

12 Day Pilgrimage to Italy & Sicily
Visiting Siracusa, Agrigento, Taormina, Paola,
San Giovanni Rotondo, St. Michael's Cave, Pietrelcina & Rome



Fr. Seraphin with Padre Ermelindo

Spiritual Director
Fr. Joseph Seraphin

September 16th – 27th, 2018

YOUR TRIP INCLUDES:

- Round trip air from New York
- First Class Hotels
- Breakfast & Dinner Daily
- Air-conditioned motor coach
- English speaking guide
- Sightseeing as per itinerary
- Porterage of one piece of luggage at hotels
- All taxes and service charges
- Daily Mass and Rosary

HIGHLIGHTS:

- Mass at the Basilica of Madonna delle Lacrime
- Visit the Valley of the Temples in Agrigento
- Mass at the Basilica of San Francesco di Paola
- Visit of the Tomb of Padre Pio in the Church of St. Pio of Pietrelcina
- Visit the Basilica of Santa Maria delle Grazie
- Mass at Santa Maria degli Angeli
- Visit Piana Romana where Padre Pio received the invisible Stigmata
- Visit Santa Anna Church where Padre Pio was Baptized
- Mass at St. Paul Outside the Walls
- Papal Audience (provided the Holy Father is in residence)
- Panorama of Rome including a visit of the four major Basilicas of Rome – St. Mary Major, St. John Lateran, St. Paul Outside the Walls and St. Peter's

Pilgrimage Price: \$ 3,799.00 per person Double/Triple
\$ 750.00 Single Supplement

ITINERARY

Sun, Sep 16th: JFK/Catania

Depart on your overnight flight to Catania. Dinner served in flight.

Mon, Sep 17th: Catania/Siracusa

Upon arrival in Catania, we are met by our guide and transferred to **Siracusa**. The remainder of the day is free.



Tue, Sep 18th: Siracusa

This morning we visit the Basilica of Madonna delle Lacrime which holds the plaque of Our Lady of the Tears. From August 29th to September 1st, 1953, a plaster plaque of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, placed over the headboard of the bed of a young couple, Angelo Iannuso and Antonina Giusto, shed human tears. The phenomenon took place at intervals inside and outside of the house. Many saw, touched, gathered and tasted the salt of those tears.

After Mass we visit the wonderful city of Siracusa where historic cultures are evident in the narrow streets and lovely courtyards of the old houses. It is the birthplace of Archimedes and, at one time, it rivaled Athens as the most important city of the Greek world.

Our first stop is the Church of St. John the Baptist. It is the oldest church in the West, second in age only to its Eastern counterpart located in Antioch, Turkey. In its crypt, Saints Paul and Luke were said to have preached to the Christian community.

Next we visit Ortiga Island where we find the Duomo which is one of the town's most celebrated sights. The building records the many ages of the town. Once it was the Greek Temple of Athena, with a giant gold statue of the goddess on its roof. The massive Doric columns of the temple are still visible. The wall above the columns along Via Minerva, with battlements, is Norman in origin, while the Baroque facade was a replacement after the 1693 earthquake. Inside the Duomo, you can see more evidence of the temple origins of the building, and more of the original structure. Inside we see the relics of St. Lucy in a small room is the shrine to Santa Lucia, the patron saint of Siracusa. St. Lucy is loved so much that Siracusa awards her two festivals a year, in May and in December, with the saint's statue being ceremonially removed from her side-chapel and placed in front of the main altar, before a succession of traditional festivities and the carrying of the statue through town in a colorful procession. Siracusa became a World Heritage Site in 2005.



Wed, Sep 19th: Siracusa/Valley of the Temples/Siracusa

This morning we visit the Valley of the Temples. The archaeological area known as the Valley of the Temples in Agrigento, Sicily, is one of the most important archeological sites in the world and a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1998. Along a long rocky scarp, chosen as the southern limit of the town, are still sited the great temples of ancient Akragas.

Ancient Akragas, in its hey-day, was a flourishing cultural center: it gave the world Empedocles, the pre-socratic philosopher, whose concept of matter was divided into four elements, Earth, Air, Fire and Water,

was the foundation of science for many centuries to come. The city attracted poets like Simonides and Pindar who described it as "the most beautiful of mortal cities".

Thu, Sep 20th: Siracusa/Taormina

After Mass at Madonna delle Lacrime, we have a free morning to enjoy Siracusa on our own. Late morning, we are transferred to **Taormina**. Upon arrival we are transferred to the upper city where we will be free to have lunch, on our own, walk around the city and just enjoy the views of Mount Etna. Taormina is a jet set town and this is evident in the local boutiques and jewelry shops. Take time to visit the Greek Theatre.

