



# The Maronite Voice

A Publication of the Maronite Eparchies in the USA



Volume XI

Issue No. II

February 2015

## A “Revolution of Tenderness”



During the big gathering at Sant Thomas University in Manila, Philippines, on January 18, 2015, the Holy Father listened with emotion to the testimonies of Jun Chura and Glyzelle Palomar, street children sheltered by ANAK-Tnk Foundation. He then embraced them for a long time.

**W**e enter into this world with tears, and it is the warm embrace of our mothers that helps ease this cry and give us hope. Our Holy Father, Pope Francis, knows this well. He recently responded to a twelve-year-old Phillipino girl, Glyzelle Iris Palomar, sheltered at Anak-Tnk Foundation, who told him with tears in her eyes: *“There are many children neglected by their own parents. There are also many who became victims and many terrible things happened to them, like drugs or prostitution. Why is God allowing such things, even if the children did nothing wrong? And why are there only very few people helping us?”*

With tears in his eyes, he told her that we can only answer such questions with tears! *“Today, she has asked the only question for which there is no answer.”* He then urged us to cry for the poor, the marginalized, the refugee, and for children with no hope. *“Did I learn to cry when I see a hungry child, a child using drugs in the street, a child without a home, a child abandoned, a child abused, a child used by the society as a slave? Only one answer, Compassion.”* The Holy Father is convinced that since Jesus so often went out of His way to meet such people, we ought to do the same.

(Continues on page 20)

## Schedule of Bishop Elias Zaidan

### February 3, 2015

Meeting with St. Jude Parish Council, West Covina, Calif.

### February 5 - 8, 2015

Pastoral Visit to St. Maron Church, Cleveland, Ohio

### February 9, 2015

Feast of St. Maron, St. Raymond Cathedral, St. Louis, Mo.

### February 13, 2015

Seminarians' Gathering, Livonia, Mich.

### February 14 - 15, 2015

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

### February 16, 2015

Ash Monday, Our Lady of Mt. Lebanon Cathedral, Los Angeles, Calif.

### February 22, 2015

St. Maron's Feast Day Celebration, Our Lady of Mt. Lebanon Cathedral, Los Angeles, Calif.

### February 27 - March 1, 2015

Pastoral Visit to St. Anthony of Padua Church, Cincinnati, Ohio

### March 6 - 8, 2015

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

### March 9 -15, 2015

Synod of Maronite Bishops, Bkerke, Lebanon. □

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### Maronite Convention 2015

Saint Maron Maronite Church

Cleveland, Ohio

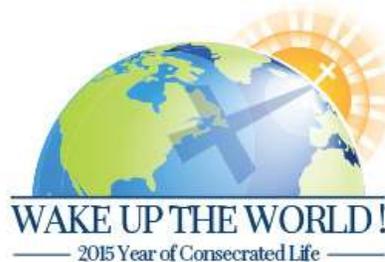
July 1 - 5, 2015

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

## Dartmouth, Massachusetts Maronite Servants' Open House

by Sister Marla Marie

The Maronite Servants of Christ the Light will host an Open House on Sunday, April 12, 2015, from 2:00 to 5:00 p.m. in celebration of the Year of Consecrated Life. In calling for this year, Pope Francis is counting on religious "to wake up the world" by their radical witness of Gospel living and Christ's merciful compassion. The Sisters welcome guests to visit their convent in Dartmouth, Mass., for a presentation on religious life and refreshments. For more information or to RSVP for this event, please contact the Sisters at [sister@maroniteservants.org](mailto:sister@maroniteservants.org) or by calling 508-996-1753.



*"Religious life ought to promote growth in the church by way of attraction. The church must be attractive. Wake up the world! Be witnesses of a different way of doing things, of acting, of living! . . . It is this witness that I expect of you. Religious should be men and women who are able to wake the world up."* (Pope Francis) □

## Annual Maronite Youth Conference

The Annual Maronite Youth Conference is scheduled for July 6 - 11, 2015, at Saint Vincent College in Latrobe, Penn. More information will be available in the near future. We hope to see you there. □

## North Palm Beach, Florida Annual Eparchy of Saint Maron Clergy Retreat



## Scottsdale, Arizona Annual Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon Clergy Retreat



by Deacon Lou Peters

The annual priests' retreat for the Eparchy of Saint Maron was held January 12 - 16, 2015, once again at the Our Lady of Florida Spiritual Center in North Palm Beach, Florida. For some of the priests, the welcome of warm weather was quite comforting, and for the remainder of priests, the welcome of some peaceful time with brother priests, prayer, and Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament was just what was needed to recharge their physical and spiritual beings.

This year Bishop Gregory J. Mansour welcomed Father James Hess, O.Carm., as retreat master. Father Hess, Spiritual Father/Director for the Byzantine Catholic Seminary in Pittsburgh, Penn, has a very diverse background and experience. He is a member of the Order of Carmelites, was a pastor in Florida and New York, and served at Catholic schools as a spiritual director.

Father Hess gave us mature, reflective, and uplifting talks on the progression and maintenance of our spiritual lives. One of his constant themes throughout the retreat was for the priests to be in constant conversation in prayer with God. When we do not seriously reflect on our lives in the scope of what God is trying to do for us, we digress instead of progress; instead of working within harmony of God's will, we "get" in the way, become selfish and mess things up. If only we would make an extra effort to make time for God, we could save ourselves a lot of headache and double work. But this is how we progress, and, hopefully, learn from our mistakes.

What was most beautiful about this retreat was the sense of fraternity. Almost all the priests were present for the retreat and all of its exercises. Everyone made a special effort to honor Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament and to visit often at the request of Bishop Gregory. Sometimes our lives become too hectic and out of focus. It is only when we stop, make time, and listen to Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, that our lives have true meaning and direction. □

The deacons and priests of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon of Los Angeles, along with Bishop Elias Zaidan, gathered in Scottsdale, Arizona, for their annual clergy retreat. The retreat, from January 19 - 23, 2015, was hosted by the Pastor of St. Joseph Maronite Church, Father Wissam Akiki. The first night of the retreat was held at St. Joseph Parish and began with the celebration of the *Qurbono* (Divine Liturgy) followed by a traditional Lebanese dinner prepared and served by the parishioners. The remainder of the retreat was held at the Franciscan Renewal Center at the foot of Camelback Mountain in Scottsdale.

Rev. Robert Rossi, a member of the Order of the Holy Cross (Crossiers), led the retreat. Fr. Rossi focused on two themes: the Baptismal Call of all Christians and the meaning and essence of ordained ministry in light of the Baptismal Call. The link to the "Cross" in our lives as Christians was highlighted - but of course, always in the light of the Resurrection. One day of the retreat also focused on the role of the ordained pastoral ministry: its challenges and character.

Apart from the retreat schedule, the clergy had an opportunity for relaxation and renewing friendships. □



**Deadline for next month's issue of** *The Maronite Voice* is February 25, 2015.

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

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

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Pictures must be original. Digital pictures must be in "JPG" format and in high resolution. *The Maronite Voice* is also available online, in PDF format, at [www.stmaron.org](http://www.stmaron.org). □

# North Jackson, Ohio

## *Shrine's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and Elevation to Minor Basilica*



Bishop A. Elias Zaidan, Bishop of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon, offers the Divine Liturgy at the elevation of Our Lady of Lebanon Shrine to minor basilica.

Saturday, October 11, 2014, was a day that will remain in the minds and hearts of many for years to come.

Bishops, chorbishops, monsignors, priests, deacons, subdeacons and religious were numerous in attendance, and the faithful filled the Shrine Chapel to overflowing.

The National Shrine of Our Lady of Lebanon in North Jackson, Ohio, hosted a magnificent celebration as part of the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the establishment of the Shrine as well as the elevation and consecration of Christ, the Prince of Peace Chapel to the great dignity of Minor Papal Basilica.

The ritual of consecration was truly impressive as the papal proclamation was read in the original Latin as well as in English. The walls of the church were anointed by Bishop A. Elias Zaidan, Bishop of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon, as the choir sang "How Lovely Is Your Dwelling Place."

Representatives of the Shrine and the founding parishes of St. Maron, Youngstown; Our Lady of the Cedars, Fairlawn [Akron], Ohio; and St. John the Baptist, New Castle, Penn., carried the Papal insignia and appointments pertaining to a minor basilica.

Bishop Zaidan offered the Divine Liturgy along with Bishop Gregory Mansour, Bishop of the Eparchy of Saint Maron; Bishop Emeritus Robert Shaheen; Chorbishop Richard Saad, Vicar General; and Chorbishop Kail, Pastor of St. Maron Church in Youngstown. Also present were priests of the Maronite, Byzantine, and Latin rites, along with a large number of deacons and subdeacons of both Maronite Eparchies (who came to Youngstown for their annual retreat).

