



# The Maronite Voice



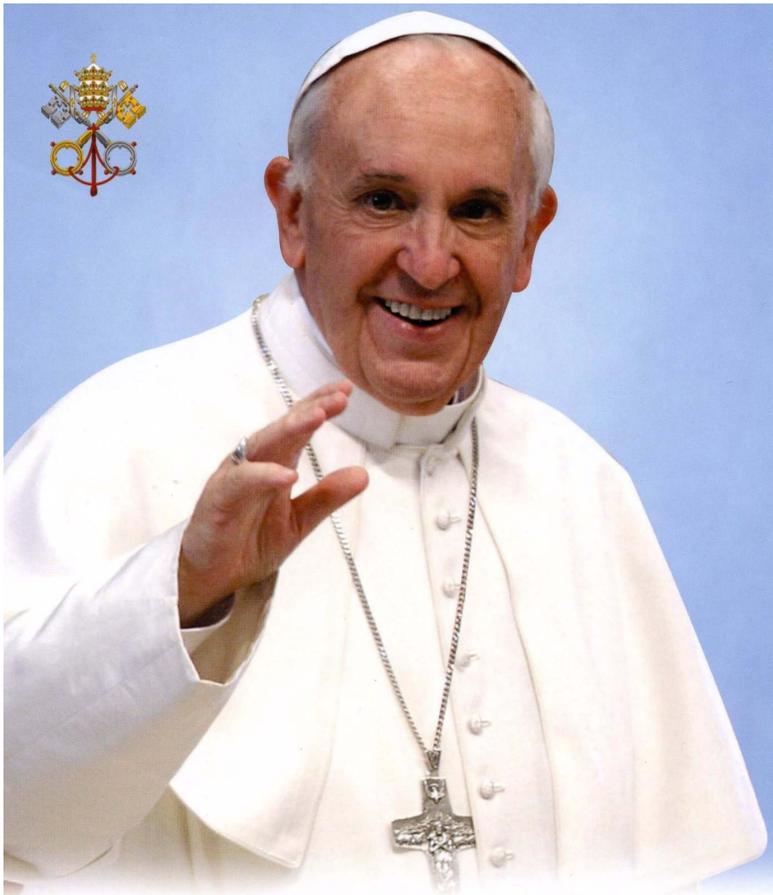
*A Publication of the Maronite Eparchies in the USA*

*Volume XI*

*Issue No. VIII*

*September 2015*

## Welcome Pope Francis



**Pope Francis**  
*"Let Us Journey Together"*

With an ardent desire to be a true Christian in word, deed and daily life we welcome Pope Francis, who speaks consistently about Christians being coherent in their witness to Christ. This means that we are the same when everyone is looking as well as when no one is looking, and whether we are rich or poor, Democrat or Republican, March 8 or March 14 [political movements], we are called by God to be the same person at Church, in the family and in the world. This is the consistency that Pope Francis is asking of us, and it is the best gift we can offer to welcome him September 22 - 27, 2015, to the United States of America.

The theme of his papacy has been mercy. The Holy Year that begins December 8, 2015, is also about mercy, which should embrace those fallen away from the faith, the poor and the forgotten, the refugee, prisoner, victim of trafficking, or of persecution; mercy for the angry, for the sad, for the discouraged; mercy for others and mercy for ourselves!

Pope Francis sees this beautiful world of ours, namely creation, and asks: Why are we so selfish, treating both nature and our vulnerable brothers and sisters so poorly? Why are we such a throw away culture? We throw away stuff, and we throw away people: the unborn, elderly, those with special needs, and those who have no voice. Pope Francis warns us not to sin by doing wrong. He even warned organized crime members, "Be careful, you could end up in hell!" Likewise, he warns us as well to be careful not to sin by doing nothing about tragic situations. This apathy is pathetic and dangerous! We must do our best to live our lives according to God's will.

As we welcome Pope Francis, may we bring with us an ardent desire to repent not only of our sins but our apathy as well. May we become more and more aware of the subtle ways that our witness to Christ can be diminished by our own self-centeredness, our own incoherence so often. Let's face it, Jesus invites us to follow him completely; it is all or nothing for him and it is this way for Pope Francis as well.

Help us, O Lord, to follow you all the way, and every way, and to welcome Pope Francis with a true Christian life and witness!

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+Gregory John Mansour

## Schedule of Bishop Elias Zaidan

### September 5 - 17, 2015

Conference for new Bishops, Rome, Italy

### September 19 - 20, 2015

Homecoming, Saint Raymond Cathedral, St. Louis, Mo.

### September 22 - 24, 2015

Pope Francis Visit to the U.S.A., Washington, D.C.

### September 25 - 27, 2015

Pastoral Visit to Our Lady of the Cedars Church, Houston, Tex.

### September 29 - 30, 2015

Presbyteral Council Meetings, St. Louis, Mo.

### October 4, 2015

Our Lady of Mt. Lebanon Cathedral, Los Angeles, Calif.

### October 10, 2015

Saints Peter and Paul Mission Annual Banquet, Simi Valley, Calif.

### October 11, 2015

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

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

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### **Maronite Convention 2016**

Our Lady of Lebanon Church

**San Francisco, California**

**July 6 - 10, 2016**

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

## Dartmouth, Massachusetts Sisters Host Bible Camp



by Natalie Salameh

Light of Life (LOL) Club Maronite summer camp concluded August 7, 2015, with Divine Liturgy celebrated at the Mother of Light Convent by Chorbishop Joseph Kaddo of St. Anthony of the Desert Parish, Fall River, Mass., and attended by LOL members, volunteers, and parents.

The LOL Club began on August 3 with a week of learning about God's love in engaging videos, crafts, bible sharing, games, prayer, choir practice, and snacks with a "Son Surf" beach theme. Sr. Therese Maria and the Maronite Servants of Christ the Light facilitated this year's program, and was sponsored by Father Jack Morrison, Pastor of Our Lady of Purgatory in New Bedford, Mass. Each day's spiritual program and catechesis presented a different theme: loving our family, obedience, overcoming our fears, fighting temptation, and forgiveness.

After the closing Liturgy, all those in attendance enjoyed a pizza lunch, mini-golf and bumper boats at Caddy Shack. ☐

## North Jackson, Ohio 50<sup>th</sup> Assumption Pilgrimage



This year's celebration of the Feast of the Assumption, August 15, 2015, brought to a close the year-long celebration of the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the establishment of the National Shrine as well as the close of the year-long celebration of the elevation of the Shrine church to Minor Papal Basilica.

The four days were spent in prayer and celebration as many pilgrims came from far and near to be at Our Lady's Shrine for this great event.

The Feast Day saw thousands of people in attendance at all of the Divine Liturgies as well as the concerts and spiritual conferences which were held. It was estimated that at least two thousand persons were present for the evening Liturgy and procession.

At the end of the Divine Liturgy a special "treasure chest" which contained fifty years of memories, photos, videos, articles, official documents and several religious articles pertaining to the Shrine was sealed by Bishop Zaidan. The treasure chest will be opened on the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, August 15, 2065.

The final procession ended in darkness as the icon of Our Lady of Lebanon, festooned with flowers, made its way to the front of the Tower Chapel as the band played hymns and marches. Finally the sky was illuminated with a spectacular display of fireworks celebrating Mary's Assumption into Heaven.

There was one great and important event which took place during the evening Divine Liturgy which cannot be taken lightly or ignored. Many recall that on the day of



dedication, August 15, 1965, a rainbow appeared in a perfectly clear and sunny sky over the statue of Our Lady as the statue was being blessed. Now fifty years to the very day, God, once again, blessed us with another magnificent rainbow which appeared over Mary's statue as the offerings of bread and wine were being brought to the altar. People were amazed and overwhelmed that such a sign would be given to the Shrine once again.

Is this a coincidence? We think not! God continues to show His favor to this holy and very special Shrine, a place where He is praised and worshiped, and where His Holy and Immaculate Mother is honored every day. □

## Tulsa, Oklahoma Priest's 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary



From left: Chorbishop Mousa Joseph, Rev. William Hamil, O.S.A., Bishop Edward Slattery, Abbot Philip Anderson, O.S.B., Bishop Elias Zaidan, Rev. Jack Gleason, Rev. Elias Abi Sarkis, Msgr. Louis Baz, Msgr. Dennis Dorney, and Chorbishop sharbel Maroun

On July 19, 2015, Father Elias Abi Sarkis celebrated his 40th anniversary of ordination to the priesthood at his parish of St. Therese in Tulsa, Oklahoma. He was ordained in *Ghazir*, Lebanon by Archbishop Francis M. Zayek and has served his whole priestly career in the United States at parishes in Ohio, Georgia, Minnesota and Oklahoma.

Father Elias was the principal celebrant of the Divine Liturgy. Bishop A. Elias Zaidan, Bishop of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon, presided and gave the homily. The Bishop remarked on Father Elias's veneration of St. Sharbel and noted how the Saint, who loved God from a hermitage for twenty-three years, is now known worldwide in bringing people to God; he called upon those present to bring one person to the faith.

