

# TO THOSE ORGANIZING THE WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY

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## **The search for unity: throughout the year**

The traditional period in the northern hemisphere for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity is 18-25 January. Those dates were proposed in 1908 by Paul Wattson to cover the days between the feasts of St Peter and St Paul, and therefore have a symbolic significance. In the southern hemisphere where January is a vacation time churches often find other days to celebrate the Week of Prayer, for example around Pentecost (suggested by the Faith and Order movement in 1926), which is also a symbolic date for the unity of the Church.

Mindful of the need for flexibility, we invite you to use this material throughout the whole year to express the degree of communion which the churches have already reached, and to pray together for that full unity which is Christ's will.

## **Adapting the text**

This material is offered with the understanding that, whenever possible, it will be adapted for use in local situations. Account should be taken of local liturgical and devotional practice, and of the whole social and cultural context. Such adaptation should ideally take place ecumenically. In some places ecumenical structures are already set up for adapting the material; in other places, we hope that the need to adapt it will be a stimulus to creating such structures.

## **Using the Week of Prayer material**

- For churches and Christian communities which observe the Week of Prayer together through a single common service, an order for an ecumenical worship service is provided.
- Churches and Christian communities may also incorporate material from the Week of Prayer into their own services. Prayers from the ecumenical worship service, the "eight days", and the selection of additional prayers can be used as appropriate in their own setting.
- Communities which observe the Week of Prayer in their worship for each day during the week may draw material for these services from the "eight days".
- Those wishing to undertake bible studies on the Week of Prayer theme can use as a basis the biblical texts and reflections given in the eight days. Each day the discussions, which this year includes a challenge, can lead to a closing period of intercessory prayer.
- Those who wish to pray privately may find the material helpful for focusing their prayer intentions. They can be mindful that they are in communion with others praying all around the world for the greater visible unity of Christ's Church.

# BIBLICAL TEXT FOR 2025

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## John 11:17-27

When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, some two miles away, and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them about their brother. When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, while Mary stayed at home. Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him". Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again". Martha said to him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day". Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" She said to him, "Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world".

*New Revised Standard Version*

# INTRODUCTION TO THE THEME FOR THE YEAR 2025

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## “Do you believe this?”

*(John 11:26)*

For this year, 2025, the prayers and reflections for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity were prepared by the brothers and sisters of the monastic community of Bose in northern Italy. This year marks the 1,700th anniversary of the first Christian Ecumenical Council, held in Nicaea, near Constantinople in 325 AD. This commemoration provides a unique opportunity to reflect on and celebrate the common faith of Christians, as expressed in the Creed formulated during this Council; a faith that remains alive and fruitful in our days. The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2025 offers an invitation to draw on this shared heritage and to enter more deeply into the faith that unites all Christians.

### **The Council of Nicaea**

Convoked by the Emperor Constantine, the Council of Nicaea was attended, according to tradition, by 318 Fathers, mostly from the East. The Church, having just emerged from hiding and persecution, was beginning to experience how difficult it was to share the same faith in the different cultural and political contexts of the time. Agreement on the text of the Creed was a matter of defining the essential common foundations on which to build local communities that recognised each other as sister churches, each respecting the diversity of the other.

Disagreements had arisen among Christians in the previous decades, which sometimes degenerated into serious conflicts. These disputes were on matters as diverse as: the nature of Christ in relation to the Father; the question of a single date to celebrate Easter and its relationship with the Jewish Passover; opposition to theological opinions considered heretical; and how to re-integrate believers who had abandoned the faith during the persecutions in earlier years.

The approved text of the Creed used the first-person plural, “We believe...”. This form emphasised the expression of a common belonging. The Creed was divided into three parts dedicated to the three persons of the Trinity, followed by a conclusion condemning affirmations that were considered heretical. The text of this Creed was revised and expanded at the Council of Constantinople in 381 AD, where the condemnations were removed. This is the form of the profession of faith that Christian churches today recognise as the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, often referred to simply as the Nicene Creed.

### **From 325 to 2025**

Although the Council of Nicaea decreed how the date of Easter should be calculated, subsequent divergences of interpretation led to the feast frequently being marked on different dates in East and West. Though we are still awaiting the day when we will again have a common celebration of Easter yearly, by happy coincidence, in this anniversary year of 2025, this great feast will be celebrated on the same date by the Eastern and Western churches.

The meaning of the saving events which all Christians will celebrate on Easter Sunday, 20 April 2025, has not changed with the passage of seventeen centuries. The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity is an opportunity for Christians to explore afresh this living heritage and re-appropriate it in ways that are in keeping with contemporary cultures, which are even more diverse today than those of the Christian world at the time of the Council of Nicaea. Living the apostolic faith together today does not imply re-opening the theological controversies of that time, which have continued down the centuries, but rather a prayerful re-reading of the scriptural foundations and ecclesial experiences that led to that Council and its decisions.

## **The Biblical Text for the Week of Prayer**

It is with this in mind that the guiding biblical text was chosen – John 11:17-27. The theme for the week, “Do you believe this?” (v. 26), takes its cue from the dialogue between Jesus and Martha when Jesus visited the home of Martha and Mary in Bethany following the death of their brother Lazarus, as narrated by the evangelist John.

At the start of the chapter, the Gospel says that Jesus loved Martha, Mary and Lazarus (v. 5), yet when informed that Lazarus was gravely ill, Jesus declared that his illness would “not lead to death” but that the Son of God would be “glorified through it” (v. 4), and remained where he was for two days longer. When Jesus eventually arrived in Bethany, despite being warned of the risk of being stoned there (v. 8), Lazarus “had already been in the tomb for four days” (v. 17). Martha’s words to Jesus express her disappointment at his late arrival, perhaps containing also a note of reproach: “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died” (v. 21). However, this exclamation is followed immediately by a profession of confidence in Jesus’ saving power: “But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him” (v. 22). When Jesus assures her that her brother would rise again (v. 23), she responds by affirming her religious belief: “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day” (v. 24). Jesus leads her a step further, declaring his power over life and death and revealing his identity as the Messiah. “I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die” (vv. 25-26). Following this astonishing declaration, Jesus challenges Martha with a very direct and deeply personal question: “Do you believe this?” (v. 26.)