The Knights and Ladies of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem and the Knights of Columbus served as the Honor Guard. Also in attendance was the Board of Directors of the National Apostolate of Maronites (NAM).

The presentation of the Papal insignia was a very moving sight, something not experienced often. The choir was accompanied by a brass and percussion quintet, and many people commented that the liturgical music was absolutely magnificent.

The Shrine Cedars Hall was filled to capacity for the grand banquet that followed. There was not an empty seat available, the dinner was excellent and the hall was beautifully decorated by volunteers.

Dr. Elias Ayoub, President of NAM, presented of an icon of St. Rafka to the Shrine for the Jubilee.

Remarks were made by Bishop Mansour, who called the Liturgy "out of this world" and he remembered the many friends and benefactors who were no longer with us, but who were celebrating with us "from the other side."

Bishop Zaidan spoke of how a "mother brings us together" and "it is the Mother of God who brings us to the Shrine." Also remembered were the founding priests, Monsignor Peter Eid, Father Maroun Eid, and Father Maroun Abi-Nader, whose faith and determination made the day possible.

Fr. Rodrigue Constantine read a letter from the Catholic Extension Society awarding the Shrine a \$25,000 grant with the condition that \$25,000 in matching donations would be received by April 30, 2015. After the letter was read, several people stepped forward with generous donations.

The Shrine continues to celebrate its 50<sup>th</sup> Jubilee, and more events are planned with the yearlong celebration culminating on August 15, 2015.

The Assumption Pilgrimage, August 13-15, will mark the closing of the 50<sup>th</sup> Jubilee Year for the Shrine and we hope to see many of our Maronite friends with us.

As a side note to this article, the Shrine is happy to report that the matching funds for the Catholic Extension Grant were received by December 31, 2014. □



## Portland, Oregon Priestly Ordination



Bishop A. Elias Zaidan ordains Deacon Monk Anthony Joseph Alles as a priest.

by Subdeacon Monk John Michael, MMJMJ

On December 27, 2014, in Portland, Oregon, Father Anthony Joseph Alles of the Maronite Monks of Jesus, Mary and Joseph (MMJMJ) was ordained as a priest by the descent of the Holy Spirit and by the imposition of hands of His Excellency A. Elias Zaidan, Bishop of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon of Los Angeles.

In this moment, both the Catholic Church in the Pacific Northwest, and the monastic Order to which Father Anthony has vowed, received an historic gift.

His Excellency A. Elias Zaidan, MLM, presided. In choir were the local Archbishop Alexander Sample of the Archdiocese of Portland and Bishop Liam Cary of the Diocese of Baker. Over twenty priests either concelebrated or attended. Hundreds of lay and religious witnessed the first Maronite priestly ordination in the northwestern region of the United States.

The Maronite Monks of Jesus, Mary and Joseph celebrate in this event the Order's first priestly ordination.

Father Anthony Joseph's ordination signals an expansion in the life of the Maronite Church in the western United States, and particularly within the unique mission territory of the Pacific Northwest. This historic conferral of priestly orders is, moreover, a needed thrust for the re-establishment of the Maronite Church's original monastic roots.

The day after his ordination, Father Anthony Joseph celebrated his first liturgy at the altar of St. Sharbel Catholic Church, which serves as the Monastery's temporary home of ministry.

His Excellency Bishop Zaidan graciously presided. Next to him at the altar were Fr. Prior Jonathan Decker, MMJMJ, Chorbishop William Lesser and Monsignor William Bonczewski, with other attending priests. The parish deacons Wadih Kaldawi and Tony Karam assisted. Subdeacon Monk John Michael, MMJMJ, Novice Brother Raphael Thaddeus, MMJMJ, and eparchial seminarian Peter Zogbi helped serve.

All those above named, and many more who cannot here be mentioned, played significant roles in bringing these historic days to fruition.

Special thanks on behalf of the parishioners of St. Sharbel Maronite Catholic Church to Bishop Zaidan for his welcome presence with us.

The Maronite Monks of Jesus, Mary and Joseph also wish to thank Bishop Elias Zaidan for his presence, which brought a threefold blessing to the Order.

In his single trip to Portland, the Bishop gave to the Order its first priest, issued a decree establishing the Order's *Typicon* (or "Rule" of life) and, lastly, gave his blessing to the Monks in their acquisition of property in Southwest Washington for the monastery's future building site. The monastery is dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

Inquiries about the monastic vocation and life in the Pacific Northwest, please visit the Monks' website at [www.mmjmj.com](http://www.mmjmj.com). □

## Cranston, Rhode Island Subdeaconate Ordination



Chorbishop Joseph F. Kaddo ordains Farid Zaarour to the Order of Subdeacon.

by Joseph P. Checrallah, Jr.

On Saturday, January 24, 2015, family, friends, and parishioners of St. George Maronite Catholic Church in Cranston, R.I., witnessed Chorbishop Joseph F. Kaddo ordain Farid Zaarour to the Order of Subdeacon.

Joining Chorbishop Kaddo to celebrate the Liturgy were Fr. Edward Pieroni, Pastor of St. Raymond Roman Catholic Church in Providence, R.I.; Fr. John Sullivan; Fr. John Morrison, Director of the Eparchial Office of Ministries; and Fr. Edward Nedder, Pastor of St. George Maronite Church. Deacon Jean Mattar and Subdeacon Joseph Abraham assisted. The Ordination was followed by a reception in the Church Hall. *(Continues on page 6)*

The youngest of eight children, Farid Zaarour was born in Beirut, Lebanon, to Shoukri and Helena Zaarour. In 1976, after completing his secondary education, he traveled to Belgium to study engineering at the Catholic University of De Louvain. After two years, he immigrated to the United States to complete his education at Bridgeport University in Danbury, Connecticut, where he graduated as a software engineer in 1978.

In 1990, Farid moved to Attleboro, Mass., and became a member of St. George's Maronite Catholic Church, then located in Pawtucket, R.I. In 1998, he traveled back to Lebanon where he met and married Gisele Ghanimeh. After their wedding, they returned to the United States, where they made their home in Attleboro and are the parents of two children, Joseph (16), and Natasha (14).

Farid worked as a consultant for Fidelity Company for eighteen years, and in 2008 started his own software company called "ISolvIT." He began to help Fr. Nedder in 2009, and with Father Nedder's encouragement and guidance, decided to take the next step of his spiritual journey and become a subdeacon. □

## Minneapolis, Minnesota *Elevation to Chorbishop*



Bishop A. Elias Zaidan places a miter on Chorbishop Maroun's head.

by Joannie Moses

The altar, adorned with dropping white roses and gold accents, was the perfect setting for what was to take place. Church clubs took their places - Saint Anne's Altar Society, Saint Rafka Society, the MYA, and the MYO. The Knights of Columbus, Order of Saint Sharbel, Order of the Holy Sepulchre, and Knights of Malta lined the main aisle in honor stance.

It was apparent something very special was about to transpire - the elevation of Monsignor sharbel Maroun to Chorbishop. Soon the altar servers and guest clergy entered in solemn procession followed by Bishop A. Elias Zaidan, Bishop of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon. Monsignor sharbel entered donning white satin vestments embroidered with gold and displaying a heavy *Qorbono* cross pendant uniquely fashioned from pieces of gold jewelry donated by members of his family.

The choir was directed by Badr Awad and Fr. Emmanuel Nakhle. The beautiful Liturgy was celebrated by bishops, monsignors and a multitude of priests. The time of ordination arrived. Smiles and misty eyes filled the sanctuary full of onlookers - Monsignor sharbel became Chorbishop sharbel. Bishop Elias carefully explained the laying on of hands and the presentation of the miter, crosier, pectoral cross and ring.

Chorbishop sharbel, with staff in hand and miter on his head, greeted his mother, Genevieve Maroun, in another touching moment. He then processed around the sanctuary, blessing those present, as church bells tolled.

Following the Liturgy, almost 550 clergy and guests attended the dinner reception in the Cedars Hall. Elizabeth Nasser, co-chair with her husband Duane, welcomed the crowd. Heartfelt messages were delivered by NAM President Dr. Elias Ayoub and by Tony Boumetri, who presented Chorbishop sharbel with a crystal prism award. Latin Bishop Lee Piche and Bishop Zaidan delivered a heartfelt, warm address.

