

*the* **Voice**  
Maronite



*St. John Maron*

First Patriarch of the Maronite Church

# the Maronite Voice

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# Year Of Jubilee

## Year Of Joy

by Bishop A. Elias Zaidan

The year 2019 is a “Jubilee Year” for the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon of Los Angeles. We will be celebrating the 25th Anniversary of the establishment of the Eparchy. With the papal proclamation *Omnium*

*Catholicorum* dated February 19, 1994,

Pope Saint John Paul II established the second Eparchy for Maronites in the United States.

I use the term “Jubilee” in announcing this celebration. The idea of a Jubilee Year has a long tradition in the Bible and the Church. As far back as Moses “a

year of Jubilee” was proclaimed. In the Book of Leviticus, we read: “the ram’s horn blast shall resound throughout your land” (Lv. 25:9). It was the ram’s horn that announced the year of jubilee to all the people. The Hebrew people kept this tradition throughout the centuries by continuing

to declare Jubilee Years from time to time. During the Jubilee year personal liberty was proclaimed throughout the land, there was a restitution of property, that is, an opportunity for reconciliation among neighbors and a call to lead a simpler life among all the people.

The Church continued this practice of declaring Jubilee years. Most recently in 2015, Pope Francis announced a special Jubilee Year on the theme of mercy. In Church tradition, a Jubilee or Holy Year is a year of forgiveness of sins. It is a year of

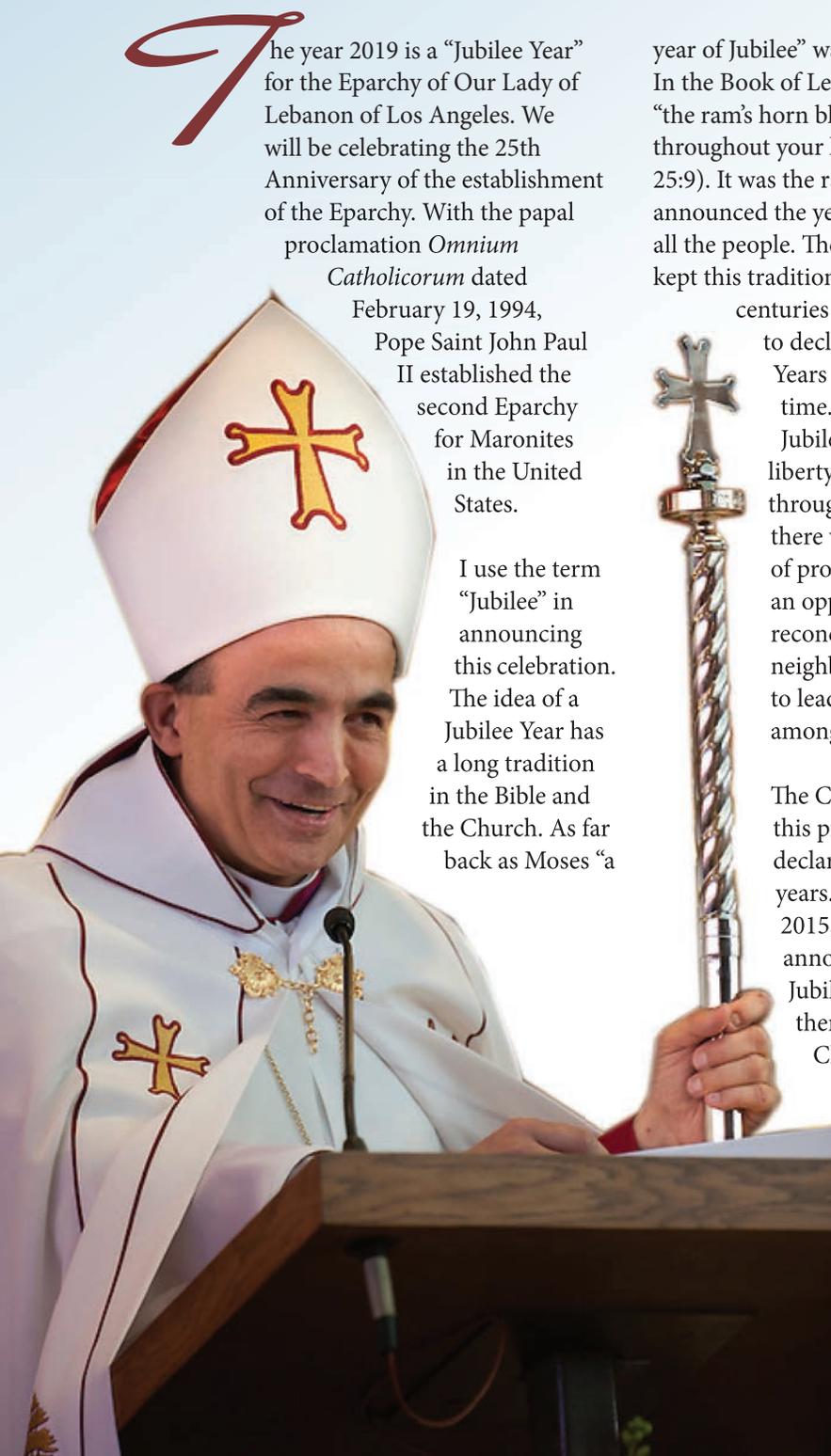
reconciliation between enemies and adversaries and even among family members; it is a time of personal conversion and receiving the Holy Mystery of Reconciliation. The aim of a Jubilee Year is solidarity, hope, justice and, in general, a commitment to serve God with joy and in peace along with all our brothers and sisters. It is an occasion for rejuvenation and renewal.

The Prophet Hosea tells us: “Come, let us return to the LORD. He has torn us to pieces, but he will heal us; he has injured us, but he will bind up our wounds” (Hosea 6:1). For us, Christ is the healer of body and soul — the physician. He can help us recover our physical and spiritual strength.

As Maronites of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon of Los Angeles, and indeed as all baptized Christians, we have a mission given to us by Jesus Himself.

“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Matthew 28:19-20).

Over the centuries since Jesus Christ gave this command to his



disciples, the Church has taken it very seriously. Our ancestors took the Faith throughout the Middle East, especially to the mountains of Lebanon. Strong and vibrant communities of Maronites existed and continue to exist in Syria, in Jordan, in Egypt, in Cyprus, and in the Holy Land. In recent centuries we have taken the Gospel to North, Central and South America, to Africa, Europe, and to Australia. The Good News of Salvation, the Gospel, which we proclaim, is for all people, in all places, and in all times. Within our own Eparchy, we have parishes from Michigan to California, from Alabama to Oregon and so many places in between. We need to establish more Maronite communities in so many other places as well: in New Mexico and Nebraska, in Indiana and Kansas, even some day in Hawaii and Alaska!

We are a young Eparchy when considering the 2,000-year history of the Church, but we take our calling to share the Gospel seriously. We need to restore our historical missionary spirit where it may have lapsed. In places where we have had a long history of an organized Maronite presence, we may need to re-evangelize our people, to stimulate a new missionary spirit. It is not just up to us, however. The Lord gives to us the gifts of being “missionaries” and, at times, the gift of “martyrdom” as well. These gifts of the Spirit belong to God.

Such gifts of God are ultimately for helping the whole Church.

We must always remember that to be a missionary, that is, one sent out to proclaim the Gospel, was given to each and every one of us at our Baptism. Every one of us, who is a follower of Jesus Christ, is under the command of God to, “Go and make disciples” (Matthew 28:19). But, of course, each of us in our own way according to our state in life: bishop and priest, deacon and subdeacon, consecrated religious and lay people, mother or father, worker, retired, sick or healthy — we all must make disciples. We are all responsible for sharing the Gospel. Saint Paul shared the Gospel in his way, Saint Maron in his, Saints Sharbel and Rafka each in their own way.

We cannot forget that martyrdom, the sacrifice of our lives for the Gospel, is tied up in our mission. We think of the great martyrs of the Church: the Holy Apostles, St. Stephen the Deacon, the 350 monks, disciples of St. Maron, who experienced martyrdom for upholding the Faith of the Church. In 1860, the three Massabki brothers, patrons of our laity, offered their lives for the sake of their faith in God. There are martyrs even up to our own day as well.

In the modern world and where we find ourselves today, like the United States, martyrdom, if not physical death, also comes in a

variety of ways. We can suffer rejection by the world for our Faith; we can be humiliated and disgraced publicly because we hold fast to the Gospel. All this we must be prepared for as well strengthened with the promise of Christ: “I am with you always” (Matthew 28:20).

But in spite of all of this, the Gospel is, at its very heart, a source of joy. The good news of the Gospel is salvation, and that is very good news. So be open to the Gospel, rejoice in the good news and somehow because each of us responds to the Gospel in different ways, I feel the Lord will help us to take it from there. In his first encyclical letter “The Joy of the Gospel,” Pope Francis said: “The Joy of the Gospel fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus. Those who accept his offer of salvation are set free from sin, sorrow, inner emptiness and loneliness. With Christ joy is constantly born anew.”