Like Martha, the first generations of Christians could not remain indifferent or passive when the words of Jesus touched and searched their hearts. They earnestly sought to give a comprehensible answer to Jesus’ question, “Do you believe this?” The Fathers of Nicaea strove to find words that would embrace the entire mystery of the incarnation and the passion, death and resurrection of their Lord. While awaiting his return, Christians around the world are called to witness together to this faith in the resurrection, which is for them the source of hope and joy, to be shared with all peoples.

## **Ecumenical Celebration of the Word of God**

In this anniversary year of the Council of Nicaea, the Ecumenical Celebration of the Word of God during the Week of Prayer is centred on the meaning of believing and on the affirmation of faith, both personal and communal, both “I believe” and “We believe”. The biblical text from which the theme for the week is drawn, with its challenging question, “Do you believe this?”, is proclaimed in a dialogue between three readers and the assembly as part of the invitation to worship. After a brief introduction to the first Ecumenical Council, an opening prayer inspired by Clement of Rome (c. 35-99 AD) leads into the Old Testament and New Testament readings.

After the sermon/homily, the dialogue between readers and assembly continues, echoing the dialogue between Jesus and Martha. The participants are invited to celebrate their common faith, by receiving a candle, and sharing its flame with one another as a sign of the light of the Risen Christ. They then recite the Nicene Creed together.

The Prayers of Intercession, based on patristic<sup>1</sup> writings from the second to the eighth centuries, are a call to grow in faith, and to bear witness to God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, together, in the world. All who are present then pray the Lord’s Prayer together and are sent out with a blessing.

## **Material for each day of the Week of Prayer**

The texts provided for personal or communal prayer for each of the eight days include two scripture readings and a psalm. The biblical texts for each day highlight in turn key statements of the Nicene Creed.

Day 1: The fatherhood and care of God who rules the universe

Day 2: Creation as God’s work

Day 3: The Incarnation of the Son

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<sup>1</sup> By early Christian authors.

Day 4: The Paschal Mystery: Passion, Death and Resurrection of Jesus

Day 5: The Holy Spirit, the giver of life and joy

Day 6: The Church: Community of believers

Day 7: Baptism into the Death and Resurrection of the Lord

Day 8: Waiting for the Kingdom and the life to come

Instead of newly-written reflections for each day, the scripture texts are followed by short patristic readings from different geographical areas and ecclesial traditions (Greek, Syriac, Armenian and Latin). The aim in selecting these short texts, mostly dating from the first millennium, is to offer an insight into Christian reflection at that time, helping to situate the Council of Nicaea's definitions in both the contexts that gave rise to them and those that were influenced by them. The prayers of intercession and contemplation for each day invite us to actualise the content of the faith shared and celebrated throughout the ages and around the world, finding in it a motive for thanksgiving.

# THE PREPARATION OF THE MATERIAL FOR THE WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY 2024

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The international team appointed jointly by the Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity (DPCU) and the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches (WCC) to review and finalise the materials for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2025 met at the Monastery of Bose, Italy from 11 to 15 September 2023.

The drafting of the materials had been entrusted by the DPCU and the WCC to the community of Bose and a group of brothers and sisters of the community prepared the first draft of the texts. During the meeting in Bose, this group collaborated with the international team to finalise the texts. The meeting was chaired jointly by Revd Dr Mikie Roberts of the World Council of Churches in Geneva and Revd Fr Martin Browne OSB of the Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity in Rome.

## **Members of the international group participating:**

Revd Fr Martin Browne OSB	Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity (Rome)
Sr Leticia Candelario Lopez FMVD	Verbum Dei Missionary Fraternity (Singapore)
Revd Fr Miguel Desjardins CCN	Bishops' Conference of France (Paris)
Revd Dr Philip Halikias	Hellenic College Holy Cross (Brookline MA)
Dr Andrej Jeftić	World Council of Churches (Geneva)
Revd Dr Mikie Roberts	World Council of Churches (Geneva)
Pastor Dr Jochen Wagner	Association of Christian Churches of Germany (Frankfurt)
Dr Clare Watkins	University of Roehampton (London)

## **Members of the Bose Community drafting group participating:**

Br Sabino Chialà *Prior*  
Br Guido Dotti  
Sr Sylvie Maubon  
Br Matteo Nicolini Zani

# ECUMENICAL WORSHIP SERVICE

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## Instructions for those preparing the worship

This year the ecumenical celebration has been prepared by the community of Bose, an ecumenical monastery of brothers and sisters in northern Italy. As we celebrate 1,700 years since the Council of Nicaea, this worship service has, at its heart, the Nicene Creed.<sup>2</sup> Reflecting this, the scripture readings for this year focus on belief.

In Bose, community life is shaped by the rhythm of regular prayer. As the bells call the sisters, brothers and guests to prayer, they all assemble at the church. If the local context allows, we suggest that on arrival, before going to their places, the faithful are welcomed and then wait in small groups in various designated points around the worship space. The worship opens with all present moving together for the meditation on the opening scripture. This gathered community is then invited to reflect on the story of Martha's confession of faith in Jesus as narrated in John 11:17-27. In a time of silence, mirroring the practice of the monastery at Bose, each is called to sit with Jesus' provocative question to Martha: "Do you believe this?" While respecting the practicalities in different contexts, we suggest that this period of silence be substantial – lasting up to five minutes.

As a response to the proclamation of the Word, we affirm our faith together in a solemn recitation of the Nicene Creed. This moment is marked by the sharing of the light of Christ, symbolised by lighted candles. Candles are distributed and the light spreads from the front moving throughout the community. We stand together as light of the world, united in love, affirming: "We believe...". At the end of the worship, the lighted candles are placed together in a suitable and safe receptacle to burn together as a reminder of our continued calling to Christian unity.

Another distinctive feature of this year's worship is the inclusion of texts by early Christian writers, most notably in the prayers of intercession. For the sisters and brothers of Bose, these writers are a living source for their shared life. These texts reflect not only the common faith before and after Nicaea, but also the diversity of language, culture and spirituality which characterised the early Church.

The texts assigned to the leader (L) may be shared between the various clergy or representatives from the different traditions present. Likewise, texts assigned to a reader (R) may be distributed among several persons.

