



The Maronite Voice

A Publication of the Maronite Eparchies in the USA



Volume VIII

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September 2012

Pope Benedict in Lebanon September 2012



Over fifteen years ago, Blessed John Paul II visited Lebanon. He met with youth, religious and civic leaders, and everywhere he went the streets were packed. What hope he brought! What joy! What confidence for a brighter future! During this historic visit he offered his much quoted word of encouragement: "Lebanon is more than a country, it is a message for East and West." Lebanon has never been the same! A few years ago in the spirit of the Blessed Pontiff, Lebanese Muslims and Christians together petitioned the government saying that there are Muslim feast days and Christian feast days, but no Muslim-Christian feast day in Lebanon. It was therefore decided that March 25 every year was to be set aside as the first ever in the whole world, Muslim-Christian feast day, to prove there is still great power and joy in the "message" that is Lebanon!

Two years after the holiday was proclaimed, on another March 25 in the year 2011, our Maronite Patriarch Bechara Peter Rai was enthroned as the 78th Patriarch for the Maronites. At his enthronement representatives of all eighteen religious communities in Lebanon, as well as visitors from throughout the Middle East and the world, were present. There were Sunni, Shiite, Druze, Catholic, Orthodox and Evangelical representatives, as well as political leaders from both the March 8 and March 14 political spectrum, present to hear Patriarch Rai proclaim that the Church finds her greatest hope in the words (which he took as his motto) "communion and love." Patriarch Rai has gone all through Lebanon, the Middle East and the world, and in each place the joy of the message of Lebanon is still alive and well. Moreover, his motto, "communion and love," has now become a household theme.

In a few weeks [September 14 -16, 2012], Pope Benedict XVI will visit Lebanon. All her people, Christians, Muslim and Druze, along with all her political leaders, have said that they will join the Lebanese families, the youth and guests from throughout the Middle East and the world to reflect on one essential and eternal truth: that man's greatest joy is to live in "communion and love." Dare we hope for this? Is peace possible? Is communion and love even thinkable in the midst of a world so torn apart by anger, hurt and dissension? Can the prayers of people of good will from throughout the world help the good people of the Middle East, especially these days in which Syria suffers from so much violence and division? The answer of Pope Benedict is and always will be: yes, peace is possible. God hears the prayers of his people, and Jesus' way is still the way that brings communion and love.

(Continues on page 9)

Schedule of Bishop Robert Shaheen

September 7, 2012

Stewardship Meeting, St. Louis, Mo.

September 8 - 9, 2012

Dedication of Sts. Peter and Paul Church - Simi Valley, Calif.

September 15, 2012

Ordination of George Hage to the Order of Deacon, Warren, Mich.

September 16, 2012

St. Raymond's Festival – St. Louis, Mo.

September 20 - 23, 2012

Eastern Church Encounter, Cleveland, Ohio

October 3 - 7, 2012

Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon Convocation, St. Louis, Mo.

October 10, 2012

Clergy Day, Warren, Mich

October 12, 2012

Wedding, St. Louis, Mo. ☐

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

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

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- Most Reverend Bishop Robert Joseph Shaheen
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Mary Shaia
Anne-Marie Condlin

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Maronite Convention 2013

Sts. Peter and Paul Maronite Church

Tampa, Florida

July 3 - 7, 2013

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



Subdeacon Kenneth Joseph Fodill of Richmond, Virginia, passed away on Saturday July 28, 2012. He is survived by his wife of fifty-four years, Janet Johnson; his three sons: Kenneth Jr., and his family; Steven and his family; Eric and his family; three daughters Susan Wright and her family, Cynthia Edwards and her family; and Pamela Gray and her family; numerous grandchildren, two great-grandchildren; his sisters: Theodora Flammia and her family; Sandra Shulleeta and her family and many nieces and nephews.

The funeral was held at St. Anthony Maronite Catholic Church in Glen Allen [Richmond], Va., on August 1, 2012. Condolences may be sent to his wife: Janet Fodill, 7413 Montrose Ave., Richmond, VA 23227.

Bishop Gregory Mansour, along with the clergy and faithful of the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn, extend their heartfelt sympathy and the promise of our prayers to the Fodill family.

May the Lord God grant Kenneth eternal rest in His Kingdom and consolation to his family and loved ones. ☐

A New Maronite Eparchy in France

On Saturday, July 21, 2012, His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI erected the new Eparchy of Notre Dame du Liban de Paris of the Maronites, based in Paris, France. He appointed Fr. Nasser Gemayel, Pastor of the parish of *Sainte Tekla* in *Masqua*, Lebanon, as first eparchial bishop of the new eparchy and Apostolic Vicar to Maronite faithful in Western and Northern Europe.

The Bishop-elect was born in *Ain Kharroube*, Lebanon, in 1951 and ordained a priest in 1981. He studied in Lebanon and France, has been active in pastoral care and education and is the author of several books on the Maronite Church. Bishop-elect Gemayel was ordained on August 30, 2012, at the Patriarchal See in *Bkerke*, Lebanon. ☐



Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon Youth Office

Bishop Robert Joseph Shaheen, Bishop of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon, is happy to announce that a new office has been established for the Youth, with the cooperation of Bishop Gregory Mansour of the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn.

The Reverend Gary George, CSsR, has been named the Full-time Director of the Office of Youth Ministry.

The Office of Youth Ministry will work with the Vocation Office. "We have long awaited the time that we could have a full-time Director for Youth Ministry and I thank Father Gary George who is known by our Youth throughout the country for accepting this responsibility" said Bishop Shaheen. He will be available to both the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon and the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn. Father Gary is also available for retreats, workshops and days of recollection. □

El Paso, Texas Diaconate Ordination



Bishop Robert Shaheen, assisted by Chorbishop Lesser and Msgr. Sawyer (right) elevates Subdeacon George Karam to the Order of Deacon.

by Michelle Karam Mouhanna

On Saturday, July 28, 2012, Saint Sharbel Mission of El Paso, Texas, celebrated the elevation of its Subdeacon George Karam to the Order of Deacon. Bishop Robert Shaheen, Bishop of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon, performed the imposition of hands on Deacon Karam. He was accompanied by Deacon Wissam Akiki of Saint Louis, Missouri. Saint Sharbel's Administrator, Monsignor Donald Sawyer of Austin, Texas, and Chorbishop William Lesser of Los Angeles, California, concelebrated. Deacon Fred Rotchford of the Holy Family Catholic Parish in El Paso assisted. Several traveled to attend this special occasion from Austin and San Antonio, Texas, Las Cruces, New Mexico;

Phoenix, Arizona; Los Angeles, California; Denver, Colorado; and Saint Louis, Missouri, to name a few, joining local parishioners, family members and guests. Following the ordination, the parishioners of Holy Family Church hosted a Mexican buffet lunch. Many thanks to Bishop Shaheen for bestowing this blessing on our community. May Deacon Karam continue to serve the Mission of Saint Sharbel with endless faith and love. □

Dartmouth, Massachusetts Light of Life Summer Program



by Maronite Servants of Christ the Light

Jesus is the Light of Life was the theme of our first LoL Club summer bible program for children ages 4-12 held on July 23rd through the 27th at our convent in Dartmouth. We hosted 18 children from the New Bedford and Fall River parishes, with the capable support of three teen helpers and three young adult assistants. Father Jack Morrison, pastor of Our Lady of Purgatory, New Bedford came each day to speak with the children about the Maronite faith and join in the fun activities and games. On the final day, Father Jack offered Divine Liturgy for the children, parents and LoL team leaders. The Liturgy was followed by entertainment by the LoL Club members, a pot-luck cookout and more games for the children. □

Midwest Regional Convention

Saint Maron Church, Cleveland, Ohio, will host NAM Midwest Regional Convention on November 16 -18, 2012, at the Holiday Inn, 6001 Rockside Road, Independence, Ohio. For More information call Samir Farah at (216) 401-7523 or Jeannie Farah at (216) 401 6039. You may also register online at www.namnews.org.

To make your hotel reservation, please call the Hotel directly at (216) 524-8050 ext. 298 and mention NAM when making your reservation. Room rate is \$82 per night. Deadline for reservation is November 1, 2012. □

Fall River, Massachusetts Scholarship Award



by Karl Hetzler

On July 22, 2012, following the Sunday liturgy, Chorbishop Joseph Kaddo, Pastor, and the parish family of St. Anthony of the Desert Church in Fall River, Mass., awarded scholarships of \$500 each to three graduating high school seniors. The scholarship program, now in its tenth year, is intended to further strengthen the bond with parish youth. The only criteria for eligibility are that the recipients be active parishioners of the church and submit a short essay of their best memories growing up in the parish. One of the scholarships is given each year in memory of Chorbishop Norman J. Ferris, while another is given in memory of Mary Ann Hallal, a former CCD instructor.

Recipients shown above from left to right:

Aaron Chouinard: Son of Lisa and Richard Chouinard, he will be attending the University of Massachusetts at Dartmouth, majoring in Accounting. Aaron received the Chorbishop Norman Ferris Memorial Scholarship.

Rachael Camara: Daughter of Lila and Joseph Camara, she will be attending Wentworth Institute of Technology, majoring in Biomedical Engineering. She received the Mary Ann Hallal Memorial Scholarship.

Jenna Michael: Daughter of John and Jacqueline Michael, she will be attending Johnson and Wales University, majoring in Culinary Arts and Culinary Nutrition.

