



The Maronite Voice



A Publication of the Maronite Eparchies in the USA

Volume X

Issue No. IV

April 2014

Resurrection: One Flock

The *Mazmooro* (Psalm of the Reading) for Resurrection Sunday reads: "Peace and hope have been given to all people far and near. From the tomb Christ has risen, gathering his flock as one."

Truly Christ is Risen! His Resurrection is so important to our faith that St. Paul says, "If Christ has not risen then...our faith will be in vain" (1 Cor. 15:14).

But why is this fact of the Resurrection so important? The Lord Jesus taught us by his words and by his actions about the love that our heavenly Father has for us. He taught us how we are to respond to this love of God: We are to love God above all else; we are to love our neighbor as ourselves; we are even to love our enemies. By His glorious Resurrection, the Lord has confirmed that all that He is, all that He taught, all that He did, was, in fact, true. Because of the Resurrection we can have confidence in the truth of the teachings of Jesus, who is the Way, the Truth and the Life. It is something on which we can stake our lives. Throughout our history many of our fellow Christians have done just that.

As the last verse of the *Mazmooro* quoted above tells us, Christ desires to gather us as one flock. That should be one of the manifestations of the Resurrection of Christ. We should be one flock, with our one Shepherd, Jesus. Being one flock, acting as one flock, speaking as one flock, truly living as one flock is not always easy. It can be a struggle. But we should never tire of struggling to live as one. After all, our own resurrection is really not far off. Just as the death of Jesus is behind Him, so too, through our baptism, we, too, have put death behind us. What is before us is our own resurrection in the Lord.

One of the unique aspects of how we, as Maronites, celebrate the great Feast of the Resurrection is known as the "Rite of Peace." After the homily the priest opens the tomb and removes the cross draped in a white cloth for a procession and for blessing the four "corners" of the earth. Holding the cross he proclaims: "O Lord, you are the source of peace and security and the great treasure of reconciliation...Bind us together." It is truly Christ that "binds us together."

(Continues on page 20)



The Empty Tomb by Fr. Abdo Badwi, University of the Holy Spirit, Kaslik, Lebanon (USEK), Department of Sacred Art.

Schedule of Bishop Elias Zaidan

April 1, 2014

Presbyteral Council Meeting, Saint Louis, Mo.

April 3 - 13, 2014

Pastoral visits to St. Maron Church, Detroit, Mich.; St. Sharbel Church, Warren, Mich.; and St. Rafka Mission, Lavonia, Mich.

April 7, 2014

Noursat Board Meeting, Detroit, Mich.

April 14 - 20, 2014

Holy Week and Easter Celebration, St. Raymond Cathedral, Saint Louis, Mo.

April 25 - 27, 2014

Pastoral Visit to Holy Family Church, Saint Paul, Minn.

May 1, 2014

50th Anniversary of Ordination of Bishop Robert Shaheen, Saint Louis, Mo.

May 2 - 4, 2014

Pastoral Visit to Our Lady of Lebanon Church, Chicago, Ill.

May 4, 2014

Visit to the community of Greater Milwaukee, Wisc.

May 6 - 8, 2014

Eastern Catholic Bishops Meeting, Saint Louis, Mo.

May 9 - 11, 2014

Pastoral Visit to St. Rafka Church, Lakewood [Denver], Col. □

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Our Lady of Victory Maronite Church

Pittsburgh, Penn.

July 2 - 6, 2014

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Saint Louis, Missouri

Priestly Ordination of a Married Deacon



Bishop A. Elias Zaidan ordains Deacon Wissam Akiki to Priesthood.

by Shelly Vitale

A momentous occasion took place at St. Raymond Maronite Cathedral in St. Louis, Mo., on Thursday, February 27, 2014. Wissam George Akiki, a married deacon, was ordained a Maronite priest. The Cathedral was filled with clergy, religious, laity, members of the deacon's family including his wife, Manal, daughter, Perla, father, George, and mother-in-law, Liliane, along with hundreds of supporters. The media was present from near and far to document this wonderful and extraordinary event. The procession began with members of the Order of Saint Sharbel and the Knights of St. Gregory the Great standing Honor Guard. Bishop A. Elias Zaidan, Bishop of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon, was the main celebrant along with Bishop Emeritus Robert J. Shaheen of St. Raymond Cathedral; Chorbishop Moussa Joseph, Rector of St. Raymond Cathedral; Father Elias Sleiman, Rector of Our Lady of Mount Lebanon Cathedral in Los Angeles, who is the godfather to

Father Wissam; Chorbishop Richard Saad, Vicar General of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon and Pastor of St. Elias Church in Birmingham, Ala.; Father Milad Yaghi, Personal Secretary to Bishop Zaidan and Pastor of Our Lady of the Cedars in Houston, Tex.; Monsignor Joubbran BouMerhi, Pastor of St. Jude Church in Murray, Utah; Monsignor sharbel Maroun, Pastor of St. Maron Church in Minneapolis, Minn.; Father Gary George CSsR, Director of Youth Ministry; Father George Hajj, Associate Pastor of St. Maron Church in Cleveland, Ohio; Father Tony Massad, Administrator of St. Rafka Mission in Livonia, Mich.; and Father Rodrique Constantin, Pastor of Holy Family Church in Saint Paul, Minn., who was the Master of Ceremonies during the ordination. Also participating on the altar were Deacon Lou Peters from St.

Raymond Cathedral, Deacon John Sfeir from Chicago, Ill., Subdeacon George Simon from St. Raymond Cathedral, and local priests and religious.

The deacon's family played integral parts during his ordination including the reading by his wife, Manal, the intercessions by his daughter, Perla and the presentation of the offerings by Manal, Perla, Deacon Wissam's father, George, and mother-in-law Liliane. His mother-in-law also sang a beautiful and moving song in his honor.

Bishop Elias Zaidan gave an inspirational homily regarding priesthood and Deacon Wissam's new journey and how he will be called to love all people, by being there for them and caring for them. He was very proud to announce that Deacon Wissam was his first priestly ordination since his own Ordination to Bishop. He offered Deacon Wissam prayers and congratulations.

Each member of the clergy participated in a special way. Bishop Elias Zaidan ordained the Deacon and then presented him to the congregation as Father Wissam George Akiki.

Father Akiki, humbled by everyone's tremendous support, spoke with great passion and gratitude. In his remarks, he thanked God and said that he wanted to give himself completely to Jesus Christ. He acknowledged His Holiness Pope Francis for granting him permission to be ordained a priest. He thanked Patriarch Bechara Rai for his support along with Bishop Elias Zaidan, Bishop Emeritus Robert Shaheen and Chorbishop Moussa Joseph, as well as many others. He was grateful to the people of St. Raymond for always making him and his family feel welcomed. He appreciated the love and support he received from them. He promised his St. Raymond family that they would always be in his daily prayers. He acknowledged the choir, including Director John LeCuyer and Organist Mike Vitale, and complimented them on their great work and devotion. He spoke of the two great blessings in his life which consisted of his ten-year marriage to Manal along with the birth of their beautiful daughter Perla and the dream to serve the Lord as a priest. He thanked his family and he gave a special message to his father in Arabic. He said, "Thank you for crossing the ocean to be here with us today. I am sure you and my mother are very proud of this moment and you will go back home and talk about this blessed day. Please take this message with you to our family in Lebanon and let them know that now they have a priest in the family praying for them every day."

Mayor Francis Slay of the City of St. Louis presented Father Wissam Akiki the key to the City of St. Louis, and he told him that he is welcome in St. Louis anytime. Dr. Maged Haikal, a friend of Father Wissam and member of the St. Raymond community, spoke on his behalf as well as Father Wissam's wife, Manal, who said that she was proud to be his wife and that she would always support him and his special work for the Lord.