The sending and the blessing may be proclaimed jointly by ministers / representatives of the different communities present.

*A note about the version of the Creed included in these resources:*

The text of the Creed included in the Ecumenical Celebration of the Word of God is the version of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed normally used during General Assemblies of the World Council of Churches and other ecumenical events. In referring to the Holy Spirit, it omits the so-called *filioque* clause – "and the Son" – after the phrase "who proceeds from the Father". This clause was not included in the text of the Creed adopted at the Council of Nicaea (325) or at the Council of Constantinople (381), but was added in the West in the sixth century, so as to underline the divinity of the Son in the face of the Arian heresy. Its inclusion has been the cause of dispute between East and West for many centuries and has been the subject of important ecumenical discussions in recent decades. The text also omits the *Deum de Deo* clause – "God from God" – in referring to the Son, which was included in the Creed at Nicaea but omitted from the version adopted at Constantinople in 381.

A 1981 report of the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches, of which the Roman Catholic Church is a full member, recommended: "That the original form of the third article of the Creed,

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<sup>2</sup> See note at the end of these instructions on the version of the Creed used in the service.

without the *filioque*, should everywhere be recognized as the normative one and restored, so that the whole Christian people may be able, in this formula, to confess their common faith in the Holy Spirit”.<sup>3</sup> While the *filioque* clause remains part of the liturgical tradition of the Latin and some other Western Churches, Bishops of Rome omit it when reciting the Creed in ecumenical encounters with leaders of Eastern Churches. A 1995 Vatican document declared: “The Catholic Church acknowledges the conciliar, ecumenical, normative and irrevocable value, as expression of the one common faith of the Church and of all Christians, of the Symbol professed in Greek at Constantinople in 381 by the Second Ecumenical Council. No profession of faith peculiar to a particular liturgical tradition can contradict this expression of the faith taught and professed by the undivided Church.”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> WCC Faith & Order Paper 103, *Spirit of God, Spirit of Christ: Ecumenical Reflections on the Filioque Controversy* (1981).

<sup>4</sup> Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, *The Greek and Latin Traditions regarding the Procession of the Holy Spirit* (1995).

## Order of Worship

L Leader  
R Reader  
A Assembly

### Invitation

*From the main entrance of the worship space*

L: Blessed be our God at all times.

**A: Now and forever. Amen.**

L: Come, let us worship God our King.

**A: Let us worship Christ among us, our King and our God.**

L: Come, let us bow down before the Lord our King and our God.

**A: Holy God, Holy and Strong, Holy and Immortal, have mercy on us.**

R1: When Jesus arrived at Bethany, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days.

*Movement into the main body of the worship space begins*

R2: When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, while Mary stayed at home.

R 3: Martha said to Jesus: Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him.

**A: Jesus said to her: Your brother will rise again.**

R1: Martha said to him: I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.

**A: Jesus said to her: I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die.**

R2: Do you believe this?

*Pause*

R3: Do you believe this?

*Pause*

R1: Do you believe this?

*Longer Pause*

*(John 11:17-26)*

### Hymn

L: 1,700 years ago, Christians struggled with questions of belief, confusion and difficulty. Out of these struggles, they were able to proclaim together their faith in the words of the Nicene Creed. Today, as a gathered community of Christians, we come together from different cultures and confessions to celebrate our common faith.

Christ is in our midst.

**A: He was. He is. And always shall be.**

**Words of Welcome** *from the host community.*

**Opening Prayers**

**A: Kyrie, eleison! Lord, have mercy!**

R1: O Creator and Guardian of every spirit,  
who multiply the human family upon earth,  
let all the peoples know that you are God alone,  
and Jesus Christ is your Son,  
and we all are your people, the flock of your pasture. **℞**

**A: Kyrie, eleison! Lord, have mercy!**

R2: Lord, we pray to you: be our help.  
save those who are afflicted among us,  
have mercy on the wretched  
Show your face to those in need. **℞**

**A: Kyrie, eleison! Lord, have mercy!**

R3: O Lord, faithful throughout all generations,  
righteous in your judgments, merciful and compassionate,  
forgive us our transgressions, cleanse us with your Truth,  
and guide our steps to walk in holiness and righteousness. **℞**

**A: Kyrie, eleison! Lord, have mercy!**

R4: Lord, make your face to shine upon us in peace for our good,  
give concord and peace to us and to all that dwell on the earth.  
Grant to our rulers wisdom and intelligence,  
direct their counsel so that they may administer their authority in justice and in peace. **℞**

**A: Kyrie, eleison! Lord, have mercy!**

*(cf Clement of Rome [c. 35-99])*

**Listening to the Word of God**

**Old Testament Reading** *Deuteronomy 6:4-9*

Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise. Bind them as a sign on your hand, fix them as an emblem on your forehead, and write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

**Psalm 131**

**℞ Hope in the LORD from this time on and forevermore.**

O Lord, my heart is not lifted up,  
my eyes are not raised too high. **℞**

I do not occupy myself with things  
too great and too marvellous for me. *R*

But I have calmed and quieted my soul,  
like a weaned child with its mother;  
my soul is like the weaned child that is with me. *R*

### **Epistle Reading**

*1 Peter 1: 3 – 9*

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy he has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who are being protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you rejoice, even if now for a little while you have had to suffer various trials, so that the genuineness of your faith—being more precious than gold that, though perishable, is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed. Although you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy, for you are receiving the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

### **Responsory**

R: Great is the Lord, great is his might.

A: **Great is the Lord, great is his might.**

R: His wisdom has no bounds.

A: **Great is his might.**

R: Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.

A: **Great is the Lord, great is his might.**

### **Gospel Reading**

*John 20:24-29*

Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord”. But he said to them, “Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe”.

A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you”. Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe”. Thomas answered him, “My Lord and my God!” Jesus said to him, “Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.”

### **Silence/Hymn**

### **Sermon**

### **Silence/Hymn/Musical Interlude**

### **Celebrating Our Common Faith**

*Candles are handed out as the Leader says)*

L: Jesus said, "I am the light of the world."

In many Christian traditions, at baptism, the baptised (or sponsor) is handed a lighted candle. Jesus also calls his followers to be the light of the world. We are each bearers of the risen light of Christ. We receive this light from Christ through one another.

