



# The Maronite Voice

A Publication of the Maronite Eparchies in the USA



Volume VIII

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June 2012

## To the Readers of The Maronite Voice

May 25, 2012

Dear Beloved Readers of *The Maronite Voice*:

Each month you and I have the joy of reading this inter-eparchial publication called *The Maronite Voice*. We often times do so without thinking to thank all those who put their time and talent, often long hours, in this labor of love. Therefore, on behalf of Bishop Robert J. Shaheen and myself I want to thank Monsignor George Sebaali and all his helpers for putting together a first class publication.

Secondly, I want to bring to your attention the contents of this month's *Maronite Voice*. You will read about Patriarch Bechara Rai's second visit to the United States and first to Canada and Mexico; about my *Ad Limina* visit with the eighteen Eastern Catholic Bishops of the United States along with Chorbishop Michael Thomas to Rome to pray at the tombs of Saints Peter and Paul and to visit with our Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI; about the upcoming MYO Retreat in Saint Louis and the Maronite (NAM) Convention in San Antonio; some news about the Religious Liberty issues facing us as Catholics in the United States; and a variety of other newsworthy items from both Maronite Eparchies in the United States and throughout the world.

I hope as you browse these pages, you will say a prayer for all those who brought this *Maronite Voice* to your home and parish; and thank God for good people like Monsignor George and his helpers.

Sincerely yours in Christ,  
+Gregory John Mansour  
Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn



Bishop Gregory Mansour with His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI.

## Schedule of Bishop Robert Shaheen

### June 3, 2012

Thanksgiving Liturgy, St. Raymond Cathedral, Saint Louis, Mo.

### June 5 - 22, 2012

Maronite Bishops' Synod, Bkerke, Lebanon.

### June 26 - 30, 2012

Maronite Youth Workshop, Saint Louis, Mo.

### July 2 - 9, 2012

Annual Clergy Conference and Maronite Convention, Saint Antonio, Tex. □

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- Most Reverend Bishop Gregory John Mansour

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### **Maronite Convention 2012**

St. George Maronite Church

San Antonio, Texas

**July 4 - 8, 2012**

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

## Dartmouth, Massachusetts *The Maronite Servants of Christ the Light*

The Maronite Servants of Christ the Light will host a summer vacation Bible camp - LoL Club (Light of Life Club), at their convent on 856 Tucker Road, Dartmouth, Mass., July 23 - 27 from 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. for ages four to twelve years old (children 13 and older can be volunteer helpers). For more information or to register your child(ren) please contact Sister Marla Marie at (508) 996 -1753. The LoL Club will feature fun activities, Bible stories, prayer, games, videos and crafts designed to help children grow in their love for Jesus and to learn more about Maronite heritage and saints.



Sr. Marla Marie with Deacon Hicham Chemali, S.J.; Nabih and Nouhad Moujabar at a *Ramsho* Supper evening on Sunday, May 20, 2012.

Also, each month on the second Sunday, the Sisters host a *Ramsho* and Supper at 5:00 p.m. *Ramsho* is the Maronite evening prayer, and following this all gather for supper. Please RSVP to attend.

The Maronite Servants' blog, [RadiateHisLight.blogspot.com](http://RadiateHisLight.blogspot.com), lists all upcoming events. If you are interested in attending or organizing a prayer event, contact the Sisters via email or phone. Their website, [MaroniteServants.org](http://MaroniteServants.org), posts a photo gallery of recent apostolic events. □

### **Eparchial Appointment**

His Excellency Robert Shaheen, Bishop of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon, has appointed **Ms. Pamela DiMercurio** as Executive Director and Administrator of the Maronite Heritage Institute in St. Louis, Missouri, effective June 1, 2012. □

### **Order of Saint Sharbel**

The website of the Order of Saint Sharbel is ready. Please visit at [www.orderstsharbel.org](http://www.orderstsharbel.org). □

# Eparchy of Saint Maron

## Visit to Rome - The Threshold of the Apostles



Bishop Gregory Mansour (left) and Chorbishop Michael Thomas with His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI.

by Chorbishop Michael G. Thomas

Every five to seven years all the Catholic Bishops of the world must make a pilgrimage to Rome and present a status report of their diocese or eparchy, and at that time they meet with the Holy Father. This is called the *Visita Ad Limina Apostolorum*, which means the "Visit to the Threshold of the Apostles."

This *Ad Limina* visit usually takes about a week and involves pilgrimages to the four Major Basilicas: Saint Peter, Saint Mary Major, Saint John Lateran, and Saint Paul Outside the Walls; meetings with various offices of the Roman Curia; and a meeting with the Holy Father. The bishops making this pilgrimage renew their commitment to following in the footsteps of the Apostles Peter and Paul, and they make a public Profession of Faith at the tomb of Saint Peter.

From May 14 - 19, 2012, I was privileged to have had the

opportunity to participate in this visit with Bishop Gregory Mansour, who was joined by most of the Eastern Catholic Bishops of the United States: Bishop Samra, Melkite; Bishop Habash, Syriac; Bishop Mouradian, Armenian; Bishop Botean, Romanian; Archbishop Metropolitan Soroka, Ukrainian, and Bishops Chomnycky, Seminac, and Bora, Ruthenian; Archbishop Metropolitan Skurla, Ruthenian, and Bishops Dino, and Kudrick, Ruthenian, and Father Cimbala (Administrator), Ruthenian; and Bishops Ibrahim and Jammo, Chaldean. Bishop Shaheen could not attend as he was hosting our Maronite Patriarch [His Beatitude Bechara Peter Rai], who was visiting his eparchy during the same week. The Malabar and Malankar bishops were not present as they made their *Ad Limina* visit last year with the bishops from their own Churches from India.

These Bishops represent all of the Eastern Catholic eparchies established in the United States. The Holy Father himself, along with several Vatican officials, stressed the historicity of this particular visit as it is the first time that all of the Eastern Catholic Bishops of the United States make their *Ad Limina* visit as a group, now that they have been established as a unique part of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) known as Region XV. The USCCB is divided into fourteen geographic regions and one "Eastern Catholic" region. Our visit concluded the *Ad Limina* visits of the United States Bishops which had begun in November.

During this *Ad Limina* visit we were offered hospitality at the Pontifical North American College. There, our schedule and transportation were arranged, and we were briefed daily on the specifics of the celebration of the Masses, the meetings, and the events. This was done by a special office established by the USCCB especially for the American *Ad Limina* visits.

Specifically, we had meetings at: The Secretariat of State, the Congregation for Eastern Churches, the Supreme Tribunal of the Apostolic Signatura, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (where we were happy to have Father John Paul Kimes, an Official of that Congregation, present along with the Cardinal), the Council for the New Evangelization, the Council for Migrants (immigration), and the Council for Christian Unity.

We were received at receptions at the Pontifical North American College Seminary; the Villa Stritch, which is the residence of American priests who are Officials of the Roman Curia; the Casa Santa Maria, the graduate house for American priests pursuing advanced degrees in Rome; the Pontifical Oriental Institute; and the Embassy of the United States to the Holy See.

As a group, we also celebrated the Divine Liturgy at the four Major Basilicas: At Saint Peter, Cardinal Sandri, the Prefect of the Congregation for Eastern Churches, was the principal celebrant using the Latin Rite; At Saint Mary Major, Metropolitan Soroka was the principal celebrant using the Ukrainian Byzantine Rite; At Saint Paul, Bishop Gregory was the principal celebrant using the Maronite Rite; and at Saint John Lateran, Metropolitan Skurla was the principal celebrant using the Ruthenian Byzantine Rite.

In addition to these many activities, Bishop Gregory and I also spent an evening at the Maronite College. There we visited with the Patriarchal Procurator, Chorbishop Tony Gebran, and with Archbishop (Continues on page 4)

## Rome, Italy Welcome Reception



*Bishop Gregory Mansour Addressed the United States Ambassador to the Holy See, Mr. Miguel Diaz, and his wife on the occasion of their welcome reception to the Eastern Catholic Bishops in their home in Rome on Friday, May 18, 2012.*

*Dear Ambassador and Mrs. Diaz, Cardinal Sandri, Brother Bishops and Friends,*

We have come to Rome, Eastern Catholic Bishops, as pastors and shepherds, but these days we are also pilgrims. We have come to pray at the tombs of Saints Peter and Paul, to be inspired by their love for the faith and their desire to stop at nothing to proclaim the truth of Jesus Christ, and a life-giving repentance that is good news to all who receive it. Billy Graham got it right. The essence of the Gospel is the good news that all of us, no matter what we have done in life, can find mercy and forgiveness from the God who loves us. We came also as pilgrims to be with Peter, in the person of Pope Benedict XVI, in the hope of being confirmed in our faith and in turn to be able to confirm our brothers and sisters.

We thank you, Mr. Ambassador, because you and your wife, both theologians who love the faith, have a special love for the Church as

"communion." As Eastern Catholic Bishops we live a most beautiful communion in the Church. We are twenty-one Eastern Catholic Churches and one Latin Catholic Church all in communion with one another, and all under the jurisdiction of the Supreme Pontiff, the Pope of Rome.

We are proud Americans, Mr. Ambassador, moreover, many of us have deep roots in our countries of origin in Eastern Europe and the Middle East. There, since the beginning of the Christian era, we have worked tirelessly with others to build a just and good society. We have known danger, lack of religious freedom, persecutions, as well as too many refugees, tragedies and wars. In the midst of all this, and still today, we continue to build up our societies there with much love.

In the United States, we too stand with our neighbors, Catholics and non-Catholics, in our desire to build a just and good society, founded first on marriage and the family.

Our desire is for a society that respects the poor, the vulnerable, the unborn, the handicapped, the needy and the immigrant, one that respects human rights and human dignity. In fact, our Catholic institutions of education, health care, and social services have done just that and continue to do so.

We desire, insist on, and will settle for no less than a robust religious liberty, promised to us by the first amendment, not just to worship freely but also to live in conformity with our conscience. We insist on this freedom not that we may impose on others, but that we may continue to be ourselves, and propose a vision of the Gospel that includes all people and builds up, that honors what is good and noble in culture, yet critiques what is not good, and respects every person from the moment of conception to natural death.

Mr. Ambassador, we face problems in our countries of origins where there is a lack of freedom of religion and conscience. In our own country of the United States, today we also face similar problems. Because of this, we make our own the words of the great Sir Thomas More, "we are the King's

loyal servants, but God's first."

Thank you for inviting us to meet with you on this important occasion. □

## Visit to Rome - The Threshold of the Apostles

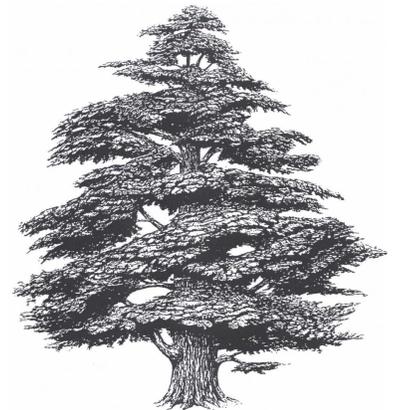
*(Continued from page 3)*

Joseph Souief who was visiting from Cyprus, and Bishops Camil Zaidan and Francis Baisari visiting from Lebanon.

We were blessed to have had two private audiences with our Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI. At the first one, the Pope gave an address to the Bishops of our Region, and at the second, each bishop was given the opportunity to address the Holy Father on a particular issue. Pope Benedict was very interested in the life of the Eastern Catholic Churches in the United States and assured us of his special prayers for our unique mission in the Catholic Church.

We believe that the Bishops of our Region truly made an impact at the Vatican, showing the solidarity, strength, and diversity of the Eastern Catholic Churches in the United States.

