



The Maronite Voice

A Publication of the Maronite Eparchies in the USA



Volume VII

Issue No. VIII

September 2011

The Holy Cross, the Universal Symbol of Christianity, Identifies Our Faith. It Is Our Sign of Hope. There Is Hope Beyond Our Suffering, Our Failures and Our Loss

On September 14, we celebrate one of our greatest feasts of the Eastern Churches: The Exaltation of the Cross. It has two historical commemorations: the dedication of the Church of the Resurrection built by Emperor Constantine in Jerusalem in 335, and the return of the Holy Cross to Jerusalem under Emperor Heraclius in 614. However, on a theological perspective, it highlights the precious redemption of Christ's salvific redemption by sacrificing His life for our sake. On a spiritual perspective, it underlies the importance of the symbol and reality of the Cross in the daily life of every Christian man or woman.

For some, the Cross of Christ is just a piece of wood. For us, it is a summary of the suffering, death and resurrection of Christ by which we have been redeemed. It is a symbol of our faith in the crucified and Risen One, our Lord Jesus Christ. The *Sedro* of the *Ramsho* of our Divine Office beautifully highlights the importance of this feast:

“The Cross is the foundation of victory and triumph; the hope of believers and the source of life; it is the key of heaven and the wood of salvation; the Cross is the light of the universe and the torch to the right path... the Cross is the assurance of faith, the joy of hope and the perfection of love.”

The Holy Cross became the universal symbol of Christianity. It decorates our churches and identifies our faith. It is also our sign of hope. When we look on the Holy Cross, we can believe that there is hope beyond our suffering, our failures, and our loss. The Cross is a sign of addition, of reconciliation by bringing us vertically to God the Father and horizontally as brothers and sisters to each other.

The feast of the Exaltation of the Cross brings us to the last season of our Liturgical Year. It shifts our attention to the *Parousia*, the second coming of Christ in glory to judge the living and the dead.



The Crucifixion of Jesus by Fr. Abdo Badwi, University of Holy Spirit, Kaslik, Lebanon (USEK), Department of Sacred Art.

(Continues on page 20)

Schedule of Bishop Robert Shaheen

September 14 - 16, 2011

Presbyteral Council Meeting. St Louis, Mo.

September 17 - 18, 2011

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

September 22 - 23, 2011

50th Anniversary of Our Lady of Lebanon Maronite Seminary, Washington D.C.

September 29, 2011

Knights of Columbus, Clergy Dinner at Saint Maron Church, Detroit, Mich.

September 30 - October 1, 2011

100 Years Celebration, Saint Maron Church, Detroit, Mich.

October 3 - 8, 2011

Meeting of the Maronite Bishops of the Expansion, Heritage Institute, St. Louis, Mo. □

The Maronite Voice

4611 Sadler Road

Glen Allen, VA 23060

Phone: 804/270-7234

Fax: 804/273-9914

E-Mail: gmsebaali@aol.com

<http://www.stmaron.org>

<http://www.usamaronite.org>

The Maronite Voice, (ISSN 1080-9880) the official newsletter of the Maronite Eparchies in the U.S.A. (Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon of Los Angeles and Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn), is published monthly.

Send all changes of address, news, pictures and personal correspondence to *The Maronite Voice* at the above captioned address. Subscription rates are \$20.00 per year. Advertising rates are available upon request.

Publishers

- Most Reverend Bishop Robert Joseph Shaheen
- Most Reverend Bishop Gregory John Mansour

Editor Msgr. George M. Sebaali

Consultor Fr. Abdallah Zaidan, M.L.M.

Editing and proofreading

Mary Shaia

Anne-Marie Condlin

Printed in Richmond, Virginia.

Maronite Convention 2012

St. George Maronite Church

San Antonio, Texas

July 2 - 8, 2012

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



Eparchial Condolences

Linda Kayrouz, The mother of Fr. Elie Kayrouz, Pastor of St. John Maron Church in Buffalo, N.Y., passed away on July 27, 2011 after a long battle with cancer. She was predeceased by her husband, Ghassan. She is survived by six sons in addition to Father Elie and one daughter, and several grandchildren.

Condolences can be sent to Father Elie Kayrouz, Saint John Maron Church, 2040 Wehrle Drive, Williamsville, New York 14221.

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 Fr. Elie and his family. May the Lord God grant Linda eternal rest in His Kingdom and consolation to her family and loved ones.

Jean Fisher, the mother of Fr. David Fisher, Pastor of Saint Anthony of Padua Church in Cincinnati, Ohio, passed away on July 20, 2011 in Columbus, Ohio. Condolences may be sent to Fr. David Fisher, c/o St. Anthony of Padua Church, 2530 Victory Parkway, Cincinnati, OH 45206.

Bishop Robert Shaheen, along with the clergy and faithful of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon, extend their heartfelt sympathy and the promise of our prayers to Fr. David and his family. May the Lord God grant Jean eternal rest in His Kingdom and consolation to her family and loved ones.

David Riemer, the brother of Fr. Anthony Weiler, passed away in Cathedral City, California. In addition to Father Weiler, David is survived by his wife, Judith, seven children as well as one sister, Joan Bennett of Milford, Massachusetts.

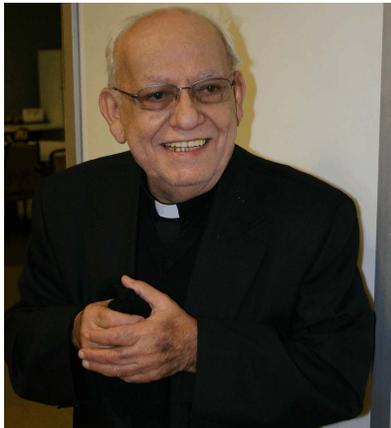
Condolences may be sent to Father Anthony Weiler, 4230 The Terraces, Shelburne, VT 05482.

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 Fr. Anthony and his family. May the Lord God grant David eternal rest in His Kingdom and consolation to his family and loved ones. □



Philadelphia, Pennsylvania *Death of Retired Pastor*

Msr. Sharbel Lischaa, the retired Pastor of Saint Maron Church in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, passed away on August 2, 2011, after a long illness. He was predeceased by his parents, Semaan and Hannie, and he is survived by two sisters, Maren, who lives in Australia, and Manira in Lebanon. He is also survived by several nieces and nephews.



Msgr. Sharbel was born on the Feast of Saint Maron, February 9, 1933, in *Mejdlaya*, Lebanon. In 1941, at the age of eight, he entered the monastery to become a Monk of the Lebanese Maronite Order. He was ordained to the priesthood in *Kaslik*, Lebanon, on May 21, 1961.

Msgr. Sharbel served as the principal of Saint George School in *Achach*, Lebanon, from 1961-1963, and at the National College of *Seqa* from 1963-1965. From 1968 to 1971 he served as the Treasurer of the Monastery of Our Lady of *Sacure* and was the Superior there from 1971-1974. In 1974, he came to the United States to serve as a priest of the Eparchy of Saint Maron, and he was assigned as Pastor of Saint Maron Church in Philadelphia, Penn., where he served until his retirement in 2010. During his tenure at Saint Maron's, he built a new church and soon became loved and respected by his parishioners, his neighbors, and his brother priests. He was given the title of Monsignor in 1985.

Msgr. Sharbel's wake and *Ginnaz* for a priest were held at St. Maron Church in Philadelphia on August 7. His Funeral Liturgy was celebrated on Monday, August 8.

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 Msgr. Sharbel's family, to all of the parishioners and friends of Saint Maron Church in Philadelphia, and to all those who knew, loved and cared for him. May the Lord God grant his servant Sharbel eternal rest in His Kingdom and consolation to his family and loved ones. □

Washington, D.C. *Golden Anniversaries*

On September 23 - 24, 2011, the Maronite Church in the United States is celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of Our Lady of Lebanon Seminary in Washington, D.C. Chorbishop Seely Beggiani, the Rector of the Seminary, is also celebrating his fiftieth anniversary of priesthood, most of those years were spent in the service of the Seminary. At the same time of this year's celebration, a chapel will be dedicated to Our Lady of Lebanon in the National Shrine of

the Immaculate Conception in Washington D.C. For more information or for dinner reservation, please log in to www.Stmaron.org.

