



The Maronite Voice

A Publication of the Maronite Eparchies in the USA



Volume IX

Issue No. XI

December 2013

Christmas 2013

Let Us Take This Opportunity To Renew Our Love for The Infant of Bethlehem Who Has Changed Our World

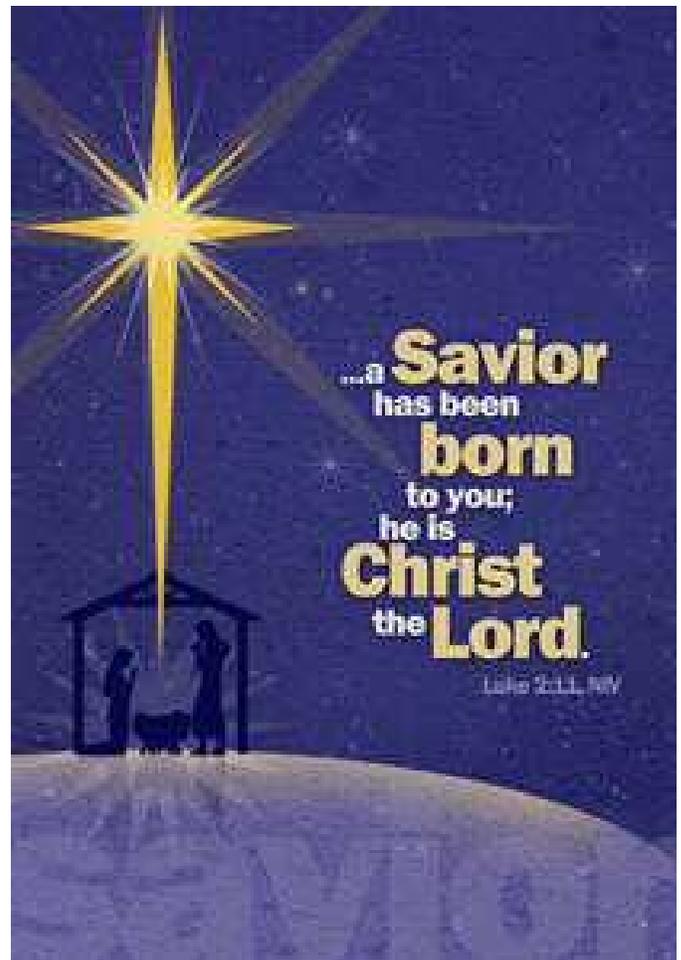
Dear Friends,

As Christmas draws near, the world around us starts preparing for commercial reasons. We enjoy the Christmas decoration, we attend Christmas parties and we look for bargains while shopping. However, the world around us very rarely prepares spiritually for the coming of Christ.

As Christians, we believe that God became man; He came to dwell among us. The Lord Jesus has limited Himself and entered our sphere of time and space. God is not distant anymore: He is "Emmanuel," "God-with-us." He is not a stranger, but a Savior who is looking to establish an intimate relationship with us.

As human beings, we wonder how could this be? The only reasonable answer is love. God's love has moved Him to take flesh and resemble human beings in everything except sin. He became one of us with the objective to share His divinity with us as the beautiful prayer during the elevation in our Divine Liturgy mentions: "You have united, O Lord, Your divinity with our humanity and our humanity with Your divinity; Your life with our mortality and our mortality with Your life. You have assumed what is ours and You have given us what is Yours, for the life and salvation of our souls . . ." Furthermore, St. Ephrem highlights that point: "Today the true sun is risen on the world, today a light has come forth in the midst of the darkened earth: God has become man, so that man may become God in his turn; the Master takes upon himself the form of a slave, so that the slave may be converted to his Master. He who founded and dwells in the heavens has made his abode on earth, so that man, the earth-bound, may find a new home in heaven."

God has fulfilled His promise by sending a Savior. How about us? Are we prepared to receive him and welcome him as the king of our lives? Let us take this opportunity to renew our love for the Infant of Bethlehem Who has changed our world. Let us bring gifts of worship, adoration and pure love to Him, and let us announce the joy of His birth to all the people around us. Let us bring Christmas glad tidings to all people in our Christmas cards, Facebook pages, e-mails, and text messages. Let us live the true spirit of Christmas, of



having Christ born into our hearts and help him to be born into everyone's life.

Bishop Gregory Mansour joins me in extending warm wishes to all of you for a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Christ is born, Alleluia!

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

Schedule of Bishop Elias Zaidan

December 7 - 8, 2013

Our Lady's Church, Austin, Tex.

December 13, 2013

Elevation of Msgr. Moussa Joseph to the dignity of Chorbishop, St. Raymond Cathedral, St. Louis, Mo.

December 15, 2013

St. Raymond Cathedral, St. Louis, Mo.

December 18, 2013

Cardinal Francis George's 50th Anniversary to the Priesthood, Chicago, Ill.

December 22, 2013

St. Raymond Cathedral, St. Louis, Mo.

December 25, 2013

Christmas Celebration, Our Lady of Mt. Lebanon Cathedral, Los Angeles, Calif.

January 4 - 5, 2014

St. Jude Mission, West Covina, Calif.

January 10 - 12, 2014

Msgr. sharbel Maroun's 25th Anniversary to the Priesthood for, Minneapolis, Minn. □

The Maronite Voice
4611 Sadler Road
Glen Allen, VA 23060
Phone: 804/270-7234
Fax: 804/273-9914

E-Mail: gmsebaali@aol.com
<http://www.stmaron.org>
<http://www.usamaronite.org>

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

Send all changes of address, news, pictures and personal correspondence to *The Maronite Voice* at the above captioned address. Subscription rates are \$25.00 per year. Advertising rates are available upon request.

Publishers

- Most Reverend Bishop Gregory John Mansour
- Most Reverend Elias Zaidan, M.L.M.

Editor Msgr. George M. Sebaali

Editing and proofreading
Mary Shaia

Printed in Richmond, Virginia.

Maronite Convention 2014

Our Lady of Victory Maronite Church

Pittsburgh, Penn.

July 2 - 6, 2014

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

Dartmouth, Massachusetts Area MYO Groups Visit Convent

by Natalie Salemech

The Maronite Servants of Christ the Light began the Season of the Glorious Birth of Our Lord by hosting an MYO gathering at the Mother of Light Convent in Dartmouth, Mass., on Sunday, November 17, 2013. The Sisters welcomed the teens of MYO groups from the parishes of Boston,



Brockton and New Bedford, Mass., including a number of parents and coordinators (whose assistance throughout the afternoon helped make the event a success).

Sister Therese Maria led fun games engaging the teens to think about the beauty of giving. Mother Marla Marie offered a catechesis to help the teens focus on how they can best prepare for the Glorious Birth by focusing on giving of themselves. Oftentimes, the Christmas season is so encumbered by materialism and commercialism that people lose sight of the fact that they should be getting ready to welcome the Savior and Light of the World into their hearts and lives.

The afternoon continued with a meditation of the Gospel scene of the Annunciation. The teens were encouraged to reflect on how they could best echo Mary's "Yes" in their everyday lives and follow the promptings of God with trust and confidence. Everyone participated in Eucharistic Adoration, for it is only in allowing Jesus to fill us that we are then able to give Him to others. What greater gift can we give to others than the Son of God present within us?

If you are interested in hosting a youth event with the Maronite Servants of Christ the Light, please call them at 508- 996-1753. □

Saint Louis, Missouri

A Tribute to His Excellency Bishop Robert J. Shaheen on His Retirement

by Shelly Vitale

On Friday evening, October 25, 2013, at St. Raymond Maronite Cathedral in Saint Louis, Mo., over six-hundred parishioners, family, friends, clergy, laity and dignitaries celebrated with their dear and beloved Bishop, His Excellency Reverend Robert J. Shaheen, on his retirement. Well-wishers came from around the world to join the Bishop on his special day. During the Liturgy members of the Order of Saint Sharbel served as honor guard along with the Knights of St. Gregory the Great. The procession included the newly ordained Bishop Elias A. Zaidan, Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon; Bishop Gregory Mansour, Eparchy of Saint Maron; Bishop George Abi Younes, Maronite Eparchy in Mexico; Bishop Hanna Alwan, Patriarchal Curia; Bishop Edgar Madi, Maronite Eparchy in Brazil; Bishop Elias Sleiman, Maronite Eparchy in Latakia, Syria; Bishop Paul M. Tabet, Eparchy of Saint Maron, Montreal, Canada; Archbishop Robert Carlson and Auxiliary Bishop Edward Rice of the Archdiocese of St. Louis; Monsignor Moussa Joseph, Rector of St. Raymond Maronite Cathedral; and Reverend Malek Abou Tanos, Superior General of Maronite Lebanese Missionaries (MLM). It was a bittersweet day for the St. Raymond family, who will always hold a special place in their hearts for Bishop Robert. He began serving St. Raymond in 1967, and he has been the support, backbone, builder, leader and shepherd of the parish ever since. The Bishop influenced the growth and development of St. Raymond Church, which began as a four-family flat and was transformed into the beautiful St. Raymond Cathedral of today. He was instrumental in building the Rectory, the Parish Center, the Pastoral Center and the Maronite Heritage Institute.

