



# The Maronite Voice



A Publication of the Maronite Eparchies in the USA

Volume X

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## Synod of Bishops on the Family 2014



## WELCOME TO THE FAMILY

Pope Francis has called for a special meeting of Catholic bishops to meet in Rome in October. The Holy Father has identified "family life" as the focus of this Synod. Over 150 bishops along with experts from around the world will participate in this Synod, to discuss in the words of the Pope's letter calling for the Synod, "pastoral challenges of the family in the context of evangelization." It is scheduled to last two weeks.

In preparation for this Synod of Bishops the Pope asked for input from bishops, priests, deacons, religious and the laity through a questionnaire with a wide range of questions. Through our parishes, our eparchy participated in this gathering of information and submitted its report to the Holy Father. The results of this questionnaire formed the basis for the general agenda of discussion. The bishops will discuss such issues as:

- ◆ The Church's teaching on the family
- ◆ The Church's understanding of marriage and the natural law
- ◆ The role of the Church in the pastoral care of the family
- ◆ The challenges facing families in light of divorce and re-marriage

As Maronites, we have always emphasized the role of the Maronite family in the life of the Church. The family is the domestic church. Our families have been the source of Christian formation for the young, the cradle of prayer and devotion, the font of priestly and monastic vocations, and the foundation of stability in the life of the Maronite people. As Maronites, we pride ourselves in placing special emphasis on the family. The Maronite Patriarchal Synod, which met from 2003-2006, noted the following: "The Maronite family was not only faithful to its Christian faith, but it also developed a missionary spirit, which has been one of its historical constants." A strong family contributed to a strong Church.

However, it is clear that there are many challenges that face our families today. As the Patriarchal Synod also noted, "steady population growth, economic, social and political transformations, as well as development of life conditions and emigration [from villages to cities and from Lebanon to the West] were all factors that led to major changes in the Maronite family." It is clear that our own families face the same challenges as all Christian families in the modern, technical society in which we find ourselves.

These challenges and, in many cases, personal struggles, are being faced by our Catholic faithful throughout the world. At times, the lack of sound catechesis (religious instruction in the Faith), a pervasive culture that is hostile to the values of the Gospel, and merely the stress of modern living all contribute to the difficulties faced by families. The Church is not insensitive to these issues. While the teachings of the Church on the indissolubility of marriage and the conviction that marriage is between one man and one woman along with the teaching on the openness of the married couple to having children will not change, Pope Francis has encouraged us to find better ways to support married couples and families in their journey towards holiness. A favorite theme of the Holy Father is "mercy."

(Continues on page 13)

## Schedule of Bishop Elias Zaidan

### September 6 - 7, 2014

Hall Dedication, Our Lady of the Cedars Church, Houston, Tex.

### September 8 - 12, 2014

In Defense of Christians, Washington, D.C.

### September 12 - 13, 2014

Patriarch Bechara Peter Rai's Visit to St. Elias Church, Birmingham, Ala.

### September 13 - 14, 2014

Patriarch Rai's Visit to St. Maron Church, Minneapolis, and Holy Family Church, St. Paul, Minn.

### September 14 - 16, 2014

Patriarch Rai's Visit to St. Maron Church, Cleveland, Ohio

### September 20 - 21, 2014

St. Raymond Cathedral, Saint Louis, Mo.

### September 22 - 24, 2014

Catholic Extension Bishops' Conference, Chicago, Ill.

### September 27 - 28, 2014

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

### 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 12, 2014

Pastoral Visit to St. Maron Church, Youngstown, Ohio. □

### *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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### *Publishers*

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

*Editor* Msgr. George M. Sebaali

### *Editing and proofreading*

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)

## Our Lady of Lebanon Shrine Is Designated As Minor Basilica

It is with great joy and gratitude to Almighty God that Bishop A. Elias Zaidan and the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon announce that the Holy See has granted the Shrine of Our Lady of Lebanon in North Jackson, Ohio, the title of Minor Basilica. This title has been bestowed by the Supreme Pontiff in recognition of the importance of the Shrine in the liturgical and pastoral life of the Eparchy and the Maronite Faithful in the United States.



While this is a great honor for the Maronite Church in the United States and to the many thousands of pilgrims to the Shrine, it also carries with it certain responsibilities. Among these responsibilities are included certain liturgical obligations to make clear the particular bond of communion of a minor basilica with the Roman Cathedra of St. Peter. The Shrine Basilica must celebrate the solemn observation of the Feasts of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul (June 29), the Feast of the Chair of St. Peter in Rome/St. Peter's Chair in Antioch (February 22), and the annual commemoration of the anniversary of the election of the Supreme Pontiff (for Pope Francis it is March 13).

The Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon would like to extend a welcome to the Maronite faithful to visit the National Shrine Basilica, especially during the many celebrations held there throughout the year. Our Lady of Lebanon Shrine will celebrate its 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary this coming October. □

## Eparchial Assignments

After having received the recommendations of the clergy of the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn, His Excellency Bishop Gregory Mansour has made the following Protopresbyter appointments for a period of five years effective on July 23, 2014:

- Appointed **Chorbishop Joseph F. Kaddo** as Protopresbyter of the New England Region of the Eparchy of Saint Maron and **Msgr. Peter Fahed Azar** as alternate protopresbyter
- Appointed **Msgr. James Root** as Protopresbyter of the Mid Atlantic East Region of the Eparchy of Saint Maron and **Chorbishop John Faris** as alternate protopresbyter
- Appointed **Fr. Rodolph Wakim** as Protopresbyter of the Mid Atlantic West Region of the Eparchy of Saint Maron and **Fr. Elie Kairouz** as alternate protopresbyter
- Appointed **Msgr. George M Sebaali** as Protopresbyter of the Southern Region of the Eparchy of Saint Maron and **Fr. Samuel Najjar** as alternate protopresbyter
- Appointed **Fr. Bassam Saade** as Protopresbyter of the Far South Region of the Eparchy of Saint Maron and **Fr. Dominique Hanna** as alternate protopresbyter.

The protopresbyter is a priest who is placed over a particular region of the eparchy, consisting of several parishes or eparchial institutions (CCEO c.276).

**The New England Region** consists of the parishes and missions in Waterville, Me.; Shelbourne, Vt.; Dover, N.H.; Lawrence, Jamaica Plain (Boston), Worcester, Springfield, Brockton, Fall River and New Bedford, Mass.; Pawtucket, R.I.; and Torrington, Waterbury and Danbury, Connecticut.

**The Mid Atlantic East Region** includes the parishes and mission in Brooklyn, Sleepy Hollow, Troy, and Utica, N.Y.; Somerset, N.J.; and Easton, Scranton, Wilkes-Barre, Newtown Square and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

**The Mid Atlantic States West Region** is comprised of the parishes and missions in Olean and Williamsville (Buffalo), N.Y.; and New Castle, Carnegie (Pittsburgh), Darlington and Uniontown, Pennsylvania.

**The Southern Region** consists of the parishes, missions and institutions in Washington, D.C.; Glen Allen (Richmond) and Roanoke, Va.; and Fayetteville, Raleigh and Charlotte, N.C.

**The Far South Region** includes the parishes and missions in Greenville, S.C.; Atlanta, Ga.; and Jacksonville, Orlando, Melbourne, Tampa, Tequesta (West Palm Beach), Fort Lauderdale and Miami, Florida.

The Protopresbyters (not the alternates) are *ex-officio* members of the Eparchial Presbyteral Council.

On August 11, 2014, His Excellency Bishop Gregory Mansour also made the following eparchial appointments effective on October 1, 2014:

- **Fr. Paul Damien** from Pastor of Our Lady of Lebanon Maronite Church, Easton, Penn., to Administrator of Sts. Peter and Paul Maronite Mission, Tampa, Fla.
- **Fr. Simon El-Hajj** from Administrator of Blessed Teresa of Calcutta Maronite Mission in Darlington, Penn., to Pastor of Our Lady of Lebanon Maronite Church, Easton, Penn.
- **Fr. Antoine Kairouz** from Administrator of Sts. Peter and Paul Maronite Mission in Tampa, Fla., to Administrator of Blessed Teresa of Calcutta Maronite Mission in Darlington, Penn. □

## Eparchial Condolences

**Father Joseph John Shaheen** passed away on August 5, 2014. He was born to Hickel (Ike) and Louise (Nassar) Shaheen on January 1, 1932, in Utica, N.Y. After attending LeMoyne College in Syracuse, N.Y., and receiving his B.A. from Our Lady of Angels Seminary in Niagara Falls, N.Y., in 1959, he was ordained in the Latin Rite on February 21, 1959, by the Auxiliary Bishop of Syracuse at St. Louis Gonzaga Maronite Church in Utica.

