

A return forward

LETTER TO OUR FRIENDS nr. 70 - Pentecost 2021

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

This letter of friendship has reached its 70th number, continuing to forge ties of communion between us.

From the time of our last number in December 2020, the two events that had already marked our life in the preceding months — the pandemic that had struck everywhere and the tensions in community before and after the apostolic visit ordained by the Holy See — took on a shape that allowed us to look with confidence towards the future. This is what Pope Francis likewise encouraged us to do in his letter addressed to us 12 March 2021, in which he has shown us his support in this stage, demanding but fruitful, of our community life.

This has been a kind of “return forward”, a return to the essentials of our monastic and ecumenical vocation in its foundations: above all the Gospel, and then our Rule, which is inspired by it and cites it on every page. We have thus wanted to confront anew the text that each one of us has signed before the altar at the moment of our monastic profession. We have carried this out by reconnecting it with its sources — the monastic tradition of East and West — and being accompanied by those who are a living testimony to this tradition. Our rereading of the Rule, thus, has been accompanied by the wisdom and friendship of Bishop Erik Varden (an expert on the Syrian fathers, formerly abbot of the Trappist monastery of Mount Saint Bernard in England and now bishop of Trondheim in Norway) and of Mother Maria Ignazia Angelini, former abbess of Viboldone. Bishop Erik preached our spiritual exercises at the end of January, on the topic of the dynamics between authority and obedience, and afterwards was present during our annual general chapter, at which he reacted to our discussions, giving us a view filled with empathy, while at the same time enriched by a salutary distance. Mother Maria Ignazia, for her part, has offered and continues to offer us the gift of her presence, her listening, and her words during our community sessions in which we read together and in groups the fundamental chapters of our Rule.

Our life as brothers and sisters belonging to different churches recenters on the two elements of celibacy and common life that characterize our form of following the Lord. Celibacy means healthy interpersonal relations, human and spiritual growth, the healing of wounds that living together inevitably entails. In this we are aided by the competence of Father Enrico Parolari and Anna Deodato, experts in psychological and community dynamics. This is also the way taken by the formation team in addition to the master and mistress of novices, so as to express concretely what we have always considered decisive: it is the community as a whole that forms those who come to it in order to share its life.

The other element of our monastic life, common life, demands a constant vigilance well beyond the years of formation. It is in the path of common life that we in Bose live out our commitment of poverty as those who serve God and not mammon and of obedience as those who offer it to God and his word and not to men. Here the pandemic has offered us the occasion to transform a negative event into an opportunity to return to the essentials. At certain times there were no guests at all to whom to offer hospitality and for a few months greatly reduced; this has led us to a greater sobriety so as to affront the reduced income as the fruit of our work, but also to a more intense rhythm of life among us. All this has given us a greater appreciation of agricultural work and of solidarity with the poor, as well as a renewed reflection on what we are really able to offer our guests rather than the organization of events with a number of persons participating that often is superior to our forces and that detracts from our attention to the individual persons who come to us.

In this sense we are likewise reflecting how to undertake with a new impetus and discernment the conferences and days that for many years have nourished our ecumenical relations. Like everyone in this time of the pandemic and impossibility of traveling and meeting in person, we too have sought to reinforce the spiritual ties that unite us with our brothers and sisters of different confessions and different countries. The stability and fidelity that we have experienced in these relations is a guarantee that new and old forms will not be wanting to restate that the search for a visible unity among Christians is a condition for the credibility of their testimony.

To return to the centrality of our common life has also led us to rethink the relations of those of us who live in Bose and those in our fraternities. How, how often we have moments shared by all; a stay of a few weeks of a brother or sister to help in various tasks; the reassignment of a brother or sister to a different fraternity — all these are opportunities for seeing that the Gospel and the Rule unite us beyond the places in which we try to live them every day. We are one community, and the moves between one fraternity and another that have become necessary have also permitted us to rediscover and appreciate our basic unity. We are looking for ways to express this precious reality fruitfully, first of all for our own sake, then also for those who visit us.

Thus, together with you, we invoke the Holy Spirit that he may guide us every day in following the Son and that he may support us as brothers and sisters in carrying out the will of the Father.

Prior Luciano and the brothers and sisters of Bose
Bose, 23 May 2021, Pentecost

