

Dear Friends,

What am I waiting for to write this ninth edition of the newsletter relating what's been going on here in Bucharest at the Center --- snow, free time, some added dose of energy ?? In any case, time is flying by and I really want to share with you some news. But first of all, let me wish you all a Happy New Year 2014 --- one filled with tenderness and peace!

As time goes by (and I don't need to remind myself as I approach 60, that it is, I keep wondering what it is that would be most important to share with you --- some of the highlights since the last edition or rather what an ordinary day or week looks like (the latter would be harder to do but might give you an insider's view of how it is that we choose to carry out our mission in this very particular societal and Church context?



Let's begin with a few of the highlights. In the last three months of 2013 we organized two rather noteworthy conferences at the St. Peter-St. Andrew Center: the first with the philosopher Jean-Luc Marion, who presented a talk entitled, «*The Situation of Christians in the World Today* »; the second was a presentation by Cardinal Kurt Koch (cf. photo above) at the beginning of December entitled
«The Challenges of Ecumenism Today

». Two high-powered individuals who drew standing-room-only crowds, among whom there were, for the first time, bishops here in the capital form a wide variety of Christian churches, especially interested in meeting Cardinal Koch, the president of the Pontifical Council for Christian Unity. Both talks (which ca be found on our website) were of the highest quality and each presented challenges that Christians seeking unity need to hear today.



Another highlight of this period has to do with the well-deserved beatification of Bishop Vladimir Ghika, at the end of August in Bucharest. It was a beautiful, if sober, ceremony celebrating a Catholic churchman and martyr of Orthodox origin. It brought together Christians of many different confessions as well as pilgrims from Paris (you may want to look at his official biography that I contributed to in a minor way: *Vladimir Ghika, professeur d'espérance*, by F. Baltaceanu and M. Brosteanu, Cerf 2013). Bishop Ghika died in a Communist prison in Bucharest in 1954 after bloody, cruel torture.

As far as our desire to share our love of the Eastern church with the Assumption Family goes, we, together with all the members of the Family in Romania, are currently organizing a session to be held next July (11-20), the first « The Near East Forum », open to all men and women religious and lay Assumptionists. The theme of this first forum is «The Near East: A Source of Faith for Us».

Here I am at the end of my letter and I haven't tackled the question of our schedule from day to day. Well, you'll just have to come and see.

May the year that the Lord gives us in 2014 be one where we all grow in Unity, unity within each of us and unity among all of us.

Fr. Michel Kubler