Following the Liturgy, a grand banquet was held at the Cedars Hall. Pictures chronicling the Bishop's life were displayed in the hall for all to view. A beautifully illustrated tribute book was given to the guests containing letters of commendation and congratulations to the Bishop on behalf of His Holiness Pope Francis and His Beatitude Patriarch Bechara Peter Cardinal Rai, along with many others.

Radio personality Trish Gazall was the first speaker to convey her admiration for the Bishop. Chorbishop Joseph Kaddo offered the Benediction. The Master of Ceremonies for the evening was the humorous Father James Swift, C.M., assisted by the entertaining Bishop Richard Stika from the Diocese of Knoxville, Tennessee. Many were invited to speak about Bishop Shaheen. They reminisced, laughed and cried.



Bishop Emeritus Robert Shaheen (center) celebrates his retirement Divine Liturgy on October 25, 2013, at St. Raymond Cathedral.

Speakers included: Monsignor Moussa Joseph, Rector of St. Raymond Maronite Cathedral, who presented the Bishop with a booklet containing a list of all the baptisms, marriages and funerals he presided over since 1967.

Monsignor Joseph also presented the Bishop with two gifts on behalf of the parish family; a digital picture frame to view scanned pictures and a quilt sewn with important milestones during the Bishop's leadership at St. Raymond. The Honorable Francis Slay, Mayor of the City of St. Louis, presented "The Mayor's" award to Bishop Robert J. Shaheen for "Commitment and Contributions of Everlasting Impact on the St. Louis Community." The President of NAM, Elie Ayoub, gave a present to the Bishop for his assistance and leadership of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon. One of the original founders of NAM, Ted Tahan, and Dr. Enzo Di Giacomo spoke about their fond memories of the Bishop. Other speakers included Archbishop Robert Carlson, Bishop Gregory Mansour and Bishop Elias Zaidan. Bishop Shaheen was last to speak. He received a standing ovation. He asked that we pass down our devotion to our children, so that we have our Maronite faith for years to come. He thanked God, thanked everyone present, and he remembered his parents Albert and Aileen Shaheen. He spoke of their devotion and their great support for him.

Bishop Shaheen may be retiring, but he will not be forgotten. He will always be a part of the St. Raymond Family and remembered for generations to come. Thank you, Bishop, for being our Shepherd. ☐



St. Louis, Missouri *Installation of Bishop Elias Abdallah Zaidan*



by Shelly Vitale

Bishop Elias A. Zaidan was installed as the third Bishop of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon during the Liturgy of Enthronement at St. Raymond Maronite Cathedral in St. Louis, Mo., on Wednesday, October 23, 2013. It was a glorious autumn day; the bells were ringing; and beautiful music, provided by the St. Raymond choir, emanated through the cathedral. Approximately 500 Maronites celebrated the liturgy with their newly ordained Bishop. Members of the Order of Saint Sharbel stood honor guard along with the Knights of St. Gregory the Great. Visiting bishops, clergy, religious, laity and dignitaries attended from near and far, including retiring Bishop Robert J. Shaheen.

During the installation, Bishop Hanna Alwan, Patriarchal Vicar, read the decree from His Beatitude Bechara Peter Cardinal Rai, Patriarch of Antioch and all the East, appointing Bishop Elias A. Zaidan as Bishop of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon. The Apostolic Nuncio to the United States, His Excellency Carlo Maria Viganò, read the Apostolic Letter appointing Bishop Elias A. Zaidan as the Eparchial Bishop. Bishop George Abi Younes, representing the Patriarch, led Bishop Zaidan to the chair and handed him the staff. The new Bishop was congratulated by members of the clergy and laity of the Eparchy. As the Bishop received a standing ovation from all present, he smiled and spoke eloquently to the congregation, thanking God, his family and all those present, promising to put his life at their service. His Excellency Antoine Chedid, the Ambassador of Lebanon to the U.S., spoke on behalf of the President of Lebanon, General Michael Sleiman, conveying his best wishes to the Bishop. The Consul General of Lebanon, Mr. Bilal A. Kabalan, also attended. The Most Honorable Francis Slay, Mayor of the City of St. Louis, presented a proclamation to the Bishop stating that Wednesday, October 23, 2013, "Bishop Elias Abdallah Zaidan Day" in the city of St. Louis. The president of NAM, Elie Ayoub, presented a gift to the Bishop.

Among the clergy present were Bishop Emeritus Robert J. Shaheen; Bishop Gregory Mansour, Eparchy of Saint Maron; Bishop George Abi Younes, Maronite Eparchy in

Mexico; Bishop Hanna Alwan, Patriarchal Curia; Bishop Edgar Madi, Maronite Eparchy in Brazil; Bishop Elias Sleiman, Maronite Eparchy in Latakia, Syria; Bishop Paul M. Tabet, Eparchy of Saint Maron, Montreal, Canada; Archbishop Robert Carlson and Auxiliary Bishop Edward Rice of the Archdiocese of St. Louis; Monsignor Moussa Joseph, Rector of St. Raymond Maronite Cathedral; and Reverend Malek Abou Tanos, Superior General of Maronite Lebanese Missionaries (MLM), along with chorbishops, monsignors, priests, deacons and subdeacons many of whom traveled long distances to attend.

After the liturgy, everyone was invited to a reception at the Cedars Hall. This gave individuals the opportunity to personally congratulate and embrace their new Bishop. On behalf of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon and the St. Raymond Family, welcome to Bishop Elias Zaidan and God bless and guide him as he begins this new journey. ☐

From the National Maronite Young Adults Board



Dear Maronite Young Adults,

On behalf of the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn and the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon, the National MYA Board and the St. Joseph Maronite Community in Atlanta, Ga., would like to thank each one of you for attending and participating in the Fifth Annual Maronite Young Adults Workshop in Atlanta this year. We have heard overwhelmingly positive feedback from you over the past week, and we are extremely happy the workshop was a valuable and enjoyable experience for you. We greatly look forward to welcoming you back again next year.

It is our sincere desire to improve the quality and experience of the workshop every year; therefore, we encourage you to take a few minutes to e-mail us any feedback you may have at nationalmya@gmail.com.

In addition, we invite you to join our official Facebook page, "MYA - Maronite Young Adults - Official Facebook Group." Pictures from this year's workshop will be posted soon along with the latest news and updates regarding next year's workshop.

Thank you for joining us. It was a pleasure being with you last weekend! Until we meet again, go out in the world and live our Maronite Catholic Faith happy and proud! ☐

Washington, D.C. *Deacons/Subdeacons Annual Retreat*



by Subdeacon Dennis and Mary Somerville

There are so many incredible reasons why being a Maronite Deacon/Subdeacon is so fulfilling. We take Holy Communion to the sick; we work with adults and youth, teaching them the Gospel and how to be a good witness for Christ. We are close to the altar at the time of consecration during Liturgy, and we are surrounded by people searching for God. We have the best of both worlds - we are married and we are ordained servants of God. Our ministry is to serve - *Diakonia* - in the church. We wear the clerical collar - a personal sign of being a witness to Christ.

We arrived at the Seminary on Friday evening and joyously greeted one another, allowing familiarity to encircle us. Soon after, we all quietly scurried into the Seminary Chapel to begin our retreat with the beautiful, restful prayers of *Ramsho*. Afterwards we walked over to Our Lady of Lebanon Church for Divine Liturgy concelebrated by Bishop Gregory Mansour, His Eminence Cardinal Donald Wuerl, Chorbishop Seely Beggiani, Chorbishop Dominic Ashkar, Chorbishop Michael Thomas, Vicar General, Msgr. Ignace Sadek, Fr. Geoffrey Abdallah, the new Seminary Rector, and many concelebrating priests.

Following the Liturgy, we were ushered down the stairs of the parish hall to enjoy a meal hosted by Chorbishop Ashkar in honor of Chorbishop Seely Beggiani on his retirement as Rector of the Seminary.

Back at the hotel, Fr. Jack Morrison and many deacons, subdeacons, candidates, and wives mingled in the lounge for a few more hours enjoying one another's company.

Saturday, in a nutshell, was a full day of prayers, orations, confessions, quiet meditations, Liturgy, lunch and a time for socializing, questions and answers, learning, dining, interacting, sharing faith and absorbing.

Bishop Gregory Mansour spoke to us of the New Evangelization and how to bring back those Catholics who have left the church. The following are our answers to some of the questions the Bishop raised in his talk:

- There is a beautiful symmetry in the ordained married man at the altar next to the ordained single man.
- The ordained married man and his wife are a model for married life.
- Deacons and Subdeacons should visit the sick, homebound, or people who haven't been to church in a while.
- Awareness is necessary of how the parish handles divorced and remarried Catholics.
- A pilgrimage to Our Lady of Lebanon Shrine in Ohio, would benefit the group.
- Mini retreats are good for junior high/middle school: have confessions, talks, Liturgy, discussions, etc. Think out of the box. We have to have good things for our children to do in our parishes, or they will go somewhere else to do bad things.