Chorbishop sharbel expressed deep gratitude and sincere intent for the future. He then claimed solitary unworthiness and requested that the title be placed on his congregation as the "*Chor-parish*." This all occurred on January 6, 2015 – the common anniversary date of Msgr. sharbel's birth, ordination as a priest, elevation to Monsignor and now elevation to Chorbishop. The celebration ended by singing "Happy Birthday" to Chorbishop sharbel before he posed tirelessly for pictures with family and friends.

## *Children's Liturgy*



The Maronite Christian Formation in Minneapolis, Minn., has celebrated Children's Liturgy once a month for twenty-four years. Pictured is the second grade class after carrying up the gifts in January. The children also read Intercessions. Other grades also usher, serve as lectors, pass peace and may offer a hymn. This participation does not end with elementary school as MYO and MYA also celebrate special Liturgies during the year. □



## San Antonio, Texas *Knights of Saint Gregory*



From left: Fr. Charles Khachan, Pastor; Bishop A. Elias Zaidan; Richard J. Karam, Knight of St. Gregory; and his wife, Peggy.

by Fr. Charles Khachan

**H**is Excellency Bishop A. Elias Zaidan, Bishop of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon, celebrated the Divine Liturgy at St. George Maronite Catholic Church in San Antonio, Texas, on Sunday, January 11, 2015, to induct Richard J. Karam into the Pontifical Equestrian Order of the Knights of Saint Gregory. Father Charles Khachan, MLM, Pastor, concelebrated. Deacon Tom Billimek and Deacon Chris Sabre assisted.

Candidates for Knighthood are chosen because of their particularly meritorious service and fidelity to the Church and their exemplary lives of Christian witness. Richard Karam has served as the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon's attorney for the last twenty years. He has also served as the attorney for St. George for the last thirty-six years and has been an active member of the St. George community all of his life.

As attorney for the Eparchy, Richard handled numerous legal matters and lawsuits on behalf of the Eparchy and all legal matters for St. George since 1978. When the Catholic Church began to witness unprecedented legal attacks against its bishops and its dioceses were being sued and foreclosed upon, Richard spearheaded the effort in 2001 to restructure the Eparchy by transferring its real properties into separate perpetual trusts and incorporating its parishes into separate nonprofit religious corporations. The restructure was necessary because, as stated by Richard, "The Eparchy, at its infant stage of development in the United States, simply cannot withstand attacks similar to those waged against the Roman Catholic Church."

Members of Mr. Karam's family as well as friends and parishioners participated in the liturgy and celebrated with him at a reception and dinner following the ceremony. The St. George Maronite Community in San Antonio extends its congratulations to Richard Karam on his receipt of so singular an honor and prays that God will bless him as he continues his service to the Church and his community. □

## Houston, Texas *Children's Christmas Program*



Children making Christmas crafts at Our Lady of the Cedars' Christmas program.

by Nabil Joubran

**D**ecember 13, 2014, was a very special day at Our Lady of the Cedars in Houston, Texas. The Christmas program, held on the Church grounds, included workshops that appealed to children of all ages and involved participation by teachers, parent volunteers, as well as youths from the Parish's Youth Organization. The children were happy, entertained, and came away learning something new or taking something home with them.

The goal was to make it a special day for the CCE children, but also one that would include ones who do not attend CCE. It ended up being a program geared towards children of all ages, mainly toddlers through early teens, comprised of five different "workshops."

As people entered the Cedar Hall, the first workshop was a cookie-decorating station. The youths had prepared over 400 sugar cookies for the children to decorate. Next, the children moved to the Pastoral Center, where the first stop was a photo booth complete with a Christmas-theme background. They could get their pictures taken with or without props, and then have them printed onsite so they could glue them onto already prepared cardboard "frames." Volunteers from the youth group manned this station and delivered the photos in record time.

Just around the corner, a decorated Christmas mailbox invited people to the "Post Office." In there, the children could write a letter to Jesus or a Christmas greeting card to a homeless or needy person. The greeting cards collected were delivered to a homeless shelter and shared with the less fortunate. The letters to Jesus were presented to the Baby Jesus on Christmas Eve during the children's Christmas Service. As part of the same workshop, a Christmas tree was decorated with small figures that toddlers could choose to take home, while older children could pick from several inspirational messages and prayers that made up the rest of the decorations on the tree.

The fourth station was a small cozy room where short Christmas stories were read to the children, who huddled on the floor around the storyteller. The last workshop was the

crafts workshop, that was setup in the library of the Pastoral Center. The children enjoyed making Christmas tree ornaments using Styrofoam balls and various decorations. When the workshop part of the program was over, everyone moved back to the hall where the Children's Choir sang Christmas Carols.

No children's Christmas program would be complete without the traditional visit of Santa Claus. While most children were excited to see Santa, a few were terrified, but the gifts handed out by Santa and his helpers from the MYO brought a smile to everyone's face. □

## Springfield, Massachusetts Women's Guild Award



Award recipient Nora Dahdah Blaisdell

by Kathy LaBella

On December 28, 2014, Nora Dahdah Blaisdell, daughter of Michael and Catherine Sahadie Dahdah, received a lifetime service and recognition award from the St. Anthony Women's Guild in Springfield, Mass. Nora, who is ninety-four years old, has been a member of the guild since she was eighteen years old. She is the oldest active member of the guild. Nora exemplifies the principles upon which the guild was built: to foster and enhance moral values and spiritual growth of the Catholic faith, to perpetuate and enhance Lebanese culture and the Maronite Rite, to plan and assist with spiritual services during the liturgical calendar, and to enrich and support families in need of spiritual and personal help.

The St. Anthony Women's Guild can trace its origins to the 1930s when it was established as an organization under the name of the Women's Sodality. Its purpose was to establish a women's lay society to perform religious and charitable activities. At that time, single Maronite women who were confirmed would automatically become members until they were married. The women participated in church

events like bazaars, bake sales and spiritual devotions. For example, during the month of May the women would attend daily services and march in procession to the Church dressed in floor-length white dresses for the crowning of Mary. Once the Sodality members married, they were presented with a statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary as a remembrance of their participation and devotion in the Sodality.

As Maronite families moved from the neighborhood and intermarriages became more prevalent, women who were interviewed from that era said that the Sodality faded away. However, during this time, another women's organization existed called the Mount Lebanon Girl's Club. This club was more of a women's social group within the Lebanese community. World War II, followed by urban renewal improvements resulted in the forced move of the church on Liberty Street to the rebuilding of St. Anthony Maronite Church at its present location on Island Pond Road in Springfield.

According to firsthand accounts, there has always been a women's organization, but the name has changed over time. In this new era, the women's organization became known as the St. Anthony Women's Guild.

Today, the Women's Guild is an active, vibrant organization involved in all levels of church life, not only at St. Anthony but also in the community. The Guild has evolved over the years, expanding its mission and services of spiritual, financial and community support. □

## Fort Lauderdale, Florida Parish's Third Anniversary



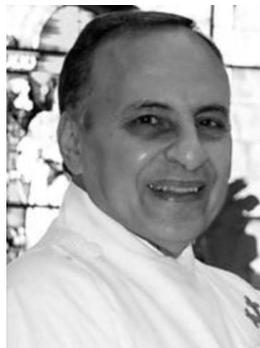
Bishop Mansour blesses the Epiphany Water.

On Monday, January 5, 2015, the eve of the Feast of the Glorious Epiphany, the parishioners of Heart of Jesus Church in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, celebrated the 3<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of their church. The celebration was made even more special by the visit of Bishop Gregory J. Mansour, who was joined by Chorbishop Michael G. Thomas, Pastor, Fr. Jorge Perales, and Fr. Michel Lahoud. After the Divine Liturgy and Blessing of the Epiphany Water, the parishioners gathered in the parish hall where they greeted Bishop Gregory and enjoyed the traditional *zalabia* made by the Ladies Guild. □

## Eparchial Condolences



**Deacon Samuel John Wehby** of Saint Elias Maronite Church, Birmingham, Ala., died suddenly on January 15, 2015.



Born in Lebanon in 1947, Deacon Sam was two years old when he came to America with his parents and two siblings. He grew up in the Lebanese Catholic community of St. Elias Maronite Church, and his love of his heritage was obvious to all. Deacon Sam had several sales jobs over the years, was licensed in real estate since 1976, and started several companies, including All South Properties in 1982.

He was ordained a Subdeacon in 1994 and a Deacon in 2007. In his own words he said, "I can say the most important job, and the one I love the most, is serving my community and parish as a deacon." Sam was the second permanent deacon to serve at St. Elias. Sam was a beloved husband, father, grandfather, and brother with a wide circle of extended family and friends who will mourn his sudden, untimely passing for many years to come. Faith and family were always first in Sam's life.

