



The Maronite Voice

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A Gift to the Church: Religious Orders in the Life of the Maronite Church



St. Maron Monastery in Annaya, Lebanon, where St. Sharbel lived before he became a hermit.

As Christians, we must always give thanks to God for the gifts He has given us. One of the most important gifts given to our Maronite Church has been the many male and female monastic institutions in the heart of our Church. This past November (2014) Pope Francis initiated "The Year of Consecrated Life." The year-long observance will end on the Feast of the Presentation of Jesus in the Temple on February 2, 2016. In his letter to religious, Pope Francis noted: "I am counting on you 'to wake up the world,' since the distinctive sign of consecrated life is prophecy," he wrote. "This is the priority that is needed right now."

The Church uses the term "consecrated life" (as well as "religious life") because men and women who commit their lives to the Church in this special way are truly "consecrated" - set aside for special service. What the Church calls "consecrated life" is a vocation just as marriage and eparchial (diocesan) priesthood are vocations. Men and women respond to God's call and choose to dedicate their lives to Christ. Such men and women offer witness by their entire lives, that relationship to Christ is our ultimate goal. They enter into a special union with the Lord. In many ways these men and women who are consecrated to the Lord prefigure in their lives what our relationship with God will be in eternity.

The Pope also noted in his letter that it would be appropriate for each "charismatic family," to reflect on its origins and history, in order to thank God Who gives to the Church a variety of gifts which embellish her and equip her for every good work (cf. *Lumen Gentium*, 12). He used the phrase "charismatic family" to describe each religious order, since each order has a unique "charism," that is, a gift to offer to the Church.

There are many religious orders in our Church. In the United States alone we have religious congregations of men and women. There is no need to mention each by name, but it is

important to note that we have both active and contemplative religious.

Monastic life is at the very root of our Maronite Church. As Pope Saint John Paul II noted in his 1995 Apostolic Letter *Orientalis Lumen* (Light of the East): "Monasticism has always been the very soul of the Eastern Churches." Saint Maron was a monk and our history has been linked to various monasteries where, for many centuries, our Maronite Patriarchs lived and prayed. Without the gift of monastic communities, our Church may not have survived through the centuries. One of the characteristics of our Church is its monastic origin and spirit. Monasteries helped to spread education and instill cultural values in society. They established schools and universities, hospitals for the sick, orphanages for the young, and nursing homes for the elderly. They respond to the needs of God's people. (*Continues on page 20*)

Schedule of Bishop Elias Zaidan

January 4, 2015

Pastoral Visit to St. Joseph Mission, Riverside, Calif.

January 6, 2015

Pastoral Visit to St. Maron Church, Minneapolis, Minn., and Elevation of Msgr. sharbel Maroun to Chorbishop.

January 9 - 10, 2015

Pastoral Visit to the Community of Omaha, Neb.

January 11, 2015

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

January 19 - 23, 2015

Eparchial Clergy Retreat, Franciscan Renewal Center, Scottsdale, Ariz.

January 24 - 25, 2015

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

January 30 - February 1, 2015

Pastoral Visit to St. Sharbel Mission, Las Vegas, Nev.

February 6 - 8, 2015

Pastoral Visit to St. Maron, Cleveland, Ohio

February 14 - 15, 2015

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

The Maronite Voice
4611 Sadler Road
Glen Allen, VA 23060
Phone: 804/270-7234
Fax: 804/273-9914

E-Mail: gmsebaali@aol.com

<http://www.stmaron.org>

<http://www.usamaronite.org>

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Saint Maron Maronite Church

Cleveland, Ohio

July 1 - 5, 2015

For more information
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at (914) 964-3070
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Cincinnati, Ohio Christmas Recital



by Linda Conour

On Sunday, December 14, 2014, the “Choir of Angels” of St. Anthony of Padua Parish in Cincinnati, Ohio, performed their Christmas Concert immediately following the Divine Liturgy. Made up of members of the Maronite Youth Organization and led by Choir Conductor Mrs. Mounira Francis, the Choir joyfully proclaimed many traditional and modern Christmas songs, both in English and in Arabic. During the concert, members of the Parish set up the large figurines for the manger scene to adorn the altar, while the choir members sang and recited the first Christmas story. A brunch and Christmas party for the children of the parish immediately followed in the Joseph A. Abood Maronite Center. □

The Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn Mourns the Death of Bishop Emeritus Stephen Hector Doueihi

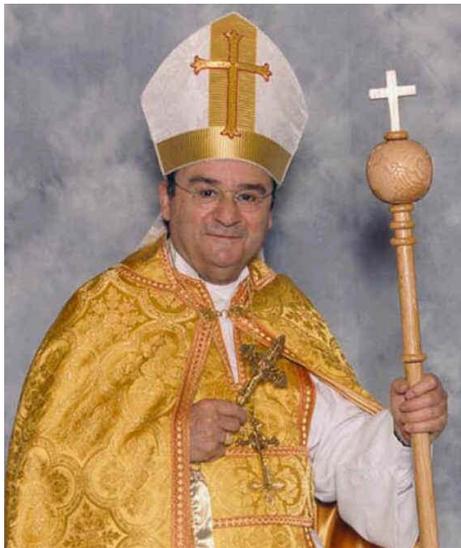
Bishop Stephen Hector Doueihi, Bishop Emeritus of the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn, passed away on December 17, 2014.

Bishop Doueihi was born to Youssef and Hassiba Zakhia Doueihi on June 25, 1927, in *Zgharta*, Lebanon. He attended the Patriarchal Seminary of Saint Maron in *Ghazir*, Lebanon, from 1941 to 1945; the Major Seminary at the University of Saint Joseph in Beirut, from 1946 to 1949; and the Pontifical College of *Propaganda Fide* in Rome, Italy, from 1952 to 1956.

He was ordained a priest for the Patriarchal Eparchy in Lebanon, on August 14, 1955, at the Chapel of the Patriarchal Summer Residence in *Dimane*, by His Beatitude Paul Peter Cardinal Meouchi, the late Maronite Patriarch of Antioch and All the East.

After ordination, Father Doueihi returned to Rome to earn a Doctorate in Sacred Theology at the Pontifical Gregorian University, which he received in 1959. His Doctoral dissertation was entitled: *Ibn Al-Qalo'i, Moine Franciscain et Eveque Maronite +1516*.

Upon his return to Lebanon, he was appointed Pastor of the Parish of *Zgharta* which he served from 1959 to 1969, simultaneously serving as Administrator of the *Wakfs* of *Zgharta* from 1967 - 1969. In October of 1969, he was assigned as Pastor of the Maronite Parish of Our Lady of Bethlehem in *Puebla*, Mexico. In 1972, Father Doueihi was received into the Maronite Diocese of the United States by Archbishop Francis M. Zayek. In August of 1973, he was appointed Pastor to the Maronite faithful in Peoria, Illinois, and later, he was assigned as Administrator of Saint George Church in Wilkes-Barre, Penn. In 1977, Father Doueihi was appointed Vice Rector of Our Lady of Lebanon Maronite Seminary in Washington, D.C., and Assistant Pastor at the Parish of Our Lady of Lebanon in the same city. In 1978, he was appointed as the Director of the Office of Liturgy for the Diocese of Saint Maron-USA. During



his tenure in that position, he provided vital leadership in the implementation of reforms to the Maronite Liturgy in the United States, and he was responsible for the many English texts of the liturgical reforms of the Maronite Divine Liturgy and Mysteries published by Saint Maron's Publications. In 1979 he was appointed Pastor of Our Lady of Lebanon Parish in Washington, D.C.

In 1983, Father Doueihi was elevated to the rank of *Periodeut* with the title of Monsignor. In 1987, Monsignor Doueihi was appointed Pastor of Saint George Church in San Antonio, Texas, where he served until 1989. He was then named Rector of Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral in Brooklyn, N.Y. That same year, he was ordained a Chorbishop and he was appointed by Maronite Patriarch Nasrallah Peter Cardinal Sfeir as a member of the Patriarchal Liturgical Commission. Chorbishop Doueihi had also served the Diocese as a Protopresbyter, a member of the Presbyteral Council and of the College of Consultors.

