

## ORTHODOX LEADERS' TRAINING ON SPIRITUAL DIMENSION IN SCOUTING SOKO GRAD, SERBIA, OCTOBER 1-4, 2009

As an expression of real need to offer to Orthodox scout leaders in DESMOS member-countries in the Balkans the opportunity to have a training on spiritual dimension in Scouting, DESMOS organized the event in the Monastery "Свети Николај Српски", in Soko Grad, in Western Serbia.



His Excellency, **Episcopo Lavrentije** of the **Serbian Orthodox Church – Eparchy of Šabac**, gave His Blessing to the **Scout Organization of Serbia** to organize the Training in the premises of the Monastery "Свети Николај Српски", in Soko Grad, and **Father Zoran Ristivojević** and the civil staff of the Monastery were excellent hosts, offering very good conditions for work.



The event was financially supported by the **Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Serbia**, while the **Public Enterprise "Serbian Railways"** took part in sponsorship by putting on DESMOS' disposal the bus for transportation of participants from Belgrade to the Training venue.

The Training was organized for participants from DESMOS member-countries in the Balkan region. However, member-countries: Cyprus, Moldova and Russian Federation were invited as well. The Training had participants from Cyprus, Romania and Serbia, and the Planning Team was composed of trainers from Greece (**Christos Papageorgiou**, DESMOS President), Palestine (**Maher Sahlieh**, DESMOS Vice-President) Romania (**Roxana Boltasu**, DESMOS member-country representative) and Serbia (**Zoran Petrović**, DESMOS Committee member; **Marko Petrović**, DESMOS Secretary General; **Milan Ristić**, Scout Group Leader). The Key-Note address "Spirituality and Young people in the Modern World" was prepared and presented to participants by **Father Veselin Stefanovski**, Priest.



The central topic of the Training was the Spirituality in Scouting and its importance for proper development of young people’s personality. The Training emphasized the essential role of the first principle of Scouting – **Duty to God**, which implementation consequently guarantees realization of other two principles of Scouting – **Duty to Self** and **Duty to Others**.

The Training was focused on practical aspects of Spiritual Dimension in Scouting and the positive impact of Orthodoxy, offering a number of ideas for implementation in practice.

Participants also had the opportunity for exchange and discussion on the examples of good practice in their NSOs.

The AGENDA of the Training was as follows:

**Thursday, 1st of October**

13:00	Departure from Belgrade
16:30	Arrival in the Monastery
19:30	Dinner
20:00	Getting to know each other / free time

**Friday, 2nd of October**

08:30	Breakfast
09:30	Opening of the Training: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Registration</li> <li>• Welcome address</li> <li>• Prayer</li> <li>• Ice breaking – games</li> </ul>
10:15	Presentation: THE GREAT WORLD SCOUT FAMILY – Marko Petrovic
11:15	Presentation: ABOUT DESMOS – Christos Papageorgiou
11:30	Break
11:45	KEY-NOTE address – Father Veselin Stefanovski SPIRITUALITY AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE MODERN WORLD