He was known for his sweet smile, quiet demeanor, and prayerful countenance. He made time for God and prayer every day, and he had a special affinity for the Blessed Mother. He will be remembered as a man who put faith and family first, who loved being a father and grandfather, and one who took pride in his service to the Church and community. He loved serving at the altar of God.

Sam was preceded in death by his parents, Salim and Maheba Wehby, his sister Juliette Redman, nephew Matthew Wehby, and mother-in-law Harriet Bostany. He is survived by his wife of thirty-six years, Dolores; his five children, Melissa, Marcus, Monica, Marian, and Michael; brothers Joseph and Sidney; grandchildren Alex, Brady, Emily, Caleb, Ethan, and Samantha; his father-in-law Fred Bostany, and numerous Wehby/Bostany cousins, aunts, uncles, nieces, nephews, and in-laws, and countless friends. Condolences may be sent to:

Mrs. Dolores Wehby and Family  
546 Bristol Ln  
Birmingham, AL 35226

Bishop A. Elias Zaidan along with the clergy and faithful of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon extend their heartfelt sympathy and the promise of their prayers to Deacon Sam's family, to Chorbishop Richard Saad, Pastor, and to the parish family of Saint Elias.

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

**Mr. Michael Abdallah**, the father of Very Reverend Geoffrey Abdallah, Rector of Our Lady of Lebanon Seminary in Washington, D.C., passed away in Sydney, Australia, on January 25, 2015, after a long battle with congestive heart failure.

Mr. Michael Abdallah was born in *Ser'el*, Lebanon, in

1939. He is the oldest son of Anthony and Sadie Abdallah (both deceased). Michael and his two brothers, Bakhos and Sarkis, migrated to Australia in 1953. He married Georgette Esber in 1963 and they had four children, Anthony, Father Geoffrey, Sadie, and Damien, and nine grandchildren.

The funeral was held at Saint Joseph's Maronite Church, Croydon NSW on Wednesday, January 28, 2015. Condolences may be sent to:

Very Reverend Geoffrey Abdallah  
Rector, Our Lady of Lebanon Maronite Seminary  
7164 Alaska Ave NW  
Washington, DC 20012

Bishop Gregory Mansour along with the clergy and faithful of the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn extend their heartfelt sympathy and the promise of their prayers to Fr. Geoffrey, his mother, and his family.

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

### Schedule of Bishop Gregory Mansour

#### February 8, 2015

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

#### February 14 - 15, 2015

Parish Visit and Forty Day Anniversary of Deacon Peter Joseph and Mrs. Bertha Jensen, St. Joseph Church, Waterville, Me.

#### February 16, 2015

Ash Monday, St. Sharbel Church, Somerset, N.J.

#### February 19, 2015

Dinner in Honor of Metropolitan Joseph Zehlawi, Lebanese Consulate of New York, Manhattan, N.Y.

#### February 22, 2015

Dedication of the new Mary, Mother of the Light Church, Tequesta (Palm Beach), Fla.

#### March 1, 2015

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

#### March 6 - 8, 2015

Pastoral Visit to St. Maron Church, Torrington, Conn.

#### March 8 - 16, 2015

Extraordinary Synod of Maronite Bishops, *Bkerke*, Lebanon. □

### Food For Thought

Christianity has not been tried and found wanting; it has been found difficult and not tried.

*G.K. Chesterton*

# *Husband and Wife for Eternity: The Thought of the Pre-Nicene Fathers* by Fr. David Fisher

" On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. ... Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him" (John 2:1-2, 11).

The first miracle of Jesus according to John's Gospel took place at a wedding, thereby pointing to the significance of this vocation of love and fidelity to another person, and the establishing of family life. By the miracle of turning water into choice wine, Jesus also links marriage to His Passion and Cross, underlying the self-emptying and sacrificial nature of love.

A number of the Fathers of the Church who flourished before the Council of Nicaea taught, or at the very least made illusion to the notion, that the marriage bond exists beyond death and into eternity<sup>1</sup>. To understand their position we must take into consideration the world in which they lived, worked, and ministered.

The early Fathers of the Church lived during the height of Roman power. Rome understood itself to be the Great Ecumenical Empire, comprising many cultures, races, and religions from Hadrian's Wall in Northern England to the banks of the Jordan River. Roman roads allowed peoples from even beyond Roman rule to travel in safety, selling their goods and spreading their beliefs. The glue that held this vast empire together was Roman Law, a bureaucracy that was unswayed by the power plays of the ruling families, and the Roman legions. On the other hand the Roman world into in which Christianity began and in which the early Fathers of the Church proclaimed the Gospel was one of moral licentiousness. This is the Rome of "pane et circensis" (bread and circuses), where the huge populations of the poor in Roman cities were pacified by "vacations" of free bread and bloodthirsty games of gladiatorial duels and animals attacking innocent humans. This is the Rome of rampant prostitution and pornography. Slaves outnumbered citizens, the urban poor lived in small, dirty and often dangerous dwellings, and all were weighed down by heavy Roman taxes.

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<sup>1</sup> Two votes at the Council of Nicaea (325 A.D.) underscored the Church Fathers' devotion to marriage. The first vote maintained clerical marriage relationships, (1) the second defended surviving spouses' remarriage. The latter was a clear indication of their esteem of the institution, in that they provided for widows and widowers who yearned for a new mate. It was actually a moderating voice. So high was the Church's regard for a couple's original vows that such prominent figures as Hermas, Justin Martyr, and Athenagoras argued that the bond outlasted death itself. (2) In the end their stricture was not adopted, (3) but the very fact of its consideration showed the group was quite serious about marital laws. As one patristic scholar, Willy Rordorf, put it, "Concerning the conception of marriage as a total union of the couple implying a fidelity without reserve, there is a unanimous agreement between the New Testament and the Early Church." - John Sanidiopoulos, "The Church Fathers' High View of Marriage," in *Mystagogy*, 2012.

It is not surprising given this picture of Roman life, that Christianity won over the hearts and minds of the city dwellers faster than the "paganus," the rural population. Christianity brought a message of hope, human dignity, and a moral/ethical way of life that resonated in the lives of those searching for a meaning to existence beyond civil law or fleeting pleasures. It was in the cities that one experienced most dramatically the grandeur and the failure of Imperial Rome. The Fathers of the Church, confronted with questions about marriage, divorce and remarriage, offered a different approach than the civil law of the time. Under Roman Law marriage was a private legal matter, which favored males, and in which divorce was easy to obtain. Also, due to the fact that the single were taxed higher than those who were married, those who were divorced were usually remarried in a short period of time. The Church's concern was instructing the faithful in how to live a Christian life in such an anti-Christian environment. In contrast to a legal view of marriage, the Fathers offered a spiritual view of marriage that emphasized the Christian proclamation that in marriage the two become one, and for some of the Fathers this oneness is an eternal bond.

**Hermas:**<sup>2</sup> In the fourth chapter of his writings, called the *Commands*, Hermas shows his belief in the eternity of marriage by his command that those who divorce should never remarry, unless it is with the repentant spouse whom they divorced. He writes, "8 For to the servants of God there is but one repentance. And for this cause a man that putteth away his wife ought not to take another, because she may repent. 9 This act is alike both in the man and in the woman...10 But it is therefore commanded that both the man and the woman should remain unmarried because such persons may repent."<sup>3</sup>

**Justin Martyr:**<sup>4</sup> Justin, having been a Stoic, Peripatetic, Pythagorean and Platonist, expresses the rigorous view towards moral/ethical issues with which the Greco-Roman

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<sup>2</sup>"The Muratorium Fragment is responsible for the information that Hermas, author of *The Shepherd*, was the brother of Pope St. Pius I (around 140-155 A.D.)...he was a slave and afterwards a freedman;..." - William A. Jurgens, *The Faith of the Early Fathers*, vol. I, p. 30, 1970.

<sup>3</sup>*Hermas, Commands, translated in* [www.sacred-texts.com/bib/lbob/lbob27.htm](http://www.sacred-texts.com/bib/lbob/lbob27.htm).

