



The Maronite Voice



A Publication of the Maronite Eparchies in the USA

Volume XIV

Issue No. VI

June 2017

Practical (and Charitable) Wisdom from our Patriarch



Patriarch Rai visits the Christian Refugees in Irbil, Iraq, with Cardinal Scola and Patriarch Sako, June 19, 2015.

Two years ago our Patriarch, Bechara Peter Cardinal Rai, wrote a beautiful and hopeful pastoral letter, *On the Economy*. It was an excellent blueprint for the renewal of Lebanon's civil society. I wrote a commentary on this pastoral letter in the May 2016 edition of *The Maronite Voice*. I hope that people in and outside of Lebanon will read the wise advice of our Patriarch.

This year Patriarch Rai has published his long awaited and much anticipated pastoral, *The Ministry of Social Charity*, focusing on the Maronite Church's Humanitarian and Charitable outreach. I quickly add that like the letter *On the Economy*, it, too, gives a practical wisdom and wise advice to all of us. One could say that it is the "rich person's guide" to how to get involved. I hasten to add that what I mean by

"rich" is not only those who are blessed with material wealth, but also those rich in passion to serve, in talents, and in love.

In this pastoral letter our Patriarch gives impressive statistics on the following Maronite Charitable and Humanitarian Institutions in Lebanon:

- Twelve Hospitals
- 275 Schools
- Five Universities
- Nine Childcare Centers
- Twenty-two Health Clinics
- Ten Senior Citizen Centers
- Five Centers For Children and Adults with Special Needs

(Continues on page 19)

Schedule of Bishop Elias Zaidan

May 22 - June 2, 2017

Eparchial Pilgrimage to Portugal and Spain

June 3 - 20, 2017

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

June 24, 2017

Children's Summer Camp, Our Lady of Mt. Lebanon Cathedral, Los Angeles, Calif.

June 25, 2017

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

June 26, 2017

Noursat Board Meeting, Greenville, S.C.

June 26 - July 2, 2017

NAM Convention, Greenville, S.C.

July 3 - 4, 2017

Catholic Leadership Convention, Orlando, Fla.

July 5 - 8, 2017

MYO Workshop, Minneapolis, Minn. ☐

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Maronite Convention 2017

Saint Rafka Maronite Mission

Greenville, South Carolina

June 29 - July 2, 2017

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

From the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn



The Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn recently received an allegation of inappropriate conduct between Father Larry Jensen and a young person under the age of eighteen at the time. The allegation dates back to the early 2000s while Father Larry was pastor of Saint Anthony Church in Danbury, Conn.

Father Larry did not deny the allegation. Therefore, in accordance with the Norms established by the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People, Bishop Gregory Mansour was required to suspend Father Larry immediately from all priestly ministry. Father Larry has been removed from his role as pastor of Saint Joseph Church in Waterville, Maine, and will lead a life of prayer and penance from now forward. He will no longer be permitted to minister publicly.

Bishop Gregory and the Eparchy of Saint Maron take very seriously their role of ensuring the protection of the children and young people of the Eparchy, and of treating their priests with dignity and respect. Should anyone have any information related to this allegation, or any other information regarding the abuse of a minor, you are asked to please come forward and contact our Eparchial Victim Assistance Coordinator, Roseanne Solomon. Her contact information and our Eparchial policies are clearly posted on the Eparchial website, stmaron.org.

This has been a difficult time for all of us. Please pray for Father Larry and for all those involved in this matter. We thank you for your understanding and for your prayers. ☐



THE ORDER OF SAINT SHARBEL



Perpetual Members

★ Sonja Daye

★ Michel Najem

St. Joseph Maronite Church,
Atlanta, Ga.

Annual Members

★ Chahid Zakka

St. Joseph Maronite Church,
Atlanta, Ga.

The Order of Saint Sharbel is an organization of lay people and clergy who have pledged their spiritual strength and financial support for Our Lady of Lebanon Seminary and the retired Maronite clergy of the Maronite Eparchies in the USA.

For more information about the Order ask your Pastor,
visit www.orderstsharbel.org

or write to:

Eparchy of Saint Maron
109 Remsen Street
Brooklyn, NY 11201

or

Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon
1021 South 10th Street
St. Louis, MO 63104

Atlanta, Georgia Order of Saint Sharbel Annual Retreats

by June Isaf

The Order of Saint Sharbel at St. Joseph Maronite Church in Atlanta, Ga., annually hosts a parish-based retreat with the goal of furthering the spiritual and temporal work of the Order. These retreats are spiritually nourishing and encourage our parish family to pray for our seminarians and retired priests. The retreats are also a means to raise awareness of the Order and to raise money for the actual support of seminarians and retired clergy.

In each of the past four years The Order has sponsored a half-day retreat beginning with the Divine Liturgy. The retreats feature presentations on a spiritual theme and confession. Typically, the retreat materials include recommended prayers, confession guides, information on the Order of Saint Sharbel, and a spiritual book or CD for post-retreat enrichment.

Prayer cards, each with the name of a seminarian or a deceased pastor of our parish, are provided to the retreat participants, who are encouraged to pray for them during the upcoming year.

Three retreats were offered in the morning and were followed by lunch.

One retreat was offered after the evening Divine Liturgy and was followed by dinner. The average attendance has been forty participants. Registration fees of \$50 per couple included the retreat, retreat materials, and a Middle Eastern meal donated by members of the Order.

A Snapshot of Prior Retreats

(2013) The Retreat Master, Msgr. Hugh Marren, Pastor of All Saints Catholic Church in Dunwoody, Georgia, inspired everyone with the theme "Christ Calling Us to a Greater Intimacy with Him." Msgr. Marren challenged the attendees to invite those who have fallen away from the faith to return by loving them and also by growing in our own holiness. For further inspiration each attendee received a copy of the book "*4 Signs of a Dynamic Catholic-How Engaging*

1% of Catholics Could Change the World" by Matthew Kelly.

(2014) The Retreat Master, Fr. Michael Silloway, Chaplain of St. Pius X High School, Atlanta, Ga., led the retreat with the theme "Cultivating Silence to Grow Closer to Christ." For further study, retreatants received a copy of the book "*In His Spirit*" by Richard J. Hauser, S. J.

(2015) The Retreat Master, Fr. William Brock, strengthened the attendees with meditations on "*Forgiveness and Mercy...In the Year of Mercy.*" For continuing enrichment, retreatants received a DVD entitled "*The Seven Pillars of Catholic Spirituality*" by Matthew Kelly.

(2016) The Retreat Master, Fr. Matthew Darymple, Parochial Vicar of Prince of Peace Catholic Church, Flowery Branch, Ga., engaged everyone in meditations on "*Suffering - The Way Christ Taught Us.*" Attendees received a book entitled "*Interior Freedom*" by Fr. Jaques Philippe.

The retreats have had very positive effects, directly impacting the parish by providing spiritual nourishment and bringing about greater awareness of the Order, resulting in many new members. Working together on a specific event has given the Order in our parish a stronger sense of identity and mission not only for the members themselves, but for other parishioners who now have come to see, know, and experience that the Order is actively working to fulfill its mission. The Order has been able to donate \$1,000 each year to the Endowment Fund for Maronite Seminarians from the retreat program.

We increased awareness of the Maronite Rite for the Roman Rite clergy in the Archdiocese of Atlanta, since the Retreat masters have all been of the Roman Rite who would not have otherwise visited St. Joseph Maronite Church or participated in the Divine Liturgy. They leave with a new appreciation for the Maronite Rite.

