



PRESS RELEASE

"WE CULTIVATE INTEGRATION: FLOWERS AND FRUITS IN THE LAND OF ASYLUM"

Launching of an innovative project, resulting from the synergy between the Vincentian Volunteer Groups, the Congregation of the Mission, the Tre Fontane Cooperative Society, the non-profit Linaria Association and some individuals.

Because of the 400 years of the Vincentian charism - recently celebrated with the jubilee that gathered in Rome at the International Symposium to representatives of the numerous Vincentian Family Worldwide - the realization of the project **"We cultivate integration: flowers and fruits in the land of asylum"** was possible, thanks to the synergy between the Vincentian Family, the Social Cooperative Society "Tre Fontane," the non-profit association Linaria and Mrs. Margherita Grasselli. The motto of the Jubilee: "I was a stranger and you welcomed me..." (Mt 25, 35) has in this initiative a concrete example of what it truly means to welcome.

The project consists in the improvement and development of approximately two hectares of uncultivated land, property of the Congregation of the Mission in Rome, in Via dei Caspaso 30, in which special botanical varieties will be cultivated, which can respond to a market so far little known, but surely expanding. It will allow to qualify the professional skills of a group of asylum seekers and holders of international and humanitarian protection, who reside regularly in Rome, with the aim of their social and labor insertion in the city. An initiative that is, at the same time, an experiment due to its evident social, economic and environmental impact, with the potential to become a replicable pilot project in other national urban realities.

Today morning, on the opening of the workshop (which will end on Saturday, March 3), the Superior General of the Congregation of the Mission, Father Tomaz Mavric, was present with Valentina Brinis, member of the United Nations High Commissioner for refugees (UNHCR). They support the initiative the municipality of Rome and the Central Service of the Protection System for Asylum Seekers and Refugees, which have helped to set the initiative in motion, valuing it as an important opportunity for the territory.

In addition to the beneficiaries of the project, the workshop also receives 35 university students and professionals from different disciplines who will study and analyze together all the potentialities of the project.

The training proposal will be completed with some lectures on topics related to urban agriculture and on the Italian realities related to botanical collecting, thanks to Gaia Zadra, director of the *Festival del Verde e del Paesaggio di Roma*. An additional contribution will come from AANT (Academy of Arts and New Technologies) that will provide, through its teachers, the necessary experience in the areas of Interior, Industrial, Product and Graphic Design to give the participants, through of specific workshops in which the theory and practice will alternate (this is the method of the Academy) the useful tools to create a harmonious and sustainable space with its own seal, in order to acquire a specific and recognizable identity. In this way, in addition to space design solutions, a logo and a brand will be defined that will clearly identify the place, the plants and all future products, to create a coherent and recognizable project that effectively describes this specific reality.

The project consists of the creation of a nursery garden, specialized in the production and sale of a wide collection of herbaceous, flowering and varieties of special plants, such as Cosmos and fragrant plants that are not easily found in traditional nurseries and garden centers of Rome. The nursery, located near the current greenhouse, will include an area of its own production, with a ceramic area, some nurseries and an educational garden and for demonstrations, where the opportunity to see the plants produced in unusual combinations will be offered. The sale will be made by joining the very rich Italian network of floriculture exhibitions and markets, such as the *Festival del Verde e del Paesaggio di Roma*. In collaboration with the schools in the area and other local authorities, workshops and activities will be proposed and organized, such as didactic, cultural and culinary tours or environmental education that promote awareness and safeguard of this particular plant heritage.

In addition to the nursery, there will also be a large vegetable garden where vegetables, aromatic herbs and small fruits will be grown. In addition to cabbages, salad greens and tomatoes, cardamom, coriander, okra and other vegetables and herbs related to the culture of origin of the project's beneficiaries will be also produced. It is expected to produce fresh healthy and tasty seasonal products, grown exclusively with organic techniques. Some products may be processed directly by the beneficiaries, for preparations such as flavored salts and sugars.

On Saturday, March 3, from 12.00 and 2:00 pm, at the end of the workshop, a space will be created for journalists who wish to interview the protagonists of the initiative and visit the land where the project is being developed. This space will be confirmed Friday, March 2 to those who will be accredited due to weather conditions that currently do not allow us to be sure we can achieve this moment.

Those interested can be credited by requesting it to the following email: elena@elenagrazini.it.

More information:

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