<sup>4</sup> St. Justin Martyr was born into paganism...As a Christian philosopher he became an itinerant, eventually arriving in Rome, where he founded a school in which he had Tatian the Syrian as a pupil. ...along with six companions he was beheaded...in 165 A.D., Jurgens, vol. I, p.50.

philosophers tried to challenge the morally suspect pagan world. In becoming a Christian he applies this rigor to Christian practices and beliefs to further challenge the moral laxity of the pagan world from which he has now converted. The Council of Nicaea would eventually moderate the views of many Pre-Nicene Fathers. He writes, "So that all who, by human law, are twice married are, in the eye of our Master, sinners, and those who look upon a woman to lust after her."<sup>5</sup>

**Athenagoras:**<sup>6</sup> Unlike Justin Martyr and his pupil Tatian, who are more polemical in their confrontation with pagan thought, Athenagoras takes more of an apologetic approach in his writings, choosing to explain and defend Christian faith. However, in his *A Plea for the Christians* he reflects the same teaching as Justin as concerns the eternity of marriage. He writes, "Second marriage is only a specious adultery," he declared. "'For whosoever puts away his wife,' says He [meaning Jesus], 'and marries another, commits adultery.'"<sup>7</sup>

**Evaluation:** How are we living almost two millennia from the Early Fathers to evaluate their teaching for Christianity today? First, we should revere the Fathers for their ability to express the Christian Gospel with clarity for the people of their day. They tackled the major philosophical, theological, ethical and social questions presented to them by pagan culture (for the Early Fathers) and heretical teachings (for the post-Nicene Fathers).

Second, the world of the Fathers was not so different from our own; although the Medieval world may be closer to ours in time, the world in which the Fathers lived was a secular ocean in which swam many competing philosophies, religions, ethical views, and political factions, in an urban rather than rural (like the Middle Ages) world. They are greatly responsible for the conversion of the Roman world to Christianity and the maintaining of Trinitarian faith against the assaults of Arianism and other heretical movements of their times.

Third, the views of the Early Fathers that we examined does not represent the total corpus of work of the Fathers on marriage, and neither do they reflect necessarily the majority view. Again, we should keep in mind that the Council of Nicaea did not adopt their views in its official teachings on marriage. However, what they offer to us is a reminder of the sanctity and fidelity of marriage. They remind us that Jesus elevated the bond of marriage beyond the directives of Roman Law, and even beyond the Mosaic Law, to be a living symbol of God's love for his Church. □

*(Father David Fisher is a priest of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon. He teaches and lives in Philadelphia, Penn. He*

<sup>5</sup>Justin Martyr, from the Ante-Nicene Fathers, translated in [www.sacred-texts.com/chr/ecf/001/0010388.htm](http://www.sacred-texts.com/chr/ecf/001/0010388.htm)

<sup>6</sup>Athenagoras was a Christian philosopher in Athens. ...a contemporary of Justin and Tatian...(his death) took place soon after 180 A.D., Jurgens, vol. I, p.69.

<sup>7</sup>Athenagoras of Athens, *A Plea for the Christians*, as found in "Divorce and Remarriage from the Early Church to John Wesley," *Trinity Journal*, p. 131, 1990.

welcomes dialogue with anyone interested in philosophical or theological issues pertinent to the Church. He may be reached by email at: [david\\_andrew1@mac.com](mailto:david_andrew1@mac.com).)

## Lenten Observances 2015



The Most Reverend Bishops Gregory Mansour and A. Elias Zaidan have issued the following Lenten guidelines for the Maronites of the U.S.:

★ All Maronites who are physically capable are to **abstain from meat** on Ash Monday (**February 16, 2015**) and all Fridays of Lent.

★ Ash Monday and the Great Friday of the Crucifixion are also days of **fasting**. Fasting in the Maronite Church involves eating and drinking nothing at all (except water and medicine) from midnight until noon. The rest of the day normal meals can be taken, but without meat. All Maronites who are physically capable are to fast on these two days.

ASH Monday

### Distribution of Ashes

All parish priests are to bless and distribute **ashes** on Ash Monday during the celebration of the Divine Liturgy as indicated in our liturgical books. This ceremony may not be celebrated on the vigil of Ash Monday (Cana Sunday). For the convenience of some faithful of the Latin Church who may come to Mass at a Maronite Church on their Ash Wednesday, ashes that were blessed on Monday may be given to them after the Mass. However, ashes are not to be blessed again on this day.

### Devotion of Lenten Fridays

All parish priests are to celebrate the **Benediction with the Cross** every Friday of Lent except for the Great Friday of the Crucifixion. This service may be preceded by other popular devotions such as Evening Prayer (*Ramsho*), Stations of the Cross or even the Divine Liturgy. Benediction with the Blessed Sacrament should not take place on Fridays of Lent.

### Personal Devotion

Clergy, religious and laity who wish to observe the more traditional Maronite practice of fasting and abstinence are encouraged to do so. That practice is summarized in the following, taken from the Synod of Mt. Lebanon (1736): *Every weekday of Lent (Monday through Friday) is a day of fasting and abstinence from meat and dairy products (eggs, butter, milk, etc.) Fasting involves eating and drinking nothing at all (except water and medicine) from midnight until noon. The rest of the day normal meals can be taken, but without meat or dairy products. Dairy products are excluded because they are animal byproducts. Saturdays and Sundays are exempt from fasting and abstaining, as are the following four feast days: St. Maron - February 9, The 40 Martyrs - March 9, St. Joseph - March 19 and the Annunciation - March 25.* □

## **Why I am Maronite and Why I am a Maronite Seminarian**

**by  
Deacon Chris Fabre**

*Deacon Fabre, a former dentist, is completing a pastoral assignment as a hospital chaplain in San Antonio, Texas. He will be ordained a priest for the Maronite Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon of Los Angeles in the near future.*

I was raised in the Latin Church, born to Roman Catholic parents and baptized at Holy Rosary Church in 1960. I come from a long line of Catholics, in fact as far back as I can trace on both sides of my family, we are Catholic. My family on my father's side is all from a small Texas town called Shiner, and were Czech/Slovak immigrants who came to the United States in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. My mother's side of the family, on the other hand, is all Irish from Erie, Penn., and immigrated in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. A question posed to me on my first trip to Lebanon, by then-

Patriarch Nasrallah Peter Cardinal Sfeir, was one that has since become familiar to me as I've traveled to different Maronite parishes and met new Lebanese Maronites.

There I was, standing in the Patriarchal residence in *Bkerke*, Lebanon, with my friend and newly-ordained priest, Fr. Dany AbiAkar, and Bishop Gregory Mansour. It was an auspicious day, and I was given the honor of this visit by virtue of being the guest of the newly ordained priest on his first visit to the Patriarch. Patriarch Sfeir began to ask me about my family heritage, curious to know if I had Lebanese blood. I explained to him that I did not, and he got a curious, but happy look upon his face. He and the Bishop and the new priest conversed in Arabic for a bit, and I asked what they had been saying. He knew that I had changed ritual churches and was now Maronite, and he knew that I was studying to be a deacon for the Maronites, and that I had felt I had a vocation as a priest. I was waiting to be accepted to study for the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon of Los Angeles. I was told that he was curious what drew me to the Maronite Church, given that I had no Lebanese or Middle Eastern blood. In fact, he asked me, "Why the Maronite Church?" My answer just popped out, without much thought, "The liturgy!" I quickly elaborated about my experience attending a Maronite Liturgy, and how moved I was by it. I immediately noticed some of the superficial ways it differed from the Latin Mass, for example the use of incense, the use of Syriac, and the priest's vestment. But I was struck by a few things that were deeper than these. I was struck by the instructive nature of the *Hoosoyo* prayer each week, which I later learned through some reading contained the actual language of the Church Fathers St. Ephrem and Jacob of Serugh. The second or third time I attended, I realized that the Liturgy differed from the Latin Mass in emphasizing God's

love for his creation: man. Even as a child in the Latin Church, I remember thinking it strange to begin the Mass with a calling to mind of our sinfulness, the thrice striking the chest with "*Mea culpa, mea culpa...*" In contrast, the Maronite Divine Liturgy begins with the entrance dialogue where the priest calls to mind that we are entering in the presence of the Almighty.

After I had said that the Maronite liturgy is what drew me initially, I explained to the Patriarch that the liturgical elements and ancient traditions might have been what hooked me, but what kept me Maronite was "the people." To illustrate my point, I told a story about how the Lebanese parishioners at Our Lady's in Austin, Tex., had gone out of their way to invite me to their homes and into their lives I also added – "For example, look at how I am in Lebanon today – I met this young Lebanese priest-to-be just a couple of months ago, and he invited me to Lebanon for his ordination, as his guest with his family, really as part of his family; this is how I have found the Lebanese people to be – amazing and hospitable and caring." The Patriarch seemed delighted with my story and he and the new priest and bishop talked excitedly after I had told it. I was told he had said something to the effect that this is an exciting testimony for the Maronite Church in the United States: that the liturgy and our people are so attractive as to move a man to become one of us and want to serve as one of us.

