



# The Maronite Voice



A Publication of the Maronite Eparchies in the USA

Volume X

Issue No. IX

October 2014

## *In Matthew We Find an Awesome Glimpse into the Mind and Heart of Our Lord Jesus Christ*



*Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,*

**B**y reflecting on the Word of God we come to know, even more personally, the One who is the "Word of God made flesh," Jesus Christ. The Scriptures give us a unique window through which to encounter Jesus, and in the Gospel of Matthew, chapters five through seven, we find an awesome glimpse into the mind and heart of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

His Gospel is called the teaching Gospel because Matthew arranged the words of Jesus in an orderly manner. To all catechists, and to all who love the Word, this Gospel is for you! In chapters five through seven, the most challenging of Our Lord's teaching shines through: the Beatitudes; Our Lord's teaching on marriage; and His teaching against revenge.

The eight Beatitudes compel the followers of Jesus not to model their lives only on the Ten Commandments, but to go beyond the law, to be peacemakers, merciful, poor in spirit, to thirst for justice and righteousness, etc. These moral imperatives are made possible because Jesus himself lived this way, even to the cross.

In Our Lord's teaching on marriage, which Saint Pope John Paul II developed into a profound reflection on human love and relationships, nicknamed the "Theology of the Body," Jesus challenged the men of his time, to whom Moses gave permission for a man to divorce his wife. Jesus, the new law giver, does not give this permission; rather he referred back to Adam and Eve and told men that they may not divorce.

Notice he was speaking to men – because women at that time had no right to divorce. Notice also how Jesus addressed the men, telling them that wives were

not possessions, but spouses, not their property, but their equal. Jesus' strong teaching on marriage reveals His interior conviction that the marriage of a man and woman is from God Himself, and no man may tamper with it! This teaching has been the teaching of the Church until this very day, and continues to inspire us to believe that marriage is a life-long and sacred union, which ought to be respected as much as humanly possible. The extraordinary synod of bishops held this month in Rome will affirm this powerful teaching on the sanctity and noble character of marriage.

*(Continues on page 20)*

## Schedule of Bishop Elias Zaidan

### October 3 - 5, 2014

Pastoral Visit to Our Lady of Lebanon, Millbrae, Calif.

### October 9 - 11, 2014

Deacons and Subdeacons Retreat, Our Lady of Lebanon Shrine, North Jackson, Ohio

### October 11, 2014

50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Our Lady of Lebanon Shrine, North Jackson, Ohio

### October 12, 2014

Pastoral Visit to St. Maron Church, Youngstown, Ohio

### October 16 - 17, 2014

Tele-Lumiere/Noursat Board Meeting, Chicago, Ill.

### October 18, 2014

Pastoral Visit to the Maronite community in Albuquerque, N.M.

### October 19 - 20, 2014

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

### October 24 - 26, 2014

Pastoral Visit to Our Lady of Lebanon, Flint, Mich.

### October 31 - November 2, 2014

MYA Workshop, Houston, Tex.

### 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. ☐

*The Maronite Voice*  
4611 Sadler Road  
Glen Allen, VA 23060  
Phone: 804/270-7234  
Fax: 804/273-9914

E-Mail: [gmsebaali@aol.com](mailto:gmsebaali@aol.com)

<http://www.stmaron.org>

<http://www.usamaronite.org>

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

**Editor** Msgr. George M. Sebaali

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Mary Shaia

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### **Maronite Convention 2015**

Saint Maron Maronite Church

**Cleveland, Ohio**

**July 1 - 5, 2015**

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

## Eparchy of Saint Maron Presbyteral Council

The following priests have been elected to the Presbyteral Council of the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn, and all have graciously accepted to serve effective August 15, 2014:

Chorbishop John Faris  
Reverend Tony Akouri  
Reverend Elie Saade  
Reverend Dominique Hanna

Also serving on the Presbyteral Council are the five elected Protopresbyters who were appointed to that office as of July 23, 2014, by Bishop Gregory Mansour:

Chorbishop Joseph Kaddo  
Monsignor James Root  
Reverend Rodolph Wakim  
Monsignor George Sebaali  
Reverend Basaam Saade

The following serve as ex-officio members of the Presbyteral Council:

Chorbishop Michael G. Thomas, Vicar General and Chancellor  
Very Reverend Geoffrey Abdallah, Seminary Rector  
Very Reverend Francis Marini, Judicial Vicar. ☐

## Washington, D.C. *Historic Inaugural Summit*



On September 9 - 11, 2014, an historical Inaugural Summit entitled "In Defense of Christians, Protecting and Preserving Christianity" took place at the Omni Shoreham Hotel in Washington, D.C.

The Summit is just the first stage in a new campaign to mobilize people across America and around the world in service of this cause. The In defense of Christians (IDC) team is working to expand and mobilize a grassroots network of support – advocacy groups that will spotlight this issue for the American public and champion it before elected officials. The IDC is a newly constituted non-profit, non-partisan organization whose mission is threefold: awareness, advocacy and unity.

Religious leaders, distinguished speakers and attendees championed the need for awareness, advocacy and unity at a time when Middle Eastern Christians and other religious and ethnic minorities face widespread persecution in their ancestral homelands. The summit began with a historic ecumenical prayer service on Tuesday, September 9. The following day attendees met with seventeen Democrat and Republican Members of Congress on Capitol Hill. Wednesday night a solidarity gala dinner was attended by over 1200 guests. On Thursday, September 11, for the first time in history, the five Christian Patriarchs visited the White House to discuss the protection of Christians in the Middle East with President Obama and National Security Advisor Susan Rice.

His Eminence Cardinal Leonardo Sandri, Prefect of the Congregation for the Oriental Congregation at the Vatican, joined His Beatitude Patriarch Bechara Peter Cardinal Rai, Maronite Patriarch of Antioch and All the East; His Beatitude Gregorius III Laham, Melkite Greek Catholic Patriarch of Antioch and All the East, Alexandria and Jerusalem; His Beatitude Mor Ignatius Aphrem II, Syriac Orthodox Patriarch of Antioch; His Beatitude Ignatius Youssef III Yonan, Syriac Catholic Patriarch of Antioch and All the East; His Beatitude Aram I Keshishian, Catholicos of the Holy See of Cilicia of the Armenian Apostolic Church; The Most Reverend Metropolitan Joseph Al-Zehlaoui, Archbishop of New York and All North America of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Church and official

representative of His Beatitude Greek Orthodox Patriarch John X of Antioch and all the East; His Grace Bishop Angaelos, General Bishop of the Coptic Orthodox Church of Alexandria and official representative of His Holiness Pope Tawadros II, the 118<sup>th</sup> Pope of Alexandria & Patriarch of All Africa on the Holy Apostolic See of St. Mark the Evangelist of the Coptic Orthodox Church of Alexandria; His Excellency Ibrahim Ibrahim, Bishop Emeritus of Chaldean Eparchy of Saint Thomas the Apostle and official representative of His Beatitude Louis Raphael Sako I, Chaldean Catholic Patriarch of Babylon and the Head of the Chaldean Catholic Church, for the summit. □

(Information and the photo for this article were taken from the IDC official website: [IndefenseofChristians.org](http://IndefenseofChristians.org).)

### *Pope Francis Sends His Greetings to the IDC Summit*

*To His Eminence Cardinal Leonardo Sandri  
Prefect of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches*

His Holiness Pope Francis sends warm greetings to the organizers and participants of the "In Defense of Christians Summit" taking place in Washington D.C. from September 9 - 11, 2014.

The theme of this meeting is very close to the Holy Father's heart. He has often expressed great concern for the situation of Christians who, above all in many parts of the Middle East, suffer deeply the consequences of regional tensions and conflicts. His Holiness renews his plea that the rights of all, Christians and adherents of other religions, be upheld, so that they may live with respect, freely professing their faith without harm to their dignity, without being deprived of the necessities of life, and without being robbed of their future or forced to flee as refugees.

The Holy Father encourages everyone to pray for them, and urges the international community to make every effort to bring this humanitarian crisis to an end, in order to protect all victims of violence and to ensure that the necessary aid reaches those who have been displaced.

His Holiness earnestly hopes that this summit, at which representatives of the Oriental Churches are present, will bear much fruit in order to ensure and strengthen the presence of Christians throughout the Middle East, where, although a small flock, they are called to fulfill an irreplaceable mission for the good, not only of the Church, but of society as a whole.

As the Holy Father had occasion to say at the Plenary Assembly of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches last November, "We must not resign ourselves to thinking of a Middle East without Christians, who for two thousand years have confessed the name of Jesus, and have been fully integrated as citizens into the social, cultural and religious life of the nations to which they belong."

With these sentiments, His Holiness cordially imparts to all those taking part in this meeting his Apostolic Blessing. □

From the Vatican, September 9, 2014  
PIETRO CARD. PAROLIN  
Secretary of State

## *Patriarch Rai Visits U.S. Maronite Parishes*

### **Birmingham, Alabama**

Chorbishop Richard D. Saad, Pastor, and Saint Elias Maronite Church welcomed Patriarch Bechara Peter Cardinal Rai to Birmingham, Alabama, on September 12 - 13, 2014, for his first visit to Saint Elias since he was chosen as the 77<sup>th</sup> Maronite Patriarch of Antioch and All the East in March 2011. He is the first Patriarch of Lebanon to visit Birmingham in over twenty-six years. Patriarch Rai held a press conference upon his arrival in Birmingham and proclaimed that ISIS and other Islamic terrorist groups were dangerous not just to the Middle East region but to the whole world.

