



DESMOS COMMITTEE MEETING February 20-22, 2009 Monastery TISMANA, Romania



The DESMOS Committee Meeting was held in the premises of the Monastery Tismana, in Romania, with the blessing of the Patriarchate of the Romanian Orthodox Church and with a support of the Romanian NSO "Cercetasii Romaniei".

Present:

Christos Papageorgiou, Desmos President,
Nicolaos Mitsides, Desmos Committee member
Georges Abboud, Desmos Committee member
Zoran M. Petrovic, Desmos Committee member
Naaman Shahada, Desmos Committee member
Maher Sahlieh, Desmos Committee member
Marko Petrovic, Desmos Secretary General

Desmos member-countries' representatives:

George Bahow, former Desmos Vice-President
Vladimir Vlas, President, National Association of Moldovian Scouts
Marianna Purcel, PR and Mass Media Commissioner
Roxana Boltasu, Desmos representative, Cercetasii Romaniei
Vassilis Birtsas, Desmos member-country representative
Fouad Abboud, General Commissioner, Scout National Orthodoxe Liban
Joseph Chami, Chef du Group, Scout National Orthodoxe Liban
Fadi Sabanekh, Leader, Amman Orthodox Scouts
Emad Bosheh, Leader, Amman Orthodox Scouts

Apologies:

Goran Jeffic, Desmos Committee member
Georges El Ghorayeb, WSC – liaison with DESMOS



The official opening of the Desmos Committee meeting took place on February 21ST, 2009, in the premises of the Holy Monastery Tismana, in Romania. Nine countries were represented.

Desmos Committee members had the minute of reflection dedicated to the Founder of the Scout Movement, Lord Baden-Powell, on the occasion of February 22nd - the Thinking Day.

At the beginning of the Meeting, Desmos Committee members had the Prayer.

The text of the Prayer was the same as used during the founding Assembly of DESMOS in the Monastery Penteli, in Greece:

PRAYER

Lord,

Through the dim light that the sundown spreads, give us across praying Your opening to dream and hope.

Life is a fierce waterfall and we are slopped in the same mass of human material, fortunately not impersonally, for we react in our own way.

Give us the strength to imprint the world with our own ability and to make our times Your times, by giving the struggle in the same arena.

We can see in Your face our generation and the generations to come, for you live eternally.

Give us the strength to begin a dialogue with You. To castigate our mistaken paces and to place our luggage in the vehicle of hope.

We lift on our shoulders the historical responsibilities and on the blank book of the third millennium we will write the first lines. Help so that they will be carved with Your inspirations and the never setting light of Your cross.

We are bound to You. We commence in life our own march and we bind our hands and soul to your bonds, thus creating earthly links of solidarity.

We travel far, we search for the origins of the problems of this era, that have passed through the chain of generations, and we are making efforts to find the causes of our century's crisis.

Our ideological content has not been defined.

Help us O Lord to provide to the ideological stigma of our generation Your Name, to speak and to express ourselves about the great bulk of our problems. To confide in You the changes we are aiming to come in the future. To dispute the traditional transcriptions of the error's practice and to deliver the despair to the emptiness and the darkness of chaos.

With the rush of an immature child we have vanished the goods of our planet, and now with the senility of a decadent old person we try to derive the agony of the survival from the bowels of the earth.

We have exaggerated O Lord, and we have turned our fleshy machines into machinery of steal, discrediting Your residence. We have created consuming ideals and we have sent the messages to all latitudes. This seclusion from your Name we will re-establish with Your help, drawing from the channels of the spiritual creation, we, the Scouts of the good and human goals, for Your Sacred Name.

The instigators of the generations' madness are succeeded by the cunning ones of our personal numbness. We are going to oppose the vigorous affirmation to the mystery of life. As we are already filled with hope, we cease to fear the confrontation between life and death.

We renounce in Your Name the political ideologies, which were formed not by the standards of love on the human relation and existence, but by the interest and the expediency. They will never succeed in penetrating our hearts which are armoured with Your spirit.

We are roused by the yearning for the search of the truth and it takes us to the port of tranquillity.

We have met and felt sorry for the hungry in the valley of the earthly death. They occupy the 2/3 (two thirds) of the earth's Crust. They are the bitterness in the mouthful of our bread. Your justice inflicts

another deal of the bread of the people. It will derive from the right division of labour to Your children. This is what we are looking for, Lord, and we are anguishing to organize our life within the light of your teachings.

