



The Maronite Voice

A Publication of the Maronite Eparchies in the USA



Volume X

Issue No. II

February 2014

Married Priests in the Maronite Church!! "Married Men Can Be Priests, But Priests Cannot Marry"

Over the centuries, indeed from the time of the Apostles themselves, our Church has maintained the tradition of admitting married men into the priesthood. In the recent Maronite Patriarchal Synod, the Maronite Church reaffirmed this practice, deeming it necessary to preserve this ancient tradition. While a married priesthood has not been common in the western world, especially in the United States, it is very common in countries of the East. In Lebanon about half of the eparchial (diocesan) priests are married men. Most American Catholics do not know that the Church has allowed married priests. Even in Europe there were married priests until it was officially banned in the 12th century. But there always have been married priests in the Eastern, non-Latin rites, like the Maronite Church. They are fully Catholic, but they ordain married men, although they do not allow unmarried priests to get married. Since 1929 there has been a rule in place in the United States that married priests could not be ordained here. However, in recent years, the Catholic Church has received many convert Anglican and Protestant ministers, and they have ordained priests even though they were married.



Taken from the cover page of The Maronite Pontifical by His Excellency Bishop Stephen Hector Doueïhi.

Speaking at the Eleventh General Synod in the Vatican in 2005, former Patriarch Nasrallah Peter Cardinal Sfeir noted the value of married priests. "Married priests have perpetuated the faith among people whose difficult lives they shared, and without them this faith would no longer exist." Also, having a married priesthood along with a celibate (unmarried) priesthood does not in any way detract from the value that the Church finds in the vocation to celibacy. The celibate priesthood

continues to be highly esteemed. We need to always keep in mind that it is a vocation to be married and to be priest in life.

Recently, the Holy Father, Pope Francis, gave permission for Deacon Wissam Akiki, a married man, to be ordained to the priesthood. This is an exception to the general rule that married men may not be ordained in the United States. The rule continues, but the Church now seems willing to review the practice on a case-by-case basis. Deacon Akiki has completed his seminary studies. He has attended Holy Spirit University in Lebanon; and in the United States he attended Our Lady of Lebanon Maronite Seminary in Washington, D.C., and most recently, the Aquinas Institute of Theology in St. Louis, Missouri. Deacon Akiki is married to Manal Kassab, and they have one daughter, Perla.

The ordination of married men to the priesthood can help to alleviate the shortage of priests in some places – as in the United States - but is not the only solution. (Continues on page 2)

Schedule of Bishop Elias Zaidan

February 6 - 9, 2014

St. Maron Church, Cleveland, Ohio

February 13, 2014

Ordination to Subdeacon of Brother John Michael in Los Angeles, Calif.

February 15 - 16, 2014

Our Lady of the Rosary Maronite Mission, Carmichael, Calif.

February 16 - 17, 2014

St. Sharbel Maronite Mission, Stockton, Calif.

February 23, 2014

St. Maron Celebration at Our Lady of Mt. Lebanon - St. Peter Cathedral in Los Angeles, Calif.

February 27, 2014

Ordination to the Priesthood of Deacon Wissam Akiki at St. Raymond Cathedral in St. Louis, Mo.

March 1 - 2, 2014

St. John Maron Church in Orange, Calif.

March 6, 2014

Our Lady of Lebanon Seminary, Washington, D.C.

March 7 - 9, 2014

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

March 14 - 16, 2014

NAM Regional Convention, San Diego, Calif. ☐

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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

Episcopal Appointments

On January 13, 2014, His Holiness Pope Francis erected the new Apostolic Exarchate for the Maronite faithful who reside in Western and Central Africa, in *ad Ibadan*, Nigeria, and appointed **Monsignor Simon Faddoul**, President of Caritas-Lebanon, as the first Apostolic Exarch without episcopal title, and as Apostolic Visitor for the Maronite faithful who reside in Southern Africa.

- Appointed **Bishop Georges Chihane**, Eparchial Vicar of Cairo and Sudan of the Maronites, as Apostolic Visitor for the Maronite faithful who reside in the countries of North Africa not included in the eparchial territory. ☐
(*Vatican Information Service, January 13, 2014*)

Married Priests in the Maronite Church!!

Continued from page 1

The role of the family in fostering priestly vocations and the willingness of young men to respond to the call to priesthood are necessary as well. Above all, praying for vocations in both the parish and in the family is essential

In the United States the ordination of married men to the priesthood is not just a "fix" to the priest shortage, but, rather, a re-establishment of an ancient and honored tradition in our Maronite Church. A married priesthood will bring with it different challenges that will need to be addressed, but with God's help and the support of the People of God, the Church can meet these challenges. ☐

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

North Palm Beach, Florida *Annual Eparchial Clergy Retreat*

by Fr. Vincent Farhat

Once again the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn met for its annual clergy retreat in North Palm Beach, Florida. All of the clergy were able to make it down to their final destination with the cooperation of Mother Nature.

The retreat began on Monday, January 13, 2014, with an hour of Eucharistic Adoration and opening reflections by Bishop Gregory Mansour. We remembered in a very special way Fr. Peter Boulos who passed away last fall. His presence and fraternal love was greatly missed.

Fr. Boniface Hicks from Latrobe, Penn., was the Retreat Master. Fr. Boniface is no stranger to the Maronite Church as he visited and audiotaped the Divine Liturgy and Divine Office at Our Lady of Lebanon Seminary in Washington, D.C., beginning in the fall of 2009. He has bi-ritual faculties into the Maronite Rite.

Fr. Boniface focused on Pope Francis' *Evangelii Gaudium*, Joy of the Gospel. He quoted Pope Francis, saying, "I invite all Christians to a renewed encounter with Jesus Christ. I ask all of you to do this every day unfailingly." It is a reminder to us that our encounter with Jesus Christ is not only bringing others to Jesus but bringing ourselves closer to Him as well. We need to go back to the time of our vocation when we knew our identity more clearly---remembering our invitation to say "yes" to God's call.

How do we renew our encounter with Jesus Christ? Fr. Boniface reminded the priests present that Our Lady embraces us beyond all others. Every Christian is in the womb of our Blessed Mother until we die, and our journey in the womb and our journey in life is completed in its fullness in eternal paradise. Trust in our Mother and rely on her loving arms to embrace us as she embraced her Son, Jesus Christ.

By bringing the joy of the Gospel to others we become heralds of the Truth!



We must light a fire by initially connecting to the people of God. We need to build a bridge by having a personal dialogue with those who hear the Word of God. We must open a window after we have built this bridge to bring the love of God to others, and this must be shared humbly. We must plant a signpost by giving them concrete steps to better their lives and to live the examples of Jesus Christ---a reminder not only for the people we minister to but for ourselves as well.

Fr. Boniface reminded us that when we recognize our weakness and humility we rely on the mercy of Jesus. When we keep secrets and we live according to the way the world tells us to live, we strengthen the devil and keep Jesus farther away from us. Pope Francis has said, "The world tells us to seek success, power and money: God tells us to seek humility, service and love."

During this year's retreat, Fr. Alaa Issa and the parishioners of Mary, Mother of the Light Mission in Taquesta, Florida, hosted the clergy at their new Church and Community Center. The Divine Liturgy was celebrated at their new Church followed by a luncheon in their church hall. The parishioners of Mary, Mother of the Light welcomed us with pride and warm hospitality.

