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## *THE HERMITAGE*

“And when God gave me brothers, no one showed me what I should do, but the Most High revealed to me that I should live according to the form of the holy Gospel”

(from the Testament of St. Francis)

The Hermitage of Gethsemane provides possibility for private prayers in a solitary retreat, following Jesus’ example, who on the night in the Gethsemane Garden, right here, stayed all alone in private solitude with the Father.

Based on the comprehension of this holy Place, we strongly encourage every pilgrim that visits the Garden to have the greatest respect and understanding for the Hermitage, ensuring an atmosphere of silence and peace, so that everyone can encounter our Lord, who wants to talk to his children. Please note that the Hermitage was exclusively put together and established with the intention of providing a solitary retreat for private prayers and solitude. It was never intended to be a tourist resort or attraction, and does not provide accommodation for tourists visiting the Holy Land.

The Hermitage welcomes everyone: men, women, priests, religious and lay persons, respecting each member’s vocation and spiritual path.

We do not have a communal kitchen for our guests, but we make available private retreats providing room and cooking facilities. Please note that retreatants can conveniently buy food and beverages downtown. All guests are required to maintain a contemplative reserved inward and outward disposition to favour prayer, concentration and meditation (see “our typical day”). Pilgrims are also asked not to receive or accommodate guests in their private retreats.

We have 9 private retreats available. We also welcome small groups up to 15 people.



## *THE PURPOSE OF THIS PLACE*



“Remain here, and stay awake with me, stay awake and pray”

(Mt 26.38.41)

Of all the Holy Places that one can visit only a few have the peculiarity of offering pilgrims a break, silence and prayer. Among these ones the most striking, charming and unique one is Gethsemane: a Place of Gospel memory. Here our Lord invited his disciples to remain with Him, closely at His side, and pray: ***“Remain here, and stay awake with me (...) stay awake and pray that you may not come into the time of trial!”*** (Mt 26,38.41). Our Hermitage was established with the specific purpose of staying within the boundaries of love that the Lord revealed during his lifetime and above all in his Passion.

We are located inside a Garden, where the encounter, the wait, the anxiety and worries of the groom awaiting his bride take place, which is also referred to and reported in different parts of the Bible (see Song 2,9). This Place tells about God’s unfathomable love for each one of his Children. Today we continue feeling His presence calling and talking to all of mankind and particularly asking each one of us with loving maternal and paternal care: *“Where are you?”* (Gen 3,9).

The Passion sustained by Jesus Christ in Gethsemane tells about the huge, unfathomable and impossible to comprehend love of God for all humankind. In His Passion the Lord experiences what we can define as a “theological blend”, because in this Place He starts accomplishing the work that distinguished the path of His entire earthly life. Here, as an anticipation of the divine plan, Jesus undertakes the final combat to such an extent that He sweats drops of blood, while He is turning his attention to darkness, nonsense, failure and ultimately death.

And yet in Gethsemane Jesus won't let himself be guided by darkness, nonsense or His instinct – here He was terribly afflicted, anguished and was feeling dread and loneliness – and won't be distracted or be led astray by His compatriots either; on the contrary, He transfigures darkness by penetrating into it, and His centre of attention will always remain the same, that is the thing that He has always profoundly wished and loved to pursue, deep down His conscience: the Father's will.

This is God's Passion for humankind, which was revealed and made known since the beginning...when a dim soft Light appeared illuminating the walls of a small common house, or when in the quiet and tranquil town of Nazareth the same Light would speak surrounded by the smell of big rough logs and the faces of peasants, farmers and country people... or here, in the pitch darkness of this Garden, when the Good King lowered Himself to walk His last steps into human fatigue, His breath taking breaths of blood sweat, here where He gave Himself up completely to death - becoming its Poison -, Jesus, the Royal King, and yet the One who stooped to hold his worn out and asleep Children in His arms, to take them to a rock solid custody of life and salvation: Home.

This is how Jesus fulfilled the Father's Love Plan which had begun with the old Covenant.



## ***“STAY” WITH THE LORD***

“There is no praise for having been to Jerusalem, but for having lived well in Jerusalem”

“Non Hierosolymis fuisse, sed Hierosolymis bene vixisse laudandum est”

(Epistle 58.3.4, St Jerome)

Our suggested mode of life is very simple. We can use a metaphor to describe it: like a mother needing good food for herself to eat so that her infant gets nutritious milk, we, being children of God, are nourished by His Word so that, in our turn, we can nourish all those whom the Lord will bring for an encounter with Himself and us.