After the press conference, Patriarch Rai was escorted to Saint Elias Church where he was greeted at the entrance of the church, which was lined with members of the Knights of Columbus and members of the Order of Saint Sharbel standing along a red carpet to welcome the Patriarch. The Patriarch celebrated liturgy with the Bishop of the Maronite Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon, Bishop Elias Zaidan, Bishop Emeritus of the Birmingham Roman Catholic Diocese, Bishop Foley, Archbishop Paul Sayah, Chorbishop Richard D. Saad, Father John Paul Kimes and numerous other priests and dignitaries.

The Liturgy was attended by parishioners of Saint Elias and open for all in the Birmingham community. The Patriarch, during his homily, reiterated the need for the support of America for combating the threat to Christians in the Middle East. He asked for prayer, financial support and our constant vigilance. After the homily he inducted six new members to the Order of Sharbel. Birmingham has the most members of the Order of Saint Sharbel in the entire diocese.

After the Liturgy, the Patriarch attended a grand banquet held by Saint Elias at The Club atop Red Mountain. Chorbishop Richard Saad was the master of ceremonies. The Patriarch was then treated to a special video and spiritual bouquet from the Maronite Young Adults of the church. The video stressed that the MYA was praying for peace in the Middle East and talked about how important peace was to the region. The MYA had asked parishioners to commit to ways in which they would help in praying for peace and wrote down all of the different ways. They presented a traditional Antiochene cross and scroll to the Patriarch listing all of the commitments made, which included praying the rosary, attending daily liturgy, offering liturgies for peace in the Middle East and fasting for peace among other offerings. After the presentation, Bishop Zaidan introduced the Patriarch.

The Patriarch began his remarks discussing the unique Antiochene cross, its origins, which date back to the monastic beginnings of our church. The Patriarch expressed gratitude for the event and his trip to the United States.

On Saturday morning, the Patriarch was greeted by the children of the parish on the front steps outside the church as he arrived. The children sang Christian songs to the Patriarch



From left: Bishop Foley, Patriarch Rai, Bishop Zaidan and Chorbishop Saad.

that they had learned during the summer Vacation Bible School program at Saint Elias. They also wore their VBS shirts, which had been made prior to any knowledge that the Patriarch would be visiting Birmingham. The t-shirts had the image of Patriarch Rai and Bishop Zaidan on the back of the t-shirt with the saying "From the *Qadisha* Valley to the South." The children presented the Patriarch and the Bishop with t-shirts. The Ladies' Altar Society served as honor guards welcoming the Patriarch into the Church. The Patriarch then led *Safro*, morning prayers. Afterwards, the Patriarch led the dedication of a completely redone entrance, walkway and garden on the south side of the church donated by the family of Deacon Joseph Stephens in his memory. The blessing of the memorial to Deacon Joe by the highest leader of our church, with the Bishop of our eparchy, Bishop Elias Zaidan, and the Bishop of Birmingham, Bishop Robert Baker, was an exceptional joy for the family and the whole parish community.

The parish then celebrated with a brunch in the hall. The Ladies' Altar Society provided the brunch with the help of many parishioners and presented the Patriarch with a gift from the Prayer Shawl Ministry. The Patriarch presented both Chorbishop Richard Saad and Bishop Robert Baker with medals of Our Lady of *A'nnoubine*. After brunch, the Patriarch stood on the stage with Bishop Zaidan and allowed each family to come up and have their picture taken with him. He greeted each person and thanked them for coming. He repeatedly told us he would see us next summer .... in Lebanon!!! He was extremely gracious and refused to sit, even though a chair was made available for him.

As he was leaving the church, one parishioner heard him say: "This is like paradise, I don't want to leave." The parish of Saint Elias could not be more delighted that the Patriarch blessed us with his presence. We only hope we will not have to wait as long to be blessed with a return visit.

# Minneapolis, Minnesota

by Joannie Moses

Plumage of the Knights of Columbus Honor Guard bobbed and silver swords shone. Members of the Order of Saint Sharbel lined the main aisle in respect of our special guests. His Beatitude Beshara Peter Cardinal Rai, Maronite Patriarch of Antioch and All the East, Bishop Elias Zaidan, Bishop of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon, Archbishop Paul Sayah, Patriarchal Vicar General, and a host of Maronite and other rite's priests entered in solemn procession.

Guest clergy concelebrated the Liturgy of thanksgiving on the Sunday of the Holy Cross, September 14, 2014. The altar was beautifully decorated in yellow and white roses, lilies, and small cedar trees.

The homily of Patriarch Rai stressed that God created us to be with Him eternally. Our souls are programmed like the airplane he flew in from Alabama to Minneapolis, programmed to love and to please Him. It is only when we allow ourselves to be led astray, like being kidnaped or highjacked, that we choose to leave His Way. We must redirect our priorities to be in line with God's priorities.

The Liturgy was followed by a Lebanese spread made and served by the parishioners. When Patriarch Rai entered the Cedars Hall, many dozens of children greeted him with carnations and flags of the Patriarchate. Their chants of "We love you! We love you! We love you!" were taken up by the entire gathering.

The previous evening, the honored guests arrived to a red carpet ceremony. A welcoming crowd plus little Oliver Farah and Alexis Sadaka, both dressed in ethnic costumes, greeted our guests with a bouquet of red roses and Lebanese flags. Patriarch Rai, Bishop Zaidan, Archbishop Sayah, Monsignor sharbel, guest priests and parishioners entered the sanctuary chanting "Ya Oum Allah" as the Patriarch blessed the crowd with the icon of the Blessed Mother.

Over 400 guests attended the grand banquet in the Cedars Hall. Henry Estephan adeptly emceed the program. The Lebanese and American national anthems were sung. Tables were adorned with centerpieces of cedar trees with American, Lebanese and papal flags.

Archbishop John Nienstedt of the St. Paul and Minneapolis Archdiocese offered the benediction. Duane and Elizabeth Nasser, event chairmen, welcomed the Patriarch and guests and called in two large decorated cakes, one to honor our Patriarch and the other to celebrate twenty-five years of service to the day for the parish of Saint Maron by Monsignor sharbel Maroun.

Monsignor Maroun spoke his reflection and presentation of our Patriarch. He pointed out that this humble monk, intelligent and wise, has played a great role in Lebanon and the Middle East and has changed the lives of so many, especially through his appearances on *Tele-Lumiere* for a couple of decades. Monsignor informed the crowd that Patriarch Rai had just met in conference with President



From left: Fr. Elie Abi Sarkis, Fr. Elie Madi, Bishop Zaidan, Patriarch Rai, Archbishop Paul Sayah and Msgr. sharbel Maroun.

Obama, along with patriarchs from Syria, Iraq and Egypt, to deliver his message for America to respect people, especially the displaced Christians of Mousel in Iraq.

Bishop Zaidan thanked Msgr. sharbel for our "great community" and his always generous service of time, talents, and treasure. He presented John Nasseff with a Patriarchal Apostolic Blessing plaque and bronze medal. The beautiful medal is inscribed with a relief of the Patriarch on one side and Our Lady of *Qanoubine* on the other.

Patriarch Rai took to the podium. He spoke in Arabic and was translated by Archbishop Sayah. Patriarch Rai stressed that the Christians of the Middle East are living in danger and turmoil as they strive to retain and protect the birthplace of Christianity for the entire world. He reminded us that we are expansive Christians, and it is our duty and our responsibility to enable the Christians of the Middle East to remain in and to worship in their homelands with God's grace. It is our job, through prayer and financial support, to display unity and solidarity with the endangered Christians. They are part of the same body as we are.

What is happening in Lebanon is killing Christianity at its source. What can be said of Lebanon, can be said of the entire Middle East. he continued: I can assure you, those of us who are in the Middle East are there to stay. Christianity will remain there and it will flourish there.

Patriarch Rai then, surprised Monsignor sharbel Maroun with the announcement that he would be elevated to Chorbishop. The crowd went wild with joy and tweeted and facebooked the good news. The date of elevation will be January 6, 2015, a date special in the heart of Monsignor sharbel.

(Continues on page 15)

# Danbury, Connecticut 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Bishop Robert J. Shaheen



by Randall J. Michael

On Sunday, September 21, St. Anthony Maronite Parish in Danbury, Connecticut, welcomed Bishop Robert Shaheen, Bishop *Emeritus* of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon, back to his hometown and gathered together to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his ordination to the priesthood. The parish gathered to honor an outstanding leader and bishop in the Maronite Church, a great priest and bishop who spent the last fifty years of his life faithful and dedicated to his priestly vocation and to the flock entrusted to his care. Father Naji Kiwan, Pastor, described Bishop Shaheen as "a bishop who carried the staff of leadership, following the example of his Lord and Master, Our Lord and God, Jesus Christ."

Bishop Robert Joseph Shaheen was born in Danbury, Connecticut, on June 3, 1937, the oldest of four boys to parents Albert and Aileen. After attending St. Peter Grammar School and Danbury Public High School, he entered the St. Thomas Seminary in Bloomfield, Connecticut, in 1955. In 1958, he transferred to St. Basil Seminary in Methuen, Mass., while also taking classes at St. Anselm College in Manchester, New Hampshire. In 1961, he enrolled in the

Maronite Seminary in Washington, D.C., as one of the first seminarians there.

