



The Maronite Voice



A Publication of the Maronite Eparchies in the USA

Volume XIV

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January 2017

2017 World Day of Peace

The World Day of Peace is a special day of the Catholic Church dedicated to peace. It is always commemorated on January 1, the threshold of the new year. It was introduced in 1967 by Pope Paul VI, inspired by the encyclical *Pacem in Terris* of Blessed John XXIII and his own encyclical *Populorum Progressio*. Thus, 2017 is the Fiftieth Anniversary of this commemoration.

In announcing this year's World Day of Peace, Pope Francis addressed not only the "bad news," that is, the brokenness of our world due to sin resulting in violence and war, stating "in the world there is too much violence, too much injustice," but he also addressed the "good news" that every one of us is called to take it to heart and act upon it. The Pope wrote "that this situation cannot be overcome except by countering it with more love, with more goodness."

In our own lives and memories, many of us have witnessed violence brought about by intolerance and misguided religious zeal. Such violence continues in many parts of the world, but what we have been witnessing in the Middle East is most disturbing. In some cases it is the destruction of entire native populations along with their culture, languages, architecture and patrimony.

The Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church by Saint John Paul II (2004) stressed the dignity of the human person, made in the image of God. We as human beings are not a "something," but "someone" the Church tells. Therefore each and every one of us "possesses the dignity of a person." As human beings we have a personal relationship with God. We are created in His image and we are called to be His likeness, therefore, to strive to lead a life pleasing to God.

To be at peace with our brothers and sisters is to be at peace with God. To war against our brothers and sisters unjustly is to be at war with God. While disagreements, misunderstandings and potential conflicts will continue, we

New Year Message from our Bishop



must try to find ways to respond to them in a non-violent way. Resort to violence should never be the first reaction to disputes and addressing injustice. There are many models for the peaceful resolution of issues. We should look to them for guidance. There are many voices in the world that offer non-violent means to address grievances; we should listen to them. Let us practice true means of communication, dialogue and diplomacy.

Peace starts from within; it is our own personal heart and conscience that need to be content and satisfied. Then we are called to be instruments of peace. The Lord tells us in Matthew 5:9: "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called children of God." (Continues on page 20)

Schedule of Bishop Elias Zaidan

January 1, 2017

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

January 7, 2017

Pastoral Visit to Holy Family Church, St. Paul, Minn.

January 8, 2017

Pastoral Visit to St. Maron Church, Minneapolis, Minn.

January 15, 2017

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

January 17, 2017

Ordination of Auxiliary Bishop Timothy Freyer, Orange, Calif.

January 23 - 27, 2017

Eparchial Annual Clergy Retreat, Phoenix, Ariz.

January 28, 2017

Pastoral Visit to St. Ephrem Church, El Cajon [San Diego], Calif.

January 29, 2017

Pastoral Visit to St. Mary Coptic Catholic Church, Los Angeles, Calif.

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. □

The Maronite Voice

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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

Clinton Township, Michigan Ladies Altar Society Honored

On Sunday, November 13, 2016, the Parish of Saint Sharbel in Clinton Township, Mich., celebrated a Divine Liturgy in honor of the Ladies Altar Society, all living and deceased members and their families. Chorbishop Alfred Badawi, Pastor, acknowledged the dedication and fruitful works of this group, which currently consists of forty-two active members.

The purpose of the Society is to unite the women of St. Sharbel Church to work cooperatively to provide assistance to the Pastor, to maintain and supply the needs of the sacristy and altar, and provide assistance to the seminarians and other pastoral needs. Funds for different activities are raised through events as the annual Pasta Dinner, Craft Shows, Thanksgiving Food Drive, and Christmas Luncheon. □



Eparchial Condolences

Archbishop Edmond Youssef Farhat, Apostolic Nuncio Emeritus to Austria and Titular Archbishop of *Byblos*, Lebanon, passed away on December 17, 2016, in Rome, Italy.

Archbishop Farhat was born in *Ain Kfaa*, Lebanon, on May 20, 1933, and ordained a priest on March 28, 1959. On August 26, 1989, he was appointed Titular Archbishop of *Byblos*, Lebanon, and Apostolic Nuncio to Algeria, Libya and Tunisia. On July 26, 1995, he was appointed Apostolic Nuncio to Slovenia and Macedonia and on December 11, 2001, Apostolic Nuncio to Turkey and Turkmenistan. On July 26, 2005, he became the Apostolic Nuncio to Austria before retiring on January 14, 2009, for having reached the canonical age.

He is survived by his brother, Raymond; his sister, Josephine; his sister-in-law, Alexandra and her children, Roland and Natalie and their families; his nephews Elias, George, Shady, and Sharbel; and his niece, Tilda. The Funeral service took place on Wednesday, December 21, 2016, at St. Rouhanna Church in *Ain Kfaa*, Lebanon.

His Excellency Bishop Gregory Mansour along with the clergy and faithful of the Eparchy of Saint Maron and His Excellency Bishop A. Elias Zaidan along with the clergy and faithful of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon extend their heartfelt sympathy and the promise of our prayers to His Beatitude Patriarch Bechara Peter Cardinal Rai, to His Excellency Archbishop Michel Aoun, Bishop of *Byblos*, to the Synod of Bishops of the Maronite Church, and to Archbishop Farhat's family.

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

Deacon Al Harb, of St. John Maron Parish in Orange, Calif., passed away on December 5, 2016. He is survived by his three sons, Richard, Alfred and Joseph, and two daughters, Patti and Peggy, and eleven grandchildren and six great-grandchildren.

The funeral Liturgy took place on December 10, 2016, at St. John Maron Maronite Catholic Church in Orange.

Deacon Al loved serving his parish with all his heart from its earliest days to the very end of his life. He was a major founder and a great pillar of the community.

His Excellency Bishop A. Elias Zaidan along with the clergy and faithful of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon extend their heartfelt sympathy and the promise of our prayers to Deacon Harb's family and loved ones.

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



Eparchy of Saint Maron Eparchial Appointment

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

- ◆ **Mrs. Vivian Akel** as the Coordinator for the Office of Child and Youth Protection of the Eparchy of Saint Maron for a three-year term commencing on December 1, 2016.
- ◆ **Rev. Raymond Khallouf** as Administrator of Saint Sharbel Maronite Mission in Raleigh, N.C., effective on January 1, 2017.
- ◆ **Rev. Elias Khalil** as Administrator of the Maronite Mission of Charlotte in Charlotte, N.C., effective on January 1, 2017. Fr. Khalil leaves St. Sharbel Mission in Raleigh, N.C. □

Attleboro, Massachusetts MYO Christmas Retreat



by Sr. Natalie Sayde Salameh

On the weekend of December 2 - 4, 2016, the Maronite Servants of Christ the Light facilitated the MYO Regional Christmas Retreat for the Eparchy of Saint Maron at the Retreat Center of the National Shrine of Our Lady of La Salette in Attleboro, Mass.

