



# The Maronite Voice

A Publication of the Maronite Eparchies in the USA

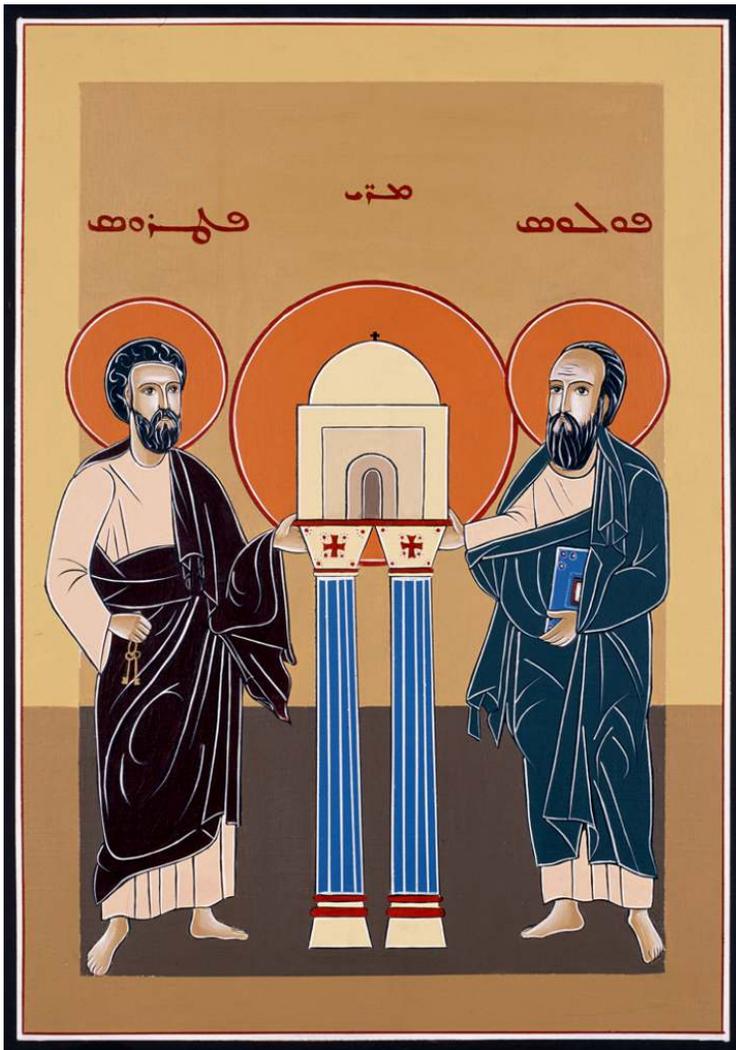


Volume XI

Issue No. VI

June 2015

## *“Charity Begins at Home,” and So Does Mercy!*



Saints Peter and Paul by Fr. Abdo Badawi, University of the Holy Spirit (USEK), Kaslik, Lebanon.

With the upcoming Holy Year, Pope Francis has asked us to take concrete steps to increase our mercy towards ourselves and our families, as well as towards the Church and the world. Perhaps this may also be the time we seek the healing of some deep wounds in Church. I am speaking of the painful divisions that have harmed the Church.

The Church was divided in the year 431, causing the separation of the Assyrian Church of the East. Then again we were divided in 451, with the separation of the Coptic, Armenian, and Syriac Churches (called Oriental Orthodox Churches). Division struck again in 1054, with the Eastern (Byzantine) Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches. The final series of divisions took place in the time of the Protestant Reformation, with the growth of several Protestant, and later, Evangelical denominations.

All these divisions continue today, but amazing progress has been made by the difficult yet persistent efforts of ecumenical dialogues. One such dialogue has produced extraordinary results, namely the Oriental Orthodox/Catholic Dialogue.

Here below is the summary of that yearly joint statement. The entire text can be read at:

[http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/pontifical\\_councils/chrstuni/anc-orient-ch-docs/rc\\_pc\\_chrstuni\\_doc\\_20150513\\_exercise-communion\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/anc-orient-ch-docs/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_20150513_exercise-communion_en.html). It is long, but it is worth the read!

### *Summary and Conclusion*

69. “The dialogue has examined in detail the nature of the relationships that existed among the member churches in the period leading up to the divisions of the 5th century. It shows that the full communion that existed among the churches was expressed in many different ways in a vast web

of relationships founded on the common conviction that all of the churches shared the same faith.

70. These expressions of communion were manifested in at least six areas: 1) through the exchange of letters and visits (both formal and informal) extending even beyond the borders of the Roman Empire; 2) through synods and councils held to resolve problems of doctrine and discipline; 3) through prayer and similar liturgical practices; 4) through sharing in the veneration of common martyrs and saints; 5) in the development and spread of monasticism to all the churches; 6) through pilgrimages to the shrines of the various churches. (Continues on page 20)

## Schedule of Bishop Elias Zaidan

**June 2 - 22, 2015**

Synod of the Maronite Bishops, Bkerke, Lebanon, and Family Visit

**June 28, 2015**

St. Raymond Cathedral, St. Louis, Mo.

**June 29 - July 5, 2015**

Clergy Conference and NAM Convention, Cleveland, Ohio

**July 6 - 8, 2015**

MYO Workshop, Latrobe, Penn.

**July 10 - 12, 2015**

Ordination of Deacon Chris Fabre to the Holy Order of Priesthood at Our Lady's Maronite Parish, Austin, Tex.

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

**Editor** Msgr. George M. Sebaali

### **Editing and proofreading**

Mary Shaia

Printed in Richmond, Virginia.

## **Maronite Convention 2015**

Saint Maron Maronite Church

**Cleveland, Ohio**

**July 1 - 5, 2015**

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

## From the Book Shelf

### **History of the Maronite Catholic Church in the United States The Clergy**

by Evelyn Karam Small

In 1890, the first assigned Maronite Catholic missionary arrived in New York City. Like many Lebanese immigrants, he brought with him his faith and the hope of building a better tomorrow.

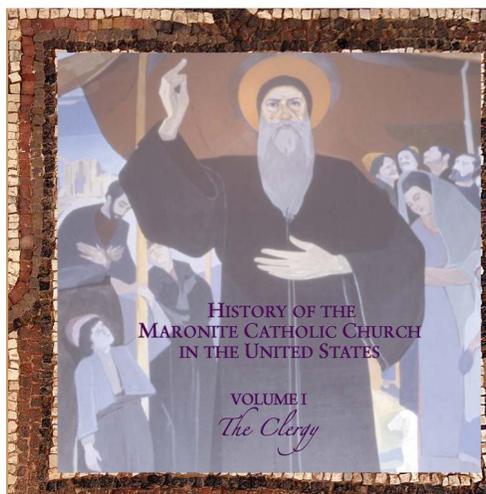
Now, modern-day parishioners can read about the complete history of the Maronite Church in America in a new book called *History of the Maronite Catholic Church in the United States, Volume I, The Clergy*. Five years of extensive research were needed to unearth never-before published documents and to translate historical records and correspondence from their original French or Arabic into English. To further understand the evolution of the Church, the authors also analyzed interviews conducted with parishioners and pastors over the past seventy years.

This 440-page book is an essential addition to the bookshelf of any Maronite curious about the contributions our Church has made over the last 125 years.

*The Clergy* is available for \$30 plus \$7 shipping from Saint Maron Publications, 4611 Sadler Road, Glen Allen, Virginia 23060, <http://stmaron.org/store>. Saint Maron Publications accepts Visa or Master Card. □

## **Appeal from Caritas Lebanon**

Christians in Lebanon are suffering! If you are able to relieve some of the suffering, please visit Caritas Lebanon at <http://www.caritas.org.lb>. Thank you for your consideration. □



# San Antonio, Texas

## 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of St. George Church

by Regina Aune

On Sunday, May 10, 2015, St. George Maronite Church in San Antonio, Tex., celebrated the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its founding with a Pontifical Divine Liturgy concelebrated by Bishop Elias Zaidan, Bishop of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon of Los Angeles; Archbishop Gustavo Garcia-Siller, Archbishop of the Archdiocese of San Antonio; Bishop Charles Grahmann, Retired Bishop of the Diocese of Dallas, Tex.; Father Charles Khachan, Pastor; and Father Ramsine Hage Moussa, Pastor of St. Jude Church in West Covina, Calif. Deacons Christopher Fabre and Thomas Billimek assisted. Following the liturgy, a luncheon reception was held in the social hall for parishioners and guests to celebrate the anniversary and honor the mothers of the parish as well since it was Mother's Day. All the mothers present received carnations.

The story of St. George Maronite Church exemplifies the dedication and sacrifices by the many men and women who helped to make St. George flourish and grow. In 1925, a group of eleven dedicated men joined efforts and formed a committee to start the first Maronite parish in South Texas. The first church was established in a two-story frame building. Fr. George Aziz, the first pastor, celebrated the liturgy on the first floor while living on the second floor. After raising funds, the building of the new church was completed on North Pecos Street and dedicated on September 25, 1932. In 1948, the parish faced the problem of relocating due to the construction of the newly proposed IH 35 expressway. Fr. John Trad, pastor then, and the parishioners rebuilt the church brick by brick on the new location on Frio Street. The new building was identical to the original church and was completed in 1952. In 1968, the parish was forced to relocate to Babcock Road, the current location, because of urban development. Again, with their dedication and enthusiasm, the parishioners raised funds and built the church complex, a rectory, a banquet hall and later the activity center that includes a gym and meeting rooms. When the church moved to the Babcock Road location, the area was still more rural than urban and far from the center of the city. Today, the area surrounding the church is a bustling residential and commercial area of San Antonio.

