

Press release

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Monastery of Bose, 8-11 September 2010

2 September 2010

XVIII International Ecumenical Conference

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XVIII International Ecumenical Conference **on Orthodox Spirituality**

Bose, Wednesday 8 - Saturday 11 September 2010

in collaboration with the Orthodox Churches

COMMUNION AND SOLITUDE

“Communion and solitude” is the theme of the 18th International Ecumenical Conference of Orthodox Spirituality, which will be held at the Monastery of Bose from 8 to 11 September 2010. Organized in collaboration with the Orthodox Churches, for almost twenty years now the conference represents an important occasion of dialogue on the essential themes of the spiritual life, where the traditions of Christian East and West intersect the profound expectations of today's men and women. The course of the conference consists of four intense days of study and fraternal comparison, during which theologians, historians, philosophers, and official representatives at the highest level of the Orthodox Churches, of the Catholic Church, and of the Churches of the Reform will take part, together with numerous other participants.

The contraposition between individual and collectivity, often a source of conflict in modern times, can find in the Christian, and in particular in the Orthodox tradition a way of humanization in the vital tension between communion and solitude, two essential dimensions of the spiritual life.

By listening to Scripture and the teachings of the fathers (from Basil to Isaac of Nineveh, from the fathers of the desert to the fathers of Byzantine and Russian monasticism) and also by interrogating the theological and philosophical reflection of the Christian East and the wisdom of several great spiritual figures of Orthodoxy, the symposium wishes to rediscover the fertile relation of these two poles that constitute human living. The monastic experience is called to be a synthesis and irradiation of the spiritual dynamics between communion and solitude; to this an ample round table discussion is dedicated, an occasion to hear some of the most authoritative spiritual guides of contemporary monasticism in East and West.

The work of the conference will begin with an inaugural lecture by the **prior of Bose, Enzo Bianchi**, and by the talk of the Serbian bishop **Irinej of Ba?ka** (Novi Sad) on *Church and monastic experience*. The specific Christian understanding of community as a dimension of the spiritual life and of the essential solitude of the meeting with God will be treated in its Biblical roots (**Petros Vassiliadis**, Thessalonica) and in its development in the patristic tradition (**Michel van Parys**, Chevetogne) and in the eastern monastic (**Kriton Chryssochoidis**, Athens; **Tat'jana Karbasova**, **Tat'jana Rudi**, St Petersburg; **Gleb Zapal'skij**, Moscow) and in the western (**Armand Veilleux**, Scourmont).

The development that Orthodox thought gives to the concept of person and of communion (**Konstantinos Agoras**, Athens; **Konstantin Sigov**, Kiev) will introduce then a reflection on what the pair “communion and solitude” means today. This will continue with a presentation of the experience of two contemporary hermits, father Cleopa of Silastria (1912–1998) and father Porfyrios of Kafsokalyvia (196–1991), by metropolitan **Serafim of Germany** and **Athanasios N. Papathanassiou** and with the Round Table dedicated to contemporary monastic experience, *To live in communion, to live in solitude*,

in which will take part, among others, archbishop **Feognost of Sergiev Posad**, superior of the Lavra of the Holy Trinity of St Sergius, bishop **Nazarij of Vyborg**, superior of the Lavra of the Holy Trinity of St Alexander Nevskij (St Petersburg), igumen **Damaskinos (Gavalas)** of the Monastery of the Prophet Elias (Santorini), igumena **Makrina (Eskaf)** of the Panaghia Monastery (Sayde), and father **Andrej (?ilerdži?)** of the Monastery of the Holy Archangels (Kovilj).

The final day will look at greater depth at the importance of the solitary and community dimensions of the spiritual life for today's men and women in the talks of archimandrite **Kirill (Hovorun)** and of metropolitan **Kallistos of Diokleia**, delagte of the Patriarch of Constantinople Bartholomew I.

A particular value on the ecumenical plane is represented by the official delegations of the Churches of East and West.

On the part of the Catholic Church are expected mons. **Brian Farrell**, secretary of the Pontifical Council for the promotion of Christian unity, together with fr. **Milan Žust**, S.J., don **Andrea Palmieri** and sr. **Barbara Matrecano** of the same office; archbishop **Antonio Mennini**, apostolic nuncio to the Russian Federation; cardinal **Achille Silvestrini**, former prefect of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches, mons. **Piero Marini**, president of the Pontifical Committee for the International Eucharistic Congresses, and mons. **Mansueto Bianchi**, bishop of Pistoia and president of the Commission for ecumenism and dialogue (Italian Bishops' Conference). During the course of the proceedings several bishops of the Episcopal Conference of Piedmont will participate, among the the secretary of the Conference, bishop **Arrigo Miglio** of Ivrea and bishop **Gabriele Mana** of Biella, the local ordinary.

Archbishop **Feognost of Sergiev Posad** will lead the delegation of the Moscow Patriarchate, composed also of bishop **Feofilakt of Brjansk and Sevsk**, archimandrite **Filipp (Ryabykh)** and hieromonk **Aleksij (Zavidonsky)**. The Orthodox Church of Greece will be represented by metropolitans **Ignatios of Dimiatriadoss** and **Daniel of Kessariani, Vironas, and Hymettos** and bishop **Ioannis of Thermopyli**. Further, as official representatives of their Churches will be present: metropolitan **Serafim of Germany** and bishop **Ioachim of Roman and Bac?u** (Romanian Orthodox Church), metropolitan **Grigorij of Veliko T?rnovo** and bishop **Kiprian of Traianopol** (Bulgarian Orthodox Church), bishop **Volodymyr of Rovin'ky** (Ukrainian Orthodox Church, Patriarchate of Moscow), bishop **Stefan of Turov and Mozyrsk** (Belarusian Exarchate of the Patriarchate of Moscow), fr. **Ruben Zargaryan** (Armenian Apostolic Church), delegat of the Catholikos of all the Armenians Garechin II; archimandrite **Athenagoras (Fasiolo)** (Orthodox Archdiocese of Italy and Malta), rev. **Jonathan Goodall**, delegate of the archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams, and **Tamara Grdzelidze** of the World Council of Churches of Geneva. In addition, we may note the presence of **Anatolij Krasikov** of Moscow, **Spyridon Kontoyannis** of the University of Athens, **Pendelis Kalaitzidis** of Volos, **Gelian M. Prochorov** of the Academy of Sciences in St Petersburg, **Hugh Wybrew** of Oxford.

The conference program was prepared in collaboration with the Orthodox Churches by a scientific committee presided by fr. **Enzo Bianchi**, and which includes fr. **Hervé Legrand** (Paris), fr. **Michel van Parys**, **Antonio Rigo** (University of Venice), **Roberto Salizzoni** (University of Turin).

As described above, the course of the conference desires to offer a space for a fraternal encounter between the various Christian Churches, for communion and sharing of their multiform spiritual traditions. The announced participation of **numerous monks and nuns** from Orthodox (Greece, Russia, Bulgaria, Romania, Mount Sinai, Georgia, Armenia) and Catholic monasteries (Belgium, France, Italy, Switzerland, Hungary) gives the hope that this purpose of the conference will be achieved.

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