



The Maronite Voice

A Publication of the Maronite Eparchies in the USA

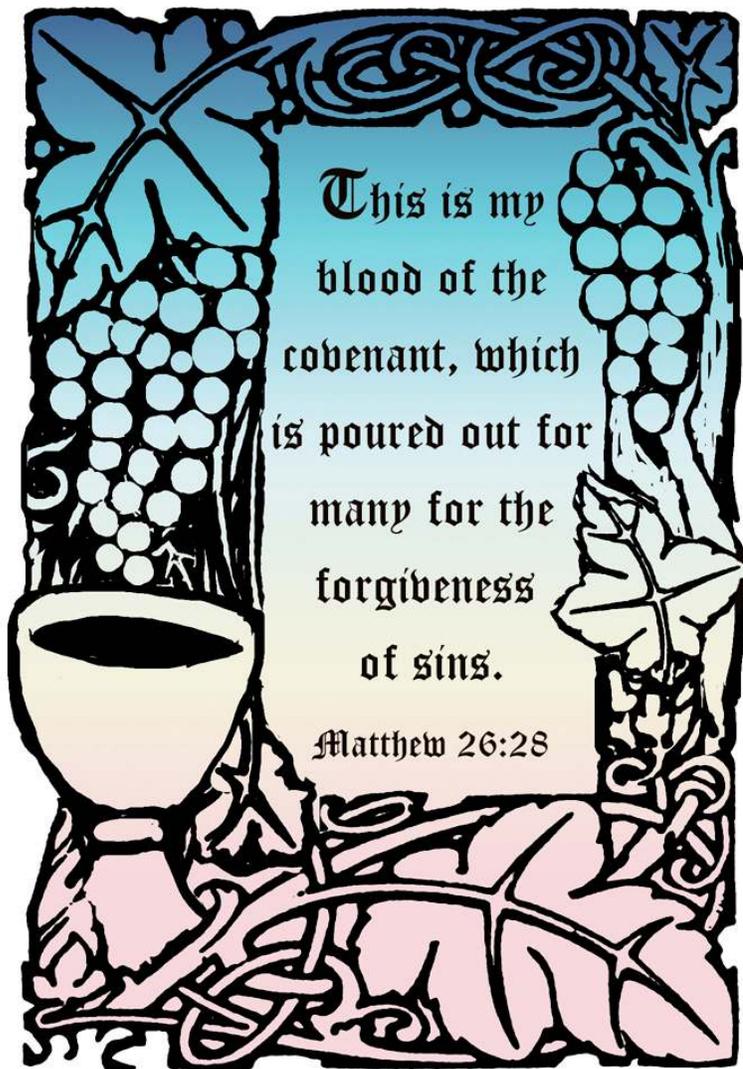


Volume X

Issue No. III

March 2014

Lenten Theme "Life-Giving" Repentance



"Repent for the Kingdom of God is at hand!" (Matthew 3:2). These words of John the Baptist are forever embedded in the Christian soul. When Jesus appeared he also preached "Repent and believe in the Gospel" (Mark 1:15). The early disciples, likewise, led by Saint Peter, preached a "life-giving repentance" on Pentecost to inaugurate the beginning of the Church.

Although we may not associate "life-giving" with "repentance," or the joy of new beginnings with repentance, in fact, repentance does bring new life because we are drawn out of our own comfort zone, as Pope Francis says, to embrace a loving invitation to change for the better.

When some of us think of "repentance," however, we often think it is meant for someone else! Nonetheless, true repentance is meant for all of us! Yes, all of us – the best and the worst of us! It can be life-giving, good and sweet, only if our own interior disposition is that of openness to God. Whether we receive generously that which may make us feel uncomfortable at first, but in the long run quite happy, really depends on us!

Thus the New Evangelization, as preached by all the Holy Fathers since good Pope John XXIII, is an invitation to create within ourselves the right disposition to embrace a "life-giving repentance." We need not focus on programs or events intended for other people, nor need we focus on something "new" in the content of New Evangelization. *What is truly "new" is the way each one of us lives the Good News that we are forgiven and very much loved by God.* Pope Francis says that this tenderness of God is a "revolution" worthy of our faithful, generous and loving response!

In commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Second Vatican Council, Pope Benedict wrote this summary of Christ's faith:

"I believe that we must learn the simplest and most fundamental lessons of the Council, and that is that Christianity in its essence consists in faith in God, who is Trinitarian Love, and in a personal and communal encounter with Christ who orients and guides our lives. Everything else follows from this. The important thing today, as was the desire of the Council Fathers, is that we see clearly and anew that God is present, that he is watching over us, that he responds to us, and that by contrast, when faith in God is found wanting, all that is essential crumbles, because man loses his profound dignity and what makes his humanity great in the face of every form of reductionism. The Council reminds us that the Church, in all her members, has the task, the mandate, of transmitting the Word of God's saving love, so that the divine call that holds within itself our eternal beatitude may be heard and welcomed" (General Audience, Oct. 10, 2010). *Continues on page 11*

Schedule of Bishop Elias Zaidan

March 1 - 2, 2014

St. John Maron Church, Orange, Calif.

March 6, 2014

Our Lady of Lebanon Seminary, Washington, D.C.

March 7 - 9, 2014

Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral, Brooklyn, N.Y.

