



The Maronite Voice

A Publication of the Maronite Eparchies in the USA

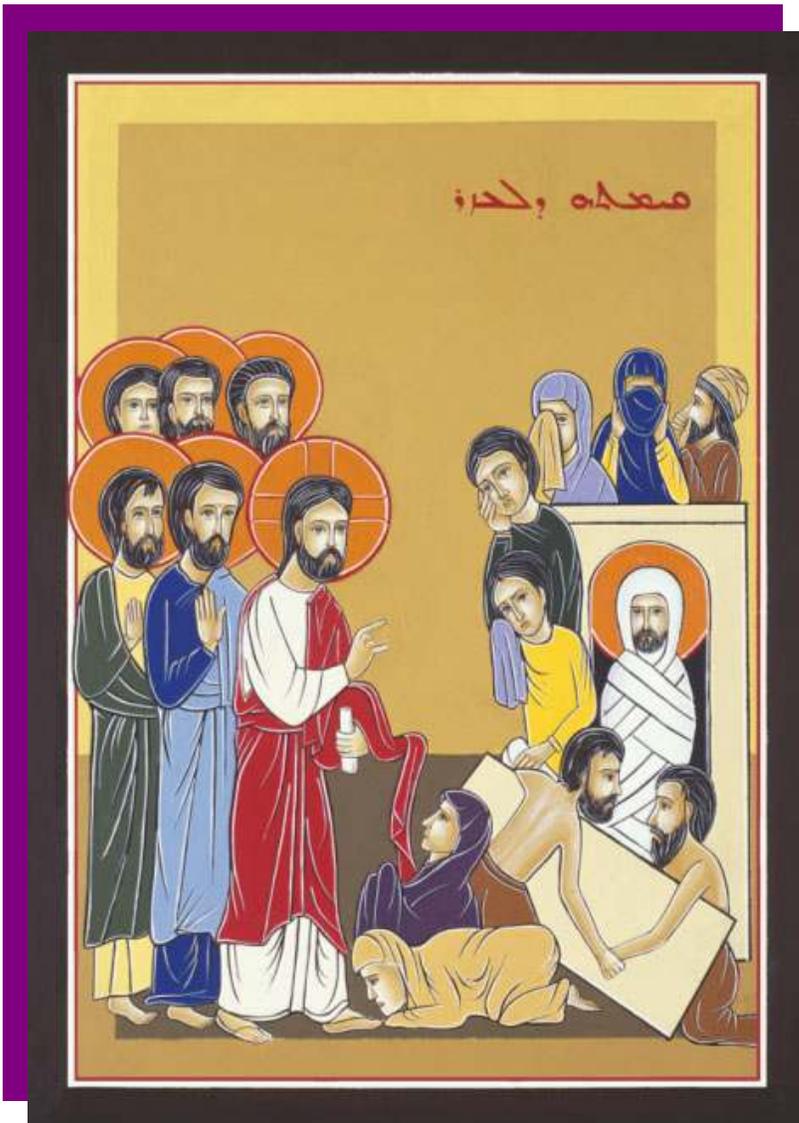


Volume VIII

Issue No. III

March 2012

Lenten Reflection



The Raising of Lazarus by Fr. Abdo Badwi, University of the Holy Spirit, Kaslik, Lebanon (USEK), Department of Sacred Art.

Dear friends,

By the time you receive this publication, the Holy Season of the Great Lent will be almost over and the Feast of the Resurrection of the Lord will be upon us.

Lent as you know, is that special liturgical season to prepare us to hear the words: "He is risen." Lent is not so much about our giving up something to please God. Lent is about our Lord Jesus Christ.

How have we prepared to receive His Good News?

Have we used this period of time for introspection, self-examination, penance and forgiveness?

Have we become reconciled to a relative or friend with whom we have disagreed? Have we forgiven someone who has hurt us in any way? Do you realize that not one of us is perfect and it is our sins that need penance and forgiveness? Have you opened your heart to God's grace by removing bitterness, anger and hatred?

There is no room in our hearts for the Love of Jesus if it is cluttered with those things that separate us from one another.

I pray that you will use the remaining days of Lent to come closer to our Lord Jesus Christ and His Mother. She will help us if we ask her.

May the Feast of the Resurrection that we will soon celebrate find us to be a renewed people with a strong faith in our hearts.

I ask a remembrance in your prayers as you are in mine.

With every best wish, I remain,
Sincerely yours,

+Bishop Robert J. Shaheen
Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon

Schedule of Bishop Robert Shaheen

March 19, 2012

Liturgy for the Italian Community and Blessing of Bread, St. Louis, Mo.

March 25, 2012

Liturgy in honor of one-year anniversary of Patriarch Bechara Peter Rai, St. Raymond Cathedral, St. Louis, Mo.

April 1, 2012

Palm Sunday Liturgy, Saint Raymond Cathedral, St. Louis, Mo.

April 5, 2012

Chrism Mass, Saint Raymond Cathedral, St. Louis, Mo.

April 6, 2012

Burial of the Lord, Saint Raymond Cathedral, St. Louis, Mo.

April 7, 2012

Opening of the Tomb and Easter Liturgy, Saint Raymond Cathedral, St. Louis, Mo.

April 8, 2012

Easter Sunday, Saint Raymond Cathedral, St. Louis, Mo. ☐

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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
or visit www.Namnews.org

Eparchial Condolences



Abla Jabbour, the mother of Subdeacon George Jabbour, passed away on March 1, 2012. Abla is predeceased by her husband, George. In addition to Subdeacon George, she is survived by her two daughters in Lebanon and one daughter and one son living here in the United States.

Condolences may be sent to Subdeacon George Jabbour at 23 Fairmont Drive, Danbury, CT 06811.

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 Subdeacon George and his family. May the Lord God grant Abla eternal rest in His Kingdom and consolation to her family and loved ones.

Ginny (Virginia) Mammi, the wife of Deacon Nicholas Mammi, passed away on February 15, 2012. She is also survived by her son, Joseph John, and his wife Jessica, her daughter, Caitlin Frauenfelder and husband Harry Joseph, four grandchildren and a brother, John Woods.

Condolences may be sent to: Deacon Nicholas Mammi, 669 Dulaney Road NW, Floyd, VA 24091.

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 Deacon Nicholas and his family. May the Lord God grant Virginia eternal rest in His Kingdom and consolation to her family and loved ones. ☐

Fr. Gaby Hoyek

Fr. Gaby Hoyek has been relieved of all priestly duties from the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon effective December 31, 2011. ☐

Food For Thought

*Peace is the goal to which the whole of humanity aspires!
For believers, "peace" is one of God most beautiful names.*

Pope Benedict XVI

St. Louis, Missouri Maronite Cathedral Celebrates 100 Years



Father Gary George, Doctor Daniel Abodeely, Subdeacon George Simon, Bishop Robert Shaheen, Doctor Maged Haikal, Doctor Isam Hawatmeh and Doctor Sir David Mueckl.

by Shelly Vitale

St. Raymond Maronite Cathedral, St. Louis, Mo., celebrated its Centennial on February 10 - 12, 2012. Congratulations and well wishes came from far and wide including: His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI, Maronite Patriarch Bechara Peter Rai and Bishop Gregory John Mansour, Bishop of the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn. The festivities began on Friday evening when hundreds gathered at the Maronite Heritage Institute for the joyous occasion. Guests and visiting clergy were shown a documentary that explained the arrival of Maronites to Saint Louis and the founding of Saint Raymond Church. Bishop Robert J. Shaheen was interviewed in the documentary. Bishop Shaheen came to Saint Raymond as a young priest in 1967. Through his many years as Pastor, he has played an enormous role in making this Cathedral Parish a vibrant, loving and generous community. Following the documentary, the guests were entertained by the very gifted and talented Monsignor Mansour Labaky. His uplifting program consisted of beautiful Maronite hymns and the explanation of their origins. Monsignor Labaky shared stories and prayers and encouraged everyone to sing along.

The grand banquet celebrating the Centennial was held at the Cedars Hall on Saturday evening. Clergy, dignitaries and guests filled the beautifully decorated hall for a night of dedication and celebration. Speakers included: The Most Reverend Edward Rice, Auxiliary Bishop of Saint Louis; The Most Reverend Robert J. Shaheen, Bishop of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon; Father Gary George, C.Ss.R., Rector of Saint Raymond Cathedral; Monsignor Moussa Joseph; Monsignor Mansour Labaky; The Honorable Francis R. Slay, Mayor of the City of St. Louis, who gave a proclamation to

Bishop Shaheen, making February 11, 2012 Saint Raymond Maronite Cathedral Centennial Day in Saint Louis; Mary Miller, representing the Board of Alderman for the City of Saint Louis, who gave Bishop Shaheen a Resolution for Saint Raymond's 100th Anniversary; and Rick Baker, Chairman of the Centennial Committee, thanked everyone involved in planning the festivities. Father Gary George and Bishop Shaheen acknowledged Roxie Rask, recipient of the Papal Cross, for her forty-five years of faithful service to the Saint Raymond's Parish Community. Father Gary George presented Bishop Shaheen with a beautiful cross and chain on behalf of the parish for his forty-five years of dedicated service, including eleven years as Bishop.