On November 23, 1996, Pope John Paul II appointed Chorbishop Doueihi as the second Bishop of the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn, and he was enthroned on February 5, 1997 at Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral in Brooklyn, N.Y.

Bishop Doueihi is well-known as a

teacher. In addition to his teaching at the Seminary of Our Lady of Lebanon in Washington, D.C., he was a professor of Theology at the University of Saint Joseph in Beirut; at the Seminary of *Karmsaddeh* in the Diocese of Tripoli in Lebanon; at the University of the Holy Spirit at *Kaslik* in Lebanon; and at the Seminary of the Diocese of *Puebla* in Mexico, where he also served as a professor of French Language. He was fluent in seven languages: Arabic, French, English, Italian, Spanish, Syriac and Latin.

His scholarly publications include: *Notre Eglise en question* (Beirut, 1969); *A Priest Among Us* (in Arabic); *Un Theologien Maronite, Gebra'il Ibn Al-Qalo'i, Eveque et Moine Franciscain*, D1516 (*Kaslik*, Lebanon, 1993); an Arabic Translation of *Prières* by Father Michel Quoist; *The Church of Stone and the Church of People* (in Arabic, *Almawakif*, N.15, 1969, Lebanon); and *The Maronite Pontifical* (2008).

Bishop Doueihi is survived by his two brothers, Peter and George, and their families in Lebanon as well as numerous nephews and nieces.

The Wake service took place at Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral, Brooklyn, N.Y., on Saturday, December 20, 2014, and on Sunday, December 21. The Funeral Liturgy was celebrated at the same Cathedral on Monday, December 22 at 12:00 noon. Bishop Gregory Mansour accompanied Bishop Doueihi's body to Lebanon for burial.

Bishop Gregory Mansour along with the clergy and faithful of the Eparchy of Saint Maron extend their heartfelt sympathy and the promise of our prayers to His Beatitude Patriarch Bechara Peter Cardinal Rai; to the Maronite Synod of Bishops; and to Bishop Doueihi's family and relatives.

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

Brooklyn, New York Farewell Bishop Doueihi



Bishop Gregory Mansour celebrated the Funeral Liturgy for Bishop Stephen Hector Doueihi. Bishop A. Elias Zaidan concelebrated.

by Salma Vahdat

In the joyous season of anticipation during which our Church and Community celebrate the Birth of Our Savior, a sadness has made its way into our lives. Bishop Stephen Hector Doueihi, *Bishop Emeritus* of the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn, passed on to his eternal reward on December 17, 2014.

I can only imagine St. Peter greeting him at those pearly gates with open arms and leading him into the presence of Almighty God. *Sayedna* might have said, "Lord, I'm finally here, but to tell You the truth, it was a long haul! I did my very best to keep the faith and lead my flock closer to You. I wanted them to keep their heritage in mind, to defend the faith of our fathers and to revere and preserve our Liturgy. I may have been single-minded in this effort, Lord, and maybe a bit stern, but like a parent, that attitude is for the good of the children. I am so happy You called me to do your work on earth, and I hope You have not been disappointed in me." I can only believe that Almighty God and His Blessed Mother would have said, "Welcome, Stephen Hector, in you I am well pleased."

Today's funeral service on December 22, and the prior two days of wake in the Cathedral of Our Lady of Lebanon in Brooklyn, N.Y., brought friends, clergy and parishioners to honor the life of *Sayedna* Stephen. He will be remembered as a man, a priest, a teacher, a scholar and a lover and champion of his Maronite heritage. He demonstrated his dynamism by the zeal with which he undertook liturgical reform and translation. He urged us to embrace the Liturgy and our heritage. It sets us apart; it confirms (as his episcopal motto *Sharar* expressed) and defines who we are: loyal members of *Beit Maroun!* There is no doubt that we shall follow his dictum and he will be long remembered by those whose lives he touched.

The funeral Liturgy was celebrated by Bishop Gregory Mansour, Bishop of the Eparchy of Saint Maron. Bishop A. Elias Zaidan, Bishop of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon;



Clergy of the Eparchy process with Bishop Doueihi's coffin three times around the altar while the farewell prayer to the altar is recited.

Bishop *Emeritus* Robert Shaheen of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon; Bishop Nicholas DiMarzio, Diocese of Brooklyn and Queens, N.Y.; Bishop Edward Scharfenberger, Diocese of Albany, N.Y.; Bishop Thomas Mar Eusebius of the Syro-Malankar Church, Queens, N.Y.; Chorbishop Michael Thomas, Vicar General, Eparchy of Saint Maron; Chorbishop Joseph Kiddo, Vicar General for Bishop Doueihi; Chorbishop Dominic Ashkar; Chorbishop John Faris; Chorbishop Richard Saad, Vicar General of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon; and Msgr. James Root, Rector of Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral, concelebrated along with many priests from the Eparchy of Saint Maron. Deacons, subdeacons and seminarians were also in attendance and assisted in the Liturgy and funeral ritual.

In his homily Bishop Mansour praised the achievements of Bishop Doueihi and called him "a man of mystical vision, a man who kept his focus on the Cross and on the well being of the Church."

At the end of the Liturgy Chorbishop Michael Thomas read letters from His Beatitude Patriarch Bechara Peter Cardinal Rai and from His Holiness Pope Francis. As is customary in the funeral of a priest or a bishop, the priests in attendance processed with the coffin three times around the altar while the prayer "I Leave you in peace O Altar of God" was recited.

Following the funeral, all in attendance were invited into the Cathedral social hall for the traditional meal of mercy.

Bishop Mansour accompanied *Sayedna* Stephen's remains to Lebanon for a funeral and interment in his hometown of *Ehden* in North Lebanon. □

Bishop Zaidan Shares his Impression of Bishop Doueihi

His Excellency Bishop A. Elias Zaidan, Bishop of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon, concelebrated the funeral Liturgy of Bishop Stephen Hector Doueihi at Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral in Brooklyn, N.Y., on December 22, 2014, and offered the following remarks:

"We come together to bid a final farewell to Bishop Stephen



Bishop A. Elias Zaidan

Hector Doueih. A man true to himself, a priest that had a great vision, and a bishop who was a great teacher, has left us and gone to the Father's house.

"When I become a bishop, he gave me sound advice. He told me many things. I will focus on a few: First, be yourself. Don't put a mask in your new position. Don't try to please everyone. Second, be a true Maronite, be proud of the Church. Don't worry and trust in God for there is the grace that pertains to the office of the Bishop, the grace which will help you and sustain you.

"Throughout the years we appreciated his work on the Liturgy. We are grateful for all of his translations of the liturgical celebrations that helped us pray and be closer to our heritage. All this came from his conviction of the Church's *aggiornamento*, the need for the Church to be updated. [It also came] through his conviction and his work in the movement 'Church in the World.'

"In the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon, he worked in two Churches. He was Pastor of St. Sharbel in Peoria, Illinois and Pastor of St. George in San Antonio, Texas. We are grateful for his dedication and ministry.

"I would like to express my sincere condolences on behalf of Bishop Shaheen, the clergy and laity of our Eparchy, to His Excellency Bishop Gregory Mansour, to all the clergy and laity of the Eparchy of Saint Maron, to Msgr. Jim Root and the community of Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral, to his nephew Edward and the rest of his family in Lebanon, to Michelle Thomas, who was a great help to him along the way, and to all of his friends.

"Today, Bishop Doueih will go back to Lebanon whom he loved, to his hometown of *Ehden* that remained vivid in his heart and mind. He will go back to *Ehden* (which means paradise) for his body to rest there while his soul will enjoy everlasting rest in the eternal paradise." □

Pope Francis Sends His Blessings and Condolences

The Most Reverend Carlo Maria Viganò, Apostolic Nuncio to the United States of America, conveyed the following letter from Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Vatican Secretary of State, on behalf of His Holiness Pope Francis in which the Pope expressed his condolences and imparted his Apostolic blessing on the Eparchy of Saint Maron.

