

The Maronite Voice



A Publication of the Maronite Eparchies in the USA

Volume XIV

Issue No. XI

December 2017

"Blessed Are the Peacemakers"

This Christmas is my fifth with you as Bishop of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon of Los Angeles, and I never cease finding in the celebration of the Birth of Our Lord some new insight each year.

At this time of year we are busy shopping, planning activities, sending greetings, buying gifts – so many things that take time. Sometimes we may lose our inner peace. We become tangled with the problems, activities and events in our own world and its surroundings. Consequently we forget the true reason for this season: Christ's birth in our hearts and in our lives. Christ came to establish a true and everlasting peace. In fact, in the Gospel of Luke we find the marvelous proclamation of the angels: "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests" (2:14). Before this proclamation of the angels could be made, there was a journey: Mary and Joseph had to travel to Bethlehem. By today's standards this journey does not seem like a major feat. It is only about seventy-five miles between Nazareth, where Mary and Joseph lived, and Bethlehem, the ancestral home of Joseph. But 2,000 years ago it would have taken them some four or five days on foot. It would not have been an easy journey for them, especially for a woman about to give birth. There were no motels, no comforts, no nice restaurants to make the journey easier.

Perhaps we all are called to travel this road as did Mary and Joseph, for at the end of the journey is found "Peace." The world is not lacking in its own "roads to peace" as we often hear. By and large they are dead-end roads; they are certainly only temporary and they are never fully realized. The world offers us just a partial and relative "peace" about only a cessation of hostilities or a truce in war and violence. The world's peace often appears to be something negative – no more fighting. As the prophet Jeremiah wrote: "They have healed the brokenness of my people superficially, saying, 'Peace, peace,' But there is no peace" (6:14).

The road to Bethlehem offers us much more. The truth is that



true peace can only come from God. This peace develops at various levels.

- Inner Peace: True peace begins within us. It begins with peace in our own hearts. There is no more searching and no more doubts as we have found the true Messiah. Peace in our hearts begins with our relationship with God and the assurance that we are loved by God and that we are precious in His eyes. It is strengthened by sincere reconciliation with God and it is reflected by our own serenity.
- Peace in our families can flow from our relationship with God and is rooted in our lived out love of those who are closest to us in the natural order of things: our parents, our spouse and our children. To love them is a decision we make. We want only what is best for those whom we love. It is built on mutual love and respect manifested by harmony within the family.

(Continues on page 20)

Schedule of Bishop Elias Zaidan

December 3, 2017

St. Raymond Cathedral, St. Louis, Mo.

December 4, 2017

Protection of Minors Review Board Meeting – Los Angeles, Calif.

December 5, 2017

Meeting of Bishops and Vocation Directors at St. John Seminary, Camarillo, Calif.

December 9 - 10, 2017

Pastoral Visit to Our Lady's Church, Austin, Tex., and Ordination of Guy Helow to the Minor Orders

December 17, 2017

St. Raymond Cathedral, St. Louis, Mo.

December 18, 2017

Pastoral Visit to St. Joseph Church, Phoenix, Ariz.

December 25, 2017

Christmas at Our Lady of Mt. Lebanon – St. Peter Cathedral, Los Angeles, Calif.

December 31, 2017

Our Lady of Mt. Lebanon – St. Peter Cathedral, Los Angeles, Calif.

January 1, 2018

Happy New Year!

January 6 - 7, 2018

Epiphany at Our Lady of Mt. Lebanon – St. Peter Cathedral, Los Angeles, Calif.

January 8 - 12, 2018

Clergy Annual Retreat, Franciscan Renewal Center, Phoenix, Ariz.

January 13- 14, 2018

Pastoral Visit to St. Joseph Church, Phoenix, Ariz. □

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Fayetteville, North Carolina Saint Michael Prayer Garden

by Fr. Sam Najjar

On November 5, 2017, the parishioners of St. Michael the Archangel Church in Fayetteville, N.C., celebrated the feast of their patron by dedicating the "St. Michael Prayer Garden" in memory of James "Jimmy" Monsour, Jr., one of the founding members of the church. The annual St. Michael Day Luncheon took place in the Parish Social Hall following the Divine Liturgy. □



Maronite Convention 2018

Our Lady of the Cedars Maronite
Catholic Church

Houston, Texas

July 11 - 15, 2018

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

www.Namnews.org
www.Namconvention2018.com

Washington, D.C. *Patriarch's Press Conference*

On October 24, 2017, His Beatitude Patriarch Bechara Peter Cardinal Rai, with Greek Orthodox Patriarch John X of Antioch and all the East, held a news conference at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C., kicking off the In Defense of Christians Summit. The October 24 - 26, 2017, summit centered on the theme of "American Leadership and Securing the Future of Christians in the Middle East." Patriarch Rai's remarks at the conference follow.

America is a young country, full of hope, vitality and idealism. The Middle East, for its part, is ancient, with many diverse cultures but also cynicism and a history of bloodshed. In recent years, the conflicts that have beset the Middle East have driven out millions of its citizens, including so many Christians — and with their exodus, our region becomes more extreme, more dangerous to the outside world.

Our worlds are, of course, very different. Yet we share many of the same hopes — for prosperity, for security, but above all for peace. Like all people, we look to America to lead the international community in so many ways.

First, we look to America to help us solve the grave humanitarian crisis of so many refugees (1.7 million Syrians, half a million Palestinians and many Iraqis), whom we received in Lebanon in the spirit of solidarity. Yet Lebanon has borne this responsibility for 69 years with the Palestinian refugees and over six years with the Syrian refugees almost entirely alone. It has become a terrible burden at various levels: demographic, political, economic, social, environmental, educational and security.

Lebanon's constitution does not grant birthright citizenship. Therefore, Lebanon cannot bear the consequences of the refugees and the fear of their disguised settlement within its borders. We'd like to see the Syrian and Iraqi refugees rebuild their lives in their respective homelands.

We hope the Palestinian crisis will be resolved soon but not at the expense of Lebanon. It must be made clear that international diplomatic efforts aimed at resolving the Syrian crisis and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict must include Lebanon as a negotiator partner for the simple reason that Lebanon has many Syrian and Palestinian refugees.

We look to America to exercise its diplomacy to resolve the many challenges in the region that have direct and indirect impact on Lebanon. While in recent years Lebanon has seen relative stability, it is still a fragile peace. Lebanon's older generation remembers well the horror of war. They know that war must never be repeated.

The youth of Lebanon in particular long for freedom and opportunity. Throughout our history, many of our challenges came from outside Lebanon, which has too often been manipulated by stronger powers. We have been abandoned to solve problems we did not create. Lebanon must be sovereign and stable — but we can only be so with your help.

Finally, we look to America to help us negotiate permanent peace. This is the dream of all people who live in fear but long for peace. We seek friendship with those on our borders and beyond. It is here that our ancient world and your new world must encounter one another and begin to understand one another.

We have a long tradition of pluralism in the Middle East. But in recent years, we have been divided against one another. Christians are bound by our faith to love everyone regardless of religious, ethnic and cultural differences. How

long can people look at one another in enmity, as hostages to fear? We cannot be divided against another and achieve lasting peace.

The work toward peace requires more than governmental efforts. We need humanitarian assistance. This can be the work of nongovernmental organizations, of writers, even of students. But above all there is a role for Christians - to be diplomats of faith. Come to Lebanon and to the Middle East. □

Manhattan, New York *Dedication of Saint Sharbel Shrine*



His Beatitude Patriarch Bechara Peter Cardinal Rai, Patriarch of Maronite Catholics, inaugurated a chapel to Lebanon's St. Sharbel in St. Patrick's Cathedral. The chapel is the first of its kind outside Lebanon.

"St. Sharbel is a sign of hope for Christianity and for all the people of the Middle East who suffer in difficult circumstances," said Cardinal Rai at the October 28, 2017, blessing and dedication at the Cathedral. Cardinal Dolan, along with Bishop Gregory J. Mansour of the Maronite Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn, also participated in the ceremony.