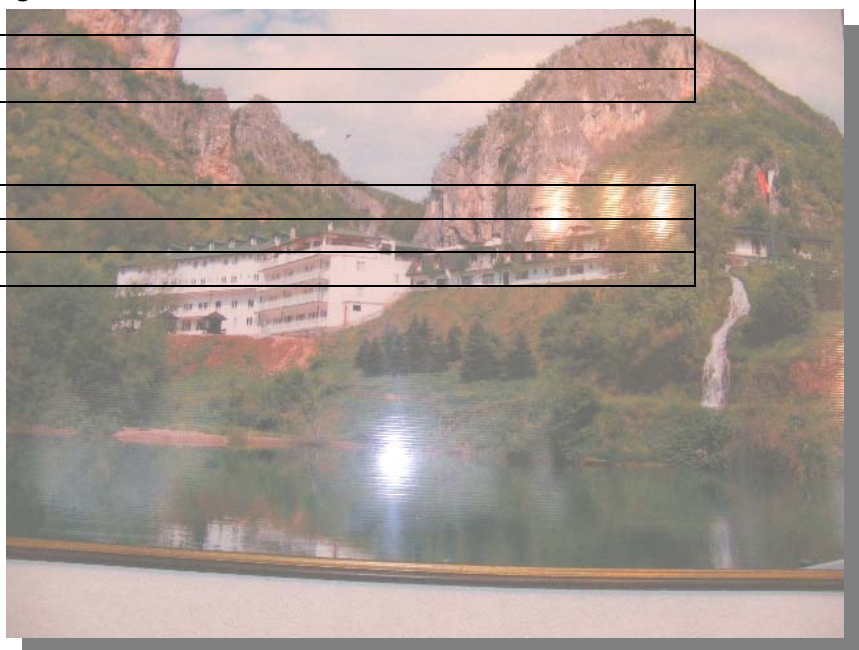
13:00	Break
13:30	Lunch
14:30	Presentation: WORLD SCOUT INTERRELIGIOUS FORUM – Christos Papageorgiou
15:00	Presentation: LEADERS QUESTIONS – WOSM ANSWERS Roxana Boltasu
15:45	Break
16:00	Presentation: DESMOS Triennium FROM TUNISIA TO KOREA DESMOS Newsletter No 1 – Christos Papageorgiou
17:00	Presentation: HOW YOU CAN IMPLEMENT SPIRITUAL DIMENSION IN YOUR SCOUT GROUP – Milan Ristic
18:00	Good practices from my scout group for implementation of Duty to God Team work
19:00	Dinner
20:00	SPIRITUAL SCOUT NIGHT – Roxana Boltasu / Milan Ristic
	Free time

### Saturday, 3<sup>rd</sup> of October

09:30	Breakfast
10:30	Prayer Ice braking – game
10:45	Presentation: HOW TO PROMOTE MEMBERSHIP WITHIN OUR LINK - DESMOS - Maher Sahlieh
11:30	Break
11:45	Presentation: WORLD SCOUT INTERRELIGIOUS SYMPOSIUM – Christos Papageorgiou
12:00	Presentation: PRACTICAL IDEAS FOR YOUR SCOUT PROGRAMME – Christos Papageorgiou
12:45	Team work – prepare one scout activity based on Spiritual Dimension, for your scout group
13:15	Break
13:30	Lunch
15:00	HIKE
18:00	Evaluation of the Training Closing of the Training
19:00	Dinner
20:00	Free acivities

### Sunday, 4<sup>th</sup> of October

08:15	Holy Liturgy
10:30	Breakfast
11:15	Departure



**Key-Note Address**  
**SPIRITUALITY AND THE YOUNG IN THE MODERN WORLD**  
**Veselin Stefanovski, priest - Soko Grad, 02.10.2009.**

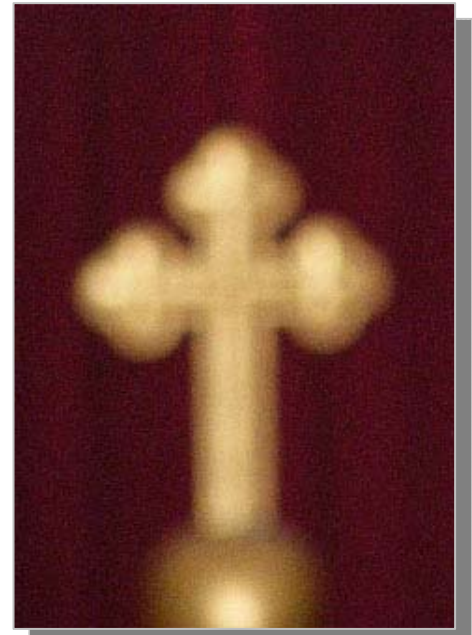
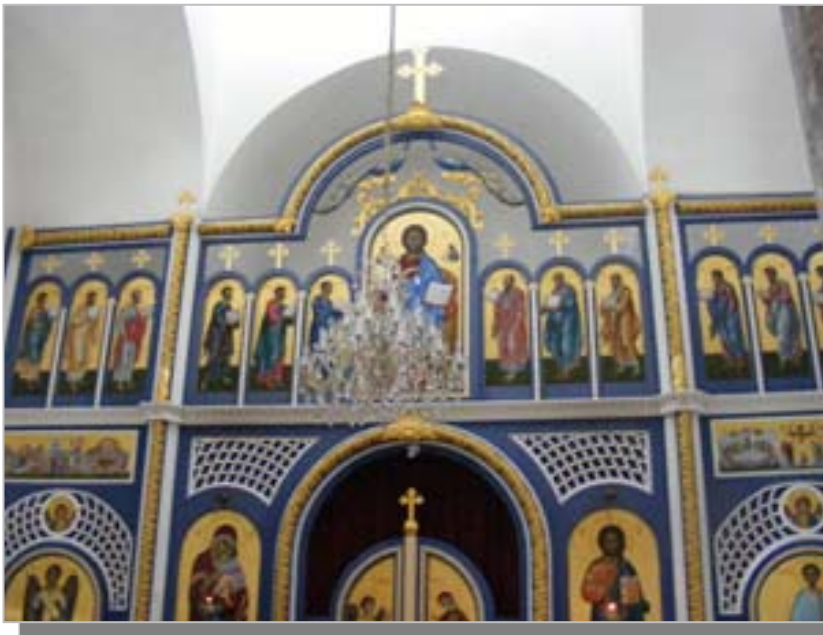
- Liturgy, the foundation or concept of growing up, one perspective
- Can the young handle with the burden of the responsibility, 'Our fathers have eaten soar grapes, whereas our theet ...'
- Can the modern world have the responsibility for the young
- 'Small cattle' – a model or futile hope



