



The Maronite Voice

A Publication of the Maronite Eparchies in the USA

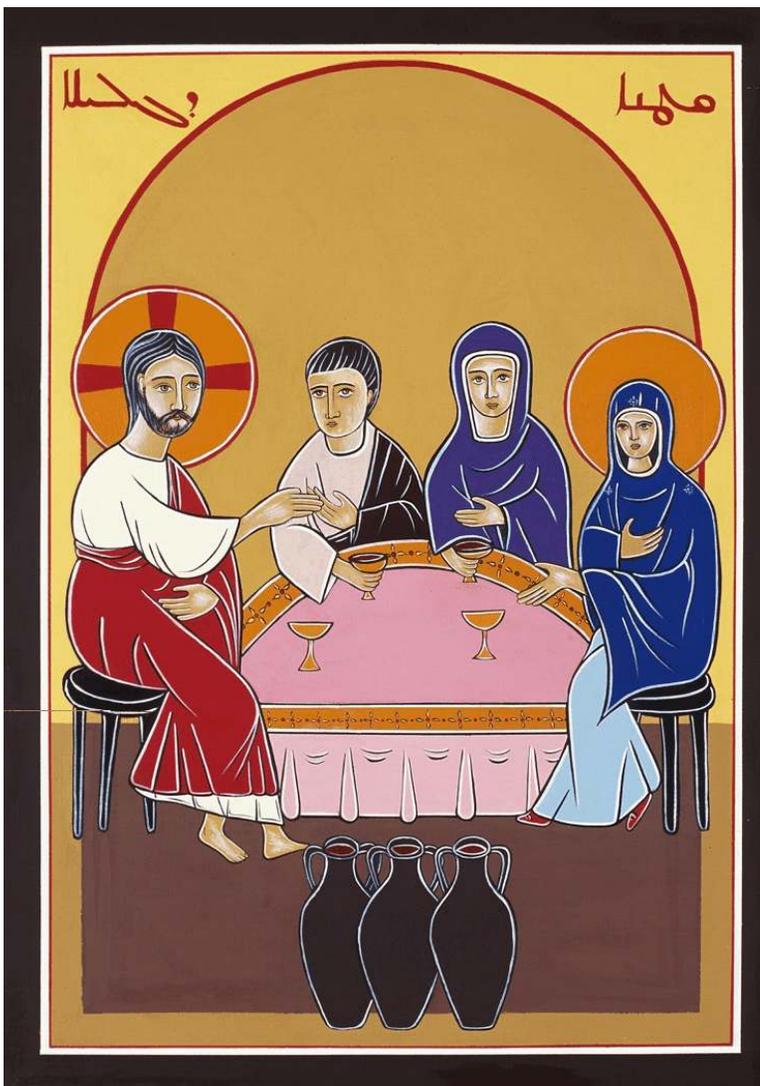


Volume VII

Issue No. II

February 2011

During Lent We Are Called Into A Deeper Relationship With the Lord By Acquiring Spiritual Maturity



Entrance Into Great Lent by Fr. Abdo Badwi, University of the Holy Spirit, Kaslik, Lebanon (USEK), Department of Sacred Art.

Dear People of God,

We will be entering into the great Season of Lent. It is a time of spiritual reflection, refocus and regeneration. In fact, nature has its four seasons: Spring, Summer, Fall and Winter. The human being has his/her periods of growing up: childhood, adolescence, youth, maturity, commitment and retirement. Each stage of life has its own characteristics that would craft the person along the years.

In a similar way, our Liturgical cycle helps us in our spiritual journey. During the Season of Advent and Christmas, we rejoice with the birth of Christ our Savior. At Epiphany, we learn the importance of renouncing Satan and believing in God. During Lent, we are called into a deeper relationship with the Lord by acquiring spiritual maturity. At Easter, we make a commitment to follow the Lord, knowing that He is the true Triune God. At Pentecost, we are called to go preach the good news to others by word and deed. Then, at the Holy Season of the Glorious Cross, we start to anticipate our forthcoming passage into eternal life.

In order to live fully this Season of Lent, I would like to share with you some thoughts for your consideration and reflection:

◆ **Lent is a time of fasting:** Many of us give up some things (meat, drinks, coffee...). It is a great way to discipline our bodies. However, this kind of fasting will not be enough unless it is coupled with practice of some sacrifices and mortifications that would bring us close to the Lord: "May our fasting, O Lord, be pleasing to you. May our prayers be an acceptable offering" (*Mazmoroo*, First Weekday Cycle of Lent).

◆ **Lent is a time of abstinence:** Many of us deprive ourselves from many pleasures. It is a great occasion to rediscover the spiritual pearl and the treasure of our tradition by reading more about our faith.

◆ **Lent is a time of almsgiving:** Lent is also a time of reaching out towards our brothers and sisters in need. It is a time of sharing ourselves and our resources with the people who are going through difficult times. Such examples are: visiting the sick, helping the poor, comforting the sorrowful...

(Continues on page 20)

Schedule of Bishop Robert Shaheen

February 5 - 6, 2011

St. Maron's Feast Day, Detroit, Mich.

February 9, 2011

St. Maron Feast Day celebration, St. Raymond Cathedral, St. Louis, Mo.

February 12 - 13, 2011

St. Anthony Church, Danbury, Conn.

February 19, 2011

St. Raymond Cathedral, St. Louis, Mo.

February 24, 2011

St. Raymond Cathedral, St. Louis, Mo.

February 26, 2011

Our Lady of the Cedars, Houston, Tex.

February 26 - 27, 2011

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

March 2, 2011

Maronite Bishops' Synod, Bkerke, Lebanon. □

The Maronite Voice

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Maronite Convention 2011

St. Sharbel Church
Newtown Square, Pennsylvania

July 6- 10, 2011

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



Eparchial Condolences

Kay Marie Budway Murphy, the sister of Anthony Budway, the Chief Financial Officer of the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn, passed away on January 2, 2011 at the age of 46. She is survived by her husband, Matthew and four brothers and sisters.

Condolences may be sent to Anthony Budway at 14 Celebration Way, Johnston, RI 02919.

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 Mr. Budway and his family. May the Lord God grant Kay Marie eternal rest in His Kingdom and consolation to her family and loved ones.

Agnes Marie Timmons, the aunt of Mary Denny, Vice Chancellor of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon, passed away on December 24, 2010. She had just turned 100 years of age this past June. She is survived by her son Robert, her niece Mary, grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Condolences may be sent to Mrs. Mary Denny at the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon, 1021 South 10th Street, St. Louis, MO 63104.

Bishop Robert Shaheen, along with the clergy and faithful of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon, and 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 Mary Denny and the Timmons family.

May the Lord God grant Agnes Marie eternal rest in His Kingdom and consolation to her family and loved ones. □



North Palm Beach, Florida "Be A Witness to Christ"



Chorbishop Michael Thomas and Bishop Gregory Mansour.

Although Mother Nature had plans of her own, the annual clergy retreat for the Eparchy of St. Maron of Brooklyn went ahead as planned. Several priests were delayed because of the weather and only a few were unable to make it down to what was one of the most rewarding clergy retreats ever. The clergy arrived on Monday, January 10, 2011, in North Palm Beach, Florida, to reflect on the past year, to gather as brothers in Christ, and to take some time to spiritually recharge themselves in an effort to pass this renewal of self to their parishioners.

Bishop Gregory Mansour began the retreat with a few words and Eucharistic Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. He also introduced our retreat master, Fr. Eugene Fulton, from the Trinity Retreat House in New York. How blessed we were to have such a motivated, spiritual, and knowledgeable speaker. His theme was "Be a Witness to Christ." He stressed daily prayer as "the way" to serve the Church effectively. Through prayer each and every one of us is able to make the internal journey to the heart of Christ.

Fr. Eugene also reflected on the need for change in our lives and the only way to make this change is by prayer. Through prayer we hear God speak to us and He gives us what we need to continue our ministry. A Polish nun once told Fr. Eugene a story about Pope John Paul II. The sister asked Pope John Paul, "What do you say when you kneel before the Blessed Sacrament for two hours before your liturgy?" The Pope said "I say very little. I listen very carefully to find Christ in the depth of my heart." This is the spiritual journey Fr. Eugene imprinted in the hearts and minds of the clergy. In addition to this theme, Fr. Eugene also stressed the need for humbleness. The Church does not need a Churchman; she needs priests who serve and love Jesus. As priests and as followers of Christ, we grow in

holiness by prayer and humility if we only look to Christ.

On Friday morning, January 15, the retreat concluded and the words and wisdom of Fr. Eugene rejuvenated those present. May the clergy and faithful truly become "witnesses to Christ" and may the love of God direct us closer to Him.

