

# *the* Maronite **Voice**



*“Feed my Sheep”*

JUNE 29 - FEAST OF SAINTS PETER AND PAUL



# the Maronite Voice

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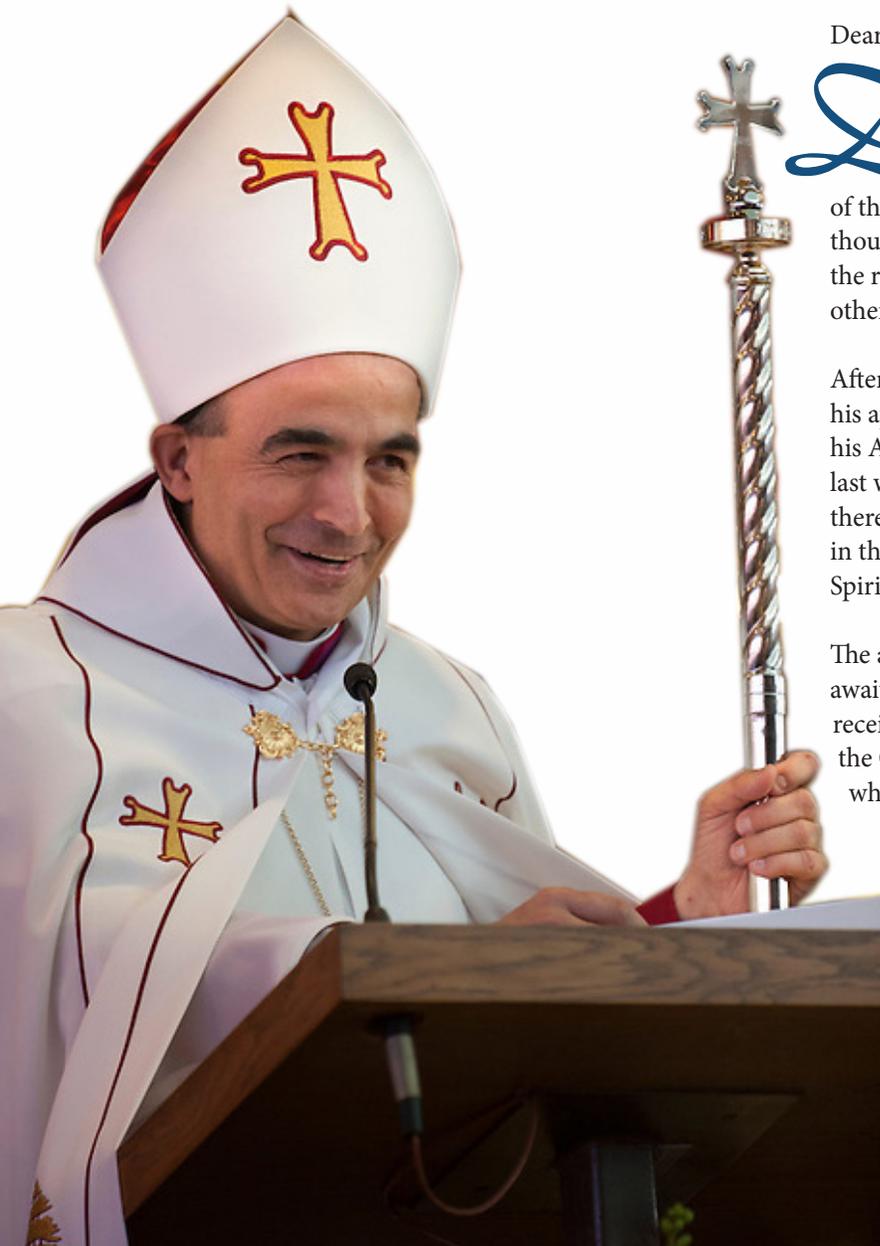
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**“How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news.”**

ROMANS 10:15



Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

During these difficult times, we are eager to hear some good news: find a vaccine, a treatment for the COVID-19 pandemic, the revival of the economy, a better job market ... However, even though these are all important news, the Good News of the redemption of our Lord Jesus Christ tops them all. All other news is temporary, Christ's Good News is permanent.

After His Resurrection, our Lord Jesus Christ appeared to his apostles and disciples for 40 days. Immediately before his Ascension, at the end of the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus's last words are addressed to his disciples. He tells them "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (MATTHEW 28:19).

The apostles gathered in the Upper Room for nine days awaiting the Holy Spirit. On Pentecost Sunday, they received the Spirit and that event constituted the birth of the Church, the beginning of the ministry of the apostles who were the messengers of the Good News.

Our Church celebrates several feast days during the month of June that highlight the importance of evangelization. On June 24th we celebrate the Feast of the birth of St. John the Baptist, on June 29th Saints Peter and Paul and on June 30th The Twelve Apostles. All three of these

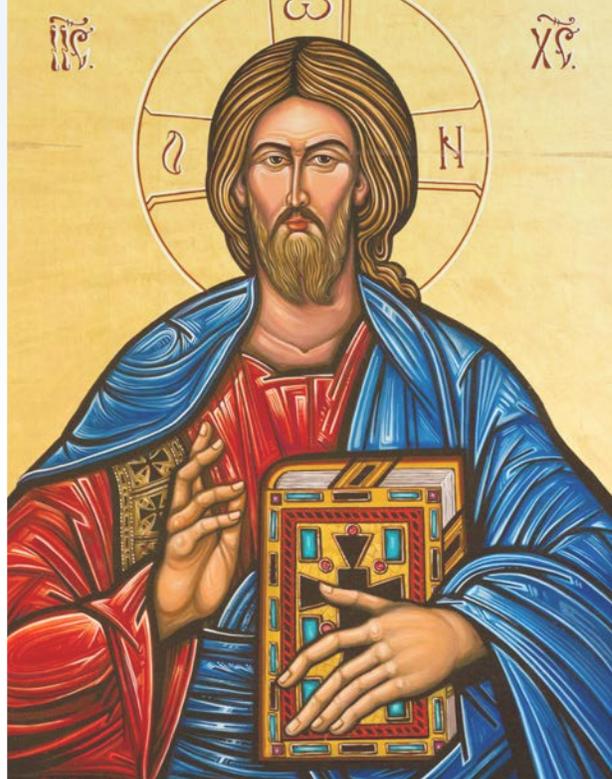
commemorations are of men who went out and brought the “Good News,” what we commonly call “The Gospel” to the world.

We can say: how beautiful are his feet! St. John the Baptist prepared the way for Jesus. For Saints Peter and Paul and for all of the Holy Apostles, we can say: how beautiful are their feet!

St. John the Baptist along with all the Apostles went out and shared the good news. They may have done this in different ways, but they went out. The Church exists today to share the same message of the Gospel—to share “good news” and with “all nations” as the Lord commands. We must each find our own way to share the Gospel. Now, with the current pandemic, we continue to spread the Good News to our people using livestreamed Masses on the different social media platforms. While practicing social distancing, our domestic Church is growing and thriving, and we continue to evangelize using new tools.

Dear Friends, you and I are called to share the Good News; it is not an option, it is the command of our Lord. Each one has his/her own way but all the ways should lead to Christ and his Church. One of our well-known saints was St. Ephrem. He shared the Gospel in his own unique way. St. Ephrem looked at the world around him and found a way through poetry and song to make the message of the Gospel attractive to people of his time. We, too, must take people where they are and present Jesus to them in order for them to experience eternal life. Let us go out of ourselves, out of our comfort zone into the outskirts of society in order to bring everyone into the fold.

We need to preach the Good News with a lot of joy as Pope Francis writes in his Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium* (*The Joy of the Gospel*):



The good news is the joy of the Father who desires that none of his little ones be lost, the joy of the Good Shepherd who finds the lost sheep and brings it back to the flock. The Gospel is the leaven which causes the dough to rise and the city on the hill whose light illumines all peoples. The Gospel has an intrinsic principle of totality: it will always remain good news until it has been proclaimed to all people, until it has healed and strengthened every aspect of humanity, until it has brought all men and women together at table in God’s kingdom. The whole is greater than the part. (237)

Every Christian family must be a source of joy; every parish community must be a place of joy as well. I am not speaking of a shallow or superficial giddy joy, but a joy that gives us inner peace and demands that we share that joy with others. We need to always remember that the Lord is the source and reason of our joy.

That joy is having Christ in our hearts, minds, and our whole being. May we reflect this joy to all people around us through our own words, deeds, and example. May our joy be contagious so that all the world will rejoice and renew the people of the earth. May the Spirit of the Lord lead our footsteps as we are all evangelists. ■

*Bishop A. Elias Zaidan*



# “Thou art

**F**or most of the second millennium, Catholics thought of the Church as a pyramid, with the pope at the top. The First Vatican Council (1869-70) seemed to confirm that view, teaching that the pope, “as the successor of St. Peter, the Prince of the apostles,” has power of jurisdiction over all the pastors and faithful of the Church. That is papal primacy, and closely attached to it is the idea of papal infallibility, namely that in certain carefully specified circumstances the pope can express the faith of the Church and define doctrine without error.

It is no coincidence that the schism between Rome and Constantinople, resulting in what we call the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church today, occurred as the pyramidal picture was developing in the West. The anathemas of 1054 were lifted in both Rome and Constantinople on 7 December 1965, and efforts seriously began to restore full communion between Catholics and Orthodox. However, the papacy is still the most difficult issue that needs to be resolved for that reconciliation to be achieved, and the definitions of Vatican I are often seen as a major obstacle in the way. So, what can be done, and what do Catholics really believe about the pope?

