



The Maronite Voice



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The Pastoral Letter of Patriarch Bechara Rai on the Economy



"It is the economy!" This is the famous quote which reminded politicians in 1992 that what people want most from their government officials is that they help create good opportunities to help raise themselves out of difficult situations. Patriarch [Bechara Peter Cardina] Rai, after working tirelessly on a political solution for Lebanon, which is still wanting, turned his attention last year to the economy. In his masterful 2015 Pastoral Letter, entitled Economic Memo, he outlined, according to Catholic Social Teaching, a way forward for Lebanon that does not only depend on government officials, but on every person who desires to make a difference. The Patriarch wrote clearly and prophetically about several meaningful themes: a decent wage for employees, fairness in business practices, healthy competition, how to temper individual competitiveness with social compassion, the importance of outreach for the poor and marginalized, the role of the Church and other non-governmental initiatives in society, creative idea sharing between Lebanon and her emigrants, respect for nature and the environment, and respect for basic human rights and values, which help us see one another as we truly are - the children of one God, and brothers and sisters to one another.

This Pastoral Letter is one of our Patriarch's finest. It may be read in English on our website (www.stmaron.org/articles). The Patriarch gives us hope in the midst of the political paralysis in Lebanon, and right here in the United States of America as well. He asks us all to make a difference.

Patriarch Rai will be here in the United States from the end of June to early July. He most likely will be speaking more about this. In the meantime, we can read his Pastoral Letter and appreciate the human struggle being played out in Lebanon and throughout the world and make it our own to make a difference. □

+ Gregory Mansour
Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn

Schedule of Bishop Elias Zaidan

May 1, 2016

Pastoral Visit to St. Sharbel Church, Clinton Township, Mich.

May 2 - 3, 2016

USCCB Committee on International Justice and Peace Meeting, Washington, D.C.

May 6 - 8, 2016

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

May 13 - 15, 2016

Pastoral Visit to Our Lady of Lebanon Church, Flint, Mich.

May 19 - 22, 2016

Deacons and Subdeacons Retreat, Saint Louis, Mo.

May 24 - June 4, 2016

Year of Mercy Pilgrimage to Italy

June 4 - 20, 2016

Synod of Maronite Bishops, Bkerke, Lebanon. ☐

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- Most Reverend A. Elias Zaidan, M.L.M.

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Maronite Convention 2016

Our Lady of Lebanon Church

San Francisco, California

July 6 - 10, 2016

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

Eparchial Appointments

His Excellency Bishop Gregory Mansour, Bishop of the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn, has made the following eparchial assignments effective on June 1, 2016:

- ! **Reverend Joseph Daif Macary** from Parochial Vicar at Saint Louis Gonzaga Church in Utica, N.Y., to Administrator of Saint Theresa Church, Brockton, Mass.
- ! **Reverend Raymond Khallouf** from Administrator of Saint Sharbel Church in Newtown Square, Penn., to Parochial Vicar at Saint Anthony Church, Glen Allen, Va.
- ! **Reverend Tanios Mouanes** from Pastor of Saint Theresa Church in Brockton, Mass., to Pastor of Saint Sharbel Church, Newtown Square, Penn. ☐

From the Book Shelf

The *Miraculous Soil of Saint Rafqa*, written and illustrated by Sister Lea Lahoud, tells the story of Saint Rafqa, "a little girl who loved Jesus so much that she asked Him to share his pains: "God, why are you distant from me? Why are you leaving me alone? Why have you spared me any disease? Have you forgotten me, after I adored you?"

The Miraculous Soil of Saint Rafqa makes a perfect First Communion gift or a gift to any young person who wants to learn more about Saint Rafqa. The book is available for \$10 plus \$3 shipping from Saint Maron Publications, 4611 Sadler Road, Glen Allen, Virginia 23060 or gmsebaali@aol.com. 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. ☐

Visit of the Relics of Saint Sharbel

Brooklyn, New York



by Salma Vahdat

As the relics of St. Sharbel made their way across the country and began their journey north from Florida, the community of Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral in Brooklyn, N. Y., was buzzing with planning for the events on Saturday and Sunday, April 9 -10, 2016. It was especially exciting for those who had never traveled to Lebanon nor visited the Saint's monastery and tomb at *Annaya*. It was a "once-in-a-lifetime" opportunity to venerate a saint of the Maronite heritage on our own home ground!

Despite all the planning, the volunteers marshaled, the liturgies, veneration, benediction, homilies and testimony accomplished, the simple truth of the weekend was that faithful from everywhere poured into the Cathedral over a thirty-six hour period ... near four thousand strong. All of the organizations of the Cathedral community had their assignments to keep order and direction, offer refreshments and rest, maintain a vigil and assist in the various rituals celebrated. It was an experience of such unity in this one thing ...welcoming St. Sharbel to Brooklyn to be enjoyed by all who would come. Many Christian denominations (non-Catholic) attended as well as Haitian, Hispanic, Asian and Eastern European faithful.

I attended the evening Divine Liturgy on Saturday. The Cathedral was packed to the gills with people of every denomination and color. All were intense, solemn, seeking blessing, healing and peace. We are, I think, trying to make sense of our world, of the upheavals occurring everywhere. Peace and safety are the primary concerns of the sane among us. Feeling insignificant and helpless in the struggle we are facing, the union of people turning to prayer for evil to be banished from our midst and compassion to return to humanity is echoed to the heavens through the intercession of St. Sharbel. What a moment! Following the Divine Liturgy, a healing service of anointing with Holy Oil took place.

Following veneration, we were very fortunate to enjoy the testimony of Dafne Gutierrez, a young mother from Phoenix, Ariz., who detailed her journey from total, irreversible blindness to the restoration of her sight after venerating St. Sharbel's Relics at St. Joseph Maronite Church in Phoenix in January. The summation of her experience was "faith and confession." It was an extraordinary, unforgettable

addition to the experience. How many of us have ever witnessed in person a person cured by a saint?

Sunday evening we reluctantly gave up the relics, which continued on the trek north to Waterbury, Conn. St. Sharbel is continuing to bless and inspire all people of faith. He left us the better for it. ☐

Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania



On March 15 - 16, 2016, St. Anthony and St. George Parish, Wilkes-Barre, Penn., was honored to receive the St. Sharbel Relics. The Parish reached out to the surrounding churches and had a very positive response. Mayor Tony George, who is a member of the Order of Saint Sharbel, joined with the Knights of Lebanon, the Altar and Rosary Society, St. Louis de Montfort Academy Band, the local Hispanic Community, who came in full historic dress, and many faithful in procession from St. Anthony/St. George Church to St. George Chapel. The love and respect shown to St. Sharbel was truly heartfelt and appreciated. ☐

Clinton Township, Michigan

On the weekend of January 29 - 31, 2016, the community of St. Sharbel Maronite Church in Clinton Township, Mich., was honored to once again receive the Relics of Saint Sharbel which we hosted at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Chaldean Catholic Church in Warren, Michigan. St. Sharbel parishioners are grateful to God for giving them another opportunity to bear witness to His healing love. People young and old, from all backgrounds and religions, including Muslims, came carrying their crosses of varying degrees of suffering seeking the comfort and answer to prayers through the intercession of Saint Sharbel that only God can provide.



People witnessed a beautiful unity of differences among the Chaldean and the Maronite communities as they prayed and worshiped together in the House of God in many languages. The Holy Rosary, the Chaplet of Divine Mercy, the Chaplet of Saint Sharbel, prayers to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and Our Lady of Perpetual Help were prayed in earnest with a deep love of God. Divine Liturgies and confessions were celebrated in the presence of the Relics throughout the three days, concluding with a Healing Liturgy on Sunday evening celebrated by Chorbishop Alfred Badawi, Pastor of St. Sharbel Maronite Catholic Church, and Rev. Fadi Philip, Pastor of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Chaldean Church, with his Associate Pastor Rev. Hermiz Haddad and assisted by a number of subdeacons.

Among one of the most inspiring moments was when the choir members of Saint Sharbel joined the choir of Our Lady of Perpetual Help at the Sunday evening Liturgy and sang together hymns of praise and adoration to God. At the time of praying the Lord's Prayer, all were encouraged to pray in their own language. What a chorus we heard as the Our Father was simultaneously prayed in many different languages at the same time! We experienced the power of unity, harmony, peace and solidarity through our common love of God.

This could not have been accomplished without the collaboration and efforts of His Excellency Bishop Michael Byrnes of the Archdiocese of Detroit, Rev. Fadi Philip and Rev. Hermiz Haddad as well as all of the dedicated volunteers and staff from both parishes who exemplified great compassion and respect while serving others.

