

Volume 16 | Issue 4 | August 2019

the
Maronite **Voice**



Mary — “Our tainted nature’s solitary boast”
— William Wordsworth, “The Virgin”

the Maronite Voice



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Modern Lebanon at 100

by Bishop Gregory John Mansour

Maronite Patriarch Elias Peter Hoyek, the Father of Modern Day Lebanon, has moved one step closer to sainthood. On 6 July 2019, Pope Francis declared him Venerable, affirming his heroic virtues. By extension, if he is close to sainthood, then Lebanon, his great love, takes one more step forward as the blessed country of saints. And by saints, I mean those recognized by the

Church for their heroic sanctity, as well as those who work each day in holiness and love, and often go unnoticed.

During my recent trip to Lebanon, I spent some time with Caritas Lebanon, Catholic Relief Services, some communities of sisters, and a variety of Catholic institutions working to serve the poor. What amazing work

the Church provides for the Lebanese poor: hospitals, drug rehabilitation centers, schools, universities, nursing facilities, migrant worker centers, places to assist those with special needs, and health clinics.

Likewise, there is also an amazing outreach, subtle but substantial, to Palestinian, Syrian, and Iraqi refugees, now numbering more



than 40% of the entire population of this small but generous nation. How does Lebanon manage all this and survive? One can honestly say it is only by works of love, the grace of God, and the protective care of Mary and the saints.

Since its modern inception, and in the mind of Patriarch Hoyek who helped arrange her borders in 1919, Lebanon has always been a refuge for those seeking protection. Maronites, Armenians, and Syriac Christians made Lebanon their home. Sunnis, Shiites, and Druze likewise found shelter within her borders. More recently, Palestinians, Syrians, and Iraqis have fled their homelands to Lebanon.

In fact, the borders of Lebanon were deliberately designed 100 years ago to include Muslim and Christian communities. Further delineated in Lebanon's Pact of 1943, the 18 different Muslim and Christian religious communities pledged to live in relative harmony within the territory of Lebanon. This co-existence has been more or less harmonious, with the exception of 1958, and the tragic civil war between 1975 and 1990.

When the country began to rebuild after the civil war in the 1990's, Saint Pope John Paul II called Lebanon

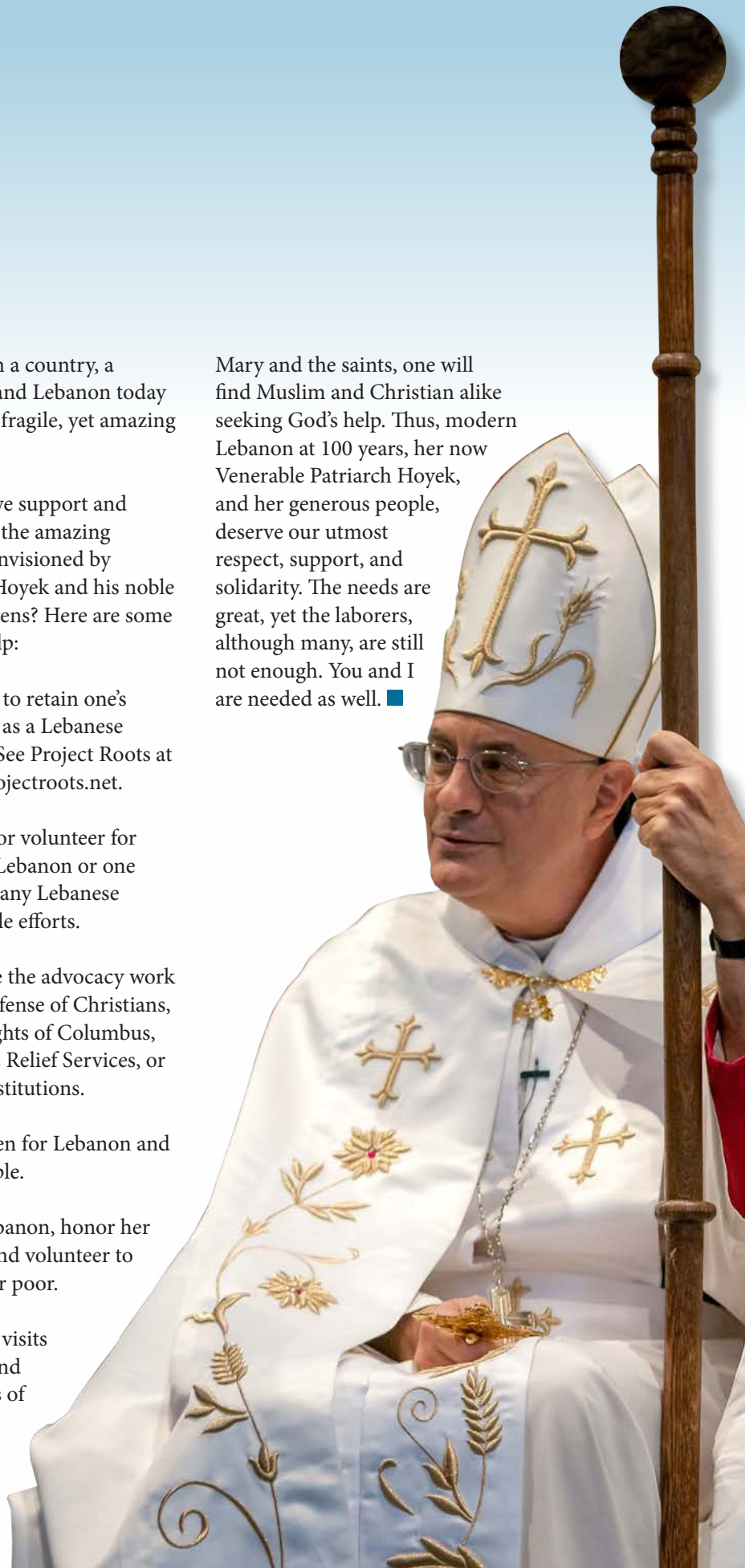
“more than a country, a message,” and Lebanon today is still that fragile, yet amazing message.

How can we support and encourage the amazing Lebanon envisioned by Patriarch Hoyek and his noble fellow citizens? Here are some ways to help:

1. Register to retain one's heritage as a Lebanese citizen. See Project Roots at www.projectroots.net.
2. Donate or volunteer for Caritas Lebanon or one of the many Lebanese charitable efforts.
3. Promote the advocacy work of In Defense of Christians, the Knights of Columbus, Catholic Relief Services, or other institutions.
4. Pray often for Lebanon and her people.
5. Visit Lebanon, honor her saints, and volunteer to serve her poor.

When one visits Lebanon and the shrines of

Mary and the saints, one will find Muslim and Christian alike seeking God's help. Thus, modern Lebanon at 100 years, her now Venerable Patriarch Hoyek, and her generous people, deserve our utmost respect, support, and solidarity. The needs are great, yet the laborers, although many, are still not enough. You and I are needed as well. ■



Schedule BISHOP GREGORY J. MANSOUR

- 10 AUGUST** Carnegie, PA | Our Lady of Victory Church | Pastoral Visit
- 11 AUGUST** Aliquippa, PA | Saint Teresa | Pastoral Visit
- 13-15 AUGUST** North Jackson, OH | National Shrine of Our Lady of Lebanon | Assumption Pilgrimage
- 25 AUGUST** Brooklyn, NY | Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral
- 31 AUG - 1 SEP** Uniontown, PA | St. George Church | Pastoral Visit and Annual Pilgrimage in Honor of Our Lady of Perpetual Help by the Ruthenian Byzantine Catholic Church and the Sisters of St. Basil
- 6-8 SEPTEMBER** Olean, NY | St. Joseph Church | 100th Anniversary
- 9 SEPTEMBER** Washington, DC | Our Lady of Lebanon Seminary | Pastoral Visit
- 10-11 SEPTEMBER** Washington, DC | USCCB | Meetings
- 11-12 SEPTEMBER** Baltimore, MD | Catholic Relief Services | Meetings
- 14 SEPTEMBER** Brooklyn, NY | Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral | Ordination to the Subdiaconate of Adonis El Asmar
- 14 SEPTEMBER** Brooklyn, NY | The Chancery | Inaugural Meeting of the Eparchial Stewardship Council
- 15 SEPTEMBER** Sleepy Hollow, NY | St. John Paul II Church | Pastoral Visit
- 22 SEPTEMBER** Brooklyn, NY | Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral
- 22 SEPTEMBER** Manhattan, NY | Church of the Holy Family | Liturgy
- 23-27 SEPTEMBER** Petersham, MA | Most Holy Trinity Monastery | Pastoral Visit
- 29 SEPTEMBER** Brooklyn, NY | Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral
- 2 OCTOBER** Brooklyn, NY | The Chancery | Presbyteral Council
- 3 OCTOBER** Brooklyn, NY | The Chancery | Finance Council
- 3 OCTOBER** Manhattan, NY | Eparchial Benefit Dinner
- 4-6 OCTOBER** San Antonio, TX | MYA Retreat
- 12-13 OCTOBER** Raleigh, NC | Dedication of New Church
- 18-20 OCTOBER** North Jackson, OH | National Shrine, Deacon and Subdeacon Retreat

Tenth Annual Benefit Dinner for Eparchy of Saint Maron Set for October 3

The Tenth Annual Benefit Dinner in Manhattan for the Eparchy of Saint Maron will occur on Thursday, October 3 at the New York Athletic Club overlooking Central Park. In addition to highlighting the work of the Eparchy, the Dinner will recognize three special honorees: Tony Loubnan, Antoun Sehnaoui, and Salma Besheer Vahdat.

Tony Loubnan served for 25 years as President of the Parish Council for Saint Sharbel Parish in New Jersey. Antoun Sehnaoui, together with Cardinal Timothy Dolan, created the Shrine of

Saint Sharbel at Saint Patrick Cathedral in Manhattan. Salma Besheer Vahdat has been a constant support for Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral and the Brooklyn community for decades.

Over the years, the Annual Benefit Dinner has provided significant financial support for the seminarians, missions, retired priests and ministries of the Eparchy of Saint Maron. In addition, the Benefit Dinner helps Maronites abroad, by allowing the Eparchy to look beyond its needs to help the Church in the Middle East.

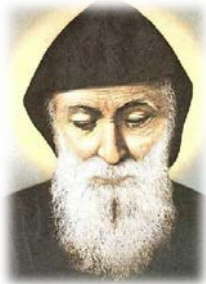
Bishop Gregory Mansour invites all of the faithful of his Eparchy to support the Benefit Dinner, stating “I invite everybody to join with us on October 3, in person or in spirit, and I ask every person to contribute to this year’s Benefit Dinner to the extent they can.”