Anniversary Schedule

Friday, September 23, 2011

- 10:30 a.m. Prayer in Honor of Saint Maron and Dedication of Chapel at the National Shrine
- 12:00 p.m. Lunch at Our Lady of Lebanon Maronite Seminary
- 1:30 p.m. Historical Perspective on the Seminary by Chorbishop Seely Beggiani
- 6:00 p.m. Divine Liturgy (Chorbishop Beggiani to preach) at Our Lady of Lebanon Parish Church
- 7:30 p.m. Ticketed Dinner in honor of both 50th Anniversaries at the Church Hall

Saturday, September 24, 2011

- 10:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy (Bishop Robert Shaheen) at the Crypt Chapel of the Immaculate Conception National Shrine
- 12:00 p.m. Lunch open to all at Our Lady of Lebanon Maronite Seminary. □

Patriarch Bechara Peter Rai Pastoral Visit to the U.S.

On October 1, 2011, His Beatitude Patriarch Bechara Peter Rai, Maronite Patriarch of Antioch and All the East, will make a pastoral visit to the Maronite Church in the U.S.A. Patriarch Rai will also meet with President Barak Obama and various Government and Church officials during his visit. The details of this pastoral visit will be made available online at www.stmaron.org. □



New Maronite Bishops

On August 12, 2011, the Holy See confirmed the election by the Synod of Maronite Bishops of Chorbishop Kamil Zaidan and Chorbishop Hanna Alwan, M.L.M. as Bishops. Both Bishops will serve as Patriarchal Vicars. Bishop-elect Alwan will be ordained on September 17, and Bishop-elect Zaidan will be ordained on September 23 in Lebanon. □

Houston, Texas *Two Days in Rome*



(From left) Fr. Abdallah Zaidan, Msgr. Maurizio Malvestiti, Mrs. Zeina Fares, Mr. Nijad Issam Fares, Leonardo Cardinal Sandri, and Fr. Milad T. Yaghi.

by Fr. Milad Yaghi

June 24, 2011, was a special day for me because it was the day I met the Holy Father Pope Benedictus XVI.

I had gone to Rome with Father Abdallah Zaidan and Mr. and Mrs. Nijad Issam Fares and their family. The purpose of the trip was to receive the Medal of St. Gregory, which was bestowed upon Mr. Fares. This recognition is by the highest authority of the Catholic Church in honor of a special person for his support and generosity.

We arrived in Rome on Thursday morning and joined Mr. Fares in a visit to the Maronite College in Rome to see our newly elected Patriarch His Beatitude Bechara Peter Rai, who also was visiting Rome. His Beatitude congratulated Mr. Fares for receiving the Medal of St. Gregory and thanked him in particular for his generosity in helping to build the Pastoral Center at Our Lady of the Cedars, noting that the Fares family is well known for generosity. His Beatitude sent his greetings to His Excellency Vice-Prime Minister Mr. Issam Fares, saying that Lebanon needs him and those like him who are willing to give from their hearts for their country.

Father Abdallah had made arrangements with Msgr. Malvestiti to guide us inside the Vatican the following day. On Friday morning, we passed the Swiss Guards, who presented their salute, then went inside where His Eminence Cardinal Sandri came to welcome us. After a short visit, we went to the audience room and waited for the arrival of His Holiness. We were awed by the beauty of this room and its many pieces of priceless works of art. At noon, the doors opened, and His Holiness came into the room, greeting us with a beautiful smile and giving us his blessing.

His Eminence gave a short speech about the Christians in the Middle East, and His Holiness talked about the Christians in the Middle East and the suffering and persecution they are undergoing.

When the audience concluded, the Cardinal presented each member of the Fares family to the Holy Father, who blessed them. His Eminence told the Holy Father that the Fareses are a good Christian family and that Mr. Fares has contributed generously to the Maronite community in Houston. After a family photograph with the Holy Father, His Holiness gave the family his Apostolic blessing. It was a special moment for everyone.

In the afternoon, we returned to the Vatican with Msgr. Malvestiti, who gave us a special tour of the Pope's Garden and the Sistine Chapel. Then, we went to St. Paul Chapel, where His Eminence was waiting for us. Following a short prayer, His Eminence bestowed upon Mr. Fares the Medal of St. Gregory and thanked him for all of his work.

In the evening, Mr. and Mrs. Fares invited His Eminence and His Beatitude to meet the Lebanese Ambassador to the Vatican and also the Lebanese Ambassador to Italy. Mr. Fares gave a speech at dinner that night saying how touched he was by the events of the day and by the beautiful gathering at dinner.

Our Lady of the Cedars Parish is fortunate to have Mr. and Mrs. Fares in the community. On behalf of our parish, I extend our thanks for their love and support and offer prayers for their continued involvement in our church. □

Dartmouth, Massachusetts *Sisters Meet Bishop Coleman*



The Maronite Servants met with Most Reverend George W. Coleman, Bishop of the Fall River Diocese. The Sisters introduced themselves to His Excellency and shared about their mission and convent in Dartmouth, Massachusetts. This was a courtesy visit to meet the local ordinary of the Latin diocese in which Dartmouth is located. Bishop Coleman gave the Maronite Servants a beautiful blessing on their mission. □

Latrobe, Pennsylvania, MYO Annual Conference

by Marie-Elizabeth Dohar

On June 27, 2011, the Maronite youth once again gathered at St. Vincent College in Latrobe, Penn., for their annual national retreat. At the six-day, five-night event, 200-plus participants from eighteen different parishes gathered in prayer and fellowship, growing in faith, friendship, and love.

The retreat opened with a liturgical celebration with Bishop Gregory Mansour, and focused on the Eucharist. After liturgy and dinner, the youth took part in opening activities and were treated to a performance from the MYO of Saint Maron Church in Cleveland, Ohio. The participants were then given time to meet fellow attendees and socialize with their returning friends before returning to the dorms for lights out.

Tuesday marked the official opening of the program, where youth director Father Gary George introduced the participants to the theme of the retreat, which came from John 14:6: "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." All of the sessions, liturgies, group discussions, missions, meditations, and activities centered around and led back to this passage.

Throughout the week, various priests served as the celebrants at the liturgies. At Tuesday's liturgy, participants were able to celebrate Father Tony Massad's first anniversary as a priest. In his homily, Father Tony encouraged the youth to be grateful for each day and God's many blessings. Father Bassam Saade was the celebrant at liturgy on Thursday, and he used his homily to reflect on the retreat's theme and the power of prayer.

At the retreat's closing liturgy, Father Rodolph Wakim also reflected on the theme of the retreat, humorously reminding attendees that the key to the theme "the way, the truth, and the life" is living life to its fullest. Prior to the daily liturgies, Monsignor sharbel Maroun spoke briefly about different liturgical traditions and proper behavior during the liturgy. Additionally, Father Simon El-Hajj, Father Nadim Helou, Father Peter Karam, Father Toufic Nasr, Deacon William George, Subdeacon Wissam Akiki, seminarians George El-Hajj, Alex Harb, and Alex Joseph, and Sister Celine Nohra were all present and active with the youth throughout the week.



Fr. Gary George blesses the retreat attendees with the Holy Eucharist.

A mission service was also held each day during the week. These services included confession, Eucharistic adoration, prayers for healing and good health, and blessings with relics. The services allowed participants the time to reflect and meditate on prayers, readings, stories, music, and videos, as well as sit in silence with the Lord. The youth were encouraged to bring forth their personal intentions in prayer during these services.

Group sessions and question-and-answer panels with the clergy and religious leaders present were held for the different age groups. These types of sessions gave the young people the opportunity to be inquisitive and the freedom to discuss and ask questions about the topics and issues most important to them.

Also, three guest speakers joined the youth during the week. Former Ohio State football player Joel Penton spoke Tuesday about the importance of making good decisions, and about the impact these decisions have on the future. Psychologist Joe Farris spoke Thursday and provided insight on the topics of suicide, depression, and counseling. David Kohout of the Talk is Cheap ministry spoke Friday of the creative, loving, redemptive nature of God, mixing videos, stories, and comedy to engage the participants in his presentation.