We need to recall some basic facts about the Church. Jesus came “to gather together the scattered children of God” (JOHN 11:52), and the very word “church,” *ekklesia*, means “gathering” or “assembly.” Jesus is the good shepherd, and the pastors who care for the Church in his name are likewise shepherds, ministers of unity. Each bishop is the minister and center of unity in his local church and the pope is the minister

# Peter”

## The Papacy and the Eucharist *by Msgr. Paul McPartlan*

and center of unity for the Church as a whole. Unity is crucial to the life and witness of the Church. At the Last Supper, Jesus prayed: “Father may they all be one, so that the world may believe that you have sent me” (JOHN 17:21). Made as we are in the image of God the Trinity, God who is the communion of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, we too are made for unity and communion — but the world is full of division, because of sin. Sin scatters, grace gathers, and the God-given unity of the Church is meant to be a sign in the world of the grace of salvation at work, a hopeful sign that reconciliation and peace are possible. That is how, in the lovely phrase of Vatican II, the Church is “the universal sacrament of salvation” (*Lumen Gentium* 48). Having ministers of unity is therefore essential to the Church, and having a minister of universal unity is likewise essential.

Vatican I went to the very heart of the matter when it said that papal primacy exists “so that the episcopate itself might be one and undivided, and that the whole multitude of believers might be preserved in unity of faith and communion by means of a closely united priesthood.” Mention of “communion” and “priesthood” here makes us think of the Eucharist, and opens up a much deeper reflection on the mystery of the Church and the primacy of the pope. The teaching of Vatican I is actually more nuanced than is often realized! The pyramid is one way in which we might organize human society, but that’s the rather earthly way of kingdoms and multinationals. The Church’s unity is heavenly, its life is sacramental, and the source from which that life is regularly replenished is the sacrament of the Eucharist, in which we regularly “receive communion.”

We should therefore be wary of assuming that the Church must be a pyramid like other familiar institutions, because the Church’s life and purpose are different from those of other institutions. In 2015, Pope Francis suggested that it’s actually better to think of the Church as “an inverted pyramid,” with the top below the base, because those who exercise authority in the Church are supposed to be “ministers.” Each bishop represents Christ to his people, the same Christ who washed the disciples’ feet at the Last Supper, and “the Successor of Peter is nothing else if not the *servus servorum Dei*,” the servant of the servants of God, using the ancient phrase of Pope St. Gregory the Great (590-604). Interestingly, Vatican I also quoted Pope Gregory to stress that, rightly understood, the pope does not lord it over the other bishops, but supports and confirms them: “My honor is the firm strength of my brothers. I am truly honored when due honor is paid to each and every one.”

The teaching of Vatican I was rather constrained by the juridical language that had been used for centuries to describe the Church in the West, and also by the embattled circumstances of the Church in 19th century Europe. However, we can already see that there was more to that teaching than is generally recognized. After the biblical, patristic and liturgical renewals of the early 20th century, Vatican II (1962-65) was able to return to the same question of the role of the bishops and the pope with better resources and a richer vocabulary. With reference to one of the earliest fathers of the Church, St. Ignatius of Antioch, Vatican II taught that the bishop is not just an administrator, he is truly a pastor and presides over the liturgy

“The Pope is not, by himself, above the Church; but within it as one of the baptized ...”

POPE FRANCIS

### “Thou art Peter”

*Continued from page 7*

of his local church (*Sacrosanctum Concilium* 41). With reference to another ancient text, the *Apostolic Tradition*, it taught that the bishop is ordained to the high priesthood, representing Christ himself, “teacher, shepherd and priest” (*Lumen Gentium* 21), and then immediately added that “together with their head [the pope] and never apart from him” the bishops form a college that has supreme authority over the Church (*Lumen Gentium* 22). Each bishop represents Christ and presides over the Eucharist for his people, and the fact that there is only one Christ and one Eucharist means that the bishops themselves are united in a profound solidarity or collegiality. Together with the pope, they care as Christ does for the Church as a whole, and together with the pope, they minister the sacrament of unity, the Eucharist, to the Church as a whole.

In the years following Vatican II, the links between the papacy and the Eucharist have been increasingly recognized, and this has certainly helped the ecumenical discussion of the papacy that Pope St. John Paul II expressed a desire for in his encyclical letter, *Ut Unum Sint* (1995). It has been noted, for instance, that in Luke’s gospel Jesus commissions Peter to strengthen his brethren (LUKE 22:32) in the setting of the Last Supper, when he instituted the Eucharist to sustain his Church on its earthly pilgrimage. Does it perhaps follow that the petrine ministry is likewise meant to continue throughout history, particularly as a service to the Church’s eucharistic unity? One of

the pioneers of the theological dialogue that started in earnest between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church around 1980, Jean Tillard, once said: “The Church is made by Eucharist and baptism, not by the papacy. The purpose of the papacy is to give the Eucharist its full dimensions” (Tillard, *The Bishop of Rome*, 1983, p.189). In 1992, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, under then-Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, said: “The existence of the Petrine ministry, which is a foundation of the unity of the Episcopate and of the universal Church, bears a profound correspondence to the eucharistic character of the Church” (*Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Idea of the Church as Communion*, 11).

Catholics and Orthodox agree that “the Eucharist makes the Church,” in the famous phrase of Henri de Lubac, and to imagine the pope as symbolizing and serving the eucharistic communion of the Church as a whole rather than exercising a universal jurisdiction over the Church is an exciting and promising way forward for Catholic-Orthodox dialogue. (I explore that idea in my book, *A Service of Love: Papal Primacy, The Eucharist and Church Unity*, 2016.) In correspondence with the Greek Orthodox Metropolitan Damaskinos, Cardinal Ratzinger himself said that the terminology of “jurisdiction” really belongs to the second millennium, and that Catholics and Orthodox should return to more ancient titles that were used for the pope as bishop of Rome in the patristic era, such as being “first in honor” and



presiding in love (*agape*). The idea of the church of Rome presiding in charity (*agape*) among the local churches goes all the way back to St. Ignatius of Antioch again, and Ratzinger pointed out that *agape* is itself a eucharistic term. In a celebrated address at Graz in 1976, he suggested that we need not be tied to the idea of the pope having a primacy of jurisdiction. The more ancient idea of Rome having a primacy of honor and of *agape* might well be regarded as adequately expressing its unique position in the Church. That was the essential content of primacy in the first millennium, he said, and what was accepted at that time, before the schism of 1054, should guide Catholic-Orthodox dialogue today: “Rome need not ask for more” (Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology*, 1987, pp.199, 217).

On the evening of his election in 2013, when he first addressed the people of Rome and the world, Pope Francis used the phrase of St. Ignatius. He spoke of himself as the new bishop of Rome, the church which presides in charity, and of the bishop and people of Rome taking up their journey together. He has increasingly spoken of the whole Church journeying together, “laity, pastors, the Bishop of Rome,” and that’s literally what is meant by *synodality*. In his important address on the 50th anniversary of the Synod of Bishops in 2015, already mentioned, he further explained: “A synodal Church is a Church which listens.... It is a mutual listening in which everyone has something to learn. The faithful people, the college

of bishops, the Bishop of Rome: all listening to each other, and all listening to the Holy Spirit, the ‘Spirit of truth’ (JOHN 14:17), in order to know what he ‘says to the Churches’ (REVELATION 2:7).”

In other words, for Pope Francis, the bishop of Rome, is not so much at the summit of the Church as a pyramid, but at the center of the Church as a communion, at the heart of the pilgrim people of God on its earthly journey, as it constantly listens for the voice of the Lord and strives to discern his will. The pope plays a vital role anchoring that communion and guiding that discernment, and of course the Eucharist is precisely the food for the journey that the Lord provides. In that same address of 2015, Pope Francis memorably summarized his understanding of the papacy, showing once again how much the phrase of St. Ignatius means to him: “The Pope is not, by himself, above the Church; but within it as one of the baptized, and within the College of Bishops as a Bishop among Bishops, called at the same time — as Successor of Peter — to lead the Church of Rome which presides in charity over all the Churches.” ■

*Msgr. Paul McPartlan is a priest of the diocese of Westminster (UK) and Carl J. Peter Professor of Systematic Theology and Ecumenism at The Catholic University of America. Since 2005, he has been a member of the international Catholic-Orthodox theological dialogue.*

# Saint John Paul II and Lebanon

by James Salamy

**O**n 18 May 2020, we marked the 100th anniversary of the birth of Karol Wojtyła, later to be known as Saint John Paul II. This year also marks the twenty-fifth anniversary of the special session of the Synod of Bishops for Lebanon.

Wojtyła was elected to the papacy in 1978 and governed until 2005, the second longest reigning pope in modern history, after Pope Pius IX (1846-1878).

A native of Poland, he was the first non-Italian elected to the Chair of Peter in 455 years. He was most sensible of the truly worldwide communion of the Catholic Church and sought to make an apostolic journey to as many countries as possible to spread

the message of the Gospel and support the Christian faithful and all people of good will. He made apostolic journeys to 129 countries, some more than once. Upon his arrival in the host country of an apostolic journey, he bent down and kissed the soil as a sign of respect.

While many attribute the collapse of the Soviet Union to him, his influence did not end there. From 1975 to 1990, Lebanon had been engulfed in a civil war. Aware of the crucial importance of Lebanon's Christians in the Middle East, the Pope followed the situation closely. In the 1980s, in the midst of the civil war, Pope John Paul II proclaimed that, "Lebanon is more than a country. It is a message of freedom and an example of pluralism for East and West." This bold proclamation continues to be repeated to this day.

With hope and expectancy for an end to the bloody and devastating war, Pope John Paul II sensed an opportunity to help beleaguered Lebanon. On 12 June 1991, he announced the convocation of a special session of the Synod of Bishops for Lebanon. It was only the second time a special session of the Synod of Bishops, established in 1967, had been called for an individual country.