Tickets are available online at www.stmaron.org, or by calling the Eparchy at 718-237-9913. The deadline for ticket purchases is September 29. Information can also be obtained by emailing saintmaron@yahoo.com. ■

Schedule **BISHOP A. ELIAS ZAIDAN**

- 10-11 AUGUST** El Paso, TX | St. Sharbel Church | Consecration of New Church
- 13-15 AUGUST** North Jackson, OH | National Shrine of Our Lady of Lebanon | Assumption Pilgrimage
- 16-18 AUGUST** Cincinnati, OH | St. Anthony Church | Pastoral Visit
- 25 AUGUST** Cleveland, OH | St. Maron Church | Bishop Peter Karam's Pontifical Divine Liturgy & Banquet
- 31 AUG - 1 SEP** Portland, OR | St. Sharbel Church | Pastoral Visit & Ordination to the Diaconate of Subdeacon Peter Zogbi
- 13-15 SEPTEMBER** Los Angeles, CA | Our Lady of Mt. Lebanon-St. Peter Cathedral
- 14-17 SEPTEMBER** Welcome of Mother Marie Antionette Saade, Superior General of the Congregation of Maronite Sisters of the Holy Family
- 21-22 SEPTEMBER** Lombard, IL | Our Lady of Lebanon Church | Pastoral Visit
- 23-27 SEPTEMBER** El Paso, TX | USCCB Subcommittee on Catholic Home Missions
- 29 SEPTEMBER** St. Louis, MO | St. Raymond Cathedral
- 3 OCTOBER** Newton, MA | Annunciation Cathedral | Anniversary of Bishop Nicholas James Samra
- 4-6 OCTOBER** San Antonio, TX | St. George Church | MYA National Workshop and Ordination to the Subdiaconate of Ernest Karam, Joseph Harb, and Raymond Dustin
- 12 OCTOBER** Orange, CA | St. John Maron Church | Pastoral Visit
- 13 OCTOBER** Los Angeles, CA | Our Lady of Mt. Lebanon-St. Peter Cathedral
- 18-20 OCTOBER** North Jackson, OH | National Shrine of Our Lady of Lebanon | Inter-Eparchial Deacon and Subdeacon Retreat

JOIN THE ORDER OF SAINT SHARBEL



ORDER OF SAINT SHARBEL SUNDAY

All parishes are asked to promote the Order on Sunday, October 13, 2019.

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.

The Assumption of Mary: Full of Grace

by Fr. David A. Fisher

*When your saving plan was accomplished, you returned to your Father,
and then drew your Mother, who was full of grace, to yourself and seated her at your right hand.*

– MARONITE RAMSHO OF THE ASSUMPTION OF THE VIRGIN

Introduction

Every year, on 15 August, the Church celebrates the Feast of the Assumption or Dormition of the All-Holy Mother of God. In remembering the “falling asleep” and bodily assumption of Mary, the Church calls us to contemplate the power and majesty of God’s grace in the greatest of our race, the Holy Virgin of Nazareth.

Like John the Baptizer, Mary’s life never pointed toward herself but to her Son and Lord, Jesus Christ. As the Mother of the Word-Made-Flesh, she is the Mother of the Church, which is the Body of Christ on earth. From the time of the early Church, Christians have realized that she alone represents what a life “full of grace” can achieve: death without bodily corruption and fullness of life in the Kingdom of Heaven.

Four Marian Dogmas

Dogma is an essential expression of the foundations of our Catholic faith. The Catholic Church has proclaimed *four Marian dogmas of faith*. Two have been proclaimed by ecumenical councils of the Church and two by popes.

Mary, the Mother of God

The first dogma concerning Mary is that of being proclaimed *Theotókos* rendered in English as Mother of God, by the Second Ecumenical Council of Ephesus 431. The teaching of the Council was to protect the Christological truth of the two natures of Christ: Jesus in his Incarnation is truly eternally the Son of God and now also truly human, and as God made Man, was born of the Virgin Mary:

begotten from the Father before the ages as regards his Godhead, and in the last days, the same, because of us and because of our salvation begotten from the Virgin Mary, the Theotokos, as regards his manhood; one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church goes on

Called in the Gospels “the mother of Jesus,” Mary is acclaimed by Elizabeth, at the prompting of the Spirit and even before the birth of her son, as “the mother of my Lord.” In fact, the One whom she conceived as man by the Holy Spirit, who truly became her Son according to the flesh, was none other than the Father’s eternal Son, the second person of the Holy Trinity. Hence the Church confesses that Mary is truly “Mother of God” (*Theotokos*.)” (n. 495)



Mary ever Virgin

The second Marian dogma defines Mary as “Ever Virgin” or *Aeiparthenos*. The Church’s belief that Mary retained her virginity before, during, and after the birth of Jesus is found in the earliest baptismal formulas, in the teachings of the early Church father St. Ignatius of Antioch, and in the teaching of the Lateran Council of 649, which stated that Mary, “without any detriment to her virginity, which remained inviolate even after his birth.” In his *Epistle to the Smyrnaeans*, St. Ignatius of Antioch remarked of Mary:

You are firmly convinced about our Lord, who is truly of the race of David according to the flesh, Son of God according to the will and power of God, truly born of a virgin ...

The Catechism of the Catholic Church drawing upon the Second Vatican Council writes:

The deepening of faith in the virginal motherhood led the Church to confess Mary’s real and perpetual virginity even in the act of giving birth to the Son of God made man. In fact, Christ’s birth “did not diminish his mother’s virginal integrity but sanctified it.” (n. 499)

And so the liturgy of the Church celebrates Mary as *Aeiparthenos*, the “Ever-virgin.”

Mary Immaculate

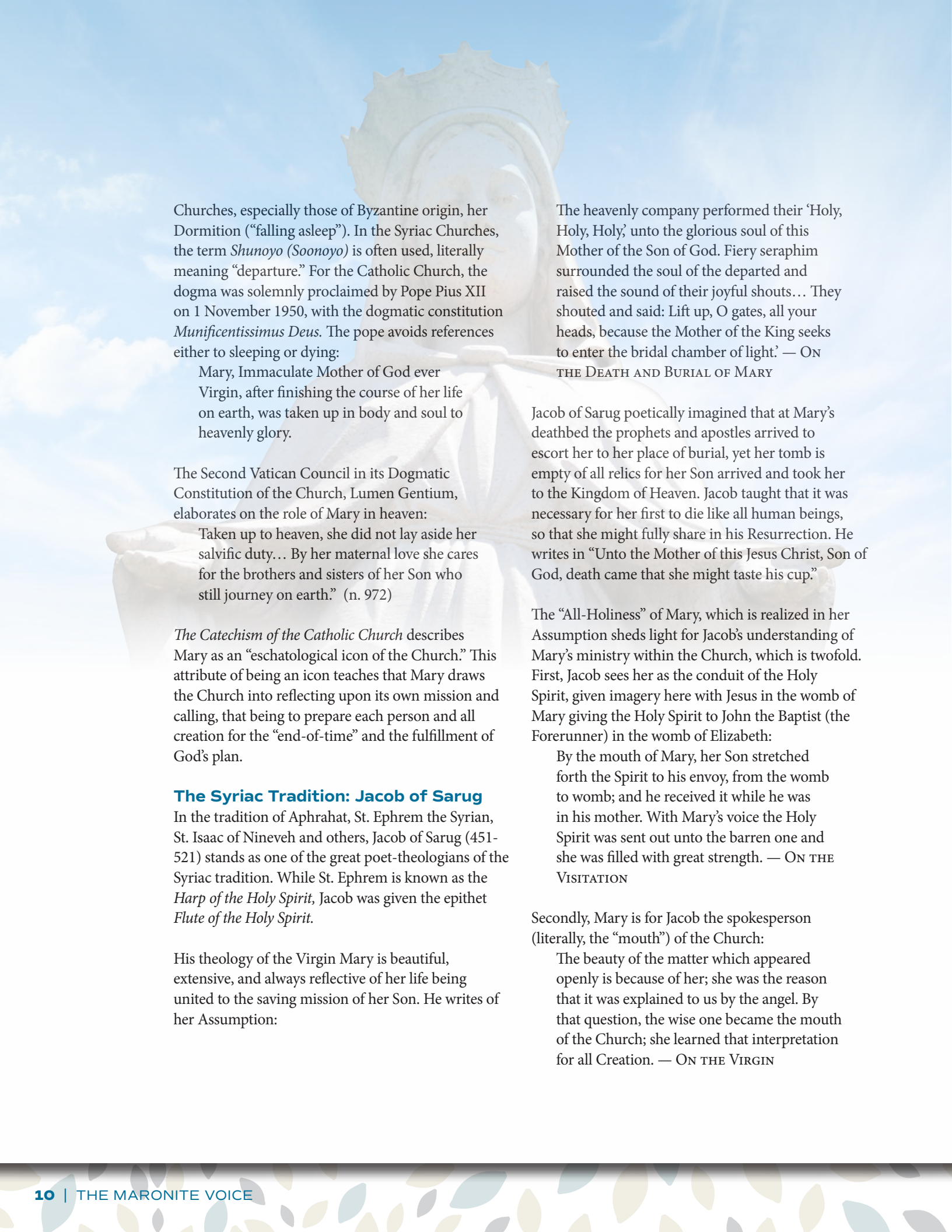
The third dogma associated with Mary is that of her Immaculate Conception. This dogma was proclaimed in 1854 by Blessed Pius IX in *Ineffabilis Deus*, which teaches:

that the most Blessed Virgin Mary, from the first moment of her conception, by a singular grace and privilege from Almighty God and in view of the merits of Jesus Christ, was kept free of every stain of original sin.

This dogma is interesting from an ecumenical perspective; it is the only one of the four Marian dogmas not totally shared with the Eastern Orthodox Churches. Orthodox Christians speak of Mary as being *immaculate* and by that they mean she did not commit sin. The Orthodox Churches have a different theology of “original sin,” understanding the *sin of Adam* resulting in *death*, rather than a passed on *compulsion* towards sinning; this means the doctrine is understood in a slightly different manner. However, both traditions Orthodox and Catholic would agree that Mary is “All-Holy” and totally obedient to God from the moment of her conception and throughout her entire life.

The Assumption of Mary

The fourth Marian dogma is that of her Assumption or what is commonly referred to in the Eastern



Churches, especially those of Byzantine origin, her Dormition (“falling asleep”). In the Syriac Churches, the term *Shunoyo* (*Soonoyo*) is often used, literally meaning “departure.” For the Catholic Church, the dogma was solemnly proclaimed by Pope Pius XII on 1 November 1950, with the dogmatic constitution *Munificentissimus Deus*. The pope avoids references either to sleeping or dying:

Mary, Immaculate Mother of God ever Virgin, after finishing the course of her life on earth, was taken up in body and soul to heavenly glory.

The Second Vatican Council in its Dogmatic Constitution of the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, elaborates on the role of Mary in heaven:

Taken up to heaven, she did not lay aside her salvific duty... By her maternal love she cares for the brothers and sisters of her Son who still journey on earth.” (n. 972)

The Catechism of the Catholic Church describes Mary as an “eschatological icon of the Church.” This attribute of being an icon teaches that Mary draws the Church into reflecting upon its own mission and calling, that being to prepare each person and all creation for the “end-of-time” and the fulfillment of God’s plan.

The Syriac Tradition: Jacob of Sarug

In the tradition of Aphrahat, St. Ephrem the Syrian, St. Isaac of Nineveh and others, Jacob of Sarug (451-521) stands as one of the great poet-theologians of the Syriac tradition. While St. Ephrem is known as the *Harp of the Holy Spirit*, Jacob was given the epithet *Flute of the Holy Spirit*.

