

the Maronite **Voice**



Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary

– September 8



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BISHOP'S MESSAGE

4 **Joy in Suffering**
by Bishop A. Elias Zaidan

6 **Bishops Schedules**

8 **The Hoosoyo: A Tool for Liturgical Catechesis**
by Fr. Claude W. Franklin Jr., SEOL

WORKER IN THE VINEYARD

13 **Father Kimes Says "Availability" Is Key**
by Brandon Shulleeta

LIVING CHURCH

14 **St. George Maronite Catholic Church: A Community Nearing 100 Years of History**
by Anna Salloum

16 **Ordinations**

18 NAM Scholarships

19 Response of Caritas Lebanon to Beirut Explosion

21 National MYA News

23 2021 National Maronite Youth Days

24 Parish News

GOING DEEPER INTO THE SPIRITUAL LIFE...

34 Sharing Hope—One Medal at a Time *by Dr. Anne Borik*

35 From the Editor



THE MARONITE VOICE

A bi-monthly publication of Saint Maron Publications under the auspices of the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn and Our Lady of Lebanon of Los Angeles.
ISSN 1080-9880

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• Subscription rates are \$25.00/year.

• Paid Advertising
\$150 - Quarter page full color
\$250 - Half page full color
\$400 - Full page full color
Additional discounts for six editions (one year).
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Monday - Friday | 9 am - 1 pm

Printed in Richmond, Virginia

Joy in Suffering

Everyone dreams of a life free of pain and difficulties. Often, we complain about the amount of hardships and sufferings we endure. However, we often overlook our blessings and take them for granted.



As human beings, pain and suffering are part of our lives. There are different types of pains that afflict us:

- **Physically:** Physical pain is the pain of our bodies whether it is from disease, injury, or other sources.
- **Social:** We can face social pain when we are expelled or ignored by our social circle.
- **Political:** This type of pain can come from the defeat of a candidate we hoped for or the success of a political party or person with whom we do not agree.
- **Psychological:** The pain of the mind can come from ridicule, mockery, or illness.
- **Emotional:** We suffer emotional pain from the loss of a loved one or the break-up of a relationship.
- **Spiritual:** Spiritual pain comes to us from sinfulness and lack of spiritual connection with the Lord. It is the darkness of the soul.

While pain can have many forms, some pain is self-inflicted or the consequences of our actions. Other pains can be the result of the evil actions of people and systems who negatively affect our lives, or simply the consequence of natural disasters.

Whatever the source is, pain affects our whole life, attitude, reasoning, affection, and actions. However, as Christians, we are called to be joyful. St. Paul tells us: “Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice!” (PHILIPPIANS 4:4). We should always be joyful—in happy times, in sad times, in comfort or in our struggles, because we are in the presence of the Lord. Christ brings to us a spiritual joy that cannot compare with the temporary happiness of the physical world.

St. Paul even goes further saying, “... we even boast of our afflictions... because the love of God has



“Each one of us has his/her own cross to bear. Instead of looking at our misery, let us rejoice in the cross which is a bridge that connects us to our loving God.”

been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.” (ROMANS 5:3-5). Suffering, or “affliction,” as St. Paul says, does not necessarily weaken us, but is a source of great strength and ultimately a source of grace in our lives. This is not easy for us, but it can be a gift.

Just look at Christ crucified. He did not do anything wrong, but he was forced to carry the cross, and endure the crucifixion so that we could be redeemed. On 14 September, we celebrate the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross. This feast day commemorates Christ’s acceptance of the physical, psychological, and social pain. The wounds Christ suffered are proof of his love for us so that we may be saved. The cross was once a symbol of punishment, but Christ changed the cross into a symbol of glory. He accepted the cup of suffering so that all of us will share in His glory one day.

St. Paul, who suffered much in his life, tells us this directly, “[God] who encourages us in our every affliction, so that we may be able to encourage those who are in any affliction with the encouragement with which we ourselves are encouraged by God.” (2 CORINTHIANS 1:4). In this sense, the sufferings we endure become a means of bringing the Gospel of Joy to others.

St. Rafka felt much pain throughout her life and her example points us to Christ’s 6th wound, the wound of Jesus’ shoulder from carrying the cross.

She suffered many losses during her life: losing her mother at a young age, working as a housekeeper, losing her sight, and lastly even paralysis. However, she never complained, but instead shared her suffering with the Lord.

St. Teresa of Calcutta (Mother Teresa) is quoted as having said, “Pain and suffering have come into your life, but remember pain, sorrow, suffering are but the kiss of Jesus—a sign that you have come so close to Him that He can kiss you.” Mother Teresa witnessed the pain of many people living in the slums of India or in different parts of the world. Yet, she was always rejoicing as she recognized the presence of God as a source of her joy.

Yes, we suffer; people around us suffer. Maybe, we are better off than others. Each one of us has his/her own cross to bear. Instead of looking at our misery, let us rejoice in the cross which is a bridge that connects us to our loving God.

I might end with the words of our Holy Father, Pope Francis, at his Palm Sunday Liturgy in St. Peter’s Basilica. What is amazing, he said, “is the fact that He [Jesus] achieves glory through humiliation. He triumphs by accepting suffering and death, things that we, in our quest for admiration and success, would rather avoid.”

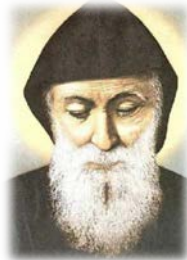
With God’s grace, we can triumph as well. ■

Bishop A. Elias Zaidan

Schedule BISHOP A. ELIAS ZAIDAN

- 12 SEPTEMBER** St. Louis, MO | St. Raymond Cathedral
- 15 SEPTEMBER** Virtual | Lecture of Aaron Butts on St. Jacob of Serugh
- 15 SEPTEMBER** Virtual | Order of St. Sharbel Eparchial Gathering
- 17-19 SEPTEMBER** Cleveland, OH | St. Maron Church | Diaconal Ordination of Subdeacon Christopher Nahra
- 20-23 SEPTEMBER** Chicago, IL | Catholic Extension 2021-Mission Bishops Conference
- 24-26 SEPTEMBER** Clinton Township, MI | St. Sharbel Church | Pastoral Visit
 - 1 OCTOBER** Virtual | Maronite Catholic Foundation Board Meeting
 - 5-6 OCTOBER** Washington, DC | USCCB International Justice and Peace Committee
 - 7-10 OCTOBER** Youngstown, OH | Pastoral Visit to Saint Maron Church
 - 12 OCTOBER** Virtual | USCCB Catholic Home Missions Meeting
 - 16-17 OCTOBER** El Cajon, CA | Pastoral Visit to Saint Ephrem Church
 - 18-19 OCTOBER** Phoenix, AZ | Pastoral Visit to St. Joseph Church
 - 20 OCTOBER** Virtual | Lecture of Thomas Kollampampil on St. Jacob of Serugh
 - 21 OCTOBER** Virtual | In Defense of Christians Religious Advisory Board Meeting
 - 24 OCTOBER** Simi Valley, CA | Sts. Peter and Paul Church | Pastoral Visit
 - 31 OCTOBER** Los Angeles, CA | Our Lady of Mt. Lebanon Cathedral
- 6-8 NOVEMBER** Austin, TX | Pastoral Visit to Our Lady's Parish
- 12-15 NOVEMBER** Houston, TX | Our Lady of the Cedars Church | Pastoral Visit
- 13 NOVEMBER** Virtual | Order of St. Sharbel Retreat

JOIN THE ORDER OF SAINT SHARBEL



ORDER OF SAINT SHARBEL SUNDAY

All parishes are asked to promote the Order on Sunday, October 10, 2021.

The Order supports Maronite Seminarians preparing to become priests.
Please prayerfully consider joining the Order.

Enroll at www.orderstsharbel.org or ask your parish priest.

