



The Maronite Voice



A Publication of the Maronite Eparchies in the USA

Volume XV

Issue No. IV

April 2018

Christ is Risen! He has Truly Risen! "Whoever is in Christ is a new creation" (2 Corinthians 5:17)

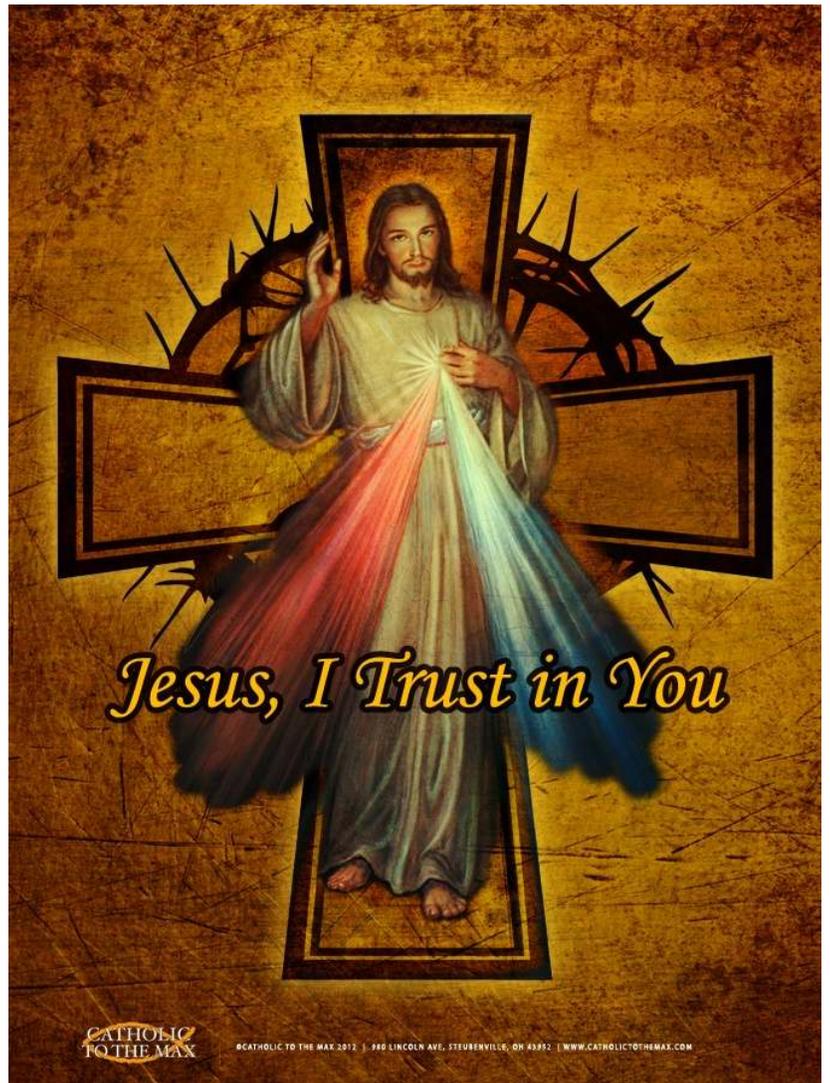
In our Maronite tradition we call the first Sunday after the Feast of the Resurrection "New Sunday," and it is the eighth day of the Church's celebration of the Feast of Resurrection. God recreated us by his Resurrection. His sacrifice and suffering on our behalf gave us new life. Pope St. John Paul II also dedicated this Sunday to the Divine Mercy of God, to whom we are called to come as faithful children, "Jesus, I trust in you." Divine Mercy flows from the Heart of God and, if we allow it to do so, can change us. When we respond to God's mercy, we enter into His new creation which is Christ, His Divine Son.

During the weekdays after Resurrection Sunday our attention is called to the various appearances of Jesus to the disciples: to Mary Magdalene, to the Apostle Peter, to the Apostles in the Upper Room; this week is known by its Syriac name, the Week of *Hawareyeen*. The word *Hawareyeen* has a special meaning as it is the week of people wearing white, meaning that they are reborn to a new life, to a new beginning.

In other writings, for example in Ephesians 4:22-24, St. Paul tells us "...in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new self, which is in the likeness of God and has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth." This "laying aside of our old self" was part of our Lenten preparation leading up to the celebration of Christ's Resurrection. We rise with Christ in "our new self."

But what does it mean to say that we are a "new creation" and "put on a new self?" The Church teaches that we are created in God's image and likeness (Genesis 1:27). Through Christ's Resurrection we are renewed to this original image. We are made new by the grace and mercy of God. We are changed when our minds and our hearts are transformed by the Holy Spirit's life in us. We are invited to become a new creation.

A certain responsibility comes with this renewal within us. We must become more like Christ in thought, word and deed. We must live a life that reflects our "new selves." What might that new life in Christ look like? To answer that, all we need to do is look at the life of Jesus Christ; He is our model. We must be men and women of kindness, humility and meekness; we must bear with one another. We must be compassionate and extend mercy to others.



(Continues on page 9)

Schedule of Bishop Elias Zaidan

April 6 - 8, 2018

Pastoral Visit to St. Joseph Church, Phoenix, Ariz.

April 9 - 10, 2018

Pastoral Visit to St. Jude Church, Salt Lake City, Utah

April 12 - 15, 2018

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

April 16 - 17, 2018

Clergy Enrichment Days, Our Lady of Lebanon Seminary, Washington, D.C.

April 22, 2018

Pastoral Visit to Saints Peter and Paul Church, Simi Valley, Calif.

April 24 - 25, 2018

Presbyteral Council Meetings, Chancery Office, St. Louis, Mo.

April 27, 2018

Pastoral Visit to the Maronite Community of Albuquerque, N.M.

April 28 - 29, 2018

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

May 1, 2018

Lecture to the Clergy of the Diocese of Fort Worth, Tex.

May 5 - 6, 2018

Pastoral Visit to Our Lady of Lebanon Church, Lombard [Chicago], Ill. □

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- Most Reverend Bishop Gregory John Mansour
- Most Reverend A. Elias Zaidan, M.L.M.

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Maronite Convention 2018

Our Lady of the Cedars Maronite Catholic Church

Houston, Texas

July 11 - 15, 2018

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

www.Namnews.org
www.Namconvention2018.com

Episcopal Appointment

The Holy Father, following the vote of the Synod of Bishops of the Patriarchal Church of Antioch of the Maronites, has elevated the Apostolic Exarchate for the Maronite faithful resident in West and Central Africa to the "Eparchy of the Annunciation," with See in *Ibadan*, Nigeria, and appointed Rev. Chorbishop Simon Faddoul, currently Apostolic Exarch, as eparchial bishop of the new See.

Born on January 7, 1958, in *Dik El Mehdi*, Lebanon, in the Archieparchy of Antélias, Bishop-Elect Faddoul completed his philosophical and theological studies at the Holy Spirit University (USEK), *Kaslik*, Lebanon, and also received a Licentiate in Education and Teacher Training in 1985. He then transferred to the United States, where he obtained a Licentiate in Education and School Administration from Providence College, Providence, Rhode Island, in 1986, and a Doctorate in Education and Administration from the University of Cincinnati in 1989.

On August 9, 1987, he was ordained a priest for the Archieparchy of Antélias, Lebanon, and has held the following positions: pastoral service in St. Anthony Parish of Cincinnati, Ohio; collaborator in Cyprus in the Cathedral of Nicosia; parish priest of Saint Elias Church of *Ain Aar*, Lebanon; parish priest of the Church of *Jal El Dib-Bkennaya*, Lebanon; and president of Caritas-Lebanon from 2010 to 2013. On January 13, 2013, he was appointed as Apostolic Exarch for Maronite faithful resident in Central and Western Africa and Apostolic Visitor for Maronite faithful resident in South Africa.

