



# The Maronite Voice



A Publication of the Maronite Eparchies in the USA

Volume X

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November 2014

## Saint Rafka and Giving Thanks to God

When we say "thank you" to someone, we often hear the response among our Maronite people: "Don't thank me, thank the Lord." Being grateful to God is part of being a Christian.

As many of you know, the relics of our beloved Saint Rafka are visiting a number of parishes in the United States, on the occasion of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of her entrance into eternal life in 1914.

Throughout much of her life, Saint Rafka never ceased giving thanks to the Lord for what was given to her - be that good or bad. She accepted with gratitude her life. Her life was one of service. She taught children; she cooked and cleaned. In many ways it was an "ordinary" life, but truly a life of prayer and work and service, doing the work of the Lord.

Eventually, physical illness became part of Saint Rafka's life, but she kept smiling and thanking God for the grace of letting her participate in His Passion. She was always grateful to the Lord for her life.

For us, it is the time of Thanksgiving. A time when we, as a nation, collectively, give thanks to the Lord for all the good things that we experience as a people. Although tradition tells us that the first Thanksgiving was in 1621 to celebrate a good harvest, Thanksgiving Day became an official Federal holiday in 1863. It was in the middle of one of the most destructive wars in our history, a war that would ultimately take over 600,000 American lives. In spite of this great tragedy, President Abraham Lincoln found it important to encourage us to give thanks to God. He declared a day in "Thanksgiving and Praise to our beneficent Father who dwelleth in the Heavens." As a federal and public holiday in the United States, Thanksgiving Day is one of the major holidays of the year. *(Continues on page 20)*



## Schedule of Bishop Elias Zaidan

### November 3 - 7, 2014

Retreat for the clergy of the Syriac Catholic Eparchy

### November 10 - 13, 2014

USCCB Meeting, Baltimore, Md.

### November 15 - 16, 2014

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

### November 20 - 21, 2014

Caritas Lebanon Board Meeting, Washington, D.C.

### November 21, 2014

Prayers for Christians of the Middle East, Detroit, Mich.

### December 2 - 3, 2014

USCCB International Justice and Peace Committee Meeting, Washington, D.C.

### December 6, 2014

Enthronement of Metropolitan Joseph Zehlaoui, Antiochian Orthodox Church, Brooklyn, N.Y.

### December 13 - 14, 2014

Pastoral Visit to St. Maron Church, Cleveland, Ohio, and Elevation of Msgr. Peter Karam to the Honor of *Periodeut.* □

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

**Editor** Msgr. George M. Sebaali

**Editing and proofreading**  
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### **Maronite Convention 2015**

Saint Maron Maronite Church

**Cleveland, Ohio**

**July 1 - 5, 2015**

For more information  
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or visit [www.Namnews.org](http://www.Namnews.org)



## **Eparchial Condolences**

His Excellency Bishop Mansour Hobaika, Maronite Bishop of the Eparchy of *Zahle*, Lebanon, died on October 28, 2014, in Paris, France, as he was being treated for cancer. His Excellency Bishop Samir Mazloom, Patriarchal Vicar, representing His Beatitude Patriarch Bechara Peter Cardinal Rai, who is making a pastoral visit to the Maronite Church in Australia, presided at the Funeral service on Sunday, November 2, 2014, at St. Maron Cathedral in *Zahle*, Lebanon.

Bishop Hobaika was born in 1941 in *Hadath* in the Baalback area of Lebanon; was ordained a priest on June 9, 1968 and became a bishop in 2002. He was the head of the Maronite Unified Tribunal, a member of the faculty at Sagesse University in Beirut, and held a doctorate degree in Oriental Canon Law from Rome. He was fluent in Arabic, French, English, Italian, German, Latin and Syriac.

Bishop Gregory Mansour along with the clergy and faithful of the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn and 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, the College of Maronite Bishops and to Bishop Hobaika's family.

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



Bishop Mansour  
Hobaika

## **Eparchy of Saint Maron Clergy Retreat**

The Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn will hold its annual clergy retreat on January 12 -16, 2015, at Our Lady of Florida Retreat House in North Palm Beach, Florida. □

## Brooklyn, New York *Fifth Annual Eparchial Benefit Dinner*

by Salma Vahdat

Maronites and friends “took” Manhattan, N.Y., on Thursday, October 23, 2014, in what has become an annual event to support the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn in its mission of administration to the forty-four parishes it encompasses; the Seminary in Washington, D.C.; retirement pension for its priests; support for the mission communities; and critically needed renovation to Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral, the Seat of the Eparchy.

Called to order by a vibrant mistress of ceremony, Dana Barakat Khoury, and an invocation led by Chorbishop Michael Thomas, Vicar General, the evening began with greetings and much joy. Chorbishop Thomas, reaching deep into the hearts of the attendees, read from the Gospel of Luke of Jesus’ visit to the home of Martha and Mary. Mary sat at the Lord’s feet and listened to what He was saying. Martha, distracted by her many tasks, complained and asked the Lord if He did not care that her sister left her to do all the work. He replied that she was worried and distracted by many things, but Mary had chosen the better part and it would not be taken away from her. Chorbishop Thomas directed his next remark to the honoree this year, Claire Habib. He said, “Claire, you heard the words of the Lord, like Mary, and worked hard like Martha.” How true!

Claire Habib, beloved by all, has labored with love for the Cathedral Parish and for the extended Maronite community for over sixty-five years. Following her college years, she volunteered and was involved in every parish event and special occasion: bazaars, street fairs, card parties; banquets, ordinations, and patriarchal visits .... you name it! She is a member of the Parish Council and in 2007 she was appointed a trustee of the Cathedral. Claire’s business acumen also landed her the task of preparing the Cathedral’s annual financial report for submission to the Eparchy from 1990 to 2007. She currently serves on the



Bishop Mansour presents Claire Habib with a rendering of an architectural sketch of Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral.

Finance Council for the Eparchy of Saint Maron. Claire continues to be an inspiration and energy to the Cathedral community. We thank her for her spirit of stewardship, her honoring of her heritage and her incredible years of unselfish service. Bishop Mansour presented Claire with a rendering of an original architectural sketch of the Cathedral as it appeared in 1846, when it was completed as the Church of the Pilgrims.

His Excellency Bishop Gregory Mansour was joined for the occasion by His Excellency Archbishop Benedetto Auza, Holy See Observer to the United Nations; Caroline Ziade, Counselor Deputy Permanent Representative of Lebanon to the United Nations; the Honorable and Mrs. Majdi Ramadan, Consul General of Lebanon in New York; Msgr. James Root, Rector of Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral; Sister Marla Marie Lucas, Founder, Maronite Servants of Christ the Light; Mrs. Rosanne Solomon, President of the Order of Saint Sharbel; Rev. Geoffrey Abdallah, Rector, Our Lady of Lebanon Seminary in Washington, D.C.; members of CNEWA; WLCU; Knights of the Equestrian Order of the Holy

Sepulcher; NAM and various members of the clergy.

Included in the evening’s program were reports from John Kurey Esq., Eparchial Stewardship Director; Mrs. Solomon, who encouraged membership in the Order of Saint Sharbel, which supports the Seminary; Charles Boorady, Benefit Dinner Committee Member; and Reverend Geoffrey Abdallah, Rector of the Seminary, who hopes to increase the roster from seven to twelve seminarians next year... with our support, of course!

The benediction was offered by the Reverend Dany Abi Akar, Administrator of the Maronite Mission of Manhattan and the Pastor of Saint John Paul II Church in Sleepy Hollow, N.Y. □



## Cincinnati, Ohio Welcome Brunch



by Linda Conour

On Sunday, October 12, 2014, St. Anthony of Padua Maronite Church in Cincinnati, Ohio, joyfully celebrated the arrival of its new Pastor, Father George Hajj, after being without a permanent Pastor for over a year. Father Hajj's much anticipated move to Cincinnati was a landmark event. Father Hajj celebrated the Divine Liturgy and humbly introduced himself to the packed Church. He spoke of his desire to lead the Parish as a disciple of Jesus and to serve the parish community. Following the Liturgy, the Parish welcomed Father Hajj with a brunch in the beautifully decorated Msgr. Joseph A. Abood Maronite Center. There was an air of joy, excitement and hope spreading amongst the parish families attending the brunch. Father Hajj's arrival to Cincinnati and the celebration event marked the beginning of a new chapter in the history of St. Anthony of Padua Church. □

## Glen Allen, Virginia Catechists' Workshop

by Cathy George

Saint Anthony Maronite Church in Glen Allen, Virginia, sponsored the Catechists' Workshop 2014. Twenty-eight catechists participated; many of them were from St. Anthony's, but some came from Detroit, Michigan, Fort Lauderdale, Florida, and Fayetteville, North Carolina.

