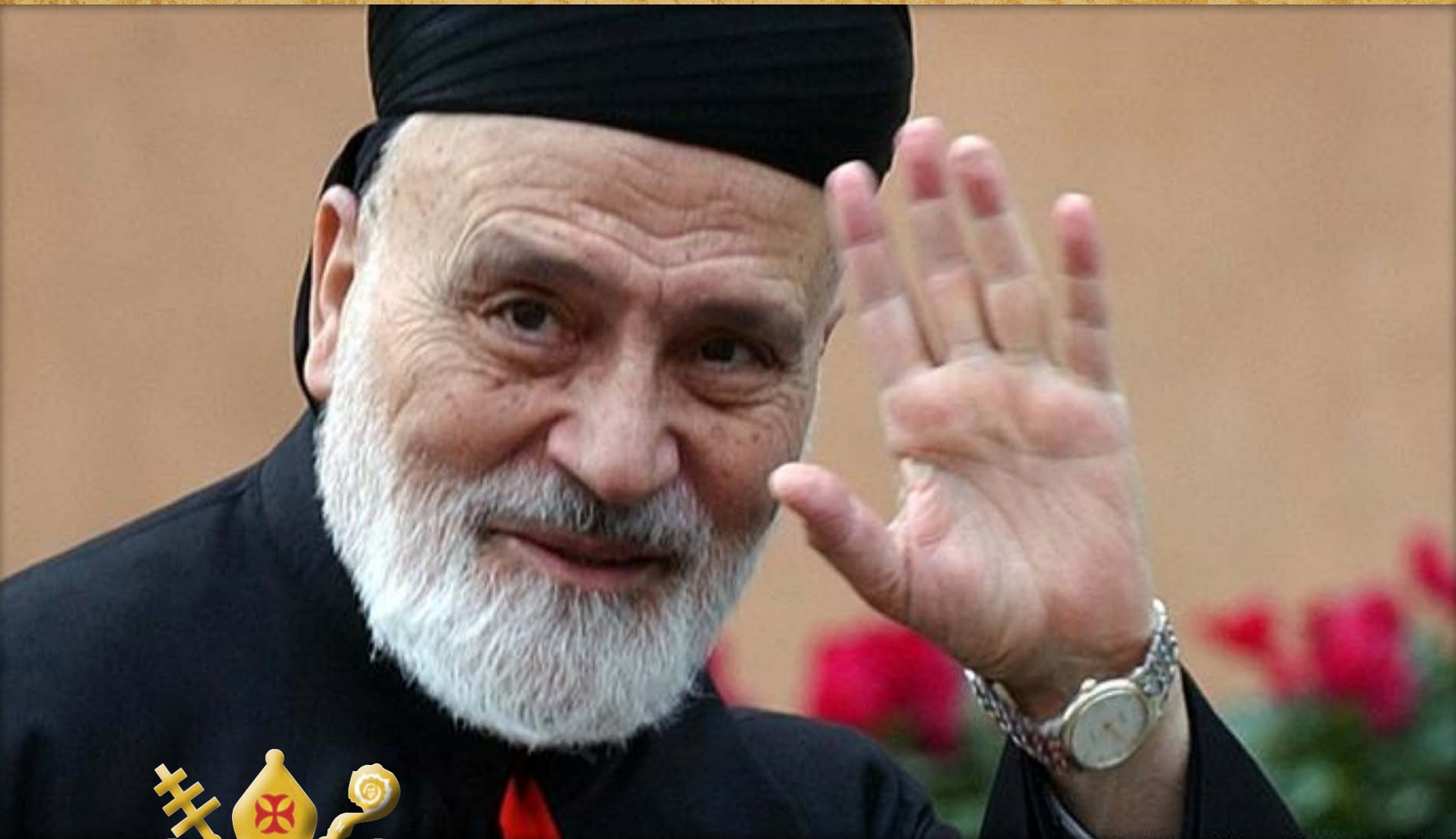


the Maronite Voice



His Eminence Nasrallah Peter Cardinal Sfeir
Maronite Patriarch of Antioch and All the East
1920-2019

the Maronite Voice

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THE MARONITE VOICE

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SYNOD ON YOUTH: *Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment* by Bishop A. Elias Zaidan

This past October, I had the unique privilege of being asked by our Patriarch and Synod to be one of the Maronite Bishops to attend the Synod on *Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment*.

The Synod met throughout the month of October in small groups and in general session.

I cherished that experience since it gave me an opportunity to meet and interact with bishops and representatives from different parts of the world.

On March 25, 2019, the feast of the Annunciation of the Lord, the Holy Father, Pope Francis, released his Apostolic Exhortation entitled “*Christus Vivit*,” Latin for “Christ Lives.” In this document, with its nine chapters and 299 paragraphs, the Holy

Father summarized the results of the synod and laid out a vision forward.

In the document “Christ Lives,” Pope Francis looks at the issue of young people in the Church in light of the Scriptures, Old and New Testaments, from the life of Jesus, noting that He [Jesus] is “ever young.” Finally, the Pope looks at the life and experience of the Church over many centuries. Quoting from the Second Vatican Council, Pope Francis

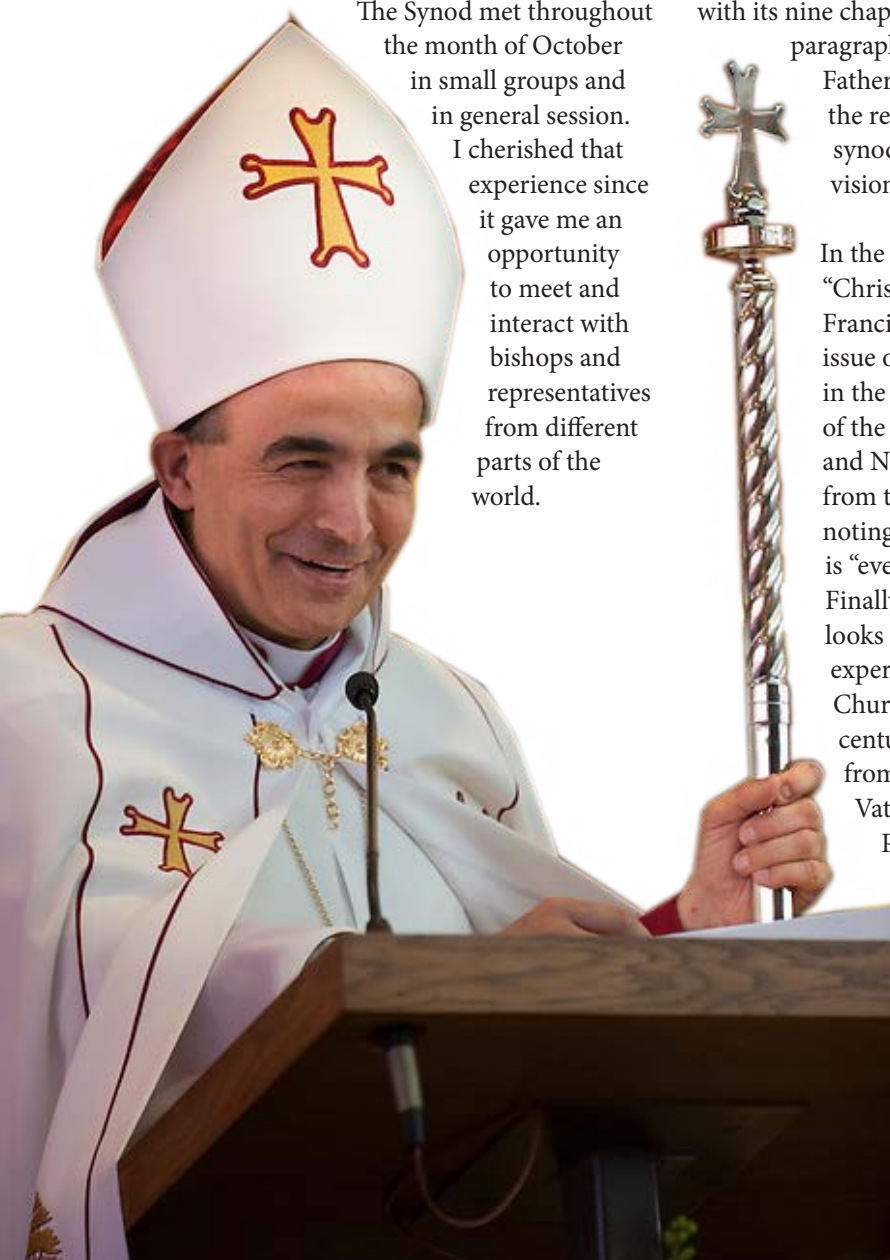
notes, “Enriched by a long and living history, and advancing

towards human perfection in time and the ultimate destinies of history and of life, the Church is the real youth of the world.” (Closing of the Council, December 8, 1965, *Message to Young Men and Women*)

From within the Church, Pope Francis cites another example for us: the Blessed Mother, “Mary shines forth. She is the supreme model for a youthful Church that seeks to follow Christ with enthusiasm and docility.” The Holy Father also makes note of many other young saints who can serve as models to us as well. (Par. 43, 49-62)

Regarding our youth, we are called to always be sensitive to their needs and open to responding to them. An important observation made by Pope Francis is that we should not just consider the young as the “future” of the Church, but that they are also the “now” as he says. They have things to offer to the Church, but often need the opportunity to be heard.

Of course, the environment and the culture in which we all live impacts the young in many significant ways. Of particular note, are the many crises and



scandals that confront them, the digital milieu of their lives, consumerism, historic migration issues, and the advances in scientific capabilities that may not always be a positive contribution to human development.

Pope Francis offers the young (and all of us) “a way out” of problems that confront us. His answer is, as it should be, **Jesus**. He calls us to depend more deeply on God, noting, “You can become what God your Creator knows you are, if only you realize that you are called to something greater.” (Par. 107)

The Pope calls on the young to move out into the world and bring the love of Christ to all, young, old, ill, rich and poor alike. In a sense, he asks them to be missionaries of the Gospel in the environment in which they find themselves.

Of course, we cannot lose sight that the young do need our guidance and the wisdom that sometimes only comes with age. The Holy Father advises the young to, “Make the most of these years of your youth. Don’t observe life from a balcony. Don’t confuse happiness with an armchair, or live your life behind a screen. Whatever you do, do not become the sorry sight of an abandoned vehicle! Don’t be parked cars, but dream freely and make good decisions. And then in reference

to living a full life, he tells them “...don’t take early retirement.” {Par. 143} The Pope is, of course, urging the young to live a life in imitation of Christ. In paragraph 108, the Holy Father also cautions the young about the implications of such a commitment. He warns them, “You need to realize one basic truth: being young is not only about pursuing fleeting pleasures and superficial achievements. If the years of your youth are to serve their purpose in life, they must be a time of generous commitment, whole-hearted dedication, and sacrifices that are difficult but ultimately fruitful.”

But the Holy Father also reminds us all that the young can truly make a contribution to the Church. He notes, “Young people can offer the Church the beauty of youth by renewing her ability to ‘rejoice with new beginnings, to give unreservedly of herself, to be renewed and to set out for ever greater accomplishments.’” (Par. 37)

But the Holy Father also makes recommendations to the leaders of the Church, and in the parishes. He highlights “outreach” and “growth.” “Outreach” to the young by pastors and their collaborators; “growth” once we have reached out to them—helping them to grow into the Faith. They must see in us love of God and love of one another.

In short, the Holy Father reminds us of many of the means to attract the young that have been successful over the years: sports and the arts, prayer experiences, service opportunities and experiences of nature—God’s creation.

A theme found often in the writings and statements of the Holy Father is that of “accompaniment” by adults and “openness” to all who come to us. These, I think, are important parts of the recommendations made by the Pope.

Pope Francis calls the young to seek out their vocation in life. Realizing that most will follow the path of work, marriage and family, he also asks to them to consider another option stating, “In discerning your vocation, do not dismiss the possibility of devoting yourself to God in the priesthood, the religious life, or in other forms of consecration. Why not?” (Par. 131) I can say the same to our own youth and to their parents as well, “Why not?”