Schedule BISHOP GREGORY J. MANSOUR

- 12 SEPTEMBER** Brooklyn, NY | Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral
13 SEPTEMBER Virtual | USCCB Meeting on Marriage & Family
13 SEPTEMBER Manhattan, NY | Prayer Service for the Opening of the United Nations
18 SEPTEMBER Pittsburgh, PA | Our Lady of Victory Church | 25th Anniversary of Fr. Rudy Wakim
19 SEPTEMBER Uniontown, PA | St. George Church | Pastoral Visit, Rosary Walk
21-22 SEPTEMBER Washington, DC | In Defense of Christians Annual Summit | Seminary Visit
25-26 SEPTEMBER Williamsville, NY | St. John Maron Church | Pastoral Visit
27 SEPTEMBER Manhattan, NY | CNEWA Special Event at United Nations
28-29 SEPTEMBER Virtual | Oriental Orthodox - Catholic Dialogue
30 SEPT - 4 OCT Michigan | Family Wedding
5 OCTOBER Brooklyn, NY | The Chancery | Presbyteral Council Meeting
6 OCTOBER Virtual | Eparchial Finance Council Meeting
7 OCTOBER Virtual | Eparchial Benefit Event
10 OCTOBER Waterbury, CT | Our Lady of Lebanon Church | Pastoral Visit
15-17 OCTOBER Virtual | Deacon/Subdeacon Retreat
17 OCTOBER Brooklyn, NY | Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral | Manhattan Mission – 5:00PM
23-24 OCTOBER New Bedford, MA | Pastoral Visit
30 OCTOBER Brooklyn, NY | St. James Cathedral Basilica | 25th Episcopal Anniversary of Bishop Nicholas DiMarzio
31 OCTOBER Somerset, NJ | St. Sharbel Church | Pastoral Visit
1 NOVEMBER Englewood, NJ | Reception of His All Holiness, Patriarch Bartholomew I of Constantinople by Archbishop Joseph, Archbishop of New York and Metropolitan of All North America of the Antiochian Orthodox Archdiocese of America
6-7 NOVEMBER Brooklyn, NY | Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral
13 NOVEMBER Washington, DC | Our Lady of Lebanon Seminary | Visit & Order of St. Sharbel Virtual Retreat
14 NOVEMBER Washington, DC | Our Lady of Lebanon Church | Ordination to Subdiaconate, Vincent Michael

Appointments

EPARCHY OF SAINT MARON

Bishop Gregory J. Mansour has appointed **Mrs. Linda George** of Saint Elias Parish in Roanoke, Virginia, as Director of the Office of Family and Sanctity of Life in the Eparchy of Saint Maron. In his announcement, Bishop Mansour expressed gratitude to **Mrs. Marise Frangie** for her years of zealous service in this position.

APPOINTMENT TO NATIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL

Deacon Joseph Chebli of Saint Sharbel Church in Somerset, NJ, has been appointed as a member of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' National Advisory Council.

Bishop Gregory Mansour joins the clergy, religious and faithful of the Eparchy of Saint Maron in congratulating Deacon Joseph for this appointment and assuring him of our prayerful support as he carries out this important function.

The *Hoosoyo*: A Tool for Liturgical Catechesis

by Fr. Claude W. Franklin, Jr., SEOL



Around this time every year our parishes begin anew their Sunday School programs, and we celebrate Catechetical Sunday; this year on 20 September. But, what exactly is “Catechesis?” Is it only done in Sunday School classrooms?

“Catechesis” comes from the Greek word *katakeesis*, meaning: “oral instruction” or more generally “instruction.” Thus, the one receiving “instruction” is known as a “catechumen” and the “instructor” is his or her “catechist.”

In a technical sense, the “Catechumenate” is a program for those coming into the faith who have not yet been Baptized nor received the Mysteries of Chrismation or the Eucharist. But we often use the term in a broader sense, such as the “Catechism of the Catholic Church.” In this case, we are referring to a document of the Catholic Church intended to “instruct” the Catholic faithful in the teachings of the Catholic Church.

In the present day, “catechesis” is thought of as what the children in our parishes do on Sundays before the Sunday Liturgy. However, this term can be used in a wider sense within the parish. If a parish has a Bible Study—that is “catechesis;” if a parish has a retreat or guest speaker—that is “catechesis”; but also,

everyday you pray the morning prayers (*Safro*) and evening prayers (*Ramsho*) in the Maronite Church; or attend the daily or weekend liturgies in the Maronite Church, you are being “catechized.” How? One word — ***Hoosoyo!***

The word *Hoosoyo* is a Syriac word meaning: “pardon,” “forgiveness” or even “atonement,” but it also refers to a series of interconnected prayers and a hymn used in the various liturgical rituals and services in the Maronite Church and other Syriac Churches (The English “*Book of Offering*,” conforming to the Arabic text, does not use this term, nor the subdivision titles discussed below). The *Hoosoyo* precedes and prepares the faithful for the readings. The Celebrant begins by burning incense and incensing the Cross, the four corners of the Altar, the Clergy and the faithful, while the *Hoosoyo* is chanted.

The *Hoosoyo* comprises a *Proemion*, *Sedro*, *Qolo* and *’Etro*. A *Proemion* (Greek: “preface” or “introduction”), is typically an introduction to the commemoration being celebrated, and invokes the Trinity, for example: “Let us raise glory, honor, and praise to the One Father, Whose voice came from Heaven testifying to His Beloved Son; and to the Only-Begotten Son, Who is worshipped, Whose light radiated upon the river, and Who accepted Baptism

from John, His Forerunner; and the One Holy Spirit, Who descended and appeared above the head of the Son. To the Good One be glory and honor, on this Feast, and all the days of our lives, and forever. Amen.” (Feast of Epiphany, *Book of Offering*, 110)

Notice how this “introduction” sums up the Feast of Epiphany (Greek word meaning: “manifestation” or “appearance”) in terms of how each of the Persons of the Trinity “manifested” themselves on this day. However, the *Proemion* also reminds us that the Most Holy Trinity is “One”—“One Father,” “Only-Begotten,” “One Holy Spirit”—for the prayer ends by sending up “glory and honor” to the “Good One!”

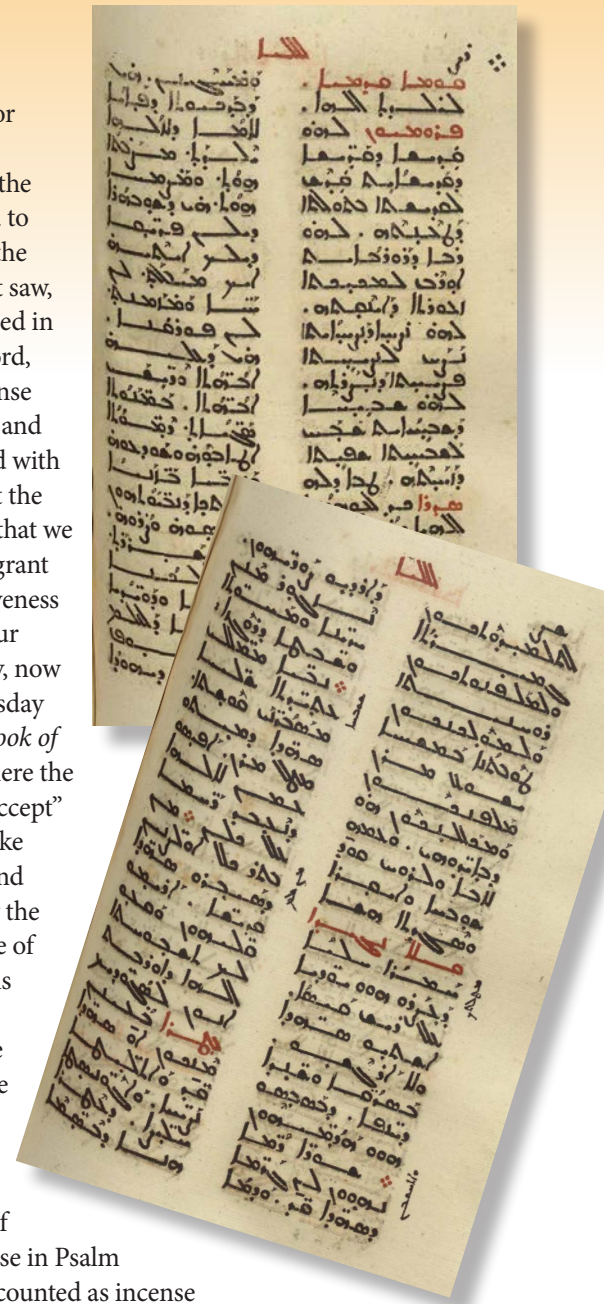
This is followed by a *Sedro* (Syriac: “list” or “order”). This term refers to the fact that the second half of the *Sedro* prayer is a “list” of petitions, for example: “strengthen the weak, heal the sick, and satisfy the hungry...” (Feast of Sts. Peter and Paul, *Book of Offering*, 567). The first half of the *Sedro* is often the teaching portion, in which we are reminded of what or who we are commemorating, which leads into the second half, in which we ask either the Lord directly, or the saint being commemorated, to intercede to the Lord on our behalf with our “list” of petitions.

The next element which we find in a *Hoosoyo* is a *Qolo* (Syriac: “voice” or “hymn”). The tunes used for the *Qolo* of the *Hoosoyo* varies, but it will often mention the burning of incense, for example: “Alleluia! Aaron offered incense to Almighty God pleading with Him to avert death from the plague. With the fragrant incense that we offer now, may God spare us from the sting of sin and death.” (Thursday B of the Season of Pentecost, *Book of Offering*, 536) Note first the connection here between the incense of Aaron and our incense—as God did in the past, so too we ask Him to do for us now. But notice that the second half of this Stanza develops this theme. We remind the Lord that the incense offered in the past helped God’s People (the Jews) “avert death from the plague” (cf. Numbers 16:46-48), now we ask Him to “spare us from the sting of sin and death.” (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:55-57)

Finally, the *Hoosoyo* is concluded with an *Etro* (Syriac: “incense” or “smoke”), also known in many manuscripts as *Qubolo* (Syriac word meaning:

“acceptance”). The *Etro*, or *Qubolo*, is a prayer which asks the Lord to “accept” the “incense” we have offered to Him, similar in scope to the Stanza of the *Qolo* we just saw, except the *Etro* is expressed in prose, for example: “O Lord, You are the Pleasant Incense and the Sweet Fragrance, and You bless the whole world with Your Divine Gifts. Accept the fragrance of this incense that we have offered to You, and grant mercy to our souls, forgiveness for our sins, and rest to our departed. To You be glory, now and forever. Amen.” (Tuesday B, Season of Pentecost, *Book of Offering*, 517) Note that here the request for the Lord “to accept” our incense is direct; unlike the *Qolo*, which has us (and the Lord) remember how the Lord accepted the incense of our ancestors. Also, in this instance, Christ is taking on the terminology of the incense itself: “You are the Pleasant Incense and the Sweet Fragrance.”