St. George Parish has grown from celebrating the Divine Liturgy in the home of the priest to a thriving parish on twenty-one acres of land. Our greatest assets, however, are the four hundred families who have made St. George what it is today. Children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren of the founding families of St. George are members of the parish and continue to cherish and share their Lebanese heritage with the San Antonio community. The theme for the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary was "St. George Maronite Church: Rooted in Christ." Today, St. George Parish continues to be deeply rooted in Christ, growing in the grace and knowledge of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18) faithfully and joyfully sharing the message of the Gospel with the residents of San Antonio. □



From left: Fr. Ramsine Hage Moussa, MLM, Deacon Chris Fabre, Bishop Charles Grahmann, Bishop Elias Zaidan, Archbishop Gustavo Garcia-Siller and Fr. Charles Khachan, MLM.



### Eparchial Condolences

**Mrs Linda (Saifi) Khoueiry**, 86, the mother of Father Joseph Khoueiry, Pastor of St. George Maronite Church in Dover, New Hampshire, passed away May 23, 2015, in Springfield, Mass., surrounded by her family. She was born in Beirut, Lebanon, to the late Melhem Saifi and Loulou (Ghorayeb) Saifi. Active in her Catholic faith, she was a communicant of Saint John Church in Beirut. She was predeceased by her husband, Ibrahim Khoueiry, and she leaves her seven children, Nabil Khoueiry and his family, George Khoueiry and his family, Leila Khoueiry, Therese Khoueiry, Father Joseph Khoueiry, Marie Khoueiry and Loulou Khoueiry Hannoush and her family; her six grandchildren; her brother, Elie Saifi and family; her sister,

Maneh Abboud and family; and her many nephews, nieces, cousins and extended family.

The Funeral service took place at Saint Anthony Church in Springfield, Mass., on May 28, 2015. Condolences may be sent to Fr. Joseph Khoueiry, c/o St. George Church, P.O. Box 2210, Dover, NH 03821.

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 Father Joseph and his family.

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



## North Jackson, Ohio A Day Pilgrimage

**O**ur Lady of Lebanon National Shrine and Basilica was pleased to receive a visit from the Sisters of Saint Francis (TOR) from the Diocese of Steubenville, Ohio, on April 7, 2015. The Sisters made a day pilgrimage to the Basilica Shrine with the intention of spending time in fellowship and prayer. Novices, postulants, and their formation Mistress accompanied the Sisters.



It was wonderful to see the many young Sisters in prayer and enjoying the facilities of the Shrine Basilica. It was also a wonderful inspiration to the staff and volunteers to witness the love of Christ in the faces of these young women who have dedicated themselves to Christ and His Church. Our Lady of Lebanon Shrine extends its best wishes to the Franciscan Sisters and hopes that they will come to visit again very soon.

## Feast of Saint Joseph



Msgr. Anthony Spinosa, Rector, blesses St. Joseph table.

**T**he Shrine Basilica of Our Lady of Lebanon hosted the annual Saint Joseph Novena from March 11 to the Feast of Saint Joseph on March 19, 2015. The

commemoration of Saint Joseph is a long observed tradition at the Shrine, but was especially important this year as the Shrine celebrates its 50<sup>th</sup> Jubilee.

Once again the Basilica was the scene of many visits by those who came to honor Saint Joseph, the Protector of the Holy Family as well as the Patron of workers and a holy death, and Guardian of the Universal Church.

During the Novena and celebration, the faithful were reminded how all of us place our trust in the intercession of Saint Joseph for so many of our temporal needs as people strive to provide for themselves and families. The Church also relies on Saint Joseph to provide for the many temporal needs of the Church so she may continue to provide spiritual and temporal assistance to all of God's people.

It was, once again, a great celebration of the life of Saint Joseph, Guardian of the Holy Family and ours as well.

## 25 Club Winners

**T**he monthly winners of the 25 Club at Our Lady of Lebanon National Shrine and Basilica in North Jackson, Ohio, are as follows:

- \$1000** Lisa Doran, New Castle, Penn.  
Brenda Leshnock, Youngstown, Ohio  
Julia Simon, Girard, Ohio
- \$500** Fr. Albert Constantine, Northridge, Calif.
- \$100** Sixteen winners

The 25 Club, begun in 1968, called for people to pay just \$25 a ticket twice a year. The money was used to pay the Shrine's utilities. Today, the 25 Club remains an important fundraiser. If you are interested in purchasing a ticket, please give the Basilica Shrine office a call at (330) 538-3351 or by email at [office@ourladyofLebanonshrine.com](mailto:office@ourladyofLebanonshrine.com). □

*the Deadline is...* **Deadline for next month's issue of *The Maronite Voice* is June 25, 2015.**  
*The Maronite Voice* is the official newsletter of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon and of the Eparchy of Saint Maron.

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

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



Follow Bishop Gregory Mansour and the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn on Twitter at [BishopMansour](https://twitter.com/BishopMansour). □

## Uniontown, Pennsylvania *May Crowning*



**S**t. George Maronite Church in Uniontown, Penn., continued its tradition of celebrating Mother's Day with a May Crowning. May Queen Karleigh Risha crowned the statue of the Blessed Mother. Attendants were Rebecca Georgiana, Hannah Sutton and Haley Sutton. Crown bearers were Cameron Ferris and Matthew Schwertfeger. Both boys were first communicants this year. Subdeacon Mallard T. George assisted Father Sami Chaaya, MLM at the special Mother's Day liturgy. □

## Fayetteville, North Carolina *Workshop on Ecumenism*

by Rev. Samuel A. Najjar, J.D., Director

**A**nually, Ecumenical Officers and representatives from dioceses, eparchies, and churches throughout the United States gather for a three-day conference under the title of National Workshop of Christian Unity (NWCU). As the Director of Ecumenism and Interreligious Dialogue for the Eparchy of St. Maron, I try to attend each year. This year the workshop took place on April 20 - 23, 2015, in Charlotte, N.C., with the theme: "Where Are We on the Path to Christian Unity?" The opening night speaker was Bishop George E. Battle, Jr. from the AME Zion Church. Tuesday, all were invited to St. Peter Catholic Church for a Mass concelebrated by the priests attending; and Wednesday evening, the Eucharist was at St. Peter Episcopal Church. Among the other speakers were Dr. Sandra Keating, who is a member of the USCCB Catholic-Muslim dialogue group and serves as a Consultor on the Vatican Commission for Religious Relations with Muslims and Dr. Amy-Jill Levine, a University Professor of New Testament and Jewish Studies at Vanderbilt Divinity School and College of Arts and Sciences. During the morning and afternoon sessions there are various seminars which were reserved at the time of conference registration.

Within the Christian Unity Organization and the Catholic Association of Diocesan Ecumenical and Interreligious

Officers (CADEIO) there are fourteen geographic regions and one region for the Eastern Churches. At this year's CADEIO general meeting I was chosen to represent the Eastern Churches (Region 15), as well as assisting with the planning of next year's workshop in Louisville, Kentucky. We were extremely honored to find an article in the *L'Osservatore Romano* (Italy) concerning our recent workshop citing our commitment to the Second Vatican Council's dialogue on Ecumenism. □

## Fall River, Massachusetts *Fashion Show*



**O**n Sunday, April 26, 2015, a Spring/Summer Fashion Show was held at St. Anthony of the Desert Church, Fall River, Mass. Fashions were provided by T.J. Maxx and were modeled by the youth of the parish. Moderators Shannon Martin and Evan Massoud introduced each model and gave those in attendance a short history of each model. The event was a fundraiser for the parish and was greatly supported by family and friends. Refreshments provided by the committee were served at the coffee hour following the program. □

## Denver, Colorado *Ecumenical Prayer Breakfast*

by Roxanne King

*This article originally appeared in the May 19, 2015, issue of the Denver Catholic.*

**"T**heir blood confesses Christ," Pope Francis said in February as he denounced the beheading of twenty-one Egyptian Christians in Libya by the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS).

Calling the murdered "martyrs," the Pope urged that the deaths stir ecumenical unity, saying, "It makes no difference whether they be Catholics, Orthodox, Copts or Protestants. They are Christians!"

On May 15, 2015, Denver Archbishop Samuel Aquila, Maronite Catholic Bishop A. Elias Zaidan, thirty other clergy and 200 laity heeded the Pope's call with an ecumenical prayer breakfast to stand in solidarity with persecuted Christians and rally aid.

The event was organized by the Archdiocese of Denver and Maronite Father Andre Mahanna, Director of Ecumenism



Bishop A. Elias Zaidan (center) with the organizers of the Ecumenical prayer breakfast.

and Interfaith Relations for the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon and Pastor of St. Rafka Church in Lakewood [Denver], Colorado, where the service was held.

It included a procession with Orthodox and Lutheran bishops and pastors, a Mormon stake (deanery) president and a Baptist minister, a hymn chanted in Arabic, English and Greek, and Scripture readings.

Those giving testimony about the plight of victimized Christians included Bishop Zaidan of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon; Carmelite monks from Syria; an aid worker; and a Skype discussion with refugees from Iraq and Syria.

