

MOMENTS OF MINI SHARING TIME 2002 IN ITALY

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This year I was very happy to take part in Sharing Time in Italy, in “La Romita”, an old Franciscan Convent located in the beautiful Umbrian mountains, a few kilometres above Terni, my native town. The convent was being restored almost entirely by the efforts of the resident Franciscan monk, Fra Bernardino, and the community. Life there still resembles what we would imagine as traditional Franciscan monastic lifestyle, with no electricity, very limited transport, water available from local wells and wood burning open fires for heating. It enjoys a stunning scenery and a still, sacred atmosphere.

About 30 people took part in Sharing Time this summer – mainly people from Germany, who organised the event, 10 people from England and a few from Italy, Switzerland and Indonesia. It was nourishing and heart-warming to be a part of the international Sharing Movement Community again, to meet up with friends old and new. Several families with children brought a feeling of caring and intimacy. Much laughter could be heard at meal times and during the working periods. There was also an opportunity to appreciate and learn from inter-cultural “social sharing” which I always find interesting and challenging.

The Sharing Movement programme consisted of indoor and outdoor sessions in the convent cloister, in the chapels and in the garden. Some of the themes we explored were: Movement and Art, Movement and Healing and Male and Female. The male group created a performance in the nearby forest, which combined theatre, art installation and music improvisation. Another performance, next to the well, celebrated Sarah Hyde’s Birthday, with an artistic installation, violin music and singing initiated by Tim Jones. Prapto joined the event for one day prior to starting teaching “Arte e Movimento” workshop in Bolsena. At a meeting he announced Sharing Time in 2003 will take place in Solo, Indonesia. Those who cannot travel there, he suggested, could organise a small Sharing time in their country, or one in Europe, to coincide with the one in Indonesia, so that a sense of mutual sharing and empowerment will be generated between Europe and Asia.

In the last few days, further meetings to discuss possible location of Sharing Time in Europe next year and confirmation that Sharing Movement has now received an official recognition in the form of a grant from the European Community. The future of “Impressions” - the International Sharing Movement newsletter, which needs wider support from the community for it to be produced, was also a topic of discussion. The grant from the European Community means that future events like Sharing Time, Art and Religiosity, MAM meetings and other movement happenings can now have financial backing. Funding from the European Community was obtained thanks to the committed work of Anne-Careen Engel and the team who organised last year’s Sharing Time in Hamburg.

One unique feature of this Sharing Time in Italy, was that in addition to the moving programme we also took part in the daily running of the convent. Every morning at 7.00 a.m. we were woken up by Fra Bernardino, who would serenade us into the day with his guitar playing and singing. Shortly after, there was an opportunity to join him in the chapel, for prayer, meditation and chanting. Each day we worked for two hours: indoors, preparing meals, or in the garden to gather food, or other maintenance work. Each meal was preceded by Fra Bernardino’s blessings, in the form of a song which we would all join in with. In the evenings, after dinner, he would ‘summon’ us to share

thoughts about our experience of life in the convent. Some of us, including myself, found the convent regime was constricting our Sharing Movement time. Others found the combination of the movement time and daily convent routine a therapeutic and learning experience for daily life, back home.

With many thanks to Iris Understaedt and the German friends who organised the event; to Fra Bernardino for opening his convent to us and to all who participated.

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