(Continues on page 14)

Houston, Texas *Silver Massabki Award*



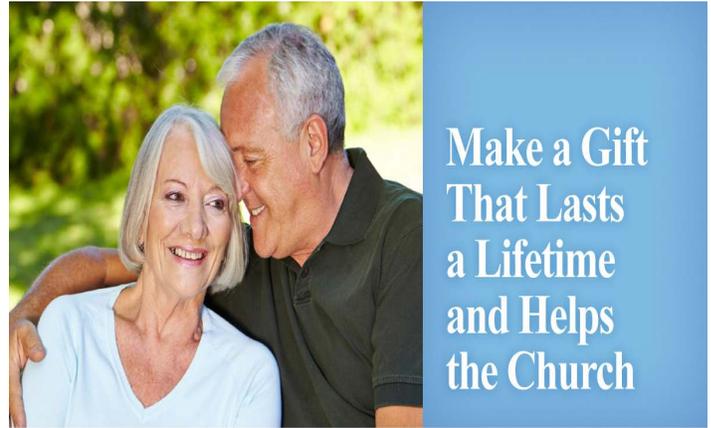
by Marcella Georges

On Sunday, May 14, 2017, during a visit to Our Lady of the Cedars Church in Houston, Tex., Bishop A. Elias Zaidan, Bishop of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon, presented two parishioners with the Silver Massabki Medal. Kal and Linda Koussa were recognized for their dedication and involvement in the parish for many years. Linda trains the children and youth choir group and participates in entertainment events whenever she is asked. She also helps direct the adult choir when needed. Of course, all of this can happen only with the support from her husband Kal, who gracefully carries the load at home for Linda to be able to be at the church events many times. Congratulations to Kal and Linda for an award that is very well deserved. □

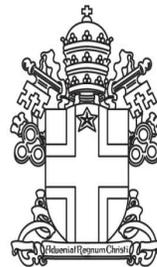
the Deadline is... **Deadline** for next month's issue of *The Maronite Voice* is June 22, 2017. *The Maronite Voice* is the official newsletter of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon and of the Eparchy of Saint Maron.

Send all news, pictures and personal correspondence to:
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Email: Gmsebaali@aol.com

Digital pictures must be in "JPG" format and in high resolution (300dpi). The Maronite Voice is also available online, in PDF format, at www.stmaron.org. □



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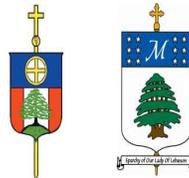
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Dallas, Texas *Our Lady of Fatima Pilgrimage*



the Rosary saved many American prisoners was truly amazing.

The Basilica Shrine was blessed at the eleventh hour with a visit from the International Pilgrim Virgin statue of Our Lady of Fatima which made the observance all the more special. □

by Mattye Thompson

In honor of the 100th Anniversary of the first apparition of Our Lady at Fatima, Portugal, Fr. Assad El Bacha, Pastor of Our Lady of Lebanon, Dallas, Tex., has made available to his parishioners a beautiful statue of Our Lady of Fatima for personal devotions in their homes. The statue was blessed at each of the Divine Liturgies on May 13 - 14, 2017, and then was released to the first receiving family to take home and venerate. Each week until May 13, 2018, the pilgrimage statue will move from parishioner's house to parishioner's house for rosaries, veneration, and meditation. □

North Jackson, Ohio

The Basilica Shrine of Our Lady of Lebanon in North Jackson, Ohio, was the setting for a great celebration of the 100th Anniversary of the apparition of Our Lady to the children of Fatima.

The weekend celebration on of May 13 - 14, 2017, commemorated the anniversary with several conferences by priests and laity who had much to say about Our Lady and the impact on their lives, especially the account of Captain Guy Gruter, who was a POW at the Hanoi Hilton along with John McCain. The story of how Our Lady and the prayer of

Holliston, Massachusetts



by Sr. Natalie Sayde Salameh

To commemorate the Centennial Anniversary of Our Lady of Fatima, the Maronite Servants of Christ the Light facilitated and led a pilgrimage to the Shrine of

Our Lady of Fatima in Holliston, Mass., on Sunday, May 21, 2017. The Shrine is maintained by the Xaverian Missionaries in the U.S.A. We were joined by families from St. Anthony of the Desert parish in Fall River, Mass., as we prayed the rosary at a beautiful outdoor shrine. This Shrine has an enormous rosary made of very large stones, held together by a chain donated by the U.S. Navy. On each of the large stones appears the "Hail Mary" prayer written in different languages. Following the rosary, we gathered together in the Church, where Fr. Rocco offered Exposition and Benediction of the Holy Mysteries, and we offered Maronite Evening Prayer (*Ramsho*). □

San Antonio, Texas Pilgrimage to the Holy Land

by Regina Aune

Lent is a time of penitence and reflection as we call to mind and reflect in our hearts on the price Christ paid for our redemption and freedom from the slavery of sin. For Father Charles Khachan, MLM, and twenty-one parishioners of St. George Church in San Antonio, Tex., the meaning of Lent truly came alive through a nine-day pilgrimage to the Holy Land from March 22 - 31, 2017. We want to share with you some of the highlights of our journey in the footsteps of Jesus.

The first day started with the celebration of the Divine Liturgy in the Church of St. Peter in *Jaffa*. From there we traveled to Acre and Caesarea Maritima, where St. Peter converted Cornelius; Nazareth; Cana; and Tiberias. In Nazareth, we visited the largest Christian church in the Middle East, the Basilica of the Annunciation. Our visit to Cana was highlighted by all the married couples renewing their wedding vows in a chapel dating from the time of the Crusaders.

Our travels through Galilee included a boat ride on the Sea of Galilee, a visit to St. Peter's house in Capernaum, the Church of the Primacy of St. Peter, the Church of the Multiplication of the Loaves and Fishes in *Tabgha*, the Church of the Beatitudes, where we celebrated the Divine Liturgy, and the traditional baptismal site on the Jordan

River.

On Sunday morning, we traveled to Mt. Tabor to visit the Church of the Transfiguration and enjoyed a majestic view of the surrounding area from atop the mountain. Later that day we journeyed to Bethlehem and the Church of the Nativity, where we celebrated the Divine Liturgy in one of the small chapels. Then, we went to *Beit Sahur* and the Shepherds' field where the angels announced the birth of Jesus to the shepherds watching over their flocks.

Our journey in Jerusalem started on the Mount of Olives at the Church of the *Pater Noster*, where Christ taught the Apostles the Our Father, and continued to Gethsemane. We prayed at the Church of All Nations which is built over the rock where Jesus prayed the night before his crucifixion. We celebrated the Divine Liturgy at *Dominus Flevit*, the church built over the spot where Jesus wept over Jerusalem. From the Mount of Olives we traveled to Mount Zion to visit the Church of the *Dormition* of Mary, the Upper Room, the tomb of King David, and the Church of St. Peter in *Gallicantu* built over Caiphass' house where St. Peter denied Jesus. Our day concluded with a visit to *Ain Karem*, the birthplace of St. John the Baptist.

Our visit to *Masada* and *Qumran* was capped by a stop at the Dead Sea where everyone had the opportunity to experience what it is like to float in the Dead Sea. Jericho provided us all with the chance to ride a camel, and we enjoyed a wonderful lunch and ended our visit with the celebration of the Divine Liturgy in the Good Shepherd Church, the only Catholic Church in Jericho.

The last two days of our pilgrimage were a perfect ending to a prayerful and enjoyable pilgrimage in the Holy Land. On Wednesday, we started our day early in the morning to pray the Stations of the Cross, walking along the *Via Dolorosa* before the old city of Jerusalem awoke from its slumber. The last three stations are in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, and we concluded the stations with the celebration of the Divine Liturgy at the altar next to the spot that marks Golgotha, the place of Jesus' crucifixion. It was in the church that we were able to touch the rock of Golgotha, the anointing stone where Jesus was prepared for his burial, and the tomb itself. In the afternoon we visited the Western Wall, the wall of the temple and the holiest site for Jews. We concluded our day with a visit to the Church of St. Anne, the birthplace of the Virgin Mary, located near the Pool of

Bethesda where Jesus healed the paralyzed man who had waited for thirty eight-years for someone to help him into the pool.

On our last day, we shopped in the Old City, celebrated the Divine Liturgy in the Maronite Church, and were feted with a delightful Lebanese lunch provided by the Sisters at the Maronite Convent and guest house.