Bishop Shaheen was ordained subdeacon in October of 1962, deacon in June of 1963, then as a priest on May 2, 1964 by Bishop Francis Zayek (Maronite Bishop of Brazil at the time). After his ordination, Bishop Shaheen was nominated Associate Pastor of St. Anthony Church, Danbury, in 1964 -1965, and then Administrator of St. Anthony Church, Springfield, Mass., from October 1965 to Spring 1966, and then Administrator of St. Anthony Church, Danbury, Spring 1966 to January 1967.

In January 1967, Bishop Shaheen was named as Administrator, then Pastor, of St. Raymond Church in St. Louis, Mo., where he spent the next forty-six years until his official retirement in October of 2013.

When assigned to St. Raymond Church, the Church had been without a priest for over twenty years. Under Bishop Shaheen's leadership, he was able to take the Church from a few faithful parishioners to what it is today, a beautiful and vibrant Maronite Parish with over 350 active families. Bishop Shaheen was ordained Archpriest in 1978 and then made Chorbishop in 1986. In December 2000, Pope John Paul II, following the retirement of Our Lady of Lebanon's first bishop, Bishop John Chedid, appointed him Eparch of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon. He was consecrated a bishop on February 15, 2001, by His Beatitude Nasrallah Peter Cardinal Sfeir.

After the liturgy with Father Kiwan and the parish of St. Anthony, a short program was presented by Mr. Thomas J. Saadi, Master of Ceremony. There were presentations from the parish and presentations by state and city officials including a citation from the city of Danbury from Mayor Mark Boughton, a citation by Senator Michael McLachlan, a citation from the Governor of Connecticut presented by Representative David Arconti, Jr., and citations from Senators Blumenthal and Murphy and Congresswoman Esty presented by Tom Saadi.

The anniversary program concluded with a luncheon in the church hall served by the St. Anthony's MYO. The parish community was proud and happy to celebrate Bishop Shaheen's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary as a priest and leader and very grateful for his dedication and hard work over the years. His great leadership over the years has helped the Maronite Church to grow and flourish in Danbury, St. Louis, and much of the United States. □

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

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

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

*The Maronite Voice*,  
4611 Sadler Road

Glen Allen, Virginia 23060

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

Email: Gmsebaali@aol.com

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). □

## St. Louis, Missouri Annual Pilgrimage



by Shelly Vitale

The annual pilgrimage to the National Shrine of Our Lady of Lebanon in North Jackson, Ohio, was a blessed experience for members of St. Raymond Maronite Cathedral in St. Louis, Missouri. A large group arrived by bus eager to participate in the many spiritual activities planned at the Shrine. They attended the Liturgy daily including the "Anointing of the Sick" which was attended by hundreds of pilgrims who received the holy oil from Bishop Gregory Mansour, Bishop Elias Zaidan and Bishop Emeritus Robert J. Shaheen. The Maronite Pontifical Liturgy took place on the Feast of the Assumption, Friday, August 15, with the three Bishops as Celebrants. It was a beautiful evening full of joyous praise. The weather was perfect for the candlelight procession which followed, and a very large crowd of pilgrims walked with their glowing candles and sang in veneration to their Holy Mother. The celebration ended with fireworks illuminating the sky, a beautiful sight for all to see.

The St. Raymond parishioners are a very close-knit community. They are one big family. Each evening they were treated to a delectable array of foods and desserts graciously provided by Bishop Robert Shaheen. He arranged for them to have a hospitality room where they could enjoy good food, great company, play traditional games and wind down for the evening. They have a saying at St. Raymond: "Pray, Eat, Play, it's the Maronite way."

When it was time for their trip home, Bishop Robert boarded the bus to give the pilgrims a special blessing. The Assumption pilgrimage is always a momentous occasion for them, and they can't wait for next year. Thank you to all the wonderful people who worked so hard to make this event so special. □

## Food For Thought

Act as if every day were the last of your life, and each action the last you perform.

*St. Alphonsus Maria de Liguori*

## Springfield, Massachusetts Thousands Visit Relic of St. Anthony During Nine-Day Novena

The visit of the first-class relic of St. Anthony of Padua concluded September 14, 2014, after drawing thousands to St. Anthony Maronite Catholic Church, Springfield, Mass., during the nine-day stay.

Father George Zina, Pastor, estimated that about 20,000 people visited the relic, which came from Italy. He said that Tom Muscatello of the Franciscan Friars of the Anthonian Association in New York worked with him at estimating the crowd. "Tom was here every day and handed out the prayer petitions to everyone who came. He said he came with 10,000 and tried to give them to every family – not every person – and he ran out of them," said Father Zina.

Father Zina said the parish ordered 8,000 candles and they were all gone. "All the St. Anthony breads from La Fiorentina Bakery are gone," he said. "I am so impressed and in awe of this past week. You can tell how much people are starving for spirituality and hungry for the Word of God. So many people came and thanked me for bringing St. Anthony here. They had tears of joy. The people still have the faith."

Deacon Enzo DiGiacomo of St. Anthony Parish worked for more than a year to help coordinate and organize the visit of the relic. "I am overwhelmed and content with the outcome," he said. "It was one of the holiest events I have ever participated in, and its spirituality was profound."

Deacon DiGiacomo said that the church was packed for many Masses, but the Healing Mass held on September 11 was especially popular. "Our parishioners who helped park the cars said you couldn't see a blade of grass on the lawn because we had so many people," said the deacon.

The church was open from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. each day, but Deacon DiGiacomo said the church stayed open until 1 a.m. after the Healing Mass to allow all of the people to venerate the relic.

The nine-day event concluded with special Masses in honor of Franciscan heritage, Vietnamese heritage and Portuguese heritage. There also was a special youth day on September 14 and a visit by Archbishop Leonard P. Blair of the Archdiocese of Hartford, Conn.

The Conventual Franciscans from Padua gave St. Anthony Parish a small, first-class relic that will stay at the Church on Island Pond Road. A novena Mass will be held in honor of St. Anthony every Tuesday at noon, said Father Zina. The first novena Mass started on September 16, 2014.



*(Story and photo by Peggy Weber, Iobserve.org)*

## Mendota Heights, Minnesota Brothers Receive Highest Scouting Rank and Continue Service



From left: Jimmy Abbott, Fr. Constantin, Pastor, and Michael Abbott.

by Jimmy Abbott, Sr.

Entering first grade was an exciting moment for them, but joining Cub Scouts was even moreso as two boys learned camping skills, tying knots, teamwork and many other things young boys enjoy doing outdoors. Joining Boy Scouts, however, was a new level of high adventure, leadership skills, commitment and advancing in rank. Little did the boys know that of those that join Boy Scouts, only 4% ever make it to the Eagle rank, but brothers Jimmy and Michael Abbott of Holy family Maronite Church in Mendota Heights, Minn., became the 49<sup>th</sup> and 52<sup>nd</sup> Eagle Scouts out of Boy Scout Troop 288 in West St. Paul. This is not an easy task, considering all the merit badges, written letters and, of course, the Eagle Project.

Jimmy's project consisted of remodeling the basement of the rectory at St. Michael Church so their youth would have a place to meet. Michael's project involved purchasing and preparing food to feed over 400 homeless. The leadership and commitment skills the brothers learned in scouting would continue on in service to others.

After graduating from high school, Jimmy joined the National Evangelization Team (NET), a Catholic youth ministry based in West St. Paul, Minnesota. Every year, 120 - 150 young Catholics, age eighteen to twenty-eight, leave behind their jobs, schools, families and friends to devote nine months to serving with NET, traveling throughout the U.S., Ireland and Australia. "It was physically and emotionally challenging, but the results were rewarding," says Jimmy, the twenty year-old who has now committed to a second year of NET. He has a passion for music, leading worship with his guitar, "Smokey." Missing his Maronite liturgy at home, he happened upon St. Elias Maronite Church in Roanoke, Virginia, and enjoyed his visit there!

Michael is also postponing college to serve with NET. Besides sports, camping and fishing, the 6' 4" young man has a passion for music as well. Noise fills our home with drums,

guitar and sometimes the harmonica. Michael is so looking forward to this year of service!

Last year's teams traveled a total of 125,000 miles and witnessed to over 75,000 teens. This year there will be fourteen teams traveling throughout the U.S. If you see a 12-passenger van towing a trailer with "NET Ministries" stamped on the side, don't be shy. Stop and say "Hi." You never know, one of the Abbott boys may be inside! ☐

## Youngstown, Ohio 40<sup>th</sup> Ordination Anniversary



by Amelia M. Yazbek

On Sunday, September 14, 2014, on the Feast of the Holy Cross, St. Maron, Youngstown, Ohio, celebrated the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Priesthood of its Pastor, Chorbishop Michael J. Kail. The day began with a crowded Liturgy officiated by Chorbishop Michael assisted by Deacons Joseph Nohra and William George and Subdeacon James Essad.

Following the Liturgy, a brunch was held in Chorbishop's honor in an elegantly decorated Antioch Hall. The Parish Council presented Chorbishop Kail with a beautifully framed Papal Blessing from Pope Francis, and the Education Foundation presented him with a beautiful pewter rendition of the Last Supper. Chorbishop Kail also received many gifts from the packed room of parishioners, He was most pleased to be joined by his 93-year old mother along with his sisters and various family members from Pittsburgh, Penn. Also in attendance were Msgr. Anthony Spinoza and the Antonine Sisters of North Jackson, Ohio.