The entire six-day trip was packed with events, but it was truly a memorable and blessed visit which will be cherished by both of us for many years to come. □



*The Cedar of Lebanon*

**Message of His Eminence Leonardo Cardinal Sandri,  
Prefect of The Congregation For Oriental Churches  
to the Oriental Bishops of The United States on the Occasion of Their  
Visit Ad Limina Apostolorum  
Congregation For Oriental Churches, May 15, 2012**

Your Excellencies,

**Y**ou have come to Rome as pilgrims to express your communion in the Church with the Successor of Peter chosen by Christ to "preside in charity." At this first *Ad Limina* visit composed of bishops of the various Eastern Churches, you provide an admirable image of the Catholic Church in her universality, diversity and antiquity.

This encounter is above all an experience of communion in Christ. Pope Benedict emphasized the importance of communion for the Eastern Churches when he preached at the opening of the Synod for the Middle East some eighteen months ago. "Without communion there can be no witness: the life of communion is truly the great witness. Jesus said it clearly: *'It is by your love for one another, that everyone will recognize you as my disciples'* (Jn 13:35)" (Pope Benedict XVI, Homily at Opening of the Special Assembly on the Middle East, October 10, 2010). Then he added: "Communion always requires conversion." And so this, like every pilgrimage, is a time of conversion, which means turning to God ever anew through Jesus Christ.

The first characteristic of your people is that they are - in regard to their cultural and religious patrimony - far from home. But they are in another dear motherland: The United States of America. To the Faithful in the Diaspora, which you are, the Synod fathers addressed this exhortation: "Keep alive in your hearts and concerns the memory of your countries and your Churches... Hold fast to your spiritual values, to your cultural traditions and to your national patrimony."

But as Faithful of the one Catholic Church in America, with its specific cultural perspectives, religious sensibility, social vision and rules, the States are your home. In this context the Eastern Christians are a bridge. They can support their brothers and

sisters in the proper territory by prayer, advocacy, moral and material support. Likewise, they can, by remaining faithful to their traditions, enrich the countries in which they now live and work. The United States has great need of your cultural and religious identity, which is far older than the nation in which you are living. In this way, as the Synod Fathers observed, you will be like "the first Christians of Jerusalem [who] were few in number, yet they were able to take the Gospel to the ends of the earth because of the grace of *'the Lord who acted with them and confirmed their word by signs'* (Mk 16:20)." Moreover, you can also resemble those early Christians in that they did not forget the needs of the saints back home.

Of course, your own local churches have needs, too. Let me briefly mention those from your reports that seem most pressing. Then I will look forward to your contributions to a discussion. To begin with, there are obvious practical challenges in your situation. Your territories are enormous, and your communities often find themselves far from each other. Some of the eparchies are young and still in need of adequate structures. There are often little financial reserves and even a need to depend upon help from outside the community. This issue has only been exacerbated by the economic crisis that has also affected the United States.

While many of your faithful have been there for many generations, there are also significant challenges arising from immigration. For some of you, your ancient heritage and recent history of persecution are not understood or appreciated in America. New arrivals are always in need of welcome and other forms of charity. If you maintain your identity, you can be for many a ready friend and valuable support.

The arrival of immigrants has been a boost to your numbers, but today they are often in need of evangelization themselves. Moreover, the cultural context of the United States, with its

materialism, secularism, and sects presents a challenge to the transmission of your moral and religious patrimony. Some of you are experiencing a dramatic fall in the numbers of your flock. You are not immune to the same corrosive effect on morals and family life as are your fellow Latin Catholics.

The difficulties in maintaining strong family and social bonds contribute to a shortage of vocations. While some of your churches still have relatively high proportions of clergy to laity, the extent of the territory still makes a need felt. Allow me to encourage you in all of the associated challenges: Maintaining formation programs, integrating immigrant priests, embracing celibacy in respect of the ecclesial context, and of course encouraging young people to listen to the voice of the Master calling them to leave everything and follow Him.

Dear Brothers, let me return to the "communion," that is not only our identity and our mission, but it is also the means of meeting the challenges just mentioned. The stronger the bonds of charity that bind our churches together, the more capable they will be of resisting hostile forces, of assisting the vulnerable, of inspiring vocations, and so forth. Love is the essence of communion, and it is ultimately the only power, for God is love. Through the Risen Christ we already share in that Divine nature, in that power to draw all things together and make them new. In the face of many difficulties, may the Lord grant you all a strong hope that His grace will enable you and your faithful to overcome them together.

Finally, in closing, I would like to return to the figure of the Apostle Peter about whom we heard this morning in the readings. While I commented on those of the liturgy of the day, the readings of the Votive Mass of St. Peter were proclaimed. This is perhaps a little sign from the Lord. We also, like St. Peter, despite all of our weaknesses, say  
(Continues on page 6)

**Homily of Cardinal Sandri,  
During the Visit Ad Limina Apostolorum of the Oriental Bishops of the  
United States of America  
Basilica of St. Peter, Vatican City, May 15, 2012**

**M**y dear brothers in Christ, the words that we have just heard were first spoken in the Cenacle on the eve of the Passion. The apostles are gathered together around their Master, sharing for the first time in the mystical banquet of His Body and Blood. He is preparing them not only for the jarring experience of the next day, but for the mission they will carry on for years to come.

Our sacred liturgy this morning is in strict continuity with this event of the Last Supper. As bishops, we are the bearers of the apostolic burden to transmit the words, works and presence of the Incarnate Son of God. We have gathered for the same mystical banquet, the identical one, for it is unique. As the first apostles looked to Peter for leadership, so we come to his tomb to honor his faith, the apostolic faith of the Church, which, with his present successor, we proclaim before the world of today.

Moreover, as you begin your *Ad Limina Apostolorum* visit today, you may well feel rather like the apostles as they listened to these words of the Lord. Their time of apprenticeship was over, and they were soon to be sent forth into a hostile world. You, dear Eastern bishops, as representatives of the diverse Eastern Churches in the Catholic Church are living symbols of the apostles, who set out in all directions from Jerusalem to establish Christian communities. Like them, you have encountered opposition, indifference, and ignorance along the way.

We heard in the first reading a report of the physical persecution endured by Paul and Silas. The Lord knew against what sort of challenges He was sending His disciples. That is why He promised them, and us, the Advocate, the *Paraklitos*. The Lord expresses the indispensable need of the Church for this Advocate with the astonishing words: "It is better for you that I go... [for] if I go, I will send him to you."

It is precisely during these days of your visit that the Church celebrates the Ascension. At this feast, the Lord will "go." However, the Word remains while leaving, just as the Spirit is sent, although He has been present all along. These two great events - Ascent of the Lord and Descent of His Spirit - complete the Paschal mystery. Just as they brought a tremendous newness of life to the early disciples of Jesus, so must they bring renewal to us now.

In our day, too, there are still people who turn to us asking "What must I do to be saved?" They know that we have been entrusted with the "words of eternal life" (Jn. 6:68). Yet, perhaps our day is characterized even more by the many who do not stop to wonder about salvation. May the Holy Spirit continue through us "to convict the world in regard to sin and righteousness and condemnation."

With regard to sin, we need the power of the Spirit to stir men's hearts. They live in a world that has lost the sense of sin because it has lost the sense of God's commandments: "They do not believe in me." Here the beauty and nobility of the Divine Liturgy, celebrated according to the liturgical norms, maintains the sacred even in the midst of a secularized and preoccupied society.

With regard to righteousness, we need the power of the Spirit to present a true and attractive image of holiness. Having gone to the Father, the Holy One is no longer visible on earth. Now He asks us to be "light of the world" (cf. Mt. 5:14). Many people today have come to doubt that there is still holiness or honesty in the Church and in the clergy. We must prove them wrong. We can be a true community of saints who shine as models of chastity and charity before a culture in great need of this witness.

Finally, with regard to condemnation: "The ruler of this world has been condemned." The victory is in the hands of Christ Jesus. Although the Church often appears to be in decline and "behind the times," in fact, she is

always gathering strength. Despite his show of pomp and power, it is the ruler of the world who has been defeated. Continue, my brothers, in union with your Latin counterparts, to fight against the rising tide of religious intolerance. May your courage and confidence convince the multitudes that without God there is no peace, no prosperity, no salvation.

So, then, my brothers, let us take courage during this pilgrimage *Ad Limina Apostolorum*. The mission of Jesus Christ continues through us. What a privilege and responsibility is ours! The Lord is with us, as He promised, until the end, and so is the Advocate Whom He has sent. In this sacred place loved by all Christian people let us open our hearts to the profession of faith of Peter: "You, Jesus are the Christ, the Son of the living God." We hear with profound consolation the answer of the Lord: "You are Peter." This promise of Christ is a gift for us now and always. Peter is the Rock established as the foundation of the Church, a visible and living Rock throughout history for the unity of the body of Christ. May the Mother of the Risen One accompany us, as Queen of Apostles, showing us the best path to take on our pastoral mission, the path of unity in the truth and love of Christ our Lord and God. Amen. □

**Message of Cardinal  
Sandri**

*Continued from page 5*

again to Our Lord Jesus, Who has chosen us and constituted us as Pastors, "Lord, to whom else would we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe that you are the Son of God and that you love us. We want to love you in return, Lord, and the Church which you have established."

Thank you for your attention, as I have initiated our common reflection today. □

# Saint Louis, Missouri *In Communion and Love*



His Beatitude Patriarch Bechara Peter Rai.

by Ramona Milford

The Lord said, "*Behold, they are one people, and they all have the same language. And this is what they began to do, and now nothing which they propose to do will be impossible for them*" (Genesis 11: 6).

Several days in May parishioners of St. Raymond Cathedral in St. Louis, Missouri, were blessed to have His Beatitude Patriarch Bechara Peter Rai in their presence. He was the special guest of Bishop Robert Shaheen and Msgr. Moussa Joseph, Rector of St. Raymond Cathedral, as he was honored by St. Louis University with an Honorary Doctorate Degree in Humanities.

On May 20, 2012, parishioners were advised that the Patriarch would be taping his weekly broadcast that evening and the taping would be entirely in Arabic. This did not dissuade attendees who were not fluent in Arabic from attending. In fact, they were especially moved by the Patriarch's address. You might wonder how that can be without a fluent understanding of Arabic. Perhaps it is because we gathered together as a faithful Maronite community seeking to be in "communion and love" with our Patriarch as our spiritual Shepherd and trusted leader of the Maronite Church throughout the world. Secondly, the Patriarch is truly a sincere man of faith gifted with the skills of an articulate speaker in any language. Sometimes truth, sincerity and faith can actually transcend language barriers.

This is very important, especially when you consider how "language" can be such a barrier to real dialogue. Imagine how many wars or conflicts may have been avoided had the parties really communicated with one another and eroded the

barriers between ideas. Imagine how many more individuals could discover and appreciate the "jewel" of the Maronite Church if language restrictions did not exclude them.

You do not have to be fluent in Arabic to be a good Maronite, and those parts of the Liturgy that are in Syriac/Aramaic can be learned and recited by anyone passionate and sincere enough to participate in the Liturgy. Insistence on the exclusive use of one language over another only serves to bar those who would want to participate freely. It smothers the efforts to evangelize others and limits the longevity of the Church once those fluent in Arabic are gone.

Consider this: In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century a number of Lebanese immigrants came to the United States of America and to other lands in order to escape the oppression of the Ottoman Empire. They were poor, uneducated and spoke no English, but they were extremely rich in their faith.

They settled in various small communities along with aunts, cousins, brothers, etc. across the United States. The first priority of these immigrants was to create a center for worship in their communities. God and their faith were at the top of their "to do list." It was their action and faith in motion that built many of the Maronite churches that exist in the United States today. Second, third and fourth generations have built upon the faith of those immigrants by keeping those church doors open and building upon them.