A dynamic group of more than a hundred teens from several parishes were in attendance along with a crew of adult advisors. The parishes in attendance included St. Maron in Philadelphia, Penn., along with their Pastor, Fr. Vincent Farhat, who offered daily Liturgy; Our Lady Star of the East in Pleasantville, N.J.; St. Charbel in Somerset, N.J.; St. George in Providence, Rhode Island; Our Lady of Purgatory in New Bedford; St. Anthony of the Desert in Fall River; St. Anthony in Lawrence; Our Lady of Mercy in Worcester; and Our Lady of the Cedars, Boston, Mass.

“Mercy is Born!” was the theme of this year’s retreat with a special focus on the Blessed Mother as the servant and mother of Mercy Incarnate.

Over the two days, the teens participated in a variety of events and activities, including adoration and confession. Among the different icebreakers buoyed the youth in a frenzy of excitement was unwrapping layer-upon-layer of a Saran-wrapped gift.

Friday night concluded on a festive note with a bonfire in the crisp air, roasting marshmallows and socializing, with cookies, cupcakes, assorted candy and hot chocolate.

There was no better place to prepare for Christmas than the La Salette Shrine with their famous display of countless miniature lights and catechetical displays which switch on at 5p.m. every day during the Christmas season. On Saturday evening, the teens made their way to the Shrine for the blessing of the Manger and the switching-on of the lights. They had some free time to explore the vast display of lights. The evening ended with lots of fun which included pizza and a *dabke* party.

Over the course of the weekend, many of the youth expressed their joy at having made so many new friends, at having this opportunity to bond with God and one another, and at being free to just be themselves and have fun. □

Jacksonville, Florida *Burning of the Mortgage*



Bishop Gregory Mansour burns the mortgage at St. Maron Church.

by Fr. Elie Abi Chedid

The weekend of November 19 - 20, 2016, was a memorable and spectacular date for Saint Maron Church in Jacksonville, Fla. The church community celebrated the second anniversary of the dedication of the new church and remarkably the burning of the church's mortgage.

The full house at Saturday evening’s formal Gala featured American and Arabic entertainment. The community was honored by the presence of His Excellency Bishop Gregory Mansour and Most Reverend Felipe Estevez, Bishop of the Diocese of Saint Augustine, and other priests.

On Sunday, both bishops celebrated a pontifical Divine

Liturgy to mark this auspicious occasion. Father Elie Abi Chedid, Pastor, welcomed everyone and expressed the joy of Saint Maron's community giving thanks and praise to Almighty God for this accomplishment. Bishop Mansour congratulated the community and encouraged everyone to keep working hard in building the church of the people after building the church of the stone and to persevere in the love of God and His Church. □

Saint Louis, Missouri *Feast of Saint Raymond*



From left: Bishop A. Elias Zaidan, Marilue Simon and Bishop Robert Shaheen.

by Shelly Vitale

The Saint Raymond Maronite Cathedral community in Saint Louis, Mo., joined together on Sunday, November 20, 2016, to celebrate the Feast of Saint Raymond (*Mar Romanos*). The Knights of Saint Gregory the Great and the Order of Saint Sharbel served as Honor Guard. The main celebrant was Bishop A. Elias Zaidan. Bishop *Emeritus* Robert J. Shaheen and Father Freiha Akiki concelebrated. Deacon Lou Peters, Parish Administrator, and Subdeacon Anthony Simon and Subdeacon David Wahby assisted. Following the Liturgy, a Luncheon was held at the Cedars Banquet Hall. At the luncheon, clergy, parishioners, family and friends honored the late Subdeacon George Simon and his wife, Marilue, for their many years of service and devotion to the parish. The beloved Subdeacon passed to eternal life on September 25, 2016. He served as Subdeacon for over twenty years. He and Marilue, his wife of sixty years, volunteered for countless programs, organizations and activities at Saint Raymond Cathedral. Subdeacon George was well known for visiting the sick and those in special need on a weekly basis. He and Marilue generously donated to the poor. They both received the Massabki Brothers Award and were members of the Order of Saint Sharbel and the National Apostolate of Maronites. Subdeacon George was also honored by the Holy See as a Knight of Saint Gregory the Great. Marilue was presented with a Patriarchal blessing and a medal on behalf of Patriarch Bechara Peter Cardinal Rai. Special thanks to Subdeacon Anthony and Mary Simon for chairing the Feast Day celebration.

Mission Sunday



Bishop Robert Shaheen with children of St. Raymond Cathedral.

Love and generosity was in the hearts of the Saint Raymond Maronite Cathedral community during the Mission Sunday Liturgy on Sunday, December 11, 2016. Mission Sunday is a time when the parish comes together to provide gifts for the poor. Bishop *Emeritus* Robert J. Shaheen was the main celebrant. Deacon Lou Peters, Parish Administrator, Subdeacon Anthony Simon and Subdeacon David Wahby assisted. Bishop Shaheen spoke to the children and encouraged them to prepare for the coming of the Baby Jesus by observing their nativity scenes and really thinking about Jesus and his birth. The children joyfully processed with their gifts, which were placed in Santa's sled so he could take them to the Saint Vincent de Paul Society and give them to less fortunate children. Following the Liturgy, a breakfast was held at the Cedars Hall. The children had the opportunity to visit with Santa and have their pictures taken. It was a wonderful celebration. Thank you to parishioners Denise Seifert, Gina Fanetti, and Kathy Wahby for chairing the event. □

Houston, Texas Christmas Preparations

Christmas Season is always a joyful occasion at Our Lady of the Cedars Maronite Church in Houston, Tex. This year, it all started on Saturday, December 3, 2016, with a "Breakfast with *Abouna*," our third annual parish breakfast and spiritual talk. This year, Father Edward Hanna, Associate Pastor, gave a talk on "Why did God do it?"

The following Saturday, December 10, between 10 o'clock and noon, the Pastoral Center was buzzing with children of all ages decorating cookies, making a variety of Christmas crafts, or writing Christmas cards to be sent to Pope Francis.

In between stations, children could pick out "ornaments" (rolled-up fill-in-the-blank prayers) off the "Tree of Faith" to complete at home. The little ones were treated to story-telling time as a catechist read Christmas stories in a quiet room in the back of the Pastoral Center.

After the children had finished all the stations, they all gathered in the Cedar Hall and sang traditional Christmas



songs as they anxiously awaited the arrival of Santa Claus, who showed up with gifts for everyone.

Later in the day, and after the evening Liturgy, the youth and adult choirs treated the entire parish to a performance of Christmas hymns and songs. Young and old musicians from the parish accompanied the choir and made for an exceptional concert. Immediately after the concert, parishioners were invited to a Christmas dinner, prepared by two chefs from the Houston restaurant scene who came on-site and cooked all day for the occasion. After dinner, the parishioners surprised Father Milad Yaghi, Pastor, with a birthday cake to celebrate his birthday.