The tables were adorned with live floral centerpieces following the red and white theme of the linen cloths and napkins and gold chargers with each attendee's name. The youth from the MYO helped with the serving and especially with the clean-up. Compliments go to the committee for a job well done.

Happy 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary to Chorbishop Kail and many more years of service and dedication. ☐

# Houston, Texas *Celebration and Thanksgiving*

by Alberto G. Tohmé

The community of Our Lady of the Cedars (OLC) in Houston, Texas, celebrated the rededication of its parish hall building after almost one year of remodeling that was triggered by an electrical fire in the kitchen in 2013. This occasion was marked by two celebrations over the weekend of September 6 - 7, 2014, hosted by OLC Pastor, Fr. Milad Yaghi, and Assistant Pastor, Fr. Pierre Elkhoury. The OLC community was blessed by the presence of His Eminence Cardinal Leonardo Sandri, Prefect of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches in the Vatican, and His Excellency Bishop-elect Maurizio Malvestiti, both on an official visit to the U.S.; His Excellency Bishop Elias Zaidan; and Reverend Malek Abou Tanous, current Superior General of the Congregation of Maronite Lebanese Missionaries.

The remodeling of the church hall was the result of a dedicated and superb effort by the building committee members, all of whom worked tirelessly to complete this project over the past year. The new parish hall building was redesigned and significantly upgraded to serve the future needs of the OLC community. Everything was ready in time and looked beautiful for the weekend events.

On Saturday, September 6, a dinner banquet was held at the church hall. The sold-out event featured a dinner of Lebanese food and pastries, a superb décor of floral arrangements at each table, and live entertainment. During the lineup of speeches, Fr. Yaghi thanked all parishioners and friends of the parish who helped make the church hall remodeling project a reality, most notably The Levant Foundation, a charitable organization which supports inter-religious dialogue in the Levant region (the birthplace of the three largest religions in the Middle East) and its founders Mr. and Mrs. Jamal Daniel. Bishop Zaidan conveyed a similar message of congratulations, pride and support to the OLC community and to all of its generous donors, most notably Mr. & Mrs. Jamal Daniel, who were not able to attend, and Mr. & Mrs. Nijad Fares, who were present at the dinner banquet. Finally, Cardinal Sandri conveyed his congratulations and pride to the OLC parish for the remarkable growth that it has achieved since its inception twenty-two years ago, and offered a blessing from His Holiness Pope Francis. Following the speeches, the attendees enjoyed a fun-filled night of music entertainment until the early hours of the morning.

On Sunday, September 7, Bishop Zaidan and Cardinal Sandri concelebrated the Divine Liturgy. In his homily, Cardinal Sandri expressed his gratitude to his hosts at OLC and reiterated his congratulations to the OLC parish for a job well done. At the end of the liturgy, the Cardinal bestowed commemorative gifts on the liturgy organizers, including the Pastor, the Assistant Pastor, the altar servers and the lectors. In the same vein, Bishop Zaidan offered his deep gratitude for the visit of the Cardinal and thanked the OLC community for its warm hospitality.

Following the liturgy, an official dedication ceremony took place at the church hall building, as Cardinal Sandri and Bishop Zaidan led prayers and sprinkled Holy Water to bless

the renovated building, now called Cedar Hall. A reception hosted by the Daughters of Mary organization immediately followed and included the cutting of the commemorative cake by the Cardinal.

The weekend of celebrations came to a close on a very positive and proud note. The OLC community is proud of this accomplishment and thankful for all those who made it happen. □

## Schedule of Bishop Gregory Mansour

### October 4 - 5, 2014

Dedication of St. George Church, Providence, R.I.

### October 7, 2014

Evening of Solidarity with Middle Eastern Christians, Diocese of Metuchen, N.J.

### October 9 - 12, 2014

Deacons and Subdeacons Annual Retreat and the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Our Lady of Lebanon Shrine, North Jackson, Ohio

### October 15, 2014

Talk on Middle Eastern Christians, Napa Institute, Manhattan, N.Y.

### October 17 - 18, 2014

TeleLumiere Board Meeting and Fundraiser, Chicago, Ill.

### October 19, 2014

St. John Paul II Mission and 6:00 p.m. Manhattan Mission

### October 21 - 22, 2014

Talk to Belmont College on Christianity in the Middle East, Nashville, Tenn.

### October 23, 2014

Eparchial Finance Council Meeting, Brooklyn, N.Y., and evening Eparchial Benefit Dinner, N.Y., N.Y.

### October 24 - 25, 2014

Dedication of New Church, Olean, N.Y.

### October 27, 2014

Knights of Columbus Evening, Waterbury, Conn.

### October 28, 2014

CAMECT Meeting, Manhattan, N.Y.

### October 29, 2014

Presbyteral Council Meeting, Brooklyn, N.Y.

### October 31 - November 2, 2014

MYA Retreat, Houston, Tex.

### 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 16 - 17, 2014

Dedication of New Church, Jacksonville, Fla. □

# **Cardinal Leonardo Sandri, Prefect of the Congregation for the Eastern Churches, at the Inaugural Summit of the “In Defense of Christians” Association – Washington, D.C.**

*Your Holiness, Your Eminences, Your Beatitudes, Your Excellencies, dear Participants,*

**I** express my deepest gratitude for the invitation to this inaugural meeting of the “In Defense of Christians” Association that gathers the heads of the Eastern Churches, Catholics and Orthodox, together with other significant representatives of world social and political life, to reflect on the means that the international community can adopt on behalf of the sorely tried peoples of the Middle East. I greet everyone, beginning with Cardinal Wuerl who has welcomed us in the capital of the United States, together with the Eastern Catholic Bishops who work with their respective communities in this nation. I also express my gratitude to all those who have made possible an event whose goals are rooted in solidarity, as is only right, for those who, in their fidelity to themselves and to their faith, are victims of the most unacceptable contempt of religious freedom and of every other human right. My thanks go in particular to Ambassador Gilbert Chagoury who to this end tirelessly does his utmost.

1. It is very significant that the meeting is taking place between people of different Christian denominations and different religions who believe and proclaim the value of the freedom of the human person and of his or her dignity, even in today’s at times pressing challenges. Envisaging a reflection on the immense suffering of Christians, as of every other religious minority, is a sign of providential openness to the world in the wake of that “stepping outside” the self, which Pope Francis requested of the Church and of people of good will in order, like the Good Samaritan, to bend down to tend humanity’s wounds.
2. As believers and pastors we refer to the Special Assembly of the Synod of Catholic Bishops for the Middle East in the year 2010, thinking of the words of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI at the opening celebration: “Looking at that part of the world [the Middle East] from God’s perspective means recognizing it as the ‘cradle’ of a universal design of salvation in love, a mystery of communion which becomes true in freedom and thus asks man for a response.” Today our brothers and sisters, their communities, the historical sites that have welcomed them for almost two thousand years, are knocking harder than ever at the door of the Nations and are asking to be heard and for intervention.
3. News and images of the terrible events in the Middle East – and especially in Iraq and Syria, not to forget Africa, starting with Nigeria – reach us every day. The Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue listed them in its Declaration of last 12 July: “the massacre of people on the sole basis of their religious affiliation, the despicable practice of beheading, crucifying and hanging bodies in public places; the choice imposed on Christians

and Yezidis between conversion to Islam, payment of a tax (*jizya*) or forced exile; the forced expulsion of tens of thousands of people, including children, elderly, pregnant women and the sick; the abduction of girls and women belonging to the Yezidi and Christian communities as spoils of war (*sabaya*); the destruction of places of worship and Christian and Muslim burial places; the forced occupation or desecration of churches and monasteries; the removal of crucifixes and other Christian and religious symbols as well as those of other religious communities; the destruction of a priceless Christian religious and cultural heritage; indiscriminate violence aimed at terrorizing people to force them to surrender or flee” (cf. PCDI 12/7/2014). Personally I add another detestable form of violence, learned from the dissemination of information by the militants of the self-styled Caliphate: the barbaric indoctrination of children of about ten years old, forced to sing out against the presumed enemies and to carry weapons at an age when they should be able to play and to go to primary school with their peers. For all these reasons let us renew the request that all direct or indirect political, economic and military support of ISIS be explicitly rejected. However, beside the evil and the homicidal lunacy of ISIS, the complicity of a widespread silence that is enveloping the conflict in Syria should be pointed out: who has ever mentioned or denounced, for example, the “purchase” of twelve- or thirteen-year-old girls, taken from Syrian refugee camps and sent as “brides” or, to be more explicit, as “goods” to certain countries?