The question about my lack of Lebanese blood, which Patriarch Sfeir first posed to me that day in Lebanon, has since become a familiar question to me in America. It is a common thing for Lebanese Maronites to ask me. Some people wonder out loud – "Why do you want to serve the Maronites?" to which I answer – "I am a Maronite now!" But I eventually answer the question they are really asking – which is about my lack of Lebanese blood.



***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 10<sup>th</sup> Street  
St. Louis, MO 63104

Or

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

Or

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

I am Maronite because I love the liturgical and spiritual traditions, which are unique and yet stay true and in union with the Church of Rome. I hope that what I have offered can be a reminder to us of the beauty of the liturgical and spiritual heritage which is at the center of the Maronite Church. I am honored and affirmed by my call to Holy Orders by Bishop A. Elias Zaidan of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon and look forward to serving my Maronite Church. I sometimes say that I chose the Maronites, but I realize that the Maronites have chosen me too. I am grateful to God and to all the faithful of both Eparchies who have prayed for and otherwise fostered my vocation. ☐

## *Prayer for Fostering Vocations to the Priesthood*

**B**lessed be God, the Father, who chose shepherds after his own heart;

Blessed be the Beloved Son, who entrusted the service of his Mysteries to them;

Blessed be the Holy Life Giving Spirit, who sanctifies their offerings.

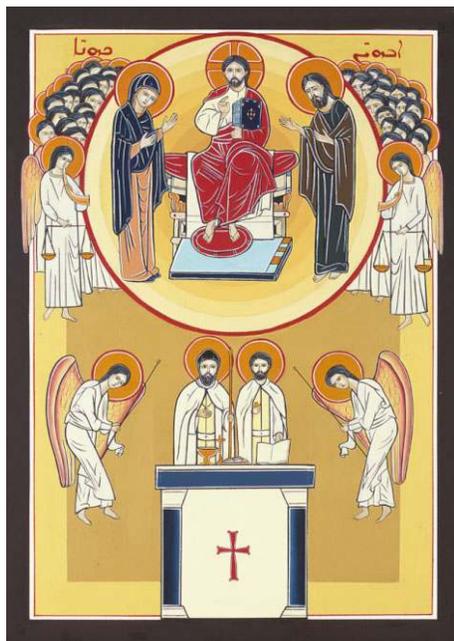
O Heavenly Father, we pray for an increase in vocations to the priesthood and religious life for the service of your holy people.

We ask You to send laborers into your vineyard. Your faithfulness is unconditional and you accompany your church and invite us to cooperate in your plan of salvation.

May we contribute to creating and preserving conditions in which the good seed, sown by your Holy Spirit, can take root and bring forth abundant fruit in us.

We petition you, O Christ Our Lord, to enlighten the paths of those considering a call to priesthood and religious life and bring them close to you, so that their calling may become a pure sacrifice for the glory of God.

To you be glory, and upon us your mercy, now and forever. Amen. ☐



*The deceased priests by Fr. Abdo Badawi of Holy Spirit University (USEK), Kaslik, Lebanon.*

## **Washington, D.C. Diaconate Ordination**



Bishop Gregory Mansour, Chorbishop Dominic Ashkar, Fr. Thomas Ferguson, Formation Director for Arlington Diocese, Fr. Paul deLadurantaye, Arlington Diocese, Fr. Robert Wagner, Secretary of the Bishop, Arlington Diocese, Deacons from Arlington Dioceses, Fr. Rodrigue Constantin, subdeacons of the Eparchy of Our Lady and seminarians of Our Lady of Lebanon Seminary.

**O**ur Lady of Lebanon Maronite Catholic Church, Washington, D.C., celebrated the ordination of Deacon Michel Touma on January 24, 2015, by the Imposition of Hands of Most Reverend Gregory J. Mansour, Bishop of the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn.

Chorbishop Dominic F. Ashkar, Pastor and sponsor for Deacon Michel; Chorbishop Seely Beggiani, retired Rector of Our Lady of Lebanon Seminary; Very Reverend Thomas Ferguson, Formation Director for the Arlington Diocese; Reverend Paul deLadurantaye of the Arlington Diocese; Reverend Robert Wagner; Secretary of the Bishop of Arlington Diocese; Reverend Vincent Farhat, Pastor of St. Maron Church, Philadelphia, Penn.; Reverend Rodrigue Constantin, Formation Director of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon, joined Bishop Mansour, Deacon Touma's family, friends and parish members for the ordination ceremony. Deacons from the Arlington Diocese; subdeacons Robert Farah, Chuck Van Heusen and Norbert Vogl from the Eparchy of Saint Maron; Seminarians Aaron Sandbothe; Michael Shami; Charbel El-Hajj; Antoun Youssef; Jebrael Moussallem; and Joseph Abi-Saad of Our Lady of Lebanon Maronite Seminary assisted.

Born to Emile and Renee Touma in Beirut, Lebanon, in a family of seven children, Michel immigrated to the United States in 1986 where he completed his education in computer science and worked for the IT industry for twenty six years. Devoted to his family and he has been married to his wife, Ghada, for twenty-one years. They have three children, Amanda, Charbel and Peter.

He has been in formation for the permanent diaconate for the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn for the past five years. He completed his formation program through the Arlington Diocese. He continues to focus on his family and work duties while at the same time serving the Church in his new ordained ministry.

The ordination celebration took place on Saturday January 24, 2015, followed by a dinner reception hosted by the parish of Our Lady of Lebanon. A Special Thank You

goes to Bishop Mansour and to Chorbishop Ashkar for a wonderful celebration and a heart-warming homily and their fatherly Love.

Deacon Touma and his family would like to offer special thanks and gratitude to so many of the parish family members that worked very hard to make this joyful celebration possible. Over forty parish families worked together to organize the celebration and reception: Jano Nicolas, Roula AbouSaleh and Gebran Fattouch coordinated the dinner reception; Pierre Chahine and Tony Rahi led the choir; Robert Zogby played the organ and Nathalie Kassis Assaf was the soloist; parishioners prepared the Lebanese food and provided flowers for the church. □

## Cleveland, Ohio Christmas Concert



by Seminarian Christopher Nahra

St. Maron Parish in Cleveland, Ohio, had another successful Christmas Concert led by St. Maron's MYO, MYC (children's group), and the newly named "Hosts of Angels" Choir. The 2014 Christmas Concert and Decoration of the Crèche of Bethlehem was a prayerful event that joined the parish community together for a beautiful performance. I am truly stupefied by the talent of these youth members and the willing effort they have to grow and learn new songs! Thank you to all the vocalists and extraordinary musicians: Christopher Jamhour, Janet Elasmara, and Aleina Souedi, who single-handedly made the concert incredible by learning the Christmas musical arrangements created by David Farah.

This concert was a chance for the choir members and the parish community to pray and reflect on the upcoming birth of the Lord. Additionally, the concert developed a prayerful fellowship among the choir members that has prospered into potential lifelong friendships. I am immensely thankful for having the privilege to work with St. Maron Parish's youth and choirs because they impress me every week with their commitment, vocals, and great attitude. Finally, their zeal to sing and praise God demonstrates the powerful potential of the youth in St. Maron's Parish, because they never cease to stop developing and learning about their faith. Thank you for the wonderful leadership of Msgr. Peter Karam and Father George Saab. I am genuinely honored to witness this miracle each and every day with St. Maron's youth, as this concert was only a beginning to what they have in store for next year.

## NAM 2015 Young Adult Activities

by Tina Lattouf Chamoun

Cleveland Maronite young adults (MYA) are excited to host fellow MYA members from around the nation at the 2015 NAM Convention in Cleveland, Ohio. The MYA Committee, led by NAM board member Marianne Dergham, are working very hard to prepare and plan an eventful convention for NAM young adult attendees. Young Adults will have the opportunity to attend a private workshop with George Harik, one of Google's first ten employees as director of Googlettes and distinguished Google initiatives, including Gmail, Google Talk, and Google Video. He is also the founder of imo.im, a social networking application.

In addition to a Cleveland trolley tour and visit to the historic Westside Market, NAM young adult attendees can look forward to a meet-and-greet at City and East Hookah Bar, a well-known bar in Cleveland that also provides Hookah in a lounge atmosphere; an excursion to University Circle, which boasts the well known Cleveland Museum of Art and Cleveland Botanical Garden; Theology on Tap with Father Tony Massad at TownHall, a hip restaurant-bar in Ohio City, and more.