The special session of the Synod of Bishops for Lebanon involved several years of preparation in the Vatican and in Lebanon. The first document, the *Lineamenta* or *Outline* was made public on 13 March 1993, and became the subject of prayer and reflection by the people of Lebanon in their parishes and eparchies for the next 18 months. The reflections were then incorporated into the Synod's working document which served as the starting point for the discussion of a session of the Synod of Bishops.

This special session of the Synod of Bishops for Lebanon met in Rome during November and December 1995. Participants included the bishops of Lebanon and bishops from other parts of the world,





including the Vatican. The ultimate expression of the Synod of Bishops is the publication of an Apostolic Exhortation by the pope. Pope John Paul II used the publication of the Apostolic Exhortation as an opportunity to visit Lebanon, where he would sign the Apostolic Exhortation in the presence of the Lebanese people.

Pope John Paul II was the first pope since apostolic times to make an apostolic journey to Lebanon. (On 2 December 1964, on his way to visit India, Paul VI landed at the Beirut airport and disembarked to address the President of Lebanon, Charles Helou.)

Pope John Paul II made his apostolic journey to Lebanon on Saturday and Sunday, 10 and 11 May 1997. After arriving at the Beirut International Airport for a welcoming ceremony and brief address, Pope Saint John Paul II proceeded to the Shrine of Our Lady of Lebanon in Harissa, where he met with the young people of Lebanon and addressed them.

While at the Shrine, Pope John Paul II signed the Apostolic Exhortation, *A New Hope for Lebanon*, the result of six years of work in Lebanon and the Vatican. The Apostolic Exhortation set the path and provided hope and renewal for the Church in Lebanon. The assessment of the pope more than two decades ago rings true today:

It is evident that the Christians of Lebanon, like all their fellow citizens, hope to enjoy the conditions necessary for the development of the person, the family, respecting their own cultural and spiritual traditions. In particular, they aspire to tranquility, prosperity, to a real recognition of fundamental freedoms, those which protect every human dignity and which allow the practice of faith; aspire to a sincere respect for their rights and those of others; finally they count on a justice that consecrates the equality of all before the law and allows everyone to take their share of responsibility in social life. They are well aware that this project is largely conditioned by the years spent in the war and by the serious situation facing this region of the Middle East... In order for a more peaceful future to materialize, I know that many sacrifices are necessary, a constant personal asceticism by virtue of which each one is demanding with himself before others, an active, courageous and persevering presence in the affairs of society; but we must also rely on the grace of the Most High, who transforms hearts and wills by directing them towards good. The past and present experience that the faithful of Christ have of themselves and others, around them and everywhere, is sufficient to convince them of the power of the forces of evil, always current and capable of obscuring the intelligences, hardening the feelings and to pose a threat to the future. (17)

The contribution that this great Pope made to Lebanon will be etched in the hearts of all Lebanese of good will, who wish to see this tiny country prosper as a sign of religious plurality and liberty. ■

*James Salamy is a Canon Lawyer and a parishioner of Saint Louis Gonzaga Church in Utica, New York.*

## The Order of Saint Sharbel New Members

### ANNUAL

**ANTHONY KURI** | *St. George Church in San Antonio, TX*

**MOUNIR RISHA** | *St. John Maron Church in Orange, CA*

### PERPETUAL

**SUSAN BETTERS** | *St. Theresa of Calcutta Mission, Conway, PA*

**CHAOUKI BOUCHROUCHE** | *St. Anthony Church, Lawrence, MA*

**MENY DIMANT, M.D.** | *Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral,  
Brooklyn, NY*

**MANAL EL-KHOURY** | *Our Lady of Mt. Lebanon Cathedral,  
Los Angeles, CA*

**RACHID AND ANGELA ELETTEL** | *Sts. Peter and Paul Church,  
Simi Valley, CA*

**BRENDAN AND JACQUELINE GEORGE** | *St. George Church,  
San Antonio, TX*

**ILONA SHAMI** | *Totowa, NJ*

**MYRIAM SADAKA** | *Our Lady of Mt. Lebanon-Los Angeles, CA*

**TONY TANNOURY** | *St. Anthony Church in Lawrence, MA*

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

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

EPARCHY OF SAINT MARON  
109 Remsen Street | Brooklyn, NY 11201  
or  
EPARCHY OF OUR LADY OF LEBANON  
1021 South 10th Street | St. Louis, MO 63104



The 29th Annual Spring Raffle drawing was held on Sunday, 26 April 2020, at St. Maron Church in Youngstown, OH. Those present were Fr. Tony Massad, pastor of St. Maron, Sue Nakley and Amelia Yazbek, both delegates of St. Maron, and Rose Sahyoun, President of NAM.

**1ST PRIZE — \$10,000**

**#223 Knights of Columbus**

Clinton Township, MI

**2ND PRIZE — \$3,000**

**#335 Lynn Mike**

Poland, OH

**3RD PRIZE — \$2,000**

**#376 Roger & Kathy Abood**

Brecksville, OH

**4TH PRIZE — \$1,500**

**#089 Our Lady of Lebanon Church**

Washington, DC

**5TH PRIZE — \$1,000**

**#098 Betty Fares**

Jacksonville, FL

Thank you to all for supporting NAM!

# Maronite Patriarch Announces Relief Program

by *The Maronite Voice Staff*



**M**aronite Patriarch Cardinal Beshara Peter Rai announced on 6 May a comprehensive food and social assistance relief program for those families in Lebanon living in poverty. The head of the Maronite Church stated that the eparchies (dioceses), religious orders, and Caritas Lebanon will assess the needs of families and provide help so that they do “not to fall prey to hunger, despair and death.”

Lebanon today is experiencing an economic crisis unprecedented even during the 15 years of civil war. In comparing the economic health of 66 developing countries, Lebanon comes in at 65, with only Venezuela in worse shape. The Lebanese pound, which has been pegged to the U.S. dollar since 1997, has lost 50% of its value, causing prices to soar. The International Monetary Fund forecasts that the economy will shrink by 12 % this year. The Lebanese government states that 35% of the working population is unemployed. The tragic reality is that 45% of this small country of 7 million people lives in poverty.

For years, Lebanon has suffered the consequences of the civil war in Syria. More than 1.5 million people

(75% of whom are undocumented) have fled for their lives to Lebanon, overwhelming social, medical, and educational institutions.

And then the COVID-19 pandemic hit, necessitating closures and creating more economic hardship. Lebanon has reported 809 cases of the virus, with 26 deaths, as of May 9.

Ignoring government curfews and lockdowns (because of the COVID-19 crisis) and police tear gas, protesters have taken to the streets, building blockades, burning tires and throwing handmade firebombs through windows of banks. In May, protesters in numerous cities blocked the streets and roads, burning tires and breaking windows.

Patriarch Rai said the Church now has a great responsibility to serve the poor and the needy, “whose number is increasing due to the economic and financial crisis and suffocating living, the random and exploitative rise in the prices of goods, and the low purchasing value of the Lebanese pound and because of the paralysis that the coronavirus has inflicted on all of us.” ■

## Miami Priest Finds Calling After Escaping Lebanese Turmoil *by Brandon Shulleeta*

**B**assam Saade was in his early-20s, driving to his family's home near Beirut, Lebanon, when he was overcome by darkness — there were no car lights in sight despite being nighttime.

He would soon come under gunfire, but this was not the first or last time Saade would experience a bombing or

sniper fire, so he was savvy enough to turn off his car lights, so that he couldn't easily be seen while driving. He eluded rubble on the roadway, and alas, he thanked God for his safe arrival as he parked his car in the quiet city.

But when he opened his car door, a sniper saw the door light and started shooting at him, sending him fleeing for his life.

For Father Bassam Saade — now a 62-year-old priest at Our Lady of Lebanon Maronite Catholic Church in Miami, Florida, with 28 years of priesthood — this was life in Lebanon before fleeing to the U.S. and finding his calling.

"I always thought I could be dead at any time when I was in Lebanon during the war, and God spared me for a reason, to answer the call and serve Him," Saade said.

\* \* \*

**Growing up in Lebanon**, the beliefs and traditions of being a Maronite Catholic were engrained in Saade.

His family never missed the Divine Liturgy and was heavily involved in church functions. His great-grandfather was a priest. His father, Michel, had memorized the entire mass in Syriac. And his mother, Hilda, has a long history of praying a rosary daily for each of her six children.

Bassam started a successful banking and marketing career after earning bachelor's and master's degrees. However, the turmoil and death toll in Lebanon became overwhelming amid an endless threat from terrorism, which drove Saade's parents and their six children out of Beirut, only to have their home flattened and belongings stolen. Relatives were killed in Lebanon.

Saade had been just minutes, and sometimes seconds, ahead of bombings and gunfire, and there were times when it was clear to him that the Christians in Lebanon



were being hunted, forcing them into basements and fleeing to the mountains.

“You never knew when it was going to be your time. So anytime you leave the house, you make the sign of the cross, you say your prayers, and you say my ‘life is in the hands of the Lord,’” Saade said.

In 1986, Saade decided he needed a break from the increasing wartime violence in Lebanon. So, he used vacation days to visit his brothers in Pittsburgh.

While he was in the United States the upheaval in Lebanon became more severe, so Saade extended his stay in America for six months of unpaid leave.

“I didn’t have a job. I didn’t have anything, except I had time on my hands,” Saade said.

During his stay in the United States, he got involved in the local Maronite parish, Our Lady of Victory Church, and his roles expanded — from helping the choir incorporate Arabic Christmas songs, to offering his expertise in business and marketing in preparation of a church festival. He even agreed to serve as a chaperone for a youth conference in Springfield, Massachusetts.