The next phase of preparations started on the evening of December 15, with the start of the nightly Christmas Novena after the evening liturgy. Then on Friday, December 16, after the Novena, all in attendance walked over to the Cedar Hall where Rev. Skip Negley, Minister to Priests at the local Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston, led a powerful lecture on "Advent: A Twofold Journey of Hope in Conversion and Transformation." □

Cincinnati, Ohio Fall Festival



by Linda Conour

On Sunday, November 20, 2016, St. Anthony of Padua Parish in Cincinnati, Ohio, held its annual Fall Festival: "A Taste of Lebanon!" Held from noon to 6:00 pm, the Parish opened its doors to the greater Cincinnati

community and offered traditional homemade Lebanese dishes prepared by the parishioners, accompanied by Lebanese pastries and beer! Besides the food, it was a day of cultural celebration as well, with folkloric dancing performed by the Parish's MYO and a Middle-Eastern fashion show. The St. Anthony of Padua parish came together under the direction of Festival Chairs: Dr. Ghada Ghastine, Dr. Lina Anaissie, and Ms. Rose Abiradi, and everyone worked so hard to make this one-day event such a huge success! ☐

Fall River, Massachusetts Annual Bazaar



Father James Doran, Assistant Pastor, kneading *mamoul* dough with Fadia Youssef, *Mamoul* Chairman and Rochelle Kieron, General Chairman.

St. Anthony of the Desert Maronite Catholic Church in Fall River, Mass., held its annual Food Festival and Christmas Bazaar on Sunday, November 20, 2016. Parishioners and visitors from the area look forward to the delicious offerings from our Lebanese kitchen and our delectable Middle Eastern pastries made fresh by the ladies of the parish just days before the event. Food could be purchased for eat-in or take-out.

Also tempting were the sumptuous raffle baskets which included a variety of items from toys to kitchen supplies. To satisfy shoppers, there were sixteen different craft tables, a holiday table, a country store, and a coat sale.

In addition to the parishioners who devoted many hours, we appreciate the support of our pastor, Chorbishop Joseph F. Kaddo and his assistant, Father James Doran. ☐



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Minneapolis, Minnesota NAM Sunday



On November 20, 2016, select students from grades 2 - 5 at St. Maron's Maronite Catholic Church in Minneapolis, Minn., portrayed the Story of Mother Teresa of Calcutta. Rebecca Younes, as Mother Teresa, led her "Missionaries of Charity" to serve the "ill and needy on the streets of Calcutta." Also, NAM Sunday was celebrated with Vocation Contest awards and an invitation for all to join the National Apostolate of Maronites. ☐

Save the Date 2017 MYO Regional Retreats

March 11, 2017

MYO/MYA Mid-Atlantic Eastern Regional Retreat at Saint John Paul II Parish, Sleepy Hollow, N.Y.

March 31 - April 1, 2017

MYO Southern Regional Retreat at Saint Anthony Parish, Glen Allen, Va.

March 25 - 26, 2017

MYO Far Southern Regional Retreat at Saint Maron Parish, Jacksonville, Fla. ☐



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Maronite Vigil For Life & March For Life 2017



JOIN US TO WITNESS FOR THE SACREDNESS OF EVERY HUMAN LIFE!!!



The Office of Family and Sanctity of Life of the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn is pleased to host the Fourth Maronite Vigil For Life on Thursday January 26, 2017 at Our Lady Of Lebanon Maronite Church located on 7142 Alaska Avenue N.W. Washington D.C. 20012.

All are invited to join us for an evening of prayer, worship and fellowship with the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal of Saint Mary of the Assumption Friary from Newburgh NY.

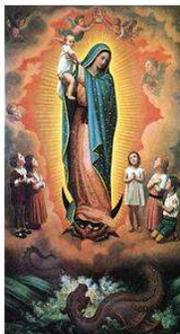
Thursday, January 26, 2017

*5:00 pm - Arrival at OLOL Church
6:00pm - Dinner
7:00pm - Welcoming talk
8:00pm - Eucharistic Adoration
9:30pm - Fellowship & Movie*

Friday, January 27, 2017

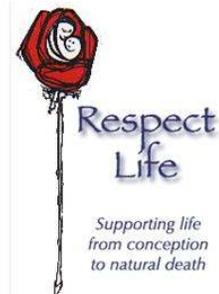
*8:30am - Maronite Divine Liturgy
9:30am - Breakfast
11:30am - Maronite Catholics For Life meet at the Starbucks on the corner of Indiana Ave. & 7th St.*

**Men and women sleep in different locations.
Please bring your sleeping bags & plan accordingly.**



Please RSVP with number of people attending no later than Monday, January 23rd.
Contact Simona Hallal
by phone at (540) 798-8450
or by email at jhallal@verizon.net

We kindly ask for a free will donation of \$20 per person to cover the cost of the meals.



Watervliet, New York Annual *Hafli*



Front row: Chorbishop Faris, Bishop Scharfenberger, Fr. Issa and Brother Abate. Back row: Fr. Sandbothe, Deacons Salamy and Hobaica and Fr. Gregory. (Picture by Therese Wittner.)

by Beverly Traa

Nearly three hundred parishioners and guests gathered for the 16th Annual *Hafli* of St. Ann Maronite Catholic Church in Watervliet, N.Y.

Traditions. Are they what people do? Or, are they what they used to do? Among the warm-hearted parishioners of St. Ann's it is clearly what they do.

Chairman Michel Boutros applied all of the ingredients of a great party, and the *Hafli* was enjoyed by entire families that included several generations. Clearly for the numerous guests who may be unfamiliar with the Lebanese tradition of hospitality and play, it is a joyful new experience that they look forward to again.

Father Alaa Issa of St. Ann Church was host. Among the guests were Bishop Edward Scharfenberger of the Albany Roman Catholic Diocese and Chorbishop John Faris, who came from Utica, New York, especially for the evening. There were several clergy, including Father Gregory of St. George's Antiochian Orthodox Church, Father Aaron Sandbothe from Utica, Deacon Paul Salamy and Deacon Peter Hobaica from Utica and Franciscan Brother Joshua Abate, who is the organist at St. Ann.

This year's annual gala affair began with a delicious traditional *mezza* of Lebanese favorites, including *kibbe*, *baba ghanoush* and *tabouli*, all prepared by many of the women and men of St. Ann Church. Each year the food preparation is chaired by Georgette Hannoush with Betty Karrat. Lebanese hospitality is something to be experienced, and great traditional homemade food is always at the center.

Staying with tradition, Ayad Atallah and His Ensemble provided the high-spirited traditional music for seemingly tireless dancers well into the evening.

St. Ann Church is grateful to radio stations WGY-810AM, The Jockey 101.3FM, WABY 900AM and especially to The Albany Times Union and Troy Record Newspapers for their coverage of the *Hafli*. □

Schedule of Bishop Gregory Mansour

January 1, 2017

Parish Visit, Mary, Mother of the Light, Taquesta, Fla.

January 7 - 8, 2017

Parish Visit with Bishop Antoine Chbeir of Syria, Heart of Jesus Mission, Fort Lauderdale, Fla.

