

The Maronite Voice

A Publication of the Maronite Eparchies in the USA



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Easter New Sunday, New Beginnings

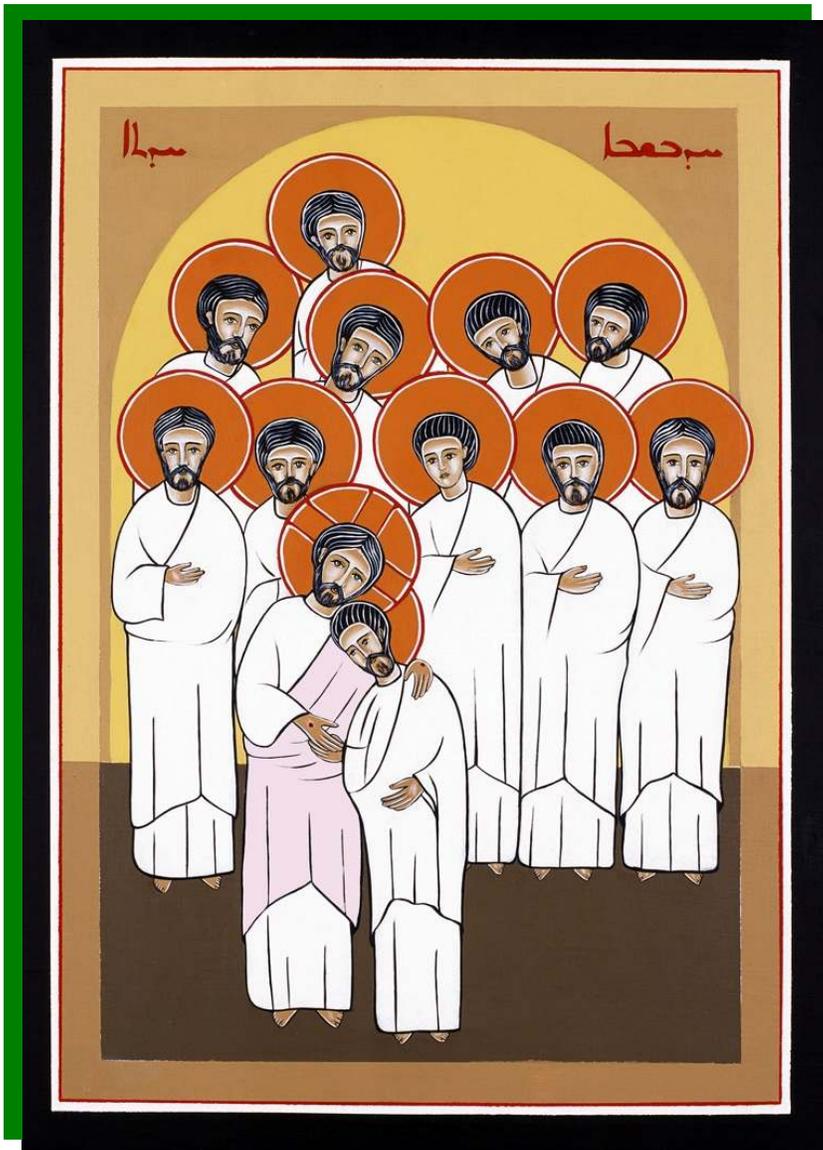
The Resurrection of Our Lord is our time for something new. Jesus believed in new beginnings for us. He told Nicodemus, "Unless a man is born again he shall not enter the Kingdom of God" (John 3:3). He told the repentant thief on the cross, "This day you shall be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43). He told the woman caught in adultery, "Is there no one to condemn you? Neither do I condemn you, go in peace and sin no more" (John 8: 1-11). He told Thomas on the first Sunday after the Resurrection, "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe" (John 20:29).

New beginnings are important to us, as they were to Thomas, whom Tradition tells us traveled all the way to India to preach the Gospel after his encounter with the Risen Christ and his new beginning. We can all remember something that has changed us and set us on a different path. For some it was a special moment of grace, for others a new friendship, or a new love, for some, the birth of a child, the death of someone close, for others it was a sincere confession, a sincere repentance and cry for mercy, for others it was a special wake-up call or a moment of clarity.

Whatever it was, new beginnings are natural to us. They are imprinted in nature with every new dawn and every sunrise, and certainly in every season of Spring and new life. Likewise, in every Divine Liturgy, as the priest makes his way to the altar, he asks the community to pray for him, he asks for the forgiveness of his sins, and he prays to the Lord to "renew his youth." The Psalms are also filled with such requests and such hope (see Psalm 103:5).

Brothers and Sisters, we need new beginnings. We need to repent of our sins and to be "born again." We should not be shy to ask for a "new heart" (Psalm 51) a "new, fresh spiritual way of thinking" (Ephesians 4:17, 20-24). We need to hear the words of Saint Paul addressed to us: "Whoever is in Christ is a new creation: the old things have passed away; behold, new things have come" (2 Corinthians 5:17).

(Continues on page 12)



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

is a new creation: the old things have passed away; behold, new things have come" (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Schedule of Bishop Robert Shaheen

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.

April 27 - 29, 2012

Forty Day Liturgy for Bishop John Chedid, Los Angeles, Calif.

May 2, 2012:

48th Anniversary of the Ordination to the Priesthood.

May 6, 2012

Forty Day Liturgy for Bishop Chedid. Saint Louis, Mo.

May 13, 2012

Patriarchal Liturgy, Saint Sharbel Warren, Mich.

May 17 - 20, 2012

Maronite Patriarch Visit, Saint Louis, Mo. ☐

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For more information
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Bishop John Chedid Passes Away

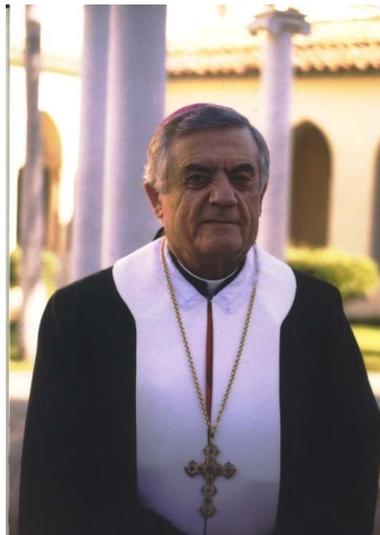
Dear Friends,

It is my sad duty to announce to you that our beloved former Bishop, John G. Chedid, has passed to eternal life on Wednesday, March 21, 2012, in Lebanon. His funeral took place on Saturday, March 24, 2012, at the Patriarchal Chapel in *Bkerke*, Lebanon. His body was then taken to his hometown for burial.

As you know, Bishop Chedid was the first Bishop of the Diocese of Our Lady of Lebanon and before that was Auxillary Bishop to Archbishop Francis M. Zayek, Bishop of the Diocese of Saint Maron of Brooklyn for many years. In the next issue of *The Maronite Voice*, I will print the details of Bishop Chedid's life and some of his accomplishments over the years.

I write this as *The Maronite Voice* goes to press tomorrow, and there is no time to write all that I would like to share with you. I will offer a Forty-day Liturgy at the Cathedral of Our Lady of Lebanon, Los Angeles, Calif., on April 29, 2012, and also at Saint Raymond Cathedral in St. Louis, Mo., on Sunday, May 6, 2012. Please keep our beloved Bishop Chedid in your prayers.

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



Los Angeles, California St. Maron Feast Day



From left: Chorbishop Faouzi Elia, Fr. Abdullah Zaidan, Bishop Robert Shaheen, Bishop Edgar Madi and Chorbishop William Lesser.

by Tommy Tedros

The community of Our Lady of Mt. Lebanon - St Peter Cathedral in Los Angeles, Calif., came together to celebrate the Annual Saint Maron's Feast Day celebration on Sunday, February 19, 2012. The day started with a Pontifical Liturgy at the Cathedral that was filled to capacity. A procession of the members of the Order of Saint Sharbel formed an honor guard as the altar servers and clergy entered the Cathedral. The main celebrants were His Excellency Robert Shaheen, Bishop of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon, and His Excellency Edgard Madi, Bishop of Our Lady of Lebanon in Sao Paulo, Brazil.

Following the Liturgy, a luncheon was held at the Beverly Hilton Hotel in Beverly Hills to honor this year's recipients of the "Lifetime Achievement Award for Civic Services," His Excellency Ziad Baroud, former Minister of the Interior in Lebanon and Mrs. Maxine Shalhoub, a parishioner of the Cathedral.

Denise Morillo and I introduced the many religious and civic dignitaries in attendance, including Acting Consul General of Lebanon Madonna Aoun Ghazal; Los Angeles City Councilman

Jose Huizar; and Los Angeles County Sheriff Lee Baca. Many other special guests and VIPs participated in the activities of the day as the program was then turned over to Master of Ceremonies Father Abdallah Zaidan and Father Elias Sleiman. They introduced the various guests to speak during the course of the event.