On Wednesday, the youth traveled to Pittsburgh, Penn., where they spent time at St. Anthony's Chapel, home to the largest public collection of relics in the world. Following a brief informational talk at the chapel and some time to peruse the relic collection, the youth boarded buses to Kennywood Amusement Park. At Kennywood, the youth rode rides, played games, ate lunch, and enjoyed the park and each other's company, before heading back to St. Vincent College in the evening.



Attendees at the annual MYO retreat with Fr. Gary George.

Each day, time was set aside to encourage fellowship among the participants. The youth were split into teams based on their rooming assignments, and teams consisting of attendees from many different parishes competed in "Minute To Win It" style activities. These activities became highly anticipated and cultivated a mildly competitive atmosphere, but inspired teamwork, friendship, and lots of laughter. Each afternoon during free time, participants were able to hang out, relax, and compete in sports, which further fostered the camaraderie among the youth.

Socials were held in the evenings, and these allowed the

youth to mingle with each other. Snacks, movies, music, dancing, and games were great ways to decompress and relax after long and eventful days. On the last evening, a Hawaiian-themed *haflī* was held for the participants. The youth enjoyed a delicious buffet, a smoothie bar, and ice cream before dancing the night away.

Saturday morning brought the retreat to a close, but the youth were in no hurry to begin their journeys home. Many youth formed strong bonds with their new-found friends, and departed only after promises of "Skype-dates" and the planning of many retreat reunions to come.

The retreat attendees were given one last assignment before they returned home. Every participant was photographed upon arrival and these photographs were randomly distributed to all participants prior to departure; each individual received a photograph of another attendee and they have been asked to pray for that person until they meet again next year. The response to this activity has been overwhelming, and it is heartwarming to hear stories of the youth praying for and thinking of their person daily.

The retreat was a special and spiritual experience for all those who attended and a brilliant time was had by all! The youth office would like to extend a heartfelt thank you to all those who made this experience possible. □

Austin, Texas *MYO Retreat*



Youth from Our Lady's Church in Austin with their adult advisors at the Maronite youth retreat in Pennsylvania.

by *Amanda Bsaibes*

This year eleven youths and three adults from Our Lady's Maronite Catholic Church, Austin, Texas, went to the Maronite youth retreat in Latrobe, Pennsylvania. They enjoyed discussing the theme "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life" with other youth each day at Liturgy. This retreat was not only a spiritual renewal for them; they all had a great time meeting and creating strong bonds of friendships with Maronites from across the nation. □

Somerset, New Jersey *Attendance at Retreat*



(from left) Rose Baradhi, George Baazak on the shoulders of Kevin Eid, Sharbel Sassine, Jonathan Abouhayla on the shoulders of Alex Hage-Boutros (Advisor), Joey Baradhi, Maya Youssef, (Advisor) and Paul Srour.

by *Maya Youssef*

This year, St. Sharbel Maronite Catholic Church of Somerset, N.J., sent seven MYO members to the 2011 Retreat in Latrobe, Penn. The kids' ages ranged from 12 to 18 years old. Each had their own concerns about going as we set out for the retreat. However, thanks to all the hard work and planning that was put into the retreat, they had a wonderful time. They learned more about themselves and their faith, made new friends, and cannot wait for the chance to go again next year. Each had something different to say about the experience, and it was wonderful to see them so involved and affected. I grew up going to these retreats and it is truly a blessing to be an advisor and see the tradition continue. See you all next year! □



Deadline for next month's issue of *The Maronite Voice* is September 25, 2011.

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

Send all changes of address, news, pictures and personal correspondence to: *The Maronite Voice*

4611 Sadler Road

Glen Allen, Virginia 23060

Phone: (804) 270-7234; Fax: (804) 273-9914

Email: Gmsebaali@aol.com

Pictures must be original. Digital pictures must be in "JPG" format and in high resolution. *The Maronite Voice* is also available online, in PDF format, at www.stmaron.org. □

San Francisco, California Camping Retreat



by Jackie Kalil

July 22 - 24, 2011, The Maronite Youth Organization of Our Lady of Lebanon Church, San Francisco Bay Area, California, organized their second annual youth camping retreat at Memorial Park in San Mateo County. The theme was "Growing in Faith." The program included reflections on John 15:5: "I am the vine, you are the branches," morning prayers, Divine Liturgy, hiking, games, camp fire, music, and *dabke*. The program concluded with a visit to a nearby beach. The retreat turned out to be a very successful and memorable one for our youth and their families. Our goal is to grow our youth in faith and in love and closer to one another. Close to seventy people participated in the retreat this year. □

Youngstown, Ohio Gold Massabki Medal

by Amelia Yazbek

On July 9, 2011, Rose Sahyoun was awarded the Gold Massabki Medal for her dedication to her church and the Maronite tradition. She was presented with the award during the Grand *Hafli* at the 2011 NAM Convention in Philadelphia, Penn. Rose was also elected as a member-at-large NAM Board member for a three-year term. Congratulations Rose! May we all continue the tradition.



Ted Tedros, NAM outgoing president, Bishop Shaheen and Rose Sahyoun.

Seniors Appreciation Luncheon

In continuing with its centennial celebration, St. Maron church in Youngstown, Ohio, honored its senior members with a luncheon on Sunday, July 17 after the Divine Liturgy. The "younger generation" prepared and served the group of eighty seniors and their families. □

Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania Centennial Celebration

The Maronites of the Greater Wilkes-Barre, Penn., area will celebrate a century of their presence in the Wyoming Valley on October 28 - 30, 2011. The weekend schedule is as follows:

Friday, October 28: A *Ramsho* Service with Bishop Gregory Mansour presiding will be held at St. Anthony+St. George Maronite Church, corner of Park Ave. and Dana Street at 7:00 p.m. followed by a reception in the parish hall sponsored by the Altar & Rosary Society.

Saturday, October 29: Grand Banquet at the Woodlands Inn beginning at 7:00 p.m. Live entertainment by the John Sallit Ensemble.

Sunday, October 30: Divine Liturgy at St. Anthony+St. George Church at 10:00 a.m. followed by brunch at the Woodlands Inn.

Accommodations

A block of rooms is available at the Woodlands Inn & Resort for out-of-town attendees of the Centennial celebration. Rooms are available for the evenings of October 28 and 29. Guests should contact the Woodlands to reserve individual rooms and coordinate payment. Please mention that you are staying for the Saint Anthony+Saint George Centennial when you call. The Woodlands Inn is located on Route 315 in Plains Township, Wilkes-Barre.

For reservation information please call 570-824-9831 or Toll Free 800-762-2222. For online reservations, log on to www.thewoodlandsresort.com.

Rooms will be blocked until October 8, so please make reservations soon.

Ticket Prices

Friday Evening Reception is complimentary
Saturday Evening Grand Banquet/Entertainment is \$70 per person and \$15 for Youth (12 and under)
Sunday Brunch is \$30 per person and \$8 for Youth (12 and under)

Checks or cash will be accepted as payment for tickets. All checks should be made payable to St. Anthony+St. George Maronite Church and sent to 79 Loomis Street, Wilkes-Barre, PA 18702.

Further information can be found at www.stanthonystgeorge.org (click on Cedar Tree Symbol), or by contacting Ms. Lena Michael at (570)283-1232 for tickets or Mr. Joe Tabit (570) 822-3580 about hotel reservations. □

Chorbishop Norman Ferris and The Order of Saint Sharbel

Chorbishop Norman Ferris was the Pastor in Fall River, Massachusetts for many years. When Archbishop Francis M. Zayek needed financial assistance, he came to him to fulfill a special task: to help create, along with others, an organization to financially support the Maronite Seminary in Washington, D.C., and our retired priests. Thus, the Order of Saint Sharbel was born, and Chorbishop Ferris was its first Chaplain.