The Episcopal Ordination will take place on April 7, 2018, at the Maronite Patriarchate in *Bkerke*, Lebanon. □





Eparchial Appointments

His Excellency Bishop Gregory J. Mansour, Bishop of the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn, has made the following eparchial assignments:

- ★ Revoked the appointment of **Msgr. George M. Sebaali** as Pastor of St. Anthony Church in Glen Allen [Richmond], Va., and appointed him as Pastor of Our Lady of Lebanon Church in Washington, D.C., effective September 1, 2018.
- ★ Revoked the appointment of **Chorbishop John D. Faris** as Pastor of Saint Louis Gonzaga Church in Utica, N.Y., and appointed him as Pastor of St. Anthony Church in Glen Allen, Va., effective September 1, 2018. Chorbishop Faris will also serve as Editor of *The Maronite Voice*, Director of Saint Maron Publications and Director of the Eparchial Office of Communications.
- ★ Revoked the appointment of **Fr. Tony Mouanes** as Pastor of St. Sharbel Church in Newtown Square, Penn., and appointed him as Pastor of Saint Louis Gonzaga Church in Utica, N.Y., effective June 1, 2018.
- ★ Revoked the appointment of **Fr. Joseph Abisaad** as Parochial Vicar of St. Anthony Church in Lawrence, Mass., and of St. George Church in Dover, N.H., and appointed him as Administrator of St. Sharbel Church in Newtown Square, Penn., effective June 1, 2018.
- ★ Revoked the appointment of **Fr. Paul Damien** as Administrator of Sts. Peter and Paul Mission in Tampa, Fla., and appointed him as Pastor of St. Anthony/St. George Church in Wilkes-Barre, Penn., effective June 1, 2018.
- ★ Revoked the appointment of **Fr. Hanna Karam** as Pastor of St. Anthony/St. George Church in Wilkes-Barre, Penn., and appointed him as Parochial Vicar of Our Lady of Victory Church in Pittsburgh, Penn., effective June 1, 2018.
- ★ Revoked the appointment of **Fr. Fadi Rouhana** as Pastoral Administrator of Our Lady of Purgatory Church in New Bedford, Mass., and appointed him as Administrator of Sts. Peter and Paul Mission in Tampa, Fla., effective June 1, 2018.
- ★ Revoked the appointment of **Fr. Antoun Youssef** as Parochial Vicar of St. Anthony Church in Lawrence, Mass., and appointed him as Administrator of Our Lady of Purgatory Church in New Bedford, Mass., effective June 1, 2018.
- ★ Revoked the appointment of **Fr. Aaron Sandbothe** as Parochial Vicar of St. Louis Gonzaga Church in Utica, N.Y., and appointed him as Administrator of Mary, Mother of the Light Mission in Tequesta [Palm Beach], Fla., effective June 1, 2018.
- ★ Revoked the appointment of **Fr. Jebrael Moussalem** as Pastoral Administrator of Mary, Mother of the Light Mission in Tequesta, Fla., and appointed him as Parochial Vicar of St. Anthony Church in Lawrence, Mass., and of St. George Church in Dover, N.H., effective June 1, 2018.
- ★ Revoked the appointment of **Fr. Dominique Hanna** as Pastor of St. Joseph Church in Atlanta, Ga., and appointed him as Rector of Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral in Brooklyn, N.Y., effective June 1, 2018.
- ★ Revoked the appointment of **Msgr. James Root** as Rector of Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral in Brooklyn, N.Y., and appointed him as Pastor of St. Anthony of the Desert Church in Fall River, Mass., effective June 1, 2018.
- ★ Revoked the appointment of **Fr. Tony Akoury**, as Pastor of St. Sharbel Church in Somerset, N.J., and appointed him as Pastor of St. Joseph Church in Atlanta, Ga., effective June 1, 2018.
- ★ Revoked the appointment of **Fr. Simon El Hajj** as Pastor of Our Lady of Lebanon Church in Easton, Penn., and appointed him as Pastor of St. Sharbel Church in Somerset, N.J., effective June 1, 2018.
- ★ Revoked the appointment of **Fr. Youssef Keikati**, as Parochial Vicar of Our Lady of Victory Church in Pittsburgh, Penn., and appointed him as Administrator of Our Lady of Lebanon Church in Easton, Penn., effective June 1, 2018.
- ★ Revoked the appointment of **Fr. Bassam Saade** as Pastor of St. Jude Church in Orlando, Fla., and appointed him as Administrator of St. Maron Mission in Jacksonville, Fla., effective September 1, 2018.
- ★ Revoked the appointment of **Fr. Elie Abi Chedid** as Administrator of St. Maron Mission in Jacksonville, Fla., and appointed him as Pastor of St. Jude Church in Orlando, Fla., effective September 1, 2018.
- ★ Revoked the appointment of **Fr. Alaa Isaa** as Administrator of St. Anne Church in Watervliet, N.Y., and appointed him as Pastor of the same church.
- ★ Revoked the appointment of **Chorbishop Joseph F. Kaddo** as Pastor of St. Anthony of the Desert Church in Fall River, Mass., and granted him permission to retire effective June 1, 2018.
- ★ Revoked the appointment of **Chorbishop Dominic Ashkar** as Pastor of Our Lady of Lebanon Church in Washington, D.C., and granted him permission to retire effective September 1, 2018.
- ★ Relieved **Deacon Jean Mattar** of managing the financial responsibilities of Our Lady of Purgatory Church in New Bedford, Mass. □

San Antonio, Texas Feast of Saint Maron



by Regina Aune

It was a festive time at St. George Church in San Antonio, Tex., as the parish celebrated St. Maron's Feast Day with the presentation of the annual awards at the conclusion of

the Divine Liturgy on Sunday, February 11, 2018.

Father Charles Khachan, MLM, presented the Silver Massabki Award to Regina and Larry Raba, the Faith of the Mountain Award to Christopher Khattar, the Bishop's Award to Amira Andera, the St. George Appreciation Award to Karen Sacre, and the Altar Server Award to Kierstin Salinas. They were honored for their selfless service to the parish and the continuous giving of their time and talents to support the parish.

Additionally, Father Charles presented five couples with certificates commemorating the renewal of their marriage vows, which took place at a Divine Liturgy celebrated in the Crusader Chapel of the Church in Cana, Galilee, during the parish pilgrimage to the Holy Land in March of 2017. The five couples who were presented certificates were: Sharon and Jose Fernandez, Jacki and Brendan George, Candy and Larry Monsour, Lina and Marcel Noujeim, and Susan and Frank Rizzo.

A luncheon reception honoring the awardees was hosted by the Pastoral Council in the Maronite Community Center following the Divine Liturgy. □



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maroniteswest@yahoo.com

Sleepy Hollow, New York *Multi Parish Ladies' Day of Recollection*



by Vivian Akel

On Saturday, March 10, 2018, the Ladies of four parishes from New York, Connecticut and New Jersey met in Sleepy Hollow, N.Y., at the St. John Paul II Parish for a Lenten Day of Recollection. The day began with continental breakfast hosted by the parish and was followed by Liturgy, celebrated by Msgr. James Root, Fr. Dany Abi-Akar and Fr. Tony Akoury.

The day's theme focused on our roles as Maronite women, at home, at work and in our Church communities. The morning workshop addressed our vocation as lay women and the process of discernment as a relationship with God by which interior guidance develops and continues to help guide the choices we make throughout our lifetime. We also addressed the challenges we face as loving caregivers to the people we hold near and dear, and the need to recognize the signs of personal stress before symptoms of compassion fatigue set in. We also discussed the need for personal care, exercise, and socialization during times of stress. The morning workshop concluded with a conversation about the importance of continually nurturing our spiritual lives through daily prayer, frequent attendance at Liturgy (weekday, when possible), examination of conscience, reconciliation, spiritual direction, and continued contact with each other.