It was there that he met Patriarch Nasrallah Peter Sfeir, who asked Saade: “Have you ever considered being a priest?”

“I said I’m waiting for the call,” Saade said. “He said: ‘Well, I’m the patriarch, and I’m calling you. So, what better call can you have?’”

\* \* \*

**Fast-forward**, and Saade found himself in seminary school weeks later. Saade went from working in a bank in Lebanon to being ordained a priest in the U.S. in 1992. He even had the occasion to meet Pope John Paul II early-on in his priesthood, and the pope prayed over him and his ministry.

Saade said he can’t remember exactly what the pope said because he was overwhelmed.

“You feel like you’re floating,” he said of the pope giving him a blessing.

Saade was a priest in Utica, NY, from 1993 to 2009, before serving as a priest in Orlando and then

Jacksonville, Florida, in more recent years. He became the priest for Our Lady of Lebanon Maronite Catholic Church in Miami, Florida, last year.

For Saade, life “has not been a honeymoon,” but he said he loves celebrating Divine Liturgy and considers his parishioners his family.

Though his journey to priesthood wasn’t an easy one, he said he found his calling in life. “My life is a joyful life,” he said.

He said that he takes joy from the liturgy, working with the youth, celebrating weddings and all of the things that comes with the priesthood.

“In every parish I’ve served in, I’ve felt like God sent me there for a reason,” he said. “My life is 24 hours ministry.”

Saade said he truly approaches priesthood as a father-like role, loving his parishioners unwaveringly as if they are his own children.

“I’ve always loved my parishioners like a father. To be a father, you have to get to know them and love them ... and love them for who they are,” he said. “They’ve opened their doors and their hearts to me.” “I’ve always loved my parishioners like a father.”

While Father Saade said he begins preparing for his homily at the beginning of the week, taking notes throughout the week, he ultimately speaks from the heart and lets the spirit of the Lord guide him. He said that he always focuses on the message of the Gospel, offers history, and relays what it means to us nowadays and how we can live God’s message.

Young Bassam was raised to take nothing for granted; he said all of the blessings of life are from God. “God is always watching and always with us,” is something that he continues to say. ■

*Brandon Shuleeta is a journalist and journalism professor from Glen Allen, VA.*



## Saint Joseph Maronite Church: Maronites in Atlanta Create a New Home

by Anna Salloum

**P**riests have played so many different roles in our lives, from shepherd, to listener, teacher, consoler and friend. In these challenging times, they have also become IT techs and social media managers. Abouna Tony Akoury of Saint Joseph Maronite Church in Atlanta is wearing those hats, plus a hard hat, because he has been overseeing the interior renovation of his parish, which is on the road to completion. One of the most exciting things about starting a construction project from scratch is

having complete control over the creative process, and everything is tailor made to the dreamer's vision. Even more exciting is taking something already existing, beautifying it, and having a spiritual sanctuary as the finished product.

Saint Joseph Maronite Church, serving Atlanta for over one hundred years, is a parish with a vibrant history that has been working hard on enhancing where mass is held. The church had previously been a Protestant church and a structure that Abouna Tony described as “very normal, and cold, with a stage for the altar because the focus had been on liturgical music and dancing.”

He wants to turn this church into a Maronite sanctuary and wishes for the parishioners to feel something special when they walk in. This desire turned into a project through the underwriting and donations of generous parishioners. The parish is quite fortunate because the architect in charge of this project is actually from Lebanon and because of the COVID-19 situation, found himself here in the states longer than anticipated, thus enabling him to personally supervise the work being done.

No stone is being left unturned — literally. The stone and marble have been brought directly from the mountains of Lebanon. Not one, but four relics have also made their way from Lebanon for the sanctuary's renovation. The relics of Saint Rafka, Saint Nehmatallah Hardini, Saint Charbel, and Blessed Estephan Nehme will be resting under the altar. Arches reminiscent of the architecture in Lebanon will be featured prominently, and a beautiful stained glass image of the Holy Spirit descending upon the people will further enhance the space. A new crucifix has been added as well.

Although this project is very exciting, this time has been very sad for Abouna Tony because there is “no life without his parishioners and no value without his people.” He firmly believes that “a priest was ordained for his people.”

Parishioners are kept up to date through the bulletin, email and live streaming. However, Abouna Tony admits that he has never preached to a camera and this is his first time. He is used to interacting with people and enjoys looking at their smile, their eyes, and their





interaction. The masses and adoration are being streamed from the chapel, which is very small, so this limits parishioners to remote viewing. First Communion were postponed until September, and up to now there had only been one funeral, and at the family's request, the memorial mass was streamed live.

Abouna Tony in solidarity with the rest of our country consecrated his parish to the heart of Mary in May. In the month of March, a virtual novena to Saint Joseph was completed, as well as a novena to Our Lady of Fatima this past May. Rosaries have been prayed every night, but truly this has been sad because the church has a very vibrant and active community of just over 200 families.

These families are active in their ministries, especially the Ladies Society with their big Spring and Fall bake sales, where people from all over the community come to enjoy the homemade sweets. The parish currently does not hold an annual festival, but it's something they've been studying and contemplating, now that they have the space. MYO & MYA are active too, celebrating their ministry with an autumn fair. The parishioners of St. Joseph also spread information on the dignity of human life through their Pro-Life Ministry, by participating in prayer vigils and fundraisers.

Abouna Tony has been at the helm for two short years at the parish, but his leadership during these trying times has shown strength in problem



solving, teamwork, resilience, and determination. A big thanks to his parish secretary Ann, who has been there for 30 years, and has provided a wealth of information. ■

*We welcome Anna Salloum as a feature writer of The Maronite Voice. Anna became a member of the Maronite Church in December 2015 and is a parishioner of Our Lady of Lebanon in Miami, Florida.*



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**HOW TO KEEP YOUR MYO ACTIVE DURING THE COVID-19 CRISIS**

**zoom** **TAKE IT ONLINE!**






The government stay-at-home orders and social distancing guidelines should not keep you from engaging your youth! There are many online platforms available for use and offering free/discounted options during the pandemic. These allow for video conference style gatherings with screen share capabilities to continue your programs. Some even offer break-out room options for small group activities.

**KEEP THE FAITH!**



- Prayer Nights (Rosary, Divine Mercy Chaplet)
- Bible Study (Lectio Divina, Sunday Gospel Reflection)
- Share Prayer Intentions during this difficult time
- Praise & Worship (tap into your youths' musical talents!)
- Eucharistic Adoration (with live streaming/Priest's help)
- Attend Divine Liturgy Together (the National MYA page has a list!)
- Invite Guest Speaker to give a talk/presentation on a topic

**KEEP THE FUN!**



- Movie Night (with screen-sharing)
- Virtual Trivia
- Virtual Scavenger Hunt (Home Edition!)
- Virtual Charades
- Ice-breakers
- Virtual Dance Party
- [Kahoot!](http://Kahoot!) ([www.kahoot.com](http://www.kahoot.com))
- Virtual Talent Show

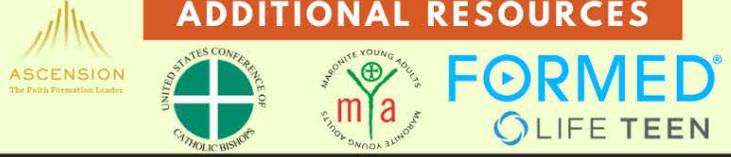
**KEEP IT SAFE!**



Additional precautions should always be taken whenever using virtual platforms for meeting. These measures ensure that only the right people get access to your meeting. Some recommendations include:

- Assign a password for your meeting and only provide this to your youth via private means (e.g. do not post on a flyer on Social Media).
- If your platform allows, enable a "Waiting Room" so, as the meeting host, you can admit people manually to the meeting
- Ensure your youth understand why they should not share meeting entry details with youth outside of your organization

**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**



**WE ARE HERE TO HELP! CONTACT US AT [MYAOFFICE@GMAIL.COM](mailto:MYAOFFICE@GMAIL.COM)**

# Upcoming MYA Virtual Events

The National MYA Board began the COVID-19 quarantine with a video message encouraging everyone to stay home and stay safe, so that we can all, hopefully, attend the 12th Annual Conference in Chicago this September. Following the release of the video, many local MYAs started organizing and holding virtual events of their own! Many of which included: virtual rosaries, bible studies, theologies on tap, coffee hours, trivia hangouts, cooking sessions, workout sessions, and “meet and greets” across state lines. If anything, this time away from our hectic schedules has brought us all closer together through faith and friendship.

During Holy Week, the National MYA Board held a live Visitation of the Seven Churches, where guests streamed in from across the nation. This allowed those who celebrate the yearly tradition to participate from the safety of their own home. On Good Friday, the National MYA Board hosted a live movie screening of *The Passion of the Christ*, followed by a discussion on Zoom. The following week there was a nationally attended Kahoot Trivia Night and Happy Hour, which was

centered around trivia topics relating to Maronite history, Lent, and Arabic music. It was beyond amazing to see how many young adults from around the country participated and enjoyed the quality time together.

This time hasn't been easy for any of us, but our vibrant faith and strong sense of community has brought us all together. We are proud of everyone's hard work, dedication, and drive during this time and we encourage you all to continue to plan local and regional MYA virtual events. God bless you all!

For more information follow our Facebook and Instagram pages along with our website listed below.