Maronite Servants Need Your Help



Cecilia Romero joins Sister Marla Marie and Sister Therese Maria for the Youth Mass in Washington, D.C., during the March for Life on January 24, 2011.

by Sister Marla Marie

A few issues back we shared the great news of finding a home for our monastery in Dartmouth, Massachusetts, and that we had hoped to be living there by the New Year. However, unforeseen circumstances in the needed renovations have stalled our move. We now have to replace the furnace completely instead of the few repairs initially thought. This will be a large expense, and we turn to our Maronite family for your assistance. If you are able to donate to our new furnace fund, we are grateful. Please send your gift to the Maronite Servants at the Eparchy of Saint Maron, the Chancery: 109 Remsen St., Brooklyn, NY 11201. If you would like more information, contact Sister Marla Marie at 781-331-3290. Visit our web pages: maroniteservants.org and radiatehislight.blogspot.com. □

United Nations Study Session
Empowering Young Women
for the New Millennium

March 17 - 18, 2011
New York City

Join the UN Representatives of IMCS – Pax Romana as we explore the issues facing young women in this volatile world. Activities will include workshops, a service project, discussions, and prayer.

More information coming soon!

Washington, D.C. *March For Life*



Bishop Gregory Mansour with a group of Maronites attending the March of Life in Washington, D.C.

by John Jarvis

On Monday, March 24, 2011, it is estimated that close to 200,000 people braved the bitterly cold weather to march for life in Washington, D.C. The event is more than just a march. It began Sunday evening with Mass at the Basilica of the Immaculate Conception celebrated by Cardinal Daniel DiNardo. This is just not a typical Mass - there were 11,000 people led by five cardinals, thirty nine bishops, 325 priests, 95 deacons, 570 seminarians, and seventy-five servers. Speakers followed the Mass. It is truly an amazing start to the March for Life and a wonderful way to give glory to God.

Monday morning began with a youth Mass and rally. This rally is so popular that a second location had to be added this year. There were over 29,000 youth with fifty-nine bishops and more than one hundred priests at the Verizon Center and another 10,000 youth at the local Armory. These events are just part of the day's activities as churches around Washington, D.C., open their doors to marchers for individual group Masses. At around noon, the March and rally began with speakers from both the religious and political world. It is a time when people from many faiths unite to proclaim life. It is summed best by Sam Vasquez, an intern with the USCCB Committee on Pro-Life, when he stated to the National Catholic Register, this is "America at its best."

People came from across the country to take part and show their support for life. This year Maronites from both Eparchies were represented and led by Bishop Gregory Mansour. The Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon of Los Angeles was represented by seminarians. The Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn saw many parishioners from Our Lady of Lebanon Church in Washington, D.C., and a bus load of people led by Msgr. George Sebaali of St. Anthony Church in Glen Allen [Richmond], Virginia. □

Newtown Square, Pennsylvania *Pastoral Visit*



Deacon Martin LoMonaco, Bishop Gregory Mansour and Fr. Paul Mouawad.

by Lillian Shahade

On Saturday evening, January 22, 2011, Bishop Gregory Mansour arrived at the "Hermitage" of St. Sharbel in Newtown Square, Penn., while Fr. Paul Mouawad, Pastor, was celebrating the Divine Liturgy and evening prayer. Afterward he invited Bishop Gregory out for dinner and some quiet time to talk. On Sunday, January 23, Bishop Gregory was commenting on the silent beauty of the "Hermitage" grounds, further enhanced by the new fallen snow. After a light breakfast, Fr. Paul, Bishop Gregory and one of the parishioners prayed the *Safro* in the church before the Divine Liturgy.

At the celebration of the Divine Liturgy, Bishop Gregory was assisted by Fr. Paul and Deacon Martin LoMonaco. The altar servers were Anthony (Tony) Azzi and Issa Muqbel.

The choir sang all the appropriate hymns for the Divine Liturgy as well as the entrance hymn to welcome the Bishop. John Khawam, the organist and music director, has been working diligently with the choir to achieve more male and female harmonizing and it definitely could be heard that Sunday.

Despite the frigid cold outside and the faulty heaters, a warm and personal feeling was felt by all who had the opportunity to attend the Bishop's Liturgy. The Church was filled to capacity.

Fr. Paul introduced Bishop Gregory to the congregation and joked that each had time to hear the other's confession the previous night. He also spoke of how humble the Bishop is and how blessed and proud we are to have him visit our parish.

During the Homily, Bishop Gregory added and shared with us that when he was attending college, he was like most other young men looking for a direction in life. One incident caused him to ponder his direction and eventually his vocation. Two young men at the college knocked on his door



Bishop Gregory Mansour blesses the faithful at the end of the Divine Liturgy.

and asked if they could talk with him about God and the Christian way. He saw that others had mocked the men previously, but he invited them in to speak. Afterwards, he wondered if he would have the conviction to do what these men were doing... And as we all know, this young man who wondered to himself if he could do what they did, is now our Bishop Gregory. He not only knocks on doors, but he knocks on our hearts to open them to the Christian way. It was also pointed out yesterday, that it is truly blessed indeed that Bishop Gregory was made Bishop by Pope John Paul II, a future Saint of the Church, who will be beatified on May 1, 2011. How often does something like that happen?

Also yesterday Bishop Gregory and Fr. Paul performed the Wedding Renewal of Vows for Mounir and Mary Al Shouli who were celebrating their 30th Wedding Anniversary. All of their family was in attendance for this special occasion.

After the Divine Liturgy, a brunch in honor of Bishop Gregory, was held in St. Sharbel's Hall. The brunch was served by the teenagers of the parish. Bishop Gregory didn't wait for people to come to him; he visited at every table and spoke with everyone in attendance and gave special attention to the young children. He also thanked all of those involved on various committees for the hard work on the upcoming Maronite Convention sponsored by St. Sharbel Church to be held right here in Philadelphia July 5-10.

Many wanted to have their picture taken with him and he was very gracious and obliged all who came forward.

Also, a surprise to Bishop Gregory, Fr. Paul had borrowed the huge display picture of the Shrine to Our Lady of Lebanon from the Saint Jude Shop, in Havertown, whose Liturgical Department is commissioned to work on the Shrine. Fr. Paul had it hung in the hall for all to see and Bishop Gregory gave a full explanation of it and its meaning. Fr. Paul gave a donation towards the shrine on behalf of the parish and several individuals also gave generous donations. It was suggested that, if one wants to donate money as a memorial to a loved one, be sure to write their name, and the Liturgy will be said several times a year for their intention.

It was a beautiful day ... for our Shepherd came to visit us... and the day was made brighter. □

Christmas Pageant



On December 19, 2010, the children of St. Sharbel Church performed the Nativity Pageant for their parents and friends.

Many of the children, who have played in previous years' pageants, helped the younger ones with their lines. Every time their enthusiasm and excitement shows through when they dress in period clothes and start to talk about the Birth of Jesus.

In practice, the children are asked, "What did Jesus get as a birthday gift?" Some of the children do know the answer, but teasingly they are asked if he got a bike, skateboard, Nintendo or even a Game boy. They are always shown the incense at the Altar, and many still cannot imagine how that can be cool to get as a birthday gift.

When you stop to think of how many children in how many of the churches of the world perform the Nativity, one has to also stop and think of the beauty of the spoken word from the mouths of these children ... "And Let There be Peace on Earth." □

Eparchial Condolences

Rhoda J. Howatt, daughter of the late Alexander and Mary Attie Howatt, sister of Mabel Howatt and the late Albert Howatt, survived by numerous cousins, died Monday, December 27, 2010, at the age of 93. Born in *Batroun*, Lebanon, she attended Xavier Elementary School, Notre Dame High School, and Edgecliff College. Rhoda worked in the family business, Fountain Drug Company and later for Gidding Jenny for many years. A member of the National Apostolate of Maronites and a perpetual member of the Order of Saint Sharbel, she received blessings from Pope John Paul II for her charitable causes. The funeral Liturgy took place on Thursday, December 30 at St. Anthony of Padua Maronite Church in Cincinnati, Ohio. Memorials may be sent to St. Anthony of Padua, 2524 Victory Parkway, Cincinnati, OH 45206. □

San Francisco, California Christmas Party



by Fares Moubarak

Our Lady of Lebanon Church, Milbrae [San Francisco], Calif., celebrated its annual Christmas party on Sunday, December 12, 2010. The day started with the Knights of Columbus serving the Divine Liturgy while the Children's Choir chanted the songs. Following the Divine Liturgy, the Ladies Guild hosted a luncheon followed by a compelling Nativity Story play written, produced, and performed by our Youth Ministry group.