The day proceeded with a lunch prepared by the women of the St. John Paul II Parish, and an afternoon workshop continued the same theme. Parishioner Dalal Fatoush

surprised everyone with a hand made gift of inspirational stones and a raffle gift from the Holy Land, as well as a donation of her awesome *manoushe* [za'atar flatbread]. The Day ended with silent Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. We hope this will be the first of many events of its kind. A big thank you to all who worked on the planning, preparation, and transportation to make this event a success. □

Detroit, Michigan *Order of Saint Sharbel*



On Saturday, February 3, 2018, St. Maron Church, Detroit, Mich., celebrated the Feast of St. Maron. During the Liturgy, His Excellency Bishop Zaidan gave a moving homily about St. Maron and the significance he holds in the Catholic Church. He also inducted parishioners Antoine and Beline Obeid into the Order of Saint Sharbel. It was a beautiful celebration and congratulations to Antoine and Beline for receiving this honor. □

Washington, D.C. *March For Life*

by Marise Frangieh

On Thursday, January 18, 2018, my husband Peter drove us from New York to Washington, D.C., to participate in the Fifth Maronite Vigil for Life at Our Lady Of Lebanon Maronite Parish. On Interstate 95 South, a billboard caught my attention: "You are loved" in big font, "Send a message of kindness to someone." It made me think how this message is lost on so many people who feel hopeless, miserable, lonely and abandoned. How easy it is to hear those words in our minds but not to receive them in our hearts as a life-changing message from a Heavenly Father. "You are loved by Me, precious child of God, precious daughter, precious son. Yes, I have wonderfully made you and loved you so much to the point of sending My Only Son to die to bring you eternal life." Our life is defined



not by our ability but by God's love for us, infinite love poured abundantly on us, a gift given to us freely (although the price was paid on the cross). In the evening, at the Vigil, Fr. Stephen Ellis, LC, gave a reflection on the healing of the crippled man at the pool of Bethesda based on John: 5:1-9. Our Lord knew the desires of the man to be healed, yet He asked his permission to do it "Do you want to be well?" Our Lord respects our freedom and doesn't impose Himself on us. Yes, He wants us to spend eternity with Him, but he didn't remain on His throne; no, He came down to us and became one of us. He always meets us where we are and helps us rise with Him on the stairway of sanctity. In this Gospel, we see the man rising up with greater dignity. When Christ rose from the dead, he decided to keep his wounds because he wanted to show the depth of His Love for you and me, a love that the paralytic experienced and changed him forever.

"Christ loved him too much" to let him go restored and healed. Christ loves you so much to leave you in your misery. Christ is still working on us. "How much of my will and freedom am I willing to put into what God is asking me?" God is asking me and you to love as He did. This love is demanding and sacrificial but when we allow ourselves to experience His Love in our hearts (not in our minds) on a personal level, He changes us, and what we thought of as a burden or cross can be looked at as an opportunity to love God and share His Love with others. Living this message of love is very difficult and countercultural, but we are not to be afraid; we are loved and not alone because the almighty powerful is on our side.

The next day we joined hundreds of thousands of people in the 45th Annual March For Life. Its theme this year "Love Saves Lives" was very fitting and confirmed the message we received the day before. God's love saves the life of the world through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Our love to the people we meet can save their lives as the story shared by Sr. Bethany, SV, proves. Raquel, a pregnant woman, met in the elevator another pregnant woman who was disturbed and willing to end her pregnancy. Raquel's baby kicked her in the womb, so she took the hand of the stranger and put on her belly, and the baby kicked again. Raquel with great love said, "No. You are not having an abortion. You are having a baby girl and you will name her Raquel. My middle name is Jasmine, and you will share this story with your girl." Then Raquel took her to her OBGYN, but lost contact with her

until two years later, when she met her rolling a stroller with her twin girls, Raquel and Jasmine. What a beautiful story of hope and love! Sister Bethany concluded, "It was such a small thing this loving exchange and the impact reaches into eternity. You may not see the impact of your love. The love of your heart is totally unique to you and only you can give it. Your love saves lives and changes hearts.

One of the speakers invited us to pray and fast more for the cause of life. Let us open our hearts to the Lord to experience His Love and go out to change the world around us in our small corners by sharing His Love, praying unceasingly, fasting, doing small things with great love, sacrificing for others so we can build a civilization of love and a culture of life. □

Lawrence, Massachusetts MYO Attends Regional Youth Conference



by Christian Hbaiter

On Saturday, March 17, 2018, youth from St. Anthony Church in Lawrence, Mass., joined more than five hundred other Catholic youth from the Merrimack Valley region at the 3rd Annual Merrimack Valley Catholic Youth Conference. The theme of the conference was "EPIC LOVE," and it was truly an epic day! Upon arrival, some youth quickly started to interact with other youth groups through friendly games of knock-out basketball and volleyball. Others went to the St. Patrick's themed photo booth to take some keepsake photos, while others wandered the gymnasium, visiting the different kiosks that were set up by local or regional organizations, such as the Student for Life of America, Jesus aCross the Border, CAMPERs, Daughters of St. Paul, and more. After a period of welcoming introductions, ice-breakers and some fun inter-parish dance competition (which St. Anthony won!), the conference had officially begun.

The first talk discussed the theme of EPIC Love and focused on God's unconditional and unlimited love for all humanity. This was followed up by a keynote presentation by renowned musician Eric Genuis. His incredible presentation of how music can really teach us how to love had the majority of the room on the brink of tears. Next the youth

were led to two Mercy Stations where they got to explore corporal and spiritual acts of mercy. At the Corporal Works of Mercy stations, each youth prepared a "Mercy Pack" filled with food and toiletries that would later be donated to a local homeless shelter. After these incredible acts of charity, the youth dispersed into different areas to visit one of ten workshops. Workshop topics varied and explored different areas of life and faith including "The Gift of Every Life," "How to Live Faith on Campus," "The Interplay of Sports and Religion," "Local Converts Share Their Story," and more.

Following these workshops and after a dinner break, the entire conference reunited for a Holy Hour, which included praise and worship followed by a period of Exposition and Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. To end the conference, Bishop Robert Hennessy, Auxiliary Bishop for the Merrimack Valley Region of the Archdiocese of Boston, celebrated a Divine Liturgy. St. Anthony's youth left the conference with a refreshed state of mind, taking with them all that they had heard or seen throughout the many talks and activities that day. □

Houston, Texas *Catholic-Orthodox Encounter*



by Alberto G. Tohmé

In collaboration with the Donald S. Nesti, CSSp Center for Faith and Culture at the University of St. Thomas and the Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs Commission of the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston, Our Lady of the Cedars Church, Houston, Tex., hosted an encounter between Catholic (Eastern and Latin churches) and Orthodox (multiple affiliations) clergy, scholars, and laity, on February 17, 2018. The purpose of this encounter, a first of its kind in the Houston area, was to establish a platform for dialogue between local Catholic and Orthodox communities, focusing on the many things that unite us as one church in Christ.

His Eminence Daniel Cardinal DiNardo, Archbishop of Galveston-Houston, offered a letter of support for this event and attended the event briefly over lunch. Reverend Fr. Thomas Fitzgerald, Greek Orthodox priest, represented the Orthodox side and gave a brief history and overview of the Orthodox Churches and some Orthodox perspectives regarding the Great Schism between the Catholic and Orthodox churches and reconciliation efforts in the last fifty years. Fr. Ronald G. Roberson, CSP, Associate Director, Secretariat for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs at the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, represented the Catholic side and gave a brief history and overview of the Eastern Catholic Churches worldwide and their current representation in the United States.

Participants generated ideas and actions to establish platforms for dialogue in their local communities. These actions will form the foundation for future encounters between local Catholic and Orthodox communities.

Our Lady of the Cedars Church is very grateful to its collaborators and to the sponsorship of Nijad and Zeina Fares for this event. □

Food For Thought

In order to prepare a truly human future, it is not enough to reject evil. We must build the common good together.

Pope Francis, March 15, 2018

Save This Date!
Thursday, October 4, 2018



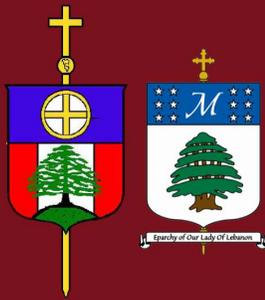
And join Bishop Gregory Mansour at the Eparchy of Saint Maron's 9th Annual Benefit Dinner on Thursday, October 4, 2018 at the New York Athletic Club.

The proceeds of this Benefit Dinner provide essential funding for:

- Seminarian Education
- Establishing New Maronite Parishes
- Caring for Retired Priests
- Ministering to the Faithful

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We look forward to seeing you there!
Thank you for your support.



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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:

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John F. Kurey, Esq., MBA
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saintmaron@yahoo.com or
maroniteswest@yahoo.com

Fall River, Massachusetts *First Vows*



Sister Natalie Sayde Salameh professed first vows as a Maronite Servant of Christ the Light on March 19, 2018. Sister is pictured here with Bishop Gregory Mansour, her parents, and her fellow sisters. The vows took place during the Divine Liturgy for the Feast of St. Joseph at St. Anthony of the Desert Maronite Church in Fall River, Mass. □

Christ is Risen

Continued from page 1

We must forgive and ask for forgiveness. And as St. Paul reminds us in the Letter to the Colossians (3:14) "...over all these put on love, that is, the bond of perfection."