Priests of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon and priests of the Diocese of Tulsa as well as a Benedictine Abbot concelebrated. Bishop Edward Slattery of Tulsa was also in attendance. Father Elias's brother Louis and sister Therese and her husband, Mark Havel, and nephews and nieces participated in the Divine Liturgy. A lunch was served following the Divine Liturgy in Jorishie Hall of the Parish. □

## Austin, Texas Priestly Ordination



Assisted by Msgr. Don Sawyer (left) and Fr. Charles Khachan, Bishop Zaidan ordains Deacon Fabre as a priest.

On July 11, 2015, His Excellency Bishop A. Elias Zaidan, Bishop of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon, ordained Deacon Christopher Fabre as a priest at Our Lady's Maronite Catholic Parish in Austin, Texas. Bishop Joe Vasquez of the Diocese of Austin; Msgr. Don Sawyer, Pastor of Our Lady's Parish; Fr. Charles Khachan, Pastor of St. George Church, San Antonio, Tex., and serving as Master of Ceremony; Fr. Geoffrey Abdallah, Rector of Our Lady of Lebanon Seminary, Msgr. Joseph Takchi of Melbourne, Australia; Fr. Milad Yaghi and Fr. Pierre ElKhoury of Our Lady of the Cedars Maronite Church, Houston, Tex.; Fr. Jonathan Raia, Fr. Pedro Garcia-Ramirez, and Fr. Elias Rafai of St. John Chrysostom in Houston, attended the ordination Liturgy.

Fr. Christopher began his seminary studies in September 2010 and continued until earning his Masters of Arts in Systemic and Historical Theology. Recently he has been in a training program in hospital chaplaincy at the Seton Family of Hospitals in Austin, and he served as Deacon at St. George Maronite Church in San Antonio. He will soon be serving as Pastor at St. Sharbel Maronite Church in Portland, Oregon. Congratulations and God's blessings, Fr. Christopher, as you begin your priestly ministry. ☐

## Danbury, Connecticut Feast of Saint Sharbel

by Mrs. Ruth Ashkar

On Saturday, July 18, 2015, the Order of Saint Sharbel at Saint Anthony Church in Danbury, Conn., celebrated the feast day of Saint Sharbel with a special Divine Liturgy in honor of Saint Sharbel. A social gathering



Fr. Naji Kiwan blesses members of the Order of Saint Sharbel with a relic of the Saint.

took place after the Liturgy at the church Rectory.

The members in attendance were Joe and Audrienne Buzaid, Louise Michael, Elizabeth Salame, Mary Elizabeth Salame and two prospective members, Ghassan and Betty Najm. Also in attendance were committee members Cheri Jowdy, John Ashkar and Ruth Ashkar.

Cheri Jowdy, Chairperson of the event, prepared many of the food items, as well as the evening's table presentation. John Ashkar served as the grill master.

Discussions were held with the group on ways to increase the parish membership in the Order, as well as to foster the main purposes of the Order, which are to assist with the education of the Maronite seminarians and the retirement of the priests.

The Members also gathered in prayer during the gathering and received a special blessing with the Relic of Saint Sharbel.



**Deadline for next month's** issue of *The Maronite Voice* is September 25, 2015.

*The Maronite Voice* is the official newsletter of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon and of the

Eparchy of Saint Maron.

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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](http://www.stmaron.org). ☐

## Portland, Oregon *Deepest Gratitude*



From left: Subdeacon Monk John Michael Morgan, MMJMJ, Father Prior Jonathan J. Decker, MMJMJ, Bishop Elias Zaidan, MLM, and Father Monk Anthony Joseph Alles, MMJMJ.

by Nadia Redmond and Gennifer Karam

After growing, nourishing, and sustaining the Maronite faithful community of Portland, Oregon, for the past twenty-five years, Father Prior Jonathan J. Decker, MMJMJ, recently received the blessing of His Excellency Bishop A. Elias Zaidan, Bishop of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon, to proceed in building Sacred Heart Maronite Monastery in the Pacific Northwest. The parish community of St. Sharbel bids a bittersweet farewell to its beloved pastor in deepest gratitude for his enduring perseverance in transforming the parish into what it is today: a haven of prayer where there is reverence for what is holy; a sacred place where our Triune God dwells.

Father Jonathan was ordained a priest on March 19, 1977, on the feast of St. Joseph. After serving in several parishes throughout the United States, including the National Shrine of Our Lady of Lebanon in North Jackson, Ohio, he was appointed pastor of St. Sharbel Church in Portland, Oregon, in 1989. Saint Sharbel Church, established in 1970, is the only Maronite Catholic Church in the Pacific Northwest, and the first church in the U.S. to be named after Saint Sharbel.

Through years of heroic self-sacrifice, obedience, and full trust in the Lord, Father Jonathan redirected the small Maronite community, and the parish began to flourish. Through his deep relationship with Our Lord and his resounding love for the Church, he became a source of light and hope; his appearance gave the struggling community of believers a truly visible presence of God. The faithful who were trying to live according to the Gospel were attracted as if by a magnet to this Maronite priest who continuously lived a life of holiness in the world. Father Jonathan has given himself for Christ's Church in humble service, and this

example of holiness is what has sustained St. Sharbel Church. He simultaneously sowed seeds of love, prayer, and vocations throughout the community.

In recent years, while serving the parish, Father Jonathan received an even deeper call to holiness – to live the life of a hermit. In 2000, he took his solemn vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience as a hermit at the Cathedral of Our Lady of Lebanon in Los Angeles, under our retired bishop, His Excellency Robert Shaheen. In subsequent years, while continuing to serve as pastor of St. Sharbel, he founded a third order for Maronites of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon, known as *The Oblates of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph*. This group of lay persons gathers monthly under the guidance of Deacon Wadih Kaldawi for prayer and discussion on how to live a life of holiness while living in the world.

Most recently in 2011, Father Jonathan received the initial blessing from Bishop Robert Shaheen to build a Maronite Monastery – the second in the United States and the first one west of the Mississippi River. In 2014, land for Sacred Heart Monastery was purchased, and fundraising plans to build it are underway. At present, Father Jonathan and the other monks live in their rectory-home, until funds can be raised to build the new monastery. In accordance with the spirit of eastern monasticism, this monastery will be situated high on a hilltop, serving as a spiritual refuge and a place of prayer for the faithful who seek shelter from the storms of life.

Father Jonathan will be deeply missed, and it is with much gratitude to God that the community of St. Sharbel bids farewell to this remarkably humble priest of God. St. Sharbel Parish is moved by his example of sacrifice and gives thanks to God for allowing him to be its spiritual father for the last twenty-five years.

To learn more about the Monks of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph or to make a donation towards the building of the Sacred Heart Monastery, please visit [mmj.org](http://www.mmj.org), or <http://www.gofundme.com/MaroniteMonastery>. □

## Fort Lauderdale, Florida *Father's Day*



On Sunday, June 21, 2015, Father's Day, the women of the Heart of Jesus Maronite Church in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., gathered to make sure the fathers of the parish had a wonderful day. After the Divine Liturgy the women served a delicious meal that they had prepared and cooked. They even took care of clean-up so the fathers could just relax. The men really appreciated all the work the women did and do everyday and are glad this has become a tradition. □

## San Diego, California Silver Massabki Award



May 17, 2015, St. Ephrem Maronite Church in San Diego, Calif., presented Camille and Eva Bsaibes with the Silver Massabki Award. Camille and Eva contribute to the Parish in every way conceivable. They give generously of their time, talent and treasure. Camille and Eva were quite surprised and humbled by the presentation, and the congregation overwhelmingly expressed its appreciation for their dedication and hard work.

### Annual Festival



✠ ST. EPHREM MARONITE CATHOLIC CHURCH DABKE GROUP 2015 ✠

In its 12<sup>th</sup> year, the annual Lebanese festival transformed the grounds of St. Ephrem Maronite Church, San Diego, Calif., into a wonderland of festival rides, Lebanese food, and plenty of family fun. It truly has become a Memorial Day destination for so many, and record attendance is reached every year.

The festival opened on Friday, May 22, 2015, with a celebration of the Divine Liturgy. Then on Sunday, May 24, on the Feast of Pentecost, the Parish welcomed Bishop A.

Elias Zaidan for a pontifical celebration of the Divine Liturgy. Members of the Order of Saint Sharbel formed the honor guard.

The festivities continued throughout the weekend with a variety of folkloric dances performed by St. Ephrem Youth and Young Adult groups, special dance performances by *Leb-Anise* Dance Expressions, also live music and hymns by the Trebble Makers. Mariam Mouawad performed religious hymns as well as popular songs. The children enjoyed lots of activities, rides and games including a very popular giant rock climbing tower. Tours of the church and prayers were held regularly in the church. *Dabke* lessons with Aniseh, as well as food and Lebanese coffee-making demonstrations were also part of the festivities.