The Youth Ministry program is in its third year and is designed for teens ages 13-18, pre-teens ages 11-12 as associate members, and for young adults ages 19-22 as the junior advisors. The focus is on both the spiritual and the social development of the youths as they go through their life journey, allowing them to worship together, socialize, bond and grow. The program includes serving youth liturgies, 'Knowing Your Faith' group discussions, attending services, community support, field trips, and social gatherings. The Ministry has forty members and is thriving under the leadership of Fr. John Nahal, Pastor, Deacon Fady Chidiac and the tireless efforts of our youths coordinators, music director, and dedicated parents. □

Lawrence, Massachusetts MYO/MYA Holiday Cheer

by Christian Hbaiter

On Sunday, December 12, 2010, good tidings were truly delivered to the residents at Mary Immaculate Nursing Home! Under the musical direction of Father Vincent Farhat, Parochial Vicar, the Maronite Youth Organization and Maronite Young Adults of St. Anthony Maronite Church in Lawrence, Mass., began their Christmas season singing Holiday classics from "Come O Ye Faithful" to "Rudolph, the Red-Nosed Reindeer." Every verse sung through the hallways of Mary Immaculate Home brought



smiles to the faces of the elders. Some residents even contributed their own voices to our musical group.

What better way to have prepared ourselves for the coming of Our Lord than to cater to our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ. This event was truthfully an amazing experience for all the youth and young adults of the parish. □

Chicago, Illinois Blessing of Babies



by Lena Daou

On Sunday, January 9, 2011, Our Lady of Lebanon Church, Lombard [Chicago], Illinois, held its annual Blessing of Babies and cutting Hair Ceremony. Chorbishop Alfred Badawi, Pastor, invited parents of babies born in 2010 to the liturgy. Fourteen babies, along with their parents and grandparents, attended. □



The Maronite Convention 2011, hosted by St. Sharbel Church in Newtown Square, Pennsylvania, will take place July 6- 10, 2011. For more information contact the NAM office at (914) 964-3070 or visit www.Namnews.org □

San Antonio, Texas Parish Anniversary



Fr. Charles Khachan, Fr. Ghassan Mattar, Bishop Robert Shaheen and Mr. and Mrs. Jamal Tawil.

On December 5, 2010, the community of St. George Maronite Church, San Antonio, Tex., formally commemorated its 85th anniversary as a parish. The celebration began with the Divine Liturgy presided over by His Excellency Bishop Robert Shaheen. Also helping the community to celebrate were the Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of San Antonio, Oscar Cantu, Fr. Abdallah Zaidan, Fr. Milad Yaghi, Deacon Wissam Akiki and Deacon Tom Billimek. During the Liturgy, the Bishop inducted Charles Malouff into the Order of St. Sharbel, bringing the St. George membership to twenty-three of which seven are perpetual.

After the Liturgy, parishioners and friends were treated to a special luncheon in the grand ballroom and a video retrospective of the last 85 years prepared by Fr. Ghassan Mattar, the pastor and his associate, Fr. Charles Khachan. As the luncheon ended, the Bishop presented a special award to Jamal Tawil for his years of dedication and service both to the parish of St. George and to the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon.

Faith Formation Christmas Pageant

One of the iconic memories of youth is participation in the traditional Christmas Pageant. Most families take photos of their little angel, shepherd, or king and prize it as generations of children share the same experience with older brothers and sisters, aunts, uncles, parents and grandparents. While the Christmas Pageant may be a tradition, it is not without its purpose or meaning. Much like reading the Genealogy of Jesus, families have been telling this story for hundreds of years. Long before TV or Facebook, this story of God's love was communicated within the family every year because of its importance and power to touch lives. Why do we continue to celebrate the Glorious Birth of Our Lord with this custom?

One essential reason is that in each Faith Formation



Group, youth from 4-18, children are able to reflect upon the story, share their thoughts and what they learn as the Announcements and narrative of Jesus' birth are discussed at their age and cognitive level. As the Pageant approaches, they are reminded that this is not a pretend play or "show;" it is praying the timeless story of Mary, Joseph, and the birth of Baby Jesus. Every child has some understanding of how exciting the arrival of a new baby is within a family. They know how tired Mary and Joseph must have been on their long journey to Bethlehem. They can put themselves in the story and allow the mystery to be born in their hearts and imagination. They bring the Gospel to life in themselves and reflect the sacred mystery in their actions. Having been part of the Announcements and Nativity story they are then prepared to respond with greater understanding during the Divine Liturgies.

This year, Faith Formation Ministry assigned one Announcement to each faith sharing group. Each group gathered in a circle with their catechists, read the Announcement, and shared what they learned from the reading. It opened a small window on the interactions within the groups and shared an impromptu and genuine dialogue as youth expressed what they learned. The audience was touched with their sincere and simple reflections.

As the Glorious Birth of Our Lord was read, Mary, Joseph, angels, and shepherds gathered behind a sheer curtain. At the end, it opened to reveal more clearly that Christmas night was not just any night, but a night that changed our connection with God. No matter how challenging gathering youth, families, food and helpers is from year to year, God never disappoints. The Spirit dwells in our midst and eyes grow moist, faces relax in tender smiles, and we are at the cave with humble hearts as the power of children teaches us what is important. Thank you to everyone who made the 2010 Christmas Pageant a journey to the manger. □

Food for Thought

The Lord does us the honor of placing his confidence in us and calling us to the ministry, showing us his mercy. This call is not reserved for a few; it is for everyone, each in his own state of life.

Pope John Paul II

Lombard, Illinois *A Month in Review*

by Lena Daou

As the holidays approached, Our Lady of Lebanon Parish in Lombard [Chicago], Illinois, was busy getting ready for this holy season. On December 6, 2010, Chorbishop Alfred Badawi, Pastor, hosted a cluster dinner for clergy members from the Joliet Diocese. The evening started with prayers of Thanksgiving and gratitude for a happy and healthy Christmas season. The hospitality of the parish was overwhelming; the attending priests exchanged fellowship and friendship. Meanwhile, ladies from the parish were busy organizing a *knefeh* breakfast along with a bake sale which was held on December 12. Thank you for all who volunteered, cooked, baked and attended.

On December 19, St. Nick arrived to Our Lady of Lebanon after the 11:30 Liturgy. Close to 100 kids were thrilled to greet him, whispering in his ears their wish lists and taking pictures with him. The day ended with a pizza luncheon and presents were distributed to all the children.

Also on December 19, the choir at Our Lady of Lebanon Church held a Christmas recital. Directed by Julie Moinnes and assisted by Jessy Moinnes Srour, Richard Wozniak (organ) and Sam Ibrahim Jr. (drums), the choir performed a recital in four languages: English, French, Arabic and Syriac. The parish is blessed to have such a choir to praise God and lead the congregation in all the liturgies and celebrations at church. □

St. Louis, Missouri *Bishop Shaheen Honored*



The Hawatmeh families of Saint Louis, Missouri, gathered together to honor Bishop Robert Shaheen during the Christmas Season 2010. □

Fall River, Massachusetts *Youth Day 2010*



Chorbishop Joseph Kaddo with children at Youth Day.

by Subdeacon Brian and Colleen Dunn

On October 24, 2010, the Parish Family of St. Anthony of the Desert Church, Fall River, Mass., celebrated its Youth Day 2010. The event was held at the St. Sharbel Parish Center and included indoor and outdoor events. Forty-eight children from the ages of four to twelve participated along with approximately twenty volunteers who helped to coordinate the events for the children.

In the St. Sharbel Parish Center children were separated according to ages and participated in several events. The 'Mummy/Mommy Wrap' for the 4-year-old children involved having to wrap their moms up with toilet paper to look like a mummy. There was also a 'Mummy Wrap' for the older children where their skills were tested to see who could wrap up a person of their choice the fastest. There was a skeleton race for all the children in which the children were blindfolded and they chose a part of a skeleton from a box and used this to try to make a complete skeleton. There were also craft tables for painting pumpkins, coloring pages, getting temporary tattoos and for playing games.

Outdoor activities included an old fashioned sack race that most of the younger children participated in while some of the older children played basketball. The children enjoyed a pizza party for lunch and snacks and drinks throughout the day.