This interior "re-creation" within us is the Lord's deep desire: the creation of a virtuous person in His sons and daughters. That is why our genuine, heartfelt repentance during the Lenten Season is so important as God begins this new process in us. We have to want, with all of our mind, soul and heart, for Him to make us into this new person. Our participation in this new life in Christ is important. The Lord wants us to make decisions as He would make them.

Therefore, let us remember to always trust Our Lord; He will never deceive us. Let us renew our commitment to live in harmony with the dignity we received as a fruit of the glorious Resurrection of Our Lord. May the grace of God work within us so that we can renew the face of the earth.

+ Most Reverend A. Elias Zaidan
Bishop of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon of Los Angeles □

Schedule of Bishop Gregory Mansour

April 5 - 6, 2018

Host for Bethlehem University Board of Trustees, the Chancery Office, Brooklyn, N.Y.

April 7, 2018

Ordination of David Laird and Camille Atallah to Diaconate, St. Maron Church, Torrington, Conn.

April 8, 2018

Parish Visit to Our Lady of Lebanon Church, Waterbury, Conn.

April 10, 2018

American Task Force for Lebanon Dinner, Washington, D.C.

April 14 - 15, 2018

Parish Visit to Our Lady of the Cedars Church, Jamaica Plains [Boston], Mass.

April 16 - 17, 2018

Maronite Seminary Alumni Association Enrichment Days, Washington, D.C.

April 18, 2018

Eparchial Finance Council Meeting, the Chancery Office, Brooklyn, N.Y.

April 21 - 22, 2018

Pastoral Visit to Our Lady of Lebanon Church, Easton, Penn.

April 23 - 25, 2018

Catholic Relief Services Meetings, Baltimore, Md.

April 28, 2018

Parish Visit and Evening Gala, St. John Paul II Church, Sleepy Hollow, N.Y.

May 5 - 7, 2018

Ordination of Richard Thornton to Diaconate, Troy, N.Y. □



Deadline for next month's issue of The Maronite Voice is April 22, 2018.

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

Eparchy of Saint Maron.

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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. □

A Case For Priestly Celibacy

by
Bishop Robert Barron

There is a very bad argument for celibacy which has reared its head throughout the tradition and which is, even today, defended by some. It runs something like this: married life is morally and spiritually suspect; priests, as religious leaders, should be spiritual athletes above reproach; therefore, priests shouldn't be married. I love Augustine, but it is hard to deny that this kind of argumentation finds support in some of Augustine's more unfortunate reflections on sexuality (original sin as a sexually transmitted disease; sex even within marriage is venially sinful; the birth of a baby associated with excretion, etc.). I once ran across a book in which the author presented a version of this justification, appealing to the purity codes in the book of Leviticus. His implication was that any sort of sexual contact, even within marriage, would render a minister at the altar impure. This approach to the question is, in my judgment, not just silly but dangerous, for it rests on assumptions that are repugnant to good Christian metaphysics.

The doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* necessarily implies the essential integrity of the world and everything in it. Genesis tells us that God found each thing he had made good and that he found the ensemble of creatures very good. Expressing the same idea with typical scholastic understatement, Thomas Aquinas commented that "being" and "good" are convertible terms. Catholic theology, at its best, has always been resolutely anti-Manichean, anti-gnostic, anti-dualist—and this means that matter, the body, and sexual activity are never, in themselves, to be despised. In his book *A People Adrift*, Peter Steinfels correctly suggests that the post-conciliar reaffirmation of this aspect of the tradition effectively undermined the dualist justification for celibacy that I sketched above.

But there is more to the doctrine of creation than an affirmation of the goodness of the world. To say that the finite realm in its entirety is created is

to imply that nothing in the universe is God. All aspects of created reality reflect God, point to God, and bear traces of the divine goodness (just as every detail of a building gives evidence of the mind of the architect), but no creature and no collectivity of creatures is divine (just as no part of a structure is the architect). This essential distinction between God and the world is the ground for the anti-idolatry principle that is reiterated from beginning to end of the Bible: do not turn something which is less than God into God. Isaiah the prophet put it thus: "As high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are my thoughts above your thoughts and my ways above your ways, says the Lord." And it is at the heart of the first commandment: "I am the Lord your God; you shall have no other gods besides me." The Bible thus holds off all forms of pantheism, immanentism, and nature mysticism—all the attempts of human beings to divinize or render ultimate some worldly reality. The doctrine of creation, in a word, involves both a great "yes" and a great "no" to the universe.

Now there is a behavioral concomitant to the anti-idolatry principle: it is the detachment which is urged throughout the Bible and by practically every figure in the great tradition from Irenaeus and Chrysostom to Bernard, John of the Cross, and Thérèse of Lisieux. Detachment is the refusal to make anything less than God the organizing principle or center of one's life. Anthony de Mello looked at it from the other side and said that "an attachment is anything in this world—including your own life—that you are convinced you cannot live without." Even as we reverence everything that God has made, we must let go of everything that God has made, precisely for the sake of God. Augustine saw to the bottom of this truth, commenting that creatures are loved better, more authentically, precisely when they are loved in God. This is why, as G.K. Chesterton noted, there is an odd, tensive, and bi-polar quality to Christian life. In accord with

its affirmation of the world, the Church loves color, pageantry, music, and rich decoration (as in the liturgy and papal ceremonies), even as, in accord with its detachment from the world, it loves the poverty of St. Francis and the simplicity of Mother Teresa. The same tensiveness governs its attitude toward sex and family. Again in Chesterton's language, the Church is "fiercely for having children" (through marriage) even as it remains "fiercely against having them" (in religious celibacy). Everything in this world—including sex and intimate friendship—is good, but impermanently so; all finite reality is beautiful, but its beauty, if I can put it in explicitly Catholic terms, is sacramental and not ultimate.

According to the Biblical narratives, when God wanted to make a certain truth vividly known to his people, he would occasionally choose a prophet and command him to act out that truth, to embody it concretely. Hence, he told Hosea to marry the unfaithful Gomer in order to sacramentalize God's fidelity to wavering Israel. In *Grammar of Assent*, John Henry Newman reminded us that truth is brought home to the mind, becoming convincing and persuasive, when it is represented, not through abstractions, but through something particular, colorful, and imaginable. We might be intrigued by the formula of Chalcedon, but we are moved to tears and to action by the narrative of Christ's appearance on the road to Emmaus. Thus, the truth of the non-ultimacy of sex, family, and worldly relationships can and should be proclaimed through words, but it will be believed only when people can see it. This is why, the Church is convinced, God chooses certain people to be celibate: in order to witness to a transcendent form of love, the way that we will love in heaven. In God's realm, we will experience a communion (bodily as well as spiritual) compared to which even the intensest forms of communion here below pale into insignificance, and celibates make this truth viscerally real for us now. Just as belief in the real presence in the Eucharist fades (as we have seen) when

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unaccompanied by devotional practice, so the belief in the impermanence of created love becomes attenuated in the absence of living embodiments of it. Though one can present practical reasons for it, I believe that celibacy only finally makes sense in this eschatological context.

I realize that my reader might be following the argument to this point and still feel compelled to ask, "Yes, granted that celibacy is a good thing for the Church, but why must all priests be celibate?" The medievals distinguished between arguments from necessity and arguments from "fittingness." I can offer only the latter kind of argument, for even its most ardent defenders admit that celibacy is not essential to the priesthood. After all, married priests have been, at various times and for various reasons, accepted from the beginning of the Church to the present day. The appropriateness of linking priesthood and celibacy comes, I think, from the priest's identity as a Eucharistic person. All that a priest is radiates outward from his unique capacity, acting in the person of Christ, to transform the Eucharistic elements into the body and blood of Jesus. As the center of a rose window anchors and orders all of the other elements in the design, so the Eucharistic act of the priest grounds and animates everything else that he does, rendering qualitatively distinctive his way of leading, sanctifying, and teaching. But the Eucharist is the eschatological act par excellence, for as Paul says, "Every time we eat this bread and drink this cup, we proclaim the death of the Lord until he comes." To proclaim the Paschal Mystery through the Eucharist is to make present that event by which the new world is opened up to us. It is to make vividly real the transcendent dimension which effectively relativizes (without denying) all of the goods of this passing world. And it is therefore fitting that the one who is so intimately conditioned by and related to the Eucharist should be in his form of life an eschatological person.