We also find this theme of “acceptance” of our incense in Psalm 141:2, “Let my prayer be counted as incense before Thee...” (RSVCE). For in the Syriac view, the incense represents our sins; the burning charcoal is God’s Mercy. Our sins are placed upon God’s Mercy and are transformed from foul-smelling sins to sweet-smelling prayers rising before the Throne of God, which we ask Him to accept, along with our “list” of petitions from the *Sedro*. This idea of transformation and our role in helping others be transformed is found in 2 Corinthians 2: 15-16: “For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing, to one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life...” (RSVCE)



“The Hoosoyo: A Tool for Liturgical Catechesis”

Continued from page 9

While the primary function of the *Hoosoyo* is as a “Prayer of Forgiveness,” it is also a liturgical tool for catechesis. How?

Let us return to the *Sedro*, especially the first half. The first half of the *Sedro* has characteristics of an *Anamnesis* (Greek word meaning: “remembrance” or “commemoration”). It is here that we see the Church “instructing” the faithful about the feast being commemorated. The Church “remembers” and in a sense “reminds” God of what wonders He has done in the past and how the “Righteous and Just” have held onto the Catholic Faith, and in the case of the martyrs, even to the point of shedding blood. The actions of these holy ones teach us in our days to be faithful as our ancestors in the past were, so that we may achieve holiness like them. We already saw an example of this in the Stanza of the *Qolo* above,

but this is often much more developed in the *Sedro* itself. The first half of the *Sedro* naturally flows into the second half, which is the “application” of the theme for us and our loved ones, usually with the connecting word of “now.” Much like in a sermon, the preacher will explain how a particular Scripture passage “applies” to our lives, so it is with this “now” portion of the *Sedro*, that we ask the Lord to “apply” His Mercy and Compassion upon us and fulfill the requests of our “list,” for example:

“O Christ our God, You are the True Light Who has come into the world. You are the Way that leads to the Father, and no one comes to the Father except through You. You showed us Your Love when You lived among us, and You told us of the Father’s Compassion and His Love for repentant sinners. You spoke to us of repentance, of mercy, and of living water. Today we meditate on the Parable of the Prodigal Son, who, trusting his father; turned from his life of corruption and repented of his sin.

Now, O Lord, we ask You, with the fragrance of this incense, to have compassion on us, as you have compassion on all sinners. May we humble ourselves before You and repent of our sins. Enlighten us that we may know You. Strengthen us with Your Power, and do not turn Your Face away from us lest the darkness of sin surround us.

Send Your Spirit to us sinners during this forgiving Season of Lent, so that we may return to You seeking forgiveness. Open Your Blessed Arms to us, and bring us close to You, so that we may meet You with joy and find happiness in knowing You. Be our strength and our help, that we may glorify You, Your Father, and Your Holy Spirit, forever. Amen.” (Sunday of the Prodigal Son, *Book of Offering*, pp. 220-221)



This *Sedro* beautifully demonstrates how the *Hoosoyo* in general, and the *Sedro* in particular, is a “tool for liturgical catechesis.” This *Sedro*, taken from the famous “Parable of the Prodigal Son,” reminds us, and our Lord, of key important aspects of it: “repentance” and how the son “turned from his life of corruption” by “trusting his father” and his “mercy.” In the “now” portion of the *Sedro*, we are encouraged to do the same as sons and daughters of our Heavenly Father. Like the son in the parable, we must “humble ourselves before You and repent of our sins.” But notice that we cannot do it on our own. We need help, and so we make our “list” and ask our Lord: “with the fragrance of this incense, to have compassion on us.” And to “enlighten us that we may know You. Strengthen us with Your Power, and do not turn Your Face away from us ...” Finally, this particular *Sedro*, in addition to the normal *Anamnesis* section has an *Epiclesis* (Greek word meaning: “invocation,” normally an invocation of the Holy Spirit). “Send Your Spirit to us sinners ... so that we may return to You seeking forgiveness,” again a reminder to us, that we cannot repent on our own, we need God’s assistance. And, we are finally reminded of how the father of the prodigal son (representing the Heavenly Father) reacted to his son’s return: “Open Your Blessed Arms to us, and bring us close to You ...”

Hopefully this short explanation of the *Hoosoyo* has fostered an appreciation of the *Hoosoyo* as a tool for liturgical catechesis transmitted to us by our spiritual fathers. To learn more about the *Hoosoyo*, especially a bit about its history and origins, read: Amar, Joseph, “The Syriac *Hoosoyo*: A Consideration of Narrative Techniques,” *Diakonia* 22/3 (1988-89) 153-168. ■

Fr. Claude W. Franklin, Jr. is a Maronite Priest of the Eparchy of St. Maron of Brooklyn, and in 2005 received a Licentiate Degree in Liturgy from the Pontifical Oriental Institute in Rome.



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Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

As you recall, last year's Fall Benefit Dinner for the Eparchy was a Virtual Event due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Due to lingering health concerns and restrictions, we believe a virtual event again this year is in everyone's best interest. While I am disappointed that we cannot have an in-person event this year, **I hope you will join us for this very special celebration on Thursday, October 7, 2021 at 7:00pm Eastern Time.**

Each year, our Fall Benefit Event provides important financial support to educate seminarians, help parishes and missions, assist retired priests, and foster a variety of ministries of the Eparchy. As in past years, a portion of this year's proceeds will be dedicated to help the Church in Lebanon and the Middle East – which is now needed more than ever. Out of respect for the serious conditions in Lebanon, this year's Benefit Event will honor those organizations and individuals who have been dedicating their time and resources to help the people of Lebanon during these various crises.

Your participation in this year's Benefit Event will help strengthen our Eparchy in her service to our faithful here, and for the vulnerable in Lebanon. I hope you will consider supporting the Eparchy with a donation in any amount. Or perhaps you might consider joining the Order of Saint Sharbel, if you are not already a member. Please visit www.stmaron.org/eparchial-benefit to make a gift and/or register for this special online Benefit Event, or return the enclosed reply card in the envelope provided.

Thank you for helping us make a difference in the Maronite Church both at home and abroad. I hope to "see" you on October 7. May God bless you for your generosity!

Gratefully yours in Christ,

+ Gregory

+ Gregory John Mansour
Bishop of the Eparchy of Saint Maron



Father Kimes Says “Availability” Is Key *by Brandon Shulleeta*

While priesthood is viewed by many as a sacrifice to God, Father John Paul Kimes says he’s been blessed with far more rewards than sacrifices, including opportunities to have close relationships with people and bring them to God.

“For every sacrifice I’ve had to make, I’ve been rewarded 100 times over,” Father Kimes said. “I’ve been rewarded to be intimately a part of people’s lives, bringing them to Christ, and Christ to them, in moments of tremendous joy and incomprehensible sorrow. And to be invited into people’s lives at those most intimate and vulnerable times is a tremendous blessing.”

Father Kimes, a native of Birmingham, Alabama, was ordained a Maronite Catholic priest in 2000, earned his doctorate in canon law, and became the pastor of St. Sharbel Maronite Catholic Church in Warren, Michigan, in 2003. After about five-and-a-half years as a pastor in Michigan, he was assigned to a role at the Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, where, for

nearly 11 years, he was part of a small team that adjudicated cases of clerical sexual misconduct against minors. “In some cases, that meant stripping clergy of their sacramental authority,” he said.

While it’s a role Father Kimes said he hadn’t anticipated when he first became a priest, it was an important mission, to help protect parishes.

“I likened it to being a garbage man,” Kimes said. “Every society produces garbage, and somebody has to take out the trash. So that was kind of my light-hearted way of describing to people what I did for a living.”

Father Kimes left Rome in late-2019 to take on a new position: professor of canon law at the University of Notre Dame. It’s a position that combines passions with deep roots; both of his parents were faithful Catholics and schoolteachers.

For Kimes, a key to being a good priest is being available, he said. “The priest needs to be with the people, pointing to his own priest, Chorbishop Richard Saad, during his youth as an example of a man who was available for his parishioners. Growing up, not only was his pastor welcomed at the dinner table, he said, it became expected that he’d be there. Father Kimes said he also appreciates the title of “abouna” that parishioners have bestowed upon him, because it means more than its literal definition of “father,” adding that there’s a bond that comes along with the word.


“He is pastor. He’s father. He’s guide,” he said of “abouna.” “But he’s also friend. He is on the same journey that his people are, and his role is to guide them on that journey, to lead them closer to Christ. And he can’t do that if he doesn’t know them and they don’t know him.” ■

Brandon Shulleeta is a journalist and parishioner of St. Anthony’s Maronite Catholic Church in Glen Allen, VA.