Being a part of these yearly clergy retreats gives us an opportunity to be reminded of these ideas and teachings of Jesus that we, as priests, preach about week after week. But as I have told my parishioners so many times before, being reminded is essential in living our faith. St. John would preach every day until his death, and every day people would gather around to hear him speak. His daily sermon was this: "Love one another. Love one another." One of his followers asked him why he always preached the same homily day after day. St. John reminded them that Jesus preached this time and time again---so must we be reminded time and time again. □



Saint Louis, Missouri *Ordination of A Chorbishop*



Bishop Robert Shaheen, Bishop Emeritus of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon, ordains Msgr. Moussa Joseph to Chorbishop. Bishop A. Elias Zaidan, Bishop of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon (left) and Chorbishop Michael Kail assisted.

by Shelly Vitale

On Friday, December 13, 2013, during the Divine Liturgy, Monsignor Moussa Joseph, Rector of St. Raymond Cathedral, St. Louis, Mo., was ordained Chorbishop. It was a cold and snowy evening in St. Louis, but inside, the St. Raymond Cathedral was aglow with the warmth and light of the Holy Spirit. As the Liturgy began, the members of the Order of Saint Sharbel and the Knights of St. Gregory the Great stood Honor Guard. The procession included: Bishop A. Zaidan, Bishop of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon; Bishop Emeritus Robert Shaheen; Bishop Edward Rice, Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of St. Louis; and Monsignor Moussa Joseph. Bishop Shaheen was the main celebrant; Bishop Zaidan and Bishop Edward Rice concelebrated. The Cathedral was filled with clergy, religious, laity and parishioners. Monsignor's family and

friends traveled from afar to attend including Monsignor's brother Simon and his wife, Connie, and his niece, Joelle, who read the reading, and relatives Mrs. Amy Habib and son, Anthony, and Mrs. Mickey McFarlane and son Michael, who carried the gifts.

Monsignor Joseph has a long-standing relationship with the St. Raymond Community going back thirty years. He has served at St. Raymond as a deacon, associate pastor, Monsignor and now Chorbishop. Because Bishop Shaheen has played such an integral part in Monsignor's life and is such a dear friend and mentor, it was fitting that he be the one to ordain Monsignor Joseph. The decree was read on behalf of Patriarch Bechara Peter Cardinal Rai, appointing Monsignor Moussa Joseph to the rank of Chorbishop. When the new Chorbishop was presented to the congregation, he received a standing ovation and thunderous applause.

Mayor Francis Slay of the City of St. Louis presented the newly installed Chorbishop with a proclamation stating that December 13, 2013, was "Chorbishop Moussa Joseph Day in the City of St. Louis." It was Chorbishop Joseph's turn to speak. He thanked everyone, including the Patriarch for the special appointment, and he asked that everyone continue to pray for the Patriarch's health and ministry. He thanked Bishop Zaidan and asked everyone to keep the new Bishop always in their prayers. He thanked Bishop Shaheen for being his spiritual shepherd through the years. He said that he was honored to have Bishop Shaheen ordain him and he considered it to be one of the most special moments of his life. He thanked his family including his parents, Bakhos and Rosette Joseph, his brothers, Norman and Johnny, and their families, and his sisters, Martha and Amy, and their families, all in Lebanon, for their love and support.

Following the Liturgy, a banquet was held at the Cedars Hall. Dr. Dan Abodeely was the Master of Ceremonies. Auxiliary Bishop Rice, representing Archbishop Carlson of the Archdiocese of St. Louis, said the prayer. Bishop Shaheen spoke about Chorbishop Moussa's journey during the past thirty years. He congratulated him and he reminded the St. Raymond family to care for one another, support their Chorbishop and keep their community strong. Bishop Zaidan offered congratulations to Chorbishop Joseph; he thanked the Chorbishop's family, friends and clergy who traveled long distances to share in the blessed event. He spoke of his friendship with the Chorbishop that began twenty-four years ago. He acknowledged the Chorbishop's service and sacrifice through the years, and he wished him the best for the future. Monsignor Moussa made a few closing remarks. He remembered all of the past parishioners who worked diligently to keep the church strong, looks forward to the future to see what lies ahead for the parish community, and expressed his sincere thanks to all present. On behalf of Bishop A. Zaidan, Bishop Emeritus Robert Shaheen and the whole St. Raymond community, congratulations to Chorbishop Moussa Joseph. □

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

by *Salma Vahdat*

As one year came to an end and a new year dawned, members of our community came together with their families to celebrate. Basking in the afterglow of Christmas, the evening began with the Divine Liturgy celebrated in the Cathedral and segued into the Social Hall where all of the Cathedral's organizations had prepared an evening of camaraderie, music, dance and the ever-present Lebanese repast.

Never a group to shrink at the prospect of having a good time, the crowd plowed into the evening with gusto. Our two DJs, Giorgio Malouf and Charlie Haddad, had everyone up and dancing for hours, fueled by the delicious food provided by Karam's Restaurant.

Bidding the old year farewell and greeting the new year at our home away from home, the Cathedral. We enjoyed the time to renew our friendships and enjoy our families. What could be better than that? □

Orlando, Florida *Fall and Winter Events*

This fall, St. Jude Parish in Orlando, Florida, was filled with celebrations enjoyed by hundreds of parishioners and visitors. The 10th anniversary festival in early October was a fun-filled afternoon of music, dancing, an international selection of delicious food, and games for everyone to enjoy as well as door prizes and raffles. It concluded with a parade of the children wearing fall costumes handmade by the parishioners.

Next we were blessed with a beautiful sunny Florida day for the St. Jude Annual Golf Tournament. It was the most successful yet. Golfers and volunteers had a great BBQ lunch followed by a silent auction and prizes.

Before Thanksgiving the Third Annual Festival of Baskets took place. St. Jude parishioners outdid themselves and donated over 240 baskets, with local merchants and fine restaurants providing a large number of gift certificates. Many of the two hundred participants walked away with smiles as they carried their prizes. Special thanks go to our volunteer chefs for their outstanding cooking.

2013 ended with a Christmas Around the World party with Santa Claus and his elves giving gifts to our children, a Christmas music concert presented by the visiting choir from St. Sharbel Church with more than thirty young members entertaining us; and our Christmas Nativity Pageant on Christmas Eve with thirty-three children re-enacting the gospel of the Birth of Our Lord.

Keeping with the spirit of giving, St. Jude Outreach Ministry was joyfully busy with the food pantry, supplying families with Thanksgiving meals. The Angel Tree provided Christmas gifts for nearly forty less fortunate children. We look forward to our St. Maron luncheon schedule for Sunday, February 9, following the eleven o'clock Divine Liturgy. □

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania *A Christmas Celebration*



by *Amal Kouyoumdji*

On December 22, 2013, the St. Maron Church Hall in Philadelphia, Penn., opened its doors to welcome more than two hundred parishioners for a joyous Christmas celebration. After Father Vincent Farhat, Pastor, warmly invited all attendees to take their seats, the Children enrolled in the Religious Education Program happily, albeit shyly, made their entrance into the hall, their faces glowing in the light of the candles they held in their hands. They lined up and proceeded to enchant their audience with beautiful Christmas carols, under the direction of their music instructor, Maria Jabbour, and accompanied on the piano by William Tayoun. Near them stood a tall Christmas tree brightly decorated with ornaments handmade by the students, with assistance from their teachers.

The Director of the Religious Education Program then took the time to acknowledge and thank each and every member of the team of volunteer teachers, all thirteen of them, that she affectionately refers to as the CCD team.

Then it was time for the St. Maron Choir to present a Bilingual Christmas concert under the direction of Cantor Paul Semaan. Their songs in English and Arabic in kept with a long-standing St. Maron tradition of building bridges across cultures and across generations.

The parishioners enjoyed an abundance of delectable dishes that they all proudly prepared. The Ladies Guild of St. Maron outdid itself once again in making everyone feel welcome and right at home. The celebration was not going to be complete without a visit from Santa, who was met by delighted cheers from children of all ages. The parishioners left the Church Hall in the late afternoon hours looking forward to all of God's blessings that 2014 will bring. □



Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania Honoring Local Military Families



Front row: Gianna Martinelli, Jillian Tucker and Jordan Tucker. Back row: Rev. Hanna Karam, Malak Khoudary, Diane Volovic, Leila Tucker, Sgt. Ed Rudnesky, 109th U.S. National Guard, Nanticoke, and Kristen Martinelli.