January 9 - 13, 2017

Annual Clergy Retreat, North Palm Beach, Fla.

January 13, 2017

Pastoral Visit with Bishop Chbeir to Mary, Mother of the Light, Taquesta, Fla.

January 14 - 15, 2017

Parish Visit with Bishop Chbeir, Our Lady of Lebanon Church, Miami, Fla.

January 22, 2017

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

January 23, 2017

Antiochene Orthodox Antiochian Luncheon with Metropolitan Joseph and Cardinal Dolan

January 26 - 27, 2017

Pro-Life Vigil and March, Washington, D.C.

January 28 - 29, 2017

Ordination to Diaconate of Jebrayel Moussallem and Divine Liturgy, Our Lady of Lebanon, Washington, D.C.

January 30, 2017

Meeting with New York Bishops, Manhattan, N.Y.

January 31, 2017

Installation of Bishop John Barres, Rockville Centre, New York

February 1, 2017

Meeting of CAMECT with Mayor DiBlasio at Armenian Prelacy, Manhattan, N.Y.

February 5, 2017

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. □

Christ is born for us, let us rejoice in the day of our salvation!

Pope Francis, December 25, 2016

The Lord becomes man to journey with us in our everyday lives.

Pope Francis, December 23, 2016

Why Christmas Should Bother Everybody

by
Bishop Robert Barron

Just a few weeks ago, at a ceremony for the lighting of the national Christmas tree, President Obama remarked on the meaning of the season. Here are some of the things he said:

"Over these next few weeks, as we celebrate the birth of our Savior, as we retell the story of weary travelers, a star, shepherds, Magi, I hope that we also focus ourselves on the message that this child brought to this Earth some 2,000 years ago—a message that says we have to be our brother's keepers, our sister's keepers; that we have to reach out to each other, to forgive each other. To let the light of our good deeds shine for all. To care for the sick, and the hungry, and the downtrodden. And of course, to love one another, even our enemies, and treat one another the way we would want to be treated ourselves. It's a message that grounds not just my family's Christian faith but that of Jewish Americans, Muslim Americans, non-believers—Americans of all backgrounds."

Now in a way, there is nothing whatsoever wrong with these ideas and sentiments. Who could possibly be against treating others with respect, offering forgiveness for offenses, and caring for those in need? And I certainly don't blame President Obama for making these remarks. Both Democrat and Republican presidents, in their capacity as chief magistrates of the civil religion, have expressed similar convictions for many years. What does bother me, however, is reducing Christmas to a level so low, so banal, that the great Christian feast is offensive to precisely no one. If President Obama is right, even those who profess no belief in God should welcome Christmas with nothing but enthusiasm! But this sort of reductionism is, in fact, directly repugnant to a feast which, in its essence, is revolutionary, subversive, and, if properly understood, offensive to just about everyone.

What could I possibly mean? Well, if

we take an honest look at the Biblical texts dealing with Christmas, we will find that they have precious little to do with sentimentality, or the embracing of a common morality, or the cultivation of a "let's all get along" attitude. In the second chapter of Matthew's Gospel, we read of the visit of the Magi, astrologers from "the east," probably from Babylon where a quasi-scientific star-gazing discipline was cultivated. They let it be known that they were in search of "the newborn king of the Jews," whose star they had observed at its rising. When this news was spread about, was it met with delight, enthusiasm, excitement, and sentimental feelings? Hardly. Listen to what Matthew tells us: "When King Herod heard this, he was greatly troubled, and all Jerusalem with him."

Why would the arrival of a tiny baby, who would grow up to bear a message of love, have excited such negativity? We must remember that the child is described as a king, which means someone who comes to rule; more precisely, he is characterized as king of the Jews, and this was the very title that Herod claimed. Therefore, Herod, quite correctly, saw him as a threat to his prerogatives and position. But why would the entire capital be in an uproar? We must recall what the Bible consistently says about cities, that is, the way we human beings typically organize ourselves politically, socially, and culturally. Cain, the murderer of Abel, is the founder of cities; Babel, full of arrogance and imperialistic designs, is seen as a typical city; and Jesus himself implied that the devil controls all the cities of the world. The trembling of all of Jerusalem at the birth of the baby king is a function of the demand that that king will eventually make, the change that his rule will affect. Just to drive this point home, Matthew tells us that Herod, having been duped by the Magi, furiously lashed out, ordering the murder of every boy in Bethlehem under two years of age. Not exactly the reaction of someone who is just delighted that the Christmas season has arrived!

If we examine Luke's account of the birth of Jesus, we find very similar motifs. Luke sets up his story as the tale of two rival Emperors: Caesar, the king of the world, and Jesus, the baby king. While Caesar rules from his palace in Rome, Jesus has no place to lay his head; while Caesar exercises rangy power, Jesus is wrapped in swaddling clothes; while Caesar surrounds himself with wealthy and sophisticated courtiers, Jesus is surrounded by animals and shepherds of the field. And yet, the baby king is more powerful than Augustus—which is signaled by the presence of an army (*stratias* in the Greek) of angels in the skies over Bethlehem.

All four of the Gospels play out as a struggle, culminating in the deadly business of the cross, between the worldly powers and the power of Christ. For Jesus is not simply a kindly prophet with a gentle message of forgiveness; he is God coming in person to assume command. He is the Lord. And the entire New Testament couldn't be clearer that his Lordship means that all those who follow a contrary rule - meaning, pretty much every one of us - are under judgment.

To be sure, the distinctive mark of Jesus' Lordship is love, compassion, forgiveness, and non-violence - but this is not the stuff of sentimentality and warm feelings. It is a provocation, a challenge, a call to conversion of the most radical kind. □

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



The Origins of The Epiphany

by
Reverend David A. Fisher

"But it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel" 2 Timothy 1:10.

"O Great One who became a babe, by your birth again you begot me; O Pure One who was baptized, let your washing wash us of impurity" St. Ephrem the Syrian.

Epiphany finds its roots as a term in *Koine* Greek, the "Common Greek" of the Hellenistic world created by the conquests of Alexander the Great and further spread by the Greco-Roman culture of Imperial Rome. With influence from Hebrew and Syriac thought and language patterns, *Koine* Greek became the language of the New Testament. Epiphany from "*epiphaneia*" means "to appear," also "manifestation," or "appearance"; the Ancient Greek term Theophany (*theophaneia*) is used to express the same concept, the manifestation of God. In the Syriac Churches the term *Denho* or *Denha*, refers to "the Light," Jesus Christ the Light who reveals the Triune God. This term in Greek, "*photo*," also came to be used in the Byzantine Churches along with the previously mentioned "*epiphaneia*" and "*theophaneia*."

