



The Maronite Voice



A Publication of the Maronite Eparchies in the USA

Volume XIV

Issue No. IV

April 2017

Witness

What qualified her to be the first Catechism teacher at Our Lady of Lebanon (then Mission) in Flint, Michigan? I suppose that Monsignor Ronald Bechara, Pastor, saw in her a good wife, a good mother, an active member of the Mission, a person in whom people could trust, and a woman who loved her Christian faith so much that she took a risk to trust in the fledging Mission. She and her husband and six children were there every Sunday.

She was chosen by her high school class to crown the Virgin Mary. She married right after high school, had her first child a year later, and raised her six children to live with as much love, forgiveness and dignity as possible. When she suffered from acute leukemia she questioned God, but the answer she quickly found was to make of her suffering something that could bear witness to Christ for the sake of the many loves in her life: husband, children, family, friends and Church. In the toughest times she would seek God and seek after the good of others. When it was her time to say goodbye, she did so as a woman of faith, a witness.

She looked at the best in each person, even though she knew also the other side. She chose to build up each person even when she held enough secrets to tear them down. She was a witness to what our Lord lived and died for, because she lived and died for the same.

My mother, described above, is like so many women and men in our parishes who today serve as catechists, volunteers, members of the women's or men's groups, and who love their Church and witness to Christ. What qualifies them to serve is their common desire to love God, and to love those entrusted to them, and to live a life worthy of the God who made us.



The 350 Martyrs of Saint Maron by Fr. Abdo Badwi, University of the Holy Spirit, Kaslik, Lebanon (USEK), Department of Sacred Art.

The Maronite Synod of Bishops, with Patriarch Bechara Peter Cardinal Rai as head, has declared this year from February 9, 2017, Feast of Saint Maron, to March 2, 2018, Feast of Saint John Maron, as The Year of the Witness (Martyr). Our Patriarch has done this to encourage us to reflect on those who lived their lives as witnesses to Christ, and then made the ultimate sacrifice, to die in defense of this faith. *(Continues on page 24)*

Schedule of Bishop Elias Zaidan

March 31 - April 9, 2017

Pastoral Visit to the Maronite Churches in the Greater Detroit Area: St. Maron Church, Detroit; St. Sharbel Church, Clinton Township; and St. Rafka Church, Livonia, Mich.

April 10, 2017

Blessing of Holy Oil, St. Raymond Cathedral, Saint Louis, Mo.

April 11 - 15, 2017

Holy Week Mission Retreat, Our Lady of the Cedars Church, Houston, Tex.

April 16, 2017

Easter Sunday, St. Raymond Cathedral, Saint Louis, Mo.

April 20 - 23, 2017

NAM Regional Convention, St. Rafka Church, Denver, Colo.

April 24 - 26, 2017

Presbyteral Council Meeting, St. Louis, Mo.

April 29 - 30, 2017

Pastoral Visit to St. Theresa Church, Tulsa, Okla.

May 2, 2017

Ordination of His Excellency Mark Rivituso, the New Auxiliary Bishop of St. Louis, Mo.

May 6 - 7, 2017

Pastoral Visit to Our Lady of Lebanon Church, Flint, Mich.

May 9, 2017

USCCB International Justice and Peace Committee Meetings, Washington, D.C.

May 11, 2017

Confirmation Mass, Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Church, San Diego, Calif.

May 12 - 14, 2017

Pastoral Visit to Our Lady of the Cedars Church, Houston, Tex. □

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Maronite Convention 2017

Saint Rafka Maronite Mission

Greenville, South Carolina

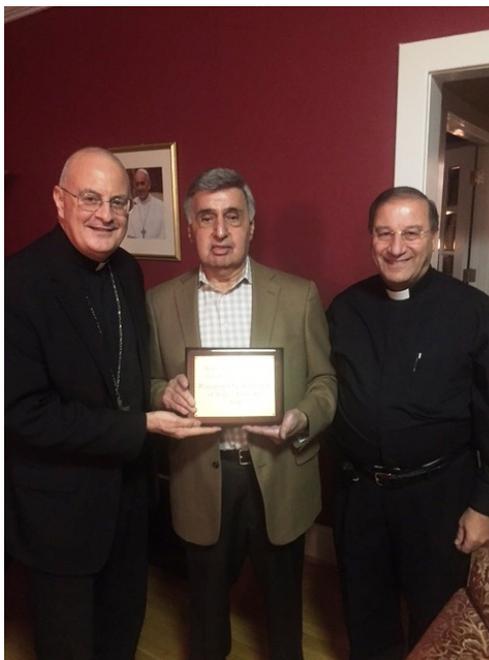
June 29 - July 2, 2017

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

Washington, D.C. Raymond Bedwick Visits Seminary

by John Kury

Raymond G. Bedwick of Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, recently visited Our Lady of Lebanon Maronite Seminary in Washington, D.C. As a longtime and significant supporter of the Seminary, Raymond was pleased to see the Seminary and have dinner with the seminarians. Bishop Gregory Mansour, Bishop of the Eparchy of Saint Maron, and Seminary Rector Monsignor Peter F. Azar unveiled a plaque which now hangs in the Seminary's living room in honor of Raymond's generosity. In addition to making a number of special donations to the Seminary over the past few years, Raymond is a Perpetual Member of the Order of Saint Sharbel. □



From left: Bishop Gregory Mansour, Ray Bedwick and Msgr. Peter Azar.

Eparchial Condolences

Our
Deepest
Sympathy

Reverend Christopher (James Edgar) Henderson passed into eternal life while at his residence in Greer, S.C., on March 13, 2017. Born to Louie and Margaret (Peggy) Henderson on August 10, 1947, in Charlotte, N.C., Father Christopher received degrees in Classics, English, Theology, 18th Century Studies and Literature. He was ordained on January 29, 1994, by Archbishop Francis M. Zayek.

Father Christopher was appointed Assistant Pastor of Saint Anthony of Padua Maronite Church in Cincinnati, Ohio, and served for two months. He was then appointed as Administrator of Saint George Church in Uniontown, Penn., in 1994 and became Pastor in 1995 and served until 1998. He was then appointed Pastor of Saint Theresa Church in Brockton, Mass. and served from 1998 until 2002.

Although Father Christopher took a three year leave of absence in 2002, and a medical retirement in 2005, he was serving, when called upon, at Saint Rafka Parish in Greenville, S.C., at the request of Father Bartholomew Leon, Administrator.

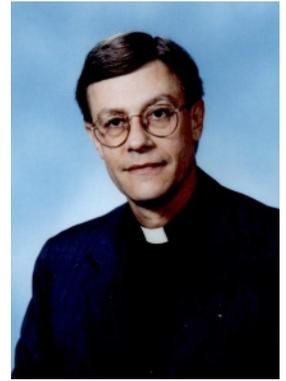
Father Christopher left behind his brother, Tom, his

sisters, Peg and Trish, as well as many nieces and nephews, relatives and friends. He was preceded in death by his parents. Bishop Gregory Mansour had the opportunity to celebrate the Divine Liturgy with him at his residence two weeks prior to his death.

The Funeral Divine Liturgy took place on Saturday, March 18, 2017, at St. Rafka Mission in Greenville. Father Christopher's burial will be at a later date in Charlotte, North Carolina.

His Excellency 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 Fr. Henderson's family and loved ones.

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



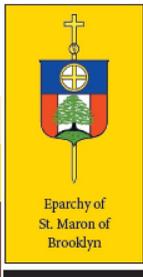
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Los Angeles, California

Feast of Saint Maron

by Manal El-Khoury

Our Lady of Mt. Lebanon St. Peter Cathedral in Los Angeles, Calif., celebrated the Feast Day of St. Maron on Sunday, February 19, 2017. During the Divine Liturgy new members of the Order of Saint Sharbel were installed. Following the Liturgy, the celebration continued with a Luncheon at the Beverly Wilshire Hotel in Beverly Hills. Mr. and Mrs. Janah Risha, the Event Chairpersons, working under the guidance of Fr. Elias Sleiman, Rector, along with Fr. Albert Constantine and with the support of all the committee members, planned a celebration to remember. Ms. Raquel Deriane and Mr. Ronny Lazar, the Masters of Ceremonies, filled the room with laughter with their wit and humor. A beautiful a capella rendition of the United States National Anthem was sung by Lauren and Emilie Risha. Christen Ntanos sang the Lebanese National Anthem. Highlights of the event included the musical talent of pianist Mr. George Alwan; and an amazing vocal performance by Ms. Mayssa Karaa, a Lebanese-American Grammy-nominated singer, accompanied on piano by Mr. Elio-Antonio El Kallassi, a composer, orchestrator and pianist. The attendees were addressed in part by Mrs. Maya Ibrahim on behalf of the Honorable John Ibrahim, the Consul General of Lebanon, and His Excellency Bishop A. Elias Zaidan, Bishop of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon. The Honorees were Mr. and Mrs. Richard Hollow for their active and dedicated service to the church and community for over forty years.

Fr. Albert Constantine, Associate Rector, wrote in his letter published in the commemoration book, "Mr. Richard and Mrs. Jeanette Hollow exemplify our best traditions and, through their example, they inspire us to greater service and deeper devotion. They clearly show us what true men and women of faith can do when they live lives pleasing to God and devote their time, talent and treasure to the betterment of our world."

The Holy Spirit University of Kaslik (USEK) was another Honoree. "The USEK is a Maronite Institution...and Initiative in the World of Education that was motivated by the zeal and the love of devoted Monks which gave birth to a renowned University," said Fr. Elias Sleiman, Rector. This was the motivation behind this year's theme: "Love Takes Up Where Knowledge Leaves Off" (St. Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologica).