"The Holy Father was saddened to learn of the death of Bishop Emeritus Stephen Hector Doueih and he offers heartfelt condolences to you and to the clergy, religious and laity of the Eparchy. With gratitude for the late Bishop's years of priestly and episcopal ministry, and particularly his contribution to liturgical scholarship and the renewal of Maronite worship in the United States, His Holiness willingly joins those present at the Funeral Divine Liturgy in commending his noble soul to the merciful love of God our heavenly Father. To all who mourn Bishop Doueih in the sure hope of the Resurrection, the Holy Father cordially imparts his Apostolic Blessing as a pledge of consolation and peace in the Lord.

Yours sincerely in Christ,
Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Secretary of State." □

Patriarch Bechara Peter Cardinal Rai Extends His Condolences and Solidarity to the Eparchy

Bishop Gregory Mansour, Bishop of the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn, received the following letter from His Beatitude Patriarch Bechara Peter Cardinal Rai to express his condolences and solidarity with the Eparchy on the passing of its Bishop Emeritus, Stephen Hector Doueih.

Bishop Gregory J. Mansour
Bishop of the Eparchy of
Saint Maron of Brooklyn
Brooklyn, New York

Prot. No. 310/2014

Bkerke, December 19, 2014

Dear Bishop Gregory,

It is with much sorrow, but with a deep sense of faith and hope in the resurrection of Our Lord, that we received the news of the passing away of Bishop Stephen Hector Doueih, Bishop Emeritus of the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn. On behalf of our Synod of Bishops and on my behalf I wish to offer the clergy, religious and lay faithful of the Eparchy our deepest sympathy. I wish to offer my sympathy to Your Excellency and to Bishops Robert J. Shaheen and Elias Abdallah Zaidan.

Bishop Doueih took a long time to prepare himself for his pastoral ministry. After many years of studies, first in Beirut and then in Rome, he earned a Doctoral Degree in Sacred Theology at the Pontifical Gregorian University, and further Eastern Studies at the Pontifical Oriental Institute, Bishop Doueih was very well prepared to start assuming his Pastoral duties.

During over half a century of active ministry in the priesthood and episcopacy, Father Doueih served with exceptional dynamism, wisdom, and dedication. His long years of Pastoral Service started in his native town of *Zghorta*, a great Maronite bastion in the northern part of Lebanon, where he earned himself a distinguished reputation



of a forward looking, highly creative leader of the Youth and a devoted Pastor. He then pursued his ministry in Mexico and the United States of America. One of the main passions he had, throughout his whole active ministry, and even after retiring, was a special love for our Maronite liturgy. He was very anxious to promote liturgical reform, and his leadership in this vital dimension of his pastoral ministry has made a significant difference to the growth of our Church in the United States, especially through the English liturgical texts published by Saint Maron's Publications. He showed special concern for the Maronites in the expansion outside and saw in the liturgy an effective way of strengthening their ties with Lebanon, their spiritual home.

Bishop Douiehi will be greatly missed by the people in his native town first, and by the Maronites of the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn and throughout the United States. He will be especially missed by the liturgical commission of our Synod in which he always made very valuable contributions.

As I join you in spirit at the Funeral Divine Liturgy you are celebrating at the Cathedral of Our Lady of Lebanon in Brooklyn, I wholeheartedly grant you all my Apostolic Blessing. May he rest in Peace.

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



Eparchial Condolences

Deacon Peter Joseph of Saint Joseph Maronite Church in Waterville, Maine, passed away on December 10, 2014. Deacon Peter was one of the first

Permanent Deacons for our Eparchy, ordained by Archbishop Francis Zayek over forty-five years ago. Not only was he very active in the Maronite Church, but he was of great assistance to the Latin Church as well. His service to the Catholic faithful of the Waterville area earned him the respect and admiration of the entire community.

Having been ordained for so many years, Deacon Peter served many pastors at Saint Joseph Church. He was truly the right hand and the dependable confidant of each and every one of them. Deacon Peter's passing is indeed a great loss for our Maronite Church.

The wake service was held at Saint Joseph Church (3 Appleton Street, Waterville, ME 04901) on Friday, December 12, and the Funeral Liturgy was held on Saturday, December 13, 2014.

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 our prayers to Deacon Peter's family, to Father Larry Jensen, Pastor, and to the parish family of Saint Joseph.

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

Mrs. Bertha Helen Jensen (age 91), the mother of Fr. Larry Jensen, Pastor of Saint Joseph Church in Waterville, Maine, passed away on Monday, December 22, 2014. Mrs. Jensen was born July 23, 1923, to Christian and Catherine (Nelen) VanAgtmael in Oceana County, Mich. She was a member of St. Thomas the Apostle Catholic Church in Muskegon, Mich., where she was part of the Altar Guild and

worked on funeral luncheons. She also took care of the altar garments for the church.

Bertha is survived by her children, Ronald (Ann) Jensen, Daniel (Geri) Jensen, Marilyn (Daniel) Lipka, James (Ruth) Jensen, Frank (Laurie) Jensen, Kevin (Annie) Jensen, Fr. Larry Jensen of Waterville, Me., Wayne (Julie) Jensen, and Denise (Stephen) Bizon; twenty-one grandchildren; twenty-six great-grandchildren; three great-great-grandchildren; a sister, Mary Nuyens; and many nieces and nephews. A Mass of Christian Burial was held on Friday, December 26, 2014, at St. Thomas the Apostle Catholic Church with Rev. Fr. Larry Jensen presiding. Contributions may be made to St. Joseph Maronite Catholic Church, 3 Appleton St., Waterville, ME 04901.

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 our prayers to Father Larry Jensen and to his family.

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

Newtown Square, Pennsylvania Fr. Paul Mouawad Honored



From left: Fr. Paul Mouawad, Fr. Raymond Khallouf, Bassem Dow and Fr. Kamil Al-Chouefati.

On December 13, 2014, Fr. Raymond Khallouf and the parishioners of St. Sharbel Church, Newtown Square, Penn., honored Fr. Paul Mouawad for his many years of dedicated service to the Church, particularly at St. Sharbel.

The party was held at St. Sharbel Hall, and it was filled to capacity. Many people came from St. Maron Church in Philadelphia, Penn., and Our Lady Star of the East in Pleasantville, N.J.. They came to show their love and appreciation for Fr. Paul for his love and many kindnesses shown over the years, not only as a priest but as a true friend. Fr. Kamil Al-Chouefati, of Pleasantville, N.J., Fr. Vincent Farhat of St. Maron in Philadelphia and Msgr. Ralph Chieffo, SMM, of Media, Penn., were in attendance to wish Fr. Paul the best.

Fr. Paul was presented with a gift of appreciation in the form of a plaque/clock: "In appreciation of your services at St. Sharbel Church Newtown Square, Penn., All the Blessings from the Lord." ☐

Jacksonville, Florida

Dedication of New Church

by Sarah Marie Saliba

Finally, the day of the solemn Dedication of the newly built Saint Maron Church in Jacksonville, Florida, has arrived. After many months of intensive preparation and prayer, the dedication ceremony successfully took place on Sunday November 16, 2014.

The parishioners of St. Maron Church could not have been happier. The Most Reverend Gregory Mansour, Bishop of the Eparchy of Saint Maron, presided at the Dedication Liturgy and Ceremony with the participation of the Most Reverend Felipe Estevez, Bishop of the Diocese of Saint Augustine. Father Elie Abi Chedid, Pastor, and Deacon Elias Shami concelebrated along with other Maronite and Latin clergy. Clergy from Orthodox Churches in Jacksonville attended the ceremony. Fourth Degree Knights of Columbus served as Honor Guards and over four hundred people attended.

The dedication ceremony began with the traditional opening of the main doors and welcoming of the Bishop. Bishop Mansour stood outside the entrance of the church and knocked on the door asking to come in to consecrate the new church. The first time a young priest answered, "Go in peace. I do not know you." The Bishop knocked a second time and was answered by a middle-aged priest with the same response. The Bishop knocked a third time and this time an older priest answered, and because of his wisdom, welcomed the Bishop into the church.

As part of the ceremonial *christening* of the church, Bishops Monsour and Estevez blessed the altar and the walls of the church with crosses using holy water and Sacred Myron [Chrism] just as is done to a baby when baptized. After the church and altar were blessed, the altar was then cloaked and decorated with new sheets; and red ribbons were hung along the walls on both sides of the church.

