



The Maronite Voice



A Publication of the Maronite Eparchies in the USA

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To Judge or Not to Judge?

"Judge not, that you be not judged" (Matthew 7:1). These words may confuse us. Sometimes we feel guilty for using our God given discernment to judge correctly, that is, to see right from wrong, or true from false. But, this is not what Jesus intended.

What Jesus meant was not "judge not," but rather "condemn not." We must judge correctly or else we will not raise our children properly, will fail to make tough decisions about love, friendship, marriage, vocation, etc. We will easily be fooled by those who lie or do not have good intentions. We must be careful, and we must judge correctly.

Later in the passage Jesus says "for the measure you give is the measure you get." He means if we are stingy in giving the benefit of the doubt to others, this stingy measure will be given to us as well. This is another admonition not to condemn or to paint another person so dark as to forget some of their better qualities.

Thus, may I propose a correct way of interpreting Jesus' words? He did, after all, call some people hypocrites, and he did apply his own critical judgment to "call a spade a spade." Jesus is inviting us, even more so in this Jubilee Year of Mercy, to see ourselves and others as we really are.

Jesus then puts the finishing touches on what he really means when he says later in the passage "Why do you see the speck that is in your brothers' eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye?" The faults of others are so very clear to us. Our own faults, however, are often hidden from our view. We seem to be experts in the faults of others, and not very good at noticing our own!

Brothers and Sisters, our Father, Saint Maron, was an "open air hermit." In other words, he lived under the elements, with no protection, and he desired union with God not to correct everyone else's faults, but to correct his own. He sought this correction with the passion of a Saint.

May, we, too, seek God passionately and ask him to correct our fault and forgive our sins (and if he would also correct the faults of others, we would not mind!). We are too often eager to point out the faults of others, and too slow to want God (or anyone else!) to correct our own.

This Lent (and always), may we not judge (condemn!), but may we be more generous in the measure we measure towards others, and may we even notice the log in our own eye! ☐

+Gregory J. Mansour

"People judge by outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."

1 Samuel 16:7, NLT

Schedule of Bishop Elias Zaidan

March 4 - 6, 2016

Pastoral Visit to St. Joseph Church, Phoenix, Ariz.

March 9 - 11, 2016

Catholic Eastern Bishops Meeting, Chancery Office, St. Louis, Mo.

March 11 - 20, 2016

Pastoral Visit to St. Maron Church, St. Sharbel Church, and St. Rafka Church, Greater Detroit area, Mich.

March 21, 2016

Liturgy of the Consecration of the Holy Oils, St. Raymond Cathedral, St. Louis, Mo.

March 22 - 26, 2016

Mission Retreat at Our Lady of the Cedars Church, Houston, Tex.

March 26 - 27, 2016

Easter Liturgy and Celebration, St. Raymond Cathedral, St. Louis, Mo.

April 2 - 3, 2016

Pastoral Visit to St. George Church, San Antonio, Tex.

April 8 - 10, 2016

Pastoral Visit to St. Elias Church, Birmingham, Ala. ☐

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- Most Reverend A. Elias Zaidan, M.L.M.

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Maronite Convention 2016

Our Lady of Lebanon Church

San Francisco, California

July 6 - 10, 2016

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

Orlando, Florida Prayer For Christian Unity



Rev. Jaroslaw Shudrak (left) from St. Mary Protectoress Ukranian Catholic Church with Fr. Bassam Saade, Pastor of St. Jude Church.

The Prayer for Christian Unity for persecuted Christians in the World especially in the Middle East, took place at St. Jude Church, Orlando, Fla., on Friday, January 22, 2016. A big thank you to all those who participated and to the clergy: Most Reverend Bernard Harrington, Bishop *Emeritus*, Diocese of Winona; Very Reverend John Giel, Holy Family Catholic Church; Rev. William Holiday, Incarnation Catholic Church; Rev. George John, Syro-Malabar Rite; Rev. Salvatore Pignato, St. Nicholas of Myra Byzantine Catholic Church; Rev. Jaroslaw Shudrak, St. Mary Protectoress Ukranian Catholic Church; Deacon Rick Chabot, Holy Family Catholic Church, and Deacon Jack Manhire, St. Jude Church. ☐

Austin, Texas Food Pantry



Bishop A. Elias Zaidan with Donn and Gene Parsons.

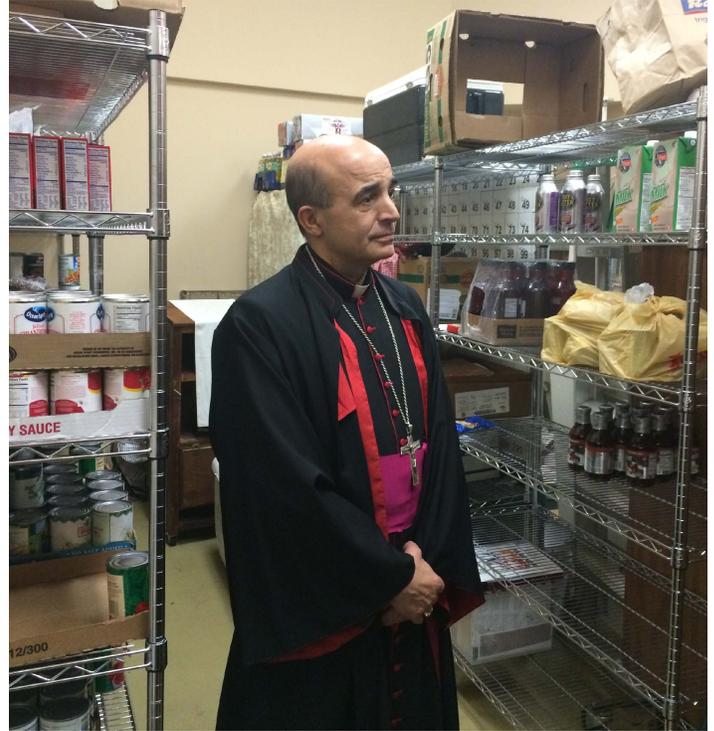
Our Lady's Maronite Catholic Parish in Austin, Tex., has always had a "food barrel" where parishioners would drop food and the church Administrative Assistant would hand out during the week. During the summer of 2014 there was an issue with one or two people coming in during liturgy and taking everything for themselves.

After a month or so of praying about it and talking together, Gene and Donna Parsons approached Msgr. Don Sawyer, Pastor, about how food banks operate in the area. If the donated food distribution was organized and structured after some of the local food banks, we would be able to avoid the hoarding and feed more families.

- On September 15, 2014, the Our Lady's Maronite Catholic Parish Food Pantry opened its doors from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. and provided food to two families (five individuals). In November 2014 the hours were expanded and the Food Pantry was open from 1:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. every Monday.
- During the week of December 8, 2014, Our Lady's Maronite Catholic Parish Food Pantry was entered into the 2-1-1 database, a United Way database of community resources. On December 15, the Food Pantry provided food to nine families and forty-two individuals. Five of these families were new referrals from 2-1-1. As of July 20, 2015, the Food Pantry has 104 families in the database, most referred by 2-1-1.
- Between September 15, 2014 and July 31, 2015, the Food Pantry had given out 851 bags of food, including food items for Thanksgiving and Christmas dinners, all of which were donated by parishioners.
- On August 3, 2015, the Parsons attended orientation training at the Capital Area Food Bank (CAFB) as a first step in the process to partner with the CAFB. After an application and site visit that same week, on Tuesday, August 11, 2015, Our Lady's received notification that

we had been approved to partner with CAFB. The Parsons attended Food Handling and Civil Rights Training, after which we were able to obtain food from CAFB.

- As of the end of January 2016, Our Lady's Maronite Food Pantry provided food to an average of forty families a week.



His Excellency Bishop A. Elias Zaidan, Bishop of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon, visits the Food Pantry at Our Lady's Parish in Austin, Tex.

All of this is done with volunteers collectively donating, on average, over forty hours of time a week. On Fridays volunteers pick up an order from CAFB, deliver it to the church and stock the shelves. The morning of the Food Pantry, volunteers go back to CAFB to get fresh produce, bread, pastries and dairy products for the families. The volunteers then head back to Our Lady's to set up chairs for the families and tables for all of the fresh foods. At the end of the Food Pantry, volunteers put anything that is left over away, put up the chairs and tables and clean up. One of the volunteers handles any paperwork so that reports can be provided to Msgr. Sawyer and the parish. □

MYO National Retreat

The Maronite Youth Organization (MYO) Annual Retreat will take place July 16 - 21, 2016 at:

St. Vincent College
300 Fraser Purchase Rd.
Latrobe, PA 15650-2667

The cost is \$475.00 per child. More information will follow in the near future. □

Washington, D.C. *Maronite Vigil For Life*



Fr. Louis Marie Leonelli addresses participants of the Third Vigil for Life at Our Lady of Lebanon Church.

by *Simona Hallal*

Our Lady of Lebanon Maronite Church, Washington, D.C., hosted the Third Vigil for Life on Thursday, January 21, 2016. More than eighty guests attended the Vigil despite the forecast that caused many buses to cancel their trips. Father Louis Marie Leonelli, CFR, shared his inspiring conversion story: how Our Lady "reached down into hell," pulled him out, and redirected his steps to follow the Poor One of Assisi. Our Heavenly Father's mercy and His tireless love for His children were the focus of the talk. Eager to encounter Merciful Love, everyone entered the church with an open heart. With reverence, attendees prayed before the Blessed Sacrament for the end of abortion. Brother Antonio María Díez De Medina, CFR, gave a Gospel reflection before the Eucharistic healing service.