4. Might the theory of the clash of civilizations have been confirmed? Is it perhaps an act of war between Islam and Christianity? I do not share this position and I ask, on the contrary, that it never prevail. One thinker stated: “It is my hypothesis that the fundamental source of conflict in this new world will not be primarily ideological or primarily economic. The great divisions among humankind and the dominating source of conflict will be cultural. Nation states will remain the most powerful actors in world affairs, but the principal conflicts of global politics will occur between nations and groups of different civilizations. The clash of civilizations will dominate global politics. The fault lines between civilizations will be the battle lines of the future” (cf. Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*). In fact in these months certain people are unfortunately intending to destroy not so much a “foreign” Christian culture in comparison with a native Islamic Arabic culture as, rather, the clear reality of a respectful and useful cultural coexistence. In the Syrian or Iraqi homelands themselves, after the great Assyrian, Babylonian and Persian empires, the Christian presence in all its manifestations has been a constitutive element for two thousand years, just as the Muslim culture has developed after six centuries, likewise in

accordance with different denominational divisions. The same applies to the religious presence that preceded Christianity and continues to exist to our day, in certain Middle Eastern contexts, in such consistent and obvious terms. The West often falls into the trap of viewing the Arab culture as entirely Muslim – forgetting that most Islamic believers do not speak Arabic and do not belong to the Arab culture. Moreover in text books the arrival of Aristotelianism in the West, thanks to the mediation of Arab and Islamic philosophy, is often mentioned but almost nothing is said of the preceding indispensable work carried out by Syriac-speaking Christian monks who translated the works of the giants of Hellenistic thought from Greek into Arabic. It is impossible above all to quell the doubts about how the vast economic interests at stake affect the conflict. I limit myself to remembering one of Pope Francis' many references, the one he made at the Angelus on 8 September 2013, the day after the Prayer Vigil for peace in Syria: "And the doubt always remains: is this war or that war – because wars are everywhere – really a war to solve problems or is it a commercial war for selling weapons in illegal trade? These are the enemies to fight, united and consistent, following no other interests than those of peace and of the common good". As well as the arms trade, we might add the control of oil wells and of gas deposits, the safety of the petroleum and gas pipelines, the supremacy of one area of free commercial trade over another, and this is not only in the Middle East but also in Eastern Europe and in other regions of the world. In practice it is the culture of waste, often denounced by the Pope, that dominates: in the face of personal economic interests, in the face of one's own idea, the other person with his or her life and inviolable dignity becomes secondary and can even be annihilated, or at least not taken into account. On the contrary the other person is a human being ab origine, and not because the State, the Constitution or any other group must recognize him as such.

5. Therefore we must insist that it should be the United Nations in New York to become increasingly and transparently the place where decisions are made in which all peoples not only proclaim but also defend in practice with adequate resolutions and actions the dignity of the Christians in the Middle East, together with those who belong to every other minority.
6. In recent weeks the position taken by some spiritual leaders of Islam in the East and in the West seems to be spreading. Let us think of the Grand Muftis of Saudi Arabia and of the Al-Ahzar University in Egypt, as well as of several Imams of England and Italy. Let us thank them in the hope that their example may be followed by many so that no silence may be equivocal, and let us thank together all those in Iraq, in Jordan, in Lebanon, in Bahrain... who have worked hard or have offered help and shown willingness to welcome the Christians expelled from the plain of Nineveh. I have news of private individuals who went to the offices of Caritas, Jordan, to take essential goods to the Iraqi refugees who have arrived in the Hashemite Kingdom, of others who

have striven to assure them full meals or the rent for a year of a certain number of apartments, and also of young people, members of Islamic university groups, who have offered themselves as volunteers at the Caritas centres in order to help the refugees. We give thanks for these acts and we hope they will continue to increase. For our part, no one should think that the current situation must cause the withdrawal of all that the Second Vatican Council authoritatively sanctioned in *Nostra Aetate* and which the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue has been carrying ahead since its foundation, fifty years ago, together with the important discernment made in *Ecclesia in Medio Oriente* 19-28.

7. Present here are several Patriarchs, Leaders and Fathers of venerable Eastern, Catholic and Orthodox Churches. Each one of them has offered and is offering through his Bishops, priests, men and women religious, seminarians and faithful a lofty testimony of the following of Christ, who still lives out the Passion in his children and in the members of the Church his bride. We are gathered – as pastors – around a work table, and we can't sit down together at the table of the Eucharist! The scandal of the division and of the Christological and Trinitarian controversies was almost certainly known to Mohammed, even though he also appreciated several monks and priests (cf. Sura 5,82). It was in recent decades, and particularly under the Pontificate of Paul VI and of St. John Paul II, that the reciprocal excommunications with the Churches of Byzantine tradition that date back to the East-West Schism (1054) were first lifted and, later, Joint Christological Declarations were signed with the Syrian Orthodox Church (1984), with the Coptic Church (1988) and with the Assyrian Church of the East (1994). The tragic events in Syria and in Iraq, as well as certain grave episodes that happened earlier in Egypt, anticipated the visible unity of the Churches in the mystery of suffering and death borne together. May the Lord help us not to forget His presence, while we let ourselves be guided by the words of *Lumen Gentium* 8: "The Church, 'like a stranger in a foreign land, presses forward amid the persecutions of the world and the consolations of God', announcing the cross and death of the Lord until He comes (cf. 1 Cor 11:26). But by the power of the Risen Lord she is given strength to overcome, in patience and in love, her sorrows and her difficulties, both those that are from within and those that are from without, so that she may reveal in the world, faithfully, however darkly, the mystery of her Lord until, in the consummation, it shall be manifested in full light." Since solicitude and fraternal charity brightly reflect the Gospel of Jesus they are a credible response to those who brandish verses of their own "Scripture" to kill those whom they consider "infidels," and also because they themselves are divided among each other. Then what is affirmed by the Second Vatican Council concerning the Catholic Eastern Churches: "Between those Churches there is such a wonderful communion that this variety, so far from diminishing the Church's unity, rather serves to emphasize it (Decree on the Catholic Eastern Churches, 2), can be a visible sign for everyone: to compose unity

in a diversity of forms is prophetic sign for today's world. As Benedict XVI said in his video message in preparation for his visit to the United States in 2008: "Indeed, the world has greater need of hope than ever: hope for peace, for justice, and for freedom, but this hope can never be fulfilled without obedience to the law of God, which Christ brought to fulfillment in the commandment to love one another. Do to others as you would have them do to you, and avoid doing what you would not want them to do. This 'golden rule' is given in the Bible, but it is valid for all people, including non-believers. It is the law written on the human heart; on this we can all agree, so that when we come to address other matters we can do so in a positive and constructive manner for the entire human community."

9. "Jonah... arise, go to Nineveh, that great city": we repeat these words from the Book of the Bible deeply aware that the mosque of the Prophet Jonah, a symbolic place for the three great monotheistic religions (the Old Testament for the Jews and the Christians, *Sura* 10 for Islam), was blown up in Nineveh, today's Mosul.

Let us forcefully repeat with our brothers and sisters that their return to that city and to their lands must be guaranteed, on pain of the dissolution of a society that was capable of reciprocal coexistence for centuries. The unjust assailant must be halted, but let us not limit our thinking to the use of force – in some cases necessary – alone, and in any case only within the framework of an international agreement under the aegis of the United Nations, involving the Arab and Muslim countries. Just as Jonah was sent in order that the hearts of the people of Nineveh might once again return to the Lord, let us do all we can to ensure that the mind – dimmed by violent action in the name of a god who would thus in his turn appear violent, as well as irrational – may succeed in making people understand that every form of violence is in opposition to God's nature and to the nature of the human soul. "Righteousness and peace will kiss each other," the Psalm says. When? When people understand that God's glory cannot be separated from human life, as the great Bishop St. Irenaeus of Lyon effectively stated. Indeed it cannot be separated and therefore even less may God's glory be set against the life of man, whom he created and renewed and redeemed through His Son. We do not want to believe in a future of the Middle East without Christians, but at the same time we are sure that the many of them who have arrived in the West in search of permanence may be "in our great cities" heralds, like Jonah, whom God saves, and he is not distant from human history. The God who is love always works to ensure that despite the most infamous denials of history, we never give up building the civilization of love. Many thanks. □

## Food For Thought

When you do a good action, have the intention of first pleasing God, and then of giving good example to your neighbor.

*St. Alphonsus Maria de Liguori*

## Reflection on Professing Vows



From left: Sr. Theresa Touma, Natalie Salameh, Sr. Theresa and Sr. Cheryl.

*by Sister Therese Maria Touma*

The Maronite Servants attended the first profession of two Pauline Sisters, Sr. Theresa and Sr. Cheryl at their provincial house in Boston, Mass., on Saturday, August 30, 2014. The theme of their first Profession of vows of chastity, poverty, and obedience was: "For me to live is Christ" (Phil 1:21). In participating in the beautiful profession liturgy and witnessing the sisters take their vows, I was taken back to the joyful time in which I took my vows in December of 2013. It is by God's grace that we freely respond to His divine invitation of love, and moreover, deepen our baptismal promises through the total offering of our lives in the love and worship of God.

When the sisters professed their vows before the altar to their superior I recalled the profession I made nearly two years ago:

"I glorify and praise you, O Christ, your Father, and your living Holy Spirit for calling me to a vocation of greater perfection, and I joyfully lay down my life in your service and that of your Church in this Congregation. In the presence of Almighty God and before you, Mother Marla Marie, our superior, I Sister Therese Maria, humbly vow for one year to live the Gospel counsels of obedience, chastity, and poverty according to the Typicon of the Maronite Servants of Christ the Light. Relying on the help of Mary, the Mother of God, our patron Saint Maron, and the support of this community, I promise with God's grace to observe my vows faithfully."