The origin of the Feast of the Epiphany seems to have begun to take shape in the fourth century, or possibly even earlier in the Syriac and Alexandrian Churches. Ammianus Marcellinus (born c. 325–330 died c. 391–400) a Roman soldier and historian believed to have been from Syria or Phoenicia, has left us with a reference to the celebration of Epiphany he experienced in 361 A.D. (*Ammianus Marcellinus, Res Gestae XXI, ii*). Saint Epiphanius (born c. 310, died 403), who was known to have mastered Hebrew, Syriac, Coptic, Greek, and Latin, and was labeled by Saint Jerome as the "Pentaglossis," meaning five-tongued, remarked that on the sixth of January there is "Christ's Birthday, that is, His Epiphany" along with the Miracle of Cana (*Epiphanius, Panarion, II, 27 in Migne, Patrologia Graecae*.) Saint Gregory of Nazianzus (also known in the East as St. Gregory the Theologian), who lived from 329 until 390, is one of the first Fathers of the Church to document the development of Christmas and Epiphany as separate

Feast Days. On the twenty-fifth of December in the year 380, he proclaimed that the Church was celebrating the Theophany - "the holy nativity of Christ" (St. Gregory Nazianzus, *Orations xxxviii, Patrologia Graecae*). Then in a sermon from the sixth of January in 381, he preached that the Liturgies of the Nativity and the Visitation of the Magi having now been done, the Baptism of the Lord would now be celebrated (*Nazianzus, Orations xxxix and xi*). Saint John Cassian (born c. 360, died c. 435), famous for his contributions to the development of monasticism, wrote that in Egypt the monks celebrate the Nativity and the Baptism of the Lord on the sixth of January (St. John Cassian, *Conferences, X, Migne, Patrologia Latina*).

These references, and others from Christian antiquity, leave us with the question of what was the central focus of the Feast of Epiphany as it relates to the life of Christ as seen in the Gospels. Hieromonk Nicholas Pokhilko writes that "The substance of the celebration of Epiphany varied in different traditions. There were two major trends: Eastern and Western. The birth of Christ, the story of the Magi, Christ's baptism, His divine manifestation, miracle at Cana, and the feeding of the crowds formed the festival of Epiphany on January 6 as indicated in earlier Alexandrian and Syrian traditions. The theme of the Nativity or the birth of Christ was dominant in the western feast of Epiphany with the baptism being less significant. December 25 (winter solstice) was the initial date of the Nativity festival in Roman tradition. It seems that Christians in the East hearing about this tradition decided to adopt it. It is also possible that certain Eastern customs may have influenced the West. The Western pattern was adopted by Constantinople, Cappadocia,

Antioch and Syria. The representatives of these local traditions segregate the variety of Epiphany themes into two festivals: the Nativity of Christ on December 25, also called *Theophania*, and the Epiphany (the Lights) on January 6. The latter feast was dedicated to the baptism of Christ and His divine manifestation and was an occasion for mass baptism (Nicholas Pokhilko, *History of Epiphany, https://sites.google.com/site/historyofepiphany/*).

Interestingly, the dates for the celebrations of Christmas and Epiphany reveal to us the process of Christian evangelization of the late ancient pagan world. As the Church grew in numbers and geography it needed to address the previous beliefs and morals of those it encountered. It needed to affirm what was good, denounce what was contrary to the Gospel, and give Christian meaning to the fabric of ancient cultures. In the East, the choosing of the sixth of January was to replace the pagan feast of the god of light, Aeon, which had been popular in Alexandrian Egypt. In the West the twenty-fifth of December was chosen to offset the pagan celebration of *Solis Invictus*, the Undeclared Sun, in whose cult even the Emperor Constantine had belonged before accepting the Christian faith.

Today there exists a plethora of liturgical forms and Scriptural themes as regards the celebration of Epiphany within the various Churches of the Catholic Church, the Eastern Orthodox Church, the Oriental Orthodox, the Nestorian Church of the East, the Anglican Communion, and the various Protestant denominations. What remains is the common thread of Epiphany, Theophany, Light - Jesus Christ is the true light of the world, the light of the nations. □

My Vocation as a Subdeacon in the Maronite Church *by* **Subdeacon Steven Crate**

I was happy when I was asked to write about my vocation as a Subdeacon. Writing this article gave me an opportunity to focus and discern what exactly it means to me now after more than six years since my ordination. This vocation is rewarding, challenging and a wonderfully supportive inspirational vocation.

When one surrenders to serve the Lord Jesus Christ in daily contemplative prayer and by participating regularly in the Holy Eucharist celebration at the Divine Liturgy, the small voice becomes a very clear and perfect message. The Holy Spirit is leading me,

and although I still have free will, my choices are easier now. That does not mean the consequences of my choices are always easy. I worry that some people may misinterpret my intentions and may judge me as a radical religious provocateur. Not me! I am a sinner who is just trying to make his way in this complex society we live in. The free will that Jesus gives each of us makes daily life an ongoing temptation that requires discipline and faith to maintain the path. The Holy Spirit is the glue that holds my life together.

In my life, being a subdeacon has taught me to maintain spiritual balance, because I have had internal conflicts that were impacting me daily, mostly due to the need to earn a living while voluntarily serving the Church as a subdeacon. Balancing involves keeping items on each side of a fulcrum equal.

The two forces I am balancing in my daily life are spiritual discernment and living/existing in the world. Because spiritual has many interpretations depending on language, religious upbringing or cultural orientation, I am using it in this narrative as a description of the mystery of the Creator in my individual life, the Trinitarian Lord who transforms each of us by the redemption and saving Grace of Jesus Christ. He is the bridge or fulcrum that connects the world with eternal Life in God, the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and end of all there is. The most practical example of this is the contrast between silence and noise. In silence, we can hear that small voice directing our actions. In the noise, we must complete the work to support our family and community. We must learn to live and work in the noise and embrace the silence for restoration and rejuvenation.

When first ordained, my employment had more flexibility, allowing me to take time off for funerals, baptisms, retreats and other duties related to the Church. This lasted about two years

after my ordination. Since that time, my employment situation has changed. I found the time required to earn a living to be in competition with my time serving in my role as Subdeacon. My vocation has become about discerning clarity of doing the Lord's will and providing for my family's needs. This clearly is part of God's plan for me. I have learned to serve my family and Church with an attitude of service and love.

I have started study and prayer to become a permanent deacon, taking steps towards this slowly but with purpose. I have taken a few courses and still have regular spiritual direction, but the end still seems far off. If God wants me there I will get there on his schedule. I like serving the Divine Liturgy as a subdeacon, chanting and reading some of the liturgical prayers and giving out the Holy Eucharist to the faithful. I feel like I have one foot in the apostolic tradition of Jesus Christ and the other in the world of work. I have recently started a regular blog and an online e-commerce business from home and am still working part time as a customer service representative. This seems to be meeting my financial needs. I also make every attempt to stay well in this chaotic society with regular exercise, eating right and maintaining a healthy stress management regime.

