



# The Maronite Voice

*A Publication of the Maronite Eparchies in the USA*



Volume VI

Issue No. XI

December 2010

## Christmas 2010

***The Birth of Christ has Changed the World. We are Now Assured of Our Salvation. We are a Brother or a Sister to Him.***



*Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,*

Again it is Christmas. It is a most beautiful time of the year to greet one another and to wish each and everyone the blessings of peace and hope. Today a Savior has been born to us and a Son has been given to us! What a marvelous mystery! The birth of Christ has changed the world. We are now assured of our salvation. We are a brother or a sister to Him and we have been given the greatest gift of love from God our Father.

As you have heard, an exciting and new project has been completed for our Diocese. An education and cultural center (Maronite Heritage Institute) has been established in Saint Louis, [Missouri], marking the beginning of our Maronite History for the entire United States. As the birth of Jesus was a gift to our world for Hope, I pray that this center will be a gift of Hope for future generations as a sign of gratitude that we have achieved so much.

It is a place and opportunity for us to study and reflect on our roots and grow so that our future will be on solid foundations. It will be a place for us to remember our gifts through the materials of our archives. A place for us to reflect and study through the Library. A place for us to gather for conferences, lectures and social gatherings for our parishes and communities. As Bethlehem became the birthplace of Jesus, I pray the center will be the birth and home of our Maronite Church for our future generations. A date of dedication and solemn blessing will take place in the spring. (and your parishes will be notified of this event.)

May the Joy and Peace of this Christmas Season remain in your hearts. Your intentions will be remembered at

the Divine Liturgy. Bishop Gregory joins me in thanking you for your dedication and support of our parishes, which makes our Dioceses a living presence of hope for our Country.

Sincerely Yours,  
Robert J. Shaheen  
Bishop of the Diocese of Our Lady of Lebanon

## Schedule of Bishop Robert Shaheen

### December 4, 2010

Our Lady of the Cedars Maronite Church, Houston, Tex.

### December 5, 2010

St. George Maronite Church, San Antonio, Tex.

### December 9, 2010

St. Raymond's Ladies Society, St. Louis, Mo.

### December 12, 2010

Children's Liturgy for Christmas, St. Raymond Cathedral, St. Louis, Mo.

### December 14, 2010

St. Louis University Meeting, St. Louis, Mo.

### December 24, 2010

Christmas Liturgy, St. Raymond Cathedral, St. Louis, Mo.

### December 25, 2010

Christmas Liturgy, St. Raymond Cathedral, St. Louis, Mo.

### January 5-12, 2011

Private Retreat

### January 15, 2011

Meeting, Belleville, Ill. □

### *The Maronite Voice*

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- Most Reverend Bishop Gregory John Mansour

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## **Maronite Convention 2011**

St. Sharbel Church  
Newtown Square, Pennsylvania

**July 6- 10, 2011**

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

## *Eparchial Condolences*



**Mr. Paul F Mooradd**, 81, the father of Father Paul Mooradd, passed away on November 5, 2010. A life-long resident of Springfield, Mass., an Army Veteran, a respected postman, an active parishioner of Saint Anthony parish, and a model husband and father, Mr. Mooradd is survived by his beloved wife of fifty-three years, Claire; his three children, Father Paul, Dr. Michael and his wife,

Theresa; and Mrs. Diane Perry and her husband, Mark; his five grandchildren, his sister, Anna Mooradd, his two sisters-in-law, Sally and Brenda; and several nieces, nephews and friends. He was preceded in death by his parents, George and Elizabeth (Lataif) Mooradd, and several brothers and sisters.

The Funeral Service took place from St. Anthony Church in Springfield on November 9, 2010.

Bishop Gregory Mansour, along with the clergy and faithful of the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn, extend their heartfelt sympathy and the promise of our prayers to Fr. Mooradd and his family. May the Lord God grant Paul eternal rest in His Kingdom and consolation to his family and loved ones. □

## *Eparchial Assignments*

His Excellency Bishop Gregory Mansour, Bishop of the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn, has made the following Eparchial appointment effective on December 1, 2010:

**Fr. Dany Abi Akar** as Parochial Vicar at St. John Maron Maronite Church in Williamsville [Buffalo], New York. Fr. Abi Akar leaves St. Anthony Church in Glen Allen [Richmond], Virginia, where he served as Parochial Vicar since September 1, 2010. □



**Eparchy of Saint Maron of  
Brooklyn  
Inaugural Benefit Dinner in  
Manhattan**  
*Archbishop Timothy Dolan was Main  
Speaker*

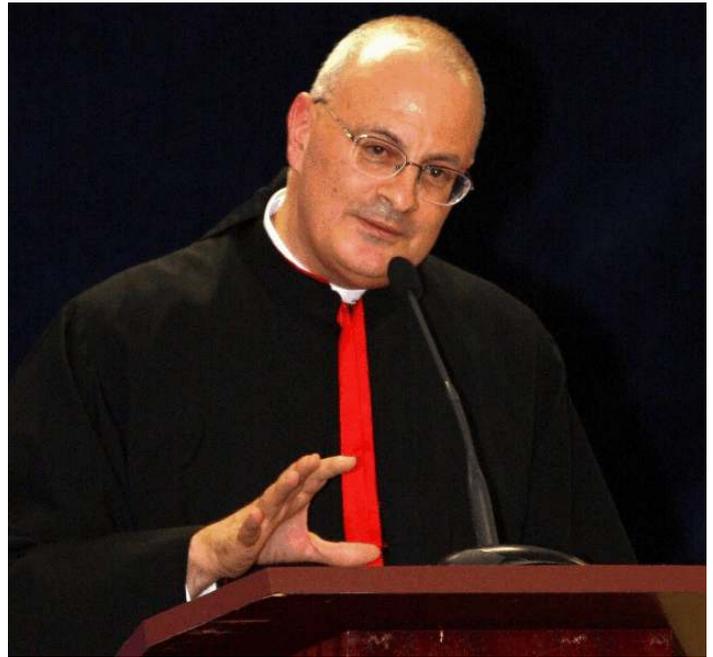


Archbishop Timothy M. Dolan and Bishop Gregory John Mansour greet guests at the Eparchy of Saint Maron's Inaugural Benefit Dinner and Celebration on November 10.

*by John F. Kurey*

Over \$200,000 was raised for the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn at its Manhattan Inaugural Benefit Dinner on November 10, 2010, hosted by Maronite Bishop Gregory John Mansour and featuring Archbishop Timothy M. Dolan of New York. Held at the Archdiocese of New York's Cathedral High School, over 175 people attended the dinner from as far away as Georgia, Virginia, Maine and Massachusetts, in addition to Manhattan and the greater New York area.

Attendees viewed a short film during dinner and listened to a moving talk by Archbishop Dolan. Edward M. Shiner, former Executive Director of the National Association of Maronites, was Master of Ceremonies. The opening prayer was given by Chorbishop Michael Thomas, Vicar General and Chancellor of the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn, and the closing prayer was offered by Very Reverend James Root, Rector of Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral in Brooklyn.



Bishop Gregory Mansour addresses guests at the Eparchy's inaugural Benefit Dinner on November 10.

Among the distinguished guests in attendance were Antoine Chedid, Ambassador of Lebanon to the United States; Antoine Azzam, Consul General of Lebanon in New York; Caroline Ziade, Deputy Permanent Representative in the Permanent Mission of Lebanon to the United States; Ibrahim Assaf, Counselor in the Permanent Mission of Lebanon to the United States; and State Senator Marty Golden. Clergy in attendance included Father Geoffrey Abdallah and Father Jean Younes of the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn, Sister Liliane Alam, FMM, and Brother James Simon, C.O.

John F. Kurey, Stewardship Director for the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn, said that the Eparchy is already looking forward to next year's Benefit Dinner. "This is the beginning of a great tradition for the Eparchy. So many people who came to the Benefit Dinner said they had a wonderful time."

Bishop Gregory expressed his gratitude to Archbishop Dolan and everyone who attended the dinner or made a contribution.

Proceeds from the Benefit Dinner will be applied to the needs of the Eparchy, including: support for seminarians; help for retired priests; assistance for Maronite missions; renovations to the Cathedral in Brooklyn; and creation of a Maronite Chapel at the National Shrine in Washington, D.C.

Donations in connection with the Inaugural Benefit Dinner are being accepted until December 17. Checks may be made payable to "Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn" and sent to 109 Remsen Street, Brooklyn, NY 11201.

For more information email John F. Kurey at [saintmaron@yahoo.com](mailto:saintmaron@yahoo.com) or by phone at (718) 237-9913. □



# Washington, D.C. *Ordination and Clergy Day*

by Fr. Vince Farhat

**O**ur Lady of Lebanon Maronite Seminary elevated three seminarians from the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon. Gabe Gubash was ordained to the orders of Cantor and Lector, George Hajj was ordained to the order of Lector, and Fadi Bazouzi was ordained to the order of Subdeacon. The celebration took place on November 17, 2010, with the graciousness of



Chorbishop Seely Beggiani congratulates the newly ordained Gabe Gubash (left), George Hajj (center) and Fadi Bazouzi.

