

the Maronite **Voice**



Christ is Risen!
Truly He is Risen!



the **Voice** Maronite

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THE MARONITE VOICE

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Wounds

by Bishop Gregory John Mansour

It took Saint Thomas a whole week before he could see for himself that Jesus had risen from the dead. During that time, what must have gone through his mind? He may have said to himself, “If Jesus really rose from the dead, my life will have to change!” Well, in the personal encounter one week later, when all the disciples were present, his life did change! Jesus walked through “locked doors”!

The Lord can walk through “locked doors,” but not a closed heart. In Saint Thomas he found a truly open heart!

Jesus then asked, “*put your finger here and see my hands*” and “*bring your hand and put it into my side*” (JOHN 20). Our Lord let Thomas have a personal, firsthand look at his wounds. Jesus also invites each of us to have a personal, firsthand look, not just at him, but even more importantly, at his wounds. This invitation says: “Come see my sorrows, see the

shame I bore, see my hurts and disappointments, and live!”

Closed doors, open hearts, personal encounter, touching wounds; these themes are very much present in our personal lives, often filled with similar hurts, shame, and disappointment. These themes are also present in our suffering, yet amazing, Church. Suffering, because of so many persecutions from without, and so much shame and sorrow from within. Amazing, because despite all her sins, the Church is still the

leading humanitarian provider of healthcare, education, and assistance throughout the world.

Pope Francis calls the Church a “field hospital,” and that she is. By binding her own wounds, as well as the wounds of those who suffer in the world (Christians and non-Christian alike), this wounded but amazing Church not only offers healing for the terrible harm caused by the scandalous and painful scourge of a small minority of her clergy, but also offers loving care for all people, regardless of their



faith, throughout this broken and troubled world of ours.

The wounds from within, and the persecutions from without, are more and more treated openly and courageously by the Church. Each day, she witnesses to the crucified, yet risen Christ. The only “closed door” that remains, where Jesus cannot walk, is the “closed human heart,” and today there seems to be lots of them.

those who believe in the One who said: *“I am the resurrection and the life.”* (JOHN 11)

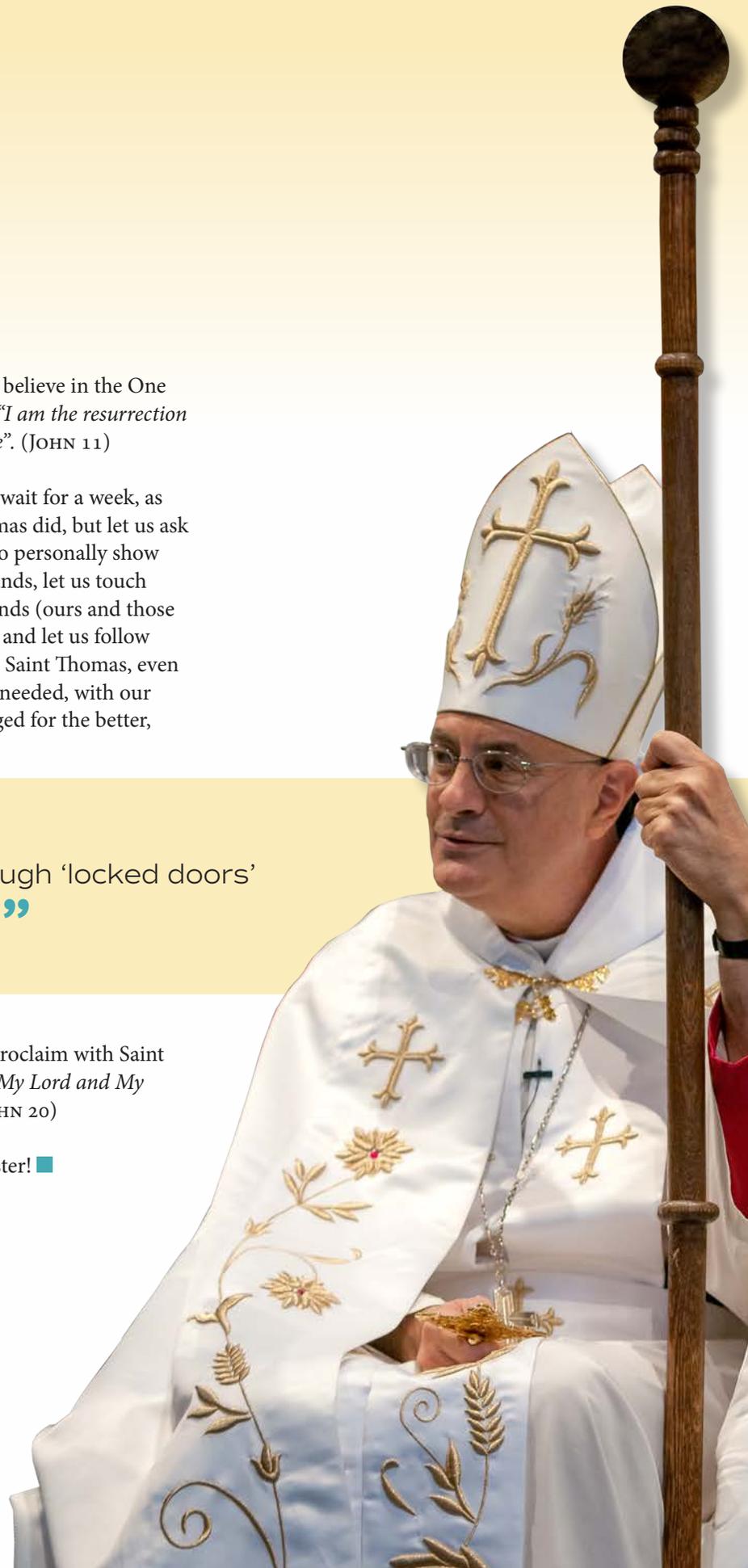
Let us not wait for a week, as Saint Thomas did, but let us ask our Lord to personally show us his wounds, let us touch those wounds (ours and those of others), and let us follow him as did Saint Thomas, even to India if needed, with our lives changed for the better,

“ The Lord can walk through ‘locked doors’ but not a closed heart. ”

Nonetheless, like our Lord did for Saint Thomas, he also invites us to touch the wounds of his Mystical Body, the Church, in a way that reminds each of us that in suffering, and yes, even in death, there is resurrection, joy, and peace for

and thus proclaim with Saint Thomas, *“My Lord and My God!”* (JOHN 20)

Happy Easter! ■



Schedule BISHOP GREGORY J. MANSOUR

- 10 APRIL** Brooklyn, NY | The Chancery | Presbyteral Council Meeting
- 10 APRIL** Brooklyn, NY | Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral | Liturgy of the Blessing of the Myron and Holy Oils
- 11 APRIL** Brooklyn, NY | The Chancery | Finance Council Meeting
- 12 APRIL** Brooklyn, NY | Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral | Way of the Cross
- 14 APRIL** Brooklyn, NY | Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral & Manhattan Mission | Palm Sunday
- 15 APRIL** New Brunswick, NJ | St. Sharbel Church | Rite of the Coming to the Harbor
- 16 APRIL** Brooklyn, NY | St. James Cathedral | Diocese of Brooklyn Chrism Mass
- 17 APRIL** Waterbury, CT | Our Lady of Lebanon Church | Rite of the Lamp
- 18 APRIL** Newtown Square, PA | St. Sharbel Church | Rite of the Washing of the Feet
- 19-21 APRIL** Brooklyn, NY | Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral | Good Friday and Easter Celebrations
- 25-26 APRIL** Brooklyn, NY | Bethlehem University Foundation
- 27-28 APRIL** Orlando, FL | St. Jude Church | Pastoral Visit
- 4 MAY** Brooklyn, NY | Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral | Seminar on NaPro Technology for Women
- 5 MAY** Brooklyn, NY | Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral | Feast of Our Lady of Lebanon
- 11-12 MAY** Charlotte, NC | St. Stephen Church | Pastoral Visit
- 25-26 MAY** Flint, MI | Home Visit
- 1-19 JUNE** Lebanon | Synod of Maronite Bishops

Appointment of Ukrainian Catholic Archbishop



On February 18, the Vatican Information Service announced that Pope Francis, concurring with the recommendation of the Synod of Ukrainian Catholic Bishops, which met in September 2018, in Lviv., appointed Bishop Borys Gudziak as archbishop-metropolitan of the Ukrainian Archeparchy of Philadelphia.

At present, Bishop Borys serves as the eparch of St. Volodymyr the Great Ukrainian Catholic Eparchy, which includes France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxemburg, and Switzerland. He is the founder and president of the Ukrainian Catholic University in Lviv. Bishop Borys is also the head of the Department of External Church Relations of the Ukrainian Catholic Church.

The installation will take place on June 4, at the Ukrainian Catholic Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Philadelphia.

Schedule BISHOP A. ELIAS ZAIDAN

- 9-10 APRIL** St. Louis, MO | The Chancery | Presbyteral Council Meeting
- 9 APRIL** St. Louis, MO | St. Raymond Cathedral | Liturgy of the Blessing of the Myron and Holy Oils
- 13 APRIL** North Jackson, OH | Antonine Sisters | Day of Recollection
- 14 APRIL** Youngstown, OH | St. Maron Church | Palm Sunday
- 16-20 APRIL** Houston, TX | Our Lady of the Cedars Church | Holy Week Mission Retreat
- 21 APRIL** St. Louis, MO | St. Raymond Cathedral | Easter Celebration
- 25 APRIL** Denver, CO | Opening Liturgy for the Knights of Columbus, Colorado State Convention
- 27-28 APRIL** Austin, TX | Our Lady's Church | 45th Priestly Ordination Anniversary of Msgr. Don Sawyer
- 2 MAY** Orange, CA | St. John Maron Church | Capital Campaign Visit
- 4-5 MAY** Lewisville, TX | Our Lady of Lebanon Church | Pastoral Visit and Ordination to the Diaconate of Subdeacon George Elandary
- 9 MAY** Lombard, IL | Our Lady of Lebanon Church | Capital Campaign Visit
- 10-12 MAY** Houston, TX | Our Lady of the Cedars Church | First Communion and Ordination to the Subdiaconate of Chuck Jaoude, Dr. Nicola Nammour, and Said Tannous
- 14 MAY** Washington, DC | USCCB | International Justice and Peace Committee Meetings
- 17 MAY** Simi Valley, CA | Sts. Peter and Paul Church | Pastoral Visit
- 18-19 MAY** El Paso, TX | St. Sharbel Church | Dedication of New Church
- 2 JUNE** Rome, Italy | Pontifical North American College | Ordination to the Diaconate of Subdeacon Michael Shami
- 5-15 JUNE** Lebanon | Synod of Maronite Bishops

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PARISH SPOTLIGHT

Our Lady of Lebanon Maronite Church

Miami, Florida *by Antoinette Zeina*



Since opening its doors 45 years ago, Our Lady of Lebanon has become home to Maronites from all over South Florida. The parish enjoyed its beginning on September, 1973, when Archbishop Francis Zayek celebrated the Divine Liturgy in Sts. Peter and Paul Catholic Church. Shortly after, he assigned Fr. Joseph Kaddo as an Administrator on September 28, 1973.

