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Sharing some thoughts on my vacation

“Jesus said to them, 'Come away by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while.' People were coming and going in great numbers, and they had no opportunity even to eat”

- Jesus said also: "come to me and I will give you rest and you will find rest for your souls".
- The rest he promises is the sense of security and peace that flows from a right relation with God. Resting allows us to quiet ourselves before God and revives our minds, bodies, and spirits.
- Every three years we are allowed to go back home to reconnect with our families and regain the strength for the work ahead.
- My vacation has been an 'intense' resting in God and I'd like to share some reflections about this period spent at home.
- Upon my reentry to The States a few friends asked if it was hard to leave behind my family and, if I was happy to be back.

- It is true:
- at home I could use my own language, the places and the people around me were familiar from my childhood, few things had changed and several new houses had been built over the years.
- At the beginning it took a while to get readjusted, but then I fitted in again perfectly.
- During my stay at home I realized how my relatives and friends had aged and how my many nephews and nieces had grown up graciously.
- My family had expanded and how I was now the eldest in the family, the one to whom the whole group was looking for guidance and advice.

My Hometown

**LA PIEVE DEI SANTI PIETRO E PAOLO
A CASCIA DI REGGELLO**

Two branches of the same tree

- My family is now divided in two large groups: one residing in the northern part of Italy and the second one in the Southern. The two groups and their cultures were so different complimentary to each other.
- There is a stereotype that Northern Italians tend to be more hardworking and business-oriented, but they can also be quite snobbish. For Southern Italians, they are thought to be more laid back but could become borderline lazy.
- This is likely because the North accounts for the vast majority of the country's wealth, so the region has many businesses.
- While the South has gorgeous beaches and the summer sun, this could create stereotypes that the South is more relaxed.
- In the South relations and their interaction are regulated by traditions that become sort of a ritual: every newcomer must acknowledge, by visiting and greeting, other members of the family, in this way strengthening family ties.