In his letter, Fr. Constantine wrote, "That many of our bishops and priests graduated from this great university is a testament to its enduring relevance and importance." Bishop Zaidan wrote, "USEK has embodied the mission of knowledge for the ultimate good of forming people to love God and their fellow human beings." As part of their recognition, the honorees were also presented with the *Gazo D Moroun* (Treasure of Maron) Trophy. This year, however, the trophy was redesigned using a 3D Modeling technology by Mr. Habib Kharrat, who used the statue of St. Maron in the Vatican as his inspiration. Mr. and Mrs. Hollow and the Very Reverend Father George Hobeika, Ph.D., of USEK also



From left: Fr. Elias Sleiman, Fr. George Hobeika, Bishop Elias Zaidan and Fr. Albert Constantine.

addressed the crowd and expressed their gratitude to the community for the recognition and support.

Mr. and Mrs. Hollow also wrote a letter published in the commemoration book. They expressed their sentiments on being part of the Maronite community and how much it has meant to them. "A special thank you for your guidance, encouragement and love that you have all given us and our family throughout the years. We are so overwhelmed with gratitude that you felt us worthy of this wonderful honor that you have bestowed upon us," they wrote. "We are also grateful and blessed to have such wonderful family and friends who are sharing in this special occasion." Also in attendance of this special celebration were Mr. Fady Chamoun, President of the USEK Foundation; Fr. Hady Mahfouz, former President of USEK for nine years and currently serving as a member of the USEK Board of Trustees and Chairman of its Institutional Planning and Sustainability Committee; and Dr. Elias Ayoub, Chairman of the USEK Board of Trustees. It was a wonderful event and one that justly honored the legacy of St. Maron. □

the Deadline is... **Deadline** for next month's issue of *The Maronite Voice* is April 22, 2017.

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

Send all news, pictures and personal correspondence to:

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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. □

Sleepy Hollow, New York *MYO/MYA Regional Retreat*



by *Gibran Mourani, MYO Member at Saint John Paul II*

Hosting a Regional MYO/MYA Retreat is a remarkable accomplishment for our parish, Saint John Paul II in Sleep Hollow [West Chester], N.Y., as we reach our ten-year anniversary as a mission. Although the church is not the biggest in size, it managed to host over one hundred fifty people from eight MYO parishes, filling our hall to capacity. The event really opened my eyes to the diversity present within the Maronite community in the Northeast. I thought my brother and I were the furthest you could deviate from the typical Middle Eastern mold (one of the kids actually thought I looked Italian!), but we were all joined under a common theme: "Be Made Clean" (Mark 1:41).

The retreat day was planned and coordinated by Sister Therese Maria Touma of the Maronite Servants of Christ the Light. The idea of being "made clean" incorporated the gifts of the Mysteries of Reconciliation/Confession and the Eucharist in the lives of young Christians. The day was composed of workshop presentations by our pastor Fr. Dany Abi-Akar, and Bishop Gregory Mansour. Icebreakers; small group discussions; delicious meals; Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament; Confession; and Divine Liturgy.

In small groups, we discussed the fears that hold us back from going to Confession, which led to the topic of the

distractions that we face today, diverting us from investing ourselves fully in our faith. In his typical anecdotal fashion, Fr. Dany told a story about a guy who fell in love with a girl at a CD store. The guy was too afraid to ask her out, so he just kept on buying CDs every day, just so he could see her. Unfortunately, the guy died unexpectedly. His mom went through his stuff to find the pile of unopened CDs. When she opened the CDs, each one had a message inside from the girl from the store, in which she asked him if he would like to go out with her. I liked this story because it showed the importance of having a certain level of openness in order to ask God for help, healing and forgiveness. Fr. Dany's message was clear: If we are too afraid to live and grow our spirituality, we might miss all that God has to offer us in our lives. Thus, going to confession is imperative towards taking initiative in searching for a deeper spiritual life.

Bishop Gregory gave a talk about how Jesus reveals himself to us through the Eucharist. He put emphasis on how we should be truly present in our participation in the Eucharist. He said we should not be "lazy Christians" in our reception of the Body and Blood of Christ, because every Mass brings us to the moment of Christ's Last Supper and Crucifixion. He, challenged us to be more active in our faith and in our parishes. During Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, we were given the opportunity to go to confession

and we were invited to come up to the Lenten devotional display (set up by the Sisters) to place a heart on a cross with the names of our loved ones who needed prayers. Prayers, readings, worship songs focusing on the gift of "Being Made Clean" through God's mercy and forgiveness complemented the reflective atmosphere.

Despite its being really cold outside, parishioners Mr. and Mrs. Munir Barakat, generously donated an afternoon surprise treat from an ice cream truck! After that, we attended Liturgy, where the MYO/MYA from my parish served. The Gospel message of the Hemorrhaging Woman really capitalized on the retreat's theme. This woman had the utmost faith in Jesus' healing power. It was she who had the courage to go to Jesus to be healed. This went back to the idea discussed earlier in the retreat, in which it is up to us to have the faith and courage to seek and accept our Maronite Catholic faith in our lives. After dinner, Sister Therese Maria offered another surprise to conclude our day together... *dabke* dancing!

Lenten Service Project

As part of a service project during their March 11, 2017, regional retreat at St. John Paul II parish in Sleepy Hollow, the MYO/MYA participants donated much-needed items to the local Community Food Pantry of Sleepy Hollow and Tarrytown. The parish also presented a check for \$150 representing a \$1 contribution on behalf of each person attending the retreat, as well as \$50 received in cash donations. The money and six boxes of canned tuna, sardines, dry beans and pasta were delivered by local MYA members Jude Bato, Antoine Hameed and Donna-Maria Mourani. □

Brooklyn, New York Arabic Class



by Salma Vahdat

For several years Arabic Class has been in operation at Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral in Brooklyn, N.Y., to teach our youngsters the classical language of our forefathers. The children usually have an opportunity to demonstrate their Arabic prowess at the First Holy Communion Liturgy when they each have turns reading the Epistle and/or the Intercessions.

We, American-born parishioners, have been so amazed at the ease with which the youngsters master the language

and are very proud of them for their accomplishment.

However, over the past few years I began to wonder what was wrong with us "older" members of the community and chastised myself, at least, for not making an overture to join the children. When, finally, a few of us began speaking about it amongst ourselves, we decided to ask if we, too, could have an adult class formed.

Leila Vogl, the wife of Subdeacon Norbert, graciously volunteered to take us under her wing and prepare a class for several of us twice per month... that has now become every week! Some of us wanted only "conversation" and some, the whole *magillah*...speaking, reading and writing!

It is true that this wonderful opportunity has come to us late, and most of us are retired, but I must say it has been a trip! Aside from exercising our brains, we enjoy the camaraderie and chuckle a lot speaking to each other in Arabic. We even have taken to making phone calls to each other speaking in Arabic. I think our parents and grandparents are having a chuckle too, watching us from above...going full circle! □

Houston, Texas Breakfast With Abouna

by Dustin Jaoude

On Saturday morning, March 11, 2017, Our Lady of the Cedars Maronite Church in Houston, Tex., gathered for a special event called "Breakfast with Abouna."

After the Divine Liturgy and while the children were having religious education instructions in the Pastoral Center, parishioners were invited to the Cedar Hall for this special event, a creative way for the parishioners to learn more about the difficult questions regarding the Maronite faith and the history of the Catechism.

A Lebanese breakfast was served while *Abouna* [Father] Edward Hanna lead the discussion with a presentation about the book of the "Catechism of the Catholic Church" (CCC). He referred to the most recent Catechism book as the second book of the Catholic Church after the Bible and explained that we should use it along with our Bibles to better understand our Catholic faith.

Abouna Edward then asked ten questions and formed groups to answer these questions with the use of the CCC. This was a great way to engage the parishioners to think about these difficult questions, and to explore our faith even deeper, while learning about the resources of the Church. □

It is vital that we sow the seeds of goodness in order to cultivate justice, foster accord, and sustain integration, without growing weary.

Pope Francis, March 21, 2017

Cleveland, Ohio *St. Maron Feast Day Celebration*



Bishop A. Elias Zaidan, Ms. Rose Mary Asher and Msgr. Peter Karam.

by *Deacon George Khoury*

It is said that a picture is worth a thousand words. Although Saint Maron Church in Cleveland, Ohio, celebrated the liturgical feast of St. Maron on February 9, 2017, the annual banquet attended by His Excellency Bishop A. Elias Zaidan, Bishop of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon, was celebrated on Saturday, February 25 at La Villa Banquet Center in Brookpark, Ohio. Nearly 600 attendees enjoyed a variety of tasty Middle Eastern appetizers.

Parishioners Marianne Dergham and Jeannie Farah were the Masters of Ceremony. A beautiful rendition of the National Anthem was sung a capella in harmony by Stephanie Farah and her brother Stephen. Msgr. Peter Karam, Pastor, welcomed the attendees, and Associate Fr. Alexander Harb gave the invocation.

Youth from ages seven to eighteen and members of our Maronite Christian Formation Program (MCFP), the Youth Organization and the Young Adults Organization performed a *dabke* dance program choreographed and directed by future seminarian Christopher Nahra.

Mr. Samir Farah, President of NAM and also a parishioner of St. Maron, presented the Silver Massabki Award to Alya and Karim Essey for their many years of generosity of time and volunteerism to Saint Maron Church.

Bishop Zaidan recognized four new members of the Order of Saint Sharbel at the banquet. They were presented with their medals and inducted on Sunday during Liturgy.