On August 31, 1975, Fr. Wadiah Peter Tayah was appointed Pastor, not long before the current property at 2055 Coral Way, Miami, was purchased.

In 1990, the parish was kept very busy with the remodeling of the church, offices, and social hall. In August of the same year, the community also hosted the annual Convention of the National Apostolate of Maronites (NAM).

In 1995, Fr. Jorge Perales served the parish for a few months until the arrival of the new Pastor Fr. Michael Thomas on March 19, 1996. On February 1, 1999, under the direction of Fr. Thomas, construction of a new church began on the site upon which the preexisting structure existed. This project included proper drainage

for, and resurfacing of, the parking lot. Additionally, widening of the sidewalk in front of the church was completed. Bishop Stephen Hector Doueihy consecrated the new church on December 12, 1999.

On June 20, 2000, the parish purchased the vacant parcel of land adjacent to its parking lot. With this purchase, the entire city block facing Coral Way became part of Our Lady of Lebanon Church.

On March 2, 2001, the parish was blessed by an historic event marking the visit of the Maronite Patriarch, Nasrallah Peter Cardinal Sfeir. Along with ten other Maronite bishops, His Beatitude celebrated mass on that day.

Fr. Elie Mikhael was appointed Pastor on July 10, 2004. During Fr. Mikhael's pastorate, the community enjoyed successful Lebanese Festivals, the acquisition of another parcel of land behind the church block, and the growth of the Maronite Spanish community.

Fr. Elie Saade, OLM, the current pastor of Our Lady of Lebanon, began serving the parish in June of 2013. With a mission in mind,





Fr. Saade sought to make everyone feel welcome. What makes this parish special is the unity within the diversity of its parishioners. Due to Miami's multicultural nature, one Divine Liturgy is celebrated in English/Arabic and another in Spanish.

Our Lady of Lebanon church is located in the center of Miami, facilitating its access to parishioners arriving from various parts of the city. Despite the church's central location, many parishioners drive long distances to participate in the life of the parish, a zeal and dedication Fr. Saade describes as a "blessing".

Fr. Saade works to find ways to bring parishioners together. With that in mind, he created a series of weekly lectures aimed at deepening parishioners' understanding of their Catholic faith and Maronite identity. Lectures end with an opportunity for parishioners to enjoy time with family and friends



in the parish hall. Similarly, the community gathers after the Divine Liturgy on Sundays to share a meal and time together.

The Annual Lebanese Festival, one of the activities that occur year-round at Our Lady of Lebanon, has become a staple for the church. Not only does it contribute financially to the parish, but it also makes a significant cultural impact on the city of Miami. Through its music, hospitality, and unique cuisine, the festival continues to grow each year. As a result, on February 3, 2019, Bishop Gregory Mansour inaugurated the newly renovated parish hall and kitchen facility to accommodate this exponential growth.

This summer, Our Lady of Lebanon will host the Maronite clergy convocation from June 24 through June 27, 2019 and the National Apostolate of Maronites convention (NAM) from June 27 through June 30, 2019. Preparations for this weeklong event, hosting both Maronite clergy and laity from around the nation, have been underway for almost a year.

Fr. Saade explained, "We have compiled multiple committees, each of which has been assigned specific duties and responsibilities, designed to bring forth a convention for all of our community and arriving guests to look forward to and enjoy." ■

56th Annual Maronite Convention | June 26-30th, 2019

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FRIDAY NIGHT
Amir Yazbeck
(Lebanese Singer)



FRIDAY NIGHT
Wassim Kattan
(Local Favorite)



SATURDAY NIGHT
Ghassan Saliba
(Lebanese Singer)

EXCURSIONS and ACTIVITIES



Bayside Boat Tour



Private Miami Tour



Theology on Tap



Everglades Tour



BBQ and Workshop



Meet the Bishops



Our Lady of Lebanon



Pool and Beach Party

WORKSHOPS

THURSDAY, JUNE 27TH @ 10:30 A.M.

*St. Jude Childrens
Research Hospital:
History and Mission*



George Elias, Last Living Founder

FRIDAY, JUNE 28TH @ 10:30 A.M.

*Catholic Relief Services: a Catholic
Response to Serve the Poorest of
the Poor Throughout the World*



Bishop Gregory J. Mansour

SATURDAY, JUNE 29TH @ 10:30 A.M.

*The Maronite History
and Identity*



Father Elie Saade, OLM

THURSDAY, JUNE 27TH @ 3:30 P.M.

*A Pastoral Approach
to the Catechesis of
the Maronite Church*



Fr. Vincent Farhat and Fr. George Hajj

FRIDAY, JUNE 28TH @ 3:30 P.M.

Marriage in the Catholic Church



Chorbishop John D. Faris, J.C.O.D

SATURDAY, JUNE 29TH @ 3:30 P.M.

*Commission on Lebanon
and the Middle East*



Bishops Gregory J. Mansour and Elias Zaidan,
Toufik Baaklani, and Charles Hajj

REGISTRATION

Pre-Registration Deadline: June 3rd, 2019 Please complete all information or register online: www.namnews.org
 Incomplete forms will not be processed. **PLEASE PRINT LEGIBLY.** You will receive a confirmation via email or mail.

PRIMARY REGISTRANT: (please add additional family members on reverse side)

First Name _____ Last Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Phone (____) _____ Email _____

Parish _____

Package/Program Purchased _____

PACKAGES ONLY: Enter number of packages desired and make sure to fill in TOTALS and GRAND TOTALS.

Daily Workshops are included with any purchase. NAM Members whose 2019 dues have been paid will receive \$15 off the full adult package and \$10 off all other packages. This discount is void after pre-registration deadline of June 3rd, 2019. If you wish to pay for your member dues with this registration, send a check payable to NAM. Child, Youth, Young Adult and Excursions are additional and not included in packages. Saturday Banquet seating is chosen for you unless you contact NAM office or request on-line. The "Covenant of Behavior" MUST be completed for all Child and Youth registrants if not accompanied by a parent. See forms online. * YOUTH: if you are 18 and have not graduated High School by summer. YOUNG ADULT: you are a high school graduate over 18 and younger than 35 years old.

Please check all that apply:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> NAM Member | <input type="checkbox"/> NAM Delegate |
| <input type="checkbox"/> NAM Board | <input type="checkbox"/> Order of St. Sharbel |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Convention Committee | <input type="checkbox"/> Child [5-11] |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Youth [12-18] | <input type="checkbox"/> Young Adult [18-35] |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Vegetarian | Age _____ |

PACKAGE OPTIONS and PRICING

Package Option <small>(does not include hotel room)</small>	Adult & Young Adult 18 years old and up		Youth 12 to 18 years old		Child 5-11 years old		Entertainment Only <small>(no meals included; entry after 10 pm)</small>	
	before June 3rd	after June 3rd	before June 3rd	after June 3rd	before June 3rd	after June 3rd	before June 3rd	after June 3rd
Full (Thursday through Sunday)	# ___ @ \$350	# ___ @ \$400	# ___ @ \$340	# ___ @ \$390	# ___ @ \$170	# ___ @ \$200	# ___ @ \$150	# ___ @ \$180
Weekend (Friday through Sunday)	# ___ @ \$350	# ___ @ \$400	# ___ @ \$340	# ___ @ \$390	# ___ @ \$170	# ___ @ \$200	# ___ @ \$150	# ___ @ \$180
Saturday and Sunday	# ___ @ \$220	# ___ @ \$250	# ___ @ \$210	# ___ @ \$240	# ___ @ \$110	# ___ @ \$140	# ___ @ \$150	# ___ @ \$180
Thursday Only	Courtesy of OLOL Miami	\$50 charge at the door	Courtesy of OLOL Miami	\$50 charge at the door	Courtesy of OLOL Miami	\$50 charge at the door	Courtesy of OLOL Miami	\$50 charge at the door
Friday Only	# ___ @ \$140	# ___ @ \$170	# ___ @ \$130	# ___ @ \$160	# ___ @ \$70	# ___ @ \$100	# ___ @ \$70	# ___ @ \$100
Saturday Only	# ___ @ \$160	# ___ @ \$190	# ___ @ \$150	# ___ @ \$180	# ___ @ \$70	# ___ @ \$100	# ___ @ \$80	# ___ @ \$110
Sunday Only	# ___ @ \$70	# ___ @ \$80	# ___ @ \$60	# ___ @ \$70	# ___ @ \$40	# ___ @ \$60	# ___ @ \$80	# ___ @ \$110
TOTAL	\$ _____	\$ _____	\$ _____	\$ _____	\$ _____	\$ _____	\$ _____	\$ _____