The vows of obedience, chastity and poverty which we take essentially capture our being totally given over to the praise and glory of our loving Father, a beautiful witness so needed in our world today. Jesus is the true joy and light of our lives. Have you considered giving your life in service to God and his people? As John Paul II has taught us, it is in giving of ourselves in love and service to others that we truly find ourselves and experiences the deepest fulfillment. □

## ***A Married Priest's Story***

[The following article/interview was published by the Archdiocesan Newspaper St. Louis Review on March 26, 2014, following the ordination of Rev. Wissam Akiki, the first married man ordained to the priesthood in the Maronite Church in the United States. It is reprinted with permission. Since its publication, Fr. Akiki has been assigned to St. Joseph Maronite Church in Phoenix, Arizona. Father and his wife, Manal, and daughter, Perla, are settled in and getting to know the parish and its people.]

**A**s a newly ordained priest, Father Wissam Akiki hasn't been assigned to his first parish yet, but already he's been preparing for another big assignment: He'll be filling in at a parish in Cincinnati during Holy Week, perhaps the most important week in the life of the Church.

Already, his plate has been filled. In addition to assisting at his temporary assignment, St. Raymond's Maronite Cathedral in St. Louis, he's been preparing his homilies for Holy Week

and tending to another major part of his life -- his wife, Manal, and 8-year-old daughter, Perla.

Last month, Father Akiki, a native of Lebanon, made headlines when he was ordained for the Maronite Catholic Church at St. Raymond's. It was the first time a married man was ordained for the Maronite Church in the United States.

The Maronite Church is an Eastern Catholic Church and is among twenty-two Catholic Churches that are in union with each other and under the authority of the Pope in Rome. The spiritual heritage of the Maronite Church is traced to a fourth-century hermit, St. Maron. The Maronite Church has a presence in the Middle East, primarily in Syria and Lebanon, where nearly half of all Maronite parish priests are married.

Despite the full schedule, Father Akiki said he is fully aware of the double vocation to which God has called him in marriage and the priesthood. It wasn't a decision he came upon lightly, and it included a discernment process that was rooted in prayer, thought and determination. But despite the uniqueness of his own calling, it's that kind of serious approach that everyone should take when considering their own vocation, he said.

"A doctor has his own vocation to his people. The one who cleans the floor has his own vocation," he said. "But to make your vocation strong, you have to be committed to it, you have to be honest in your vocation. And to make a vocation strong, you have to depend more on God and pray more, to take time for yourself to pray, to contemplate, to meditate.

"For me, now as a priest and as a

married person, my vocation for my (parish) people and my vocation for my family is going to be the same," he said, adding that he will rely on both family and parish to support the other vocation.

"I'm trying to do my best, as a married person and a priest, to give myself to my God first, to my family and to my people. And to do my best ... with honesty and from my heart," he said.

### ***Calling to Priesthood***

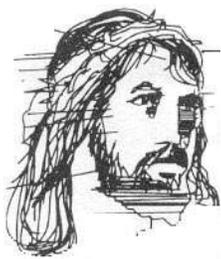
As a ten-year-old, Wissam began sensing that God might be calling him to the priesthood. During the week and especially on weekends, the youngster would go to the Maronite Catholic church in his hometown of Zahle, Lebanon, to serve at Mass. He attended Catholic school, where he was a student activities leader.

During his studies at Holy Spirit University of Kaslik in Lebanon, he met a young woman, Manal Kassab. "We were in the same Christian organization, and we had a lot of activities together," recalled Manal. She was studying translation and languages, and he was starting his theological studies.

"The theology department was right next to the language department," she said. "We used to criss-cross ways often."

The two became good friends, but that was the extent of it. "At that time I was studying to be a priest, but not a married priest," he explained.

Because his English wasn't the best, Wissam asked Manal to help him fill out the application to study for the priesthood in the United States. During a visit to Lebanon, now-retired Bishop



***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

Robert Shaheen, head of the St. Louis-based Eparchy (diocese) of Our Lady of Lebanon, met Wissam and invited him to finish his studies in the United States, with the hope he would be ordained for the eparchy someday. He arrived in 2001 and continued his studies at Our Lady of Lebanon Maronite Seminary in Washington, D.C., and later at the Aquinas Institute of Theology in St. Louis.

"We stayed in touch when he came here," said Manal. "Nothing is hard now with the Internet and all the technology. And he used to go back and forth to Lebanon. So we kept our relationship as friends going on." After maintaining a long-distance friendship, Wissam began to realize that there might be something more to the relationship.

"I said, 'After two years, either I marry her or let her go on,'" he said. "I realized, 'I think I have two vocations.' I want to be married and also to be a priest. And in our culture, it's not that strange, to have a person married and to live the sacraments in the Catholic Church."

Married priests in the Maronite Church generally need to be mature and settled with children first, and then they're ordained to the diaconate before the priesthood. Once a priest is ordained, he cannot later be married. It was a difficult decision, Manal said. "He was here serving the Church, and I knew this was really his vocation. It's either I encourage him in what he's doing, or I let this relationship go on in its own way."

### *The Path Changes*

In mid-August 2003, Wissam met with Bishop Shaheen just before he was to be ordained a subdeacon. He told his bishop there was something he needed to know before going through with the ordination, and he told him about Manal.

"He said, 'My son, you're not losing anything,'" he recalled. "'Get ordained a subdeacon. Even if you'd like to go back to Lebanon, you can still live your vocation'" to the priesthood and be married.

After a year of serving as a subdeacon at St. Raymond's, he told Bishop Shaheen he was going to head back to Lebanon to discern. After all, the culture there was used to married priests as a long-held tradition. Speaking at the 11th General Synod at the Vatican in 2005, former Maronite patriarch Cardinal Nasrallah Peter Sfeir noted the value of married priests. "Married priests have perpetuated the faith among people whose difficult lives they shared, and without them this faith would no longer exist," he said.

Wissam and Manal married in Lebanon on August 24, 2003, and Wissam continued to weigh his options. On one hand, he was prepared to stay in the United States and serve as a married deacon, but in considering a move back to Lebanon, he first asked Bishop Shaheen if they could try one more thing -- seek the pope's permission to stay in the United States as a married priest. Since the 1920s, the practice of permitting married priests from Eastern Catholic Churches generally had not been permitted in the United States, part of a long-term developing understanding Eastern Churches have had with the Latin Church in the United States.

"I said, 'Let's try to do one thing. Send my file to Rome,'" he recalled. "If Rome accepts my file to be a priest in this country, it means the Holy Spirit wants me to be a priest here. If Rome refuses me to be a married priest in this country, I'll go back to Lebanon."

Bishop Elias Zaidan, who was ordained bishop and succeeded Bishop Shaheen as head of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon last fall, hand-delivered the file to the Vatican in June 2012, when Pope Benedict XVI was still at the helm; Pope Francis later took on the case. The process also included conferring with others, including Cardinal Timothy Dolan, then-president of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and Bishop John Kudrick, chairman of the Eastern Catholic Bishops in the United States. At that point, Wissam knew in his heart it didn't matter where he would serve. He handed everything over to the Holy Spirit, and they all waited for the answer from Rome.

### *Vocation to the family*

The response that came back last October was affirmative: Pope Francis gave the OK for him to become a priest in the United States. On Feb. 27, he was ordained at St. Raymond's during a liturgy that lasted more than two hours. Bishop Zaidan was the main celebrant -- his first ordination of a priest. Joining them were Bishop Shaheen, Cathedral Rector Chorbishop Moussa Joseph, and clergy from throughout the eparchy and the United States.

Father Akiki is expected to be assigned to his first parish this summer. The eparchy covers thirty-four states, from California to Ohio and from Michigan to Alabama, and includes 45 parishes and missions. Father Akiki said he and his family are prepared for whatever assignment he will receive.

Manal explained that supporting her husband in his two vocations is not different from any wife who supports her husband in his career. "If he has a meeting or a certain thing he has to attend, if he cannot be with us, I have never had a problem with that," she said. Manal sometimes receives help from her mother, who frequently travels from Lebanon to be with the family.

Father Akiki said that while there can be challenges of living out two vocations at the same time, he sees his role as taking care of two families -- his own family and his parish family. "Both of them are vocations, but distinct. The vocation to my family is to be with them, to lead them, love them, care for them and listen to them as head of the household."

Likewise, "my vocation for the priesthood is to be with my people, to listen to their voice, to listen to their pain, and to minister to them in sad times and happy times. I am going to give as much time to my parish and to my people as I give to my family." □



## THE ORDER OF SAINT SHARBEL



### Annual Members

★ **Muriel A. Salami**

*Our Lady of the Cedars Church  
Jamaica Plain, Mass.*

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

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

Eparchy of Saint Maron  
109 Remsen Street  
Brooklyn, NY 11201

or

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

## Houston, Texas *MYO Summer Activities*

by Tom Cordova

What an amazing summer 2014 has been. While many of our families travel far and wide, we still had a few youth sticking it out in the Houston, Tex., area. Our mid-summer MYO activity was our annual participation in the Houston-Galveston Annual Youth Conference held in downtown Houston. AYC is open to incoming high school students through graduating seniors and this year we had twelve youths participate along with over 2,400 other youths from the Houston area. It was an amazing experience going to different breakout sessions and worshipping with wonderful keynote speakers. I look forward to taking even more youth next year.

