



JUNE 2016 - Volume 14 Number 06

# The Vedanta Kyokai Newsletter

NEWS, UPDATES AND MISCELLANY FROM THE VEDANTA SOCIETY OF JAPAN

## JULY Calendar



Saint Vyasa

### Birthdays

#### Guru Purnima

Tuesday, 19 July

#### Swami

#### Ramakrishnananda

Sunday, 31 July

### Kyokai Events

\* **Swami Medhasanda** \*  
will be out of the country  
July 1~8

#### Yoga Asana Sessions

Sundays Zushi Centre  
Hanari 090-6702-2308

\* **NO JULY** \*  
**Zushi Retreat**

### PUBLIC CELEBRATION

#### Swami Vivekananda Indian Embassy Tokyo

Details see page 7

#### Summer Outdoor Retreat to Fukui

Details on page 9

\* **For More Events and  
Details on Page 5.**

## ✧ Thus Spake ✧

*“Look upon every man, woman and everyone as God. You cannot help any one; you can only serve; serve the children of the Lord, serve the Lord Himself, if you have the privilege.”*

- Swami Vivekananda

*“But when you give alms, let your left hand not know what your right hand does. Your alms be in secret and your Father who sees it in secret shall reward you openly.”*

- Jesus Christ

May Zushi Retreat 2016

### St. Francis of Assisi; The Apostle of Divine Love

Guest Speaker: Mr. Leonardo Alvarez

St. Francis of Assisi is one of the most important saints in the history of the Catholic Church, and perhaps of the whole of Christianity. He is the patron saint of Italy. During his lifetime he was known as the “Poverello D’Assisi”, which means the “Poor Man or Beggar of Assisi” because of his reluctance to have anything to do with money or possessions. During his lifetime he was considered a great saint and was often called “Alter Christus”, which means “Second Christ”, especially towards the end of his life.

(con’t page 2)

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## **St. Francis** (from page 1)

### **Childhood and Youth**

Francis, or should we say “Francesco” was born in 1180 or 1181 in the mountainous hill-town of Assisi in the state of Umbria, which is located in the middle part of Italy. It is a very beautiful place, full of hills, with extensive prairies and vegetation.

When he was born, his father, Pietro Bernadone, was in France, as much of his business depended on trade with France. Francesco’s mother, Pica, was from an aristocratic family in Assisi and was a very devout and religious woman. When Francesco was born, she actually called him “Giovanni”, that is the Italian for “John”, because she wanted her son to be a man of God and preach religion as John the Baptist had.

When Francis’ father’s returned from France, he was horrified at the thought of his son becoming a man of God, so he changed his name from “Giovanni” to “Francesco”, which means “Frenchman”. His father wanted his son to have love for France.

Francis enjoyed a very rich and easy life, because of his father’s wealth. Also his character was very good and was loved by everyone. He was constantly happy, charming, and a born leader. As he grew up, however, Francis became the leader of a crowd of young people who spent their nights at parties drinking and making merry. He was then known as “The king of the revelers”.

At the same time, Francis was quite fond of the life of chivalry, and he aspired to become a famous knight and enjoy honor and fame. The best place to get the glory and prestige he longed for was on the battlefield, and hence when he was about twenty years old he set out to a war between the town of Assisi and Perugia, in which he was taken prisoner. He spent one year in a dungeon, but in spite of this he kept the spirit of his companions high. Soon after his father ransomed him, he fell ill, and began to have a bitter taste of the pains humans have to bear in life. His mother was at his bed-side, constantly praying for him. He finally got well, but inspite of these experi-

ences, he did not give up his dreams of becoming a knight.

### **Conversion**

Before long, Francis joined troop of knights from Assisi who were riding south to fight for the Pope against the Germans. He thought this would be a perfect opportunity for him to get the glory he wanted. After having been decorated with magnificent armor and a cloak by his father he set off. However, on his first day he met a knight shabbily clad, and was so touched with compassion that he exchanged his clothes with him. That night he dreamed he saw his father’s house transformed into a castle, its walls hung with armors, all marked with the sign of the cross; and he heard a voice saying that the armors belonged to Francis and his soldiers. Confident now that he would win glory as a knight, he set out again, but on the first day he fell ill. While lying helplessly sick he heard a voice saying to him: “Whom do you want to serve, the servant or the Master?” The servant means man, that is, the feudal lords who wage war and the Master meaning God.

