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"The soul is like a castle made entirely out of a diamond or a very clear crystal, in which there are many rooms, just as in heaven there are many dwelling places..."

(Saint Teresa, The Interior Castle)

The ICMS was created in 1990 as a Municipal Foundation.

It is a non-profit organization depending on the Town Council of Avila and it has the support of UNESCO. It aims to contribute to studies on mysticism as an integral part of the history of humanity. The Centre has been developing three distinct yet closely connected departments: teaching and research, documentation and publishing, and cultural activities.

The Centre's international scope and the plural, ecumenical approach which inspires it have been reflected by the initiatives carried out so far:

-Two three-day courses on Islamic Mystical Literature, in collaboration with UNESCO and with the Institute for Cooperation with the Arab World, including lectures on Sufi spirituality and literature, Islamic culture and philosophy, and the figures of Ibn Arabi, Avicena, Algazel, etc.

-An intensive course on Great Contemporary Mystics of India, in collaboration with UNESCO and the Indian Embassy in Spain, directed by Professor Raimundo Panikkar, which focused on the figures of Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Aurobindo, Sri Ramana Maharsi and Anandamayi Ma, and culminated in a performance by the Indian dancer Alarmel Valli.

-An International Seminar on Jewish Mysticism, in collaboration with UNESCO and the Israeli Community of Madrid.

Topics of the Seminar included: studies on the Cabala and the Zojar, the Jewish presence in Avila and in Spanish mysticism, and on figures such as Nahmanides and R. Shem Tobn Ibn Shem Tob, by scholars from Europe and Israel.

-A Second International Seminar on Comparative Mysticism, which included speakers Ernesto Cardenal, María Kodama (the wife of the Argentinian writer Jorge Luis Borges), Luce López-Baralt, Annemarie Schimmel of Harvard University, the Spanish writer Juan Goytisolo, etc., with papers from social, literary, religious and psychoanalytic perspectives on figures as diverse as St. Teresa and St. John of the Cross, Miguel de Molinos, Muhammad Iqbal and Thomas Merton. -An International Conference on Music and Spirituality, with performances of Oriental dances, Classical music from India, Orthodox religious music, Sufi music and Dervish dance, Gregorian chant, Sephardic songs and Flamenco mysticism.

-A three-week summer course on contemporary spirituality with reputed speakers like Leonardo Boff. -An Exhibition in the cathedral-fortress of Avila on St. Teresa and 16th century Spain, with considerable media coverage and an average attendance of 2000 people per day and a total of 400,000 visitors, which culminated in an International Congress on the patron saint of Avila.

-An International Gathering on the Cistercian Order on the occasion of the 900 anniversary of its foundation. - International seminars on Women's Mysticism, Tibetan Mysticism, Mysticism for the XXI century and Mystical Phenomena. The Centre has been active in different Symposia in Spain, Istanbul, the Dominican Republic, and in joint meetings on the history of religions involving UNESCO and the Vatican.

The Centre has regular links with Spanish and foreign universities, has signed a Cooperation Agreement with the Institute of Hebraic Studies in Palermo, Italy, and has formal ties with the International Thomas Merton Center at Bellarmine College, Louisville, Kentucky. Publications: The Centre has published separate volumes of the Proceedings of most seminars, musical and recitation recordings, Spanish translations of unpublished texts by Thomas Merton and is planning to publish a series of important works on mysticism. Attendance: ICMS courses have been attended by 2.000 students but personal or written requests have been made by more than 10.000 people. Welcome to Avila ICMS where you are invited to explore the many rooms within the castle of the soul so that, together, we may do justice to the treasure and nobility of our human nature.

For further information contact:

Centro Internacional de Estudios Místicos

Plaza del Mercado Chico, 1 - 05001 Ávila (España)

Tel. 34 920 21 21 54

Fax: 34 920 25 50 99

E-mail: ciem@ayuntavila.com