



# The Maronite Voice

A Publication of the Maronite Eparchies in the USA



Volume XII

Issue No. IX

October 2016

## The Joy of Love

### EXTRAORDINARY JUBILEE OF MERCY

DEC. 8, 2015 - NOV. 20, 2016



"IT WILL BE A HOLY YEAR OF MERCY."  
-POPE FRANCIS

### *The Jubilee Year of Mercy*

Commemorating this Jubilee Year of Mercy and in the light of Pope Francis' beautiful exhortation on marriage and family entitled "The Joy of Love," I would like to reflect with you on the extravagant love of God, especially as revealed in the person and the parables of Jesus Christ, whose passion and death are His clearest witness to this love and a mirror of the love His Father has for each of us.

Among his many miracles, Jesus healed the leper, opened the eyes of the blind, and forgave the sins of the woman who wept at his feet. In these acts of mercy, he asked little in return, except: "Go and sin no more." This love is beautifully illuminated in the Parable of the Prodigal Son, one of three stories recorded in Luke's Gospel, Chapter 15, all three of which were presented to the Scribes and Pharisees, who complained that Jesus spoke and ate with tax collectors and sinners.

The first parable is that of a shepherd, who leaves ninety-nine

sheep in the desert to go in search of the one lost. It was intended by Jesus to reveal the extravagant love of God for the sinner. No shepherd in his right mind would risk losing ninety-nine sheep to look for the one lost. But God does, and He not only rejoices, but calls his friends to rejoice with him and to show how, and to what extent, he was willing to risk the entire flock, just to find the one.

The second parable is similar, about a woman who had ten coins. Even though she lost one, she swept her entire house just to find it. When she did, she invited her friends to come and celebrate with her.

The third parable is called the "Story of the Prodigal Son." It is more like a story of a father and his boundless love for two sons "who just did not get it!" The "Prodigal" returns home, only because he is hungry and out of money. He did not understand his father's great love for him.

The older son cannot rejoice that his brother is back alive. He does not know his father's love. He calls his brother "your son," and he cannot understand how his father could love his prodigal brother. The father pleads with him and tells him: "You are with me always, and all that I have is yours;" but this does not convince him. Although he is obedient to the will of his father, he does so, not out of love, but out of servitude.

Jesus told these three parables to describe God as a loving and merciful Father, able to embrace the sinner (the Prodigal) and those who think they are more righteous (the Scribes and Pharisees). Like the Scribes and Pharisees, the son who worked with his Father was doing everything to please, but did not understand his father's love. Although the Prodigal demanded his share of the estate while his father was still living, a clear insult, yet the father still gives, and above that hopes for his return.

Jesus is trying to teach us that God endures the bad behavior of people, that is, the Prodigal and the Self-Righteous alike. He pleads with the Self-Righteous to come to the feast, and at the same time he hopes the Prodigal will make a full repentance.

(Continues on page 12)

## Schedule of Bishop Elias Zaidan

### October 2, 2016

Our Lady of Mt. Lebanon-St. Peter Cathedral, Los Angeles, Calif.

### October 3 - 6, 2016

USCCB Meeting of Subcommittee on Catholic Home Missions, Lexington, Ky.

### October 7, 2016

50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration of the Presence of a Maronite Bishop in the U.S.,  
Eparchy of Saint Maron, Brooklyn, N.Y.

### October 9, 2016

St. Raymond Cathedral, Saint Louis, Mo.

### October 14 - 15, 2016

Pastoral Visit to St. Rafka Church, Lakewood, Colo.

### October 17, 2016

Caritas Lebanon - USA Board Meeting, Saint Louis, Mo.

### October 18 - 19, 2016

Presbyteral Council Meeting, Saint Louis, Mo.

### October 22 - 23, 2016

Pastoral Visit to St. Jude Church, West Covina, Calif.

### October 24 - 28, 2016

Retreat to the Clergy of the Syriac Catholic Eparchy of the U.S.

### October 29 - 30, 2016

Pastoral Visit to St. Sharbel Church, Portland, Ore.

### November 5 - 6, 2016

Pastoral Visit to St. John Maron Church, 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>

*The Maronite Voice*, (ISSN 1080-9880) the official newsletter of the Maronite Eparchies in the U.S.A. (Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon of Los Angeles and Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn), is published monthly.

Send all changes of address, news, pictures and personal correspondence to *The Maronite Voice* at the above captioned address. Subscription rates are \$25.00 per year. Advertising rates are available upon request.

#### **Publishers**

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

**Editor** Msgr. George M. Sebaali

#### **Editing and proofreading**

Mary Shaia

Printed in Richmond, Virginia.

### **Maronite Convention 2017**

Saint Rafka Maronite Mission

**Greenville, South Carolina**

**July 5 - 9, 2017**

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



## **Eparchial Appointments**

**H**is Excellency Bishop Gregory Mansour, Bishop of the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn, has made the following eparchial assignments effective on October 1, 2016:

- **Reverend Joseph Abisaad** as Parochial Vicar of Saint Anthony Church in Lawrence, Mass., as well as Saint George Church in Dover, New Hampshire.
- **Reverend Tony Saab** from Parochial Vicar of Saint George Church in Dover, New Hampshire, and of Saint Anthony Church in Lawrence, Mass., to Administrator of Saint Maron Church in Torrington, Conn.
- **Reverend Miled Jreig** from Administrator of Saint Maron Church in Torrington, Conn. Fr. Jreig is awaiting assignment in the Eparchy of Saint Maron upon his return from Lebanon.
- **Reverend Aaron Sandbothe** as Parochial Vicar of Saint Louis Gonzaga Church in Utica, N.Y.
- **Sister Therese Maria Touma, M.S.C.L.** as Coordinator of the MYO and MYA in the Eparchy of Saint Maron. ☐

## Detroit, Michigan Chorbishop Elevation



Assisted by his secretary, Fr. Miled Yaghi, Bishop A. Elias Zaidan elevates Msgr. Louis to the rank of Chorbishop.

by Chris Kassab

**H**undreds of people filled the pews at St. Maron Maronite Catholic Church in Detroit, Mich., on September 11, 2016, to join in the celebration as His Excellency Bishop A. Elias Zaidan, Bishop of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon, elevated Msgr. Louis Youssef Baz to the rank of Chorbishop.

His Beatitude Patriarch Bechara Peter Cardinal Rai, Maronite Patriarch of Antioch and All the East, announced the elevation earlier this year during a special visit to Detroit. Msgr. Baz has served as pastor of St. Maron Church for seven years.

Special guests in attendance included: Ambassador Yousif Ghafari and his wife; Consul General of Lebanon in Detroit Bilal Kaban; Middle East Airlines Executive Adib Kassis; Antonine Sisters from Youngstown, Ohio; and National Apostolate of Maronites (NAM) President Samir Farah, who presented Chorbishop Baz with a special plaque of recognition.

Bishop Zaidan guided parishioners through the Divine Liturgy, as he bestowed the ring, staff and miter upon Chorbishop Baz.

"I'm sure that this rank will help you to serve more and be more," said Bishop Zaidan. "Your cross will get bigger but the grace is a lot bigger. And God will sustain you with His grace every step of the way."

Born in *Ghazir*, Lebanon, Chorbishop Baz was ordained by the late Patriarch Antonios Peter Khraich on October 4, 1981, in St. Maron Church, Youngstown, Ohio. He is honored to be the cousin of Blessed Yaacub [Jacques] Haddad, the Capuchin Monk who lived a life of sainthood.

Following the Liturgy, all those in attendance gathered in the church hall for a luncheon, organized by parishioner Theresa Ghafari.

"It certainly is a wonderful occasion that brings all of us together to celebrate the elevation of Msgr. Louis Baz from Monsignor to Chorbishop," said Ghafari, acknowledging special guests who traveled from afar to attend the ordination

from Missouri, Ohio, Texas, New York and New Jersey. "Please join us in congratulating Chorbishop Baz."

Dr. Daher Rahi, cousin of Patriarch Rai and a longtime supporter of the church, said it was "a great day for St. Maron's Parish."

