



# The Maronite Voice



*A Publication of the Maronite Eparchies in the USA*

*Volume XIV*

*Issue No. II*

*February 2017*

## **Our True Reason for Hope**

*Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,*

**W**hat a world we live in! After all the rancor of the 2016 elections in the United States (and let us add Lebanon as well), after all the man-made tragedies in the Middle East, Northern and Central Africa, Eastern Ukraine and elsewhere, after seeing the tragic disrespect for religious freedom in communist countries, Islamic countries, and by terror groups, one has to wonder if this world is headed in the right direction! Lord have Mercy!

In the midst of all this, Pope Francis, who has been a consistent and credible voice for the poor, forgotten, downtrodden, and the oppressed, has been teaching at every Wednesday Papal Audience about the Christian virtue of hope. Yes, hope! This could not come at a better time! Just as last year our world had great need for mercy, and thus the Jubilee Year, this year, with all that is going on in this world, we so badly need hope!



The Pope says that hope, however, is not just optimism. Rather, hope is based on something true, and this is it: God became man and dwells among us! This is our true reason for hope. For even though God entered our world small, poor and vulnerable as a child in Bethlehem, and even though we did not recognize him at the time of his coming and we had no room for him, and even though he was harshly treated and crucified, he arose from the dead, and by his wounds we are healed! This gives us reason to hope.

This eternal and sure truth encourages all who follow God, even in the midst of their own suffering and discouragement, to keep hope.

Are we headed in the right direction in this world? We are if we are following Him!

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+Gregory John Mansour  
Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn

## Schedule of Bishop Elias Zaidan

### February 3 - 4, 2017

Pastoral Visit to St. Maron Church, Detroit, Mich.

### February 5, 2017

St. Maron Feast Day Celebration, Our Lady of the Cedars of Lebanon, Fairlawn [Akron], Ohio

### February 8, 2017

Divine Liturgy at St. John Seminary, Camarillo, Calif.

### February 9, 2017

Enthronement of Bishop Edward Burns, Dallas, Tex.

### February 10, 2017

Diaconate Ordination of Monk Brother John, Our Lady of Mt. Lebanon Cathedral, Los Angeles, Calif.

### February 11 - 12, 2017

Pastoral Visit to Our Lady of Lebanon Church, Lombard [Chicago], Ill.

### February 14 - 16, 2017

New Bishops' Conference, USCCB Headquarters, Washington, D.C.

### February 19, 2017

St. Maron's Liturgy and Banquet, Our Lady of Mt. Lebanon Cathedral, Los Angeles, Calif.

### February 20, 2017

Capital Campaign Committee Meeting, Los Angeles, Calif.

### February 24 - 26, 2017

Pastoral Visit to St. Maron Church, Cleveland, Ohio

### February 27, 2017

Ash Monday Service, St. Raymond Cathedral, St. Louis, Mo.

### March 4 - 5, 2017

Pastoral Visit to St. Sharbel Mission, Baton Rouge, La.

### March 7, 2017

Enthronement of Bishop Oscar Solis, Salt Lake City, Utah. ☐

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#### **Publishers**

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

**Editor** Msgr. George M. Sebaali

#### **Editing and proofreading**

Mary Shaia

Printed in Richmond, Virginia.

#### **Maronite Convention 2017**

Saint Rafka Maronite Mission

**Greenville, South Carolina**

**June 29 - July 2, 2017**

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

## Maronite Bishops' Annual Appeal



The Maronite Bishops' Annual Appeal takes place in Lent each year. This is an opportunity to help with the greatest needs of the Maronite Church in America.

Look for more information about this year's Annual Appeal in next month's issue of *The Maronite Voice*. ☐



## THE ORDER OF SAINT SHARBEL



### Perpetual Members

★ **Zahia Abi Habib**

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

★ **Mary Fallen**

*St. Anthony Church, Glen Allen, Va.*

\*\*\*\*\*

### Annual Members

★ **Monsignor Joseph Kerrigan**

*Holy Family Parish, New Brunswick,  
N.J. (Latin Rite)*

★ **Nicholas Romah**

*Our Lady of Victory Church  
Carnegie, Penn.*

\*\*\*\*\*

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

For more information about the Order ask your Pastor, visit [www.orderstsharbel.org](http://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

## North Palm Beach, Florida Eparchy of Saint Maron Annual Clergy Retreat



by *Father Vince Farhat*

Every year spiritual retreats are offered to the MYO, MYA, and adults of our communities throughout the United States, and once a year the clergy of the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn, along with their bishop, take time to gather for their annual clergy retreat in North Palm Beach, Florida. It is a time to gather as brothers in prayer, conversations, and talks that are meant to recharge us so that we may minister to our people in a more productive way. This year was no different.

We were blessed to have among us the Most Reverend Antoine Chbeir, Maronite Bishop of Latakia, Syria, to serve us as the Retreat Master. Bishop Antoine brings his many years of pastoral care, his fatherly advice from shepherding his priests, and being in the middle of such difficulties while leading his flock in Syria. Such words of wisdom can truly touch the hearts of those who face difficulties in their ministry.

Bishop Gregory Mansour and the clergy were welcomed with sunny skies and cool air which would begin our five-day retreat. After dinner, we had welcoming remarks from Bishop Gregory followed by Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. His remarks touched on remembering the bishops and priests who had served our Church, as well as remembering our priests who were not able to attend due to medical reasons. We offered our prayers for them during the week.

Bishop Antoine spoke most eloquently about the difficulties and the joys that the priesthood holds. Each day he had two meditations for us to think about, pray about, and talk about, while at the same time giving us so much to be hopeful and thankful for. He began his talk with questions for us: "On our spiritual journey, what are the difficulties and obstacles a priest may face? How can we fight the battles of the spiritual journey such as discouragement, feelings of failure, emptiness, loneliness and boredom, etc.? How can we succeed in the spiritual combat we often face and how can we be happy?"

These questions are not exclusively for the clergy but for each and every one of us. Over the five days Bishop Antoine gave advice and experience that would be most helpful to each of us in answering these questions---the same advice and experience we can also pass on to our parishioners.

The life of a priest is paramount in leading his parishioners to a deeper and loving relationship with God. How we live and what we preach from Sacred Scriptures must be one and the same and it is through a strong prayer life and conviction that this state of holiness can be achieved and passed on.

Being together with our brother priests gave us some time to share our joys and our difficulties, and realizing that we are all trying to achieve a common goal. Hopefully our time together once a year can help us improve the way in which we serve others and bring us to a deeper level and relationship with God. □

# Springfield, Massachusetts 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Ordination

by Kathy LaBella

On October 2, 2016, St. Anthony Maronite Church, Springfield, Mass., proudly celebrated one of her own, Monsignor David George, on the 40<sup>th</sup> Jubilee of his ordination to the priesthood. Msgr. David celebrated the Divine Liturgy in the same church in which he was ordained forty years ago. Chorbishop Joseph Kaddo, representing Bishop Gregory Mansour, presided. Fr. George Zina, Pastor, Fr. David Darcy, Chorbishop Joseph Lahoud, Msgr. James Root, Msgr. Chris Connelly, Msgr. David Joyce, Fr. Naji Kiwan, Fr. Tony Saab, Fr. John Murray and Fr. Robert White concelebrated. Many deacons and subdeacons from the area assisted. Music was provided by a combined choir from St. Anthony, Our Lady Of Lebanon in Waterbury, Conn., and members of the Dan Kane Singers. After the liturgy, a banquet was prepared and enjoyed by family, friends and parishioners.

Msgr. David's first call to the priesthood began in the eighth grade when he felt the desire to attend a high school seminary. At the time, there wasn't a high school seminary where he lived so he attended the local Cathedral High School and continued on to Fairfield University, both Catholic institutions. It was during his second year of college that Msgr. David experienced his second calling to the priesthood. Spiritual guidance from the clergy at the University, Sr. Ann Whibey and priests from the Maronite diocese were instrumental in helping Msgr. David discern his call to serve Jesus through the priesthood. After college, Msgr. David entered Our Lady of Lebanon Maronite Seminary in Washington, D.C. He was ordained by Archbishop Frances Zayek on October 2, 1976, at St. Anthony Maronite Church in Springfield, where he and his family were parishioners.

