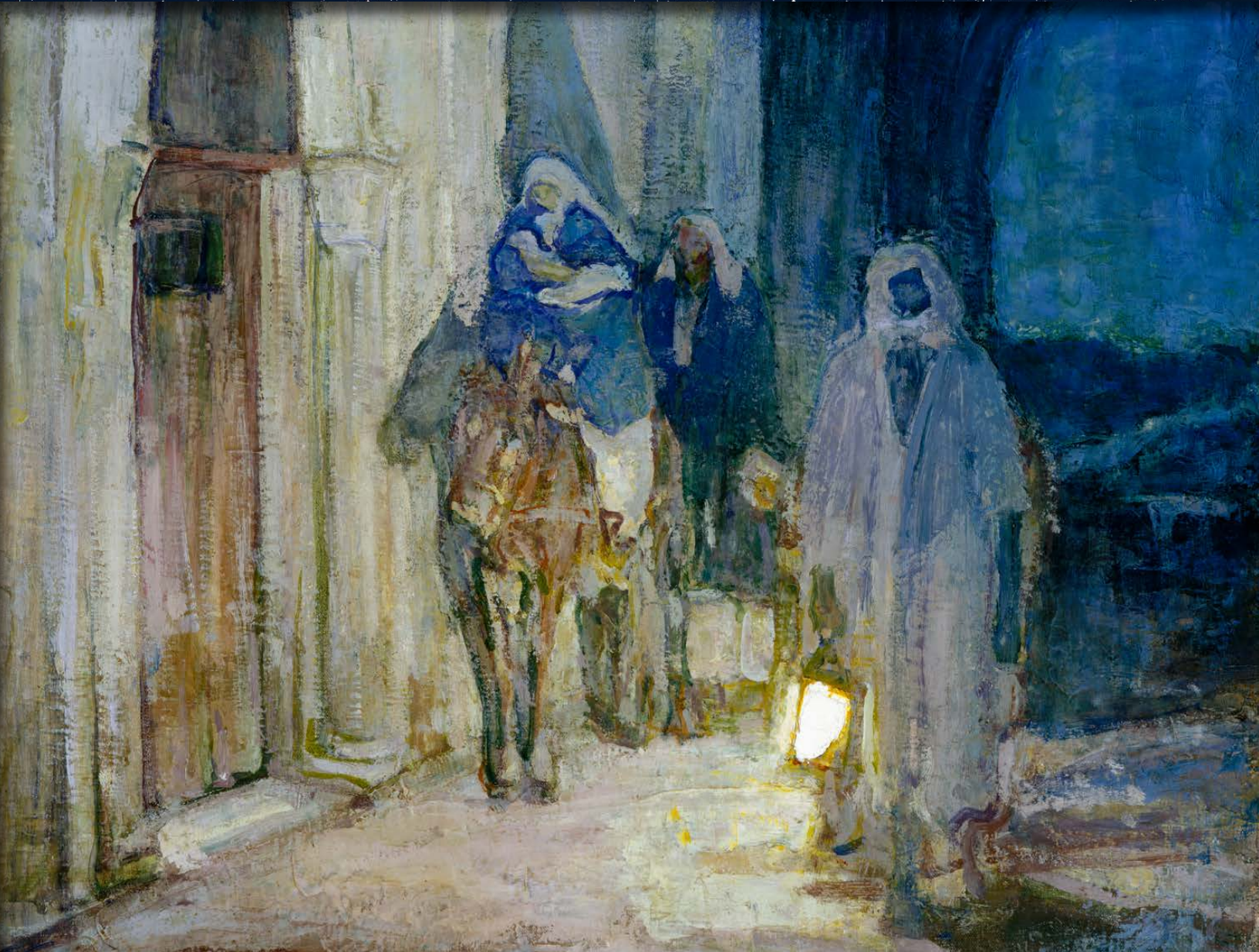


Volume 16 | Issue 6 | December 2019

the Maronite **Voice**



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the First Christian Refugees

the Maronite Voice

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Joseph, Mary and Jesus: The First Christian Refugees

When the Magi came in search of Jesus, whom they identified as the King of the Jews, Herod the Great became threatened that this child would take his throne. Herod was afraid that the newborn child would take his throne and initiated the Massacre of the Innocents with the intention of killing the child.

However, an angel had already appeared to Joseph in a dream and warned him to take the baby and his mother from Bethlehem and seek refuge in Egypt. Egypt was a logical place for them: It was part of the Roman Empire, but beyond the control of Herod.

The cover is a 1923 painting *Flight Into Egypt*, by Henry Ossawa Tanner.



The entrance to the crypt of Saints Sergius and Bacchus Coptic Church in Cairo where Mary, Joseph and the infant Jesus are said to have rested. The crypt is 30 feet deep and, when Nile levels are high, is often flooded.

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Christmas: The Symphony of God's Great Love for Us

by Bishop Gregory John Mansour

What we truly believe about the **Incarnation** and what we truly believe about the **Eucharist** are not, in fact, easy to believe. As for the Incarnation, we believe that God, in all his grandeur, entered our world and became a little child (JOHN 1). As for the Eucharist, we believe that Jesus, at the Last Supper, took bread and wine and said to his disciples “this is my body”, “this is my blood”. He said that these are not symbols, not signs, but his real and true Body and Blood. He said this clearly, even though it was hard for some disciples to believe (JOHN 6).

It is no wonder that these tried and true doctrines are hard to believe. Nonetheless, by believing firmly in these truths, which have come down to us since Christ Jesus and his apostles, we may understand more fully the interior, the intention, the ways of God.

Some people, Christian and non-Christian alike, believe that God is all-powerful, yet they don't believe that he became a child. Why? Perhaps because we can't imagine why an all-powerful God would want to do such a thing.

If God wanted to reach out to his creation, he could have surely sent messengers, it would have been much easier. However, why God became man is at the heart of his own way; he did not choose the easy way to communicate with us, but the hard, enduring and most endearing way: “The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us” (JOHN 1). This communion with us, even to the point of sharing with us in “all things but sin” (HEBREWS 9), has made all the difference.



“... why God became man is at the heart of his own way; he did not choose the easy way to communicate with us, but the hard, enduring and most endearing way: ‘The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us’ (JOHN 1).”

The Incarnation helps us understand that in Christ Jesus, the beloved Son of God, we encounter the same self-giving of the Father, and even to the point of sharing with us the shame and sorrow of the Cross. Saint Paul writes: “Though he was in the form of God, he did not regard his equality with God as something to be grasped. Rather he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness; and found in human appearance, he humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, even death on a Cross” (PHILLIPIANS 2).

If we believe that God is all-powerful, why would he do such a thing? Perhaps this was the only means available to show us his great sacrificial love. The Incarnation and the Eucharist are thus two movements in the same symphony of God’s great love. The third movement is the Cross, the fourth his resurrection, and the fifth his sending of the Holy Spirit to guide his Church.

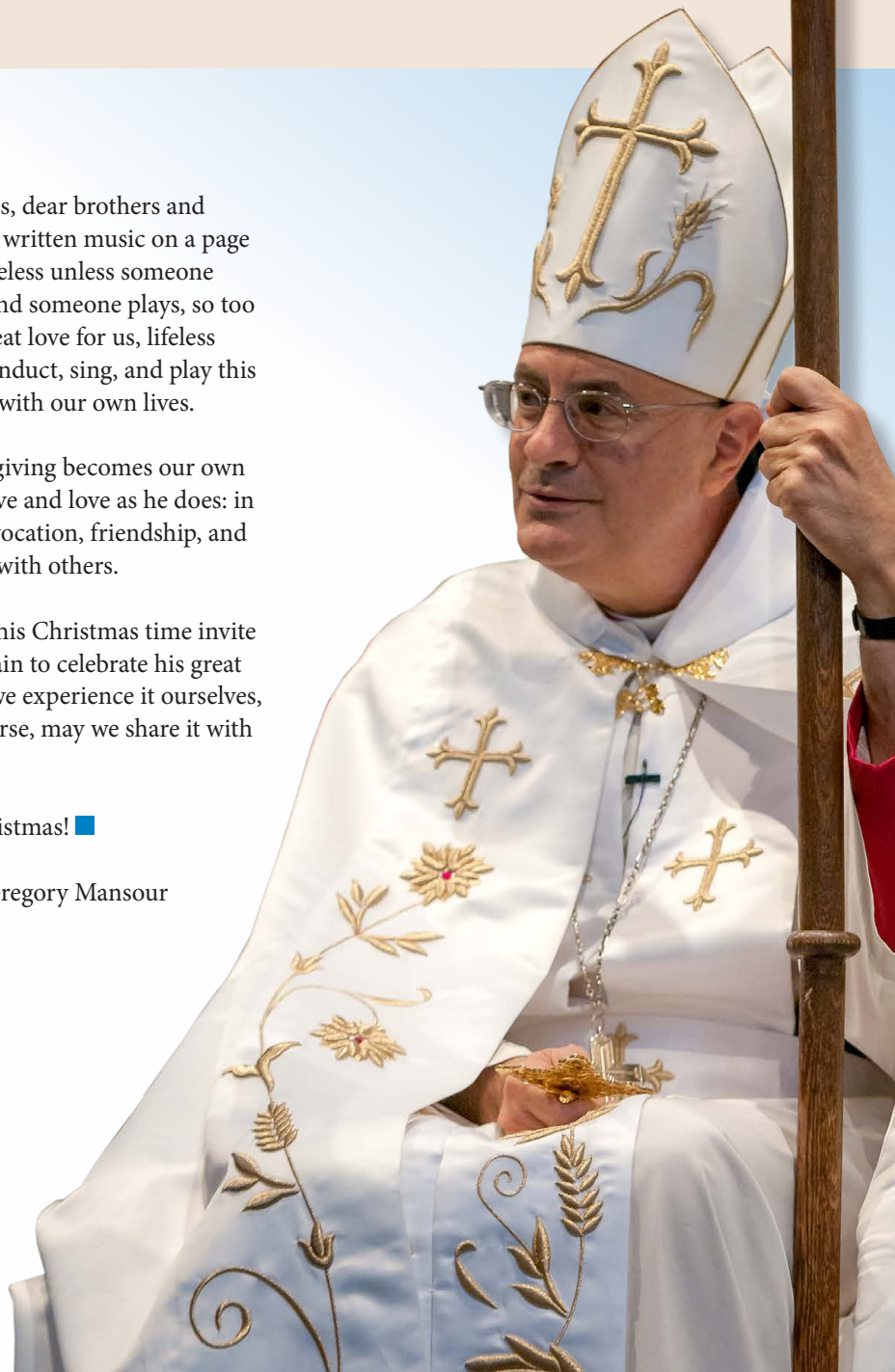
Nonetheless, dear brothers and sisters, like written music on a page which is lifeless unless someone conducts and someone plays, so too is God’s great love for us, lifeless until we conduct, sing, and play this symphony with our own lives.