Everyone is invited to mark their calendars for the next festival which will be during Memorial Day weekend 2016. □

## Philadelphia, Pennsylvania Lebanese Festival

by Amal Kouyoumdji

Philadelphia was bracing for record high temperatures, and you had to circle around for several blocks in search of that difficult-to-come-by parking spot. Yet none of this mattered. As you made your way towards Tenth Street, and about twenty steps before you reached Ellsworth Street, your senses were vividly awakened by the smells and sounds of the Saint Maron's Lebanese and Middle Eastern festival.

As eager as you were to reach your destination, though, you had to contain your excitement and stop for a few seconds at the corner of Tenth and Ellsworth to take in the beautiful scene of perfectly aligned white tents against the clear day disturbed only slightly by the smoke rising from the barbecue, or were those the Hookahs? As you walked by the children's games, it was easy to spot the *saj*, that glistening hot dome responsible for the simplest yet the most glorious food, the *manoosheh*, *zaatar* or cheese, the choice was yours. The evening was young, and the only decision you had to make, was on which of these delicacies to feast. Up for Turkish coffee and dessert? All you had to do was cross the narrow street not only to satisfy your sweet tooth, but also to enjoy Lebanese art and crafts that told a story or two about who we are and where we came from. To quench your thirst, Uncle Chubby's Bar was only a few steps away, and there you could order *Ksarak*, *Massaya*, or other mysterious concoctions meant to be enjoyed, no questions asked, because the recipe is a family secret. And if all of that was not enough, you could make your way towards the stage to allow yourself to be enchanted by old and new melodies from back home.

Through it all, Father Vincent Farhat, Pastor, would emerge from his office every few minutes, briefly leaving behind mounds of the obligatory paperwork that these events tend to generate, to meet and greet all those who came to enjoy, or to proudly introduce the performances of the *Dabke* troupes who stole the hearts of all attendees.

Saint Maron Parish would like to thank all its friends who came from near and far to help celebrate its heritage as well as the precious gift of coming together. We hope to see you all again next year. □

## Houston, Texas May Crowning and Village Night



To mark the beginning of the Marian month of May, Our Lady of the Cedars Maronite Church, Houston, Tex., celebrated the traditional Crowning of the Virgin Mary with a Divine Liturgy on Saturday May 2, 2015, followed by the all-too-popular Village Night. Thanks to weeks of planning by dozens of dedicated volunteers, this year's event was most successful as usual. The beautiful weather added to the success of this event, where parishioners and friends came and enjoyed freshly cooked *Shawarma*, *falafel*, *Kafta*, chicken, *Zaatar* bread, along with fried *kibbe* balls, *Labne* sandwiches, and tons of desserts. Refreshing drinks included beer and wine, *Jillab*, lemonade, and of course water and soda. Smoke from a few hookahs scattered around the grounds could be seen rising in the evening sky.

The children enjoyed bouncing in inflatable castles, riding the mini-train and running around the petting zoo. As the darkness of the night settled in, a group of our "not-so-young" adults performed a traditional *Dabke*, only to be outperformed by the parish youths whose *Dabke* performance was outstanding. At the sounds of the talented choir singers and Jabbour and his band, people got up and danced the night away.

A big "thank you" goes out to those who attended and made this another successful Village Night. An even bigger "thank you" is owed to the volunteers whose tireless efforts do not go unnoticed. □

## Livonia, Michigan Vacation Bible School

by Madlein Kobrossi and Holly Hilu

Saint Rafka Church in Livonia [Detroit], Mich., held its third annual Vacation Bible School this year. Thirty children, ages 4-14, attended the five-day camp led by the Religious Education Director, parent helpers, and Fr. Tony Massad, Pastor. It was special this year because the children learned specifically about their Maronite faith. The theme was *Faith of the Mountain* and each day was dedicated to a different lesson about how God revealed His Word in ways related to mountains. The church hall and

grounds were decorated to reflect this theme, and Fr. Tony even built a giant mountain range complete with a waterfall. The children were grouped in teams and wore different colored T-shirts with the *Faith of Mountain* logo and participated in the outdoor activities. The older children served as group leaders and mentors to the younger children while enjoying all the activities tailored for each age group.

The children learned about specific biblical stories that provided the theme for each day. The theme was carried out through their crafts, activities and even their snacks. Some of the activities included a rescue mission tug of war, relay to the top of the mountain, and creating artificial mountain snow. The last day of camp the children went "hiking" and "rock climbing" at the local community recreation center. The children really enjoyed knowing that our heritage and our homeland had the same mountains where the prophets and saints actually encountered God.

The program concluded with the children sharing what they learned about their faith with the church community by performing a song entitled, "Though the Mountains May Fall." It was a blessing to see the friendships that were formed and to know that each year, the VBS continues to grow and provide a fun, faith-filled week for the children of the community. □

## SAVE the Date!

4th Annual  
American Lebanese & Middle Eastern  
Music & Food Festival 2015

Hosted by:

Our Lady of The Rosary  
The Maronite Catholic Community of Sacramento  
6811 Fair Oaks Blvd., Carmichael, CA 95608

Saturday, October 3rd & Sunday, October 4th  
11:00am - 10:00pm      11:00am - 6:00pm

For Info, contact

Carolyn Abubechara (916) 832-2288 - George Choufani (916)947-5545

## Boston, Massachusetts Award Sunday



memory of Chorbishop Norman J. Ferris, while others are given in memory of Mary Ann Hallal, a former CCD instructor and Loretta George, a life long parishioner and leader with the parish. The scholarship program is now in its thirteenth year.

Recipients are shown from left to right:

**Sarah Nasiff:** Daughter of Steven and Joan Nasiff, she will be attending the University of Massachusetts in Amherst, majoring in Pre-Medical Studies. Sarah received the Loretta George Memorial Scholarship.

**Alexander Martin:** Son of Alexander and Shannon Martin, he will be attending Northeastern University, majoring in Mathematics. Alexander received the Chorbishop Norman J. Ferris Memorial Scholarship.

**Leana Karam:** Daughter of Albert and Paula Karam, she will be attending the University of Massachusetts in Amherst, majoring in Biology on a pre-dental track.

**Miranda Howayeck:** Daughter of Gary and Renee Howayeck, she will be attending Salve Regina University in Newport, R.I., majoring in Biology.

**Jason Abdow:** Son of Edward and Susan Abdow, he will be attending Hofstra University in Hempstead, N.Y., majoring in Communications. Jason received the Mary Ann Hallal Memorial Scholarship.

**Briana Camara:** Daughter of Joseph and Lila Camara, she will be attending Southern New Hampshire University majoring in Business Administration.

**Brendan Capuano:** Son of Richard and Sonya Capuano, he will be attending Sacred Heart University in Fairfield, Conn., majoring in Communications and Psychology.

Also shown in the background from left to right: Alter servers Andro Alkhawande, William Brownell and Zachary Martin, Deacon Donald Massoud, Chorbishop Joseph Kaddo, Subdeacon Brian Dunn and Scholarship Committeeman Karl Hetzler. □

After a brunch hosted by the Scholarship Committee on June 14, 2015, the awards for Man/Woman of the Year were presented to Mr. George Salah and Mr. Joseph Shamon of Our Lady of the Cedars Church in Jamaica Plain [Boston], Massachusetts. The recipient for the National Apostolate of Maronite Silver Massabki Award was Mr. Robert Ward, and the Merit College Scholarship Awards, sponsored by "The Joseph & Alice Resha Memorial Fund," were bestowed upon Miss Monet Souza and Mr. Christopher J. Graham.

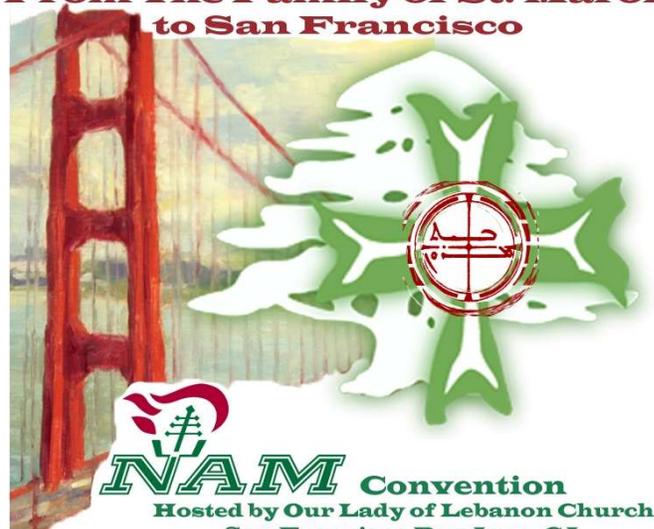
Each year "The Joseph & Alice Resha Memorial Fund" Scholarship in the amount of \$1000 each, is offered to high school seniors whose families are active, contributing parishioners, and who demonstrate academic and community strengths. □

## Fall River, Massachusetts Scholarship Awards



On July 26, 2015, following the Sunday liturgy, Chorbishop Joseph Kaddo and the parish family of St. Anthony of the Desert Church, Fall River, Mass., awarded scholarships of \$500 each to seven graduating high school seniors. One of the scholarships is given each year in

**Holiness in Solitary and  
Communal Living  
From The Family of St. Maron  
to San Francisco**





## Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn

### *Sixth Annual Benefit Dinner*

**M**aronite Catholics and friends from the greater New York area and beyond will gather on Tuesday, October 13, 2015, at the New York Athletic Club in Manhattan, N.Y., for the Sixth Annual Benefit Dinner for the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn.