In observance of Veteran's Day, November 11, 2013, the students of the Maronite Religious Education (MRE) Program of St. Anthony/St. George Maronite Church in Wilkes-Barre, Penn., collected donations for local military soldiers and their families, through the Family Readiness Program. This program assists service members and their families to prepare for separations during short and long term deployments. A local soldier from the U.S. National Guard, Sgt. Ed Rudnesky, delivered the donations to the local Family Readiness Chapter for disbursement to the families. □

New Castle, Pennsylvania Annual Christmas Party

Once again, the children of St. John the Baptist Maronite Church in New Castle, Penn., gathered in the basement of the church to celebrate the coming of Our Lord with great songs, food and fellowship on December 22, 2013. Kathy George, the Sunday School Coordinator, and teachers prepared a party immediately after the Liturgy. Father Claude Franklin, Pastor, was there to greet the children, their families and friends. The children were especially excited when our special guest arrived. Santa Claus greeted each child and asked what each wanted for Christmas. A great time was held by all! □

Food For Thought

“Have patience with all things, but chiefly have patience with yourself. Do not lose courage in considering your own imperfections, but instantly set about remedying them - every day begin the task anew.”

Saint Francis de Sales

Springfield, Massachusetts Christmas Party



by Kathy LaBella

On December 15, 2013, the teachers and parents of the Maronite Religious Formation children of St. Anthony Maronite Church in Springfield, Massachusetts, hosted a Christmas party for the children and members of the parish.

The teachers and parents beautifully decorated the Cedars Hall into a winter wonderland, filled with a variety of activities such as gingerbread and cupcake decorating as well as arts and crafts. Food was donated and served by the Women's Guild of the Parish. The party concluded with a visit from Santa. □

From the Book Shelf

Book of Offering: The new translation of our beautiful Maronite Divine Liturgy in English, Arabic and Syriac has been promulgated by the Maronite Patriarch for use in all of the English speaking eparchies throughout the world.

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Cleveland, Ohio Christmas Recital



Fr. Peter Karam, Pastor, and Fr. George Hajj, Assistant Pastor, join children and members of St. Maron's Choirs for their Christmas Recital.

by Deacon Anthony Khoury

Through the centuries, geologists, archaeologists and those working in various sciences and technologies have searched for the origin of the universe and the meaning of human life. Many believe that it all began with the Big Bang theory of creation. However, for people of faith, no explanation is necessary; for people without faith, no explanation is possible.

On Saturday, December 21, 2013, at the Chapel of St. Maron in Independence [Cleveland], Ohio, our faith was personified at the Christmas Recital and Decoration of the Creche. Under the direction of Chris Nahra and with the cooperation of Fr. George Hajj, Assistant Pastor, and with the blessing of Fr. Peter Karam, Pastor, the Saturday evening Liturgy Choir, the Sunday morning Arabic Liturgy Choir, the Students of the Arabic School, the students of the Maronite Christian Formation Program, the Immaculate Conception Sodality, the Maronite Youth Organization, and the Maronite Young Adults.

Beginning with the Annunciation, the walking of the Road to Bethlehem, the Birth of Christ, the Angels' Praise, and to the Adoration of the Shepherds and Magi, each scenario was interspersed with a chorus of *Arsal Allah* [God sent His Only Son] and an English Christmas carol, under the musical direction of David Farah, prefaced by an explanative reading and the placing of the appropriate statue or animal in its place of the Creche.

After the last scenario, the final verse of *Arsal Allah* was sung. It says, "*Halel, Halel, Halelloony,*" (Praise Him! Praise Him! Praise Him, Our Lord!) □



Schedule of Bishop Gregory Mansour

February 8 - 9, 2014

Feast of St. Maron, Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral, Brooklyn, N.Y.

February 16, 2014

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

February 17 - 21, 2014

El Salvador Visit with Catholic Relief Services CEO and staff

February 23, 2014

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

March 2, 2014

Pastoral Visit to St. Maron Church, Philadelphia, Penn.

March 3, 2014

Ash Monday at Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral, Brooklyn, N.Y.

March 7 - 9, 2014

Visit of Bishop A. Elias Zaidan, Bishop of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon, to Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral, Brooklyn, N.Y.

March 10 - 11, 2014

Caritas-Lebanon Meeting, St. Louis, Mo.

March 15 - 16, 2014

Pastoral Visit to Star of the East Mission, Pleasantville, N.J.

March 17 - 18, 2014

Catholic University Board of Directors and Visit to Our Lady of Lebanon Seminary, Washington, D.C.

March 19, 2014

Our Lady of Lebanon Church, Easton, Penn., for Feast of St. Joseph. □



Deadline for next month's issue of *The Maronite Voice* is February 25, 2014.

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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Featuring
Fidel Fayad



Southwest Regional NAM Convention
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Schedule of Events

Friday March 14, 2014		Sunday March 16, 2014 at Hotel
12:00 pm - 7:00 pm	Registration & Hospitality at Hotel	9:00 am - 11:00 am Farewell Breakfast
7:00 pm - 7:30 pm	Prayer Service at Church	12:00 pm - 1:00 pm Divine Liturgy
7:30 pm - 10:30 pm	Welcome Party at Church	
Saturday March 15, 2014 at Hotel		
9:00 am - 12:00 pm	Registration	
9:30 am - 10:00 am	Prayer Service	
10:00 am - 10:50 am	Workshop I	
11:00 am - 11:50 am	Workshop II	
7:00 pm - 8:00 pm	Cocktail Hour	
8:00 pm - 1:00 am	Grand Banquet	

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Dear Friends,

St. Ephrem Parish and its pastor Fr. Toufic Nasr are looking forward to hosting the Southwest Regional NAM Convention in San Diego, California on March 14-16, 2014 at the San Diego Marriott Mission Valley, 8757 Rio San Diego Drive, San Diego, California 92108.

A Commemorative Sponsors and Business Ad Book will be published and distributed to all conventioners and sponsors as a way to welcome our newly elected bishop of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon His Excellency Abdallah Elias Zaidan on his first official visit to St. Ephrem Parish as well as congratulate the parish on hosting the regional convention. The Ad Book will generate considerable exposure to all our American and Middle Eastern Sponsors and advertisers.

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Thank you in advance for your kind support.

Fr. Toufic Nasr
Host Pastor

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

Eparchy of Saint Maron
109 Remsen Street
Brooklyn, NY 11201

or

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

Lenten Observances 2014



The Most Reverend Bishops Gregory Mansour and A. Elias Zaidan 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 (**March 3, 2014**) 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



ASH Monday

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. □*

Homily of His Eminence Sean Cardinal O'Malley Pro-Life Vigil Mass Washington, D.C.

The following is the homily of His Eminence Sean Cardinal O'Malley, Archbishop of the Archdiocese of Boston, Mass., at the Pro Life Vigil Mass held at the Immaculate Conception National Shrine in Washington, D.C., on January 21, 2014, the eve of Roe vs. Wade. *It is published with permission.*

Almost 200 years ago the Danish writer Hans Christian Anderson wrote a wonderful story called "The Emperor's New Suit". It is the story of a very proud and vain king who thought so much of new clothes that he spent all of his money on his apparel. His only ambition was to be the best dressed. One day two swindlers arrived in the city and convinced the king to buy a new suit made of a magical material that was invisible. They told the king that those who could not see the cloth were stupid and unfit for office.

The king was quite deceived and paraded through the street of his capital to receive the ovations of his people. The crowds lined the streets and applauded when the king passed by. The crowd shouted compliments and congratulated the king on his magnificent clothing.