Over the years, as their children and grandchildren assimilated into the culture of the United States and were educated in the local schools, English began to replace Arabic as the spoken language in the households of the Maronites. Yet, the Maronite Church in the United States has grown and has opened its doors to anyone wishing to worship God according to the Maronite tradition.

His Beatitude Patriarch Bechara Peter Rai reminded us all on May 20<sup>th</sup> that sincerity, faith and love can transcend language barriers as long as we who are faithful truly are listening. If we cannot communicate with one another and remove the barriers to communication then nothing will be possible. However, as Genesis states; "*with the same language, nothing we propose to do will be impossible.*"

The Maronite Church is blessed to have such a wise leader as Patriarch Bechara Peter Rai and all of those early immigrants and clergy. They are and were the sowers of the seeds of faith. Now the challenge is passed to each of us to continue to listen and uphold our Maronite Church "in communion and love." □

**Deadline for next month's issue of**  
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*The Maronite Voice* is the official Newsletter of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon and of the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn.

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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). □

## Warren, Michigan *Michigan Welcomes Patriarch in His North America Tour*



Children of Saint Sharbel Church welcome Patriarch Rai.

by Jessica Sader and Michelle Makhoul

Crowds of people gathered at Saint Sharbel Church in Warren, Michigan, awaiting the arrival of His Beatitude Patriarch Bechara Peter Rai on Sunday, May 13, 2012. His Beatitude was welcomed with flowers, *zaffe* dancers, music and the love of fellow Maronites and supporters.

His three-day visit to Michigan began as he walked under an arch that was hand-crafted by members of the church specifically for his arrival. Children and young adults involved in the religious education program, Arabic classes and *dabke* groups welcomed him.

His Beatitude then celebrated a standing-room only Divine Liturgy. Archbishop Allen Vigneron, of the Archdiocese of Detroit, Auxiliary Bishop Francis Reiss, and many priests and religious were present at the Liturgy. In his sermon, Patriarch Rai thanked the many people who donated their time and energy on his tour. He thanked the clergy and Archbishop Paul Sayah, Patriarchal Vicar General, for translating and Bishop Robert Shaheen, Bishop of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon, for his attendance. Preaching about communion and love, he centered his sermon on unity as one Christian family.

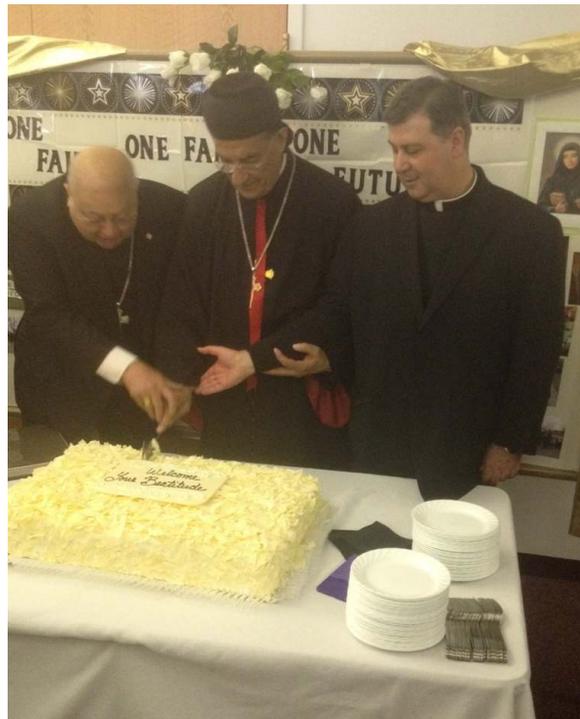
Immediately following the Liturgy, approximately nine hundred people attended a banquet in his honor at The Palazzo Grande Banquet and Event Center. James Fouts, the Mayor of Warren, Mich., presented His Beatitude with the key to the city. The Lebanese American Club of Michigan and Saint Sharbel *dabke* troupes performed dances, and were followed by speeches from a variety of public and religious figures.

In the days after, His Beatitude visited Saint Maron Church in Detroit, where he blessed a portrait of Saint Rafka, and Saint Mary's Church in Livonia, where he blessed an icon. The rest of his Michigan tour led him to Saint Rafka Church in Livonia, two mosques in Dearborn, a luncheon at the Oakland Hills Country Club hosted by Ambassador and

Mrs. Yousif B. Ghafari and family, and Our Lady of Lebanon Church in Flint, where he was presented with the key to the city by the Mayor of Flint.

Chorbishop Alfred Badawi, Pastor, and the parishioners of Saint Sharbel would like to thank all of the volunteers and attendees for their help in making the visit a success. Most importantly, we thank Patriarch Bechara Peter Rai for blessing us with his presence. □

## Livonia, Michigan *St. Rafka Welcomes Patriarch*



Bishop Robert Shaheen helps Patriarch Rai cut the cake at the reception held in his honor at St. Rafka Mission in Livonia, Mich. Chorbishop Alfred Badawi is watching.

On Tuesday May 15, 2012, St. Rafka Mission Church, in Livonia, Michigan, lovingly welcomed His Beatitude Patriarch Bechara Peter Rai. After the Benediction with the Icon of the Blessed Mother, a beautiful reception followed. St. Rafka Mission presented the Patriarch Rai and Bishop Robert Shaheen with a small token of its love and affection and asked for their continued prayer and support for the growing parish. The children of St. Rafka were affectionately blessed by the Patriarch and the experience of his visit will be forever remembered. □



## Washington, D.C. Golden Jubilee of Priesthood



Ambassador Antoine Chedid presents Chorbishop Ashkar with the Republic of Lebanon Presidential Shield.

by Robert Farah

The weekend of Saturday April 28 - April 29, 2012, was a festive occasion at Our Lady of Lebanon Church in Washington, D.C., celebrating fifty years of the priesthood for Chorbishop Dominic F. Ashkar. The Parish Council and the Social Committee worked together in organizing the event.

On Saturday night, the parish hall was transformed into a magical ballroom, where hundreds of parishioners enjoyed a Lebanese meal while various speakers shared their memories and lauded the accomplishments of Chorbishop Ashkar.

Mr. Richard A. Hibey served as Master of Ceremonies. Mrs. Jano Nicholas, on behalf of the Social Committee, welcomed the attendees and thanked Msgr. Ashkar for his service and dedication. The invocation was given by Monsignor Ignace Sadek, who spoke of his long friendship with Chorbishop Ashkar.

In addition to parishioners and religious leaders, attendees included Chorbishop Ashkar's family members, who traveled from Lebanon and France, as well as officials from various organizations throughout the area. Representatives from the National Institutes of Health and Arlington Cemetery, where Chorbishop Ashkar serves as chaplain, attended the celebration. Ms. Kathryn A. Condon, Executive Director, Army Programs, and Mr. Patrick Hallinan, the superintendent of Arlington Cemetery, presented Chorbishop Ashkar with a flag that had flown over the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at Arlington Cemetery.

His Excellency Ambassador Antoine Chedid, on behalf of Lebanese President Michel Suleiman, presented Chorbishop Ashkar with the Republic of Lebanon Presidential Shield.

Dr. Elias Saadi from Saint Maron Church in Youngstown, Ohio, where Chorbishop Ashkar served from 1975 to 1986, gave remarks. "History will tell you, you are great," said Dr. Saadi. "You are lucky to have as your chief this man of vision, strong will, integrity and righteousness."

Dr. Saadi went on to share some amusing stories of Chorbishop Ashkar's time in Youngstown.

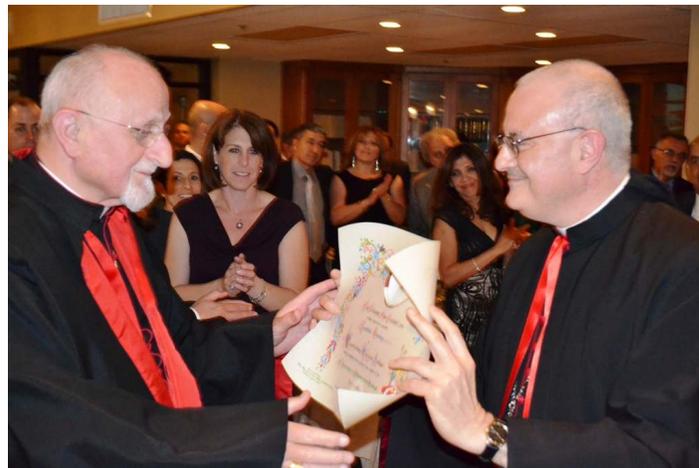
Chorbishop Seely Beggiani, who also recently celebrated his golden jubilee in the priesthood, shared his experiences working with Chorbishop Ashkar. Chorbishop Beggiani spoke about their special friendship and all the years they have worked together and continue to work together. He spoke about Chorbishop Ashkar's great passion and work on the Maronite catechism. "This reflects the Maronite tradition. Due to the vision and execution of Chorbishop Ashkar, there is a strong Maronite presence in the nation's capital and in the United States."

Chorbishop Ashkar's nephew George Ashkar, who came from Lebanon, spoke on behalf of the family.

Mr. Tom Karam, representing the parish, spoke about Chorbishop Ashkar's boundless energy and his desire to serve the parish with the utmost respect and great compassion. "He is a committed religious person and a devoted priest. His most lasting influence and the legacy he will leave is the building of this church. His vision and determination caused it to be a reality." Our Lady of Lebanon Maronite Church is the first Catholic Church to be built in the District of Columbia since 1953.

Mr. Karam also thanked Julie Ashkar, Msgr.'s sister, for her many years of service to her brother. Ms. Ashkar received a standing ovation. Mr. Karam presented Msgr. Ashkar with a chalice as a gift from the parish.

The program also included several video presentations. First, photographs were shown that went as far back as when Chorbishop Ashkar attended the seminary up until the present time. Some of these photographs included his audiences with the late Blessed Pope John Paul II. Next was a video of testimonials from parishioners, and included the children of the parish singing religious songs for Chorbishop Ashkar.



Bishop Mansour presents Chorbishop Ashkar with a Papal Blessing.

Bishop Gregory Mansour, Bishop of the Eparchy of Saint Maron, spoke about Chorbishop Ashkar's father, who was also a priest, and that the Ashkar family has given almost 100 years to the priesthood. "You know he cares deeply, and I've known him for over thirty years," said Bishop Mansour. "He doesn't miss a trick and has a wonderful pastoral presence. He can give you advice in such a discreet way you don't even know you are being advised," said Bishop Mansour. "His crowning achievement is the building of this church. He has

been an exemplary priest. He's there when he's needed, and he is the kind of priest you can trust. He desires to do God's will." Chorbishop Ashkar spoke to the group and was very appreciative, if a bit overwhelmed by all the compliments. He thanked everyone for their contributions, and asked that we have a moment of silence for Dr. Edward and Mrs. Anne Soma, two parishioners who were founding members of the parish and were instrumental in all activities of the church for years, most notably in the building of the new church. Dr. and Mrs. Soma passed away last year. Chorbishop Ashkar also thanked his family, and especially his sister Julie, for her service to him.

Speaking about the parish's accomplishments, Chorbishop Ashkar said, "God is not lost - if you can do something like this, you can do much more. Education by example."

"I am happy and proud that my family has given almost 100 years of service to the priesthood," said Chorbishop Ashkar, "I came to serve, not to be served. When I can't serve any more, then you can let me go." Chorbishop Seely Beggiani gave the closing benediction.



Chorbishop Ashkar greets a young parishioner at the end of the Liturgy on April 29, 2012.