A media presentation showed the beheading, massacres and destruction of ancient Christian sites in Syria by ISIS, whose brutal aggression there has led to one of the greatest exiles of people in centuries.

"Lebanon is a land of four million people and over two million refugees," Bishop Zaidan said about his birthplace, which borders Syria, adding that the need is overwhelming both the government and the Church.

Christian casualties in Syria, which has a population of 22.9 million, according to the United Nations, include 1.5 million displaced, more than 6,400 killed and 10,000 abductions. Entire villages have been destroyed, countless numbers of children orphaned and Christian women taken as sex slaves as ISIS expands its self-declared Islamic state.

Archbishop Aquila exhorted the audience to build awareness of the atrocities. "The fact that (Christians) put their faith in Jesus Christ is the only reason (they) are being killed (by ISIS)," he said. "It's especially important for people in the United States to speak out against this."

Jaden McNeely, Director of Operations for Global Refuge International, also issued a challenge. "When you hear, you have a responsibility ... not just as a human, but as a believer in Jesus, to do something about this," he said.

Among the suggestions speakers offered is urging elected officials to take action and donating to humanitarian relief efforts.

"Never forget your (persecuted Christian) brothers and sisters," Bishop Zaidan emphasized. "Never forget to pray for them. We underestimate the importance and power of prayer."

The program also highlighted heartening experiences of

divine grace among the despoiled people. Via video, two refugee children from Iraq who were close friends but separated when they were uprooted from their homes, were reunited. One of them, Miryam, said she forgave her aggressors the same way she and her friend, Sandra, forgave each other.

"This is the greatest story," Father Mahanna said, translating for refugee workers skyping from Lebanon. He said he aims to reunite the friends in person and bring them to the United States to serve as ambassadors for peace.

Carmelite Brother David Johnson, 34, a native Denverite who is a monk at St. James the Persian Monastery in *Qara*, Syria, shared an uplifting experience of God's Providence amidst the terrorism. He told of being abducted from the monastery, which is surrounded by mountains filled with ISIS fighters, on Easter Monday three years ago by Syrian militia who thought he might be a spy. While being held hostage, Brother David told his captors that although he is American, Jesus taught that one's true home is with God the Father in heaven, and he sang an Easter hymn to them in Arabic.

"I've never heard that before, why don't you sing that again," Brother David recalled one of the soldiers saying. "So I sang again, 'Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down death by death, and upon those in the tombs bestowing life.'"

Drawing laughter, he added: "The guy said, 'Let's turn around the car. We're taking him back to the monastery.'"

Fellow monk, Carmelite Father Daniel Maes, a 50-year-old priest from Belgium, stressed the importance of protecting Christianity in the lands where it started, noting that its disappearance there would bode ill for all Christians.

"When the roots of the tree are cut off," he warned, "then the tree outside will die also."

The prayer breakfast was a follow-up to the Peace, Love and Co-Existence (PLACE) petition launched by Father Mahanna and the Denver Archdiocese last fall that calls for the defense of human rights and religious liberty for persecuted Christians

(sign it at [www.archden.org/prayer-peace](http://www.archden.org/prayer-peace)).

"More than \$23,000 was raised for charity aid at the prayer breakfast," Father Mahanna said, adding that contributions, which will go to a refugee center in Lebanon, are still being accepted (see information box).

"I am very thankful to all the (prayer breakfast) supporters and contributors," Father Mahanna added, noting that he will visit relief efforts in Lebanon next month.

To Help:

- Speak out: Sign the PLACE petition at [www.archden.org/prayer-peace](http://www.archden.org/prayer-peace)
- Donate: Make check payable to St. Rafka Church, mail to 2301 Wadsworth Blvd., Lakewood, CO 80214; indicate in the memo line: Middle East Refugee Aid. ☐



## North Jackson, Ohio 2015 MYO/MYA State Reunion



by Seminarian Christopher Nahra

On Saturday, May 16, 2015, the first-ever MYO/MYA State Reunion took place at the Our Lady of Lebanon National Basilica, North Jackson, Ohio. Flying in from St. Louis, Mo., Father Gary George accompanied the youth as they prayed for vocations and learned about the Holy Rosary. All the Maronite Youth Organizations of Ohio reunited and celebrated Liturgy at the youngest chapel in the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon located in the new Adult Day Care Center, which is run by the Antonine Sisters. Furthermore, the youth prayed the Living Rosary in motion and participated in various team building activities.

A special Thank you goes to all the advisors that drove their youth groups to the Basilica and to Father Gary for his leadership in administering this reunion. Everyone had an amazing time and cannot wait for the National Youth Retreat in Latrobe, Penn., in July. The youth continue to exponentially grow and widen their horizons in the Maronite Faith, but together they will set the world ablaze with their love for one another, forgiveness in their relationships and the zeal to make God's will known in the world. ☐

## Cleveland, Ohio Car and Convention Raffles

Saint Maron Church in Cleveland, Ohio, is working hard to prepare for the 2015 NAM Convention in July of this year. Each NAM convention serves as an opportunity for Maronites around the nation to gather together for a weekend of religious reflection, spiritual activities, inspiring and educational workshops, festivities and more. The NAM convention is made possible through the dedication of numerous volunteers, the NAM attendees, and the generous donations of many, including those donations raised through the NAM raffles.

This year, the NAM car raffle features a brand new 2015 GMC Terrain, valued at \$27,620, generously donated by Mike and Kevin Joyce of Joyce Buick GMC, Samir and Kim



Haikal and Family, and Saba and Rita Salloum and Family. There will be five hundred tickets for the car raffle, each selling for \$100.

Tickets for the Convention raffle are \$5 each or \$20 for a book of five (5) tickets for a chance at the following prizes:

- 1st Prize: Mont Blanc Ladies Watch, \$1,250 value, donated by Sheiban Jewelers, Strongsville, Ohio
- 2nd Prize: Two Round Trip Tickets from anywhere in Europe to Beirut, \$1,000 value, donated by Middle East Airlines, New York, N.Y.
- 3rd Prize: Apple Watch Sport (Space Gray Aluminum Case with Black Sport Band), \$349 value, donated by Saint Maron Cleveland MYA
- 4th Prize: Samsung 32" LED TV, \$249 value, donated by Jihan and Darlene Maroun, Cleveland, Ohio

If you would like to purchase tickets for either raffle please contact Mauni Khoury at (440) 655-8303 or Mekhoury@Mac.com, or order online at [www.namnews.org](http://www.namnews.org). Raffle tickets will also be available for purchase throughout the convention prior to their drawings on Saturday, July 4, 2015, during the Grand Banquet. Ticket purchasers need not be present to win. A cash value option is not available for either raffle. Thank you for your ongoing support. ☐

## Dallas, Texas Troops of Saint George



From left (Front row): Pierce O'Flaherty and Gabriel Sotelo. Second row: Cillian Smith, Christian Omvig, Sebastian Sotelo. Third row: Chaplain Mark Omvig, Sean O'Flaherty, Gabriel Medina, Liam O'Flaherty, Blaise Omvig, Capt. Tim O'Flaherty. Back row: 1st Lt. Joe Marincel, Granite Omvig, Fr. Assaad ElBasha, Sgt. Michael Marincel, Luke Hawbaker and Lt. Art Sotelo.

Our Lady of Lebanon Church in Dallas, Texas, is proud to present its Troops of Saint George troop. The troop is unique in that these boys are all homeschooled, and they have been or are currently Altar Servers. They are a very active group, camping, visiting historic cathedrals and volunteering at the Parish. Our Lady of Lebanon Parish is very blessed to have them and their fathers/troop leaders as its parishioners. ☐

## Norman, Oklahoma *Lebanese Food Festival*



Our Lady of Lebanon Maronite Mission in Norman, Oklahoma, rejoiced in presenting its 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Lebanese Heritage and Food Festival on April 18, 2015. It was a fun and successful event! The Norman Mission wishes to say “Thank You” to the parishioners of Our Lady of Lebanon Maronite Church, Lewisville [Dallas], Texas, who came to support their event. ☐

## Brooklyn, New York *SpringFest*



Members of the Cathedral’s Confraternity with Msgr. James A. Root, Rector.

by *Salma Vahdat*

The Confraternity of the Immaculate Conception of Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral, Brooklyn, N.Y., sponsored

a dinner dance on Saturday, May 2, 2015, at the Byblos Restaurant in Manhattan. It was the right time to renew spirits after a deep freeze winter.

Co-chaired by members Norma Haddad and Michele Malouf, it turned out to be a fun-filled evening of camaraderie and delicious food. The turnout was heartening, and the dance pulled the attendees out of the winter doldrums.

A 50/50 raffle added to the funds raised by the event, especially when one of the raffle winners graciously and generously donated his winnings back to the Confraternity! This successful event is expected to continue on an annual basis. Coupled with the winter Bake sale and boutique, it will generate more funds for the Cathedral and its renovation. ☐

## Newtown Square, Pennsylvania *May Crowning*



by *Lillian Shahade*

On May 3, 2015, Sayde Stanford had the honor to lead the Crowning of Mary in Saint Sharbel’s Maronite Church Annual May procession in Newtown Square, Penn. Sayde's twin brothers, Jacob and Charles, both carried the crown for Mary while Sayde's mom, Amanda Abiaad Stanford assisted her. Fr. Raymond Khallouf, Pastor, ascended the ladder to place the crown on the Blessed Virgin’s statue. The children present participated in the entrance processional and presented flowers to Mary. After the Divine Liturgy, coffee and refreshments, provided by the parishioners, were served in the social hall. ☐



## Minneapolis, Minnesota *Children Fun Day*



by Joan Moses

Chorbishop sharbel Maroun, Pastor of Saint Maron Church, Minneapolis, Minn., joined the children at their annual Maronite Christian Formation Fun Day. The children played carnival games, earned prizes, and feasted on hot dogs and chips in the classrooms. □



### Schedule of Bishop Gregory Mansour

**June 5 - 22, 2015**

Annual Synod of Maronite Bishops, *Bkerke*, Lebanon.