Suddenly a little child shouted, "But he has nothing on at all." The king continued on his way. His chamberlains walked with still greater dignity, as if they were carrying the train of his robe which did not exist.

"The King's New Clothes" today are called reproduction rights, termination of pregnancy, choice, and many other subterfuges that disguise the reality and the brutality that is abortion.

The crowd applauds the Kings' New Clothes, people are afraid to question. Those who do not applaud must be stupid, naïve, obstinate.

The voice of the Church is like the child who declares before the world that the new clothes are a lie, a humbug, a deception. The Church with the candor of a child must call out the uncomfortable truth. Abortion is wrong. Thou shall not kill.

Our first reading is from Deuteronomy.



Maronite faithful joined Bishop Gregory Mansour (center) at the March For Life in Washington, D.C., on January 22, 2014.

In this last sermon before he dies on Mt. Nebo, Moses tells God's people: I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. Choose life then, that you and your descendants might live, by loving the Lord, obeying His voice, and holding fast to Him. That will be life for you.

"Choose Life," that is the message of the Church confronted by the King's New Clothes. Choose life.

John Paul II commented on the many declarations of human rights and many initiatives inspired by these ideals that seem to indicate a growing moral sensitivity, more alert to acknowledge the value and dignity of every individual as a human being, without any distinction of race, nationality, religion, political opinion or social class.

Sadly these noble proclamations are contradicted by a tragic repudiation of them in practice. This denial is still more distressing, indeed more

scandalous, precisely because it is occurring in a society which makes affirmation and protection of human rights its primary objective and its boast.

The Holy Father John Paul II asks, "How can we reconcile these repeated declarations of human rights with the continual increase and widespread justification of attacks on human life? How can we reconcile these declarations with the refusal to accept those who are weak and needy, or elderly, or those who have just been conceived?" These attacks go directly against respect for life and they represent a direct threat to the entire culture of human rights. It jeopardizes the very meaning of democratic coexistence; rather than societies of "people living together," our cities risk becoming societies of people who are rejected, marginalized, uprooted and oppressed.

When the Church raises a prophetic cry, "Choose Life," we are performing a

great service to all society. Life is sacred. Life is a mystery. Life must be protected, nurtured, respected. The Gospel of Life is the centerpiece of the Church's social teaching.

When the value of life is compromised or diminished, all life is at risk. When we give the State the power to determine which human beings are worthy of living and which should be eliminated, what we are doing is opening a Pandora's Box that unleashes every kind of injustice and violation of human dignity.

Life is precious. The transmission of life, sexuality, and marriage, which is the sanctuary of life, are all sacred. The Church's consistent life ethic contrasts with the incoherent proclamation of human rights that fails to protect life when it is most vulnerable.

Human rights, without the right to life, are the King's New Clothes – it's a fraud, an exercise in self-deception.

When Roe vs. Wade was handed down forty years ago, Archibald Cox, the Harvard University expert in constitutional law and Watergate prosecutor states, "This decision (Roe vs. Wade) fails even to consider what I suppose to be the most compelling interest of the State in prohibiting abortion: the interest in maintaining that respect for the paramount sanctity of human life which has always been at the center of Western Civilization."

The Church's pro-life message is a great service to all society. The culture of death flows out of the extreme individualism of our age. The Church's antidote is community and solidarity. Pope Francis is always talking about a culture of encounter.

In his stunning Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium*, Pope Francis writes: "Among the vulnerable for whom the Church wishes to care with particular love and concern are unborn children, the most defenseless and innocent among us." Pope Francis goes on to say: "Frequently, attempts are made to ridicule the Church's efforts to defend the unborn. Attempts are made to present the Church's teaching as ideological, obscurantist and conservative. Yet, this defense of

unborn life is closely linked to the defense of each and every other human right."

The Holy Father laments the fact that we have done little to adequately accompany women in very difficult situations.

The Good News is that God never gives up on us. He never tires of loving us. He never tires of forgiving us, never tires of giving us another chance. The Pro-Life Movement needs to be the merciful face of God to women facing a difficult pregnancy. Being judgmental or condemnatory is not part of the Gospel of Life.

In pre-Revolutionary Cuba, a Catholic radio play was broadcast that caused quite a bit of attention at the time. It was called: Muralla. It was the story of a middle class Catholic family, husband, wife and five children. Each Sunday the whole family went to Mass together. They all went to communion each Sunday with the exception of the father. This was a source of great anxiety to the whole family. The wife and children were always encouraging their Dad to go to confession and join them at the communion rail. He resisted all their pleading. The years passed. The man grew old. When he was dying, his wife sent for the priest who came and gave him the last sacraments and Extreme Unction - anointing of the sick for the dying. After making his confession and receiving communion, the man called his wife and children around his deathbed and said, before I die, I want to tell you why I did not go to communion for all these years. When I was a young lawyer, I falsified a will. All the money we have really should belong to a distant cousin. I knew that if I went to confession I would have to make restitution so I have waited until now. With that the man died, but now it was the wife and children who stopped going to communion because they did not want to make restitution either. We are often quick to judge people because we have not walked in their moccasins. Until we find ourselves in the same situation we don't know, we might do the same thing that we judge others for.

Today's Gospel is one of the most

dramatic scenes in the New Testament. The Pharisees are determined to impale Jesus on the horns of a dilemma. Should the woman caught in adultery be punished by death as the law demanded? If Jesus said "no," they would accuse him of neglecting to obey the law. If Jesus said "yes, kill her," He would turn people against Him for having the woman killed.

The Pharisees brought in the woman almost like a stage prop to use her for their political purposes. It is interesting to note that her partner has escaped punishment. It is only the woman who pays the price for their actions. She is filled with shame and is in fear for her life, with feelings of anger, despair, disappointment and a profound sense of loneliness.

It is curious to note that this is the only place in the Gospel where we see Jesus writing something. For Jesus, there was no need to publish or perish. We do not know for sure what Jesus was writing. Some of the Church's Fathers speculate that Jesus was writing the sins of those brave men, after telling them that the one who is without sin should cast the first stone. When the men see their sins, the stones fall from their hands and they begin to sneak away beginning with the oldest. Jesus is left alone with the woman; the crowd with their prurient curiosity and the Pharisees disarmed by Jesus, have slipped off. St. Augustine describes that Gospel scene as *miseria* and *miseriordis*. Misery and mercy meet.

Jesus has come, not for the healthy, but for the sick. He has come to set up the field hospital. He is the Good Shepherd who leaves the ninety-nine sheep behind to seek out the lost sheep. That gives Him more joy than the ninety-nine just people who do not need the Good Shepherd.

The feelings of the woman in the Gospel must be like the young woman caught in a crisis situation of an unwanted pregnancy. She feels overwhelmed, alone, afraid, confused. We must never allow that woman to perceive the Pro-Life movement as a bunch of angry self-righteous Pharisees with stones in their hands, looking down on her and judging her. We want the woman to experience the merciful

love of Christ. Jesus does not condone the woman's fall, but He does not condemn her. He invites her to make a new start, to know that she is forgiven and loved. Pope Francis urges us to practice "the art of accompaniment" which teaches us to remove our sandals before the sacred ground of the other, in this case, the woman in crisis. This accompaniment must be steady and reassuring, reflecting our closeness and our compassionate gaze which heals, liberates and encourages growth in the Christian Life. This is precisely what the Sisters of Life, Project Rachel and the Community of Jesus the Living Mercy are doing.

We are all here because we want to save the thousands of innocent children who are being executed by the very people whose mission should be to heal and protect life. The truth is that we can save those babies only by saving the mothers. When they experience God's loving mercy, then they will become capable of showing mercy to their children. The Pro Life Movement has to be about saving mothers. We need to focus on the women to try to understand what they are suffering.