Images from the North Milan



Parma



Parma



Sunset in Venice



From the South of Italy Castle by Frederick II



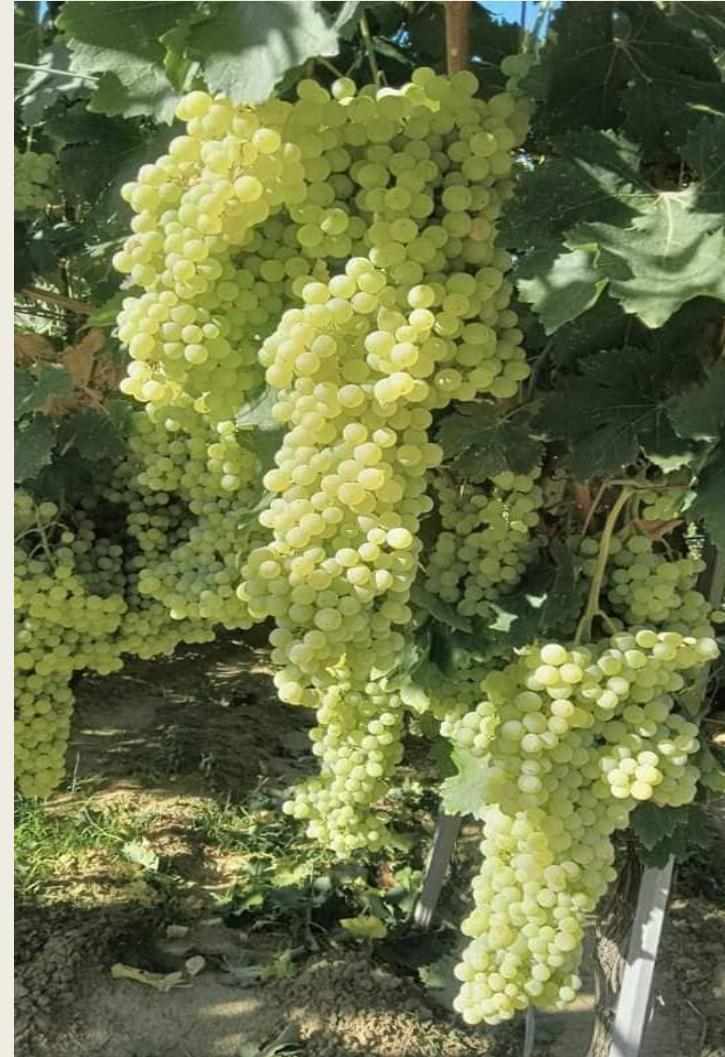
St. Nicholas Basilica: Bari



City of Polignano (Ba)



Figs and grapes



- The main event that brought my family together was the celebration of my Golden Jubilee in the Priesthood.
- We gathered at my hometown, Reggello (Florence), where I was born, received First Holy Communion, celebrated my First Mass and the Silver Jubilee.

