

# THE TENDER CARE OF PROVIDENCE

## SDE gathering in Maguzzano, Italy, 18.-23. April, 2018

SDE gathering 2018 was situated in Maguzzano, by the lake Garda in Italy in a monastery founded by Don Calabria (1873-1954) where lives nowadays a small community of sisters and brothers of The Poor Servants of Divine Providence.



Our SDE secretary Aija Kaartinen knows Maguzzano quite well after having lived there years in the past. Finally it was possible to have a meeting there with intense preparation with brother Abraham from Maguzzano, his team and of course the SDE committee. We were 62 participants together from sixteen countries and five denominations. This time most of us were Roman Catholics and Lutherans. The ecumenism becomes loving reality in SDE meetings, so this time too. The Orthodox Church is still lacking but we pray for them to participate with us also.

Before our meeting we had been thinking what the topic the tender care of Providence actually means. A word "providence" struck to us. We hear it really rarely in our worship in Finland. First we were astounded, what was this? In these times our lives are full of struggle and problems of all kind in our families, congregations and communities. We have global fears, we feel to be powerless despite of our faith. Afterwards it's easier to recognize, how important it was to be surrounded by the tender care of Providence in all those welcoming deeds with time tables and taking care of our coming and leaving. We could feel it in the dining room with delicious food made with love in the kitchen. We could feel it in the gentle smiles of the sisters of the house and the staff. And what about the nature! The surrounding views of Garda, the lake and mountains, the olive fields and flowers, warmth, the stars and the moon and even the graveyard told us about God's love and providence. The numerous chapels inside and outside the monastery and many beautiful icons. There is "the scuola di iconografia del Centro Ecumenico" in Maguzzano.

On Wednesday, the 18.4. the Opening Prayer with presentations took time. We were so many with our interesting stories and objects, we had brought with us.

On Thursday, the 19.4. we went deeper in our topic. We were asked to come present with a stone given to each of us:



*"Hold in your hand a stone*

*smoothed by the waves*

*And you understand*

*that tender*

*and constant*

*touching*

*can work miracles."*

We were sharing in small groups what a stone had told each of us about The tender care of Providence.

We could become acquainted with Don Calabria in the session "Going deeper". We got to know that there were some main things in San Giovanni Calabria's spirituality: 1. God is the Father, 2. God is love. 3. We all are sisters and brothers. 4. Gospel gives the example for deeds. 5. He himself was surrounded especially by children and youth, but also those in need, the poorest ones. 6. He was a good listener. 7. He did not suppress, but wanted everybody to find his or her own vocation.

After this session brother John from Taizé told us about spiritual guidance in Taizé.

Thursday was also the day of workshops: Liturgical dance led by Valda, Finding the Soul's Song in Later Life led by Una, fr. Evilazio's workshop about Discernment, Focusing in our Personal Lives led by Maureen and Rafael Maria's workshop of Focusing dealing with traumas and spiritual guidance.



In the evening we had Eucharist by walking which took us through the olive field to one of those small outdoor chapels of the area. We have the memory of it in our hearts. Many thanks to Aija and Teemu.

On Friday we had pilgrimage to the Shrine of "Madonna della Corona". On the journey we could see the beautiful views of Garda and the mountains around. A tradition dates the birth of the Shrine of Our Lady of the Corona to 1522, as the sculpture venerated here was transported from the island Rhodes in a time of dangerous conflicts caused by the Muslim army of Suliman II. Medieval documents testify that hermits lived ones in the caves and the hermitage was linked to the Abbey of St Zeno in Verona already around the year 1000. Along the path from buses down to the shrine we could meditate the beautiful bronze statues of the stations of the Via Crucis. A guidance could have helped us to a deeper understanding.



In the evening our Eucharist was silent, led by Peter Ball.

And we continued in silence in Saturday. In the evening we got local concert by Coro degli Alpini.

Sunday, the 22. April the former committee was elected again in AGM. We are grateful for chair Rafael Maria's, secretary Aija's, treasurer Elemer's and the 4<sup>th</sup> member Paula's contributions, for all they have done for SDE. In the future we though hope that different dominations are part of the Executive Committee.

It was interesting to hear about the catholic education program of spiritual guidance first asked after the SDE meeting in Poland. We would like to continue with it more ecumenical, so it could serve all the participants of SDE.

Before our closing there was a presentation of our next meeting place in Romania. Also seven new members of SDE were blessed. There are many new members in the SDE. So we suggest to hear of the roots of SDE by the members from very beginning Henry Morgan, Maike Ewert, Peter Ball... What were the goals and have those goals and tasks changed during the years. We could discourse after a prayerful silence, if the purpose of SDE still remains or if we have to change something. It has been so important that, during the triads, Emmaus walks and time out of formal program, it's possible to share our questions with new and older members, soul friends, spiritual guiders. Together. For example we have been so thankful to Maike and Henry for their sharing their wisdom and support in our diocese and our community in Kuopio.

We spent the time of our own inside the walls of the beautiful Maguzzano. Many times in different SDE meetings we have met laypeople of local communities and got to know their history, culture, spirituality and wounds. It has not been easy, but we have learned a lot, something has been transformed in us. Now we were safe and were offered Gods tender care and providence in the beauty of a place, in prayers, in Eucharist, in unhurried talks with our "soul friends"...



In one workshop there was a woman, who asked if it would be possible to attend to dancing led by Valda. In the evening we met this teacher, a layperson who was so eager to tell us what is going on in many active Christian communities in nearby villages. We hoped that it could have been possible to every one of us to hear those stories. We hope, that next SDE meetings bring us in contact with the locals, with their lives and spirituality.

Some days after our meeting Aija sent us a message: She had visited in one Finnish- Italian family near Magguzzano. She had brought with her to the family Sisko' s picture of the presentation. It was a photo of an altar painting from one of the churches in Lapland. This couple was so amazed at that picture and became to tears: "How did You give to us exactly this picture? We were married in front of this altar 40 years ago." Wasn't it a sign of the continuous tender care of Providence?

*God is Father. He takes care of us and our dear ones.  
Nothing escapes his sight.  
Nothing happens to us abruptly and takes him by surprise.  
St. John Calabria*

May God bless You all.

Sisko, Sirpa and Marja Leena

Kuopio, Finland