The confession line was long; a steady flow of repentant of all ages "came home to the Father's house" through the sacrament of reconciliation. Bishop Gregory Mansour, Fr. Rodolph Wakim, Fr. Antoine Kairouz, and Father Louis Marie Leonelli heard confessions for about two hours. "The return of the prodigal son" by means of the sacrament of reconciliation was celebrated in the social hall over coffee and dessert. It was a vibrant sharing of stories about personal encounters. Everyone was beaming with joy, and many eyes were filled with tears as people spoke about their encounter with God's merciful love. In the words of Maria Joun, a parishioner from Our Lady of Lebanon, "I felt that the Holy Spirit was among us. It was an amazing experience from the inspiring talk, to the confession, to the blessing. I felt peace, love, and joy in our community. It was amazing!"

"The Lord affirmed to me that He can work through me despite my weaknesses and sinfulness, if I follow the inspirations of the Holy Spirit and act on them. He led me to invite and encourage someone to receive God's mercy in the confessional without me knowing that the person hasn't

received this sacrament in few years... I saw a lot of tears. Many burdened and wounded hearts were mended by Our Lord in the sacrament of reconciliation and the Eucharistic healing service!" said another parishioner.

Indeed, the Holy Spirit's presence was felt throughout the whole event. His fruit was showing: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, and generosity. Our hearts were beating in sync with one another, a unity that only the Holy Spirit is capable of achieving! ☐

Birmingham, Alabama *Banquet Honors 90+ Year Olds*



From left: Richard Kassouf, NAM Regional Vice-President, Kathleen Boehme and Chorbishop Richard Saad.

The 62nd Annual St. Maron Banquet was held on February 6, 2016, at St. Elias Maronite Church in Birmingham, Ala. Father John Paul Kimes, St. Elias' native son, celebrated the Divine Liturgy. Chorbishop Richard D. Saad, Pastor, and Reverend Mitch Pacwa from EWTN, concelebrated. Following the Liturgy parishioners prepared and served a steak dinner. Fr. Kimes was also the guest speaker. The honorees for the evening were fifteen parishioners ninety plus years old, many of whom are still very active in the parish. A DVD consisting of interviews with them was a highlight of the banquet.

The honorees were Fred Bostany, Hazel Cuff, Roz Elkourie, Virgie Elkourie, Rozella Joseph, Naomi Kassouf, Juanita Milton, Eddie Mizerany, Louise Prestwood, Pat Rookis, Mary Tanory, Dot Wehby, Josephine Wehby, and Joseph Zyne and, in memoriam, Helen Boohaker, who died in January. They were presented with a flower and a copy of the DVD. St. Elias Church is appreciative of the contributions they have made during the 106-year of the parish history and of the wonderful legacy they are leaving for the younger generation. Couples who will be celebrating twenty-five or fifty years of marriage this year were recognized and presented with certificates. The Faith of the Mountain Award was presented to Kathleen Boehme for her service and leadership with the youth of the parish. ☐

West Palm Beach Parish Welcomes New Pastor



Fr. Jack Morrison is pictured with some of the children of the parish, in front of the sign that Helena Azzi had made for the occasion.

Although originally scheduled for an early November transfer from Our Lady Of Purgatory Church in New Bedford, Mass., Fr. Jack Morrison arrived at Palm Beach International airport in early December to a not-so-sunny south Florida. The weather was unusually wet, but that did not deter Fr. Jack from moving in, getting settled, and quipping that this was the first time in many years that he didn't have to shovel snow!

Mary, Mother Of the Light Maronite Church in West Palm Beach, Fla., welcomed Fr. Jack as its new Administrator with a luncheon after Liturgy on December 6, 2015, that had been prepared by the ladies of the parish.

The previous week, Mary, Mother Of the Light bid farewell to Fr. Alaa Issa, whom we were blessed to have had as the Pastoral Administrator for two and a half years. We are grateful to Fr. Alaa for shepherding us into our new church in Tequesta [Palm Beach], Fla., and making it feel like home!

Fr. Jack, in his first bulletin, stated, "...Together we will be used by God in exciting ways as we share the Good News of Jesus Christ, and what better time than during these Sundays of Happy Announcements as we prepare to celebrate the Birth of Our Lord."

And exciting it was for Fr. Jack as he "hit the ground running." Plans quickly began for the Christmas Novena, the St. Valentine/St. Maron *hafli* on February 6, 2016, the Relic of St. Sharbel visiting our humble church on February 9 - 10; the formation of a new Pastoral Council. This is not to mention the myriad adjustments that come with moving and assimilating into a new area!

Fr. Jack continued in that bulletin, "I pray that with your friendship, partnership, and in particular your prayers, the parish of Mary, Mother Of the Light will continue to grow and flourish."

Mary, Mother of the Light parishioners thank God for bringing Fr. Jack to continue leading them to share God's love to all. ☐

THE ORDER OF SAINT SHARBEL

Perpetual Members



★ **Blanche Saad; Lillian Massery**
St. Ephrem Church, San Diego, Calif.

★ **John and Joann Joseph,**
St. Elias Church, Birmingham, Ala.

★ **Jay Semaan; Antoine Ayoub; Pierre Mitri;
Samia Salem; Mary Jeanne Ayoub; and Nicole
Rabahat**
St. John Maron Church, Orange, Calif.

★ **Charles Khalil; Tony Azzi; George Chamoun;
Dr. Antoine Hage; Sadie Tedros; Carol Salloum;
Joseph and Aida Frem; and Dr. Elias Ayoub**
Our Lady of Mt. Lebanon Cathedral, Los Angeles, Calif.

Annual Members

★ **Giselle Rizk Fares; Maya Feghali;
and Joseph and Raymonde Helou**
Sts. Peter and Paul Church, Simi Valley, Calif.

★ **George and Shirley Tobia**
St. Elias Church, Birmingham, Ala.

★ **Mary Kourieh; Najem Assaf;
and Katia Moukarzel**
St. Ephrem Church, San Diego, Calif.

★ **Danny Saar; George and Violette Haddad; Farid
and Aida El Khoury; Ezzat and Serene Baaklini;
John Mansour; Dr. Albert and Suzane Mansour;
and Ramzi and Suzanne Bader**
St. Jude Church, West Covina, Calif.

★ **Amira Loomis**
St. John Maron Church, Orange, Calif.

★ **Joumana Abboud; Tony Abboud; Mary Azzi;
Paul Azzi; Rania Chamoun; Joseph Ghazal;
Madonna Ghazal; Carol Abi Nakad; Christina
Boutros; Jason Boutros; Nada Boutros; Gaby
Maalouf; Rita Maalouf; Rima Rahme; George Rizk
Rania Rizk; Dr. Tony Fahd; and Ziad Rizk**
*Our Lady of Mt. Lebanon Cathedral, Los Angeles,
Calif.*

For more information about the Order ask your Pastor,
visit www.orderstsharbel.org. ☐

Detroit, Michigan Saint Maron Feast Day



by Chris Rahi Kassab

Hundreds of Maronites from the Greater Detroit area and neighboring communities filled the hall to capacity at St. Maron Church on Saturday, February 6, 2016, to celebrate the Feast Day of St. Maron, the spiritual father of the Maronite Church.

Msgr. Louis Baz, Pastor, celebrated the Divine Liturgy in honor of St. Maron. Fr. Milad Yagy, representing His Excellency Bishop A. Elias Zaidan, Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon; Chorbishop Charles Saad from St. Anthony Church in Leamington, Canada; Fr. Tony Massad, Pastor of St. Raffka Church in Livonia, Mich.; Fr. Paul Tarabay, Fr. Francois Akl and Fr. Nabil Habshi from the Maronite Order of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Ann Arbor, Mich.; Fr. Daniel Farris from St. Sharbel Church in Windsor, Canada; and Fr. George Shalhoub, Pastor, St. Mary Orthodox Church in Livonia.

Following the liturgy, guests gathered at the hall for a reception that included dinner, Arabic music and entertainment by the young adult troupe of St. Sharbel Church in Warren, Mich.

Reminder about Maronite Bishops' Annual Appeal

If you have not already made your contribution to the Maronite Bishops' Annual Appeal this year, it is not too late! Bring your gift to your parish, make it online or mail it in. The Bishops rely on you to provide for the needs of our Maronite Church in America!



