

Dear Friends,

After leaving *La Croix* (Assumptionist daily newspaper in Paris) as an editor-in-chief at theend of 2009 and having enjoyed a sabbatical, my superiors have asked me to goto Romania.

I will begin my new ministryon September 14 in Bucharest, where the Congregation will re-open a large houseto serve dialogue among the Churches and the unity of all Christians.

Being involved inreconciliation between divided communities of faith has been one of our"trademarks" and was particularly developed in Eastern Europe, a land which isalmost 90% Orthodox. So it is that, for more than 100 years, the Augustiniansof the Assumption have been present in Russia, Romania, Bulgaria, Greece, Turkey,as well as Jerusalem, in what we call the "Mission d'Orient" (Eastern Mission).

The Center "Unitate"of Byzantine Studies and Ecumenical Encounters of Bucharest, where I will work and live from September 14 on, figures within this lengthy Assumptionist presence in Romania (since 1923), a prestigious history at the service of the Tradition of the Christians of the East. The building which will house the Center was built by the Assumptionists to accommodate the French Institute of Byzantine Studies in 1937, which was in Turkey at the time. But when the Communists arrived in power, it led to the expulsion of the team of religious, internationally renowned scientific scholars. Several years ago, we were able to recuperate the building and it has been completely renovated to serve its new mission.

The new community will be comprised of Frs. Lucian and Ovidiu, two young Romanians, Fr.

Cornie, a Belgian, and me. Our community will join two other existing ones in Romania, (one in Transylvania, of Byzantine rite, the other in Moldavia, of the Latin rite). The new community, of Latin rite, will oversee the Center along three axes, mainly:

+ Byzantine culture, by placing at the disposition of the public a university library, specialized in the history and doctrine of Eastern Christianity; the very existence of this tool and the exchanges that it will foster is meant to form a bridge between the Catholic and Orthodox traditions

+ ecumenical dialogue, by the organization of debates and the formation of reflection groups bringing together participants from every Christian confession to discuss questions

of Church and society.

+the formation of young Christians, in the framework of a residence for students where Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant students will learn to know better and appreciate the religious traditions of the various Christian communities.

"*Unitate*": I proposed this name for our Center, inspired by the cry which the people of Romania, both Catholic and Orthodox, expressed when Pope John Paul II visited Bucharest in 1999, the first visit of a Pope in Orthodox country. It is one way to sustain the desire of all Christians to be able to breathe with both lungs of the Church, to use an expression made popular by Pope John Paul II. We'll do this by putting ourselves at the service of the various churches of this country, but also of the entire Assumption Family throughout the world, since the Congregation has asked that the Bucharest house be concerned with keeping ecumenical fervor alive within all members of the family throughout the world.

Our center will be placed under the dual patronage of Sts. Andrew and Peter (both brothers, one patron of the Romanian Church and the other patron of the Roman Church). The icon below will be prominently displayed at the Center to remind us of the mission entrusted to us. Please pray for us! If anyone would like to support our mission financially, please send donations (payable to
the Assumptionists
) to

Development Office
Augustinians of the Assumption
330 Market Street
Brighton, MA 02135
And please specify that your gift is intended for the Bucharest mission.

Many thanks!
Fr. Michel Kubler, A.A.