For years, Andrew Greeley argued - quite rightly in my view - that the priest is fascinating, and that a large part of the fascination comes from celibacy. The compelling quality of the priest is not a matter of superficial celebrity or charm; that gets us precisely nowhere.

It is something much stranger, deeper, and more mystical: the fascination for another world, for that mysterious dimension of existence hinted at sacramentally by the universe here below and revealed to us, however tantalizingly, in the breaking of the bread. I, for one, am glad that such eschatologically fascinating persons are not simply in monasteries, cloistered convents, and hermits cells, but in parishes, on the streets, and in the pulpits, moving visibly among the people of God.

There are, I realize, a couple of major problems with offering arguments for celibacy. First, it can make everything seem so pat, rational, and resolved. I've been a priest now for over thirty years, and I can assure you that the living of celibacy has been anything but that. As I've gone through different seasons of my life as a priest, I've struggled mightily with celibacy, precisely because the tension between the goodness and ephemerality of creation of which I spoke of earlier is no abstraction, but rather runs right through my body. The second problem is that reason only goes so far. As Thomas More said in that wonderful scene from *A Man for All Seasons*, as he was trying to make his daughter understand why he was being so stubborn: "Finally, Meg, it's not a matter of reason; finally, it's a matter of love." People in love do strange things: they pledge eternal fidelity; they write poetry and songs; they defy their families and change their life plans; sometimes they go to their deaths. They tend to be over-the-top, irrational, and confounding to the reasonable people around them. Though we can make a case for it - as I have tried to do - celibacy is finally inexplicable, unnatural, and fascinating, for it is a form of life adopted by people in love with Jesus Christ. □

About the Author

Bishop Robert Barron is an auxiliary bishop of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles and the founder of Word on Fire Catholic Ministries.



Bishop Robert Barron

Apostolic Faith: Ancient Faith (Part One)

by
Rev. David A. Fisher

Introduction

The faith of Christians is grounded in the "apostolic witness" that Jesus Christ is Risen! This apostolic faith is the ancient faith of Holy Church, whose seeds were sown in the history, Scriptures, and faith of the ancient Israelites. The subject of this faith was born of the Virgin. Jesus the Christ, whose presence was heralded by the Forerunner, died on the Holy Cross for our sins, rose from the dead for our Salvation, and has opened for us the gates of the Kingdom, for our Divinization.

The Church has been entrusted with this faith, not to remake it, not to reform it, or redefine it anew each day; rather to guard it, proclaim it, and live it anew each day. In a special way the churches of the East: Catholic and Orthodox, Syriac-Antiochene, Byzantine and Alexandrian, have a holy obligation and ministry in keeping the traditions and beauty of the ancient faith alive. As Maronites, whose roots are planted in the lands of the Bible, there is given a special calling within the church, to remind all Christians of their biblical roots, their biblical homeland, their biblical languages, and to therefore reveal the ongoing salvific power of the ancient faith.

The elements of the apostolic faith reside in the reality and the event of the Church, to which is given the Sacred Scriptures, the Holy Mysteries (Sacraments), the Ecumenical Councils and Magisterium, the witness of the Martyrs, and the teachings of the Fathers of the Church.

"I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star" - *The Apocalypse of John* (The Book of Revelation) 22:16.

The Event of the Church

Christianity is not another religion in the list of formal and informal human attempts to know, serve, and worship the Holy and Divine, that organizing of human effort which we call religion. Christianity is not religion, rather it is

an event, the event of the Church.

The Greek word *ekklisia* was chosen to express not a new religion but a social event - a mode of relations of communion. ...the word *ekklisia* was chosen so as to manifest the identity of the first Christian communities. Ecclesia continued to signify a collectivity of people who want to live together with the struggle to attain true existence, to make existence become true, as their common goal. By living together they want to realize that mode that knows no limitations of decay and death - Christos Yannaras, *Against Religion, The Alienation of the Ecclesial Event*, pp. 21-22.

The event of the Church is the actualization of communal faith grounded in Word and Sacrament. The first Christians realized that the Jewish Scriptures in its Law, Psalms, and Prophets were a proclamation of what the prophet Jeremiah called the New Covenant, which is Jesus Christ, and that he would always be known and present to his Church in the "Breaking of the Bread," the Eucharist.

The event of the Church is the realization of "*theosis*" (becoming god-like) in the arena of human existence. The Church founded by the apostles of the Lord experienced that "God is love" (1 John 4:8), meaning God realizes in his eternal nature the perfection of communion (love), for Jesus reveals the Trinitarian nature of God. God is love, God is freedom, not at the level of will as human beings experience it, but on the level of being. The Church Fathers (Gregory Nanzianzus, Maximus the Confessor, John of Damascus) coined the term "*Perichoresis*" in Greek (literally meaning "rotation") to describe the interpenetrating reality of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit - eternally constituting the being (love and freedom) of the One God. *Theosis* therefore is the coming to full stature of what it means to be human, what it means to be a Christian. By the death and resurrection of Jesus and the gift of the Holy Spirit, the New Covenant in the blood of Christ transforms us, breaks the bonds of death caused by sin, so that we can have life and life in

its fullness: *theosis* (becoming god-like), "being" constituted by love and freedom.

The Church: One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic

"This is the sole Church of Christ, which in the Creed we profess to be one, holy, catholic and apostolic. These four characteristics, inseparably linked with each other, indicate essential features of the Church and her mission. The Church does not possess them of herself; it is Christ who, through the Holy Spirit, makes his Church one, holy, catholic, and apostolic, and it is he who calls her to realize each of these qualities (Catechism of the Catholic Church, number 811).

The Church is the Holy Mystery (Sacrament) of Salvation, in which the "two hands of the Father" (from St. Irenaeus), the Son and the Holy Spirit continually form its essential nature of being one, holy, catholic, and apostolic. The being of the Church is constituted like the Lord Jesus himself as "love" and "freedom." As Paul writes in Romans 16:16, "Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ greet you."

Early Christians realized that the community of the Church was their family, not based on blood relation, or tribal and ethnic ties, but in the liberating free faith in Christ, creating a bond of love in which all who embrace this faith become One in Christ.

"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28).

The oneness of the Church is the unity of its Head, Jesus Christ, with its Body, the People of God. The Holiness of the Church is that it is filled with the Holy Spirit, the catholicity of the Church is its evangelical mission to proclaim the truth of Christ to all men and women, and the apostolic nature of the Church is the fundamental witness of the apostles of Jesus, the Easter Proclamation - that he is Risen. □



Interior Freedom by *James Salamy*

Since October "Going Deeper in the Spiritual Life" has been reflecting on the book *Interior Freedom* by Father Jacques Philippe. This month I will reflect on Chapter Four, "From Law to Grace: Love as a Free Gift."

"For freedom Christ has set us free; stand fast therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery" (Galatians 5:1). How appropriate it is, during this Season of the Glorious Resurrection, to reflect on the freedom that Christ won for us by His death and resurrection, which have set us free to live as children of God.

There are two "traps" that cause the loss of our freedom, the flesh and the law. The flesh is our weak and sinful human nature, which resists God. At first glance, following the desires of the flesh may appear to be freeing, but in actuality they are not freeing at all. The desires of the flesh make us slaves to the passions of sin and take away our freedom. It is only when we place God at the center our lives and submit to the grace offered us by Christ that we are free.

Father Philippe offers two very practical and helpful insights to fight the trap of the flesh. "First, our efforts will never be sufficient on their own. Only the grace of Christ can win us victory. Therefore our chief weapons are prayer, patience, and hope" (pg. 113). Second, we must replace that which is sinful in our lives with that which is good and from God.

The law also "traps" us when we begin to think we can earn or merit our own salvation by our own good deeds. This is not the case. Christ won our salvation by His death and resurrection. He freely gives salvation. Saint Paul wrote to Titus, "but when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of deeds done by us in righteousness, but in virtue of his own mercy" (Titus 3:4-5). We respond to the free gift of our salvation by our good actions and good deeds done out of love and gratitude to Christ.