Reservations at the Renaissance Hotel may be made for \$129 a night if booked by June 8, 2015. For more information and to reserve your room, please contact 1-800-HOTELS1 with the code "NAM." Self-parking at the hotel is 50% off to all NAM hotel guests (\$13.50 a day). We are anticipating many participants and would love for our NAM attendees to be together at the Renaissance Hotel, so we urge you to reserve your rooms early. □

## Newtown Square, Pennsylvania Christmas Pageant



by Lillian Shahade

Yes, yet another Christmas Pageant was held on Dec. 21, 2014, by the children of St. Sharbel Church in Newtown Square, Penn. Very fittingly it was played

out on the Sunday of the Genealogy of Jesus. The children, in all their excitement, found room for Jesus in their hearts as they spoke and sang the words of the Nativity written so many years before, and acted out by children and grown men and women all over the world. The children sang all the hymns by themselves, and they sang beautifully. This year a group of the older girls and boys joined in the pageant and helped out with the younger ones. Each child got a little gift of appreciation and remembrance for his or her participation in the pageant. A party was held in the Church Hall after the Liturgy. Santa even surprised us with a visit and talked and sang with the children and gave each child a little treat. □

## Zgharta, Lebanon Bishop Doueih's Return Home



Bishop Emile Saade (left), Bishop Maroun Amar and Bishop Gregory Mansour lead the funeral procession of Bishop Doueih in Zgharta, Lebanon.

by Salma T. Vahdat

There is something about a homecoming that is at once happy yet sad: Happiness to return to the place we know best which nurtured us from the onset of life, yet sad because we have missed the familiarity of home. Usually one is greeted with joy and fanfare which elates us only to be saddened when it is time to leave once again.

Bishop Stephen Hector Doueih, Bishop *Emeritus* of the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn, no doubt experienced those emotions many times in his lifetime of travels and studies abroad coupled with his mission throughout the world. Returning to Zgharta/Ehden numerous times and then leaving again for his next post, it was as if he needed to drink the waters of *neb'a mar sarkis* to sustain himself for the work ahead. On December 22, 2014, he made his final journey home accompanied by Bishop Gregory John Mansour, Bishop of the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn.

My curiosity as to the welcome his remains would receive overwhelmed me, and so, dear reader, I asked Bishop Gregory for a recount of the reception the town of Ehden prepared for their native son. This was his reply to my query:

"My time in Lebanon for Bishop Doueih was truly blessed. The good people of Zgharta truly honored their



His Beatitude Patriarch Bechara Peter Cardinal Rai presides at the funeral service of Bishop Stephen Hector Doueih at St. John Cathedral in Zgharta, Lebanon on December 27, 2014.

native son." He continued, "The town was strewn with banners over the streets with pictures and quotes of *Sayedna*. The marching band, the ladies and men's groups, the scouts, the priests and bishops, the Doueih family and all the parishioners were present. It made me proud to be associated with *Sayedna*. I went to Lebanon to honor and respect Bishop Doueih but in Zgharta and Ehden during my week between Christmas and New Year, I received much more than I gave. May *Sayedna* now rest in peace."

After a life of three quarters of a century dedicated to his vocation to serve the Church and its community of faith, *Sayedna* Stephen Hector Doueih earned his rest in his beloved Lebanon. He is finally home. □

## North Jackson, Ohio Order of Saint Sharbel and NAM to Host Lenten Retreat

The Order of Saint Sharbel and the National Apostolate of Maronites (NAM) are hosting a special Lenten Retreat together this year at the National Shrine of Our Lady of Lebanon in North Jackson, Ohio. The dates of the Retreat are March 6 - 8, 2015. All Members of the Order and NAM are invited to attend.

The Retreat Director will be Father Rudolph Wakim. Dr. Thomas Michael, member of the Order of Saint Sharbel, and Mrs. Rose Sahyoun, Secretary of NAM, are organizing and coordinating the Retreat. Registration information is available online at [namnews.org](http://namnews.org) or by contacting the NAM office as soon as possible at (914) 964-3070 or by emailing [nam@namnews.org](mailto:nam@namnews.org). Please consider attending what is sure to be a fun and spiritually rewarding activity. □





## ***Pope's Lenten Message Denounces Globalization of Indifference***

*by Junno Arocho Esteves*

**T**he Vatican released Pope Francis' Lenten message for this year, a message that highlights the temptation of indifference to those who suffer.

The message was presented at a press conference this morning [January 27, 2015] at the Holy See Press Office. Among those present were Msgr. Giampietro Dal Toso, Secretary of the Pontifical Council "Cor Unum"; Msgr. Segundo Tejado Muñoz, Under-Secretary of the same dicastery; and Dr. Michel Roy, Secretary General of Caritas Internationalis.

In his message, the Pope said that the Lenten season is "a time of grace" that calls all Christians to reflect on God's love which "does not allow Him to be indifferent to what happens to us." The Holy Father noted, however, that many times those who are suffering from problems and injustices are often forgotten, "something God the Father never does."

"Today, this selfish attitude of indifference has taken on global proportions, to the extent that we can speak of a globalization of indifference. It is a problem which we, as Christians, need to confront," the Pope wrote.

"Indifference to our neighbor and to God also represents a real temptation for us Christians. Each year during Lent we need to hear once more the voice of the prophets who cry out and trouble our conscience."

The Pope goes on to offer three reflections, based on biblical texts, that call for an interior renewal in the Church, parishes and communities, as well as individual Christians to combat this indifference in today's world.

### ***The Phenomenon of Indifference***

During today's press conference, Msgr. Dal Toso explained that the Lenten message's focus on indifference is "an important concept to explain the different phenomena of the modern world." He also explained that this concept is examined in three levels: interpersonal, cultural, and metaphysical.

"At the interpersonal level," Msgr. Del Toso said, "the play on words between difference and indifference is perhaps more easily understood. On the one hand, the difference is stressed in order to provoke a separation. On the other hand, a lack of attention to the difference between the other and myself conforms the other to my parameters and thus annihilates him."

Regarding the cultural aspect, the Secretary of the Pontifical Council "Cor Unum" said that this indifference can be seen in today's world not only in the lack of awareness of values, but mainly a lack of judgment on values. Choices become interchangeable and any assessment between good and evil becomes useless.

"Since if there is no difference, it's all the same," he explained. "It is not permissible for anyone to propose

something that is more appropriate or less appropriate to the person's nature. In my view, the global uniformity, the lowering of the standards of values that comes from the lack of difference is linked to the experience of many of our contemporaries on the lack of meaning."

Explaining the metaphysical aspect of indifference, Msgr. Del Toso regarded it as "the greatest indifference," that is, the indifference towards God. The Italian prelate explained that this aspect "causes so much harm to modern man because it leads him to believe that he is God, while he must continually push against his own limitations."

After reflecting on the Pope's call for renewal, Msgr. Del Toso highlighted the season of Lent as a time of conversion against this globalized indifference.

"The Lenten season is always a time of conversion, change and renewal," he said. "It is a time to overcome this globalization of indifference and enter into a new phase where we recognize the difference between oneself and the other, between one lifestyle and another, between oneself and God." □

January 27, 2015 (Zenit.org)

## ***Oriental Orthodox and Catholics Work to Conclude Joint Document***

**R**epresentatives of all the Oriental Orthodox Churches are in Rome this week (January 26, 2015) for a meeting of their International Joint Commission for Theological Dialogue with the Catholic Church. During the five-day encounter, which began on Monday, participants hope to finalize a joint document on Communion and Communication in the first five centuries of Christianity.

The Oriental Orthodox Churches are amongst the most ancient Christian communities in the world, founded according to tradition by the first apostles in Egypt, Armenia, Syria, India and Ethiopia in the decades following Christ's Death and Resurrection. They have not been in communion with either the Roman Catholic Church or the Orthodox world since they officially severed ties in the 5<sup>th</sup> century.

To find out more, Philippa Hitchen spoke with Fr. Gabriel Quicke, who is in charge of relations with these Oriental Orthodox Churches at the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity.

Fr. Gabriel says the new document is significant for Christians today as it highlights the rich heritage the Churches shared in the first five centuries before the divisions took place... He says the Commission will go on to a new round of discussions on the sacraments, especially the question of Baptism, which is still not recognized by some of the Oriental Orthodox Churches. Fr. Gabriel says many of the Oriental Orthodox Church leaders are witnessing an emptying out of their communities because of the lack of security in the Middle East region. He says the solidarity of the Catholic world and the appeals of Pope Francis on behalf of persecuted Christians are very important and much appreciated by the people there. □

*(Vatican Radio, January 27, 2015)*

## Bkerke, Lebanon *Meeting of the Patriarchs of the East*

by Paul Dakiki

A meeting of the Patriarchs and Christian leaders of the East was held on January 27, 2015, in Bkerke, Lebanon, the seat of the Maronite Patriarchate to address the situation of Christians in the Middle East and ask the Arab and international community to stop supporting terrorism, aid the refugee emergency and work for their return home. The need for a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian crisis was also underscored.

