

# The Maronite Voice

A Publication of the Maronite Eparchies in the USA



Volume VIII

Issue No. II

February 2012

## *The Massabki Brothers and The Righteous and the Just Today*



Every community in the Middle East has stories about their heroes, and we Maronites have plenty of our own. The Massabki Brothers, in fact, are extraordinary heroes for extraordinary times. We can call them patrons of the Maronites and all people of goodwill who struggle throughout the Middle East for peace, justice and the cause of truth, especially today.

Francis, Raphael, and Abdel Mo'ti Massabki were businessmen, devoted fathers and brothers, and faithful parish members who were martyred for their faith in the midst of the violence of Damascus in 1860. (See [www.beatimassabki.com](http://www.beatimassabki.com)) At that time, Muslims and Christians alike had been victims of radical ideologies. The Syria of 1860 can be compared to the Syria of today with oppression from above and sectarian violence from below. The Massabki brothers were well respected in their day and, over the years, have long been held with esteem by laity and clergy alike. They are worthy and much needed intercessors for what is called the "Arab Spring" sweeping the Middle East.

Christians in some parts of the world are praying for their very survival. It is sad to say this, but it is true. Radical Islam cannot tolerate anyone different from them - neither Christian nor Jew. This is not true of the majority of Muslims, but it is true of all who are radical. Ironically, Christians were part of the Middle East and the Arabic speaking world almost 700 years before the dawn of Islam. But to radical fundamentalists, Christians are looked upon with suspicion.

The Massabki brothers can help. In their day, Christians were both defended by fellow Muslim citizens and persecuted by others. In particular, a former radical jihadist by the name of Emir Abdel Kader, who lived in Damascus at that time, came to their defense. He and others fought for the innocent and protected the persecuted. (See *Commander of the Faithful* by John W. Kiser) The Massabki brothers were not fortunate enough to have come under his protection, but other Christians were. Eventually the Massabki brothers were killed

before the holy altar, along with several Franciscan friars, all of whom refused to deny their faith. Although their murder was thought to be their end by those who killed them, these martyrs continue to live on in the hearts and minds of devout believers as good examples of those who believe in what is true, noble and good, and are willing to pay the ultimate price.

*(Continues on page 20)*

## Schedule of Bishop Robert Shaheen

### February 10 - 12, 2012

100<sup>th</sup> Year Anniversary of St. Raymond Cathedral, Saint Louis, Mo.

### February 17 - 20, 2012

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

### February 20, 2012

Ash Monday Liturgy, St. Raymond Cathedral, Saint Louis, Mo.

### February 27, 2012

Lecture, Belleville, Ill.

### February 25, 2012

Men's Society Dinner, The Cedars Hall, Saint Louis, Mo.

### March 11 - 12, 2012

Pastoral Visit to the Maronite Community of Baton Rouge, Louisiana

### March 17 - 18, 2012

Pastoral Visit to St. Rafka Church, Denver, Col. □

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### **Maronite Convention 2012**

St. George Maronite Church

**San Antonio, Texas**

**July 4 - 8, 2012**

For more information  
contact the NAM office  
at (914) 964-3070  
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## Utica, New York Maronite Appointed to the USCCB National Advisory Council

At the proposal of Bishop Gregory Mansour, the Eastern Catholic Bishops of the United States recently appointed James Salamy, as one of two lay representatives to the National Advisory Council of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB).

The National Advisory Council is composed of lay men and women, men and women religious, deacons, priests, and bishops, all of whom represent various facets of the Catholic faithful. The purpose of the National Advisory Council is to offer advice to the Bishops on matters that are to be addressed at their plenary meetings. The National Advisory Council meets twice a year, immediately before the Administrative Committee of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

James Salamy, a graduate of Utica College, is the Associate Director of Constituent Relations for the New York State Catholic Conference of Bishops. A parishioner of Saint Louis Gonzaga Church in Utica, New York, he is involved in several aspects of parish life. James is a member of the Eparchy of Saint Maron Family and Sanctity of Life Advisory Board. He is the son of Deacon Paul Salamy and the late Mary Susan (née Hobaica) Salamy and the grandson of Mary and Fred Mazloom and the late Assaf and Joan D'Arc Hobaica, all of Utica, New York. □



James Salamy

## Eparchy of Saint Maron Parish Haflis

In the past few years, the Chancery has noticed an increase in parishes having *haflis* during Lent and has received requests for weddings during Lent. As priests, it is up to us to teach the faithful that Lent is a Penitential Season. *Haflis* and other parties should not be celebrated at all during Lent. The Lenten Season in 2012 is from February 20 – April 8. The only exceptions to *haflis* during Lent would be on March 19 and March 25. Weddings are not to be celebrated during Lent at all without prior dispensation. □

## *The Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn Holds Its Annual Clergy Retreat*



by Fr. Vince Farhat

The Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn held its Annual Clergy Retreat January 9 - 13, 2012, at Our Lady of Florida Spiritual Center, in North Palm Beach, Florida. Bishop Gregory Mansour and the clergy gathered once again for a personal retreat amid the clear skies and warmth of the Sunshine State.

The guest speaker and retreat facilitator was Reverend John Kelleher from Fall River, Massachusetts. His presence was a blessing to all those gathered and his theme for the retreat inspiring. "Get busy living or get busy dying; the choice is yours." This line from the movie 'Shawshank Redemption' proved to be challenging and worthy of the four-day retreat.

Fr. Kelleher brought many ideas from this single line, and one of them was taking a long loving gaze to God. The virtue of humility is a starting point in "getting busy living." Taking a long loving look to God helps us to face the truth, to bring prayer from our heads to our hearts. Through meditation and prayer, we find the strength and the will to "get busy living" by a deep and personal relationship with God. Prayer life is vital to this relationship and it is through this relationship with God that we are able to build strong relationships with ourselves and with the people around us.

Another idea that Fr. John brought to the forefront of our retreat was a quote from St. Francis of Assisi: "Preach

always, and when necessary use words." Fr. John was conveying to us that if we achieve this deep relationship with God, it is through our actions that we preach the word of God. We are all familiar with the saying "actions speak louder than words." We can certainly credit St. Francis' quote to this well known saying.

When we live the Gospel in our daily lives, we, as God's entrusted servants, become more compassionate, less judgmental, and more caring to His flock. When we live the Gospel in our daily lives, we understand the struggles of those who seek our advice, our help, and our guidance. It is one thing to preach the Word of God by using words; however, it is another thing to live out the Gospel in our daily lives and to be a living testament to the teachings and precepts of our faith.

Fr. John augmented this week by his words of wisdom that many of us probably already knew. Yet this week in Florida made us realize that although we may know this in theory, it is always good to hear it again and again. By listening to these words of wisdom, we allow ourselves to be reminded that the greatest glory on this earth is to live out our faith so that we may be one step closer to the promises of our Lord Jesus---the eternal Kingdom of Heaven and bringing those to whom we are entrusted along with us. ☐



## Murray, Utah *Two Subdeacons Ordained*



From left: Subdeacon Anthony Allam, Chorbishop Leser and Subdeacon Claudio Covacci.

For the first time in the thirty-five year history of St. Jude Maronite Church in Murray, Utah, the parish has two subdeacons: Anthony Allam and Claudio Gary Covacci. Today they feel as close as brothers after going through Subdiaconate training together, but they couldn't come from more different backgrounds.

Subdeacon Tony was raised in the Salt Lake City area. He is a second generation Lebanese. His grandfather was one of those Maronites begging Archbishop Zayek for a priest to minister to the local Maronite community. In fact, Subdeacon Tony remembers well when Monsignor John Trad arrived in 1976 and asked the then twelve-year-old boy to become an altar boy. Some of the new subdeacon's best memories are of being curled up with his mom talking about God. Later, when his older brother Ed entered the Maronite Seminary, the two would have long in-depth conversations about their faith. As the new subdeacon remembered, his parents' attitude was: "Save your soul, and everything else is second."

