

## Intensive vipassana meditation retreat

[8 days: 400E; 16 days: 680E]

Directed by **Henk Barendregt** with assistance of **Antonino Raffone** and **Mirjam Hartkamp**

August 19, 19:00 --- September 4, 14:00, 2016

Monastero Clarisse Eremita

Fara in Sabina, Italy



### Vipassana

Vipassana or insight meditation is the training of a continued mild attention towards internal phenomena, in mind and body, that determine our choices. With this attention one can become more flexible in our habits. For this one needs concentration, as (important) choices in our life often are made during a fraction of a second. When these moments can be observed degrees of freedom will increase, enabling possibilities for creativity and empathy. While meditation can be seen as a life long path, during an intensive retreat one can make essential steps forward.

The method is simple and effective. One sits in a comfortable position, relaxed and dignified. The basic exercise is to observe the body, notably the rising and falling of the abdomen while breathing. Next one learns to observe and 'know' what the mind is attending to. If it is no longer doing the basic exercise, one knows this and also what is the nature of the 'distractor'. One then gently goes back to the basis exercise. This will give us a more clear picture of the conditionings we are subjected to. The conditioning often is mental and has an interaction within our body and behaviour. Considering distractors as impersonal energies we can learn, step by step, to domesticate these forces, resulting in greater flexibility. An important insight on the way is that we have no absolute control over our body and mind. This disillusion may be confronting at first, but will be liberating later. Developing an equanimous attitude, poised, and without hidden agendas, the meditator approaches clear insight and threefold peace: towards ourselves, others and the world.

## **Our hosts**

The Monastery is an active nunnery, devoted to loving mild contemplation in the spirit of Clara and Franciscus of Assisi.

## **Location**

Monastero delle Clarisse Eremita, Via del Castello, Fara in Sabina, Rieti, Italy.

The monastery is located about 54 km from Roma. There are frequent trains from the Fiumicino and Ciampino airports and from Termini railway station, passing through Roma Tiburtina, to Fara Sabina-Montelibretti (Passo Corese), from where it is 13 km by bus to the monastery. On top of a hill (450m above sea level) it has breathtaking views.

**Teachers** Henk Barendregt assisted by Antonino Raffone and Mirjam Hartkamp.

**Henk Barendregt** practised from 1972-1979 Zen meditation under Kobun Chino Roshi (1939-2002) and from 1979-2006 Vipassana meditation under Phra Mettavihari (1942-2007). He has been teaching Vipassana since 2001. Since 2006 he has been conducting Vipassana retreats in the style of Mahasi Sayadaw, with an emphasis on scientific and artistic metaphors. Barendregt is emeritus professor of Mathematics and Computer Science at Radboud University, Nijmegen, and has been visiting professor at the Psychology Department at Sapienza University, Roma. Since 1998 he directs with colleagues neurophysiology, psychology, and psychiatry an interdisciplinary research group on insight meditation and clinical applications.

**Antonino Raffone**, Ph.D., associate professor at the Department of Psychology of Sapienza University of Rome, has been practicing intensively Buddhist meditation since 2004. He started with Samatha meditation with Peter Harvey at the University of Sunderland in 2004. From November 2005 he has practised at the Arco Zen Center of Rome (affiliated to the San Francisco Zen Center) in the Soto Zen tradition with Dario Doshin Girolami, where he received a lay ordination in 2009. He has practised Vipassana meditation in intensive retreats from 2011 with Henk Barendregt, after earlier practice inspired in particular by the Thai Forest Theravada tradition. He has coordinated several initiatives promoting meditation and mindfulness, including in university and prison contexts, and currently directs the International Association 'Consciousness, Mindfulness, Compassion' (CMC) and the Master in Mindfulness at Sapienza University of Rome.

**Mirjam Hartkamp** has been practicing vipassana meditation intensively since 2009 and is currently teaching in the Mahasi Sayadaw tradition under supervision of Henk Barendregt. She is an active boardmember of the Dutch Insight Meditation Foundation (SIM) that aims to further the knowledge and practice of insight meditation. She is committed to the investigation of the Dhamma on a personal level (own practice), interpersonal level (teaching

and counselling), and impersonal level (conducting scientific research) and aims to deepen our knowledge about overcoming and going beyond ourselves towards freedom.

### **Living recommendations**

During the retreat one is requested to keep the five rules of behaviour: using respectful language (in our case this means not speaking, except during interviews and for questions), respecting other person's property, respecting life, keeping a friendly a-sexual attitude (in speech, dressing and behaviour), and refraining from using drugs (including alcohol and tobacco; coffee is allowed and necessary medicines as well).

### **Program**

There are daily morning instructions and evening lectures that support the meditation. After wake-up there will be bowing exercises. The rest of the program consists of sitting or walking meditation. On the last day special attention will be given how to return to daily life. The language used is English, with translations in Italian. Questions may be asked also in Dutch, German, and French. Each participant will get interviews by the teachers to get feedback. Apart from this, all time will be spent in silence. This implies that one does not use a phone or uses textmessaging. One does not read or write, but one may keep a diary to write notes (just a few lines a day) for the interview or during the evening lecture. In emergencies family members can call the teacher or the monastery.

### **For whom**

The retreat is for meditators that like to deepen their practise. Some previous experience with vipassana meditation is recommended. Persons that are under supervision or treatment of a psychiatrist or those taking psychoactive medicine, are requested to discuss with one of the teachers whether participation at this moment is suitable. Also discussing participation with the psychiatrist involved is mandatory.

### **Arrival, costs, and departure**

The retreat lasts 8-16 days. Participants have single rooms with a private bathroom. The retreat can be started only on August 19 for 8 or 16 days and on August 27 for 8 days. Sojourn plus full pension (vegetarian) is **400E** for 8 days; for the full 16 day period it is **680E**. There are cheap flights from many places in Europe to Roma, to be organised by each participant. Payment details at <https://farasabina.wordpress.com/vipassana-2016/>.

### **Dana**

The full sojourn for the teachers is covered by participants' payment. The teaching is freely offered out of gratitude. At the end of the retreat participants will be given the traditional opportunity to practice generosity towards the teachers.

### Scientific research

To make vipassana and its effects better known, meditators are given the possibility to take part in scientific research. At a later stage details will be given to those interested. On the basis of this information the meditator can decide whether or not to participate.

### Detailed information

One is requested to bring his or her own meditation mat, and bench or pillow. Other practical information on what to bring will be sent two weeks before the start of the retreat. Registration at <http://barendregt.wordpress.com/vipassana>; for questions not answered by this letter, one may send email to Mirjam Hartkamp <mhartkamp@gmail.com>.



The middle way