St. George Maronite Catholic Church: A Community Nearing 100 Years of History

by Anna Salloum



If you look on the lower left side of a map of Pennsylvania (a state that is almost a perfect rectangle), you will find Uniontown, a place that boasts a couple of fun facts. Uniontown was established on 4 July 1776, which is the same day that the Declaration of Independence was adopted. It is also where the McDonald's Big Mac made its debut. In the late 1800s, the town grew thanks to work opportunities in coal mining as well as the steel industry. These opportunities opened doors for Lebanese immigrants. Many, in true merchant fashion, also came to showcase their goods at the World's Fairs in the beginning of the 1900s. The story of the Maronite Church in Uniontown mirrors that of many others—these newly arrived people needed a place to worship. About 10 men from the small Maronite community decided to mortgage their homes to build the original church, which opened in 1927.

Prior to having a church, worship first took place in a house. By the 1950s, approximately 700 families were in attendance at St. George, most being Lebanese. While this new space was founded and eventually built, they have since relocated to another location, which

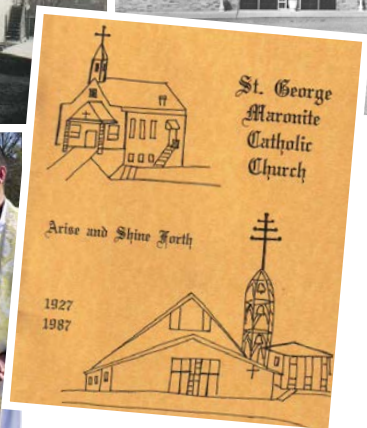
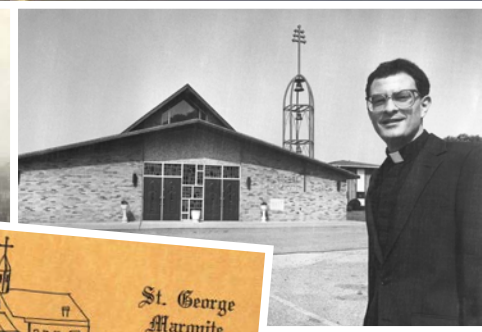
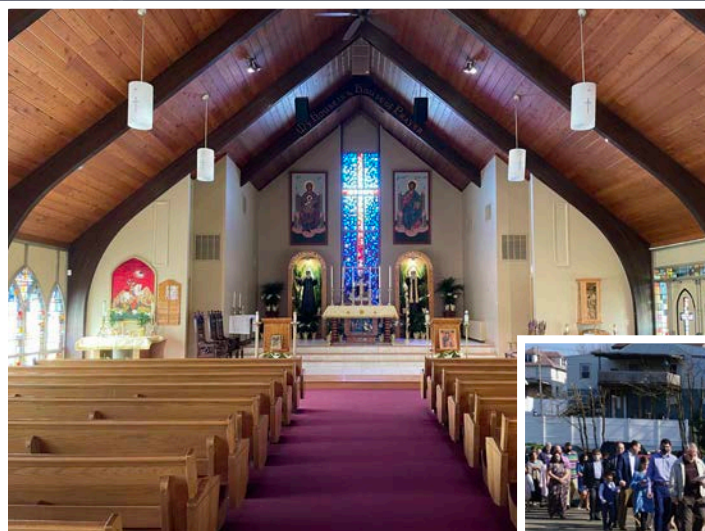
was erected in 1967, on Lebanon Terrace. Mary Macar, a Parish Council member, recalls that the area reminded a lot of early parishioners of where they came from, because of the mountains in the surrounding area. Over 50 years have passed since the newer church was built, but the connections to the past and the original church have not been forgotten.

Like many other parishes, the leadership at St. George is young and fresh. There is a well-known quote that many of us have heard, “God doesn’t give us more than we can handle.” That quote came true to life when Father Aaron Sandbothe was transferred to St. George in March of 2020, just prior to the peak of the COVID pandemic. It was a time of lots of uncertainty, and he was new in a place where pretty much everything was shut down. However, over the past year-and-a-half, Father Aaron has risen to the occasion and worked hard to keep things alive, steady, and running smoothly, with parishioner participation. St. George just enjoyed their parish festival in the beginning of August, and hopefully with the beginning of the new school year, things will get back to as normal as possible.

The parish is blessed to have about 350 families and four subdeacons. In spite of the pandemic, good has come out of the situation. Because St. George was open, lots of new young families came during COVID and have decided to stay with the Church and enjoy the Maronite Liturgy. Of course, Father Aaron is praying for everything to go back to “normal programming,” but due to ever-changing and unforeseen instances with the pandemic, it’s hard to tell what the immediate future holds.

There was a small hiatus during the pandemic with younger parishioners, but he’s excited about their involvement and activities such as bonfires, hiking trips, and even a dedicated Sunday where MYO serves at the Liturgy and sings in the choir. These fun activities enrich the young parishioners in many facets, including spiritual, educational, social and theological.

With St. George’s 100-year anniversary coming up in 2027, Father Aaron has encouraged parishioners to start thinking of how they would like to commemorate the event. This task has been made easier thanks to Mary.



Since 1999, every time there was a parish breakfast, Mary would sit with longtime and elderly parishioners, take notes, write everything down, type it, and keep a digital record. She went through photos, identifying people and later scanning the photos. She also set up a google account where everything could be kept in a cloud-based system and started taking photos of everything. Baptismal records were

even digitized. Recently, the church was remodeled and an archive room was created. The project was so appealing to other parishioners that even the gift shop was given up to make space for displaying so many church artifacts throughout years of history. Through her son in college, Mary was able to speak with a museum expert to assist with archiving and coding. Original prayer books still exist, as well as

kneelers, lights, carrying cases for viaticum, and bulletin archives.

This active involvement is a display of true witness, and is what will take St. George into the next 100 years. We pray for their continued growth!

Anna Salloum is a parishioner of Our Lady of Lebanon in Miami, Florida.

Ordinations

Ordination of Peter Frangie to the Priesthood

On Saturday, 17 July 2021, Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral celebrated the ordination of one of its sons to the priesthood. Bishop Gregory John Mansour ordained Deacon Peter Frangie to the priesthood for the altars of the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn. Father Peter's wife, Marise, sat in the first pew and presented the vestments to the new priest.

The rector of the Cathedral, Father Dominique Hanna, and Chorbishop John Faris were among those who participated in the ordination in the presence of Maronite priests, deacons and subdeacons, Franciscan Friars of the Renewal, and other clergy from the Roman Catholic Church and family, friends, and parishioners.

On Sunday, 18 July (Feast of Saint Sharbel), Father Peter celebrated his first Divine Liturgy at the Cathedral.

One of 12 children, Peter was born in Zagharta, Lebanon. He has bachelor's degrees in both electrical and computer engineering. For 30 years, he taught mathematics at both a high school and college level.

In December 2003, Peter married Marise Frangie. Together they progressed along the spiritual journey that brought them to the day of ordination, when both willingly accepted the sacrifices that will be demanded of them.

Since 2016, he has served as a deacon in the Cathedral. Father Peter Frangie will serve temporarily as parochial



vicar in Saint Anthony Church in Glen Allen, VA, along with its pastor Chorbishop John Faris.

Cathedral rector, Father Dominique wrote, "Even though Peter has been a deacon serving the Cathedral and other parishes for several years, becoming a priest will not only be a new chapter in his life, but a new book all together." Now, Father Peter "will be helping the faithful at risk of his own life," putting the lives of others before his own.

We pray that God gives strength to Father Peter and that his ministry to God's people be fruitful. ■

Monsignor Donald Sawyer Ordained Chorbishop

On 25 July 2021, Our Lady's Maronite Church in Austin, Texas, celebrated the ordination of its pastor as a Maronite Chorbishop by their shepherd. Bishop A. Elias Zaidan chose to confer this honor on Chorbishop Sawyer in light of his four decades of zealous work on behalf of the Maronite community in Austin.

Bishop Joe Stephen Vásquez of the Diocese of Austin, Bishop Michael J. Sis of the Diocese of San Angelo and Chorbishop Anthony Spinosa, Rector of the Basilica of the National Shrine of Our Lady of Lebanon, were in the sanctuary with Bishop Elias.

Latin, Maronite, and Byzantine clergy participated in the celebration along with the parishioners of Our Lady's Church.

In addition to his ministry of pastor, Chorbishop Sawyer is also the Director of Vocations for the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon.