Honored guests in attendance included His Excellency Ambassador Yousif Ghafari and His Honor Consul General of Lebanon Bilal Kabalan and his wife, Laura. Kabalan spoke from the heart congratulating the congregation, noting how particularly impressed he was by the number of young parishioners in attendance.

Mrs. Theresa Ghafari, who served as chairwoman of the event with co-chair Mrs. Louana Ghafari, welcomed and thanked those in attendance. She expressed pride and gratitude for the number of parishioners and guests who packed the hall to honor the feast of St. Maron. Following her remarks, Msgr. Baz presented both women with flowers as a gesture of thanks for the tremendous work they put in to make the event such a great success.

Msgr. Baz also welcomed and thanked everyone who shared in the celebration and expressed his personal delight at the number of people in attendance.

In a personal letter to the parishioners of St. Maron, His Excellency Bishop Zaidan expressed his congratulations and thanks. "I would like to thank Msgr. Louis Baz for his dedication and ministry for all these years. He has shepherded the community with love and faithfulness," he said. "I would like to commend all the volunteers who have been good stewards of time, talent and treasure, putting themselves at the service of God and the community."

The crowd continued dancing and listening to Arabic music into the early hours of the morning. "It was an honor and pleasure to see parishioners from every church in our community joining in and having a wonderful time," said Msgr. Baz. □



PLEASE SAVE THIS DATE
TUESDAY, MAY 3, 2016
AND JOIN US FOR THE

**7TH ANNUAL BENEFIT DINNER
FOR THE
EPARCHY OF SAINT MARON**

NEW YORK ATHLETIC CLUB,
NEW YORK CITY

DETAILS TO FOLLOW



San Diego, California *Silver Massabki Award*



by Mary H. Ghosn

On Sunday, February 7, 2016, as part of the celebrations for the Feast of St. Maron at St. Ephrem Church in San Diego, Calif., this year's Silver Massabki Award was presented to Dr. John and Mrs. Ellen Saad. Their unwavering and total dedication to the parish over the years has proven them more than worthy of this recognition. St. Ephrem Parish's heartfelt thanks go out to Dr. John and Ellen for all they have done and continue to do for the parish. Presenting them with the award, along with Fr. Toufic Nasr, Pastor, is NAM board member Ms. Diana Ayoub of Los Angeles, Calif. □

Roanoke, Virginia *Saint Maron Feast Day Celebration*

by Gerald Brunning

What is the connection between St. Maron and the New York theatrical agency, Flapjaw, Flapjaw and Flapjaw? Saint Maron probably got as many chuckles as did the banqueters, from a "Way Off Broadway" musical comedy which culminated the annual St. Maron's Day Dinner at St. Elias Parish, Roanoke, Va., on February 6, 2016.

St. Elias Social Hall, the site of many happy parish gatherings, was transformed into a banquet venue by the ladies of St. Rafqa's Women's group. The meal of Lebanese food was catered by Jean Sade and his new restaurant, Café Jano, and was served by the youth of the parish. The banquet itself was a fitting prelude to the entertainment which followed.

"So Many Can Sing and So Many Can Dance" is a one, act musical comedy, described by the playwright, Fr. Kevin Beaton, as a "Waaaaay off Broadway" production. It was staged for the first time at the visit of Bishop Mansour in

September. Taking inspiration from the fact that so many of the young people of the parish love to sing and dance, Fr. Kevin concocted a tale of the St. Elias Troubadours who, under the guiding hand of Uncle Archibald (played by Fr. Kevin), journeyed to New York with their singing turtle, to try to find fame and fortune. As luck would have it, their choice of theatrical agents, Flapjaw, Flapjaw and Flapjaw was less than fortuitous as the three brothers were deathly afraid of turtles, and their receptionist, Miss Obnoxious, lived up to her name. Nonetheless, the cast was able to impress the audience, if not the agents, with a delightfully choreographed dance and four wistful songs, three of them composed by the playwright.

In addition to Fr. Kevin, cast members included the Troubadours: Angelie Aboujaoude, Anne Largen, Clara Chahine and Jaclyn George; Kevin Chahine as Assistant to Uncle Archibald; Christiana George as Miss Obnoxious; the Flapjaw brothers: Josh Ballard, Ja'quan Duhon and Michael Aboujaoude; Maurice the Turtle as Himself. Sound effects were by Mrs. Linda George. □

Houston, Texas *MYO/MYA Activities*

by Lauren Rouhana and Clarice Zehri

On February 6, 2016, the young adults of Our Lady of the Cedars Maronite Church (MYA) in Houston, Tex., hosted "Fat Sat," a pre-Lenten feast and barbecue, on the church grounds. More than twenty young adults attended the event to celebrate and prepare for the holy season of Lent. As an alternative to the carnival celebration of *Mardi Gras*, the young adults decided to congregate before the ritual fasting of the Lenten season by eating, socializing, and discussing the upcoming Holy Season. Thanks to the dedication of many volunteers, the young adults were able to prepare a delicious spread of many foods from which they traditionally abstain and, most importantly, come together in the spirit of the season.

At the end of January, the youth club (MYO) took a trip to San Antonio, Tex., for the regional youth retreat led by Father Gary George. They were joined there by youth from Our Lady's Parish in Austin and San Antonio's youth group. Throughout the weekend, Father Gary focused on Mercy.

The youths were separated into small groups and joined as one big group, prayed together, and danced together. They were given a few hours to pray and reconcile with God, each other, and themselves. All three parishes joined together and ended Saturday night with a *hafli* where Houston's *dabke* group had a dance battle against San Antonio's group.

The weekend ended with the Divine Liturgy. This was a great retreat, definitely a favorite of all who attended. □

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. □

Brooklyn, New York *Feast of Saint Maron*



Phyllis Simon, the recipient of the Cathedral Lifetime Award, is pictured with her sons and Bishop Mansour and Msgr. Root.

by *Salma Vahdat*

One of the most memorable events in recent years was celebrated Saturday, February 6, 2016, at the Dyker Heights Golf Course in Brooklyn, N.Y. A sell out event commemorating the Feast Day of our patron, St. Maron, was joyfully celebrated by the Community of Faith of the Cathedral of Our Lady of Lebanon in Brooklyn. It was the ninetieth annual banquet for the parish faithful.

Sponsored by the Cathedral's Parish Council and chaired by Marian Ciaccia, Norma Haddad, Eva Boumoussa, and assisted by William Abou-Chrouh and Sonia Abi Habib, the evening couldn't be anything but a huge success. The frosting on the cake was the witty master of ceremony, Roger Shamas, who kept the evening's program moving along at a respectable pace.

Members of the Cathedral Parish were privileged to share the celebration with honored guests Majdi Ramadan and his wife, Vanessa, Consul General of Lebanon in New York; Caroline Ziade, Deputy Ambassador of Lebanon to the United Nations; Most Reverend Gregory Mansour, Bishop of the Eparchy of Saint Maron; Msgr. James Root, Rector of the Cathedral; Rev. Michel Lahoud, assistant at the Cathedral and Subdeacon Norbert and Leila Vogl.

The evening began with a welcome from Roger Shamas, followed by the Lebanese and American National Anthems. Msgr. Root led the invocation, the guests were introduced and Msgr. Root segued into the presentation of awards which are a highlight of the celebration. Each year it becomes more difficult to discern who will be named for service to the community. So many are deserving of the honor. This year

the NAM Silver Massabki Awards went to surprised and happy recipients Jeanette and Adonis El-Asmar and Lily and George Elhaje. The NAM youth Faith of the Mountain Award went to Fidelle El-Asmar, and the Cathedral Lifetime Awards were presented to Phyllis Simon and Roger Shamas. The announcements were greeted with thunderous applause, only reaffirming the selections. It brought the house down!

The delight of having our shepherd share the celebration with us was palpable when Bishop Gregory Mansour rose to greet his flock. Roger, our MC, introduced the Bishop as the "Bishop of I-95," referring to his time spent on the road visiting the parishes of the Eparchy. The Bishop reminded us of the legacy we bear as Maronites. St. Maron lived a monastic life choosing to reside in the open air, to be one with God's universe. His attributes were integrity (i.e.. we live what we profess); coherence (i.e..husband and wife love one another and live their faith in the home with family); passion for God (i.e.. being an "open air hermit" brought people to him and a spiritual monastic movement ensued within the church). It was a faithful Chalcedonian church yet faithful to the East and West, faithful to Rome with a desire to build a nation of all religions and people. In that vein he remarked that Pope Francis would meet with the Russian Orthodox Patriarch, a meeting which had not occurred for one thousand years. Bishop Mansour urged the faithful to assume the qualities of our patron, St. Maron, in our daily lives. If, in truth, we are followers of Maron, we must. It was another gentle instruction from the Bishop, reminding us of our heritage and responsibility as Maronites.

