Concluding thanks by Enzo Bianchi

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Ringraziamenti di Enzo Bianchi

CONCLUDING THANKS BY ENZO BIANCHI

To conclude this 23rd Conference I simply wish to express profound thanks to the Lord. It is the Lord who always accompanies us in these conferences, it is the Lord who is in our midst with his mercy and his love, it is the Lord who allows us to meet, to listen to each other, to exchange gifts, the gifts that our Churches have and that ought to be shared among those who call themselves Christians. We will, of course, express our thanksgiving in prayer, but it is as well a profoundly felt sentiment in our hearts, hence we must by all means express it at the end of our meetings.

These our conferences, which from the beginning have had the blessing of the ecumenical patriarch and of the patriarch of Moscow, who have always supported and encouraged us, and also of the other Orthodox Churches, would like to be truly an occasion of sincere friendship, and the fraternal climate of these days witnesses to this.

This is why I feel the obligation to thank:

The patriarch of Constantinople Bartholomeos I, the archbishop of Crete Irineos, metropolitans Maximos of Silivria and Kallistos of Dioklea, archimandrite Nifon of Heraklion, without forgetting archimandrite Athenagoras, whom we thank also for celebrating vespers yesterday evening.

Patriarch Kirill of Moscow, bishop Mitrofan of Severomorsk, with fr Arsenij ?ernikin, fr Maksim Korban, and igumen Arsenij (Sokolov).

Bishop Filaret of Lviv and Haly?, delegate of metropolitan Onufrij of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, the monks of the Lavra of the Caves.

Bishop Stefan of Homel and Žlobin of the Belarusian Orthodox Church.

We also wish to thank, among many others, those whose presence is always a sign of God's mercy: cardinal Walter Kasper, archbishop Antonio Mennini, apostolic nuncio in Great Britain, archbishop Marco Arnolfo of Vercelli, bishops Gabriele Mana of Biella, Mansueto Bianchi, Piergiorgio De Bernardi of Pinerolo; don Andrea Palmieri, delegate of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, and don Cristiano Bettega, the new director of the National Office of the Italian Bishops' Conference for ecumenism and dialogue.

Metropolitan Seraphim of Zimbabwe of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria, representing patriarch Theodoros II. Father Bassam Nassif of Balamand, representing the Greek Orthodox patriarch of Antioch Yuhanna X. Bishop Andrej of Austria, delegate of patriarch Irinej of Serbia; Father Atanasie Rusnac, representing His Holiness patriarch Daniel of Romania; Bishop Grigorios of Mesaorias, representing the Orthodox Church of Cyprus, metropolitan Ioannis of Thermopyli, delegate of the Orthodox Church of Greece, the delegations of various Greek dioceses, together with Greek monks and nuns, as well as professors of Athens and Thessaloniki. Bishop Melchisedek of Pittsburgh of the Orthodox Church of America and fr John Behr, dean of St Vladimir's Theological Institute.

We also wish to thanks bishop Epifanios of San Macario in Wadi el Natrun, a monastic community that we have visited and that remains for us a point of reference, a perpetual memory of the ancient desert fathers. Father Makaryan, representing the Armenian Apostolic Church. Bishop John Stroyan, representing the Archbishop of Canterbury, bishop Jonathan Goodall, and canon Hugh Wybrew. Michel Nseir, delegate of the World Council of Churches.

The speakers who have offered us papers of great spiritual quality and intellectual passion and kept attentive our assembly of over 250 persons. The monks and nuns of Eastern and Western monasteries, with whom we have a sincere communion in the same perseverance in following the Lord. The interpreters; the technical staff. Those of you who are our friends who faithfully return, support, and accompany us with prayers, and all participants.

Like every year, the Acts of the previous 22nd Conference, "Blessed are the peaceful", have come out.

The Lord faithfully leads us on our way and wants us to remain extremely humbly and faithful in his footsteps. We will continue to pursue this road. To decide on the theme of the next conference and the choice of speakers the scientific committee will meet very soon. The dates will remain at the beginning of September, Wednesday 7 to Saturday 10.

We will pray for all of you and we ask you to pray for our community. Our initiatives surpass us. Our community could live even without these initiatives, as it has for many years. When we began these conferences, we did so because it was asked of us as a service which we hope to carry out for the Church. Our contribution is only to offer a place and to pray

and pray. This is our monastic task, the rest belongs to the Church. Thank you, and pray that we may be a community faithful to the Lord. We will pray for you. Thanks you.