"We are here in New York and the United States to hear the voices that speak to us about the Middle East," Cardinal Dolan said.

The artistic mosaic sanctuary depicts St. Sharbel wrapped in a luminous halo in the Lebanese mountain, near the St. Maron monastery in *Annaya*, Lebanon, where his tomb is located. The saint is surrounded by flourishing cedars and

crystalline waters of the Mediterranean, a symbol of spiritual life.

The 19th-century Lebanese Maronite monk had a strong devotion to the Eucharist. He was canonized by Blessed Pope Paul VI in 1977.

St. Maron's Monastery says it has approximately 26,000 documented miracles attributed to the intercession of St. Sharbel, not just in Lebanon but worldwide.

It says that, lately, at least 10 percent of recipients of miracles are nonbaptized individuals, including Muslims, Druze, Jews and atheists.

Antoun Sehnaoui, Chairman of Societe Generale de Banque au Liban, is the sponsor of the chapel, dedicated in honor of his parents, May and Nabil Sehnaoui. (Taken from cny.org, published on November 8, 2017).

The Patriarch's homily, "God is glorified in his saints!" follows.

*Cardinal Dolan,
Bishops, Priests,
Ambassadors, Consul General, Antoun Sehnaoui and Family,
Brothers and Sisters in Christ*

From the mountain hermitage of *Annaya* where Saint Sharbel, the Lebanese Maronite Monk lived far away from everyone, forgotten by everyone, we are now transported from that mountain hermitage to the "Cathedral of America," Saint Patrick, here in New York.

Saint Sharbel shines as a bright (Maronite Catholic) star in this fresco, which we will consecrate today, along with this entire assembly praying together.

Saint Sharbel brings with him the beauty of Eastern Christianity. He also carries with him the suffering of the Middle Eastern people, in particular the people of the Holy Land, Iraq, Egypt, Syria, Turkey and Lebanon. He also carries with him the hopes and aspirations of the peoples of those countries.

Suffering, death and resurrection: this is the mystery of Christianity in the world. It is also the mystery of Christ the Redeemer, and the mystery of the Church. Saint Sharbel lived that mystery in its fullness: he suffered, made sacrifices, died to himself in his hermitage, and God raised him up in glory. He is a saint across the countries, across the continents and across religions, distributing the graces of God generously. Sharbel is a sign of hope for Christians, and for all the people of the Middle East, suffering under very difficult circumstances.

I make a word of thanks to God, and glorify him, who gave Saint Sharbel to his Church, and who shows through him the face of his love and mercy. A word of thanks also to Saint Sharbel, who shines like a pearl on the face of the Church.

We thank you, Your Eminence, Cardinal Dolan, for having made even more beautiful the Cathedral of Saint Patrick by the face of Saint Sharbel. We also thank our dear Antoun Sehnaoui for helping make this possible.

We pray to God, through the intercession of Saint Sharbel, that he may shower his love, mercy and peace upon the whole world, and we raise glory to God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. ☐

Salt Lake City, Utah *Patriarch's Visit*



Children of St. Jude Church who worked hard on the presentation to Patriarch Rai.

by Wadell Goins, Director of Religious Education

On Friday, October 20, 2017, Saint Jude Maronite Catholic Church of Murray [Salt Lake City], Utah, was honored to welcome His Beatitude and Eminence Patriarch Bechara Peter Cardinal Rai for a Divine Liturgy and dinner held at Saint Vincent de Paul Catholic Church. The children from Saint Jude's celebrated this historic visit by processing behind the Patriarch at the Divine Liturgy and then presenting him with a book they had created under the direction of their teachers in Saint Jude's Faith and Heritage Program. Each child in the parish contributed a page to the book that includes the child's picture, a short autobiography, a description of their favorite saint, the saint's picture, and the child's favorite prayer. The Patriarch graciously accepted the book which was presented by two children. On Sunday, October 22, 2017, they presented a copy of their book to Monsignor Joubran Bou Merhi, the pastor of Saint Jude Church, and Chorbishop William Lesser. ☐

Detroit, Michigan *Patriarch Blesses 60th Wedding Anniversary*

by Chris Rahi Kassab

His Beatitude Patriarch Bechara Peter Cardinal Rai, Maronite Patriarch of Antioch and all the East, recently made a private visit to the home of Dr. and Mrs. Daher Rahi in Grosse Pointe Shores, Mich., to celebrate their 60th wedding anniversary.

Patriarch Rai, accompanied by Archbishop Paul Sayah celebrated the Divine Liturgy at St. Maron Church in Detroit, where Dr. and Mrs. Rahi renewed their wedding vows. Joining Patriarch Rai in performing the ceremony was His Excellency Bishop A. Elias Zaidan, Bishop of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon of Los Angeles, Chorbishop Louis Baz, Pastor of St. Maron, and Chorbishop Alfred Badawi, Pastor



Patriarch Rai blesses Dr. and Mrs. Daher Rahi at St. Maron Church in Detroit, Mich., as they celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary.

of St. Sharbel Church in Clinton Township, and numerous other priests from the Greater Detroit community.

During the Liturgy, Patriarch Rai surprised Dr. Rahi by bestowing upon him the first St. Maron Medal in recognition of his contributions and devotion to the Maronite Church and to His Beatitude.

Following the ceremony, Bishop Zaidan called upon Dr. Rahi to say a few words. Dr. Rahi thanked His Beatitude and the entire entourage of clergy in attendance for participating in the celebration.

"I am very honored to receive the first-of-its-kind medal of St. Maron, and I promise to wear it in all ceremonial activities of our beloved St. Maron Church," said Dr. Rahi. "I shall hold the medal close to my heart forever."

A reception was held immediately following the Liturgy at St. Maron's Hall, where guests had an opportunity to congratulate Dr. and Mrs. Rahi and greet the Patriarch.

Chorbishop Baz took special time to thank each and every one of the guests who came from near and far to celebrate the occasion. Chorbishop Badawi was thanked for his efforts to facilitate special transportation for His Beatitude and the entourage from Lebanon. □

Clinton Township, Michigan Patriarch Visits New Site of St. Sharbel Church

His Beatitude Patriarch Bechara Peter Cardinal Rai, Patriarch of Antioch and all the East, visited and blessed the new site of St. Sharbel Maronite Church in Clinton Township, Mich., on Thursday, October 19, 2017, marking a historical visit for the local community.

Patriarch Rai blessed the site with holy water as a crowd of 150 parishioners and visitors chanted hymns to commemorate the occasion. After the blessing, His Beatitude was briefed on the project details, including the design, construction, and the progress of the capital campaign. Staying true to his motto, his message encouraged us to remain united, firm in faith, charitable in love, and



Patriarch Rai blesses the new site of St. Sharbel Church in Clinton Township, Mich. To his right is Bishop A. Elias Zaidan. Chorbishop Badawi and Bishop Robert Fisher stand to his left.

compassionate in service to others. The Patriarch was then taken on a tour of the property and was excited to see the building structures already in place. The visit concluded with refreshments hosted by the Ladies Altar Society and a meet and greet with the parishioners.

In attendance were His Excellency A. Elias Zaidan, Bishop of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon of Los Angeles, along with Bishop Robert Fisher of the Archdiocese of Detroit, Rev. George Shalhoub of St. Mary Orthodox Church, Chorbishop Alfred Badawi, Pastor, and Subdeacon Michael Magyar. Officials representing the City of Clinton Township and the media were also present. □

the Deadline is... Deadline for next month's issue of The Maronite Voice is December 22, 2017.