With naivety and hidden hope we accepted the Message. Scouts of honour and Your innocent children, we, seek the ways to turn around the struggle of the weak and to help our brothers and Your children to escape from the hulks of poverty and degradation. Help us to make the leap from corruption to quality.

Every day we accumulate dead material in the ocean of consumption, which we see, we take pride in it and we fix our attention on it. Help us to see through your spirit and your breath the racket of production and consumption, to harness our aims to the improvement of our brothers' life. Help us to illuminate the system so as to stop functioning conventionally and mechanically.

We know well that systems cannot cover up the human absence and it's not only in Your name that we gain the ability to immobilize Evil. Make it so that we get stronger and allow to the silenced voices of truth to speak, instigating the disappointed consciences of Your children. Call us up to the camp of Peace. Help us to bear the bulk of guilt and to stop the massive carriage of people towards the shadow of death. Your truth is the harsh critic on the devastating fury of the grand of this earth.

Arm us with the word of Your love.

Through our scout principals, which remain the same throughout the ages and transmit their own intellectual dimension, let our move to be the link of unity between the young in all of the world.

Your voice Lord is a voice of guidance through the centuries.

AMEN.

The Meeting was very successful. The Committee elected the new President for the period of three years, until the next Desmos Conference in Brazil – Christos Papageorgiou – the new Vice-President, Maher Sahlieh and the new Treasurer, Nicolaos Mitsides. The Committee also appointed the new Secretary General, Marko Petrovic, Assistant Secretary General, Athanassios Efstathiou and the PR&Communications Commissioner, Vassilis Birtsas. The Committee appointed Honorary Committee members – George Bahow and Odeh Bishara. A number of important issues have been treated and the relevant decisions were brought.

SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

Upon Arrival to Bucharest, the participants of the Meeting were met at the airport and on the train station and brought to the Romanian NSO's Headquarters Office, where the hosts offered sandwiches, coffee, tea and soft drinks. There, we could meet the representatives of the "Cercetasii Romaniei", who were very kind and ready to offer details on their organization. Later on, a walk around the central Buccarest was organized, before going to the reception in the Romanian Orthodox Church Patriarchate.



In the Patriarchate building, Desmos delegation first met the President of the Romanian National Scout Organization, **Mr. Alexandru Moldovan**, with whom we had a friendly talk about Scouting in Romania and about Desmos as The Link with consultative status with WOSM. Desmos President Christos Papageorgiou offered to President Alexandru Moldovan a small gift,



as a souvenir to the Desmos Committee Meeting in Romania and asked him kindly to keep on supporting Desmos efforts in Romania.

Desmos delegation was then received by Bishop Vicar of The Romanian Patriarchy, **Ciprian Campineanu**, who warmly welcomed Desmos representatives to Romania and said His Beatitude The Patriarch Daniel was busy and not able to receive the delegation Himself.

Bishop Vicar Ciprian Campineanu presented the short history of the Romanian Orthodox Church, pointing out the main aspects and challenges this institution is facing nowadays.

Desmos President presented to Bishop Vicar Ciprian Campineanu The International link of Orthodox Christian Scouts and explained the aims and objectives of Desmos, our Mission and Vision, as well as the activities we are conducting on national, regional and international level.



After visiting The Patriarchate, participants of Desmos Committee Meeting started the trip to Monastery Tismana. The trip was long but it enabled Desmos Committee members and guests from Desmos member countries to watch the landscapes and get acquainted with the interior of Romania. The group arrived to the destination in the evening.

The next day, short time available for free activities was used for looking around the Monastery land and facilities and after the Meeting, in the evening, the Group visited the Monastery complex and the Church, and was presented the facts about that extraordinary Monastery, which was built back in XIV century. One of the nuns was explaining in details the history and responded to various questions of the Meeting participants. Desmos representatives expressed to the **Mother Superiour Ierusalima** the gratitude for hosting the event and offered her some presents.



The Monastery complex is very nice and in perfect harmony with the surrounding nature.

The winter time gives the entire environment a special atmosphere, which everybody was fond of, in spite of the fact that it was very cold.