In reflecting on our own response to this Synod and the Pope’s Apostolic Exhortation, I propose to all the Maronite faithful of our Eparchies the following points:

Continued on page 6 ...

Schedule BISHOP A. ELIAS ZAIDAN

5-15 JUNE	Lebanon Synod of Maronite Bishops
24-30 JUNE	Miami, FL Clergy Conference and NAM Convention
7-8 JULY	Canton, OH MYO National Workshop
9-15 JULY	Hosting The Most Reverend Samir Nassar, Archbishop of Damascus, Syria
14 JULY	Los Angeles, CA Our Lady of Mt. Lebanon-St. Peter Cathedral
17 JULY	Orange, CA Christ Cathedral Dedication of Cathedral for the Diocese of Orange
21 JULY	Los Angeles, CA Our Lady of Mt. Lebanon-St. Peter Cathedral
2-3 AUGUST	Bkerke, Lebanon Patriarchal Economic Summit
9-11 AUGUST	El Paso, TX St. Sharbel Church Consecration of New Church

SYNOD ON YOUTH *Continued from page 5*

TO OUR YOUTH:

- Be proud of your Faith and of your Heritage.
- Be involved, seek, ask questions; you have the right to find the answers.
- Go deeper into your Faith and invite your friends to join with you; reach out to them as a true follower of the Lord
- Bring Christ into your daily life through prayer—no matter how simple and by your actions—no matter how insignificant you may think they are.

TO PARENTS:

- Be models of faith to your young people.
- As you work hard to provide for them a good future, invest

in their religious education and spiritual growth as well.

- Encourage them to come to Church and to be involved in the life of the parish.

TO PASTORS, YOUTH COUNSELORS, AND ADVISORS:

- Make ministry to the youth of your parish a priority.
- Listen to them, make efforts to understand them, support and guide them as you accompany them in their spiritual journey in life.
- Plan activities that are meaningful to them. Bring the youth together.

I would like to conclude my message to you with the closing

paragraph of Pope Francis in his Apostolic Exhortation addressed to the young:

Dear young people, my joyful hope is to see you keep running the race before you, outstripping all those who are slow or fearful. Keep running, attracted by the face of Christ, whom we love so much, whom we adore in the Holy Eucharist and acknowledge in the flesh of our suffering brothers and sisters. May the Holy Spirit urge you on as you run this race. The Church needs your momentum, your intuitions, your faith. We need them! And when you arrive where we have not yet reached, have the patience to wait for us. (Par. 299) ■

Schedule **BISHOP GREGORY J. MANSOUR**

- 1-19 JUNE** Lebanon | Synod of Maronite Bishops
23 JUNE Miami, FL | Our Lady of Lebanon Church | Pastoral Visit
24-30 JUNE Miami, FL | Clergy Conference and NAM Convention
8-10 JULY Canton, OH | MYO National Workshop
11 JULY Brooklyn, NY | Benefit Dinner for TeleLumiere
14 JULY Brooklyn, NY | Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral
15-17 JULY Washington, DC | Department of State | Ministerial to Advance Religious Freedom
21 JULY Flint, MI | Our Lady of Lebanon Church | Memorial Divine Liturgy for Mother
25-28 JULY Toronto, Canada | Family Wedding
31 JULY - 7 AUGUST Morristown, NJ | Silent Retreat
11 August Pittsburgh, PA | Our Lady of Victory Pastoral Visit
13-15 AUGUST North Jackson, OH | National Shrine of Our Lady of Lebanon | Assumption Pilgrimage

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Patriarch Sfeir Enters Eternal Life

His Eminence Nasrallah Peter Cardinal Sfeir, the 76th Maronite Patriarch of Antioch and All the East, passed away in the early morning of 12 May, after a brief illness, at Hotel-Dieu Hospital in Ashrafieh, Lebanon. He would have turned 99 on 15 May.

The patriarch was the spiritual leader of the Maronite Church with four million faithful all over the world. Lebanese religious and political figures visited Bkerke to pay condolences. The Lebanese government declared two days of mourning starting Wednesday with flags flying at half-staff. Patriarch Bechara Peter Cardinal Rai, Sfeir's successor, called on churches to ring their bells on Wednesday. The patriarch headquarters at Bkerke declared, "The Maronite Church is orphaned, and Lebanon is in sadness," in announcing the passing of Patriarch Sfeir. In the United States, Bishop Gregory J. Mansour and Bishop A. Elias Zaidan issued statements mourning the loss of this great man of the Church.

Born on 15 May 1920, in Rayfoun, Lebanon, the only son of the six children of Maroun and Hanee, Sfeir completed his elementary studies at Saint Abda School in Harharya-Aramoun, followed by secondary studies at the Maronite Patriarchal Seminary in Ghazir, and philosophical and theological studies at the Oriental Seminary Institute of Saint Joseph University.

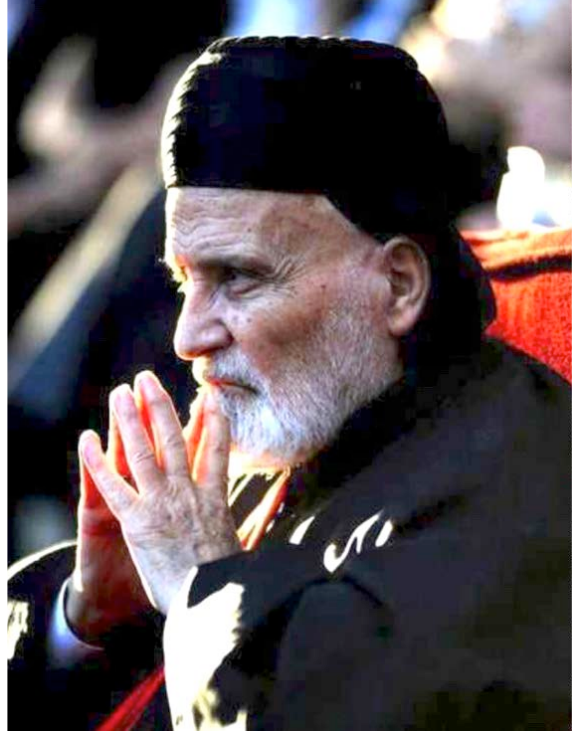
Following his ordination to the priesthood on 7 May 1950, Father Sfeir was assigned as a parish priest in his hometown of Rayfoun, until 1953, when he was appointed secretary of the Maronite Patriarchate in Bkerke. His appointment as secretary was the first of what would become a lifelong series of leadership positions in the patriarchal see. During this time, Sfeir also taught Arabic literature and philosophy at the Marist Brothers (Frères Maristes) College in Jounieh. In July 1961, Sfeir was consecrated Auxiliary Bishop of Antioch and Titular Bishop of Tarsus for the Maronites by then Maronite Patriarch Paul Peter Cardinal Meouchi. Over the next 25 years, Bishop Sfeir would serve as the patriarchal vicar.

In the mid 1970s, Bishop Sfeir served as patriarchal administrator for Archbishop Antoine Kouraihe, the Archbishop of Sidon (Sfeir would eventually succeed Kouraihe as patriarch). During this time, he also served as president of the Executive Committee of the Assembly of the Catholic Patriarchs and Bishops in Lebanon, as a representative to Caritas-Lebanon, as a consultant on the commission to revise Eastern Canon Law, and as spiritual director of the Knights of Malta.

The Synod of Bishops of the Maronites elected him as patriarch on 19 April 1986. He was enthroned on 27 April and his election was confirmed by Pope John Paul II on 7 May 1986. Regarded by some as a compromise, his election was not enthusiastically received. However, it soon became apparent that he had the strength needed to guide the Maronite Church and provide leadership for Lebanon that was at the height of its 15-year civil war, which killed more than 150,000 people. On many occasions, it would be left to Patriarch Sfeir to compensate for the political paralysis and to seek to reconcile warring factions in order to rebuild a post-civil war Lebanon. As would be expected in any society that had undergone a civil war, he met with sometimes violent opposition.

The new patriarch had not traveled very far from Bkerke during his tenure as patriarchal vicar, so it was a surprise when he "took to the road," consolidating the Maronite expansion on the five continents and telling the world of the tragedy that was taking place in Lebanon. In a 2011 interview with CNN, Patriarch Sfeir said, "Our message is that people must live among each other with respect and harmony, and that everyone must make every effort for peace and never for war."

The patriarch was tireless in his efforts. Typical patriarchal visits to the United States might begin with a 17-hour plane ride, followed immediately by a visit to the United Nations, meetings with prominent political and religious figures, and a formal banquet



with speeches that evening. Patriarch Sfeir was resolute in his efforts to learn English so that he might communicate directly with his faithful.

Pope John Paul II created Patriarch Sfeir as a cardinal on 26 November 1994.

Patriarch Sfeir initiated a liturgical reform in the Maronite Church that culminated in the publication of the *Qurbono*, containing eight anaphorae. The text in both Arabic and English was published as the *Book of Offering*. In order to provide for the pastoral needs of the faithful in the expansion, he collaborated in the appointment of bishops and the creations of eparchies and exarchies.

In 2011, the cardinal patriarch—despite his energy and alertness—resigned so that another could continue to guide the Maronite Church in the third millennium.

“Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.” (John 15:13) Patriarch Sfeir, during every moment of every day of his ministry, laid down his life for God, the Church, and Lebanon. ■

This article was written by Suzanne Tavani with contributions from Chorbishop John D. Faris.



MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS

LITURGY

- Promulgation of the Lectionary
- Promulgation of the *Qurbono*
- Promulgation of the rites of ordination of a Priest and a Bishop.
- Promulgation of the Book of Ginnazat (Rites of Christian Funerals)

BISHOPS

- Ordained 30 bishops
- Created and modified eparchies and exarchies Church Renewal

CHURCH RENEWAL

- Synod for Lebanon
- Visit of Pope John Paul to Lebanon Construction and Renovation in Lebanon

CONSTRUCTION AND RENOVATION IN LEBANON

- Construction of the south wing of the patriarchal residence in Bkerke for a library, archive, a hall dedicated to Saint John Paul II, and rooms for bishops, and of the north wing as a residence for nuns and staff, and a large hall for meetings of the Assembly of the Catholic Patriarchs and Bishops in Lebanon
- Construction of a 20,000-seat plaza at the patriarchal residence in Bkeke for ceremonies
- Renovation of the patriarchal residence in Diman
- Renovation of the patriarchal seminary in Ghazir
- Construction of a dignified cemetery for patriarchs and bishops
- Construction of facilities for the Ecclesiastical Tribunal and the Maronite Social Fund
- Construction of a Medical Center in Rayfoun, Kesrouan.

RENOVATION OUTSIDE OF LEBANON

- Our Lady of Lebanon Church in Paris
- Franco-Lebanese Dorm in Paris
- Our Lady of Lebanon Church and the Franco-Lebanese Dorm in Marseille, France
- Renovation of the Patriarchal Residence in Jerusalem
- Re-opening of the Maronite College in Rome

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Ghassan Saliba
(Lebanese Singer)

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*St. Jude Childrens
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History and Mission*



George Elias, Last Living Founder

FRIDAY, JUNE 28TH @ 10:30 A.M.

*Catholic Relief Services: a Catholic
Response to Serve the Poorest of
the Poor Throughout the World*



Bishop Gregory J. Mansour

SATURDAY, JUNE 29TH @ 10:30 A.M.

*The Maronite History
and Identity*



Father Elie Saade, OLM

THURSDAY, JUNE 27TH @ 3:30 P.M.

*A Pastoral Approach
to the Catechesis of
the Maronite Church*



Fr. Vincent Farhat and Fr. George Hajj

FRIDAY, JUNE 28TH @ 3:30 P.M.

Marriage in the Catholic Church



Chorbishop John D. Faris, J.C.O.D

SATURDAY, JUNE 29TH @ 3:30 P.M.