EXCURSION and ACTIVITY PRICING

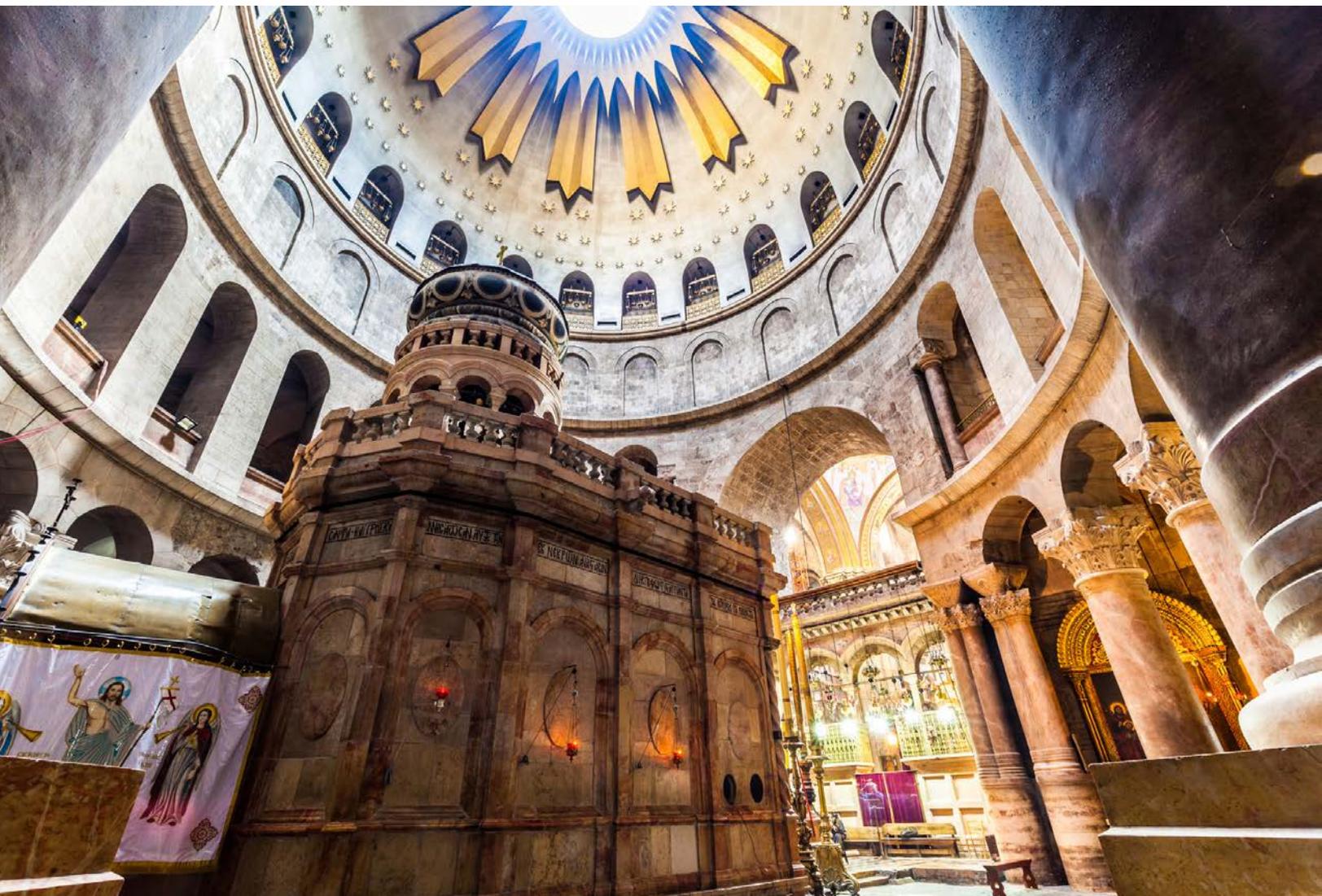
Date	Excursion or Activity	Time	Attendees	Price
Wednesday, June 26th	Boat Tour, Bayside Marketplace	3 pm to 6 pm	EVERYONE WELCOME	_____ x \$20
Thursday, June 27th	Private City Tour	2 pm to 5 pm	EVERYONE WELCOME	_____ x \$20
Thursday, June 27th	Theology on Tap, Wynwood	4 pm to 6:30 pm	YOUNG ADULTS (18-35) ONLY	_____ x \$25
Friday, June 28th	Everglades Tour	11 am to 3 pm	EVERYONE WELCOME	_____ x \$35
Friday, June 28th	BBQ & Workshop, Key Biscayne	11 am to 4 pm	YOUNG ADULTS (18-35) ONLY	_____ x \$20
Friday, June 28th	Meet the Bishops @ Loews Hotel	6 pm to 7:30 pm	EVERYONE WELCOME	Drinks for Purchase
Saturday, June 29th	Our Lady of Lebanon Visit	After Saturday Mass	EVERYONE WELCOME	Courtesy of OLOL
Saturday, June 29th	Pool & Beach Party @ Loews Hotel	After Saturday Mass (until 4 pm)	EVERYONE WELCOME	Courtesy of OLOL

Where He Was Risen— The Holy Sepulchre

by Msgr. Robert L. Stern

Wonder what the Crusader knights must have thought when in 1099, after a bloody battle to take Jerusalem, the Holy City, they finally saw the tomb of the Lord Jesus. At home, they were used to seeing churches or their crypts with the grand tombs of royalty and higher clergy, elegant sarcophaguses housing their last mortal remains, often topped by a life-sized stone effigy of the deceased. Of course,

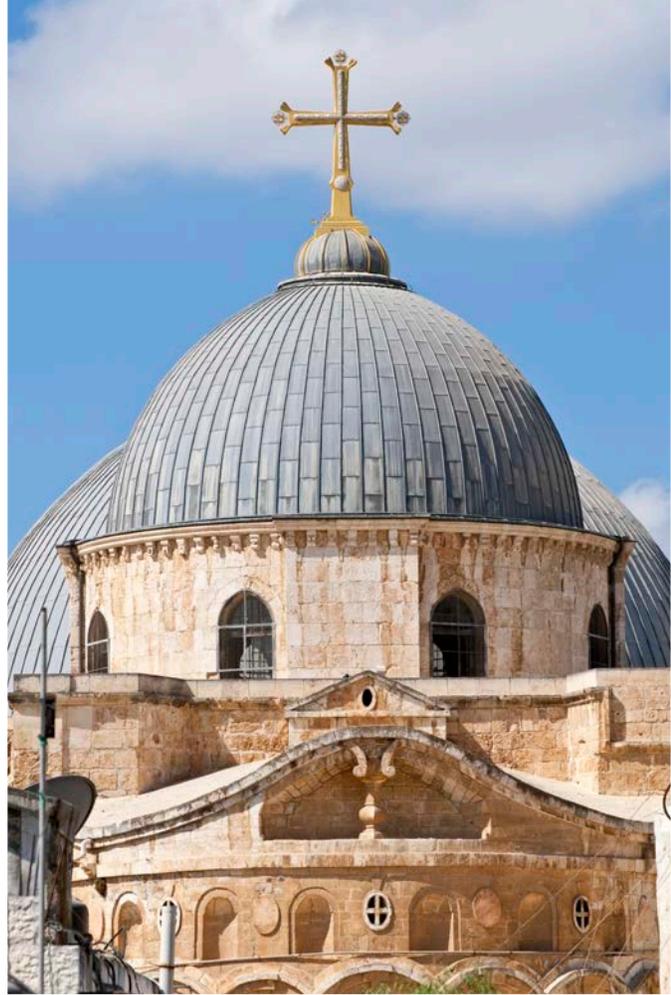
there was no coffin housing the remains of the Resurrected One nor need for a sculptured effigy. What, then, was there to see? Well, more or less what one sees today, a kind of shelf on which an enshrouded body could be laid or, more precisely, a marble slab over the remains of the rough-cut stone shelf of the original burial place.



What would that original place have looked like? It may well have been a kind of natural or artificial cave, somewhat modified, with shelf-like niches for the placement of the bodies, a little like the catacombs in Rome. But, remember, these Crusader knights were seeking and arriving at this holy place over a thousand years after the burial of the body of Jesus—and a lot had happened during these thousand years.

It's safe to assume that the early followers of Jesus would have known the execution area outside the city walls and the location of the nearby tomb where his body was placed after it was taken down from the cross. Maybe the tomb was venerated and visited, although hardly with the same sentiments with which we visit the grave of a loved one—for the tomb of Jesus was only briefly used and, as the angel messengers told the first of his followers to come there, "He's not here. He's risen."

Whatever the case, in a relatively few years after the death of the Lord, the tomb area became inside, not outside, the city when the new northern wall of Jerusalem was built. However, following the siege of the city during the first Jewish-Roman War in the year 70, Jerusalem and its temple were razed to the ground. In 130, the Roman Emperor Hadrian vowed to rebuild the city, but he redesigned it along the classic model of a Roman colony town and called it Aelia Capitolina. Part of his plan was to obliterate all traces of sites venerated by the early Christians within his new city by building a pagan temple over them, with a statue of Jupiter over Calvary and an altar to Venus over the tomb of Jesus.



What a paradox! His plan to obliterate the holy sites and their veneration actually preserved and marked them. As a result of the visit of the first Christian Empress Helena, mother of Constantine the Great, to the Holy Land in 326-328, the pagan temple was removed, the sites of Calvary and the tomb were revealed, the remains of the true cross were found, and a great Church of the Resurrection was constructed by the emperor and inaugurated in 335.

As described by Franciscan Father Eugene Hoade in his classic *Guide to the Holy Land*, its atrium or entrance courtyard was accessed directly from the *Cardo Maximus*, the principal avenue of Aelia Capitolina. Directly across the atrium was the basilica-style church with five naves and an apse, dedicated to the mystery of the Resurrection. In a garden behind the basilica were two important sites

Where He Was Risen—The Holy Sepulchre *Continued from page 13*

to be venerated: to the left was a great stone block, the very site of the crucifixion, carved from the hill of Calvary, adorned with precious stones, and surmounted by a cross. Across the garden, opposite the apse end of the basilica was a great rotunda enclosing the tomb of Jesus. Again, the surrounding rock was removed leaving only the portion in which the tomb had been excavated standing and enshrined in the rotunda.



Our modern mentality is taken aback by this alteration of historical sites. We expect to see a famous place in its original setting, but this wasn't the mentality of Constantine's time; their way to display something precious was to cut, shape, and mount it in a beautiful setting as, for example, we would cut, shape, and mount a diamond to be part of a ring or necklace.

However, the beautiful works of Constantine lasted not quite three centuries. What happened was this: the continual political tensions between the Byzantine (Eastern Roman) Empire and the Sasanian Persian Empire had erupted into a full scale war in 602. Under Persian Emperor Khosrow II, his armies invaded and plundered Byzantine territories, and, since by then Christianity was the imperial state religion of the Romans, their churches were public buildings, targeted for destruction. In 614, this fate befell Jerusalem and Constantine's church.

The Persian occupation was short-lived. After the withdrawal of their forces, the Church of the Resurrection was somewhat restored by Modestus, Patriarch of Jerusalem. However, the Byzantines soon again lost their control of the Holy Land, this time forever, when it fell into the hands of conquering Muslim armies. Happily, the Church of the Resurrection was respected by Caliph Umar when he traveled to Jerusalem to receive the submission of the city in 637, for Islam venerates Jesus as the greatest of the prophets and messengers of God, except for the Prophet Muhammad. Unfortunately, centuries later, the Caliph Al-Hakim (996-1021) did not follow in Umar's footsteps, and in 1009 he had the great church in Jerusalem again destroyed.

With the permission of Al-Hakim's successor in 1042-1048, the Byzantine Emperor Constantine IX reconstructed some of part of site, not rebuilding the great basilica, but enshrining Calvary, the tomb, and the garden area into a more modest-sized church. Intended or not, this gave greater emphasis to the passion and death of the Lord even though the new church was still known by local Christians as the Church of the Resurrection. This was what the Crusader knights found in 1099.

During the following 88 years of Crusader control of Jerusalem (1099-1187), the church, called by these invading Western Christians as the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, was somewhat further modified, especially with the creation of some crypt chapels under part of the area where the great Constantinian basilica-church once stood. As the following centuries passed, there was no further damage done to the shrine by political forces, but by natural forces, yes, especially by fires and earthquakes. Various major and minor repairs and restorations were made, but, even so, today's visitors are still viewing the structure of Crusader days.

Under the rule of pagan Rome, Christian Rome, Muslim caliphates (except for the Crusader period), and, during the last century, Great Britain, Jordan, Palestine, and now Israel, the church in Jerusalem that is the focus of pilgrimage today is an enshrined

place of the crucifixion, burial, and memory of the resurrection of Jesus, an architectural patchwork in the heart of the Old City. One legacy of Crusader days is the regrettable misnomer, calling the Church of the Resurrection the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. One doesn't go there so much to view and pray at an empty sepulchre as to meditate on and celebrate with the eyes of faith Jesus' triumph over sin and death opening the way that leads to the fullness of life.