Chorbishop Dominic Askar from Our Lady of Lebanon Maronite Church in Washington, D.C. Chorbishop Seely Beggiani, Rector of the Seminary, presided over these ordinations to minor orders. More than twenty-five priests attended this beautiful occasion along with family members of those receiving orders. Choir members from Our Lady of Lebanon Church added much to the liturgy on this special occasion. The Maronite Church is blessed by the commitment of these three men who are continuing their education and spiritual journey to the calling of Holy Priesthood.

On November 18, 2010, clergy from both Eparchies attended a conference, also held at the seminary in Washington, D.C. Bishop Gregory Mansour, who was in Baltimore, Md., for the USCCB conference for Catholic Bishops, attended, meeting with the eparchial vocation team in the morning in an attempt to reach the thousands of Maronite men and women to contemplate and examine a possible vocation to the priesthood or religious life.

This was followed by a special guest speaker, the Very Reverend Lawrence Terrien, S.S., former Superior General of the Society of St.

Sulpice. Rev. Lawrence spoke to the clergy about living the sacraments and the call to holiness and our place in it. We are very grateful to Rev. Lawrence for his wisdom, knowledge, and well-delivered talk.

The conference was followed by a luncheon hosted by the seminarians who worked hard to make this week in Washington, D.C., a special time for all of us. Our thanks go out to Chorbishop Seely Beggiani, Chorbishop Dominic Ashkar, and all of the seminarians for a job well done and for welcoming the clergy and family with such gracious hospitality. May all of us continue to pray for our clergy and seminarians so that we may live the sacraments and achieve this call to holiness that Jesus Christ asks of us. □



## THE ORDER OF



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★ Karen Stephens  
★ Harold Stephens  
*Birmingham, Alabama*

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 or write

to

Eparchy of Saint Maron  
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109 Remsen Street  
Brooklyn, NY 11201

Or

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

## Brooklyn, New York Maronite Servants Receive First Novice



Left to right: Mother Marla Marie, Bishop Gregory Mansour and Sister Therese Touma.

*by the Maronite Servants*

The Maronite Servants of Christ the Light announce the reception to the Novitiate of Therese Touma. This next step in the formation of religious life took place at Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral in Brooklyn, N.Y., on November 21, 2010 during the Divine Liturgy with Bishop Gregory J. Mansour presiding, and Father James Root, Rector, concelebrating,

It was the Sunday of the Annunciation to Mary and the feast of the Presentation of the Virgin Mary, both fitting themes for the sacrifice and dedication of religious life. Also adding blessing to the day was the unexpected visit of six Sisters of Life who stopped in for the Divine Liturgy, as well as a Sister of St. Joseph and a Franciscan Sister.

After the homily, Bishop Gregory blessed Therese as she was led to the sanctuary by Mother Marla Marie, who then presented Therese saying, "She has completed a period of Postulancy, and has asked to be received into the Novitiate of the Congregation of the Maronite Servants of Christ the Light, in the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn. As her Superior, I have granted her request and welcome her as a Novice with the Religious name of Sister Therese Maria. We ask your blessing upon her habit and rosary, the rich symbols of Religious life, and also upon the Typicon of the Congregation, which Sister Therese Maria will study in preparation to embrace the evangelical counsels of our Congregation."

After Bishop Gregory's blessing upon the articles of the habit, Mother Marla Marie presented them to Sister Therese Maria, and clothed her with the white veil of the novitiate. Sister Therese Maria is the first member to join with the foundress, Mother Marla Marie, in this new congregation of Maronite religious in the Eparchy of Saint Maron. Sister Therese Maria began a postulancy period last February to help her make the transition into monastery life. Following the postulancy is the novitiate, at which time the Maronite

Servant is given the title of "Sister" and receives the habit. Then begins a two-year formation, which is a foundational period for the deepening of the spiritual life in preparation for vows.

Reflecting on the ceremony, Sister Therese Maria said, "One of the highlights was when Mother Marla Marie handed me the white veil which I then kissed, symbolizing the vow of chastity." She also added, "I see the Novitiate as a precious time of deepening my love and commitment to Jesus. These two years of formation will be a beautiful opportunity to humbly grow in my understanding of what it means to be a Maronite Servant of Christ the Light."

Sr. Therese Maria, 26, is from Sydney, Australia, and is the daughter of Joseph and Jacqueline Touma. She was raised in the Maronite Church and cherishes her early memories of family members' teaching her the faith. She also has a strong devotion to the Maronite saints, and says St. Rafka in particular has been "a great role model" as she strives to live out her faith.

More information on the Maronite Servants can be found on the website: [maroniteservants.org](http://maroniteservants.org). Also, more photos may be viewed on the blog: [RadiateHisLight.blogspot.com](http://RadiateHisLight.blogspot.com). □



### Schedule of Bishop Gregory Mansour

**December 2, 2010**

Lecture on the Synod for the Middle East, Huntington Seminary, Long Island, N.Y.

**December 5, 2010**

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

**December 12, 2010**

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

**December 13 - 14, 2010**

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

**December 19, 2010**

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

**December 24 - 25, 2010**

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

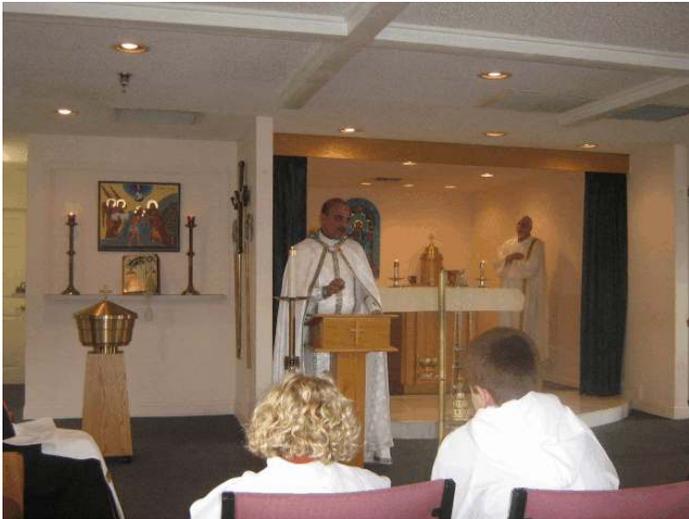
**December 26, 2010 - January 2, 2011**

Miami, Florida

**January 15, 2010**

Annual Clergy Retreat, West Palm Beach, Florida. □

## West Palm Beach *First Liturgy*



Fr. Vincent Farhat celebrates his first Liturgy at Mary Mother of Light Mission in West Palm Beach, Florida. Fr. Farhat was ordained in June of 2010.

by Msgr. Ron Beshara

On Sunday, October 31, 2010, the last in the sixth Season of Victorious Cross, Fr. Vincent Farhat, son of the spiritual family of Mary, Mother of Light Mission, visited and celebrated his First Liturgy among the people of God in the Palm Beaches, Florida. Msgr. Ron Beshara concelebrated, and several deacons and subdeacons, and three servers assisted at the altar.

The Liturgy, chanted in Syriac and English, included specific selections of the Feast of the Victorious Cross for the Word Service and the Anaphora of the Twelve Apostles for the Eucharistic Service. The intentions of the Holy Mysteries included an increase of vocations to the Church and the second anniversary of Virginia, beloved mother of Fr. Vincent.

The music ministry supported the worshipping community and chanted several favorite hymns: *Lord, I Seek You Alone, Jesus, and I Believe*, and included the Hymn of Peace composed by Fr. Vincent when he was the music director for MML parish.

Fr. Vincent preached to a full church on Matthew's lessons and call to the Christian community to be ever vigilant and responsive to the needs and the cries of the poor. Fr. Vincent invited the enthusiastic and inspired community to live the hospitality of Jesus and to see the face of Jesus in every person.

Following communion, Msgr. Ron extended a heartfelt and warm welcome to a son and brother in faith; he mentioned how seeing Fr. Vincent at the MML altar brought tears, many smiles, and profound gratitude to him and all the community. Fr. Vincent extended his deep appreciation and thanks to the pastor and community for their five years of constant, prayerful, and fraternal support during his years at Our Lady of Lebanon Seminary. He also expressed his thankfulness for the parish gift of a complete set of Purple Syriac Maronite vestments made for Great Lent.

The Ladies of MML Altar Society prepared and served a sit-down Lebanese meal. It was such a joy and a blessing to have home with MML their beloved son, friend, brother, and newly ordained priest, Fr. Vincent Farhat. May Jesus, High Priest and Lover of humanity bless him with many years of good health, joyful service, and fruitful ministry. □

## Houston, Texas *Cardinal Di Nardo visit*



Cardinal Di Nardo with Fr. Milad Yaghi, Pastor, and Fr. Pierre El-Khoury and young members of the Parish.