His theology of the Virgin Mary is beautiful, extensive, and always reflective of her life being united to the saving mission of her Son. He writes of her Assumption:

The heavenly company performed their ‘Holy, Holy, Holy,’ unto the glorious soul of this Mother of the Son of God. Fiery seraphim surrounded the soul of the departed and raised the sound of their joyful shouts... They shouted and said: Lift up, O gates, all your heads, because the Mother of the King seeks to enter the bridal chamber of light.’ — ON THE DEATH AND BURIAL OF MARY

Jacob of Sarug poetically imagined that at Mary’s deathbed the prophets and apostles arrived to escort her to her place of burial, yet her tomb is empty of all relics for her Son arrived and took her to the Kingdom of Heaven. Jacob taught that it was necessary for her first to die like all human beings, so that she might fully share in his Resurrection. He writes in “Unto the Mother of this Jesus Christ, Son of God, death came that she might taste his cup.”

The “All-Holiness” of Mary, which is realized in her Assumption sheds light for Jacob’s understanding of Mary’s ministry within the Church, which is twofold. First, Jacob sees her as the conduit of the Holy Spirit, given imagery here with Jesus in the womb of Mary giving the Holy Spirit to John the Baptist (the Forerunner) in the womb of Elizabeth:

By the mouth of Mary, her Son stretched forth the Spirit to his envoy, from the womb to womb; and he received it while he was in his mother. With Mary’s voice the Holy Spirit was sent out unto the barren one and she was filled with great strength. — ON THE VISITATION

Secondly, Mary is for Jacob the spokesperson (literally, the “mouth”) of the Church:

The beauty of the matter which appeared openly is because of her; she was the reason that it was explained to us by the angel. By that question, the wise one became the mouth of the Church; she learned that interpretation for all Creation. — ON THE VIRGIN

By asking an explanation from the Archangel Gabriel for the words he spoke to her, and understanding that the angel was bringing the message of salvation to all, she consented to give birth to the Redeemer of the world, making her the perfect spokesperson of the Church — “let it be done unto me as you say.”

Conclusion

The dogmas and doctrines of the Church concerning the Holy Virgin Mary are teachings of hope and love. Scripture tells us that the Christian life can be understood in this way:

He said to him, ‘You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. The second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ (MATTHEW 22:37-39)

Mary lived her whole life in love of God and in love of neighbor, offering her Son, who was also her Lord; as her heart was pierced as if by swords, as He offered the perfect offering and sacrifice of love upon the altar of the Cross. She who is Queen of Angels and Queen of the Apostles, was present with them when Jesus appeared to them in the upper room and breathed upon them the soft of the Holy Spirit, the same Spirit by which he was conceived in the womb of the Holy Mother of God.

Each step of our life, each step of the Church’s life is guided by the beacon of Mary’s holiness. “Hail, Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you, blessed are you among women.” (LUKE 1:28) ■

Father Fisher, a Maronite priest and Adjunct Professor of Theology at the Byzantine Catholic Seminary of Ss. Cyril and Methodius, is a regular contributor to The Maronite Voice.

54th ANNUAL ASSUMPTION PILGRIMAGE

August 13-15, 2019

**Feast of the Assumption
Thursday, August 15th**



**BASILICA AND
NATIONAL SHRINE OF
OUR LADY OF LEBANON**

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Patriarch Elias Boutros Howayek

by Joe Waked

On July 6, 2019, Pope Francis declared the 72nd Patriarch of the Maronite Church, Elias Boutros Howayek, *Venerable*. This brings the patriarch, who was instrumental in the creation of the modern state of Lebanon, one step closer to sainthood. According to Vatican News, Pope Francis authorized the Congregation for the Causes of Saints to promulgate the decree of venerable on “the heroic virtues of the Lebanese Servant of God Elias [Howayek], Patriarch of Antioch of the Maronites, Founder of the Congregation of the Maronite Sisters of the Holy Family. He was born in Helta, Lebanon on 4 December 1843 and died in Bkerké, Lebanon on 24 December 1931.”

Elias Howayek was the oldest of seven children. His father, Tadros, was the village priest and was known as Father Boutros. His mother, Ghorra Tannous Howayek, was a saintly woman of immovable faith, known for her exemplary charity and piety. The family lived in poverty but enjoyed a life of love and fear of the Lord. At an early age, Elias developed a dedication to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, which only grew and deepened as he matured to manhood. His calling to the priesthood eventually led him to Rome where he was ordained on June 5, 1870 and received his doctorate in theology. He returned to Lebanon and served as the Patriarch’s personal secretary until December 1889, when he was ordained bishop and titular archbishop of ‘Araka, as well as Patriarchal Vicar. Finally, on January 7, 1899, he was elected Patriarch of Antioch and the East.

Patriarch Howayek had many remarkable virtues including his love and service to the poor of Lebanon and his passion for the godly building of families which led him to establish the missionary Congregation of the Maronite Sisters of the Holy Family in 1895. This was one year after he had been in Rome reestablishing the Pontifical Maronite College. His zeal led him across Europe and the



Middle East, building Maronite Churches and establishing Lebanese communities. Elias firmly believed that the education of young girls was the foundation of strong, faithful families and he charged the Maronite Sisters of the Holy Family with this solemn objective:

“God, Great and Most High, founded this dear Congregation in His providence and mercy, nurturing it and protecting it up till now...and [He] will protect and bless it till the end of time....”

He also led the Church through the terrible persecutions under Ottoman rule and became the symbol of hope for Maronites as his priests and religious fed and cared for the thousands of

hungry, homeless and impoverished Lebanese during World War I. After the war ended, a defiant Patriarch Howayek successfully advocated and lobbied European powers to keep Lebanon distinct and separate as its own nation, preserving its unique culture, and most importantly, the preservation of a Christian identity.

Patriarch Howayek continued living a Christ-like life of heroic virtue until his death, fittingly, on Christmas Eve, 1931. Later, upon the request of the Maronite Sisters of the Holy Family, his successor Patriarch Antoun Arida, authorized the transfer of the Patriarch's body to the crypt of the congregation's headquarters in Ebrine, on May 12th, 1936. Since that day, the crypt became a shrine for pilgrimage and prayer.

For Venerable Patriarch Howayek, the remaining step before beatification — when we may call him “Blessed Elias Howayek” — is the approval of a miracle. Such a supernatural event would be evidence of the intercessory power of the Venerable Servant of God and, thus, of his union after death with the Triune God. The Church conducts painstaking tribunals, both scientific and theological. While the scientific and medical commission rules that the cure is without natural explanation, the theological commission must rule whether the cure was a miracle in the strict sense, that is, by its nature *can only be attributed* to God. Ultimately, another such miracle is required following beatification as evidence for the final canonization of the Patriarch as “saint”.

God is raising up holy men and women for the sanctification of His Church in Lebanon. The Maronite Church can, not only survive, but grow and prosper in the world and in Lebanon especially — only if it heeds His call and imitates His righteous saints. ■



*G*lory be to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, now and forever. Amen

Our Holy Father, who sanctified the life of our father the Patriarch Elias Howayek, and blessed him with your heavenly benedictions, so he lived his life in gratitude to you and constantly relied on your providence, presenting his life as service to You and Your people. He remained united to You every moment of his life, never requesting anything but your pleasure.

I am offering You now, O Lord, my prayers, asking You, through his intercession, the grace (...) that I need. May it be for the salvation of my soul, for peace in my heart, and for my well-being, glory is yours till the end. Amen.

Election of Archbishop of Beirut and Two Bishops of Patriarchal Curia

The Synod of Bishops of the Maronite Patriarchal Church has elected as archbishop of Beirut, Bishop **Paul Abdel Sater**, currently bishop of the Patriarchal Curia.

The Synod of Bishops of the Maronite Patriarchal Church has elected as bishops of the Patriarchal Curia, the Rev. Antoine Aoukar, O.A.M., and the Rev. Peter Karam, to which the Holy Father has given his assent, and has assigned them the titular sees of Ptolomais in Phoenicia of the Maronites, and Arcena in Phoenicia of the Maronites.

Bishop-elect **Antoine Aoukar**, O.A.M., was born in 1964 in Mreiji, Beirut, Lebanon, gave his religious vows in 1995, and was ordained a priest in 1996. He holds a licentiate in mathematics from the Lebanese University, a licentiate in theology and another in biblical theology from the Institut Catholique of Lyon, and a doctorate in biblical studies from the Holy Spirit University of Kaslik.

Since ordination, he has held a number of pastoral and academic roles, including: professor of sacred scripture in various universities, parish priest,

chaplain of the Foi et Lumière Community, and superior of the Monastery of Mar Chaya. He is currently vicar general of his order.

Bishop-elect, **Peter Karam**, was born in 1959, in Beirut, Lebanon, and was ordained a priest in 1988. After studying at the Maronite Seminary in Washington, U.S.A., he obtained a licentiate from the Catholic University of America and a doctorate in philosophy from the Ludwig-Maximilians Universität in München, Germany.

Since ordination, he has served in a number of roles, including head of the Maronite Mission of Saint Joseph in Seattle, Washington; parish priest in Cleveland, Ohio; Director of the Office for the Protection of Minors, Director of Ongoing Formation of the Clergy, member of the college of consultors, and syncellus for the clergy. ■



Reflection on the 2019 Maronite Youth Organization National Retreat

Walsh University, North Canton, Ohio | 7-12 July *by José Awais*

This year's MYO National Retreat was an event I had been looking forward to for months and it did not disappoint. The theme was "Only Jesus." I was looking forward to seeing old friends that I had made at prior retreats and also to get closer to God. Having attended four previous national retreats and multiple regional retreats I had thought I knew what to expect from each day however I was pleasantly surprised each day. Every day was packed with activities which may seem exhausting from an outside view however each thing we did was unique and performed in an interesting way so that the long days flew by.

In the week we were given a talk about the Theology of the Body, presented by Jen Ricard and Seminarian Luke McNeil. The talk on the Theology of the Body was a great lesson on the teachings of the Bible and how our bodies were made in God's image. It elaborated on the story of Adam and Eve (found in Genesis) in more depth which helped us become more connected to our bodies since they are to be a place for God's presence. After this talk in smaller groups we elaborated on what it means to be a real man and how to be there for others along with being our best selves as teenage men.

We also later in the week took time out of our days to perform service projects around the community. As I went around a local park cleaning and tending to the land it allowed me to connect with the beautiful Earth that the Lord gave us. I also got to spend time with friends and bond with them doing something good for the environment, letting us all feel that we



did something productive in the name of God. These activities were balanced with adequate free time to enjoy ourselves, followed by fun parties with singing and dancing. The week was fully worth it and has brought me closer to the Lord. I look forward to attending in the future as an advisor so that I may help the MYO flourish. ■

José Awais is in the MYO from Our Lady of the Rosary Church, Carmichael, California.

National Apostolate of Maronites Gather in Miami for 56th Annual Convention

Over 1500 participants — one of the greatest number of registrants in history — from across the United States convened in Miami for the 56th annual NAM convention which was hosted by Our Lady of Lebanon Church, Miami. From June 26-30 at Loews Miami Beach Hotel in Miami Beach.

“Our theme for this year is centered on the Holy Cross of Our Lord,” said Father Saade, “nurtured by our Catholic faith and founded on our Maronite history, I pray this time together will encourage us to preserve our heritage, fulfill our mission, and create a vision for future Maronite generations.” The convention welcomes Maronites of all ages, including children, young adults, and families spanning across multiple generations. With this in mind, it is designed to educate all participants about the rich heritage and traditions of the Maronite Catholic faith. Enjoying continued growth in the United States, the National Apostolate of Maronites’ annual gathering focuses on enriching the organization’s principles, centered on the mission, history, faith, and heritage of the Maronite Church.