The evening will begin with a Cocktail Reception with hors d'oeuvres at 6:00 p.m., to be followed by dinner at 7:30 p.m. All donations are encouraged. Over two hundred guests are expected.

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

An added feature of this year's Benefit Dinner is that we will honor Monir and Hayat Barakat, who are faithful and devoted members of the Maronite community in the New York area.

The Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn comprises forty-three parishes, a Seminary, a Convent, a Monastery and Maronite faithful in sixteen states located along the East Coast of the United States from Maine to Florida. It is directly under the jurisdiction of Pope Francis. Further information may be found at [www.stmaron.org](http://www.stmaron.org) or by emailing [saintmaron@yahoo.com](mailto:saintmaron@yahoo.com). □

### **Buffalo, New York** ***S.A.V.E. - O.N.E. Banquet***

**T**he S.A.V.E.- O.N.E. Foundation (Serving A Vital Effort - Orphans Need Everyone) is an organization formed by parishioners of St. John Maron Parish in Williamsville [Buffalo], N.Y., the spiritual home of S.A.V.E.-O.N.E. Our goal is to provide financial assistance to orphanages and orphans in Lebanon.

S.A.V.E.-O.N.E. has functioned for over fourteen years and has helped to better the lives of hundreds of children. We are appealing to the kindness of all goodwill people all over the United States to participate in helping to provide for these less fortunate children. Over the past few years, Lebanon has seen thousands of refugees enter the country. Hence, there is a tremendous need for our help.

S.A.V.E.- O.N.E. is hosting its annual fundraiser on October 6, 2015. Guest of honor will be His Excellency Bishop Gregory J. Mansour, Bishop of the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn.

By supporting the S.A.V.E.- O.N.E. Foundation, we are helping to better the lives of these children, as every child has a right to a better life. St. John Maron Church is committed to this cause, and it is hoped that everyone will be a willing donor. To make donations, please visit: [www.save-one.org](http://www.save-one.org). □

### **Schedule of Bishop Gregory Mansour**

#### **September 6, 2015**

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

#### **September 9 - 11, 2015**

Visit to Our Lady of Lebanon Seminary and *In Defense of Christians* Leadership Conference, Washington, D.C.

#### **September 13, 2015**

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

#### **September 16 - 17, 2015**

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

#### **September 18 - 20, 2015**

Pastoral Visit to St. Elias Church, Roanoke, Va.

#### **September 23, 2015**

Meeting of Bishops followed by Divine Liturgy with Pope Francis, Washington, D.C.

#### **September 24 - 25, 2015**

Interfaith Prayer Service at Ground Zero followed by evening Vespers and Divine Liturgy with Pope Francis, New York, N.Y.

#### **September 26 - 27, 2015**

Meeting of Families with Pope Francis, Philadelphia, Penn.

#### **September 28 - 30, 2015**

Host to Abbot Semaan Abou Abdou, Apostolic Administrator for the Maronite Eparchy in Aleppo, Syria

#### **October 2 - 4, 2015**

Deacons and Subdeacons Retreat, Washington, D.C.

#### **October 6, 2015**

S.A.V.E.- O.N.E. Banquet, Williamsville [Buffalo], N.Y.

#### **October 7 - 8, 2015**

Host to Bishop Samir Nassar, Maronite Bishop of Damascus, Syria

#### **October 11, 2015**

Ordination to Diaconate of Joseph Chebli, New Brunswick, N.J. □

### ***Order of Saint Sharbel***

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

# *Maronites in America - Continuing the Legacy*

*Address Given by Chorbishop Seely Beggiani, S.T.D., to the Joint Clergy Meeting, Cleveland, Ohio, June 30, 2015*

**T**he Maronites in the United States during the past 135 years have not only survived but have grown and prospered. Beginning especially in the 1880s, Maronites emigrated in large numbers from Lebanon and Syria to many parts of the world. There were various reasons for leaving. While religious issues may have been a factor, the principal causes were a lack of economic opportunities and lack of living space. Significant numbers settled in North and South America, Australia and parts of Africa. But it was only in the United States that numerous parishes were established. This may be due to the fact that the United States was already becoming a very prosperous country with advanced means of transportation and communication. However, we should also recognize the strong faith, efforts and generosity of the Maronite clergy and laity of the early decades.

The first part of this presentation will chronicle and analyze the major events of the Maronite experience in the United States. The second part will be devoted to continuing this legacy.

## *Part I Maronites in America*

In the 1880s, if not sooner, significant numbers of Maronites began emigrating to the United States. They came through all ports of entry, New York, Boston, Philadelphia, New Orleans, the Mexican and Canadian borders, and the West Coast. By 1900, Maronite communities were to be found in New England, New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia, the Carolinas, Georgia, the rest of the South, Ohio, West Virginia, Illinois, Michigan, Minnesota, Oklahoma, Texas, California and Oregon.

Like other immigrants, Maronites congregated where opportunities for work or business were available. These would have included the textile mills of New England and the Carolinas, the steel mills of Pittsburgh, Birmingham and Youngstown, and the auto factories



Chorbishop Seely Beggiani

of Detroit. They worked the coal mines of Pennsylvania and West Virginia. They congregated at the Great Lakes ports of Cleveland and Buffalo, and the river port of St. Louis. Maronite entrepreneurs opened stores and sold their wares, wherever there was an opportunity for business. With the exception of the Carolinas, most of the above places, among others, had parish meeting places and pastors before the beginning of World War I in 1914.

It is important to note that it was the laity who took the initiative to petition the Maronite Patriarch and the Sacred Congregation of the Propagation of the Faith to send them pastors. The Patriarchs responded and did send clergy. However, there does not seem to have been a plan on how an organized missionary activity would take place. Other clergy also arrived to visit relatives or fellow townspeople living in the United States, but only on a temporary basis.

It should be kept in mind that the first generation of Maronites came to the United States with the intention of making money and returning to their homeland. However, as time went on

and with the coming of World War I and the Great Depression, and with established families, the idea of returning home slowly faded for most.

The first churches were often large houses or other buildings which were purchased and remodeled. The first floor would become the church or chapel and the second floor, the rectory. As time went on, the Maronites either bought existing churches or built their own.

## *The First Parishes*

In response to a petition from the Maronites living in lower Manhattan and forwarded to the Patriarch by Cardinal Michael Corrigan of New York, Patriarch John Hajj responded in 1890 by sending Father Peter Korkemaz, who came with his cousin, Joseph Yazbek, a seminarian in minor orders.

St. Joseph Church in Manhattan was dedicated in 1891 with over 200 Maronites in attendance. During this time other parishes were being established in Boston, Philadelphia, and shortly thereafter in St. Louis and Brooklyn among other cities.

Father Joseph Yazbek was ordained a Maronite deacon and priest in New York by Cardinal Corrigan at the request of Patriarch Hajj in 1891. He was the first Maronite priest ordained in the United States. This event was reported in several newspapers in the United States.

Father Yazbek was sent to Boston, but also began his missionary activity by conducting a tour to many cities in 1891. He reports that he traveled to Providence, Fall River, Worcester, Buffalo, Cleveland, Toledo, Detroit, Milwaukee, St. Paul, Minneapolis, Madison, Omaha, Kansas City, St. Louis, Louisville, Cincinnati, Rochester and Syracuse. He stayed at each place from three to ten days, where he met with groups of Maronites, distributed the sacrament, and preached retreats.

What is noteworthy of Father Yazbek's travels is that they give evidence of the expansion of the Maronites throughout a large area of the United States by 1891. It is also interesting that Father Yazbek had knowledge of where Maronite communities were to be found.

By the beginning of World War I, there were at least twenty-two established parishes in the United States. During and after the War, seven additional parishes were founded.

In the early years of immigration, a number of Maronite parishes would hold classes either to teach English for those seeking work or to teach Arabic to the children. Parish schools were established in Wheeling, Wilkes-Barre, Waterville, and Buffalo. Others were found in Boston, Olean and Detroit. Organizations were established to help people in need.

Besides parish organizations, Maronites extended their social ties beyond the parish in the form of Lebanese/Syrian clubs or clubs from the same town or village. Parishes in different parts of the country organized "mahrajans" or celebrations in conjunction with religious feasts or national holidays.

