



The Maronite Voice



A Publication of the Maronite Eparchies in the USA

Volume XII

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November 2016

A Litany of Thanksgiving

In the Gospel of Luke (17:11-19) Jesus cures ten lepers. Saint Luke reports that ... "One of them, turned back, praising God with a loud voice; and he fell on his face at Jesus' feet, giving him thanks...he was a Samaritan." Jesus remarks, 'Were not ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?'"

Both the Old and New Testaments are filled with appeals for us to thank God. Psalm 118 instructs us, "Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good; His steadfast love endures forever!" The Scriptures even tell us why we should be thankful to the Lord: Because "His steadfast love endures forever!"

In the United States for almost four hundred years, there has been a celebration of thanks in November. The first is recorded in November of 1621. From our earliest years as a people, and before we were even an independent country, we have offered public thanksgiving for the gifts of the Lord. To be thankful is not just a polite word to say at Thanksgiving every year. Giving thanks to Almighty God is much more and should be a daily acknowledgment by all of us. We should never take God's gifts and other people's kindness for granted.

We speak of a "litany" of thanksgiving. A litany is a series of invocations. There are litanies of the Lord Jesus, of the Blessed Mother, and of the Saints. Perhaps we should stop and reflect on a "Litany of Thanksgiving." What are those things for which we should thank the Lord?

- for God's revelation, incarnation and redemption;
- for God's great compassion and mercy given freely to us;
- for the Church and the Holy Mysteries entrusted to her;
- for our Church leaders and ministers;
- for creation and all things great and small, beautiful and awesome;



- for those things seen and unseen;
- for human life, from the womb to the tomb— among the greatest of God's gifts;
- for marriage and the children that are the fruits of married love;
- for our friendships and comradeships;
- for our nation's freedom and independence and the rights we enjoy; freedom of speech, worship, life and happiness;
- for our nation as a beacon of hope and land of opportunity;
- for the opportunity to work;
- for the home to enjoy;
- for the means of leisure and rest.

Continues on page 20

Schedule of Bishop Elias Zaidan

November 5 - 6, 2016

Pastoral Visit to St. John Maron Church, Orange, Calif.

November 10 - 13, 2016

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

November 14 - 17, 2016

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' Meetings, Baltimore, Md.

November 20, 2016

St. Raymond Feast Day Celebration, St. Raymond Cathedral, St. Louis, Mo.

November 24, 2016

Thanksgiving

December 4, 2016

Elevation of Msgr. Antoine Bakh to the honor of *Periodeut*, St. John Maron, Orange, Calif. □

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

E-Mail: gmsebaali@aol.com
<http://www.stmaron.org>
<http://www.usamaronite.org>

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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

Worcester, Massachusetts Holy Door Pilgrimage

by Sr. Natalie Sayde
Salameh

The Maronite Servants of Christ the Light, in collaboration with Fr. Alex Joseph, Pastor, facilitated a regional pilgrimage to Our Lady of Mercy Church in Worcester, Mass., on Sunday, October 16, 2016. In the Eparchy of Saint Maron, this is one of the sites of pilgrimage with a Holy Door. Our Lord stands at the door of our hearts knocking. We are called, especially in this Jubilee, to open our hearts to God's abundant mercy.



The Maronite Servants, Father Alex Joseph and some of the pilgrims.

It was a beautiful, grace-filled day. The pilgrimage began with the Divine Liturgy followed by brunch in the Church Hall. Afterwards, all gathered in the Church for exposition of the Holy Mysteries and adoration. The congregation entered at the vestibule, offering prayers for the intentions of Pope Francis, and then each pilgrim processed through the Holy Door while receiving a blessing of holy water from Father. The Maronite Servant Sisters facilitated the adoration while Fr. Alex heard confessions. □



Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn

Celebration of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Presence of a Maronite Bishop in the United States

by Salma Vahdat

Months of anticipation and preparation came to fruition as the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the presence of a Maronite Bishop in the U.S.A. got underway on Friday, October 7, 2016, at Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral in Brooklyn, N.Y. Prelates, clergy, deacons, subdeacons, parishioners and civic leaders from far and wide filled the Cathedral to celebrate the Divine Liturgy in thanksgiving for the gift of a Shepherd in this country.

Concelebrating the Divine Liturgy with Bishop Gregory Mansour were Archbishop Christopher Pierre, Apostolic Nuncio to the U.S., and personal representative of His Holiness Pope Francis; Mar Thomas Eusebius, Syro-Malankar Bishop of the U.S.; Mar Barnaba Yousif Habash, Syriac Bishop of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Deliverance, USA; Bishop Abdallah Elias Zaidan, Bishop of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon; Timothy Cardinal Dolan, Archbishop of the Archdiocese of New York; Bishop Nicolas DiMarzio, Bishop of the Diocese of Brooklyn-Queens; Archbishop Bernadito Auza, Permanent Representative of the Holy See to the United Nations; Bishop Octavio Cisneros, Auxiliary Bishop of Brooklyn-Queens; Chorbishop Michael Thomas, Vicar General of the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn; and Monsignor James Root, Cathedral Rector.

For those too young to remember and those who have joined us here more recently let me sketch a brief history of our beginning. As expressed by Bishop Gregory Mansour, our third bishop, ... "Fifty years ago a young bishop was assigned by Pope Paul VI as the first Maronite bishop for the United States. He came not knowing what to expect and was pleased to find an organized laity (National Apostolate of Maronites) already working well with their clergy, a Maronite Seminary, the first outside Lebanon, a Shrine to Our Lady, and clergy and laity hoping for



From left: Mar Thomas Eusebius, Syro-Malankar Bishop; Mar Barnaba Yousif Habash, Syriac Bishop of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Deliverance; Bishop A. Elias Zaidan, Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon; Bishop Gregory J. Mansour, Eparchy of Saint Maron; Timothy Cardinal Dolan, Archbishop of New York; Bishop Nicolas DiMarzio, Bishop of the Diocese of Brooklyn-Queens; Archbishop Bernadito Auza, Permanent Representative of the Holy See to the U.N.; Bishop Octavio Cisneros, Auxiliary Bishop of Brooklyn-Queens; Archbishop Christopher Pierre, Apostolic Nuncio to the U.S., Personal Representative of His Holiness Pope Francis; and Chorbishop Michael Thomas, Vicar General.

greater unity and progress. With persistent love, a broad and vibrant vision of the Church, and untiring efforts and confidence in Our Lady and Divine Providence, Archbishop Francis M. Zayek was able to gain the hearts and minds of God's people, and as they say, the rest is history!"

Archbishop Zayek recognized the immensity of the task before him. With utter devotion he consecrated himself and the entire people of God entrusted to him to Our Lord and His Blessed Mother. He entrusted our future to the will of God and today we look back with amazement at what has been accomplished. Where there was none, there are now two eparchies, as well as eighty-six parishes, two monasteries, two congregations of nuns, deacons, subdeacons and several missions.

In his greeting to the communities who joined together at the Marriott Hotel for

a reception, Sayedna Gregory thanked Monsignor James Root and his committee for planning and executing the beautiful celebration and Chorbishop Michael Thomas, Vicar General of the Eparchy for his unceasing efforts on behalf of all of us. *Sayedna* remarked about the joy he could see in the eyes of his clergy especially when they see their parishioners happy.

The Maronite Church in America has retained and nourished the heritage and culture brought to this land by our forebears since the late 1800s. During the last fifty years the church has grown with new parishes and missions and vocations to the priesthood and religious life. Our Maronite Church is open to all in generosity and brotherhood. We are united! We are blessed! We are *Beit Maroun!* □

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania *National MYA Workshop*



by *Mauni Khoury, a young adult from Cleveland, Ohio*

More than 160 Maronite Young Adults (MYA) from across the United States gathered for the eighth annual MYA workshop September 30 through October 2, 2016, in Philadelphia, Penn. Father Vincent Farhat and the generous parishioners of Saint Maron Church in Philadelphia hosted the MYA group.

In light of the Pope's declaration for the Jubilee "Year of Mercy," the theme of the workshop was "His Light Radiates Through Our Mercy." During the three-day event, young adults had the opportunity to participate in spiritual, social, and service activities which highlighted the corporal and spiritual works of mercy. With the spiritual guidance of Bishop Gregory Mansour, Father Tony Massad, Father Rodolph Wakim, Father Vincent, and Sr. Therese Maria, the young adults participated in adoration before the Blessed Sacrament, reconciliation, prayer services, liturgies, and interactive presentations, along with various social activities.