Bishop A. Elias Zaidan, bishop of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon of Los Angeles and Bishop Gregory John Mansour, bishop of the Eparchy of St. Maron of Brooklyn were present for the entire event. Also in their company was Archbishop Samir Nassar, Maronite archbishop of Damascus, Syria. Bishop-elect Peter Karam attended a portion of the convention. In a display of unity, Archbishop Thomas Wenski of Miami visited the Maronite bishops and clergy on June 26, during

celebration of the Divine Liturgy at the beginning of the clergy convocation at Our Lady of Lebanon Church. Expressing his delight to meet the Maronite bishops and clergy convening in Florida, he said “Your brothers in the Archdiocese of Miami pledge their prayers for a successful grace-filled convening here in South Florida.” Bishop Fernando Isern, retired bishop of the Diocese of Pueblo and a former priest of the Miami archdiocese, also joined the clergy in prayer.

This year’s convention aimed to bring guests together through hospitality, educational workshops, social activities, and spiritual events, including rosary prayer, adoration, and daily divine liturgies. This gathering of Maronites facilitates an environment aimed at inspiring a deeper understanding of one’s faith through education and spiritual immersion, and grants an opportunity to become acquainted with persons sharing similar cultural traditions. Together, children, youth, and young adults are encouraged to learn about, experience, and love the heritage they were born into so as to motivate future generations to come. Designed to build unity and strength as one, the host parish inaugurated the week with a Divine Liturgy celebrated by Bishop Mansour and other bishops visiting the parish. Together with 100 priests, nuns, and religious from around the country, the host parishioners and NAM guests enjoyed a beautiful and heartfelt mass inaugurating the annual convention, after which all were invited to dine together in the newly renovated parish hall. Prepared by the host community, the meal offered the local parishioners the opportunity to personally welcome their guests.





After participating in a clergy convocation during the first part of the week, several of the priests, deacons, subdeacons and religious chose to participate in the laity's convention during the latter part of the week. Everyone was invited to enjoy daily meals in the hospitality room where delicious Lebanese finger food was available for breakfast and lunch which was prepared, delivered, and served by the host parishioners, the Lebanese hospitality would not exist without a meal designed to unite. Educational workshops discussed interesting and imperative matters. These included "History of the Maronite Identity", led by Father Elie Saade, "St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, The Greatest Monument to our Heritage", led by George Elias, Esq., the last living founding member of the institution, "A Pastoral Approach to the Catechesis of the Maronite Church", led by Rev. Vincent Farhat and Rev. George Hajj, "Catholic Relief Services: a Catholic Response to Serve the Poorest of the Poor Throughout the World", led by Bishop Mansour and "Marriage in the Catholic Church", led by Chorbishop John D. Faris. These conversations were well attended and appreciated by all.

City and cultural excursions were organized and prepared to entice a variety of interests. Experiences included the Bayside boat tour and marketplace visit, a private Miami tour excursion, the Florida Everglades airboat tour and cultural immersion, an interactive visit to Little Havana, a testament to the Cuban heritage in Miami, beach and pool time, fast speed boat tours of Biscayne Bay, and a memorable visit to Our Lady of Lebanon Church, Miami, where visitors were given a personalized tour of the parish by Father Saade himself and treated to a home cooked meal topped off with St. Sharbel statue candle. Children and young adult programs attracted the youth, engaging them in various activities such as arts and crafts, fun games,

theology on tap, a pool party, a beachside BBQ, and spiritual graffiti, among others.

NAM guests were invited to begin their experience during a welcome reception and evangelical concert hosted by Our Lady of Lebanon Church and performed by Lebanese vocalist Carla Ramia. Her angelic voice and mesmerizing interpretation of age-old favorites inspired unity and prayer in song. This year's evening gatherings were very special. Lebanese superstars traveled from Lebanon to join the community in celebration. Local favorite Wassim Kattan and Lebanese star Amir Yazbeck wowed the crowd during the first dinner hafli, while Lebanese theatrical performer Ghassan Saliba, along with his band, entertained over 1300 people during the next evening's grand banquet. The evening's events also included a silent auction and raffle that were made possible by the generous contributions of host parishioners, local businesses, and professionals interested in supporting NAM's mission. Following an evening of song and dance, the NAM convention came to a close during Sunday's Divine Liturgy and farewell brunch.

A first in the history of the NAM convention, Tony Boumitri, the outgoing NAM president, accompanied by Rose Sahyoun, NAM's president-elect, presented to Father Elie Saade and to the parishioners of Our Lady of Lebanon Church a plaque depicting the icon of the Massabki brothers in appreciation of the host parish's success in surpassing the expectations of NAM and for magnificent hospitality offered.

Our Lady of Lebanon Church continued the NAM legacy. The overwhelming generosity, organization, and love shown during this year's NAM convention made a mark on everyone who had the privilege to be a part of this memorable experience. Let it be an inspiration for many years to come! ■

Father Vincent Farhat

Pastor, St. Maron Church, Philadelphia, PA *by Suzanne Tavani*

There are probably as many ways for an individual to recognize their vocation as there are stars in the sky. Each calling is unique to the individual's experiences and is acted upon at an appropriate time in their lives. At least, such is the case of Father Vincent Farhat whose journey proves that it's never too late!

Born the youngest of ten children in a family that was very active in their local church — St. Mary's Roman Catholic Cathedral in Lansing, Michigan — young Vincent first became involved in the life of the Church as an altar boy. When he was thirteen, his father helped to found St. Joseph Melkite Church in Lansing, where Vincent again served as an altar boy and played piano for the choir. His involvement with the Church also extended throughout his familial relationships. He and his family would travel frequently to Flint, Michigan, to visit Aunt Gloria and Uncle George Mansour and their children where, as a family, they attended Our Lady of Lebanon Maronite Catholic Church. This was his first introduction to the Maronite Church.

Father Vincent describes himself as having a very normal "All American" teenage life, even though he first started to think about a religious vocation at age seventeen. Although his parents were very supportive,

his father cautioned him with words he remembers until this day, "Vince, it's a very difficult life. Think about it." So, he thought about it and decided to attend college.

After two years of college in Michigan, he left for Florida, completed his studies and had what he described as a very normal life which included dating and hanging out with friends. However, the thought of a vocation was always in the back of his mind, and he wrote several letters on this topic to his cousin who had entered Our Lady of Lebanon Seminary in Washington, D.C.

Vincent was happily ensconced in a successful career in the restaurant industry and leasing and financing for a car dealership when, in 2004, he traveled to Lebanon for the ordination of his cousin, Gregory Mansour, as Bishop of the Eparchy of St. Maron. During that trip to Lebanon, the two cousins went for a long walk on the beach and discussed the topic of a possible vocation, as well as Farhat's gnawing concern as to whether or not he might be too old for such an undertaking and unworthy of such a vocation. The true turning point came during a 2005 visit to his mother in Michigan. While at Mass he listened to a priest's homily about why God chooses people for different reasons. He went home



and told his mother his mind was made up and he was entering the seminary. In 2006, Farhat entered Our Lady of Lebanon Maronite Seminary where at 42 years of age he was the oldest seminarian by at least 18 years!

After his ordination to the priesthood in 2010, his life took a few more unexpected turns. Happy and quite comfortable with his first assignment at St. Anthony Church in Lawrence, Massachusetts, Farhat was shocked when he received a call telling him that he would be moved to St. Maron Church in Philadelphia. Farhat says with a great deal of candor, "Moving to a new parish isn't always easy. I arrived in Philadelphia the same week the former pastor, Msgr. Sharbel Lischaa, passed away after

IN A SNAPSHOT

having served the parish for more than 30 years. I experienced a lot of growing pains that first year.” He now smiles when he recalls a conversation with Msgr. James Root who assured him, “You will cry when you are told to leave St. Maron’s and go to your next assignment.”

Upon his arrival in Philadelphia, Farhat put his business experience to work and undertook a series of projects including a complete renovation of the church hall, the renovation of the rectory, the expansion of the annual festival which has grown in size and revenue each year, the acquisition of new property adjacent to the church, and the 125th anniversary of the parish. Most important, however, due to Farhat’s outreach the parish has grown from 80 families to 185 families.

Farhat smiles when he reflects on his move from suburban Lawrence to the big city of Philadelphia. “A parish like St. Maron’s is a very different experience than many other parishes in our eparchy. The parish is in the middle of an urban neighborhood where ministry isn’t limited to your parishioners, but it extends into the community. I’ve now had first-hand experience with homeless people. I live next to neighbors of various ethnicities and belief systems. I’ve been invited to be the Chaplain for the local police district. We have a fabulous relationship with the local community, and we hold an annual Police-Fire Department-First Responders Liturgy and Dinner. Many

community groups use our church hall for their meetings. It’s a very eye-opening and rewarding experience.”

Within the past month, Father Vincent received the bittersweet news that he was to take up a new

pastoral assignment at Our Lady of Purgatory Church in New Bedford, Massachusetts. While he will miss the good parishioners of St. Maron Church, it is expected that he will serve the Maronites in New Bedford with his typical enthusiastic dedication. ■

BORN

February 12, 1964, the son of Leo and Virginia Farhat

EDUCATION

College: Central Michigan University and Florida Atlantic University (B.A., Communications), 1988
Our Lady of Lebanon Seminary, Washington, D.C. and Dominican House of Studies

ORDINATION

June 25, 2010 by Bishop Gregory J. Mansour at St. Mary’s Cathedral, Lansing, MI

APPOINTMENTS

2011 – Present: St. Maron Church, Philadelphia, PA
2010 – 2011: St. Anthony Church, Lawrence, MA

OTHER

Director, MYO for Eparchy of St. Maron (2015 – 2017)
Member, Vocations Committee for Eparchy of St. Maron (2011 – Present)
President, Alumni Association, Our Lady of Lebanon Seminary (2017 – Present)
4th Degree Knights of Columbus, Methuen (MA) Chapter (2011 – Present)
Chaplain, Third District, Philadelphia Police Department (2018 – Present)



Our Lady of the Cedars Church

Fairlawn, Ohio *by Antoinette Zeina*

Since the Cedars of Lebanon represent holiness, peace, and longevity, they are the perfect namesake for Our Lady of the Cedars in Fairlawn, Ohio. For 82 years, parishioners have created a dedicated community of worshippers. Our church is not only a place of worship — but a home — and it continues to create new traditions, memories, and moments of faith to this day. Like all immigrants to the United States in the early 20th century, families worked diligently to start a new life while maintaining their ethnic customs, traditions, and the Maronite faith. Many attended Latin Masses to fulfill their religious obligations. As the number of Maronites grew in the Akron area, families came together in 1931 to start the Maronite Society for the purpose of building a church of their own. The group purchased a house in Akron and, although it did not serve as a church, it was a meeting place for the Maronite Society.

Despite the financial depression of the 1930s, the Maronite Society was able to purchase land and families immediately began fundraising for the construction of their parish. With the help of fundraising and donations from

87 families, all but \$1,600 was collected to construct the church. In June 1937, the church was dedicated and given the name of Our Lady of the Cedars.