Let us make this Jubilee Year, our Eparchial Silver Anniversary, one of renewal and rekindle in ourselves and in our parishes a new missionary spirit. Let us reach out to all our faithful, the people we lost along the years; and let us welcome with open arms, hearts, and minds the many who are seeking a relationship with our Lord. ■

## Schedule **BISHOP GREGORY J. MANSOUR**

- 16-17 FEBRUARY** Utica, NY | St. Louis Gonzaga Church | Pastoral Visit
- 23-24 FEBRUARY** Roanoke, VA | St. Elias Church | Pastoral Visit
- 3 MARCH** Brooklyn, NY | Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral
- 8-10 MARCH** Uniontown, PA | Pastoral Visit
- 12 MARCH** Washington, DC | USCCB Meetings & Eparchial Review Board Meeting
- 12-13 MARCH** Baltimore, MD | USCCB & CRS Meetings
- 15-17 MARCH** Pleasantville, NJ | Our Lady Star of the East Church | MYO/MYA Retreat
- 24 MARCH** Sleepy Hollow, NY | St. John Paul II Church | Pastoral Visit
- 25-28 MARCH** Saint Louis, MO | The Chancery | Caritas Lebanon & Eastern Catholic Bishops Meeting
- 31 MARCH** Washington, DC | Our Lady of Lebanon Church | Pastoral Visit
- 1-2 APRIL** Washington, DC | Our Lady of Lebanon Seminary | Clergy Enrichment Days & Vocations Team
- 6-7 APRIL** Atlanta, GA | St. Joseph Church | Pastoral Visit
- 10 APRIL** Brooklyn, NY | The Chancery | Presbyteral Council Meeting
- 10 APRIL** Brooklyn, NY | Eparchial Finance Council
- 10 APRIL** Brooklyn, NY | Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral | Liturgy of the Blessing of the Myron and Holy Oils
- 14 APRIL** Brooklyn, NY | Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral & Manhattan Mission | Palm Sunday

*Tenth Annual Benefit Dinner for  
The Eparchy of Saint Maron*



*A Special Decade of Service*

*Thursday, October 3, 2019*  
New York Athletic Club, New York City

Details to follow

## Schedule BISHOP A. ELIAS ZAIDAN

- 23-24 FEBRUARY** Millbrae, CA | Our Lady of Lebanon Church | Pastoral Visit
- 26 FEB- 1 MARCH** Capital Campaign Drive: Houston, TX
- 1-3 MARCH** Birmingham, AL | St. Elias Church | Pastoral Visit
- 8-10 MARCH** Cincinnati, OH | St. Anthony of Padua Church | Regional NAM Convention & Pastoral Visit
- 15-17 MARCH** Minneapolis, MN | St. Maron Church | Pastoral Visit
- 22-24 MARCH** Phoenix, AZ | St. Joseph Church | Pastoral Visit
- 25 MARCH** St. Louis, MO | The Chancery | Caritas Lebanon Board Meeting
- 27-28 MARCH** St. Louis, MO | The Chancery | Eastern Catholic Bishops Meeting
- 29 MARCH** Orange County, CA | Religious Education Eparchial Board Meeting
- 30 MARCH** Houston, TX | Our Lady of the Cedars Church | 25th Eparchial Anniversary Banquet
- 31 MARCH** Simi Valley, CA | Sts. Peter and Paul Church | Pastoral Visit
- 1-2 APRIL** Washington, DC | Our Lady of Lebanon Seminary | Clergy Enrichment Days
- 5-7 APRIL** Livonia, MI | St. Rafka Church | Pastoral Visit
- 9-10 APRIL** St. Louis, MO | The Chancery | Presbyteral Council Meeting
- 9 APRIL** St. Louis, MO | St. Raymond Cathedral | Liturgy of the Blessing of the Myron and Holy Oils
- 13 APRIL** North Jackson, OH | Antonine Sisters | Day of Recollection
- 14 APRIL** Youngstown, OH | St. Maron Church | Palm Sunday

## LENTEN OBSERVANCES 2019

The Most Reverend Bishops Gregory J. Mansour and A. Elias Zaidan have issued the following Lenten guidelines for the Maronites of the U.S.:

- + All Maronites who are physically capable are to abstain from meat on Ash Monday (4 March 2019) and all Fridays of Lent.
- + Ash Monday and the Great Friday of the Crucifixion are also days of fasting. Fasting in the Maronite Church involves eating and drinking nothing at all (except water and medicine) from midnight until noon. The rest of the day normal meals can be taken, but without meat. All Maronites who are physically capable are to fast on these two days.

### Distribution of Ashes

All parish priests are to bless and distribute ashes on Ash Monday during the celebration of the Divine Liturgy as indicated in our liturgical books. This ceremony may not be celebrated on the vigil of Ash Monday (Cana Sunday). For the convenience of some faithful of the Latin Church who may come to Mass at a Maronite Church on their Ash Wednesday, ashes that were blessed on Monday may be given to them after the Mass. However, ashes are not to be blessed again on this day.

### Devotion of Lenten Fridays

All parish priests are to celebrate the Benediction with the Cross every Friday of Lent except for the Great Friday of the Crucifixion. This service may be preceded by Evening Prayer (Ramsho), Stations of the Cross, or even the Divine Liturgy. Benediction with the Blessed Sacrament should not take place on the Fridays of Lent.

### Personal Devotion

Clergy, religious and laity who wish to observe the more traditional Maronite practice of fasting and abstinence are encouraged to do so. That practice is summarized in the following, taken from the Synod of Mt. Lebanon (1736): *Every weekday of Lent (Monday through Friday) is a day of fasting and abstinence from meat and dairy products (eggs, butter, milk, etc.) Fasting involves eating and drinking nothing at all (except water and medicine) from midnight until noon. The rest of the day normal meals can be taken, but without meat or dairy products. Dairy products are excluded because they are animal byproducts. Saturdays and Sundays are exempt from fasting and abstaining, as are the following four feast days: St. Maron – 9 February, The 40 Martyrs – 9 March, St. Joseph – 19 March, and the Annunciation – 25 March.*

# The History of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon Upon its 25th Anniversary

by Bishop A. Elias Zaidan

Immigration of Maronite Christians from the Middle East to the United States began during the latter half of the nineteenth century. When local communities were able to obtain a priest from the Middle East, parish communities were established under the jurisdiction of the local Latin Bishops. This accommodation continued until Pope Paul VI on January 10, 1966 established the Maronite Apostolic Exarchate for the Maronite faithful of the United States. This was announced through the Apostolic Constitution *Cum supremi*.

Francis Mansour Zayek was appointed first bishop of the Exarchate which was established in Detroit, Michigan. The Exarchate was a suffragan of the Archdiocese of Detroit. Through the Apostolic Constitution *Quae sees*, issued by Pope Paul VI on November 29, 1971, the Maronite Exarchate was elevated to the status as a full Eparchy or Diocese. It was named the Eparchy

of Saint Maron of Detroit. On June 27, 1977, by a decree from the Oriental Congregation for the Churches, the See of the Maronite Eparchy was transferred to Brooklyn, New York and the name was modified to reflect the move to Brooklyn.

Pope John Paul II issued the papal bull *Omnium Catholicorum* on February 19, 1994 establishing a second Eparchy for the Maronite of the United States. The new Eparchy received the title of Our Lady of Lebanon of Los Angeles, and was carved out of the territory of the original Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn. It included some 34 States. The decree from the Apostolic See states:

*We create an Eparchy which encompasses the faithful presently living in these States, namely: Ohio, West Virginia, Illinois,*

*Alabama, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Texas, Utah, Arizona, Nevada, Oregon, California, Alaska, Hawaii, Indiana, Kentucky, Tennessee, Mississippi, Wisconsin, Iowa, Arkansas, Louisiana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Kansas, Oklahoma, Nebraska, Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, New Mexico, Idaho and Washington. This Eparchy we separate from the other of Saint Maron of Brooklyn, and henceforth it will hold the title of Our Lady of Lebanon of Los Angeles in California.*

The Most Reverend John G. Chedid, formerly titular Bishop of Callinicum for the Maronites and Auxiliary Bishop for the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn, since October 1980, was appointed first bishop for the new Eparchy with the Cathedral under the patronage of Our Lady of Mt. Lebanon in

Our Lady of Mt. Lebanon Cathedral,  
Los Angeles, CA.





Maronite Pastoral Center opened in 2003 and The Maronite Heritage Institute, St. Louis, MO opened in 2011.

Los Angeles. Bishop Chedid was enthroned on June 23, 1994 during ceremonies celebrated at Saint Charles Borromeo Church, North Hollywood, California. Archbishop Francis M. Zayek, representing the Maronite Patriarch, His Eminence and Beatitude Nasrallah Peter Cardinal Sfeir, enthroned the new Bishop with many clergy and dignitaries in attendance. Bishop Chedid was born in 1923 and raised in the village of Edde, Batroun, in Lebanon. In the decree of appointment, Pope John Paul II mentions:

*We have established the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon in Los Angeles, at the same time We have carefully decided about sending a shepherd to that place. And so to you, venerable brother, we turn Our thoughts, you whom We know to be thoroughly educated in the sacred disciplines in the city and trained in pastoral experience.*

In conformity with the Code of Canons for the Eastern Churches (CCEO), Bishop Chedid sent his resignation to the Holy Father on his seventy-fifth birthday. On December 5, 2000 the Holy Father accepted his resignation due to canonical age and appointed Chorbishop Robert J. Shaheen as the second bishop for the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon. Bishop

Shaheen was ordained and installed as Eparch on February 15, 2001 by his Eminence and Beatitude Nasrallah Peter Cardinal Sfeir at the Cathedral Basilica of the Archdiocese of Saint Louis, Missouri. Bishop Shaheen was the first American-born priest to be ordained a Bishop for the Maronite Church. In the decree of appointment, Pope John Paul II addressed Bishop Robert Shaheen saying:

*And so when the Eparchial See of Our Lady of Lebanon of Los Angeles owed to the resignation from his Episcopal office of the venerable brother John George Chedid, we hastened to assign another shepherd to the aforementioned See. Therefore our thoughts turned to you beloved son since we judged you suitable for the same very office and endeavored with the necessary qualities and virtues. Accordingly I have given approval to the opinion of the Congregation for the Eastern Churches.*

This marked a significant milestone in the history of the Maronite Church, in that the Holy See and the Maronite Patriarchal See recognized and responded to the need for domestic leadership within the Maronite Church in the United States. Bishop Shaheen was born in 1937 in Danbury, Connecticut.

While the eparchy was originally established in Los Angeles in 1994, its offices were moved to St. Louis in July 2001 with approval from the Vatican Congregation for the Oriental Churches and St. Raymond was elevated to the rank of Co-Cathedral.