Msgr. David George has served several parishes over his forty years in the priesthood. His first assignment was at St. Anthony of the Desert in Fall River, Mass., as assistant to Msgr. Norman Ferris. He was next assigned as Administrator and then Pastor of Our Lady of Lebanon in Flint, Mich., and then Pastor of St. Theresa Church in



Msgr. David George celebrates the Divine Liturgy for his 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

Brockton, Mass., Our Lady of Lebanon in Waterbury, Conn., and lastly St. Anthony Church in Springfield, Mass. While serving as a pastor in these locations, Msgr. David was drawn to a special ministry to the youth and young adults of the parish and the Eparchy.

He found them to be "invigorating, life giving and a rich source of grace," because they challenged him as much as he challenged them. It was his goal to teach and bring them closer to the heart of Jesus. He found their hearts open and thirsting to learn about the Lord. While in Michigan, Monsignor David became involved with the national youth retreats and annual workshops.

As a result, he started several youth groups, ranging in ages from 6-12 years old (Maronite Children's Organization-MCO), 13-18 years old (Maronite Youth Organization - MYO), and 18 years and older (Maronite Young Adult - MYA) in the various parishes in which he served. While pastor in Brockton, under the direction of Msgr. Michael Kail, Msgr. David and Msgr. James Root formed the MYA, the first young adult organization for the Maronite Eparchy. They also became co-directors of the National Youth Workshop.

Monsignor David is accomplished in many areas: leading interfaith groups

in days of prayer for peace and reconciliation; serving as a member of the founding board of directors and establishing the Brockton Neighborhood Health Center; giving spiritual retreats for youth and adults; and serving as spiritual director to deacon candidates throughout his years of dedicated service to God. However, when asked what the priesthood means to him, he says what stands out is "seeing the miracle of God's love working through the people around me and watching that create even more miracles. Recognizing miracles around me and realizing that they occur every day, both personally and to others is indeed a gift that being a priest has been for me."

Throughout Monsignor David's forty years in the priesthood, he has always served God and his people. Even though health issues have caused him to retire early, he has never stopped serving God as he continues to visit the sick, provide spiritual direction, celebrate liturgy, preach and give retreats. He lives the true meaning of being a priest and inspires us all. □

## Saint Louis, Missouri Cathedral Welcomes New Rector



by Shelly Vitale

On Sunday, January 8, 2017, the community of Saint Raymond Cathedral in Saint Louis, Mo., extended a warm welcome to its new Rector, Reverend John Nahal. Hundreds attended the Divine Liturgy with Reverend Nahal as the celebrant. He was assisted by Deacon Lou Peters and Subdeacon David Wahby. Reverend Nahal's homily was inspiring and heartwarming; he also mentioned that he is looking forward to working with the leaders of the Youth Group and Faith and Heritage classes. He wants the youth engaged in activities because he feels that our children are the future! After the Liturgy, a reception was held at the Cedars Hall. The parishioners were treated to a lunch and given the opportunity to get acquainted with their new Rector. Reverend Nahal made sure to visit every table and meet each parishioner. Everyone was excited to talk with him. Many stated that they were impressed with his endearing personality and beautiful singing voice! The Saint Raymond community looks forward to working with its new Rector. □

## Clinton Township, Michigan New Church Construction Details

by Isabella N. Agby

St. Sharbel Maronite Catholic Church in Clinton Township, Michigan, has launched a three-year capital campaign building project under the local direction of Chorbishop Alfred Badawi, Pastor. The new parish will be located on Hayes Road north of 19 Mile Road in Clinton Township. The location is much closer to most of the parishioners, near major access roads, and large enough to accommodate all the projected future needs (including a church, parish hall, and rectory.) The parish will be housed in an area known for its beauty and value.

A capital campaign committee, comprised of parishioners, will lead the various stages of fundraising needed to carry out the multi-year project. "We are building our future legacy, we are building it for our new generation, to preserve our community, we want to reach out to our youth



Chorbishop Alfred Badawi with the Capital Campaign Committee.

and strengthen their faith, and we want them to be proud of our Middle Eastern heritage and values. We want them to be proud of what their parents and grandparents did for them," stated Rachid El Aile, Chairman of the Capital Campaign Committee.

"What an exciting and historic moment for the parish community of St. Sharbel!" said His Excellency Bishop A. Elias Zaidan, Bishop of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon, in a letter to the parish faithful.

A campaign website has been established and donations to the Building Fund can be made online at [www.stsharbelbuildingfund.org](http://www.stsharbelbuildingfund.org).

## MYO Activities



by Racquel Fakhouri

On Saturday, January 14, 2017, the MYO of St. Sharbel Church, Clinton Township, Mich., volunteered at Gleaners Food Bank in Warren, Mich., where they helped bag frozen green beans for the less fortunate. After two hours of hard work and working together they packed 792 pounds of green beans, which impacted 673 lives! This was the first MYO Volunteer event of 2017 and they cannot wait for many more opportunities coming this year. □



## Minneapolis, Minnesota Pastor's Anniversary



From left: Fr. Emmanuel Nakhle, Bishop Zaidan and Chorbishop Maroun.

by Joannie Moses

Celebration weekend at Saint Maron, Minneapolis, Minn., took place January 6 - 8, 2017! We love our pastor, Chorbishop sharbel Maroun, and were pleased to celebrate his birthday and anniversaries on the weekend of Epiphany. We were blessed to have His Excellency Bishop A. Elias Zaidan visit us.

Friday started with the Divine Liturgy and Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and ended with a sumptuous birthday banquet for Chorbishop sharbel with Bishop Zaidan, Father Emmanuel Nakhle, Father John Paul Kouri, Subdeacon Elias Yazbek, members of the Order of Saint Sharbel, executive board and others. Saturday was a fun pizza party with the MYO and MYA.

The crown of the weekend was the Divine Liturgy on Sunday. Knights of Columbus, standing guard with raised swords, and members of the Order of Saint Sharbel lined the main aisle in honor of the entrance of His Excellency. The Liturgy was punctuated with special events. First, blessing with the Holy Water with His Excellency circled the congregation while the choir added to the elegance of the service. Secondly, four new members of the Order of Saint Sharbel were inducted: Tom Ignatowicz, Dick Haddad, Amira Farah and Genevieve Maroun, Chorbishop Maroun's beloved mother. Lastly, the Order of Saint Gregory was granted by His Holiness Pope Francis to parishioners Elizabeth and Duane Nasser for their unwavering commitment and dedication to the Maronite Church.

The Divine Liturgy was followed by a Lebanese feast prepared by the dedicated parishioners in honor of our special guest His Excellency Bishop A. Elias Zaidan. The MYO and children led the many birthday greetings to our beloved

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The Unity of love is realized when we announce  
together the wonders God has done for us.

*Pope Francis, January 22, 2017*

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pastor. We wish Chorbishop sharbel decades more of healthy and happy life dedicated to the service of our Lord!

## Prison Ministry

A highlight of the blessed Christmas season for Saint Maron Church in Minneapolis was collecting gifts for the needy. Piles grew under the decorated trees as parish clubs, families, and Maronite Christian Formation students donated an estimated value of over \$700 in new toys plus another \$150 cash and personal items, gently used toys and clothing. These gifts were destined for children of the inmates at the Roseville Re-entry Center run by Volunteers of America (VOA). Each parent-inmate was able to choose and wrap gifts for each of his or her own children. Calvary Church and VOA donated also.

Six representatives of St. Maron Parish attended Christmas parties for the families, men's families upstairs, women's families downstairs. Nelly Farhat, Carla Bedros, Kariman Ailabouni, and Joan Moses joined the women's families. We were blessed to be surrounded by the excited children, who unwrapped surprise gifts with great joy. Larger items, such as a Big Wheel, Disney Princess Castle and Thomas the Train Set, were given as door prize drawings. We were joined after Liturgy by Chorbishop sharbel Maroun and Subdeacon Elias Yazbeck. Thrilled children exited with happy hearts and arms full of gifts.

Joan Moses has a prison ministry with the women residing there. She attends Wednesday evenings to facilitate personal writing sessions and attends whenever individuals request individual counseling. Joan sometimes makes jewelry with them, sews, colors, and creates artwork, but most of the time is spent writing and sharing details of their pasts, present and future. She has published a book of forty-three women prisoners' collective writings called *Breaking the Cycle*, available on Amazon. A second volume is in the works. Our prison ministry will expand as some of our parishioners plan to become VOA volunteers with the prisoners!