Our final activity this summer was our kick-off annual MYO Camp. A record-breaking seventy-five youth attended the camp at Carolina Christian Creek in Huntsville, Tex. The theme was "Make a Beautiful Mess," which was something we took away from AYC. Make a beautiful mess, you ask? Yes, we are encouraging our youth to take an active part in spreading God's word everywhere. Our youth are the church of today and we want to encourage them to take charge of their religion and make a beautiful mess out of the not-so-beautiful mess surrounding us in social media, television and peer pressure. We took the beautiful mess to the max, having a great time with messy paint twister and a scavenger hunt with "color-run" paint. We elected new board members and promoted current members: Giovanni Youssef, President; Mariam Ramy and Gio Elmessan, Co-Vice Presidents; and Clarice Zehri and Rami Basbous, Members.

Both of these events could not have happened without the help of the chaperones: Christian Tannous, Amanda Beaini, Angela Francis, Christina Nemry, Elias Estephan, Pary Gedeon, Mona Zaher, Francesco Joubran, Laurianne Dib, and Said Tannous. □

## Youngstown, Ohio *Annual Pillars Brunch*

by Amelia M. Yazbek

On Sunday, August 24, 2014, St. Maron Church, Youngstown, Ohio, held its annual Pillars Brunch. The brunch is given in appreciation of our dedication and continuance of the Maronite heritage. They have given us much to be thankful for, like the handing down of delicious recipes, unending love of family, stories of the past about who we are as well as what we are and where we have come from.

The day began with the Divine Liturgy followed by the "pillars" and their family members entering Antioch Hall for an abundant display of hors d'oeuvres. After some socializing, a sit-down luncheon was served by the MYO. After dessert, the centerpieces were given to the eldest "Pillar" at each table. We look forward to many more years of honoring our "elders" and the heritage they provide us. □

## Minneapolis, Minnesota

*Continued from page 5*

Patriarch Rai thanked everyone for making the visit and delivery of his message possible. He thanked President Obama for forty minutes of his time during which Rai pleaded for nations to stop the attacks of ISIS. He reminded us that we are aware of the dangers Lebanon is experiencing. We "have to make sure the unity and solidarity you are experiencing here" must be exported to Lebanon. Long live America. Long live this parish. Long live Lebanon!" □

## Olean, New York Annual Mahrajan



by Fr. Anthony J. Salim

Our Good God, always better to us than we can imagine, gave us a gorgeous summer day here in Olean, N.Y., on Saturday, August 9, 2014. Under blue skies and a temperature of 75 degrees, St. Joseph Parish hosted its long-standing Middle-eastern Festival, or *Mahrajan*, for the second year on the new parish property. The General Chairman was Emil Ash, son of the late Amiel Ash.

The four sessions of the food preparation for the event saw a lot of enthusiastic help from parishioners and from people outside the community alike. Of course, the bulk of the fare was traditional Lebanese cuisine, such as baked *kibbee*, rolled grapevine leaves, beef and chicken shish-kabobs, *hummus*, *tabbouli*, flat and pocket bread; and for dessert, home baked baklava. In addition, and as last year, some basic Polish food was served, because the neighborhood of the new location is largely still people of Polish extraction. Many of these people worship regularly with us in the Maronite Way, and they even helped make the food of both ethnic palates. Food preparation took place this year in our own professional kitchen in the new Community Center and was under the direction of Ann Marie (Dwailebe) Wright and capable helpers. People are still commenting on how delectable the food was.

Entertainment was varied between Lebanese music, the Larry Lewicki Band, and American music, including rock and roll and Oldies. All agreed that St. Joseph Parish remains a vibrant parish in the Olean Catholic Community. □

## Warren, Michigan Taste of Lebanon

St. Sharbel Maronite Church of Warren, Michigan, successfully celebrated its 7<sup>th</sup> Annual "A Taste of Lebanon" Festival the weekend of September 5 - 7, 2014. The Festival began with excitement on Friday, but the evening ended abruptly due to severe weather and strong

winds that blew through the grounds. As the storm raged and the winds peaked to seventy miles per hour, many faith filled parishioners inside the tent prayed the rosary imploring our Blessed Mother Mary for her veil of protection, while Chorbishop Badawi cried out, "*Ya athra! Ya Mar Sharbel!*" At that moment the tent was lifted six inches from the ground and was safely placed back down without damage or injury! By the grace obtained through these prayers, our festival was spared and our guests and workers were safe and sound! The remainder of the weekend held good weather and all were able to enjoy a fun-filled time!

Many benefactors and sponsors generously supported the festival financially, which in turn greatly benefitted the community. As in years past, St. Sharbel Maronite Church made a large donation from the proceeds of its festival. This year's recipient was St. Jude's Children's Research Hospital.

Numerous volunteers graciously dedicated many hours of their time to ensure that all who attended the festival enjoyed their time there. The Planning Committee spent several months in advance planning and preparing for the weekend festivities. The Ladies Altar Society was of great help as they prepped and cooked a variety of Lebanese foods and baked sweets. St. Sharbel's *Dabke* Troupes practiced for weeks to perfect their dance performances. The children enjoyed the inflatables, pony rides and making crafts while the adults enjoyed music, dancing, and, of course, the food!

The Sunday Liturgy was celebrated outdoors with parishioners and guests alike. The Liturgy was dedicated to Our Blessed Mother on the Feast of her Nativity and in thanksgiving for her protection during the storm and imploring her veil of protection to extend to the Middle East for all the martyrs dying for the faith, and for peace. We gave thanks for the many hard-working and dedicated volunteers, and for the families, friends and visitors who came to support St. Sharbel Church and who enjoyed a little "Taste of Lebanon." □

## Fall River, Massachusetts Youth Activities

On August 21, 2014, a youth group from Saint Anthony of the Desert Church in Fall River, Massachusetts, attended a Pawtucket Red Sox game. The youth group earned the money for tickets and snacks through a car wash



at the church about a month prior. The group washed dozens of cars, but also collected clothing for a drive called Bag2School, a locally based textile recycling company, in order to attend the game. The PawSox ended up beating the Iron Pigs in a close 3 - 2 game, and everyone who attended the game had a great time cheering the team on. It was a win for both the Pawtucket Red Sox and for the Saint Anthony of the Desert Church youth! ☐

## Chicago, Illinois Annual Food Festival



by *Samantha Lebbos*

On September 5 - 7, 2014, Our Lady of Lebanon Church in Lombard [Chicago], Ill., held its Seventh Annual Food Festival. It was a wonderful opportunity to get together as Community, to have fun and to raise funds to support the parish. Many parishioners devoted their time, talents, energy and dedication to make this event successful. They worked tirelessly to set up professionally and beautifully the church's facility to accommodate the activities of the festival and to make the visitors feel welcomed. Thousands of parishioners, friends, neighbors and visitors enjoyed the live entertainment as well as the Lebanese cuisine, pastries and *manakeesh* prepared on the *saj*. The children had real fun participating in games, face painting and bounce houses. They loved watching the beautiful and touchy Saint Rafqa Play performed by the Parish Kids. At the

end of the festival, Father Pierre Albalaa, Pastor, thanked everyone who helped in any way to make the Seventh Annual Lebanese Festival a success. He added that once again my heart smiles knowing that the festival has added an enthusiastic unity and solidarity to our community. Thanks to those who attended our festival and we missed those who couldn't be with us. God bless you and your loved ones. ☐

## Cranston, Rhode Island First Annual Festival



by *Joseph P. Checrallah, Jr.*

The First Annual Lebanese Festival was held on September 13 - 14, 2014, at the new home of St. George Maronite Catholic Church in Cranston, Rhode Island. The parish presented a fun-filled weekend which included live Arabic music and entertainment, performed by Mitchell Kaltsunas on Saturday, and George Maalouf and his band on Sunday, traditional Lebanese dance performances, children's games, raffles, and a large selection of delectable Middle Eastern foods and pastries.

Alluring aromatic aromas filled the air as the festival organizers presented a taste of Lebanon with authentic Lebanese foods and pastries, including Shish Kabob, Shish *Tawook* (marinated chicken and vegetables), baked *Kibbee* and *Kafta*, Grape leaves, *Hummus*, *Baba ghanouj*, *Tabouli*, Falafel and chicken and beef Shawarma.

Over 4,000 visitors enjoyed the food and festivities of this family event on a picture-perfect late summer weekend. Fr. Edward Nedder, Pastor, was thrilled and very grateful for the tremendous outpouring of community support by the many parishioners who worked together tirelessly for many months pulling together the countless details an endeavor of this size entailed. Fr. Ed expressed his gratitude at his weekly Liturgies and thanked the organizers of the event, the attendees, and everyone who had generously donated the time, effort, resources, and gifts to bring this family event to life. The festival brought the entire community together, and introduced St. George to its new neighbors.