Unlike Subdeacon Tony, Major Claudio, U.S.A.F., was raised as an Italian Latin Catholic in a small village in Italy. During his military career, this new subdeacon often led Sunday celebrations in the absence of a priest in Iraq. He always felt something was missing in his life. Then, while stationed at Hill Air Force Base in Ogden, Utah, several priests recommended he attend St. Jude's Maronite Church, where he found the spiritual underpinnings to his deepening faith and commitment to the Lord. As he said:

"I just enjoy the spirituality of the Maronite understanding of our Catholic Faith more. Their prayers are more personal." So, in time, he asked to be ascribed as a Maronite Catholic. Although he had no doubts about making that switch, he did take his time making that momentous decision. And then, after much discernment, he also undertook Subdeacon training.

As Subdeacon Claudio put it: "I've always served, but this is more important than what you serve in other aspects of the community. It's a calling! It's a sense of fulfillment that you don't get doing other things."

The two new subdeacons were ordained on Sunday, December 18, 2011, by Chorbishop William J. Leser,

Eparchial Judicial Vicar and Temporary Administrator of St. Jude's, as a delegate of Bishop Robert J. Shaheen, Bishop of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon, at St. Jude Maronite Church in Murray, Utah, with standing room only in the small parish church. Afterwards the parish community had a true Maronite celebration in the parish hall in the church basement. □

## San Antonio, Texas *Farewell to Rev. Charles Khachan*



Fr. Charles Khachan (behind the podium) and Fr. Ghassan Mattar.

by Robert Beathe

On January 8, 2012, the parishioners of St. George Maronite Church, San Antonio, Texas, bid a loving farewell to their Assistant Pastor, Rev. Charles Khachan, M.L.M., newly appointed Parochial Administrator of Our Lady of Lebanon Church in Lombard [Chicago], Illinois. A reception held at the St. George banquet hall and attended by over 300 parishioners, honored Fr. Charles for all his love and efforts in the parish and for all of the many successful programs and projects that he directed over the past five years. After a video presentation, dinner, and warm-felt gifts for his trip to Illinois, members of different organizations rose to thank him for his leadership and involvement. The groups included the Parish Council, Stewardship Committee, Ladies Altar society, MYO, MYA, Cultural Arts Programs, Faith Formation and senior citizens, just to name a few. The program concluded with a presentation of a plaque from the Pastor, Rev. Ghassan Mattar, M.L.M., and the church members in remembrance of his service to St. George. Needless to say, the Maronite community of San Antonio has been blessed with both Fr. Ghassan and Fr. Charles for their care and devotion to the welfare of the parish. We wish Fr. Charles the best and know he will forever remain in the hearts and minds of this community. □

## West Palm Beach Pastoral Visit



Bishop Gregory Mansour celebrates the Divine Liturgy at Mary Mother of the Light Mission in West Palm Beach.

by Fr. Jorge Perales

The Most Reverend Gregory John Mansour, Bishop of the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn, visited Mary Mother of the Light Mission, Greenacres [West Palm Beach], Florida, on the weekend of January 14 -15, 2012. He had just completed the retreat with the priests of the Eparchy at Our Lady of Florida Retreat House in nearby North Palm Beach. On Saturday, the Bishop met with a group of parishioners, mainly from the Parish Council, and Fr. Jorge Perales and Fr. Leonard Basinow. They discussed the life of the church and the Bishop gave them very good insights and suggestions concerning its spiritual and pastoral life. The meeting was followed by a simple yet tasty lunch of barbecued pork and ribs. On Sunday, Bishop Mansour celebrated the Liturgy and was welcomed with the hymn "Toe Bashlom" - "Come in peace, Oh Good Shepherd...." sung in Syriac and English. During the Liturgy, the Bishop spoke of Monsignor Ron Beshara's vision for the Church, a community united in and by the love of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Chorbishop Joseph Kaddo, Pastor of St. Anthony of the Desert Parish in Fall River, Mass., and Father John Kelleher, O.S.B., who preached the priests' retreat joined Fr. Basinow and Fr. Perales in concelebrating the Liturgy with the Bishop. A lunch-reception took place following the Divine Liturgy. Many thanks to all who helped make this weekend such a beautiful time with the Bishop. □

## Uniontown, Pennsylvania MYO Activities

by Joanne John, MYO Advisor

St. George MYO members have been busy this school year, starting with sending cards to shut-ins at Thanksgiving, then buying and wrapping Christmas



St. George MYO members Jessy Madison, Olivia George, Kelly Miller and Olivia Crutchman with retired Sister Mary, a resident of the home, who is showing her Valentine to all.

gifts for needy children. In December they made a trip to a local tree farm where they picked out two live Christmas trees for the church. The youth enjoyed watching their choices as they were cut down and machine wrapped for delivery. The next day the MYO and their advisors decorated the trees in the sanctuary of St. George Church in Uniontown, Penn.

On the evening of December 22, members also participated in a Live Nativity encased by the doorways of the church, where parishioners and visitors from the area could follow the candlelit driveway to enjoy the depiction of that Holy Night.

In January, the MYO held a planning meeting where they talked about future plans including visiting Mt. Macrina Manor nursing home. There they helped residents make Valentines for their decorations to put on their doors or in their rooms. Many other activities are planned for the rest of the year, including return trips to the nursing home and an MYO retreat day during Lent. □



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

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

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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). □

## St. Paul, Minnesota Christmas Celebration

by Anna Grimes

On Sunday, December 16, 2011, after the morning Liturgy, the children of Holy Family Church, St. Paul, Minn., put on a play of the most holy night, Jesus' birth. Between each segment of the play, they sang with all their hearts, *Silent Night, O Little Town of Bethlehem, Away In a Manger, The First Noel* and a multitude of other songs. They were beautiful in their attire of Baby Jesus, Mary, Joseph, the three Wise men, the shepherds, animals and angel. The narrator kept the story going and everyone on task. This was all followed by a breakfast and more social gathering amongst friends and family and, of course, our pageant celebrities.

On December 24, Christmas Eve, at the Children's 4:00 p.m. Liturgy, the Church, the Narthex and the Hall were standing room only to celebrate the glorious birth of Jesus. The children processed around the Church with Fr. Rodrigue, Pastor. On December 25, the birth of Jesus was celebrated by a great number of people on this day as well. Fr. Rodrigue gave a poignant and heartfelt message to us. Christmas is a day of joy and celebration. The love of family and faith were quite apparent in our little church and we are happy to be a part of this celebration where memories are built one upon the other. □

## Newtown Square, Pennsylvania Christmas Play



(Left to right) Issa Muqbel, Ilyas Muqbel, Jack Hill, Olive Karam, Emily Estephan, Aoun Earafej, Jacob Karam, Juliana LoMonaco and Reneen Muqbel.

by Lillian Shahade

On December 18, 2011, the children of St. Sharbel Church in Newtown Square, Penn., performed the Nativity Pageant for their parents and friends. They sang hymns appropriate to the play and accompanied by the

choir under the direction of John Khawam. Refreshments were served in the social hall following the Divine Liturgy. □

## Dallas, Texas Children's Christmas Celebration



Fr. Assad Elbasha and Subdeacon Bassil with children of Our Lady of Lebanon Church in Dallas, Tex.

On Christmas Day, the children of Our Lady of Lebanon Church in Dallas, Texas, participated in the Liturgy by bringing the Gifts to the Altar. The girls were dressed as Angels and the boys were St. Nicklaus. Fr. Assad Elbasha, Pastor, blessed the children and reminded them that they are the future of the Maronite Church, and he thanked the parents for helping him to keep the Maronite traditions. He invited them to take pictures at the end of the Liturgy.

Fr. Assad introduced Subdeacon Michel Bassil to the parish. Subdeacon Bassil recently moved from St. Maron Church in Youngstown, Ohio, to live with his son in the Dallas/Fort Worth area. □

## Brooklyn, New York Right to Life Campaign

by Salma T. Vahdat

Sunday, January 22, 2012, Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral, Brooklyn, N.Y., observed the Annual Right to Life Campaign in advance of the event to take place on Monday, January 23, in Washington, D.C. An estimated gathering of one million people converged on the nation's capital to march and voice their support for life. Our Eparchial Bishop, the Most Reverend Gregory J. Mansour accompanied by the Maronite seminarians and Maronite sisters were in attendance at the March.