The highlight of the evening was the surprise announcement by Msgr. Peter Karam of the efforts of Bishop Zaidan, in communication with the Holy Father, Pope Francis, to confer the highest degree in the Knighthood of St. Gregory on Ms. Rosemary Asher. This honor is for deeds, merits and generosity by recipients to the benefit of the Holy See, the Catholic Church, or their respective communities and organizations. The presentation of this medal took place during Sunday's Liturgy. □

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania *Subdiaconate Ordination*



Subdeacon AlChoufete with his family and Fr. Rodolph Wakim.

by *Therezia AlChoufete*

On Sunday, January 8, 2017, parishioner Bahige Dib Alchoufete was ordained to the Minor Orders of Cantor, Lector, and Subdeacon at Our Lady of Victory Maronite Catholic Church (OLOV) in Pittsburgh, Penn. Archbishop John D. Faris led the ceremony. Fr. Rodolph Wakim was Bahige's sponsor. Family, friends and parishioners, along with out-of-state guests, attended the celebration. The event was followed by a family-style reception, and lunch was prepared and served by the parishioners. It was a great event highlighting service and unity within the OLOV community. □

Fairlawn, Ohio. *Eightieth Anniversary*

by *Msgr. William Bonczewski*

A memorable day in the Parish of Our Lady of the Cedars of Mt. Lebanon was February 5, 2017, when His Excellency Bishop A. Elias Zaidan came to Fairlawn [Akron], Ohio, to lead the celebrations of the Feast of St. Maron and the 80th Anniversary of the Parish.

Parishioners of all ages and friends of the Parish filled the Church to overflowing. The prayerful spirit and the joy of the occasion was fully alive. The Parish youth, Altar Servers,



Children of the parish chant the hymn *Salatooke Ma'Ana* to Bishop Zaidan.



Japanese, Indian, Arabic and more, each interesting, unique, and taught us new things.

We cannot thank the staff of The International Coffee and Tea Festival and the DIA enough for giving us the opportunity to perform in front of such an amazing audience, surrounded by breathtaking art, inside of a beautiful museum.

Also a huge thank you to Chorbishop Alfred Badawi and everyone that came to support us during our performance.

choir members, clergy, and the faithful all participated so well. Following Holy Communion, the children in the pre-school class approached Bishop Zaidan and chanted the hymn *Salatooke Ma'Ana* with a special intention to Our Blessed Mother for more vocations to the Priesthood and Religious Life for our Eparchy.

After this presentation members of the Parish clubs and Youth took turns to express a pledge to do what they could to help increase the Catholic faith of our community and to help our Maronite traditions to flourish.

A reception took place in the Parish Hall. Parishioners provided a grand buffet including many Lebanese favorites. The menu, the service and the arrangement of the Hall were all well done and very appropriate for the two-part celebration. The Antonine Sisters chanted the invocation prayer. A documentary about the past and present life of the Parish was shown. Bishop Zaidan concluded the program by offering words of congratulations and encouragement.

Our lives are filled with great blessings and so many of the blessings in our lives seem to come from our life of faith and from our beautiful spiritual home, our Church under the title and patronage of Our Blessed Mother. I cannot imagine what kind of life story each of us here in Akron would have without this Parish of Our Lady of the Cedars of Mt. Lebanon.

I pray that the many generations to come will enjoy the same blessings in their lives as we all have had until now. Thank you, God, for our parish from the past, in this present time and for all the future. □

Youth Lecture

by *Steven El Aile*

Twenty-five members of the St. Sharbel Maronite Youth Organization (MYO) in Clinton Township, Mich., attended a lecture about how to bring God into daily life. Steven El Aile, a longtime member of St. Sharbel Parish, discussed the daily distractions that prevent us from focusing on God and bringing Him into our lives. He reminded the youths that with the greatest commandment, Jesus instructed us to love one another. It is this love that we must bring into our everyday lives and share with everyone around us. □

Clinton Township, Michigan Performance at the DIA

by *Melody DeBan*

On Saturday, January 21, 2017, the Saint Sharbel Dabke Troupe and Belly Dance Group performed at the Detroit Institute of Arts (DIA) as the entertainment for the Arabic portion in the International Coffee and Tea Festival. Over 10,000 people attended at this event. The Saint Sharbel Dabke Troupe and Belly Dance Group were overjoyed to participate in this amazing and culturally fascinating festival; we had never been to anything like it before. There were displays of different cultures: Chinese,

Please save this date
Thursday, October 5, 2017
And join us for the

***Eighth Annual Benefit Dinner for
The Eparchy of Saint Maron***

New York Athletic Club, New York City

Special honorees
Dr. Josyann Abisaab and Habib Kairouz

Details to follow

The Eparchy of Saint Maron and The Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon Need You!

by Marise Frangie

Each one of us is fashioned in a unique way to carry God's plan of salvation in the world. Our calling, gifts, talents and abilities are all gift from God, gifts for us to use to build His kingdom and bring others closer to Him. As Our Lord says, "Without cost you have received; without cost you are to give." Giving back by using our gifts and time is a great way to be grateful to God for His goodness. The Eparchy needs you! Your parish needs you to help build a culture of life and a civilization of love!! We are looking for people who can volunteer as a Respect Life coordinator for his/her parish. We need you to actively engage people in your parish about Respect Life/Family Life issues and to reach out to various ministries to raise awareness that fosters Respect Life action in the community. Your responsibilities as a Respect Life coordinator are not different from the responsibilities of every baptized Maronite Catholic called to be an active participant in the building of his/her Church:

- Develop or maintain a solid, consistent prayer life and frequent the Sacraments. Stay close to Christ, or if it is not possible to do His work. The Sacraments and prayer give you the graces you need.
- Be familiar with the Church teachings on life issues found in Scripture, the Catechism of the Catholic Church, and the USCCB Plan for Pro-Life Activities.
- Develop a relationship with your pastor; learn about his intentions for the parish.
- Act in accord with Christ's will in obedience to your pastor, the Bishop, and the Church.
- At all times speak the Truth in Charity.
- Know yourself, your strengths and weaknesses ... pray for humility and courage to have the knowledge and the courage you need...Christ has called you to this work, and He will equip you to do it if you allow Him to do so.
- Know your parish...you are a leader...know the strengths and weaknesses of your parish in order that you may see the unique gift that your parish is and call upon others who have a unique gift to offer...you are both a servant and a leader!

The duties of the Parish Respect Life Coordinator include but are not limited to:

- Serve as a liaison between the local diocesan Respect Life Office, the Office of Family and Sanctity of Life for the Eparchy of Saint Maron, and the parish.
- Educate and inform the parish on Respect Life issues under

the guidance of the local diocesan and eparchial Offices.

- Receive and act upon Respect Life newsletters, bulletin inserts, intercessions, flyers, alerts, educational and pastoral information from the diocesan and eparchial Offices.
- Support your pastor in making Respect Life activity visible and viable at the parish level.

Saint Francis of Assisi said, "Keep a clear eye toward life's end. Do not forget your purpose and destiny as God's creature. What you are in his sight is what you are and nothing more. Remember that when you leave this earth, you can take nothing that you have received...but only what you have given: a full heart enriched by honest service, love, sacrifice, and courage." Will you give your time and talents to help in the salvation of souls? The Office of Family and Sanctity of Life is in need of your assistance to help others realize how precious they are in God's sight. Please, if you can dedicate some of your time to help in building a culture of life and a civilization of Love, contact:

- For the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon, Monsignor William Bonczewski at 330-666-3598 or ourladyofthecedarschurch@gmail.com, 507 South Cleveland Massillon Road, Fairlawn, OH 44333
- For the Eparchy of Saint Maron, Marise Frangie at 914-393-8907 or sanctityoflife@live.com, Office of Family and Sanctity of Life, 109 Remsen Street, Brooklyn, NY 11201. □

Denver, Colorado *Twenty-Four Hours with the Lord*



by Mike Dunn

On March 17 - 18, 2017, St. Rafka Maronite Catholic Church, Lakewood [Denver], Colo., celebrated twenty-four hours of praise, worship, and adoration with the Lord. This has become an annual tradition at St. Rafka.

The event began at three o'clock on Friday afternoon with the Divine Mercy Chaplet and the Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament. The afternoon was an opportunity for personal quiet time with Our Lord as several people came in for a period of time.

At 6:30 p.m., the Blessed Sacrament was reposed and we celebrated our Lenten Friday service of Divine Liturgy, Stations of the Cross, and the Benediction of the Cross. Eucharistic Adoration resumed afterwards, and many people alternated between time in prayer and time in the Parish Hall enjoying a simple potluck Lenten dinner.

Adoration continued all through the night and into Saturday with more than ten people present at a time before Our Lord. The faithful included St. Rafka parishioners, friends from neighboring Roman Catholic parishes, and the Eucharistic Apostles of Divine Mercy group hosted at St. Rafka Church. Most of the time was spent in silent prayer and reflection that was interspersed with sacred music or meditative readings. One parishioner commented on what a blessing it was: "We so rarely have time to sit quietly with Our Lord."

The closing rites began on Saturday afternoon and included the Service of Readings, the Chaplet of Divine Mercy, the Litany of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Praise and Worship, and concluded with the Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. □

Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania Charitable Drive



During the month of February, The Altar & Rosary Society of St. Anthony/St. George Maronite Parish in Wilkes-Barre, Penn., ran a St. Maron's Food Drive for the needy. This event was chaired by Mrs. Georgette Austin and Mrs. Cynthia Daywood Collins. The Sisters of Mercy were very grateful for the non-perishable goods and monetary donations. □



Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania Award Presentation



On Saturday, February 18, 2017, parishioners and friends of Our Lady of Victory Maronite Church in Carnegie [Pittsburgh], Penn., gathered at the Le Mont Restaurant for the 10th Annual *Hafli* in Honor of Saint Maron.

During the event, Father Rodolph Wakim, Pastor, presented the Family of the Year Award to Peter and Theresa Habib for the many years of support and dedication to Our Lady of Victory Church. This award was the third time given to a family of OLOV and was the highlight of the *Hafli*.

Light Is Life

On Sunday, February 12, 2017, following the Divine Liturgy, Father Rodolph Wakim, Pastor of Our Lady of Victory Church, presented Sharbel Sadaka with the "Light is Life" Medal program awarded by our Maronite Church



Father Wakim worked closely with Sharbel on this emblem, as his Priest and Counselor. Sharbel, a proud Maronite and an Eagle Scout candidate was proud to receive this award. May God protect Sharbel and keep him close to Jesus, who is the Light of our lives.