As a Latin Rite priest, he served more than seven years in the Buffalo Diocese until he went to Lebanon in September 1966 to study the Maronite Rite. He became bi-ritual and was incardinated into the Maronite Apostolic Exarchate in the United States in 1967. He earned his M.A. from Villanova University in Philadelphia, Penn.

His first assignment was as assistant to Father Elias Abi Nader at St. George Maronite Church, Uniontown, Penn., from 1967 until 1969. He was transferred to St. Maron Church in Philadelphia, Penn., where he served as Pastor from 1969 until 1974. In 1975, he served as Pastor of St. Ann Maronite Church, Scranton, Penn., until 1977, and served as Pastor of Our Lady of Lebanon Maronite Church in Wheeling, West Virginia, from 1977 until 1985.

He served as Administrator of the Maronites of Orange County, Calif., from 1985 until 1986, and offered the Liturgy on Saturday evenings at St. Mary Roman Catholic Church in Fullerton, Calif.

His final assignment was as Pastor of St. Michael the Archangel Maronite Church, Fayetteville, N.C., in 1987. Fr. Shaheen went on leave shortly after that, and later retired.

He is survived by his brothers, Albert and Eli, as well as several nephews and nieces, in particular Lamya, who was his caregiver. Chorbishop John D. Faris, Pastor, celebrated the Funeral Divine Liturgy on August 13, 2014, at St. Louis Gonzaga Maronite Church. Condolences can be sent to the family, care of Chorbishop John Faris, 520 Rutger Street, Utica, NY, 13501.

Bishops Gregory Mansour and Elias Zaidan, along with the clergy and faithful of the Eparchy of Saint Maron and the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon extend their heartfelt sympathy and the promise of our prayers to Fr. Shaheen's family. May Almighty God grant his servant Joseph eternal rest and consolation to his family and friends. □

# Eparchy of Saint Maron

## Instruction Regarding Cremation

### Introduction

Some priests have inquired what the procedures should be regarding the funeral of those faithful who wish to be cremated. The concept of cremation is seldom, if ever, considered by Christians in Lebanon and the Middle East and, as such, to this date, has not been discussed by the Maronite Synod. In the United States it is an issue, which we must realistically deal with in an appropriate manner. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, to which the Eastern Catholic Bishops belong, has issued a directive on Cremation, which was approved by the Holy See in 1997. Although the liturgical particulars of that document apply only to the Latin Church, its general principles are very pertinent to us. Excerpts of these norms are listed below and hopefully can be of great assistance in dealing with this issue in a practical and pastoral way in our own Eparchy.

### The Dignity of the Human Body

The body that lies in death "brings to mind our belief that our human bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit (I Cor. 6:19), destined for future glory at the resurrection of the dead." That body "recalls the personal story of faith... of the deceased person... for it was once washed in baptism, anointed with the oil of salvation, and fed with the bread of life. This is the body whose hands clothed the poor and embraced the sorrowing...The Church's belief in the sacredness of the human body and the resurrection of the dead had traditionally found expression in the care taken to prepare the bodies of the deceased for burial."

### Cremation

Catholic belief "reflects a theology and a tradition in which burial (interment or entombment) of the body has been the principal manner of the body's final disposition. The long-standing practice of burying the body of the deceased in a grave or tomb in imitation of the burial of Jesus' body continues to be encouraged as a sign of Christian faith. However, owing to contemporary cultural interaction, the practice of cremation has become part of Catholic practice in the United States and other parts of the Western world... Although cremation is now permitted, it does not enjoy the same value as burial of the body. Catholic teaching continues to stress the preference for the burial or entombment of the body of the deceased."

### The Funeral

"The Church clearly prefers and urges that the body of the deceased be present for its funeral rites, since the presence of the human body better expresses the values" of the Church. As such, it is preferred that the cremation of the body of the deceased take place after the final rites in the church and before the committal. "Sometimes, however, it is not possible for the body to be present for the funeral liturgy. While promoting our preference for burial of the body, we must exercise sensitive pastoral judgment concerning the choice that... our people are making in favor of cremation."

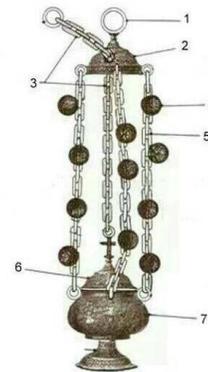
### Practical Considerations

In light of what has been stated above, if cremation is to be chosen, it is highly recommended that cremation take place after the funeral liturgy. However, due to particular circumstances, when the body cannot be present, "it is appropriate that the cremated remains of the body be present for the full course of the funeral rites, including the Vigil for the Deceased, the Funeral Liturgy and the Rite of Committal. The funeral liturgy should always be celebrated in a church (not in a funeral home or cemetery chapel). The cremated remains should then be reverently buried or entombed in a cemetery or mausoleum... The remains of cremated bodies should be treated with the same respect given to the corporeal remains of a human body. This includes the manner in which they are carried, the care and attention to appropriate care and transport, and their final disposition... The practices of scattering cremated remains on the sea, from the air, or on the ground or keeping cremated remains in the home of a relative or friend of the deceased are not the reverent disposition that the Church requires." A blessed grave or other dignified place in a cemetery is appropriate. Burial at sea, of an intact urn containing the cremated remains of the deceased, is permitted but should take place with the proper prayers of committal. "Whenever possible, appropriate means for memorializing the deceased should be utilized, such as a plaque or stone that records the name of the deceased." □

### Explanation of the Censer

The censer refers to the Virgin Mary where the fire of God was placed in her womb without being burned and was revealed to the world as fine perfume that dispelled the smell of sin, and gave the souls the opportunity to smell life and the scent of holiness and the goodness of heaven (Rev. 3:8).

- The hook symbolizes God
- The dome symbolizes heaven
- The middle chain symbolizes Christ's concession and his descent to earth to become a man
- The bells symbolize the angels
- The three outer chains symbolize the Holy Trinity
- The cavity where the fiery embers are placed symbolizes the Virgin's womb that carried God and did not burn
- The incense symbolizes the pure prayers ascending to heaven
- The deacon that carries the censer symbolizes Archangel Gabriel
- The path of the deacon who carries the censer from east to west symbolizes Christ' life on earth and His return to heaven
- The ember symbolizes God's ember "because our God is a raging fire" (Hebrews 11:29)
- The coal symbolizes the body which is our human nature, the humanity of Christ
- Igniting the coal with fire symbolizes the complete unity of humanity with divinity in one body since "He made Him one with His divinity without being mixed, blended or changed." □



## Fort Lauderdale, Florida *Feast of the Sacred Heart*



Chorbishop Michael Thomas processes with the Blessed Sacrament in honor of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

*by Deacon John Jarvis*

On Friday, June 27, 2014, the rainy skies cleared in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, just in time for a beautiful celebration of the Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus at the Heart of Jesus Maronite Church. The feast day of our Church brought together all those who, over the past three years, have worked to make the church a reality. There was a prayerful and reverential Mass followed by Benediction and a procession with the Holy Eucharist. The time of prayer was followed by a delicious Lebanese dinner prepared by the Ladies Guild in the parish hall. It was an evening to be remembered and we are thankful for all who made it possible.

## *Father's Day*



From left to right: Theresa Deeb, Chorbishop Michael G. Thomas, Jeanne d'arc Lahoud, Abla C. Khalil Dagher, Carmen Chamoun and Marsha Macary.