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

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Digital pictures must be in "JPG" format and in high resolution (300dpi). The Maronite Voice is also available online, in PDF format, at www.stmaron.org. □



THE ORDER OF SAINT SHARBEL



Perpetual Members

★ **Antoine Hanna**

*Our Lady of the Cedars Church,
Houston, Tex.*

★ **Daniel Jowdy**

*St. Anthony Maronite Church,
Danbury, Conn.*

★ **Daniel Mansour Barbour**

*(in memory of David A. Pimental, Sr.,
and in honor of Louise A. Pimental)
Our Lady of Purgatory Church,
New Bedford, Mass.*

Annual Members

★ **Abdow Chebli**

★ **Franklin Clark**

★ **Ann Botaish**

★ **Saleem Mouawad**

*Our Lady of the Cedars Church,
Jamaica Plains [Boston], Mass.*

★ **Diane Wyder**

*St. Joseph Maronite Church,
Waterville, Me.*

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

For more information about the Order ask your Pastor, or visit www.orderstsharbel.org

Petersham, Massachusetts *A Double Ordination*



The Monks of Holy Trinity Monastery in Petersham, Mass., were blessed to begin the month of November with a double ordination on the Feast of All Saints. On that day, November 1, 2017, Br. Maron Henricks was raised to the order of Deacon by Bishop Gregory Mansour, Bishop of the Eparchy of Saint Maron, and Br. Bernardo Vargas was ordained a subdeacon by Abbot William Driscoll. The ceremony was well attended by friends and family.

Br. Maron had served as a subdeacon at the monastery for more than four years and greatly looked forward to the day of his diaconal ordination, when he would enter the ranks of the major orders. Br. Bernardo was only recently ordained to the minor orders of Cantor and Lector before being raised to the order of subdeacon. Please keep both of our newly ordained brothers in your prayers as they, God-Willing, continue their journey towards the priesthood. □

Uniontown, Pennsylvania *Fall Season of "Thanks"*

by Dr. Mabel George Howard

"The smallest act of kindness is worth more than the greatest intention." This quote by Kahlil Gibran, world renowned writer, poet, and artist, represents compassion through acts of kindness for one another.

Many parishioners of St. George Church in Uniontown, Penn., believe that the Fall season is a special time for mutual kindness, caring, sharing, and giving "thanks." It means more than watching football, feasting, shopping, and relaxing. This time of "thanks" represents two important lifelong lessons: Personal gratitude for one's good fortune and compassion for God's less fortunate.

The Fall Season is a time of year to enjoy the company of family and friends and to help others in times of need. As active participants, the St. George Ladies Guild and the Altar & Rosary Society joined forces in September to organize, purchase, and deliver nonperishable food items to the St. Vincent de Paul Society in Uniontown. These food donations help feed families and community members through difficult times during the year.

In keeping with the theme of "thanks," Father Habib, Pastor of St. George

Church, celebrated a "Blue Mass" on September 30, 2017, to honor the men and women of the community who serve and protect the citizens. The "Blue Mass" pays tribute to those who have fallen in the line of duty and those currently serving their communities. These public defenders included firefighters, police officers, EMS personnel, 911 operators, rescue teams, and the military. Our First Responders are individuals who demonstrate courage and risk their safety for others in difficult and/or tragic times. We are "thankful" for these caring souls who strive to keep our communities safe.

Also, spending quality time with loved ones and friends during this Fall Season of "thanks" is extremely important. To support our St. George community, an Octoberfest was held on October 21st in our beautifully decorated church hall for all parishioners to enjoy. The Octoberfest was an evening of fun, laughter, games, entertainment, prizes, and delicious covered dishes and desserts. In our busy lives, this provided an opportunity for reconnecting with families and friends.

Games, music, food, overflowing candy bags and laughter describe our annual Trunk or Treat Halloween Party, held this year on October 28th. Our festive St. George Church Hall was filled with children and adults enjoying the activities sponsored by the MYO. The children sported a colorful variety of costumes from Wonder Woman and Harry Potter to a Princess and a Firefighter. The MYO members also collected nonperishable food items donated by the parishioners for the St. Vincent de Paul Food Drive. Once again, we give "thanks" to God for our good fortune and especially for the children.... our future generations.

Finally, on November 12, the Altar & Rosary Society of St. George Church celebrated a Memorial Liturgy honoring the deceased members of our Society. We remembered our loved ones and gave "thanks" to them for their many spiritual and cultural contributions. The Society members recited the rosary as names of the deceased were announced and candles



lit for each one. After attending the liturgy together, the Altar & Rosary Society members and their families enjoyed a light reception in the church hall.

Many would agree that the Fall Season is a time for reflection, giving thanks, showing appreciation, sharing memories, helping others, honoring many deserving individuals, and most importantly, counting one's blessings from God. □

BISHOP GREGORY AND BISHOP ELIAS WISH YOU A HAPPY AND BLESSED CHRISTMAS SEASON



As we prepare for the coming of Christ in our hearts and in the world,
consider giving a gift to your Eparchy this Christmas.

Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn

www.stmaron.org/donate

Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon

www.eparchy.org

Utica, New York Maronite Young Adults



by Chorbishop John Faris

The Saint Louis Gonzaga Church Maronite Young Adults (MYA) of Utica, New York, strives diligently to achieve the national MYA mission. Beyond assisting with the needs of local parishes and the most vulnerable people in the community, the MYA determined it is vital to "give back" to the community in order to fully achieve the MYA mission. So far, the MYA has raised over \$12,000 that has been donated to four charitable organizations in the greater Utica, New York, area.

In 2016, the Saint Louis Gonzaga MYA started to host a series of "social hours" in which 100% of the proceeds benefit a local cause or charity. The social hours consist of a "mixer" held at a local venue and include live entertainment, hors d'oeuvres, cocktails and raffles. The aim is to gather people from the community to show appreciation for the benefitting charitable organization. Also, the social hours aim to engage other local young adults from the greater Utica area Catholic parishes in hopes that they share the need to spotlight the charitable organizations that touch many lives in the community.

Two social hours are held each year in which the proceeds benefit two different charitable organizations. So far, the MYA has donated to the Children's Miracle Network, Hospice, the Good News Center and the Abraham House. Through this initiative, the MYA has gained recognition as a young adult group in the community. In fact, this initiative has resulted in other Catholic parishes of the greater Utica area requesting the assistance of the Saint Louis Gonzaga MYA to engage their own young adults in parish activities. □

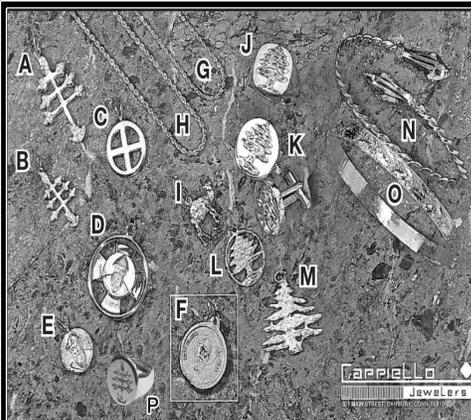


Saint Louis, Missouri Children's Liturgy



by Shelly Vitale

On Sunday, October 29, 2017, a Children's Liturgy was held at Saint Raymond Maronite Cathedral in Saint Louis, Mo. The children dressed as Saints for the All Hallows Celebration. Each child had the opportunity to tell about the Saint they portrayed. It was an enlightening experience for all present. On behalf of Fr. John Nahal, Rector, and the parish community, thank you to the children and their families for all their hard work and creativity. □



- A. Large Antiochene Cross
- B. Small Antiochene Cross
- C. Rubbula Cross
- D. Saint Sharbel in Circle Cross
- E. Saint Sharbel Medallion
- F. Large Saint Sharbel Medallion
- G. Solid Rope Chain
- H. Solid Heavy Rope Chain
- I. Camel
- J. Gents Cedar Tree Ring
- K. Cedar Tree Cuff Links
- L. Small Circle Cedar
- M. Large Cedar Tree
- N. Serpent Bracelet
- O. Bangle Bracelet
- P. Antiochene Cross Ring

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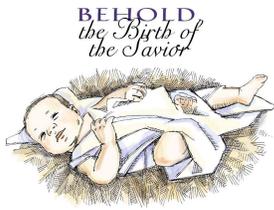
Eparchial Assignment

His Excellency Bishop Gregory J. Mansour, Bishop of the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn, has made the following eparchial appointment:

Msgr. Peter Fahed Azar as the Eparchial Minister for Priests. The Minister for Priests is charged with the following responsibilities:

- ◆ To listen to any priest who needs a brother priest to talk to;
- ◆ To keep the priest's concerns confidential;
- ◆ Not to be involved in the process of clergy assignments or disciplinary actions.