God’s self-giving becomes our own when we live and love as he does: in marriage, vocation, friendship, and fellowship with others.

May God this Christmas time invite us once again to celebrate his great love, may we experience it ourselves, and, of course, may we share it with the world.

Merry Christmas! ■

+ Bishop Gregory Mansour



Schedule **BISHOP GREGORY J. MANSOUR**

- 13-15 DECEMBER** Torrington, CT | MYO Retreat and Parish Visit
- 18 DECEMBER** Wilkes-Barre, PA | St. Anthony-St. George Church | Pastoral Visit
- 19 DECEMBER** Livingston Manor, NY | Sisters of Bethlehem | Visit
- 22 DECEMBER** New Brunswick, NJ | Morning Divine Liturgy
New York, NY | Manhattan Mission | 5PM Divine Liturgy
- 24 DECEMBER** Danbury, CT | St. Anthony Church | Vigil Liturgy of Christmas
- 24-25 DECEMBER** Brooklyn, NY | Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral | Christmas Evening and Day Liturgies
- 27 DECEMBER** Miami, FL | Our Lady of Lebanon Church | Pastoral and Family Visit
- 5 JANUARY** Brooklyn, NY | Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral
- 6-12 JANUARY** Silent Retreat
- 18-20 JANUARY** Los Angeles, CA | Our Lady of Mt. Lebanon-St. Peter Cathedral | 25th Eparchial Anniversary
- 23-26 JANUARY** Washington, DC | Seminary Visit | March for Life | MYA Gathering | Pastoral Visit
- 8 FEBRUARY** Fayetteville, NC | St. Michael the Archangel Church | Diaconal Ordination of Charles VanHeusen
- 9 FEBRUARY** Brooklyn, NY | Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral | Feast of St. Maron

**BISHOP GREGORY AND BISHOP ELIAS WISH YOU A
HAPPY AND BLESSED CHRISTMAS SEASON**



As we prepare for the coming of Christ in our hearts and in the world,
consider giving a gift to your Eparchy this Christmas.

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Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon
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Schedule BISHOP A. ELIAS ZAIDAN

13-15 DECEMBER	Dayton, OH St. Ignatius of Antioch Church Pastoral Visit and Consecration of New Church
23 DECEMBER	St. Louis, MO Meeting with Archbishop Robert Carlson
25 DECEMBER	Los Angeles, CA Our Lady of Mt. Lebanon-St. Peter Cathedral Christmas Liturgies
1 JANUARY	Happy New Year!
10-12 JANUARY	Cleveland, OH St. Maron Church Pastoral Visit
13-17 JANUARY	Phoenix, AZ Annual Clergy Retreat
19 JANUARY	Los Angeles, CA Our Lady of Mt. Lebanon-St. Peter Cathedral 25th Eparchial Anniversary
23-27 JANUARY	Houston, TX Our Lady of the Cedars Church Capital Campaign Visit
31 JAN- 2 FEB	San Antonio, TX St. George Church Capital Campaign Visit
7-9 FEBRUARY	Minneapolis, MN St. Maron Church St. Paul, MN Holy Family Church Pastoral Visit
15-16 FEBRUARY	Lewisville, TX Our Lady of Lebanon Church Capital Campaign Visit

APPOINTMENTS Eparchy of Our Lady Of Lebanon Of Los Angeles

Most Reverend A. Elias Zaidan, Bishop of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon of Los Angeles, announces the following transfers and appointments:

- **Chorbishop Michael Kail**, Pastor of St. Maron Maronite Church in Youngstown, Ohio, is granted retirement status, effective December 31, 2019.
- **Rev. Elias Yazbeck** has been assigned as the Administrator of St. Maron Church in Cleveland, OH effective October 1, 2019
- **Rev. Tony Massad**, Pastor of St. Rafka Maronite Church in Livonia, Michigan has been appointed Pastor of St. Maron Maronite Church in Youngstown, Ohio, effective January 1, 2020.
- **Rev. Rami Razzouk**, Associate Pastor of St. Elias Maronite Church in Birmingham, Alabama has been assigned as the Administrator of Our Lady of Lebanon Maronite Church in Millbrae, California, effective December 20, 2019.
- **Seminarian, Deacon Michael Shami**, has been appointed Administrator of St. Rafka Maronite Church in Livonia, Michigan, effective January 1, 2020.
- **Seminarian, Deacon Peter Zogbi**, has been assigned for his pastoral year to St. Elias Maronite Church in Birmingham, Alabama, effective December 16, 2019.
- **The Monks of the Blessed Virgin Mary (OMM)** of Ann Arbor, Michigan, have been requested temporarily to provide liturgical and sacramental services for St. Rafka Maronite Church in Livonia, Michigan, effective January 1, 2020.
- **Seminarian, Deacon Michael Shami**, has been appointed Director of the Eparchial Office of Liturgy, effective November 25, 2019.
- **Rev. Alex Harb** has been appointed Pastor St. Ignatius of Antioch, Dayton, OH effective December 15, 2019.

We Are Never Without Hope

by Fr. David A. Fisher

“And now faith, hope, and love abide...”

1 CORINTHIANS 13:13

Hope in the language of the Sacred Scriptures

When examining a concept such as hope that has such deep roots in the Sacred Scriptures, we must first uncover the biblical understanding of the term. It is necessary to discover how the word was used in Judaism and the Old Testament, and was then transformed in the light of the Resurrection of Christ by the New Testament Church in its proclamation of salvation.

The Hebrew Scriptures used a variety of terms to express the notion of hope in the one true God, the God of Israel, in the sense of trust. Here we see the close connection between hope and faith, which will be expressed also in the New Testament. Ancient Israel hoped for the fulfillment of the promises of God. As God's Chosen People, they are not to place their hope in armies, riches, or earthly powers.

In the Septuagint, the Greek version of Old Testament (the version of the Hebrew Scriptures received by the New Testament Church), the term *hupomeno* is used to express the notion of *to wait*, *to be patient*, or *to endure*.

In the New Testament, the Greek word *elpida* is used for hoping in the promises of God (ROMANS 4:18), hope that leads to joy (ROMANS 12:12), and the sanctifying nature of hope (1 JOHN 3:3).

Hebrews 3:6 summarizes the Scriptural nuances of hope: “Christ, however, was faithful over God's house as a son, and we are his house if we hold firm to the confidence and the pride that belong to hope.”

The Theological Virtues: Faith, Hope, and Love

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* discusses faith, hope, and love under the title of the *The Theological Virtues* (see n. 1812). The *Catechism* (n. 1817) defines hope as:

... the theological virtue by which we desire the kingdom of heaven and eternal life as our happiness, placing our trust in Christ's promises and relying not on our own strength, but on the help of the grace of the Holy Spirit. 'Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful' (HEBREWS 10:23) 'The Holy Spirit ... he poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that we might be justified by his grace and become heirs in hope of eternal life.' (TITUS 3:6-7)



The *Catechism* reminds us that all other human virtues are rooted in the theological virtues, because they do not arise within ourselves, but are a gift of God. Faith, Hope, and Love are together the *Grace of God*, operative within our lives and our very being. In a sense they can be seen as the presence of salvific grace in our trinitarian being. Jesus Christ has revealed to us the trinitarian nature of God, that the one true God is; Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Jesus also reveals to us the true nature of being human, that human beings are: body, spirit, and soul. Humanity is made in the image and likeness of God. Like God, we are trinitarian, but whereas the Triune God is uncreated, we are creatures. We are in need to overcome the limitations of created nature; these limitations are exhibited in the failures to live virtuous lives.

Faith, hope, and love are living signs of the new man and the new woman, described in the Book of Revelation 7:14

These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

Hope in the Theology of the Syriac Fathers

Hope in the thought of the Syriac Fathers is intimately connected to their theology of salvation (soteriology). The long-awaited hope of ancient Israel is realized in the Incarnation and birth of the Savior, Jesus. The hope of the Church is found in its faith in Christ. The hope of all humanity for eternal life, eternal meaning, and eternal peace and love finds its realization in the Kingdom of God, whose gates are opened by the Son of God.

Saint Ephrem the Syrian († 373), in his *Hymns On the Nativity* (n. 23) sees hope as the gift from God to all humanity:

Since human hope was shattered, hope was increased by Your birth.

The heavenly beings announced good hope to human beings.

The evil one, who cut off our hope, cut off his hope by his own hands when he saw that hope increased.

Your birth became for the hopeless a spring gushing hope.

Blessed is the hope that brought the Gospel!

We Are Never Without Hope

Continued from page 9

Saint Isaac of Nineveh († c. 700), along with a minority group of Church Fathers such as Origen and St. Gregory of Nyssa, believed in *universal salvation*, the notion that all will be saved. Saint Isaac found some affirmation for this hope in salvation for all in the New Testament.

“As all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ.” (1 CORINTHIANS 15:22)

“God has imprisoned all in disobedience, that he may be merciful to all.” (ROMANS 11:32)

“Just as one man’s trespass led to condemnation for all, so one man’s act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all.” (ROMANS 5:18)

Possibly the most positive assertion of universal salvation is found in the First Letter to the Corinthians:

“God has put all things in subjection under his feet... And when all things are made subject to the Son, then the Son himself will also be made subject to the Father, who has subjected all things to him; and thus God will be all in all.” (15:28)

In *Ascetical Homilies 27*, St. Isaac expresses his hope in universal salvation:

Let us not be in doubt, O fellow humanity, concerning the hope of our salvation, seeing that the One who bore sufferings for our sakes is very concerned about our salvation; God’s mercifulness is far more extensive than we can conceive, God’s grace is greater than what we ask for...