Retreat Feedback

Deacon Richard Stone

It was really good to be with all of you in Washington. My wife and I look forward to it each year. Next year, with the help of God, will be at our Lady of Lebanon Shrine in Ohio. For those of you who have never been to the Shrine, it will be a real uplifting experience.

My role as Deacon has let me meet people of all faiths that I never would have met otherwise. I have had the pleasure to serve as chaplain to the police department in my city. I am now going to expand to the nursing homes in the area. New Castle, Penn., only has four priests for the whole city, and this is an area that needs my help. Looking forward to hearing from all of you, and praying for you daily. God Bless all of you.

Subdeacon Brian Dunn

I look forward to these retreats each year and seeing everyone and meeting new people, this year especially with all of the new candidates and wives coming and joining us.

I hope that the arrangements to go to the Shrine of Our Lady can happen. I think that would be good for a lot of us as we have not been there.

Peace and Blessings.

Wanda Foster

You asked for input regarding the session for the wives at the Retreat. I want the message to be that we are there to serve and to empower others to serve. One way I am trying to do that is through encouraging the efforts of others and making sure they are recognized and appreciated.

Subdeacon Peter Hobaica

Having been ordained less than a year ago, this retreat was special, first, from the point of view of getting to meet the deacons, subdeacons and candidates, and some of their wonderful wives, but second, because it is so gratifying and encouraging to see so many fellows in ministry and seeking ministry. These days when there is so much hate, crime and

dissension in the world, it is refreshing to know that He is still at work by the power of His Holy Spirit in all of us!!

Deacon Allan Ramey and Alice

At 87 years of age my current ministry as caregiver for my wife, Alice, who has mobility problems, is now my most important and rewarding ministry. As the first Maronite permanent Deacon, ordained in 1976, Alice and I have served our community of St. Anthony in Lawrence, Mass., and watched our Maronite communities grow nationally, and our deacon community grow to assist our churches and the faith communities they serve.

Our age and health issues have made it impossible for us to join you at retreats or other activities, but we feel a special bond to each of you, and welcome your sharing your lives and experiences in the newsletter.

I officially was retired from active ministry about four years ago, but our many years of experience in ministry as retreat house director, program coordinator, and in various areas of ministry make us a good ministry resource. If our past experiences could be of value to any of you, feel free to contact us.

God Bless all of you. We keep you in our prayers.

Pat Demko

The retreat was, once again, a great spiritual experience. What makes it personally more meaningful to me is spending time with all the wives and witnessing the love they have for their husbands, families, and their ministry. I cherish my friends and feel closer to them and to God with every retreat that I attend. □

Utica, New York Day of Recollection



by Chorbishop John D. Faris

On September 21, 2013, Saint Mary's Guild of Saint Louis Gonzaga Church in Utica, New York, sponsored a Day of Recollection at the Good News Center. It was not a traditional format. Chorbishop John Faris, the pastor of Saint Louis Gonzaga Church, opened the day with a Divine Liturgy. The presenters were four women from the Focolare Movement, a group established in Italy in 1944 that promotes the unity of all people regardless of religion, race or politics. They shared with the participants their experience of spiritual

journey and the mission of Focolare (Italian for "hearth"). And the women didn't have to cook! A luncheon was provided that allowed everyone to enjoy the fellowship.

The Day of Recollection was a welcome opportunity for the members of Saint Mary's Guild to be refreshed spiritually and continue their mission of multifaceted service to the parish family. □

Atlanta, Georgia Young Adults Annual Retreat

by Subdeacon Leo Shababy

The National Maronite Young Adults met at St. Joseph Maronite Church in Atlanta, Ga., on November 1 - 3, 2013. St. Joseph Maronite Catholic Church had the privilege of being able to sponsor this annual retreat.

Truly the Ladies of St. Joseph Church should be proud of the way they prepared the luncheon; it was fit for a king. While the standup crowd participating in the Sunday Liturgy, Father Tony Masaad along with Fathers Rodolph Wakim, Elie Mikhail, Sami Chaaya, Pierre El Khoury and our Pastor Dominic Hanna concelebrated the Liturgy. It will be a day to remember. With our Choir members and guest participating in the singing, Heaven had opened its gates to welcome the throngs. "God truly shined down his light on us."

I had the honor in speaking with many of the youth at a luncheon after the Liturgy on Sunday November 3. I have never in my life been as proud of our youth as I was that day. The parents of these young adults could be very proud of them. The ladies were beautiful and the men handsome. They spoke with confidence and pride about their heritage, about their churches and about their God. I may sound like a preacher when I speak of the way our young adults behaved, how they spoke about each other and how serious they are about the Maronite faith and their churches. I am lost for words to describe what a great impression these Maronite youth have made not only on me but on our entire parish. "May God forever keep them under the show of His wings." □

the Deadline is... **Deadline** for next month's issue of *The Maronite Voice* is December 26, 2013.

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

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. □

Fourth Annual Benefit Dinner For the Eparchy of Saint Maron Provides a Success



Bishop Gregory Mansour and Bishop Emeritus Stephen Hector Doueïhi present Dr. Hamid and Mrs. Leila Mouallem with an icon of Saint Maron at the Eparchial Benefit Dinner.

by John Kurey

Maronite Catholics and friends from New York and beyond gathered on Thursday, November 21, 2013, at the Archdiocese of New York Building for the Fourth Annual Benefit Dinner for the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn. The event raised funds for the Eparchy and featured a beautiful ceremony honoring Dr. and Mrs. Hamid and Leila Mouallem. Over 180 guests attended.

Proceeds from the Benefit Dinner will be used to educate Seminarians, support poorer parishes, make structural repairs to the Cathedral and assist retired priests.

A special feature of this year's Benefit Dinner was that it honored Dr. Hamid Mouallem and his wife, Leila, who are faithful and devoted members of the Maronite community in the New York area. They were introduced by their children, Joseph and Mona Lisa, and received a standing ovation. Bishop Mansour and retired Bishop Stephen Hector Doueïhi presented the Mouallem family with an icon of Saint Maron. Afterwards, an ebullient Bishop Mansour asked, "Is there anything better than this on this side of Heaven?!" He thanked the many members and friends of the Mouallem family in attendance, along with the devoted members of the Eparchy who support its work so faithfully.

Donations in connection with the Benefit Dinner are being accepted through December 15, 2013, and may be made online or mailed to the Eparchy's offices at 109 Remsen Street, Brooklyn, NY 11201. Bishop Gregory stated "I invite all members of the faithful throughout the Eparchy to support this Benefit Dinner and the good works it will do."

The Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn comprises forty-three parishes, a Seminary, a Convent, a Monastery and the Maronite faithful in sixteen states located along the East Coast of the United States from Maine to Florida. It is directly under the jurisdiction of Pope Francis.

Further information may be found at www.stmaron.org or by emailing saintmaron@yahoo.com. □



Eparchial Assignments



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

- **Deacon Pierre Al-Feghaly**, to Saint Anthony Church, Glen Allen, Va., effective November 1, 2013.
- **Rev. Raymond Khallouf**, as Parochial Vicar at Saint Anthony Church, Danbury, Conn., effective December 1, 2013. He leaves Our Lady of Lebanon Church, Easton, Penn., where he served as Parochial Vicar.
- **Rev. Antoine Kairouz**, as Administrator of Sts. Peter and Paul Mission, Tampa, Fla., effective January 1, 2014.
- **Rev. Lawrence Michael**, from Pastor of Saint Maron Church, Torrington, Conn., to retirement, effective February 1, 2014.
- **Rev. Miled Jreig**, as Administrator of Saint Maron Church, Torrington, Conn., effective February 1, 2014. He leaves Saint Louis Gonzaga Church, Utica, N.Y., where he served as Parochial Vicar.
- **Rev. Elias Khalil**, as Parochial Vicar at Saint Louis Gonzaga Church, Utica, N.Y., effective February 1, 2014.
- **Rev. Bassam Saade**, to the pastoral care of the Maronite Community in Melbourne, Fla., effective immediately, while continuing as Pastor of St. Jude Church, Orlando, Fla. He has also been appointed as Protopresbyter of the Far South Region.
- **Rev. Geoffrey Abdallah**, to the College of Consultors and the Eparchial Presbyteral Council, *Ex Officio*, as the Rector of Our Lady of Lebanon Seminary, effective immediately.
- **Rev. Dany Abi-Akar**, to the pastoral care of the Maronite Community in Manhattan, N.Y., effective January 1, 2014, while continuing as Pastor of Our Lady of Lebanon Church, Waterbury, Conn. □