### ***The 1920s to the 1960s***

In 1920 Archbishop Chukrallah Khouri came to the United States on an official visit to determine the situation of the Maronites in the United States. He traveled throughout the country and conducted a personal census. He held meetings including an assembly of many of the Maronite clergy. He concluded that there was a need for a Maronite hierarchy and also for American vocations to the priesthood. Unfortunately, nothing appears to have resulted from his mission.

In 1924 the United States sharply restricted immigration quotas into the country. This situation continued for many decades. As a result, the growth of Maronites in the country was significantly slowed. Nevertheless, the arrival of new Maronite priests continued, and the number of Maronite parishes grew to over forty before the arrival of the first Maronite bishop.

### ***Our Lady of Lebanon Maronite Seminary***

Before 1960, only a few American-born Maronites became Maronite priests. A large number became Latin-rite priests. There has not been a study of why this occurred, but probably a major reason was that Maronite seminaries were only in Lebanon. Many young men were reluctant to spend a number of years away from home and perhaps felt it was too great a challenge to learn Arabic and Syriac well. Only five Maronite Americans priests had studied in Lebanon.

In the late 1950s, and again due to the initiative of the laity and some clergy, especially a group known as *The Maronite League*, a concerted effort was made to establish a Maronite seminary in the United States. With the fundraising efforts of the Maronite clergy and laity, Our Lady of Lebanon Maronite Seminary was established in Washington, D.C., in 1961.

The coming of the Seminary was a sign of the permanence of the Maronites in the United States. It not only served as a place of formation of future priests, but as a center of Maronite studies. Much of the early publications in Maronite liturgy, history and catechetics originated from the Seminary. Its focus was on how the Maronite tradition is to be perpetuated in the American culture. Its hope was to develop enduring fraternal bonds among future priests. Since its inception, more than eighty men have been ordained to the priesthood.

### ***National Association of Maronites/ National Apostolate of Maronites***

NAM was founded in 1963 as a lay organization to support the Seminary and to work for a Maronite bishop for the United States. In 1969 it was transformed by Archbishop Zayek into the National Apostolate of Maronites to give a more accurate representation of its mission and of its relationship with the hierarchy. It serves a very important and unique role of uniting Maronite laity from across the United States especially in national and regional meetings. Such an

organization is rarely found in western Catholic dioceses.

### ***Establishment of the Maronite Apostolic Exarchate (1966) and the Eparchy of Saint Maron (1971)***

In 1966 Archbishop Francis Zayek was appointed as Bishop of the Maronite Apostolic Exarchate which became the Eparchy of St. Maron in 1971. The situation of the Maronites in the United States had changed considerably in the intervening 85 years. The Maronites were no longer poor immigrants but primarily part of the middle class. Many laity of the first and second generation were successful in business and the professions. Many marriages involved spouses of non-Maronite backgrounds. Many of the younger Maronites no longer knew Arabic. Some Maronites had already drifted away from the local Maronite church for a variety of reasons. The eagerness of Maronite parents to send their children to Catholic schools was often a mixed blessing. Many pastors of these schools asked that they support the local Latin parish, thereby forcing some families to choose which parish to support. Also, some families found it more convenient to go to the local Latin church than to travel to the Maronite church. Maronites in cities and areas in which no Maronite church had been established were lost to the Maronite church.

The canonical establishment of the Maronite Church with its own bishop marks a new chapter for the Maronite presence in the United States. The various parishes throughout the country now had a leader and a center of unity. Joint action could be taken to address the various challenges facing the Maronites and other Catholic dioceses in the United States.

Archbishop Zayek established a number of new parishes and missions. In the area of liturgy, there was a need to provide texts in English. An extensive Lectionary was published, as well as a Book of Anaphoras and a Book of Feasts. Translations of the Divine Office, the Mysteries (sacraments), and Maronite liturgical hymns were made available. A

complete series of catechetical texts grounded in Maronite tradition and culture was published. Local and national Maronite Youth and later Maronite Young Adult Organizations were established. A diocesan newspaper was published. The Order of St. Sharbel was formed to provide financial help to the Seminary and for retired clergy.

### ***Demographic Changes From 1975 to the Present***

The conflict in Lebanon from 1975 to 1990 and its aftermath produced a large emigration of Maronites to the United States and many other countries. This has had a large impact on a number, but not all, of the Maronite parishes in this country. These new Maronites ended up becoming the majority in some parishes. They also accounted for the establishment of new parishes and missions in various states, especially in Florida, the Southwest and California. Besides the influx of laity, a significant number of seminarians and clergy have also immigrated.

### ***The Two Eparchies (1994) Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn and the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon of Los Angeles***

The growth of the Maronite presence in the United State necessitated the formation of two eparchies. Archbishop Zayek remained as the Bishop of the Eparchy of Saint Maron and Bishop John Chedid was named first Bishop of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon. Archbishop Zayek was succeeded by Bishop Stephen Hector Doueïhi and Bishop Gregory Mansour. Bishop Chedid was followed by Bishop Robert Shaheen and Bishop Abdallah Elias Zaidan. The successive bishops have shepherded the continued growth of their Eparchies.

### ***The Present Situation***

At the present time there are more than eighty Maronite parishes and missions in the United States. More than two-thirds of the Maronite clergy serving them were born outside the United States. Among the Maronite laity, hardly any of the third and fourth

generation Lebanese and Syrian Americans have any knowledge of Arabic. The number of non-Lebanese spouses who attend Maronite parishes has significantly increased. The number of parishioners who have non-Maronite backgrounds is slowly increasing. Among the recent immigrants, we now have first generation Lebanese Americans.

The new Maronite Missal printed in both Arabic and English and with singable hymns has been well received. More parishes are using the Faith of the Mountain catechetical texts. National and regional meetings of the MYO and MYA are showing some progress.

## ***Part II Continuing the Legacy***

**O**ur legacy is the reality that on any given Sunday throughout the United States, a vibrant community of Maronite parishes is joyfully living the Maronite liturgical year with its various rituals. It cherishes the popular celebrations of Christmas, Epiphany, Palm Sunday, Good Friday and Resurrection. Its emphasis is on family and the extended family. It practices universal hospitality and exhibits a *joie de vivre*.

### ***Strengthening our Resources***

If we are to continue our growth in the future we must continue to adapt and to innovate. While our new Missal incorporates hymns that can be chanted in English using Syriac tones, in order to relate to the present and coming generations we should consider adapting our hymns to musical forms that are in the spirit of the Syriac but are fused with the contemporary. This challenge requires persons who are knowledgeable of both Syriac and contemporary music. Hopefully, in future revisions of the Missal, the poetry and the original Syriac flavor of some of the prayers will be restored.

We need to organize programs to acculturate foreign clergy to the American scene and acculturate American born clergy to Middle Eastern culture. We should strengthen the effort of teacher training and certification of our religious education teachers, while realizing that they are

volunteer teachers with many commitments on their time. To perpetuate our Maronite tradition, we should develop adult education programs. There is a need to give priority to forming MYO and MYA groups in all of our parishes. New programs should be directed to the needs of young families.

### ***The Challenge of Assimilation***

Besides the present challenges of secularism, post-modernism, and relativism facing religion in the United States, minority Eastern churches are tempted to assimilate to the larger Catholic culture. This is especially true of the Maronites in regard to the Latin Church. For centuries, the Maronites of the Middle East have developed a great affinity for the Catholics of the West. Many western religious orders have established schools and adjoining parishes there. Therefore, for many Maronites in the United States there can be the temptation to attend the Catholic parish that is most convenient. The challenge is to educate Maronites as to their distinct identity and its richness. This identity is much more than being similar to that of a "national church." There is no doubt that the Maronite church has incorporated many liturgical elements, especially in music and paraliturgical services from its life in Lebanon for 1500 years. However, these are only a part of the larger Maronite tradition.

### ***Maronite Identity According to the Maronite Patriarchal Synod***

The first five chapters of the Maronite Patriarchal Synod (2003-6) treated the question of identity, vocation and mission of the Maronite Church. The first characteristic of Maronite identity is that the Maronite Church is a Syriac Antiochene Church with a special liturgical heritage. The Maronite Church perpetuates the tradition of the great Apostolic Church of Antioch. It is important to remember that the church of Antioch was founded by St. Peter before he went to Rome. Responding to the preaching of Sts. Peter and Paul it developed its own liturgy and theology. The church of Antioch also conducted missionary activity to the East and therefore

incorporated two cultures, the Hellenic culture and the Syriac culture, especially the writings of St. Ephrem (d. 373) and Jacob of Serug (d. 521). These writers expressed the faith within a Semitic biblical culture and represented the world-view of early Judeo-Christianity. Maronites are heirs of that Syriac Antiochene tradition.

Secondly, the Maronites are a Chalcedonian Church. What this means is that they adhere to the teaching of the Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon (451) which declared that Christ was both fully divine and full human. This is especially important because Maronites believe that the whole of humanity was joined to the divine, without loss of its human nature. Believers are united to the divine through union with Christ, while retaining their free will.