Sin, Gehenna, and death do not exist at all with God, for they are effects (or acts), not substances. Sin is the fruit of the will. There was a time when sin did not exist — and there will be a time when it will not exist. Gehenna is the fruit of sin. At some point in time, it received a beginning, but its end is not known. Death, however, is a dispensation of the wisdom of the Creator. It will have power over nature only for a time. Then it will be totally abolished.

We Are Never Without Hope

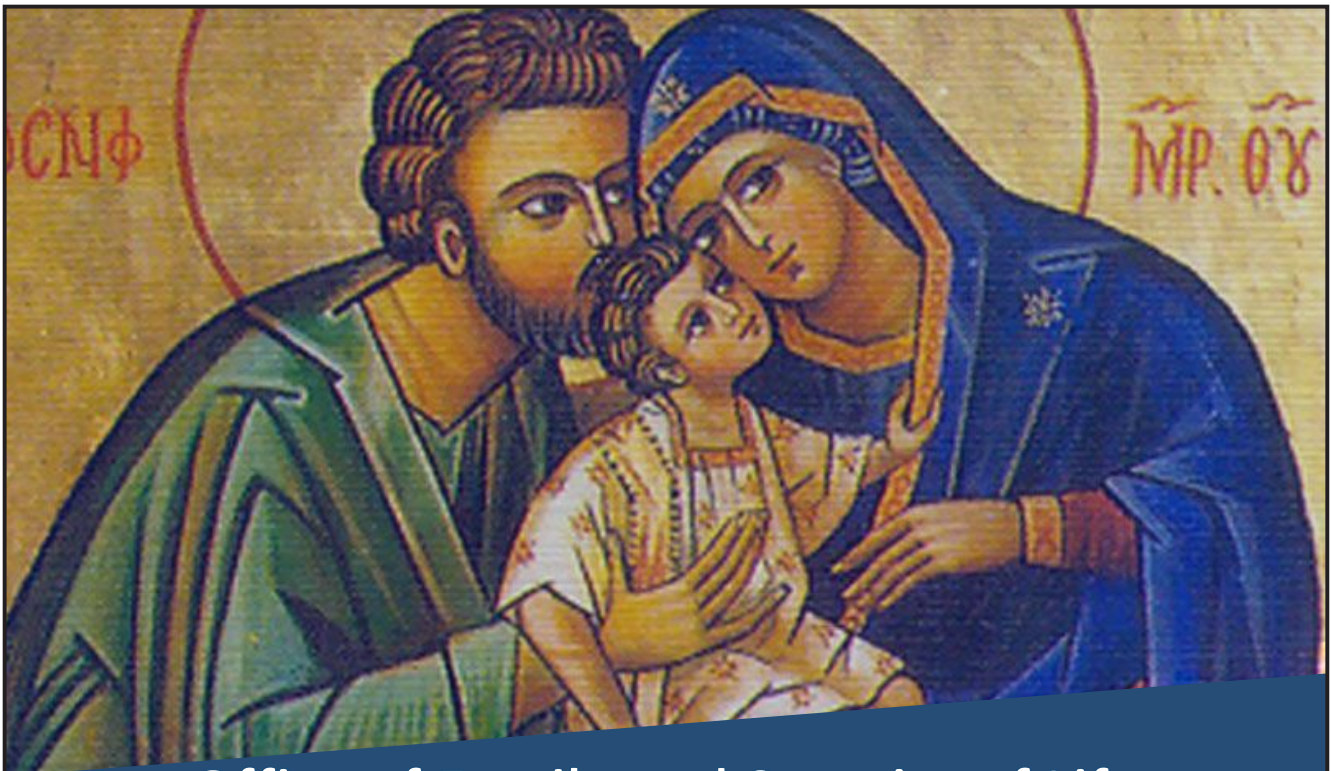
“Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death, so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope.” (1 THESSALONIANS 4:13)

Christians are never without hope, for our hope is grounded in Christ and his victory over sin and death. Hope springs forth from our faith, changing our lives, transforming our being, into beings constituted by love, the love of God. For the Christian, faith, hope, and love become ontological categories, that is to say, the very makeup of our life in Christ.

The hope that springs from our faith in the Risen Lord shows us that love never dies, that love conquers the grave, and that those who die in Christ, will rise with him in a like resurrection. The hope of Israel is fulfilled in Christ, the hope of the Church which is celebrated in the Holy Mysteries, in sacramental signs, is fulfilled in Lord’s Death and Resurrection; ushering in the “last days,” and the fullness of life, love, and hope, fulfilled in the Kingdom of God. ■

Father Fisher, a Maronite Priest, Adjunct Professor at St. Charles Seminary and a regular contributor.

“The hope of the Church is found in its faith in Christ.”



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You Are Precious In My Sight – Isaiah 43:4

National Maronite Young Adult Conference, San Antonio, Texas

by Maya Khoury

On 4-6 October, Maronite Young Adults from across the United States traveled to San Antonio, Texas, for the 11th National Maronite Young Adult Conference, at a retreat center, T Bar M, outside of the city.

The theme for this year's conference was "Leading by Example." All the speakers discussed the importance of witness and leading a Christian life. The weekend started with Divine Liturgy on Friday night celebrated by Bishop Gregory Mansour and Bishop Elias Zaidan, and concelebrated by other Maronite priests. After

the Liturgy, the young adults shared dinner and participated in a few ice-breakers to get to know each other. The evening ended with everyone socializing, listening to music and some basketball.

The schedule on Saturday was packed. The morning started off early with Divine Liturgy, followed by national Catholic speaker, Joe Farris, from Cincinnati, Ohio. Joe's message touched many of the young adult's hearts, as he shared his personal story and his strong words of faith encouraging us to trust





God with everything. He really connected with the attendees. He shared about how God called him and his wife to the missionary life for a few years and how his former community in North Carolina came together to support their mission. In addition to Joe's two talks, the groups also participated in small break-out sessions to talk about what pressures we deal with as young adults when it comes to living our faith in today's society. It was great to connect with other young adults and learn how each of us deals with different societal pressures.

The young adults also listened to vocation stories from a variety of different speakers, which included Deacon Michael Shami, Mr. and Mrs. Karam, a married couple, and Leah Bostany, a FOCUS missionary. In addition to the group discussions, there was time for Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, Confession, Rosary and quiet reflection. Saturday afternoon free time consisted of volleyball games, basketball, swimming in the outdoor pool, and soccer. Saturday evening closed with a prayer service and dinner followed by a bus ride into San Antonio where the young adults went out and toured the city.

On Sunday, everyone traveled to St. George Church in San Antonio. The Liturgy was celebrated by Bishop Elias Zaidan, Father Charles Khachan, pastor of St. George parish, and Father Tony Massad. Following the Divine Liturgy, there was a farewell luncheon for all of the attendees before everyone parted ways. ■



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Ordinations

Deacon Ordained for the Eparchy of St. Maron

Bishop Gregory J. Mansour ordained Adib Salameh to the order of Deacon on 8 November 2019, for service in the Eparchy of St. Maron of Brooklyn. Hosted by Our Lady of Lebanon Maronite Seminary, the ordination took place at the nearby Our Lady of Lebanon Church. Many Maronites came from afar including Massachusetts and New York to celebrate this joyful event. Adib was presented to Bishop Gregory by Msgr. Peter Azar, Seminary Rector, and was led in procession with the Epistles of St. Paul and the Censer by Msgr. James A. Root and Rev. Armando El Khoury. Following the ordination, we gathered for a Middle Eastern dinner and an evening of fellowship.

Adib traveled a long distance from Lebanon to serve the Maronite Church in America. His example of leaving everything behind and following the Lord's call encompasses the true meaning of the diaconate which is "to serve and not to be served" (Mt 20:28). Pope Francis explains in *Gaudete et exultate* (n.1): "the call to holiness is present in various ways from the very first pages of the Bible. We see it expressed in the Lord's words to Abraham: 'Walk before me and be blameless' (GEN 17:1)." Adib will conclude his theological studies at The Catholic University of America and then serve at a Maronite parish as a deacon before ordination. May he be a genuine witness of Christ's love to the Maronite churches in the United States. ■



Subdeacon Ordinations St. George Church, San Antonio, TX

by Regina Aune

On Sunday, 6 October, three members of St. George parish, Raymond Dustin, Joseph Harb, and Ernest Karam, were ordained to the minor orders of cantor, lector, and subdeacon by Bishop Elias Zaidan at the 11 am Divine Liturgy. Families, friends, and parishioners were all present to participate in the liturgy and extend their support.

Father Charles Khachan, MLM, pastor, presented the three men to the Bishop. He was assisted by Father Khachan, Father Milad Yaghi, Father Tony Massad, Deacon Thomas Billimek

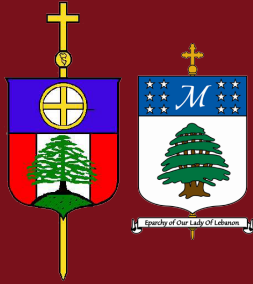
and Deacon Michael Shami. As Bishop Elias conferred the orders, he explained both the purpose of the various roles and the meaning and symbolism of each part of the rite so that everyone could appreciate the roles and responsibilities each man was assuming.

When the new subdeacons were asked what motivated them to pursue the subdiaconate, all three answered that it was a process of discernment of the will of God for their lives; a movement of the Holy Spirit within, inviting them to go deeper in their faith journey. For each one, the example of living faith from family members and priests they encountered led them to reflect on how they could best serve God and the Church. The process of preparation for ordination to the subdiaconate highlighted and emphasized to them the monastic origins of the Maronite Church and the unique aspects of Maronite spirituality. Family support was a crucial factor throughout their journey to ordination and it was this support and encouragement that sustained them on their journey of preparation for ordination.

In addition to the ordination of the three subdeacons, Bishop Zaidan installed four new permanent members of the Order of St. Sharbel at the liturgy. Candyce and Larry Monsour, Toufic Khalife, and Jose Fernandez committed themselves to fulfilling the purpose of the Order of St. Sharbel — to contribute to the support of the priests and to pray for them. It was especially fitting that both ceremonies occurred during the liturgy, giving evidence of the relationship of all the members of the Church in sustaining each other and fulfilling the mission of evangelizing those with whom we live and work and pray.

