



# The Maronite Voice



A Publication of the Maronite Eparchies in the USA

Volume XII

Issue No. IV

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## Being People of Prayer

How often in our lives are we told to pray? Our parents have told us this, our teachers, our pastors. Even the Lord himself tells us to pray – both in His words (Matthew 6:9) and in His own actions by modeling prayer for us (Luke 6:12). Recently, Pope Francis said: “The first duty of the Bishop is to pray and to proclaim the Resurrection of Jesus.” That is worthy guidance for all of us: We all must be people of prayer as well.

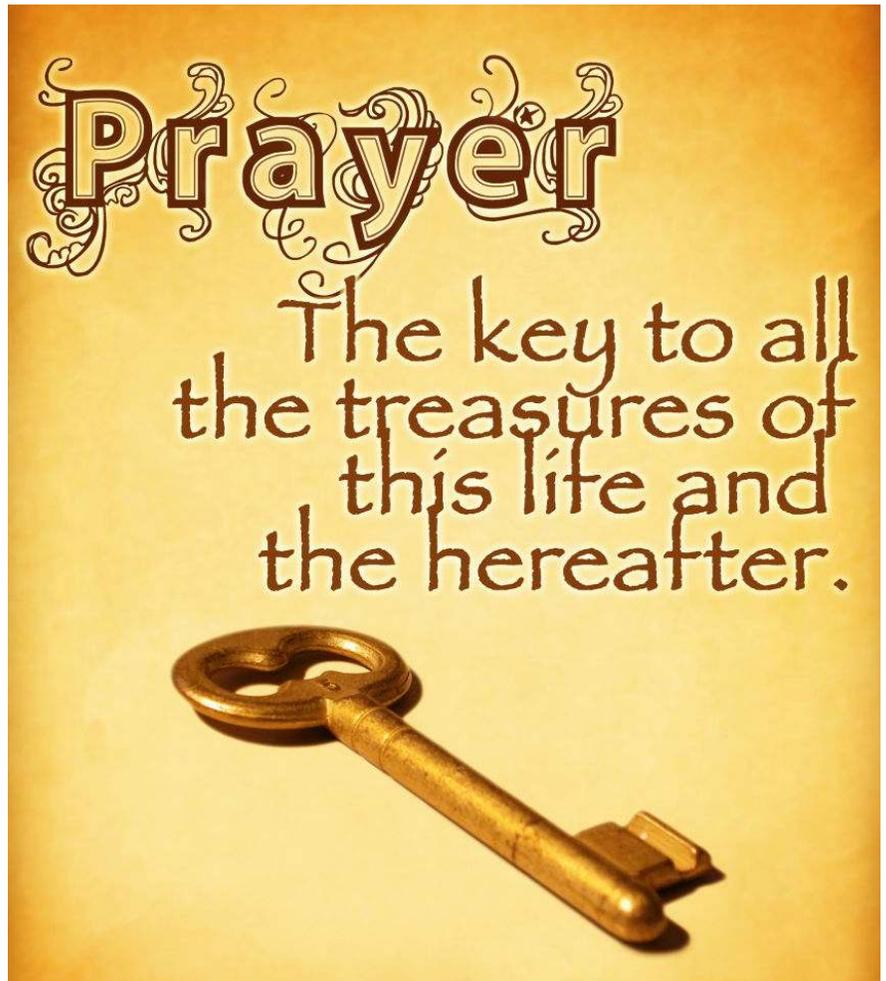
One of the most important aspects of prayer is being persistent – simply not giving up when our prayer seems to go unanswered.

In Chapter 18 of the Gospel of Saint Luke, the Lord gives us a wonderful parable about persistent prayer. We usually refer to it as the “Parable of the Unjust Judge and the Persistent Widow.” Most of us have heard this parable. A poor widow doesn’t take “no” for an answer because a corrupt judge refuses to give her justice. She keeps after this judge. It comes to the point that the judge is simply worn down by her pleas and even fears for his own safety.

Sometimes we tend to think of God in a very legal, criminal justice sense. We think that God will judge us and mete out “justice” – in some ways like a criminal prosecutor, a judge, a jury and executioner. Have you ever seen the statue of “justice” on many of our court houses? I’m sure you’ve noticed that her eyes are covered with a blindfold. In our criminal justice system we see “justice” as blind, not to be influenced by any outside mediators or affected by anything but the law, not affected even by the one on trial or by the victim of the crime. After all, the law is the law. In our civil society that is not a particularly bad thing either. That idea about the law does give us some sense of security or protection from arbitrary, capricious or corrupt judges. But our God is a judge who lets Himself be petitioned by people about their situations in life and listens to their pleas for mercy.

In this parable the judge promises to give the widow justice simply because of her persistence. There’s a lesson here: Persistence can pay off. Persistent prayer can also make a difference. Persistent prayer can touch God’s heart. God shows compassion and mercy when he hears the prayers of his people, especially those of the neediest among us. Jesus tells us “to ask, to seek, to knock” because God can “give”; he can “find”; he can “open” for us.

(Continues on page 20)



## Schedule of Bishop Elias Zaidan

### April 2 - 3, 2016

Pastoral Visit to St. George Church, San Antonio, Tex.

### April 8 - 10, 2016

Pastoral Visit to St. Elias Church, Birmingham, Ala.

### April 12 - 13, 2016

Presbyteral Council Meeting, Chancery Office, Saint Louis, Mo.

### April 17, 2016

Subdeacon's Ordination, St. Jude Church, West Covina, Calif.

### April 23, 2016

Priestly Ordination of Deacon Alex Harb, Baton Rouge, La.

### April 29, 2016

Eparchial Stewardship Council Meeting, Chancery Office, Saint Louis, Mo.

### April 30, 2016

Eparchial Pastoral Council Meeting, Chancery Office, Saint Louis, Mo.

### May 2 - 3, 2016

USCCB Committee on International Justice and Peace Meeting, Washington, D.C.

### May 6 - 8, 2016

Pastoral Visit to St. Sharbel Church, Las Vegas, Nev. ☐

*The Maronite Voice*

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- Most Reverend A. Elias Zaidan, M.L.M.

**Editor** Msgr. George M. Sebaali

### **Editing and proofreading**

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## **Maronite Convention 2016**

Our Lady of Lebanon Church

**San Francisco, California**

**July 6 - 10, 2016**

For more information contact the NAM office at (914) 964-3070 or visit [www.Namnews.org](http://www.Namnews.org)

## *Eparchial Condolences*



**Antoine Emile Touma**, the brother of Deacon Michel Tournay of Washington, D.C., passed away suddenly on Sunday February 28, 2016, after a car struck him while riding his bicycle. Antoine was 52 years old and he is survived by his wife, Dara Griffith Touma, and his children, Antoine and Madeline; his parents; his three brothers Maroun, Deacon Michel, and Raymond; and two sisters, Claire and Marcelle. He is predeceased by his brother, Sharbel. Antoine lived in Rockledge, Florida, with his wife and children. His parents are parishioners of Saint Anthony Church in Danbury, Conn.

Condolences may be sent to: Deacon Michel Touma, 3601 Avonlea Way, Catharpin, VA 20143.

Bishop Gregory Mansour along with the clergy and faithful of the Eparchy of Saint Maron extend their heartfelt sympathy and the promise of our prayers to Deacon Touma and his family.

May the Lord God grant Antoine eternal rest in His Kingdom and consolation to his family and loved ones.

**Josephine Romagna Manhire** (95), the mother of Deacon Jack Manhire of St. Jude Maronite Church in Orlando, Fla., passed away Thursday, March 10, 2016. She is predeceased by her husband, John V. Manhire, and her brother John B. Romagna. Surviving are her son and daughter-in-law, Deacon Jack and Diane Manhire, grandchildren and many great grandchildren.

A Memorial Divine Liturgy will be celebrated at Saint Jude Maronite Church in Orlando on April 9, 2016. Condolences may be sent to: Deacon Jack Manhire, Ph.D., 7575 Dr. Phillips Blvd., Suite 245, Orlando, FL 32819.

Bishop Gregory Mansour along with the clergy and faithful of the Eparchy of Saint Maron extend their heartfelt sympathy and the promise of our prayers to Deacon Manhire and his family.

May the Lord God grant Josephine eternal rest in His Kingdom and consolation to her family and loved ones. ☐



## Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn

### *Seventh Annual Benefit Dinner to Celebrate 50th Anniversary and Honor Mothers*

Maronite Catholics and friends from the greater New York area and beyond will gather on Tuesday, May 3, 2016, at the New York Athletic Club for the Seventh Annual Benefit Dinner for the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn.

This year's Dinner will celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Eparchy. It will also feature a special honoring of mothers just a few days before Mother's Day. In addition, two special mothers will be honored at the Dinner: **Jeanette Abi Habib** and **Nohade Boorady**.