The Friday evening program began with dinner, and then Chorbishop Dominic Ashkar, Pastor of Our Lady of Lebanon Church, Washington, D.C., spoke about his "Vision of Religious Education in the Maronite Church." He quoted Proverbs 29:18, "Where there is no vision, people perish." He said that we must see the Word of God within our hearts. The vision is the love of God, and He enlightens the hearts of



From left: Natalie Choueifati, Magie Gray, Kelly Edwards, Maria Greco and, Linda Shibley.

his children. Each teacher must ask, "What is God asking me to do?" even with the impossible student. The chorbishop said that we must ask, "Am I doing enough for my students?" He said that parents, the first educators, give their children to the church community to be educated, but he said we need more adult education so that the children can see the example in their parents.

On Saturday, Kelly Edwards and Cathy George gave presentations on how to structure lesson plans for the *Faith of the Mountain* series. These presentations also included tips on discipline, prayer, active learning, and how to approach young people. Natalie Choueifati talked about integrating children in the classroom with disabilities, especially autism, which is particularly prevalent today. She gave practical solutions to a variety of behavioral problems. Francine Maynes went over sacramental preparation for those who needed it and gave out a year-long guide to how the program is structured at St. Anthony parish. Finally, Jennifer Fodill reviewed why we are catechists and our purpose in the classrooms. She showed the participants many creative ways to use the *Faith of the Mountain* activity books and to keep the children actively learning throughout each session. She also included service projects that encourage empathy and Gospel values that students could do in the classroom.

After Chorbishop Ashkar's presentation, Maria Greco said, "I was inspired to be a better teacher, better Catholic and to share the love of Jesus with everyone, not just my students. The sessions were inspirational, educational and extremely useful. I look forward to additional workshops." The most useful part of the workshop was the useful exchange of ideas among the participants. The teachers have requested a "Best Practices" workshop next year where everyone brings in their favorite or most successful lesson plans. □

## Food For Thought

Understand this well: there is something holy, something divine hidden in the most ordinary situations, and it is up to each one of you to discover it.

St. Josemaria Escriva

## Boston, Massachusetts Scholarship Breakfast



Fr. Georges El Khalli, Pastor, Mary Boulos, Stephanie Matar and Hanny Nassif.

by Rosanne Solomon

On Sunday, October 12, 2014, the parish of Our Lady of the Cedars of Lebanon, Boston, Mass., was proud to host the First Annual Merit Scholarship Awards Breakfast.

It had long been a dream of the parish to establish a scholarship program to support its youth. This year, it became a reality with the funding of the Joseph and Alice Resha Memorial Fund, which gave the Parish the opportunity to award three \$1,000 scholarships. A committee was formed, guidelines and an application were drawn up, and the process was handled online through the Church website. Our Lady of the Cedars is proud to announce that Mary Boulos, Stephanie Matar and Hanny Nassif are the scholarship recipients this year.

The whole parish joins in wishing these young people success in their educational pursuits. Of course, the Parish hopes to build this program in the future, by securing more sponsors and more applicants to participate. We are committed to support our youth and to keep them close to the heart of the parish. They are the present and the future of the Church. May Our Lady of the Cedars continue to guide, protect and bless them! □

## Food For Thought

Consult not your fears but your hopes and your dreams. Think not about your frustrations, but about your unfulfilled potential. Concern yourself not with what you tried and failed in, but with what it is still possible for you to do.

*St. John XXIII*

## Youngstown, Ohio Bishop Zaidan's Visit

by Amelia M. Yazbek

On Sunday, October 12, 2014, St. Maron Church, Youngstown, Ohio, had the honor and privilege of welcoming Bishop A. Elias Zaidan for his first official visit to the parish since becoming Bishop of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon.

Bishop Zaidan celebrated the Divine Liturgy, assisted by Chorbishop Michael Kail, Pastor, and Fr. Rodriguez Constantine of Mendota Heights, Minn. Also participating were Deacon William George and Subdeacon Jim Essad along with many deacons and subdeacons from the Eparchy.

After the Liturgy, everyone proceeded to the Maronite Center for brunch. Afterwards, the Bishop conducted an informal meet and greet with the parishioners.

Later in the day, Chorbishop Kail hosted a dinner for the Bishop, the Church's Pastoral Council, the Finance Committee and the Education Foundation. St. Maron Parish thanks Bishop Zaidan for his visit and blessings upon the parish.

## Scholarships Awarded

On August 2, 2014, in conjunction with the annual "Back to Cedar Lake" picnic, the Education Foundation of St. Maron Church, Youngstown, Ohio, awarded its annual scholarships to deserving students of the parish.

The Foundation awarded twelve memorial scholarships totaling \$18,500. Additionally, the Foundation awarded nineteen \$1,000 funded scholarships to deserving graduates.

St. Maron Parish wishes all its graduates the best of luck in their college endeavors along with prayers for a job well done.

St. Maron's Education Foundation also helps subsidize tuition for grammar school attendees at \$500 per student, and for high school attendees at \$1,000 per student. All of these monetary awards are made possible by memorial and funded scholarships along with personal donations. □

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

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

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

## Warren, Michigan Scholarships Awarded

Thanks to the generosity of Mr. Leonard Thomas ten students who are parishioners at St. Sharbel Maronite Catholic Church in Warren, Mich., have been named as recipients of \$1,000 each from the Leonard Thomas Scholarship Fund. These young adults are students who take their studies seriously in pursuing their education and vocations. This is the second year that the Leonard Thomas Scholarships have been made available

Thank you, Mr. Leonard Thomas, for your kind generosity and for investing in the future of the Maronite faith community. □

## Atlanta, Georgia Charitable Youth Activity



by Father Dominique Hanna

During the month of October, St. Joseph's MYO, Atlanta, Ga., volunteered at the Atlanta Community Food Bank as part of their monthly service project. After collecting cans and other food items from generous parishioners, the youth donated and helped to inspect, sort and pack the food for families in need. It was interesting to discover the immense amount of food donated to the Food Bank by charitable people from the parish church community and beyond. As the youth packed the food, the thought of all the families they were feeding made them feel grateful for what they have and privileged to assist others. The fact that these simple items will make a world of difference for others inspired the youth to continue working towards such a great cause. Not only was it an opportunity to spend time with their friends, but a chance to volunteer alongside other residents and churches in the area. Blaring music, laughing, and dancing made the would-be-tedious task entertaining, and the time flew by. They all bonded through helping others in the name of Christ, and enjoyed themselves at the same time. By the end of the volunteering session, the youth had sorted and packed 15,304 pounds of food, providing 12,730

meals. They gained a new outlook on the lifestyle of people right outside their doorstep, and made a difference through their actions. □

## Utica, New York Festival of Baskets



by Father Elias Khalil

St. Louis Gonzaga Church in Utica, N.Y., held its 14<sup>th</sup> annual Festival of Baskets on October 19, 2014. The festival is the largest of its kind in the region. The organizers, volunteers, contributors, sponsors and patrons made the day a tremendous success.

## One and Many Churches Workshop



"One and Many Churches" was the title of the workshop hosted by Saint Louis Gonzaga Church in Utica, N.Y., on Tuesday, October 21. The workshop was organized by the Faith Formation office of the Diocese of Syracuse and was given by Chorbishop John D. Faris, Pastor of Saint Louis Gonzaga Church. □



## Cranston, Rhode Island Church Dedication



by Joseph P. Checrallah, Jr.

On Sunday, October 5, 2014, His Excellency Bishop Gregory J. Mansour, Bishop of the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn, joined with over three hundred friends, family, and parishioners to lead a Liturgy of Celebration followed by the Dedication of St. George's Maronite Catholic Church of Cranston, R.I.

Joining His Excellency at Mass were Chorbishop Joseph Lahoud; Fr. Edward Pieroni, Pastor of St. Raymond Roman Catholic Church in Providence, RI; Fr. William Ledoux, Pastor of St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church of Cranston; Deacons Enzo DiGiacomo and Charles Gebron, Sub-Deacon Joseph Abraham, and Fr. Edward Nedder, Pastor of St. George Maronite Catholic Church. The Holy Liturgy was followed by a celebration at the Venus DeMilo in Swansea, Mass., officiated by Fred Simon, Master of Ceremonies. The Invocation was given by Fr. Edward Pieroni, and the Convocation by Chorbishop Joseph K. Kaddo.

The American National Anthem, sung by Darine Saker, was followed by the Lebanese National Anthem, sung by Darine Saker and Giselle Zaarour. Remarks were made by His Excellency Bishop Gregory and Fr. Edward Pieroni.

This journey began in October of 2005, during the pastorate of Fr. Paul Mouawad, when St. George Maronite Catholic Church and Hall, located at 50 Main Street, in Pawtucket, R.I., were completely destroyed by a fire that raced quickly through the buildings. The entire facility was ruined beyond repair. The parish rebounded quickly, and within a few weeks of the tragedy created an Exploratory Committee to research the many possibilities for a future home of Saint George Church. They rented St. Raymond Church in Providence to use as a temporary house of worship.

