

# Fraternal visits and ecumenical presence

Cardinal Carlo Maria Martini

A monastic community such as ours, although it is “on the edge of the desert”, as we like to define it, has never wanted to be extraneous to the local Churches, and for that reason the visits of their pastors are always for us new occasions to strengthen the ties of communion and to bring in intercession before the Lord the anxieties and the hopes of their ministry

A monastic community such as ours, although it is “on the edge of the desert”, as we like to define it, has never wanted to be extraneous to the local Churches, and for that reason the visits of their pastors are always for us new occasions to strengthen the ties of communion and to bring in intercession before the Lord the anxieties and the hopes of their ministry. In this period too some bishops have come up to Bose for a stay or for a brief stop: first of all, the bishop of our local Church of Biella, **Gabriele Mana**, who again this year celebrated with us the conclusion of the week of prayer for Christian unity; **Arrigo Miglio**, bishop of Ivrea nearby; **Alceste Catella**, bishop of Casale Monferrato; **Gianni Ambrosio**, bishop of Piacenza; **Tommaso Valentinetti**, archbishop of Pescara and president of Pax Christi; and **Adrian van Luyn**, bishop of Rotterdam.

We give thanks to the Lord for two especially significant visits in January. At the beginning of the new year we welcomed the archbishop of Canterbury, **Rowan Williams**, who again this year chose to spend in Bose a period of retreat and of silence, at the end of which in a fraternal *collation* he shared with us his preoccupations, but also his hopes, in spite of everything, in face of the difficult situation at present in the Anglican Church, of which he is the primate.

At the end of January, with great joy we welcomed **cardinal Carlo Maria Martini**, accompanied by bishop **Erminio Descalzi**. He himself explained the sense of his visit in the few words he addressed to us at the beginning of the midday prayer: “The Lord calls... *ad convivendum et ad commoriendum*, by now I see eternal life before me... I have come to greet you for the last time, to thank the Lord for this long friendship in his name. I rely on your prayers and your affection. I kiss you and I bless you.”

Early in May we welcomed the bishops' conference of the Lutheran Church of Sweden with its primate, **Anders Wejryd**. Bishops **Erik Aurelius of Skara**, **Sven Thidevall of Växjö**, **Hans Stiglund of Luleå**, **Thomas Söderberg of Västerås**, **Ragnar Persenius of Uppsala**, **Hans-Erik Nordin of Strängnäs**, **Caroline Krook of Stockholm**, **Antje Jacklén of Lund**, **Martin Lind of Linköping**, **Tony Guldbrandzén of Härnösand** spent several days of retreat in Bose, during which they also had the chance to meet with our bishop, Gabriele Mana.

Among the other ecumenical visits during these months, we wish to recall the members of the Compagnie des pasteurs et diacres of Geneva and pastor Peter Haldorff, founder and guide of the community of Biarka-Säby (Sweden), who this year visited us with a large group of his co-nationals, among them Biörn Fjärstedt, retired bishop of Visby (Gotland) of the Swedish Lutheran Church.

In the week between Ascension and Pentecost we had with us about fifteen Russian Orthodox young adults of the **Fraternity of the Transfiguration**, led by **fr Georgij Ko?etkov**, with whom we have had fraternal ties for more than fifteen years. Their love for God's word and their wise search to live the Christian faith in the modern world are also for us a precious testimony.

In this period a great witness of Christian faith passed from death to Life: **Olivier Clément**, French Orthodox theologian, with whom we had ties of friendship and profound esteem. He was twice in Bose, on the occasion of the international ecumenical conferences, and we have been reading with appreciation his many books for a long time. For this reason we have decided to republish in the near future one of his best books, *Alle fonti con i padri*.