In his homily, Bishop Mansour expressed his joy for this achievement and his congratulations to our church community urging all parishioners to keep on in building the church of people after building the church of stone. Bishop Estevez also addressed the congregation evoking Pope John



Bishop Mansour and Bishop Estevez anoint the walls and the altar with Sacred Chrism.

Paul II's teaching on the Church that breathes with two lungs of Latin and Eastern traditions.

In his welcoming speech, Father Elie Abi Chedid thanked the Bishops, the clergy, the dignitaries and friends for their presence. He indicated that the dedication of our new church is a joyful and blessed event, and a milestone in the history of our community. It represents the fruit and the crowning of all our challenging endeavors and efforts. He also thanked all sincere volunteers and donors who contributed to this achievement.

Father Elie quoted a passage from the message addressed to our community by Archbishop Vignano, the Apostolic Nuncio, for this occasion, on behalf of the Holy Father, Pope Francis: "*Indeed, the Holy Father is confident that this wonderful occasion, which is surely a tribute to the great self-sacrifice and generosity of so many, will remind the whole faith community that they too are a house of God. In the words of Saint Augustine, 'The work we see complete in this building is physical; it should find its spiritual counterpart in your hearts. We see here the finished product of stone and wood; so too your lives should reveal the handiwork of God's grace.'*"

Father Elie also said: "We took upon us, as an Eastern rite Catholic

Church, the challenge of building a new church here in Jacksonville in order to preserve our rich spiritual heritage. As our Mission statement goes: To practice our Christian faith, and witness to it according to one of the oldest Traditions of the Catholic Church, the Aramaic Antiochian Tradition, whose pure origin is Our Lord Jesus Christ and His Apostles."

St. Maron Church in Jacksonville is now marked as a newborn foundation that will grow in spirituality and as a close follower of Christ.

After the Liturgy, a banquet was held at Jacksonville Marriott where parishioners were joined by many clergy members, dignitaries and friends. A few speeches were given in recognition of St. Maron's journey to this joyous day followed by three *Dabke* dances performed by St. Maron's *Dabke* Group. Everyone enjoyed the uniqueness of the dedication Liturgy and ceremony and appreciated the pleasant fellowship at the banquet.

This is an event that will be kept engraved in our hearts forever and the date of November 16, 2014, will be forever a souvenir of a monumental event in our church community in Jacksonville. □

San Antonio, Texas *Diaconate Ordination*



Bishop A. Elias Zaidan, assisted by Fr. Charles Khachan, ordains Subdeacon Fabre to the Order of Deacon.

Our Lord calls men to work in His vineyard, and another man is one step closer to serving His Holy Altars. We read in scripture that the apostles appointed others to serve the Church in ministry through the imposition of hands. Specifically, we know from the Book of Acts (6:6) that deacons were ordained through prayer and the laying on of hands. St. George Parish in San Antonio, Texas, was blessed recently with such an ordination. Subdeacon Christopher Fabre was ordained to the Order of Deacons on September 28, 2014, by the invocation of the Holy Spirit and the imposition of hands of the Most Reverend Abdullah Elias Zaidan of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon of Los Angeles. Joining the Bishop was Fr. Charles Khachan, MLM, Pastor; Msgr. Don Sawyer, Pastor of Our Lady's Parish in Austin; and Fr. Milad Yaghi, MLM, Pastor of Our Lady of the Cedars in Houston. Christopher's seminary brothers Subdeacon Alex Harb, Mr. Aaron Sandbothe and Mr. Paul Massoud also assisted at the ordination. The ordination was part of a full weekend that was planned by Fr. Khachan, which included the celebration of the 50th year of the parish's gala, "Magic is the Night." Along with the other festivities, Bishop Elias inducted Deacon Tom Billimek into the Order of St. Sharbel. Deacon Tom has faithfully served the Maronite community in San Antonio and wished to join the Order of St. Sharbel because of his love for St. Sharbel and the Maronites.

From Austin, Texas, Christopher has been in formation

for the priesthood for the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon of Los Angeles. The road towards the priesthood includes a course of studies in Philosophy at the undergraduate level, which Christopher completed in Austin. Christopher has completed a Master degree in Systematic and Historical Theology at Catholic University of America in residence at Our Lady of Lebanon Maronite Seminary in Washington, D.C. He is currently completing his deacon year in Texas, where he is completing a residency in hospital chaplaincy and serving the parish of St. George as well. He will be ordained to the priesthood in the summer of 2015 at his home parish of Our Lady's Maronite Parish in Austin, Texas. □

Danbury, Connecticut *Subdeacon Ordination*



Bishop Shaheen, assisted by Fr. Kiwan (left) and Chorbishop Joseph ordains Randy Michael to the Order of Subdeacon.

by Nancy Michael

On November 29, 2014, Randall John Michael was ordained as cantor, lector, and subdeacon at St. Anthony Maronite Church in Danbury, Conn. Randall is a man of strong faith who has a strong desire to serve the people of God. He is devoted to his family and has been married to his wife, Nancy, for thirty years. They have three daughters, Rachel, Elizabeth, and Mary.

The ordination was by the imposition of hands of the Most Reverend Bishop Robert J. Shaheen, Bishop *Emeritus* of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon, and Randall's cousin. Father Naji Kiwan, Pastor, presented the subdeacon and was his sponsor. Many members of the clergy concelebrated, including Chorbishop Moussa Joseph, Pastor of St. Raymond Maronite Catholic Cathedral, Saint Louis, Mo., and Fr. Jack Morrison, Director of the Eparchial Office of Ministries. Priests, deacons, subdeacons, family members, and friends shared the occasion traveling from as far as Massachusetts, Michigan and Missouri.

May God help Randall to fulfill his duties with dedication, serving the altar of God and serving his parish of Saint Anthony for many years to come. □

Birmingham, Alabama Papal Honor



Left to right, Paul Bolus, Bishop A. Elias Zaidan, Chorbishop Richard D. Saad, and Norman Bolus.

On Sunday, December 7, 2014, His Excellency Bishop A. Elias Zaidan, Bishop of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon, visited St. Elias Maronite Church in Birmingham, Ala., to install Paul Bolus and Norman Bolus into The Pontifical Equestrian Order of St. Gregory the Great, the highest honor that can be bestowed on a lay Catholic. This Order is bestowed on Catholic men and women in recognition of their personal service to the Holy See and the Church, unusual labors, and the good example they set in their communities and country.

Paul and Norman were nominated by Chorbishop Richard D. Saad, Pastor, and they were chosen by Pope Francis to receive the honor.

Sons of Tofe and Helen Bolus, Paul and Norman are both lifelong members of St. Elias Church. Both have been active in all aspects of parish life, from being altar servers to serving as chairmen of the Parish Council.

A lasting contribution they have made at St. Elias is the establishment of the St. Elias Food and Cultural Festival beginning in 1999 and continuing until the present. This festival was based on encouraging parishioners to tithe for the church, giving time, talent, and treasure for all of us to work together. In addition, the Festival has allowed us to open the doors of our church for others to learn about our faith and traditions besides our food.

Paul is an attorney practicing with Bradley Arant Boult Cummings LLP. He has been married to Theresa Joseph Bolus for over twenty-five years and they have four children: Stephen, Jessica, Matthew and Daniel.

Norman is presently the Director and Assistant Professor at the UAB School of Health Professions, Department of Clinical and Diagnostic Sciences, Nuclear Medicine Technology Program. He has been married to Lisa McGuirk Bolus for over twenty-three years.

The entire parish community congratulates and honors Paul and Norman for their service and dedication. □

Schedule of Bishop Gregory Mansour

December 23 - 31, 2014

Funeral of Bishop Stephen Hector Doueihi, Lebanon

January 1, 2015

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

January 4, 2015

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

January 5, 2015

Feast of the Epiphany of the Lord, Heart of Jesus Mission, Fort Lauderdale, Fla.

January 10 - 11, 2015

Pastoral Visit to Our Lady of Lebanon Church, Miami, Fla.

January 12 - 16, 2015

Annual Clergy Retreat, North Palm Beach, Fla.

January 18, 2015

Memorial Liturgy for Bishop Doueihi, Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral, Brooklyn, N.Y.