"Chorbishop Baz is a wonderful person who loves this community very much. He's always there when you need him and even when you don't. He has done a marvelous job for our church," said Dr. Rahi.

"There are no words in the dictionary adequate enough to thank everyone here today because, in essence, you made Msgr. Baz a Chorbishop. If it wasn't for your help, support and dedication to this church and your love for him personally this would have never happened."

Chorbishop Baz began his remarks by thanking Bishop Zaidan.

"Thank you for the kindness and confidence you showed to me at this time by recommending me to our Patriarch for the rank of Chorbishop," he said. "Please know that I will do my best to serve and carry well the privileges and honor of this elevation."

Chorbishop Baz thanked all of the parishioners of St. Maron Church, and he recognized Dr. Rahi in a special way. "I would like to express my gratitude for the part Dr. Daher Rahi played in this special honor given to me," he said. "I also thank the members of his family. They are like family to me. May God bless all of you."

Chorbishop Baz also gave special thanks to his family. "My thoughts today include all the good God has blessed me with, including the precious gift of my Catholic faith and my life in our holy Maronite Catholic Church handed on to me by my beloved and faithful parents — my dad Youssef and my mom Rose," he said. "I also want to thank my whole family, especially my niece and her family who came from Toronto [Canada] and my nephew and his family who came from New Jersey to be with me today."

As he concluded his remarks, Chorbishop Baz thanked Theresa Ghafari for her work organizing the reception and presented her with a bouquet of flowers.

After the formal program, the reception continued with food, dancing and a special cake prepared for Chorbishop Baz. It was truly a joyous day for the parishioners of St. Maron Church. □

*the Deadline is...* **Deadline** for the next month issue of *The Maronite Voice* is October 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](http://www.stmaron.org). □

## North Jackson, Ohio Chorbishop Elevation



NAM President Samir Farah presents a plaque of congratulations to Chorbishop Spinosa.

by Rose Sahyoun

Saturday, August 13, 2016, was the beginning of the Tridium for the Feast of the Assumption of Mary, celebrated on August 13 - 15 at the Basilica and National Shrine of Our Lady of Lebanon in North Jackson, Ohio. However, this year was special because Bishop A. Elias Zaidan, Bishop of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon, began the weekend with the elevation of Monsignor Anthony Salvatore Spinosa to the rank of Chorbishop. Chorbishop Spinosa has worked very hard for the Shrine and throughout all of his years as a priest has been very dedicated and deserving of this honor.

NAM president Samir Farah and National Coordinator Rose Sahyoun were present for the Divine Liturgy and Ordination to represent NAM, which is the lay organization that is the link between NAM and the Clergy. NAM was very proud to present a plaque of appreciation and congratulations to Chorbishop Spinosa and wish him many beautiful and healthy years ahead. Chorbishop's family and friends filled the Shrine church and later were invited to a reception in his honor in Antioch Hall. Following all of this, the Shrine festivities began. It truly was a beautiful day. □

## Eparchy of Saint Maron Priestly Ordinations



On Sunday, September 11, 2016, His Excellency Bishop Joseph Mouawad, delegated by His Excellency Bishop Gregory Mansour, ordained Deacon Antoun [Tony] Youssef a priest for the Eparchy of Saint Maron at Saint Charbel Church in *Al-Cuattine*, Lebanon.



On Saturday, September 10, 2016, His Excellency Bishop Gregory Mansour, Bishop of the Eparchy of Saint Maron, ordained Deacon Aaron Sandbothe a priest at Saint Mary's Church in Greenville, South Carolina. □

## Dayton, Ohio *Patriarch Rai's Visit*



From left: Fr. Guy-Raymond Sarkis, Archbishop Sayah, Patriarch Rai, Bishop Zaidan and Fr. George ElHajj.

Our small church at St. Ignatius of Antioch Maronite Catholic Church in Dayton, Ohio, was blessed to welcome His Beatitude Bechara Peter Cardinal Rai and Most Reverend Bishop A. Elias Zaidan, Bishop of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon, for a once-in-a-lifetime visit on Thursday, June 30, 2016. This was the second stop in the Patriarch's visit to the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon of Los Angeles on his way to preside at the Annual Convention of the National Apostolate of Maronites (NAM) in San Francisco, Calif., July 5 - 10, 2016.

Father Guy-Raymond Sarkis, Pastor, drove the Patriarch, His Excellency Archbishop Paul N. Sayah, Patriarchal Vicar General, and Bishop Zaidan from their visit in Detroit, Michigan, to Dayton. Patriarch Rai, Archbishop Sayah, and Bishop Zaidan arrived at St. Ignatius of Antioch Maronite Catholic Church's Hall for a Parish "Meet and Greet" reception. Everyone was thrilled to welcome them, and many were excited to acknowledge the presence of His Beatitude. Many photos were taken of families with Patriarch Rai and Bishop Zaidan so that they could remember the experience for the rest of their lives.

Patriarch Rai celebrated the Divine Liturgy to a standing-room only crowd. Bishop Zaidan, Archbishop Sayah, Fr. George Hajj from St. Anthony of Padua Maronite Catholic Church, Cincinnati, Ohio, and Fr. Raymond-Guy Sarkis concelebrated.

At the beginning of the Liturgy, Montgomery County (Ohio) Commissioner, Mr. Dan Foley, presented the following Proclamation:

*"The General Assembly of The State of Ohio House of Representatives under the Sponsorship of Representative Niraj J. Antari, House District 42:*

*On behalf of the members of the House of Representatives of the 131st General Assembly of Ohio, we are pleased to congratulate St. Ignatius of Antioch Maronite Catholic Church on hosting His Beatitude Mar Bechara Peter Cardinal Rai, June 30, 2016. Since its inception, Saint Ignatius of Antioch Maronite Catholic Church has offered its*

*members the pathway to a more meaningful life by illuminating and demonstrating the precepts on which the Catholic Church was founded. The church is hosting a meeting with His Beatitude Patriarch Mar Bechara Peter Cardinal Rai, and the spirit of love and Christian fellowship that exists among the parishioners not only prevails within the edifice itself but also extends beyond those sacred walls to touch the lives of everyone encountered by their devout disciples.*

*Under the capable leadership of the church's pastors, both past and present, St. Ignatius of Antioch Maronite Catholic Church has experienced continued growth and has provided a source of moral guidance and spiritual motivation for its congregation. Over the years, the members of the church have kept their faith alive in the community, and during this special event, they have accepted the challenge of carrying their beliefs into the future.*

*Thus, with great pleasure, we commend St. Ignatius of Antioch Maronite Catholic Church on hosting His Beatitude Patriarch Mar Bechara Peter Cardinal Rai and pay tribute to all those taking part in this memorable event." /Signed/ Representative Niraj J. Antari, House District 42 and Clifford A. Rosenberger, Speaker, Ohio House of Representatives.*

In addition, Mr. Foley presented a similar Proclamation to Patriarch Rai and St. Ignatius from the County Commissioners of Montgomery County, Ohio.

In Patriarch Rai's fourteen minute Homily, most of which was an explanation of the love, mission, humanity, difficulties and blessings of the Twelve Apostles, he welcomed U.S. Congressman Mike Turner and asked him "to keep the cause of Lebanon in your heart and in your mind." that "we appreciate his efforts to bring true and everlasting peace to Lebanon." We will keep him "in our prayers."

Patriarch Rai then brought to our attention "the importance of registering our life events – birth and weddings – at the Lebanese Consulate." He then ended with the prayer: "Oh God, send to our tormented and beloved Middle East apostles who will change the face of the Earth. May their prayers be with us, Amen."

