

Buen Camino

Newsletter of Fr. Michael Fish, OSB, CAM

Michael's Via Francigena Journal

With Michael trekking the Via Francigena to Rome, in lieu of his usual reflection, we are sharing some of his photos and journal entries from along the route.



Circa 30 June: I set out about 6:00 AM. By far the toughest walk of the last three days, unable to catch my breath, so progress was slow. The closer I came to the summit at St. Bernard, I could see the road far above me, with its twists and turns, and was given to panic that I would never be able to climb that high. Took me ages to complete the last section. I'm staying in the Hospice Auberge. After a siesta, I went for a walk before the rain came. Crossing into Italy, to celebrate, I enjoyed a delicious hot chocolate and apple tart. A great feeling of achievement having arrived.



Circa 10 August: The day began without much promise, I stepped out into a gray, dark, over-

cast morning, a few steps later, raindrops. The sun wrestled with the clouds, sometimes winning and sometimes disappearing, however the effect was heartbreaking. It seemed like a special show put on just for me, not a soul in sight. The walk was supposed to be about 15 km (9+ mi), but turned to be more like 18 km (11 mi) and took much longer than planned, as I stopped, not only to take photos, but to just stand in awe. I arrived in Buonconvento, a bustling little town which I immediately liked. Checked in at the Pensione. Lunch was a local dish of bread soaked in water and vinegar, together with onions, celery, tomatoes and olive oil, served cold, delicious. An air conditioned siesta and later a walk about town. A memorable day for sure.



Circa 16 August: Today's segment called for walking through Monteroni-d'Arbia's old town, followed by a steep descent to the plain. Once the path levelled out, I had the privilege of walking on the ancient Via Cassia, built between 4 and 3 BC. It was a meditation, reflecting on the slaves who constructed the road, the Romans, for whom it was one of the principal arteries leading to Rome, and finally the millions of pilgrims, who over the centuries, have walked it. Amazing, this gem, in the middle of nowhere, almost forgotten. However, it was slow going because of the uneven surface. A few days ago, I walked with a pilgrim who shared how he wanted and didn't want, the walk to finish. That's exactly how I feel. A friend of mine taught me a poignant Japanese expression: "mono no aware," a melancholy sadness over the passage of time. The transitory nature of beauty and life. That sums it up perfectly, I walked this road six years ago and realize I may never see these places again. Definitely "mono no aware."

Michael news

Michael has completed his walk of the Via Francigena, receiving the final stamp in his Pilgrim's Credential at St. Peter's Square in Vatican City. The entire journey, from his start at the French-Swiss border, over the Alps and across an unseasonably hot Italy, took Michael more than 60 days. For the moment, he remains in Italy, resting, recuperating and reflecting on the physical and mental experiences of these past weeks.

Levanté 1 Retreat Schedule

SEPT 23-25 | Mary & Joseph Retreat Center • Online Only

OCT 6-9 | Mercy Center Auburn Online & On-Site
535 Sacramento Street, Auburn, CA 95603

OCT 28-30 | Bethlehem Center Online & On-Site
2371 Arbot Road, Nanaimo, BC, Canada

NOV 18-20 | St. Francis Retreat On-Site Only
549 Mission Vineyard Road,
San Juan Bautista, CA 95045

For information about *Levanté 1*, visit:
<https://hermitfish.com/levante-1-retreat-houses>

Levanté 2 – coming in 2023

Levanté 2 will launch in January 2023. We will announce the retreat schedule in the coming weeks.

Grateful for your support

Michael thanks everyone for your continued prayers, good wishes and support. Donations to Hermit Fish, Michael's 501(c)(3) nonprofit, are fully tax deductible. Gifts of any size are greatly appreciated. FID: 82-2489475

Visit: <https://www.hermitfish.com/donate>

Creative and logistical support for Michael, his *Buen Camino* newsletter and HermitFish.com website are provided by Enigma | LA, enigma.la

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