Also shown in the background from left to right: Deacon Donald Massoud, Chorbishop Joseph Kaddo, Pastor, and scholarship committeeman Karl Hetzler. □

Food For Thought

Prayer is not asking. Prayer is putting oneself in the hands of God, at His disposition and listening to His Voice in the depths of our hearts.

Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta

Danbury, Connecticut Visit to B'nai Israel Synagogue

by Fr. Jean Younes

Fr. Jean Younes, Pastor of St. Anthony Maronite Church in Danbury, Conn., was invited to a Shabbat service at the Conservative congregation of B'nai Israel in Danbury on Saturday, July 21, 2012. Ten parishioners accompanied him. The purpose of the visit was to deepen the relationships with the local community in Danbury and to understand the Jewish faith and the connection to it through Our Savior Jesus Christ.

As with any visitors to a Maronite service or home, we were welcomed and embraced by the members of the congregation. The Temple was void of any opulence; it was a simple, 'monastic' room, symbolic of the days when people converted their living rooms by adding chairs for celebrants to sit and celebrate the Passover service.

Other similarities we share with our Jewish brethren: the entire service is chanted; you are either sitting or standing during the service; when the curtain, representing the Holy of Holies, where the Torah is housed, is opened, the Torah scroll is then carried around the room and revered among those in attendance; congregants participate in the pre-readings prior to the reading of the Torah passage; both share the same language roots as Christ...for the Israelites spoke Aramaic and not Hebrew.

In spite of these similarities there were a couple of distinct differences. While Fr. Jean was told to arrive at 10:30, the service actually began at 9:30 and lasted until 12:30. It is not unusual for those attending the service to leave and take a brief break then return during the ongoing celebration! In addition, there are two volumes of hardbound books that are utilized during the celebration. One is the Hebrew bible from which the Old Testament readings are taken and the other I would equate to the Word portion of our Liturgical celebration. All in all it was a wonderful experience culminated by sharing a bountiful ethnic lunch. □

Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon Year of Faith

His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI has named the forthcoming Church Year the "Year of Faith." With his Apostolic Letter of October 11, 2011, *Porta Fidei...*, Pope Benedict XVI declared that a "Year of Faith" will begin on October 11, 2012 and conclude on November 24, 2013. October 11, 2012, the first day of the Year of Faith, is the fiftieth anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Council (Vatican II), and also the twentieth anniversary of the Catechism of the Catholic Church. During the Year of Faith, Catholics are asked to study and reflect on the documents of Vatican II and the Catechism so that they may deepen their knowledge of the faith."

Bishop Robert J. Shaheen has appointed Rev. Andre' Mhanna as the Eparchial Coordinator for the "Year of Faith" within the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon. Rev. Mhanna will be keeping the Eparchy informed through mailings and directives throughout the coming Church Year. □

Roanoke, Virginia *Lebanese Festival Highly Successful*



The dance troupe of St. Elias Church, Roanoke, Va.

Pleasantville, New Jersey *First Annual Mediterranean Festival*



Jennifer Builes

The 14th annual Lebanese Festival, June 1-3, 2012, at St. Elias Maronite Catholic Church in Roanoke, Virginia, attracted thousands of visitors, despite uncooperative weather.

On opening night, June 1, the church totally lost electric power during a nasty storm, but quick thinking saved the day as church members brought in candles and turned the event into a "Lebanese dinner by candlelight."

Rene' Turk, Pierre Ellis and Charlie Aesy were co-chairs for the annual event, which generated the greatest foot-traffic in its 14-year history. Rene' notes that 7,200 rolled grape leaves were sold, along with 2,000 spinach pies and more than 3,000 skewers of lamb and beef shish kabobs.

Samer Jazrawy, a parishioner who's a professional musician from Iraq, provided live Lebanese music throughout the festival. Mary Ann and George Assaid helped introduce festival visitors to a *saj*, and Charlie Aesy and Antoinette Nackley demonstrated how it is used to make bread.

Another new event was a special area called "A Taste of Lebanon," which included facts about Lebanon, ornate clothing, paintings, Lebanese musical instruments and valuable oriental rugs.

The "cake walk" was revived from festivals past by two enthusiastic St. Elias junior youth. The youths presented the idea to Fr. Kevin weeks in advance complete with time schedules and projected profits. A variety of homemade cakes were up for grabs to the lucky holder of the winning ticket.

Youth of the parish, including the youngest children, performed traditional dances throughout the week, with the young men taking the spotlight for two dances. Many parishioners worked extremely hard and their efforts made this year's festival a resounding success. □

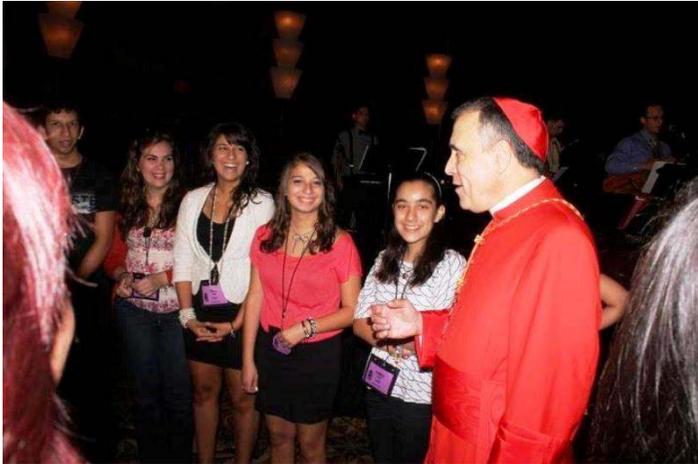
Our Lady Star of the East Maronite Catholic Mission in Pleasantville, N.J., held its first Mediterranean Festival on June 22 - 24, 2012. Live entertainment by Najeeb Saad and Hafez El Ali was performed Saturday. On Friday and Sunday, a mixture of Arabic, English and Spanish music was played. Lots of people attended all weekend long and enjoyed their time and showed their gratitude for the positive event in the community. A great selection of food was prepared by the parishioners including *Tabbouleh*, *Shawarma*, *Gyro*, *Falafel*, and *Shish Kabab*, and many more. Besides the endless amount of food, homemade Middle Eastern sweets were made.

Kyle Lowery, an NBA Superstar from the Toronto Raptors, attended the festival and signed autographs for all the fans who came to greet him. There were many carnival games for the children to enjoy and lots of prizes to be won. Children could play in the huge moon bounce. Adults had fun dunking the volunteers in the dunk tank. Ice cream, freshly made popcorn and cotton candy were on hand for guests to enjoy.

Our Lady Star of the East *Dabke* group performed all weekend, even in the rain! As well, local groups within the local community of Pleasantville performed with the help of the City of Pleasantville. On Sunday, Father Elie Saadeh, Administrator, celebrated a noon Divine Liturgy. On behalf of everyone at Our Lady Star of the East, we would like to thank everyone who participated in making our first festival a successful one! We can only go up from here, so let's hope next year is bigger and better! □



Houston, Texas Youth Conference: A Big Hit



Daniel Cardinal DiNardo, Archbishop of Galveston-Houston with (from left): Clarice Zehri, Christina Abou-Nassif, Maya Ramy, Hanan Francis, and Antonio El Kareh.

by Hanan Francis

On July 20, 2012, the MYO of Our Lady of the Cedars in Houston, Texas, joined all youth groups from the Galveston-Houston diocese at the Annual Youth Conference (AYC). The three-day conference gave the youth the opportunity to meet fellow youth who wanted to praise God and talk about how God helped them make it through times. As we entered the room filled with two thousand youth, music pounded through our ears and smiles formed while we broke out in song meeting new people.

On Friday evening our first speaker was Brian Johnson, the Director of the Office of Adolescent Catechesis and Evangelization for the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston. His talk covered the miracles God has created on earth. Our next activity involved boys and girls in two separate groups. Each group discussed what happens in our daily lives. Mary Bielski, a national speaker and former youth minister and one of the keynote speakers at the conference, led the girls' session. The girls' group discussed the importance of respecting ourselves and not to base who we are or how we live life by the media. Brian Lennox, a parish youth minister in the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston, led the boys' discussion. The boys discussed how to become a "Man of God." Following our discussions, we all met back together to say a prayer.

On Saturday following the morning Mass, Steve Angrisano, a Catholic recording star, led us in singing some praise and worship songs. Next, we attended our choice of the conference workshop sessions: one session covered the pros and cons of life and the other covered the different choices we have in our lives. Following lunch, we all gathered in the conference area for Mary Bielski's powerful presentation entitled "Unchanging Love of God the Father." She helped us realize that no matter what goes on in life, God has and will always be on our side. Then there was a short play about all the different saints and how they lived their lives with and for God. When we all settled down, Mark

Hart, Vice-President of Life Teen, gave the last keynote address of the conference entitled "Our Love for God." Dinner and Adoration followed. During Adoration, we prayed in silence for what we are thankful for in life.

During Sunday morning Mass, Daniel Cardinal DiNardo gave a shout out to Our Lady of The Cedars. As we left, each and every one of us looked back at what we had learned and spoke about the memories that were made. AYC was a hit! We all cannot wait for next year! ☐

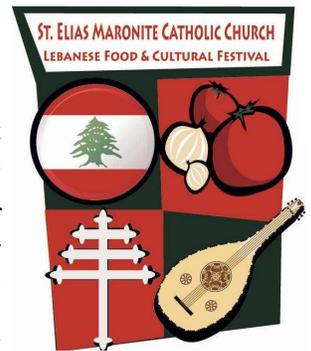
Birmingham, Alabama Festival Sets Records

by Wanda ElKhoury

St. Elias Maronite Catholic Church in Birmingham, Alabama, held its 14th Annual Lebanese Food and Cultural Festival on April 20 - 21, 2012. In contrast to the weather in 2011 when devastating tornadoes passed through the area only a couple of days prior to the festival, the weather was perfect and resulted in record numbers attending the festival.

