

REPORT
ON DESMOS STUDY VISIT TO LEBANESE ASSOCIATION
SCOUT NATIONAL ORTHODOX (S.N.O)



Upon the invitation of DESMOS Committee member, **Georges Abboud**, President of the association Scout National Orthodox (S.N.O.), DESMOS officials visited Lebanon on the last weekend in April 2010.

During the three-day visit, DESMOS President **Christos Papageorgiou** and DESMOS Secretary General **Marko Petrovic**, together with the guests from Jordan, Amman Orthodox Scouts leaders **Saeed Daoud** and **Emad Bosheh**, were offered a rich and interesting programme and the opportunity to find out more about S.N.O., which is a founding member of The International Link of Orthodox Christian Scouts DESMOS.

Besides visits to S.N.O. scout groups and meeting with President of the Lebanese Scout Federation Mr. **Kamal Fakher** and his associates, the programme comprised the meeting with the World Scout Committee member **Georges El Ghorayeb**, and the meetings with local Church officials, as well as a number of social events, but also sight-seeing of certain famous Lebanese tourist spots.

The first day of the visit started with the meeting with **Colonel Naji Aramouni**, General Manager of the "Monroe" hotel in Beirut, where we stayed during our visit to Lebanon. We had a nice and very friendly exchange with Colonel Aramouni, who wished us a pleasant stay in the hotel he's running, as well as a nice and fruitful visit to Lebanon.



The next scheduled visit in Beirut was the one to **Annahar newspaper**, where we were given the opportunity to be acquainted with the work of this distinguished Lebanese media. In addition to a very detailed presentation of this newspaper's work, one of the journalists made an interview with us and gave us the opportunity to briefly present our Link, its Mission, Vision and objectives.

The programme continued with an extraordinary visit to **Jeita Grotto**, the famous Lebanese site nominated for the new world wonders. Visiting this unique natural wonder was a wonderful experience. We were really impressed with the beauty of this worldwide famous cave and we did enjoy it.



The next step was the visit to the beautiful monastery up in the mountain, where the lunch was organized with **Archbishop Elias Kfoury**, Pastor of Sidon and Tyr.



Archbishop Elias Kfoury welcomed us warmly and we had the opportunity to present him our Link and Desmos activities. Archbishop said he will continue to support S.N.O. scouts and their engagement in Desmos. President Christos Papageorgou expressed gratitude for a warm welcome and offered Archbishop a small gift.

DESMOS/S.N.O. expedition continued towards **Bekaa** Valey, passing through beautiful parts of Lebanon and enjoying in wonderful landscapes.

The next stop was **Zahle**, where we arrived in the afternoon.



In Zahle, we had the meeting with the Orthodox Church **Archbishop Esperedon Khoury** Pastor of Zahle and Bekaa.

Once again we experienced a warm welcome and extraordinary hospitality. We had a nice discussion with the Archbishop, whom we presented the International Link of Orthodox Christian Scouts DESMOS and our efforts in assisting young people in developing the spiritual dimension in Scouting, thus improving their overall personal development.



In the late afternoon, we had the opportunity and the pleasure to meet S.N.O. scout leaders and volunteers in **Jdita** village in the Bekaa Valley. It was really a warm encounter in a very friendly atmosphere. We were welcomed in a traditional way with music and dances and with Church bells ringing ...



After the welcome ceremony, the discussion with leaders was organized in the Church premises. It was interesting to have an exchange with leaders on the issue of spiritual dimension in Scouting, and about DESMOS mission, vision and objectives.



Afterwards, we had a pleasure to take part in the Promise ceremony, on the occasion of welcoming five new leaders in Scouting.

The first day of our visit to Lebanon ended with a very nice dinner with traditional Lebanese food, organized in a charming restaurant in Zahle. There, we had the opportunity to summarize the activities of the very busy day and have an informal exchange with S.N.O. officials and young leaders.

The second day of our visit to Lebanon started with meetings with Orthodox Church officials.

Firstly, we had a nice and fruitful encounter with **Archbishop Georges Khoder**, Pastor of Mount Lebanon. He confirmed his strong support to S.N.O. scouts. →



Further on, in Beirut, we were also received by **Archbishop Elias Aude**, Pastor of Beirut, with whom we had an interesting exchange on the spiritual dimension in Scouting, role of Church and role of DESMOS.

The first half of the second day of our visit to Lebanon was completed with the visit to the Headquarters of the **Lebanese Scouting Federation**, where we had the meeting with the Chairman, Mr. **Kamal Fakher** and the LSF Board members.



We presented DESMOS work and stressed upon its consultative status with WOSM. With full respect of the fact that LSF comprises quite a number of scout associations, we suggested Mr. Fakher to consider the possibility to include in official LSF delegation for the next World Scout Conference in Brazil one representative of S.N.O. We believe it was a good meeting and we express our gratitude to the Lebanese Scout Federation and Mr. Kamal Fakher himself for reserving time to have meeting with us.