Revisit Scheduled for June 2016

Reverend Safaa Habach, Pastor of Christ the King Syriac Catholic Church, was so moved by the experience and what he witnessed that he requested to have the Relics visit his community. The long process of granting permission was approved by the coordinators of the Relics Committee and His Excellency Bishop A. Elias Zaidan, Bishop of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon; His Excellency Bishop Gregory Mansour, Bishop of the Eparchy of Saint Maron; and the Lebanese Maronite Religious Order in Lebanon. The Relics of Saint Sharbel will be venerated at Christ the King Syriac Catholic Church in Troy, Mich., on June 10 - 12, 2016. □

Brockton, Massachusetts



Parishioners, guests and visitors gathered with Fr. Tony Mouanes in front of the Relics of Saint Sharbel right before Friday's Service of Healing.

by Michelle A. Nessralla

Hundreds of parishioners, guests and visitors joined Father Tony Mouanes, on April 14 -15, 2016, to welcome and venerate the relics of Saint Sharbel at Saint Theresa Church in Brockton, Mass. Over the course of the two-day visit, people were invited to participate in reflection talks and the recitation of the Rosary led by the Maronite Sisters; *Safro* and *Ramsho* services, a healing service on Friday, and the celebration of the Divine Liturgy on both evenings. Many people found a source of quiet inspiration, gentle comfort and hushed solitude and adoration as they prayed with Saint Sharbel, knowing that he himself spent a lifetime of "faith and good works" in ascetic devotion to God and in humble service to his people.

The relics were placed immediately outside the sanctuary, to the right of the altar, in front of a statue of Saint Sharbel; Shirley Asack-Younes and Paula Samia beautifully decorated the church with fresh flowers and green plants. The Maronite Sisters sang and prayed with parishioners and shared their knowledge. Fr. Tony joyfully greeted everyone and invited them to come and pray and experience the power and strength of Saint Sharbel. □

Newtown Square, Pennsylvania

by Lillian Shahade

St. Sharbel Church in Newtown Square, Penn., had the honor of venerating Saint Sharbel Relics on March 13 - 14, 2016. The Relics of St. Sharbel are in the U.S. as part of the 50th anniversary celebration of the beatification of St. Sharbel by Pope Paul VI.

What a blessed and beautiful first day for the Visitation of the Relics. People literally came from miles away to join in the procession and the Divine Liturgy. A group from Philadelphia carefully delivered the Relics to Fr. Raymond Khallouf, Administrator, in the parking lot, where he and many of the faithful were ready to start the procession and chant hymns in honor of St. Sharbel. The voices of the choir and the faithful



Fr. Raymond Khallouf and Fr. Richard Cannuli process with the Relics of St. Sharbel.

could be heard throughout the area. What a wonderful sight to behold with parents and children carrying candles and singing. Fr. Richard Cannuli, OSA, concelebrated with Fr. Raymond Khallouf, and on the second day, Fr. Vladimir Klanichka, Pastor of St. Nicholas Ukrainian Catholic Church in Wilmington, Del., concelebrated the Divine Liturgy. One of the faithful drove three hours from Connecticut to venerate the Relics. Many were physically and emotionally moved by this experience. After the Divine Liturgy and devotion to St. Sharbel a buffet brunch was served. During the two-day veneration of the Relics, many opportunities of prayer and devotion to St. Sharbel were made available. □

San Antonio, Texas Year of Mercy Celebration



From left: Deacon Thomas Billimek, Fr. Marwan Abi-Nader, Bishop A. Elias Zaidan, and Fr. Charles Khachan.

On Sunday, April 3, 2016, Bishop A. Elias Zaidan, Bishop of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon, celebrated Divine Mercy and New Sunday with the parishioners of St. George Church during his pastoral visit to San Antonio, Texas. Father Charles Khachan, MLM, Pastor,

and Father Marwan Abi-Nader, MLM, Associate Pastor, concelebrated. Deacon Thomas Billimek assisted. In his homily, Bishop Zaidan tied together Sunday's Gospel reading regarding Thomas' doubt about Christ's Resurrection and our own need for God's Divine Mercy as revealed through Jesus' revelations to St. Faustina. Bishop Zaidan also highlighted the fact that St. George Church is one of the designated pilgrimage churches in the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon during this Jubilee Year of Mercy. Following the liturgy there was a luncheon reception honoring Bishop Zaidan and an opportunity for him to greet members of the St. George parish family.

A Lenten Season Focused on Mercy

by Regina Aune

For St. George Parish in San Antonio, Texas, the Lenten season is always a special time, one that provides the parishioners with ways to reflect upon, renew and deepen their commitment to the Lord and bring them closer together as a faith community. For the past several years, the parish has marked the Friday evenings of Lent with Adoration of the Cross followed by a Lenten potluck dinner and a movie about one of the Church's saints such as Mother Teresa, St. Augustine, or Pope St. John Paul II. Additionally, the parish has a one-day retreat during one of the weekends of Lent. In keeping with that tradition and wanting to respond fully to Pope Francis' request that March 4 - 5, be designated "24 Hours for the Lord" the parish combined the Lenten retreat with its celebration of the "24 Hours for the Lord."

Beginning on Friday, March 4, there was continuous adoration of the Blessed Sacrament until 5:00 pm Saturday, March 5. Following the Stations of the Cross on Friday, Reconciliation was available throughout the evening. In addition to the parish priests, several priests from neighboring parishes assisted in providing parishioners with the opportunity to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Each parish organization had a designated hour of adoration, and the church was open throughout the night for anyone who wished to come and pray. On Saturday morning, the parish retreat, which was focused on mercy, began at 9:30 a.m. and concluded at 3:00 p.m. with the prayer of the Chaplet of Divine Mercy.

Mindful of this year as the Jubilee Year of Mercy and desiring to reflect mercy in their actions as a parish family, the Ladies' Altar Society suggested to Father Charles Khachan, Pastor, that throughout Lent the parish collect clothing, non-perishable foods, and baby items to give to those in need. Bins were placed in the church foyer for donations. St. George partnered with St. Brigid Roman Catholic parish in ensuring that the food and clothing collected were distributed to those in need. Items collected were taken to St. Brigid's to be distributed through their food pantry and the St. Vincent de Paul Society. Over the course of Lent, St. George donated 5,400 pounds of non-perishable food items and \$3,000 worth of clothing and baby items to be given to needy families.

Because mercy does not end with Lent and Easter, the parish has decided to continue to collect food, clothing, and baby items throughout the year in order to continue to reflect mercy in action. The items collected will be gathered and taken to St. Brigid's the last weekend of each month for distribution to families in need.

Each Sunday at the end of the Divine Liturgy the St. George parish family prays Pope Francis' prayer for the Jubilee

Year of Mercy and through its donations of food and clothing items for the needy parishioners are trying to be merciful as the Father is merciful. ☐

Las Vegas, Nevada Youth Retreat

by Juliette Hanache

It was an honor to host one of the 2016 Youth Retreats at St. Sharbel Church in Las Vegas, Nev. These retreats for the youth are a blessing, and Fr. Gary George, Youth Director, really touches their hearts and souls. I witnessed these young people pain and struggles that they are going through being transformed. They are finding peace and love by talking and sharing these experiences with Fr. Gary and each other.



St. Sharbel Parish has doubled the number of youth attending these retreats and that indicates the need. St. Sharbel Parish would like to thank Bishop A. Elias Zaidan, Bishop of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon, Father Nadim Abou Zeid, Pastor, and Father Gary George for making it happen and caring for the youth. They are the future of this church and we need to keep them close to God and the Church.

The following paragraphs are some of the youths' experiences with the retreat, in their own words:

Jason Mounnes

The 2016 MYO Retreat at St. Sharbel Maronite Catholic Church transformed many young hearts of various individuals. Throughout the weekend, the attendees of the event learned more about being merciful in the Year of Mercy, as declared by the Pope. Confession served to be the most impactful part of the retreat because it helped cleanse many broken hearts throughout the organization. Father Gary is an astounding leadership advisor who empowers young people to be the best version of themselves despite the suffering and corrupted world in which we all live. His stories about his past encouraged us to live a more holy life in the presence of Christ. In conclusion, this weekend can be considered one of the most powerful spiritual events any young Maronite should attend in order to rediscover their faith.

Tatiana Alhwayek

The Youth Retreat that was held in our Church in Las Vegas this year has to have been one of the most eye-opening and exciting experiences of my life. Father Gary is very passionate about what he tells us and his passion inspires me to open up more. He is aware that he is talking to an audience that is eighteen and younger, so he makes his stories very

interesting and he is very good at keeping us awake and interested. The retreat is something I recommend all youth to attend.

Natalya Dagher

This being only our second retreat, Father Gary and all of the individuals of the Maronite youth organization have taught us so much. Last year being Faith and this year being Mercy, this year's youth retreat themes have inspired us to be more faithful in God and rely on him in times of difficulties. We have learned that everything happens for a reason and although we may not know what that reason is, God does. He has a plan for all of us and knows exactly what we need even if it's not necessarily what we want. Thought the retreat, I have learned more about my faith and how to apply the gifts of the Holy Spirit in my everyday life. I have also learned that the presence of our family and friends are worth way more than what money can buy. I made so many new friends this retreat. Everyone is so incredibly nice and accepting, and I couldn't ask for a better set of people in my life! I am looking forward to the next retreat and reuniting with all of my friends as well as make some new friends!