In July 2006, Fr. Paul was transferred to Newtown Square, Pennsylvania, to serve the Maronite parish of St. Sharbel Church. Father Edward T. Nedder was assigned to serve as Pastor of Saint George Church. His primary mission was to strengthen the faith of his congregation and to establish a new permanent home for the parishioners. In May 2007, a house residing on eight plus acres of land at 171

Twin River Road, Lincoln, Rhode Island, was purchased to be the site of the future church, hall, and rectory of Saint George.

Unfortunately, after several years of negotiations with the Town of Lincoln, the Department of Environmental Management, and many other associated agencies, the plans to build a new church were abandoned, and the decision was made to purchase a church that could be renovated to the Maronite tradition.

In April 2013, the Maronite Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn entered into an agreement with the Roman Catholic Diocese of Providence, R.I., to purchase the Church and Rectory of St. Ann's Parish in Cranston. On June 30, 2013, the purchase was completed and became the new home of St. George Maronite Catholic Church. The first Maronite Liturgy was celebrated on July 6, 2013. Fr. Ed continues to celebrate weekly Roman Catholic Masses for the parishioners of St. Ann, some of whom have joined St. George, and he continues to extend a warm welcome to all.

Since his arrival in July of 2006, Fr. Ed has overseen the 100th Anniversary celebration of St. George, the purchase of a new Church, the hosting of the first Lebanese Food Festival at the new location and now the complete restoration of the new permanent home of St. George Maronite Catholic Church and Rectory. □

## Springfield, Massachusetts Harvest Festival



by Kathy LaBella

On October 25, 2014, the children of St. Anthony Maronite Church in Springfield, Mass., enjoyed a harvest festival at Randall's farm. Hayrides, mazes, scarecrow making and many other activities were offered. □



## Cleveland, Ohio Preparation of 2015 Convention



Welcome to Cleveland, Ohio, for the 52nd Annual National Apostolate of Maronites Convention from Wednesday, July 1, 2015, to Sunday, July 5, 2015, at the historic Renaissance Hotel on Public Square. Through the leadership of Monsignor Peter Karam, Saint Maron Church in Cleveland is preparing an amazing presentation of workshop speakers, spiritual activities, bands, excursions and more for their guests, adults and youth alike. Get ready for an incredible historic and cultural experience of food, fun and festivities. Here is a preview of our bucket list of things to do:

- Rock & Roll Hall of Fame and Science Center on the beautiful shores of Lake Erie
- University Circle on the Campus of Case Western Reserve University, hosting our world renowned museums and cultural institutions including: The Cleveland Art Museum, Cleveland Botanical Gardens, Crawford Auto Museum, The Natural History Museum and more
- The Westside Market on West 25th is home to over 100 food vendors representing cultures from around the world
- Culinary Heaven: Cleveland is most proud of its restaurants and delis tucked away in some of the following areas and neighborhoods: West 6<sup>th</sup>, East 4<sup>th</sup>, Tremont and Ohio City to name a few.

The Renaissance Hotel, "Hotel Cleveland," is a staple in Cleveland's history and development. Brothers O.P. and M.J. Van Sweringen developed the hotel in the midst of an expansive plan for a multipurpose downtown complex featuring restaurants, the current Horseshoe Casino, the Terminal Tower and a shopping mall. Formally opened in 1918 as one of the largest hotels in the world, the magnificent 14-story Renaissance Hotel remains a significant part of downtown Cleveland and has hosted an array of Presidents, including Presidents Harry Truman, John F. Kennedy, George W. Bush, Bill Clinton as well as British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, civil rights leader Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and Colonel Charles A. Lindbergh, following his historic 1927 flight from New York to Paris. Most significantly, in July of 2015, this historic Cleveland hotel will be host of the 52<sup>nd</sup> Annual National Apostolate of Maronites Convention.

St. Maron parishioners Henry and Judy Hilow were honored to accept the position of Chairs for the NAM 2015 Cleveland Convention. In October, the NAM Board, led by President Elias Ayoub and Executive Director Mike Naber, visited Cleveland and were met by an overwhelming rally of over ninety volunteers and hundreds of parishioners for an exciting four-day stay. The Maronite community in Cleveland and those around the nation are getting ready to make this one of the most successful and well-attended conventions. Stay posted for more information. Cleveland is looking forward to welcoming you all in 2015. ☐

## Fairlawn, Ohio Stand Up For Life



by Msgr. William Bonczewski

On Saturday, October 4, 2014, eight members of Our Lady of the Cedars of Mt. Lebanon Maronite Catholic Church in Fairlawn, Ohio, joined with several hundred other Catholics, Christians and others to make a quite prayerful Life Chain in honor of the Right to Life mission for all babies in the womb and their Mothers.

That morning was very cold and windy, but the rain waited until we finished our time of prayer by noon. Most of the travelers on Market Street in Akron, Ohio, acknowledged and endorsed our public witness by the tooting of the horn. A few expressed an objection. It happened that one man actually stopped his car, rolled down his window, looked at me and shouted, "Stop judging, Father. Don't you know you are not supposed to judge." What a surprise this was to me. I simply responded and said, "I'm not judging. I'm here to pray." The driver insisted and repeated his comments two more times and so I finally said the same to him, "Why are you judging me? I only want to pray to save the little babies." He drove away. I hope my prayers were also of help to him and the two children he had in the back seat of his car.

This mission is not just for one day or for certain times of the year. We need to pray for the sanctity of all life for everyone from the very moment life begins to the very last moment at the end of life every day. ☐

## Dartmouth, Massachusetts Maronite Servants Telelumiere Program

The Maronite Servants of Christ the Light presented a series of short reflections on prayer and the spiritual life broadcasted on *Telelumiere* television station. The segments are also available for view on YouTube by searching: "servants of light telelumiere." Sister Marla Marie offers thoughts on vocation, the movements of prayer, using the Bible for daily prayer, and other topics. Tune in and let the Sisters know your thoughts on the programs. ☐



## From the Book Shelf

### *Early Syriac Theology with Special Reference to the Maronite Tradition, Revised Edition*

by Chorbishop Seely Joseph Beggiani

The Catholic University of America Press is pleased to announce the publication of *Early Syriac Theology: With Special Reference to the Maronite Tradition, Revised Edition* by Chorbishop Seely Joseph Beggiani.

St. Ephrem, who was proclaimed a Doctor of the Church by Pope Benedict XV, and Jacob of Serugh were two of the earliest and most important representatives of the theological world-view of the Syriac Church. Much of their work was in the form of hymns and metrical homilies, using poetry to express theology. In *Early Syriac Theology*, Chorbishop Seely Joseph Beggiani strives to present their insights in a systematic form according to headings used in western treatises, while not undermining the originality and cohesiveness of their thought.

Dr. Robert A. Kitchen says the book "provides a sweeping overview of the distinctive themes and topics of early Syriac theology. . . there is no such overview available, in particular in English."

*Early Syriac Theology* is available in paperback and as an ebook for \$29.95. Please visit the website [cuapress.cua.edu](http://cuapress.cua.edu) for information on this and other titles from CUA Press. Please contact Brian Roach, Marketing Manager, at 202-319-5052 or [roach@cua.edu](mailto:roach@cua.edu) with any inquiries. ☐

## Schedule of Bishop Gregory Mansour

### November 4, 2014

Visit of Saint Rafka's Relics, Danbury, Conn.

### November 7, 2014

Visit of Saint Rafka's Relics: Noon - 3 P.M., Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral, Brooklyn, N.Y.

### November 8, 2014

Eparchial Pastoral Council Meeting and evening ordination to Subdiaconate of Peter Frangie and Michel Rabbah, Brooklyn, N.Y.

### November 9, 2014

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

### November 10 - 13, 2014

USCCB Meeting, Baltimore, Md.

### November 15 - 16, 2014

Dedication of New Church, Jacksonville, Fla.

### November 20 - 21, 2014

Vocation Team Meeting and Caritas Lebanon Board of Directors Meeting, Our Lady of Lebanon Seminary, Washington, D.C.

### November 23, 2014

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

### November 25 - December 2, 2014

Family Visit in Michigan

### December 3 - 4, 2014

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

### December 5 - 6, 2014

Vespers and Enthronement of the Antiochene Orthodox Metropolitan, Joseph Zehlaoui, Brooklyn, N.Y.

### December 8, 2014

Our Lady of Lebanon Seminary Visit and talk to the Papal Foundation on Middle Eastern Christians, Washington, D.C.

### December 13 - 14, 2014

Pastoral Visit to St. George Maronite Church, Uniontown, Penn.

### December 15, 2014

Catholic University of America Board of Directors Meeting, Washington, D.C. ☐



# ***Cardinal Leonardo Sandri, Prefect of the Congregation for the Eastern Churches, Addressed the Bishops' Conference in Washington, D.C.***

*Your Excellency Archbishop Joseph Kurtz, President of the Episcopal Conference of the United States, Your Eminences and Excellencies!*

I am happy to meet with you and be able to share with you some reflections on the situation of Christians in the Middle East with a particular accent on Iraq and Syria.