The evening will begin with a Cocktail Reception with drinks and hors d'oeuvres at 6:00 p.m., followed by Dinner at 7:30 p.m. Individual tickets are \$300. Table sponsorships are available at \$5,000, \$10,000 and \$15,000. Additional donations are encouraged.

The proceeds from the Benefit Dinner will be used to educate seminarians, support poor parishes and missions, and assist retired priests. Ten percent of the proceeds of the Dinner will be given to support Christians in Lebanon, in union with the Jubilee Year of Mercy declared by Pope Francis. Bishop Gregory stated, "I invite everybody to join with us on May 3, in person or in spirit, and I ask every person to support this year's Benefit Dinner to whatever extent they can."

The Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn comprises forty-five parishes, a Seminary, a Convent, a Monastery and Maronite faithful in sixteen states located along the East Coast of the United States from Maine to Florida. It is directly under the jurisdiction of Pope Francis. Further information may be found at [www.stmaron.org](http://www.stmaron.org) or by emailing [saintmaron@yahoo.com](mailto:saintmaron@yahoo.com). □

### **Pleasantville, New Jersey** *Mission Retreat*

During the weekend of March 11-13, 2016, the Maronite Servants of Christ the Light were on mission at Our Lady Star of the East in Pleasantville [Atlantic City], New Jersey. They were invited by Father Kamil Choueifati, Pastor, to give a parish-wide retreat on Mercy. On Friday evening they joined the parish in praying the Way of the Cross and Benediction of the Cross, and offered meditations they edited from Patriarch Rai's reflections.

The weekend included a children's retreat on Saturday morning, then visits to the sick and home bound. In the evening, Mother Marla Marie spoke on vocations and the Maronite Servants of Christ the Light mission at the Divine Liturgy. Later in the evening, the Maronite Servants guided the parish in Eucharistic adoration and a healing service, which included confession. They also had an interactive evening and sharing with the MYO on mercy and forgiveness in our lives.



On Sunday, they offered the mothers a presentation on how to keep children in the faith. Afterwards, mothers asked to make a retreat at the convent for an extended time of prayer.

The Maronite Servants of Christ the Light thoroughly enjoyed the weekend with the parish family of Our Lady Star of the East. They thank Fr. Kamil and the parishioners for their warm hospitality, support and goodness in welcoming them and responding positively to their mission. □

### **Dover, New Hampshire** *Parish Activities*



by Fr. Tony Saab

St. George Maronite Church in Dover, New Hampshire, is the smallest parish in the Eparchy of Saint Maron. Although it is challenged financially to keep its doors wide open to all who seek Christ, it has parishioners with the faith of gold! It is like a beehive, full of faith-filled activities. I have been a Maronite priest for over nineteen years. I have not experienced the same communal warmth and life here in any of the churches I served or visited. This community is best described by one of its parishioner's as "Small but Strong!"

A soup kitchen for the less fortunate in the community is held every first Saturday of the month. Food, clothes, sweets and the like are available for everyone. All the food and supplies are donated by the volunteers themselves. Every

Wednesday, prayers to the Blessed Mother are offered at the weekly cenacle of Our Lady of Fatima. Every month has a Spaghetti Dinner and a breakfast fundraiser, in addition to yearly Bazaars, *Haflis*, calendar sales, and more.

All these activities of this smallest parish exemplify the great faith and commitment of God's people to serve the church and nurture the Word of God! The faith and kindness are detected as soon as one walks into the church during the Sunday liturgy. May the Lord reward his people with His abundant mercy, and may the doors of His holy Church be always open to welcome all those in need of the Lord's healing touch. □

## Houston, Texas *Relics of St. Anthony of Padua*



Fr. Mario carrying the Relics of Saint Anthony of Padua.

by Nabil Joubran

On Saturday morning, February 27, 2016, the Relics of St. Anthony of Padua arrived at Our Lady of the Cedars Maronite Church in Houston, Tex., for a full day of prayers and veneration. The Relics were exposed in the Church for veneration starting at 9 a.m., and the faithful kept pouring in until 10 o'clock that night. The faithful could also leave prayers and messages that were sent back with the Relics to present at the Tomb of St. Anthony in Padua.

The day started with a morning Liturgy, dedicated to the Religious Education Program, with children and catechists serving the Liturgy. Father Mario, the Italian monk accompanying the Relics, gave a beautiful homily that grabbed the attention of children and parents alike. After the Liturgy, and during the normal religious education session, each class made a visit to the Church for veneration and to pray in front of the Relics. Father Mario was also present to answer questions and explain various aspects of the Relics and the life of St. Anthony to the children. At the same time, in the Cedar Hall adjacent to the Church, a movie about the Saint's life was shown on a large projection screen.

In the afternoon, the St. Anthony Society from a neighboring Roman Catholic Parish, St. Laurence of Sugar Land, celebrated a Latin Rite Mass at Our Lady of the Cedars, with hundreds in attendance. Then in the evening, another Maronite Liturgy was concelebrated by the Parish priests and Fr. Mario, who again gave the homily. The Liturgy ended with a candle-lit procession outside the Church

with the Relics. It was indeed a great day full of prayers and blessings for the community of Our Lady of the Cedars. □

## Los Angeles, California *The Relics of Saint Sharbel*

by Tommy Tedros

As the Maronite communities around the country commemorate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Beatification of Saint Sharbel, his holy Relics made a visit to Los Angeles, Calif., for five days. The parishioners of Our Lady of Mount Lebanon Cathedral, Los Angeles, Calif., welcomed the Relics and many events took place within the community Wednesday, January 20 - Sunday, January 24, 2016.

The Altar was decorated exquisitely with floral arrangements and candles. A backdrop simulating the landscapes of Lebanon was created

and set on the steps of the altar where the Relics were placed. The five-day cathedral visit started with a welcoming ceremony and procession, during which the Relics were carried to their place of honor atop the steps of the altar.

His Excellency Bishop A. Elias Zaidan, Bishop of the Eparchy of Our Lady Of Lebanon, celebrated the Divine Liturgy. Fr. Elias Sleiman, Rector, and Father Albert Constantine concelebrated. Members of the Order of Saint Sharbel participated in the opening ceremony in procession and honor guard.

Before the end of liturgy, the blessing and anointing of oil received from Lebanon took place. A little tube with some of the blessed oil of St. Sharbel was distributed to parishioners as the liturgy concluded. Then the attendees were given the opportunity for personal reflection and prayer as the veneration of the Relics continued into the latter part of the evening and the following four afternoons and evenings. A movie on the history and life of St. Sharbel was shown each evening and throughout the weekend in the Cathedral hall. Daily hospitality and reception was the norm as volunteers continuously staffed the information and gift booth.

The local Univision affiliate in Los Angeles interviewed Bishop Zaidan and various parishioners before Thursday's liturgy about the importance and meaning behind the Relics. Bishop Zaidan stated that devotion to the Saint is popular among Hispanics as well as many other ethnicities. Miracles are attributed to the Saint's intercession and are recorded around the world. The recent miracle (upon verification and review) that took place the previous week at St. Joseph



Maronite Church in Phoenix, Ariz., and the exposure the Univision media in Phoenix and Los Angeles have given this apparent miracle parlayed into an even greater amount of interest locally.

The Most Reverend Archbishop Jose Gomez of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles presided over a Roman Rite Mass on Friday. Many religious leader of the Los Angeles Catholic community and many guests attended. Spanish Masses were added to the schedule during the remaining days, and a large number of people waited to enter and pray throughout the available hours each day and evening.

A popular custom in Mexico is to write the name of someone that is sick or in need on a ribbon and tie that ribbon to the St. Sharbel statue. The veneration continued on Saturday with multiple Masses highlighted by the Divine Liturgies presided by His Excellency Bishop Elias Zaidan and clergy of the Eastern Churches.

On Sunday, the Maronite Divine Liturgy concluded the official festivities of the visit. Bishop Zaidan and the Cathedral clergy concelebrated. Following the Gospel, Bishop Zaidan inducted twenty-five new members into the Order of Saint Sharbel.