This event was sponsored by the Blessed Mother Guild with the help of the CCD Coordinators. Chorbishop Joseph Kaddo, Pastor, was present throughout the day and participated in the activities with the children. The Co-Chairs of this event were Terry Galib, President of the Blessed Mother Guild, Rachel Shaker-Filipe and Shannon Burke-Martin. The event was a success and other Youth Day Events are being planned for 2011. □

Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania Epiphany Celebration



Cast, Musicians, and Crew of "The Christmas Play." Row 1: Theresa Khoudary, Julia Lewis, Marie Andrews, Dynastie Thomas. Row 2: Andrew Wallace, Peter Khoudary, Jessica Fellereman, Nicole Joseph, Sarah Joseph, Kurtis Nordmark, Simon Peter, Erica Fellerman, Krystal Haertter, Naythan Wielgopolski, Michael Andrews, Sarah Chekan. Row 3: Anne Kasper, Nina Atie, Cayln Managenallo, Kenny Wallace, Marc Chekan, Nicolas Chekan, Teri Andrews, Samantha Nordmark, Anthony Khoudary, William Andrews, Trystan Wielgopolski, Christina Kasper. Row 4: Lauren MacMullin, Maria Khoudary, Emily Collins, Olivia Richards, Diane Brewster, Tina Brewster, Vanessa Atie, Lina Chekan, Frankie Nockley, Aleandra Nockley with Leo Nockley, Fr. Hanna Karam, Malak Khoudary and Chalres Wallace.

by Anne Kasper

St. Anthony/St. George Maronite Church in Wilkes-Barre, Penn., along with Fr. Hanna Karam, Administrator, and Subdeacon Crosby Sparks celebrated the Feast of the Epiphany on Sunday, January 9, 2011, by featuring a play, *The Christmas Story*, performed by the children in the Maronite Religious Education program. The play included the foretelling of the Messiah through the words of the Old Testament Prophets, Samuel, Isaiah and Micah and Joseph's Dream. The play tells of the birth of Jesus, the Announcement by the angels to the shepherds and the Adoration of the Magi. The play concluded by inviting all to join in singing, "Come All Ye' Faithful" and "Silent Night." This year an old German hymn called "Joseph Dearest, Joseph Mild" was sung by Samantha Nordmark (Mary) accompanied by Malak Khoudary and Anthony Khoudary (Joseph) accompanied by Simon Peter and Collin MacMullin. Ms. Diane Brewster made the set design. Mrs. Kim MacMullin, Mrs. Chrissie Nordmark and Mrs. Anne Kasper prepared the costumes. Music was under the direction of Mrs. Malak Khoudary. The music was provided by Miss Emily Collins, Vocal and Keyboard; Miss Maria Khoudary, Vocal and Keyboard; Miss Olivia Richards, Vocal and Keyboard; Miss Lauren MacMullin, Flute; Miss Carol

Brewster, Violin; Miss Nina Atie, Vocal; Miss Jessica Fellerman, Vocal; and Master Collin MacMullin, Vocal. The stage hands were Mrs. Lina Chekan, Mrs. Maria Kasper, Ms. Tina Brewster and Mr. Peter Bonczewski. The play was under the direction of Mrs. Anne Kasper. Following the play, the celebration of the Epiphany continued in the Church Hall with serving of the traditional *zalabia*, which was provided in loving memory of Mrs. Annie Slavish, who passed away unexpectedly shortly before Christmas and who helped to make and serve the *zalabia* the last seven years. □

Schedule of Bishop Gregory Mansour

February 6, 2011

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

February 11- 13, 2011

Feast of Saint Maron, Danbury, Conn.

February 14, 2011

New York State Catholic Bishops Meeting, New York, N.Y.

February 19 - 20, 2011

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

March 3 - 14, 2011

Maronite Bishops' Synod, *Bkerke*, Lebanon

March 18 - 20, 2011

Feast of St. Joseph and 100th Anniversary of St. Joseph Church, Atlanta, Ga. □

Deadline for next month's issue

of *The Maronite Voice* is February 25, 2011.



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THE ORDER OF



SAINT SHARBEL

Annual Members

★ Charles Malouff
St. George Maronite Church
San Antonio, Texas

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

For more information about the Order, ask your pastor or write

to

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

Or

Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon
Order of Saint Sharbel
1021 South 10th Street
St. Louis, MO 63104

Minneapolis, Minnesota 16th Annual Vocations Assembly

by Joan Moses

“**A** calling is something you feel in the depth of your heart.” Monsignor sharbel Maroun of Saint Maron Church, Minneapolis, Minnesota, on Sunday, January 23, 2011, presented his 16th annual Vocations Assembly to the students and staff of the Maronite Christian Formation and interested parishioners.

“It is very important in your prayers every night to ask God to give you a calling on what to do with your life. God the Holy Spirit will

nourish your soul and help you to decide, to discern, what you should do with your life. You may say, ‘I would like to be one of these things, for example: firefighter, policeman, doctor, banker, or engineer.’

God may speak to you and tell you, ‘I do not want you to be any of these.’ You must keep your heart and your mind open to His call.” Monsignor made clear that God may call you in many ways; many avenues are vocations, not just religious vocations.

Monsignor answered questions on a variety of subjects from his favorite sport to whether he performed an exorcism, from previous jobs to whether he feels regrets over anything in his past. The regret he shared was that he wasted too much time in his youth doing unproductive things! He made the gathering think about the cumulative hours spent watching football on television and what else they might do with that time.

Many questions were about his personal vocational call and his service as a priest. He instructed the children that confession is like a car wash – it cleanses any dirt you have. When asked about his responses in the confessional, Monsignor sharbel assured the students that “the Holy Spirit gives the right words at the right time; the priest is His (God’s) channel.” Answering another concern, he also stated that “after confession, I always feel the same way toward a person as I did before hearing it (the confession). The private sharing in the confessional is not meant to be remembered by the priest, but is to be forgiven by God.”

His favorite sacrament is actually a feeling found in most sacraments – the sense of healing, “Especially when you are wanted so much when you visit the sick and dying. God uses you to deliver His joy to His people.”

When asked to define the greatest need of the Maronite Church, Monsignor sharbel replied that “the Maronite Church is in more need of commitment and loyalty from the parishioners because we are spread all over. We need more vocations to serve more communities.”

The small chapel brimmed with more than forty students and adults. They asked a steady stream of questions for over an hour until he called for the final three questions. The interest in Monsignor sharbel and the love shown between him and his parishioners is a blessing to behold. We are truly blessed at Saint Maron with our priest and our community who clearly demonstrate Jesus’ commandment to “love one another.”□



North Jackson, Ohio

A Life of Service

by Sister Celine Nohra

"Good morning," I said, smiling to her but the look on her face indicated something was wrong. "My brother died," she replied, holding her tears back. During Morning Prayer I glanced over her way catching silent tears streaming down her cheeks. At the end of prayer, I saw her wipe those tears away and get ready to serve yet again for another day.



Sister Claudette

Sister Claudette is convinced that "neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers nor height, nor depth nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8: 38-39). I look at her face and I cannot help but think of Mother Teresa's, whose every crease symbolized a story of love shared, of faith lived, and of hope built and kept. Like most women, Sister Claudette does not like to reveal her age, and to respect her wishes I will not disclose it either. Age, to her, means absolutely nothing; it is "life" that counts. She truthfully sees life as an absolute gift from God and thus holds it with great esteem. She knows how to admire beauty around her, the beauty of people and that of things. When in awe, her face lights up like that of a little child unwrapping her favorite present. "How beautiful!" she would say pointing out a flower, a bird, a tree or a baby. Likewise, she recognizes good work and eagerly praises someone else's efforts.

Sister Claudette is also distinguished by her hospitality. It is true that both her Antonine Spirituality and Lebanese background inspire her to be welcoming like she is. Her hospitality extends, however, beyond being generous in her greeting and offering of goodies. Regardless of how notable the visitor may or may not be, she takes time to welcome, listen and be present to that person. "Honoring your guest is a Gospel virtue," she repeats. "You must take care of your visitors and make sure they are comfortable."

Besides the traits mentioned above, Sister Claudette has a sharp sense of wit that contributes greatly to the fun and laughter we have as a community. Our family life as Antonine Sisters would not be the same without her. I am not trying to make it sound like Sister Claudette is perfect for she would not want to give that impression either. I am just trying to imitate one of her qualities which is admiring the work of God in his creature and appreciating the response of the creature to her God. After so many years of steadfast service to God and to the Church, I can only imagine God smiling down on her, she who portrays his love in one of the most compassionate forms I am fortunate enough to see.

When you love Christ so much that even the death of your brother cannot keep you from serving those whom

Christ died for, and when you are secretly mourning in your heart and you still manage to give a smile to ease someone else's pain, I believe that people deserve to hear about your faith. It was Jesus who said: "No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven" (Matt. 5:15- 16). □

From the Book Shelf

The Maronite Icons, Saints of the Maronite Church: constitutes the second volume of Maronite Icons that have been painted by the Maronite Archbishopric in Nicosia, Cyprus. It contains a collection of icons that illustrate the most revered saints in our Maronite Church. The book is composed of four parts:

- ★ **Part One** presents icons depicting Old Testament figures who prepared for the coming of the Messiah
- ★ **Part Two** presents icons depicting evangelists, saints and apostles of the First Church
- ★ **Part Three** is dedicated to the icons of the most venerated saints in the Maronite Church
- ★ **Part Four** is an artistic reproduction of the most important icons of the Rabbula Gospel.

The Maronite Icons (both volume one and volume two) are available for \$50 each volume plus \$7 shipping.

Mary in the Maronite Church, by Archbishop Boutros Gemayel and translated by Fr. Georges El-Khalli, is now available from Saint Maron Publications for \$15 plus \$4 shipping.