My Ordination: Sept.27th, 1970







PROMISING OBEDIENCE

Reception



My cousin Fr. Mark





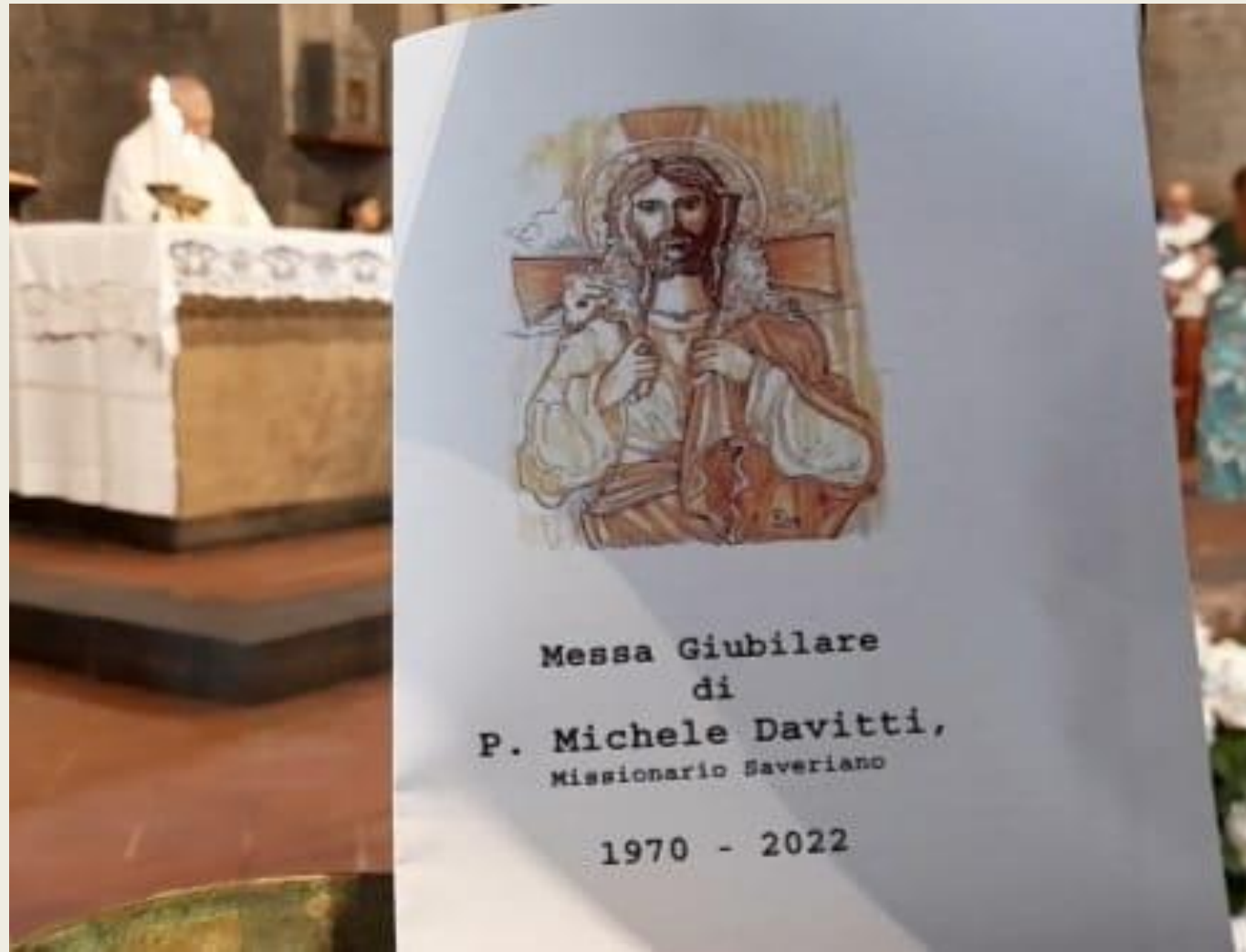


Golden Jubilee

June 19th 2022



The Booklet




Tracing back our steps and discover God's Blessings

But the LORD said to Samuel,
"Do not consider his appearance
or his height, for I have rejected
him. The LORD does not look at
the things man looks at. Man
looks at the outward
appearance, but the LORD looks
at the heart."

1 Samuel 16:7

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Who am I,
O Lord God?...that
You have brought
me this far?

2 SAMUEL 7:18

IT IS WRITTEN.com



MY CHURCH

INTERIOR ALIGNED WITH THE PLANETS









- We thank you for counting us worthy to stand in your presence and praise you

Fifty two years erlier: the way we were!





- Now after so many years and so many experiences: sharing the great things the Lord has accomplished through my feet and my heart.



- The
- Town-
mayor:
- Mr. Piero
Giunti





WITH
SOME
CHILDHOOD
FRIENDS



- During the three weeks at Reggello I gave conferences to the various parishes trying to read the “signs” of our time, i.e. what God wants of us and how to give sense to what seems to have no sense.
- During the time spent at home I came across so many people, from all walks of life, who honored me by sharing their sorrows and hopes.
- I was pleasantly surprised by their trust: as soon as they felt the warmth of friendship, they opened up sharing with me their difficulties and challenges.
- A long line of people came to see me at the rectory to share their joys and sorrows, asking for an advice or to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation.
-

Responding to the signs of the times

Saint Pope John XXIII believed that the Church always needs to read and respond to the 'signs of the times'.

He convoked the **Second Vatican Council** to keep the Church truly in touch with the world so that she could be an instrument of Salvation for the people of the world.

The Council emphasized that:

- the work of the Church is the work of all the baptized and is not limited to the hierarchy;
- the Church is first and foremost a People, the new People of God;
- all the baptized are to join with humanity in building a more human world.

“ ...

Judge and Act



■ St. John
XXIII

- ④ **Reading the "signs of the times"** It is a basic Christian belief that God continues to speak in and through human history. This truth was reaffirmed by Vatican II. Consequently, the Church has "the duty of scrutinizing the signs of the times and of interpreting them in the light of the Gospel."

- I felt honored by their trust, encouraged by their faith. I realized that every time we approach a human-being we are approaching a Cross: we have to take off our shoes (i.e. Prejudices and judgments) because we are on “holy ground” made holy by their tears and sufferings.
-
- During the conversations I was praying in my heart that I should be a Cyrenian an “helper” in carrying those crosses and I asked God to help me not to add to the sufferings.

- During the epidemic Guido, my brother got sick. He was my best friend, only four years younger than me.
- I had planned to go with him to Lourdes to ask for his healing, but it was not possible.
- He died.
- Nevertheless I wanted to keep my promise to Blessed Mother, so I went to Lourdes praying for his eternal rest and for all my friends and myself, putting all under the protective mantle of Blessed Mother.