In addition to helping begin the Order of Saint Sharbel build up its membership, Chorbishop Ferris performed another incredibly significant act: before he died, he named the Seminary and the Eparchy as major beneficiaries of his estate. This gift has been a great help to promote vocations to the priesthood and religious life in the Church. We are so grateful to him. Bequests are an excellent way to support the Seminary, the Eparchy, and the Maronite Church. For more information, please contact your pastor or the Chancery Office.

Thank you for supporting Maronite Seminarians, Our Lady of Lebanon Maronite Seminary, and our Retired Priests! □



Tax-Smart Giving of Appreciated Stock or Other Assets

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

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

Project Roots

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

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

Bringing balance back into Middle Eastern societies means that those Americans who obtain or regain such citizenship would have a say in what goes on in their country of origin. They can help foster social justice which is a requirement for those wishing to walk in the footsteps of Christ. Bringing balance back into society will help all their relatives in more than one way: It will usher in moderation, security to individuals and groups, as well as prosperity and a higher quality of life for relatives and all others who call their Middle Eastern country of origin their homeland.

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

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

Effective Ways You Can Help Your Eparchy

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

Planned Giving: Consider Your Legacy

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

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

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

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

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



San Francisco, California *MYO Activities*



Our Lady of Lebanon of the San Francisco Bay Area, Calif., sends its youth out in a flurry of enriching talks, team building activities, and rewarding socials for an entire year. But as the school year winds down, our youth group gears up as its members wait to hear the big news. Our four coordinators examined the year's worth of effort to select a group of teens to represent us in the Maronite Youth Organization Annual Retreat. Those qualified received a fully-paid trip to the MYO as a reward for their hard work. And returning qualifiers could choose to partake in the excursion if they were so inclined. And that is how the Californians- the longest-traveling group to the MYO, my group - found its way to the heart of Pennsylvania.

Upon arrival, we were exhausted from our long flights. But we were greeted whole-heartedly by a welcoming Liturgy and "Minute to Win It" icebreakers. With a late-night snooze, we woke in the morning to a week of faith and love.

Every day included one Liturgy, and that was our time to regroup in effective silence. We explored "the way, the truth, and the light," our theme, with discussions led by devoted priests and special activities, like confession.

After a few days of solely staying on campus and learning about our faith, it was interesting to see that Fr. Gary and the others had spread their message so effectively that we seemed to explore "the way, the truth, and the light" on a social level. By the third day (our trip to Kennywood), groups branched out from their friends from their state and socialized with everyone.

While going into detail about the retreat brings everyone pleasure, it would take an excessive amount of time; however, anyone can tell you that it was a true blessing. The trip united a couple hundred people with each other and with God in such a small amount of time all for the sake of renewing their faith. Watch this video (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MdYh81YvUOY>) to catch a glimpse of our trip.

As we found our family again in the San Francisco International Airport all we could say was, "I'm so glad we went." □

Schedule of Bishop Gregory Mansour

August 28 - September 5, 2011

Personal Silent Retreat

September 6, 2011

Evening Liturgy at Gloucester, Mass.

September 8, 2011

Installation of Archbishop Chaput of Philadelphia, Penn.

September 11, 2011

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

September 12, 2011

Seminary Visit and USCCB Pro-life Committee Meeting, Washington, D.C.,

September 14 -15, 2011

Sisters of Bethlehem in Livingston Manor, N.Y., for the Celebration of the Vows of Sister Rafka Saad

September 17, 2011

Meeting with the Raskob Foundation, Wilmington, Delaware

September 18, 2011

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

September 19 -21, 2011

Priests' Retreat for the Byzantine Eparchy of Passaic, Long Branch, N.J.

September 22, 2011

Meeting with Maronite Inter-Eparchial History Committee, Washington, D.C.

September 23 - 24, 2011

50th Anniversary of Chorbishop Seely Beggiani and Our Lady of Lebanon Seminary as well as the Dedication of the Maronite Chapel at the Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, Washington, D.C.

September 25, 2011

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

October 2 - 4, 2011

Divine Liturgy of His Beatitude Patriarch Bechara Peter Rai at Our Lady of Lebanon Church and Visit with President Obama and Government Officials, Washington, D.C.

October 5, 2011

Meeting of Maronite Bishops and Superior General with Patriarch Rai, Saint Louis, Mo.

October 9, 2011

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

October 14 -16, 2011

100th Anniversary of St. George Maronite Parish, Providence, Rhode Island. □

Marriage or Friendship?

No one should be against true friendship, whether friends are of the same sex or the opposite sex. Friendships are good, and they can be very deep and fulfilling. The ideal of friendship as a union of hearts and minds in which each one loves the other's good as his or her own is beautifully exemplified in the friendship of David and Jonathan: "The soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul" (1 Samuel 18:1). Likewise, friendship was hardly absent from the life of our Lord. Jesus taught the value of ultimate sacrifice in terms of friendship (John 15:13); he wept over the death of his dear friend Lazarus (John 11:35); revealed his inner most self to his Apostles in order to transform them from servants into friends (John 15:15); brought Peter, James, and John closer to him than the others (Mt 17:1; Mark 9:2; Mark 5:35-43); and was closest of all to the 'Beloved Disciple', who reclined on his chest at the last supper (John 13:23).

Friendship, however, must not be confused with marriage. While friendships are unions of hearts and minds, marriage by its nature unites hearts, minds, and bodies. While friendships come in different degrees and kinds of commitment, marriage calls for a permanent and exclusive commitment as well as sexual complementarity. While friendships can be shaped by a variety of pursuits, marriage is naturally fulfilled by, and provides the best possible context for, the conception, care, and upbringing of children.

This is by no means to deny that spouses should be friends. But marriage is more than an especially deep friendship. Marriage, unlike ordinary friendship, is a comprehensive union oriented to procreation. Its unique commitment is sealed, embodied, and renewed by conjugal acts - acts of the sort that are in themselves apt for procreation, though, of course, procreation does not always result from them. Where children do come, the loving marital bond of husband and wife offers them the distinctive parental contributions,

including the gender role modeling, of both a mother and a father, putting the child's needs first. The possibility of truly conjugal acts, and thus the possibility of marriage itself, depends on the reproductive complementarity of the sexes.

Marriage, as the Church so beautifully teaches us, has both procreative and unitive significance, and these two dimensions of the overall marital good are connected in a profound way. Marriage obviously serves the noble end of handing on the gift of life. At the same time, marriage, including its sexual dimension, is an end in itself; it fulfills spouses even when they cannot conceive a child. Just as it is wrong to think of marriage in its sexual dimension as a mere recreational activity that can be detached from its procreative meaning, it is an error to suppose that marital relations are valuable only as a means to conceiving and rearing children. Conjugal acts in their openness to new life are honorable and meaningful in themselves because they truly unite husband and wife as "one flesh" - as Jesus, recalling Genesis, teaches us (Genesis 2:24; Mark 10:8; Matthew 19:5). When the gift of a child comes of the spouses' "one flesh" union, it is certainly a cause for great joy. Even where a child is not conceived, however, this union expresses and embodies the marriage as something valuable for its own sake.

The debate about same-sex "marriage" often refers to a "right to marriage" and an opposition to this "right." The absence of sexual complementarity makes the marriage of two people of the same sex impossible: they cannot realize the procreative sort of union - including the bodily union - distinctive of marriage. Something that is impossible cannot be "denied" to anyone; nor can anyone have a "right" to it. Moreover, no one has a right to have the law or the institutions of the state call something other than what it is. Truth itself demands that we recognize as marriages only those unions that truly are marriages. Two persons of the same sex can have a deep friendship; they can support and

care for each other very much, but that relationship (whether chaste, as it should be, or unchaste) must be called and treated as what, in truth, it is: a deep friendship, not a marriage.

If two friends, two relatives or any two persons want to have the state recognize their relationship of mutual care and support for purposes of benefits, medical visits or inheritance, the state may grant that request by legal contract as long as it does not obscure the truth and purpose of marriage. In other words, as long as the state does not treat non-marital partners as if they were married - for example, by making the existence (or presumption) of a sexual relationship a condition of receiving benefits - it can legitimately honor contracts that facilitate people's capacities to care for and support each other.