The Centennial Liturgy was celebrated on February 12th. Members of the Order of Saint Sharbel formed the honor guard. Bishop Robert Shaheen, Father Gary George, Monsignor Moussa Joseph and local Latin clergy celebrated the Liturgy. Monsignor Labaky accompanied the choir. Family and friends watched as the Bishop, assisted by Sir Doctor David Mueckl, Commander with Star of the Pontifical Equestrian Order of Saint Gregory the Great, bestowed upon Subdeacon George Simon, Doctor Isam Hawatmeh, Doctor Maged Haikal and Doctor Daniel Abodeely the Papal Honor of Knight of Saint Gregory the Great from Pope Benedict XVI. The Investiture took place during the Divine Liturgy. Following Communion, Bishop Shaheen bestowed the award of Silver Massabki to parishioner Terry Rask. A brunch reception was held at the Cedars Hall following the Liturgy. The weekend was a spiritual and joyous occasion. The Cathedral of Saint Raymond would like to thank Bishop Shaheen, Father Gary George, and the Centennial Committee for their many hours of hard work and dedication. On behalf of each of them, a big thank you to every parish in both eparchies for their support, generosity and prayers towards this 100th Year Celebration. □

Eparchial Appointments

His Excellency Bishop Robert Shaheen, Bishop of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon, has made the following Eparchial appointments effective January 9, 2012:

- **Msgr. Jibran Bomerhi** as Pastor of St. Jude Maronite Church in Murray, Utah. He leaves St. Sharbel Church in Warren, Mich.
- **Chorbishop Alfred Badawi** as Pastor of St. Sharbel Maronite Church in Warren, and Administrator of St. Rafka Maronite Mission in Livonia, Mich. He leaves Our Lady of Lebanon Church in Lombard [Chicago], Ill.
- **Fr. Charles Khachan, M.L.M.**, as Administrator of Our Lady of Lebanon Maronite Church in Lombard [Chicago], Ill. He leaves St. George Maronite Church in San Antonio, Tex.
- **Rev. Bakhos Chidiac**, Administrator of St. Rafka Mission, Denver, Colorado, was bestowed the honor of *Periodeut* on February 9, 2012, at St. Raymond Cathedral in St. Louis, Mo., by Most Reverend Robert J. Shaheen. Congratulations Monsignor Bakhos Chidiac!

Bishop Shaheen also appointed **Mrs. Randa Hakim** as the Eparchial Archivist, effective February 3, 2012. □

Glen Allen, Virginia 100-Year Anniversary



Chorbishop Seely Beggiani, Bishop Stephen Hector Doueih, Bishop Gregory Mansour, Msgr. George Sebaali, Bishop Walter Sullivan, Bishop Francis DiLorenzo, Fr. Nagi Kiwan and Chorbishop Dominick Ashkar. Altar servers are Sam Shibley and Matthew Maynes.

by Brandon Shulleeta

Hundreds of parishioners of St. Anthony Maronite Catholic Church in Glen Allen (Richmond), Va., united on February 11 - 12, 2012, to celebrate the church's 100-year anniversary.

Church members joined to "celebrate 100 years of witnessing to Christ and proclaiming the gospel," Msgr. George M. Sebaali said during a parish dinner, adding that Lebanese Maronites who founded the church arrived in Richmond as early as 1895.

"They came with few possessions," Sebaali said. "But they carried with them an unshakable faith in God, dependence on His mother and a strong Maronite heritage and legacy."

After a morning prayer, a meeting with the children and youth and a luncheon with the ladies of the Parish, Bishop Gregory J. Mansour celebrated the anniversary Liturgy on Saturday evening. Bishop Stephen Hector Doueih, Bishop



Emeritus of the Eparchy of Saint Maron; Bishop Francis DiLorenzo, Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Richmond; Bishop Walter Sullivan, Bishop Emeritus; Chorbishop Seely Beggiani, Rector of Our Lady of Lebanon Seminary; Chorbishop Dominick Ashkar, Pastor of Our Lady of Lebanon Church, Washington, D.C.; Fr. Nagi Kiwan, Administrator of Blessed John Paul II Maronite Mission, Westchester, N.Y.; and Msgr. George M. Sebaali, Pastor, concelebrated. In his homily, Bishop Mansour told parishioners, "There's something beautiful about someone who places God before himself or others. You know how to do that. Your ancestors knew how to do that, and those who founded this church, back sixteen hundred years ago knew how to do that."

Bishop Mansour urged parishioners to keep their faith and "celebrate it." He said that much could be learned from Saint Anthony, a man who mirrored the good qualities of those who surpassed him in virtue and discipline in an effort to faithfully serve God.

St. Anthony Church has been blessed with many incredible members who have contributed and still contribute to its success, Sebaali said, listing a slew of church organizations central to the parish's foundation.

"And above all, we honor and salute all those 'unknown soldiers' among us who work hard and in silence behind the scenes to make sure St. Anthony Church continues to be like 'a light put on a stand where people can see the light and give praise to our Heavenly Father.'

These unknown soldiers are champions of faith. The Kingdom of God, my friends, depends on champions of faith, who are willing to give of their possessions, lend a hand, offer a strong shoulder to lean on, or hand over an anonymous gift of time and money.

"These unknown soldiers do all of this ... because they are convinced that the Kingdom of God must advance and that His Church must remain a beacon of light, a refuge for sinners and a way to salvation.

"So, tonight, from the bottom of my heart," Sebaali said during the anniversary dinner, "I thank you, dear parishioners and friends, for the many hundreds of volunteer hours spent in serving God, through serving His brothers and sisters, for your financial, moral and spiritual support. We thank you for carrying the torch for the last 100 years."

Bishop Stephen Hector Doueih, Bishop Emeritus of the Eparchy of Saint Maron, told parishioners that St. Anthony Church is where he feels most comfortable. "I feel at home when I am with you," he said.

In a Richmond Times-Dispatch article about the 100-year anniversary, parishioner MacKenzie Wells said: "Being Maronite gives us a sense of uniqueness and pride ... No matter what happens, we'll always have our family to fall back on."

The centennial events, themed "Faith, Family and Tradition," began in September with daily liturgies, adoration and benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, and social gatherings, including a *hafli* and a celebration of the church's most senior parishioners. A time capsule was sealed with memorabilia including liturgy books, pictures documenting church moments and groups, literature about the church's annual Lebanese food festival, and other items. It will be opened in fifty years. □

Youngstown, Ohio *Sleep Over*



Rejoice
in the
Lord!

by Kalyn Sharrow

On February 4 - 5, 2012, the Maronite Christian Formation (MCF) students of Saint Maron Church in Youngstown, Ohio, held their first sleepover. Seventeen students, grades 1 thru 6, gathered for an afternoon and evening filled with prayer, games, and fellowship ... and, of course, pizza! Saturday evening continued with a movie, popcorn and ice cream before it was time for lights out.

The weekend was capped off with the children's taking part in the 8:30 a.m. liturgy by serving, reading and singing. Finally came the awards ceremony. Gifts and certificates were presented by Sister Celine Nohra, Director of Religious Education, to students and classes based on regular attendance and participation. After all recognitions were given, the children were "let loose" to their parents and families.

The idea came into the works back in the early fall by St. Maron's MCF Committee, now in its second year. The committee, comprised of two Antonine Sisters, two MCF teachers and another parishioner planned the event with the approval of Chorbishop Michael Kail, Pastor. The first sleepover was a huge success; and both the children and chaperones are looking forward to the next one. □

San Diego, California *Pastoral Visit*

On Sunday, January 15, 2012, St. Ephrem Church of San Diego, California, was honored by a pastoral visit from His Excellency Bishop Robert Shaheen, Bishop of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon. Bishop Shaheen was joined by Chorbishop Alfred Badawi as well as Fr. Nabil Mouannes, Pastor, and Deacon Georges Ghosn in celebrating two Divine Liturgies in honor of St. Ephrem, for our patron's feast day.

During his homilies, the Bishop inspired the community to

forge ahead and to keep at heart all that has been accomplished in the parish and urged them to continue the good work.

Just before the conclusion of the Divine liturgy, Bishop Shaheen installed Camille Bsaibas, Sabah and Norma Dehessy, Joe El Maasri, Dr. Rita Feghali Khoury, Francois Habchi, Ziad and Sarah Kabban, Nagy Najjar and Tony Thomas into the Order of Saint Sharbel.

Following the 9:30 a.m. Liturgy, the Bishop went for a photo-op with twenty-six children from this year's First Communion preparation class along with their instructor Ms. Lilian Massery. What a treasured moment for the children to be pictured with their bishop!

After the 11:00 a.m. Liturgy, St. Ephrem Academy Parents Association prepared a luncheon in the church courtyard in honor of the occasion.

During his visit, the Bishop took the opportunity to speak to Mr. Jihad Sleiman, a potential candidate for the Subdiaconate program, to encourage him to continue in his pursuit of his vocation. His thoughtful regard made a deep impression and has helped spur Mr. Sleiman onward in his discernment process.

Our heartfelt sentiment of thanks goes out to Bishop Shaheen for gracing our community with his presence and inspiring us with his wisdom. And our sincerest prayers are for God's blessing to remain with him. □

A Convocation For the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon to Apply the New Evangelization

"I have been found by those who did not seek me; I have shown myself to those who did not ask for me" (Rom 10:20).

Save the Date!

Eparchial (Diocesan) Convocation
Wednesday, October 3, 2012
through
Saturday, October 6, 2012

Maronite Heritage Center - St. Louis, Mo.

On behalf of His Excellency, Robert J. Shaheen, Bishop of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon, we kindly request that you save the date for the 2nd Eparchial Convocation which will be held October 3 - 6, 2012 in St. Louis, Missouri.

Following the Maronite Patriarchal Synod, the Holy Father Benedict XVI clearly placed the topic of New Evangelization at the top of the Church's agenda with its practical applications for church life.

Every pastor is cordially invited to attend along with two representatives of his parish community. Please look for more information to follow. □

Birmingham, Alabama Annual Food Festival

The St. Elias Maronite Catholic Church in Birmingham, Alabama, is having its Fourteenth Annual Lebanese Food and Cultural Festival on April 20 - 21, 2012. There is no admission charge.