On Sunday, the celebration continued with the Divine Liturgy of the Sunday of the Priests. Chorbishop Ashkar and Chorbishop Beggiani were joined by Bishop Gregory Mansour and His Excellency Archbishop Carlo Maria Vigano, Apostolic Nuncio to the United States, Archbishop Justo Mullor, President Emeritus of Pontifical Ecclesiastical Academy at the Vatican City, Father William George of the staff of Cardinal Wuerl, Archbishop of Washington, and Father Paul Mouawad of Newtown Square, Pennsylvania, along with the deacons and seminarians. At the conclusion of the Liturgy, Chorbishop Ashkar asked the congregation to join him in reciting the closing prayer.

Immediately following the Liturgy, a luncheon was held in the Church Hall attended by the clergy and many family and friends, including Ambassador Chedid.

Ms. Mary Ackourey, on behalf of the Parish, presented

Chorbishop Ashkar with a trophy honoring him on the occasion of his 50<sup>th</sup> Jubilee and asked him to cut the ribbon dedicating the new Parish library in his name. The trophy will be displayed in one of the cabinets in the library. The library, located in the Church hall, contains Chorbishop Ashkar's extensive personal collection of religious books, as well as copies of the books he has written, including his latest publication "We the Epiclesis People." Archbishop Vigano offered his congratulatory remarks and joined in the ribbon cutting ceremony.

At the closing of the gathering, the children of the parish presented Chorbishop Ashkar with a performance of his favorite religious hymns. After the music, Chorbishop Ashkar was presented with a large card signed by all the children of the parish and a huge "flower" - when in fact, the "flower" was made up of lollipops. Every child who has ever attended the Liturgy at Our Lady of Lebanon looks forward to receiving a lollipop from Chorbishop Ashkar after the Liturgy.

Chorbishop Ashkar again thanked everyone for the outpouring of love and support, and with the children standing behind him, stated that they are the future of the church. □

## Springfield, Massachusetts Deacon Ordination

by Kathy LaBella

On Saturday, March 10, 2012, the community of St. Anthony Maronite Church in Springfield, Mass., joined together to celebrate the ordination of subdeacon Norman Hannoush to the Order of Deacon. His Excellency Gregory John Mansour, Bishop of the Eparchy of Saint Maron, conducted the ceremony.



Chorbishops Joseph Kaddo and Joseph Lahoud, Monsignors Peter Azar and David George, Reverends George Zina, John Morrison, Joseph Khoueiry, Edward Nedder, Georges

Bishop Gregory Mansour, assisted by Fr. Jack Morrison, ordains Subdeacon Hannoush to the Order of Deacon.

BouChaaya, and Paul Mooradd concelebrated. Monsignor Christopher Connelly, Vicar General of the Diocese of Springfield, and Reverend Robert White, along with many deacons and subdeacons from the Eparchy of Saint Maron and the local Springfield Diocese, attended. Deacon Norman Hannoush was surrounded by his wife, Suzanne, and their children, Maroun, Daniel and Dominic, as well as many other relatives, friends and parishioners. Following the ordination ceremony, a brunch was held in the Cedars' Hall. The following day, Deacon Norman participated at the Liturgy as deacon and delivered his first sermon. The Women's Guild hosted a breakfast in his honor. The parish of St. Anthony Church is blessed to have Deacon Norman and extends its love and appreciation to him. □

## Danbury, Connecticut *Ladies Retreat*



by Jacqueline Leonard

On April 27 - 28, 2012, St. Anthony Parish in Danbury, Conn., held a two-day retreat, conducted by the Eparchy's newly formed order of nuns, The Maronite Servants of Christ The Light. Sister Marla Marie and Sister Therese Maria traveled from their convent in Dartmouth, Mass., to share the theme, "Seeking His Light in Prayer." The ladies were encouraged to find strength, healing and inspiration in our Maronite prayers and devotions.

The day concluded with Exposition and Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. Following the Adoration, the Sisters, the ladies and Father Jean Younes, Pastor, shared a luncheon. □

## Fort Lauderdale, Florida *Spring Hafli*



On April 28, 2012, on a beautiful, balmy evening in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., the parishioners of the Heart of Jesus Maronite Church held their first "Spring Hafli." The Church opened on January 6, 2012, the Feast of Epiphany,

and it has been a dynamic and growing parish from that day. Thus, it was not a surprise that the first *Hafli* was a sold-out success. Success, however, took a lot of work. People came together to sell tickets, donate raffle prizes, prepare food, set up the social hall, serve dinner and clean the hall afterwards. Those attending enjoyed the Lebanese food and dancing. It was a wonderful first *Hafli* and hopefully there will be many more. □

## Western New York *Lebanese Festival*

St. John Maron Church in Williamsville [Buffalo], N.Y., will celebrate its 14<sup>th</sup> Annual Lebanese Festival from Friday, July 27 through Sunday, July 29, 2012. Amin and The Sultans will provide continuous live Lebanese music and dancing by our Lebanese Festival Dance Troupe. The Gift Shop will have many treasures. The Festival will also feature amusement rides for the children, Pulltabs, raffle with cash and prizes, and a backgammon tournament. Hours are Friday from 5 p.m. - 11 p.m.; Saturday from noon to 11 p.m. and Sunday from noon to 5 p.m. The Divine Liturgy will be celebrated during the festival at 5 p.m. on Saturday and 11 a.m. on Sunday. For further information and directions, visit the church's website at [www.stjohnmaron.org](http://www.stjohnmaron.org). □

### Schedule of Bishop Gregory Mansour

#### June 6 - 20, 2012

Maronite Bishops' Synod, *Bkerke*, Lebanon

#### June 24, 2012

25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Father Ed Nedder, Providence, Rhode Island

#### June 27 - 29, 2012

Annual Youth Conference (MYO), St. Louis, Mo.

#### July 1, 2012

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

#### July 2 - 8, 2012

Clergy Conference and NAM Convention, San Antonio, Tex.

#### July 9 - 10, 2012

Teelumiere Board Meeting, Detroit, Mich.

#### July 11, 2012

Ordination of two Auxiliary Bishops, Brooklyn, N.Y.

#### July 15, 2012

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

#### July 22, 2012

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

#### July 28 - 29, 2012

Fr. Kevin Beaton's Silver Anniversary, Roanoke, Va. □

# Vocations, the Gift of the Love of God

As Bishop Gregory Mansour, Bishop of the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn, indicated in his letter published in the April issue of *The Maronite Voice*, a page will be devoted each month to the fostering of vocations. As he wrote in his letter, God " ... stirs the heart, He asks others to invite us, and He brings about His loving plan in a most loving way." Over the next months you will read articles detailing the life experiences of those choosing the religious life, the tools that can be used to encourage vocations, and the status of vocations. It is, however, most important to remember that vocations are dependent, in the words of Pope Benedict XVI, on "God who is love." Thus to remind us of this reality and how we can grow in this love, we begin the series with Pope Benedict XVI's message on the 49th World Day of Prayer for Vocations.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

The 49<sup>th</sup> World Day of Prayer for Vocations, which was celebrated on April 29, 2012, the Fourth Sunday of Easter, prompts us to meditate on the theme: Vocations, the Gift of the Love of God.

The source of every perfect gift is God who is Love – *Deus caritas est*: "Whoever remains in love remains in God and God in him" (1 Jn 4:15). Sacred Scripture tells the story of this original bond between God and man, which precedes creation itself. Writing to the Christians of the city of Ephesus, Saint Paul raises a hymn of gratitude and praise to the Father who, with infinite benevolence, in the course of the centuries accomplishes his universal plan of salvation, which is a plan of love. In His Son Jesus – Paul states – "He chose us, before the foundation of the world, to be holy and without blemish before Him in love" (Eph 1:4). We are loved by God even "before" we come into existence! Moved solely by His unconditional love, He created us "not ... out of existing things" (cf. 2 Macc 7:28), to bring us into full communion with Him.

In great wonderment before the work of God's providence, the Psalmist exclaims: "When I see the heavens, the work of your hands, the moon and the stars which you arranged, what is man that you should keep him in mind, mortal man that you care for him?" (Ps 8:3-4). The profound truth of our existence is thus contained in this surprising mystery: every creature, and in particular every human person, is the fruit of God's thought and an act of His love, a love that is boundless, faithful and everlasting (cf. Jer 31:3). The discovery of this reality is what truly and profoundly changes our lives. In a famous page of the Confessions, Saint

Augustine expresses with great force his discovery of God, supreme beauty and supreme love, a God who was always close to him, and to whom he at last opened his mind and heart to be transformed: "Late have I loved you, O Beauty ever ancient, ever new, late have I loved you! You were within me, but I was outside, and it was there that I searched for you. In my unloveliness I plunged into the lovely things which you created. You were with me, but I was not with you. Created things kept me from you; yet if they had not been in you they would have not been at all. You called, you shouted, and you broke through my deafness. You flashed, you shone, and you dispelled my blindness. You breathed your fragrance on me; I drew in breath and now I pant for you. I have tasted you, now I hunger and thirst for more. You touched me, and I burned for your peace" (X, 27.38). With these images, the Saint of Hippo seeks to describe the ineffable mystery of his encounter with God, with God's love that transforms all of life.

It is a love that is limitless and that precedes us, sustains us and calls us along the path of life, a love rooted in an absolutely free gift of God. Speaking particularly of the ministerial priesthood, my predecessor, Blessed John Paul II, stated that "every ministerial action - while it leads to loving and serving the Church - provides an incentive to grow in ever greater love and service of Jesus Christ the head, shepherd and spouse of the Church, a love which is always a response to the free and unsolicited love of God in Christ" ("[http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/john\\_paul\\_ii/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_exh\\_25031992\\_pastores-dabo-vobis\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_25031992_pastores-dabo-vobis_en.html)" *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, 25). Every specific vocation is in fact born of the initiative of God; it is a gift of the Love of God! He is the One who takes the "first step," and not

because He has found something good in us, but because of the presence of His own love "poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit" (Rom 5:5).

In every age, the source of the divine call is to be found in the initiative of the infinite love of God, who reveals Himself fully in Jesus Christ. As I wrote in my first Encyclical, *Deus Caritas Est*, "God is indeed visible in a number of ways. In the love-story recounted by the Bible, He comes towards us, He seeks to win our hearts, all the way to the Last Supper, to the piercing of His heart on the Cross, to His appearances after the Resurrection and to the great deeds by which, through the activity of the Apostles, He guided the nascent Church along its path. Nor has the Lord been absent from subsequent Church history: He encounters us ever anew, in the men and women who reflect his presence, in His Word, in the sacraments, and especially in the Eucharist" (No. 17).

The love of God is everlasting; He is faithful to Himself, to the "word that He commanded for a thousand generations" (Ps 105:8). Yet the appealing beauty of this divine love, which precedes and accompanies us, needs to be proclaimed ever anew, especially to younger generations. This divine love is the hidden impulse, the motivation which never fails, even in the most difficult circumstances.

Dear brothers and sisters, we need to open our lives to this love. It is to the perfection of the Father's love (cf. Mt 5:48) that Jesus Christ calls us every day! The high standard of the Christian life consists in loving "as" God loves; with a love that is shown in the total, faithful and fruitful gift of self. Saint John of the Cross, writing to the Prioress of the Monastery of Segovia who was pained by the terrible

circumstances surrounding his suspension, responded by urging her to act as God does: "Think nothing else but that God ordains all, and where there is no love, put love, and there you will draw out love" (Letters, 26).