Rosie Hayek

"Do not say God is in your heart, say you are in God's heart" -Gibran Khalil Gibran. As we gathered at the annual Maronite Youth Retreat we were given the opportunity to truly understand the reasoning behind our faith. With the theme being "mercy" this past gathering, one lesson that truly stood out was the idea that being merciful was to forgive one even if he is not deserving of that forgiveness, just as Jesus did for us as he was crucified on the cross. Forgiving all that were around him, despite the fact that they were putting him to his death. Throughout the weekend, Father Gary took the time to show us how to be exactly that, Merciful, and emphasized that no matter what the circumstance, we must have faith and truly believe. And thanks to him we now know how to be in God's heart. ☐

Houston, Texas Annual Family Retreat

by Alberto G. Tohmé

For the eighth consecutive year, the Annual Family Retreat of Our Lady of the Cedars Church in Houston, Texas, which took place at Circle Lake Retreat Center on April 15-17, 2016, was a big success. The main goals of this annual retreat are to promote bonding within and between families in our parish, and spiritual renewal and growth for parents and kids alike. This year's theme was Divine Mercy: Your Face, Lord, Do I Seek (Ps 27: 8b).

As in previous years, the retreat program offered a good mix of spiritual, family, and fun activities. On the spiritual front, adults participated in morning and afternoon workshops centered around the main theme of our retreat: finding the face of God in our lives. In the morning workshop, our Associate Pastor, Fr. George Bouchaaya, M.L.M., challenged the adults to put God on trial, with a mock trial complete with two teams presenting the cases for and against God's mercy and a panel of judges to challenge these cases. In the afternoon session, adults and teenagers (ages 13-18) reflected on the face of their own



family: mercy or anger, especially that the family is an expression of God’s love. During this workshop, participants were challenged with reflection on the role and value of the Beatitudes in their family life. Children participated in their own interactive workshops in four separate age groups. All workshops for kids covered the topic of God’s mercy and discussed similar questions as the adults had within an age-specific context.

Besides workshops, families bonded together at the many attractions of the center including canoeing and fishing, during meals catered by a fellow parishioner, evening entertainment by our own church choir members, and at nightly bonfires where s’mores kept everyone happy. On Sunday morning, Fr. George led families in a Divine Mercy Chaplet prayer, and then celebrated the Divine Liturgy. At multiple spiritual events during the retreat, we prayed and reflected on a prayer of mercy adapted from the writings of St. Maria Faustina Kowalska.

Once again this year, our family retreat helped us reflect on our relationship with God and ways in which we can become more merciful in our family life. Our family retreat provides a forum for enriching and renewing our spirituality and to highlight the importance of our mission of evangelization. □

Dartmouth, Massachusetts **Retreat with Star of the East Parish**

by Sister Natalie Sayde

During the weekend of April 8-10, 2016, the Maronite Servants of Christ the Light facilitated a retreat for twelve ladies from the Maronite parish of Our Lady Star of the East, Pleasantville, N.J., at the Mother of Light Convent in Dartmouth, Mass. The theme of the weekend’s retreat was the life and spirituality of Our Blessed Mother, Mary, depicted vividly in the four different mysteries of the Rosary.

The Blessed Mother holds a special place of significance in the Maronite Tradition, and she is dear to the heart of every Maronite. Mother Marla Marie set the tone of the retreat by asking the ladies to reflect on what Mary means to them and why is she special in their lives. Many of them

replied with a beautiful faith and simplicity that she is our Mother who holds our hands and leads us to her Son.

During the retreat, Mother Marla Marie gave presentations on the Joyful and Luminous Mysteries to help the ladies to meditate while praying the Rosary. Mother Marla Marie emphasized that the Rosary is first and foremost a meditation, a means of contemplating the life of Christ while journeying with Mary. The women were guided in a holy hour of adoration before the Holy Mysteries in the convent chapel. On the second day, the holy hour of adoration was one centered on the prayer of healing and forgiveness, as each lady was encouraged to lay her burdens at the feet of Jesus.

Each evening, they watched the movie, “Mary of Nazareth” which depicts the life of Mary from her childhood through the Resurrection of Jesus. The film vividly captures the essence of Mary’s profound faith and trust in God amidst the great mysteries that she lived with as the Mother of the Messiah. Many of the ladies were deeply moved, as they each shared on what captured them in the film.

The days of retreat were interspersed with prayer, presentations, recreation and relaxation, Divine Liturgy and confession. All of the women had a wonderful, rejuvenating time, and thanked the Sisters for helping them in their prayer life and spirituality. Some said that their lives had been changed by this retreat and they are returning to their homes as new women.

“Mary of Nazareth is the woman of a full and total ‘Here I am’ to the Divine Will. In her yes, even when faced with the loss of her Son, we find complete and profound beatitude.”
- Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI.

If any are interested in holding a similar weekend retreat for the ladies of their parish, please contact Mother Marla Marie at (508) 996-1753 or at sister@maroniteservants.org. □

Food For Thought

All are called to love and cherish family life, for families are not a problem; they are first and foremost an opportunity.

Pope Francis, April 25, 2016

Akron, Ohio *Right to Life Banquet*



Dr. Aveda King with Msgr. William Bonczewski and young adults from Our Lady of the Cedars Church at the Right to Life banquet.

by Msgr. William Bonczewski

On Saturday, April 2, 2016, six members of the Young Adults group from Our Lady of the Cedars Maronite Church in Fairlawn [Akron], Ohio, enjoyed a learning experience at the annual banquet hosted by the Right to Life of North East Ohio. The young adults commented that the buffet meal was very good and the talks were very informative. The entire group was grateful to attend the event.

Executive Director Denise Leipold served as the Master of Ceremonies and spoke about the need for ongoing formation for volunteers who do sidewalk counseling. She commented on the great volume of new information that comes out on a weekly basis and the importance of the weekly newsletter to keep everyone up to date. In her information package for that evening she listed six other agencies in the area who assist pregnant mothers with needs. These groups do not only talk about not choosing abortion, they provide all that is needed for the mothers to keep their babies. Every baby is precious.

The keynote speaker, Dr. Aveda King, is very involved in the Pro-Life Movement. She is a pastoral associate and Director of African American Outreach for Priests for Life and Gospel of Life Ministries. She is also a voice for the Silent No More Awareness Campaign. She is in much demand as a speaker at Pro-Life gatherings everywhere, and she gave a dynamic and convincing presentation.

Among her meaningful stories was her story about the time her own mother was pregnant with her. The mother went to her uncle, Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., and told him that she was pregnant and was intending to have an abortion. Dr. King's response was, we do not believe in abortion. He went on to tell her that he had a dream three years before that one of his family would be born with fair skin and reddish hair. When this little girl entered the world several months later, she was the one in his dream. Her skin

color was light and her hair was reddish. What a gift she has become in our time and truly a heroic defender of life. Thank goodness her mother listened to her uncle and her life was spared.

At the end of the program Dr. King welcomed the Young Adults group for a photo with her. The group of Young Adults were also a special witness to the three hundred or more guests in attendance that evening. ☐

Cincinnati, Ohio *NAM Retreat*



by Rose AbiRadi, NAM Chapter President

St. Anthony of Padua's NAM retreat was held on Saturday, March 19, 2016. This Lenten Retreat has been an annual event, sponsored by the Cincinnati, Ohio, NAM Chapter for many years. Mr. Joe Farris, the national coordinator for *Christ Renews His Parish* for the Dynamic Catholic Institute, was the retreat facilitator. The retreat theme for the day was: "But now we must celebrate and rejoice because your brother was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found" (Luke 15:32). The retreat, attended by more than thirty people, was spiritually uplifting and created a stronger bond among participants. The Mystery of Reconciliation was received by many. The Hosanna Sunday Divine Liturgy followed, on the Feast Day of St. Joseph, during which time Fr. George Hajj, Pastor, presented Mrs. Ann Nader the Apostolic Blessing from His Holiness Pope Francis in recognition of her many years of dedication to St. Anthony of Padua Church, St. Joseph Sodality, and the NAM Chapter.