Consider becoming a volunteer by clearing a background check and getting fingerprinted. These prisoners are immersed in rebuilding and recreating their lives. Most just need someone to talk to who can offer faith, hope, and ideas to help them overcome obstacles. "I was in prison and you visited me" Matt. 25:36. □



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

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

Send all news, pictures and personal correspondence to:

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Email: Gmsebaali@aol.com

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

## Utica, New York *MYA Retreat*



by Father Aaron Sandbothe

On January 14, 2017, the MYA of Saint Louis Gonzaga Maronite Church in Utica, N.Y., hosted its first local retreat for young adults. Fifteen young adults from St. Louis Gonzaga and neighboring parishes attended. The day began with introductions and *Safro* (Morning Prayer), followed by a lecture on the interconnection between faith and professional life in the context of the historical situation of Maronites in Central New York by Dr. Eugene Nassar, Rhodes Scholar and parishioner of St. Louis Gonzaga Church. Dr. Nassar, renowned professor of literature, with degrees from Oxford and Cornell, spoke of the rich contribution the Maronites of Central New York made over the past century and how his faith and connection to Utica throughout his life shaped his personal and professional identity. Following the lecture, the group gathered to celebrate the Holy Mysteries celebrated by Father Aaron Sandbothe, Parochial Vicar and MYA Chaplain for St. Louis Gonzaga Church. Fr. Aaron preached to the group on the importance of faith itself as a sign to the world and the importance of maintaining a close connection to the local church throughout college and the beginning of a career as the local church community serves as the foundation for building and keeping a Christian identity - and a Maronite identity in particular - in an increasingly secular world.

Following Liturgy, the group had lunch together followed by trivia and fellowship. The MYA of St. Louis Gonzaga Church looks forward to hosting more retreats in the future. □

## Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania *Epiphany Celebration*

The Altar & Rosary Society at St. Anthony & St. George Maronite Church in Wilkes-Barre, Penn., prepared *Zalabia* for the Epiphany. Members of the Society prepared and served the *Zalabia* and coffee in an annual tradition in memory of Mrs. Anne Slavish. All parishioners



Parishioners enjoying the event.

were welcomed after the Divine Liturgy to enjoy the treats which were offered in original, gluten free and anise seed-free varieties. □

## Houston, Texas *Epiphany Celebration*

by Nabil Joubran

Our Lady of the Cedars Maronite Church in Houston, Texas, observed the Feast of the Glorious Epiphany with an evening Divine Liturgy and Blessing of the Epiphany waters on Thursday, January 5, 2017, a cold and wet evening. Fathers Milad Yaghi, Pastor, and Edward Hanna, Associate Pastor, concelebrated the Divine Liturgy, during which the Rite of the Blessing of the Waters was performed, followed by Fr. Hanna's sprinkling the faithful with Holy Water. Despite the adverse weather, many parishioners braved the cold and packed the Church. At the end of the service, pre-filled bottles of Holy Water were distributed to all those present, so that they could bless their homes and take to friends and family members who could not attend.

After the Divine Liturgy, everyone enjoyed fellowship in the Cedar Hall, where the Daughters of Mary had prepared Lebanese sweets that are traditionally offered for this feast. There was plenty of *Zalabia*, *Maakaroon*, and *Awwaymet* for everyone to enjoy, with many taking home the remaining desserts. □





## Lenten Observances 2017

## Devotion of Lenten Fridays

The Most Reverend Bishops Gregory Mansour and A. Elias Zaidan have issued the following Lenten guidelines for the Maronites of the U.S.:

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.

- ★ All Maronites who are physically capable are to abstain from meat on Ash Monday (February 27, 2017) and all Fridays of Lent.

ASH Monday

- ★ 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.

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.* □



## Estate Planning and Charitable Gift Annuity Opportunities

**E**state gifts are the bedrock of financial security for many Catholic dioceses, non-profit organizations and other institutions in the United States such as hospitals and universities. A gift from a person's estate is one of the most meaningful gifts one can make. By definition, such a gift is a purposeful and deliberate gift that a person makes to mark his or her life. It is a lasting testament to the values and institutions that a person cherishes.

Please consider naming your Eparchy and Parish as beneficiaries in your estate plan. Such a gift can benefit the Church for generations to come.

There are many types of innovative gifts that can provide a tax deduction now and save you money. For example, by establishing a Charitable Gift Annuity, you can get an immediate tax deduction, receive a large dividend for the rest of your life, and help the Maronite Church. Catholic Extension Society, which has managed annuities for over 100 years and never missed a payment, manages the Eparchy's Charitable Gift Annuity program.

If you have any questions about an estate gift or any other type of planned gift, please contact Stewardship Director John Kurey Esq., at [saintmaron@yahoo.com](mailto:saintmaron@yahoo.com) or [maroniteswest@yahoo.com](mailto:maroniteswest@yahoo.com).

If you would like more information about Charitable Gift Annuities, please contact Mr. Kurey or Catholic Extension Society's expert on Charitable Gift Annuities, Bobbi Hannigan, at [bhannigan@catholicextension.org](mailto:bhannigan@catholicextension.org) or 312-795-6047.

The Maronite Eparchies exist to serve you and your loved ones. Please help the Maronite Church for generations to come with a special gift. □



## Eparchial Condolences

**Br. Augustine (Michael B.) Martin, MMA**, passed away suddenly on Christmas Day, 2016, at Most Holy Trinity Monastery in Petersham, Mass., at the age of 58.

He was predeceased by his mother Patricia (Glatfelter) Martin in 1989. His father, Robert T. Martin still lives in Br. Augustine's hometown of Columbia, Penn. He is also survived by three older brothers, Subdeacon Brother Ephrem, MMA, Edward, and Joseph, and three younger siblings, Anthony, Maria, and Daniel. He was interred in the Monastery's cemetery.

Br. Augustine first arrived at Most Holy Trinity Monastery in 1994, captivated by Our Lord's call to forsake a successful career in computer programming (over fifteen years which involved world traveling for his company), as well as the avid pursuit of favorite activities in music (piano, organ and French horn), art, photography, scuba-diving, volleyball, golf and camping, for the more challenging narrow way of the Cross in the cloistered Maronite life of contemplative Eucharistic adoration.

Michael Martin professed his first vows under the name of Br. Augustine of the Cross on March 19, 1998, and made his final consecration of monastic life to Christ on St. Joseph's Feast in 2001.

His Excellency Bishop Gregory Mansour along with the clergy and faithful of the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn, extend their heartfelt sympathy and the promise of our prayers to Abbott Driscoll and the Monks of the Holy

Trinity Monastery, and to Br. Augustine's family.

May the Lord God grant his servant Augustine rest in His Kingdom and consolation to his family and loved ones. ☐

## Schedule of Bishop Gregory Mansour

### February 1, 2017

Meeting of CAMECT (Christian Arab and Middle Eastern Churches Together) with Catholic and Orthodox Leaders at Armenian Prelacy, Manhattan, N.Y.

### February 4- 5, 2017

Visit to Sts. Peter and Paul Church, Tampa, Fla.

### February 8, 2017

Vigil of Saint Maron Feast Day, Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral, Brooklyn, N.Y.

### February 11 - 12, 2017

Saint Maron Feast Day Celebration, Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral, Brooklyn, N.Y.

### February 16 - 17, 2017

Visit to Abbott Driscoll and the Monks of the Holy Trinity Monastery, Petersham, Mass.

### February 18 - 19, 2017

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

### February 25, 2017

Visit to St. Anthony Church, Danbury, Conn.

### February 26, 2017

Visit to St. Maron Church, Torrington, Conn.

### March 2, 2017

Christian Churches Together Meeting, Newark, N.J.

### March 3, 2017

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

### March 8, 2017

Catholic Relief Services Evening, Fordham University, New York, N.Y.

### March 11 - 12, 2017

MYO/MYA Retreat and Parish Visit, St. John Paul II Church, Sleepy Hollow, N.Y.

### March 19, 2017

Visit to St. Joseph Church, Atlanta, Ga. ☐

## SAVE THE DATE!!

### 2017 MYO National Retreat

St. Maron Maronite Church  
Minneapolis, Minnesota

July 3 - 8, 2017



### Visit Our Upcoming Retreat Location at:

[www.circavistavirtualtours.com/universityofnorthwestern/Intro.html](http://www.circavistavirtualtours.com/universityofnorthwestern/Intro.html)

**Facebook:** National Maronite Youth Organization (MYO)

**Twitter:** @maronite\_youth

**Instagram:** @maroniteyouth

**Snapchat:** maroniteyouth

## Appeal from Caritas Lebanon

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

**Fr. Elias Abi Sarkis, Director**

8315 South 107<sup>th</sup> East Ave.

Tulsa, OK, 74133

Ph: 918-872-7400

or visit *Caritas Lebanon* at <http://www.caritas.org.lb>.