*Commission on Lebanon
and the Middle East*



Bishops Gregory J. Mansour and Elias Zaidan,
Toufic Baaklini, and Charles Hajj

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Package/Program Purchased _____

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PACKAGE OPTIONS and PRICING

	<i>Adult & Young Adult</i> 18 years old and up		<i>Youth</i> 12 to 18 years old		<i>Child</i> 5-11 years old		<i>Entertainment Only</i> (no meals included; entry after 10 pm)	
<i>Package Option</i> (does not include hotel room)	<i>before June 3rd</i>	<i>after June 3rd</i>	<i>before June 3rd</i>	<i>after June 3rd</i>	<i>before June 3rd</i>	<i>after June 3rd</i>	<i>before June 3rd</i>	<i>after June 3rd</i>
Full (Thursday through Sunday)	# ____ @ \$350	# ____ @ \$400	# ____ @ \$340	# ____ @ \$390	# ____ @ \$170	# ____ @ \$200	# ____ @ \$150	# ____ @ \$180
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Friday Only	# ____ @ \$140	# ____ @ \$170	# ____ @ \$130	# ____ @ \$160	# ____ @ \$70	# ____ @ \$100	# ____ @ \$70	# ____ @ \$100
Saturday Only	# ____ @ \$160	# ____ @ \$190	# ____ @ \$150	# ____ @ \$180	# ____ @ \$70	# ____ @ \$100	# ____ @ \$80	# ____ @ \$110
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EXCURSION and ACTIVITY PRICING

<i>Date</i>	<i>Excursion or Activity</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i>Attendees</i>	<i>Price</i>
Wednesday, June 26th	Boat Tour, Bayside Marketplace	3 pm to 6 pm	EVERYONE WELCOME	_____ x \$20
Thursday, June 27th	Private City Tour	2 pm to 5 pm	EVERYONE WELCOME	_____ x \$20
Thursday, June 27th	Theology on Tap, Wynwood	4 pm to 6:30 pm	YOUNG ADULTS [18-35] ONLY	_____ x \$25
Friday, June 28th	Everglades Tour	11 am to 3 pm	EVERYONE WELCOME	_____ x \$35
Friday, June 28th	BBQ & Workshop, Key Biscayne	11 am to 4 pm	YOUNG ADULTS [18-35] ONLY	_____ x \$20
Friday, June 28th	Meet the Bishops @ Loews Hotel	6 pm to 7:30 pm	EVERYONE WELCOME	Drinks for Purchase
Saturday, June 29th	Our Lady of Lebanon Visit	After Saturday Mass	EVERYONE WELCOME	Courtesy of OLOL
Saturday, June 29th	Pool & Beach Party @ Loews Hotel	After Saturday Mass (until 4 pm)	EVERYONE WELCOME	Courtesy of OLOL

St. Ephrem the Syrian— “Harp of the Holy Spirit”

by Rev. Joseph P. Amar

We know very little about the life of St. Ephrem. He was born around 305, in or near the Syrian city of Nisibis, and died around 373. He tells us nothing about his family background, upbringing, or education. He had no reason to. In a place like Nisibis, everyone knew everyone else. Ephrem never expected his home-grown verses to outlive him.

The fact that so little is known about Ephrem's life encouraged the creation of all sorts of stories—some inspiring, some not. He may have been a deacon, but he was never a monk, as later tradition portrayed him.

At first glance, it seems like Ephrem comes from a time and place very different from our own. In fact, just the opposite is true.

Ephrem lived during a time of enormous political and religious upheaval. Traditional beliefs and values were under attack from every side. Society was coming apart at the seams, and nobody seemed to care. All that mattered was winning the latest high-profile, public debate.

Ephrem did not mince words: “God's flock is starving; it has been left to graze on fields of words.”

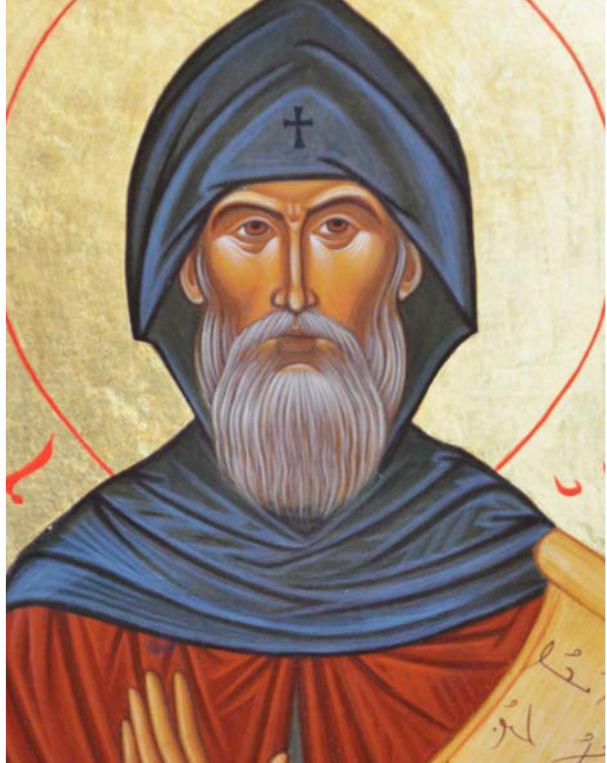
Religion and politics had become hopelessly entangled, and the result was toxic.

The church was torn between two rival factions. On the one side, a new breed of Christian philosophers reduced God to a concept—“an idea.” On the other, the rigidly pious spiritualized God. They kept him safely in heaven, far from the nastiness of everyday life. As Ephrem saw it, the remedy for both groups was the same—“a return to the simple words of the Apostles.”

God was not a monarch ruling from a distant throne. He was a person who revealed himself in his Son. “Jesus is the Bridge,” Ephrem taught, “who leads us back to the source of our life.”

Ephrem was a poet and a teacher. But he taught like no one else. Educated people of his day wrote and spoke Greek. They went to school in places like Antioch and Athens. Ephrem was a very different sort of person. He wrote exclusively in Syriac, and never left his native land. In place of human credentials, he prayed to be filled with the spirit of the Gospels. And his prayers were answered.

“People who heard Ephrem speak nick-named him the ‘Harp of the Holy Spirit.’ They could hear God's music in his words, and it was a breath of fresh air.”



People who heard Ephrem speak nick-named him the “Harp of the Holy Spirit.” They could hear God’s music in his words, and it was a breath of fresh air. It was the same reason his earliest Arabic biography, written around 750, calls him al-Nabi al-Suryani – “the Syriac Prophet.” Ephrem breathed life and hope back into faith.

We cannot read Ephrem without becoming aware of the profound respect he had for the power of words, especially the words of scripture. He describes opening the Bible as a homecoming: “The words ran out to meet me. They flung their arms around me, took me by the hand, and led me in.”

The lessons scripture taught were simple and clear. God did not play favorites. His love was bigger than all the controversies people invented to divide and destroy: “Our Lord,” Ephrem reminded anyone who would listen, “spoke gently to teach his followers the power of gentle words.”

Ephrem called Jesus “the Medicine of Life” for an ailing world. If people lowered their voices and opened their eyes, they might see the wonder of creation—a wonder they were part of. They would know that life is a privilege and a blessing not to be squandered on man-made conflicts.

Popular wisdom held that self-interest was at the root of human problems. Ephrem saw things differently. If people were really self-interested, if they really cared about their well-being and happiness, they would not waste their lives. Ephrem put it bluntly: “We wear ourselves out hording power and working for personal advancement. It only adds to our insecurity and makes us unhappy. The Lord taught us in the Gospel that creation has blessings enough for everyone. He said, ‘Look at the birds of the air and the lilies of the field’? When will we look?”

Ephrem was celebrated for his writing because he brought deep insight to what it meant to be human. Commenting on the Gospel, he wrote: “The things our Lord wants to teach us are simple, but they’re hard.” “This,” Ephrem concluded, “should tell us how well our Lord knew human nature.” But even with his divine knowledge, the Lord responded with compassion, not judgement. It’s what made him Lord. Quoting John’s Gospel, Ephrem reminded his hearers of Jesus’ words, “I have not come to judge the world, but to save it.”

Ephrem’s vision inspires much of Maronite liturgy, but his poems are hard to translate. Modern English is not the best fit for ancient Syriac. In other ways, though, we may be in a better position to appreciate him than the people of his own day who called him “Harp of the Holy Spirit.” In a world aching to hear again “the simple words of the Apostles,” Ephrem may be the whole orchestra. ■

Rev. Joseph P. Amar, professor emeritus of Notre Dame University, is a Maronite priest and a linguist trained in Semitic languages and in the histories, religions, and cultures of the Middle East.

St. Sharbel Church of Clinton, Michigan, Celebrates Dedication and Consecration of New Church

The new St. Sharbel Church in Clinton Township, Michigan, was officially dedicated and consecrated the weekend of 14-16 September 2018, with a full schedule of planned celebrations and events. The three-day weekend began on the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross and included a welcoming cocktail reception, a dedication gala, and the consecration and dedication of the new church.

The festivities began Friday evening with a cocktail reception and tour of the new church grounds. As the evening continued, families and visitors cheered with joy as the children and youth dabkeh and groups of parishioners danced the night away marking the start of a great weekend.

The dedication gala was held Saturday night at the Palazzo Grande Reception Hall in Shelby Township. More than 800 guests attended the grand celebration, which included dignitary speeches, dinner, dabkeh performances, and a live band and singer, Emad Batayeh, who had everyone pack the dance floor in celebration.

The “big day” finally came on Sunday when the church was officially dedicated and

consecrated as a Maronite Catholic place of worship. Chorbishop Alfred Badawi, pastor of St. Sharbel Church, welcomed everyone to the church and Divine Liturgy which took two-and-a-half hours long and included the blessing of the doors, walls, and the altar of the sanctuary with Holy Water, Holy Oil, Holy Myron, and blessed incense.

The Divine Liturgy was celebrated by Bishop Elias Zaidan of the Eparchy of our Lady of Lebanon. During the homily, the bishop told the faithful, “Let us be inspired by St. Sharbel and show our faith on a daily basis. This way, we are not only consecrating the building, but we are consecrating ourselves.”

Several visiting bishops, monsignors, and priests from the Maronite and local eparchies also participated in the Divine Liturgy, including Archbishop Allen Vigneron of the Archdiocese of Detroit, Bishop Francis Kalabat of the Chaldean Eparchy of Detroit, and Auxillary Bishop Robert Fisher of the Archdiocese of Detroit, and Chorbishop Simon Faddoul of the Maronite Eparchy of the Annunciation of West and Central Africa.

In attendance were also Chorbishop Richard Saad, Msgr. Peter Karam, Fr. James Grau, Fr. Milad Yaghi, Fr. Hanna Tayar, and Fr. Joseph Khalil in addition to Deacons John Sfire, Joe Pavlovich, and Subdeacon Michael Magyar.

Community members, visitors, and religious men and women from near and far packed the church and the church hall to witness the dedication ceremony and share in the joy of the community. Various church organizations, including the Knights of Columbus, the Men’s Club and the Ladies Altar Society welcomed visitors and assisted throughout the service. The event concluded with a celebratory reception for everyone in the church’s hall.

The weekend radiated the love and service of the St. Sharbel community that worked very hard through numerous committees and volunteers to plan an extraordinary weekend full of joy and thanksgiving. May our Lord, through the intercession of our beloved Saint Sharbel, continue to bless the Saint Sharbel community and all those who serve it, and may everyone who enters the church feel the same love and joy felt during the dedication weekend. ■



MYO/MYA Regional Retreat New Jersey

 n MYO/MYA Regional Retreat was held on 16 March at Our Lady Star of the East Church in Pleasantville, NJ. The day was facilitated by the Maronite Servants of Christ the Light and a great team of volunteers who helped the youth reflect on their call to holiness.

“Rejoice and Be Glad” was the theme, based on Pope Francis’ recent Apostolic Exhortation, reminding us all to seek holiness. We were blessed to have among us His Excellency, Bishop Gregory Mansour, who was also one of the keynote speakers.