**June 25 - 28, 2015**

Family Wedding, Toronto, Canada

**June 29 - July 2, 2015**

Clergy Conference, Cleveland, Ohio

**July 2 - 5, 2015**

Annual Maronite (NAM) Convention, Cleveland, Ohio

**July 6 - 8, 2015**

Annual MYO Conference, Latrobe, Penn.

**July 12, 2015**

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

**July 17 - 20, 2015**

*Teleumiere* Board of Directors Meeting and Symposium on Christianity in the Middle East co-sponsored by CAMECT, IDC, the Detroit Chaldean Community and *Teleumiere*, Detroit, Mich. □

## Chicago, Illinois *Meeting For the Achievement of a Unified Church of the East*



A cordial and fraternal meeting between the delegations of the Assyrian Church of the East and the Ancient Church of the East for the achievement of a unified Church of the East took place in Chicago, Ill., at the premises of St. Andrew's Assyrian Church of the East on Friday, May 22, 2015. The representatives of the Ancient Church of the East were:

- His Beatitude Mar Yakoob Danil, Metropolitan of Australia and New Zealand
- His Beatitude Mar Zaia Khoshaba, Metropolitan of Canada and the U.S.
- His Grace Mar Gewargis Younan, Bishop of Chicago, Ill.

The representatives of the Assyrian Church of the East were:

- His Beatitude Mar Gewargis Sliwa, Metropolitan of Iraq and Russia
- His Grace Mar Iskhaq Yousif, Bishop of Nohadra, Erbil, and Russia
- His Grace Mar Awa Royel, Bishop of California and Secretary of the Holy Synod

The common secretary of this meeting was the Very Rev. William Toma, Archdeacon.

The meeting began with the Lord's Prayer in a singular love, as King David says in the Old Testament: "How very good and pleasant it is, when kindred live together in unity!" (Psalms 133:1). Representatives of both branches showed sincere love and the desire in fulfilling a complete unification of the Church of the East, after nearly fifty years of separation within our Holy Church.

The recommendations for unity of the Assyrian Church of the East and the Ancient Church of the East were submitted to each other through the representatives chosen by the leadership of each branch. They will be submitted and discussed in their individual Holy Synods. After the recommendations are discussed, a date and venue shall be designated for a second meeting - for further examination of the responses to the recommendations submitted today.

In conclusion, the meeting came to a close with a positive awareness and belief of both delegations in the fulfillment of unification, as is the will of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Who said, "That they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be one in us" (John 17:21). □

(<http://news.assyrianchurch.org>)

## The Season of Pentecost and the Spirit of Truth and Life

*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters (Genesis 1:1-2).*

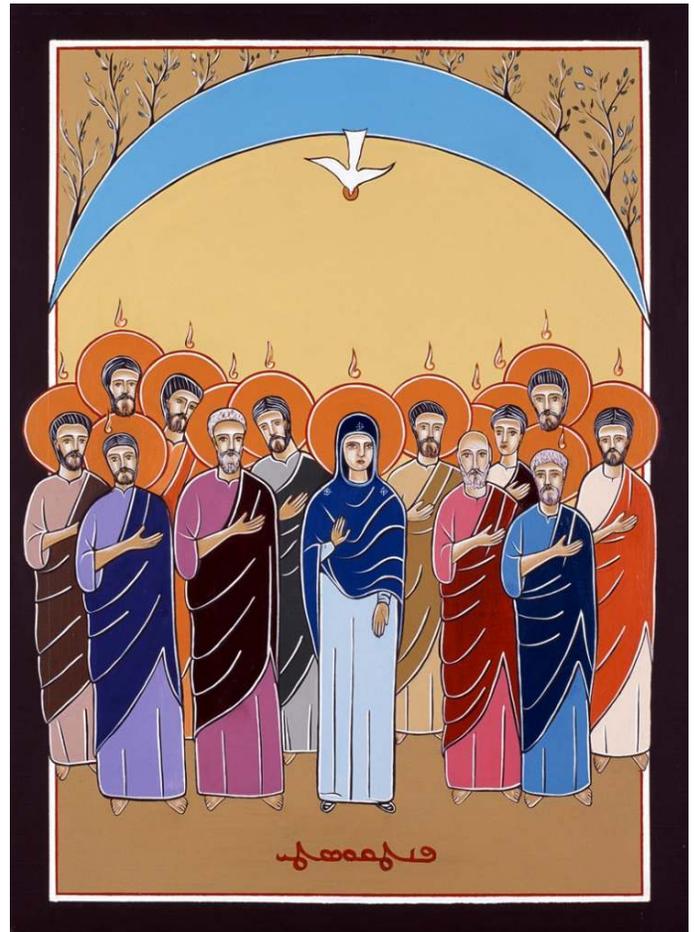
The Holy Spirit (*Ruach Elohim* in Hebrew; *Rucha Qadisha* in Syriac-Aramaic; *Hagia Pneuma* in Greek) is the Spirit of Truth and Life. In all the Churches of the East (Catholic, Ancient Orthodox, and Eastern Orthodox) Pentecost is not only a Feast Day but a Season of the Church Calendar, in which we remember, celebrate and praise the gift of the Holy Spirit.

While the coming of spring and summer were celebrated by ancient peoples with rites and ceremonies focused upon flowering, new birth, and the light and warmth of the sun; in the Hebrew Scriptures or Old Testament we see a new meaning in the giving of The Law to Moses on Mt. Sinai. "Where in an inexpressible mystical encounter God revealed himself, entered into a Covenant, gave commandments, and promised salvation. ... religion ceased being simply nature, and now became the beginning of history."<sup>1</sup> This will allow the prophets of Israel to see and proclaim a future fullness of God's reign over His creation. This will allow for the proclamation of the coming of a Messiah who will redeem humanity, and a re-creation through the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit of God. As the prophet Joel wrote:

*And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. Even upon the menservants and maidservants in those days, I will pour out My Spirit. And I will give signs in the heavens and on the earth...before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes. And it shall come to pass that all who call upon the name of the Lord shall be delivered...(Joel 2:28-32).*

In the Acts of the Apostles we see that the Apostolic Church realizes in the experience of the Pentecost that the words of the prophets and the long awaited hope of salvation has indeed been fulfilled in their experience of the death, resurrection, appearances, and Ascension of Christ; and now with the Holy Spirit poured out upon them they must proclaim this truth to the world. They realize that the Spirit is the Truth and Life of Christ living in them through the power of God's Spirit, the same Spirit that Scripture says, by whose power Jesus rose from the dead.

*When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly a sound came from heaven like the rush of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them tongues as of fire, distributed and resting on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance... And all who heard were amazed and perplexed, saying to one*



The Coming of the Holy Spirit by Fr. Abdo Badawi, University of the Holy Spirit (USEK), Kaslik, Lebanon.

*another, "What does this mean?" But others mocking said, "They are filled with new wine" (Acts 2:1-4, 12-13).*

To those who did not understand, Peter explained to them that the prophetic witness of Joel was being fulfilled, that the Spirit would be poured out upon all flesh (see Acts 2:17). The Spirit ushers in the Seventh Day, the Last Day, Eternal Life, in which all that has been won by Christ is given back to the Father.

What is the power of the Spirit that bestows Truth and Life? It is the power of Love, Divine Love. "...While the Holy Spirit is the presence, manifestation, and operation of the Father's love, wisdom, and creative work, He is not the Father. ...If the Father is the Lover, if the Son is the Beloved, the Spirit is the Love which unites them, He is their unity, their unified illumination, power and truth."<sup>2</sup>

*(Continues on page 12)*

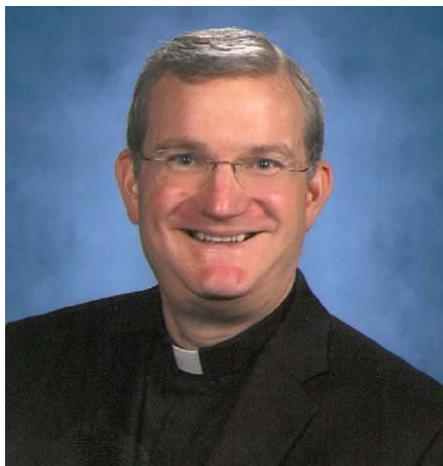
<sup>1</sup>Schmemmann, Alexander, *The Church Year: The Celebration of Faith*, SVS Press, Crestwood, New York, 1994, p.152.

<sup>2</sup> Schmemmann, p.110.

**Looking Back**  
**by**  
**Fr. Patrick Posey**

**A**s I was kneeling at the foot of the altar in a five hundred year-old Church, looking up to the Cross, I remember saying to God, "Four years ago I literally prostrated myself before the altar and your Cross, O Lord, and said that I will give my life to you." Was this what you wanted? Was this the service I was destined to give? This was not where I was supposed to be.