On a beautiful day in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, the parishioners of the Heart of Jesus Maronite Church celebrated Father's Day with a luncheon. The Ladies

Guild cooked and served the meal for the men, in part as response to the men cooking and serving the women on Mother's Day. The men were able to sit back and enjoy each other's company. They were thankful for the time and appreciative of all the work of the Ladies Guild. It was a good day for everyone involved. □

## Glen Allen, Virginia *Bible Camp*



*by Cathy George*

The children at St. Anthony Maronite Catholic Church in Glen Allen [Richmond], Virginia, explored the corporal works of mercy during their annual Bible Camp that took place from June 23 through June 27, 2014. With a tropical island theme, each day illustrated one of the stories of Jesus with key truths about God's love. The children broke down the passage in 1 Corinthians 13 and learned that God's love is giving, kind, caring, forgiving and forever. Forty students, with their adults and teen helpers explored the nativity stories, Jesus raising the little girl from the dead, meeting the Samaritan woman at the well, visiting with Zacchaeus and the Resurrection stories. Each day they talked about how to perform different works of mercy in their everyday lives.

Other centers included tropical island arts and crafts, outdoor games and activities, and music. The children learned Maronite liturgical hymns as well as several new camp songs that went with the island theme. At the end of the week the children led a prayer service where they sang their hymns and participated in parts of the service. When it concluded they performed their camp songs for their parents and showed them their arts and crafts. □



## San Francisco, California *European Pilgrimage*



Fr. John Nahal (center) with parishioners who went on the European pilgrimage.

by Nicole Rishwan

Our Lady of Lebanon Maronite Church in the San Francisco Bay area, Calif., organized a pilgrimage to the Shrines of Mary and other saints in Europe from May 13 - 24, 2014.

The pilgrimage covered five European countries. Beginning in Lisbon, Portugal, the birthplace of St. Anthony of Padua, we continued to Fatima, where the Virgin Mary appeared in 1917.

We visited Avila, Spain, the birthplace of St. Teresa, and continued to Loyola, the birthplace of St. Ignatius, founder of the Society of Jesus. Next our pilgrimage landed in Lourdes, France, where the Virgin Mary appeared to St. Bernadette in the year 1858. After that we flew to Croatia, the fourth country to visit. From there, we visited Medugorje, in Bosnia, our final country. The apparitions of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Medugorje are not confirmed yet, however the church allows pilgrimages to go and pray there.

The pilgrims had a prayerful experience contemplating the messages of the Blessed Virgin Mary, St. Anthony, St. Teresa and St. Ignatius. They are looking forward to another pilgrimage and uplifting spiritual experience. □

## Atlanta, Georgia *Youth Retreat*



During the first week of July 2014, St. Joseph Maronite Church's MYO in Atlanta, Ga., had the privilege of attending the National Maronite Youth Retreat in Latrobe, Pennsylvania. We were greeted with a warm smile from the kind-hearted Father Gary George, Director, as he welcomed us to the workshop. He started off by inviting us to challenge what we believe in as Catholics and to understand the deeper meaning in the words we absentmindedly recite during the liturgy. We were reminded that the prayers and hymns are more than a mere compilation of letters and words; they are a testament of our faith, and a way to express our love for the Lord. To truly comprehend the intensity of our beliefs, we were split into separate age groups and assigned a task: to discover "our Creed." As everyone exchanged thoughts and presented ideas, we collectively put together the characteristics that represent what we believe. Humility, integrity, miracles, selflessness, sacrifice, models of hope and forgiveness, understanding, and prayer. Throughout the remainder of the week, we were called to practice these traits and apply them to our daily lives rather than brushing them off as soon as we left the church.

Not only did we grow stronger in our faith as individuals, but we guided each other to believe in Jesus and His Glory without question or doubt. In a beautiful adoration ceremony one night, after all had prayed in front of the Eucharist, there was not a dry eye in the room. Friends embraced, people consoled one another, tissues were passed around, and eventually the entire congregation was holding each other in one giant embrace in the middle of the church. The moment was powerful and the presence of God was incredibly strong. We all broke down our barriers and found the courage to reach out and hold each other's hands.

By the end of the week, friendships were made to last a lifetime and the memories were proof of the impact the retreat had on each person. The talks we received from Fr. Gary, Bishop Gregory Mansour, and all the inspirational priests forever changed our relationship with God. The people we met helped shape us as individuals, and the wonderful experiences we had as a group strengthened our faith in what we believe. □



# Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn

## *Fifth Annual Benefit Dinner*

**M**aronite Catholics and friends from the greater New York area will gather on Thursday, October 23, 2014, at the Archdiocese of New York Building (1011 First Avenue) for the Fifth Annual Benefit Dinner for the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn.

The evening will begin with a Cocktail Reception with hors d'oeuvres at 6:00pm, to be followed by Dinner at 7:30pm. Individual tickets cost \$250 each. Table sponsorships are available at \$5,000, \$10,000 and \$15,000. Additional donations are encouraged. Over two hundred guests are expected.

Proceeds from the Benefit Dinner will be used to educate seminarians, support poorer parishes and missions, make structural repairs to the Eparchy's Cathedral in Brooklyn and assist retired priests. Bishop Gregory John Mansour stated, "I invite all of the faithful of the Eparchy, and every person of good will, to attend or support this year's Benefit Dinner. Thank you and welcome!"

An added feature of this year's Benefit Dinner is that it will honor Claire Habib, a faithful and devoted member of the Maronite community in the New York area.

The Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn comprises forty-three parishes, a Seminary, a Convent, a Monastery and the Maronite faithful in sixteen states located along the East Coast of the United States from Maine to Florida. It is directly under the jurisdiction of Pope Francis. Further information may be found at [www.stmaron.org](http://www.stmaron.org) or by emailing [saintmaron@yahoo.com](mailto:saintmaron@yahoo.com). □

## **Newtown Square, Pennsylvania** ***St. Sharbel Feast Day Celebration***

by *Lillian Shahade*

**B**ishop Gregory Mansour, Bishop of the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn, made a Pastoral visit to St. Sharbel Church in Newtown Square, Penn., on July 20, 2014, to celebrate the Feast of its Patron Saint. St. Sharbel died 116 years ago, but he is kept alive in the hearts of the people in the many stories, books, hymns and celebrations of his life. St. Sharbel gave up all worldly possessions so that he might live a life devoted to God. He planted seeds in the vineyard that not only grew food for the body, but food for the spiritual growth of man.

Bishop Gregory spoke in his homily of Fr. Paul Mouawad and warmly thanked him for his complete devotion to the priesthood, for all that he did in the ministry of God, and for much that he gave up and his continuance in that ministry in spite of his health. He also wished Fr. Paul a complete recovery as he continues to live and get the rest he so richly deserves in Lebanon, and he said that Fr. Paul plans to come back and visit here at St. Sharbel to see his former



From left: Fr. Raymond Khallouf, Bishop Gregory Mansour and Fr. Chaouki Karam.

parishioners and friends.

Bishop Gregory also made mention of a conversation of a publisher and his editor and the question was asked, "What two words best describe what's wrong with the world today?" And the reply came: "I am." He asked us to think about the full impact of those two words.

The celebration of the Liturgy on that day was for the departed soul of Joseph Barakat. He, too, planted seeds by giving a portion of his God-given possessions to start St. Sharbel, so that many may come together and grow spiritually and give thanks in the house of God. In 1983, Pope John Paul II named him a Knight Commander of the Order of St. Gregory, the highest honor awarded a private citizen by the Catholic Church, for his unselfish gift to the Eparchy for the purpose of starting a Maronite Church. Joseph was called to the Lord on the Feast of St. Sharbel on July 23, 1986. Joseph's wife, Adele, was present for the Divine Liturgy along with many of his children and grandchildren. Without his unselfish contribution, we would not be celebrating here today.

Bishop Gregory has appointed Fr. Raymond Khallouf as Administrator of St. Sharbel Church as of June 1, 2014. He has been warmly received by the parishioners and he asks for our prayers for himself and for the good of the community.

Concelebrating with Bishop Gregory were Fr. Raymond, Fr. Richard Cannuli, OSA, a writer of Iconography at Villanova University, and Fr. Chaouki Karam, a Professor of Moral Theology at the Pontifical Maronite Seminary at Ghazir, Lebanon.