On Saturday evening, after visiting the Monastery complex, the Desmos group visited the village **Topesti** and the Community Center for Local Traditional Activities, where we had the opportunity to see the results of children art-work. It was amazing what those children were able to create, so the participants of Desmos Committee meeting really enjoyed.

The end of the evening was marked by a fascinating folkloric dances and songs performed by children of the village.

On Sunday morning, Desmos group left Monastery Tismana. Before heading towards Buccuresti, the participants of Desmos Committee meeting visited the Town Hall in TARGU-JIU, where the Vice-Mayor, **Roman Bărbuți Ion**, received the delegation.



DESMOS EXPRESSES GRATITUDE TO THE ROMANIAN NSO "CERCETASII ROMANIEI" FOR SUPPORTING THE MEETING, TO ROXANA BOLTASU FOR ORGANIZING EVERYTHING AND TO MOTHER SUPERIOR IERUSALIMA AND SISTERHOOD OF THE MONASTERY TISMANA FOR HOSTING THE MEETING.

THE HOLY MONASTERY OF TISMANA



The Holy Monastery of Tismana is one of the oldest, the most important and the most beautiful monasteries in Romania. This monument, built in the middle of nature, is perfect for those who want to gather their thoughts, to be close to God and to know the Romanian Orthodox religion.

Settled on Starmina Mountain, surrounded by wooded, rocky peaks, the monastery took its name from a coniferous tree called "tisa", that used to grow around here long time ago. On the occasion of some archeological works, there were discovered the ruins of an old Daco-Roman fortress; in the ancient language of the Dac people, the word "tismana" meant "fortified place".

It was founded in the 14th by Saint Nicodim the Pious, with the financial support of the Basarab princes Radu I (1377- 1383) and his sons Dan I (1384- 1386) and Mircea the Old (1386- 1418). Near the monastery, there was a small church made of the wood of a big "tisa" tree. It was consecrated in August 15th, having the dedication on the Pure Virgin's Dormition and it is historically attested in a charter of Leader Dan, written on October 3rd, 1385.



Saint Nicodim lets us feel his permanent presence here, enlightening our lives with his holy gifts. He was born at the beginning of the 14th century at Prilep, in Macedonia, as a member of the great Basarab family. Lazar, the leader of Serbia, was also his relative. The young Nicodim, only sixteen, chose to leave home and become a monk in the Saint mountain Athos, in Greece. Due to his extreme intelligence and to his strong wish to lead a saint life, Nicodim the Pious became a very profound theologian, an expert in Greek and Slav languages, a perfect orator, an exceptional miniature painter. He also knew how to work with people and he was very close to all of them. He had the full support of his contemporary leaders who helped him build churches and monasteries that became centres of culture and of national unity, powerful protectors of the Orthodox religion.

A perfect monk, Nicodim the Pious came to Valachia (the southern part of Romania) and he founded monasteries similar to those in Athos, where the monks learned how to work and become skilful in various arts.

In 1377, the Patriarch Philotheos of Constantinople, raised this monastery to the rank of "archimandrie" which meant that it had the role to watch over the other small monasteries like: Vodita, Gura Motrului, Prislop, Topolnita, and the hermitages Teius, Mocirlita, Saint Anthony, Plostina Dragoiestilor (Hobita), Aninoasa, Visina and others.

Saint Nicodim the Pious lived here like a hermit, spending nights and days on end praying in a small cave near the monastery. Saint Nicodim the Pious had the great gift of making miracles. Many sick people would come to him every day, searching for healing. Some of them were healed by touching his clothes, others simply by calling his name from a distance. His holiness and his miracles became wellknown even abroad. Sigismund of Luxembourg himself, Emperor of Austro-Hungary, visited him, in August, 13th, 1406. He had a sick daughter, possessed by an evil spirit. Many doctors and priests had seen her but with no

results. So, the Emperor took his daughter and some people from his court and came to meet Saint Nicodim.

Coming close to the monastery, the evil spirit went away and the girl got well. Sigismund ordered his people not to tell Saint Nicodim about this. When they reached the monastery, all the monks were waiting for them. The Saint told him: " Praise God for his mercy, for healing your daughter. The guests were all astonished, hearing his words. The Catholic priests who accompanied Sigismund became envious, so they planned to bring shame on Saint Nicodim and his monks. They knew that the monks did not eat meat; so they brought a covered plate with some pork for lunch, saying that there was fish. By his holy spirit, the Saint knew what there was on that plate, and said: "Be it fish!" When they uncovered the plate, there was fish instead of pork. Then all the Catholic priests got frightened. Saint Nicodim told them about the true faith and about the power of God who makes miracles by those who love Him. Then Sigismund and many of his people wanted to be baptized in the Orthodox religion.