March 10, 2014

Caritas Lebanon Board Meeting, St. Louis, Mo.

March 14 - 16, 2014

Pastoral Visit to St. Ephrem Church, El Cajon, Calif., and NAM Regional Convention, San Diego, Calif.

March 21 - 23, 2014

Pastoral Visit to St. Joseph Church, Phoenix, Ariz.

April 28 - 30, 2014

Pastoral Visit to St. Elias Church, Birmingham, Ala.

April 3 - 13, 2014

Pastoral Visits to St. Maron Church, Detroit, Mich.; St. Sharbel Church, Warren, Mich.; and St. Rafka Mission, Lavonia, Mich.

April 14 - 20, 2014

Holy Week and Easter Celebration, St. Raymond Cathedral, Saint Louis, Mo. ☐



The Maronite Voice
4611 Sadler Road
Glen Allen, VA 23060
Phone: 804/270-7234
Fax: 804/273-9914

E-Mail: gmsebaali@aol.com
<http://www.stmaron.org>
<http://www.usamaronite.org>

The Maronite Voice, (ISSN 1080-9880) the official newsletter of the Maronite Eparchies in the U.S.A. (Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon of Los Angeles and Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn), is published monthly.

Send all changes of address, news, pictures and personal correspondence to *The Maronite Voice* at the above captioned address. Subscription rates are \$25.00 per year. Advertising rates are available upon request.

Publishers

- Most Reverend Bishop Gregory John Mansour
- Most Reverend Elias Zaidan, M.L.M.

Editor Msgr. George M. Sebaali

Editing and proofreading
Mary Shaia

Printed in Richmond, Virginia.

Maronite Convention 2014

Our Lady of Victory Maronite Church

Pittsburgh, Penn.

July 2 - 6, 2014

For more information contact the NAM office at (914) 964-3070 or visit www.Namnews.org



Make the Difference of a Lifetime Give a Gift This Spring

Are you looking for a special Graduation Day Gift? A First Communion gift? Any kind of gift?

Do you wish your child, grandchild, godchild, family member or anyone special to you would remain close to their faith and the Maronite Church? Consider one of the following options:

		
Annual Membership in the Order of Saint Sharbel \$500	Perpetual Membership in the Order of Saint Sharbel \$5,000	Lifetime Membership in the The National Apostolate of Maronites \$1,000
Order of Saint Sharbel EPARCHY OF OUR LADY OF LEBANON 1021 S. 10th Street St. Louis, MO 63104 (314) 231-1021 www.orderstsharbel.org	Order of Saint Sharbel EPARCHY OF SAINT MARON 109 Remsen Street Brooklyn, NY 11201 (718) 237-9913 www.orderstsharbel.org	National Apostolate of Maronites 20 S. Broadway, #405 Yonkers, NY 10701 (914) 964-3070 www.namnews.org

Eparchial Appointments

His Excellency Bishop A. Elias Zaidan, Bishop of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon, has made the following eparchial assignments effective February 1, 2014:

- Chorbishop Richard Saad as *Protosyncellus*
- Father Peter Karam as Vicar for Priests

The following priests have been assigned to the **Eparchial Presbyteral Council**:

- Chorbishop Richard Saad (ex-officio: Protosyncellus)
- Chorbishop Moussa Joseph (ex-officio: Rector)
- Father Peter Karam (elected)
- Father John Nahal (elected)
- Father Rodrigue Constantin (elected)
- Msgr. sharbel Maroun (Protopresbyter)
- Msgr. Anthony Spinosa (Protopresbyter)
- Father Elias Sleiman (Protopresbyter and ex-officio: Rector)
- Father Elias Abi Sarkis (Protopresbyter)
- Msgr. Donald Sawyer (appointed)
- Father Toufic Nasr (appointed)

The following priests have been assigned to the **Eparchial College of Consultors**:

- Chorbishop Richard Saad
- Msgr. sharbel Maroun
- Msgr. Anthony Spinosa
- Father Elias Sleiman
- Father Elias Abi Sarkis
- Father Peter Karam

Protopresbyters:

- Msgr. sharbel Maroun (Mid-America Region)
- Msgr. Anthony Spinosa (Midwest Region)
- Father Elias Abi Sarkis (Southern Region)
- Father Elias Sleiman (Southwest Region)

Personnel Board:

- Msgr. Anthony Spinosa
- Msgr. sharbel Maroun
- Father Peter Karam
- Father Elias Sleiman
- Father Elias Abi Sarkis

Board of Pastors:

- Chorbishop William Leser
- Father Peter Karam
- Father Milad Yaghi

Eparchial Offices and Commissions

- Chorbishop William Leser as Judicial Vicar
- Father Robert Bishop as Defender of the Bond
- Father Elias Sleiman as Advocate for the Respondent and Tribunal Coordinator
- Father Ramsine Hage Moussa as Advocate for the Petitioner