The work of the pregnancy crisis centers has helped countless women to be able to choose Life. We owe a great debt of gratitude to all the volunteers and workers.

There are millions of women in our country who have had abortions, millions of men who pushed them, encouraged them, and drove them to the abortion clinic. Wouldn't it be wonderful if some of them could accept John Paul II's challenge to those who have chosen abortion to commit themselves to life, "whether by accepting the birth of other children, or by welcoming and caring for those most in need of someone to be close to them; to become promoters of a new way of looking at human life."

One person to take up this challenge was Dr. Bernard Nathanson, the founder of NARAL and the Pro Abortion Movement in the U.S. In the 1970s Dr. Nathanson ran an abortion clinic in New York City, which operated from 8:00 a.m. 'till midnight. He performed roughly one hundred abortions a day.

But then after having promoted abortion and convincing people of its urgency, Bernard Nathanson, the tailor that produced the King's New Clothes in the United States, finally heard that child's voice pointing out the inconvenient truth. His conscience could no longer allow him to fool himself into believing it was not a human being.

Dr. Bernard Nathanson became the most eloquent opponent of abortion and the abortion industry. In 1982 I invited him to come and speak to Black and Hispanic leaders in the Archdiocese of Washington, right here at Caldwell Hall. A few years later Dr. Nathanson accompanied me to Honduras, where he presented his film, *The Silent Scream*, to the medical faculty, and on National television. He was very instrumental in getting the laws that legalized abortion in Honduras reversed. He spent the rest of his life trying to do the same in the United States.

God's grace turned Saul of Tarsus, the implacable persecutor of the Church, into the Apostle of the Gentiles; and that grace transformed Bernard Nathanson into an apostle of the Gospel of Life.

The antidote of abortion is solidarity; community where people are willing to care for each and for the most vulnerable.

The message of the Gospel of Life is, as Pope Francis tells us (in *Evangelii Gaudium*), a message of Joy. The Holy Father writes: "To those who feel far from God and the Church, and to all who are fearful or indifferent, I would like to say this: the Lord with great respect and love is also calling you to be part of His people. The Church must be a place of mercy freely given, where everyone can feel welcomed, loved, forgiven and encouraged to live the good life of the Gospel. The very heart of the Gospel is life in community and engagement with others."

The challenge Pope Francis places before our young people is to be evangelizers, to evangelize with beauty and joy. The Holy Father says (in *Evangelii Gaudium*): "To communicate the moral teachings that promote growth in the Gospel way of life, it is

helpful to stress again and again the attractiveness and ideal of a life of wisdom, self-fulfillment and enrichment. In light of that positive message our rejection of the evils which endanger that life can be better understood. Rather than experts in dire predictions, dour judges bent on rooting out every threat and deviation, we should appear as joyful messengers of challenging proposals, guardians of the goodness and beauty which shines forth in a life of fidelity to the Gospel."

At Lampedusa Pope Francis cast a wreath into the sea where thousands of poor immigrants lost their lives at sea. He warned about the globalization of indifference.

We face this in the Pro Life Movement. Just as with slavery in the past, today many Americans are repulsed by abortion but believe that it is a necessary evil. Our task is to show them that it is not necessary. It is an evil, but it is not necessary.

Where there are community and solidarity, more humane solutions present themselves when there is a difficult pregnancy. When the abortion decision of the Supreme Court was handed down, the logical response of our Pro-Life Movement was a resolute call for "Adoption, not abortion." The truth is each year there are fewer and fewer adoptions while the number of abortions is over a million. Many young Americans don't know anyone who is adopted, and if they do know someone, it is probably someone from China, Russia or Guatemala – giving the impression that entrusting a child to an adoptive family is not something Americans do.

The history of adoption is not always a glorious one. There is a popular film in the theaters right now portraying some of the worst practices of the past. *Philomena*, portrayed by Dame Judi Dench, tells the story of a young girl forced to give up her baby. It is a tragic history.

We need people to hear the good stories of adoptions of courageous birth mothers and generous adoptive families that have truly provided a loving family for an adopted child.

(Continues on page 20)

Adoration for Priests and Vocations

"The harvest is abundant but the laborers are few; so ask the master of the harvest to send out laborers for His harvest" Matthew 9:37-38.



to raise up in it priests, deacons, religious, consecrated lay people and missionaries according to His holy will. We pray for our religious leaders, that they may receive the grace to be humble in service, strong in faith, firm in hope, and perfect in love, and as they teach, lead and sanctify the people, equipping us all to make Christ present in the world in our day-to-day lives.

Our Lady of Lebanon Parish has the privilege of being close to Our Lady of Lebanon Maronite Seminary. We meet the seminarians; we get to know them and journey with them until they receive Holy Orders. We hear about their exams, their heavy workloads, and their deadlines. We love them; we adopt them spiritually and pray for them, especially on the day of ordination. Currently, in Washington, we have four seminarians, a small number, but great in quality!

If we want to expand the kingdom of God, if we want our Church to be a sign of Christ's presence and a light to the world, if we want people to recognize us as Christians by how much we love one another, we need to pray for our priests, for their holiness, and for vocations to the priesthood and the religious life. In the process of praying for them, we ourselves will be transformed more and more into Christ's likeness. The patron saint of priests, Jean-Marie Vianney, said: "There is no such thing as bad priests; only priests whose people did not pray enough for them."

Please, join our Parish in holding a monthly Holy Hour of adoration in your own parish. Let us unite our prayers and storm heaven so that it may rain down vocations, flooding our seminary and convents. Call this apostolate: "Operation fill out our Seminary and Convents with holy men and women!" It is our duty to do what the Lord Himself asked us to do. ☐

(For an electronic copy of the prayer booklet, please call 540-798-8450 or email jhallal@verizon.net.)

SAVE THE DATE! **Vocation Discernment Weekend**

On April 5 - 6, 2014, Our Lady of Lebanon Maronite Seminary in Washington, D.C., will be hosting its annual Discernment Weekend for men, 18 and over, interested in finding God's will in their lives. This weekend will be a chance to meet current seminarians, the Vocation Directors, and Fr. Geoffrey Abdallah, Rector of the Seminary. It is also an opportunity to sightsee one of the greatest cities in the world. This weekend is open for men who feel the call to priesthood or are interested in finding out how to discern God's will. More details to come soon. ☐

by *Simona Elhallal*

On Sunday, December 15, 2013, Our Lady of Lebanon Maronite Church, Washington, D.C., celebrated the second anniversary of monthly adoration for priests and vocations. One Sunday a month after the Divine Liturgy, parishioners come to see Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament and to pray for the priests and for vocations. We do not need to make a hole in the ceiling like the friends of the paralytic in the Gospel did; there is plenty of room for everyone to come close to Him, spend time in His company, and tell Him about our needs. Emmanuel - God with us - is always waiting for us in the Holy Sacrament at the Altar; a Gift given to us only through priestly hands and the Holy Spirit!

Sunday worked best for the Parish community because of the Church's location and the long distances many need to travel. When we first started, a small number of parishioners stayed to pray. But as the Pastor continued to announce it from the pulpit and in the bulletin, everyone became familiar with it and started looking forward to that monthly "date" with Jesus.

The litany for priests is sung after the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament. Then we join in a series of vocal prayers, entrusting to God our parish community, asking Him to create in it the spiritual atmosphere of the first Christians and

Dartmouth, Massachusetts Young Women Discern A Religious Vocation



Rachelle Semrani (L) and Emily Lattouf (center) with the Sisters in Dartmouth.

by Sister Therese Maria Touma

Young women are invited to open their hearts to the possibility that God may be choosing them to consecrate their lives to Him in service of His Church. We would like to share some thoughts of two young women who are discerning a vocation to religious life with the Maronite Servants of Christ the Light.