The increase in attendance resulted in the most profitable festival since St. Elias started its Lebanese Food and Cultural Festival in 1999 to showcase to the citizens of Birmingham, the rich heritage, culture and food that is a part of this Maronite community. The festival has always given a part of the proceeds to charity - over \$245,000 in the last thirteen years. This is one way that this church family is working together to help with Christian causes here and abroad.

Plans are underway for the 15th Annual Lebanese Food and Cultural Festival which will be held on April 12 - 13, 2013. Mark your calendars. It is an event you will not want to miss. ☐



Deadline for next month's issue of *The Maronite Voice* is September 25, 2012.

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

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

Pictures must be original. 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 *Pilgrimage to the National Shrine*



Pictured with Bishop Gregory Mansour, Fr. Rodolph Wakim (left) and Msgr. James Root, is a group of parishioners from Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral at Our Lady of Lebanon Shrine in Ohio.

by *Salma T. Vahdat*

The annual pilgrimage to the Blessed Mother's Shrine in North Jackson, Ohio, was once again undertaken by a group of faithful parishioners from Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral, Brooklyn, N.Y., on August 14, 2012. With Msgr. Root at the helm, the enthusiastic group wheeled their way westward to celebrate the Feast of the Assumption with the expected crowds assembling from all over the country. Although the Feast Day was in the middle of the week, which normally would keep crowds thin, there was a larger crowd in attendance than in previous years.

Tuesday evening marked the celebration of the Melkite Liturgy, with priests and deacons garbed in stunningly beautiful vestments. Surprisingly, on the eve of the Feast, there was a full church of congregants.

On Wednesday, August 15, there were four Liturgies celebrated. The Healing of the Sick Liturgy was held midday with Bishop Gregory as the main celebrant. The evening Liturgy, celebrated at 7 p.m., was con-celebrated by Bishop Robert Shaheen of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon as the main celebrant assisted by Bishop Mansour and retired Bishop Massoud Massoud from Syria along with fifteen priests from various locales. The Cathedral Choir, led by Msgr. Root, chanted the Liturgy as well as the Litany to the Blessed Mother. The choir was joined by members from St. Maron of Youngstown, St. John the Baptist choir of New Castle, Penn., as well as members from St. Raymond Cathedral of St. Louis, Mo. The Antonine Sisters and the Maronite Servants of Christ the Light lent their beautiful voices in praise to the Blessed Mother. As the sun set and the

candle lights glittered in the dusk from the procession of the congregation, the participants, led by Msgr. Root, processed and responded to the Litany. The procession ended at the Shrine with the altar servers carrying the cross to the top of the Shrine. The Bishops ended the Liturgy with prayers at the Shrine, followed by a colorful display of fireworks. It was truly a spectacular spiritual and secular event and an inspiration to all.

The next day, August 16, the group piled into the van for the journey home. We were refreshed and inspired and ready to carry on for another year with the hope to return again with a few added "shriners" to pay homage to our Patroness on Her feast day. □

Schedule of Bishop Gregory Mansour

September 4, 2012

Annual Divine Liturgy, Gloucester, Mass.

September 9, 2012

Divine Liturgy at 5:00 p.m. for the Maronites and friends, Regis High School Chapel, Manhattan, N.Y.

September 10 - 11, 2012

USCCB Pro-Life Committee Meeting and Seminary visit, Washington, D.C.

September 14 - 16, 2012

Deacons/Subdeacons Annual Retreat, Washington, D.C.

September 23, 2012

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

September 26 - 27, 2012

New York State Bishops' Conference, N.Y., N.Y.

September 30, 2012

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

October 5 - 6, 2012

Ordination of Brother Patrick to the Order of Deacon, Petersham, Mass.

October 7, 2012

100th Anniversary of Saint Anthony of the Desert Parish and 40th Anniversary of Chorbishop Joseph Kaddo, Fall River, Mass.

October 13, 2012

Eastern Catholic Conference, Hillsborough, N.J.

October 14, 2012

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

Sacramento, California *A New Shrine*

With great joy, the Our Lady of the Rosary Maronite Mission in Sacramento, Calif., is announcing the presence of a statue of the Mother of God, Our Lady of Sacramento, standing high in front of the church's entrance. Bishop Jaime Soto of Sacramento will bless the statue on October 20, 2012, during the Second Annual Walk for World Peace.

The Mission happily announces that Our Lady of the Rosary is taking a new start. Fr. Nabil Mouannes is the first permanent Maronite priest in Carmichael, Sacramento County. The garden is remodeled. The hall is renovated. The chapel is furnished with many Eastern features. The liturgy is at 11:30 a.m. every Sunday.

Youth's First Spiritual Camping



During the summer, Our Lady of the Rosary Mission, with the help of Fr. Mouannes, prepared a seminar on leadership and direction where Fr. Mouannes taught the children how to be strong based on the life of St. Joshua and the life of Jesus Christ.

Before the Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Mother, the Mission had its first spiritual camping adventure where families and children camped in the garden of the church which is called the garden of the Mother of God. Young people from the Mission of St. Sharbel in Stockton, Calif., joined the campers. During that day and that evening Fr. Mouannes, with Fr. Jack Azzi who was visiting from Lebanon, focused on leadership and direction and taught from the Bible how God is not only the Creator of the universe but is also the leader of history. He is our personal leader because He is holding us together from within, not only in our hearts but also in every cell in our bodies.

Festival Information

Our Lady of the Rosary Maronite Catholic Mission will host a Lebanese and Middle Eastern Festival on October 6 - 7, at 6811 Fair Oaks Blvd., Carmichael, CA 95608. The festival will feature Lebanese food and pastries, and live Middle Eastern music, dancing and entertainment for the children. □

Easton, Pennsylvania *Deacon Retirement*

by Frances (Koury) Marcus

On Saturday, June 2, 2012, Notre Dame High School, Easton, Pennsylvania, honored Deacon Anthony P. Koury on his retirement from the school after 43 years of dedicated service as a member of the faculty and athletic director. The day began with a Liturgy of Thanksgiving at Our Lady of Lebanon Maronite Catholic Church in Easton, Father Paul Damien, Pastor, was the main celebrant. Msgr. Francis Doumit of Montreal, Canada, and Msgr. Maroun Asmar, Pastor Emeritus of St. Sharbel Church in Somerset, N.J.; Msgr. Alfred A. Schlert, Vicar-General of the Diocese of Allentown, Penn.; Msgr. Robert Forst, Msgr. Victor Finelli, Msgr. Thomas Koons, Msgr. John Grabish, Rev. E. Michael Camilli, Rev. Robert Kosek, Rev. Keith Mathur, Rev. J. Michael Beers, Father Elias, A.J., and Rev. Joseph Tobias, M.S.C. concelebrated. Deacon Anthony was the homilist, and the Choir of Our Lady of Lebanon Church provided the music for the liturgy. The 4th Degree Knights of Columbus, Union Council #345, in Easton, Pennsylvania, provided the Honor Guard.

Following the liturgy, over 420 people attended a banquet in Deacon Anthony's honor at the Church's social hall. The ladies in the parish helped prepare the food, and students from Notre Dame High School helped with the dinner.

Msgr. Thomas Koons, Notre Dame Class of 1980, offered the invocation. Msgr. Koons was a former student of Deacon Anthony. Following the invocation, Sal Rizzo led the singing of the American National Anthem and Msgr. Maroun Asmar and Msgr. Francis Doumit led the Lebanese Anthem. Mr. James Steiner, Vice-Principal of Notre Dame High School, offered a toast, and Fr. Paul Damien offered remarks. Mr. Joseph Kramer, Principal of Notre Dame High School, served as toastmaster for the banquet.

Following the dinner, the following people offered remarks and/or presentations to Deacon Anthony: the Honorable Salvatore Panto, Jr., Mayor of the City of Easton, who issued a Proclamation; State Representative Robert Freeman; and Marta Gabriel, who represented Senator Pat Toomey in Washington, D.C. United States Senator Charlie Dent sent a Proclamation, since he wasn't able to attend, as did Northampton County Executive, John Stoffa, who was also unable to attend.

In attendance were: the Honorable Robert Freedberg and the Honorable James Hogan, both former Judges of the Court of Common Pleas in Northampton County, Pennsylvania, the Honorable Michael J. Koury, Jr., nephew of Deacon Anthony and a Northampton County Judge of the Court of Common Pleas in Pennsylvania; and Municipal Judge Robert Ellwood of N.J.

Mrs. Cheryl Fenton spoke on behalf of the faculty, staff, and student athletes and parents of Notre Dame High School. Mr. Don Harakal, retired athletic director at Southern Lehigh High School and a member of the P.I.A.A. District XI Committee and Dr. Evan Reese, Jr., an orthopedic surgeon who was the football team physician for over thirty years and worked closely with Deacon Anthony also spoke. Dr. Reese

and his wife, Rosemary, traveled from South Carolina especially for the event. Another featured speaker was Rev. Robert George, Pastor of Sacred Heart Catholic Church in Bethlehem Township and Chaplain at Notre Dame High School. Father Bob has been a close friend of Deacon Anthony for many years. Frances Koury Marcus, Deacon Anthony's daughter, spoke on behalf of the family and delivered a very moving and beautiful tribute to her father. Rebecca Koury, Deacon Anthony's great niece, read a poem that she wrote in honor of her great-uncle. Msgr. Maroun Asmar, a longtime friend of Deacon Anthony, spoke about Deacon Anthony's commitment to Notre Dame and his parish in Easton.