*When everyone has received a candle, the Leader lights the first candle and shares the light with those nearby, who in turn share the light throughout the assembly*

L: Jesus said to Martha, "I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?"

A: **"Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world".**

*Each person lights their neighbour's candle. As they do so, they say "The light of Christ". When all the candles have been lit, the Leader continues:*

L: Let us love one another, so that with oneness of mind, we may confess the faith into which we were all baptised:

A: **We believe in one God,  
the Father, the Almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth,  
of all that is, seen and unseen.  
We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,  
the only Son of God,  
eternally begotten of the Father,  
Light from Light,  
true God from true God,  
begotten, not made;  
of one Being with the Father.  
Through him all things were made.  
For us all, and for our salvation  
he came down from heaven;  
and was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary,  
and was made human.  
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;  
he suffered and was buried.  
On the third day he rose from the dead in accordance with the scriptures.  
He ascended to heaven  
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.  
He will come again in glory  
to judge the living and the dead  
and his kingdom will have no end.  
We believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the Lord, the giver of life,  
who proceeds from the Father.  
Who, with the Father and the Son, is worshipped and glorified,  
who has spoken through the Prophets.  
We believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.  
We confess one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.  
We look forward to the resurrection of the dead,  
and to life in the age to come. Amen.**

## Prayers of Intercession

R1: For all things were made out of nothing, and their being would again sink into nothing, if the Author of all things did not hold it by the hand of governance. (*Gregory the Great [c. 540-604]*)

R2: Lord of life, we receive all creation from your hand and by your providence. Teach us to live in your world with care and justice for all that you have created.

**A: We believe, help our unbelief.**

R1: I call this faith: the intelligible light which by grace dawns in the soul, that supports the heart, and grants the gift of hope. (*Isaac of Nineveh [7<sup>th</sup> century]*)

R2: Loving God, grant us the gift of hope in abundance in a world troubled by strife and discord. Strengthen your people afflicted by apathy and division.

**A: We believe, help our unbelief.**

R1: What wonder then, if, coming to God, we first of all profess that we believe, seeing that, without this, not even common life can be lived. (*Rufinus of Aquileia [c. 344-411]*)

R2: Merciful God, forgive us for the times we have failed to live a common life as Christians. Draw us more deeply to one faith in you so that we may witness to the world.

**A: We believe, help our unbelief.**

R1: Let faith prevail: faith that leads the mind to trust, faith that does not come from human logic, but is the fruit of the Holy Spirit. (*Basil of Caesarea [c. 330-378]*)

R2: O heavenly Comforter, we pray that we may trust more in the gift of your wisdom rather than the cleverness of our thinking.

**A: We believe, help our unbelief.**

R1: His light appeared and made the darkness of the prison disappear and hallowed our birth and destroyed death, loosing those same fetters in which we were enchained. (*Irenaeus of Lyon [c. 135-198]*)

R2: Compassionate Lord, lead us to work together so that wherever there is darkness and oppression, suffering and injustice, we may bring your light and freedom.

**A: We believe, help our unbelief.**

L: As brothers and sisters of Jesus, together we pray in the words he taught us:

**A: Our Father.....**

## Hymn

**Concluding Prayer** *(from the Bose community)*

L: God our Father, accept our praise and thanksgiving for what already unites Christians in the confession of and witness to Jesus the Lord. Hasten the hour when all churches will recognise each other in the one communion you willed and for which your Son prayed to you in the power of the Holy Spirit. Hear us, you who live and reign now and forever.

**A: Amen.**

**Sending Forth**

L: Let us bless the Lord

**A: Thanks be to God.**

L: May he who is our peace and has made us one, grant that we may present one another to the Father in the one Spirit.

**A: Amen.**

# REFLECTIONS AND PRAYERS FOR THE EIGHT DAYS: A JOURNEY THROUGH THE NICENE CREED

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## DAY 1

### The fatherhood and care of God who rules the universe

#### Scripture Readings

Isaiah 63:15-17  
Psalm 139:1-3, 13, 23, 24b  
1 Corinthians 8:5-6

#### Patristic<sup>5</sup> Reading

##### *From the Greek tradition*

Behold the mysteries of love, and then you will contemplate the bosom of the Father, which the only-begotten Son of God has revealed. God himself is love, and through love he is contemplated by us. And while in his ineffable reality he is Father, in his compassion he has become for us mother.

- *Clement of Alexandria* [c. 150-215], *Which Rich Man Will Be Saved?* 37:1-2

#### For reflection:

1. How have you experienced God's fatherly care and motherly compassion in your own life?
2. What hinders us from recognising each person as a child of God?
3. How does acknowledging God as the Father of all affect our perception of and relationship with others?

#### Prayer

**R/** Thanks and praise to you, O Lord

We bless you, O Lord, Father of lights:  
from you descend every good thing and every perfect gift. **R/**

You have made the world and all that it contains,  
you are the Lord of heaven and earth.  
To all mortals you give life and breath and all things. **R/**

You created all the peoples that dwell on the earth.  
For them you established the order of time and the boundaries of their space.  
In the heart of human beings, you have placed the thought of eternity **R/**

Heavenly Father, according to your great goodness

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<sup>5</sup> From early Christian writers.

you grant us a way of life through the Law and the Prophets.  
Merciful Father, in Jesus, your Son, you proclaimed the good news of the kingdom. **R/**

God of all consolation,  
call us to follow you.  
Make firm for us the work of our hands. **R/**

Let us pray.  
Father of compassion,  
renew our faith in you and bind us together through your love,  
so that we can recognise each other as your children,  
and come together as one.  
We praise you through Jesus Christ, your only-begotten Son,  
in the communion of the Holy Spirit. **AMEN.**

### Alternative Patristic Readings

#### ***From the Syriac tradition***

What man can contemplate God with vigilant thought, and look upon his majesty, and consider his hidden nature, and can with the eye of his understanding look upon that pure and holy Nature, which has need of nothing? ... He who begs, and entreats, and urges every man to live. He who suffers to give us life, and seeks to find us, and is more pleased at our happiness than we ourselves. He who continually entreats us to take from his riches and to carry off wealth from his storehouse, that we may be rich through his treasures and not poverty-stricken. He who rejoices not so much for his own life as that we live.