God forbid that we should forget the ancient message for those looking for the body of Jesus at the empty tomb, "He's not here. He's risen!" ■

Msgr. Robert L. Stern, a retired priest of the Archdiocese of New York, is the former president of CNEWA and an archimandrite of the Melkite Church



ANNUAL LENTEN APPEAL 2019



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

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Celebrating St. Maron at the Maronite Seminary

by Subdeacon Peter Zogbi

One of the largest annual events that Our Lady of Lebanon Maronite Seminary hosts is a celebration of the Feast of St. Maron. For two years in a row, the seminary has invited a host of guests from the The Catholic University of America to share the Liturgy, dinner, and conversation on the feast of this most beloved saint. This year's celebration is one that we will all remember.

The evening began with the Liturgy, which was celebrated on the vigil of the feast. The seminary chapel was filled to full capacity as professors, priests, lay students, and seminarians took their seats. Some of them had been in a Maronite Church before, but for many, this would be their first experience of the Maronite Qurbono. Many commented afterwards on the atmosphere of prayer that was created through the sweet-smelling incense, the uplifting hymns, the rich prayers, and the fervor that the

celebrant and congregation brought to the heavenly table. The liturgy was celebrated by the seminary's rector, Monsignor Peter Fahed Azar, who preached eloquently on the life of the saint and the need to follow his example. Concelebrating were the Rector Emeritus, Chorbishop Seely Beggiani, the Vice Rector, Fr. Armando Elkhoury, Monsignor George Sebaali, Fr. Rodrigue Constantin, and several local Latin priests.

After the liturgy, the celebration moved to the dining hall where the guests feasted on kibbe, kabobs, and various other foods and sweets. The seminarians had prepared a video presentation on the life of St. Maron and his significance for the Maronite Church. This video was published shortly afterward on the evangelization initiative Ignite the Maronite and is available for viewing on Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube.



Among the many who stayed after dinner, some went to the living room for Praise and Worship. Others went to the basement for ping-pong, video-games, and a competitive game of Spoons. Still others continued in conversation, eager to learn about the history and culture associated with the Maronite Church. I think we all came away with a deeper love for the traditions of the Maronite Church. Seeing others eagerly inquire and appreciate our rituals led even us Maronites to see our traditions with new eyes and a deeper appreciation.

A lot of work went into this event, and it certainly paid off. Our seminary community worked hard creating invitations, decorating, preparing the chapel, shooting the video presentation, and making countless other arrangements. All of the preparations had an unanticipated side-effect. The work brought the members of the seminary closer to one another. That semester, three new members joined the seminary, bringing the total number of seminarians living in the building to eight. Our Lady of Lebanon Seminary has not had numbers that high in at least four years. This event served as a way for all of us to get to know one another and establish a brotherhood.

Of course, the celebration loses its significance if we lose sight of why we gathered in the first place.



We must ask, “Why is the life of St. Maron worth celebrating?” In every Maronite liturgy, the priest prays the following words to God, “You have assumed what is ours and you have given us what is yours for the life and salvation of our souls.” This simple statement is an excellent summary of Christian life. We surrender ourselves to Christ out of love, and He also gives Himself to us, holding nothing back. The result is that we can all end up saying with St. Paul, “It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.” (Galatians 2:20). St. Maron is an example of someone who did not hold anything back but gave everything he had and everything he was to Christ. The outcome was extraordinary. He became another Christ, going about curing bodily illnesses and healing wounded souls. Through his witness, we also can find the confidence to surrender ourselves totally to Christ, holding nothing back. ■

Subdeacon Peter Zogbi is from Portland, Oregon and is a seminarian studying at Our Lady of Lebanon Maronite Seminary in Washington, DC

“ We surrender ourselves to Christ out of love, and He also gives Himself to us, holding nothing back. ”

World Youth Day Panama 2019: Fiat & Encounter

Reflection by Sr. Therese Maria Touma, MSCCL

“You, dear young people, are not the future but the now of God.”

— POPE FRANCIS AT WYD CLOSING MASS



In the flight back to Boston, after a memorable week at World Youth Day (WYD) in Panama, I was recalling some of the special graces, encounters, and transformations that took place in my heart and in the group of Maronite young adults who travelled with me. WYD is a powerful reminder that we, as “pilgrims,” are all on a journey together to heaven. We each have a unique story to share. It was inspiring to see each person, with their diverse backgrounds and culture, celebrating their faith and being open to the other.

The WYD theme centered on Mary’s fiat, *“I am the Servant of the Lord; let it be done to me according to your word.”* (LUKE 1:38) As Mary said, “yes,” to being the Mother of God, she was able to encounter and carry our Lord for nine months in her pure womb. In our personal “yes” to this WYD pilgrimage, we were making room in our lives to intimately encounter the goodness and beauty of Jesus in the Catholic Church: in each person, in the sacraments, catechesis, joyful fellowship, Liturgies, papal events, praise and worship, and in the bond of love we share.



**WYD
PANAMA
2019**

One of those precious “God moment” encounters for me was on our flight to Panama where I met, Marie-Caroline, a young pilgrim from Paris. She was paralyzed and sitting in her electronic wheel chair as a result of a rare and debilitating disease. Despite her numerous health setbacks and dependency on others to eat, shower, work, and travel to WYD, she exuded tremendous joy and a vibrant passion for the gift of life. Her calm presence and confidence in God’s love and providence in her life was a powerful testimony, which moved my heart to gratitude. In listening to her story of love, courage, and struggle, I encountered the merciful face of Jesus.

The graces of WYD are still being unpacked. During our pilgrimage there were so many opportunities to be connected with other pilgrims (and Maronites!) from across the world. I was blessed to be able to pray for and be in solidarity with those suffering, especially during the Way of the Cross; to be nourished with the Word of God and the Eucharist; to be cleansed and renewed in the gift of confession; and to be spiritually fed, especially in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament and in unity with our Holy Father, Pope Francis, during the Vigil and Closing Mass.

There were a variety of awesome speakers and bishops that came to Panama from across the globe to speak to the energetic youth. In the Catechesis sessions, two bishops that spoke to my heart were Bishop Robert Barron and Bishop Edward Burns from the United States. In particular, I appreciated how Bishop



Barron was encouraging us to allow Jesus into our “boats” (our hearts and lives) in order to take us deeper, and not to just stay in the shallow. He invited us to dive into the deep like Mary, who trusted and said, “yes,” to God’s will.

The two ideas that I took from Bishop Burns were not to give up on Jesus because of Judas (this was in relation to the scandals the Church is facing), and the importance of silence and listening in trying to prayerfully understand and discern the Lord’s will. The proper disposition for a disciple should be “speak, Lord, for your servant is listening” and not “listen, Lord, for your servant is speaking.”

It was a tremendous blessing for me to be part of this Panama WYD and to see our Maronite group from the United States bond so beautifully. My prayer is that we can keep this fire of love burning and strive to be open to God’s will in each moment by faithfully renewing our “yes,” to him, in order for our lives to bear fruit like Mary. “I am the Servant of the Lord!” May our “yes” lead us to encounter and share the Hidden One with all those we meet along the way.

The next WYD will be in Lisbon, Portugal, in January 2022. Who is in? ■

Sr. Therese Maria Touma works in youth and young adult ministry for the Eparchy of Saint Maron. She is a sister of the Maronite Servants of Christ the Light.



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PRIEST SPOTLIGHT

Fr. Tony Massad

Pastor, St. Rafka, Livonia, Missouri *by Suzanne Tavani*

One might say that Father Tony Massad was destined to become a priest of the Maronite Church. Well, perhaps not destined to, but he certainly was directed through his childhood experiences that centered around his local Maronite church, Our Lady of Lebanon in Flint, Michigan.

Born in 1984, in Sidon, Lebanon, to a Lebanese-American mother and a Lebanese father, he spent the first four years of his life in Lebanon and in Oman. The family, which now included his siblings Alicia and Paul, returned to the United States in 1987 where this teddy bear of a man says with a chuckle in his voice, “I had pretty much an American upbringing with an immigrant flair!” He attended the local schools in Flint, hung out with friends, played basketball, and rode bikes. The immigrant flair, however, proved to

be the strongest influence in his life. He fondly remembers serving at the altar for 14 years, training others to do the same, and attending Maronite Youth Organization (MYO) retreats where he established lifelong friendships. Fr. Tony credits his pastor, Monsignor Anthony Spinosa, with serving as a good example. He recalls that at about age 16 friends began calling him “Abouna” and he started to think it just might be “cool” to be a priest. However, much like the average American teen, he turned his attention toward attending college as the thought of entering the priesthood proved to be a bit overwhelming.

Following his graduation from the University of Michigan in May 2002, Tony began a discernment year and in September 2003, he entered the Maronite Seminary in Washington, D.C. In June 2010, the young man

was ordained in his hometown parish with his family and lifelong friends in attendance.

He emotionally recalls one of his proudest moments, which was when he and his family travelled to Lebanon in 2011 and he celebrated Mass in his father’s hometown. He is the first Massad from that village to become a priest.

Following his 2010 ordination, Father Tony was assigned to St. Maron in Cleveland, Ohio, which exposed him to a different side of the immigrant experience. “The community of Our Lady of Lebanon in Flint was built by second and third generation Lebanese in the 1960’s and 1970’s, and had some newer immigrants, while St. Maron’s in Cleveland was built by first generation Lebanese in the early 1900’s,” reflects Father Tony. “It was a



bit of a different dynamic than my home parish, which had a large number of recent immigrants in the congregation who moved to the U.S. in the 1980's and 1990's. Same faith, same pride, but a different set of experiences and I am very grateful to have been supported by Msgr. Peter Karam during that assignment."

In 2013, Father Tony returned to Michigan as pastor of the St. Rafka Mission and in April 2014, the community received designation as a full-fledged parish in the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon. Under his pastoral guidance, St. Rafka Mission has grown from 125 to 225 families. "I not only want to grow the size of the parish from a numbers perspective, but more importantly, I hope to see this congregation become a more faithful people who actively practice and live their faith," says Massad.



In addition to his pastoral responsibilities at St. Rafka, Father Tony serves as Director of the Maronite Young Adults (MYA) for the Eparchy of OLOL. "Working with the young adults in my capacity is a very meaningful and deeply personal assignment because I am able to recall my own involvement as a teenager in MYO and MYA—the roots of some of my longest and most meaningful friendships," says Massad. He hopes that current

members are fortunate enough to experience the same.