Msgr. Alfred Schlert, Vicar-General of the Diocese of Allentown, Pennsylvania, Notre Dame High School Class of 1979 and former student of Deacon Anthony's, gave the main address in which he detailed Deacon Anthony's involvement not only at Notre Dame High School as a faculty member and athletic director, but also to his diaconal ministry at Notre Dame High School and the Diocese of Allentown.

Deacon Anthony was able to chronicle his life at Notre Dame High School for the last 43 years. In doing so, he expressed his thanks to the thousands of people whose lives he touched and in turn, touched his life. He began by thanking his wife of 42 years, Cheffie, his son, Anthony, Jr., and his daughter, Frances, and her husband, Jason. In those early years, and for many years afterwards, Cheffie, along with Anthony, Jr. and Frances, made many sacrifices as a family.

Deacon Anthony also paid tribute to his brother, the late District Judge, Michael J. Koury, Sr., for being the inspiration for his life of service in Catholic Education and for being a great role model. He also thanked his parents, the late Frank and Catherine Koury, and his sister, Frances, who was present, for everything they did to help educate him.

Deacon Anthony also thanked his family, his sister-in-law, Josie, his nephew, Judge Koury, and his wife, Elaine, and their children, Josie, Rebecca, and Michael J. Koury III, and his niece, Cathy. He then went on and tried to recognize all of the people at Notre Dame High School, past and present, administration, faculty, staff, coaches, student athletes, students, and parents. He made special mention of the fact that he was blessed with a great deal of volunteerism for the last forty-three years. At that point, he asked for a moment of silence to pay tribute to all of the volunteers who have passed to their eternal reward. Here, he asked that everyone in attendance be mindful of the passing on May 17, 2012, of Barbara Kassis, a former Notre Dame parent, volunteer and benefactor.

Deacon Anthony also wanted to thank the student servers, as well as all of the people who helped in any way to make the event a very memorable one, especially the people in the kitchen, preparing and serving the food, and all of the other aspects of the banquet. He pointed out how tight-knit the community of Our Lady of Lebanon is and how proud he was to part of that community.

Mrs. Sue Kramer presented Deacon Anthony with a



Deacon Anthony Koury surrounded by his Pastor and priests friends at his retirement party.

poem which was framed and matted on behalf of the Notre Dame High School community.

The benediction was given by Rev. Keith Mathur, Notre Dame Class of 2001 and a former student of Deacon Anthony. Following the benediction, Deacon Anthony was able to greet his guests and present each family with a desk stand of the Divine Mercy as a remembrance and a token of this gratitude.

In accepting the schools' offer to have a retirement celebration for him, Deacon Anthony insisted that all proceeds from the tribute book, as well as the banquet, form the start of the Deacon Anthony P. Koury Scholarship Fund, which hopefully, for many years to come, will financially benefit incoming freshmen from Our Lady of Lebanon Church who want to attend Notre Dame High School.

Deacon Anthony has tried to live his life by a quotation from Albert Pike, "What we do for ourselves, dies with us, what we do for others and the world remains, and is immortal." □

Pope Benedict in Lebanon

Continued from page 1

For the Lebanese people and for all her guests at the Holy Mass that Pope Benedict will celebrate, for one moment in time Jesus Himself will be present in their midst, and all the Middle East will receive a pilgrim, a father, the Vicar of Christ, who "comes in the name of the Lord." Lebanon once again can become that "message for East and West." Our hearts are fixed on Lebanon for this visit, and we pray and rely on the prayer of the Virgin who heard the words from her cousin Elizabeth, "Nothing is impossible with God" (Luke 1:37).

O Virgin of Nazareth, O Mother of God, O Queen of Peace, Our Lady of Lebanon, pray for us!! □

+Gregory John Mansour
Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn

The Maronite Bishops Launch Their Annual Appeal



On August 1, 2012, Their Excellencies the Maronite Bishops held their monthly meeting in *Diman* [Lebanon], headed by His Beatitude Patriarch Bechara Peter Rai, Patriarch of Antioch and All the East, with the participation of His Beatitude Nasrallah Peter Cardinal Sfeir. The meeting was also attended, on special invitation, by the General Superiors of the Maronite Orders. They examined the ecclesiastical and the national affairs, they greeted the Lebanese Army commanders, officers, non-commissioned officers and soldiers on the Army Annual Anniversary, appraising all their sacrifices to defend homeland and citizens, calling on everyone to rally around this army, so it remains an invincible bastion facing threats to Lebanon. They concluded the meeting by issuing the following appeal that treats the basic vital sector in the country life, the economy: reality, causes and solutions.

Why the Appeal?

◆ In addition to the thorny issues that weighed upon the situation in Lebanon, the Syrian crisis and its implication, the socio-economic theme has recently emerged in a remarkable and sometimes tragic evolution. This theme is taking dangerous aspects, making it a prey to the political controversies connected to more than one background. And the most dangerous matter in this topic is its tendency

to sectarianism, out of norms and laws, and resorting to logic similar to the civil disobedience. In front of this scene, we witness a state of deficit at the level of political decision and the economic vision, whose outcome might enter Lebanon into a foggy stage exposing its destiny to a bankruptcy risk in case it is dealt in an irresponsible spirit or partial approaches. There is no way out from searching radical solutions to the economic crisis, based on ethical and legal principles, and on the long-term projects that provide the state and the society a gradual economic stability.

◆ Facing this perilous reality, the Church, involved in individuals and society, “because man is the first path pursued by the Church to carry its message ... a path drawn by Christ Himself, throughout the Incarnation and the Redemption” (John Paul II, Year 100, P.53), cannot remote [itself] from an issue where the victim is primarily the Lebanese citizens, especially the poor and the weak. Therefore, our Council directed this appeal, which is considered a wake-up and an urgent call to deal with issues before it is too late. We first aim at the Lebanese public opinion, to be aware of its role in the exercise of its democratic rights in election and accountability, and second, to all officials in order to bear their moral and national responsibilities in this field, to serve the people and to preserve the nation. Otherwise, the state of Lebanon

would become a bankrupt state on the moral, financial and legal levels, validating St. Augustine saying: "Remove the Law-then what would distinguish the State from a huge gang of bandits?"

The Reality of the Lebanese Economy

1. Since 1975, the socio-economic reality in Lebanon has witnessed very difficult conditions and signals more peril in light of the inability to confront problems and the absence of integrated visions for solution. In the light of globalization and the linked economies of other countries, lays a fundamental problem shown in the lack of stability in the international oil prices, resulting complications in the various economic sectors in Lebanon.

a) It puts additional burdens on the energy production cost in the present and the future. The electricity crisis is starting to pose a risk to the national economy as it has become nearly 20% of the annual state budget and contributes to the value of the deficit with more than 65%, a figure expected to increase annually.

b) Its repercussions are clearly shown on the productive sectors of industry and agriculture, dangerously withdrawing its competitive capacity, in addition to what is happening of natural or artificial disasters, as well as the difficulties in conducting its production, caused by troubles and wars converging in the region.

c) The service sectors, which themselves need to use the energy, cannot survive and they are also affected by the unsteady political and security circumstances.

2. The second basic problem is the public debt accumulation, forcing the state to borrowing year after year to cover the value of the benefits resulting from the service of this debt. Practically, the bottom line is the absence of investment funding sources in development, establishment and safeguard. Therefore, Lebanon is facing the reality of "a hemorrhagic economy," which turned into a continuous existential crisis, exposed year after year by the increase of deficits, in the absence of a real solution for both Lebanon's electricity and the public debt.

3. Unless we strongly confront this bad situation, the next few years are expected to be really scary. For in the year 2016, some experts expect a 33% increase in the total public debt, to reach about eighty billion U.S. Dollars; the annual deficit in the government budget would rise about 47% and the percentage of debt to gross domestic product from 140% to more than 170%. This ratio may lead Lebanon to be banned, as it did to richer European countries such as Greece, Italy and others.

4. This is negatively reflected on the citizen who is sinking under the rising burden of heating, transportation and electricity costs ... in addition to the price rise for all consume goods and services, while the purchasing power is diminished day after day, thereby creating a social crisis, so far unknown by the Lebanese community. It led and will lead to the dissolution of the middle class and the

increase in the proportion of citizens living below the poverty line, the declining of job opportunities and the increase of a bleeding migration in all directions.

5. Behind all these facts, the specter of great depression is looming as well as the risk of the State bankruptcy. Indicators are obvious in the State's faltering on dues payments to private and public enterprises, its inability to develop infrastructure, the fear of not being able to secure the salaries and wages for the public sector workers, the payment of pensions and the end of service indemnities.