Checks may be made to Caritas Lebanon.

Thank you for your consideration. ☐

# How Should We Translate The Lord's Prayer?

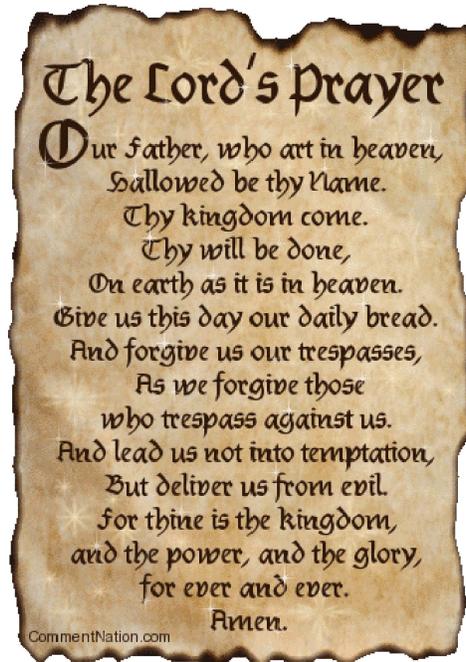
by  
Reverend David A. Fisher

"Therefore, you shall pray in this way: Our Father, who is in heaven: May your name be kept holy. May your kingdom come. May your will be done, as in heaven, so also on earth. Give us this day our life-sustaining bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation. But free us from evil. Amen" Matthew 6:9-13 (Douay-Rheims Version).

The "Our Father," or Lord's Prayer, is found in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. The above translation of Matthew's Gospel is from the Douay-Rheims Version of the Bible in English. This translation of the Bible into English was in response to the Protestant project which eventually became known as the King James Version. This translation was carried out by English Catholics in exile, living in Douay and Rheims [France], with the New Testament being published in 1582. Revised in 1752 and produced in an American Edition in 1899, the Douay-Rheims Version of the Bible enjoyed the status of being the official Catholic Bible in English well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Having been a translation from St. Jerome's Latin Vulgate Bible and not from the original Biblical languages led to the decline of its status with the English translations of the New American Bible, the Jerusalem Bible, the Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition and others. However, the above passage from Matthew opens our eyes to a significant question of translation; we see here not the usual "give us this day our daily bread;" rather we read "give us this day our life-sustaining bread."

The Koine Greek word in question is *epiousios* as it is used in its adjectival form *epiousion*. This word is found only twice in the Bible, that being in the Lord's Prayer or "Our Father" of Matthew and Luke. Even more significantly it has never been found in any other Greek writing in history, Christian or pagan. Therefore, most scholars believe, as did the early Church Father Origen, that it was created by the Gospel writers to serve as an adjective for the word "bread."

A survey of the Fathers of the Church, many of whom were well-schooled in Greek such as St. Jerome, or whose native language was Greek, are in disagreement as to the meaning of this



word. Origen, in his work *On Prayer*, 27.2, and St. Cyprian in his work *Treatise on the Lord's Prayer*, 18, both felt that that the bread referred to is Christ himself, the "Bread of Heaven," the Eucharist, while St. John Chrysostom, in his Homily on the Gospel of Matthew 19:5, felt that it referred to the daily bread we need to sustain our bodies and life on earth. St. Jerome interestingly translates *epiousion* in both ways; in translating the Our Father in Luke's Gospel into Latin he uses the word *quotidianum*, meaning "daily bread," which has become the traditional word used in the Latin Liturgy, but for Matthew's Gospel he uses the word *supersubstantialem*, meaning super-substantial bread, or the Eucharist.

Our Lord, of course, would have recited the Our Father in either Hebrew or Aramaic, and while we do not know the exact words he used, the Gospel writers chose this compound of *epi* (for) and *ousia* (essence, being) to reflect the meaning/translation of the actual Aramaic or Hebrew used by Jesus

himself.

The Maronite Biblical Scholar Msgr. Paul Feghali remarked that "This word (*epiousios-epiousion*) has two translations; in some Eastern Christian Churches they say "for tomorrow" [*Heavenly, Eucharistic Bread*] and in the Latin Church "today" [*Daily Bread*]. We cannot take one meaning and abandon the other" (*personal correspondence*, 2017).

This both/and position rather than an either/or answer is reflected in The Catechism of the Catholic Church: "Daily" (*epiousios*) occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. Taken in a temporal sense, this word is a pedagogical repetition of "this day," to confirm us in trust "without reservation." Taken in the qualitative sense, it signifies what is necessary for life, and more broadly every good thing sufficient for subsistence. Taken literally (*epi-ousios*: "super-essential"), it refers directly to the Bread of Life, the Body of Christ, the "medicine of immortality," without which we have no life within us. Finally, in this connection, its heavenly meaning is evident: "this day" is the Day of the Lord, the day of the feast of the kingdom, anticipated in the Eucharist that is already the foretaste of the kingdom to come (Catechism of the Catholic Church # 2837).

In the final analysis the "Our Father" is an all-encompassing prayer. Since Jesus taught us to pray this way, it sums up our total relationship and dependency upon God. Without God our daily lives are empty of the bread of living and without God our desire for the eternal, heavenly bread is lost. □



# *Go In Haste! Be Amazed! Treasure!*

*By  
Bishop Robert Barron*

**B**y now most of you are probably aware of the depressing statistics regarding the "nones," that is to say, those in this country who claim no religious affiliation. The most recent survey showed that now fully one fourth of Americans belong to no religion at all—that's approximately 80,000,000 people. And among those in the 18 - 29 age group, the percentage of nones goes up to 40! This increase has been alarmingly precipitous. Fifty years ago, only a fraction of the country would have identified as unreligious, and even a decade ago, the number was only at 14%. What makes this situation even more distressing is that fully 64% of young adult nones were indeed raised religious but have taken the conscious and active decision to abandon their churches. Houston, we definitely have a problem.

I have written frequently regarding practical steps that religious leaders ought to be taking to confront this rising tide of secularist ideology, and I will continue to do so. But for the moment, I would like to reflect on a passage from the Gospel of Luke, which sheds considerable light on this issue. It has to do with the visit of the shepherds to Mary and the Christ child in the stable at Bethlehem, and it hinges on three words: haste, astonished, and treasured.

We hear that, upon receiving the angel's message, the shepherds "went in haste" to visit the holy family. This echoes a passage from a bit earlier in Luke's Gospel: having heard the news of her own pregnancy and that of Elizabeth, Mary, we are told, "went in haste" to the hill country of Judah to help her cousin. The spiritual truth that both of these pericopes disclose is that energy, verve, enthusiasm, and a sense of mission come precisely from a good that is perceived to be both objective and transcendent to the ego. If I might borrow the language of Dietrich von Hildebrand, it is only the objectively valuable—as opposed to the merely subjectively satisfying—that fills the mind and soul with passion and purpose. When the sense of objective and transcendent value is attenuated -

as it necessarily is within the context of a secularist worldview - passion and mission fade away. John Henry Newman said that what gives a river verve and movement is precisely the firmness of its banks. When those banks are broken down, in the interest of a supposed freedom, the once energetic body of water spreads out into a great lazy lake. What we have in our secularist culture, which denies the transcendent good, is a subjectivism that gives rise to the "whatever" attitude. Toleration and self-assertion reign supreme; but no one goes anywhere in haste. Rather, we all rest on our individual air mattresses in the midst of the placid but tedious lake.