FACEBOOK: <https://www.facebook.com/NationalMYA/>

INSTAGRAM: @nationalmya

WEBSITE: <https://www.maroniteyoungadults.org/> ■



# Ordinations to the Priesthood

## Presbyteral Ordination of Fr. Michael Shami

by Anna Wood

My dear friend, Fr. Michael Shami, was ordained a priest at the Chapel of Our Lady of Elige in St. Louis, Missouri, on Saturday, 2 May 2020 by Bishop A. Elias Zaidan. I never imagined that I would be watching this wonderful occasion on my laptop in New York rather than attending in person. Though the smell of incense, the feeling of holy water, and mostly, the taste of the Eucharist were notably and sadly absent, it was comforting to hear the familiar sound of my friend's voice joining in the beautiful prayers of the ordination liturgy.

The program for the ordination, with many hymns translated entirely by Fr. Michael, was beautifully done, and helped me to witness the event prayerfully from afar. I noticed particularly the hymn by St. Jacob of Serugh that Fr. Michael selected for one of the processions. "Come in peace, our father who carries the pure censer effusing its scent and sweetening the world. Come in peace, our father who carries the Mysteries of his Lord and with his right hand distributes life

to mankind." These words seemed so fitting, particularly in conjunction with the procession in which the newly ordained carries first a censer, then the Gospel, and then the Eucharist in procession around the altar. Christ is literally placed above the priest, being held on his head, a beautiful symbol of the priest's submission and commitment to serve Christ completely.



The words of the Maronite Liturgy have a way of painting pictures in one's mind and revealing something of the beauty of the Lord. I don't know how such words could not inspire one to join in prayer. In my conversations with Fr. Michael throughout the years, I know that he is and will continue to be a person deeply devoted to prayer, to the Liturgy, and particularly to preserving the Syriac language and beautiful traditions of the Maronite Church. Such priests and such devotion are so needed. His friendship has strengthened my own

faith, increased my knowledge and understanding of God, and been a great source of joy in my life. I am confident that all who experience his priestly ministry will experience the same joy.



As I think back on the occasion, the prayer of the bishop echoes in my heart: "Anoint him with your living holiness, and make him one with your Divine Mysteries, that he may stand before you without blemish all the days of his life, proclaiming glory and thanks. Clothed with the holy vestment of the exalted Order of Priests, may he join the pure priests who have pleased you by their honorable deeds and service." ■

## Presbyteral Ordination of Fr. Fadi Bazouzi

by Laura Abinajm Eid

Glory be to God who calls upon men to leave everything and follow Him. Fr. Fadi Bazouzi who heard God's calling and answered it, received the grace of priestly ordination on Saturday, 29 February 2020 at St. Christopher Church, San Jose, CA. Although the ordination to the priesthood is an earthly celebration, for Christians it is also considered among the celestial ranks of angels. As a successor of the apostles, the head of the Maronite Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon of Los Angeles, Bishop Elias Zaidan celebrated the ordination liturgy, a deeply spiritual celebration, rich in meaning and history. From the imposition of hands, anointing of the palms of the new priest, vesting with priestly vestments, imposition of incense, and giving of the chalice the rites are steeped in symbolism and beauty.

In his homily Bishop Elias stressed the importance of love and invited the candidate to love God with all his heart and all his being. He offered him a challenge to compete, "I hope you and I can compete together" to love God more and more. The Bishop added, "I am not asking you to sacrifice your love to your wife Nicole, your son Raymond, your family and loved ones. I want you to love God more than anyone and more than anything. God who gave Himself to redeem us, is the Greatest Master of Love. He will help you and teach you how to love. With love come responsibilities and sacrifices. Go do your daily duties with a passionate love. Carry the cross. Accept suffering and pain. Share the priesthood of Christ, the first and greatest Priest. You are the groom of the Church and the father of the faithful congregation. You must be alert, vigilant, accepting of people, shining with sanctity, and excelling in peace. You are the teacher, the administrator and the sanctifier. With today's sacramental bond our relationship is like a father and a son. God be with you, and we will be with you".

This ordination was attended by the newly ordained priest's immediate family, his extended Our Lady of Lebanon parish family, Fr. Rami Razzouk, Pastor of Our Lady of Lebanon Church Millbrae, CA, Fr. John Nahal, Sponsor, Fr. Armando Khoury, Director of Ministries, Fr. Milad Yaghi, Assistant to the Bishop, along with a choir of clergy and the faithful.

Father Fadi, we ask the Lord to help you go on this sacred mission. Preach the Gospel. Be the best shepherd for the faithful. Celebrate the Mysteries. Be the light that leads people to God. Spread the Word of God. ■



# Ordinations to the Priesthood Continued

## Ordination of Reverend Adib Salameh

by Sue Tessier

The parish of St. Anthony of the Desert, Fall River, MA was honored to host Fr. Adib Salameh's Ordination on Saturday, 23 May 2020. We were blessed to have Bishop Gregory J. Mansour from the Eparchy of St. Maron of Brooklyn celebrate the Imposition of Hand on the candidate who was presented by Monsignor James

A. Root, Pastor of St. Anthony's. The parish community was united in spirit through prayer and music which was beautifully sung by the Choir. In attendance were several priests from Maronite Churches of New England as well as clerics from the Diocese of Fall River, MA. Despite the circumstances we are all living under, the family, parishioners and friends of Fr. Adib were able to witness and pray the Ordination Liturgy via Facebook and YouTube.

A private reception was held in his honor for all Clergy and Religious immediately following the Ordination in the St. Sharbel Maronite Center. At the reception Fr. Adib was Facetimed by his family in Zouk Mekaël, Lebanon. Attendees were able to witness the celebration that took place at Fr. Adib's family home in Lebanon. Despite the distance it was one joyful celebration both spiritually and socially.

The parishioners of St. Anthony were inspired by the homily of Fr. Salameh's first Divine Liturgy on Sunday, May 24, 2020 and are fortunate to have him in residence for the next several weeks. At the end of June Reverend Adib will be given a permanent appointment. ■



# Pope Francis Calls for More Prayer During Pandemic

by Brandon Shulleeta

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Pope Francis has taken advantage of his public appearance to call upon us to pray for those in need — the elderly, hungry, sick, and jobless, the lonely, the despairing, not forgetting those who are dying alone, away from their families.

On several occasions, he's expressed gratitude for the selfless, including medical professionals who risks their lives for the good of others. He's recognized journalists reporting during the pandemic and has called on us to pray for them in their pursuit of truth.

The pope has reminded us that the quarantine offers a time for prayer and reading the Bible, while coming together as family, and to reflect on our commonalities as we “rediscover what truly matters.”

The Holy Father also asked for prayers for parents concerned about how to take care of their families and expecting mothers who are giving birth during a time of uncertainty.

Speaking from the small chapel inside the Casa Santa Marta guesthouse, the pope began his livestreamed Mass by asking that viewers join him in praying “for the nurses, men and women, girls and boys, who have this profession, which is more than a profession, it's a vocation, a dedication.”

The 82-year old pope has made use of social media to convey his message. These are his tweets (@Pontifex) since 28 February:

- **May 5:** Today we pray for the deceased who have died because of the pandemic. They have died alone, without the caresses of their loved ones. So many did not even have a funeral. May the Lord receive them into His glory. #PrayTogether
- **Apr 26:** Let us #PrayTogether for all those who are suffering from sadness, because they are alone, do not know what future awaits them, or cannot take care of their family because they have no job. Let us pray for them today.
- **Apr 21:** There's a lot of silence at this moment. May this silence, which is a bit new to what we are accustomed, teach us how to listen. Let us #PrayTogether that we might grow in our ability to listen.
- **Apr 18:** We remember the difficult task entrusted to healthcare providers, nurses and doctors, in caring for persons with disabilities who have come down with Covid-19. Let us #PrayTogether for persons with disabilities and those who assist them.
- **Apr 6:** The tragedy we are experiencing summons us to take seriously the things that are serious, and not to be caught up in those that matter less; to rediscover that life is of no use if not used to serve others. For life is measured by love.
- **Mar 28:** It is not the time of your judgement, but of our judgement: a time to choose what matters and what passes away, a time to separate what is necessary from what is not. It is a time to get our lives back on track with regard to you, Lord, and to others.
- **Mar 26:** If you find it hard to pray, don't give up. Be still; make space for God to come in; let Him look at you, and He will fill you with His peace. #Lent
- **Mar 17:** #PrayTogether for the elderly who are suffering in a particular way at this moment from great interior solitude, many times with a lot of fear. They gave us wisdom, life, our story... May we be near them with our prayer.
- **Feb 28:** #Lent is great time to make space for the Word of God. It is time to turn off the TV and open the Bible. It is a time to pull ourselves away from cell phones and connect ourselves to the Gospel. ■

# CHURCHES COPING



YOUTUBE.COM  
Bishop Gregory Mansour Says He Contracted COVID-19 by Helping a Parishioner, Would Do It Again

## Bishop Gregory Mansour

Eparchy of St. Maron of Brooklyn

My greatest joy in the midst of so much hardship was to be able to confirm my brother priests, as Saint Peter was asked to do by suffering with them the same social distancing and the same necessary pastoral outreach required in this pandemic.

I learned how to live without, as well as, what is necessary and good. I relearned that the Church and our family are the most important gifts God has given us, and how we love will be the standard on which we will be judged.

Since I was alone at my home and alone at my office, I had an opportune time to be with God for serious self-reflection. I did not have a morbid sense of aloneness, nor an exaggerated fear of death, rather a peaceful sense of knowing that one day I will stand before God's mighty throne and ask for mercy.

This past Lent and Easter have been "the best and the worst of times". Nonetheless, a loving, yet exacting God, has accompanied us. I am more confident in His mercy, yet acutely aware that He is asking so much more from us.