1. When I went to Aleppo, Syria, in January 2011, to preside at the rite of dedication of the new Cathedral of the Latin Apostolic Vicariate and when, in December of 2012, I went to Iraq for the re-consecration of the Syro-Catholic Cathedral of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, which had been profaned and bathed in the blood of martyrs on October 31, 2010, I never would have imagined that we would find ourselves in the present situation. The explosion and subsequent evolution of the Syrian conflict as well as the more recent drama unfolding in Iraq have burdened our hearts with an enormous suffering. Great is the wound inflicted to the dignity of the human person, but especially and above all to our Christian brothers and sisters, both Catholic and not. Still in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, as if history has taught nothing, we must witness barbarities and atrocities which strike above all the weakest: the elderly, women and children. Along with my preoccupations for the thousands of refugees, chased from their houses on the plain of Nineveh, I have ever in mind the bishops and priests still in the hands of kidnappers in Syria, and – finding myself in the United States – I cannot forget the journalists so brutally killed. May the Lord grant peace and eternal repose to them, and to their families consolation and hope: that their sacrifice will not remain without effect, but will move the conscience of the entire world.
2. On one hand, the action of the Holy Spirit continues to make the Church fertile in every part of the world, manifesting its characteristic maternity (cfr. LG 64). Yet, on the other hand, it must be recognized that the Churches, which gave rise in great part to the diffusion of the Gospel in the Apostolic era, are now shaken at their foundations and threatened in their very existence. We know the difficulties of the Church in Jerusalem, and we are always more convinced that a durable peace in the Holy Land would contribute significantly to the stability of the whole Middle East. We see the drama of the Church in Antioch (geographically located in modern day Turkey, although the Catholic and Orthodox Patriarchs of that See reside in Syria and Lebanon). As for the Church of Babylon of the Chaldeans, the fruit of evangelization of the Church of Antioch, which once played a key role in the East, we fear now for its loss of active presence. If these churches, the historic mothers of the evangelizing mission, are struck at their foundations, we, as their children, cannot be silent.

3. In addition to being part of a single Apostolic College with our brother bishops in that region, we are duty bound to our own faithful to speak out: the ongoing presence of these churches in their place of origin touches the source of our common Christian faith. God chose that part of the world as “the cradle of a universal plan of salvation in love.” This adds a specific value to every effort we undertake to respond to this dramatic page in human and Christian history. For nearly two thousand years these Christians have kept alive the flame of the first Pentecost in those lands. As the Church in the United States celebrates the passage of 225 years since the establishment of its first diocese in Baltimore - an event in remembrance of which I willingly join with you - it is all the easier to appreciate this two millennia of existence, now so direly tried. I give heartfelt thanks for the constant calls you have issued to the American faithful asking for solidarity with their elder brethren in the faith. As Pope Francis said when he received the Members of the Oriental Congregation at the end of our Plenary Session last November: “Every Catholic therefore owes a debt of thanks to the Churches that live in that region. From these Churches we may learn, among other things, the effort of the daily exercise of the spirit of ecumenism and of interreligious dialogue. The geographical, historical and cultural context in which they have lived for centuries has indeed made them natural interlocutors with numerous other Christian confessions and with other religions” (21 November 2013).
4. Also in the name of these brothers from the Christian East and on behalf of the Dicastery that helps the Holy Father in his solicitude for their Churches, I come before you today to extend a word of thanks. Firstly, I thank you for the constant and generous attention which you demonstrate by the Holy Friday Collection for the Holy Land. Additionally, however, gratitude is deserved for the extraordinary actions of this past month: I think firstly of the prayer for peace in Iraq, which you held in all the dioceses of the country on Sunday, August 17. Also, I am grateful for the gestures of charity and solidarity in the form of the extraordinary collection of last Sunday and next Sunday, as also for the efforts to raise the awareness of the political authorities, especially by means of the letter of August 13<sup>th</sup> last from His Excellency Msgr. Kurtz to President Obama. Moreover, there is an ordinary organ of assistance, part of the Catholic Church in the United States, which the Dicastery recognizes as indispensable to its service and exhorts you to promote in every way possible: I refer to the Catholic Near East Welfare Association (CNEWA). Along with the Pontifical Mission for Palestine, it is part of the Reunion of Aid Agencies for the Oriental Churches (ROACO), and its President, the Archbishop of New York, is among the members of the Congregation

for Eastern Churches. Certainly, I do not wish to forget the work of Aid to the Church in Need and Catholic Relief Services, nor the great hospitality which the United States has given over the decades to all of the Eastern Churches in the diaspora. This is clear enough from the presence, here in the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, of the bishops representing these churches (Region XV for *ad limina* visits). The land of liberty, where rights are protected for individuals and groups alike, has effectively honored its foundational values by this wonderful welcome of all the various traditions of Eastern Christianity. In particular, in accordance with the will of the Second Vatican Council, adequate structures are guaranteed in the United States for all Catholics by which to provide the pastoral care proper to them. Thanks be to God for this reciprocal interaction, which has become an ordinary aspect of ecclesial life and which in time will only continue to grow, producing benefits also for the Latin dioceses. Indeed, the varied liturgical and disciplinary patrimony of Eastern Christianity is a spiritual wealth from which all in the Church should profit, while making it their responsibility to guard it from erosion.

5. The situation in Iraq is still one of extreme emergency: the refugees of the plain of Nineveh need all sorts of basic necessities to insure their survival, also in Erbil and Baghdad. No less urgent are efforts to prepare for their return to their own homes or, if necessary, to relocate them in more secure parts of the country. While fully conscious of the fact that no one should be forced to remain in the country against his will, I echo the call frequently expressed by the Chaldean Patriarch, His Beatitude Sako, that neither should the Christians of Iraq be constrained to flee; for one thing, this would only lead to a still more destabilized future for Iraq. Care must be taken that economic assistance always be coordinated with prudence and to this end I recommend keeping the relevant Apostolic Nunciatures apprised. Not only can they contribute to the flow of accurate information, but they can, when necessary, render a service of vigilance over the effective use of funds.

6. With regard to relations with the Islamic world, there is, besides the undiminished worth of the conciliar declaration *Nostra Aetate*, the more recent deliberations made by the Special Assembly for the Middle East of the Synod of Bishops. It culminated in the Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Medio Oriente*, especially numbers 19 - 28. In dialogue both clarity and fraternal respect are needed: it seems that a prime example of the same is the declaration just issued, last August 12th, by the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue. While rightly asking all spiritual leaders to take positions against such blind and barbarous violence, we continue to maintain an attitude of closeness and reciprocal esteem. For our part, we have the responsibility of educating our faithful lest they yield to a vision of conflict between civilizations or religions. We must recall that it has taken Catholic theological and biblical reflection centuries to arrive at its present capacity for interpreting our sacred texts without undue fear of violating the *depositum fidei*.

7. Finally, I am certain that you are already following with great attention the interventions of the Holy See in its various modes, from the words of the Holy Father to those of the Cardinal Secretary of State and the representatives of the Holy See at the various international organizations, especially the United Nations' headquarters in Geneva. We are meeting in Washington, the seat of the government of this sovereign nation; however, even as American citizens, you are called to support the role of the United Nations, prominently present in New York, as the appropriate organ for decisions and concrete interventions in matters of general international concern. If the Assembly which meets in that glass tower in New York has frequently been compromised or blocked by opposing vetoes of self-interested factions, it must, nevertheless, become an ever more effective forum through which to prevent the repetition of violence and injustice of the sort that we are discussing. In the more than fifty years passed since the signing of the Declaration of the Rights of Man, following the horrors of the Second World War, progress has been made in this regard, and we must not abandon the hope that first united the world in the cause of peace. Exactly one year ago, on Saturday, September 7, 2013, a day of prayer and fasting for peace reminded world leaders of the power of prayer and made those who hold power listen to the voice of the people crying out: "No more war!"

Thanking you for your attention, I entrust you all, together with your brother bishops, priests and faithful of the dioceses which you shepherd, to the maternal intercession of the Immaculate Virgin. Having contemplated with joy her Nativity, close to her sanctuary here in Washington, we pray that she continue to watch over all Americans. Thank you. ☐

### *Beatitudes for Nurturing Church Vocations in the Family*

**B**lessed are the children of parents who . . .

- Witness love for their spouse, their children, their neighbor, and the world
- Talk freely about the presence of God in the joys and sorrows of their lives
- Remind their children that they are loved by God and have been given gifts to serve others
- Lead their family in prayer
- Speak positively about sisters, brothers, priests, and deacons
- Participate in the lay ministries and activities of their parish and community
- Invite a deacon, priest, Brother, or Sister to their home
- Encourage their children to consider priesthood and religious life as well as marriage. ☐

***By the Power of the Holy Spirit***  
***by***  
***Deacon John Jarvis***

"**B**y the power of the Holy Spirit." That is the answer to the question of how did I, a person who grew up in a very poor southern family, listening to television evangelists and music like the "Old Rugged Cross," end up serving as a deacon in the Maronite Church. My father was institutionalized with problems because of injuries received in World War II, and my mother, a waitress, could not care for my sister and me. I lived with relatives. My mother remarried when I was eight years old, and we were reunited as a family.