The retreat brought together 150 teens, young adults, and chaperones from the following parishes: St. John Paul II, Sleepy Hollow, NY; Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral, Brooklyn, NY; St. Sharbel, Somerset, NJ; Our Lady Star of the East, Pleasantville, NJ; and St. Maron, Philadelphia, PA. We also had the good help of several pastors: Fr. Kamil El-Choufeiti, Fr. Simon El-Hajj, and Fr. Vincent Farhat.

Throughout the day, the youth enjoyed several activities, prayerful communion with God, and much fun. We had two different presentations for the MYO and MYA. Bishop Gregory spoke to both groups at

separate times on discernment and the gift of and obstacles to holiness. Fr. Simon El-Hajj spoke to the MYA on needs, goods, and power in relation to our call to holiness. Fr. Vincent Farhat spoke to the MYO on what holiness looks like in real life.

Father Vincent showed a moving video of a young Iraqi girl who had lost her home to ISIS. The young girl forgave her enemies and prayed for them. She was a beautiful example of holiness. The morning and afternoon sessions included small group discussions, which focused on hearing God’s voice amidst the many voices of today, our relationship with God and the Holy Spirit, and the process of discernment in sifting through negativity or toxicity in our lives.

In the afternoon, we had an hour of Eucharistic Adoration and Confession. We had priests stationed around the Church hearing confessions. The day concluded with Divine Liturgy, dinner, and a dabke party. We would like to thank Fr. Kamil El-Choufeiti, Camellia Nammour, and the parish and volunteers of Our Lady Star of the East Church for hosting this spiritual event and for their outstanding service and hospitality. ■



11th Annual MYA Conference Presents

Leading by Example

CAN PEOPLE TELL YOU'RE A CHRISTIAN WITHOUT SAYING SO?

October 4th-6th, 2019

SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS



The Order of Saint Sharbel New Members

ANNUAL

TONY AND RITA FARRAH | *St. Maron Church, Minneapolis, MN*

PERPETUAL

TACLA JACOBS | *St. Sharbel Church, Somerset, NJ*

RAYMOND G. LAHOUD, ESQ. | *Our Lady of Lebanon Church, Easton, PA*

ROGER SHAMMAS | *Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral, Brooklyn, NY*

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 or write to:

Eparchy of Saint Maron | 109 Remsen Street | Brooklyn, NY 11201 or
Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon | 1021 South 10th Street | St. Louis, MO 63104



Passing of Bishop Roland Abou Jaoudeh

Bishop Roland Abou Jaoudeh passed away on Thursday, 2 May 2019, at the age of 89, at Notre Dame des Secours hospital in Jbeil, where he had been in a coma for six months.

Born in Jal el-Dib, on 7 September 1930, Roland Abou Jaoudeh was ordained a priest on 25 April 1959. On 12 July 1975, at the age of 44, he was appointed Auxiliary Bishop of Antioch and Titular Bishop of Arca in Phoenicia for the Maronites. He was ordained on 23 August 1975, by Maronite Patriarch Anthony Peter Khoraiiche. Bishop Abou Jaoudeh served as a curial bishop for patriarchs Khoraiiche, Sfeir, and Rai until his retirement in 2011.

The Divine Liturgy for the Burial of the Christian Faithful was celebrated on 6 May 2019, at the Maronite Patriarchal Residence in Bkerke. His Beatitude Bechara Peter Cardinal Rai celebrated the Divine Liturgy with bishops, clergy, government officials, and representatives of the communities in attendance.

His Excellency Joseph Spiteri, apostolic nuncio to Lebanon, represented Pope Francis at the ceremony. After the liturgy, the nuncio expressed condolences of the Holy Father to the Patriarch, bishops, clergy, and faithful of the Maronite Church, especially the family of the late Bishop Roland.

May God gift rest to His servant of the Altar. ■

Deacon Anthony P. Koury

Our Lady of Lebanon, Easton, PA *by Suzanne Tavani*

The life of Deacon Anthony Koury and that of his beloved Our Lady of Lebanon in Easton, Pennsylvania, are inextricably intertwined. He fondly recalls, “To this day, I have a vivid memory of meeting Father Norman. Norman Peter, in 1952, on the steps of Our Lady of Lebanon. From that day, at the age of five, until today, I have been actively involved with the church—as an altar server, a cantor, a lector, a member of the Parish Council, director of religious education, deacon—you name it and I have done it!”

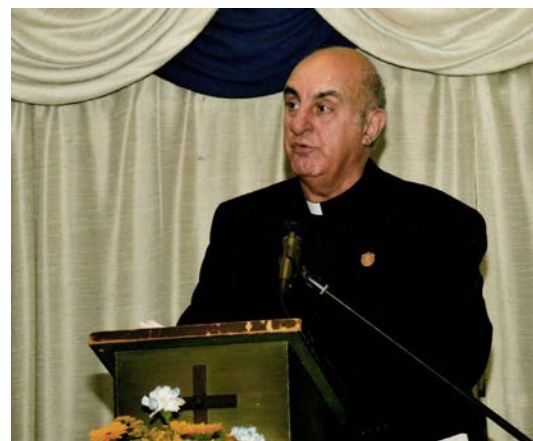
Deacon Anthony’s life has been one of total dedication to his family, his community, his student athletes, and his church. When asked about his dedication to a life of service he cites a quotation from Civil War-era Brigadier General Albert Pike, “What we do for ourselves dies with us, but what we do for others and the world remains and is immortal.”

The meaning of those profound words took root during Deacon Anthony’s rather ordinary upbringing in Easton, Pennsylvania, where he juggled his time among his schoolwork, serving the altar at Our Lady of Lebanon, and playing basketball and baseball with his friends. At the encouragement of his parents, he attended Allentown College of St. Frances de Sales, and

then pursued what would become a lifelong career as a teacher and athletic director of his alma mater, Notre Dame High School. In 1967, he met Chafica Melhem—known to all as Cheffie—when he was best man and she was maid of honor at his brother’s wedding. They married in 1970, and went on to have two children—Anthony and Frances.

Despite a hectic life as husband, father, teacher, and athletic director, Deacon Anthony remained dedicated to the service of Our Lady of Lebanon. His dedication was noticed by then Bishop Francis M. Zayek, who asked him of his interest in the diaconate. Anthony was ordained as a subdeacon by Bishop Zayek in 1975 and, eventually, a deacon in 1982.

The deacon is quick to credit his beloved wife, Cheffie, as an integral part of his story. “She’s been an incredible wife, mother, and partner in all my activities,” he says with great pride. “My school day didn’t end with classes. I usually attended all the games and participated in many activities at school and at church. I couldn’t have done it without her.” To this day, Cheffie, who suffers from kidney disease, works at the Church in a variety of roles including as Chair of the Annual Festival’s Food Committee.



Upon his retirement from Notre Dame in 2011, school administrators suggested a party in his honor. After much coaxing, Koury agreed to the party with one caveat—all monetary gifts would be directed to fund a scholarship for students from Our Lady of Lebanon to Notre Dame High School. Today, the Deacon Anthony P. Koury Scholarship Fund forever binds the two institutions to which he has dedicated his life.

Deacon Koury’s service to the community has been well recognized, including:

- The Notre Dame High School Athletic Booster Award (1981)
- The Robert W. Stimmel Athletic Director of the Year Award in the Centennial League (1994)
- The Pennsylvania State Athletic Director Association’s 25-Year Award (1994)

- The Colonial League Athletic Director of the Year Award (2000-2001)
- “Unending Loyalty of Catholic Education,” Easton Catholic High School (2005)
- The Ava Maria Award of Outstanding Alumni Contribution (2006)
- The Notre Dame High School Athletic Booster Club Hall of Fame (2011)

One of his most notable community honors will be celebrated in August 2019, when his beloved Notre Dame High School will rename the school stadium in his honor.

Despite these recognitions for his dedication to the larger civic community, Koury is quick to say that one of the greatest honors of his life remains being invited by Zayek to be one of two Maronite deacons to meet with Pope John Paul II. He also cites innumerable special moments as both a deacon and parishioner of Our Lady of Lebanon—anniversaries of the parish, the Annual Festival, and watching both old and new parishioners work together to nurture their community.

Now well into his seventh decade of service and devotion to Our Lady of Lebanon, Koury believes that the secret to any success he may have achieved lies in relating to people on a one-on-one basis in good times or in bad times. “Regardless of the situation—whether it was with my student athletes, my pastor, my family, my fellow parishioners—I always tried to remain true to the words of Brigadier General Pike—what I do for others will remain immortal.” ■

IN A SNAPSHOT

BORN

April 1, 1947, in Easton PA, the son of Frank and Catherine; Siblings: Frances and Michael

WIFE

Chafica (Cheffie) Melhem

Married: May 23, 1970

Officiated by Archbishop Francis M. Zayek at Our Lady of Lebanon (Easton, PA)

CHILDREN/GRANDCHILDREN

Anthony, Jr. (1974) and Frances Koury Marcus (1981)/One Granddaughter & One Grandson

EDUCATION

Grade School: St. Bernard's Catholic School, Easton, PA (1961)

High School: Notre Dame High School, Easton, PA (1965)

College: Allentown College of St. Francis deSales (1969)

Diaconate Studies: Diocese of Allentown

ORDINATION

Deacon: July 11, 1982 by Archbishop Francis M. Zayek at Our Lady of Lebanon (Easton, PA)

ASSIGNMENT

Our Lady of Lebanon, Easton, PA

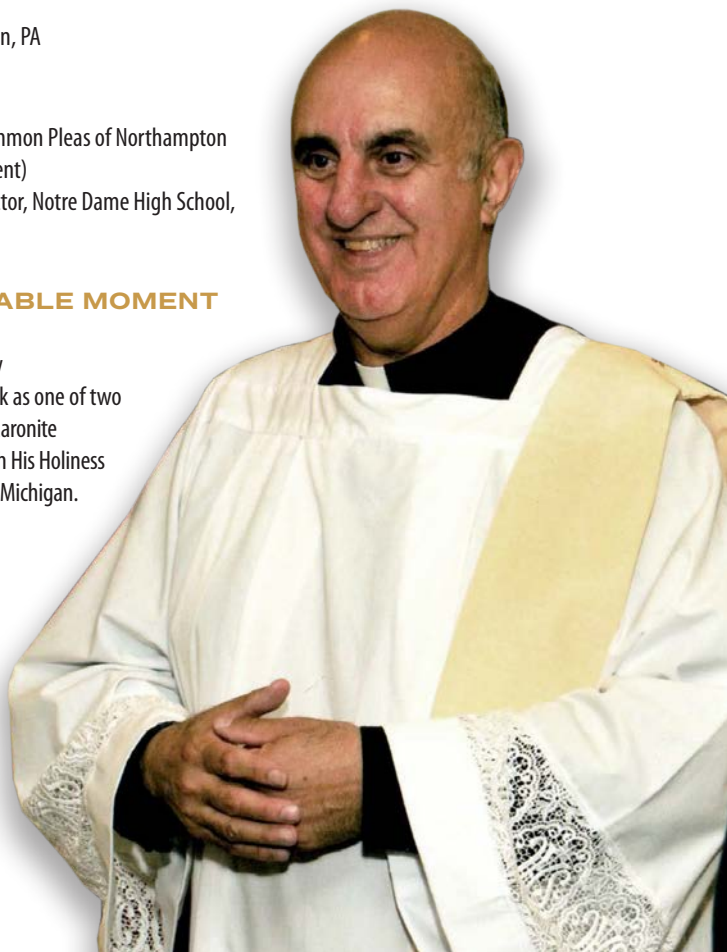
OCCUPATION

- Court Officer, Court of Common Pleas of Northampton County (PA) (2012 – Present)

- Teacher and Athletic Director, Notre Dame High School, Easton, PA (1969 – 2012)

MOST MEMORABLE MOMENT AS A DEACON

In 1987, he was selected by Archbishop Francis M. Zayek as one of two Deacons to represent the Maronite deaconate at a meeting with His Holiness Pope John Paul II in Detroit, Michigan.