At the end of the Liturgy, the forehead of each parishioner was anointed and also they received a prayer card of St. Sharbel and kissed a relic of St. Sharbel. After the Divine Liturgy a luncheon was served in the Church hall. Thank you to John Khawam, choir director and organist, who left his family on vacation to return early to celebrate with us and provide the hymns for the Liturgy. □



## Utica, New York *Holy Land Pilgrimage*



Chorbishop John D. Faris, Pastor of St. Louis Gonzaga Church in Utica, New York, was the spiritual director of a pilgrimage for twenty-two seminarians to the Holy Land and Turkey from July 9 - 25, 2014. The program, sponsored by the Eastern Lieutenancy of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem, provides the future priests with an experience of the "Fifth Gospel," as the Church historian, Eusebius describes the holy places. □

## Fall River, Massachusetts *Scholarship Awards*



On July 13, 2014, following the Sunday liturgy, Chorbishop Joseph Kaddo and the parish family of St. Anthony of the Desert Church, Fall River, Mass., awarded scholarships of \$500 each to three graduating high

school seniors. One of the scholarships is given each year in memory of Chorbishop Norman J. Ferris, while another is given in memory of Mary Ann Hallal, a former CCD instructor. This year, a third was given in memory of Loretta George, a lifelong parishioner and leader within the church.

Recipients shown from left to right:

**Rebecca Moussa:** Daughter of Jihad and Stacie Moussa, she will be attending the Lebanese American University, Beirut, Lebanon, majoring in Child Psychology/Early Childhood Education. Rebecca received the Mary Ann Hallal Memorial Scholarship.

**Samantha Massoud:** Daughter of Ed and Marie Massoud, she will be attending Boston College majoring in Biochemistry on a Pre Med track and minoring in Spanish. Samantha received the Loretta George Memorial Scholarship.

**Joseph Heneine:** Son of Fadi and Rima Heneine, he will be attending Bridgewater State University majoring in Physical Therapy. Joseph was awarded the Chorbishop Norman Ferris Memorial Scholarship.

Also shown from left to right: Deacon Andre Nasser, Deacon Donald Massoud, Chorbishop Joseph Kaddo, Pastor, and scholarship committeeman Karl Hetzler. □

## Warren, Michigan *Father's Day*



Father's Day was celebrated at all the liturgies on the weekend of June 14 -15, 2014, at St. Sharbel Maronite Catholic Church, Warren, Mich. Chorbishop Alfred Badawi, Pastor, honored all fathers, grandfathers, godfathers and fathers-to-be with a special blessing for their vocations. All who were acknowledged received a blessed medal of the Blessed Virgin Mary as a token of appreciation of their dedication and commitment to their families and as men of God. □



# Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon ACDA Conference



This past July 2014, Randa Gemayel Hakim, Archivist for the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon, assisted at the Biennial Conference of Association of Catholic Diocesan Archivists, (ACDA), held at the University of Saint Mary of the Lake, (Mundelein Seminary), in Chicago, Illinois. Several speakers were present from different dioceses and archdioceses in the U.S. Workshops included methods on how to repair and manage old sacramental records. A special presentation from archivists at the University of Notre Dame on filing pictures and another from the Archivist of McDonald Company attesting to how an active archive could help the growth of an institution.

In 2011, Bishop Robert Shaheen created the archival office for the Maronite Church. It was part of his great vision to preserve records pertaining to the Maronite heritage in the United States. With the help of Bishop Gregory Mansour, the information in the archives increased immensely.

Two years later, Bishop A. Elias Zaidan continued the legacy of Bishop *Emeritus* Shaheen by improving the research and digitizing the records in the Maronite archives. From the start, Bishop Zaidan was a keen supporter and a sponsor of the project.

The archive's office for the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon is located at the Eparchial Pastoral Center in Saint Louis, Mo. For further information or help, please send an email to: [maronitearchive@eparchy.org](mailto:maronitearchive@eparchy.org). □

## Food For Thought

"All our religion is but a false religion, and all our virtues are mere illusions and we ourselves are only hypocrites in the sight of God, if we have not that universal charity for everyone - for the good, and for the bad, for the poor and for the rich, and for all those who do us harm as much as those who do us good. "

St. John Marie Vianney

## Schedule of Bishop Gregory Mansour

### September 5 - 7, 2014

Extraordinary Visit of the Relics of St. Anthony of Padua, Springfield, Mass.

### September 8, 2014

Meeting at Catholic University and Welcome of Patriarch Bechara Rai, Washington, D.C.

### September 9 - 11, 2014

Summit For Christianity in the Middle East, Washington, D.C.

### September 11, 2014

Divine Liturgy celebrated by Patriarch Rai at Our Lady of Lebanon Church, Washington, D.C.

### September 12 - 14, 2014

Visit to Our Lady of Lebanon Seminary and Sunday Liturgy at the Parish, Washington, D.C.

### September 20 - 21, 2014

Archangel Maronite Church, 40<sup>th</sup> Parish Anniversary, Fayetteville, N.C.

### September 23, 2014

Catholic University Meetings, Washington, D.C.

### September 26, 2014

Knights of the Holy Sepulchre Meeting, New York, N.Y.

### September 27 - 28, 2014

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

### October 2, 2014

Oriental Orthodox/Catholic Dialogue, Stella Maris Retreat House, N.J.

### 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. □

*the Deadline is...* **Deadline for next month's issue of *The Maronite Voice* is September 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](mailto:Gmsebaali@aol.com)

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# "LIFT HIGH THE CROSS" Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross

by Brother John M. Samaha, S.M.

Already in the time of the apostles, the Cross on which Christ died had become the symbol of his redemptive death and a symbol for himself and for Christianity.

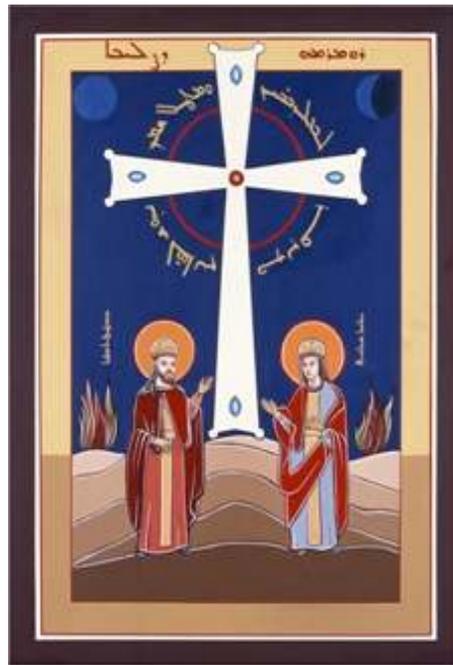
In 335 A.D., on September 13, the Church of the Martyrdom and Resurrection was dedicated in Jerusalem. The next day, in a solemn ceremony, the faithful were shown the cross that the Empress Helen had discovered on September 14, 320. This ceremony was repeated each successive year on September 14 in that church, which possessed a large relic of the Cross. The reverent elevation of the relic of the True Cross gave this day its name, "Exaltation of the Cross." From this gesture we have our popular contemporary hymn, "Lift High the Cross." Later this feast was combined with the memorial of the rescue of the stolen cross from the Persians by the Emperor Heraclius in 628.

The striking prayers of the Divine Liturgy for this day testify to the grace of our salvation as expressed in Christ's promise, "When I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw all to myself" (John 12:32).

The tone of the feast of the "Exaltation of the Cross," which more properly is now called the "Triumph of the Cross," is quite different from the somber and sorrowful liturgy of Good Friday. September 14 has a definitely joyous character. It recalls our happiness about our salvation.

Pope St. John XXIII had a favorite crucifix on his bedroom wall. He prayed in front of it before retiring, upon arising, and whenever cares awakened him during the night. "A cross," he said, "is the primary symbol of God's love for us."

Because the cross has become so commonplace, there is danger that this symbol of Christian salvation may lose much of its significance. The cross is visible in so many places and we see it so often: in church, in our room, in



Exaltation of the Holy Cross by Father Abdo Badawi.

public displays, even on some hilltops. Frequently we make the "sign of the cross" over ourselves when we pray and at other times. Even in the secular realm the word "cross" is widely used not only as a symbol of honor or service as in "Red Cross" and "Distinguished Service Cross," but even in more prosaic terms such as "criss-cross," "crossword," and other common expressions. How do we overcome the tendency to lose or dilute the importance of the word and the symbol?