We are convinced that this holy Place is, by Jesus' will, devoted to prayer and consecrated to an encounter with Him. The Gospel says that in this Garden Jesus asked his disciples to ***“remain here, and stay awake with me...and pray”*** (Mt 26,38.41).



That is exactly what this Place is: in the whole town of Jerusalem it is the most suitable Place to stay with the Lord, to become one of his disciples in regard to silence, meditation, to discover His will for us, to say our “YES” to Him and acknowledge His Easter presence in history and in our small and yet important life experience. Here as elsewhere, the Gospel, that is Christ, has visited us walking by our side on the road of our daily life, has talked to us, has made our hearts burn within, although we have not recognized Him, even then.

Our proposal aims at suggesting a simple mode of life, in which we share what the divine mercy has done for us – free gift and free initiative because in God everything is mercy.

We achieve all this through a daily listening to the Word of God (Lectio Divina) and Adoration.

In addition, based on each member's capability and as far as it is possible, we like sharing labour and maintenance to the Garden, which also contributes to a physical and psychological well-being of our guests.



## ***SPIRITUALITY OF THE PLACE: THE MODEL OF LIFE***

“I weep for the passion of my Lord Jesus Christ; and I should not be ashamed to go weeping through the whole world for his sake”

(St. Francis of Assisi)

The mode of life proposed by the Friars Minor of the Hermitage, for those who would like to go on a retreat, involves mainly prayers, Adoration, listening to the Word of God, Lectio Divina and liturgy.

In this Mystical Garden where God returns to walk along with men and women, respecting their own sensitivity and needs, private prayers are greatly encouraged and participants are asked to share moments of communal prayer and service. Guidance, spiritual direction and fraternal discussion are also provided, for those who express the desire for it.

In this Holy Place - where you can contemplate the same moon that attracted lovers' eyes, Patriarchs' and Prophets' attention, the greats and the small - the spirituality of the Franciscan community represents small but precious light. St. Francis himself had a deep bond with the Passion of our Lord. He once said: *“I weep for the passion of my Lord Jesus Christ; and I should not be ashamed to go weeping through the whole world for his sake.”*

The outside world around us enters Gethsemane to find the Place of the Passion of our Lord... where we can only be small mediators of the Lord's Love - which He witnessed for us by giving his Life - to manifest His Love to all whom we meet and make it become nourishment,

home and consolation for those who visit this Place that was our Lord's favourite.

We would like to stress that the Hermitage was established exclusively for devoting solid time for prayer and it is not meant to be accommodation for tourists visiting the Holy Land and the town of Jerusalem.



## DAILY SCHEDULE

*“S. Francis was walking up and down all along his heart latitude, and while he was doing it, he was preparing an ‘habitacula Dei’ in himself”*

(Franciscan Sources: 1Cel 396)

In spite of a deep respect in front of different sensibilities or needs, there is a proposal of personal prayer and housekeeping services. We ask our guests to share some prayer moments and community services. See below some appointments.

### *Daily and weekly schedule*

<b>6:30</b>	Holy Mass and Lauds in the Agony Basilica with the Gethsemanes Brotherhood (optional). After this Mass, if somebody would like to stay in silent prayers in the Basilica (closed up to 8 o'clock), he may do it.
<b>8:00</b>	Lectio continuous (Reading of the Gospel or one of the books of the Bible) After this Lectio, there is time to meditate and to work, or for personal prayer
<b>17:30</b>	(Silent adoration in our Chapel, according to the Lord's invitation: <i>“Stay here and keep watch with me” (Matt 26,38)</i>
<b>18:30</b>	Holy Mass with Vespers



## *FATHER GIORGIO COLOMBINI: HERMITAGE HISTORY*



Fr. Giorgio (Ermanno) Colombini was born in Modena (Italy) on 7 March 1928.