Parishioner William Thomas stated the next day: "We were blessed with a truly wonderful, grace-filled event! Everyone was great! All aspects went virtually perfect! Great crowd at Church! Once-in-a-lifetime event!" Another, Patricia Zennie, exclaimed "What a beautiful liturgy. I feel blessed to do my part for our church. We have a great group of people who give their time. What an honor to have both our Bishop and our Patriarch come to our humble church." □

## Cincinnati, Ohio *Exaltation of the Holy Cross*

by Linda Conour

On Wednesday, September 14, 2016, members of St. Anthony of Padua Maronite Catholic Church and the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary Roman Catholic Church came together in Cincinnati, Ohio, once again to worship and pray for religious freedom for all around the world. This joint prayer service held on the Feast



Day of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross was a continuation of efforts of the One Church Of Mercy team ([www.onechurchofmercy.org](http://www.onechurchofmercy.org)) and a follow-up from the July 1, 2016, Conference that took place in Cincinnati when His Beatitude Patriarch Rai was in town. This evening prayer service was held at Annunciation Church and celebrated by Father Todd Grogan. A procession led by the Knights and Dames of the Holy Sepulcher of Jerusalem started off the evening and included a beautiful and massive wooden Cross of the Maronite Church crafted by Mr. Elie Kanaan, a member of St. Anthony of Padua Church living in London, Ky. Moving hymns and psalms were sung, and veneration of the Cross took place during the prayer service. Afterwards, a fellowship hour was held at the Annunciation Rectory and the bonds of friendship between the two parishes were made even stronger after that evening. □

## Houston, Texas *Catechists' Retreat*

by Rita Joubran

On Sunday, September 18, 2016, catechists at Our Lady of the Cedars Church in Houston, Tex., were invited to assemble for a mini-retreat to kick off the new year of religious education. The day started with a special Divine Liturgy on Catechetical Sunday, during which the catechists were in charge of the readings, intentions, and offerings. After the homily, a special blessing was imparted on the catechists, who were invited to stand in front of the Altar.

The retreat took place after the Divine Liturgy. Fr. Milad Yaghi, MLM, offered heartfelt words of thanks to the selfless volunteers who graciously dedicate their time and



talents to teach the children. A light meal was served at the beginning, then the actual retreat started with a prayer service prepared by the Associate Pastor, Father Edward Hanna.

Brian Henritze, the assistant director of Catechesis at the local Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston, followed with a presentation on Scripture and CCE. Mr. Henritze shared tools to better help teachers infuse the Gospel in their lessons, with tips for effective teaching. His talk was well-received and was complemented by a Powerpoint presentation that was also made available to the catechists for use as a resource.

After the presentation and a short break, Father Hanna presented a topic centered on the theme for the Catechetical Year, "Prayer: The Faith Prayed." This segment included time for meditation and solitary prayer. This second part of the retreat concluded with a training session on the Safe Environment, prepared and presented by Vera Kmeid, Heidi Sloan Chelala, and Nabil Joubran.

Everyone moved to the Chapel for the final hour of the retreat, where each catechist shared briefly her yearly program with the others. A discussion ensued about tying the curriculum together so that CCE is a seamless program from Pre-K to High School. Fr. Hanna ended the retreat by leading a special decade of the Rosary with special meditation inspired by the "Prayer: The Faith Prayed" theme. □

## Olean, New York *Annual Mahrajan*

On August 7, 2016, St. Joseph Maronite Catholic Church hosted its 78<sup>th</sup> Annual *Mahrajan*, or Lebanese Festival, on the grounds of the parish campus in Olean, New York. For the fourth consecutive year the weather provided a stunning summer day, with plenty of sun and low humidity. The food, comprised of a varied Lebanese offering, as well as some Polish and American fare, drew a great crowd. People from all parts of the city have come to know the talents of the parish cooks, as well as their sense of hospitality. Fr. Anthony J. Salim, Pastor, gave two tours of the still-new redesigned church in between serving food and greeting the people who came. Once again the *Mahrajan* was a great success because of the hard work and cooperation of parishioners and friends, under the leadership of Chairman Emil Ash. □

## Lawrence, Massachusetts *MYO Kick-Off*



by Angie Naser, MYO member

On Saturday, September 10, 2016, more than twenty-five high school-aged members of the Maronite Youth Organization (MYO) held a kickoff event to begin the new season at St. Anthony Maronite Church in Lawrence, Mass. To welcome the new members of the parish, Father Elie Mikhael and Subdeacon Jim Demers led the group in introductions and a great discussion of what it means to be part of a youth organization. After going over the calendar of events for the year, the youth were blessed with a table of food and drinks to enjoy before diving into the next activity.

Divided into different teams, the MYO members played a game called "Who Wants To Be A Disciple" - a spinoff of "Who Wants To Be A Millionaire." All of the members enjoyed competing with their friends, answering questions relating to the Bible and the teachings of the Church, to win Starbucks giftcards! This day was an amazing start to the new MYO season and the goal is to make a difference in the community and to influence the younger children of the parish to follow our lead. It is a way for the teens to get away from their normal lives and come together to do amazing things, such as pray together and perform community service activities. We are so blessed that God has allowed us to be able to unite as one group and we are excited for what He has in store for us! ☐

## Youngstown, Ohio *Pillars Brunch*

by Rose Sahyoun

On July 24, 2016, the community of St. Maron Parish in Youngstown, Ohio, honored and celebrated with its Pillars for their years of service and knowledge. They are the ones who have brought us to where we are, who have taught us what we know. We owe them more than we can show. We gathered with those who could be with us and with their families for a Tasty *mezza* and a brunch following



the Divine Liturgy celebrated by Chorbishop Michael Kail. They were all excited to be together and were remembering the good old days which we younger ones love to hear about, as well as remembering the ones who have gone before us. They say history repeats itself and if so, then we cannot go wrong.

Before the meal they posed together for a photo and they all look so happy. It truly was a blessed event. God bless our Pillars of St. Maron! ☐

## Boston, Massachusetts *Knights of the Virgin Mary*



by Randa Yazbeck

On Saturday, September 18, 2016, members of the Knights of the Virgin Mary and the MYO at Our Lady of the Cedars Maronite Church in Boston, Mass., accompanied by leaders and parents, visited Our Lady Of Mercy Maronite Church, in Worcester, Mass. Our Lady of Mercy Church has been designated by Bishop Gregory Mansour, Bishop of the Eparchy of Saint Maron, as a

Pilgrimage Site during this Jubilee Year of Mercy. Fr. Alex Joseph, Administrator, welcomed the group and gave them a tour inside the church. Fr. Alex had a special Divine Liturgy and a discussion about Mercy. The group had the opportunity to obtain a "plenary indulgence" by passing through the designated Holy Doors. Lunch was provided courtesy of Roula and Angelo Maroun. □

## Lakewood, Colorado In Defense of Persecuted Christians



Signing of the Document: Fr. Andre Mahanna (left), Archbishop Samuel J. Aquila (center), and His Eminence Metropolitan Isaiah (right). Cardinal Stafford (behind).

St. Rafka Maronite Parish, in Lakewood, Colorado, hosted an important ecumenical event on August 18, 2016, which brought together Catholic, Orthodox, and other Christian leaders to jointly condemn the violence of Islamic State and other related conflicts in the Middle East. The event, spearheaded by Fr. Andre Mahanna, Pastor of St. Rafka and Director of Ecumenism and Interfaith Relations for the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon, was the first public meeting for Archbishop Samuel J. Aquila, as archbishop of Denver, and His Eminence Metropolitan Isaiah, leader of the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Denver. St. Rafka Parish was also honored with the presence of J. Francis Cardinal Stafford at the event.

The evening culminated in the signing of a document, *Condemning the Genocide of Christians in the Middle East and Calling for United Support for Religious Liberty and Human Rights: A Joint Declaration of the Catholic and Orthodox Churches*.

In addition to Cardinal Stafford, Archbishop Aquila, Metropolitan Isaiah, and Fr. Andre Mahanna, the document has been signed by Bishop A. Elias Zaidan of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon and by the numerous civic and religious leaders present at the event.

The document stresses that "for the first time in history, we face the very real possibility that Christianity may cease to exist in the land where Jesus was born" and calls on the "faithful to join us in calling for the White House and Congress to stop genocide and justly protect our Christian

brothers and sisters in the Middle East" and calls on "the Christian community and all citizens to question and to raise awareness among their political candidates and elected officials about the persecution of Christians in the Middle East and world; and secondly, about the danger of losing religious liberty in the United States." For the full text of the document, go to [www.SaveChristianMiddleEast.org](http://www.SaveChristianMiddleEast.org).