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

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

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

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

The Maronite Icons according to the Maronite Liturgical Year and the Feasts of the Saints was prepared by the Icons Workshop at the Maronite Eparchy of Cyprus. It consists of 60 icons (41 for Sundays and Holy Days and 19 for Maronite Saints). This collection of icons (14" x 20") along with a booklet explaining each icon is available from Saint Maron Publications for \$100 plus \$10 shipping.

To order your copy (ies) please write to:
Saint Maron Publications
4611 Sadler Road
Glen Allen, Virginia 23060

Dallas, Texas Christmas Celebration



Fr. Assad El Basha receives the offerings during the Christmas Divine Liturgy at Our Lady of Lebanon Church in Dallas, Texas.

On Christmas Day the Maronite community in Dallas - Fort Worth, Texas, was surprised during Liturgy. Three angels and eleven children from the parish, wearing Santa hats, walked through the main aisle of the church carrying the liturgical gifts to the altar. The community present for the liturgy was very touched by their presence. Fr. Assad El Basha, Pastor, blessed the children and told them, "You are the future of the parish. For you, we as a parish family are working very hard to pass our Maronite Catholic faith to you. Be ready to take this responsibility on your shoulders and be proud of your heritage." Dany El Ghreichi, who is seven years old, read the Epistle in front of the whole community with a clear voice and outstanding pronunciation. In his homily, Fr. El Basha offered his thanks to the children, the three angels and to Dany, who made the Christmas liturgy beautiful.

On Christmas Eve, we had a full orchestra and a beautiful thirty-member English choir led by Helen Dhooghe. The Church was full, and the Maronite Liturgy allowed the community to worship our Savior in the most reverent way. The choir, led by Anita Breidi, allowed the parish to enjoy the traditional Maronite Christmas songs at Midnight Liturgy. After the Midnight and Christmas Day Liturgies, the community gathered in the Church Hall for a Christmas reception. □

Jacksonville-Florida Youth Group Activities

by Jeannette Saliba

The Saint Maron Youth Group in Jacksonville, Florida, has been very active in their church community. On December 11, 2010, the youth group played a soccer game against St. Ephrem Syriac Church at their parish field. Fifty youth members between both churches participated. Fr. Elie Abi Chedid, Pastor, and Father Selwan Tapponi of St.



Fr. Elie and Father Selwan with the Youth Groups.

Ephrem Church attended. Before the game Father Elie led the group in prayer. Although the feeling of competition was there, the game brought everyone together and allowed us to meet new people and make new friends. After the success of this first game, we plan on doing more sporting events in the future.

Once a month the youth take part in serving the Sunday Liturgy. This includes doing the readings both in English and Arabic, the offerings, the petitions, singing the thanksgiving hymn, and taking the collection. These positions are rotated every month to allow everyone to take part in serving at Liturgy.

The youth hosted their Christmas Bake Sale on Sunday, December 12, 2010. Each youth member volunteered to bake certain types of desserts that were sold after Liturgy. Hundreds of dollars are raised each year to benefit the church as well as to plan for future activities for the youth.

One of the youths' most awaited events is the yearly Children's Christmas party that is held immediately after Liturgy the Sunday before Christmas. This year the party was on December 19. Food was prepared by Chef Samir Gebrael, who graciously volunteers his time and work for the Parish. On that day, one of our group dresses up as Santa Claus and gifts are laid under the Christmas tree before Liturgy. As in every year, Santa is welcomed with a lot of enthusiasm and excitement by all the children, calling each child by name to come up to get his gift and take a picture with him. At the Christmas party the youth helped with music, setting up the tables, handing out the gifts, selling raffle tickets, and cleaning up. This party is one the most anticipated events that everyone looks forward to every year because of its spiritual meaning and the way it brings us all together.

This year, the youth group helped as well at the New Year's Party organized by the parish with set-up, decorations, and raffles. □

Food For Thought

Be submissive to good, unbending to evil,
gentle in generosity,
untiring in love, just in all things.

St. Columban



Lenten Observances 2011

The Most Reverend Bishops Robert Shaheen and Gregory Mansour have issued the following Lenten guidelines for the Maronites of the United States:

- ★ All Maronites who are physically capable are to **abstain from meat** on Ash Monday (March 7) and all Fridays of Lent.
- ★ Ash Monday and the Great Friday of the Crucifixion are also days of **fasting**. Fasting in the Maronite Church involves eating and drinking nothing at all (except water and medicine) from midnight until noon. The rest of the day normal meals can be taken but without meat. All Maronites who are physically capable are to fast on these two days.

Distribution of Ashes



All parish priests are to bless and distribute **ashes** on Ash Monday during the celebration of the Divine Liturgy as indicated in our liturgical books. This ceremony may not be celebrated on the vigil of Ash Monday (Cana Sunday). For the convenience

of some faithful of the Latin Church who may come to Mass at a Maronite Church on their Ash Wednesday, ashes that were blessed on Monday may be given to them after the Mass. However, ashes are not to be blessed again on this day.

Devotion of Lenten Fridays

All parish priests are to celebrate the **Benediction with the Cross** every Friday of Lent except for the Great Friday of the Crucifixion. This service may be preceded by other popular devotions such as Evening Prayer (*Ramsho*), Stations of the Cross or even the Divine Liturgy. Benediction with the Blessed Sacrament should not take place on Fridays of Lent.

Personal Devotion

Clergy, religious and laity who wish to observe the more traditional Maronite practice of fasting and abstinence are encouraged to do so. That practice is summarized in the following, taken from the Synod of Mt. Lebanon (1736): *Every weekday of Lent (Monday through Friday) is a day of fasting and abstinence from meat and dairy products (eggs, butter, milk etc.) Fasting involves eating and drinking nothing at all (except water and medicine) from midnight until noon. The rest of the day normal meals can be taken but without meat or dairy products. Dairy products are excluded because they are animal byproducts. Saturdays and Sundays are exempt from fasting and abstaining, as are the following three feast days: St. Maron-February 9, The 40 Martyrs-March 9, St. Joseph-March 19 and the Annunciation - March 25.* □

Scholarships Available

The National Apostolate of Maronites (NAM) is happy to announce its annual Scholarship Program:

- ★ **The John A. Solomon Memorial NAM/MYO Scholarship** is available for high school seniors who are active members of MYO.
- ★ **The Naomi and Paul Kassouf Scholarship** is available for high school seniors whose parents are members of NAM.
- ★ **The Thomas and Jennie Ayoob Memorial Scholarship** is available for student who are already in college.

The deadline for applications is May 15, 2011. This is a "hard and fast deadline" and, in fairness to all applicants, no applications will be accepted after this date. Please ask your pastor for an application. Send all application to the NAM office at P.O. Box 717, Yonkers, NY 10702. The scholarship winners will be announced at the NAM convention. For more information call Robert Zugby, Chairman, Education Committee, at 301-345-2065 or by email at rczugby@aol.com. □

Aitaneet Foundation

Each year the Aitaneet Foundation, located in Cleveland, Ohio, awards scholarships to applicants of Lebanese Christian descent. Applicants must be of Lebanese Christian descent, a 2011 graduate of an accredited secondary school, and accepted to an accredited post secondary education institution.

This year the following Scholarships will be awarded:

- \$3,000 Aitaneet Brotherhood Association Scholarship
- \$2,000 Aitaneet Foundation Scholarship
- \$1,000 Thomas & Mary Shaia Scholarship
- \$1,000 Edward Nahra Scholarship

Selection will be based on academic achievement, extracurricular involvement, financial need, and service to school, church, and community. Completed applications must be postmarked no later than April 15, 2011. Recipients will be notified prior to May 30, 2011.

For applications and guidelines, please go to www.aitaneet.com and click on the scholarship icon. All applications are evaluated by an independent committee of educators. For any questions, call Victor Shaia at 216-621-0328.

The Aitaneet Foundation was established in 2000 by the Aitaneet Brotherhood Association as an independent non-profit charitable corporation to promote charitable, educational, and humanitarian endeavors. Its Tax Id is 34-1928941 and the mailing address is PO Box 93234, Cleveland, Ohio 44101. □



Jack G. Shaheen 2011 Mass Communications Scholarships

Purpose: To honor Arab-American students who excel in media studies

Amount: \$1,000

Eligibility:

College students classified as a junior, senior, or enrolled in graduate school for the 2011-2012 academic year majoring in journalism, radio, television, and/or film

Must have a minimum of 3.0 GPA and be a U.S. citizen of Arab heritage

Applicants please submit the following items to the ADC Research Institute:

- A one page statement explaining your goals and stating that: you are a U.S. citizen; you are of Arab heritage; and why you merit the scholarship.
- Two original signed letters of recommendation from mass communications professors.
- Copies of your articles, videos, films, etc. (The items will not be returned to you).
- Official academic transcripts including your GPA
- Permanent home address, phone number, e-mail address, and phone number during the school year.

The deadline is April 1, 2011 (incomplete or late applications will not be accepted). Submit all materials to:

ADC Research Institute
Attn: Dr. Nabil Mohamad
1732 Wisconsin Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20007.