Deacon Ordination

Subdeacon Michael Magyar Ordained a Deacon Clinton Township, Michigan

The community of St. Sharbel Maronite Church in Clinton Township, Michigan, had the privilege to gather in prayer and thanksgiving to God as it celebrated the ordination of Subdeacon Michael Magyar to the Order of Deacon on Sunday, November 11, 2018.

The Divine Liturgy was celebrated by Bishop A. Elias Zaidan, of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon. Chorbishop Alfred Badawi, pastor of St. Sharbel Church where Subdeacon Michael serves, was his sponsor and presented him to the Bishop.



In attendance were also Father Milad Yaghi, pastor of Our Lady of the Cedars in Houston, TX, Father Mark George, associate pastor at St. Isidore Catholic Church in Clinton Township, MI, and Deacon John Sfire from Chicago, Illinois.

Subdeacon Michael Magyar is the son of Oskar and Lorraine Magyar and is the oldest of six children, all of whom were present to witness the special day with their families. He was baptized at St. Maron Church on Congress Street in Detroit and attended St. Martin Catholic School in Detroit until it closed. He then attended St. Ambrose for a year before graduating from Grosse Pointe South High School. He earned a Bachelor's Degree in Accounting and a Master's Degree in Finance, allowing him to work as an accountant.

His spiritual journey of vocational discernment began in 2000 while attending Divine Liturgy at St. Sharbel Church in Warren, MI. He heard a homily by Msgr. Kenneth Michael which caused him to question how much he knew about his faith and led him to seek the answers. Most importantly, it led him to the community of St. Sharbel. He was ordained a Subdeacon in June 2005 and has served the communities of St. Sharbel, St. Maron, and St. Rafka Mission faithfully ever since.

Following the Ordination, a reception in honor of the newly-ordained Deacon Mike was offered in the church hall where everyone congratulated the new deacon. ■

Subdeacon Ordination

Ordination of Antoine Nammour As a Cantor, Lector, and Subdeacon
Lawrence, Massachusetts



St. Anthony Parish, in Lawrence, MA, celebrated the ordination of Mr. Antoine Nammour to the orders of Cantor, Lector, and Subdeacon on 4 May 2019, at the 4:00 p.m. liturgy. Chorbishop John D. Faris, representing Bishop Gregory J. Mansour, celebrated with a church full of family, parishioners, and friends. Joining as concelebrants were Msgr. Georges El-Khalli, Msgr. Peter Azar, Father Fares Abraham, Father Elie Mikhael, and Father Jebrael Moussallem. Also present in the sanctuary were Deacon Nadim Daou, Deacon Michael Charchafian, and Subdeacon James Demers.

In his homily, Chorbishop Faris stressed the sanctity of the church building given God's presence in the tabernacle, the subdeacon's role in caring for the church, and his role as a "hammer" in the hands of the Lord—a tool doing His works without questions or complaint.

Tonsure symbolized Mr. Nammour's movement from the laity to the clergy. Symbolic of his role in caring for the house of God, the new subdeacon opened and closed the church door, rang the bells to call the congregation to attention, and extinguished and lit a candle representing his role in lighting the church and preparing for liturgies. Subdeacon Antoine was sponsored by his pastor, Father Elie, throughout the ceremony, and processed in the church with his former pastor, Msgr. Peter, Msgr. Georges, and Father Elie.



Antoine's wife, Hitaf, and their children Elias, Maria, and Raymond all participated. Maria read the epistle, Hitaf presented her husband with his

alb and stole, and they all presented the gifts for consecration at the altar. The Nammour family has supported Antoine not only during this event, but also in their own works such as teaching religious education, serving at the altar, teaching Arabic classes, and volunteering in many unsung ways. His vocation is truly inspiring to his family, and their vocation inspires all their parish family. The parish followed up the celebration with a home-made meal in the parish hall. Congratulations to Subdeacon Antoine Nammour, a treasured instrument the Lord will use to build His Church. ■



The Holy Spirit and the Church

by Fr. David A. Fisher

*No one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit ...
For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks,
slaves or free persons, and we were all given to drink of one Spirit.*

1 CORINTHIANS 12:3, 13

It would be a mistake to think that the Holy Spirit is not present throughout salvation history and does not enter our world until the great day of Pentecost. Following the teachings of the Apostolic Father, Saint Irenaeus of Lyon (c.130 -c. 202), the Father is never present without his two hands, the Son and the Holy Spirit (*Against Heresies, book IV, chapter 20*). Indeed, the beginning of the Book of Genesis proclaims to us the presence of the Holy Spirit, "In the beginning God made heaven and earth. The earth was invisible and unfinished; and darkness was over the deep. *The Spirit of God* was hovering over the face of the water." (GENESIS 1:1-2)

On the great day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit is gifted to the Church, so that the faithful can profess, "Jesus is Lord." Saint Isaac the Syrian (c. 613 - c. 700) expressed the event of Pentecost in these words, "... the Savior commanded them not to leave Jerusalem until they should receive power from on high, that is to say, the Paraclete, which, being interpreted, is the Spirit of consolation." (*Ascetical Homily 77*) What is our consolation? That Jesus is the Lord of life, that he has destroyed death, and that our faith in him is the consolation of knowing that by sharing in his death, we share in his Resurrection.

The Creed

The distinguished 20th century liturgy scholar Alexander Schmemmann remarked that: "The Church is not a library of doctrines that have been neatly catalogued into individual classifications, neither is it in the strict sense of the word a teacher of religious truths, rather it is an 'epiphany' of God's final and total revelation to humanity." (*The Eucharist - Sacrament of the Kingdom*)

According to the ecumenical councils of the first Christian millennium, this 'epiphany' of God's final and total revelation, experienced first and foremost in the celebration of *The Holy Mysteries/Sacraments*, are expressed as articles of faith.

It is from the first two ecumenical councils of the "unbroken Church," that what is commonly referred to as The Nicene Creed was articulated. The proper name of the profession of faith is, however, The *Nicene-Constantinopolitan Symbol of Faith*; taken from the cities in which the Councils were held. The First Ecumenical Council was called by the Roman Emperor Constantine I the Great, in 325, and was held in Nicaea to combat the Arian Heresy. In doing

so, it affirmed the divinity of Jesus Christ, true God from true God, (consubstantial) one-in-being with the Father. The Second Ecumenical Council was called by the Roman Emperor Theodosius I the Great, in 381, and responding to the heresy of Macedonius, it affirmed the divinity of the Holy Spirit, *the Lord and giver of life*.

In the English translation of *The Creed*, it states that the Holy Spirit *proceeds* from the Father. This translation is from the Latin word *procedere*, yet in the original Greek text the dynamic term *ἐκπορευόμενον* is used. The meaning intended here is a proclamation of faith in the Holy Spirit's *dynamic, energetic, spiration*, from the Father; and the *transformation, grace-filled* return to the Father of all that is sanctified. This is why we can profess we believe in One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church. What is unified and made holy is the universal Apostolic Church, sanctified (made Christ-like) by the same power of the Father by which the Word became flesh in the womb of the Holy Mother of God, and by which the Savior of the world opened the gates of the abode of the dead, and rose triumphant on the day of Resurrection; that being the power of the Holy Spirit.

Saint Ephrem the Syrian uses King David as an example of those who longed to receive the grace that is given to the Church. He writes: "The Spirit dwelt in him and made song in him. Your anointing which you have is greater, for Father and Son and Holy Spirit, have moved and come down to dwell in you." (*Hymns for the Feast of Epiphany, Hymn Three*)

The Holy Mysteries

"HEAR US, O LORD. HEAR US, O LORD.
HEAR US, O LORD.
AND MAY YOUR LIVING HOLY SPIRIT COME AND
REST UPON US AND UPON THIS OFFERING.
KYRIE ELEISON. KYRIE ELEISON. KYRIE ELEISON."
—*The Epiclesis from the
Maronite Divine Liturgy*

The Church is made by the celebration of the *Holy Mysteries/Sacraments*, especially *The Divine Liturgy of the Holy Eucharist* and therefore, the Church we can say is brought about by the *Invocation of the Holy Spirit*. As Saint Irenaeus remarked, "Our teaching is in accordance with the Eucharist, and the Eucharist, in turn, confirms our teaching." (*Against Heresies, book IV, chapter 18*)

In the early and Patristic periods of the Church, there was no "distance" between the liturgical celebration of the Holy Mysteries and the dogmatic beliefs of the Church. The words and actions of the Holy Mysteries, especially the Eucharist, were a living catechism of belief. With the Medieval Scholastic period in Western Christianity and the rise of Aristotle's logic and metaphysics as paramount in the Medieval Universities, what arose was a separation between worship and dogma. While the shift to rationalism had a much greater impact on Western Christianity and society (eventually leading to the Reformation, Enlightenment, and Secularism) than it did on Eastern Christianity, its impact was felt throughout all of Christianity.

Schmemmann points out that the unity of belief and worship became lost in non-eucharistic theology; the fracturing between dogma, ecclesiology, and the Eucharist. Theology was left standing in a



paradox, because it had destroyed that which was its gift, that being *unity*. The gift of the Holy Spirit which is “communion” on the level of real and true being; a being constituted by the members of the Church and the Church united with the triune God; this “mystery of faith” suffers when its theological expression becomes handicapped by the creation of “divisions” within it.

We need look no further than the first document of the Second Vatican Council, the Document on the Sacred Liturgy (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*), to see how the Latin Church came to a realization of what had been lost. This document called for the insertion of an explicit “epiclesis” in the New Order of the Roman Mass (*Novus Ordo*), which had been absent or as some said “ambiguous” in the Tridentine Mass.

The celebration of the *Holy Mysteries* are *ecclesial events*, they constitute the being (ontological reality) of the Church, because the invocation of the Holy Spirit unites the Church with the Holy Trinity. In a sense the *Epiclesis of the Holy Spirit*, draws the Church into the *Perechoresis* (*interpenetrating rotation of the Three Persons of the Trinity*) of the triune God. In other words, we are brought into the very life of God, which means for us the Kingdom of God/Heaven.

Conclusion

In his first letter to the Corinthians, Saint Paul goes to the heart of the Christian life and by extension the life of the Church: “Though I speak with tongues of men and angels, but have not love, I have become a sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. ...And now abide faith, hope, love, these three, but the greatest of these is love.” (1 Corinthians 13:1, 13)

Jesus Christ reveals by his Death and Resurrection that God is Love, and that we who are graced by the Holy Spirit, who “groans” within us, is forming us to be Christ-like, that is beings constituted by “love.” Our faith teaches us that love never exists in isolation; we are brothers and sisters in the Church. Our faith teaches us that love never dies and that the Church is terrestrial and heavenly; we are united with the living and the faithful departed.

As God is a perfect communion, the Holy Trinity; the Church is a perfect community, One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic. In this time where we are faced with assaults upon the Church, we must remember that the Church is Holy, formed by the Invocation of the Holy Spirit. ■

Father Fisher is a Maronite priest of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon of Los Angeles and Adjunct Professor of Theology, Byzantine Catholic Seminary of Sts. Cyril & Methodius

Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit

by Jane Brock

Is there anyone who doesn't like to receive presents? Whether Christmas, Easter, a birthday, or another important occasion, when someone we love gives us a gift, we delight in the expression of remembrance, fondness, and generosity. But the nicest gift is one that is unexpected, given for no reason at all but that we are loved, cherished, and appreciated by the giver. We have done nothing to deserve such kindness; it was chosen and given simply because the giver wants to express how he feels about us.

This is how our Heavenly Father works. He showers down on His creation the vast riches of His love, and human beings, created in His image, receive the benefits of this grace which comes via the Holy Spirit, the third Person of the Trinity. This wonderful bounty comes in the form of the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Our Father doesn't give these spiritual gifts because we merit them, but simply because He created us in His own image out of the abundance of His mercy and love. According to the Tradition of the Church extending back to the second century, these supernatural gifts of the Holy Spirit are heroic character traits that are possessed in all their fullness only in Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, since each of us are called to emulate Jesus and to become saints, we must aspire to receive and develop them in our own lives.