Christmas Directives



Christmas Novena

His Excellency Bishop Gregory Mansour has asked that the Maronite Christmas Novena be celebrated in all the parishes of the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn from December 15 to December 23, 2017, inclusive.

Christmas Eve Liturgy

It is not the custom of the Maronite Church to celebrate Christmas before midnight. However, the Chancery Office is fully aware that in many areas the Christmas Eve Liturgy (around 5:00 p.m.) is very popular. Pastors are urged to do all they can to maintain the Midnight tradition if at all possible. □

Appeal from Caritas Lebanon

Christians in Lebanon are suffering! If you are able to relieve some of the suffering, please contact

Fr. Elias Abi Sarkis, Director
8315 South 107th East Ave.
Tulsa, OK 74133
Ph: 918-872-7400

or visit *Caritas Lebanon* at <http://www.caritas.org.lb>.
Checks may be made payable to Caritas Lebanon.
Thank you for your consideration. □



Schedule of Bishop Gregory Mansour

December 1 - 3, 2017

125th Anniversary of Saint Maron Church, Philadelphia, Penn.

December 6 - 7, 2017

Oriental Orthodox - Catholic Dialogue, Teaneck, N.J.

December 8, 2017

Perpetual Vows of Sister Therese Marie Touma, St. Anthony of the Desert Church, Fall River, Mass.

December 10, 2017

Pastoral Visit to St. Sharbel Church, New Brunswick, N.J.

December 12, 2017

Vocation Team Meeting, The Chancery, Brooklyn, N.Y.

December 13 - 14, 2017

Catholic Relief Services Meetings, Baltimore, Md.

December 16 - 17, 2017

Pastoral Visit to St. Stephen Mission, Charlotte, N.C.

December 18, 2017

Christmas Novena and Visit to St. Sharbel Mission, Raleigh, N.C.

December 21, 2017

Christmas Novena at Our Lady of Lebanon Church, Waterbury, Conn.

December 24 - 25, 2017

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

December 26, 2017 - January 1, 2018

Family Visit, Flint, Michigan

January 6 - 7, 2017

Visit to Heart of Jesus Mission, Fort Lauderdale, Fla.

January 8 - 12, 2018

Annual Eparchial Clergy Retreat, Our Lady of Florida Retreat House, Palm Beach, Fla.

January 14, 2018

Visit to Mary, Mother of the Light Mission, Tequesta [Palm Beach], Fla. □

Food For Thought

The love of Christ is like a "spiritual GPS" that guides us unerringly towards God and towards the heart of our neighbor.

Pope Francis, November 29, 2017

Black Elk and the Need for Catechists

by
Bishop Robert Barron

I write these words as the annual November meeting of the United States bishops comes to a close. We bishops discussed many significant matters—from racism and immigration to the liturgy for the baptism of children. But I would like to emphasize one theme in particular that came up frequently in our conversations, namely, the catechesis of our young people. I have a rather intense personal interest in the topic since, at the conclusion of this gathering, I officially became chairman of the bishops' Committee on Evangelization and Catechesis.

In his formal address to us at the commencement of the conference, Archbishop Christophe Pierre, the Apostolic Nuncio to the United States, reiterated statistics that I have often remarked regarding the growing number of "nones" or religiously unaffiliated in our country. He especially noted the rise of this cohort among people under thirty years of age. For every one person who joins the Catholic Church today, he reminded us, six are leaving. We must make a renewed commitment, he concluded, to the indispensable work of handing on the faith. The Archbishop's intuition in this regard was confirmed, over and over again, by bishops who spoke, in various sessions and forums, of a crisis of catechesis in our Church.

I had this wake-up call from the Pope's representative very much in mind as my friend, Bishop Robert Gruss, the bishop of Rapid City, South Dakota, rose to speak on the second day of the meeting. Bishop Gruss' happy task was to present to us the case for the beatification and canonization of Nicholas Black Elk, a Lakota Indian medicine man who, at midlife, converted to Catholicism. After hearing the bishop's impassioned presentation, we enthusiastically voted to approve the advancement of Black Elk's cause. What especially struck me in Bishop Gruss' brief biographical sketch is that Black Elk, after his conversion, eagerly took up the task of catechesis within his community. Due to his impressive memory and acute mind, he was able to convey the complexities of the Bible and Church teaching to his fellow Lakotans who had embraced the faith. And very much in line with the Catholic conviction that grace builds on and perfects nature, Black Elk endeavored to incorporate his mystical sensibility and healing power into the fuller context of his Catholicism. It was his holiness and prayerful connection to God, even more than his learning, that brought his people closer to Christ.

My prayer is that, if the cause of Black Elk moves forward, we might one day invoke him as a real icon for catechists in the Catholic Church. There is an army of volunteers across our country who give generously of their time to pass on the faith to our young people, but I wonder how many of these laborers in the vineyard of the Lord truly realize the sacredness of their task. Without good catechists, more and more of our young people will fall into secularism and indifference. And as these unaffiliated in ever greater numbers come of age, our society will be adversely affected,

for Christian ideas and values will be less and less at play.

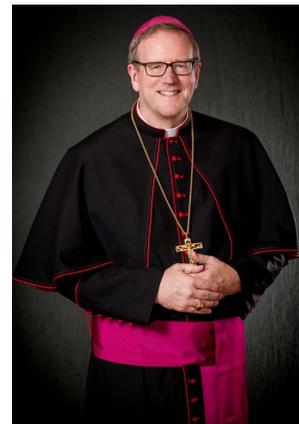
So what can catechists today take from the example of Nicholas Black Elk? First, they can commit themselves to the assiduous study of the faith. As I have argued before, huge numbers of the young identify intellectual problems and questions as the reasons they are leaving the faith: religion in relation to science, the existence of God, the objectivity of moral values, etc. Without smart catechists, the kids abandon the faith. It's as blunt and as simple as that. My nephew, who is starting his first year at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (M.I.T.) this fall, went through religious education as he was coming of age. To be frank, he found the vast majority of his training superficial and remembers almost none of it. But one year stays in his mind. In his sixth grade religious education class, he had a catechist who had a master's degree in theology and who took the young people, with some rigor, through a study of the Bible. Please don't tell me that the kids can't handle that sort of challenge; on the contrary, it's what they remember—and savor.

Secondly, they can see their work as a true vocation, a sacred calling, a mystical obligation. As Pope Paul VI put it so memorably, men and women of today listen to witnesses more than to teachers, and to teachers in the measure that they are also witnesses. Or as the cliché has it: the faith is caught more than taught. Some years ago, I read a study that indicated what drew young people to the faith were not gimmicks or histrionics or the pathetic attempt to be "relevant" to them. What drew them were teachers who knew their subject matter and were obviously committed to it.

Catechists, the Church needs you! We're losing our kids to secularism. If anyone of sharp mind and faithful heart is reading these words, take seriously the possibility that God is calling you to this sacred work. And I pray that one day catechists can look to Nicholas Black Elk as exemplar and heavenly friend. □

About the Author

Bishop Robert Barron is an auxiliary bishop of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles and the founder of Word on Fire Catholic Ministries.



Bishop Robert Barron





Interior Freedom by James Salamy

Since October "Going Deeper into the Spiritual Life" has been reflecting on the book *Interior Freedom* by Father Jacques Philippe. This month I will reflect on Part Three, "Accepting Suffering" of Chapter one, "Freedom and Acceptance."

Part One looked at the "Search for Freedom," that fundamental human quest. Part Two looked at "Accepting Ourselves," something necessary to be truly free. Part Three now examines our acceptance of suffering, another aspect of true freedom.

As Father Philippe points out in the beginning of this part, accepting suffering is consenting to the difficulties in our life. To have interior freedom, we need to consent to the difficulties and accept them. Suffering is a part of life. We cannot avoid it. If we reject it, we only cause further suffering, because we are fighting against something that is part of life. Therefore, our consent, our humble submission, our acceptance of suffering is the way we are called to live. Consent is our willing acceptance. It is not begrudged or half-hearted.