Following the ordination liturgy, a festive luncheon reception for the new subdeacons, their families, friends and parishioners was held in the Phoenician Ballroom. ■





Effective Ways You Can Help Your Eparchy!

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

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"I give and bequeath to the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn _____% of the residue of my estate [or: the sum of \$_____]."

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"I give and bequeath to the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon of Los Angeles _____% of the residue of my estate [or: the sum of \$_____]."

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The gift of an asset such as *common stock or mutual fund shares* that have increased in value can be a smart way to make a contribution and receive maximum tax benefits based on the value of the asset.

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Stewardship Director
John F. Kurey, Esq., MBA
718-237-9913 or 314-231-1021
saintmaron@yahoo.com or
maroniteswest@yahoo.com

Ordinations

Ordination of Subdeacon George Younes St. Maron Church Minneapolis, MN

by Chorbishop Sharbel Maroun

A solitary wood chair sat in stark contrast to the beautifully decorated cream marble altar. The day was Sunday, 13 October 2019 in Minneapolis, Minnesota — ordination Sunday for George Younes, soon to be Subdeacon George. Fathers Bechara Awada and Anthony Salim concelebrated the Divine Liturgy with Chorbishop Sharbel Maroun along with Deacon Jim Marschall of All Saint Church and Subdeacons James Farhat and Gabe Gubash.



George patiently sat in the simple wood chair. His second-grade son, Thomas, was poised and clear-voiced as he delivered the reading. George's wife, Susan, their four children, and siblings carried the offerings. George's children perfectly delivered the intercessions and his eldest daughter, seventh-grade Rebecca, soloed a delightful hymn.



Finally, the time arrived for the solemn ordination. Chorbishop Sharbel snipped George's hair in corner points of a cross before he blessed the candidate as Cantor. Father Awada processed with Cantor George who carried the bible before him.

Next, George received blessings as a lector and was processed by Father Anthony Salim. George was redressed from black jibbee to a white alb. He was fitted with the embroidered light blue stole once worn by Chorbishop Sharbel at his own lector ordination. During the procession, George's sister, Annette, delivered *The Lord Is My Shepherd* in her beautifully-trained soprano voice.

Lastly, George received the ordination for subdeacon. The light blue simple stole was replaced with a gorgeously crafted subdeacon stole. Led by the cross and candles, George once again processed around the nave with Father Awada. He opened the doors and rang a bell, symbol of his new responsibility. He read a passage from the scripture, as he did in the two previous ordinations, as he raised a lit candle. George received sacred blessings at the altar, received Holy Communion, and offered the Holy Eucharist to his wife, family, and community for the first time.

The Divine Liturgy was followed by a beautiful celebration and delicious meal provided by the parish. ■

WORKER IN THE VINEYARD

Abbot Patrick

by Brandon Shulleeta

Maronite monasticism in Massachusetts

At 25 years old, Patrick Kokorian had an ordinary life plan: continue advancing in his aerospace engineering career, find a nice woman to marry, and raise a Catholic family.

But while reading a book about a monk, Kokorian felt called to become a monk.

“It totally took me by surprise,” Kokorian said. “I closed the book and said: ‘That’s not what I had in mind at all,’ but at that moment, I had to figure out if this was what God was calling me to.”

Nineteen years later, Kokorian, 44, is now the head monk for Most Holy Trinity Monastery in Petersham, Massachusetts. Kokorian was elected in September to become the abbot — the spiritual leader of the monastery — after almost 17 years as a monk.

The monastery was founded by Father William Driscoll, who served as the abbot for more than 40 years. Due to his age and health, Driscoll, who is 87 years old, said he was anxious for a new abbot to take over.

“He’ll make an especially good abbot. That’s why we elected him,” Driscoll said, adding that Kokorian has the right demeanor and character.

“They picked exactly the man I was voting for,” Driscoll said with a laugh. “We both have the same ideals but different ways of doing things.”

Prayer is at the heart of the Maronite Catholic monastery, which has 19 monks.



“The whole center of the day is God,” Kokorian said. “If you wanted to invent something for yourself that would focus your mind on God all the time and give you the best possible chance of union with him in this life, this is what you’d invent.”

The monks begin prayers at 5:20 a.m. daily and continue through the day, following the Maronite Liturgical cycle. They also pray for individual causes, some of which come from prayer requests that are submitted by people to their monastery’s website, maronitemonks.org.

While Kokorian said it’s a misnomer that monks take a vow of silence, they do at least try to minimize unnecessary talking.



“You only talk when you need to talk. Now, obviously, some people need a little more (talking) than others,” he said with a laugh.

Kokorian said monks at some monasteries spend much of the day with each other. However, he said Most Holy Trinity Monastery is designed to give monks a little more alone time for praying and meditating. While no electronics are used for entertainment (they don’t watch TV or play games on smart phones), they do have a recreation period three times a week that’s largely spent talking. Each day, the monks spend two hours adoring the Blessed Sacrament exposed.

At 44 years old, Kokorian is a relatively young abbot. While he oversees the monastery, he says his most important leadership role as abbot is providing spiritual guidance to the other monks as needed.

Kokorian’s path to becoming an abbot was unforeseen compared with some others. Driscoll, for example, said that he knew since he was in grade school that he wanted to become a priest.

Kokorian, on the other hand, had no plans of becoming a Catholic cleric during his youth. When he

read a 1940s book about a monk, *The Seven Storey Mountain*, he wasn’t even sure at the time if monks still existed.

Kokorian laughed as he recalled his thoughts when he was a 25-year-old: “I didn’t know if monks still existed. Maybe they all disappeared! You never hear about monks at all.”

However, when he felt connected to Most Holy Trinity Monastery after a retreat, he got rid of all of his belongings, paid off his college debt and became a monk.

Over the years, he’s learned how prayer often transforms for people as their spirituality grows. “Typically, as you grow spiritually, as the spiritual authors tell us and monks can attest to this, your prayer gets simpler,” Kokorian said, “and it becomes less about talking to God and more about listening to God and more about being with God.

“As you get closer to God, you start to take on a little bit more simplicity as He works in you,” Kokorian said.

Kokorian said that being a good abbot, in part, means continuing the traditions established by his predecessor.

“My great hope is to be faithful to what I’ve been given ... hopefully deepen it,” Kokorian said. “For me, success would mean that when I die in this monastery it’s at least as good as I found it when I arrived almost 17 years ago.” ■

Brandon Shulleeta is a freelance journalist hailing from Glen Allen, VA.

Saint Sharbel Church

Portland, Oregon *by Antoinette Zeina*

The small parish of St. Sharbel in Portland, Oregon, has become a home for Maronites in the Pacific Northwest since opening its doors in 1970. With the pastoral direction from Fr. Christopher Fabre, the parish of St. Sharbel is blessed to have dynamic families who continue to support this parish spiritually and materially.

In July 1970, Fr. Paul Mouawad, then a newly-ordained priest, established the first Maronite Church in his assigned mission territory of Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Montana and Alaska. The first Maronite Divine Liturgy was celebrated at the National Sanctuary of Our Sorrowful Mother (popularly known as “The

Grotto”) in Portland, Oregon. At the initiative of Archbishop Francis M. Zayek, the name of the mission was changed in 1971 from St. Maron to Blessed Sharbel (canonized on 9 October 1977). The parish has the distinction of being the first Maronite parish in the United States entrusted to the patronage of this great Maronite hermit.

In 1974, the community purchased a church on Southeast 16th Avenue in Portland. The church building is in an historic, unique neighborhood on the east side of Portland. The neighborhood, called Ladd’s Addition, is laid out not in a rectilinear fashion but on an x-shape with a rotary on the middle.

At each of the cardinal points, there is a large rose garden. In the Spring, the scent of roses permeates the neighborhood in the city affectionately known as “Rose City.”

The parish is “small but mighty,” according to current pastor Fr. Christopher, who has served the community since 2015. After his ordination to the priesthood four years ago, Father Christopher succeeded Father Jonathan Decker who had devotedly served since 1993. With close to 50 families currently making up the parish, Father Christopher works passionately to maintain the rich tradition of Maronite Catholicism in what is known as the “unchurched” Pacific Northwest.

Father Christopher proudly asserts, “We have families who have been involved since the very beginning when the parish opened its doors. We have stayed steady and strong through the many changes, up and downs. Portland is an interesting place to have a parish but we have maintained a strong presence here. That is best thing you can ask for.”

The duties as pastor of St. Sharbel go well beyond his own flock that Father Chris serves in Portland. St. Sharbel is the only Maronite parish in the tri-state region of Oregon, Washington, and Idaho. Accordingly,



the parish and Father Christopher also serve the needs of Maronites in Washington and Idaho with baptisms, weddings and funerals.

It takes a community of devoted and faithful parishioners to keep the doors of St. Sharbel open.

Parishioner Nadia Redmond has been a member of St. Sharbel since she and her husband moved from southern California to Oregon in 1992. The early years as a parishioner were trying as the church in the late 80s and early 90s went through transition periods with several priests coming and going. The parishioners appealed to Archbishop Zayek to reinstate Father Decker, who as pastor would provide stability to the community.

“I am proud of our parish,” Nadia said, “It was Father Decker who was the rock and now Father Chris is continuing to make the church stronger and stronger. It’s been a great journey.”

Organizations and fundraising teams work year-round to prepare for events that provide for the parish economically, socially and spiritually. A Ladies Guild comprised of women in the parish put on an annual dinner in the Fall that is the oldest parish tradition. In recent years, the parish reinstated an annual Mother’s Day Hafli. In



addition to annual events that bring the community together, a Lebanese Festival is held every July around the feast day of St. Sharbel. Months of preparation make the event one of the biggest fundraisers of the year that draws people from different backgrounds and from every corner of the historic Portland neighborhood.

With a great youth presence in the parish, Redmond and her husband had a helping hand in bringing religious education back into the parish. Angel Scouts, the parish’s catechetical program for the youth, creates a vital learning experience for the Maronite youth in Portland. Although many children are homeschooled through Catholic homeschooling programs, the parish offers weekly classes that offer a curriculum of reading stories, prayer and, projects to teach children their faith. Living in a region where Catholicism is scarce, it is important to educate children. This is the basis of hope for the future well-being of the parish.

