



The Maronite Voice

A Publication of the Maronite Eparchies in the USA



Volume IX

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October 2013

Abdallah Elias Zaidan Ordained Bishop of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon



Patriarch Rai ordains the Reverend Abdallah Zaidan as a Bishop. Rev. Hani Mattar, Patriarchal Liturgical Master of Ceremonies (left) and Bishop Robert Shaheen assisted. Photo is courtesy of www.bkerke.org.lb.

On Saturday, September 28, 2013, at the Basilica of Our Lady of Lebanon in *Harissa*, Lebanon, His Beatitude Patriarch Bechara Peter Cardinal Rai, Maronite Patriarch of Antioch and All the East, ordained the Reverend Abdallah Elias Zaidan as the third Bishop of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon. Bishop Zaidan succeeds His Excellency Bishop Robert J. Shaheen, whose resignation the Pope accepted in conformity with Canon 210, paragraph 2 of the Code of Canons of the Oriental Churches. Bishop Zaidan assumed his late father's name -Elias- on whose birthday he was ordained.

Lebanon's Minister of Interior, General Marwan Sharbel, representing President Michel Sleyman, Joined His Excellency Archbishop Gabriele Giordano Caccia, Apostolic Nuncio to Lebanon; His Beatitude Patriarch Emeritus Nasrallah Peter Cardinal Sfeir; many bishops, priests and religious, civic and military dignitaries as well as the family and friends of Bishop Zaidan and a large number of faithful for the ceremony.

Bishop Zaidan will be installed at St. Raymond Cathedral in Saint Louis, Mo., on October 23, 2013. □

Schedule of Bishop Robert Shaheen

October 6, 2013

Annual Liturgy and Banquet, Daughters of Saint Paul, St. Louis, Mo.

October 23, 2013

Installation of Bishop A. Elias Zaidan, St. Raymond Cathedral, St. Louis, Mo.

October 25, 2013

Appreciation Party for Bishop Robert J. Shaheen, St. Louis, Mo.

October 27, 2013

First Mass of Bishop Zaidan, St. Raymond Cathedral, St. Louis, Mo. ☐

Schedule of Bishop A. Elias Zaidan

October 23, 2013

Enthronement Ceremony, St. Raymond Cathedral, St. Louis, Mo.

October 25, 2013

Appreciation Party for Bishop Robert J. Shaheen, St. Louis, Mo.

October 27, 2013

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

November 2 - 3, 2013

Liturgy of Thanksgiving and Banquet, Our Lady of Mt. Lebanon Cathedral, Los Angeles, Calif. ☐

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Our Lady of Victory Maronite Church

Pittsburgh, Penn.

July 2 - 6, 2014

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

Dartmouth, Massachusetts Blessed Mother's Guild Retreat



On Sunday, September 8, the Maronite Servants of Christ the Light facilitated an afternoon retreat for the Blessed Mother's Guild of St. Anthony of the Desert, Fall River, Mass. The Sisters hosted fifteen ladies for an afternoon of Marian reflections, *Lectio Divina*, silence, sharing, rosary, *ramsho*, supper and fellowship. Chorbishop Kaddo, Pastor of St. Anthony of the Desert, joined the group for *ramsho* and supper. The ladies were glad to have attended and found this time of reflection with Mary to be a great blessing of peace, strength and joy. ☐

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

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Hrajel, Lebanon Priestly Ordination



Fr. Elias Khalil processes with the Eucharist at his ordination.

On September 28, 2013, His Excellency Bishop Gregory Mansour ordained Elias Khalil a Priest for the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn at St. Elias Maronite Church in *Hrajel*, Lebanon. On Sunday, September 29, 2013, Fr. Khalil celebrated a Liturgy of Thanksgiving at the same Church. □

Adonis, Lebanon Priestly Ordination



On September 29, 2013, His Excellency Bishop Gregory Mansour ordained Antoine Kairouz a Priest for the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn at St. Sharbel Maronite Church in *Adonis*, Lebanon. On Sunday, October 6, 2013, Fr. Kairouz celebrated a Liturgy of Thanksgiving at the same Church. □

Warren, Michigan Wedding Anniversary Celebration



On the weekend of August 18, 2013 at St. Sharbel Maronite Catholic Church in Warren, Mich., a special acknowledgment and blessing was extended to all married couples who were celebrating anniversaries for five years to fifty years of marriage. At each of the Liturgies, these couples were called forward to the altar to receive a blessing by Chorbishop Alfred Badawi, Pastor, and Rev. George Hajj. Each couple received a certificate of renewal of marriage vows. A light reception was held in their honor.

May God grant them many years of health, joy and peace together as they continue to witness to the sanctity of the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony.

Feast of The Assumption

The Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary was celebrated in a very special way by the parishioners of St. Sharbel Maronite Catholic Church in Warren, Mich., On Thursday, August 15, 2013. After praying the Rosary together, Chorbishop Alfred Badawi, Pastor, and visiting priest Fr. Philip Yazbeck celebrated the Divine Liturgy. The choir led those present in beautiful hymns honoring the Blessed Mother.

Following the Liturgy, a tradition *saj* and village food reception was enjoyed by over 350 parishioners. □

Olean, New York 74th Annual Mahrajan

by Emil J. Ash

The 74th Annual St. Joseph Parish *Mahrajan*, or Middle-East Lebanese Festival, was held on August 11, 2013, at the new church location at Walnut Street in North Olean, New York. It was a resounding success.

Before the actual date of the event, the steering committee, made up of faithful experts at hosting this annual

event, held on with baited breath. The many volunteer workers from both within the parish and from outside it as well, were eager to do a good job. Our Pastor, Fr. Anthony J. Salim, and Chairman Emil Ash were full of cautious optimism and hope.

Everybody agreed that the new grounds accommodated the *Mahrajan* well. The tents were well laid out on the nearly 1.5 available acres. The food was served directly to the food line outside the kitchen exit.

It turned out to be a beautiful August day, with plenty of sunshine and warm weather. The traditional Lebanese dishes, as well as some Polish food to attract the people of the neighborhood, had been well prepared and were appreciated by the hundreds of people who came to the *Mahrajan*. All went well that the food sold out well before the advertised closing time. In fact, the only complaint heard was that people who came too late couldn't get the food they wait for all year long! In the words of Father Anthony: "I guess I'll have to roll double the number of grapevine leaves next year!" All our good cooks agreed.

Gross revenue far exceeded our expectations, and many in the day's crowd went home remarking that this was the best festival in Olean this year - which is no small compliment to a town that hosts three other major festivals each summer, as well some new events started in recent years - and maybe our best ever. A quite flattering review on the front page of the local newspaper topped off what proved to be a wonderful parish and city event. □



Philadelphia, Pennsylvania Lebanon Independence Day

In honor of Lebanon Independence Day, St. Maron Church in Philadelphia, Penn., presents the Lebanese singer Tony Kiwan on November 23, 2013. For further information, please call the Church office at 215 389 - 2000. To make reservations, please call 215 - 334 -1884. □

Birmingham, Alabama Festival Continues to Set Records

St. Elias Maronite Catholic Church in Birmingham, Alabama, held its 15th Annual Lebanese Food and Cultural Festival on April 12 - 13, 2013.

The combination of good food and good weather resulted in the most profitable festival since St. Elias started its Lebanese Food & Cultural Festival in 1999 to showcase to the citizens of Birmingham the rich heritage, culture and food that are part of this Christian Lebanese community.

The festival has always given a part of the proceeds to charity - over \$277,500 in the last fourteen years. This is one way that its church family is working together to help with Christian causes here and abroad.

Plans are underway for the 16th Annual Lebanese Food and Cultural Festival which will be held on April 25 - 26, 2014. Mark your calendars - it's an event you will not want to miss! □



St. Anthony's Guild. Many of the parishioners and vendors of Lebanese descent gave generously of their time and talents. It was rewarding for all of the volunteers to share the warmth and camaraderie of the Lebanese heritage with the multicultural community.