The Causes of This Reality

There is no doubt that Lebanon wars, occupation, destruction and displacement since 1975 have hit the national economy at heart, and smashed the prosperity of this country. Nevertheless, there are other reasons that prevented and still prevent this economy to regain its vitality and its natural path. Some of the most important reasons:

a) An incomplete adoption of economic policies: the economic policies pursued since the end of the war in the early nineties have focused on the revenue economy, and neglected the productive sectors that build the real national economic basis, and have found it simpler to borrow in order to finance the State deficit worsening derived from the amplification of the mostly non productive State expenses. It also limited the economic power in the capital without seriously working on rebuilding the destroyed displaced areas, equally developing all Lebanese regions and all the economy sectors. This led to the serious decline in the competitiveness power of productive sectors in industry, agriculture and others. The other sectors were not reinforced in face of the political and security instability. The accumulation of public debt that drove the national economy in a devastating spiral is the most dangerous result of these policies.

b) A severe corruption in the body of the State and public administrations: which led to the public money seizure and the wasteful spending on projects that cost the state times the real cost, as well as the growing tide of transactions in all areas with the absence of any control or accountability.

c) Considering the State a "dairy cow" and a breeding ground for partisans gathered in departments without needing them, their efficiencies and their productivity. This led to administrative inflation in non efficient number of persons, while administration is complaining about large voids in sensitive positions that require scientific and high ethical skills. Finally, several attempts to lay hands on some public utilities are emerging with rival competition, which definitely damage the state imports.

d) The loss of decision-making in the State: the deep political divisions and the lack of a unified and clear vision, the tyranny of private or partisan interest over the public interest, the lack of respect for the correct rules of democracy, the adoption of spiteful policies and disruption of mutual revenge ... all this led to a paralysis of the right decision-making mechanism at the right time. In the rare

times when a decision was taken, it came after a unanimously labor through bargaining, and often too late, to become in the end, inappropriate and useless. Thus, the results are incomplete on the economic front, in the lack of the studied and root coherent solutions.

Suggesting Some Solutions

The Fathers realize that the complex situation of the Lebanese economy will not find magic solutions, as they know that finding technical solutions is a task for experts, in abundance but put aside in our society. Though, the gravity of the situation leads us to propose some strategic solutions capable of placing the records straight.

a) **Focus on the Governing Role of the State:** The State, in the free economic system, should not monopolize the power and the decision, and should not directly manage all economy as in the totalitarian states and regimes. Nevertheless, this does not mean that it has no role at all, as claimed by ultra-liberal extremists. “The Church respects the independent legitimate democratic system (and the free economic one), but economic activity, especially at the market level, cannot fall in an institutional or legal or political vacuum; rather provide guarantees for individual freedoms and private ownership, as well as currency stability and public services restoration. It is the core duty of the State to ensure these guarantees. The State must also monitor and sponsor the application of human rights in the economic field” (John Paul II, Year 100.P 48). Hence, the State has an organizational role in the economics field, played through the enactment of fair laws that determine the rights and duties of each class, to ensure the application of these laws without bias, limiting the monopoly and the greed of some people. It should carry out the rights of the poor and the vulnerable in the society and ensure social justice for all citizens. It also must draw the general economic policies and the plans that control the investment of natural resources; it should sponsor the weak sector and spread balanced development in all areas. The restoration of the Lebanese State governing role, its efficiency and firm practice in a spirit of responsibility and high ethics, lead the way to adopt other solutions that deeply treat economic and social problems. Therefore, it should not monopolize public utilities while it does not have the capacity to promote and develop them due to its high borrowing.

b) **Launch the Partnership Between the Public and Private Sector, Resident and Expatriate:** The treatment of the economic situation on the verge of the great depression, requires the combined efforts of every well to do individual to contribute in stopping this collapse, and the launch of a new dynamic motivating all citizens to carry their share of responsibility for their community. Thus, we recommend the launch of the decision to revive the work in the Social-Economic Council that opens doors for constructive, scientific and conventional dialogue in order to build this partnership. We also recommend the adoption and application of mutual law between the public and private sector, to encourage the smart investment in infrastructure that is witnessing frightening erosion by an

appropriate funding without new debts on the treasury. We recommend expediting the appointment of governing bodies for various sectors, such as electricity, gas, water and other...

- c) **Reduce the Public Debt with the Quintuple Strategy or More:** The treatment of socio-economic dispatched files is through a radical reform within the quintuple strategy or more. It should develop budgets that anticipate the data for the next years, adopt creative complementary solutions through the development of a “special fund” to cure the public debt, create a “fund for energy,” stimulate the productive sectors, strengthen the citizens’ purchasing power, attract investment for employment in infrastructure, support education, restructure the electricity sectors, contract with specialized companies to extract oil with an absolute transparency and without any politicization or corruption, before hands are placed over a large part of the oil fields and the natural gas in our territorial waters, causing us new wars we can do without. The Lebanese Banks are an important fortress for the Lebanese economy and are the pride to all the Lebanese. Hence, the need for awareness of its responsibilities in the protection of small depositors and savers, and the rationalization of the State condemnation process, avoiding their exposure to risks we witness along with sovereign debt crisis, today and yesterday, in Asia, Latin America and others.
- d) **Expedite the Implementation of Administrative and Extended Development Decentralization:** This releases the economic growth and the balanced development wheel, and brings closer the social and development services to the citizen. This measure will stimulate citizens to pay the required taxes and fees, opens for them the possibility of monitoring and accounting, and feeds their spirit in solidarity and social joint liability.
- e) **Extend of State Decisions on all the Regions and all the Citizens:** Regarding the levying and taxes collected and the application of customs laws, subject everyone to their requirements, and fight against smuggling and deviations and various types of evading the regulations. *There would be no summer and winter on one roof*, thus, the State will deal with justice and equality with all its children.

Conclusion and Warning

Facing the great dangers of collapse and a failure to reach the national-social pact, the Fathers are appealing and warning to face the risk of failure synchrony with the major political changes in the region, they might constitute, God forbid, the spark that, if erupted, lead to the dissolution of Lebanon. If the social-economic collapse occurs, it would be an additional pressure on the national fabric that unites common national interests, as fundamental and constitutional understandings are neither a conflict nor a split.

(continued on page 20)

Nine Steps Toward Positive Life Decisions

I've been a Vocation Counselor for thirty-five years, and these days I meet regularly with more than a dozen people of all ages and walks of life. Every person and every situation is different, but I've discovered nine basic steps that keep me and those I talk with moving toward positive and faithful life decisions.

I try to assure people who bring a difficult decision to me that they will be able to know, in their deepest being, in their heart of hearts, what God is calling them to do. Many people are not sure they will ever know God's will or, if they do, that this knowledge will necessarily bring them peace.

We begin with prayer. Two verses from the psalms are favorites of mine for these situations: "Take delight in the Lord and He will give you the desires of your heart" (Ps. 37:4) and "I am your servant. Give me wisdom that I may know your decrees" (Ps. 119:125). We pray the prayer to the Holy Spirit together: "Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of the faithful. . . ." We add other prayers appropriate to the situation, and we ask the Holy Spirit to inspire us and lead us to true wisdom.

1. Use Your Mind

I advise people that in the ordinary course of events they can use their minds to reach conviction in their hearts. We'll often read the beginning of Paul's Letter to the Romans, chapter 12: "I urge you, therefore . . . by the mercies of God, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God, your spiritual worship. Do not conform yourselves to this age but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and pleasing and perfect" (Rom. 12:1-2).

We talk about renewing the mind--centering the intellect and the will totally on God and what God wants for us. I like to quote scripture to reinforce this point: "Love the Lord your God with your whole heart, your whole mind and with all your strength; and love your neighbor as yourself" (Mark 12:30-31).

The purpose of our discussion--indeed, the purpose of our lives--is to seek out and live God's will for us.

2. Look at the Options

I ask people what they think God wants them to do. If they present alternate possibilities, I ask which one they are inclined to think is God's will. From students and younger people, the possibilities I hear most frequently are: Should I marry? Should I be a religious or a priest? Should I break up with the person I'm dating? Should I change my course of study in school? Should I spend my summer in volunteer missionary work, or should I take a job at home? Should I room with these particular people? Should I direct my future career into work for the Church?

From recent graduates and older people I hear: Is God calling me to move and change my job? Should I go back to school? I thought I was called to marriage, but it's been a long time and I haven't found anyone to marry. Should we adopt children? Should I join a lay community or apostolate? How do I deal with my strong attraction to the married person at work who seems to be flirting with me?

3. What Does God Want?

Most Catholics follow God's commandments and the teachings of the Church. Indeed, the question is usually, "What does God want?" Seldom will a proposed course of action be inconsistent with what God wants. However, a careful review of the priorities involved in the person's state of life will frequently cast a helpful, new light on the proposed decision or change. Such statements as "I am first called to be a wife and mother" or "My first priority as a priest is to serve the people God has given me" will clarify the matter if a new direction threatens to undermine these commitments or make fulfilling them more difficult.

We might also review secondary commitments such as "God has called me to be a teacher" or "My main service to the Church is in the area of

respect for life." Deeply held commitments of this kind lay a foundation for future actions.

4. Will It Help the Conversion of Heart?

The key to discerning a specific vocational call is conversion. Our response to vocation involves converting our life more deeply and fully to the Lord. The call to religious life means a special call of service and self-surrender. The call to marriage always means conversion to a life centered on a spouse and possibly children. Being "in love" is important but not sufficient. Marriage, as well as the religious vocation, involves a commitment to the loving service of others.

In talking about conversion, we'll examine the person's spiritual history of turning away from sin and growing in love of God. We consider how the proposed action fits into this history. Will it bring the person closer to God and a life of virtue, or will it lead him or her further away? We look at how it will change supportive relationships. Will it be easier or more difficult to practice the disciplines of a spiritual life, such as regular prayer, participating in Mass and other sacraments, sharing faith with others, and having spiritual directors and models of holiness?