However, for those who could not travel to Washington for the event, the Cathedral was participating in spirit. A vigil was conducted in the St. Rafka Chapel between three and six p.m. with Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. The various organizations of the Cathedral as well as the parish community were invited to participate in the vigil. □

## Pleasantville, New Jersey *New Year's Celebration*



On Saturday December 31, 2011, parishioners and guests of Our Lady Star of the East (OLSE) in Pleasantville, N.J., said good-bye to 2011 and welcomed 2012 in style! The evening started off with a Middle Eastern *Mazza* and traditional American favorites prepared by Chef Mousa Dababneh and the hardworking women of the OLSE community. A beautiful time was had by over 250 guests from parts of New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania and even as far as New Mexico. In addition to the dining and dancing, there was a champagne toast at midnight to welcome in 2012. Our Lady Star of the East raised \$7,600 from ticket sales and the raffle of a 50" inch LED flat screen TV. Many thanks to all that attended and a very special thank you to the hardworking community of Our Lady Star of the East for hosting such an evening. □

## Danbury, Connecticut *Christmas Play*



by Barbara Stuart

The children of Saint Anthony Church in Danbury, Connecticut, performed their annual Christmas play

during the Christmas Eve liturgy. The youth of the church began practicing for the play on Thanksgiving weekend. They got together every Saturday and Sunday between Thanksgiving and Christmas to prepare for the pageant. The children practiced their lines and many songs over these few weeks. The costumes were prepared and the children were very excited. The play was performed for the all of the parish to enjoy on Christmas Eve. □

## Cleveland, Ohio *MYA Activity*



by Fr. Tony Massad

On Thursday, December 22, 2011, the St. Maron's Cleveland MYA (Maronite Young Adults) hosted a Christmas fundraising party to collect money and canned food and goods. Over forty young adults attended, and the event was successful! The MYA was able to collect three large bins of canned goods and non-perishable food items, as well as raise over \$400 in donations.

The fun party consisted of a delicious spread of food and dessert, kindly donated by MYA members and their families and friends. Various of "Minute to Win It" style games were played. The party drew attendees from other local parishes such as Our Lady of the Cedars in Akron, as well as St. Georges Orthodox Church and St. Elias Church in Cleveland.

At the following MYA meeting, the members announced that the food collected was donated to St. Augustine's homeless shelter, and it was decided that the money raised will be set aside and used in the future to donate an artifact to the new St. Maron Church in the name of the MYA. The MYA is very appreciative and gracious of everyone's donations and support, and we look forward to hosting this event again in the future. □



## San Francisco, California Christmas Party



by Nicole Rishwan

On Saturday, December 17, 2011, Our Lady of Lebanon Maronite Church community in the Bay area of California celebrated with a Christmas party. The whole community participated in the program. Children and adults performed a Christmas concert together, singing Arabic, English, French, and Latin hymns.

The Youth group had a Christmas presentation with a *dabke* dance. The Knights of Columbus helped to set up and serve drinks. The Ladies Guild was in charge of the food/dessert, Santa booth, and many other tasks.

Many valuable raffle prizes were awarded, and a professional singer sang traditional Lebanese and Middle eastern songs. Close to 400 people enjoyed the Christmas party. □

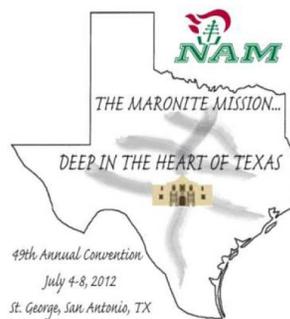
## New Castle, Pennsylvania Christmas Party



Once again, the parents and friends of St. John the Baptist Church in New Castle, Penn., and their Pastor, Fr. Claude Franklin, welcomed Santa Clause as he visited the children in the basement of the church after the December 18, 2011, Liturgy. Thanks to the Religious Education teachers and parents, cookies, refreshments and other special surprises greeted Santa as the children made way to sit on his lap and tell him what they wanted for Christmas. □

## San Antonio, Texas Convention Updates

by Julie Mery



The Community of St. George Maronite Catholic Church in the city of San Antonio, Texas, is eagerly anticipating the 49<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention of the National Apostolate of Maronites. The convention will be held July 4 - 8, 2012.

The convention committee and members of St. George are busy planning religious, spiritual and social events that promise many unforgettable memories.

The Marriott Rivercenter is the host hotel for this convention. It is a magnificent thirty-eight story building offering 82 luxurious suites and 918 wonderfully appointed guestrooms. The famous San Antonio River Walk is easily accessed through the back door of this hotel. The River Walk has beautiful scenic walkways that lead to a myriad of colorful shops and unique restaurants and other points of interest. The Rivercenter Hotel is centrally located with easy access to a variety of fun and entertaining venues including Six Flags Fiesta Texas, Sea World, the San Antonio Zoo, the institute of Texan Cultures and the historical Alamo Mission.

The room cost will be \$125.00 per night single/double/triple/quad. To make your reservation ask for NAM Convention at the numbers listed and make your reservation by June 15, 2012. One night will be billed to your credit card as soon as you make your reservation. The hotel registration process is separate from the NAM convention registration.

The San Antonio Marriott Rivercenter is located at 101 Bowie Street, San Antonio, Texas 78205; Phone: 210.223.1000; Toll Free: 800.648.4462.

The city of San Antonio has a lot to offer and we invite you to come and experience the Maronite Mission Deep in the Heart of Texas.

For more information on the Maronite Convention of 2012 and all of NAM's programs and events visit [WWW.NAMNEWS.ORG](http://WWW.NAMNEWS.ORG) or call (914) 964-3070 or contact by email at [NAM@NAMNEWS.org](mailto:NAM@NAMNEWS.org). □

## Food For Thought

*The one triune God is an ocean that cannot be crossed or explored. High is the heaven, broad the earth, deep the sea and long the ages; but higher and broader and deeper and longer is [God's] knowledge. For [God] has been adorned by nature, [God] who created it from nothing.*

St. Columban, Irish Monk and Missionary, 6<sup>th</sup> century

# Minneapolis, Minnesota 50<sup>th</sup> Birthday and Priestly Anniversary



Msgr. sharbel Maroun with his nephews and nieces.

by Joseph Moses

**I**t was a sold out event in Minneapolis, Minnesota. The January 7, 2012, event was an evening of dinner, dancing and a guest of honor.

The Cedars Hall at St. Maron Church, Minneapolis, Minn., was packed to capacity. They came from far and near in honor of Monsignor sharbel Maroun, Pastor.

On Saturday, January 7, 2012, 560 people gathered to celebrate Monsignor sharbel Maroun's 50<sup>th</sup> birthday and 23<sup>rd</sup> Anniversary of Ordination party.....in hope that he would show up for his own event, but that wasn't likely!

The parishioners of St. Maron planned the sold-out event for months, not quite sure if the guest of honor was going to attend. Msgr. Maroun is a humble leader, not liking all the attention and hoopla surrounding the event that was going to be taking place. "He kept saying he wasn't going to be there and to have a good time without him," said Duane Nasser, Chairman of the event. "Even at 4:00pm Liturgy on that Saturday evening he told us to enjoy our evening."

But he did show up because he loves his parish and his parishioners. And, well, fifty is a milestone to be celebrated!

Together, all the parishioners of St. Maron, community friends and Maroun's family enjoyed a Lebanese buffet prepared by generous parishioners. There were many tributes to Msgr. Maroun as well as a live band by Msgr. Maroun's nephew, Roukos Jacobs, and Singer Tony Mekhail of Ohio. Msgr. shared his beautiful voice and sang for the crowd.

An unsung hero of his parish, he tirelessly serves a parish of 500 plus families. Parishioners will receive phone calls on their birthdays, hospital visits to celebrate the birth of their children and bedside visits to console the sick. He also provided vision and growth so that St. Maron will be a home for Maronites and others for years to come.

Monsignor sharbel was ordained on his birthday in 1989, so we also celebrated his 23<sup>rd</sup> Priesthood Anniversary. Msgr. sharbel was born in *Jal-El-Deeb*, Lebanon. He is the sixth child of seven children. After completing high school, he

worked as a computer operator at a bank before he came to the United States to continue his study in Computer Science. Throughout his life, sharbel received many signs from God calling him to the Holy Priesthood.

In 1984, he entered the Maronite Seminary in Washington, D.C. He was ordained a priest in Lebanon on his birthday, January 6, 1989. He served as an associate pastor in Danbury, Conn., for seven months and then was assigned to Saint Maron of Minneapolis.