After this incident he returned home and a big change started to happen within him. He would spend many hours by himself in the countryside and felt contempt for a life wasted on trivial and transitory things. It was a time of spiritual crisis. One day riding in the plains below Assisi, he met a leper whose loathsome sores filled Francis with horror. Overcoming his revulsion, he leapt from his horse and pressed into the leper’s hand all the money he had with him, then kissed the hand. This was a turning point in his life. He started visiting hospitals, especially the refuge for lepers, which most persons avoided.

On a pilgrimage to Rome, he emptied his purse at St. Peter’s tomb, then went out to the swarm of beggars at the door; gave his clothes to the one who looked poorest; dressed himself in the fellow’s rags and stood there all day with hand outstretched. The rich young man would then experience for himself the bitterness and humiliation of poverty.

One day, after his return from Rome, as he prayed in the humble little Church of St. Damian outside the walls of Assisi, he felt the eyes

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## **St. Francis** (from page 2)

of Christ on the crucifix there gazing at him and heard a voice saying three times, "Francis, go and repair My house, which you see is falling down." The building, he observed, was old and ready to fall. Assured that he had now found the right path, Francis went home and in the singleness and simplicity of his heart took a horse load of cloth out of his father's warehouse and sold it, together with the horse that carried it, in the marketplace.

He then brought the money to the poor priest of St. Damian's church, and asked if he might stay there. Although the priest accepted Francis' companionship, he refused the money, which Francis left lying on a window sill. Bernadone, furious at his son's waywardness, came to St. Damian's to bring him home, but Francis hid himself and could not be found.

He spent some days in prayer, and then went bravely to see his father. He was now so thin and ill-clad that boys in the streets pelted him and called him mad. The exasperated Bernadone beat Francis, bound his feet and locked him up. A little later his mother set him free and Francis returned to St. Damian's. His father pursued him there and angrily declared that he must either return home or renounce his share of his inheritance and pay the purchase price of the horse and the goods he had taken as well. Francis made no objection to being disinherited, but protested that the other money now belonged to God and the poor.

Bernadone had him summoned for trial before Guido, the bishop of Assisi, who heard the story and told the young man to restore the money and trust in God. "He does not wish," the bishop said, "to have His church profit by goods which may have been unjustly acquired." Francis not only gave back the money but went even further. "My clothing is also his," he said, and stripped off his garments. "Hither to I have called Peter Bernadone father.... From now on I say only, 'Our Father, who art in Heaven.'" Bernadone left the court in sorrow and rage, while the bishop covered the young man with his own cloak until a gardener's smock was brought. Francis marked a cross on the shoulder of the garment with chalk, and put it on.

## **A Lew Life Begins**

Henceforth, completely cut off from his family, Francis began a strange new life. He roamed the highways, singing God's praise. In a wood some robbers stopped him and asked who he was. When he answered soberly, "I am the herald of the Great King," they jeered and threw him into a ditch. He picked himself up and continued on his way singing.

When he returned to St. Damian's the priest welcomed him and Francis now began in earnest to repair the church, begging for building stones in the streets of Assisi and carrying off those that were given him. He labored with the masons in the actual reconstruction, and, by the spring of 1208, the church was once more in good condition.

## **Ministry**

Next he repaired an old chapel dedicated to St. Peter. Then Francis was now attracted to a tiny chapel known as St. Mary of the Portiuncula. Francis rebuilt it as he had done the others, and seems to have thought of spending his life there as a hermit in peace and seclusion. Here on the feast of St. Matthias, in 1209, the way of the life he was to follow was revealed to him. The Gospel of the Mass for this day was Matthew 10: 7-19: "And going, preach, saying The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.... Freely have you received, freely give. Take neither gold nor silver nor brass in your purses . . . nor two coats nor shoes nor a staff.... Behold I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves...."

Francis took these words as Christ's direct charge to him. Suddenly his doubts were over, and he cast off shoes, staff, leathern girdle (leather waist belt), but kept his rough woolen coat which he tied about him with a rope. This was the habit he gave his friars the following year. In this garb he went to Assisi the next morning and, with a moving warmth and sincerity, began to speak to the people he met on the shortness of life, the need of repentance, and the love of God. His salutation to those he passed on the road was, "Our Lord give you peace."

## **Visit to the Pope**

Soon afterwards Bernardo Quintavalle and  
(con't page 4)

## **St. Francis** (from page 3)

Brother Gilles joined Francis, and before long many started to follow them, renouncing hearth and home and becoming wandering monks. Because of the growing number of followers, a rule was drafted with numerous quotations from the Gospel which spoke about how the brothers ought to live. Shortly after, the party of monks set off to Rome, to ask permission of the pope to form a new order. Innocent III was the pope at that time. When the group of shabby looking monks came, he did not take them seriously, nor did the cardinals, except for one.

