



(excerpts from the annual newsletter of Fr. Michel Kubler, A.A., Director of the St. Peter-St. Andrew Center)

January 2017

Dear Friends,

...and life goes on here in Bucharest in a way that keeps me as excited and involved as ever. I could list for you any number of events that marked this past semester like the conference given by Cardinal Walter Kasper, traveling from Rome in October to speak to us of Divine Mercy during the Jubilee Year. Or, a little more eventful, the evening we sponsored in September dedicated to the pan-Orthodox council held on the island of Crete and disrupted by a group of far-right Orthodox commandos who came to launch anathemas at the participants and to denounce ecumenism as heresy! A hair-raising experience that earned us a few flattering articles, but especially served to reinforce the relationship we have with so many Orthodox friends who greatly appreciate the space we offer for dialogue and encounter.

Fortunately not every day is like these, not as spectacular! And I would like to point out that these « everyday humdrum moments » give more meaning and consistency to our lives than rave press reviews and prestigious commentaries. Thus it is with so many signs of esteem that come our way, gestures of disinterested fraternity that seem to multiply day after day, invitations offered to my brothers to explain Orthodoxy to Catholics and Catholicism to Orthodox. Such moments are not necessarily recorded in our appointment books, but often they are what gives our lives real savor. I am sure that it's the same with you wherever you may be and whatever you may do; in any case, that would be my hope for you!

What I take from all this, whether from the programmed or the unforeseen, is the need to appreciate it all. There seem to be a number of few common threads that run through my experience here in Romania– such as:

- the never-ending discovery of the country and the people who offer me a welcome here. I do not tire of this Romanian land and the friendships on which I have come to count and the « exchange of gifts » between East and West;

- the ever-widening network of contacts in the religious and cultural world, but especially the bonds that grow in trust and gratuity and thus in intensity with a large group among them, both Romanians and ex-pats, all of whom have become true friends (and I would like to point out my former parishioners in a particular way);

- the direction I give to individuals and groups who are seeking to discover a connection between their professional and personal lives, on the one hand, and their faith on the other. In this context I have recently been busy as a spiritual director to a group of Christian businessmen that has begun here in Bucharest;

- the cause of unity to be served and built especially, here, among Christians of every Church, but also among the many activities in which I get involved whether feeding breakfast to the homeless or dining at the French embassy. I have come to understand that it's only prayer that can hold it all together.

...in my spare time, the Assumptionist Bayard Press has been keeping me busy, especially during this 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation. In March they will publish a book in which I conduct a dialogue with François Clavairolly, president of the Protestant Federation of France entitled *Protestants, catholiques* : *qu'est-ce qui nous sépare encore* ? (“Protestants and Catholics: What Still Keeps us Separated?”).

In order perhaps to maintain a balance in my ecumenical efforts between the Churches of the East and the West, I have become a member of the French Institute of Byzantine Studies (Ifeb), a prestigious institution founded by the Assumptionists in Constantinople at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup>

century and later transferred to Bucharest (the facility in which we currently live was built to house this institute) and finally to Paris. I really don't have any scholarly qualifications to belong to such a group, but I represent the Assumptionists and our unquenchable thirst for the unity of Christians.

I wish you, one and all, a Happy New Year.

**Michel**

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