# Discernment and the christian life

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## XXVIth International Ecumenical Conference on Orthodox Spirituality
## DISCERNMENT AND THE CHRISTIAN LIFE
## Monastero di Bose, 5-8 September 2018
## in collaboration with the Orthodox Churches

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The Gospel asks us to be vigilant (*be vigilant and pray,* Mt 26,41; Mk 14,38) about one's thoughts and inclinations. This attention to oneself (cf. Lk17,3) is man's response to God's gift of love. Discerning God's will expressed in Scripture ( *teach me to do your will,* Ps 143,10), the Christian tries to carry it out in faithfulness to the Word. Throughout the centuries, the great Christian teachers and spiritual masters have taught the ways of discerning "thoughts) (*loghismoi* in Greek, *cogitationes* in Latin), that distract the mind from seeking God and render it a prisoner of a deceptive image of oneself. Discernment is the personal and liberating operation that permits every person to recognize his unique vocation.

The conference proposes to explore the modes and forms of discernment, an essential process in the formation of the human being and in relations with others, especially in moments of crisis. The tradition of the ancient Church and the spirituality of the Christian East offer a direction to contemporary man's search of sense. The conference will attempt to show the various ways of spiritual discernment, the profound convergences and numerous facets that characterize it.

Discernment in itself concerns the person and his conscience. Nevertheless, the operation of discernment bears a collective dimension, which cuts across the social, cultural, political and historical spheres. In the Christian tradition, discernment is above all "ecclesial". Every Christian community and every local Church are invited to be plumbed by the Spirit of Christ (cf. Ap 2,19) and to discern the *signs of the times,* conforming renewal and fidelity to the "deposit of faith". Times of crisis have aroused, and still today should arouse, discernment (*diákrisis*). The conference hopes to examine specific dynamics of community and church discernment in monastic and church history. They may offer spiritual criteria and instruments to overcome moments of anguish and distress and to spread the *joy of salvation* (Ps 50,14). This is to reach full human maturity in Christ in order to "do the truth in love" — in ourselves, in our communities, in the human community. *We are no longer to be children, tossed by the waves and whirled about by every fresh gust of teaching… No, let us speak the truth in love, so shall we fully grow up into Christ* (Eph 4,14–15).

Ecclesial and personal discernment, in fact, is at the service of new life in Christ Jesus, given to all humanity beloved by God (cf. Jn 3,16–17).

The program, which will be published shortly, was drawn up by the scientific committee presided by Enzo Bianchi (Bose) and composed of John Behr (Crestwood, NY), Lino Breda (Bose), Sabino Chialà (Bose), Lisa Cremaschi (Bose), Luigi d'Ayala Valva (Bose), Hervé Legrand (Paris), Adalberto Mainardi (Bose), Raffaele Ogliari (Bose), Antonio Rigo (Venice), Michel van Parys (Chevetogne). The conference is open to all.

Bose, 11 October 2017