One day when playing a pickup game of football, a friend told me he had just been baptized. I asked what that was, and he told me to go see the man who lived in the house nearby. Needless to say, when I knocked on the door, a priest answered. I told him I needed to be baptized. He was kind and called my mother who said it was fine with her. Thus, I am a Catholic "By the power of the Holy Spirit."

Unfortunately, shortly after my baptism, my stepfather died, and we had to move to a small trailer park. Yet again the Holy Spirit intervened. We lived near a very poor parish, St. Francis of Assisi. The priest met with my mother, who told the priest it was okay if he wanted to teach me. The priest told me if I was to learn about Jesus and Mary, I should teach the Rosary to a group of mentally handicapped children. I taught the children for close to a year, and they taught me.

We moved again just before I entered high school, and I moved away from church. I had to work and go to school, and I drifted away. I was a good student but had no money. Instead of being able to go to the University of Michigan, where I had been accepted, I joined the Marines. The Marines put me on a journey that led me throughout the world. It is interesting to reflect that even though I had distanced myself from the Church, the Holy Spirit had not left me. "By the power of the Holy Spirit," I still felt close to God and His Church.

After being injured, I left the Marines, returned briefly home, and before long found myself in Washington, D.C., working for a congressman and marrying my wife, Faith. I soon started my own lobbying business and became successful, owning a large home on five acres in the horse country of Virginia. I traveled often and enjoyed life. We went to church but it was not the priority. I was living the American



Deacon John Jarvis

dream, yet one day I found myself at forty-two years old in the cardiac unit of Georgetown Hospital. I had had a heart attack. "By the power of the Holy Spirit," God made clear to me my life should be a different one.

After my release, I went to the Abbey of Gethsemani to thank God for his healing. I then went to our parish priest and said one day I would like to be prepared to serve the Church if He called. The priest told me I needed more education. I finished my bachelor's degree and got a Master in Theology from the Institute for Pastoral Studies at Ave Maria University. God and His Church became a priority for Faith and me. She had her own journey, becoming a Catholic convert thanks to the hospitality of the Maronites. Thanks to the warmth, liturgy, and theology of the Maronites, we decided to move closer to Our Lady of Lebanon in Washington, D.C. We were welcomed by Chorbishops Ashkar and Beggiani and parishioners and seminarians. "By the power of the Holy Spirit," we were home, and not long after, I began studies for the diaconate. I now live in Ave Maria, Florida, while serving as deacon at the Heart of Jesus in Fort Lauderdale, Fla. □



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

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

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

Or

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

Or

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



## Eparchy of Saint Maron College of Consultors

**H**is Excellency Bishop Gregory J. Mansour, Bishop of the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn, appointed the following priests to the Eparchial College of Consultors on October 29, 2014:

Chorbishop Michael G. Thomas; Chorbishop Joseph F. Kaddo; Msgr. George M. Sebaali; Msgr. James A. Root; Fr. Dominique Hanna; and Fr. Geoffrey Abdallah.

The College of Consultors is comprised of members drawn from the Presbyteral Council and appointed by the Eparchial Bishop; it will function in those matters as determined by the *CCEO*. □

### Jack G. Shaheen 2015 Mass Communications Scholarships

**Purpose:** To honor Arab-American students who excel in media studies

**Amount:** \$1,000

**Eligibility:**

College students classified as a junior, senior, or enrolled in graduate school for the 2014 - 2015 academic year majoring in journalism, radio, television, and/or film. Applicants must have a minimum of 3.0 GPA and be a U.S. citizen of Arab heritage.

Applicants please submit the following items to the ADC Research Institute:

- ★ A one page statement explaining your goals and stating that: you are a U.S. citizen; you are of Arab heritage; and why you merit the scholarship
- ★ Two original signed letters of recommendation from Mass Communications professors
- ★ Copies of your articles, videos, films, etc. (These items will not be returned to you.)
- ★ Official academic transcripts including your GPA
- ★ Your permanent home address, phone number, e-mail address, and phone number during the school year

The deadline is March 30, 2015. Incomplete or late applications will not be accepted. Submit all materials to:

Jack G. Shaheen Mass Communications Scholarship  
Mr. Nabil Mohamad  
ADC Vice President  
1990 M Street, NW, Suite 610  
Washington, D.C. 20006

For further details, call 202-244-2990, or email [organizing@ADC.org](mailto:organizing@ADC.org). Awards will be presented in June 2015 during ADC's National Convention in Washington, D.C. Winners are encouraged to attend the Convention. □

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# Christian Lebanese Foundation in the World

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Discover your Identity.*
- *Register through us  
and win FREE tickets  
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We aim to help  
all Americans  
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register their Births  
and Marriages  
to obtain status in Lebanon.  
**FREE OF CHARGE**

**BRING YOUR DOCUMENTS AND JOIN US IN NOVEMBER 2014!**

Nov. 7-9: St. Joseph Maronite Church, Phoenix, AZ Nov. 8-9: Sts. Peter & Paul Maronite Church, Tampa, FL Nov. 9 at 8:30 & 11 AM: St. Anthony Maronite Church, Glen Allen, VA	Nov. 15 at 6 PM: NOLAA's Heritage Ball, Westlake, OH	Nov. 16 at 10 AM: Our Lady of Lebanon Maronite Church, Easton, PA Nov. 22-23: St. Sharbel Maronite Church, Warren, MI Nov. 23 at 11 AM: St. Rafka Maronite Church, Greer, SC
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[ We have joined in the effort with the Lebanese Embassy and Consulates in the U.S. and with the Lebanese American Clubs and Organizations ]

**Documents Needed:** Marriage Certificate, Birth Certificates, Family "Ikhray Qayd" (Civil Registry Record- we can help you acquire it)

# Miracle in New Jersey

## “I Was Blind, but Now I See”

by Most Reverend Kurt Burnette  
Bishop of Passaic

Is there anyone more afraid than a mother who is afraid for her child? When unusual symptoms start to appear, and a mother makes the decision to approach a physician, she hopes to be told that the problem is transitory, or is easily cured. She tries not to show fear to her child, but in the back of her mind is a silent terror of the unknown.

In 1963, a mother in northern New Jersey began to observe in her son Michael behaviors which concerned her. A healthy eight year old, he began walking into trees, and even crashed his bike into a tree. He walked into a moving car. His mother described his escalating symptoms as “bizarre.” Eventually, he broke his front teeth in an accident, refused to play ball with his older brother, and the other children nicknamed him “butter fingers.” His central vision was degenerating. She took her son to an ophthalmologist who observed black pigment in the area of the macula. As the black areas increased, he was diagnosed with bilateral macular degeneration and declared legally blind in 1963. The physician who declared him legally blind told the parents that eventually the entire macula would be blackened and the boy would be totally blind. The silent terror of a mother was made flesh.

At this point in the illness, a little known Ruthenian nun from our own Byzantine Catholic Church entered the story. Sister Miriam Teresa Demjanovich was baptized and chrismated at our parish in Bayonne, New Jersey, at the beginning of the twentieth century in 1901. As she herself said, “The real beginning of my life, the life of the spirit, occurred five days after my birth according to the flesh. I was baptized and confirmed in the Greek rite on the thirty-first of March, a Sunday, truly a day of resurrection.”

After high school, she went to college and earned a Bachelor’s degree in literature at the College of St. Elizabeth, Convent Station, New Jersey. At this point in history, a small percentage of people went to college, and even fewer women earned a Baccalaureate degree. This highly intelligent woman then went on to dedicate her life completely to God in 1925 by entering the Sisters of Charity, one of the communities founded by Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton. Sister Miriam Teresa died on May 8, 1927, at the age of twenty-six. Although she was allowed to take her final vows just before she died, she never changed rites and died a Ruthenian Greek



Sister Miriam Teresa  
Demjanovich

Catholic. The people close to her suspected that she was a saint and a mystic, a special intimate friend of Our Lord. During her short time as a religious, she wrote a series of spiritual conferences that were presented without her name on them. Her authorship was revealed after her death, and, after their publication in 1928, they quickly became a bestseller in the American Church.

Now you may be wondering how a Ruthenian Byzantine Catholic nun who died forty years earlier might be involved in the blindness of a young boy in the 1960s. The Roman Catholic Bishop of Paterson, New Jersey proposed Sister Miriam Teresa for canonization in 1945, and the Sisters at Michael’s school were promoting devotion to her. When she heard the news of Michael’s blindness, his third grade teacher, Sister Mary Augustine, gave Michael a leaflet on Sister Miriam Theresa and a piece of her hair, that is, a first class relic. The mother recalled when he gave her the leaflet and relic that she had a feeling that everything would be OK. Michael’s family moved to southern New Jersey about a month after the last visit to a physician, and two weeks later Michael was taken to Wills Eye Hospital in Philadelphia. The examination showed his eyesight was normal, and he recalls that he could ride his bike again when they moved. There was no doubt. It was a miracle - just like the one we read in St. John’s Gospel a few weeks ago. Several doctors agreed that he was blind from macular degeneration, and four ophthalmologists testified that there was no known case of a cure such as this. As the George Gershwin song says, “The age of miracles hadn’t passed.”