In the early afternoon, we visited Mr. **Georges El Ghorayeb**, the World Scout Committee member, in his office in Beirut. It was a warm encounter with an old friend and important person in the world of Scouting. After a pleasant conversation and exchange of information about DESMOS and actual issues in World Scouting, we had lunch together in one charming restaurant in Beirut.



The rest of the day was reserved for the general meeting with all **S.N.O. leaders and adult volunteers**.

The large group of around forty **Orthodox scouts from Syria** joined the gathering.

The audience had the opportunity to hear the addresses of hosts and guests, as well as the presentation of DESMOS.

The Orthodox scouts from Syria contributed to the programme with their **pipe band**, which performed nice music.

The gathering was an excellent opportunity to encourage the officials, leaders and adult volunteers to continue their work with equal commitment and enthusiasm they manifested so far, and to communicate them the information on the forthcoming DESMOS events.



This gathering was also an opportunity for S.N.O. leaders and adult volunteers to ask questions and get answers related to DESMOS and its work, to the spiritual dimension in Scouting and to the World Scouting in general.



The last day of our mission in Lebanon was reserved for a visit to the northern part of this country.

On our way towards Tripoli, we stopped at the beautiful **Monastery of Sayidat Nouriya**, where we were present for the morning Holy Liturgy.



The Monastery with its nice architecture and extraordinary position with a wonderful view to the Sea, leaves the visitors breathless. We did enjoy this visit after a previous day's tough agenda and knowing we're just at the beginning of another very busy day...

The next stop was the town of **Tripoli**, where we had meeting with leaders and scouts of S.N.O. scout group **Saint Esprit**.



Encounter with scouts and leaders of the Saint Esprit scout group was very nice. They presented us their work and activities and we had an open discussion on various issues.

The cub scouts also welcomed us and offered us some lovely presents.

We also had the opportunity to meet the local Church officials, who strongly support the work and activities of this scout group.



The scouts of the Saint Esprit scout group meet a full understanding of the local Church. They use the Church premises for their indoors activities.

The Orthodox scouts from Tripoli organized for us a sightseeing, offering us the opportunity to get acquainted to some of the interesting spots of their town.



We did enjoy the company of Orthodox scouts from Tripoli.

After several hours spent in Tripoli, DESMOS/S.N.O. expedition visited **El Mina** and had encounter with scouts and leaders of **Saint Elias** scout group.



Once again, warm welcome, nice and useful discussions with scout leaders in a pleasant atmosphere, in this scout group's premises.



Further on, the meeting with the Mayor of El Mina in the City Hall and then – surprise!

The Mayor arranged for us an unforgettable one hour cruising tour around El Mina bay...

Wonderful!



The last encounter with scouts and leaders according to the programme of our visit to Lebanon was **Sainte Catherine** scout group, in **Anfe**.



Beautiful place, wonderful people, pleasant atmosphere, enthusiastic scouts and leaders.



The host scout group prepared an interesting PPT presentation on their work. They informed us about their activities and events they took part at.

Then we presented them the Mission, Vision and objectives of The International Link of Orthodox Christian Scouts, as well as DESMOS events planned for the forthcoming period.



We spent there a wonderful, unforgettable evening.

Leaving Anfe, after three days with a very busy agenda and facing a night trip back home, we were of course tired but we felt very good because of a nice and fruitful mission we completed.

On our way back towards Beirut, we visited **Byblos**, where we had dinner with our hosts in a relaxing atmosphere, on one of the squares in this wonderful ancient town.

The site first appears to have been settled during the Neolithic period, approximately 5000 BC. Neolithic remains of some buildings can be observed at the site. According to the writer "Philo of Byblos", Byblos had the reputation of being **the oldest city in the world**, founded by Cronus. During the 3rd millennium BC, the first signs of a town can be observed, with the remains of well-built houses of uniform size. This was the period when the Phoenician civilization began to develop.



Given the time of our arrival in Byblos, we had the opportunity to experience the night view of this extraordinary town, which was fascinating.

Summarizing the impressions, we feel we should say that:

- S.N.O. organized a very good study visit, and made significant efforts in covering all expenditures. The logistics offered was excellent.
- S.N.O. leaders and adult volunteers, their commitment and enthusiasm, are the guarantee of further development and prosperity of this association and, consequently, of The International Link of Orthodox Christian Scouts.
- S.N.O. has good reputation within the Lebanese Scouting Federation, which is important considering the consultative status DESMOS has with WOSM.
- S.N.O. has excellent relations with most of the Church officials. This association pays very much attention to spiritual development of its members and achieves good results.
- DESMOS encourages S.N.O. to continue its fruitful work and extend its activities in terms of cooperation with other DESMOS countries.
- DESMOS is proud of its young people, leaders and volunteers, the treasury we rely on.

DESMOS expresses gratitude to the Association S.N.O. and its President GEORGES ABOUD, DESMOS Committee member, for excellently organized visit.

Christos Papageorgiou, DESMOS President
Marko Petrovic, DESMOS Secretary General

DESMOS YOUTH



LEBANON, April 2010.