Along with music and dancing, many speeches and anecdotes were presented by all the clubs, community members and church leaders. In some way, Msgr. Maroun has touched the lives of many.

Saint Maron's oldest living parishioner, Sadie Anton, 103 years of age, said this of Monsignor sharbel, "I have witnessed the building of this parish and the coming and going of many priests. Monsignor sharbel has created a legacy for the youth of this parish for many years to call home."

Msgr. Maroun is also the Vocation Director of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon and the President of *Telemiere International, USA.* □

## Schedule of Bishop Gregory Mansour

### February 5, 2012

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

### February 8, 2012

Vigil for Saint Maron Feast Day, Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral, Brooklyn, N.Y.

### February 10 - 12, 2012

Centennial Celebration of St. Anthony Maronite Church, Glen Allen (Richmond), Virginia.

### February 16 -19, 2012

Rome with Cardinal-elect Timothy Dolan

### February 20, 2012

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

### February 25, 2012

Mass for Cardinal Dolan, St. Patrick Cathedral, New York, N.Y.

### February 26, 2012

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

### February 27, 2012

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

### March 2, 2012

Friday Lenten Service, St. Maron Church, Torrington, Conn.

### March 3 - 4, 2012

Pastoral Visit to Our Lady of Mercy Maronite Church, Worcester, Mass.

### March 10 - 11, 2012

Ordination of Norman Hannoush to Deacon, St. Anthony Church, Springfield, Mass. □

# Making Saints

by Chorbishop John D. Faris

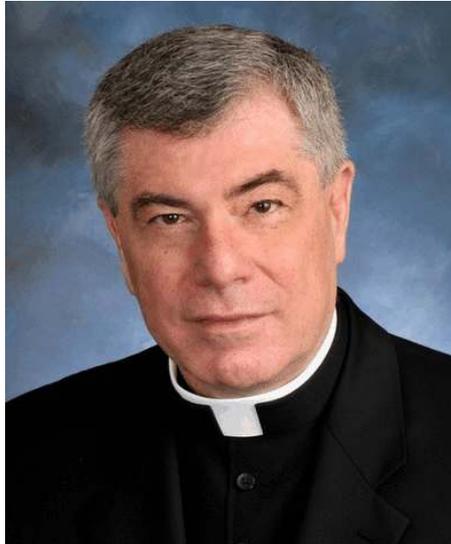
On Sunday, February 5, 2012, the Maronite Church recalled and celebrated its "finest product:" the Righteous and the Just, the saints of the Church. Referring to saints as "products" might seem crass and make one pause, but upon reflection one realizes that the Church makes saints. Indeed, making saints is the purpose of the Church: through the work of the Holy Spirit, countless followers of Christ have responded to the inspiration of grace and led heroic lives of virtue, in short, have become saints.

## Martyrs and Confessors

Some holy women and men have been canonized, that is, included in the canon, or list, of recognized saints. In the early Church, the first Christians to be honored as saints were the martyrs. One notes that in the Roman Canon of the Latin Rite, the only saints that are mentioned are martyrs, with the exception of the Blessed Virgin Mary and, since 1962, Saint Joseph.

Because Christianity was illegal in the Roman Empire and punishable by death, the first three centuries of the Church have been called the "age of martyrs." Those who suffered death for their faith were known as martyrs. (The word martyr comes from the Greek, meaning "witness.") After Emperor Constantine gave legal recognition to Christianity, the age of martyrs ended. Nevertheless, Christian martyrdom continues: Christians today continue to sacrifice their lives for the faith.

After the age of martyrs, Christians gave witness or confessed their faith by their lives, words and deeds; therefore, they are venerated as confessors by the Church. The reason for the veneration of these confessors is that their lives of self-denial and suffering were truly "prolonged martyrdoms." Early confessors included Saint Martin of Tours (316-397) and Saint Hilary of Poitiers (300-368) in the West; examples of confessors in the East are Saint Ephrem (306-373) and Saint Hilarion (291-371).



Chorbishop John Faris

## Canonization

How does one become a canonized saint? At first the process of canonization was a simple one: Some holy men and women were spontaneously venerated as holy by the faithful: *Vox populi, vox Dei*. ("The voice of the people is the voice of God.") We witness such a popular acclamation of sanctity with the passing of Blessed John Paul II; mourners in Saint Peter's Square carried placards with the words *Santo Subito* ("Sainthood right away") calling for the quick canonization of this beloved pope. Similar calls for canonization were made after the passing of Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta.

Despite - or perhaps because of - the fervor of the faithful, it became apparent that some kind of process was needed. In the case of the martyrs, it was the responsibility of the bishop in the place where the martyrdom occurred to verify the circumstances of martyrdom. If he found that the person died a martyr, an altar could be erected over the saint's tomb, relics could be transferred to a church and the name of the saint would be listed in the canon or diptychs. This type of canonization was a local matter, but often the bishop would send testimony of the martyrdom to other bishops in the region. In the case of confessors, approval of the bishop was again required before a person could be publicly venerated.

In the case of both martyrs and confessors, approval of the Bishop of Rome was required in order for the veneration of the saint to be for the entire Catholic Church.

Abuses began to creep in, perhaps because of local fervor or laxity on the part of the local bishop to conduct a rigorous investigation. At the end of the eleventh century, popes called for broader investigation of the lives of men and women proposed for veneration. These directives had a limited effect and abuses continued (one "saint" was intoxicated when he was killed). Pope Urban VII in 1634 issued an order reserving the declarations of sanctity to the Bishop of Rome.

## Modern Procedures

Today, the Vatican has a special office, the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, to investigate the lives of persons proposed for veneration. A cardinal heads the office, assisted by a staff of 25. This Congregation was established as a separate office by Pope Paul VI in 1969 and currently operates according to norms established by Pope John Paul II in 1983, followed by additional specific norms.<sup>1</sup>

The process towards canonization begins at the eparchial / diocesan level. The local bishop can, either on his own initiative or in response to a request, authorize the investigation into the virtues of an individual. The general rule is that the process is to begin no sooner than five years after the death of the person to be investigated. However, the pope can waive this requirement as was the case of Mother Teresa and Pope John Paul II. The investigation involves an exhaustive

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<sup>1</sup>Pope John Paul II, Apostolic Constitution, *Divinus Perfectionis Magister*, January 25, 1983; Congregation for the Causes of Saints, *New Laws for the Causes of Saints*, February 7, 1983; Id. Notice of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints on *New Procedures in the Rite of Beatification*, September 29, 2005; *Instruction for Conducting Diocesan or Eparchial Inquiries in the Causes of Saints*, May 17, 2007.

search into the writings, speeches and sermons of the person, as well as eyewitness investigations. Additionally, a biography of the person is prepared. After completion of the investigation, the bishop presents the case to the Congregation for the Causes of Saints. At this point the proposed person is referred to as a Servant of God.

Permission is then granted for the remains of the Servant of God to be exhumed and examined to be sure that no superstition or improper cult has taken place. Relics are then taken from the body.

The Congregation can then recommend to the Pope that he proclaim the heroic virtues of the person (that is, that the person manifested the theological virtues of faith, hope and charity and the cardinal virtues of prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance to a heroic degree). After the proclamation, this person of heroic virtue is given the title of Venerable. The Church has not yet made a definitive statement regarding the presence of the Venerable in Heaven, so no feast day is assigned and no churches may be built in honor of a Venerable. However, information and devotional material (such as prayer cards) can be printed to encourage the faithful to pray for a miracle through the intercession of the Venerable.

The next stage in the canonization process is beatification, indicating that "it is worthy of belief" that the person is in heaven. This stage marks a "fork in the road," depending on whether the Venerable is a martyr or confessor. In the case of a martyr, the pope only needs to make a declaration of martyrdom, attesting that the person gave his life for the faith or in an act of heroic charity or both. If the Venerable was not a martyr, but a confessor, it is necessary to prove that a miracle has taken place through the intercession of the Venerable. The miracle indicates that the Venerable is in the Divine Presence and that God is responding to the prayers of the Venerable. Today, the miracles are usually miraculous healings, the cure of a person for whom there was no known cure after prayers to the Venerable.

At this point, the person is given the title of Blessed (abbreviated to Bl.) and a feast day is assigned, with the

observance generally restricted to the eparchy/diocese of origin or to places associated with the Blessed. Churches are normally not dedicated to Blesseds.