The authorities in Rome acknowledge that the return of Michael’s eyesight is a miracle unexplained by any natural phenomenon and worked by God through the intercession of his handmaid Sister Miriam Teresa Demjanovich. On Saturday, October 4, 2014, at 9:30 in the morning, her Beatification was solemnized at the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart in Newark, New Jersey. If you read the dates carefully, once again, you may be puzzled by the timing. Why did it take fifty years after the miracle to beatify her? The answer is this. The miracle was carefully studied and documented at the time - it was then misfiled! The file was rediscovered in 1998, thirty years later. It seems that Sister Miriam Teresa was just as self-effacing after her death as she was during her life. She wanted her writings to point us toward God, not toward herself.

“When John heard in prison of the works of the Messiah, he sent his disciples to him with this question, “Are you the one who is to come, or should we look for another?” Jesus said to them in reply, “Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind regain their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have the good news preached to them. And blessed is the one who takes no offense in me” Matthew 11: 2-6. □



## ***In Lebanon, A Major Catholic Village Walks Its Way of the Cross***

### ***At Border With Syria, Town of Kaa Has History of Terror, Discrimination***

by Khouloud Tawm

The village of *Kaa* is in the north of the Bekaa Valley, close to the Syrian border. It has a population of some 13,000 Christians, most of them Melkites. After the city of Zahle, this is the home of the country's largest Melkite population. *Kaa* is surrounded by mostly Shiite Muslim communities.

*Kaa* has been very poor for a long time, with government services largely absent. On July 1, 1975, Islamic extremists from adjacent villages violently attacked the community. Five people were martyred. The government did nothing to intervene. In fact, army reports at the time did not even mention the incident.

After the arrival of Syrian troops in Lebanon in 1978, *Kaa* residents were divided into those supporting and opposing that presence. The government cracked down on local critics, especially members of the *Kataeb* party. On June 28, 1978, Syrian intelligence forces arrested fifteen young members. Their lifeless bodies were brought back the next morning.

That incident left deep scars. It created a climate of fear and many residents opted for moving to Beirut. At the same time, there was an aggressive push to sell local land to outsiders.

From 1978 until 2005 - that is to say, during the time of Syria's *de facto* occupation of Lebanon - the Syrian army took charge of security in the village. That meant a climate of repression, as well as psychological and ideological terror that came to dominate the daily life of the local population.

Ever since that time, according to well-informed sources at the municipal level, there have continued to be illegal seizures of land and a complete absence of legality governing the allotment of housing. Inhabitants of the neighboring Sunni village of *Ersal* set up shop in an agricultural zone dubbed "the *Kaa* projects." They built houses there, as well as mosques and schools, without any permission or any kind of regulation. This development has made local Christians afraid of a demographic shift that would erase the Christian presence in the community.

With the start of the Syrian civil war in 2011, the area came into the spotlight again. *Kaa* became home to 25,000 Syrians, most of them Sunni, and sporadic fighting broke out between the Syrian army and the opposition—a further setback for the people of *Kaa*. A number of homes were damaged, and fields burned down. Trade with Syria was greatly hampered. A still-worse climate of insecurity and instability was created. Each arrival of strangers triggered fears of massacres such as the ones being committed in Syria. The future for local Christians has begun to look very dark.

Throughout the history of Lebanon, the village of *Kaa* only made the news during crises. And so it is today, with the spillover from the warring factions in Syria, such as *Al-Nusra* and *Hezbollah*, continuing their battles across the border here in Lebanon. The Syrian conflict is raging all along from the Syrian hinterland to the chain of mountains straddling the Lebanese-Syrian border to the east, from *Ersal* to *Kaa*. The border is regularly bombed by the Syrian army, with shells and rockets striking Lebanese territory.

The Christians of *Kaa* are living in a state of permanent terror regarding their future—for a number of reasons:

The location of the village is right beside the border; any fighting just across the border in Syria has ramifications in *Kaa*.

The people of *Kaa* are living in territory controlled by the Shiite *Hezbollah*, who in support of the Syrian regime use Lebanese border villages as staging grounds for rocket attacks aimed at rebel forces in Syria;

Then there is the massive Sunni presence in the region that is home to the "*Kaa* projects," an area that has continued to grow considerably in the wake of the arrival of waves of Muslim Syrian refugees who threaten to displace the local Christians.

Bands of Islamic radicals belonging to factions like *Al-Nusra* freely move about in *Ersal*, killing civilians and engaging the Lebanese army in fire fights. The people of *Kaa* are on constant alert in the face of the threat of terrorist organizations expanding their presence, a presence that can easily turn murderous for Christians. Just like the Christians that suffered such heinous acts at the hands of ISIS in Mosul, many residents of *Kaa* are driven to exile.

Under these sad and difficult circumstances and utterly lacking security, the Christians of *Kaa* have no choice but to arm themselves with their faith and hope—all the while waiting to see how the situation in Syria will develop. Although *Kaa* is in Lebanon, its fate is always tied to the conditions across the border. As such, the situation of the Christians of *Kaa* is as dramatic as any faced by other Christians in the Middle East. □

October 09, 2014 (Zenit.org)

*Khouloud Tawm* is a correspondent for *Aid to the Church in Need*, an international Catholic charity under the guidance of the Holy See that provides assistance to the suffering and persecuted Church in more than 140 countries.

## ***“Middle East Families Are Facing a Great Challenge”***

### ***Syriac Catholic Patriarch of Antioch Says His People Are 'Split' and 'Divided'***

by Deborah Castellano Lubov

Patriarch Ignatius Youssef III Younan, the Syrian Catholic Patriarch of Antioch, has said that the challenge for Christians in Iraq and Syria is "not only how to live our Christian vocation, but how to survive," and that the Church is "caring for them."

In an interview with *ZENIT*, Patriarch Younan reflected on the struggles facing the families in his region, saying he is "very concerned for his people."

Moreover, he speaks on whether his hopes for the synod were fulfilled, and whether it will help his people.

In late July, Pope Francis called the Catholic Patriarch to reassure him that he is following news out of Iraq with concern, especially the dramatic situation of Christians in Mosul.

Islamic militants have been threatening Mosul's Christians with death and seizure of their homes unless they left or converted to their form of Islamic belief. Iraq's second largest city is now without a Christian presence for the first time in nearly two thousand years.

Patriarch Younan has denounced attacks by members of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIS), including an arson of the episcopal headquarters of the Syriac-Catholic Church in Mosul. He was also one of the six patriarchs of the Middle East to participate in a summit in Washington, D.C., this September with U.S. lawmakers to discuss and address the situation facing their people.

**Q.** *Could you please describe yourself briefly for our readers?*

**A.** Yes, I am Ignatius Youssef III Younan, the Syriac-Catholic Patriarch of Antioch. Our residence, our patriarchal see, is located in Beirut, Lebanon.

**Q.** *What were your main concerns regarding the family before this Synod began, particularly those in your region? Do you feel this Synod has addressed them directly?*

**A.** The Christian families in the Middle East, the whole Middle East, except perhaps in Lebanon, are ... All of the families are facing a great challenge: how to keep going, preserving the faith, announcing their faith with their children in a dignified way, and their freedom. But what we did just face the last four months, it's been incredibly difficult for our families in Iraq, with also many difficulties, many challenges, for the Christian families in Syria.

So in those two countries, it's really a kind of a challenge of surviving for us. Not only how to live our Christian vocation, but how to survive. And those who are still staying back home in Iraq and Syria are challenged with so many difficulties. We have so many other challenges with those who fled outside Iraq and Syria. Of course, we're also, let's say, split and divided because they are looking for another country where they can live their faith in a dignified way, with freedom of religion and conscience.

And for those who were accepted in foreign countries, still the challenges stay because they have to manage to be integrated into their new society. So we really, we Christians in the Middle East, we have our own problems, added to the problems of the Christian families around the world in facing the challenges in their societies, the globalization, the education of the children, the youth.

So we keep faith and hope that the Lord will help us, our families, to keep the faith and bear witness to the Gospel of love and peace.

**Q.** *So do you believe the Synod, in some concrete way, has addressed how to help these families?*

**A.** In my opinion, the Synod did a very good job analyzing the problems and the difficulties of the Christian families around the world. It's very different from country to country, or continent to continent, and from south to north. But the Synod did a very good job.

And, as you know, it's kind of preliminary, in its work for next year's Synod, where the Synod will take a very clear resolution regarding the Christian families.

**Q.** *Any final thoughts or reflections?*

**A.** I am very concerned about our people, our people in Iraq and Syria, and I want to spread the word around us, especially in the Western countries, where you have the decisions at the international [level]...