On Saturday, Mrs. Rachel Muha spoke about the importance of forgiveness. As Mrs. Muha shared her touching story, it was apparent in the emotional response of everyone present that forgiveness is an essential part of our spiritual journey and our Maronite faith. As a thank you to Mrs. Muha, the MYA made a donation in her late son's honor to the Brian Muha Memorial Foundation. To further honor the spirit of giving and sharing, the young adults also participated in a group service activity. All the attendees came together and made fifty fleece blankets to donate to the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia.

On Sunday after the liturgy, St. Maron Church hosted a brunch for all of the young adults. In true MYA spirit, everyone could be seen socializing and interacting until the very last minute. Many pictures were taken to commemorate the events of this successful workshop and were almost instantly shared on social media.

It is our hope that the MYA will continue to grow in strength and number through local, regional, and national events. To learn more about the MYA and to find out about their upcoming events, visit www.maroniteyoungadults.org

or join the "MYA - Maronite Young Adults" official group on Facebook. □

Brooklyn, New York *Order of Saint Sharbel Sunday*



by *Salma Vahdat*

Sunday, October 16, 2016, celebrated the Order of Saint Sharbel in all the parishes of the Eparchy of Saint Maron and the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon. The day was set aside to promote membership in the organization which supports the Maronite Seminary in Washington, D.C. and retired clergy.

At Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral in Brooklyn, N.Y., parishioners were delighted and inspired by an address from Therese Abi Habib who reminded them of their obligation to support the education of the Maronite seminarians in the United States who will one day serve the current and future parishes. It is through the annual and perpetual memberships which fund the maintenance of the seminary and the education of the seminarians. It was an "eye opener" to learn that it takes forty thousand dollars per year to adequately support each seminarian. It is clear that we, as Maronites,

must support those who have served us so faithfully and those who will continue to serve future generations of our communities. It should be noted that retired Bishop Robert Shaheen (the first graduate), Bishop Gregory Mansour and our very own Msgr. James Root are graduates of the Seminary.

Zahia Abi Habib, Mrs. Mirna Ayoub, Mr. Bassam Ayoub and Msgr. James Root were inducted into the Order. We look forward to new members who will take on the mission of the Seminary and the retired clergy. □

San Antonio, Texas *Archbishop Visits Parish*



by Fr. Charles Khachan

In celebration of the Jubilee Year of Mercy, Archbishop Gustavo Garcia-Siller, Archbishop of San Antonio, Tex., visited St. George Maronite Church on Sunday, August 28, 2016. Archbishop Garcia-Siller spoke of God's great mercy in his homily at the Divine Liturgy which was concelebrated by Father Charles Khachan, MLM, Pastor, and Father Marwan Abi-Nader, Associate Pastor. At the conclusion of the liturgy, Father Charles presented the archbishop with a gift of relics of the Maronite saints as a memento of the friendship shared between the parish and the Archbishop. The Ladies' Altar Society hosted a Lebanese luncheon for all parishioners in the Phoenecian Ballroom following the liturgy to honor Archbishop Garica-Siller. □

Lakewood, Colorado *The Relics of St. Anthony of Padua*

by Fr. Andre Mahanna

For the first time, the relics of St. Anthony of Padua have visited Colorado, and St. Rafka Maronite Church in Lakewood was honored to be the inaugural host. Two first-class relics, St. Anthony's floating rib and layers of the saint's skin, made a ten-day tour of the Denver area



Bishop Zaidan, Fr. Andre Mahanna, Pastor, and Fr. Mario Conte, OFM, with the reliquary of St. Anthony of Padua.

October 14 - 23, 2016, beginning at St. Rafka and ending at the Archdiocese of Denver's Cathedral Basilica of the Immaculate Conception.

St. Rafka Parish prepared for the visit with several hours of eucharistic adoration and a Divine Mercy Chaplet before formally receiving the relics. A period of veneration was followed by an International Rosary (English, Spanish, Arabic, Aramaic, and Latin) for the intention of peace and for the Christians persecuted for the sake of their faith in the Middle East and in the world. Friar Mario Conte, St. Anthony's traveling companion, shared remarks and information about the relics. The Divine Liturgy was celebrated by His Excellency Bishop A. Elias Zaidan, Bishop of the Eparchy of our Lady of Lebanon of Los Angeles. After a short reception and additional time for veneration of the relics, the evening closed with a Holy Hour.

St. Rafka parishioners were thrilled to see the church full of people the entire evening with both members of St. Rafka and many visitors of other rites and denominations. One parishioner remarked, "Our community experienced the peace, joy, and love of the many who attended the most Holy Mass, Veneration, and the reception." She further expressed gratitude to all those who made the visit possible. □

the Deadline is... **Deadline** for the next month issue of *The Maronite Voice* is November 23, 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:

The Maronite Voice

4611 Sadler Road

Glen Allen, Virginia 23060

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

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. □

Somerset, New Jersey Catholic Charities Solidarity Team Dinner



(From left to right): Msgr. William Benwell, Diocesan Vicar General; Lori Albanese, Diocesan Chancellor; Bishop Gregory J. Mansour, Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn; and Msgr. Joseph Kerrigan, Pastor of Holy Family Parish, New Brunswick, who also serves as the director of local chapters of CCST and CRS for the Diocese of Metuchen.



of Knots Icon followed by a discussion about the Icon. They also learned about the importance of prayers. Each member wrote a concern/problem that was presented with prayers to "God 's Box " at the Church. □

Cincinnati, Ohio Catholic Charities Awards



The honorees: Dr. Edward Feghali, Ms. Christine Thomas, Ms. Nadia Zacharia and Ms. Rose AbiRadi, representing NAM., the Pastor and parishioners of St. Anthony of Padua Maronite Catholic Church, Cincinnati, Ohio.

by Maggie Samaan

During this Jubilee Year of Mercy, Catholic Charities of Southwestern Ohio celebrated its "centennial anniversary." Catholic Charities has served the Archdiocese of Cincinnati for one hundred years through its mission that reflects God's mercy by performing works of mercy in the name of the church on a daily basis and by serving the most vulnerable in this community. Catholic Charities was honored to celebrate its centennial anniversary by recognizing a hundred people from across the community whose actions reflects God's mercy. St. Anthony of Padua Maronite Church in Cincinnati, Ohio, was very proud and blessed by its five recipients of such an honorable Award:

The Diocese of Metuchen, N.J., recently awarded \$57,500 in local grants to support food security programs in Middlesex, Somerset, Hunterdon and Warren counties. A total of nineteen grants were distributed during the annual "Harvest of Mercy" dinner held October 20 at Saints Peter and Paul Byzantine Catholic Church Hall on Hamilton Street.

These grants were made possible through the 2016 Catholic Relief Services (CRS) Rice Bowl collection, which was taken up in local Catholic parishes, schools and other institutions during Lent. Twenty-five percent of the monies raised through this annual collection benefit local food security programs in the Diocese of Metuchen; the remaining funds support CRS' international work to help those most in need. Visit <http://ccsolidarity.org> for information on Rice Bowl grants.

The annual "Harvest" dinner, renamed this year to align with the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy as proclaimed by Pope Francis, is sponsored by the diocese's Catholic Charities Solidarity Team (CCST). Proceeds from the 2016 fundraiser will benefit CCST's international work in Lebanon, a new country program announced at the dinner. Bishop Gregory J. Mansour of the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn, who is a member of the Board of Trustees of Catholic Relief Services and Caritas Lebanon USA, delivered the keynote address. □

Boston, Massachusetts Knights of the Virgin Mary

by Rhanda Yazbeck

On Saturday, October 22, 2016, the Knights of the Virgin Mary gathered at Our Lady of the Cedars Maronite Church, Jamaica Plain [Boston], Mass., to launch the opening of this year's theme: "Prayer, the Faith Prayed." They put together a puzzle of the Our Lady Undoer

Dr. Edward Feghali, for welcoming the stranger in his Church and in his medical field; Ms. Christine Thomas, for feeding the poor in her fifty-five years of volunteering; Ms. Patricia Wakim, Executive Director of Over the Rhine Soup Kitchen, for feeding the hungry in her apostolate; Ms. Nadia Zacharia, for welcoming the strangers in this country after they emigrate from the Middle East; and St. Anthony's N.A.M. Chapter, for welcoming the stranger and comforting the sick in our community.