The final stage is canonization, the declaration that the person is in the Divine Presence. The person is then referred to as Saint (abbreviated to St. or S.). The feast day may be celebrated anywhere in the Catholic Church, but not necessarily be included in the universal calendar of the Catholic Church. Churches can be built in the name of the Saint.

The Maronite Church and Lebanese can take holy pride in the fact that five of their own have been beatified or canonized in modern times (not to mention the countless unnamed righteous and just who preceded them).

- ◆ On December 5, 1965, Pope Paul VI officiated at the ceremony of the beatification of Father Sharbel Maklouf at the closure of Vatican Council II. In 1976, Pope Paul VI signed the decree of canonization of Blessed Sharbel. That canonization took place in the Vatican on October 9, 1977. His feast is July 23 in the Maronite Church and July 24 in the Latin Church.
- ◆ On November 16, 1985, Pope John Paul II declared Sister Rafqa Pietra Choboq Al-Rayès a Blessed and on June 10, 2001, he elevated her to the rank of Saint at a solemn ceremony in the Vatican. Her feast is March 23.
- ◆ On May 10, 1998, Pope John Paul II presided at the beatification of Father Nimatullah Kassab Al-Hardini and canonized him on May 16, 2004. His feast is December 14.
- ◆ Father Yacoub Haddad Al-Kbouchi was beatified in Martyrs Square in Lebanon on June 22, 2008, with His Eminence José Saraiva Martins representing Pope Benedict XVI.
- ◆ On December 17, 2007, Pope Benedict XVI recognized Brother Estephan Nehme as Venerable. Brother Estephan was recognized as Blessed on June 27, 2010, at the Monastery of Saints Cyprian and

Justine in *Kfifane*, by Archbishop Angelo Amato, S.D.B., Prefect of the Congregation for the Causes of the Saints.

## ***Communion of the Saints***

The veneration of saints is a problem for some people. They deny that we have any connection with persons who have died and do not accept any possibility of saints interceding to God on our behalf. (It is ironic that the same persons have pictures of deceased loved ones on their walls and visit their grave sites, on occasion speaking with them.)

We Catholics follow our natural instincts and "hold on" to the ones we love. The communion of saints expresses the notion that those of us living on earth, those in heaven and those in purgatory are spiritually united into one body, with Christ at the head. As members of that one body, we can share our joys and sufferings with each other and pray for each other. For us, the saints are our "friends in high places." Before she died, the young girl, Saint Thérèse of Lisieux, understood that she would continue to be connected with souls in need; she confidently asserted, "When I die, I will send down a shower of roses from the heavens. I will spend my heaven by doing good on earth."

## ***Call to Holiness***

Admittedly, very few of us can expect to be canonized. But, we are all called to be among the Righteous and the Just, sharing joy in the loving presence of God. Every Christian must strive to achieve this destiny. The Holy Spirit is at work in the life of the Church and provides us with all that is necessary in Word and Sacrament. By responding to grace we achieve our goal of being our "true selves," that is, saints. God has, in His mind and heart, a perfect image of each of us and a unique plan for each of us to reach our "perfect selves." We simply need to cooperate with Him—and sometimes to stay out of the way.

Again Saint Thérèse expresses it beautifully: "Let this presence settle into your bones, and allow your soul the freedom to sing, dance, praise and love. It is there for each and every one of us." □



## Lenten Observances 2012

## Scholarships Available Aitaneet Foundation

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 (**February 20**) 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 four feast days: St. Maron-February 9, The 40 Martyrs-March 9, St. Joseph-March 19 and the Annunciation - March 25.* □

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 2012 graduate of an accredited secondary school, and accepted to an accredited post secondary education institution.

This year the following Scholarships will be awarded:

- \$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 20, 2012. Recipients will be notified prior to May 31, 2012.

For applications and guidelines, please go to [www.aitaneet.com](http://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.

## 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 \$10 shipping each.

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

## San Diego, California *Pro-life Year Review*

by Patricia Hansen, Director

2011 was a busy year for the Mariam Mother of Life Pro-life Center of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon located in San Diego, California. Fr. Nabil Mouannes, as Chairman, was a visible sign of priestly participation and leadership in many of the prayer vigils and activities held this past year. Following is a brief review of the Committee's activities:

- ★ Participation in Helpers of God's Precious Infants Candlelight Prayer Vigil at the harbor in San Diego (January 22, marking the Roe v. Wade decision, legalizing abortion)
- ★ Participation weekly at Prayer Vigil at local Planned Parenthood in El Cajon [San Diego], Calif. (Friday and Saturday mornings)
- ★ Participation at the Good Friday Public Pro-life Rosary Procession sponsored by Helpers of God's Precious Infants (April 22, Downtown San Diego at Horton Plaza)
- ★ Participation and sponsor of the forty days for Life Prayer Vigil in front of Planned Parenthood, El Cajon, Calif. (September 28- November 6)
- ★ Participation at the San Diego Del Mar Fair Pro-life Booth (June)
- ★ Participation as Committee member for The West Coast Mother of Life Conference. Sponsored by the Knights of Columbus (held at the University of San Diego in August)
- ★ Participation with a Booth at the Mother of Life Conference with educational materials, and the selling of T-shirts, statues of our Mariam Mother of Life Shrine, and candles.
- ★ Participation in the Public Life Chain on a busy freeway intersection, (October)
- ★ Participation and Sponsor of America Needs Fatima Public Square Rosary Rally (October)
- ★ Showing of the DVD: The High Cost of Abortion
- ★ Participation in signature gathering to stop AB48 (homosexual agenda in public schools)
- ★ Ordering and distribution of pro-life educational materials
- ★ Creation of educational pro-life power point presentation
- ★ Promotion of the Eucharistic Pro-life Prayer Hour in San Diego Parishes
- ★ Through the Parish's October Pie-social, notebook materials were distributed as well as personal follow-up
- ★ Monthly First Friday Mid-day Eucharistic Pro-life Prayer Hour at St. Ephrem Maronite Church, San Diego

We present these activities as an example of some ways you and your parish can use to take a more active role in being a witness and worker for the sanctity of all human life. The Right to Life of the Unborn is the most important civil/human rights issue of our day.

We at the Mariam Mother of Life Pro-life Center are here as a resource to help you get started and to point you to materials you might need. Please email St. Ephrem Church at [stephrem@sbcglobal.net](mailto:stephrem@sbcglobal.net) or call 619-337-1350 or email the Director at [hansenpat@msn.com](mailto:hansenpat@msn.com). □

## Washington, D.C. *Vocations Fair*



The Maronite Servants and Maronite Seminarians each presented a display.

A Maronite Vocations display was featured at the Eastern Catholic Vocations Fair on January 22, 2012. The Eastern Catholic Bishops of the United States of America (USCCB Region XV) hosted this event at the Ukrainian Catholic National Shrine of the Holy Family in Washington, D.C.,. Those in attendance had the opportunity to learn about the importance of Christ's call in their lives to the priesthood, diaconate, and religious life. □

### *Project Roots*

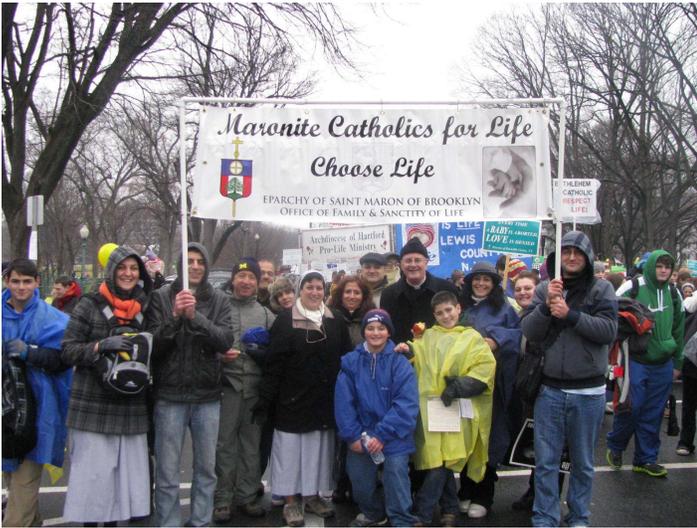
The Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn and the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon join together to help people reconnect with their Christian spiritual roots in Lebanon and the Middle East. An office in Los Angeles, Calif., under the responsibility of Fr. Abdallah Zaidan, M.L.M., will assist those interested to:

- ★ Obtain their sacramental records from their country of origin
- ★ Connect with family members living in their place of origin and throughout the world where they emigrated
- ★ Obtain Lebanese citizenship, if desired
- ★ Obtain immigration records, if desired
- ★ Remain connected with the Maronite Church here and throughout the world.