However, marriage is different and has something truly and profoundly valuable to offer society. It is the foundation of the family: the original and best "department of health, education, and welfare." Nothing is better than the healthy, marriage-based family as the place in which children are loved, cared for, and taught to be productive, creative, upright, and responsible. By recognizing true marriage and supporting it, both law and culture help to ensure that as many children as possible know and are known by, and love and are loved by, the mother and father through whose marital embrace, by the grace of God, they were brought into being, and in whose permanent marital love their greatest security is to be found.

Certainly, unfortunate things happen, and this is also true of problems in marriage. No one can guarantee that every child will have the great benefit of being nurtured and educated by his or her biological parents in their loving matrimonial bond. That is why, thank God, we have possibilities to help those children for whom what is ideal is not possible. Adoption and foster-parenting are great gifts. They are to be supported and encouraged. May God bless every adoptive and foster parent who provides parental love and support

to a child who is in need. They are heroes.

Still, it is our obligation, each one of us, to do all that we can to make the ideal situation available for as many children as possible. And that is why not only our state and national governments, but each of us individually, is under a solemn obligation to support the institution of marriage - true marriage - and to stand against any effort to redefine or undermine it. As individuals, we can support marriage through our daily actions by being faithful spouses or upright single people, and by supporting the marriages of our family members and friends. The Manhattan Declaration states:

"To strengthen families, we must stop glamorizing promiscuity and infidelity and restore among our people a sense of the profound beauty, mystery, and holiness of faithful marital love. We must work to change ill-advised policies that contribute to the weakening of the institution of marriage, including the discredited idea of unilateral divorce. We must work in the legal, cultural, and religious domains to instill in young people a sound understanding of what marriage is, what it requires, and why it is worth the commitment and sacrifices that faithful spouses make."

We need not, and we must not, redefine marriage and reduce it to a form of sexualized romantic friendship. Yet we need not prevent same-sex friends - whether they are chaste, as true love between them demands, or involved with each other in a sexual way - from caring for each other, arranging their finances together, and/or seeing to their practical needs. However, marriage must always have special recognition, rights, and responsibilities that are distinct from friendships of any type. Otherwise, the blurring of friendship and true marriage will lead to an erosion of marital norms in the public mind and, soon enough, a weakening of these norms in practice. Marriage must be recognized by the formal institutions of law as a special form of human communion that unites one man to one woman faithfully in a profoundly meaningful and socially indispensable bond.

Let us then say "Yes" to marriage; and

let us say "Yes" to friendship; and let us say "No" to confusing friendship with marriage.

+ Bishop Gregory J. Mansour and Dr. Robert P. George □

Rookie Priests

The following article written by Father Tim Goldrick, Pastor of St. Nicholas of Myra Parish in North Dighton, Mass., first appeared in The Anchor, a newspaper from the Diocese of Fall River, Mass. It is reprinted with permission.

You know me, dear readers; I love statistics. I was delighted to come across a recent survey commissioned by the Secretariat of Clergy, Consecrated Life, and Vocations; a division of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. I found it on the Internet. The study was on the priestly ordination class of 2011. The survey was conducted by the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, based at Georgetown University. There were approximately 480 men ordained to the priesthood in the United States this spring. The men tended to be younger, as has been the case for the past five years. The average age of more than half of them was between twenty-five and thirty-four years. Here are some highlights:

- ★ Nearly one in ten men ordained this year was a convert to the Catholic Faith.
- ★ Four out of five of the men reported that both of their parents were Catholic and one-third of the total number of ordained also had a family member who was a priest or religious.
- ★ Almost none of those ordained was an only child, with some twenty-five percent reporting that they were one of five or more siblings.
- ★ Seventy-one percent had been an altar server.
- ★ Sixty-six percent said that they had been encouraged in their vocation by a priest.
- ★ Two-thirds of the class of 2011 did

not attend a specialized seminary college. They were far more likely to have attended a regular Catholic college before entering the seminary. They were also more likely to have attended a Catholic elementary and high school.

- ★ One-third of the ordination class was born outside the United States (surprisingly to me, most often in Asia or the Pacific Islands and less likely in a Hispanic/Latino nation).

I compared the statistics to my own ordination class. First, I was ordained in the spring of my 27th year. Both of my parents were Catholics. There the similarity ends. The vast majority of the members of the class of 1972, myself included, were born in the U.S.A. There were many more of us in those days. Few of us were converts. It was not uncommon among my classmates to be an only child. I, on the other hand, was one of five siblings. I had no relatives who were priests or religious, although I come from a long line of ministers (my father was a convert). I didn't sign up to be an altar server until my junior year of high school. Although I admired the priests in my parish, I didn't have a close relationship with any of them. As for Catholic elementary and high school, I am a product of the public school system. I was assigned to a seminary college.

As you begin, my newly-ordained brothers, allow me to offer some advice to those entering the work-force from professionals who know about such things. I found it on the Internet. It matches my own experience.

When I was a rookie priest, Msgr. Ron Tosti gave me some sound advice one day over lunch. He said, "Tim, 'no' is a valid word. It is found in any dictionary. Learn to use it." I'm still working on this. We priests often strive too hard to be "people-pleasers." We tend to put too much stock in what others may think of us. You want to say "yes" to every request. You want to "fix it" for the other person, but you have your own needs as well. Do not neglect your own needs. Your worth is not based on what others think of you. Just be the best you can be in the circumstances in which you find yourself.

(Continues on page 20)

Torrington, Connecticut *Subdeacon Ordination*



From left: Fr. Warren Savage, Fr. William Considine, Chorbishop John Faris, Deacon Steven Marcus, Subdeacon David Leard, Deacon Roy Dungan, Fr. Larry Michael, Deacon Jose Dlugoleski, Subdeacon Paul Comeau, Deacon Paul Salamy, and Subdeacon Brian Dunn.

On Sunday, June 26, 2011, David Leard was ordained to the Orders of Cantor, Lector and Subdeacon at the altar of St. Maron Church, Torrington, Conn., before Chorbishop John Faris and Fr. Larry Michael, Pastor. The beautiful ceremony of the three different orders was assisted by Deacon Steven Marcus and Subdeacon Paul Comeau of St. Maron Parish, Deacon Paul Salamy of St. Louis Gonzaga Parish of Utica, N.Y., Subdeacon Brian Dunn of St. Anthony of the Desert Parish of Fall River, Mass., and several local priests and deacons of the Latin Rite. David's wife Marilyn and their three children all participated in the ceremony as readers, altar servers and bearers of the alb. St. Maron Church was pleased to receive many generous donations to its renovation fund in honor of David's ordination. Following the ceremony, participants and guests enjoyed a Sunday brunch in the church hall.

David has been a member of St. Maron Church since 1985. He has previously assisted the church as an usher, lector, president of the parish council, and most recently as the chairman of the fundraising committee for the church's renovation. David and St. Maron parish are grateful to Chorbishop Faris for presiding at the ordination, and to the deacons and subdeacons for making the trip to Torrington and helping to ensure such a beautiful service. St. Maron Parish is celebrating its 100th anniversary this year. □



Philadelphia, Pennsylvania *Massabki Award*



From left: Fr. Paul Mouawad, Marcelle and John Khawam and Bishop Gregory Mansour.

by Lillian Shahade

On July 8, 2011, at the NAM National Convention in Philadelphia, Penn., Fr. Paul Mouawad, Pastor of St. Sharbel Church in Newtown Square, Penn., and Bishop Gregory Mansour presented the Silver Massabki Award to John and Marcelle Khawam.

Both John and Marcelle are very active members of St. Sharbel Parish. John is a member of the St. Sharbel Parish Council, the Choir Director and organist. Marcelle assists in the kitchen at the fundraisers and at the Annual Festival and can always be found manning one of the booths. As husband and wife, they have worked hand in hand on many of the events for the parish.