On his seventy-fifth birthday, Bishop Shaheen also tendered his resignation due to canonical age to the Holy Father. On July 10, 2013, Pope Francis accepted Bishop Shaheen's resignation and appointed Abdallah Elias Zaidan, MLM (Congregation of Maronite Lebanese Missionaries), Rector of Our Lady of Mt. Lebanon Cathedral as third Bishop for the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon. Bishop Zaidan was born in Ksseibe, Lebanon on March 10, 1963 and was ordained a priest on July 20, 1986. He was consecrated a Bishop at the Shrine and Basilica of Our Lady of Lebanon in Harissa, Lebanon by His Eminence and Beatitude Bechara Peter Cardinal Rai on September 28, 2013 and installed as Bishop of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon at Saint Raymond Co-Cathedral on October 23, 2013. His Episcopal motto is: Thy Will Be Done.

Pope Francis, in his decree of appointment, addressed Bishop Zaidan with the following:

## The History of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon

Continued from page 9

*Finally, beloved Son, may you act in such manner as to fulfill this vital ministry of Shepherd by word, deed, and above all, the example of your life, for no other means is more suited to the teaching and governing of men. May “the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit” (2 Cor 13:13), through the intercession of the Virgin Mary, be always with you and with this Maronite ecclesial community that is so dear to Us.*

The Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon presently has some 34 established parishes and eight missions. The Eparchy is comprised of almost 50,000 Maronite faithful served by about 51 priests; some 17 permanent deacons and over 30 subdeacons. The Eparchy also has two monasteries under its jurisdiction: The Maronite Order of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Ann Arbor, Michigan and the Monks

of Jesus, Mary and Joseph in Beaverton/Portland, Oregon. It also has two women religious orders who are serving the Eparchy: The Antonine Sisters in Ohio and the Maronite Sisters of the Holy family in California.

The Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon of Los Angeles continues to grow and expand in unity and faith. Since its establishment, the Eparchy added 14 new parishes and missions, while other missions were strengthened and expanded. Its many parishes, missions, and communities have sought, under the leadership of Bishop Elias Zaidan, to strengthen their ties to their Maronite roots and bring new generations of Maronites into the fold. The demographic makeup of Maronite churches across the country has shifted and evolved over time. Although the Maronite Church in the United States began as a Church of first- and second-

generations Lebanese immigrants, the Maronite Church now includes members from a variety of ethnic and social backgrounds. Many individuals with no family or marital ties to the Maronite Church have chosen to become Maronites due to the beautiful and unique tradition and liturgy.

The modern Eparchy recognizes the diversity of its parishioners, the richness of its traditions and the strength of its communal faith. It carries the storied history of the first Maronites to settle in the United States and all of the Maronites who have since joined the fold. As the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon of Los Angeles moves forward with its 25th anniversary into a new chapter, its laity, clergy and Bishop acknowledge the importance of their Maronite faith and heritage with an eye toward the bright future ahead. ■



### ANNUAL LENTEN APPEAL 2019



The Maronite Bishops' Annual Appeal takes place during Lent each year. Please be generous and help with the greatest needs of your Eparchy.

#### HOW DO YOU MAKE A GIFT?

##### YOU MAY MAKE A DONATION IN YOUR PARISH:

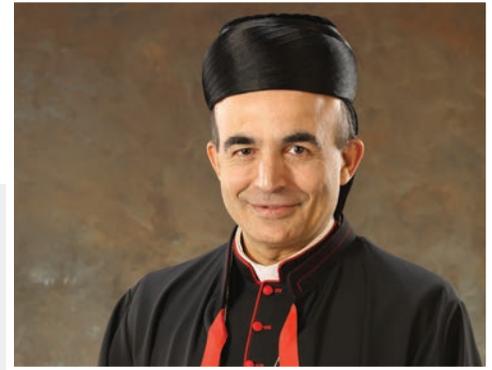
Please bring your gift to your Maronite Parish on any Sunday during Lent in a special envelope marked "Annual Appeal."

##### MAIL A GIFT OR MAKE A DONATION ON-LINE:

Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn  
109 Remsen Street  
Brooklyn NY, 11201  
[www.stmaron.org](http://www.stmaron.org)

Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon of Los Angeles  
1021 S. 10<sup>th</sup> Street  
Saint Louis, MO 63104  
[www.eparchy.org](http://www.eparchy.org)

# Biography of Bishop Elias Zaidan



Bishop A. Elias Zaidan is the third and youngest Bishop to lead the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon of Los Angeles. Appointed when he was just 50 years old, Bishop Zaidan has brought a unique perspective to his role as Bishop. He has made great strides both in his earlier priesthood and his tenure as Bishop and commands the respect of laity and clergy.

Bishop Elias Zaidan was born in Ksseibe, Lebanon, on March 10, 1963. He professed his Perpetual Vows as a member of the Congregation of the Lebanese Maronite Missionaries on September 26, 1984 and was ordained a priest two years later on July 20, 1986 by Patriarch Nasrallah Peter Sfeir at the Basilica of Our Lady of Lebanon Shrine in Harissa, Lebanon. During his preparations for the priesthood, Bishop Zaidan earned licentiate in theology and philosophy. After two years serving as Assistant Rector of the Minor Seminary of the Congregation of the Maronite Lebanese Missionaries and teaching religious education in local Catholic schools, Bishop Zaidan was transferred to the United States, where he served as Assistant Rector at Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral in Brooklyn, New York. While in Brooklyn, Bishop Zaidan received a Master's Degree in Education from St. John's University.

In January 1990, Bishop Zaidan became the Pastor of St. George Maronite Catholic Church in San Antonio, Texas. After four and a half years in Texas, he was reassigned to Los Angeles, California, where he served as the first Rector of Our Lady of Mt. Lebanon-St. Peter Cathedral for Bishop John Chedid and then Bishop Robert Shaheen. During his time in both Texas and California, Bishop Elias Zaidan helped establish several new Maronite missions, including missions in Dallas and Houston, as well as the St. Jude Mission in the San Gabriel Valley, CA and the Sts. Peter and Paul Mission in the San Fernando Valley, CA.

Beyond his role in establishing Maronite missions, Bishop Zaidan has long been involved with organizations within and outside the Eparchy. He has been a member of the Presbyteral Council, Protospesbyter and member of the College of Consultors, chairman of the Commission for Lebanon, board member of Tele-Lumiere International,

member of the Board of Pastors and the Personnel Board of the Eparchy, coordinator of the Eparchial Marriage Tribunal, member of the Eparchial Sexual Abuse Board, director of Project Roots, supervisor for the Eparchial Stewardship Office, and the Vicar for Clergy as well as being the local Superior for the Congregation of Maronite Lebanese Missionaries. Bishop Zaidan led the re-writing of the Eparchial Pastoral Handbook in 2008. He has also participated in several Synods and Convocations, including as a translator at the Synod of Bishops for the Christians of the Middle East at the Vatican in 2010 and as a delegate and special expert at the Maronite Patriarchal Synod in Lebanon from 2003-2005, for which he was also chief editor of the English Edition of the official Synod text.

On July 10, 2013, Pope Francis, based on the recommendation of the Synod of Maronite Bishops, appointed Rev. A. Elias Zaidan as the third bishop of the Eparchy. He was ordained bishop by the Maronite Patriarch Bechara Peter Cardinal Rai at the Basilica of Our Lady of Lebanon Shrine in Harissa, Lebanon on September 28, 2013. He was enthroned at St. Raymond Cathedral on October 23, 2013. His motto is: "Thy will be done."

During his tenure as Bishop of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon, Bishop Elias Zaidan has been a champion for the protection of children, pastoral involvement of the laity, and missionary outreach to all the faithful. He also serves on two committees at the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops: International Justice and Peace as well as Catholic Home Missions. He has taken important steps to further unity within Maronite Parishes throughout the Eparchy through his pastoral visits to the various parishes and missions. His work for the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon of Los Angeles has continued the mission of his predecessors Bishop John Chedid and Bishop Robert Shaheen while forging a new path for the future of the Eparchy. ■

# Biography of Bishop Robert Shaheen



Bishop Robert Joseph Shaheen, the second Bishop of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon of Los Angeles, had a long and storied history of service in the Maronite Church in the United States. As the first American-born Maronite Bishop in the history of the Church, Bishop Shaheen brought important insight and perspective to the Maronite Church in America, while maintaining strong ties to the Church in Lebanon.

Bishop Robert Shaheen was born on June 3, 1937 to Albert and Aileen Shaheen in Danbury, Connecticut. After attending local elementary and secondary schools, in 1955, he entered the Latin rite St. Thomas Seminary in Bloomfield, Connecticut. In 1958, he transferred to the Melkite rite St. Basil Seminary in Methuen, Massachusetts, and in 1961, he enrolled as one of the first four seminarians in the newly-established Maronite Seminary of Our Lady of Lebanon in Washington, D.C.

Bishop Shaheen was ordained a priest on May 2, 1964 at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception during the very first national convention of NAM by Bishop Francis Zayek, then-Bishop of the Maronites of Brazil. Bishop Shaheen's ordination was the first Maronite ordination in the United States.

In January of 1967, soon after the establishment of the Apostolic Exarchate in the United States, Bishop Shaheen was appointed Pastor of Saint Raymond Maronite Church in St. Louis, Missouri, which had been without a Maronite priest for over 20 years. During the 34 years he served as Pastor at St. Raymond, the church experienced dramatic growth and development; St. Raymond became a center for the Lebanese community in St. Louis and expanded from a handful of families to hundreds. Bishop Shaheen also worked with the City of St. Louis to

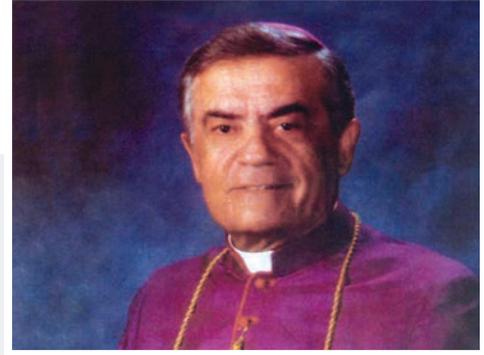
preserve and renew the LaSalle Park neighborhood, where St. Raymond is located.