What started as a group of 87 families has transformed today into 130 families. The parish was moved to a beautiful location in Fairlawn, Ohio, under the pastoral guidance of Chorbishop Michael Kail. Monsignor William Bonczewski (“Msgr. Bill” to everyone), the current pastor of Our Lady of the Cedars, has spent six years at the parish. Working alongside him is Deacon Thomas Maroon. Together, they are the glue that continues to keep their parish doors open.

Just as their ancestors before them, the parishioners of Our Lady of the Cedars place a strong emphasis on family and faith. Members of the parish community work all year to put on annual events that bring everyone together as well as maintain the Lebanese heritage. One such event is the annual St. Maron Family Dinner, where a majority of parishioners gather to enjoy a meal in honor of our patron saint. And, for 30 years, the church has successfully put on the annual Lebanese Festival—

bringing together people from all over the Fairlawn community to enjoy Lebanese food, music, and culture.

“This has to be my favorite event of the year,” says Deacon Thomas. “It is a great way that we bring together people and introduce new people to our parish community.” Despite the annual large-scale events, Msgr. Bill favors the smaller traditions that put smiles on the faces of parents and children in the church. Every year at the Mother’s Day liturgy, mothers are given a special corsage by Msgr. Bill and are then welcomed into the parish hall for a brunch served by the men of the parish. The same is done on Father’s Day. It is the little things that Msgr. Bill says he enjoys most because it allows him to give back to such a dedicated group of parents that make up their community.

“We have such a beautiful parish community,” says Msgr. Bill. “Everyone is so kind and so generous. It is nice to give back in the little ways so that we can to make them feel special.”

When contemplating the future of the parish, Msgr. Bill looks to the most critical part of their



community: the children and young people. A strong emphasis is placed on the religious education program as well as creating church events that keep the young people interested in their faith. The MYO makes up a strong presence of young parishioners involved in church endeavors. In fact, the MYO has created a dabke team that performs at the annual Lebanese Festival. When it comes to the little ones, encouraging them to sit up front and making them eager to learn more about their faith is what will sustain the strength of this parish for years to come.

This parish community has created more than an environment to come and worship once week—they have created a spiritual family and a home. Many parish members can trace their ancestors back to the very people who built the church. Life-long parishioner, Tom Jesser, can remember playing in the dirt while his mother and father helped laborers with their daily work. It is the dedication and the love for their faith and for one another that has kept its church doors open for decades. Our Lady of the Cedars has many strengths as a parish, but the one that is most important, according to Msgr. Bill,



“The greatest strength of this parish is the family attachment. The kids, parents and grandparents — we all stick together. As much as we do prayers and lessons in church, I think a great lesson for the kids is growing up in family.” ■

Deacon Ordination

Subdeacon Michael Shami Ordained a Deacon in the North American College Chapel of the Immaculate Conception

On 2 June 2019 Michael Shami of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon was elevated from subdeacon to deacon in the North American College Chapel of the Immaculate Conception by Bishop Elias Zaidan. Father John Paul Kimes and Father Christopher Fabre, assisted Bishop Elias. Father Aaron Sandbothe, directed the choir of seminarians. Deacon Michael's parents, friends from the United States, and classmates from Rome attended the pontifical liturgy.



Like so many of the other Maronite liturgies, the Ordination rite is both beautiful worship to God and catechetical instruction to the congregation. The liturgy began with the ancient Syriac chant *To Bashlom*, or Come in Peace, where those gathered welcome the bishop with incense at the doors of the church. The ordination liturgy then continued like all the other Maronite *Qurbone* until the reception of communion.

After all those who outranked the candidate for ordination, who was a subdeacon at the time, were communed, the ordination began before

the Eucharist placed on the altar. Fr. Cyril Pinchak SJ, a classmate of Deacon Michael at the Pontifical Oriental Institute, presented Subdeacon Michael to Bishop Elias for ordination. Bishop Elias invoked the Holy Spirit to descend upon the Deacon and elevate him to the Order through His descent through the prayer of Divine Grace. Next, the Bishop placed one hand on the Eucharist and the other on the Deacon to mediate the grace of Christ to the candidate. Lastly, the Bishop pulled his cope over the Deacon's head to show that he adopts the new Deacon to share in part of his ministry. Once the new Deacon was vested, the Bishop entrusted him with the Book of Pauline Epistles, the censer and the anaphoral veil, each time led by his sponsor and proving to the Bishop he was able to perform the tasks given to him by ordination.

Bishop Elias admonished the new deacon during his homily to have patience, perseverance and courage as necessary traits of pastoral ministry, and expressed his eagerness for Deacon Michael's ordination to the Order of Priests in the following year. As Bishop Elias solemnly concluded in the Final Exhortation, "Behold, my son: today you are standing before our humble person, but tomorrow you shall stand before the awesome throne of Christ. You shall then account for all that you did before him." With this, Bishop Elias reminded the new Deacon that he now serves God before the holy altar. ■

Subdeacon Ordination

Ordination of Dr. Charles Machesky
Uniontown, Pennsylvania by Dr. Mabel George Howard



On May 29, 2019, clergy, family, friends, and colleagues gathered to witness the Ordination of Dr. Charles Machesky to the Minor Orders of Cantor, Lector, and Subdeacon at Saint George Maronite Catholic Church in Uniontown, Pennsylvania. The Most Reverend Chorbishop Michael Thomas from Heart of Jesus Maronite Catholic Church in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, celebrated the Divine Liturgy and conferred the Sacrament of Holy Orders upon Charles. Throughout the ceremony, Chorbishop Thomas was assisted by Fr. El-Badaoui Habib, St. George Pastor & Sponsor; Fr. Rudolph Wakim, Pastor of Our Lady of Victory Maronite Church in Carnegie, PA; Subdeacon Thomas R. George; Subdeacon Dr. Mallard George, and Candidate Charles Michael. In his inspiring homily, Chorbishop Thomas emphasized the notion of “Looking Up” to God and the Heavens as Jesus did, not looking down and depressed. He emphasized the point that “Looking Up” will help guide us in the direction of eternal happiness.



As the ceremony continued, Charles received blessings from God as expressed by Chorbishop Thomas with the laying of the hands on Charles’ head. The Chorbishop cut a few locks of Charles’ hair in the form of a cross to show his commitment as the new Cantor. Led by his sponsor, Charles processed around the church while carrying the Book of Psalms. Again, the Chorbishop imposed both hands on Charles’ head, prayed, and blessed the new Lector. With his sponsor, Charles processed around the church carrying the Book of the Prophets. On his final presentation, Chorbishop again imposed his hands on Charles’ head. He blessed and vested Charles in the Subdeacon Alb and Stole confirming his induction into the Minor Orders. Accompanied by his sponsor, Charles processed throughout the church carrying the Acts of the Apostles. Charles opened and closed the church doors, rang the bells, and extinguished and lit a candle representing his role in caring for the church and calling the congregation to worship.

When asked why he chose the role of Maronite Subdeacon, Charles commented, “My wife, Mary, a lifelong member of St. George Church, and I were married in the Maronite Rite. Over the span of 44 years, I have grown to respect and admire the ancient Maronite beliefs, traditions, and rituals. I feel that the role of Subdeacon strengthens my faith in serving the church and community.” Charles and his wife have three daughters and two grandchildren who supported him in this new religious journey. Following the Ordination, a wonderful reception was held in the church hall to commemorate this joyful event. Congratulations, Subdeacon Charles! We wish you many blessed years of serving God and His Church. ■

EPARCHY OF OUR LADY OF LEBANON
Statement of Activity
January - December 2018

Revenue	
40000 Restricted Income	22,773.85
40100 Bequest	
Grunewald Bequest	247,714.40
Total 40100 Bequest	\$ 247,714.40
40500 Parish Assessments	480,000.00
40700 Eparchial Appeals	
40702 Lenten Appeal	220,979.86
40705 Christmas Appeal	34,789.22
Total 40700 Eparchial Appeals	\$ 255,769.08
41000 Second Collections	
41055 Eparchial Charity	8,782.00
Total 41000 Second Collections	\$ 8,782.00
41550 Building Insurance	8,735.00
42000 Donation Income	
42100 Individuals	18,961.06
42300 Organizations	100,600.00
Total 42000 Donation Income	\$ 119,561.06
43000 Fundraising	
43100 Events	51,000.00
Total 43000 Fundraising	\$ 51,000.00
43500 Capital Campaign	
43510 Individuals	7,025.00
43520 Businesses	35,000.00
Total 43500 Capital Campaign	\$ 42,025.00
44000 Grants Income	
44100 Catholic Extension Grant	
44105 Missions	41,600.00
44110 Vocations	15,000.00
44115 Youth Office	15,000.00
44120 Stewardship Office	36,000.00
44125 Fiscal Management	11,566.77
44130 Stipends	20,100.00
44150 Seminarians	35,000.00
Total 44100 Catholic Extension Grant	\$ 174,266.77
44500 Dan Murphy Foundation	50,000.00
44600 CHM Grant	119,335.58
Total 44000 Grants Income	\$ 343,602.35
45000 Maronite Voice	21,303.00
45500 Retreat Income	31,300.00
46000 Order of St. Sharbel	271.00
46050 Annual Membership Dues	77,805.00
46100 Perpetual Membership Dues	86,250.00
Total 46000 Order of St. Sharbel	\$ 164,326.00
47000 Charity	3,800.00
47500 Religious Articles	46.90
49000 Miscellaneous Income	1,404.19
49500 Mission Clergy	
49510 columbus, oh	9,084.24
49520 Milwaukee, WI	32,925.30
Total 49500 Mission Clergy	\$ 42,009.54
Unapplied Cash Payment Income	0.00
Total Revenue	\$ 1,844,152.37
Gross Profit	\$ 1,844,152.37
Expenditures	
(R) Restricted Expenses	15,166.00

61000 Grants		
61100 Catholic Extension		
61105 Missions		100,262.14
61110 Vocations		27,300.00
61120 Stewardship Office		1,000.00
61130 Stipends		20,050.00
Total 61100 Catholic Extension	\$	148,612.14
61300 Dan Murphy Foundation		
61310 Sts Peter & Paul Mission		12,500.00
61320 Youth Group LA		12,500.00
Total 61300 Dan Murphy Foundation	\$	25,000.00
Total 61000 Grants	\$	173,612.14
62000 Eparchial Appeal Disbursements		
62100 Missions		43,032.94
62200 National Shrine of Our Lady		21,970.00
62300 Eparchial Offices		
62320 Youth		13,000.00
62325 Communication		1,668.00
Total 62300 Eparchial Offices	\$	14,668.00
62400 Brochure Package Printing		18,473.89
62500 Postage		1,742.25
62600 Special Events Cov		95.00
Total 62000 Eparchial Appeal Disbursements	\$	99,982.08
63000 Charity Expense		1,085.00
63200 Seminarians		8,200.16
63300 specific purpose		20,500.00
Total 63000 Charity Expense	\$	29,785.16
CHM Grant		3,225.00
62103 Youth Services		2,300.00
Total CHM Grant	\$	5,525.00
Total (R) Restricted Expenses	\$	324,070.38
(U) Operating Expenses		
71000 Retired Bishop		
71100 House Expenses		1,853.08
selling expenses		1,569.20
Total 71000 Retired Bishop	\$	3,422.28
72000 Salaries		9,230.76
72100 Bishop		42,900.00
72200 Vice Chancellor		32,000.00
72300 Chancellor		10,769.22
72500 Administrative Assistant		39,999.96
72550 Fiscal Officer		25,384.60
72600 Housekeeper/Janitor		15,779.00
72700 Bishop Assistant		14,000.00
72800 Archivist Scanner		12,712.08
Total 72000 Salaries	\$	202,775.62
73000 Payroll Expenses		27,016.92
74000 Benefits		
74100 Health Insurance		6,997.11
74200 Retirement		78,000.00
74300 Medical Expenses		2,198.59
Total 74000 Benefits	\$	87,195.70
75000 Building		
75100 Utilities		31,443.64
75200 Telephone & Fax		5,990.87
75300 Maintenance & Repairs		37,154.10
Total 75000 Building	\$	74,588.61
7600 Insurance		
76100 Liability/Multi-Peril		42,943.00