God can use suffering as a means for good in our life even though we do not know how. "No philosophy or theological argument can explain it completely" (page 45). But, we know and we believe, as it is written in Scripture, "that in everything God works for good with those who love him, who are called according to his purpose" (Rom 8:28).

We do not need to always understand our suffering. Such a desire for understanding is a human desire. Instead, we are called to accept and consent to our suffering, trusting in God and His plan for us. We also do not need to go and seek out additional suffering or mortification either. All we do need to do is accept the suffering that we find in our life.

Yes, this may leave us unable to help and feeling powerless in the face of suffering, because we are unable to make the situation better or make the suffering go away. We even may

not be able to alleviate the suffering. This is a real and painful experience. But, we are not without hope! As people of faith, we are called to hope, to believe, and to trust in God and His plan for us by humbly submitting ourselves to His will.

Father Philippe shares a story from the life of Saint Therese of Lisieux who in her own "Little Way" shows us how to consent to the difficulties in our life. Saint Therese did not like to be interrupted while she was working. She liked to take full advantage of the opportunity to concentrate and focus on her work, but sometimes, interruptions would come. Therefore, she consented to this suffering by saying, "I choose to be interrupted," and, if an interruption came, she accepted it with good grace. If no interruption came, she thanked the Lord gratefully for this gift. These interruptions became her will, because her will was to accept them. Therefore, whatever happened, Saint Therese was able to be at peace and not upset (page 56).

May God help us consent to the difficulties in our life. Next month, we will continue our reflections on Father Phillippe's book *Interior Freedom* by reflecting on Chapter one, Part four "Accepting Others." □



THE STAR OF BETHLEHEM



Our warm personal greetings to you and your families as we celebrate the Incarnation of the Son of God.

We are grateful for the support you have given us during the year.

May the Prince of Peace fill your hearts with His Love and Peace at Christmas and in the New Year.

From all of us here at The Maronite Voice, Merry Christmas and a Blessed and Joyful 2018.

How I Became a Deacon
by
Deacon Martin John Rachid

My name is Deacon Martin John Rachid. I was born on May 4, 1932, in St. Louis, Mo., to Ajege and Martha Rachid of St. Louis. My mother died during child-birth so I didn't have the opportunity to know her. I have one older brother, John, who still lives in St. Louis.

It was a difficult time growing up in those days, and since my father had to work, both my brother and I grew up in an orphanage in Normandy, Mo., run by the Sisters of Christian Charity. I went to school at St. Mary's Catholic High School in St. Louis and graduated in 1951. I began working for the City of St. Louis and was drafted into the army in 1953, serving two years in Germany after WWII. After my tour of service, I went back home and worked

for the Post Office. A cousin visited from Detroit, Mich., and pitched me a great opportunity to work on his father's parking lots in the city of Detroit. I took him up on the offer and relocated to Detroit only to find out my uncle didn't know about the job offer! After that, I decided to move to Flint, Mich., and began working for the Mansours.

Around 1960, at the age of twenty-eight, while working at the General Motors factory in Flint, I felt a calling from God to serve the Church. I had always stayed close to the Church because of my solid foundation of faith instilled in me by the Sisters of Christian Charity in the orphanage where I grew up. I was also influenced by the Passionist Fathers, who served the orphanage. I moved back to St. Louis to enter the Passionist Seminary for one year. After that year, I entered the novitiate for one year in St. Paul, Kans., and then to Chicago for philosophy studies all from the years of 1960 to 1965.

My father passed away in 1964, and that was difficult for my brother and me. During my time in the seminary, through much prayer and lots of discussions with my spiritual director, I decided to leave the seminary in 1965, feeling I was not called to be a priest. After leaving the seminary, I worked for one year as a social worker in St. Louis. Although my desire for a priestly vocation may have ended, I still felt a calling to serve the Church.

Before I left the seminary, my spiritual director advised me to find a good woman, marry her, settle down, and stay close to the Church. He was a very wise man! I took his advice and married Lillian Nina Rachid in February of 1967, in St. Agnes Roman Catholic Church in Flint, Mich. (Our Lady of Lebanon Church in Flint had not been established yet.) In 1973, when we started the Maronite parish, I was working with Msgr. Elias El Hayek, and after he was transferred, with Msgr. Ronald Beshara. I stayed close to the church working with all the priests who served Our Lady of

Lebanon Church. During my married years and service to the church, I began working as a school teacher in the Flint Public School system, teaching Latin and Social Studies. I was a teacher for twenty-five years and retired in 1992. After I retired from teaching, I studied Spanish for one year.

My vocation to serve the church never left and with the suggestion and encouragement of Msgr. Anthony Spinosa, I applied for the Subdiaconate program and was ordained a Subdeacon in 1995. I continued my service to the church and became a permanent Deacon in 1999. My wife, Nina, and I have always been servants of the Church and have always felt it is my second home. My wife was the first president of the Altar Society at Our Lady of Lebanon Church. The women's social and spiritual group serves the church and was instrumental in building Our Lady of Lebanon in Flint.

I have served Our Lady of Lebanon Parish since 1973. During my last twenty-two years as Subdeacon and Deacon I have had the blessing of serving with eleven priests.

Through my service as a Deacon, I have conducted Bible studies, regularly visited the sick, prayed with them, and gave them Holy Communion. I have also been rewarded in my service with the opportunity to meet so many people in and outside of our parish and to build lasting and fruitful friendships that I may not have had the opportunity to make if I wasn't a Deacon. I would like to believe I have influenced many people in our church to continue to live their faith while promoting the vocation of Deacon for other men in our church as well.

I am happy that I answered the call to be a Deacon. I feel like I have been blessed by the many nuns, priests and bishops I have gotten to know and work with. I owe my whole spiritual life to these special people, the nuns who planted the seeds of faith in my heart, the priests and bishops who helped tend those seeds, and God who made the growth happen and allowed me to serve as a Deacon. □



***If the Lord
is Calling
You,
The
Church
Needs You!***

If you feel that you have a vocation to the Priesthood or religious life, please contact your Pastor or write to:

Fr. Gary George, Director
Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon
Office of Vocations
1021 South 10th Street
St. Louis, MO 63104

or

Fr. Dominique Hanna, Director
Eparchy of Saint Maron
Office of Vocations
c/o St. Joseph Church
6025 Glenridge Drive
Sandy Springs, GA 30328

or

Our Lady of Lebanon Seminary
7164 Alaska Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20012

The Gift of Perpetual Profession of Vows

by

Sister Therese Maria Touma, MSCL

“To do your will, O my God, is my delight and your law is in my heart” (Ps 40:8-9).



Sister Therese Touma with Bishop Paul Sayah (center) and Patriarch Bechara Rai.

As I was preparing for my Perpetual Profession of Vows as a Maronite Servant of Christ the Light, I was grateful to receive a letter from a monk and friend of our community. In these encouraging words I was given the opportunity to further reflect on the gift of my religious profession. I read these words with joy and gratitude and saw them as a sign of God’s benevolent providence and love. In particular, I was sent three insightful words to ponder that are signified by the letters of the word *vow*:

V= Vision

As a religious I am reminded that I need *vision* not just to see the world from my eyes but “the ability to seek and look upon things that others don’t see, things that God reveals to us, and to see differently.” In order to see as God sees with his merciful eyes, I need to gaze upon Jesus, the lover of all people. In continuously contemplating and seeking Jesus, “the author and perfecter of our faith” (Hebrew 12:2), I will find all the virtues and graces I need to love like Jesus and live religious life in union with God.

O= Openness

If I am not open to listen and to be obedient, to receive the Word of God and live it, to sacrifice my own will, I cannot truly imitate the obedient Christ, who humbled himself and personified obedience to the Father unto his death (Phil 2:8). As our friend wrote, “Obedience resides not chiefly in the ears of our body but in the “ears” of our minds and hearts.”