The chairpersons for this event were John Ackourey and Tanya Elias - Boulos. They and all the volunteers made this endeavor a rousing success. St. Anthony Parish and its Pastor, Fr. George Zina, would like to thank the people of the surrounding communities who attended. The Parish looks forward to seeing them next year as it continues the tradition of its *mahrajan*. □

St. Paul, Minnesota Holy Family Annual Festival



by Lisa Leach

Holy Family Maronite Church, Mendota Heights [St. Paul], Minn., celebrated its annual Fall Festival the first weekend in September. Months of planning proved successful as we exceeded last year's net profit by 25%!

The festival is the Parish's biggest fundraiser, and was this year chaired by the Parish Council. It is a chance for us to share our heritage with the community around our church. It's a fun-filled weekend with Bingo, estate sale, baked goods, raffles, children's games, music, food, Lebanese and Maronite jewelry and fun with our families and friends.

The Sunday festival started with the celebration of the Divine Liturgy by Fr. Rodrigue Constantin, Pastor. After Liturgy, festival goers treated their taste buds to traditional favorites which were available for takeout or to enjoy with others at the festival. There were many new faces from the neighborhood and from Minneapolis, thanks to the efforts of our Marketing Committee. Many parishioners from our sister Church, St. Maron in Minneapolis, also joined us.

Sincere thanks go to the parish council and all volunteers who worked hard to make this festival an event of which we can all be very proud, and a beautiful reflection of our parish and our Maronite heritage. □

Springfield, Massachusetts First Annual Festival



The First Annual Lebanese Festival at St. Anthony Maronite Church in Springfield, Mass., was held on June 8, 2013.

An early morning downpour gave way to bright sunshine in time for the start of a perfect day for all of the outdoor activities. The children enjoyed the bounce houses, games, face painting and pony rides. Evening performers as well as crowds of people danced the *dabke* to the lively music of Salah Kurdi and ensemble. The highlight for the four thousand people in attendance was the opportunity to sample the Lebanese food and baked goods prepared by the ladies of

San Francisco, California Annual Festival



by Nicole Rishwan

Our Lady of Lebanon Maronite Church community in the San Francisco Bay Area proudly organized a wonderful Lebanese Festival for the third year in a row on Saturday, August 31, 2013.

About 10,000 people attended the Festival and enjoyed the entertainment by our youths, young adults, and many other talented parishioners. The food was prepared by the parish ladies. The food menu included a variety of items in addition to sweets and pastries. The children enjoyed the games, and there were many vendors who are now regulars because of the success of our Festival.

In the photo are most of the Festival Coordinators who have worked tirelessly for three years, to make The Bay Area Lebanese Festival a huge success." □

Troy, New York National Day of Remembrance for the Unborn

Saturday, September 14, 2013, was a day set aside to remember and give honor to abortion victims across America. Fifty-eight people (including members of St. Ann's Family and Sanctity of Life Committee, Troy, N.Y.) gathered to honor and remember seventeen aborted babies buried in the Albany Rural Cemetery in Menands, N.Y. These pre-born children were left behind in a freezer of an unlicensed abortion clinic in Colonie, New York, when the clinic was abruptly closed in 1996 by the NYS Health Department, remaining as sentinels and proxies for their fifty-five million aborted brothers and sisters.

The service was organized, written and conducted by Members of the Respect Life Committee from St. Madeleine Sophie Roman Catholic Church, Guilderland, N.Y., and the members of St. Ann's Family and Sanctity of Life Committee. It included themes of repentance, remembrance, and healing in scripture, song, and a reflection given by Father Robert Powhida, Assistant Pastor of St. Madeleine Sophie. In affirmation of the humanity of these pre-born children, a name for each baby was read aloud as participants placed a rose in front of each of the sixteen wooden crosses

and the single Star of David erected for this event.

In addition to parishioners from St. Ann and St. Madeleine Sophie, local participants included members of the Capital District Pro-Life Group, Citizens Concerned for Human Life. Following the service, St. Ann's Family and Sanctity of Life Committee welcomed participants back to the church hall for a time of hospitality and friendship. This time was also spent enlightening the over forty attendees from a multitude of parishes throughout the Capital Region by answering their questions concerning the Maronite liturgy, customs and traditions and providing a tour of the Church. All left with a better understanding of the Maronite identity and membership and position within the one Catholic Church. □

Uniontown, Pennsylvania Men's Group Meets with Bishop



Pictured with Bishop Gregory Mansour are the members of the Maronite Men's Group including Father Nadim Helou, Subdeacon Tom George and Subdeacon Mallard George.

by Chuck Michael

Maronite Men's Group of St. George Church in Uniontown, Penn., met with Bishop Gregory Mansour on Saturday, August 17, 2013. The MMG enjoyed breakfast, conversation and camaraderie with each other and the Bishop. His Excellency spoke to the group about the men's role in the Maronite Church and about the history of the Maronite Church. He greeted each man and spoke to everyone who was gathered that day. Bishop Gregory blessed the food, the hosts of the event (Alan and Marsha George) and the ladies who prepared the meal.

The MMG is a group of men from within the Parish. At the time the picture was taken the group had sixty-seven members. The group has activities planned for the upcoming year such as: a *Halfi*, cleaning up a local cemetery and assisting in projects throughout the church. The group meets once a month to discuss organizational items, finances and all other business items. At each meeting a light dinner is served and a guest speaker addresses the group. □

North Jackson, Ohio Shrine Drawing Results

by Amelia Yazbek

The National Shrine of Our Lady of Lebanon in North Jackson, Ohio, would like to announce the past quarter year monthly winners of the "25 Club."

May 2013	ticket # 475	Marian Welsch
June 2013	173	George Gabriel
July 2013	6	Helen Beshara
August 2013	500	Dr. Tom Gabriel
September 2013	261	David Clarke

Anyone interested in joining the "25 Club" to help support the Shrine projects can call the Shrine at 330-538-3351 and ask for Joanne. Tickets are \$70 for the year. Each ticket is entered each month in the drawing and participants are invited to a dinner where the numbers are drawn for more money prizes in April. We thank you in advance for any support. ☐

Fairlawn, Ohio Dedication of a New Cross



In honor of the Feast of the Exultation of the Holy Cross, which was celebrated on September 8, 2013, benefactors Dr. Walid Lababidi, his wife Renee and their children gathered with all the Parish Family outside the Church for a solemn blessing and dedication of the new eight-foot cross made of aluminum material with a gold powder coat finish. We all deeply appreciate the generosity of the Lababidi Family for this very beautiful gift. This new Cross announces to all who arrive here that this is a Maronite Catholic Church. ☐

Schedule of Bishop Gregory Mansour

October 3 - 4, 2013

Banquet in Honor of Chorbishop Seely Beggiani and to welcome Fr. Geoffrey Abdallah, Our Lady of Lebanon Seminary, Washington, D.C.

October 4 - 6, 2013

Retreat and Meeting with Deacons, Subdeacons and their spouses, Our Lady of Lebanon Seminary, Washington, D.C.

October 9 - 11, 2013

Host to Bishop Elias Sleiman of Latakia, Syria

October 10 - 11, 2013

Oriental Orthodox/Catholic Dialogue, New York, N.Y.

October 12 - 13, 2013

Benefit Dinner and Divine Liturgy, Fort Lauderdale, Fla.

October 15, 2013

Our Lady of Lebanon Church, Miami, Fla.

October 16, 2013

Mary Mother of the Light Mission in Tequesta [West Palm Beach], Fla.

October 20, 2013

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

October 22 - 25, 2013

Enthronement of Bishop Elias Abdallah Zaidan and Banquet in honor of Bishop Robert Shaheen, St. Raymond Cathedral, St. Louis, Mo.

October 26 - 28, 2013

Ordination of Patrick Kokorian to priesthood, Holy Trinity Monastery, Petersham, Mass.

October 31 - November 5, 2013

Welcome to Bishop Zaidan, Los Angeles, Calif.

November 9, 2013

Catholic Relief Services Board of Directors Meeting, Baltimore, Md.

November 10, 2013

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

November 11 - 14, 2013

USCCB meetings, Baltimore, Md. ☐



Deadline for next month's issue of The Maronite Voice is October 25, 2013.