Sometimes the process of discernment will end here, when it appears that a proposed decision will make it harder for the person to grow in holiness. After going through this review, people sometimes will say, "I can see now that the Lord doesn't want me to do this; this isn't right for me." (More often, however, this conclusion comes after the next step--consistency.) At the same time, a new direction that involves considerable additional responsibility should not be ruled out because it might raise new temptations and challenges. Perhaps meeting and overcoming new challenges is precisely what's needed for the next stage of your spiritual growth.

5. Is It Consistent With the Way God Has Dealt With Me Before?

The discussion moves to consistency: How has God led you to this point? The difference between the conversion and consistency is often blurred. In both we're discerning a pattern of spiritual growth. Does the plan under consideration fit in? Can you see your life leading to this point? Do you have the time, energy, and resources to fulfill more demanding commitments?

Sometimes we understand our vocational call only when we meet the people we would like to spend our lives with. In any case, the call will be consistent with what has gone on before in our lives. Sometimes we know we are called to marriage or the religious life long before we find someone we would like to marry or a religious order we would like to enter.

The consistency of the vocation will be tested over a period of time. A couple will go through years of acquaintance and courtship to discern their vocation. People discerning religious vocations will spend years in seminary and formation before making vows for life. We say that married people are "made for each other." We say that priests and nuns and brothers "have a vocation."

The same is true for vocations to the single life. Many people are called to actively embrace singleness in order to care for family members, join a lay apostolate, or lead some other life of service. There must be consistency between the service, the person, and the call to singleness, just as there must be conformity to the Gospel and an awareness of how the call will lead to greater conversion and union with God.

As you discern a life vocation, it's important to live consistently. You should start living now what you believe is your vocation. Eliminate the contradictions. As a decision about marriage approaches, both partners will stop dating other people and devote their attention exclusively to each other. Men and women might date in the early stages of thinking about a religious vocation. As they move toward a decision, however, it's important to begin to live the celibate call, without romantic relationships.

6. What Confirms the Wisdom of the Proposed Action?

Usually people tell me several ways that their course of action appears to be confirmed. Friends will endorse it. Circumstances will change in surprising ways to make the act possible. They may have detected special spiritual signs that seem to affirm it. A life vocation is a two-way street. In large decisions--marriage, religious vocation--the confirmation of another party is required. Two parties, not one, make marriage vows. The religious community, as well as the individual, assents to a call to a religious vocation.

The lack of a confirming invitation can cause great anguish. Lovers say their hearts are broken when their love is not reciprocated. The same thing happens to people who think they have a call to the religious life. The call to a religious vocation is mutual. Both the individual and the church must hear it.

Because the mutuality of a religious vocation is often less well understood than the mutuality of marriage, I'd like to say a bit more about it. Dealing with the Church can be difficult, but the Church is the institution established to carry out the Lord's work--including the work of discerning vocations to the religious life. God became human. He entered into human life. He works through limited, flawed, and sometimes erring human beings and human institutions.

You may encounter problems in this discussion of the confirmation of your vocation. What does it mean when the signs are negative while the disposition of your heart is positive? Parents and family are opposed, circumstances seem to block action, but you still think the proposed course is the right one. Is this a question of timing, should the whole matter be reexamined, or should the signs be disregarded?

What is the relative importance of confirming signs--or the lack of them? How important is the approval of others? What does it mean when it looks very easy, or very difficult, to implement the decision? Be careful not to let the discussion of these complexities overwhelm the discernment process. Difficulties tend to become more complex the longer they are discussed. Move quickly to conviction of the heart. This is decisive.

It is often helpful to write down the most important items of confirmation--or lack of it. In fact, it is usually a good idea to summarize the conclusions you reach at each stage of the discernment process for later prayerful consideration.

7. Interpret Spiritual Signs

Signs have their place. Signs appear frequently in scripture. "And this will be a sign for you: You will find an infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger," the angel told the shepherds (Luke 2:12). Gideon repeatedly prayed for signs that God wanted him to lead his small force against a greater army. Jesus' miracles were signs of the coming of the kingdom of God. At the same time, Saint Paul explicitly warns against relying on signs rather than on the faith we have received (1 Cor. 1:22).

In my experience, a person's account of spiritual signs is more useful as confirmation of the desire in the person's heart than as a confirming sign in itself. Often, the individual is fully convinced that he or she should go ahead; the spiritual signs are incidental or ambiguous points of confirmation.

8. What Does Your Heart Say?

Conviction is decisive. What do you sense about the moral certainty of the rightness of your call? I'll talk with people about their deepest values and desires. "Ask yourself this: Putting aside all other considerations, including difficulties in implementation and other complexities, do you believe that this is the right thing to do? When you prayerfully think about going ahead with this, do you experience a deep 'yes,' a release and a pouring out, or do you experience hesitation and deep uncertainty?"

The standard of moral certainty is high in commitments such as marriage and religious vocation, where the commitment is for life and time is not a great factor.

(Continued on page 20)



National Apostolate of Maronites 50th Anniversary – 2013

by Edward M. Shiner
former Executive Director of NAM

With the exciting and successful 49th Convention in San Antonio just behind us, we enthusiastically look ahead to a monumental year for NAM as we celebrate its half-century mark. Last year we proudly marked the 50th anniversary of our Maronite Seminary in Washington and now we prepare to commemorate another significant milestone in the American Maronite Church – the birth of NAM in 1963. It is not coincidental, but probably providential that in the same year that NAM was born, the first American-born Maronite priest was ordained!

Bishop Robert Shaheen was ordained to the Holy Priesthood at the first NAM Convention in Washington, D.C. in May of 1964. In retrospect we can see that these two monumental and historic events were major catalysts for a new beginning of the Maronite Church in the U.S. NAM provided a new vehicle to unite the Maronites of America, which eventually led to the establishment of our Exarchate and the presence and leadership of our first bishop, while the ordination of our first American-born Maronite priest gave us all a new vision of what could be accomplished here in America beyond the boundary and horizon of our Lebanese Maronite roots.

You may be wondering why this article is being written by me – a former NAM director – and why I'm writing this so much in advance of this celebration to be held at the 2013 convention in Tampa. It's been over six years since I left the position of NAM's Executive Director in March of 2006, however I'm proud to note that I still have a deep commitment to the mission and goals of the apostolate and to the laity and clergy of our Maronite Church. Several months ago NAM's President, Amine Harb, asked me to consider overseeing an important aspect of this upcoming celebration, a special commemorative and historic book. At first, I was somewhat hesitant because of the time and work that this project would entail and also concerned about how I would fit it in to my busy schedule and full-time position with Lebanese American University. After further thought and a second discussion with Amine, I agreed to take on this project for this very special NAM commemoration.

My first step was to establish a national committee made up of all the living past-presidents and spiritual directors of NAM, and the current president, vice-president, and executive director, along with several key people who have been a part of the apostolate's beginning and growth from the very start, as well as a few people who have been involved in the archival aspects of NAM and the American Maronite Church. To complete this committee I have enlisted the guidance and advice of Bishops Shaheen, Mansour and Emeritus Bishop, Doueïhi. A full list of these committee people will soon be available on NAM's website along with a general plan for this project.

One of the key purposes of this article is to inform you of this momentous project and to enlist your participation in it in various ways that I hope will make it a true project of our

grassroots Maronite Community. First, allow me to give you an overview of the general plan to date, which is still in formulation.

- A complete and updated history of NAM, accompanied by a detailed Timeline
- A visual collection of all 50 NAM Convention book covers
- A series of brief articles by each past president recalling the key events and accomplishments of their presidencies
- Letters from the Pope, our Patriarch and our three Bishops
- Memorial pages for Bishops Zayek and Chedid and for each of our deceased past presidents
- A listing (as complete as possible) of all of the NAM boards of directors during these fifty years
- A multi-page collage of photos from convention participants over this half-century
- A series of comments, quotes or observations from conventioners and NAM members
- A special collection of photos noting the many married couples who met at these conventions
- A listing of all fifty convention sites, noting the host pastors and NAM presidents for each convention

This publication will be separate from the regular convention commemorative book in Tampa, and will be funded separately so as not to conflict with the Tampa convention

An initial meeting was held at the San Antonio Convention, where several committee members attended and reviewed the project and discussed additional ideas and implementations. Future meetings will be held via conference call and ongoing work will be done via email.

Now here is how you, as an individual, can get involved and become an important part of this "extended committee" and this historic event.

- Send us special photos that we can use in our photo collage pages
- Be a personal part of this book by submitting any personal quotes, comments or observations on your enjoyable convention experiences
- If you served on the NAM Board during these 50 years, send us your dates of service as best as you can recall
- If you met your spouse at a NAM Convention – send us dates (when you met; when you married) and a wedding photo or a similar photo.

Please send photos to Ramona Milford at: 9860 Tesson Creek Dr., St. Louis, MO 63123. Or email them to her at ramonamarie26@att.net (Continues on page 16)

Pornography, Respect, And Responsibility

A Letter on Pornography and Business Ethics to Hotel Industry Executives

by Robert P. George and Shaykh Hamza Yusuf

We write to ask you to stop offering pornographic movies in your company's hotels. We make no proposal here to limit your legal freedom, nor do we threaten protests, boycotts, or anything of the sort. We simply ask you to do what is right as a matter of conscience.

We are, respectively, a Christian and a Muslim, but we appeal to you not on the basis of truths revealed in our scriptures but on the basis of a commitment that should be shared by all people of reason and goodwill: a commitment to human dignity and the common good. As teachers and as parents, we seek a society in which young people are encouraged to respect others and themselves--treating no one as an impersonal object or thing. We hope that you share our desire to build such a society.