Looking only at the law, and ignoring the grace of salvation that was won for us and is given to us by Christ, has many

negative effects. It can lead to pride, when we think that we have earned our salvation by our own good works. On the other hand, it can also lead to despair, when we realize that we cannot achieve our salvation on our own, or when we realize that we cannot fulfill the law perfectly.

The remedy for both of these negative effects is to live by grace. When we live by grace "we realize that our works are not our own but are what God gives us the grace to do" (pg. 117). Grace is also the remedy for despair "because no matter how terrible our failures, we are never doomed to inevitable damnation – we can always return to God's absolutely free and unconditional love" (pg. 117).

Grace is freely given to us and we freely receive it. Although very difficult because of our fallen human nature, we must try, in our relationship with God and in our relationships with each other, to live according to God's grace, so that we may be better recipients of His grace given to us. □

Prayer For Peace In Our Communities

O Lord our God, in your mercy and kindness, no thought of ours is left unnoticed, no desire or concern ignored.

You have proven that blessings abound when we fall on our knees in prayer, and so we turn to you in our hour of need.

Surrounded by violence and cries for justice, we hear your voice telling us what is required . . . "Only to do justice and to love goodness, and to walk humbly with your God" (Mi 6:8).

Fill us with your mercy so that we, in turn, may be merciful to others. Strip away pride, suspicion, and racism so that we may seek peace and justice in our communities.

Strengthen our hearts so that they beat only to the rhythm of your holy will. Flood our path with your light as we walk humbly toward a future filled with encounter and unity.

Be with us, O Lord, in our efforts, for only by the prompting of your grace can we progress toward virtue. We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. □

(United States Conference of Catholic Bishops)

On Being A Deacon *by* **Deacon Bob Calabrese**

A Little Background

The title "deacon" originates from the Greek *diakonia* which describes care and service among others like a servant who waits on tables. In fact, the first deacons did just that – they helped distribute food among the new believers so that no one was missed or short-changed. Over time, the position was formalized as one who serves and reports directly to the bishop, carrying out his wishes for the widows, the poor and the under-served. Even later during the evolution of the church, deacons became the managers of the church

funds for the bishop, a position of power that eventually got them sidelined when the position was effectively "shelved." It wasn't until the Vatican II Council that the position was reinstated. Since then the Church has offered to train men for this revitalized position among the ordained clergy. It involves a substantial amount of formal education (several years of academics, deepening prayer and actions to serve others) and culminates with the layman being ordained by the bishop to proclaim the Gospel and serve the needs of the community. This can "play out" differently for people depending upon their talents, skills, interests and experiences but it always involves serving at Divine Liturgy, assisting the pastor and serving the community.

on God's behalf asking me: "Have you considered becoming a deacon?"

All my life I felt that I had been blessed with certain talents and skills but still felt unworthy and challenged by Luke's "To whom much is given, much is expected!" and struggled with how I could ever be worthy to possibly be a deacon. Finally, my prayer led me to the realization that it wasn't my decision to make -- all I could do was put myself forth to try, to apply for the Diaconate Program and God would take care of the rest as long as I did my best. It is most important to acquire an intimacy with the Bible by reading and studying its texts. My wife, Kathie, and I were fortunate enough to have world class scholars teach us in an additional two-year program with the Diocese of Bridgeport, Connecticut, called "Day Star" which drew upon many talented faculty in the NYC/CT area to help us learn and appreciate the many books of the Bible.

After ordination, I started as a Roman Catholic permanent Deacon (one year) then became a bi-ritual deacon for thirteen years thanks to Msgr. Ronald Beshara of St. Anthony Maronite Church in Danbury, Conn., then served at Saint Rafka's Retreat Center in Shelburne, Vermont, for two years and today at St. Joseph Maronite Church in Atlanta, Ga., for almost sixteen years.

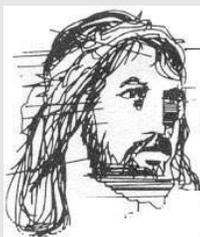
My Service

I have been blessed as a deacon to act as God's helper for people during exceptional times in their lives, to be a reminder that God is always faithful and loving both during joyful celebrations like baptisms, graduations and weddings and in funerals; personal trials and times of affliction like job loss, serious accidents or illness, isolation and prison incarceration.

(Continues on page 20)

My Vocation

The word "deacon" means something special to me. I believe the call to consider becoming a deacon emanates from within a person – it is difficult to describe, but it feels like an unfulfilled hunger to help others and grow closer to Christ. It is not something to be entered into 'lightly' – it involves serious prayer and lengthy discernment. I personally spent three years of prayer and discernment trying to understand what, if anything, God was calling me to. I was already an active layperson involved with many different activities in my parish and beyond for the larger community. I believe that when someone enters this discernment process the Holy Spirit will provide answers or signs that indicate that God is leading you to a lifetime ministry of service – kind of like Samuel in the Old Testament who kept hearing God but wasn't quite sure. Finally, he said those famous words: "Speak Lord, your servant is listening!" In my case, I finally placed myself before God and asked Him for three signs to confirm what I thought my heart was telling me. The results were undeniable – over time, three different people spoke to me



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

If you feel that you have a vocation to the Priesthood or religious life, 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
6025 Glenridge Drive
Sandy Springs, GA 30328

or

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

Seven Practical Steps to Discerning Your Religious Vocation



Newly professed Sister Sayde (kneeling) with Mother Marla Marie, Fr. Morrison, Msgr. Kaddo and Bishop Mansour.

by Sister Marla Marie Lucas

- ★ *Is God calling me to offer the gift of my life for the upbuilding of his Church?*
- ★ *Do I desire to follow Jesus more intimately as a religious sister?*
- ★ *Do I know of others who are curious to learn more about religious life?*

In today's secular climate it is extremely difficult for a young woman or man to heed and courageously follow the call of the Lord. Many noisy distractions, empty ideologies, technology, and career advancement opportunities are vying for their attention and inhibit the cultivation of a spiritual life. Moreover, it is countercultural to see a young man or woman intentionally carving out daily prayer time "to be" with and "encounter" Jesus, the light and joy of hearts. For young people to experience or recognize a "stirring" of the heart or a call, they need to pray and seek communion with our Lord.

To help cultivate a "culture of vocation" in our Maronite Church, parishes and families should encourage religious and priestly vocations from within their own community. If you are a young man or woman reading this, or know of others who may be interested in learning about God's will for their life's mission please share these seven steps which specifically guide one to explore the vocation of religious life. These steps are summarized from the book by Sr. Clare Matthias, CFR.

1. **Make a Commitment.** Discernment is a journey and it takes time. Sr. Clare suggests taking six months to a year to look into the possibility of a call to the consecrated life.
 2. **Develop your Prayer Life.** To discern well requires a daily prayer life and deepening your relationship with God. Holy Mass, frequent Confession, adoration, and personal prayer time, including silence, praying with the Scriptures, and Marian Consecration are highly encouraged. Also, limiting technology and social media, which can easily rob us of the quiet we need for prayer, is vital to hearing the Holy Spirit's promptings.
 3. **Seek Accompaniment.** A discernment journey needs a good guide. It is highly recommended that you have a good spiritual director to meet with on a regular basis. A spiritual director can be a priest, religious, or even a layperson. When seeking a spiritual director look for someone who is living his or her faith and is trained in this accompaniment.
 4. **Don't Date and Discern.** To truly give the space and attention to discerning religious life, a dating fast is advised. Marriage and religious life should be discerned separately.
 5. **Start Visiting.** Make contact with congregations that you know and are interested in learning more about, and schedule a visit. Sister Clare recommends, "visit sooner rather than later. It is important to make a step forward for the continued revelation of His will." Your visit will help you to experience firsthand the daily life and mission of the sisters.
 6. **Look for Confirmations of the Call.** As you grow in understanding your call, you will experience confirmations in the form of peace and joy. These confirmations will come from the community, your spiritual director, and those who know you best. Often parents will resist your vocation because it doesn't align with their plans for you. Here is good counsel from the book: "The important thing is to honor your father and mother and to follow Christ. Jesus knew we would face confrontations on this point and his teaching is clear: 'If anyone prefers father or mother to me, he is not worthy of me (Matt 10:37).'"
 7. **Take a Leap of Faith.** The purpose of discernment is to help us to make a concrete decision and take action. Perhaps a longer visit to the convent will help confirm and clarify your call. The community journeys with you, and through your visits and interactions will evaluate your readiness and aptitude for consecrated religious life. Be at peace and be courageous. Remember a call comes from Jesus and he is with you every step of the way.
- Please pray with us for the women joining us for our discernment retreat in April. We encourage you to share with others about our Maronite Servant of Christ the Light mission and website maroniteservants.org.
- If you are discerning a religious vocation or know someone who is encourage them to contact Sister Marla Marie at 508-996-1753 or sister@maroniteservants.org for ongoing accompaniment and helpful discernment resources. □