Patriarch Beshara Rai said that the goal of the gathering was to study the situation of Christian refugees and that of the faithful who have decided to stay in their country, despite war and difficulties. For them, he added, it is urgent to help them secure a job, schools, housing so "they can stay in their respective countries and preserve their Christian tradition and mission."

The other goal is an appeal "to the two communities Arab and international" to come to the aid of the refugees, helping them to return home and to rebuild their houses. This can be done "by ending the war in Syria and Iraq by peaceful means, through political negotiations and a serious dialogue between the warring parties, neutralizing terrorist organizations." This can only be achieved if the Arab and the international community "cease to support [the terrorists] in financial and military terms, closing the borders where it is necessary to prevent the movement of mercenaries."

"Political and economic designs - he added - cannot justify these terrible attacks against humanity."

For the Christian patriarchs and leaders, greater efforts must be made to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian crisis, on the basis of the formula "two peoples, two states," allowing the return of refugees to their homes. "It's obvious - said Patriarch Rai - that both the Israeli Palestinian conflict and Israeli-Arab conflict is the root cause of the misfortunes that we are experiencing today in the Middle East."

Christian leaders are asking for greater effort on the part of governments and non-governmental



An ecumenical meeting in Bkerke to address the difficulties faced by Christian communities attended by representatives of Catholic, Orthodox, Armenian and Protestant communities.

organizations to assist refugees and securing the release of all those who have been abducted, or detained, whether civil, military or religious figures. These include the two bishops, the Greek-orthodox bishop of Aleppo, Boulos Yazigi, and the Syriac Orthodox, Youhanna Ibrahim, in the hands of fundamentalist groups in Syria for almost two years.

The situation in Lebanon was also discussed particular the lack of President since last May and the Christian and Muslim political groups who are boycotting the election of the head of state.

The meeting was attended by Greek-Orthodox Patriarch Youhanna Yazigi; Syriac Orthodox Patriarch Mar Aghnatios Afram II; Patriarch Greek-Catholic Gregory III Laham; Syrian Catholic Patriarch Mar Aghnatios Youssef III Younane; Joseph Arnaout, representative of the Armenian Catholicos of Cilicia, Nercès Bedros IX; Michel Kassargi, Chaldean Bishop in Lebanon; Pastor Sélim Sahyoun, President of the High Council of the Evangelical community in Lebanon and Syria; the Apostolic Nuncio Gabriele Caccia; several representatives of Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant organizations. □

January 28, 2015 (AsiaNews.It)

### ***Catholic Population Up Fifteen Million***

The world's Catholic population increased by fifteen million in the past year, with some growth on every continent, according to new statistics from the Fides news service.

The latest figures, which date to the end of 2012, show a worldwide Catholic population of 1.2 billion. That accounts for 17.49% of the world's overall population: a figure that is down slightly from the previous year's 17.50%.

The number of Catholics grew most rapidly in Africa and the Americas (which are treated as one continent in Vatican statistics), with Asia following and Europe and Oceania lagging behind.

The number of Catholic priests was up slightly, to 414,313. That growth was very irregular, however; the numbers were significantly up in Asia (1,364) and Africa (1,076), but down sharply in Europe (-1,375). A similar pattern was evident in the number of female religious, but that figure was down more than 10,000 worldwide, settling at 702,529. □

Catholic World News - Dec. 31, 2014



July 1-5, 2015  
Cleveland, OH



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**\*\*YOUTH:** you are considered youth if you are 18 and did not graduate from high school by summer.

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| Package Options<br><b>DOES NOT<br/>INCLUDE HOTEL<br/>ROOMS</b> | Adult<br>18 years old +              |               | Youth<br>12 to 18 years**            |               | Child<br>5 to 11 years               |               | Entertainment Only<br>35 & under - no meals included<br>Entry after 10PM - valid student ID<br>required |               |
|--|--------------------------------------|---------------|--------------------------------------|---------------|--------------------------------------|---------------|---|---------------|
|  | Pre-registration<br>Before 6/09/2014 | Registration  | Pre-registration<br>Before 6/09/2014 | Registration  | Pre-registration<br>Before 6/09/2014 | Registration  | Pre-registration<br>Before 6/09/2014  | Registration  |
| Full (Wed - Sun)   | # ___ @ \$300                        | # ___ @ \$330 | # ___ @ \$270                        | # ___ @ \$300 | # ___ @ \$185                        | # ___ @ \$215 | # ___ @ \$120   | # ___ @ \$150 |
| Long Weekend (Thu - Sun)                                       | # ___ @ \$270                        | # ___ @ \$300 | # ___ @ \$240                        | # ___ @ \$270 | # ___ @ \$160                        | # ___ @ \$190 | # ___ @ \$100   | # ___ @ \$130 |
| Weekend (Fri - Sun)  | # ___ @ \$240                        | # ___ @ \$270 | # ___ @ \$210                        | # ___ @ \$240 | # ___ @ \$140                        | # ___ @ \$170 | # ___ @ \$80  | # ___ @ \$110 |
| Saturday & Sunday  | # ___ @ \$170                        | # ___ @ \$200 | # ___ @ \$140                        | # ___ @ \$170 | # ___ @ \$95                         | # ___ @ \$125 | # ___ @ \$60  | # ___ @ \$90  |
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|   |   |
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|---|---|

For any excursions or day ticketed events, on-site registration may incur a \$20 fee per event.

**MYA EXCURSIONS (AGE 18-35)**

|   |                |
|---|----------------|
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| Thursday: Excursion to Town Hall  | # _____ @ \$10 |
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## *A Revolution of Tenderness*

*Continued from page 1*

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In his "The Joy of the Gospel," Pope Francis suggests that some want to avoid the social dimension of the Gospel, and make the Gospel something private. It then becomes all about me. He reminds us that the Gospel makes demands of us, Jesus asks something more from us!

"For just as some people want a purely spiritual Christ, without flesh and without the Cross, they also want their interpersonal relationships provided by sophisticated equipment, by screens and systems which can be turned on and off on command. "Meanwhile, the Gospel tells us constantly to run the risk of a face-to-face encounter with others, with their physical presence which challenges, with their pain and their pleas, with their joy which infects us in our close and continuous interaction. True faith in the Incarnate Son of God is inseparable from self-giving, from membership in the community, from service, from reconciliation with others. The Son of God, by becoming flesh, summoned us to the revolution of tenderness."

A "revolution of tenderness" is just what is needed in our angry and broken world. This revolution is the Christian version of *jihad*, one that exerts every effort to make friends, not enemies, heal wounds, not inflict them, build bridges, not burn them. This revolution is the answer to the problems of this tired world of ours. This is the *jihad* of the saints, from Anthony and Maron, to Sharbel and Rafka. It is the *jihad* of the strong, for only those secure in themselves can truly be kind. Kindness is not weakness, as Pope Francis proves time and again.

This Lent, may we place ourselves once again in the hands of the loving, tender God and fulfill His call to *jihad*!. He, too, came into this world in tears, and his mother wiped, away

tears in her tender compassion. May she do so, once again for us, that we may engage and perfect his revolution of tenderness so that his Kingdom may come! Happy Lent. ☐

+ Bishop Gregory J. Mansour  
Bishop of the Eparchy of Saint Maron

## *Patriarch Rai: Poverty Is Also Destabilizing the Middle East*

*by Staff Reporter*

Even poverty and deprivation "are destabilizing" the Middle East, because "there cannot be peace where there is underdevelopment."

These were the words of Maronite Patriarch Bechara Peter Cardinal Rai during a visit to a suburb in Tripoli, Lebanon, on Sunday, January 18, 2015. The suburb of *Jabal Mohsen* was the site of two suicide bombings on January 10, which killed nine people and left thirty wounded.

According to Fides news service, Patriarch Rai noted the factors that often destabilize the Middle East, where financial resources of extremists can use money to entice the poor to enroll new fighters.

With his visit the Patriarch wanted to offer his condolences in person to Assad Assi, head of the Alawite Muslim Council, and to the families of the victims, of Alawite confession. ☐

*January 20, 2015 (Zenit.org)*

## **Food For Thought**

If you wish to be brothers, let the weapons fall from your hands. One cannot love with offensive weapons in his hands.

*Blessed Paul VI, Address to the U.N., October 4, 1965*