

Letter to our friends - Advent 2014

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Lettera agli amici - Avvento 2014

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Dear friends, guests, and those of you who follow us from afar,

This letter comes to you early in Advent, a period that renews our awaiting and hastens the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ in glory. May this period be for all of us an occasion for reconfirming our faith, reinforcing our hope, and expanding our charity, so that the Lord may find us ready when he will meet us in the embrace that opens to us the great communion of the Kingdom, eternal life.

In this letter I wish to speak to you above all about what the community has lived in the first months of this year. You know that every monastic community in the Church lives under the vigilance of the competent church authority, normally the bishop ordinary of the place for Catholics, but you can understand that sometimes an observation and an evaluation is needed from others as well, monks and nuns with experience and authority in the Church, so that the community does not live in self-satisfaction, closed upon itself, or, worse, sarcastically or like a sect. The wisdom of the monastic tradition, therefore, thought of and practices the “canonical visit”, in which an abbot or an abbess of another monastery visit a community, listen to each member, from the superior to the last novice, inspect the spaces, visit the workshops, look at the accounts, in short, make a careful and precise visit to be able to evaluate the community and indicate shortcomings and needs.

Because of this, although Bose is a new community and does not belong to an order or a congregation, as prior I wanted an analogous fraternal visit for our community. Father Michel van Parys, former abbot of Chevetogne and now of Grotteferrata, and mother Anne-Emmanuelle Devêche, Trappist abbess of Blauvac, whom we have known for years through visits and exchanges, were invited by me to carry out a fraternal visit. Before this we had two professional auditors examine the community’s economic situation to see whether everything was correct and adequate. Then, from January to May the visitors spent several days in Bose and also visited the various fraternities, spoke with and listened to all the brothers and sisters, exchanged views with the authorities (prior, vice-prior, sister responsible) and with the statutory organs (discretorium and council).

At the end they drew up and left as a Charta visitationis signed by them, which we have also sent to the competent authorities and to the bishops of the various dioceses where the community (Biella) and the fraternities of Ostuni (Brindisi-Ostuni), San Masseo (Assisi), Celiole (Volterra), and Civitella San Paolo (Civita Castellana) live. We are very grateful to the visitors for the service they did without haste and with great attention to each one and to the community and we have received with joy their report.

The visitors have confirmed us in our vocation; they have “read” us with intelligence, pointing out the “evangelical quality of our life”, the responsibility of each one for the gifts the Lord has given the community, “spiritual and human gifts that the Lord of the Church has given and continues to give to the community”, the unanimous gratitude towards the one who began this form of life, the communion between brothers and sisters as a gift to be preserved, the character of being a workshop of communion between the Churches that today are separated...

They have asked us to be vigilant over the use of words in the community, over community discernment, to provide in the new statutes an adequate mode of communion between the Bose community and the four existing fraternities. They have also counseled us on formation during novitiate and probation and have exhorted us as a community to discern better the vocation of those admitted to monastic vows.

This visit was certainly a grace and for me who desired this common life also a great joy, because the visit confirmed that what has been followed so far has been evangelical, without temptations of sectarianism, self-sufficiency, or spiritual autarchy, and the exercise of the various authorities in the community has not been authoritarian.

On 8 December 2005 the community will recall, together with the entire Church, an anniversary that cannot be forgotten: the conclusion of Vatican Council II. That day I began my life in Bose, where in autumn 1968 the first two brothers and a sister would join me. The community, hence, should strive to live with renewed vigor the spiritual life in following Christ, in a life of communion. Dear friends, pray for us, so that, faithful and persevering in our vocation and in the alliance concluded with God and among us, we may become ever more humble, otherwise that the Lord may have us know humiliations if we do not so become, and that He may accompany us with great mercy in our attempt of Christian life among all humanity that God loves and that He has saved.

As I have always said, we are only poor Christians who are trying to live the Gospel and, as the great Pachomius used to say, “we monks are only poor laymen” in the Church, nothing else.

br Enzo Bianchi, prior of Bose

Bose, 30 November 2014, 1st Sunday of Advent

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