On Saturday, October 1, 2016, Catholic Charities held a banquet to honor the hundred individuals and groups for their various work of mercy. Many parishioners of St. Anthony of Padua proudly accompanied the honorees and Fr. George Hajj, Pastor, to join in the celebration of such a memorable event. Five hundred people attended this special event, and each of the hundred award recipients received a medallion of Champion of Mercy with his/her name engraved on it. Out of these hundred Champions of Mercy Award recipients, five individuals/groups were chosen by Catholic Charities to receive an additional monetary award of \$1000 to further their work or to donate to a charity of their choice. Ms. Christine Thomas of St. Anthony of Padua Parish was amongst the top five chosen candidates to receive this award.

The banquet was held at Xavier University's Cintas Center in Cincinnati, and Most Rev. Dennis Schnurr, Archbishop of Cincinnati, presented the awards. Also, this Maronite Parish couldn't be any more honored to learn that it had the highest number of recipients to receive such honorable Champion of Mercy Awards. We are truly blessed to have such a great community and for the many parishioners of St. Anthony who do various works of mercy throughout our community. □

Los Angeles, California *Annual Parish Festival*



Our Lady of Mount Lebanon Maronite Catholic Church in Los Angeles, Calif., held its parish festival on September 16 - 17, 2016, at the Santa Anita Race Track in Arcadia, Calif. Although this is the fourteenth year that this event was held, it is the second time it was held at the race track and the first time it was a two-day event. Prior to 2015, the event was a one-day picnic at a park.

Friday's activities included performances by the Youth Dabke Group, Singer Nidal Nasr and Singer Maria Elena Infantino accompanied by Los Pingous. Saturday's agenda

included additional performances by the Youth Dabke Group, Maria Elena Infantino and Los Pingous. Singer Fidel Fayad also took the stage that night. Dancers crowded the dance floor both nights.

For two days, attendees enjoyed traditional Lebanese fare and other delicacies and beverages. While parents socialized, the children enjoyed rock climbing, basketball, outdoor movies and other games.

Another highlight of the festival was the raffle, which capped off the event. As the festival drew to a close, raffle participants were eager for the opportunity to win a wide variety of prizes. Two of the raffle prizes were supplemental donation gifts for \$500 off the best deal of a new or used Honda, which went to Dr. Patrick Challita and Mr. Gaby Abi Khalil. Mr. Gaby Frem also won a supplemental donation gift certificate to Carousel Restaurant valued at \$570. Ms. Georgina Constantin was the third place prize winner and recipient of \$1,000 in cash. Mr. Basim Hanna was the lucky winner of the second place prize, a Microsoft Pro 4 computer. The first place prize, a pearl necklace valued at \$1,595, went to Mr. Phillip Frem. The Grand Prize, a 2017 Mercedes Benz Class E sedan, provided by Mercedes Benz of Beverly Hills, was awarded to Mr. Ted Coudsi.

The festival brought communities together and was thoroughly enjoyed by all who attended. It was a success beyond measure. □

Houston, Texas *Fall Village Night*



by Eliana Abou Jaoude

On October 15, 2016, Our Lady of the Cedars Church in Houston, Tex., celebrated the Feast of Our Lady of the Holy Rosary in a festive Village Night full of tradition and fun. The evening started with a Divine Liturgy followed by a procession and benediction with the statue of Our Lady of the Rosary. It was very heartwarming to see the community come together for a moment of prayer before the Village Night festival started.

As the festivities began, the newly built entertainment stage was inaugurated by the performances of the *Dabke* dancers from the MYO and the young musicians and singers from the youth choir. Lebanese food along with other treats were served and enjoyed. The music, dancing, and singing lasted late into the night. The festivities were enjoyed by

people of all ages who came with their friends and families to embrace the Maronite tradition. The generosity of the parishioners was remarkable in donating time, talents and blessings.

The hype of the festivity had started a week earlier when many volunteers from the parish organizations - The Knights of the Cedars, the Daughters of Mary, the Parish Council, the MYO and the MYA - worked tirelessly to make this event a successful one. Our Lady of the Cedars Parish is grateful for all the hard work from its organizations and the generosity of many benefactors who contributed monetary or in-kind donations. Overall, we enjoyed this year's Fall Village Night very much and hope to keep this successful tradition for many years ahead. □

San Diego, California Order of Saint Sharbel Sunday



by Joseph J. Saad

The Order of Saint Sharbel Sunday was observed by St. Ephrem Church on October 9, 2016. Fr. Toufic Nasr, Pastor, highlighted the importance of the Order's spiritual and financial assistance in the education of the seminarians. Seminarians are blessed to have been called by God to share specifically in His role of spiritual teacher and father. We need no reminding that these seminarians are the same men who will eventually become the priests who administer our marriages, baptize our children, and open our hearts to the salvation of the Gospel at the weekly liturgy. Along with Fr. Toufic's words about the seminarians came an enthusiastic call for more parishioners to join the Order in investing in the future of the faith of our families. □

Newtown Square, Pennsylvania Blessing of St. Sharbel Statue

by Lillian Shahade

Bishop Gregory Mansour celebrated the Divine Liturgy at the end of July, 2016, and blessed the new statue of St. Sharbel at St. Sharbel Church in Newtown Square, Penn. Fr. Tony Mouanes, Pastor, Fr. Richard Cannuli, OSA and Fr. Kail Ellis, OSA, concelebrated.

St. Sharbel parishioners are grateful for this statue of their Patron Saint donated to the Church by John and Marcelle Khawam and their family.



Pictured with Bishop Gregory Mansour is John and Marcelle Khawam, son David and his family and Marcelle's Aunt Therese Zouein.

The statue was made in and from crushed stone from Lebanon and brought back from there on John Khawam's most recent visit.

A reception was held in the Church hall after the Liturgy in honor of Bishop Gregory. □

Uniontown, Pennsylvania Parish Welcomes New Pastor



Father Sami (on left) and Father Habib (on right) with some of the St. George ladies who hosted the reception.

by Dr. Mabel George Howard

The congregation of St. George Maronite Catholic Church in Uniontown, Penn., is pleased to welcome its new pastor, Father El-Badaoui Habib, with open arms. Father Habib comes with much experience as a pastoral leader and mentor. He has served in many Maronite Churches, but his most recent ten-year ministry was in South Africa. Father Habib held the distinguished appointment of the Superior of the Maronite Catholic Mission in South Africa. His responsibility was to oversee and care for all the Maronite faithful in Our Lady of the Cedars and Our Lady of Lebanon Churches. St. George Church is fortunate to have

the wisdom and spiritual guidance of Father Habib.

A reception was held by the Ladies Guild and Altar Rosary Society after each liturgy on September 24 - 25, 2016, to welcome him into the parish community. These initial greetings allowed Father Habib to become acquainted with St. George Parish. When speaking with Father Habib, it is evident that he is a warm, understanding, reverent and dedicated servant of God. Parishioners quickly realized that conversing with Father Habib on a personal level revealed his unique quality of being a focused and excellent "listener." He spoke to each individual with a sincere kindness, interest, compassion, and delightful sense of humor. Father Habib socialized and chatted with everyone at the reception.

Last, but not least, St. George Church sadly extended its farewells to Father Sami Chaaya, who is beginning his new religious assignment in Lebanon. Father Sami and St. George parish have grown and progressed together over the past three years. He will be missed, and we wish him well. □

Glen Allen, Virginia Saint Rafka's Choir



Schedule of Bishop Gregory Mansour

November 6, 2016

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

November 7, 2016

Jewish - Catholic Dialogue with Cardinal Dolan and New York Jewish Leaders, Manhattan, N.Y.

November 11 - 13, 2016

USCCB Meetings, Washington, D.C.

November 13, 2016

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

November 18, 2016

Knights of the Holy Sepulcher, St. Patrick Cathedral, Manhattan, N.Y.

November 19 - 20, 2016

Pastoral Visit to St. Maron Church, Jacksonville, Fla.

November 22 - 28, 2016

Family time, Flint, Michigan

November 29, 2016

Luncheon to Welcome Syriac Orthodox Bishop and Antiochene Orthodox Metropolitan, Manhattan, N.Y.