In addition to the Lebanese delicacies and deserts, many cultural events explaining the rich history and tradition of the Maronite Catholic faith will be held during the two day event. Some of the cultural events will include a Heritage Room where demonstrations of the Birmingham Lebanese Community and cultural displays from Lebanon will occur. Also, daytime tours of the newly renovated Church will be held each day. The tours will include a discussion of the famous stained glass windows surrounding the Church and the use during Church services of Aramaic, the native language spoken by Jesus.

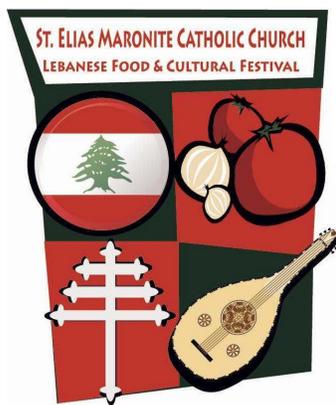
Nightly entertainment will again feature the extremely popular world-renowned Amin Sultan Band from New York outside in a tent with music and dancing from 6:00 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday. The public is also invited to attend our Liturgy service which will start at 5:00 p.m. on Saturday. Our youth will perform traditional Lebanese dances on stage. Beginning on Friday night and concluding Saturday at 8:30 p.m., a Silent Auction will be held. Donations to the Silent Auction include two original works of art by the renowned artist Nall, designer sink and faucet, jewelry, Lebanese Dinner for 12, and a Website Design and Management package.

Twenty-five percent of all proceeds for the Festival will go to local and national charities other than St. Elias. In the last thirteen years St Elias has donated over \$245,000 to other charities from Festival proceeds. Check out our website at http://www.stelias.org/festival_2012.html. □

Over \$22,000 to Charities

A portion of the proceeds of the Thirteenth Annual Lebanese Food & Cultural Festival that was held at St. Elias Maronite Catholic Church, April 29 - 30, 2011, has been given to local, national, and international charities, as follows:

- ★ \$2,000 to *Tele-Lumiere* Television Station in Lebanon
- ★ \$2,000 to the Maronite Heritage Center, St. Louis, Mo.
- ★ \$2,000 to the Birmingham Catholic Center of Concern
- ★ \$2,000 to neighboring St. Andrew Episcopal Church
- ★ \$1,000 to Her Choice
- ★ \$1,000 to Holy Family Cristo/Rey
- ★ \$500 to Birmingham YMCA
- ★ \$12,000 to the Magic City Harvest for donation of food for tornado victims



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

Be sure to mark your calendars for the Fourteenth Annual St. Elias Maronite Catholic Church Lebanese Food & Cultural Festival which is scheduled for Friday and Saturday, April 20 - 21, 2012. □

San Francisco, California St. Maron Feast Day



Our Lady of Lebanon Maronite Church, San Francisco Bay area, Calif., celebrated the Feast of St. Maron on Sunday, February 12, 2012. During the Divine Liturgy, all officers/members from the parish's different organizations/committees were blessed and installed for the year 2012. Joseph and Carmen Maroun, one of the founder families of the Maronite church in the Bay area, were awarded the Silver Massabki medals. Bshara Choufani was the recipient of the Faith of the Mountain award.

Following the Divine Liturgy, the Maroun family sponsored a reception in honor of St. Maron's Feast Day celebration. □

Cleveland, Ohio 50+ Club

St. Maron Maronite Catholic Church in Cleveland, Ohio, has been blessed with a joyful and energetic group of people who make up its 50+ Club. Members get together the first Friday of every month for Liturgy followed by a group activity. They have visited Amish country in Central Ohio, visited Frankenmuth, Mich., played cards and shared funny stories together, and participated in bible studies, and making rosaries. They are always willing to give a helping hand, and they have been the group to count on when it is time to send a mailing to the whole parish. □

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania *Pastoral Visit*



Bishop Gregory Mansour celebrates the Divine Liturgy in thanksgiving for the service of Fr. Michael Marrone.

by Suzanne M. Tavani

"From everyone to whom much has been given, much will be required; and from the one to whom much has been entrusted, even more will be demanded." These words from the gospel of St. Luke resonated with the standing-room only congregation gathered at St. Maron Church in Philadelphia, Penn., on the Sunday of Priests, January 29, 2012. On that day, His Excellency Bishop Gregory Mansour offered Divine Liturgy in thanksgiving for the service of Fr. Michael Marrone of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. Fr. Marrone, who was baptized at St. Maron and is a member of one of the Parish's oldest families, served as Parish Administrator during the two-year period of the late Msgr. Sharbel Lischaa's illness. During liturgy, Bishop Mansour noted that it was no small irony and, perhaps, a touch of divine intervention, that his visit coincided with the Sunday of Priests. He fondly remembered Msgr. Sharbel and thanked Fr. Marrone for his service to the community. A choir which included many members of Msgr. Sharbel's family as well as other parishioners provided musical accompaniment during the liturgy in both Arabic and Syriac.

Bishop Mansour also blessed some new additions to the church including new altar cloth and cases for both sacred oils and relics. Following the Liturgy, the community gathered in the Church Hall for a multi-course Lebanese meal prepared by the women of the parish. Fr. Michael was presented with a plaque from Fr. Vincent and the parishioners of St. Maron in recognition of his service to the community.

Bishop Mansour began his visit to the St. Maron community on Saturday when he, along with Fr. Vincent, visited with the sick and elderly members of the parish. Later that day he celebrated the Saturday evening Liturgy which was followed by a dinner hosted at the rectory by Fr. Vincent. Other clergy in attendance included Fr. Paul

Mouwad of St. Sharbel in Newtown Square, Pennsylvania, Fr. Elie Saade of Our Lady Star of the East Maronite Mission in Pleasantville, N.J., Fr. Michael Marrone and Fr. Michael Olivieri of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, and Deacon Joseph Regan of St. Maron's. □

Austin, Texas *Scout Sunday Presentation*



From left to right, are Den Leader and Eagle Scout Geoffrey Miller, Cub Scouts Ethan Andrew, Leo Kubelka, Isaac Ahonle, Emmanuel Ahonle, Adrian Verdict, Henry Kubelka, and Joe Kubelka. Behind them are Committee Chairperson Merlin Stephen, Committee Member Gail Miller, Monsignor Donald J. Sawyer, Cub Master Anso Andrew, and Armadillo District Director Robert Oatman. Not shown is Committee Member Margarita Morrel.

by Geoffrey Miller

Cub Scouts in Pack 1056 celebrated their partnership with Our Lady's Maronite Catholic Parish, Austin, Texas, by holding a flag ceremony for the congregation on Scout Sunday. In making this presentation, the young Cubs also commemorated the founding of the Boy Scouts of America by W.D. Boyce in February 1910 and reaffirmed their commitment to be reverent and to do their duty to God.

During the past year, pack members have participated in fun activities such as an archery lesson and fossil dig at Pioneer Farms, a tour of the Aerospace Engineering Department at the University of Texas, and a march to the capitol in the 63rd Annual Scout Parade & Report to the State of Texas. These activities and semimonthly meetings are designed to build each Scout's character, physical fitness, and citizenship.

Scouts receive guidance from adults who take on the role of Akela, the leader of the wolf pack in Rudyard Kipling's Jungle Book series. Akela figures for Pack 1056 include parents, teachers, church leaders, and parishioners. They emphasize the principles of scouting, teaching virtues that the Bible calls Christians to exhibit as God's holy people. □

Called to Radiate the Eucharist



Sister Therese Touma prays with a young woman in the chapel.

by Sister Therese Maria Touma

Over the last two years of my formation as a Maronite Servant of Christ the Light, I have experienced a beautiful growth in my own spirituality and love for the Eucharist. It is the center of who I am and an ongoing source of light for my path to wholeness and union with God. Our convent life of liturgical and communal prayer has deepened my understanding of how to approach prayer, how to surrender my will to the present moment, and to carry out my day in recollection.

As Maronite Servants, the primary purpose of our mission is to give God praise by striving for holiness following the Typicon (rule) of our congregation. We are inspired and sustained by a vowed life in community of prayer, Eucharist, and joyful communion in living the Gospel of the Lord. We offer our lives as spiritual mothers in prayer and pastoral service, working alongside our priests, praying and sacrificing for them and the needs of all our Maronite people (Adapted from our Typicon Art. 2).

In imitation of Mary, we are called as servants of the Lord to radiate the light of Christ's merciful love and hope by offering the gift of our spiritual motherhood to nurture God's life in the hearts of children, families, and peoples of all ages through works of mercy (Typicon Art. 3).

We live the monastic spirit of our Maronite spirituality through a contemplative-apostolic prayer life centered on the Eucharist. We find our strength and source of charity for the other in the Eucharist. The Eucharist is the heart of our worship, and the center of our devotional life of daily adoration which we seek to nurture in our Maronite faithful (Typicon Art. 8).

Daily, we attend Divine Liturgy and we also offer an hour of prayer in the presence of the Eucharist, entrusting to the Lord the needs of the world, the Church and community. We are particularly praying for holy vocations to the priesthood and to our Maronite Servant community, for generous supporters, and each day we offer our prayers and sacrifices

for a priest serving in our Maronite Eparchy. Please join us in our prayer intentions.

In living this Eucharistic life as a community, I am amazed how I have discovered more about the mystery of who I am, in his Radiant Light, and with His mercy and grace I am learning to embrace it all, the good and all that needs transformation and healing in my humanity and the humanity of those around me. God is so good!

Help us to spread the word about our Community especially to young women.