76200 Volunteer Accident	1,020.00
76400 workers compensation	1,730.00
Total 7600 Insurance	\$ 45,693.00
77000 Office Expense	
77100 Supplies	10,278.55
77200 Office Equipment	837.87
77210 Copier Lease	5,774.43
77215 Postage Meter	468.76
77220 Repairs & Maintenance	877.50
Total 77200 Office Equipment	\$ 7,958.56
77300 Subscriptions	2,254.30
77400 Reconciliation Discrepancies	-0.12
77500 Printing	333.00
Total 77000 Office Expense	\$ 20,824.29
79000 Professional Fees	1,350.00
79100 Legal Fees	58,884.29
79200 Accounting	35,091.50
79400 Stewardship Office	78,000.00
79500 Translations	250.00
79600 Archivist	7,210.00
79700 Membership Dues	12,684.56
79800 Other	1,650.86
79900 Bookkeeper	32,000.00
Total 79000 Professional Fees	\$ 227,121.21
80000 Diocesan Office	
80100 Archivist	6,887.70
80200 Stewardship	7,730.01
80400 Youth	939.61
80500 Immigration	31,734.57
80600 Ministry	
80630 MYA	2,000.00
Total 80600 Ministry	\$ 2,000.00
80700 Office of Protection of Minors	1,136.60
80710 Background Checks	349.10
Total 80700 Office of Protection of Minors	\$ 1,485.70
Total 80000 Diocesan Office	\$ 50,777.59
81000 Automobile Expense	
81100 Insurance	5,004.00
81200 Registration/Title	207.00
81300 Maintenance	212.23
81400 Fuel	1,387.33
Total 81000 Automobile Expense	\$ 6,810.56
82000 Religious Supplies	12,164.89
83000 Table Expense	30,140.35
83100 Household Expense	5,261.39
84000 Maronite Voice	22,858.50
86000 Real Estate Taxes	225.74
86500 Travel/Conference	1,626.82
86510 Airlines	46,261.28
86520 Accomodations	11,791.10
86530 Fees	6,242.25
Total 86500 Travel/Conference	\$ 65,921.45
86600 Honorariums/gifts	54,424.55
86700 Bank Service Charges	7,586.99
86800 Retreat Expense	
86810 Priests	25,783.00
86820 Deacon/Subdeacon	3,277.74
86830 Bishop's Retreat	1,511.30
Total 86800 Retreat Expense	\$ 30,572.04

88000 Seminarian Expenses		
88100 Assistance		85,705.04
88200 Supplies		1,020.43
88300 Health Ins & Medical Expense		40,868.29
88400 Room & Board and Books		82,226.28
88500 Tuition & Fees		169,723.73
88600 Travel Expense		14,319.12
88700 Miscellaneous		16,298.56
Total 88000 Seminarian Expenses	\$	410,161.45
89000 Papal Honors & Dues		1,750.00
90100 Miscellaneous Expense		166,177.21
Total (U) Operating Expenses	\$	1,553,470.34
63100 Maronite Patriarcat obligations		
63600 Bishops Retirement Fund-Lebanon		16,250.00
Patriarch Liturgical commissio		1,500.00
Total 63100 Maronite Patriarcat obligations	\$	17,750.00
89500 Capital Camp EXP **		305,767.08
Carmichael, CA ***		177,340.22
Total Expenditures	\$	2,378,398.02
Net Operating Revenue	-\$	534,245.65
Other Revenue		
98000 Investment Gains/Losses		85,650.36
98100 Interest Income		5,069.20
98150 Dividend Income		69,129.24
98160 Capital Gains		6,508.33
98200 Sale of Property ****		297,778.60
Total Other Revenue	\$	464,135.73
Other Expenditures		
99000 Investment Fees		33,081.27
Total Other Expenditures	\$	33,081.27
Net Other Revenue	\$	431,054.46
Net Revenue	-\$	103,191.19

Monday, Jul 29, 2019 10:07:41 AM GMT-7 - Accrual Basis

** We have retained Steier Group, a professional Capital Campaign managing company to assist the Eparchy with planning and conducting its own Capital Campaign.

*** The Eparchy had Loaned "Our Lady of the Rosary" Mission in Carmichael, California \$ 177,340.22 to pay off a high interest loan they took to purchase the church.

**** After the Death of Late Bishop Shaheen, the Eparchy sold the house provided to him when he retired.

First Holy Communion 2019



Atlanta, GA | St. Joseph Church

The following children received their First Holy Communion on May 11, 2019, at St. Joseph Church in Atlanta, GA. (L to R) Row 1: Deema Fawzi, Alaina Vatishtas, Donia Fawzi — Row 2: Sila Maslouf — Row 3: Emma Bousarkis, Marc Maalouf — Row 4: Andrew Andraos, Eli Zogby — Row 5: Gabi Maalouf, Daniel Nicolas, Michael and Bshara Azzi, Isabella Abi-Sarkis — (Back): Kathie Calabrese, MCF Director; Abouna Elias Abi-Sarkis; Abouna Tony Akoury, Pastor; Masami Uernoto, Teacher

Cleveland, OH | St. Maron

Steven Afram, Joseph Badran, Gabriel Bedran, Reema Chammas, Vanessa Elhachach, Charbel Frangieh, Carl Hatem, Aimy Labbad, Maria Lahoud, Andray Mitri, Kaya Sfeir, Eyana Shaia, Joseph Yacoub, And not pictured: Maria Kanaan



Clinton Township, MI | St. Sharbel Church

Leon Adou, Lilliamma Afram, Mya Afram, Raymond Agini, Leonn Bagi, Aiden Bashi, Lucas De Bruyn, Angelina Eid, Laith Farah, Andrew Francis, Gioia Haddad, Liliana Jabbour, Fadi Jamil, Antonio Kattoola, Mark Makhoul, Anthony Matar, Maia Mordovanaki, Kyle Moussa, Alexander Rabine, Andrew Rabine, Rami Ramzi, Elias Sayah, Mariam Sayah, Elias Shaya, Anthony Shaya, Nayla Sitarski, Sophie Solomon, Joseph Soyad, Anthony Sweet, Tariesya Touma



**El Cajon, CA |
St. Ephrem Church**



**Fairlawn, OH | Our Lady of the
Cedars of Mt. Lebanon Church**

In the photo from left to right: Jim Raphael Jaoude, Krista Salwa Mary Sabbagh, Angelina Sarah Zogbi, Kristen Chadi Bouserhal, Ryan Joseph Abou-Touma. In row 2, Subdeacon Paul Boulos, Deacon Robert Foster, Msgr. William Bonczewski, Deacon Thomas Maroon, Maria Stewart, Instructor for First Holy Communion Class.



**Glen Allen, VA | Saint
Anthony Maronite
Church**

From left to right: Chorbishop John D. Faris, Alexa Haddad, Lawson Sherriff, Cora Aboujaoude, Dylan Carr, Ethan, Dermesropian, Jack Craig, Anna Bella Daniel, and Subdeacon Michael Maynes



First Holy Communion 2019



Las Vegas, NV | St. Sharbel Church



Livonia, MI | St. Rafka Maronite Catholic Church

The children pictured are: Ma'belle AbouAziz, Anna Albarchini, Leyalli Aleassa, Ghazal Alkhazouz, Ejona Aziz, Aya Harb, Lynn Korab, Sabine Seryani, Charbel Ziadat, Mary Ziadat; The celebrant pictured is: Fr. Tony Massad; The altar servers pictured are: Antonio AbouAziz, Jan Bodagh, J.P. Richa

Orange, CA | St. John Maron Church

First row, left to right (us facing the altar) Charbel Hajj, Natalie Alam, Antonio Kafieh, Sofie Elkhoeiry, Nina Yacko, Christian Yacko, Tia Feghali, Charbel El Alam; Second row, left to right George Batikh, Mathieu Khamis, Katherine Bayeh, Melanie Nassar, Jean Paul El Khoury.





Philadelphia, PA | St. Maron Church
Zeina Tapolian (RED) Rev. Vincent Farhat, Mrs. Rosemarie Marrone (Teacher), Carol Saad, Dany Sukkarieh, Zaina Szwczyk, Stephanie Churfane



Portland, OR | St. Sharbel Church
1st row from left to right: Angelina Rafka Rita Massaad, Sameera Tirtha Maskey, and Olivia Ragehda Fought; 2nd row from left to right: Katherine Moffitt, catechist and Abouna Christopher Fabre



Uniontown, PA | St. George Church
Asher Vail, Brooklyn Lecorchick, Amelia Opar, Hailey Lowden, and Jackson Opar received their First Holy Communion on April 28, 2019, at Saint George Church in Uniontown, Pennsylvania. (Back): Dr. Mallard George, Subdeacon; Fr. El-Badaoui Habib, Pastor; Barbara George, Teacher

First Holy Communion 2019



Williamsville, NY | St. John Maron Church

Peter Boulos, Mia Khoury, Elaina Khangi, George Issa, Isabella Aldik, Charlotte Robinson, Josef Ntanios, Charbel Kaban, and Damien Boctor received their First Holy Eucharist on May 5, 2019 at St. John Maron Church in Williamsville, NY

Worcester, MA | Our Lady of Mercy Church

Jalyn Hachern, Catherine Violette Sahady-Richmond, Zeina Khoury, Alexa Bassim, Miren Habchy, Georgio Jreig, and Elly Elzoghby received their First Holy Communion on May 5, 2019, at Our Lady of Mercy Maronite Church in Worcester, MA; (Back): Tarek El Zoghby, Teacher



Youngstown, OH | St. Maron Church

L-R Dominic Yazbek, Jaxtin Sudetic, Cybelle Feghali, Alaynna D'Angelo, Celine Chammas, James Abi-Habib; Top L-R Deacon William George, Mrs. Justine Truslow, Chorbishop Michael Kail, Marc Judy, Sr. Jinane Farah, Kamillie Truslow



Wilkes Barre, PA | St. Anthony/ St. George Church

Lillian Michael, Tyler Zola, Gabrielle Collis received their First Holy Communion on May 5, 2019 (Back): Fr. Paul Damien

Parish News

CLINTON TOWNSHIP, MICHIGAN

Father's Day Blessing at St. Sharbel

by Valerie Menassa

Happy Father's Day! Several of our amazing Father's and Father's-to-Be celebrated their day, Sunday, June 16th, with a special blessing by Chorbishop Alfred Badawi. ■