The August 18 event was a precursor to the In Defense of Christians (IDC) National Advocacy Convention held September 7 – 9, 2016, in Washington, D.C.

## Lebanese Festival



St. Rafka Maronite Church in Lakewood, Colorado, held its third annual Lebanese Festival September 10 - 11, 2016. The Festival attracted visitors from across the Denver-Metro area and introduced them to a variety of Lebanese cuisine and traditions. New items this year included live *Saj* demonstrations and adult theological discussions facilitated by Fr. Andre Mahanna and called "Coffee with God."

The Festival, which is scheduled on the weekend closest to the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, is a celebration of heritage and faith. On Saturday, there was a Vigil for the Martyrs to begin the evening and on Sunday, the Divine Liturgy with the Exaltation of the Holy Cross and a commemoration for the victims of 9/11, the Martyrs, and the victims of religious persecution in the Middle East today. Both days were capped off with a dance party featuring Elie El-Moujabber. □



## Uniontown, Pennsylvania 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Ordination



From left: Subdeacon Mallard George, Chorbishop John D. Faris and Subdeacon Thomas R. George.

by Dr. Mabel George Howard

A life of worship, service and dedication to the priesthood exemplifies the characteristics of Chorbishop John D. Faris, who was ordained to the priesthood by Bishop Francis Zayek on July 17, 1976, at St. George Maronite Catholic Church in Uniontown, Pennsylvania. On August 14, 2016, St. George Church proudly welcomed home its beloved son, Chorbishop Faris, home to celebrate the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his ordination. St. George Church has always been "a familiar and comfortable return home" to Chorbishop Faris. Throughout his early and formative years at St. George, Chorbishop Faris received the sacraments of Baptism and First Holy Communion; and as an active member of the church, he assisted parish priests with various religious activities and events. Chorbishop Faris continued his love, devotion and commitment for the Maronite Church as he pursued his life's work in the holy ministry.

Accompanied by Subdeacons Thomas R. George and Dr. Mallard George, Chorbishop Faris celebrated the Sunday liturgy at St. George Church with an inspirational homily expressing the power of prayer and the importance of being thankful for God's blessings. At the conclusion of the Liturgy, Chorbishop Faris was delightfully surprised and pleased to be presented with an engraved crystal obelisk commemorating this most memorable occasion. The Altar Rosary Society adorned the altar and church hall with beautiful flower arrangements for this special event. Following the liturgy, a brunch was prepared by the Ladies Guild in the church hall. Chorbishop Faris happily mingled and chatted with everyone at the reception. His pleasant smile and personal kindness permeated throughout the room.

The St. George congregation felt privileged to have played a part in honoring and celebrating Chorbishop Faris' continuing spiritual and religious journey. Best wishes to Chorbishop Faris for another forty years as a humble and faithful servant of God. His current parish, St. Louis Gonzaga in Utica, N.Y., is fortunate to have such a devout and wise mentor. Congratulations, Chorbishop Faris!. ☐

### Schedule of Bishop Gregory Mansour

#### October 1 - 2, 2016

MYA Annual Retreat, Philadelphia, Penn.

#### October 4, 2016

Oriental Orthodox-Catholic Dialogue, N.J.

#### October 5, 2016

Eparchial Presbyteral Council Meeting, The Chancery, Brooklyn, N.Y.

#### October 6, 2016

Eparchial Finance Council Meeting, The Chancery, Brooklyn, N.Y.

#### October 7, 2016

50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Presence of a Maronite Bishop in the United States, Liturgy and Dinner, Brooklyn, N.Y.

#### October 8 - 9, 2016

Deacons/Subdeacons Retreat and Saturday meeting along with the Eparchial Pastoral Council, Chancery Office, Brooklyn, N.Y.

#### October 16, 2016

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

#### October 20, 2016

Fund Raiser for Caritas Lebanon, Metuchen Diocese, N.J.

#### October 21 - 23, 2016

Groundbreaking for New Church, Raleigh, N.C.

#### October 22, 2016

Visit to the Maronite Mission, Charlotte, N.C.

#### October 28 - 30, 2016

Regional NAM Convention, Easton, Penn. ☐

## From the Book Shelf

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

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

# Questioning ... Accepting ... Believing

by  
*Sister Paula Vandegaer*

The pill was introduced to the world in 1960 and became hugely popular during the 1960s. I was studying at Catholic University [Washington, D.C.] during the 60s and on my way to becoming a professional social worker. It was an exciting decade. The second Vatican Council opened October, 1962, and things began changing. The intellectual setting I was in was a hotbed for new ideas. It seemed every day we heard about new formulations in theology and new regulations from the Church. The Liturgy changed dramatically and everyone was alert to the "new."

This new "pill" was one of the exciting things. It was said that the pill for the first time would prevent pregnancy by mimicking the body's natural system. It was expected to enhance married life since a couple would not have to fear conceiving a child and could better enjoy the act. This was going to strengthen marriage. Was the Church going to reverse her centuries-old stance?

I began my counseling career with these questions. One of my first assignments was working with unwed mothers in an adoption agency. I began a group for women who had placed their children for adoption and were now trying to get their life back together. One of the topics that was a prime discussion was how and who to date after the birth of the baby, and abandonment by the father. I was very clear that I would not recommend contraception to any of these women. They did not need to be used again by a man and needed to restore their dignity.

But what about married couples? Why would contraception be wrong for them? This was a serious question for me. I decided that I would not recommend contraception to anyone simply because I would be obedient to the Church and trust that she is wiser than I. But it troubled me that I didn't have a rational explanation why. I thought the Church would change her stance in time.

One day I was counseling a mother who had placed her baby for adoption and now was starting to date again. She was lonely and was dating someone. She knew she didn't want to start to have sex with him but didn't know if she could keep up her resolve. She started talking about going on the pill, "just in case."

As I was listening to her I was suddenly overwhelmed with an awareness of a huge fight going on over my head. It was a battle between heaven and hell and was quite overwhelming. I don't really know how long it lasted. I remember she finished the session and I saw her out. Afterward I tried to put together what had happened. I realized on a deep level that this contraception thing is not an instrument of the Holy Spirit designed to help family life but a tool of the enemy, a very deceptive tool!

I knew I had to figure out what was wrong with it and explain it in a rational way.

In 1968 Pope Paul VI wrote *Humanae Vitae*, a papal encyclical condemning artificial contraception. He made three prophetic statements in it:

1. Contraception would lead to marital infidelity,
2. Contraception would reduce the dignity of women, and
3. Contraception could be used by governments to control the fertility of its people.

All of these have happened.

This encyclical was rejected and ridiculed. Many found reasons to reject it. The prevailing "cultural wisdom" of the age just was to follow your own conscience. Consequentially thousands of Christian women went on the pill, convinced that this was a good plan for them and their marriage.

By the 70's it was known that the chemical pill also works to cause an early abortion (abortifacient). That is, it may not stop ovulation or prevent the sperm from migrating to the ovum, instead it can alter the lining of the uterus and prevent a fertilized ovum from implanting. The chemical compounds of the pill are foreign substances and the woman's body fights them. It may change each month how the pill prevents pregnancy.

My learning continued through experiences. I learned the physical consequences of the pill. I had been treating a woman for depression for over a year. One day she mentioned that her doctor had put her on the pill. I told her to get off of it and immediately the depression stopped.

I counseled a young couple living together. He wanted to get married but she decided not to ever marry. She believed men wouldn't stay faithful. None of her other relationships had stayed faithful. Why would this one? I told them both they must stop the sex and form a friendship. Six months later I saw them. She was ready to get married to him. She realized that he really loved her, the first time in her life that had happened, and she had fallen deeply in love with him. He said he felt like a virgin and was so excited and proud of himself. She had become so important to him. They both agreed that abstinence had made the difference. Naturally after marriage they were going to do Natural Family Planning (NFP) and continue the good experience.