Saint Nicodim the Pious died on December, the 26th, 1406.

The architecture of Tismana Monastery is in the Byzantine style of the 14th century, resembling the churches in Macedonia and Athos, also showing a few Romanian architectural elements. The actual church of the monastery is built directly on the rock, following a triconic plan with steeples on the nave, pronaos and porch. Along the years, it suffered many transformations.

The church was painted in 1564 by Dobromir from Targoviste, being financially supported by the great magistrate Nedelcu. The painting is in the post- Byzantine style, in a polichrome fresco, applied on the initial monochrome fresco.

In 1732, the archimandrite Ioan restored the painting in the Saint Altar and in the naos. In the pronaos, the fresco from 1564 was not destroyed but there was applied a new fresco in 1766. Beginning with 1955, the painting in the pronaos started to be prickled and placed on the walls of the museum and on the corridors of the hermitages. The first fresco, thje one from 1564, was restored. The porch of the church had been demolished in Prince Bibescu's time (1842-1848) and it was rebuilt in 1983, following Saint Nicodim's plans.

In the same period, the whole monastery and all its dependencies were restored, the coordinator of the restauration work being the engineer Ioan Salajan, the actual bishop of Harghita and Covasna. In 1994, the porch of the church was painted by Grigore Popescu from Campulung Muscel, in a Byzantine style, having an appropriate design and a discrete harmony of colours. The iconographic presentation is also unique, as some newly discovered Daco-Roman saints were painted for the first time.

The Monastery of Tismana had an extraordinary treasure, now lost because of the numerous hardships that came over the monastery during the centuries.

A great part of the valuable objects of the monastery are now at the Art Museum in Bucharest. Among these objects, the most valuable is The Saint Nicodim's Gospel – a complex work of art, valuable by the beauty of its writing and the miniatural ornaments. Its covers are made of golden silver. This is the oldest Romanian manuscript and the oldest silver cover. The museum also has a rich collection of mural paintings (taken from the pronaos in 1766), old icons on

wood, religious objects, old books and clerical robes.

Inside the church there is a holy silver coffin, made by the visual artist Gheorghe Stoica. It contains three pieces of holy relics of: Saint Nicodim, Saint Ignatie Theofor and Saint John the Golden Mouth, together with the cross worn by Saint Nicodim. On the cover and inside the holy coffin these saints are presented in medallions. On the exterior there are some life scenes and some miracles made by Saint Nicodim.

In the porch of the church there is Saint Nicodim's tomb, watched by an ever burning candle.

The Holy Monastery of Tismana is a special place not only for its wonderful position but most of all for its spiritual mission that was given to it in the life of the Romanian people. It is a holy place where we can feel close to God and His saints, it is a place where miracle is present every day. It cannot be otherwise, for when Saint Nicodim was on his dying bed, he promised to give his love and help to all those who would come here, to Tismana.

The **Romanian Orthodox Church** is a Church of apostolic origins, born out of the mission of St Andrew the Apostle, who preached the Word of the Gospel also in the old Roman province of *Scythia Minor*, the territory between the Danube and the western part of the Black Sea, present Dobrogea (south east of Romania).

On 25 April 1885, the Romanian Orthodox Church became autocephal (self-governing) and on 25 February 1925 she was elevated to the rank of Patriarchate, being in dogmatic, liturgical and canonical communion with the other Sister Orthodox Churches.

According the last census, (2002), Romania has a population of 21,794,793 inhabitants, of which 86,7 % declared themselves as Christian Orthodox.



His Beatitude Patriarch DANIEL

Organisation

The Romanian Orthodox Church is organised as Patriarchate and comprises:

- within the country: 6 Metropolitanates, made up of Archdioceses and Dioceses, with a total of 13,527 parishes, served by 14,513 priests and deacons, in 15,218 places of worship;
- for the Romanian Orthodox from abroad, there are 3 Metropolitanates (made up of 3 Archdioceses and 6 Dioceses) in Europe; an Archdiocese on the American continent and a Diocese of Australia and New Zealand.