As he approaches the nine-year mark of his ordination, he proudly states, "It's really cool and humbling to officiate at the weddings of friends I met through church and the MYO, and even baptizing their children. I hope that I will be a positive influence on today's young adults and one day perhaps one of them may do the same." ■

MILESTONES

BORN

January 27, 1983, in Sidon, Lebanon, the son of Aziz and Diane; Siblings: Alicia and Paul

STUDIES

Carman-Ainsworth High School, Flint, Michigan
 University of Michigan, Flint: Bachelor of Arts, Philosophy
 Our Lady of Lebanon Seminary, Washington, D.C.
 Catholic University of America: Sacred Theological Baccalaureate, Theology

ORDINATION

June 26, 2010 by Bishop Robert Shaheen, Our Lady of Lebanon Maronite Catholic Church, Flint, Michigan

APPOINTMENTS

2010 - 2013: Assistant, St. Maron, Cleveland, Ohio
 2013 - Present: Pastor, St Rafka, Livonia, Michigan

OTHER RESPONSIBILITIES

- Secretary, Presbyteral Council
- Director, Maronite Young Adults – Eparchy of OLOL

MOST MEMORABLE MOMENTS AS A PRIEST

- First visit as a priest to father's village in Mjaydel, Lebanon with parents and celebrating Liturgy
- Celebrating baptisms and weddings and funerals of and with family members
- Celebrating the marriages of friends that he first met in the MYO National retreats as a teenager
- First Liturgy after ordination with friends and family in home parish of Our Lady of Lebanon in Flint, MI
- Celebrating the Divine Liturgy on the Sea of Galilee in a boat with a pilgrimage group
- Celebrating Divine Liturgy with a pilgrimage group in St. Peter's Basilica in Rome

The Resurrection: “According to the Scriptures”

by Fr. David A. Fisher

For I handed on to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures; that he was buried; that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures; that he appeared to Cephas, then to the Twelve.

1 CORINTHIANS 15:3-5

“According to the Scriptures”

Saint Paul established the Christian community in Corinth around the year 51 during his second missionary journey and wrote his First Letter (Epistle) to the Corinthians in 56 while he was in Ephesus. In this letter as well his letters to the Thessalonians, we are allowed to see the working dynamics of the Church in its infancy and know of the themes of the apostolic preaching.

How did the apostles preach? Saint Irenaeus (c.130-c.202.) was one of the earliest and greatest of Church Fathers and a disciple of Saint Polycarp of Smyrna, who was a disciple of Saint John the Apostle. Saint Irenaeus tells us in his *Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching* that the apostles preached by showing how Jesus was the fulfillment of the scriptures. “Scriptures” in the *Apostolic Preaching* were the Jewish Scriptures, (i.e., Old Testament), received by the early Church primarily in its Greek translation known as the Septuagint, a translation of the seventy scholars of Alexandria, Egypt, which was compiled in 200 BC.

By making the Jewish Scriptures the context of the Messianic fulfillment in Jesus, the apostles were able to present to Jewish Christians how their scriptures were all about the Eternal Word of the Father, the long-awaited Messiah. For Gentile Christians, the

Jewish scriptures became a type of catechism from which could be drawn the fundamental truths of the Christian faith, prefigured in the Old Testament.

In proclaiming to both Jewish and Gentile believers that, according to the scriptures, Jesus died and resurrected. Such an approach made Christian faith a public, historical revelation open to all. Revelation in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus was neither a philosophical school or system, nor a mystery cult based on ecstatic experiences of a few elect, but a divine truth revealed in the prophetically-lived reality of a chosen people, always pointing toward the Savior of the world. These chosen people were given the vocation of creating the Sacred Scripture that would eventually be revealed to the world by the Apostolic Ministry of the Church. The *Apostolic Preaching* is a living witness of the divine truth that Jesus is the fulfillment of God’s plan, revealed according to the scriptures.

THE BODILY RESURRECTION

So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown corruptible; it is raised incorruptible. It is sown dishonorable; it is raised glorious. It is sown weak; it is raised powerful. It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual one.

1 CORINTHIANS 15:42-44



The New Testament Church inherited from Judaism a strong belief in the integral unity of the human person. The view of the human person differs with the notions of the surrounding Greco-Roman world with its Platonic philosophy. In the thought of Plato, the person is the soul, distinct from the body. When the body dies, the soul travels down the River Styx to Hades, assumes a new body, and returns to the physical world. One of the greatest challenges to the Apostolic Preaching of the early Church was how to explain the fundamental belief of the Church in resurrection of the body.

The Church overcame the teachings of Platonism by explaining that the body is more than flesh; rather, the body is also a spiritual entity as much as the human soul, or the human spirit. Saint Paul told the Corinthians, ending with the words of the Prophet Hosea (according to the Scriptures):

This I declare, brothers: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I tell you a mystery. We shall not all fall asleep, but we will all be changed, in an instant, in the blink of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For that which is corruptible must clothe itself with incorruptibility, and that which is mortal must clothe itself with immortality. And when this which is corruptible clothes itself with incorruptibility and this which is mortal clothes itself with immortality, then the word that is written shall come about:

*“Death is swallowed up in victory.
Where, O death, is your victory?
Where, O death, is your sting?”*

1 CORINTHIANS 15:50-55

SHARING IN THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

Now one of the criminals hanging there reviled Jesus, saying, “Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us.” The other, however, rebuking him, said in reply, “Have you no fear of God, for you are subject to the same condemnation? And indeed, we have been condemned justly, for the sentence we received corresponds to our crimes, but this man has done nothing criminal.” Then he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.” He replied to him, “Amen, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise.”

LUKE 23:39-43

The good thief (whom tradition calls Saint Dismas) represents all of us who desire to follow Christ, to share in his Resurrection, to live in His peace, to arrive at Paradise. Like Saint Paul, we come to realize that, *“the sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.”* (1 CORINTHIANS 15:56). This means that we cannot perfect ourselves nor do we have power to save ourselves; the sting of sin reminds us that we carry death within us, the law reminds us that we always fall short of the commandments of God. Like the good thief, all we are left with is faith in The One who can remember us and share with us eternal life, life in its fullness. In faith we know that only in Christ is our salvation and the preservation of our personal identity: body, soul, and spirit. We long to hear the words of the Lord when we come to the end of our earthly pilgrimage, *“Amen, today you will be with me in Paradise.”* Then we can say with Saint Paul, *“Thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”* 1 CORINTHIANS 15:57 ■

Father Fisher is a Maronite priest of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon of Los Angeles and Adjunct Professor of Theology, Byzantine Catholic Seminary of Sts. Cyril & Methodius

MYO Regional Retreat

St. Anthony Church, Glen Allen, VA

As they piled into their cars to return to Washington, Roanoke, Raleigh, Fayetteville, and Fort Lauderdale, comments such as, “This was the best workshop ever!”, “I had so much fun!”, and the ever-present “Awesome!” were heard about the MYO Regional Workshop at Saint Anthony Church in Glen Allen, Virginia.

Approximately 90 participants, some for the first time, others who are “veterans” in the program — and one who had come as a member of the MYO, but now as a chaperone, arrived on Friday, March 15, for pizza, mjadra, salad, and ice-breaker activities under the direction of Seminarian Chris Nahra. On

Saturday, Subdeacon Peter Zogbi gave two talks, one on Christian life in today’s world, and the other on our Maronite saints’ lives of holiness. Saturday also included games, free time, a Reconciliation service, and finally closed with a lively hafli.

An uplifting and inspirational spirit was present throughout the weekend that was organized by Mrs. Cathy George, Subdeacon Michael Maynes, and Ms. Carmen Dailey. Pastors should be proud of the young people who came. Activities such as this assure all of us that the Maronite Church will be in good hands. ■



MYO Midwest Regional Retreat

by Amanda Abi-Samra

St. Sharbel Maronite Church was honored to host the MYO Regional Retreat in their newly built parish in Clinton Township, Michigan. The weekend consisted of over one hundred youth and over thirty advisors as they embarked on a journey to experience The Passionate Pursuit of Joy. The retreat was filled with many fruitful activities leaving the kids renewed spiritually and stronger as a community. The youth would celebrate Liturgy together each day, partake of individual prayer including adoration and reconciliation, attend discussions by keynote speakers, bond socially through ice-breakers and engage in other exciting activities.

The retreat started late Friday afternoon with most parishes arriving from long trips, eager to greet each other. As one, the youth ate and socialized together. Then, they were introduced to this year's theme The Passionate Pursuit of Joy, followed by prayer. Over the next two nights, the youth stayed in hotel

rooms with their friends where they grew closer and deepened their friendships. Saturday morning, they ate breakfast together and headed over to the church for Liturgy, spiritual discussion, and a heartfelt period of adoration. Afterwards, the youth enjoyed an exhilarating afternoon playing gym activities with each other. Later that day, they were taken back to the hotel in order to freshen up for the evening to come. Considerably the most charismatic gathering of the retreat is the hafli, which took place Saturday night, and is the grand finale of events. Here, the youth celebrated their faith and communion under Christ as one, enjoying a formal dinner lead by upbeat music and dancing. On Sunday morning the youth attended their last Liturgy together, followed by a brunch where they socialized one last time. The youth said their goodbyes exchanging hugs and tears of joy from such an amazing weekend spent together. Shortly after, parishes departed and the countdown till next year's Midwest Regional retreat began! ■



Maronite Young Adults on

SOCIAL MEDIA

The National Maronite Young Adults (MYA) Social Media Committee has been busy at work over the last few months! The MYA has launched a revamped website on 1 March 2019, providing the history of the organization, links to all of the Maronite parishes in United States, along with many links and resources for local MYA groups to use as a reference for local activity and growth. The website is also a tool to promote the annual National MYA Conference. The website hosts information about past conferences and helps in promoting future conferences. This year, our National Conference is being hosted near San Antonio, TX, and the theme is *Leading by Example*. The MYA website is a great resource to learn how to get involved within the Maronite Young Adults organization locally, regionally, and nationally.

In addition to our website, we have very active Instagram and Facebook pages. Current initiatives on the pages include posts on Feast Days, Holy Days of Obligation, MYA of the Week, Bible Verse of the Day, *Ignite the Maronite* videos, and informational

posts such as upcoming conferences and retreats or eparchial announcements.

Throughout the year, the Feast Day and Holy Day posts explain the history and the importance of why we remember each Feast.

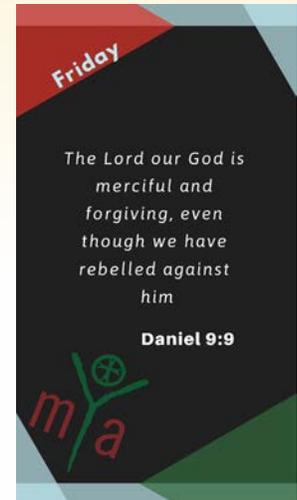
Every Wednesday, a local MYA chapter is featured to share exciting social, spiritual, and service based events. If your local MYA has done a fundraiser, participated in volunteer work, or had a social or spiritual event, please send it to @nationalmya on Instagram and Facebook or to our email (nationalmya@gmail.com) so that we can share the exciting work you do!