Emily Sarbela Lattouf, 19, from Norton Massachusetts

"The Lord said, "There is no greater love than this: to lay down ones life for one's friends" John 15:13. This is the love, which our Lord gave us; there is truly no greater love than His and He calls us as His children to imitate His love for us.

We are all called by te Lord to make sacrifices for one another; to love one another with sacrificial love, but how far are we willing to serve one another in the Lord's name?

To me the beautiful thing about the Maronite Servants of Christ the Light's mission is that not only are the Sisters called to willingly sacrifice their worldly life in order to better serve the Lord and His people, but also they are called to radiate the Lord's light to all the people they encounter throughout their daily lives. At the end of each meal the Sisters pray, "May we be strengthened to do your holy will and to radiate your light to all those we meet." What better gift can we give to each other than Christ our Lord?"

Rachelle Semrani, 22, from Sydney, Australia

I first heard about the Maronite Servants of Christ the Light

about 12 months ago. I was immediately attracted to the congregation because they live the Maronite faith and spirituality in the Western culture. I was also joyous at learning that formation is in English as they are a fruit of the Eparchy in the U.S.A.. After visiting their website my attraction toward them grew as I read that their apostolate focuses on pastoral service. What better way is there to demonstrate spiritual motherhood than to work alongside the priests in ministering to the spiritual needs of the children of the Church? Indeed by the very consecration of a woman to Jesus, she becomes a spiritual sacrifice to God for the needs of the Church; and the Maronite Servants go deeper by living the spiritual motherhood in their apostolate. I am blessed to be able to discern religious life with them and am drawn toward their very balanced daily schedule. Let us thank God for blessing the Maronite Church with the Maronite Servants of Christ the Light.

Is God calling you? Or perhaps you can suggest the thought of religious life to a young woman in your parish. Let us pray for vocations. The Maronite Servants can be reached at sister@maroniteservants.org or at (508) 996-1753. □

Pope Francis: Pray for Our Bishops and Priests Who Serve the Lord

Bishops and priests are not chosen just to run an organization but rather are the anointed ones chosen by the Lord to serve His people. This was Pope Francis' reflection during his homily on January 27, 2014, at Casa Santa Marta.

The Holy Father began by commenting on the first reading which recounts David's anointing as King of Israel. Without it, the Pope said, David would have been a mere political organizer. "The anointing allows for the Spirit of the Lord to descend upon David. This is precisely the difference anointing makes," the Pope said.

"The bishops are elected not only to conduct an organization, which is called the particular Church. They are anointed: they have the anointing, and the Spirit of the Lord is with them. All the bishops are sinners, everyone. Still, we are anointed."

"It is in this anointing that a particular Church has its strength. Because they take part [in the bishop's mission of service] priests are anointed, as well."

The Holy Father continued his homily saying that the anointing brings priests and bishops closer to the Lord, allowing them to live in the service of their people. It is impossible to understand or explain, however, that the Church could continue on human strength alone.

"We in history know but a small part - though how many holy bishops, how many priests, how many holy priests have given their lives in the service of the diocese, the parish. How many people have received the power of faith, the power of love, hope [itself] from these anonymous pastors? We do not know. There are so many."

While acknowledging that people may read negative news about bishops and priests who have done things contrary to the Gospel, the Holy Father asked the faithful to ponder on

how often good news about their works are reported.

"Tell me, though: do the papers carry news of what great charity so many priests, so many priests in so many parishes of the city and the countryside, perform? Of the great work they do in carrying their people forward?," he asked. "No? This is not news."

Concluding his homily, Pope Francis exhorted those present to reflect on the anointing of King David, which calls us to pray for our brave, holy, good, faithful bishops and priests, and pray for them. "We are here today thanks to them." □

(Zenit.org, January 27, 2014)

On the Sacrament of Confirmation



Below is the translation of the Holy Father's continuing catechesis on the Sacraments during his weekly General Audience in St. Peter's Square on January 29, 2014.

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good Morning!

In this third catechesis on the Sacraments, we will reflect on Confirmation or *Cresima*, which is understood in continuity with Baptism, to which it is connected in an inseparable way. These two Sacraments, together with the Eucharist, make up one salvific event - "Christian initiation" -, with which we are inserted in Jesus Christ dead and risen and become new creatures and members of the Church. This is why originally these three Sacraments were celebrated at the same time, at the end of the catechumenal journey, normally during the Easter Vigil. Thus the course of formation was sealed and a gradual insertion in the Christian community, which could last even several years. It was done step by step to arrive at Baptism, then to Confirmation and the Eucharist.

Ordinarily one speaks of the Sacrament of "*Cresima*," a word which means "anointing." And, in fact, through the oil called "sacred Chrism" we are conformed, in the power of the Spirit, to Jesus Christ, who is the only true "Anointed One," the "Messiah," the Holy One of God.

The term "Confirmation," therefore, reminds us that this Sacrament brings a growth of Baptismal grace: it unites us more firmly to Christ; it brings to fulfillment our bond with the Church; it gives us the special strength of the Holy Spirit to spread and defend the faith, to confess the name of Christ and never to be ashamed of His cross (cf. Catechism of the Catholic Church, n. 1303.)

"For this reason it is important to care that our children, our young ones have this sacrament. We all must take care that they be baptized: and this is good, but perhaps we don't care so much if they receive Confirmation: they remain half-way and do not receive the Holy Spirit, which is very important in Christian life, because it gives us the strength to go forward!

Let us think, each one of us: do we, truly care that our children and our young ones receive Confirmation? This is

important, it is important! And if you have children in your home, young ones who have not received it yet and are of age to receive it, do everything possible to bring to fulfillment this Christian initiation and that they may receive the strength of the Holy Spirit. It is important!

Of course it is important to give the candidates for Confirmation a good preparation, which must seek to lead them to personal adherence to faith in Christ and to awaken in them the sense of belonging to the Church.

Confirmation, like every Sacrament, is not the work of men but of God, who takes care of our life in order to mold us to the image of His Son, to make us capable of loving like Him. He does so by infusing in us His Holy Spirit, whose action pervades the whole person and the whole of life, as shining through the seven gifts that Tradition, in the light of Holy Scripture, has always evidenced. These seven gifts: I do not wish to ask you if you remember the seven gifts. Maybe you all do...But I will say them in your name. What are these gifts? Wisdom, Understanding, Counsel, Fortitude, Knowledge, Piety and Fear of God. And these gifts are given to us by the Holy Spirit in the sacrament of Confirmation. I intend to dedicate to these gifts the catecheses that will follow those of the Sacraments.

When we receive the Holy Spirit in our heart and allow Him to act, Christ Himself makes Himself present in us and molds our life. Through us, it will be He who prays, who forgives, who infuses hope and consolation, who serves brethren, who makes Himself close to the needy and the least, who creates communion, who sows peace. Think of how important this is: through the Holy Spirit, Christ Himself comes to do all this in our midst for us. For this reason it is important that children and young ones receive the Sacrament of Confirmation.

Dear brothers and sisters, let us remind ourselves that we have received Confirmation! All of us! Let us remember it first of all to thank the Lord for this gift, and then to ask Him to help us to live as true Christians, to walk always with joy according to the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us. □

(Zenit.org, January 29, 2014)

Washington, D.C. March for Life

Live Action Founder Calls for Re-Education About Personhood, Dignity of Unborn

by Ann Schneible

Thousands of people braved the bitter cold in Washington, D.C., on January 22, 2014, to take part in the 41st March for Life.

Families, young adults, priests and religious, post-abortive mothers and abortion survivors were among those who marched peacefully through the U.S. capital, calling for an end to legalized abortion.

Beginning in 1974, the March for Life has been held every year on, or near, the anniversary of the 1973 Supreme Court decision – known as *Roe vs. Wade* – which declared

abortion legal in the U.S. Since then, more than fifty-seven million babies have been aborted.

