angeli" where our Guide Antonello was waiting to share with us precious details on the holy story of St. Francis and the Porziuncola.

Respecting the Covid emergency restrictions, the guide gave us as much information as possible outside the Basilica, offering us the opportunity to admire the various parts of the Church in total silence and prayer. We visited the Porziuncola; the chiesetta (little church) of Porziuncola (Italian for "Little portion"), the most sacred place for Franciscans followed by the Rose Garden and Rose Chapel, via the sacristy where we saw the last remains of the ancient woods in which St. Francis and his friars lived. From the Rose garden, we were then

**FRIDAY, 11**





guided to the Rose Chapel. Our day continued with the visit of the Basilica of Santa Chiara along with our guide. This Church is dedicated to Saint Claire of Assisi and also preserves the remains of the Saint. Visiting these holy places prepared our hearts for a special weekend at the Ashram "Casa del Divino". We then followed our guides towards the Ashram via a gravel road, immersed in nature. Our brief pilgrimage towards the sacred center inaugurated by Swami in the year 2108 filled us with sweet expectations and on arrival we were welcomed by Nature in all its manifestations.





We were invited to the prayer hall for a Bhajan session after which a brief introduction about the birth of this Ashram and its main Mission was illustrated by the Italian Youth Coordinator Victory Craxi.

We then relished a Vegetarian dinner prepared by volunteers of the Ashram helped by Youth who served food and cleaned up after dinner. Each Youth was assigned a responsibility in-line with programme of the entire retreat.

The day ended with thankful wishes and prayers to all. The girls headed towards the B&B for the night while the boys remained at the Ashram with the organizers of the retreat.



# SATURDAY, 12

The girls who slept at the B&B had breakfast together and, on a beautiful morning with a pastel-colored sky, they went up by car along the slopes leading to the Casa del Divino. This path is to be followed by each one at his or her own pace, with awareness and attention both to oneself as well as to others representing a perfect metaphor of life!

Arriving at the Ashram you immediately perceive a very warm, welcoming and loving energy where everything is arranged with care, harmony and in perfect order. After having reunited with the boys who had slept in the Ashram





it was time to sing Bhajans all together (devotional songs) inside the meeting room where the presence of the Master is highly perceptible. Personally, these songs have a cleansing and uplifting effect on me predisposing an introspection and at the same time causing an openness towards others. How wonderful!

After a short yoga session kindly conducted by Melissa, we all became children once again during the interactive session conducted by Dorianio who is a member of the Aves association that deals with a European project on education in human values. Dorianio, with a lot of sympathy and stage presence, told us how, with this project one can collaborate with schools through lessons based on techniques such as storytelling, singing, guided imagery, quotation and group activity.

The boys, dusting off their creative skills, had a lot of fun singing, reading and impersonating the story of the ugly and poor farmer and they relaxed a lot during a session of guided meditation, aptly called an imaginary journey.







An Aves interactive session in fact begins with everyone singing because singing focuses one's attention and prepares and harmonizes the group. What then follows is the telling of a story in which the person is involved in acting, reading, questioning, but above all he is asked to express his opinion in order to awaken in the participant those values that are inserted in the story. Subsequently, through the imaginary journey, a very pleasant and relaxing moment is created and ends with a final song and sharing. After a break for lunch and for Seva (services), the youth had the opportunity to attend the presentation of a game on human values, a project still in the making. Marcella explained how this idea came from the German youth and how it is a game aimed above all at the devotees of the Master, useful for learning and improving collaboration with others.





After dividing everyone into four groups it was time to choose a number that matched a question. Each group then had a few minutes to discuss and find an answer that everyone agreed upon. For each correct answer, we advanced on the 9 planets in the direction of the sun. A very nice game that definitely gives you food for thought and allows you to put yourself in your neighbours shoes and so gives one an opportunity of learning another's point of view leading to a personal enrichment through this experience.

After a short break for a snack, the youth were able to stretch their legs a little and immerse themselves in the unspoiled nature in silence while taking a walk towards a water source on the hill (currently dry due to the lack of rains) which leads to the Master's favourite spot in the Ashram's garden, the waterfall.



Walking in nature is very nourishing and doing it in silence allows for greater introspection useful for letting out most of the thoughts and creating peace in the mind and heart.

Before returning to the Casa del Divino Ashram, it was possible to share, thanks to a question posed by Victory, a pleasant memory of one's childhood in the midst of nature, thus becoming aware of how important it is to dedicate at least a few minutes to nature every day.

Before dinner, as with every meal we sang the food prayer together, a very emotional moment in which the energy is felt to rise again. Furthermore, the food offered in the Ashram







is delicious and nutritious on all levels.

After dinner, even though tired, a Satsang (meeting) was held with attention and admiration from Ampelio Veleda, a man who dedicated most of his life to the Master and to the creation of the wonderful Ashram.

All this can be seen from the precision with which he reports every event, every anecdote, every word or joke. His words exuded Love and knowledge from experience.

A great joy for everyone's ears and hearts!





## SUNDAY, 13

During breakfast on the third day it almost seemed like we all knew each other since a long time and upon arrival at the Divine Ashram we got the confirmation! The morning songs began accompanied by the harmonium, the transverse flute, the drum and other instruments, which together with the voices managed to reach beyond the usual vibrations that can be perceived in ordinary day to day life. In the silence of these vibrations we then moved to the garden to practice an outdoor yoga class and the scents, colors and sounds of nature seemed to be much stronger and closer than ever before... perhaps they vibrate with the same music as the Bhajans?

We remained in the garden for a group photo, where we arranged ourselves in a position





of the "Om" symbol. We looked like schoolchildren at their first class photo: laughter, and jokes abound, while the teacher, who in this case was Victory, tried to maintain discipline in the class.

Not always in those days was there an exact perception of time and space, which is really very strange if we think about our busy way of life today. In the morning Victory talked to us about the mind, judgment, our fears, and between his explanations and our questions we tried to understand more, so that we can be more open to acceptance without judgment, even of our limitations.

When we detach ourselves from the action without giving judgment, it means that we are observing and therefore there is no longer a right and wrong, I want or I don't want, but we leave the mind and become observers and the practice of



# SANATHANA DHARMA



observing is done in silence. To achieve this change it takes discipline, perseverance and practice that transform the "blockages" into a good and better habit and that which was difficult before, in time becomes a new "normal".

From the change on a personal level, we moved on to talk about the change we are experiencing globally and in order to better explain this concept we watched a video message from Swami telling that everything is changing and will change, and that we must accept this change. Rejecting it will be in vain, accepting it will be divine. After His blessings again through this video, we had lunch.





Meal time is a very fun time and in addition to eating we had a chance to get to know each other better. We were all Italians at the retreat (unlike other retreats which included youth from all over Europe) and we came from many parts of Italy.

After greeting Swami on the upper floor, it was time for the "Arathi" which was performed by Silvia and Victory and was perceived very strongly. To the final greeting before leaving are added thanks to everyone, for having organized, for having participated, for having cooked, for having given everyone a part of themselves.