The St. Anthony of Padua Cincinnati, Ohio, NAM Chapter is the only active chapter of the National Apostolate of Maronites in both eparchies. This retreat is one of many activities that the NAM Chapter sponsors during the year. ☐

MYO National Retreat

The Maronite Youth Organization (MYO) Annual Retreat will take place July 16 - 21, 2016 at:

St. Vincent College
300 Fraser Purchase Rd.
Latrobe, PA 15650-2667

The cost is \$400 per child. For more information please ask your pastor. ☐

Maronites Attending World Youth Day in Poland

**MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
FOR THE THIRTY-FIRST WORLD YOUTH DAY
2016**

**"Blessed are the merciful,
for they shall obtain mercy" (Mt 5:7)**



by Sr. Therese Maria Touma, MSCL

Our Maronite Eparchies in the U.S. have nearly thirty youth including some families attending World Youth Day (WYD) in Poland July 23 - August 2, 2016. These pilgrims will undertake this exciting journey joining with Pope Francis and tens of thousands of youth from around the world. World Youth Days are an opportunity for Catholic youth to witness and celebrate the universality and beauty of the Catholic faith. Fittingly, in this Jubilee Year of Mercy, the theme for this WYD is: "Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy" (Matthew 5:7).

The youth and families that have registered come from Maronite parishes in North Carolina, California, Florida, Washington, Virginia, Pennsylvania, and Massachusetts. A number of these youth were granted scholarships from the Eparchies to help fund their travel expense. Father Rudy Wakim, Pastor of Our Lady of Victory in Pittsburgh, and Sister Therese Maria from the Maronite Servants of Christ the Light will accompany the group as spiritual advisors. Join us in praying for all the chaperones and youth attending WYD from our parishes. If any person is interested in attending World Youth Day with our group there is still time to register. Please contact Subdeacon Chuck and Marie Van Heusen, coordinators, at 910-988-2421.

Below is an excerpt of the official WYD USA Prayer:

God Our Father,

Be with us on our pilgrim journey of faith.
Give us the grace and courage to step forward
in faith and hope on the road ahead.

Lord Jesus,

Open our eyes to see your face in all those we encounter.
Open our ears to hear your voice in those who are often
ignored.
Open our hearts that we might be faithful disciples of
mercy and truth.

Holy Spirit,

Transform us. Empower us to give of ourselves to the poor;
to welcome the lost; to forgive those who hurt us;
to comfort those who suffer and are marginalized.

Bless those who travel on mission from the United States of
America to Krakow in Poland, Land of Divine Mercy,
to join the universal Church for World Youth Day.

Bless, too, those who celebrate stateside, united in faith and
joy. ... Amen. ☐

Schedule of Bishop Gregory Mansour

May 2, 2016

Presbyteral Council Meeting, Chancery Office,
Brooklyn, N.Y.

May 3, 2016

Ordination of Bishop-Elect Checcio, Metuchen, N.J.
7th Annual Eparchial Benefit Dinner, Manhattan, N.Y.

May 6 - 7, 2016

Ordination of Peter Hobeika to Diaconate, Utica, N.Y.

May 8, 2016

Mother's Day and Visit of the Relics of St. Sharbel,
St. Ann Church, Troy, N.Y.

May 12, 2016

Nurse for a Day, Maimonides Hospital, Brooklyn,
N.Y.

May 14, 2016

Annual Festival, St. Maron Church, Philadelphia,
Penn.

May 15, 2016

Feast of St. John Paul II, Sleepy Hollow, N.Y.

May 22, 2016

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

May 26 - 31, 2016

Family Visit, Flint, Mich.

June 1, 2016

Anniversary of the Sisters of Life, Saint Patrick
Cathedral, Manhattan, N.Y.

June 2 - 19, 2016

Annual Synod of Maronite Bishops, Bkerke,
Lebanon. ☐

the Deadline is... **Deadline** for next month's issue of
The Maronite Voice is May 25, 2016.

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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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. ☐

A Brief Reflection on Human Dignity

So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them (Genesis 1:27).

Introduction

The challenge of affirming the dignity of all human beings is possibly the greatest struggle in our world today. The ancient horrors of chattel slavery and child infanticide are now embodied in new forms of indentured servitude, abuse and exploitation of children, abortion, and the growing legalization in Western nations of euthanasia. The Christian today finds himself or herself in a world of myriad competing ideologies as concerns human nature, gender identity, and human dignity. In Western society rationalism and secularism have replaced Christian ethics and moral teaching with emotivism (the ethics of personal feelings and emotion), relativism (the ethics that deny universal principles and absolutes), and the pursuit of rights grounded not in faith and reason, but often in the self centered desire to do whatever one wants to do without question. What is lost, in losing sight of Christ, is the truth of human dignity.

Life in Christ

"If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory" (Colossians 3:1-4).

The Christian affirmation of human dignity is essentially not a question of ethics, morals, or rights. The Church never ceases to remind us that we are made new in Christ; simply put, our identity, nature, and dignity is a question of Being, whose answer lies in the Word who became flesh, Jesus Christ. As St. Paul proclaims, our "life is hidden with Christ in God," not in the futile attempt to define humanity by any other means. We cannot attain moral perfection, we will never collect enough rights to satiate our thirst for

total unbridled freedom, we cannot continue to question our God-created gender, as if we can re-fashion ourselves more perfectly than the Creator. No, our lives are hidden with Christ in God, meaning our lives are wrapped in God's love, and it is the Divine Love that constitutes our identity and dignity.

St. Peter Chrysologus (380-450) eloquently expressed our human dignity as rooted in Christ. He wrote: "He who made man without generation from pure clay made man again and was born from a pure body (Mary). The hand that assumed clay to make our flesh deigned to assume a body for our salvation. That the Creator is in his creature and God is in the flesh bringing dignity to humanity... " (Sermon 148).

The Second Vatican Council on Human Dignity

The Declaration on Religious Freedom, *Dignitatis Humanae* (Human Dignity), promulgated on December 7, 1965, was the last official topic addressed by Second Vatican Council. While considered revolutionary by some for its unwavering proclamation of religious freedom, it actually expresses in modern nuances the same understanding of religious freedom taught in the Encyclical *Sublimis Dei* of Pope Paul III in 1537. That called for an evangelization of the Native peoples of the newly discovered Americas, An evangelization that would respect their freedom and dignity in accepting or rejecting the Gospel, without fear of coercion and possible enslavement.

The Council Fathers make it quite clear through *Dignitatis Humanae* "that the human person has a right to religious freedom" (paragraph 2). Can it be more prophetic today than when it was written? In 1965, the Council Fathers had in mind primarily the loss of religious freedom in the Communist block of nations. Today, however, we find a less overt but just as virulent movement against religious freedom in

the Constitutional Democracies of the Western world. The anti-religious freedom movements of today seek to cast the image of traditional religious values on the human person as archaic and bigoted. They propagate this message through the power of the media and social technology. Along with this they have discovered how to by-pass the slow deliberative process of legislative democracy by making direct attacks upon the "law courts," to refigure the Constitutional foundations of society, so that they might reflect their new morality of non-religious values. (For a comprehensive examination of this topic as it relates to the unborn child, I would recommend *The Ethics of Pregnancy, Abortion and Childbirth: Exploring Moral Choices in Childbearing*, by Helen Watt, Routledge Press, 2016)

The Pastoral Constitution On The Church In The Modern World, *Gaudium Et Spes*, which was promulgated by His Holiness Pope Paul VI on December 7, 1965, addressed also the dignity of human beings in the modern world. In acknowledging our shared humanity, those who have must care for those who have not: *"Therefore, there must be made available to all men everything necessary for leading a life truly human, such as food, clothing, and shelter; the right to choose a state of life freely and to found a family, the right to education, to employment..."* (paragraph 26).

The Council reminds us that Human Dignity is not merely a concept but a call to action, an integral part of the social doctrine and ministry of the Church. Modern men and women are convinced of the truth not only by words but especially by deeds; the members of Christ's Body, the Church, must simultaneously preach the message of human dignity and minister to others with Christ-like love. *"Coming down to practical and particularly urgent consequences, this council lays stress on reverence for man; everyone must consider his every neighbor without*

THE ORDER OF SAINT SHARBEL



Perpetual Members

★ **Elizabeth Boackle**
*St. Elias Church,
Birmingham, Ala.*

★ **Vivian Akel and Adonis El-Asmar**
*Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral,
Brooklyn, N.Y.*

Upgraded from Annual
★ **James Jowedy**
*St. Anthony Church, Danbury,
Conn.*

Annual Members

★ **Jessica Bou Akar**
*St. Elias Church,
Birmingham, Ala.*

★ **Diane Ashkouti, William Abdella, Tina Marie Abdella, Deacon Gerald Zukauckas, Sharon Zukauckas, and Simon Touma**
St. Joseph Church, Atlanta, Ga.

★ **Tarek Fadel, Marina Fadel, and Mary Lou Abdella** (*deceased, enrolled by her daughter Sharon Zukauckas*)
St. John Paul II, Westchester, N.Y.

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 U.S.A.

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

exception as another self, taking into account first of all his or her life and the means necessary to living it with dignity, so as not to imitate the rich man who had no concern for the poor man Lazarus” (paraphrase 27).