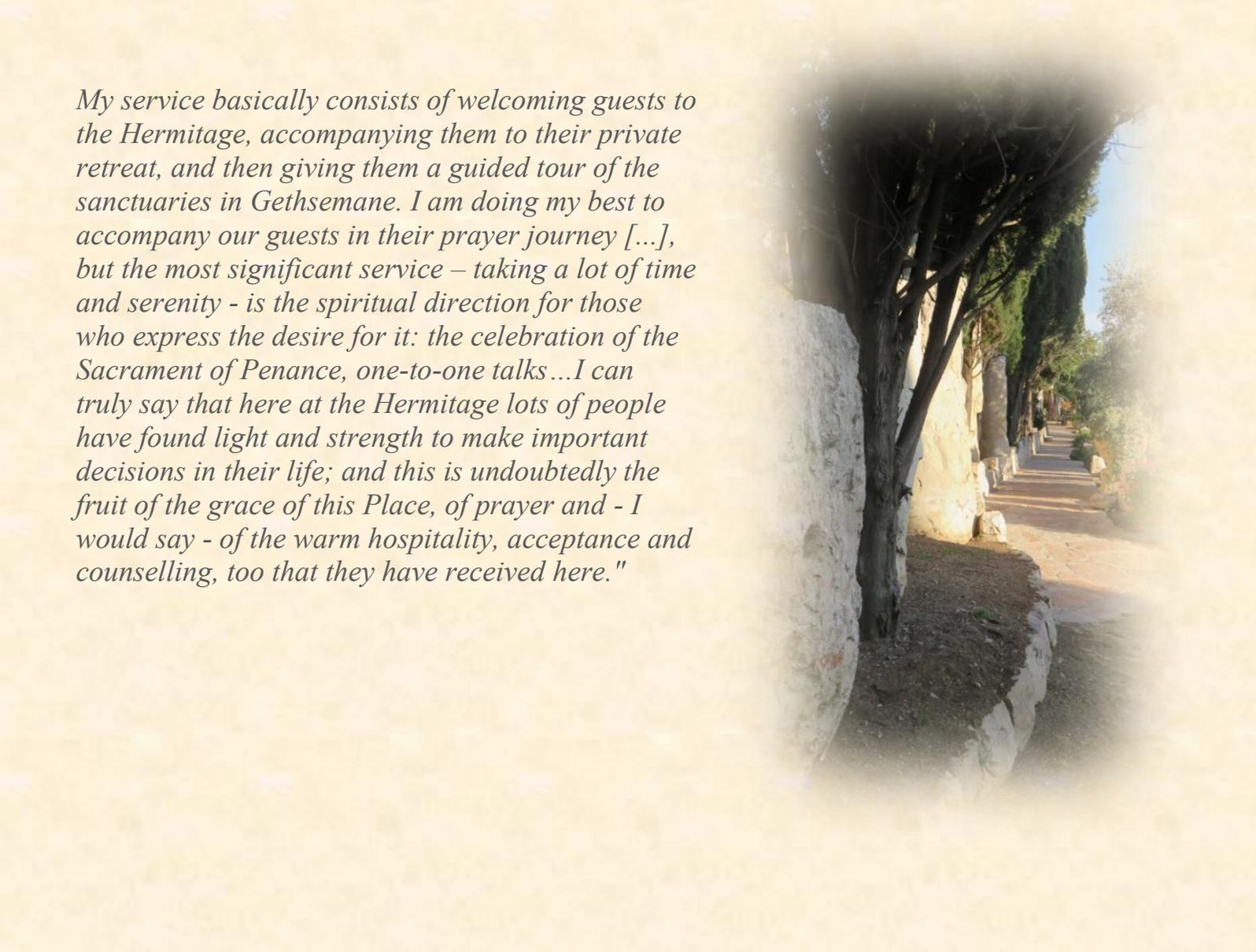
In 1977 he came to the Holy Land for a sabbatical year: a gift in appreciation of his 25 years of priesthood. That was a break after 15 years of serving as a parish priest in the Church of the Osservanza (Observation) in Cesena. Over this period of time he became fascinated by Jesus' Land. On Pentecost day in 1982 he wrote to his Guardian (his superior):

*"I wouldn't mind taking part in a praying community: I heard about an initiative of this kind that failed to be fulfilled; I believe that a House of prayer in the Holy Land should be based on the Word of God and the richness of our Franciscan spirituality. Personally, I couldn't organize all this, but I'd love to have the opportunity to take part in it; if one day this is accomplished, it could be a point of reference for the religious people in the Holy Land."*