+ Gregory



## St. Ignatius of Antioch

Dayton, OH by Fr. Alex Harb

With the needs of social distancing, Fr. Alex Harb and St. Ignatius of Antioch Church in Dayton, OH, and Our Lady of Lebanon Mission in Columbus, OH, took to the internet. Six days a week, the parish hosts a 1-hour Bible and Book Study. The first 30 minutes are dedicated to studying the Psalms including a verse by verse commentary, poetic elements, differences between translations and versions as well as the ultimate fulfillment of many verses in Jesus. The second half hour is dedicated to studying ancient Christian documents including the Didache and the Letter of Clement to the Corinthians from the First Century, the Letters of St. Ignatius of Antioch from the year 108, and a selection of poems from St. Jacob of Serugh and St. Ephrem. Many of these readings were previously part of an anthology of works given to parishioners at Christmas and Easter. In addition to the serious studies, the hour is punctuated by jokes and one-liners to lighten things up a bit. Feel free to join in or catch up at [facebook.com/DaytonPrays](https://facebook.com/DaytonPrays).

**"There is hope ..."**

**"I learned how to live without ..."**

**Ministering Angels**

*"Technology is a great tool!"*

# CREATIVELY



## Zoom Socials | St. Rafka Church

Greer, SC by Fr. Bartholomew Leon

Like every other pastor in the world, I wondered how to keep people informed during the coronavirus pandemic. Our parish is blessed to have a good email system along with Facebook and Instagram accounts. Parishioner Wendi Hill, a young businesswoman, suggested we offer a Zoom Social Hour for parishioners. The note was put in the electronic bulletin and people clicked the Zoom invitation on the appropriate day and time. It was a wonderful success! To my great surprise, it was our older members of the community that jumped on this opportunity very quickly. We avoided politics and viral statistics. We raised a glass or two of whatever people were drinking at home! Both socials were about an hour and people came in and out. It was a great way to reconnect and to have conversations with members of the parish community. Technology is a great tool!

## Ministering Angels

Decades of living in Manhattan got me into the habit of eating in restaurants. I brought this habit to the parishes in which I have served and things went very well. No need for a cook or even shopping for groceries. I could simply go to a restaurant, sit down and ask for food. The food was brought to me. After I had eaten, I could simply walk away without doing the dishes.

But now, none of that is possible. Thank God, I am blessed with wonderful parishioners. I am not speaking of their faith or their dedication to the God and the Church, but their cooking skills! Almost every day, I find delicious and amazing dishes left in my doorway.

These good people are concerned about their priest. And the priest offers grateful prayers to God for the loving concern.

Chorbishop John D. Faris



## Bishop A. Elias Zaidan

Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon of Los Angeles

Since the COVID-19 Pandemic started, things have been strange in many ways. We have not been able to celebrate the Liturgy with our communities present in our Churches, but the message of the Gospel was still proclaimed. It is sad to see how this pandemic affected our Church attendance.

Social distancing may be keeping us physically apart, but it is teaching us the value of faith, family, and life. There is hope despite the coronavirus as we see the enriching of the domestic Church while our Church facilities are closed. For many of us, this time has helped us to focus on the essentials, on the spiritual meaning of our liturgical celebrations without the distractions of the outside world. We may be physically separate, but we are joined in thoughts and prayers. We hope to be closer to God, closer to our families, and grateful for each day we are given. Passion Week and the great Feast of the Resurrection were an especially poignant time because we suffered with Christ in a personal way.

During these difficult times, I had a great concern for all our people, for the well-being and good health of the faithful as well as the overall survival of our parishes. I keep praying for the speedy recovery of those who are infected and the people caring for them.

This pandemic will leave a scar in our memories, whether bishop, priests, deacons, subdeacons, or laypeople, but nonetheless, Christ rejuvenates us. Just as He conquered sin and death, so we know this is only a temporary time of hardship and as a people of hope, we will overcome this challenge like the others in our long and rich history. Each day Christ accompanies us, and we pray to our merciful and loving God for the fortitude and strength to stay strong amidst these challenges and for the health, well-being, and safety of all.

+Elias

# CHURCHES COPING

## "Angels at Your Door"

Lawrence, MA by Mark Tannoury

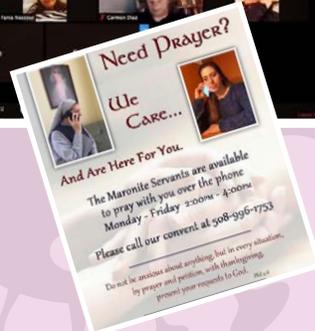
My sister, Tamara, and I, along with the MYO of Saint Anthony's Church in Lawrence, Massachusetts, have initiated the "Angels at Your Door" volunteer group. We deliver groceries, pharmacy necessities, and restaurant take-out foods to the homes of those in our parish community who need assistance. We remembered how difficult it was for our grandfather in Lebanon, who was confined to his home due to health problems, obtain the groceries he needed. Currently, the MYO and community volunteers have made 126 deliveries to very grateful parishioners, friends, and neighbors. We adhere to CDC guidelines wearing masks, gloves, head covers and gowns. It is obvious that there is mutual respect, appreciation, and camaraderie between the "Angels at Your Door" and the elderly. What a wonderful way to show kindness!



## Community Appreciation

Uniontown, PA by Dr. Mabel George Howard

In solidarity during this ongoing Coronavirus pandemic, we are forced to alter our daily lives by finding ways of coping creatively and showing kindness and determination in fighting this battle. We, the parishioners at Saint George Church in Uniontown, Pennsylvania, know that this horrific illness has left much of the population vulnerable and open to disaster. While medical experts advise us to follow specific health guidelines, we have become even more aware of the urgent need for our Frontline Workers. In recognizing the daily sacrifices performed by these brave men and women, we are especially grateful for the First Responders who serve and protect us in many ways. As a small token of our appreciation, the Ladies Guild of Saint George purchased hearty meals for the Uniontown City Police Department, Fire Department, and EMS First Responders. These men and women demonstrate courage and risk their lives to keep others safe from harm and lend help in times of despair. We are eager to show our support for such deserving individuals.



## MSCL Initiatives by Sister Therese

The Maronite Servants of Christ the Light, as spiritual mothers, have been reaching out virtually to connect and comfort people during COVID-19. In our mission of contemplative prayer and outreach, we have adapted during these months of social distancing by taking our mission online. We are hosting weekly bible sharing, worship music training, mini-retreats, and youth advisor and catechist mentoring. Each day we have a phone us prayer initiative: "Need Prayer, We Care." Please visit [maroniteservants.org](http://maroniteservants.org) for more information and if you have a specific prayer intention for the sisters to remember.

## The Future is Bright

by Rose Sahyoun, NAM President



Life as we had grown accustomed to is not quite the same anymore or does not exist anymore. There have been many devastating events happening, but soon a new day is coming. There is light at the end of the tunnel. The month of May is when flowers should begin to bloom, the weather is warmer, and we feel a new beginning. Most of us long to return to our churches to be with God and community.

As the country begins to open-up, NAM is moving forward. We had our Annual Spring Raffle and five people are happier. We are hoping our graduates and college students will apply for the scholarships that are available. The vocation poster and essay contest is still viable. More excitedly, we have already begun our plans for the 2021 Philadelphia NAM Convention. St. Maron's pastor, chairpersons, and NAM have had their first meeting... online. It was an exciting, enjoyable sharing of ideas and hoping for the future. We are excited to have meaningful workshops, praying together, sharing conversations, and dancing the night away. The thought of seeing and mingling with old and new friends is refreshing. It is exciting and invigorating planning for the future.

We need to renew ourselves both physically and spiritually. This is a renewal for all of us—like the feeling that spring is in the air.

See you in Philadelphia.

## Celebrating the Mercy of God

St. Sharbel Church,  
Clinton Township, MI  
by Dianne Bartolomeo

St. Sharbel Church in Clinton Township, MI, gathered on Sunday, 19 April 2020, to celebrate the conclusion of the Divine Mercy Novena. With social distancing in mind, we had over sixty cars in the church parking lot filled with families young and old, praying with Chorbishop Alfred Badawi as he celebrated Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. With the church bells loudly ringing, and praying in our vehicles, we joined spiritually in the procession that circled the church parking lot three times.



## Alternative Teaching – The Covid Way

Mary, Mother of the Light Academy, Tequesta, FL by Judy Harris, Director

Since March, we all have been facing challenges we never could have dreamed of in different ways. For us, at MMOLA, we asked ourselves: how do we continue to stay connected with our students while they are not in our classrooms?

We have organized Facebook Live and Zoom classes for each of our enrichment classes. We also added one class per week for each teacher, since we had five academic teachers and five enrichment teachers, this worked out well. Our teaching aides wanted to contribute so they began a "Story Time" on our Facebook page a few times each week. Most are doing this from their homes, a few come into the school to "produce" their classes. We also upload articles of interest and suggestions for parents such as art projects, family activities, social and emotional support and helpful tips for teaching at home.

This transition hasn't come without a few trials and tribulations. We are teachers not techies. We have had some real laughs over our own leaning process. I was helping one of my teachers operate a new iPad for her Facebook Live class and I slipped right off the stool I was sitting on in front of a dozen students and their parents! She just kept going like nothing happened.

We cannot wait to have the children back in the classroom. But I am blessed to have a willing and heartfelt staff that have the interest of our children first even as they deal with their daily issues of this new way of living at home.