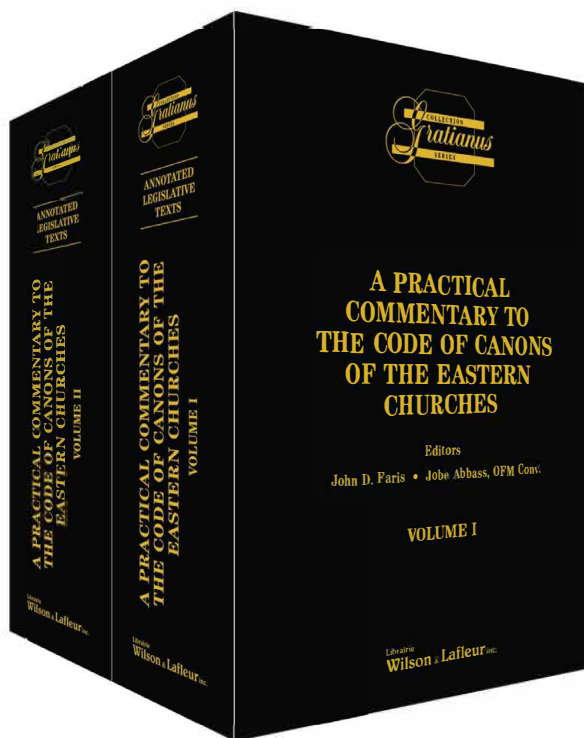


“They ask a lot of questions,” Redmond said. We are competing with the world we live in, but we do our best to keep them close to their Maronite roots.”

The future of St. Sharbel Church reflects the strong faith and devotion that the community and fellow Maronites around the country have for this parish. Bishop A. Elias Zaidan of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon constantly shows his support for the Maronite community in Portland and has made several visits for ordinations, bestowal of honors, and other significant community events. The church recently completed a project to make its building more accessible with the installation of an elevator. Perhaps the most remarkable quality of this small parish in Portland is the ability to create a home of faith in a place where it is found least.

The parishioners have built a home upon their faith—one that is firmly held together by its pastor and the solicitude of the beloved St. Sharbel.

Practical Commentary on the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches



– John D. Faris and Jobe Abbass

The two-volume *Practical Commentary on the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches* is the work of canonists and experts of the Eastern and Latin Churches. The editors are two well-known canonists, John D. Faris and Jobe Abbass, OFM Conv.

The work provides both the Latin and English translation of the 1990 *Codex Canonum Ecclesiarum Orientalium* and the updates of the 2015 *Mitis et Misericors Iesus* and takes into account the provisions of the 2016 *De Concordia inter Codices*. English translations of documents relevant to the promulgation of the Eastern Code are included. Along with a canon-by-canon commentary, the *Practical Commentary* includes references to *Nuntia* and the *iter* of each canon, tables of corresponding canons, an analytical index, and a table indicating the sources referred to in the Code.

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Maronite Academy Regional Reunion in Washington

by Maya Khoury

The Maronite Foundation sponsored its first-ever Maronite Academy Regional Reunion in Washington, DC, on Labor Day weekend. This reunion was open to any of the past Maronite Academy Alumni from the United States and Canada.

the United States Capitol Building, and later all came together for an Awards Ceremony and Lebanese style party at Phoenicia in northern Virginia. Each attendee was recognized for being an active member for the Maronite Academy Alumni organization.



Sunday included Divine Liturgy at Our Lady of Lebanon in Washington, DC, with Monsignor George Sebaali, followed by a meeting at the Lebanese Embassy with His Excellency Lebanese Ambassador Gabriel Issa, where the alumni discussed Lebanon's challenges. The entire event concluded with a bus tour of Washington's landmarks and a night out together before everyone departed.

The Maronite Academy, established seven years ago, is a non-profit initiative, undertaken by the Maronite Foundation, aimed at introducing young Lebanese immigrants around the world to their country of origin. Selected candidates will undergo online sessions (e-learning sessions) that will build their knowledge about Lebanon and Maronite Heritage.

The program included presentations from In Defense of Christians Policy Director Peter Burns and Communications Manager Sarah Bassil; National Apostolate of Maronites Mid-Atlantic Regional Director Tonia Khouri; Dr. Edmund Ghareeb, a Lebanese American Professor from American University; and Maronite Foundation Regional USA Director Mrs. Josephine Sfeir and Maronite Academy USA Alumni Coordinator Maya Khoury.

Following the presentation, attendees participated in a competition where they had to register one of their relatives or friends of Lebanese descent to see if they are eligible for Lebanese Citizenship. If the person was eligible, the first person to submit someone was awarded a prize from the Maronite Foundation. Following the morning sessions, the group toured

Lebanon and Maronite Heritage.

After successfully completing their online courses, the selected candidates benefit from an organized two-week trip to Lebanon, all expenses covered, by the Maronite Foundation. During their stay in Lebanon, the candidates will bond with their roots and get further in touch with the history of Lebanon and their Maronite Heritage through various site visits and seminars, given by prominent figures.

To find out more about the Maronite Academy for Summer 2020, please visit their website at <https://maronitefoundation.org/MaroniteAcademy>. ■

Maya is Maronite Academy USA Regional Reunion Coordinator and a parishioner of St. Anthony Church, Glen Allen, VA

Making Saints: The Process of Canonization in the Catholic Church

by Prof. Fr. Cherian Thunduparampil, CMI

[Editors Note: This article is of particular interest to the Maronite Church, which is prayerfully striving to see the Blessed Massabki Brothers (†1860) and the Venerable Patriarch Elias Hoayek (1843-1931) canonized as saints of the universal Church. Another for veneration is Mother Isabelle, a reformer of the Antonine Congregation, covered in this issue of *The Maronite Voice*.

The Maronite Church takes holy pride in its saints canonized in Rome: Saint Sharbel (canonized 1977); Saint Rafka (canonized 2001); Saint Nimatallah (canonized 2004).]

From the early Christian centuries, the cult of the saints has been an important element of Christian worship. Our faith tells us that it is possible for a human to enjoy the beatific vision, that is, perfect salvation in its entirety, being with God in heaven. The Church calls such redeemed persons “saints.” Some of these saints

are “canonized,” that is, officially included in the list (“canon”) of recognized saints.

There are three groups of canonized saints: The *martyrs*, by their supreme witness of faith and charity, shed of their blood in imitation of Christ’s death. The



second group of canonized saints are *confessors* who lived their lives fullness through their closer imitation of Christ and profound union with him. To these two groups — martyrs and confessors — Pope Francis introduced a third group. The *offer of life* is distinct from martyrdom or heroic virtues. By the offer of life, a person offers his or her life voluntarily and freely; it is an heroic acceptance of death which, though not immediate, is certain within a short period of time.

Evolution of Canonization Procedures

Through the centuries, various criteria and procedures have been employed in the process of recognizing someone as a saint in order to render the person public and ecclesiastical cult. At first, the process took the form of *vox populi* (popular acclamation), with the elevation and or transferal of the mortal remains of the person by the local Church, and then enrolling of the person's name in the *martyrology* or List (or "Canon") of the Saints. This could have occurred in a diocese and did not require the involvement of the pope.

The current procedure for canonization involves a rigorous canonical investigation. Since the twelfth century, canonization has been reserved to the pope. The Congregation for the Causes of Saints carries out the canonical investigation of behalf of the pope. The Church needs proof of martyrdom in case of *martyrs*, of sanctity of life and of the heroic practice of the moral and theological virtues for *confessors*, or proof of the offer of life. In the process of this recognition the Church also needs properly attested miracles granted by God through the intercession of Servants of God or Blesseds as an essential prerequisite, a necessary element or criterion to verify the authenticity of his/her sanctity.

Stages in the Modern Canonization Process

At various stages in the canonization process, a candidate for canonization obtains the following four titles: one merits the title *servant of God* with the initiation of a cause by the bishop where the servant of God dies. Then with the issue of the decree on the virtues by the Congregation and its approval by the Roman Pontiff subsequent to the verification of the heroic practice, the title *venerable* is conferred on the

servant of God. However, no public and ecclesiastical cult is yet permitted. With the approval of a miracle that God performs through his or her intercession and confirmation of the judgment on the scientific and theological aspects of the same by the Roman Pontiff, the venerable could be called *blessed*. In the case of martyrs, no miracle is required for the beatification. However, a miracle after the beatification is required for the blessed to be called a *saint*.

What is the difference between beatification and canonization? Having ascertained the martyrdom or heroic practice of the virtues or "heroic offer of life" through beatification, the Church officially raises one to the honors of the altar, but the cult given to him or her will be restricted to a Church *sui iuris*, a nation, region, diocese, province or a religious institute according the stipulations in the decree of beatification. Canonization removes this restraint and the saint becomes an object of veneration in the universal Church.

Celebration

Until the pontificate of Pope Benedict XVI, both the ceremonies of beatification and canonization were presided over by the pope himself, normally in Rome. In order to involve the local Church, Benedict XVI introduced a reform in the Rites of Beatification (2005) according to which the beatification ceremony is presided over by the representative of the Holy Father in the local Church. Only the pope presides at the canonization ceremony normally in Rome.

Purpose of Canonization

Our ultimate goal is to become holy as the Heavenly Father is holy, to become saints. The beatification and canonization processes are intended to serve two goals: 1) to offer models of sanctity for the imitation of the faithful; and 2) to offer the faithful intercessors on their before God.

All you saints, pray for us! ■

Prof. Fr. Cherian Thunduparampil, CMI, a canon lawyer, is the procurator in Rome of the religious institute of Carmelites of Mary Immaculate

Mother Isabelle Abdullah El-Khoury

Reformer of the Antonine Sisters Congregation

APRIL 29, 1878 - JULY 20, 1953

*by General Secretariat of the Antonine Sisters
Our Lady of Graces Convent - Generalate Roumieh El-Metn*

Mother Isabelle is the charismatic reformer and the first Superior General of the new generation of the Maronite Antonine Sisters (1932-1953). She is one of the first renovators in our Antiochian Church, who sought to achieve a certain balance between the apostolic dimension of religious life and the contemplative one, which she embraced for over twenty-five years. This apostolic contemplative heritage accompanied the beginnings of religious life in our Orient without any discontinuity.