St. John Paul II on Human Dignity

In 1995, His Holiness John Paul II, published his encyclical letter *On The Value And Inviolability Of Human Life - Evangelium Vitae* (The Gospel of Life). He desired to remind the faithful that to treat another human being without his proper dignity does even more injury to the one who is acting in a less than humane fashion; because in the process of hurting or mistreating another person, one actually devalues his own human nature:

Whatever is opposed to life itself, such as any type of murder, genocide, abortion, euthanasia or willful self-destruction, whatever violates the integrity of the human person, such as mutilation, torments inflicted on body or mind, attempts to coerce the will itself; whatever insults human dignity, such as subhuman living conditions, arbitrary imprisonment, deportation, slavery, prostitution, the selling of human beings; as well as disgraceful working conditions, where human beings are treated as mere tools for profit, rather than as free and responsible persons; all these things and others of their like are infamies indeed. They poison human society, but they do more harm to those who practice them than those who suffer from the injury - St. John Paul II.

St. John Paul turned to the thought of St. Irenaeus of Lyon (130 - 202AD), who expressed the uniqueness of humanity in his words, "*Gloria Dei est vivens homo*" (Man, living man, is the glory of God.) The Holy Father, St. John Paul, elaborated on these words, writing: *The life which God gives man is quite different from the life of all other living creatures, in as much as man, although formed from the dust of the earth, is a manifestation of God in the world, a sign of his presence, a trace of his glory... Man has been given a sublime dignity, based on the intimate bond which unites him to his Creator:*

in man there shines forth a reflection of God himself."

Conclusion

Modern Catholic Social Teaching began with the defense of the laborer in *Rerum Novarum* (1891) of Pope Leo XIII. It has continued in the Magisterial teachings of every Pontiff since, and especially is witnessed to in the teachings of the Second Vatican Council and by Conferences of Bishops all over the world. At the very heart of the Church's teaching is the affirmation of the dignity of the human person, from conception until death.

"Even politics, important as it is, is a poor tool for changing human hearts. Nations change when people change. And people change through the witness of other people—people like each of you ... You make the future. You build it stone by stone with the choices you make. So choose life. Defend its dignity and witness its meaning and hope to others. And if you do, you'll discover in your own life what it means to be fully human" (Address given by The Most Rev. Charles J. Chaput, O.F.M. Cap., Archbishop of Philadelphia, Penn., for LifeNews, University of Pennsylvania, November 17, 2011).

Ultimately, human hearts will not be swayed by political agendas, laws, or rhetoric, but by the commitment and actions of Christians - living fully the commandment of Our Lord to "love one another." □

Rev. David A. Fisher
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania



Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn

Reviewed and Revised Policy on Sexual Abuse of Minors by Priests or Deacons

The Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn publishes its reviewed and revised Policy on Sexual Abuse of Minors by Priests or Deacons. The same policy is also available online at http://www.stmaron.org/policy_sexual_abuse.html. The Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon has its own policy and it is also available online at eparchy.org

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

Definitions

Sexual Abuse of a minor includes sexual molestation or sexual exploitation of a minor; the acquisition, possession or distribution of pornographic images of a minor; and other behavior by which an adult uses a minor as an object of sexual gratification.

For purposes of this policy, a minor shall be construed to include anyone who has not attained the age of eighteen (18) years as well as anyone who lacks the use of reason regardless of his or her actual chronological age.

Response

The healing of victims, their families and their community from the effects of sexual abuse by church leaders begins when the allegations of such abuses are received. When victims decide to disclose the abuse, it is important that the response they receive be compassionate and non-judgmental.

Anyone receiving an allegation of abuse will respond in a pastoral, supportive manner, leaving investigative concerns to those who serve in that role.

An allegation will be received without initial judgment as to the truth of the complaint. No intimation of blame will be made by the initial recipient of information. Individuals making allegations will be supported positively in their decision to disclose.

The Eparchial Bishop will designate a competent person to coordinate assistance for the immediate pastoral care of persons who claim to have been sexually abused when they were minors by priests or deacons. This Victim Assistance Coordinator will assess and respond to the immediate and long-term needs of the alleged victim and family, the alleged offender, parish communities and others that are affected by the disclosure of sex abuse.

The Victim Assistance Coordinator will serve as a consultant to the Eparchial Bishop and the Review Board regarding the treatment needs of clients.

Any individual wishing to report a claim of sexual abuse is encouraged to contact the Victim Assistance Coordinator, Rosanne Solomon, at:

PO Box 189, Boston, MA 02137

Tel: (617) 327-1317, RosanneSolomon@gmail.com

Review Board

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

Board Functions

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

Membership

The Review Board, established by the Eparchial Bishop, will be composed of five members of outstanding integrity and good judgment in full communion with the Church. The majority of the board will be lay persons not in the employ of the Eparchy. These will include:

- A person with particular expertise in the treatment of sexual abuse of minors
- A parent
- A parish pastor/administrator
- An attorney
- An individual with investigative experience

The Eparchial Bishop may deem it desirable that the Promoter of Justice participate in the meetings of the Review Board. The Vicar General and Eparchial Attorney participate in the annual meeting of the Review Board but are not considered members of the Board.

Appointment

Members appointed by the Eparchial Bishop will serve a five (5) year term.

All Review Board members will adhere to the rules of strict confidentiality with regard to all deliberations and information received.

Reporting

In all cases of alleged or suspected or known child abuse committed by a priest or deacon, the Eparchy will comply with all applicable civil laws in respect to reporting the

allegations and will cooperate with civil authorities in the investigation.

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

Investigation

When an allegation of sexual abuse of a minor by a priest or deacon is received, a preliminary investigation in accordance with canon law will be initiated and conducted promptly and objectively (Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches [CCE0], c. 1468). The purpose of the Eparchial investigation is to ensure that the Eparchial Bishop has a complete, thorough, and accurate report of the alleged incident. The investigation will be conducted by an investigator appointed by the Review Board. The investigator will report his findings in writing to the Eparchial bishop and to the Review Board.

The accused will immediately be called by the Eparchial Bishop or his delegate and be made aware of the allegation against him and the identity of the accuser. The accused will remain in his position until the initial investigation is completed, which is to be done as expeditiously as possible.

All appropriate steps shall be taken to protect the reputation of the accused and the accuser during the investigation. The accused will be encouraged to retain the assistance of civil and canonical counsel and will be promptly notified of the results of the investigation.

When there is sufficient evidence that sexual abuse of a minor has occurred, the Eparchial Bishop will notify the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. The Eparchial Bishop shall then apply the precautionary measures mentioned in CCEO, c. 1473 that is, remove the *accused* from the sacred ministry or from any ecclesiastical office or function. The Eparchial Bishop may impose or prohibit residence in a given place or territory, and prohibit the public participation in the Most Holy Eucharist pending the outcome of the process.

In every case involving canonical penalties, the processes provided for in canon law will be observed, and the various provisions of canon law will be considered¹. Unless the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, having been notified, calls the case to itself because of special circumstances, the Eparchial Bishop will follow the directions of the Congregation on how to proceed². If the case would otherwise be barred by prescription, because sexual abuse of a minor is a grave offense, the Eparchial Bishop

¹ Cf. *Canonical Delicts Involving Sexual Misconduct and Dismissal from the Clerical State*, 1995; Letter from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, May 18, 2001.

² Article 16, of the 2010 Revised Procedural Norms for the *Moto proprio Sacramentorum sanctitatis tutela*.

shall apply to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith for a dispensation from the prescription, while indicating appropriate pastoral reasons.

For the sake of due process, the accused is encouraged to retain the assistance of civil and canonical counsel. When necessary, the Eparchy will supply canonical counsel to the cleric.

The Eparchy will conduct a judicial process of the case according to the appropriate canons and practice of the Church. The accused may be requested to seek, and may be urged voluntarily to comply with, an appropriate medical and psychological evaluation at a facility mutually acceptable to the Eparchy and the accused.

In every instance, the Eparchy will advise and support a person's right to make a report to public authorities.

Ministry/Service

No priest or deacon removed from an Eparchial position for allegations of sexual abuse of a minor will return to ministry or service before their case is assessed and fitness is determined by the Eparchial Bishop in consultation with the Review Board. The safety of children is the paramount consideration governing the formation of recommendations regarding the future ministry of one accused of abuse.

An allegation of sexual abuse of a minor made against a priest or deacon will be deemed established if, with due respect for the provisions of canon law:

- ! The accused individual admits to conduct defined by this policy as sexual abuse.
- ! A civil court of criminal law finds the accused guilty of a crime that consists of conduct defined by this policy as sexual abuse, or the accused pleads guilty or no contest to a crime that consists of conduct defined by this policy as sexual abuse.
- ! The appropriate ecclesiastical tribunal finds the accused guilty of the crime.

When an act of sexual abuse by a priest or deacon is admitted or is established after an appropriate process in accord with canon law, the offending priest or deacon will be removed from ecclesiastical ministry, not excluding dismissal from the clerical state, if the case so warrants.