## A Healing Presence: Becoming Eucharist *by Sr. Therese Maria Touma, MSCL*

One June night as a young novice, I was awakened by a soft breeze coming through the open window. My room was on the third floor of the motherhouse with a view of the chapel roof and bell tower. Lying there, I looked out at the cross fixed atop the bell tower. It was illuminated by a full moon which at that exact moment was perfectly centered behind the cross. The large glowing moon reminded me of the Host being

elevated at the consecration and of Jesus offering himself for us on the cross. As soon as I witnessed this beautiful scene, the moon quickly progressed on its course and sailed out of view.

That morning at prayer I reflected on the moon and the cross, recalling how beautiful it was. I related the experience to my novice director who suggested that I pray about it to discover its meaning for me. A few days later I came to an understanding that Jesus was assuring me that in the crosses of my life, the Eucharist will be my strength. Jesus and His

Real Presence and receiving Communion have been my steadfast source of strength and peace.

What a treasure and gift we have in the Eucharist, an encounter with “heaven on earth,” as Saint John Paul II has said. Yet, these difficult months of sheltering in place and virtual Liturgies on social media have heightened the experience of the absence of Jesus in His Real Presence.

We all share in this common experience of not being able to go to our churches and it is a real suffering. I just said that the Eucharist is a source of strength in suffering. How can we experience this when we are prevented from going to church? During this pandemic, Jesus is calling us to go deeper in our understanding of Eucharist. I can hear my novice director challenging me again to ask God, what more did that scene mean? Have we been seeking Jesus just to get something from him and neglecting or missing where Jesus is so visibly present?

Jesus is present in our family members that we are living so closely with these days and who call from us more patience and attention. Jesus is present in the sick, in the needy and in the poor. We have a beautiful opportunity to reach out to Jesus by our giving to the others that God is putting in our path. We are being called to help out, to give back.

This is our time to truly live the Eucharist and to be the bread that is broken and given. It can take the shape of family prayer at home, on-line prayer groups, donations to the poor, reaching out to a neighbor to help with groceries, and the many other creative ways to show our generosity. The presence of Jesus is alive with opportunities to love in action and this brings healing. ■





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## Passing of Hilda Matta Saadeh

Bishop Gregory J. Mansour received the sad news of the passing of Mrs. Hilda Matta Saadeh, mother of Father Bassam Saade. On May 20, fortified by the sacred mysteries given by her own priest son, Hilda passed with her children and family present. She was 92 years of age.

A devoted wife and mother, Hilda now joins her beloved husband Michel. She is survived by her six children: Liliane, Ghassan (Gus), Christiane, Father Bassam, Michel and Sam. She is also the grandmother of thirteen and great grandmother of five.

May Hilda, after a long, fruitful and extraordinarily devoted life, now rest in God's light and peace.

Condolences may be sent to Reverend Bassam Saade at:

Our Lady of Lebanon Church  
 2055 Coral Way  
 Miami, FL 33145



# Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn Policy on Child and Youth Protection

*The Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn publishes its reviewed and revised Policy on Sexual Abuse of Minors by Priests or Deacons. The same policy is also available online at <http://www.stmaron.org>. The Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon has its own policy and it is also available online at [eparchy.org](http://eparchy.org)*

**A**s Catholics and Maronites, we consider the welfare and protection of our children a sacred responsibility. We hereby promulgate the following Eparchial norms as an implementation of Essential Norms for Diocesan/Eparchial Policies Dealing with Allegations of Sexual Abuse of Minors by Priests or Deacons approved by the Congregation for Bishops on December 8, 2002.

## Definitions

*Sexual Abuse of a minor* includes sexual molestation or sexual exploitation of a minor; the acquisition, possession or distribution of pornographic images of a minor; and other behavior by which an adult uses a minor as an object of sexual gratification.

For purposes of this policy, a minor shall be construed to include anyone who has not attained the age of eighteen (18) years as well as anyone who lacks the use of reason regardless of his or her actual chronological age.

## Response

The healing of victims, their families and their community from the effects of sexual abuse by church leaders begins when the allegations of such abuses are received. When victims decide to disclose the abuse, it is important that the response they receive be compassionate and non-judgmental.

Anyone receiving an allegation of abuse will respond in a pastoral, supportive manner, leaving investigative concerns to those who serve in that role.

An allegation will be received without initial judgment as to the truth of the complaint. No intimation of blame will be made by the initial recipient of information. Individuals making allegations will be supported positively in their decision to disclose.

The Eparchial Bishop will designate a competent person to coordinate assistance for the immediate pastoral care of persons who claim to have been sexually abused when they were minors by priests or deacons. This Victim Assistance Coordinator will assess and respond to the immediate and long-term needs of the alleged victim and family, the alleged offender, parish communities and others that are affected by the disclosure of sex abuse.

The Victim Assistance Coordinator will serve as a consultant to the Eparchial Bishop and the Review Board.

Any individual wishing to report a claim of sexual abuse is encouraged to contact the Victim Assistance Coordinator, Rosanne Solomon, at:

Eparchy of Saint Maron | 109 Remsen St. | Brooklyn, New York 11201  
Tel: (617) 327-1317 | (718) 237-9913

## Review Board

The Review Board is a predominantly lay board composed of a variety of professionals duly appointed to assist the Eparchial Bishop in a strictly confidential and consultative capacity. It will have no final decision-making authority, which authority will continue to reside exclusively with the Eparchial Bishop.

## Board Functions

- To advise the Eparchial Bishop in his assessment of allegations of sexual abuse of minors and in his determination of suitability for ministry;
- To review Eparchial policies for dealing with sexual abuse of minors;
- To offer advice on all aspects of sexual abuse cases, whether retrospectively or prospectively.

## Membership

The Review Board, established by the Eparchial Bishop, will be composed of five members of outstanding integrity and good judgment in full communion with the Church. The majority of the board will be lay persons not in the employ of the Eparchy. These will include:

- A parent
- A parish pastor/administrator
- An attorney
- An individual with investigative experience

The Eparchial Bishop may deem it desirable that the Promoter of Justice participate in the meetings of the Review Board. The Vicar General and Eparchial Attorney participate in the annual meeting of the Review Board but are not considered members of the Board.

## Appointment

Members appointed by the Eparchial Bishop will serve a five (5) year term.

All Review Board members will adhere to the rules of strict confidentiality with regard to all deliberations and information received.

## Reporting

In all cases of alleged or suspected or known child abuse committed by a priest or deacon, the Eparchy will comply with all applicable civil laws in respect to reporting the allegations and will cooperate with civil authorities in the investigation.

Any priest or deacon, who knows from the external forum that a minor has been sexually abused, is required to report that knowledge or suspicion to the Eparchial Bishop in accordance with the norms of canon law and to the civil authorities.

## Investigation

When an allegation of sexual abuse of a minor by a priest or deacon is received, a preliminary investigation in accordance with canon law will be initiated and conducted promptly and objectively (Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches [CCEO], c. 1468). The purpose of the Eparchial investigation is to ensure that the Eparchial Bishop has a complete, thorough, and accurate report of the alleged incident. The investigation will be conducted by an investigator appointed by the Review Board. The investigator will report his findings in writing to the Eparchial bishop and to the Review Board.

The accused will immediately be called by the Eparchial Bishop or his delegate and be made aware of the allegation against him and the identity of the accuser. The accused will remain in his position until the initial investigation is completed, which is to be done as expeditiously as possible.

All appropriate steps shall be taken to protect the reputation of the accused and the accuser during the investigation. The accused will be encouraged to retain the assistance of civil and canonical counsel and will be promptly notified of the results of the investigation.

When there is sufficient evidence that sexual abuse of a minor has occurred, the Eparchial Bishop will notify the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. The Eparchial Bishop shall then apply the precautionary measures mentioned in CCEO, c. 1473 that is, remove the accused from the sacred ministry or from any ecclesiastical office or function. The Eparchial Bishop may impose or prohibit residence in a given place or territory, and prohibit the public participation in the Most Holy Eucharist pending the outcome of the process.

In every case involving canonical penalties, the processes provided for in canon law will be observed, and the various provisions of canon law will be considered.<sup>1</sup> Unless the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, having been notified, calls the case to itself because of special circumstances, the Eparchial Bishop will follow the directions of the Congregation on how to proceed.<sup>2</sup> If the case would otherwise be barred by prescription, because sexual abuse of a minor is a grave offense, the Eparchial Bishop shall apply to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith for a dispensation from the prescription, while indicating appropriate pastoral reasons.

For the sake of due process, the accused is encouraged to retain the assistance of civil and canonical counsel. When necessary, the Eparchy will supply canonical counsel to the cleric.

The Eparchy will conduct a judicial process of the case according to the appropriate canons and practice of the Church. The accused may be requested to seek, and may be urged voluntarily to comply with, an appropriate medical and psychological evaluation at a facility mutually acceptable to the Eparchy and the accused.

In every instance, the Eparchy will advise and support a person's right to make a report to public authorities.

## Ministry/Service

No priest or deacon removed from an Eparchial position for allegations of sexual abuse of a minor will return to ministry or service before their case is assessed and fitness is determined by the Eparchial Bishop in consultation with the Review Board. The safety of children is the paramount consideration governing the formation of recommendations regarding the future ministry of one accused of abuse.

An allegation of sexual abuse of a minor made against a priest or deacon will be deemed established if, with due respect for the provisions of canon law:

- The accused individual admits to conduct defined by this policy as sexual abuse
- A civil court of criminal law finds the accused guilty of a crime that consists of conduct defined by this policy as sexual abuse, or the accused pleads guilty or no contest to a crime that consists of conduct defined by this policy as sexual abuse.
- The appropriate ecclesiastical tribunal finds the accused guilty of the crime.

When an act of sexual abuse by a priest or deacon is admitted or is established after an appropriate process in accord with canon law, the offending priest or deacon will be removed from ecclesiastical ministry, not excluding dismissal from the clerical state, if the case so warrants.