The key for true *openness* lies in opening the ears of my mind and heart to hear God’s voice, and to grow in interior freedom in order to completely offer myself, my entire will, as a “holocaust” of love to God. Our Maronite Servants’ Typicon #17 affirms: “Religious obedience is the fruit of love, and of an interior freedom borne of our divine relationship in following Jesus.”

W= Whole

In surrendering myself with confidence in his mercy, I am called to offer my *whole* self, body and soul, and all else to God. A beautiful excerpt that stood out to me from the letter on the significance of perpetual profession: “Thus you entered the state of perfection, when you made the offering and sacrifice of your whole self: the good of your body, by chastity; the goods outside your body, by poverty; and the good of your soul, by obedience. Your perpetual profession seals that offering for good. And by this, you will undo the damage of sin in a remarkable way.”

I am humbled by God’s invitation and in awe of this call to offer myself completely to God in religious profession as a Maronite Servant. In my spousal union with Christ, and through living out my vows in service to the Church, I am continuing the work of salvation in bringing souls to Jesus. This gift of consecrated life is a needed witness in our wounded world!

Join the sisters in giving thanks to God for the awesome gift of consecrated life in our Maronite Church! Please pray with us for an increase of vocations to our community and that young women will open their hearts to generously accept the invitation to follow Jesus as a religious sister. The Church needs more consecrated sisters to serve alongside our priests and to share the healing light and love of Christ. We appreciate your sharing about our community especially with young women who are searching for their calling in life. For those ladies (ages 18 to 35) who are reading this and are interested in taking time away to discover God’s will for your life we invite you to consider joining us for a Discernment Retreat on April 6 - 8, 2018, at Our Mother of the Light Convent in Dartmouth, Mass. Please contact Sister Marla Marie for more information at 508-996-1753 or at sister@maroniteservants.org. To learn more about our community and mission visit www.maroniteservants.org. ☐



Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn Policy on Sexual Abuse of Minors by Priests or Deacons

The Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn publishes excerpts of its Policy on Sexual Abuse of Minors by Priests or Deacons. The complete policy is also available online at http://www.stmaron.org/policy_sexual_abuse.html. The Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon has its own policy, which is available online at eparchy.org.

As Catholics and Maronites, we consider the welfare and protection of our children a sacred responsibility. We hereby promulgate the following Eparchial norms as an implementation of Essential Norms for Diocesan/Eparchial Policies Dealing with Allegations of Sexual Abuse of Minors by Priests or Deacons approved by the Congregation for Bishops on December 8, 2002.

Definitions

Sexual Abuse of a minor includes sexual molestation or sexual exploitation of a minor; the acquisition, possession or distribution of pornographic images of a minor; and other behavior by which an adult uses a minor as an object of sexual gratification.

For purposes of this policy, a minor shall be construed to include anyone who has not attained the age of eighteen (18) years as well as anyone who lacks the use of reason regardless of his or her actual chronological age.

Response

The healing of victims, their families and their community from the effects of sexual abuse by church leaders begins when the allegations of such abuses are received. When victims decide to disclose the abuse, it is important that the response they receive be compassionate and non-judgmental.

Anyone receiving an allegation of abuse will respond in a pastoral, supportive manner, leaving investigative concerns to those who serve in that role.

An allegation will be received without initial judgment as to the truth of the complaint. No intimation of blame will be made by the initial recipient of information. Individuals making allegations will be supported positively in their decision to disclose.

The Eparchial Bishop will designate a competent person to coordinate assistance for the immediate pastoral care of persons who claim to have been sexually abused when they were minors by priests or deacons. This Victim Assistance Coordinator will assess and respond to the immediate and long-term needs of the alleged victim and family, the alleged offender, parish communities and others that are affected by the disclosure of sex abuse.

The Victim Assistance Coordinator will serve as a consultant to the Eparchial Bishop and the Review Board regarding the treatment needs of clients.

Any individual wishing to report a claim of sexual abuse is encouraged to contact the Victim Assistance Coordinator, Rosanne Solomon, at:

P.O. Box 189, Boston, MA 02137

Tel: (617) 327-1317, RosanneSolomon@gmail.com

Code of Ethics and Integrity

For purposes of this Code of Ethics and Integrity, the term church personnel includes priests, religious permanent and

transitional deacons, subdeacons, seminarians, and all paid and volunteer personnel who are employed by or work in eparchial parishes or institutions.

- ◆ Church personnel will exhibit the highest Christian ethical standards and personal integrity.
- ◆ Church personnel will conduct themselves in a manner that is consistent with the discipline and teaching of the Catholic Church.
- ◆ Church personnel will not physically, sexually or emotionally abuse a minor or an adult.
- ◆ Church personnel will not engage in physical, psychological, sexual, written or verbal harassment of employees, volunteers, or parishioners and will not tolerate such harassment by other Church personnel.
- ◆ Church personnel shall provide a professional work environment that is free from physical, psychological, sexual, written, or verbal intimidation or harassment.
- ◆ Church personnel shall not engage in sexual intimacies with the persons they counsel. This includes consensual contact, forced physical contact and sexually explicit conversations not related to counseling issues.
- ◆ Church personnel assume the full burden for setting and maintaining clear, appropriate boundaries in all counseling and counseling-related relationships.
- ◆ No counseling sessions should be conducted in private living quarters.
- ◆ Church personnel will share concerns about suspicious or inappropriate behavior with their pastor, the Vicar General of the Eparchy, or the Eparchial Bishop.
- ◆ Church personnel will report any suspected abuse to the proper civil authorities.
- ◆ Church personnel will accept their personal responsibility to protect minors and adults from all forms of abuse.
- ◆ Houses used for residences of priests and religious are exclusively for the use of the religious. With the exception of occasional visits from immediate family members, minors are not permitted to be overnight guests in the residence of a priest or a religious.

Internet and Social Media Guidelines

The following are a list of general guidelines to cover the use

of the Internet websites and other social media sites. These guidelines, along with the recently issued United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) Social Media Guidelines

<http://www.usccb.org/comm/social-mediaguidelines.shtml> should cover most situations faced by any Pastor/Administrator.

- ! The use of official parish websites and other social media platforms are entrusted to the confidence of the Pastor and the Bishop. It is important to always remember that once something is placed on the Internet there are no deletions; it will remain forever in cyberspace just waiting to be found. Thus, the Administrator/Pastor or his delegate should keep close watch over all postings to ensure that none of them is harmful, embarrassing, dangerous, or illegal.
- ! Any unofficial websites associated with the parish should carry a disclaimer reflecting that postings are not the expressed opinion of the Parish, Eparchy or the Magisterium of the Catholic Church.
- ! The official website of the parish should reflect the dignity of the Church, thus web-hosting companies, paid for by advertising, should be avoided. The Church has no control over the advertising which could, at a minimum, reflect badly on the dignity of the Church.
- ! Due to privacy concerns, only business (not personal) accounts may be established on all social media platforms. That is because business accounts do not have an open wall and only allow for posting by the administrator. The Pastor or a designated responsible adult should be the only administrator and the account should carry a disclaimer.
- ! With the advent of Photoshopping and other internet photo programs that can alter images, it is important that no pictures of minor children be posted. If pictures are posted, it should be done only with the written permission of parents.
- ! Church personnel should not use Church computers for personal social media sites. These sites raise numerous security and privacy concerns for the Church. The Pastor/Administrator is to make sure there are enough filters in place to prevent access to improper and unwanted material.
- ! Use by Church personnel of a Church computer to access, view and/or download pornography of any kind is strictly forbidden.
- ! Use by Church personnel of a Church computer to access, view and/or download images of a person under the age of eighteen (18) years or of a person who habitually lacks the use of reason regardless of his or her chronological age shall constitute grounds for dismissal. The Pastor/Administrator shall immediately report such conduct to the appropriate civil authority for investigation and/or prosecution, as well as to the Vicar General or Eparchial Bishop. ☐

Orlando, Florida 25th Ordination Anniversary



Pictured left to right: Amine Harb, Bishop John Noonan, Bishop Gregory Mansour, and Fr. Bassam Saade.