For more information about vocations email Sister Marla Marie: sister@maroniteservants.org. Read more about our recent events and articles at RadiateHisLight.blogspot.com. □

Vocations Discernment Weekend

The Maronite Eparchies in the United States are having a Vocations Discernment Weekend on Friday - Sunday, April 13 - 15, 2012, at the Maronite Seminary of Our Lady of Lebanon in Washington D.C.

If you are college age to 45 years old and feel that God is calling you to be a priest, come search and discover by meeting, listening, and asking our seminarians and priests.

For more information, contact your Director of Vocations,

Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon

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(612) 379-2758
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Fr. Tony Massaad
(810) 691-7055
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Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn

Fr. Dominique Hanna
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dominique_hanna@hotmail.com

If God is calling you, give Him a chance!

Deadline for next month's issue of
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of Lebanon and of the Eparchy of Saint
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Send all changes of address, news, pictures and personal correspondence to: *The Maronite Voice*
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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. □

Brooklyn, New York Saint Maron Feast Day



Anthony Houayek, recipient of the Faith of the Mountain Award, with Msgr. James Root.

by Salma T. Vahdat

Rio has its Mardi Gras and New Orleans has its final fling before the Lenten season. The Maronite community of Brooklyn, New York, celebrates the Feast of our Patron, St. Maron, just before the Lenten season begins...and celebrate we did!

Wednesday, February 8, 2012, the vigil of the feast, a liturgy was celebrated in Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral for our community. Concelebrating with the Most Reverend Gregory Mansour, the Eparchial Bishop, were Msgr. James Root, Rector, and the Pastor of the Virgin Mary Melkite Church, Rev. Antoine Rizk. The Rev. Michael Elias, Pastor of St. Mary Syrian Antiochean Orthodox Church, was also in attendance. A reception in the Cathedral's Social Hall followed the Liturgy.

Saturday, February 11, found us all gathered at the Rex Manor for the eighty-seventh annual banquet and *hafli* celebrating the feast. The program was co-chaired by Norma Haddad and Majida Mahfouz. The music, presented by Eddie Osama and his group, kept the beat up all evening and the crowd had *dabke* lines snaking throughout the room all night. This was the Lebanese version of Mardi Gras!

The highlight of the evening was the presentation of the NAM sponsored Silver Massabki Award and the Faith of the Mountain Award. These awards are given to a couple or individual who has faithfully served the Church and Community over a span of time. The recipients of the awards this year went to Marion Sahadi Ciaccia and Anthony Houayek, respectively. The devoted and dynamic Marion was so deserving of the Massabki. Not only has she served our Cathedral in her spirited fashion but she was also named "Outstanding Delegate of the Year" within the Eparchy of

Saint Maron, Mid-Atlantic East Region, at the 2011 NAM Convention. As she has said, "I love spreading our Maronite heritage..." and we know we can count on her to do that!

Anthony Houayek, now attending University, has been an altar server for many years, an inspiration to our youth and has trained the altar servers following him. He always finds time to return to us and can be counted on to serve in spite of his other activities at school. ☐

Schedule of Bishop Gregory Mansour

March 10 - 11, 2012

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

March 12, 2012

USCCB Pro-Life Meeting, Washington, D.C.

March 13 - 14, 2012

Visit to Our Lady of Lebanon Seminary, Washington, D.C.

March 15, 2012

USCCB Catechesis Meeting, Washington, D.C.

March 16 - 17, 2012

MYO/MYA Retreat, Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral, Brooklyn, N.Y.

March 18, 2012

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

March 19 - 20, 2012

Catholic University, Trustee Meeting, Washington, D.C.

March 22, 2012

Evening Prayer and Dinner, Maronite Servants of Christ the Light, Dartmouth, Mass.

March 23 - 25, 2012

Pastoral Visit to St. Theresa Church, Brockton, Mass.

March 27, 2012

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

April 1, 2012

Palm Sunday Liturgy, Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral, Brooklyn, N.Y., at 11:00 a.m., and Blessed John Paul II Mission, Westchester, N.Y., at 3:00 p.m.

April 2 - 4, 2012

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

April 5, 2012

Holy Thursday, St. Anthony Maronite Church, Danbury, Conn.

April 6 - 8, 2012

Good Friday, Holy Saturday and Easter Sunday, Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral, Brooklyn, N.Y.

April 14 - 15, 2012

Pastoral Visit to St. Joseph Church, Atlanta, Ga. ☐

The Lenten Message of His Beatitude Patriarch Bechara Peter Rai 2012

To Their Excellencies, our brothers, the Bishops, and the sons and daughters of our Maronite Church, The Priests, Deacons, the Monks and the Nuns, And all the Faithful,

Greetings and Apostolic Blessing!

The time of Great Lent, which starts on Sunday, February 19, 2012, known as the Entrance into Lent, in which the Church commemorates the sign of transforming the water into wine in Cana of Galilee, is the time of conversion in the imagery of this sign in preparation for the resurrection of hearts in the Pascal Mystery, the Mystery of the Death of Christ in expiation for our sins and His resurrection for our sanctification.¹

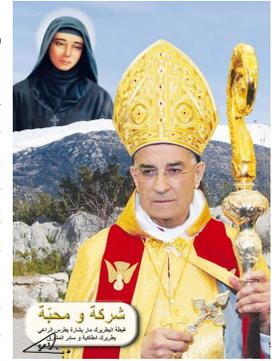
So then, it gives me pleasure to address my First Pastoral Letter on the occasion of Great Lent for 2012; and this is what I will continue doing every year, God willing. This would be in addition to the Pastoral Letter that I will address to you, year after year, on March 25, the anniversary of the start of my patriarchal service.

Great Lent – A Time of Conversion

The Son of Man, Jesus Christ, was incarnate to “make all things new”² to renew the image of God in man, which he disfigured by his sins and his evil, and to give him strength, through His Word and His grace that he may triumph over trials, instinct and distorted inclinations. Before we fasted, Jesus fasted in the wilderness for forty days, living them in austerity and prayer. He taught us how to triumph over the trials of the evil one by repeated reversion to the Word of God, living in profound inner peace.³ This is how He prepared Himself for the launching of His global redemptive and salvific mission, as He declared: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He has anointed...” and “sent me.”⁴

The time of Great Lent is a time of conversion in three dimensions: **conversion in the relationship with God** through prayer and repentance for regaining the splendor of divine sonship; **conversion in the relationship with one’s self** through fasting and mortification for the sake of freeing us from whatever may blemish this sonship and the image of God in us, for the sake of training the will to curb the distorted inclinations and instincts and for exercising self control; and, **conversion in the relationship with every human being**, especially with the needy through acts of love,

mercy and almsgiving, so as to restore our all-inclusive fellowship. The consequence of this threefold conversion is entrance into the depths of the mystery of communion and love. Great Lent is contemporaneous with nature’s springtime, which changes into a new attire in preparation for a season of giving. How befitting it is for the human person to be like nature. Thus, it is imperative that we discard this worn out pattern of life by means of mortification and repentance just as nature does in winter, and put on this robe of new life at the level of intellect and vision, acts and conduct.



Behold John the Baptist calling: “Repent, and believe in the Gospel,”⁵ and Paul the Apostle: “Do not conform yourselves to this age but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good, pleasing and perfect.”⁶

Prayer, Fasting and Almsgiving

The means of this conversion are threefold: prayer, fasting and almsgiving. These three are integrated and indivisible and form the Law of Great Lent. We say Law because it is the duty of all, and an Evangelical Law which Christ, the Lord, called for.⁷

Prayer is an existential need. The Holy Spirit, who fills the soul of the prayerful person, liberates that soul from distorted works of the flesh, as Paul the Apostle says, and fructifies it by the fruits of the Spirit, such as love, joy, peace, kindness, purity, humility and patience.⁸ Prayer brings the heart closer to the Holy Spirit who guides our life and frees it from bondage to sin. Saint John Chrysostom affirms: “It is impossible for one who prays to become a slave to sin. For prayer makes what is impossible, possible, and the difficult, easy.” Saint Alphonsus Liguori asserts: “If you pray, you are sure about saving your soul. If you do not pray, you are just as sure of losing your soul.” However, prayer springs forth from faith in God and His love. For, the one who does not believe and does not love, cannot pray, and so, be saved.⁹

(Continues on page 12)

¹ Romans 3:25

² Revelation 21:5

³ Refer to Matthew 4:1-11

⁴ Luke 4:18

⁵ Mark 1:15

⁶ Romans 12:2

⁷ Refer to Matthew 6:1, 5, and 16

⁸ Galatians 5:18-23

⁹ Refer to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 2744 - 2745

Fasting is a necessity for by self-denial of food and drink, each person expiates his/her sins and the evils he/she has done through recompense. For Christ, the Son of God, has expiated the sins and evils of all people through His Passion and Death, and He who is innocent of every personal sin¹⁰ did good to all people.¹¹

However, fasting also encompasses self-denial, from what the Apostle Paul calls: the works of the flesh, which are: immorality, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, rivalry, jealousy, outbursts of fury, acts of selfishness, dissensions, factions, occasions of envy, drinking bouts, orgies, and the like.¹² Through the words of Isaiah the Prophet, God confirms: "This, rather, is the fasting that I wish: releasing those bound unjustly, untying the thongs of the yoke; setting free the oppressed, breaking every yoke."¹³