Other speakers included Tony Morillo, Co-chairperson of St. Maron's Day 2012, along with his wife, Najwa, Bishop Robert Shaheen of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon and Acting Consul General Ghazal. Chorbishop Faouzi Elia, Vicar General, gave the Benediction. Father Abdallah Zaidan awarded the Silver Massabki Award to Michel Kahwaji; the Regional Silver Massabki Awards to Dr. Elias and Mireille Ayoub and the Faith of the Mountain Award to Nicole Karaan for their service and dedication to the local cathedral community and beyond. Choir member Christine Said sang "Ave Maria."

An audio-visual presentation highlighted the backgrounds and career paths of His Excellency Baroud and Maxine Shalhoub and how it translated into the success each one has exhibited.

Maxine has chaired many events and functions for the Cathedral

community over the years and was the General Chairperson of the 1982 NAM Convention as well as the Grand Banquet Chairperson of the 2009 NAM Convention.

She organized the first annual Christmas Boutique in 1973 that has become a tradition at the cathedral. She also was President of the Maronite Guild and general chairperson for the golden jubilee committee that same year. She served as general chairperson for the Enthronement of Bishop John Chedid as the first Bishop of the new Eparchy of Our Lady of Mount Lebanon in 1994. Maxine was also general chairperson for the 75th diamond jubilee of our church in 1998 and the patriarchal visit of His Beatitude Nasrallah Peter Cardinal Sfeir in 2001.

His Excellency Ziad Baroud is a prominent Lebanese attorney and has worked as a civil and social activist for improvement in Lebanon.

He is the former Minister of Interior and Municipalities (MoIM) of the Republic of Lebanon. He served in two consecutive cabinets from July 2008 - June 2011. The MoIM was awarded under his leadership the 2010 United Nations Public Service Award first prize. In 2010, Ziad Baroud received the International Foundation for Electoral Systems 2010 Manatt Democracy Award as a tribute to his commitment to freedom and democracy. Prior to his appointment as Minister, Ziad Baroud held a number of positions including member of the Lebanese National Commission on Electoral Law. In 2004, he was elected Secretary General of the Lebanese Association for Democratic Elections in leading a group of more than 1,300 domestic electoral observers. He has served as a board member of the Lebanese chapter of Transparency International since 2006. He is also on the board of the Lebanese Center for Policy Studies. *(continues on page 4)*



Minister Ziad Baroud.

Youngstown, Ohio 100-Year Anniversary



From left: Chorbishop Michael Kail, Bishop Robert Shaheen and Fr. Anthony Salim.

by Amelia M. Yazbek

On Saturday, December 3, 2011, St. Maron Maronite Church in Youngstown, Ohio, celebrated its 100th Anniversary at the Maronite Center with a grand banquet.

Special guests included Bishop Robert Shaheen, Bishop of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon; Chorbishop Michael Kail, Pastor; and former pastors Chorbishop Dominic Ashkar, Our Lady of Lebanon Church, Washington, D.C., and Fr. Anthony Salim of Saint Joseph Maronite Church in Olean, N.Y. Also present were Monsignor Anthony Spinoza of the National Shrine of Our Lady of Lebanon, North Jackson, Ohio; Deacons Joseph Nohra, and William George; Subdeacon Dr. James Essad of Youngstown; Deacon Wissam Akiki from St. Louis, Mo.; the Antonine Sisters of North Jackson; and several other seminarians and clergy from the Maronite and Latin rites. Former State Representative Ken Carano, also a parishioner, presented Chorbishop Kail and the parish with various proclamations from the city, county and state levels to honor our 100 years in the Mahoning Valley. Dr. Elias Saadi was the Master of Ceremonies and spoke about the dedication of the clergy who started serving the people in the early 1900s. Our forefathers were determined and hard working proud people who wanted to foster their culture and religious beliefs in their new home of Youngstown.

The guests were served dinner while they watched a presentation of the history of the early settlers and the beginnings of St. Maron in Youngstown as a contributing force in the area. Another presentation provided pictures and sound clips of years past which brought memories and tears to those watching. The Maronite Christian Formation children of the parish prepared and gathered artifacts and written histories by showcasing each decade of times past. The evening culminated with dancing to the Tony Mikhail Band of Cleveland.

On Sunday, December 4, Bishop Robert Shaheen celebrated a solemn Liturgy. Chorbishop Kail, Fr. Salim and

other Latin clergy concelebrated. After the Liturgy, a buffet brunch was served in Antioch Hall. Both events were well attended. A big Thank You to the committees for the hard work and dedication towards making the 100th Anniversary a memorable occasion. □

Cleveland, Ohio Saint Maron Feast Day



From left: Fr. Tony Massad, Bishop Massoud, Mrs. Claire Naoum, Fr. Peter Karam and Samir Farah.

On Saturday February 11, 2012, the parish of Saint Maron in Cleveland, Ohio, held a banquet for Saint Maron's Feast Day. Over 500 parishioners gathered together as a family to celebrate the feast of our founder. During the banquet, the parish community, along with Fr. Peter Karam, Pastor, and Fr. Tony Massad, Parochial Vicar, honored Mrs. Claire Naoum, parishioner, with the Silver Massabki Award for her dedication and leadership in many parish committees and events. In his presentation Fr. Peter Karam explained how Mrs. Naoum's outstanding service and sacrifice has been an inspiration for others. During the Divine Liturgy on Sunday, February 12, 2012, Bishop Massoud Youseff Massoud, Bishop Emeritus of Latakia, Syria; Fr. Karam; Fr. Massad, and Samir Farah, the Mid-west regional Vice president for NAM, presented Mrs. Claire Naoum with a pin and a certificate of recognition as a Silver Massabki award winner. The Silver Massabki award is sponsored by the National Apostolate of Maronites (NAM). □

Los Angeles, California

(Continued from page 3)

The recipients deserved these honors and made the Maronite community of greater Los Angeles, proud to honor them in this event. St. Maron's Day is the feast day of the founder and patron of the Maronite Church that is commemorated every February 9th. Each year, the bar is raised on the magnitude of this event, and it fosters Maronite pride in us all in terms of heritage, culture, tradition and unity. □

Brooklyn, New York *MYO/MYA Lenten Retreat*



by Salma T. Vahdat

The annual Lenten retreat for Maronite youth and young adults was, once again, held at Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral in Brooklyn, New York.

On Friday, March 16, 2012, approximately 180 enthusiastic youth, young adults, chaperones and advisors congregated for the start of two days of prayer and reflection. The Cathedral parish opened its arms and hearts to embrace the future of the Maronite Church in the U.S. They came from a five-state Eastern region representing parishes in Massachusetts, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania. The retreat and schedule were arranged by Msgr. James Root, Pastor. Therese Abi-Habib organized the parents and supplies.

Fr. Vincent Farhat, Pastor of St. Maron Church in Philadelphia, Penn., and Msgr. James Root conducted the sessions with the MYO in the Social Hall while Bishop Gregory Mansour addressed the young adults in the Chancery. The theme of the retreat was Prayer and Our Relationship with Jesus. It was suggested that we should keep our minds and hearts open to Jesus; to pray and listen for answers which will direct us onto a good path for our life.

Friday evening all attended the Stations of the Cross for Teens, written by youth from across the nation, specifically for youth. Following the Stations, the Benediction of the Cross was prayed. The retreat sessions were begun at nine p.m. Activities included trust building exercises, relays of twelve teams competing against one another and finally, sustenance...a pizza party!

Saturday morning began with prayer, Session two on Trust, Reconciliation and Divine Liturgy. Then, it seemed as if the Holy Spirit intervened on behalf of the attendees! A gentleman and his wife, looking to attend Liturgy at the Cathedral, came in to find that the daily liturgy was cancelled due to the retreat. He introduced himself to Msgr. Root. The surprise visitor was Jim Caviezel, actor, who had portrayed Jesus in the Mel Gibson film, *The Passion of the Christ*. He was most gracious and willing to answer questions posed to him by the youth. A summary of his talk related how he had pursued acting. He had been a basketball player in college and wanted to make it a career. He sustained an injury to his foot which sidelined that ambition. In despair for a direction

to his life, he prayed. He said Jesus told him to be an actor. He auditioned for the role he subsequently portrayed but had been discouraged from doing so. Advisors said it would be a "one shot" deal and since the film was receiving negative vibes from Hollywood he would never get another opportunity. He ignored all the negativity. Today he is successful!

He told the crowd that he could never have imagined the suffering that Christ endured without that role. In carrying the heavy cross in the film he sustained a displaced shoulder. He was struck by lightning on the set. He suffered a few gashes from the whip in the whipping scene. When crucified the set was made frigid and he became so numb from cold that he could hardly gasp a breath. All these trials were little as compared to the true Passion of Christ. You could have heard a pin drop ... so rapt was the audience. He gave a great witness to the congregants. His theme of Prayer as a route to Jesus was the same as the theme of the Retreat.