The Maronite Voice is the official Newsletter of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon and of the Eparchy of Saint

Maron of Brooklyn.

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

Brooklyn, New York Accomplishments Celebrated

by Salma Vahdat

Chests expanded with pride, and smiles broadened in our community to learn of the remarkable accomplishments and success of one of our own, Jupiter El-Asmar, son of Adonis and Jeanette El-Asmar.

Humble, affable and cheerful, and, above all, intelligent, this young gentleman encompasses all that a parent could dream of in a child.

How often do we, parents, attempt and strive to set our children on a path to success and happiness? Most probably, always. Very often those efforts are thwarted by many factors, i.e., friends, culture, distractions and a host of other influences. However, in the life of young Jupiter, all the stars have been aligned; his parents set the tasks and gave him the opportunity to grow and expand the gracious gifts that God has given him. Nurtured by family in kindness and love, Church and school in service and his love of the arts and music, he has accomplished the following.

Jupiter is a scholar, having garnered four scholarships:



Georgetown University, Milken Family Foundation, Salaam Club, and NAM: John A. Solomon Memorial. He maintained a cumulative GPA of 3.90 at Regis High School in NYC; Summa Cum Laude in grades 9, 10, 11 in the National Latin Exam; National Merit Scholar Finalist. He has served as a mentor to an elementary school child; Middle Eastern Cultural Society President at Regis H.S.; President of Amate Vitam Pro-Life and Anti-Abortion Club; President of the MYO; Lector for Mass/Prayer services at St. Patrick's Church and Regis H.S.; Eucharistic Minister.

An accomplished musician, Jupiter has played the alto saxophone since elementary school as well as the piano, even performing at Carnegie Hall while in the sixth grade. He now plays with the Wagner College Jazz Ensemble.

A member of the Forensics Team at Regis, he distinguished himself for three straight years as an octo-finalist in the Lincoln-Douglas Debates. His interest in public policy issues has influenced his decision to study international relations, majoring in Regional/Comprehensive Studies of the Middle East, Africa and Latin America at the Walsh School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University. Possessing what his guidance counselor at Regis notes as "the talent to master subjects faster and more efficiently than most," Jupiter also ranked "in the top 2% of all the students I taught during my fourteen years in the Regis English Department" by a teacher.

We, at the Cathedral, are excited to see Jupiter off to an illustrious future. We will track him as he proceeds to his goal and share in the justified pride of his family. □

5TH ANNUAL MYA WORKSHOP

ATLANTA, GA — NOVEMBER 1-3, 2013
GRAND HYATT HOTEL
St. Joseph Maronite Catholic Church



Living a Maronite Catholic Faith as a Young Adult in Today's World

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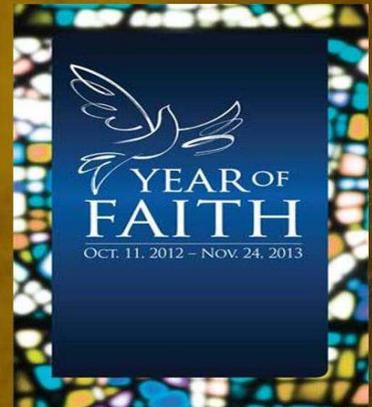
- Most Reverend Maronite Bishop of the Eparchy of St. Maron of Brooklyn, Gregory J. Mansour
- Most Reverend Maronite Bishop of Canada, Marwan Tabet "Who is God to Me?"
- Fr. Tony Massad, Pastor of St. Rafka Maronite Mission - Livonia, Michigan "Faith and Society"
- Mr. Tony Charaf, Delta Chief Cargo Officer and President of TechOps "Servant Leaders"

HOT TOPICS

- Religious Marriage vs. Civil Marriage
- Catholicism vs. Spirituality
- Pro-Life vs. Pro-Choice
- Human Rights vs. Sexual Orientation



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www.facebook.com/groups/MYAfb

www.grandatlanta.hyatt.com

Why The Decrease in Christian Populations In the East?

by Brother John M. Samaha, S.M.

Christians are becoming an ever smaller minority in the Holy Land countries of Jesus Christ's time.

At the beginning of the twentieth century Christians accounted for a quarter of the population in the countries of the Near East and Middle East. Muslims have been the majority. One hundred years later in the second decade of the third millennium the number of Christians has decreased to less than five per cent, except in Lebanon.

Why is the Christian population shrinking in these Muslim-dominated countries? Researchers in Beirut and in Rome identify three reasons based on their observations. The causes of shrinking Christian population are demographic changes, emigration, and sterner Islamization.

Demography

Muslims multiply faster than Christians. This is due partially because of Muslim polygamy, a fairly common practice in rural areas.

Another contributing factor is improved hygiene and health care. Until a half-century ago, before the use of antibiotics and advanced medical care, infant mortality in these areas was higher in Muslim communities than among the more educated Christian families. Now Muslim families are no longer plagued by that handicap.

In the socio-cultural realm, Christians place strong emphasis on the education of their children, and this accounts for a somewhat lower birth rate. World statistics indicate that groups with a greater educational and cultural achievement, in this case Christians, have fewer children. Christian families used to average three or four children, and Muslims eight to ten. The figures are lower now, and the gap continues to grow.

Emigration

Worsening social and political factors have caused increased Christian emigration. Christians occupy an inferior position in Islamic society. This is stipulated both in the Qur'an and in historical tradition.

According to Islam a Christian is one who pays taxes and is tolerated, but in a position subordinate to Muslims. The Qur'an actually calls for the "humiliation" of Christians (sura IX, verse 29), although the term has been interpreted differently throughout history by various Muslim rulers. In most, but not all, Muslim countries Christians have been allowed to worship freely, but were subject to diverse humiliations. In times past they had to cede to Muslims passing by, or travel on foot while Muslims were permitted to ride horses.

In the modern era Christians in Muslim lands have worked

for equal rights. In fact, in nineteenth century Egypt under Mehmed Ali Pasha, and in Turkey after Ataturk's revolution of 1923, Christians were trusted with important roles in the modernization of Muslim countries.

While some Muslim and Israeli political leaders pay lip service to equal rights for Christians, the reality is often the opposite.

Islamization

Re-Islamization and intolerance have sprung up again and been re-fueled with the current crisis in the Arab world caused by the creation of the state of Israel in 1948. In this era it must be understood objectively that Israel was not founded in a just and equitable manner. For the first time in world history a state was born from nothing at the expense of another people, whose identity was cancelled as its territory was confiscated. Because of a troubled conscience following the Shoah, the West facilitated the population of a new state with Jews from outside the area, mostly from Europe. Consequently the Muslim world perceived Israel as a Western and Christian creation. Unfortunately the identification of "Western" with "Christian" persists in Muslim society.

Because of their political and military ineptitude against Israel and the West, the Muslim countries became more vengeful and bitter. With the onset of Nasser's anti-West regime in Egypt in the 1950's the flight of Christians began.

The situation deteriorated for Christians after the 1978 war when they were squeezed from both sides.

Further, after the fall of Soviet communism a Muslim fear arose that the West would make Islam its new number one enemy.

As a result, the flight of Christians from the Holy Land and neighboring countries continues and even increases. Christian bishops of all persuasions -- Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant -- beg the émigrés to return to their homelands, but to no avail. □

Popes John Paul II and John XXIII Will be Canonized on April 27, 2014: The Feast of Divine Mercy

Pope Francis announced the date for the joint canonization ceremony at an ordinary consistory in Rome on September 30, 2013. In July, when the Pope signed a decree calling for the canonization of the two former Pontiffs, there was speculation that the joint ceremony might take place before the end of the calendar year. The later date [April 27, 2014] allows Vatican organizers more time to plan for what will likely be an enormous influx of pilgrims for the ceremony. □

(CWNews, September 30, 2013)

The Significance of Shrines

by
Brother John M. Samaha, S.M.

The Meaning of Shrine

A shrine is a church or other sacred place visited by the faithful as pilgrims for special devotion. A pilgrimage is a journey by the faithful to a shrine, a place made sacred. Today the concept of pilgrimage is gaining ascendancy. We have a heightened awareness that we are a pilgrim people en route to our eternal destiny. Vatican Council II reminded us that we are a pilgrim Church.