Thank you Fr. Rodolph for being a good role model and teacher to our youth. □



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Schedule of Bishop Gregory Mansour

April 1, 2017

Visit to St. Sharbel Church for the Children and Youth Program, Somerset, N.J.

April 2, 2017

Visit to Our Lady Star of the East Parish, Pleasantville, N.J.

April 5, 2017

Presbyteral Council Meetings and Chrism Mass, Brooklyn, N.Y.

April 6, 2017

Eparchial Financial Council Meetings, The Chancery, Brooklyn, N.Y.

April 9, 2017

Hosanna Sunday Service, Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral, Brooklyn, N.Y., and Evening Service at Manhattan Mission, Manhattan, N.Y.

April 11, 2017

Diocese of Brooklyn Chrism Mass, Brooklyn, N.Y.

April 12, 2017

Rite of the Lamp, St. Theresa Church, Brockton, Mass.

April 13, 2017

Washing of the Feet, St. Maron Church, Torrington, Conn.

April 14 - 16, 2017

Great Friday of the Crucifixion, Holy Saturday and Easter Sunday Services, Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral, Brooklyn, N.Y.

April 21, 2017

Hosting Bethlehem University Board of Trustees, The Chancery, Brooklyn, N.Y.

April 23, 2017

Feast of St. George, Providence, Rhode Island

April 24, 2017

Welcome to Archbishop of Pakistan Speaking on Religious Freedom

April 29 - 30, 2017

Pastoral Visit to St. George Church, Uniontown, Penn.

May 7, 2017

Feast of Our Lady of Lebanon, Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral, Brooklyn, N.Y.

May 8 - 9, 2017

Seminary Visit and Catholic Relief Services Meetings, Washington, D.C.

May 13, 2017

Ordination to Diaconate of Brian Dunn, Fall River, Mass.

May 20, 2017

Ordination to Diaconate of Peter Frangie, Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral, Brooklyn, N.Y. □

The Year of Witness and Martyrs

Pastoral Letter of His Beatitude Patriarch Bechara Peter Rai

Bechara Peter Cardinal Rai, through the Grace of God, Patriarch of Antioch and All the East and Cardinal of the Universal Church

To their Excellencies the Bishops, Priests, Monks, Nuns and all the Faithful, the Sons and Daughters of our Maronite Church.

Peace and Apostolic Blessing,

Introduction

The Holy Synod of our Church, held between June 10 and June 18, 2015, decided to declare the year 2017 "The Year of Witness and Martyrs of the Maronite Church."

We have decided, along with the Council of Their Excellencies the Bishops, at the meeting on Wednesday, January 4, 2017, to start the Year of Witness and Martyrs on the Feast day of our Father, Saint Maron on February 9, 2017, and end it on March 2, 2018, the Feast day of our Father, the First Maronite Patriarch, Saint John Maron.

The purpose of this "year" is: First, to celebrate our well-known martyrs, particularly the three hundred and fifty monks, followers of Saint Maron who were martyred 1500 years ago (517-2017); our Church celebrates them on July 31. Also to be celebrated are the Patriarch Daniel Hadchiti who was martyred 734 years ago (1283-2017); the Patriarch Gabriel Hjoula who was martyred 650 years ago (1367-2017); and the Blessed Martyrs, the Massabki Brothers, who were martyred along with a large number of Maronites in 1860; our Church celebrates their feast on July 10th.

Second, the purpose is to create a list with the names of the sons and daughters of our Church who had shed their blood for the sake of their faith in Jesus Christ, the archetypal Martyr. They are unidentified and their martyrdom goes back to different eras of history when our Church has endured the harshest persecutions, similar to the ones during the rule of the



Mamluks and the Ottomans, the events of 1840 and 1860, the famine during World War I and the last Lebanese war.

We cover in this letter four topics:

- Reasons to Celebrate the Year of Witness and Martyrs;
- The concept of Witness and Martyrdom in the Holy Scriptures and the Catechism of the Church;
- The Maronite Church as the Church of Witnesses and Martyrs;
- Instructions to celebrate the Year of Witness and Martyrs.

Reasons to Celebrate the Year of Witness and Martyrs

This initiative falls under the established framework of loyalty to the ecclesiastical, apostolic and theological traditions of the Church and forms a reply to the call which His Holiness the late Pope John Paul II addressed to local churches, in his Apostolic Letter titled, "At the Beginning of the Third Millennium," issued on November 10, 1994: "The local Churches should do everything possible to ensure that the

memory of those who have suffered martyrdom should be safeguarded, gathering the necessary documentation. This gesture cannot fail to have an ecumenical character and expression. Perhaps the most convincing form of ecumenism is the ecumenism of the saints and of the martyrs. The *communio sanctorum* speaks louder than the things which divide us. The martyrologium of the first centuries was the basis of the veneration of the Saints. By proclaiming and venerating the holiness of her sons and daughters, the Church gave supreme honor to God himself; in the martyrs she venerated Christ, who was at the origin of their martyrdom and of their holiness. The Church of the first millennium was born of the blood of the martyrs. At the end of the second millennium, the Church has once again become a Church of martyrs. The persecutions of believers - priests, Religious and laity - has caused a great sowing of martyrdom in different parts of the world. The witness to Christ borne even to the shedding of blood has become a common inheritance of all the Christians. This witness must not be forgotten" (No.37).

As we comply with this invitation, identified during the Synod of Bishops for Lebanon in Rome during October 1995, we are honoring the legacy of the sons and daughters of our Maronite Church. We are especially honoring the martyrs, whom we look at as an example to faithfully follow the Bible and to believe in Jesus Christ as we live in our modern world at the beginning of the third millennium. Thus, our Church sustains its historical memory and remains by virtue of its vocation throughout history, a witness to the last drop of its blood to the divine teacher, Christ, who assured the church pastors as well as he did to his disciples. "But you will be my witness...and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

If we go back to our history, we find that it was filled with the spirituality of monasticism and witness, which are the integrated dimensions of our Maronite spirituality, the spirituality that Saint Maron has created and the one that his disciples and his people have lived after

his death. In both cases, it shows the depth and roots of the Christian life in following Jesus Christ. Our Maronite churches and monasteries are the living examples of this great Christian legacy. Our patron saints are among the great martyrs and hermits: Stephen, Takla, Cyprian and Justina, Sarkis and Bakhos, Nohra, Mama, Abda, Charbel Rihawi, Shalita, Saba, Antonios, Doumit, Simon the Stylite, Bichai, Marina, and many others of the bright and angelic faces that had an impact and still does on our history, our existence and our Christian journey in Lebanon, in the Middle East and throughout the world in the countries of our diaspora, expansion and settlement.

In our liturgical calendar, many days are offered for remembrance of those heroes and memorial services are devoted to them, especially on Fridays; the celebrant saves precise days for them, ordered in terms of number and importance right after the main feasts. The liturgical rituals commemorate the martyrs and hermits on specific days and mention them after the name of Jesus, our Lord, the Virgin Mary, Mother of God, and the Apostles, as is the case for the rite of Good Friday, the rites of Crowning, Baptism and other sacred rites. It is also the case for the daily prayers and the Anaphorae of the Divine Liturgy.

The commemoration of those martyrs who loved Christ and bore witness to him by their death is a duty for us as well, so we can follow their examples in living our faith, sanctifying our life and strengthening our ability to forgive. It is also an invitation to deepen our understanding of the religious virtues and to be in constant readiness to live a life of loving service to one another, and also to spread peace.

Witness and Martyrdom in the Holy Scriptures and the Catechism of the Catholic Church

We must remind you of the teachings of the Holy Scriptures and the Catechism of the Catholic Church about witness and martyrdom. The witness recorded in the Holy Scriptures is completed by the martyrdom. The Martyr is the one who has proven his/her faith in Christ by his/her actions, words and

behaviors, then crowned it with the witness of blood. Not every witness is a martyr, but every martyr is a witness. The Greek terms "*martyrion*" and "*martyria*," mean "martyr" and "witness" and infer the possibility of the witness of blood. When the Lord Jesus Christ appointed his disciples to be witnesses to His teaching and His Resurrection, it exposed for them the possibility that they may be persecuted until death: "Behold, I am sending you like sheep in the midst of wolves; so be shrewd as serpents and simple as doves. But beware of people, for they will hand you over to courts and scourge you in their synagogues... And you will be hated by all because of my name... And do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather, be afraid of the one who can destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matthew 10: 16, 17, 22, 28). Hence they are confirming to God and to Christ the testimony of "the Great Love," as God attests in the Gospel, "No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends" (John 15:13).

The Letter to the Hebrews speaks about the witnesses to the martyrs of faith in the Old Testament. They have endured pain and death, for the sake of their loyalty to the divine promises (cf. Chapter 11). The Second Book of Maccabees refers to observed loyalty to the divine law by the martyrs. (cf. Chapter 6 - 7). In the Book of Revelation, we find the word "witnesses," which John the Apostle used for those who have been slaughtered because of the witness they bore to the word of God "I saw underneath the altar the souls of those who had been slaughtered because of the witness they bore to the word of God" (Revelation 6:9).

In The Catechism of the Catholic Church, "martyrdom is the ultimate witness to the truth of the faith, signifying bearing witness unto death. The martyr bears witness to Christ who died and rose and to whom he is united by charity. The martyr, in tribute to the truth of the Christian faith and belief, endures death as an act of fortitude, as did Saint Ignatius of Antioch while saying to his people: "Let me become the food of the beasts, through whom it will be given me to reach God," (Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2473). The Church

deemed that through baptism we bear witness to the truth of faith, as Saint John Chrysostom said, "Do not be surprised if the witness to the faith is considered Baptism. Just like the baptized people are washed with water, so are the martyrs with their blood." In the Maronite prayer, on Friday evening of the Season of the Glorious Epiphany of the Lord, we pray: "Jesus Christ our Lord, at your divine baptism in the waters of the Jordan River you began the journey of mortification and suffering, till witness and baptism of blood, thus your martyr heroes were baptized by shedding their blood." "The Church has painstakingly collected the records of those who persevered to the end in witnessing to their faith. These are the Acts of the Martyrs. They form the archives of truth written in letters of blood" (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2474).