Thirdly, the Maronite Church is a patriarchal church with monastic and ascetic features. It was founded on a monastery and was spread by monks. It maintains an ascetic world-view by teaching true repentance for the sake of the kingdom, developing a state of spiritual vigilance, relying on hope, and awaiting the second coming of Christ.

Fourth, the Maronite church is in full communion with the Roman Apostolic See. For Maronites, schism in the Church of Christ is not an option. To paraphrase an ancient saying: "Their faith is the faith of Peter." Being in union with the Holy Father, Maronites can serve an ecumenical role between Rome and separated churches.

Fifth, the Maronite Church is incarnated in its Lebanese and Eastern environment and in the countries of the Expansion. The Maronite church has a universal mission to preach the Gospel to the whole world. Maronites are called to share the riches of their Syriac and Antiochene heritage wherever they find themselves.

### ***Maronite Legacy According to Maronite Liturgical Theology***

In the East, the liturgy plays a paramount role in the expression of faith and is the vehicle of theology. For the believer, theology is important because it tries to explain the

ramifications of faith to fellow believers and to others. While faith is one in its truth, it can be explained in different ways. This does not confuse but enhances faith, because faith's richness is not exhausted by only one form of explanation. In the Catholic Church there can be a pluralism of theologies. The Maronite liturgy, strongly influenced by St. Ephrem and Jacob of Serug provides a distinct and rich theological explanation of the faith.

For these Syriac Fathers, God is unto Himself. By his nature, he is ungraspable and elusive. St. Ephrem in his writings respects God's mystery by using variations of the Syriac term for "being," which corresponds to the Hebrew term "YHWH." In these cases the "beingness" of God is translated into terms such as "divinity," "godhead," and "self-existent." Therefore, our Maronite liturgy is consistent in presuming the "unknowability" of God. On the other hand, creation, being an expression of God's love, reflects the image of its Creator. While the Old Testament speaks of God with different names, it provides only distant intimations. It is Christ who reveals to us that He is the Word of God made flesh and that God is His Father. By being united with Christ, God is not only our Father, but can be prayed to as "Abba."

Syriac-Maronite theology reasons that human beings are created not only in the image and likeness of God, but in the image of the pre-existent future Christ. What this means is that it was always God's plan from the beginning of creation that human beings are called to transcend their natural birth and be reborn into a spiritual beings through the spiritual womb of Baptism. The Maronite ritual for Baptism describes this teaching beautifully. It is in this context that we can appreciate the prayer in the Divine Liturgy, that the incarnate Christ has "united his divinity with our humanity and our humanity with his divinity." As the Epistle of St. Peter tells us we are called to be partakers of what is of God. The Gospels teach us that we are called to be members of the divine family and are constituted as heirs. The Maronite liturgy refers often to Christians as God's inheritance.

Our Maronite liturgy teaches us that

Christ's work of redemption not only serves to reunite humans and creation with the Father, but also by entering the world of the dead, Christ destroys the power of evil and death itself. Our Maronite liturgy also declares that the Cross of Christ is not an instrument of death but the re-emergence of the "Tree of Life" of the Garden of Eden. From the blood and water that flowed from side of Christ is born the Church as the New Eve, just as the old Eve was born from the side of Adam. The Church forms its members with the water of Baptism and nourishes them with the Body and Blood of the Eucharist. The union of Christ and the Church as His Bride at the Cross is the foundation of the mystery of Marriage.

In using the term "mystery" for "sacrament," the Maronite Church wishes to emphasize that God's creation both hides and reveals the holy. It is already holy because God in his love poured his presence into creation. God's power is hidden, but through the words of the Church becomes unveiled in the seven mysteries/sacraments. Christ himself, by his earthly action at the first Epiphany when he was baptized by John, sanctified all the rivers and waters of the world as our Maronite liturgy for Epiphany describes. Christ's action over the bread and wine at the Last Supper manifests that created bread and wine can indeed become His Body and Blood.

Our Blessed Mother is not only the mother of Christ, but his first disciple, and his companion through his whole life and death, a witness of his Ascension, and the coming of His Spirit on Pentecost. She is indeed the mother of all who are united with his humanity. Her dormition is commemorated by the ancient Maronite Anaphora of Sharar.

The Maronite legacy and its continuation provides a rich insight into how the Gospel of Christ was received, celebrated, reflected upon, and handed down over the centuries by believers belonging to highly developed Eastern cultures. This treasure belongs to Maronites of the future and can serve to offer other believers a fuller understanding of God's revelation. □

***The Lord's Call***  
***by***  
***His Excellency Bishop A. Elias Zaidan***

**D**uring His earthly ministry, Jesus called on all people: "Be holy as your Heavenly Father is holy." To attain holiness, there is an invitation for every human being to walk his/her life journey in conformity with God's call. From this universal vocation, God calls different people for different purposes: priesthood, religious life, married life, lay ministry... He uses different methods and messages to directly or indirectly call us to Him, hoping for us to discern properly and respond positively.

On a personal note, my vocation found its roots from a very young age. My vocation was a natural process as I

grew older. I was raised in a practicing Maronite family where Sunday Mass was natural and daily prayers at home, especially the rosary during the month of May, dedicated to the Blessed Mother, were done together as a family. I have an uncle who is a priest, Father Sassine Zaidan, at the Congregation of Maronite Lebanese Missionaries and an aunt Sister Afdokia Zaidan at the Order of Antonine Sisters. When my uncle jokingly used to ask me: "What do you want to do in the future?" My response was: "I want to be a priest like you." As a little boy, I also used to act as a priest, put a cape and say a few prayers I memorized from the Mass.

Along the years, the calling became stronger and more serious. I joined the minor seminary of the Congregation of Maronite Lebanese Missionaries. There, I received good formation and introduction to the religious life in addition to continuing my regular schooling. During that period, I saw many of my friends leave the seminary while I stayed. One constant question I used to ask God was: "Why do you want me, O Lord?" I faced many challenges and temptations but the grace of God has sustained me all of these years.

After the minor seminary, I entered the novitiate where at the end, I pronounced my religious vows of chastity, poverty, and obedience. Father Sassine reminded me: "I don't want you to be here just for me, it is your life not mine." Along the years, I felt that God's voice was stronger than any other voice despite the struggles and hesitations I had been confronted with.

In my formation, I was told to trust in God and in the ecclesial authority: "Never ask for any position, never refuse what the superiors ask of you; trust in God." I worked to achieve this conviction, to realize the need to surrender to God who is the Father and He knows what is best for us.



After finishing the required theological courses and proper formation, I was ordained Priest in July 1986. Then, life and ministry are great teachers as well. Usually, as a new priest, you have great ideals and vision to change the whole world. However, the reality is different and you come to concede that you can't change everyone; you just try to change yourself and help others to change themselves for the better. I have learned from people along the years and the various incidents/problems have taught me a lot.

Throughout my years as a priest, I have been blessed by the collaboration of parishioners and friends in my various assignments. I can't claim success but I tried to be faithful every step of the way. I have experienced the grace of God first hand and continuously in my life. I am so grateful for God's Providence as He has kept me going all of these years.

Now, as bishop, I feel the responsibility and weight of the office. I try my best to shepherd the flock entrusted to me with love, compassion and dedication. The challenge is always to properly discern the will of God above anything else and to implement it in our own lives and in the life of our Eparchy.

Looking back at my twenty-nine years of priestly ministry and ten prior years



***If the Lord  
is Calling  
You,  
The  
Church  
Needs  
You!***

If you feel that you have a vocation to the Priesthood or religious life, please contact your Pastor or write to:

Fr. Gary George, Director  
Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon  
Office of Vocations  
1021 South 10<sup>th</sup> Street  
St. Louis, MO 63104

Or

Fr. Dominique Hanna, Director  
Eparchy of Saint Maron  
Office of Vocations  
c/o St. Joseph Church  
502 Seminole Ave. NE  
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Or

Our Lady of Lebanon Seminary  
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St. Louis, MO 63104

of formation and preparation, I would summarize a few essential points:

Listen carefully and lovingly to the voice of God in your life.

- You can never completely plan your life. Just work hard and depend on the grace of God; It is easy to become a priest but it is hard to be a good one.
- Prayer is our daily connection with the Lord, the sustainer of our ministry, He will never let us down.
- Love God, love yourself and love others is the source of our inner peace and serenity.
- Enjoy your ministry and be content with the gifts that God has given you.

May God's will be done in our life.

God Bless!

+A. Elias Zaidan

Bishop of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon of Los Angeles

## Brooklyn, New York Confraternity Year End Celebration

by Salma Vahdat

No one can deny that the Confraternity of the Immaculate Conception at Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral in Brooklyn, N.Y., is at the core of the Cathedral's activities. The ladies are unstinting in their devotion and willingness to rise to any occasion for the betterment of the Community and the Eparchy.