The group took refuge for the night in a pigsty close to the Vatican. That night Pope Innocent III had a dream, in which he saw Francis carrying the Church of St. John Lateran on his back. The pope took this to mean that Francis was carrying the weight of the true Church, which meant living according to the teachings of Christ. It was then clear to the pope that the true Christians were not those close to him, dressed in costly garments and luxury, but this poor monk from Assisi, whose exemplary life was showing the way to Christ to the common people.

Henceforth Innocent III summoned the group the next they and promptly gave them permission to lead their lives according to their rules. A leader had to be chosen and naturally Francis was elected as a leader, whereupon he officially got a monk's tonsure (partial head-shave) by Cardinal Colonna who had pleaded in Francis' favor to the pope beforehand.

The group soon returned to Assisi, jubilant, and started to preach repentance and the joy of doing God's will. Soon a large crowd was following them and this made the Benedictines give them a monastery for their use, albeit Francis would only accept the building and would have nothing to do with money. He said anyone who would follow him could not accept money in any way.

### **Some Anecdotes: The Body as Brother Ass**

Because the body was meant to carry burdens, to eat scantily and coarsely, and to be beaten when sluggish or refractory, Francis called it Brother Ass. When, early in his new life, he was violently tempted, he threw himself naked into a ditch full of snow. Again if a lustful thought would come up, he plunged into a briar patch and rolled about until he was torn and bleeding. Yet, before he died, he asked his body to pardon him for having treated it so cruelly; by that time he considered excessive austerities wrong, especially if they decreased the power to labor.

## **St. Claire, St. Francis and the Divine Fire**

When Francis was in Assisi in 1212, a young sister, who would later become Saint Claire, wanted earnestly to have the blessing to take lunch with St. Francis just once. Claire had heard him preach in Assisi a few years back, and was so moved by his words that she swiftly returned home from St. Damian's to become a nun. Shortly after, her sister Agnese followed. They and a group of women formed the Second Franciscan Order, the First being the monastic order for men, the second the monastic order for women.

Though she would implore and implore, Francis would always refuse. His brother monks, however thought that he was too rigid and did not correspond with the spirit of Divine Love, so he at least should consent and have lunch with the sister one time, because after all she was Francis' "Spiritual plant" (spiritual daughter) so he should agree to her desire. Being thus entreated Francis accepted saying: "If you agree, then I agree. We should have lunch at the Church of Santa Maria degli Angeli, because although she lives at the Church of St. Damian, she took her monastic vows at the Church of Santa Maria degli Angeli, so it would be pleasing for her to see the church."

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### **• Thought of the Month •**

"Preach the Gospel at all times  
and when necessary use words."

- St. Francis of Assisi

**Vedanta Society of Japan  
Schedule of Events**

**July 2016**

**\* Swami Medhasananda visits India from 1st July to 8th July.  
Indian Embassy Discourse on Bhagavad Gita ⇒ Cancelled**

**3rd, 10th, 24th, 31st (Sun)**

Yoga-Asana Session Zushi Centre (14:00~15:30)

Please Contact: Hanari (080-6702-2308)

**9th (Sat)**

Exhibit Relief Works of Ramakrishna Mission from 17:00~  
Embassy of India in Tokyo

**10th (Sun)**

**Public Celebration 13:30 ~ 17:00**

**Commemorative Swami Vivekananda's 153rd Birth Anniversary**

Theme: "Selfless Service"

Embassy of India in Tokyo

See Page 7 for more details

**16~18th (Sat~Mon)**

Outdoor Retreat / Venue: Fukui

By Reservation Only! - See Page 9 for more details

Please Contact: Shanti <vedantaharmony@gmail.com>

**22nd (Fri)**

Nara Narayan:

Service to homeless Narayan

Please Contact: Yoko Sato (090-6544-9304)

**23rd (Sat)**

Discourses in Osaka 13:00-17:00

(Only in the Japanese language)

Discourses on the "Bhagavad Gita" and "Upanishads" are  
given in Osaka and Kyoto on a monthly basis.