I have to tell them to keep the faithfulness to the principles of true democracy, true freedom, civil freedom, as well as freedom of religion and conscience. And, of course, there will be a great message to our families that the Church is caring about them. ☐

*October 21, 2014 (Zenit.org)*

## ***You Can Die Any Number of Ways in Damascus***

**W**ith much of the focus on the plight of Chaldean Christian in Iraq and the fight of the US-led coalition against ISIS, the ongoing crisis in Syria has to some extent fallen from the headlines. However, life for Christians - and the majority of Muslims - in the country remains extremely difficult. Maronite Archbishop Samir Nassar of Damascus spoke with international Catholic charity Aid to the Church in Need about the situation in the Syrian capital.

**Q.** *The war in Syria has now lasted for more than three years. How are the people able to cope?*

**A.** Problems are increasing. The economy is dead. The people have no work. Inflation is rising. Our currency is rapidly losing value against the dollar. Gradually everyone is becoming poor. People have used up their savings. They all need help. We as a Church are trying to support as many families as possible. At the present time this involves about 300 - 400 Christian families. The problem is getting the help to them. This isn't without its dangers. It's possible to get robbed or even abducted. But we have to take this risk. Otherwise our people will leave. We've already been forced to close down three parishes because the faithful have left. So, if we don't help the few that remain, there'll no longer be a Church in Damascus.

**Q.** *Is the Syrian state still able to grant any assistance?*

**A.** No. People have to rely on their own resources. But as I said, even those who are still working are becoming poor because of the high inflation. And there is hardly any work. Elderly people are of course particularly badly affected. To date they have been supported by their families. But these no longer have anything. And so we are trying to take their place. For example, we are running a program to make sure the elderly have access to the medication they need.

**Q.** *Please describe day-to-day life in a war zone.*

**A.** Well, we are now in the fourth year of the war. In the beginning everybody was afraid of the fighting, the bombs and the missiles. Now we've gotten used to it. Life must go on. Of course we try to be very careful. It's better to stay at home than to be on the street. You can die any number of ways in Damascus. For instance, you can be shot by a sniper or blown up by car bombs. And of course there are the shells. Then again you can die from lack of medical care if you are injured. The hospitals no longer have sufficient supplies of medicines.

One shell can kill three or four people immediately on impact and perhaps injure thirty or forty others. That means ten more will die because they do not receive adequate medical attention. You can also die of malnutrition. If you are a diabetic, for example, and need to stick to a certain diet, but don't get it, you are also at grave risk. Living conditions are also poor in other ways. We have two million children who no longer go to school. Many schools have been destroyed and the ones that are left are completely overcrowded. Each classroom now has around sixty pupils. Just imagine how that affects the teaching and learning process.

**Q.** *Is it possible to buy food if you have money, or is there simply nothing available?*

**A.** You can indeed buy things, especially canned goods. But what's lacking is fresh foodstuffs, like vegetables, cheese and meat. The problem is also that you have to keep fresh food in cold storage because of the heat. But unfortunately we have problems with the power supply. As a result, we eat mainly canned products and non-perishables such as rice or lentils.

**Q.** *Have the war and the distress it causes deepened the faith of your flock?*

**A.** Yes. There is definitely a return to the faith. People are praying a lot more. The churches stay open longer. Many of the faithful go there to pray in silence, often for hours on end. They have nothing left but their faith. They are in a dead-end and are waiting for death. At the end of Mass they make a point of saying goodbye, because they don't know whether they will see one another the next day.

The mood is very resigned. People surrender to their fate. So it's a very difficult situation. We as a Church are at the

moment doing more social work than pastoral work, as we are trying to alleviate the people's distress. There is no other help available. The family is basically the only intact institution. It's the family which helps, shares and supports. People's identification with their families is very pronounced. Without the family, the situation would be an utter and complete disaster.

**Q.** *Are you able to keep track of the number of your faithful who have left Syria?*

**A.** No. We don't have any statistics, but the number of people taking the sacraments is falling from year to year, very sharply. In 2012, there were more baptisms and weddings than in 2013. The number of funerals, on the other hand, is rising. There were previous plans to build a kindergarten or a school, but now we are planning for the enlargement of the Christian cemetery. □

October 24, 2014 (Zenit.org)

*Aid to the Church in Need is an international Catholic charity under the guidance of the Holy See, providing assistance to the suffering and persecuted Church in more than 140 countries. [www.churchinneed.org](http://www.churchinneed.org) (USA)*

## ***Apostolic Nuncio to Lebanon Shares Concerns for Region in Conflict***

"**N**o more war, no more violations of human rights!" That's what the Holy See's Apostolic Nuncio to Lebanon says the international community needs to hear and act on as conflict rages across Syria and Iraq. In an interview with Vatican Radio's Tracey McClure, Italian Archbishop Gabriele Caccia welcomed the opportunity to meet with his other colleagues representing Jordan, Iraq, Syria, Turkey, Iran and Egypt in crisis talks in the Vatican, October 2 - 4, 2014.

The Nuncios shared information about the critical situations in their respective host countries with officials from Vatican offices directly involved in the Middle East crisis: the Congregation for Eastern Churches, the Pontifical Councils for Interreligious Dialogue and Christian Unity, the Pontifical Councils for Justice and Peace, Care of Migrants and Itinerant People, and the Pope's charitable office, *Cor Unum*. The Permanent Observers of the Holy See to the United Nations in New York and Geneva, and the Vatican's representative to the European Union were also present.

### ***Pope Francis' Concern for Middle East***

Archbishop Caccia said by calling the meeting, Pope Francis wanted to express his concern for the seriousness of the situation created in the last few months in the Middle East.

The "overwhelming result" of the meeting, Msgr. Caccia noted, was "the consciousness of the magnitude" of the impact of the "wars going on in the region on the civil population: mass violations of human rights, countless children and women, and elderly people abandoned. Millions of refugees abroad, millions of displaced people in their own countries... and most of all, no indication for a future of

stability."

While the meeting was due to focus on the impact of conflict on the Middle East's Christian community, Msgr. Caccia said the Nuncios reported that all of the region's people are affected, majorities and minorities. "Everybody is concerned and that's unbearable. So, the main message (that came out of the meeting) is no more war, no more violations of human rights," he said.

### ***Use of Force Against Islamic State***

Regarding the international coalition of some forty countries combatting Islamic State militants in Iraq and Syria, Archbishop Caccia recalled Pope Francis' comments on his flight back to Rome from Korea: "The Holy Father has said ... that the international community has a responsibility to stop the aggressor according to international law."

"There are mechanisms," Msgr. Caccia added, "to find a consensus to protect the civilian population which is unarmed, which is without protection since the State is not able to protect them. And, we face a new reality which goes beyond the borders of a single state."

Archbishop Caccia expressed hope that "this consensus to protect the civil population will be found according to the international law. And maybe this gives occasion also to go a little bit beyond what has already been done."

### ***Lebanon's Refugee Crisis and Security Concerns***

Msgr. Caccia says his concerns for Lebanon include the internal strain of housing, feeding, educating and caring for the 1.5 million Syrian refugees who have flooded the country of four million. Security is another concern.

The Syrian conflict has spilled over into its neighbor, threatening security and raising tensions in Lebanon. Sunni extremist groups including Islamic State and *Al Nusra* Front have for weeks been waging fierce battles against the Lebanese army in and around *Arsal*, not far from Lebanon's northern border with Syria. Dozens of Lebanese soldiers, police and civilians have been kidnapped, and some killed. A series of car bombs late last year and into 2014 targeted Beirut suburbs considered strongholds of *Hezbollah*, the armed Lebanese Shiite political group which has poured fighters and weapons into Syria in support of President Bashar al Assad's battle against Sunni rebels. Lebanon's Christians, too, are divided. They are at a stalemate in choosing a candidate to replace President Michel Suleiman whose mandate expired in May this year.

### ***Lebanon As a Model of Pluralism, Coexistence***

Despite the tensions, Archbishop Caccia remains optimistic: "I would say Lebanon, in this very moment, also gives hope for all the region because it is the only country where there is a share of power among all the seventeen different faith communities, where all are accepted, all have (a voice), and all together they can decide (policies) for the good of the nation."

It's the same power-sharing formula, he says, that both the international community and the region have been seeking, particularly in response to the conflicts in Iraq and Syria. "So in that sense, Lebanon can give hope that it's possible to live together, all communities, all faiths, with

respect and I would say even more: with understanding and mutual help."

Msgr. Caccia points to concrete actions which have brought the different faith communities together. Lebanon's Muslim community, he said, share the concerns of Christians "about the humanitarian problems and the atrocities and there were some statements of condemnation." "We are not enemies but we are partners (in building) a more just society. And all forces which want to build on human dignity, on freedom, on respect, are really welcome and in that sense, I would also like to thank (our) Muslim counterparts because they are going in the right directions to build a just country for everybody."