Words cannot capture what it was like to experience the Holy Land. For the twenty-two of us pilgrims, experiencing nine days of Lent in the Holy Land enabled us to live Holy Week and Easter with a whole new understanding of what Jesus' sacrifice for us truly is and what it means to be a Christian. □



Saint Louis, Missouri *Holy Week*



by Shelly Vitale

The Saint Raymond Parish in Saint Louis, Mo., celebrated Palm Sunday, April 9, 2017, with great joy. It was a beautiful spring day. Reverend John Nahal, Rector, was the celebrant and the Cathedral overflowed with hundreds of parishioners and visitors. Father John called all the children to the foot of the altar so he could talk to them during his homily. They were so attentive and eagerly answered his questions and they were excited and enthusiastic when it was time to process with their families in praise of Jesus.

Following the Liturgy, the annual Palm Sunday Luncheon was held at the Cedars Hall. Traditional Lebanese cuisine was offered. Family and friends had the opportunity to eat and socialize. The Ladies' Society provided a bake sale, chaired by Diana Deeba and Diana Slay, consisting of hundreds of treats. The day was a great success thanks to all the dedicated volunteers who donated their time and talents! The kitchen workers led by Denise Seifert, Gina Fanetti and Kathy Wahby were outstanding!

Holy Week was a time for reflection with daily traditional practices and rituals of the Maronite Church. The community was blessed with the presence of The Most Reverend Bishop A. Elias Zaidan, Bishop of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon, for Divine Liturgy and Consecration of the Holy Oils. The entire week was meaningful and inspirational. The church was decorated with a multitude of beautiful flowers, inside and out, thanks to the new Liturgical Decorating Committee, chaired by Diana Deeba, and the Gardening Committee, chaired by Ramona Milford. Beautiful song, led by the choir, filled the Cathedral with praise. On April 14, after the Good Friday Services, a Lenten dinner was served. The event was chaired by Nina Bouhasin and was held to give everyone an opportunity to gather together and catch up with old friends and loved ones.

Bishop A. Elias Zaidan was the main Celebrant assisted by Father John Nahal at Easter Midnight and Easter Sunday Liturgies. The Liturgies were joyful and uplifting. An Easter Egg Hunt, sponsored by the Youth Group, was held after the Sunday Liturgies.

The Saint Raymond community owes special gratitude to Reverend John Nahal for sharing his gifts of dedication, talent and creativity towards making the entire Holy season a blessed and memorable time. Thanks to all the loyal volunteers and, most of all, thanks to God the Father for sending us his only Son, Jesus Christ. □

Uniontown, Pennsylvania *90th Anniversary of St. George Church*



St. George Church, Uniontown, Penn.

by Dr. Mabel George Howard

The congregation of St. George Maronite Catholic Church in Uniontown, Penn., commemorated a 2017 dual celebration, the 90th year anniversary of their first church and the 50th year Golden Jubilee of their present church. Throughout its many years, St. George Church has been fortunate to have had eighteen spiritual leaders, all playing significant roles in the growth and success of the church. The Lebanese Maronites faithfully worshiped God, and through their endless resistance and preservation of character, their beliefs have survived and thrived from their fourth century ancestors to the present. Let's take a glimpse at this blessed legacy.

The descendants of St. George Church in Uniontown tell a very interesting and historical account of determined people and their struggle toward religious independence. Their story begins from the breathtaking shores of the Mediterranean Sea and Lebanon's beautiful mountains to the wide open New World. In the late 1800s, their ancestors journeyed from Lebanon to America in search of new opportunities. These Lebanese Maronites refused to abandon their traditions, customs, and Christian Aramaic language (the language spoken by Jesus Christ) that had been practiced for over 1,600 years. They had already suffered through persecutions, invasions, and suppressors as they courageously defended their right to religious worship. They possessed an unrelenting faith in God and a formidable Maronite heritage and legacy that would continue in America for generations.

A group of these Maronite Catholics settled in the city of Uniontown, Penns., fifty miles south of Pittsburgh. Its green rolling hills and mountainous terrain reminded them of their beautiful and scenic homeland. They worshiped at local Catholic churches until 1922, when their Maronite priest

founded a neighboring home where they could pray in their own Maronite tradition. In 1927, as their numbers continued to grow, they petitioned Bishop Boyle, Ordinary of the Pittsburgh Diocese, to establish a formal parish for 110 families. Through persistent efforts, sacrifice, and hard work, their first church was constructed and dedicated on March 25, 1928. The burning of the mortgage took place in 1942, and the congregation continued to organize and participate in many church groups.

As the parish flourished, there was a need for expansion. The entire congregation helped to increase pledges and raise money for the church fund. Finally, groundbreaking for a new church took place on the Feast of St. George, April 23, 1967, and a Divine Liturgy was celebrated at the excavation site. The address of the new church was appropriately named Lebanon Terrace, and 1978 marked the official burning of the mortgage. Through dedication and perseverance, the parishioners added many features to the new church, including a paved parking lot, air conditioning, a new organ, bell tower, baptismal font, chalices, Maronite-Syriac vestments, and outside religious gardens and memorials.

In 2015, nearly fifty years later, the congregation and clergy discussed and examined plans to renovate the church. A financial campaign was launched to secure funds and donations to undertake this outstanding project. Through the overwhelming generosity and hard work of the parishioners and benefactors, this beautiful transformation became a reality. During liturgy, on April 4, 2016, Bishop Gregory Mansour (former pastor of St. George from 1983 - 1994), honored St. George Church with the consecration of the new altar according to the Maronite tradition. He also completed the official ribbon cutting, blessing and dedication of the renovated church social hall, kitchen, catechism classrooms, conference area, candle and archives rooms, prayer room, religious artwork, and portico. Parishioners of St. George are proud of the beautiful changes that represent the perpetual care of their parish and the spiritual and economic growth of the Uniontown Lebanese American community.

During the weekend of April 28 - 30, 2017, the St. George congregation celebrated its 90th anniversary and 50th Golden Jubilee. The parishioners were elated to welcome their beloved "son," The Most Reverend Bishop Gregory Mansour, Bishop of the Eparchy of Saint Maron as their honored guest for this memorable celebration. To begin his weekend activities, Bishop Gregory met with several church organizations to discuss their achievements and future goals. He emphasized the importance of praying to God daily and working together for the good of the church and community. He discussed the necessary and loving work of the Catholic Relief Services, who help the less fortunate worldwide, and he encouraged everyone to follow this example.

To begin the Saturday evening liturgy, the Knights of Columbus, dressed in full regalia, led Bishop Mansour and clergy members in a procession to the altar. Bishop Mansour concelebrated the liturgy with Father El-Badaoui Habib (Pastor of St. George), Chorbishop John Faris (Pastor of St. Louis Gonzaga Church in Utica, N.Y.), Fr. Simboli (retired pastor of St. Joseph Church in Uniontown), Father Bob Lubic (Pastor of the Catholic churches of Connellsville), Father Peter Peretti (Pastor of St. Mary Church in Uniontown), Father Ron Larko (Pastor of St. John Byzantine Church in Uniontown), and Subdeacons Tom "Duke" George and Dr.



Mallard George. Following the evening liturgy, a *Hafli* celebration of Lebanese culture, music, dancing and fellowship was held at the Uniontown Country Club.