Mother Isabelle (Adlaid) was born April 29, 1878 in Jezzine, South Lebanon, in an aristocratic family known for her humanity, culture and spirituality. She first went to the American School in Saida, then transferred to a school run by the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary Sisters, whom she joined in 1894, and remained with them 10 years.

In 1908, she was called again to the monastic spirituality of both Mar Antonios and Mar Maroun, and joined the Antonine cloistered nuns at Mar Antonios of Padua monastery in Jezzine, June 4th. Thus, she became endowed with both the tradition and spirituality of the Latin and Maronite liturgical heritage.

When living in the cloister, Mother Isabelle felt a deep calling for the apostolic ministry and the caring to the needy and the poor at a time when Lebanon was undergoing great hardships and poverty following First World War. In 1929, and with the approval of the Superior General of the Antonine Order and his council, Mother Isabelle, accompanied with Sr. Mariam Aoun, left the cloister in Jezzine and joined



Mar Doumit's monastery in Roumieh El-Metn, where she established a new way of religious life based both on contemplative prayer and apostolic work.

Soon after she opened the first gratuitous school for the children of the disadvantage families living in Roumieh El-Metn and the neighboring villages, while preserving the monastic dimension of religious life; she was later requested to open an orphanage beside the school.



As time went by and with the approval of the ecclesial authorities, Mother Isabelle began to receive young girls into religious life and accompany them spiritually. The number of sisters soon increased and they became around 40 sisters. This encouraged her to ask permission to leave the cloister and start new apostolic missions. Permission to do so was granted to her in 1940 from the Sacred Congregation for the Oriental Churches in Rome. At the request of the Antonine Order and many Bishops, several schools were opened in different parts of Lebanon. In 1946, Mother Isabelle El Khoury was nominated the first Superior General of the Antonine Sisters, with four assistants, a mistress of novices and a general treasurer.

Mother Isabelle was both “the mother and the educator” for the young generation of the Antonine Sisters. As a “mother”, she was compassionate and caring and at the same time firm and attentive to the needs of each sister; she was also the watchful eye over their human and spiritual growth and journey. As “educator”, she helped in the upbringing of the young generation and the formation of a community around the gospel, the Church mysteries and the religious and liturgical program of the day.

Three characteristics exemplified the spirit of the young generation of sisters:

- Love and preference for the poor over all in their convents and institutions.
- Evangelical and prophetic simplicity based on the presence of Christ in their lives.
- Family spirit inherent in love, forgiveness and joy.

Mother Isabelle’s charismatic evangelical Antonine heritage was embodied in her life and remained as a model for all the sisters to follow. Her repeated testament to them was : in the midst of the human crowd and your activities, watch carefully over your contemplative life and don’t ever prefer anyone or anything over your love for Christ.

Mother Isabelle left us peacefully to the Father July 20, 1953; this date remains, to this day, a sacred symbol and an important station to the General Chapters of the Congregation, wherein the Mother Superior and the council general are elected every six years.

As we lift our prayers of thanksgiving to God for our model Mother Isabelle, we ask Him to grant her the grace of sanctification on the altars of the Church, so that our hearts and the earth will be filled with a whiff of the fragrance of heaven. ■

Parish News

ATLANTA, GEORGIA
Parish Renewal



Saint Joseph Church in Atlanta, Georgia, held its first Parish Renewal on 14 September 2019. This seven and a half hour session entitled, "Re-Igniting the Flame," was led by *Stewardship Calling* founder, Mr. Bill Marianes. Mr. Marianes has conducted countless Parish Renewals for hundreds of Catholic and Orthodox parishes throughout the country. The presentation focused on building the parish and the effectiveness of its ministries. He encouraged members to realize their personal callings as disciples of Jesus Christ and their pursuit of true stewardship with Christ at the center of their lives. Mr. Marianes emphasized the need to involve all parishioners in the youth, adult, and educational ministries of the parish and surrounding community. Mr. Marianes interacted with the audience as he entertained challenging questions and answers directly pertaining to the topic. He stressed ways to increase participation, motivation, and revenue with particular attention to involving the youth of the parish in activities and events. The Parish Renewal was an engaging and thought-provoking program to experience. ■

DARTMOUTH, MASSACHUSETTS
New Postulant | Maronite Servants of Christ the Light

Emily Sharbela Lattouf entered the Maronite Servants of Christ the Light on 19 September at the Convent Chapel of St. Maron. At the end of *Ramsho*, Monsignor James Root gave a blessing to Emily and Mother Marla Marie presented her with a medal of Our Lady of Lebanon and formally welcomed her into the community. Emily enters religious life from St. Theresa Church in Brockton. Please pray for the young women currently discerning with the Maronite Servants. Your prayers for vocations are appreciated. Visit our blog to keep up with our mission: radiatehislight.blogspot.com.

"I am so happy to be starting my new life as a Maronite Servant of Christ the Light postulant. Our greatest calling in any vocation is to love. As Saint Teresa of Calcutta says, "the fruit of love is service." It is with great joy and honor that I start this incredible journey of serving God through serving you.

Growing up in the United States I have seen a need for Maronite religious sisters. I have been attracted to this congregation for quite some time (around seven years). I have enjoyed going on spiritual retreats hosted by the sisters, and volunteering in their various ministries such as the summer Bible camp, visiting the elderly, attending wedding and funeral services and much more. The sisters are involved in the lives of the parishioners and they accompany them in their journey of faith. We laugh, cry and grow with you and with one another. I look forward to serving you and living a life of prayer and service alongside such wonderful sisters." - Emily ■



EMMITSBURG, MARYLAND

2nd Anniversary of the Dedication of the Shrine of St. Sharbel

On 19 October 2019, the Shrine of St. Sharbel, located at the National Grotto of Our Lady of Lourdes in Emmitsburg, Maryland, celebrated its second anniversary.

The Divine Liturgy was celebrated by Monsignor George Sebaali, Pastor of Our Lady of Lebanon Church, assisted by Monsignor Peter Azar, Rector of Our Lady of Lebanon Maronite Seminary. After the Divine Liturgy, the priests lead a procession with the icon of Saint Sharbel while the faithful followed, singing hymns. At the shrine, they gathered for the final blessing with the icon and the veneration of Saint Sharbel's relics placed in a glass reliquary next to the statue. Sweets and Saint Sharbel prayer cards were offered to all the participants following the celebration. ■



LIVONIA, MICHIGAN

Mercy in Action Day | St. Rafka Church

by Fr. Tony Massad

On Saturday, 26 October, over 60 members of St. Rafka Church in Livonia, Michigan, teamed up with parishioners from a local parish, St. Michael the Archangel Catholic Church, to work and serve people in need in the local community. Tens of thousands of Catholics from the Metro-Detroit area participated in this annual day of community service entitled *Mercy in Action Day*.



This year, there were over 160 volunteers from the two churches who made blankets for the homeless, cooked meals and delivered them to home-bound seniors, made snack packs for hungry children, prepared purses with personal items for the homeless, and made rosaries to be passed out to hospitalized patients. The volunteers ranged in age from children as young as four years old all the way up to 87 years old who came together to pray and work, helping the mercy of Christ show through their actions.

This is the third year St. Rafka Church has teamed up with St. Michael's to participate in *Mercy in Action Day*. This event has inspired several St. Rafka Church members to continue these ministries as part of our regular charitable works. A parish-wide gift card fundraising program now provides teams of St. Rafka parishioners the supplies to make rosaries, prepare and deliver meals for home-bound seniors, and assemble snack packs for hungry children on a regular basis. ■

Parish News

SOMERSET, NEW JERSEY

St. Sharbel Church

by Laurie Machalany and Dr. Mabel George Howard

Under the leadership and guidance of Father Simon El Hajj, parishioners of St. Sharbel Church in Somerset, New Jersey, have been actively involved in several activities and church events over the past year. Arabic classes are offered by the Lebanese speaking parishioners of the church. Presently, there are over 50 students (ages 12 & under) enrolled in these classes. They are learning to speak, read, and write the Arabic language. The MCF and MYO groups are equally involved in church activities. The MYO *Pioneers of Mary* have over 40 young members (grades 8-12), and the *Knights of Mary* consist of 20 children (grades 3-7). These youth participate in prayer sessions, religious instruction, and church events.

October was a very productive and busy month at St. Sharbel Church. The Ladies' *Sodality of Mary* held a retreat at Our Lady of Fatima, Blue Army Shrine in Washington, NJ. The focus of the retreat was to reflect upon one's personal relationship with God. The women felt that the retreat was a peaceful time for meditation and prayer. During the same month, 19 men confirmed their first oaths as members of the *Knights of St. Sharbel*. The men's group strives to support the church spiritually, socially, and financially. Also, the parish hosted its 2nd Annual *Family Halloween Soiree* featuring *Rami Badr & Band*. A bountiful and delicious banquet of mezze and dinner were prepared by the Ladies Sodality.

On 9 November 2019, an unprecedented worldwide community service event, *Helping Hands*, was held to benefit the starving and less fortunate of the African nation of Burkina Faso. St. Sharbel Church, the first Maronite parish in the United States to participate in this global effort under the partnership of Catholic Relief Services (CRS) and *Rise Against Hunger*, packed 10,152 meals to aid the people of this African nation.

When asked about the mission of St. Sharbel Church, Father Simon commented, "The theme of our parish this year is *Community in Christ*. I am so proud of our parishioners for uniting their efforts together for Social Justice. . . . we are fulfilling the mission of the church!" ■



YOUNGSTOWN, OHIO

Chorbishop Michael J. Kail 45th Ordination Anniversary

Thou art a Priest forever! This sounds like a penitential sentence but it is what you make of it. To be a member of every family but not really belonging. To suffer with those in pain or anguish, to carry secrets good and bad, to help heal or comfort, the many baptisms, marriages and funerals, to bless and to hope to be blessed and much more, is a fulfilling life. No human being is perfect, but we expect perfection. Decision making is difficult, especially when not everyone agrees with you. This life of a priest is not easy and only a few fit the calling or vocation.