Daily Bible verses are posted on both the Instagram and Facebook page stories.

A relatively new weekly initiative called *Ignite the Maronite*, which is led by a group of clergy, religious, and laity from both eparchies, and members of the MYA National Board, collaborate to publish informational videos about the Maronite faith. These videos are then shared every Monday on YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram pages of both *Ignite the Maronite* and the National MYA.

We encourage all age groups to *like* our Facebook and Instagram pages so they can keep up with our organization's news, updates, and exciting events. ■

<https://www.maroniteyoungadults.org>
<https://www.facebook.com/NationalMYA/>
<https://www.instagram.com/nationalmya/>



Marriage Enrichment Evening at Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral

 On Saturday, February 23, Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral organized a Marriage Enrichment Evening. The event began with the Divine Liturgy celebrated by our rector, Father Dominique Hanna, who delivered a homily focused on love in marriage. Father encouraged every person to recall what attracted them to their spouse; to accept each other as they are with their faults and not as they wish them to be. He reflected on the fact that “a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.” The man leaves his parents house like Jesus left His Father’s house to come and abide with His people. Father reminded all of the men present of the words of Saint Paul in His Epistle to the Ephesians, “Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word.” At the end of the homily, Father challenged us to consider what we are bringing into our marriage. Will it make us saints or is it making us live like dead people? After his homily, Father asked every couple to face each other and hold hands while they renewed their marital vows and received his blessings. Following the renewal of vows, Father asked the 32 couples present to spend a few minutes reflecting silently on the questions in the program given to every person.

At the end of the Divine Liturgy, everyone went to the social hall where they received party favors at the registration table and took their seats. The favors included a photo frame coaster made up of two pieces of heart-shaped glass, a laminated marriage blessing prayer card, and a small card with the words “Keep SPICE in your Marriage.”

All then celebrated married life with food, music, and dancing. During the party, Father Dominique had planned trivia questions with simple prizes. There was lot of laughter, fun, joy, and excitement while everyone tried to guess the correct answers and win the game.



After the game, every person there was invited to check under their seats for a red ribbon, an indication that they had won a simple prize. At that moment, everyone was turning their chairs over, searching for the winning ribbon that earned them a big heart filled with chocolate.

Everyone felt it was a nice family gathering with lots of love and joy put into preparing for the success of the event. All enjoyed it and had positive interaction and feedback. 50/50 raffles were drawn at the end of the evening and the winner gave 50% of it back to the church.

The Office of Family and Sanctity of Life for the Eparchy of Saint Maron wants to encourage every priest to consider planning a similar event in his parish. Such an evening can bring couples together and build fellowship between them, help them reflect on the importance of their vocation to marriage, and strengthen their marriage while celebrating married life with Liturgy, music, and food. For more information on planning such an event, please contact Marise Frangie at 914-393-8907 and sanctityoflife@live.com, or check out the webpage: <http://www.cedaroflebanonfcc.com/office-of-family-and-sanctity-of-life.html>. ■

Parish News

CLINTON TOWNSHIP, MICHIGAN

Relics of St. Sharbel

St. Sharbel Maronite Church in Clinton Township, Michigan, hosted First-Class Relics of its beloved patron, St. Sharbel Makhlouf, for the first time at the new church location.

The relics were on display for four days starting 22 January 2019, which marked the 26th Anniversary of the miracle St. Sharbel performed for Nouhad Al-Chami, healing her from hemiplegia in Lebanon years ago. Despite a major snow storm and very cold temperatures, over 4,000 parishioners and worshipers from all over the Detroit metro area came to venerate his relics and seek St. Sharbel's intercession.

The schedule of events began with the veneration of the relics followed by prayers and exposition of the Blessed Sacrament throughout the afternoon. The Divine Liturgy was celebrated by the Most Rev. A. Elias Zaidan, Bishop of Our Lady of Lebanon of Los Angeles, along with multiple priests who visited from near and far.

His Excellency, Gabriel Issa, Ambassador of Lebanon to the United States, was also present along with Mrs. Souzan Mouzi, the Consul General of Lebanon in Detroit, and local city officials.

Following the Divine Liturgy, a reception in the church's hall took place for everyone in attendance.

The schedule for the rest of the week included morning Liturgies celebrated by Chorbishop Alfred Badawi, Pastor of St. Sharbel Church, and followed throughout the day with prayers, confessions, and Healing Liturgies in the afternoon. The Chaldean Catholic Community and the Syriac Catholic Community in Metro Detroit also honored St. Sharbel by celebrating special Healing Liturgies at St. Sharbel Church on behalf of their communities.



Heartfelt thanks goes to all the volunteers who spent countless hours preparing for the week and making it a very memorable and hospitable event for all. Through the intercession of St. Sharbel, may our Lord always bless the Maronite Community of Clinton Township, Michigan, and all those who enter the church's doors. ■

Editor's Correction: St. Anthony of Padua Parish Christmas Concert and Children's Party article in the February Issue was authored by Linda Conour.

FALL RIVER, MASSACHUSETTS
Wedding Vows Renewed

Wedding bells rang out on March 2, 2019, as 36 married couples renewed their vows at St. Anthony of the Desert Maronite Catholic Church. Msgr. James Root (Pastor) concelebrated a special liturgy at 6:00 pm with Chorbishop Joseph Kaddo (retired pastor of Saint Anthony's), and Msgr. David George to honor the couples ranging from 3 years to 53 years of marriage. This has been a year of renewal for St. Anthony's Church. Msgr. Root, the parish council and church organizations are stressing the importance of renewing the Church mission and renewing ourselves in every aspect of our Christian commitment.

Msgr. George spoke about the language of love based upon a book by Gary Chapman entitled: *The 5 Love Languages* – Words of Affirmation, Quality Time, Receiving Gifts, Acts of Service and Physical Touch. Msgr. George added another important Love Language: *Forgiving Love*. He used

the paradigm of the greatest example of love that Jesus gave us, His dying on the Cross. Msgr. George said that "Our forgiveness must be patterned after God's forgiveness of us. God forgives out of a grace filled heart of forgiveness. We are simply to forgive as God forgives." While thinking of the couples attending liturgy, Msgr. George stated that "Forgiving love sets your spouse free. Remember how the weight of sin makes you feel before you receive God's forgiveness? Your spouse feels the same pain and discomfort from hurting you. Forgiveness is how we bring our relationship into the light."

Following liturgy, the couples gathered in the Saint Sharbel Maronite Center for dinner, wedding cake, champagne toast, and dancing. Each couple received a Marriage Certificate with their original date of marriage and renewal date. ■

MILWAUKEE, WISCONSIN
**St. Sharbel Mission
Healing Liturgy**

St. Sharbel Mission in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, celebrates a Healing Liturgy at 4:00 p.m. on the third Sunday of each month in commemoration of the miraculous healings attributed to St. Sharbel in Annaya, Lebanon. Following the Liturgy, attendees are invited to venerate the relics and oil of St. Sharbel before enjoying a communal monastic dinner. All are welcome! ■



Parish News

UNIONTOWN, PENNSYLVANIA

Bishop Gregory Mansour's Pastoral Visit

by Dr. Mabel George Howard

During the weekend of 8-10 March 2019, St. George Maronite Church in Uniontown, PA, welcomed its beloved son, His Excellency Bishop Gregory Mansour, home with open arms. Bishop Mansour, former pastor of St. George Church (1983-1994), honored the parishioners with a pastoral visit. To begin his mission Friday evening, Bishop Mansour, assisted by pastor, Father El-Badaoui Habib, led Stations of the Cross. Afterwards, a Lenten meal, sponsored by the MYO, was held in the church hall. On Saturday, the ladies of the church prepared breakfast and lunch for Bishop Mansour and guests. Later, Bishop Mansour visited and blessed those who recently lost a loved one as well as the sick and shut-ins of the parish who were unable to attend Liturgy. They were overwhelmed and humbled by his gentleness and concern for their physical and spiritual well-being.

Bishop Mansour and Father Habib concelebrated the weekend Liturgies assisted by Subdeacons T.R. George and Dr. Mallard George. Bishop Mansour's inspirational homilies expressed several key points. He spoke to the congregation about the importance of the beauty that one sees in him/herself, and how we should experience the beauty that the world has to offer. He commented, "God created the beauty that is reflected in nature, in all creatures, and in mankind throughout the universe." Bishop Mansour also discussed the importance of three words: 'I need help.' He explained

how the church should help those in need. He remarked, "Everyone has faults and makes mistakes, and Lent is a time to examine oneself, ask for God's help, and strive for improvement."

A highlight of Bishop Mansour's pastoral visit was the presentation of the Massabki Award. Marion Barkett Broskey was awarded the prestigious Silver Massabki Medal by Bishop Mansour during Sunday's liturgy. Marion, a faithful, dedicated, and lifelong parishioner of St. George Church, has contributed her time, talents, and treasures to the church for over 60 years. She is a compassionate, kind, and loving person who humbly and willingly volunteers to serve her church in many capacities. Marion is predominantly known as the "head of the kitchen crew," as she plans and cooks for endless church activities and events. We extend a heartfelt thanks to Marion for her years of commitment and support for the benefit of our parish community. We recognize her selfless years of devotion, service, and love for St. George Church. Congratulations and God Bless You!

After Sunday Liturgies, the ladies prepared a wonderful reception in the church hall for all parishioners to enjoy as they reconnected with Bishop Mansour, family, and friends. ■

ST. MARON CHURCH, YOUNGSTOWN, OHIO

Faith of the Mountain and Silver Massabki Awards

On 9 February, Chorbishop Michael Kail and NAM Vice President Rose Sahyoun presented the Faith of the Mountain Award to a well-deserving young adult, Michelle Gabriel. Michelle is a very energetic, determined, hardworking person who has contributed a great deal to the parish. She has been very active as an MYO member and has moved on to trying to start an MYA group. She is also a chairperson for the Family Life Committee. Michelle is always available to help the parish whenever there is a need even though she is an involved college student at Youngstown State University.

The Silver Massabki Medal was then presented to another deserving parishioner and NAM member, Anthony Vross. Anthony is a lifelong faithful member of the parish and has served both as an MYO advisor and on the Parish Council. He has over 40 years of experience in the roofing industry, serving in an executive position in the family-owned national roofing company, Simon Roofing, and is always there for the parish when needed. Anthony is very accomplished, sitting on several business, university, and charitable organizations. Plus, he has authored several articles in national magazines. ■

HOUSTON, TEXAS

Fat Thursday

by Dolan Dow

"Fat Tuesday" is a feast celebrated around the world the week before the season of Lent. In Lebanon and other eastern countries, this day is referred to as "Drunkard's Thursday." For the first time, our parish, Our Lady of the Cedars, brought these wonderful traditions together on Thursday, 28 February 2019, at our "Fat Thursday" event.