On Sunday, Bishop Mansour celebrated the liturgy, accompanied by Father Habib. In his homily, the Bishop reflected upon a universal heartfelt message given by Pope Francis. He stated that the Pope tells us to worship God, care for each other, be charitable, and live faithfully and lovingly. He says that there is only "one true fanaticism that comes from God - and that fanaticism is to love one another." Following the liturgy, a reception was held in the church hall and featured a historical slideshow of St. George throughout the years. This allowed the congregation to socialize with family and friends, share memories, and solidify relationships. Very importantly, this memorable occasion gave the parishioners an opportunity to spend time visiting with their kind and loving Bishop Gregory Mansour. Finally, the Maronite Catholics of St. George Church in Uniontown are fortunate to celebrate ninety years of worship together, and thus, the groundwork has been laid for future generations to continue their proud legacy. □



The Cedar of Lebanon



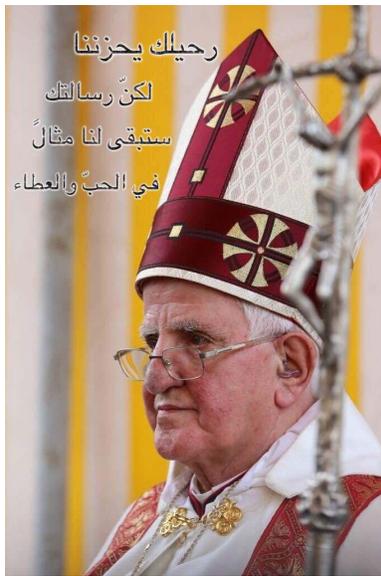
Eparchial Appointments

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

- **Father James Doran** from Parochial Vicar at St. Anthony of the Desert Church in Fall River, Mass., to Pastor of St. Joseph Church, Waterville, Me., effective May 8, 2017.
- **Father Antoun Youssef** as Parochial Vicar at St. John Maron Church in Williamsville [Buffalo], N.Y., effective June 1, 2017. □

Eparchial Condolences

His Excellency **Bishop Youssef Anis Abi Aad**, Bishop Emeritus of the Maronite Eparchy of Aleppo, Syria, passed away on Saturday, May 6, 2017. He is survived by his sisters, May Fares, Hyatt Abi Aad and Dallal Hudamous, and many nephews and nieces. The Funeral Liturgy took place at St. Joseph Maronite Church in Beirut, Lebanon, on May 9, 2017.



His Excellency Bishop Gregory Mansour along with the clergy and faithful of the Eparchy of Saint Maron, and His Excellency Bishop A. Elias Zaidan, along with the clergy and faithful of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon, extend their heartfelt sympathy and the promise of our prayers to His Beatitude Patriarch Bechara Peter Cardinal Rai, to His Excellency Archbishop Joseph Tobejy, Bishop of Aleppo, to the Synod of Bishops of the Maronite Church, and to Bishop Abi Aad's family.

May the Lord God grant his servant Youssef Anis eternal rest in His Kingdom and consolation to his family and loved ones.

Mrs. Mariam Hannah (95), mother of Monsignor Georges El-Khalli; Pastor of Our Lady of the Cedars of Lebanon Church in Boston, Mass., passed away on May 11, 2017. She was predeceased by her husband, Youssef El-Khalli, and by several brothers and sisters.

Mariam is survived by her seven children, Monsignor Georges, Sister Chantal of the Basilite Order, Tanious, Butrous, Maurice, Malaki, and Georgette; twenty-five grandchildren, fifteen great grandchildren; and her brother, Elias Hannah.

The funeral was held on Friday, May 12, 2017, at Our

Lady of the Assumption Church in *Chebanieh*, Lebanon. Condolences may be sent to Monsignor Georges at:

Monsignor Georges El-Khalli
Our Lady of the Cedars of Lebanon Church
61 Rockwood Street
Jamaica Plain, MA 02130

Bishop Gregory Mansour, along with the clergy and faithful of the Eparchy of Saint Maron, extends his heartfelt sympathy and the promise of our prayers to Msgr. Georges' family and relatives.

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

Schedule of Bishop Gregory Mansour

June 1 - 21, 2017

Annual Maronite Bishops' Synod, *Bkerke*, Lebanon

June 17, 2017

Ordination of Jebrayel Moussalem to Priesthood, Lebanon

June 26 - 27, 2017

Teleumiere Board Meeting, Greenville, S.C.

June 26 - July 2, 2017

Annual Clergy Conference and National Apostolate of Maronites Convention, Greenville, S.C.

July 2 - 4, 2017

Catholic Leaders Convocation, Orlando, Fla.

July 5 - 7, 2017

Annual MYO Retreat, Minneapolis, Minn.

July 8 - 11, 2017

Family Visit, Flint, Mich.

July 16 - 23, 2017

Catholic Relief Services, Uganda. □

Appeal from Caritas Lebanon

Christians in Lebanon are suffering! If you are able to relieve some of the suffering, please contact

Fr. Elias Abi Sarkis, Director

8315 South 107th East Ave.
Tulsa, OK 74133
Ph: 918-872-7400

or visit *Caritas Lebanon* at <http://www.caritas.org.lb>. Checks may be made payable to Caritas Lebanon.

Thank you for your consideration. □

The Season of Pentecost: The Gift of the Advocate

by
Rev. David A. Fisher

"If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you" The Gospel of John 14:15-17.

The Season of Pentecost in the Syriac-Maronite Tradition is a time to reflect upon the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives, in the Church, and in the world. In nature it corresponds to the months of planting and growing, long sunny days, warm evenings, and often vacation travels. During these latter days of spring and the months of summer, we are called by the Church to unite our prayers with the Holy Spirit that "groans within us" (Romans 8:26), the Holy Spirit who pleads for us in our weaknesses before the Father.

In the Johannine Corpus of writings in the New Testament, the term *Parakltos* (Paraclete) is used five times, and can be translated from the original Greek as Counselor, Advocate, or Helper. The word was taken from its use in the courtroom, referring to the lawyer for the defense, or advocate for the accused. John uses "Paraclete" in reference to both Jesus and the Holy Spirit, thus echoing the words of St. Irenaeus of Lyon (born 130 AD in *Smyrna* - died 202 AD in *Lugdunum* [Lyon] in Roman Gaul), that the Father is never present without his two hands, the Son and the Spirit (St. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*).



We read, for example, in the First Letter of John that Christ is our advocate: "My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world" (1 John 2:1-2).

In John's Gospel we see that the Holy Spirit is also an advocate for the strength of the disciples, "And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever" (John 14:16); to give instruction in the truth, "But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you" (John 14:26); and defend against error and evil, "Nevertheless I tell you the truth, it is to your

advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Advocate will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you. And when he comes, he will prove the world wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment: about sin, because they do not believe in me; about righteousness, because I am going to the Father and you will see me no longer; about judgment, because the ruler of this world has been condemned" (John 16:7-11).

In the Old Testament the Jewish Feast of Pentecost happened fifty days after the celebration of Passover. Its significance was the giving of the Ten Commandments to Moses on Mount Sinai. In Christianity, Jesus Christ is our Passover. By his Cross and Resurrection he has led us on our "exodus" from sin and death to the Kingdom of His Father. In like manner the Holy Spirit is for Christians the celebration of Pentecost, the New Law, not written on tablets but written on our hearts, permeating our soul. Luke records in the Acts of the Apostles, "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 as resting upon each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1-4).

It is fitting that Pentecost is a Season, and not just one day in the liturgical calendar, because it realizes the New Day that never sets, the New Law that will never be abrogated. It is the apocalyptic moment, the ushering in of the end-times, "I am sending upon you what my Father promised; so stay here in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high" (Luke 24:49). This power from "on high" is the Holy Spirit, the Truth of God that has transformed time, so that we can truly say the Kingdom of God is in our midst.

In the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Symbol of Faith (the Nicene Creed) it says that the Holy Spirit *ekporeuomenon*, (ἐκπορεύμενον) from the Father, which we usually render in English as "proceeds." Yet, this Greek word is a dynamic description of the Father's gift of the Holy Spirit. *Ekporeuomenon* means to burst forth, to spirate, to go forth in such a way that a connection is made between the Giver and the one to whom it is given. In the Creed it is understood that in the Holy Spirit, the will of the Father that was accomplished by the Son becomes for us the Day that never sets and our human history becomes *salvation history*, by our Advocate and Counselor - the Holy Spirit. □

How to Preach Like the Apostles

by
Bishop Robert Barron

I have always loved the Acts of the Apostles and have often recommended it to those who are approaching the Bible for the first time. Filled with colorful narratives, adventure, martyrdom, persecution, journeys by sea, etc., it makes for stimulating reading indeed. But I love it especially because it shows us the excitement of being a follower of Jesus. Long before there were parishes and dioceses and the Vatican and other institutional structures, there was this band of brothers and sisters who were so overwhelmed and energized by the fact of the resurrection that they went careening around the world and to their deaths with the message of Jesus.

