

Summer holidays for young professionals Palermo, Sicily
21 – 31 August, 2007

Palermo holidays in August 2007 were just the last step of our journey that begins in autumn, 2005 when I started the e-mail correspondence with Pierluigi Portaluppi.

Euroteam accepted the challenge from the group of young people in CLC Italy to do something for young CLC'ers in Europe. Pierluigi was one of them. It took time to decide what is it that we want, how are we going to do it and who is going to do it. After some time while we were questioning our possibilities and talents we were ready to set up a small guiding team.

I do not know the exact number of young or better to say less experienced CLC'ers in Europe but it seemed there are not many. It was a miracle to find the ones who would really do it in spite all of their obligations, work or commitments. Finally we came up with Roberta Michalief (CLC Malta), Mariella Demichele (Germany), Giovanni Mondello (Host community Palermo), Pierluigi Portaluppi (CLC Italy – Genoa) and me, Martina Županić (Euroteam member and CLC Croatia). Our first meeting was in September of 2006, in Rome. Since then we had been working more intensively on our holidays. Day by day many things became more and more clear. Of course, there were also times when our tired bodies and minds needed help of other euroteam members. Their help and support was immeasurable. Many times obstacles we have to cross were above our knowledge or capabilities. Many times we were at risk to cancel everything because it was difficult to confront our fears. Thanks to God and dear people who believed in what we are doing we did not give up.

On our second meeting, in March 2007, in Palermo over the Palm Sunday weekend there was one member of our team less. But we got a new one who we have been looking for since the very beginning. It was f. Oliver Borg who responded that he is able to be with us in August. We were hoping to get more detailed information about our holidays. For the first time we as team has seen the place where we shall spent our holidays and met the other host community members from CLC in Palermo. We met Alessandra Perricone and her husband Stefano, Gabriella, Alfonso, Giovanni's wife to be, Gisella. Simultaneously the preparations for their wedding June went on. F. Sibilio and F. Guerra, Jesuits who live in the house welcomed us warmly and generously. We split more in a serious than a joyful way. There were many questions with no responds, doubts and situations. Somehow we keep on going. Since that moment I knew there is no way back just forward with full speed ahead.

What give me hope the most were our participants. Many registered since February 2007 but at the end we came up with 27 participants in August. The last participant registered in July. Many times the issue was is that enough?

Finally at the end of August we have started our HOt Holy Holidays as one of the participants named them writing an article for *Progressio*. It started with hot weather, lost luggage and one sick team member less as he broke his ankle on the last working day before leaving for Palermo. He was coming back home from work when it happened. There were just two left to deal with the programme, one who took all the responsibility for the excursions, visits and sightseeing and father Oliver who we all hoped will be able to put us all together when we meet him for the first time in Gonzaga House, in Palermo. Fortunately there was a host team Giovanni and Alessandra and their supporters not just for the holiday season but in their everyday life Stefano and Gisella. There have been some others as we may see on the lovely dinner at Nicoletta's house. But Alessandra and Giovanni did it by whole heart. As f. Oliver would say for Giovanni on one occasion – «He is just too good». They were good both each on a special way. The only thing I would prefer to be different next time is that somebody from the host community takes responsibility of the finances and the welcome committee at the airport or at the train station.

Our participants were in my opinion also nice and mature people. Ready to accept our proposals, programme, accommodation whatever we prepared. It was a great surprise and gift for me. I felt grateful for their patience with our weaknesses as guides. Even they were not all CLC'ers we could feel no big difference because of it. They were also ready to take part in the programme, especially in the preparation of the daily mass, singing, making fun and spreading the good and relaxed atmosphere in the house and among all of us. Our guests from Lebanon helped them in this sun and fun activities generously. We all thank them for being with us. We all also appreciate a visit of CLC Italy president Leonardo Becchetti together with his wife Laura. The whole Italian CLC community took over a difficult task of welcoming us at the first place and we thank them for that. By his presence Leonardo testifies to us how we are important to CLC Italy and CLC Palermo. He was also present as the representative of the euroteam.

The vast majority of the participants were between 25 and 33 years old and they came from different CLC communities in Europe – England & Wales, France, Germany, Italy, Slovenia, Slovakia, Poland and guests from Lebanon. Together with guides we had the representatives of CLC Malta and Croatia as well.

We tried to make a balanced programme. Holidays was first on our minds we admit that and spiritual programme on second. Some people thought it would be better if was the other way round. Of course we could make it better and different. We were happy to have people who were interested in spiritual programme. But sometimes you plan one thing and completely another comes out. You have to respect the unexpected changes, other people's ideas, capabilities and limitations as well as your own. We are different in dealing with the same matter. While one thinks it is too much swimming other thinks it is not enough.

To conclude I would like to share my feelings of gratitude and joy that we all together as participants, host community, prayer supporters, Jesuits, guides really make it happen. It was a great challenge and pleasure even it does not look like it from the very beginning to had an opportunity to meet different people from various CLC communities in Europe. The picture of CLC Europe looks a bit more vivid, warm and beautiful to me. Some of the participants are quite active in their home CLC communities. Hopefully it will also encourage them to keep going on and maybe once in the future welcome our another encounter.

It was also one of the many opportunities to meet God and realize how things with and without His touch have no same taste.

Martina Zupanic
Coordinator of the Guiding team