Project Roots

Project Roots is a program initiated by the Maronite Bishops in the United States and is designed to help Maronites, as well as others and without discrimination, to connect with relatives in their homeland of origin in the Middle East. It provides other services such as aiding newer generations in obtaining or regaining the citizenship of their parents or grandparents.

For American citizens with Middle Eastern roots, it is patriotic to establish and cement relations with their relatives in their original homeland. It is also being patriotic to America, to obtain or regain that citizenship, since this will further strengthen ties between America and countries of the Middle East by bringing balance to Middle Eastern societies. To that end, those involved with Project Roots will do all they can to help those Americans and those of other nationalities who wish to connect to their roots in the Middle East.

Bringing balance back into Middle Eastern societies means that those Americans who obtain or regain such citizenship would have a say in what goes on in their country of origin. They can help foster social justice which is a requirement for those wishing to walk in the footsteps of

Christ. Bringing balance back into society will help all their relatives in more than one way: It will usher in moderation, security to individuals and groups, as well as prosperity and a higher quality of life for relatives and all others who call their Middle Eastern country of origin their homeland.

Project Roots is ready to help any and all Americans of Middle Eastern origin, from all sectors of society, who wish to obtain citizenship of the country of their roots. The Project's office in the U.S. is available to provide information, help with formalities here and in their country of origin, and help in connecting with relatives there.

Contact information by phone is via (310) 276-1939; Fax (310) 858-0856. On the internet the e-mail is projectroots@live.com. □



5 Cardinals, 39 Bishops, 10,000 Faithful Pack Basilica for Vigil for Life Mass

Since early afternoon Sunday the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception had begun to fill for the 6:30 p.m. National Prayer Vigil for Life Mass in anticipation of the March for Life. By 6 p.m. every nook and cranny of the giant basilica was packed with people. The booming pipe organ and majestic choir signaled the commencement of the Mass, which began with a massive procession of hundreds of seminarians, deacons and priests followed by thirty-nine bishops and five cardinals.



Cardinal Daniel DiNardo

Cardinal Daniel DiNardo, Archbishop of Galveston-Houston and Chairman of the U.S. Bishops' Committee on Pro-Life Activities, was the principal celebrant and homilist, joined at the altar by Cardinals Donald Wuerl of Washington, Francis George of Chicago, Justin Rigali of Philadelphia, and Sean O'Malley of Boston.

In his homily, Cardinal DiNardo spoke of today's "cultural shadows," noting that they are "cast by the terrible reality of legal abortion on demand."

He thanked various groups for attending the event including priests, deacons, seminarians, bishops, religious, and most of all, the youth. "To the astonishment of nature, of the chattering classes and of disinterested and jaded media, you have continuously come forward here and throughout the places where you live to be unflagging witnesses to the inestimable worth of each human person," said DiNardo. "We your elders become exhausted just watching you!" he added to an outburst of applause.

The Cardinal recalled John Paul II's powerful pro-life encyclical *Evangelium Vitae* - The Gospel of Life - in which the Pope "minced no words when he wrote of a disturbing

state of affairs that keeps expanding new attacks on the dignity of the human being by way of scientific and supposed technological progress.”

Applause greeted the Cardinal’s mention that Pope John Paul II was to be declared Blessed on May 1, adding that John Paul’s prayers were now a “pro-life plus.”

“The seemingly daily attempts to deny nurses and pharmacists their conscience rights are disquieting,” he said. “A further violation takes place when taxpayers are forced to fund abortions. The blindness against the rights of the unborn seems to move to an inability to respect the rights of those of us who respect and fight for the rights of the unborn.”

After interviewing several bishops this reporter did not leave the Basilica till 10:30 p.m.; however the vigil continued all night in the crypt church below. At 6 a.m. Monday morning the closing Mass of the vigil took place. In his closing remarks, Cardinal DiNardo jokingly asked the young people who would take part in the all-night vigil to have mercy on their elders and let them get some sleep. □

(LifeSiteNews.com, January 24, 2011)

Pope Sees Opportunities, Dangers in Social Networks

Pope Benedict XVI strongly endorsed Christians participation in online social networks, but also strongly cautioned against the dangers of superficial relationships in his message for the 45th World Day of Social Communications.

“New horizons are now open that were until recently unimaginable,” the Pope said. “They stir our wonder at the possibilities offered by these new media and, at the same time, urgently demand a serious reflection on the significance of communication in the digital age.”

Pope Benedict observed that the new possibilities of electronic communication create extraordinary possibilities for apostolic work: “If used wisely, they can contribute to the satisfaction of the desire for meaning, truth and unity which remain the most profound aspirations of each human being.”

However, the Pope warned users - and especially young people - that social networks suffer from “the limits typical of digital communication: the one-sidedness of the interaction, the tendency to communicate only some parts of one’s interior world, the risk of constructing a false image of oneself, which can become a form of self-indulgence.”

The papal message, entitled “Truth, Proclamation and Authenticity of Life in the Digital Age,” was released by the Vatican on January 24, the feast of St. Francis de Sales, the patron saint of journalists.

The Pope observed that modern technology is changing not only the means of communication but also its content. The result raises a host of serious questions, he said, listing a number of them:

Who is my ‘neighbor’ in this new world? Does the danger exist that we may be less present to those whom we encounter in our everyday life? Is there a risk of being more distracted because our attention is fragmented and absorbed in a world ‘other’ than the one in which we live?

Do we have time to reflect critically on our choices and to foster human relationships which are truly deep and lasting? It is important always to remember that virtual contact cannot and must not take the place of direct human contact with people at every level of our lives.

To counteract the temptation toward superficiality in communications, the Pope reminded Catholics that they should hold fast to the principles of their faith. Moreover, in seeking to share that faith, Catholics engaged in discussions on social networks must avoid the temptation to measure their success by immediate results. “We must be aware,” he said, “that the truth which we long to share does not derive its worth from its ‘popularity’ or from the amount of attention it receives.”

Despite the inherent dangers of this means of communication, Pope Benedict urged young Catholics to use the social networks as a means to promote the Gospel message. The presence of faithful Christians on these networks, he said, should counteract their dangers. He explained:

Believers who bear witness to their most profound convictions greatly help prevent the web from becoming an instrument which depersonalizes people, attempts to manipulate them emotionally or allows those who are powerful to monopolize the opinions of others.

At a press conference in Rome introducing the papal message, Archbishop Claudio Maria Celli, the President of the Pontifical Council for Social Communications, observed that new internet options “alter not only the way we communicate, but communication itself.” The result, he said, is “an authentic cultural transformation.”

During the press conference, Archbishop Celli was questioned about the Pope’s calls for “respectful and sensitive” communication on the internet. Was this a reference to the often acerbic tone of many blogs, he was asked? “The risk is there, no doubt,” the archbishop replied. An AP report took that mild and general response as evidence that the papal statement was intended as a reproach to conservative Catholic bloggers -- disregarding the obvious fact that the Pope’s words apply with equal force to dissident Catholic liberals, and to non-Catholics as well. □

(CatholicCulture.org, January 24, 2011)

Pope Benedict XVI Encourages Dialogue With Orthodox, Expresses Hope for Greater Mutual Understanding

Pope Benedict XVI is encouraging the ongoing dialogue with the Eastern Orthodox Churches, currently focused on historical expressions of communion with the Catholic Church.

The Pope stated this on January 28, 2011, in an audience with members of the Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue Between the Catholic Church and the

Oriental Orthodox Churches.

He expressed gratitude for the work that began in 2003 as a joint initiative between Catholic and Orthodox leaders.

The first phase of this dialogue, which lasted through 2009, resulted in a joint document, "Nature, Constitution and Mission of the Church." This document outlined the shared principles of the Churches and identified issues requiring further discussion.

The Pontiff stated, "We can only be grateful that after almost fifteen hundred years of separation we still find agreement about the sacramental nature of the Church, about apostolic succession in priestly service and about the impelling need to bear witness to the Gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ in the world."

He noted that in this second phase of dialogue the commission is reflecting "from an historical perspective on the ways in which the Churches expressed their communion down the ages."

The Holy Father acknowledged, "During the meeting this week you are deepening your study of the communion and communication that existed between the Churches until the mid-fifth century of Christian history, as well as the role played by monasticism in the life of the early Church."

The Will of Christ

He continued, "We must be confident that your theological reflection will lead our Churches not only to understand each other more deeply, but resolutely to continue our journey decisively towards the full communion to which we are called by the will of Christ."

Pope Benedict XVI noted, "Many of you come from regions where Christian individuals and communities face trials and difficulties that are a cause of deep concern for us all."

"All Christians need to work together in mutual acceptance and trust in order to serve the cause of peace and justice," he affirmed.

The Pope concluded, "May the intercession and example of the many martyrs and saints, who have given courageous witness to Christ in all our Churches, sustain and strengthen you and your Christian communities."