The meeting was a success with old friendships renewed and new ones begun. We can hardly wait for next year's meeting to see what the Holy Spirit has in store for us. □

San Francisco, California *Winter Retreat*



by Jackie Kalil

Our Lady of Lebanon Church, San Francisco Bay Area, California, held its first annual winter youth retreat from February 24 - 26, 2012, at YMCA camp Campbell in Boulder Creek, Calif. The camp is a branch of the YMCA of Silicon Valley located among the redwood trees, one hour away from the church. This winter retreat was organized by the Youth Ministry office.

The theme focused on "Let Your Love be Sincere – Romans 12:9." In addition to the youth coordinators, advisors and ministers, around thirty youth, ages 13 years old and older, attended the retreat. The program included ice breaker games, spiritual talks and prayers, a reconciliation service, Divine Liturgy at an outdoor chapel and team building activities. □

Glen Allen, Virginia Regional Youth Retreat



by Stephanie Cole

The third annual Regional Youth Retreat took place March 9 - 11, 2012, at St. Anthony Maronite Church in Glen Allen [Richmond], Va. The theme was "Fill Our Lamps, O Lord." Youths from St. Michael the Archangel Church, Fayetteville, N.C.; St. Sharbel Mission, Raleigh, N.C.; St. Elias Maronite Church, Roanoke, Va.; and Our Lady of Lebanon Church, Washington, D.C., joined St. Anthony's youth for the retreat. These same churches come each year, and we are all filled with excitement when we get the chance to see our long-distance friends again.

Friday night consisted of ice breaker games and a short service about the theme for the weekend. For those three days, we kept a journal with us; we reflected on ourselves and focused on filling our lamps with the characteristics we want to be able to carry with us for the rest of our lives. On Saturday, Jeff Ukrop, Founder and President of First Things First, was the guest speaker. He spoke to us about filling our lamps with character. This eye opening discussion talked about what character means and how we want to be perceived by others; he challenged us to look within ourselves and discover exactly how we wanted to live our lives. Many of the activities during the weekend were open discussions, which allowed everyone to speak their minds free from judgment. This made for very interesting talks, exposing everyone to different points of view.

My favorite part of the retreat was the Reconciliation Service and Holy Hour. A priest from the Mary, Mother of the Church Abbey in Richmond joined us and offered confession along with Monsignor George Sebaali, Pastor. Our youth leaders, Cathy George, Carmen Dailey, and Mike Maynes, prepared us well for the service and made us all feel comfortable talking to different priests about the things that troubled us. We ended the busy and fulfilling day with a dance. Everyone always looks forward to this DJ sponsored celebration, and just like every other year, it was a big hit.

On Sunday, students of St. Anthony's Maronite Formation joined the youth for the final talk on compassion. Following the Divine Liturgy a luncheon was served in the social hall. Everyone was taking pictures and reminiscing on the weekend in preparation for all the goodbyes. We may not

have known each other on Friday night, but throughout the weekend we developed a special bond with one another. We connected through our love and faith in God. We all shared the same spiritual values and morals, which only brought us closer together. Roxy Shulleeta said, "It was a very enlightening experience to get to be around so many other people of the same faith." Tyler Shebelski agreed, "I thought it was so much fun to get to know new people and strengthen the bonds we made at last year's retreat. I'm definitely coming back next year." □

Warren, Michigan MYA Spiritual Retreat



by Jessica Sader

On Saturday, February 25, 2012, members of the Maronite Young Adults (MYA) of St. Sharbel Church in Warren, Mich., went on their first spiritual retreat since the re-launch of the group, visiting the monastery of the Order of the Blessed Mother Mary located in Ann Arbor, Mich., for an eventful day.

The group, which had been inactive for six years, recently decided to join together again in hopes of building stronger friendships with fellow Maronites and reinforcing their faith.

The day started with games and icebreakers to get everyone comfortable before prayers. Discussions focused on freedom, forgiveness and the holy season of Lent.

MYA Warren Social Chair, Roger Chaaya, and Spiritual Chair, Carine Nahed, worked hard to create a bible-themed scavenger hunt, hiding clues around the monastery for all to find and piece together.

Confession was available to anyone seeking forgiveness and the Divine Liturgy, celebrated by Fathers Victor Daou and Nabil Habshi in the chapel, followed. The chapel, discretely located in the neighboring woods, was an adventure to find in itself. Its seclusion and aged exterior added to its tranquility.

The day rounded off with a barbecue and a bon fire - icing on the cake of a truly memorable retreat. MYA Warren members would like to thank the Monks again for graciously welcoming us. We hope to visit again soon! □

Olean, New York Annual Lenten Retreat

Each year for the last several years, the three Latin-rite parishes of Olean [N.Y.] have cooperated in presenting an inter-parish Lenten Retreat. Guest speakers have been invited to conduct it. This year the three pastors invited Fr. Anthony Salim [Pastor of St. Joseph Maronite Church] to conduct the Retreat. There were a few goals with this invitation: 1) to give a fresh and different approach to the annual Lenten journey; 2) to expose the wider, local Catholic Community to the richness of the Eastern and Maronite approach to Great Lent; and 3) to foster stronger bonds between the Latin-rite and Maronite-rite Communities in the city. The Retreat was held February 26 - 28, 2012.



Fr. Anthony Salim incenses the altar.

In a preliminary meeting of the four pastors, it was decided that some education on the Eastern Churches in general was encouraged, focusing on the Syriac-Antiochene Maronite Tradition. At the suggestion of Fr. Anthony, a theme of "Opening the Gates to Paradise" was taken from the *Mazmooro* verses for weekdays of Great Lent: "Fasting opens the gates of Paradise, and those who fast inherit the Kingdom." To illustrate this, Father Anthony presented the Miracle Gospels of the Sundays of Lent, from Cana Sunday to Pascha-Easter. Each night from 7 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. There was a wide selection of handouts and professional publications provided, such as the USCCB booklet, "Eastern Catholics in the United States of America;" "What Every Catholic Should Know about the Eastern Catholic Churches," from St. Anthony Messenger Press, and the eparchial Welcome Packet, "Welcome to the Maronite Catholic Church," to name but a few. Between 150 and 200 people attended each night. Each session began with a prayer service, in which all learned to sing the *Trisagion* in Syriac, as well as Fr. Geoffrey Abdallah's beautiful hymn, "Lord Jesus, Forgiver and Healer."

On the first night Father Anthony welcomed all to Transfiguration Oratory (Latin-rite) of Olean, in which St. Joseph parishioners are currently worshiping while they continue to discern the direction they will take for a new church facility after the devastating fire of last August. He began by setting the tone for the retreat by presenting a concise picture of the history of Eastern Christianity in general, including the formation of the Eastern Catholic Churches. From this he spoke of the history of the Maronite Church's roots in the Syrian and Syriac-speaking tradition of

the Universal Church. Lastly, he gave a preview of the Sunday Cycle of Lenten Gospels.

On the second and third nights each Lenten Sunday's celebration was presented, with the idea that each Gospel presented a transforming healing, symbolized at the beginning of Great Lent by the changing of water into good wine, leading to the transformation of the Body of Jesus Himself in the Resurrection. Father Anthony also alluded to the Maronite Lenten Weekday Cycles, which emphasize fasting, and the value of fasting for conversion.

Many people of all four parishes expressed enthusiastic thanks for the Retreat, saying that they learned a lot about the Eastern Churches and about another and inspiring way of approaching the Lenten Season. □

Cincinnati, Ohio Lenten Retreat



Fr. Tony Massad with members of St. Anthony of Padua at their lenten retreat.

by Fr. Tony Massad

A Lenten Retreat was held at St. Anthony of Padua Maronite Church in Cincinnati, Ohio, on Saturday, March 10, 2012, followed by a Divine Liturgy. Fr. Tony Massad of St. Maron Church, Cleveland, Ohio, was the main speaker. Topics discussed were faith, hope and love and how they affect us during the Lenten Season. This retreat gave us an opportunity to come together as a community during this Great Season of Lent, and share how each of us can experience faith, hope and love not only during this Season, but also throughout the entire year. Fr. David Fisher, Pastor at St. Anthony, closed with a prayer, thanking Fr. Tony and all who attended for their participation. □

Food For Thought

*The human heart must love something;
when it loves less the things of earth,
it will love more the things of heaven.*

Emmanuel D'Alzon

Los Angeles, California *Subdeacon Ordination*



From left: Subdeacon Albert Constantine, Subdeacon Monk Anthony Joseph Alles, M.M.J.M.J., Fr. Abdallah Zaidan M.L.M., Bishop Robert J. Shaheen, Deacon Wissam Akiki, Father Prior Jonathan Decker, M.M.J.M.J., and Subdeacon Wadih Kaldawi.

by Nadia Redmond

On February 18, 2012, His Excellency Bishop Robert J. Shaheen, Bishop of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon, ordained Monk Anthony Joseph Alles of the Monastery Monks of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, to the Minor Orders of the Cantor, Lector, and Subdeacon at Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral in Los Angeles, Calif. Monk Anthony Joseph's mother, Jennifer Alles, attended, as well as Fr. Abdallah Zaidan, M.L.M., Rector; Fr. Prior Jonathan Decker, M.M.J.M.J. of the Monastery Monks of Jesus, Mary and Joseph, Portland, Ore.; Deacon Wissam Akiki of St. Raymond Cathedral, St. Louis, Mo.; Subdeacon Albert Constantine of Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral, Los Angeles, Calif.; Subdeacon Wadih Kaldawi and his wife, Mona, Sisters Jan Jensen and Cecily Mesa of St. Sharbel Church, Portland, Ore.; James Alles, his uncle; and Vince McKenzie and his wife, Kayla, friends of Subdeacon Joseph.