- ***Philoxenus of Mabbug*** [c. 440-523], *Discourse 7*

#### ***From the Latin tradition***

The Fountain of Life is that chief Good, from which the means of life are dispensed to all, while he has life abiding in himself. He receives from none as though he were in need. He confers good on others rather than borrows from others for himself, for he has no need of us ... What then can be more lovely than to approach him, to cleave to him? What pleasure can be greater? He who has seen and tasted freely of the Fountain of Living Water, what else can he desire?

- ***Ambrose of Milan*** [c. 337-397], *Letters IV*, 11, 18

## DAY 2

### Creation as God's work

#### Scripture Readings

Genesis 1:1-5

Psalm 148:1, 3, 9-14

Romans 8:19-23

#### Patristic Reading

##### *From the Greek tradition*

God cannot be seen by human eyes, but is seen and perceived through his providence and works. Just as one who sees a fully equipped ship entering port assumes that it has a pilot to guide it, so we must perceive that God is the pilot of the entire universe, even though he is not visible to the eyes of the flesh because he is incomprehensible.

- *Theophilus of Antioch* [2<sup>nd</sup> century], *Ad Autolytus*, I:5

##### For reflection:

1. We believe that God is present in all of creation although his presence is sometimes difficult to perceive.
2. Creation is a gift of God subjected to suffering, often inflicted by human beings. How can we better recognize our responsibility for its care and preservation?
3. If possible, spend some time in nature and contemplate how it connects us with the Creator.

#### Prayer

**R/ Blessed are you, O Lord!**

We praise you and give you thanks,  
God of steadfast love  
for the great signs of your favour  
and your mercy for the whole creation. **R/**

You have made all things.  
You declared them to be good,  
for your Spirit dwells in them all  
and they belong to you, O Lord, who love the living. **R/**

We confess, O Lord, your glory  
in the immense starry spaces of the universe and in the smallest seed of life.  
We give thanks for the works of your hands  
and the creation of all people. **R/**

Blessed are you for the air that gives us life.  
Blessed are you for the earth that nourishes us.  
Blessed are you for the water that quenches our thirst.  
Blessed are you for the fire that warms us. **R/**

Giving voice to the whole creation and gathering together every grief and joy,  
we glorify you and give you thanks.  
Lord God, you made all things,  
and will soon transfigure them, clothing them with your glory. **R/**

Let us pray.  
Lord God, Father of lights,  
strengthen our hearts in expectation and hope  
as we work for unity and together seek the harmony of all creation.  
Let us be burning lamps,  
until the day of the coming of your Son in glory,  
with all his saints in the everlasting kingdom.  
Blessed are you, now and forever, and to the ages of ages. **AMEN.**

### **Alternative Patristic Readings**

#### ***From the Syriac tradition***

The first book given by God to rational beings is the nature of created things. Instruction by means of ink was added after the transgression.

- **Isaac of Nineveh** [7<sup>th</sup> century], *First Collection*, 5

#### ***From the Latin tradition***

For all things were made out of nothing, and their being would again sink into nothing, if the Author of all things did not hold it by the hand of governance.

- **Gregory the Great** [c. 540-604], *Moralia in Job*, XVI:37, 45

## DAY 3

### The Incarnation of the Son

#### Scripture Readings

Jeremiah 33:14-16  
Psalm 72:7, 12, 16-17  
John 1:1-14

#### Patristic Reading

##### *From the Armenian tradition*

He took upon himself all human passions, excluding sin. That is: he hungered who gives food to all the living. He thirsted who gives the water of life to his believers. He felt weariness who is the rest of the weary. He slept who always kept Israel vigilant. He wept who wiped away every tear from all eyes ... He took on our passible body, so that he who is impassible might suffer with the passible body and he who is immortal might die with the mortal body, to free us who are guilty.

- *Gregory of Skevra* [12<sup>th</sup>/13<sup>th</sup> centuries], *On True Faith and Pure Conduct in the Virtues*, 15-17

#### For reflection:

1. How does faith in Jesus, the incarnate Son of God, inspire and shape our lives?
2. How have you experienced Christ's consoling presence in your life?
3. Wherever we see someone who is thirsty, hungry, weeping or suffering, Christ is present.

#### Prayer

**R/**     **Glory to you, O Christ. Glory to you!**

Word of God, you became flesh, and came to dwell among us.  
You have shared our life in all things;  
you died as we all die. **R/**

Son of David, desired by the righteous and the prophets,  
you have proclaimed the good news to the poor;  
you have proclaimed the Lord's time of favour. **R/**

You came to break the chains of bondage;  
you went about doing good;  
you have opened the way to the presence of God for all. **R/**

You came into the world in weakness and poverty;  
you have confounded the proud with your humility;  
you have drawn the weary and overburdened to you. **R/**

You are the Lamb of God and our Shepherd,  
the Servant of God and our Lord:  
you were made sin for us, our Redeemer. **R/**

Let us pray:  
Lord God, our Father  
draw our eyes to you  
so that together we may walk  
from darkness to the light of your face,  
revealed to us in Jesus,  
your Son and our brother,  
who lives with you and the Holy Spirit  
now and for ever and ever. **AMEN.**

## Alternative Patristic Readings

### *From the Syriac tradition*

Now that the highest and lowest creatures have become one, there is no longer high and low. God has even appeared on earth and our [human] nature has ascended to heaven. When God came down to us, the earth became heaven, and when the Son of our kind was raised up, heaven became earth. Then heaven and earth became one.

- **Abdisho bar Bahriz** [9<sup>th</sup> century], *Commentary on the Celebrations of the Church*, p. 58

### *From the Greek tradition*

This is the grace of the Lord, and these are the Lord's means of restoration for the sons of men. For he suffered to prepare freedom from suffering for those who suffer in him. He descended, so that he might raise us up. He experienced being conceived, so that we would love who is not generated. He went down to corruption, so that corruption might put on immortality. He became weak for us, so that we might rise with power. He descended to death, so that he might bestow on us immortality and give life to the dead. Finally, he became human, so that we who die as human beings might live again, and death should no more reign over us.