With just one year left on my first parish assignment, Bishop John Keating (at that time my local ordinary) called me into his office. I had begun to get excited about my plans to go into military chaplaincy so I was somewhat



Fr. Patrick Posey

quickly learn that it could be off for two or three days at a time. In the seventy-two villages I was to minister there was no running water and no telephones; it would take a 45-minute ride to get to a phone or read a paper.

When I finally arrived, I just wanted to take a shower and worry about the situation in the morning. Asking where I could get a shower, my driver handed me a flashlight and pointed across the street from the rectory where there was a dirt path that led to the river, the only source of water for bathing, washing clothes or drinking. Having bathed, I stumbled my way into the dark rectory, dropped off my two bags of belongings and went into the Church. I knelt, staring at the Cross, and the only thing that I could say was "I will give my life to you."

My life would be threatened three times while in the missions. One of those times was a result of being summoned to local hospital to help a sick woman. Upon entering, I found a Haitian woman, visibly pregnant, passed out and bleeding at the foot of the doctor, who was busy with a game of dominos. The woman had just been brought three hours from Haiti to get medical attention. I asked the doctor to help her, to which he replied, "I will not touch it." Because Haitians are darker skinned, some Dominicans treat Haitians with some animosity. Unfortunately for this woman, the local doctor was one of them. I was able to get this lady help and to have this doctor removed from the town's hospital, but the doctor was well-connected politically, and many people didn't understand the problem of denying aid to a Haitian. I received notice that if I ventured out at night into the town that I would not return.

I would never serve as a chaplain in the Air Force, because God had His plan. At first this was difficult to accept. Yet, after kneeling before the altar, under the Cross in a darkened Church in the

nervous at being called to this meeting. "I know you are ready to go into the Air Force full time, but I need you to do one year in our Dominican Republic mission parishes first." Already a commissioned officer, I had just completed both some initial training as well as a tour of service as a Chaplain Candidate while still finishing my studies at Mount St. Mary's seminary in Emmitsburg, Maryland.

After the initial shock I remember first, disappointment: my plans were not to be. Then, with reality sinking in, trepidation: I didn't speak Spanish. When I mentioned this point to Bishop Keating his reply came, "You soon will."

After a month in Mexico and some intensive language courses, I arrived at night into the parish of St. Francis of Assisi after a five-hour journey from Santo Domingo. The last forty-five minutes of the trip were over what could be loosely termed a "road," a pot-holed dirt road without any lights on. Even the "town" of Banica, where my parish was located, was dark. Asking the driver why, I learned that the government rationed electricity and that since our population of 10,000 were mostly farmers, our area of the country would only receive electricity for two or three hours a day. I would



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Eparchy of Saint Maron  
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middle of a foreign country far from my home in Virginia, I remember being at peace and simply trusting all would work out.

My one-year assignment turned into eight. During this time in the missions, I would learn how to ride a mule, build chapels, wells and latrines, homes and schools, and even pull teeth. (Thank God, I never had to do it myself, but was a passable assistant!) I organized medical and volunteer groups who would come down fifteen times a year; advocated for those literally lying in their own blood at the foot of someone who should have cared; and ministered to over ten thousand people spread over a mountain mostly accessible only by foot or mule.

And, I would encounter people like Porfilio, a community leader. Because I could not get to all the villages on a Sunday, we had village members who would lead a Liturgy of the Word service, give catechesis to the children and communicate to me any spiritual or humanitarian concerns in their community. Porfilio was dying of cancer. The last time I saw him was two days prior to his passing. His small house smelled of decaying flesh around the soiled cloth that covered his eye, where the cancer was bulging from the socket. When I entered his house, he immediately called for his brother to go and get a woman in the village. Porfilio said that he prayed over the decision, but this is the person who would continue the work of the Church. Porfilio was dying and in pain, yet his concern was who would lead the people in prayer.

My life changed drastically that day in the Bishop's office. It changed not necessarily because my plans had changed, but rather because I learned to trust God completely.

If I did as I had before the Cross at my ordination and again in the dark in Banica, all would be well.

I am now serving with Bishops Elias Zaidan, Gregory Mansour and Gerald Kicanas, along with several others, on the Board of Directors for Caritas Lebanon-USA. What a grace to know that there are so many others like me who serve without knowing the future!

*Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age" (Matthew 28:19-20). □*

Fr. Patrick L. Posey  
Diocese of Arlington, Virginia

## The Season of Pentecost

*Continued from page 10*

The Spirit confirms in us the truth of the Father that has been revealed to us in His Word, Jesus. Looking at the origins and development of the New Testament Greek word for person (*prosōpon*), we discover its root in Greek Theater, with the name for mask (*prosōpeon*). Since the theater used few actors, they needed to play many roles by changing their mask; by the time we reach the New Testament period of (Koine) Common Hellenistic Greek, the word for person had come to mean "face," sometimes translated into English as "presence." The turning of one's "face" (personhood) towards another constitutes relational personhood (hypostasis) and therefore "love." This can be illustrated in the traditional Greek icons of the Mother of God and the Christ-Child. They either have their faces towards one another, known as the Compassionate (*Eleousa*) Style, revealing the love and tenderness between Christ and humanity represented in Mary the Mother of God (*Theotokos*), or they together look out, "show their faces" directly to those who venerate the icon.

The Spirit lifts the mask that was seen by those who sought God before the Word became Flesh in Christ, and that same Spirit, who reveals the Holy Trinity, turns our face towards God and lifts our mask so that we can truly love Him. The Spirit becomes the Truth and Life of God dwelling within us. □

Rev. David A. Fisher  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

# Why is the Image of Light Significant in the Life of the Maronite Servants of Christ the Light?

This excerpt is taken from the thesis project of Sister Therese Maria Touma, who will be graduating in August from Boston College with a Masters in Pastoral Ministry.

The image of Christ the Light is foundational to our community in that it shapes who we are called to be as “servants of the Lord” (Lk 1:38) imitating Mary, the Mother of God; and who we are called to radiate as spiritual mothers, bearing Christ’s light and pointing to his salvific love for humanity as revealed in the Paschal mysteries. As the rule prescribes: “The Sisters are called to emit the light of Christ’s merciful



Sister Therese Maria Touma

love and hope by offering the gift of their spiritual motherhood to nurture God’s life in the hearts of children, families, and people of all ages, through works of mercy in service to the Maronite Church.”<sup>1</sup> In order for the Sisters to effectively share the light and love of Christ with others through their communal life of sacrifice, prayer and service, they first need to be filled and sanctified by the light. It is Christ the Light who teaches, gives wisdom, purifies, and the Sisters are called to be receptive bearers of His light and not their own. The Sisters ultimately find their fulfillment and sense of identity in nurturing a spousal relationship with Jesus, the Light. In living His teachings of light (e.g. mercy, charity, justice, compassion) and by choosing to unite their will with Christ’s will they are essentially participating in the Trinitarian love and communion that all people are called to.

There are many internal helps available (such as the Mystery of Penance, daily Eucharist, meditation on Sacred Scripture, adoration) to daily aid a Sister in conforming her will to the light and in deepening her spousal love of Christ and her witness of Trinitarian love. “By this all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:35). In loving one another and seeking the light of Christ in the other, the Sisters witness to the freedom, unity and hope that Christ the “light of our life” brings. In their communal life, “Sisters support the transformation of one another in Christ” and “are brought together in the mystery

<sup>1</sup> Maronite Servants of Christ the Light, *Typicon Maronite Servants of Christ the Light: Provisional Rule for Maronite Servants of Christ the Light* (Eparchy of Saint Maron, 2008), 3.

of God’s love to live a communion that gives witness to the ideals of the Gospel.”<sup>2</sup> And from this fullness in striving to live Christ’s unifying love in community, the Sisters are inspired to go out of themselves and spread the light of Christ by their fidelity to prayer, duty, service, and so offer their consecrated witness to a world hungering for Christ.

The contemplative life of the Maronite Servants of Christ the Light, centered on the Eucharist or the Divine Liturgy, is an inexhaustible source of nourishment and support for the community’s life of prayer, recollection, conversion and charity. As the rule instructs, “The Sisters find their fortitude and wellspring of charity in the Eucharist and the Church’s devotions which flow from and lead to the Divine Liturgy.”<sup>3</sup> Through the Divine Liturgy, the Sisters unite themselves with the offering of Christ and in communion are bonded to one another in his love and light.<sup>4</sup> Outside of the daily liturgy the Sisters offer an hour of Eucharistic adoration each day from which Christ emanates His light to their recollected heart, and they in turn are energized to go out and radiate this same light to others.<sup>5</sup> In their faith journey, Sisters are grounded in the Eucharist as they daily struggle to make a total gift of self and to live in the light of Christ. This entails a sincere docility on the Sister’s part to see (with the eyes of faith) and grow in self-knowledge and in the knowledge of God. In essence, the light of Christ is what assists a Sister to progress in the spiritual life, to pray well, to be merciful, to live virtue, to believe, to give fitting praise and worship to the Trinity, to ask for forgiveness, to offer gratitude, and to humbly place before the Lord one’s needs.