We need to devise solutions and reminders to overcome that kind of passivity. One approach is to think of and to speak of the striking symbolism of the two beams that make up the cross. The upright (vertical) beam with its orientation pointing both above and below will remind us that the Son of God came down from heaven for us and for our salvation. This beam is a symbol of God's love for humankind, which manifests itself especially in the Incarnation and in Christ's sacrificial death on the cross. The upright beam will also remind us of the necessity of lifting up the human spirit to God. When people forget this upward climb

to God, this transcendence, they quickly lose awareness of the fundamental dimension of their own relationship with and dependence on the Creator. Then the illusion of human autonomy quickly encroaches, resulting in error and confusion.

The horizontal (cross) beam points both left and right to indicate our fellow human beings all around us. That reminds us that together with the love of God, the love of neighbor is essential to the Christian commandment of love. True holiness cannot overlook one's neighbor. Christ himself demonstrated symbolically with his arms extended on the Cross what he had earlier proclaimed publicly: "When I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw all to myself" (John 12:32). Let us stretch our arms wide as Jesus has done, so that we will embrace the whole world. We cannot love God while denying our fellow human beings practical love in concrete situations. Christ refers every good deed, and every good deed left undone, to himself: "...you did it (did not do it) to me" (Matthew 25:40-45).

Recalling the vertical and horizontal beams of the cross in this way is a lively reminder of the Christian way of life. To give the symbol of the Cross such a prominence in our lives is the most significant "exaltation" and "triumph" of the Cross. May the feast and each time we bless ourselves remind us of this.

"We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you, because by your Holy Cross you have redeemed us." □



## *My Vocation, as a Subdeacon and a Family Man*

by Subdeacon Brian Dunn

My life as a Subdeacon has been a wonderful experience. I was ordained to the Minor Orders of Cantor, Lector and Subdeacon on December 10, 2010, at St. Anthony of the Desert Church in Fall River, Mass. Our Pastor, Chorbishop Joseph Kaddo, was the main celebrant and was joined by many priests from our eparchy as well as priests from the Fall River Diocese, some of whom are retired. I am grateful they made the trip. Msgr. David M. George who was my pastor for fifteen years when I was a parishioner at St. Theresa Maronite Church in Brockton, Mass., presented

me for Ordination. My spiritual director, Fr. Manuel Ferreira, attended along with many deacons and subdeacons from the sister parishes of New England. It was wonderful to have so many priests, deacons and subdeacons present during my ordination.

The journey to becoming a subdeacon, and with the will of God a deacon, has been imbedded in my soul for many years. It began at the age of six when I served at the altar in Brockton with Chorbishop Louis Khalil, and as a young adult with Msgr. John Trad, Msgr. David George and many other priests until my family moved to Somerset, Mass. We are now parishioners of St. Anthony of the Desert Church in Fall River, Mass. It was at this time that I began my formal studies for the subdiaconate. My studies required reading books and writing essays. Of all the books I had to read, I especially enjoyed those written by Chorbishop Seely Beggiani. My favorite topic to learn and study was about the History of our Church and the teachings of the Syriac Fathers of the past. Of all the essays I had to write I favored the one that asked me to choose a *Hossoyo* and then list the Biblical/Scriptural resources and references. I chose the *Hossoyo* from the Season of the Glorious Birth of the Lord, the Sunday of the Announcement to Zechariah. The story of Zechariah and the Angel, who appeared to him, holds a special meaning in my life. One day I will share that story with you. This story of Zechariah and of how the Syriac Fathers wrote the liturgy around it, is so profound. There are so many references to the Old Testament and the New Testament that answering the question really showed me all of these references that I did not truly understand until then. Our liturgy is so rich with these prayers that every week we are inspired in a different way.

Serving as a subdeacon in our Church brings peace and happiness to me personally. I especially enjoy reaching

out to the children in the church while I am there. I like to go see them and say hello to them during Sunday School and to share parts of the liturgy with them, explaining to them what each Sunday service is about. Seeing them learn and ask questions and seeing the smiles on their faces is a wonderful and heartwarming experience.

Being in the sanctuary during liturgy is always a special time. It is sacred space, and knowing that the priest will call on the Holy Spirit to descend upon the gifts that are placed on the Altar is truly a moving and wonderful experience. When the deacon proclaims, "Bow your head before the merciful Lord....." is another special time. It is a time when I thank the Lord for all he has done for me and my family, ask and pray for those in need and for the ones who have asked for prayers. Sometimes I have the great and wonderful privilege of giving communion. As I hold the Body and Blood of Our Lord, I am in awe at what I am doing and feel grateful that I have been given this privilege. I am at peace during this moment. It brings me closer to Our Lord and also to the parish members. I have learned how to distribute communion to the Arabic speaking parishioners. Whether in English or Arabic, I am connected to the parishioners and Our Lord.

As a family man, there are also wonderful and beautiful experiences that I enjoy as a father and a husband. My wife, Colleen, is a wonderful woman, and without her I would not be able to be a subdeacon. She is a strong faith-filled woman who has strong family values and continues to keep things moving forward in our family. We have Sunday dinners with the family and spend time together each week. Now that our older children, Michaela and Brandon, are in college, this time together is even more special for all of us. Our younger daughter, Leah, and son, Lucas, are blessings from God. I appreciate the special little moments that we have together, like planting flowers in the spring and



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

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

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

Or

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

Or

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

# THE ORDER OF SAINT SHARBEL



## Perpetual Members

### ★ Toufic Baaklini

(from Annual to Perpetual)  
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*Saint Cecilia Catholic Church,  
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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.

\*\*\*\*\*

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

shoveling the snow together, even when one puts the snow back in the driveway after we have cleaned the snow from that area, or when both of them come running to me after liturgy wanting to help. But most of all, just spending time with Leah and Lucas, no matter what it may be: going to dance class or taking her to what we call "pancakes" on Saturday morning, or working with Lucas and Leah in the garage fixing the cars. There are things that we do together, and they both enjoy the time with me.

As we all know, life is very busy and filled with demands and obligations. One thing that Colleen and I try to keep going is our date night once a week. This is something that I would recommend to any married couple. It is a time when we do something together. It could be just a simple dinner somewhere or shopping for something in need. Having a conversation with the one you love, without being distracted by the children, the phone, email or a text message keeps the foundation of your marriage intact.

Some of the challenges of serving as a subdeacon are balancing family life, work and serving. It truly does need to go in that order. There are so many different things going on in your family life with children and a wife that you need to keep them fully aware of all the items in your schedule as well. Keeping everyone aware of the schedules: yours, the children's and your wife's can be a daunting task at times, but it is far better than letting people know at the last minute that you will be away. With the difficult schedules, we always find time to be together as a family and to have prayer time together.

I am attending diaconate studies with the Fall River Diocese. I have been taking class two nights a week and I have just completed two years of diaconate studies, learning more about the Church history and about the New Testament and Homiletics. Attending these classes has already started to advance my knowledge in preparing me for the diaconate, if God wills it. Please keep me in your prayers as I continue my studies.

As my studies continue, many people in my life continue to shape and mold me for the future years of serving his

Church. Chorbishop Joseph Kaddo, Deacon Andre Nasser and Deacon Donald Massoud continue to provide me with the training and guidance that will be invaluable in later years. Time with my brother deacons and subdeacons on our retreats have been wonderful times of bonding and spiritual growth. I look forward to these retreats in the coming years. □



## Prayer For Priestly Vocations

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

\*\*\*

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

\*\*\*

Give us priests who will lead and guide Your holy people gathered by Word and Sacrament.

\*\*\*

Bless us with priestly vocations so that we can continue to be a truly Eucharistic Church, strengthened in our discipleship of Jesus Christ, Your Only Son.

\*\*\*

Raise up, we pray, men who are generous in their service, willing to offer their lives and all their gifts for Your greater glory and for the good of Your people.

\*\*\*

We make our prayer in the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

## Dartmouth, Massachusetts Summer Bible Club



by Mother Marla Marie

**L**ight of Life Club (LOL) Summer Camp began on Monday, August 4 - 8, 2014, with Divine Liturgy celebrated at the Maronite Servants' Convent by Father Jack Morrison, Pastor of Our Lady of Purgatory Maronite Church, New Bedford, Mass. There were LOL members, volunteers, and parents in attendance.