For details contact:

E-mail: <gita.benkyoukai.kansai@gmail.com>

Fax: 0744-22-6658

**23rd (Sun)**

Satsanga in Hamamatsu

For Details Contact:

<happy-yoga@outlook.com>

phone: 090-8475-9864

**NOTE: Please remember to bring photo ID to all Embassy events!  
Embassy Talks on Bhagavad Gita and Upanishads are in the Japanese language.**

## **St. Francis** (from page 4)

After some days the news reached Claire, and along with another nun they went to Santa Maria degli Angeli. They prayed devoutly to the Virgin Mary, and after a while Francis came and a setting for their lunch was laid out in the ground. Francis was there with his brother monks. Just as lunch was starting St. Francis began to talk about God in an ecstatic mood, and soon all had joined him in his rapture.

Meanwhile, some villagers outside were seeing that not only the Church, but the forest around the Church was all in fire. Awestruck at the scene, they ran quickly to the church, but to their surprise nothing was burning. Instead, they found Clair and Francis along with his brother monks talking in rapture about God. Then they understood that such fire was not a material fire, but that it was a fire which God had miraculously made appear, to show the Fire of Divine Love by which the hearts of the holy monks and nuns constantly burn.

### **Sermon to the Birds**

Once in the town of Sevorino, Francis lifted up his eyes and saw a great multitude of birds in some trees along the wayside; and being much surprised, he said to his companions, "Wait for me here, whilst I go and preach to my little sisters the birds"; and entering into the field, he began to preach to the birds which were on the ground, and suddenly even those up in the trees gathered round him.

Thus he spoke: "My little sisters the birds, you owe much to God, your Creator, and you ought to sing his praise at all times and in all places, because he has given you liberty to fly about into all places; and though you neither spin nor sew, he has given you drink and food. Thus always to give praise to God."

As he said these words, all the birds began to open their beaks, to stretch their necks, to spread their wings and reverently to bow their heads to the ground, endeavoring by their motions and by their songs to manifest their joy to Francis. And the saint rejoiced with them. Having finished his sermon, Francis made the sign of the cross, and gave them leave to fly away. Then all those birds rose up into the air, and flew away in four directions following the sign of the Cross.

## **Francis and the Wolf**

There was a wolf in the town of Gubbio, who was killing sheep and livestock, and had killed several men who had tried to kill him. The wolf was very powerful and nobody knew what to do about him, because they could not kill him. Therefore the mayor of the town asked St. Francis to come and try to pacify the wolf and find a solution to this grave matter. Francis prayed the day before departing and the following days, after he reached Gubbio. Then he went alone, fearlessly, into the forest to meet the wolf. The wolf was quietly ready to attack, but seeing Francis he became paralyzed. Francis did the sign of the cross, and started talking with the wolf. The wolf somehow understood that he meant no harm, wherefrom he listened to Francis. Francis told him of the sufferings he had caused by killing the villagers. The wolf in turn justified himself to Francis by telling him how he was left behind by his pack after he was injured, and because of his injury he could only eat animals that would not run fast, like sheep and goats. Thus rendered unable to eat wild prey, he began to starve and had to go to the city whereupon ate some sheep and goats. When the owners of the livestock saw this, they came to attack him and tried to kill him, but the wolf killed the men in self-defense. This happened several times.

The saint told the wolf that he would talk with the townsfolk and reach an agreement. He said they would feed the wolf and instead the wolf would stop killing people and he would protect the town. The wolf agreed to it by putting his paw upon Francis's hand. Henceforth, both headed to the central area of the town.

Everyone was amazed when Francis walked into the town with the wolf. They thought they would not see him come back alive. Francis spoke to the people saying that because of our sins God allows such calamities. He explained how much more terrifying the flames of hell were compared to the rage of a beast, and how we should fear the jaws of hell much more than the jaws of an animal.

He then addressed the wolf and said: "These people will feed you every day and in return you shall not kill them but protect them. You

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## **SWAMI VIVEKANANDA: 153rd BIRTH ANNIVERSARY**

Date: Sunday, July 10, 2016. 1:30 p.m.- 5 p.m.

**スワミー・ヴィヴェーカーナンダ：第153回生誕記念祝賀会**

日時：2016年7月10日（日）午後1時30分～5時

**Venue:** Indian Embassy Auditorium, 2-2-11 Kudan-minami, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo

**Theme:** 'Selfless Service'

**場 所:** インド大使館ホール：東京都千代田区九段南 2-2-11

**スピーチ:** 「無私の奉仕」



# SWAMI VIVEKANANDA: 153rd BIRTH ANNIVERSARY スワミー・ヴィヴェーカーナンダ：第153回生誕記念祝賀会

Website : vedanta.jp

E-mail: info@vedanta.jp

ご家族友人お誘い合わせのうえ、ご出席ください。歓迎いたします。All, with family and friends, are cordially invited to attend!