The formal program of the evening concluded and the music of Eddie Osama brought the community to their feet to joyfully sing and dance to our traditional music. The *dabke* snaked all around the ballroom, smiles and laughter filled the room and all greeted one another and congratulated the honorees of the evening. It certainly was a feast day to remember. □

Dartmouth, Massachusetts *My Religious Name as a Novice*

by *Sister Natalie Sayde Salameh*

Many of you would remember me as the postulant, Natalie. With deep gratitude to God, I entered the Novitiate of the Maronite Servants of Christ the Light on Cana Sunday, February 7, 2016. I received the religious habit, a white veil (not grey), which is the traditional veil color worn by a novice, and a new religious name, Sr. Natalie Sayde. The Novitiate usually lasts for two years where the novice begins to learn more about the rule of the community and vows of obedience, poverty and chastity, which she will profess when the novitiate concludes.

So my first name doesn't change, but in the Maronite Servants, when a candidate enters her novitiate, she chooses a second name in honor of the Blessed Mother of God. With the approval of Mother Marla Marie, I chose the name "Sayde."

The name "Sayde" in Arabic literally means "Lady" in English. But the name "Sayde" has become a familiar word used among Lebanese people to refer to "Our Lady



Sister Natalie Sayde Salameh (2nd from left) with others.

of Lebanon” in *Harissa*, Lebanon – “*Saydet Luban*” (Arabic). So they would say [I’m paraphrasing], “We’re going up to visit the *Sayde*.”

When I entered religious life as a postulant on February 2, 2014, Mother Marla Marie placed around my neck the medal of Our Lady of Lebanon, and I wore it every day for the last two years. The *Sayde* was my constant companion; everyday as I would place the medal around my neck I would give her my vocation, my cares, my joys, my concerns. I handed over everything to the *Sayde*, trusting and knowing that she was smiling at me and telling me “your mother never leaves you.”

I also got into the habit as Postulant of praying a special prayer everyday to the Holy Spirit before I would begin my Adoration Hour. It is kind of funny because I would pray half of it in English and half of it in Arabic:

Heavenly Father, through the powerful intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Our Lady of Lebanon, Our Lady of the Church and my Lady, to send upon us your Holy Spirit to illumine our minds with the light and splendor of your truth and inflame our hearts with the fire of divine charity. I ask this in the most Holy Name of Jesus. Amen.

There are no accidents, all prayer is the work of the Holy Spirit, and I believe that the Holy Spirit was sending me a big message when I started praying to Our Lady of Lebanon (the *Sayde*) everyday. So I was delighted when both myself and Mother Marla Marie decided that the name “*Sayde*” would be the religious name for me.

In our religious, we celebrate each sister’s name day instead of birthdays. Each sister has a feast day, and mine will be the first Sunday of May each year, which is the feast of Our Lady of Lebanon. Please continue to pray for me as I journey in my novitiate. □



Schedule of Bishop Gregory Mansour

March 1, 2016

Talk on Christians in the Middle East, Greensburg, Penn.

March 4, 2016

Morning Talk on Christians in the Middle East, Manhattan, N.Y.

March 5 - 6, 2016

Ordination of Aaron Sandbothe to the Diaconate, Greenville, S.C.

March 8 - 9, 2016

USCCB Meetings of Administrative Committee and Visit to Our Lady of Lebanon Seminary, Washington, D.C.

March 9 - 10, 2016

Meeting with Catholic Relief Services Board of Trustees, Baltimore, Md.

March 13, 2016

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

March 14 - 15, 2016

Catholic University Board of Trustees Meeting, Washington, D.C.

March 16, 2016

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

March 17, 2016

Meeting with the Eparchial Finance Council, Chancery Office, Brooklyn, N.Y.

March 20, 2016

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

March 21, 2016

Coming to the Harbor Service, St. Sharbel Church, Somerset, N.J.

March 22, 2016

Chrism Mass, Diocese of Brooklyn, N.Y.

March 23, 2016

Rite of the Lamp, St. Anthony Church, Springfield, Mass.

March 24, 2016

Holy Thursday Morning with the Abbot and Monks of the Most Holy Trinity Monastery, Petersham, Mass., and Evening Rite of the Washing of the Feet, Our Lady of Mercy Maronite Church, Worcester, Mass.

March 25, 2016

Great Friday of the Crucifixion, Service of the Signing of the Chalice, St. Maron Church, Torrington, Conn.

Great Friday of the Crucifixion Service, Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral, Brooklyn, N.Y.

March 26 - 27, 2016

Holy Saturday and Easter Sunday Services, Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral, Brooklyn, N.Y.

April 2 - 3, 2016

Dedication of the New Addition, St. George Church, Uniontown, Penn.

April 5, 2016

Meeting of CAMECT, Manhattan, N.Y. □

We Believe ... in the Resurrection

Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies" (John 11:25).
"Thus also the body that was laid in the earth is that which shall rise again" - Aphrahat, Demonstrations 8.

Introduction

Our common profession of faith in the Divine Liturgy ends with "We look forward to the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen."¹ Therefore, belief in the resurrection of the dead and eternal life is central to our Christian faith and to our understanding of the nature of being a human. However, what is often baffling to believers is what of us actually resurrects? This is especially true when we take into consideration the resurrection appearances of Jesus to his disciples and how they convey to us that their experience of him was not of a resuscitated corpse, or a disembodied soul, but of a resurrected person.

Since antiquity we find terms such as body, soul, spirit, and flesh used in Sacred Scripture, philosophy, and religious-theological thought. Yet we find often sharp differences between how these terms are used: in the Old Testament, in the New Testament, by the Greco-Roman philosophers, and the Fathers of the Church. Despite the limitations of our earthly intellects to know the inscrutable power of God, our hearts resonate with the words of Job: "For I know that my Redeemer lives, and on the last day I will rise out of the earth. And I will be enveloped again with my skin, and in my flesh I will see my God" (Job 19:25-26).

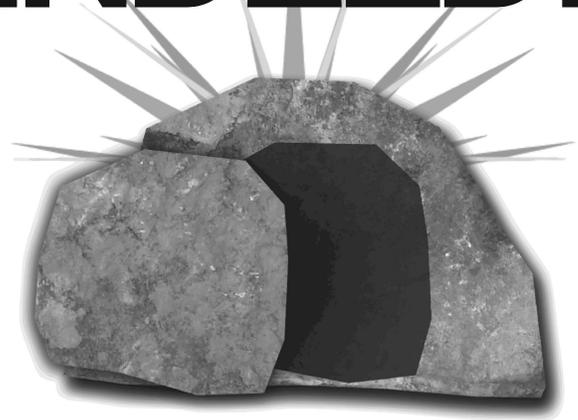
Sacred Scripture

While Judaism has no universal doctrinal statement about what all its adherents should believe as concerns death and immortality, the Old Testament has many references that support substantial, personal life beyond the grave. For example 2 Maccabees 7:9 states: "But the King of the world will raise us up, in eternal life at the resurrection, for we die on behalf of his laws." Also, in Ecclesiastes 12:7 we see, "The dust returns to its earth, from which it was, and the spirit returns to God, who granted it." These and other verses, such as the already mentioned words of Job, show that within the history of Judaism there came to be other ideas beyond the original Israelite teaching of *Shoel* - the shadowy place of the dead; to a greater understanding that one's relationship with God was not just a matter of a long life and blessings on earth, but the gift of eternal life in the presence of God.

In the New Testament the Resurrection of Christ gives light and meaning to the totality of the Gospel; indeed the Good News is Our Lord's Resurrection. He is the first-born and our

¹The Nicene-Constantinopolitan Symbol of Faith, usually referred to as the Nicene Creed or just The Creed, was formulated at the Ecumenical Councils of Nicaea in 325 and Constantinople in 381.

He Is RISEN INDEED!



hope and promise of eternal life. St. Paul, in his first letter to the Corinthians, addresses the question of the resurrection of the body:² "But someone will ask, 'How are the dead raised? With what body will they come?' ... The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable, ... it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. ... I declare to you, brothers and sisters, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable" (1Cor. 15:35,42,44,50).

St. Paul is adamant that the resurrection of the dead involves the rising of a "spiritual body." He tells us that flesh and blood as we know them in our earthly lives cannot inherit the Kingdom of God, but we will be changed - our earthly body

² "The notion of the "spiritual" body appears in the New Testament in the first Epistle of the Apostle Paul, addressed to the Corinthians. ... The resurrection of the dead was in fact one of the questions that seem to have perplexed Timotheos (Timothy), whom Paul had left in Corinth during his second peregrination, in order to organize and help the Corinthian Church." Antonia S. Kakavelaki, Patristic Journal Scrinium volume 11, 2015, pp. 225-241.

for a spiritual body. There are a number of key elements in this teaching of the Apostle: First, there is an affirmation of the integrity of the person, unlike the idea of a disembodied spirit or soul being our ultimate end, as in the view of Plato and Neo-Platonism. Paul is careful to remind us that we remain totally human and totally ourselves but clothed in immortality. A second point is that Paul is not being a philosopher, but he is being an Apostle of the Good News³.