Subdeacon Monk Anthony Joseph will continue with his studies and preparation for the priesthood through Holy Apostles Seminary, Cromwell, Conn., as well as serve at St. Sharbel Maronite Catholic Church in Portland, Ore. The following day, St. Sharbel parishioners surprised Subdeacon Monk Anthony Joseph with a celebration after the Holy Mysteries. The community in Portland is very proud of Subdeacon Monk Anthony Joseph's accomplishments. Our love and deep appreciation is extended to him for accepting God's special calling to the subdiaconate and for gracing the Monastery of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph with his ministry. For inquiries about the monastic vocation and life in the Pacific Northwest, please visit the Monks' website at www.mmjmj.com.

The community of Portland extends its gratitude to Fr. Abdallah Zaidan, M.L.M., for the hospitality that he

presented to its members in Los Angeles. The Monastery Monks of Jesus, Mary and Joseph would like to thank His Excellency Bishop Shaheen for his blessings and support. □

Chicago, Illinois *Journey in Lent*



by Sami Daniel

"How very good and pleasant it is when kindred live together in unity" (Psalm 133:1) was the motto of the Chicago, Illinois, Eastern Churches that journeyed together during the season of Great Lent in a spiritual lecture series. These lectures highlighted the importance of uniting the faithful and bringing them together to share in the passion and resurrection of our Savior Jesus Christ. Every Thursday evening, parishioners gathered with their priests to share the Word of God and the bread in a Lenten meal served by the hosting parish afterwards. The first presentation was with Fr. Malek Rihani from Saint Mary's Orthodox Church: "From Doubt to Sainthood: A Lenten Journey" at Saint John the Baptist Melkite Church. Fr. Charles Khachan, from Our Lady of Lebanon Maronite Church, spoke about forgiveness and how to journey "Towards the Cross, the Empty Tomb, and Beyond" at Saint John the Baptist Syriac Orthodox Church. Fr. Fouad Sayegh, from Saint John the Baptist Melkite Church, presented "The Liturgical Year, Celebrating Christ and Journeying towards God" at Saint Mary's Orthodox Church. Our Lady of Lebanon Maronite Church hosted Fr. Yacoub Youhanoun, from Saint John the Baptist Syriac Orthodox Church, whose presentation was about "Anger in the Holy Bible: How Can We Deal with It." The final presentation was by Fr. Sharbel Bcheiry from St. Ephrem Syriac Orthodox Church about "Repentance and Fasting in the Sermon of St. Jacob of Serug on the People of Nineveh, a Model of an Inner Spiritual Progress and Change for our Daily Life," and was hosted by Saint John the Baptist Melkite Church. These lecture series were a great success as they assisted each one of us in strengthening and renewing our spirituality and faith and refocused everyone's attention on what truly matters in our Christian life. It also provided in nurturing and strengthening the communal life that always existed between our churches in Chicago. □

Cromwell, Connecticut Bishop Mansour Visits Seminary



Bishop Gregory Mansour demonstrates the Maronite Sign of Peace to seminarians at Holy Apostles Seminary.

by Seminarian Alex Joseph

On Wednesday, February 29, 2012, the Most Reverend Gregory John Mansour, Bishop of the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn, made a visit to Holy Apostles College and Seminary (H.A.C.S.) in Cromwell, Connecticut. Bishop Mansour spent the following three days immersed in the culture and seminary life of H.A.C.S.

The following day, at sunrise, the entire community celebrated the Sacred Mysteries according to the Antiochene Syriac Maronite tradition. In H.A.C.S.' new chapel, Queen of the Apostles Chapel, the Bishop was assisted by fourteen Roman Rite priests, with the Very Reverend Douglas L. Mosey, C.S.B. (Rector, President, and Professor of Liturgical Theology) and Reverend Dennis Kolinski, S.J.C. (Director of Liturgy) as the chief concelebrants. Over one hundred seminarians, sixteen professed sisters (from five different religious orders), several members of the faculty, and many lay students attended the Offering. A meaningful homily was delivered by Bishop Mansour in respect to the Gospel of the day (Luke 8:4-15, The Parable of the Sower.) A Choir comprised of a "Schola" of seminarians, professed brothers, and co-educational lay students provided Maronite hymns and responses in the English, Arabic, and Syriac languages. The choir even graced the Bishop with a specially requested hymn in Latin towards the end of Communion.

Later in the day, Bishop Mansour held an hourlong talk relating to the Universal Church, with an emphasis on the Maronite and other Eastern Churches. The conference was attended by a great gathering of seminarians, lay students, faculty, and administrators. Numerous questions were posed to the Bishop and many insightful responses were delivered.

Upon his departure, Bishop Mansour remarked, "I have been truly happy for the past three days." In turn, his message was relayed to the faculty and administrators; and their response was, "He brought to us a sense of peace and upliftment." For most seminarians, lay students, faculty, and administrators, this was their first time being exposed to an Eastern Church. Due to the Grace received by Bishop

Mansour's generosity, the brothers and sisters of H.A.C.S. received an experience that will remain with them for the rest of their lives.

The seminarians of H.A.C.S. come from five continents, comprise nine religious orders and nineteen dioceses throughout the world and speak English, Spanish, Vietnamese, Ukrainian, and several tongues native to Africa. At the present time, only two of the seminarians are of the Churches of the East: Ukrainian Catholic-Archeparchy of Philadelphia and Maronite - Eparchy of Saint Maron. □

Schedule of Bishop Gregory Mansour

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.

April 19, 2012

Enthronement of Archbishop William Skurla, Pittsburgh, Penn.

April 21 - 22, 2012

Pastoral Visit to Our Lady of Lebanon Church, Waterbury, Conn.

April 27, 2012

American Task Force for Lebanon Gala, Washington, D.C.

April 28 - 29, 2012

50th Anniversary of Chorbishop Dominic Ashkar, Washington, D.C.

May 2, 2012

Rockville Center, New York, Talk to Legatus

May 4, 2012

University of Saint Joseph (USJ) in Lebanon Dinner, Manhattan, N.Y.

May 5 - 6, 2012

Pastoral Visit to the Maronite Community of Pleasantville, N.J.