Although the practice remains legal in all fifty U.S. States, pro-life activists are reporting a nationwide decrease in support for abortion.

"The growth of the pro-life movement in the last few years has been phenomenal," said Live Action founder Lila Rose in an interview this week with *ZENIT*.

Recent polls indicate more people are identifying themselves as pro-life than pro-choice, she said, adding that there are growing trends of women, as well as young people, identifying as pro-life.

Also, the passing of pro-life legislation in the last few years, such as the "unprecedented defunding of the abortion giant, Planned Parenthood" at the State and local level, is a positive step towards ending abortion in the country.

Despite these advancements in the pro-life cause, however, Rose warns that there is still work to be done. "Keep in mind we have an Obama administration. He's the most pro-abortion president we've ever had, so the political climate at the federal level is particularly hostile."

Pro-life advocates are also facing the HHS Mandate – known as "Obama Care" – which, Rose says, "is another way of forcing Americans to fund abortion and contraceptives."

"We [need to] completely disentangle the government from the abortion industry," she said, adding that government funding of abortion chains must be shut down at the federal level. "We need to be adamant in our pursuit of that goal, where we do not fund Planned Parenthood. We do not fund abortifacients. We do not fund [forms of] contraception that are also abortifacients."

"That has to happen. And that can happen, even with a pro-abortion president. There are things that we can do and we must do."

Education is also fundamental to the pro-life cause, Rose continued, noting that one of Live Action's initiatives is the education through new media. "We need to be tireless in exposing the abortion industry in the United States," she said. "We need to be putting the evidence in front of the media, in front of the legislators, in front of young people, in front of the public."

"We need to be making the positive statement about why humans have dignity, why humans have rights, where those rights come from. [We need to be] educating people to understand why it is an actual injustice to kill a child in the womb, and how that respect for human life has to extend to all people, including themselves."

This education, she continued, must be done in such a way so as to provide "a foundation for lasting change." It needs to be made clear, she said, that an unborn child "is a human being, with rights - even if they're conceived in rape, even if their mother has health issues. We need to love them both, and explain to people what that means."

While the pro-life movement continues to confront these challenges, Rose remains optimistic. "The good news is that the cultural trending is very much in our favor [due to] the tireless work of pro-life advocates, and unlikely allies, who get out the message of the humanity of the unborn child." □

(Zenit.org, January 22, 2014)

Pope Francis Tweets Support for March for Life

The thousands of marchers braving the cold in Washington, D.C., [on January 22, 2014], got a special affirmation of support from Rome. Pope Francis tweeted: "I join the March for Life in Washington with my prayers. May God help us respect all life, especially the most vulnerable."

The Pope's Twitter account has some 3.6 million followers and he tweets in nine languages.

The annual March for Life in Washington marks the anniversary of *Roe vs. Wade*, the Supreme Court decision that legalized abortion in the United States. This year is the 41st anniversary of that decision. □

(Zenit.org, January 22, 2014)

Pope Appeals for Peace as Geneva II Conference Begins

Pope Francis launched an appeal for peace as the world's top diplomats gathered in Geneva to negotiate a peaceful settlement in the Syrian civil war.

At the conclusion of his Wednesday General Audience on January 22, the Holy Father prayed that the Geneva II Peace Conference will result in an end to the violence that has left hundreds of thousands dead.

"I pray that the Lord will touch the hearts of all so that, in looking only to the greater good of the Syrian people, so sorely tried, they may spare no effort in coming together with urgency in ceasing violence and an end to the conflict, that has already caused so much suffering," the Pope said.

Civil war has raged between the forces of President Bashar al-Assad and Syrian opposition forces. Over 100,000 people are estimated to have been killed in the three year conflict. On September 7th, the Holy Father called for a Day of Prayer and Fasting for Syria which saw the participation of faithful around the world. The Pope has made repeated calls for a peaceful solution to the conflict.

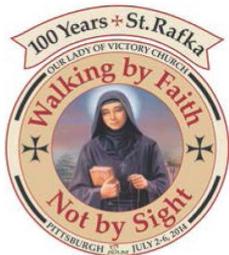
"I wish for the dear nation of Syria a decided path to reconciliation, of harmony and reconstruction with the participation of all citizens," the Pope concluded, "where each one can find in the other not an enemy, not a competitor but a brother to receive and embrace." □

(Zenit.org, January 22, 2014)

Food For Thought

"Not to oppose error is to approve it; and not to defend truth is to suppress it; and, indeed, to neglect to confound evil men - when we can do it - is no less a sin than to encourage them."

Pope Felix III



Commemorative Ad Book Form

51 Annual Maronite Convention
July 2 thru 6, 2014
Our Lady of Victory, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania



There are many opportunities to advertise and sponsor

All ads appear in the commemorative ad book and will be also listed in a local guide. Other options include full color ads, name on web site, logo or name on a digital screen or sponsor wall.

Book Size: The commemorative ad book is a 8.5"x11", perfect bound with no bleeds. Full page is about 7"x 9", half page horizontal is about 7"x 4.25", and quarter page ads are 3" x 4".

Digital: Upload or email your high resolution PDF, JPG, TIFF or EPS file(s)

Text-Only Ads: Clearly print copy that you would like to be typeset on paper and send to address below

Camera-Ready: Mail your camera-ready art to the address below. Paste-up or tape clean text, images and photos at the correct size. It may be resized to fit. Send camera-ready art with your order form and payment to:

Maronite Convention 2014
P.O. Box 717
Yonkers, NY 10702-4611
Phone: 914-964-3070
Fax: 914-964-3071
Email: nam@namnews.org

Submit your ad on line:
www.namnews.org

1] Please circle the ad(s) you are placing and calculate total cost.

AD SIZE	DESCRIPTION	COST
Diamond Sponsor	Full page color, sponsor wall, digital screen, guide and web	\$ 2,500
Gold Sponsor	Full page color, digital screen, guide and web	\$ 1,500
Silver Sponsor	Full page color, guide and web	\$ 750
Bronze Sponsor	Full page color, guide	\$ 500
Full Page B&W	Guide	\$ 300
Half Page B&W	Guide	\$ 200
Quarter B&W	Guide	\$ 100

Total Cost \$ _____

Cover pages are also available please contact the NAM office

2] Please circle the payment method and complete all required (*) information.

Circle one:* VISA MC AMEX Discover Check
 Exp. Date* ____ / ____ Account No.* _____
 Security code* (3 digits on back of card) _____ Signature* _____
 Make checks payable to "NAM Convention."

3] Please provide your information

Parish/ Business* _____
 Your Name* _____
 Address* _____
 City* _____ State* _____ Zip* _____
 Phone* _____ - _____ FAX* _____ - _____
 Email* _____

For full and half page ads, please use another sheet. For smaller ads, please use space below to lay out ad.

I would like to sponsor an educational page (please add up to 3 lines below to be added at the bottom of the page)

NAM OFFICE USE ONLY: AMT. PD. \$ _____ CHK# _____ CASH _____ DATE _____



Project Roots

Preserving Our Pride in Our Lebanese Roots

www.clfw.org



Registering In Lebanon Maintains Cultural Diversity and Open Nature

by *Nada Salem Abisamra*
Director, CLFW and Project Roots

Project Roots is an endeavor of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon and the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn, in collaboration with the Maronite Foundation in the World (now represented in the U.S. by the Christian Lebanese Foundation in the World, CLFW). Our main objective is to preserve the image of Lebanon as it is, whereby Lebanese society maintains its confessional and cultural diversity, its freedom, and its open nature.

As we all know, the percentage of Christians in Lebanon is falling precipitously. Despite the fact that most Lebanese who emigrated from Lebanon are Christian, most of the people of Lebanese descent abroad, especially in the U.S., who register their births and marriages in Lebanon, are usually non-Christian! The Christians abroad have failed to register their marriages and children in Lebanon. We need your support to reverse that and avoid the loss of confessional and cultural diversity in the only country in the Middle East that still maintains it.

