From “Giornale di Sicilia” 24th May 2014

The “Centro di Accoglienza Padre Nostro” ( Our Father Welcoming Centre) has been working in Brancaccio quarter for more than 20 years trying to carry on the difficult human and social promotion started by Don Pino Puglisi. He was a humble priest who worked in this suburban area and was killed by “Mafia” in front of his home in Piazzale Anita Garibaldi on 15th September 1993. He was then beatified on 25th May 2013.

Like its founder the Centre has always been involved in the difficulties of the “weak” such as children, women, elderly people and convicts. To promote the human development of these people, to meet their needs and to give them concrete answers, many activities have been carried out and have given them the possibility to express themselves and feel main protagonists for once.

Padre Puglisi’s murder has given the Centre a symbolic value which goes beyond the geographical borders of the quarter itself and has made it a landmark in experimenting and putting in practice “good habits” which have gone beyond the borders of Brancaccio quarter and have promoted national and even international meetings and exchanges with increasing positive effects.

In the last twenty years and not only on the anniversary of his death, the Centre has always kept in mind Padre Puglisi’s example and because of this, one of the most important projects of the Centre is the transformation of Piazzale Anita Garibaldi ( the place where Padre Puglisi spent the final years of his life and where he was shot dead )into a” Holy” place, where all those who believe in God and who share the ideals of blessed Padre Puglisi may feel his message. The aim of the Centre has been therefore to turn this square from a parking area into a place of remembrance, of faith, of legality and justice.

In the past people used to build cathedrals in the places where martyrs had been killed. In the same way making Piazzale Anita Garibaldi the live and vital place of remembrance where Padre Pino Puglisi keeps speaking to people, means giving the place the value of common good.

On 26th May 2013 a wooden statue representing Padre Pino Puglisi was put in the Piazzale and, after a year since his beatification, the Centre is now thinking of completing this project by opening the house where Padre Puglisi lived.

He lived in piazzale Anita Garibaldi with his parents from 1969 to 1982.He returned here in 1986 and, after his mother’s death he went on living here with his father until 1992 when his father died too. From that date to 15th May 1993, date of his murder just in front of his house, he went on living in this house on his own.

It is a council house which, after his death, was given to another family that bought it some time later.

Rescuing this place has been for the Centre a way of putting together the process of evangelization and human promotion according to the recommendations of the Second Vatican Council(1962-1965) which devotes “Gaudium et Spes” to the relationship between evangelization and contemporary world and requires coherent behaviours as a consequence of it. Expressions and activities meant therefore as tools which, in their artistic and communicative forms narrate, spread and testify to the life and the pastoral, cultural and social action of a martyr.

Those who get to Piazzale Anita Garibaldi do it to pay homage to a Christian, Padre Pino Puglisi, who was beatified just because of his testimony to faith and his hatred of Mafia. Making the place of his martyrdom a holy place has made it now possible for many priests and communities to celebrate the Divine Liturgy there and for those who believe in the values of human dignity, to be allowed to visit a place which symbolizes them all.

In order to carry on this project, The “Centro di Accoglienza Padre Nostro” is going to make Padre Puglisi’s house a “home-museum” in which the word “home” is meant as the hearth and home, where the family members live, interact and welcome the dear ones. Therefore it is meant as an “anthropological “place, a meaningful “locus of existence”. The aim is to give new life to the place where Blessed padre Puglisi lived the last part of his earthly life. Buying and restoring Padre Pino Puglisi’s house express the Centre’s desire to communicate the idea of a place in which the human bonds, the way of living and welcoming are the most characteristic aspects, more than the building itself.

Blessed Giuseppe Puglisi’s house on the whole together with the Piazzale ( the place of his martyrdom) make up an ideal place where you meet God and your fellow creatures, where your faith grows and also your concern for the poor.

The house therefore symbolizes the foundations of human life, the source of subjectivity where everybody feels the desire for feeling welcome and belonging to something or somebody. It is the place which contains human essence.

These were the feelings of those who had the privilege to meet Blessed padre Pino in this very house.

In this house in Piazzale Anita Garibaldi there are books, furniture and objects belonging to Blessed Giuseppe Puglisi and his parents, with whom he lived for many years. These objects help us evoke the past together with the present and the future and give us an idea of what Padre Pino Puglisi’s life was like. The simplicity and sobriety of these objects make us understand how little Padre Puglisi considered all these objects and how much he valued books: inside his house there were about 6000 of them. They were later moved to Seminario Diocesano. Some were kept at some relatives’ homes being a live and essential presence. Thanks to the opening of Padre Puglisi’s house his books and his objects can come to new life so that visitors through them can get to know and start a relationship with him. Blessed Giuseppe Puglisi chose to live in poverty as his house testifies. It was not difficult for him to get rid of everything to embrace Christ on the Cross.