It also features some wonderful exemplifications of Christian preaching, for it relates to us some of the earliest kerygmatic proclamations of the apostles. If we attend carefully to these speeches, we can learn a lot about good preaching, but also a lot about the nature of Christianity. A particularly fine example is the sermon given by St. Peter on Pentecost morning and described in the second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. We hear that Peter stood up with the Eleven and raised his voice. First lesson: all legitimate Christian teaching and proclamation is apostolic, which is to say, grounded in the witness of the first intimate followers of Jesus. Bishops are entitled to preach precisely because they are successors of the apostles; priests and deacons are formally commissioned to preach by bishops. This is to assure that what preachers say is not just a matter of private opinion or the fruit of the present cultural consensus, but is rather rooted in the experience of those who knew Jesus personally.

So what does apostolic preaching sound like? Peter says, "Let the whole house of Israel know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Messiah, this Jesus whom you crucified." Notice, first, the strength, confidence, and edginess of this proclamation. There is nothing weak, vacillating, or unsure about it. This is not a preacher sharing his doubt with you or reveling in the complexity and multivalence and ambiguity of faith. This is a man speaking (in a loud voice) about his absolute conviction. And what is he convicted about? "That God has made him both Lord and Messiah, this Jesus whom you crucified." Christos, the Greek term for Messiah from which we derive the English word Christ, has the sense of anointed, which implies the new David, which means the fulfillment of the expectation of Israel. Good preaching always puts Jesus in relation to Israel, for he makes sense only *kata ta grapha* (according to the Scriptures). A Jesus abstracted from the history of Israel devolves in short order into a mere religious teacher or teacher of timeless spiritual truths.

And not only is he Christ; he is also *Kyrios* (Lord). This term had, at the time of Peter and Jesus, both a Jewish and a Roman sense. On the Jewish reading, it designated Yahweh, the God of Israel, for *Adonai* (Lord, in Hebrew) was the typical substitute for the unpronounceable tetragrammaton, *YHWH*. Paul, who continually calls Jesus "Lord," says that Jesus was given the name above every other name, by which

he means the name of God. Preaching that leaves the divinity of Jesus aside or in the shadows is, therefore, not Apostolic preaching. Now *Kyrios* also had a Roman sense, since Caesar was called *kyrios*, meaning the one to whom final allegiance is due. Do you see how edgy and subversive it was to declare that Jesus is Lord, and by implication, Caesar is not? And do you see why those who made that claim usually ended up imprisoned and/or put to death? A twentieth century Anglican bishop memorably expressed the insight as follows: "When Paul preached, there were riots; when I preach, they serve me tea."

Notice, next, that Peter is not tickling the ears of his hearers: "God has made both Lord and Christ this Jesus whom you crucified." He's not pulling any punches or trying to win friends and influence people. About as bluntly and clearly as he possibly can, he names the sin of his audience. And this is precisely what "cuts to the heart" of his hearers. Trust me when I tell you that abstract spiritual principles, tired bromides, and timeless moral truths don't cut people to the heart. And so they cry out, "What are we to do?" Peter's sermon continues: "Repent and be baptized for the forgiveness of your sins." Every truly evangelical sermon should be a call to repentance, to turn one's life around. If it doesn't lead to contrition and a conviction to change, it has not cut to the heart. Mind you, this doesn't entail moralizing in a brow-beating way, but rather the presenting of the message of Jesus in such a clear and compelling way that people naturally see how they've fallen short and want to change.

Peter concludes: "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation." Followers of Jesus are a holy nation, a people set apart. We have renewed minds and wills; we should profile ourselves distinctly against the backdrop of the world. If we think and act like everyone else, we haven't taken in the Gospel. Relatedly, if all we hear from the pulpit is what can be heard on talk-shows and in discussion groups and in political conversations, we haven't heard the Gospel. Finally, we are told that, "Three thousand persons were added [to the Church] that day." I know that everyone and his brother tells us not to worry about numbers and there is indeed truth to that. For God wants us to be, not successful, but faithful, as Mother Teresa said. However, like it or not, the Bible is interested in numbers. And good preaching, if it is truly evangelical, is meant to draw people into the Church. That they are staying away from the Church in droves today says, I would suggest, something rather negative about the quality of our preaching.

To all preachers, I might recommend a careful consideration of the kerygmatic sermonizing in the Acts of the Apostles. If you preach like Peter, they might not serve you tea after every homily, but they will know that they've been cut to the heart. □

Bishop Robert Barron is an auxiliary bishop of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles.

Culture and Vocations

by
Fr. Tony Massad

I have been very fortunate to be able to go and visit Lebanon, a place where our Maronite Church has flourished and a place where many Maronites draw their heritage. We know that Lebanon is an old and historical land, not only for culture but for religion as well. It is home to eighteen different religions among people who live and work side by side. One aspect of the Middle Eastern or Arabic culture that I have found so different than our culture here in the United States is the acknowledgment of God. In Arabic, there are dozens of sayings or blessings that incorporate God in some way, shape, or form. These sayings are often said when we

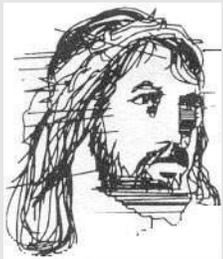
meet someone or are sending someone off, when we haven't seen a person in a long time, and it's amazing how many of these sayings are particular to each event or interaction. Here in America, our culture does not have the same type of emphasis or incorporation of God in our common vernacular. What does this have to do with a vocation?

Farmers must prepare the land, till the soil, make sure that it is able to give the proper nutrients to feed the plants or seeds, and the farmer will make sure to cultivate that plant or seed so that it can grow and bear fruit. When I am in Lebanon, visiting family and friends, I feel that the atmosphere of cultivation for the spiritual life is still present, in contrast to our American culture. Just the mere mentioning of God multiple times on the radio and television alone in one day seems striking for someone who comes from America. I am not talking about religious television or radio programs, but regular television and radio programs that all watch daily, including the news. Just these seemingly superficial instances of God being mentioned create an atmosphere where at the very least the name of God is almost always present in all that is done. This is only one aspect of the spiritual atmosphere of Lebanon. When one includes the church bells that ring, the songs to our Blessed Mother one hears playing on the radio and in homes, and of course the opportunity to visit and experience so many holy and ancient sites of our faith, like St. Sharbel, St. Rafka, St. Hardini, Our Lady of Lebanon, Our Lady of *Manatara*, *Qadisha* Valley, and the list goes on, I think it would be hard to stop the growth and continuation of vocations to the religious life when one is completely engulfed in it on a daily basis.

What we have in America is different than what can be found in Lebanon, Syria, and the Holy Land, for example, but we live in a different reality and culture. This does not mean it could

never happen, but it is up to us to create the atmosphere that will inspire vocations and the devotion to live a life of service following Jesus Christ. We create this atmosphere first in our homes and in our churches. These are the places in which we should make our love and devotion to God our top priority. We have control to create and foster an atmosphere of faith and obedience to Our Father, and then we can cultivate the seeds of faith to grow into all types of vocations, religious life, devoted married life, and overall a good Christian life. Our Churches play a major role to create the proper atmosphere and to cultivate good vocations. It is not either the home or the Church but rather, the home and the Church, both working and complementing each other in the growth of vocations in following Our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Maronite Church in the United States continues to grow and flourish because of our people's devotion to God and living a life of faith. Our homes and Churches have created an atmosphere that cultivates a life of faithful discipleship and the growth of vocations. Yet, we need more. "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few" Mt 9:37. Last month we celebrated our Blessed Mother and this month we celebrate the Sacred Heart of Jesus. We ask for Christ's blessings and Mary's intercession that our homes and churches always have the atmosphere to produce workers for the harvest, following our Lord. □



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

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

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

Or

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

Or

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





Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit

by
Dr. Anne Borik

At Baptism, we receive seven special gifts from the Holy Spirit. These gifts are freely given to us to help us live as followers of Jesus. They help us to respond to the Presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives, in order that we might make good choices, serving God and each other.