When I have a married couple with sexual relationship problems, as soon as I can, I recommend NFP. So often previous experiences get in the way in marriage and sex. Previous memories are hard to erase when one is abandoning oneself to one's partner. NFP requires communication and deep respect for the woman and her fertility. Women tend to sense this respect from their husbands, and it fosters love. Men seem to like the natural rhythm and know that there is a time when they know their wife can be responsive to them and a time not.

The bad effects of contraception on a marriage are hard to see because they develop an attitude, and it's hard for people to see an "attitude." In the 60s and part of the 70s we didn't know enough to speak out boldly. Cardinal Dolan admitted this in an interview with the Wall Street Journal. "We have gotten gun-shy...in speaking with any amount of cogency on chastity and sexual morality," he said.

Consequently there are two generations of American women who have been on the pill and experienced its negative effects on themselves and on their marriages. They believed they were choosing something good. They believe that the tumultuous marriages of the past decades are as good as it gets.

CANFP's work is to spread the good news about Natural Family Planning and how helpful it is to marriage. We now know that its natural rhythms, the communication it engenders, and the mutual respect it demands are God's ways. We can't beat that.

God bless you CANFP. Keep up the good work, and let's all spread the good news. ☐

*Reprinted from CANFP NEWS with permission of CANFP. www.canfp.org, email: info@canfp.org 1-877-33-CANFP (22637).*

### About the Author

Sister Paula Vandegaer, SSS. ACSW, LCSW, is the Founder of International Life Services, Volunteers for Life, and Scholl Institute of Bioethics. An internationally recognized leader in the pro-life movement, Sister has trained, ministered, and inspired thousands, and authored the first textbook written for today's pro-life counselors, "Introduction to Pregnancy Counseling." [www.internationallifeservices.org](http://www.internationallifeservices.org).




---

### 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. ☐

---

## Dartmouth, Massachusetts Prayer



*A prayer written by Sister Therese Maria after reflecting on the Beatitudes during the Maronite Servants of Christ the Light annual silent retreat*

### Blessedness

Lord Jesus, I desire to reflect your face of mercy and radiate your light and charity to all those I encounter. May I become one with each Beatitude:

Help me to be compassionate, courageous, sacrificial in suffering love, and authentic in living out "meekness."

Help me to be detached, docile, trusting and giving of myself in my striving to be "poor in spirit."

Help me to shed all that displeases you and sincerely "mourn" my willfulness and selfishness, in order to freely love you and my neighbor.

Help me to be your "Reservoir of Light" in extending "mercy" and comfort to all those who suffer, want or need a hand.

Help me to clearly distinguish what comes from you and what does not, so that I can choose you in "purity of heart."

Help me to uphold the awesome dignity we have as children of God by sowing words and deeds of "peace" and love.

Help me to serve and seek what is Good, True and Beautiful, and "hunger and thirst" for you, the Hidden One, the Radiant One.

Help me to remain undivided in loving and following you, my sweet Jesus, despite what "persecutions" may come....  
You are my life, You are my all  
My eternal home is with you! ☐

# The Joy of Love

Continued from page 1

---

In the parable Jesus never lets us know if the Self-Righteous son ever came to the banquet, nor does he tell us if the Prodigal ever completely repented, so as to love the father for more than just what he could get out of him. Nonetheless, we do know that Jesus described God as having an extravagant love for sinner and self-righteous alike, even when neither truly deserves that love.

## "The Joy of Love"

This brings us to the wonderful work of Pope Francis on marriage and family. Jesus healed, taught, and forgave sins as a witness to God's great love, and it is this love that impelled Pope Francis to write "The Joy of Love" (*Amoris Laetitia*).

After two Synods in which he listened to bishops, experts and married couples from throughout the world, Pope Francis, in the person of Saint Peter, wrote this exhortation calling us to a greater fidelity to Our Lord's teaching on marriage and family. At the same time, he urged us to be true witnesses to the unconditional and merciful love the Father has for each of us, whether or not we have been faithful to all that the Gospel demands of us.

The Holy Father begins by reflecting on the attributes of love as found in Saint Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians (1 Cor 13:4-7), often read at marriage ceremonies, and which provides an eloquent invitation to couples to find joy in their daily lives together.

"The Joy of Love" is meant for those who have, with God's grace, lived an upright and chaste life, honoring marriage and family, and it is a profound invitation to safeguard and nurture this love. It is also written to those who have not been so fortunate! In fact, it is written as Jesus himself would have wanted, with one eye on those who are doing well, to encourage them to deepen their love for their spouse and family, and to accompany, without self-righteousness, all those in need; and the other eye on those who

struggle and have not yet fully realized the joy of love in marriage and family. It is thus an invitation to all of us to find greater joy in human love.

Pope Francis urges us to:

- Assist our engaged couples to enhance their transition from single to married life through a strong, effective and relevant marriage preparation program.
- Encourage those couples and families who are living in God's grace, and are cornerstones of our Church, to share their experience with newly married couples.
- Support and nurture newly married couples and families in establishing spirituality in their home lives while assisting them in developing strong and responsible parenting skills.
- Be mindful of the role of the Church in preparing our youth to receive the Mysteries through strong and effective Religious Education programs.
- Support families through life crises, including illness, loss of a child, spouse, parent or sibling, financial loss, addictions, mental health challenges, or domestic violence.
- Discern the best course of assistance and counseling to assist individuals and families to resolve serious issues.
- Foster an environment of forgiveness and mercy where spouses and families can feel the loving embrace, warmth and support of their Church to rekindle their love for God and each other and fully participate in the Mysteries.

The exhortation is also meant for those who have been "wounded" or disappointed by "imperfect love" as Pope Francis describes, so that they may regain their strength, turn to God and the Church, and be welcomed back with love and mercy. We are all sadly familiar with those around us, and in

some cases, we ourselves, who have suffered abuse, or other hurtful actions, at the hands of those who were trusted. All people are welcome to the banquet of God's forgiveness and mercy.

Although the Holy Father does not change or compromise the teaching of Our Lord with regard to the sacred nature of marriage, he does ask us to assist others in any way we can. He urges us to reach out to those who are in irregular unions, for example, those who may be living together without marriage, or are divorced and civilly re-married and who seek the Church's help. Pope Francis clearly reminds us that "they remain part of the ecclesial community" (*The Joy of Love*, n. 243).

Again Pope Francis gives us some practical advice:

- Help those who are in need of healing after divorce to come to Church; and if possible seek an annulment.
- Invite them to attend and receive a blessing at communion time, until their marital situation can be regularized.
- Encourage all who feel estranged from God to return to Church, without being judged.
- Accompany others as Pope Francis urges us: "What we are speaking of is a process of accompaniment and discernment, which guides the faithful to an awareness of their situation before God" (*The Joy of Love*, n. 300).

There are other ways that we, in our parishes, can assist:

- Make marriages better, stronger and happier by fostering retreats for couples and individuals that help deepen marriage and family commitments.
- Work with youth and young adults to mature in charity, grace, and chastity in preparation for marriage.

- Appreciate single people who are often generous with their time and love. The parish needs them. They often serve as catechists, helpers with youth and young adults, and in a variety of other ways. We ought to appreciate the way they live their single life, with love and generosity, their way of life and their experience of friendship, especially overcoming loneliness, as well as their personal devotion to God and others, are gifts to the Church.
- Accompany those in our parishes who feel same-sex attraction, and welcome them with love. What is said above for the single person can also be said for those who sincerely want to be engaged in the life of Church and have gifts to offer. We can encourage them to live the Gospel's invitation, to which all people are called, that is, to the joy of loving and chaste relationships that enrich their lives and give them much holiness, spirituality and peace.
- Appreciate the life and gifts of consecrated men and women, who pour their lives into the life of the Church, and who witness to the evangelical virtues of chastity, poverty and obedience. The Church needs their witness and finds joy in their service.
- Never forget our elders. Their wise and patient guidance are a blessing, and they have so much to offer all of us.