The Archbishop of Galveston-Houston, His Eminence Daniel Cardinal Di Nardo, visited Our Lady of the Cedars Maronite Catholic Church in Houston, Texas, and concelebrated the Divine Liturgy on the Feast of the Consecration of the Church on Sunday, November 7, 2010.

In his homily Cardinal Di Nardo thanked both Fr. Milad Yaghi, Pastor at Our Lady of the Cedars, and the parish community for the invitation and the opportunity to concelebrate the Divine Liturgy. Cardinal Di Nardo also spoke of the importance of the Maronite Church and all other Eastern Churches and traditions in the Universal Catholic Church. The Cardinal also challenged the community to keep alive and to pass down the traditions of their native land.

At the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy Cardinal Di Nardo was presented with a framed print of the Accession of Jesus from the *Rabbula* Gospels and with greeting cards from the children in the Continuing Christian Education program of the parish. Following the Divine Liturgy His Eminence attended a banquet in his honor in the Our Lady of the Cedars Parish Hall.

Daniel Cardinal Di Nardo was installed as Coadjutor Bishop of Galveston on March 26, 2004 and became Archbishop of Galveston-Houston on February 28, 2006. He became a Cardinal on November 24, 2007. □



## Birmingham, Alabama End of the Centennial Year Celebration



Chorbishop Richard Saad (left) and Bishop Robert Shaheen with children of the Maronite Christian Formation Program at St. Elias Church, Birmingham, Ala.

by Jeanette Wyrick

St. Elias Maronite Church in Birmingham, Alabama, ended a year-long celebration of its centennial with a grand weekend November 6-7, 2010. We were honored to have Bishop Robert Shaheen with us for the closing festivities. He had also been with us for the opening weekend in 2009 and for the NAM Convention in July, 2010.

On Saturday, November 6, we enjoyed a cocktail hour followed by dinner and entertainment at The Club. In addition to Bishop Shaheen we were privileged to have Bishop David E. Foley, Bishop Emeritus of the Birmingham Diocese, Birmingham Mayor William Bell, and several city council and legislative representatives with us for the evening.

Following dinner, an audiovisual presentation recapping the history of St. Elias was shown and dancing followed.

On Sunday morning, November 7, Bishop Shaheen had breakfast with the MYO and visited all of the Maronite Christian Formation Classes before celebrating a Solemn Pontifical Liturgy at St. Elias. The liturgy was followed by the traditional parish Thanksgiving luncheon prepared by the Ladies Altar Society.

The year has been a great tribute to our parish and we have celebrated by having many spiritual, social, and educational events to remind us of our past and prepare us for a great future. Many parishioners have worked on the events throughout the year.

We feel very blessed to have the leadership of our pastor, Chorbishop Richard D. Saad, who has been an integral part of our parish for almost forty years. May God bless us for many more years! □

## St. Paul, Minnesota Annual Fall Festival



Photo by Tom Dooher.

by Mary Beth Dooher

The stage was set. The tents were up. The grills and fryers were warming up. The baskets and baked goods were displayed. The volunteers had assembled. God Bless the volunteers!

It was Sunday, September 12, 2010. We waited for the day to begin and we wondered, would it be too hot, too windy, too rainy? What did the day hold for us? I am pleased to say that Holy Family Maronite Church in Mendota Heights, Minn., was once again blessed by a beautiful, sunny and warm day for our Annual Fall Festival.

The Fall Festival was kicked off by a morning Divine Liturgy celebrated by our Pastor, Fr. Rodrigue Constantin. Then there was *Zaatar* bread to be tasted, cakes to be won at the cake walk, and baskets to be bid on in the silent auction. Volunteers moved quickly and efficiently among the guests as any good host or hostess would. When the day ended we had sold every baked good and every silent auction item.

It was a very successful festival, a success that would not have been achieved without the endless donation of time, talents and treasures from parishioners and the encouraging support of our new neighbors who did not seem to get enough of our delicious food!

A huge thank you to the event Chairperson, Vicki Whebbe, to all the individual chairs, and to each volunteer that keeps this parish thriving. □

## Eparchy of Saint Maron Annual Clergy Retreat

The Annual Clergy Retreat of the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn will take place from Monday evening, January 10, to Friday morning, January 14, 2011, at Our Lady of Florida Spiritual Center, 1300 US Highway One, North Palm Beach, FL 33408. The Retreat Master will be Reverend Eugene Fulton from the Trinity Retreat House, in Larchmont, New York. □

## Lawrence, Massachusetts *Theology on Tap*



**"By wisdom a house is built, and through understanding it is established; through knowledge its rooms are filled with rare and beautiful treasures"** Proverbs 24:3-4.

The twenty or so attendees at the MYA-sponsored Theology on Tap session truly left with the knowledge capable of filling a room with treasures. On Tuesday, November 9, 2010, the Maronite Young Adults group of St. Anthony Maronite Church in Lawrence, Mass., gathered at nearby Shadi's Mediterranean Restaurant in Methuen, Mass., to share in a night in which the curiosities that they brought to the table were able to be answered. The MYA was blessed to have Monsignor Peter Azar, Pastor of St. Anthony, and Father Vincent Farhat, Parochial Vicar of St. Anthony, present in order to help guide them and present them with the proper reasoning for their inquiries. The chosen topic of the night was Freemasonry. Throughout the discussion, the attendees enjoyed various appetizers and shared a drink with one another.

The premise of Theology on Tap is to gather and discuss different topics involving the Catholic Church and theology as a whole, while being in a comfortable setting. It reaches out to young adults and welcomes them to join in discussion about different issues, inquiries, or topics regarding their faith. □

**Deadline for next month's issue of *The Maronite Voice* is December 26, 2010.**

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

Send all changes of address, news, pictures and personal correspondence to: *The Maronite Voice*

4611 Sadler Road  
Glen Allen, Virginia 23060

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

Email: Gmsebaali@aol.com □

## Torrington, Connecticut *Church Renovation*

by David Leard

**S**t. Maron Church of Torrington, Connecticut, is embarking upon a major renovation of its church facility. On September 11, 2010, a kickoff "Renovation Celebration" fundraiser was held in the church hall. A crowd of about 150 people was in attendance.

The celebration was accompanied by food and drink donated by parishioners and local merchants. A brochure describing the proposed renovation was distributed to all attendees. A brief presentation by Father Larry Michael, the architect, and Michael Nejaime, head of the building committee, was made. As a result of the September 11 Renovation Celebration, over \$250,000 was raised in pledges. A wonderful time was had by all, and this was a major success in kicking off our fundraising campaign.

St. Maron Church was built in the 1920s. It includes some beautiful original stained-glass windows made in France. However, over the years, the building has come to need several repairs. It is also in need of many modern updates, including air conditioning and an elevator for access (a steep stairway is the only current means of access).

The renovation plan includes all the necessary repairs, updating, and bringing things up to code. It preserves the original stained-glass windows and the basic structure of the church. It will add additional space for a gathering room with baptismal font, a small daily Chapel, and an expanded sacristy.

While the plan is an ambitious one for a small parish, it has engendered a lot of enthusiasm. The renovation celebration was a great success. Many more fundraisers will be planned over the next several years, including a Feast of St. Maron dinner in February, 2011. St. Maron parish will also be celebrating its 100th anniversary in 2011. □

## Eparchy of Saint Maron *Christmas Directives*

**Christmas Novena:** His Excellency Bishop Gregory Mansour has asked that the Maronite Christmas Novena be celebrated in all the parishes of the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn from December 15 to December 23, 2010, inclusive.

**Christmas Eve Liturgy:** It is not the custom of the Maronite Church to celebrate Christmas before midnight. However, the Chancery Office is fully aware that in many areas the Christmas Eve Liturgy (around 5:00 P.M.) is very popular. Therefore, pastors are urged to do all they can to maintain the Midnight tradition if at all possible. □



## Atlantic City, New Jersey New Maronite Church



The front view of the newly purchased St. Peter Church, the new home of Our Lady Star of the East Maronite Mission.

by Mary Asmar Smith

Christmas came early this year for the Maronite community of Pleasantville (Atlantic City), New Jersey. On Sunday, November 21, Msgr. Maroun Asmar, Mission Administrator, celebrated Divine Liturgy in their new church located on Black Horse Turnpike in Pleasantville, known to everyone as St. Peter's Church. The Maronite Mission of Our Lady Star of the East began in 2002 and their parishioners have worked very hard over the last eight years until they realized their dream and purchased St. Peter church.