Our Lady's Church in Austin is a living testimony to the attraction of the Syriac-Maronite tradition to an ethnically diverse community. Under the loving and steady leadership of Chorbishop Sawyer, the Maronite community in Austin has reached out to create possibly the most pluralistic worshipping community of the Maronite Church in America. ■



NAM SCHOLARSHIPS

2021 RECIPIENTS

Graduating High School Senior Scholarships



Tony Samaha
St. Elias, Birmingham, AL
John A. Solomon



Georgina Younes
St. Theresa, Brockton, MA
John A. Solomon



Hannah Sutton
St. George, Uniontown, PA
Massabki Brothers



Alisson Abourjeili
Our Lady of Lebanon, Waterbury, CT.
Naomi & Paul Kassouf



Benjamin Ferris
St. Elias, Birmingham, AL
Naomi & Paul Kassouf



Sarah Shaia
St. Anthony's, Richmond, VA
Bouna sharbel

Undergraduate & Graduate Scholarships



Brett George
St. Anthony's, Lawrence, MA
Thomas & Jennie Ayooob



Tamara Alchoufete
Our Lady of Victory, Pittsburgh, PA
Gilbert Chagoury-Undergrad



Carmen Moradian
St. Maron, Youngstown, OH
Gilbert Chagoury-Graduate

Response of Caritas Lebanon to Beirut Explosion

In response to the aftermath of the explosion in the port of Beirut, Caritas Lebanon immediately deployed field teams in the affected areas, through centers in Rmeil and Achrafieh to provide first aid on site, triage the injured based on the gravity of their injuries and transported them to nearby hospitals. Other field teams were also deployed to help clean shelters, centers and HQ and assist the most vulnerable with cleaning their homes from broken glass, shattered doors and internal damage.

To address the impact of the explosion, Caritas Lebanon has developed a multi-sectoral response including:

Health; Basic Assistance; Rehabilitation of shelters; Protection (Emergency Cash Assistance).

By 19 July 2021, Caritas Lebanon **provided assistance to 361,788 individuals** in Beirut and its suburbs including, but not limited to, the following services:

- 3,708 hygiene kits.
- 7,982 food kits distributed to Households.
- 245,828 hot meals have been distributed to those in need.
- 1,541 individuals were provided with psychological first aid.
- 509 injured provided with Medical First Aid.
- 72,764 medicines distributed to patients.
- 7,710 medical consultations.
- 1,725 houses assessed for damage.
- 1,300 houses have been renovated.

Some of the above services were under projects and funded by international and national donors, and the rest was in-kind donations. ■



The Order of Saint Sharbel New Members

ANNUAL

BEN & Wafa RIVERA | *Our Lady's Parish* | Austin, TX
REVEREND MICHAEL JOHNSON | *Nativity of Our Lord Church*
| Orchard Park, NY

PERPETUAL

SAMIR HAIKAL | *St. Maron Church* | Cleveland, OH
LILES STEPHEN | *St. Elias Church* | Birmingham, AL
JEANNE BOOHAKER | *St. Elias Church* | Birmingham, AL
KENNETH & SUHA VARGAS | *Our Lady's Parish* | Austin, TX

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



Eternal rest grant to them, O Lord.

THOMAS J. GEORGE

Thomas J. George, the father of Subdeacon Mallard T. George, of St. George Church in Uniontown, PA, passed away on 2 August 2021, at the age of 95.

His parents, beloved wife Lorraine (Donato) George, a brother, Elias "Eli" and his wife Mabel, and a sister, Macey, preceded him in death.

Left to cherish his memory are three sons, Subdeacon Mallard T. George and wife Donna, Thomas F. George and wife Andrea, and Dr. Michael P. George and wife Paula; grandchildren, Lauren and husband Shawn Clemmer, Thomas, Megan, Kendall and Erin; and great granddaughter, Mallory.

The Divine Liturgy for the Faithful Departed was celebrated on 6 August.

Bishop Gregory joins the clergy, religious and faithful of the Eparchy of Saint Maron in offering condolences to Subdeacon Mallard and his family. May God give eternal rest to His servant, Thomas.



National MYA News



Every Maronite parish across the country has its own pandemic story. The journey of many local MYA groups that have stayed connected through 2020 and others that have struggled to keep their group together forms part of those stories. The National MYA Board is made up of regional representatives, and we worked throughout 2020 and 2021 to keep MYA members active not only at their local parish, but on a national level. Our monthly Zoom events were highly attended and consisted of discussions with the bishops, board members, and guest speakers. We covered topics from relativism to the “feminine genius,” and even Pope Francis’ letter to the youth and young adults. MYA members were provided the rare opportunity to ask tough questions to the leaders of our church, and they were answered in bountiful discussion from the comfort of home!

As we look ahead, we look forward to bringing MYA members to Chicago, Illinois, for our annual conference. We will be focusing on giving attendees the tools to create, maintain and sustain a local MYA group. Our speaker, Chris Padgett, is a graduate from Franciscan University and is renowned in guiding youth and young adults in faith-filled leadership. We look forward to his energizing talks and discussion groups.

The National MYA board has planned several other activities for the conference. Maronite Mingle is an evening networking event with a twist! We aim to provide the time and space for the attendees to meet each other on a deeper level. This conference is infused with our faith. We are honored to have both Bishop Gregory and Bishop Elias attending the conference and presenting, as well as being available throughout the whole weekend. With time to partake in confession and prayer, we hope that the young adults take this weekend as a chance to step back from the rush and enjoy what our schedule and the beautiful campus has to offer.

The conference will be held at the University of St. Mary of the Lake. It is the major seminary and Graduate School of Theology for the Latin Archdiocese of Chicago. With walking/hiking paths along the water, soccer fields and an outdoor chapel, the site for this year’s conference is wonderful for reflection and relaxation. We are looking forward to seeing many new faces and returning faces this year at our 16th annual Maronite MYA conference! Let’s become stronger leaders together! ■





Effective Ways You Can Help Your Eparchy!

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

Legacy Giving

This is a creative way to support the Church. Legacy Giving can involve contributing through your *will*, *insurance policy*, or *retirement assets*.

You can get a tax deduction today and provide yourself with a steady source of income in future years through a *charitable trust*.

How to Remember Your Church in Your Will

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

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

Suggested wording for a bequest to the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon of Los Angeles:

"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 \$_____]."

Tax-Smart Giving of Appreciated Stock or other Assets

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.

Gifts of other *appreciated assets* such as land, antiques, and homes, can also be utilized as potential gifts with valuable tax benefits.

Gifts of these assets should be considered on a case-by-case basis.

For more information on any of these options, please contact:

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

2021 National Maronite Youth Days

Have you ever sat down to enjoy a much-anticipated meal at a restaurant, only to find that the dish you ordered was lacking flavor and seasoning? If only it had a little bit more salt, how delicious it would have been! Now, when Jesus tells his followers that they are the “salt of the earth” and “light of the world,” it’s likely he wasn’t referring to a piece of steak, but this definitely helps drive home the main theme of the 2021 National Maronite Youth Days, hosted by the National MYO Office on 26-27 June.

The pandemic prevented a typical in-person event; instead, it was live-streamed via our social media platforms, under the name: “SNL: Salt n’ Light,” based on Matthew 5:13-15. This event had global participation, as it was also being streamed by *Bkerke Jeune*, the Maronite Patriarchal Youth Office. The live-streamed event received thousands of views and hundreds of comments and shares! Though the event itself and its attendees were virtual, the event was presented by the National MYO Board who produced the broadcast at St. Maron Church in Youngstown, OH.

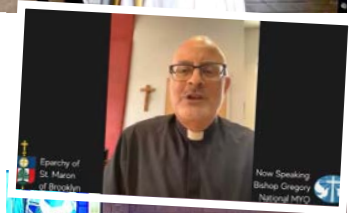
The highlight of the first day was a talk-show interview with guest John Beaulieu, who focused on the meaning of being Salt and Light as a young Catholic in today’s world, providing practical ways to become a “saltier” witness in society. The day continued with a message to the youth from Bishop Elias Zaidan and wrapped up with a vocational discernment panel. This panel included vocational testimonies from a seminarian, religious sister, and a lay married couple.

The second day’s guest was Landis Erwin, who shared a moving testimony of her own calling from God to convert her soul and become salt and light in this world. Bishop Gregory Mansour delivered a message to the youth before the cameras turned to two great presentations on *Christian Relationships & Friendships* and *Why the Church?* The National Board concluded the event with a procession through St. Maron Church, dramatizing the disciples’ walk with the Risen Lord, along the road to Emmaus ending with a period of prayer and reflection.

We give thanks to God for such a remarkable event and the National MYO Board looks forward to the 2022 National Maronite Youth Days in-person!

Follow us on Social Media

National MYO: Facebook, Snapchat, Twitter, and TikTok! @maroniteyouth
Eparchy of OLOL MYO: Facebook @ololeparchy.myo and Instagram @olol_myo
Eparchy of St. Maron Office of Youth & Young Adults: Facebook @officemyya and Instagram @office_myya



Parish News

BIRMINGHAM, ALABAMA

Retirement Banquet for Chorbishop Richard Saad

by Norman Bolus

On Saturday, 24 July, over 250 parishioners of St. Elias Church in Birmingham, Alabama, came together for a delayed banquet to honor the January 2021 retirement of Chorbishop Richard Saad as pastor of the parish. The steak dinner with all the trimmings was specifically designed to highlight Chorbishop Richard's ministry at St. Elias, which spanned over 49 years. As the St. Elias MYO served dinner, a program was presented, which consisted of a video tribute honoring Chorbishop Richard with special recognition of his involvement in delivering the Holy Mysteries to the parish over his tenure. As each Holy Mystery was highlighted, attendees to the banquet rose with a lighted candle to visually display those who had received each mystery by his hand. Chorbishop Saad performed an estimated 785 Baptisms and Chrismations, 401 Holy Crownings, and 785 funerals over the years. The program concluded with champagne toasts honoring the dedication he has had to the parish over the years. The Chorbishop thanked everyone for all they had done. ■

Vacation Bible School

by Beverly Kimes

St. Elias Church in Birmingham, Alabama, was blessed to be able to host Vacation Bible School again this summer after taking off last year due to the pandemic. The theme of the program was *Treasured: Discovering You're Priceless to God*. Each day focused on a different theme starting with *God knows you*. Other themes were *God hears you*, *God comforts you*, *God forgives you* and *God chooses you*. Kathleen Boehme Plott assisted in planning the program and served as Arts and Crafts teacher. Katharine Henley served as Bible Studies teacher, Lily Henley supervised and coordinated recreation time, Janice Toner coordinated snacks and prepared our Friday lunch. Beverly Kimes served as religious education coordinator for the event.