Beyond his role as pastor of St. Raymond, Bishop Robert Shaheen also held a number of positions in the Maronite Church in the U.S. He was a member of the Priests' Senate, the Eparchial Liturgical Committee and the Board of Consultors. Bishop Shaheen served as the Vice-Chairman of the Financial Committee, Chairman of the Family Life Office, Chairman of the Personnel Office, Proto-Presbyter of the Mid-America Region and Spiritual Director of the Order of St. Sharbel. He was ordained an Archpriest in 1978 and a Chorbishop in 1986.

On December 5, 2000, Pope St. John Paul II accepted the retirement of Bishop John G. Chedid and appointed Bishop Robert Shaheen as the second Bishop of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon of Los Angeles. He was ordained a bishop and enthroned on February 15, 2001 by Maronite Patriarch Nasrallah Peter Cardinal Sfeir at the St. Louis Cathedral. His motto was: "Do not be afraid." Soon after, he relocated the eparchial offices to St. Louis and St. Raymond Church was elevated to the rank of Co-Cathedral. During his ministry as Bishop, he emphasized the importance of our Liturgy as the most cherished treasure of our Church and heritage.

On July 10, 2013, Pope Francis accepted Bishop Shaheen's age-related resignation. He held the title of Bishop Emeritus of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon until his death at the age of 80 on August 9, 2017. ■

# Biography of Bishop John Chedid



Bishop John George Chedid, first Bishop of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon of Los Angeles, served important roles in the Maronite Church in the U.S. during the majority of his career. Quiet and reflective by nature, Bishop Chedid commanded respect from his parishioners and fellow clergy, alike. His work at Our Lady of Mt. Lebanon Church in Los Angeles, as well as his role as the first Bishop of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Los Angeles, has earned him an enduring legacy within the Maronite Church.

Bishop John Chedid was born on July 4, 1923 to George and Hannah Chedid. The second-youngest of five children, he was born and raised in the small village of Edde, Batroun, in Lebanon. Bishop Chedid began his journey to the priesthood at the minor seminary of St. Maron in Ghazir, Lebanon, under the direction of the Jesuit Fathers. He continued his studies at the Seminary of the University of Saint Joseph in Beirut. After his university studies, Bishop Chedid was sent to the Propaganda Fide in Rome in 1946. He stayed in Rome until 1956, during which time he earned a Baccalaureate in Philosophy, a Licentiate in Theology and a Doctorate in Canon Law. He was ordained to the Holy Priesthood on December 21, 1951 by Cardinal Fumasoni Biondi at the Propaganda Fide.

Bishop Chedid was assigned to Our Lady of Mt. Lebanon-St. Peter in Los Angeles, California, by the late Maronite Patriarch Paul Cardinal Meouchi. He arrived in Los Angeles on September 1, 1956 and served the Church there all the time until his elevation to Eparchial Bishop. He was elevated to the honor of Monsignor in 1969 and ordained a Chorbishop in 1978. In 1980, he was appointed an auxiliary Bishop to Archbishop Francis M. Zayek of the Eparchy of St. Maron of Brooklyn, New York. On January 25, 1981, he was consecrated Bishop by the late Patriarch, Cardinal Antonius Peter

Khoreiche. When Pope St. John Paul II created the new Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon of Los Angeles on March 1, 1994, he named Bishop John Chedid its first Eparchial Bishop. Bishop Chedid was enthroned as Bishop of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon of Los Angeles on June 23, 1994. His motto was: "Your grace is enough for me."

Over the years, Bishop John Chedid served the Maronite faithful of the United States in a number of important roles. He was the Judicial Vicar, Vicar General and Moderator of the Intereparchial Marriage Tribunal. Moreover, he served on the Tribunal of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. In 1966, he helped relocate the Maronite Church in Los Angeles from its Brooklyn Avenue location to its present location on South San Vicente Boulevard. He was also a representative of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles to the Inter-Religious Ecumenical Council. Bishop Chedid officiated at confirmations for the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, became a hospital chaplain at Cedars-Sinai Hospital, and served in a variety of ministries for Catholic (Eastern and Latin rite) Churches in the United States and abroad.

After his age-related retirement from the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon on December 5, 2000, Bishop Chedid remained in Los Angeles but eventually returned to Lebanon, where he spent the last years of his life in the care of his family and the Sisters of the Cross. He died on March 21, 2012, and his funeral was held in Bkerke, Lebanon. Bishop John Chedid is remembered for his prudence, his respect for clergy and laity alike and his dedication to the Church. ■



# St. John Maron

## The First Patriarch of the Maronite Church

The Monastery of St. Maron was established in the Roman province that covered much of the area we know as the Levant. John Maron was born in the seventh century and lived his life during a period of great political and religious conflict.

Politically, the period saw the onset of the Byzantine-Persian War that left both empires devastated, consequently allowing the advance of the Muslim invaders and the loss of the entire territory to the followers of Islam.

Within the Church, there was continued tension regarding the nature of Christ. The Council of Chalcedon in 451 stated that Christ had both a divine and human nature. This is the Catholic doctrine we hold today. Others, partly motivated by their animosity for the Byzantines, asserted that Christ had only one, divine nature.

The Chalcedonian Patriarch of Antioch, Anastasius II, died in 609. After his passing, patriarchs were appointed by Constantinople and lived in exile in the imperial city and the patriarchal see of Antioch was effectively vacant. The absence of a patriarch for the Chalcedonian Christians of the region, coupled with the aftermath of war and Muslim invasions left the Chalcedonian community in need of effective leadership.

Many looked to the Monastery of St. Maron, the center of Chalcedonian monasticism. The monks elected a priest to serve as Patriarch of Antioch who took the name John Maron, who was to guide the Maronite community during a time of great strife. The new patriarch also facilitated the migration of many from the region of the Orantes River to Mount Lebanon in order to take refuge from continued conflict. There are numerous liturgical and theological works attributed to him, but admittedly, there is little direct evidence of their authorship by John Maron.

Despite the historical inaccuracies of John Maron's hagiographies and the dearth of concrete evidence, the Maronite Church definitely had a first patriarch whose leadership and spiritual fortitude allowed the Monastery of St. Maron and its followers to flourish in the midst of war, persecution, religious strife, and uncertainty. His leadership and holiness inspired veneration among the people that persists to this day. There is an anaphora attributed to him that forms part of the Maronite liturgical patrimony.

The feast of St. John Maron, the first patriarch of the Maronite Church, was transferred from 9 March to 2 March in 1778 by Patriarch Joseph Estephan.

May his prayers be with us. ■

# Lebanon

October 2-16 2019

Our Lady of the Cedars of Lebanon Church  
Boston, Massachusetts • [www.ourladyofthecedars.org](http://www.ourladyofthecedars.org)  
(Sponsored by the Saint Maron Society)

**14 days | 13 nights**

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## Save These Dates

### Women's Discernment Retreat

Friday, April 26<sup>th</sup> - Sunday April 28<sup>th</sup>

Mother of the Light Convent

856 Tucker Rd, Dartmouth, MA 02747

Please join us as we explore how trust in God's mercy is crucial for developing life-giving relationships, and especially in living one's mission and purpose.

*The Weekend Will Include:*

Divine Liturgy, Confession, Eucharistic Adoration  
Talks on Religious Life, Marriage & Vocational Discernment, and  
Fellowship with Other Young Women

To obtain more information please contact:

Sister Marla Marie Lucas, [sister@maroniteservants.org](mailto:sister@maroniteservants.org), or call 202-213-7700



Hosted by:  
Maronite Servants of  
Christ the Light  
[www.maroniteservants.org](http://www.maroniteservants.org)

# Maronite Young Adults: Mission and Growth

*The Maronite Young Adult (MYA) organization is a group of Maronite Catholic disciples who intentionally live the teaching of the Catholic Church and embrace Jesus in their daily lives. By their service, social, and spiritual activities, they seek to live the Gospel of mercy and compassion and grow in their relationship with Jesus and one another.”*

(MYA MISSION STATEMENT)

Our Maronite Young Adults (MYA) groups live in different locations across the United States. On the local level, parishes have been encouraged and are starting to develop their own MYA group, with the commitment of their young adult parishioners. The national MYA board comprises representatives from all regions.

By using the right tools to foster community, a parish can establish and/or nurture an MYA group (ages 18-35). We pray MYA becomes an extension

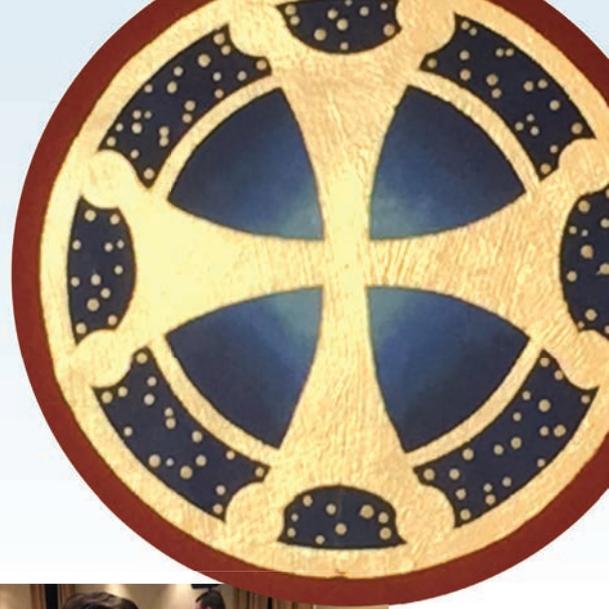
of a young Maronite’s daily life and faith, through the combination of ongoing service, spirituality, catechesis, discussion and fellowship.