Each Christian receives the seven Gifts of the Spirit as a permanent bequest at the time of his or her Baptism, and they are sealed at the time of Confirmation by prayer and the laying on of hands. The purpose of the Gifts is to help us to be obedient to the Holy Spirit, which is how we grow in holiness. But just like any other present, we must decide to "open" the gifts God gives us and to develop and use them not only for our sanctification but to assist

others in their own walk of faith. The Eucharist is the best gift of all and the Sevenfold Gifts enable us to receive the Body and Blood of Christ in truth and humility, gratitude, and love.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC) lists the gifts of the Holy Spirit:

Wisdom is both the knowledge of and judgment about the things of God and the ability to judge and direct our human affairs according to divine truth.

Understanding is the ability to see into the very heart of revealed truth, especially those higher truths that are necessary for our eternal salvation.

Counsel allows one to be directed by God in matters necessary for salvation.

Fortitude signifies a constancy of mind in doing good and in avoiding evil, particularly when it is difficult or dangerous to do so, and confidence to overcome all stumbling blocks because our minds are set on living with God through eternity.

Knowledge gives us the ability to judge correctly about matters of faith and right action, so as never to stray from the true path of justice.

Piety is revering God with the affection of sons and daughters, giving worship and allegiance to God, paying due duty to all humans on account of their relationship to God, honoring the saints, and not contradicting Scripture.

Fear of the Lord is a holy fear whereby we honor and respect God and anchor our lives in following His will. The opposite is "servile fear" where we serve God because we fear punishment. (CCC 1831)



These gifts are mentioned in only one place in Sacred Scripture—Isaiah 11:1-3, one of several prophecies of the coming of Messiah:

*A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse,
and a branch shall grow out of his roots
The spirit of the Lord shall rest on him,
the spirit of wisdom and understanding,
the spirit of counsel and might,
the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.
His delight shall be in the fear of the Lord.*

These spiritual gifts from God help us to overcome our fallen natures and enable us to rise above our sinfulness to share in the very life of God. These wonderful, supernatural gifts are not meant to be called on only in the difficult moments of life, but to be cultivated and used each day for our good, the transformation of our world, and the establishment of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ. They are practical and help us to order rightly all our relationships—family, work, leisure—and help us to perfect in our lives the theological virtues of Faith, Hope, and Love (CCC 1813), the cardinal virtues of Prudence, Justice, Temperance, and Fortitude (CCC 1805), and the fruit of the Spirit which is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23)

Pope St. Gregory the Great explains the dynamic way that the gifts are imparted to us and build upon one another:

Through the fear of the Lord, we rise to piety, from piety then to knowledge, from knowledge we derive strength, from strength counsel, with counsel we move towards understanding, and with intelligence towards wisdom and thus, by the sevenfold grace of the Spirit, there opens to us at the end of the ascent the entrance to the life of Heaven.

Pentecost commemorates that great initial outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the disciples and is described in the Acts of the Apostles, Chapter 2. Let us implore God to endow us ever more fully with these precious gifts, and the grace to develop and use them, and as Moses reminded the Israelites, “Teach them to your children, talking about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise.” (Deuteronomy 11:19) ■

Jane Brock is an active laywoman at St. Matthew Catholic Church in Charlotte, NC. She teaches Bible studies and leads retreats in several dioceses.

Parish News

ATLANTA, GEORGIA

Bishop's Pastoral Visit

On 6-7 April, the parishioners of St. Joseph Church in Atlanta, Georgia, welcomed Bishop Gregory Mansour on his first Pastoral Visit to their new home. Bishop Gregory met with the Stewardship and Pastoral Councils to discuss the transition from their original church in Little Five Points, to their present larger facility in Sandy Springs, a northern suburb of Atlanta. In his homily, Bishop Gregory congratulated the congregation on their progress as they plan their church dedication and installation of the new altar, stained glass windows, and original marble altar in the small chapel adjacent to the main sanctuary. Over 400 worshippers attended an elegant reception in Bishop Gregory's honor, hosted by The Ladies Altar and Rosary Society. ■

GLEN ALLEN, VIRGINIA

35th Saint Anthony Food Festival

For the past 35 years, in a tradition started by Msgr. George Sebaali, Saint Anthony Church in Glen Allen, VA, on the weekend after Mothers Day, invites an invasion of 40,000 hungry patrons to enjoy Lebanese food, music, and hospitality.

Cooking began in February. During the weekend, one can see a 90-year-old man selling hummus and a 9-year-old girl washing trays. Literally hundreds of parishioners collaborated in the cooking, serving, cleaning, entertainment, and the myriad of things that go on behind the scenes, but a few need to be recognized for their extraordinary generosity of talent and time: Rick Shibley, Sandra Brown, and Gus Harika shared in all aspects of the event.

It was Chorbishop Faris' first experience with the food festival in Glen Allen and everyone asked him if he was impressed. His response, "The crowds are nice, but the workers are amazing." ■

CHARLOTTE, NORTH CAROLINA

Visit of Bishop Gregory on Mother's Day

by Amanda Nassar

On 12 May, Mother's Day, St. Stephen Church in Charlotte, NC, was honored with a pastoral visit from Bishop Gregory J. Mansour, the high point of which was the celebration of the Divine Liturgy on Mother's Day. In his homily, he emphasized that Mother's Day is a time to celebrate both our mothers and our Mother Church. Sayedna stated, "The Church is Our Mother that we seek in times of need. Like Saint Peter who pulls the net full of fish to Christ; the priest is our shepherd who pulls us closer to Christ." We are grateful for our loving and nurturing mothers; and also for our Mother Church, that guides us in faith to Jesus Christ. To all mothers on Earth and in Heaven, Thank You! ■



AUSTIN, TEXAS

Msgr. Donald J. Joseph Sawyer, D.Min, Celebrates 45 Years

by Terri Schexnayder

On 27 April 2019, exactly 45 years to the date of his ordination to the Holy Priesthood, Msgr. Dr. Donald J. Joseph Sawyer—Fr. Don or “Abouna” to his parish family—celebrated his landmark anniversary with Liturgy, excellent cuisine, and music from DJ Miraelie at Our Lady’s Maronite Parish in Austin. Among the hundreds of attendees who were there to honor Fr. Don, Bishop A. Elias Zaidan praised the work of the pastor. “We first met in 1990 when I was pastor at St. George’s Maronite Church in San Antonio,” says Bishop Zaidan. “Father Don has always had a vision for a better future; he tries new things; and, is so welcoming to others.”

Although Fr. Don initially struggled as a young man about what his exact calling was, he vividly remembers moments from his childhood when he would create altars at home and was fascinated by the priest’s vestments when his family attended St. Mary’s in Austin. His mother, Julia J. Sawyer, whom everyone acknowledges as one of the key founders of Our Lady’s and passed away in 2009, used to tell her son a story. He would ride on his father’s shoulders and point at one of the priests, exclaiming, “Daddy, priest, priest—me!” As a teenager, Don Sawyer progressed through high school and college, always hearing the Lord’s gentle reminder, “Have a good time at the dance, but understand you won’t marry and have kids.”

“When I first heard the consecration in Aramaic from a recording, I knew this is what I wanted—to be a Maronite priest,” recalls Father Don. “Someone once said to me, ‘Congratulations! You are not Roman Rite . . . you are Maronite!’ How true that was!”

On 27 April 1974, after graduating with a Masters in Theology from the University of St. Thomas in Houston, his dream came true as he was ordained a Maronite priest by Archbishop Francis M. Zayek. Fr. Don served several parishes, including Sacred Heart Church in Austin, before leading



the effort to “build from scratch” Our Lady’s Maronite Parish. He became its pastor in 1990 and achieved his doctorate from Austin Presbyterian Seminary the following year. Father Don shares that the first collection at Our Lady’s began with \$46.00. He marvels at the parish’s growth through his mother’s passion for her son’s calling, and the dedication and financial support of Our Lady’s parishioners.

“Our parish is very unique in that our members are from many and varied cultural, social, and economic backgrounds. We have many converts and many who were Roman Rite. We are a very inclusive and welcoming community,” says Father Don. “It is wonderful to celebrate with so many of those early founders and new parishioners tonight.” ■

Parish News

GLEN ALLEN, VIRGINIA

Passion Play

by Dr. Mabel George Howard

The Passion of Our Lord is an impactful religious account of events familiar to Christians throughout the world. *The Passion of Our Lord*, also known as *The Passion of Christ*, is the story of Jesus Christ and the events that took place from Holy Thursday through Good Friday, including: the arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane, the trial before Pilate and Herod, the scourging and suffering, and the crucifixion on Golgotha.

During Holy Week, following the traditional Good Friday service, a group of parishioners from St. Anthony Church in Glen Allen, Virginia, performed a powerful reenactment of the *Passion of Our Lord*. The play script was written by Fr. Raymond Khallouf, Parochial Vicar. With the guidance, support, and ingenuity of the Maronite Young Adults, the parishioners constructed the scenery, created the costumes, and performed the drama to engage the congregation in the play.



A sincere thanks is extended to Lindal Handal, Milad Habboush, and Eid Rustom for their efforts and hard work in creating this impressive and emotional portrayal of Our Lord's Passion. This presentation was certainly one of the spiritual highlights of our Holy Week celebration. ■

JAMAICA PLAIN, MASSACHUSETTS

Lenten Retreat

by Lucille Noel

Msgr. Georges El-Khalli, of Our Lady of the Cedars of Lebanon Church in Jamaica Plains, MA, invited Rev. Philip Dabney, Parochial Vicar of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church, to participate in their Lenten Retreat. Upon entering the church, Fr. Dabney was very pleased to see the beautifully restored Icon of Our Lady of Perpetual Help placed prominently in the church sanctuary. He felt that God's hand brought him to Our Lady of the Cedars of Lebanon Church. In his inspirational talks, Fr. Dabney commented, "The Icon of Our Lady of Perpetual Help is a beautiful representation of the devotion and faith shown in our Catholic Religion." We are grateful to Fr. Dabney for his spiritual guidance during our blessed Lenten Retreat. ■



LAWRENCE, MASSACHUSETTS

MYO Fundraisers

The Maronite Youth Organization of St. Anthony Church in Lawrence, Massachusetts, hosted a fundraiser to defray costs necessary for members to attend the Regional MYO Retreat. The youth cooked and served breakfast and lunch after both Sunday Liturgies. Attending parishioners enjoyed an array of delicious food selections. The MYO is grateful for the adult volunteers who helped plan and prepare the meals. The youth also attended the Liturgy celebrated by His Excellency, Bishop Gregory Mansour, as part of his Pastoral Visit. Carrying their banners, the MYO, Knights of the Altar, Knights of Mary, Maronite Young Adults, and the Knights of Columbus, led a procession into the church as Bishop Gregory prepared to celebrate the Liturgy. ■



YOUNGSTOWN, OHIO

Bishop Elias Zaidan Pastoral Visit for Hosanna Sunday

by Diana L. Awad Scrocco

On Sunday, 14 April 2019, His Excellency A. Elias Zaidan visited St. Maron Church in Youngstown, Ohio, to celebrate Shaa'nineh (Hosanna Sunday) with the parish. On Saturday, the Antonine Sisters welcomed Bishop Zaidan to the National Shrine of Our Lady of Lebanon in North Jackson, Ohio. Before Liturgy began on Sunday, the kindergarten and first-grade children of the Maronite Catholic Faith program at St. Maron Church welcomed approximately 350 parishioners with a celebratory song, which concluded with "Shaa'nineh Mubārake," or "Blessed Palm Sunday."



His Excellency presided over Liturgy, speaking in his homily about the true meaning of "Hosanna," which many often associate with "Alleluia." Instead, Bishop Zaidan explained, "Hosanna" actually means "Save us," an appeal to Jesus Christ during this special celebration. During Liturgy, parishioners processed through the church grounds with their blessed palms and candles to commemorate Jesus' grand entry into Jerusalem on Hosanna Sunday.