The six ancient Eastern Orthodox Churches include the Armenian Apostolic Church, the Orthodox Coptic Patriarchate of Egypt, the Syro-Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch, the Orthodox Church of Ethiopia, the Orthodox Church of Eritrea, and the Syro-Orthodox Church of Malankara.

These Churches separated from Rome after the Fourth Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon in 451 over controversy arising from the council's adoption of the Christological terminology of two natures in one person. □

(Zenit.org, January 28, 2011)

Church Needs Well Prepared Priests, Says Pope

Pope Benedict XVI is underlining the Church's need for priests who are well prepared for ministry through a strong friendship with Jesus.

The Pope stated this on Monday, January 17, 2011, during an audience with members of the community from the Pontifical Polish Ecclesiastical Institute in Rome on the occasion of the centenary of its foundation.

He noted the institute's commitment "to offer Polish priests an ideal environment for study and fraternity during the period of formation in Rome."

"The Church needs well prepared priests," the Pontiff stated, "rich in that wisdom that is acquired in friendship with the Lord Jesus, drawing constantly from the Eucharistic table and from the inexhaustible source of his Gospel."

"From these two irreplaceable sources know how to draw the constant support and necessary inspiration for your life and your ministry, for a sincere love of the Truth that today you are called to deepen also through study and scientific research and that you will be able to share tomorrow with many," he said.

The Holy Father noted that for those priests currently living in Rome at the Institute, the search for truth "is stimulated and enriched by the closeness to the Apostolic See, which must give a specific and universal service to the Catholic communion in truth and in charity."

"To remain close to Peter, in the heart of the Church, means to acknowledge, full of gratitude, that you are within a centuries-long and fruitful history of salvation, which by a manifold grace has reached you and in which you are called to participate actively so that, as a luxuriant tree, you will always bear precious fruits," he affirmed.

Pope Benedict XVI continued, "May love and devotion to the figure of Peter drive you to serve generously the communion of the whole Catholic Church and of your particular Churches."

In this way, he said, "as one great family, all can learn to recognize in Christ, the Way, the Truth, the Life, the face of the merciful Father, who does not wish any of his children to be lost."

The Institute was initiated by St. Jozef Sebastian Pelczar (1842-1924) while he was bishop of Przemysl, Poland. It was erected on March 19, 1910 during the pontificate of St. Pius X, and was solemnly inaugurated on November 13, 1910.

(Zenit.org, January 18, 2011)

Pope Benedict XVI to Beatify Pope John Paul II Pontiff's Great Fame of Sanctity Acknowledged

Pope Benedict XVI is planning to preside over the beatification rite for John Paul II on May 1, Divine Mercy Sunday, in the Vatican. A communiqué from the Congregation for Saints' Causes announced on January 14, 2011, that the Pope, in an audience with the Congregation's Prefect, Cardinal Angelo Amato, "authorized the Dicastery to promulgate the decree of the miracle attributed to the intercession of Venerable Servant of God John Paul II (Karol Wojtyła)."

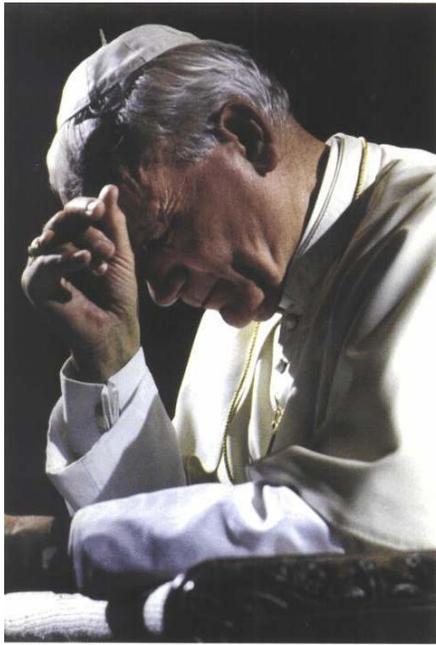
This was the final step in the process preceding the beatification rite, which will be celebrated on Divine Mercy Sunday, a feast day instituted by Pope John Paul II.

The communiqué noted: "It is well known that, by pontifical dispensation, his cause began before the end of the five-year period which the current norms stipulate must pass following the death of a Servant of God.

"This provision was solicited by the great fame of sanctity which Pope John Paul II enjoyed during his life, in his death and after his death.

"In all other ways, the normal canonical dispositions concerning causes of beatification and canonization were observed in full."

The diocesan investigation into the cause for beatification of the Pontiff took place between June 2005 and April 2007. On Dec. 19, 2009, Benedict XVI authorized the promulgation of the decree on his predecessor's heroic virtue.



The late Pope John Paul II at prayer.

Miracle

The congregation then examined the report of a miraculous healing through the intercession of Pope John Paul II: the cure from Parkinson's disease of Sister Marie Simon Pierre Normand of the Little Sisters of Catholic Motherhood.

The reports of medical and legal experts on the French nun's healing were submitted to the Dicastery for scientific examination last October 21.

The congregation noted that its experts, "having studied the depositions and the entire documentation with their customary scrupulousness, expressed their agreement concerning the scientifically inexplicable nature of the healing."

Thus, on December 14, the theological consultants began an evaluation of the case, and "unanimously recognized the unicity, antecedence and choral nature of the invocation made to Servant of God Pope John Paul II, whose intercession was effective in this prodigious healing."

On Tuesday [December 14], during the ordinary session of the congregation, the members expressed their "unanimous approval." The prelates expressed belief in the miraculous nature of the recovery of Sister Marie Simon Pierre, "having been achieved by God in a scientifically inexplicable manner following the intercession of the Supreme Pontiff John Paul II, trustingly invoked both by Sister Simon herself and by many other faithful." The conclusions were then submitted to Pope Benedict XVI for approval. □

(Zenit.org, January 14, 2011)

Baptism Is Beautiful, Says Pontiff Urges Faithful to Rediscover Greatness of God's Family

Pope Benedict XVI is encouraging the faithful to "rediscover the beauty of being baptized and belonging to the great family of God." The Pope made this invitation on January 9, 2011, the feast of the Baptism of the Lord, before praying the midday Angelus with those gathered in St. Peter's Square. He called the commitment of baptism "a great responsibility, which comes from a great gift!"

"I would like to encourage all of the faithful to rediscover the beauty of being baptized and belonging to the great family of God," the Holy Father said, "and to giving a joyous witness to their own faith so that they might bear the fruits of goodness and concord."

The Pontiff noted how each baptized person "acquires the character of son from the name Christian, indisputable sign that the Holy Spirit brings man to be born 'again' from the womb of the Church."

He continued: "Blessed Anotonio Rosmini says that 'the baptized person undergoes a secret but most powerful operation by which he is raised up to the supernatural order, he is placed in communication with God.'"

The Bishop of Rome concluded by entrusting to Mary, Help of Christians, the "parents who are preparing their children for baptism and catechists as well. "May the whole May the whole community share in the joy of being reborn by the water of the Holy Spirit!" □

(Zenit.org, January 9, 2011)

U.S. Bishops Decry Anti-Christian Violence Urge Government to Be Mindful of Freedom When Making Economic Decisions

The U.S. Episcopal Conference is urging the Obama administration to make economic and political decisions being mindful of governments' indifference to the protection of their citizens.

Bishop Howard Hubbard of Albany, New York, Chairman of the Bishops' Committee on International Justice and Peace, in a letter [dated January 7, 2011] to Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, said that "egregious violations of human rights as well as indifference and inaction by foreign governments to the protection of their own citizens must be weighed seriously" in economic and political decisions taken by the administration.

Bishop Hubbard's letter as well as two statements from Archbishop Timothy Dolan of New York, president of the United States Catholic of Conference Bishops, responded to a recent surge in anti-Christian violence, particularly the January 1 explosion at an Orthodox Coptic church in Alexandria, Egypt, which claimed the lives of 21 people and injured more than 100.

Archbishop Dolan called the Alexandria attack a "shocking assault on human life and religious freedom."

"So many innocent lives lost to such senseless violence calls for the strongest condemnation by all religious leaders and by persons of conscience everywhere," Archbishop Dolan wrote in a message to the Coptic leader, Patriarch Shenouda III of the See of St. Mark in Alexandria. "Please be assured that the Catholic bishops of the United States stand in solidarity with you and your Church in this time of trial and suffering."

In a separate statement, Archbishop Dolan called for prayer for religious freedom, for Christians and people of other faiths: "The recent violence in the Middle East and the ongoing threats to religious freedom in countries like Pakistan, Nigeria, China and North Korea remind us of what Pope Benedict has recently said, that religious freedom is essential not only as a human right, but in ensuring world peace."

Why the Silence?

Meanwhile, Ray Flynn, a former mayor of Boston who served as the U.S. Ambassador to the Holy See under President Bill Clinton, released a statement questioning why anti-Christian violence gets so little attention.