10 DAYS IN LOURDES



INTERNATIONAL MASS



BATHING
VERSUS
'WASHING'

Back to Italy to meet the other side of my family

- The rest of my stay was spent in the south, at Alberobello, famous for its conic buildings in stone and in Bari with the shrine of St. Nicolas, a link between the two churches of East and West



Alberobello





THE CHURCH OF ST. ANTHONY



- The protectors of the city: Cosma and Damian

Their celebrations





alamy

Image ID: 2CFAK08
www.alamy.com

BART:
WHERE MY
MOTHER
WAS BORN
ITS
CATHEDRAL

St. Nicholas Basilica





THE RELICS WITH THE 'MANNA'



THE BLESSING OF THE SEA

Puglia and Tuscany

- Two regions quite different in their beauty and one has to adjust accordingly.
- In Northern Italy people when show affection, tend to be more reserved, keeping their feelings for themselves .
- To them, deeds speak louder than words. They would give you the house-keys with the words: “make yourself at home”. Leaving to you the possibility to organize your stay as you like.

- In the south they tend to sort of “kidnap” you!
- They like to show affection: I never received so many kisses and hugs in my life as during the days I spent in the South.
- They shovel food in your plate: more food, more love (more weight!).

- They like to be close to show love!
- They shout and gesticulate to make their point.
- No breakfast or supper, only a long lunch at 2:00pm when all the stores are closed and nobody is in the streets because of the heat. (This year we had temperatures round 104-110 F.0

- In the south people like to waste time together chatting, eating pumpkin-seeds or other snacks. Usually lunch lasts for many long hours, to make up for the time we were away.
- More guests at table more happiness: one doesn't need an official invitation, we can always squeeze up and there is room for everybody.

Friendship and cordiality seem to take precedence over order and organization.

- A host in the north would get crazy, almost fainting if a uninvited guest shows up. The table has been set for a certain number of people only
- . In the south this is a secondary detail: people come first!

Religion is lived in a different way

- Although the majority of Italians are Catholics, the way religion is lived is quite distinctive.
- In Northern Italy religion seems to be quite simple and clear: one has to be upright, hard working and generous.
- In the South there is the so called popular devotion. Pope Francis commenting on this said: “If you want to KNOW about Mary, ask a theologian, if you want to LOVE Mary, ask the people.

The Saints and God

- In the south, saints seem more important than God, He is too busy running the universe to be disturbed by petty problems such as the loss of keys, a typical case for St. Anthony to come in.
- The saints are “our protectors and defenders” they patronize us.
- They talk to people in dreams to advice and worn them.
- Their statues are carried along the streets of the village on the shoulders of devotees, to make sure that everybody is known to them and put under their protection.
- The heavier the statue, the more abundant the sweat, the more blessings you receive!
- Saints know that to be a human being is not easy and that is impossible to keep all the commandments and they will put a good word for us with God.



The best of all: *Sorrowful Mother*

- She understands our sufferings and can help us in all our troubles.