It is in this soil of self-offering and openness to the love of God, and as the fruit of that love, that all vocations are born and grow. By drawing from this wellspring through prayer, constant recourse to God's Word and to the sacraments, especially the Eucharist, it becomes possible to live a life of love for our neighbors, in whom we come to perceive the face of Christ the Lord (cf. Mt25:31-46). To express the inseparable bond that links these "two loves" – love of God and love of neighbor – both of which flow from the same divine source and return to it, Pope Saint Gregory the Great uses the metaphor of the seedling: "In the soil of our heart God first planted the root of love for him; from this, like the leaf, sprouts love for one another." (*Moralium Libri, sive expositio in Librum B. Job, Lib. VII, Ch. 24, 28; PL 75, 780D*).

These two expressions of the one divine love must be lived with a particular intensity and purity of heart by those who have decided to set out on the path of vocation discernment towards the ministerial priesthood and the consecrated life; they are its distinguishing mark. Love of God, which priests and consecrated persons are called to mirror, however imperfectly, is the motivation for answering the Lord's call to special consecration through priestly ordination or the profession of the evangelical counsels. Saint Peter's vehement reply to the Divine Master: "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you" (Jn 21:15) contains the secret of a life fully given and lived out, and thus one which is deeply joyful.

The other practical expression of love, that towards our neighbor, and especially those who suffer and are in greatest need, is the decisive impulse that leads the priest and the consecrated person to be a builder of communion between people and a sower of hope. The relationship of consecrated persons, and especially of the priest, to the Christian community is vital and

becomes a fundamental dimension of their affectivity. The Curé of Ars was fond of saying: "Priests are not priests for themselves, but for you" (Le cure d'Ars. Sa pensée – Son cœur, Foi Vivante, 1966, p. 100).

Dear brother bishops, dear priests, deacons, consecrated men and women, catechists, pastoral workers and all of you who are engaged in the field of educating young people: I fervently exhort you to pay close attention to those members of parish communities, associations and ecclesial movements who sense a call to the priesthood or to a special consecration. It is important for the Church to create the conditions that will permit many young people to say "yes" in generous response to God's loving call.

The task of fostering vocations will be to provide helpful guidance and direction along the way. Central to this should be love of God's word nourished by a growing familiarity with Sacred Scripture, and attentive and unceasing prayer, both personal and in community; this will make it possible to hear God's call amid all the voices of daily life. But above all, the Eucharist should be the heart of every vocational journey: it is here that the love of God touches us in Christ's sacrifice, the perfect expression of love, and it is here that we learn ever anew how to live according to the "high standard" of God's love. Scripture, prayer and the Eucharist are the precious treasure enabling us to grasp the beauty of a life spent fully in service of the Kingdom.

It is my hope that the local Churches and all the various groups within them, will become places where vocations are carefully discerned and their authenticity tested, places where young men and women are offered wise and strong spiritual direction. In this way, the Christian community itself becomes a manifestation of the Love of God in which every calling is contained. As a response to the demands of the new commandment of Jesus, this can find eloquent and particular realization in Christian families, whose love is an expression of the love of Christ who gave himself for his Church (cf. Eph 5:32). Within the family, "a community of life and love" (Gaudium et Spes, 48), young people can have a wonderful

experience of this self-giving love. Indeed, families are not only the privileged place for human and Christian formation; they can also be "the primary and most excellent seed-bed of vocations to a life of consecration to the Kingdom of God" (Familiaris Consortio, 53), by helping their members to see, precisely within the family, the beauty and the importance of the priesthood and the consecrated life. May pastors and all the lay faithful always cooperate so that in the Church these "homes and schools of communion" may multiply, modelled on the Holy Family of Nazareth, the harmonious reflection on earth of the life of the Most Holy Trinity.

With this prayerful hope, I cordially impart my Apostolic Blessing to all of you: my brother bishops, priests, deacons, religious men and women and all lay faithful, and especially those young men and women who strive to listen with a docile heart to God's voice and are ready to respond generously and faithfully. □



**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:

Msgr. sharbel Maroun, Director  
Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon  
Office of Vocations  
c/o St. Maron Church  
600 University Ave. NE  
Minneapolis, MN 55413

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

# Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn

## Policy on Sexual Abuse of Minors *By Priests or Deacons*

*The Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn publishes its Policy on Sexual Abuse of Minors by Priests or Deacons. The same policy is also available online at [http://www.stmaron.org/policy\\_sexual\\_abuse.html](http://www.stmaron.org/policy_sexual_abuse.html). The Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon has its own policy and it is also available online at <http://www.usamaronite.org/statement.html>.*

**A**s Christians and Maronites we consider the welfare and protection of our children a sacred responsibility. We hereby promulgate the following Eparchial norms as an implementation of Essential norms for Diocesan/Eparchial Policies Dealing with Allegations of Sexual Abuse of Minors by Priests or Deacons approved by the Congregation for Bishops on December 8, 2002.

### **Definition**

Sexual Abuse of a minor includes sexual molestation or sexual exploitation of a minor and other behavior by which an adult uses a minor as an object of sexual gratification. The norm to be considered in assessing an allegation of sexual abuse of a minor is whether conduct or interaction with a minor qualifies as an external, objectively grave violation of the sixth commandment.

### **Response**

- The healing of victims, their families and their community from the effects of sexual abuse by church leaders begins when the allegations of such abuse are received. When victims decide to disclose the abuse, it is important that the response they receive is compassionate and non-judgmental.
- Anyone receiving an allegation of abuse will respond in a pastoral, supportive manner, leaving investigative concerns to those who serve in that role.
- An allegation will be received without initial judgment as to the truth of the complaint. No intimation of blame will be made by the initial recipient of information.
- Individuals making allegations will be supported positively in their decision to disclose.
- The Eparchial Bishop will designate a competent person to coordinate assistance for the immediate pastoral care of persons who claim to have been sexually abused when they were minors by priests or deacons. This "assistance-coordinator" will assess and respond to the immediate and long term needs of the alleged victim and family, the alleged offender, parish communities and others that are affected by the disclosure of sex abuse.
- The assistance-coordinator will serve as a consultant to the eparchial bishop and the review board regarding the treatment needs of clients.

### **Review Board**

The review board is a predominantly lay board composed of a variety of professionals duly appointed to assist the bishop in a strictly confidential consultative capacity. It will have no final, decision-making authority, which authority will continue to reside exclusively with the bishop.

### **Board Functions**

1. To advise the eparchial bishop in his assessment of allegations of sexual abuse of minors and in his determination of suitability for ministry;
2. To review eparchial policies for dealing with sexual abuse of minors;
3. To offer advice on all aspects of sexual abuse cases, whether retrospectively or prospectively.

### **Membership**

The review board, established by the eparchial bishop, will be composed of five members of outstanding integrity and good judgment in full communion with the Church. The majority of the board will be lay persons who are not in the employ of the eparchy. These will include:

- ★ a person with particular expertise in the treatment of sexual abuse of minors;
- ★ a parent;
- ★ a parish priest;
- ★ an attorney; and
- ★ an individual with investigative experience.

The bishop may deem it desirable that the Promoter of Justice participate in the meetings of the review board.

### **Appointment**

Members appointed by the eparchial bishop will serve a five year term. All board members will adhere to the rules of strict confidentiality with regard to all deliberations and information received.

### **Reporting**

In all cases of alleged or suspected or known child abuse committed by a cleric, the Eparchy will comply with all applicable civil laws in respect to reporting the allegations and will cooperate with civil authorities in the investigation.

Any cleric, who knows from the external forum that a minor has been sexually abused is required to report that knowledge or suspicion to the Eparchial Bishop and to the civil authorities in accordance with the norms of canon law.

## ***Investigation***

- When an allegation of sexual abuse of a minor by a priest or deacon is received, a preliminary investigation in harmony with canon law will be initiated and conducted promptly and objectively (Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches [CCEO], c. 1468). The purpose of the eparchial investigation is to ensure that the bishop has a complete, thorough, and accurate report of the alleged incident. The investigation will be conducted by an investigator appointed by the review board. The investigator will report his findings in writing to the Eparchial bishop and to the review board.
- The accused will immediately be called by the Eparchial Bishop and made aware of the allegation against him and the identity of the accuser. The accused will remain in his position until the initial investigation is completed, which is to be done as expeditiously as possible. All appropriate steps shall be taken to protect the reputation of the accused and the accuser during the investigation. The accused will be encouraged to retain the assistance of civil and canonical counsel and will be promptly notified of the results of the investigation.
- When there is sufficient evidence that sexual abuse of a minor has occurred, the eparchial bishop will notify the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith. The Eparchial Bishop shall then apply the precautionary measures mentioned in CCEO, c. 1473 -- that is, remove the alleged offender from the sacred ministry or from any ecclesiastical office or function. The bishop may impose or prohibit residence in a given place or territory, and prohibit the public participation in the Most Holy Eucharist pending the outcome of the process.
- In every case involving canonical penalties, the processes provided for in canon law will be observed, and the various provisions of canon law will be considered. (1) Unless the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith, having been notified, calls the case to itself because of special circumstances, the Eparchial Bishop will follow the directions of the Congregation on how to proceed. (2) If the case would otherwise be barred by prescription, because sexual abuse of a minor is a grave offense, the Eparchial Bishop shall apply to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith for a dispensation from the prescription, while indicating appropriate pastoral reasons.
- For the sake of due process, the accused is encouraged to retain the assistance of civil and canonical counsel. When necessary, the eparchy will supply canonical counsel to the cleric.
- The Eparchy will conduct a judicial process of the case according to the appropriate canons and practice of the Church.

- The alleged offender may be requested to seek, and may be urged voluntarily to comply with, an appropriate medical and psychological evaluation at a facility mutually acceptable to the Eparchy and the accused.
- In every instance, the Eparchy will advise and support a person's right to make a report to public authorities.

## ***Ministry/Service***

- No cleric removed from an eparchial position for allegations of sexual abuse of a minor will return to ministry or service before their case is assessed and fitness is determined by the Eparchial Bishop in consultation with the review board. The safety of children is the paramount consideration governing the formation of recommendations regarding the future ministry of one accused of abuse.
- An allegation of sexual abuse of a minor made against a cleric will be deemed established if, with due respect for the provisions of canon law:
  - The accused individual admits to conduct defined by this policy as sexual abuse; or
  - A civil court of criminal law finds the accused guilty of a crime that consists of conduct defined by this policy as sexual abuse, or the accused pleads guilty or no contest to a crime that consists of conduct defined by this policy as sexual abuse; or
  - The appropriate church tribunal finds the accused guilty of the crime.
- When an act of sexual abuse by a priest or deacon is admitted or is established after an appropriate process in accord with canon law, the offending priest or deacon will be removed from ecclesiastical ministry, not excluding dismissal from the clerical state, if the case so warrants.
- If the penalty of dismissal from the clerical state has not been applied (e.g., for reasons of advanced age or infirmity), the offender ought to lead a life of prayer and penance. He will not be permitted to celebrate the Divine Liturgy publicly or to administer the mysteries. He will be instructed not to wear clerical garb, or present himself publicly as a priest.
- At all times, the Eparchial Bishop has the executive power of clerical governance, through an administrative act, to remove an offending cleric from office, to remove or restrict his faculties, and to limit his exercise of priestly ministry. For the sake of the common good and observing the provisions of canon law, the Eparchial Bishop shall exercise this power of governance to ensure that any priest who has committed an act of sexual abuse of a minor as described above shall not continue in the active ministry.
- The priest or deacon may at any time request a dispensation from the obligations of the clerical state. In

exceptional cases, the Eparchial Bishop may request of the Holy Father the dismissal of the priest or deacon from the clerical state ex officio, even without the consent of the priest or deacon.