Partnership, Archbishop Caccia concluded, is key to finding a lasting peace in the region. "We can get out of these troubles only together- not one against the other, but each one together with the other. In that sense, Lebanon could also be a very good example of hope for the future of the region." □

*Vatican Radio, October 8, 2014*

### ***Pope Francis Laments Attacks on Family***

Pope Francis lamented attacked on the family during an October 25 audience with 7,000 members of the Schönstatt movement, who were in Rome to celebrate the centenary of their founding. According to a Vatican Radio summary of his extemporaneous remarks:

Asked about marriage and what advice he can offer to those who don't feel welcome in the Church, Pope Francis stressed the need for priests to stay close to each one of their flock without becoming scandalized over what takes place within the family. He said a bishop during the recent Synod on the family asked whether priests are aware of what children feel and the psychological damage caused when their parents separate? The Pope noted how sometimes in these cases the parent who is separating ends up living at home only part-time with the children which he described as a "new and totally destructive" form of cohabitation.

He said the Christian family and marriage have never been so attacked as they are nowadays because of growing relativism over the concept of the sacrament of marriage. When it comes to preparing for marriage, Pope Francis said all too often there is a misunderstanding over the difference between the sacrament of marriage and the social rite. Marriage is forever, he said, but in our present society there is a temporary or throw-away culture that has become widespread.

The Pope added that when it comes to reforming the Church, "inner holiness ... counts far more than more external ways such as reforming the Curia and the Vatican bank," according to the summary. "Pope Francis also spoke about the importance of having a freedom of spirit and warned against closing ourselves up in a mass of rules and regulations, thus becoming a caricature of the doctors of law." □

*Catholic World News - October 27, 2014*

# John Henry Newman at the Synod on the Family

by Very Rev. Robert Barron

The controversies surrounding the recent Extraordinary Synod on the Family have often put me in mind of John Henry Cardinal Newman, the greatest Catholic churchman of the 19th century. Newman wrote eloquently on an extraordinary range of topics, including university education, the play between faith and reason, the nature of papal authority, and the subtle manner in which we come to assent in matters of religion. But the arguments around the Synod compel us to look at Newman's work regarding the evolution of doctrine.

When he was at mid-career and in the process of converting from Anglicanism to Roman Catholicism, Newman penned a masterpiece entitled *On the Development of Christian Doctrine*. In line with the evolutionary theories that were just emerging at that time - Hegel's work was dominant in most European universities and Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* would appear just a few years later - Newman argued that Christian doctrines are not given once for all and simply passed down unchanged from generation to generation. Rather, like seeds that unfold into plants or rivers that deepen and broaden over time, they develop, their various aspects and implications emerging in the course of lively rumination. It is assuredly not the case, for example, that the doctrine of the Trinity was delivered fully-grown into the minds of the first disciples of Jesus and then passed on like a football across the ages. On the contrary, it took hundreds of years for the seed of that teaching to grow into the mighty tree of Augustine's formulations in the *De Trinitate* or Aquinas's complex treatise in the first part of the *Summa theologiae*. Moreover, Newman felt that even those definitive theological achievements in turn develop and unfold as they are mused over, turned around, questioned, and argued about. He concludes: "A real idea is equivalent to the sum total of its possible aspects." And those aspects appear only in the course of time and through the play of the lively minds that consider them. It is precisely in this context that Newman penned the most famous line of *On the Development of Christian Doctrine*: "In a higher world it is otherwise; but here below, to live is to change and to be perfect is to have changed often." Ideas change because they are living things.

I realize that many, upon considering this view, will get nervous - as did many in Newman's day. Does this mean that doctrine is up for grabs? Should we keep our dogmatic statements, as one cynical wag once put it, in loose-leaf binders? To get some clarity on this point, I would recommend that we delve a little further into Newman's great book and examine the criteria that he laid out to determine the difference between a legitimate development (which makes the doctrine in question more fully itself) and a corruption (which undermines the doctrine). Newman presents seven in total, but I should like to examine just three.

The first is what he calls preservation of type. A valid development preserves the essential form and structure of what came before. If that type is undermined, we are dealing with a corruption. Mind you, type can be maintained even

through enormous superficial changes, as, to use Newman's own example, "a butterfly is a development of the caterpillar but not in any sense its image." And by the same token, superficialities can remain largely unchanged even as the type utterly morphs, as happened, say, in the transition from the Roman Republic to the Roman Empire.

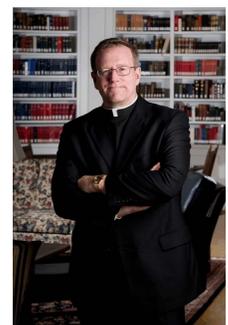
A second criterion is what Newman refers to as "conservative action upon its past." An evolution that simply reverses or contradicts what came before it is necessarily a corruption and not a development. In Newman's own words, an authentic development "is an addition that illustrates, not obscures; corroborates, not corrects the body of thought from which it proceeds." In accord with this idea, Christianity could be seen as the development of Judaism, since it preserves the essential teachings and practices of that faith, even as it moves beyond them. Cardinal George Pell alluded to this principle when he said, during the recent Synod debates, "The Church does not do back-flips on doctrine." So, for example, if a proposal were put forth at the Extraordinary Synod that simply contradicted the teaching of John Paul II in *Familiaris consortio* or Paul VI in *Humanae vitae*, it would certainly reflect a corruption.

A third criterion that Newman puts forward is what he calls "the power of assimilation." Just as a healthy organism can take in what it can from its environment, even as it resists what it must, so a sane and lively idea can take to itself what is best in the intellectual atmosphere, even as it throws off what is noxious. Both total accommodation to the culture and total resistance to it are usually signs of intellectual sickness.

Now how does all of this apply to the Synod? Well, let's consider the proposal made by Cardinal Walter Kasper regarding communion for the divorced and re-married. Is it an authentic development or a corruption of Catholic moral teaching and practice? Might I suggest that all of the disputants in that argument take a step back and assess the matter using Cardinal Newman's criteria? Would Newman be opposed in principle to change in this regard? Not necessarily, for he knew that to live is to change. Would he therefore enthusiastically embrace what Cardinal Kasper has proposed? Not necessarily, for it might represent a corruption. As the conversation continues to unfold over the coming months, I think all sides would benefit from a careful reading of *On the Development of Christian Doctrine*. □

## About the Author

Father Robert Barron is the founder of the global ministry, Word on Fire, and the Rector/President of Mundelein Seminary. He is the creator of the award winning documentary series, "Catholicism" and "Catholicism: The New Evangelization." Learn more at [www.WordonFire.org](http://www.WordonFire.org).



Fr. Robert Barron

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## *Saint Rafka and Giving Thanks to God*

*Continued from page 1*

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The Scriptures are full of reminders about being grateful and giving thanks to the Lord. Jesus speaks of it in the Gospel of Luke (Luke 17:15-19). After having cured ten lepers and when only one, a Samaritan, returns to give thanks to God, Jesus asks, "Were not all ten made clean? The other nine, where are they?" In the New Testament Saint Paul regularly gives thanks and exhorts other Christians to do likewise: "And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him" (Col. 3:17). This attitude of gratitude is found throughout the Old Testament as well, especially in the Psalms (Ps. 92, 100, 136 150).

The center of our Christian life is the Holy Eucharist. We must always remember and reflect on the fact that the very word *Eucharist* is from a Greek word meaning "thanksgiving." Saint Paul tells us in his letter to the Corinthians: "For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me"" (1 Cor. 11:23-24). This most sacred part of our faith focuses on "giving thanks" for the greatest gift we can ever receive: Christ Himself.

It is important to remember as well, that while saying "thank you" to someone is important, it is also crucial to show gratitude by our actions. Love and gratitude are lived out in our deeds. Our actions must demonstrate that we are truly grateful.

Like Saint Rafka, we must always find the strength to give thanks for our lives even in times of trial and distress. Like Saint Rafka, we must be willing to accept that which life lays

at our feet. Like Saint Rafka we must be grateful.

God bless you all, God bless your families, God bless our nation!

Happy Thanksgiving. ☐

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

## *Prayer For Saint Rafka*

**W**e implore you, Saint Rafka, you, who walked on our soil, among our oaks and rocks, who lived among your sisters, the nuns, in your monastery.

Blessed Sister, daughter of our land and cedars, we implore you to be our guiding light and our example in bearing the sufferings with love and joy.

Saint Rafka, our patron and Sister, let peace reign in our country; sanctify our monasteries and churches; grant your visitors and those who ask for your intercession the graces that they need; cure sick people with your blessed soil; comfort sad people; bless our children and young; raise our orphans; let our harvest be abundant; let our homes be full of blessings; let our work be prosperous; bless our workers; feed hungry people; accompany our emigrants to come back to their homeland; pray for dead people.

Teach us, dear Sister, to pray like you did for Our Christ and Savior, who made you share His sufferings and imprinted His wounds on your body, adding to them the sixth wound, and who made you a messenger of faith, joy and love.

So that we thank the Virgin Mary and glorify with you the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, forever.

Amen. ☐