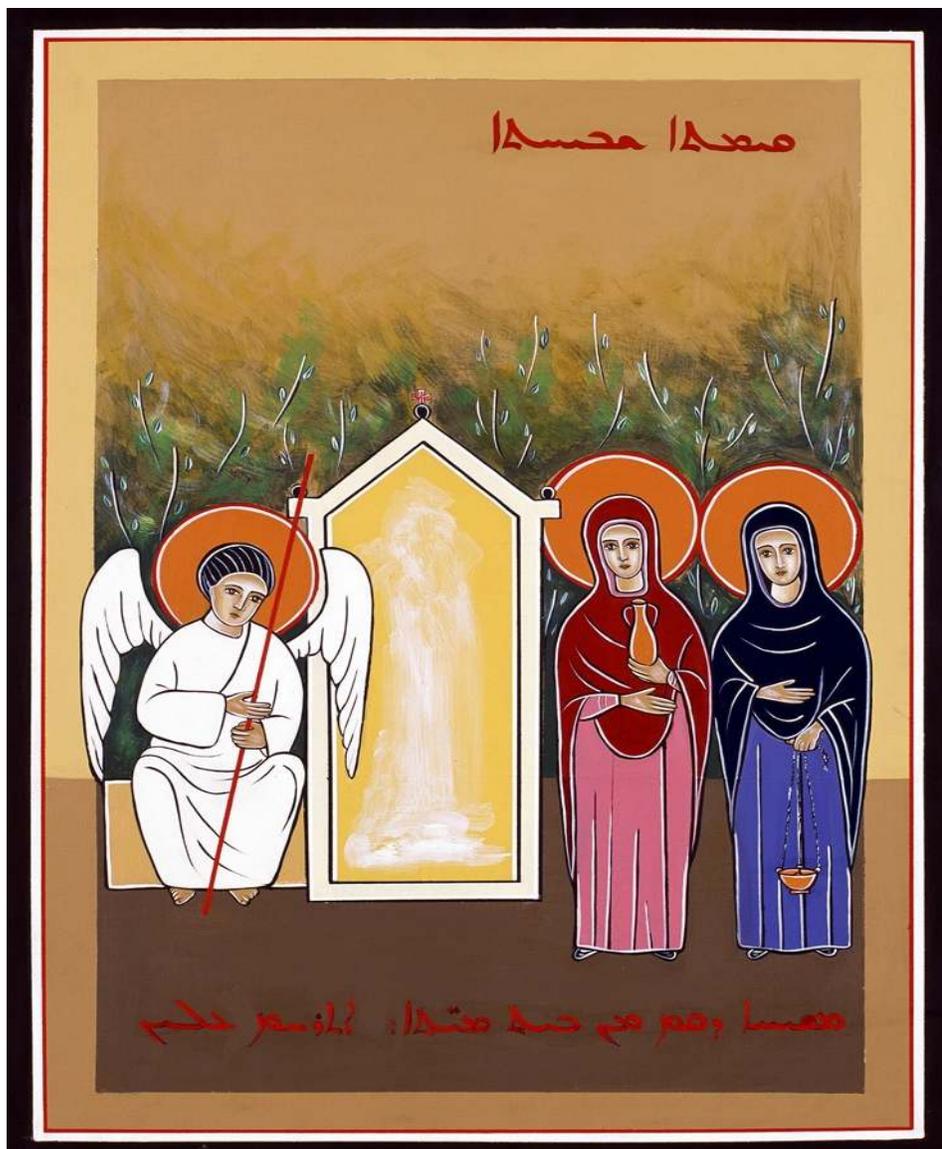
May 13, 2012

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

May 14 - 21, 2012

Ad Limina visit with Pope Benedict along with the other Eastern Catholic Bishops of the U.S., Rome, Italy. □

The Empty Tomb



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

by Chorbishop John D. Faris

In 1973 a group of my classmates traveled to Moscow. The group was led by our rector Bishop (later Cardinal) James A. Hickey. Since it was during the Cold War, visas were not so easy to obtain; the involvement of the Vatican was necessary to prevail over the numerous obstacles that arose.

At the time, groups of foreign visitors to the Soviet Union were assigned "tour

guides," whose apparent responsibility was to guide, but who were there primarily to watch and report on anything said or any contacts made. These "guides" were quick to offer praise of anything Russian and Communist and critical of just about everything else.

The itinerary included a visit to the mausoleum of Vladimir Lenin, popularly known as Lenin's Tomb on Red Square. The site was venerated in a manner similar to that held by Americans for the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Washington. The guides went to great length to explain

to the seminarians the protocol that was to be followed during the visit. Young men being what they are, one of the seminarians quipped, "What's the big deal about a tomb?" The tour guide, perhaps having met such a challenge in the past, retorted, "Well, you Christians make a big deal about Jesus' tomb in Jerusalem!" Bishop Hickey stepped in and clarified, "That's because His tomb is empty."

The tomb is empty: Jesus has risen! We Christians have been venerating this tomb - the place of the resurrection - of Jesus for over two thousand years. During this Season of Resurrection, let us take a closer look at this holy place.

Jesus was executed as a criminal with other criminals. Someone suffering such a death would ordinarily be buried on the "boot hill" of the day. Roman Law provided that the body of an executed criminal could be handed over to the next of kin. However, if one was executed for trying to overthrow the government - we note that Jesus was executed for the claim to be the King of the Jews - their bodies were not taken down, but left to be eaten by scavenger birds. The Jews did not like this practice and permitted the burial of an executed criminal, but not with other members of society. Executed criminals were buried outside the city in their own burial site.

The circumstances of Jesus' death made it most dangerous for his disciples to claim his body. Out of fear that they might meet a similar fate, they were keeping their distance, all except one: Joseph from Arimathea. Joseph was pious, hoping for the kingdom of God; he was wealthy (Mt 27:57); he was a member of the ruling body of the Jews, the Sanhedrin (Mk 15:43).

Joseph courageously took the dangerous initiative of going to the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate, and asking if he could claim the body of Jesus. He did so secretly because he was afraid of the Sanhedrin and the Jews who had called for the death of Jesus (Jn 19:38).

Joseph had prepared for himself a tomb that had been carved out of stone. Since

it was not far from the place of the crucifixion, he decided to place the body of Jesus in it. There was not much time to do anything since it was Friday afternoon and the Jewish Sabbath began that evening, a time when no work could be done. In any case, Joseph, Nicodemus (who had secretly approached Jesus with questions at night [Jn 3:1-2]) and some Galilean women (Mary Magdalene was one of them), removed the body from the cross. They hurriedly wrapped it with spices in a linen cloth, and placed it in the tomb. They rolled a large stone at the door and left.

Although Jesus' disciples had apparently forgotten all that Jesus had predicted, his persecutors had not. In the presence of the high priest, they had accused him of saying, "I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and in three days I will build another, not made with human hands" (Mk 14:58). After Jesus' death, the Jewish authorities approached Pontius Pilate and said, "Sir, we remember what that impostor said while he was still alive, 'After three days, I will rise again.'" The authorities asked that the tomb be made secure so that his disciples could not steal the body and claim that he had risen from the dead. Pontius gave them guards and they went to seal the tomb (Mt 27:62-66).

On Sunday before dawn, Mary Magdalene and another woman went to see the tomb. Upon arrival, they saw that the stone had been moved: the tomb was empty! The Gospel of John simply recounts that Mary ran to tell Peter and the apostles that the body of Jesus had been taken to an unknown place (Jn 20:2). Matthew provides a much more glorious account of the discovery of the empty tomb, describing an angel, dressed in gleaming white cloth whose appearance was like lightning. The Roman guards were "like dead men." The angel said, "Do not be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for He has been raised, as He said. Come, see the place where He lay" (Mt 28:5-6).

For more than twenty centuries, Christian pilgrims have heeded the invitation of the angel to "come and see the place where [Jesus] lay." The

resurrection event had no eyewitnesses. The followers of Jesus came to realize what had happened when they found the empty tomb. Seeing the empty tomb prepared them for their future encounters with the Risen Lord. We are in the same position: we do not witness the resurrection, but a visit to the empty tomb prepares us for an encounter with the Risen Lord.

The tomb of Jesus is now located in a church in the Old City of Jerusalem, the "Church of the Holy Sepulchre" (as it is known to Catholics, with a focus on the tomb itself) or the "Church of the Resurrection" (as it is known to Orthodox, with a focus on the wondrous event that took place in the tomb). The tomb itself is located in a small chapel under the rotunda of the church, known as the "edicule." This chapel comprises two rooms: the first room contains the stone which tradition holds to be the stone that sealed the tomb and the second room contains the tomb itself.

The church is shared - grudgingly - by the Greek Orthodox, Catholic Franciscans, and the Armenians, Coptic Orthodox, Ethiopian Orthodox and Syriac Orthodox. The competition and disputes among these religious groups regarding rights in the church are the source of embarrassment, disdain, and amusement for pilgrims who witness it. A complex arrangement (the so-called status quo) imposed by the Ottoman sultan in the middle of the nineteenth century continues to provide ample material for discussion and dispute among the followers of Jesus. This is not the only sad facet in the history of this place.

The Evangelist Luke tells us how Jesus wept as he predicted that destruction of Jerusalem, predicting that "[enemies] will not leave within you one stone upon another" (Lk 19:44). In response to a Jewish uprising, the Roman emperor completely destroyed the holy city in 135 AD. The places held holy by Jews and the fledgling group of followers of Jesus of Nazareth were all destroyed. The burial site of Jesus was covered and replaced with a pagan temple dedicated to Aphrodite.

Almost two centuries later after Christianity had been declared a legal

religion in the Roman Empire, the mother of Emperor Constantine, Helena, journeyed to Jerusalem to locate the holy places. The Church historian, Eusebius, tells of the excavations and how the discovery exhibited a "clear and visible truth that it was the tomb of Jesus." The validity of the discovery can also be confirmed by the fact that the local people would have had a recollection of where the tomb was located. The emperor funded the construction of two beautiful churches in the area, one on the site of the crucifixion and a second on the site of the tomb of Jesus.

The rock surrounding the tomb was carved away so that the tomb stood exposed as an isolated stone compartment (or "edicule") in the middle of the basilica. The holy site was to be destroyed again by the Persians in the 7th century and the Muslim Fatimid caliph in the 11th century. After extensive negotiations and the payment of an exorbitant amount of money by the Christian Emperor, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre was partially restored later in the 11th century. The present church was built during the Crusader period and places under one roof the site of the crucifixion and the tomb.

The presence and power of the Risen Lord is not confined to any one place; we can encounter Him anywhere. Nevertheless, the empty tomb reminds us that the Resurrection is not a fairy tale, philosophy, or theory, but took place on a certain day, at a certain time in a certain place. People saw it and later saw the Risen Lord. They were willing to die rather than change their testimony of what they saw with their eyes and touched with their hands (1 Jn 1:1).

Christ is risen! He is truly risen! ☐

About the Author

Former Vicar General of the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn, Chorbishop John D. Faris, J.C.O.D., is the Pastor of Saint Louis Gonzaga Maronite Church in Utica, New York. He is also a professor of Eastern Canon Law at Catholic University of America (CUA) in Washington, D.C.