At the end of the Liturgy, Chorbishop Moussa Joseph invited guests to attend a reception for Father Akiki at the Cedars Hall. □

Portland, Oregon Monk Ordained Subdeacon



From left: Reverend Albert Constantine, Subdeacon Monk Anthony Joseph Alles, M.M.J.M.J., Prior Jonathan Decker, M.M.J.M.J., Most Reverend A. Elias Zaidan, Subdeacon John Michael Morgan, M.M.J.M.J., Deacon Tony Karam and Deacon Wadih Kaldawi. □

On February 12, 2014, His Excellency Bishop A. Elias Zaidan, M.L.M., ordained Monk John Michael Morgan of the Sacred Heart Monastery to the Minor Orders of Cantor, Lector and Subdeacon. These were, provisionally, the Most Reverend Elias' first ordinations of any kind. The ordinations took place at Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral in Los Angeles, Calif.

Father Prior Jonathan Decker and Subdeacon Monk Anthony Joseph Alles, M.M.J.M.J., of the Sacred Heart Monastery in Beaverton, Ore., welcomed their newly ordained Brother into a new dimension of his life in service to the Church.

Those in attendance from Portland included Deacon Tony Karam, Deacon Wadih Kaldawi, with his wife, Mona, and Sr. Mariam Sharbel Vianney.

On the following Sunday, the parishioners of St. Sharbel Church held a dinner in honor of the newly ordained monk.

The Maronite Monks are ever grateful to Almighty God for granting this ordination and for another monk's reception of simple vows. They also want to thank Bishop Elias for the wonderful hospitality that he extended while they visited. A special thanks as well to Father Elias Sleiman, Rector of the Cathedral, for his hospitality.

Inquiries into the monastic vocation and life in the Pacific Northwest are referred to the Monks' website, www.mmjmj.com. □



Sacramento, California Dedication of the Church



Bishop Zaidan anoints the altar of Our Lady of the Rosary with the Holy Oil.

His Excellency Bishop Elias Abdallah Zaidan visited Our Lady of the Rosary on Saturday, February 15, 2014, to meet the community and celebrate the church's third year anniversary with a Valentine's Dinner Banquet where the Young Adults of Our Lady of the Rosary Church performed a Lebanese *Dabke* Performance in honor of the Bishop's presence. The following day, Bishop Zaidan solemnly dedicated the church during the morning Divine Liturgy. Temporary Administrator Chorbishop William Leser and Monsignor Michael Kiernan, Sacramento Diocesan Liaison Officer for Eastern Catholic Churches and Pastor of our local Latin parish, concelebrated.

The ceremony of the dedication of the church began with everyone gathered outside the church's main entrance with the doors locked. After the Bishop sprinkled and anointed the outside with holy water, he knocked on the main door seeking entrance three times. Chorbishop Leser and Deacon Tony Boukhalil were inside responding to the Bishop and finally opened the doors for all to follow into the church.

After the homily Bishop Elias sprinkled holy water on the walls of the church, incensed them and anointed them. He also anointed and consecrated the wooden altar built by one of the parishioners. After the walls were solemnly blessed, a number of individuals helped pin red ribbon around them, symbolizing that they were consecrated to the Lord. Some ladies and the parishioner who built the altar brought forward linens to dress the altar. After the Divine Liturgy, a reception was held in honor of Bishop Zaidan. Following the reception Bishop Zaidan left to visit the Mission in Stockton and celebrate an evening Divine Liturgy with them. □

Waterville, Maine Lenten Retreat



From left: Sister Teresa Touma, Fr. Larry Jensen, Mother Marla Marie and Natalie Salameh.

by Natalie Salameh

On Saturday, March 22, 2014, the Maronite Servants of Christ the Light offered a retreat for the parishioners of St. Joseph Maronite Church in Waterville, Maine. The focus of the retreat was the Gospel parable of the Prodigal Son, emphasizing the theme of repentance and coming home to the love and security of the Father's tender care.

The morning opened with a meet and greet of the retreat participants, followed by the praying of the Maronite Morning Prayer (*Safro*) led by Father Larry Jensen, Pastor. Mother Marla Marie began the day's first reflection followed by a *Lectio Divina* (Divine Reading) on the parable. She explained that the younger prodigal son and the self-righteous elder brother both lived in the same house with a compassionate and loving father, but neither of them really knew their father. Both brothers were too closed in on themselves which prevented them from having a meaningful relationship with the father.

The parable of the Prodigal Son calls us all to a deeper conversion. Mother Marla Marie was able to assist the retreat participants in applying the parable to their own personal spiritual journey. How many of us go to Church every Sunday because we are "simply doing the right thing" or "fulfilling our obligations," but not really experiencing the tender embrace and mercy of our heavenly Father?

The afternoon of the retreat included an hour of adoration before the Holy Mysteries, with a deeply prayerful and meditative reflection on the sorrowful mysteries of the rosary. The retreat participants were also able to celebrate in Saturday's Vigil Liturgy of the Prodigal Son, followed by a lenten supper with lots of sharing on the day's thoughts and reflections.

Here are some thoughts from some retreat participants: "We had such an enriching day! The talks led to a very deep scrutiny of the Prodigal Son parable. This was richly

enhanced by the quiet personal meditations throughout the day and in our Rosary prayer which made it truly a retreat in all our senses. I am positively changed and more closely bonded through this experience with my parish family" - Lyn Rowden.

"The Sisters' presentation opened up more dialogue among the Lebanese and non-Lebanese attendees which led to sharing questions and answers among the participants." - Joe Rowden

"It was a very valuable retreat; it helped us as individuals and as a parish to develop a greater understanding of our Lenten practices and sacrifices" - Emily Fournier.

For those interested in holding a similar retreat for their parishes, please contact the Maronite Servants of Christ: sister@maroniteservants.org. □

Utica, New York Day of Recollection



On March 2, 2014, Cana Sunday, the Holy Name Society of St. Louis Gonzaga Church in Utica, N.Y., hosted a day of recollection for the men of the parish. Mr. Rick Blank, Holy Name President, invited Father Saba Shofany to be the guest speaker. In addition to listening to the two presentations by the Melkite priest, the thirty participants enjoyed the fellowship of a lunch together and had the opportunity to receive the sacrament of reconciliation. □



Deadline for next month's issue of *The Maronite Voice* is April 25, 2014.

The Maronite Voice is the official newsletter of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon and of the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn.

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Digital pictures must be in "JPG" format and in high resolution (300dpi). *The Maronite Voice* is also available online, in PDF format, at www.stmaron.org. □

Brooklyn, New York Bishop Zaidan's Visit

by Salma Vahdat

The Community of Faith of Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral in Brooklyn, N.Y., welcomed the newest Maronite Bishop, Abdallah Elias Zaidan, Bishop of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon, to open the first service of Great Lent on March 7, 2014. It was a momentous occasion for all, many of whom remembered him from his service as assistant rector of the Cathedral beginning in September, 1988 to January, 1990. For more recent members of the Cathedral, it was a "getting to know and love you" opportunity. All took advantage of the occasion!

Following the Benediction with the Cross, Bishop Zaidan greeted the faithful with his homily. Citing his previous tour at the Cathedral and his pleasure at returning to meet with us, he thanked Bishop Gregory and Msgr. James Root, Rector, for the invitation. Soft spoken but intense in his delivery, he began his comments centered on the virtue of faith, emphasizing that faith is the virtue by which we believe in God and all that He has said and revealed to us and which our holy Church proposes for our belief. It is also our response to God's revelation.

He compared our growth in faith to that of a human being. As a person grows so our faith matures. It goes from observing and learning, discernment and choices, decision and commitment, to planting and reaping the fruits of our belief. He urged us to make a difference, to evangelize through good example, preaching, and works of charity. We are not as well informed as other religions, citing Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses and Muslims. As Christians we are encouraged to reflect God in our daily life. It is certainly a goal worth attaining.