Furthermore, fasting, aside from being an evangelical law, is also an ecclesial counsel; one of the seven counsels: "Fast the Great Lent and the rest of the imposed fasts, and abstain from meat on Friday."¹⁴ The *Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches*, in paragraph 882, requires: "On the days of penance the Christian faithful are obliged to observe fast or abstinence in the manner established by the Particular Law of their Church *sui iuris*." Our Maronite Church specifies in the Lebanese Synod that: "Great Lent, known as the Forty, starts on the Monday following the Entrance into Lent and is called Ash Monday, and then connects with the Passion Week for participation in the Redemptive Passion, and ends on the Saturday before Resurrection Sunday. There is no fasting on Sundays and Saturdays, except Holy Saturday, known as the Saturday of the Light, and the feast days that occur during Great Lent, and they are: The Presentation in the Temple, Saint Maron, Saint John Maron, the Forty Martyrs, Saint Joseph, and the Annunciation. Fasting is abstaining from food and drink from midnight till midday; as well as abstention from meat every Friday the year round, except for those feasts falling on Holy Days of Obligation, the week before the start of Great Lent, the period between Christmas and Epiphany and the period between Resurrection Sunday and Pentecost Sunday."¹⁵

Almsgiving to the poor, is an expression pertaining to the duty of justice and the commandment of brotherly love: "Love your neighbor as yourself."¹⁶ Jesus the Lord commanded: "So give alms for those things that were within;

and see, everything will be clean for you."¹⁷ And, John the Baptist: "Whoever has two cloaks should share with the person who has none."¹⁸ And James **the Apostle**: "If a brother or sister has nothing to wear and has no food for the day, and one of you says to them, 'Go in peace, keep warm, and eat well,' but you do not give them the necessities of the body, what good is it? So also faith of itself, if it does not have works, is dead."¹⁹ And John the Beloved: "If someone who has worldly means sees a brother in need and refuses him compassion, how can the love of God remain in him? Children, let us love not in word or speech but in deed and truth."²⁰

Almsgiving is the bulk of the works of mercy; through works of charity we help our brothers and sisters, whether in their temporal needs, by feeding the hungry, sheltering the homeless and the stranger, clothing the naked and visiting the sick and the imprisoned;²¹ or, in their spiritual needs by instructing, educating, advising, consoling and comforting.²²

Through the mouth of Isaiah the Prophet, God once again warns: "This, rather, is the fasting that I wish: Sharing your bread with the hungry, sheltering the oppressed and the homeless; clothing the naked when you see them... Then your light shall break forth like the dawn...; your vindication shall go before you, and the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard. Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer."²³

Christ the Redeemer is the One Who Brings About Conversion

By saying that the time of Great Lent is a time of conversion, we mean that it is a time of interior penance and a return to God, self, and others. Prayer, fasting and almsgiving are the expressive forms of this interior penance, and simultaneously, the means for receiving forgiveness of sins. For all these aims, parishes, monasteries and schools organize spiritual exercises, penitential liturgies, evangelical gatherings and pilgrimages, which the faithful ought to participate in and live out as consecrated time pleasing to God.²⁴

All these are channels of conversion, of penance, which means in its Greek utterance of "meta-noia," a radical change in one's self for the sake of its reform and the reform of its

¹⁰ Refer to 2 Corinthians 5:21

¹¹ Refer to Acts 10:38

¹² Galatians 5:19-21

¹³ Isaiah 58:6

¹⁴ The Second and Third Counsels

¹⁵ The Lebanese Synod: Chapter Four, On Feasts and Fasting; #1-3

¹⁶ Matthew 22:39

¹⁷ Luke 11:41

¹⁸ Luke 3:11

¹⁹ James 2:15-17

²⁰ 1 John 3:17-18

²¹ Matthew 25:31-46

²² *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 2447

²³ Isaiah 58:6-9

²⁴ *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1434-1435

relationship with God, self and people. However, it is Christ Jesus who brings about conversion through His Word, grace, and the power of His Holy Spirit, and attains, through repentance, its goals and fruits.

All the Gospels of the Sundays of Lent present us with examples of conversion realized by Christ in a torrent of His love and mercy toward the human person and as a physician for souls and bodies:

- ◆ **The Gospel of the Entrance into Lent** refers to the sign of transforming water into excellent quality wine at the wedding feast in Cana of Galilee,²⁵ to manifest His ability to convert the old inner person into a new creation. Through this transformation, He sows happiness and joy in the heart, as He did with the crowd and the newlyweds at the wedding feast in Cana, which means that Christ is personally the perpetual and constant joy of the human person.
- ◆ **The Gospel of the Healing of the Leper**²⁶ gives conversion the form of healing the leper from his skin sores. With a word, Jesus acceded to his request: "I do will it. Be made clean. The leprosy left him immediately." This is how conversion takes place in the soul of the penitent, removing all the disfigurements of sin.
- ◆ **The Gospel of the Healing of the Hemorrhaging Woman**²⁷ reveals another facet of conversion, which is the stopping of the hemorrhage of blood after all attempts by doctors in the course of twelve years ended up in failure. This symbolizes the cessation of the hemorrhage of spiritual, humane and moral values in the human person caused by sin.
- ◆ **The Gospel of the Prodigal Son**,²⁸ half way through the lenten period and in parable form, touches on the negative change brought about by the sin of the younger son, which transported him from the filial, dignified and abundant state to the state of estrangement, poverty and social degradation. The positive conversion, brought about by his repentance, liberated him from bondage to sin, transported him to the state of fundamental reformation through reconciliation initiated by the father, saved him from death and gave him direction after his alienation, sowing joy at home after mourning and misery at his loss.
- ◆ **The Gospel of the Healing of the Paralytic**²⁹ gives conversion two facets: Giving life back to a paralyzed man, who stood up and walked, and giving life back to the intellect, will, heart and the conscience all paralyzed by

sin. Thus, the paralytic who was healed pursued the path of truth, of the good, and of love and the calling of God.

- ◆ **The Gospel of the Healing of the Blind Man**³⁰ describes conversion in the giving of sight to the blind man's otherwise extinguished eyes, and perception to the human soul blinded by sin, which caused a straying from Christ's light, in His person, His teaching, His signs and His deeds, living in the deep darkness of evil.
- ◆ **The Gospel of Hosanna Sunday**,³¹ which is the last Sunday of Lent, makes conversion an arrival after a sea of waves and a journey in the sails of the Church, which has lasted six weeks, to the Harbor of Peace and Salvation, to Christ who enters hearts, human society and the earthly city with His peace, security and stability. With Christ, we walk through Holy Week and participate in His redemptive and salvific Passion, attaining to the dawn of His Resurrection, where conversion is a movement from the state of sin to the state of grace and new life. Thus, conversion would be the resurrection of the heart.

Appeal: Great Lent is the Season of Social Charity

We salute and encourage all initiatives expressive of social charity undertaken by school and university students and their administration, on behalf of orphanages, homes for the elderly and centers for the challenged and those pertaining to difficult cases, in conformity with the evangelical charity and mercy emanating from the Heart of God, "abounding in kindness." We also express our thanks to the commercial and industrial institutions and all people of goodwill who, on the occasion of Great Lent, as well as other occasions, are generous toward poor and needy families, whether by direct means or through the ecclesial and civil benevolent and social organizations. We appreciate, on this occasion, the financial assistance extended by the eparchies and the monastic orders, especially those directed at Catholic schools and universities and the hospitals, thus, reducing the burden on parents and students. We commend all benefactors who undertake development projects in the regions on the industrial, agricultural and investment levels, as they provide encouraging job opportunities and economic activity.

In view of the deteriorating economic and social conditions and the state of poverty which is expanding, we direct our call to all in the Church, to society and to the government so that they may commit themselves to social charity according to the social teaching of the Church, which is based on two principles: First: "God intended the earth with everything contained in it for the use of all human beings and peoples;" Second: private property has a social quality which is based on the law of the common destination of earthly goods." We recognize from this teaching, to which is added the principle of solidarity and interconnection between people, the obligation of social charity based on the sharing of the

²⁵ John 2:10-11

²⁶ Mark 1:35-45

²⁷ Luke 8:40-56

²⁸ Luke 15:11-32

²⁹ Mark 2:1-12

³⁰ Mark 10:46-52

³¹ John 12:12-22

material, cultural, developmental and moral riches of the earth.

The Church for her part is called upon to utilize her goods, which are in the form of endowments, meaning they are reserved for the service of the mission and aiding the poor, for these two equivalent aims. The poor and the needy are altogether the share of the Church anyway; rather, her treasures, because, in them, identified, is the face of Christ.

Also, the political authority is called upon to utilize the State's capabilities, its possessions, public funds, facilities, ports, taxes, fees and the national economy for the sake of the common good, so that citizens may live in abundance, a dignified life. One of the first duties of the political authority, the state, is to care for poor and needy citizens so that they may have a sense of belonging to their nation and have pride in that.

The Venerable Pope Pius XII taught that "Whoever owns, does so for the sake of all. This is an obliging Christian truth." Blessed Pope John Paul II, after him, taught that "Denying this truth and not committing to the help of the poor, these two are imitations of the Rich Man who ignored wretched Lazarus lying at the gate of his house." Saint John Chrysostom warns resolutely: "Not to share our own wealth with the poor is theft from the poor and deprivation of their means of life; we do not possess our own wealth, but theirs." Thus, we are all called to participate in the monetary and material contributions, each according to his ability, to help our brothers and sisters, the poor and needy, by virtue of the command of the Church: Give what is due, that is, the tenth, which is aid motivated by love, through the gate of justice, because we are returning to them what is originally their right. This is our evangelical culture and the teaching of our Church.

The Year of the Holy Bible

The Church in Lebanon has declared 2012 as the Year of the Holy Bible pursuant to the recommendation of the Special Assembly for the Middle East of the Synod of Bishops, which convened in Rome during October of 2010. We are awaiting the promulgation of the Apostolic Exhortation subsequent to this Synod.