### ***Life-Giving Repentance***

What then does our Holy Father ask of us? He asks most that we work on ourselves, not to be the half-repentant son who loves the father only for what he will do for us, nor the self-righteous son who does not truly know or appreciate that the Father can love both saint and sinner alike, and even rejoice at the repentance of a sinner. The Holy Father asks us to willingly and eagerly embrace a "life-giving repentance" (Acts 11:18), that we may know the Father's mercy and love.

Our world is troubled. We are reeling from irresponsible sexual "freedom," which has left a wasteland of wounded

hearts and much confusion. Abortion, pornography, human trafficking, various addictions, broken families, depression, and the inability to commit ourselves to another person are just some of the illnesses we face today. This reminds us of the prophetic warning of Pope Paul VI in 1968, when he wrote of his real concern about the rising promotion of artificial contraception, and its much deeper consequences. It may sound "old fashioned" today, but it is clearer than ever before. He wrote:

"Responsible men can become more deeply convinced of the truth of the doctrine laid down by the Church on this issue if they reflect on the consequences of methods and plans for artificial birth control. Let them first consider how easily this course of action could open wide the way for marital infidelity and a general lowering of moral standards. Not much experience is needed to be fully aware of human weakness and to understand that human beings - and especially the young, who are so exposed to temptation - need incentives to keep the moral law, and it is an evil thing to make it easy for them to break that law. Another effect that gives cause for alarm is that a man who grows accustomed to the use of contraceptive methods may forget the reverence due to a woman, and, disregarding her physical and emotional equilibrium, reduce her to being a mere instrument for the satisfaction of his own desires, no longer considering her as his partner whom he should surround with care and affection" (*Humanae Vitae*. n. 17).

The great challenge before us is to heal, forgive, safeguard and restore, particularly during this Jubilee Year of Mercy, the joy of love in marriage and family. What helps us do this? We can begin in the confessional, to participate in the Mystery of Penance. We can examine our conscience, acknowledge our shortcomings, accept the spiritual guidance of our confessor, and resolve to do better through the grace of forgiveness and absolution. This is truly a life-giving repentance. Let us remember that Christ is as present to us in the Mystery of Penance as he is in the Eucharist, and is ever ready to restore us to the state of grace, if we are ready to repent, and accept his forgiveness and love.

*Brothers and sisters*, just as our Lord's passion and death bear witness to the extent he would go for us, so does his parable of the "Prodigal Son." He stands waiting and hopeful for our return home, as a kind and loving Father, and continually urges us to come home to his banquet, even though we may be only partially-repentant. Perhaps we are more like the Self-Righteous, condemning others for their sins and faults and not attentive to our own. In this case we must ask for forgiveness and accept the extravagant love that will make us more open to God's mercy and love for ourselves and others.

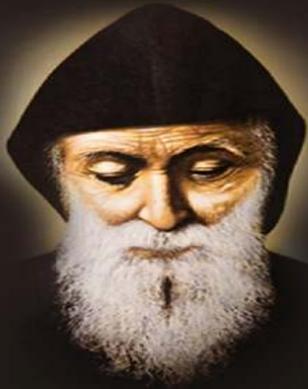
"The Joy of Love" calls us to embody this love in our family, our marriage, our friendships, our parish, and in every aspect of our life. With God's grace we can recognize, foster and enhance the joy of this love and know that God loves us, and even runs to us in order to forgive us. The Father urges us to come home, even half-repentant or self-righteous.

Marriage and family are precious gifts, and as the Pope says, the ordinary means for us to reach God. They are also realities close to the heart of God, and are of divine origin, as he often reminds us.

Nonetheless, there is no perfect marriage, no perfect spouse, no perfect family and no perfect person. We are called by Pope Francis, and by Jesus himself, to a life-giving repentance, so that we may take our assigned place of duty in the "Field Hospital," as Pope Francis describes the Church.

Let us then redouble our efforts to strengthen marriage, and to honor the joy of love in families. Let us, as a community, reach out to those who are either self-righteous or partially repentant and invite them all to come home. Let us repent, as best as we can, and acknowledge our own personal failures, as well as our failure to love and forgive others as extravagantly as God has first loved and forgave us! This is the Jubilee Year. This is the appointed time. This is the time for mercy.

Mary, Mother of Mercy, pray for us.  
+ Gregory



# Going Deeper into the Spiritual Life...



## Praying with God's Word *Lectio Divina*

by Sr. Marla Marie and Sr. Therese Maria

The Sacred Scriptures are an indispensable source and guide for personal spiritual growth. In our Divine Liturgy, the words of Sacred Scripture permeate and animate our prayers. "Your Word is a lamp to my feet, a light for my path" (Psalm 119:105).

An ancient Christian practice for praying with the Bible is called *lectio divina* (Latin: divine reading). This method of prayer is a great help in deepening one's relationship with God. In *lectio divina*, we read and re-read a passage slowly and prayerfully, inviting the Holy Spirit to guide and inspire our prayer. Through this meditation on Scripture we nourish our communion with the One who not only loves us but longs to be one with us.

He speaks to us through His Word, for it is living and effective (Heb 4:12), and has the power to move and transform us. Each one of us can cooperate and open the ears of our hearts, quiet the inner and outer distractions, and pay attention to what is really happening within, and specifically to the areas in our life that God is calling us to change.

The four steps of *lectio divina* are simple: Read, Reflect, Pray, Act. The duration of each step can be adjusted to each one's needs and circumstances. A passage from the Bible is selected (possibly the upcoming Sunday's Gospel). Then the steps below are used as a guide to ponder quietly the passage, allowing the words to penetrate, encourage, challenge and inspire one in becoming a more authentic disciple of Jesus.

1. **Read** - Read the passage slowly and thoughtfully.
2. **Reflect** - Reread the passage. This time notice what stands out: is there a word or image or a particular verse that resonates with or challenges or consoles you? Ponder it. What is God saying to you?
3. **Pray** - After reflecting, pray by listening to God and

speaking to Him in your heart. God loves to listen to us and wants to hear what is in our hearts—our feelings, fears, hopes, and the intentions of the people we love and care for.

4. **Act** - What resolution or actions are you inspired to make from reading this passage? Think of something realistic and practical, e.g., to be more grateful, to be less critical, to be open to seeking counsel and spiritual direction, to spend more time in prayer, to go to Divine Liturgy and Confession more regularly. You may be inspired with other resolutions.

Conclude the *lectio divina* by giving God thanks for this time of prayer.

*Let us pray:*

O Holy and Immortal Lord sanctify our minds and purify our consciences that we may praise you with pure hearts and listen to your Holy Scriptures. To you be glory, forever. Amen (Maronite Book of Offering).

For a summary of this see this video link on praying with the Word: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K8Z-s6RcyqY>

If you have any further questions, thoughts or need some resources on prayer or spiritual direction please contact the Maronite Servant Sisters at [sister@maroniteservants.org](mailto:sister@maroniteservants.org) or at 508-996-1753. □



Many people see the Gospel in our lives: in our generous and faithful love for Christ and our brothers and sisters.

*Pope Francis, Saturday, August 12, 2016*

**All Are Called**  
*by*  
**Father Tony Massad**

**W**hen discussing the topic of vocations many think of the religious vocations to the priesthood for men and religious life as a sister or nun for women. There is no doubt that these vocations within the Church are the most visible manifestations of people living out their vocations, living out their answer to God's call in their lives. Generally speaking a vocation is an invitation to live out God's call to serve and love Him and in doing so, to serve and love His people. One's vocation flows from the grace received through Baptism. It is living out one's Baptismal promise in following in the footsteps of Christ.

Although all have a vocation, it can be difficult to understand what this vocation/call is for one's life. Unfortunately, God does not send a text, make a phone call, or send an email to clearly state His call and intention for one's life. It is up to each one to figure out or discern the vocation to which one is being invited, and that is called the process of discernment. Discerning one's vocation is the process of discovery through prayer, reflection, and discussion. Discussion not only with God, but with people in one's life who can share their experiences and insights of living their vocations. Naturally one would find someone who is living a vocation they feel they are being called to, to help discern what would be best.