At all times, the Eparchial Bishop has the executive power of governance, through an Administrative act, to remove an offending priest or deacon from office, to remove or restrict his faculties, and to limit the exercise of his ministry. For the sake of the common good and observing the provisions of canon law, the Eparchial Bishop shall exercise this power of governance to ensure that any Priest or Deacon who has committed an act of sexual abuse of a minor as described above shall not continue in the active ministry.

The priest or deacon may at any time request a dispensation from the obligations of the clerical state. In exceptional cases, the Eparchial Bishop may request of the Holy Father the dismissal of the priest or deacon from the clerical state *ex officio*, even without the consent of the priest or deacon.

Care will always be taken to protect the rights of all parties involved, particularly those of the person claiming to have been sexually abused and the person against whom the charge has been made. When an accusation has proved to be unfounded, every step possible will be taken by the Eparchial Bishop to restore the good name of the priest or deacon falsely accused.

No priest or deacon who has committed an act of sexual abuse of a minor will be transferred for ministerial assignment to another eparchy/diocese or religious province.

Before a priest or deacon is transferred for residence to another eparchy/diocese or religious province, the Eparchial Bishop shall forward, in a confidential manner, to the local bishop or religious superior of the proposed place of residence any and all information concerning any act of sexual abuse of a minor and any other information indicating that he has been or may be a danger to children or young people.

The Eparchial Bishop will not consider receiving a priest or deacon into the Eparchy from another jurisdiction without previously obtaining the necessary information regarding the moral and civil record of the priest or deacon in question.

Prevention

The Eparchy of Saint Maron has promulgated a Code of Ethics and Integrity in Ministry to be adhered to all persons in positions of trust in the Eparchy.

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

Internet and Social Media Guidelines for the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn

The following are a list of general guidelines to cover the use of the Internet websites and other social media sites. These guidelines, along with the recently issued United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) Social Media Guidelines <http://www.usccb.org/comm/socialmediaguidelines.shtml>, should cover most situations faced by any Pastor Administrator.

- The use of official parish websites and other social media platforms are entrusted to the confidence of the Pastor/Administrator and the Bishop. It is important to remember that once something is placed on the Internet, there are no deletions; it will remain forever in cyberspace. Thus, the Pastor/Administrator or his delegate should keep close watch over all postings to

ensure that none of them is harmful, embarrassing, dangerous, or illegal.

- Any unofficial websites associated with the parish must carry a disclaimer reflecting that postings are not the expressed opinion of the Parish, Eparchy or the Magisterium of the Catholic Church.
- The official website of the parish must reflect the dignity of the Church, thus web-hosting companies, paid for by advertising, should be avoided. The Church has no control over the advertising that could, at a minimum, reflect badly on the dignity of the Church.
- Due to privacy concerns, only business (not personal) accounts may be established on all social media platforms. That is because business accounts do not have an open wall and only allow for posting by the administrator. The Pastor/Administrator or a designated responsible adult should be the only administrator and the account should carry a disclaimer.
- No photos of children taken in a private setting should be posted on a parish or personal website or on other social media sites. Photos of children taken in public settings should be posted according to the desires of the parents.
- Church personnel are not to use Church computers for personal social media sites. These sites raise numerous security and privacy concerns for the Church. The Pastor/Administrator is to make sure there are enough filters in place to prevent access to improper and unwanted material.
- Use by Church personnel of a Church computer to access, view and/or download pornography of any kind is strictly forbidden.
- Use by Church personnel of a Church computer to access, view and/or download pornographic images of a person under the age of eighteen (18) years or of a person who lacks the use of reason regardless of his or her chronological age shall constitute grounds for dismissal. The Pastor/Administrator shall immediately report such conduct to the appropriate civil authority for investigation and/or prosecution, as well as to the Vicar General or Eparchial Bishop.
- Although the Eparchy cannot monitor or control personal accounts, in the context of one's use of social media (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc.), priests, deacons, religious, employees and volunteers should be mindful that postings and other statements made in these forums can be seen as connected to both their professional role and the Church. □



San Francisco, California, Prepares for the 53rd Maronite Convention

With the convention a short two months away, the committees are hard at work preparing for their guests. This year's convention starts on July 6, 2016, and everyone has been working on a full schedule of informative and inspiring workshops, colorful excursions and fun events for the evenings' entertainment.

Workshops

The Role of Christianity in the Making of Higher Education in Lebanon

Thursday, July 7, 2016: 10:30 a.m. – 12:00 noon, Mr. Joseph Jabbra, Ph.D.

Dr. Jabbra is the President of the Lebanese American University (LAU). Prior to his role at LAU, Dr. Jabbra served as Academic Vice President at Loyola Marymount University (LMU) in Los Angeles, California. Dr. Jabbra earned his law degree at the Université Saint-Joseph in Beirut, Lebanon, and a Ph.D. in Political Science from the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C. He is the author and co-author of twelve books.

Connecting the Dots with Faith

Thursday, July 7, 2016: 3:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m., Ms. Nina Kouyoumdjian

Ms. Nina Kouyoumdjian is the Principal of Cota Capital. Prior to joining Cota, she was a Financial Analyst at Google, where she was responsible for a \$1.8 billion business. She has vast international experience, including London, New York, San Francisco, Dubai, and Istanbul. Nina also founded HIVE, the first Armenian tech incubator. Nina received her B.A. in Government from Harvard University, and was one of six recipients of the Michael C. Rockefeller Fellowship.

Maronite Divine Liturgies and Services

Friday, July 8, 2016: 10:30 a.m. – 12:00 noon, Archbishop Youssef Soueif

Archbishop Youssef Soueif, Maronite Archbishop of Cyprus, succeeded Archbishop Boutros Gemayel. President of The Patriarchal Liturgical Commission, President of Caritas Cyprus, Member of the Council of European Catholic Bishops (CCEE). Archbishop Soueif published more than fifteen books about the Maronite Liturgy.

Orchestral Percussion and Drum Kit

Friday, July 8, 2016: 10:30 a.m. – 12:00 noon, Mr. Rony Barrak

Mr. Rony Barrak is a famous Lebanese composer and musician renowned for his great talent with the *darbuka*. At the age of 17, Rony won the Gold Medal on LBCI television station in competition for talented young musicians. He has performed with some of the biggest names in Jazz, and has played with philharmonic orchestras all over the world. His

style encompasses a broad range of music, mixing Latin music, jazz, funk, and percussion.

Prayer and Entrepreneurship

Friday, July 8, 2016: 3:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m., Mr. Ramy Adeeb

Mr. Ramy Adeeb is the founder of Snip.it, which was acquired by Yahoo for \$10 million. Ramy holds an M.S. in Computer Science from Harvard University, and an MBA from Stanford University. At Tellme Networks, Ramy led the enterprise engineering group and oversaw development of more than thirty products. Ramy is the author of a number of patents in VoiceXML application development. Tellme Networks was sold to Microsoft in 2007 for \$800 million.

The Role of Faith in Successful Ventures

Saturday, July 9, 2016: 10:30 a.m. – 12:00 noon, Dr. Roger Hajjar

Dr. Roger Hajjar is the founder of Prysm. He has pioneered Laser Phosphor Display (LPD) technology. Dr. Hajjar has registered more than seventy-five U.S. and worldwide patents.

Dr. Hajjar holds a Ph.D., in Optical Sciences from the University of Arizona and a B.S. in Electrical Engineering from Boston University where he graduated *Summa Cum Laude*.

Four Pillars of Healthy Living

Saturday, July 9, 2016: 10:30 a.m. – 12:00 noon, Dr. Salwan AbiEzzi

Dr. Salwan AbiEzzi graduated from the University of California, San Diego School of Medicine, in 1993. Following his residency, Dr. AbiEzzi joined the Palo Alto Medical Foundation in 1999. He practices general internal medicine with an additional interest in diabetes and sports medicine. San Jose Magazine and the nonprofit Consumers' Checkbook Magazine have recognized Dr. AbiEzzi on several occasions on their list of the "Best Doctors" in the Bay Area.

Commission for Lebanon

Saturday, July 9, 2016: 3:00 p.m.

His Beatitude Patriarch Bechara Peter Cardinal Rai, Maronite Patriarch of Antioch and All the East.

The 53rd Maronite Convention is sponsored by the National Apostolate of Maronites (NAM) and is hosted by Our Lady of Lebanon Maronite Church, San Francisco Bay area, Calif. For more information about the Convention, NAM and its activities, please log on to www.namnews.org. □



San Diego, California *Easter Egg Hunt*



The much anticipated ring of a bell, by Fr. Toufic Nasr, Pastor, signaled the start of the hunt. More than two hundred children, along with their parents and relatives, dashed onto the field with vibrant spirit to collect their share of the precious plastic eggs. Over the years, we at St. Ephrem Maronite Church in San Diego, Calif., have crafted a unique egg hunt operating procedure designed to make the experience as seamless and enjoyable as possible. To avoid frenzy and the inevitable empty candy wrappers strewn around the church grounds, children are limited to a generous twelve eggs each, which are empty upon discovery but redeemable for prizes; all the fun without the tears or mess.