In the spiritual heritage of our monastic roots, and in the footsteps of our spiritual father St. Maron (an ascetic and monk from the 5<sup>th</sup> century), Sisters undertake daily readings and meditation on the Sacred Scriptures to enliven their vocation to reflect and live Christ’s light with their fellow Sisters and the people they serve.<sup>6</sup> Each day, the Sisters in following the rule, take the gospel reading from the daily liturgy to prayerfully meditate on the light of God’s Word. They open their hearts to reflect on how they can be living more deeply in union with the Word. This is in keeping with our Maronite spirituality, which “is to seek God in the persons, events and world around us.”<sup>7</sup> In having a relationship with the Word, the Light of the World, daily meditation serves to facilitate a Sister’s appreciation and recognition of God’s mercy and presence in her life, and emboldens one to bring her will into conformity with God’s loving will. □

<sup>2</sup> Maronite Servants of Christ the Light, 53.

<sup>3</sup> Maronite Servants of Christ the Light, 8.

<sup>4</sup> Maronite Servants of Christ the Light, 41.

<sup>5</sup> Maronite Servants of Christ the Light, 42.

<sup>6</sup> Maronite Servants of Christ the Light, 48.

<sup>7</sup> Maronite Servants of Christ the Light, 51.

## *An Interview with the President of Caritas Lebanon*

Pope Francis stated to the Maronite Patriarch, the Melkite Patriarch and the Chaldean Patriarch on November 21, 2013, "We will not resign ourselves to imagining a Middle East without Christians." Recognizing the warlike conditions existing and the fact that Caritas Lebanon is in the forefront of providing relief for millions of persons, the Pope stated on May 13, 2015, "Whoever lives the mission of Caritas is not a simple charitable worker, but is a true witness of Christ. He is a person who seeks Christ and allows Christ to seek him."

Father Paul Karam, a Maronite priest, has been president of Caritas Lebanon since January 2014. Appointed by the Council of Catholic Patriarchs and Bishops, this 48-year old priest was previously the National Director of the Pontifical Mission Societies in Lebanon. With the establishment by the Maronite Bishops of the United States, Bishop Gregory Mansour and Bishop A. Elias Zaidan, of Caritas Lebanon USA, to support the efforts of the organization in Lebanon, *The Maronite Voice* asked several questions of Father Karam in order to provide information for Christians who, like the Holy Father, want to see Christianity flourish in the Middle East. The following answers were received from Joelle El Dib, Head of Communications and Information for Caritas Lebanon on May 20, 2015 on behalf of Fr. Karam



Fr. Paul Karam

*The Maronite Voice: In the U.S., people are known to be generous when someone needs help. How can Caritas Lebanon-USA demonstrate to American Maronites and their friends that helping the poor in Lebanon should be high on their list of priorities?*

**Father Karam:** On April 13, 2015, Lebanon commemorated the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of a fifteen-year war that divided the Lebanese people, although its basis was not truly a civil war, as too often presented in the local and international media and other institutions.

Of course, as all wars do, this war brought on everyone death, violence, distress and immigration. It was followed by a long lasting socio-economic crisis that contributed to the drastic deterioration of the overall economic condition of the Lebanese population (Christians and Muslims). At the end of the war, people needed financial support to rebuild their homes, villages, cities and country. They also needed psychosocial support to overcome their traumas and to start a new life all together on a peaceful basis. The will was and is still there, but unfortunately, international conflicting interests in Lebanon as well as rivalry between all political Lebanese leaders resulted, over the years, in frequent outbreaks of violence, changes and/or absence of governments/president (Lebanon has had no president since May 2014 and once before for a few months in 2008) and instability on the economic, political and military levels.

So much insecurity for such a long time

has naturally increased the degree of poverty in Lebanon as well as the significant reduction of the middle class, which used to be the main component of the Lebanese society before the war. Salaries in Lebanon are rather low (the basic income per person is 500 USD) in a country where the cost of living is as high as in Europe or North America, and an increasing number of people are forced to secure two jobs to be able to afford the most basic bills.

Gradually, along the years, Lebanese parents who give a huge importance to the quality education of their children, had increasing difficulties in affording the enrolment of their children in private schools, and many were forced to transfer them to public schools, known for their poor teaching level.

With regard to health needs, around 50% of the Lebanese population is deprived of healthcare coverage and cannot ensure its basic medical needs. Public hospitals have very limited means and availabilities, and people have generally no other choice than to turn to the private sector, which they cannot afford. Primary healthcare centers across Lebanon (Caritas Lebanon has implemented 10 PHC nationwide) play a huge role in assisting helpless people, by providing them medicine and basic exams at a reduced price or free-of-charge, when possible. Their means are limited and despite all efforts, the needs remain huge.

Another heavy burden is the elderly who have no public support at all.

Benefits from the Social Security stop when employees retire at the age of 64, which leaves them with one month salary/year of work, in the best case scenario and if they were registered by their employers at the Social Security. Their children, who can barely cover their own family needs, have difficulties in also assisting their parents. Therefore, seniors are in desperate need of having their medical and food needs covered, and more action must be undertaken to widen the existing and insufficient private support.

*The Maronite Voice: People in the U.S. know of the unsettled nature of the Middle East, and of the current wars in Syria and Iraq. In what ways have these conditions impacted the work of Caritas Lebanon and perhaps put strains on its abilities to care for the poor?*

**Father Karam:** The close to 1.2 million Syrian refugees (officially) and still growing steadily, who poured into Lebanon in a very short time since the start of the Syrian crisis in March 2011, impacted dramatically on the already poor and vulnerable host communities. The presence of such an overwhelming number of refugees for an unknown period of time, in a country of around four million people (Syrians represent one quarter of the total population in Lebanon), already suffering from the sixty-seven year presence of 400,000 Palestinian refugees and its own internal problems, is a disaster.

At first, the Lebanese people welcomed the refugees with open arms, but very soon and due to their increasing needs,

the absence of a solution promoting the refugees' return to their country, the very poor financial support from the international community along with the deterioration of both the security due to the presence of *ihadists* among the refugees during the past year, and the strain on the local infrastructure (water, electricity, sanitation, waste, etc.), tensions have been rising considerably between the Lebanese and the Syrians. The refugees have also contributed to increase the local low-skill unemployment, as they represent cheap labor and push the Lebanese workers towards unemployment (the unemployment rate in Lebanon stands at over 20%).

Besides, with regard to education, Syrian school aged children were enrolled by the thousands in Lebanese public schools and their very poor academic level as well as their huge numbers have triggered very serious issues; many poor Lebanese parents preferred to remove their children from public schools. Where did these children go for education, considering that private schools are too expensive?

To reduce these tensions, the international community has started including 30% of vulnerable Lebanese as beneficiaries of their humanitarian programs and supporting the local infrastructure with new projects that would increase the existing capacities.

But these programs can be seen as a way to force the Lebanese people into accepting the presence of the Syrian refugees for at least a few more years, and this is an extremely worrying issue.

**The Maronite Voice:** *There are three areas of Church work in Lebanon that the Church here in America was asked to support. First is Télé-Lumière; the second is the General Secretariat of Catholic Schools; and the third is Caritas Lebanon and its charitable activities on behalf of the poor. What can you tell us here in the United States that would be most welcome and needed on a continuing basis?*

**Father Karam:** *Télé-Lumière* is a Christian TV channel that reaches Middle Eastern Christians around the world. Its financial means are limited and it is essential to keep it afloat to ensure that the message of love it conveys is perpetuated.

During its Lenten campaign, Caritas Lebanon sets up special programs on its various activities on *Télé-Lumière* and financially supports it through a yearly donation in return for the rendered services.

Regarding the General Secretariat of Catholic Schools, as mentioned above, quality education is a top priority for parents in Lebanon, and private schools, mostly Christian, are usually favored by all.

Christian schools are valued by both Christian and Muslim families for the excellent education they provide to the entire population (in some areas such as in the South of Lebanon, the majority of students are Muslim). But due to the financial difficulties faced by most parents, it is very important to financially support the various educational activities implemented by Caritas Lebanon in different regions to help disfavored students, regardless of their religion and race, especially for those who are enrolled in Catholic schools, to contribute to a part of their tuition and fees. It is worth noting also that it is through those Catholic schools that Caritas Lebanon spreads its message of love and coexistence.

Caritas Lebanon is a 43-year Catholic organization that provides humanitarian support to all people in need, regardless of their religion and race. It is highly esteemed by all parties in Lebanon and abroad. Its areas of intervention are health and social (children, children with special needs, youth, and elderly). Caritas Lebanon also assists migrant workers and refugees through its Migrant Center.

**The Maronite Voice:** *What hope is there that the work of Caritas Lebanon and its partners will provide a lasting benefit to those they serve?*

**Father Karam:** The socio-economic development programs implemented by Caritas Lebanon aim at targeting and empowering the Lebanese vulnerable rural communities and women. But all these programs and projects are subject to international funding, which are already scarce and limited in time.

For several years now, Caritas Lebanon aims at benefitting from the financial

and technical capacity of the Lebanese diaspora across the world as well as its know-how and excellent business relations.

Caritas Lebanon would like to engage the Lebanese community overseas, and especially in the USA and Canada, in specific sponsoring programs (i.e., for children, elderly, human development) that would respond to the local needs and have a long-lasting positive impact on the vulnerable Lebanese communities in their homeland.

It is a must and a duty for the international Christian community to stand by the Christians in the Middle East and more specifically, in Lebanon, and support its valued action in order to maintain their presence in the region where Christ and the Christian religion were both born.

Building constructive ties between Lebanese people overseas and in Lebanon will surely favor a more sustainable benefit than one-time projects launched by foreign governments, NGOs or institutions.