They drive over one and a half hours from home to get to the church every Sunday in order to be ready for the choir. We have a full complement of members that sing in harmony together because of John's tireless efforts and practice with them. Before a major Feast Day, John and the choir practice well into the night. Because of him we have a choir that sings together and encourages the congregation to always join in the singing of the hymns. John is now working with the youth of the parish and several sing together with the adults. As part of hosting the National Convention, John had prepared the choir several times a week in order to be ready for the Divine Liturgies at the convention. John also played the piano well into the night for the after hours group sing-a-long on Thursday, Friday and Saturday of the convention.

Both John and Marcelle are tireless in their efforts for improvements to and within our church, and they work together toward that means. They are well liked and respected by members of the community, and they never fail to fill a request that is asked of them for the good of the church. They and their family pitch in wherever they are needed in addition to their regular assignment. All that they

do, they do for God and from the goodness of their hearts. Fr. Paul states that he is a very proud Pastor, indeed, to have John and Marcelle receive this award, for they deserve recognition from him as well as from our entire community, and the Silver Massabki Award, which exemplifies a committed service to the church, is the highest form of honor that can be bestowed on them. □

Brockton, Massachusetts *Silver Massabki Award*



On Sunday, June 26, 2011, the parish community of Saint Theresa Maronite Church and its pastor, Fr. Anthony J. Salim, celebrated the Divine Liturgy in honor of the Feast of Saints Peter and Paul. This most important feast day honors the ministries of Saints Peter and Paul, the important foundation pillars of the Church.

The parish community appropriately honored one of its parishioners with the Silver Massabki Award, sponsored by the National Apostolate of Maronites (NAM). Cauna (Macary) Magner received the award for her work and leadership in many parish events, activities, and religious education. Fr. Anthony mentioned that Cauna exemplifies the true spirit of humble work and sacrifice for the Church in a most inspiring way to all. Cauna was given a pin and certificate at the end of the Liturgy by Michael Macary, New England Regional Vice President for NAM.

The Massabki Awards are given out annually to recognize outstanding service rendered to the Maronite Church in the United States by members of the Apostolate who live fully the Maronite Way. Many parishioners attended an extended fellowship hour in the church hall that

followed the Liturgy in honor of the recipient. □

Minneapolis, Minnesota *50th Wedding Anniversary*



The parish of Saint Maron of Minneapolis, Minnesota, honored Mr. and Mrs. Carl and Eileen Hedberg on the occasion of their 50th Wedding Anniversary. A Papal Blessing from Pope Benedict XVI was presented to this couple by Msgr. Sharbel Maroun, Pastor. The Hedbergs enjoyed a special dinner that was followed by a cruise on Lake Minnetonka. □

Olean, New York *Church Fire*

A late afternoon fire on Saturday, August 27, 2011, destroyed St. Joseph Maronite Catholic Church in Olean, N.Y. Their Excellencies Bishop Gregory Mansour, Bishop of the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn, and Bishop Robert Shaheen, Bishop of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon, ask all Maronites to keep the St. Joseph Maronite Parish in their prayers and thoughts as they try to recover from this tragedy. Fr. Salim became the Pastor of St. Joseph Maronite Church on August 1.

Bishop Edward Kmiec, Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Buffalo, issued the following statement:

“I was deeply saddened to see the pictures of the fire that has gutted St. Joseph Church in Olean. Our parishes in the Olean area have already reached out to their new pastor, Father Anthony Salim, and the St. Joseph Parish community. They will work to accommodate the faithful of St. Joseph Parish as they work to recover from this tragedy. I ask that everyone in the Diocese of Buffalo keep this parish in their prayers during their time of tremendous loss.” □

Murray, Utah Church Repair For Anniversary



Painting of the Cross

by Msgr. William Bonczewski

The Parish Community of St. Jude in Murray, Utah, is very busy making all kinds of needed preparations for the Feast of St. Jude and our Jubilee Celebration this coming October. We attend lots of meetings, we are preparing several spiritual events, and we are making needed repairs to the Church roof and the painting of the Cross on top of the Church.

In our area there are many Church buildings but very few with a visible cross. Our Cross looks like a new one now thanks to the good volunteer work by parishioners Tom Allem and Richard Watkins.

Our little Maronite Parish of St. Jude here in Utah, with the good leadership of its first Pastor, Chorbishop John Trad, obtained the Church building from the Catholic Diocese just thirty-five years ago. The Patron Saint of the Church then was St. Vincent de Paul and it was the first Catholic Church (founded in 1927) for the town of Murray and the nearby cities. Over the years some good improvements were made but the original character of the building stays the same, making the Church a truly precious treasure to our parishioners, friends and all who visit here. Among the treasures is the original stained glass window depicting St. Vincent de Paul.

The parish family is looking forward to the days of celebrating the feast of St. Jude beginning on Tuesday, October 24, with three days of devotions to our Patron Saint, concluding on the Feast Day, Friday, October 28. Bishop Robert Shaheen will celebrate an evening Divine Liturgy followed by a simple reception.

At 8:30 p.m. Bishop John Wester of the Diocese of Salt Lake City will celebrate a Mass for the Hispanic Community whose members come each month on the 28th day for their special devotions to St. Jude. A reception will follow this celebration.

On Saturday, October 29, the parish community will

gather at the new St. Vincent de Paul facilities for a grand banquet and *hafli*. Sunday, October 30, will be the day we offer our thanksgiving for the thirty-five years of St. Jude in Murray with a Divine Liturgy celebrated by Bishop Robert Shaheen. A reception will be hosted by the Ladies Club.

Along with our prayers of thanksgiving for all the blessings of the past we wish to devote our prayers to a request for God's blessing for our parish for the future that it will grow strong in the Lord and that we will have vocations from this Parish of St. Jude. □

Warren, Michigan Vacation Bible School



by Christine Akroush

On July 19, 2011, St. Sharbel Church in Warren, Mich., completed its annual Vacation Bible School (VBS). VBS is a fun-filled week-long summer camp for children ages 4 -11. After taking an adventure to Egypt last year to learn about Joseph's journey, the theme this year was PandaMania. The children enjoyed a wild celebration of God's unconditional love.

At PandaMania VBS, the kids discovered that God has a purpose and a plan for everyone and that He crafted each of us with His own loving hands. Each day focuses on a daily point that is integrated into each station's activities and is supported with a relating Bible story. The five daily points this year were: God made you, God listens to you, God watches over you, God loves you no matter what, and God gives good gifts.

In addition to learning a dance routine to this year's VBS theme song, "God is Wild About You," the children enjoyed daily discussion, crafts, games, and movie stations. The MYO is a big part of making each year's VBS a success by helping to lead the children through their VBS adventures. □

Convention Raffle Winners

The Board of Directors of the National Apostolate of Maronites (NAM) is pleased to announce the winners of the Convention Raffle:

- ★ **Michael Shammass** of Philadelphia, Penn., won the First Prize
- ★ **Rita Houayek** of San Antonio, Tex., won the Second Prize
- ★ **Joseph and Mary Saba** of Potomac, Md., won the Third prize. □

Danbury, Connecticut *Lebanese Festival*



Members of St. Anthony Church in Danbury, Conn., make meat pies for their 8th annual *Mahrajan*.

by Ghassan Najm

St. Anthony Maronite Church in Danbury, Connecticut, hosted its 8th Annual *Mahrajan*, Lebanese Heritage Festival, on Friday, August 19, and Saturday August 20, 2011. Many visitors came from the Greater Danbury area as well as other parts of Connecticut, New England, Tri-State and Pennsylvania to join families and friends of St. Anthony in the festivities. They were joined by many dignitaries from the Danbury area such as the Mayor, City Clerk, state senators and representatives. Traditional Lebanese foods and desserts were served. Many Festival goers, danced the night, performed the *Dabke* to the music of Amine Sultan and Ensemble.

As always young children were entertained with an inflatable bounce house, face painting and jewelry making, and they were treated to cotton candy, popcorn and ice cream.

In addition, the Church was open for adoration. On Saturday at 5p.m. many joined His Excellency Robert Shaheen, Bishop of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon (and a son of Danbury), in celebrating the Divine Liturgy along with Father Jean Younes, Pastor of St. Anthony.