January 21, 2015

Pro-Life Vigil, Washington, D.C.

January 22, 2015

Pro-Life March, Washington, D.C.

January 23, 2015

Our Lady of Lebanon Seminary, Washington, D.C.

January 24, 2015

Ordination of Subdeacon Michel Touma as a Deacon, Our Lady of Lebanon Church, Washington, D.C.

January 25, 2015

Memorial Liturgy for Bishop Doueihi, Our Lady of Lebanon Church, Washington, D.C.

January 30 - February 1, 2015

NAM Regional Convention, Philadelphia, Penn.

February 8, 2015

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

February 14 - 15, 2015

Forty Day Anniversary of Deacon Peter Joseph, St. Joseph Church, Waterville, Me.

February 16, 2015

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

the Deadline is... **Deadline for next month's issue of**
The Maronite Voice is January 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:

The Maronite Voice

4611 Sadler Road

Glen Allen, Virginia 23060

Phone: (804) 270-7234; Fax: (804) 273-9914

Email: Gmsebaali@aol.com

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. □

The Grace of the Call

Religious life is a particular form of consecrated life, and, as the year of consecrated life opens, it would be helpful to begin in the beginning, that is to say, to begin with a consideration of the call or vocation to religious life. By understanding better this grace, we will also learn what prepares the seedbed of vocations, what helps to discern and what will sustain them to the end.

The Servant of God, Father John Hardon remarks that the call to religious life is a grace from God, given to some but not to all. He writes:

Somewhere near the heart of a religious vocation is the idea that God chooses certain people to imitate His own Incarnate example of the religious life. [...] Jesus Christ was the first religious. His life and preaching inspired men and women from the dawn of Christianity to sell all they had, give the proceeds to the poor and follow Him.... We must come to understand better than we have done so far that a vocation to the religious life is just that: a distinctive call from God, choosing certain individuals for this way of life.¹

The discernment of the call to religious life and the response to it requires three things: faith, prayer and sacrifice.² Without *faith*, no one could recognize Christ and his life as the model for all Christians and especially for religious. Without *prayer*, no one could hear the call or desire to respond by imitation of Christ. Without *sacrifice*, no one could persevere in responding to the call to leave all things for love of Christ. These three conditions best prepare the soil of the heart to receive the seed - in

¹ "Religious Vocation - of Divine Origin," an address by Father Hardon (2 February 1972) at the meeting of Consortium *Perfectae Caritatis*.

² These conditions are noted in a conference of Father Hardon entitled: "What is a Religious Vocation?"

this case, the seed of a call to religious life. The lack of these dispositions renders the seed fruitless.

To appreciate the importance of these necessary conditions for hearing and responding to a vocation, I will attempt to draw a parallel between the three types of fruitless soil in the parable of the seed (Matthew 13:1-23) with the three conditions of the "good soil" that enable the seed to take root, thrive and be fruitful. In the Gospel, Our Lord speaks of these conditions as necessary for Christian discipleship. All the more, then, are they necessary for religious life.

Faith

First of all, for someone discerning a vocation to religious life, faith is necessary. This cannot be overstated. "Where sound religious education is neglected it is either tempting Providence or asking for a miracle to expect vocations to flourish."³ To be realistic, of course, those who believe and come to discern a vocation might not possess a fully developed faith - yet, even so, their faith must be cultivated. That is to say, they must not be like the foot path, which is uncultivated soil. No seed can penetrate trampled earth. Likewise, those who have no interest and make no effort to cultivate and understand what they believe prevent the seed from being received. Instead, candidates must have a desire to understand what they believe. And they must be willing to subject themselves, as faith requires, in mind and heart to Christ and his Vicar on earth who teaches us with Christ's own authority. We see all around us the devastation of the demons stealing away the seeds of faith from the minds and hearts of those who only call themselves Catholic - even some vowed religious - but who, in practice, deny the authority of Christ and the Church.

Prayer

Second, when Christ calls someone to

³ Conference of Father Hardon entitled: "Religious Education and Vocations."

follow him into the way of religious consecration, the call is heard through prayer. That doesn't mean that it's heard only at the time of prayer. Rather, by means of prayer, the soul is listening with heart and mind elevated to God, trying to learn how to think like God and to love and desire the things God loves and desires to give us. This is why desire for religious life is always a sign of a vocation. It isn't the only sign, or the definitive one. Yet it remains a sign that a call has been heard. It may not even be a call to religious life, but instead to a deepening of Christian life and imitation of Christ. But without devotion to prayer in some measure, no call can be heard. A feeble life of prayer might enable us to hear the call, but, there being no depth of soil, even the first trial that comes along could be sufficient to wither the plant altogether. Father Hardon observes: "Since



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

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

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

Or

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

Or

Our Lady of Lebanon Seminary
7164 Alaska Ave. NW

religious vocations are of divine origin, it is only through divine means that they can be sustained, and only by divine means can the young religious be formed to face the terrifying challenges of the ... twenty-first century."⁴

Sacrifice

Third, hearing the call to religious life enlightens the mind and enkindles the heart to follow Christ more closely, as the Church's law says: religious life is "a stable form of living by which the faithful, following Christ more closely under the action of the Holy Spirit, are totally dedicated to God, who is supremely loved."⁵ For those who love, sacrifice is the way to express it - and supreme love sacrifices supremely. Even sinners are willing to suffer much for the sake of the abominable things they love. The sacrifices of religious, embodied in the vowed profession of the evangelical counsels, are no doubt difficult, even painful to our fallen human nature - but they enable us to express a "total love" for Christ and to follow him "more closely." Saint Augustine observes: "For that which men love, either no labor is felt, or the labor itself is loved."⁶

The lovers of Christ know that the vows are not only the best and most useful remedies for the effects of sin (correcting excessive love of creatures) but they are the very food of love. Here we should note that since Christianity itself is a call to love and to sacrifice, religious have no monopoly on either one. Many laity not in the "state of perfection" nevertheless might strive for and attain the perfection of the counsels. Why? Because they love Christ and desire to please him. Saint Francis de Sales teaches this very clearly in the Treatise on the Love of God.⁷ True believers and lovers of Christ abound in admiration for the evangelical counsels and gratitude to Christ for giving them. They rejoice at

⁴ From his conference: "Religious Vocation - of Divine Origin."

⁵ Code of Canon Law, canon 73 § i; cf. also CCEO, c. 410.

⁶ De Bono vid. c. 21.

⁷ Especially in Book VIII, cc. 6-9.

the encounter with those who have been called to religious life and they encourage vocations.

But for those religious candidates unwilling to sacrifice totally for love of Christ, eventually the weeds of desires for the world creep up, choke the vocation and prevent any fruitfulness. They end up sad, like the rich young man, since they know they have refused a greater love.

Christian "Philosophy"

What we have learned about the beginnings of the call to religious life also makes clear what the call to Christian life entails: a great and generous love of Christ. If this is so for every Christian, a fortiori is it so for religious, who follow Christ more closely. The preparation for discerning a vocation requires attentive listening to God in and through the Church as well as in our hearts. "If you incline your ear, you will gain instruction, and if you love to listen, you will be wise" (Sir. 6:34). This is the wisdom of Christianity and the saints.

St. Thomas speaks to us about this love of wisdom, so characteristic of religious consecration - which could also be called "philosophy."

"When the mind is affected vehemently with intense love and desire for something, the result is that it sets aside other things. Therefore, when a man's mind is fervently carried by love and desire to divine matters, in which perfection manifestly consists, it follows that he casts aside everything that might hold him back from being borne to God: not only the care of things or affection of wife and children but even of himself."⁸

Church history is filled with examples of those who preferred to forego legitimate goods for the sake of Christ. No doubt, such self-denial entails a kind of death. But, according to St. John Damascene, this forms the very heart of philosophy.