On Sunday, March 9, Bishop Zaidan celebrated the Divine Liturgy. Bishop Mansour, Msgr. Maroun El-Asmar and Msgr. James Root, Rector, concelebrated. Deacon Brother Youseff-Mariam, CFR, and Subdeacon Norbert Vogl assisted. In his homily, Bishop Zaidan nostalgically commented on his tour at the Cathedral and his time as rector of Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral in Los Angeles while Bishop Mansour was Vicar General of the western Eparchy. It was a warm and happy recollection which we enjoyed sharing with him.

Following the Divine Liturgy, the Parish held a reception in the Social Hall, where everyone was able to greet the new Bishop. For a bit I was thinking that Bishop Zaidan and Bishop Gregory were actually *brothers*. They share the same aura of gentility, humility and approachability. What wonderful traits for our Shepherds to bear. We gave a warm welcome and offered a beautiful repast sponsored by the ladies of the Confraternity of the Immaculate Conception. □

Worcester, Massachusetts MYA Movie Night



by Miriam Chouki

On Saturday, March 15, 2014, the Maronite Young Adults and Fr. Gaby Hoyek, Pastor of Our Lady of Mercy in Worcester, Massachusetts, went to a local movie theater to watch the new hit release, *Son of God*. The group returned to the parish rectory to discuss the film.

The event gave the young adults and Fr. Gaby a chance to spend time. Discussing the film, the group came to the conclusion that the film was entertaining but not precisely accurate as it disregarded and altered some of the events that took place in the Holy Bible. However, the event was successful in the sense that it was fun to watch and discuss the film together as a group, helping each of us to grow deeper in our understanding of our faith. □

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Please watch our website for all registration material,
www.maronite-youth.com. □

San Diego, California MYO Regional Retreat



by Nada Salloum,
St. John Maron, Orange, Calif.

The Regional Youth Retreat at St. Ephrem Maronite Church in San Diego, Calif., organized and implemented by Father Gary George and his team, was a weekend focused on self protection, trust, confession, and a passion for Christ with action, not with words. Father Gary shared personal experiences and involved the youth with group workshops and heart-felt powerpoints which allowed them to reflect, express and pray.

Bishop Zaidan, Bishop of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon, attended the weekend and had many encouraging words for the MYO. He spoke to them with much love and asked them to continue in their growth in Christ and their commitment to their church and community.

Each day concluded with a fun outing or a *hafli*. This allowed the 130 youth from various counties to interact and strengthen their friendships as a community. They shared moments of laughter, tears and love for one another.

The overwhelming welcome, hospitality and care was extended to over 150 youth and chaperones by the St. Ephrem's volunteers who spent endless hours in preparation and service. Their love was evident throughout the retreat. Words cannot express enough gratitude for their Christ-like service and warm welcome.

Thank you, Father Gary, for sharing your passion for Jesus! Your zeal and love for Christ is profound and contagious. We pray for your good health and your continuous connection with the youth throughout the Eparchy. We look forward to your return in May.

A special thanks extends to Father Toufic Nasr, Pastor, for hosting the West Coast Maronite Region and to all the participating clergy. Much appreciation goes to Father Tony Bakh, Pastor of St. John Maron in Orange, Calif., for supporting the youth and encouraging activities throughout the year.

We are grateful to the parents for entrusting us with their teens as well as to the advisers, chaperones and volunteers for their commitment. □

Westchester, New York Canonization Celebration

Blessed John Paul II Maronite Mission in Westchester, N.Y., will celebrate the canonization of its Patron, John Paul II, on April 24 -27, 2014, at the Immaculate Conception, 199 N Broadway, Sleepy Hollow, N.Y., location.

Program of Events

Thursday, April 24:

6:00 pm: Holy Hour (Eucharistic Adoration)
7:00 pm: Guest Lecture: The life of St. John Paul II, followed by a Wine and Cheese Reception

Friday, April 25:

6:00 pm: Evening Prayer
7:00 pm: Youth Rally followed by a concert by the Catholic Band
FULL ARMOR

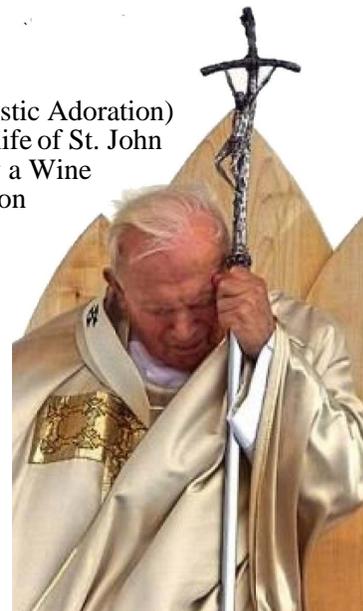
Saturday, April 26:

2:00 pm: Children's presentations on the life of St. John Paul II (cookies and juice served)
5:00 pm: Mass according to Roman Catholic Rite
7:00 pm: Gala Dinner at Knollwood Country Club (Elmsford, N.Y.)

Sunday, April 27:

10:00 am: Mass according to Roman Catholic Rite
11:30 am: Maronite Divine Liturgy followed by reception in the Hall
3:00 pm: Tridentine Latin Mass

For more information or if you would like to help please contact Frances Mourani: wfmourani@aol.com. □



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Philadelphia, Pennsylvania *Bishop's Visit*

by Amal Kouyoumdji

St. Maron Church in Philadelphia, Penn., was graced with the presence of Bishop Gregory Mansour on March 2, 2014. As far as the parishioners knew, Bishop Gregory was coming to celebrate his ten year anniversary (to the day) of his ordination as the Bishop of the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn. As is the standard of "South Philly Hospitality," Bishop Gregory was welcomed with excitement and appreciation. The parishioners of St. Maron honored him by presenting him with a beautiful gold and diamond lapel pin in the shape of the Rabbula Cross along with a beautiful cake donated by the Termini Bakery in South Philadelphia.



But the Bishop's visit to Philadelphia was more than to honor his anniversary. He was here to present the Massabki Award to two parishioners who exemplify the qualities of such a prestigious award. This year we honored Costa Mansour and James Tayoun, Sr., who have dedicated much of their time to St. Maron Church, the priests who have served this parish, the people who have been loyal to this Church, and the wonderful children in this community. Their hard work and dedication have touched the lives of everyone in this community. How blessed St. Maron is to have people like Costa and Jimmy always trying to better this parish and its people.

Jimmy has served on the Finance Council for many years, publishes and prints the weekly bulletins, was one of many responsible for the newly renovated Msgr. Sharbel Lischaa Community Center, and has been extremely supportive in building this community of faith.

Costa has served on the Parish Council for many years, is a NAM delegate for St. Maron Parish, volunteers his time for the annual summer festival, transports the youth to regional and national conventions and retreats, and is always one of the first to participate in church activities. Both of these men are very deserving of this award.

After the presentation of the awards, Bishop Gregory, along with the Pastor Fr. Vincent Farhat and the Religious Education Director, Amal Kouyoumdji, went to each of the seven CCD classes to visit with the children and to talk to them about the importance of learning about the faith.

A reception was held so the community could congratulate Bishop Gregory, Costa and Jimmy. Bishop Gregory's visit energized, once again, this thriving and beautiful community of South Philly. □

Cincinnati, Ohio *Regional Retreat*



A large turnout of MYO from all over the Midwest, and even a few from Georgia, battled through the snow covered streets of Cincinnati, Ohio, arriving safe and sound on the day of love, February 14, 2014. They received a warm welcome from our hosts at St. Anthony of Padua Church where they kick-started their weekend retreat with an icebreaker involving lots of candy. This was no surprise, as Father Gary George headed the retreat with most needed and appreciated assistance from Lisa Bishara, Rosa Calabria, and Deacon William. The youth were then able to share their most prized talents with their fellow youth groups, who were encouraging to one another. Father Gary intertwined spiritual discussions, including a theme of listening, with fun activities such as a bowling outing. Of course we had daily prayer, a reconciliation service with assistance from Fr. George Hajj and Fr. Tony Massad, and a Sunday liturgy in which the MYO and the local parishioners shared in serving. It is reassuring to see how innocently the youth come together and unite, leaving any drama back home, and embracing the companionship of old friends and making lifelong new friends. They understand that the church and their retreats are a place to unite, to love one another and not to bully each other. This was shown, for example, with the youth from each Michigan parish forming a *dabke* line together and making sure to get a picture as one large family together. A special thanks to the local parishioners who worked very hard in the kitchen. Be sure to encourage the youth from both eparchies, the future of the Maronite Church, to attend their annual national retreat in Pittsburgh, Penn., at La Roche Campus on June 28 - July 3, 2014. □

Food For Thought

If in Christ we have been tempted, in Him we overcome the devil. Do you think only of Christ's temptations and fail to think of His victory? See yourself as tempted in Him, and see yourself as victorious in Him. He could have kept the devil from Himself; but if He were not tempted He could not teach you how to triumph over temptation.