Teatro Greco - Taormina's historic theater owes much of its present appearance to the Romans, the Greeks' successors in Sicily. Designed with an unsurpassable backdrop of blue sea, coastline, distant smoking Etna, and inland mountains, the theater was begun by the Greeks in the third century BC. In the first century AD, when Taormina was a significant Roman town, the Romans adapted the theatre to suit their more barbaric spectacles, stripping out seating to make more room for gladiatorial shows. It would be hard to beat the views from Taormina on a clear day. Some of the best places for enjoying the vista are the panoramic terrace of Piazza IX Aprile on Corso Umberto.

Fri, Sep 21st: Taormina/Paola

Morning departure to **Paola**. Today we follow the Mediterranean Coast. We arrive at **Messina** where we board our ferry to cross **the Strait of Messina**. Upon arrival at the port of **Villa San Giovanni**, we continue north along the Coast of Calabria en route to Paola. Upon arrival in Paola, we go to the Basilica of San Francesco di Paola for Mass.



Francis was born in Paola on March 27, 1416, to Giacomo Martolilla and Vienna Fuscaldo. Being advanced in years, his parents attributed the birth of their eldest child to the intercession of St Francis of Assisi. This is the reason why they named him Francis and promised to make him wear the votive habit of the Franciscans for a year. At the age of fifteen Francis went to the monastery of the Friars Minor Conventuals in St Marco Argentano (Cosenza) to fulfill the vow made by his parents. Here Francis showed his disposition to prayer and his devotion, along with those supernatural powers which made him famous as a wonder-worker afterwards.

From the very beginning Francis was a famous wonder-worker. He worked wonders for all of his life, from the building of his first monastery till his time in France. His powers were on behalf of the poor and of people who were oppressed by the frequent embezzlements of the powerful.

Thanks to Neapolitan merchants Francis' fame reached the court of the French King Louis XI. Since the king was very ill, he asked Pope Sixtus IV to send the hermit to his deathbed. This was the beginning of the "diplomatic chapter" of Francis' life. The Pope, wishing to sign a treaty with France, granted Louis XI's request willingly and so did the King of Naples.

Francis lived in France for about twenty-five years. There he led a simple life, working a piece of land, and was seen as a reformer of religious life-style. Because of his austere life-style he was chosen as a spiritual guide by some Benedictines, Franciscans and hermits, who left their religious orders to follow him. This made his Calabrian congregation international. Francis started the Order of Minims, then the secular Third Order and finally the Cloistered Nuns. Their Rules were definitively approved by Pope Julius II on July 28, 1506.

Francis died in Tours on Good Friday, April 2, 1507. The fame of this wonder-worker spread through Europe thanks to the three branches of his order and contributed to his beatification on July 7, 1513 and his canonization on May 1, 1519, which took place after only twelve years since his death.

In 1562, a group of Huguenots in France broke open his tomb and found his body incorrupt. They dragged it forth, burned it and scattered the bones, which were recovered by Catholic faithful and distributed as relics to various churches of his order.



Sat, Sep 22nd: Paola/San Giovanni Rotondo

Morning departure to **San Giovanni Rotondo**. Upon arrival we check into our hotel. This evening we go to the Church of St. Pio of Pietrelcina for the beginning of the celebration of Padre Pio's Feast Day.

Sun, Sep 23rd: Our Day with Padre Pio

Today is the feast day of Padre Pio. We spend our day following the program of the Basilica for Padre Pio.

Mon, Sep 24th: San Giovanni Rotondo

Today we visit the Basilica of Santa Maria delle Grazie and the Chapel of the old Church where Padre Pio said Mass. Next we visit the English Office for a talk on Padre Pio. After our visit, we visit the new Church of St. Pio of Pietrelcina to see Padre Pio's Tomb. This afternoon, we visit **St. Michael's Cave** where St. Michael the Archangel appeared.

Tue, Sep 25th: San Giovanni Rotondo/Pietrelcina/Rome

Morning departure to **Rome**. En route we stop at **Pietrelcina**, birthplace of Padre Pio. We visit Padre Pio's home, the Church of Santa Ana, where he was baptized and we have Mass at Santa Maria degli Angeli. Next we stop at Piana Romana to visit the place where Padre Pio received the invisible stigmata. After our visit we continue to **Rome**.

Wed, Sep 26th: Papal Audience

This morning we go to **St. Peter's Square** for the Papal Audience (provided the Holy Father is in residence).

This afternoon we have a "Tour of the Major Basilicas of Rome" – St. Peter's, St. Mary Major & St John Lateran. We also see the Roman Forum, the Coliseum and the Monument to Victor Emmanuel, Piazza Navona and the Trevi Fountain.

Thu, Sep 27th: Rome/USA

Morning departure to Rome airport for our return flight to the USA.

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