Philosophy... is a study of death,

⁸ Summa Contra Gentiles, bk.3, c. 130.

whether this be voluntary or natural. For life is of two kinds, there being the natural life by which we live and the voluntary one by which we cling lovingly to this present life. Death, also, is of two kinds: the one being natural, which is the separation of soul from body, whereas the other is the voluntary one by which we disdain this present life and aspire to that which is to come. ... Philosophy, again is a love of wisdom. But, true wisdom is God. Therefore, the love of God, this is the true philosophy.⁹

And since such philosophy will be pursued by those "vehemently affected" by love of God, we find in it the perfect imitation of Christ who, "having joy set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame" (Heb. 12:12). The joy set before him was our redemption. He preferred to suffer the separation of body and soul in death than to be separated from us for eternity. The Canticle describes Christ in these terms: "If a man should give all the substance of his house for love, he shall despise it as nothing" (Song of Solomon 8:7). With the grace of faith, prayer and sacrifice, the same can be said of us.

So now, with all consecrated religious, we enter the year of consecrated life together, our thoughts and hearts grateful to God for such supernatural gifts.

Let each of the faithful called to the profession of the evangelical counsels, therefore, carefully see to it that he persevere and ever grow in that vocation God has given him. Let him do this for the increased holiness of the Church, for the greater glory of the one and undivided Trinity, which in and through Christ is the fount and the source of all holiness.¹⁰ □

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⁹ The Fount of Knowledge, c. 3.

¹⁰ *Lumen Gentium*, 47

Year of Consecrated Life "Wake Up the World!"



From left: Sister Natalie Salameh, Mother Marla Marie and Sister Therese Maria Touma.

by Sister Therese Maria Touma

Pope Francis declared that a Year of Consecrated Life, which began on Sunday November 30 and concludes on February 2, 2016, be celebrated throughout the world. In his message, the Pope underlined the key goals to "look to the past with gratitude, to live the present with passion and to embrace the future with hope." The Pope also expressed his expectations for the year-long observance: "that consecrated men and women would be witnesses of communion, of joy and the Gospel, and go evermore to the peripheries to proclaim the Good News."

This Year for Consecrated Life concerns not only consecrated persons, but also the entire Church. Pope Francis asks that the whole Christian people "be increasingly aware of the gift which is the presence of our many consecrated men and women, heirs of the great saints who have written the history of Christianity."

The Pope is counting on religious "to wake up the world" by their radical witness of Gospel living and Christ's merciful compassion. In answer to this call to wake up the world and raise awareness about the gift and beauty of religious life, the Maronite Servants of Christ the Light will be developing a Vocation Curriculum for parish religious education programs and are available to give presentations and witness talks. Please invite us to your parish to share on religious life. We also plan to have an Open House on March 8 and a Day of Prayer on September 13 (details to follow).

Join us in praying for vocations. Currently, we have a few women discerning with the Maronite Servants and one who is ready to enter in June. Be assured of our daily prayers for you and your loved ones.

Prayer for the Year of Consecrated Life

O God, throughout the ages you have called women and men to pursue lives of perfect charity through the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity, and obedience.

During this Year of Consecrated Life, we give you thanks for these courageous witnesses of Faith and models of inspiration. Their pursuit of holy lives teaches us to make a more perfect offering of ourselves to you.

Continue to enrich Your Church by calling forth sons and daughters who, having found the pearl of great price, treasure the Kingdom of heaven above all things.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, Your Son, who lives and reigns with You in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen. □

West Covina, California Christmas Concert



by Layla Tahan

On Saturday, December 6, 2014, the community of Saint Jude Maronite Church in West Covina, Calif., held a Christmas Concert performed by Christian singer Nizar Fares. Invited by Father Ramsine Hage Moussa, Pastor, Nizar came from Boston, Mass., for the concert. Nizar, who holds a Ph.D. in Musicology from Holy Spirit University in *Kaslik*, Lebanon, is a Vocal Coach, university lecturer, music teacher and researcher, and choir conductor. During the first half of the concert, he skillfully enchanted the audience with his solos and his charismatic voice. During the second half, the children's choir, who were taught the Arabic songs during religion classes using phonetics, as well as the adults' choir in the religion program at Saint Jude Church, joined him to perform Arabic melodies. He surprisingly created on the spot another Arabic song and invited all children in church to learn it and sing it. Children were very excited and thrilled for breaking a long-held fear to perform spontaneously an Arabic song. At the end, he and both choirs delighted the audience with an engaging Christmas Medley performed in Arabic, English and French, which made everyone call for a repeat. Following the concert, the parish's social committee prepared a reception at the church hall. □



Tequesta, Florida Christmas Gathering



by Pierre E. Azzi, Esq.,
MMOL Finance Committee Chairman

On Saturday, December 6, 2014, Mary, Mother of the Light Church held a Christmas *Hafli* at its new location in Tequesta (Palm Beach County), Florida. The *Hafli* was a huge success drawing about two hundred parishioners and friends in a packed church hall. There was good live Middle Eastern music, plenty of dancing and, of course, lots of great Lebanese food. The event was a wonderful way to foster a greater sense of community, help maintain our heritage and also raise funds for the new church.

Mary, Mother of the Light Church wishes to thank its generous sponsor, Mrs. Delores Solomon and her late husband, Mr. John Solomon, may the Lord grant him eternal peace, and all of the businesses who made donations to the raffle. We also thank the Parish Advisory Council members under the leadership of Fr. Alaa Issa, Administrator, for all their hard work.

If you are or will be in the Palm Beach area, we invite you to celebrate the Divine Liturgy with us. For details about Mary, Mother of Light Church, please visit: <http://www.marymotherofthelight.com> or email: mmolchurch@gmail.com.

On behalf of Fr. Issa and all the parishioners of Mary, Mother of the Light Church, we wish you a Merry Christmas and God's love and joy throughout the new year. □

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. □



Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon Public Release of The Eparchy's App

It is with joy and gladness during this season of The Birth of Our Lord that the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon of Los Angeles launches its Application on iPhone, and soon, on all other smartphones and tablets.

The technology office at The Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon has been working on developing the Eparchy App for the past nine months, and succeeded in a soft launch for beta testers last October, and for a public release of the Eparchy App on Christmas Day 2014. Our gratitude is extended to Fr. John Nahal and the committee that worked diligently on this project.

The Eparchy App serves everyone in the world who would like to know about the Maronite Church in general and about The Maronite Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon of Los Angeles in particular.

In order to download the Eparchy App on an iPhone, all one has to do is search in the App store for "Eparchy," and the Coat of Arms of The Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon will appear.

The Eparchy App's Home page offers News from the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon and the global church along with information on the Eparchy and more information about Maronites. The Parishes tab is very useful for visitors to our Maronite churches in The Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon. They can see where the closest Maronite parish is located and how many miles they have to travel, along with all information, phone numbers, emails, and websites, in order to attend Divine Liturgies and services. The third tab is a directory of all clergy in the Eparchy, with their information and a short biography of each. The fourth tab is a Calendar of important Feast Days and Liturgical celebrations, and there is "More" for additional information, prayer requests, spiritual songs and On-line giving.

I encourage you to visit our Eparchy App and enjoy the wealth of information about the Maronite Church, History, Divine Liturgies, Maronite Icons, Prayer services, Liturgical Hymns, Spiritual Songs, and much more.

With this App the Maronite Church is spreading the Gospel, "The Good News," using the latest in Social Media technology and following the example of "The Apostle of The Gentiles," Saint Paul. Jesus Christ commissioned His disciples: "Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matthew 28:19-20). □

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



Washington, D.C. *Caritas Lebanon-USA*



The Board of Directors of Caritas Lebanon-USA meeting in Washington: Seated: Bishop Gerald Kicanas (Diocese of Tucson, Ariz.), Bishop A. Elias Zaidan (Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon), and Bishop Gregory Mansour (Eparchy of Saint Maron). Second row: Msgr. James Root (Brooklyn, N.Y.), Dr. George Ayoub (Phoenix, Ariz.), Therese Abi Habib (Brooklyn, N.Y.), Dr. Rustom Khouri (Cleveland, Ohio), Father Paul Karam (Beirut, Lebanon), Dr. Jake Jorishie (Tulsa, Okla.). Third row: Father Patrick Posey (Arlington, Va.), Msgr. George Sebaali (Richmond, Va.), Father Elias Abi Sarkis (Tulsa, Okla.), Henry Harder (Tulsa), and John Kurey, Esq. (Stewardship Director of both eparchies).

by Henry Harder

The Board of Directors of Caritas Lebanon-USA met Friday, November 21, 2014, at the Maronite Seminary in Washington, D.C. Caritas Lebanon-USA was established by the initiative of the Maronite Bishops of the United States to fully support the work of Caritas Lebanon, to raise awareness of its needs, and to reach out to people of good will to share this mission.