After Liturgy, Bishop Zaidan joined approximately 300 parishioners in the church banquet hall for lunch, a raffle, and Lebanese music and dancing. Before departing from the Maronite community in Youngstown, His Excellency was given a bag of ka'ak, or Lebanese Easter bread, which several members of the church prepared and sold during the Shaa'nineh celebration. ■

Parish News

LEWISVILLE, TEXAS

A Journey Toward Easter in Lewisville, Texas

by Sara Kumar

Our Lady of Lebanon Maronite Church is a beacon and refuge in the heart of North Texas for those thirsting to authentically live out their vocations as Catholics. This year, at Our Lady of Lebanon, with the guidance and direction of our pastor Fr. Assaad ElBasha, our Lenten events and our Holy Week Mission inspired our parishioners to deepen their spiritual lives by walking the road with Christ to the Cross and to arrive at the hope of the Resurrection.



We began our journey with Ash Monday, this entry into Lent through the anointing of ashes brought together not only our regular Sunday parishioners, but also members of our surrounding Latin Rite churches. We came together as representatives of diverse cultures and backgrounds with the common purpose of responding to our Lord's call to repentance, of acknowledging the brokenness of our humanity, and of opening our hearts to God's healing love and mercy.

Our entrance into the Lenten journey with Christ was further fortified and nourished by our day of reflection on the first Saturday of Lent, led by Fr. Jorge Cabrera. Fr. Jorge Cabrera is a Discalced Carmelite friar and currently serves as the Superior of the Mount Carmel Center in Dallas. The topic for the day of reflection was "Entering into the Desert with Christ." Fr. Cabrera introduced parishioners to the Carmelite spirituality and encouraged attendees not to become discouraged during seasons of spiritual dryness, but rather to consider what God might be doing during these times! Being in a place where we are waiting, wanting, and praying together is often the proving ground of strength and refinement along the spiritual path.

Our annual Lenten scripture course this year was "Catholics & Salvation," led by Dr. Eric W. Hendry. Every Thursday evening during Lent, Dr. Hendry engaged parishioners in a participative class, which examined the scriptural basis for our Catholic understanding of salvation. Parishioners enjoyed the theological depths that Dr. Hendry probed. He delved into such topics as the importance of the sacraments, prayer life, scripture, good works, and virtue as we strive toward the hope of salvation.

The week of 25 March, volunteers from our parish worked on behalf of our church to sponsor, prepare, and serve a meal for the homeless in partnership

with Prodigal Projects. The meal which featured homemade meatballs, braised chicken, roasted red potatoes and veggies, shaabiyat, and namoura was served on 28 March at Our Calling in Dallas, TX. This was an opportunity for our parishioners to share their time and gifts with those less fortunate in our community and to respond to the Lenten call for almsgiving.

We were extremely blessed to have Fr. Mitch Pacwa join us again for our Holy Week Mission. Fr. Pacwa is the resident Scripture Scholar for EWTN and the author of numerous books. Our annual Holy Week with Fr. Pacwa has truly placed our church on the map. Every year, hundreds of people from the Dallas community come to listen to Fr. Pacwa share his theological and cultural insights as they journey through Holy Week and experience the beauty and solemnity of the Maronite liturgy.

On Holy Thursday, after the Washing of the Feet, Fr. Assaad and Fr. Pacwa were joined by Msgr. Jerome Duesman and Fr. Pavlo Popov to hear confessions. The lines for confession were out the door, and confessions were heard until midnight. Hundreds of people filled our church and our lobby to participate in the Burial Service of Good Friday. Fr. Jorge Cabrera joined Fr. Assaad, Fr. Pacwa, and Msgr. Duesman to hear confessions until midnight on Good Friday. On Easter Sunday, Fr. Pacwa and Fr. Assaad celebrated Liturgy at 8:30 am and 11:00 am.

This journey leading to Resurrection Sunday was truly unforgettable, because it provided parishioners with the light of hope in a culture shrouded in darkness. We, as parishioners of Our Lady of Lebanon Catholic Church, are so fortunate to have a home church and a safe harbor to raise our families, renew our culture, and live out our Catholic faith. ■

CINCINNATI, OHIO **Lenten Retreat**

by Ashley Farris

On 9 March 2019, St. Anthony of Padua Maronite Church had the privilege of experiencing a glimmer of light during the Lenten season. Fr. Dennis McManus, priest and professor of Jewish Studies at Georgetown University humbly invited the retreat participants on a journey with Jesus by reminding the listeners there is only one thing that matters: helping each other get to heaven. He began his series of reflections with the familiar gospel story from John 7:53-8:1-11, A Woman Caught in Adultery. He challenged the participants to listen to the story in a way which "opens our heart to Jesus' message to learn how to be accountable to love rather than to punishment." He explained that when we are accountable to how people love us, then we are more inclined to love and act differently than when expecting punishment, just as Jesus showed in his response to the woman. How do we open up to Jesus' message? By recognizing the moments, we have also been that woman or perhaps the scribes and Pharisees. How beautifully challenging



to begin the retreat and the Lenten season by placing oneself in the same light as this sinful woman or Pharisees and begin the process of opening one's heart to a new way of loving. With each reflection from Fr. McManus, there were multiple opportunities to seek one's own woundedness in the wilderness of one's soul, so that during these Forty Days one could silently dive into the deep, dark areas one tries to avoid - the places that seem unlovable. In this stillness and silence, one realizes it is in the very woundedness one was trying to avoid is where wholeness and healing begin and where emerges a new way of love, a love more like Jesus. What better way to journey through Lent than to begin to transform one's heart to beat more with the rhythm of Jesus' and in doing so one can't help but focus on one thing: helping each other get to heaven. ■

UNIONTOWN, PENNSYLVANIA **Lenten Season**

by Dr. Mabel George Howard

The Lenten Season leading to Passion Week at St. George Church is typically known as a time for prayer, fasting, almsgiving, religious traditions, spiritual introspection, and a renewal of the heart. During Lent, the congregation collected monetary donations to support the Catholic Relief Services (CRS) Rice Bowl that offers resources to families and communities locally and globally who are experiencing difficulties.



The church altar was adorned with arrangements of blessed palms to celebrate Hosanna Sunday, the commencement of Passion Week. During Liturgy, Fr. Habib reminded the MCF children to pray for Jesus' blessings every day. Following Liturgy, the Ladies Guild sponsored a breakfast for

the children, and the MYO helped organize an Easter Egg Hunt and visit from the Easter Bunny.

During Passion Week, the faithful participated in Maronite religious traditions, rituals, and prayers. Father Habib celebrated the Rite of the Coming to the Harbor to begin Passion Week, hours of the Divine Office, the Rite of the Lamp on Great Wednesday, the Washing of the Feet on the Thursday of the Mysteries, and the Adoration of the Cross on Great Friday. Pallbearers processed through the church carrying the casket filled with flowers and covered in a black shroud as the faithful chanted hymns. On Saturday of the Light, a liturgy was celebrated for the "Blessing of Spiritual Retreat." The Rite of Peace was celebrated on Easter Sunday where pallbearers carried the empty casket draped in a white cloth to celebrate the Glorious Resurrection of Christ. Christ is risen! He is truly risen! ■



Parish News

SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS

Pilgrimage to the Shrines of Italy

by Regina Aune

Joan Riegel, 85 years young and a long-time member of St. George Church in San Antonio, Texas, had always dreamed of going to the Vatican and seeing the holy sites in Italy. But she never knew if that dream would be fulfilled in her lifetime. To her great joy and happiness, that dream was fulfilled when she joined several members of St. George and Fr. Charles Khachan, MLM, on a pilgrimage to Italy from 19-29 March 2019. They spent several days in Rome visiting the Vatican, the Sistine Chapel, the Vatican Museum, and St. Peter's Basilica, as well as the Major Roman Basilicas of St. John Lateran, St. Paul Outside-the-Walls, and St. Mary Major. Each of these places was memorable because of the splendor, beauty, craftsmanship, and enormous size of each. But the highlight of the time in Rome was the papal audience in St. Peter's Square with the Holy Father, Pope Francis. The slight drizzle before the Holy Father's arrival did nothing to dampen the anticipation and enthusiasm of the San Antonio pilgrims.

Each pilgrim probably has his or her own special moments and favorite sites to savor when reflecting on the pilgrimage. It would be impossible to recount all the places we visited and all the activities (and all the good Italian food and wine we shared) we participated in, but a few stand out. On our final day in Italy, we celebrated the Divine Liturgy at St. Mary Major—a fitting end to a memorable trip.

But our whole pilgrimage wasn't spent in Rome. We followed the footsteps of St. Francis and St. Clare of Assisi. During our stay in Assisi, some of us made a

brief leisurely excursion to Florence, the Renaissance City, where we roamed the piazza, enjoyed the Florentine food, admired the Baptistry Doors, and learned some of the city's noble history and about some of Italy's famous artists such as Michelangelo.

Moving south, we visited the house of Nazareth in the Basilica of Our Lady of Loreto, only two days before the Holy Father's visit to Loreto. We continued our journey to San Giovanni Rotondo. We had the opportunity to pray at the basilica there and view the incorrupt body of St. Pio of Pietrelcina, better known simply as Padre Pio.

There are many monasteries in Italy and we visited several. Perhaps the most famous one we visited was the Abbey of Monte Cassino, founded in the 6th century by St. Benedict, and bombed and destroyed during World War II. Completely rebuilt, there are stunning views of the Italian countryside from its heights. Both St. Benedict's and his twin sister, St. Scholastica's, relics are housed in the abbey.

All too soon, we St. George pilgrims were on a plane bound for San Antonio. Each of our pilgrimages has been a time of friendship, fun, and prayer and this one was no different. Each pilgrimage is an opportunity to be grateful for the life each one of us has been given and the life we share together. It is a blessing to come home renewed in spirit and anxious to share what we have learned with those who could not come with us. ■



CINCINNATI, OHIO

Making Maamoul Family Day

Making maamoul with friends or family members is a very rich tradition dear to our culture. In fact, many people of the Levant (Eastern Mediterranean, Middle East, and Africa) make maamoul. For we as Christians, the maamoul has even deeper meaning as we eat them on Easter. The maamoul is symbolic of following Christ through His Passion, Death, and Resurrection. The wooden mold that shapes the maamoul symbolizes the wood of Jesus' Cross. The designs and pattern of the cookies resembles the shape of the sponge with which Jesus was given vinegar to drink as He hung on the Cross. The outside of the dough of the maamoul contains no sugar just as there is no sweetness to Jesus's brutal death; however, this sweetness lays hidden in the filling of the maamoul just as the sweetness of new life of the Resurrection lays hidden in the Jesus' tomb. Also, we eat maamoul after the Great Fast of Lent. Like maamoul, the outside of it is bland as fasting, but the core is sweet as our interior spiritual life accepts the joy of living in Christ.

To celebrate Holy Week and prepare for the Resurrection as a family, the Maronite Youth Organization (MYO) at St. Anthony of Padua Maronite Church in Cincinnati, Ohio hosted a Making Maamoul Family Day for the whole parish. On Holy Saturday, 20 April 2019, we began the event with a short talk on the importance of the sacrament of Confession, and then, filled St. Aquilina Chapel to celebrate the Rite of Forgiveness with our pastor, Fr. George Hajj. After praying with each other, we gathered in the hall around several tables



and bowls of dough as parishioner Mrs. Cori Seif walked us through the steps on how to make date-filled mammo! Everyone was given the opportunity shape the mammo! and fill trays of their very own personally designed maamoul to take home with them after they baked in the hall's kitchen.