Those interested in the mission of MYA should talk with the pastor and parishioners. Is there interest in forming/strengthening your MYA? With even a small group of committed individuals, there is no limit to how fruitful this young adult group can be and what they can do for the parish community. Social media is an effective means of communication

and evangelization. It can be utilized to inform and update members, to recruit new members, and to share the beauty, truth and joy of the Gospel.

A regular schedule of events encourages commitment and involvement of the members. It is ideal to have at least one event per month. At each event, new members are warmly welcomed! “For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”





(Matthew 18:20) So whether an event is popular in attendance or not, do not be discouraged. Persevere, be positive, and be open to feedback: it takes time and patience to build a community.

After a MYA has been established, its members are encouraged to elect a local board of representatives, including the roles of President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, and an Event Coordinator. Elections for these positions are from active members and should take place annually. If you have any questions or would like more tools or resources to start and/or expand your MYA, please contact the National MYA Board at [nationalmya@gmail.com](mailto:nationalmya@gmail.com). ■



## *Save these Dates*

**MARCH 9, 2019**

**Regional  
MYA Retreat Day**  
Our Lady Star of the East  
Pleasantville NJ

**OCTOBER 4-6, 2019**

**National  
MYA Conference**  
T Bar M  
San Antonio TX



## Retreat for Priests | Eparchy of St. Maron



In the Gospel, there are many references to Jesus, sometimes with his disciples, withdrawing and taking time to pray.

*Jesus went out to a mountain side to pray, and spent the night praying to God. When morning came, he called his disciples to him. (Luke 6:12-13)*

The Church calls for priests to devote themselves daily to the reading and meditation of the word of God. They are to be assiduous in prayer, in liturgical celebrations and especially in their devotion to the mystery of the Eucharist. They are daily to examine their consciences and frequently receive the sacrament of penance. They are to carry out the other pious exercises of their own Church.

But it is still necessary for the priest to withdraw, perhaps with his brother priests to be quiet and to pray. For this reason, every year Bishop Gregory gathers all the priest in a quiet place to get some rest, to share in fellowship and to refresh their spiritual lives.

From 7-11 January 2019, the priests of the Eparchy of St. Maron of Brooklyn gathered at Our Lady of Florida Retreat Center in North Palm Beach, Florida for a week of prayer, conferences, and fellowship. Chorbishop Seely Beggiani, Rector Emeritus of Our Lady of Lebanon Maronite Seminary, gave the retreat and offered a series of conferences on Syriac Spirituality. Chorbishop Beggiani drew from St. Ephrem, St. Jacob of Serugh, St. John the Solitary, and other Syriac writers to focus on a spirituality of Baptism. ■

## Retreat for Priests | Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon



The annual clergy retreat was conducted from Monday evening to Thursday afternoon January 7-11, at Franciscan Renewal Center, Scottsdale, Arizona. On Monday, January 7 following the Divine Liturgy, the Maronite Community of St. Joseph Maronite Church provided a wonderful dinner to all. This year's retreat master, Led by his excellency Bishop A. Elias Zaidan, Bishop of Our Lady of Lebanon of Los Angeles. The priests enthusiastically participated for three days in a rich spiritual program. During the three-day retreat, the following topics were presented and discussed:

- 1 — "Vocation and Formation & Priests Ambassadors before God and before the people."
- 2 — "Priests Students and Teachers & Priests as peacemakers."
- 3 — "Priests as Alter Christus & Thanksgiving and Commission."

The retreat provides an opportunity for the priests and deacons of the eparchy to pray together, reflect on the spiritual message delivered and to have time to gather for meals, socializing and living the unique companionship with each other.

The retreat also offers a time to take care and empty and recharge ourselves to be able to serve the communities within and outside the walls of the church. He also invited us to keep our eyes directed towards Him.

Jesus once spoke to his disciples, "Come away to a quiet place and rest awhile." Hear the invitation once again to come away with Jesus. We will rest awhile, listen for guidance and renew our courage and compassion. ■

# Lent, The Forty Days Journey

by Fr. George Hajj

Lent is the forty days journey, following the season of Epiphany (Baptism and Manifestation), in other words, the identity and mission of Jesus Christ and through him, his Mystical Body, the Church.

We fast during these forty days from midnight to midday as an act of faith, we abstain from meat and animal products, and from other luxuries. We are also to refrain from vices such as smoking, cursing, gossiping, etc.

Even though the general misconception is that Lent is about fasting only, it is actually so much more than that.

Lent is the epitome of spirituality. Lent prompts us to get in touch with our spiritual side; whether by intensifying prayer or reading Holy Scripture and contemplating the wonders of God's creation. It is an opportunity to feed the soul and the heart and isolate oneself from the daily distractions and take a break from the chaos of the day to day life.

It brings out the good side of people. During these Forty Days, leading to the Passion and the Resurrection, we strive for virtue. Lent prompts us to help the less fortunate, forgive and make peace with friends or people we were on bad terms with, reach out to family members and relatives and to focus on purifying our hearts and intentions as the journey goes on.

Lent is all about peace and reconciliation. It is about being a better person; people do not only fast from

food, they fast from any extreme emotions — anger, frustration, envy, and sadness. The main spirit of the journey is for people to focus on their relationship with God and strengthen the faith instead of letting their emotions take control of their lives.

It is a journey of healing. The spirit of Lent, the prayers, the kindness that people exude during this journey and the peace of mind that comes with the isolation from the daily routine really helps us tap into our sadness and heal ourselves. It's building a connection with the Lord, away from the noise of people that drain us and jobs that wear us down. It completely shifts our mental and emotional state.

It helps us practice gratitude. Fasting makes us realize how much we take things like food and water for granted and gives us a taste of how some less fortunate people actually live; deprived from the simple things that we take for granted every day. It teaches us how to be compassionate and count our blessings instead of focusing on the things we don't have.

It is also a journey of love. It is encouraged to gather large groups of friends and family in our parishes and live the highest summit of Love, which is the Divine Liturgy, partaking of the Body and Blood of God. It is a journey of reconciliation and reconnection, with each other and with the Lord.

It reflects life. Since Lent teaches us patience, humility, gratitude and self-control, if we reflect deeper, these are also the tools we need to live a

good life. We often get carried away with our duties and our lives that we do not really take a moment to reflect on the point of it all. Lent helps us cling to the essence of life and sharpen the tools we need to thrive in life.

It is also an opportunity to get to know ourselves. When we isolate ourselves from all the material things and spend less time thinking about eating, drinking, and going out, we get to truly spend some time with the Lord and our own thoughts and feelings and listen to them. It is another form of soul searching; we get to know parts of our self and we get to understand how strong we are against temptations and how forgiving we are against those who did us wrong and how we can let go, and let God. All these are questions we normally ask ourselves, but Lent really puts it all in perspective.

Lent, fasting, charity and prayer are supposed to be a lifestyle not an occasion. Even though it is one month and ten days, the point is to carry out these behaviors after Lent and throughout the year too. It is more about becoming a better human being. It is a reminder from God that we are here to do good, to forgive, to heal, to let go and to help those who cannot help themselves — in other words, to walk the journey of becoming a child of God. ■

*Father George Hajj is the pastor of Saint Anthony Maronite Church in Cincinnati, Ohio.*





# Great Lent and Asceticism

by Fr. David A. Fisher

*Jesus said to him, “If you wish to be perfect, go, sell your possessions, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.”*

MATTHEW 19:21

Asceticism is derived from the Greek word *askēō*, *askēsis*, meaning “training” or “exercise.” It was used in reference to the training and discipline of athletes preparing for competition, as in the Olympic Games, and was further used in defining the training of soldiers for the Greek City-States. Later the idea of asceticism in ancient Greece was applied to the wise and the intellectual, to the paid professional teachers (Sophists), and eventually to the ethical who advocated the control of human emotions (Stoics).

Platonism and Neo-Platonism, the philosophical/ascetical movement begun by Plotinus, both emphasized the ascetical ascent of the soul to pure knowledge and abandoning the lesser desires of the body.

While early Christianity grappled with the philosophical traditions of the Classical Greeks, as it did with the Scriptural tradition of Ancient Judaism; it was in the light of Jesus Christ that both inheritances were properly “baptized” for Christian use. This was most eloquently expressed by St. Paul in his First Epistle to the Corinthians, “but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles,” (I Corinthians 1:23).

All Christians are called to be martyrs, not necessarily to the point of shedding one’s blood, but as the word martyr means witness, all are called to witness to the faith, and therefore witness to Christ. In the same way all Christians are called to be ascetics, not necessarily to be ascetics in the sense of isolated

hermits or solitary nuns, but all are called to sacrifice worldly pleasure for the sake of discovering what is of true value and unending worth.

The Season of Great Lent is given to the Church each year as a time when we can seriously and prayerfully reflect upon what is of ultimate value in our lives and what is not necessary in our pilgrimage to the Kingdom of God. It is a far greater journey the Church calls us to during Great Lent than the traditional “what did you give up for Lent,” or abstaining from certain foods. While these are good places to begin the journey of Lenten Asceticism, they can become merely challenges to our human will, rather than moments of spiritual growth. The Church is calling us to the kind of spiritual awareness that was expressed by St. Basil the Great in the fourth century, in his work known as the *Moralia*. He writes, “whatever a person may possess over and above what is necessary for life, he is obliged to do good with, according to the command of the Lord who has bestowed on us the things we possess.” (*Moralia*) Here St. Basil reminds us that as Christians, if we have been given all we need for a good life, then what we have in abundance we should do good work with for others, for ultimately all we have is not of our own making, but are gifts from God.