**Liturgy, the foundation or concept of growing up, one perspective**

Before I begin, I have to express my pleasure because of the opportunity to meet you all and to show my deep respect for your work as well as for the huge effort that you are making. Looking back on the last few years while working with the young, I admit that every time when I was supposed to present the concept which would unite varieties, I would face the problem which I overcame successfully only with the God's help and supreme effort to serve as a joy to all.

In Serbia, as you are probably familiar with, Religious Teaching has been a part of the Serbian educational system for 8 years now, and it has greatly opened the space for a new reflection on the relation between the Church and the youth. Thanks to the great number of young religious teachers, a lot of successful projects have been conducted and the experiences we drawn from it are the foundation of our further work. Apart from conversations held in the classrooms, as well as pointing out numerous advantages of spirituality and what it does for a man, it is always necessary that everything is confirmed in practice. If we accept the fact that majority of young people do not have necessary religious education, which in every sense refers to going to liturgies and the knowledge of important holidays as well as the history of Christ's mission on the Earth, then we have delicate job to fulfill and it starts with the basic information about the faith and church no matter how child is old.



The whole civilization is making an enormous effort to enable the people an idyllic setting in which all diversities will be abolished and which will offer equal opportunities and chances to everyone. Almost religious approach is expected from people in this eagerness of the world leaders. The

years are passing by, hundreds of forums and congresses are being held, different organizations with their concepts are trying to contribute to this supreme aim, which seems somehow more and more distant and even more unattainable. The world is distracted and shaken by conflicts due to racial tensions, nuclear threats, territorial pretensions and above all by economic interests. Having this (previously described) situation in mind, we are aware that as a consequence we have another generation that is growing up in the conditions where some have everything, whereas others nothing. (which provides some with everything, while others with nothing). As a logical alternative, or I would say 'pigeon's milk' we have a virtual world, known as WWW. This virtual world is offered to people, and it partially succeeds to soften the essential separation of the human beings all around the world. A partial success of this virtual contact is seen through absence of physical relationship among the people and the very creation of false pretences of others and of ourselves. The main factor of the relationship is an appeal for literary skillfulness and the power of creating false picture that will satisfy other persons. Each photograph and other objective content is subject to corrective interventions of the almighty photoshop.



Well then, you will say now if everything is so ugly, where is the way out, the very trace of light at the end of the tunnel? That light is the Holy Liturgy, two-thousand-years old concept of the essential unity of the people among themselves, with themselves alone and above all with the God. When I talk about liturgy, I think of its Ecumenical and even cosmic character. The united factor of this organism is not some almighty software but Crucified on the Cross and Resurrected the Lord Jesus Christ. Although I previously mentioned growing up, it is not conditioned any more by age, rather small number of years or life experience that is always very relative and challenged. When coming to the Holy Liturgy, we are all measured in relation to the God's deed on earth. The God's deed on earth is measured by making sacrifices and giving ultimate love. As

an illustration and example, I will remind you of the moment when the Christ's followers approached Jesus with the question - who is the biggest in the heavens- 'Jesus called a child, placed him between them and said: ' Truly I say to you, unless you turn around and become as young children, you will by no means enter into the kingdom of the heavens.' Mt. 18:3. Without space for speculation, the God points to child as a being of purity and I see that you have it also because you are still young and you are collecting strength to do something that will greatly contribute to general aim. One of the missions that requires great responsibility, even though it might sound trivial, is your attendance on the Liturgy, because, remember ' And Jesus called a child and placed him between them'. If we do not have children, our youth in the Church, then who will give us an example to follow. The second and very important responsibility is that we keep our pure hearts in the time we live in, so we will tell something about it.