Only in the postconciliar period has any thought been given to defining the concept of shrine or to developing official criteria about shrines. We find no reference to shrines in the former (1917) Code of Canon Law, in the writings of Vatican II, or in Pope Paul VI's instruction on proper devotion to Mary, *Marialis Cultus*.

Paul VI's Initiative

Pope Paul VI remedied this situation emphatically, and called for serious reflection on the role of shrines in the life of the Church. At the first meeting of rectors of Marian shrines in Italy, Paul VI urged them to "lift their voices and let their existence be known in the Church." In the annual addresses to the rectors of Marian shrines, meetings which he initiated, Paul VI was concerned with the meaning of shrines and their place in the liturgical and pastoral life of the Church. He described shrines as "spiritual clinics" (1965), "testimonies of miraculous deeds and of a continual wave of devotion" (1966), "luminous stars in the Church's sky" ... "centers of devotion, of prayer, of recollection, of spiritual refreshment" (1970). He recommended that shrines have a full program of sacramental and pastoral activity, and that they be centers of genuine religious intensity. He made it clear that devotion is an extension of liturgy and a preparation for it, that all Christian worship leads to Christ.

Previously, academic theology gave no consideration to shrines. The former Code of Canon Law, Vatican Council II, and papal instructions did not mention shrines. Shrines had no formal or canonical Church recognition.

Then Paul VI rose to the occasion and instigated the legislation on shrines contained in the current (1983) Code of Canon Law which now guides the Church, and defines shrines as sacred places of pilgrimage, animated centers of intense Christian life which foster liturgical and sacramental practice and cultivate sound devotion.

John Paul II and the Marian Year

In his Marian Year encyclical *Redemptoris Mater* (Mother of the Redeemer, 1987), Pope John Paul II spoke of the "geography of faith" and Marian devotion in regard to shrines. He asked for a qualitative approach to liturgical and devotional practice.

The Central Committee for the 1987-1988 Marian Year issued an instructional letter on the mission of Marian shrines. Among its directives the instruction encouraged shrines to present in the Eucharistic celebrations a genuine image of the nature of the Church and of the Eucharist" and "reveal the fullness of the paschal mystery, communion with the universal Church, and the presence of Mary in word and symbol." Further, it encouraged shrines:

- to cultivate a sense of God's beauty revealed in Mary;
- to provide an atmosphere for discerning and responding to vocation as a gift of God, for a shrine is a sign of this mysterious relationship between God's call and the person's response;
- to be associated with or to sponsor a work of charity, such as a home for the sick, a school for the disadvantaged, a retirement center;
- to foster ecumenical prayer, encounters, dialogues.

The Meaning of Pilgrimage

A pilgrimage or visit to a sacred place honoring a significant event is intended to be an action both profoundly human and religious. Millions each year frequent the great historical locations where their country's grand events were forged. The concept of pilgrimage is prominent in all of the world's major religions: Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist.

The spirit of the early and medieval Church inspired pilgrimages to Jerusalem and Bethlehem, to the tombs of the apostles and martyrs, to the holy places of Rome, and to churches and shrines holding relics of saints. Internationally famous for pilgrimage in the Middle Ages were Santiago de Compostela in northwestern Spain and Canterbury in England.

The Mission of Shrines

Marian shrines are a particular expression of devotion to Mary. In the last century the Church has made enormous strides in promoting the liturgical and pastoral life of the Church, especially at shrines.

The Marian apparitions of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries at Paris, Lourdes, La Salette, Knock, Beauraing, Fatima, and other places created noted centers of prayer and renewal. Pilgrims came to find healing and spiritual courage, to experience for themselves the miraculous event which had occurred, and this devotion revitalized the spirit of pilgrimage in the Church.

In the Catholic world of today about eighty percent of all shrines are dedicated to Mary. Annually the vast majority of pilgrims are destined for Marian shrines. For example, about

ten million go to Guadalupe in Mexico, six million to Lourdes in France, five million to Czestochowa in Poland, four million to Aparecida in Brazil.

Shrines are not intended to be a sightseeing stop on a vacation trip; they are places of pilgrimage. Though most need to travel considerable distances and use vacation time to reach the shrines, pilgrimage is not a vacation-time visit, but rather an action of spiritual renewal.

Pilgrimage is an effort of the great journey of human life toward God. The life of the Christian person is a pilgrimage. Ours is a pilgrim Church. Ordinarily pilgrims endured privations in joining with others en route to a common goal. They unite with pilgrims of the past in prayer and in gratitude for a hallowed place.

All the actions of a pilgrimage are meant to be symbolic and instructive and transforming: the preparation, joining together with other pilgrims, the welcome at the shrine, the visit to the sanctuary, the celebration of the Eucharist, the return home. The purpose of the pilgrimage is to guide the pilgrim "to the essential: Jesus Christ, the Savior, the end of every journey, and the source of all holiness."

Vatican Council II spoke of Mary's "pilgrimage of faith." She precedes and encourages us in our own pilgrimage of Faith. Marian shrines are one expression of Mary's presence among us, the Church. John Paul II in *Mother of the Redeemer* referred to a "geography" of faith and devotion to Mary which includes those special places of pilgrimage where the People of God find the one who first believed and a strengthening of their own faith.

In today's world with millions of refugees and displaced persons, shrines are becoming gathering places for people uprooted from their homes and churches. At the first World Congress on Shrines and Pilgrimages in 1992 sponsored by the Pontifical Council for Migrants and Itinerant People, John Paul II expressed the desire that "persons whom life has treated harshly, the poor, the people who are distant from the Church" may find a welcome at shrines.

Hospitality extended to migrants and to all pilgrims at Marian shrines is an expression of the Virgin Mary's welcoming of God's Word. Her example reminds all people that we come together in the great pilgrimage of life on this earth to everlasting life in our permanent home with God.

Shrines make manifest Jesus, Mary, and the saints.

Food For Thought

"Ultimately, in the battle against lies and violence, truth and love have no other weapon than the witness of suffering."

Pope Benedict XVI

ENCOUNTER

Eastern Catholic Churches in the U.S.A. and Canada

Together in Christ

The bishops of the Eastern Catholic Churches of the U.S.A. and Canada announced today that an "Encounter of the Eastern Catholic Churches - Together in Christ" will be held from January 31 to February 2, 2014 at the Renaissance Hotel, Orlando, Florida.

The concept of the "Encounter" began in 1999 in Boston, Mass., with the approval and encouragement of the Holy See of Rome. A subsequent gathering was held in Chicago in 2006 with representation of the Vatican Congregation of the Oriental Congregation in the person of Cardinal Daoud, then Prefect of the Congregation.

Owing to the success of these two Encounters the bishops took the unusual step of conducting the "Encounter 2012" in Cleveland, Ohio; Hillsborough, N.J.; and El Segundo, Calif. That event, which was really one event in three locations, won the admiration of the faithful of the Eastern Catholic Churches, who expressed the desire for more events of this kind; hence the announcement of this latest Encounter under the spiritual guidance of Bishop Nicholas J. Samra of the Eparchy (Diocese) of Newton, Mass., for the Melkites.

Bishop Samra is the vice-president of the Eastern Catholic Associates, as the organization of the bishops is collectively known, and the Eastern Catholic Conference of Eparchial (diocesan) Directors of Religious Education which is under the aegis of the ECA. For more information email

From the Book Shelf

Ecedchairman@comcast.net. □

The Prayer of the Faithful, three volumes of morning and evening prayer of the faithful in English, is available from Saint Maron Publications.

Volume One (Sundays of the Church; Season of Announcements; Birth of the Lord and Epiphany) is available for \$40 plus \$5 shipping.

Volume Two (Seasons of Great Lent and Resurrection) is available for \$40 plus \$5 shipping.

Volume Three (Seasons of Pentecost and Holy Cross) is available for \$30 plus \$5 shipping.

To order your copy, please write to:
Saint Maron Publications,
4611 Sadler Road,
Glen Allen, VA 23060.