Fundraising...creative and productive. Food

prep...all hands working delicious repasts for whatever occasion our Rector requires. Donations...all hands open and giving. Spirit...always present and contagious. The women of the Confraternity are the heart of the Cathedral!

Keep in mind every June we take it upon ourselves to close out the year with a self congratulatory celebration to ourselves. This year the venue was at Bocelli's Restaurant on Staten Island, N.Y., which served up a banquet of Italian food. How nice to be served! We deserved it! We enjoyed it! Shamelessly! Sharing our evening were our dynamic Rector, Msgr. James Root, and our two subdeacons, Norbert Vogl and Peter Frangie. They had a good time in spite of being outnumbered!

Marian Ciaccia, President, welcomed Msgr. Root, our mentor, and presented him with five thousand dollars toward the upkeep of the Cathedral, the proceeds of the fundraising. Her gratitude to the members was effusive and well-deserved. The lightheartedness of the evening continued well into the night. Many said a fond farewell to each other before leaving for Lebanon for the summer. In truth, we need a good rest to recharge for resumption of our activities come September. □



# Detroit, Michigan 100<sup>th</sup> Birthday

by Veronica Asmar

On July 5, 2015, Diane George celebrated her 100<sup>th</sup> Birthday during a Liturgy at St. Maron Church, Detroit, Mich. Msgr. Louis Baz read a letter from Bishop Elias Zaidan, Bishop of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon, and presented her with a Papal Blessing from Pope Francis. The family treated attendees to breakfast in the Social Hall.

This was the first time Diane's entire family of six children (three boys/three girls), fifteen grandchildren, twenty-six great grandchildren and spouses were able to come together from across the U.S. for this special family reunion. In 1970, Diane lost her husband Leo, at the age of fifty-four.

Diane George was a working mom and is proud of her Maronite heritage. She has been active in fundraising and contributed to both St. Maron and St. Sharbel Churches. Diane is a member of the St. Maron Altar Society and was Coordinator of the Perpetual Adoration Chapel.

When Diane George met Bishop Zaidan, she was thrilled her actual birthday, September 29, is close to his ordination anniversary as a bishop, September 28, 2013. Mrs. George attributes her longevity to her deep faith in God and to the blessing she received, at age nineteen, from Capuchin monk Fr. Solanus Casey (now Venerable). □



And flourish we did. We were generously wined and dined and taken to many Holy places and sites in Lebanon that the Maronites deem sacred. Such energy from the youth resonated with every revered place and brought it back to life. This is what the Forum was meant to do: to bring together Maronite youth and illuminate Lebanon's splendor. We also deepened our knowledge of the saints of Lebanon as we visited their holy sites. Every step we took and every song we sang brought us together and planted our roots deeper into the fertile soil of Lebanon and Maronite history. The times we did travel around Lebanon were uplifting, eye-opening and spiritual, but it was the bonding that really made this trip. Over each meal, each prayer, each song, each bus trip, and each *dabke* we became stronger in love and hope. We could always feel the presence of God, alongside the Maronite Saints. Hand in hand, we 185-strong Maronite youth rooted our souls in Lebanon.

One month later, I know that I was part of this Forum for a reason. I was meant to rediscover my spiritual life and water it to grow and thrive. Lebanon showed me a glimpse into what my path in life could be. It showed me that I was meant to be a leader and that I could make a difference in the world with amazing spiritual connections. Going back to Lebanon after fifteen years was bittersweet, because it was one of the most amazing experiences of my entire life and it was one of the saddest moments of my life when I had to leave my family and newly made friends. Thankfully, we have Whatsapp and Facebook so we can easily stay in touch even a thousand miles away.

I don't think I could have had this opportunity to represent our Patriarchy and the U.S. if it weren't for Sister Therese Maria Touma and the Maronite Servants of Christ the Light, the Eparchy of Saint Maron and especially Bishop Gregory Mansour, and St. Theresa Church in Brockton, Mass. You have always inspired my spiritual growth and hope you continue to uplift the Maronite youth in the U.S. A sincere thank you to His Beatitude Patriarch Bechara Peter Cardinal Rai, Fr. Toufic Bou Hadir, and the eparchies in Lebanon for welcoming us home and loving us with such passion. □

## Bkerke, Lebanon World Maronite Youth Forum

by Evette Franjeh

“Like the Cedars of Lebanon ...” (Psalm 92:12), was the main theme of the First World Maronite Youth Forum. The Forum was meticulously planned by the most devout people in the Lebanese eparchies, and it brought together vibrant youth from around the world, including Mexico, Burkina Faso, Egypt, Australia, Canada, Cyprus, Brazil, the Holy Land, Syria, France, the U.S., and Argentina. Each and every person, no matter where they came from, brought not only their culture but also the thirst and love for Lebanon and the Maronite traditions. Even the language barriers couldn't stop us from communicating and sharing our lives with each other. Like the Cedars, the Maronite youth came together and made a forest of love and enduring spirituality.



## Cleveland, Ohio

### *Maronites in America - Continuing the Legacy at the 52<sup>nd</sup> Annual Convention*



The 52<sup>nd</sup> Annual National Apostolate of Maronites Convention held in Cleveland, Ohio, July 1 - 5, 2015, brought together over 1100 Maronites from around the nation for a week of religious reflection, spiritual activities, inspirational and educational workshops, cultural festivities, and more in celebration of our Maronite faith and the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of St. Maron Church in Cleveland.

In conjunction with the theme of this year's Convention, *Maronites in America - Continuing the Legacy*, the workshops covered various topics that impact Maronites in America today, including education, careers, health, the future of Maronites in America, and most importantly, continued dedication to the Maronite faith. The workshops commenced on Thursday with an inspiring presentation by Charles Elachi, Ph.D., on his experience in America as a Lebanese immigrant and how that path led him to his career as a NASA Rocket Scientist. The next workshop by Deborah Ghazoul-Mills, M.D., and Sonia Najjar, Ph.D., focused on Maronite Professionals in America through an enlightening discussion on family health and wellness. On Friday, the workshops were led by American public opinion pollster, author and public speaker, John Zogby, while the one for the Maronite Young Adults was led by George Harik, Ph.D., who gave a special workshop tailored towards the Maronite Young Adults and the wealth of opportunities available to them. On Friday afternoon Dr. Mirna Mzawak, Ph.D., led a presentation on securing the Maronite family unit in the U.S.A. based on the Maronite Synod. The Saturday workshops began with an inspiring presentation by Rachel Muha on turning to our Maronite faith during times of difficulty and strife through following God's way of forgiveness. Through her personal tragedy and dedication to her faith, Rachel is an example to us all. The Saturday panelist discussion on Maronite Americans and U.S. Policy and how it impacts the events in the Middle East was led by

Mr. Toufic Baaklini from *In Defense of Christians* (IDC), Dr. Asaad Eid, Notre Dame University (NDU) in Lebanon, Rev. Hady Mahfouz, University of the Holy Spirit, *Kaslik*, Lebanon (USEK), and Mr. Samir Sfeir (WPF). Chorbishop Seely Beggiani and Rev. Toufic Nasr moderated the discussion.

The evening entertainment paralleled the success of the workshops. On Wednesday, guests were welcomed by performances by Tony Koussa Jr. & The Elements. Thursday evening included a religious celebration through music, led by international artists Joumana Mdawar and Ashley Nemeh. The Friday evening dinner banquet included a selection of Middle Eastern food from *Taza Lebanese Grill* and Aladdin's Eatery, entertainment by Cleveland's own Tony Mikhael & Band, and a *dabke* dance performance by the Cleveland MaronKnights. The Saturday banquet brought together more than one thousand NAM attendees in a wonderful evening featuring entertainment by internationally-renowned Arabic Singer Tony Kiwan. The Gold Massabki awards were presented to Therese Abi-Habib from the Eparchy of Saint Maron and Tommy Tedros from the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon for their continued dedication to NAM. A beautiful highlight from the banquet was the presentation of flowers to the Cleveland NAM volunteers by the Convention Co-Chairs.

Throughout the week, the Maronite Young Adults participated in numerous religious and cultural activities. MYA activities began on Wednesday with an MYA opening Liturgy led by Father Tony Massad, followed by a meet-and-greet event at City and East Hookah Bar, and ending with a social gathering at the Barley House. On Thursday, MYA attendees participated in an excursion to University Circle, which boasts the well-known Cleveland Museum of Art and Cleveland Botanical Gardens, followed by a very well attended Theology onTap session at TownHall with Father Tony Massad. On Friday, the MYA joined the Bishops for lunch at *Taza Lebanese Grill*, followed by the special MYA workshop with George Harik. Saturday MYA activities included a Lolly the Trolley Tour around the City of Cleveland.