The LOL Club was a week of learning about how much God loves them through DVD's, crafts, bible sharing, games, prayer, choir practice, and snacks. This year's program was written and coordinated by Mother Marla Marie and Sr. Therese Maria, with an Australian "Outback" theme. We were riding the Boomerang Express all the way to Jesus and the children were able to learn some fun facts about Australia along the way!

If your parish is interested in hosting an LOL summer club, please email the Maronite Servants of Christ the Light at [sister@maroniteservants.org](mailto:sister@maroniteservants.org). □

## Uniontown, Pennsylvania May Crowning

by Jen Sutton

**O**n May 11, 2014, the members of St. George Maronite Church in Uniontown, Penn., celebrated their May Crowning ceremony in the beautiful Garden of Prayer adjacent to the Church. This year's May Queen was Haley Sutton, daughter of Raymond and Jennifer Sutton. The procession to the statue of the Virgin Mary was led by visiting priest Father Boniface Patrick Hicks, OSB and Subdeacon Thomas "Duke" George. Adorned with a crown of flowers in her hair and one in her hands for the crowning, May Queen Haley Sutton followed behind, along with her escort Patrick Nahaas, her three attendants Rebecca Marinelli, Karleigh Risha, and Hannah Sutton, as well as the



Father Boniface with the May Queen, her escort, attendants, and the first communion children.

children from this year's First Holy Communion class. During the ceremony, Haley crowned the statue of the Virgin Mother, while the others in attendance left flowers in honor of Mary. Following the service, all those in attendance were invited to the parish hall for cake and refreshments. It was a beautiful day of prayer and devotion in honor of our Blessed Virgin Mother of God, Mary. □

## Synod of Bishops

Continued from page 1

We are all sinners and in need of mercy. After careful and prayerful discernment, perhaps the Synod Fathers may find ways to extend the Lord's mercy in a deep and comprehensive way.

Although we must not ignore the challenges, there are a great many signs that should encourage us. Such things as simply recognizing these challenges and struggles and coming together to attempt to address them, the establishments of committees and groups at the eparchial and parish levels to assist families along with the reemphasis of the importance of the family in the life and vitality of the Church should give us hope.

Let us pray for the Pope and the Synod Fathers that they may truly find ways to do God's will and to serve His people. May our families become true "domestic churches" reflecting God's love and mercy in this world. □

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

## Waterville, Maine *Hope Haitian Choir*



by *Kevin J. Michaud*

**F**r. Larry Jensen, Pastor, and the parish of St. Joseph Maronite Church in Waterville, Maine, made history on Thursday, August 14, 2014, when they became the first ever Catholic Church to host a concert by the Hope Haitian Children's Choir. The Choir, which is made up of children from Port au Prince, Haiti, has traveled all over New England spreading the joy they have in Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, through songs. The choir played to a good crowd of supporters from throughout the Central Maine area for the evening concert.

Volunteers from St. Joseph Church played host to the children for twenty-four hours, providing some housing and even a scavenger hunt throughout downtown businesses. Volunteers led by Bonnie Davis, Aaron Rowden and Subdeacon Stephen Crate worked to secure donations of food and lodging for the choir during their visit to Waterville. A free will offering was taken to support the choir at the end of the concert. □

## Uniontown, Pennsylvania *Retreat With Fr. Pacwa*

**I**n June, 2014, St. George Maronite Catholic Church in Uniontown, Penn., hosted a spiritual weekend with Father Mitch Pacwa, S.J., best-selling author and EWTN host of television and radio. The steering Committee, guided by Pastor, Father Sami Chaaya, reached out to the community and was able to fill the church with parishioners and people from surrounding parishes. Father Pacwa, who is a bi-ritual priest, began on Saturday by concelebrating the Divine Liturgy with Father Sami and other area priests. The Liturgy was enhanced even further with songs performed by the singer Elite Possik. She sang the Maronite chants and



Members of the steering committee pictured First row, left to right Mary Macar, Donna George, Karen Nickman and Jennifer Sutton. Second row, from left to right, Father Sami, Garry Sisson Jr., Father Pacwa and Dr. Chuck Yezbak.

songs in Syriac while accompanied by a small Maronite orchestra. Following the Liturgy, Father Pacwa spoke to the crowd on "Meditation and Contemplation in Today's World." The lecture, as well as the Question & Answer session, proved to be very thought-provoking, enlightening, and spiritual from an informed and religious man. To finish out the weekend, Father Pacwa celebrated the Divine Liturgy on Sunday morning. Father Sami and the parishioners of Saint George Maronite Catholic Church were extremely proud to host this event. □

## Fairlawn, Ohio *Pastoral Visit and Subdeacon Ordination*

by *Msgr. William Bonczewski*

**T**he weekend of August 9 - 12, 2014, was filled with joy and blessings for all the parish community of Our Lady of the Cedars in Fairlawn [Akron], Ohio, thanks to the visit of Bishop A. Elias Zaidan, Bishop of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon.

The weekend began with a welcome by the First Holy Communion Children at the Cleveland Airport with bunches of roses on Friday afternoon. The children were accompanied by one parent, the President of the Parish Advisory Board and Msgr. Bonczewski.

Later that evening the entire Advisory Board and presidents of all the parish organizations gathered for an evening meal and gave their warm welcome greetings to Bishop Elias. The Bishop learned the names of each person and the part he or she plays in serving the parish.

On Saturday morning the youth gathered in the Church for a morning prayer which included the Holy Rosary. Each decade was offered for a special intention for



Bishop A. Elias Zaidan ordains Paul Boulos to the Order of Subdeacon.

the Church leaders and for our parish. Afterwards, a parent provided and served breakfast and the youth gathered in the conference room for questions in the form of an interview. They asked questions about the time of Bishop Elias as a youth in Lebanon, about his religious vocation, about his coming to the United States and they learned what it is like for him to be our Bishop. The final question had to do with asking the Bishop what they could do to help him in his mission.

In the evening the Parish came together for an Evening Prayer before the social events. The Antonine Sisters of North Jackson, Ohio, led the chanting of the prayers.

Following the prayer service, refreshments in the hall and on the outdoor patio were served followed by a buffet dinner. The program for the evening included entertainment by many talented members of our parish. We listened to music by Chopin, a vocal solo, a composition for stringed instruments and a hymn sung by the youth group in honor of the Blessed Mother. A parishioner presented a welcome to the Bishop in Arabic, and the Bishop concluded with his loving message to all the parish.

On Sunday Bishop Elias celebrated the Divine Liturgy for an overflowing crowd of parishioners and friends. The Knights of Columbus stood as the honor guard. During the

Liturgy Bishop Zaidan ordained Mr. Paul Boulos to the Order of Subdeacon. That evening Bishop Elias enjoyed a relaxing visit at the home of one of the parishioners.

Monday morning the Altar Servers gathered with Bishop Elias to pray the Morning Prayer for vocations for our Eparchy. Each server took a photo with the Bishop and received a Certificate of Appreciation from him. In the evening he celebrated the Divine Liturgy with our deacons, their wives and a few visitors as honored guests.

The entire parish says thank you to Bishop Elias for coming to be with us at Our Lady of the Cedars of Mt. Lebanon here in Fairlawn, Ohio. Our daily prayers are with you. ☐

## Springfield, Massachusetts Second Annual Festival



Mayor Domonic Sarno of Springfield, Mass., with a group of volunteers working at St. Anthony's second annual festival.

St. Anthony Maronite Church of Springfield, Mass., held its second annual festival on June 7 - 8, 2014. Due to last year's success, the festival was extended to two days this year. Many volunteers prepared and served the food, set up the facility and supervised the many activities that were offered for both young and old. "It was truly a total parish effort," said one volunteer. The thousands of attendees enjoyed a taste of Lebanese cuisine, pastries and three types of bread made on the *saj*. Children who attended the festival participated in games, face painting and bounce houses. Friends, families and neighbors enjoyed and danced the *dabke* to the music of Amin Sultan and Ensemble.