We were blessed to have His Excellency, Bishop Elias Zaidan, with us to celebrate the Liturgy and begin the evening with a special prayer, reminding us that while all of the cultural celebrations associated with Lent are a blessing to be a part of, we must remember that at the end of the celebrations, there is true meaning behind all of the traditions associated with Lent: to lead us to the season of prayer and sacrifice.

Our wonderful parishioners came together to keep both our faith and our culture alive. From preparing and serving the delicious meat and chicken kabobs, accompanied with the delicious *mezza* sides, to providing the right drinks and entertainment, everyone contributed to make this event truly authentic!

All of the church organizations—the Knights, the Daughters, and the Parish Council—worked very hard to make this event a great success. With over 300 attendees, we were able to bring more of our heritage to our church and keep the traditions going for generations to come! Have a blessed Lent season! ■



Parish News



BIRMINGHAM, ALABAMA

Bishop Zaidan Visits St. Elias

Bishop Elias Zaidan made a Pastoral Visit to St. Elias in Birmingham, Alabama, on the weekend of 2-3 March 2019. He was accompanied by Fr. Milad Yaghi, MLM, Pastor of Our Lady of the Cedars in Houston, Texas, and Beth Schantzen from the Steir Group.

They were able to see the parish in action during a cooking session for our upcoming 21st Annual Lebanese Food and Cultural Festival in April. The Bishop met and had lunch with the Ladies' Altar Society. He celebrated all three parish Liturgies. He had breakfast with the youth and had a chance to meet with several individuals to introduce the upcoming Capital Campaign for the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon.

During the 10:30 a.m. Liturgy on Sunday, 3 March, he installed two new Annual Members of the Order of St. Sharbel, Danny and Pal Bostany. He also blessed a new statue of St. Sharbel, dedicated to the memory of Deacon Samuel Wehby. ■

DARTMOUTH, MASSACHUSETTS

Maronite Servants on Mission in Lebanon

by Sr. Natalie Sayde Salameh, MSCL

The Maronite Servants of Christ the Light visited Lebanon for three weeks in the months of October and November. Initially, they participated in a silent retreat, several mission and apostolic activities, and two youth groups. The first group consisted of four hundred youth and their Bishop, His Excellency Michel Aoun from Jbeil. The theme, *Plant Your Fingerprint*, presented spiritual conferences, Liturgy, adoration and testimonials. Sister Therese Maria discussed contemporary challenges faced by the Maronite youth of America. Bishop Joseph Mouawad conducted the second youth gathering held in Zahle under the topic, *What is my Vocation?* Bishop Joseph spoke about the gift of vocation and the meaning of "discern." On their journey, the Maronite Servants visited the Missionary Sisters of the Most Holy Sacrament in Jbeil. They prayed with the elderly in their "House of Mercy" located in Kfarmasshoun followed by a trip to the Sisters' school and orphanage in Beit Habbak. The Maronite Servants' visit to the Sesobel Institute in Ain El Rehani was an enlightening experience. This school cares for two hundred and fifty mentally and physically disabled children in their physical therapy and autism centers. The children exhibited true happiness and joy in the midst of their challenges. Before returning to the United States, the Maronite Servants visited His Beatitude, Patriarch Beshara Peter Rai, in Bkerke. Patriarch Rai discussed his recent visit to Rome and participation in the Synod on Young People. He emphasized the importance of listening to the concerns of our youth. Finally, the Maronite Servants thanked God for their opportunity to visit Lebanon and sympathize with so many people who face difficulties in their lives. They felt extremely fortunate and blessed to have been a part of this wonderful experience. ■



SAINT LOUIS, MISSOURI

Cathedral Celebrates Feast of Saint Maron

by Shelly Vitale

On Sunday, 3 February 2019, at the 10 a.m. Divine Liturgy, the community of St. Raymond Maronite Cathedral, along with Bishop A. Elias Zaidan and Cathedral Rector, Fr. John Nahal, joined together to celebrate the Feast of Saint Maron. The procession included representatives from every organization. The Bishop invited all the officers and members of various groups and committees of St. Raymond to receive a special blessing and installation.

After the Liturgy, a reception and awards program were held at the Cedars Hall where guests were treated to a special meal sponsored by the MYA. Following the luncheon, Bishop Zaidan and Father John presented the 2019 awards to deserving recipients, including: Dennis and Roxanne Elking—Patriarchal Blessing and Medal; Subdeacon Tony and Mary Simon—Regional Silver Massabki Medal; Brian and Robbyn Wahby—Silver Massabki Medal and Jacqueline Wahby—Faith of the Mountain Award. Father John expressed his appreciation and gratitude to the recipients for their hard work and dedication.

The St. Raymond community is also very proud of parishioner, Mary Denny, who was invested with the Order of Saint Sylvester by Bishop Zaidan, on 18 November 2018. Mary has served many years as Vice Chancellor and Financial Officer for the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon. She also has played an integral part in countless church projects and activities throughout the years. ■

The Order of Saint Sharbel New Members

ANNUAL

ALEXANDER AGBAY | *St. Maron Church, Detroit, MI*

SUSAN CHAWKI | *Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral, Brooklyn, NY*

KAY MARIE FADDOUL | *St. Maron Church, Detroit, MI*

HENRY EL KHOURY | *St. Maron Church, Detroit, MI*

ROBERT KRAMER | *Our Lady of Lebanon, Lewisville, TX*

JOHN AND CAROLYN MARKER | *Holy Family, Mendota Heights, MN*

PERPETUAL

MARY ANTON | *St. Maron, Minneapolis, MN*

MONTY COURY | *St. Joseph Church, Phoenix, AZ*

JOSEPHINE DAHDAH | *St. Maron, Minneapolis, MN*

ZIAD ELGHOUL | *St. Joseph Church, Phoenix, AZ*

NICOLA MIKHAIL | *Our Lady of Mt. Lebanon, Los Angeles, CA*

MARDELLE WHEBBE | *Holy Family, Mendota Heights, MN*

VICTORIA WHEBBE | *Holy Family, Mendota Heights, MN*

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

For more information about the Order ask your Pastor, visit
www.orderstsharbel.org or write to:

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



Parish News

BROOKLYN, NEW YORK

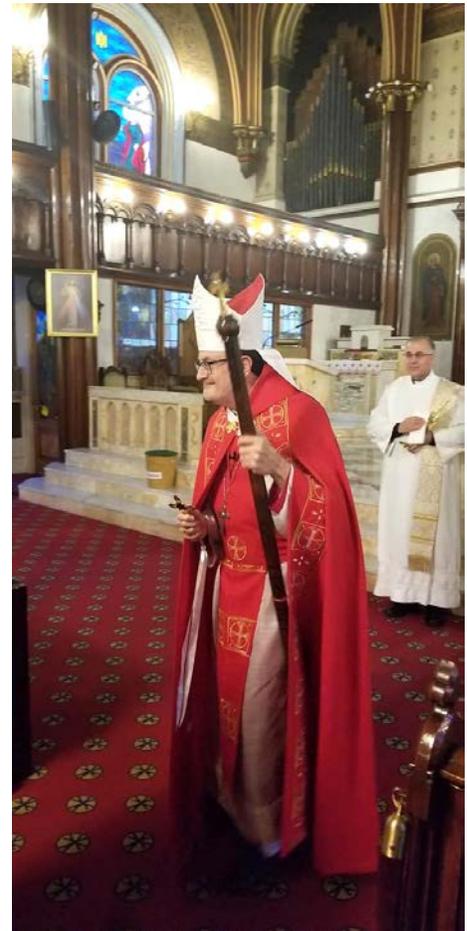
Feast Day of Saint Maron

by Salma Vahdat

On Sunday, February 10th, the ninety third feast day of our patron, Saint Maron, was celebrated at Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral in Brooklyn, New York. Sayedna Gregory Mansour celebrated the Divine Liturgy assisted by Reverend Dominique Hanna, Rector, Peter Frangie and Subdeacon Norbert Vogl. It is always a joyous occasion and reminder of the rich and noble history of the Maronite Catholics.

In his homily, Sayedna Gregory spoke about our beloved Saint Maron who left the material world to become an "open air" hermit seeking a closer communion with God. He strived to do God's work on earth by serving the poor and disenfranchised, feeding the hungry and comforting the sick and grieving. Sayedna reflected on his recent trip to Nigeria on behalf of Catholic Relief Services (CRS). Originally, the Global Fund, an international group of all religions gave a (273 million dollar) grant to the government of Nigeria to eliminate disease. Due to governmental issues, the grant was stopped after one year. Fortunately, CRS stepped in to help, and in two years were able to decrease the malaria rate from 42% to 27%. The humanitarian aid and dedication of CRS in spirit with Saint Maron helps others in need. Reverend Dominique commented that God expects us to aspire to greatness and to follow Saint Maron's example of connecting with God and sharing love for humanity.

After the Liturgy, a luncheon was held at Gargiulo's Restaurant in Coney Island. This gave our community the opportunity to greet family and friends. Our MCF youngsters recited facts about the life of Saint Maron. Sonia Abi Habib, our MC, graciously thanked all for their enthusiasm. We enjoyed this event organized by Therese Abi Habib and her committee. ■



BIRMINGHAM, ALABAMA

Feast of St. Maron

The Feast of St. Maron was celebrated on 9 February 2019, at St. Elias Church in Birmingham, with a banquet following the 5:00 p.m. Liturgy. The church hall was beautifully decorated by members of the Ladies' Altar Society. A catered steak dinner was served by the MYO and the 8th graders of the Jr. MYO. The Master of Ceremonies was Danny Bostany, and the guest speaker was Mayor Frank Brocato, whose childhood home was on the same street as the church. He recognized many familiar faces and was glad to be back in the neighborhood.

Following the dinner, the MYA presented a Silhouette on the Life of St. Maron to remind us of the reason for our celebration. The Silhouette was written by Fr. Rami Razzouk, Parochial Vicar.



The following awards were presented by Chorbishop Richard Saad: the Faith of the Mountain Award to Katrine Aboujaoude; the Silver Massabki Medal to Rana Atieh; and Parishioner of the Year Award to David and Judy Elkourie. A great time was had by all! ■

SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS

Feast of St. Maron

by Regina Aune



The Feast of St. Maron is always a time of great celebration for St. George Church in San Antonio, and the weekend of 9-10 February was no exception. The annual hafli was held on Saturday evening, 9 February, featuring traditional Lebanese music provided by Houston's Jabour and his band. Attendees enjoyed traditional Lebanese folk dancing by the parish dance troupe and a meal of traditional Lebanese food.

The Liturgy for the feast was celebrated by Father Charles Khachan on Sunday, 10 February. Archbishop Gustavo Garcia-Siller, Archbishop of the Archdiocese of San Antonio, gave the homily and spoke of St. Maron and the rich traditions of the Maronite Church, which he considers a great blessing to the universal Church.



