26th International Symposium on Orthodox Spirituality started at Bose

On September 5, 2018, the 26th International Symposium on Orthodox Spirituality was opened at the Monastery of the Holy Transfiguration in Bose under the theme 'Discernment and the Christian Life'. It is attended by high-ranking representatives of Local Orthodox Churches, the Roman Catholic Church, the Anglican Church and Protestant communities as well as outstanding theologians and church historians.

With a blessing of His Holiness Kirill, Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, a delegation of the Russian Orthodox Church has been sent to the symposium. It is led by Bishop Mitrofan of Severemorsk and Umba. Bishop Irinej of Sacramento (Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia) will participate in the work of the conference as a speaker.

Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, head of the Moscow Patriarchate department for external church relations, sent the following message of greetings to the organizers and participants in the symposium:

'**To the organizers and participants of the 26th International Symposium on Orthodox Spirituality on Discernment and the Christian Life**

Bose, 5 – 8 September 2018

Very Reverend Father Enzo Bianchi,

Esteemed Organizers and Participants in the Symposium:

On behalf of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia, I cordially greet all the participants in the 26th International Symposium on Orthodox Spirituality organized by the monastic community of Bose on the theme 'Discernment and the Christian Life'.

In the Christian ascetic tradition, a special attention has been given to the gift of discernment or spiritual discretion. In his letter, St. John the Theologian admonish, 'do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world' (1 Jn. 4:1). False prophets, 'they are from the world and therefore speak from the viewpoint of the world, and the world listens to them' (1 Jn. 4:5). Christians, who live in the world and are liable to its influence, are called to seek the gift of the Holy Spirit Who helps them to distinguish truth from falsehood and to walk the right path of Christian perfection.

In patristic writings, spiritual discernment is often called a source and root of every virtue and the greatest gift of divine grace because it helps man to live in accordance with the will of God Who safeguards him against the pernicious slyness of devils. St. Anthony the Great teaches, ‘In examining every thought and action of man, discernment separates and removes every evil and action disagreeable to God and turns away every temptation’.

Perhaps never before the danger of temptation has threatened man so hard. In the modern world, an enormous flow of information is poured on him, not always easy to sort out; a life style is imposed on him, hardly compatible with the Christian teaching; numerous temptations overpower him. His Holiness Patriarch Kirill points to the special importance of spiritual discernment in our time, ‘Speaking of today’s life, in the first place I would like call upon our youth to learn to discern spirits. It is not easy but one cannot get on without it because the devil adjusts himself imitating a desire of truth, nobleness and especially freedom – the ideas held so dear by the human heart’. The mission of the Church today consists precisely in the task to teach younger generations to distinguish good from evil, truth from falsehood, things real and truly precious from things momentary, transient and superficial.

I would like to wish you that the present symposium may with a new force remind Christians of the fundamental ascetical principles necessary for the right spiritual development of the individual and society as a whole. Joint work in this direction can become an important contribution to inter-church cooperation in preaching the Gospel of Christ to the modern world.

I wish you fruitful work and invoke God’s blessing upon you.

With love in the Lord,

Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk

Chairman of the Department for External Church Relations

Moscow Patriarchate

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