Msgr. Asmar gave thanks to God and said that "they want to reach out to all the people of the community." The parishioners were excited to finally have a place to call home and purchasing St. Peter Church was well worth the wait. Founded in 1898, St. Peter Church is a great example of Spanish colonial architecture. Known as St. Peter's Village, the complex includes a Church that can seat up to one thousand people, a school with four floors that previously had 250 students, a rectory with five bedrooms and three offices and two parking lots. Vaulted ceilings soar majestically and large stain glass windows depict scenes from the Bible throughout Church grounds. The ambiance is peaceful and lends itself to deep meditation and reverence. Parishioners anxiously await the visit of His Excellency Bishop Gregory Mansour for the dedication. □

## Danbury, Connecticut Maronite Conference

by Betty Najm

In honor of the Jubilee Year of St. Maron, Father Anthony Salim held a Maronite conference on Saturday, November 13, at St. Anthony Church in Danbury, Conn. Approximately thirty-five parishioners, ranging in age from early teens and young adults to young-at-heart seniors, attended the conference. Father Salim, pastor of St. Therese



Fr. Anthony Salim (center) with Fr. Jean Younes and members of St. Anthony who attended the conference on November 13.

Maronite Church in Brockton, Massachusetts, focused the conference on the life of St. Maron, the history of the Maronite church, its liturgy and the sacraments. An enlightening documentary was shown and handouts were distributed to show the importance of Antioch and Edessa as the area where the Maronite faith was founded. A lively discussion occurred over the twenty (20) Eastern Catholic Churches that make up about 2% or twenty million of the one billion Catholics on earth today. The Maronite Catholics belong to the Syro-Antiochene rite which is one of five Eastern traditions. The other four traditions are Alexandrian, Armenian, Chaldean and Byzantine. □

## From the Book Shelf

***The Maronite Icons, Saints of the Maronite Church:*** constitutes the second volume of Maronite Icons that have been painted by the Maronite Archbishopric in Nicosia, Cyprus. It contains a collection of icons that illustrate the most revered saints in our Maronite Church. The book is composed of four parts:

- ★ **Part One** presents icons depicting Old Testament figures who prepared for the coming of the Messiah
- ★ **Part Two** presents icons depicting evangelists, saints and apostles of the First Church
- ★ **Part Three** is dedicated to the icons of the most venerated saints in the Maronite Church
- ★ **Part Four** is an artistic reproduction of the most important icons of the Rabbula Gospel.

***The Maronite Icons*** (both volume one and volume two) are available for \$50 each volume plus \$7 shipping.

To order your copy (ies) please write to:

Saint Maron Publications  
4611 Sadler Road  
Glen Allen, Virginia 23060

For further information, call (804) 762-4301, or visit [www.stmaron.org](http://www.stmaron.org). □

# One and Many Churches

by  
*Chorbishop John D. Faris*

When being introduced to other Catholics, Eastern Catholics are often given the litmus test, "Are you under the pope?" They are asked this question because most Catholics identify the Catholic Church with the Latin Catholic Church. It comes as a shock to many to learn that the Catholic Church is actually a communion of twenty-two churches; one of these churches is the Latin Church and the other twenty-one fall under the category of Eastern Churches---all of them are Catholic!

An explanation of the evolution of the Eastern churches is complex and somewhat confusing. Relations among them are comparable to many American families today that are comprised of stepparents, brothers and sisters, half-brother and sisters and in-laws.

## *Why Are There So Many?*

Some would offer the simplistic explanation that the multiplicity of Eastern churches is the result of disputes and divisions. Like so many simple answers, this is only partially correct. Some churches are indeed the result of divisions that unfortunately took place. However, history demonstrates otherwise and reveals to us that while the Church has always sought unity of faith in the one Lord, it was never "one" from the perspective of liturgy, discipline or government. The Gospel message was taken from Jerusalem to various parts of the world, took root and flourished to give rise to a wonderful diversity of churches that were, for some time, all in full communion with each other.

## *Christianity in the Roman Empire*

Christianity arose in the context of one of history's greatest political structures, the Roman Empire, a governmental structure encompassing a territory today controlled by approximately forty



Chorbishop John D. Faris.

nations. Despite the persecution inflicted on the adherents of this new religious movement, the Empire furnished Christians with a superstructure in which to function; that is, the necessary communication, transportation and commercial systems served in the spread of the Good News.

Certain cities that were of great importance for the secular world attained similar importance also for Christians for the very same reasons.

Rome, Alexandria, and Antioch were all centers of commerce and government. As such, they attracted the apostles and evolved into centers of evangelization. With the passage of time, the Christian communities that matured in these cities took pride in their apostolic foundations. Rome and Antioch identified themselves with Peter, who preached in both of these cities, and who was martyred in Rome. The Christians of Alexandria take pride in the tradition that Saint Mark brought the Christian message to them. This identification with an apostle eventually became so important to the Christian world that Constantinople, after its establishment as an imperial capital in the fourth century, coincidentally found the tomb of Saint Andrew, so that it, too, could lay claim to apostolic authority. Eventually, Constantinople would overshadow all the other important Christian centers and even rival Rome. In doing so, it reminded the Romans that Saint Andrew was the elder brother of Peter.

The fourth century was a turning point for the Christian Church. In the first part of the century, emperor Constantine the Great declared Christianity to be the state religion. No longer were Christians obliged to hide from persecutors in the catacombs. Instead, Christians were able to profess their faith publicly and to establish centers of worship and administration.

During the latter part of the century, another emperor, Theodosius, divided the Roman Empire into two separate empires, the Western and the Eastern, with their respective capitals at Rome and Constantinople.

This division was to be of crucial importance to the Church, because when divisions arose, the rifts occurred along the same lines, that is, Western and Eastern. The term Eastern Church designates all those churches which found their origins in the Eastern Roman Empire.

## *Centers of Evangelization*

Jerusalem is a city revered as holy by the followers of three great monotheistic religions, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, because it is held to be the site of the Temple of Solomon, the crucifixion, resurrection and ascension of Jesus, the descent of the Holy Spirit, and the rock from which Mohammed ascended to heaven. As an aside, medieval mapmakers, who were concerned more with showing people their place in the world rather than geography, always placed Jerusalem in the center of the map. Everything else revolved around that one city. Despite the disposition of Divine Providence that this city was to be the site of numerous key events in religious history, the fact that it was isolated and landlocked made it insignificant in the cultural, commercial and governmental spheres; therefore, it was ill-suited to be the center of any religious movement. Tragic events resulted in even a further decline in the city. It was destroyed soon after the death of Jesus in 70 A.D. and rebuilt only to be destroyed again in 135 A.D.

By the time that Christianity had attained a certain public recognition, Jerusalem had already ceased to be a vital, progressive center of the Christian Church and was instead a place of sacred memories.

It is fortunate that the fate of Christianity was not bound to the fate of Jerusalem. After receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit, the followers of Jesus soon dispersed and established Christian communities throughout the Roman Empire and even beyond its Eastern boundaries in the kingdom of Armenia and the Persian Empire.

When the followers of Jesus began to take the Good News to the pagan world, the new religion naturally presented itself as a novelty, and, since its followers were usually to be found in the urban centers, it was regarded as a religion of the city. Association with urban society brought with it great culture and economic resources, which are naturally more available in the cities than in the rural areas. After the Church was recognized by the state, it soon received the largess of the imperial court. Imitating the imperial court, the Church constructed elaborate churches and monasteries. Imperial money and wealthy benefactors also afforded the Church the possibility to establish libraries, schools, and charitable institutions. However, there is a negative side to the Church's identification with the urban population. The rural population was mistrustful of this new institution with its "citified" ways. They were so reluctant to accept the new religion that the word for countryside, "pagus," eventually came to mean non-believers, hence, the term "pagan."

Even after the rural population had come to accept Christianity, difficulties arose because of a conflict of culture and political interests. The cities of Constantinople, Antioch and Alexandria were Greek in culture and identified themselves with the political interests of the imperial government. The rural regions surrounding Alexandria and Antioch were not Greek in culture, but were Coptic and Semitic in language and culture and were antipathetic towards Constantinople, which was decried as a drain on their resources. The doctrinal disputes that arose during the fifth century, instead of being fundamentally theological in nature, were expressions of the cultural,

political and economic tensions of the times. A modern example of political tensions being given a religious veneer are the problems in North Ireland.

A city which was to gain importance very early in the life of the Church was Antioch, a political capital and center of commerce and culture. As such, it was an ideal location for the dissemination of the Christian message, especially after the fall of Jerusalem. As I said earlier, Peter is connected with the establishment of the Church in Antioch; Paul used the city as a base for his mission to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles. Their efforts to upbuild and consolidate the community resulted in the attainment of a unique communal identity, and it was in Antioch that the followers of Jesus were first called "Christians" (Acts 11:26).

Many of the Eastern Churches trace their origins to Antioch. In addition to the region immediately surrounding it in the Middle East, the churches of Persia, India, Mongolia and China all find their origins in the evangelization effort of the Antiochenes. Unfortunately, the current status of Antioch, today a small town in Turkey, does not reveal the former greatness of a city so crucial to the evolution of Eastern Christianity.

Another key city in the life of the Eastern Christian world is Alexandria. Founded in 331 B.C. by Alexander the Great, the city of Alexandria exerted an influence over northern Africa in a manner similar to that of Antioch in the Middle East.