St. Augustine of Hippo

Glen Allen, Virginia Youth Regional Retreat



by Cathy George

"**Y**ES" was the correct response to the question of "Are you the salt of the earth?" Eight-eight youth and chaperones from St. Sharbel Mission in Raleigh, N.C., St. Elias Maronite Church in Roanoke, Va., Our Lady of Lebanon Maronite Church, in Washington, D.C., and St. Anthony in Glen Allen, Va., attended the Youth Regional Retreat at Saint Anthony Maronite Catholic Church in Glen Allen (Richmond), Va., from March 7 - 9, 2014.

The youth learned that in YES, Y stands for "You." Jesus said that "You are the salt of the earth." We have to stand up and be strong in our relationship with God and others. The E stands for the excellent preservative that salt provides. Salt promises to keep things safe. We have to do that for each other. The S stands for salt and its value. Salt was so precious that it was used as money; so, too, is every life precious and valued on this earth. The youth and chaperones pledged their "yes" to following Jesus in their lives. The first evening ended with a candlelit rosary service.

Dan Harms, the Director of Youth Ministry at St. Bridget Church in Richmond and a musician and speaker at Popple, was the guest speaker for Saturday morning of the retreat. The students thought that his energy was contagious. They said he was very enthusiastic, and they loved how he played his guitar. His interactive sessions made the Bible stories of Samuel's call by God and Peter's walking on water come alive. He encouraged the youth to reach out to God and to each other daily.

In the vocations session, Monsignor George Sebaali talked about the priestly vocation and about how to discern a vocation. He said it was not always easy and it takes time.

The students also heard about the married vocation from Eddie and Linda Shibley, who have been married for forty years. They talked about how marriage is a sacred covenant between God and each other and how they worked together to make decisions. Marah Bourret said, "I loved the vocations talks. You don't usually hear or talk about marriage being a vocation in life."

The youth participated in the Mystery of Reconciliation and a prayer service. Rev. William Noe from Sacred Heart

Catholic Church in Richmond assisted with confessions. The evening ended with a variety show and dancing. The youth participated in a closing liturgy the following morning. All of the churches were represented in reading, presenting of the gifts and passing of peace. □

Schedule of Bishop Gregory Mansour

April 4, 2014

Lenten Mission, Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral, Brooklyn, N.Y.

April 6, 2014

Blessed John Paul II Mission, Westchester, N.Y.

April 9 - 10, 2014

Telumiere Board of Directors Meeting, Detroit, Mich.

April 11, 2014

Visit of the Superior General, Fr. Malek Boutanos, of the Lebanese Maronite Missionaries (M.L.M.) To Brooklyn, N.Y.

April 13, 2014

Hosanna Sunday at Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral, Brooklyn, N.Y.; Sunday afternoon, Liturgy at the Manhattan Maronite Mission, Manhattan, N.Y.

April 15, 2014

Brooklyn Latin Diocesan Chrism Mass with Bishop DiMarzio

April 16, 2014

Rite of the Lamp, anointing and prayers for all the sick, Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral, Brooklyn, N.Y.

April 17 - 18, 2014

Washing of the Feet and Good Friday Signing of the Chalice, St. Anthony/St. George Church, Wilkes-Barre, Penn.

April 18 - 20, 2014

Good Friday evening, Holy Saturday and Easter Sunday Liturgy at Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral, Brooklyn, N.Y.

April 26 - 27, 2014

Feast of the Canonization of Pope John Paul II at Blessed John Paul II Mission, Westchester, N.Y.

April 29, 2014

Eparchial Presbyteral Council Meeting, The Chancery, Brooklyn, N.Y.

April 30, 2014

Eparchial Finance Council Meeting, The Chancery, Brooklyn, N.Y.

May 4, 2014

Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral, Brooklyn, N.Y. 5:00 p.m., Liturgy at the Manhattan Mission, N.Y.

May 6 - 8, 2014

Eastern Catholic Bishops Annual Meeting, Saint Louis, Mo.

May 9 - 10, 2014

Pastoral Visit and Mother's Day, St. Theresa Church, Brockton, Mass.

May 18, 2014

Ordination to Priesthood of Brother Youssef Mariam, Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral, Brooklyn, N.Y. □

"Priest, Prophet and King"

by

Very Rev. Robert Barron

A classic characterization of Jesus is that he is priest, prophet, and king. As priest, he sanctifies, that is to say, he reestablishes the lost link between divinity and humanity; as prophet, he speaks and embodies the divine truth; and as king, he leads us on the right path, giving guidance to the human project. You might say that, as priest, he is the life; as prophet, he is the truth; and as king he is the way.

Not only is this munus triplex (triple office) a rich way to characterize the Lord; it is also a very good way to designate who the baptized are supposed to be. According to Catholic theology, baptism is much more than merely a symbolic sign of belonging to the church. It is the means by which a person is incorporated into Christ, becoming a member of his mystical body. Baptism, accordingly, makes the baptized an alter Christus, another Christ. This is precisely why, for example, every candidate for baptism is anointed with oil, just as, in the Old Testament, priests, prophets, and kings were anointed upon assumption of their offices.

So what does this look like in practice? How does it show itself in the lives of ordinary believers? Let us look at priesthood first. A priest fosters holiness, precisely in the measure that he or she serves as a bridge between God and human beings. In ancient Roman times, the priest was described as a pontifex, bridge-builder, and this remains a valid designation in the Christian context. The reconciliation of divinity and humanity produces in human beings a wholeness or integration, a coming together of the often warring elements within the self. The same dynamic obtains on a grander scale as well: when cities, societies, cultures rediscover a link to God, they find an inner peace. And therefore baptized priests are meant, first, to embody the harmony that God wants between himself and those made in his image and likeness. They affect this through their own intense devotion to prayer, the sacraments, and the Mass. In their cultivation of a real friendship with the living Christ, they act out their priestly identity and purpose. Then, they are sent out into families, communities, places of work, the political and cultural arenas, etc. in order to carry the integration they have found like a holy contagion. If baptized priests stop praying, stop going to Mass, stop frequenting the sacraments, they will become, in short order, like salt that has lost its savor.

What does it mean for the average baptized person to be a prophet? A person is a prophet in the measure that he or she bears the truth of God. G.K. Chesterton said that in an upside-down world such as ours, the prophet is the one who stands on his head so that he might see things aright. This is why, of course, prophets have always appeared more than a little insane. In fact, the Hebrew word for prophet, "nabi," has the overtone of madman. Well, of course: in a world that has lost its bearings, those who speak the divine truth will, perforce, appear unhinged. How does one cultivate this salutary madness? Baptized prophets should exercise their brains by studying philosophy, theology, spirituality, church

history, and the lives of the saints. And they can't be satisfied with reading superficial tracts designed for children. Augustine, Origen, Bernard, Thomas Aquinas, Ignatius, John Henry Newman, Chesterton, and Ratzinger beckon. If those classic authors are a bit intimidating, Fulton Sheen, C.S. Lewis, Peter Kreeft, George Weigel, and Robert Spitzer provide more accessible but still meaty fare. Having been illumined, these prophets are then sent out into their worlds as beacons of light. God knows that in our increasingly secularized society, such illumination is desperately needed, but if baptized prophets stop studying and stop speaking, they are like lamps over which a bushel basket has been placed.

Finally, what does it mean for the ordinary Catholic to be a king? In the theological sense, a king is someone who orders the charisms within a community so as to direct that community toward God. In this way, he is like the general of an army or the conductor of an orchestra: he coordinates the efforts and talents of a conglomeration of people in order to help them achieve a common purpose. Thus, a Catholic parent directs her children toward the accomplishment of their God-given missions, educating them, shaping them interiorly, molding their behavior, disciplining their desires, etc. A Catholic politician appreciates the moral dimension of his work, and legislates, cajoles, and directs accordingly. A Catholic private equity investor saves a company that provides indispensable jobs in a declining neighborhood, etc. How does one grow in the capacity to exercise kingly leadership? One can do so by overcoming the cultural prejudice in favor of a privatized religion. Most of the avatars of secularism would accept religion as a personal preoccupation, something along the lines of a hobby. But such an attenuated spirituality has nothing to do with a robustly Biblical sense of religion. On the Catholic reading, religious people—the baptized—come forth boldly and publicly and are more than willing to govern, to be kings, out of religious conviction. If you are looking for examples of what I'm describing here, look no further than Dorothy Day and Fulton Sheen. Baptized kings who refuse to reign are like a hilltop city covered in clouds.

The key to the renewal of our society is a recovery of the deepest meaning of baptism, to become priestly, prophetic, and kingly people. □

About the Author

Father Robert Barron is the founder of the global ministry, Word on Fire, and the Rector/President of Mundelein Seminary. He is the creator of the award winning documentary series, "Catholicism" and "Catholicism: The New Evangelization." Learn more at www.WordonFire.org.



A Deacon's Wife's Perspective

by Suzanne Hannoush

Saturday, March 10, 2012, was the day my husband got ordained a deacon at St. Anthony Church in Springfield, Mass. Wow, what a day! It was filled with much joy and confusion. Joy for my husband, for his ordination, for him to be able to serve God through the altar; and also, great confusion for me, for a sense of being lost in my role as a deacon's wife. But now after enjoying this role for a couple of years, I have learned a lot more than I ever knew and am experiencing a beautifully unique life. You may often hear, "Oh, the man gets ordained a deacon and he leaves his wife behind." No, definitely not. She is not a woman left behind, but she is a woman behind her husband to support him with her prayers, charisms, and daily sacrifices that she offers to the church, along with her entire family.

Being a deacon's wife is living a life to help his call to serve. My duty no longer ends after I sit quietly in my pew for Mass. God gave each one of us a unique gift, a talent to use in our daily life. I try my best to be always supportive of his ministry. Both of us have our own roles in contributing to the church, yet we are together, living to serve God each in our own ways.

Living with a deacon has opened the door for me to be more involved with the church. I am honored to be able to work with such a great group of Catholics. We get involved and active in different volunteering activities around our communities, whether it is by helping schools or donating to shelters or coming together as a community for prayer services. It is always a blessing to be surrounded by faithful people. Along with them, I have a feeling of humbleness when I am spending time with my husband, my deacon.

Nothing has changed for me personally since my husband was ordained a deacon. I am used to him the way he is. This is the way he has always been, faithful, always praying and chanting,

and either way, we have always been close to God as a couple.

As a family we have scheduled our life around Sunday. Our priority is to attend Sunday morning Mass, there is no discussion about it. If a friend stays overnight on Saturday, they know they have to wake up early for Sunday morning Mass. People will realize that we build our lives around God. I do feel obliged because of my role as a deacon's wife, to be at every church event, but I also have a family life. After all, I am not the deacon. I, myself, try my best to attend the most important events, while still catering to the family.

I live my Christian Catholic life my way on a daily basis. This is just the way I was raised and have raised my kids. Even when doing my chores at home as a mother, I do them with true faith and I rely on God to show me the way to go on with my day. He is my strength.

As a parishioner, I may appear in everyone's eyes as "the deacon's wife," but in God's eyes, I am that same woman who came to St. Anthony Church twenty-two years ago as a bride to the same man. In God's eyes I am still that same parishioner, but my duties have changed from a mother who took care of her children every Sunday at Mass, to now also helping out in the church in any event and being as productive as possible.

I take pleasure in being a member of the Women's Guild in our church. We work hard to put on great events throughout the year. We spend a lot of time together preparing delicious foods for many amazing events. The Guild is a group of hardworking Catholic women who volunteer for the same goal, for the good of their church. I, like all the others, want to keep the church going for many generations to come.

As a deacon's wife, I have a role in the church, not only in supporting my husband, but also by standing by his

side. I like to warmly greet and welcome newcomers into our church. It makes an enormous difference. I never leave a guest in the church hallway without offering hospitality. It is not just shaking their hands that does it, but taking that extra step to invite them in to have coffee with the rest of the parishioners, the rest of the family. Again, we all come for the same purpose.

Every Sunday, the deacon will go into the sacristy, vest up, and serve, but will always leave the church holding hands with his wife. After two years, being a deacon's wife has only brought joy and many blessings. □

Prayer For Priestly Vocations

Father, in every generation You provide ministers of Christ and the Church.

We come before You now, asking that You call forth more men to serve our eparchies in the ministerial priesthood.

Give us priests who will lead and guide Your holy people gathered by Word and Sacrament.

Bless us with priestly vocations so that we can continue to be a truly Eucharistic Church, strengthened in our discipleship of Jesus Christ, Your Only Son.

Raise up, we pray, men who are generous in their service, willing to offer their lives and all their gifts for Your greater glory and for the good of Your people.

We make our prayer in the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, through Christ, our Lord.
Amen.

Washington, D.C. *Blessed Chaos*

by Tresa Van Heusen

The first time I visited the Rizk family in their home in Maryland I stopped for an overnight visit. In the morning I woke up early hoping to have a chance to say my morning prayer before the family would wake up. All was quiet in the house as I began to pray, but after a couple of minutes I heard some noises. I looked up at the glass door separating the room I was in from the kitchen and saw three little faces peering in at me. Then I heard one exclaim, “She’s awake!” Before I knew it, I was surrounded by happy little faces eager to share with me their stories and ask me some of mine.

When most people think of big families, they think of a life of constant interruptions. They think they will not have the time to pursue the things they enjoy, and thus they will not be happy. Charbel and Maribel Rizk will be the first to tell you that raising ten children is not easy, but they will also say that the benefits and joys are immeasurable! Yes, there are many concerns and demands, but as Charbel always says, God has been at their side every step of the way and continuously provides for all their needs.

Their story begins in 1989 at the University of Florida where both Charbel and Maribel were studying Aerospace Engineering. Charbel, born in Beirut and raised in Jezzine in Lebanon, came to America to finish college, fully intent to then return to Lebanon. Maribel, whose parents are from Puerto Rico, was born in New York City and then moved with her family to Miami when she was 12 years old. The two met, fell in love, and were married in 1992 during Charbel’s senior year in college.

Charbel and Maribel did not plan a big family, but rather “trusted their marriage to God to let Him decide what to do with it.” A year after they were married their first son, George, was born. Before Charbel began his first professional job they had added Gabriel (#2) and Theresa (#3), and Maribel was pregnant with Amanuel (#4). Maribel says that “initially we were nervous, and though it was never easy, it became the greatest thing I’ve



The Rizk family

ever been a part of. Every need has been met.”

While Charbel and Maribel always view their family as a great gift from God, and know their blessings and joys far outweigh the challenges and struggles, they are also quite open in sharing their difficulties. The first question most people ask is how are they able to support the family financially – can you imagine the grocery bills, housing, diapers, clothes, heating, electricity, college, to name a few. As Maribel is the family barber, one joke in the house is how much the family saves because they don’t have to take the six boys to a barber shop. One other major challenge is the logistical aspects - imagine twenty-four dental appointments a year, with almost as many orthodontics, then ten or twelve physicals, and this of course does not include hospital visits for sickness or injuries of which they have had a few! Aside from basic health needs, they also have their many activities – soccer, music, basketball, gymnastics, skiing, ice skating, friends, volunteering, etc – all those “normal” things our young people are involved in today.

So amidst all this chaos and activity, where is the joy and happiness? As Charbel says, assuming they survive the challenges and

struggles, it’s immeasurable. Maribel sees one great benefit as always having the “manpower to support one another in life.” It is her hope that “the kids live their lives always knowing that they have each other.” As friends come and go, Maribel finds “great joy in seeing the kids interact well with each other, especially when they are reunited after some separation.”

The kids were asked to share their experience of being in such a large family, and here are a couple of their responses:

Gabriel – College freshman, volunteer firefighter, guitarist

“Being alone is unpleasant to many kids, to us an occasional treat. ‘What do you guys share?’ people ask. Well, the uncensored version is...everything. Yes, we share bedrooms. Clothing? Shoes? Absolutely. Socks, and crocs, and nail clippers and hair brushes. The blessings far outweigh the drawbacks. Want to play a soccer game? We got it covered.

(Continues on page 20)

Minneapolis, Minnesota *Silver Jubilee*



by Joannie Moses

The shimmering radiance of twenty-five candles danced on the silver fringe and brocade of the new altar cloth. The occasion was the twenty-fifth anniversary of the ordination of Msgr. sharbel Maroun, January 12, 2014.

Candlelight also reflected off the gleaming raised swords of the attending Knights of Columbus wearing their white-plumed helmets. Members of the Order of Saint Sharbel lined the main aisle. Members of organizations filed to their places in the pews. Altar servers, guest clergy, and the new shepherd of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon, Bishop Elias Zaidan, proceeded up the aisle followed by the celebrating priest, Monsignor sharbel Maroun. He was vested in white brocade and silver vestments and carried a new cedar staff.

This Liturgy of Thanksgiving closed a whirlwind of celebrations which started a week earlier in his home parish of Saint Tacla in Lebanon, where he was ordained a priest on January 6, 1989.

Over five hundred guests attended the dinner party on Saturday evening. Key guests included Monsignor's mother, Genevieve Maroun; Bishop Zaidan; Archbishop of St. Paul and Minneapolis, John Nienstedt; a large number of visiting clergy and Maroun family members and friends.

Over twenty speakers praised Monsignor for his dedication, faith, leadership, vision, capabilities, and fine example of living as a true Christian. The speakers consisted of representatives of parish organizations, clubs, and cohorts of Monsignor. They lauded him as pastor, friend, and brother. They reflected all the love and respect which Monsignor sharbel has earned through the years.

The honoree and guests were pleased by the presence of Archbishop Nienstedt. He applauded the fine dedication and accomplishments and commended Monsignor sharbel as a generous, kind and thoughtful friend.

Bishop Zaidan welcomed and thanked Archbishop Neinstedt with "Your presence here tonight reflects the beauty of our Catholic Church where the East meets the West," and offered him the love and support of the Maronite Church. He thanked the committee and community for this "first-class event, their comments, and hard work."

Bishop Elias Zaidan praised Monsignor sharbel for his "generous response to God's calling. He never looked back. He heard God's voice to serve and the response was magnificent. He combined Sharbel and Maroun, the two pillars of our church. His selfless sacrifice has given the Eparchy and his parish this model of stewardship and dedication."

Bishop Zaidan advised the community to "reach out of your comfort zone. Make St. Maron an oasis of peace, really Christ-centered, for all the churches around, where all people will find a beautiful refuge and place of joy and serenity. You love him. I love him. We all love him. Stay always around him and follow his lead as his priesthood continues. His achievements are louder than any words could convey." □

Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania *First Penance*



First row from left: Naythan Wielgopolski, Howard Shiner, Julia Lewis, Theresa Khoudary, Benjamin Fenster. Second row: Father Hanna Karam, Pastor.

On March 1, 2014, a special program was held at St. Anthony and St. George Church, Wilkes-Barre, Penn., to celebrate the receipt of the Holy Mystery of Reconciliation for the first time by the children in the First Communion Class. The Gospel Story of the Lost Lamb was proclaimed by Fr. Hanna Karam and acted out by the children. Fr. Hanna then gave a homily on the meaning of the Gospel and the importance of the Mystery of Reconciliation.

The children were instructed that with the celebration of the Mystery of Reconciliation, like in Baptism, they were washed clean of their sins and reconciled to God and their neighbors. They also received a crown and a ring, which were from the Parable of the Prodigal Son. The children concluded the program with singing of the children's song: *Walking with Jesus*. Following the program a luncheon was held in St. Sharbel Hall for the children and their families. □

THE ORDER OF SAINT SHARBEL



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- ★ **Peter Koway**
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Philadelphia, Penn.*
- ★ **Andre Charles**
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The Order of Saint Sharbel is an organization of lay people and clergy who have pledged their spiritual strength and financial support for Our Lady of Lebanon Seminary and the retired Maronite clergy of the Maronite Eparchies in the USA.

For more information about the Order ask your Pastor, or visit www.orderstsharbel.org.

West Palm Beach 60th Anniversary of Ordination

by *Eliane Rizkallah Jouni*

"Like St. Maron who converted a pagan temple into a house of God, so did Father Leonard when he converted a Pizza Hut into a church." Those were Father Alaa Issa's words during the celebration of the St. Maron feast on Sunday, February 9, 2014, at Mary, Mother of the Light Maronite Church, in Tequesta, Fla. Rev. Dr. Leonard Bassinow was honored for sixty years of serving God. Bishop Gregory Mansour, Bishop of the Eparchy of Saint Maron, also recognized Father Leonard with a congratulatory letter. "Father Leonard is one of those unsung heroes who has poured his life into the life of the church ... He has done this without much fanfare but with lots of love," the Bishop said.



Fr. Alaa Issa, Fr. Bassinow and Bernadette Shalhoub.

After the liturgy, and on behalf of the National Apostolate of Maronites [NAM] and the Order of Saint Sharbel, Mrs. Bernadette Shalhoub, presented Father Leonard with a plaque of appreciation,

Thanks to the families of Mary, Mother of the Light Church, a luncheon was held at the church hall. With great gratitude, Father Leonard thanked everyone and asked us to maintain and nourish our faith for the growth of the Maronite Church, just like St. Maron.

Fr. Leonard, we thank you for being part of our church, and we appreciate you. May God give you many more years in health and happiness to continue your priestly service.

Order of Saint Sharbel Congratulates Fr. Bassinow

Rev. Dr. Leonard Basinow, ED. D., L.R.C.,

It is a distinct honor and privilege to greet you on this auspicious occasion of the celebration of your 60th Anniversary of Ordination to the Holy Priesthood. On behalf of my family, the parish of Our Lady of the Cedars of Lebanon (Boston), and the members of the Order of St. Sharbel nationwide, I want to congratulate you on this milestone in your priestly ministry.

We have followed your footsteps with the enthusiasm and pride of family, since 1953 when you were ordained in Rome, by Patriarch Emeritus, His Beatitude Nesrallah Peter Cardinal Sfeir, for the altar of Our Lady of the Cedars of Lebanon (Boston) to your recent activities involving the Maronite community of Gloucester and Cape Ann, Massachusetts.

We are grateful to the Parish of Mary, Mother of the Light for hosting this celebration and acknowledging all of your efforts to further the Maronite Rite and Tradition in the United States.

We are inspired by your spirit and zeal. We wish you many more fruitful years in the vineyard of the Lord.

May God grant you health and happiness,

Sincerely,
Rosanne C. Williams Solomon
President of the Order of Saint Sharbel ☐

San Antonio, Texas *Feast of St. Maron*



Each year the parishioners of St. George Maronite Church in San Antonio, Tex., gather to celebrate the feast day of the spiritual father of the Maronite Church, St. Maron. As always a special blessing was given to the elected leaders of the various parish organizations to assist them in their duties. Fr. Charles Khachan, M.L.M., Pastor of St. George Church, had the pleasure of announcing this year's recipients of the National Apostolate's (NAM) Silver Massabki Medal, Elmosa and Fernando Herrera. The Faith of the Mountain Award was awarded to Crystel Harb. After the Liturgy all proceeded to the large banquet hall for a reception in honor of St. Maron. □

Tulsa, Oklahoma *Lenten Retreat*



Bishop Edward Slattery of the Diocese of Tulsa led a day of retreat for the Men's Club and the Women's Club of St. Therese Maronite Church, Tulsa, Oklahoma, on March 22, 2014, following the Divine Liturgy. At his first reflection the Bishop took as his theme the story of Bartimeus the Blind (Mark 10:46-52). He spoke of us as blind until we are able to see ourselves as God sees us. Bishop Slattery continued on the need for quiet prayer in order to hear the

Holy Spirit confirming that God is Love. He said that lack of trust that God loves us is what keeps many people from the Sacrament of Penance.

A Lenten retreat is customary at St. Therese, but this year the two clubs, men and women, joined together for the retreat. A group of about forty attended the Bishop's talks. □

Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania *St. Maron Feast Day*



From left: Fr. Hanna Karam, Pastor, Deangelo Aboutanus, Maryann Nockley, John Berezna, chairperson, Msgr. Root, James Ellis, Sabah DeMace, Therese Kasmark and Subdeacon Crosby Sparks.

Recently, the St. Maron's Feast Day Celebration Committee of the St. Anthony/St. George Maronite Parish in Wilkes-Barre, Penn., held a luncheon at the Wyoming Valley Country Club to celebrate the occasion. The luncheon was preceded by Divine Liturgy celebrated at St. Anthony/St. George Church. The main celebrant was also the guest speaker, Msgr. James A. Root, the Rector of Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral, Brooklyn, New York. Msgr. Root's presentation was an enjoyable comparison between religion and faith. □

Lebanese Christians, Muslims Join In Marian Devotion

On March 25, the feast of the Annunciation, which has been a national holiday in Lebanon since 2010, Catholics and Muslims joined in the 8th Islamic-Christian Prayer Meeting, which was dedicated to the theme: "Together around Mary, Our Lady."

In an address to the meeting, Father Miguel Angel Ayuso, the Secretary of the Pontifical Council for Inter-Religious Dialogue, observed that Muslims share the Christian reverence for the Virgin Mary. "Devotion creates sentiments of friendship," he said. Moreover, he said, "Mary, a model for Muslims and Christians, is also a model of dialogue, teaching us to believe, not to close ourselves up in certainties, but rather to remain open and available to others."

(Continues on page 20)

Springfield, Massachusetts *The Wind and the Cedar Tree*

On June 1, 2011, a major tornado devastated the area around St. Anthony Maronite Church in Springfield, Mass. Even though the spirit of the community has risen above the traumatizing experience, the scarred landscape has still not recovered. Matchstick trees and some blue-tarped roofs still remain a haunting reminder of the devastation that took place on that day. One member of St. Anthony Maronite Church, Fred Frangie, reflected on the incident and wrote a poem about the cedar tree from Lebanon, located on the Church property, that was unscathed by the devastating tornado.

The Wind And The Tree

It was June 1, 2011 when the Wind came;
Rushing wildly like an unchecked train.
Straight along the road by the pond
Where houses, stores and trees are found.

The whirlwind tore through this area around
Sent branches and leaves skyward bound.

Then stripped the houses from their gowns.
Along the road; as it chose its course,
Demonstrating its destructive force.

The parking lot bordered by trees also shared
The effect of this wind that bent them as if in prayer.

The wind came upon the Church so round
With speed, and fury and a purpose to pound
Hurling its debris upon the windows and walls.

Then it met the tree that remained sturdy and tall.
A tree whose ancestors gave shade to HIM:
WHO is always forgiving
As He walked with HIS Mother, to the Cana wedding
And He changed the water to wine at Her bidding.

A tree which ancient nations built their ships
The strength of its timber allowed many ocean trips.

The tree that the wind could not tread upon
It is known as a Cedar of Lebanon.

The wind met this tree; quickly turned away; but kept its fury
As it headed to the road called Surrey
I often see how majestic the tree has grown
It arrived here from the place where the Bible is known.

And is mentioned as an example of strength on its own
As a Cedar of Lebanon. A tree for all to see,
Where visitors and parishioners it is there to greet. □

Houston, Texas *Lenten Drive*



From left: Lupe Munoz; Fr. Milad Yaghi; and Eliana Jaoude.

by Tommy L. Cordova

The Helping Hands Ministry of Our Lady of the Cedars in Houston, Tex., recently sponsored the Lenten Brown Bag Food Drive to benefit the Guadalupe Catholic Center of Houston. The Guadalupe Catholic Center was in need of food for their clients with heart conditions and high blood pressure. The food drive collected enough food to meet the needs of the Guadalupe Center for one week. □



Convention Children Program

Our Children's Program for the NAM Convention this year will combine some entertainment, religious education and local history. We'll have a visit with some feathered friends from America's only National Aviary. They'll come right to the hotel to meet us! Later in the week we'll learn about St. Rafka and her inspiring life story. For example, did you know that she knit socks for her sisters even though she was blind, and that she once hid a child from harm in the skirts of her habit? The example she sets is truly motivating for people of all ages.

Our convention this year falls on Independence Day, so of course we'll wear our red, white and blue and celebrate the birth of America. The kids will learn how this country started, and we'll have a Fourth of July party! And since Pittsburgh is the city of rivers, we'll ride on one. We're planning a tour of the city by water and street on a WW II amphibious "duck" through the Pittsburgh Just Ducky tour company. We'll end the Children's Program Saturday with a relaxing movie and snack hour so the kids will be well rested for the *hafli* that night. Snacks and crafts will be included throughout the week. Hope to see you there! □

Austin, Texas Regional Youth Retreat



by Rania Kattura, MYO Advisor, Austin, Tex.

For the second year in a row, Father Gary George ignited the faith of the Maronite youth in Central Texas during the annual regional retreat workshop, held at Well Spring Retreat Center in Blanco, Tex., from January 31 - February 2, 2014. A total of thirty youth participated from the Austin and San Antonio Maronite parishes. This year's theme, "Signed, Sealed, Delivered, I Am Yours," created an environment of prayer and fellowship, and a better understanding of what Jesus did for us.

Kicking off with the blessing of the water Friday night, the youth were signed with the Sign of the Cross and then spent time in Adoration of the Holy Eucharist after learning about the youngest saint, Marcelino, Pain y Vino. They ended the evening in prayer with Fr. Gary as they came up to the altar and touched the Eucharist like Saint Marcelino did. Allowing time for fellowship and building of friendships, the youth spent time in karaoke with each other until it was time to turn in for the night.

Saturday started with Morning Prayer led by the San Antonio Parish. After a hearty breakfast, Fr. Gary discussed the status of a person's heart, how something as simple as a rock with all its detailed etches and dents can explain an individual's heart with all the love, purity and aches it holds. With that in mind each youth left in prayer to search for and find the rock that best resembles their heart. Later they were divided in groups and asked to work on identifying obstacles to their faith and how these obstacles can be remedied. Technology, sports and peer pressure were identified by all groups as the biggest obstacles to the youth's faith, while prayer, communion, and church were identified as ways to overcome such obstacles. Before lunch the youth celebrated the sacrament of confession and nailed a burden of theirs to the cross. This experience had many in tears as they got to experience Our Lord at a closer and deeper level, and many others engaged in worship and praise during that time. The popular "free time" after lunch called for a soccer match, a football playoff and other activities to further strengthen the relationships the youth began to build with one another. Later they were sealed by the holy oil from St. Sharbel's tomb and were delivered by the Holy Spirit during evening liturgy,

which was followed by a prayer experience in the chapel. Saturday ended with the movie *Frozen* and *S'mores*.

After a beautiful Saturday, we woke up to a chilly, rainy Sunday, soon forgotten as we celebrated Sunday Liturgy with Fr. Gary. The youth were given the nails they hung on the cross as a memento of the retreat and a reminder that Jesus died for our sins. With the memories of this retreat held in the hearts and minds of the youth, they begin their countdown for the national retreat this summer in Pittsburgh. Until then, they will continue to communicate through their prayers for one another and will follow each other on Facebook and Twitter!

Uniontown, Pennsylvania MYA Service Project



by Abby Rozgony, MYA Member

In 2012, our then-pastor, Fr. Nadim Helou, M.L.M., revived the Maronite Young Adult organization of our parish, to bring the young adults closer to the faith and to participate in community service projects.

Over the 2013 holiday season, while the college students were in town, our new Pastor, Fr. Sami Chaaya, M.L.M., organized a weekend of events for the MYA members.

On Friday, the MYA spent the day purchasing, sorting and delivering toiletries, enough necessities for twelve families, to the Uniontown City Mission, Living Stones, Inc., a local organization that gives help and hope to the homeless in our community. They sent a letter later expressing their thanks for our support, describing it as "encouraging, wonderful and rewarding as well as very much appreciated and of course, extremely useful."

On Saturday, the MYA members were encouraged by Fr. Sami to attend the evening Divine Liturgy, which was followed by dinner at the Lebanese Bistro in nearby Morgantown, West Virginia. □



Lakewood Colorado Conference Unites Christians at St. Rafka's Parish in Colorado



Fr. Andre Mahanna prays before the statue of the Blessed Mother.

by Nissa LaPoint
Denver Catholic Register

Eastern and Western Christians met to join in prayer for peace and unity at St. Rafka Maronite Catholic Church. Father Andre Y-Sebastian Mahanna of the Lakewood Maronite Church led the conference open to local Catholics and Orthodox March 1, 2014, to invite ecumenism and plead for peace in the war-torn Middle East.

"The Church has two lungs - the East and the West. The Church must learn to breathe with both lungs or something is wrong," Father Mahanna told the crowd gathered inside.

The Maronite parish, a Lebanon-based rite of the Eastern Catholic Church in communion with Rome, has held a series of meetings to bridge Christian communities by focusing on devotion to Mary and the Divine Mercy.

"I'm trying to raise awareness that it's OK to pray with one another. It is the will of God to pray with one another," Father Mahanna said after the conference. "I think Our Lady and the Divine Mercy are going to be the instruments which will bridge people who hate one another to love one another."

Father Mahanna was recently named the director of the Office of Ecumenism and Interfaith Relations in the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon based in Missouri.

He has met with leaders of other faiths locally including

Father George Shawareb of St. Elias Antiochian Orthodox Church in Arvada, who led the Saturday conference with Father Mahanna.

He said this year is special for Orthodox and Catholics who will celebrate Easter on the same day. Frequently, the two churches follow separate liturgical calendars and celebrate at different times. "It's something so precious," Father Shawareb said.

He also said that his church prays for Christian unity. "We have to keep our hope alive," he said. "That unity is not there in the paperwork, but I know it is in my heart and his heart."

Lolou Najjar of St. Luke Orthodox Christian Church in Erie attended to pray with fellow Christians. "I wanted to join in prayer for peace," she said. "And for the unity of Christians to come together for peace in the world."

Gina Abou-Jaoude of St. Rafka's helped organize the conference that included an international rosary prayed in several languages, two conference talks on Mary and the Divine Mercy, and dinner afterward. "(Father Mahanna's) vision is to be like Christ and have everyone come together no matter what their faith is," she said.

Father Mahanna said the church will hold other conferences this summer and fall to speak more about Mary and the Divine Mercy to help achieve ecumenism. The next conference will be held May 3, 2014.

(This article is reprinted by permission of the Denver Catholic Register.) □



Spring Raffle

The National Apostolate of Maronites (NAM) Presents the 22nd Annual Spring Raffle - 2014. Only four hundred tickets are printed. Donation is \$100 per ticket.

First Prize:	\$10,000
Second Prize:	\$ 3,000
Third Prize:	\$ 2,000
Fourth Prize:	\$ 1,500
Fifth Prize:	\$ 1,000

This year's drawing will be held at Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral, Brooklyn, N.Y., on May 18, 2014.

Thank you for your support in previous years for this raffle fundraiser, as it is an important part of the NAM annual budget. We are counting on your generosity once again, to support our community projects.

To purchase a personal ticket(s) or to help us in selling tickets please write to the national office:

Mike J. Naber, Executive Director NAM
P.O. Box 717
Yonkers, NY 10702,

or call 914-964-3070 or email nam@namnews.org.

You can purchase your tickets on line using a credit card or request it to be mailed to you. All requests and payments must be received by May 1st, 2014. □



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Hosted by Our Lady of Victory Maronite Church, Pittsburgh, PA
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Resurrection: One Flock

Continues from page 1

For us to be truly a People of Resurrection we must bury our hatred and sinfulness; bury our old selves so that we can rise anew. We must bury our weakness in order to become victorious. The Cross of Christ requires us to spread the message of the Resurrection, the message of peace, joy and love, not the message of revenge, pettiness and hatred. Just as Jesus did not hold onto his earthly life, we, too, must not hold onto those things, whether in the past or in the present, that do not show forth love of God and love of neighbor. The Resurrection of Christ invites us to be free. Let us not be slaves to sin, but as St. Paul tells us, "It is for freedom that Christ has set us free." Then, let us live accordingly.

Christ is Risen! He has truly Risen! Alleluia!
+ A. Elias Zaidan
Bishop of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon

Blessed Chaos

Continues from page 12

Clean the house in ten minutes? Got that covered too. My dad calls us the 'Rizk Team' because that's what we are. We work like a well-oiled machine, and that's what keeps us moving."

Theresa – College freshman, violinist, artist, substitute mom

"Frankly, you tend to run low on elbow room, privacy, peace, quiet, order and all that good stuff. But in my eighteen short years of worldly experience I will have to say that my family has by far been the highlight of my life. Sure we've got the usual fights and kinks to work out now and then, but it all pales in comparison to the joy and contentment that comes from being constantly surrounded by so much love and happiness. Nothing can describe the feeling

of coming home from school to the delighted squeals and hugs of a bunch of little people, with the assurance of company whenever it's needed and friends to go to for anything and everything."

Aside from managing the chaos of daily life, the most important part of the Rizk family is being firmly rooted in their faith. Their Maronite Catholic faith is central in their lives, and they work hard to keep the family involved in their parish and community. They also encourage their children to follow Our Lord in their daily lives. When asked if they are open to one or more of them entering the priesthood or religious life, their immediate response, is "Yes"! Maribel says it would be a blessing as "they have always belonged to God; He's only trusted us with them. How can we keep them from His plan?"

The Rizk family is a great witness to the truth of our faith that happiness lies not in material possessions or seeking earthly pleasures, but comes in living life open to God's grace. No matter what path in life we are called to, there will be challenges and struggles, and problems will not magically go away. But when we seek Our Lord's will in our daily lives, when we are open to His calling and trust, He will provide all that we need. Our Lord always provides the grace we need to face life's challenges. □

Marian Devotion

Continued from page 15

Father Ayuso remarked that the observance of a national holiday on the Marian feast is "a true example of the coexistence between Muslims and Christians that characterizes Lebanese history, in the midst of so many difficulties, and which also constitutes an important example for many other nations."

Pope Francis sent a message to the meeting in which he encouraged Catholic and Muslim participants to "work together for peace and for the common good." The Pope said that he entrusts "all the inhabitants of Lebanon to the maternal intercession of the Virgin Mary, Queen of Peace and Protectress of Lebanon." □ (CwNews, March 26, 2014)