The Church also teaches that "the duty of Christians to partake in the life of the Church impels them to act as witnesses of the Gospel and of the obligations that flow from it. This witness is a transmission of the faith in words and deeds. Witness is an act of justice that establishes the truth or makes it known" (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2472). "For all Christians, wherever they live, are bound to show forth, by the example of their lives and by the witness of the word, the new man put on at baptism and that power of the Holy Spirit by which they have been strengthened at confirmation" (Vatican II Decree *Ad Gentes* on the Mission Activity of the Church, 11).

The Church took the theology of witness and martyrdom from the mystery of Christ, in His Incarnation, Death, and Resurrection. He is the role model of the witness to the truth and martyr by the sacrifice of his blood (John 12:15). For to witness to Christ is demonstrated by following his example in loving one another, imitating Him and dying for His name. Thus, the witness took three principle values:

A. The value of personal faith to verbally profess that Jesus Christ is the Lord. (Acts 2:36 and Romans 10:9) and profess that He is the one and only faithful witness (Revelation 1:5); to be His disciple, steady in our love for Him and follow him unreservedly.

B. The value of socio-religious love that commits to serve the Gospel (Acts 6:2-3) and serve the church (2 Corinthians 8:3). In return, God Himself who knows the human heart, testifies and expresses His satisfaction (Acts 15:8).

C. The value of missionary hope initiated by the enthusiasm of the baptized men and women to announce the good news of the Gospel. (Matthew 24:14) and follow the mission of evangelization like the Apostles. (Acts 1:8) Also, to continue their witness that God, the Holy Trinity is close to every person and is inviting us to the feast of joy (Matthew 22:1).

The Witness in Christianity is someone in love with Christ; loves him in every person, even the enemy. He/she proclaims the presence of "Christ yesterday, today and forever" (Hebrews 13:8); he/she witnesses to his message (Acts 1:22) and his resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:5).

The martyr is an imitator of Jesus who followed His example and has been filled with the power of the Holy Spirit and the grace of the Father. Thus, the martyr, through shedding his/her blood, is able to proclaim the good news of the Gospel. He declares through his/her Christian faith a belief in God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Through his/her membership within the Church, he/she makes evident his/her connection to the divine virtues and the Catechism of the Church, and he/she faces, armed with the tools of peace and mercy, the sword of the persecutor, who tortures him/her and kills him/her in many different ways.

Martyrdom is an act that the martyr accepts to demonstrate his/her devotion to his/her faith in Christ and his/her love of Him freely, honestly and joyfully. With the willingness to completely imitate Jesus and to be part of His plan of redemption, he evokes the Word of God deep inside himself: "If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you" (John 15:20). Christian martyrdom is not a desire for death, rather it is confirmation of faith in Christ until death (cf. Matthew 10:32).

We learn, in our Antiochian heritage, about the theology of witness and

martyrdom in the spirituality of Saint Ignatius of Antioch, who considered that the shedding of blood in witness to faith is a special invitation from God to the Church. It is also a divine choice and a Eucharistic living. Saint Ignatius wrote to the Romans: "Allow me to become food for the wild beasts, through whose instrumentality it will be granted me to attain to God. I am the wheat of God, and let me be ground by the teeth of the wild beasts that I may be found to be the pure bread of Christ ... Entreat Christ for me, that by these instruments I may be found a sacrifice to God (Letter of Ignatius to the Romans 4:1). He considered martyrdom an opportunity for greater witness to Christ. He wrote, "Only request on my behalf both inward and outward strength that I may not only speak but truly will, and I may not merely be called a Christian, but really be found to be one, and be then deemed faithful, when I shall no longer appear to the world (Letter to the Romans 3:1). And to the Church in Smyrna he wrote: "The witness of blood shows Christ's life within us, and witness to the Resurrection and victory over death from now on" (Letter to the Smyrnians 3).

In the Process of Causes for Beatification and Canonization, the Church presented the rules of categorizing the martyrs in the document of "*Sanctorum Mater*," issued by The Congregation for The Causes of Saints on May 17, 2007. It states that the basic rule of sacrificing one's life for Christ is the best path toward sainthood. And it considers that the proof of martyrdom be exempt from performing a miracle. For it conducts thorough inquiry "on the life, the martyrdom and the reputation of martyrdom and intercessory power" (Article 31, par. 2). It gives credence to the reputation of martyrdom which is voiced by the faithful that the alleged servant of God, man or woman that will be canonized, has endured death for his/her faith and for a virtue associated to faith. Martyrdom should be spontaneous and not artificially produced. For this reason the Church asks all faithful, whether man or woman, to be ready to die for their faith in Christ, but not to seek death. It is likewise necessary, directly or indirectly but always in a morally certain way, to ascertain the hatred of

the faith of the persecutor who coerces and intimidates the believer to deny the faith, disregarding socio-political reasons or any other similar reasons. This is the point that Pope Benedict XVI pointed to in a letter to the Congregation for the Causes of Saints issued in 2006.

As an example, Saint Maximilian Kolbe voluntarily chose death so another may live in the face of religious persecution. He volunteered to die in 1941 at the death camp of Auschwitz in Poland, in place of a father who was detained with him. He was not declared as a martyr saint in the Church. However, Pope Francis declared Father Jacques Hamel a martyr who was murdered at Saint Stephen, in the diocese of Rouen on July 26, 2016. Pope Francis asked the Bishop of the Diocese of Rouen to begin an immediate inquiry into his beatification for his having been sacrificed for his faith and refusal to denounce his Christian belief in God and Jesus Christ.

The Maronite Church is the Church of Witnesses and Martyrs

Since its inception at the end of the seventeenth century by the first Patriarch Saint John Maron and afterwards, the Maronite Church experienced constant growth and embraced the spirituality that Saint Maron and his disciples had founded in the mountain of Cyr. The Church seeks to live the Gospel without compromise through a life of asceticism, anchoritism, prayer and preaching. This spirituality has been discerned as a complete life that gathered the anchoritic life and the message in the framework of witness to Christ.

The Maronite hermit is known for living in the open air, on mountain tops, standing for long hours, and remaining awake in contemplative silence. The hermit is also known for living in poverty, self-denial, and working and investing in the field. However, the message was carried by emigration in order to spread the word, preach to the pagans, inspire them to believe in Christ and turn their temples into churches and monasteries. Also, by building monasteries to serve as the

centers which spread Christian life, education, and knowledge.

This Maronite spirituality is the spirituality of the Cross that is based on two dimensions: the vertical dimension is the line of the relationship with God, through asceticism, worship, and prayer, the line that connects earth and heaven; and the horizontal line, which is the line of the message of evangelization, a line that connects us to one another. Following Saint Maron and his disciples, this is how the Maronites lived their life and became "the Community of the Cross in the Church of Humanity."

The disciples of Saint Maron came first to the mountains of *Jbeil*, *Batroun*, and *Jebbeh* where they preached, baptized and spread their spirituality. When Patriarch John Maron, the first Patriarch of Antioch was elected, he established the Maronite Patriarchate of *sui juris* Church in communion with the Universal Catholic Church. During and after that time, Maronites followed the spiritual fundamentals of the founding fathers, carrying the cross, following Jesus Christ and witnessing to Him. So, from the tops of the mountains, or in the deep valley, they lived in the open air a life of eternal prayer, ready to meet God through prayer, vigils, fasting, and mortification. They endured the harshest tortures and persecutions for their faith, freedom, and their independence. The price they paid was of the blood of thousands of martyrs throughout the ages and centuries.

They did not ask this world for power, and they did not build an empire. They did not come to Mount Lebanon as refugees or invaders, but they came as hermits carrying a message engraved by the ascetic testimony and readiness for martyrdom to defend their faith and freedom. Their martyrs were not crowned as a result of greed for wealth and power, but as a result of their peaceful message of love, reconciliation and respect of one another. Their name was associated with Mount Lebanon, and they turned it into a monastery of prayer and praise to God. They named the highest peak of Mount Lebanon "*Qarno D'Sawhde*" which means the "peak of martyrs" as a role model for every spiritual height, and they named the biggest valley in Mount Lebanon

"*Qadisha Valley*" which means "Valley of Saints." They endured all kinds of torture and death, to the point where the saying about martyrs of faith in the letter to the Hebrews applied to them: "Some were tortured and would not accept deliverance, to obtain a better resurrection. Others endured mockery, scourging, even chains, and imprisonment. They were stoned, sawed in two, put to death at sword's point; they went about in skins of sheep or goats, needy, afflicted, tormented. The world was not worthy of them. They wandered about in deserts and on mountains, in caves, and in crevices in the earth" (Hebrews 11: 35-38).

None of the Maronites' properties were saved from damages or destruction, rather, they were ravaged, their possessions destroyed, their churches torn down, and they themselves displaced to the mountains and valleys. In spite of this, they did not give up, and they did not renounce their faith in Christ; rather they strengthened their close relationship with Him to the point that they identified themselves with Him. Their martyrdom emulated the characteristics of Mary. They saw the Holy Virgin Mary as the example, guide, and patron to their families, their churches and their monasteries, which were the residences of their Patriarchs. They took the martyrs as patrons to the churches of their parishes and monasteries.

Celebrating the Year of Witness and Martyrs

We call upon all the sons and daughters of our Maronite Church in Lebanon, the Patriarchal domain and the countries of expansion to celebrate the Year of Witness and Martyrs, by participating in the activities organized by the Maronite eparchies, parishes, religious orders, monasteries, ladies' societies, pastoral groups, church organizations, schools, universities, cultural centers, intellectuals, historians, artists, families and channels of communication and media.