This is how Fr. Giorgio started his service with the Custody of the Holy Land, a service that lasted 27 years all spent in Gethsemane, except for the first 8 months that were spent at the Holy Sepulchre, as it is customary. Slowly, his vocation and desire to unite prayer and pastoral action, together with the help and cooperation of the friary (Franciscan community) of the Church of the Agony, originated The *"Hermitage of Gethsemane."*

A photograph of a garden path. On the left, there is a small shrine or altar with a blue and white facade, partially obscured by a large rock. A young tree with bright yellow-green leaves stands in the center. The path leads into the distance, flanked by mature trees and a large white pot with a plant. The scene is bathed in warm, golden light.

He wrote in a report of 1998:

A photograph of a path lined with trees. A large, light-colored rock is in the foreground on the left. The path leads into the distance, flanked by tall, dark trees. The scene is bathed in warm, golden light.

*My service basically consists of welcoming guests to the Hermitage, accompanying them to their private retreat, and then giving them a guided tour of the sanctuaries in Gethsemane. I am doing my best to accompany our guests in their prayer journey [...], but the most significant service – taking a lot of time and serenity - is the spiritual direction for those who express the desire for it: the celebration of the Sacrament of Penance, one-to-one talks...I can truly say that here at the Hermitage lots of people have found light and strength to make important decisions in their life; and this is undoubtedly the fruit of the grace of this Place, of prayer and - I would say - of the warm hospitality, acceptance and counselling, too that they have received here."*

Year after year Father Giorgio took various initiatives and his prayer became more and more illuminating, helping the retreatants in living, appreciating and understanding the Mystery and spirituality of Gethsemane; he hosted “masters” to grasp the profundity of the Scriptures during the *Lectio Divina* (Latin for “Divine Reading”, “Scriptural Reading”), in significant moments of prayer and in times of preparation such as Advent and Lent. At the same time he would work hard to create an atmosphere of silence, prayer, concentration and meditation; he would also take care of the trees and plants: he brought over some gardeners from the Italian region of Puglia to help with their know-how, he had the drystone walls cemented to keep vipers out, and had small and comfy retreats built for retreatants to pray in.



This is how, after a long time, the sacred Place at the foot of the Mount of Olives - very dear to our Lord -, returned to be ‘The Garden’ where His disciples - past and present - can experience again the same joy, intimacy and familiarity with the Lord that the Divine Master experienced when withdrawing in the peace of Gethsemane.

His strong desire for a retreat to be set up in the ancient place called Gethsemane has therefore been fulfilled: Father Giorgio, encouraged by the Custody of the Holy Land, had prayed and worked hard with the support of many volunteers, devoting his time entirely to this project, with the perseverance of a prophet and the generosity of a lover. We greatly appreciate all he has done and are extremely grateful to his *Province of Christ the King (Friars Minor in Bologna, Italy)* and to all those who have cooperated with him to make this dream come true.

Special thanks are due to Daria Severgnini (*Ordo Virginum Bergamo, Italy*) for her presence and her continuous cooperation at Father Giorgio’s side: sharing ideals, hard work, efforts and hopes; with love and great care she served the Lord in the Hermitage for quite a long time: 17 years.

Today many people come across the Hermitage “by chance”, sometimes they are sent over by those who have been here before and have had some experience, they all come from all over the world. This tells about and confirms the Lord’s love for this Holy Place, where he continues calling his disciples to keep close to Him and show their love and intimacy in staying awake and praying with Him. Often we receive words of encouragement and support from Brasil, Switzerland, England, Spain, Italy, America and many other Countries.

Lots of people thank God for the experience they’ve had of Him here, and a close bond of affection has linked them with this Garden and those who live in.

We friars, who are serving our Lord today in Gethsemane, gratefully acknowledge that we are just picking the good fruits that Father Giorgio, Daria and many others had sown before.

But what is the actual reason why people make their way to this Place? And what exactly moves their hearts to make all their way to this Garden that is still expecting to be looked after with love?

The reason, or in other words the “Source”, that motivated us and Father Giorgio is the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, as the Gospel says, in this garden, pronouncing his “Yes” to the Father, made a decision to give His life for all of mankind: a love made of facts, not just words, unconditional love (free, unlimited, unrestricted and without reservation) that reaches all kind of situations and conditions of the human being and asks for our presence and support... ***“Remain here, stay awake and pray with me”***.