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, 2013, 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 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. □

Dayton, Ohio *First Pastoral Visit*



From left: Michel M. Eid, William T. Thomas (Parish Advisory Board President), Monsignor Ignace Sadek, Samir F. Farah (NAM VP and President Elect), Bishop Elias A. Zaidan, Joseph V. Baddour, Marianne Dergham and Jean-Marie Farah.

by Joseph Baddour

Parishioners and friends of St. Ignatius of Antioch Maronite Catholic Church were honored to host their newly enthroned spiritual leader, His Excellency Most Reverend Elias Abdallah Zaidan, Bishop of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon, for a mid-November weekend of festivities celebrating the 20th anniversary of the establishment of the St. Ignatius of Antioch Parish in Dayton, Ohio. The weekend activities included an introductory luncheon hosted by Monsignor Ignace Sadek, where the Parish Advisory Board members and parishioners of St. Ignatius discussed the parish's current and future plans. The attendees were delighted to hear the Bishop's remarks and guidance, where he stressed the importance of perseverance and faith. After a well-deserved break, His Excellency joined an overflow crowd at the Crowne Plaza Hotel for a banquet honoring his presence and the 20th anniversary of the parish. Bishop Zaidan was joined at the head table by Monsignor Ignace Sadek, Pastor, former Pastor for twelve years, Father Pierre Bassil, Pastor of Our Lady of Lebanon Parish in Flint, Mich., Father John Kroeger, and Deacon Martin Rachid of Our Lady of Lebanon Church, Flint, Mich. During the banquet, NAM Vice President and President-elect, Mr. Samir Farah, presented the St. Ignatius community with a beautiful icon of the Holy Trinity, by Judy Soma, on behalf of the National Apostolate of Maronites.

On Sunday, November 17, 2013, Bishop Zaidan celebrated the Divine Liturgy with the St. Ignatius family. In his homily, he stressed the importance of faith, accepting God's will, and cohesiveness within the parish. His Excellency also urged all families of Lebanese origin to respond to the call made by His Beatitude Patriarch Bechara Peter Cardinal Rai, Patriarch of Antioch and All the East, to provide moral support to all the Christians in Lebanon and the Middle East and help to maintain the demographic and power sharing balance by registering their marriages and/or children births

in Lebanon. Bishop Zaidan reminded the attendees that the registration can be done free of charge, with the help of the personnel from Project Roots (<http://www.projectroots.net>).

The highlights of the Sunday ceremonies included the presentation of an appreciation plaque to Mr. Emil Mershad, longtime parishioner and contributor to St. Ignatius Parish, and the flawless performance of the St. Ignatius choir. The youth and adult members of the choir spent many hours rehearsing special hymns for the Pontifical Liturgy. By the end of the day it was obvious to all that this small parish is capable of accomplishing big goals, as evidenced by the wonderful display of faith in God and belief in one united and cohesive family. St. Ignatius Parish looks forward toward the next twenty years of serving God and preserving its heritage with a renewed faith. □



Schedule of Bishop Gregory Mansour

December 7 - 8, 2013

Parish Visit, St. Sharbel Church, New Brunswick, N.J.

December 9 - 10, 2013

Catholic University Trustees Meeting, Washington, D.C.

December 11, 2013

Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral Men's Group Dinner, Brooklyn, N.Y.

December 12, 2013

Eparchial Finance Council Meeting, Brooklyn, N.Y.

December 15, 2013

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

December 16, 2013

Installation of New Archbishop, Hartford, Conn.

December 21 - 22, 2013

Parish Visit, St. Anthony Church, Glen Allen (Richmond), Va.

December 24 - 25, 2013

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

December 29 - January 2, 2014

Parish Visit, Our Lady of Lebanon Church, Miami, Fla.

January 5, 2014

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

January 11 - 12, 2014

Parish Visit, St. Maron Mission, Jacksonville, Fla.

January 13 - 17, 2014

Annual Clergy Retreat, North Palm Beach, Fla. □

Newtown Square, Pennsylvania All Saints Day



by Lillian Shahade

On Sunday, November 3, 2013, the children of Saint Sharbel Church, Newtown, Square, Penn., came dressed as their favorite saints in honor of All Saints Day (November 1).

The children made a wonderful selection of the Saints this year, and a few even insisted on having their moms make new outfits for their chosen saints. In addition to dressing as the Saint, the children were asked to write a little about who they were portraying and to be prepared to tell a little about that Saint. Their completed papers were hung in the hall for all to read.

The children who participated this year, (front and center): Jesus (Alvin Polus), front row: St. Sharbel our Patron Saint (Giovanni Sleiman), St. Maron, Founder of our Faith (Charbel Sleiman), second row: St. Rose of Lima (Jessica Farhat), St. Andrew (Andrew Polus), St. Stephen (Steven Sleiman), Mary (Lilly Obeid), St. Patrick (Allesandro Sleiman), St. Therese of Avila (Lauren Ward), St. Peter (Lillian Shahade), St. Joseph (Andrew Obeid), – St. Rafka (Jennifer Farhat), St. Peter (Ilyas Muqbel) and St. Thomas (Aoun Earafej). Fr. Tom Rossi, OP, of the Daylesford Abbey was the main celebrant.

After the Divine Liturgy a reception, prepared by the mothers and members of the parish, was held, and all the Little Saints offered their prayer of thanksgiving.. This was such a learning experience for the children. Rather than just dress in spooky costumes and eating candy, they learned so much more of the many saints that we all can emulate.

Also the Divine Liturgy was offered for Fr. Paul Mouawad, Pastor, by the entire parish for his quick recovery. Father Paul suffered a stroke and was taken to the hospital that very same morning. Please keep him in your prayers, as we pray:

O Jesus, Eternal Priest, keep all Thy priests within the shelter of Thy Sacred Heart, where none may harm them. Bless their labors with abundant fruit, and may the souls to whom they

have ministered to here below share their joy and consolation and in Heaven their beautiful and everlasting crown.

We pray for all our dedicated and devoted priests and pray that God will continue to bless them with peace of mind and the wisdom and strength to carry on His Word; and let Thy Holy Love surround them and shield them forever. Amen

San Francisco, California Prayer for Peace



by Nicole Rishwan

On Sunday, November 3, 2013, responding to Pope Francis' call to pray for Peace in the Middle East, and in a special way for the Syrian people, religious leaders in the Bay Area of California organized an evening of prayer for peace at St. Thomas More Catholic Church in San Francisco. Pastors and clergies of the Maronite, Arab Latin, Coptic, Orthodox, Armenian, Chaldean and Assyrian churches were present with some of their parishioners to pray.

The guest speaker was Mother Agnes Mariam of the Cross, who was born in Lebanon and entered the Carmelite contemplative order. In 1994, she moved to a 6th century monastery, some fifteen kilometers north of Damascus, Syria. After the completion of the restoration work, Mother Agnes established there an international community for dialogue, peace, and openness to Christian, Muslim, and Jewish religions.

The evening of prayer for peace in the Middle East ended with a declaration of peace commitment from all the religious leaders present on behalf of their communities. □



A Brief Retrospect On Eastern Christianity

by

Brother John M. Samaha, S.M.

In the West some form of separation between religion and government is the usual situation. Separation of church and state is the normal condition. Christians have experienced many types of relationships with prevailing governments.

When the Roman Empire first regarded the early church as a branch of Judaism, Christianity was legally protected. Eventually the profession of Christianity became a crime, and the degree of persecution or tolerance wavered according to the whims of the reigning emperor and the local ruler. Increased martyrdom brought on the development of apologetics and theological precision in addressing controversy and fostered order in the life of the church. Sometimes Christians felt protected from state persecution, but periods of fierce official persecution were common.

When Diocletian in 303 stepped up the Roman persecution of Christians, he perceived the Church as a political threat, a state within a state, developing an establishment paralleling his government. He ordered churches destroyed, clergy imprisoned, sacred books confiscated, and rampant martyrdom of believers. Only in April 311 was an Edict of Toleration of Christians issued, and in 313 the Emperor Constantine promulgated the Edict of Milan, which granted freedom of conscience. When Constantine transferred his capital from Rome to Byzantium the spread of Christianity coincided with the spread of the Roman Empire.

Desiring Christianity to be as united as the law and citizenship of the empire, Constantine convoked church councils to settle theological questions and disputes under imperial supervision. In May 325 the first general council met in Nicaea. The bishops attended at government expense. Constantine himself participated and took positions, advocating a universal creed. Following that first council the debates continued in matters of Christology, and imperial interference played a part. Any departure from official Christian orthodoxy was regarded as a state crime.

Subsequent councils were called by imperial rulers with the expectation that a united religion would mean a united empire. But this backfired, and the opposite occurred. Schisms proliferated. By the close of the sixth century there was confusion and serious disaffection from orthodox Christianity, and consequently from the Constantinople government. In those parts of the empire where the churches did not accept the Council of Chalcedon (451), Christians were heavily taxed for disagreeing with the doctrines supported by the emperor. Some parts of the empire suffered abuse and persecution from Byzantine Christians. The invasion of the Persians into parts of Byzantium only aggravated the situation.