He wrote: "The central question I asked was, 'Why is it that Catholics are afraid to speak out against injustice, hatred and even violence directed against them?' I complained to the national media. One outlet said to me, 'Ambassador, you are the only person to bring this to our attention. We don't hear too much from you folks.'"

"I can't imagine another religious group who would allow the media – conservative or progressive -- to get away with this," Flynn remarked. "... I'm beginning to see no difference between the [political] parties or in the media, when it comes to traditional Catholic concerns." □

(Zenit.org, January 7, 2011)

Right to Marry Isn't Absolute, Says Pontiff

The right of a man and woman to marry each other is contingent upon their juridical ability to do so, says Benedict XVI. The Pope affirmed this in a reflection on the relationship between law and pastoral care, which he gave upon receiving in audience on January 22, 2011, the judges, officials, lawyers and collaborators of the Roman Rota, the Church's central appellate court, at the opening of the judicial year.

Quoting Pope John Paul II's 1990 address to the same tribunal, Pope Benedict affirmed, "It is not true that to be more pastoral the law must make itself less juridical."

"The juridical dimension and the pastoral dimension," he added, continuing to quote his predecessor, "are inseparably united in the pilgrim Church on this earth. First of all, there is their harmony that derives from their common finality: the salvation of souls."

To this end, Benedict XVI embarked on a consideration of the "juridical dimension that is inherent in the pastoral activity of preparation and admission to marriage" in an

attempt to "shed light on the connection between such activity and the judicial matrimonial processes."

He noted that the relationship between law and pastoral care "is often the object of misunderstandings, to the detriment of law, but also to the detriment of pastoral work. On the contrary, it is necessary to promote in all sectors, and in a special way in that of marriage and the family, profound harmony between the pastoral and the juridical, which will certainly show itself to be fruitful for those who approach marriage."

Formal Obligations

Regarding the place of "canonical questions" in marriage preparation courses, Benedict XVI noted a common misconception that that "in admitting couples to marriage, pastors must proceed with generosity since the natural right of the persons to marry is in play."

The right to marriage, or "ius connubii," the Pontiff explained, "presupposes that one can marry, and one intends to authentically celebrate marriage, that is, to do so in the truth of its essence as it is taught by the Church."

"No one can boast of a right to a nuptial ceremony," he continued. "The 'ius connubii,' in fact, refers to the right to celebrate a real marriage."

"The 'ius connubii,' therefore, is not being denied where it is evident that the premises for its exercise are not present, that is, if the requested capacity to wed is manifestly lacking, or an objective is sought that is contrary to the natural reality of marriage."

Regarding marriage preparation, Pope Benedict XVI affirmed that the various phases have purposes that "transcend the juridic dimension," but that "we must never forget that the immediate objective of such preparation is that of promoting the free celebration of an authentic marriage, that is, the constituting of a bond of justice and love between the couple, with the characteristics of unity and indissolubility, ordained to the good of the spouses and to the procreation and education of children, and which between baptized persons constitutes one of the sacraments of the New Covenant."

Lawful Spouses

The Pontiff said that the juridical aspect is not promoting "an extrinsic ideological message," nor is it imposing a "cultural model." Rather, he explained, "the betrothed are made able to discover the truth of a natural inclination and a capacity for commitment that is inscribed in the being of their man-woman relationship. Law as an essential component of the matrimonial relation flows from here; it is rooted in a natural power of the couple that is actualized in consensual self-giving."

In order to assess whether or not an intended marriage, a pre-marriage examination must be conducted, the Pope explained. "This examination has a principally juridical purpose: to judge that nothing is opposed to the valid and licit celebration of the marriage," he stated.

The Holy Father called the interview "a unique pastoral event," which should be "valued for all the seriousness and attention that it demands."

"Through a dialogue full of respect and cordiality," he explained, "the pastor tries to help the person seriously place himself before the truth about himself and his human and Christian vocation to marriage. In this case the dialogue, always conducted with man and woman separately - without diminishing the importance of other conversations with the couple - requires a climate full of sincerity in which there must be an emphasis on the fact that those entering into the contract are the ones primarily concerned and primarily obligated in conscience to celebrate a valid matrimony."

Annulments

Pope Benedict XVI asserted that with more careful juridical marriage preparation, the "vicious circle" of "careless admission to marriage" and a declaration of nullity that is "sometimes just as careless," could be broken.

"In light of this," he continued, "it is evidently important that there be a more acute awareness of the responsibility that those charged with the care of souls have in these matters. Canon law in general, and that dealing with marriage and trials in particular, certainly demands a special preparation, but a knowledge of the basic and the immediately practical aspects of Canon Law, relative to our proper functions, constitutes a formative exigency of fundamental relevance for all pastoral workers, in particular for those who are engaged in the pastoral care of families."

The Pontiff also urged all ecclesiastical tribunals to "send an univocal message about what is essential to marriage in harmony with the Magisterium and Canon Law, speaking with one voice." □ *(Zenit.org, January 23, 2011)*

Effective Ways You Can Help Your Eparchy

Please consider the following ways in which you can help the Maronite Church!

Planned Giving: Consider Your Legacy

This is a creative way to support the Church. Planned giving can involve contributing through your will, insurance policy, or retirement assets. Also, it can be a way to make a donation and to provide yourself with a steady source of income; a charitable remainder trust is one example.

Suggested wording for a bequest to the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn:

"I give and bequeath to the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn, located in Brooklyn, New York, _____% of the residue of my estate [or: the sum of \$_____]."

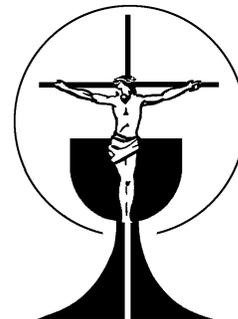
Suggested wording for a bequest to the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon:

"I give and bequeath to the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon, located in St. Louis, Missouri, _____% of the residue of my estate [or: the sum of \$_____]."

Tax-Smart Giving of Appreciated Stock or Other Assets

The gift of an asset such as common stock or mutual fund shares is a smart way to make a contribution and receive maximum tax benefits based on the value of the asset. Gifts of other appreciated assets, such as land, antiques, and homes, can also be utilized as potential gifts with valuable tax benefits. Gifts of these assets should be considered on a case-by-case basis.

For more information on any or all of these options, please contact Eparchy of Saint Maron Stewardship Director John F. Kurey, Esq., at 718-237-9913 or by e-mail at johnkurey@yahoo.com; or Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon Vice-Chancellor, Mrs. Mary Denny, at 314-231-1021 or by email at mdenny@usamaronite.org. □



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During Lent We Are Called Into A Deeper Relationship With the Lord By Acquiring Spiritual Maturity

Continued from page 1

◆ **Lent is a time of repentance and reconciliation:** We are all invited to turn away from sin, to avoid the occasions of sin, and to make peace with everyone, especially those who have hurt us or to whom we have caused troubles. Let us benefit from the fruits and graces of the Sacrament of Reconciliation, which cleanses our souls. "I yearn for your pardon, come to me, Lord. While there is still time, give me tears to beg for your mercy. For your favors, I thirst, O Lord; without them, I cannot stand. O Sea of Mercy, pour forth on me your overflowing kindness" (Supplication of St. James on Ash Monday).

◆ **Lent is a time of prayer:** We come together every Friday for the Benediction with the Holy Cross. This is the time we are asked to go deeper in our relationship with the Lord. Let us be generous with our time by spending a few extra minutes a day with the Lord. Let us get to know him better by reading the Bible, by praying the Divine Office of the Prayer of the Faithful, by spending some time in private meditation and reflection. It will not be wasted time but it will be time of spiritual growth and personal peace.

Many of these thoughts help us all to live the upcoming Season of Lent in a spiritual fashion and prepare ourselves for a stronger commitment with the glorious feast of Easter. I will keep all of you in my prayers so that we will have a grace filled Lenten journey.

+Robert J. Shaheen, D.D.
Bishop of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon ☐

Official Prayer for the Jubilee of Saint Maron

*February 9, 2010 - March 2,
2011*

Lord God,
you called your chosen one,
Saint Maron, to the monastic
life,
perfected him in divine virtues,
and guided him along the
difficult road to the heavenly
kingdom.

During this jubilee year, commemorating 1600 years since the death of your chosen one, Saint Maron, when he was called to the house of your heavenly Father;

We ask you, through his intercession,
to immerse us in your love
that we may walk in your path,
heed your commandments,
and follow in his footsteps.

May his holy example resonate throughout our lives.
With your love, may we achieve that final destination
reached by our father, Saint Maron,
and carry your Gospel throughout the world.

Through his intercession, may we attain the glory of the
resurrection and everlasting life in you.

Glory and thanks are due to you, to your blessed Father,
and to your living Holy Spirit, now and forever. Amen. ☐

