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## POPE ENCOURAGES ORTHODOX CONFERENCE

### Annual Event Takes Up Theme of Spiritual Struggle

VATICAN CITY, SEPT. 4, 2009 ([Zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org)).- Benedict XVI is encouraging an "opportune initiative" being organized to consider the "spiritual struggle" as understood in the Orthodox tradition.

The Pope, through his secretary of state, Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, sent a message to the 17th annual International Ecumenical Conference on Orthodox Spirituality.

He expressed his hopes that the "fraternal gathering" would bring about a renewed awareness of the value of the spiritual struggle as a consequence of the love of Christ, and generous efforts in the ascetic formation of young generations.

The papal message is addressed to Prior Enzo Bianchi of the Monastery of Bose in Italy, which is where the Wednesday through Saturday conference will be held.

"Organized in collaboration with the Orthodox Churches, the conference is an important occasion of discussion on fundamental themes of the spiritual life," organizers explain.

This year's theme "touches the very center of a problem that is extremely relevant today. [...] This is the art of the struggle against 'evil thoughts,' as tradition defines those negative images, impulses, inclinations that disturb the 'mind' by distracting it from the memory of God and pushing it into sin," they added.

This issue will be at the center of dialogue among theologians, scholars, and representatives of the Orthodox Churches, the Catholic Church, and the Churches of the Reform.

The Catholic Church will be represented by Cardinal Roger Etchegaray, vice dean of the College of Cardinals; Archbishop Antonio Mennini, apostolic nuncio in Russia; Monsignor Brian Farrell, secretary of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity; and Jesuit Father Milan Zust, of that same dicastery.

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On the Net:

International Ecumenical Conference: [www.monasterodibose.it/index.php/content/view/3164/528/lang,en/](http://www.monasterodibose.it/index.php/content/view/3164/528/lang,en/)