For the Christian asceticism is not a training or exercise in “self-denial,” it is a training in love. This training is not a matter of laws, rules, and regulations imposed upon us by the Church; rather it is a discovering of the Law of Christ within us,



which is the Law of Love. St. Basil reminds us that commandments of Scripture allow us to become truly ourselves. In his work *Long Rules*, he teaches: The love of God is not something that is taught, for we do not learn from another to rejoice in light or to desire life, ... In the same way and even to a far greater degree it is true that instruction in divine law is not from without, but, simultaneously with the formation of the creature — humanity, I mean — a kind of rational force is implanted in us like a seed, which, by an inherent tendency, impels us toward love. This germ is then received into account in the school of God's commandments, where it is wont to be carefully cultivated and skillfully nurtured and thus, by the grace of God, is brought to its full perfection." (*Long Rules*)

In his book *The Freedom of Morality*, the contemporary theologian Christos Yannaras, being true to the ancient tradition of the Church and especially the Eastern Christian tradition of which the Maronite Church is a part, reminds us that asceticism is an ecclesial event, not an individual pursuit: Christian asceticism is above all an ecclesial event and not an individual matter. It is the changing of our nature's individual mode of existence into a personal communion and relationship, a dynamic entry into the community of the life of the body of the Church. The aim of asceticism is to transfigure our impersonal natural desires and needs into manifestations of the free personal will which brings into being the true life of love. (*The Freedom of Morality*)

Yannaras is saying, that asceticism allows us to discover our true selves within the body of the Church. For it is in the Church that our true self emerges as a being of communion and relationship. It is within the Church we gain freedom from the false self of sin, desire, and need, to discover our true life of love, which is manifested in the communion of the Body of Christ, the Church.

The rebellion of which asceticism seeks to be a cure is documented in Scripture in Genesis 3:5, "In the day you eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you shall be as gods." As many of the Church Fathers taught, God became Man, so that Man could become God. This did not mean the rebellion of the autonomous, self-sufficient, false self as presented in Genesis 3:5, but to become Christ-like, a person in communion with others (Church), sharing one's goods with others (Charity), and laying down one's life for others (Salvation).

While the practice of asceticism can take on many forms; fasting, penance, chastity, charity, prayers, prostrations, participation in liturgy, pilgrimage, etc., ultimately it is to free us from what is false and leads to death and to crown us with what is true and leads to eternal life and unites us with the Communion of Saints. ■

*Father David A. Fisher, Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon of Los Angeles, Adjunct Professor of Theology, Byzantine Catholic Seminary of Sts. Cyril & Methodius*



# What's in a Rice Bowl?

by Deacon Joseph Chebli

There is no shortage of exhortations from the Church Fathers, the Desert Fathers and our own Maronite monks and hermits on the spiritual benefits of fasting. Perhaps St Leo the Great puts it best when speaking of fasting, praying and almsgiving:

*“And though our minds must at all times be set on holiness of mind and body, yet now during these 40 days of fasting bestir yourselves to yet more active works of piety, not only in the distribution of alms, which are very effectual in attesting reform, but also in forgiving offenses, and in being merciful to those accused of wrongdoing, that the condition which God has laid down between Himself and us may not be against us when we pray.”*

our deep Maronite spirituality during lent is not to simply fast as our ancestors did, or deprive ourselves of the luxury of life, or follow our church precepts. While these are great acts of piety, they are the roots of our Maronite heritage- the simplicity of living. Our Maronite heritage is built on the premise of living simply daily before the awesomeness of God.

I was speaking once about the Rice Bowl, a Catholic Relief Services (CRS) initiative, and a young girl asked me: what is in the rice bowl? At first, I dismissed the question as childish. However, a child's question seems to always come from a deeper root. And so, I pondered.

“Forty days of lent is an invitation and a challenge to prepare ourselves for the resurrection of Christ and the recreation of humanity in the magnificent imago dei (image of God).”

Forty days of lent is an invitation and a challenge to prepare ourselves for the resurrection of Christ and the recreation of humanity in the magnificent imago dei (image of God). We speak of almsgiving, praying and fasting during lent and many of us have adopted various practices of these three pillars. To engage

During my recent trip to Uganda, I realized the benefits of Catholic Relief Services' Rice Bowl initiative, that invites us to participate in acts of charity and justice on a personal and communal level. I quickly understood what is really in the Rice Bowl besides rice. What we may not see is the other essential ingredients it contains:



There is of course, “rice.” Nutrition for those who cannot find sufficient food.

There is also clean water and sanitation for those who thirst and have no homes.

There is a shelter for refugees who live in the open space.

There is education and empowerment of farmers.

There is apprenticeship to those who drop out of school.

There is school fees and resilience building for families.

There is re-unification of families whose circumstances shattered their unity.

But perhaps the greatest thing that the Rice Bowl has is our solidarity with the least of Christ’s brothers.

The greatest thing is our effort to get to know up-close the lives of those affected, to understand the world through the eyes of Christ. It engages us in small subtle ways in the defense of those who have no voice or who’s voices are drummed by the sound of the hunger, poverty, war and persecution.

A child’s question always seems to take us to a different dimension. Children’s simplicity, this uninhibited curiosity, always challenges adults and makes us re-discover the child-like faith that we have lost somewhere along the road of growing up and cynicism. The Rice Bowl is a great addition to the family prayer time and gathering during the Lenten season. A great reminder to the father and mother that the things we take for granted are lacking

necessities for others. It is also a great reminder for children that the world they are growing into is shrinking around them and that the events that happen thousands of miles away affect them in ways unfathomable. So, if I meet this little 5th grader who asked me what is in the Rice Bowl besides rice, I will make sure to tell her: “it has all of what the world needs starting with your smile and your small caring hands.” ■

*Deacon Joseph Chebli is a deacon in the Eparchy of St. Maron, licensed pharmacist, the executive director of New Jersey-based JC Rx Consulting, and an adjunct assistant professor at Felician College.*

# Deacon Ordinations

## Our Lady's Church | Austin, Texas

Blessings and Congratulations to our newly ordained Deacons Mike Cunningham and Guy Helou! They were ordained to the Diaconate on Sunday, 13 January by Bishop A. Elias Zaidan. The church was full to capacity with friends and family members from out of town for this wonderful event. The new deacons will have a variety of new duties in our parish family. Besides being involved in the Divine Liturgies, they will also be teaching classes, bringing communion to the sick in our community, visiting the elderly and infirm in nursing homes and hospitals, and other supportive roles in parish outreach.

Deacon Guy immigrated to the United States in 1987 from Lebanon. He has been involved with Religious Education, RCIA, bible studies, and ACTS retreats. Deacon Mike is a career educator who has been a member of Our Lady's and serving in ministry for over eight years. We wish them many blessings as they both continue ministering and serving Our Lord! ■



## Saint Anthony Maronite Church | Lawrence, MA by Elie and Nadine Daou

On 3 November 2018, after six years of hard work, dedication, and studies in the diaconate program of the Archdiocese of Boston, Nadim Daou was ordained to the order of deacon by Bishop Gregory Mansour. Deacon Nadim was sponsored by Father Elie Mikhael, the pastor of St. Anthony Maronite Church.

Deacon Nadim was surrounded by the newly-ordained deacons of his class and several clerics members from Melkite, Latin, and Maronite Churches.

The parish family of Saint Anthony, and family and friends joined in the celebration of this special day. ■



## NAM Welcomes New Executive Director

The National Apostolate of Maronites (NAM) is thrilled to welcome our new Executive Director to the NAM family! Sandy Nassif Moses hails from Coppell, Texas and is an active member of Our Lady of Lebanon Maronite Catholic Church in Lewisville, Texas. She has also been an active member in missions/parishes in Fayetteville (NC), San Antonio, Austin, Houston, and Dallas.



Prior to joining NAM, Sandy has worked as a Territory Manager for Pharmaceutical companies. Sandy's prior experience as a director of marketing, management consultant and account manager, among other positions, will be useful in the NAM Executive Director duties. Sandy previously served as the President of the Southern Federation of Syrian and Lebanese American Club and values communication and integrity above all else. She cites effective communication as a cornerstone of her presidency, and plans to continue this practice as the Executive Director.

Sandy is hard-working, motivated and dedicated. She always finds an opportunity to keep you engaged in her stimulating conversation and her eagerness to invoke new ideas are contagious. She has been a NAM convention attendee, and loves every aspect of it, from traveling to meeting new people and interacting on a foundation of faith and culture. She has a vision to propel the NAM organization into the future. Sandy has already shared many great ideas she has with the NAM Board and we can't wait to bring those ideas to life!

If you have any questions regarding NAM, or want to welcome Sandy, you can email her at [sandymoses@namnews.org](mailto:sandymoses@namnews.org). ■



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# MYO Mission – Leading Teens to Encounter Christ

by Peter Harb

The Maronite Youth Organization (MYO) is the official national group for all youth between the ages of 12-18 in the United States for both the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon and the Eparchy of St. Maron of Brooklyn. With annual regional and national retreats, the MYO was launched in order to gather our Maronite Catholic teens in the United States, focused in bringing them to Christ in the Eucharist, and leading them to be formed in the Maronite Catholic faith. Teens and their families are led to a deeper encounter and relationship with Jesus Christ and His Church.

At the local level in each Maronite parish, MYOs focus on service to their church and community, forming lifelong friends, and praying and growing in the faith together. At the annual regional and national retreats, what the teens have experienced locally is taken to a whole other level by gathering hundreds of youth in one room to worship our Lord together through mission services, adoration, confession, and Divine Liturgy. The teens are also able to meet fellow teens from around the United States and form unbelievable bonds that last forever. Adolescents crave something more, something outside of the norm. Thousands of Maronite youth are transformed each and every year largely because they were able to encounter the love of Christ and truly experience Him through MYO retreats.