**Can the young carry the burden of responsibility, Our fathers had eaten sour grapes and we are ignorant of that. Our fathers had sinned and now we suffer.**

Now recognized as pure, like those who have an irreplaceable seat in the Church, what is the reason not to answer and remain passive in that enormous event of the Liturgy. Does young man today runaway from himself, is he afraid of himself and does he consciously repress a role given by the God in an intention to present himself as someone who is not, perhaps, fearless and capable of dealing with all challenges of the world? Are pure and innocence not being 'in' anymore and an inmalevolence is not the model anymore which guarantees existence in the world? The response is negative. If we want to exist by preserving human dignity inside ourselves, remain proud yet not show pride, the only way is with the God and within God, to freely respond to the God's call and get our place in a temple. Children of the earliest age are mostly dependent of parents' will, whether they will take them or not, but with persistence they always reach their goal and those are the first victories for their own soul and parents' souls as well. In that way we acquire first everlasting gifts which are not toys for one or two days. When we talk about youngsters, things are not different either, and a frequent answer of my students is that they do not have anyone to accompany them, although they are willing. That surely refers to an unreadiness of a man to make important decisions in life on its own, because if we assume that all great struggles through life we have to face alone, and not to forget, with the God's help. The time has brought us instant pleasures, a range of aids necessary for reducing an effort in reaching the goal. In that atmosphere since the earliest days, we have become conformists incapable of producing things to this world with our own effort and in the most simplest cases we use many tools which represent us as invalids rather than capable and vivacity persons. We can add an instant spirituality too, we use a range of aids to express our religious feelings, therefore, tools for prayer like a bead have become some amulets which possibly protect itself alone, a cross around the neck more like a voodoo dolly on a rope and the God itself has become a service which fullfills all desires of lazy people who, with all mentioned above, have so much strength within themselves that they can reach everything that is a condition of blessedness of man in general. Noone thinks of a cross around neck as something that should stay in the heart and to be a reminder of the need of sacrifice for the other one and how many young people generally knows a short text of prayer that should be told on each bead 'Lord Jesus Christ have mercy on my soul.' All numbered above demands a little bit of our will, everything is given to us and we should easily fullfill the God's Ten Comandments, however, many are not capable of doing that. Many would rather set guilty on someone else for their negligence because that sounds quite logical, without an objection. Remember the old Serbian proverb 'A stranger's hand cannot scratch the itch.' Everything we should do, we should do ourselves, therefore the collected fruits will be the most delicious.

**Can the modern world bear the responsibility for the young**

We previously spoke about the personal responsibility of the young, but now we will tell something about the world and the society around us. We will see in which way it treats an individual or groups, and to what extent it is ready to produce an understanding for the time being already lost human values. It is known from the Christian history that Orthodoxy

experiences its expansion in the conditions of total repression of the Roman Empire. The more they were abused and tortured, the more their faith was growing and spreading like fire flames. The era of torture and persecution later on was finished, but the internal unrest started to disturb the Church little by little. This was also caused by different teachings that were wrong, then weakening of the moral (in general), which let's say even apostle Pavle raises as a problem in his epistles, and also because of the pressures of the state authorities and etc. We can say that in the time of freedom and governing of law rights, the faith was experiencing its greatest temptations. The things have not improved greatly up to now, even though the atmosphere of complete liberalism is prevailing and we call it the governing of law rights. However, nowadays we are faced with something that we might call aggressive secularization. This form of public consciousness sees the impact of faith as a possible threat for the society and the source of all plights in the world. All the actions, let's assume, of one spontaneously formed group has for an aim a promotion of moral that is completely opposed to the Christian values. Nowadays, the young are in the position to search their place in the society by satisfying norms that sooner or later create a deep rupture with the virtuous life. On one hand, we can notice the existence of elite that emphasizes something we call status symbols and the one who can follow these is naturally considered to be a part of this society. On the other hand, others belong to the avant-garde of its kind trying to be recognized and liked by the others. Apart from elite and avant-garde, anarchy is slowly pervading and it carries a seed of rebellion and dissatisfaction. In all three groups it is really hard to find a place for a humble, virtuous and pious man. The man, who is a truly follower of the christian values, is still unable to cope with the harsh competition that has no limits in achieving its material well-being on the earth. The one who is not ready to return an insult to the one who insulted him, to destroy a potential enemy in a merciless struggle, that man is already doomed to failure. Yet, can this be true? Is it true that a man's sinful life creates a state of the spirit devastation and what about friendship, that is to say, how to establish friendship when people are obsessed with gaining material wealth. Aren't people condemned to existential loneliness in these life conditions? The society offers the various groups of communities starting from the European, international, local, regional, social, ethnic, work groups and etc., but unfortunately Christ's words: 'The greatest love you can show is to give your life for his friends', fall on deaf ears in each of these groups. The secular community speculates with the number and with the people that are the part of pure statistics. As opposed to this, liturgic community gathers people in a direct, free and completely spontaneous way, and it unites people in the personalities of the One who is the overall united force, the Lord Jesus Christ.