The reality is that I love being married to my best friend Allison. We have been married for forty-one years. Our home is a sanctuary of sorts because of her. I also love serving St. Joseph Maronite Catholic Church as a subdeacon. I cannot imagine any other life. I have learned to live and work in the noise of life and find solace in the silence of contemplative prayer and the Divine Liturgy and I pray that I can continue to balance my role as a subdeacon with the need to earn a living and maintain my family life. □



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

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

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

Or

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

Or

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



Prayer Warrior's Inner Room by *Dr. Anne Borik*

Clear the space that clutters your heart and mind and prepare to live today to the fullest; play to the fullest, work to the fullest, and pray to the fullest.

Jesus said, "Go to your inner room, close the door and pray to your Father in heaven" (Matthew 6:6.) That 'inner room' is your heart, the depth of your being. How do you connect with that place in a way that empowers you, motivates you, encourages you and gives you hope for tomorrow?

I would like to suggest three things that will help you to quiet the inner chatter that often distracts and gets in the way of life, especially prayer life.

- The first is Breath. Not necessarily to practice deep breathing, but to simply use your breath to remind you that God is always with you! The breath is one of the functions of the body that is there whether you think about it or not. God is always there, even if you are not thinking about Him. He is always with you. When you find yourself feeling anxious or angry, take a deep breath and be reminded that even in the storm of the day, God is always there.
- Next is your Posture or Attitude. This is not referring to the physical posture, but rather to stand firm in your faith. Do not be indifferent, but instead be rooted in your Maronite faith. The Letter of Paul to the Colossians 2:7 says: "Let your roots grow down into Him, and let your lives be built on Him. Then your faith will grow strong in the truth you were taught, and you will overflow with thankfulness." Desire to be a Eucharistic person, that is, one who is filled with gratitude and thanksgiving. By doing this you will find yourself growing deeper in the Spiritual life.
- Finally is Prayer. Prayer has the power to transform any situation, condition, problem or person. Like any deep and lasting friendship, your relationship with the Lord will be

strengthened by frequent, honest, open communication. "So when you pray, go to your inner room, close the door and pray to your Father who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you" (Matthew 6:6). ☐

Prayer For Peace In Our Communities

O Lord our God, in your mercy and kindness, no thought of ours is left unnoticed, no desire or concern ignored.

You have proven that blessings abound when we fall on our knees in prayer, and so we turn to you in our hour of need.

Surrounded by violence and cries for justice, we hear your voice telling us what is required . . . "Only to do justice and to love goodness, and to walk humbly with your God" (Micah 6:8).

Fill us with your mercy so that we, in turn, may be merciful to others. Strip away pride, suspicion, and racism so that we may seek peace and justice in our communities.

Strengthen our hearts so that they beat only to the rhythm of your holy will. Flood our path with your light as we walk humbly toward a future filled with encounter and unity.

Be with us, O Lord, in our efforts, for only by the prompting of your grace can we progress toward virtue. We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. ☐

(United States Conference of Catholic Bishops)

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★ **Mary Gabriel**

St. George Church, Uniontown, Penn.

★ **Fr. Marwan Abi Nader**

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Fall River, Massachusetts Annual Winter Concert



Director Evan Massoud, David Faris, Nancy Hanoud, Samya Brownell, Charlie Murray, Carol Guimond, JoAnn Bullard, Rochelle Kieron, Sharon Carney Andrews, Mizette Nasser, Mirna Bouramia, Rouba Youssef, Paula Karam, Dawn Ayoub and William Ayoub.

by Evan Massoud

On Saturday, December 10, 2016, joyful sounds of Christmas filled St. Anthony of the Desert Church in Fall River, Mass., as the choir held its 4th Annual Winter Concert. Under the direction of Evan Massoud, the singers and musicians began preparing in August for this yearly tradition that did not disappoint the standing-room-only crowd of friends and family.

The night began with the children of the parish participating in the Living Nativity, coordinated by Terry Galib, Lynn Abdow, and Barbara Terrio, as well as choir member JoAnn Bullard, who designed and sewed the costumes. Cameron Filipe and Melia Bouramia narrated the story as the children processed down the aisle to the sanctuary, which was transformed into a concert stage. The choir then joined the children for the opening number, "Because It's Christmas."

The program was full of Christmas favorites like "Rockin' Around The Christmas Tree," "Silent Night," and "Christmas Time Is Here." After the children performed their solo, "The Chipmunk Song," they rejoined the choir at the end of the night for "We Are The World," a non-Christmas song chosen to remind everyone that we must do our part to spread peace in the world. A coffee hour was held at the St. Sharbel Center to end another memorable night of music.

The choir expresses its gratitude to all of the volunteers behind the scenes who helped make this event possible, especially Sound Engineer Paul Hanoud, who willingly offered his time to make everyone sound his or her best. □

Tequesta, Florida Christmas Pageant



by Pierre E. Azzi, Esq.

On Wednesday, December 21, 2016, Mary, Mother of the Light Academy in Tequesta, Fla., had its second annual Christmas pageant. The first Catholic preschool in north Palm Beach County, Florida, Mary, Mother of the Light Maronite Church in Tequesta. The preschool opened in the Fall of 2015, and now in its second academic year, the preschool has grown to forty-five students. Please see our preschool website for more information: www.mmolacademy.org.

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

Lakewood, Colorado The Blessings of the Season



Volunteers at St. Rafka Church.

As we entered into the New Liturgical Year and began the preparation for the Glorious Birth of Our Lord, the weeks have been filled with many blessings at St. Rafka Church in Lakewood, Colo.

Due to the work being done by Fr. Andre Mahanna, Pastor, St. Rafka Parish, and the St. Rafka Mission of Hope and Mercy to reach out to the community and raise awareness, we have received some great gifts. First, thanks to the people at Boston Market and Interstate Roofing, the Parish was able to host a Thanksgiving dinner for about one

hundred people. Invitations went out to members and friends of St. Rafka Church and to needy members of the surrounding communities. All present were thankful to the parish for the experience. St. Rafka Parish would like to thank Mr. George Michel, CEO of Boston Market, the Boston Market team, and Scott and Danielle Riopelle of Interstate Roofing.

The two days after Thanksgiving were completely crazy here as the exceptional team from Interstate Roofing, including many of their subcontractors and assisted by parish volunteers, descended on the parish and spent two full days in wonderful volunteer service. The roof on the Rectory and garage were replaced and much needed repairs were made to the roof of the Parish Hall and to the fascia in the church.

Additional storage was built off of the garage and countless other small projects were tackled. To make it even more fun, a volunteer musician from Texas came and played Christmas music while everyone worked. Reporters from two local stations and a YouTube channel covered the event. All volunteers received a Rosary from Fr. Mahanna afterwards.

Finally, St. Rafka Parish was able to brighten Christmas for twenty at-risk children served by Renaissance Children's Center, a program of the Colorado Coalition for the Homeless. St. Rafka families selected children from the Giving Tree and purchased gifts for the children. □

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

Facebook: National Maronite Youth Organization (MYO)

Twitter: @maronite_youth

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Snapchat: maroniteyouth



National Shrine of Our Lady of Lebanon

by Rose Sahyoun

Following is the list of winners from the monthly drawings for the 25Club Dinner raffle held at the National Shrine of Our Lady of Lebanon in North Jackson, Ohio, for the 2016 year.