Also, we ask them to work together to gather information about the martyrs of our Church throughout different generations and pay homage to the known, unknown and forgotten martyrs. We have asked some

historians of our Church to work on clarifying history, in particular the history of the martyrs from the beginning of our Church until today, especially the 350 martyrs of Saint Maron's disciples, Patriarch Daniel Hadchiti, as well as Patriarch Gabriel Hjoula. We appreciate the efforts that will be made in order to achieve such work. It is a long term work, and it will take years to accomplish it. We also decided at the Maronite Patriarchal Synod to leave the pending issues open for scientific research. Hence, historians will work on putting together the historical events and explaining them in the light of the Church's journey towards ecumenism and unity.

Among the most important initiatives that will be undertaken, in order to celebrate the Year of Witness and Martyrs, we suggest the following:

- To organize a campaign that aims to raise awareness about witness and martyrdom in our Church.
- To offer spiritual retreats, meditation and symposiums that emphasize the role of witness and martyrs in our daily life.
- To plan festivals, processions, and pilgrimages to sacred places, to churches and to the martyr's monasteries.
- To initiate scientific and historical research, particularly in the universities, that focus on the history of witness and martyrs in our Church. To enrich the Maronite Synaxarion of the Saints, the book that commemorates Saints for every day throughout the year.
- To ensure that Universities and Colleges organize a series of conferences that cover the issue of the Christian martyrs in the various times of persecutions.
- To engage the faculties of engineering and fine art to discover the historical features in our Church, in terms of the architecture of the churches, the drawing of icons, music, etc.
- To build a collaboration between the Patriarchal Liturgical Committee and the faculties of religious, theological

and liturgical studies, in order to create prayers, novenas, hymns and processions for the martyrs of our Church. As well, work on adding celebrations of witness and martyrdom to the liturgical year calendar.

- To collaborate with the media to spread knowledge about the martyrs and their role in the journey of the Church, its prosperity and growth.

There are major feasts that help incorporate these initiatives in the liturgical calendar. They are as follows: February 9, Feast of Saint Maron; March 2, Feast of Saint John Maron; April 1, the memory of martyrdom of Patriarch Gabriel Hjoula; May 22, memory of martyrdom of Patriarch Daniel Hadchiti and the hundreds of martyrs in the *Jebbeh* and its suburbs (in 1283); July 10, the Feast of the Blessed Massabki Brothers and the memory of the martyrs in Mount Lebanon, *Zahle* and Damascus (in 1860); July 31, the Feast of the Three Hundred Fifty Martyrs, Disciples of Saint Maron (in 517); September 14, the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, and, others.

It is necessary, this year, to coordinate activities and initiatives for ceremonies. For this reason we designated a Patriarchal Committee chaired by His Excellency Bishop Mounir Khairallah. It has the following members: Abbot Antoine Khalife OLM; Father Raymond Bassil as treasurer; Father Joseph Moukarzel OLM; Father Abdo Antoun OMM; Father Sarkis Taber OMA; Father Maroun Moubarak MLM; Sister Martha Bassil LMO; Sister Leila Saliba the Antonin nun; Dr. Marie Khoury; Dr. Samir Khoury; Dr. Ray Jabber Hachem; Dr. Antoine Hakim; Dr. Elias Kattar; and Dr. Christian El Helou. This committee will be responsible for planning and supervising the intended events and for putting together a directory for this purpose.

Conclusion

The Year of Witness and Martyrs is a special occasion to renew our Christian commitment to witness to Jesus and to be prepared to fulfill it even to the witness of blood, so that hatred can be conquered by love, war by peace, enmity by fraternity, and injustice by

justice. It is a year that removes fear from our hearts while we are witnessing nowadays torture and persecution of Christians. We have also witnessed killing, destruction, displacement and expulsion in many different parts of the world, and especially in the Middle East. Pope Francis describes this reality in his homily marking the Feast of Saint Stephen, the martyr. He said: "Today, the liturgy involves us in celebrating the martyrdom of Saint Stephen, the First Martyr, inviting us to reflect on the witness that he gave us with his sacrifice. It is precisely the glorious witness of Christian martyrdom, suffered for love of Christ, the martyrdom which continues to be present in the history of the Church, from Stephen up to our time. Jesus forewarns the disciples of the rejection and persecution they will encounter: "You will be hated by all for my name's sake" (Matthew 10: 22). But why does the world persecute Christians? The world hates Christians for the same reason that they hated Jesus: because he brought the light of God, and the world prefers darkness so as to hide its evil works. Today, too, in order to bear witness to light and to truth, the Church experiences, in different places, harsh persecution up to the supreme sacrifice of martyrdom. How many of our brothers and sisters in faith endure abuse and violence and are hated because of Jesus! I shall tell you something: today's martyrs are more numerous with respect to those of the first centuries" (Angelus Dec. 26, 2016).

In the Year of Witness and Martyrs we lift up our thoughts and our minds to Mary our Mother, the Queen of Martyrs. We ask that this year be a period of hope and perseverance, to complete the work of salvation that Jesus Christ has started and completed, a work that Saint Paul describes as, "in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ on behalf of his body, which is the Church" (Colossians 1:24). May this year be an incentive to follow in the footsteps of our witnesses and martyrs, to collect their heritage, a year to discover the forgotten martyrs and the unknown, so they can all intercede for us and be an example for us to follow Christ and witness to his love, in giving, sacrificing, forgiveness and reconciliation. □

From our See in *Bkerke* on February 9, 2017, Feast of Saint Maron.

+ Bechara Peter Cardinal Rai
Patriarch of Antioch and All the East



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, visit www.orderstsharbel.org

or write to:

Eparchy of Saint Maron
109 Remsen Street
Brooklyn, NY 11201

or

Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon
1021 South 10th Street
St. Louis, MO 63104



Are We a Bridge-Builder? *by Fr. Tony Massad*

Once upon a time two brothers shared adjoining farms. For over forty years they worked side by side, sharing equipment and helping each other out whenever needed. Then one day a rift developed. It began with a small misunderstanding and it grew into a major difference, and finally it exploded into an exchange of bitter words followed by months of angry silence.

One day the elder brother, Pete, was out in his fields when a truck pulled up. Out jumped a man who approached Pete carrying a carpenter's toolbox. "I'm looking for a few days' work," he said. "Perhaps you would have a few small jobs I could do for you?"

"Well, yes, I do," said Pete. "See that creek down there? It's the border between my brother's farm and mine. My brother keeps it nice and deep to

stop me from setting one foot on his beloved farm. Well I'll oblige him. I want you to take that timber over there by the barn and build me a new fence, a real tall one, so I don't have to look over at my stinkin' brother and his farm no more."

The carpenter was glad to have the work, "No problem sir. I understand. Just point me to your post-hole digger and I'll get the job done." The carpenter set about working. Meanwhile Farmer Pete drove into town to the cattle auction. When he returned at sunset he was shocked to see what the carpenter had done.

There was no fence. Instead the carpenter had built a bridge and walking across it was Pete's younger brother. He held out his hand and spoke to his brother. "Pete, after all I've done to you these past few weeks I can't believe you'd still reach out to me. You're right. It's time to bury the hatchet."

The two brothers met at the middle of the bridge and embraced. They turned to see the carpenter hoist his toolbox on his shoulder. "No, wait! Stay a few days. I've a lot of other projects for you," said farmer Pete. "I'd love to stay on," the carpenter said, "but I have more bridges to build." (Author Unknown).

In the story, we see two brothers who have a problem with each other, and rather than finding a way to solve the issue, they decided to hurt each other. In doing so they grow apart and as they do they begin to change themselves. Not only is it enough to stop talking to each other, they want to do things and put up obstacles that will further divide them and erase the idea of each other's existence! Have we ever felt this way about another? Are we in a situation in which we are living this way right now? Where do we find ourselves in this story? If we can't answer "the carpenter," the one who builds the bridge, then we must re-evaluate our lives if we say we are a Christian.

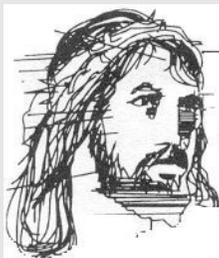
To be a Christian is to be a bridge-maker. We build bridges in our lives, first the bridge between ourselves and God, because He gives us the grace

to do the work. We build our bridge with the Lord to give us the strength to fight the good fight, to honor our Lord and respect the dignity and mercy He bestows upon us, because we are made in His image and likeness, and from this point we can become bridge-builders for those in the world.

This is not a new idea or teaching. Pope Francis, and many popes before him, have elaborated on this point. This all comes from Our Lord Jesus, who, when challenged by a doctor of the law as to which is the greatest Commandment, replies, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. And the second is like it, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.' On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets" Mt 22:37-40.

We may ask, who is my neighbor? In the Gospel of Luke, chapter 10, Jesus was asked this question and responded with the parable of the Good Samaritan. In our story above, we see that the carpenter saw Pete, the older brother, as his neighbor. After listening to the reason why Pete wanted to build the fence, the carpenter chose to build something that would heal and promote forgiveness and reconciliation with the younger brother, rather than to create more of a divide. Where do we fit in this story? Would we have the wisdom and grace to build the bridge or would be a fence?