**Date:** Sunday, 10th July, 2016. 1:30 p.m. – 5 p.m.

**Venue:** Indian Embassy Auditorium, 2-2-11 Kudan-minami, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo

**Programme highlight :** Speech ('Selfless Service') ;Exhibition ;Cultural Programme

**日時:** 2016年7月10日(日)午後1時30分～5時

**場所:** インド大使館ホール：東京都千代田区九段南2-2-11

**プログラム・ハイライト :** スピーチ(「無私の奉仕」)、展示会、文化交流プログラム

## • Speakers 講演者



**Mr. Amit Kumar**  
Deputy Chief of Mission  
Embassy of India, Tokyo  
スジャン・R・チノイ氏  
在東京インド大使館、  
インド大使閣下



**Mr. Tadateru Konoe**  
President, International  
Federation of Red Cross and  
Red Crescent Societies and  
Japanese Red Cross Society  
近衛 忠輝氏  
国際赤十字・赤新月社連盟会長、  
日本赤十字社社長



**Swami Bodhasarananda**  
Assistant General Secretary:  
Ramakrishna Math & Mission  
スワミー・ボダサラーナンダ師  
ラマクリシュナ・マト・  
アンド・ミッション、アシ  
スタント・ジェネラル・セ  
クレタリー

## • Cultural Programme 文化交流プログラム



A dance drama on Swami  
Vivekananda by Nupurnad  
group from India  
スワミー・ヴィヴェー  
カーナンダ舞踊劇  
インドのヌプルナド・グ  
ループによる

## • Exhibition 展示会



Photos of the Relief  
works undertaken by the  
Ramakrishna Mission  
ラマクリシュナ・ミッ  
ションによる災害支援活動  
の写真

**Admission free: All will be treated with a light refreshment.**

**入場は無料です：ご来場の皆様に茶菓をお出しします。**

Owing to the limited capacity of the auditorium the programme can be also viewed in additional areas provided.  
会場のホールは収容人数が限られているため、館内の所定の場所で祝賀会の映像をライブで見することもできます。

## • Notice

- Parking space not available.
- Please bring your photo identity card .

## 注意

- 駐車場はありません。
- 写真付き身分証明書(運転免許書など)を必ずお持ちください。

## Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902)

Swami Vivekananda was a prophet of Modern India. He was a lover of humanity, a preacher of Universal Religion and a protagonist of internationalism. Both Eastern and Western savants hold Vivekananda in high esteem for his universal outlook, holistic approach and soul-stirring message. He founded the Ramakrishna Mission, an international spiritual organisation, in 1897 with the objective of realising the Self and serving humanity with a spirit of worship.

### About the Programme:

The purpose of the present programme is to pay tribute to the great Swami and to highlight the various facets of his personality and deliberate on his message, which not only helps us to solve the problems we face at different levels, but also elevates us to a higher state of consciousness.

## スワミー・ヴィヴェーカーナンダ (1863～1902)

スワミー・ヴィヴェーカーナンダは、現代インドの予言者です。彼は人類愛の人、普遍宗教の説教者、国際主義の提唱者です。東西の碩学(せきがく)たちは、彼の普遍の見解、全統合的な研究態度、および魂をゆるがすような説法を高く評価しています。1897(明治30)年に彼は、真我の実現および礼拝の精神で人類に奉仕することを目的とする国際的な精神組織ラマクリシュナ・ミッションを創設しました。

### この催しの目的:

この催しの目的は、この偉大なスワミーに敬意を表し、彼の人格のさまざまな面を明らかにして、彼のメッセージを深く考えようとするものです。それは単に、私達がさまざまなレベルで直面する問題を解決する助けとなるばかりではなく、私達を、もっと高度の意識状態にまで高めてくれることでしょう。

## Map of The Embassy of India



### For further details, please call:

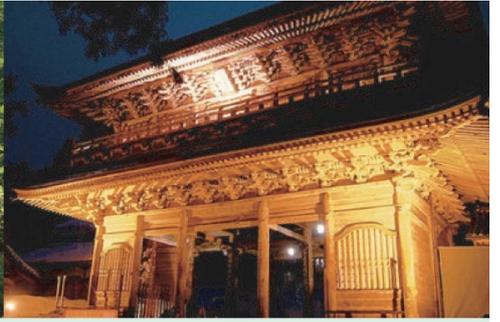
Swami Medhasarananda  
(046)873-0428  
Mr. S. Kar (045)622-6451  
Mr. S. Brahma (03)3816-6075  
Organized by: The Celebration Committee  
in collaboration with the Nippon  
Vedanta Kyokai (A branch of the  
Ramakrishna Mission) and Nichi-in  
Bunka Kyokai  
Office Address: Nippon Vedanta  
Kyokai, 4-18-1 Hisagi Zushi-shi,  
Kanagawa-ken 249-0001, Phone  
(046)873-0428, Fax (046)873-0592