In discerning one's vocation it can be confusing, and by the grace of God, the Church is a great help in lighting the path and showing the way for one who is discerning a vocation. There are several different types of vocations such as married life, religious life, and consecrated life. Within each of these three major branches of vocations (which is not a hard definition or the only types of vocations, per se), there are many different opportunities for one to live a vocation in service to God and man.

Generally when the topic of vocation or vocations arises, many think of it as the call to religious life, for men as priests, monks or brothers, and for women as sisters or nuns, yet there are different vocations and each and every person is called to a vocation. Marriage is not only a very important vocation that many are called to, but it is holy and absolutely necessary and in accordance with God's plan. There are very few vocations on this earth that bear the fruit of God's grace like a holy marriage between one man and one woman. Another type of vocation that is recognized by the Church is a secular institute, which is comprised of single lay men and women who make a commitment to live the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity, and

obedience. The goal of a secular institute is to be a transforming presence in society.

All are called and all have been chosen by God, yet it is up to each and every person to discern his or her vocation to serve and love Him. In the context of the Church or in religious circles vocations are discussed in a strictly religious sense of a man being a priest or a woman becoming a nun, but every vocation that each is called to is holy. Why? The vocation that each person is called to answer and live comes from God. It is His divine invitation to live one's life according to His will. The process sounds simple: hear the call, answer the call, and live the call, yet answering a vocation takes courage, sacrifice, love, and God's grace to live one's vocation fully and faithfully. □



***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 10<sup>th</sup> 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

**Prayer For Priestly  
Vocations**

Father, in every generation You provide ministers of Christ and the Church.

We come before You now, asking that You call forth more men to serve our eparchies in the ministerial priesthood.

Give us priests who will lead and guide Your holy people gathered by Word and Sacrament.

Bless us with priestly vocations so that we can continue to be a truly Eucharistic Church,

strengthened in our discipleship of Jesus Christ, Your Only Son.

Raise up, we pray, men who are generous in their service, willing to offer their lives and all their gifts for Your greater glory and for the good of Your people.

We make our prayer in the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, through Christ, our Lord.  
Amen.

# Order of Saint Sharbel Application Form

**To apply for Membership in the Order of Saint Sharbel, please follow these directions:**

1. Fill out this Application Form (print all information)
2. Circle appropriate Membership category
3. Make check payable to "Order of Saint Sharbel"
4. Mail check and application to your respective eparchy:

Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn  
109 Remsen Street  
Brooklyn, NY 11201

Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon of Los Angeles  
**OR** 1021 S. 10<sup>th</sup> Street  
St. Louis, MO 63104

## Membership Category (Please circle one)

### Type

1) **Perpetual**

2) **Annual**

### Donation

\$ 5,000 one time

\$ 500 each year

**OR**

Four payments of \$1,250 within one year

**OR**

Four payments of \$125 each year.

## Member Information

Last Name: \_\_\_\_\_ First Name: \_\_\_\_\_ M.I.: \_\_\_\_\_

Home address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Mobile Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

## Member's Business Mailing Address

Business Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Business Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

## Spouse's Information

Last Name: \_\_\_\_\_ First Name: \_\_\_\_\_ M.I.: \_\_\_\_\_

Cell Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

## Spouse's Business Mailing Address

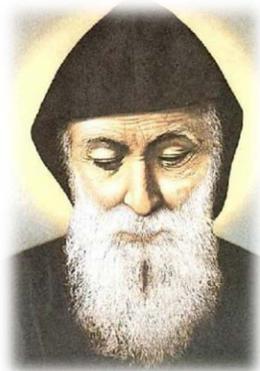
Business Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

**Parish/ Mission:** \_\_\_\_\_

# JOIN THE ORDER OF SAINT SHARBEL



## ORDER OF SAINT SHARBEL SUNDAY

Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon: Sunday, October 9, 2016

Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn: Sunday, October 16, 2016

All parishes will promote the Order on the date above.

The Order supports Maronite Seminarians preparing to become priests.

Please prayerfully consider joining the Order.

Enroll at [www.orderstsharbel.org](http://www.orderstsharbel.org) or ask your parish priest.



## Syria *Will We Become the Guardians of Rocks, Pebbles and Stones?*

*In a letter to Aid to the Church in Need, the Maronite Archbishop of Damascus, His Excellency Archbishop Samir Nassar, writes about his country's suffering people.*

### **Shaken Safeguard**

Six years of war have finally shaken the Syrian society's safeguard: The Family, which was the primary cell that absorbed the shocks and misfortunes of the never ending violence and that saved the country and the Church until 2014. Insecurity, intolerance, violence and chaotic destructions have uprooted more than two million families. Deprived of shelter and spread a bit all over, how can said families possibly endure such a heavy Calvary?

### **Heroic Mothers**

The family is quite frequently centered around the mother after the beginning of the war (March 15, 2011). It is men

that go to war and that oftentimes die. A popular saying says: "a fatherless child is not an orphan." The family continues to be centered around the mother, who ensures the unity and survival of the household. In this long and heavy sufferance, these heroic mothers live amidst misery and tears. They've honored their vocation while living under tents and drowning to death. Is there a bigger sacrifice?

### **Exodus of the Youth**

The general mobilization, decreed on October 2015, invites young men, younger than 45 years old, to join the military service. This decision disturbed all those families that weren't able to leave the country and were waiting *in situ* for this endless war to end. This age bracket is the spinal cord of the economic activities that remain. These youths disappeared quickly. Some of them decided to join the barracks, while others decided to escape, which meant an irreversible clandestine emigration, which in turn destabilized the labour market and the modest family life deprived of resources. Is there a future for a community without young people?

### **Weakened Church**

The effects of the above-mentioned changes weakened the Church. Families usually chose to follow the child that emigrated. This explains the accelerated exodus of families

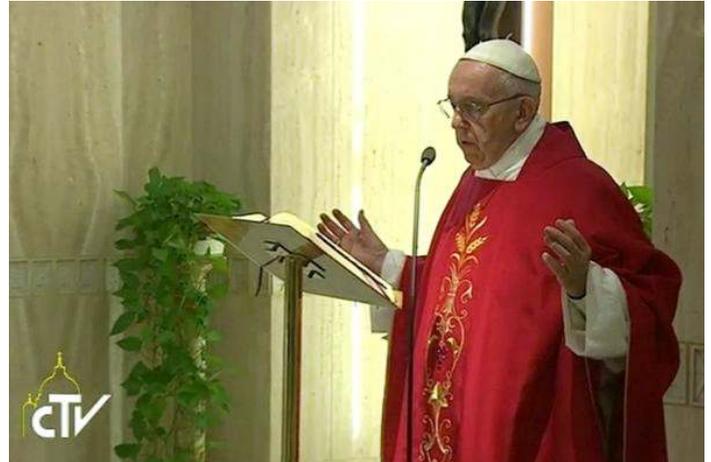
and the diminishing number of parishioners in all parishes. In addition, young women have to marry Muslim polygamists because there are no young men left, causing a demographic unbalance. Hence less marriages and less baptisms. For the first time, the Church is facing a crucial problem: one in three priests has chosen to leave Damascus towards more peaceful countries. How can we retain priests in Damascus? What will our Church become without priests?

### **Guardians of Rocks/Pebbles/Stones**

The ghost towns in the north of Syria are a source of inspiration for what we might become... How can we avoid becoming guardians of rocks, pebbles and stones? It is up to the Christians of the East to rethink their vocations and live like the little Primitive Minority Church: without any guarantees or protection. Will we be able to erase this Apostolic Challenge?

"Fear not, little flock..." Luke 12:32 .  
September 14, 2016 – Feast of the Glorious Cross ☐

## ***To Kill in the Name of God is Satanic Says Pope***



**P**ope Francis made this strong statement as he celebrated this morning Mass on September 25, 2016, in memory of Father Jacques Hamel, before his General Audience in St. Peter's Square. The Eucharistic celebration was filmed and broadcast live by the Vatican Television Center.

The director of the Holy See Press Office, Greg Burke, announced this Mass for the martyred 86-year-old priest, killed by an Islamic terrorist, noting it would be a "gesture as a sign of closeness to Father Jacques Hamel and his family and the whole community of Rouen."