No eparchial funds will be used, but the office will accept financial help from those willing to help. For more information contact:

Father Abdallah Zaidan, M.L.M.  
333 South San Vicente Boulevard  
Los Angeles, CA 90048 □

# Washington, D.C. *Catholics Come to D.C. to Pray and Witness for Life*



by Susan E. Wills

Despite rough weather impeding travel from many parts of the country, huge numbers of Catholics gathered in Washington, D.C., to take part in liturgies, youth rallies, and conferences occurring January 21-23, in advance of the March for Life. Their enthusiasm and presence were a great blessing, and evidence of the continuing strength and vitality of the pro-life movement.

The continued growth in numbers each year also creates welcome challenges for the Archdiocese of Washington - host to many events - and the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception ("Basilica") where the all-night National Prayer Vigil for Life began in 1979 and is held each year on the eve of the March for Life. By adding extra Masses throughout Sunday and on Monday morning, the Basilica was able to accommodate 36,000 worshippers this year!

Cardinal Daniel DiNardo, Chair of the USCCB Committee on Pro-Life Activities, was principal celebrant and homilist at the televised Opening Mass on Sunday evening. Over forty bishops (including four cardinals and the Apostolic Nuncio), around 350 priests, seventy deacons, and 650 seminarians took part in the Mass, with standing room only for 12,000 people in what is the largest Catholic church in the United States.

Many hundreds of pilgrims then spent the entire night in prayer in the Crypt Church praying the National Rosary for Life, which was then followed by Byzantine Night Prayer, or Compline. This year, Compline was led by Most Reverend William C. Skurla, Bishop of Passaic and Metropolitan Archbishop-elect of Pittsburgh, and featured a homily by Most Reverend Stefan Soroka, Metropolitan Archbishop for the Ukrainian Catholic Archeparchy of Philadelphia. From midnight until 7:00 a.m., Holy Hour devotions, Adoration,

and Morning Prayer were led by seminarians from dioceses and religious orders across the United States, from California to Massachusetts. The National Prayer Vigil for Life concluded with a 7:30 a.m. Closing Mass at which Cardinal-designate Timothy Dolan, President of the USCCB, was principal celebrant and homilist. The homilies of all three Church leaders are posted at [www.usccb.org/about/media-relations/resources/2012-national-prayer-vigil-for-life-homilies.cfm](http://www.usccb.org/about/media-relations/resources/2012-national-prayer-vigil-for-life-homilies.cfm).

Elsewhere in D.C., Monday morning events began near dawn with the opening of the 20,000-seat Verizon Center and the 10,000-seat D.C. Armory, the largest indoor venues in the area. Catholic students from the Archdiocese of Washington and dioceses across the country soon filled both arenas for pre-March rallies and Mass.

However, even these spaces can't meet the demand for over 40,000 tickets, so 5,000 more students heard pro-life talks and attended Mass in local parishes. In the neighboring Diocese of Arlington (VA), Bishop Paul Loverde hosted a "Life is Very Good" evening of prayer for youth (with Mass, speakers, music, and Eucharistic Adoration), attended by 5,000 teens the night before the March.

The goals of these liturgies and events are many:

- ◆ To thank God for the great gift of human life.
- ◆ To beg his protection for the lives of unborn children through just laws and policies.
- ◆ To pray for the conversion, healing, and peace of all those who have been involved in an abortion decision or in providing abortions.
- ◆ To ask God to change the hearts and minds of those in our government and culture who influence the beliefs and behaviors of the nation's children, so that all Americans will come to recognize, and fight to uphold, the inherent dignity and right to life of every human being.
- ◆ To empower teens and young adults to take up the critical task of transforming the culture and changing our laws with all the energy, idealism, and fresh messaging ideas that they possess.

One example of young Catholics educating their peers on life issues was the January 22 "Cardinal O'Connor Conference on Life," hosted since 1990 by Georgetown University Students for Life. The Conference keynote was delivered by Archbishop Charles Chaput, Archbishop of Philadelphia. His keynote can be found at: [catholicphilly.com/2012/01/news/archdiocese/archbishop-chaput-speaks-at-cardinal-oconnor-conference-on-life](http://catholicphilly.com/2012/01/news/archdiocese/archbishop-chaput-speaks-at-cardinal-oconnor-conference-on-life).

Consider making the pilgrimage to Washington for these events next year. If you can't, consider using the resources on our web site for hosting similar holy hours and public witnesses for life in your local parish. □

### **About the Author**

*Susan Wills is Assistant Director for Education & Outreach, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' Secretariat of Pro-Life Activities. To learn more about the Catholic bishops' pro-life work visit [www.usccb.org/about/pro-life-activities](http://www.usccb.org/about/pro-life-activities).*

## Waterville, Maine *Community Recognized*



by Kevin J. Michaud

St. Joseph Maronite Church in Waterville, Maine, was treated to a Baked Ham luncheon following the Divine Liturgy on Sunday January 22, 2012. The meal was a gesture from the Immaculate Heart of Mary Council of the Knights of Columbus to say thank you to St. Joseph Parish for giving the council a place to call home. On October 1, 2011, the parish of The Immaculate Heart of Mary in Fairfield, Maine, was closed by the Diocese of Portland as austerity measures have taken a firm grip on the central Maine Catholic community. Faced with the possibility of having to merge with other existing councils and of surrendering their charter, the Knights were offered a place to call home by the Parish Council of St. Joseph, just two miles away in Waterville. The Knights have found a warm and welcoming community at St. Joseph, and to show their appreciation, they put on a meal enjoyed by more than a hundred parishioners.

### *Priest Golden Jubilee*

The sound of African drumming and hymns sung in Swahili were the norm at St. Joseph Maronite Church in Waterville, Maine, on January 9, 2012, as the parish was joined by guests from around the Diocese of Portland to celebrate the Golden Jubilee of Rev. James Roy, M.M. Fr. Jim, as he is known by the parishioners, has been a Maryknoll missionary priest for fifty years, and for more than forty of those years he served the faithful in Kenya, Africa. Fr. Jim was adopted by the students of the former St. Joseph's Maronite School shortly after his ordination as St. Joseph's very own missionary in action. For many years the students of the parish would raise funds to assist Fr. Jim in his ministry. Fr. Jim grew up in Winslow, Maine, just across the river from St. Joseph Church. He would often attend Sunday Liturgy and, since his retirement, he now acts as our stand-in priest when Fr. Larry Jensen, Pastor, is away. The Church was nearly full as Fr. Larry Jensen officiated at the Liturgy of Jubilee concelebrated by Fr. Jim and Rev. Chris Piscelli of the Diocese of Portland. Also assisting was Deacon Peter Joseph and Subdeacon Steve Crate. Following



Fr. James Roy, M.M., cuts the cake at his Golden Jubilee reception.

the Liturgy, members of the Rosary Sodality and the men of the Immaculate Heart of Mary Council, Knights of Columbus, served a continental breakfast in the Social Hall. □

## Pleasantville, New Jersey *Christmas Play*



by Rana Nammour

On Saturday, December 24, 2011, prior to Midnight Liturgy at Our Lady Star of the East in Pleasantville [Atlantic City], N.J., the parishioners put on a Christmas play, that was written and directed by Maria Massoud Nammour. The play portrays two girls and their families, one of whom wealthy and the other is from humble means. When the wealthy girl and her family fall upon hard times, her friend introduces her to her church community, and together they show the family the real meaning of why we celebrate Christmas. For many of the stars, mainly consisting of the church's youth and a few adult members, it was their first time performing on stage. However, if you did not know this, you would not have been able to tell. □



## Two Lebanese Capuchins on the Way to Beatification



The Capuchins and the local Church in Lebanon are happy to announce the closure of the second diocesan inquiry into the martyrdom of two Capuchin missionaries of *Baabdat* [Lebanon]: Br. Leonard Melki (1881-1915) and Br. Thomas Saleh (1879-1917), who were martyred in Turkey. The tribunal, presided over by Bishop Paul Dahdad, Apostolic Vicar of the Latins in Lebanon in the presence of the Vice-provincial Minister, Br. Tony Haddad, entrusted the documents of the case to the Vice-postulator, Br. Salim Rizkallah, who undertook to transmit them to the Congregation in Rome. The two Brothers Leonard and Thomas were arrested and tortured during the genocide of 1915 in Lebanon. Br.