Of course, the egg hunt was just the appetizer of the Easter celebration. Next, the kids were treated with many noteworthy activities planned by the Language and Religious Education School. The parents shared in their children's delight as they got to go on pony rides, pet the animals in the petting zoo, jump their hearts out in the jumper, compete in field games, get their faces painted, color eggs, design Easter crafts, and most importantly meet the Easter Bunny himself. Finally, who can say no to fresh, billowy cotton candy made on site?

The success of this and every year's Easter egg hunt would not be possible if not for the teachers, substitutes, parents, young adults, and youth who volunteered and showed their love for the St. Ephrem community. They deserve a big thank you for all of their passion and hard work. □

Birmingham, Alabama *18th Annual Festival*

During the weekend of April 8 - 10, 2016, St. Elias Maronite Church in Birmingham, Ala., celebrated its 18th Annual Lebanese Food and Cultural Festival. The Parish was honored to have Bishop Elias Zaidan, Bishop of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon, present. The Festival was a huge success, featuring Lebanese cuisine, church tours, a 5K run benefitting the SUKI Foundation (for children with Rett Syndrome), live entertainment, and Lebanese dancing by the youth of the parish. Over three hundred parishioners volunteered to help with the event. During the two-day festival, 9,000 people attended and enjoyed traditional food, music and dance.

The Bishop's presence made the weekend even more special. He got to see the parish at its best with so many



The new members of the Order of Saint Sharbel with Chorbishop Richard Saad, Pastor, and Bishop Elias Zaidan: (from left) Elizabeth Boackle, Jackie Akl, Jessica Bou-Akar, John Joseph, JoAnn Joseph, and George Tobia. Not pictured: Gabrielle Bruno, Greg Butrus and Sherry Tobia.

working together. He was also able to install nine new members of the Order of Saint Sharbel at the Divine Liturgy on Sunday, April 10. It truly was a remarkable weekend for all. □

North Jackson, Ohio *National Shrine 25Club Winners*

On Saturday, April 16, 2016, the Basilica and National Shrine of Our Lady of Lebanon 25Club had its yearly dinner drawing. The following people were winners:

Amount	Ticket Number	Name
\$1000	321	Michael Policy
\$1000	33	Elizabeth Sohaiby
\$1000	154	Jackie Mosco
\$500	201	Joffre Sahyoun
\$500	105	Diane Peccione
\$100	137	Steven Medovich
\$100	399	Fr. Amado Guida
\$100	457	Joseph Yazbek
\$100	409	Amelia Yazbek
\$100	469	Samir and Yolla Boulos
\$100	117	Elizabeth Peccione
\$100	308	Judy Dohar
\$100	14	David Clarke
\$100	65	Kathy Letrenta
\$100	246	John Kerns Jr.
\$100	289	Theresa Habosky
\$100	387	Brenda Leshnock
\$100	126	Paul and Wanda Elkouri
\$100	12	Fr. Albert Constantine
\$100	288	Darryl Frye
\$100	438	Joe Dohar

Anyone interested in purchasing a ticket for the 2016 - 2017 year, please contact Rose Sahyoun at 330-565-7238 or the National Shrine at 330-538-3351. Tickets are \$70 per year. Please consider buying a ticket to help the Shrine. □

First Thoughts on "Amoris Laetitia"

by
Bishop Robert Barron

On a spring day about five years ago, when I was rector of Mundelein Seminary [Mundelein, Illinois], Francis Cardinal George spoke to the assembled student body. He congratulated those proudly orthodox seminarians for their devotion to the dogmatic and moral truths proposed by the Church, but he also offered some pointed pastoral advice. He said that it is insufficient simply to drop the truth on people and then smugly walk away. Rather, he insisted, you must accompany those you have instructed, committing yourself to helping them integrate the truth that you have shared. I thought of this intervention by the late Cardinal often as I was reading Pope Francis's apostolic exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*. If I might make bold to summarize a complex 264-page document, I would say that Pope Francis wants the truths regarding marriage, sexuality, and family to be unambiguously declared, but that he also wants the Church's ministers to reach out in mercy and compassion to those who struggle to incarnate those truths in their lives.

In regard to the moral objectivities of marriage, the Pope is bracingly clear. He unhesitatingly puts forward the Church's understanding that authentic marriage is between a man and a woman, who have committed themselves to one another in permanent fidelity, expressing their mutual love and openness to children, and abiding as a sacrament of Christ's love for his Church (52, 71). He bemoans any number of threats to this ideal, including moral relativism, a pervasive cultural narcissism, the ideology of self-invention, pornography, the "throwaway" society, etc. He explicitly calls to our attention the teaching of Pope Paul VI in *Humanae Vitae* regarding the essential connection between the unitive and the procreative dimensions of conjugal love (80). Moreover, he approvingly cites the consensus of the recent Synod on the Family that homosexual relationships cannot be considered even vaguely analogous to what the Church means by marriage (251). He is especially strong in his condemnation of ideologies that dictate that gender is merely a social construct and can be changed or manipulated according to our choice (56). Such moves are tantamount, he argues, to forgetting the right relationship between creature and Creator. Finally, any doubt regarding the Pope's attitude toward the permanence of marriage is dispelled as clearly and directly as possible: "The indissolubility of marriage - 'what God has joined together, let no man put asunder' (Mt 19:6) - should not be viewed as a 'yoke' imposed on humanity, but as a 'gift' granted to those who are joined in marriage..." (62).

In a particularly affecting section of the exhortation, Pope Francis interprets the famous hymn to love in Paul's first letter to the Corinthians (90-119). Following the great missionary Apostle, he argues that love is not primarily a feeling (94), but rather a commitment of the will to do some pretty definite and challenging things: to be patient, to bear with one another, to put away envy and rivalry, ceaselessly to hope. In the tones of grandfatherly pastor, Francis instructs couples entering into marriage that love, in this dense and demanding sense of the term, must be at the heart of their

relationship. I frankly think that this portion of *Amoris Laetitia* should be required reading for those in pre-Cana [and] other similar marriage preparation programs in the Catholic Church. Now Francis says much more regarding the beauty and integrity of marriage, but you get my point: there is no watering down or compromising of the ideal in this text.

However, the Pope also honestly admits that many, many people fall short of the ideal, failing fully to integrate all of the dimensions of what the Church means by matrimony. What is the proper attitude to them? Like Cardinal George, the Pope has a visceral reaction against a strategy of simple condemnation, for the Church, he says, is a field hospital, designed to care precisely for the wounded (292). Accordingly, he recommends two fundamental moves. First, we can recognize, even in irregular or objectively imperfect unions, certain positive elements that participate, as it were, in the fullness of married love. Thus for example, a couple living together without benefit of marriage might be marked by mutual fidelity, deep love, the presence of children, etc. Appealing to these positive marks, the Church might, according to a "law of gradualness," move that couple toward authentic and fully-integrated matrimony (295). This is not to say that living together is permitted or in accord with the will of God; it is to say that the Church can perhaps find a more winsome way to move people in such a situation to conversion.

The second move - and here we come to what will undoubtedly be the most controverted part of the exhortation - is to employ the Church's classical distinction between the objective quality of a moral act and the subjective responsibility that the moral agent bears for committing that act (302). The Pope observes that many people in civil marriages following upon a divorce find themselves in a nearly impossible bind. If their second marriage has proven faithful, life-giving, and fruitful, how can they simply walk out on it without in fact incurring more sin and producing more sadness? This is, of course, not to insinuate that their second marriage is not objectively disordered, but it is to say that the pressures, difficulties, and dilemmas might mitigate their culpability. Here is how Pope Francis applies the distinction: "Hence it can no longer simply be said that all those in any 'irregular' situation are living in a state of mortal sin and are deprived of sanctifying grace" (301). Could the Church's minister, therefore, not help such people, in the privacy of the rectory parlor or the confessional, to discern their degree of moral responsibility? Once again, this is not to embrace a breezy "anything-goes" mentality, nor to deny that a civil marriage after a divorce is objectively irregular; it is to find, perhaps, for someone in great pain, a way forward.

Will *Amoris Laetitia* end all debate on these matters? Hardly. But it does indeed represent a deft and impressive balancing of the many and often contradictory interventions at the two Synods on the Family. As such, it will be of great service to many suffering souls who come to the Field Hospital. □

The Rosary In Maronite Spirituality

by brother John M. Samaha, S.M.

Origin of the Rosary

The Rosary, the blessed beads that quietly slip between our fingers as we pray over the mysteries of Jesus' redemptive life, has an ancient origin. Most likely it originated in the ancient East and not in the medieval West, perhaps in India. It was and still is a popular prayer device among the Muslims, who use the Arabic term *masbahat*, which means to give praise. Devout Muslims used the *masbahat* in repeating the attributes of God, just as it was used by the early Christian hermits. Following the Crusades, the Rosary found its way to the West. The missionary who worked hardest to spread this devotion was Abed El-Ahad, along with Saint Dominic, and his Dominican companions.