- Father Milad Yaghi as the Bishop's Personal Secretary
- Chorbishop Michael Kail as Director of the Eparchial Pastoral Council
- Mr. John Kurey as Director of the Eparchial Stewardship Office
- Father Gary George as Director of Priestly Vocations
- Chorbishop Moussa Joseph as Director of the Eparchial Office of Liturgy
- Father Rodrigue Constantin as Director of the Eparchial Office of Ministries
- Msgr. sharbel Maroun as Director of the Eparchial Office of New Evangelization/Outreach
- Msgr. Donald Sawyer as Director of the Office of Caregivers
- Father Gary George as Director of Youth Ministry
- Father Tony Massad as Director of the Maronite Young Adult Apostolate
- Msgr. William Bonczewski and Father Nadim Abou Zeid as Co-directors of the Eparchial Family/Pro-Life Office
- Father Pierre El Khoury as Director of Religious Education
- Father Toufic Nasr as Coordinator of Commission for Lebanon and the Middle East
- Chorbishop Faouzi Elia as Director of the Office of Immigration
- Father Andre Mhanna as Director of the Eparchial Office of Ecumenism and Inter-Faith
- Father Antoine Bakh and Father Ramsine Hage Moussa as Directors of Communications
- Msgr. Anthony Spinosa as Director of Our Lady of Lebanon Seminary Alumni
- Chorbishop Alfred Badawi as Director of Liturgical Music Commission
- Father Pierre Bassil as Eparchial Newsletter Consultor
- Father John Nahal as Director of Technology
- Chorbishop Faouzi Elia as Director of the Office of Building Oversight
- Father Peter Karam as Coordinator of the Legal Counsel Board
- Msgr. sharbel Maroun as Director of *Noursat* Television
- Father Charles Khachan as Director of the Catholic Schools Assistance Fund Lebanon
- Father George Hajj as Director of the Inter-Eparchial History Committee
- Father Elias Abi-Sarkis as Director of Caritas Lebanon
- Father Peter Karam as Director of the Office for the Protection of Minors
- Father Charles Khachan as Coordinator of Project Roots
- Father Peter Karam as Director of Continuing Education for Clergy
- Chorbishop Faouzi Elia
- Msgr. Anthony Spinosa
- Msgr. Jibrán BouMerhi
- Father Albert Constantine to the Office of Priests' Retirement
- Mrs. Randa Gemayel Hakim as Eparchial Archivist

Chancellor:

Deacon Louis Peters

Vice-Chancellor and Eparchial Fiscal Officer:

Mrs. Mary Denny ☐

Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon Annual Clergy Retreat

by Deacon Louis Peters

The clergy of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon participated in their annual retreat January 20 - 24, 2014, at the Franciscan Renewal Center in Scottsdale (Phoenix), Arizona. The Pastor, Father Ghattas Khoury, and parishioners of St. Joseph Maronite Church hosted the clergy for their opening Liturgy and a Lebanese dinner following.

The retreat consisted in the celebration of *Safro* (Morning Prayer) and *Ramsho* (Evening Prayer) along with the daily celebration of the Divine Liturgy. Father John Horn, the Rector of Kenrick-Glennon Seminary in St. Louis, Missouri, was the retreat leader. Through a series of presentations, Fr. Horn was able to guide the clergy along a journey to enhance their own spiritual lives.



Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon Clergy Retreat 2014

One of the primary resources for the retreat was the recently published Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (The Joy of the Gospel) by Pope Francis. One of the key phrases that framed the retreat is taken from the very introduction of the document: "The joy of the gospel fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus. Those who accept his offer of salvation are set free from sin, sorrow, inner emptiness and loneliness. With Christ joy is constantly born anew."

Another theme dealt with the Church as "the house of the Father" as Pope Francis noted in his Exhortation. The doors should always be wide open in order to welcome all those who come looking for God. The Church has a place for everyone. For those in pastoral leadership positions this has many implications in how the pastoral ministry is carried out. It was a great opportunity for the priests and deacons in attendance to be together for prayer, sharing and fraternal bonding. □

Syria: A Fourth Lent Spent In War?

A Chaotic Situation

A fourth year Lent spent in war will mean pain and violence. The Geneva II peace conference hasn't changed anything at the moment. New streams of refugees come to our parishes, exceeding our resources. Our social and pastoral action is primarily focused on support of the affected families. Here is a highlight of our weaknesses, limits and many challenges:

- 150, 000 families are deprived of their fathers
- Two million dwellings are destroyed
- Two million families are without shelter
- Twelve million are refugees
- Three million are in the neighboring countries
- Nine million are displaced in their own country
- Two million students are without school
- The economy is in ruins; our currency has devalued by 300%
- There is growing violence every day; anguish and bitterness
- An embargo chokes everyone, especially the children, the poor, the hospitals and the medical sector
- The list of the suffering is endless.

Can We Take This Route?

The Christians of Syria accounted for 4.5% of the

population before the war. What will it be after the war? Forty-seven churches closed; two priests and a nun have been martyred. Two bishops, three priests and twelve nuns were abducted. The Christians of Syria share the same pain of their fellow citizens. How do we reassure this little flock inhabited by fear? Could these Christians in this ancient biblical land, which lit the flame of the Gospel, leave?

This little flock draws on the faith of St. Paul converted and baptized in Damascus, and on the strength of his testimony. We celebrated the conversion of St. Paul on January 25 at the chapel of Ananias, and June 29 we celebrate Liturgy at the Chapel of St. Paul at the wall of the old city where Paul escaped in a basket (Acts 9:25). Will we be more courageous than St. Paul?