Leonard Melki refused to apostatise after managing to hide the Blessed Sacrament when the police arrived. He was taken to the desert where he was murdered together with the Armenian Bishop, Blessed Ignace Maloyan and 415 men from *Mardine*. Br. Thomas Saleh was arrested and condemned to death for offering hospitality to an Armenian priest during the genocide; he was deported in the heart of winter under military escort. He died on the way on January 18, 1917, while courageously repeating "I have full trust in God; I do not fear death."

The Capuchins of Lebanon ask us to join them in prayer that the beatification of these two Brothers will be speedily achieved, so that they can be models of fraternal charity and apostolic zeal for the Church, especially for the Christians of the East. May their intercession obtain peace for this tormented region of the world. □

(Bollettino Di Informazioni Cappuccine Internazionali (BICI) No. 249, January 2012)

## Statement on Elevation of Archbishop Timothy Dolan to the College of Cardinals

On January 6, 2012, Pope Benedict XVI announced that he was creating twenty-two new cardinals, among them Most Rev. Timothy M. Dolan, Archbishop of New York and President of the New York State Catholic Conference. Cardinal-designate Dolan, who is also serving a three-year term as President of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, will be elevated to the College of Cardinals at a consistory in Rome on February 18.

Richard E. Barries, Executive Director of the New York State Catholic Conference, made the following statement this morning:

"We at the New York State Catholic Conference rejoice at the pending elevation of our president, Cardinal-designate Timothy M. Dolan, to the College of Cardinals.

"With his infectious joy, brilliant intellect and enthusiastic love of the Lord and His people, Cardinal-designate Dolan is truly a bright light in the American Church. He already has become the face of the Church in the United States. Now as a "Prince of the Church," his influence will truly extend worldwide, even if, as he underscored in remarks today [January 6], his primary responsibility remains Archbishop of New York.

"As the eighth Cardinal-Archbishop of New York, Cardinal-designate Dolan follows in the very large footsteps of his predecessor and our President Emeritus, Edward Cardinal Egan, as well as those who came earlier, including the late Cardinals John O'Connor, Terence Cooke and Francis Spellman. In his nearly three years in New York, Cardinal-designate Dolan has shown himself a worthy heir to their legacies, and we look forward to his many years of leadership in New York, as well as in the nation and the Church universal.

"We would be remiss if we did not also congratulate Cardinal-designate Edwin O'Brien, Pro-Grand Master of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre, who is a Bronx native and a former priest and auxiliary bishop of the Archdiocese of New York. This is truly a great day for the Catholic Church in New York, and across the U.S. and, indeed, the world, and a wonderful way to ring in the New Year." □

(New York State Catholic Conference, January 6, 2012)

## Pope's Visit to Lebanon

A visit by Pope Benedict XVI to Lebanon later this year is "very possible," according to the Vatican's official spokesman. The Pope would use the visit to deliver a document – known as an Apostolic Exhortation – that is the fruit of the discussions that took place at last October's Synod for the Middle East.

"In the context of the publication of a synod document, it is very possible and reasonable for the Pope to go to Lebanon and deliver this message," Vatican spokesman Fr. Federico Lombardi, S.J., told CNA on Jan. 23, 2012.

"Lebanon is certainly a country that desires the Pope's presence. Given that the Pope has already been to the Holy Land, Lebanon is a place that would be an option to host the Pope for this purpose," Fr. Lombardi said.

The Italian media is already speculating that the Pope will travel to the country in mid-September. Possible dates include September 13, the Feast of the Exultation of the Holy Cross, and the following weekend, September 22 - 23, 2012.

Pope Benedict could make stops in Lebanon's capital city of Beirut and the seat of the Maronite Catholic Patriarchate, *Bkerke*, as part of his trip.

"Well that's very much the hope there at the moment," said Monsignor John Kozar, President of the Catholic Near East Welfare Association, who recently visited Lebanon.

“There is a lot that would have to go into such a decision, and there are a lot of parties that will have to weigh in on that,” he told CNA, adding that a papal trip “certainly would be a most welcome sign to the people and to the Church there.”

Just over a quarter of the Lebanese population is Catholic, with the majority of those belonging to the Maronite Catholic Church, an Eastern Church in communion with Rome.

Blessed Pope John Paul II made a two-day visit to Lebanon in 1997 to sign the Apostolic Exhortation “A Hope for Lebanon,” which drew together the work of the Special Assembly for Lebanon of the Synod of Bishops in 1995.

A papal visit later this year would be Pope Benedict’s first journey to the Middle East since the emergence of the “Arab Spring,” a series of popular uprisings across the region that have toppled a number of dictatorships over the past year. □

(Catholic News Agency (CNA/EWTN News, Jan. 23, 2012)

## Pope Approves the Election of Three Maronite Bishops

### Bishop-elect Mounir Khairallah

On January 16, 2012, and in accordance with canon 185 para. 1 of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches, Pope Benedict XVI gave his assent to the canonical election carried out by the Synod of Bishops of the Maronite Patriarchal Church of Chorbishop Mounir Khairallah, "Protosincellus" of *Batroun* of the Maronites, Lebanon, as Bishop of *Batroun* (Catholics 69,800, priests 56, religious 95). The Bishop-elect was born in *Mrah El Zayat* on January 2, 1953. His parents (Tanios Boutros Khayrallah and Katbe Estefan Nader) were murdered in their house on September 13, 1958, on the eve of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross Day. His grandfather, Fr. Boutros Khalil El Houry, had a major influence on his vocation. He has three aunts of three consecutive generations who are nuns at the Maronite Saint Joseph Convent of *Jrabta*, seat of Saint Raffka's tomb.



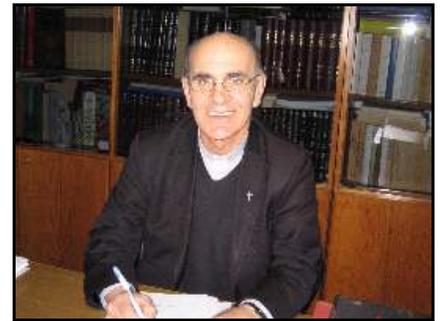
In September 1972, His Beatitude Patriarch Paul Meoushi sent him to *Propanda Fide* College in Rome, to study philosophy and theology at *Pontificale Urbaniana* University. He returned to Lebanon in July 1977, and was ordained a priest by, then, His Excellency Nasrallah Sfeir on September 13, 1977. On August 25, 1978, Patriarch Antoine Khoreish sent him to Paris, France, to specialize in the Catholic Institute and at the Sorbonne University. He obtained a higher diploma in Pastoral Catechism (June 1980) and a Doctorate in Theology from the Catholic Institute of Paris, as well as a Doctorate in Religious Sciences from

Sorbonne-Paris IV (October 1984). While studying in Paris, he also worked in pastoral care in Parisian parishes. In Lebanon, in addition to teaching Theology at Holy Spirit University and St. Anthony Seminary, he served as Rector of Saint Maron Seminary in *Ghazir*, Vicar General of the Maronite Eparchy of Batroun as well as Secretary of the Maronite Patriarchal Synod.

Fluent in Arabic, French, English, Italian, and German, as well as Syriac, Latin, Hebrew, and Greek, Bishop-elect Khairallah authored many books, articles, and lectures in Arabic, French, Italian, and English on priestly formation, the history of the Maronite Church and congregations, the Maronite spirituality, and youth. He will be ordained on February 25, 2012, by His Beatitude Patriarch Bechara Rai at the Patriarchal See in *Bkerke*.

