

Fraternal visits and monastic exchanges

Bose, December 2013

from the *Letter to our friends n° 57*

Visits to Bose of monks and nuns of other communities have created or renewed ties of friendship and fraternity

During the last few months we again had the joy of welcoming among us several bishops: the bishop of our diocese of Biella, Gabriele Mana, who came for the vespers of Transfiguration; Piero Marini, president of the Pontifical committee for the International Eucharistic Congresses; Tommaso Valentineti, archbishop of Pescara; Alceste Catella, bishop of Casale Monferrato and president of the Bishops' commission for liturgy of the Italian Bishops' Conference; Giuseppe Cavallotto, bishop of Cuneo and Fossano; Franco Giulio Brambilla, bishop of Novara; Gianfranco Agostino Gardin, bishop of Treviso; Tadeusz Kondrusiewicz, Catholic archbishop of Minsk and Mahilev; Adriaan van Luyn, retired bishop of Rotterdam; Paolo Magnani, retired bishop of Treviso; Claudio Gugerotti, apostolic nuncio to Belarus; Martin Modeus, Lutheran bishop of Linköping in Sweden; the retired bishop of the same diocese, Martin Lind; Kyrillos, Orthodox metropolitan of Karditsa (Greece).

In September canon Jonathan Goodall of the Church of England, an old friend, made his spiritual retreat in Bose in preparation for his episcopal ordination, which took place in London on 25 September and in which our br Guido participated.

On the occasion of the feast of St Andrew, a delegation of the Commission for ecumenism of Piedmont and Val d'Aosta, led by Piergiorgio Debernardi of Pinerolo, traveled to Istanbul to visit the ecumenical patriarchate. Br Guido, delegate for ecumenism of the Biella diocese, was able to participate in this occasion of warm fraternity. After a prayer at the tomb of the beloved patriarch Athenagoras, the delegation was received in audience by His Holiness Bartholomeos, who in his talk and in the cordial dialogue that followed warmly exhorted those present to proceed confidently on the road of dialogue, in obedience to the Lord's will.

On his part, Piergiorgio Debernardi expressed gratitude for this opportunity of deeper acquaintance and gave the patriarch some relics of Piedmont saints. The following day the delegation participated at the divine liturgy with other persons from the Pontifical Council for promoting Christian unity. During the celebration Job Getcha, an old friend of our monastery, was ordained bishop. Joy at this fraternal visit is rendered more intense by the perspectives opening for ecumenism. God willing next year pope Francis and patriarch Bartholomeos will meet three times.

Visits to Bose of monks and nuns of other communities have created or renewed ties of friendship and fraternity. In October, for about a month, br Drasko and br Christopher, monks of the ecumenical monastic community Emmaus in Tasmania, were again with us. In the summer br Rabiah, a Lebanese Maronite religious, student in Rome, stayed two weeks with us. At the beginning of November came br Iezekiil, monk of the St George Koudounas monastery on one of the Prince Islands, sent by patriarch Bartholomeos for about two months to perfect his Italian here.

Besides the numerous monks and nuns who came for the Liturgical and the Orthodox conferences, we have had among us in recent months: fr Timothy Wright, Benedictine monk of the English Ampleforth Abbey, at the end of his term as councilor to the abbot primate for relations with Islam; fr Pierre-François de Béthune, Benedictine monk of Clerlande (Belgium); br Matteo of the Camaldoli monastery; eight Benedictine monks from the Hungarian abbey of Pannonhalma, among them br Iako and br Imre, whom we already knew; three Poor Clares from the monastery of Sant'Agata Feltria; m. Laura and sr Eleonora from the Carmel of Sassuolo; br Brice, Benedictine monk of Abu-Gosh (Israel); fr Giulio Pagnoni, Benedictine of Santa Giustina in Padua; fr William Skudlarek, American Benedictine of the Fujimi priory (Japan), secretary general of the Inter-religious monastic dialogue; br Jean-Paul and three other Cistercian monks of Hauterive (Switzerland); fr François Cassingena-Trévedy, Benedictine of Saint-Martin de Ligugé (France); fr Michel van Parys, retired abbot of Chevetogne, recently named igumen of the Santa Maria di Grottaferrata abbey, who in November held some talks for the community on "Authority and obedience in following Christ".

Several of us have spent some days of retreat and of exchange at other monastic communities. In mid-June sr Lara took part in a one-week ecumenical monastic pilgrimage in Serbia, visiting the women's monasteries of Žižaja, Kač, Kaleni, and Gradac and the men's monasteries of Studenica and Kovilj, in addition to the patriarchate in Belgrade, where they were able to meet patriarch Irinej and a friend of our community, bishop Andrej of Remesiana. Sr Lara then in October spent a week with the Benedictine nuns of San Giulio d'Orta for iconographic collaboration. Sr Sylvie traveled to the Reformed Protestant community of Grandchamp in Switzerland for the profession of two new sisters. Sr Raffaella gave a course on reading the Psalms in Hebrew to the community and guests of the Benedictine monastery of Praille in France. Br Vincenzo made a week-long retreat at the Benedictine community of Dumenza.

As a sign of gratitude for reciprocal fraternal aid in the past, br Enzo, br Daniel, and br Guido participated in Grandchamp in the funeral of sr Minke, called by God on 19 October. When in autumn 1968 the first sister asked to be part of our

community, br Enzo asked sr Minke for help, by sending one of her sisters for several months to accompany that sister. Sr Minke unhesitatingly sent one of her novices, and this generous act created a bond between our two communities that has grown only stronger over the years.