For further information, call (804) 762-4301. For a complete listing of publications carried by Saint Maron Publications, please visit www.stmaron.org. □

Homily at Mass with Seminarians, Novices and Those Discerning their Vocations

On July 7, 2013, Pope Francis delivered the homily at Mass with seminarians and novices gathered in St. Peter's Basilica to mark the end of a four-day conference on vocation, discernment and formation in Rome. Below, please find the English translation of the Holy Father's remarks.

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Yesterday I had the pleasure of meeting you, and today our joy is even greater, because we have gathered for the Eucharist on the Lord's Day. You are seminarians, novices, young people on a vocational journey, from every part of the world. You represent the Church's youth! If the Church is the Bride of Christ, you in a certain sense represent the moment of betrothal, the Spring of vocation, the season of discovery, assessment, formation. And it is a very beautiful season, in which foundations are laid for the future. Thank you for coming!

Today the Word of God speaks to us of mission. Where does mission originate? The answer is simple: it originates from a call, the Lord's call, and when He calls people, He does so with a view to sending them out. But how is the one sent out meant to live? What are the reference points of Christian mission? The readings we have heard suggest three: the joy of consolation, the Cross and prayer.

The first element: the joy of consolation. The prophet Isaiah is addressing a people that has been through a dark period of exile, a very difficult trial. But now the time of consolation has come for Jerusalem; sadness and fear must give way to joy: "Rejoice... be glad ... rejoice with her in joy," says the prophet (66:10). It is a great invitation to joy. Why? For what reason? Because the Lord is going to pour out over the Holy City and its inhabitants a "torrent" of consolation, of maternal tenderness: "You shall be carried upon her hip and dandled upon her knees. As one whom his mother comforts, so I will comfort you" (vv. 12-13). Every Christian, especially you and I, is called to be a bearer of this message of hope that gives serenity and joy: God's consolation, his tenderness towards all. But if we first experience the joy of being consoled by Him, of being loved by Him, then we can bring that joy to others. This is important if our mission is to be fruitful: to feel God's consolation and to pass it on to others! Isaiah's invitation must resound in our hearts: "Comfort, comfort my people" (40:1) and it must lead to mission. People today certainly need words, but most of all they need us to bear witness to the mercy and tenderness of the Lord, which warms the heart, rekindles hope, and attracts people towards the good. What a joy it is to bring God's consolation to others!

The second reference point of mission is the Cross of Christ. Saint Paul, writing to the Galatians, says: "Far be it from me to glory except in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ" (6:14). And he speaks of the "marks of Jesus," that is, the wounds of the crucified Lord, as a countersign, as the distinctive mark of his life as an Apostle of the Gospel. In his ministry Paul experienced suffering, weakness and defeat, but also joy and



consolation. This is the Paschal mystery of Jesus: the mystery of death and resurrection. And it was precisely by letting himself be conformed to the death of Jesus that Saint Paul became a sharer in His resurrection, in His victory. In the hour of darkness and trial, the dawn of light and salvation is already present and operative. The Paschal mystery is the beating heart of the Church's mission! And if we remain within this mystery, we are sheltered both from a worldly and triumphalistic view of mission and from the discouragement that can result from trials and failures. The fruitfulness of the Gospel proclamation is measured neither by success nor by failure according to the criteria of human evaluation, but by becoming conformed to the logic of the Cross of Jesus, which is the logic of stepping outside oneself and spending oneself, the logic of love. It is the Cross – the Cross that is always present with Christ – which guarantees the fruitfulness of our mission. And it is from the Cross, the supreme act of mercy and love, that we are reborn as a "new creation" (Gal 6:15).

Finally the third element: prayer. In the Gospel we heard: "Pray therefore the Lord of the harvest, to send out labourers into his harvest" (Lk 10:2). The labourers for the harvest are not chosen through advertising campaigns or appeals for service and generosity, but they are "chosen" and "sent" by God. For this, prayer is important. The Church, as Benedict XVI has often reiterated, is not ours, but God's; the field to be cultivated is His. The mission, then, is primarily about grace. And if the Apostle is born of prayer, he finds in prayer the light and strength for his action. Our mission ceases to bear fruit, indeed, it is extinguished the moment the link with its source, with the Lord, is interrupted.

(Continues on page 20)



Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn *Fourth Annual Benefit Dinner*

Maronite Catholics and friends from the greater New York area will gather on Thursday, November 21, 2013, at the Archdiocese of New York Building (1011 First Avenue) for the Fourth Annual Benefit Dinner for the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn.

The evening will begin with a Cocktail Reception with hors d'oeuvres at 6:00 p.m., to be followed by Dinner at 7:30 p.m. Individual tickets cost \$250 each. Table sponsorships are available at \$5,000, \$10,000 and \$20,000. Additional donations are encouraged. Over two hundred guests are expected.

Proceeds from the Benefit Dinner will be used to educate Seminarians, support poorer parishes and missions, make structural repairs to the Cathedral and assist retired priests. Bishop Gregory John Mansour stated, "I invite all of the faithful of the Eparchy, and every person of good will, to attend or support this year's Benefit Dinner in Manhattan. Thank you and welcome!"

An added feature of this year's Benefit Dinner is that it will honor Dr. Hamid Mouallem and his wife, Leila. The Mouallems are faithful and devoted members of the Maronite community in the New York area.

The Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn comprises forty-three parishes, a Seminary, a Convent, a Monastery and the Maronite faithful in sixteen states located along the East Coast of the United States from Maine to Florida. It is directly under the jurisdiction of Pope Francis.

To sponsor a table or to make reservations or for further information, please log on to www.stmaron.org or email saintmaron@yahoo.com. □

Worcester, Massachusetts *Catechists Workshop*

by Sister Marla Marie

On Saturday, September 7, 2013, the Maronite Servants of Christ the Light were invited by Father Gaby Hoyek to give a workshop to the catechists at Our Lady of Mercy Maronite Church in Worcester, Mass. The introductory workshop covered the what and how of catechesis, the source documents for catechesis through visual media and interactive discussion. We explored the vocation and essential qualities and skills of a catechist; how to keep children engaged in the classroom; tips in preparing the learning environment; and how to use the Faith of the Mountain Catechetical series in developing effective lessons for the children.

The catechists found the sessions to be useful, refreshing and encouraging in their mission and service to the Church in guiding the children closer to Our Lord Jesus by their Christ-like witness and love for our Maronite heritage. If you would like the Maronite Servants to visit your parish and



present a catechist workshop please call (508) 996-1753 or email sister@maroniteservants.org. □

Pope Calls On Catechists To Awaken The Memory Of God In Others

More than 100,000 pilgrims participated at the open air Mass in St. Peter's Square on Sunday, September 29, 2013, with Pope Francis on the final day of the World Day of Catechists. The event which gathered catechists from all over the world was one of many events this year to mark the Year of Faith.

The Holy Father quoted the words of the prophet Amos: "Woe to the complacent in Zion ... lying upon beds of ivory! They eat, they drink, they sing, they play and they care nothing about other people's troubles." He explained that, although these are harsh words, "they warn us about a danger that all of us face. ... The danger of complacency, comfort, worldliness in our lifestyles and in our hearts, of making our well-being the most important thing in our lives."

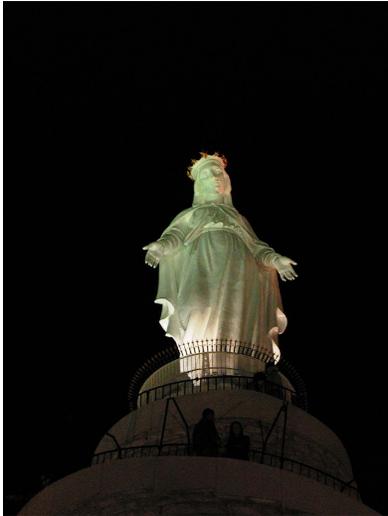
This was also the case of the rich man in the Gospel, who dressed luxuriously and banqueted sumptuously without concern for the poor man on his doorstep who had nothing to relieve his hunger. "Whenever material things, money, worldliness, become the center of our lives, they take hold of us, they possess us; we lose our very identity as human beings. ... The rich man in the Gospel has no name, he is simply 'a rich man'. Material things, his possessions, are his face; he has nothing else."