Pornography is degrading, dehumanizing, and corrupting. It undermines self-respect and respect for others. It reduces persons--creatures bearing profound, inherent, and equal dignity--to the status of objects. It robs a central aspect of our humanity--our sexuality--of its dignity and beauty. It ensnares some in addiction. It deprives others of their sense of self-worth. It teaches our young people to settle for the cheap satisfactions of lust, rather than to do the hard, yet ultimately liberating and fulfilling, work of love.

We recognize that we are asking you to abandon a profitable aspect of your business, but we hope that you will muster the conviction and strength of will to make that sacrifice and to explain it to your stockholders. We urge you to do away with pornography in your hotels because it is morally wrong to seek to profit from the suffering, degradation, or corruption of others. Some might say that you are simply honoring the free choices of your customers. However, you are doing much more than that. You are placing temptation in their path--temptation for the sake of profit. That is unjust. Moreover, the fact that something is chosen freely does not make it right; nor does it ensure that the choice will not be damaging to those who make it or to the larger community where degrading practices and materials flourish.

We beg you to consider the young woman who is depicted as a sexual object in these movies, as nothing but a bundle of raw animal appetites whose sex organs are displayed to the voyeurs of the world and whose body is used in loveless and utterly depersonalized sex acts. Surely we should regard that young woman as we would regard a sister, daughter, or mother. She is a precious member of the human family. You may say that she freely chooses to compromise her dignity in this way, and in some cases that would be true, but that gives you no right to avail yourself of her self-degradation for the sake of financial gain. Would you be willing to profit from her self-degradation if she were your sister? Would you be willing to profit from her self-degradation if she were your own beloved daughter?

Furthermore, we trust that you need no reminding of the fact that something's being legal does not make it right. For example, denying black men and women and their families

access to hotel rooms--and tables in restaurants, as well as other amenities and opportunities--was, for countless shameful years, perfectly legal. In some circumstances, it even made financial sense for hotel owners and operators in racist cultures to engage in segregationist practices even when not compelled by law to do so. However, this was deeply morally wrong. Shame on those who denied their brothers and sisters of color the equal treatment to which they were morally entitled. Shame on you if you hide behind legality to peddle immorality in the pursuit of money.

Our purpose is not to condemn you and your company but to call you to your highest and best self. We have no desire to hurt your business. On the contrary, we want you and your business to succeed financially--for your sake; for the sake of your stockholders, employees, and contract partners; and for the sake of the communities that your hotels serve. We believe that the properly regulated market economy serves the good of all by providing products and services at reasonable prices and by generating prosperity and social mobility. But the market itself cannot provide the moral values that make it a truly humane and just institution. We--owners, managers, employees, customers--must bring those values to the market. There are some things--inhuman things, unjust things, de-humanizing things--that should not be sold. There must be some things that, for the sake of human dignity and the common good, we must refuse to sell--even if it means forgoing profit. □

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About the Authors

Robert P. George is McCormick Professor of Jurisprudence at Princeton University. Shaykh Hamza Yusuf is co-founder and a member of the faculty of Zaytuna College. Affiliations are provided for identification purposes and do not imply institutional endorsements.

National Apostolate of Maronites

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If you send actual photos, please put your name on them so we can return them to you after scanning and archiving them. Feel free to contact me with any questions, suggestions, etc. at emshiner411@gmail.com or call me at 917-334-0711.

I encourage you to make every effort to participate in this project and to respond at your earliest convenience. This is a huge project and will require considerable advanced planning in order to execute it properly, so please respond soon and be a part of this historic event!

And don't forget to plan to attend this memorable convention in Tampa, Fla., next July. Full details will be forthcoming from the convention committee and on the NAM website – www.namnews.org. □

San Antonio, Texas A Memorable Maronite Convention



The 49th Annual Maronite Convention Committee.

by Miriam Wells

It was an unforgettable week in San Antonio, Texas, as clergy and members of NAM came together to experience the Maronite Mission deep in the heart of Texas. Monday, July 2, 2012, many of the clergy from both Maronite eparchies in the United States gathered in the Alamo City. Bishops Robert J. Shaheen, Bishop of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon, and Gregory John Mansour, Bishop of the Eparchy of Saint Maron, joined Maronite clergy and religious for their annual conferences. That evening, the attendees, along with the NAM board and convention committee members, gathered at St. George for an inspirational liturgy and Lebanese dinner.

Maronites from around the country began arriving in San Antonio just in time to celebrate the 4th of July, Texas style. The opening event, aptly titled "Stars, Stripes and Spurs," was a *boot scootin'* fun time with great country music by local artists The Gary Glenn Band and a performance by the Fire on the Mountain Cloggers. Guests were transported to and from this event at the Lonesome Dove via barges on the San Antonio River. The evening was complete with a fireworks display by the city of San Antonio celebrating Independence Day.

Each day of the convention was filled with activities. There were workshops and informational sessions on various topics covering everything from fundraising to leadership to faith formation and spirituality. The hospitality room was available most of the day. Conventioneers would gather with friends and family members to visit and enjoy the Lebanese food prepared by volunteers from St. George.

The attendees were blessed to have Fr. Fadi Tabet M.L.M. perform an uplifting evangelical concert on

Thursday, July 5. Conventioneers were transported to the grounds of St. George Maronite Catholic Church where they were served a Middle Eastern dinner prepared by parishioners of St. George and entertained by the St. George Folk Dancers before the spiritual performance by Fr. Fadi Tabet.

The highlight of each day was the liturgy concelebrated by Bishops Robert Shaheen, Gregory Mansour and Stephen Hector Doueihy. Each day at noon the faithful would gather to worship and sing praise. The liturgies were rich and meaningful to those who attended. The liturgy on Friday, July 5, was made special by the installation of ten new members to the Order of St. Sharbel.

Friday evening's event was "A Taste of San Antonio." The Mexican food was "*muy sabroso*." There was Latin and party music performed by Patsy Torres and Blue Harmony and a beautiful performance by the St. George Dancers followed by *Dabke*

music performed by Zeina. The excitement lasted well into the night with a DJ providing music for those who wanted to keep on dancing.

Throughout the week there were excursions and special outings for all ages. Many visited the missions of San Antonio and/or went on shopping excursions. The youth had the opportunity to visit the Alamo attractions in downtown San Antonio and the popular theme park Fiesta Texas located in the northwest section of the City. The young adults and young professionals had a foot rally, a pool party and a trip to Schlitterbahn Water Park.

The Grand Banquet held on Saturday night was well attended. The meal was wonderful as was the evening. The Head Table marched in to the tune of "Deep in the Heart of Texas." There were addresses given by Bishop Gregory Mansour, Bishop Robert Shaheen, Fr. Ghassan Mattar and NAM President Amine T. Harb. The recipients of the Gold Massabki Awards were announced. After the ceremony, the star of the evening, Nicolas El Osta, made his way to the stage. Many crowded the floor as *dabke* lines were formed and the guests danced the night away.

The liturgy on Sunday was said for the Blessed Massabki Brothers. The clergy, diocesan choir and congregation came together in song and prayer during the solemn celebration. A farewell breakfast followed the liturgy. During the breakfast, there was a power point presentation that captured special moments throughout the week's events. Father Ghassan Mattar, George and Julie Mery, Chairpersons, the convention committee and the volunteers of St. George Maronite Parish in San Antonio did an amazing job organizing, preparing and orchestrating this year's convention. Their hard work provided for an unforgettable uniting of faith, heritage and community deep in the heart of Texas. □

The Maronite Foundation in the World Presents Ten Commandments to Strengthen the Lebanese Dream

*by Antonio Andary
Foreign Relations Director
Maronite Foundation in the World*

For many centuries, the Lebanese have ventured far from their native land in search of adventure and opportunity; and to fulfill their dreams of freedom from the many conflicts and nightmares that have engulfed their beloved homeland. Their successes abroad have become legend. The Lebanese have succeeded in adapting to the new world while remembering their cultural and religious roots and relying on the wisdom and faith of their parents, grandparents and forefathers.

They lived by the values they inherited from their forefathers: integrity, entrepreneurship, hard work, courage, openness, generosity and hospitality. You and your families are true examples of the success of the Lebanese who emigrated with heart in hand and faced the difficulties of a world filled with challenges: Challenges of a different language, a new lifestyle, different sets of values, and yes, a strange set of moral standards. Yet you and they have excelled beyond anyone's wildest expectation in every walk of life... You are the leaders in government, industry, business and charitable works around the world. What other ethnic group can claim such accomplishments?

And, yet, your successes have not diminished your love and affinity for your homeland. You have strengthened the ties to your families and relatives still in Lebanon. You have maintained a love and loyalty to your home villages and towns, and, most importantly, many of you have continued to support your families and visit them on a regular basis.. Thanks to you, Lebanon has the highest immigrant revenues in proportion to its population, reaching seven billion dollars a year, making up 20% of the national income.

Indeed, we, the Lebanese at home are most grateful to you for your efforts, emotionally, financially and politically. We are proud of you for your success, for what and who you are, and most importantly for your proven devotion to Lebanon and the dream of freedom and liberty over the generations. The "Lebanese dream" lives strong in the hearts and minds of all Lebanese ... the dream you have turned into reality.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

While our people thrive in foreign lands, the Christians of Lebanon have fallen on dire times. Today, we have representation that is less than equal to our population; this presents great concern for the Christians, Maronites and Lebanon. If we are not alarmed, and take action, the future for our families and our countries is indeed bleak. As Lebanon bleeds its intellectual resources, its future, both economically and politically, assumes a dire hue. This can be reversed only by the concerted action of our people outside of Lebanon.