**The Maronite Voice:** *Thank you, Father Karam for your enlightening answers.* □

## **Caritas Lebanon USA Launches Its Website**

**F**ather Elias Abi-Sarkis, Director of Caritas Lebanon USA, announces that the organization now has an operational website that features the good that is done for the poor and needy in Lebanon by Caritas Lebanon.

The website <http://www.caritaslebanonusa.org> can be reached both by Google and Bing search engines. It is also available on Facebook and Twitter; it has a channel on YouTube. One can even make a donation securely on the website and receive an acknowledgment. The website was funded by Dr. Ruston Khouri and designed by Valerie Mueller. Caritas Lebanon is well known for the fact that its overhead is so low that the intended recipient receives maximum benefit from a donation. □



## ***A Patriarch's Lament: 'What Will Remain of Lebanon?'***

*The Maronite Patriarch has expressed concern about the religious situation in Lebanon, given the precarious situation of Sunni Muslim refugees from Syria.*

In an interview at his official residence [Bkerke, Lebanon], Maronite Patriarch Bechara Peter Cardinal Rai told international Christian charity Aid to the Church in Need: "There are no problems arising from Muslims and Christians living together in Lebanon. All Lebanese want to live together. Our greatest problem is the Syrian refugees. These comprise over 1.5 million people. Of course, it is our humanitarian duty to help. And the Church is doing a great deal. However, most of them are Sunnis. They can be exploited both politically and religiously.

"We already had this experience with the Palestinians. They started the civil war in the 1970s against the Lebanese and the Lebanese Army. At the time they were joined by the Lebanese Sunnis. This could happen again. This is a ticking bomb. The war in Syria and in Iraq has to end so that the people can return. Time is not on our side."

Sheltering the large number of Syrian refugees also has economic consequences. "The Syrians work for lower wages than the Lebanese. This means that the Lebanese lose their jobs. They open up shops that undercut the prices of Lebanese shops. This is why a number of Lebanese have emigrated. This also has grave social and cultural consequences," the Patriarch explained.

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The Christians want freedom and a good life.

This is why they are selling their possessions and emigrating.

There is a danger that the Middle East will gradually lose its Christian presence.

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"What will remain of Lebanon and Lebanese culture in the long term when more than 1.5 million Syrians are living in our country?" he asked, adding that "this also has an effect on the Christians in Lebanon. The Christians want freedom and a good life. This is why they are selling their possessions and emigrating. There is a danger that the Middle East will gradually lose its Christian presence. The West must realize the gravity of the situation."

"The politicians need to understand that the war in Syria has to end. The international community has to stop fomenting and fostering the war. The arms trade has to stop. They have to set their pride aside, sit down at one table and find a political solution. But their pride will not allow this," he said, charging that "economic interests such as gas and oil are behind" this attitude.

The Cardinal said that "Assad did not fall like Mubarak in Egypt or Ben Ali in Tunisia, who were opposed by the entire population. This is not the case in Syria. Elections were recently held that confirmed Assad as president. The West does not want to recognize these elections."

He insisted that governments have "to talk with Assad. The dialogue between government and opposition is crucial." □

*(Zenit.org, May 6, 2015)*

*This report is provided by Oliver Maksan of Aid to the Church in Need.*

## ***Marriage Is Not the Ceremony, Dress or Flowers***

### ***Pope Francis Says Spousal Covenant Enriches Church, But Its Deterioration, Disfigures***

*by Deborah Castellano Lubov*

Christian marriage is not merely a ceremony that is done in a church, with flowers, dress, and photos, but "is a sacrament that takes place in the Church and makes the Church."

During his weekly General Audience [May 6, 2015] in a sunny St. Peter's Square, the Pope made this observation, stressing that Christian marriage should never be reduced to material things.

Continuing his catechesis series on the family, and reflecting specifically on marriage, Pope Francis called to mind how Saint Paul introduced the analogy between the couple, husband and wife, and Christ and the Church.

"It's clear that this is an imperfect analogy, but we have to grasp the spiritual meaning that is very high and revolutionary," Pope Francis said, noting Paul says the love between husband and wife is the image of the love between Christ and the Church.

"Unthinkable dignity!" he said. "But in reality, it is inscribed in God's creative design, and with the grace of Christ, innumerable Christian couples, despite their sins and limitations, have achieved this!"

Pope Francis reminded those gathered of Paul's words that a husband must love his wife as himself, just as "Christ loved the Church and gave himself up for her."

The Sacrament of Marriage, the Pontiff noted, is a great act of faith and love, and requires courage to step beyond one's self.

"The Christian vocation to love unconditionally and without limit is what, with the grace of Christ, is the basis of the free consent which makes marriage," he said.

The Church itself, the Pope said, "is fully involved in the history of every Christian marriage and is built in its successes and failures, and suffering."

"But we must ask ourselves seriously: Do we ourselves accept, as believers and also pastors, this unbreakable bond of the history of Christ and the Church with the history of marriage and of the human family? Are we prepared to take this responsibility seriously, that is that every marriage goes on the road of love that Christ has with the Church?"

"This is great!" Pope Francis said.

The life of the Church, he added, "is enriched each time by the beauty of this spousal covenant, and deteriorates whenever it is disfigured."

The courageous faithfulness of spouses, the Pope said, is required for the Church to give all the gifts of faith, love and hope. "God's people need their daily walk in faith, love and hope, with all the joys and hardships that this path entails in a marriage and in a family."

Before concluding, Pope Francis reminded those gathered, "Christ does not cease to care for the Church," for God transmits His tenderness from couple to couple and from family to family.

God does not get deterred, Pope Francis noted, for the Lord is ready "to remove from its human face wrinkles and stains of all kinds."

Toward the conclusion of the General Audience, Pope Francis recalled that in the coming days, some will commemorate the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of World War II in Europe.

"On this occasion," Pope Francis said, "I entrust to the Lord, through the intercession of Mary, Queen of Peace, the hope that human society learns from past mistakes and that in front of the current conflicts that are tearing apart some regions of the world, all civil leaders commit themselves to seeking the common good and promoting a culture of peace." □

(Zenit.org, May 6, 2015)

## ***Pope to Middle East Nuns: Pray For Peace in the Holy Land***

**P**ope Francis received a group of Carmelite religious from Bethlehem and Sisters of the Rosary from Jerusalem, who were in Rome for yesterday's canonization [May 17, 2015].

Among the four blessed canonized yesterday were the first two saints from the Holy Land: Sts. Mariam Baouardy and Marie Alphonsine Danil Ghattas.

During his brief address, the Holy Father thanked the Sisters for their participation in yesterday's celebration and entrusted them with a mission.

"Pray to the new saints for peace in your land, so that this unending war may end and there is peace between peoples," he said.

He encouraged them to "pray for persecuted Christians, who are kicked out of their homes, from their land and the victims of persecution 'with white gloves' [i.e. from a distance]: it is hidden, but it is done."

The Holy Father prayed a Hail Mary with the religious women for peace in the Middle East.

Pope Francis also took a moment to joke around with the Sisters present. "I am of this pilgrimage of sisters for the canonization of the new saints," he said. "The president of the State of Palestine told me that a plane full of nuns departed from Jordan! Poor pilot!" (J.A.E.) □

(Zenit.org, May 18, 2015)

## ***Marie Alphonsine and Mariam of Jesus Crucified Are Saints***

### ***The Story of the Canonization Celebration of Marie Alphonsine and Mariam of Jesus Crucified***

**"W**e declare and define the blessed Marie Alphonsine Danil Ghattas and Mariam of Jesus Crucified Baouardy and enroll them among the saints, by establishing that in all the Church they may be devoutly honored among the saints."

With this formula in Latin, Pope Francis declared Marie Alphonsine Danil Ghattas and Mariam of Jesus Crucified Baouardy saints on Sunday, May 17, 2015, at St. Peter's Square, on the parvis of the Vatican Basilica. Along with the two Palestinian religious, two other Sisters were also canonized: Giovanna Emilia de Villeneuve and Maria Cristina of the Immaculate Conception. After the proclamation of the formula, relics of the new saints were brought to the altar. The joy and hope of the faithful present at the Square were expressed through the singing of the *Jubilate Deo*.

It was a great celebration, especially for the more than two thousand people who came from Palestine, Jordan, Lebanon and Israel. They made up a large delegation, led by the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, Fouad Twal.

His Excellency William Shomali, Auxiliary Bishop, Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem [said]: "There were about one hundred relatives of Marie Alphonsine from Canada and about twenty from Australia. In addition, the family of the child who was miraculously cured through Mariam Baouardy's intercession came from Italy for the event. As you can see, the numbers are great. Where they meet, there is a celebration, and where there is a celebration, everyone gathers together.

In his homily, the Holy Father focused on the Apostles' direct and stupendous experience of the Resurrection and, along with their experience, that of generations of saints: "Our faith is firmly tied to their witness as an unbroken chain deployed over the centuries not only by the successors of the Apostles, but also by generations of Christians."

Recalling the First Letter of John, the pope repeated: "Whoever remains in love, remains in God and God in him. And this is the secret of the saints. This is what the four women who were proclaimed saints today did." This is also a reference to the work and the charism of the two fledgling Palestinian saints.

"Mariam Baouardy who, being humble and illiterate, was able to give advice and theological explanations very clearly; this was the fruit of continuous dialogue with the Holy Spirit. Docility to the Holy Spirit also made her an instrument of encounter and communion with the Muslim world. Likewise, Sister Marie Alphonsine Danil Ghattas understood what it means to radiate the love of God in the apostolate, becoming a witness of meekness and unity."

