



Brother Fire, Brother Sun and...Scrambled Egg: Assisi 2017

The 2017 Assisi retreat took place at the tail-end of a heat-wave in Central Italy, giving us 12 days of Brother Sun at 30 -35°... This year's participants came from Iceland, Malta and all parts of the UK, bringing with them a rich diversity of artistic talent and spirituality to share.



Our second evening fell on the 'Vigil of the Assumption' and several of us went to Santa Maria degli Angeli to witness the *Faló* in the piazza in front of the Basilica. The *Faló* was a tall pyre of local brushwood, stuffed with hundreds of hand-written prayers, which were placed in the unlit bonfire by attendants. Following a Service and Procession from the Basilica, the fire was then ceremonially lit, with the local Bishop and hundreds of visitors in attendance. Brother Fire indeed!

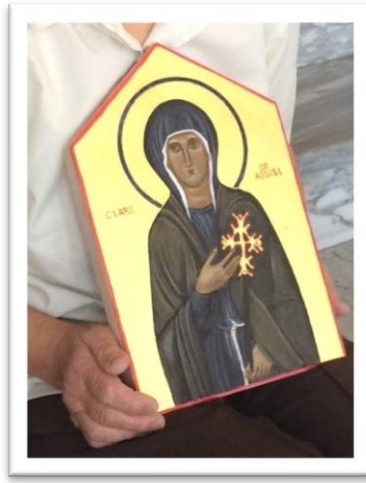


The following day, being the *Ferrogosto*, we enjoyed our own *fiesta*, having our 'Canticle of the Sun' picnic with Umbrian wine, Pecorino cheeses and ham from Mount Subasio, local tomatoes, bread and grapes – and cake. Our setting this year was a riverside spot on the east side of the Colle d'Inferno, in the beautiful park of the 'Bosco di San Francesco'.

The 7 days of the painting course were intensive, and concentrated on early 13th century 'Franciscan icons' or specific late medieval Italian devotional images with a Byzantine antecedence. This year, for the first time, a wider choice of images was offered and the group successfully completed versions of Berlinghiero's *St Francis receiving the Stigmata*, *Madonna di sotto gli Organi*, and the anonymously painted image of *Santa Chiara* from her Vita panel using the 12th century technique of Theophilus.

One lady painted a later 14th image of *St Anthony of Padua*, using Cennini's technique. Everyone worked with great diligence, despite the challenges of the heat and 'scrambled egg tempera' by mid-afternoon!





In addition to painting these images, we also explored their specific art historical contexts and connections in relation to art of the Basilica di San Francesco and the collection in the National Gallery of Perugia.

Our visit to La Verna was blessed with clear skies and fabulous views over the mountains and valleys where Tuscany, Umbria and Le Marche meet. After the afternoon Service, those that wanted, had their icons blessed in the Basilica.



Feedback:

'I found the retreat a deeply moving and spiritual experience. I appreciated the chance of visiting key Franciscan sites and the freedom, within the necessary framework, to choose what to do. I greatly appreciated the generous help and encouragement at all stages of the process and your unfailing patience. The group's happy ethos was wonderful too.'

Josephine, FRM

'I felt this was an excellent and high standard of art tuition at university level of presentation. Tutor was knowledgeable at exceptional level in respect of icon art history and also excellent guide at religious historical sites. Helen offered excellent support at every step of the painting process and exhibited incredible patience towards those of us not previously experienced in this subject and in so far as

additional hours of support where necessary....The location for the retreat is perfect with examples of related iconography at sacred and religious sites close by and certainly these could not be better. I feel the retreat has offered far more than I ever expected...'

J.P

'I appreciated the location in a homely environment near to all the main sights and plenty of time for us to pursue a prayerful retreat in conjunction with our icon painting...I think this was the loveliest retreat I've been on and the Guest House Community are great.'

Anon.