With the seventh-century Muslim invasion, some Christians welcomed the Muslim Arabs, because often the Islamic protection was better than that of Constantinople or the

Persians. With this new regime Christians were given a special but secondary status in society (*dhimmi*), which offered government protection, but there was a price to pay: a special tax (*jizya*) in addition to laws imposing constraints on dress and manners, and forbidding the riding of animals. The use of religious symbols in public was forbidden, and there were prohibitions against building or repairing churches, ringing bells, and the public display of crosses. Non-Muslims were not allowed missionary activity, and Muslims were forbidden to convert to Christianity.

This two-tiered system made the Christians second-class citizens but allowed them to live peacefully side-by-side with the Muslims and others. But this *millet* system reinforced the divisions among churches and splintered Christianity. Some Christians succumbed to Islam rather than remain in a subordinate social standing. Yet Christianity thrived in many places, and Christians remained the majority in that region into the ninth century.

In these times Eastern and Western Christianity became increasingly estranged religiously and politically. Western Latin Christianity was more strongly adversarial toward Islam. This resulted in the Crusades of the eleventh to thirteenth centuries. The Crusades began as a desire to free the Holy Land from the Muslims, but ended with the sack of Constantinople and the Eastern churches. Western Christianity oppressed the Christian East. Christian nations oppressed the Muslims. Because Islam did not recognize the separation of religion and government, the Muslims failed to see the difference between local Christians of the East and the hostile Western Christian governments that mounted the Crusades.

Several Muslim dynasties ruled following the Crusades. The last was the Ottoman Empire, which established its capital in Constantinople (Istanbul) in 1453. The Ottomans reinforced the subordinate status of Christians and Jews through the *millet* system. The Ottoman caliph considered "Armenian" those Christians who rejected the Council of Chalcedon. This led to friction and internal quarrels in the differing *millets*. In the latter times of the Ottoman Empire European nations opened commercial contacts in the Near East and Middle East. The European powers requested the right to protect their trading clients, often Christians. Different governments protected different churches, and this aligned Eastern churches with European political centers. Gradually this disrupted the *millet* system as European governments wanted equality of citizenship for Eastern Christians.

With Islam, religion and government are joined in the service of God, and the same person usually provides both religious and civic leadership. The Islamic ideal is a worldwide Muslim community (*ummah*) in which politics and religion are one, and racial and ethnic distinctions are not important.

(Continues on page 12)

THE ORDER OF SAINT SHARBEL



Annual Members

★ Margo Gussin

St. Maron Church, Philadelphia, Penn.

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, visit www.orderstsharbel.org, or write to:

Eparchy of Saint Maron
Order of Saint Sharbel
109 Remsen Street
Brooklyn, NY 11201

or

Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon
Order of Saint Sharbel
1021 South 10th Street
St. Louis, MO 63104

Pray for Vocations!

by Mary Van Heusen

As a mother of three, I am blessed to have two of my children actively discerning religious vocations. I am often asked how they decided this course for their lives. Deciding to pursue a life of service to the Church is more a result of discerning, listening and then responding "Yes" to God's call.

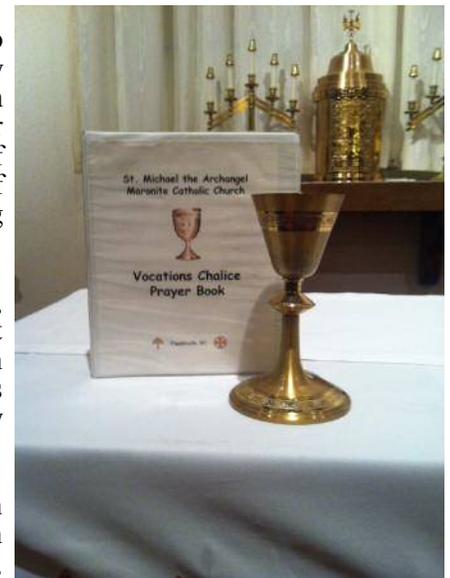
Did my husband and I help? Yes we did! We began, when our children were young, praying to God asking Him to call at least one of our children. We often spoke to them about listening carefully to see what God's plan is for their lives and most importantly we prayed as a family.

When Chuck and I first arrived in Fayetteville, North Carolina, and began attending St. Michael the Archangel Church, I was excited to find a parish that encouraged families to pray for religious vocations. Every Sunday, at the end of Divine Liturgy, *Aboona* announces the name of a person and/or family who will be praying during the upcoming week. That person then comes forward to receive the Vocation Chalice. With the Vocation Chalice comes a small velvet bag to protect it (in transport) and a larger tote bag to carry it along with two books. The family is directed, once home, to place the chalice in a prominent place (preferably the middle of the dining room table) and keep it there throughout the week. The first of the books is a notebook with daily prayers, readings and intercessions centered on religious vocations. Every evening as they sit to eat their meal, the family is asked to begin with someone reading aloud that day's prayers (in my family we take turns reading). The Chalice is a focal point to help pull together the family's prayers. The second book is a notebook filled with writing paper. Anyone may write their personal thoughts, poems or prayers, sharing with those to follow what their family experienced while praying together specifically for vocations. The next Sunday the bag is returned with all inside, and a new family will have the opportunity to accept the Chalice.

A few years ago the parishioners who usually attend the Divine Liturgy on Saturday evenings expressed their desire to add their prayers. *Aboona* offered another Chalice and a second bag with all its books and supplies was created and now goes out and returns every Saturday.

This shared prayer has been meaningful to all of our families! Our parishioners speak often of the vast vocations that stem from our small community. We have had vocations to both the Maronite rite and the Latin rite.

The Maronite Church has so many beautiful young men and women, some who may be discerning God's call to serve His people, but perhaps all they need to know is that their families and fellow parishioners are standing with them, praying and lifting them up as they struggle to find the courage to say "Yes." □



A Brief Retrospect on Eastern Christianity

Continued from page 10

The Qur'an and other Islamic religious books are the foundation for the legal system, and there is no institution parallel to the Church. Christian religious leaders always had difficulty convincing their Muslim rulers of their civic loyalty because they also wanted to be in contact with the foreign religious hierarchy. The protection by European governments increased the doubts about the civic loyalty of Eastern Christians.

With the demise of the Ottoman Empire after World War I, European nations assumed mandates in some parts of the former empire to form nation-states in which citizenship would be based on one's place or residence or birth rather than on religion, and in which religious organizations would be free from government control. This was in opposition to the ideal of *'ummah*, the united community under single governance with economic, social, and legal practices based on religion.

Today these two opposing views are still in contention, and vie for acceptance. In the Middle East we find as much diversity among governments concerning church and state as in the West. Eastern Christian minorities still struggle for equality of citizenship. □

Maronite Prelate in Syria: Only Project We Have Is Building A Bigger Cemetery

Archbishop Samir Nassar Calls for Christian Solidarity, Ecumenical Collaboration as War Rages On

Christians in Damascus [Syria] are clinging to hope despite the rising death toll in the ongoing conflict in Syria. In an interview with Catholic Charity Aid to the Church in Need, Maronite Archbishop Samir Nassar of Damascus pleaded for support and solidarity to Christians in Syria.

"There has been war [in Syria] for three years, and it is destroying the whole country," he said. "The people feel lost and without support."

As of now, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights have released figures stating that 110,371 people have died in the conflict, many of them innocent civilians, including women and children. Archbishop Nassar told Aid to the Church in Need that the only project the Maronite Church has is to "build a bigger cemetery."

The Maronite prelate expressed his hope for a brighter future for the Syrian population and will focus on rebuilding efforts when the war is over, especially in collaboration with

other faiths in the region.

"For fourteen centuries we have lived in its shadow. If we want to continue to live in the future, then it can only be together. That is a great challenge, but we can succeed in it," he said. Archbishop Nassar called on the world's Christians to continue to pray for Syria. □

(Zenit.org, November 22, 2013)

Pope Francis Concludes Year of Faith in St. Peter's Square

First Public Display of St. Peter's Relics

An initiative that gave the faithful "an opportunity to rediscover the beauty of the journey of faith" drew to a close on Sunday, November 24, 2013 as Pope Francis concluded the Year of Faith in St. Peter's Square. The Mass, which celebrated the Solemnity of Christ the King, drew thousands of pilgrims.

Particularly notable during the Mass was the first public unveiling of a reliquary said to contain the bone fragments of St. Peter. Discovered in 1942, the bones of the apostle were contained in a bronze reliquary and were held by Pope Francis shortly after his homily.

The Holy Father expressed his affection and gratitude to Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI for opening the Year of Faith. He also greeted the Patriarchs and Major Archbishops of the Eastern Churches who were in Rome for a three day meeting with the Pope.