A Regard For Hope

Facing despair the Church looks for hope. From this abyss of suffering she sees bright spots:

- The mutual assistance and solidarity expressed spontaneously by poor families to impoverished refugees
- There are new initiatives for dialogue and reconciliation between enemies
- A resurgence of faith strengthens our communities. The Gospel is our reference and inspiration. The faithful come to Mass, even under the threat of bombs, and devote much time to prayer and Eucharistic adoration

(Continues on page 20)

Cleveland, Ohio Pastoral Visit



Bishop Zaidan with the clergy attending St. Maron's Banquet in Cleveland.

by Marianne Dergham

The community of St. Maron in Cleveland, Ohio, was honored to host His Excellency Bishop Abdullah Elias Zaidan from Thursday, February 6, 2014, until Monday, February 10, 2014. This marked His Excellency's first visit to St. Maron Church in Cleveland as the newly-appointed Bishop of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon. His visit also coincided with the Feast Day of St. Maron, a time of celebration for the community. Bishop Zaidan arrived on Thursday, February 6, and was welcomed at the Parish Center in Independence, Ohio, by the leaders of the St. Maron community, including but not limited to Reverend Peter Karam, Pastor, and Associate Pastor Father George Hajj, members of the clergy and the Parish Council, the Executive Board members of the Maronite Young Adults (MYO), the Immaculate Conception Sodality (ICS), and the Sons of Mary, the Maronite Youth Organization (MYO) advisors, the Convention Chairs for both the Centennial Celebration and the 2015 NAM National Convention, and other parishioners who play an active role in the leadership of St. Maron. It was an excellent opportunity for the leaders of the community to meet Bishop Zaidan in an informal manner and learn about his vision for St. Maron Church and the Eparchy as a whole.

On Friday, February 7, Bishop Zaidan met with members of the clergy during the day to discuss upcoming events taking place within the community, and, during the evening, members of the MYO and MYA were able to spend time with the Bishop. His Excellency graciously provided the youth, young adults and young professionals with an ample amount of time to ask him questions in order to learn about his calling to the Church, as well as his hopes for the growth of both organizations in the upcoming years.

The members of the MYO and MYA were impressed with the Bishop's candor, willingness to listen, and the ease with which he was able to relate to the younger members of the Church.

Saturday, February 8, was the Grand Banquet/*Hafli*, which took place at the Embassy Suites in Independence, Ohio. With over six hundred parishioners in attendance, it was the perfect setting for Bishop Zaidan to observe the unyielding support that the parishioners provide not only to the Parish of St. Maron but to the Eparchy as a whole. Bishop Zaidan was able to address the community as well as personally introduce himself to countless members of the parish, with the intent to reach out to as many as possible. The talented entertainment provided by Danny Achkar, combined with Bishop Zaidan's presence, made for a truly unforgettable evening.

The following morning, despite the snow that continued to fall, the parishioners gathered at St. Maron Church for the Divine Liturgy, which was followed by a reception in the Parish Hall.

On Bishop Zaidan's final evening in Cleveland, a reception was held at the Parish Center for the Committee Chair volunteers that will help organize the 2015 NAM National Convention from Wednesday, July 1, until Sunday, July 5, 2015, at the Renaissance Hotel in downtown Cleveland. Having hosted both a NAM National Convention as well as organizing a Centennial Celebration, Bishop Zaidan is well-versed in the amount of hard work required as well as the reward following such unique celebrations of faith. His Excellency provided ideas, insight and encouragement to the volunteers in attendance, giving a sense of motivation and purpose to those who have agreed to organize a memorable 2015 NAM National Convention.

Bishop Zaidan's visit rejuvenated the St. Maron community. His willingness to meet countless parishioners, engage in discussions with the rising leaders of the Church and provide insight and advice regarding important milestones in our Church's history left the members with a new sense of hope. With Bishop Zaidan's prayers, encouragement and guidance, coupled with the impeccable leadership provided by Father Peter Karam and Father George Hajj, St. Maron Church in Cleveland can continue to flourish in the coming years, both in faith and fellowship. It was an honor to host Bishop Zaidan and we greatly look forward to his next visit. □



Deadline for next month's issue of *The Maronite Voice* is March 25, 2014.

The Maronite Voice is the official newsletter of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon and of the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn.

Send all changes of address, news, pictures and personal correspondence to:

The Maronite Voice
4611 Sadler Road
Glen Allen, Virginia 23060
Phone: (804) 270-7234; Fax: (804) 273-9914
Email: Gmsebaali@aol.com

Digital pictures must be in "JPEG" format and in high resolution (300dpi). *The Maronite Voice* is also available online, in PDF format, at www.stmaron.org. □

San Antonio, Texas *First Pastoral Visit*



Bishop Zaidan with members of Maronite Formation Program in San Antonio, Texas.

by Robert Beathe

On January 18 - 19, 2014, the newly installed Bishop Elias Zaidan, Bishop of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon, made his first pastoral visit to St. George Maronite Church in San Antonio, Texas. Accompanying the Bishop was the superior of the Maronite Lebanese Missionaries (MLM) in the United States Fr. Elias Sleiman, M.L.M., and Fr. Milad Yagi, M.L.M., Pastor of Our Lady of the Cedars Maronite Church in Houston, Texas. It was something of a homecoming as the Bishop was pastor of this Maronite community from 1990 to 1994. The weekend events began with a youth lunch and gathering before all the parishioners and friends greeted His Excellency with a *Hafli* on Saturday evening. Entertainment was provided by Danny Achkar and St. George's very own Lebanese folk dancers.