Purgatory

The Purifying Fire of Divine Love

by Rev. David A. Fisher

2Maccabees 12:43-46: "And making a gathering, he [Judas] sent twelve thousand drachms of silver to Jerusalem for sacrifice to be offered for the sins of the dead, thinking well and religiously concerning the resurrection, (For if he had not hoped that they that were slain should rise again, it would have seemed superfluous and vain to pray for the dead,) And because he considered that they who had fallen asleep with godliness, had great grace laid up for them. It is therefore a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they may be loosed from sins."

The above quote from the Second Book of Maccabees is usually cited as the foundational Scriptural reference for the doctrine of Purgatory. Judas Maccabee, the great liberator of the Jewish people from foreign dominance, sends a stipend to the Jewish priests for his deceased soldiers, whom he loved, and who died fighting for the law of God, so that their sins may be forgiven and they might receive resurrection from the abode of Sheol (the shadowy place of the dead).

What is the experience of Purgatory and what is our connection with the faithful departed? Let us start with the conceptual connection between knowledge, love, and attachment. First is knowledge, the fundamental ingredient in any lasting relationship, for we can only love what we know. For example, if someone said they wanted you to love their best friend like they do and they set off on a long explanation of why their friend is such a lovable, wonderful person, at the end of their exposition you might feel interested in getting to know their friend; but you could not say you love them, because your knowledge is second-hand; it has no existential quality in that you have never encountered them firsthand yourself. Knowledge is the bedrock of love and relationship. To paraphrase the French philosopher Pascal in his famous writing the *Pensées* (My Thoughts) - if you wish to have faith in God, then fall on our knees in prayer, take holy water, go to Mass, do the things that others have risked to know and love the Eternal God.

Secondly, knowledge leads to love and love to attachment. It is not surprising that the first people we usually love in life and feel an attachment to are our parents. The self-giving and vulnerability of human love only grows within the context of real, honest communication, of mutual self-disclosure. These attachments of love, as we Catholics believe, do not end at the grave. The Church, the People of God, exists on earth, in time and in Heaven - the Church of Purgatory and the Communion of Saints. Love is an active reality. It is the core of our being, as St. Augustine remarked, "My weight is my love," Love does not end.

So often when we pray for the eternal peace or eternal rest of the faithful departed, we can fall into a false impression that

the redeemed live in some sort of Nirvana of blissful meditation. This is nowhere within our tradition. Until the Kingdom of God comes in its fullness we all, the living and the departed, have a ministry of love and prayer. This leads us to see Purgatory as a refining fire, refining our being to love more purely. On this side of the grave, love is imperfect. We all fall short of the perfect symbol of love which is Our Lord's Holy Cross. On earth it is impossible for human beings not to have some degree of self-interest and selfishness in loving. In Purgatory the fire of Divine Love is an experience which allows us to shed the impulses toward self-centeredness as we exist more closely to the Light of Truth.

Those who have experienced Purgatory take their love for us to the throne of God. As the great Jesuit intellectual and Saint Robert Bellarmine reminds us, the Church that has suffered through Purgatory has been purified and therefore when we pray for our beloved dead, we should also ask them to pray for us.

Purgatory and prayer for the dead is ultimately not a question of darkness, pain and suffering; rather it is an affirmation of the purifying power of the Divine Light and Divine Love and the consolation that we are never separated from our loved ones. In fact the love is purified in the glory of God. □

About the Author

Rev. David A. Fisher is the Pastor of St. Anthony of Padua Maronite Church in Cincinnati, Ohio. He is also an Adjunct Professor in Philosophy, Central State University, Wilberforce, Ohio.

Easter, New Sunday, New Beginnings

Continued from page one

So that we may share in the new beginnings of all who love Christ and are "called according to his plan" (Romans 8), let us ask the prayer of Mary, Mother of God, to be with us; for she stood at the foot of the Cross and then with the repentant Apostles in the Upper Room as they awaited the "gift from above," the Holy Spirit, promised on Pentecost. From her earliest youth she knew how to say 'yes' to God's new beginnings, and she helps us even today to say 'yes' to His new beginnings.

Jesus said, "Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness over you and all these things shall be given to you as well" (Luke 12:31). Lord, help us to seek you and to be born anew in you.

Happy Easter and new beginnings!

+ Gregory John Mansour
Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn

Dartmouth, Massachusetts Open House At Maronite Servants



by Sister Marla Marie, MSCCL

The Maronite Servants of Christ were pleased to have close to 150 people visit their Mother of the Light Convent in Dartmouth, Mass., on March 4, 2012, for their Open House. Their company was a diverse group of friends and supporters, including the Dominican Sisters of Hope, who had previously owned the property.

We first introduced the guests to the Chapel of Saint Maron, and then they proceeded to the dining room which was set up as a display area featuring photos of before and after the renovations. Also, tours were offered of both floors, giving a more extensive look at how the convent is arranged for sisters and for those making retreats. Refreshments were served by dedicated volunteers in the sunroom, where visitors could sit back and enjoy each other's company.

The following excerpt written by one of the visitors captures the spirit of many comments we received that day: "Mother of the Light Convent is absolutely lovely. Thank you for your invitation on Sunday to witness the renovations, so well designed.

The visit to the Chapel was the highlight of the tour. Watching those who were writing their pleas and seeing one young man expressing his sorrows were very moving.

We felt much peace in our tour of the convent, especially on floor two. The simplicity of color and decor is where we immediately sensed a peaceful aura where prayer could not be interrupted and one's mind could not be distracted with worldly goods, only to direct our hearts and minds to our dear Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ."

The Maronite Servants invite you to visit them. Please call and arrange for a visit or a day of retreat, The contact information is at maroniteservants.org. □

Food For Thought

*We sometimes feel that what we do is just a drop in the ocean,
but the ocean would be less because of that missing drop.*
(Mother Theresa)

Eparchy of Saint Maron Vocations Page

Beginning with next month's issue, *The Maronite Voice* will feature a monthly page on vocations "which will showcase the beautiful way we listen to the call of Our Lord Jesus to serve him." Below is the welcoming letter from His Excellency Bishop Gregory Mansour.

March 6, 2012

Prot. No. 170/1/12

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

Welcome to the vocations page of the Eparchy, which will showcase the beautiful way we listen to the call of Our Lord Jesus to serve him.

My own vocation to priesthood goes back to 1973 and to the newly established Maronite Mission in Flint, Michigan. I was part of that first Mission and had no idea how my future would be interwoven with the good of that Mission.

I wanted to be a biology teacher, but it seemed that God had other plans. The late Monsignor Ronald Beshara asked me forthright, "Would you consider being a priest?" I told him it was not in my plans. He asked if I loved the Lord enough to change my plans if He was calling me. Beloved brothers and sisters, the rest is history.

This is how God works. He stirs the heart, He asks others to invite us, and He brings about his loving plan in a most loving way. As you read this monthly vocations page, I hope you will let your heart imagine what good things God has in store for those who love Him. Let your heart be open to what you will read here as together we reflect on the wondrous ways that God works in the hearts of His people.

Sincerely yours in Christ,
+Gregory John Mansour

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

**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. □

Warren, Michigan Seminary Visit



Msgr. Jeffrey Monforton presents Chorbishop Badawi with an image of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

On Sunday, January 22, 2012, the Pastor and parishioners of St. Sharbel Maronite Church in Warren, Michigan, warmly welcomed approximately eighty-five seminarians from Sacred Heart Major Seminary located in Detroit, Michigan. Sacred Heart Major Seminary prepares candidates for the Roman Catholic priesthood and laity for ministerial leadership. Along with their rector, Very Rev. Msgr. Jeffrey M. Monforton, and instructor, Rev. Chas Canoy, the young men were among those attending the Divine Liturgy celebrated by Chorbishop Alfred Badawi, his first as the newly installed pastor of St. Sharbel Maronite Church. Prior to the Liturgy, Subdeacon George Hajj gave an impressive presentation on the history and tradition of the Maronites, highlighting similarities and differences unique to each rite as well as some personal insight into his own seminary studies. Subdeacon George currently is a seminarian for the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon at Our Lady of Lebanon Maronite Seminary in Washington D.C.

Following the celebration of the Liturgy, Msgr. Monforton presented Chorbishop Badawi with a beautiful image of the Sacred Heart of Jesus on behalf of the visiting seminarians. They remained for questions and answers as they socialized with the parishioners of St. Sharbel Church over refreshments.

Catechists Warm up Haven of Hope

After they made posters announcing they would be 'Warming Up the Haven,' on Saturday, January 21, 2012, more than a dozen St. Sharbel middle school catechists went to the Haven of Hope Community Outreach (HOHCO) in southwest Detroit, Mich., to live the Gospel mandate (Matthew 25:31- 46) to feed the hungry and clothe the needy. The students registered local neighborhood residents and recorded the number of coats, blankets, boots, gloves and outerwear they gave away. After choosing warming outerwear, each neighbor received a bowl of warm homemade lentil soup with bread.