"With this gesture, through them, I would like to reach all those Christians living in the Holy Land, in Syria and in the entire East, and obtain for them the gift of peace and concord," the Pope said.

Reflecting on the Feast of Christ the King, Pope Francis spoke on the common theme shared on Sunday readings: the centrality of Christ. Christ as the center of creation demands of us as believers to place him at the center of our words and works.

"When this center is lost, when it is replaced by something else, only harm can result for everything around us and for ourselves," he said.

The Holy Father also spoke on the centrality of Christ in the people of God and history. Christ is united to all, thus making all of us share in a "single journey, a single destiny."

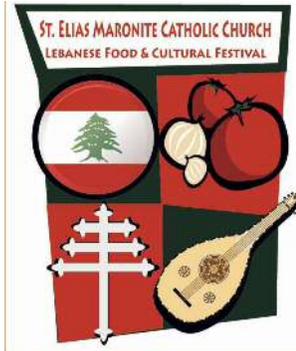
"To him we can bring the joys and the hopes, the sorrows and troubles which are part of our lives," he said. "When Jesus is the center, light shines even amid the darkest times of our lives; he gives us hope, as he does to the good thief in today's Gospel," the 76-year-old Pontiff said.

Christ's mercy to the good thief, he concluded, shows that the Lord always gives more than what is asked of Him. "Let us ask the Lord to remember us, in the certainty that by his mercy we will be able to share his glory in paradise," the Pope said. □

(Zenit.org, November 25, 2013)

Birmingham, Alabama Festival Distribution

A portion of the proceeds of the Fifteenth Annual Lebanese Food & Cultural Festival that was held at St. Elias Maronite Catholic Church, April 12 - 13, 2013, has been given as follows:



National and International Charities

\$ 5,000 to Patriarchal Charities
\$ 2,000 to Tele-Lumiere

Local Charities

\$10,000 to SUKI Foundation
\$ 2,000 to Birmingham Catholic Center of Concern
\$ 2,000 to Birmingham YMCA Strong Kids Campaign
\$ 2,000 to Catholic Charities
\$ 2,000 to Her Choice
\$ 2,000 to Holy Family Cristo/Rey School
\$ 2,000 to St. Andrew Episcopal Church "The Red Door"
\$ 2,000 to St. Jude
\$ 1,000 to Big Oak Ranch
\$ 1,000 to Jimmie Hale Mission
\$ 750 to Firehouse Shelter

St. Elias started its Lebanese Food & Cultural Festival in 1999 to showcase to the citizens of Birmingham the rich heritage, culture and food that are part of this Christian Lebanese community. The festival has always given a portion of the proceeds to charity—over \$311,000 in the last fifteen years to 33 different charitable causes. This is one way that its church family is working together to help with Christian causes here and abroad.

Be sure to mark your calendars for the Sixteenth Annual St. Elias Maronite Catholic Church Lebanese Food & Cultural Festival which is scheduled for Friday and Saturday, April 25 - 26, 2014. ☐

Roanoke, Virginia Veterans Day

by Gerald J. Brunning

Ninety-nine red, white and blue balloons and one black one, wafted into the bright sky over Roanoke, Virginia, on Sunday, November 10, 2013, as the finale to the second annual Veterans Day program at St. Elias Parish. As the balloons raced towards the heavens to the sound of Taps, they symbolically carried our prayers of gratitude for the veterans' service to our country and our prayers of intercession for our missing and imprisoned servicemen and women.

Congressman Bob Goodlatte, representing the 6th District of Virginia, was the honored guest and featured speaker. His message emphasized that the best expression of gratitude to

our veterans is to be good and patriotic citizens. Their service would be futile if we were to allow our nation to suffer due to apathy.

The congressman and his wife, Mary Ellen, though not Catholic, attended their first Maronite Liturgy. They expressed delight with its reverence. This was not their first visit to St. Elias, however, as they are regular attendees at the annual festival.

The program, once again, was the effort of the Religious Education classes and the young people of the parish. Notable were the beautiful decorations by St. Maron's Youth group, the posting of the colors by Boy Scout Troop 138, the marching and singing by all the religious education students, and a beautiful rendition of "God Bless America" by members of the young people's choir.

Emcee for the program was Jim Donkers, himself a Navy veteran. Wanda Donkers read the roll of honor of all the known veterans of the parish and the families of parishioners. A table with photos of many of the veterans taken while they were on active duty provided a chuckle or two as comparisons were made to the vets as we know them today. Donations made by the attendees were given to the canteen fund for veterans at the VA hospital in Salem, Virginia. ☐



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 2014.



Brooklyn, New York *Christmas Preparations*

by Salma Vahdat

December at our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral in Brooklyn, N.Y., is a month full of frenetic activity. It is a time of preparing ourselves for the joyful birth of our Savior, Jesus. In this season of Announcements we are all mindful of the beauty of the Christmas story. We decorate the Church, out comes the crèche in our homes and good will and greetings abound to family and friends. We gather to proclaim the birth of the Messiah!

One of the ways we demonstrate our caring and good will is through our traditional Christmas Giving Tree, sponsored by the Heritage program. In a niche in the Cathedral a tree stands decorated with colorful paper trees, on the back of which is noted what is needed. Community members select however many of the little trees and purchase toys to fit the description. The gifts are brought to the Cathedral and in mid December are delivered to Catholic Charities for distribution to less fortunate tots.

The Heritage program also sponsors a "Breakfast with Santa" to be held on December 7th this year. Children, newborn to nine years of age come together for breakfast, a party and chat with the Jolly Old Elf himself and receive a gift.

We all think of the loved ones who have passed to their eternal reward and no longer share the joy of the holiday with us. This year we wish to make them much more a part of our celebration. Sponsored by the MYO, there will be a Memorial Christmas Tree Sale. The Cathedral has a large garden area on a street side which will accommodate at least thirty six-foot-trees, which will be lit with white lights, bearing a legend with the names to be memorialized. They will surround the outdoor Nativity Scene and be lit from December 8 to January 10, 2014. All proceeds will underwrite the Youth Workshop and activities.

The annual Holiday Bake Sale and Christmas Boutique sponsored by the Confraternity of the Immaculate Conception occurs December 14 -15. It is always a great success. The neighbors surrounding the Cathedral are the earliest customers.

Of course, on December 15 the Christmas Novena begins. The Community comes together each evening to prepare its hearts and souls to receive the Baby Jesus.

The Community of Faith of Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral labor to achieve the peace and joy and promise of the Good News. All preparation finally culminates on Christmas Eve with the Divine Liturgy at midnight in a packed Cathedral, our voices chanting and praising the Lord, "Peace on Earth to Men of Good Will."

MYA Game Night

It was the right time to initiate a new activity at the Cathedral, and the MYA was the right group to take the plunge! Susan Chawki, MYA President, Denise Abou-Chrouch, Vice President, and Chadi Mahfouz, Treasurer, conceived and organized the evening on Saturday, November 16, 2013.

Approximately thirty attendees from the parish



community and new residents of New York City came loaded for camaraderie and fun. A ping pong tournament was quickly started with a male and female winner presented with trophies. Prizes such as trophies and gift cards were awarded for games such as Pictionary, jenga, backgammon, cards, bingo, taboo, chess and "guess how many lollipops in a jar."

According to Susan, people were just letting loose, getting comfortable socializing, team building and just enjoying the evening.

For a first time event, it was very successful. People who missed it were sorry they couldn't attend but are looking forward to the next event. The food was great, too. What better way to spend an evening - congeniality, laughter, sustenance! ☐

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania *All Saints Day*



The Maronite Christian Formation (MCF) children of Our Lady of Victory, Carnegie, [Pittsburgh], Penn., celebrated the feast of All Saints Day with a nice presentation that took place on the stage at the Maronite Center, on Sunday November 10, 2013. The program featured many of the universal and the Lebanese Saints. Thank you to all the children who participated and their teachers. ☐



Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania *Food Drive*



The Altar and Rosary Society of Saint Anthony and Saint George Parish in Wilkes-Barre, Penn., Conducted its annual Food Drive, which helps to support the Catherine McAuley House, a shelter for women and children. Pictured from left to right are Sister Catherine McGroarty, Director of the Catherine McAuley House, and Rosa Khalife-McCracken, President of the Altar and Rosary Society. □

Phoenix, Arizona *Annual Festival*



November 1 - 3, 2013, were the days of the annual Festival at St. Joseph Mission in Phoenix, Ariz. One of the aims of the festival is to gather the community together with its friends to celebrate the tradition that has come from Lebanon and the Middle East. People enjoyed the entertainment and the food and they were excited to celebrate the heritage. In its twelfth year, the festival has become a part of the tradition of Phoenix. □