Caritas Lebanon, organized under the Maronite Patriarch, is one of 165 members of *Caritas Internationalis* with headquarters in Vatican City; its current president is Cardinal Oscar Rodriguez Maradiaga. The mission of Caritas Lebanon is to serve the poorest without any discrimination throughout Lebanon. It does this in diverse activities including medical, social, socio-pastoral, refugee and migrant assistance, emergency intervention, reconstruction, rehabilitation and economic development. The current president of Caritas Lebanon is Father Paul Karam. The director of Caritas Lebanon here in the U.S. is Father Elias Abi Sarkis.

Father Karam came from Lebanon to meet the Board of Directors, and in his presentation to the Board he detailed some of the needs of Caritas Lebanon. He noted some of the burdens presented by the 1.6 million Syrian refugees, who are

interspersed throughout various parts of the country. This has created economic problems among the Lebanese. He noted that 80% have no health care; Caritas Lebanon has only nine mobile clinics to help.

Father Paul also noted that it is difficult to get medical goods to Lebanon in time to be effective. One example is that a shipment of medicine passed its sell-by date while sitting in Malta. Thus, the best way to help the poor is by sending money, as Caritas can obtain its needs locally at lower prices.

Father Elias announced that Caritas Lebanon-USA has \$30,000 to wire to Lebanon now. The most effective way is to wire money to Caritas Lebanon's bank account in Beirut; this is part of Father Elias's responsibility.

Bishop Gregory Mansour reported on the success he, Bishop A. Elias Zaidan, and several Eastern rite bishops have had in getting the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) to support their efforts. In June the Eastern bishops asked for a special collection in 2015, but the USCCB moved quickly and ordered such a collection for September 2014.

Bishop Gerald F. Kicanas of the Diocese of Tucson, Ariz., has joined the board of Caritas Lebanon-USA. He served as Chairman of the Catholic Relief Services Board of Directors, a USCCB organization, for several years. It was because of him that Bishop Mansour was asked to join the CRS Board.

The Board discussed methods of increasing support for Caritas Lebanon by all Catholics. The first step is to allay apathy, quiet fears, and engender enthusiasm in the leaders of the people, their priests.

Board member Dr. Rustom Khouri announced that work continues toward getting a website for Caritas Lebanon-USA, and he expects to present it to the Board at its next meeting. Relevant Caritas websites include Caritas Lebanon: <http://caritas.org.lb/> and Caritas Internationalis <http://www.caritas.org/>.

Those wishing to contribute may contact Father Elias Abi Sarkis, Saint Therese Catholic Church, 8315 South 107th East Avenue, Tulsa, OK 74133. □

Tulsa, Oklahoma *Christmas Luncheon*



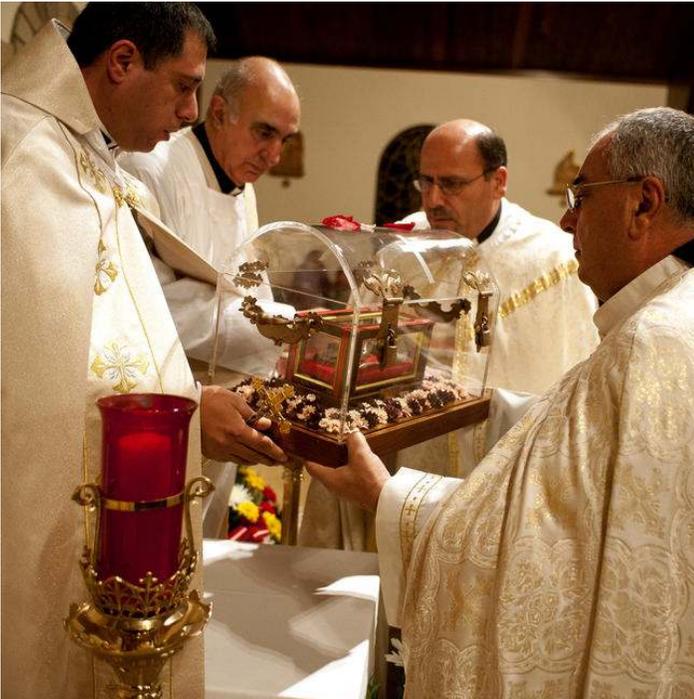
St. Therese Maronite Parish, Tulsa, Okla., celebrated its 18th Annual Christmas Luncheon fundraiser on December 7, 2014. Its continued growth indicates

increased knowledge and respect of this Maronite community by the general population in Tulsa. This year's record number of 596 lunches breaks last year's record by over 10%.

The festivities started after Divine Liturgy and continued past the 2:30 scheduled ending. The associated bake sale of Lebanese foods ended earlier with sellouts of most offerings.

Entertainment was offered by Cesar's Band and by a magician's show. Also, a photographer offered individual portraits of the participants. A grant by the Allen Elias family offset these expenses. Father Elias Abi Sarkis, Pastor, acknowledged this grant as well as a contribution by Dr. Rustom Khouri of Cleveland, Ohio. Several clergy attended as guests of the parish. □

Easton, Pennsylvania *St. Rafka's Relics*



Fr. Paul Azzi transfers relic to Fr. Simon El Hajj in the presence of Fr. Kamil El Chouafatti and Deacon Anthony Koury.

by Naomi Koerwitz

On Thursday, November 6, 2014, hundreds of the faithful flocked to Our Lady of Lebanon Maronite Catholic Church in Easton, Pennsylvania, to witness and come into contact with the 100-year-old remains of Saint Rafka, who was affectionately referred to as "the Patroness of People in Pain." Many came to pray for her intercession on behalf of family members or themselves. Others came to be part of history.

St. Rafka was the first Middle Eastern Saint to be displayed in the United States and Our Lady of Lebanon was the only Church in Pennsylvania to have the honor and privilege of hosting her relics (fragments of St. Rafka's bones). Members of the congregation pressed their palms to the box or the painting of Rafka as she was carried in a procession. Father Simon El Hajj, Pastor, said during Liturgy that "people used to have to go to Lebanon to see the

relics. This is the 100th anniversary, and she has chosen to be with us."

The Church remained open through the night and into Friday morning in order for people to have access to St. Rafka and to pray over her relics. Another Liturgy was held on Friday morning before St. Rafka's relics were taken to their next stop, Our Lady of Lebanon Maronite Catholic Cathedral in Brooklyn, New York. □

Fall River, Massachusetts *Winter Concert*



by Shannon Martin

On December 13, 2014, the St. Anthony of the Desert Church Choir presented its 2nd annual Winter Concert featuring a children's living nativity as the opening act. Led by Evan Massoud and David Faris, the choir performed nineteen songs, with the children accompanying them on a beautiful version of "It's the Messiah" and the enjoyable "Rudolph, The Red-Nosed Reindeer." The night was only made possible by the dedication and time of many people. The choir thanks all those involved and all who attended for supporting the church. Merry Christmas and a Blessed New Year! □

Livonia, Michigan *Youth Regional Retreat*

Hosted by St. Rafka Maronite Catholic Church, the eparchial youth regional retreat will take place the weekend of February 13 - 15, 2015, at the Marriott Hotel in Livonia, Michigan. Completed applications and checks should be turned in to Fr. Gary George, Director, no later than January 26, 2015. For applications, fees and further details, please visit www.maronite-youth.com. □

Food For Thought

A 2012 study out of Georgetown University-based Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) has found that young people are more likely to act on a religious vocation when three or more people invite them to do so. □

Cranston, Rhode Island *Food Drive*



by Janelle Khoury

The youths of St. George Maronite Church in Cranston [Providence], R.I., held a food drive for a few weekends in November 2014, and were able to collect and donate over nine bins of food to their friends at St. Raymond Catholic Church for their food pantry. □

Warren, Michigan *Prayers For Christians in the Middle East*



Bishop Zaidan with young members of St. Sharbel Church.