He is drawing a direct correlation between the dying and rising to new life in baptism and one's entrance into the Body of Christ, the Church. This, in turn, is in direct comparison to mortal death, rising to immortality, and entrance into the Kingdom of God. Paul witnessed that many who had formerly embraced pagan lives and beliefs now embraced the Christian faith to the point of being baptized and were promising to live Christ-like lives; for them this was indeed a death and rebirth. It often cut a person off from former family and friends and ushered them into the embrace of their new family, the Church of believers in Christ.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church

"The term 'flesh' refers to man in his state of weakness and mortality. The 'resurrection of the flesh' (the literal formulation of the Apostles' Creed) means not only that the immortal soul will live on after death, but that even our 'mortal body' will come to life again" (*Catechism 990*). The philosophical importance of this statement is that it rejects the Platonic idea of the soul being the "true person," who merely inhabits a body on earth, and immortality is the freeing of the soul from the body. It also negates the idea of Aristotle, that a "true person" is one who has body and soul united, and when the body dies, so does the soul, therefore making immortality impossible. The statement of the Catechism is an affirmation of Scripture and Tradition concerning the value, necessity, and redemption of the total and "true person" - body and soul.

Answering the question of "How do the dead rise?", the Catechism of the Catholic Church offers these words of wisdom:

997: *What is "rising"?* In death, the separation of the soul from the body, the human body decays and the soul goes to meet God, while awaiting its reunion with its glorified body. God, in his almighty power, will definitively grant incorruptible life to our bodies by reuniting them with our souls, through the power of Jesus' Resurrection.

998: *Who will rise?* All the dead will rise, "those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those

who have done evil, to the resurrection of judgment."

999: *How?* Christ is raised with his own body: "See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself"; but he did not return to an earthly life. So, in him, "all of them will rise again with their own bodies which they now bear," but Christ "will change our lowly body to be like his glorious body," into a "spiritual body".

1000: This "how" exceeds our imagination and understanding; it is accessible only to faith. Yet our participation in the Eucharist already gives us a foretaste of Christ's transfiguration of our bodies.

1001: *When?* Definitively "at the last day," "at the end of the world." Indeed, the resurrection of the dead is closely associated with Christ's Parousia.

There will be an incompleteness to our lives until the Kingdom of God (Heaven) comes in its fullness. We are not meant to merely live as souls but we are meant to live as God created us, and for this reason "the Word became flesh," to assume and redeem the total person, soul and body. Indeed, immortality in the totality of our personhood is the destiny of all. Both the righteous and those who rejected God in this life will stand before God in their souls and bodies. The Resurrection of Christ reveals that our resurrected body will be like his, a spiritual body. The understanding of this great mystery is not open to our reason, or any human imagining, but to the hearts and eyes of faith. It is rooted in our celebration of the Holy Mysteries - the Sacraments of the Church, especially the Holy Eucharist. In the celebration of the Eucharist we discover and realize the true nature of "the Church" and our own "personhood" as a foretaste of the eternal communion with the Blessed Trinity, which we call the Kingdom of God. In the end we shall proclaim the words of St. Paul to the Corinthians: "O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" (1 Cor. 15:55). □

Reverend David Fisher
Philadelphia, Penn.



Deadline for next month's issue of *The Maronite Voice* is March 25, 2016.

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

Send all changes of address, news, pictures and personal correspondence to:

The Maronite Voice
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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. □

³ "The official Christian view concerning the resurrection of the dead was that it is the same flesh that rises again, although in a state of glory and eternal. The Christian writers that held this opinion did not approach their conception in a philosophic way, in other words they were not interested whether their argumentation was pertinent in a philosophic-logical way." Antonia S. Kakavelaki, *Patristic Journal Scrinium* vol 11, 2015, pp. 225-241.

My Journey to the Priesthood

by

Father Rodolph Wakim, Our Lady of Victory Church, Pittsburgh, Penn.

It is the best decision I ever made in my life. To become a priest was a dream. Priesthood is something so sacred. I did not see myself worthy of that great honor. Even though I went to church (Liturgy) every day and took part in most church activities and prayer groups, I did not picture myself on the Altar. I felt that I am a follower, not a leader. I am great in being an assistant and helper not a commander and boss. Little did I know that this is exactly what God needed from me, which is, to be His follower and His assistant. But at the time, I did not see that. All I knew was the joy of being with the family of Faith, praying together, where I felt at home.

I remember a very good friend of mine whom I respected and admired, asking me if I had a spiritual director. I did not know what that was. He recommended a retired priest (+)Fr. Emil Jalkh, and insisted on my going to see him. I did and started meeting with him once a week. I had tons of questions on religion, faith, history, etc... God rest his soul, he was so patient with me, answered all my questions, heard my confession every week and started guiding me on Scripture meditation and the life of the saints. He gave me many books on the life of the saints. I would read them in one sitting. I was tremendously impressed with their lives. St. John Vianney (Curé of Ars) and St. Sharbel were the first two saints that I really looked up to. I thank God for Fr. Emil. He was like a father to me. He taught me so much. Today, after thirty years plus, I still remember and benefit from his lessons and words of wisdom. That is why I strongly encourage every Christian to have his own spiritual director/confessor. He would walk with you in your journey of faith to guide, direct, and teach you how to love God and do His Will.

needed an open heart surgery. I ended up staying here. The first thing I looked for was a spiritual director. I found one and met with him once a month for guidance and confessions. Meeting with him and going to confessions regularly really saved my soul in New York City. One day, he asked me: "Have you ever thought of how you would like to spend the rest of your life?" I was going to college at the time, pursuing a physical therapy degree. My immediate answer was: "I would like to spend the rest of my life with God and for God!" I could not think of any better way to spend my life. That's when it became clear to me that I would like to give my life to God. A few months later, I went to Lebanon for a visit and I made it a point to go and talk with my uncle, Fr. Francis. This time, I was determined that I wanted to give my life to God, but did not know how. When my uncle saw my determination, now that I am twenty-eight years old (ten years after my first visit) and have been living in New York on my own for several years, he took me seriously and directed me toward becoming a parish priest. When I came back to the U.S., I met Chorbishop John Faris and asked him to be my spiritual director. I did not know who he was. He used to come with Bishop Francis Zayek to the Cathedral. With his help I joined Our Lady of Lebanon Seminary in Washington, D.C., in 1992 and became a priest in 1996. Almost twenty years later, I still cannot believe that I am a priest. I am so honored and grateful to God. It is a dream and it is the best decision I ever made in my 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

The first time I took any initiative toward the priesthood was when I was around eighteen years old. My cousin Paul told me that he wanted to join the religious life and he was going to see our uncle, Fr. Francis Wakim, who is an Antonine Monk at *Mar Chaaya* Monastery. That idea appealed to me so much. I told Paul that I wanted to go with him to join the monastery too. Our uncle accepted my cousin but told me that my family needed me because I have a brother with special needs and no other brothers or sisters. Later, when my parents found out about my wanting to join the monastery, they were concerned and wondered if I was trying to run away from home, so I put that idea to rest for a while.

Several years later, I came to Brooklyn, New York, to be with my father because he had a heart attack and

Bishop Mansour Makes CRS Visits to Refugees and Those in Need

On February 15, 2016, His Excellency Bishop Gregory Mansour accompanied a delegation of Catholic Relief Services (CRS) on a two-week trip to visit the Refugees in Lebanon, Syria, and Egypt. Below are a few pictures of the Bishop's trip.



At a center in Lebanon designed to protect migrant workers who have suffered from abuse from employers who have not honored their agreement. We heard their stories and assured them of our support. The center, one of many in Lebanon, run by Caritas Lebanon and Catholic Relief Services, is a safe haven for those who have nowhere to go. Here they are thanking us for our visit. ☐

Caritas Lebanon and Catholic Relief Services, is a safe haven for those who have nowhere to go. Here they are thanking us for our visit. ☐



The Maronite Bishop of Egypt, the retired Bishop of Gary and Bishop Mansour sharing a lighter moment with Syrian refugees who are being trained by CRS in Cairo on a variety of livelihood skills: One man is an electrical engineer, one is a cook, one woman makes perfumes and shampoos,

the other caters out of her small crowded apartment. CRS gives them the help they need, including small loans to get started. They wanted us to thank all who give to CRS. ☐



Catholic Relief Services (CRS) delegation visits with His Beatitude Maronite Patriarch, Bechara Peter Cardinal Rai, in Bkerke, Lebanon. ☐



Caritas Jordan is a source of great Christian pride. Over 400 full time and 2,000 volunteers constitute an army of mercy for Syrian and Iraqi refugees as well as Christian and Muslim poor in Jordan whom they serve without distinction. ☐



The Sister responsible for the Italian Hospital in Amman, Jordan, who along with support from CRS and Caritas Jordan serves on a daily basis hundreds of poor Jordanians as well as Iraqis and Syrians fleeing conflicts. ☐



In Upper Egypt, where tensions were high between Christian and Muslim, CRS has been working with local youth as well as Coptic Orthodox priests and Sunni Muslim imams to build bridges for peace. This program located just outside Luxor has met with great success during the most turbulent of times. The youth and clergy forged ties that inspired all to continue to deepen their ties. ☐



This is the face of mercy from the Good Shepherd Sisters of Lebanon and Syria. She oversees five nuns in Syria and hundreds of their coworkers in the field of humanitarian assistance for many Syrian women in desperate need. Pray that her prayer will be answered. ☐

Phoenix, Arizona St. Joseph Maronite Church "She Came And Prayed Asking St. Sharbel to Cure Her"



Mrs. Dafne Gutierrez with her husband, three children, Bishop Zaidan, Bishop Olmstead, the Bishop of Phoenix, and Fr. Akiki.

by Dr. Anne Borik

January 18, 2016, was not just your ordinary day in Phoenix, Arizona. It is a day that will always be remembered as the day that Dafne Gutierrez, a young blind Hispanic woman and mother of four children, got her vision restored to normal through the intercession of St. Sharbel.