At noon, we prayed the Angelus and ate lunch. Thanks to parishioners Vicki Misleh and her family who run the neighboring Skyline Chili Restaurant, we enjoyed a donated lunch of Cincinnati Skyline chili conies (a hotdog on a bun covered in chili and cheese)! Those who came also enjoyed adding design to dyed Easter eggs, filling plastic eggs with toys and candy for the little kids to hunt on Easter the next day, signed cards to those who are in need of prayers in the parish, and finished with an egg-to-egg battle in our Lebanese egg cracking tournament! Special thanks to those of the Maronite Young Adult (MYA) group that also helped make sure the event ran smoothly! The process of making maamoul has a beautiful way of bringing people together to make new connections and share their stories. The MYO of St. Anthony was glad to bring the entire church community and visitors together to experience this Easter tradition! Christ is truly among us, here. Indeed, He is risen! ■

PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA

St. Maron Feast Day

On 9 February, St. Maron Church in Philadelphia celebrated the feast of her patron saint, St. Maron. Bishop Gregory Mansour and other clergy joined the festivities including: Fr. Kamil Al-Chouefati, Fr. Joseph Abissad, Fr. Szolack, Fr. Sedano, and Subdeacon Fahid Nammour. Fr. Vincent Farhat, pastor, honored Suzanne Tavani with the Blessed Massabki Award. Suzanne received this award for her dedication and tireless work in preserving her Maronite legacy and traditions in Philadelphia. Suzanne and her family are original members of this community established in 1890. She served on the parish council and religious committees, is a co-chair of the 2021 NAM Convention, and contributes to *The Maronite Voice*. Suzanne produced and edited the St. Maron's 125th Anniversary video of their beautiful and vibrant



community that may be viewed on YouTube. The evening ended with the Haffli for St. Maron's Feast Day. Over 225 people gathered for a memorable night of dinner, dancing, and mingling with family and friends. ■

Faithfulness in Marriage

by Vivian M. Akel LCSW

“Caring for One’s Spouse” is especially meaningful as my husband and I complete our 33rd year of marriage.

Over these years, with God’s grace, I have learned much about the meaning of caring and loving in the unique relationship between husband and wife. After a 40-year career as a clinical psychotherapist, I have also learned much about the sadness and sorrow in marriages devoid of God’s grace.

Caring for and about each other in marriage, as well as in other areas of life, is the most beautiful way we can bear witness to Christ in our daily lives and encourage and allow each other to be the best version of who we are.

In a certain way, we pave the way to heaven for our beloved. We do this primarily by creating a home environment in which daily prayer is encouraged and valued as part of family life. Further, we accept our commitment to faithfulness to our spouse in ways that reach far beyond our customary understanding of spousal fidelity. We are faithful when we

- ▶ Agree to keep the little promises we make to each other.
- ▶ Keep our dinner plans.
- ▶ Keep each other’s confidences.
- ▶ Show up to go to a movie or go for a walk when we say we will.
- ▶ Make our life plans, as well as our social plans, as a couple.
- ▶ Avoid disclosing their weaknesses to our friends and colleagues.
- ▶ Support them through losses and personal crises with love and compassion.
- ▶ Take their concerns seriously.
- ▶ Stand with them during the difficult times whether through illness or other personal challenges.
- ▶ Give them loving but sometimes candid feedback that may be difficult for them to hear.

No one can deny that challenges will emerge over the course of any long-term marriage, but it is possible to face these with love if we stay focused on the graces we have received as a couple and a family. Sometimes overcoming these challenges requires asking for and giving forgiveness, and taking time away from the distractions of our day to day lives, and going on a couples retreat to reconnect with each other and with God’s loving grace. Sometimes it requires simply standing together humbly before God and asking for His help to reignite the love and passion that brought us to Him as a couple.

Each one of us wants and needs to feel loved and valued by our spouse and our family. Caring for each other, with Christ as our model, as he loved His Church, is a wonderful way to show that love and to value our spouse and family. ■



New President for Caritas Lebanon USA

Caritas Lebanon is the official pastoral arm of the Catholic Church in

Lebanon that serves the poor and refugees. It provides health care, emergency aid, education and humanitarian relief in Lebanon.

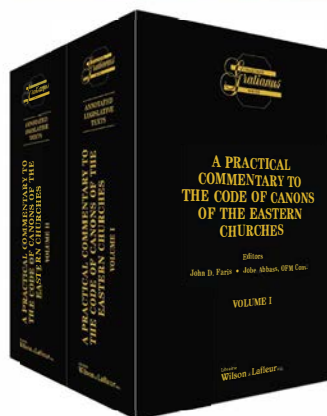


The Maronite Bishops in the United States established Caritas Lebanon USA, to promote awareness of the work of Caritas Lebanon and help fundraise for it in the United States. Bishop A. Elias Zaidan recently appointed Father John Nahal, Rector of Saint Raymond's Cathedral in St. Louis, as the new President of Caritas Lebanon USA. Several new members were also named to the volunteer Board of Directors. The Board had a teleconference in April where Father Nahal appointed several committee chairs and discussed ways to increase help for Caritas. Father Nahal and several Board members will be visiting Caritas Lebanon this Summer at their personal expense to assist Caritas.

Bishop Zaidan and Bishop Gregory Mansour ask all people of good will, especially Maronites, to please remember Caritas Lebanon in their prayers and to support it financially if possible. Tax-deductible donations may be made online with a credit card at www.caritaslebanonusa.org, or by mailing a check payable to "Caritas Lebanon USA" to Father John Nahal at 931 Lebanon Drive, St. Louis, MO, 63104. Volunteers interested in helping Caritas should contact Father Nahal by emailing rector@straymond-mc.org or calling 314-621-0056. ■

Practical Commentary on the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches

— John D. Faris and Jobe Abbass



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Let the wilderness rejoice,
and the desert shall flourish like the lily.
It shall bud forth and blossom,
and shall rejoice with joy and praise:
the glory of Lebanon is given to it.

ISAIAH 35:1-2

This is a new edition of Chor-Bishop Joseph Eid's book on Saint Sharbel, first published in 1955, but now in its third and updated edition. In addition, it has been expanded with the writings of Archbishop Francis Zayek, founding Bishop of the Maronite Eparchy in America.

The popular awareness and knowledge of Saint Sharbel are significantly wider these days than they were in the years when Msgr. Eid first put pen to paper in order to present the holy hermit to the English-speaking world, but his work remains the best introduction in print.

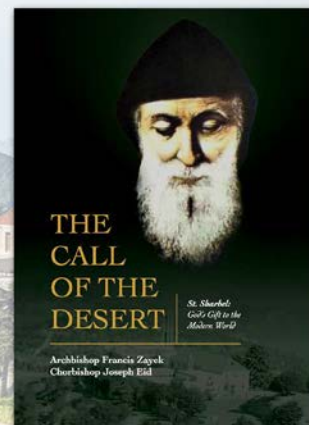
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DESERT

Archbishop Francis Zayek
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St. Sharbel:
God's Gift to the
Modern World

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The Choice Made by God

By Sr. Natalie Sayde Salameh, MSCL

One of the most topical issues in the mainstream media is abortion. It's not surprising with the State of New York formally legalizing third trimester abortions and infanticide. All of this coinciding with the release of the movie "Unplanned," which is an awesome depiction of the true story of Abby Johnson, a former abortion advocate and employee of Planned Parenthood turned Pro-life advocate and mother of eight children.

Many, I think, fail to grasp the reality of abortion. Well, this reality has hit home for me on a very personal level as I have just recently come to know the full truth about the story of my conception, a story I want to share with you. This story is not really mine to share but that of my parents, and they have given me permission to share it.

My parents had three children, my two older brothers and myself. My eldest brother, Peter, is 11 years older than me, and Malcolm is eight years older than me. When I was conceived in 1984, after an 8-year gap, the doctor who examined my mother told her that the baby would be born with serious birth defects; actually, he said that I would be missing an eye or both eyes and some limbs. This was before the advancement of technology including ultra sounds and sonograms. The doctor gave my

mother a white slip of paper, which stated clearly at the top "Recommendation—Termination of Pregnancy".

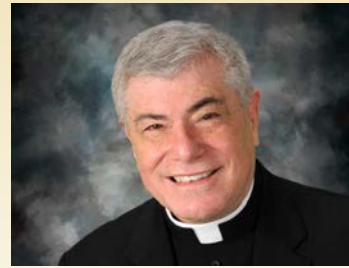
The doctor advised my mother to abort me. My father, being the typical Lebanese man who doesn't go into exam rooms, was outside in the waiting room. My mother emerged visibly distressed and crying and she told my father what the doctor had said. She showed him the white slip of paper from the doctor which would have ended my life. Now, bear in mind, English is not my parents' first language, so my father went straight in to see the doctor to ascertain exactly what was going on, while my mother was drying her tears in the waiting room.

He asked the doctor, "Did you give this slip of paper to my wife? What's going on?" The doctor told my father the same thing he had told my mother about my being born with serious birth defects. What my father said in response to the doctor is to this day, the most moving thing I have ever heard my father say. He said, "Are you going to take care of this baby or are we? Who are you to say that we have to end our baby's life just because that baby may be born with some defects? We're happy to keep this baby no matter what, I don't care if the baby is missing both eyes and all four limbs, we will look after the baby because it's ours." The doctor then said the buzz word of the century to my father, "well, Mr. Salameh, it's your choice." "Choice!" My father again responded beautifully, "The choice was made by God when he gave us this baby as a gift."

My parents left the doctor's office and went to another doctor, who again examined my mother. It turns out that this doctor said that I would be born with both eyes and with all my limbs, with no defects whatsoever, and so it was. My mother carried me to term; actually, I was born after my due date. ■



From the Editor



Pizza with Heroes

A few weeks ago, I had the pleasure of spending an evening with the **seminarians** of Our Lady of Lebanon Seminary, a community of young men preparing for priestly ministry in the Maronite Church in the United States. We went for pizza along with Msgr. Peter Azar, rector of the Seminary, and Msgr. George Sebaali, pastor of Our Lady of Lebanon Church.

The eight seminarians are of different ages, different native tongues, and different mentalities. Nevertheless, they have formed a beautiful community in which they will live as they prepare themselves for the priesthood.

Naturally, being with the seminarians caused me to reminisce about my own days in the seminary. I managed to keep most of these memories to myself and did not—well, for the most part—bore the group with stories of “in my day.”

In comparing ourselves with seminarians, we priests usually hold the opinion that we had it rougher: our prayer time was longer, our studies more difficult, and our superiors more demanding.

Careful reflection will reveal that prayer, studies, and discipline have not changed very much. However, the **Church and society have changed**. When I entered the seminary—some 50 years ago—Church and the priesthood were facing some challenges, but still enjoyed the prestige and respect of society. People may not have understood the call of a priestly vocation, but they appreciated the sacrifices that a seminarian was willing to make. All that has changed.

In society today, there is a lack of appreciation of religion and faith, disdain for clergy on the part of many, and disappointment in Church leaders. The Church seems to be imitating society with its inclination to polarize. People sometimes view the priests with suspicion.

Nevertheless, in the face of all these negative factors, these eight men recognize a call bigger than themselves and were willing to stand up and assert, “I want to be a priest.” This is an act of *heroism*. Our seminarians realize that society needs Christ and that Christ calls men to the priesthood in order to share salvation through Word and Sacrament.

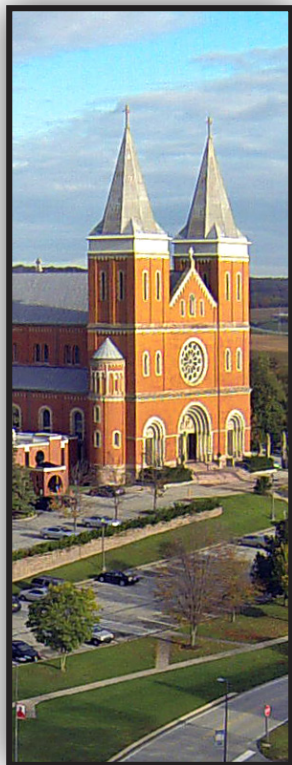
The seminarians need our **support**: anyone who has put a son or daughter through college knows that it is expensive. The seminarians deserve our **gratitude**. They will benefit from our **loving prayers**.



Chorbishop John D. Faris

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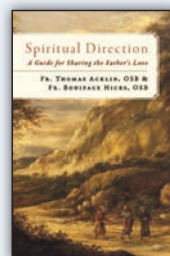
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