- **Athanasius of Alexandria** [c. 295-373], *Festal Letters*, 10:8, 19

## DAY 4

### The Paschal Mystery: Passion, Death and Resurrection of Jesus

#### Scripture Readings

Exodus 3: 7-8

Psalm 16:5, 7, 10, 11

Philippians 2:5-11

#### Patristic Reading

##### *From the Latin tradition*

God the Father was very merciful: he sent his creative Word who, in coming to deliver us, came to the very place and spot in which we had lost life, and broke the bonds of our fetters. His light appeared and made the darkness of the prison disappear and hallowed our birth and destroyed death, loosing those same fetters in which we were enchained.

- *Irenaeus of Lyon* [c. 135-198], *Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching*, 38

#### For reflection:

1. We know that we will all die. How does belief in Jesus destroying death change the way we approach this reality?
2. “God lets himself be pushed out of the world on to the cross. He is weak and powerless in the world, and that is precisely the way, the only way, in which he is with us and helps us.” (Dietrich Bonhoeffer)
3. As the Risen One, Jesus is with us until the end of all time. In what ways does his companionship encourage you in your daily life?

#### Prayer

##### **R/ Glory and praise to you, O Lord**

Blessed are you, O Christ, Firstborn of all creation:  
you are crowned with glory and honour. **R/**

At your Name every knee will bend in heaven and on earth and under the earth  
and every tongue will confess that you are the Lord. **R/**

Let us rejoice and sing praises to you, O Christ, beloved Son of the Father:  
you are the Risen One, you call us to live in you. **R/**

We adore you, we glorify you, for you are King of kings and Lord of lords:  
you have opened to us the kingdom of heaven. **R/**

We give you thanks at all times and we bless your Name:  
you are with us always, to the end of the age. **R/**

Let us pray  
Lord our God,

glorifying your Son Jesus, you have freed us from death.  
Through his resurrection,  
awaken our slumbering hearts,  
enlighten all who seek you  
and make the morning star shine upon us,  
Jesus Christ, the Living One,  
who is Lord for ever and ever. **AMEN.**

### **Alternative Patristic Readings**

#### ***From the Greek tradition***

The Saviour came down to earth out of mercy for mankind. He fully suffered our passions, before he suffered the cross and deigned to take on our flesh. For if he had not suffered, he would not have come to dwell in the midst of human life. First he suffered, then he descended and was seen. What is that passion which he suffered for us? The passion of charity.

- **Origen of Alexandria** [c. 185-254], *Homilies on Ezekiel*, 6:6

#### ***From the Syriac tradition***

The body thanks you, that it was saved by your humiliation.  
It was a strayed sheep, and the lion lay in ambush to dismember it,  
and sin in secret is the beast that tears it into pieces.  
David preserved himself while he saved the sheep,  
instead of our body you delivered your body  
to that death that devoured us but was not sated.

- **Ephrem of Nisibis** [c. 306-373], *Hymn on Virginity*, 37:5

# DAY 5

## The Holy Spirit, the giver of life and joy

### Scripture Readings

Ezekiel 36:24-28

Psalm 104:24-25, 27-29, 33-34

John 3:4-8

### Patristic Reading

#### *From the Syriac tradition*

It is not correct to say that the Spirit departs when we sin to return when we are converted ... What good is it for me if he dwells in me after I have become righteous? If at the time of the fall he does not dwell in me, does not give me a hand, and does not raise me up, how will I feel his help? What physician, when he sees a sick person who falls sick, leaves and abandons him, to come to him when he becomes healthy? Is it not more useful that the physician be with the sick person at the time of his illness?

- *Philoxenus of Mabbug* [c. 440-523], *On the Inhabitation of the Holy Spirit*

#### For reflection:

1. God's Spirit renews the face of the earth every day, calling us to cooperation.
2. What are the sources of joy in your life and how are they related to the Holy Spirit?
3. Where do we see the Holy Spirit at work, overcoming our divisions and drawing us into deeper unity, and how can we join in this work?

### Prayer

**R/ Amen, amen! Alleluia!**

You are the Spirit breathed upon the face of Adam:  
making human flesh a living being. **R/**

You are the Spirit given by the Risen One:  
our sins have been forgiven. **R/**

You are the Spirit sent at Pentecost:  
you opened the way for the Gospel to reach all people. **R/**

You are the Spirit that awakens our prayer:  
we are held in God's love. **R/**

You are the Spirit of God poured out upon the dead:  
the graves will be opened, and the dead will rise **R/**

Let us pray:

God our Father,  
you have revealed to us the wondrous mystery of your life,

sending your Son into the world  
and sharing with us your Spirit of holiness and joy.  
Let us rejoice in the Spirit,  
who renews the face of the earth and draws us towards unity.  
We confess our faith in you,  
the One God, three times Holy:  
Father, Son and Holy Spirit.  
Blessed are you, now and for ever and ever. **AMEN.**

## Alternative Patristic Readings

### *From the Greek tradition*

This is my God, the Lord of all, who alone stretched out the heavens and established the breadth of the earth under it, ... who founded the earth upon the waters and gave a spirit to nourish it; whose breath gives light to the whole, who, if he withdrew his breath, the whole would utterly fail. By him you speak, O man. His breath you breathe yet him you know not.

- *Theophilus of Antioch* [2<sup>nd</sup> century], *Ad Autolytus*, I:7

### *From the Latin tradition*

“Your heavenly Father will give the good Spirit to those who ask him.” This is the Spirit by virtue of whom is poured out in our hearts the love with which we observe the divine commandments, by loving God and neighbour. This is the Spirit by virtue of whom we cry out: “Abba, Father”. It is therefore the Spirit who gives us the capacity to ask, and it is the same Spirit whom we desire to receive. It is he who makes us seek, and it is he whom we desire to find.

- *Augustine of Hippo* [354-430], *Exposition on Psalm 118*, 14:2

# DAY 6

## The Church: Community of Believers

### Scripture Readings

Isaiah 2:2-4

Psalm 133

Ephesians 4:1-6

### Patristic Reading

#### *From the Latin tradition*

The church is one, spread abroad far and wide into a multitude by an increase of fruitfulness. As there are many rays of the sun but one light, and many branches of a tree but one strength based in its tenacious root ... in the same manner the church, shone over with the light of the Lord, sheds forth her rays over the whole world, yet it is one light which is everywhere diffused, nor is the unity of the body fractured. Her fruitful abundance spreads her branches over the whole world.