Mother's Day Garden Tea Party

St. Sharbel hosted its first Mother's Day Garden Tea Party on 12 May. The ladies all wore their finest tea hats, sipped on mimosas, listened to a beautiful harpist and had a wonderful brunch. It was a beautiful event leaving all with a good time and enjoyable memories! ■



TEQUESTA, FLORIDA

Mary, Mother of the Light Church & Academy

Mary, Mother of the Light Academy joyfully celebrated the graduation of thirty-one students at the end of the 2018 Academic Year. This is the fourth graduating class MMOLA has produced since it was founded once Mary, Mother of the Light Church relocated to its current campus in Tequesta, FL. Through the generosity of parishioners, parents, and local businesses, and through successful "word-of-mouth" advertising, MMOLA has grown year after year and ended the current year with sixty-two students. MMOLA is first Catholic Preschool in the Eparchy of Saint Maron. MMOLA is under the leadership of Fr. Aaron J. Sandbothe, Pastor of Mary, Mother of the Light Church, Mrs. Judy Harris, Director of Mary, Mother of the Light Academy, and Mrs. Jennifer Dunn, Assistant Director of the Academy and a faculty of ten teachers and staff. ■



Parish News

HOUSTON, TEXAS

An Outstanding Houston Young Adult receives the 2019 Faith of the Mountains Award at Our Lady of the Cedars Church

by Susie Hage

On Sunday, 26 May, one of our most outstanding parishioners, Maya Ramy, was recognized for her leadership of the young adults, not only in our parish, but among those of our Eparchy as well. At Our Lady of the Cedars, Maya was a MYO Board Member from 2010-2011, MYO President 2011-2013, MYA Board Member 2013-2016, MYA President 2016-2017, MYA Vice President 2018-2019, and as the regional leader for the National MYA since 2017. During her time in leadership, she directed and organized spiritual, cultural, social, and service events within the church community and around the city of Houston. Some of these service events included Habitat for Humanity, visiting the elderly in retirement homes, visiting the mentally disabled in care homes and feeding the homeless. Maya has been serving our community all while in high school and while pursuing her Bachelor of Arts in Cognitive Science at Houston's prestigious Rice University. She went on to complete a Master of Science at UNT Health Science Center and will begin medical school at Texas A&M University's College of Medicine this summer. She plans on specializing in neurology after graduating. Our Lady of the Cedars is blessed and proud to have Maya as a parishioner. ■



LEWISVILLE, TEXAS

Graduation Liturgy | Our Lady of Lebanon Church

by Sara Kumar

On the Feast of the Holy Trinity, our parish celebrated the joyous occasion of the graduation of our Class of 2019 high school seniors at the 11:00 AM Liturgy. In his homily, Fr. Assaad addressed the meaning of the Holy Trinity, and he reminded the new graduates embarking upon their futures that God will always be ready to help them if they call upon His Name. Our pastor offered great encouragement by reminding the graduates that not only are their parents proud of them, but our entire parish community is proud! We have watched these young graduates grow up in our parish. Fr. Assaad said, "You did your First Communion here, and you have served in the choir and as altar servers." Fr. Assaad went on to say that in college, the graduates will meet people who are both good and bad influences. He told the graduates to bring home a college degree, not a boyfriend, a girlfriend, or a baby. The parents were so happy with the positive and encouraging message that Fr. Assaad gave to our Class of 2019 graduates. We celebrated their achievements after Liturgy with a reception in the Parish Hall. We are all praying for their future success!



Class of 2019 Graduates: Gaele ElKhoury, Cibel Semaan, Anthony Chamoun, Christy Elias, Maya Elias, Anthony Farhat ■

INDEPENDENCE, OHIO

Lucas George Wins Prestigious President James Madison Fellowship Scholarship

by Deacon George Khoury

First year Franklin High School Social Studies teacher Lucas George, son of Mark George, an usher and ready volunteer of Saint Maron Church in Independence, Ohio, could hardly believe he had been accepted in the James Madison Fellowship Scholarship in his first year of teaching and in his first attempt to enter the competition with entrants throughout the United States. There are teachers that enter five or six times before they are accepted.

In his own words, Lucas said, "I figured I would apply, get feedback on what I needed to do differently for the next year and apply again." Instead Lucas will be one of 52 teachers — and the only one from Ohio — to travel to Washington D.C. for a special seminar this summer. In addition, he received \$24,000 towards his master's degree. Upon receipt of the scholarship, Lucas said, "I'm very honored and humbled. It is something for which I was saving."

Lucas began serving at the Liturgy after he made his First Holy Communion and continued to serve until he graduated from Independence High School. Throughout the years as a server, he was faithful, reverent and dependable.

In Dayton, Ohio during the school year, Lucas is a faithful Maronite and an active member of St. Ignatius of Antioch Maronite Church. In the summer he usually returns to Independence and assists his father ushering and volunteering. Msgr. Peter Karam, our pastor, and the parish of St. Maron Church in Independence and Cleveland, wish him well at Georgetown and pray that he has continued success in all his endeavors; and that God safely keeps him in the palm of His hand. ■



ORANGE, CALIFORNIA

Women's Society Sponsors Reflection Contest

by Shirley Bayeh

Each year, the Women's Society of St. John Maron Parish in Orange, Calif. sponsors a Reflection Contest. Interested parishioners between the ages of 14-17 are encouraged to write an essay on a designated topic. This year's topic, "Why do you like to attend St. John Maron Maronite Church?" This allowed the entrants to learn about their Church's history and its importance in their lives.

Congratulations to the first-place winner, Jessica Zaki, and second place winner, Johnathan Mitri who both submitted stellar essays.

Looking forward to next year's event. The Women's Society of St. John Maron Parish is dedicated to promoting educational advancement among the youth and strengthening their ties to the Maronite Church. ■





**EPARCHY OF SAINT MARON OF BROOKLYN
OFFICE OF THE BISHOP**

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3 July 2019

Prot. No. 282/1/19
Circ No. 19.08

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Enclosed please find a summary of the **2018 Audited Financial Report** for the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn. The full audited financial statements are available at the Chancery.

This past year we continued to invest in educating our six seminarians, we paid monthly pensions for our fifteen retired priests, supported our three Maronite Servants of Christ the Light, assisted over four-hundred youth and young adults, over sixty deacons and subdeacons, and our many brothers and sisters in Lebanon, Syria and the Middle East.

Expenses were offset by efforts to augment income by means of donations, grants, and our Annual Benefit Dinner in New York. The Eparchy showed again this year a net positive after expenses in 2018, but we are still in need of help for repairs, tuition and expenses for our Seminary.

Our finances are audited by the independent accounting firm of Baker Tilly Virchow Krause, LLP. Likewise, all of our parishes and missions have been directed to have an independent accountant approve their annual financial report, have their parish finance council review finances every quarter, and publish the annual report in the parish bulletin.

I thank the members of the Eparchial Finance Council for giving wise advice and helping implement good internal controls for all financial matters in the Chancery: Mr. Edward Massoud, our Chief Financial Officer, Mr. Raymond Espinal, our Compliance Officer, Mr. Albert Ashkouti, Chorbishop Seely Beggiani, Dr. Peter Gabriel, Mr. John Schlageter, Esq., Chorbishop Michael Thomas, Judge Dianne Yamin and Deacon Steven Marcus. Their help has been invaluable.

I also thank our Eparchial Stewardship Director, Mr. John Kurey, the members of the Order of Saint Sharbel, who are always there when we need them, all of our Eparchial donors, who are always so very generous with their financial help, and every pastor and parish of the Eparchy for their compliance to Eparchial policies and their generous support and encouragement.

I thank all of you who have given your time, talent and treasure to enable the Maronite Church to fulfill the mission that our Lord gave to her, to be the “light of the world” and “salt of the earth.” (Matthew 5:13)

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+ *Gregory*

+ Gregory J. Mansour

Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn

Statements of Financial Position
December 31, 2018 and 2017

	<u>2018</u>	<u>2017</u>
Assets		
Current Assets		
Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 611,462	\$ 486,399
Pledges receivable, current portion	225,474	210,540
Loans receivable, current portion	291,423	291,423
Other receivables	17,367	14,240
Investments	3,577,921	3,780,580
Assets whose use is limited	755,113	771,004
Prepaid expenses	4,716	4,518
Total current assets	5,483,476	5,558,704
Pledges Receivable, Long-Term, Net	189,629	282,814
Loans Receivable, Long-Term	100,000	-
Land, Buildings and Equipment, Net	3,864,216	4,001,729
Total assets	<u>\$ 9,637,321</u>	<u>\$ 9,843,247</u>
Liabilities and Net Assets		
Liabilities		
Accounts payable and accrued expenses	\$ 112,794	\$ 15,622
Funds held for others, second collections and mideast assistance	3,643	7,669
Funds held for others, disability fund	755,113	771,004
Mortgage payable, current portion	60,380	58,016
Total current liabilities	931,930	852,311
Mortgage Payable	902,226	962,784
Total liabilities	1,834,156	1,815,095
Net Assets		
Net assets without donor restrictions	7,235,692	6,853,809
Net assets with donor restrictions	567,473	1,174,343
Total net assets	7,803,165	8,028,152
Total liabilities and net assets	<u>\$ 9,637,321</u>	<u>\$ 9,843,247</u>

Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn

Statement of Activities and Changes in Net Assets
Year Ended December 31, 2018
(With Comparative Totals for 2017)

	2018			2017 Total
	Without Donor Restrictions	With Donor Restrictions	Total	
Revenues, Gains and Other Support				
Diocesan assessments	\$ 508,127	\$ -	\$ 508,127	\$ 504,000
Contributions	249,750	50,740	300,490	184,351
Grants	-	351,344	351,344	277,670
Diocesan appeal	180,870	-	180,870	178,621
Contributed use of facilities	120,000	-	120,000	120,000
Special events	189,370	-	189,370	242,410
Less direct cost of benefits to donors	(44,285)	-	(44,285)	(57,892)
Other	27,832	-	27,832	6,901
Total	1,231,664	402,084	1,633,748	1,456,061
Net assets released from restriction	972,439	(972,439)	-	-
Total revenues, gains and other support	2,204,103	(570,355)	1,633,748	1,456,061
Expenses				
Eparchial program	1,121,417	-	1,121,417	1,095,268
Chancery	178,384	-	178,384	174,836
Stewardship office	120,750	-	120,750	117,224
Total expenses	1,420,551	-	1,420,551	1,387,328
Change in net assets before other items	783,552	(570,355)	213,197	68,733
Other Items				
Investment (loss) income	(212,842)	(36,515)	(249,357)	451,543
Interest income on non-interest-bearing loans	21,528	-	21,528	14,821
Contribution of interest on non-interest-bearing loans	(21,528)	-	(21,528)	(14,821)
Interest expense, Heart of Jesus	(39,789)	-	(39,789)	(45,656)
Depreciation and amortization, Heart of Jesus	(49,038)	-	(49,038)	(49,038)
Legal settlement	(100,000)	-	(100,000)	-
Change in net assets	381,883	(606,870)	(224,987)	425,582
Net Assets, Beginning	6,853,809	1,174,343	8,028,152	7,602,570
Net Assets, Ending	\$ 7,235,692	\$ 567,473	\$ 7,803,165	\$ 8,028,152

Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn

Statement of Functional Expenses

Year Ended December 31, 2018

(With Comparative Totals for 2017)