This happens to us when we find "security in material things which ultimately rob us of our our human face. This is what happens when we become complacent, when we no longer remember God. ... Life, the world, other people, all of these become unreal, they no longer matter, everything boils down to one thing: having. When we no longer remember God, we too become unreal, we too become empty; like the rich man in the Gospel, we no longer have a face. Those who run after nothing become nothing." (Continues on page 20)

Act of Consecration of Lebanon and the Middle East to the Blessed Virgin Mary

In May of 2013, His Beatitude Patriarch Bechara Peter Cardinal Rai, Maronite Patriarch of Antioch and All the East, consecrated Lebanon and the Middle East to the Blessed Virgin Mary. Below is the prayer of consecration that the Patriarch read.

Most Holy Virgin Mary, Mother of God and our Mother, you have been chosen by God Our Father, through the action of the Holy Spirit, to become the Mother of His Incarnate Son; you lived perfectly the obedience of faith, united, by your motherhood, to Your Son Jesus, by an indissoluble bond, thus listening to His words, treasuring up all these things and pondering them in your heart; you accompanied Him throughout His early life in Nazareth, where He was growing in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man; you interceded with Him in Cana of Galilee, you suffered with Him in your motherly heart at the foot of the Cross and participated in the redemption that He accomplished, He, the only Redeemer of the world, for the sake of the entire humanity in every time and place. Your spiritual motherhood thus embraced the whole of humanity and all mankind, in all their affiliations and cultures. Today, after you were raised to the glory of Your Son risen from the dead, you continue to enfold us with your maternal care, through your intercession, for us to welcome the graces of the Lord that would lead us to the Kingdom of Heaven.



Our Lady of Lebanon, we ask you to bestow your tenderness upon our beloved country, Lebanon, and all the Middle East, this region which soil witnessed the fulfillment of the events of His plan of redemption and from where the Church, by the grace of the Holy Spirit, took off to bring the Good News to the entire population, bearing witness to the Lord Jesus until martyrdom and acting as the guarantor of the treasure of faith, in order to transmit it from generation to generation, until it reached us.

O Mother of the Church, Help us through your intercession, for we are the sons and daughters of the Church to which you belong and whose model, mother and teacher you are, so that we live the Communion of Love among ourselves and bear witness for the human and Christian values in our family, social and national lives, working to promote those values in Lebanon and the East and turning them into a civilization that elevates the human person to listen with the utmost obedience to God who speaks constantly to his heart.

O Mother of men and peoples, you who know our sufferings and joys, our fears and hopes, protect this region through

your intercession from all that threatens it, from violence, extremism, turmoil and turbulence and from the demeaning of human persons' dignity and the infringement of their rights, freedom and integrity; we pray you to guide all the children of this East, in their diversity, that their minds be enlightened with the light of the only Creator who wants us to live as one human family tied by the bonds of brotherhood, so that every person seeks to build a bright future, on the grounds of convergence, participation, love and justice.

We implore you, O Mother, to accept from us the consecration of Lebanon and the East to your Immaculate Heart and to your holy patronage. We thus consecrate ourselves to God, through the action of the Holy Spirit, following the example of the Only Son who consecrated Himself to His Divine Father and was faithful to Him in all His acts and teachings, for the salvation of humanity. Pray for us, that we may live the full requirements of this consecration, thus repenting of our sins, listening to the Word of God which is our source of life and renewing our love to God by complying to His will and through our love for our neighbors expressed in the act of reconciliation and peaceful coexistence in a spirit of brotherhood.

We implore your intercession, O Holy Mary:

- For the human persons to be open to God and to abide by His will, thus working for the good of the entire humanity and contributing to building peace, we pray You;
- So that we show faithfulness to Jesus Christ in our life and we bear witness to Him in our words and deeds, through love and reconciliation, service and sacrifice, we pray You;
- So that we carry the Cross of pain in our souls and bodies, on the example of Jesus Christ, and face the challenges and adversities with patience and hope, we pray you;
- For our bishops, priests, religious and laymen, so that God assists them in carrying out their mission, we pray you;
- For the preservation of the sanctity of the union of marriage and for our families to remain domestic churches that convey faith, teach how to pray and contribute in the life and the ministry of the Church, we pray you;
- For the respect of human life from birth and until death, we pray you;
- For peace in the hearts, the families and communities and for the advancement of human beings, we pray you;

- So that each human person's dignity, rights, civil and religious freedoms and integrity be preserved, we pray you;
- For the political authorities to work on ensuring public good which contributes to the good of men and the nations, we pray you;
- So that we may be delivered from our sins that lead to divisions, aggression and violence, we pray you;
- So that we give God the priority in our life, against the reality of consumerism and materialism and in light of the excessive earthly concerns and temptations of life, we pray you;

O Mother of God and Lady of Lebanon, full of sanctity, intercede for us, that we may accept in our country and our East the graces that God has bestowed upon the world, by the enduring salvific power of the redemption and the merciful love that leads the consciences and sanctifies the human person, so that with you and through you we elevate the Hymn of glory and praise to the Holy Trinity who has chosen You, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, Amen. ☐

Pope Compares Church With 'Field Hospital' For Wounded Society

In a broad-ranging interview, Pope Francis has underlined the need for the Church "to heal wounds and to warm the hearts of the faithful."

"Ministers of the church must be ministers of mercy above all," the Pope insists in the course of a 12,000-word interview. Conducted by Father Antonio Spadaro, the editor of the Italian Jesuit journal *La Civiltà Cattolica*, the interview was translated and published simultaneously by other Jesuit publications, including the American magazine *America*.

Stressing that the Church must respond to the needs of a society with several spiritual needs, the Pope likened the Church to a "field hospital" dealing with gravely wounded patients. "It is useless to ask a seriously injured person if he has high cholesterol and about the level of his blood sugars," he said. "You have to heal his wounds. Then we can talk about everything else."

In a portion of the interview that immediately commanded headlines in the Western world, the Pontiff said that Church leaders should not confine their public statements to controversial social issues such as abortion, homosexuality, and contraception. The Church's stand on those issues is already well known, he said. More important, he added, the primary goal of the Church is to preach the fundamental Gospel message. He spoke of the need to speak about "what fascinates and attracts more, what makes the heart burn, as it did for the disciples at Emmaus."

"We have to find a new balance; otherwise even the moral

edifice of the church is likely to fall like a house of cards, losing the freshness and fragrance of the Gospel," the Pope said. He observed that if people are attracted by the Gospel message, they will naturally be sympathetic to the moral principles derived from that message.

Regarding homosexual persons and others who are living in objectively sinful situations, the Pope said that Church ministers should approach them with a loving attitude. "In life, God accompanies persons, and we must accompany them, starting from their situation."

Throughout the long interview, Pope Francis returned repeatedly to the need for a fresh, new, and attractive presentation of the Gospel. "The Church sometimes has locked itself up in small things, in small-minded rules," he said.

The Pope observed that the "young" Catholic churches — the communities in which the Church is experiencing her first period of growth—have very different experiences and outlooks from the older Catholic communities. He suggested that both are necessary to help plot the future of Catholicism, just as both young and old people are essential to the vitality of any society. "They build the future: the young ones with their strength and the others with their wisdom."

Regarding the future of Catholicism, the Pope said that he would not use the term optimism, "because that is about a psychological attitude." He opted instead for the word "hope," which is a theological virtue. "God does not mislead hope," the Pope said.

The interviewer, Father Spadaro, began the questions by asking: "Who is Jorge Mario Bergoglio?" After a pause, the Pope replied, "I am a sinner. This is the most accurate definition."

Father Spadaro commented, in his own introductory remarks, that the interview proved challenging because the Pope produced a "volcanic flow of ideas that are bound up with each other." At times, he said, the Pontiff interrupted one question to elaborate on his response to an earlier one.