Spiritual Gift of Wisdom

Wisdom is the gift of knowing the right choices to make in order to live a holy life. It is an intimate understanding of His Word and commandments. James 3:17 says "The wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere."

Spiritual Gift of Understanding

Understanding is the gift of comprehension, or the ability to grasp the meaning of the teachings of the Church. The gift of understanding helps us to be tolerant and sympathetic of others, recognizing when someone is hurting or in need.

Spiritual Gift of Counsel or Right Judgment

The gift of Counsel is prudence. It is through this gift of the Holy Spirit that we are able to judge how best to act in any given situation. Through this gift, we learn how to best please God.

Spiritual Gift of Fortitude or Courage

Fortitude is the gift of courage that helps us stand firm in our faith. It strengthens the soul, helping us to overcome any obstacle that gets in the way of practicing our faith.

Spiritual Gift of Knowledge

The gift of knowledge helps us determine God's purpose for our life. It enables us to choose the right path that will lead us to God.

Spiritual Gift of Piety or Reverence

Piety is the gift that takes us beyond a sense of duty and instills in us the desire to joyfully want to serve God and

others.

Spiritual Gift of Awe or Fear of the Lord

The gift of fear of the Lord encourages us to be in awe of God and moves us to love Him to the point of not wanting to offend Him in any way by our words or actions. □

(Adapted from Catholic Resources)

Prayer For Peace In Our Communities

O Lord our God, in your mercy and kindness, no thought of ours is left unnoticed, no desire or concern ignored. You have proven that blessings abound when we fall on our knees in prayer, and so we turn to you in our hour of need.

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

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

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

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

(United States Conference of Catholic Bishops)

The Soul Alone with God Alone: The Syriac Spirituality of *lhoodoyo*



by Sr. Natalie Sayde Salameh

The Maronite Servants of Christ the Light recently completed their annual week-long silent retreat (May 14 – 21, 2017) at the Mother of the Light Convent in Dartmouth, Mass. The theme of this year's retreat was "*In the Footsteps of St. Sharbel in our Syriac Spirituality*," and was preached by Fr. James Doran, Administrator of St. Joseph Maronite Church in Waterville, Maine. A theme of the conferences was the Syriac concept of *lhoodoyo* or *yihidoyo* (translated: the alone or the solitary).

In Syriac spirituality, the term *lhoodoyo* or *yihidoyo* refers to "the soul alone with God alone," this concept of standing alone before the Divine Light in order to arrive at complete inner stillness or quietude. The soul is completely, utterly and resolutely single-minded in its pursuit of the Hidden One. Creation, and all things created, are simply shadows or reflections of the One being sought, and therefore should lay no claim on any of our affections or attachments.

Naturally, of course, this quest for solitude with God by our ancient Syriac and desert fathers was always coupled with reticent lips, that is, with silence. The fathers stressed not merely external silence, such as freedom from surrounding noise, but more importantly, inner silence from the many thoughts and distractions that flood our minds. We see this so beautifully depicted in the life of our great solitary, St. Sharbel.

Why all the solitude and silence? What is the goal of this *yihidoyo*? The answer lies in our Divine Liturgy.

In our Maronite Divine Liturgy, the priest performs a beautiful rite after the Intercessions, known in our Maronite missals as the Fraction, Signing, Sprinkling, Mingling, and Elevation. The priest is given the option to perform this rite in English, Arabic or Syriac. The words used in Syriac for the Signing portion of this rite are quite profound and mention the only Son using this Syriac word of *yihidoyo*. As the priest dips the Body of Christ in His Precious Blood, he prays:

bshem abo + hayo lhaye (In the name of the Father +, the Living One, for the living); *wdabro + yihidoyo wqadisho yaldo dmeneh wakhwoteh hayo lhaye* (and of the only Son+, the Holy One, begotten of him, and like him, the Living One, for the living).

In this excerpt, Christ is the Great *Yihidoyo*, beloved by the Father as His only Son, and the radiance of the Father's eternity. The great solitaries, St. Sharbel being just one of them, sought in their silence and solitude to put on the solitary likeness of Christ, to become *yihidoyoe* (plural). This is a most profound and important concept that we must all learn and apply in our everyday lives, lay or religious, married or celibate. Our sole attachment, our sole preoccupation, our sole goal, our sole desire should be to seek in single-mindedness the face and will of the Hidden One, observed and discerned in His creation at every moment of every day.

Order of Saint Sharbel Retreat

Continued from page 3

Testimonials

"I attended all four St. Sharbel retreats. All of the speakers were magnificently enlightening. Each delivered a great message for me to learn. Each profound theme opened the Scriptures and related them to my everyday life, giving me a deeper understanding of my being a follower of Christ, gaining a much greater appreciation of the Scriptures and the teaching of the Church, and bringing me to a deeper relationship with my Good Lord. The fee was very affordable for everyone to be able to attend. The time frame was reasonable. And the books and CD given at the retreat were excellent. I appreciate all the time and effort of the Order of St. Sharbel in bringing these most needed retreats to the Maronite Church." (Marlene Kolyiani)

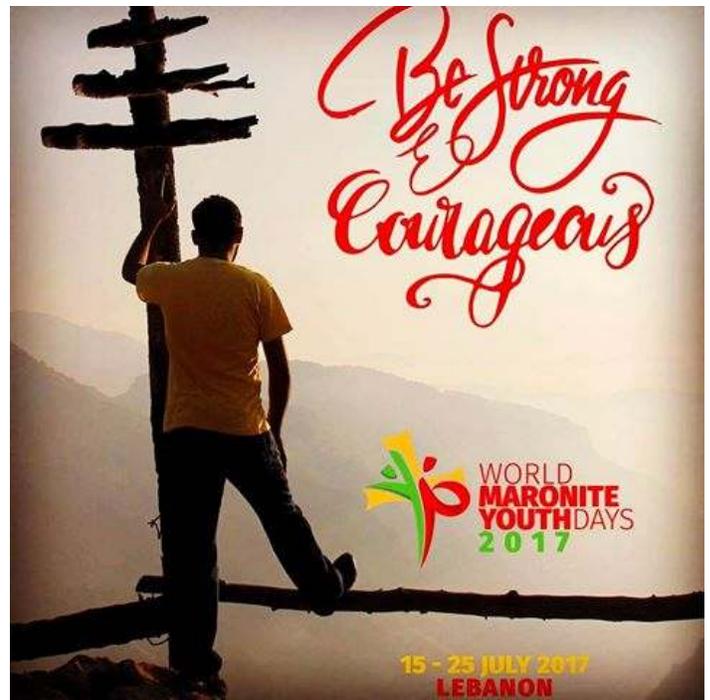
"I enjoyed all four of the St. Sharbel retreats very much: the dynamic speakers, the authentic Catholic talks, and the overall experience. I cannot wait for the next one in the fall, and I wish we could have more than one per year." (Jocelyne Murad).

Fr. Dominique Hanna, Pastor, is hoping the annual St. Sharbel Retreats will become a long-standing tradition at St. Joseph Parish. □

World Maronite Youth Days, Lebanon



We are delighted to share that we have forty-one young adults representing the two Maronite Eparchies in the U.S. and attending WMYD. These individuals (including two of our seminarians, Chris Nahra and Peter Zogby) are coming from a number of our Maronite parishes in the following ten states: Washington, D.C., Maryland, Virginia, Massachusetts, New York, Rhode Island, Ohio, Alabama, California, Michigan and Oregon.



by Sr. Therese Maria Touma,
Eparchial Coordinator for MYO/MYA

Together with His Beatitude Patriarch Beshara Peter Cardinal Rai, thousands of Maronite Young adults will gather from all over the world in Lebanon this summer to share and celebrate the unique beauty of our Maronite faith and roots. The theme for World Maronite Youth days (WMYD) is: "Be Strong and Courageous."

The significant goals set by the Youth Pastoral Ministry in Lebanon for the WMYD are:

- Deepening the young adult's personal relationship with Christ
- Learning about the history and spirituality of the Maronite Church
- Developing their sense of pastoral and eparchial belonging
- Creating and deepening their relationship and friendship between the resident and non-resident Maronite youth.