Our Lady, Our Land, Our Legacy



by Suad Saqr Ammar

Lebanon, the land of many saints and the land of the Cedars, is also the home of many shrines to the Virgin Mary. They light up the skies of *Harissa/Jounieh*, *Zahle*, *Zgharta*, *Miziara*, the *Bekaa Valley*, *Maghdoucheh*, *Hamat*, and coming soon, *Ain Ebel*. Magnificent monuments give witness to the devotion and adoration of loving children to their Divine Mother. They look up to her with gratitude for her help and protection, and thank her for her continued blessings.

In *Ain Ebel* [Southern Lebanon], the shrine has been the dream of our parents and grandparents for a long time. They built their first church in the year 1880, but a "shrine" remained a dream. Today we are intent on realizing their dream, to make this shrine a reality.

With the guidance and patronage of the Most Reverend Archbishop Shukrallah Nabil Al-Hajj and the blessing of His Beatitude Bechara Peter Cardinal Rai, who laid the cornerstone, Our Lady of Light (*Emm El Nour*) is being built atop a hill at the town's entrance.

At an altitude of 720 to 850 meters above sea level, *Ain Ebel* is located atop a range of hills and plains in the heart of what was known as the Land of Annunciation (*Blaad el Beshara*) along the path on which, historians tell us, that our Lord Jesus Christ walked to Tyre, Sidon, and Cana where he joined his mother at the wedding, performed his first miracle and continued on His way to the Holy Land.

The people of *Ain Ebel* want her shrine to be on a national level a symbol of the Christian presence in the south. The Shrine will serve as a symbol of peace and friendship among all religious parties. It will provide a destination for Lebanese and vacationers from all over the world to visit this picturesque region of Lebanon and to go on a pilgrimage to this beautiful shrine at the heart of Southern Lebanon. The



shrine consists of the following main sections:

- ◆ The tower is made up of three huge columns which rise to 54 meters, and are topped by a 14-meter-high statue of the Virgin Mary carrying her son Jesus. The tower's underground foundation encompasses a multi-purpose hall that accommodates 400 persons. A circular church with a glass facade accommodates 150 persons at the ground level, above which there is a main hall, the elevators and staircases for pilgrims to climb to the statue of the Virgin Mary.
- ◆ A building includes residences for both administrators and guests, a meeting hall, administrative offices, cafeteria and souvenir shops.

The cost of the project is estimated at about \$2.5 million, and the duration of completion to be about two years. Hence, our appeal to the Lebanese in general and to the Christians in particular, residents and immigrants, for moral and financial support to complete this ambitious project which symbolizes the dream and hope of the people of the Land of Annunciation; a project that has historical, religious touristic and economic significance to *Ain Ebel* and the region.

With the hope that *Ain Ebel's* dream becomes a shining reality, may the Virgin Mary, the Lady of Light, bless and protect you.

For more information please contact Suad Ammar at (951) 818-2668, or by email: suadammar@yahoo.com. □

Cincinnati, Ohio MYO Regional Retreat



by Maggie Samaan and Linda Conour

On the weekend of February 16 - 18, 2018, over 150 Maronite youth, Advisors, and Chaperones gathered at St. Anthony of Padua Church in Cincinnati, Ohio, for the MYO Regional Retreat. The Retreat was led by Father George Hajj, Pastor of St. Anthony of Padua Church; Father Gary George, Pastor of Our Lady of Lebanon Church in San Francisco, Calif; and Father Alex Harb from St. Ignatius of Antioch in Dayton, Ohio. Youth from Livonia and Warren, Mich.; Darlington and Pittsburgh, Penn; and Akron, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Dayton, and Youngstown, Ohio, participated in this spiritual and uplifting event. Sister Therese Maria Touma, Eparchial Director for the MYO, was in attendance, and Seminarian Christopher Nahra also helped during the weekend.

The Retreat started on Friday night with a welcome dinner, activities for everyone to get to know one another, and an opportunity for spiritual conversation and prayer. Subdeacons Mark Floyd and Don George from St. Anthony of Padua Parish assisted in the prayer service. Cincinnati's own Maronite Young Adult (MYA) group helped throughout the entire weekend. Those attending the Retreat from outside of Cincinnati stayed at the nearby SpringHill Suites Hotel.

On Saturday morning, discussion, prayers, and breakout sessions assisted by Rosa Calabria and Deacon William George from Youngstown started off the program. Then a special moving presentation by Lisa Farah and her daughter Sophie, who was born with Downs Syndrome, took place. Lisa shared how her life was changed when Sophie was born and how she became an advocate for special needs children.

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. ☐

Sophie talked about her life and how she enjoys blogging: blessedforsuccess.org. After Liturgy and lunch donated by Cincinnati parishioners Ron Bistany and Kam Misleh, a group outing in the afternoon to Game On Sports was enjoyed by all! That evening, a dinner and festive party took place at the Parish Hall. Many new friendships from around the region were formed.

Sunday concluded with the Liturgy held at St. Anthony of Padua Church, concelebrated by Father George, Father Alex, and Father Gary, who gave a moving homily. The retreat was a big success and reinforced the faith of our Maronite youth and their sense of belonging to the Church. ☐

Brooklyn, New York MYA Potluck Event



by Sandy Richa

Maronite Young Adults from the Eparchy of Saint Maron's Mid-Atlantic region met on Saturday, March 17, 2018, at the Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral in Brooklyn, N.Y., for Liturgy, dinner, fellowship, and an interactive discussion on purposeful dating. The MYA group is comprised of young adults throughout the Mid-Atlantic region. Those in attendance included young adults from St. Louis Gonzaga Church, Utica, N.Y., St. Sharbel Church, Somerset, N.J., and Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral, Brooklyn, N.Y. We also had a visitor from Our Lady's Maronite Church in Austin, Tex.

Prior to dinner, the Rector, Monsignor James Root, celebrated an uplifting Liturgy for the MYA. Several of the young adults served as readers and altar servers. After the Liturgy, the young adults enjoyed an icebreaker, potluck, pizza as well as some sweet treats. The leftover food was donated to those in need in the local community. The MYA appreciated the presentation of Msgr. Root and the practical sharing of Mrs. Vivian Akel, the Coordinator for the Office of Child and Youth Protection of the Eparchy of Saint Maron. As you can imagine, the MYA group had much to share about this important topic and gained new insights and a deeper understanding on dating. A beautiful and spiritual evening was enjoyed by all those in attendance. We are grateful to Msgr. Root for hosting us at the Cathedral and we look forward to more of these gatherings. If you are interested in learning more about the Mid-Atlantic MYA group contact Sr. Therese Maria Touma at 508-996-1753. ☐



July 11 - July 15, 2018
Houston, Texas



Pre-registration Deadline: **Monday, June 18, 2018**
 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 Order of St. Sharbel
 Conv. Comm. Child (5-11)
 Youth (12-18) Young Adult (18-35)
 Vegetarian Age: _____
 Allergies: _____