The Festival was a wonderful success made possible by the many parishioners and friends who always bond together to support Fr. Ed and St. George in this close-knit Lebanese community. Planning for next year's event is already underway. ☐

## Eparchy of Saint Maron Annual Benefit Dinner



started with a Lebanese breakfast, *Saj Manaesh*. The children were at the dedicated play area and had lots of fun. *Shawarma*, chicken and other sandwiches were also available for lunch. We had special performances by our children and youth groups. Afterwards, we raffled a brand new Mercedes Benz car and several other prizes including an airline ticket to Beirut, Lebanon. The day ended with more food and dancing! We had a variety of Lebanese and Arab performers to close the night out right! ☐



### Press Release from the Media Office of the Maronite Eparchy of Australia

This release follows the unfortunate incident which occurred on Tuesday, September 16, 2014, in the street in front of Our Lady of Lebanon Church and the Maronite College of the Holy Family in Harris Park [Australia] and which was followed with considerable publicity. To forestall disproportionate reactions and to clarify what happened, the Maronite Eparchy of Australia issues the following statement:

His Excellency Bishop Gregory Mansour invites you to the Eparchy of Saint Maron's Fifth Annual Benefit Dinner on October 23, 2014, at the Archdiocese of New York Building. This year's Dinner will recognize a longtime member of the Maronite Church in New York, Claire Habib. If you would like to purchase a ticket or make a reservation, please visit [www.stmaron.org](http://www.stmaron.org) or email [saintmaron@yahoo.com](mailto:saintmaron@yahoo.com). We hope to see you there! Thank you for your support. ☐

### San Francisco, California Lebanese Festival



On Saturday, August 30, 2014, Our Lady of Lebanon Maronite Church organized a Lebanese Food Festival in the San Francisco, California, Bay area. The day

1. The Maronite Eparchy of Australia strongly condemns the threat made against the school students and the parishioners of Our Lady of Lebanon Church by an individual in a car carrying a black banner.
2. The incident has been reported to the civil authorities. They are working to discover the identity of the persons involved so that charges can be laid, in accordance with civil laws.
3. We assure the community, both in Australia and overseas, that there is no call for anxiety or fear. The authorities are diligently and seriously addressing the matter, and steps have been taken to ensure the security of all who use our church and school.
4. We call upon all to pray for peace and harmony. We call on all those who believe in the language of violence and hostility to renounce them and choose the language of dialogue in order to build a better humanitarian society. We emphasize the need to respect the law of the land and to resist the temptation to futile and counter-productive knee-jerk reactions.

The Maronite Eparchy of Australia thanks all who have expressed solidarity and concern from within Australia and overseas. We pray that peace may reign and that dialogue may win, and that all Australians may live in safety. We also pray that calm and peace return to those areas of conflict in the Middle East. For more information, please contact the Media Office of the Maronite Eparchy of Australia on 02 9642 0211. ☐

## **Syrian Refugees Face Increased Hostility, Says Head of Caritas Lebanon**

### **Maronite Priest Says Locals Resent Help Being Given to the Refugees**

As Syrian refugees continue flooding into Lebanon, the President of Caritas Lebanon, Fr. Paul Karam, has decried the situation as disturbing, noting that locals feel threatened by their increased presence, and hostility is increasing. "The effects of an uncontrolled influx of Syrian refugees in Lebanon open a disturbing scenario," Fr. Karam said, reported Fides Wednesday.

"The concern has reached the warning level," Fr. Karam explained that after weapons were found in refugee camps, the local population's hostility "towards refugees continues to grow."

As a result, he noted, "Everyone now sees refugees at the disposal of regional powers who want to destabilize Lebanon or dominate it, preventing it from having an independent policy."

The Caritas president's remarks were made in response to what happened in the area of *Arsal*, where in recent days the army destroyed a refugee camp and arrested hundreds of people.

Widespread reports by humanitarian organizations claim the operation was spoiled by the army's violent behavior and violations against refugees. Hundreds of men in the camp, during the initial stages of the operation, protested. They chanted slogans of support to the jihadists of the Islamic State.

"In some refugee camps," Fr. Karam noted, "weapons were found. Refugees are more than one million and one hundred thousand."

Although the Church "warns against the criminalization of refugees as such," he said this hostile sentiment is growing among the population, "We cannot deny it and we are not able to appease it."

"We are criticized for the help we give to refugees," the head of Caritas Lebanon added. "It is natural to raise questions: Why are Syrian refugees not checked at the entrance and during their stay like what happens in Jordan or Turkey? Why have Arabia and Qatar so far not received even a Syrian refugee?"

Regularly, the border between Syria and Lebanon was crossed by the incursions of jihadist groups, such as *al-Nusra*. In retaliation for the pro-Assad involvement of the Lebanese Shiite militia of *Hezbollah* in the Syrian conflict, the group threatens to execute nine policemen and Lebanese soldiers held hostage. In addition, sources state there is a growing climate of sectarian conflict throughout the Bekaa Valley. □

October 2, 2014 (Zenit.org)



## **Priests' Top Task is Evangelization Pope Tells Congregation for Clergy**

Priests should be aware that "it is their lives that evangelize, rather than their works," Pope Francis said in an October 3, 2014, address to the members of the Congregation for the Clergy.

"Every vocation is for the mission, and the mission of ordained ministers is evangelization," the Pope said. He remarked that a priest is "the administrator of a gift that God has entrusted to him for the good of all the people."

At the same time, the Pope continued, the priesthood is a gift to the Church, and "all the Christian community is the custodian of the treasure of these vocations."

A priest should recall Christ's call to his disciples to "follow me," the Pope said. "It is a task that is never completed, because priests never stop being Jesus' disciples; they never stop following Him." □

Catholic World News - October 03, 2014)

## **Synod of Bishops Opens with Mass in St. Peter's Basilica**

The Third Extraordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on the Family opened in Rome on October 5, 2014, with a Mass in St. Peter's Basilica. Preaching on the Sunday Mass readings, Pope Francis said that "today the prophet Isaiah and the Gospel employ the image of the Lord's vineyard. The Lord's vineyard is His 'dream,' the plan which he nurtures with all His love, like a farmer who cares for His vineyard. Vines are plants which need much care!"

"God's 'dream' is His people," he continued. "He planted it and nurtured it with patient and faithful love, so that it can become a holy people, a people which brings forth abundant fruits of justice."

He continued: The temptation to greed is ever present. We encounter it also in the great prophecy of Ezekiel on the shepherds (cf. ch. 34), which Saint Augustine commented upon in one his celebrated sermons which we have just reread in the Liturgy of the Hours. Greed for money and power. And to satisfy this greed, evil pastors lay intolerable burdens on the shoulders of others, which they themselves do not lift a finger to move (cf. Mt 23:4).

We too, in the Synod of Bishops, are called to work for the Lord's vineyard. Synod Assemblies are not meant to discuss beautiful and clever ideas, or to see who is more intelligent. They are meant to better nurture and tend the Lord's vineyard, to help realize His dream, His loving plan for His people. In this case the Lord is asking us to care for the family, which has been from the beginning an integral part of His loving plan for humanity.

We are all sinners and can also be tempted to "take over" the vineyard, because of that greed which is always present in us human beings. God's dream always clashes with the hypocrisy of some of his servants.

(Continues on page 20)

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## *Matthew's Teaching Gospel*

*Continued from page 1*

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The third window into Jesus' very personal desire for us is His teaching against retaliation. The words and stories he uses are very much His own. "You have heard it said an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, but what I say is offer no resistance." Jesus commands us to be like him, to love like him, even our enemies, and to wish good, even to those who do evil.

His three examples are quite clear: "Turn the other cheek;" "go the extra mile;" and "give the shirt off your back." I have paraphrased these expressions based on popular parlance, but what Jesus actually said is very different.

He did not say "Turn the other cheek;" he said, "If someone strikes you on the right cheek offer him the left." A strike on the right cheek could only be done as a back-handed slap, sending a clear signal that one is superior and the other inferior.

Jesus asked us to be defiant in the face of such cruelty, and not accept an inferior status, but rather demand that the oppressor strike as an equal!

Likewise, Jesus did not say "Go the extra mile" as if to mean we must give more. Rather, Our Lord knew the unjust law that allowed Roman soldiers to force a Jew to carry his bag, but not for more than one mile. Jesus thus told his countrymen to go the "extra mile," so as to buy back a man's internal freedom from his oppressor, to embarrass him, and to honor the innate dignity of one unjustly treated.

Lastly, Jesus did not say, "Give the shirt off your back." Rather he said, "If someone sues for your jacket, offer him your shirt as well." Thus, instead of being a victim of another's injustice, if one turns and gives him one's shirt as

well, one shows him a fearless love with the hope that it will awaken justice in his oppressor.

By means of these three examples, Our Lord is clear: no retaliation, no inferior status, be defiant in face of oppression, have a non-violent attitude, refuse to accept unjust treatment, and never return evil for evil. How appropriate is Our Lord's imperatives today in the face of ISIS and other hateful ideologies.

By peering into the window of the Word of God, we see clearly the Word made Flesh, Jesus Christ, in all the splendor of truth. In Matthew five through seven, we hear Our Lord's commands to go beyond the Ten Commandments to the Beatitudes so as to be truly happy; we are asked to give marriage the proper sacred place Our Lord wanted it to have in our world; and never to retaliate, but we are commanded to face every injustice with a loving defiance.

The Word of God gives us this very personal glimpse into the heart and mind of Our Lord Jesus Christ and, in fact, we see the very way He lives His own life. This inspires us to follow Him even more closely, even to the cross!

Sincerely yours in Christ,  
+Gregory John Mansour  
Bishop of the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn

## *Synod of Bishops*

*Continued from page 19*

We can "thwart" God's dream if we fail to let ourselves be guided by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit gives us that wisdom which surpasses knowledge, and enables us to work generously with authentic freedom and humble creativity. □

*Catholic World News - October 6, 2014*