In other portions of the interview, the Pope commented on:

- His membership in the Jesuit order, saying that he was "a witness myself to the misunderstandings and problems that the Society has recently experienced.
- Marian devotion, saying that popular devotion captures the attitude of the Church. Regarding the Virgin Mary, he said, "If you want to know who she is, you ask theologians; if you want to know how to love her, you have to ask the people."

(Continues on page 18)



NAM Vocations Awareness Winners

The National Apostolate of Maronites (NAM) sponsors annual contests that receive wide participation by Maronite youth throughout the country. The vocation contests take place during the year and the results are announced at each convention. At this year's national convention in Philadelphia, Penn., the following winners were recognized for their achievements and contributions.

NAM 2013 Vocations Awareness Contest Winners

Essays

Kindergarten / Grade One

How do you show God that you love Him?

- Jonathan Mouanes** Our Lady of Lebanon, Waterbury, Conn.
Cassidy Youssef St. George Church, Pawtucket, Rhode Island
Leanne Siefke St. Anthony Church, Glen Allen, Va.

Grades Two and Three

Email God asking about your future life.

- Michael Urban** Blessed Teresa of Calcutta Mission, Aliquippa, Penn.
Taylor Greenaway St. Maron Church, Youngstown, Ohio
Kierstin Salinas St. George Church, San Antonio, Tex.

Grades Four through Six

What is the difference between a religious vocation and a career? Is one better than the other?

- Maroun Harb** St. George Church, San Antonio, Tex.
Marta Michael Blessed Teresa of Calcutta Mission, Aliquippa, Penn.
Ava Gibrall St. Anthony Church, Glen Allen, Va.

Grades Seven through Nine

Assuming you have a religious or priestly vocation, would you family support your choice? Why or why not?

- Melissa Safi** Our Lady of Lebanon, Brooklyn, N.Y.

Grades Ten through Twelve

"The harvest is plentiful but the laborers are few..." (Luke 10:2). Why do you think there is a shortage of religious and priestly vocations today? What can you do to help?

No entries

Poster Winners

Kindergarten / Grade One

Guardian Angels help keep me safe.

- Randieh Kassouf** Our Lady of Victory, Pittsburgh, Penn.
Nicholas Shaker Our Lady of Lebanon, Waterbury, Conn.
Elizabeth Msrano St. Elias Church, Birmingham, Ala.

Grades Two and Three

God gave you the gift of life. What gift would you give God?

- Christo El Hachem** Our Lady of the Cedars, Jamaica Plain, Mass.
Dominique Khoury St. John Maron Church, Williamsville, N.Y.
Melanie Tohme Our Lady of the Rosary, Carmichael, Calif.

Grades Four through Six

Follow the Lord and He will lead you on the right path.

- Andrew Saffa** St. Therese Church, Tulsa, Okla.
Grace Khoury St. Maron Church, Minneapolis, Minn.
Quintin Blaizot St. Jude Church, Murray, Utah

Grades Seven through Nine

The choices I make today make a difference in my life tomorrow.

- Alexandra Williams** St. Jude Church, Orlando, Fla.
Matthew Moradian St. Maron Church, Youngstown, Ohio
Samuel Minaya St. Jude Church, Orlando, Fla.

Grades Ten through Twelve

"Listen I am standing at the door knocking..." (Revelation 3:30).

- Stefan Billups** St. Jude Church, Orlando, Fla.

Multimedia

Compose a 3-5 minute production. Interview a priest, nun, deacon or other religious about their choice to serve God.

Or choose and present the life of one saint (i.e. Rafka, Hardini, Sharbel, Maron or Stephen) and why they chose to life they chose

Grades Seven through Nine

- Paul Nassif** Our Lady of the Cedars of Lebanon, Jamaica Plain, Mass.

Paul LaHood Heart of Jesus Mission, Fort Lauderdale, Fla.
Tiana Eladem Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral, Brooklyn, N.Y.

Grades Ten through Twelve

Fidelle El-Asmar Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral, Brooklyn, N.Y.
Gaielle Harb St. George Church, San Antonio, Tex.
Theresa Bolus St. Elias Church, Birmingham, Ala.

Eleven parishes from the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn participated with twenty-two essays, four multimedia and fifty posters. Eighteen winners were chosen.

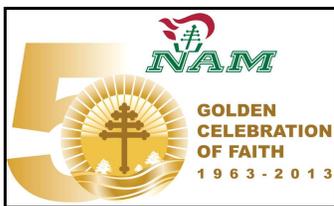
Eight parishes from the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon participated with twelve essays, six multimedia and sixty-one posters. Ten winners were chosen.

Convention Raffle Winners

The Board of Directors of the National Apostolate of Maronites (NAM) is pleased to announce the winners of the Convention Raffle:

- **Nouha Daoud** of Tampa, Fla., (ticket no. 08139) won the first prize
- **Tony Younes** of Boston, Mass., (ticket no. 08660) won the second prize
- **Jean-Marie Maio** of Brightwaters, N.Y., (ticket no. 11295) won the third prize

Congratulations to all the winners, and thank you for your support. □



NAM's 50th Annual Convention, Continuing the Apostolic Mission

A dream, a reality, an achievement - NAM's 50th anniversary convention was a great success in Tampa, Fla. The community of Sts. Peter and Paul Mission set their goals high and reached them. With the enlightening workshops, fun excursions and activities, spiritual gatherings, and entertaining evenings and after parties, NAM 2013 was an unforgettable celebration of faith and heritage.

For the duration of the convention, attendees had the opportunity to feed their curiosity and faith by attending numerous workshops. A wide range of topics was carefully assigned to knowledgeable and experienced speakers such as Mr. John Kurey, who presented fundraising and stewardship tactics. Fr. Abdallah Zaidan and Msgr. George M. Sebaali

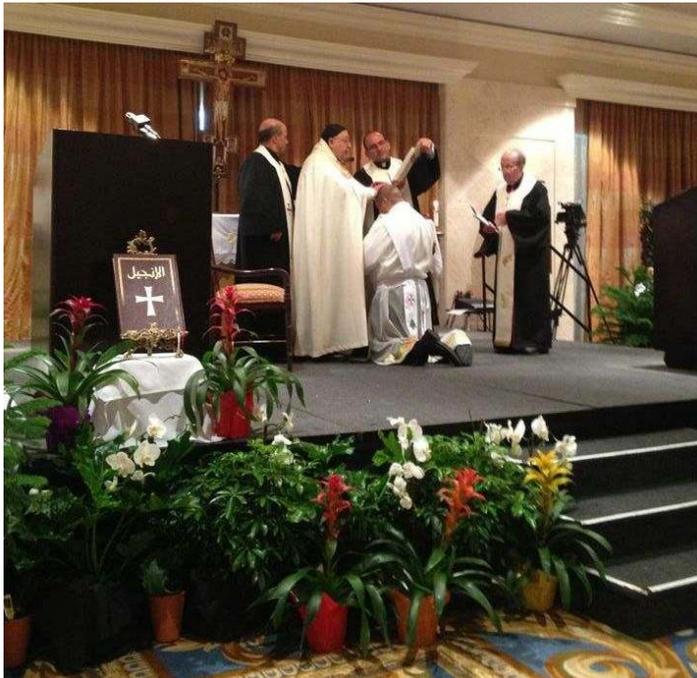


presented a workshop about effective church leadership methods. An overview of the last fifty years and an interactive discussion on the future of NAM was given by Ed Shiner. Fr. Geoffrey Abdallah answered many questions about the new Liturgical books and hymns. Maronite formation teachers from across the country were guided through *Faith of the Mountain* by Fr. Georges El Khalli and Deacon Louis Peters. Secretary of Transportation Ray LaHood, Dr. Sami Nader, and Chorbishop Seely Beggiani kept everyone on the edge of their seats during their workshop on The Eastern Church and the challenges of the Arab Spring. The Holy Spirit University at *Kaslik*, Lebanon, (USEK) presented the movie "Maronites ... Destination Freedom" which was well received by all.