Month	Ticket #	Winner
May 2016	277	Theresa Moses
June 2016	74	Eli Boulos, Sr.
July 2016	277	Theresa Moses
August 2016	200	Joseph A. Thomas, Sr.
September 2016	307	Maurina Hanna
October 2016	469	Samir and Yolla Boulos
November 2016	358	Vince Morgione

If you are interested in helping the Basilica and the National Shrine of Our Lady of Lebanon by purchasing a ticket, please call the Shrine at 330-538-3351 or Rose Sahyoun at 330-565-7238. Tickets are \$70 a year. Only 500 tickets will be issued. Yearly awards: 3@\$1000; 2@\$500; 16@\$100. Monthly awards: \$150. □

Uniontown, Pennsylvania Ladies' Christmas Party



by Dr. Mabel George Howard

On December 4, 2016, the Ladies Guild and Altar & Rosary Society of Saint George Maronite Church in Uniontown, Penn., held its annual Christmas party in the newly renovated Church Hall. This served as a time for the ladies to relax and enjoy an excellent meal in the comfort and sisterhood of one another. The many activities included Christmas carols, games, door prizes, silent auction and gift exchanges. In light of this blessed and holy season, the Ladies Guild also celebrated the memory of Millicent

Gabriel, who was a very special member of the ladies' church groups. Millie was a compassionate person who genuinely cared about helping and giving to others as she humbly supported numerous church and civic organizations throughout the years. We miss you, Millie. Finally, as a memento, each lady received a beautifully decorated religious Christmas ornament. The Christmas party was a very successful, joyous and festive event to remember. □

Christian Genocide in the Middle East

by Brother John M. Samaha, S.M.

We are lulled into thinking that a disaster like the Holocaust will never again happen. But that is not the reality. Since 1940 there have been a number of genocides. And one is happening at this very moment.

In the Middle East Christians are being eliminated wholesale. In 2003 Christians were one of the largest minorities in Iraq, numbering about 1.5 million. By 2014 that number had diminished to about a half million because many fled violence or were forced to leave. ISIS targeted them. Now only 200,000 remain in Iraq, one of the oldest Christian communities in the world. That means about 87 per cent have gone in only thirteen years.

However, the Iraqi Christians are not the only people suffering persecution. In Iran more than 550 Christians have been arrested and detained arbitrarily since 2010. In Syria churches are being closed or destroyed by ISIS. Christians are attacked and kidnaped. In Turkey Christians continue to struggle against inequality.

What is being done to correct this shameful abuse of our brothers and sisters in the faith? Seemingly very little. Today mention of the Middle East brings to mind war and constant conflict, inequality, and cities reduced to rubble.

The Middle East is the cradle of Christianity. It is home to a devout Christian faith that is long-standing, that has nurtured many beautiful churches and loving communities, and that has undergone many trials.

Just because this holocaust is not front page news does not mean it is not happening. It is time to raise our voices and to martial forces to correct this crisis; to pray, to appeal to our legislators and government officials to take action. □

Appeal from Caritas Lebanon

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

at

<http://www.caritas.org.lb>

Thank you for your consideration. □



MARONITES CONSECRATED TO THE HEARTS OF MARY & JESUS

54TH ANNUAL CONVENTION
ST. RAFKA ♦ GREENVILLE SC
JUNE 29 - JULY 2 ♦ 2017



Sponsored by National Apostolate of Maronites

St. Rafka Mission in Greenville, S.C., to Host 2017 NAM Convention

by Bridget Nevin

St. Rafka Maronite Catholic Mission in Greer, S.C., will be hosting the 2017 NAM 54th Annual Convention planned for June 29 to July 2, 2017. As with all NAM Conventions there will be good variety of activities for all who attend. I don't want to steal the thunder as the speakers are being finalized, however, I would like to share with you some exciting information about St. Rafka Mission.

Fr. Bartholomew Leon is the present Administrator. His love of God and his enthusiasm for sharing his faith is evident in all that he does for his parishioners. Fr. Bart welcomes all visitors and encourages them to learn more about the Maronite rite at each Liturgy. There are over 140 registered families as well as regular visitors from surrounding parishes. The beginning of this small mission started in 1999 with Monsignor Ron Beshara. He laid the ground work for St. Rafka by appointing Marlene Saad as the Maronite Missions of South Carolina Parish Leader in Greenville to spread the love of the Maronite religion in support of building a Maronite community. Marlene was determined and instrumental in establishing St. Rafka Mission. In 2002, Fr. Michael David was sent to help Marlene, and in 2003 he was joined by Fr. Bart Leon. As the Maronite needs grew, Fr. Bart was transferred from St. Rafka, which brought Fr. Peter Boulos to lead the St. Rafka's journey. As a result of the dedication of all the people who worked diligently on St. Rafka's growth, the Church has become a wonderful place to worship and has created a melting pot of diverse cultures. In 2009, Heather Sijon identified the site which is the Greer location of St. Rafka Maronite Catholic Mission today! Please come and experience for yourself the true Spiritual presence that is the cornerstone of our community.

Once you arrive in Greenville to participate in the conference, here are some of the workshops topics meant to engage you:

- ♦ *The Sanctity of Marriage and the Promises of the Sacred Heart within the Family* by Chorbishop Michael Thomas.
- ♦ *Authenticity of the Shroud of Turin* (reflecting the Passion of Christ and medical aspects of the Crucifixion).
- ♦ *The Purposeful Grace of Consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary and to the Sacred Heart of Jesus* with Sister Olga Yacob.
- ♦ *Going Deeper in the Spiritual Life* with Fr. Dominique

Hanna.

- ♦ Knights of Columbus' Supreme Knight Carl Anderson and his wife Dorian t will be with us on Saturday to discuss *Christians in the Middle East*.

Greg and Mary Anne Lepak, the 2017 Chairpersons, are supported by twenty-two committee leaders who are working fiercely to make your experience a memorable one for years to come.

The Hyatt Regency is the hotel which exudes southern hospitality by making you feel right at home. Room reservations will be available within the next few weeks by logging into www.namnews.org.

The 54th Maronite Convention is sponsored by the National Apostolate of Maronites (NAM) and is hosted by Saint Rafka Mission in Greer [Greenville], S.C. For more information about the Convention, NAM, and its activities, please visit www.namnews.org. □



This Christmas, Open Up Your Heart

Pope Francis gave this encouragement during the General Audience on December 14, 2016, in the Vatican's Paul VI Hall, as he continued his new series of catecheses on Christian hope.

Reminding those present that we are approaching Christmas, he noted how the prophet Isaiah can help us again to open ourselves up to the hope of the Good News of the coming of salvation.

Pope Francis used the reading to illustrate how God never abandons His people and Whose grace surpasses all and any sin.

"I will pose the question: Who is greater, God or sin? God! And who wins in the end? God or sin? God," Pope Francis stressed, saying God's love has the power to conquer the biggest, most terrible sin.