We mentioned a few moments ago that the Gospel message was to expand beyond the boundaries of the Roman Empire into Persia and Armenia. It is important to recall the fact that the Gospel crossed imperial boundaries, because the churches of Persia and Armenia were soon to separate from the rest of the Christian world because of the animosity among the governments. An insignificant city on the Bosphorus, Byzantium, as it was then called, was to be the site of emperor Constantine's new imperial capital. Constantinople, as it eventually came to be called, attained a prestige that overshadowed the entire East and rivaled the status of Rome in the governance of the Church.

## *Heresies, Invasions and Schisms*

However, this blessed unity was not to last forever. Tensions within the Church soon gave rise to divisions. One doctrinal dispute questioning the divinity of Christ, known as Nestorianism, which was condemned at a Church Council in 431, resulted in the separation of the Church of Persia from the rest of the Christian Church. Monophysitism, a theological position that exaggerates the divine nature of Christ to the detriment of his human nature, was condemned during the Council of Chalcedon in 451. This resulted in the separation of the territory surrounding Antioch, Alexandria, and Armenia. While the countryside had departed, the urban Christians of these cities, faithful to Constantinople, remained in full communion.

Up to this point the divisions of which we have spoken all took place within the East itself. By the beginning of the eleventh century, another division arose--this time along Eastern/Western lines. For some time the Eastern and Western Empires had become culturally and politically estranged. Rome became Latin and Constantinople was Greek. Misunderstandings arose that eventually resulted in the rupture between the Eastern Churches and the Church of Rome. Those of the East identified themselves as Orthodox and those of the West as Catholics (even though both terms can be aptly applied to both Churches.) With the exception of a few scattered communities in southern Italy and Mt. Lebanon, Catholicism had disappeared from the East.

## *Partial Reunions*

During the sixteenth century with the Counter Reformation of Trent, missionaries were sent to the Eastern territories. The dedication, erudition, and wealth of the missionaries impressed the Eastern Orthodox, and eventually small pockets of Eastern Catholic communities were founded. The Church was at a crossroads at this point. It is important to recall that for five hundred years, the Catholic Church was almost entirely a Latin Catholic

Church. To be Catholic was to be Latin Catholic.

The Church authorities were confronted with the issue of whether the new converts needed to become Latin in order to be Catholic. It was decided that they could become Catholic and still retain their Eastern traditions. After bishops had been appointed for these communities, Eastern Catholic Churches came into existence. There are now twenty-one Eastern Catholic Churches, all in communion with Rome.

### ***Traditions and Rites***

The centers of evangelization, the cities of Alexandria, Antioch, Constantinople, the Persian Empire, and the Kingdom of Armenia, gave rise to the five major traditions in the Church: Alexandria, Antioch, Constantinople, Chaldean (East Syrian) and Armenian. The twenty-one Eastern Catholic churches each observe a rite that was derived from one of these traditions.

### ***Emigrations***

Two world wars, the persecution of communist dictatorships, regional conflicts (the most famous being the Arab-Israeli wars) and the rise of fanatic Islamic fundamentalism resulted in the massive emigration of Eastern Christians to all parts of the world during the twentieth century. This migration has resulted in a situation wherein the population of the Eastern Churches -- both Catholic and non-Catholic - is greater in the lands of the immigration than in the place of the Church's origins. In some places Christianity has almost disappeared. Istanbul, the former Constantinople, has only a few thousand Christians subject to the Ecumenical Patriarch.

### ***A Tradition of Disunity***

One can see that the history of Christianity has been one of expansion and division. In general, the Church is divided between East and West. Eastern Christianity itself is divided into the Assyrian Church of the East, the Oriental Orthodox Churches, the Orthodox Churches and the Eastern Catholic Churches. The plea of our Lord for unity was a prediction of this

unfortunate situation. Perhaps the greatest tragedy was the fact that the Christian world had become comfortable with the arrangement; disunity had become an accepted fact-until the birth of the ecumenical movement. In short, ecumenism is a quest for unity among Christians. For a moment, let us examine this movement with regard to the Eastern Churches.

The Catholic Church can take pride in the accomplishments that have been made in the quest for unity, a program known as ecumenism. Nevertheless, it should be noted that the Catholics are the "new kids on the block" with regard to ecumenism. At first the Catholic Church was mistrustful of any such effort. It is only necessary to refer to a statement of Pope Pius XI to appreciate the Catholic mindset: "There is only one way in which the unity of Christians may be fostered, and that is by promoting the return to the one true Church of Christ of those who are separated from it; for from that one true Church they have in the past unhappily fallen away."

### ***Dialogues of Charity and Truth***

With Vatican II came a refined understanding of "Church" that included not only the Catholic Church, but all who professed the name of Christ. It was with this new understanding of Church that the Catholic Church embarked on a quest for unity. The journey was to be undertaken on two paths: a dialogue of charity and a dialogue of truth. The dialogue of truth is the interchange that takes place between the theologians as they attempt to reconcile the doctrinal differences that have arisen during the past 1500 years. However, this dialogue of truth must be preceded by and based upon a dialogue of charity, which is simply a reversal of the process of alienation that has occurred. Like any healing process, it is gradual, painfully slow and difficult to measure. It is a journey that is also marred by setbacks and disappointments. Nevertheless, we are confident that the Lord who has begun the good work will see it through to completion (Phil. 1:6). Success in the dialogue of charity will not take the form of a signed agreement

between Church leaders; rather it will have achieved its goal if someday Eastern Christians awake to an atmosphere of love and trust that has been lacking for so long. □

## **Eastern Catholic Churches**

### **Alexandrian Tradition**

Coptic Church  
Ethiopian Church

### **Antiochian Tradition**

Malankar Church  
Maronite Church  
Syrian Church

### **Constantinopolitan Tradition**

Albanian Church  
Bulgarian Church  
Greek Church  
Greek-Melkite Church  
Hungarian Church  
Italo-Albanian Church  
Krizevci Church  
Romanian Church  
Russian Church  
Ruthenian Church  
Slovak Church  
Ukrainian Church

### **Chaldean Tradition**

Chaldean Church  
Syro-Malabar Church

### **Armenian Tradition**

Armenian Church

## Livonia, Michigan Parish Anniversary



Members of St. Rafka Mission present Judge Murad with an appreciation plaque.

It was with great pride and much hope for the future that the Mission of St. Rafka in Livonia [Detroit], Michigan, celebrated its sixth anniversary on October 9, 2010, with a fundraising dinner/dance. Thanks to many generous donors, hard working volunteers and the help of the youth organization, the event proved to be a successful fundraiser and fun evening for all.

During the evening, St. Rafka Mission paid a special tribute to the Honorable Deacon Al Murad who attended with his family. Judge Murad has served St. Rafka since its inception in a small chapel in the basement of Madonna University in Livonia when it could count only five or six families among its membership.

Today, St. Rafka boasts a membership of more than seventy families, an active youth group and religious education classes. The Liturgy is celebrated at St. Maurice Catholic Church, but religious education classes, potluck dinners, celebrations and events are held at St. Rafka's modest center.

St. Rafka owes much of its growth as a mission and its unity as a family to the guidance of Fr. John Paul Kimes who was the Administrator for four years. After Fr. Kimes was called to serve at the Vatican, Chorbishop Michael Kail and then Fr. Gary George of St. Sharbel in Warren, along with the Mariamite Monks of Ann Arbor, made sure the Divine Liturgy was celebrated every Sunday.

Looking to the future, St. Rafka Mission would like to welcome Fr. Gaby Hoyek as its newly assigned Administrator. We look forward to the day when the mission, by the grace of God, the intercessions of St. Rafka and the guidance of its clergy will become a full-fledged parish. □

## Newtown Square, Pennsylvania All Saints Day

On Sunday, October 31, 2010 the children and a few young adults of St. Sharbel Church in Newtown Square, Penn., came dressed as their favorite saint in



honor of All Saints Day. The children were included in the Processional and all took their places in the front pews to observe the Divine Liturgy close up.

As a change from the traditional Halloween costumes, this was to teach the children about the saints and actually what it takes to become a saint. This was the first time at St. Sharbel for the children to dress as their favorite saint and from the response; it will not be the last. There were several St. Sharbels, St. Marons, St. Rafkas, and St. Georges at different age levels. Accompanying them were St. Padre Pio, St. Gabriel, St. Barbara, St. Timothy, the Blessed Mother and some angels. A few came as Spiderman, and a few princesses could be seen. St. Moses came with a staff in one hand and the Ten Commandments in the other.