Faith and confession is what Dafne Gutierrez continues to repeat time and time again when asked about her healing. "I was desperate when I walked into St. Joseph Maronite Catholic Church." Dafne continues, "I felt like God never heard me before, but this time was different, just different." Mrs. Gutierrez is not a member of the Maronite Rite and had never heard of St. Sharbel before, but she came with faith and prayed in front of the Relics of St. Sharbel, went to Confession and was blessed with the Holy Oil by Fr. Wissam Akiki, the Pastor of St. Joseph Maronite Church. Within four days, her vision was restored to normal with a completely normal eye examination.

Mrs. Gutierrez was diagnosed with Idiopathic Intracranial Hypertension in 2013. Despite aggressive medical and surgical treatment, her vision progressively declined, leaving her completely blind in both eyes. Surgical interventions including ventriculo-peritoneal shunts as well as lumbo-peritoneal shunts were performed in an attempt to lower the intracranial pressure in the brain and thus decrease damage to the optic nerves. Unfortunately, it did not work. "After trying every medication, I had two surgeries to decrease the pressure in my brain that failed and now there is nothing else to do. They want to put me in a nursing home because they said I can't take care of myself or my children."

Mrs. Gutierrez states that her sister-in-law heard about

the Relics of St. Sharbel coming to Phoenix, Arizona, and it spurred interest because she heard that St. Sharbel cured a boy with blindness. On Saturday January 16, 2016, she entered St. Joseph Maronite Catholic Church, went to confession, attended Divine Liturgy and was blessed with the Holy Oil by Fr. Wissam Akiki. She returned on Sunday January 17, 2016. That evening she awoke at 4 a.m. with severe pain in her head, and her eyes were burning. When her husband turned on the lights, she said it hurt her eyes and at that point was able to see vague shadows. He told her, "It is impossible because you are not able to see." He described an odor of burnt meat coming out of her nostrils.



Mrs. Gutierrez's eye exam.

That morning she called her ophthalmologist and she was evaluated the next day. Her exam showed that she was still legally blind with abnormal optic nerves. Two days later she saw a different ophthalmologist and her vision was a perfect 20/20 with completely normal optic nerves! Subsequently, she saw her original ophthalmologist one week later and her vision was documented to be normal with a completely normal exam! No medical explanation was given.

Mrs. Gutierrez immediately notified Fr. Wissam, as she was convinced that her healing occurred through the intercession of St. Sharbel in his church. At that point, Fr. Wissam consulted a group of physicians to investigate this occurrence. An extensive review of Mrs. Gutierrez's medical records took place as well as repeat examinations.

According to Dr. Anne Borik, a board certified Internal Medicine physician, "This is something we just don't see. A long-standing damaged optic nerve causing blindness does not just all-of-a-sudden look normal in two days with complete restoration of vision." According to the medical committee, "After a thorough physical exam, extensive literature search and review of all medical records, we have no medical explanation and therefore believe this to be a miraculous healing through the intercession of St. Sharbel."

Fr. Wissam Akiki, Pastor of St. Joseph Maronite Catholic Church, has not stopped hearing confessions and ministering to those in search of healing through the intercession of St. Sharbel. According to Fr. Wissam, "In the midst of hundreds of people, I remember saying to Dafne's children, "Your mom will be able to see you again. Just have faith!"

It has been over one month since Dafne Gutierrez was healed through the intercession of St. Sharbel and her vision is still perfect! As a gesture of Thanksgiving to God, Divine

Liturgy and blessing with the Holy Oil of St. Sharbel took place on February 18, 2016, with His Excellency Bishop A. Elias Zaidan in Phoenix.

On the 18th of every month, Divine Liturgy and blessing with Holy Oil of St. Sharbel will take place at 7 p.m. at St. Joseph Maronite Catholic Church in Phoenix. In addition, the first Tuesday of every month will be dedicated to prayer and reflection on the Chaplet of St. Sharbel and Holy Rosary at 7 p.m. All are welcome! ☐



Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon

Statement on The Healing of Mrs. Dafne Gutierrez

Just as there are many kinds of diseases, there are many kinds of healings. While the Lord Jesus cured many people of their physical and mental diseases, He also cured them of spiritual disease, thus bringing about a full healing.

As a Bishop of the Church it is not within my competency to determine a physical or medical cure; the Church relies upon the expertise and skills of the medical professionals to judge that. Although miraculous instantaneous cures are rare, they are not unknown, and we should always be open to this possibility. As human beings, we are always amazed by the physical healing granted to people who have been under pain and suffering caused by certain diseases. We look at the case of Mrs. Dafne Gutierrez and we thank God for the gift of healing she received at the occasion of the visit of the Relics of St. Sharbel, the Maronite Saint from Lebanon who spent twenty-three years of his life in a hermitage. During the visit of the Relics of St. Sharbel to St. Joseph Church [Phoenix, Ariz.] from January 15 - 17, 2016, she came and prayed asking St. Sharbel to cure her.

The other type of healing, spiritual healing, can help people in many different ways – sometimes in unexpected ways. A physical healing may completely cure someone – or may not – but it may also bring about a healing of the condition of the soul. We are able to judge spiritual healing by the fruit of that healing – by what we observe as a result. Jesus tells us "You will know them by their fruits" (Mt. 7:16). When the Spirit of God acts among us and brings about

spiritual healing, the word of the Lord grows "mightily" (to paraphrase a passage in the Acts of the Apostles 19:20). It is always our wish to ask for spiritual healing as we petition the Lord for our physical healing and material needs.



The "end product" of spiritual healing is an increase in the virtues of faith, hope and love (*caritas*) in people. Such growth in these virtues can be seen in an increase in the intensity of our

prayer life, in our more frequent reception of the sacraments – especially of Penance and the Holy Eucharist, resulting in our reconciliation with God and our neighbor. Thus, we will be living our faith, witnessing the love of God in the darkness of our world.

St. Sharbel is well known for his intercessory prayer on behalf of the many people afflicted with various diseases. So many cases of healing have been attributed to the intercession of St. Sharbel. What is evident at this time is that Mrs. Dafne Gutierrez has regained her sight. We raise a prayer of thanksgiving to our Loving and Merciful God for his providence and graces. May this healing of the sight of Dafne be an inspiration for all of us to seek the spiritual sight, in order to recognize the will of God in our lives and to act accordingly. Let us all together follow the example of St. Sharbel in living our life as a pleasing offering to the Almighty God. ☐

Bishop A. Elias Zaidan
Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon

Eparchy of Saint Maron

Eparchial Appointments



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

Mr. Edward T. Massoud has been appointed as the new Eparchial Finance Officer. Mr. Massoud is currently the Chief Investment Officer at Teknor Apex Company, and has been actively involved at Saint Anthony of the Desert Maronite Church in Fall River, Mass., assisting with the parish finances there. He brings with him a trove of knowledge in the financial field. His expertise will assist the Eparchy in continuing to move in the right direction for financial growth and transparency.

Mr. Raymond Espinal has been appointed as the Eparchial Compliance Officer. Mr. Espinal is currently working for the Finance Office of the Diocese of Brooklyn, which he has done for many years, and he spends a great deal of time "in the field," going from parish to parish offering his advice and assistance. Also, he has been a great help to the Eparchy of Saint Maron for the past several years with its quarterly reports and with so many solutions as regards to *QuickBooks*. His experience enables him to help the priests and parish accountants to be compliant with the Eparchial financial norms. Further, he has the knowledge to carefully review each yearly parish financial report, and to give his feedback to each parish in this regard.

Both of these men will be a great asset to the Eparchy of Saint Maron. We thank them sincerely for their kindness and willingness to assist. ☐

53rd Annual NAM Convention

July 6 – 10, 2016, San Francisco Bay Area, CA

Convention Hotel- Hyatt Regency

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\$140 per night Single/Double/Triple/
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**Blessed by the presence of
Our Maronite Patriarch
Cardinal Mar Bechara Peter Rai,
NAM and the Community of
Our Lady of Lebanon Church
welcome you to the 53rd Annual
Maronite Convention**

San Francisco

One of the Best Places to Visit



Hisham El Hajj

is an award winning Lebanese performer. In 1993, Hisham won the Golden Award in the Lebanese art program 'Studio Al Fan'. Hisham has performed in many concerts and festivals in Lebanon and abroad, and represented Lebanon at the 2004 Francophone in Burkina Faso, Africa. In 2008, Hisham was selected as the Best Arabic Young Singer at the Oscar Festival in Egypt. In 2010, Hisham released his world famous duet "Baladna" featuring the Egyptian singer Amina. The video tells the cultural heritage of both Lebanon and Egypt. This work was a turning point in Hisham's career and led him to win a "Murex d'Or" in 2011 for the Best Arabic Song.