On 14 September 2019, St. Maron Church in Youngstown, Ohio, celebrated the 45th Anniversary of the Ordination of Priesthood for Chorbishop Michael J. Kail. The Divine Liturgy was concelebrated by Chorbishop Kail, Chorbishop Anthony Spinosa of the Basilica & National Shrine of Our Lady of Lebanon, Monsignor Robert Siffrin, Diocese of Youngstown and Fr. Lubomyr Zhabak of Holy Trinity Ukrainian Church. They were assisted by Deacon William George, and Subdeacons James Essad and Albert Dohar. The well attended liturgy was followed by a dinner at the Maronite Center with over 250 attendees, including his family from Pittsburgh, PA, expressing their heartfelt appreciation for Father's 45 years as a priest.

Chorbishop Kail was ordained on 14 September 1974, by Archbishop Francis Zayek in Pittsburgh, PA, and was assigned to the National Shrine and St. Maron in Youngstown, OH. Besides serving as pastor or administrator at six parishes, he has held several positions and offices including Office of Religious Education, Director of Youth Ministry, Diocesan Master of Ceremonies, and Spiritual Director of NAM. Currently, he holds the Office of Protopresbyter of the Midwest Region, Eparchial Director of the Office of Liturgy, and is a member of the Eparchial College of Consultors.

Chorbishop Kail is a great homilist and has a dry sense of humor. He is a solid rock, built on traditions, built with blood, sweat and tears of the founding families and sustained by the current families. He has shown much generosity, compassion, faith, and strength, and we appreciate and love him for that. Thank you for everything. *A Priest Forever!* ■

A Tribute to Dolour Anthony George

by his son, Father Gary George

Dolour Anthony George was born in South Africa to Theresa and Anthony George on 15 September 1938, and was named Dolour after the feast of Our Lady of Sorrows. He was one of eight boys, though orphaned at the young age of six. All seven brothers, except for the youngest, were raised by the Nazareth House Sisters in South Africa. After completing high school, he took up the trade of carpenter. He was married for almost 59 years to my mom, Lettie, and had four children including my siblings Cecilia, Derek, Gerard, and myself. My siblings immigrated to the United States in the early 90's and my parents followed soon after. His spiritual journey deepened in the year of the millennium when he decided to take on a prayer life with mom that imitated the monks and nuns around the world who spent hours in prayer and daily adoration.

He loved the MYO workshops and became known around the country as the father of the youth. He would attend all the youth programs and came to know many bishops, priests, religious and advisors. He had a deep love for the Shrine of Our Lady of Lebanon in North Jackson, OH, and longed to attend the annual Assumption Pilgrimage on the 15th of August. He had a simple philosophy of life which included respect for every person, do not hold a grudge, and always take care of the poor. His favorite hobbies included cooking, traveling to holy shrines and watching baseball. He loved Bishop Shaheen and would ask us every week, "When are we going on a cruise?"

My dad left us a legacy of prayer and generosity that he wanted to share with everyone. On behalf of my family, we want to extend our deepest gratitude to the entire Eparchies of Saint Maron, Our Lady of Lebanon and the many people who offered Divine Liturgies and condolences of his passing. ■

Parish News

HOUSTON, TEXAS

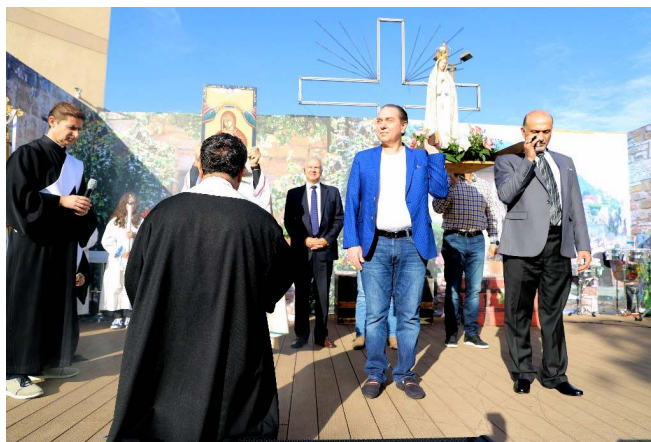
Our Lady of the Cedars Church

by Susie A. Hage, Director of Parish Administration

Our Lady of the Cedars has had lots going on since school resumed. We launched this year's CCE and Arabic Programs in September along with our newest group, The MYKids, and we had our annual Fall Village Night as well as our Fall Banquet in honor of Lebanon's Independence Day.

Our CCE and Arabic classes welcomed over 160 children this year. The MYKids Group has over 66 members (grades Kindergarten-6th) and they are getting to enjoy awesome activities such as PumpItUp, Lock-Ins and painting parties. Our MYO and MYA groups always have things going on as well. As usual, our Fall Village Night welcomed well over 2,000 people who showed up to enjoy wonderful Lebanese food and entertainment. Among our attendees was the Honorable Gaby Issa, the Lebanese Ambassador to the United States. Our Parish Council hosted a trick or treat for the entire parish and many families came out to enjoy good food and lots of fun on All Saints Day. Finally, the Fall Banquet, held in our Cedar Hall, had over 300 attendees this year. Our keynote speaker was Phillippe Ziade, a successful entrepreneur and Lebanese immigrant, who is also the Honorary Consul of Lebanon in Las Vegas. He shared with us his experiences and plans to help the young people of Lebanon.

Bishop Elias has made his wishes for the future clear in all of his messages, and we, as a parish, are in total agreement. The future of our church is the youth. The young children are tomorrow's leaders, and it is our responsibility to make our parish their second home so they may grow to love it and want to participate in keeping it growing for generations to come. We are blessed with an amazing community of leaders, parishioners, and volunteers, who always make it seem so effortless to undertake the various activities and functions in our parish. We are so grateful for all of them! ■



CLINTON TOWNSHIP, MICHIGAN

Ladies Altar Society Hosts Successful Bake Sale | St. Sharbel Church

by Char Fortuna

The Ladies Altar Society (LAS) at St. Sharbel Church in Clinton Township, Michigan, hosted a very successful bake sale the weekend of 9-10 November. There were 2,400 meat and spinach pies sold as part of this annual fundraising event, due to a well-organized pre-order system! Various homemade pastries and desserts, donated by LAS members and parishioners, were tastefully displayed in the church hall after all three weekend liturgies! The funds are used for the good works this society does to maintain the beauty of the sanctuary at St. Sharbel Church. ■

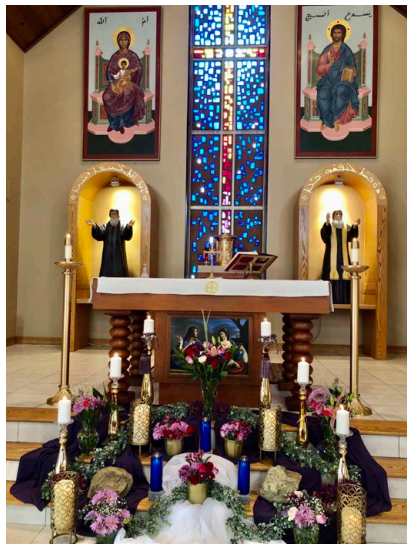


UNIONTOWN, PENNSYLVANIA
St. George Fall Events

by Dr. Mabel George Howard

The parishioners of St. George Church in Uniontown, Pennsylvania, celebrate the Fall Season as a special time for mutual kindness, caring, sharing, praying, and giving *thanks*. It is a time of year to enjoy the company of family and friends.

15 September 2019, marked the 30th Annual Uniontown Rosary Walk, organized and sponsored by the Altar & Rosary Society of St. George Church. This spiritual event, honoring the Blessed Mother, Queen of the Holy Rosary, began in the St. George Church *Garden of Prayer* with the recitation of the first decade of the rosary. The Knights of Columbus led the participants in a procession to five other Catholic parishes in Uniontown. It was wonderful to experience the faithfulness of three Catholic ritual traditions (Maronite, Roman, and Byzantine), all praying in unison. Worshipers prayed a decade of the rosary at each church followed by religious hymns and concluding with the Litany of the Blessed Mother and



the final Benediction. The Uniontown Rosary Walk is a spiritual time for prayer, reflection, meditation, and giving *thanks* for the faithful that join in praying the rosary in honor of the Blessed Mother.

To spend quality time with loved ones and friends, an *Octoberfest* was held on 13 October in our beautifully decorated church hall. This event was specifically planned for ladies only from the parish and community. The *Octoberfest* was an afternoon of laughter, prizes, and a delicious selection of covered dishes and desserts. This gathering provided an opportunity for reconnecting, relaxing, and enjoying fellowship, while giving *thanks* to the women who work diligently and faithfully to support the church.

Games, music, food, candy bags, and fun describe our annual "*Trunk*" or *Treat Halloween Party* held on 19 October in the church hall. The MYO sponsored the event as the children enjoyed the activities and sported an array of original and colorful costumes. We give *thanks* to God for the children—our future generations.

Finally, on 10 November, the St. George Altar & Rosary Society (ARS) celebrated a Memorial Liturgy honoring the deceased members of the Society. We remembered our loved ones and gave *thanks* to them for their many spiritual and cultural contributions to the church. The ARS members recited the rosary as their names were announced and candles lit for them. After liturgy, the ARS members and their families enjoyed a light reception in the church hall.

Many would agree that the Fall Season is a time for reflection, giving *thanks*, sharing memories, showing appreciation and kindness, honoring many deserving individuals, and most importantly, counting God's blessings. ■

Parish News

GLEN ALLEN, VIRGINIA

Joe Farris Inspires St. Anthony Community to Be Fully Alive St. Anthony Church

"Nothing will be impossible for God." These words from Luke 1:37 began Joe Farris' 3 November presentation to over 100 teens and adults at St. Anthony Church in Glen Allen, VA. Joe Farris is part of the *Ten Ten Group* that focuses its ministry on the importance of being fully alive in God's love. In other words, everything we do and say should reflect God's love. This is the perfect message to meditate on during the Season of Announcement. In fact, Luke 1:37 will be part of the Gospel reading on 24 November, the second Sunday in the Season of Announcement. In this reading, Gabriel announces to Mary that she will conceive and bear a Son, who will be named Jesus. Mary responds 'yes' to God's call and humbly chooses to be the handmaid of the Lord.