The second word I want to emphasize is "astonished." Luke tells us that those who heard the shepherds' testimony were "astonished" at the news. The King James Version renders this as "they wondered at" the message. Wonder, amazement, and astonishment happen when the properly transcendent power breaks into our ordinary experience. The findings of the sciences delight and inform us, but they don't astonish us, and the reason for this is that we are finally in control of the deliverances of the scientific method. We observe, we form hypotheses, we make experiments, and we draw conclusions. Again, this is all to the good, but it doesn't produce amazement. Dorothy Day witnessed to the astonishing when she said, upon the birth of her first child, that she felt a gratitude so enormous that it would correspond to nothing or no one in this world. Mother Teresa was properly amazed when, on a lengthy train journey to *Darjeeling*, she heard a voice calling her to minister to the poorest of the poor. The apostles of Jesus fell into wonder when they saw, alive again, their master who had been crucified and buried. These are the most precious kinds of experiences that we can have, and if St. Augustine is right, they alone can satisfy the deepest longing of the heart. A secularist ideology—the worldview embraced by the "nones"—produces the clean, well-lighted space of what we can know and control. But it precludes true

astonishment, and this leaves the soul impoverished.

The final word from Luke upon which I'd like to reflect is "treasured." The evangelist tells us that Mary "treasured these things, pondering upon them in her heart." Newman said that Mary, precisely in this contemplative, ruminative frame of mind, is the model of all theology. I'd press it further. She is the real symbol of the Church in its entire function as the custodian of revelation. What is the Sistine Chapel? What is Notre Dame Cathedral? What is *The Divine Comedy of Dante*? What is the *Summa contra gentiles* of Thomas Aquinas? What are the sermons of John Chrysostom? What are the teachings of the great ecumenical councils? What is the liturgy in all of its complexity and beauty? These are all means by which the Church stubbornly, century in and century out, treasures the astonishing events of God's self-manifestation. Up and down the ages, the Church ponders what God has done so that the memory of these mighty deeds might never be lost. As such, she performs an indispensable service on behalf of the world—though the world might not have any sense of it. She keeps holding up the light against the darkness.

So to the "nones" and to those who are tempted to move into secularism, I say, don't float on the lazy lake; rather, go in haste! Don't settle for something less than astonishment; be amazed! Don't fall into spiritual amnesia; treasure! □

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



## **My Journey to the Priesthood**

*by*  
**Father Alex Harb**

I am a newly ordained priest working and praying at St. Maron Church in Cleveland, Ohio. I preach, teach, celebrate liturgies, baptisms, and marriages, accompany families through deaths and funerals, and attend meetings and parish events. I also go out to eat, go swimming and to the gym, watch tv, visit with family and friends, cook, and hope to start raising chickens when the season starts. I am sometimes happy, sometimes, sad, and sometimes get a little angry or frustrated.

For almost eight years I was actively preparing to be a priest and have found that a few aspects of my life are different than I expected, but in many

ways, it is similar to when I was a deacon, and a subdeacon before that, and a seminarian before that.

The priesthood can be nothing more than this, nothing more than a series of actions removed from their meaning. There is a temptation to turn my priesthood into a selfish and meaningless life.

All of this can happen if I think of the priesthood as my priesthood rather than a sharing in the priesthood and life of Jesus Christ. On days and moments when I put Jesus first, the priesthood is unveiled before me. The sanctuary and assembly become heaven and the hosts of heaven and earth joined in prayer before almighty God. Baptisms reveal themselves as transformational new births and through the shadow of funerals appears bridges between the here and the hereafter. Loneliness fades as I realize God's embrace.

I live this seesaw priesthood both soaring on wings of eagles and bogged down in the day to day. Prayer can still be a struggle, temptation has become no lighter, and yet I have finally found satisfaction. Ten years ago, God told me that He would wait for me, that He intended for me to be a priest, and assured me that I could serve Him in many ways, even if I chose not to be a priest. Here I am, having said, "yes" after many hundreds of smaller yeses, needing to still say "yes" each day and each moment. God has made me a priest.

I am filled with awe when I am invited into households and families because of the people's love for God, which they extend to me because of their love for Him.

One beautiful aspect about the priesthood is that I am involved in Reconciliation/Confession from two sides, as both a sharer and receiver of mercy. I sin, and thank God for the gift of humility to go to Reconciliation and receive His mercy. I extend God's

mercy, and each time I am an instrument of mercy in the confessional I am struck with the profound sense that I need to love and take time for each person I encounter, because many close their tear ducts with forced smiles, and drown out their pains and doubts with talk of the weather.

I am not the man I should be, I am not the priest I should be, I have not said yes to God's love as thoroughly as I could. Yet, through me and in spite of me God works on both the natural and supernatural levels. As the Lord said to St. Paul, "*My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness*" (2 Cor 12:9a). Please pray for me that I may declare with St. Paul, "*I will most gladly spend and be utterly spent for your sakes*" (2 Cor 12:15a). □

### **Prayer For Priestly Vocations**

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

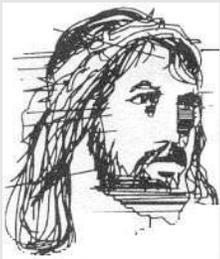
We come before You now, asking that You call forth more men to serve our eparchies in the ministerial priesthood.

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.



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

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

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

Or

Fr. Dominique Hanna, Director  
Eparchy of Saint Maron  
Office of Vocations  
c/o St. Joseph Church  
502 Seminole Ave. NE  
Atlanta, GA 30307

Or

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



## Gratitude by Marise Frangie

God loves us so much to the point of sending His Only Son to be born a little baby in a manger, to endure the agony in the garden, the scourging at the pillar, the heavy cross of our sins, and to stay with us in the Eucharist to be our daily food.

Thus, we must have an attitude of gratitude. We cannot go deeper in the spiritual life if we do not cultivate a grateful heart every moment of our life. We cannot be grateful and at the same time be a people of complaints. We have been blessed with so much. What we have is a gift from God, for which we are to be grateful. What kind of attitude do you have? Do you praise God and thank Him even for the crosses? When St. Francis preached to the birds, he taught us a great lesson in gratefulness:

*"My little sisters, the birds, ye owe much to God, your Creator, and ye ought to sing his praise at all times and in all places... Beware, my little sisters, of the sin of ingratitude, and study always to give praise to God."*

Our Lord said to Saint Faustina: *"Your thanksgiving opens up new treasures of graces (1489). In return for My blessings, I get ingratitude. In return for My love, I get forgetfulness and indifference. My Heart cannot bear this (1537)."* We can console the heart of Jesus daily by praising and thanking God in all things.

We, who receive Holy Communion at Divine Liturgy are called to be a Eucharistic people. Eucharist means thanksgiving. How many times we want more and fail to see all the blessings in our lives? We participate in the greatest thanksgiving celebration - the Eucharist - yet we do not realize what a great treasure we are given in the Blessed Sacrament. We come to the Divine Liturgy with an intention in our minds and we walk out hoping God will grant us our petition. We get easily distracted by our materialistic needs and forget that every Holy Communion in a state of grace is an opportunity for us:

- to be transformed into another Christ.
- to grow in holiness and live more faithfully our calling to holiness
- to deepen and strengthen our personal relationship with the Lord
- to offer the best act of thanksgiving to Our Heavenly Father.

No wonder why the post communion prayer in our Maronite Divine Liturgy poses important questions:

*"O gracious Lord, what return shall we make to your goodness, for the salvation you have just given us? Who is able to offer the proper glory due to you? Although of little worth and according to our measure, we glorify, praise, and thank you"* [Anaphora of St. John]. Perhaps this prayer can remind us that our lives should be a continuous celebration of the Eucharist, a fitting thanksgiving to Our Lord. May we join Saint Faustina in praying:

*"O Jesus, eternal God, I thank You for Your countless graces and blessings. Let every beat of my heart be a new hymn of thanksgiving to You, O God. Let every drop of my blood circulate for You, Lord. My soul is one hymn in adoration of Your mercy. I love You, God, for Yourself alone (1794)."* □



## Vocation: Life Giving Vow of Obedience



by Sister Therese Touma

*"My food is to do the will of him who sent me, that I may accomplish his work" (John 4:34).*

In reflecting back over the nearly seven years of my religious life, I can honestly share that I have tasted the beautiful fruits of living obedience, and have seen my self grow in self-knowledge, confidence in God's mercy and inner freedom. On the other hand, the daily struggle to live out authentic obedience has been real and trying. Throughout my journey, I have stumbled (and in the process have been humbled) in my quest to love God undividedly and master my self-seeking and strong will, which wants to seek its "own" way.