"The most beautiful of Christmas joys," Francis went on to say, "is the joy of inner peace: 'The Lord has blotted out my sins, the Lord has forgiven me, the Lord has had mercy on me, he came to my rescue.'" "This is the joy of

Christmas!" he said.



Reasons for Hope

“When everything seems to be over, when, in front of so many negative realities, faith becomes tiring and is tempted to say that nothing else makes sense, here was the good news.”

God, the Argentine Pontiff added, is coming to do something new. While he comes to establish a kingdom of peace, and bring freedom and consolation, we must realize evil will not triumph forever, he noted.

Since “the desperation is conquered, for God is with us,” the Pope observed, “we are also urged “to wake up a bit” and “become men and women of hope.”

“How bad when we find a Christian who has lost hope! “But I do not hope anything, everything is over for me.” So says a Christian who is not able to look at horizons of hope and in front of his heart, only a wall.”

“But God destroys these walls with forgiveness!” he continued. “And for this we must pray that God will give us every day and give hope to all, the hope that comes when we see God in the manger in Bethlehem.”

The message of the Good News entrusted to us, the Pontiff exclaimed, is “urgent,” as the world cannot wait for justice, truth, and peace.

“And seeing the little Child of Bethlehem, the little ones of the world will know that the promise was fulfilled,” Pope Francis concluded. “The message has come true.”

“In a newborn baby, in need of everything, wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger, found inside is all the power of the God who saves.” □

(Zenit.org, December 14, 2016)

Nonviolence is Theme of Pope’s Message for World Day of Peace

The Vatican has released the message of Pope Francis for the World Day of Peace, entitled “Nonviolence: A Style of Politics for Peace.”

The World Day of Peace is observed on January 1. As usual, the papal message was released in advance, on December 12, 2016. It was signed by the Pontiff on December 8, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception.

In the message the Pope argues that the Gospel is “the

Magna Carta of Christian nonviolence.” The command to Christians to love their neighbors, he said, is a practical alternative to the “horrifying world war fought piecemeal” that we experience today. Violence achieves nothing, the Pope writes, and causes incalculable suffering. The only solution, he says, is to make nonviolence “the characteristic style of our decisions, our relationships, our actions, politics in all its forms.”

Nonviolence does not mean “surrender, lack of involvement, or passivity,” the Pope writes. He points out the dedication and social involvement of famous practitioners of nonviolence, beginning with the example of St. Teresa of Calcutta and also citing Gandhi and more recent activists.

Although he emphasizes the link between Christianity and nonviolence, Pope Francis observes that “many religious traditions” also emphasize the need for compassion. He stresses, particularly, that “no religion is terrorist.”

In a section of the message devoted to family life, the Pope writes that the habits of compassion and caring for others are nurtured in the family and disrupted by violence and warfare. He continues:

“The family is the indispensable crucible in which spouses, parents and children, brothers and sisters, learn to communicate and to show generous concern for one another, and in which frictions and even conflicts have to be resolved not by force but by dialogue, respect, concern for the good of the other, mercy and forgiveness. From within families, the joy of love spills out into the world and radiates to the whole of society. An ethics of fraternity and peaceful coexistence between individuals and among peoples cannot be based on the logic of fear, violence and closed-mindedness, but on responsibility, respect and sincere dialogue. Hence, I plead for disarmament and for the prohibition and abolition of nuclear weapons: nuclear deterrence and the threat of mutual assured destruction are incapable of grounding such an ethics. I plead with equal urgency for an end to domestic violence and to the abuse of women and children.”

“I pledge the assistance of the Church in every effort to build peace through active and creative nonviolence,” Pope Francis writes. He notes that the newly formed Vatican dicastery for Integral Human Development will officially begin its work on January 1 - the World Day of Peace. □

(CWNews, December 12, 2016)



Deadline for next month’s issue of

The Maronite Voice is January 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:

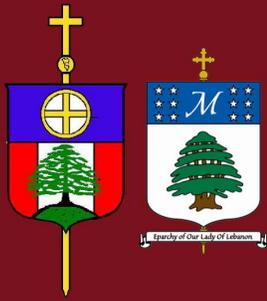
The Maronite Voice
4611 Sadler Road

Glen Allen, Virginia 23060

Phone: (804) 270-7234; Fax: (804) 273-9914;

Email: Gmsebaali@aol.com

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



Effective Ways You Can Help Your Eparchy!

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

Legacy Giving

This is a creative way to support the Church. Legacy Giving can involve contributing through your *will, insurance policy, or retirement assets*.

You can get a tax deduction today and provide yourself with a steady source of income in future years through a *charitable trust*.

How to Remember Your Church in Your Will

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

"I give and bequeath to the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn _____% of the residue of my estate [or: the sum of \$_____]."

Suggested wording for a bequest to the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon of Los Angeles:

"I give and bequeath to the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon of Los Angeles _____% of the residue of my estate [or: the sum of \$_____]."

Tax-Smart Giving of Appreciated Stock or other Assets

The gift of an asset such as *common stock or mutual fund shares* that have increased in value can be a smart way to make a contribution and receive maximum tax benefits based on the value of the asset.

Gifts of other *appreciated assets* such as land, antiques, and homes, can also be utilized as potential gifts with valuable tax benefits.

Gifts of these assets should be considered on a case-by-case basis.

For more information on any of these options, please contact:

Stewardship Director
John F. Kurey, Esq., MBA
718-237-9913 or 314-231-1021
saintmaron@yahoo.com or
maroniteswest@yahoo.com

World Day of Peace

(Continued from page 1)

Peace, of course, is not just the lack of war. To be truly "at peace" is to be in a proper relationship with others and to be reconciled to all. The Catholic Bishops of the United States have given us three concrete things that we can do in our journey to seek peace:

- Pray. Use the *Prayer for Peace in Our Communities* with your family, school, faith community, or in other settings. (See page 13 of this issue.)
- Learn. Read the U.S. Catholic Bishops' *The Harvest of Justice is Sown in Peace* (bit.ly/harvestofjustice). Reflect on how the Gospel of Jesus Christ challenges each of us personally and as a nation.
- Act. Join others to advocate for policies that build peace at home and around the world.

Working together and praying together, we can be instruments of peace with justice, not only in the world but within our own families and parishes. Let us commit ourselves in this new year of 2017 to do just that. Let us pray, learn and then act! Let us take to heart the famous prayer of St. Francis of Assisi: "Lord, make me an instrument of Your peace. Where there is hatred, let me sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; where there is sadness, joy."

May 2017 be year of peace at home, in our society and all over the world! ☐

Springfield, Massachusetts Children's Christmas Party



by Kathy LaBella

On December 11, 2016, St. Anthony Maronite Church in Springfield, Mass., held its annual children's Christmas party. Parishioners and children were invited and treated to a breakfast. Plenty of crafts, games and goodies were available for the children followed by a visit from Santa.



Happy New Year Happy New Year Happy New Year