So, if you're a teen between the ages of 12-18 and seek to experience something more, join your local MYO. As a Maronite young adult, I encourage you to support your local teens in any way you are able to. Help them fundraise, become an advisor, or keep them in your prayers. Every little bit helps, and your support of the MYO causes a ripple effect

throughout the United States when your local youth interact with their fellow Maronites at the retreats throughout the year. Let's give our teens the tools to rise up above what society throws at them, and instead lead them to deeper encounters with Christ. ■

## Upcoming Regional Retreat Dates:

### MYO/MYA Regional Retreat

March 15-17 | Pleasantville, NJ

### MYO West Coast Regional Retreat

March 15-17 | Las Vegas, NV

### MYO Southern Regional Retreat

March 15-17 | Glen Allen, VA

## We invite you to save the date and attend the 2019 MYO National Retreat July 7-12 at Walsh University, North Canton, Ohio.

Registration information can be found at [www.maroniteyouth.org](http://www.maroniteyouth.org)

Follow MYO on Social Media:

Facebook: National Maronite Youth Organization  
Instagram/Twitter/Snapchat: @maroniteyouth



EPARCHY OF ST. MARON

# 2019 Youth & Young Adult Events & Retreats

## MYO Regional Retreat

March 15-17

Saint Anthony Church | Glen Allen VA

## MYO/MYA Regional Retreat Day

March 16

Our Lady Star of the East | Pleasantville NJ

## Womens' Discernment Retreat

April 26-28

Maronite Servants' Convent | Dartmouth MA

## MYO & MYA Program & Activities

June 27-30

NAM Convention | Miami FL

## National MYO Workshop

July 7-12

Walsh University | North Canton OH

## Assumption Pilgrimage

August 13-15

Basilica & National Shrine of Our Lady of  
Lebanon | North Jackson OH

## National MYA Conference

October 4-6

T Bar M | San Antonio TX

## MYO Regional Christmas Retreat

December 13-15

Wisdom Conference Center | Litchfield CT

## The Order of Saint Sharbel New Members

### PERPETUAL

ELIZABETH R. ASSAF | *St. John Maron Church,  
Williamsville, NY*

MARTIN PALGUT | *St. Rafka Maronite Catholic Church,  
Greer, SC*

PETER NASIFF | *Saint Anthony of the Desert Church,  
Fall River, MA*

GEORGES GHAFARI | *St. Maron Church, Detroit, MI*

### ANNUAL

SAMIRA HOWARD | *St. Maron Church, Detroit, MI*

DONALD JONES | *St. Anthony of Padua Church,  
Cincinnati, OH*

MALAKE KOZAH | *St. Maron Church, Minneapolis, MN*

DANNY AND PAL BOSTANY | *St. Elias Church,  
Birmingham, AL*

ROBERT MABARAK | *St. Maron Church, Detroit, MI*

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

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

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

# Parish News

HOUSTON, TEXAS

## Patriarchal Medals and Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice Awards Our Lady of the Cedars

by Samantha Georges

The holidays were a busy and exciting time at Our Lady of the Cedars in Houston! In addition to all of the fun Christmas events planned – the Youth and Young Adult Socials, Santa’s visit during the CCE Christmas Program, Brunch with Mr. & Mrs. Clause, the Choir Concert, Parish Movie Night, daily Novenas, and of course, our Christmas liturgies – we had the honor of recognizing eight incredible parishioners for their dedication and involvement in the parish.

His Excellency, Bishop Zaidan, presented George Abdallah, Elie Bejjani, Fayez Droubi, Naim Nemry, and Saad Shaar with the Maronite Patriarchal Medal. This award recognizes these five men for their decades of support of the parish and their strong Maronite faith.

Bishop Zaidan also presented Eliana Abou-Jaoude, Suzanne Dib, and Myrna Georges with the Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice Medal, a Pontifical Honor that can be awarded to lay people by the Pope, for their distinguished service to the Catholic Church and their many charitable activities.

These eight men and women have had the remarkable ability to take on any task asked of them. They have unselfishly donated their time, talent, and treasure for the good of their parish, and Our Lady of the Cedars is grateful for each and every one of them.

Congratulations to George, Eliana, Elie, Suzanne, Fayez, Myrna, Naim, and Saad on your well-deserved awards. ■



FORT LAUDERDALE, FLORIDA

## Heart of Jesus Church Secretary Retires

The parishioners of Heart of Jesus Church in Fort Lauderdale, Florida gathered together on 23 December to honor Maria Taylor, parish secretary, on her retirement. Maria served as Chorbishop Michael G. Thomas’ secretary for nearly seven years. Chorbishop Michael described her as kind, patient, and dedicated to her work in the church. He also stated that Maria was so polite that even the spam callers were given attention. Chorbishop Michael presented Maria with a special plaque and gift commemorating her years of outstanding service to the priests and the Eparchy. After liturgy, the congregation enjoyed lunch in the parish hall. Maria was joined by her family in this joyful celebration. ■





UTICA, NEW YORK  
**Saint Maron's Day Hafli**

by *Elias Zeina*

Saint Louis Gonzaga Maronite Church of Utica, NY commemorated Patron Saint, Saint Maron, in a special way. Over 150 parishioners and guests celebrated both Maronite faith and Lebanese culture at the annual St. Maron's Day Hafli. Arabic musician and Connecticut native, Ayad Atallah, headlined the evening with ground-trembling debke music that had every guest dancing. In addition to live Arabic music, the evening dinner menu included many traditional Lebanese dishes. Some of which included hummus, tabouleh, lebneh, kibbeh, grape leaves, shish tawouk, and baklawa. Saint Louis Gonzaga Maronite Church welcomed participating priests and parishioners from local parishes — Saint Basil Melkite Church and Saint George Orthodox Church — to celebrate in the evening. The hafli was organized by the MYA of Utica lead by John Salamy, the event co-chairperson. Thank you to those who attended and hope to see you again next year! ■



BROOKLYN, NEW YORK  
**Visit to St. Patrick's Cathedral** by *Salma Vahdat*

On 10 November 2018, an intrepid band of youngsters, parents and teachers from the Maronite Catholic Formation Group, and Fr. Dominique Hanna from Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral in Brooklyn, traveled to Manhattan, New York. Our trip was spiritual in nature. We toured the awe inspiring St. Patrick's Cathedral to visit the newly dedicated chapel dedicated to our own precious Saint Sharbel. All were gratified to be able to offer a prayer to our Maronite saint while in the sanctuary of a Roman Catholic Cathedral. We were also satisfied to spend time together socially. After leaving the Cathedral, our little group retired for some fun and relaxation at a nearby bowling alley. Our first youth field trip of the year was a great success. ■

MILWAUKEE, WISCONSIN  
**St. Sharbel Mission Celebrates its 5th Anniversary**

St Sharbel Mission of Milwaukee celebrated its 5th anniversary through the Joy of Advent on the Sunday of the Revelation to Joseph. At the same time, the community with Chorbishop Sharbel Maroun and Fr. Nabil Mouannes, honored a devoted member of the Mission who has given so much of her resources and talents to help us grow our Mission. She is the well-known musician, Miss Doris Farhat. She has been awarded the Silver Massabki Award for her dedicated services to our Mission since its inception. ■



# Parish News



CINCINNATI, OHIO

## St. Anthony of Padua Parish Christmas Concert and Children's Party *by Salma Vahdat*

On Saturday, 22 December 2018, St. Anthony of Padua Parish's Choir held their annual Christmas Concert. Led by Choir Conductor Mrs. Mounira Francis, and organist Dr. Ghada Ghastine, the choir joyfully proclaimed many traditional and modern Christmas songs, performed in both English and Arabic. Spiritual readings celebrating the birth of our Savior accompanied the songs and complimented the program. It was truly a beautiful Christmas Recital, and the entire Parish was filled with the spirit of the season! A reception hosted by the Choir, took place in the Founders' Hall immediately following the Concert. The performance may be viewed online at [www.staparish.org](http://www.staparish.org).

The following day, Sunday, 23 December 2018, a Christmas party for the children of the parish was held after the Liturgy. The party included a visit from Santa, gifts for the children, craft-making activities, and a delicious brunch. The children really enjoyed all the festivities! ■



UNIONTOWN, PA

## Christmas Season Celebration

*by Dr. Mabel George Howard*

St. George church groups were involved in activities to celebrate the 2018 Christmas Holiday season. On December 2, the MYO (Maronite Youth Organization) visited the Marquis Gardens Place Personal Care Senior Living Community to spread cheer among the elderly. The MYO entertained the Marquis residents with religious and traditional Christmas carols and distributed candy canes to them. The residents' smiles confirmed their appreciation for the group's kindness.

Next, the MYO participated in the outdoor Christmas program held at Mount Saint Macrina in Uniontown. Mount Saint Macrina, a beautiful mansion and estate, is home to the Sisters of the Order of St. Basil the Great. It was once home to J.V. Thompson, coal baron in the late 19th century. Mount Saint Macrina is the site to one of the largest religious pilgrimages in the United States and a renowned resource for spiritual retreats. The MYO sang religious hymns to accompany the Live Nativity presentation. They warmed the hearts of parishioners and community members and brought happiness to all. As a gesture of "thanks," the youths were given a holiday ornament, hot chocolate, and cookies by the Mount Saint Macrina staff.

Also, the Ladies Guild and Altar & Rosary Society held their annual Christmas celebration in the parish hall. This was a wonderful opportunity for the ladies to relax with family and friends, enjoy a delicious meal, and exchange gifts. It was a time to recognize the efforts and hard work of these dedicated women who are affectionately referred to as the "backbone of the church." In light of this holy season, poems and prayers were recited in memory of the deceased members who faithfully served God and the parish family for many years and touched our hearts forever. This peaceful, festive, and joyous holiday season reminds us of our Maronite faith and gratefulness for God's love and blessings at Christmas and throughout the year. ■



LEWISVILLE, TEXAS

## 22nd Annual Lebanese Food Festival *by: Denise Helou*



Each year the Lebanese Food Festival continues to grow because of the love and effort of our parishioners and support from our wonderful sponsors. From the Troops of St. George to the Parish choir who open our festival up by singing a moving, beautiful rendition of the National Anthem, to the children's area, silent auction and cultural booths, to the ladies who knit baby clothing for expectant mothers in need at the Loretto House, to the kitchen to the outside fryers and grills, booths and servers, to the shuttle drivers, to the set up and clean-up crew and to everyone involved, we all come together for a greater cause. It truly takes a village.