Over 30 children (ages 3-grade 6) from the parish and the neighborhood participated in the program. Parents and members of the Jr. MYO and MYO served as helpers for the teachers. We were fortunate that our program was held during the week of the feasts of two great saints: St. Elias and St. Sharbel.

Each day began with an opening session where Fr. Peter Zogbi introduced the theme of the day and shared personal stories with the children who attentively listened. He also shared information about our patron saint, St. Elias on his feast day. Additionally, Fr. Peter assisted with the closing session each day as well as visiting the classes. The children were excited to have him in their classes and were eager to answer the questions he posed to them about their learning.

As a special treat, our choir director, Michael Harrison, was available to facilitate the music session for each group daily. This year, we chose to focus on the Maronite hymns that were sung during our closing liturgy on Friday, which was the feast of St. Sharbel. The children's singing made our liturgy even more special than usual, and Fr. Peter commented on how hearing them sing energized him. After liturgy, parents and guests were invited to share lunch with the children in the parish hall. Our parish is grateful to all who volunteered to make Vacation Bible School a memorable experience for our children this year. ■



CHARLOTTE, NORTH CAROLINA

Father's Day

Father Rodolph Wakim celebrated the Father's Day liturgy on 20 June 2021, at St. Stephen Maronite Church in Charlotte, North Carolina. Father Wakim spoke about the commitment, loyalty, faith, and sacrifices that fathers make for the benefit and growth of their families. He referred to St. Joseph as a loving and holy man who quietly served God and his own family. Father Wakim asked all fathers, grandfathers, godfathers, and future fathers to gather in front of the altar. He honored them with prayers and a special blessing for their devotion to God and family.

As a token of appreciation and respect, each father attending liturgy received a "Great Father" Coffee Mug and a Father's Prayer Card to commemorate the occasion. After liturgy, light refreshments were served for all to enjoy. This was a great opportunity for parishioners to socialize and plan upcoming church events. ■



LEWISVILLE, TEXAS

Graduates

by Michael Pollock



Fr. Assaad ElBashaa, the pastor of Our Lady of Lebanon in Lewisville, Texas, celebrated a Liturgy on 27 June, the Feast of Saints Peter and Paul, for the high school graduates of the parish: Matthew Boulos, George El-Khoury, Michael Mattie, Nanya Moore, Lillian O'Flaherty, Steven Wood, and Tony Yamouni. Father ElBashaa blessed the graduates at the end of his homily and told them to take the wisdom of Saint Paul and the zeal of Saint Peter as they seek a higher education to make their parents and the parish proud. After liturgy, our pastor blessed the graduates with holy water and invoked St. Michael the Archangel's intercession for them.

This year, our parish gave scholarships to our graduates to assist them financially. This is the second year that we have awarded scholarships to our graduates. May the Lord continue to bless them and guide them as they pursue a higher education. ■

Parish News

CLINTON TOWNSHIP, MICHIGAN

Honoring Graduates

by Khouloud Maroun-Yammine

On the weekend of 12-13 June, St. Sharbel Church, Clinton Township, Michigan, offered its masses in honor of the community's graduates. Towards the end of the masses, graduates were invited to come to the altar and introduce themselves and what university they will be attending. Additionally, each graduate received a papal blessing in the form of a certificate. Finally, a photo was taken with all graduates and Chorbishop Alfred Badawi. Congratulations to all graduates. May God be with you always! ■



by Rita Maroun-Yammine

On Friday, 18 June, the 2nd annual MYO Graduation Ceremony was held for the high school graduates of St. Sharbel Church, Clinton Township, Michigan, in the banquet hall of the parish. The graduates received sashes commending not just their completion of high school, but also their steadfast dedication to the MYO. Additionally, graduates were honored as they were given their certificates of MYO achievement by having their colleges, senior quotes, reflections on God's presence in their lives, and favorite Bible verse announced. Next, speeches were given by a variety of keynote speakers, including Chorbishop Alfred Badawi, Deacon Michael Magyar, MYO Advisors, graduates, and MYO Executive Board members. After a blessing and conclusion, both high school and college graduates from the community, including MYO Advisors and E-board members, were treated to a lovely dinner at California Pizza Kitchen, a fitting way to celebrate our graduates. God bless all our graduates! ■



FAIRLAWN, OHIO

Retirement of Monsignor Bill Bonzcewski

by Rick Maroon

The priestly vocation is a profound and vital dedication to the life of the church. To answer the call to the priesthood, a man must put aside earthly comforts and give his life toward shepherding God's people. The Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon has been blessed with many such priests who illuminate our daily life with God's saving message.

It was an honor for the community of Our Lady of the Cedars of Mount Lebanon in Fairlawn, Ohio, to celebrate the 45th Anniversary to the Priesthood and Retirement of our beloved pastor Reverend Monsignor William Bonzcewski.

Monsignor Bill served as pastor of Our Lady of the Cedars of Mount Lebanon for the past nine years. Hailing from Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, Monsignor dreamed about serving the Lord as a priest from the time he was a very young child. He graduated from the seminary in 1976 and served Maronite parishes in Ohio, West Virginia, and Utah. In his tenure, Monsignor was rector at Our Lady of Lebanon Shrine in North Jackson, Ohio.

Monsignor's priestly devotion is unparalleled and anyone who encounters him knows that his love for the Lord is pervasive and enduring. Through his rich prayer life, Monsignor held a special devotion to St. Therese the Little Flower and every year prepared a special novena to honor her feast day. His every word and deed is designed to fulfill his mission as priest and servant. In his downtime, Monsignor enjoys a good laugh at *The Three Stooges* while delighting in his favorite dessert—ice cream!



The community of Our Lady of the Cedars of Mount Lebanon celebrated Ramsho on Saturday 29 May with Bishop Elias Zaidan. A dinner followed for Monsignor, his brother priests, and other clergy. On Sunday 30 May, Bishop Elias concelebrated with Monsignor Bill the liturgy for Trinity Sunday. After liturgy, the bishop, Monsignor Bill, his family, the Antonine Sisters, local clergy, and many friends joined the parish family for a Banquet featuring many of our Lebanese delicacies and ending with delicious pastries and, of course, a personal ice-cream cake for Monsignor Bill. It was a wonderful opportunity to share our best wishes to Monsignor Bill as he begins this new chapter in his life as chaplain at The Antonine Village in North Jackson, Ohio.

God bless you Monsignor Bill—we love you and will keep you in our thoughts and prayers always! ■

MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA

First Communion

Anthony Khouri, Mia Kabalan, Simon Farah, Elena Khoury, Peter Favorite, Toni Abou Mourad, Alex Bedros, John Dahdah, Saif Dahdal, and Elizabeth Dahdal (not pictured). ■



Parish News

PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA

Pastoral Visit

St. Maron's Church in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, sits a mere 1.5 miles from Independence Hall where the Declaration of Independence was signed on 4 July 1776. The essence of that document, which declared that all men are created equal, was the precursor of the Constitution of the United States. The Constitution promises freedom for religious worship of one's choosing ... a gift denied to so many brothers and sisters in Lebanon and the entire Middle East.

In keeping with the religious meaning of this country's important annual celebration, St. Maron's gathered for the 4 July liturgy. This was the largest attendance since the COVID restrictions of March 2020. The beautiful voices of the choir welcomed Bishop Gregory Mansour on his pastoral visit to the parish. Bishop Gregory concelebrated the liturgy with Fr. Andrewos El Tabchi (pastor), Fr. Vincent Farhat, and Fr. David Fisher. All four priests had served or continue to serve St. Maron's during their ministries. In his homily, Bishop Gregory addressed the importance of individual freedoms and that choice of worship should be a priority around the world. Following liturgy, the parishioners were invited to a brunch in the church hall. After a lengthy hiatus due to the pandemic, church members enjoyed the camaraderie and fellowship. Bishop Gregory offered a blessing and led the faithful in a prayer for America singing "America, the Beautiful." ■



ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI

Medal of St. Maron

The Medal of Saint Maron was bestowed on five couples on Sunday, 8 August, at St. Raymond Maronite Cathedral. On behalf of the Patriarch, Bishop A. Elias Zaidan presented the medal to Joseph and Diana Butrus, Dr. Abraham and Rita Hawatmeh, Ameal and Gerri Nassif, John and Margaret Simon and Dr. Edmond and Rima Cabbabe (they were not present due to travel and will be presented the medal at a later date). The honor was granted by His Beatitude Patriarch Bechara Rai for their on-going dedication to the Maronite Church. The couples have been members of the parish for many decades and have been involved in various activities over the years. The bishop congratulated them for their many good works and support of the local parish and eparchial community. ■



GLEN ALLEN VIRGINIA

Cornhole Tournament or the Kingdom of God?