November 30 - December 1, 2016

Catholic Relief Services Meeting, Baltimore, Md.

December 4, 2016

Close of the Holy Year of Mercy, Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral, Brooklyn, N.Y.

December 6, 2016

Installation of Bishop Michael Burbidge, Arlington, Va.

December 5 - 7, 2016

Audit for Child Protection Policies, Chancery Office, Brooklyn, N.Y.

December 11, 2016

St. Sharbel Church, Somerset, N.J.

December 12 - 13, 2016

Catholic University of America, Board of Trustees' Meetings, Washington, D.C. □

Fifty-five musicians and members of Saint Rafka's Choir of St. Joseph Convent, Tomb of Saint Rafka in *Jrabta*, Lebanon, accompanied Sr. Marana Saad, Founder and Director; Sr. Ghada Khaliffe, representing the Mother General; Sr. Raghida Antoun; and Sr. Lea Lahoud as they visited St. Anthony Maronite Church in Glen Allen [Richmond], Va., October 17 - 24, 2016.

On Wednesday, October 19, The Choir toured downtown Richmond. After visiting St. John Church, where Patrick Henry made his famous speech "Give me Liberty or Give me Death," the Choir visited the Virginia State Capitol and had a brief meeting with Governor Terry McAuliffe.

On Friday, October 21, Sr. Marana Saad, presented a conference on the "Challenges of the Christians in the Middle East," and on Saturday evening the Choir presented a sacred and classical oriental music concert to a standing-room only church followed by Lebanese Night attended by more than five hundred people.

On Sunday, Sr. Marana Saad presented a Catechism and Musical workshop to the children of the Religious Education program. After teaching them a Syriac hymn, she invited them to join her Choir in singing it at the end of the Divine Liturgy.

Sunday's Divine Liturgy was sung by Saint Rafka Choir and celebrated by Msgr. George M. Sebaali, Pastor. Msgr. Peter Azar, Rector of the Maronite Seminary and Fr. Najji Kiwan of St. Anthony Church in Danbury, Conn., concelebrated. The Pastoral Council hosted a farewell picnic following the Liturgy.

Founded in 2010 under the direction of Sr. Marana Saad, Saint Rafka's Choir has established its reputation as one of the leading choirs in Lebanon. They gained national and international recognition as they performed at the Presidential Palace in *Baabda*, Lebanon; at the Maronite Patriarchate in *Bkerke*; and in many cities, towns and universities. Outside of Lebanon Saint Rafka's Choir has performed at the 2016 World Youth Day in Poland; at the Vatican before His Holiness Pope Francis; and in Europe. □

One in Christ: The Gospel and Prejudice

by

Reverend David A. Fisher

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus - Galatians 3:28.

Brothers and sisters: I, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to live in a manner worthy of the call you have received, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another through love, striving to preserve the unity of the spirit through the bond of peace; one Body and one Spirit, as you were also called to the one hope of your call; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all - Ephesians 4:1-6.

The Scriptures are clear in their proclamation of the necessity for unity among the followers of Christ. In the Garden of Gethsemane, as he is about to fulfill his ministry of High Priest of a new and eternal covenant, Jesus says, "...that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me" (John 17:21). It is interesting to observe here that Our Lord not only prays for our unity, but he adds, "that the world may believe that You sent Me"; as if to say, the Truth will not be embraced by the world, if his disciples do not find unity among themselves. Christian evangelization, which proclaims a God of love and forgiveness, will fall on deaf ears and closed hearts if those who proclaim find no love and unity amongst themselves.

Genetically, we all belong to the same human race. We may have different climate adaptations, different skin complexions, curly hair and straight hair; some are tall, some are short, blondes, brunettes, and red heads; yet, we are all children of the same creator, and we all stand before God, seeking self-understanding, love, forgiveness, and ultimately the grace of salvation, won for us by the God-Man, Jesus Christ. As Genesis 1:26-27 instructs us, "Then God said, 'Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness';... So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them."

In the Book of Revelation we are offered a glimpse of the eternity we will spend together in the Kingdom of Heaven; "After this I looked, and there was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, robed in white, with palm branches in their hands" (Rev. 7:9).

If we cannot embrace each other as brother and sister on earth, how can we in heaven; if we reject "the other" for

Let us pray for our brothers and sisters who encounter discrimination and pay a personal price for their fidelity to the Gospel. ☐

Pope Francis, October 28, 2016

being "different" or not from "our tribe" - do we not stand the risk of losing our invitation to the eternal banquet, that celebrates rather than denigrates our God given uniquenesses."

We must always remember that "All forms of racism, prejudice, and discrimination are affronts to the work of Christ on the Cross. Jesus Christ died that all might be saved,..."(Abbot Tryphon, Racism has no place in the life of a Christian, 2016).

Possibly the most poignant examples given by Our Lord concerning prejudice are the stories in Luke 10 and John 4, the Parable of the Good Samaritan and the Samaritan woman at the well. Samaritans were so rejected by the Jews of Judea, that most would take the long route around, crossing the Jordan River if they needed, to go north of Samaria, rather than even cross Samaritan land. For the Jews at the time of Jesus the Samaritans were rejected for being religious heretics and for having married and had children with pagans, when they had been under Assyrian rule. So they were banished on religious and ethnic grounds by their neighbors.

Jesus turns the prevailing ideas of his day upside down in his words concerning the Samaritans. He shows us that religious purity is empty if it lacks compassion and concern for the other. He says to the Samaritan woman, " But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such as these to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth" (John 4:23-24).

Just as Christianity sowed the seeds that eventually lead to the abolition of slavery among Christians (see Paul's Letter to Philemon), so too it has prepared the ground for a fertile harvest of all men and women, of every race and tongue, and the scourge of discrimination, prejudice, and racism will be seen as repugnant and against the values of the Gospel as we now hold slavery to be. Someday Sunday will not be the most segregated day in our country, but the day we embrace each other as One In Christ. ☐



“Yes, Lord, Behold Your Servant” A Vocation Reflection

by

Sr. Natalie Sayde Salameh, Maronite Servants of Christ the Light

Having arrived fresh off the shores of Australia two and one half years ago to join the Maronite Servants, I have often encountered the misunderstanding of people regarding what a religious vocation is, and how it is discerned.

What does it mean to "discern?" It starts with a question – 'What does God want me to be in my life', that is, 'what is my vocation?' I underlined the word 'be' because we are all so used to asking 'what should I do with my life?' This is not a question of doing, but a more profound question of being. Now, for all of us, the answer will be the same, I'm called to be a saint. But our paths toward sainthood will differ, and that path has been traced for us by a loving Father, who wants to shed light

on what will ultimately fulfill us and make us happy. This is discernment. Marriage is the most common vocation, and many are called to be husbands and wives, then ultimately fathers and mothers. But for others, like myself, I was called to the religious life to be a consecrated woman (commonly known as a 'nun' or 'sister').

I am frequently asked, "Sister, how did you know that you wanted to be a nun?" That's also quite simple – I fell in love with Jesus, who is the beginning and end of my vocation story. I was working in a busy office for six years, putting all my energies and talents into climbing that infamous corporate ladder, which left me empty and very much alone. Trying desperately to fill the void in my life, I turned to many finite things. Finally, after such a long period of emptiness, and not knowing where to turn, I called out to Him in prayer from my darkness: "God help me, I don't know what I need, I'm ashamed even to admit that I need more, when I have so much, God, give me what I need, please, I know that you have it." That was it, no magic formula! It was not long after that when I could not stop thinking about Jesus. I was so confused; I did not know what was happening. The Holy Spirit was soon to guide me through the help of the Maronite Servants.

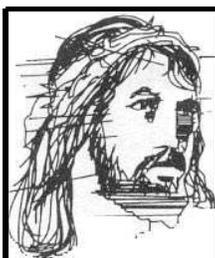
they exposed the Blessed Sacrament. In those moments of prayer, I would speak with Jesus about the thoughts of my heart. I also enlisted the help of a spiritual director, and was receiving weekly guidance from Mother Marla Marie.

However, the greatest joy and peace I experienced that year was during my weekly visits to the confessional, I hadn't gone in years. It was there that I most encountered and fell deeply in love with the Merciful Heart of Jesus. By frequenting the Mysteries and following the guidance given to me, I was ready with conviction to say "Yes, Lord, behold your servant."