## インド大使館地図



より詳しい情報を知りたい方は、ここ  
におかけ下さい:

スワミー・メダサラーナンダ  
046-873-0428  
主催: 祝賀委員会  
共催: 日本ヴェーダータ協会  
(ラマクリシュナ・ミッション日本支部)、  
日印文化協会  
連絡先: 日本ヴェーダータ協会  
249-0001 神奈川県逗子市久木  
4-18-1  
Tel : 046-873-0428  
Fax : 046-873-0592



日本ヴェーダ協会  
2016年 戸外夏期リトリート

大晦日「ゆく年くる年」除夜の鐘で有名  
曹洞宗の大本山

# 永平寺

スワミー・メーダサーナンダ 特別講話  
「人生のサポート」～バガヴァッド・ギータの教えより～  
*Bhagavad Gita - A Support of Life*

鎌倉時代 道元禅師によって開かれた厳粛な禅寺 永平寺  
今も多くの修行僧が厳しい修行生活を送っています  
スワミーとともに過ごす 神聖な時間  
凜とした静寂に包まれ 内なる自己を見つめませんか？

2016年 7月16日(土)～7月18日(祝)

初めての方も是非ご参加ください！



講話  
Discourse



戸外瞑想  
Outdoor Meditation



永平寺訪問  
Visit to Eiheiiji



ヴェーダの祈り&賛歌  
Chanting & Songs

講師：スワミー・メーダサーナンダ師

日本ヴェーダ協会会長  
日本ヨーガ療法学会スピリチュアルアドバイザー  
1974年ラマクリシュナ・ミッションの出家僧となり同僧団の  
ヴィディヤマンディール大学学長を経て、1993年より  
日本ヴェーダ協会会長を務める。  
著書に『スワミー・ヴィヴェーカーナンダと日本』、誘導瞑想  
チャンティングのCD等。毎月行われるインド大使館の  
バガヴァッド・ギーター講話の他、日本全国で講話を行う。



ヨーガ  
Yoga



夜の集会  
Evening Satsang

【参加費】(宿泊費・食費のみ) **締め切り 6月20日**

2泊3日 ¥29,000 1泊2日 ¥18,000 日帰り ¥9,000

【お問い合わせ】090-5575-0971

日本ヴェーダ協会(リトリート係)  
vedantaharmony@gmail.com

隠れ宿で「森・呼・吸」自家源泉の宿

【宿泊場所】みらくる亭

住所: 福井県福井市市波町38-2 TEL: 0776-96-4141



みらくる亭の中庭と温泉

みらくる亭へのアクセス(JR)

- 東京-米原-福井-市波(新幹線、特急、越美北線)約4時間
- 京阪神-福井-市波駅(特急、越美北線)約2時間20分
- 名古屋-福井-市波駅(特急、越美北線)約2時間20分
- 自動車: 北陸自動車道(福井インター)国道158号(市波)約10分

## St. Francis (from page 6)

You promised to agree to this before, so now before everyone show your consent.” So the wolf placed his paw again on Francis’ hand to people’s amazement. Ever since people fed the wolf every day, and the wolf did no more harm to the people and protected them until his death, two years later. This story symbolizes God’s grace and forgiveness.

### Meeting with the Sultan During the Crusades

In 1219 St. Francis and Brother Illuminato accompanied the armies of Western Europe to Damietta, Egypt, during the Fifth Crusade. His desire was to speak peacefully with Muslim people about Christianity, even if it meant dying as a martyr. He tried to stop the Crusaders from attacking the Muslims at the Battle of Damietta, but failed. After the defeat of the Western armies, he crossed the battle line with Brother Illuminato, shouting: “Sultan! Sultan!” calling for the Muslim leader. They were arrested and beaten by Arab soldiers, and eventually were taken to the sultan, Malekal-Kamil.

Al-Kamil was known as a kind, generous, fair ruler. He was nephew to the great Salah al-Din. At Damietta alone he offered peace to the Crusaders five times, and, according to Western accounts, treated defeated Crusaders humanely. His goal was to establish a peaceful coexistence with Christians.