A reception was held in the Cathedral Hall following the liturgy, and the Spanish Masses continued into the evening. Following the visit to Our Lady of Mount Lebanon Cathedral, the Relics of Saint Sharbel visited the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn. □

## Olean, New York NAM Vocation Posters Award



On March 13, 2016, Olivia Bean, a religious education student at St. Joseph Maronite Church in Olean, New York, was honored for winning second place in the 2015 NAM Convention Vocations Poster Contest. Father Anthony J. Salim, Pastor, presented Olivia with her award, and the winning entry was on display for the congregation to view. The poster was framed and will hang in the Parish Community Center. □

## Akron, Ohio Youth Retreat



by John Jesser

On the weekend of February 12 - 14, 2016, Our Lady of the Cedars of Mount Lebanon in Akron, Ohio, hosted more than 150 youth from the Maronite parishes in Michigan, Pennsylvania and Ohio for the MYO regional youth retreat. The retreat was led by Father Gary George (MYO Director) and team. The theme of the retreat was "Be merciful, just as your Father is Merciful" (Luke 6:36), focusing on Pope Francis' call for a Jubilee Year of Mercy. The youths engaged with each other in workshops focused on how they can change themselves and impact the lives of their home parishes with a renewed understanding of Mercy as not words but action in their lives. They also participated in games and recreation and a reconciliation service with six priests hearing confessions for over three hours. The youth organized and participated in the liturgies both Saturday and Sunday. The social highlight of the weekend was a buffet dinner followed by a talent show, music and comedy performed by the youth, and dancing. The special treat in the later part of the evening was a taco bar and a smore bar, where marshmallows could be roasted. Special thanks to Msgr. Bill Bonczewski, Pastor, and to the parishioners of Our Lady of the Cedars for hosting the event and for their donations of time, funding and hospitality. Looking forward to the national youth retreat in Latrobe, Penn., July 16 - 21, 2016. □

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## MYO National Retreat

The Maronite Youth Organization (MYO) Annual Retreat will take place July 16 - 21, 2016 at:

St. Vincent College  
300 Fraser Purchase Rd.  
Latrobe, PA 15650-2667

The cost is \$400 per child. For more information please ask your pastor. □

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# Glen Allen, Virginia Youth Regional Retreat



by Cathy George

"Life is Choices" was the theme for the Youth Regional Retreat held at St. Anthony Maronite Church in Glen Allen (Richmond), Va., on March 11 - 13, 2016. Sixty-five youth and their chaperones gathered from the Glen Allen parish; from Our Lady of Lebanon in Washington, D.C.; from St. Michael the Archangel in Fayetteville, N.C.; from St. Elias in Roanoke, Va.; and from Heart of Jesus Mission in Fort Lauderdale, Fla. It was exciting to see many of the youth who had come several times before and who had been communicating throughout the year.

Using Matthew Kelly's program of *Decision Point*, the retreat participants discussed how to be the best version of themselves. Beginning with decision-making games, the retreat team demonstrated the choices that are made every day and their consequences. The team talked about conscience, peer pressure and reason and how God's voice echoes in a person's most secret core. They reviewed the cardinal virtues, and what God wants for each one of us. The participants were encouraged to be a rebel like Jesus – to rebel against the culture that pulls us away from what we believe in. Throughout the weekend, the youth and their chaperones competed as teams to illustrate each of the points.

Monsignor George Sebaali, Pastor, led the discussion on vocations after the youth watched a video from Altaration (Ascension Press). Later, the youth spent a couple of hours examining their consciences before the altar in the church while Monsignor George and Father Sam Najjar heard confessions. Their evening time was spent in a variety of ways: dancing to Lebanese and American music, playing the Wii, and designing prayer flags.

On the last day, everyone participated in Sunday liturgy and the closing breakfast. The students found it difficult to say good-bye and are looking forward to the next year's retreat.

## Relics of Saint Sharbel

The Relics of St. Sharbel were received at St. Anthony Maronite Church in Glen Allen (Richmond), Virginia on March 2, 2016. Parishioners received the Novena of St. Sharbel nine days before so they could pray, asking for his intercession before the arrival of the Relics. When the Relics



arrived, they were carried in procession by the elders of the church. After an hour of veneration, the Divine Liturgy in honor of St. Sharbel was celebrated. Fr. Anthony Marques, from St. Benedict Catholic Church concelebrated with Monsignor George Sebaali, Pastor. Father John Mary Lugemwa, OSB, from Mary Mother of the Church Abbey, heard confessions during two evenings. Liturgy was followed by a presentation on the life of St. Sharbel and then veneration of the Relics.

Thursday morning with the Relics began with morning prayer and rosary. Later in the afternoon, the Chaplet of the Divine Mercy was recited. After veneration of the Relics and the presentation of St. Sharbel's life, evening prayer and liturgy was celebrated. A healing service from the Service of the Lamp and exposition of the Blessed Sacrament concluded the evening.

Friday began again with morning prayer. The most moving event was the prayer service with the sick, shut-ins and those who were homebound. People came in wheelchairs and with walkers to visit the Relics. Many people came later in the day for the Benediction of the Cross and Divine Liturgy and then the final blessing with the Relics. It was a deeply enriching experience for all those who participated. □



## THE ORDER OF SAINT SHARBEL



### Perpetual Members

★ **Fady Chamoun, Sally Chamoun, Daad Chamoun, and George Chamoun**  
*St. Maron Church, Cleveland, Ohio*

### Annual Members

★ **Aida El Khoury**  
*St. Jude Maronite Church, West Covina, Calif.*

★ **Gabrielle Bruno**  
*St. Elias Church, Birmingham, Ala.*

★ **Arlette Andraos, and Charles Bou Maroun**  
*St. Rafka Church, Livonia, Mich.*

★ **Samir Rabil, Najib Rached, Samir Haikal, Ziad Hayek, Saba Salloum, Fahim Gemayel, Bernadette Faddoul, Kanann Kanann, and Sophie Hatem**  
*St. Maron Church, Cleveland, Ohio*

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 U.S.A.

For more information about the Order ask your Pastor, or visit [www.orderstsharbel.org](http://www.orderstsharbel.org). □

## Brooklyn, New York *Chrism Liturgy*



*by Salma Vahdat*

**O**ur Maronite Church is rich in its holy traditions, and we gathered, once again, to witness the Chrism Liturgy on Wednesday, March 16, 2016, at Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral in Brooklyn, N.Y. The Chrism Liturgy is normally to be celebrated on Holy Thursday, however considering the expanse of our Eparchy, the rite is celebrated in advance so that the majority of priests may travel to attend and take back the sacred oils with them to their parishes and celebrate Holy Week with their own communities.

Bishop Gregory Mansour, Bishop of the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn, Chorbishop Michael Thomas, Vicar General of the Eparchy, and Msgr. James Root, Rector of the Cathedral, concelebrated the Liturgy and Chrism Rite and were assisted by deacons, subdeacons and the visiting clergy.

What, exactly, is the Chrism Liturgy? It is an ancient rite within the Church by which the Sacred Oils are renewed and blessed each year for use in the Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, Holy Orders, and Anointing of the Sick as well as for consecrating a new church. Olive oil has been used throughout history for many purposes as we read in sacred texts of the anointing of the sick, the blessing the faithful and even the anointing of Jesus. The old oil is used in lighting lamps within the church where possible, or it can also be buried in undisturbed ground.

Through the Oil of the Catechumens those anointed at Baptism and Confirmation will share in the mission of Christ, the Anointed One. Through the Oil of the Sick one receives God's grace and healing. Through the Chrism a priest or bishop at ordination receives God's strength and wisdom to discharge the duties of his vocation. The Chrism is also mixed with the water at Baptism and in the consecration of churches, chapels and baptismal fonts. The Chrism Liturgy reminds us of our oneness in Christ through Baptism and its holy anointing. As the Bishop blesses these three oils, our hearts turn to the gracious Lord, who bestows His infinite love and mercy on us through these Sacraments. This Liturgy is a solemn prelude to Holy Week and the promise of the Resurrection!

Following the Liturgy those in attendance were invited to share a buffet lunch in the social hall. It gave an opportunity for the parishioners to greet the visiting clergy before they began their trek back to their own communities. □

## Waterville, Maine *Lenten Retreat*



**S**t. Joseph Maronite Catholic Church, Waterville, Me., held its annual Lenten Retreat March 4 - 5, 2016. The main focus of the retreat was a series of lectures on CD presented by Catholic motivational speaker and author Matthew Kelly, native of Australia, now in the U.S., speaking on *The Seven Pillars of Catholic Spirituality*.

On Friday evening the Knights of Columbus served a haddock chowder supper. The retreat began with Stations and Veneration of the Cross followed by a lecture on the first Pillar, Confession. This topic elicited a lively dialogue with all present as people shared their various experiences and understandings of this Sacrament.

Saturday morning began with prayer and continued with more informative talks and discussions on each of the Pillars: Contemplation, Divine Liturgy, Bible, Fasting, Spiritual Reading, and the Rosary.

Before and after a break for lunch, Suzanne Pare and Lolo Salazar inspired the participants with sacred music, and after the closing prayer they enlivened everyone with an uplifting action song.