The hospitality and success of this year's *mahrajan* could have not been possible without the dedication and hard work of Bobby and Janet Hudak, Co-Chairs, countless volunteers, young and old, along with the generosity and support of many, including our neighbors. □

Peoria, Illinois *Feast of St. Sharbel*

by Laurice Joseph

St. Sharbel, the Lebanese Saint of monasticism, was surely not a "hermit" this July 16 - 17, 2011. Bus load after bus load filled the parking lots of the church and the St. Sharbel Shrine in Peoria, Illinois. Pilgrims from

Canada, California, as well as St. Louis, Chicago, Detroit, and other cities graced St. Sharbel Church and Shrine. Young and old, men, women, and children formed a melting pot of love; love cancelled out any differences among these attending.

I saw "arms of love" reaching out to strangers and fellow parishioners welcoming all who came to honor St. Sharbel.

The "Herculean" labor performed by our dedicated St. Sharbel men provided tables and chairs under the huge tents, beckoning the crowds: *Ahlan Wa Suhlan*, - - a warm and gracious "Hello and Welcome. Come in, sit down with your family and friends, and praise God and St. Sharbel by breaking bread together."

Saturday evening found the people, led by Chorbishop Faouzi Elia, Fr. Bechara Awada, Deacon Jim Siedlecki and Deacon George Geagea processing to the outdoor shrine of St. Sharbel, singing hymns and reciting prayers in his honor. Mini glass-encased red and white candles were carried to the feet of the St. Sharbel statue. Light, synonymous with Jesus, permeated the darkness. Many petitions accompanied peoples' prayers and candles.



Under a gigantic tent set up in front of the beautiful Blessed Mother and Child Shrine, one could visit Our Lady and her Son; and then enjoy food and dance.

Out-of-towners were welcomed by Chorbishop Elia, who invited all of them to their "home" in Peoria. Many slept in the church while others slept in the parish banquet and community halls.

Sunday morning began with the Arabic recitation of the Holy Rosary followed by the Divine Liturgy, with the theme of St. Sharbel prayers and hymns. Individual packets of blessed oils and incense were handed out to all attending.

The final blessing and kissing of the picture of St. Sharbel culminated at the Shrine of St. Sharbel. What an example for the children to witness the place of honor for God and His Saints in their young lives. □

Food For Thought

O Lord, you probe me; you know when I sit and when I stand. You understand my faults... with all my ways you are familiar (Psalm 139).

Springfield, Massachusetts *Tornado Rips Through Church's Neighborhood*



Entrance of St. Anthony Church in Springfield, Mass.

by Kathy LaBella

What started out as an ordinary summer day on June 1, 2011, turned into a horrific nightmare for many Western Massachusetts residents as three overpowering tornadoes touched down in the areas of Springfield, Palmer and Sturbridge causing massive devastation and destruction. Three deaths occurred as a result of the incidents. More than 60,000 power outages were reported, and at least two dozen communities were affected. Governor Deval Patrick declared a state of emergency and federal and state agencies were called in to assist in the disaster.

For the members of St. Anthony's Guild, this was the afternoon they routinely prepared for their monthly pasta supper. While cooking for the supper, the tornado hit. One member reported seeing the swirling debris and hearing the thunderous banging. Huge trees fell, were uprooted or sliced in half. Power was lost, and roads in and around the church were closed. Little did the Women's Guild realize that their fundraising supper would become a mercy meal for those victims affected by the tornadoes.

About 3:00 p.m., a tornado warning was announced by the media. Soon after, it was reported that a tornado had formed in the Springfield area. The tornado traveled from West Springfield, headed straight through the heart of Springfield's South End, and continued through several of the city's neighborhoods during its 39-mile trip of destruction. The brunt of the storm hit hardest the Island Pond Road neighborhood just south of St. Anthony's Maronite Church, ripping off roofs, collapsing buildings and crushing cars. Fortunately, St. Anthony's lay just to the edge of the path of the tornado and the church and the hall sustained some roof and water damage. Hundreds of massive trees were uprooted, and tree tops were broken off like matchsticks. However, the Cedar of Lebanon tree, which stands tall on the front lawn of the property, survived.

That evening, St. Anthony's Cedar Banquet Hall became a temporary shelter and safe haven for those left homeless and displaced as a result of the tornado, including a neighborhood day care. They were fed meals and given shelter and comfort during the uncertain and unnerving time. St. Anthony is continuing its charitable work in the aftermath of the tornado with a drive to collect new bed blankets for victims in need and complimentary use of its banquet facilities for a fundraiser for the neighborhood Cathedral High School, which was closed for massive renovations as a result of the tornado. St. Anthony's commitment to its people and its community knows no boundaries. □

Chicago, Illinois *Sacristan Honored*



Subdeacon Sfeir, Tom Podraza and Msgr. Alfred Badawi.

On Sunday, July 31, 2011, a special dedication was held to honor Our Lady of Lebanon's Sacristan & Usher, Tom Podraza. Chorbishop Alfred Badawi acknowledged Tom's loyalty and commitment in this Ministry, having devoted the last thirty-five years to the church community. Tom recounted experiences from the early days of the church, and spoke of the friends that encouraged him to volunteer. Tom's family was also acknowledged for their unwavering support to Tom as he dedicated so much of his time to the church. A Holy Bible was presented to Tom by the Chorbishop after Liturgy in thanks for his many years of loyalty and service. Friends, family and parishioners gathered after Liturgy in celebration. We pray that Tom Podraza's warm smile will remain a "fixture" of church services at Our Lady of Lebanon for many years to come and a witness to the Lord's love and caring for each one of us. □



St. Sharbel Church Hosts one of the Largest Conventions in NAM History

by Claudine El-Beyrouy

Just as the final flicker of fireworks had ended in Philadelphia, a new spark was provided by the fervor of 1300 Maronites gathered at the Sheraton Hotel for the 48th Annual NAM Convention from July 6 -10, 2011. For five days people from sixty parishes across the U.S. came together for a jam-packed agenda of workshops, tours, and entertainment. All regions of the U.S. were well represented, from our neighbors in the Northeast to those from the sunny West Coast and everywhere in between. In addition to the Maronite lay faithful, eighty-six clergy and religious and sixty-seven NAM delegates joined the group. The willingness of so many people to make the trip to the convention made it clear the importance of their Maronite faith and culture.

This year's convention theme was "Identity and Evangelization in the Spirit of St. Maron." The many workshops touched on various aspects of this theme. On Thursday representatives from Holy Spirit University - *Kaslik*, Lebanon, the first Maronite University, discussed the role that the University continues to play in preserving the Maronite liturgical traditions. Later that afternoon Reverend Georges El-Khalie, Eparchial Director of Religious Education, presented a workshop on "Discovering *Faith of the Mountain*", highlighting the changes made in the catechism series. On Friday, an uplifting start to the day was provided by Rev. Geoffrey Abdallah and the Inter-Eparchial Music Commission, with a presentation of liturgical music. Maronite Archbishop Samir Nassar of Damascus, Syria, presented a talk on the progress in the canonization efforts of the Massabki Brothers. He highlighted the important role that those Maronites living in the U.S. have played in advancing the canonization efforts. The young adults met with Dr. Assad Eid and Dr. George Abdelnour from Notre Dame University (NDU-*Louaize*, Lebanon) for a workshop on Bridging the U.S. and Lebanon through higher education. On Saturday, the NAM General Assembly was addressed by Rev. Simone Faddoul, President of Caritas, Lebanon, regarding the current



Convention Committee

situation in Lebanon and the programs designed to combat poverty. Antoine Faddoul, MS, AIAA, reviewed the intricacies of the Lebanese Language in the 21st Century. One of the main events of the day was The Interfaith Dialogue Workshop. The featured panelists included His Excellency Bishop Stephen Hector Doueihi, Bishop Emeritus of the Eparchy of Saint Maron; Chorbishop Seely Beggiani, Rector of Our Lady of Lebanon Maronite Seminary; Fr. Paul Mouawad, Pastor; and Chukri Khorchid, an entrepreneur and founder of the *AlAqsa* Islamic Academy in Philadelphia. There was a spirited dialogue and discussion regarding the role of faith in life.