- Care will always be taken to protect the rights of all parties involved, particularly those of the person claiming to have been sexually abused and the person against whom the charge has been made. When an accusation has proved to be unfounded, every step possible will be taken by the bishop to restore the good name of the priest or deacon falsely accused.
- No priest or deacon who has committed an act of sexual abuse of a minor will be transferred for ministerial assignment to another eparchy/diocese or religious province.
- Before a priest or deacon is transferred for residence to another eparchy/diocese or religious province, the Eparchial Bishop shall forward, in a confidential manner, to the local eparch/bishop or religious ordinary of the proposed place of residence any and all information concerning any act of sexual abuse of a minor and any other information indicating that he has been or may be a danger to children or young people.
- The Eparchial Bishop will not consider receiving a priest or deacon into the eparchy from another jurisdiction without previously obtaining the necessary information regarding the moral and civil record of the priest or deacon in question.

### ***Prevention***

The Eparchy of Saint Maron will publish a code of ethics and integrity in ministry to be adhered to by all the clergy and persons in positions of trust in the Eparchy.

All eparchial programs designed to certify clerics, eparchial employees, and volunteers who serve children on a regular basis will include segments that address child sexual abuse. The training curriculum will include information concerning: signs and symptoms, dynamics of child abuse, impact of child abuse, intervention strategies, reporting requirements and community resources.

### ***Screening***

The Eparchy will study the psychological screening currently undertaken to assess all potential candidates for the priesthood and diaconate. The tests given will be reviewed from the perspective of identifying, to the extent possible, potential problems in the area of sexuality. Problem candidates will be disqualified.

A protocol or procedure, including a psychological evaluation, is to be developed to screen clerical personnel from outside the Eparchy before an assignment is given or confirmed by the Eparchial Bishop to minister within the Eparchy of Saint Maron.

## **Supplement**

### ***Policy on Sexual Abuse of Minors by Seminarians, Religious, Eparchial Employees or Regular Volunteers***

The Norms listed above regarding sexual abuse of minors by priests or deacons, with the exception of those that deal specifically with priests or deacons according to canon law, are also to be applied to seminarians, religious, eparchial employees and regular volunteers of the Eparchy. In addition, there are these following norms.

### ***Reporting***

In all cases of alleged or suspected or known child abuse committed by a seminarian, religious, eparchial employee or volunteer of the Eparchy, the Eparchy will comply with all applicable civil laws in respect to reporting the allegations and will cooperate with civil authorities in the investigation.

### ***Investigation***

Besides any actions taken by the civil authorities, the Eparchy will conduct its own investigation of the alleged abuse.

Based on the results of the civil disposition, the eparchy's own investigation, and the advice of the Review Board, the Eparchial Bishop will determine the continued working relationship of the accused with the Eparchy.

During the investigation, the accused will be relieved from his or her responsibilities, and removed from any contact with minors.

### ***Screening***

The background of all eparchial and parish personnel who have regular contact with minors will be evaluated. Administrators must take due precautions to assure that only persons who are psychologically and temperamentally suited are chosen to work with children.

No applicant with a history of a felony or misdemeanor sex offense conviction will be considered for placement or hire.

Applicants for employment or to volunteer in a position with children contact in parishes and institutions of the eparchy must provide the hiring agent personal information adequate to assess their suitability for contact with minors. They must sign a waiver to conduct a criminal background check. They must supply names of three references, at least one from the most recent employer and none from close friends or relatives. And they must complete the screening interview process.

Hiring agents and/or volunteer coordinators must speak with all references provided by applicants for employment and examine and verify the employment history. The hiring agent

is to conduct a criminal records check of any person seeking employment or to volunteer at their facility. Any applicant who has not lived continuously for five years in the state of the eparchial parish or institution must also provide an FBI identification record or a waiver allowing the hiring agent to obtain it.

Pastors will require that any person or group who is hired through a third party contract, and who will have responsibility for the care, custody, or control of a child, must provide proof of a criminal background check.

Each parish or institution of the eparchy must establish procedures for gathering the information and completing the reference checks mentioned above. All information gathered will be retained in a confidential file at the location of employment for as long as legally required.

## *Code of Ethics and Integrity*

### **General Norms**

- Church personnel<sup>1</sup> will exhibit the highest Christian ethical standards and personal integrity.
- Church personnel will conduct themselves in a manner that is consistent with the discipline and teaching of the Catholic Church.
- Church personnel will not physically, sexually or emotionally abuse a minor or an adult.
- Church personnel will not engage in physical, psychological, written or verbal harassment of employees, volunteers, or parishioners and will not tolerate such harassment by other Church personnel.
- Church personnel shall provide a professional work environment that is free from physical, psychological, written, or verbal intimidation or harassment.
- Church personnel shall not engage in sexual intimacies with the persons they counsel. This includes consensual contact, forced physical contact and sexually explicit conversations not related to counseling issues.
- Church personnel assume the full burden for setting and maintaining clear, appropriate boundaries in all counseling and counseling-related relationships.
- No counseling sessions should be conducted in private living quarters.
- Church personnel will share concerns about suspicious or inappropriate behavior with their pastor, the Vicar-General

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<sup>1</sup>Church personnel includes priests, religious, permanent and transitional deacons, seminarians, all paid and volunteer personnel who are employed by or work in eparchial parishes or institutions.

- of the Eparchy, or the Eparchial Bishop.
- Church personnel will report any suspected abuse to the proper civil authorities.
- Church personnel will accept their personal responsibility to protect minors and adults from all forms of abuse.
- Houses used for residences of priests and religious are exclusively for the use of the religious. With the exception of occasional visits from immediate family members, minors are not permitted to be overnight guests in the residence of a priest or a religious.

## **Eparchial Review Board**

### *Members of the Eparchial Review Board*

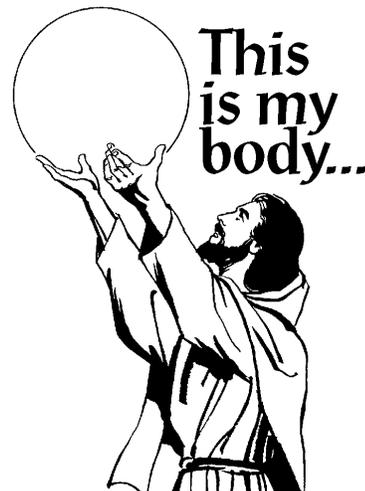
- Dr. Martha Rashed (Psychologist, Washington, D.C.)
- Fr. Bassam Saade, St. Jude Maronite Church, Orlando, Florida
- Attorney Richard Hibey (Attorney), Our Lady of Lebanon Maronite Church, Washington, D.C.
- Anthony J. Shaia, MD, St. Anthony Maronite Church, Glen Allen (Richmond), Virginia
- Lieutenant Michael Zohab, St. Anthony Maronite Church, Glen Allen (Richmond), Virginia.

### **Victim Assistance Coordinator**

**Roseanne C. Solomon**

Telephone: (781) 828-5183

Mrs. Solomon can also be reached at:  
c/o Our Lady of the Cedars of Lebanon Maronite Church  
61 Rockwood Street  
Jamaica Plain (Boston), Massachusetts 02130  
Telephone: (617) 522-0225 Fax: (617) 522-0194. □



# ***You're Not Wanted Here! The Other Side of the Present Administration's Anti-Poverty Campaign***

by Bishop Gregory Mansour

It is now unfortunately quite clear that from the start of his campaign for President<sup>1</sup> a major component of the anti-poverty efforts of his Administration is to prevent "unwanted pregnancies." Part of this effort now employs a fully funded artificial contraception, sterilization and "morning after pill" mandate by the Health and Human Services, even in the face of stiff opposition and the complaints of thousands of women who make the reasonable claim that a contraceptive mentality does not help women, rather it encourages promiscuous male behavior and has clearly unhealthy consequences for women (see [www.womenspeakforthemselves.com](http://www.womenspeakforthemselves.com)) and is not true health care.



The other part of the effort is that if artificial contraception, abortion drugs approved by the FDA, and sterilization does not keep away unwanted pregnancies, then abortion must remain legal throughout all nine months of pregnancy. Down syndrome babies are now aborted nine times out of ten, and sex selection abortions, especially for baby girls, are hardly being noticed in mainstream media, and hardly ever condemned, perhaps because these efforts keep "unwanted pregnancies" out of society.

Although the Administration does deserve some credit for keeping our eye on the poor and the needy, nonetheless, anti-poverty efforts must try to get at the underlying cause of poverty, which in most cases is due to the breakup of the family. Thus, strengthening marriage is one of the greatest protections for the poor. Are we forced to settle for an approach that does not help us in the long run? Artificial contraception, sterilization and abortion are not healthy for women or for society.

The Church, on the other hand, has a wholesome anti-poverty plan for society:

- ◆ chastity before marriage, along with fidelity during marriage;
- ◆ promotion of the dignity and profound meaning of sex in marriage;

- ◆ support for marriage itself as a sacred bond worthy of respect and support between a man and a woman;
- ◆ belief in the sacred character of life from the moment of conception to natural death;
- ◆ promotion of the rights of workers to a just and fair wage;
- ◆ promotion of a spiritual solidarity so that all people may make a preferential option for the poor;
- ◆ encourage an approach to government that prefers local community and state involvement in governance, rather than national dominance; this is the principle of subsidiarity;
- ◆ promotion of a free and robust capitalism that is justly regulated for fairness;
- ◆ progress towards making health care and education that is not-for-profit and is principled in its life affirming practices more available, accessible and affordable to all; and
- ◆ belief in and encouragement of a message of hope that rings throughout everything we do - even in the midst of our mistakes.

This pro-life, pro-family, pro-marriage, pro-woman and pro-society approach may not be popular today, but it is reasonable. Even though it may be difficult, the truth of this approach is accessible to us not just through the tenets of Catholic faith, but also through reason.

We long for the day when, in the midst of our society's anti-poverty efforts, the reasonable and healthy voice of the Church can be heard instead of the coarse, even shrill, voice of the present Administration. □

## ***Eparchy of Saint Maron Call to Action***

*Dear Brother Priests, Deacons, Subdeacons, Monks, Sisters and Lay Faithful:*

As you know from the entries on my blog at [www.stmaron.org](http://www.stmaron.org), since January there has been a concerted Catholic effort to address the very troubling Health and Human Services (HHS) coercive mandate requiring almost all private health plans to cover contraception, sterilization and abortion-inducing drugs. For the first time in our nation's history, the federal government will force religious institutions to facilitate drugs and procedures contrary to our moral teaching. And this will purport to define which religious institutions are "religious enough" to merit an exemption.

The US Conference of Catholic Bishops [www.usccb.org](http://www.usccb.org) responded to many urgent situations with the Administration, Congress and now the Judiciary. We now need the help and support of all Catholics to address a wide range of issues from our concerns over religious liberty to the Church's teaching on sexuality and openness to new human life. Some of these efforts will be catechetical and others will encourage parishioners to take some needed action.

Our focus should be on "Religious Liberty, the Most Cherished of American Freedoms." (See the following article which was a nationwide bulletin insert in April-May, 2012). Parishioners are encouraged to send messages to the President, Members of Congress and the HHS, during this

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<sup>1</sup>See his speech at Planned Parenthood <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uUI99id2SvM>

limited comment period.

Lastly, I ask you to join me and all Catholics throughout the country in a fourteen-day prayer vigil from June 21, 2012, the Feast of Saints Thomas More and John Fisher, until July 4, 2012. I ask every parishioner to offer a decade of rosary each of these fourteen days. Likewise, I ask every pastor to add a special intention during each liturgy of those fourteen days for religious liberty and the good of our country. Let freedom ring! And may the radiant beauty of Catholic teaching ring! ☐

With prayerful best wishes, I remain,  
Sincerely yours in Christ  
+Gregory John Mansour

## ***The Most Cherished Of American Freedoms, Past and Present***

In 1634, a mix of Catholic and Protestant settlers arrived in Southern Maryland from England aboard the Ark and the Dove. They had come at the invitation of the Catholic Lord Baltimore, who had been granted the land by the Protestant King Charles I of England. While Catholics and Protestants were killing each other in Europe, Lord Baltimore imagined Maryland as a society where people of different faiths could live together peacefully. This vision was soon codified in Maryland's 1649 Act Concerning Religion (also called the "Toleration Act"), which was the first law in our nation's history to protect an individual's right to freedom of conscience.