On Sunday the Bishop met with the members of the Faith Formation Program of the Parish in a special breakfast meeting. At its conclusion all gathered for a special Pontifical Divine Liturgy followed by a reception in the community's large banquet hall. During this event the Bishop was presented with an American flag flown over the Capital in Washington, D.C., obtained by Rep. Joaquin Castro, and several other awards from both the city and county. A plaque was then presented by Fr. Charles Khachan, M.L.M., to His Excellency. The event ended with extremely kind remarks by the Bishop concerning the direction and guidance given to the community of St. George by their new Pastor, Fr. Charles. He also thanked St. George for the tremendous and kind hospitality shown to him during his visit. □

Olean, New York *Christmas Pageant*

by Colleen DaPolito

On Sunday, December 22, 2013, the children of the Religious Education Program of St. Joseph Maronite Church in Olean, N.Y., participated in a Christmas pageant during the Divine Liturgy. They prepared under the direction of Program Coordinator Colleen DaPolito with lots of help from the other catechists, Mikki Cole, Lisa Zlockie

and Fr. Anthony J. Salim, Pastor. This was the first time in fifteen years that a children's Christmas pageant was performed in the parish. A reenactment of the story of the Nativity of Jesus was performed by the children as the Gospel for the Liturgy. The verses of the proclamation of the Gospel story were alternated by high school students. After each verse, the characters (Mary, Joseph, the Infant, the angels, etc.) processed up the main aisle as a Christmas carol was sung. Some of the children carried decorated pots of sprouted legumes that they had previously planted in class at the time of St. Barbara's Feast Day [December 4]. These plants were placed at the manger as their gifts to the Baby Jesus as signs of New Life. The pageant ended in song with the children wishing the congregation a Merry Christmas.

Groundbreaking



After months of deliberating, and after weeks of legal procedures and requisite city and state tests, the Community of St. Joseph in Olean, N.Y., broke ground for construction of their new Community Center on November 14, 2013. Pictured in the accompanying photo with Fr. Salim (from left to right) are: Enzo Bagazzoli (Finance Councillor); Steve Zlockie (Finance Council Chairman); JoAnn (Zemer) Snyder (Parish Trustee); Ron DaPolito (Finance Councillor and Parish Accountant), and Peter Ash (Parish Trustee). Not pictured: Judy Yorke, Finance Councillor. The firm of Duggan and Duggan, well-known and respected regional contractors, were selected to do the project. One of the key elements in the selection is that they agreed to do winter work, a plus in this area of cold and snow. It is hoped that the entire project, which will include not only the new construction of the Community Center but also the renovation of the existing church that the parish purchased, will be completed in thirty-two weeks. □

Food For Thought

The greatest deception, and the deepest source of unhappiness, is the illusion of finding life by excluding God, of finding freedom by excluding moral truths and personal responsibility."

Blessed John Paul II, World Youth Day 2002

Tequesta, Florida Bishop's Visit

by Eliane Rizkallah ElJouni

On January 15, 2014, Mary Mother of the Light Maronite Church in Tequesta, Florida, was honored to celebrate the Divine Liturgy with the priests of the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn, led by Bishop Gregory Mansour, during their annual retreat. After the Liturgy the priests were invited to a lunch. On January 19, His Excellency Bishop Gregory Mansour visited the Church again to celebrate the Divine Liturgy. Father Alaa Issa, Administrator, and Father Leonard Basinow concelebrated. The Liturgy was attended by many parishioners, who stressed their support to the church.

In his homily Bishop Gregory reflected on Pope Francis' modest life, reminding us as Catholics that we are here to serve, not to be served. He also noted the development of the church and the solidarity and ambition of its parishioners. Bishop Gregory thanked Father Leonard for his involvement in the parish church and congratulated him on sixty years of priesthood.

After the Divine Liturgy, the children welcomed Bishop Gregory with a welcome sign and flowers. Everyone spent time with the Bishop in the hall for coffee hour. Even the children had their own share talking to him and taking some photos.

Mary, Mother of the Light Church would like to thank Bishop Gregory for his visit, and they look forward to his next visit at the dedication of the Church. □

Warren, Michigan Saint Maron Feast Day

On Sunday, February 9, 2014, the parish of St. Sharbel in Warren, Mich., celebrated the Second Annual St. Maron's Feast Day with a standing-room-only Divine Liturgy. Members of the Order of Saint Sharbel and the Knights of Columbus formed the honor guards as the altar servers and clergy entered the Church. The main celebrant was Chorbishop Alfred Badawi, Pastor, assisted by local clergy from the Latin Rite.

As members and partners in the Maronite faith, we have much to be thankful for and to rejoice in. The Maronite Church has contributed much to the formation of the history of Lebanon, Chorbishop Alfred said in his homily. Following the Liturgy a luncheon was held at St. Sharbel Banquet Center.