Each week, the Haven of Hope, which is an IRS Sec. 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation, distributes fresh food to 300 persons in the neighborhood. The Rev. Lena Teagarden, CEO of HOHCO, has operated the food distribution program with volunteer support, in cooperation with the Forgotten Harvest Corporation, for nearly eight years.

"The kind and generous actions of the St. Sharbel Parish clothing donors, students, and volunteers who came to the Haven of Hope warmed the bodies, minds and hearts of all who participated. Thank you and God Bless You," said Rev. Teagarden. In alignment with Matthew 6:1-4, the names of all donors and volunteers will not be noted. □

Flint, Michigan Women's Day of Recollection



Sr. Ruthann speaks to the ladies of the Altar Society.

The Altar Society of Our Lady of Lebanon Church in Flint, Michigan, hosted a Women's Day of Recollection on Saturday, February 18, 2012. The theme for the day was "Women of the Bible" and the guest speaker was Sr. Ruthann, O.P., from the St. Francis Prayer Center. The day began with a light breakfast followed by the opening talk from the guest speaker. Sr. Ruthann, who gave the ladies a whole new insight into their lives as women of today's church and followers of Jesus. The morning liturgy offered by Fr. Victor Daw and the homily by Subdeacon Earl Matte further inspired the ladies. After a luncheon break the ladies heard two additional speakers. The day's activities were motivating and all the ladies wish to express their thanks to Sr. Ruthann for taking time from her schedule to share her thoughts with them. □

Happy Birthday Msgr. Kail

On Sunday, March 4, 2012, St. Maron Church, Youngstown, Ohio, celebrated the 65th birthday of its Pastor, Chorbishop Michael Kail. The parish sang to him after all the Liturgies and served cake and coffee in Antioch Hall afterwards. Msgr. Kail's mother and other family members were present. □

Waterville, Maine Chowder Lenten Meal



by Kevin J. Michaud

The Immaculate Heart of Mary Council of the Knights of Columbus held their ever popular Haddock Chowder Supper in the parish center of St. Joseph Maronite Church in Waterville, Maine, beginning February 24, 2012. The first night saw 141 guests come to enjoy the meal, which includes a twenty oz. serving of Haddock Chowder, a homemade biscuit, beverage and desert for just \$6.00 per person.

Following the dinner all were invited to participate in the Stations of the Cross in the Maronite tradition led by Fr. Larry Jensen, Pastor, and assisted by Subdeacon Stephen Crate. The Knights of Columbus are new to St. Joseph Church, having moved from their former home parish of Immaculate Heart of Mary in Fairfield, Maine, when that church closed last October. The Lenten Haddock Chowder meals continued throughout Lent, bringing together many visitors from around the Central Maine area who have never experienced the Maronite hospitality. □



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

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. □

Houston, Texas The Gift of The Word

Mr. and Mrs. Nijad and Zeina Fares have accompanied the Maronite community of Houston, Tex., from its beginnings. Throughout the years, they have left their mark on many of its projects, only a few of which have come with public recognition like the Georges Mouawad Pastoral Center and hosting the grand functions honoring our Patriarchs. The Fares family's financial support has been extremely generous, whether it was made public or remained anonymous. Equally important are the Fares' moral support and friendship to the community, both of which have been abundant.

Their latest gift to Our Lady of the Cedars Maronite Church is the first set of the printed Bible in Arabic, an extremely valuable, rare, and truly priceless treasure. This 17th Century Bible Set, "Biblia Sacra Arabica (Typis eiusdem Sacrae Congregat. de Propaganda Fide, 1671)" will be cherished by our community for decades and, God willing, centuries to come.

The *editio* princeps of the complete Bible in Arabic is a careful revision of the version collated from various Arabic manuscripts, and compared with the original Hebrew and Greek, and certain Oriental versions. It was edited by permission of Pope Urban V and under the direction of the College De *Propaganda Fide*, by Bishop Sergius Risius (Sarkis Er-Rizzi), the Maronite Archbishop of Damascus, who had come to Rome in 1624, bringing with him many manuscripts of the Arabic Scriptures. His assistant Philip Guadagnolo bore the whole burden after Risius' death in 1638, and completed the Old Testament in 1647 and the New Testament in 1650.

This first impression, however, was withdrawn - though a few copies survived - as it did not agree sufficiently with the Vulgate. The further revision was entrusted to Abraham Ecchellensis and Louis Maracci. They finished their task in 1664, but it was not until 1671 that the Bible was at last published, in three volumes containing the Arabic text and the Latin Vulgate printed side by side. The reception of this revised Arabic Bible in the East was at first unfavorable, owing to the changes introduced in the text; but the version eventually won general acceptance among Arabic-speaking Christians.

Our sincere thanks again to Mr. and Mrs. Fares for this gift of the Word of God. May God give back to them and their family tenfold what they have shared, not only with our community, but with all the lives they touch on a daily basis with their generous spirit. □

Austin, Texas Lenten Retreat

Our Lady's Maronite Catholic Parish in Austin, Tex., held its annual Lenten Retreat near Austin, Texas, in March. Msgr. Don J. Sawyer led the group in reflecting on the themes of "Prayer, Forgiveness, and Renewal." □

Uniontown, Pennsylvania *Organist Retires*

by Dr. Mable Howard

The resounding bells of St. George Maronite Church, Uniontown, Penn., summon the faithful to liturgy each week. As parishioners enter the Church, they see a familiar face and hear a melodic voice welcoming them to worship. That particular person sits on a bench pillow with the top of her head barely peeking from behind the organ. Traditional Syriac chants permeate the air, and the Church organ rings out as she leads the congregation in choral responses. This setting describes a typical St. George Maronite Catholic Liturgy led in song and inspiration by Sylvia Roger. Following sixty-five years of outstanding and faithful service, Sylvia is retiring from her position as Church Organist and Cantor at St. George.

Sylvia has led a very interesting and full life. She was born in the United States, the oldest of three children, to John and Dorothy Joseph Roger. After the Great Depression of 1929 hit, Sylvia's family moved to Lebanon to find work when she was nearly three years old. She attended grade school in Lebanon until moving back to the U.S. in the third grade. At that time, Sylvia could not speak English. Within about six months, she learned to speak English very well, and later graduated as salutatorian of St. John's High School with the class of 1947.

Sylvia was raised in a religious family, and her father's love for music, especially the Maronite Liturgy, inspired her to begin singing at a very young age. Sylvia's father, cantor in the church, taught her to sing and chant the ancient melodies and divine songs. With only limited training on the piano, she eventually taught herself to play the traditional hymns for the Liturgy on the parish's pump organ in the old St. George Church on Lincoln Street. In the late 1930s, her father organized the first St. George girls' choir, and the talented Sylvia became the church organist and cantor as a teenager. In 1950, an electric organ replaced the pump organ as Sylvia continued to play and sing solo and with the choir. Finally, in 1967, after moving into the new church on Lebanon Terrace, a Baldwin two-manual organ was purchased.

Sylvia, a lifetime member of St. George, is the longest serving volunteer in the music ministry of the parish. She has also directed several parish adult and youth choirs to perform Maronite hymns. During her tenure at St. George, she has performed faithfully and unselfishly for an overwhelming number of religious events, and has sung for many religious leaders, visiting clergy and pastors of St. George including



His Excellency Gregory Mansour, Bishop of the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn (previously pastor of the Parish) and presently Fr. Nadim Helou, M.L.M., Pastor. One of her greatest moments was the honor of playing for His Beatitude Patriarch Bechara Rai, Patriarch of Antioch and all the East, on his pastoral visit to the U.S.

Sylvia is a member of the Ladies Guild, Altar Rosary Society and NAM. She was the recipient of the Massabki Award for her dedication to the preservation and promotion of the Maronite faith. She has also received the Cedars Award for a lifetime of service, self-sacrifice, and dedication to St. George Church.

Over more than six decades, Sylvia has watched generations of parishioners grow personally and spiritually. Sylvia has been a connecting force that transcends past and present heritage of our Lebanese American parish community. She understands the history and legacy of St. George and the Maronite Catholic faith. When I asked Sylvia how she felt about St. George Church, she simply responded, "I love my church. I feel great joy and humility, and I am privileged to serve my parish." We truly wish Sylvia a wonderful and fulfilling retirement. □

West Palm Beach, Florida *Lebanese Food Festival*



by Fr. Jorge Perales

On Cana Sunday, February 19, 2012, Mary Mother of the Light Church, Greenacres [West Palm Beach], Florida, celebrated its annual Lebanese Food Festival. It was an afternoon in which everyone enjoyed good food and excellent company, as well as lively music and games for the children. The parishioners worked hard for months in organizing and preparing for it. The Lord blessed us with a beautiful day, not only in the weather, but also with a beautiful and successful event. □



Newtown Square, Pennsylvania *Birthday Blessing*



Fr. Paul Mouawad, Pastor, blesses Fred Shahadi on the occasion of his 90th birthday.

by Lillian Shahade

On March 4, 2012, Fr. Paul Mouawad and the parishioners of St. Sharbel Church in Newtown Square, Penn., offered the Divine Liturgy for the intention and as a birthday blessing for Fred Shahadi, Sr., USN Captain, Ret. Uncle Fred, as he is best known, is the resident greeter for all the newcomers to St. Sharbel Church. After sitting with Fred for an hour, one comes away with the history of the church and all the people, for Fred has been with St. Sharbel from its beginning as a Mission four miles away from its present location. Fred has many nieces and cousins attending St. Sharbel Church. In fact, at this age, his eyesight is a little less sharp, so his niece, Charlotte Bijansky, brings him to and from Church every Sunday. He is the perfect role model for parishioners, young and adults alike.