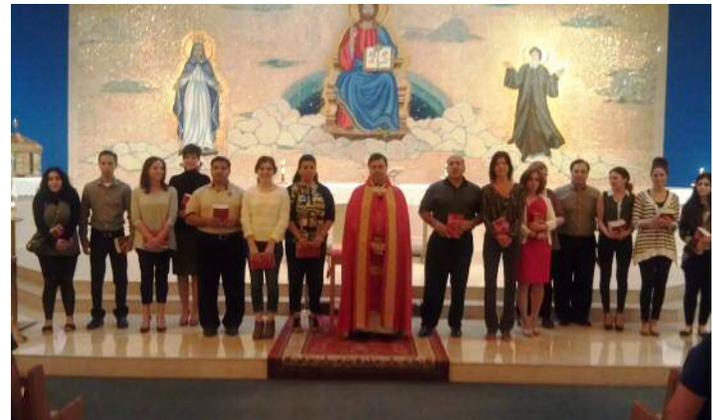
Springfield, Massachusetts *Harvest Bazaar*



by Kathy LaBella

St. Anthony Maronite Church in Springfield, Mass., held its annual Harvest Bazaar on November 9-10, 2013, in The Cedars Hall. Over fifty vendors were present selling their wares. American and Lebanese food and baked goods prepared by the Women's Guild were available for sale and for dining in the hall. Many thanks to the Women's Guild and all those who donated their time to make this event such a huge success. □

Warren, Michigan *Catechetical Sunday*



by Sarah Ashkar, 8th Grade Student

St. Sharbel Maronite Church in Warren, Mich., celebrated its seventeen catechists on September 15, 2013, and discovered firsthand that the Holy Spirit is working within the Parish. Chorbishop Alfred Badawi, Pastor, presented a Bible to every catechist and thanked God for their dedication and service. They will have an awesome task teaching our faith to the 158 children in the program!

Chorbishop Alfred stated that according to the Canon Law of the Church, parents have the most grave duty and the primary obligation to take care, as best they can, of the physical, social, cultural, moral and religious education of their offspring. Parents are the primary teachers. □

Washington, D.C. *Forty Days For Life*



by Joseph El Halal

In response to the invitation of the Office of Family and Sanctity of Life of the Eparchy of Saint Maron to participate in a Pro-Life activity in October, Our Lady of Lebanon Parish in Washington, D.C., joined in the nationwide Forty Days for Life campaign.

On Sunday, October 27, 2013, right after the Divine Liturgy, a group of "Pro-Lifers" went to a late-term abortion clinic in Germantown, Maryland, to witness against the killing of innocent babies. It was definitely a big step out of our comfort zone to pray on the open sidewalk beside the public thoroughfare, especially when we felt the chill of death in front of the clinic; but it felt right to go out and confront the evil with prayers of petition instead of ignoring the terrible reality of abortion. This was the first step towards a proactive involvement in defending life; indifference is no longer acceptable.

Our Lady of Lebanon Parish community also responded generously by donating baby furniture, diapers, wipes, and clothes, new and used, for the Pregnancy Crisis Center, where most women who change their mind about terminating their pregnancies receive much needed emotional support and financial help, along with some basic baby needs.

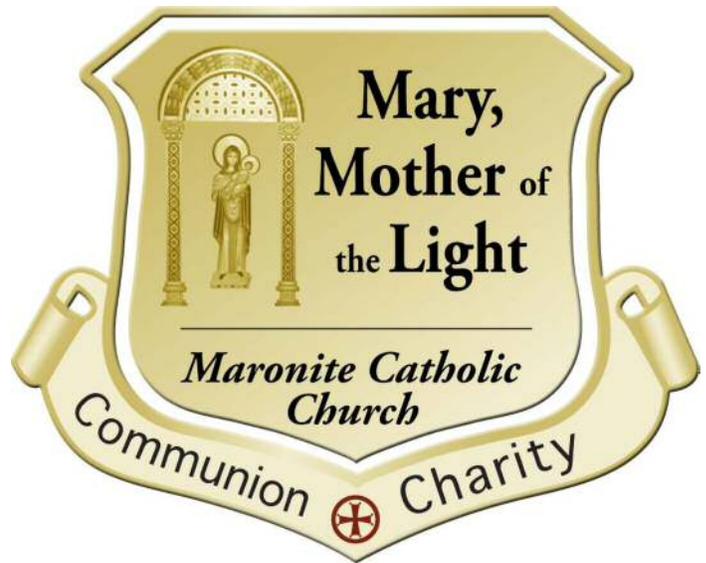
We pray that there will be a greater awareness among the Maronite faithful regarding the importance of our active role in the public square, defending life, volunteering our time to assist these women who think they have no other options, and praying for the end of abortion. We hope to see busloads of Maronites, especially young people, come from all over the country to participate in the March for Life on January 22, 2014 in Washington, D.C. □

Food For Thought

“God uses broken things. It takes broken soil to produce a crop, broken clouds to give rain, broken grain to give bread, broken bread to give strength. It is the broken alabaster box that gives forth perfume.”

Vance Havner

West Palm Beach, Florida *First Hafli*



by Pierre E. Azzi, Esq.,
MMOL Finance Committee Chairman

On Saturday, October 26, 2013, Mary Mother of the Light Church in Tequesta (Palm Beach County), Florida, held its first Hafli at its new location, in its new church hall and with its new priest, Fr. Alaa Issa. The Hafli was a huge success drawing parishioners and friends from a variety of backgrounds (Lebanese, American, Syrian, Egyptian, and more.) There was good live music, plenty of dancing and of course lots of Lebanese food. The event was a way to foster a greater sense of community, help maintain our heritage and also raise funds for the new church. In addition, it was a testimony that even a small community, in a new church can come together and put on a big, successful Hafli.

If you are or will be in the Palm Beach area, we invite you to celebrate the Divine Liturgy with us. For details about Mary Mother of Light Maronite Mission, please visit: www.marymotherofthelight.com or email: mmolchurch@gmail.com. □

You are to
give him the name
JESUS, because
he **WILL SAVE**
HIS PEOPLE
from their sins.

MATTHEW 1:21, NIV

Maronite Churches in Florida

The cold, snowy and dark days of winter will soon be upon our brothers and sisters who live in the north, and many of you seek refuge in the warmth of Florida during these months. Whether you are a “snowbird” escaping for a few weeks or a few months, a retiree moving permanently, or you are simply just moving to Florida, there is a chance you can find a Maronite Church not too far away. Over the past few decades the growth of the Maronite Church has been dramatic. There are now six Maronite Churches in Florida. So please, when you are in Florida for whatever reason, take time to join with other Maronites in celebrating the Divine Liturgy at one of our churches.

Miami



Our Lady of Lebanon Maronite Church

2055 Coral Way
Miami, FL 33145
Rev. Elie Saade, Pastor
Tel. 305-856-7449
Liturgical Schedule
Weekday Liturgy: 12:00 noon
Saturday Liturgy: 6:00 p.m. (in Spanish)
Sunday Liturgy: 11:00 a.m. (in English and Arabic)
Holy Days of Obligation: 8:00 p.m.
Website: www.ololmiami.org.

Palm Beach

Mary Mother of the Light Maronite Mission

46 Willow Road
Tequesta, Florida 33469
Rev. Alaa Issa
Office: 561-427-1331
Fax: 561-427-7210
Email: mmolchurch@gmail.com
Liturgical Schedule
Saturday Liturgy: 5:30 PM
Sunday Liturgy: 11:00 AM
Holy Days of Obligation: 7:15PM
Website: [Mary Mother of the Light](http://MaryMotheroftheLight.com)



Orlando



St. Jude Maronite Church

5555 Dr. Phillips Boulevard
Orlando, FL 32819
Rev. Bassam Saade, Pastor
Subdeacon Jack Manhire, Ph.D.
Tel. 407-363-7405
Liturgical Schedule
Holy Days of Obligation at 12:00 noon

Saturday Liturgy: 5:00 p.m.
Sunday Liturgy: 9:00 a.m. and 11:00 a.m.
Website: <http://saintjudechurch.org>.

Tampa

Mission of Saints Peter and Paul

6201 Sheldon Road
Tampa, FL 33615-3115
Rev. Antoine Kairouz, Administrator
Tel. 813-886-7413
Fax 813-885-6346

Liturgical Schedule
Sunday Liturgy: 11:30 a.m.
Holy Days of Obligation: 7:00 p.m.
Email: Maronitetampa@yahoo.com
Website: www.maronitetampa.com.



Jacksonville



Saint Maron Maronite Mission

7032 Bowden Road
Jacksonville, FL 32216
Rev. Elie Abi-Chedid, Pastor
Deacon Elias Shami
Tel. 904-448-0203
Email: frchedid@hotmail.com

St. Maron Church under construction.

Holy Days of Obligation: 7:00 p.m.
Website: www.stmaronjax.org.

Liturgical Schedule
Weekday Liturgy: 7:00 p.m.
Sunday Liturgy: 11:15 a.m.

Fort Lauderdale

Heart of Jesus Maronite Church

1800 N. E. 6th Court
Ft. Lauderdale, FL 33304

Chorbishop Michael Thomas, Administrator
Deacon John Jarvis

Liturgical Schedule
Weekday Liturgy: 12:00 noon
Saturday 4:00 p.m. (English);
Sunday 11:00 a.m. (Arabic, English);
Holy Days of Obligation: Vigil Mass at 7:30 p.m. and Holy Day at 12:00 p.m.
Email: heartofjesusfll@gmail.com;
Website: heartofjesus.org.



The Maronite Academy Inspiring Journey and Amazing Educational Trip to Lebanon

by Carolyn Aboubechara

As an active Maronite volunteer and parishioner of a new Maronite Church, Our Lady of the Rosary Church in Sacramento, Calif., I embarked on what turned out to be a life-changing journey to learn more about my religious denomination and my Lebanese roots through a program created by the "Maronite Foundation in the World" called "The Maronite Academy." The Foundation's President is Mr. Michel Eddé, Vice-President is Mr. Nehmat Frem, and the Administrative Director is Mrs. Hiam Boustani. The Executive Director of The Maronite Academy was Mrs. Nada Salem Abisamra, who is now the Director of the Christian Lebanese Foundation (CLF) in the U.S. and of "Project Roots" (<http://www.projectroots.net>), an endeavor which aims to help, free of charge, all Americans of Lebanese descent to connect with their roots and register their Vital Life Events to obtain status in Lebanon, in order to maintain the demographic and political power-sharing balance there.

The Maronite Academy has three major goals which complement those of Project Roots: 1) Introduce Lebanon to the youth of Lebanese immigrants; 2) Strengthen the relationship between Lebanese residents and the diaspora; 3) Improve the image of Lebanon in the new generation's minds in order to incite pride in their Lebanese roots, encourage them to register in Lebanon, and motivate them to encourage their friends and families to register.

Approximately one hundred applications were submitted in 2012 by young men and women of Lebanese descent from all over the world, aged between eighteen and thirty. About eighty students were selected to take, over the course of a five month period, five short online courses covering the following topics: "History of the Maronites," taught by Father Jad Kossaiy; "Challenges of the Christians in Lebanon," taught by Mr. Antoine Saad; "The Christian Sacred Sites in



Students from the Maronite Academy with His Beatitude Patriarch Rai.

Lebanon," taught by Father Fadi Kmeid; "Immigration: Opportunities and Losses," taught by Mr. Laurent Aoun; and "Lebanon, Lebanese Culture, and Spoken Lebanese Language," taught by Mrs. Nada Salem Abisamra. After completing the courses, forty students from the U.S., Canada, Australia, Brazil, Argentina, Mexico, Switzerland, and Egypt, were selected to go in July 2013, all expenses covered, on a two-week trip to Lebanon to discover its rich history (1,600 years old), customs and beauty, and to explore the Holy Valley where Maronites survived attacks for centuries in order to preserve their freedom and religious beliefs, despite the difficulty of life in those areas.

On the trip, we got a glimpse of how strong and dedicated the Maronites were for living in *Qadisha* Valley and for overcoming all obstacles and spreading the teachings of St. Maron to the whole world. We met the President, Mr. Michel Sleiman, who encouraged us to stay connected with and visit our country of origin; he spoke about a promising future for Lebanon. We also had the opportunity to meet the Maronite Patriarch, His Beatitude Bechara Peter Cardinal Rai, who was proud to see such dedicated and successful students, so proud of their Maronite roots, and he encouraged us to stay connected with our roots as well

and to talk about and spread the news about Lebanon and our Maronite heritage and history.

Our trip concluded with a beautiful and grandiose Gala/Graduation Ceremony hosted by Mr. Nehmat Frem and dedicated to us, the Maronite Academy Class of Georges Frem. About three hundred prominent Lebanese personalities were invited to this gala. We were all given Certificates of Completion and towards the end of the ceremony, I had the honor of presenting Mr. Michel Eddé with a small cedar tree the students and I had brought back with us from our trip to the Cedars as a gift of gratitude for the amazing experience the Maronite Academy and the Maronite Foundation in the World had provided us. Engraved on this cedar tree were all the students' names in addition to the names of the four people who volunteered to manage, guide and accompany us throughout our stay in Lebanon: Mrs. Nada Abisamra, Father Fadi Kmeid, Mr. Robert Matta, and Ms. Cynthia Abisamra. This tree represents a history of over 5,000 years, has a biblical significance by being referred to in the Bible approximately seventy-five times, and is a symbol of survival, which is what the Lebanese have done for hundreds of years.

(Continues on page 19)

Continued from page 18

The trip to Lebanon instilled in me the pride, passion, and motivation to be continuously involved in the Lebanese cause and to promote Lebanon as a country, as a holy land, and as an example of democracy and way of life. This was honestly an amazing educational and spiritual experience that had a major influence on my life. I now have a new family in Lebanon (the Maronite Foundation in the World), and one that is spread out all over the world (the Maronite Academy students and teachers).

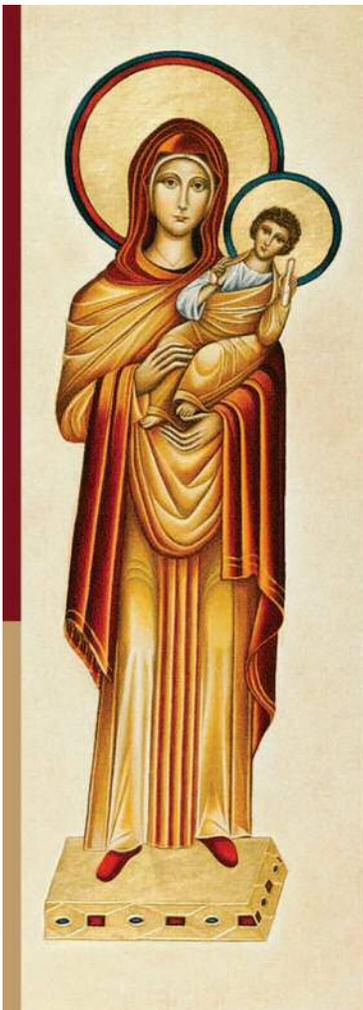
After spending two full weeks with individuals with Lebanese roots from all over the world, we developed a very close bond. We stay connected via our own Facebook group where we share stories, pictures, and life events.



I encourage every person of Lebanese descent to discover their roots and stay connected to their roots. A first step is to join the Maronite Youth Club on Facebook (www.facebook.com/groups/maroniteyouthclub/) and to check Project Roots'

website on a regular basis for opportunities to connect, learn and help.

I also encourage all people of Lebanese descent to register their marriages and children in order to help our Christian presence in Lebanon and to make sure that Lebanon remains a source of pride for us and "an island of democratic ideals, a message of freedom, a living example of coexistence and a symbol of pluralism for both the East and the West" (Pope John Paul II, "The Apostolic Exhortation: A New Hope for Lebanon). I will do my part and help this cause, and I encourage you to do so as well. ☐



This Christmas, Give a Gift that Makes a Difference

Are you looking for a special gift to give a family member or friend this Christmas?

Do you want to give a child or grandchild a gift that may help bring them closer to the Maronite Church and Community?

Here are a few options to consider:



\$500 Annual Membership in the Order of Saint Sharbel



\$5,000 Perpetual Membership in the Order of Saint Sharbel



\$1,000 Lifetime Membership in The National Apostolate of Maronites

With one of these Memberships, you will receive a special gift: The Christmas ornament from the Chapel of Our Lady of Lebanon sold by The Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, DC

For more information, please visit NAM at www.namnews.org and Order of Saint Sharbel at www.orderstsharbel.org



Atlanta, Georgia *All Saints Day*



St. Joseph Maronite Catholic Church in Atlanta, Georgia, celebrated All Saints Day during the Divine Liturgy. To promote learning of saints, the Maronite Christian Formation (MCF) students were asked to select their favorite saints and to learn the stories of their lives and how they served God. Each student was very creative and had fun dressing up as the saint he/she chose and presented their learning to the parish, including the saint's name, feast day, and patronage. □



Warren, Michigan *Parish's 25th Anniversary*



Chorbishop Alfred Badawi, Pastor of St. Sharbel Maronite Catholic Church in Warren, Mich., challenged his parishioners to actively thank God for all of His graces imparted over a quarter of century of parish life as they celebrated their 25th Anniversary on November 2, 2013.

“Your job tonight is not just to commemorate events,” Chorbishop Alfred said. “Each of you is here to fulfill a particular duty, to praise and thank God, and carry in your hearts some awareness of the grace that God has poured out through this parish for the last twenty-five years.”

At the anniversary celebration, Chorbishop Alfred recognized the history of this Maronite community in Michigan, along with other recognized speakers: Rev. John Paul Bassil, Naif Nasif, Leonard Thomas, Joumana Kayrouz, Paul Fayad and Debra Schrader, who shared inspirational and heart-warming stories. The weekend continued with Liturgical celebrations of thanksgiving and receptions. □