At the Liturgy, Father Charles Khachan, assisted by Archbishop Gustavo Garcia-Siller, presented the Silver Massabki Award to Gibran Mery, the Faith of the Mountain Award to Desirae Imad, the Bishop's Award to Charles Malouff, the St. George Appreciation Award to Tony Antoun, and the Altar Server Award to Matthew Hanna. Finally, Miriam Wells received the National Apostolate of Maronites Delegate of the Year Award, which honors individuals for their selfless service and continuous giving of their time and talents to support the parish and larger community of Maronites. A luncheon reception in the Phoenician Ballroom followed the liturgy and continued the celebration. ■



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Pastoral Care: A Servant Heart that Listens *by Mother Marla Marie, MSCL*



ften times we think of the term “pastoral care” as a task for our pastors or people who serve in the Church. “Oh, isn’t that what the priest or deacon does?” most people would answer. We are all called to offer pastoral care, paying attention to the needs of others whether physical, material, social, emotional, and spiritual. Jesus teaches: *“I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.”* MATTHEW 25:40.

We have to admit that we are at times so overly stretched, that we don’t even take care of our own needs. How could we possibly be stretched even more beyond our own circle of family or friends?

At our baptism and chrismation the Holy Spirit sanctified us to love with the love of Jesus, to reach out of ourselves to the other, to have a servant heart. Do we allow the Holy Spirit guide our thoughts and deeds? Perhaps our Maronite posture of standing at prayer is a good model for cultivating a servant heart leading us to pastoral care. The posture of standing signifies our readiness to meet Jesus. In our standing posture we are awaiting the coming of Our Lord and are in the position to run out to meet him.

Holy Spirit guide us to always be ready to care for the “least of these brothers” and to see in them that we are serving Our Lord. Mother Teresa often said, “We shall never know all the good that a simple smile can do.” This is where pastoral care can begin, by offering a welcoming smile and a listening ear.

I share the following story to give an example of how God can bring great blessings from our simple, sincere gestures of kindness. This is pastoral care in action.

Lost with a Pro-Life Purpose

It was late afternoon and the day before the March

for Life 2019 in Washington DC. I was planning on attending the vigil Liturgy that evening at the Basilica of the Immaculate Conception. This Liturgy is awesome with priests, seminarians, religious, and laity from all over the country praying for the pro-life cause.

Instead, I found myself far from the Basilica. I had met up in DC with a friend who was bringing a bus of youth from her parish in Florida and they were going to drop me off on route to their evening destination. However, the bus driver was not very good with directions and ended up in the opposite direction. He finally pulled the bus over in a plaza so that the teens could get a bite to eat before continuing on to their pro-life youth rally in Virginia. At this point I decided to look for a metro and make my way back to where I was staying because it was too late to return to the Basilica.

“Well Lord, this must be your plan for me tonight,” thinking to myself as I disappointingly walked down the dark street with snow blowing around me. It was only when I reached the subway platform and looked at the map, that I realized the location — Largo, Maryland and the last stop on that line of the metro. How did we ever get here!?

There was only one other person waiting, a young woman in her late 20s. We boarded the empty metro together. I greeted her and asked if she knew the best way for me to get to my destination. After studying the metro map, she advised me to stay on the train and I should be where I needed to go in about 40 minutes.

I asked what brought her out this evening guessing she was on her way to work a night shift in downtown DC. The young woman replied that she had a very rough week and was going in to meet a friend. She repeated again putting your head down, “I’ve had such an awful month. It has been so rough.”

Maronite Monks of Adoration

“Is there anything I can pray about for you,” I asked. Her eyes welled up with tears and she began to tell her story. She shared how her boyfriend of nine years had just walked out, even after finding out that she was pregnant with his child. She mentioned that her grandfather, a Baptist Minister, had advised her many times over those years to get married. She lamented that God had given up on her because everything seemed to be going wrong.

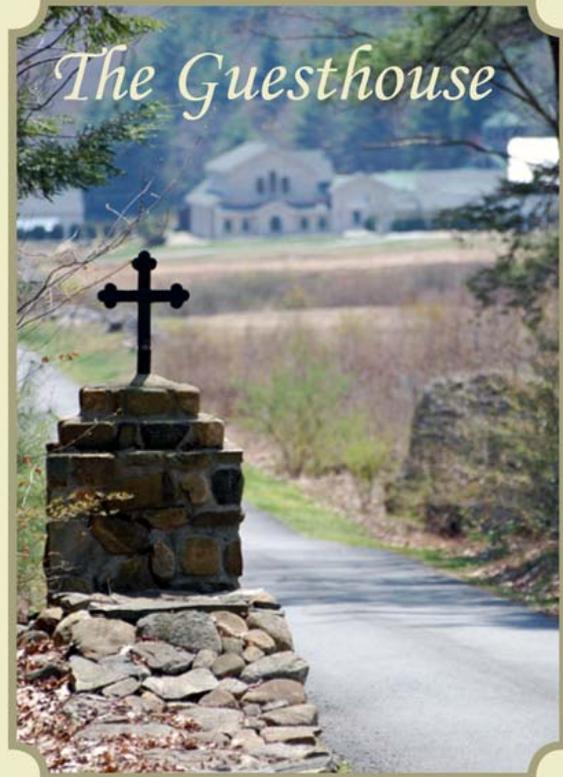
We had quite a conversation and I assured her that God is truly looking out for her. Then I asked her about her pre-born baby and again she cried. Just the week before she went for an abortion and justified it saying, “I just couldn’t have a child at this time, I have another young child at home and I’m doing this all alone.”

“God is truly looking out for you!” I said, explaining how he put me here on this train to speak his word of love and mercy to her. “I was supposed to be an hour away from here in the opposite direction at church praying for pro-life. Somehow, I ended up in Largo. It was God’s plan to tell you how much he loves you and wants you to come back to him.”

I invited her to pray with me. We bowed our heads and I called on God the Father, asking his love and mercy for this young woman, and asked her to confess to the Lord and rely on him as her rock. We offered the Our Father and as we both said “amen”, the train pulled into her stop.

My new friend jumped up, gave me a huge hug, and kept saying that God had truly sent me to her. She smiled through tears of joy, “I will remember what you said to me. Thank you, thank you!” ■

Mother Marla Marie is Superior of the Maronite Servants of Christ the Light in Dartmouth, Massachusetts



And Jesus said to them, “Come apart into a desert place and rest a while.”

Mk. 6:30

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Maronite Church To Open In Qatar

by Dr. Edward A. Lynch



Maronite Catholics around the world know of the desperate and often deteriorating conditions for Christians in the Middle East. Targeted by radical Islamic terrorists, and victims of onerous discrimination, Christians have much to endure in the region that gave birth to Christianity.

However, on a recent fact-finding trip to the Gulf Region, I found there is some good news for Christians from the region, and good news specifically for Maronites. The small nation of Qatar, unlike most of its neighbors, permits Christians to worship, and recognizes several different Christian churches in the overwhelmingly Muslim nation. I visited the Roman Catholic Church of Our Lady of the Rosary in November, as part of a visit sponsored by the National Council on U.S.-Arab Relations (NCUSAR). It is located in a Christian enclave outside the capital city of Doha, along with churches for Greek Orthodox, Anglicans, Evangelicals, and mainstream Protestants.

Christians in Qatar affirmed that church attendance is unrestrained, and noted that the Qatari-Christian community will soon be expanded with the opening of a Maronite church. This will be the first Maronite church to operate freely in the Gulf region. Maronite Patriarch Bechara Boutros al-Rahi laid the foundation stone for the new church in April 2018.

To be sure, the 750,000 or so Christians in Qatar have to live with legal restrictions. One religious representative said that he does not wear a cross outside the enclave, except in an official capacity. Proselytizing among

Muslims is strictly forbidden, and Christian churches hold weekly services on Friday, with an evening Mass on Sunday, in order to align with the Muslim holy day. The enclave is several miles outside of Doha, with bus service, and is surrounded by high fences.

Still, the legal status of Qatari Christians is far better than that of Christians in Bahrain, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, or the United Arab Emirates (UAE). (Nearby Oman, like Qatar, permits private Christian worship.) Qatari churches are permitted to run private Christian schools, Christian marriage is recognized by the government, and there is no religious designation on government-issued ID cards. Christian churches in Qatar serve the country's large ex-pat community, with most of the faithful coming from India, the Philippines and, increasingly, Syria and Lebanon. (Thus, the successful effort to gain recognition of a Maronite church.)

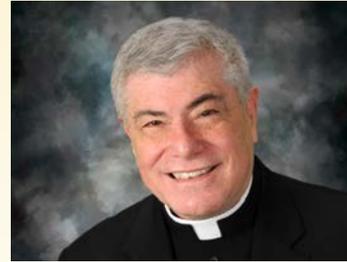
The situation for Christians in Qatar may very well improve in the short term. Qatar is currently in a prolonged dispute with its neighbors. Saudi Arabia, UAE, Bahrain, and Egypt imposed an economic and diplomatic boycott of the country in 2017, in response to Qatar's sponsorship of Al-Jazeera. The crisis has compelled the Qatari government to open the country to foreign investment, and to redouble its efforts to attract tourists. While dealing with the boycott, Qatar is also making preparations to host the 2022 World Cup football tournament.

All of this means that Qatar needs friends. Certainly, the country cannot afford to make new enemies, nor create negative press coverage. Moreover, travel restrictions imposed by its neighbors mean a greater need for immigrant labor from elsewhere, including Lebanon. Thus, the world's Maronite community can find good reason for hope with the opening of a sister church in Qatar. ■

Dr. Lynch is a political scientist from Hollins University, and a member of St. Elias Church in Roanoke, Virginia



From the Editor



Conflict Resolution



To resolve conflicts, the early Christians used the tools of civil society and took their opponents—fellow Christians—to court. St. Paul told them this was exactly the approach not to take: **“When you take another believer to court, you have lost the battle already.”** (1 CORINTHIANS 1:7)

To deal with disputes and conflicts today, we Christians may not haul people into court for every disagreement, but we do rely heavily on some of the more pervasive tools of our society, like **shouting, mockery, sneers, lies, half-truths, and ridicule.**

Jesus challenged us to consider another method for resolving conflicts: **love and forgiveness.**

“But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.”
(MATTHEW 5:44)

St. Paul is more specific:

Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone.... If your enemy is hungry, feed him. If he is thirsty, give him a drink.... Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.
(ROMANS 12:17-21)

We tend to dismiss this approach as impractical and useless. But consider... where have the tactics we have been using gotten us?

When I am confronted with someone who has hurt me, maybe I could harm them in return. But the Lord is clear: my job is to forgive that person. When I am confronted with a person whose opinions conflict with mine, maybe I could overwhelm them with contrary facts, shouting, mockery, and insults...and perhaps even win the argument. But my job is to love that person.

We shall not be judged on how many arguments we have won. **We shall be judged on how much we have forgiven and loved.**

It may mean that we lose the battle, but Jesus assures us that we shall win the war.

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

Chorbishop John D. Faris

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