At the end of the Liturgy, Fr. Paul Mouawad, Pastor, asked Moses for the tablet with the ten commandments and took time to ask questions and discuss each of the commandments with the children. After the Divine Liturgy, a party was held in the hall for the children, and they all received a bag full of treats. □

## San Francisco, California Parishioners Band

by Nicole Rishwan

San Francisco Bay area Maronite Church is proud to have a band singing in most of the community events. The band members are active and committed parishioners. Fred



is the main singer, Minaise is the guitarist, Jack is a singer and drummer (*derbake*), Sam is a drummer (*daff*). Their wives, Mayada, Viviane, Raghida, and Maha are the choir members. The community is blessed to have such a band to sing and entertain the community. □

## St. Louis, Missouri *Maronite History Committee*

The Committee has the objective to gather historical information on the Maronite Church within the United States so as to 1) create a virtual showcase of the information on a website; 2) publish a coffee table size book, and 3) gather tangible archives that may be preserved safely in the Maronite Heritage Center in Saint Louis. The pieces to this historical puzzle, which trace our Church history back to the 1860s, are to be found in Lebanon, among our parishes, in the archives of Latin Dioceses and in the memories of our elders.

The Committee has found evidence that the first official assignment of a Maronite priest to the United States by the Patriarch occurred in 1890. There were visiting priests prior to this but 1890 was the first official assignment. The record of each priest who has served in the United States has been gathered by Evelyn Karam Small. In an amazing labor of love, on her own initiative, she poured over immigration records and parish histories and created spreadsheets of information that have taken months of careful work.

She has now been able to confirm data with Randa Hakim, who as an archivist with the permission of Bishops Shaheen and Mansour, was given access to Patriarchal archives and has generously donated her time and expertise for the sake of the Committee's objective. We are all grateful to Randa, Evelyn and to all on the Committee and we know that future generations will benefit from this great service.

Most of the Committee's efforts to this point have been in "gathering" information and confirming its validity. Since some of the Patriarchal records are in Latin, French, Italian, Arabic or even *Karshouni* (Arabic words spelled with Syriac characters so as not to be noticed by Ottoman authorities) it takes a lot of time and generosity of spirit to confirm much of the data.

If you would like to see some of the information gathered, view our website (a work in process) at [www.usmaronites.com](http://www.usmaronites.com). Also you can watch our progress in future issues of the Maronite Voice as well.

The Committee also has a special project to commemorate our deceased loved ones called Maronites Remembered. If you would like to contribute information on a loved one simply contact Ramona Milford with the information. She can be reached at [ramonamarie26@gmail.com](mailto:ramonamarie26@gmail.com). □

## Miami, Florida *MYA Conference*

by Cecilia Romero

Over one hundred young adults from all over the nation came to quench their spiritual thirst and live their Maronite spirituality at the second MYA Leadership workshop, held October 29 – 31, 2010, in Miami, Fla., The Workshop was hosted by Fr. Elie Mikhael, MYA director and Pastor of Our Lady of Lebanon in Miami, Fla. Assisting were Fr. Elias Sleiman, MYA director for the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon and Assistant Pastor in Los Angeles, Calif.;



Fr. Jean Younes, Pastor of St. Anthony Church in Danbury, Conn.; and the MYA board. Also in attendance were Fr. Vincent Farhat (Lawrence, Mass.), Fr. Naji Kiwan (Waterbury, Conn.), Fr. Pierre El Khoury (Houston, Tex.), Fr. Toni Akouri (Somerset, N.J.), Fr. Rudolf Wakim (Carnegie/Aliquippa, Penn.), Sister Marla Marie Lucas and Therese Touma, Postulant.

The Workshop began Friday evening with guest speaker Dorothy Polchinski, Director of Young Adults for the Archdiocese of Atlanta, who gave a presentation: How to connect young adults with Christ, with the Church and with other young adults. Strategies of how to form the group and make it a part of the church community, personal stories, feedback from the audience gave way to emphasize with a more spiritual approach the following day .

On Saturday our guest speaker, Fr. John Cusick addressed how to effectively initiate parish young adult groups and strategies to keep them going. Fr. Cusick suggested a number of key ideas to get a group started:

- ★ **Think of the people before the program.** Be direct with people, get to know them personally, think of a suitable time and invite them to come to the parish.
- ★ **Have a realistic goal** of how many people you will need to form this group. Be optimistic!
- ★ **Create an effective group, dream BIG, go Slow, and think Small.**

The workshop then focused on answering spiritual questions of the importance of confession, having a more spiritual life not only at Church but in one's work and never living an ordinary life when you can be extraordinary and make a difference.

At the end of the workshop Ms. Polchinski gave a presentation for plans that we have with the Archdiocese of Atlanta to attend World Youth Day 2011 in Madrid, Spain. An agreement was made by Bishop Gregory Mansour and Archbishop Wilton Gregory to have a group of Maronites travel to Madrid with the archdiocesan group. Ms. Polchinski invited Maronite adults ages 18-35 to attend World Youth Day in conjunction with her group from Atlanta. She emphasized that this would be a great opportunity to give witness and celebrate the gift of our faith with other Catholic youth from around the world.

For more information, see the Archdiocese of Atlanta website, <http://www.yam.org/events/wyd2011.php>. □

## Brockton, Massachusetts NAM Awareness Weekend



Fr. Anthony Salim, Pastor, with Mary Matook and Gordon McKinnon, Massabki Award recipients, and Michael Macary, New England Regional Vice President for NAM.

by Michael Macary

On the weekend of the Consecration of the Church Sunday [November 7, 2010], the parish community of Saint Theresa Maronite Church in Brockton, Mass., held a NAM Weekend, during which two parishioners were recipients of Silver Massabki awards for this past year. The awards were presented during Sunday Divine Liturgy celebrated by their pastor, Fr. Anthony J. Salim.

After speaking briefly about the National Apostolate of Maronites (NAM), which sponsors the awards program, Michael Macary, New England Regional Vice President for NAM, presented the recipients with their pins and certificates. The Massabki Awards are designed to recognize outstanding service rendered to the Maronite Church in the United States by members of the Apostolate who live fully the Maronite way. The inspiration for these awards, as we know, is the courageous and holy lives of the Brothers Massabki, Maronites who in the 1860s gave their lives in martyrdom for the faith. They are the patrons of NAM.

Gordon McKinnon was honored for his tireless work for the parish community. Gordon chairs the Parish Stewardship Council, volunteers as Coordinator of the parish Religious Education program and serves as a catechist in it, and even finds time to serve at the altar with one of his sons, Matthew. Gordon exemplifies the best qualities of our parish laity.

Mary Matook was honored for her longtime service to the parish as a faithful member of the choir, member of the Altar Society, occasional fundraising coordinator, and as an outstanding NAM delegate for many years. She has been energetic, persistent, and always willing to help in the activities of our Churches in the New England Region, to the parish and to the Apostolate. Followed the Liturgy the parish hosted a light luncheon in honor of the awardees.

## First Maronite Heritage Day

by Fr. Anthony J. Salim

On November 6, 2010, Saturday of the Weekend of the Consecration of the Church, our liturgical New Year, St. Theresa Maronite Church's Religious Education Staff conducted the first of six Maronite Heritage Days of the 2010-11 Religious Education Program. The parish has, of course, a weekly Sunday School program which is conducted before the Sunday *Qoorbono* (Divine Liturgy). This program is made up of students attending area public schools.

But what about those children whose parents send them to Latin Catholic schools, and who get religion classes five days a week? Historically, many parents of these children think that this education is enough for the Faith. Too often they do not see the need to send them to the parish Sunday School program. The problem with this, of course, is that while getting a Catholic education from the Latin-rite vision, how will the children learn about anything Eastern and Maronite?

To address this common eparchial problem, Fr. Anthony Salim, Pastor, working with the parish religious education staff, notably Coordinator Gordon McKinnon and catechist Alison Saade, Heritage Days Coordinator, has encouraged the development of six sessions called "Maronite Heritage Days." Held on selected Saturdays from 1:30 to 3:40 p.m., the program offers teaching in four areas: Maronite Identity; Maronite Worship; Syriac Culture, and Basic Catholic Beliefs. Helping with these special days are Sr. Marla Marie Lucas and Postulant Therese Touma of the Maronite Servants of Christ the Light. Alison taught about the background of the Maronite Church; Sister and Therese taught about St. Maron, and Fr. Anthony explained about the Syriac - the written form of Jesus' Aramaic - that we use in the *Qoorbono*, and focused on the meaning of the Trisagion (*Qadeeshat Aloho*) and how the variable responses of the Liturgical Year - such as "O Christ, crucified for us, have mercy on us! - help us to enter into the spirit of the seasons and their meanings. The children impressively sang this ancient hymn in Syriac and learned to sing it in English as well.

Our first session was a big success, with about thirty - five children - of both public and Catholic schools - and a dozen parents, some of whom stayed for the entire session, then took their children to Divine Liturgy. All in all, with staff, about fifty people participated.