Father Bassam M. Saade, Pastor of St. Jude Maronite Catholic Church, Orlando, Fla., celebrated his 25th Anniversary to the Priesthood with his parishioners at the Rosen Hotel in Orlando on October 21, 2017. More than two-hundred guests and family members attended. Bishop Gregory Mansour, Bishop of the Eparchy of Saint Maron, also came to celebrate Fr. Bassam's Anniversary starting with the Saturday Liturgy at 5 p.m. before attending the dinner. Fr. John Giel, Vicar General of the Diocese of Orlando was present, as well.

The following day, a special Liturgy at St. Jude was held with the Knights of Columbus participating. Father Bassam M. Saade celebrated the Liturgy with Bishop Gregory Mansour and Bishop John Noonan, Bishop of the Diocese of Orlando, presiding. The Very Reverend Paul Henry, the Vicar for priests in the Orlando Diocese, also attended. It was a great event celebrated by most of the parishioners, and the church was at full capacity. A reception followed in the church hall, and parishioners and guests enjoyed the food prepared by the Ladies Guild and parishioners. It was an unforgettable reception and a beautiful celebration that was carried on facebook as well. ☐



Lawrence, Massachusetts *MYO Activities*



by St. Anthony's MYO

"**A**men, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me" (Mt 25:40). This Gospel verse was inscribed in the hearts and minds of the youth of St. Anthony Church in Lawrence, Mass., as they visited Mary Immaculate Nursing Home. On Sunday, November 12, 2017, close to thirty MYO members gathered to create care packages for the residents they were going to visit. Packing the boxes with socks, blankets, tea, Sudoku books and more, the members were very excited to deliver the packages. After a short walk to the nearby nursing home, the MYO split into three groups and each visited and spent time with residents, parishioners and non-parishioners alike. Statements from the residents like "What have I done to deserve this?" and "I know God sent you here for a reason" created spirits of faith, hope, and love throughout the facility. The members were so excited and thankful to be able to bring smiles to the faces of these residents and quickly started asking when they could come back and do it again. The MYO got to experience a new face of Christ that they may not have experienced before, one hidden behind joyful smiles and thankful tears.

Men's Retreat

On Saturday, October 14, 2017, close to twenty men joined in prayer at St. Anthony Maronite Catholic Church in Lawrence, Mass., to participate in a day retreat hosted by the St. Anthony's Knight of Columbus Council #16204. This retreat was open to all men, not just Knights. Men from multiple local churches also attended. To begin the day, Father Joseph AbiSaad, Parochial Vicar at St. Anthony, led the participants in a traditional Maronite morning prayer (*Safro*). Following the prayer service, Rt. Rev. Archmandrite Leonard Faris, Pastor of St. George Orthodox Church in Lowell, Mass., led the first talk called "Why Are You Here?" Father Patrick Armano, Chaplain of Austin Preparatory High School in Reading, Mass., spoke

about a man's calling to a "Life of Virtue."

After breaking to pray the Rosary together, the men then continued their day with two more talks, led by Eric Alaimo. Eric, a Religious Studies educator at Central Catholic High School in Lawrence, spoke about the meaning of "Christian Manhood" and our purpose as "Sons of God." In between the afternoon talks, the participants enjoyed a period of meditation in front of the Blessed Sacrament and many receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

The retreat proved to be a blessed day with great discussion and fellowship and an opportunity for all the men that were present to reevaluate their spiritual lives and bring themselves closer to God. □

Clinton Township, Michigan *Birthday Blessing*



On Sunday, October 8, 2017, Diane George of St. Sharbel Church in Clinton Township, Mich., received a special blessing by Chorbishop Alfred Badawi, Pastor, on her 102nd birthday. "May the Lord God continue to bless this faith-filled servant of God with health and happiness all the days of her life" said Msgr. Badawi. □

Birmingham, Alabama Luncheon to Help Two Orphanages



For many years, the Ladies' Altar Society of Saint Elias Maronite Church in Birmingham, Ala., has held a Bingo luncheon. The parish and the community are all invited to participate, and proceeds from the luncheon are sent to two orphanages in Lebanon.

This year, the Bingo luncheon was held on September 20, 2017. The luncheon included playing Bingo as well as a teacup auction, a raffle, a desserts booth, a Lebanese-style lunch, and even take out and delivery. The Society works hard every year to make this event a success.

Last year, the Bingo luncheon raised \$5,000 for each of the orphanages, and the Society is hoping to repeat, if not exceed, those donations again this year. The Ladies' Altar Society of Saint Elias Maronite Church would like to thank everyone who worked and participated in this event and thank everyone on behalf of the nuns who run the orphanages for helping to make a difference in the lives of the children. □

Houston, Texas Trunk-Or-Treat

by Nadra Maakaron

"You go trick-or-treating when you go to people's houses to get candy." "You go trunk-or-treating when you go to people's cars to get candy, and that's much better because you can go around the cars a million dozen times and you don't even get tired."

Here at Our Lady of the Cedars Church in Houston, Tex., as in suburban communities across the country, trunk-or-treating is the latest twist on the quintessentially American ritual of door-to-door candy-collecting, bringing Halloween from the uncertain streets to the safety of the church parking lot, turning the backs of cars, minivans and sport utility vehicles into the new front porch.

And for churches that had disdained Halloween as a pagan ritual, trunk-or-treating has become a safe alternative

for parents — and pastors — who wish to keep a watchful eye on children, often encouraged to dress as biblical characters; although not many follow the suggestion, you can see cute pumpkins to wild beasts both gobbling candy with ferocious appetites.

We do not know for sure how the idea of trunk-or-treat came about, or where and when the first event of its kind took place. But the fad has exploded recently, with scores of communities posting open invitations on the Internet or in local newspapers.

"This is great for the kids, but I'll tell you, the parents end up having just as much fun," socializing in a contained environment with your fellow parishioners turns out to be a wonderful easy-going event that the whole family enjoys and looks forward to year after year -- I know I do. □

Los Angeles, California Trip to San Juan Capistrano



by Manal El-Khoury

On Saturday, October 28, 2017, the Maronite Christian Formation (MCF) students of Our Lady of Mount Lebanon Cathedral in Los Angeles, Calif., took an unprecedented trip by train to San Juan Capistrano Mission. Accompanied by Fr. Elias Sleiman, parents and chaperones, the children enjoyed a scenic journey to the mission, followed by a tour at the mission, a visit to the gift shop for souvenirs, and a pizza lunch at Los Rios Heritage Park before boarding the train back to Los Angeles. MCF Director Doris Joukhadar not only attended the trip but also made all the arrangements and plans for the day. She was excited for the journey the children were about to embark on and she said

the children's reactions to the experience were the best part of the day. "They were constantly fascinated by everything, from the train ride to the mission's history," she said. "Many of the kids had never been on a train and they were also so excited not only about the mission, but by how we were getting there."

Upon arriving at the mission, the children were given some time to explore on their own before the tour began. During the tour, they learned about the history of the mission and the way of life of the inhabitants who once lived there. They also learned about the founder of nine of the twenty-one missions, Saint Junipero Serra. Doris added, "The children's curiosity was adorable, and children of all ages kept asking the tour guide an endless stream of questions." Following the tour, the children spent some reflection time with Fr. Elias. As part of the experience of the day, they discussed pilgrimages to holy sites, silence and prayer, along with how a location change is an expression of an inner change. MCF second grader Chloe Rizk said she enjoyed the trip to the mission, especially the group time with Fr. Elias. "My day at San Juan Capistrano was fun. I liked the part when we gathered around in a circle next to *Abouna* Elias and prayed," she said. "I felt calm, happy and joyful. I enjoyed each other's company like one big family and I am glad that I went to my first MCF field trip. I will never forget that day. Thank you to *Abouna* Elias and to the grown-ups that kept us safe and for your hard work."

The trip was enjoyed by all who attended. Doris said, "It was beautiful to be a part of an educational, spiritual and all in-all fun trip with the future of the Maronite community." This trip is the first of more to come for the children to visit historical and spiritual sites, grow in their faith individually and together among their friends in the church community.