Eighty pilgrims of the French diocese, together with Bishop Dominique Lebrun of Rouen attended the Mass for Fr. Hamel, who suffered a martyr's death on July 26, 2016, in the church of Saint-Etienne-du-Rouvray, where he was pastor. There, two men armed with knives entered and took him, two nuns, and two faithful hostage. They subsequently killed Fr. Hamel, by cutting his throat, and seriously wounded another.

During the morning homily, Pope Francis recalled that today marks the feast day of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross. Speaking on this mystery, the Pontiff reflected how Fr. Hamel, like Christ, was obedient unto death.

The Holy Father reminded those present how Jesus was the first martyr, and ever since, the Church has had many martyrs, but today more than ever.

"Today, there are Christians martyred, tortured, slaughtered, because they do not deny Jesus Christ," he said.

In this history of martyrdom, he noted, we arrive at that of Father Jacques, who is part of this chain of martyrs.

"This cruelty that asks for apostasy is – let's say the word – satanic," he said, noting, "How much I would like that all the confessions would say: to kill in the name of God is satanic."

Father Jacques Hamel was slaughtered, just as he was celebrating the Sacrifice of Christ. "A good, meek man, who always was trying to make peace, was assassinated, as if he were a criminal."

*Saint Anthony Maronite Catholic Church*  
*Presents*  
*Saint Rafka's Choir*  
*Richmond, Virginia & Washington, D.C.*  
**USA 2016**

**Thursday, October 20, 2016**  
7.00 pm Concert at Our Lady of Lebanon Seminary, Washington, D.C., organized by the Rector, Msgr. Peter F. Azar, presented by St. Rafka's Choir, Directed by Sr. Marana Saad, LMO

**Friday, October 21, 2016**  
7.00 pm Conference "Challenges of Christians in the Middle East" presented by Sr. Marana Saad, LMO, at St. Anthony Maronite Church - Glen Allen - Richmond

**Saturday, October 22, 2016**  
6.00 pm \* Concert at St. Anthony Maronite Church, Glen Allen - Richmond, presented by St. Rafka's Choir, directed by Sr. Marana Saad, LMO  
\* Lebanese Night organized by Sr. Raghida Antoun, LMO

**Sunday, October 23, 2016**  
9.00 am Catechism and musical workshops with the children of the parish, presented by Sr. Marana Saad, LMO  
11.00 am Divine Liturgy celebrated by Msgr. George Sebaali and sung by St. Rafka's Choir  
\* Lebanese picnic and programs

"This is the thread of satanic persecution," [Pope] Francis said, observing, "In the midst of the difficult time that he lived, in the midst of this tragedy he saw coming, he did not lose the clarity of accusing and say the name of the assassination: 'Go away, Satan!'"

At the funeral Mass for Father Hamel, the Archbishop of Rouen recalled that Father Hamel tried to push away his attacker, saying twice, "Go away, Satan."

"May this example of courage, along with the martyrdom of his life, to empty himself to help others," Pope Francis prayed, "Help us to move forward without fear. We must pray, eh! He is a martyr, the martyrs are blessed ... We must pray he gives us brotherhood, meekness, peace."

Moreover, the Pope prayed that Father Hamel intercedes that the faithful might have "the courage to tell the truth: that to kill in the name of God is satanic." □

(Zenit.org, September 14, 2016)

## ***Pope: What Happens in Heaven When a Sinner Enters a Confessional?***

Confessionals are generally quiet, darkened places. But what does heaven look and sound like when a soul enters a confessional? On September 11, 2016, Pope Francis invited the faithful to think about the rejoicing and celebrating in heaven when a sinner repents.

He made this invitation before praying the midday Angelus with those in St. Peter's Square, as he reflected on the heart of God as revealed in the three parables from Luke 15 recounted in the liturgy.

"A common element in these parables is expressed in the verbs that mean rejoice together, make a celebration," the Pope noted. "Mourning is not spoken of; there is rejoicing, there is celebrating. The shepherd calls his friends and neighbors and says, 'Rejoice with me because I have found my lost sheep' (v. 6). The woman calls her friends and neighbors, saying, 'Rejoice with me because I have found the coin that I lost' (v. 9). And the father says to his other son: 'now we must celebrate and rejoice, because your brother was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found' (v. 32).

"In the first two parables, the focus is on the joy that is so uncontainable that it must be shared with 'friends and neighbors.' In the third parable, the focus is on the celebration that springs from the heart of the merciful father and expands to the whole household."

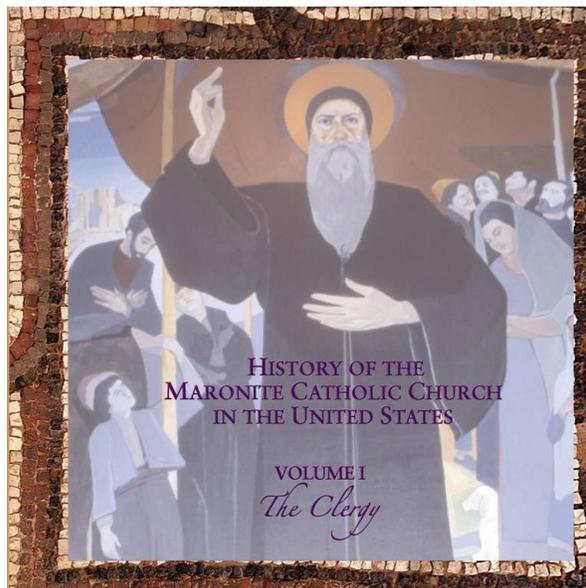
The Pope said that with these parables Jesus is presenting us with "the true face of God, a God with his arms always open, a God who deals with sinners with tenderness and compassion."

*Continues on page 20*

## ***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.*

---

## ***What Happens in Heaven***

*Continued from page 19*

God is waiting for us to get back up again, to rise up out of sin, the Pope explained. And “he awaits us with patience, he sees us when we are still a long way off, he runs to meet us, he embraces us, he kisses us, he forgives us. That is how God is. That is how our Father is.”

“And,” the Pope continued, “his forgiveness cancels the past and regenerates us in love. To forget the past — this is the weakness of God. When he embraces us, he forgives us, and he loses his memory. He doesn't have memory. He forgets the past. When we sinners convert and bring ourselves to be re-encountered by God, reproaches and sternness do not await us, because God saves, he welcomes us home again with joy and makes a celebration.”

### ***Beautiful***

Jesus himself speaks of the rejoicing in Heaven, the Pontiff noted. It is Jesus who says, “there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous people who have no need of repentance.”

In this light, the Pope proposed a question: “Have you ever thought about how each time we go to the confessional, there is joy and celebration in heaven?” He asked, “Have you ever thought of this? It's beautiful.”

Pope Francis said that we can be filled with great hope, since “there is no sin in which we may have fallen, from which, with the grace of God, we cannot rise up again.”

No one is so far gone they can't be recovered, he assured, “because God never stops wanting our good — even when we sin!”

The Pope concluded with a prayer to Our Lady, under the title of Refuge of Sinners, asking that through her intercession, the confidence of the prodigal son might well up in our hearts: “I shall get up and go to my father and I shall say to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you,’” the prodigal son said.

“On this path,” the Pope affirmed, “we can give glory to God, and his glory can become his celebration, and ours.” □

*(Zenit.org, September 11, 2016)*

## ***Pope Invites Youth to Live by 'Criteria of Faith' and Married Couples to Pray***

At the end of the general audience on September 21, 2016, Pope Francis gave his traditional greetings to the sick, youth and newlyweds. He noted today's feast of St. Matthew the Evangelist.

He drew three qualities from the saint's testimony: his conversion to live by faith; his meekness; and his dedication to Christ.

“May his conversion be an example to you, dear young people, to live life by the criteria of faith,” the Pope invited.

For the ill and newlyweds, the Pope prayed that Matthew's “meekness support you, the infirm, when your suffering seems unbearable; and may his following of the Savior remind you, dear newlyweds, of the importance of prayer in the matrimonial story you have undertaken.” □

*(Zenit.org, September 21, 2016)*