After an initial attempt by Francis and the sultan to convert the other, both quickly realized that the other already knew and loved God. Francis and Illuminato remained with al-Kamil and his Sufi teacher Fakhr ad-din al-Farisi for as many as twenty days, discussing prayer and the mystical life. When Francis left, al-Kamil gave him an ivory trumpet, which on his return, Francis used it to call people for prayer or for preaching.

When Francis returned home, he even amended the rule he had written for his brothers, saying that those who feel called to go to Muslims should be allowed to do so. In 1272, a sultan allowed the Franciscans to settle in the Cenacle in Jerusalem.

Francis also shared with his community his new and deep respect for his Moslem brothers



and sisters, breaking down the cycle of enmity and misunderstanding that fueled the Crusades. Francis was especially struck by the Moslem five times daily prayer, and the practice of prostrations in worship of God; his letters urged Christians to adopt a similar practice: To make prayer a part of everyday life, in effect to remember God in everything you do, as is the Sufi tradition.

### St. Francis’ Humility and Thirst for Perfection

One of St. Francis’ disciples, Brother Bernardo, had the gift of being enraptured and talking with God. In 1219, towards the end of his life, Francis had lost his eyesight considerably due to many austerities. He went out of the monastery where he was staying to meet Br. Bernardo, who was at a grove in the forest, praying. Having arrived at the forest Francis called his brother: “Oh Br. Bernardo, come and talk with this blind man (Francis himself)”. But Br. Bernardo did not reply. Francis called him three times in the same way, but there was no reply. Being quite perturbed because of the lack of response of his dear brother, Francis went to a solitary place nearby and started to pray to God to reveal him why Br. Bernardo had not replied to him. After a while, he heard God’s reprimand: “O poor and small man, why are you perturbed? Must a man leave God for a creature? When you were calling Br. Bernardo, he was with Me. That is why he could not come to meet you nor answer you. So don’t be awestruck if he could not answer you, he was beyond his senses, and hence he could not hear to any of your words.”

(con’t page 11)

## **St. Francis** (from page 10)

Having heard this, Francis went to meet Br. Bernardo. On his way there, he saw Br. Bernardo coming towards him, and soon Br. Bernardo fell prostrated at his feet. After having been thus saluted, Francis told Br. Bernardo to get up and asked him if he would obey to his command. Br. Bernardo, knowing of the extreme things Francis would make him do sometimes, he said he would, provided he would also promise he would do what he asked him to do. Francis having agreed his brother's condition, told him to do the following:

"I command you that in order to punish my conceited attitude and anxiety, I shall lay on the ground and you shall put one of your foot on my throat and another one in my mouth. And you shall thus switch your feet from the mouth to the throat and from the throat to the mouth three times. At the same time you shall yell to me again and again: 'Lie down your rascal, son of Pietro Bernardone, how do you dare to be so proud, you evil creature!'"

Br. Bernardo could hardly follow this command, but because he had promised to obey, he had to carry it out. When this terrifying act was over, he asked Francis the following: "Now you fulfill my wish. That whenever we are together and you see any defect of mine, that you shall reprimand and correct very harshly any one of my defects." From then on Francis tried to spend more time with him, guiding him in his spiritual growth.

### **Last Years – General Convocation, the Stigmata and Return to the Eternal Abode.**

In the year 1221, a general convocation was held and over 5000 monks assisted. There, the general rules of the order were finally decided. Besides the monastic discipline such as the daily routine, Francis stressed the spirit of poverty, in which he said that no monk should ever receive any money and they should not own anything, not even a monastery. They should go out

and beg for food and live as pilgrims in this world. They should be ever ready to leave and preach, and be as the Lord, who said 'Foxes have dens and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay His head'".

In August 1224, with a few of the brothers closest to him, he made his way through the Apennine forest to Mount La Verna a place of retreat put at his disposal years earlier by the lord of Chiusi. A hut of branches was built for him, a little way from his companions. Brother Leo daily brought him food. And here it was, on or about Holy Cross Day, September 14, that at sunrise, after a night of prayer, he had a vision of a winged seraph or angel, nailed to a cross and flying towards him; he felt wonder at the beauty of the sight, but also felt keen stabs of pain in his hands, feet, and sides. The seraph then vanished, and as he puzzled at the significance of this vision, he discovered his body now bore the crucifixion wounds of Jesus Christ. However, at this time very few persons saw the stigmata, since he was very keen on not making the event public.