Only if we go back to this Source, that generates and purifies everything, can we have some insight into what today connects and joins us to all those who, in the past, have stopped by, spent some time or lived in this Place.



I'd like to conclude reporting some of Father Giorgio's quotes that he used to say:

"IF ALL THIS HARD WORK WOULD HELP AT LEAST ONE PERSON BECOME CLOSER TO GOD...THEN IT REALLY WAS WORTH IT!"

"LESS WORDS MORE WORD OF GOD"

"GETHSEMANE...IS UNDERSTOOD BY THOSE WHO EXPERIENCE IT"



Our dear Father Giorgio departed this life peacefully in Jerusalem on 11 May 2009. He is buried here in Gethsemane, his favourite place, awaiting the return of our Lord. He was 81 when he passed away, 26 years of his life were spent serving the Custody of the Holy Land.

## *ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI, A SECRET TO ACCEPT*

*“This is the life that Brother Francis begged might be conceded to him and confirmed by the Lord Pope Innocent. And he [the Pope] has conceded and confirmed it...”*

(cfr First Rule of the Friars Minor)

*Or we wouldn't have understood your secret, Francis:*

*what happened deep inside of you, and you were so sad*

*on your way back from Foligno and Spoleto:*

*what occurred inside*

*that unroofed church*

*dwhere all by Himself He was hanging, but He was like this:*

*like a king (a poor and a king!)*

*that crucifix wounded*

*by the moon shaft that night.*

*And we never knew*

*and I guess never will what*

*his voice sounded like and what he told you:*

*was it a cry or a moan*

*or perhaps a faint smile and then silence.*

*Or we would never have discovered that face*

*that you immediately recognized on the leper's face;*

*and then you would see it everywhere*

*among the thorns of brambles, amongst flowers or amid clouds.*

*And we have not yet comprehended*

*what happened to you under that huge detached rock of The Verna*

*when over and over again at nights you would feel like the forsaken worm...*



*Or what happened to you in the garden  
when slanting rays wounded the hedges  
and you felt a spear piercing your heart  
just like His heart had been...*

*And yet you lived on but not for long, then you fell onto the ground  
like an overflowing broken vase  
Francis, little man of God, you ended up heartbroken:  
received naked by the bare earth  
like a lover returning home  
that gives back even the tunic he had borrowed.*

*Francis, Francis, help us to understand.*

(D. M. Turollo)



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# *Information and reservations*



*“All praise be yours, my Lord, through Sister Earth, our mother,  
who feeds us in her sovereignty, and ...”*

*(St. Francis of Assisi, the Canticle of Brother Sun)*

## **Hermitage of Gethsemane**

Phone 00972 (0)2 6266430

91190 Jerusalem - Israel

For information and reservations we ask you to use

this e-mail address: E-mail: [romitaggio@custodia.org](mailto:romitaggio@custodia.org)

[www.custodia.org](http://www.custodia.org)

[Enlarged map view](#)

## *Shipping address*



For any kind of shipping, please, use the following address:

**To Br Diego Dalla Gassa**

St. Saviour's Monastery

- 1, St. Francis Street
- P.O.B. 186
- 91001 Jerusalem
- Israel

# *To support the Hermitage*



***IF YOU WANT TO SUPPORT THE HERMITAGE, YOU MAY TRANSFER YOUR OFFERING TO:***

BANK NAME	<b>MERCANTILE DISCOUNT BANK LTD</b>
BANK NUMBER	<b>0017</b>
BRANCH NUMBER	<b>0642</b>
BIC CODE	<b>BARDILIT</b>
NUMBER IBAN (23 DIGITS)	<b>IL640176420000095728661</b>
CURRENCY OF ACCOUNT	<b>EURO</b>
NUMBER IBAN (23 DIGITS)	<b>IL110176420000095728645</b>
CURRENCY OF ACCOUNT	<b>US.DOLLAR</b>
BENEFICIARY'S NAME	<b>CUSTODIA DI TERRA SANTA</b>

PLEASE, SPECIFY YOUR OFFERING: ***“FOR THE HERMITAGE OF GETHSEMANE”***



***MAY THE LORD BLESS YOU!***