- *Cyprian of Carthage* [c. 210-258], *On the Unity of the Church*, 5

#### For reflection:

1. The Church is called to shed forth the light of Christ over the world. Where do you perceive this reality in your own context?
2. Even though in Christ the Church is one body, historically the churches are divided. How have you experienced the pain of this division?
3. The Church as the community of the Holy Spirit, the giver of peace, is sent to live and spread the message of peace in the world. In what ways might churches enable their members to fulfil this calling?

### Prayer

**R/ O Lord, hear our prayer!**

At the empty tomb, you entrusted the news of your resurrection to the women:  
deliver all messengers of the Gospel from fear. **R/**

On the road to Emmaus, you explained the law and the prophets to the disciples:  
open our minds to understand the Scriptures. **R/**

In the upper room, you gave your friends the gift of your peace:  
help us to keep this peace by our mutual love. **R/**

On the lakeshore, you appointed Peter as shepherd of your flock:  
uphold with your Spirit the leaders of our communities. **R/**

On the mountain, you gathered the dispersed disciples before you returned to the Father:  
give unity in faith and charity to those who believe in you. **R/**

Let us pray.

God of heaven and earth,

your Son Jesus Christ has revealed you as our Father

and promised us the gift of the Holy Spirit:  
grant to your Church to overcome the scandal of our divisions,  
so that we may bear witness to your life of communion,  
in the unity of our profession of faith  
and in the love of mutual service.  
Through Christ our Lord. **AMEN.**

## Alternative Patristic Readings

### *From the Armenian tradition*

Holy fathers and teachers of truth! Leaders and pastors of the Christ's flock! You who preside over and administer the house of God! Today I see you gathered in one spirit and in one body, in adherence to him who is the head of all. Who has brought you to this tranquil harbour of peace, O peacemakers of the world, if not the Holy Spirit who has been given to us from heaven as our peace? And for what purpose, if not to begin the building of the temple of God demolished and destroyed, which the author of evil threw down?  
- **Nerses of Lambron** [1152-1198], *Synodal Discourse*

### *From the Greek tradition*

Being many and countless, men, women, children, various and profoundly different in origin and appearance, nation and language, way of life and age, knowledge and arts, manner of life, customs and propensities, sciences and honours, fate, temperaments and habits, all are in the [church], through which all are regenerated and recreated in the Spirit. To all equally she gives and imparts the same divine form and denomination, to be in Christ and bear his name and to have the same relation, simple, undivided and indivisible, in the faith, that no longer allows to recognise even the existence of the many and inexpressible differences present among them, because all universally refer to and meet in the [church].  
- **Maximus the Confessor** [c. 580-662], *Mystagogy*, 1

# DAY 7

## Baptism into the Death and Resurrection of the Lord

### Scripture Readings

Micah 7:18-19  
Psalm 51:1, 7, 10, 12  
Matthew 28:16-20

### Patristic Readings

#### *From the Greek tradition*

Such is the power of faith in Christ, such the excess of his grace: As the element of fire, when it meets with ore from the mine, straightway of earth makes it gold, even so and much more baptism makes those who are washed to be of gold instead of clay. The Spirit at that time falling like fire into our souls, burning up the “image of the earthy”, and producing “the image of the heavenly,” fresh coined, bright and glittering, as from the furnace-mould.

- *John Chrysostom* [c. 350-407], *Homily on the Gospel of John*, X:2

#### For reflection:

1. Christians are baptised into the death and resurrection of Christ. What does your baptism mean to you today?
2. Sin disfigures us in various ways. Through baptism, God liberates us from this humiliation.
3. In spite of different church traditions and practices, how does confessing “one Lord, one faith, one baptism” (Eph. 4:5) affect our relationships with other Christians?

### Prayer

**R/ We thank you, O Lord, and bless your name!**

For having called us to faith in baptism,  
for the communion we share in the New Covenant,  
for your presence in the holy Church. **R/**

For the witness of persecuted Christians,  
for the suffering of their martyrdom,  
for their participation in Christ’s passion. **R/**

For all servants of communion,  
for those who pray and work for the reconciliation of churches,  
for those who offer their lives for unity. **R/**

Let us pray.

God our Father, we praise you and bless your name.

Accept our thanksgiving for the unity Christians already enjoy  
in the confession of Jesus the Lord.

Hasten the day, we beg you, of the full mutual recognition of our churches

in the communion that you desire,  
and for which your Son prayed.  
We ask this in the power of the Holy Spirit. **AMEN.**

### **Alternative Patristic Readings**

#### ***From the Syriac tradition***

The Son of God descended from heaven, became man  
and from the abyss raised you, so that you would become a son for God.  
He became your brother in the womb full of holiness  
and made you his brother in the womb of baptism. ...  
A son for God he made you, with him, in the water  
so that he who is the Only Begotten acquires brothers through the second birth.  
For he himself by a second birth became man,  
by that second generation he made you a son for God.  
- **Jacob of Sarug** [c. 451-521], *Discourse 10*

#### ***From the Latin tradition***

Man, you dared not lift up your face towards heaven, you turned your eyes towards the earth, and suddenly you received the grace of Christ ... Lift up, therefore, your eyes to the Father, who has begotten you through baptism, to the Father who has redeemed you through the Son, and say, "Our Father!"  
- **Ambrose of Milan** [c. 337-397], *The Sacraments*, V:19

# DAY 8

## Waiting for the Kingdom and the life to come

### Scripture Readings

Revelation 21:1-4  
Psalm 85:8, 10-12  
Luke 12:35-40

### Patristic Reading

#### *From the Syriac tradition*

Whoever lives in love in this creation breathes the life coming from God. While yet in this world, he breathes the air of rebirth. In this air the righteous will delight at resurrection. Love is the kingdom whereof our Lord mystically promised the disciples that they would eat in his kingdom: "You shall eat and drink at the table of my kingdom." What should they eat, if not love? Love is sufficient to nourish a man instead of food and drink. This is the wine that gladdens the heart of man. Blessed is he who drinks of this wine!  
- *Isaac of Nineveh* [7<sup>th</sup> century], *First Collection*, 43

#### For reflection:

1. Love will be the reality of the Kingdom of God. Concrete actions of charity make this Kingdom present in our lives.
2. Living in expectation of the Kingdom of God, how do we embody signs of the coming Kingdom in the world today?
3. We are called to be ready for the second coming of the Lord. How do we prepare ourselves for it?