Returning to the North for the re-entry

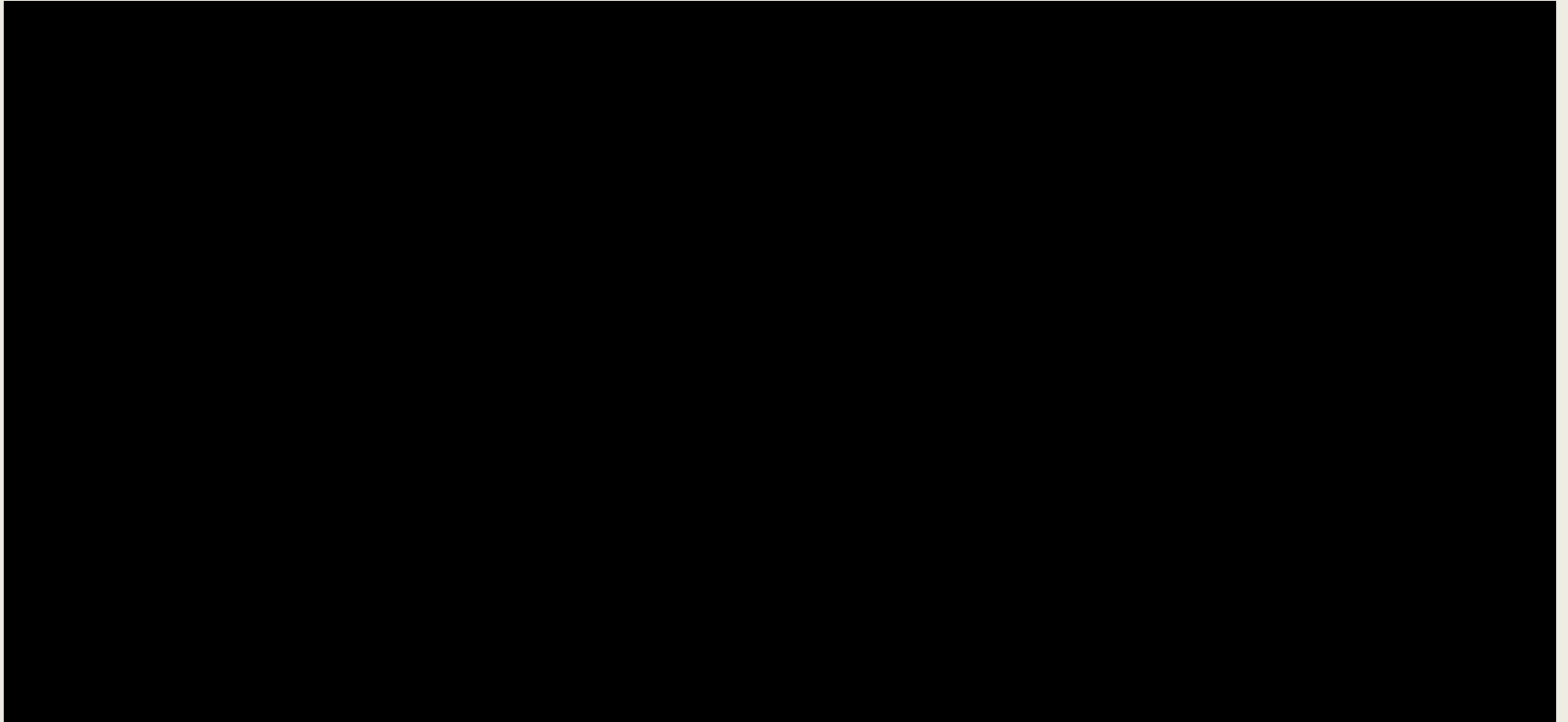
- Two world-views so beautiful and so different, so complimentary at the same time.
- It was time now to pack for the reentry. On the way back North we stopped at two famous shrines: Padre Pio and “Monte Santangelo” where St. Michael appeared on the Gargano Hills.