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Aline Lahood

studied singing and dramatic art. She acts in TV, plays and directs short films. She won the international prize at the Megahit festival in Turkey. In 2006 she starred in Elias Rahbani's musical "Jawharat Al Aalam" in Qatar. In 2009,

she performed with the Caracalla dance group at Baalbeck International Festival. She won the Murex d'Or 2013 for best performance as an actress and singer at Casino du Liban. In 2014, she joined the third season of the French edition of *The Voice*. Aline impressed the judges during the blind audition with her superb rendition of "Khedni Maak" from the repertoire of her mother, the Lebanese singer Salwa Al Katrib.



Leila Milki

is a singer, songwriter, and pianist from the Bay Area. She is a dynamic and multilingual performer who integrates her classical piano training with her Middle Eastern roots to create thoughtful instrumentation, engaging melodies, and heartfelt harmony. She is a USC Renaissance Scholar who is pursuing her musical passion full-time, striving to

translate her artistic expression into an accessible platform for emotional and social empowerment.

ENTERTAINMENT

Thursday, July 7

Evangelical & Classical Concert by
International Artist

Joumana Mdarar,

Angelic Voices of OLL Children,
Young Lebanese American Singer
Leila Milki

Friday, July 8

Middle Eastern Night
Special performances by
OLL Children, Youth,
and Young Adults.

Tribute to Fairuz by **John Fayyad,**
Nada Khoury, Marc Homsy,
and Lebanese Super Star
Aline Lahoud

Saturday, July 9

Entertainment by
Rony Barrak,
and famous Lebanese singer
Hisham El Hajj



Joumana Mdarar

is one of Lebanon's most popular religious singers. She performs about 50 concerts annually in Lebanon and around the world. She was featured at the Beatification of St. Naamtallah El Hardini

in Rome; and at the Canonization of St. Rafqa, the beatification of Abouna Yaaqoub and Brother Estephan in Lebanon. In 1997, Joumana had a special performance in the presence of Saint Pope John-Paul II in Lebanon. Her voice is particularly associated with the music of Joseph Khalifé who composed her best repertory.



Rony Barrak

is a famous Lebanese composer and musician renowned for his great talent with the darbuka. At the age of 17, Rony won the Gold Medal on LBCL in competition for talented young musicians. He has performed with some of

the biggest names in Jazz, and has played with philharmonic orchestras all over the world. His style encompasses a broad range of music, mixing Latin music, jazz, funk, and percussion. He has a passion for developing new projects which has allowed him to play during live performances of video game music.



John Fayyad, Nada Khoury, Marc Homsy

Are devoted to singing for charities and humanitarian causes by performing Lebanese music. Nada and Marc are graduates of the Lebanese Academy of Fine Arts in interior design, and John is a Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist. They enjoy bringing happiness to the under-privileged by performing songs that evoke happy memories from Lebanon.

They will perform a Tribute to Fairuz at the NAM Convention.

53rd Annual NAM Convention

SPEAKERS



Most Reverend Youssef Soueif, Maronite Archbishop of Cyprus. He succeeded Archbishop of Cyprus Boutros Gemayel. President of The Patriarchal Liturgical Commission, President of Caritas Cyprus, Member of the CCEE – the Council of European Catholic Bishops. Archbishop Soueif published more than 15 books about The Maronite Liturgy.



Dr. Joseph G. Jabbara, President of The Lebanese American University. Prior to his role at LAU, Dr. Jabbara served as Academic Vice President at Loyola Marymount University (LMU) in Los Angeles, California. Dr. Jabbara earned his law degree at the Université Saint-Joseph in Beirut, and a Ph.D. in Political Science from the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C. He is the author, co-author, and of 12 books.



Dr. Roger Hajjar, Founder, Prysm Dr. Hajjar has pioneered Laser Phosphor Display (LPD) technology. Dr. Hajjar has registered more than 75 U.S. and world-wide patents. Dr. Hajjar holds a Ph.D. in Optical Sciences from the University of Arizona and a B.S. in Electrical Engineering from Boston University where he graduated Summa Cum Laude.



Dr. Salwan AbiEzzi, Dr. AbiEzzi graduated from the University of California, San Diego School of Medicine in 1993. Following his residency, Dr. AbiEzzi joined the Palo Alto Medical Foundation in 1999. He practices general internal medicine with an additional interest in diabetes and sports medicine. San Jose Magazine and the nonprofit Consumers' Checkbook Magazine have recognized Dr. AbiEzzi on several occasions on their list of the "Best Doctors" in the Bay Area.



Nina Kouyoumdjian, Principal, Cota Capital. Prior to joining Cota, Nina held a Financial Analyst position at Google, where she was responsible for a \$1.8 billion business. She has vast international experience, including London, New York, San Francisco, Dubai, and Istanbul. Nina also founded HIVE, the first Armenian tech incubator. Nina received her B.A. in Government from Harvard University, and was one of six recipients of the Michael C. Rockefeller Fellowship.



Ramy Adeeb founder Snip.it Acquired by Yahoo for \$10 million. Ramy holds an M.S. in Computer Science from Harvard University, and MBA from Stanford. At Tellme Networks, Ramy led the enterprise engineering group and oversaw development of more than 30 products. Ramy is the author of a number of patents in VoiceXML application development. Tellme Networks was sold to Microsoft in 2007 for \$800 million.

WORKSHOPS

Thursday, July 7

10:30am "The Role of Christianity in the Making of Higher Education in Lebanon"

Dr Joseph Jabbara

3:30pm "Connecting the Dots with Faith"

Nina Kouyoumdjian

Friday, July 8

10:30am "Maronite Divine Liturgies and Services"

Archbishop Youssef Soueif

10:30am "Orchestral Percussion and Drum kit"

Rony Barrak

3:30pm "Prayer and Entrepreneurship"

Ramy Adeeb

Saturday, July 9

10:30am "The Role of Faith in Successful Ventures"

Dr Roger Hajjar

10:30am "4 Pillars of Healthy Living"

Dr Salwan AbiEzzi

3:00pm "Commission for Lebanon"

His Beatitude Patriarch Bechara Peter Rai



YOUTH

Fr Gary George, CSsR (Congregation of The Most Holy Redeemer). Fr George is the Episcopal Director of Youth Organization (MYO), and Priestly Vocations.



Fr Fadi Chidiac, S.J. Fr Fadi is a Jesuit priest, doctoral studies/research at UC Berkeley. Founder of ECOBA (Eastern Churches of Bay Area), and One Voice Choir.

Wednesday, July 6

6:00pm MYO/MYA Opening Divine Liturgy

Thursday, July 7

10:30am "Experiencing the Grace of Jesus" during this year of Mercy.

Fr Gary George

12:00 noon, Divine Liturgy served by MYO/MYA

Friday, July 8

12:00 noon, Divine Liturgy served by MYO

3:30pm "Faith and Technology"

Fr Fadi Chidiac



Thursday, July 7
Fr Tony Massad, Pastor of St Rafka Maronite Church, Livonia, MI. Episcopal Director of Maronite Young Adult Apostolate (MYA).



Friday, July 8
Fr Guy-Raymond Sarkis, Pastor of St Ignatius of Antioch Maronite Catholic Church Dayton, OH. Doctoral studies/research on Islam.

YOUNG ADULTS Theology on Tap

EXCURSIONS

Wednesday, July 6

10:30am — Napa Valley, Wine country, known world-wide as a premium wine-growing region Wine Tour to include visiting 3 wineries, lunch box, return by 5:00pm (wine tasting fee not included)

Thursday, July 7

1:15pm — 1st Excursion to San Francisco for Seniors, Adults, MYA, and MYO

Golden Gate Park, *Academy of Sciences, *Tea Garden, Botanical Garden. See the buffaloes, Young Museum tower, Ocean Beach, and Cliff House for a wonderful ocean view. Return by 5:00 pm (*fee park not included) (different buses for different age-groups)

Friday, July 8

8:00am — 5K Run,

Organized by OLL Youth Ministry. All proceeds will be donated to St Jude's Children's Hospital.

10:30am — MYA Excursion to Alcatraz

The federal prison on Alcatraz Island (The Rock) housed some of America's most dangerous criminals from 1934 to 1963. Among those who served time at the maximum-security facility was the notorious gangster Al "Scarface" Capone (1899-1947). Alcatraz Island was also the site of a U.S. military prison from the late 1850s to 1933, and is now a popular tourist destination.