The highly engaging Matthew Kelly is the founder of The Dynamic Catholic Institute, a Cincinnati-based non-profit organization whose mission is to re-energize the Catholic Church in America with resources that inspire people to rediscover the genius of Catholicism. With Kelly's inspiration and the ideas everyone contributed, the congregation of St. Joseph is recharged and ready to, as Kelly says, "become the best version of itself!" □

## Charlotte, North Carolina *Palm Sunday Celebration*

**T**he Maronite Mission of Charlotte, N.C., celebrated its first Palm Sunday with a liturgy and service performed by Fr. Elie Mikael, Administrator. He welcomed all to the celebration, especially the children, for whom this Liturgy was dedicated. After Fr. Mikael blessed the olive and palms branches, they were given to the families as the procession made its way outside of St. Matthew Church. The choir led the procession with appropriate hymns. As the procession came to an end a group picture was taken of all who joined on this holy day. Following the Liturgy, everyone was invited



for coffee and cookies and the children participated in an egg hunt. The Maronite Mission of Charlotte continues to grow and take steps in the right direction to make the community stronger and bigger. □

## Troy, New York *Stations of the Cross*



by Mikayla Boutros

**O**n February 19, 2016, the children of St. Ann in Watervliet [Troy], N.Y., went through the Stations of the Cross. Father Alaa Issa, Administrator, explained every station to the children of the parish. The Stations of the Cross is a popular devotion that uses prayer and reflection to follow Jesus Christ on his way to Calvary and the Passion of Christ. The children of St. Ann colored the Stations of the Cross and hung them up around the church. As they went through each Station, the children read lines of each Station of the Cross and sang the prayer in Arabic. □

## Boston, Massachusetts *Knights of the Virgin Mary*



by Randa Yazbeck

**D**uring the school vacation week of February 15 - 20, 2016, the Knights of the Virgin Mary were very excited to come to church with one thing on their minds: to learn about the life of Saint Sharbel and to be prepared spiritually to receive the Relics of the Saint in their Parish of Our Lady of the Cedars, Jamaica Plain [Boston], Mass., April 16 - 17, 2016. The children participated in different workshops presented by their leaders Ibtissam Chahwan and Nisrine El-Hachem. Children aged 6 - 9 years had the chance to take a peek at the Saint's biography and worked on creating related activities booklets. The older children read excerpts from the book *Saint Sharbel from His Contemporaries to Our Era* by Father Hanna Skandar. They expressed their thoughts in graphic organizers to be shared later with other children and families. The workshop was a good experience to learn a moral lesson and grow in the Maronite faith. □

## Austin, Texas *Equestrian Order*



**M**sr. Donald Joseph Sawyer was inducted last November into the Equestrian Order of the Knights of the Holy Sepulchre. The order has over 30,000 Knights and Ladies whose

commitment and dues help to fund monasteries and maintain the churches, schools and other Catholic ministries in the Holy Land.

Msgr. Sawyer received the Pilgrim Shell on January 4, 2016, at the Latin Patriarchate after making a pilgrimage to the Holy Land and praying at the Holy Sepulchre of the Risen Lord. □

### Schedule of Bishop Gregory Mansour

#### April 2 - 3, 2016

Dedication of the New Addition, St. George Church, Uniontown, Penn.

#### April 4, 2016

Meeting of CAMECT, Manhattan, N.Y. (William Bratton, NYPD Chief of Police, will be present, and Leadership of IDC will help advocate for Christians in the Middle East.)

#### April 8, 2016

Annual Gala, St. John Paul II Church, Sleepy Hollow, N.Y.

#### April 9 - 10, 2016

Visit of the Relics of St. Sharbel, Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral, Brooklyn, N.Y.

#### April 12, 2016

American Task Force For Lebanon Annual Banquet, Washington, D.C.

#### April 16, 2016

Ordination to Diaconate of Tony Youssef, Easton, Penn.

#### April 17, 2016

One Year Memorial Liturgy for Msgr. Ignace Sadek, Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral, Brooklyn, N.Y.

#### April 20 - 21, 2016

Retreat Offered for Bishops and Priests of the Diocese of Rockville Center, Long Island, N.Y.

#### April 27, 2016

Family Wedding, Naples, Fla.

#### May 2, 2016

Presbyteral Council Meeting, Chancery Office, Brooklyn, N.Y.

#### May 3, 2016

7<sup>th</sup> Annual Eparchial Benefit Dinner, Manhattan, N.Y.

#### May 6 - 7, 2016

Ordination of Peter Hobeika to Diaconate, Utica, N.Y.

#### May 8, 2016

Mother's Day and Visit of the Relics of St. Sharbel, St. Ann Church, Troy, N.Y. □



@BishopMansour

# Isaac of Nineveh and Syriac Thought

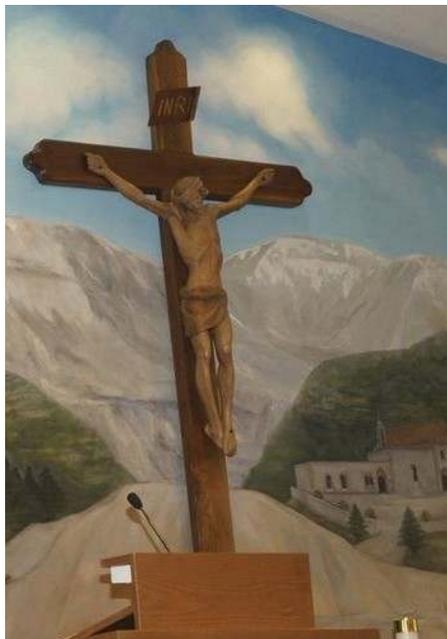
**"The message of the Cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God" (1 Corinthians 1:18).**

**"To discover the literature of the Syrian Fathers is to discover a lost treasure" - Dom Cuthbert Brogan, OSB.**

## Introduction

The English speaking world is indebted to Dr. Sebastian P. Brock, the now-retired Professor of Syriac Studies at Oxford University in England, for exposing the works of Syriac Christianity in English translation. His interest in Syriac began as a young scholar of the Septuagint (the Ancient Greek version of the Old Testament), where he began to discover its intersections with the Syriac language. This blossomed into his prolific career of becoming one of the leading experts on the literature and theology of Syriac Christianity. One very important Syriac writer he has studied extensively is Isaac of Nineveh.

Born around 613 in *Beth Qatraye* of Eastern Arabia and passing on to eternal life in 700 at the Monastery of *Rabban Shabur*, he is often called Abba Isaac, Isaac Syrus, Isaac of Qatar, and St. Isaac the Syrian. He was made the Bishop of Nineveh (modern *Mosul*, Iraq), but soon resigned his position to live the life of a hermit in the mountains of Northern Persia (Iran). Although a member of the Church of the East, sometimes called the Nestorian Church (the predominant Christian Church in modern Iran), Isaac's thought does not center upon the Christological teachings that caused its condemnation and subsequent schism at the Council of Ephesus. Rather, his thought is grounded in the fruits of ascetical monastic prayer and practices, devotion to the Holy Cross, and the theology of the Holy Spirit (Pneumatology). He is numbered among the saints by the Church of the East, the Ancient Oriental Orthodox Churches, and the Eastern Orthodox Church; for Catholics, especially Eastern Catholics, his life and thought have been influential.



## Devotion to the Holy Cross

Isaac of Nineveh was a great defender of the outward, bodily actions that should accompany prayer. He had taken on the *Messalians* (Syriac *msalyane*, 'those who pray') "which appeared in the fourth century and spread over the entire Christian Orient, rejected the Church's sacraments and asceticism" (Hilarion Alfeyev, *Prayer in St. Isaac of Nineveh*). In response to them and their sole desire for ecstatic mystical experiences, Isaac argued that it was the tradition of the ancient fathers that bodily reverence for God should go along with the inner prayer of the heart, together creating true piety in the one who prays. This stance of Isaac is seen clearly in his devotion to the Holy Cross, a central symbol in the prayer, art, and theological thought of ancient Syriac Christianity.

"In many places Isaac mentions prayer and prostrations before the Cross, kissing the Cross, and other signs of special reverence which must be shown

by a Christian to the Cross" (Hilarion Alfeyev, *Prayer in St. Isaac of Nineveh*). For him the Cross is foreshadowed in the Ark of the Covenant, where Moses and the people of Israel acknowledged the presence of God by prostration before the Ark. Now the presence of God is perfectly manifested in the Cross of Christ, and in reverence to that presence we adore Christ through prayer and prostration before the Cross. The Cross, therefore, is the bridge between the Old Testament and the New Testament and is the eschatological (end-of-time) bridge to the Kingdom of God. The Holy Cross stands out in the theology of Isaac as the symbol above all others of the whole sweep of salvation history. It was to be venerated with prostrations, kissing the image of the Cross, kneeling, laying in front of its image for long periods of time, and putting one's head to the floor numerous times.

## Universal Reconciliation

"A handful of sand, thrown into the sea, is what sinning is, when compared to God's Providence and mercy. Just like an abundant source of water is not impeded by a handful of dust, so is the Creator's mercy not defeated by the sins of His creations"

(Sebastian P. Brock, *The Wisdom of Saint Isaac the Syrian*).

This quote from Isaac shows the strong belief he held in the mercy of God. So fervently did he hold this as a personal tenet of faith, that he can be counted among the minority of Church Fathers who argued for Universal Reconciliation, the theological position that all will be saved.

Among the Fathers of the Church, Origen, St. Gregory of Nyssa, and Isaac of Nineveh stand out as defenders of universal salvation. Each in their own way offers a theological reflection in which the eternal mercy and plan of

# The Virgin Mary in Maronite Life

by Brother John M. Samaha, S.M.

