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HOT HOLY HOLIDAYS

In February I received the news about CLC holidays for young adults in Palermo, Italy. The information leaflet was so attractive that I soon decided to go. Now I can say that the organisers did their best and the programme was really excellent. There was time for praying, personal reflection, sharing groups, silence, and also for visiting cultural and natural heritage or having fun.

Usually we started a day with a holy mass. Simultaneously, a small church team had been formed. It tried to involve all members into readings during the mass, every day in different language. Also singing was very vivid, from Slovak to Arabic songs. After breakfast we had a short introduction to a certain topic, then a personal reflection/praying and sharing in small groups. The main topics were about our own history of faith, experience of being a member of a (CLC) group/community and our mission. Small groups were a space to deepen our relationship. The members of my group were Shola from England, Antonia from Germany and Katarina and Martina from Slovakia. We shared our lives and opinions and always the time was too short to tell everything. Other people's experience and their way of living enrich me and give me ideas about how to live my own life. In the small group I experienced the CLC as a world (or European) community. I got an impression that London CLC is a very strong one, having two types of groups, for old and young adults. In Slovenia there is no such differentiation. I found out that the frequency and the structure of a group meeting is very similar in London and in Ljubljana. I was happy to hear that CLC is even ecumenical: some members of English groups are not Catholics. Slovak girls told us that there is no CLC in their country, but the groups they attend are something very similar to CLC. German members of the holidays also do not belong to CLC, but they often attend the projects organised by Jesuits.

Many young people said they are volunteers in charity organisations. On Sicily, one of the major problems is a refugee problem. A lot of boats full of Africans or Asians escaping from unbearable conditions land here. They want to go north, but many of them stay on the island. We visited Centro Astelli, where volunteers offer medical care, lawyer, food and clothes. The centre is located in Ballarò, a poor and dirty part of Palermo, where the façades are severely damaged and the street names are written in Italian, Arabic and Hebrew language. It is not a good feeling walking there, especially at narrow streets. I think this visit made us quite disturbed. Facing such a big and complex social problem, I feel so small and weak. Not only the visit of refugee centre, also the movie Truman's Show, which we saw afterwards, made us think a lot. Full of deep impressions we finally relaxed in a nice pizzeria and walking through

a city by night. The silence next day was an opportunity to think about my mission, and to be alone with God.

In the afternoons, we usually went on short trips or just had fun. Of course, firstly we had a sightseeing tour of vivid Palermo centre. I found the architecture quite exotic. There is a mixture of Norman, Arabic, gothic and baroque elements and a single building could be admired for hours. Admired was also the Monreale cathedral. Its ceiling and walls are covered with golden mosaics, showing the stories from Old and New Testament. And above everything – a huge mosaic of Christ Pantocrator. We also visited a nature reserve Capo Rama-Terrasini. There was a guided tour on geological history of Sicily. We saw carbonate cliffs of different colours and the hundreds billion years old fossils of bivalve Megalodon. At nearly 40 °C not many animals could be seen; I noticed just some lizards and grasshoppers. We admired a typical Mediterranean flora (e.g. cactuses, prickly pear, agave, ephedra, sea lavender) and endemic dwarf fan palms which offered us no shadow. The sun is a symbol of Sicily and we experienced its power every single day. Wherever we had been, we also had a beautiful view on a big blue Tyrrhenian Sea. We were sunbathing on long sandy beaches and having fun in a warm sea. The programme included also a whole day excursion to a nice fishermen's town Cefalù. One of the Sicilian CLC members showed us town sights and the cathedral. The bus took us then high above the sea, into a forest where we celebrated a holy mass and had a picnic. Some CLC families joined us, too.

During our ten-day holidays we met a lot of CLC members from Palermo, and even Leonardo Becchetti, a president of Italian CLC, visited us. The evenings were full of joy and happiness: presentation of nations, European quiz, dance, »Palermo by night« and party on Nicoletta's garden. Last but not least, I should mention the delicious Sicilian food.

However, I will never forget these holidays, especially because of around 30 happy, active and optimistic young people, who were from Croatia, England, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Lebanon, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia. I am very grateful to the organisers who took a great care of us: f. Oliver (Malta), Martina (Croatia), Giovanni, Gisela, Alessandra, Stefano (Palermo) and Roberta (Malta).

The fruits of the holidays are new friends, nice experience and mostly a new élan to live my own life at home.