During that year, I also made two visits to the Maronite Servants, which is called a 'come and see'. I lived with them, prayed with them, and saw them in action on mission. I saw the tremendous difference that the offering of their spiritual motherhood made to so many people. So many people cannot see the fruit of our labors, and often, we don't see it ourselves. Who sees the widow coming to us and pouring out her heart with grief, or the young man confiding to us his struggle with same-sex attraction? No one sees except God. It was the hidden life of Christ that they were emulating before me, and I loved it!

Currently, I'm in the first year of my novitiate learning about the vows of obedience, chastity and poverty. These vows are the heart of our religious vocation in imitating the obedient, chaste and poor Christ. We also have a Holy Rule (*Typicon*), which guides the Sisters in their living the vocation. I am now learning its spirit and letter. Another key element of religious life is living in a community with other sisters, where I am certainly called to come out of myself and to be for the other.

Continues on page 12



***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

The Maronite Servants came to Sydney, Australia, in February 2013 and spoke at my Parish, St. Charbel's. The Sisters shared about the charism of the Community and how they discerned their religious vocations. Their experiences were so similar to mine, that quite literally, a light bulb went off in my head, and all became clear. I knew I was being called. I spent the next year discerning a vocation to consecrated life.

My lifestyle completely changed. During my lunch hours at work, I would go to Daily Liturgy at a nearby parish run by the Marist Fathers, and I would stay for a little while after as



What is your Second Nature?

by
Dr. Anne Borik

What is your 'second nature'? For some it might be kindness and hospitality, for others it might be joy, laughter and humor. For Mother Teresa, her 'second nature' was love and mercy. She was able to see the face of Christ in every person she met and extend love and mercy to them without even thinking about her own health or safety. For St. Sharbel, his 'second nature' was prayer and deep love for God. He was in complete union with God every step and breath of his life!

One's 'second nature' stems from within and is beyond comprehension. As Christians, our 'second nature' should be our automatic response in any given situation powered by the Holy Spirit. Each situation might be different, but our response must be consistent in order for it to be considered 'second nature.'

Let us look deeper at what our 'second nature' is by turning to Galatians 5:22, "against which there is no law." "The Fruit of the Holy Spirit is love. God is Love" (1 John 4:8), and from love all other qualities grow such as joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. It is important to realize that in Scripture it says the "Fruit" of the Spirit, not "Fruits." Therefore, we must always respond with love, which is then manifested in the different qualities stated above. My 'second nature' response may manifest itself as patience, while another person's 'second nature' response may be gentleness, but regardless, we must always respond with love.

Once these seeds are planted, as is the case when we are baptized, it is then our job to grow in the Spirit so that they become 'second nature.' To grow in the Spirit is to grow in relationship with Jesus, with others and even with our self.

A simple way to remember this is the word JOY...

J = JESUS

Love, Joy and Peace come through a strong relationship with Jesus.

O = OTHERS

Patience, Kindness and Goodness are qualities that are strengthened through healthy relationship with others.

Y = YOURSELF

Faithfulness, Gentleness and Self-Control are qualities that are strengthened within oneself.

In conclusion, as Christians, it is important for us to take note of who or what is growing in our lives. How do we respond in a given situation? What is our 'second nature?' If it is not love, then we must consider re-fertilizing the soil within so that His seeds of joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control grow and overtake any outside weeds that might be strangulating our ability to love! ☐

A Vocation Reflection

Continued from page 11

Life in community is the greatest blessing and the greatest challenge. Another key aspect of our vocation is our apostolate, that is, our service to our Maronite people in the spiritual and corporal works of mercy.

With regard to our daily life, the best word that sums it up is 'balance.' We have prayer times, daily adoration, daily Liturgy, recreation, exercise, leisure, duties and chores, and of course studies and spiritual reading. This daily regimen helps to form the whole person, mind, body and spirit.

Usually vocation stories start off just like mine, with openness and a stirring of the heart. We can help you discern your path in life, the path God is calling you to. Please feel free to contact us on 508/996-1753 or by email at sister@maroniteservants.org. ☐

How to Practice Catholic Mindfulness

by Gregory Bottaro, PSY.D.

Mindfulness. You've heard of it right? It's suddenly everywhere we turn. Videos, courses, talk shows, retreat themes, school programs, even little gadgets to wear ... all promising to help people be more "mindful."

But what does that mean? Is it just another pop fad or the latest tentacle of New Age to make its way into the mainstream?

Actually, it's more Catholic than anything else, though it was popularized for our day by a Buddhist doctor.

The premise for mindfulness is that we are actually safe in the present moment. That's where Christian spirituality can come in.

We can only really know we are safe if we believe there is a God who loves us and takes care of us. This truth is also the premise to a spiritual practice called "Abandonment to Divine Providence," explained in a book with the same title. Abandonment is classic Catholic spirituality, and is also found in Br. Lawrence's "Practice of the Presence of God." Awareness of the present moment is central to the mystical life, and many saints have written about it.

The deeper we go into learning about mindfulness, the more it becomes clear that it is not a new fad. Mindfulness, in fact, is simply a rebranding of a classically Catholic spirituality that has been around since Jesus told his disciples, "Do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Look at the birds of the air: They do not sow or reap or gather into barns—and yet your Heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?" (Matthew 6:25 -26).

Catholic mindfulness is a way to practically trust God more in our lives. Instead of separating faith from the day-to-day of life, mindfulness helps bridge the gap so that we can feel the peace in our lives that should come from having a Father we can trust.

Mindfulness helps us to be more present to everything in our lives — from a trip to the grocery store, to relaxing with friends, to listening more attentively to a homily or meditating on the mysteries of the rosary. It is simply a new way to understand age-old truth.

So What's All the Hype About?

We've all had the experience of not really listening to someone talking to us. Or finding that we've arrived to a destination with only a vague recollection of how we got there. All of us turn away from the present moment sometimes, and some of us do it a lot.

Researchers tell us that at a very deep level, our brains are constantly scanning our reality to figure out where potential dangers might be in order to prepare for them. We tend to overuse this tendency by interpreting being late to the dentist or having a messy laundry room as a "danger." Or, we replay situations that might have not gone our way to figure out how things could have gone better in order to avoid future "dangers."

When we present these "dangerous" situations to our

brain by way of the imagination, our brains can react to some degree with the sympathetic nervous response, otherwise known as the fight-or-flight response. Even if the response is subtle and barely felt, there are physiological reactions that occur as a result of where our minds are. Our heart rates and blood pressure increase slightly and muscles tense up. We might feel flush, or tingly, and our minds become super-focused on the problem at hand.

Mindfulness, then, is a practice that helps us become more aware of this tendency, and helps us learn how to focus our mind where we want it to go. Focus is like a muscle, and mindfulness is how we exercise it.

The effects of strengthening this muscle are far-reaching. Many disorders are connected to the mind – not just psychological disorders but physical and spiritual disorders as well. Exercising the mind's focus muscle can help heal all of these. This is why the research has been so surprisingly positive regarding treatment outcomes, and why mindfulness has become so popular.

So What then, Precisely, is Mindfulness?

It is essentially "awareness of the present moment with acceptance." With mindfulness practice, we learn how to focus with greater strength on what is actually happening around us right now.

At any moment our five senses are communicating reality to our brains, but it is up to us to choose to pay attention to this, rather than ideas coming through our imagination, some of which could trigger our sympathetic nervous response, even if we are actually totally safe in reality.

How Did this Become Popular Today?

Mindfulness started off as something called the Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction program developed by a researcher named Jon Kabat-Zinn in 1979.

As a student of Buddhist teaching, Kabat-Zinn realized that some aspects of his spiritual practice offered a great opportunity for his patients suffering from chronic pain. However he wanted to make this program available to anyone, without the stigma of religious practice, and so he purposefully created it in such a way as to avoid any philosophical input from Buddhist teaching.

Many people have tried to bring Buddhist ideology back into mindfulness practice, but it didn't begin this way, and it isn't appropriately practiced in this way. In fact, many actual Buddhists protest the existence of mindfulness as a practice itself, because they feel that it takes part of their spirituality and distorts it of its spiritual significance.

