

Press Release, 29 August 2013

XXIst International Ecumenical Conference on Orthodox Spirituality

The conference in Bose, with the participation of bishops and monks belonging to the Orthodox Churches, to the Reform, and to the Catholic Church and of scholars from various countries

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in collaboration with the Orthodox Churches

THE AGES OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE

Monastery of Bose, 4-7 September 2013

The Ages of the Spiritual Life is the title, inspired by the book of the Russian theologian Paul Evdokimov, of the 21st International Ecumenical Conference on Orthodox Spirituality, organized in collaboration with the Orthodox Churches, which will be held at the Monastery of Bose on 4–7 September 2013.

The passage from one age to another in life is the common experience of all, but is often difficult to live. Contemporary culture, held between the idolatry of immutable youth and the removal of old age and of death, appears to have lost a sense of the bounds between the ages of life and to postpone to an indefinite future the decisions of mature age. In the understanding of the Christian East the spiritual life is essential for authentic human maturity.

The conference in Bose, with the participation of bishops and monks belonging to the Orthodox Churches, to the Reform, and to the Catholic Church and of scholars from various countries, intends to listen to the wisdom of the fathers and to offer a space for reflection on the theme of spiritual maturity through crises of passage and phases of trial. Particular attention will be paid to the final phase of life and of Christian hope in the face of death.

In the inaugural session the speakers will be **Enzo Bianchi**, prior of Bose, bishop Iosif of Patara, delegate of the ecumenical patriarch Bartholomew ("Spiritual life and Christian unity"), father **Michail Želtov** of the Moscow Patriarchate ("Baptism, the source of life in Christ").

In four days of meetings and discussions open to the public the speakers will be: Biblical scholars (**Andrej Desnickij**, Moscow; **Petros Vassiliadis**, Thessalonica), patrologists (**Sebastian Brock**, Oxford; **Andrew Louth**, Durham; **Symeon Paschalidis**, Thessalonica; **Norman Russell**, Farnham), eastern and western monks (fr **Michel Van Parys**, Chevetogne monastery; igumen **Metodije Markovi?**, Monastery of St Nicholas, Vranje; igumen **Nikolay Pavlyk**, Holy Trinity-St Sergius Lavra), theologians and writers (**Vassilios Thermos**, Athens; **Andrei Ple?u**, Bucharest; **John Behr**, New York; **Porphyrios Giorgi**, Balamand).

Christian spiritual life is born in baptism, with incorporation in Christ, and grows to the measure of full maturity in Christ (Eph 4:13). In the ascetic tradition, spiritual growth goes through various stages or steps, in which the person learns to know its own limits, also the Spirit's action, which leads to the transfiguration of everything human.

What indications does the Orthodox monastic tradition offer for understanding the relation between the various stages of human life and the ages of spiritual life? What is the relation between youth and spiritual fervor, between middle age and service to one's neighbor, between old age and Christian hope in sickness and in death?

These are some of the questions that will be treated in an exchange of views moderated by Konstantin Sigov (Kiev), dedicated to *Christian hope in the ages of life*, with the participation of **Michel Evdokimov** (Paris), **Antoine Arjakovsky** (Paris), **Athanasios Papathanassiou** (Athens), and metropolitan **Vassilios** (Karayannis) of Kostantia and Ammochostos, delegate of the Archbishop Cyprus Chrysostomos II, moderator of the commission "Faith and Order" of the World Council of Churches, represented at the conference by **Michel Nseir**.

Learning to discern the Spirit's action in every age means also opening paths of hope for men and women who experience suffering and loneliness. The Church, as a space of communion and of communication among men and between men and God, is also an occasion for a fraternal encounter so as to live time that has sense. This theme will be treated in the final paper of the conference, "Time in the life of the Church", by bishop **Maxim** of Western America of the Serbian Orthodox Church (Los Angeles).

Those present at the conference for the Catholic Church will be: **Mansueto Bianchi**, bishop of Pistoia, president of the commission "Ecumenism and inter-religious dialogue" of the Italian Bishops' Conference, archbishop **Antonio Mennini**, apostolic nuncio in the United Kingdom, bishop **Gabriele Mana** of Biella, retired archbishop of Perugia **Giuseppe Chiaretti**

, and **Hyacinthe Destivelle**, the delegate of the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity.

Bishop **Konstantin** (Ostrovskij) of Zarsk will lead the delegation of the Moscow Patriarchate, which includes father **Dimitrij Sizonenko**, responsible for inter-Christian dialogue of the Department for external relations. Other participants will be archbishop **Stefan** of Homel' and Žhiobin (Exarchate of Belarus), metropolitan **Zosima** of Vladikavkaz, father **Stefan Domuschi**, delegate of the Moscow Theological Academy, archimandrite **Serafim** (Petrovskij), delegate of metropolitan Aleksandr of Alma Ata and Kazakhstan, hieromonks **Amvrosij** (Vajnegij) e **Pimen** (Vojat) of the Lavra of the Caves in Kiev, delegates of metropolitan **Antonij** of Boryspil, vicar of the metropolitan of Kiev and rector of the Kiev Theological Academy.

Bishop **Ignatie** of Mureș of the Romanian Orthodox Church will represent patriarch Daniel. Other participants will be metropolitan **Dometian** of Vidin and bishop **Boris** of Agatonitsa (Bulgarian Orthodox Church), bishop **Alexander** (Golitzin) of Toledo and bishop **Melchisedek** of Pittsburgh (Orthodox Church of America), fr **Zakaria** (Baghumian) (Armenian Apostolic Church), delegate of the Catholicos of all Armenians Garechin II, archimandrite **Athenagoras** (Fasiolo) (Orthodox Archdiocese of Italy and Malta), canon **Hugh Wybrew** (Church of England), delegate of the Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby.

To be noted is the presence of monks and nuns from Orthodox monasteries (Greece, Russia, Ukraine, Bulgaria, Romania, Turkey, Mount Sinai, Armenia, France, England, United States), from Catholic and Reformed monasteries (Belgium, France, Italy, Switzerland, Hungary). We note also the presence of father **Joustinos** of the St Catherine Monastery on Sinai in Egypt, fr **Evdokimos Karakoulakis** of the Koutloumoussiou monastery on Mount Athos, of fr **Vasilije** (Grolimund) of Geilnau. Present at the conference will be the ambassador of Romania to the Holy See **Bogdan Tataru**, the consul general of the Russian Federation in Milan **Aleksandr Nourizade**, and professors **Gelian Prochorov** (St Petersburg), **Spyridon Kontoyannis** and **Nikitas Aliprandis** (Athens), **Pantelis Kalaitzidis** (Volos).

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