In the early days, Fred and his now deceased wife, Dolly, spearheaded many of the events, *haflis* and festivals at the mission. A member of the original Parish Council, usher, lector and greeter, Fred was involved in just about everything that was going on in the church. As the years rolled by, Fred had to lessen his involvement with the activities that were building up around him and he encouraged many of the

present parishioners to participate in the many ministries of the parish. Those who heeded his words of advice and encouragement have made him truly proud.

Fred Shahadi, US Navy Captain, Retired. He graduated from high school in 1941 and joined the US Navy six days after Pearl Harbor. He was stationed on the YMS349 (Yard Minesweeper). Fred's account of his history at sea was one of bravery, great cause for concern and heroism. The YMS' job was to clear the way of mines for the safety of the invasion ships following them. They toured in waters that rose as high as forty-five feet at given times. His crew rescued British and American soldiers from capsized ships that later had to be destroyed by friendly fire so as not to fall into the hands of the enemy. At one point, his sister ship YMS350 was hit by a mine and the YMS349 immediately turned back into the minefield and rescued their friends. Fred was one of four brothers all serving in WWII. On his way to Japan, Fred actually met his brother, Billy a Marine, in Pearl. Billy has just returned from Midway.

Fred left the service in 1946 and later graduated from Pennsylvania Military College (Widener) in 1949. Fred's expertise at the time was computers (a little different then than now) and he was responsible for the design of financial management systems for managing the US Navy Shipyard in Philadelphia.

He has received many awards throughout his career, just to name a few: the College award at graduation, the alumnus award, serving on the Board of Trustees of Widener and serving on a Washington Steering committee. He retired as the CFO of US Naval Air Engineering Center in Lakehurst, N.J.

Fred has received many more awards, but the most coveted award is the Massabki Award that he received at St. Sharbel Church in 2005.

Fred's family and friends attended the Liturgy for his intentions and all joined him later in the hall for cake, coffee and congratulations.

Reading this very brief account of a man's life who did and gave so much for others should make us pause and wonder: How much do we know and really appreciate about the person sitting next to us. □

Raleigh, North Carolina *Parish Picnic*

by Patti Rezk Karam

On March 21, 2012, Saint Sharbel Mission Church in Raleigh North Carolina, held its first annual parish picnic at Triad Park in Greensboro, N.C. The picnic featured games, food, music, *Dabke* and a soccer game challenge between the Raleigh parishioners and Maronites from Charlotte and Greensboro, N.C. The day started with the youth (MYA) setting up, Liturgy was held at noon. Everyone brought their own lunch to share so there was plenty for everyone and then some. Everyone had so much fun that it was decided that everyone present will attend next year and will bring friends along. □

Orange County, California *Church Rebuilt*



The newly built St. John Maron Church in Orange County, Calif.

by Nada Salloum

On December 23, 2008, St. John Maron Church, Orange County, Calif., was vandalized and burned. The devastation left us homeless and heart-broken, but never hopeless. Three years, three months later, our church has overcome a difficult journey. We have faced and endured obstacles, downfalls, and numerous challenges.

Until we found a permanent solution, we were left with no other choice but to rent halls for weekly liturgy. Having no place to call home, and functioning outside of our comfort zone, the situation was challenging for us all. Preparing for each liturgy required extra work and effort. Setting up the altar and over 300 chairs, and then stacking them all away again a few hours later, became a part of our weekly routine. May the Lord reward our deacons and subdeacons who faithfully fulfilled these new responsibilities, Sunday after Sunday.

Father Antoine Bakh, Pastor, under tremendous pressure and difficult circumstances, maintained the focus of the congregation on faith and hope. His ultimate goal was to rebuild the church from the inside out and on a strong foundation - namely, the parishioners. The repeated weekly messages focused on love, forgiveness, and the importance of reflecting God to others through our words and actions.

His focus was on our relationship with Jesus and the importance of good morals and family values. Making right choices became the resounding theme.

The message was strong and became all the more effective when the various committees and parishioners worked in unity. For faith and works together were the key that reached success!

The motivation and dedication were overwhelming. Endless hours of hard work were put into every detail to exceed expectations. The youth and the young adults shared in the responsibilities by planning and orchestrating spiritual and social events.

Our elders and founders prayed and whispered wisdom at times when advice was necessary. Religious classes,

various activities, *haflis*, home dinners, and prayers remained active despite all the changes.

On October 5, 2010, the Parish purchased a property, and by God's grace, today we are blessed with the realization of our vision. Our precious dream has become a reality! We welcomed the new church by recording the first Liturgy on February 9, 2012, St. Maron's Feast Day.

With joyful hearts, tearful eyes, and a loss for words, the new church left us breathless, for we felt at home again! Come and join us for Liturgy and fellowship. You will experience a warm welcome and love in our home; for our home is yours. □

Brooklyn, New York *First Reconciliation*



Norma Haddad and Msgr. James Root with the First Confession class.

by Salma T. Vahdat

Elysa Abdel Massih, Kaithleen AlHaddad, Marvin AlHaddad, Gael Diab, Keven Diab, Vanessa Eid, Eli Abi Daher, Patrick Chamoun, Jenna Abi Habib, Andrea Khoury, Maya Mattar and Tiffany Chouki made their first confession on Saturday, March 3, 2012, at Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral in Brooklyn, N.Y.

Accompanied by parents, grandparents and siblings, they were primed for the Service prepared for them by Msgr. James Root, Rector. After all, it would be the first time they would be aware and participate themselves in receiving a Sacrament. Baptism and Chrismation were beyond their baby memories. Norma Haddad, their Catechist, had been instructing them since September, and they were more than ready to demonstrate what they had learned. The Service had been scheduled during the season of Great Lent to emphasize the penitential aspect of the Sacrament.

The event began with a prayer service after which their confessions were heard. When all had completed the confessions a communal prayer was offered and each of the children was presented with a prayer stole. The children and their families were then honored at a reception in the Cathedral Social Hall. □

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.

Brockton, Massachusetts Pastoral Visit



Fr. Tony Mouanes and Bishop Gregory Mansour with the children of St. Theresa Church in Brockton, Mass.

by Michelle A. Nessralla

"Christianity is not for wimps...Christianity is not for the faint of heart...Christianity is bold...it is powerful...it is strong...and it is for those who are faith-filled and devout...it is not meant to be easy...Christianity is sacrifice, and it is love; it is that love represented by Jesus on the cross which gives our life a greater purpose and deeper meaning...it is meant to make life joyful." And so was the poignant message that Bishop Gregory Mansour delivered to the parish family of Saint Theresa, Brockton, Mass., on March 23 - 25, 2012.

Fr. Tony Mouanes, Administrator of Saint Theresa

Church, and hundreds of parishioners welcomed Bishop Mansour throughout his three-day visit. Bishop Gregory, with his trademark quiet grace, reflective intelligence, and warm and gentle demeanor, addressed various groups and organizations throughout his weekend visit. He thanked members of the Choir, Religious Education, Ladies Altar Society, Parish and Stewardship Councils, MYO, and MYA for their ongoing ministries to the church; he reminded us of the important role that the church plays in our lives and encouraged all of us to continue the up-building and strengthening of our parish community. He especially acknowledged the importance and contributions of "the young people," who are the future of our church, our faith, and our traditions. He shared stories and memories from his own childhood, of his beloved parents and of growing up within the community of his home parish. He also disclosed to the youth and young adults that "you make all of us feel young again..."

This wonderful weekend culminated on Sunday, when Bishop Gregory celebrated a Children's Liturgy with the youth of Saint Theresa Church. Students in the Religious Education Program recited an opening prayer, delivered the readings and intercessions in English and Arabic, sang hymns with the choir, handled the weekly collections, and shared the greeting of peace; one student read a poem in memory of her father, for whom the liturgy was celebrated.

Before gathering in the church hall for a Harvest Brunch, The Bishop once again thanked the parish family and shared one final sentiment with us: he told us that we have "a beautiful priest," one who is humble, one who has accomplished much thus far, one who is bringing together the Lebanese and the Americans, the English and the Arabic with a satisfying and balanced blend, one who needs our support and prayers, just as we need his. The congregation wholeheartedly responded to the Bishop's statement with enthusiastic applause, because Fr. Tony is such a priest. □