Obedience is much more than something I do or my efforts in striving to listen and follow my superior's directives. I have come to learn that it is essentially a gift from God. "This is one of the greatest gifts that God gives us in our vocation as religious, to enable us to share in complete self-giving which is the life of the Blessed Trinity, to be enabled to give him our last self-possession, our own will and judgment, and by giving it to him, to receive it back from him glorious and divinized, part even of himself" (*The Mysticism of Obedience, Page 29*).

To surrender each day in faith, my entire liberty, my memory, my understanding to God has been something I have cultivated with the help of my formator, Mother Marla Marie. Sometimes I have been successful and at other times I have taken back my will due to certain fears, difficulties, weaknesses and a lack of trust on my part. So what impels me in my religious life to obey my superior? Simply put, it is because I love God, and I believe that it is God who is

speaking to me in the person of my superior, and when I do my superior's will, I do God's will and thus I am united to God's will in my loving obedience. As Bernard Lemming, S.J., asserts, to unite our will with God is to become sharers in his nature and to be one with his being. "God's will IS himself. He is immutable" (*The Mysticism of Obedience, Page 28*).

In imitation of the obedient, poor and chaste Christ who redeemed the world through his obedience to God the Father, I, too, as his spouse and as a Maronite Servant of Christ the Light, am called to live out this radical vow in union with him for the salvation of souls. Christ came to do not his will but the Father's will. "I have come down from heaven not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me" (John 6:38).

My prayer is that I may always find great joy and beauty in seeking God's will both in the small and grand assignments that come my way. Lord, grant me a greater trust and surrender knowing that you permit all things in your loving and wise providence.

Lord Jesus Christ, take all my freedom, take my memory, my understanding, and take all of me. All that I have and cherished you have given to me. Take, Lord Jesus, Take all of me. I surrender it all to you to be guided by your will. Your grace and your love, they are wealth enough for me. Give me these, Lord Jesus, I ask nothing more of you (Ignatius of Loyola). □

## Dayton, Ohio Bishop's Visit



Bishop A. Elias Zaidan with Fr. Guy-Raymond Sarkis.

by Bassem Zgheib, Parish Council President

On December 10, 2016, His Excellency Bishop A. Elias Zaidan visited Saint Ignatius of Antioch Maronite Catholic Church in Dayton, Ohio, for the parish's Feast Day.

His visit, just before the Christmas holiday season was timely to the parish and its parishioners. Bishop Zaidan met with parishioners and attended a banquet celebrating Saint Ignatius' Feast Day. In addition, during his visit, His Excellency baptized William Abdallah, the son of a parish member and concluded his visit on December 11 with a Divine Liturgy.

As always, the Bishop's visit to Saint Ignatius was very special. It demonstrated his continuing support for the Lebanese community in Dayton. Saint Ignatius is a humble and small parish that strives to serve the Maronites in Dayton and the Miami Valley area. The parish has been essential in maintaining a strong relationship with our Lebanese roots and Maronite heritage.

His Excellency's visit also exhibited the growth of Saint Ignatius Parish in Dayton. Bishop Zaidan appointed Fr. Guy-Raymond Sarkis in 2015 as Pastor for Saint Ignatius. Since then, Father Sarkis, in collaboration with the parishioners, has devoted all his efforts to plan for a better future for the parish. His hard work and commitment to overcome the challenges that the parish faces and to make it a thriving place of worship are very noticeable.

Although Saint Ignatius is a Lebanese Maronite Catholic Church, it serves multiple national communities in addition to the Lebanese community. Believers from different Middle Eastern nationalities come together to continue the amazing Maronite journey that our ancestors set before us. Lebanese, Jordanians, Americans, Syrians, Egyptians and Iraqis gather together to grow in faith and follow in the footsteps of Jesus.

St. Ignatius Church would like to thank Bishop Zaidan for his visit and ask Christ to lead his path. His visit was a blessing to the Parish, and we look forward to meeting with him again.

"I am with you always" (Matthew 28:20). Armed with the love of Christ and trust in God, parishioners from the Saint Ignatius of Antioch Maronite Catholic Church continue to thrive and grow in this challenging world around us. □

## Tequesta, Florida Bishop's Visit



From left: Bishop Gregory Mansour, Bishop Antoine Chbeir with the congregation of Mary, Mother of the Light Mission. (Picture by Valerie Fares.)

by Subdeacon Dennis and Mary Somerville

On Friday, January 13, 2017, Mary, Mother of the Light Mission in Tequesta [Palm Beach], Fla., hosted two Maronite Bishops: Bishop Gregory Mansour, Bishop of the Eparchy of Saint Maron, and Bishop Antoine Chbeir, Bishop of the Maronite Eparchy of Latakia, Syria, for an evening of prayer and fellowship.

The evening started with the chanting of *Ramsho* [evening Prayer] of the first Sunday after Epiphany. After *Ramsho*, Bishop Gregory introduced Bishop Antoine Chbeir as a very humble and spiritual beacon in the war torn land of

Syria. He spoke how for twenty-two years, Bishop Antoine was happy in Lebanon as a parish priest, and then the bishops elected him to become bishop. Their decision changed his life. But Bishop Antoine then said that he always wanted to say "yes" to wherever God put him, so it was meant to be.

Bishop Antoine eloquently shared the difficulties he, his people, and many others experience in Syria and how the economy has fallen drastically which puts a strain on everyone. Even when he asked the bank for a loan to make additions to the church and schools, which are a sign of hope, they replied that they would not grant a loan to a country at war. Yet, the education of all, especially seminarians, must continue so that the people don't become illiterate or have their lives fully repressed and not allowed to grow due to their simple basic education. He said that people keep coming to the church to ask for help, and he doesn't ask any person if they are Christian or not because everyone needs the help and he gives what he can.

After the talk, the ladies of the parish prepared and served a simple meal in the Church Hall. The two bishops walked around and greeted everyone, while fellowship and discussion continued among us about what we had just heard and experienced in our hearts.

A good-will offering was received that evening, and a second collection was taken at Sunday's Liturgy to aid the poor and internally displaced in Bishop Antoine's eparchy.

Mary, Mother of the Light community will keep Bishop Antoine Chbeir and his people in its hearts and prayers. He is truly a faith-filled minister of the Gospel, and a beacon of hope to those in his care.

## Newtown Square, Pennsylvania Christmas Pageant



by Lillian Shahade

On December 18, 2016, the children at St. Sharbel Maronite Church in Newtown Square, Penn., came together and reenacted the Birth of Christ. They did a wonderful job and sang hymns. Fr. Tony Mouaness, Pastor, congratulated them on a job well done. After the Liturgy refreshments were served in the Hall and Santa came to visit with the children. □



## ***God Forgets Our Sins. So It's Time to Trust That and Start Over***

“**G**od is ready to forgive and forget our sins. So let’s welcome His invitation to renew us....” According to Vatican Radio, Pope Francis stressed this to faithful during his daily morning Mass at Casa Santa Marta on January 20, 2017, as he reflected on the Letter to the Hebrews.

In his homily, Pope Francis underscored that the new covenant which God makes with us in Jesus Christ, renews our heart. God renews all things “from the roots, not only in appearance,” he said.

### ***Change in Mindset***

This new covenant, Pope Francis explained, has its own characteristics. “The law of the Lord,” he noted, “is not an external way of acting,” but rather, enters hearts and changes our mindset, leading to “a change of heart, a change of feeling, of way of acting, and a different way of looking at things.”

To demonstrate this, the Pope offered the example of a work of art, which an architect can behold either with cold envy or with joy and goodness. “The new covenant changes our heart,” Francis said.

The Pope invited those present to consider the doctors of the law who persecuted Jesus, who did everything prescribed by the law.

Stressing that their mindset was distanced from God, Francis lamented it was an egotistical mindset, focused on themselves, and condemning others. On the other hand, the Pontiff stressed, the new covenant changes our hearts and minds. “There is a change in mindset.”

“At times, I like to think about joking with the Lord: ‘You don’t have a good memory!’ This is the weakness of God: When God forgives, He forgets,” Francis shared.

### ***The Lord Recreates Us***

“He forgets, because he forgives. Before a penitent heart, He forgives and forgets: ‘I will forget, I will not remember their sins’. But this too is an invitation not to remind the Lord of our sins, that is, to not sin any more: ‘You have forgiven me, you forgot.’

“A change of life, a new covenant renews me and changes my life, not only the mindset and heart, but my life. To live without sin, far from sin: this is to recreate. This is how the Lord recreates us.”