The Convention concluded on Sunday with a solemn Divine Liturgy, followed by a short ceremony recognizing the NAM Cleveland Convention team led by Monsignor Peter Karam, the NAM 2015 Cleveland Convention Co-Chairs, Henry and Judy Hilow, and NAM Executive Director Mike J. Naber. Dr. Elias Ayoub was recognized for his dedication and service to NAM and the Maronite community, and his work with Henry and Judy Hilow, who commented that "Dr. Elias Ayoub is one of the most dedicated, mission-driven leaders we have the pleasure of knowing. His guidance and support is one of the key factors in the huge success of the NAM 2015 Cleveland Convention. We will cherish his friendship today and always." This year's Convention was particularly special for the Cleveland community as Samir Farah, a Cleveland parishioner, was elected as the President of NAM. The success of this convention was made possible through the Convention leadership, the dedicated Cleveland volunteers, the NAM attendees, the generous donations of many and most importantly by the blessings of God. □

# Mid-Atlantic East Regional NAM Convention

## November 6–8, 2015



**Hampton Inn Hotel**  
 125 Flatbush Avenue  
 Brooklyn, NY 11201  
**Room rate of \$159.00**  
 Pre-registration deadline is  
**October 16, 2015**  
 For reservations call  
**718-875-8800 and use**  
**Code NAM**

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For Registration-Go online:

[www.namnews.org](http://www.namnews.org)

For more information:

NAM 914-964-3070

LOLOL 718-624-7228

[nam@namnews.org](mailto:nam@namnews.org)

Ad Book, Email:

[cathrectory@verizon.net](mailto:cathrectory@verizon.net)

## ✠ Schedule of Events ✠

### Friday, November 6

3:00 - 6:00 Registration—Parish Hall  
 7:30 - 8:00 Evening Prayer—Cathedral  
 8:00 - 12:00 Welcome Hafli—Parish Hall

### Saturday, November 7

9:00 Registration—Parish Hall  
 9:30-10:00 Morning Prayer—Cathedral  
 10:00-11:30 Workshops:  
 Pre-schoolers & Youth—Maronite  
                   Sisters of Christ the Light  
 MYO—Bishop Gregory  
 MYA—Father Vincent Farhat  
 Adults—Chorbishop Beggiani  
 7:00-12:00 Grand Hafli—St. Francis College



### Sunday, November 8

11:00 Divine Liturgy—Cathedral  
 12:00-2:00 Farewell Brunch-Parish Hall

*Saturday Hafli: Featuring Amin Sultan*



## NAM Scholarship Winners

The NAM Scholarship Committee is pleased to announce the winners of the NAM Scholarships for the 2015 - 2016 school year. Each winner will receive a \$1000 scholarship pending notification of enrollment in college. This scholarship may be renewed for one additional year provided the recipient maintains a 3.0 or better average on a 4.0 scale and enrolls for an additional year in college.

### John A. Solomon Memorial MYO Scholarship Winners

- Clara Habib, St. Maron Church, Cleveland, Ohio
- Valentina Malouf, Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral, Brooklyn, N.Y.

### Naomi and Paul Kassouf NAM Scholarship Winners

- Amanda Bsaibes, Our Lady's Maronite Church, Austin, Tex.
- Jennifer Hobeika, Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral, Brooklyn, N.Y.

### Thomas and Jennie Ayoob Memorial NAM Scholarship Winner

- Dalton C. Hass, Our Lady of Lebanon Church, Wheeling, W. Va.

### St. John Maron, Orange, Calif., Scholarship Winner

- Taria Abi-Saber

### Massabki Brothers Scholarship Winner

- Gabriella Karam, Our Lady of Lebanon Church, Easton, Penn.

### Paul Wakim Scholarship Winner

- Fidelle El-Asmar, Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral, Brooklyn, N.Y.

### Robert Atallah Scholarship Winner

- Elias Irani, St. Maron Church, Philadelphia, Penn.

### Gilbert Chagoury Undergraduate Scholarship Winner

- Therezia Al-Choufete, Our Lady of Victory Church, Pittsburgh, Penn.

### Gilbert Chagoury Graduate Scholarship Winner

- Maribeth Rezey, St. Raymond Cathedral, St. Louis, Mo.

The winners from last year are asked to contact the NAM office at 914-964-3070 or [nam@namnews.org](mailto:nam@namnews.org) for verification that each qualifies for the second \$1000.

## NAM Scholarships in Lebanon

The National Apostolate of Maronites (NAM) proudly announces scholarships for a semester in Lebanon for the 2016 school year at **University of the Holy Spirit (USEK)**, *Kaslik*, and **Notre Dame University (NDU)**. It includes full tuition, dormitory and \$500 once completed:

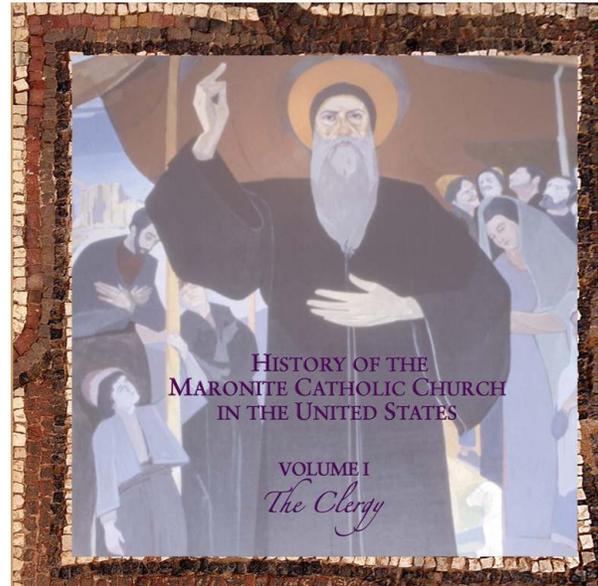
- Maya Khoury (NDU), St. Anthony Church, Glen Allen, Va.
- Layla Chaoul (USEK), St. Anthony Church, Glen Allen, Va.

For more information and applications, contact your pastor or NAM delegates, or online: [WWW.NAMNEWS.ORG](http://WWW.NAMNEWS.ORG), or by email [nam@namnews.org](mailto:nam@namnews.org), or call NAM at (914) 964-3070. □

## From the Book Shelf

### *History of the Maronite Catholic Church in the United States*

#### *The Clergy*



by Evelyn Karam Small

In 1890, the first assigned Maronite Catholic missionary arrived in New York City. Like many Lebanese immigrants, he brought with him his faith and the hope of building a better tomorrow.

Now, modern-day parishioners can read about the complete history of the Maronite Church in America in a new book called *History of the Maronite Catholic Church in the United States, Volume I, The Clergy*. Five years of extensive research were needed to unearth never-before published documents and to translate historical records and correspondence from their original French or Arabic into English. To further understand the evolution of the Church, the authors also analyzed interviews conducted with parishioners and pastors over the past seventy years.

This 440-page book is an essential addition to the bookshelf of any Maronite curious about the contributions our Church has made over the last 125 years.

*The Clergy* is available for \$30 plus \$7 shipping from Saint Maron Publications, 4611 Sadler Road, Glen Allen, Virginia 23060 <http://stmaron.org/store>.

*Saint Maron Publications accepts Visa or Master Card.*

## Minneapolis, Minnesota *Bible Camp*



August 18 - 20, 2015, nineteen Maronite Christian Formation (MCF) students of Saint Maron Church, Minneapolis, Minn., engaged in liturgical studies, meditation exercises, and scripture reading which culminated in a performance of the Passion Play. Five hours each day provided opportunity for focused learning and social fun as they prepped for the new school year. □

## Uniontown, Pennsylvania *Graduates Honored*

On June 7, 2015, St. George Maronite Church in Uniontown, Penn., recognized its graduates at the Divine Liturgy. Fr. Sami Chaaya, M.L.M., Pastor, presented each one with a certificate and a gift. A luncheon followed in the Parish Hall.

Pictured are Rachel Rogers, graduate of Uniontown High School, Sarah Rogers, Westmoreland County Community



College, Fr. Sami, Abby Rozgony, Penn State University, Joshua Horvath, Penn State University, and Karleigh Risha accepting for her sister, Sandy Risha. Sandy graduate from Columbia University in New York with a Master's of Science degree. Other graduates were Maria Pollick, a graduate of Laurel Highlands High School and Anna Howard, who graduated from the University of Pittsburgh at Greensburg. □

## San Antonio, Texas *Celebration of Thanksgiving*

by Regina Aune

On July 18 - 19, 2015, newly ordained Fr. Christopher Fabre celebrated the weekend Divine Liturgies of Thanksgiving at St. George Church in San Antonio, Tex. After the Sunday liturgy a reception in honor of Fr. Fabre was held in the parish hall. Fr. Fabre was ordained by Bishop Elias Zaidan on July 11, 2015, at Our Lady's Church in Austin, Tex. During the past year, Fr. Fabre served as a deacon at St. George in final preparation for his ordination. He became an integral member of the parish, and St. George Parish prays that Fr. Faber's ministry as a newly ordained priest will be richly blessed by God and that his new parish family will be blessed by his presence among them. □