1:15pm — 2nd Excursion to San Francisco for Adults

Downtown SF, Union Square, Lombard Street, Pier 39, Fisherman's Wharf, and the world-famous San Francisco **GOLDEN GATE BRIDGE**
Return by 5:00 pm

Saturday, July 9

10:30am — MYA Scavenger Hunt in San Francisco. Return by 2:30pm

1:15pm — MYO Sight-seeing, San Francisco, Pier 39, Fisherman's Wharf, Golden Gate Bridge, Sausalito. Return by 5:00pm

Uniontown, Pennsylvania *Bishop's Visit*



by *Dr. Mabel George Howard*

Simply stated, "There's a new Bishop in town," and the congregation of St. George Maronite Catholic Church in Uniontown, Pennsylvania, was pleased to welcome him with open arms. Bishop Edward Malesic, fifth Bishop of the Diocese of Greensburg, Penn., honored the parishioners of St. George with a visit on February 9, 2016, the Feast Day of St. Maron. On this holy day of obligation, Maronite Catholics remember the priest and hermit, St. Maron, who is considered the Father of the spiritual and monastic movement called the Maronite Church. St. Maron lived his life in quiet and solitude in the mountainous region of Syria near Antioch, and his followers spread his religious teachings throughout Syria and Lebanon. St. Maron was known for his missionary work, healing, miracles, and teachings of a monastic devotion to God.

Bishop Malesic celebrated the evening Liturgy at St. George. Father Sami Chaaya, Pastor, Fr. Bandura, Fr. Ron Simboli, Fr. Larko, Fr. Tringhese, Msgr. Matusak, and Fr. Peretti concelebrated. The outstanding message expressed in Bishop Malesic's homily was the fact that although we may come from many different backgrounds with varied traditions - (religious, ethnic, cultural, language, etc.), God hears us universally. Bishop Malesic was impressed with our Maronite history and preservation of the language spoken by Jesus, not only the Aramaic in its Syrian dialect, but God's language of love and faithfulness.

Father Sami noted that although St. George Maronite Church is under the jurisdiction of the Eparchy of Saint Maron, the Diocese of Greensburg and its religious leaders have always been a friend and brother to our Maronite Church. Bishop Malesic continues this tradition in brotherhood with our Bishop Gregory Mansour. After the final blessing, Father Sami presented Bishop Malesic with a relic of St. Sharbel mounted on a cedar tree plaque which symbolizes our Maronite heritage and spirituality. St. Sharbel, a Lebanese Maronite monk, hermit, and priest, was revered for his holiness and canonized a saint by the Catholic Church.

Following the liturgy, a reception was held in the church hall with hors d'oeuvres, pastries and other delicacies. Everyone in attendance had an opportunity to speak with Bishop Malesic on a personal level. The parishioners of St. George were extremely honored to share this time with Bishop Malesic, who displayed a sincere kindness, interest, and delightful sense of humor to all. Finally, to demonstrate our cultural pride, the youth of the parish presented a portrayal of several notable descendants of Phoenician, Lebanese, and Maronite heritage for all to enjoy. □

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania *MYO Regional Retreat*



by *Sr. Natalie Sayde Salameh*

On the weekend of February 19 - 21, 2016, St. Maron Church in Philadelphia, Penn., hosted a regional MYO retreat focusing on the theme of "mercy" during this Jubilee Year. The retreat gathered approximately sixty youth from St. Maron, Philadelphia; St. Anthony Church, Lawrence, Mass.; Our Lady Star of the East, Pleasantville, N.J.; and St. Sharbel Church, Newtown Square, Penn.

Sister Therese Maria of the Maronite Servants of Christ the Light facilitated the weekend with Father Vince Farhat, Pastor of St. Maron, and many dedicated chaperones and youth leaders. Sister encouraged the teens to think about how God manifests His mercy personally to them in their lives, and in the Works of Mercy. The teens participated in a service project on Saturday morning where they helped a needy local parish with indoor and outdoor maintenance. The MYO participated in adoration, confession, and fun activities like ice skating at Penn's Landing.

On Sunday morning, the teens shared on what aspect of the weekend they found most enlightening. Many loved adoration and confession, while others enjoyed the service project and having a chance to give back to the community. They enjoyed being with one another and forming new and deeper friendships. □

Damascus, Syria *Vigilant Servants*

It was Tuesday March 26, 2013, at 1:00 a.m when shrapnel killed Deacon Camille on the road to the Church. Following his death parents of the priests were eager for me to leave; to leave Damascus. They were afraid for the safety of their children. I proposed that the priests leave if they wanted to. The diocese does not have the right to keep them here under these conditions. They have all answered: "You stay, we stay."



Providence has since protected us. Our deacon martyr had the role of distributing bread to the poor. The priests took over and each of them has become a social worker, good Samaritans who watch over the charitable activities in their parishes. This is necessitated by the intense fighting in Syria and the waves of refugees that unfortunately arrive each day.

2015 was quite hard for the diocese: Two shells caused significant damage in the historic cathedral, the roof of the library caught fire and collapsed, the old sanitary facilities, built in 1958, succumbed to the fire, and the room of Father Jean caught fire. The heavy restoration work was carried out by priests during my absence (health problems). They gave up days of rest in order to complete the work.

In a gesture of rebellion against death and destruction, these courageous priests launched the construction of three chapels in the modest suburban districts, mobilizing the faithful around these three projects which are a sign of hope and faith in the future of the Church in Syria. This vitality highlights their pastoral proximity during this year of mercy and great suffering.

The first chapel, dedicated to the Martyrs of Damascus (1860), was inaugurated on January 8, 2016. Two other chapels will follow. This first one is a step on the path of reconstruction. Only the Lord gives peace. The Church and our Good Shepherd are proud of these priests, vigilant servants who cling to their mission under the bombs. They are the strength and future pledge of a martyred Christianity that refuses to die.

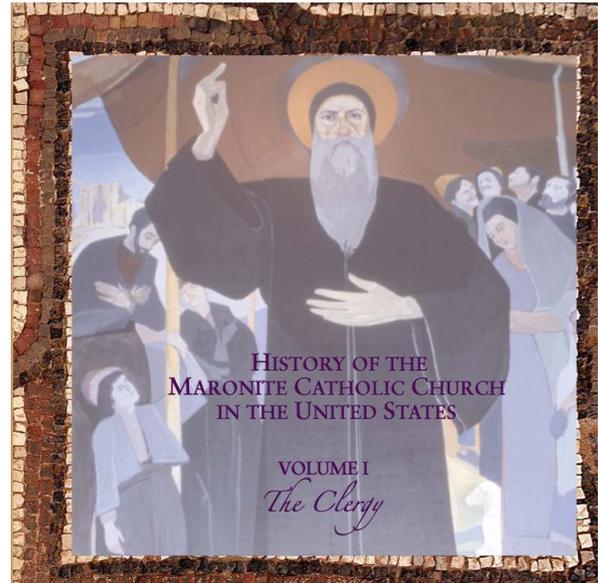
From Damascus, February, 14, 2016
+Samir Nassar
Maronite Archbishop of Damascus



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.

Austin, Texas Pro-Life Activities



Members of Our Lady's Parish are standing with their pastor, Msgr. Don Joseph Sawyer.

Thousands of people marched on the Texas State Capitol in Austin, Tex., on Saturday, January 23, 2016, to advocate for life and against abortion! Our Lady's Maronite Parish in Austin has always been involved in the March and other activities such as the John Paul II Women's Health Center, the Rachel Project for unwed mothers, 40 Days for Life and more. □

San Antonio, Texas Saint Maron Celebration

by Regina Aune

St. George Maronite Church in San Antonio, Tex., celebrated a festive weekend in honor of St. Maron's Feast Day with the annual *hafli* on Saturday evening,



From left: (front row): Suzanne Karam, Larry Monsour, Candy Monsour, Marcel Noujeim, Lina Noujeim, Kathy Birkner, Gaielle Harb, and Chris Karam. Back row: Dan Karam, Cinder Obeid, Fr. Charles Khachan, MLM, Brendan George, Jackie George, Simon Salinas, and Fr. Marwan Abi Nader, MLM. Not in the picture: Tony Obeid.

February 6, 2016, and the presentation of the annual awards at the Divine Liturgy on Sunday, February 7.

Stephanie Sarkis and the Paul El Bayeh Band provided traditional Lebanese music for the *hafli* and DJ Sam provided the American music. The parish youth provided traditional Lebanese folk dancing, and all enjoyed traditional Lebanese food.

At Sunday's liturgy, Father Charles Khachan, Pastor, presented the Silver Massabki Award to Lina and Marcel Noujeim; the Faith of the Mountain Award to Gaielle Harb; the Bishop's Awards to Jackie and Brendan George and Cinder and Tony Obeid; and the St. George Appreciation Award to Kathy Birkner, Chris Karam, Suzanne and Dan Karam, Candy and Larry Monsour, and Simon Salinas, honoring these individuals for their selfless and continuous giving of their time and talents to support Saint George Parish. □