"We're always looking for signs of the Kingdom of God here on Earth. I think you saw a glimpse of it during the MYA Cornhole tournament last week. People were so happy to be together, having fun, all in the name of bringing our church community back to life after so much time in isolation. I guarantee people looking at that from the outside would say, 'I want to be a part of something so beautiful.'"

— Chorbishop Faris



The MYA of St. Anthony Church in Glen Allen, VA, held its 1st Annual Cornhole Tournament on Sunday 8 August. Thirty-seven teams of two competed for the title of Cornhole Champions. Stephen Shibley, Sr. and Chaz Heng eventually bested the field. But the real story was how the parishioners of St. Anthony came together to have fun, support each other, enjoy friendly competition, and breathe new life into a community that had laid dormant for far too long.

As successful as the event was, many of those watching said they hope to join in the fun next year. Special thanks goes out to the entire MYA for bringing this event to life, especially to Alexa Shulleeta, the event organizer, and Christopher Maynes and his concession stand crew for offering pulled pork BBQ sandwiches, loaded tots, cheeseburgers, snow cones and, of course, corn dogs, throughout the day. ■

WEST COVINA, CALIFORNIA

First Communions

by Layla Tahan

Saint Jude Maronite Church in West Covina, California, held three First Communion celebrations during the year 2020-2021. The first celebration took place outdoors on the church patio on 21 November 2020. The two other celebrations were held inside the church on 22 May 2021 in two separate ceremonies. Special thanks to Father Ramsine Hage, Pastor, and his dedicated staff for their time and efforts to keep religious education going virtually during a challenging and difficult time. ■



Parish News

FALL RIVER, MASSACHUSETTS

MYA Fellowship

On Sunday, 1 August, 30 young adults gathered at St. Anthony of the Desert Church in Fall River, Massachusetts, for an afternoon of prayer and fellowship. Monsignor James Root hosted the successful event sponsored by the MYA committee members of the Eparchy of St. Maron. All young adults attending the function were from Maronite backgrounds representing six churches in the region including: St. Anthony of the Desert (Fall River, MA), St. Anthony (Lawrence, MA), St. Theresa (Brockton, MA), St. Mary's (Mansfield, OH), Our Lady of the Cedars of Lebanon (Jamaica Plain, MA) and St. Mary Immaculate Conception Melkite (Boston, MA).

The day began with a testimony of faith, praying the rosary, adoration, and confessions offered by Msgr. Root and Father Vincent Farhat, from Our Lady of Purgatory Church in New Bedford, MA. The young adults enjoyed Catholic trivia, dinner, and dancing the *dabke*. The MYA members in the New England area are planning to organize another get-together on 3 October at a local parish in the Boston area. The young adults felt that their Maronite faith and upbringing initiated a common religious bond and friendship.

Bible Camp

A Light of Life (LOL) Maronite Bible Camp for children (ages 5-12) was offered at Saint Anthony of the Desert parish in Fall River, Massachusetts, during the week of 2-6 August. The Maronite Servants of Christ the Light hosted the Bible Camp with 50 children attending. Volunteers from the MYO and MYA groups assisted the Sisters in various activities and focused on the Ten Commandments. The children also participated in prayer, crafts, bible stories, lessons, videos, games,



music, skits, food, *dabke* lessons and more. Everyone thanked Msgr. James Root for his generous hospitality. Msgr. Jim offered a liturgy for the children and parents, followed by an awesome lunch and bouncy house, ensuring a fun and memorable final day of camp. ■



WILKES-BARRE, PENNSYLVANIA

Rededication of Shrine

On Sunday, 18 July, Fr. Adib Salameh, parishioners and friends of St. Anthony and St. George Maronite Church in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, celebrated the Feast of St. Sharbel and the dedication of a new shrine to the saint. The beautifully redesigned area included a weather resistant pergola to protect the statue of St. Sharbel. A relic of St. Sharbel was present for the dedication and blessing of the shrine. Following the dedication, all were invited to a "Coffee Hour and Buffet" in the parish hall sponsored by The Altar & Rosary Society. ■

UNIONTOWN, PENNSYLVANIA

Vacation Bible School

by Dr. Mabel George Howard

Saint George Maronite Church in Uniontown, Pennsylvania, held their **Vacation Bible School (VBS)** on 20 July 2021. This year's theme, "Celebrating Our Maronite Traditions," was an eclectic approach to exploring our Maronite faith and Middle Eastern culture. Twenty-five children and young adults (elementary – secondary) and nine volunteers participated in the VBS activities.

The VBS program led the children through several learning stations including:

FAITH – Father Aaron Sandbothe began the day with a group prayer. He spoke about giving thanks to God for their faith and families and expressed that one of the best ways to show love for God is through song. Father Aaron led the group in singing an ancient Syriac hymn and discussing its religious meaning.

FOOD – With "hands-on experience," church volunteers taught the children to prepare an impressive variety of traditional Lebanese ethnic delicacies such as: tabbouli, zalabia, maamoul, grape leaves, laban, mujadara, lubia, and hummus.

FAMILY – Parents and children completed a scavenger hunt in the parish archive to learn more about St. George Church, its people, and their heritage. Afterwards, everyone attended liturgy together. In his homily, Father Aaron talked about Syriac saints, and he stressed the fact that important lessons are learned from the saints. The VBS culminated with a delicious Middle Eastern dinner "fit for a king, a queen, or even a Maronite saint!"



Church Festival

Throngs of patrons enjoying a variety of ethnic foods, games, and entertainment described the joyful atmosphere at the 25th annual **St. George Church Festival** in Uniontown, Pennsylvania, held on 7-8 August 2021. This was an opportunity for the parish family and members of the wider community to celebrate Uniontown's Middle Eastern heritage. The St. George Ladies Guild and Altar & Rosary Society prepared delicious traditional delights including many dishes dear to the hearts of the people of Uniontown. The festival also featured a basket raffle, cash prize winnings, kids' games, food truck treats, and a Night at the Races.

All church groups and organizations worked cooperatively to make this event a great success. This collaborative effort reaffirmed a commitment to God and a continual growth of the parish community. St. George parish is truly blessed with volunteers who worked diligently to make this festival a proud and beautiful reflection of the church and Maronite faith. The primary goal at St. George was to develop and strengthen spiritual and social bonds among family, friends, and parishioners for the common good of their church and Lebanese ancestry. ■

Parish News

UTICA, NEW YORK Statue Dedication

On 17 July the parishioners of St. Louis Gonzaga Church in Utica, NY dedicated a statue of Our Lady of Mount Carmel at the 4PM Mass. Father Boutros El Hachem and Deacon Peter Hobaica officiated and blessed the statue of Our Lady to be re-erected on the church grounds. The statue was donated in memory of Mary Raya by her family to replace a statue of Our Lady of Mount Carmel originally erected in 1995 which fell into disrepair. The feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel was July 16 which happens to be the birth date of Mary Raya. Mary was very dedicated to the Blessed Mother and in her lifetime of 92 years, she shared over 400 statues of Our Lady with clergy, family, friends and strangers. Mary's life was devoted to God and His Mother and through her acts of kindness and generosity she prayed that the Blessed Mother would accompany her on her journey to eternal life.



Feast of Saint Sharbel



On Sunday, 18 July, St. Louis Gonzaga Church celebrated the feast of Saint Sharbel in a special way. Through the generosity of Amelia Jabour our parish now has a first class relic of Saint Sharbel, a piece of his bone. Amelia donated the relic in memory of her brother William Jabour. Fr. Boutros expressed his appreciation to Amelia and her family. May the prayers of St. Sharbel be with us.

Taste of Lebanon Drive-Thru

Over two beautiful weather days — the weekend of 30-31 July — St. Louis Gonzaga parish hosted their annual "Taste of Lebanon" food festival. Due to the pandemic, this year and last were drive-thru events. A steady flow of patrons in cars were treated to an array of mouthwatering Lebanese culinary cuisine as well as delicious homemade sweets. Back by popular demand were two custom T-shirts! If anyone is interested in supporting the parish, they are available for purchase online at <https://saint-louis-gonzaga-church.square.site/>. Because of generous sponsors, donors, volunteers, supporters and parishioners, the event was a huge success. ■



MIAMI, FLORIDA Parish Events

The months of May and June 2021 brought many blessings to Our Lady of Lebanon Church in Miami, Florida. Divine liturgies were celebrated by Fr. Bassam Saade and Subdeacon Joseph Lahoud to pay tribute to all mothers and fathers in the parish. On Mother's Day (9 May), mothers, grandmothers, aunts, and those representing all mother figures, were honored at a luncheon for the caring and love that they give to their families and church. Each mom was presented with a bouquet of roses in appreciation for their support. On Father's Day (20 June), fathers, grandfathers, uncles, and all father figures, were recognized at a luncheon.