In his talk, Joe reminded the community that we, like Mary, need to listen for God's call, be willing to say 'yes' and believe that nothing is impossible for God. Joe helps to bring his message home by sharing his own personal experiences. Joe is a gifted storyteller and has the ability not only to



entertain but also to connect his stories to the underlying message. In Joe's life, God called him to sell his home and belongings and become

a missionary. At first his wife and six children thought that Joe must have misheard God's message. Laughter filled the room as Joe shared his wife's initial response to this call. However, God was persistent and patient in calling Joe and his family, and they did sell their home and belongings and serve as Life Teen missionaries for two years. While the stories were entertaining, the message challenged us to always listen for God's call and be willing to respond with a joy-filled YES.

Joe Farris is a parishioner at St. Anthony of Padua Church in Cincinnati, Ohio. If you would like to have Joe speak at your parish, you can contact him through the *Ten Ten Group* or at joe@joeffarris.org. ■



Archbishop Kamil Zaidan Passes to Eternal Life

Bishop Kamil Zaidan was born on March 9, 1944 in Metn, Lebanon. He was ordained priest on October 23, 1971 by Bishop Emeritus Elias Farah. After his ordination, he was sent to Washington DC where he served and continued his studies in philosophy and theology from Catholic University of America.

He served several parishes and institutions in Lebanon in the Archdiocese of Antelias.

On June 6, 2011 the Synod of the Maronite Bishops elected him Bishop to serve in the Patriarchal Curia. On August 13, 2011 Pope Benedict XVI confirmed his election and appointed him titular Bishop of Ptolemais in Phoenicia for the Maronites. On September 23, 2011 he was ordained bishop by Patriarch Bechara Peter Rai and his co-consecrators were Archeparch Emeritus of Antelias, Joseph Mohsen Bechara and The Emeritus Curial Bishop Samir Mazloum.

He was elected as the Archbishop of Antelias by the Maronite Synod in June 2012 and his appointment was confirmed by Pope Benedict XVI on June 16, 2012.

Bishop Zaidan died in Lebanon on October 21, 2019. His Beatitude Patriarch Bechara Rai celebrated his funeral service along with other bishops and priests on October 23, 2019 at the Antelias Cathedral in Qornet Shehwan in Metn, Lebanon. ■

Reflection on Visit to the Holy Land

by Sr. Therese Maria, MSCL

During the week of 8-15 September, along with 20 others from diverse backgrounds, I was given the unique opportunity to visit the Holy Land. It was a gift that I am grateful for and will always treasure, especially the meaningful encounters, and interactions we had with the local residents.

There are so many layers to unpack from this visit as we met with Christians, Jews, Muslims, government officials, Church leaders and journalists who are working on the local ground with the Philos Project to help promote dialogue, positive engagement and peace in the Middle East. One of the things I observed firsthand was the pluralistic landscape of Israel and the intricate and complex situation and dialogue that is occurring between Christians, Muslims, Jews, Palestinians and Israelis as they “strive” to peacefully co-exist.

In addition to visiting the holy sites of Bethlehem, Jerusalem, Nazareth, and Magdala to name a few,

our focus for this trip was to learn more about the Christians and their role in the Middle East. Unfortunately, due to the lack of political stability, persecution, ongoing discrimination, and poor job opportunities, thousands of Christians are leaving Israel and other places in the Middle East to seek security and stability. Today, Christians are a minority of less than 2% of the population in Israel. After hearing from Christians in their own villages about their daily struggles, I have come to see even more why we need to materially and spiritually support Christian families. Their impact and presence in the Middle East are a much needed witness, especially in the areas of education and healthcare.

Each day, I found myself switching gears from a tourist visiting the holy sites to a servant visiting various places such as Saint Rachel’s Center for refugee children. Also, being present in attentively listening to the difficulties of Christians who seek to be free, to be seen, to be heard, to be accepted and to have their human dignity and rights recognized and respected. In these vulnerable and raw moments, the group bonded, as various people expressed their heart-breaking stories.

On a final note, it was such a privilege to take your intentions with us as we remembered each of you in our liturgies, and especially in Bethlehem. We were blessed to celebrate Mass at the Field of the Shepherds and to venerate the actual place where Jesus the Christ was born. As a group we joyfully praised God and sang Christmas carols to remember the gift of Jesus’ birth. “Joy to the World” and “Away in a Manger” will have a special meaning for me this Christmas and for the rest of my life. ■

Sr. Therese is a member of the Congregation of the Maronite Servants of Christ the Light Byzantine Catholic Seminary of Sts. Cyril & Methodius



The Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist by Anne Borik, M.D.

“Amen, amen, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you will not have life in you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. (JOHN 6:54).”

The “Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist” is how Catholics and Orthodox express our belief that Jesus is really present in the Eucharist, not merely a symbol used metaphorically.

The process where the bread becomes the Body of Christ, and the wine becomes the Blood of Christ is called *transubstantiation*. It is through the power of the Holy Spirit that this miracle takes place.

It is important to understand that the Eucharist is not only a meal to nourish us but also a *sacrifice*.

During the Divine Liturgy, we take part and actually enter into the Sacrifice of Christ through the action of the priest and the power of the Holy Spirit. As we recall, the Lord Jesus, on the night before he suffered on the Cross shared one last meal with His disciples. During this meal, Jesus instituted the Sacrament of the Eucharist (*thanksgiving*) and entrusted the perpetuation of His Sacrifice so that we can take part in it at every Divine Liturgy!

Now, Jesus knew very well that people like you and me would

question His Real Presence in the Eucharist from time to time and therefore throughout the ages He has given us certain Eucharistic Miracles to help us grow in our faith in Him, the Risen Lord! I would like to focus on three Eucharist Miracles, which I have personally witnessed on various pilgrimages.

Eucharistic Miracle in Lanciano, Italy, in 8th Century

This miracle took place in response to a monk's doubt about Jesus' Real Presence in the



Eucharist. During Mass, the host was changed into living Flesh and the wine changed into human Blood. The Flesh consists of heart muscle from the left ventricle and part of the *Vagus* nerve and has human blood type of *AB*. It is still preserved today and remains an extraordinary phenomenon.

Eucharistic Miracle in O’Cebreiro, Spain, in 12th Century

This miracle took place in response to a priest with little faith who did not believe in the Real Presence in the Eucharist. On a very cold snowy Christmas Eve, the priest hoped that no one would come for Mass, but one poor farmer did. The priest despised the farmer’s faith and thought ill of him for coming to Mass in the cold harsh weather. During the consecration, the host turned into Flesh and the wine into Blood. Scientific studies show that the flesh is human heart muscle from a beaten left ventricle and the

blood is human blood type *AB*. To this day, the Flesh and Blood can be viewed in the Church in O’Cebreiro, Spain.

Eucharistic Miracle in Santarém, Portugal, in 13th Century

This miracle centers on a woman with an unfaithful husband. She was desperate to save her marriage and consulted a sorceress who said she can cure her husband for the price of a consecrated Eucharistic host. The woman took the host from her mouth and wrapped it in a veil to take out. After a few steps out the door, the host began to bleed profusely. She took it home and threw it in a trunk. That night, a bright light emanating from the trunk woke her and her husband and she confessed and took the bleeding host back to the priest. She was reconciled to her husband and the bloody Flesh was found to be of human *AB* blood type. It was identified as traumatized left ventricular heart muscle.

There are many, many more Eucharistic Miracles documented and shown to be of human blood type *AB* and consistent with human heart tissue. The most recent one was in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in the 20th Century (1996). It is remarkable that the scientific evidence is consistent and identical throughout the ages. In fact, DNA tests are confirming this along with fibers from the Shroud of Turin to demonstrate that it is of human blood type *AB*, the universal donor.

In conclusion, as Catholic and Orthodox Christians, we believe in the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist without the need of scientific evidence. Let us all go deeper in our spirituality as we receive Christ in the Eucharist and spend more quality time with Him in Eucharistic Adoration. ■



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 ANN MARIE GRADY | *St. Ann Maronite Church, Troy, NY*
 AMANDA HIFFA DONDERO | *St. Joseph Maronite Church, Atlanta, GA*
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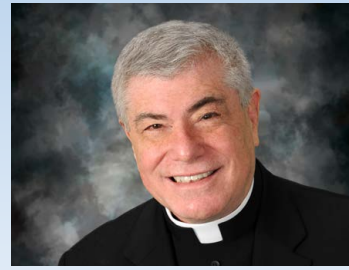
PERPETUAL

- NIDAL ABISAAB | *Our Lady of Lebanon, Brooklyn, NY*
 ANTHONY BUDWAY | *St. George Maronite Catholic Church, Cranston, RI*
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 JANE RABA | *Our Lady of Lebanon, Brooklyn, NY*
 AIDA TAGHER | *Maronite Mission of Manhattan*

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

From the Editor



Enjoying the *not yet* — right now



bike, a chemistry set and a desk —strangely, are about the only Christmas gifts I can recall. Memories of Christmas mornings are a happy flurry of tearing open gifts, assembling things, being torn away for dinner and then returning to toys.

Admittedly, the days approaching Christmas drummed up occasional, yet fearful dwellings about any acts of mischief I had gotten myself into over the prior year, but for the most part, I was so happy that I could not sit still, let alone sleep. (I always struggled to put a tag on that feeling, but I now realize that it was **hope** — **hope that the joys of Christmas did indeed await me.**)

Just to be sure that I was going to be happy on Christmas morning, I confess to searching high and low for the gifts, but found no proof. (The toys were at my grandparents' home — my parents trusted us no further than they could throw us.)

Despite coming up with no proof, I knew that Santa Claus and my parents had somehow collaborated to bring toys for my brothers and me. They loved us. That was a definite. No matter what happened on those days leading up to Christmas, I was happy because of the good things that had been prepared for me.

Do you know where I'm going?

A baby was born with a message that **the Kingdom of God has been prepared for us.**

Come, you who are blessed by My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. (MATTHEW 29:34)

Just as I wasn't able to see my presents before Christmas, I know that something beautiful and joyful has been prepared and awaits us — even if it's just not yet time to see it. God loves us. This is a definite. And His Kingdom is coming. No matter the difficulties in the days leading up to the Kingdom, **I'm enjoying the *not yet* — right now.**

May your days be filled with joy-filled hope of the promise given to us in Bethlehem. ■

Chorbishop John D. Faris

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