

Fraternal Visits and Ecumenical Presence

uggerotti, apostolic nuncio to Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan

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In this period again we have had numerous fraternal visits of bishops from Italian and other dioceses. Besides Gabriele Mana, bishop of our Biella diocese, and Arrigo Miglio, bishop of the neighboring diocese of Ivrea, and of the respective retired bishops, Massimo Giustetti and Luigi Bettazzi, many others have paid us a visit, some only to greet us briefly, others for a longer stay. We wish to recall here Giuseppe Bertello, apostolic nuncio to Italy; Giuseppe Cavallotto, bishop of Cuneo; Franco Giulio Brambilla, who spent a week of retreat in Bose in September, before Mario Meini, bishop of Pitigliano-Sovana-Orbetello; Tommaso Valentinetti, archbishop of Pescara and a dear friend of long standing of the community; Piero Fragnelli, bishop of Castellaneta; Paolo Romeo, nominated archbishop of Palermo a few months back, who was accompanied by a group of seminarians of his diocese; Claudio Gugerotti, apostolic nuncio to Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan, who in a fraternal meeting with the community shared with us the difficulties of his delicate charge, but also his passion for the unity of the churches and his love of the ancient Christian traditions of these lands; Damian Cornel, auxiliary bishop of Bucharest; John Cummins, retired bishop of Oakland; cardinal Stéphanos Ghattas, retired patriarch of the Catholic Coptic church; Agostino Gardin, secretary of the Congregation for Religious. To all of these, besides gratitude for their visits, we assure our remembrance and intercession for their pastoral ministry. In October in Bose we hosted at short intervals one from another three initiatives of an ecumenical character. First of all, a session of the Christian council of Sweden (Sveriges Kristna Råd), an ecumenical assembly that brings together representatives of the various churches present in Sweden: among them were members of the Lutheran Church of Sweden, the Baptist Union, the Pentecostal Movement, the Syrian Orthodox Church, the Serbian Orthodox Church, the Salvation Army, and the Mission Covenant Church; present was also Peter Halldorf, founder and animator of the Biarka-Säby community, several of whose members have stayed with us in this period. Afterwards we hosted a brief colloquium organized by the Saint Andrew Biblical-Theological Institute of Moscow in collaboration with the Catholic Committee for cultural collaboration of Rome, on the theme "The Apostles Peter and Andrew, an icon for the future". Finally, at the end of October–beginning of November we were particularly happy to host a session of the mixed international Commission for Catholic-Methodist dialogue, a commission that, besides boasting of being the first and oldest of those on which the Catholic Church embarked immediately after the council, is known for the atmosphere of fraternal dialogue and of respect that dominates it, which of course helps the work to progress well. The two co-presidents of this commission are Michael Putney, bishop of Townsville, Australia, from the Catholic side and Geoffrey Wainwright from the Methodist, both of who have already been in Bose on other occasions. Among its other members are two Catholic bishops, Michael Evans of East Anglia (Norwich in England) and Joseph Osei-Bonsu of Konongo-Mampong (Ghana); two Methodist bishops, Walter Klaiber of Tübingen (Germany) and Paulo Ayres Mattos of Sao Bernardo Do Campo (Brazil), as well as Donald Bolen of the Pontifical council for the promotion of Christian unity and George H. Freeman, general secretary of the World Methodist council. Among the other ecumenical visits to the community in this period we would like to mention a group of professors and students of pastoral theology of the Aristotle University of Thessalonica, Greece; fr. Vassilios Lapenitzas and Nektarios Thanos of Preveza, Greece; fr. Raffaele of the Coptic community of Turin and Novara; fr. Angelo of the Coptic community of Florence; the Anglican pastor Georgie Simpson; some members of the Swiss Reformed churches, among them in particular pastor Pierre with his wife Fabienne Burgat, pastor Gottfried Hammann of Neuchâtel, a dear friend, and pastor Pierre Glardon with a group of young pastors from the Vaud canton (Switzerland).