

Pilgrimage to Pompeii for the 50th anniversary of Faith and Light in Italy

Article by Angela Grassi
International Vice-Coordinator



The pilgrimage of the 49 Italian communities, gathered to celebrate 50 years of Faith and Light in Italy, took place from 18 to 21 September 2025, at the Shrine of Our Lady of the Rosary in Pompeii, near Naples.

A total of 520 pilgrims from the three provinces of Fiume di Pace (River of Peace), Kimata and Mari e Vulcani (Seas and Volcanoes), as well as delegations from Croatia and Slovenia, and friends of the Kimata province from Greece, Cyprus and Albania, celebrated these 50 years of friendship and spiritual growth.



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Angela Grassi, International Vice-Coordinator

The theme that accompanied us was **'He has done great things for us'**, and each day was inspired by the Magnificat. For Mariangela Bertolini, the 'mother' of Faith and Light in Italy, this canticle of Mary was the beginning of a journey in the face of the great fragility of her daughter Maria Francesca, known as Chicca, but also the foundation of numerous communities in Rome and various other regions.

The Italian history of Faith and Light began with another pilgrimage, for the Jubilee of 1975, to Rome. A video was presented, summarising the stages experienced over the past fifty years: the first steps in Italy after Lourdes in 1971; the journey towards national unification; the creation of the three provinces in 2009 into which the Italian territory is organised; and the work of the National Association 'Faith and Light Italy'.



There are so many moments to cherish in our heart: a young girl with a disability, Antonella, dancing the Magnificat during the mime (in her eyes, we can see the infinite gentleness of God's embrace); the net with the names of communities past and present, carried to the stage by people with disabilities, their parents and friends; the prayer vigil with shadow puppet mime in the Shrine of Pompeii, meditating on 'the Mysteries of Faith and Light.' (*)

At Faith and Light, you feel at home, you feel joy, you feel welcome, as evidenced by the cheerful exchanges in hotels, the messages shared by everyone, and the enthusiasm of our young presenters Marta, Angelo, and Nicolò.



Sister Veronica Donatello



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Sister Veronica Donatello, head of the Italian Bishops' Conference's National Service for the Pastoral Care of Persons with Disabilities, shared this reflection with us: **"Only 25% of families with disabled members have friends. You are champions of friendship. You must show your charism to everyone. For you, people with disabilities are not people to be assisted, but people with whom to share a journey of faith.** You have the gift of challenging Christian communities, parishes and dioceses. Be like a bell that proclaims: We cannot exclude anyone from the Lord's table; let us learn to become a community!" Invite everyone to the table of life. Step outside your comfort zone, do not be afraid: there are vulnerable people waiting. Be the yeast that mixes with the new flour, have courage."

Raúl Izquierdo, our international coordinator, was present with his wife Laura, and he told us how he discovered Faith and Light at the age of 18: "Over the years, I have discovered a God who loves the little ones, a God shaped in the mud of humanity. **Faith and Light has helped me to grow in simplicity and helps me to keep a child's heart, has taught me to be more aware of my weakness, but also of my abilities.** God continues to use Faith and Light to remind us that he loves people beyond their merits and abilities."



(on the right) Raúl Izquierdo,
international coordinator

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During the final Mass, Father Benoît Malvaux, national spiritual for Faith and Light, summed up what had emerged from these four days: "**The Magnificat was like a guiding thread, reminding us of the importance of the least in God's eyes. Mary accompanies us in our trust in God, she who has supported us through so many trials, and in our friends. Many parents, upon the birth of a with disability child, have felt chosen by God. Mary too was chosen and guided on a path she could never have imagined. We entrust ourselves to her when we no longer know what the best decision to make is. To her, a strong and discreet presence in our lives, we entrust our future.**"



Here are some testimonies from participants:

'Many people came from far away to celebrate an important anniversary; it's like being at home, because we feel good and happy,' says Daniela, from the community of Rho (Milan).

'This experience was wonderful, it was really worth it,' adds Franco, from San Giovanni Battista in Bari.

And Angela, from Rome, concludes: **'We hope that Faith and Light will continue for another 50 years, or even more, because we are very strong!'**

Then the young participants: "We return full of hope, full of joy and rich in friendship. Let us sing the Magnificat again, because the Lord has done great things for us and through us."

(*) Meditation proposed by Ghislain du Chéné, available on the Faith and Light International intranet.



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