In fact, not only is mindfulness not Buddhist, but, as we've seen, it is actually more Christian than anything else. □

Dr. Greg Bottaro is the Director of the CatholicPsych Institute, a Catholic psychotherapy practice with a mission to bridge the gap between faith and science. CatholicPsych therapists see patients in New York and Connecticut, or anywhere else in the world via online therapy. Learn more at www.catholicpsych.com. □



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

NAM Board Visits Greenville South Carolina, for Fall Meeting



NAM Board Members with Fr. Bartholomew Leon.

On Friday, October 14, 2016, the NAM Board of Directors came together at St. Rafka Maronite Catholic Church in Greer [Greenville], South Carolina, the site for the NAM 54th Annual Convention, which is planned June 29 to July 2, 2017. The NAM Board members brought with them their passion and talents to St. Rafka Mission. Following the social hour, the teams went to work! Greg and Mary Anne Lepak, the 2017 Chairpersons, along with each committee leader, presented the progress they were making on their duties. Fr. Bartholomew Leon's congregation is filled with enthusiasm as plans were discussed and the Board offered their support and direction for the upcoming event. Everyone is looking forward to coming together during this convention. It's an opportunity for both clergy and laity to share their time as a community. Although the mission is small, their passion is huge and they are looking forward to fostering growth and awareness of the Maronite Church, sharing the love of the Church and meeting the bishops and clergy while having an opportunity to pray the prayers of the day and having daily liturgy together. There will be workshops, knowledgeable speakers and entertainment. The Lebanese food at the Hospitality Suite will be beyond your expectations!

The Board members held their fall board meeting at the Hyatt Regency, where the convention will be hosted. The hotel is located in the heart of downtown Greenville, which makes shopping and eating within walking distance. There is always something going on in town including restaurants, music, and a safe family atmosphere. The Roost Restaurant is within the Hyatt for those who do not want to venture out into the crowd. The Hyatt Regency gives a spacious feel with large glass windows, luscious greens, and lighting that makes the hotel guests feel relaxed at home. Booking room reservations will be available within the next few weeks by logging into www.namnews.org

The 2017 NAM Convention theme is "Maronites Consecrated to the Hearts of Mary and Jesus." There are three hearts joined together and they represent:

- **Top Heart** – The *Rabbula* cross encircled with the Crown of Thorns and extended flame of love depicts the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Consecration is willful obedience to our Maronite Catholic Faith where we live the Divine Liturgy as the Body of Christ, humbly united to God and each other.
- **Middle Heart** – The rose and sword represent the Immaculate Heart of Mary and her sorrowful Mother's heart. By consecrating ourselves to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, we choose to place ourselves under her loving care and direction so that we can be formed more perfectly into the image of her divine son.
- **Bottom Heart** - The Cedar of Lebanon, a symbol of incorruptibility, strength, courage and the heritage of the Maronite Rite, is encircled by the Rosary which is prayed by faithful to Our Blessed Mother for her unfailing intercession while the prayers themselves draw us into the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

The 54th Maronite Convention is sponsored by the National Apostolate of Maronites (NAM) and is hosted by Saint Rafka Mission in Greer [Greenville], S.C. For more information about the Convention, NAM and its activities, please log on to www.namnews.org. □

Clinton Township, Michigan Parishioners' Appreciation



On the 39th Anniversary of the Canonization of Saint Sharbel, Sunday, October 9, 2016, several parishioners of St. Sharbel Church in Clinton Township, Mich., were acknowledged for their years of service. Naif Nassef, Robert Weber, and Michael DeBruyn were given beautiful Holy Bibles in thanksgiving for their dedication to our parish. St. Sharbel Church is very grateful to all its parishioners for their daily services during this time of transition.

On Sunday, October 2, 2016, on the Feast of the Holy Rosary, Elizabeth Neam, sister-in-law to the late Sarah Neam, was presented a Holy Bible on behalf of the family for the outstanding donation to the building of the new St. Sharbel Church in loving memory of Sarah.

MYO Retreat

by Racquel Fakhouri, MYO Advisor

The Maronite Youth Organization (MYO) of St. Sharbel Church in Clinton Township, Mich., held its first spiritual night of the year on October 7, 2016, at the church office. The theme was "Thy will be done." Khouloud Yammine, guest speaker, brought the youth closer to the Lord's Prayer and gave them a new understanding of what they are praying when they say the Lord's Prayer every day. The MYO had a great time coming closer to each other and to God through a beautiful spiritual night and cannot wait for more to come! □



Lawrence, Massachusetts MYO Charitable Drive



by Farah El-Khoury

The Maronite Youth Organization (MYO) of Saint Anthony Parish in Lawrence, Mass., set up its Annual Thanksgiving Food Drive. This year they are also holding a Diaper Drive, collecting diapers and other baby essentials for those children in need. These drives serve as the MYO's first community service project of the new year. The MYO members got together and decorated collection baskets and set up their display in the Church Foyer so parishioners can donate non-perishable items and baby items. These drives go on until the week before Thanksgiving, at which time the MYO will come together to organize the contributions and deliver them to local charities and shelters. The MYO is beyond blessed to have such generous and supportive parishioners to whom they look for help to collect as much as possible for the less fortunate.

MYO Liturgy and Apple Picking

The youth members of St. Anthony Church in Lawrence, Mass., gathered in prayer to participate in the Divine Liturgy, celebrated by Father Elie Mikhael, Pastor, and assisted by Subdeacon Jim Demers. Members were assigned different roles throughout the service including the first reading, the presentation of the Offerings, the Intercessions, and the weekly church announcements. At the conclusion of the Liturgy the youth, accompanied by their Advisors, got on board the Church bus and traveled to nearby Smolak Farms. There, the members embarked on an Alice in Wonderland themed hayride through the orchards. After the hayride, the members enjoyed the farm's famous cider donuts and they picked out their own sugar pumpkins to take home. Next, the youth strolled into the farm's massive orchards for some fun-filled apple picking! The day proved to be both spiritually and socially enriching for the youth of the parish! □



Church Clarifies Teaching on Cremation

The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith has released *Ad resurgendum cum Christo* [To Rise with Christ], an instruction on the burial of the deceased and the conservation of the ashes in the case of cremation.

The instruction, approved by Pope Francis on March 18, 2016 and dated August 15, was made public on October 25. Its twofold purpose is to emphasize “the doctrinal and pastoral reasons for the preference of the burial of the remains of the faithful and to set out norms pertaining to the conservation of ashes in the case of cremation.”

Since the Church first permitted cremation in 1963, “the practice of cremation has notably increased in many countries, but simultaneously new ideas contrary to the Church’s faith have also become widespread,” the Congregation noted.

“Following the most ancient Christian tradition, the Church insistently recommends that the bodies of the deceased be buried in cemeteries or other sacred places,” the Congregation stated. “In memory of the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord, the mystery that illumines the Christian meaning of death, burial is above all the most fitting way to express faith and hope in the resurrection of the body.”

The Congregation continued: By burying the bodies of the faithful, the Church confirms her faith in the resurrection of the body, and intends to show the great dignity of the human body as an integral part of the human person whose body forms part of their identity. She cannot, therefore, condone attitudes or permit rites that involve erroneous ideas about death, such as considering death as the definitive annihilation of the person, or the moment of fusion with Mother Nature or the universe, or as a stage in the cycle of regeneration, or as the definitive liberation from the “prison” of the body ...

The burial of the faithful departed in cemeteries or other sacred places encourages family members and the whole Christian community to pray for and remember the dead, while at the same time fostering the veneration of martyrs and saints.

Turning to cremation, the Congregation established:

- ◆ “In circumstances when cremation is chosen because of sanitary, economic or social considerations, this choice must never violate the explicitly-stated or the reasonably inferable wishes of the deceased faithful.”
- ◆ “The Church continues to prefer the practice of burying the bodies of the deceased, because this shows a greater esteem towards the deceased. Nevertheless, cremation is not prohibited, unless it was chosen for reasons contrary to Christian doctrine.”
- ◆ “When, for legitimate motives, cremation of the body has been chosen, the ashes of the faithful must be laid to rest in a sacred place, that is, in a cemetery or, in certain cases, in a church or an area, which has been set aside for

this purpose, and so dedicated by the competent ecclesial authority.”

- ◆ “The conservation of the ashes of the departed in a domestic residence is not permitted” except in “grave and exceptional cases dependent on cultural conditions of a localized nature” with permission of the bishop. “Nonetheless, the ashes may not be divided among various family members and due respect must be maintained regarding the circumstances of such a conservation.”
- ◆ “In order that every appearance of pantheism, naturalism or nihilism be avoided, it is not permitted to scatter the ashes of the faithful departed in the air, on land, at sea or in some other way, nor may they be preserved in mementos, pieces of jewelry or other objects.”

