

Press release 30 August 2016

24th International Ecumenical Conference of Orthodox Spirituality

MARTYRDOM AND COMMUNION

Bose, 7–10 September 2016
in collaboration with the Orthodox Churches

“Martyrdom and communion” is the theme chosen for the twenty-fourth International Ecumenical Conference of Orthodox spirituality, organized in collaboration with the Orthodox Churches, which will be held at the Monastery of Bose on 7–10 September 2016.

After the tragic experience of the totalitarian regimes in the twentieth century, the way of peace today seems ever more in jeopardy. Discrimination and persecution for religious motives is not rare. In particular, in twenty-five countries, where wars and conflicts are often rife, Christians are still marginalized and persecuted for their faith. The Conference, echoing their voice, wishes to illuminate the close ties between the witness to Christ of the martyrs and communion among the Churches, in its Scriptural and patristic foundations and in the various traditions of Eastern and Western Christians. The experience of the martyrs of the twentieth century and the testimony of Christian communities persecuted today is a precious evangelical patrimony for all the Churches and all of humanity.

The sufferings and the death of Christian martyrs speak to us of the unity-communion of the heavenly Jerusalem, where the risen Christ will gather about him the immense multitude of the redeemed of the earth (Rev 7,9) and where he will be all in all (Col 3,11). The cry of the martyrs is still heard (Rev 6,10) and joins that of the Spirit and the Spouse: “Come, Lord Jesus” (Rev 22,20). The blood of martyrs is already a witness to the *Una Sancta*.

The International Ecumenical Conference of Orthodox spirituality has become a point of reference for ecumenical dialogue and for the study of the spiritual tradition of the Christian East. It is a precious occasion of brotherly meeting, of encounters and sharing, open to all.

The work of the Conference will open with the inaugural talk of the prior of Bose, Enzo Bianchi, and the papers of His Beatitude Youhanna X (Yazighi), patriarch of Antioch, on “The blood of martyrs, seed of communion”, and of archbishop Job (Getcha) of Telmessos, representative of the Patriarchate of Constantinople at the World Council of Churches, on “The testimony and the service of communion of the ecumenical patriarchate”. After four days of talks and discussions, with the papers of theologians, patrologists, historians, philosophers from various countries, the conference will conclude with the talk of cardinal Kurt Koch, president of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, on the ecumenical meaning of martyrdom and of the American Orthodox theologian Aristotle Papanikolaou on testimony and communion.

There will be numerous delegations from the Churches. The delegate of patriarch Bartholomeos I of Constantinople is metropolitan Athenagoras of Belgium, while archimandrite Athenagoras Fasiolo will represent Gennadios, the metropolitan of Italy. The delegation of the Moscow Patriarchate, headed by bishop Antonij of Bogorodsk, includes fr. Aleksej Dikarev and fr. Kirill Kaleda. The Patriarchate of Alexandria will be represented by metropolitan Gennadios of Neiloupoleos and the Patriarchate of Antioch by fr. Porphyrios Georgi. The Ukrainian Orthodox Church will be represented by metropolitan Filipp of Poltava, archimandrite Nazarij (Omeljanenko), hieromonk Panteleimon (Mel'nik), fr. Mykola Danylevych, and archimandrite Filaret (Egorov). The Serbian Orthodox Church will be represented by bishops Andrej ?ilerdži? (Vienna) and Jeronim of Jegar, the Romanian Orthodox Church by archbishop Josif (Pop) of Central and Southern Italy. Metropolitan Grigorios of Mesaoria will be from the Church of Cyprus, archbishop Melchisedek of Pittsburgh and bishop Alexander of Dallas from the Orthodox Church of America, bishop Asti of Bylis from the Orthodox Church of Albania, fr. Stefan Palikarov from the Bulgarian Orthodox Church.

In addition to cardinal Koch, the Catholic Church will be represented at the conference by bishops Gabriele Mana of Biella, Marco Arnolfo of Vercelli, Juan Antonio Martinez Camino, auxiliary of Madrid, Pier Giorgio Debernardi of Pinerolo, Luigi Bettazzi, retired bishop of Ivrea, and don Cristiano Bettega, director of the Office for Ecumenism and Dialogue of the Italian Bishops' Conference. Kurian Manoj will represent the World Council of Churches. Numerous monks and nuns of East and West will be present.

During the conference there will be a presentation of the volume *Mercy and pardon* (Qiqajon 2016), with the acts of last year's Conference.

The program of the twenty-fourth International Ecumenical Conference of Orthodox spirituality was prepared by the scientific committee, composed of: Enzo Bianchi (Bose), Lino Breda (Bose), Sabino Chialà (Bose), Lisa Cremaschi (Bose), Luigi d'Ayala Valva (Bose), Hervé Legrand (Paris), Adalberto Mainardi (Bose), Raffaele Ogliari (Bose), Antonio Rigo (University of Venice), Michel van Parys (Chevetogne).