Sister Hadeel Dababne of the Sisters of the Rosary, Jerusalem - *Beit Hanina* declared: "Marie Alphonsine is a sign, a great sign for us, a sign that allows us to reflect. We then pray with seriousness and awareness for spiritual renewal in our religious life, both on a personal level for each

sister and as a congregation."

Sister Ferial Qarra'a of Carmel, Bethlehem, said: "We experienced an atmosphere of spirituality. So, we asked the saints for a blessing: for the Middle East, for our country and for all those who have asked us to pray for them."

After the holy Mass, Pope Francis greeted those present and in particular the official delegations from Palestine, France, Italy, Israel and Jordan. Among them, there was Mahmoud Abbas, President of the Palestinian State. In the days leading up to the canonization, the Bilateral Commission between the Holy See and the State of Palestine reached an agreement, which may soon be signed, for the life of the Catholic Church in Palestine. The text even includes the hope for a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the framework of two states for two peoples.

Fr. Madouh Abu Saadah, Greek-Catholic parish of Beit Sahour, said: "This event is very important for us. It tells us that the Holy Land, Palestine, is a land of peace and saints. We pray for peace and we ask the two saints Mariam of Jesus Crucified and Marie Alphonsine that there may be peace in our country."

Fr. Firas Hijazine, OFM, Latin Pastor of Jerusalem, said: "The canonization of the two saints is a proclamation of faith for the entire Middle East."

Fr. Bashar Fawadleh, Spiritual Director, Young Christian Students, Palestine, "We came with a group of young people from all over Palestine, members of the JEC (student youth group), with the slogan 'We come to be holy.' We want to be holy with the two saints: young, beautiful, male and female youngsters, college students, and there are about thirty of us."

Sister Laurence Ghaleb, *Jbeil*, Lebanon, said: "The atmosphere today is very beautiful. It unites hearts in love and peace, especially the peace and love that the Pope has reiterated."

Fr. Ibrahim Faltas, OFM, Bursar, Custody of the Holy Land, declared: "Despite the massacres, the forced displacement and persecution of which Eastern Christians are victims, we see that God in this difficult time, has chosen two saints from the Holy Land. I think every Palestinian present in Rome today feels proud to be Palestinian, sons and daughters of this Holy Land that has produced two very great and important saints."

(*Christian Media Center, May 23, 2015*)

## ***Two Witnesses for Our Time***

### ***A Thanksgiving Mass for the Canonization of the Two Arab Saints at the Basilica of Saint Mary Major in Rome***

Giving thanks for the gift of sainthood and continuing the prayer for intercession together: with these intentions, the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, Fouad Twal, presided over the thanksgiving Mass for Saints Marie Alphonsine and Mariam Baouardy, on the day after their canonization in St. Peter's Square. The Eucharistic celebration took place at the Papal Basilica of Saint Mary Major in Rome.

Together with Patriarch Fouad, concelebrants included Greek Melkite Patriarch Gregory III and bishops and priests

who came to Rome for the canonization, before an assembly of many deacons, religious, seminarians and faithful from the Holy Land.

At the basilica dedicated to Mary *Theotokos*, the Mother of God, which perhaps for the first time has hosted a celebration entirely in Arabic, Patriarch Twal stressed the uniqueness of the message of the two Palestinian Arab women, who were able to be courageous and credible witnesses during their own time.

"Saint Marie Alphonsine founded the Congregation of the Rosary by the inspiration of the Heavenly Mother; Sister Mariam of Jesus Crucified laid the foundation of the Carmelite Order of Bethlehem. Mother Marie Alphonsine and Sister Mariam of Jesus Crucified, lived out their humility in silence. They did not talk about the good they did, enduring criticism even when it was undeserved, always obeying with joy and a spirit of service.

In the prayer of the faithful, there was a true awareness of the historical moment that the canonization of Mariam Baouardy and Marie Alphonsine represented: for the Church of the Holy Land, as well as for the universal Church, especially in the complex Middle Eastern context.

His Beatitude Fouad Twal, Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, said: "On a worldwide level, we enter onto the list of the saints, in the litany of the saints. There is holiness: I see joy on everyone's face. There is an impulse toward greater holiness, less violence, fewer wars, less killing, more joy, more holiness. We hope and rely on the Holy Land. Now we are stronger because we have two more saints in heaven, interceding for their country, praying for their people and for the peace that has yet to come. Let us go forward with optimism and joy."

The typical Palestinian festive atmosphere took over Rome, inside and outside the churches. □

(*Christian Media Center, May 23, 2015*)

## ***Another Catholic Priest Seized by Jihadists in Syria***

A Catholic monk has been kidnaped from a monastery in *Qaryatayn*, Syria. Father Jacques Mourad, the Prior of the *Mar Elias* monastery, was seized by armed men representing an Islamic rebel group. The monastery is a branch of a monastic community that was re-established by the Italian Jesuit missionary, Father Paolo Dall'Oglio, who was himself kidnaped in July 2013 and is still missing. □

(*Catholic World News, May 22, 2015*)

## **Food For Thought**

We say that knowledge is not mere talk, but a certain divine knowledge, that light which is kindled in the soul as a result of obedience to the commandments, and which reveals all that is in a state of becoming, enables man to know himself and teaches him to become possessed of God. □

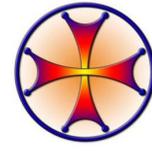
*St. Clement of Alexandria*

# Maronites at World Youth Day 2016



Krakow, Poland

July 24 — August 2



Bishop Gregory Mansour and Bishop Elias Zaidan invite the youth and young adults of both Eparchies to journey on a pilgrimage to Krakow, Poland to attend World Youth Day 2016. World Youth Day is an international meeting of youth from all over the world who gather together in one place with their catechists, priests, bishops and the Holy Father, Pope Francis, in order to profess faith in Jesus Christ. At the World Youth Day, we experience the great community of the Universal Church, listen to the Word of God, receive the sacraments of Penance and the Eucharist, as well as joyfully witnessing to Jesus Christ as the Lord and Savior.

**WHO:** Young Adults ages 19 - 35 / Youth ages 14 - 18 (must be 14 years old before July 1, 2016 and have at least 1 chaperone per 3 youth)

**COST:** \$2,000 per person

**Includes:** round trip air from USA to Krakow, World Youth Day fee, lodging, meals during the official days of the event, WYD Eparchy T-Shirt

**Not included:** passport fees, additional meals and sightseeing, purchasing souvenirs, personal items

*For more information, contact one of our Eparchial Coordinators:*

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*"Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy."*

*~ Matthew 5:7*



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## *Charity Begins At Home*

*Continues from page 1*

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71. For the most part, in this period these expressions of communion were informal, that is, not carried out within clear structures. They also tended to take place primarily on the regional level; there was no clear central reference point. On the one hand, in Rome there was a growing awareness of a ministry of broader communion and unity, in particular from the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century on.
72. Many of the relationships that existed among the churches in the early centuries have continued to the present day in spite of the divisions, or have been recently revived. The exchange of letters and visits between the heads of the Catholic Church and the Oriental Orthodox Churches has become common. In many places, the faithful of the churches increasingly pray together, learn from one another and share with each other the richness of their respective traditions. This often includes sharing stories of the lives of their saints and martyrs, engaging in common pilgrimages and visiting one another's sacred shrines. Increasingly there are exchanges among monastic communities that are reminiscent of those that took place in the early centuries. The presence of delegations from one another's churches at major events, such as the enthronements and funerals of heads of churches, and the presence of Oriental Orthodox observers at the Second Vatican Council and subsequent synods of the Catholic Church recall a similar ancient practice.
73. Consequently, the members of the commission are able to observe with satisfaction that, to a large extent, in recent years the communication that existed among their churches in the early centuries has been revived. In view of these developments, they will examine in a positive way remaining divergences in doctrine and practice, and determine to what extent those divergences can be accepted as legitimate and not compromising the essence

of the faith. This will be a central question to be addressed as they take up the Sacraments of Initiation in the next phase of the dialogue. They will be asking themselves to what extent a restoration of the relationships that existed in the early centuries would be sufficient to restore full sacramental communion today. In time, this will include, among other important issues, a consideration of the place of the Bishop of Rome in that communion, a question that is being broadly re-examined in all the churches.

74. The members prayerfully rely on the healing and reconciling work of the Holy Spirit among them to guide their future steps towards unity.”

Perhaps the troubles facing Christians, especially the persecutions of the past one hundred years in the Middle East, have brought about this greater desire for unity; or perhaps it is the hard work of the theological commissions seeking common ground and understanding; or perhaps as Pope Francis has described it, today we experience an "ecumenism of blood." Whatever the reason, the ecumenical movement seems to be gaining steam. Pope Saint John XXIII advises us, as he did the Church Fathers at the beginning of the Second Vatican Council, to apply the "medicine of mercy" to our wounds of division.

In the midst of all the bad news of trials and tribulations on every side, it is good for us to see that today the signs of unity have become much like those of the early Church. There is great cause for hope!

Come Holy Spirit. Come, bring a deeper unity and the healing of wounds. May charity, and yes mercy, begin at home with us in the Church, and by God's grace may we see the unity of the Churches in our own day. ☐

+Bishop Gregory J. Mansour