### Bishop-elect Elias Sleiman

In accordance with canon 185 para. 1 of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches, Pope Benedict XVI gave his assent to the canonical election carried out by the Synod of Bishops of the Maronite Patriarchal Church of



Fr. Elias Sleiman Sleiman, Professor and Judge in the Lebanese Ecclesiastical Tribunals, as Bishop of *Latakia* of the Maronites (Catholics 33,000, priests 28, religious 51), Syria. The bishop-elect was born in *Hekr Semaan*, Syria on August 16, 1951, and was ordained a priest in 1987. Bishop-elect Sleiman earned a degree in Theology at the Holy Spirit University in *Kaslik* in 1982 and in 1988 he earned a higher degree in Theology at the Catholic Institute of Paris, France. In 1997 he earned a Doctorate in Canon Law at the Catholic Institute of Paris and a Doctorate in Civil Law from the Jean Monnet Faculty at Université de Paris XI.

Fluent in Arabic, French, English, German, Latin, Old Greek, Syriac, and Old Syriac, he authored numerous scientific articles, essays and poems. He also wrote religious TV programs for a number of parishes. He will be ordained on February 25, 2012, by His Beatitude Patriarch Bechara Rai at the Patriarchal See in *Bkerke*.

### Bishop-elect Michel Aoun

In accordance with canon 185 para. 1 of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches, Pope Benedict XVI gave his assent to the canonical election carried out by the Synod of Bishops of the Maronite Patriarchal Church of Msgr. Michel Aoun, "sincellus" for the clergy of Beirut of the Maronites, Lebanon, as Bishop of *Jbeil-Byblos* of the Maronites (Catholics 250,000, priests 94, religious 78),



Lebanon. The Bishop-elect was born in *Damour*, Lebanon, on February 6, 1959, and was ordained a priest on September 6, 1984. He earned a degree in Theology from Holy Spirit University -*Kaslik* and a Masters degree in Dogmatic Theology from the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome in 1989 and a Doctorate in Dogmatic Theology from the same university in 1995.

He has worked as a pastor, educator and Theology professor in Lebanon and as Rector at seminaries in Lebanon, Cairo (Egypt) and in Rome. He is also Vice President of "La Sagesse" University in Beirut. He will be ordained on February 25, 2012, by His Beatitude Patriarch Bechara Rai at the Patriarchal See in *Bkerke*. □

## Leader of U.S. Bishops Rallies Marchers

### *Cardinal-designate Dolan: 'Goliath the Giant Didn't Win, Did He?'*

The closing homily for the National Prayer Vigil for Life was given by New York's Cardinal-designate Timothy Dolan on January 23, 2012, before the faithful poured out of the Shrine of the Immaculate Conception and onto the streets of the U.S. capital.

The Cardinal-designate, also President of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, celebrated the 7:30 a.m. Mass that brought an end to the all-night vigil for those who had just spent the night in what he referred to as "their mother's home," the Basilica of the Immaculate Conception, America's National Marian Shrine. He welcomed them all and thanked them for the "radiant inspiration" they had given by their testimony.

We should not lose hope of winning the Pro-life battle, he urged them. "God's grace, God's power is unlimited! There is no evil, no horror, no sin that is exempt from the healing rays of his grace."

Noting the difficulties, such as governments that promote abortion, and contraception and abortion being considered "rights," Cardinal-designate Dolan acknowledged that we can be tempted to despair and to think that all is lost.

"Not us! Not for thousands who have stayed up all night in prayer in this, the home of a pregnant woman; Not for hundreds of thousands who will march today with the words of 'We Shall Overcome' ringing in our ears," he exclaimed.

Comparing the struggle to the David versus Goliath contest, he said that like David the Pro-life movement "has been dismissed by the Goliath of the well-oiled, well-inked, glitterati-crowded pro-abortion one." "But, Goliath the Giant didn't win, did he? Trusting, shrewd, faithful, confident, energetic little David did!" □

*(Zenit.org, January 23, 2012)*



## Pope Tells What's Most Important on Path to Priesthood

### *Emphasizes Importance of Studying the Faith as an Organic Whole*

Pope Benedict XVI says the most important thing on the journey toward the priesthood and in priestly life is a personal relationship with God in Christ. The Pope affirmed this Thursday [January 26, 2012] when he addressed three of Italy's regional seminaries.

After noting the value of seminaries that draw from several dioceses as a preparation for collaboration in the universal Church, the Holy Father went on to speak about the philosophical-theological formation of future priests.

"As I wrote in my letter to seminarians at the close of the Year for Priests, it is not only a question of learning obviously useful things but of knowing and understanding the structure of the faith in its totality -- which is not a summary of theses but an organism, an organic vision -- so that it becomes an answer to the questions of men, who change in externals from generation to generation but who remain fundamentally the same," he said.

The Pontiff also emphasized that the study of theology must be connected with the life of prayer.

"It is important," he said, "that the seminarian well understands that the object that he applies himself to is in fact a 'Subject' who calls to him, that Lord who spoke to him, inviting him to spend his life in service to God and to his brothers."

### *Promoting Sanctity*

Pope Benedict XVI reflected on the integration of ministry and spiritual life, observing how important the human formation of the priest is. "It is in fact in our humanity that we present ourselves before God to be authentic men of God in the eyes of our brothers. [...] Thus, the most important thing in the journey toward the priesthood and during the whole priestly life is a personal relationship with God in Jesus Christ," he affirmed.

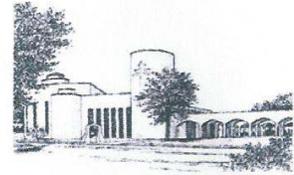
The Pope cited his predecessor, Blessed John XXII, affirming: "In view of the mission with which you will be entrusted for the glory of God and the salvation of souls, this is the purpose of your education: forming the mind, sanctifying the will. The world awaits saints: this above all. Before cultured, eloquent, up-to-date priests, there is a need of holy priests who sanctify (*sacerdoti santie sanctificatori*)."

"These words still have resonance today," Pope Benedict said, "because in the whole Church, as well as in the regions from which you come, there is much more than ever the need for workers of the Gospel, credible witnesses and those who promote sanctity with their own lives." □

*(Zenit.org, January 26, 2012)*



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## Fort Lauderdale, Florida *First Liturgy at Heart of Jesus Maronite Church*



From left: Fr. Elie Mikhael, Chorbishop Michael Thomas and Father Jorge Perales.

**O**n a warm and balmy evening in Fort Lauderdale, the doors of the new Heart of Jesus Maronite Church were opened. Chorbishop Michael G. Thomas welcomed the standing-room only crowd of new parishioners, family, and friends as he offered the first Divine Liturgy on Friday, January 6, 2012, the Feast of Epiphany. With the newly-blessed Epiphany water, Chorbishop Thomas sprinkled the church and the congregation and announced that at a future date, Bishop Gregory Mansour would appropriately dedicate and consecrate the building.

The Liturgy was concelebrated by Reverend Elie Mikhael of Miami and Reverend Jorge Perales of Greenacres [West Palm Beach] as well as by Monsignor Terrance Hogan,

and Fathers Patrick O'Neill and Lazarus Govin of the Archdiocese of Miami. Assisting were Deacons John Jarvis, assigned to the new Mission, Simon Abi-Nader, Ian Taylor, and Subdeacon Dennis Somerville. The choir of Our Lady of Lebanon in Miami offered music which helped make it a beautiful and joyous celebration where the Holy Spirit was truly present.

The Divine Liturgy was followed by a reception that packed the church hall. It was made possible by the hard work of the parishioners and the Pastor of Our Lady of Lebanon in Miami. They welcomed "Father Michael," their former Pastor, back to Florida with good food, laughter, and an overall wonderful evening. The new Heart of Jesus parishioners and the people of the neighborhood are excited about the new church and hope that it will have a permanent place in the history of Fort Lauderdale. ☐

## *The Three Massabki Brothers*

(Continued from page 1)

The so called "Arab Spring" does not have to be marked by oppression or sectarian violence. In the present, Christians and Muslims alike have been hard at work in the streets and in quiet political efforts to bring about change for the good. In the past, they did this by working together, especially during the Arab Renaissance of the late 1800s. They can do it again today.

The good example of people like Emir Abdel Kader, the Massabki Brothers and other persons whom we can call the Righteous and the Just is so very important. May the prayer of the Blessed Massabki Brothers and all the Saints intercede for us and for all people of goodwill. ☐

+ Bishop Gregory J. Mansour  
Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn