



# The Maronite Voice

*A Publication of the Maronite Eparchies in the USA*



Volume IX

Issue No. II

February 2013

## Lent 2013

*We Are Called Upon to Reflect on The Gift of Faith And To Do All That Is Possible To Increase It*

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ.

**L**ent is upon us. The entrance of Lent is Sunday February 10, 2013, and Ash Monday is the first week day. This Season of the Year, calls upon us to look deep into our hearts and to take an inventory on the relationship with our neighbors whom Jesus said: " we must love as ourselves".

A few days ago, I ran across the following words from Mother Theresa of Calcutta. I propose these words for your Lenten meditation:

"People are unreasonable, illogical, and self-centered ... Love them anyway.

If you do good, people may accuse you of selfish motives ... Do good anyway.

If you are successful, you may win false friends and true enemies... Succeed anyway.

The good you do today may be forgotten tomorrow ... Do good anyway.

Honesty and transparency make you vulnerable ... Be honest and transparent anyway.

What you spend years building may be destroyed overnight ... Build anyway.

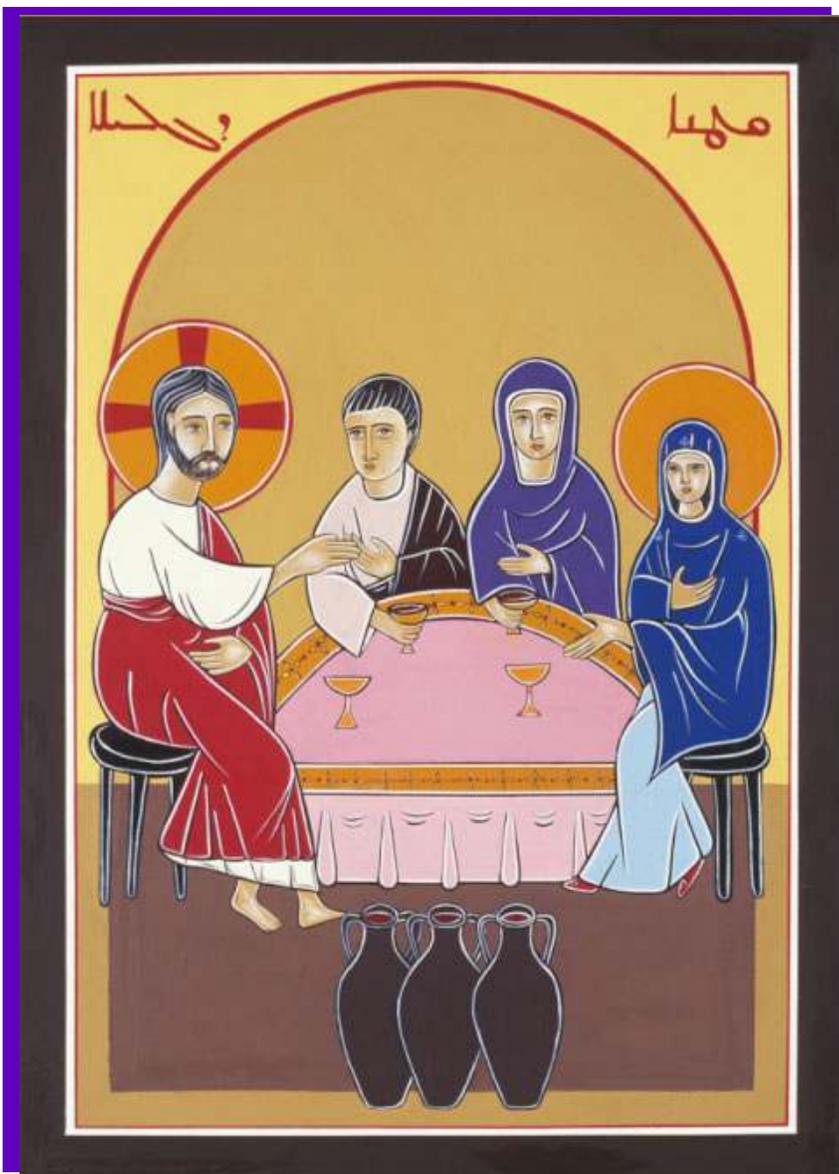
People who really want help may attack you if you help them ... Help them anyway.

Give the Lord the best you have and you may get hurt ... Give the world your best anyway.

In the final analysis, it is between you and God. It was never between you and them anyway. "

In this Year of Faith, declared by our Holy Father Pope Benedict XVI, we must look deep into our heart to see if we are far from our Lord. We are called upon to reflect on the gift of Faith and to do all that is possible to increase it; not only among ourselves but among anyone we happen to meet. If our Faith is strong, we are on our way to becoming the present day Apostles of Jesus. We must share and live our Faith, so that the presence of Christ can be felt in all what we say and do.

*(Continues on page 17)*



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

## Schedule of Bishop Robert Shaheen

### February 9, 2013

Jefferson City, Mo.

### February 10, 2013

Saint Maron Celebration, St. Raymond Cathedral, Saint Louis, Mo.

### February 15 - 18, 2013

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

### February 22 - 25, 2013

Enthronement of Bishop Marwan Tabet, Eparchy of Saint Maron, Montreal, Canada

### March 2, 2013

Deacon Ordination, Portland, Or.

### March 8, 2012

Lecture at Maronite Heritage Center, Saint Louis, Mo. □

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## Maronite Convention 2013

Sts. Peter and Paul Maronite Church

Tampa, Florida

July 3 - 7, 2013

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



## Eparchial Condolences

Reverend Anthony (George) Weiler, passed away on Friday, January 4, 2013, in Sun City, California, in the loving care of his niece, Judy Brown. Father Weiler was predeceased by his parents, Albert and Theresa, his brothers John James, David and Donald, and his sister Joan Bennett. The Funeral service took place on Saturday, January 19, 2013, at Our Lady of Mt. Lebanon Maronite Co-Cathedral, Los Angeles, California.

Father Anthony was ordained a priest on December 8, 1993, at Our Lady of the Cedars in Boston, Massachusetts. He was instrumental in the beginning work of The Maronite Monks of Adoration in Petersham, Mass., and has served a most helpful ministry in several parishes throughout the United States. He often was called upon to assist in sudden emergencies, and in every case he brought peace and stability.

Father Weiler spent the last several years of his priestly service at Saint Rafka Maronite Mission in Shelbourne, Vermont.

Condolences can be sent to Father Weiler's sister, Judy Brown, 27364 El Rancho Drive, Sun City, CA 92586 or to his brother, David W. Riemer, 17130 Ludlow Street, Granada Hills, CA 91344.

Bishop Gregory along with the clergy and faithful of the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn and Bishop Robert Shaheen along with the clergy and faithful of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon extend their heartfelt sympathy and the promise of our prayers to Father Weiler's family.

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

## Episcopal Election

On January 10, 2013, His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI appointed Fr. Marwan Tabet, M.L.M., as Bishop of the Eparchy of Saint-Maron de Montreal of the Maronites (Catholics 85,000, priests 20, religious 15), Canada. The Bishop-elect was born in *Bhamdoun*, Lebanon, in 1961, entered the Congregation of the Lebanese Maronite Missionaries in 1980, and was ordained to the priesthood in 1986. He succeeds Bishop Joseph Khoury, whose resignation from the pastoral care of the same eparchy the Holy Father accepted in accordance with canon 210 para. 1 of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches. □



Patriarch Rai and Bishop-elect Tabet.

## Fort Lauderdale, Florida Consecration of a New Church



Bishop Gregory Mansour celebrates the Liturgy of the Consecration of the Church. Chorbishop Thomas and Archbishop John C. Favalora, Bishop George Coleman and Bishop Frank Caggiano concelebrated.

by *Deacon John Jarvis*

On Sunday, January 6, 2013, the Feast of Epiphany, close to three hundred people attended the Divine Liturgy of the Consecration of the Church at the Heart of Jesus Maronite Church in Fort Lauderdale, Fla. Chorbishop Michael G. Thomas, Pastor, had celebrated the first Divine Liturgy exactly one year earlier, and it was with great anticipation that the people gathered on this bright and sunny day. Bishop Gregory Mansour was the main celebrant. Archbishop John C. Favalora, Bishop George Coleman, Bishop Frank Caggiano, Chorbishop Michael G. Thomas, Fr. Vincent Farhat, Msgr. Michael Soucker, Msgr. James Suchocki, Msgr. Steven Avila, Msgr. James Dixon, Fr. Pat O'Neill, Fr. Jorge Perales, Fr. Lazarus Govin, and Fr. Donald Guglione concelebrated. Deacons Andre Nasser, Simon Abi Nader, John Jarvis, and Victor Pimentel assisted. Msgr. Terence Hogan, Fr. Sam Najjar, Deacon Ian Taylor, and Mr. Ryan Saunders were the masters of ceremony.

The ceremony began with Bishop Gregory's knocking on the main door of the locked Church and his asking to enter. In his homily Bishop Gregory spoke of the joy of consecrating another new church. He personally thanked all the concelebrating bishops. He also asked the people to focus

on the Sacrament of Baptism during the "Year of Faith" as he taught how Pope Benedict XVI had spoken often of the importance of Baptism. In conclusion, Bishop Gregory thanked all who had made the day possible, including the inspiring choir.

After the homily Bishop Gregory, assisted by Chorbishop Michael G. Thomas and the other bishops, celebrated the Rite of Consecration. The Bishop sprinkled the faithful, the Church, and the altar following the blessing of the Epiphany water. He then anointed the door and the four walls of the church with the Sacred Chrism. Chorbishop Thomas incensed the walls and they were encircled with red ribbon. The Bishop blessed and anointed the altar with the Sacred Chrism and placed a relic into the altar. Women of the parish reverently placed the altar cloth on the newly consecrated altar, and members of the parish advisory board placed the candles and altar cross on the altar. The Divine Liturgy continued.

The Divine Liturgy was followed by a luncheon of Lebanese food prepared by the women of the Parish. For all those who prepared for this beautiful celebration it was a long and tiring day but one that will not be forgotten. It was the day their community of faith and a new church were truly born. □

# North Palm Beach, Florida Annual Eparchial Clergy Retreat

by Fr. Vincent Farhat

The Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn came together once again in North Palm Beach, Florida, for its annual Clergy Retreat January 14 - 18, 2013. Unlike last year, Mother Nature cooperated very well in bringing the clergy members without delay. The Most Reverend Carl Mengeling, Bishop Emeritus of Lansing, Michigan, was the Retreat Master.

Bishop Mengeling brought fifty-seven years of priestly service to the retreat where he focused on the Rite of Ordination that was bestowed upon each of us on our ordination day. "We are all part of God's *Fishing Company*," the Bishop reiterated time and time again, reciting prayers and rituals of the Maronite Ordination Rite, reminding us of this great invitation to which God has called us to be a part. He made the clergy more conscious of the meaning of priesthood that was conferred upon them: Priests are ordained for the service of the people, they are the vessels of election, and they are called into unity and fraternity with the Bishop and brother priests. These three ideas are what makes a parish flourish.

Bishop Mengeling also brought to the forefront of the retreat two very important ministries that Jesus conferred on his priests: Heralds of the Gospel and ministers of the Eucharist. The Words of God are alive and active, and what Jesus did then, He is doing right now. This is Scripture, the Bishop told us. What happened then is happening now. The Words of God are timeless and they will remain timeless until His second coming. Just as the fishing partners of Peter, Andrew, John and James depended on each other, the foundation of the Church also depends on God's *Fishing Company* to depend on one another along with their Bishop; to invite the faithful into the unity of the Church. The priests are disciples of Jesus at His invitation and when they accepted this invitation, Jesus commanded them to lay down their lives for His sheep. This is our discipleship.

Bishop Mengeling also reminded the clergy of three very important conditions in order to be a disciple of Jesus. First you must have the mind to be part of God's fishing company. As partners with God, one must believe in the owner of the fishing company. Reciting our Creed every day, we profess this belief in the Trinity. His Holiness Benedict XVI says that our faith is a gift and is always in jeopardy. One must remember that the Church is without sin, but the Church is not without sinners.

One must also have the heart - the source of where the will resides and the will is capable to love. The Bishop



continued saying that through conviction and trust the priest will be loyal to Jesus. Trust of the Word, of sanctification, and of the ministry are all key to God's *Fishing Company*.

The final condition is that of service. Bishop Mengeling assured us that this is the greatest time to be a priest and that the qualities of service are that you have "guts." Just as the twelve disciples began their ministry with adversity and misunderstanding, we too are facing our adversity and misunderstanding 2000 years later. But this is the time the *Fishing Company* is needed most if we follow the commands of Jesus by denying ourselves, taking up our cross and following Him, and humbling ourselves to the service of God.

A priest must also be a Eucharistic Priest. As the Blessed John Paul II has said, by being a Eucharistic Priest everything is possible. Through the priesthood, we are consecrated to bring the living Jesus into our lives. To make sacred the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ is not an option for the priesthood but it is a command. Jesus tells us at the last supper, "Do this in memory of me." The Eucharist is the center of a priest's life and we are commanded by Jesus to do just that.

The clergy of the Eparchy of Saint Maron, along with their Bishop Gregory Mansour, were blessed with the zeal and wisdom of Bishop Carl. This week he reminded each of us that we graciously accepted God's call to the priesthood and that we must commit ourselves to the very end with the same passion and zeal that we felt on our ordination day. At the final liturgy, Bishop Gregory recited three prayers from the Ordination Rite as each of us remembered vividly our call to God's *Fishing Company*. □



# Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon Diocesan Convocation 2013

by Fr. Abdullah  
Zaidan

The Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon would like to invite you to a special Diocesan Convention taking place April 4 - 7, 2013, in St. Louis, Missouri. In celebrating the Year of Faith 2012 - 2013, the theme will be "Aggiornamento: Evangelization, Renewal, and Re-Commitment." This theme reflects the goals of the Diocesan gathering, to bring the Church up to date, to re-commit ourselves to our Church and to renew our ties and our faith in God.

This will be a special gathering of all of the Diocesan clergy, religious and lay people, adults and youth. It concerns all of the Maronite people of the Diocese. It will be a time to discuss important topics about the Maronite faith and heritage and matters of interest to our life and our Church involvement.

The goal of the Diocesan convention has three dimensions: to preserve our communities, reach out to inactive Maronites and welcome new members. It will be an informative gathering that everyone is encouraged to attend as it concerns all of us. From the workshops and group sharing, we hope to come up with an action plan that will re-energize our communities all over the diocese. This Convocation could become the starting point for a new vision and mission.

The Diocesan Team is also conducting special surveys for everyone in the Eparchy in order to help us learn more about the functioning of our diocese and parishes, its present constitutions, its needs, its strengths and weaknesses and what can be done to ensure our future as we prepare to welcome a new bishop. A special Convocation Committee has been appointed to process the information gathered from the surveys. We would like to assure everyone that the survey answers will remain anonymous and will not be shared except in a general way to assist the work of the Convocation Committee. The results of the surveys will assist us in addressing the proper topics for the presentations as well as the questions for the group sharing.

We ask for everyone's participation. Please answer the call of the Diocesan Convocation, keep praying, and plan to attend the Diocesan Convocation. You can obtain a copy of the survey from the diocesan web site at [www.eparchy.org](http://www.eparchy.org). We look forward to seeing you all in St. Louis in April. □



# Cleveland, Ohio NAM Midwest Regional Convention



From left: Mike Naber, Samir Farah, Diane Maroun, Fr. Peter Karam, Fr. Tony Massad and Amine Harb.

by Marianne Dergham

The Parish of St. Maron in Cleveland, Ohio, had the honor of hosting the NAM 2012 Midwest Regional Convention from November 16 - 18, 2012. With over eighty attendees during the talks given by Father Peter Karam, Pastor, and his Associate, Father Tony Massad, and almost 500 attendees at the Grand Banquet, it was one of the most well attended, successful Midwest Regional Conventions with parishioners from Aliquippa, Pittsburgh, and New Castle, Penn.; Flint and Warren, Mich.; Buffalo, N.Y.; Houston Tex.; and Columbus, Fairlawn and Youngstown, Ohio.

NAM President Mr. Amine Harb from Orlando, Fla., NAM Executive Director Mr. Mike Naber from New York, Dr. Ray Hachem from Houston, Tex., and Mrs. Rose Sayhoun from Youngstown, Ohio, attended the convention.

During the Grand Banquet, Diane Maroun was presented with the Silver Massabki Award for her dedication, commitment, and support to St. Maron Church. At the farewell Liturgy, Mr. Amine Harb presented the Church with an Icon of the Blessed Massabki Brothers in appreciation for hosting the NAM Regional Convention. Following the Liturgy, a breakfast completely prepared and planned by the St. Maron Cleveland MYA was served.

The tireless efforts of the NAM committee, in particular Samir and Jeannie Farah, Co-chairs of the convention, combined with the hard work of countless volunteers truly made this a successful convention. We would especially like to thank Father Peter Karam and Father Tony Massad and all of the clergy members who were supportive throughout the entire process. We all look forward to 2015, when St. Maron Church hosts the National Convention. □

## Warren, Michigan *Christmas Recital*



by Charlotte Fortuna

On Sunday, December 9, 2012, Saint Sharbel Maronite Church in Warren, Michigan, held a moving Christmas Recital for parishioners and friends. Traditional Christmas hymns and carols were performed in Arabic, Syriac and English by the Adult and Children's Choirs under the direction of Mrs. Christianne Yasso-Bousho and Mrs. Sandy Harb. The concert was enjoyed by all who attended and helped to boost the true meaning of Christmas. Refreshments were served in the social hall following the concert. □

## Brooklyn, New York *New Year's Eve Celebration*

by Salma Vahdat

The concept of greeting each New Year with a prayer together with family and friends was continued by Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral Community in Brooklyn, N.Y. Families with children in tow assisted at Divine Liturgy and then proceeded to the Social Hall for the celebration.

The MYA of the Cathedral sponsored the event. The Hall was replete with a party atmosphere and the celebrants were primed for a fun and convivial evening. Delicious food was provided by Karam's Restaurant of Bay Ridge; music to keep the crowd moving was played by Amin Sultan and our own DJ, Georgio Malouf. The energy in the Hall was palpable as the dancers kept the beat going and everyone was in a party mood.

From the oldest to the youngest partygoer there was joy and the expectation that the New Year would bring us all a year of good health and peace to enjoy with our families and community. □

## Birmingham, Alabama *Youth Retreat*



by Wanda Elkhourie

On December 21 - 22, 2012, the Saint Elias Maronite Church in Birmingham, Alabama, had its first joint Maronite Youth Organization (MYO) and Maronite Young Adults (MYA) retreat in Cook Springs, Alabama. There were activities that both groups did together such as hiking to the top of the mountain, eating meals at the lodge, roasting s'mores by a bonfire, and Liturgy. Despite the busy schedule, time was set aside for each group to have its own activities. The twenty-one MYO members had spiritual discussions, a "question box" to try and stump Chorbishop Richard Saad, followed by a time for confessions. Games like Charades and Catch Phrase along with a Dirty Santa gift exchange were also part of the MYO activities.

The MYA started off with an icebreaker session discussing who we are and where we are going spiritually. After dinner, the MYA played America's favorite game show, Minute to Win It, where teams were split into two groups to compete for a six pack of Coca-Cola. Once the game was completed, the twenty-six MYA members split up into small groups for spiritual discussions followed by a whole group discussion on how our Maronite faith is important to us. Chorbishop Saad heard confessions to end the night. This retreat marked an important step to connecting the youth of Saint Elias Maronite Church today and for years to come. □

## Food For Thought

What does the Lord ask of us as we work for Christian unity?

To pray constantly, do justice, love goodness, and walk humbly with Him.

*Pope Benedict XVI's tweet from Sunday, January 20, 2013*

## Fort Lauderdale, Florida *Order Of Saint Sharbel Winter Retreat*

The Order of Saint Sharbel held its Annual Winter Retreat in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, on January 18 - 20, 2013. Chorbishop Michael Thomas and the parishioners of the newest parish in the Eparchy of Saint Maron, Heart of Jesus, hosted the retreat.

The oceanfront accommodations at the Sheraton Beach Hotel provided a welcome respite from the cold weather! Members from Boston, Fall River, and New Bedford, Massachusetts; Providence, Rhode Island; St. Louis, Missouri; Detroit, Michigan; Washington, D.C.; and Brooklyn, New York, attended.

The members gathered for morning and evening prayer and joined in a special liturgy commemorating the deceased members of the Order and deceased priests. Bishop Gregory Mansour, Chorbishop Joseph Kaddo, Chaplain, and Chorbishop Seely Beggiani, Rector of the Maronite Seminary, offered insightful and inspiring talks. It was very gratifying to hear about the progress of the Maronite seminarians and the anticipated ordinations for this year.

The Order of Saint Sharbel was formed with the goal of educating young men as priests and supporting retired priests who have served faithfully. The Order of Saint Sharbel sincerely thanks its Vice-President, Bernadette Shalhoub, Mrs. Jeanned'arc Lahoud (Chairperson of the event), and Chorbishop Michael Thomas and all the Parishioners of Heart of Jesus, who made them feel very welcome and offered the best in hospitality. □



### ***Effective Ways You Can Help Your Eparchy!***

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

#### ***Planned Giving: Consider Your Legacy***

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

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

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

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

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

#### **Tax-Smart Giving of Appreciated Stock or other Assets**

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

For more information on any or all of these options, please contact Stewardship Director John F. Kurey, Esq., MBA, at 718-237-9913 or 314-231-1021; or by e-mail at [johnkurey@yahoo.com](mailto:johnkurey@yahoo.com) or at [maroniteswest@yahoo.com](mailto:maroniteswest@yahoo.com). □

**THE ORDER  
OF  
SAINT SHARBEL**



**Perpetual Members**

★ **Mr. Pierre Azzi**

*Mary, Mother of the Light Mission  
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**Annual Members**

★ **Mrs. Dianne E. Yamin**

★ **Mr. William A. Asmar**

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

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 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 10<sup>th</sup> Street

**Flint, Michigan**  
*Subdeaconate Ordination*



Fr. Paul Tarabay leads Joseph Pavlovich in procession during his ordination.

**O**n Sunday, November 11, 2012, Chorbishop Alfred Badawi ordained Joseph M. Pavlovich as Lector, Cantor, and Subdeacon at Our Lady of Lebanon Maronite Church in Flint, Michigan. Father Paul Tarabay, Pastor, concelebrated. Deacon Marty Rachid, Subdeacons Earl Matte and Elias Aouad assisted.

In his homily, Chorbishop Alfred told Joseph “Your ministry as a subdeacon must be consistent; and everything you do must be related to the Word of God that you proclaim.” He continued by saying “...the church asks of you dedication in your personal commitment to Jesus Christ and to His Church. She asks for your fidelity to prayer. She asks you to love Jesus Christ, His Church and His Mother Mary.” Before distributing the Holy Eucharist to the attending faithful, Father Paul presented Joseph to Chorbishop Alfred for ordination. Following his ordination subdeacon Joseph was asked to distribute communion to his family and friends. After the liturgy a reception luncheon was held in the parish hall.

Joseph and his wife, Lily, have been married forty years and have been members of Our Lady of Lebanon Church in Flint since 1973. He has a BA degree from the University of Michigan and a Masters degree in Guidance and Counseling with a minor in Computer Science. He taught for thirty-five years in the Flint Public Schools Magnet program. He received the Bridge Builder Award in 1987 from the U.A.W./GM Quality education program for enhancing cooperation between industry and education. In 1989 he was named IBM Teacher of the Year.

Following his retirement in 2006 and a terrible accident, Joseph realized that in spite of his accomplishments, something was lacking in his life. That is when he became aware of God calling him to a closer relationship. After several conversations with his parish priest and others, Joseph applied and was accepted into the Subdeaconate program.

Currently Subdeacon Joseph is enrolled in the formation program through Sienna Heights College. □

# Sacramento, California *Tribute to the Mother of God*



by Carolyn Aboubechara

**O**ur Lady of Sacramento, Sacramento, Calif., celebrated its new year and the Feast of the Mother of God on the first of January<sup>1</sup> where all the Aramaic churches in Sacramento gathered to offer praises and thanksgiving to God for allowing us to have here a shrine for the Mother of God, Our Lady of Sacramento. Father Mouannes and the Maronite Catholic community welcomed Fr. Boulos and the choir of the Chaldean church in Hazel, Our Lady of the Perpetual Help. He introduced their choir to the community and they sang two praises to the Mother of God in Chaldean. After that Fr. Mouannes welcomed Fr. Abdel Massih who came with his choir from the Syriac Orthodox church to offer two hymns in Syriac to the Mother of God. The choir of Our Lady of the Rosary in Carmichael, the home of Our Lady of Sacramento, offered two special hymns in Syriac. One is called "*Shlom Lech Mariam*," which means "Hail Mary" and the other, "*Lmariam yoldat alloho*," which means "Mary Mother of God." The evening continued with a Maronite Liturgy offered for the City of Sacramento, for the fiscal problems of our nation, and for peace in the Middle East especially in Syria, Iraq, Egypt, Palestine, Jordan, Lebanon and many other places in the Middle East. □

## Food For Thought

"There is still time for endurance, time for patience, time for healing, time for change.

Have you slipped? Rise up.

Have you sinned? Cease.

Do not stand among sinners, but leap aside."

*St. Basil*

<sup>1</sup> **Editorial note:** The Maronite Church celebrates the Feast of the Circumcision of the Lord on January 1. However, the Latin Church celebrates the Feast of Mary, the Mother of God on January 1.

## Schedule of Bishop Gregory Mansour

### February 2 - 3, 2013

Pastoral Visit to Our Lady of Mercy Maronite Church, Worcester, Mass.

### February 9 - 10, 2013

Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral, St. Maron Feast Day celebration and honoring of Bishop Stephen Hector Doueihy.

### February 15 - 17, 2013

Pastoral Visit to Saint Anthony Maronite Church, Lawrence, Mass.

### February 22 - 24, 2013

Enthronement of Bishop Marwan Tabet, Eparchy of Saint Maron, Montreal, Canada

### March 2 - 3, 2013

Pastoral Visit to Saint John Maron, Williamsville [Buffalo], N.Y., and ordination of Antoine Kairouz to Subdeacon

### March 6, 2013

Rutgers University Syriac Library, New Brunswick, N.J.

### March 8 - 10, 2013

Pastoral Visit to Saint Sharbel Mission, Raleigh, N.C., and to the Maronite Community in Charlotte, N.C.

### March 12 - 14, 2013

Catholic Relief Services Board of Directors Meeting, Baltimore, Md.

### March 16 - 17, 2013

Pastoral Visit to St. Joseph Church, Waterville, Me., and Silver Anniversary of Fr. Larry Jensen

### March 18 - 19, 2013

Visit to Our Lady of Lebanon Seminary and Catholic University Trustees meeting, Washington, D.C. □

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

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Pictures must be original. Digital pictures must be in "JPG" format and in high resolution. The Maronite Voice is also available online, in PDF format, at [www.stmaron.org](http://www.stmaron.org). □

# The Maronite Funeral Service

## *He had Made Peace Along the Whole Road so that it Can Now be Traveled Without Fear*

by Fr. Armando Elkhoury  
Eichstätt, Germany

**T**he *Book of Accompaniment* is the oldest extant Maronite document which preserves the funeral rites celebrated by the Maronite Church.<sup>2,3</sup> Then Chorbishop Hector Y. Doueihi, now Bishop Emeritus of the Maronite Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn, explains in the introduction,

“The title and the concept it contains] indicate that the dead, who have ended their journey in this life, are starting another journey in the life beyond. According to the ancient spiritual vision of the early Syriac Churches, the passage to eternal life is hampered by obstacles and dangers. The departed need special support and guidance on their journey. Thus, the funeral rites are a complex of psalms, hymns, Scripture readings and prayers that ‘accompany’ them on this ‘other’ journey. The texts implore the ‘company’ of the Lord and his mysteries for them, and pray for protection and safety on their journey. The funeral rites, are, therefore, rites of ‘accompaniment’ which are celebrated on the road as one begins the journey to new life.”<sup>4</sup>

Not only do the departed need special support and guidance on their journey, but the living, who mourn the death of their loved ones and are traveling on the same road of faith, seek a message of hope and consolation as well. <sup>5</sup>Jacob of Sarug

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<sup>2</sup> Book of *Ginnazat*, Order of Christian Funerals According to the Rites of the Maronite Antiochene Church, Diocese of Saint Maron, USA, office of Liturgy, San Antonio, Texas 1988, 8. To download a pdf copy of this text go to [www.thehiddenpearl.org/useful-resources/maronite-liturgies](http://www.thehiddenpearl.org/useful-resources/maronite-liturgies)

<sup>3</sup> The noun “accompaniment” is obviously derived from the verb to accompany. It should be understood from its verbal root to mean: “to go along or in company with, join in action: *To accompany a friend on a walk.*” This explanatory endnote is needed because when one looks up the word “accompaniment” in a modern dictionary, one finds the following two definitions: “1. something incidental or added for ornament, symmetry, etc. and 2. Music. a part in a composition designed to serve as background and support for more important parts.” Neither conveys the meaning of a person accompanying another. Perhaps a better English word should be chosen. However, this is not the task at hand. Therefore, I will stick to the word “accompaniment” that Doueihi had chosen to use.

<sup>4</sup> Book of *Ginnazat* 8

<sup>5</sup> Book of *Ginnazat* 1

(ca. 451 - 521), a prolific Syriac Church Father and known as the Flute of the Holy Spirit, provides his readers with such a message. He teaches that it is none other than Jesus Christ who accompanies the deceased and the living on this road traveled by all grudgingly and with fear. The objective of this brief column<sup>6</sup> is to share with the reader this powerful insight which Jacob draws from his main source of pastoral, theological, spiritual and poetical insight, i.e., the Bible. Furthermore, this column’s other goal is to encourage the interpretation of the three stations of the Maronite funeral rites, or better yet the three stations of the *accompaniment rites*, in light of Jacob’s explanation.

### *The Three Stations of the Accompaniment Rites*

There are three stations in the Maronite funeral service.<sup>7</sup> In the days before funeral homes, the accompaniment service started at the home of the deceased, i.e., the first station. The body of the loved one is carried in procession out of his house to the Church while psalms and hymns are being sung. At the second station, i.e., the Church, the funeral service is celebrated. This service comprises of Psalms and prayers full of hope, thus easing the pain of the mourners by reminding them that Jesus Christ has defeated death. The whole Church shouts with St. Paul, “Death is swallowed up in victory. Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?” (1 Corinthians 15:45b-55) and with Hosea before him, “Shall I deliver them from the power of Sheol? shall I redeem them from death? Where are your plagues, O death! where is your sting, Sheol!” (Hosea 13:14). After the celebration of the funeral service<sup>8</sup>, the procession continues with psalms and hymns to the third and last station, the grave. According to the Gospels, Jesus performed many miracles.

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<sup>6</sup> I based this column on a section (pages 78-85) of a dissertation written in 1972 by Michael Damon Guinan, O.F.M. and entitled “The Eschatology of James of Sarug.” Guinan does not discuss the Maronite funeral service and/or its stages and does not insinuate that there is a connection between it and the thoughts of Jacob of Sarug. I am encouraging an interpretation of the three stages based on Guinan’s explanation of Jacob of Sarug.

<sup>7</sup> I am not certain how many Maronites in the United States are aware of this service. To read it, one may go to [www.thehiddenpearl.org/useful-resources/maronite-liturgies](http://www.thehiddenpearl.org/useful-resources/maronite-liturgies) to download a pdf copy in English

<sup>8</sup> This is not the celebration of the Eucharist. The Divine Liturgy is celebrated three days after the funeral service to “relieve” and be reminded of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The fourth Gospel concludes with the statement, "There are also many other things that Jesus did, but if these were to be described individually, I do not think the whole world would contain the books that would be written" (John 21:25). However, the Gospel authors chose to list three resurrection miracles that Jesus had performed: Jairus's daughter (Mark 5:21-43; Luke 8:40-56; Matthew 9:18-26), the widow's son (Luke 7:11-17) and Lazarus (John 11:1-44). These three miracles form the basis of Jacob of Sarug's powerful pastoral insight in which light the three stations of the Maronite accompaniment rites could be interpreted. Jesus is present and acts with loving compassion to the deceased by restoring them to life, and to the living by accompanying them through their sorrow and finally by reuniting them with their loved ones.

### ***Jesus' Coming to the House The First Station***

The miracle stories of Jairus' Daughter and the Woman with a Hemorrhage are undoubtedly intertwined (Mark 5:21-43; Luke 8:40-56; Matthew 9:18-26). However, my intention is to extract that which relates to the subject at hand, i.e., how Jesus is present in the three station accompaniment service. Jairus comes to Jesus asking him to heal his dying daughter, who was about twelve years old (Luke 8:42). On his way to answer the plea of this official of the synagogue, his journey gets interrupted. Jesus heals the woman with a hemorrhage. Meanwhile, the twelve year old daughter of Jairus dies. A very sad moment in the life of her parents, relatives and friends. How many people in the world suffer such tragedies? Weren't young lives plucked out not too long ago in Sandy Hook Elementary School in Connecticut? How can any mournful parent be consoled at such a moment?

Jairus receives the news, "Your daughter is dead; do not trouble the teacher any longer" (Luke 8:49b). Like any parent, Jairus' life was shattered. His only child is no longer. Death, the greatest evil of all evils, had swallowed and devoured her. Who can rescue her? Is Jesus so powerless against death that he should no longer be bothered? (Luke 8:49). These, of course, are words of hopelessness and unbelief. Jesus does not wait for Jairus or any one else to utter a word. He takes the first step in consoling this sorrowful father, "Do not be afraid; just have faith and she will be saved" (Luke 8:50b). Jesus accompanies this mournful parent to his home where his daughter lies motionless, but not for long. The ever flowing and unceasing Fountain of Life holds the child by the hand and says, "Child, arise! Her breath returned and she immediately arose. He then directed that she should be given something to eat" (Luke 8:54b-55). Luke tells us, "Her parents were astounded..." (Luke 8:56a).

### ***Jesus Accompanying the Procession The Second Station: Procession - Church - Procession***

The second station corresponds to the resurrection miracle that Jesus performed at the gate of the city of Nain (Luke

7:11-17). A man, who had died, was being carried out. He was the only son of a widow. Luke does not tell us that the dead man was being taken to be buried. However, the meaning is implied. Perhaps, Luke does not give his reader this detail because of that which Jesus is about to do.

Death of a loved one is always difficult to bear. However, our hearts ache most when a mother has to bury a child, regardless of its age. It may be a fourteen-month old infant or a forty-eight year old man. The mother's reaction is always the same. She feels that her life has ceased when the apple of her eye died, and would, in a heart beat, give up not only her life, but also her entire being for anyone who would bring her child back to life. This woman at the gate of Nain is such a woman. She is powerless and the large crowd that accompanies her and her dead son is impotent as well.

The most Compassionate, the most merciful, the most loving, the most forgiving, the Holy One, the Strong One, the Immortal One saw her and was moved with pity! He acts immediately to console her saying, "Do not weep" (Luke 7, 13). These simple but powerful words must have immediately soothed her inconsolable heart. The One who created the world by His Word now commands the dead person, "Young man, I tell you, arise!" (Luke 7, 13b). His life-giving word breathes life into a corpus of dust just as He had breathed life into the first lump of dust to create Adam into his image and likeness (Genesis 1:26a, Genesis 2:7). Jesus restores this young man's life and reunites him with his mother. (Luke 7: 15).

### ***The Good Shepherd Calling his Sheep The Third Station: the Grave***

The last station of the Maronite accompaniment service is at the grave, where the deceased is laid to rest. The grave is, in my opinion, a symbol of absolute separation between the living and dead. However, through the eyes of faith, one plainly sees that Jesus is present there too, for he accompanies the deceased and the living on their most grievous journeys just as he did with Lazarus and his sisters Mary and Martha (John 11:1-44). Lazarus, Jesus' friend, was laid to rest in a grave four days before Jesus arrived to his friend's village, Bethany. John tells us that many came to comfort Mary and Martha. They seem not to have been consoled until Jesus' arrival. The One who is "the resurrection and the life" (John 11:25) is the only One who can console. Jesus accompanies the sisters and the crowd to the grave. There, He faces the grave and cries out in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" (John 11:43). What happens next?

*(Continues on page 18)*

## ***Baptism – First Sacrament of Vocation***

by Deborah A. Keenan

It seems as if the things I'm searching for aren't always in plain sight. Recently, I reached for something I could neither see nor touch. As one might expect, most of what was on that closet shelf rained down on my head and all over the floor.

Fuming, I kicked at the pile and then crouched down to deal with the mess. Unraveling a tangle of scarves and mittens, I unearthed the corner of a worn blue cardboard box. It had been so long since I'd seen that box that I almost didn't recognize it as mine, but as the only resident of the house, I knew it had to be. Curious, I opened the lid. Under some tissue paper was a tiny white cotton dress, the garment in which I'd been baptized as an infant.

As I lifted the delicate garment from its container, I had the impression of touching the past, coming into contact with an event of which I have no personal memory. Whatever I know of my Baptism I have heard from relatives or seen in snapshots, but here in my hands was a most intimate reminder of the day that will always give direction to my life.

I sat down amidst the jumble of things from the shelf to examine the little dress. As I gently touched the fabric, it came to me that I'm incredibly grateful that someone brought me to the baptismal font, to Jesus and to the Church.

I suspect that, like me, many of us who were baptized as children don't reflect often enough on the meaning of our own Baptisms. We hear the words and see the actions when we witness the rite for babies and when adults and children celebrate the sacraments of initiation at Easter, but we have put "on the shelf" the reality that we "share in the priesthood of Christ, in his prophetic and royal mission" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, #1268). Some of us may even think that Baptism is about the remission of Original Sin and nothing more.

At the font we become part of the Body of Christ and receive the meaning and mission of our Christian lives. We must claim this for ourselves because the way we live will flow from our acceptance. Jesus models this for us when he comes to John to be baptized. The Gospel of Mark (1:9-11) records the baptism of Jesus as his entry into ministry. The other Gospels share similar accounts (Matthew 3:13-17; Luke 3:21-22; John 1:29-34), all noting the appearance of the Holy Spirit and the presence of the voice of God. By his example, the sinless Jesus invites us to be baptized into the loving relationship of the Trinity and to take on his life of service.

Baptism, then, is everyone's first sacrament of vocation. Each of us will express this in different callings (ordained clergy, married, single or vowed religious), but we all begin at the font. I discovered this for myself when I was asked to speak to adults about the sacraments of vocation. As a single woman, I had information to relate about Marriage and Holy

Orders, but no personal experiences to share about living my life within these two sacraments. I needed to clarify for myself how I too have a vocation and a place in the mission of the Church.

In searching around "on the shelf" for my identity, my own Baptism hit me on my head! The Vatican II document *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church* proclaims that the laity, through Baptism and Confirmation, are appointed by Christ to bring the Church into areas and situations particular to our lives so that we become the salt of the earth (#33). The Council also states in the *Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity* that our right to be apostles springs from our relationship with Christ as the head of the Body, and with that comes the duty to act as priest, prophet and king in our own circumstances (#3). *Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord*, a postconciliar resource from the U.S. bishops, builds on those earlier works to clarify that the laity and the ordained are of "one mind" in the Body of Christ and so both "are ordered to one another and thus are intimately related" (p. 24).

# When were you baptized? What do you know or remember about that event?

# How often do you reflect on the meaning of your Baptism? What difference has being baptized made in your life?

# How will you make a more intentional effort to live out your baptismal call to be priest, prophet and king?

What are we called to do as members of the baptized priesthood? How can our mutuality with the ordained priesthood be expressed?

• **PRIEST:** Be people of prayer, not only at the weekend liturgy, but also every day. Choose a personal prayer practice that you can do faithfully, and the quality of your prayer will be enriched when you pray in community. We turn to our clergy to offer our needs to God in prayer, and they need us for prayer support as well. Send a priest or deacon a note letting him know that you're praying specifically for him. Encourage others to join you.

• **PROPHET:** Be people who proclaim the gospel and, as St. Francis of Assisi said, "If necessary, use words." We Catholics have traditionally been a little shy about personal evangelization. Our baptismal garments aren't meant to be left "on the shelf" when we're outside of the Church community. We're called to serve with the mind and heart of Jesus at school and in the workplace, and so be prophets in action. (Continues on page 20)

## The Story of A Vocation



through Bishop Gregory Mansour, called me to serve His Church in the United States of America, in the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn.

A year ago, I came to the Maronite Seminary of Our Lady of Lebanon in Washington D.C., where I studied English at the Catholic University of America. Last summer, I went back to Syria where His Excellency Bishop Elias Sleiman, the Bishop of the Eparchy of *Lattakia*, ordained me to the Diaconate. I came back to Washington, D.C., to continue my studies. In December of 2012, I went back again to Syria, but this time, it was to offer my life on the altar of the Lord. On December 29, 2012, a few days after the birth of our Lord, the Eternal High Priest, I was born again in my hometown, but this time, as a priest of Jesus Christ.

This ordination was a source of joy and hope in the hearts of the Maronites and of the Christians in the region of my hometown. The ongoing war that the people of Syria are suffering these days has weighed enormously on them and has put them in a desperate state. This ordination has given them a light of hope and joy especially during that Christmas season.

I say that I was born again into the priesthood of Jesus Christ, because the priesthood ordination is not the final goal, but it is the new step in the way to God towards holiness, our ultimate goal.

My vocation was not easy, and was hard in a time where the war is devouring my country and the Christians of the Middle East. It is a time where the Church of God faces many challenges. Today, I am here in America living in a new culture and speaking a foreign language, to serve and be the priest that God's providence has led me to be. I ask you, as I and every Maronite priest ask in the beginning of the Divine Liturgy, to "Pray to the Lord for me," so the Lord may accept the offerings of my hands and have mercy on us all. □

by *Father Alaa Issa (newly ordained priest)*

I was born in a small town in Syria on February 20, 1984. My faithful family raised me up in the love of God and the church. I have three brothers and one sister. My vocation grew with time, and I walked in the path that I believe God has called me to, that is to serve his people. He called me to teach, to sanctify and to lead. I had not planned my path, but I followed God's grace and trusted in His providence.

In 2004 Bishop Massoud Massoud, Bishop of the Maronite Eparchy of *Lattakia*, Syria, sent me to the Seminary of Saint Anthony of Padua in Lebanon, where I completed the program of priestly formation, acquiring an education in philosophy and theology and I grew in spirituality and was formed pastorally. After my Subdiaconate ordination in 2009 I served in my Eparchy of *Lattakia*, where I was formed in the service of the people of God in my hometown and in the land where the Christians have lived for two thousand years, and where our Maronite Church has been formed. Then God,

### Prayer For Priestly Vocations

Father, in every generation You provide ministers of Christ and the Church.

We come before You now, asking that You call forth more men to serve our eparchies in the ministerial priesthood. Give us priests who will lead and guide Your holy people gathered by Word and Sacrament.

Bless us with priestly vocations so that we can continue to be a truly Eucharistic Church, strengthened in our discipleship of Jesus Christ, Your Only Son.

Raise up, we pray, men who are generous in their service, willing to offer their lives and all their gifts for Your greater glory and for the good of Your people. We make our prayer in the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, through Christ, our Lord.  
Amen.



## Lenten Observances 2013

The Most Reverend Bishops Robert Shaheen and Gregory Mansour have issued the following Lenten guidelines for the Maronites of the United States:

- ★ All Maronites who are physically capable are to **abstain from meat** on Ash Monday (**February 11**) and all Fridays of Lent.
- ★ Ash Monday and the Great Friday of the Crucifixion are also days of **fasting**. Fasting in the Maronite Church involves eating and drinking nothing at all (except water and medicine) from midnight until noon. The rest of the day normal meals can be taken but without meat. All Maronites who are physically capable are to fast on these two days.

### Distribution of Ashes



All parish priests are to bless and distribute **ashes** on Ash Monday during the celebration of the Divine Liturgy as indicated in our liturgical books. This ceremony may not be celebrated on the vigil of Ash Monday (Cana Sunday). For the convenience of some faithful of the

Latin Church who may come to Mass at a Maronite Church on their Ash Wednesday, ashes that were blessed on Monday may be given to them after the Mass. However, ashes are not to be blessed again on this day.

### Devotion of Lenten Fridays

All parish priests are to celebrate the **Benediction with the Cross** every Friday of Lent except for the Great Friday of the Crucifixion. This service may be preceded by other popular devotions such as Evening Prayer (*Ramsho*), Stations of the Cross or even the Divine Liturgy. Benediction with the Blessed Sacrament should not take place on Fridays of Lent.

### Personal Devotion

Clergy, religious and laity who wish to observe the more traditional Maronite practice of fasting and abstinence are encouraged to do so. That practice is summarized in the following, taken from the Synod of Mt. Lebanon (1736): *Every weekday of Lent (Monday through Friday) is a day of fasting and abstinence from meat and dairy products (eggs, butter, milk, etc.) Fasting involves eating and drinking nothing at all (except water and medicine) from midnight until noon. The rest of the day normal meals can be taken, but without meat or dairy products. Dairy products are excluded because they are animal byproducts. Saturdays and Sundays are exempt from fasting and abstaining, as are the following four feast days: St. Maron - February 9, The 40 Martyrs - March 9, St. Joseph - March 19 and the Annunciation - March 25.* □

## Scholarships Available Aitaneet Foundation

Each year the Aitaneet Foundation, located in Cleveland, Ohio, awards scholarships to applicants of Lebanese Christian descent. Applicants must be of Lebanese Christian descent, a 2013 graduate of an accredited secondary school, and accepted to an accredited post secondary education institution.

This year the following Scholarships will be awarded:

- \$2,000 Aitaneet Foundation Scholarship
- \$1,000 Thomas & Mary Shaia Scholarship
- \$1,000 Edward Nahra Scholarship

Selection will be based on academic achievement, extracurricular involvement, financial need, and service to school, church, and community. Completed applications must be postmarked no later than April 20, 2013. Recipients will be notified prior to June 7, 2013.

For applications and guidelines, please go to [www.aitaneet.com](http://www.aitaneet.com) and click on the scholarship icon. All applications are evaluated by an independent committee of educators. For any questions, call Victor Shaia at 216-621-0328.

The Aitaneet Foundation was established in 2000 by the Aitaneet Brotherhood Association as an independent non-profit charitable corporation to promote charitable, educational, and humanitarian endeavors. Its Tax Id is 34-1928941 and the mailing address is PO Box 93234, Cleveland, Ohio 44101.

## From the Book Shelf

*The Maronite Icons, Saints of the Maronite Church*: constitutes the second volume of Maronite Icons that have been painted by the Maronite Archbishopric in Nicosia, Cyprus. It contains a collection of icons that illustrate the most revered saints in our Maronite Church. The book is composed of four parts:

- ★ **Part One** presents icons depicting Old Testament figures who prepared for the coming of the Messiah
- ★ **Part Two** presents icons depicting evangelists, saints and apostles of the First Church
- ★ **Part Three** is dedicated to the icons of the most venerated saints in the Maronite Church
- ★ **Part Four** is an artistic reproduction of the most important icons of the Rabbula Gospel

*The Maronite Icons* (both volume one and volume two) are available for \$50 each volume plus \$10 shipping each.

To order your copy (ies) please write to:  
Saint Maron Publications  
4611 Sadler Road  
Glen Allen, Virginia 23060

## Maronite Servants in Sydney



Sister Therese Maria, Maronite Servant of Christ the Light, gave a presentation at the Saint Charbel's iSeek Camp for teens in Sydney, Australia, on January 19, 2013, while on her home visit. The topic was "Goodness Gracious Me: Everything is Grace" with an emphasis on understanding the definition of grace and practical ways to grow in grace through a daily prayer life, frequenting the mysteries, daily reading of the Word of God and the lives of the saints. iSeek Camp is a program to help teens encounter Christ in new and meaningful ways through social and spiritual activities. Sister Therese Maria will be joined by Mother Marla Marie in Sydney during the first two weeks of February to offer retreats and vocation efforts. Readers can follow their mission on the blog [RadiateHisLight.blogspot.com](http://RadiateHisLight.blogspot.com), updated weekly. □

## Flint, Michigan Christmas Pageant



On Sunday, December 23, 2012, thirteen children presented "A Christmas Pageant" to the parish of Our Lady of Lebanon in Flint, Michigan. The children

were clothed in costumes of the period of Jesus' birth. The stage was set with a manger in front of a backdrop of Bethlehem created from silk materials, along with painted silhouettes of animals. Eight children accompanied the Christmas Carols on their instruments, finishing with a song; "Happy Birthday Jesus, it's all about you."

Following the pageant, the children of the parish had breakfast with St. Nicholas, sat on his lap and told him what they wanted for Christmas, all in a beautiful Christmas setting.

The hard work of many volunteers was obvious in the quality of the performance, backdrop and decorations. The event was successful and enjoyable for all ages. □

## Newtown Square, Pennsylvania Christmas Pageant



by Lillian Shahade

On Sunday, December 23, 2012, the children of St. Sharbel Maronite Church in Newtown Square, Penn., gathered together to re-enact the birth of the Christ Child. Even though the pageant play is written and followed each year, it is always a wonder to behold the children acting out the parts of Mary, Joseph, Herod, the Wise Men and all the angels and shepherds. Each year some of the children are very reluctant to take part, but once the rehearsals start, they take a very active part. □



## A Big Thank You

The Maronite Voice gratefully acknowledges the generous donation of \$1000 from the Most Reverend Carl F. Mengeling, Bishop Emeritus of the Catholic Diocese of Lansing, Michigan.

Bishop Mengeling was the Retreat Master for the Eparchy of Saint Maron's annual clergy conference held in North Palm Beach, Fla., January 14 -18, 2013. □

# Catholic College Influences Choice to Become Nun, Brother

by Sr. Mary Ann Walsh,  
USCCB Department of Communications

Catholic education in high school and especially in college stands out as a significant factor in men and women choosing to enter a religious order, according to an annual survey of Sisters and Brothers who recently professed perpetual vows. The survey also found an increase in Asians, particularly Vietnamese, choosing religious life in the U.S.

The data are found in "New Sisters and Brothers Professing Perpetual Vows in Religious Life," a report on a survey conducted by the Georgetown University-based Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA). The survey was commissioned by the U.S. Bishops' Secretariat of Clergy, Consecrated Life and Vocations. It can be found at [www.usccb.org/consecratedlife](http://www.usccb.org/consecratedlife).

Researchers surveyed religious who professed perpetual vows in 2012, reaching a total of 108 sisters and twenty four brothers, a response rate of 85 percent of the 156 potential members of the Profession Class of 2012 identified to CARA by their religious superior.

Major findings include the following:

- The average age of religious of the Profession Class of 2012 is 39. Half are 37 or younger. The youngest responding sister is 23; the oldest 66. Eight women professed perpetual vows at age 60 or older. Among brothers, the youngest is 25 and the oldest, 62; two professed perpetual vows at 60 or older.
- Over two-thirds (69 percent) of the class identify as white, nearly one in six (15 percent) identifies as Asian, and almost one in ten (8 percent) identifies as Hispanic. In general the Class of 2012 has a larger percentage of Asians and much lower percentage of Hispanics than the percentage of Asians and Hispanics found in the U.S. Catholic population at large. About two percent of U.S. Catholics are Asian and at least a third are Hispanic.
- Most (71 percent) were U.S.- born. Of those born outside the U.S., the most common country of origin is Vietnam (8 percent). Respondents identified eighteen different countries of origin.
- About four in ten religious (43 percent) attended a Catholic elementary school, about the same as that for all U.S. Catholic adults (42 percent). These respondents, however, are more likely than other U.S. Catholics to have attended a Catholic high school (36 percent of the religious, compared to 22 percent of U.S. adult Catholics overall) and much more likely to have attended a Catholic college (33 percent of the religious, compared to just 7 percent of U.S. adult Catholics overall).
- The religious are highly educated. Twenty-two percent earned a graduate degree before entering their order (including 37 percent of brothers and 19 percent of sisters/nuns). Six in ten (60 percent) entered their order with at least a bachelor's degree or more (58 percent for

women and 70 percent for men).

- Most religious did not report that educational debt delayed their application for entrance to their institute. For those who did, they averaged two years of delay while they paid down an average of \$19,500 in educational debt.
- Over eight in ten religious (82 percent) had work experience prior to entering their religious institute. Women are more likely than men to have been employed in education or health care. Men are more likely to have been employed in business or church ministry.
- Many religious were active in parishes before entering their institute. Almost half (45 percent) participated in youth ministry or a youth group. One quarter (25 percent) participated in a young adult ministry or group, Catholic campus ministry/Newman Center, and/or World Youth Day.
- Almost nine in ten (88 percent) had ministry experience before entering their religious institute, most commonly in faith formation (46 percent). Women were more likely to participate in faith formation or liturgical ministries (except altar servers), while men more commonly reported hospital or prison ministries, altar server, or teaching in a Catholic school.
- On average, responding religious report that they were 20 years old when they first considered a vocation, but half were 18 or younger when they first did so.
- Eight in ten (82 percent) say they were encouraged to consider religious life by someone. Responding religious ranked parish priests highest for their support (44 percent of women and 58 percent of men), with encouragement from religious sisters and brothers coming second (43 percent for women, 38 percent for men).
- The women who responded to the survey represent 64 religious congregations, provinces or monasteries. The brothers come from 19 different congregations, provinces, or monasteries. □

## *Faith or Instinct*

by Deacon George Karam  
El Paso, Texas

"The moral law is the work of divine Wisdom. Its biblical meaning can be defined as fatherly instruction, God's pedagogy. It prescribes for man the ways, the rules of conduct that lead to the promised beatitude; it proscribes the ways of evil which turn him away from God and his love. It is at once firm in its precepts and, in its promises, worthy of love." CCC # 1950 Second Edition

According to the author in his book "WHAT DO I DO LORD?" addressing ethics in ministry and in our daily life, he discusses the four qualities of "Consistent Ethic of Life" as promoted by Cardinal Joseph Bernardin. He

says that "... all life is sacred" and "God is the author of life," and since God created life, He created us equal and alike.

We strive for the common good of human beings, trying to lessen suffering, whether it is physical or emotional. We tend to the care of humanity, and we also strive towards improving the quality of life. So, what is ethics? In my opinion, ethics is what defines us as human beings. It defines our personalities, our conduct, the way we think, speak, teach and the way we live. As Christians, we witness ethical teachings all through the Bible. It guides and governs our lives. It gives us a religious code to follow and is grounded in truth.

Since ethics and morals are subjects addressed in the Bible, the Church took on this commitment to teach it in the spirit of justice, fairness and compassion. The Church has delegated this teaching job to its ordained ministers. These ministers should not exhibit unethical behavior, but rather godliness and integrity.

Jesus began his mission immediately after his baptism. As baptized Christians, we are commissioned in a life of ministry and teaching. Baptism was the instrument by which we entered into covenant with God, a relationship which includes believing and conviction, stewardship and leadership. We have been commissioned to tame this wilderness, a postmodern society influenced by everything including science, fanaticism and warped news media. These trends are even influencing the ethics of the Church today and turning our world into an unruly wilderness.

Whether in ministry or in secular dealings ethics constitute many aspects in the conduct of our lives. Because of advancement in technology and science today, it created more ethical issues in our environment. Some of these issues are problematic to the Church's teachings; such as abortion, stem cell research, cloning, gender changing, and other similar issues. Ethical boundaries are a necessity in maintaining a life that the Creator has set for us; yet, the media has removed these boundaries. Theaters, television, and magazine stands have set their own standards: everything goes without any limit or consequences.

Immoral behavior is destroying our society today. Using cartoons in a subtle way influences even the smallest children. These movie producers are conspiring to weaken our traditional values, purporting Church's teachings to be a thing of the past. People expect to see or hear these things on television and they, anymore, think that this is the new way of life. Some people may call these standards, the law of nature, and this is how they value their judgment. These values have been refuted by Christianity, because they do not have a spiritual self-preservation according to the teachings of Jesus. There never has been before Jesus, and never will be, a new controversial judgment of value in the history of the world. Why do we follow Christ? Because He is the best moral teacher that will ever be. The irony of it, however, is that Jesus taught elementary standards which we, even now, are having trouble to understand, nevertheless to apply.

Christianity is what Jesus intended as a plan for His creation. We in turn, try to depart from this plan, create new plans to

satisfy our desires. People's desires adopt these modifications, follow their short-lived instincts, fall into the trap of the evil one, and then cry: Jesus help me. Is it faith or is it instinct that differentiates us from the beast?

Therefore, everything we ethically and morally do is influenced by God, for no man has invented anything whether physical, spiritual or by thought. Man failed to apply God's rules to all problems of conduct. When man is without moral code, he becomes like the animal, free from it as ignorance free from intelligence. □

## ***Bishops Release Penance Statement, Encourages Sacrament's Use in Parishes For Lent***

**T**he U.S. Bishops have released a statement encouraging Catholics to make going to confession a significant part of their spiritual lives and to use this Lent as an opportunity to do so. *God's Gift of Forgiveness: The Pastoral Exhortation on the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation* was approved by the full body of bishops during their annual Fall General Assembly in Baltimore, November 13, 2012.

"Pope Benedict XVI and Cardinal Timothy Dolan [President of the USCCB] have both stressed the importance of confession in strengthening our witness during the Year of Faith," said Bishop David Ricken of Green Bay, Wisconsin, Chairman of the Committee on Evangelization and Catechesis of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). "The bishops have made this document available for easy distribution at the parish level this Lent, and the USCCB has produced resources that will help engage Catholics and welcome them in their journey back to the sacrament."

The full text of the statement and the links to resources for individual Catholics and diocesan and parish staff on the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation are available online at: [www.usccb.org/confession](http://www.usccb.org/confession). □

## **Lent 2013**

Continued from page 1

Fasting and prayer help to get ourselves close to our Divine Lord. Fast and abstinence are no longer as strict as in past days, but this does not mean we are to take fasting and prayer lightly. You are adults and the Church allows you to choose what is convenient for you, but does not do away with these penitential practices.

Lent prepares us to rise with Christ on Easter. We must die to ourselves to our sins and to our imperfections, so that we may rise with Christ on that Special Day. □

God Bless you,  
Bishop Robert J. Shaheen  
Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon

# The Maronite Funeral Service

Continued from page 11

“Death in Sheol saw the gates being opened, but he was not worried. The gates were always opening to let people in. Although he had trampled down many strong and just men in the past, no one has ever gone out from his realm... And then our Lord called Lazarus out, and he came forth. Death was absolutely terrified; he did not know what to say or do. He was afraid that the one who called Lazarus out would himself come in after him and lead out all the dead. So death wanted Lazarus to return quickly so that Christ would not enter after him.”<sup>9</sup>

Lazarus comes out of the grave. Although he was bound from head to toe, he walked and saw for the voice of the “Good Shepherd who will lay down his life for the sheep,” (John 10:11, 15) called and guided him out of the realm of the dead.

## Conclusion

“The road of death begins in the house, where a person dies, Jesus raised Jairus’ daughter in the house. The crowd saw the light of resurrection dawn with great wonder and were amazed... The middle of the road of death is the procession to the grave. There, Jesus came upon a youth being carried out the city gate. No one asked him to do anything, but he wanted to setup a tower of peace there also. he raised the boy, and again death was made a mockery before the crowd... Death’s road ends in the grave. Jesus had to follow it to the end; Lazarus was in the grave, corrupting in Sheol. Jesus knocked on death’s door. Death, his crown on his head, was sitting as king on his throne set over a pile of skeletons. The voice of life knocked off his crown and over his throne. Death could not hold the dead man back... Lazarus was called by name because Christ wanted only him. It was not yet time for all the dead to rise. He kicked Sheol and made it vomit up some of its food... The dead man rose up, and death fell down. Here at the end of the road, even in the grave, our Lord set up a lodging of peace...”

The three stations of the Maronite accompaniment service could be seen in light of these three resurrection stories. Jesus is present at home (Jairus’ daughter - the first station). He accompanies the mourners in procession through the Church (the widow’s son - the second station) and awaits them at the grave (Lazarus in the grave - the third station). Just as he consoled the hearts of Jairus and his wife, the widow who lost her son, and Mary and Martha, so too he consoles our hearts when they are stricken by similar tragedies, no matter how awful these tragedies may be. His consolation is not just empty words. On the contrary, Christ’s Word gives life. The twelve year old girl, the young man, and Lazarus were restored to life when they heard the Word who chose to create and redeem. “At the second coming, at the end of the world, when the Son comes again, he will call the dead and raise them in the twinkling of an eye. Here [John 11:1-44] he wanted to show

how he would call them and lead them out of Sheol.”<sup>10</sup>

## Finally, Jesus

“saw that the road to the grave was being travelled without hope; so he filled it with lodgings of great hope... He measured that road and placed on it milestones of peace and encouragement so men can travel it without fear... The whole road of death is now filled with life and hope. At the start of the road, Christ raised the girl and gave her to her father; in the middle, he raised the boy and gave him to his mother; at the end, he raised Lazarus and gave him to his sisters... At each milestone along the road, he transformed grief and mourning, turning them to rejoicing. All along the road he was confessed and praised because he had made peace (8««7««6) along the whole road so that it can now be travelled without fear.”<sup>11</sup>



## Pope Picks Young Lebanese to Write Good Friday Meditations

Pope Benedict XVI has asked for two young Lebanese Catholics to prepare the meditations for the Way of the Cross devotion on Good Friday at the Coliseum in Rome.

The Pope has asked Maronite Catholic Patriarch Bechara Peter Cardinal Rai to supervise the preparation of the meditations. The young people who will write the texts have not been identified.

In announcing the Pope's choice, the Vatican said that the Pope intended to ask "the whole Church to remember the Middle East, its problems and Christian communities in the land, in their prayers" on Good Friday. During his visit to Lebanon in September the Pope was particularly moved by a meeting with young people outside the Maronite Patriarch's headquarters.

Each year the Pope chooses a new author for the meditations to be read at the Way of the Cross. Last year he chose an Italian married couple, Danilo and Anna Maria Zanzucchi, the founders of the New Families Movement. With this year's choice he clearly wanted to draw attention to the plight of Christians in the Middle East, and especially the young Christians who face pressures to emigrate. □

(CWNews, January 29, 2013)

<sup>9</sup> Michael Damon Guinan, *The Eschatology of James of Sarug*, Dissertation, Washington, D.C. 1972, 84 a

<sup>10</sup> *ibid* 85

<sup>11</sup> *ibid* 86 - 87



## *The Road to Tampa*

by Tampa Convention Committee

As the clock ticks down toward the celebration of the National Apostolate of Maronites 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary [July 3- 7, 2013], Sts. Peter and Paul Mission continues to pave the "road to Tampa" with hard work, dedication, and motivation.

Planning is underway for exciting entertainment. With various cultures hugging Tampa Bay, welcoming night Wednesday will be the sparkle of the convention with Tampa's root culture: A Cuban night with a pirate invasion. Enjoy a live original Cuban band along with the interactive flamenco dancers, but beware, little pirates might be near! Children will use their imagination, become pirates, and search for hidden treasures. Treasure maps will lead you and your families to uncover fun filled nights of celebration. You can enjoy a spectacular show of fireworks lighting the skies of Tampa Bay on the Fourth of July, before hearing the angelic voice of Aber Nehme. Not to forget our traditions and heritage, we will come back home on Friday night to the delicious taste of Lebanese food and dancing to the music of Amin El Sultan and group. Sts. Peter and Paul Mission is also proud to present rising star Naji el Osta, who will fire up the banquet party on Saturday night.

Sts. Peter & Paul Mission values originality. Therefore, we are proud to announce the planning of a 5k leisure run on a breezy Tampa Bay morning. It is a family event where everyone can go for a run, walk or stroller walk along the scenic view of the Bayshore Boulevard. This will be an opportunity for all participants to enjoy the beauty of the historic streets, buildings, and atmosphere of the Tampa Bay along the Gulf of Mexico. To further enrich your experience of the NAM's 50th anniversary, we are offering you the chance to return home with a brand new vehicle. A 2013 Mercedes Benz will be one of many valuable items available for raffle.

What's a trip to the sunshine state without soaking up some sun? The Maronite Young Adults are planning a beach trip and a pool party on the hotel roof top, twenty-seven floors closer to the sun. We continue the energetic journey to Adventure Island where MYA's can enjoy all that the water park has to offer. We will then relax by touring the inner city and exploring its cigar factory.

For the duration of the convention, attendees will have the opportunity to feed their curiosity and faith by attending numerous workshops. A wide range of topics were carefully assigned to knowledgeable and experienced speakers such as Mr. John Kurey, who will inform us of fundraising and stewardship tactics. Fr. Abdallah Zaidan [Rector of Our Lady of Mt. Lebanon Cathedral, Los Angeles, Calif.] and Msgr. George Sebaali [Pastor of St. Anthony Maronite Church, Glen Allen, Va.] will also present a workshop about effective church leadership methods.

In July 2013, the National Apostolate of Maronites is proud to celebrate its 50<sup>th</sup> year of dedication to unite and preserve Maronites around the United States. The great efforts and achievements will be highlighted in a workshop presented by Mr. Ed Shiner as well as in a documentary of archived pictures and short statements from all the Bishops who have served the Maronite Church for the last fifty years, taking us on the journey of NAM and how it came to be.

You, your families and friends are invited to our city for a week to join us in remembering our roots, strengthening our faith and celebrating the NAM 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. To make hotel reservations please contact the Tampa Marriott Waterside Hotel and Marina directly at (888) 273-4683. Special NAM Convention rate: \$99.00 per night (single/dbl/trip/quad). This special rate is good from June 30 to July 7, 2013.

Sts. Peter and Paul Mission is determined to continue to pave the road with great aspirations that will make you say, "This one's for the books."

For more information about the NAM Convention 2013 and all of NAM's programs and events, please visit [www.namnews.org](http://www.namnews.org) or call (914) 964-3070 or by email at [nam@namnews.org](mailto:nam@namnews.org). For more information from the host parish, call (813) 886-7413 or by email at [peterpaultampa@gmail.com](mailto:peterpaultampa@gmail.com). □

## *North Jackson, Ohio Christmas Concert*

The National Shrine of Our Lady of Lebanon in North Jackson, Ohio, hosted a Christmas concert on Friday, December 7, 2012.

International singing star Tajci performed "Emmanuel-The Story of Christmas" in the Prince of Peace Chapel to a crowd of more than two hundred people.

The Prince of Peace Chapel was beautifully decorated for the season and was a lovely backdrop for the inspirational and moving Christmas music.

Tajci captivated the audience with her remarkable voice and artistically arranged music, but she stole the hearts of all when she performed several songs with her three young sons.

The evening ending with refreshments in Cedars Hall where audience members could speak to Tajci or purchase a concert CD.

The concert was well received, and many who attended asked for it to be a yearly event. For more information on Tajci, go to [Idobelieve.com](http://Idobelieve.com). For more information on the Shrine, go to [www.ourladyoflebanonshrine.com](http://www.ourladyoflebanonshrine.com). □



Tajci at Our Lady of Lebanon Shrine.

## Livonia, Michigan *Papal Blessing*



Deacon Alfred Morad (center), Mrs. Freda Morad (left), Chorbishop Alfred Badawi (right) at St. Rafka Mission.

by Holly Hilu

On Sunday, December 23, 2012, together with parishioners of St. Rafka Mission in Livonia, Michigan, Chorbishop Alfred Badawi presented Deacon Alfred Morad with an Apostolic Blessing imparted by His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI.

On this special occasion, Chorbishop Badawi offered the Divine Liturgy for the living and deceased members of the Morad Family. Following the Divine Liturgy, joined by his wife, Mrs. Freda Morad, and their children, Deacon Alfred was recognized for his years of selfless service to the community.

Chorbishop Badawi noted that upon completion of study at Sacred Heart Major Seminary, Alfred Morad was ordained Deacon at St. Maron Church, Detroit, Mich., in December of 1978. Since his ordination, Deacon Alfred has served at the parishes of St. Maron, St. Sharbel [Warren], St. Colette, and St. Edith, but his work in recent years to establish the Mission of St. Rafka has truly touched each of our parishioners.

As Deacon Alfred accepted the Papal Blessing certificate, he expressed his appreciation, assured the community of his prayers and encouraged the parishioners of St. Rafka Mission to continue working together as a family in Christ's love. St. Rafka Mission extends its deep appreciation to Deacon Alfred for his continued inspiration, service and prayerful dedication to our community. □

## *Baptism - First Sacrament*

*Continued from page 12*

• **KING:** Be people of faithful service. The document *Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord* stresses mutual respect and collaboration between the laity and ordained. The clergy and parish staff create and offer opportunities for everyone to serve and live out their baptismal promises, but we also share in that ministry. Find your own way to serve and invite others to join you. Don't forget the homebound as a prayer resource.

Knowing our own identity is the foundation of action. The little blue box that holds my baptismal garment is not in the closet anymore; I set it out in plain sight and claim it as my own. □

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