Maryland's early history teaches us that, like any freedom, religious liberty requires constant vigilance and protection, or it will disappear. Maryland's experiment in religious toleration ended within a few decades. The colony was placed under royal control and the Church of England became the established religion. Discriminatory laws, including the loss of political rights, were enacted against those who refused to conform. Catholic chapels were closed and Catholics were restricted to practicing their faith in their homes. The Catholic community lived under this coercion until the American Revolution.

By the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century our nation's founders embraced freedom of religion as an essential condition of a free and democratic society. So when the Bill of Rights was ratified, religious freedom had the distinction of being the First Amendment. Religious liberty is indeed the first liberty. This is our American heritage, our most cherished freedom. If we are not free in our conscience and our practice of

### ***What Can You Do to Ensure the Protection of Religious Freedom***

To learn more about our first freedom, and to send your message to HHS and Congress telling them to stand up for religious liberty and conscience rights, go to [www.usccb.org](http://www.usccb.org) today! Thank you for joining the effort to end this unprecedented government coercion of conscience and intrusion in religious affairs. ☐

religion, all other freedoms are fragile. If our obligations and duties to God are impeded, or even worse, contradicted by the government, then we can no longer claim to be land of the free.

Is our most cherished freedom truly under threat? Among many current challenges, consider the recent Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) mandate requiring almost all private health plans to cover contraception, sterilization and abortion-inducing drugs.

For the first time in our history, the federal government will force religious institutions to facilitate drugs and procedures contrary to our moral teaching, and purport to define which religious institutions are "religious enough" to merit an exemption. This is not a matter of whether contraception may be prohibited by the government. It is not even a matter of whether contraception may be supported by the government. It is a matter of whether religious people and institutions may be forced by the government to provide coverage for contraception and sterilization, even when it violates our religious beliefs. ☐

*(USCCB Nationwide Bulletin Insert, April-May 2012)*

## **Washington, D.C. Garveys Reveal Marriage Secrets**

*by Sam O'Mahony*

Catholic University President John H. Garvey and his wife, Jeanne, gave a lecture on the Vocation of Marriage this week, reflecting on their thirty-seven years together.

"We are called to marriage in different ways," said Jeanne Garvey, to which Mr. Garvey jestingly interrupted, "Yes, Jeanne proposed to me on our second date."

The hour-long discussion held before a packed house in the Keane Hall Auditorium was sponsored by Live Out Love, a student organization that focuses on chastity, love, life, and relationships. The talk began with the Angelic Salutation, led by President Garvey, and concluded with a question-and-answer wherein students from the audience were free to ask questions related to the talk. Before jumping into the main dialogue, Mr. Garvey, in an indication on how the lecture was going to un-fold, began the talk with a jovial stab at the student body that resulted in laughter from both him and the audience.

"We got invited, because you know who we are, and we live here," said Garvey. "We're handy and happy to do it."

After setting the crowd of around sixty at ease, the Garveys transitioned into a more serious discussion on the importance of the Sacrament of Marriage.

*(Continues on page 20)*



Mr. and Mrs. Garvey.

(Continued from page 19)

They discussed how marriage is a vocation to which people are called, just as people are called to Holy Orders.

The Garveys, who met while completing their studies at Harvard University, have been married for thirty-seven years and have five children and thirteen grandchildren to prove it. The Garveys held the attention of the audience throughout the lecture as they candidly discussed topics relating to the sacrament of marriage and their personal marriage. The audience most enjoyed the Garveys' poignant and often humorous recollection of the dates they shared together as well as the story of their first meeting.

"I think that for most of our students marriage is the vocation that God has in mind for them. I'm glad that so many people were able to come," said Garvey.

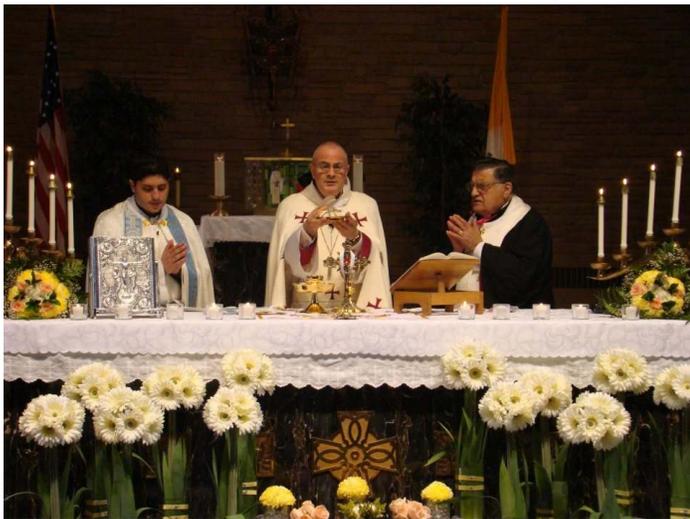
Students and members of the University community alike were able to learn first-hand about the adventures of marriage from a real married couple, rather than through secondary sources.

"I really liked it, because I think that they are a great example of real marriage and how to live out that vocation," said Mary Elizabeth Murphy, a senior elementary education major.

Live Out Love is a student organization led by senior Michael Pratt. The group meets weekly, and frequently holds discussions on the topics of chastity, love, life, relationships, and general information related to these topics. □

(First published in *The Tower*, *The Catholic University of America* student newspaper.)

## Pleasantville, New Jersey One Year Anniversary



Fr. Elie Saade (left), Bishop Gregory Mansour and Msgr. Maroun Asmar.

by *Georgette Nammour*

The weekend of May 5, 2012, marked the one-year anniversary of Our Lady Star of the East Mission in Pleasantville, New Jersey. This was a moment of

complete and utter sentimental joy for the parishioners of OLSE (Our Lady Star of the East); an emotional moment which commanded a true and happy resonance of accomplishment. For several years, parishioners put their own time and dedication into making the mission the church it is now.

OLSE is not only a place of worship, but also a home to its parishioners and families. It is a place of unfathomable value, and has brought the people of this parish together and forever united in what else but love. These efforts would not have been accomplished without the unconditional support and aid of Msgr. Maroun Asmar, Rev. Paul Mouawad, and Rev. Elie Saade, LMO. There are no words that could express the gratitude in the hearts of the parishioners of OLSE to these three incomparable human beings.

His Excellency Bishop Gregory Mansour graced OLSE with his presence and led the Dedication, commemorating this most precious anniversary. There was a banquet held Saturday, May 5, 2012, in the Church Hall. Many attended and enjoyed the food prepared by the parishioners. Rev. Vincent Farhat, from St. Maron Church in Philadelphia, Penn., said the banquet invocation prayer. Then, His Excellency Bishop Gregory Mansour gave a small speech of outpouring love, and thanks were given to Msgr. Maroun Asmar, Rev. Paul Mouawad, and Rev. Elie Saade in honor of all their hard work and dedication to OLSE and its people. A special dance performance was given following the meal along with speeches by the MYO and MKO.

On Sunday, May 6, His Excellency met with the MYA and MYO and shared an intimate discussion with the younger generation of parishioners. He enlightened the youth and young adults with his wisdom, and the topical discussions sparked the interest of all who attended.

Following this gathering came the Dedication Liturgy for the feast of OLSE presided by His Excellency Bishop Gregory Mansour. After the Liturgy, a luncheon was held in the Church Hall, followed by a meeting with the Sunday school students. In the afternoon, His Excellency visited the MKO (Maronite Kids Organization) where approximately twenty children were waiting for the Bishop to bless them and their newly equipped MKO room. The entire weekend was a beautiful blessing.

The parishioners and people of OLSE are nothing but grateful to His Excellency Bishop Gregory Mansour for bestowing his treasured time and consideration upon us all. OLSE has encountered an immense amount of love, support, kindness, and encouragement from so many; there is nothing left to say but thank you. "*I have found the paradox that if I love until it hurts, then there is no hurt, but only more love*" (Mother Teresa). □

**F**r. Paul Mouawad, Pastor, and the parishioners of St. Sharbel Church

invite you to their Annual Festival to be held on  
August 25 - 26, 2012  
at 3679 Providence Road in Newtown Square,  
Penn.  
610-353-5952

## Scranton, Pennsylvania May Crowning



by Judy Soma

On Sunday, May 6, 2012, the Daughters of Saint Ann, the youth sodality of Saint Ann Maronite Church in Scranton, Penn., performed the May Crowning of the Blessed Mother. They were assisted by the girls who had just received their First Holy Communion.

The May Queen was Prefect Sarah Nicole Wheeler, who wore a long white gown and a blue satin cape and carried a bouquet of Madonna Lilies and white roses. Vice-Prefect Rebecca Abdo carried a bouquet of pink roses. Each girl wore a white dress and carried a white rose to present to the Blessed Mother. The youngest member, Lena Ligorio, carried the crown of roses on a blue satin pillow.

The May Court included Lucy Abdalla, Rebecca Abdo, Katherine Harding, Gemma Hashem, Ava Hazzouri, Natasha Hazzouri, Anna Ligorio, Lena Ligorio, Ava Russo, Ava Tayoun, Angelina Wheeler and Sarah Wheeler. The traditional event was coordinated by the group's moderator, Judy Soma. □

## Eparchial Condolences



**George J. Gebron**, the brother of Deacon Charles J. Gebron, passed away on Sunday, May 13, 2012. In addition to Deacon Charles, George is survived by his wife, Judy, his sister, Ruth, his children, grandchildren and nephews. George was a

United States Navy veteran of World War II and then served in the United States Air Force during the Korean War.

Condolences may be sent to Deacon Charles J. Gebron, 432 Wolf Swamp Road, Longmeadow, MA 01106.

Bishop Gregory Mansour, along with the clergy and faithful of the Eparchy of Saint Maron, extend their heartfelt sympathy and the promise of our prayers to Deacon Charles and his family. May the Lord grant George eternal rest in His Kingdom and consolation to his family and loved ones. □

## Newtown Square, Pennsylvania May Crowning



by Lillian Shahade

On May 13, 2012, St. Sharbel Maronite Church in Newtown Square, Penn., held the annual crowning of The Blessed Virgin Mary. Isabella Karam was May Queen. The children held flowers and processed, led by Fr. Paul, Fr. Craig and the parishioners, around the Church and into the courtyard. Marian hymns were sung in English and Arabic. The weather was perfect for crowning the outside statue of Mary, and this year was rather special in that we actually had a statue of Mary to crown. A few months ago, during an extremely wintry and windy evening, the statue of Mary fell to the ground from her pedestal. Despite the height of the pedestal, there was not one broken piece or harm to the statue in any way. □

## New Bedford, Massachusetts Lenten Outreach

For the second year in a row, during the season of Lent, Our Lady of Purgatory Church in New Bedford, Mass., showed itself to be a true family of faith. As a Lenten outreach project, the church became a "Partner in Hope" supporting St. Jude Children's Hospital. The goal was simple: twelve families would join together, each paying one month (\$20.00) as part of a year's pledge. However, within days after the project was announced, so many families came forward to be part of the program that the church was able to increase its pledge to over four times the original goal. This year the pledge has been increased to five times the original goal to \$100 monthly for the next year.