How Can You Help?

1) If you (or any member of your family) live in the U.S. and haven't registered your marriage or any of your children in Lebanon yet, contact us and we will be very happy to register you, free of charge. We have several regional coordinators spread throughout the U.S. who would help you from A to Z. The only thing you would have to do is submit a request here: <http://www.projectroots.net/requests.html>. As an incentive to register, we offer a chance to win free tickets to Lebanon to all those who register through us; the drawing is held every year, on Mother's Day.

Please note that your registration in Lebanon will, in no way, jeopardize your American citizenship or reduce your commitment to the United States. It will, however, ensure that Lebanon remains a source of pride for us all.

In order to improve the image of Lebanon in the new generation's minds, incite pride in their Lebanese roots and encourage them to register in Lebanon, we are offering, for the second year in a row, an exceptional opportunity for all young people of Lebanese descent living abroad who are

between twenty and twenty-eight years old: a fully covered two-week educational trip to Lebanon in August 2014. You can find details about it at www.maroniteacademy.org.¹ Register before the end of February 2014.

2) Spread the word about the need to register in Lebanon and the free help provided by CLFW and Project Roots. Explain the importance of registering to your friends and relatives; direct them to our website (www.clfw.org). Talk about this on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Share our flyer/poster.

3) If you believe that all people of Lebanese descent should be able to obtain the Lebanese citizenship because it is their birth right, please sign the Lebanese Citizenship Petition at www.lebanesecitizenship.com and share it with all your friends and relatives.

We are counting on your support. Our cause is vital; our task is tough; but together we can prevail!

¹ The Maronite Academy is an initiative, undertaken by the Maronite Foundation, aimed at introducing young Lebanese immigrants around the world to their country of origin, Lebanon. Selected candidates (between the ages of 20 and 28, of Lebanese descent, living abroad) will undergo online sessions (e-learning sessions) that will build their knowledge about Lebanon and the Maronite Heritage.

After successfully completing their online courses, the selected candidates will benefit from an organized two-week trip to Lebanon (from August 2 until August 17, 2014) all expenses covered by the Maronite Foundation. During their stay in Lebanon, the candidates will get to bond with their roots and get further in touch with the history of Lebanon and the Maronite Heritage through various site visits and seminars, given by prominent figures. For more information log on to www.maroniteacademy.com.



Project Roots

Preserving Our Pride in Our Lebanese Roots

www.clfw.org



Project Roots --an endeavor of the Christian Lebanese Foundation in the World (CLFW) and all the Lebanese Churches in the USA-- aims to help, **free of charge**, all **Americans of Lebanese Descent** register their Births and Marriages to obtain status in Lebanon.

No matter where we go, no matter how long we have been in the United States,
We will Always be Lebanese Descendants.

Registering in Lebanon helps our country of origin to maintain
- **Freedom and Open Nature**
- **Confessional and Cultural Diversity**
... so that it remains a source of pride for us and our offspring.

FREE AIRFARE

**Encourage your Friends and Relatives
to Register through
Project Roots' Coordinators
for a Chance to Win
FREE TICKETS to LEBANON!**

Drawing: Every Year, on Mother's Day!



The Maronite Academy

For ALL Lebanese Christians Abroad

[Free Educational trip to Lebanon for 100 people of Lebanese descent, living abroad, and aged between 20 and 28]

<http://www.maroniteacademy.org>

In Order to Encourage you to Register in Lebanon,
We are Offering you, For the Second Year in a
Row, a Wonderful Opportunity Not to Miss:
**A Fully Covered 2-Week Trip to Lebanon
in August 2014**

Registration deadline: Feb. 28, 2014

**[To increase your chances of being selected from the USA, register
in Lebanon with CLFW and refer to us 2 families to register]**

The Lebanese Citizenship Petition

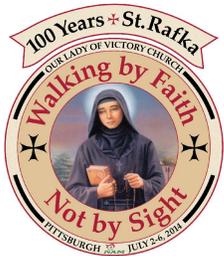
<http://www.lebanesecitizenship.com>

If you are Lebanese or of Lebanese descent,
and you believe that ALL people of Lebanese
descent all over the world should be able to
obtain the Lebanese Citizenship because it is
their BIRTH RIGHT, please sign the petition
and share it with all your friends and relatives.
Thank you!

Contact: **CLFW || PROJECT ROOTS**

Tel Number: 917-755-0499 || Email: info@clfw.org

Web Sites: <http://www.projectroots.net> & <http://www.clfw.org>



Pittsburgh, Penn., Prepares For The Maronite Convention

In 2014, NAM will hold its convention in one of the most fascinating and surprising cities in the United States. Pittsburgh is a city of transformation. From its strategic position at the confluence of three rivers, Pittsburgh has been an important trading post and a fort in pre-colonial times, a transportation hub in early American times, and industrial capital that served as the world's center of manufacturing and materials technology. When times changed in the later 20th century, Pittsburgh went into a decline. As the 1980s and 1990s brought more innovation and alterations that re-shaped Pittsburgh's economy, the city took on a whole new character and shape. In the place of worn-out smokestacks rose attractive and engaging shopping malls. Where unemployment ravaged some communities, new sources of income appeared, fueled by the research and development pumped into new businesses by local colleges, universities and hospitals.

Today, Pittsburgh is a thriving multicultural community, filled with activities that appeal to residents and visitors alike. A world-class symphony, championship sports teams, ballet, theater, art and natural history museums as well as The National Aviary and an astounding botanical conservatory offer cultural experiences that rival those found in other major cities around the globe. Magnificent vistas, rides on a quaint incline, frequent art and food festivals, and magical amusement parks entice families to fall in love with Pittsburgh. Special events, especially the Three Rivers Regatta, showcase the city's waterfront and its potential as a spectacular source of wonder and entertainment.

For more information about the NAM Convention 2014, please visit www.namnews.org or call (914) 964-3070 or by email at nam@namnews.org. For more information from the hosting parish, call (412) 278-0841 or check the Pittsburgh convention website at www.nam2014pittsburgh.org. □

Homily of Cardinal O'Malley

Continued from page 12

In Boston we are making adoption part of a pro-life curriculum for our young people. The majority of women who succumb to abortion are poor. Poverty is a dehumanizing force that leads people to feel trapped and to make this horrible choice. The Gospel of Life demands that we work for economic justice in our country and in our world. In a society where the rich are getting ever richer and the poor poorer, abortion looms ever larger. Planned Parenthood was founded to eliminate the poor.

We can rescue unborn babies from abortion by rescuing their mothers from a life of poverty and hopelessness. Pope Francis challenges our complacency and indifference to the oppressive poverty that spawns so many abortions.

Yes, the Catholic Church's consistent life ethic is a great service to society. It is our task to witness to the truth that love, compassion and solidarity can build a just society that will be safer for the poor, the unborn and those on the periphery.

I often share with people the fact that on the island of Martha's Vineyard there is a beautiful church dedicated to St. Augustine. There are lovely stained glass windows that depict the seven sacraments. When the tourists enter the church, the first window they see is one that represents the sacrament of confession with the crossed keys, the priest's stole and the words: "Go and sin no more." But the church is not air conditioned so in the hot days of summer they open all the windows in the church. Well, the only pane of glass that opens on that window is the part where the word "no" appears. So tourists enter the church and see the window that says "Go and sin more."

In my ten years as Bishop there, not one person ever complained about the window. The irony is that many people think of us Catholics as people of No - don't do this, don't do that. In reality we are the people of Yes - yes to God, yes to life, yes to compassion for the poor and suffering, yes to the solidarity and community that make us messengers of joy even in a valley of tears. The Gospel of Life will always trump the King's New Clothes. □