### **'A small herd' - a model or a futile hope**

Lord Jesus Christ calls his disciples and friends gathered in one place as 'A small herd' which refers to their number in the circumstances of that time. When he announced for the second time that he came to this world to bring fire 'and how he liked it had already lit', probably noone imagined that it was meant on spreading of His science and multiplying of His herd. Today we are witnesses to what extent the Christians are present in the world, and if we single out only those truly convinced their number is not small and apostle's zeal today has the same effects as 2000 years before. In every victim to which man does a charity and love and that victim is yours, the Spirit of the One who enriches and multiply the Lord itself. First efforts are slowly becoming visible and with pious perseverance they give us fruits which are an adequate satisfaction for labour invested. The same as it was with the development of the Christianity, after primal deep satisfaction comes the time of peace in which one should keep himself from the storm of temptation. Noone should be intoxicated by the taste of victory because only

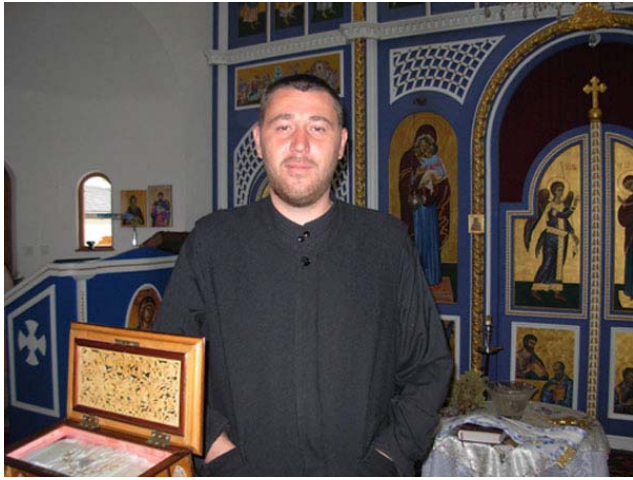


the one who finishes the race wins. Due to all mentioned before, I keep your work for another torch in the world and your effort for little fire, which if with your personal perseverance would be everlasting in the near future can connect and testify similar to testimonies of martyrs in the first century of the Christianity. Once more I wish you warm welcome, every kind of help in case you think it is of importance. In the end, I wish more gatherings of this type which make new friendships based on the Christian values to be organized.

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For the participants of the Training, Monastery "Свети Николај Српски" opened widely its doors. The conditions for work were excellent – accommodation, working space, food, everything.

**Father Zoran Ristivojevic**, young, open-hearted, very kind and ready to meet all our needs, was the most "responsible" for the friendly and relaxing atmosphere.

Father Zoran wasn't with us all the time, but he was always somewhere there, we knew he's in the background, we knew we could count on him.

**The President of the Scout Organization of Serbia, Momcilo Petkovic**, visited the Training venue and welcomed the participants of behalf of the NSO. He made a long trip just to spend some time with us, to give us support and to let us know that he considers this DESMOS event very useful and important for proper development of young people, scouts.



Participants worked hard. We had a very intensive Agenda.



Still, there were moments for feelings, for love.



Definitely, everybody enjoyed. Even our friend, lovely small cat, that was hiding behind the flowers, on a warm and pleasant autumn day...