Along with Their Excellencies, the Bishops, the Superiors General and the Mothers Superior, we wish to initiate the Year of the Holy Bible, especially in Lenten retreats, whether they take place in the parishes, monasteries or schools. We invite the faithful to participate in them, because "Your Word is a lamp for my feet, a light for my path." The need of our souls for the Word is as the need of our bodies for bread. In accordance with the utterance of the Lord Jesus: "One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes forth from the "mouth of God." How beautiful it would be if we make the season of fasting from food a season of reclining at the table of the Lord's Word for the sake of nourishing the soul, intellect and heart and its embodiment in good deeds, initiatives and stands! O, how we wish that every believer would read a text from the Gospels and the Books of the New Testament every day!

It is worthy of preachers and spiritual directors to extract their homilies, reflections and talks from the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Verbum Domini* (On the Word of God in the Life and Mission of the Church), which was promulgated by His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI on the 30th of September, 2010, subsequent to the General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, which convened in Rome from the 5th to the 26th of October, 2010, under the title: The Word of God in the Life and Mission of the Church. His Holiness says that it is the duty of Christian people to come to know the Word of God and its effect in life and in the mission, that they may "confront the new challenges which the present time sets before Christian believers," and live a spiritual renewal emanating from delving into "the Word of the Lord which remains forever."

Let all Servants of the Word strive to attain the goals which this Apostolic Exhortation decrees; and they are:

- ◆ Discovering the Word of God as a spring of perpetual renewal in the life of believers and that of the Church, and so, "in our personal relationship with the sacred Scriptures, their interpretation in the liturgy and catechesis, and in scientific research, the Bible may not be simply a word from the past, but a living and timely word." This discovery and renewal presuppose listening and meditating, as well as the return of the heart, for the sake of retaining God's Word and also openness to the perpetual Pentecost based on love for the Holy Scriptures;
- ◆ Striving ever more to place the Word of God at the heart of every ecclesial activity through appropriate Biblical enculturation at all levels and invigorating apostolic endeavors with the Biblical spirit;
- ◆ Aiding "all the faithful to renew their personal and communal encounter with Christ, the Word of life made visible, and to become His heralds, so that the gift of divine life - communion - can spread ever more fully throughout the world. Indeed, sharing in the life of God, a Trinity of love, is complete joy...to encounter the God who speaks to us and shares His love so that we might have life in abundance;"
- ◆ "Embarking on the New Evangelization," based on the indisputable efficacy of the Word of God, "especially in those nations where the Gospel has been forgotten or meets with indifference as a result of widespread secularism;" and,
- ◆ "Emphasizing the centrality of biblical studies within ecumenical dialogue aimed at the full expression of the unity of all believers in Christ. All of this can only strengthen our conviction that by listening and meditating together on the Scriptures, we experience a real, albeit not yet full, communion."

Conclusion: Echo of His Holiness the Pope

In conclusion, we call for what His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI called for in his message for Great Lent 2012, dated November 3, 2011.

Beginning with the words of the Letter to the Hebrews: "Let us be concerned for each other, to stir a response in love and good works." His Holiness calls for three things:

1. Pay attention to the other and take care of him/her, thus, "solidarity, justice, mercy and compassion will naturally well up in our hearts. Concern for others entails desiring what is good for them from every point of view: physical, moral and spiritual," as in the parable of the Good Samaritan;
2. Reciprocity amongst us in the spirit of communion and love abiding by the directions of the Apostle Paul: "just as I try to please everyone in every way, not seeking my own benefit but that of the many, that they may be saved," ... "let each of us please our neighbor for the good, for building up." "Let us then pursue what leads to peace and to building up one another;"
3. Walking toward holiness by living a life of love and accomplishing good deeds, this is an all-encompassing Christian call to holiness. Caring for the other and reciprocity in performing good deeds, both aim at encouraging one another toward active ever increasing love, because "the path of the just is like shining light, that grows in brilliance till perfect day."

We raise our prayers to God in the time of Lent, which is the acceptable time, with the intercession of our mother, the Blessed Virgin Mary, and our father, Saint Maron, imploring the grace to make of Lent an opportunity of inner conversion as we turn a yellowish page in our lives, and start a walk of comprehensive renewal in our personal relationship with God, self and every human person. So, may daily prayer emanating from the Holy Bible elevate us to the universe of God that we may obtain from Him the values of the Spirit, and may Lent free us from the bonds of the flesh, and let charity open up our hearts to the love that grows as the light of dawn grows in brilliance until perfect day. And, may the hymn of glory and praise, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, rise from every mouth, now and forever. Amen.

From our See in *Bkerke*, February 9, 2012, the Feast of our Father, Saint Maron

+Bechara Peter Rai
Patriarch of Antioch and all the East ☐



Where is Syria Heading?

by Archbishop Samir Nassar
Maronite Archbishop of Damascus, Syria

Globalization of the Crisis

From a small demonstration in the south of Syria on March 15, 2011, the crisis has spread, like an oil stain, to almost every Syrian town. This has been a rebellion without a face, driven by the Internet and the electronic media. From a local crisis to a regional crisis, after one year Syria has been transformed into a place of international conflict in which political, military and economic interests are determining the future of the country... leaving the door open to violence and extreme suffering.

Facing A Stalemate

This conflict seems to be running out of control. On the one side is a muscular central power, bent on holding sway, and on the other a determined popular uprising that refuses to subside or put down its arms, despite the intensity of the violence. In this conflict, which is paralysing the country - with an economic embargo, inflation, a 60% devaluation of the local currency, galloping unemployment, destruction, displacement of populations and thousands of victims - it is the little people who suffer. They are subjected to enormous pressures and sufferings that only grow with the passing of time and the hatred that divides and the poverty that is spreading, in the absence of any charitable and humanitarian relief movements. Syria appears to be locked in a situation of murderous stalemate.

Fear and Anguish

This inescapable situation is stoking the fears of the faithful, who say goodbye to each other at the end of every Mass, so uncertain are they of a continuing future... The closure of the embassies in Damascus has made it impossible to obtain a visa and further reduced the possibility of leaving the country, above all for the Iraqi refugees, of whom there are many still living here. The young people in first-time employment, who have been the victims of mass layoffs, take a very dim view of this diplomatic embargo, which has only made their plight still worse.

The world no longer wants anything to do with us and is closing the door on us, they think. This same anxiety is affecting even the priests, some of whom are quietly seeking more tranquil skies. What will become of the Church in Syria without them? The adventure with Christ is certainly not made any easier.

The Safe Refuge

In the midst of this great turmoil and sharp division, the victims of this crisis have found their only refuge in the family.... Without doubt the family is proving to be the sole safety net, a place of life and welcome that cares, protects, consoles, shares and defends with love and affection, in a marvelous spirit of solidarity... This basic cell absorbs the shocks, and to it the uprooted, the wounded, the unemployed all return. (*Continues on page 15*)

Brockton, Massachusetts Saint Maron and Saint Valentine's Day

by Michelle Nessralla and Ghazi Saab

Many spirits were lifted with joy as Fr. Tony Mouanes and the parish family of Saint Theresa Church, Brockton, Mass., celebrated the Feast Days of Saint Maron and Saint Valentine in grand style with our February 11, 2012, *Haflī* in which hundreds of friends and guests from the greater Brockton Area gathered together for this fun and festive occasion. A sense of miraculous wonder initially took root as the snowstorm forecasted for that day blew into the ocean, keeping local roads safe and dry for travelers.

A wide array of live entertainment included the singing of the American and Lebanese National Anthems performed by the children of the parish, the local jazz band *Mystique*, opening songs by Ra'Waa, and finally, famed singer Nicolas Osta, who sang with much exuberance, energy and talent. With an eclectic selection of music and songs, guests enthusiastically took to the dance floor to *dabke* the night away.

Fr. Tony, with his trademark charismatic style, delivered a jubilant and heartfelt welcome to all guests, especially to fellow clergymen Chorbishop Joseph Lahoud, Reverend Georges El-Khalli of Our Lady of Lebanon in Jamaica Plain, Reverend Tony Saab of Saint Anthony Church in Lawrence, and Msgr. Fahed Azar, also of Saint Anthony Church, who graciously delivered the blessing of the meal.

Ghazi Saab, Co-Chair for the event, acknowledged the financial support and generosity of the sponsors for the *haflī*: Cedar's International Foods, Haddad's Travel, Profile News, the Prone Family Foundation, Hannoush Jewelers, Right Deal Motors, and Near East Bakery. Ghazi also thanked all guests, because their collective support, united presence and warm camaraderie helped ensure a successful and entertaining event.

Ghazi Saab and Co-Chair Mirna Issa spearheaded the months-long preparation and organization for this *haflī*; members of the planning committee were Joyce Nessralla, Flavia Saade, Antoinette Gebrael, Charlie El-Helou, and Charlie Saab.

As special and memorable as the evening was, Sunday's well-attended liturgy was made even more so with the presence and participation of Nicolas Osta, who graciously served on the altar and sang hymns and prayers with Fr. Tony and the choir and parishioners of Saint Theresa Church. His melodic voice filled our church and lifted our spirits, and for this exceptional blessing, this unique joy, we are deeply appreciative. □

Houston, Texas Family Retreat

Our Lady of the Cedars Maronite Catholic Church in Houston, Texas, held its annual Family Retreat February 10 - 12, 2012, at Camp Allen Episcopal Conference and Retreat Center in Navasota, Texas. The

theme for the 2012 Family Retreat was Forgiveness and Confession.

The Retreat began on Friday evening with a meal followed by evening prayer and then a campfire. Saturday morning began with Morning Prayer led by Fr. Pierre El Khoury. The children of the parish went then to their own meeting rooms for activities designed to teach them about the meaning of forgiveness, when adults and teens stayed in the main gathering space for a talk on forgiveness given by Fr. Pierre. After the talk, participants gathered in the chapel for a half hour of meditation and Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. In the afternoon the children took part in a scavenger hunt while the adults and teens discussed the morning session. Following the discussion Fr. Pierre talked about the power of the Sacrament of Confession. After the last talk of the day there was an opportunity for participants to receive the Sacrament of Penance. The evening ended with a campfire and music. The retreat ended on Sunday with a Divine Liturgy.