San Giovanni Rotondo e Padre Pio

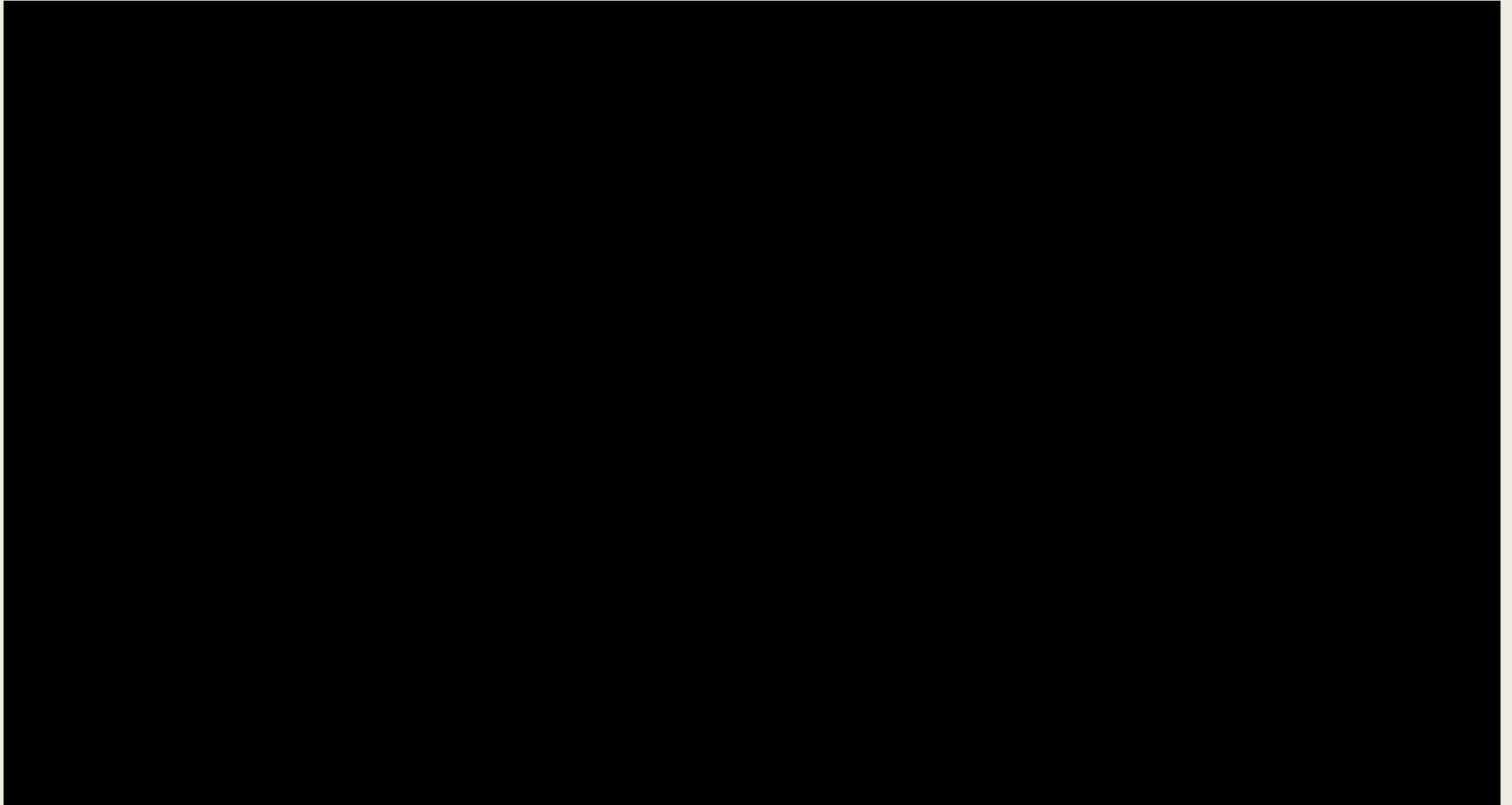


VATICANO
SPECIAL

Origin and history of the shrine of St. Michael



Padre Pio and St. Michael



Coming back Home to Wayne

Before leaving Italy I was asked by a few people if I wanted to remain behind: “there is a lot of work to do also here!”.

They forgot that I belong to a Religious family and my “richness” and diversity come from the vast experience of my Missionary Congregation.

Missionaries are “prophets” and their job is to point the way while, at the same time, working to become redundant . Missionaries are the people of the dreams, the people who, because carried on the shoulders of the local clergy can see far and show the direction towards which direct our steps.

- I love my country, my people and leaving them behind is an act of faith.
- I realized, in fact, that I was saying goodbye to people whom, given the age and their ailments, most probably, I will not see again., as it has been the case of my brother who passed away during the pandemic
- But I consider the Xaverians my real family in God. What unites us is not the fact that were born by the same physical parents, but by
- the **Holy Spirit**: “children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God.” Jn. 1,13
Besides, our Christian faith reminds us that “we don’t have here a permanent city”.

You are my real family.

- This is why I **am happy** to be back,
- **grateful** to God for the ten years I spent in Wayne with you
- **Trustful** for what is going to happen
- **and ready** for one more round.