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 2018 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 18, 2018. 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 6/18/2018	After 6/18/2018	Before 6/18/2018	After 6/18/2018	Before 6/18/2018	After 6/18/2018	Before 6/18/2018	After 6/18/2018
	Full (Thursday - Sunday)	# ___ @ \$300	# ___ @ \$330	# ___ @ \$270	# ___ @ \$300	# ___ @ \$150	# ___ @ \$180	# ___ @ \$120
Weekend (Friday - Sunday)	# ___ @ \$260	# ___ @ \$290	# ___ @ \$220	# ___ @ \$250	# ___ @ \$130	# ___ @ \$160	# ___ @ \$100	# ___ @ \$130
Saturday & Sunday	# ___ @ \$170	# ___ @ \$200	# ___ @ \$150	# ___ @ \$180	# ___ @ \$80	# ___ @ \$110		
Thursday Only	# ___ @ \$50	# ___ @ \$80	# ___ @ \$40	# ___ @ \$70	# ___ @ \$20	# ___ @ \$50	# ___ @ \$30	# ___ @ \$60
Friday Only	# ___ @ \$110	# ___ @ \$140	# ___ @ \$90	# ___ @ \$120	# ___ @ \$50	# ___ @ \$80	# ___ @ \$50	# ___ @ \$80
Saturday Only	# ___ @ \$140	# ___ @ \$170	# ___ @ \$120	# ___ @ \$150	# ___ @ \$60	# ___ @ \$90	# ___ @ \$70	# ___ @ \$130
Sunday Only	# ___ @ \$50	# ___ @ \$80	# ___ @ \$40	# ___ @ \$70	# ___ @ \$20	# ___ @ \$50		
Totals	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$

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

Wednesday: Excursion - General - Baseball Game at Minute Maid Park - Houston Astros (World Champs) vs Oakland Athletics (A's)	# ___ @ \$35
Thursday: Excursion - General - Museum District - <u>Children (under 12) to visit the Children's Museum *</u>	# ___ @ \$15
Thursday: Excursion - Youth - Houston Food Bank - Service Project with Dinner *	# ___ @ \$20
Thursday: Young Adults - Theology on Tap with the Bishops - St. Arnold's Brewery - Includes Dinner and Beer	# ___ @ \$20
Friday: Excursion - General - NASA Johnson Space Center - Includes Lunch	# ___ @ \$55
Friday: Excursion - Young Adults - NASA Johnson Space Center - Afternoon Excursion	# ___ @ \$20
Saturday: General - Order of St. Sharbel Lunch - All are welcome to join	# ___ @ \$50
Saturday: Excursion - Youth - Kemah Boardwalk - Includes lunch - Plan "B" (if adverse weather) - Edwards Center on I-10 - Bowling - Escape Room - Food-Games *	# ___ @ \$20
Saturday: Excursion & Workshop - Young Adults - Philippe Ziade - Workshop during Excursion to Museum District	# ___ @ \$15
Saturday: Excursion - General - Our Lady of the Cedars - Church Tour (Free Event - Need to Register to Organize Transportation)	# ___ No Charge
*: Pre-registration and Signed Waiver Required: Contact Samer Haouila for Forms: shaouila@yahoo.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 Discover AMEX Acct#: _____ EXP Date: _____
 V-code (3 or 4 digit # on front/back of card): _____ Signature: _____

OFFICE USE ONLY: AMOUNT PAID: _____ DATE: _____ CHK #: _____ REG #: _____

For hotel reservations call Marriott Marquis Houston at 1 (877) 622-3056 code 'NAM Convention'. Hotel rate: \$139/night for single/double/triple/quad room. Parking is extra. A one-night deposit is required for all reservations. **Rate valid only until June 18, 2018**

55th Annual Maronite Convention

HOUSTON, TX | Jul 11-15, 2018

Hosted by Our Lady of the Cedars Parish
Sponsored by the National Apostolate of Maronites
Marriott Marquis, Downtown



REGISTER TODAY:
NAMconvention2018.com
NAMnews.org | 914.964.3070

MARRIOTT MARQUIS

\$139/night **877.622.3056**

Code: **NAM Convention**

Rate for single, double, triple, quadruple rooms. One night deposit required. Rate valid till June 18, 2018.

- Texas-sized Lazy River
- Convenient Location
- Luxurious Rooms
- Full Amenities

“Come and See”

Everything is Bigger in Texas

Experience Southern hospitality at its best by a large community with a big heart.

OUR LADY OF THE CEDARS

MARONITES: DEEP ROOTS, GROWING IN FAITH



Johnson Space Center
See the Apollo 8 and Rocket Garden



Baseball Game at Minute Maid Park
2017 World Series Champs vs. Oakland Athletics (GO 'STROS!)

ALL AGES

Museum District Local Parish Tour

KIDS

The Children’s Museum Crafts and Activities

YOUTH

Houston Food Bank Kemah Boardwalk

YOUNG ADULTS

Pool Party Parish Feud

SENIORS

Backgammon, Cards, Games and Tournaments

Live and Silent Auction Prizes

- Trip for 4 to Mexico + 4 Night Stay at a Luxurious Beach House
- Jewelry
- Fur
- Many More Valuable Items

Live Auction by a Professional Auctioneer



Raffle Prizes: Flights and Cash

- Two Round-trip Tickets to Lebanon
- \$2500 in Cash
- \$1000 in Cash
- \$500 in Cash

\$5/ticket
\$20/5 tickets



Nader Khoury
Lebanese Singer
Saturday Night



Ghada Chbeir
Religious Singer
Thursday Night



Nemr Abou Nassar
Lebanese Comedian
Thursday Night



Jabbour
Local Favorite
Friday Night



Country and Western Music and Dancing
Friday Night

ACTIVITIES



Commission on Lebanon and the Middle East
Cardinal Leonardo Sandri



Archbishop Boulos Matar
Saturday PM



Dr. Marcellino D'Ambrosio
Thursday PM
Living Our Faith - Opportunities & Challenges

Bishop A. Elias Zaidan, Bishop Gregory Mansour
Friday AM
Maronites in the US: Present and Future



Dr. Huda Y. Zoghbi
Friday AM
Scientific Advances and Their Impact on Health and Society



Philippe Ziade
Saturday AM
Faith Alongside Success



Sammy Argumaniz
Friday AM + PM
Express Your Faith with Hip Hop

Chorbishop John D. Farris
Thursday AM
To Become What We Are: The Challenge of Reuniting the Catholic and Orthodox

Dominick Albano
Saturday AM
How to Have a Happy Marriage

ENTERTAINMENT

On Being A Deacon

Continued from page 14

My wife and I have served in many capacities in a variety of ministries like hospital visitation, soup kitchens, sacramental preparation (Baptism, Confirmation, Pre-Cana), Pro-Life marches, (Washington, D.C., and Atlanta), Interfaith Dialogue (Catholic/Jewish dialogue), teaching Maronite Christian Formation (MCF) along with very active participation in NAM, St. Jude's, Forsyth County



Deacon Bob Calabrese

Ministerial Association and other community awareness/support (AIDS/HIV) programs. I have been a parish youth group leader in Conn., and Ga. We have served on and helped lead retreats for teens (Emmaus), couples (Marriage Encounter), adults (Cursillo), and inmates (Federal and Georgia Kairos Prison Ministry). I enjoy training and shepherding our Altar Servers (Conn., and Ga.)

As a deacon serving others during these times of joy, sorrow, distress, pain and loneliness, I have tried to bring God's love, care and compassion to others, so they can realize, encounter and build a relationship with Jesus. These times of service are among the most fulfilling times of my life. Being a deacon for Christ can be the most satisfying thing in the world when you choose to be with others on their journey to eternity with God. ☐



HOLY SPIRIT
UNIVERSITY
OF KASLIK

by Rita Elojail Zihenni

The Alumni Relations Office of the Holy Spirit University (USEK) in Lebanon has started its efforts to launch several Chapters for its Alumni community in the U.S.

Father Antoine Al Tahan, Director, has appointed Mrs. Rita Elojail Zihenni, a parishioner of Saint John Paul II Maronite Church in Westchester, N.Y., to lead the New York Chapter covering the East region. Other alumni and supporters are assigned to head the Alumni Chapters in the West, Midwest and Southern regions of the U.S. For more information on the Alumni Chapters or to register and join, please contact Rita Elojail Zihenni at ritazihenni@gmail.com or Mr. Fadi Matta at fadiematta@gmail.com.

USEK, a private Catholic higher education institution founded by the Lebanese Maronite Order (LMO) in 1938, is the first university which was established upon a Lebanese initiative and by Lebanese citizens (in this case by the LMO monks). USEK offers twelve scholarships yearly for members of the National Apostolate of Maronites (NAM). Students receive full tuition, all registration fees, dormitory and \$500, once completed. For more information on USEK scholarships, you can refer to the link <http://www.namnews.org/index.php?page=Scholarships1>. ☐