The next session, on Saturday, December 4, will focus on the Righteous and Just (i.e., the Saints), including St. Barbara (feast day December 4) and St. Nicholas (December 6) and for a different level of children, St. Maron. The children will plant legumes, according to the custom for St. Barbara's Day, and the sprouted plants will be brought to the Crèche-Manger for Christmas. We will also begin to explain the Service of the Word and introduce our Lectionary, among other items. □



## Westchester, New York Massabki Awards



Fr. Jean Younes, Administrator, and Mike Naber, NAM Executive Director, present Monir and Hayat Barakat with the Massabki Silver Award.

by Antoine Najjar

The Westchester Maronite Mission, Westchester, N.Y., organized its 5<sup>th</sup> annual Family Lunch on Sunday, November 21, 2010. The event started with activities and a magic show for the children followed by lunch and an update on the Mission's achievements and focus for the coming months. It was also the opportunity to recognize a few people in the Mission, and most notably the NAM Massabki award was presented by Father Jean Younes and NAM Executive Director Mike Naber to Monir and Hayat Barakat. Monir and Hayat have been an inspiration to all Mission families through their energy and commitment to the Mission. The day was capped by the Divine Liturgy served by all the children and teenagers. It was truly a day of "thanks." □



*Our warm personal greetings to you and your families as we celebrate the Incarnation of the Son of God.*

*We are grateful for the support you have given us during the year.*

*May the Prince of Peace fill your hearts with His Love and Peace at Christmas and in the New Year.*

*From all of us here at The Maronite Voice, Merry Christmas and a Blessed and Joyful 2011.*

## Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania Annual Food Festival



Seated: Vaughn Koter, Lena Michael (Chairwoman), Fr. Hanna Karam, Administrator, and Lena Cheka. Standing: Sharon Koter, Cynthia Collins, Elaine Wehbe, Attorney Ferris Wehbe and John Koury.

St. Anthony/St. George Maronite Church in Wilkes-Barre, Penn., celebrated its heritage with a Lebanese Food Festival on September 18 - 19, 2010. The festival featured games of chance, raffle tickets and authentic Lebanese food and pastries as well as live entertainment of traditional music and dance. The festival created a wonderful experience for everyone who attended. The Parish community came together to make the event a great success and has set a precedent for future festivals to come. □

## Murray, Utah Parish Anniversary



Chaldean members of St. Jude Parish.

In honor of the 34<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of St. Jude Maronite Church in Murray, Utah, and in celebration of their Patron Feast Day, Dance Instructors Michelle Simon and Theresa Pendergast led the youth group in their first Middle East dance performance on October 24, 2010. The Chaldean members of St. Jude Church shared their style of Middle Eastern dance and added an extra delight to the celebration. □



## NAM 2010 Vocations Awareness Contest Winners

The National Apostolate of Maronites (NAM) sponsors annual contests for Maronite youth throughout the country. The vocation awareness contest takes place during the year and the results are announced at each convention. At this year's national convention in Birmingham, Alabama, the following winners were recognized for their achievements and contributions.

### Essays

#### Kindergarten / Grade One

*Write a prayer thanking God for a priest, deacon, subdeacon or religious.*

- Brianna Cassidy** St. Anthony, Glen Allen, Va.
- Benjamin Faris** St. Elias, Birmingham, Ala.
- Andie Bouhaidar** St. Anthony, Glen Allen, Va.

#### Grades Two And Three

*Write a prayer thanking God for those studying for the priesthood.*

- Karleigh RIsha** St. George, Uniontown, Penn.
- Souad Shaia** St. Anthony, Glen Allen, Va.
- William Chber** St. Elias, Birmingham, Ala.

#### Grades Four Through Six

*Write a letter of thanks to a priest, deacon, subdeacon or religious.*

- Rachel Flammia** St. Anthony, Glen Allen, Va.
- Joseph Hitti** St. Maron, Minneapolis, Minn.
- Christy Bouhaiadr** St. Anthony, Glen Allen, Va.

#### Grades Seven Through Nine

*Write an essay describing an event in your life, where a priest, deacon, subdeacon or religious made a difference.*

No Entries

#### Grades Ten Through Twelve

*Write an essay describing the process of discernment needed to discover if one has a vocation [subdeacon, deacon, priest or religious].*

No Entries

### Poster Winners

#### Kindergarten / Grade One

*Priest, Deacons, Subdeacons, Religious Having Fun!*

- Mimi Misan** St. Ephrem, San Diego, Calif.
- Hannah Sutton** St. George Church, Uniontown, Penn.
- Daniel Boackle** St. Elias, Birmingham, Ala.

#### Grades Two And Three

*Families "Grow" Vocations*

- Grace Khouri** St. Maron, Minneapolis, Minn.
- Isabella Boackle** St. Elias, Birmingham, AL.
- Simon Kusinar** St. George, Uniontown, Penn.

#### Grades Four Through Six

*God Is Calling, Are You Listening?*

- Rebecca Georgiana** St. George, Uniontown, Penn.
- Carla Bassil** St. Maron, Minneapolis, Minn.
- Amanda Flower** St. Maron, Torrington, Conn.

#### Grades Seven Through Nine

*God Needs You to Lead His Flock*

- Cassie Dablin** St. Maron, Torrington, Conn.
- Stephanie Moeller** St. Ephrem, San Diego, Calif.

#### Grades Ten Through Twelve

*The Plan of God is Written in our Hearts*

- Gianna Genova** St. Maron, Torrington, Conn.

The deadline for the 2011 NAM Vocations Awareness Contest is May 15, 2011. All entries must be sent to Robert C. Zugby, Chairman of Education Committee at 94 Ridge Road, Greenbelt, MD 20770 in order to be considered for prizes. For more information about NAM and its programs visit [www.namnews.org](http://www.namnews.org). □

# ***We Are the Christians of Iraq Letter of an Iraqi Priest to His Wounded Country***

by *Father Albert Hisham Naoum*

*Father Albert Hisham Naoum is an Iraqi Chaldean priest studying communications in Rome, and was a friend of Father Wasim Sabieh and Father Thayer Saad Abdal, the two priests who died in the October 31, 2010, attack on Our Lady of Salvation Syrian Catholic Church.*

**T**he martyrs of the Church of Our Lady of Salvation showed the world once again who we are, the Christians of Iraq, and they joined the martyrs of our Church, those who sacrificed their lives to Christ our Lord, who taught us to bear witness to the resurrection of life, for forgiveness, for hope, for love, for faith, for joy.

The blood of our fallen heroes cries out to the world and all humanity, and urges the Christians of Iraq, wherever we are, to "preach" to the world about the suffering and risen Christ who lives in our wounded land.

Yes, I say "preach" because our faith is good news, as it "was and will always be." Who has ears to hear, hear us now, and know that Christ lives in the Christians of Iraq. It's a witness that lives and will continue to live. And if there is someone who does not feel the importance of witnessing in life, we would only say to him and to the whole world, that for us it is life itself. What the world calls "nothing," for us it is "everything!"

The Christians of Iraq are well aware that the risen Christ has conquered death, not because they are baptized believers, but rather because, with Him, they have experienced death on the cross several times, and with Him they drank the bitter cup and have experienced the abandonment of others. And side by side with Him they walked the way of His cross, and fell under the weight of their cross -- once in the attack on their churches, one with death, and yet another with the massacre of Our Lady of Salvation. Yet, they continue to stand up and live their faith as they have always done throughout history, walking along the path of suffering.

For Christians in Iraq, Oct. 31 was not the first time they have suffered, and no human being, especially those who claim to want peace, but really don't, can pretend that this will be the last time. But they do not interest us, because our hope has never been, and never will be, in them, but in the One who took up His cross and walked the path of death to ensure that life will continue and eventually win.

## **Joy and Tragedy**

Iraq's Christians have experienced deeply the meaning of life because they have experienced its joys after having tasted the bitterness of grief. They have lived in hope after experiencing the power of tragedy. They experienced laughter after having paid tears, and have experienced smiles after seeing their will broken by violence. These are really the Christians of Iraq with their good hearts, who love everyone, their country, and life, and these are those who forgive their enemies, and sow goodness wherever they are, spreading the spirit of peace.

And despite their great suffering, they never forgot to live their Christian spirit in every place they went.

As an example of all this I can show you the Church of Our Lady of Salvation, which speaks on behalf of all Christians in Iraq, and which gives examples written with the blood of its martyrs.

Have you heard how they died in this massacre, the two brave priests, Wasim Sabieh and Thayer Saad Abdal? Did you know that they defended the faithful and tried to save their lives by offering their own from the first moment the criminals set foot in church? Did you know that a father protected his son by covering him completely with his own body while they were lying on the floor, and died in a hail of bullets so that the child would survive? Have you heard that the killers murdered a four-month-old baby girl and a young woman who, on the day of her death, had received the best news, namely that she was pregnant, and so went to church to thank God for this gift?

O people of the world, these are the Christians of Iraq. Hear and evangelize to everyone!

And you Christians of Iraq, when sadness fills your soul and you cannot imagine the future, look up there, to the God of Heaven and Earth, and remember well who you are and let the world know! Christ will not leave us alone, we are his "little flock," and he wants us to remain forever with him, to live our faith and our love for all as we have always done, because as he tells us, "By this all men will know that you are my disciples" (John 13: 35).