### Prayer

#### **R/ Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father**

O Christ the Lord, who for our sakes became poor  
and who promise that the poor will inherit the Kingdom of Heaven,  
you fill us with your riches. **R/**

O Lord Jesus, meek and humble of heart,  
who reveal a new world to those who trust in you,  
you give us your fullness. **R/**

O Christ the Lord, who knelt and prayed with your face to the ground,  
you who in sadness traced a way of consolation,  
you are the joy that nothing and no one can take away from us. **R/**

O Lord Jesus, who cast down rulers and powers  
and who clothe peacemakers with a glorious robe,  
you transform us into your image. **R/**

O Christ the Lord, merciful and compassionate  
who on the Cross forgave the thief who died with you,

we beseech you: Remember us when you come into your kingdom. **R/**

Let us pray.

O Lord, hasten the coming of your great and glorious day!

In our darkness, many men and women no longer dare to hope.

Protect the flame of faith in the hearts of the weak and the suffering.

May the Church be a faithful herald of the victory of Christ your Son over death

and a beacon of expectation for his return in glory.

He is the Living One, with you and with the Holy Spirit.

now and forever and ever. **AMEN.**

## Alternative Patristic Readings

### *From the Greek tradition*

You, O Lord, have freed us from the fear of death. You have made the end of this life the beginning for us of true life. You, for a season, let our bodies rest in sleep and awake them again at the last trumpet. You give our earth, which you have fashioned with your hands, to the earth to keep in safety. One day you will take back what you gave, transfiguring with immortality and grace our mortal and unsightly remains ... You showed us the way of resurrection, having broken the gates of hell, and brought to nought him who had the power of death.

- **Gregory of Nyssa** [c. 335-395], *Life of St Macrina*, 24

### *From the Latin tradition*

By hope God breastfeeds us, nourishes us, strengthens us, and give us consolation in this life of toil. In this hope we sing “alleluia”. Just look what joy there is in hope! What can the reality be? You ask: “What can it be?” Listen to what is said: “They shall get drunk on the plenteousness of your house.” That is the reality that hope is about. We are thirsty. We are hungry. It must be that we shall be satisfied. Hunger while on the road, satisfaction when we come home. When shall we be satisfied? “I shall be satisfied when your glory is revealed.” ... Then it will be “alleluia” in reality, while now it is just in hope.

- **Augustine of Hippo** [354-430], *Sermons*, 255:5

# APPENDIX

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## The Bose Community

The Monastic Community of Bose seeks to embody the monastic path today, inserting itself in the tradition proper to the Christian East and West, which has seen, since the first centuries, men and women who have abandoned everything to attempt to live the Gospel radically in celibacy and united in community.

Bose was founded in 1968 on the initiative of Br Enzo Bianchi, together with some brothers and sisters. It has from the beginning been an ecumenical community, due to the presence of Christians belonging to different Churches already among the first ones to take vows in 1973, and a mixed one, *ie* composed of both men and women, who live celibacy in response to Christ's call. Today it is recognised by the Roman Catholic Church as a monastery *sui iuris* of diocesan right – *ie* established in the local Church of Biella (Piedmont), a monastery fully autonomous in its internal management and in which all members, belonging to different Christian Churches, enjoy the same rights.

The brothers and sisters of the Monastic Community of Bose, pursuing the search for God by following Jesus Christ, seek to live evangelical radicalism in celibacy and common life, in obedience, poverty and stability according to the *Rule of Bose*, and inspired by the great monastic tradition of East and West. In this *forma vitae*, founded in Baptism and nourished by the Eucharist, the brothers and sisters treasure the impulses awakened by the ecumenical movement and the teachings of the Second Vatican Council.

The life of the brothers and sisters at Bose seeks simplicity and tends towards the essential: a cenobitic life made up of prayer and work, in order to accomplish the one true 'work' of the monastic brother or sister: believing and living in the One whom God has sent, Jesus Christ.

Three times a day the Community meets for common prayer, marking time with the singing of the Psalms and listening to the proclamation of the Word of God contained in Scripture, according to the very ancient tradition that the Church has inherited from the people of Israel. Our belonging to different Christian denominations has led us to formulate our own expression of the Liturgy of the Hours suitable to be prayed by all Christians. Thus was born the *Preghiera dei Giorni*, first published in 1973 and repeatedly expanded and enriched in order to have an ecumenical daily liturgy that is organic and consonant with our daily practice. While maintaining the structure proper to Western liturgical prayer, it draws on the rich eucharological and faith heritage of the Churches of East and West, thus offering a tool for the praying life also of Christian groups and communities wishing to pray together while respecting differences.

Community prayer is echoed in the life of every brother and sister by personal prayer, first and foremost *lectio divina* – a spiritual reading of biblical texts – which is also offered daily to guests by a member of the community. On Saturday evenings, in preparation for the Sunday Eucharist, the community and guests gather for a vigil, during which the Bible texts of Sunday are listened to together, and the Prior, or a brother or sister appointed by him, helps the community to grasp the spiritual unity that characterises the Scripture passages offered in the lectionary.

All the brothers and sisters work, earning a living with their own hands, following the example of the Apostles and Fathers, engaging in different activities that may change over time. While there is no specific work of the monastic community, varied works are undertaken in order to tend to the needs of the community, the guests, the poor and the churches. Vegetable gardens, orchards, olive groves and vineyards, icon and wax workshops, carpentry, a publishing house, as well as biblical and patristic research and the study of the great Jewish and Christian tradition are some of the professional activities developed to date.

Hospitality has been a ministry practised since the origins of monasticism. At Bose and in its fraternities – currently three: at Ostuni in Puglia, at Assisi and at Civitella San Paolo near Rome – the brothers and sisters seek to welcome everyone and to grasp in each the presence of Christ who said: "I was a stranger and you

welcomed me” (*Mt 25:35*). Particular attention is paid to those who need a place apart, to pause in silence, to share our prayers and our lives, or for a fraternal discussion on the problems of the world and the Church.