With various cultures hugging Tampa Bay, welcoming night Wednesday highlighted Tampa's root culture: A Cuban night with a pirate invasion. A live original Cuban band along with the interactive flamenco dancers invaded the dance floor. Not only that, but little pirates were near! Children used their imagination, became pirates, and searched for hidden treasures. On Thursday evening, a spectacular show of fireworks lit the skies of Tampa Bay. Later the angelic voice of Aber Nehme transported us back home in an unforgettable evening of hymns, religious songs, folklore and classics. Friday night, we traveled back home with the delicious taste of Lebanese food and dancing to the music of Amin El Sultan and group. Sts. Peter and Paul Mission also proudly presented Lebanese superstar Tony Kiwan, who fired up the banquet party on Saturday night.

Sts. Peter & Paul Mission values originality. A 5k leisure run on a breezy Tampa Bay morning saw a high number of competitive athletes! Attendees also had the chance to return home with a brand new vehicle. A 2013-Mercedes Benz was one of many valuable items available for raffle.

At the first NAM convention back in 1964 we celebrated the ordination of the first American-born Maronite priest, now Bishop Robert Shaheen; and on the fiftieth many crowded the chapel at the hotel to celebrate the ordination of Fr. George Hajj. Fr. Hajj wanted to celebrate his ordination among many of the Order of Saint Sharbel and NAM members who support the seminarians and the Church in so many ways. For the first time ever the Maronite Youth Organization



Bishop Robert Shaheen, assisted by Fr. (now Bishop) Abdullah Zaidan (left), Fr. Andre Mhanna and Chorbishop Seely Beggiani, ordains Deacon George Hajj as a priest.

(MYO) annual workshop coincided with the NAM convention. It was great seeing 250 of our youth unite in faith with all the clergy and conventioners. The presence of two of the original founders of NAM, Mr. Theodore Tahan and Dr. Joseph Soma, and all the previous presidents of NAM strengthened the convention and continues the apostolic mission for decades to come

Parishioners of Sts. Peter and Paul Mission are thankful for a successful convention in the leadership of Dr. Dany Sayad, Chairman of the Convention, and Mr. Mike Naber, Executive Director of NAM and all the efforts of the many committees that worked to bring the apostolic work of NAM to Tampa. The success of this convention marked a legacy that Sts. Peter and Paul Mission will continue in memory of its beloved Pastor, Fr. Peter Boulos. His faith and example within the community will be everlasting. ☐

Pope Compares Church with 'Field Hospital' For Wounded Society

Continued from page 15

- His decision to live in the Casa Sanctae Marthae, saying that while the papal apartment is not luxurious, "it is like an inverted funnel," with a small entrance leading to spacious rooms. He preferred a wider access, he said, explaining that "I cannot live without people."
- Reforms at the Vatican. Although he did not speak about reform of the Roman Curia in any detail, the Pope stated his general position: "The Roman congregations are mediators; they are not middlemen or managers."

- The traditional liturgy, saying that the decision by Pope Benedict to broaden the use of the extraordinary form was prudent, but Pope Francis said that he worries about the "ideologization" and "exploitation" of the traditional Latin Mass. ☐

(CWNews, September 20, 2013)

Pope Francis Meets with Syrian Greek-Orthodox Patriarch

by Junno Arocho Esteves

Pope Francis met with Patriarch Youhanna X Yazigi, the head of the Greek Orthodox Church of Antioch and All the East. The Syrian prelate informed the Holy Father of the continuing suffering of Christians in the nation.

The situation is particularly difficult for the Patriarch whose brother was one of two bishops kidnapped in Syria. On April 22, Syrian Orthodox Metropolitan Mar Gregorios Yohanna Ibrahim and Greek-Orthodox Bishop Boulos al-Yazigi were kidnapped by unknown abductors during a humanitarian mission.

In an interview with Vatican Radio, Patriarch Yazigi expressed his gratitude for the Holy Father's concern for the people of Syria.

"I bear in my heart all the pain of our people in Syria, in Lebanon, in the Middle East, and we consider the attitude of His Holiness towards our people, our Church in the Middle East, in Syria and Lebanon especially to find solutions, to establish a peace through dialogue, not in war," he said.

Pope Francis' recent call for a day of prayer and fasting for Syria, he said, was an important message to all, especially to world leaders to find a peaceful solution to the conflict.

Patriarch Yazigi stated that he spoke not only on the abduction of his brother and the situation in Syria but also of the continuing dialogue between the Orthodox and Catholic Churches.

"We talked about our progression towards unity, Christian unity as you know, dialogue between the Orthodox Church and the Catholic Church," the Patriarch told Vatican Radio.

"We try, we want to do what we can do, all together – this is the desire of His Holiness, and our desire. And about this political situation, about the presence of Christians in the Middle East – it's a very important issue now, because a lot of our people are leaving Syria or Lebanon for other countries, and we cannot accept the Middle East without the face of Christ."

Speaking on a peaceful solution to the crisis, the Syrian prelate called on world governments, especially Russia, the U.S. and in Europe to help push for a solution in Syria through peaceful dialogue. ☐

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Homily at Mass with Seminarians

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Dear seminarians, dear novices, dear young people discerning your vocations: "Evangelization is done on one's knees," as one of you said to me the other day. Always be men and women of prayer! Without a constant relationship with God, the mission becomes a job. The risk of activism, of relying too much on structures, is an ever-present danger. If we look towards Jesus, we see that prior to any important decision or event He recollected himself in intense and prolonged prayer. Let us cultivate the contemplative dimension, even amid the whirlwind of more urgent and pressing duties. And the more the mission calls you to go out to the margins of existence, let your heart be the more closely united to Christ's heart, full of mercy and love. Herein lies the secret of the fruitfulness of a disciple of the Lord! Jesus sends his followers out with "no purse, no bag, no sandals" (Lk 10:4). The spread of the Gospel is not guaranteed either by the number of persons, or by the prestige of the institution, or by the quantity of available resources. What counts is to be permeated by the love of Christ, to let oneself be led by the Holy Spirit and to graft one's own life onto the tree of life, which is the Lord's Cross.

Dear friends, with great confidence I entrust you to the intercession of Mary Most Holy. She is the Mother who helps us to take life decisions freely and without fear. May she help you to bear witness to the joy of God's consolation, to conform yourselves to the logic of love of the Cross, to grow in ever deeper union with the Lord. Then your lives will be rich and fruitful! Amen. ☐ *(Vatican Radio, July 7, 2013)*

Pope Calls On Catechists

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Catechists must be those "who keep the memory of God

alive; they keep it alive in themselves and they are able to revive it in others", like Mary, "who ... sees God's wondrous works in her life ... but instead, after receiving the message of the angel and conceiving the Son of God ... goes to assist her elderly kinswoman Elizabeth, also pregnant", and upon encountering her, "the first thing she does ... is to recall God's work, God's fidelity, in her own life, in the history of her people, in our history ... Mary remembers God."

"This canticle of Mary also contains the remembrance of her personal history, God's history with her, her own experience of faith. And this is true too for each one of us and for every Christian: faith contains our own memory of God's history with us, the memory of our encountering God who always takes the first step, who creates, saves and transforms us. ... A catechist is a Christian who puts this remembrance at the service of proclamation, not to seem important, not to talk about himself or herself, but to talk about God, about his love and his fidelity. To talk about and to pass down all that God has revealed, his teaching in its totality, neither trimming it down nor adding on to it. ... What is the Catechism itself, if not the memory of God, the memory of his works in history and his drawing near to us in Christ present in his word, in the sacraments, in his Church, in his love?."

Finally, the Pope cited St. Paul's recommendations to Timothy, which also indicate the path of the catechist: "Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, gentleness. ... Catechists are men and women of the memory of God if they have a constant, living relationship with him and with their neighbor; if they are men and women of faith who truly trust in God and put their security in him; if they are men and women of charity, love, who see others as brothers and sisters; if they are men and women of 'hypomoné', endurance and perseverance, able to face difficulties, trials and failures with serenity and hope in the Lord; if they are gentle, capable of understanding and mercy".

"Let us ask the Lord God that we may all be men and women who keep the memory of God alive in ourselves, and are able to awaken it in the hearts of others," Pope Francis concluded. ☐

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