We witness with our lives, so that the world can see what is happening to us, so that those who have plugged their ears and those who have shut their mouths will speak about who we are. We are the Christians of Iraq!

[Translation from Arabic by ZENIT, November 11, 2010]

## ***Baghdad Cathedral: Priests were Killed During Mass, Confession***

**C**ardinal Francis George, speaking at the fall meeting of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, told those assembled that the two priests slain in the Syrian Catholic cathedral on October 31 were killed while offering Mass and hearing confessions.

"Our brothers in the priesthood, Father Thayer Saad and Father Boutros Wassim, were slain as one celebrated Mass and the other heard confessions," Cardinal George said. "Father Thayer prayed and asked a terrorist to spare the lives of his parishioners before he died. Father Raphael [a third priest] moved parishioners to a safer location in the Church and was grievously wounded."

The U.S. bishops affirmed by acclamation the content of Cardinal George's recent letter calling upon President Barack Obama to come to the aid of Iraqi Christians. In his final address as USCCB president, Cardinal George also said: "We are not a national Church; we resist being transformed into a purely American denomination. I therefore cannot depart this position or leave you today without speaking of our Catholic brothers and sisters in Iraq.

(Continues on page 19)

## **Effective Ways You Can Help Your Eparchy**

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

### **Planned Giving: Consider Your Legacy**

This is a creative way to support the Church. Planned giving can involve contributing through your will, insurance policy, or retirement assets. Also, it can be a way to make a donation and to provide yourself with a steady source of income; a charitable remainder trust is one example.

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

“I give and bequeath to the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn, located in Brooklyn, New York, \_\_\_\_\_% of the residue of my estate [or: the sum of \$\_\_\_\_\_].”

#### **Suggested wording for a bequest to the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon:**

“I give and bequeath to the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon, located in St. Louis, Missouri, \_\_\_\_\_% of the residue of my estate [or: the sum of \$\_\_\_\_\_].”

### **Tax-Smart Giving of Appreciated Stock or Other Assets**

The gift of an asset such as common stock or mutual fund shares is a smart way to make a contribution and receive maximum tax benefits based on the value of the asset. Gifts of other appreciated assets, such as land, antiques, and homes, can also be utilized as potential gifts with valuable tax benefits. Gifts of these assets should be considered on a case-by-case basis.

For more information on any or all of these options, please contact Eparchy of Saint Maron Stewardship Director John F. Kurey, Esq., at 718-237-9913 or by e-mail at johnkurey@yahoo.com; or Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon Vice-Chancellor, Mrs. Mary Denny, at 314-231-1021 or by email at mdenny@usamaronite.org. □

## **Project Roots**

The Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn and the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon join together to help people reconnect with their Christian spiritual roots in Lebanon and the Middle East. An office in Los Angeles, Calif., under the responsibility of Fr. Abdallah Zaidan, M.L.M., will assist those interested to:

- ★ Obtain their sacramental records from their country of origin

- ★ Connect with family members living in their place of origin and throughout the world where they emigrated
- ★ Obtain Lebanese citizenship, if desired
- ★ Obtain immigration records, if desired
- ★ Remain connected with the Maronite Church here and throughout the world.

No eparchial funds will be used, but the office will accept financial help from those willing to help. For more information contact:

Father Abdallah Zaidan, M.L.M.  
333 South San Vicente Boulevard  
Los Angeles, CA 90048  
310-275-6634 □

## **Baghdad Cathedral**

*Continued from page 18*

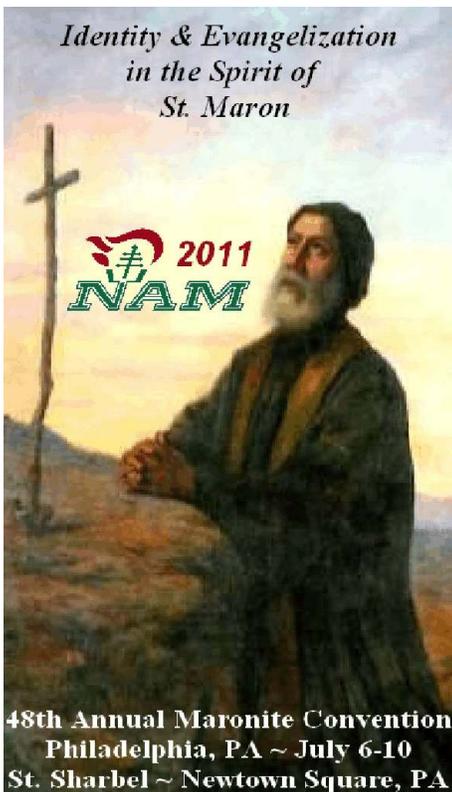
“Ever since the capture of Baghdad, it has been clear to anyone of good will that, while Muslim groups might be in conflict with one another, it was uniquely the Christians who were without protection in the wake of the American invasion of Iraq.

“Now, at the end of last month, on the vigil of the Feast of All Saints, in the Syriac Catholic Cathedral of Our Lady of Deliverance in the city of Baghdad, many dozens of Catholics were killed as they gathered for Mass. Two were priests: one was killed at the altar and the other as he left the confessional. They are joined in death with hundreds of others who have died for their faith in Christ since the current conflict began. An American Dominican Sister, a friend of a friend, has written from that country: (Waves of grief have enveloped their world, surging along the fault lines created in Iraqi society by the displacement of thousands of Iraq’s Christian minority who have fled what is clearly a growing genocidal threat... One survivor was asked by a reporter, what do you say to the terrorists? Through his tears he said, ‘We forgive you.’... Among the victims of this senseless tragedy was a little boy named Adam. Three-year-old Adam witnessed the horror of dozens of deaths, including that of his own parents. He wandered among the corpses and the blood, following the terrorists around and admonishing them, ‘enough, enough, enough.’ According to witnesses, this continued for two hours until Adam was himself murdered.) As bishops, as Americans, we cannot turn from this scene or allow the world to overlook it.”

Dear brothers, we have all experienced challenges and even tragedies that tempt us to say at times, “enough.” Yet all of our efforts, our work, our failures and our sense of responsibility pale before the martyrdom of our brothers and sisters in Iraq and the active persecution of Catholics in other parts of the Middle East, in India and Pakistan, in China and in Vietnam, in Sudan and African countries rent by civil conflict. With their faces always before us, we stand before the Lord, collectively responsible for all those whom Jesus Christ died to save; and that is more than enough to define us as bishops and to keep us together in mission. □

*Catholic World News, Noevember 16, 2010*

## Philadelphia is Getting Ready for the Maronite Convention 2011



by Claudine El-Beyrouly

**N**ext year's NAM Convention in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, will be packed with special events for

all age groups, from the children and youth to the young adults and of course the more "mature" adults. The Young Adults [including those ages 18-35] and the Young Professionals [ages 21-35] will have a number of activities designed to provide entertainment, opportunities to see the city of Philadelphia, and most importantly time to socialize with one another.

In keeping with the convention's mission to strengthen our Maronite faith, the Young Professionals will have the chance to participate in Theology on Tap with our Bishops at Vango Lounge and Skybar. This Philadelphia hot spot is owned and operated by Dia Sawan, of Lebanese descent, and features custom made décor, a 3<sup>rd</sup> floor roof deck with patio, bar, and fireplace. The discussion will be complemented by cocktails and the "Japanese Continental" menu prepared by Vango's chef.

Philadelphia is a city known for many trademarks, including our signature food items such as the "Philly" cheese steak and soft pretzels. On the Flavors of Philly Tour the members of the Young Adults and Young Professionals will enjoy Philadelphia's most popular foods while touring local food venues such as the famous Reading Terminal Market and a soft pretzel factory. This tour brings visitors in contact with the real Philadelphia, places where locals go to eat and to shop for the tastiest versions of Philadelphia favorites. The 4<sup>th</sup> St. Cookies are a do-not-miss item on any visitor's list.

No visit to Philadelphia would be complete without stopping at the Museum of Art, located just steps away from our convention headquarters. As one of the largest museums in the United States, the Philadelphia Museum of Art invites visitors from around the world to explore its renowned collections, acclaimed special exhibitions, and enriching programs.

For the Young Professionals additional events include a wine tasting hosted by a Sommelier from the Wine School. These demonstrations are nationally renowned and have been featured in magazines such as Bon Appetit. The Ale and Arts Tour is a unique combination of the cultural and culinary aspects of the city. A trolley will take guests to several murals that are part of the Philadelphia Mural Arts Program and also on a tour of Philadelphia's Yard Brewing Company. Beer and snacks will be provided – you bring the conversation.

Our young adult and professional committee has been hard at work to make sure that your visit to Philadelphia will be enjoyable. We look forward to sharing all our city has to offer. Please keep an eye out for all of these events and more on our upcoming registration form. Additional information can be found at [www.namnews.org](http://www.namnews.org) and on our parish website and [www.saintsharbel.org](http://www.saintsharbel.org). □