At all times, the Eparchial Bishop has the executive power of governance, through an Administrative act, to remove an offending priest or deacon from office, to remove or restrict his faculties, and to limit the exercise of his ministry. For the sake of the common good and observing the provisions of canon law, the Eparchial Bishop shall exercise this power of governance to ensure that any Priest or Deacon who has committed an act of sexual abuse of a minor as described above shall not continue in the active ministry.

The priest or deacon may at any time request a dispensation from the obligations of the clerical state. In exceptional cases, the Eparchial Bishop may

<sup>1</sup>Cf. *Canonical Delicts Involving Sexual Misconduct and Dismissal from the Clerical State*, 1995; Letter from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, May 18, 2001.

<sup>2</sup>Article 16, of the 2010 Revised Procedural Norms for the *Moto proprio Sacramentorum sanctitatis tutela*.

request of the Holy Father the dismissal of the priest or deacon from the clerical state *ex officio*, even without the consent of the priest or deacon.

Care will always be taken to protect the rights of all parties involved, particularly those of the person claiming to have been sexually abused and the person against whom the charge has been made. When an accusation has proved to be unfounded, every step possible will be taken by the Eparchial Bishop to restore the good name of the priest or deacon falsely accused.

No priest or deacon who has committed an act of sexual abuse of a minor will be transferred for ministerial assignment to another eparchy/diocese or religious province.

Before a priest or deacon is transferred for residence to another eparchy/diocese or religious province, the Eparchial Bishop shall forward, in a confidential manner, to the local bishop or religious superior of the proposed place of residence any and all information concerning any act of sexual abuse of a minor

and any other information indicating that he has been or may be a danger to children or young people.

The Eparchial Bishop will not consider receiving a priest or deacon into the Eparchy from another jurisdiction without previously obtaining the necessary information regarding the moral and civil record of the priest or deacon in question.

### Prevention

The Eparchy of Saint Maron has promulgated a Code of Ethics and Integrity in Ministry to be adhered to all persons in positions of trust in the Eparchy.

All Eparchial programs designed to certify clerics, eparchial employees, and volunteers who serve children on a regular basis will include segments that address child sexual abuse. The training curriculum will include information concerning: signs and symptoms, dynamics of child abuse, impact of child abuse, intervention strategies, reporting requirements and community resources. ■

## Internet and Social Media Guidelines for the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn

The following are a list of general guidelines to cover the use of the Internet websites and other social media sites. These guidelines, along with the recently issued United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) Social Media Guidelines <http://www.usccb.org/comm/socialmediaguidelines.shtml>, should cover most situations faced by any Pastor Administrator.

- The use of official parish websites and other social media platforms are entrusted to the confidence of the Pastor/Administrator and the Bishop. It is important to remember that once something is placed on the Internet, there are no deletions; it will remain forever in cyberspace. Thus, the Pastor/Administrator or his delegate should keep close watch over all postings to ensure that none of them is harmful, embarrassing, dangerous, or illegal.
- Any unofficial websites associated with the parish must carry a disclaimer reflecting that postings are not the expressed opinion of the Parish, Eparchy or the Magisterium of the Catholic Church.

- The official website of the parish must reflect the dignity of the Church, thus web-hosting companies, paid for by advertising, should be avoided. The Church has no control over the advertising that could, at a minimum, reflect badly on the dignity of the Church.
- Due to privacy concerns, only business (not personal) accounts may be established on all social media platforms. That is because business accounts do not have an open wall and only allow for posting by the administrator. The Pastor/Administrator or a designated responsible adult should be the only administrator and the account should carry a disclaimer.
- No photos of children taken in a private setting should be posted on a parish or personal website or on other social media sites. Photos of children taken in public settings should be posted according to the desires of the parents.
- Church personnel are not to use Church computers for personal social media sites.

These sites raise numerous security and privacy concerns for the Church. The Pastor/Administrator is to make sure there are enough filters in place to prevent access to improper and unwanted material.

- Use by Church personnel of a Church computer to access, view and/or download pornographic images of a person under the age of eighteen (18) years or of a person who lacks the use of reason regardless of his or her chronological age shall constitute grounds for dismissal. The Pastor/Administrator shall immediately report such conduct to the appropriate civil authority for investigation and/or prosecution, as well as to the Vicar General or Eparchial Bishop.
- Although the Eparchy cannot monitor or control personal accounts, in the context of one's use of social media (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc.), priests, deacons, religious, employees and volunteers should be mindful that postings and other statements made in these forums can be seen as connected to both both their professional role and the Church. ■



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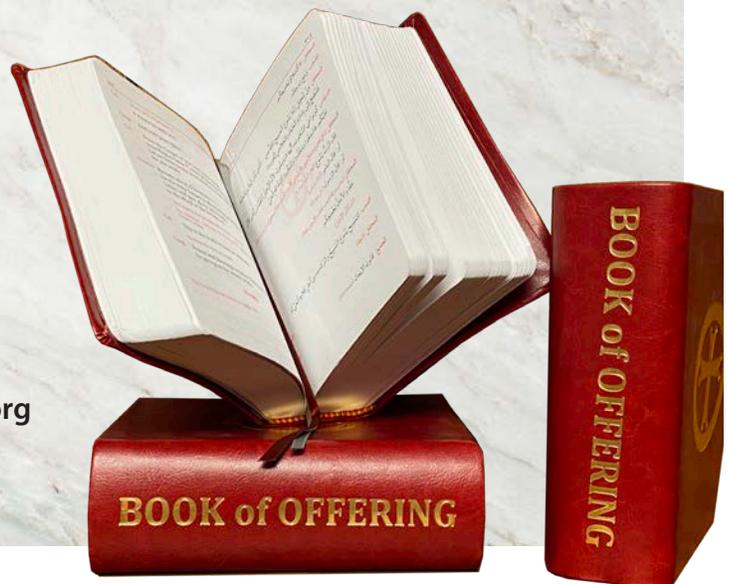


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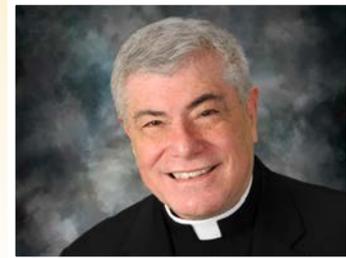
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# From the Editor



## A Grand Re-Opening

In an office where I worked many years ago, there was a kitchenette in which we were able to fix coffee and heat lunches. Installed for the sake of convenience, this kitchenette created some of the most contentious problems in our office because people left dishes in the sink, used other people's milk, coffee, etc. The response to solve the problem was to make regulations. These regulations determined in great detail who had to do what with regard to the sink, counters, table, coffee pot, refrigerator and microwave. The regulations were clear and reasonable, but dirty cups and messy surfaces and appliances persisted.

One thing was lacking. None of us took into account that these regulations were for everyone's benefit and required a commitment to the common good. Most of us assumed responsibility only for our own utensils, with no real concern for the general cleanliness for the benefit of everyone. (A coffee cup left by a visitor unfamiliar with rules would linger in the sink for days.) Beyond a lack of concern for the common good, we missed something else. If someone left a mess, we were given an opportunity to do some charity. We could clean it up! Was this fair? No. But none of us were promised fair treatment when we were born.

In the days ahead, several of our churches and societies are going to re-open. For some of us, this may be in the more distant future, but eventually we will all re-open. Hopefully, the pandemic will continue to diminish.

We need to be grateful for the courage of the real heroes, the doctors, nurse, health care workers and first responders. We offer grateful prayers to God for all of them.

We also need to be joyful! We will be able to leave our homes, work, play and enjoy the summer.

Unfortunately, until now I have not witnessed an abundance of gratitude and joy. There is uncertainty because we do not know how COVID-19 is going to further affect us. There is bickering and confusion about the time and manner of opening. There is fear, because it could get bad or even worse. I have a friend who is a federal corrections officer and contracted the disease after contact with inmates. He was very sick but got better. His father-in-law died from it. My friend is now hesitant to return to work out of fear of infecting his family.



We face two realities: the first is that the virus is still present and could come in a second wave. The second is that our society must re-open. Re-opening is not just about money; the delivery of goods and medicines need a supply chain. Hospitals cannot be restricted forever with regard to surgeries. We cannot be like the followers of Jesus who hid behind locked doors.

Opening churches and society requires lots of rules. Let us view all the rules as an expression of concern for the common good. Let us also consider the rules as an opportunity for charity. When we follow the rules, we are not doing so only out of concern for our own health, but also for the health of others. We don't follow them for the sake of a political position or ideology. We follow the COVID-19 rules because God gave us another rule: Love your neighbor. The rules may be deficient. They may be excessive. That can all be sorted out later. But they are intended to protect all of us. If there is a chance that observing a certain rule will protect a vulnerable person, that is enough to convince me to observe it.

We might be tempted to act otherwise. In the face of such rules, we could assert ourselves, our independence, our rights, but we follow a man who knelt down and washed the feet of his followers (JOHN 13:1-17). We follow a man who could summon armies of angels to fight on his behalf (MATTHEW 26:53) but did not. After telling Pontius Pilate that the only power the Roman governor had over him had been given to him (JOHN 19:11), Jesus did not assert his rights, but submitted to the will of another — ultimately for the salvation of the world. Jesus did not need to prove the power that he knew he had.

As we enter into a new phase of this crisis, let our attitude be one of joy and gratitude for the gift of life we have been given. With Pentecost, we shall celebrate the power of God's Spirit that has been given to us. We have been clothed with power on high (LUKE 24:49), let us be humble and cooperate out of love for God and neighbor. ■

John D. Faris

Chorbishop John D. Faris

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