	2018				2017 Total
	Program	Administrative Chancery	Fundraising	Total	
	Eparchial Program		Stewardship Office		
Clergy salaries	\$ 63,680	\$ 15,920	\$ -	\$ 79,600	\$ 80,600
Religious subsidies	-	-	-	-	24,000
Lay salaries	47,078	11,770	-	58,848	58,905
Payroll taxes	12,882	3,220	-	16,102	10,196
Clergy benefits	5,166	1,291	-	6,457	5,808
Lay benefits	561	140	-	701	807
Vocations	119,188	-	-	119,188	186,624
Grants	221,310	-	-	221,310	141,128
Bishop appeal disbursements	144,270	-	-	144,270	125,082
Donations	47,100	-	-	47,100	61,092
Clergy support	5,811	-	-	5,811	9,372
Retirement fund contribution	-	-	-	-	5,000
Religious expenses	18,508	-	-	18,508	19,837
Rent	96,000	24,000	-	120,000	120,000
Professional expenses	47,510	52,784	-	100,294	109,504
Conferences	26,763	-	-	26,763	13,126
Stewardship expenses	-	-	120,750	120,750	107,573
Travel	40,757	-	-	40,757	50,243
Household	25,370	6,342	-	31,712	33,856
Office	36,537	9,134	-	45,671	41,260
Insurance	-	22,548	-	22,548	21,054
Maintenance and repairs	14,308	3,577	-	17,885	18,316
Utilities	11,894	2,974	-	14,868	18,573
Telephone	10,666	2,667	-	13,333	10,141
Publications	37,991	-	-	37,991	18,928
Depreciation and amortization	70,780	17,695	-	88,475	88,477
Other	17,287	4,322	-	21,609	7,826
Total	\$ 1,121,417	\$ 178,384	\$ 120,750	\$ 1,420,551	\$ 1,387,328



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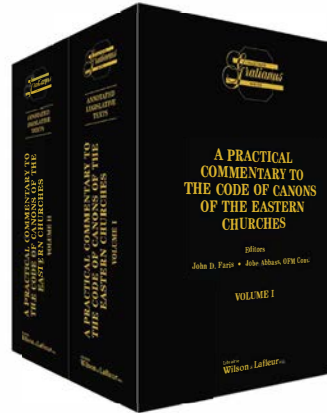
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Practical Commentary on the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches

– John D. Faris and Jobe Abbass



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

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

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CHOR-BISHOP JOSEPH EID,
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ST. SHARBEL'S BEATIFICATION,
AND AMPLIFIED by THE WRITINGS
of ARCHBISHOP FRANCIS ZAYEK.

Let the wilderness rejoice,
and the desert shall flourish like the lily.
It shall bud forth and blossom,
and shall rejoice with joy and praise:
the glory of Lebanon is given to it.
ISAIAH 35:1-2

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

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

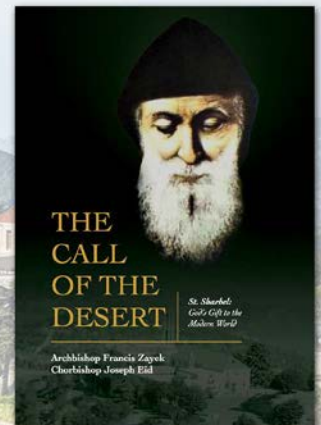
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Visit to Missionary Sisters in Lebanon; A Plea for Help



Bishop Edgar Madi (Brazil Eparchy), Bishop Gregory Mansour, Monsignor Sami Hayek and the Missionary Sisters of the Very Holy Eucharist in the Sisters' chapel in Beit Hebbak.

During the Maronite Synod (meeting) of Bishops in June in Lebanon, Bishop Gregory Mansour visited the Motherhouse of the Missionary Sisters of the Very Holy Eucharist, located 40 miles north of Beirut in the village of Beit Hebbak. Accompanied by Eparchial Stewardship Director John Kurey, Bishop Gregory celebrated the Divine Liturgy for the Sisters at 8 a.m. with Monsignor Sami Hayek, whose 60th anniversary in the priesthood was commemorated. After the Liturgy, Bishop Gregory had breakfast with the Sisters and toured part of their school that serves 1,325 poor students ages 4-18.



Bishop Michel Aoun (Jbeil Eparchy) and Bishop Gregory Mansour with Monsignor Sami Hayek in Lebanon, Summer 2019.

The Missionary Sisters consist of 51 women devoted to the Eucharist and to helping women from childhood through old age. The Sisters serve orphans, children, and families, and operate a senior citizen center in Kfarmashoun. Bishop Gregory has assisted the Sisters for many years and visits them each time he is in Lebanon.

One of the Sisters' special projects is an orphanage for 20 orphan girls, ages 6 to 18, in a mountainside monastery located in Ain Warka near the Shrine of Our Lady of Lebanon. The girls in this orphanage suffer from learning disabilities which prevent them from attending normal schools and would be a major hindrance to their integration into society. The Sisters provide these girls with a place to live, educate them, and teach them practical skills including cooking, sewing and simple computer skills. These things will help the girls adapt to society as they mature.

The orphanage is run very efficiently as a cost of just \$144,000 a year, and relies almost entirely on donations. Donations for the Sisters may be sent to the Eparchy of Saint Maron at 109 Remsen Street, Brooklyn, New York, 11201. Please include a note with your check stating that it is designated for the Missionary Sisters of the Very Holy Eucharist. May God bless you for your generosity! ■

New Statutes for Saint Maron Eparchy

On June 9, 2019, Bishop Gregory Mansour issued a revised set of statutes for the Eparchy of Saint Maron for the purpose to provide “clarity, uniformity, and impartiality ... to guide the clergy, religious, and laity, in our Eparchial mission of sanctifying, teaching, and governing the Christian faithful in our Eparchy.” The provisions of the statutes went into effect on the day they were issued.

Among the matters treated in the new statutes are the administration of the sacraments, the rights and obligations of the clergy, and parish administration.

Bishop Gregory thanked Monsignor Peter Fahed Azar, Reverend Simon El Hajj, Reverend Vincent Farhat, Very Reverend Dominique Hanna, and Chorbishop Michael G. Thomas, the Presbyteral Council and other priests who took part in reviewing and commenting on the drafts.

The statutes can be found on the Website of the Eparchy of Saint Maron:

<http://www.stmaron.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Eparchy-of-St.-Maron-Statutes.pdf> ■

Spiritual Motherhood by Marise Frangie OFS, CFCE

“Woman, behold your son...” These words, spoken from the cross, express Jesus’ desire for Mary to become the mother of his disciples. This spiritual motherhood of Mary keeps us connected closely to Our Lord because Our Lady’s desire is to help us (“Do whatever he tells you”) and bring us closer to Him. Every woman, by virtue of her nature, is called to share in the spiritual motherhood of Our Lady. Due to her unique tenderness and affection, she has the ability to nurture life, care for others, and help them become the saints God is calling them to be through her smile, her life, her gentleness, her presence, her kind words.

The most popular aspect of spiritual motherhood is to be a godmother. A godmother has the responsibility to help her goddaughter/son fulfill their baptismal promises that she promised on their behalf. She assists the parents to care for the spiritual needs of the child.

Another kind of spiritual motherhood derives from all the gifts women have. Women are perceptive in seeing the needs of those around them and recognizing the deeper issues. A woman’s natural maternal yearning enables her to mother all entrusted to her and serve them daily with joy and love, including strangers that the Lord places in her life. She seeks to nourish and advance their growth through her loving care and attentiveness to their needs. Every spiritual mother

(young and old, single and married, celibate and religious) tends with compassion and care to others, and accompanies and supports her spiritual children with her prayers.

One way this aspect of spiritual Motherhood can be lived by every woman is by daily carrying in her heart her spiritual children, by offering prayers, sacrifices, and fasting on their behalf. This person can be known or unknown to the spiritual mother. A great story from “Eucharistic Adoration for the sanctification of priests and spiritual maternity” (available on the Office of Family and Sanctity of Life website) explains how one bishop’s vocation is owed to the prayers of a nun who consecrated her life and spent it praying for him. This type of spiritual motherhood is so much needed today to strengthen people in living their vocation joyfully and faithfully, be it to married, religious, ordained, or celibate life.

You can be a spiritual mother to someone who needs your prayers and sacrifices so the Lord can use them to bring peace and joy to that soul in need. Our priests are in great need of spiritual mothers holding them dear to their hearts so they can be steadfast in their ‘Yes’ to the Lord.

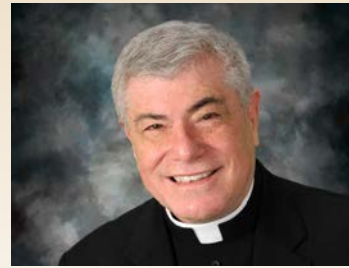
“The world doesn’t need what women have, it needs what women are,” said Saint Teresa Benedicta of the Cross. Women bring the richness of their sensitivity, their intuitiveness, their generosity, and fidelity into the heart of the family. They then enrich all of society by living out their “feminine genius” with a certain empathy and inherent compassion according to Pope Saint John Paul the Great.

May Our Lady accompany all women as we strive to draw closer to the Lord’s heart and inspire us to live out our “feminine genius” daily with steadfast courage, flaming charity, angelic sweetness, and perfect cheerfulness. ■

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From the Editor



God is—and must be—involved!

George Washington, James Madison, Thomas Jefferson, and many other Founding Fathers of our nation believed in God, but were not precisely Christians. Instead, they were Deists who held to the philosophy/theology that God created the world, but that after creation, God was uninvolved—no revelation, no intervention in the world and thus no need for prayer, no miracles. Thomas Jefferson went so far as to re-write the Bible, cutting out all the miracles.

We Christians regard this understanding of God as strange. Christians believe that God not only created the world, but revealed Himself to us ultimately in the person of Jesus. We believe in the descent of the Holy Spirit in the world to continue to work and to empower Christians to continue to carry out God's plan.

This is what we say. But how do we act?

Sometimes we are Christians—who act like Deists.

God is at work in the world, but sometimes we act as if everything depended on us. We see problems in our personal lives, in our families, in our society and in our Church. We then resort to self-help books, counselors, new laws, and new policies. All these approaches are of some benefit, but they can only do so much.

Indeed, perhaps we are going about things backwards. **Our first call should be to God, seeking his plan, guidance, and power.**

We cannot solve the problems of our lives or of the world on our own. The “good pope” Saint John XXIII, was worrying about a problem, but then realized it was a problem for God to solve when he recalled that he was only the pope.

God has a plan for each of us, but sometimes we lose sight of the goal. Despite confusion, difficulties and fears, we Christians also hold firm in the belief that God has something magnificent in his plan for each of us. On August 15, we celebrate the Assumption of Mary—body and soul—to Heaven. William Wordsworth, in the 1822 poem, *The Virgin*, referred to Mary as “our tainted nature’s solitary boast.” Mary was a human, like us in all things except sin. We can “boast” that a human like us was taken into heaven. **The glory in which Mary now shares is a glory that God plans to share with each of us.**

The Founding Fathers thought that they could create a perfect society here on earth. They did not need God. We Christians know differently: the only perfect society is Heaven and only God is going to get us there!

John D. Faris

Chorbishop John D. Faris

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