Day of the Sick

On February 11, 2014, a Healing Mass was celebrated at St. Sharbel Maronite Church in Warren, Mich., by Monsignor Alfred Badawi in honor of World Day of the Sick and the Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes. Many parishioners and visitors joined together in prayer with special intentions and blessings for the sick and suffering. A special blessing was also given to all who work as healthcare



providers, including family caregivers. After the Liturgy, Sister Rosemary Sam and Sister Barbara, IHM, who have volunteered many of their summers in Lourdes, France, addressed the participants. Sister Rosemary Sam shared the story of St. Bernadette at the grotto, where Our Lady of Lourdes came to her, along with stories of miraculous healings reported to have taken place at the Lourdes water spring. The Ladies Altar Society hosted a small reception following the Liturgy for all those able to attend. □

Fort Lauderdale, Florida St. Maron Hafli



Mr. and Mrs. George Thomas visit with Thomas Abraham at Heart of Jesus *hafli*.

by Deacon John Jarvis

On Saturday, February 8, 2014, a beautiful warm February night in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., the Heart of Jesus parishioners gathered for a *Hafli* to celebrate the Feast of St. Maron. The parish hall was filled with parishioners and friends enjoying Lebanese food prepared by the Ladies Guild and music provided by singer Marleine Ghaby with band members Fadi Hardan, Elias Kilzi, Walid Abusad, and John Sassine. People danced past midnight. It was a wonderful family-oriented evening, and parents did not have to worry as babysitting was provided. It has become an annual event enjoyed by all. □

Brooklyn, New York *Saint Maron's Feast Day*



by SalmaVahdat

The Community of Faith of the Cathedral of Our Lady of Lebanon in Brooklyn, N.Y., made the most of its Patron Saint's feast day this year. Not just a one day celebration, but two days of camaraderie.

On Saturday evening, February 8, 2014, over two hundred parishioners and friends gathered at the Rex Manor in Brooklyn for a *Hafli* celebration. The evening was directed by Norma Haddad and chaired by William Abou-Chrouch.

This year we were graced with the presence of our Shepherd, Bishop Gregory Mansour... always a joy to have among us. Msgr. James Root, Rector, was beaming as he greeted his flock and we were delighted to have as honored guests the Rev. Michael Ellias and his wife of St. Mary Orthodox Church, The Rev. Antoine Rizk of the Melkite Church of the Virgin Mary, Subdeacon Norbert and Leila Vogl, the Honorable Majdi Ramadan, Consul General of Lebanon in New York, State Senator Marty Golden, and Brooklyn Borough President, Eric Adams.

The program for the evening included a Proclamation from the New York State Senate brought by Mr. Golden, congratulating the Maronite community for its strong sense of family and commitment rendered through the Church.

Mr. Adams, recently elected, pledged his office to the work of bettering the community as a whole. When the familiar Mr. Ramadan rose to speak, the room paused to hear what news of Lebanon. He did not disappoint. He reminded us all how important the Maronites were and are to Lebanon. He said it was the Maronites who forged modern day Lebanon, and it is now their responsibility to help the homeland in these very troubled times. The abominable situation in Syria causing hundreds of thousands of refugees to flee into Lebanon is a major cause of concern. It was apparent that he is counting on us to respond to the needs engendered by this crisis.

Finally, Bishop Gregory made an appeal to us to pray for Syria and to ask St. Maron to aid in a settlement towards peace for the region and the world. He said that there are forces pulling in opposite directions led by jealousy and envy. Needless to say, the remarks made by the Consul and

the Bishop were very sobering indeed.

We arrived then at a part of the evening that keeps us all on the edge of our seats. Cloaked in secrecy, finally to be revealed were the NAM awards. The Silver Massabki award was presented to Rafca and William Abou-Chrouch for their years of faithful service. The Faith of the Mountain award went to Jupiter El-Asmar for his service to the church and community at large.

A newly established "Cathedral" award, for those who have faithfully served the Cathedral and community was given to Joseph El Helew and William Shakal. From the thunderous applause that erupted following the announcements, it was obvious the community was well pleased and the awards well deserved.

With the formalities concluded, the evening continued with a dinner and music provided by the Eddie Zosama band.

The following day, Sunday, the community gathered at the Cathedral for the Divine Liturgy. We gave thanks to our Patron for guiding, protecting and strengthening our resolve to live up to the Maronite tradition. Marian Sahadi Ciaccia, President of the Confraternity of the Immaculate Conception was inducted into the Order of Saint Sharbel. Her children and grandchildren shared in the joy of the congregation as *Sayedna* Gregory presented her with her medal.

A brunch was offered at the usual coffee hour in the Social Hall where all were happy to offer congratulations to Marian and her family. □

Austin, Texas *Holy Land Pilgrimage*



by Msgr. Donald Sawyer

In January of 2014, Our Lady's Maronite Parish in Austin, Texas, hosted a pilgrimage to the Holy Land! Shown in the photo are Patriarch Fouad Twal, Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, Fr. Bob Kincl, Msgr. Don J. Sawyer and pilgrims. Shepherd's Tours provided the group with a native Catholic Guide who knew Scripture extensively. It is important to have a Christian guide in the Holy Land. Next year's pilgrimage will be from January 21 - February 1, 2015. □

Jacksonville, Florida

First Liturgy in New Church



Fr. Elie Abi Chedid processes with the icon of St. Maron.

by Tracy Ross-Fares

Glory and praise to God! How wonderful and joyous it was on such a beautiful sunny day in Jacksonville, Fla., to celebrate Saint Maron Feast day on February 9, 2014, as the first liturgical service in the new church!

Our church family continues to grow and evolve, and it is truly stupendous to experience the love and blessings from our great Lord as many of us came together to worship in the new finished house of God.