The city of Philadelphia offered a fantastic backdrop to the convention, and the young adult and youth activities were centered on showcasing Philadelphia's rich history and current culture. The events started on Thursday when the youth participated in a luau party by the hotel pool while the young adults took a walking tour to several Philadelphia hot spots, including the famous Reading Terminal Market. On Friday, rain and storms put a slight

damper on the walking tour of Philadelphia planned for the youth but were no obstacle for the young adults, who attended a lunch cruise aboard the Spirit of Philadelphia. Seventy young adults and professionals gathered on a private deck of the boat, enjoying food, music and dancing. Saturday was beautiful and the youth made up for the rain delay from Friday by visiting the Franklin Institute Science Museum and stopping to say hi to "Rocky" at the steps of the Philadelphia Museum of Art. About thirty young adults boarded an old fashioned trolley bus to visit a sample of more than 3,000 murals which can be found in Philadelphia and then rounded out the trip with a stop at the Yards Brewery. Ale and art really can mix, and many new Facebook friends were made.

After the workshops and sightseeing ended each day, the evening programs offered a variety of entertainment and dining themes. The convention started off with an intimate party for early arrivals on Wednesday evening. The rooftop ballroom of the Sheraton offered views of the surrounding city while guests were treated to local



Evangelical Singer Joumana Medawar

favorite treats including Philadelphia Cheese steaks and pretzels. Entertainment was provided by the Church choir from St. Sharbel of Newtown Square and Dominic Khawand on the *Derbekkeh*. The Thursday evening entertainment featured a concert by evangelical singer

Joumana Medawar of Lebanon. Her mix of spiritual and popular music moved the crowd, and fans waited eagerly afterwards for autographs and pictures. Joumana stayed and participated in activities throughout the next few days. By Friday there were almost 800 attendees for the evening



From left: Msgr. Faouzi Elia, Archbishop Samir Nassar, Msgr. Alfred Badawi, Bishop Robert Shaheen, Bishop Gregory Mansour, Bishop Stephen Hector Doueihi and Msgr. Seely Beggiani.

events. First guests participated in an auction featuring sports memorabilia, vacations getaways, Persian rugs and more. Following the auction and dinner, Yousef Chamoun and Band provided the entertainment and the crowds danced the night away. The grand finale on Saturday night was a dinner for 1,100 guests, catered by the Sheraton Hotel in Center City. From the moment that superstar Tony Kiwan entered the ballroom, the dance floor was packed and one of the world's longest *Dabke* lines lasted for hours. On Sunday morning the faithful packed St. Peter and Paul's Cathedral across the street from the Sheraton Hotel for a concluding Liturgy. The Maronite Bishops Doueihi, Shaheen and Mansour officiated along with the Archbishop of Philadelphia, Justin Cardinal Rigali. Before leaving town guests went back for a brunch that included a spontaneous serenade by Joumana Medawar. A flurry of goodbyes and packing concluded an amazing week as guests returned to their hometowns.

We hope that each guest left with great memories of Philadelphia and the NAM experience, the excitement provided by the amazing number of people and the passion exhibited by all who attended. It was clear that one thing all Maronites have in common, regardless of ethnicity or geography, is a love of life. This is a culture of people who enjoy life and celebrating it with others, who can pray, eat, and dance with a seemingly endless amount of energy. At any time of day groups of people could be found sitting in the hospitality suite or hanging out in the hotel restaurant, reconnecting with old friends and meeting new people. This culture of faith, family, friendship, and food (of course!) was on display nonstop for five days in Philadelphia.

The success of this convention is in large part due to the incredible leadership of our chairpersons Bassem and Najwa Dow as well as the hard work of our committee members, the guidance of Mike Naber from NAM, and the enthusiasm of our Pastor, Father Paul. Most especially we thank all of those who traveled to Philadelphia to share the experience with us and wish the best of luck to the planning board in San Antonio, Texas. □



NATIONAL APOSTOLATE OF MARONITES

MIDWEST REGIONAL CONVENTION

Hosted by: SAINT MARON CHURCH, YOUNGSTOWN, OHIO

SAVE THE DATES...

Friday, Nov. 18, 2011

- 5-8 PM Registration (Antioch Hall)
- 7 PM Ramsho (Church)
- 7:30 PM Welcome *Sahra* (Antioch Hall)
Finger Foods, Refreshments, & DJ

Saturday, Nov. 19, 2011

- 9 AM Safro (Morning Prayer)
- 9:45 AM Workshop I (St. Ephrem Center)
- 11 AM Workshop II (St. Ephrem Center)
- Noon Regional Delegate Meeting (TBD)
- Afternoon Free
- 6-7 PM Cocktails (Maronite Center)
- 7 PM Banquet & Hafli (Maronite Center)
Entertainment by: **Tony Mikhael Band**

Sunday, Nov. 20, 2011

- 11 AM Closing Liturgy (Church)
- 12 Noon Farewell Brunch

YOUTH & YOUNG ADULT ACTIVITIES ALSO PLANNED

Convention Hotel: HAMPTON INN & SUITES CANFIELD
6690 Ironwood Blvd.
Canfield, OH 44406
330-702-1900
FAX 330-702-1915



Room Rate: Standard/2Queen \$99.⁰⁰ / Standard/King \$99.⁰⁰
Mention NAM when making reservations (deadline: October 18th)



All events and activities on Church property located at
**1555 South Meridian Road
Youngstown, Ohio 44511**

More information & details will follow shortly. For now, mark your calendars and plan on joining us for a great weekend this Fall!

The Holy Cross, The Universal Symbol of Christianity, Identifies Our Faith

(Continued from page 1)

It urges us to prepare ourselves properly as faithful sons and daughters of God.

For better preparation, we need to live fully the meaning of the Cross. Jesus taught us that the Cross should be a constant feature in the daily lives of His followers: "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me" (Luke 9:23). To take up the cross in this way we need to do more than wear a crucifix or place it in our surroundings. To lift up the cross the way Jesus asks us to do is a way of life. It is to accept self-denial and sacrifice as part of our daily lives. Sacrifice means to give up something that is of value to me for the sake of God and the benefit of my neighbor. Another word for it is love. Love is measured by sacrifice. People who love much sacrifice much. Yet sacrifice does not make us poorer but richer as we share in Christ's sufferings. This is what we see in Christ. This is what we see in the lives of the saints. This is what we are all called to be.

The Cross only promises us that Jesus will be with us, no matter how badly we suffer, no matter how badly we fail, and no matter how horribly we feel. Jesus said "Behold I am with you always until the end of the age" (Matthew 28:20). It is through His Cross that Jesus is with us – that is the meaning of the Cross and that is the meaning of our Christian faith.

Let us unite ourselves to Christ on His Way of the Cross in order that we might be worthy of the eternal life He promises us! Let us firmly believe that the love of God surpasses anything we could imagine! Let us ask Mary for these graces! She stood at the foot of the Cross, watching her Son

die; so may she be our model of love for God and men!

Have a Blessed Season!

Yours in Christ,
+Robert J. Shaheen, D.D.
Bishop of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon

Rookie Priests

(Continued from page 11)

Sure, it's more blessed to give than to receive, but keep a balanced perspective.

Don't put yourself down and shrug it off when someone else does. Learn to accept a compliment graciously. This is sometimes very difficult for a priest. We can have a false idea of true humility.

I once saw a statue showing a group of people standing in a circle whispering to each other. It was entitled, "The Gossips." Some parishioners (and some priests as well) gossip. There's even a wildly popular Vatican gossip website. Gossip is unhealthy for one's emotional well-being. If you join the circle of gossips, people will distrust you. They will suspect you might gossip about them.

Sure, the priesthood can get rough at times (doesn't any walk of life?) but keep a positive attitude. Pessimism is a contagious disease. It saps the spirit and poisons a faith community. If you get hit upside the head, shake it off and keep on going. Avoid the "poor-me's." Learn to forgive. Holding a grudge can consume you, yet it has little effect on the person with whom you are angry.

Welcome to the priesthood, ordination class of 2011. *Ad multos annos.* ☐