

Concluding greeting of Enzo Bianchi

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XVIII International Ecumenical Conference

Bose, 11 September 2010

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on Orthodox spirituality

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My words are intended to be only a thanks, a thanks to the Lord, because the Lord truly makes his presence felt among us in giving us the possibility to meet, to be able to communicate, and to be able to tend towards an ever greater communion. It is truly the Lord who makes this possible, and I say this not simply out of humility, but because we are really convinced that only he can operate in us what we are not able to operate. We are asked only to predispose, to predispose ourselves, to predispose spaces, occasions for his action, and this is what these our Conferences hope to be. We are not protagonists of anything, we continue to invoke the Spirit that he may render the Lord present among us, that he may bring us to that communion for which the Lord Jesus prayed and for which he wanted his disciples. Truly, we can only predispose, and it is the Spirit who produces in us both the wanting and the doing, it is the Holy Spirit who brings to completion every work of his in us. This is why our thanks are intense thanks said with conviction, and we will express them above all at the prayer that we shall make shortly together in our church.

Thanks again to the patriarch of Constantinople Bartholomew I and to his representative, metropolitan Kallistos of Dioklea, who today is celebrating his seventy-sixth birthday. We are happy to celebrate this occasion together with him in great communion and we hope that the Lord may grant him health, may grant him days, because if the days of us human beings are seventy or eighty if we have the strength, they can be many more with the Lord's strength.

Thanks also to patriarch Kirill of Moscow and to the members of the delegation led by bishop Feognost of Sergiev Posad and also to bishops Nazarij of Vyborg, Feofilakt of Brjansk and Sevsk, and Stefan of Turov and Mozyrsk, as well as to bishop Volodymyr of Robinky, delegate of metropolitan Volodymyr of Kiev.

The Orthodox Churches from the beginning have patronized these our conferences, and we want always to hold our conferences in communion with them and as a service to all the Orthodox Churches, which, we feel, are truly sister Churches.

Thanks to the Churches that have sent their representatives, messages of fraternal participation, particularly numerous this year. This year numerous bishops have attended the conference, have visited us, and are still with us. Among them is cardinal Achille Silvestrini, former prefect of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches, archbishop Piero Marini, president of the Pontifical Committee for the International Eucharistic Congresses, and bishop Brian Farrell, secretary of the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity, as well as others whom you have seen among us during these days.

Our thanks go to the speakers who have given us papers of great spiritual quality, of great intellectual passion, and who have known to keep the attention of our assembly, which counted well over 220 persons during these days.

Thanks also to the members of the scientific committee, among whom I mention in particular father Michel van Parys, who has always been close not only to these conferences, but to the community and to me personally with his wisdom and discernment.

To the monks and nuns of eastern and western monasteries, with whom we live a sincere communion in the one perseverance of following Christ, I express particular thanks. We see that they are more every year; this year they were more than sixty, and I am especially happy at the solidarity shown. Monasticism, as you know, in the West is not enjoying good times, in the West the days are somewhat bad for monasticism. Everywhere there is an asthenia of monasticism.

This is not happening in the Orthodox Churches, where monasticism, on the contrary, shows great vitality. We are really counting on this solidarity, on this brotherliness of Orthodox monastics, and wish that in the exchange of gifts a spring for monasticism may be possible also in the West.

Thanks also to the interpreters, who this year were many. A thank you to Gianpaolo Rampoldi, who saw to the technical part, to the friends who return faithfully every year, who make known our conferences and accompany them with their prayers, and to all of you participants of these day for this sharing of things tat mean much to us, that are God's, not our things.

We dare to say with audacity in Christian hope that we look forward to seeing you, if the Lord wishes, next year in these same days. From 7 to 10 September 2011 we will seek again to live this conference; for this conference there is a first suggestion, but we will be glad to receive other suggestions from you. You can write to us, perhaps before leaving you can tell your suggestions to the brothers and sisters of the community. Perhaps a first suggestion can be the theme *the Word of God in spiritual life and in the life of the Church*. This is a theme that has been proposed to us by some Orthodox monastic communities and also by some Orthodox bishops present among us, but we will gladly look at other proposals also with prayer and the Lord's help.

To all of you I make a request, I ask your intercession, your prayer for us. We really are a little thing, we want to be following the Lord and to beat the service of the Churches, nothing else. I always tell my brothers and my sisters that we do not even claim to give witness, we ask the Lord that he permit us to follow him without giving scandal to anyone. You also pray for this, and this is enough for us so as then one day to be together in the great communion of the Lord.

ENZO BIANCHI
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