“When the deceased notoriously has requested cremation and the scattering of their ashes for reasons contrary to the Christian faith, a Christian funeral must be denied to that person according to the norms of the law,” the Congregation concluded. □

(Catholic World News, October 25, 2016)

Why So Many Rites in the Church

Answered by Legionary of Christ Father Edward McNamara, professor of liturgy and dean of theology at the Regina Apostolorum University.

Q: What is the reason for the existence of so many Eucharistic rites present in the Church? Can you explain the origin of different rites, and why does the Church accept all the divisions of the Eucharistic celebration?

A: Although some people think that the Catholic Church is equivalent to the Latin or Roman rite, this is a misconception. The Roman rite is by far the largest and most widely diffused in the world, but the Catholic Church is composed of twenty-three distinct Churches or rites. According to the *Annuario Pontificio*, Eastern Catholics number about 16.3 million.

The Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches defines “rite” as follows: “Rite is the liturgical, theological, spiritual and disciplinary heritage, distinguished according to peoples’ culture and historical circumstances, that finds expression in each autonomous church’s way of living the faith.”

Therefore, “rite” concerns not only a Church’s liturgy, but also its theology, spirituality and law. In some cases it might also involve ethnicity and language. Because of this, many members of these rites prefer to speak about Churches rather than rites. Others say that “Church” refers to the people, and “rite” to their spiritual and cultural heritage and patrimony.

Not all of the twenty-three Churches have a distinct liturgy or differ only in the language used or in local traditions. Traditionally there are six major liturgical families: the Latin, Alexandrian, Antiochian, Armenian, Chaldean and Constantinopolitan (sometimes called Byzantine).

The Latin rite is mostly formed by the Roman rite which is divided into an ordinary and extraordinary form. There are also some other Latin liturgical traditions such as the Ambrosian (habitually celebrated in the Archdiocese of Milan), the Mozarabic (celebrated in a more restricted manner in Toledo in Spain), and that of the city of Braga in Portugal which is permitted in that diocese but not widely used. Others, such as the rite of the Diocese of Lyon, in France, have fallen into disuse. The specific rites of some religious orders, such as the Order of Preachers, are apparently being used again after a hiatus of some years.

The Constantinopolitan, or Byzantine, liturgy is used by fourteen Churches, the Alexandrian by three, the Antiochian by three, the Chaldean by two and the Armenian by one.

It would be arduous to trace the origin and history of each Church. In broad strokes we can say that the various rites were born from the effort of distinct peoples to express the one faith according to their own particular traits and traditions in language, music, literary and artistic styles.

It is somewhat similar to the fact that the four Evangelists present the same Christ but each one with particular nuances that together give a more complete picture. However, rather than each diocese having its own liturgy, various regions of the ancient world tended to coalesce around the liturgy of dioceses believed to be of apostolic origin. Thus Rome became the center of the Latin world. The Church in Alexandria in Egypt, traditionally founded by St. Mark, became the inspiration for Ethiopia. Antioch in Syria, the first see of St. Peter, had Greek- and Aramaic-speaking Christians.

Some went as missionaries to the East, and the liturgy developed from this tradition became the Chaldean and Syro-Malabar Rites. The Greek-speakers headed west, and their customs later blended with practices of the capital of the Byzantine Empire to form the Constantinopolitan liturgies. The Maronite and Armenian rites formed slightly later and synthesized several traditions as well as introducing many unique elements from their own heritage.

With respect to these Churches' communion within the Catholic fold, some have never been formally severed from communion with the Pope, although they were not in contact with him for centuries due to a lack of communication or even of knowledge of each other's existence. Others returned to communion after a period of separation at various stages in history even as late as the early 20th century.

In this process of reunification, some people thought that a return to communion with Rome meant abandoning the ancient traditions and adopting the Latin rite. This was practically never official policy, and the popes generally saw the diversity as enhancing rather than endangering unity. The call for liturgical unity after the Council of Trent was above all centered on the Roman rite and did not affect the Eastern Churches.

The popes have frequently reiterated their appreciation of the specific gifts of the Eastern Churches and consider them as a true gift to the universal Church.

Thus Pope Benedict XIV in his encyclical *Allatae Sunt* in 1755 recalled some of the actions of his predecessors in favor of Eastern Christians:

“13. The Greek Manual, published at Benevento, contains two Constitutions of Popes Leo X and Clement VII which vigorously criticize Latins who abuse the Greeks for practices which the Council of Florence permitted them: in particular that they may offer the Sacrifice of the Mass with leavened bread, that they may take a wife before receiving Holy Orders and keep their wife after Ordination, and that they may offer the Eucharist under both species even to children. When Pius IV decreed that Greeks living in the Dioceses of Latins should be subject to the Latin bishops, he added that ‘by this decree, however, We do not purpose that the Greeks themselves should be drawn away from their Greek rite, or that they should be hindered in any way in other places by the local Ordinaries or others’ (veteris Bullarii, vol. 2, const. no. 75, *Romanus Pontifex*).

“14. The annals of Gregory XIII, written by Fr. Maffei and printed at Rome in 1742, relate several deeds of this pope which aimed at restoring the Copts and Armenians to the Catholic faith, though quite unsuccessfully. But of especial interest are his words concerning the foundation of three colleges in Rome which he had established for the education of Greek, Maronite, and Armenian students, in which he provided that they should continue in their oriental rites (in *novo Bullario*, vol. 4, pt. 3, const. 63, and pt. 4, const. 157 and 173).

“A solemn union of the Ruthenians with the Apostolic See was enacted in the time of Pope Clement VIII. The decree prepared by the Ruthenian archbishops and bishops for establishing union contains the following condition: ‘However, the ceremonies and rites of the divine liturgy and holy sacraments shall be preserved and fully observed in accordance with the custom of the oriental church; only those points shall be corrected which are a hindrance to union; everything shall be done in the ancient manner as they were long ago when the union was in existence.’

“Shortly afterwards a disturbance was caused by a widespread rumor that the union had put an end to all the old rites which the Ruthenians followed in the divine psalmody, the sacrifice of the Mass, the administration of the sacraments, and other holy ceremonies. Paul V in an apostolic brief written in 1615 and printed in the Greek Manual, solemnly declared his will in the following words: ‘Provided that they are not opposed to truth and the teaching of the Catholic faith, and they do not prevent communion with the Roman church, it was not and it is not the intention, understanding, or will of the Roman church to remove or destroy them by means of this union; and this could not and cannot be said or thought; instead these rites have been allowed and granted to the Ruthenian bishops and clergy by Apostolic kindness.’”

Later referring to Latin clergy who tried to oblige Eastern Catholics to adopt the Latin rite, the Pope is very severe:

“21. We have dealt with transferring from the Latin to the Greek rite. Transferrals in the opposite direction are not

forbidden as strictly as the former. Still, a missionary who hopes for the return of a Greek or Oriental to the unity of the Catholic Church may not make him give up his own rite. This can cause great harm.

“Melkite Catholics used to transfer willingly from the Greek to the Latin rite, but they have been forbidden to do so. Missionaries have been warned not to urge them to transfer. Permission to do so has been reserved to the private decision of the Apostolic See. This is clear from Our Constitution *Demandatam*, 85, sect. 35 (*Bullarium*, vol. 1): ‘Moreover We expressly forbid henceforth all Melkite Catholics who observe the Greek rite to transfer to the Latin rite. We give strict orders to all missionaries not to encourage anyone rashly to transfer to the Latin from the Greek rite, nor even to allow them to do so if they want to without the permission of the Apostolic See, under the penalties which will be set out below and other penalties to be decided on by Us.’”

Among these penalties were:

“Any Latin rite missionary, whether of the secular or religious clergy, who induces with his advice or assistance any Eastern rite faithful to transfer to the Latin rite, will be deposed and excluded from his benefice in addition to the ipso facto suspension a divinis and other punishments that he will incur as imposed in the aforesaid Constitution *Demandatam*.”