Speaking about the ‘change of appearance,’ he said, “We belong to God, other gods do not exist... A change of mindset changes the heart, life, and appearance.” He reiterated that this “is the re-creation, which the Lord makes even more glorious than the first Creation.”

### ***Change Your Heart, Life***

He then exhorted Christians to follow through with this

covenant and to be ever true to it.

“The seal of this covenant is faithfulness, to be faithful to this work which the Lord has completed to change our mindset, to change our hearts. The prophets said, ‘But the Lord will change your heart of stone into a heart of flesh’: To change one’s heart and life and to sin no more.”

Pope Francis concluded, praying: “May the Lord give us the grace to know how to discern what is going on in our hearts and to choose the right path upon which the Father draws us to Jesus.” □

*(Zenit.org, January 20, 2017)*

## ***Don't Let Temptations 'Wage a War' Against You***



**C**hristian life is a daily struggle against temptation. According to Vatican Radio, Pope Francis stressed this to faithful during his daily morning Mass at Casa Santa Marta on January 19, 2017, as he reflected on the day's Gospel reading from St. Mark, which tells of how large numbers of people followed Jesus with enthusiasm and their reasons for doing so, such as to be healed.

Pope Francis encouraged faithful to be ‘drawn’ to Jesus, without succumbing to other subjects to which one can be ‘drawn.’

The Argentine Pontiff reminded faithful how resisting these natural sentiments will help them to not fall down the wrong path. “A Christian life without temptations,” Francis said, “is not Christian, he said: it is ideological.”

For this very reason, the Pope said, St. Paul speaks of Christian life “as a struggle: a daily struggle. A fight!” he

said. “That's why Jesus came: ‘to destroy Satan's empire, the empire of evil.’

“He came to destroy its influence in our hearts, the Pope said. “So while the Father is attracting you to Jesus, the spirit of evil is seeking to destroy that attraction.”

Reflecting on the end of the Gospel passage which says ‘whenever unclean spirits saw Him, they would fall down before Him and shout, “You are the Son of God,”’ Francis said that whenever we try to approach God, the unclean spirits try to prevent us from doing so, and “wage a war against us.”

Inviting faithful to fight on and feel the heart that

struggles for the victory of Jesus, Pope Francis concluded, praying: "May the Lord give us the grace to know how to discern what is going on in our hearts and to choose the right path upon which the Father draws us to Jesus. □

(Zenit.org, January 20, 2017)

## ***Maronite Patriarch Rai Deplores Conversions for Sake of Divorce***

**I**n an address to judges of ecclesiastical courts in Lebanon, the head of the Maronite Catholic Church, His Beatitude Patriarch Bechara Peter Cardinal Rai, deplored the conversion of Lebanese Maronites to other Christian communities or to Islam in order to obtain a divorce. In Lebanon, divorce is primarily a matter of religious rather than civil law.

Lamenting the breaking of the sacred bond of marriage, Patriarch Rai said that such conversions are a "painful plague" rather than a matter of authentic religious freedom or freedom of conscience. □

(CWNews, January 4, 2017)

## ***Too Many Null And Inconsistent Marriages. A New Catechumenate Is Necessary***



Speaking to the Roman Rota, Pope Francis Calls for Appropriate Preparation of Couples Before and After Marriage. Then He Says: "Great Courage Is Necessary to Get Married in the Time in Which We Live."

**T**he Pope proposes an antidote to the problem of the "multiplication of null and inconsistent marriage celebrations:" "A new catechumenate in preparation for marriage," that is to say, "an appropriate path of preparation geared to rediscover marriage and the family in keeping with God's design," which is "part of the sacramental process" as for Baptism.

The Pontiff expressed this indication during an audience on January 22, 2017, to Prelate auditors, officials, lawyers

and collaborators of the Tribunal of the Roman Rota, received on the occasion of the solemn opening of the Judiciary Year. His reflection focused on today's context that, "lacking in religious values and faith, cannot but condition marriage as well. "

The Pope is concerned about that "widespread mentality" that "tends to obscure access to eternal truths" and "often involves, in a vast and capillary way, the attitude and behavior of Christians themselves, whose faith is weakened and loses the originality of interpretative and operative criteria for personal, family and social existence."

"Great courage is needed to get married in the time in which we live," Pope Bergoglio noted, as he has on other occasions. "All those who have the strength and joy to take this important step must feel alongside them the affection and concrete closeness of the Church." Also because "the experiences of faith of those requesting a Christian marriage are very different," some "take part actively in the life of the parish;" others "approach it for the first time;" some "even have an intense life of prayer." Then there are those who, instead, are guided by a more generic religious sentiment" or persons who are "far from faith or lacking in faith."

In face of this situation, it is necessary to find "valid remedies," affirms Francis. The first is, without a doubt, the "formation of young people, through an appropriate path of preparation geared to rediscovering marriage and the family in keeping with God's design." Today more than ever, a preparation of this nature "appears as a true and proper occasion of evangelization of adults and, often, of the so-called estranged," remarks the Pontiff, quoting *Familiaris Consortio* about the need for a "new catechumenate."

In the light of Wojtyla's exhortation, and also of the directives of recent Synods on the Family, the Pope expressed the hope that "the preparation for marriage may become an integral part of the whole sacramental procedure of marriage, as antidote that impedes the multiplication of null and inconsistent marriage celebrations," underlined the Pope.

Suggested as a second remedy to newlyweds is help "to continue the journey in the faith and in the Church also after the celebration of the marriage. It is necessary to single out, with courage and creativity, a plan for formation for young spouses, with initiatives geared to a growing awareness of the Sacrament received," stressed the Bishop of Rome.

The whole Christian community is challenged to "receive, accompany and help" young couples, "offering occasions and appropriate instruments — beginning with participation in Sunday Mass — to take care of the spiritual life, be it within family life, be it in the ambit of pastoral programming in the parish or in aggregations."

Too often "young spouses are left to themselves, perhaps because of the simple fact that they are less seen in the parish. This happens especially with the birth of children," noted the Holy Father. On the contrary, "in these first moments of family life, it is necessary to guarantee greater closeness and strong spiritual support, also in the educational work of children, who are the first witnesses and bearers of the gift of faith."

For the Pope, it is necessary to render "intelligible and real" the "synergy between *foedus* and *fides*," to move, namely, from a narrowly juridical and formal vision of the preparation of future spouses, to a sacramental foundation *ab initio*, namely beginning from the journey towards the

fullness of their *foedus* - consensus elevated by Christ to a Sacrament.”

“Love is in need of truth,” concluded Pope Francis finally, recalling Pope Benedict XVI’s words in his last address to the Roman Rota. “It is all the more necessary to deepen the relation between love and truth. Only in so far as it is founded on truth can love last in time, overcome the ephemeral instant and remain firm to support the common journey. If love does not have a relation with truth, it is subject to the change in sentiments and does not surmount the test of time. Instead, true love unifies all the elements of our person and becomes a new light towards a great and full life. Without truth love cannot offer a solid bond, it is unable to lead the I beyond its isolation, or to free it from the fleeting instant to build life and bear fruit.” □

(Zenit.org, January 23, 2017)

## ***Christians Assess Damage on Iraq’s Nineveh Plain, Ravaged by ISIS***

“I don’t understand how people can harm each other so much,” sighs security guard Louis Petrus. Petrus recently returned to his hometown for the first time: the Christian city of *Qaraqosh*, near Mosul, which he had to flee in August 2014, when ISIS captured the town, the largest Christian city on the Nineveh plain.

He told international Catholic charity Aid to the Church in Need: “Look at my house: it is damaged, most of my furniture has been stolen and my household effects are broken. Other inhabitants of *Qaraqosh* had prepared me for what I would find in the city. I had heard stories and seen pictures of the destruction caused by the jihadists. Now that I am seeing the city with my own eyes, I do not know what to feel. The terrorists have destroyed a lot of my possessions.”

Father Sharbil Eeso, a 72-year-old Syrian-Catholic priest also returned to the town. He found the seminary in shambles. In search of hidden treasures, the occupiers brought down ceilings and destroyed statues. “We are not allowed to clear up the mess yet,” the priest said, adding that “first the damage needs to be assessed carefully and documented thoroughly, and that can only start when the city is safe. Last week, a jihadist emerged from the tunnel system which ISIS has built underneath the city. The army immediately shot and killed him: it was a 13-year-old boy.”