A total of 166 participants attended the 2012 Family Retreat and plans are already underway for the 2013 Family Retreat. □

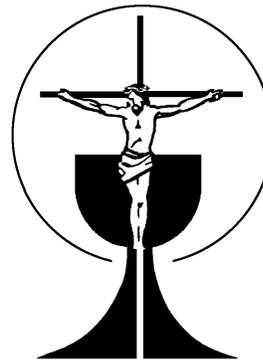
Where is Syria Heading

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The family is the fortress in this chaotic void and the place that guarantees the survival of society and of the Church... And so, faced with this crisis, this same Church has chosen to focus all its efforts and its prayers on the family, by supplying it with all the assistance and support at her disposal. What a grace it is to be able to rely, during this Calvary, on the family - damaged and vulnerable indeed, but remaining united, close-knit, solid, prayerful and faith-filled.

We are so far from an early end to this crisis and the storm seems to be blowing more fiercely than ever as we approach the second year. There is still no light at the end of the tunnel. Where is Syria heading?

As we enter the season of Lent, we do so in silence, our hands empty, our hearts constricted and our gaze fixed on the Risen Christ, who will guide our steps on the path of forgiveness and peace. □



HHS Mandate and Religious Liberty

Dear Brothers and Sisters:

There can no longer be any doubt that religious liberty in our country is in jeopardy. On January 20, 2012, the United States Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) with the approval of the President, issued a new federal mandate making coverage of all abortive drugs, sterilization, and FDA-approved contraceptives obligatory for virtually all employees, including those working in faith-based institutions.

The new mandate is the first federal regulation in our nation's history to require all religious institutions to pay for this coverage. Now nearly all those who provide insurance must comply. To force people to provide these mandated services that violates both their faith conviction and their freedom is just not right in the land of the free. (see www.stmaron.org/blog)

The President has recently made a much publicized "compromise". However, this is no real compromise, for the burden of responsibility has simply shifted from employers to insurance companies to provide these services "for free." In our case, some of these insurance companies are owned and operated by the Church so that we may insure ourselves.

By continuing this insistence on this mandate, the Administration has ignored the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States. Please visit www.usccb.org/conscience to learn more about this mandate, which not only strikes a blow to religious liberty, but also the free exercise of conscience.

Yours in Christ,

+Gregory John Mansour
Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn
March 6, 2012

Chicago, Illinois Pastor's Farewell Reception

by Pierrette Malek

"Have you ever heard someone say they love 'Goodbyes'? Of course not. That's because they are hard, and when you really love the one leaving, they hurt. So that's where I am today..." explained Mrs. Bobbi Sfire, Director of the Religious Education program at Our Lady of Lebanon Church in Lombard [Chicago], Illinois. The goodbye she is referring to is for Chorbishop Alfred Badawi, Pastor.

In December 2011, Chorbishop Badawi announced his departure from Our Lady of Lebanon in Lombard to St. Sharbel and St. Rafka in Detroit, Michigan.

Although the parish hoped to grow with Chorbishop



Farewell reception for Chorbishop Badawi.

Badawi for many more years, it understands that such circumstances are common in priesthood and respect the Bishop's decision. The parish thanked Chorbishop Badawi for his service with a farewell luncheon on Sunday, January 8, 2012. During the luncheon, Subdeacon William Nijim; Religious Education Director Bobbi Sfire; Maronite Youth Organization Advisor Pierrette Malek; and Liturgical Committee Chair Cathy Awad gave farewell speeches. The speakers, close friends and colleagues of Chorbishop Badawi, shared their gratitude for the empowerment he brought to Our Lady of Lebanon and their confidence in his upcoming success in Detroit, Michigan.

The Parish Pastoral Council and Board of Trustees also hosted a farewell banquet for Chorbishop Badawi on Saturday, January 21. Over 400 attendees bid Chorbishop Badawi farewell. Samuel Ibrahim, Sr., Board of Trustees; Deacon John Sfire; Julie Kozaili, Music Director; Joseph Shaker, Board of Trustees; Sami Daou, President of the Parish Pastoral Council; and Anthony Shaker, Board of Trustees; shared their memorable moments and connection to Chorbishop Badawi.

In describing Msgr.'s uncompromising commitment to the Church, Julie Kozaili noted: "Along the way, there were many times where things got too hard or too stressful and where it would've been much easier to give up ... But knowing Msgr.'s passion, we would not give up...If I want to criticize, I would say that he was at times too much of a perfectionist, demanding more of himself than of others, and always leading by example; he would often not ask you to do something, rather, he would start doing it and if you wanted, you were welcome to join in. On many occasions, I found myself reminding him that it is okay to only have two new hymns in one liturgy instead of five; it's only human!"

Chorbishop Badawi's time at Our Lady of Lebanon in Lombard was a blessing to the parish, and we continue to see that blessing as we welcome and get to know Father Charles Khachan and his many talents. □



San Antonio, Texas, Prepares for the 49th Annual Maronite Convention

by Miriam Wells and Robert Beathe

The St. George Convention committee in San Antonio, Tex., recently had a planning meeting for the 49th NAM convention. With the convention being a short four months away, the committees are hard at work preparing for our guests. This year's convention starts on July 4, 2012, and everyone has been working on a full schedule of informative, inspiring workshops, colorful excursions and fun events for the evenings' entertainment.

Robert Beathe, the workshop chairman, feels our annual conventions are noted for their many activities, not the least of which are its workshops. Remember NAM's mission is to preserve our religious heritage, and workshops offer a way in which we can accomplish our goal. San Antonio will offer new and exciting vehicles for learning and growth.

Workshops

Church Fundraising

How often have we been appointed to a committee or helped plan a church event whose goal was to raise money? Fundraising is both an art and a science and this year we are privileged to have Mr. John Kurey, an expert on the subject, who is going to share his expertise with us.

Maronite Antiochene Spirituality

No convention would be complete without the Rector of our Maronite Seminary, Chorbishop Seely Beggiani to impart his vast knowledge of Eastern Spirituality. This year he will discuss "deification," the role of the Holy Spirit, and the differences between the Latin and Maronite (Eastern) Spirituality.

Effective Church Leadership by the Laity

Many times we are elected or appointed to positions of leadership within our parish without knowing what our specific responsibilities and legal abilities are. Church (Canon) Law defines the role of the laity in parish leadership and offers workable guidelines that aid the Pastor and the laity. Fr. Abdallah Zaidan and noted clerics from both eparchies will explain what is expected from both sides.

Maronite Faith Formation Catechists

While Maronites share the same faith as all Catholics, we come from a different tradition that is unique and priceless. One of the ways we preserve our heritage is by making sure our children are catechized by teachers who are totally versed in Maronite Spirituality and Theology. Deacon Lou Peters

will help guide the current and future faith formation teachers on the best way of accomplishing this goal. While the purpose of this workshop is to aid teachers, this workshop is open to everyone who is interested in this topic.

Property in Lebanon

Ever thought about owning real property in Lebanon? It can be a very difficult process. Rev. Fadi Tabet, M.L.M., has made a film discussing the purchase of property by foreigners. (All workshops are tentative).

Highlights of the Evening Events

Wednesday, July 4: "Stars, Stripes and Spurs"

A bootstrappin' star shootin' celebration. Entertainment performed by the *Gary Glenn Band*

Thursday, July 5: "Stars Over St. George"

Middle Eastern cuisine and an Evangelical concert performed by the renowned Fr. Fadi Tabet, M.L.M.

Friday, July 6: "Taste of San Antonio"

A night full of San Antonio flavor/silent and live auction Entertainment performed by Patsy Torres, an international recording star, and Zeina, a Lebanese star

Saturday, July 7: "Deep in the Heart of Texas"

Grand Banquet (black-tie optional). Entertainment performed by the Lebanese super-star Nicolas El Osta

Excursions

Thursday, July 5: San Antonio Shopping Tour

Tour and shop at the Guenther House, Gini Art Glass and the Mexican Market

Friday, July 6: San Antonio Mission Tour

Tour some of our most famous missions with stops at Mission San Jose and the Alamo

Saturday, July 7: San Antonio Culture Tour

Tour and shop at the Pearl, La Villita and the Arneson River Theater

All optional excursions are \$25.00 each. All tours depart at 9:00 a.m. (load bus 15 minutes prior to departure) and return at 11:45 a.m.

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



Pre Registration Deadline: Monday, June 11, 2012

Please complete all information, or Register on line: www.namnews.org
 Incomplete forms will not be processed. Please **PRINT** legibly - You will receive an E-mail confirmation



ALL DATA MUST BE COMPLETE !

Primary Registrant - Please add additional family members on reverse side

First & Last Name:		Check all that apply:	<input type="checkbox"/> Convention Committee
Address:		<input type="checkbox"/> NAM Member	<input type="checkbox"/> NAM Board
City/State/Zip:		<input type="checkbox"/> NAM Delegate	<input type="checkbox"/> Order of Saint Sharbel
Parish & City:		<input type="checkbox"/> Child (5 - 11 yrs.)	<input type="checkbox"/> Young Professionals 21 - 35 yrs.
E-mail:	Primary Phone:	<input type="checkbox"/> Youth 12 - 18 yrs. Age: _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Young Adult 18-35 yrs. Age: _____
Package / Day Program / Excursions Purchased:		<input type="checkbox"/> VEGETARIAN	<input type="checkbox"/> Single Adult Maronite (36 - ?)