The Rosary became a popular method of prayer and spread quickly in the West during the Middle Ages. For Christians it has always been "the Gospel strung on beads." It is a simple and easy prayer that can be employed for vocal prayer or silent contemplation by individuals, families, and communities.

Papal Encouragement

Since the 16th century the popes have frequently encouraged the faithful of East and West to pray the Rosary. The first was a Dominican pope, Saint Pius V, who wrote a papal letter about the Rosary in 1569 shortly after the Council of Trent, and instituted the feast of Our Lady of the Rosary.

In the late 19th century after the First Vatican Council the illustrious Pope Leo XIII wrote more than ten encyclicals and instructions promoting the use of the Rosary.

To make pastoral applications of the Marian teachings of the Second Vatican Council, Pope Paul VI in 1974 authored the apostolic exhortation *Devotion to Mary (Marialis Cultus)*. Paul VI discussed the Rosary at some length as a summary of the Gospel comprised of prayers based on Gospel texts. He urged the faithful to pray the Rosary, and especially recommended the family Rosary in these words:

"We would like now to join our voice to the voices of our predecessors and strongly recommend the prayer of the Rosary in the family...because the Christian family is a family church....If the family neglected this communal prayer, it would lose its character as a Christian family."

"In addition to the prayer of the Divine Office (Liturgy of the Hours) ... the Rosary of the Virgin Mary would be the most preferable communal prayer for the Christian family."

Pope Paul VI concluded his recommendation by saying: "We would like to repeat that the Rosary is an excellent and magnificent prayer...."

In a pastoral letter about the 1987 Marian Year, His Beatitude Patriarch Nasrallah Peter Cardinal Sfeir, encouraged all Maronites to honor the Mother of God by praying the Rosary.

Pope St. John Paul II, enthusiastic devotee of our Blessed Mother, in 2002 issued a pastoral letter entitled *The Rosary of the Virgin Mary*, in which he proclaimed October 2002 until October 2003 the Year of the Rosary, and put forth the Luminous Mysteries based on the public life of Jesus.

Pope Benedict XVI values the prayer of the Rosary as a means of contemplating Jesus with Mary's eyes. For him pondering the mysteries of the Rosary calms a "restless spirit, allows the soul to settle into tranquility...and grants a vision of God." He associates the Rosary with consolation and healing, an inner refuge which enfolds us "in the rhythm of the prayer of the whole Church." "I do it quite simply," he said, "just as my parents used to pray."

The Rosary Today

Unlike some Eastern Christians who erroneously consider the Rosary foreign to Eastern spirituality, Maronites have emphasized the prayer of the Rosary for centuries. On a visit to Maronites in Lebanon in 1580, Jesuit Father Eliano recorded that he brought them "about one thousand rosaries."

Early on, the Rosary was a common method of prayer in the East among Christians and non-Christians. Even though it came to us through Western missionaries, it was and still is an easy and rich method of prayer to help the faithful fathom the mysteries of God along the journey of salvation. And we do so with a special companion, the Mother of God and our Mother. Praying the Rosary, particularly in the family, is an excellent method of bringing us together in the faith under the protection of her who always and everywhere intercedes for all people. Let us spare no effort to remain close to her. □



From the Consulate of Lebanon *Reacquiring the Lebanese Citizenship*

We would like to inform you that the Lebanese pertinent authorities, pursuant to Law # 41 “*Reacquiring the Lebanese Citizenship*” dated November 24, 2015, have started taking applications from



members of the Lebanese diaspora to reacquire the Lebanese citizenship. The said Law stipulates that applications should be submitted before November 25, 2025.

Applications will be considered by a committee within the Ministry of Interior and Municipalities of Lebanon. Applicants can appeal the decisions of the said committee within a month from the time they are legally notified of such decisions at the address they specified in their applications.

Persons eligible to apply should have their names or the names of their paternal ancestors, or male relatives on their father’s side, listed on the records of the census of 1921 – 1924, either residents or immigrants registers, and/or the records of the census of 1932, immigrants registers, available at the Ministry of Interior and Municipalities.

To Apply:

At the Consular Section: You or your legal proxy should complete a reacquiring citizenship application and enclose:

1. Transcript of the above mentioned records of the census of 1921 – 1924, either residents or immigrants registers, and/or the records of the census of 1932, immigrants registers, listing your name or the names of your paternal ancestors, or male relatives on your father’s side.
2. Lebanese documents including civil status records (IDs, *ikhraj kayd*), wills, or national archives, etc... listing your name or the names of your paternal ancestors, or male relatives on your father’s side.
3. American documents including civil status records (birth certificates), or national archives, etc... listing your name or the names of your paternal ancestors, or male relatives on your father’s side.
4. Parental consent form for minors and applicants under eighteen signed by both parents or legal guardians, at the Consular Section or authenticated by a notary public, affirming their consent to the application.

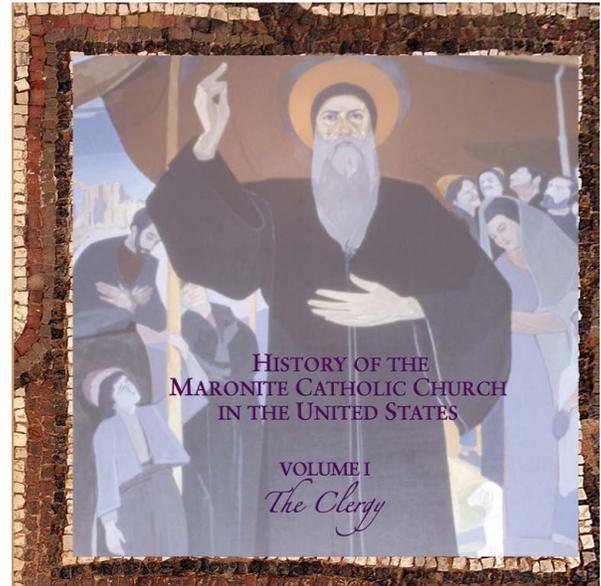
Via certified mail: if you cannot get to the Consulate, complete and sign a reacquiring citizenship application in front of a notary public, and then send it to us along with the same documents mentioned above.

Detailed information and forms are available on the Consulate website at www.nylebcons.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.

San Antonio, Texas *MYO Regional Retreat*



by Talina Bechara

The Regional MYO retreat was held at St. George Maronite Catholic Church in San Antonio, Texas, January 29 - 31, 2016. Youth from the parishes of Houston, Austin, and San Antonio, Texas, attended. The theme of the weekend was The Year of Mercy and it was very obvious how the Holy Spirit was working amongst the one hundred youths, advisors, and parents that helped out. Fr. Gary George directed the weekend retreat that was spiritually uplifting in an atmosphere that was fun and inviting for all the youth to make new friends and also create a stronger relationship with God. Activities and meals were at the parish. The St. George Community was thrilled to host the MYO regional youth retreat for the first time. The youth went home reconnected with their faith and with God. Many youth came on the retreat having strayed from their faith, but at the end of the retreat they were back on the right path. Pope Francis wrote in the prayer for The Jubilee Year of

Mercy, "You have taught us to be merciful like the Heavenly Father, and have told us that whoever sees you sees Him." That is exactly what all the youth learned on this spiritual retreat: how to be merciful like the Heavenly Father. Now the youth can use that and everything else they have learned and experienced in their lives for the Glory of God within their families, amongst their friends and in the world around them. □

Pope Calls Young People to Self-sacrificial Love, Friendship with Christ

Pope Francis celebrated Mass in St. Peter's Square on April 24, 2016, for the sixty thousands who had gathered in Rome for the Jubilee for Boys and Girls.

Describing love as the "the Christian's identity card, the only valid 'document' identifying us as Christians," Pope Francis preached that love is "shown in real actions. Those who are not real and genuine and who speak of love are like characters in a soap opera, some fake love story."

Such love is "demanding, and it requires effort," he continued. "To love means to give, not only something material, but also something of oneself: one's own time, one's friendship, one's own abilities."

"Christ", the Pope added, "offers us his faithful friendship, which he will never take back." "The Lord is a friend forever," Pope Francis said. "Even if you disappoint him and walk away from him, Jesus continues to want the best for you and to remain close to you; he believes in you even more than you believe in yourself. This is an example of genuine love that Jesus teaches to us."

The Pope also called young people to seek true freedom by choosing the good, rather than being content with "mediocrity" and seeking an abundance of possessions.

"Freedom is not the ability simply to do what I want," he said. "This makes us self-centered and aloof, and it prevents us from being open and sincere friends ... Instead, freedom is the gift of being able to choose the good: this is true freedom." □
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