The jihadists made full use of the churches in *Qaraqosh*, even writing battle instructions on church walls. Syrian-Catholic St. George’s Church was turned into a bomb factory; hundreds of bombs and grenades, in all shapes and sizes, are still lying there. There are also supplies of deadly chemicals, ingredients to make powerful explosives.

Like Father Eeso, Louis Petrus firmly intends to return to *Qaraqosh*. He said: “I don’t want to leave Iraq, unless all the inhabitants stay away and leave. But if two or three families return to *Qaraqosh*, I will too. This is my country. As soon as it is safe in the city and we receive permission to live here again, I want to rebuild my life in *Qaraqosh*. This is my place, I shall remain here until I die.”

“We really want to return to *Qaraqosh*, with our children,” said the mayor of *Qaraqosh*, Nisan Karromi, but he added that “it will be a long time before all damages will be repaired.” He added: “We not only have to reconstruct and rebuild this city, but we also have to compensate the people for the damages they have suffered. Now that the Iraqi government is in crisis, the international community will have to help make Iraq habitable again.” Another concern Christians have is that both the Iraqi government and the Kurds - whose forces chased out ISIS - have designs on their land.

Manal Matti recently visited the blackened church of the Immaculate Conception. She is surprised by the mannequins that are spread out across the church grounds, shot through with bullets. “The jihadists used the church as a shooting range and the mannequins as targets,” she tells us, horrified. The woman used to run a beauty salon, just steps away from the church. She pondered: “I do not know when I will ever be able to see the inhabitants of *Qaraqosh* coming again to my beauty salon.” □

*Aid to the Church in Need is an international Catholic charity under the guidance of the Holy See, providing assistance to the suffering and persecuted Church in more than 140 countries. [www.churchinneed.org](http://www.churchinneed.org) (USA); [www.acnuk.org](http://www.acnuk.org) (UK); [www.aidtochurch.org](http://www.aidtochurch.org) (AUS); [www.acnireland.org](http://www.acnireland.org) (IRL); [www.acn-aed-ca.org](http://www.acn-aed-ca.org) (CAN) [www.acnmalta.org](http://www.acnmalta.org) (Malta).*

(Zenit.org, January 19, 2017)

## ***Mother and Son Survived Two Years Under the Thumb of the Islamic State***



Ismail and his mother. ACN photo by Jaco Klamer.

by Jaco Klamer

Late last year, Ismail fled Mosul with his mother, Jandark Behnam Mansour Nassi (55), the two having survived ISIS’ reign of terror for two years. From the safety of *Erbil*, Kurdistan, the Iraqi Christians, former residents of the town of Bartella, on the Nineveh plain, told their story to international Catholic charity Aid to the Church in Need.

“I was put in the prison of Bartella,” confirms Ismail. “One day a Shiite was shot dead right in front of me. The terrorists told me: ‘If you do not convert to Islam, we will shoot you as well.’ That is when I converted to Islam. From that time on, we concealed that we were Christians.”

“We received a document from ISIS stating that we were Muslims,” continues Ismail. “That way, I could go out on the street in Mosul, though you could not be sure of your life. Once, I was beaten up because my trousers were too long.”

“Another time, when I was going to the mosque with the jihadists, our path was blocked. Suddenly we were passed by men in orange suits, held at gunpoint by a group of ISIS children. The children executed them with pleasure.”

“Another time I ran into a big crowd on the street. There was a woman; her hands and feet were tied. The ISIS terrorists drew a circle around her. If she got out of the circle, she would live, but that was impossible because she was tied up. While her relatives were crying and begging for a pardon, the jihadists threw stones at her until she died.”

Ismail’s story continues: “ISIS put me in a correctional camp. I had to grow out my hair and grow my beard. My mother got a black, all-concealing robe, but she was not allowed to go outside. ISIS warriors wanted me to marry, so I would be one of them. I objected, stating that I was too young: just fifteen. But even boys as young as thirteen were getting married.”

“My son was forced by ISIS to practice Islam and I was tortured for not knowing anything about Islam and the Koran,” says his mother. “I am embarrassed for having had to profess Islam,” says Ismail.

He adds: “Men were forced to pray in the mosque on Friday. Anyone who would walk the streets during Friday prayers would be beaten. Preachers proclaimed that Assyrians were evil and that Christians did not believe in the right way.”

“Then the ISIS warriors discovered my necklace with a cross. They beat me and I had to study the Koran for a month. I was hit whenever I could not answer their questions the way they wanted me to, and my mother was stung with long needles because she had not studied anything from the Koran.”

Then the battle for the liberation of Mosul began in the fall of 2016. “When the terrorists grew too busy with the battle, they abandoned us,” says Ismail, continuing: “We took a taxi to the front, heading towards our freedom, but ISIS snipers tried to shoot us. We ran for cover into a house. After hours of fighting, my mother and I were able to leave the house, waving a white flag. Soldiers of the Iraqi army welcomed us. We were free!” □

(CatholicCulture.org, January 4, 2017)

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Hope lets new life blossom, like a plant that grows from the seed fallen on the earth.

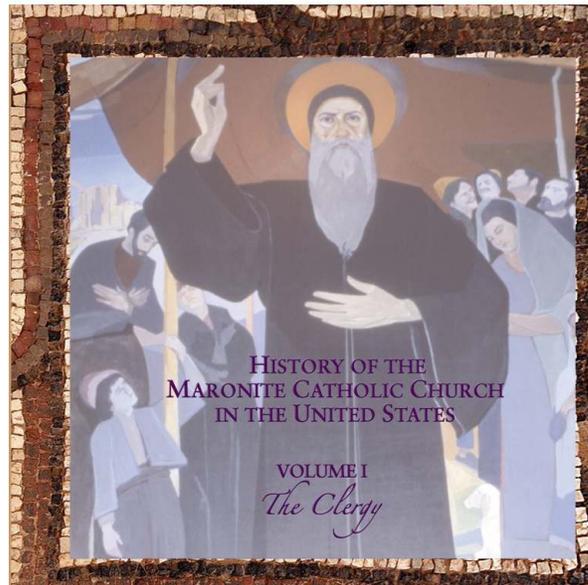
Pope Francis, January 26, 2017

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## From the Book Shelf

### History of the Maronite Catholic Church in the United States

#### The Clergy



by Evelyn Karam Small

In 1890, the first assigned Maronite Catholic missionary arrived in New York City. Like many Lebanese immigrants, he brought with him his faith and the hope of building a better tomorrow.

Now, modern-day parishioners can read about the complete history of the Maronite Church in America in a new book called *History of the Maronite Catholic Church in the United States, Volume I, The Clergy*. Five years of extensive research were needed to unearth never-before published documents and to translate historical records and correspondence from their original French or Arabic into English. To further understand the evolution of the Church, the authors also analyzed interviews conducted with parishioners and pastors over the past seventy years.

This 440-page book is an essential addition to the bookshelf of any Maronite curious about the contributions our Church has made over the last 125 years.

*The Clergy* is available for \$30 plus \$7 shipping from Saint Maron Publications, 4611 Sadler Road, Glen Allen, Virginia 23060 <http://stmaron.org/store>.

Saint Maron Publications accepts Visa or Master Card.

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## Tequesta, Florida *Real Meaning of Christmas*



On December 24, 2016, while most families were busy buying last minute gifts and making other last minute preparations for the holiday, one family from Mary, Mother of the Light Church, Tequesta (Palm Beach), Fla., was living out the true meaning of Christmas. On a cold Christmas Eve morning, Mourice and Kay Faddoul and their four daughters loaded up their SUV with scores of presents and headed over to Detroit Children's Hospital in Detroit, Mich. They distributed presents to more than a hundred children who could not be home for Christmas. Mourice explained that this was his girls' idea. Instead of asking for presents for themselves, their Christmas wish was to buy presents for needy children and deliver them as a family. □

## New Castle, Pennsylvania *Christmas Party*



by Marcia Rudley

On December 18, 2016, the hearty sounds of Ho! Ho! Ho! were heard in the basement of St. John the Baptist Maronite Church in New Castle, Penn., as our special guest, Santa Claus visited the children after Sunday Liturgy. Father Claude Franklin, Pastor, welcomed Santa, the parents and the children. Santa visited with the children as they told him what they wanted under their Christmas tree this year. Refreshments, pizza, cookies and cupcakes were supplied for the children by the parents and their teacher, Mrs. Lori Doran. See you next year, Santa! □