During the WMYD, July 15 - 25, 2017, the dynamic activities planned in the program include daily catechesis, interactive discussions, sport and art activities, exhibitions, opportunity for adoration, quiet prayer and confession, social gatherings, and optional touring of various religious and historical sites throughout Lebanon, such as the Holy Valley, St. Nimuttallah Al-Hardini, St. Rafka, Our Lady of Lebanon, Harissa, Byblos, Jeita Grotto, Beyrouth Centre Ville, Deir el Kamar, Beit Dine, Maghdoushe, Zahle, Baalbek, Bekaa Valley and more.

The young adults, including myself (Sister Therese Maria, MSCL), are counting down the days and are very excited to be participating! Here is a complete list of those attending: Gabriel Rizk, Amanuel Rizk, George Rizk, Theresa Rizk, Zachariah Rizk, Christy Bouhaidar, Sandra Matar, Stephanie Matar, Mark El-Hallal, Christophe Chedid, Gabrielle Chedid, Maya Khoury, James Salamy, Eleni Carali, Michael Hyland, Mariette Franjeh, Stephanie Khoury, Lisa Wyrsh, Layla Chaoul, Eliana Francis, Hana Chemaly, Chris Nahra, Maria Harika, Clara Karam, Racquel Fakhouri, George-Charbel Fakhouri, Anthony Fakhouri, Christina Khamis, Andrew Samaan, Ashley Samaan, Antoine Zogbi, Peter Zogby, Christine Abi-Abdallah, James Abi-Abdallah, Sami Younes and Joyce Eid.

Please join me in praying for our energetic group, for the generous organizers in Lebanon, and all those attending. May WMYD be a spiritually uplifting and life-changing encounter with the Lord and with each person we meet along our way. Come Holy Spirit! ☐



Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania *Blanket Project*



On Sunday, March 19, 2017, the Maronite Youth Organization (MYO) of Our Lady of Victory Church in Pittsburgh, Penn., came together to hand-make fleece blankets for the kids at Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh. A total of fifty colorful blankets were made by the members and donated to the facility, and the MYO received a personal thank you letter from the hospital showing their gratitude. MYO Pittsburgh hopes that these blankets will bring a smile to the faces of the children suffering from chronic illnesses such as cancer. □

Lawrence, Massachusetts *MYO Lock-In*



by St. Anthony MYO

"Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, and in purity"

(1 Timothy 4:12). This was our theme for the MYO Lock-In/Mini Retreat held for the MYO at St. Anthony Maronite Church in Lawrence, Mass. Close to thirty MYO members brought along their sleeping bags and "locked in" to the Parish Hall for a night of prayer, discussion, activities, and relationship building. Upon entry, members each read the previously mentioned Bible verse which was printed on a large canvas they colored ink to mark their thumbprint on the canvas, symbolizing the individual and unique marks they leave on the world. The members then joined together and served a Liturgy celebrated by Father Elie Mikhael, Pastor. After dinner, the members came together for a presentation and discussion on Social Justice, our main theme for the event. Later, the MYO got comfortable for a showing of "God's Not Dead," a great movie showcasing a young adult not backing down on his faith despite social pressures. After the movie, the youth and their advisors entered the dark church, which had nothing illuminated except for the cross hanging above the altar, held hands around the altar and together recited a prayer to end their night. In the morning, the youth gathered back in the church for an hour of Eucharistic Adoration with beautiful songs playing in the background to help guide the members' meditation and conversation with the Lord. After a breakfast buffet, the youth were split into teams and competed against each other in a game of Bible Jeopardy. The winners took home a Pope Francis bobble head! The weekend proved to be incredibly fruitful and the youth left refreshed with new information to help them strengthen their faith in the face of adversity and to use it to make a positive impact on the world and those around them. □

Please save this date
Thursday, October 5, 2017
And join us for the

***Eighth Annual Benefit Dinner for
The Eparchy of Saint Maron***

New York Athletic Club, New York City

***Special honorees
Dr. Josyann Abisaab and Habib Kairouz***

Details to follow



MARONITES CONSECRATED TO THE HEARTS OF MARY & JESUS

54TH ANNUAL CONVENTION ST. RAFKA ♦ GREENVILLE SC JUNE 29 - JULY 2 ♦ 2017



Sponsored by National Apostolate of Maronites

Greenville, South Carolina Countdown to the 54th Convention

by Bridget Nevin

St. Rafka Maronite Catholic Church in Greenville, S.C., is all abuzz with excitement as the final weeks of preparation are upon them. The weather is warm, the sun is bright, the committee leaders and Chairmen, Greg and Mary Anne Lepak, are passionately working to make this year's convention an unforgettable one, and we want to see you there.

Why is attending the NAM convention important? I asked this question of Fr. Bart Leon and he said to me, "A primary reason to attend NAM is to meet other Maronites from around the country. Our parishes are all very similar and yet there are many differences. Some are larger or smaller, older or younger, active or inactive, struggling or booming. We all struggle with music, CCD classes, and providing adult religious education. How do we network? How do we help each other? It's simple—come to the NAM Convention."

"This convention means a lot to our parish as we are isolated from other Maronite communities. As we are located in Greenville, S.C., Charlotte, N.C., is now the closest Maronite community. Atlanta, Ga., and Fayetteville, N.C., are also close neighbors. I think it is important for other Maronites to see how a small, younger mission community is thriving in the midst of an Evangelical Protestant ocean. For a few days, we will be the focus of the entire Maronite Church as people see us in person and via Teleluminere to the Middle East and beyond. Quite a feat for us!"

This convention is an opportunity to step away from the hectic routine of everyday living to come and meet new friends, join with families, experience southern hospitality, while enjoying Lebanese food! It is also a time to learn more about the Maronite faith by attending workshops of your choosing, become inspired during the daily liturgies offered bringing you closer to God. The convention offers an opportunity to learn more about the Maronites, experience the Lebanese culture and enjoy the variety of food, entertainment and programs being offered for all ages. The convention includes activities but also a time for sharing and reconnecting with the church and family.

All you have to do to register for the convention workshops

is to go to the Namnews.org or to saintrafka.org websites to read more about the activities and speakers planned.

To book a hotel room, call the Hyatt Regency at (888) 421-1442 and state the code NAM CONVENTION to get the discount. It will be a lot of fun for everyone and we look forward to seeing you there! ☐

Williamsville [Buffalo], New York 19th Annual Lebanese Festival

Are you looking for an opportunity to experience a "Treasure Chest" of traditional Lebanese culture, customs, cuisine, and terrific music? We are happy to announce that the ever-popular 19th Annual Lebanese Festival of Western New York will be held on the grounds of St. John Maron Church, 2040 Wehrle Drive, Williamsville, N.Y., on Friday, July 28, 2017, from 5:00 to 11:00 p.m.; Saturday, July 29, from 2:00 to 11:00 p.m.; and Sunday, July 30, 2017, from noon to 8:00 p.m.



The St. John Maron Lebanese Festival continues to share its heritage with the Western New York community in an enjoyable and unique way, by offering authentic Lebanese food and mouth-watering desserts; continuous live music by Paul Hage & Mirage; traditional Lebanese free-style dancing and Lebanese line dancing (Dabke); games of chance, raffles, and bounce houses. Unique apparel, unusual gift items, food products, hand-made and costume jewelry will be featured in the Gift Shop. All are invited to attend this happy and fun event for an admission fee of \$1.00.

For more information regarding the festival, please call (716) 634-0669, email stjmaron@gmail.com, or visit our website at www.stjohnmaron.org. ☐





Do Not Resist the Holy Spirit



According to Vatican Radio, during his daily morning Mass at *Casa Santa Marta* on May 9, 2017, Pope Francis noted that this is how a Christian ought to conduct himself.

The Pope's homily focused on the day's readings discussing the Christian who is "docile to the Holy Ghost," as opposed to the readings of the past days telling of resisting the Holy Spirit.

Goodness, peace and self-control are the fruit of those who receive the Word, know it and are familiar with it.