Fr. George Zina, Pastor, thanks the chairpersons, John Ackourey and Tanya Elias Boulos, and all the parishioners who made the festival a rousing success. ☐



# Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania Convention Highlights

by Marie Sadaka

The Maronites in the U.S.A. celebrated the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Saint Rafka at the 51<sup>st</sup> Maronite Convention in Pittsburgh, Penn. This convention was filled with exciting spiritual and social events. Over 800 Maronites and friends attended this successful convention. A unified comment – which you can hear throughout the convention – was that this convention was one of the best conventions that they had ever attended. All of the workshops were completely packed with conventioners who had high interest to hear and learn more from the presenters.

We kicked off the Convention on Thursday with an exciting workshop about "Leadership" presented by Mr. Tony Charaf (Senior Vice President and Chief Cargo Officer of Delta Air Lines). A faithful member of St. Joseph Maronite Church in Atlanta, Ga., Mr. Charaf spoke about the difficulties he encountered during his road to success. He shared his life experiences and discussed the many leadership challenges. The values that he cherishes the most are to tell the truth no matter what the consequences, to be a servant leader, and to keep God in the center of his life.

Friday was highlighted by another exciting workshop. Father Tony Khawli shared with us his journey from fame to priesthood, "from the stage to the altar." He explained the reason he decided to become a priest. Many people thought that he might have had a tragic event in his life, which had led him to leave the fame, but, as he explained in his presentation, God has called him and simply he answered God's call. This workshop was very inspirational, and attendees are still talking about his amazing journey.

On Saturday, Mother Marta Basil and Sister Lea from the Maronite convent of St. Joseph, *Jrabta*, Lebanon, presented the faith-filled story of St. Rafka's journey. The room was packed by conventioners who were eager to listen to the story of St. Rafka and how her faith helped her to cope with her suffering.



Saturday afternoon the conventioners listened to a panel moderated by Chorbishop Seely Beggiani. Fr Toufic Nasr, Dr. Sam Nader and Dr. Mounzer Fatfat discussed the situation in the Middle East and how it is affecting the Christians. The message was to follow Jesus' teaching about peace as all religions believe in Jesus.

Other workshops were well attended: "Music and the Maronite Liturgy" presented by Seminarian Aaron Sandbothe; "Catechesis and Religious Education" presented by Cathy George and Deacon Lou Peters; "Prayer in Motion – Eat Healthy, Be Happy, and Live Holy" led by Dr. Anne Borik.

Every nightly event was colorful and fun. The food and the music were outstanding. Wednesday night was a "Jazz night" with a live band "Soirée." Attendees danced happily and gracefully to the music.

Thursday night, and for the first time ever during a convention, we had two singers, Gina Morgano and Nicholas El-Osta. Gina, in a beautiful opera voice, sang several classical songs and a couple of hymns. Everyone was in awe when they heard her sing the hymn

"Pray for Us, O Holy Rafka" in English for the first time and translated by Msgr. Ignace Sadek. Nicholas followed and sang many songs and hymns in Arabic, concluding the concert with the original Arabic version of "Pray for Us, O Holy Rafka."

Friday night, Our Lady of Victory's young *dabke* dancers performed to traditional Lebanese songs at the "Touch of Lebanon" night. After a fabulous display of Fourth of July fireworks, everyone danced to a live performance by the famous singer Samir Edmond and a special appearance by the singer Tony Mikhael.

The grand banquet was a blast as the Lebanese singer Nicholas El-Osta sang almost non-stop until 1 am. Young and old danced to the music.

The Maronite Young Adults participated in several spiritual and social workshops during the 2014 Maronite Convention in Pittsburgh. A boat cruise took a group of close to one hundred young adults to the local beer garden, (*Continues on page 17*)

## Gold Massabki Medals *Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon*

where they had a spiritual discussion during "Theology on Tap" with Fr. Tony Massad and Fr. Rodolph Wakim. They also created a new theme, "Theology on Lunch," where they spent two hours discussing the Church's views on several controversial topics with Bishop Gregory Mansour and Bishop Elias Zaidan. Some members of the group also took a bike tour around Pittsburgh. From spiritual workshops, to social outings, to serving Mass, the MYA had a full schedule at this year's Convention.

Many conventioneers took part in the excursions offered. Some went on the "Just Ducky Tour," a land and water tour of the city of Pittsburgh. Also offered was a tour to St. Anthony's Chapel – Pittsburgh's home of 5,000 relics sacred to the Catholic faith, and a trip to Our Lady of Victory Maronite Church.

A large number of members of the Maronite Youth Organization (MYO) joined the conventioneers for Liturgy on Thursday at noon.

We acknowledge that the success of this convention was first attributed to the blessing of God and the intercession of St Rafka. This great accomplishment would have not been achieved without the hard work, dedication and commitment of the committees and selfless leadership of the convention chairs, Marie and Marwan Sadaka. We are grateful to the guidance of our leader, Father Rodolph Wakim, and the wonderful work of Mike Naber, the NAM Executive Director. We would like to thank all who supported the convention and traveled to Pittsburgh to be part of this special celebration.

### ***Convention Raffle Winners***

The Board of Directors of the National Apostolate of Maronites (NAM) announced the winners for the 51<sup>st</sup> Convention raffles at the grand banquet held on July 5, 2014:

**Car Raffle Winner:** Anne Borik, Pittsburgh, Penn., ticket number 486

#### **Convention Raffle:**

**First Prize:** Two Round Trip tickets, Europe to Beirut, Sadee Joseph, Birmingham, Ala., ticket number 05007

**Second Prize:** IBM Lenovo Laptop, Rev. Bill Bonczewski, Fairlawn, Ohio, ticket number 17309

**Third Prize:** \$500 Cash  
Anne Marie Azzi, Newtown Square, Penn., ticket number 37610.

Congratulations to all the winners. ☐



Randa Gemayel Hakim with her husband, Joseph, and Bishop Zaidan.

**H**is Excellency Bishop A. Elias Zaidan and NAM Board of Directors presented Randa Gemayel Hakim of Houston, Tex., with the Gold Massabki Award for the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon.

### ***Eparchy of Saint Maron***



Dr. Dany Sayid with Fr. Bassam Saade and Fr. Paul Damien. In the background are former recipients of the Gold Massabki Medal.

**H**is Excellency Bishop Gregory Mansour and NAM Board of Directors presented Dany Sayid, MD, of Tampa, Fla., with the Gold Massabki Award for the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn. ☐

## Brooklyn, New York *Renovation And Rededication*



Renovation and restoration are underway at Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral.

by *Salma Vahdat*

From the title of this essay, dear reader, you may be wondering what is going on in Brooklyn at our beloved Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral and the seat of the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn. I am pleased to clue you in to our mega project to restore this exquisite historical landmark which has graced Brooklyn Heights since its dedication in 1846 and has served the Maronite community since February 9, 1944. A brief background is in order to further enhance your understanding of the historical significance of the edifice and why we are committed to its restoration.

Construction of the church began in 1844 after a small group of individuals met and agreed to establish an ecclesiastical society that would become the Church of the Pilgrims. The group hired Richard Upjohn, a prominent architect, to design the church. It became the first Romanesque Revival church in the United States and was dedicated in December, 1844, and completed in May, 1846. The first pastor, Rev. Richard Storrs, Jr. served until 1900 and oversaw expansion of the original structure. He was a contemporary of the Rev. Henry Ward Beecher, Pastor of the nearby Plymouth Church and fiery Abolitionist who participated in the famed "Underground Railway" which routed escaped slaves to Canada. It is also thought but not proven, that our Cathedral was also a haven for the slaves.

As the population of Brooklyn Heights changed in the early twentieth century, the members of the Church of the Pilgrims and neighboring Plymouth declined. In 1934 both decided to merge and became the Plymouth Church of the Pilgrims. Our community, originally established in 1890 in Manhattan at St. Joseph's Church, then moved to larger

quarters in Brooklyn in 1902. As immigration grew, so did our community. In 1938 the search was on for a larger church and by 1944 the deal was done and we took over the former Church of the Pilgrims. Guided by the fifty year stewardship of Msgr. Mansour Stephen, the parish grew and continued improving the church structure.