God is for them made manifest. Origen held the view known as "apocatastasis," meaning the ultimate restoration of all things and all persons with God. St. Gregory of Nyssa (also called Gregory the Theologian) abandoned the idea of pre-existent souls, which Origen had attached to his doctrine, and affirms that within the mystery of the Divine Incarnation is held the ultimate restoration and reconciliation of all with God. Isaac of Nineveh took the position that hell is a scourging of love, where those in hell have chosen through their lives on earth to be separated from God; but in his thought the doors of hell are locked from the inside. This makes for the possibility of repentance and forgiveness being offered to those in hell.

## Conclusion

"The entire purpose of our Lord's death was not to redeem us from sins, or for any other reason, but solely in order that the world might become aware of the love which God has for creation" (Sebastion P. Brock, *The Wisdom of Saint Isaac the Syrian*). This quote reflects the foundation of Isaac's program of thought and prayer, that God made us to be transformed by his love. Through prayer and repentance our hearts will be transformed to be hearts of love, so that we will truly be the image and likeness of God, as was intended in Creation and reached its eternal stature in the Incarnation, Cross, and Resurrection of Christ. □

Rev. David A. Fisher



The Cedar of Lebanon

Persecutions and similar adversities have caused the Maronite faithful to migrate soon after they began to gather at the Monastery of Saint Maron on the Orontes River. They fled Antioch to seek a safe haven in the rugged mountains of Lebanon early in the sixth century. Challenges persisted through the *Umayyad*, *Fatimide*, and *Mamlouk* dynasties and continued through the duration of the Ottoman Empire (15th to the 20th centuries). The difficulties of the last two centuries were no less aggravating for Lebanon and the Maronites -- and other Eastern Christians. The massacres of the 1840s and 1860s, the two World Wars, and the Lebanese civil war of the last quarter of the 20th century continued the flow of emigrants. Oppression, famine, strife, lack of job opportunities, and other hardships again forced Maronite and other Christians to migrate from the Near East, not only to neighboring Middle Eastern countries, but also to Europe, to the Americas, and to Oceania.

Always and everywhere the Blessed Virgin Mary was part of Maronite life as the faithful persevered and established parishes and eparchies in their new worlds. Generations later the immigrants of the expanded Church and their progeny still maintain their precious heritage and strive to solidify their communities. The Maronites of today strive to preserve their religious heritage and spirituality as they celebrate their rich liturgical and paraliturgical services and make efforts to hand on the Maronite tradition. Among the cherished paraliturgical services is the Benediction with the Icon of the Virgin Mary while chanting the hymn *Ya Umm Allah* (O Mother of God). But often the young do not understand the deeper special significance and need some instruction and assistance toward that end. It is important to enlighten our younger generation about this and other revered Marian devotions received from our ancestors, and to realize why they placed themselves under the mantle of our Blessed Mother's protection.

The Maronite Church is both Apostolic



and Marian, built upon the Apostles and the love of the Virgin Mary. Our Church has journeyed over the ages with the Virgin Mary, whose icon is engraved in every heart and honored in every home. Every morning and every evening and in every difficulty our people naturally sigh *Ya Adra* (O Blessed Virgin). Everywhere the icon of the Virgin Mary is our constant companion.

Maronite devotion to Mary highlights her relationship to her Son, to the life of the Church, and to each of us personally. This manifests itself in our liturgical practices and various devotions. If prayer, liturgical prayer in particular, is the true expression of faith, then Maronites exhibit special veneration of Mary stemming from the Scriptures, the teachings of the Fathers of the Church, and the faith of its people. As Mother of our Redeemer she is also the spiritual mother of each of us, and leads us to her Son.

Realizing this underscores the importance and need to return to and delve into the sources of our Marian heritage. This will energize our veneration of her and strengthen our filial attachment to her. This attachment to Mary is the attachment of children to a mother, and inspires us to have for her a shrine in every town, an icon in every home, and filial love for her in every heart. □

## Saint Tarcisus by Subdeacon Norbert Vogl

Last year a young boy, age twelve, underwent surgery to remove a large tumor beside his brain. He had been roughhousing with friends, as boys are apt to do, after a Friday Lenten prayer service and bumped his head. When pain didn't dissipate, he was taken to the emergency room and, Glory be to God, the tumor was discovered while still operable. During his recovery from the successful operation, I gave him a prayer card for Saint Tarcisus, which he kept under his pillow. Saint Tarcisus is a third century martyr of Rome who underwent great trauma and testing of body and soul. One day after Divine Liturgy, because there was no one else able to do it, young Tarcisus was given the

dangerous task to take the Eucharist to those who were not able to attend. On his way he came across some friends, pagans, gathered together who invited Tarcisus to join them. Tarcisus refused and soon a fight started over the Mysteries that Tarcisus was protecting. Tarcisus died defending the Sacrament. He is a patron saint for altar servers and first communicants. In a poem, Pope Damasus (366-384) compared his death to that of Saint Stephen the Archdeacon.

Many saints have lived long meaningful lives, and their biographies weave beautiful complex tapestries of lessons, both good and bad.



Saint Tarcisus can be a companion to us and a role model. Not to trivialize the saint, but for example, sometimes I will be at lunch with coworkers and shy to bless myself before I eat. I think of this little saint and subtly mark my heart with a cross. He's also helped me, at the times I've carried the Eucharist, to resist the temptation to mingle with friends or stop in at Home Depot on my way to minister the sacrament. I call upon Saint Tarcisus when I am, in general, hesitant and need a little bit of strength. The simplicity and lack of specificity of his story can also help in role play. A parishioner was once mugged and left for dead on the sidewalk near the Cathedral in Brooklyn, N.Y. What would I do if I was stopped while carrying the sacrament and someone wanted to take the pyx from me? During his three-day descent into a personal hell, while blinded, Saint Paul would have remembered the speech Saint Stephen gave at his trial. Did Tarcisus also give a speech and plant seeds of conversion in his attackers? Could I?

Saint Tarcisus's story can be a teaching tool for children and a source of strength to them so they can resist temptations and preserve their own mysteries of purity and sanctity. I hope you can also call this simple Saint a friend in your lives. To learn more of Saint Tarcisus, please see Pope Benedict XVI's general audience at Saint Peter's square on August 4, 2010.□



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The  
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Needs  
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If you feel that you have a vocation to the Priesthood or religious life, please contact your Pastor or write to:

Fr. Gary George, Director  
Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon  
Office of Vocations  
1021 South 10<sup>th</sup> Street  
St. Louis, MO 63104

Or

Fr. Dominique Hanna, Director  
Eparchy of Saint Maron  
Office of Vocations  
c/o St. Joseph Church  
502 Seminole Ave. NE  
Atlanta, GA 30307

Or

Our Lady of Lebanon Seminary  
7164 Alaska Ave. NW  
Washington, DC 20012

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*"When an insane gang pressed saintly Tarcisus, who was carrying the sacraments of Christ, to display them to the profane, he preferred to be killed and give up his life rather than betray to rabid dogs the heavenly body."*

*Excerpt from Pope St.  
Damasus's poem.*

---

Saint Tarcisus on the contrary is known only for a singular, very simple, event. How is he relevant to us? First, we don't know his age. In the popular telling, Tarcisus is a child of twelve. He was old enough to understand the responsibility of Eucharistic ministry. I see the following facts from his story: 1) he is an "everyman" saint. He was an ordinary Christian like us. 2) He was of the people, having both Christian and non-Christian friends. 3) When the need arose, he answered the call to service. And (4) he found inner strength to defend his faith. Don't we all have three of these four attributes? And we pray for the latter.

## West Palm Beach, Florida *Palm Sunday Celebration*



From left: Fr. Leonard Basinow, Fr. Jorge Perales and Fr. Jack Morrison.

by *Mary Somerville*

It was an historic moment for Mary, Mother Of the Light Mission in Tequesta [West Palm Beach], Fla., as Fr. Leonard Basinow, Administrator from April 1997 - March 2001, and Fr. Jorge Perales, from February 2011 - June 2012, joined Fr. Jack Morrison, present Administrator, to celebrate the Divine Liturgy on Hosanna Sunday, March 20, 2016. The Liturgy was offered for the repose of the soul of Msgr. Ron Beshara, the first Administrator of the Mission.

Mary, Mother of the Light's newest and youngest member, Marie Veronica Azzi, only six days old, received the Rite of Admission by Fr. Jack Morrison.

The Church was filled to capacity, and the choir sang the traditional hymns accompanied by George Nehme at the organ. The early morning rain left many puddles, but did not deter the children, dressed in their Sunday best and carrying their beautifully decorated candles, in the procession outside the church along with their parents, grandparents, and other parishioners.