This has been a hope, prayer and goal for many, many years. Generations of our church family have gathered in various places over the past years to worship as Maronites in Jacksonville, Florida. We were welcomed in many places, from other area Roman Catholic established churches in Jacksonville, until we did have our own place of worship in the year 2001 that has been used for both religious and social functions; it was then blessed by His Beatitude Nasrallah Peter Cardinal Sfeir during his pastoral visit to our community.

I recall a smaller group of us first gathered on this very property when it was first acquired. The first families had a concrete slab poured onto the land, erected a vinyl tent covering and had some of the first church services here. As I reflect back to that time, recall the progress we have experienced and now look around to see so many other families gathered in His name here I am so happy to see, feel and experience the glory and blessings bestowed upon our church family of Saint Maron.

Over 450 people packed the new church as Fr. Elie Abi

Chedid, Pastor, conducted the first preliminary blessing of the altar and the church, as he was instructed by Bishop Gregory Mansour in anticipation of the formal blessing that will be conducted by Bishop Mansour later on this year. He incensed the altar all around and sprinkled holy water on it and on the four corners of the church. In his homily, Fr. Elie spoke about Maronite history and spirituality explicitly depicted in the gorgeous mural in the apse of the church. At the end of the Liturgy, the *Ziah Assoura* (procession and blessing with the icon of Saint Maron) was processed throughout the church.

After liturgy, parishioners joined together in the social hall at full capacity to share a lunch. It was really a historic day for our community and all those who joined in this celebration. □

Schedule of Bishop Gregory Mansour

March 3, 2014

Ash Monday at St. Sharbel Church, Newtown Square, Penn.

March 7 - 9, 2014

Visit of Bishop A. Elias Zaidan to Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral, Brooklyn, N.Y.

March 10 - 11, 2014

Caritas-Lebanon Meeting, St. Louis, Mo.

March 15 - 16, 2014

Pastoral Visit to Star of the East Mission, Pleasantville, N.J.

March 17 - 18, 2014

Catholic University Board of Directors and Visit to Our Lady of Lebanon Seminary, Washington, D.C.

March 19, 2014

Our Lady of Lebanon Church, Easton, Penn., for Feast of St. Joseph.

March 20, 2014

CAMECT Meeting of Middle East Christian Leaders, Manhattan, N.Y.

March 22 - 23, 2014

MYO/MYA Retreat, Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral, Brooklyn, N.Y.

March 27 - 28, 2014

American Task Force For Lebanon Banquet, Washington, D.C.

March 30, 2014

Pastoral Visit to the Maronite Missions in Raleigh and Charlotte, N.C.

April 6, 2014

Blessed John Paul II Mission, Westchester, N.Y.

April 8, 2014

Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral, Chrism Mass

April 9 - 10, 2014

Telumiere Board of Directors Meeting, Detroit, Mich.

April 13, 2014

Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral, Brooklyn, N.Y. □

(See Bishop Gregory's Blog at www.stmaron.org for his experience of his official CRS visit to El Salvador last month.)

An Unacceptable State of Affairs by *Chorbishop John D. Faris, J.C.O.D.*

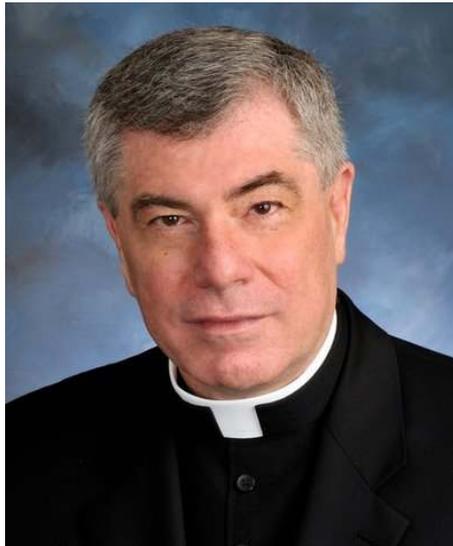
In a scene in the film *Lion in Winter*, King Henry II and his three sons are on a battlefield, each one with an army and fighting the other three. Inside the castle, Queen Eleanor of Aquitaine, the wife and mother of the combatants, simply shrugged, "What family doesn't have its ups and downs?" To Eleanor, a family divided and even in violent combat was normal, an acceptable state of affairs. This acceptance of division, rivalry and violence strikes us as bizarre. Yet, when it comes to the Christian family, do we have this same attitude?

There are today 41,000 different Christian communities; each represents itself as an heir of Jesus Christ. History records rivalries among Christian communities over points of doctrine to the point of bloodshed. Sadly, we Christians have become rather comfortable with the dysfunctional state of affairs - it has become normal and acceptable.

On the last night of his earthly life, Jesus had one concern: that his followers remain united. From Gethsemane (*Gat Šm nê* Syriac for "oil press") Jesus could see the torches of soldiers in the Kidron Valley coming to arrest him, but nevertheless prayed for us to be his small band of followers and all who would hear his message to stay united: "My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me" (John 17:20-21).

On January 25, the Feast of the Conversion of Saint Paul, Pope Francis said that it is becoming more evident that the divisions cannot be viewed any longer as something natural. Divisions wound the Body of Christ and impede the witness Christians are called to give in the world.