Our Lord has called us to follow Him, to be like Him, and as we are finishing the season of Great Lent, we will be moving to the holy Season of the Glorious Resurrection. There is no better time than now to evaluate our lives and our promise and look deep into our hearts and ask: Who is the Lord calling me to be? If we answer a disciple who bears his name, a Christian, then like the carpenter, we are called to be a bridge-builder, one who works for the glory of God, honoring the dignity of everyone we meet by building bridges to bring them together rather than fences to keep them apart. □



***If the Lord
is Calling
You,
The
Church
Needs
You!***

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

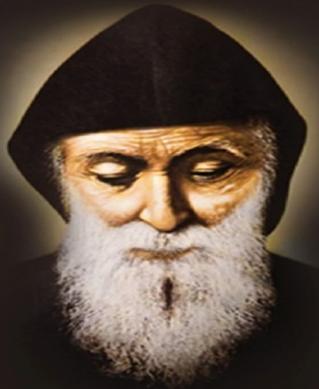
Fr. Gary George, Director
Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon
Office of Vocations
1021 South 10th Street
St. Louis, MO 63104

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



What is Divine Mercy?

by
Dr. Anne Borik

Divine Mercy is simply a gift from God and is the manifestation of His love for each and every one of us. We believe that the devotion itself comes directly from Jesus through apparitions received by a young Polish nun named Faustina Kowalska. According to documents found in her diary, Jesus said, "Now is the time of mercy and I want to give especially great graces to the human race." This brings to mind a Scripture verse in Romans when St. Paul writes, "Where sin increased, grace abounded all the more."

How do we tap into this Divine Mercy? There are five components to the devotion and I would like to suggest a simple way to remember them. Think of CHIN- F. (The chin is on the face that is how to remember the 'F'.)

'C' is for **CHAPLET**: The Chaplet of Divine Mercy is a simple prayer that we believe was given to us through the apparitions of Our Lord received by Sr. Faustina in the 1930s in Poland. According to Faustina's diary, Jesus said, "When this Chaplet is said by the bedside of a dying person, unfathomable mercy envelops the soul, and the very depths of My tender mercy is moved."

The Chaplet can be prayed on ordinary rosary beads. Begin by praying the Our Father, a Hail Mary and reciting the Apostles Creed

Large bead: "**Eternal Father, I offer you the body, blood, soul and divinity of your dearly beloved son, our Lord Jesus Christ in atonement for our sins and those of the whole world.**"

(10) Small beads: "**For the sake of His sorrowful passion, have mercy on us and on the whole world.**"

At the completion of all five decades, the ending prayer of the Chaplet is: "**Holy God, Holy Mighty One, Holy Immortal One, have mercy on us and on the whole world**" prayed three times

'H' is for **HOUR of MERCY**: At the three o'clock hour,

Jesus died on the cross for us. It is considered the hour of Great Mercy between 3-4pm. During this hour, Jesus asks us to pray the Stations of the Cross. If you are unable to do that, then at least for a brief moment, think about and immerse yourself in the thought of His Passion.

'I' is for **IMAGE**: What image? The Image of Divine Mercy. Jesus told Sr. Faustina to have this image painted with the signature at the bottom that says, Jesus, I TRUST in you. He said, " By means of this Image, I shall grant many graces."

'N' is for **NOVENA**: The Novena to Divine Mercy is a nine-day prayer novena where Jesus asks that a different group of people be entrusted to him each day.

Day One: Today bring to Me all mankind, especially sinners.

Day Two: Today bring to Me the souls of priests and religious.

Day Three: Today bring to Me all devout and faithful souls.

Day Four: Today bring to Me those who do not believe and those who do not yet know Me.

Day Five: Today bring to Me the souls of those who have separated themselves from My church.

Day Six: Today bring to Me the meek and humble souls and souls of little children.

Day Seven: Today bring to Me the souls who venerate and glorify My mercy.

Day Eight: Today bring to Me the souls who are detained in purgatory.

Day Nine: Today bring to Me souls who have become lukewarm.

(Continues on page 22)

Minneapolis, Minnesota *Order of Saint Gregory*



Duane and Elizabeth Nassar, life-long members of St. Maron Maronite Catholic Church in Minneapolis, Minn., and great supporters of the Order of Saint Sharbel, NAM and the Maronite eparchies in the U.S., received the Papal Order of St. Gregory the Great, one of the highest papal honors bestowed to laity in the Catholic Church. The award was presented to them during Divine Liturgy on January 7, 2017, by Bishop Zaidan, Bishop of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon.

Miracles of Jesus



Saint Maron Maronite Church, Minneapolis, Minn., is re-enacting the miracles of Jesus each Sunday during the Season of Great Lent. Pictured above is the multiplication of loaves and fish. Other plays given by grades preschool through high school are Raising of Lazarus, Descent of the Holy Spirit, and Hosanna - entry of Jesus into Jerusalem. The Passion Play is being postponed until summer and will be enacted by MYA and MYO.

A Churchill Scholar

Anthony Tabet, son of Claude and Maroun Tabet and senior at the University of Minnesota's College of Science and Engineering and the University's Honor Program, has been named a Churchill Scholar. He is one of only fifteen seniors selected from top colleges and research universities in the country this year. He will attend the 2017 - 2018 academic year at Churchill College of the University of Cambridge near London, England. There Anthony will pursue and complete an M.Phil in Chemistry. He will conduct research on supramolecular hydrogels, which have potential applications in cancer treatment.

He spent the summer of 2016 as an Amgen Fellow at Stanford University, in research leading to the 3D printing of tissue. The honor is valued around \$60,000. As recipient, □

Lawrence, Massachusetts *MYO at a Regional Catholic Youth Conference*



by St. Anthony's MYO

"He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus" (Phil 1:6) was the theme of the 2nd Annual Merrimack Valley Catholic Youth Conference under the title "Work In Progress. God is Not Done With Me Yet." St. Anthony Maronite Youth Organization in Lawrence, Mass., was blessed to be invited to the conference, which brought together more than three hundred teens from different Catholic parishes across the region. Twenty-one MYO members along with their advisors attended this year's conference and partook in the day's events. The day started with large group games/icebreakers, contests and skits. After the welcoming address and some Praise and Worship, the youth enjoyed a heartfelt keynote address delivered by Catholic singer/songwriter Liz Cotrupi-Phunder. The rest of the day was composed of different workshops for the teens, ongoing Eucharistic Adoration throughout the day, and the opportunity for the Sacrament of Reconciliation. After dinner, the teens gathered together for a prayer service, which

was followed by the Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. The conference concluded with a Vigil Mass celebrated by the Most Reverend Robert Hennessey, Vicar General, Regional Bishop-Merrimack Region of the Archdiocese of Boston. What an incredible event this was for our teens to experience the Lord as members of His one, catholic, and apostolic church.

MYO Outing

On Saturday, February 25, 2017, the MYO at St. Anthony Church in Lawrence, Mass., gathered for their monthly get-together and outing. Fifteen MYO members came together for a faith formation session centered around the Gospel passage of the Temptation of Jesus. This discussion was led by Father Elie Mikhael, Pastor, and Subdeacon Jim Demers as an introduction to the Great Lenten Journey. Following this fruitful discussion, the MYO enjoyed Mexican food prepared by their advisors before departing to nearby LaserCraze. The MYO experienced some friendly competition during a Laser Tag battle followed by time in the arcade where a lot of prizes were won! St. Anthony's MYO is blessed with more than twenty-five active MYO members that gather once a month for faith formation and an outing. The MYO also rotate different weekends to volunteer with the Knights of Mary, the parish's children organization. □

Life Committee, the celebration continued with a wedding cake for everyone in the Church Hall. □

San Francisco, California *Retreat and Pastoral Visit*



by Sue Massoud Bou Harb and Elie Antoun

Utica, New York *Blessing of Married Couples*



by Chorbishop John D. Faris

A new tradition began at Saint Louis Gonzaga Church in Utica, N.Y., on Sunday, February 26, 2017, the Feast of Cana Sunday. At the Divine Liturgy, Chorbishop John D. Faris, Pastor, blessed all the couples of the parish who had significant wedding anniversaries. This couples were delighted to be a part of a celebration of family! Organized by Deacon Peter Hobaica, Chair of the Family

Our Lady of Lebanon Church Ladies Guild in Milbrae [San Francisco], Calif., held its annual retreat on Saturday, March 18, 2017. Father Gary George led those in attendance on a spiritual journey of self awareness to help break down the barriers that keep us from being our best selves and come in the way of our relationship with God. In a 'hands-on' exercise, participants traced their hands on a piece of paper. On the left hand, feelings that hold us back from being close to God, such as hurt, anger, envy, jealousy or hate were juxtaposed against things we do to keep us close to God such as prayer, giving, forgiveness and loving on the right hand. Father Gary explained when our two hands come together in prayer and forgiveness, God's light shines in us so we can be a true reflection of his love. We wrapped up the day in a prayer of healing with the Blessed Sacrament and a meditation rosary.

On Sunday, March 19, Bishop A. Elias Zaidan, Bishop of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon, celebrated the Divine Liturgy for the Feast of Saint Joseph. Father Gary George and Father Fadi Chidiac concelebrated. During the Liturgy, Bishop Zaidan announced the formal appointment of Father Gary George as Our Lady of Lebanon's new Pastor. In addition, Father Fadi Chidiac will become Associate Pastor to support Father Gary's commitment to his responsibilities as the National Director of the Maronite Youth. The Ladies Guild cooked and shared a homemade meal, and a memorable weekend was had by all. □





**June 28-July 2, 2017
Greenville, South Carolina**



Pre-registration Deadline: **Friday, June 9, 2017**

Please complete all information or register online: 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.

First Name: _____ Last Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Phone: _____ E-mail: _____

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. Daily Workshops are included with any purchase. NAM members whose 2017 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 9, 2017. If you wish to pay for your member dues with this registration: send a check payable to NAM. Child, Youth, Young Adult, and Excursions are additional and not included in packages. Saturday Banquet seating is chosen for you unless you contact NAM office or request on-line. The "Covenant of Behavior" MUST be completed for all Child and Youth registrants- if not accompanied by parent. See forms on-line. **YOUTH: If you are 18 and did not graduate from high school by summer; YOUNG ADULT: If you are over 18 and a high school graduate and younger than 35.