Our Lady of Purgatory Church is known in the area as the "little church with the big heart." In addition to this outreach program, the church donates food twice monthly to a neighborhood food pantry and sponsors an annual major food drive called the "Souper Bowl of Caring" which coincides with the Super Bowl. Another charity that is supported by Our Lady of Purgatory is Project Birthright which provides new baby items for needy families. Also a special group of knitters make hats and mittens during the year to provide winter warmth for children in need. □

## Tulsa, Oklahoma Annual Festival



St. Thérèse Maronite Parish, Tulsa, Oklahoma, held its annual Lebanon Fest on May 5, 2012. Featured outside for the children was Safari Joe's Exotic Animal Rescue with pony rides, pythons, alligators, parrots, and other exotic animals along with a trampoline.

Inside, Cesar's Latin Band played Cinco de Mayo style music with a Lebanese twist. A bake sale for those who wished to take items home was available.

Jorishie Hall echoed with the sounds of fraternity from the parishioners and friends. Father Elias Abi Sarkis, Pastor, praised those who generously contributed their time and efforts, and very importantly their culinary talents, for the success of this endeavor. He said that each year the Lebanon Fest gets more popular with the members of the parish and has become a fixture in parish life. □



## San Antonio, Texas, Countdown to the 49<sup>th</sup> Annual Maronite Convention

Remember, there is still time to make plans to come on down to San Antonio, Texas, for the 49<sup>th</sup> annual Maronite Convention. Early registration will continue until June 11, so mark your calendars. We also need to remind everyone that there is still time to participate in the Commemorative Ad Book (Journal). This is a perfect opportunity to send a warm greeting or to remember a beloved relative. The forms for the ads are online at [www.namnews.org](http://www.namnews.org).

The Silent Auction is also in need of donations. If you cannot find a particular item, simply go online and check out our auction registries:

- [www.bedbathandbeyond.com](http://www.bedbathandbeyond.com). Click on "Bridal and Gift Registry," then "Give a Great Gift." The first name is Genina and the last name is Mery.

- [www.williamssonoma.com](http://www.williamssonoma.com). Click on "Registry," then "Find a Registry." The first name is Genina and the last name is Mery.
- [www.potterybarn.com](http://www.potterybarn.com). Click on "Registry," then "Find a Registry." The first name is Genina and the last name is Mery.

## Top 10 Reasons to Attend the Convention

10. San Antonio is a fun destination place and after the convention you can take advantage of being here to see all the wonderful sites!
9. The excursions and tours will provide distractions for the down times - no need for making other plans.
8. Our children will be busy with fun and educational outings and special events.
7. Old and new friends can reminisce and make new memories while experiencing the beautiful San Antonio Riverwalk.
6. The workshop topics promise to be spiritual, fun and informative.
5. The Youth will have plenty to do - there will be no "I'm bored!" comments.
4. The entertainment for the evening events will be unforgettable. There will be the great country entertainer Gary Glenn; an evangelical concert by Fr. Fadi Tabet, M.L.M.; an evening of Latin rhythms by famed Tejano recording artist Patsy Torres; and great Lebanese music provided by Studio *El Fan* finalist Zeina and renowned Lebanese superstar Nicolas El Osta.
3. Hospitality, hospitality, hospitality!
2. There will be beautiful, spiritually uplifting liturgies celebrated by our bishops and clergy.

And the #1 reason for attending this year's convention: The NAM Convention in San Antonio will be a wonderful, unforgettable experience uniting our Faith, Heritage and Community. □

## Convention Schedule

### Wednesday, July 4, 2012

- |                      |   |
|----------------------|---|
| 8:00 - 8:30 a.m.     | <i>Safro</i> (Morning Prayer)   |
| 9:00 - 5:00 a.m.     | NAM Board of Directors Meeting  |
| 9:30 - 11:30 a.m.    | Clergy Meeting  |
| Noon - 1:00 p.m.     | Divine Liturgy  |
| 1:00 - 5:00 p.m.     | Registration & Banquet Seating  |
| 2:00 - 4:00 p.m.     | Youth Mixer   |
| 2:00 - 4:00 p.m.     | Young Adults Mixer  |
| 3:30 - 5:00 p.m.     | Clergy Meeting  |
| 5:30 - 6:00 p.m.     | <i>Ramsho</i>   |
| 6:00 - 7:00 p.m.     | Choir Rehearsal   |
| 7:30 - Midnight      | "Stars, Stripes & Spurs" - Dinner & Texas Music Lonesome Dove @ The Convention Center |
| Midnight - 3:00 a.m. | DJ - Late Night Gathering & Dance   |
| Midnight - 3:00 a.m. | Sing Along  |

# Convention Schedule

## Thursday, July 5, 2012

8:00 - 8:30 a.m.	<i>Safro</i> (Morning Prayer)
9:00 - 11:45 a.m.	Excursion - San Antonio Shopping Tour
9:00 - 5:00 p.m.	Hospitality Room
9:00 - 5:00 p.m.	Exhibits and Displays
9:00 - 5:00 p.m.	Registration & Banquet Seating
9:30 - 11:30 a.m.	Clergy Meeting
9:45 - 11:45 a.m.	Children's Program
10:00 - 11:30 a.m.	Workshop - <i>Successful Fundraising</i> by F. Kurey, Esq., MBA
Noon - 1:00 p.m.	Divine Liturgy
1:00 - 2:30 p.m.	NAM Board Lunch with the Bishops
1:00 - 4:00 p.m.	Youth Workshop with Lunch and Pool Party
1:30 - 4:00 p.m.	YA/YAP - Foot Rally - River Walk
	Theology on Tap - off site
2:15 - 4:15 p.m.	Children's Program- Arts and Crafts
2:30 - 4:00 p.m.	Workshop - Maronite Antiochene Spirituality by Chorbishop Seely Beggiani
2:00 - 4:00 p.m.	SAM (Single Adult Maronite) - Who Are We? Social Introduction
5:00 - 5:30 p.m.	<i>Ramsho</i> (Evening Prayer)
5:30 - 6:30 p.m.	Choir Rehearsal
6:30 - 11:30 p.m.	"Stars Over St. George" - Middle Eastern Cuisine and an Evangelical Concert with Fr. Fadi Tabet
Midnight - 3:00 a.m.	DJ - Late Night Gathering and Dance
Midnight - 3:00 a.m.	Sing Along

## Friday, July 6, 2012

8:00 - 8:30 a.m.	<i>Safro</i> (Morning Prayer)
9:00 - 11:45 a.m.	Excursion - San Antonio Mission Tour
9:00 - 10:00 a.m.	Order of St. Sharbel Breakfast and Meeting
9:00 a.m.- 5:00 p.m.	Exhibits and Displays
9:00 a.m.- 5:00 p.m.	Registration and Banquet Seating
9:00 a.m.- 4:45 p.m.	YA/YAP - Schlitterbaun Water Park
9:30 - 11:45 a.m.	Children's Program - Whitte Museum
10:00 - 11:30 a.m.	Workshop - <i>Catechesis and Religious Education</i> (Session 1)
10:30 a.m.- 1:30 p.m.	Youth Outing (Alamo City Attractions and Lunch)
Noon - 1:00 p.m.	Divine Liturgy
1:00 - 4:00 p.m.	Youth Workshop with Lunch and Pool Party
2:00 - 3:30 p.m.	Book signing - Lebanese Language Institute
2:15 - 4:15 p.m.	Children's Program - Arts and Crafts
2:30 - 4:00 p.m.	Workshop - <i>Catechesis and Religious Education</i> (Session 2)
2:30 - 4:00 p.m.	Youth Workshop - Fundraising
4:30 - 6:30 p.m.	NAM Delegates Meeting
5:00 - 5:30 p.m.	<i>Ramsho</i> (Evening Prayer)
5:30 - 6:30 p.m.	Choir Rehearsal
6:00 - 7:30 p.m.	SAM (Single Adult Maronite) Social

8:00 p.m. - 1:00 a.m.	"Taste of San Antonio" (Dinner and Dancing)
1:00 - 3:00 a.m.	DJ-Late Night Gathering & Dance
1:00 - 3:00 a.m.	Sing Along

## Saturday, July 7, 2012

8:00 - 8:30 a.m.	<i>Safro</i> (Morning Prayer)
8:30 - 9:00 a.m.	NAM Breakfast
9:00 - 11:45 a.m.	Excursion - San Antonio Culture Tour
9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.	Exhibits and Displays
9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.	Registration and Banquet Seating
9:00 - 11:30 a.m.	NAM General Assembly
9:30 - 4:30 p.m.	Youth Program - Fiesta Texas
9:45 - 11:45 a.m.	Children's Program- Fun in the Sun
10:00 - 11:30 a.m.	Workshop - <i>Effective Church Leadership by the Laity</i> by Rev. Abdallah Zaidan and Panel
Noon - 1:00 p.m.	Divine Liturgy
1:30 - 2:30 p.m.	NAM Board of Directors Meeting
1:30 - 2:30 p.m.	YA/YAP Workshop with Bishops
2:00 - 3:00 p.m.	Order of St. Sharbel - Ice Cream Social
2:15 - 4:15 p.m.	Children's Program- Movie Time
2:30 - 4:00 p.m.	Workshop - <i>Land and Identity</i> (Movie - "End of a Dream")
2:30 - 4:30 p.m.	YA/YAP - Pool Party
4:00 - 5:00 p.m.	SAM (Single Adult Maronite) - Talks of Interest
5:00 - 5:30 p.m.	Divine Liturgy for Sunday Travelers
5:30 - 6:30 p.m.	Choir Rehearsal
6:30 - 7:30 p.m.	Pre-Banquet Cocktail Hour
7:30 p.m. - 1:00 a.m.	"Deep In The Heart Of Texas" The Grand Banquet and Raffle Drawing; Lebanese Super Star Nicolas El Osta & Band
1:00 - 3:00 a.m.	DJ - Late Night Gathering & Dance
1:00 - 3:00 a.m.	Sing Along

## Sunday, July 8, 2012

10:00 - 11:30 a.m.	Pontifical Divine Liturgy
11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m.	Farewell Brunch ("Until We Meet In Tampa 2013"). ☐



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## Atlanta, Georgia *Theology on Tap 2012*



by Dana Smith

The St. Joseph's Maronite Young Adults (MYA) in Atlanta, Ga., has long awaited a visit from Bishop Gregory Mansour. They certainly had reason to, since they were not afforded the opportunity last year. However, this year's visit more than made up for last year!

The group met with Bishop Mansour on the upper deck of Atlanta's Dark Horse Tavern. It was a relaxed but intimate scene - there were about twenty of us - and we munched on tortilla chips while the Bishop explored the first three chapters of Genesis. We dissected the meaning of Adam and Eve's existence and fall. We discovered that there is such great value in free choice and using that choice to give glory to God. (It is by Adam and Eve's choice that man died; it was by Mary and Jesus' choice that man may now live.) We came to understand God's intent for man and woman was to exist as helpmates for one another, not to live in discord or blame.

Over dinner, we discussed the importance of prayer and all of the different ways that we can pray, whether through

meditating upon scripture, morning and evening talks with God, rosaries, and daily Liturgy. Ultimately, we were refreshed and brought to a remembrance of our overall purpose and the necessity of intimacy with God. This gift of the knowledge of God is priceless, and for this time, we were beyond grateful. □

## Norman, Oklahoma *Lebanese Heritage and Food Festival*



More than ninety Maronite families from Dallas, Texas, traveled on Saturday, April 28, 2012, to Norman, Oklahoma, to support Our Lady of Lebanon Mission for their First Annual Lebanese Heritage and Food Festival. Fr. Assaad ElBasha and his parishioners left the Church in Dallas and were welcomed by Fr. Sami Chaaya and his parishioners. Fr. Sami was so appreciative of their support of the Raffle sales and their presence at the Festival. The children from Dallas performed *Dabke* dances and entertained the festival audiences. □