Years of poverty and wandering had made Francis ill. When he began to go blind, the pope ordered that his eyes be operated on. This meant cauterizing his face with a hot iron. At the time of the surgery Francis spoke to "Brother Fire" thus: "Brother Fire, the Most High has made you strong and beautiful and useful. Be courteous to me now in this hour, for I have always loved you, and temper your heat so that I can endure it." And Francis reported that Brother Fire had been so kind that he felt nothing at all.

In 1226 in failing health he lay on his death bed. Francis gathered his monastic brothers who stood by him singing "Canticle of the Sun", a song Francis had composed. He repeated the 141st Psalm: "I cried to the Lord with my voice: with my voice I made supplication to the Lord."

(con't page 12)

**St. Francis** (from page 11)

At his request he was stripped of his clothing and laid for a while on the ground that dying he may rest in the arms of Lady Poverty. Later, he was dressed and brought back to his bed, and while hearing the story of the Lord's Passion as told by St. John, St. Francis gave up the body on Saturday, October 3, 1226.

**St. Francis' Prayer of Peace**

Lord, make me an instrument of Thy peace;  
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;  
Where there is injury, pardon;  
Where there is error, truth;

Where there is doubt, faith;  
Where there is despair, hope;  
Where there is darkness, light;  
And where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master,  
Grant that I may not so much seek  
To be consoled, as to console;  
To be understood, as to understand;  
To be loved, as to love.

For it is in giving that we receive;  
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned;  
And it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

Amen. •

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Vedanta Reading Group  
'Mother's Kumamoto' Delivers Supplies to Quake Victim Centre  
Contributed by Mr. Nobuhiko Saiwai

On May 15, 2016 seven members of Mother's Kumamoto, a reading group, visited Kumamoto and the Honda Motor gym in the town of Ozu, which was used as a shelter for earthquake victims who mainly came from the Tateno area. We provided paper cups and dishes, acrylic paints, paint brushes, pallets and draining boards as relief supplies from donations received by the Vedanta Society of Japan.

We met at 2 pm and after first chanting Sahana Bhavatu together, went to the shelter and turned over relief supplies to a volunteer named Naru-san who was in charge of cooking, as the person in charge of the entire shelter was absent. The coffee shop 'Untone' in Ozu was providing training and experience in knitting and spinning, which we joined and enjoyed until time for preparations at the soup kitchen to begin.



At 4 pm the kitchen area was busy and we helped with some cooking and washing of dishes. As supper for 150 people was required, the volumes of ingredients and the preparation needed was more extensive than that which we were used to. Supper was served from 6 pm and was finally provided to all the people by a little after 7 pm, when we departed. We heard that the other volunteers all had supper a bit later.



Images from Mother's Kumamoto Volunteer Group.



• **A Story to Remember** •  
**Why Prayers are Unanswered**

One day a Sufi saint, Ibrahim Adham, was passing through the bazaar in the city of Basra when he was surrounded by people who said to him: "O Ibrahim! Allah (SWT) [meaning "Subhanahu Wa Ta'ala," or "Glory to Him, the Exalted."] has stated in the Noble Qur'an: "Call on Me; I will answer your Prayer"; we call upon Allah (SWT), but our prayers are not answered. Why are prayers are not answered?

Ibrahim Adham said: "The reason is because your hearts have died due to ten things so that your supplications have no sincerity, as your hearts are not pure and free of contamination."

They asked: "What are those ten issues?" Ibrahim Adham replied:

"01: First and foremost you have accepted Allah (SWT), but have not repaid His claim.

"02: You have recited the Noble Qur'an, but have not practiced it.

"03: You profess your love of the Holy Prophet of Islam, but are opposed to his Household.

"04: You claim to have enmity with Shaitan (Satan) but in practice you are in agreement with him.

"05: You say that you are fond of heaven, but in order to enter heaven you have not done anything.

"06: You said that you were afraid of the Hell Fire, but have thrown your bodies into it.

"07: You were busy slandering and criticizing people, but were ignorant of your own shortcomings and faults.

"08: You said that you didn't like the world, but are greedily following it.

"09: You confess to the reality of death, but don't prepare yourself for it.

"10: You have buried the dead, but haven't taken a lesson or guidance from it.

"These are the 10 practices or reasons which cause prayers to remain unanswered.

"Prayer is not a spare wheel that you pull out when YOU ARE IN TROUBLE, It is a steering wheel that keeps you on the right path throughout your life."

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