Package Options DOES NOT INCLUDE HOTEL ROOMS	Adult and Young 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 6/9/2017	After 6/9/2017	Before 6/9/2017	After 6/9/2017	Before 6/9/2017	After 6/9/2017	Before 6/9/2017	After 6/9/2017
Full (Thur-Sun)	# ___ @\$300	# ___ @\$330	# ___ @\$270	# ___ @\$300	# ___ @\$150	# ___ @\$180	# ___ @\$120	# ___ @\$150
Weekend (Fri - Sun)	# ___ @\$260	# ___ @\$290	# ___ @\$220	# ___ @\$250	# ___ @\$130	# ___ @\$160	# ___ @\$100	# ___ @\$130
Saturday & Sunday	# ___ @\$170	# ___ @\$200	# ___ @\$150	# ___ @\$180	# ___ @\$80	# ___ @\$110		
Thursday Only	# ___ @\$50	# ___ @\$80	# ___ @\$40	# ___ @\$70	# ___ @\$20	# ___ @\$50	# ___ @\$20	# ___ @\$50
Friday Only	# ___ @\$110	# ___ @\$140	# ___ @\$90	# ___ @\$120	# ___ @\$50	# ___ @\$80	# ___ @\$50	# ___ @\$80
Saturday Only	# ___ @\$140	# ___ @\$170	# ___ @\$120	# ___ @\$150	# ___ @\$60	# ___ @\$90	# ___ @\$70	# ___ @\$100
Sunday Only	# ___ @\$50	# ___ @\$80	# ___ @\$40	# ___ @\$70	# ___ @\$20	# ___ @\$50		
Totals	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$

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

Wednesday: Excursion to Biltmore Estate & Winery, all-inclusive Buffet, audio tour and wine tour Adults ages 17 +	#	@\$120
Wednesday: Excursion to Biltmore Estate & Winery (all above included) ages 5-16 ONLY	#	@\$ 90
Wednesday: Excursion to Biltmore Estate & Winery (all above included) children 4 and under	#	@\$ 35
Wednesday: THE GORGE ZIPLINING & Box Lunch**	#	@\$140
Wednesday: GREEN RIVER INFLATABLE KAYAKING & Box Lunch**	#	@\$100
Thursday, Friday and Saturday: Children's Program – Children's Museum, Zoo, Crafts with Lauralee Saad	#	@\$30/day or \$75/all
Thursday and Friday: Youth – Program with Michele Houmis	#	@\$ 20
Thursday: Young Adults – Theology on Tap with the Bishops - Brazwells Pub with Hors d'oeuvres – Main Street	#	@\$ 20
Friday: Young Adults – Lunch with the Bishops – Ink N Ivy Restaurant – Buffet Included - Main Street	#	@\$ 20
I want to make a Non-Taxable Donation for Religious and Clergy attending NAM '17 \$100 ___ \$200 ___ \$300 ___	#	

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

**Pre-registration and Signed Waiver Required: Contact Elias Jowdy for Forms: ejowdy27@live.com

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

For Credit Card: Visa MC Discovery AMEX Acct#: _____ EXP Date: _____

V-code (3 or 4 digit# on front/back of card): _____ Signature: _____

OFFICE USE ONLY: AMT.PD: _____ DATE: _____ CHK#: _____ REG#: _____

For hotel reservations call Hyatt Regency Greenville at (888) 421-1442 code 'NAM Convention'. Hotel rate: \$129/night for single/double/triple/quad room. Parking extra. A one-night deposit is required for all reservations. **Rate valid only until June 1, 2017**

What is Divine Mercy

Continued from page 18

'F' is for **FEAST** Day: The Feast day is the Sunday after Easter, referred to as Divine Mercy Sunday. Jesus said, "On that day, the very depths of MY tender mercy are opened. I pour out a whole ocean of graces upon those souls who approach the fount of My mercy on that day."

In conclusion, the devotion to Divine Mercy includes praying the Chaplet, remembering the three o'clock hour of Mercy, reflecting on the Image of Mercy, praying the Novena, and attending Mass on Divine Mercy Sunday, which is the Sunday after Easter. But for whatever reason, if you can't remember all that, remember the ABCs. The message of Mercy is as simple as the ABC's...

- A: Ask for mercy
- B: Be merciful
- C: Completely Trust. ☐

Tequesta, Florida Welcome Back



From left: Msgr. David George, Fr. Jack Morrison and Subdeacon Pierre Azzi.

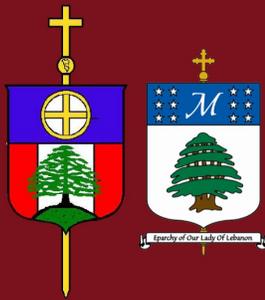
On Sunday, March 19, 2017, the parishioners of Mary, Mother of the Light Mission (MMOL) in Tequesta [Palm Beach], Fla., welcomed Fr. Jack Morrison for his first Liturgy. Msgr. David George, who was substituting for Fr. Jack, told the congregation that it was appropriate on the Sunday of the Prodigal Son that the *prodigal pastor* had returned. Fr. Jack thanked all of the parishioners, not only of MMOL, but also so many throughout the Eparchy who prayed for his recovery. He said: "I believe in miracles every time I look in the mirror." Fr. Jack had been in the hospital recovering from a major illness since Christmas. ☐

San Diego, California Silver Massabki Award



Graced with the presence of Bishop A. Elias Zaidan, Bishop of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon, as a part of the celebrations for the Feasts of Sts. Ephrem and Maron, St. Ephrem Church in San Diego, Calif., had the distinct pleasure to present this year's Silver Massabki Award to Mr. George and Mrs. Mima Habchi on January 28, 2017. Their unwavering and total dedication to the parish over the years has proven them more than worthy of this recognition. Our parish's heartfelt thanks go out to George and Mima for all they have done and continue to do for the parish. Presenting them with the award, along with Bishop Zaidan and Rev. Toufic Nasr, is the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon - NAM Southwest Regional Vice-President, Mrs. Ellen Saad. ☐

Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral in Brooklyn, N.Y., will present a seminar about the Creighton Model System and NaProTECHNOLOGY on **Tuesday, May 30, 2017, from 7 - 9 p.m.** This seminar will shed light on the great work being done in building a culture of life in women's healthcare using the Creighton Model FertilityCare™ System and NaProTECHNOLOGY. It will provide lay people, medical professionals, clergy and religious with information and resources useful to help couples struggling with infertility (and contemplating in vitro fertilization (IVF)), couples who want effective natural birth regulation, and women struggling with various gynecologic issues such as repetitive miscarriage, PMS, PCOS, endometriosis, postpartum depression, premenopause, etc. Bishop Gregory Mansour will lead the seminar in opening prayer and Dr. Paul Carpentier, CFCMC, Director of the Long Island Gianna Center at Good Samaritan Hospital will be the keynote speaker. To register and for more information, contact Marise Frangie, CFPC, FCEI at 914-393-8907 or email: sanctityoflife@live.com



Effective Ways You Can Help Your Eparchy!

Please consider the following ways in which you can help the Maronite Church!

Legacy Giving

This is a creative way to support the Church. Legacy Giving can involve contributing through your *will, insurance policy, or retirement assets.*

You can get a tax deduction today and provide yourself with a steady source of income in future years through a *charitable trust.*

How to Remember Your Church in Your Will

Suggested wording for a bequest to the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn:

"I give and bequeath to the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn _____% of the residue of my estate [or: the sum of \$_____]."

Suggested wording for a bequest to the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon of Los Angeles:

"I give and bequeath to the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon of Los Angeles _____% of the residue of my estate [or: the sum of \$_____]."

Tax-Smart Giving of Appreciated Stock or other Assets

The gift of an asset such as *common stock or mutual fund shares* that have increased in value can be a smart way to make a contribution and receive maximum tax benefits based on the value of the asset.

Gifts of other *appreciated assets* such as land, antiques, and homes, can also be utilized as potential gifts with valuable tax benefits.

Gifts of these assets should be considered on a case-by-case basis.

For more information on any of these options, please contact:

Stewardship Director
John F. Kurey, Esq., MBA
718-237-9913 or 314-231-1021
saintmaron@yahoo.com or
maroniteswest@yahoo.com

Witness

Continued from page 1

Although my mother did not die because she was persecuted, as so many martyrs have over the years and sadly even today, she lived her life as a witness. In this way she is like you and me. Our Patriarch asks us to reflect on the witness of martyrs of the past and present, to learn from them, and to bear witness to what they bear witness to, that the love of God has no bounds.

Please read the Patriarch's pastoral letter in this issue of *The Maronite Voice* (page 12) or at www.stmaron.org. May this year allow us to do all we can to bear a faithful and credible witness to Christ. What qualifies us to teach, or witness, or serve his Church is the same love for God and love for others that motivated my mother and each of you. May we give Him glory and praise now and forever. ☐

+ Gregory J. Mansour
Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn

Dartmouth, Massachusetts Day of Recollection

by Sr. Natalie Sayde Salameh

On Saturday, March 18, 2017, the Maronite Servants of Christ the Light hosted a Day of Recollection at the Mother of Light Convent in Dartmouth, Mass., for ladies from the Daughters of Mary of Our Lady of the Cedars, Boston, Mass. The theme of the day was "Welcome Beloved Daughters to the Father's Embrace," and was based on the Gospel of the Prodigal Son.

Mother Marla Marie challenged and encouraged the ladies to rest on the Father's merciful heart, to experience His



embrace of mercy, and to allow God to draw them close to His tender and compassionate heart. The day included presentations, quiet reflection, faith sharing, prayerful communion before the Holy Mysteries, and an abundance of sisterly fellowship, support and laughter. Call the Sisters at 508/996-1753 to plan a similar day for your parish group. ☐

Appeal from Caritas Lebanon

Christians in Lebanon are suffering! If you are able to relieve some of the suffering, please contact

Fr. Elias Abi Sarkis, Director

8315 South 107th East Ave.

Tulsa, OK 74133

Ph: 918-872-7400

or visit *Caritas Lebanon* at <http://www.caritas.org.lb>.
Checks may be made payable to Caritas Lebanon.

Thank you for your consideration. ☐