A lamb luncheon, prepared by Robert and Bernadette Shalhoub and many other parishioners, was served after Liturgy in the Social Hall. □

## Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania *St. Maron Food Drive*

The Altar & Rosary Society of St. Anthony + St George Maronite Church, Wilkes-Barre, Penn., and Father Hanna Karam, Pastor, held the Annual Saint Maron Food Drive during the month of February. For over twenty years, the ladies of the Altar & Rosary Society have been collecting non-perishable food items in honor of the Feast of Saint Maron and donating the food to needy families or



From left: Cynthia Collins, Event Coordinator, Lena Michael, Georgette Austin and MaryAnn Spagnola.

charitable agencies for distribution. This year the Altar & Rosary Society and parishioners contributed six boxes of non-perishable food and \$200 cash. □

## Minneapolis, Minnesota *Knights For Life*

by *Joan Moses*

Chorbishop sharbel Maroun, Pastor of St. Maron Church in Minneapolis, Minn., addressed two hundred guests as the featured speaker at the Knights for Life Banquet held at Mendakota Country Club on March 12, 2016, Mendota Heights, Minn. Chorbishop Maroun was the perfect choice to deliver a stirring talk, referring to Jesus in the womb as developing like a typical human being. He personalized the Culture of Life message and inspired us all to do more to protect life from womb to the tomb with mercy. He drew the connections between the words in Arabic for Womb, Mercy, Merciful, and Have Mercy on Us.

The Father Lucien Galtier Knights of Columbus Council 4184 of West St. Paul, Minn., has held three successful banquet fundraisers over the last three years to raise funds for the local Wakota Life Care Center. This Council has received the 2015 International Pro-Life Service Award at their 133<sup>rd</sup> Annual Supreme Convention because of their Knights for Life efforts. Wakota Center's professional staff and trained volunteers have been addressing the needs of those making pregnancy decisions since 1976. Each year, over 800 individuals find the hope and help they need at the center in an atmosphere that is confidential, safe, compassionate, and non-judgmental.

The majority of monies raised come from unique raffle prizes: the opportunity to enjoy a traditional Lebanese style dinner (in the past) and country club dinners with Maronite priests this year; as well as the opportunity to serve breakfast with the local bishop at the Catholic Charities soup kitchen. Proceeds of the successful fundraiser will be used to purchase an ultrasound machine, among other items. □



July 6-10, 2016  
San Francisco, CA



Pre-registration Deadline: **Monday, June 13, 2016**

Please complete all information or register online: [www.namnews.org](http://www.namnews.org)

Incomplete forms will not be processed. Please PRINT legibly. You will receive a confirmation via email or mail.

Primary Registrant: Please add additional family members on reverse side.

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 Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 City/State/Zip: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Parish: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Package/Program Purchased: \_\_\_\_\_

**Check all that apply:**

NAM Member       NAM Delegate  
 NAM Board       Ord. St. Sharbel  
 Conv. Comm.       Child (5-11)  
 Youth (12-18)       Yng Ad. (18-35)  
 Vegetarian      Age: \_\_\_\_\_

**PACKAGES ONLY** - Enter number of packages desired and make sure to fill in Totals and Grand Totals.  
 NAM members whose 2016 dues have been paid will receive \$15 off of the full adult package and \$10 off all other packages.  
 This discount is void after the pre-registration deadline of June 13, 2016.  
 If you wish to pay for your dues or become a member with this registration, please send a check payable to NAM. Child, Youth, Young Adult, and Adult excursions are additional and not included in any package.  
 Saturday Banquet seating will be chosen for you, unless you contact NAM office, or submit your request on-line  
 The "Covenant of Behavior" MUST be completed and SIGNED for all Child and Youth registrants - if not accompanied by a parent.  
 \*\*YOUTH: you are considered youth if you are 18 and did not graduate from high school by summer.  
 YOUNG ADULT: You are considered young adult if you are 18 and are a high school graduate by summer.

Package Options <b>DOES NOT INCLUDE HOTEL ROOMS</b>	Adult 18 years old +		Youth 12 to 18 years**		Child 5 to 11 years		Entertainment Only 35 & under - no meals included Entry after 10PM - valid student ID required	
	Before 6/13/2016	After 6/13/2016	Before 6/13/2016	After 6/13/2016	Before 6/13/2016	After 6/13/2016	Before 6/13/2016	After 6/13/2016
Long Weekend (Thu-Sun)	# ___ @ \$300	# ___ @ \$330	# ___ @ \$270	# ___ @ \$300	# ___ @ \$190	# ___ @ \$220	# ___ @ \$120	# ___ @ \$150
Weekend (Fri - Sun)	# ___ @ \$260	# ___ @ \$290	# ___ @ \$220	# ___ @ \$250	# ___ @ \$140	# ___ @ \$170	# ___ @ \$100	# ___ @ \$130
Saturday & Sunday	# ___ @ \$170	# ___ @ \$200	# ___ @ \$150	# ___ @ \$180	# ___ @ \$100	# ___ @ \$130		
Thursday Only	# ___ @ \$50	# ___ @ \$80	# ___ @ \$40	# ___ @ \$70	# ___ @ \$30	# ___ @ \$50		
Friday Only	# ___ @ \$110	# ___ @ \$140	# ___ @ \$90	# ___ @ \$120	# ___ @ \$60	# ___ @ \$80	# ___ @ \$50	# ___ @ \$80
Saturday Only	# ___ @ \$140	# ___ @ \$170	# ___ @ \$120	# ___ @ \$150	# ___ @ \$70	# ___ @ \$90	# ___ @ \$70	# ___ @ \$100
Sunday Only	# ___ @ \$50	# ___ @ \$80	# ___ @ \$40	# ___ @ \$70	# ___ @ \$30	# ___ @ \$50		
Totals	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$

**EXCURSIONS (Children, Youth, Young Adults, Adults, and Seniors)**

Wednesday: Excursion to Napa, Wine Country (lunch box included)	# _____ @ \$40
Thursday: Youth - Excursion to San Francisco (lunch box included)	# _____ @ \$30
Thursday: Young Adults - (BART) transportation Excursion to San Francisco	# _____ @ \$35
Thursday: Adults, Seniors - Excursion to San Francisco	# _____ @ \$30
Friday: 5K Run by The Bay, organized by OLL Youth Ministry. All donations go to St Jude's Children's Hospital	# _____ @ \$20
Friday: Young Adults - Excursion to Alcatraz	# _____ @ \$40
Friday: Adults, Seniors - Excursion to San Francisco (tour II)	# _____ @ \$30
Saturday: Young Adults - Scavenger hunt in San Francisco	# _____ @ \$10
Saturday: Youth - Sight-seeing to San Francisco, Golden Gate Bridge, Sausalito (lunch box included)	# _____ @ \$30

*On-site registration for all excursions and above events will incur a \$20 fee per event.*

**GRAND TOTAL \$**

**Make checks payable to "NAM Convention" and mail to NAM, P.O. Box 717, Yonkers, NY 10702**  
 Do Not Send Cash. If using a **CREDIT CARD** register online or complete the information below and fax to 914-964-3071  
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For hotel reservations call Hyatt Regency, Burlingame at (888) 421-1442 code 'NAM Convention'. Hotel rate: \$140/night for single/double/triple/quad room. Self-parking at \$12.50 per day. A one-night deposit is required for all reservations. **Rate valid only until June 13, 2016**

Additional Attendees: (Do not repeat information provided on first page, write "SAME" where it applies)

If additional space is needed use a separate sheet or print additional copies of page 2.

First Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Last Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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Parish: \_\_\_\_\_

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| <input type="checkbox"/> Conv. Comm.   | <input type="checkbox"/> Child (5-11)     |
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| <input type="checkbox"/> Vegetarian    | Age: _____                                |

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Package/Program Purchased: \_\_\_\_\_

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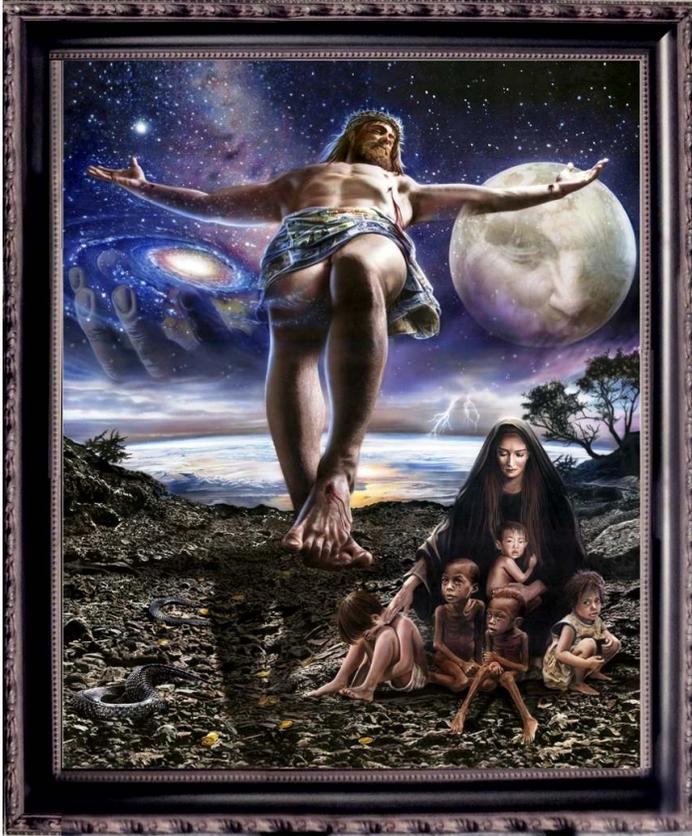
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## Youngstown, Ohio Painting Revealed



by Rose Sayhoun

On March 6, 2016, St. Maron Parish in Youngstown, Ohio, celebrated Chorbishop Michael Kail's birthday. Following the Liturgy, a very interesting and thought-provoking painting of the Crucifixion and its scholarly interpretation were presented by Artist Raymond A. Simon, a parishioner of St. Maron Church. Ray is a renowned artist who has come into his own right and has been commissioned to do work for many public and religious organizations. His work has been featured in NewsWeek, Time and the Associated Press. His work has also been featured on NBC, CBS, ABC, A&E Biography, ESPN and more. He has done a painting of Abraham Lincoln which hangs in the Lincoln Library. His works of art have been placed in the White House and Pentagon.