A) Central Organisation

The Holy Synod is the highest authority of the Romanian Orthodox Church in all her matters of activity. The Holy Synod is made up of the Patriarch, as president, and all metropolitans, archbishops, bishops, assistant bishops to the Patriarch and assistant bishops in function.

The deliberative central body of the Romanian Orthodox Church for all administrative, social, cultural, economical and patrimonial issues is the **National Church Assembly**, made up of three representatives of each diocese or archdiocese (a clergy and two lay persons), appointed by the respective diocesan assemblies for a term of four years. The members of the Holy Synod participate in it with deliberative vote.

The central executive body, both of the Holy Synod and of the National Church Assembly, is the **National Church Council**, made up of twelve members of the National Church Assembly (one clergy and one lay person representing each metropolitanate from Romania, designated for a term of four years). The members of the Holy Synod may participate in it with deliberative vote.

The Primate of the Romanian Orthodox Church is **His Beatitude Patriarch DANIEL**, elected on 12 September 2007 and enthroned as the 6th Patriarch of Romania on 30 September 2007.

B) Local Organisation

The administrative units of the Romanian Orthodox Church are:

- parohia;
- monastery;
- deanery;
- eparchy (archdiocese and diocese);
- metropolitanate.

2. Monastic Life

The Romanian Orthodox Church has 637 monasteries and sketes with more than 8,000 monks and nuns.

3. Theological Education

The Romanian Orthodox Church comprises:

- 33 Theological Seminaries at high school level;
- 11 Faculties of Theology and 4 Departments of Theology, which are part of the state university education system, having 9,365 students in several specialities

More than 10,000 professors teach religious education in state schools.

4. Religious Assistance

Besides usual activities in the parishes, religious assistance is also provided in:

- army, police and prisons, by 143 priests;
- hospitals, social centres and educational units, by 364 priests;

5. Social Assistance

Social institutions which are under the patronage of the Romanian Orthodox Church:

- 121 centres for children;
- 35 centres for old people;
- 106 social canteens and bakeries;
- 52 de centre de diagnostic și tratament, cabinete medicale și farmacii sociale;
- 23 centres for counselling and assistance of families in difficulty;
- 2 centres for victims of human trafficking.

The Romanian Orthodox Church provides permanent social assistance for around 270.000 persons.

In cases of natural disasters, the Romanian Orthodox Church undertakes humanitarian campaigns at national level, in order to provide immediate assistance to affected persons. At the same time, in partnership with central and local authorities and national and international non-governmental organisations, the Romanian Orthodox Church is involved in national programs for:

- preventing domestic violence;
- preventing human trafficking;
- preventing drugs abuse;
- preventing the spread of HIV/ AIDS ;
- promoting integration and social inclusion of those at risk (people with disabilities, unemployed etc.)

6. Church Institutions with missionary purpose

In the Romanian Orthodox Church function:

- The Biblical and Missionary Institute of the Romanian Orthodox Church;
 - Mass-media institutions both at the level of the Romanian Patriarchate and at the level of the dioceses;
- At the initiative of His Beatitude Patriarch Daniel, on the 27 October 2007, the Romanian Patriarchate's "BASILICA Media Centre" was established, being made up of: radio *TRINITAS*; *TRINITAS TV*; *Ziarul Lumina* (*The Light Newspaper*), *Lumina de duminică* (*The Light of Sunday*) and *Vestitorul Ortodoxiei* (*The Orthodox Messenger*) publications; *BASILICA* Press agency and the Press and Communications Office of the Romanian Patriarchate.

7. Church and Inter-religious Relations

The Romanian Orthodox Church is member of the World Council of Churches (WCC) beginning with 1961 and of the Conference of European Churches (CEC), from 1964, being also involved in local ecumenical relations. Together with other Orthodox Churches, she participates in international theological dialogues with the Roman Catholic Church, the Protestant Churches, the Anglican Church, etc. The Romanian Orthodox Church takes also part in the wider inter-religious dialogue.

Beginning with 1 January 2007, the Romanian Orthodox Church has, in Brussels, an Office of Representation to the European Union and other European political institutions.

8. Museum Collections for the Conservation of Old Books and Religious Artefacts

In the Romanian Orthodox Church there are 275 museums and museum collections, as well as 42 regional centres for storage.



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