The Our Lady of Lebanon Lewisville, Texas Parish celebrated its 22nd Annual Lebanese Food Festival in October. The festival has become a staple for people everywhere in the Dallas/Fort Worth (DFW) area. They know that when the first weekend of October arrives, it's time for delicious, authentic Lebanese cuisine, folkloric dance performances, live music, silent auctions, children activities and so much more.

We begin preparing for the festival as early as mid-March. The food is prepared in the parish kitchen by our parish members. At any time between March and October, you'll find men, women, and even children helping in the kitchen! We know that "many hands make light work" and our wonderful parishioners always put their hands together to make the festival the success that it is. Our children, teenagers, and college students start practicing during their summer vacations to put on a show that leaves people inspired, excited, and wanting more. This year and for the first time in our 22-year history, the three-day entertainment showcase featured more than 70 Dabke dancers, some as young as 5 years old! Watching our next generation proudly represent our Lebanese culture is breathtaking.

Our village this year came together in a way that gave us the ability to continue our support of the St. Jude Children's Research Hospital. We are proud to share that \$10,000 of the festival proceeds were sent to St. Jude. We hope to continue supporting this wonderful organization that helps so many families and kids in need.

During the months leading up to the festival and the three days of the festival, we witnessed parishioners work with joyful hearts and persistent wills. One cannot walk on the grounds of Our Lady of Lebanon without seeing the smiles of our parishioners and feeling their warmth. The Liturgy celebrated over these three days made visitors of the parish feel at home because of the loving care and zeal of our pastor. We are a parish of commitment that truly desires to bring the love of Christ to the community. If you are ever in the DFW area the first week of October, come join us! ■

# Parish News



MIAMI, FLORIDA

## Church Hall Dedication at Our Lady of Lebanon Church

by Raymond Caram

After months of hard work and dedication, Our Lady of Lebanon Church completed the renovation of the church hall, a large facility that accommodates five hundred, in addition to the parish offices and new classrooms for religious education and a fully equipped kitchen.

After the Divine Liturgy, Bishop Gregory Mansour blessed the hall, congratulated the parish community for their steadfast support of their priest, and urged them to continue working for the upcoming NAM convention to be held last week of June 2019 in Miami.

Father Elie Saade, the pastor, thanked several prominent members of the community for showing extraordinary zeal of involvement in developing the project.

A plaque was also presented to Mr. Saba Maroun, the owner of Mona Lisa Construction, for executing the job in a timely and efficient manner.

The parish also presented a surprise plaque to Father Elie in recognition for the sacrifices he made and for making project such a priority in his daily life. ■



TEQUESTA, FLORIDA

## Pastoral Visit | Mary, Mother of the Light Maronite Church

On Thursday, 31 January 2019, Bishop Gregory Mansour made a pastoral visit to Mary, Mother of the Light Maronite Church & Academy in Tequesta, FL. Despite torrential rain, a large congregation gathered for a Pontifical Liturgy and reception. A number of priests from the Diocese of Palm Beach concelebrated and the Knights of Columbus 4th Degree Honor Guard from St. Jude's and St. Christopher's Parishes, accompanied by the Order of St. Sharbel Honor Guard, added to the ceremonies. During the Liturgy the parish presented Bishop Gregory a gift in commemoration of the Fifteenth Anniversary of his Episcopal Ministry to the Eparchy of Saint Maron. ■

YOUNGSTOWN, OHIO

**St. Barbara's Festival** by Michelle Gabriel

What used to be the Halloween Party is now the Saint Barbara's Festival, and this year was its first year. The reason that we chose to do a Saint Barbara's Festival rather than a Halloween party, was because we wanted to go back to our Lebanese traditions. The turnout was incredible with an attendance of over fifty families. The food was delicious; there were gluten free options for those with dietary restrictions, along with candy and sweets to help celebrate the holiday. There were games and activities that all had to do with the life of Saint Barbara so that the kids would be having fun while also learning about her life. The games and activities included a ball toss, where the kids had to "feed the animals" that wanted to kill Saint Barbara. There was a face painting and mask making station, where the kids had to "choose a disguise" to help her hide from her persecutors and a cookie making station to "feed Saint Barbara" after her long journey. A storyteller narrated the life of Saint Barbara and why we celebrate her. The evening ended with a piñata for the older and younger kids. We were very excited about this year's festival, and are even more excited for the next one. ■



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Our Lady of Lebanon Maronite Seminary  
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29 January 2019

Prot No. 036/1/19  
Circ No. 19.02

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

The recent New York State Bill promoting abortion through the last trimester of pregnancy is a very sad reality. Sometimes we can only respond by prayer (and fasting).

Recently, the Eparchy gathered in Washington, DC to join the March for Life. We prayed with our feet and filmed this video. The photo is below and the link is here <https://youtu.be/FhcmYQdzonc>

But more is needed, and for this reason I echo the sentiments of the New York Bishops who have been courageous defenders of life here in the State and who have been clear that “the primary purpose of this legislation is to expand late term abortion”. Professor Robby George, who after seeing the standing ovation given in the New York State Senate wrote that he was “physically ill” to see the applause for something so inhumane, and how we as a nation became so indifferent to the child in the womb and to her mother.

Dear Brothers and Sisters, the enemy of life is not people who disagree with us, the enemy is a certain way of thinking that promotes the rights of some and callously disregards the rights of others, namely the innocent child in the womb. Unfortunately, all of this passes under the false guise of science and/or progress. True science proves that life begins at conception. Please see the link <https://youtu.be/WH9ZJu4wRUE>

May God spare us from such thinking and help us promote and defend life courageously. May God restore us to be a nation of just laws and respect for life.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+ Gregory

+Gregory John Mansour

GJM/rl





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## Pastoral Care of the Environment

by James Salamy

In the last several articles of Going Deeper in the Spiritual Life, we have been looking at pastoral care. In this article, we will continue to examine pastoral care. In particular, this article will focus on pastoral care of the environment.

Pastoral care of the environment is not a new theme. It harkens all the way back to the beginning of creation, when God created the earth and placed all of creation: the birds, the fish, the animals, and all the plants in the care of Adam and Eve. (Genesis 1:27-30)

We see the interaction with creation throughout the Old and New Testaments and throughout the history of humanity. Humanity does not exist in a vacuum. Humanity exists with the earth, with creation. We need the earth and creation to survive. It is our common home.

Saint Francis of Assisi echoes this theme throughout his preaching, teaching, and prayers. He refers to creation in deeply personal and human terms, such as brother sun, sister moon, and mother earth. Saint Francis saw, recognized, and then expressed, in deeply human terms, the intertwined and personal relationship between creation, the earth, which is our common home, and humanity.



This theme has arisen again in our time because of the situation that humanity and planet earth are in. Pope Francis wrote about the current situation of the earth, creation, humanity, and their deeply intertwined relationship in his recent encyclical of 2015, *Laudato Si'*.

In the present era, the theme of care for creation is not unique to Pope Francis. Popes Paul VI, John Paul II, and Benedict XVI have all written about the importance of taking care of the environment and creation.

Care of the environment is also an ecumenical concern, as well. The Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, Bartholomew I, has also written about the need, especially in this present era, to

care for creation and to be good stewards of the earth, our common home.

This need to care for creation exists because the earth is our common home. We all live on planet earth: past, present, and future generations, and the rich and the poor alike. All humanity shares planet earth. Also, and more importantly, God, who is the Creator, has entrusted us with the care of creation. He who made the earth gave it to us and entrusted it to us, as our responsibility to care for.

Therefore, let us heed the Divine call to be good stewards of creation and to care for our common home, the earth, that was given to us by God to live in and to preserve in good order, for future generations. ■

## From the Editor



### Inconvenient Babies

In the Christmas edition of *The Maronite Voice*, I wrote about babies in church. This is another reflection about babies...inconvenient babies.

*Matthew 2:6 — When Herod realized that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious, and he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi.*

*January 1, 2019, Philadelphia, PA — A 15-year-old mother is facing charges after her newborn son was found in a dumpster and later died. A woman discovered the baby after a friend of the teen told her what happened.*

History demonstrates that societies have had no qualms in killing babies who have been inconvenient for political, financial or personal reasons. Two thousand years ago, Herod killed the male babies in the vicinity of Bethlehem out of fear that one of them might challenge his right to the throne. This year in Philadelphia, the pathetic teenager who tossed her newborn son in a dumpster was probably desperate and committed an act that is beyond belief, so shocking that it made the news.

On January 18, thousands converged on Washington in the March for Life to protest the Supreme Court decision, *Roe v. Wade*. On January 22, the State of New York passed a new law expanding the possibilities for abortion. Now, almost any licensed health care practitioner can conduct abortions within 24 weeks from the commencement of pregnancy, or later if there is an “absence of fetal viability,” or if the practitioner considers the abortion “necessary to protect the patient’s life or health.”

The young mother who tossed her newborn son in a dumpster could have gone to an abortion clinic in September 2018 and achieved the same result of killing the baby. She would have faced no criminal charges because abortion was only a health care issue and perfectly legal. Sadly, her actions would have raised few eyebrows. Three months later, after that baby passed through the birth canal, her actions are deemed murder and she faces criminal charges.

“In God We Trust” is still on the currency, but this is how America treats babies we don’t want — the inconvenient ones.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John D. Faris".

Chorbishop John D. Faris

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