This particular painting has attracted many visitors wherever it has been on display. The theological interpretation displayed on a scroll was done as a collaboration by Raymond Nakley Jr., Chorbishop Michael Kail, Fr. Anthony Salim, and Fr. Edward Noga of Youngstown, Ohio. Artist Ray Simon says: "I have been haunted with this vision for over a decade. The grain of wheat is the miracle of God; we are that grain. Christ uses the stone of our hearts to grind our sinful nature into flour. He calls upon the Holy Spirit to leaven our souls so that we may rise with Him to become the Bread of Eternal Life. The vision of this painting came in a dream; only within this dream came total vision and clarity."

Needless to say, Chorbishop Kail was very happy with his gift which now hangs on the walls of St. Maron. Later all of the MCF students and parishioners sang happy birthday and enjoyed cake to celebrate the occasion. Happy birthday and many more.

## National Shrine of Our Lady of Lebanon

by Rose Sayhoun

Following is the list of winners from the monthly drawings for the 25Club Dinner raffle held at the National Shrine of Our Lady of Lebanon in North Jackson, Ohio, for the 2015 - 2016 year.

Month	Ticket Number	Winner
April 2015	No drawing	
May 2015	338	George Rohan Sr.
June 2015	116	Tracy Yeropoli
July 2015	132	Josephine Medovich
August 2015	317	Don Santisi III
September, 2015	232	Jaclene and Badih Feghali
October 2015	087	Jim Rohan
November 2015	120	Mike Nabor
December 2015	100	Jim Borak
January 2016	068	J. and H. Estaphan
February 2016	172	Andy Ziobert
March 2016	355	Yvonne Marzano
April 2016	Banquet and Drawings	

If you are interested in helping the Basilica and the National Shrine of Our Lady of Lebanon by purchasing a ticket, please call the Shrine at 330-538-3351 or Rose Sayhoun at 330-565-7238. Tickets are \$70 a year. Only 500 tickets will be issued. Yearly awards: 3@\$1000; 2@\$500; 16@\$100. Monthly awards \$150. □



**Deadline** for next month's issue of *The Maronite Voice* is April 25, 2016.

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

Send all changes of address, news, pictures and personal correspondence to: The Maronite Voice

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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](http://www.stmaron.org). □

## Brooklyn, New York *Palm Sunday Celebration*



by Leila Vogl

The weather was too cold for a procession outside down the streets of Brooklyn, but we had a beautiful Palm Sunday celebration inside the Cathedral this year. Before the Divine Liturgy, Bishop Gregory Mansour said a few words about the imagery within the Jubilee of Mercy logo. Then the Cathedral Youth choir began to sing hymns in Arabic, English and Syriac. Approximately thirty of the children of the parish of Our Lady of Lebanon, Brooklyn, N.Y., participated in different ways during the Divine Liturgy, organized by Monsignor James Root, Rector, Mrs. Leila Vogl and Subdeacon Norbert Vogl. Marvin Alhaddad, age thirteen, amazed everyone by reading the epistle in Arabic directly from the Arabic text and Tiffany Chawki, age eleven, read the epistle in English. Children of ages ranging from four to fourteen from the religion and Arabic classes also brought the gifts, distributed peace to the people and read the intercessions, ending each intercession by chanting "We Pray to You, O Lord." Elias Diab, age twelve, said and chanted his intercession in Arabic. Bishop Mansour centered his homily around the meaning and modern interpretation of "Hosanna" and then, after blessing the palms, led all the children in procession through the Year of Mercy Holy Doors and around the Church. Msgr. James Root, Father Michel Lahoud and Father James Doran concelebrated the Liturgy. Subdeacons Norbert Vogl and Peter Frangie assisted. □

## Springfield, Massachusetts *Rite of the Lamp*

by Kathy LaBella

The Most Reverend Bishop Gregory John Mansour, Bishop of the Eparchy of Saint Maron, visited St. Anthony Maronite Church in Springfield, Mass., on Wednesday, March 23, 2016, to celebrate the *Rite of the*



Lamp with the parish. Several clergy, deacons and the Knights of Columbus were among the congregation. The purpose of the *Rite of the Lamp* is to plead to the Lord to receive contrition of the faithful repentant and to grant health to the sick as well as to the healthy. Monsignor David George made the dough covered in oil, which the Bishop blessed as candles were lit over it. At the end of the service the dough and the holy oil were distributed to the parishioners. □



## *Pope's Urbi et Orbi Blessing*

"O give thanks to the Lord, for He is  
Good, for His Mercy Endures Forever" (Ps 136:1)



Dear Brothers and Sisters, Happy Easter!

Jesus Christ, the incarnation of God's mercy, out of love for us, died on the cross, and out of love he rose again from the dead. That is why we proclaim today: Jesus is Lord!

His resurrection fulfills the prophecy of the Psalm: God's

mercy endures for ever; it never dies. We can trust him completely, and we thank him because for our sake he descended into the depths of the abyss.

Before the spiritual and moral abysses of mankind, before the chasms that open up in hearts and provoke hatred and death, only an infinite mercy can bring us salvation. Only God can fill those chasms with his love, prevent us from falling into them and help us to continue our journey together towards the land of freedom and life.

The glorious Easter message that Jesus, who was crucified, is not here but risen (cf. Mt 28:5-6), offers us the comforting assurance that the abyss of death has been bridged and, with it, all mourning, lamentation and pain (cf. Rev 21:4). The Lord, who suffered abandonment by his disciples, the burden of an unjust condemnation and shame of an ignominious death, now makes us sharers of his immortal life and enables us to see with his eyes of love and compassion those who hunger and thirst, strangers and prisoners, the marginalized and the outcast, the victims of oppression and violence. Our world is full of persons suffering in body and spirit, even as the daily news is full of stories of brutal crimes which often take place within homes, and large-scale armed conflicts which cause indescribable suffering to entire peoples.

The risen Christ points out paths of hope to beloved Syria, a country torn by a lengthy conflict, with its sad wake of destruction, death, contempt for humanitarian law and the breakdown of civil concord. To the power of the Risen Lord we entrust the talks now in course, that good will and the cooperation of all will bear fruit in peace and initiate the building of a fraternal society respectful of the dignity and rights of each citizen. May the message of life, proclaimed by the Angel beside the overturned stone of the tomb, overcome hardened hearts and promote a fruitful encounter of peoples and cultures in other areas of the Mediterranean and the Middle East, particularly in Iraq, Yemen and Libya. May the image of the new man, shining on the face of Christ, favor concord between Israelis and Palestinians in the Holy Land, as well as patience, openness and daily commitment to laying the foundations of a just and lasting peace through direct and sincere negotiations. May the Lord of life also accompany efforts to attain a definitive solution to the war in Ukraine, inspiring and sustaining initiatives of humanitarian aid, including the liberation of those who are detained.

The Lord Jesus, our peace (Eph 2:14), by his resurrection triumphed over evil and sin. May he draw us closer on this Easter feast to the victims of terrorism, that blind and brutal form of violence which continues to shed blood in different parts of the world, as in the recent attacks in Belgium, Turkey, Nigeria, Chad, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire and Iraq. May he water the seeds of hope and prospects for peace in Africa; I think in particular of Burundi, Mozambique, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan, marked by political and social tensions.

With the weapons of love, God has defeated selfishness and death. His son Jesus is the door of mercy wide open to all. May his Easter message be felt ever more powerfully by the beloved people of Venezuela in the difficult conditions which they are experiencing, and by those responsible for the

country's future, that everyone may work for the common good, seeking spaces of dialogue and cooperation with all. May efforts be made everywhere to promote the culture of justice and reciprocal respect, which alone can guarantee the spiritual and material welfare of all people.