Over a century later, in the apostolic constitution *Orientalium Dignitas* of 1894, Pope Leo XIII confirmed that these penalties were still in effect. He also expressed his appreciation for the Eastern Churches:

“The Churches of the East are worthy of the glory and reverence that they hold throughout the whole of Christendom in virtue of those extremely ancient, singular memorials that they have bequeathed to us. For it was in that part of the world that the first actions for the redemption of the human race began, in accord with the all-kind plan of God. They swiftly gave forth their yield: there flowered in first blush the glories of preaching the True Faith to the nations, of martyrdom, and of holiness. They gave us the first joys of the fruits of salvation. From them has come a wondrously grand and powerful flood of benefits upon the other peoples of the world, no matter how far-flung. When blessed Peter, the Prince of the Apostles, intended to cast down the manifold wickedness of error and vice, in accord with the will of Heaven, he brought the light of divine Truth, the Gospel of peace, freedom in Christ to the metropolis of the Gentiles.”

He also declared: “The maintenance in being of the Eastern rites is of more importance than might be imagined. The august antiquity, which lends dignity to these various rites is an adornment of the whole church and a witness to the divine unity of the Catholic faith. Perhaps nothing, in fact, better proves the note of Catholicity in the Church of God than the singular homage paid by these ceremonies which vary in form, which are celebrated in languages venerable by their antiquity, and which are still further hallowed by the use that has been made of them by the Apostles and Fathers of the Church.”

On occasion of the 15th centenary of St. John Chrysostom (407-1907), Pope St. Pius X presided at a solemn pontifical Mass in the Byzantine rite at the Vatican on February 12, 1908. In his letter promulgating this celebration he wrote: “May the Easterns separated from Us see and understand in what great and profound regard We hold all the rites alike.”

Pope Benedict XV asserted in the 1917 encyclical *Dei Providentis*: “The Church of Jesus Christ is neither Latin nor Greek nor Slav, but Catholic; accordingly she makes no difference between her children and Greeks, Latins, Slavs and members of all other nations are equal in the eyes of the Apostolic See.”

Pope Pius XI had a great respect for the Eastern rites and did much to strengthen them. In his November 1923 encyclical *Ecclesiam Dei*, published on the occasion of the third centenary of the martyr of Catholic unity, St. Josaphat, he wrote: “Then we shall see all peoples, brought together in this manner, in possession of the same rights, whatever may be their race, language or liturgy. The Roman Church has always scrupulously respected and maintained the various rites, and has at all times insisted on their preservation.”

Pope Pius celebrated the 15th centenary of St. Cyril of Alexandria in the encyclical *Orientalis Ecclesiae* in 1944. He states:

“Each and every nation of Oriental rite must have its own rightful freedom in all that is bound up with its own history and its own genius and character, saving always the truth and integrity of the doctrine of Jesus Christ. ... They will never be forced to abandon their own legitimate rites or to exchange their own venerable or traditional customs for Latin rites and customs. All these are to be held in equal esteem and honor, for they adorn the common Mother Church with a royal garment of many colors. Indeed this variety of rites and customs, preserving inviolate what is most ancient and most valuable in each, presents no obstacle to a true and genuine unity.”

The Second Vatican Council in the document *Orientalium Ecclesiarum* directed that that the traditions of Eastern Catholic Churches should be maintained. It declared that:

“[I]t is the mind of the Catholic Church that each individual Church or Rite should retain its traditions whole and entire and likewise that it should adapt its way of life to the different needs of time and place,” and that they should all “preserve their legitimate liturgical rite and their established way of life, and ... these may not be altered except to obtain for themselves an organic improvement.”

Vatican II’s dogmatic constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, deals with Eastern Catholic Churches in paragraph 23, stating:

“By divine providence it has come about that various churches, established in various places by the apostles and their successors, have in the course of time coalesced into several groups, organically united, which, preserving the unity of faith and the unique divine constitution of the universal Church, enjoy their own discipline, their own

liturgical usage, and their own theological and spiritual heritage. Some of these churches, notably the ancient patriarchal churches, as parent-stocks of the Faith, so to speak, have begotten others as daughter churches, with which they are connected down to our own time by a close bond of charity in their sacramental life and in their mutual respect for their rights and duties. This variety of local churches with one common aspiration is splendid evidence of the catholicity of the undivided Church. In like manner the Episcopal bodies of today are in a position to render a manifold and fruitful assistance, so that this collegiate feeling may be put into practical application.”

St. John Paul II promulgated the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches and celebrated the centenary of Leo XII's *Orientalium Dignitas* with the apostolic letter *Orientalium Lumen*:

“Since, in fact, we believe that the venerable and ancient tradition of the Eastern Churches is an integral part of the heritage of Christ's Church, the first need for Catholics is to be familiar with that tradition, so as to be nourished by it and to encourage the process of unity in the best way possible for each.

“Our Eastern Catholic brothers and sisters are very conscious of being the living bearers of this tradition, together with our Orthodox brothers and sisters. The members of the Catholic Church of the Latin tradition must also be fully acquainted with this treasure and thus feel, with the Pope, a passionate longing that the full manifestation of the Church's catholicity be restored to the Church and to the world, expressed not by a single tradition, and still less by one community in opposition to the other; and that we too may be granted a full taste of the divinely revealed and undivided heritage of the universal Church which is preserved and grows in the life of the Churches of the East as in those of the West.”

In conclusion the Catholic Church desires that its Eastern component not only survive but also continue to grow, flourish and enrich the universal Church with treasures. ☐

(Zenit.org, October 25, 2016)

Appeal from Caritas Lebanon

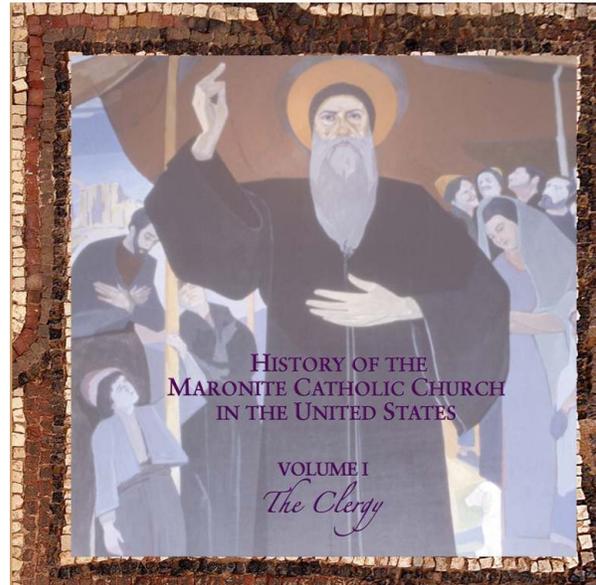
Christians in Lebanon are suffering! If you are able to relieve some of the suffering, please visit Caritas Lebanon at <http://www.caritas.org.lb>.

Thank you for your consideration. ☐

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.

A Litany of Thanksgiving

Continued from page 1

All of these are worthy of our thanks. But perhaps, above all, is our gratitude for God's Son, Jesus Christ, who took to Himself our human nature and lived among us and died that we might live.

On a personal basis, I would like to add my addendum to this litany:

- For the gift of priesthood, the dedication of my brother priests, the services of deacons, and the assistance of subdeacons;
- For the witness of religious, monks, and nuns, in their consecrated vows of obedience, chastity and poverty;
- For all of you the lay faithful who take your faith seriously and make our churches alive and open for anyone who seeks God.

So, at this time of the year, and in the spirit of the season of Thanksgiving, I urge you:

"Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good; His steadfast love endures forever!"

Have a Happy and Blessed Thanksgiving! Thank you so much!

Yours in Christ,

+A. Elias Zaidan

Fall River, Massachusetts Youth Kickoff



On Friday September 16, 2016, Saint Anthony of the Desert Church hosted a Maronite Youth kickoff, inviting teens from the parish to a monthly program of fun, spirituality and service. The goals of the MYO gatherings are to: help teens to grow closer to Jesus and to each other, reach out in service to those in need in the parish and wider community, and deepen their sense of belonging within their parish and Maronite Church. Our dynamic program to date has included a fun games night, a movie night with meaningful discussion, and an interactive Bible sharing. The teens look forward to engaging in upcoming service projects and a Christmas regional retreat in December. We are grateful to Chorbishop Joseph Kaddo, Fr. James Doran, Subdeacon Brian Dunn, Terry Galib and all the parents for their support and ongoing involvement in making this youth ministry possible and nourishing for the teens. □