The Most Rev. Allen H. Vigneron, Archbishop of Detroit, Mich., hosted the second annual prayer service for Christians in the Middle East on Friday, November 21, 2014. The faithful of the Detroit area, including the parishioners and pastors of the Maronite Churches, and the choir of St. Sharbel Maronite Church in Warren, Mich., accompanied by the Most Rev. A. Elias Zaidan, Bishop of the

Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon, attended the Holy Hour of prayer and songs imploring the protection of Our Mother of Perpetual Help, Queen of Peace. Over eight hundred Christians filled the Cathedral of the Most Blessed Sacrament. Fellowship was held following the service. The Maronite parishes in the Detroit area are very grateful to the Archdiocese of Detroit and Archbishop Vigneron for hosting the Chaldean, Melkite, Maronite, Armenian, Syriac and Latin Rite Catholics to participate in this beautiful prayer service.

On November 22 - 23, 2014, the Most. Rev. A. Elias Zaidan made a pastoral visit to St. Sharbel Maronite Church in Warren, Mich. Bishop Zaidan celebrated all three liturgies and attended the annual Lebanese American Club of Michigan (LACOM) Trailblazer Banquet on Saturday evening.

On Sunday, November 23, His Excellency visited the students of the Religious Education Program during their class time and the Arabic Language Program students, who celebrated the 71st Lebanese Independence Day with a play and the singing of the Lebanese Anthem.

Knights of St. Gregory



From left: Mr. Leonard Thomas, Chorbishop Alfred Badawi and Mr. Paul Fayad.

On November 2, 2014, Mr. Leonard Thomas and Mr. Paul Fayad were invested into the Order of the Knights of St. Gregory the Great during the Divine Liturgy at St. Sharbel Maronite Church in Warren, Mich. Both Mr. Thomas and Mr. Fayad are members of the Knights of Columbus and have served the parish over many years in various capacities of leadership and service. May God bless you as you continue to serve Him and His Church. □

Brooklyn, New York *Holiday Bake Sale*



Msgr. Jim Root, Rector, with members of the Confraternity of the Immaculate Conception.

As preparations for the Christmas holiday swung into high gear, the ladies of the Confraternity of the Immaculate Conception at Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral, Brooklyn, N.Y., found time to mount their annual Bake Sale and Boutique on December 6 - 7, 2014.

Kitchens were buzzing with activity as each talented member created her own specialty to be swept up by the community at large. Who could resist the exotic array of delicious sweets? In truth, no one! Assorted bags of nuts were also available and very well received.

To add to the interest of the Bake Sale and to facilitate Christmas shopping, several vendors were present, offering a variety of goods such as jewelry, linens, bags and crafts. A variety of donated baskets were put up for a raffle.

The Ladies outdid themselves in their generosity of time and material and in their willingness to bring us together in this joyful season to benefit the needs of the Cathedral. □

Boston, Massachusetts *Christmas Pageant*

by Randa Yazbeck

On December 21, 2014, the Sunday of the Genealogy of Jesus, the Religious Education Program students at Our Lady of the Cedars of Lebanon Church, Jamaica Plain [Boston], Mass., from Kindergarten to the Eighth Grade brought alive from more than 2000 years ago that precious night at Bethlehem, the Birth of our Savior Jesus Christ. Rev. Georges El-Khalli, Pastor, opened the pageant with a prayer as he blessed the cast and the crowded hall which was filled by parishioners.

The pageant was under the direction of Mrs. Jeymie Khoury. At the end of the play, directed by Mrs. Nisrine El-Hachem, they chanted English and Arabic carols.

After the play the children wrapped gifts they had bought, and they donated them to The Child Life Department



at Children's Hospital in Boston. The celebration was extended after the Divine Liturgy with a Christmas breakfast sponsored by the MYA of Our Lady of the Cedars Parish. □

Chicago, Illinois *Lebanon Independence Day*



Illinois Lieutenant Governor Evelyn Sanguinetti (right) congratulates Madeleine Malek.

On Saturday, November 22, 2014, the 71st anniversary of Lebanon's Independence Day, a celebration took place at the Drury Lane Banquets in Oakbrook Terrace, Illinois.

The event exceeded expectations when over two-hundred guests enjoyed Lebanese appetizers, dinner and a *Hafli*. Entertainment featured David Hakim and his band.

Net proceeds of \$10,400 were sent through Bishop A. Elias Zaidan, Bishop of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon, to aid the Middle East Christians who have taken refuge in Lebanon.

The newly elected Illinois Lieutenant Governor Evelyn Sanguinetti attended the celebration. A special Distinguished Service Award was presented to Madeleine Malik of Lombard, Illinois, in recognition of her outstanding and unselfish service to the community.

The printed programs featured an information page on the "History of Independence Day," and an insert featuring the major Phoenician contributions to the world and the Lebanese-American contributions to U.S. society. □



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Hosted by

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San Francisco Bay Area, CA



Schedule of Events

Friday March 13, 2015

3:00 PM	-	7:00 PM	Registration & Hospitality
7:00 PM	-	7:30 PM	Prayer Service
7:30 PM	-	12:00 AM	Welcome Party

Saturday March 14, 2015

9:00 AM	-	9:30 AM	Prayer Service
9:30 AM	-	12:00 PM	Registration & Hospitality
10:00 AM	-	10:50 AM	Workshop I
11:00 AM	-	11:50 AM	Workshop II
11:00 AM	-	11:50 AM	Workshop III — Faith & Science for MYO
12:30 PM	-	7:00 PM	Tour in San Francisco for MYA & MYO
7:00 PM	-	8:00 PM	Cocktail Hour
8:00 PM	-	1:00 AM	Grand Banquet - Live Entertainment!

Sunday March 15, 2015

9:00 AM	-	11:00 AM	Farewell Breakfast
12:00 PM	-	1:00 PM	Divine Liturgy

Our Lady of Lebanon



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A Gift to the Church

Continued from page 1

The life of monks and nuns centers on two principles: work and prayer. Their lives center on praying the Divine Office (Prayer of the Faithful), the celebration of the Divine Liturgy or *Qurbano*, spiritual and scriptural readings and reflection, such as the *Lectio Divina*, while observing all the rituals and services of the Maronite Church. When not at communal prayer, religious devote themselves to study and meditation. All this is only interrupted by their work and daily chores in order to support themselves and to be able to help care for the poor who come to them for aid or to their pastoral ministry.

It is sometimes asked, "Why would someone want to be a monk or nun in our world today?" The recent Maronite Patriarchal Synod (2003-2006) tells us: "Monastic life is above all a burning search for God with awe and love." Monks and nuns enter into a quest for a relationship with Jesus Himself. They commit themselves to the historic vows of chastity (celibacy), poverty and obedience. These are the three foundational and evangelical virtues they are obliged to live out. Religious give up their right to marriage in order to free themselves to love all people regardless of ethnicity, profession or social position.

Monks and nuns adhere to "evangelical" poverty by renouncing personal possessions as Jesus instructed in the Gospel of St. Matthew (19:20-21): "The young man said to him, 'All of these [laws] I have observed. What do I still lack?' Jesus said to him, 'If you wish to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.'"

The third vow of "obedience" can be the most difficult. Monks or nuns vow to obey their superiors. It is a voluntary submission of oneself to obey Church authority beyond the demand of obedience prescribed on all the faithful. It is the free surrender of one's autonomy in order to better imitate

Christ, who became obedient unto death, even to death on the Cross as St. Paul tells us in Philippians 2:8, and to cooperate with him in his work of redemption.

Consecrated religious life is not for everyone, but there is no doubt that the Lord continues to call men and women to that life. We must support those who feel the call, especially our youth. We should take time to pray for all those Consecrated Religious: the monks and nuns of our Church. They pray for us, let us always remember them and celebrate and give thanks to God for their lives of true devotion and commitment to God and His Holy Church. ☐

+ A. Elias Zaidan
Bishop of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon

Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania Nativity Play



On Sunday Dec 14, 2014, the children of St. Anthony/St. George Parish, Wilkes-Barre, Penn., participated in a nativity play, which focused on keeping the birth of Our Lord as the main reason for the Christmas celebration. It was followed by a Christmas party in the Church hall. ☐