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with Metropolitans Elpidofòros of Bursa, Paul of Aleppo and Hilarion of Volokolamsk

Bose, 10 September 2011

XIX International Ecumenical Conference

on Orthodox spirituality

by ENZO BIANCHI

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Bose, Wednesday 7 - Saturday 10 September 2011

in collaboration with the Orthodox Churches

THE WORD OF GOD

IN THE SPIRITUAL LIFE

To end these days I wish simply to express a great thank-you to the Lord. It is the Lord who always accompanies us in these conferences, it is the Lord who stands among us with his mercy and his love. It is the Lord who lets us meet each other, listen to one another, exchange gifts, the gifts that our Churches have and that should be shared among those who say they are Christians. We will certainly express our thanks in prayer, but it is also an earnest, profound sentiment that is in our hearts, hence we absolutely have to recognize it at the end of our meetings. I recall that archbishop Alexis of Düsseldorf used to say that meetings between Christians are like a light lit in an enormous space: it seems to illuminate and warm only a small portion, yet, no matter how large, how vast that space may be, the darkness there is not absolute! Yes, the Spirit is active, is life-giving, takes the initiative, casts His appeals, sows germs of life, and, as a spiritual elder of Athos used to say, makes us understand that *nous ne devons jamais oublier ni cesser de voir le mystérieux cheminement de Dieu dans les âmes et les communautés chrétiennes, quand au lieu d'affrontements il y a une mise en commun des problèmes, un grande et humble patience qui sa ne pas se hâter, qui est attentive à se reconnaître et à ne pas étouffer un germe de vie...*

I wish to remind us all that this our conferences from the very beginning have had the blessing of the Patriarchate of Constantinople and of the Patriarchate of Moscow, who have always sustained and encouraged us, and that for some years now this collaboration has happily been extended to the other Orthodox Churches, who have shown support and sympathy for this initiative, the spirit of which is well described by what the unforgettable patriarch Athenagoras used to say: *quand on se rencontre dans l'amour on applique la vraie théologie!*

Thus, I feel the obligation to thank:

The patriarch of Constantinople, **Bartholomew I**, whom we assure of our prayer on the imminent twentieth anniversary of his ministry and with whom we rejoice over the recent decree of the Turkish government concerning the restitution of confiscated properties; the metropolitan his delegate **Elpidophoros of Bursa**, for many years the indefatigable general secretary of the holy and sacred Synod, elected only a short while ago hegumenos of the Holy Trinity monastery on Halki, which houses the Institute of Theology that we hope will be opened shortly.

Patriarch **Kirill** of Moscow, metropolitan **Ilarion**, president of the Department for external affairs, an old and dear friend of our community, engaged in a great action of forging human and ecclesial ties (in the last few days he visited patriarch Theophilos III of Jerusalem and patriarch Ignatius IV of Antioch): how can it be forgotten that he wanted to be personally present with great attention and sensitivity, at the 50th anniversary of his diaconal ordination that patriarch Bartholomew

commemorated on the island of Imbros where he was born, and just before that at the enthronization of metropolitan Elpidophoros, who is here among us? I also thank the members of the delegation, archbishop **Kliment of Krasnoslobodsk** and fr Arsenij **Žernikin**.

The Churches that sent their representatives or messages of fraternal participation are even more numerous; they may be found on the website of the community.

The bishops who followed or visited the conference, among them cardinal Angelo **Sodano**, former Secretary of State of His Holiness and dean of the College of Cardinals, whom we thank for the great attention that he wished to show towards the participants of this conference, and bishop Mansueto **Bianchi** of Pistoia, president of the Commission for ecumenism and dialogue of the Italian Bishops' Conference; bishop Gabriele **Mana** of Biella, bishops Arrigo **Miglio** and Massimo **Giustetti**, always attentive to the initiatives of our community; metropolitans **Georges of Mount Lebanon** and **Paul of Aleppo** of the Patriarchate of Antioch, whose great suffering for the situation in Syria we know and to whom we are close with ardent intercession to the Lord; bishop **Porfirje of Jegar** of the Serbian Orthodox Church, auxiliary of bishop **Irinej of Novi Sad**, very dear to us, and igumen of the Kovil monastery, with which we are bound in fraternal friendship; metropolitan **Grigorije of Veliko Tŕnovo** and bishop **Boris of Agatonica**, igumen of the Baŕka monastery, of the Orthodox Church of Bulgaria, always punctually present at these our conferences; metropolitan **Chrysostomos of Messina** of the Orthodox Church of Greece, who opened our sessions with his paper; retired bishop **Serafim of Sendai** of the Orthodox Church in Japan.

The speakers, who have offered us papers of great spiritual quality and intellectual passion, have known how to keep alive the attention of an assembly of over 250 persons during these days.

The members of the scientific committee.

The interpreters: **Andrei Bourtsev**, **Ania Worontzoff**, **Ekaterini Kasimova-Zuchra**, Maria Giuseppina **Erba Sain**, Leonardo Paleari, Giovanni **Bonavia**, and Gabriele **Pentzikis**.

The technician.

The friends who faithfully return, support, and accompany with prayer our conferences.

All the participants: good-bye till next year!

Finally:

Like every year, so the Acts of the 18th Conference of last year have come out on the topic of *Communion and solitude*.

For **the theme of our next conference — which will be the twentieth — and the choice of speakers**, the scientific committee will meet on 6–7 November; your suggestions are really welcome.

The dates: we will keep this period at the **beginning of September, from 5 to 8**; the weather seems also to be favorable, as we have seen in these days spent together.

Enzo Bianchi, Prior of Bose

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