PACKAGES ONLY - Enter # of packages desired and make sure to fill-in Totals & Grand Totals

NAM Members, whose 2012 dues have been paid, will receive \$15 off the Full Adult Package and \$10 off other packages. This discount is VOID after the pre-registration deadline of June 15, 2012. Late registration for excursions and Day Event Options will be subjected to \$20 Late Fee per person. The Covenant of Behavior MUST be completed and SIGNED for all CHILD and YOUTH Registrants. Adult, Youth & Child Packages do NOT include optional excursions

Package Options Does not include Hotel Rooms	ADULT 18 YEARS OLD +		Youth 12 to 18 yrs.		CHILD 5 to 11 yrs.		Entertainment Only Under 35 Only - No Meals Included Entry after 10pm - Valid ID Required	
	PRE	LATE	PRE	LATE	PRE	LATE	PRE	LATE
FULL (WED. - SUN)	# ___ @ \$300	# ___ @ \$330	# ___ @ \$270	# ___ @ \$300	# ___ @ \$185	# ___ @ \$215	# ___ @ \$120	# ___ @ \$150
LONG WEEKEND (THU. - SUN)	# ___ @ \$270	# ___ @ \$300	# ___ @ \$240	# ___ @ \$270	# ___ @ \$160	# ___ @ \$190	# ___ @ \$100	# ___ @ \$130
WEEKEND (FRI. - SUN)	# ___ @ \$240	# ___ @ \$270	# ___ @ \$210	# ___ @ \$240	# ___ @ \$140	# ___ @ \$170	# ___ @ \$80	# ___ @ \$110
SATURDAY & SUNDAY	# ___ @ \$185	# ___ @ \$215	# ___ @ \$155	# ___ @ \$185	# ___ @ \$95	# ___ @ \$125	# ___ @ \$60	# ___ @ \$90
TOTALS	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$

Day Programs

Thur. thru Sat. • Child # ___ at \$35* • Fri. and Sat. Child # ___ at \$25*

Thur. thru Sat. • Youth # ___ at \$100* • Young Adults # ___ at \$115* • Young Professionals # ___ at \$115*

Fri. and Sat. • Youth # ___ at \$80* • Young Adults # ___ at \$95* • Young Professionals # ___ at \$95*

** These events are age specific. Onsite and late registration will incur a \$20 late fee*

Optional Excursions

Thursday, July 5 - San Antonio Shopping Tour (Transportation & Tour) 9 am - 11:45 am	# ___ X \$25 = \$
Friday, July 6 - San Antonio Missions Tour (Transportation & Tour) 9 am - 11:45 am	# ___ X \$25 = \$
Saturday, July 7 - San Antonio Cultural Tour (Transportation & Tour) 9 am - 11:45 am	# ___ X \$25 = \$

Grand Total \$

Make checks payable to "NAM Convention" and mail to: **NAM - P.O. Box 717 - Yonkers, NY 10702-4611**

If using a **credit card** - complete the information below - **DO NOT SEND CASH**

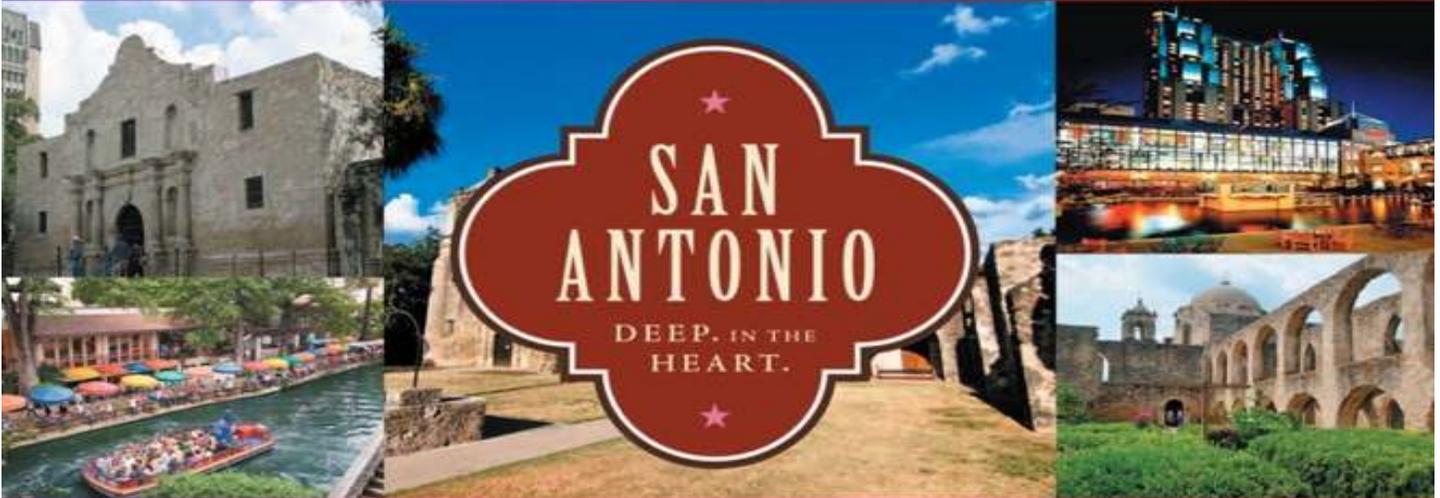
Credit Card: Visa M C Am Ex Discover Acct # _____ Exp. Date: _____

V-code (3 or 4 digit # on front / back of card) _____ Signature: _____

OFFICE USE ONLY: AMT. PD: _____ DATE: _____ CHK#: _____ REG.# _____

For Hotel Reservations call The Marriott Rivercenter Hotel 1-877-622-3056 - code: NAM Convention or link to <https://resweb.passkey.com/go/maronites2012>. Convention room rate \$125.00 per room per night.

The 49th Annual *Maronite Convention* July 4 thru 8, 2012



The Maronite Mission...UNITING...Faith, Heritage and Community

WORKSHOPS

Church Fundraising Maronite Antiochene Spirituality Effective Church Leadership by the Laity
Maronite Faith Formation Catechists Land and Identity - A film "End of a Dream" by Fr. Fadi Tabet, MLM

EXCURSIONS

San Antonio Shopping Tour San Antonio Missions Tour San Antonio Culture Tour

EVENING ENTERTAINMENT

NAM
National Apostolate of Maronites

THE MARONITE MISSION...
DEEP IN THE HEART

www.namnews.org

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A bootstrappin' star shootin' celebration.
Entertainment performed by the *Gary Glenn Band*

Thursday July 5 - "Stars Over St. George"

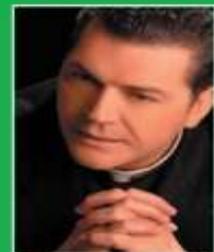
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A night full of San Antonio flavor / silent & live auction.
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Fady Faysal - An international recording star
Zena - A Lebanese star

Saturday July 7 - "Deep in the Heart of Texas"

Grand Banquet...Black-Tie Optional
Entertainment performed by
The Lebanese super star *Nicolas El Osta*



Hosted by St. George Maronite Church - 6070 Babcock Road - San Antonio, Tx. 78240 For Info visit us at www.NAM2012.org

Detroit, Michigan Saint Maron Feast Day



Altar server Karam Karam, Fr. Nabil Habshe, Msgr. Baz main celebrant, Chorbishop Badawi, Deacon John Sfeir and Subdeacon Mike.

On Saturday, February 4, 2012, the Maronite Community of greater Detroit, Mich., joined together to celebrate the feast of Saint Maron. The community was drawn together for this celebration by our Pastors, Msgr. Louis Baz, Pastor of St. Maron Church in Detroit, and by Chorbishop Alfred Badawi, Pastor of St. Sharbel in Warren and the Administrator of the Mission of St. Rafka in Livonia. A joint committee was formed with representatives of all three Churches to plan and organize the event. The Committee selected Dr. Daher Rahi as Chairman of the event with the assistance of Toni Maalouf as the Co-Chairman. The evening began with a Divine Liturgy concelebrated by our Pastors and Fr. Nabil Habshe, of the Order of the Blessed Mother Mary located in Ann Arbor, Mich. Christian Yasso led a joint choir of all three Churches. Following the Liturgy over 500 people attended a banquet that held at the Barrister

Gardens in St. Clair Shores, Mich. Three groups of *Dabke* Dancers from St. Sharbel and a performance by Sumaya Aziz and her Band provided the entertainment.

The three speakers of the evening, Dr. Rahi, Msgr. Baz, and Chorbishop Badawi all expressed how great it was to see all three Churches together for a joyous celebration. □

Eparchy of Saint Maron Protopresbyter Appointment

His Excellency Bishop Gregory Mansour, Bishop of the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn, has made the following Eparchial appointment effective, February 1, 2012:

Father Rodolphe Wakim has been appointed as Protopresbyter of the Mid-Atlantic West Region.

The following have been appointed as Alternate Protopresbyters for all of the five Eparchial Regions:

Chorbishop John Faris:	Mid Atlantic Region
Chorbishop Joseph Kaddo:	New England Region
Reverend Bassam Saade:	Far South Region
Reverend Anthony Salim:	Mid Atlantic West Region
Monsignor George Sebaali:	South Region

The protopresbyter is a priest who is placed over a particular region of the eparchy, consisting of several parishes or eparchial institutions (CCEO c.276). □

Available From St. Maron Publications

The Documents of the Maronite Patriarchal Synod are available (in Arabic) from Saint Maron Publications for \$15, plus \$5 shipping and in English for \$25 plus \$5 shipping.

To order your copy (ies) please write to:

Saint Maron Publications
4611 Sadler Road, Glen Allen, Virginia 23060. □