The Easter message of the risen Christ, a message of life for all humanity, echoes down the ages and invites us not to forget those men and women seeking a better future, an ever more numerous throng of migrants and refugees – including many children – fleeing from war, hunger, poverty and social injustice. All too often, these brothers and sisters of ours meet along the way with death or, in any event, rejection by those who could offer them welcome and assistance. May the forthcoming World Humanitarian Summit not fail to be centered on the human person and his or her dignity, and to come up with policies capable of assisting and protecting the victims of conflicts and other emergencies, especially those who are most vulnerable and all those persecuted for ethnic and religious reasons.

On this glorious day, “*let the earth rejoice, in shining splendor*” (cf. Easter Proclamation), even though it is so often mistreated and greedily exploited, resulting in an alteration of natural equilibria. I think especially of those areas affected by climate change, which not infrequently causes drought or violent flooding, which then lead to food crises in different parts of the world.

Along with our brothers and sisters persecuted for their faith and their fidelity to the name of Christ, and before the evil that seems to have the upper hand in the life of so many people, let us hear once again the comforting words of the Lord: “Take courage; I have conquered the world! (Jn 16:33). Today is the radiant day of this victory, for Christ has trampled death and destruction underfoot. By his resurrection he has brought life and immortality to light (cf. 2 Tim 1:10). “He has made us pass from enslavement to freedom, from sadness to joy, from mourning to jubilation, from darkness to light, from slavery to redemption. Therefore let us acclaim in his presence: Alleluia!” (Melito of Sardis, Easter Homily).

To those in our society who have lost all hope and joy in life, to the elderly who struggle alone and feel their strength waning, to young people who seem to have no future, to all, I once more address the words of the Risen One: “See, I am making all things new... To the thirsty I will give water as a gift from the spring of the water of life” (Rev 21:5-6). May this comforting message of Jesus help each of us to set out anew with greater courage and greater hope to blaze trails of reconciliation with God and with all our brothers and sisters. Of which we have great need! ☐

(Zenit.org, March 27, 2016)



## 4.5 million Refugees from Syria's Civil War

**C**aritas Italiana, the relief and development agency of the Church in Italy, has published a 24-page report marking the fifth anniversary of the beginning of the Syrian Civil War.

According to Caritas, the war, which has claimed more than 260,000 lives, has led 12.5 million people to leave their homes: eight million have been internally displaced within Syria, and 4.5 million are refugees. The majority of refugees are in Lebanon, Turkey, Jordan, and Iraq.

Appealing for continued refugee assistance, Caritas called for advocacy on behalf of peace "at the level of governments and international institutions." □

(Catholic World News, March 18, 2016)

## U.S. Says ISIS is Guilty of Genocide against Christians and other Minorities

**U**.S. Secretary of State John Kerry has issued an official finding that the Islamic State is guilty of genocide against Christians and other minorities in Syria and Iraq.

The formal finding by the State Department comes just before a deadline imposed by Congress, and in fact a spokesman had earlier told reporters that the State Department would not meet that deadline. The March 17, 2016, announcement does not trigger any other action by the United States. Kerry said that he was "neither judge nor prosecutor nor jury" in the matter, and any charges against the Islamic State would have to be brought before an international court.

Nevertheless Kerry said that the "despicable" actions of the Islamic State are genocidal "by self-acclimation, by ideology, and by practice." □

(Catholic World News, March 17, 2016)

## Caritas Lebanon, USA

**O**n March 22, 2016, after obtaining the approval of Bishop A. Elias Zaidan, Bishop of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon, and Bishop Gregory Mansour, Bishop of the Eparchy of Saint Maron, Fr. Elias Abi Sarkis, Director of Caritas Lebanon, USA, forwarded \$90,000 from the Caritas Lebanon USA account to the account of Caritas Lebanon in Lebanon for its charitable activities. □

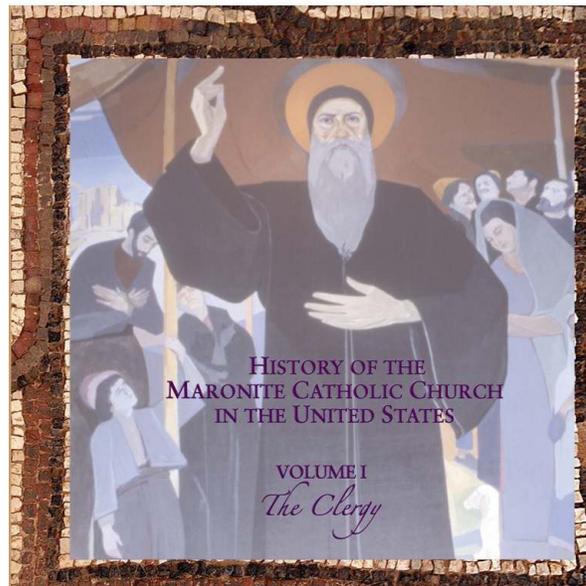


Eparchyofsaintmaron

## From the Book Shelf

### History of the Maronite Catholic Church in the United States

#### The Clergy



by Evelyn Karam Small

**I**n 1890, the first assigned Maronite Catholic missionary arrived in New York City. Like many Lebanese immigrants, he brought with him his faith and the hope of building a better tomorrow.

Now, modern-day parishioners can read about the complete history of the Maronite Church in America in a new book called *History of the Maronite Catholic Church in the United States, Volume I, The Clergy*. Five years of extensive research were needed to unearth never-before published documents and to translate historical records and correspondence from their original French or Arabic into English. To further understand the evolution of the Church, the authors also analyzed interviews conducted with parishioners and pastors over the past seventy years.

This 440-page book is an essential addition to the bookshelf of any Maronite curious about the contributions our Church has made over the last 125 years.

*The Clergy* is available for \$30 plus \$7 shipping from Saint Maron Publications, 4611 Sadler Road, Glen Allen, Virginia 23060 <http://stmaron.org/store>.

Saint Maron Publications accepts Visa or Master Card.

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## *Being People of Prayer*

*Continued from page 1*

Of course, it is easy to stop praying when prayer seems to go unanswered. It is just frustrating. But think of the widow – she never stopped; she was persistent even to the point of becoming something of a bother. She was driving the judge crazy with her persistence.

The world we live in today is fast-paced, geared to quick answers. We have instant communication with texting, Twitter and Facebook. Television programs are meant to solve many problems in less than thirty minutes. Prayer is really an encounter between God and us. Our hearts, our minds and very lives are part of that encounter and so prayer is not meant to be “fast-food” for the soul. Like any encounter with others, it takes time to develop and mature.

Persistent prayer can be frustrating for us; it can be discouraging especially in a world filled with heartache and heartbreak, sickness and suffering, war and violence. Jesus is reminding us that our life often calls for endurance. Sometimes we ask where is God's compassion, where is his mercy? We can come to feel that God is turning his deaf ear to us. But we know that it is not that God just doesn't care about us – He does! It is not that God doesn't love us – He does! God does hear us; He does accept our pleas to Him. Sometimes God may seem to be silent, but He is not. The famous Doctor of the Church, St. Ephrem, wrote in one of his prayers (*The Pearl*): “*Let your stillness speak to one that hears.*”

Knowing that God is unchangeable, that he is the same yesterday, today and will be tomorrow, it seems strange to say that prayer is capable of changing God's heart. But that is what Jesus teaches us. Perhaps, we just do not know what to ask for. St. Paul tells us: “... we do not know how to pray as we ought” (Romans 8:26). The Bible tells us that when God asked King Solomon, “Ask for whatever you want me to give you,” King Solomon replied: “to distinguish between

right and wrong.”(1 Kings 3:5-9). He did not ask for wealth or success or even health, but wisdom.

Prayer is not meant to be selfish either. It is good to pray for ourselves, but we must always remember others, especially those who have no one to pray for them.

It is easy to stop praying when prayer seems to go unanswered, but God is more willing than any judge to listen – and listen quickly – to the cries of his people. As believers we must persevere in prayer even when the outcomes are different than what we may have hoped for. As always, remember that Jesus is the model for us. He prayed constantly; he prayed intensely; he even prayed that the chalice – his Passion - might pass from him, but it did not. This great trial set before him did not discourage him; it did not cause him to doubt or grow distant from his Heavenly Father. In the same way we must persevere in prayer. As Maronites we have a strong devotion to the Blessed Mother and to our patron saints. These holy ones have great intercessory power. We must not allow ourselves to grow distant from God. Let us always persist in prayer. God will not let us down. Prayer can truly make miracles happen.

During this Holy Season of Resurrection, let us make prayer a more integral part of our relationship with the Lord. We are God's friends, his brothers and sisters in Christ. ☐

+Bishop A. Elias Zaidan  
Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon of Los Angeles

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## *Appeal from Caritas Lebanon*

**C**hristians in Lebanon are suffering! If you are able to relieve some of the suffering, please visit *Caritas Lebanon* at <http://www.caritas.org.lb>. Thank you for your consideration. ☐