15th Annual Festival



The 15th Annual American Lebanese Cultural Festival of Our Lady of Mount Lebanon-St. Peter Cathedral, Los Angeles, Calif., was held on Saturday, September 9, 2017, at the beautiful grounds of Santa Anita Park and Racetrack in Arcadia, Calif. Upon arrival, children delighted in the games with their friends while their parents socialized over coffee, hookah, cigars, beer and wine. Jackie Atallah said, "The festival brings us together. It's family oriented and

for all ages. There's something for everyone and the way the church does it is awesome. This location is great."

All attendees enjoyed the traditional American and Lebanese food and sweets that were served. Sara Abudayyeh also felt the festival was a great experience for families. "I honestly feel it's a family and friends event. I get to see most of my family, my extended family, my church family and friends. It's nice to see all the kids having fun and the variety of food is very good," she said. "It reconnects me with people I haven't seen in a long time."

Singer Arsham Baberian started off the live entertainment. Later in the day, children and families had the opportunity to take pictures with Disney characters in the photo booth. Singer and parishioner Christine Said was the next entertainer to take the stage. Dancing to the live music was in full swing as day turned into night. Nidal Nasr was the last singer to perform for the crowd. Festival goers enjoyed all the singers and the *dabke* dancing. Jeannette Hollow enjoyed the opportunity to celebrate the culture. "It's our heritage," she said. "It's a chance to be with our friends and it's the camaraderie that we need to have. It's a tradition that is very important to us."

Another highlight of the day was the raffle. Some of the raffle prizes included a pearl necklace for the first place winner, an iPad Pro for second place and \$1,000 in cash as the third place prize. The grand prize was a 2017 Mercedes Benz E-Class. The Master of Ceremonies of the festival was Tommy Tedros. He expressed similar sentiments as Jeanette. "It's always been an honor these fifteen years watching the evolution of this cultural festival grow in popularity," he said. "From the days that we were in Bonelli Park in San Dimas to the festivals we currently have in Santa Anita Park, it brings me great satisfaction to see our community participate and increase our cultural and heritage awareness. □

Scranton, Pennsylvania Lebanese Food Festival

by Constantino M. Siconolfi

Saint Ann Maronite Catholic Church, Scranton, Penn., celebrated its 23rd Annual Lebanese Heritage Festival on Sunday, September 17, 2017, immediately following the Divine Liturgy celebrated by Msgr. Francis Marini, Pastor.

The beautiful late summer weather, the aroma of delicious foods, and the sounds of traditional Lebanese music drew hundreds of visitors, family, and friends, both indoors and outdoors at what turned out to be the largest Lebanese festival in the parish's history.

This year's Lebanese Festival featured the ever-popular silent auction gift baskets, Lebanese gifts, and jewelry. Children lined up for face painting as the adults were drawn to the game of chance raffle ticket with two chances to win one thousand dollars. A separate tent for Hookah (Argileh) rentals along with monitors displaying traditional Lebanese music videos, historic films, and slideshows contributed to the ambiance of the overall festival.

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Our Lady of the Cedars Continues Preparation for the 2018 NAM Convention



The 55th Maronite Convention is sponsored by the National Apostolate of Maronites (NAM) and is hosted by Our Lady of the Cedars Church in Houston, Tex. For more information about NAM, and its activities, please visit www.namnews.org. For more updates on the 2018 Convention, visit www.NAMconvention2018.com. □

Scranton, Pennsylvania Lebanese Food Festival

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Most importantly visitors, family, and friends enjoyed eating authentic Lebanese homemade food and pastries that could be purchased for eat-in or take-out.

Northeast Pennsylvania's television personality Ryan Leckey of WNEP-TV conducted a three-part interview on the preparation and uniqueness of the Lebanese Festival. More can be viewed from www.LebFest.org or www.facebook.com/SaintAnnMaroniteChurch.

In addition, the Saint Ann Maronite Church was open for adoration, and literature was available to all who came to visit the church.



The parishioners and volunteers cooked for days so that visitors, family, and friends could enjoy a wide variety of Lebanese food and pastries. Due to everyone's efforts, contributions, hard work, and generosity, the festival raised much-needed funds to support the parish throughout the year. The festival was a great success and a source of pride for the Maronite and Lebanese community in the area, which shows the work of God among his faithful.

Saint Ann Maronite Church continues to make its presence known in the Northeast Pennsylvania area and throughout the local community. We thank everyone for their continued support! □

by The NAM Public Relations Committee

The NAM Board held its Fall meeting during the weekend of October 27 - 29, 2017, in Houston, Tex. The Board met on Friday evening with all committee chairs at Our Lady of the Cedars Church's Cedar Hall to get updated on the progress and the planned activities for the Maronite Convention to be held in July of 2018. It was a very fruitful meeting, as the Board members saw firsthand the excellent preparations and excitement of the committee chairs. The local chairs also had the chance to learn from the various Board members about their experiences in previous conventions.

On Saturday, the Board met all day tending to Board and general NAM business. The meeting took place at the Marriott Marquis, site of the 2018 convention. The Board took time during the day to visit the various parts of the hotel and had hotel staff lead them in a tour of the highlights of the hotel from banquet halls, attractions, and meeting rooms. "Impressive" and "Awesome" were adjectives heard throughout the tour. Saying that the Board loved the choice of venue for the 2018 convention would be an understatement. We can't wait to have the rest of our brothers and sisters experience the beauty of this venue when Maronites gather in Houston next July.

On Sunday, the Board joined the Houston parishioners at the Divine Liturgy, concelebrated by the Pastor, Father Milad Yaghi, MLM, his associate Fr. Edward Hanna, MLM, and Fr. Albert Constantine, NAM's Spiritual Director, along with Subdeacon Dr. George Carrum. At the end of the Divine Liturgy, NAM's Executive Director, Mr. Mike Naber, gave a brief overview of NAM and its mission. Then, Mr. Tony Boumitri, NAM's Board President, Mrs. Rose Sahyoun, Vice President, and Dr. Ray Hachem, the Convention Board Liaison, joined Mr. Naber in front of the Altar to present Fr. Yaghi with an appreciation plaque for hosting the Board's fall meeting and the upcoming 2018 Convention. Following the Liturgy, and before the parish bid farewell to the out-of-town visitors, everyone walked over to the Cedar Hall where the parish ladies had prepared a lunch in honor of the NAM Board.

"Blessed Are the Peacemakers"

Continued from page 1



- ! Peace in our communities and societies, and with those with whom we come into contact, must reflect our understanding of the inherent dignity of every human person. It is in God that we find our dignity as human beings. This peace is based on respect for each and every human person and reflected by the collaboration of all members for the common good.
- ! Peace among the nations and peoples of the world creates a safe environment where every person finds an opportunity to learn and live in dignity and prosperity. This peace is monitored by the proper civil and human rights and responsibilities.

In view of these various dimensions of peace, the late Pope Paul VI instituted the "World Day of Peace" back on January 1, 1968. Since then, January 1st is a day of prayer for peace in our hearts, within our families, our communities at large and in the whole world.

Peace is a state of being; it is a gift from God. Our response is to act, to use that gift given to us. Thus we would be answering Jesus' call: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God" (Matthew 5:9). □

+Bishop A. Elias Zaidan
Bishop of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon

Wheeling, West Virginia Annual Festival



In August of 2017, Our Lady of Lebanon Church in Wheeling, W.Va., held its annual *Mahrajan* Festival in beautiful Oglebay Park. The Festival was a two-day event this year and we were blessed with beautiful weather and abundant crowds of delighted festival goers. The two highlights of this year's Festival were two Parish *Dabke* Troupes. The young adult troupe did standout routines and the leader of the group, Dalton Hass, amazed the audience with his dancing talent. What warmed the hearts of the crowds, however, was the Mini *Dabke* Troupe. They ranged in age from seven to nine years old, and seeing them doing the steps of our grandparents was unforgettable. This has been a dream of our Pastor, Monsignor Bakhos Chidiac, for many, years and this year his dream came true. □