The bronze doors of the Cathedral were purchased at auction from the French luxury liner Normandie; the marble in the sanctuary came from the French and Lebanese pavilions of the World's Fair; the chandeliers were manufactured in Granada, Spain; the windows are the creation of Jean Crotti, a French artist who developed the "gemmaux" glass process; above the altar rests a painting of Our Lady of *Harissa* by our own famed Lebanese artist, Saliba Doueihy; the interior entry doors came from the Schwab Mansion in New York City. There is much more to the building not written here, but what is most important is the love of our community for our home. It contains tradition, faith and a part of us not to be lost in the assimilation of cultures. We celebrate the joys of life here in marriage, baptism and communion. We mourn our loved ones here also as they are given the final rites of their church. We come together to celebrate the great feasts of the year and to pray for peace. We care for each other and our home away from home.

In 2010 the community was called to action to address the problems of age and wear on our Cathedral. Architects studied the defects, advised the remedies and calculated the cost. It was staggering...seven million dollars. Guided by the firm hand of Bishop Gregory Mansour and the oversight of our dynamic rector, Msgr. Root, a capital campaign was begun to raise the funds. Three-year pledges were undertaken and fundraisers abounded. The towers needed complete rebuilding, roof replacement and repairs, pointing of the stone walls, sidewalks replaced, the Cathedral doors rehung...and the list goes on. That was the first phase, which I am happy to report has been just about completed. However, much remains to be done. We are continuing our effort to raise the money to continue the restoration. It has not been easy in the economic downturn but we are optimistic in the generosity of our communities and friends.

This year is the seventieth anniversary of our stewardship of the Cathedral. In commemoration of this and the completion of our first phase of restoration the Cathedral will be rededicated on Sunday, November 8, 2014. Our community invites all Maronites and friends to attend this celebration of our renewal and participate in our joy and accomplishment. And so it goes.... Welcome everyone. □

### *Save the Date*

The Office of Family and Sanctity of Life of the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn is organizing the second Maronite Vigil For Life on Wednesday, January 21, 2015, at Our Lady of Lebanon Maronite Church in Washington, D.C.

Please save the date and start planning your trip to join us this coming January as we stand for life, pray and march on January 22. □

# *The New Global Strategy of an Old Local Church Church Planting in the Maronite Diaspora*

by Mouna Ghossain Zaiter

On July 21, 2012, Pope Benedict XVI announced the creation of a Maronite eparchy in France and asked the Maronite Patriarch, Beshara Raï, to appoint a bishop for this country. The bishop will also be in charge of fifteen others European countries that he will have to visit regularly. Bishop Maroun Nasser Gemayel was nominated in 2012. The eparchy will be headquartered in Paris. Up until this historic date for Maronites and the Eastern Church, Maronites only had two parishes in France.

These past few years, the number of Maronites has increased significantly in France and in Europe. We inventory about 80,000 Maronites in France. Since his nomination in 2012 as Maronite Bishop for France, Monsignor Gemayel is very active in France and Europe, striving to get acquainted with his dispersed Maronites and to evaluate their numbers. Towards the end of 2013, the bishop summoned the priests and laymen who are under his jurisdiction, and invited bishops from the United States and Canada to take part in a Synod. There was a need to establish something concrete to guide these Maronite priests and those few Lebanese laymen who want to help in organizing and unifying the Maronite Church in Europe. A road map and an organized movement were needed, in order to be able to showcase and promote the interests and issues of this project.

During his inauguration, the bishop announced his mission's slogan "Authenticity and Mission." He explained this choice is due to evangelical engagement, but mostly due to the Maronites' own cultural and ecclesiastical heritage: one had to work with the authenticity and mission drive of the first apostles, one had to be borderless with a universal goal.

As a member of the newly founded Maronite parish in Bordeaux, France, and as a scholar trained in political science and with a doctorate in Christian and Muslim relations, I am building a data base of all the Lebanese Maronites in the area. I will explain the case of Bordeaux, the city where I live.

The appointed priest is Father Nabil Mouannes. He arrived last November, after having served twenty one years in the U.S.A.: in San Diego and in other cities in the U.S. I asked him to explain what differences he saw between the two countries. He explained to me that in San Diego he started his mission with few people. But because the religious landscape is so intense in the U.S., these people were quickly persuaded to give money to build their own church. It might have been also more important for them to start a parish since they were so far away from their home land. Over the years he succeeded in planting one in San Diego area and one in Las Vegas and four in other cities as Sacramento and Stockton, Calif., and in Denver, Colo., and Phoenix, Ariz. He turned one of his parishes into a pilgrimage center, St Ephrem in El Cajon [San Diego]. Indeed, here in France and in Bordeaux in particular, there is a bigger Lebanese community than the one he started with in San Diego, but these people have become "very French," so that his engagement in this new parish proves to be difficult. Father Mouannes, tried to

inculcate in their spirit the sense of being instituted by a special mission. The explanation is that usually in France, parishes will not ask you to do too many things, though this is slowly changing, but in any case few people will get involved. If you ask too much, they will not come back.

Another major point is funding. In France, because of the confiscation of Church properties at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the State made amends with the 1905 law of separation of Church and State that provided that church buildings would be maintained by the city, and cathedrals by the French state.

The local Catholic Cardinal Ricard, Bishop of the diocese of Bordeaux, who is the only authority able to grant a church building to various communities, welcomed Father Mouannes and showed it by his presence at inaugurated mass in November. He reiterated his support, first at the feast of St. Maron and when Bishop Gemayel did his installation parish visit during the last Palm Sunday.

But one of the things that Father Mouannes has a hard time understanding or pushing his parishioners to overcome, is the fear they have that through their diligence and loyalty to this temporary Maronite church, they will be branded as "communitarians" and find themselves in some kind of ghettos. Of course there is a comparison to be done here with the United States: Where all the communities can freely practice their faiths and above all self-manage it and proclaim it publicly without worrying about what the government has to say about it. France, since the separation of state and religion, the radicalization of Islam, and the emergence of other radical religious movements, has become very vigilant and aggressive towards what we call here communitarian ghettos.

The challenges the Maronites face in Europe and in France in particular are clearly understood by Patriarch Raï and Bishop Gemayel. In the Synod in Paris in December 2013, they explained that the Maronites have to see their role as that of Christian missionaries who must evangelize the people they live with. Bishop Gemayel refuses to use the term "diaspora" that too many people now use also to describe the Lebanese in exile. Father Mouannes played a key role in the first and the second session of this Synod: he placed ten members in different committees as Project and Development, Superior Education, Liturgy, Inter-religion Dialogue and so on. The National Official French TV recorded and broadcasted all the works of the first sessions of the Synod. It gave an exposé of the huge effort that is happening to build on the rock the new Maronite Eparchy. Our involvement was clearly noticeable in that program which was published in the Collection of the "Fate of the Christians of the Middle East." Our big challenge as Maronites is to keep our mission, to show the world the rites of these early Christians that we have preserved as faithfully as possible, including the Aramaic language, to keep talking in this big village that is the Earth, as Jesus did. □

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## Utica, New York Maronite Archbishop of Cyprus Visits Parish



On August 17, 2014, the parish family of St. Louis Gonzaga in Utica, New York, was blessed with a visit of Archbishop Joseph Soueif, the Maronite Archbishop of Cyprus. During a visit with the family of his sister, Mrs. Sylvie Obeid, the Archbishop offered the Divine Liturgy and spoke of the critical situation of Christians in the

Middle East. The Archbishop is especially attune to the situation after having served as the Special Secretary for the 2010 Synod on the Middle East in Rome. Chorbishop John D. Faris, Pastor of St. Louis Gonzaga, welcomed the Archbishop on behalf of the entire parish family and assured him of our prayers for him and his important ministry. □

## Minneapolis, Minnesota Community Impact Award



Jay Abdo with Teri Thomas, daughter of the late Danny Thomas, and her son Jason Thomas Gordon, along with two young patients from the hospital.

Jay Abdo, a member of St. Maron Maronite Catholic Church in Minneapolis, Minn., was named St. Jude Children's Hospital national volunteer of the year and was awarded the prestigious Community Impact Award during the ALSAC/St. Jude Volunteer Appreciation Awards dinner on June 28, 2014. □