The children surprised their dads with personally decorated gifts. Also, Mr. Nabil Ashar, a prominent parishioner, received the Silver Massabki Award. Mr. Ashar has been involved in every aspect of the church's growth, and his experience and integrity have helped guide Our Lady of Lebanon parish. With admiration and respect, Mr. Ashar was presented with the Silver Massabki Plaque. ■



2021 First Communion

Ashley Alcalá, Angelo Alcalá, Camila Abou Attieh, Nicole Diaz, Antonella Diaz, Enzo Espinoza, George Anthony Saliba, Keira Torres, John Paul Wehbe

FAYETTEVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA

Vacation Bible School



Over 35 children participated in St. Michael the Archangel's Summer Vacation Bible School (VBS) from 19-23 July, in Fayetteville, North Carolina. Since this was the first VBS at St. Michael Church in many years, the parishioners worked together donating their "time, treasure, and talent" to organize a wonderful event for the youth. Throughout the week, the children "Explored the World with St. Maron" as they explored different countries, learning about the Maronite Church. They discovered numerous Shrines to the Mother of God including: Lebanon (Our Lady of Lebanon), Mexico (Our Lady of Guadalupe), Vietnam (Our Lady of La Vang), France (Our Lady of Lourdes), Ireland (Our Lady of Knock), Portugal (Our Lady of Fatima), Rwanda (Our Lady of Kibeho), and Brazil (Our Lady of Aparecida).

Each day, Fr. Paul Damien celebrated the Divine Liturgy at 9:00 a.m. followed by songs, religious lessons, crafts, games, and delicious food. The children

learned to pray the "Glory Be" in Syriac and sing songs to the Virgin Mary. They constructed a grotto for Our Lady of Lourdes and played pin Our Lady of Lebanon on the mountaintop. They cooked foods from various countries, learned to make rosaries, paper flowers, and many more activities.

Bible School was educational, spiritual, and fun for the children and adult volunteers including the Ladies Guild, Knights of Columbus, MYO, and parish Religious Education Teachers. Many of the children were inspired enough to ask if they could serve a daily liturgy, make more rosaries, and continue learning the Syriac language.

Order of St. Sharbel

On 1 August, Ray Miller, a longtime member of St. Michael's Church in Fayetteville, North Carolina, was inducted into the Order of St. Sharbel by Father Paul Damien during the Divine Liturgy. Parishioners describe Ray as a strong leader in the parish providing support in numerous areas including: maintaining church grounds, making repairs inside and outside of the church, and serving as sacristan for over 20 years. Ray also represents the parish by participating on the Board of "Operation Inasmuch," a local outreach center for the homeless in Fayetteville. Ray exemplifies the parish's overall dedication to encouraging vocations to the priesthood and religious life. ■



LAWRENCE, MASSACHUSETTS

Summer Bible Camp

For the first time, the Light of Light (LOL) Bible Camp was hosted at Saint Anthony Church in Lawrence, Massachusetts. The Maronite Servants of Christ the Light held the four-day Bible Camp for youth (ages 5-12) during the week of 19 July 2021. The camp was filled with religious activities, outside games, singing, and dancing. By the end of the week, each group felt more engaged and excited about their Maronite Faith. A "thank you" was extended to all participants, volunteers, and the Maronite Servants of Christ the Light for making this a wonderful experience for the youths of the parish. The children are looking forward to next year's program. ■



Sharing Hope—One Medal at a Time

by Dr. Anne Borik

When I was asked how I am a witness to Christ in my everyday life, I decided to share what has become my personal ministry of giving out miraculous medals to strangers. Since I started doing this a few years ago, I have accumulated hundreds of stories of how this simple gesture has revealed God's grace in a very profound and almost mystical way to those who receive it.

What is most profound in those who willingly accept the miraculous medal is that they feel it was meant for them at that moment, which gives them hope. Whether I am driving thru Starbucks or at the supermarket or with a waiter in a restaurant, people tell me they experience chills all over their body or they feel like crying at that moment. My response is that this is not a good luck charm, but rather a blessing from the Lord. You can't see it but you certainly can feel it.

The following three examples are all true stories that I have experienced in my everyday witness to Christ and His Mother.

1. When I asked a worker in a supermarket where to find something, a friendly lady standing nearby directed me there. As a gesture of thanks, I handed her a miraculous medal. She was very excited to receive it and actually hugged me. As I was leaving, I ran into her again and she remarked how happy she was to get that medal. She told me that she found the Lord and was going to a non-denominational Christian church, but was Catholic. I told her that this is a sign to come back.



She responded, "I know." She left the church because she felt there was not enough 'bible stuff'. I told her that the whole Mass is the Bible and the rosary is the Bible on beads and the most important thing is the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist! She said that her heart was racing and she felt goose bumps all over her body and that she knew this to be a sign to come back to the Catholic Church. I asked her name and she said it was Mary. I just smiled and she said, "I know, I know!"

2. I met a young waiter at a restaurant who was very personable. After learning that his name was Mexican, I placed a miraculous medal on the table and asked if he knew who it was. He answered correctly and I said it was for him. He was so excited to receive it and kept thanking me. I told him how much Jesus loves us. He literally dropped to his knees next to the table, bowed his head and prayed. He said, "You will never know how much this means to me. I have been waiting to get back to church." He gestured to his pocket and said he will keep this with him always and is going on a trip and will keep it in his pocket. I told him how important it is to turn back to Jesus and he kept agreeing and teared up. He was so

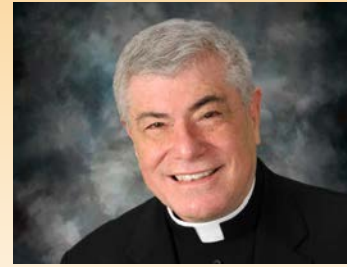
very thankful and even offered free desert but we graciously declined.

3. One day, I gave a miraculous medal to the cashier at the supermarket and asked her if she was Catholic and if she knew what this was? She replied, "I know what it is and it's well received. Thank you very much." The next time I saw her, she told me that she was homeless and had been living out of her car, but felt like doors began to open for her since she received that medal. She said, "I keep it in a special place so I don't lose it." I told her that nothing is impossible for God. As I was talking, she said that every hair on her body was standing up. That same day, I brought her a rope so she could wear the medal.

A few weeks later, I saw her again and she looked like a different person. She had makeup on and looked great. She leaned over and said, "I haven't taken it off since you gave it to me. I have my own place now and I believe my prayers are being answered . . . and just the other day a customer saw my medal and asked me to pray for her because she was struggling."

As Catholics, it is our responsibility and our joy to be witnesses to Christ in our everyday life. Let us pray for the courage to share the Gospel of hope, not optimism, so that more people might experience those invisible yet profound mystical moments powered by the Holy Spirit. For St. Paul writes, "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit" (Romans 15:13) ■

From the Editor



When we say that people “showed their true colors,” we mean to say that these people revealed who they really were. Up to that time, we thought we knew them, but then on this one occasion—either good or bad—they let us know who they really are.

I saw a brief snippet on the internet which shows a young man who found a money clip with money on the sidewalk leading to someone’s front door. He didn’t know that he was being recorded when he picked up the money, slid it through the mail slot, rang the doorbell and walked away. On that occasion, this young man showed his true colors: he is an honest man, a man of integrity. Had he pocketed the money clip, well, again we would have seen his true colors.

On 6 August, the Church celebrated the Feast of the Transfiguration. We are not completely sure where the event took place; the Gospel writers say that Jesus led Peter, James and John up a high mountain after a six-day walk. Since the third century, many Christians believed Mount Tabor to be the site. There are many indications that this is the place. There has been a church there on the site since the fourth century.

In any case, on a high mountain, Jesus was transfigured: his clothes became whiter than any bleacher could make them. The apostles saw him in his glory. The prophet Elijah, representing the prophets, and Moses, representing the Law, appeared, and Jesus began to talk to them. Peter, apparently wanting never to leave the gathering, suggested that they build

three shelters for Jesus, Moses and Elijah and just stay there. And then a voice sounded, “This is my Son, the Beloved, Listen to him.”

Explanations of this Gospel passage usually—and rightly—interpret the event as Jesus manifesting the glory of his divinity. This is true, but I would like to look at things a little differently. The event on Mt. Tabor is manifesting not only Jesus, but also revealing our true colors, at least the glorious future he has planned for us. The glorious state of Jesus can be ours!

On 14 September, we celebrate the Feast of the Cross. It is on the Cross that Jesus showed His true colors and revealed how much he loves us. The Son of God loved us so much that he was willing to accept pain and death so that we might live. On Mt. Tabor, we see who we can be. On Golgotha, we see how much he loves us.

So, here is my question to you: which is a greater challenge to believe: that we can be pure and good and shining or that God hung humiliated on the Cross. Many of us feel guilty about the past and somewhat hopeless about a glorious future. After where we have been and what we have done, how can we ever share in such glory?

But both are realities that we need to accept: Jesus as God and man, suffered on the Cross out of love for us. This suffering has the power to make us good and pure. We need to let the Lord do his work ... ■

John D Faris

Chorbishop John D. Faris

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