At the beginning of his homily, Francis noted that the Mass was offered for Sisters of the same *Casa Santa Marta* who "celebrate the day of their founder, Santa Luisa of Marillac."

In the first chapter of his Letter, the Apostle James calls for the Word to be accepted with docility, which he underscored requires being open and "not rigid."

With this background, Francis said the first step is "welcoming the Word," that is to say "opening one's heart."

The second, the Pope continued, is to "know the Word," "to know Jesus," and what He means when it was said: "My sheep hear my voice and I know them and they follow me."

The third step, he concluded, is "familiarity with the Word."

"Always carry the Word with us, read it, open the heart to the Word, open the heart to the Spirit, which is what makes us understand the Word," he encouraged, saying, "And the fruit of this being to receive the Word, to know the Word, to bring it to us, to this familiarity with the Word, is a great fruit: it is the fruit ... the attitude of a person who does this is goodness, goodwill, joy, peace, self-mastery, mildness."

This, the Holy Father highlighted, is the style that gives docility to the Spirit.

"But I must receive the Spirit that leads me to the Word with docility, and this docility, not to resist the Spirit, will lead me to this way of life, in this way of acting. To receive the Word with discretion, to know the Word, and to ask the Spirit for grace to make it known, and then to give space for this seed to sprout and grow in those attitudes of goodness, mildness, benevolence, peace, charity, mastery of self: all that

does The Christian style."

"There is the Spirit guiding us not to err, to receive the Spirit with docility, to know the Spirit in the Word and to live according to the Spirit," Francis stressed, calling on faithful to ask themselves: Do we resist the Spirit? Or do we welcome him?

Pope Francis concluded, urging faithful to consider whether they welcome the Spirit with docility, and to pray for this grace. □

(Zenit.org, May 9, 2017)

Pope Says: The Only Fanaticism Believers Can Have is that of Charity

On April 29, the second and final day of his apostolic journey to Egypt, Pope Francis celebrated an outdoor Mass at the Egyptian Air Defense Stadium in Cairo. During the homily, the Pope reflected on the encounter between the Risen Lord and the disciples on the way to Emmaus.

"The experience of the disciples on the way to Emmaus teaches us that it is of no use to fill our places of worship if our hearts are empty of the fear of God and of his presence," he preached. "It is of no use to pray if our prayer to God does not turn into love for our brothers and sisters. All our religiosity means nothing unless it is inspired by deep faith and charity."

The Pope continued: God is pleased only by a faith that is proclaimed by our lives, for the only fanaticism believers can have is that of charity! Any other fanaticism does not come from God and is not pleasing to him!

So now, like the disciples of Emmaus, filled with joy, courage and faith, return to your own Jerusalem, that is, to your daily lives, your families, your work and your beloved country. Do not be afraid to open your hearts to the light of the Risen Lord, and let him transform your uncertainty into a positive force for yourselves and for others. Do not be afraid to love everyone, friends and enemies alike, because the strength and treasure of the believer lies in a life of love!

Following the Mass, the Pope had lunch with the nation's bishops. Before departing for Rome, Pope Francis met with Egyptian priests, religious, and seminarians at the seminary in Cairo.

The Pope encouraged them not to give in to seven temptations, including "the temptation to let ourselves be led, rather than to lead," and "the temptation to complain constantly."

"Do not be afraid of the burdens of your daily service and the difficult circumstances some of you must endure," he said. "We venerate the Holy Cross, the instrument and sign of our salvation. When we flee the Cross, we flee the resurrection!" □

(CWNews, May 1, 2017)

Practical (and Charitable) Wisdom from our Patriarch

Continued from page 1

It is hard to imagine Lebanese society without the charitable generosity of the Church. Yet, these numbers are only the Maronite Centers; other Catholic joint efforts make our charitable footprint even greater! Moreover, there are many amazing efforts of social and religious solidarity between local parishes, monasteries and convents and the poor; and each of these institutions is open to all people regardless of religion or ethnic background.

Our Patriarch shares three indispensable aspects of Christian life that describe what it means to believe in and witness to the Risen Christ:

- Proclaiming the Word of God
- Worship and Sacraments
- Charity

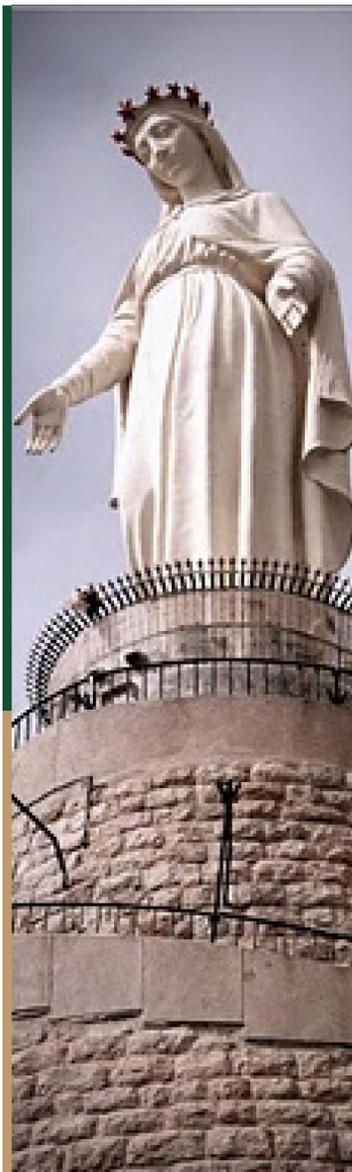
In quoting Pope Benedict, and in giving illustrations from the life of Pope Francis, Patriarch Rai states that our Christian religion, beautiful as it is in itself, is incomplete without a full engagement of charity reaching to the poorest of the poor among us. How very true, and how very important for all of us to be engaged in this work of charity.

In addition to the institutions named above, there is also *Caritas* Lebanon, which is the common effort of all Catholics in Lebanon, as well as Catholic Relief Services, which is the common effort of all Catholics here in the United States for the service of the poor overseas (117 countries) including Lebanon.

Brothers and Sisters, we are richly blessed by God, and we can easily find ways to serve. Let us find our own special place in this charitable and humanitarian outreach of the Catholic Church, and since there are so many places to serve, let each of us secure his/her own place.

Thank you, *Sayedna* Patriarch, for this timely reminder. □

+ Gregory J. Mansour
Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn



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Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania *Heritage Day*



(Sitting, left to right) Chris Sod, Councilman T. Brooks, and Ms. Mae Thomas. (Standing, left to right) John Koury, Dr. Raymond Khourday, Mayor T. George, Fr. Hanna Karam, and Subdeacon C. Sparks.

On Sunday, April 23, 2017, more than 120 people attended a Heritage Day at St. Anthony/St. George Maronite Church in Wilkes-Barre, Penn., hosted by the Altar and Rosary Society.

This event was a tribute to the past and a celebration honoring the future of our heritage. Families made posters, displayed items that showed their family history and culture, while listening to speakers discuss the history and influence of Lebanese immigrants to the area. It was a day of love, respect, and happiness. A traditional Arabic breakfast and *mezza* plates were served. □

Charlotte, North Carolina *Annual Hafli*



by Amanda Nassar

On May 6, 2017, the Maronite Mission of Charlotte, N.C., held its annual *hafli*/party. The annual event is one of the church's fundraisers during the year. It was a night full of dancing and laughter. Danny Achkar, singer and entertainer, along with his band, sang their hearts out to represent the Lebanese culture. The Mission's youth performed their first *dabke*, which turned out to be a big hit among the audience members.

Raffles and a live auction of a statue of Mary was the highlight of the fundraiser. Monsignor McSweeney, Pastor of Saint Matthew Parish, was one of our honored guests during the party. We all enjoyed the homemade Lebanese appetizers and desserts prepared by the parish council and an exquisite dinner. We danced the night away until midnight. Just as a *dabke* dance involves cooperation in a group of people to form a community, our community builds on each other so that every event together is a memorable one. We are so proud to have a community that stays connected to its Lebanese roots and faith. □