Today, unfortunately, many generations of Maronite Lebanese immigrants have lost or ignored their interest and ties with the motherland. The new official records [in Lebanon], for example, show that 75% of Lebanese born between the years of 1940 and 1979 (30 - 69 years old) are single; this means that hundreds of thousands of marriages abroad have not been registered. In addition records show that 24% of the Lebanese population is under the age of twenty years old; only 15% of these are Maronites. This means that Maronite children born abroad are not being registered as Lebanese.

Our educated guess is that there are around 1.6 million Christian Lebanese immigrants who are not registered. If we continue this course in fifty years, Christians will be less than 10% of the total Lebanese population.

We at the Maronite Foundation, a Patriarchal organization, are extremely worried about these numbers. The delicate balance between the different confessional groups in Lebanon is a must for our existence and our national harmony. The emigration of the Maronites as well as other Christian communities is a threat to the mere existence of Lebanon... These dire consequences will reverberate throughout our society, impacting political representation, economic success, and religious freedoms and liberties. This may seem alarming to you. It is!!! We must all take notice and act now.

At the Maronite Foundation we are working to enable those of Lebanese descent to process a formal request to claim their Lebanese nationality. Also, to make things easier, we are lobbying for laws to simplify the paperwork and process for registration and participation in Lebanese parliamentary elections. In fact, a month ago the Lebanese parliament approved the mechanism to allow participation in the upcoming 2013 parliamentary elections.

We strongly believe that the Lebanese abroad should be part of our economical, social, cultural and political life. Our Patriarch Bechara Peter Rai has visited many of his flock around the world to help strengthen the Maronite family and the ties which bring you closer to Lebanon and our Maronite church. These visits have been extremely successful in raising awareness about registration and preserving the land. We are all working toward the goal of a strong, vibrant and viable Lebanon for future generations. This is a job for all of us, in Lebanon and abroad.

Before I close, allow me to share with you a "Lebanese Ten Commandments" to strengthen the Lebanese dream.

1. Pursue higher education in Lebanon. This way you will enrich your children with the heritage of your motherland, its pluralism, warmth, beauty, and cultural values, to take with you wherever you go.

2. Maintain your connection with your faith and your church. This is the eternal fount of the water of life that will quench your thirst, and bind you to the rich Maronite and Lebanese values. These will strengthen your resolve to live your faith, and retain your bonds to Lebanon. A visit to Lebanon will further renew the strength of these bonds.
3. Be good ambassadors of the Lebanese culture and heritage. With the moral and ethical values you inherited, become part of the political and economic fabric of your adopted land, being loyal and patriotic citizens.
4. Seek to come together, building on those things that unite rather than divide. Come together for common causes, forming information and lobbying groups to promote your ideas and to advance the cause of Lebanon and support it politically and economically. If we do not unite, we will surely fail.
5. Marry the one you love, especially if they are the sons and daughters of Lebanon. Then register your marriage and the birth of your children in Lebanese consulates and embassies.
6. Teach your children Lebanese history and help them understand its rich culture and heritage. Teach them the mother Tongue. Tell them stories of your villages, grandparents, your childhood. Plant in them the seeds of love for Lebanon... This way they will remain citizens of the world while retaining their Lebanese Maronite identity.
7. Visit Lebanon with your children when they are of the proper age to travel. Enroll them in activities and summer camps there; this way they will experience Lebanon and fold it into their hearts and memories to pass to future generations.
8. When pursuing higher education, encourage them to participate in exchange programs with Lebanese colleges.
9. And when you have achieved financial success, buy land in your village, renovate your ancestral home, and participate in developing your villages socially and economically by investing in their future.
10. Finally when it is time to retire, after a long fruitful and productive life in the land you adopted, choose Lebanon for retirement and spend the autumn of your life there. And, if God wills, be buried in your native soil side by side with your forefathers and ancestors.

We, in Lebanon, want you to remember that you are the sons and daughters of the "Lebanese dream." We count on you to keep this dream alive. Be good citizens of this great nation the USA, yet remain faithful to the land of your fathers. To borrow a line from the Fiddler on the Roof movie: "It is all about tradition;" you excelled in keeping the tradition of our folklore dance; the *dabke*, of our food: *kibbe*, *tabboule*. Keep the tradition of registering your vital events, too, and teaching the new generation to do so.... By registering your marriages and births, you keep alive the reality of a viable Christian presence in the land in which Christ walked. You will always

be able to visit the land of your dreams, of the martyrs and saints and walk in the steps of those who made you what you are.

Thank you, and may God Bless you, bless Lebanon and the U.S. ☐

Mary The Way Of Hope

The following letter was sent on August 16, 2012, by Archbishop Samir Nassar, Maronite Archbishop of Damascus, Syria, to his friends in the U.S., explaining the situation in Damascus.

It is with anxiety and bitterness that the small Syrian people [community] carry, since March 2011, alone and with courage, a heavy nightmare while waiting for "Simon of Cyrene"... To the blind violence, hatred and lack of dialogue; to the indifference or impotence of the international community; this small community turned towards prayer, the only and ultimate refuge.

On the other side and on the spiritual level and, especially around the Marian shrines [worldwide], friends have mobilized chains of prayer for peace in Syria. Sick people have offered prayers and their pains for peace in Syria.

From these powerful pilgrimage places is emerging a force along, with many "Simon of Cyrene" to help carry the cross and take the road. Thank you for this beautiful spontaneous solidarity coming from afar to manifest the catholicity of the Church, we must see the work of the Divine Providence, who is not leaving Syria alone in these painful days.

This support of Marian character joins the strong Eastern devotion to the Mother of God, connected from one side to the Gospel by a "Yes" that has transformed the History, and connected from the other side by the believers in Jesus-Eucharist who makes the Church. Mary was the guide since the dawn of Christianity.

On August 15, 2012, and despite the rather tense situation, many faithful came to the evening Liturgy of the Assumption. These faithful prostrated before the altar of the Martyrs of Damascus [Massabki Brothers], having one voice, dedicating Syria to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, our surest way of hope.

This pious demarche is towards forgiveness and reconciliation. To our surprise many Muslims took part in the ceremony.

"Here is your mother ..." (Jn 19:27). In front of this crisis with no end nor mercy, that is putting into question the future and survival of the Christian minority, the Church turns to the Mother of God to draw courage and strength to witness to the Gospel and to facilitate a respectful dialogue with Islam, a majority closing a month of fasting that was very bloody. Mary who is venerated in the Koran (*Surat Mariam*) could be the architect of the so desired Marian peace and reconciliation.

From the bottom of the misery and suffering flows a Hope, a Light ... Thank you Mary. ☐

+ Samir Nassar
Maronite Archbishop of Damascus

The Maronite Bishops Launch Their Annual Appeal

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When the State is unable to comply with its obligations, the nation and its supreme interest are pledged, it is easy then to impose fundamental changes that may affect its national fabric such as the imposition of a “de facto” nationalization, or deviation from the essence of the *Taif* Agreement stipulating equity, or the acceptance of basic changes in the strategic choices in terms of foreign policy.

The Fathers hope that the Lebanese could find in these dangers, a real opportunity to launch an economic and a social renaissance, perceive fundamental solutions to our country's dilemmas and our people's suffering. They call upon to renew the pact among the nation partners on its essence, regime and mission, and to endeavor on neutralizing Lebanon from regional and international conflicts, to maintain its rich mission as a nation of pluralism and unity in diversity, to consolidate the stability as an input to the launch of real growth for the sake of the human. There is no legitimacy for any political or economic action, if not to serve the human, to promote his life level and to protect the poor and the weak. □

Nine Steps Toward Positive Life Decisions

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The standard of the conviction of rightness is lower in matters where you have to choose the best of several alternatives in a certain period of time. In these cases, moral certainty is a practical conclusion that this is the right course of action, as far as I can see at this point, as a Christian who follows the Lord.

9. Pray

The key to obtaining conviction is prayer. The Lord himself--through the Holy Spirit's action and presence--is the source of true conviction. We all need to pray daily for God to lead us in obedience and faithfulness.

Discerners need patience. Ultimately, neither you nor the rules are in charge. Courtships can be lengthy. Religious vocations can take a long time to unfold. There can be false starts. The process of making a life commitment is easily described, but it's messy and imperfect in reality. We are dealing with sinners, not angels. The man and woman at the altar are two imperfect people exchanging vows of love and faithfulness. Every religious community and parish is populated by people marred by sin. We shouldn't look for the perfect spouse or the perfect community. Even if we found the perfect partner, the marriage wouldn't be perfect after we joined it.

Those in discernment will change. Those who are too rigorous, legalistic, rigid, and set on things being a certain way will learn to adapt and be flexible. Those who like things to be loose and informal, never settled, will learn the benefits of discipline and structure. Those who escape into the spiritual to avoid the natural and the physical will learn how to embrace the messiness of real life. Those who are too cautious and careful will learn how to leap ahead with God's call. Risk-takers will learn the skills of caution and reflective deliberation.

Our life vocation is a treasure buried in a field, the pearl of great price. The grace is in the calling. Pursue it at whatever the cost. □

About the Author

Father Michael Scanlan, T.O.R. is a Franciscan Third Order Regular priest. He is Chancellor of Franciscan University of Steubenville, Ohio, and author of the book, What Does God Want?, published by Franciscan University Press. The Maronite Voice reprints this article with the permission of the author.