"We have all been damaged by these divisions. None of us wishes to become



Chorbishop John D. Faris

a cause of scandal. And so we are all journeying together, fraternally, on the road towards unity, bringing about unity even as we walk; that unity comes from the Holy Spirit and brings us something unique which only the Holy Spirit can do, that is, reconciling our differences," the Bishop of Rome declared. "The Lord waits for us all, accompanies us all, and is with us all on this path of unity."

Ecumenism refers to the various initiatives to promote the unity of Christians. For many years, the Catholic Church was suspicious of ecumenism. Until the middle of the twentieth century, baptized non-Catholics were regarded as heretics or schismatics and were to be avoided. Catholics were not permitted to participate in any way in the sacred worship of non-Catholics. A marriage between a Catholic and a baptized non-Catholic could not be celebrated in a church (some thought that it might be alright to do so in the sacristy, the room where the priest prepares himself for the liturgical celebration). Non-Catholics were generally forbidden to be buried in a Catholic cemetery. Catholics were forbidden to have public debates or conferences with non-Catholics without special permission.

This is not to say that Catholics have had an exclusive franchise on prejudice towards other Christian communities. Anti-Catholicism abounds in some communities. Quite recently I visited an Orthodox monastery. The monks were friendly and after the Divine Liturgy invited my small group to lunch.

Afterwards, the abbot invited us to his apartments. During our conversation, I introduced the topic of initiatives to bring about the unity of Christians. I soon became aware of my mistake. The monastery had recently reconciled with the Patriarchate of Moscow, a party in the ecumenical dialogues with the Catholic Church. The abbot told me that some monks had left the monastery because they did not want to be a part of anything that was on speaking terms with Catholics. The abbot said that he had tried to convince them to stay, assuring them that the monastery would never dialogue with Catholics. For them, dialogue was wrong. They felt that they possessed the truth and that we Catholics, whom they refer to as heterodox (wrong believers) simply had to convert and join them. The monks find the present division and rivalry as acceptable.

Thank God certain men of vision did not accept the *status quo*. One of these men was Father Paul Wattson, a convert from Anglicanism and the co-founder of the Franciscan religious community dedicated to promote the unity of Christians, the Society of the Atonement. In 1908, Father Wattson initiated the Octave of Christian Unity, eight days when all Christians would pray for the restoration of unity among themselves. The date of the octave is significant: it opens on January 18, the *Feast of the Chair of Peter*, the source and sign of unity, and ends on January 25, the *Feast of the Conversion of Saint Paul*, the apostle to all the nations. What a wonderful image of unity, diversity and openness to the world!

Blessed Pope John XXIII, affectionately known as the "Good

Pope," also found the state of affairs among Christians and, indeed, all of humanity to be unacceptable. At the age of 78, only three months after being elected to the papacy, Pope John announced on January 25, 1959, that he was going to call an ecumenical council, an assembly of all the bishops of the world. He used the closing of the Octave of Christian Unity for a reason: the purpose of the Council was to be the *unity of Christians* and the *unity of humanity*. All the other reforms that took place were intended to serve those two primary purposes. Divine Providence apparently wanted to emphasize the precarious state of human affairs: as the Council celebrated its formal opening in October 1962, the Cuban missile crisis was unfolding.

One of the great accomplishments of Vatican II (as the ecumenical council came to be called) was its document on ecumenism, published on November 21, 1964. This document marks a sea change in the Catholic approach to baptized non-Catholics. One indicator of the change is that we are no longer referring to them as heretics and schismatics, but as separated *brethren* or simply *non-Catholics*. Baby steps. We cannot expect divisions that have lasted for centuries to be resolved overnight.

This year marks the golden anniversary of the Vatican II decree on ecumenism. No longer does the Catholic Church regard ecumenism as suspect, but encourages it. Christian faithful, especially pastors, are urged to pray and work for the fullness of unity desired by the Lord and to participate in the ecumenical activities set in motion by the Holy Spirit. There is to be sincere and frank dialogue, and initiatives are to be undertaken with a prudence that avoids the dangers of superficial agreements, indifferentism or immoderate zeal. It is desirable that the Catholic faithful undertake projects in which they can cooperate with other Christians: for example, charitable works and works of social justice, the defense of the dignity and the fundamental rights of the human person, promotion of peace, national holidays.

Given their close bonds with the

Orthodox Churches, the Eastern Catholic Churches have a special role in ecumenical initiatives. (The Maronite Church is unique in that it does not have an Orthodox counterpart.) Eastern Catholics can promote the unity of Christians through prayer, by the example of life, by conscientious fidelity to the ancient traditions of the Eastern Churches, by better knowledge of each other, by working together, and by fraternal respect for the feelings of others and their history.

As Pope Francis warned, "If we do not walk together, if we do not pray for one another, if we do not collaborate in the many ways that we can in this world for the People of God, then unity will not come about!"

Things have changed radically in fifty years. Catholics can be given permission to marry baptized non-Catholics in a Catholic church. Under certain exceptional circumstances, Catholic faithful can receive the sacraments of Eucharist, penance and anointing of the sick from Orthodox priests. Likewise, the Catholic Church permits Orthodox faithful to receive the same sacraments from Catholic priests. A baptized non-Catholic can be given a funeral in a Catholic church, and Catholic bishops can even give permission for non-Catholic Christians to use Catholic churches, cemeteries and buildings if they lack suitable facilities of their own.

As we can see, a great deal has already been accomplished. But there is still much to be done. The words of Saint Francis of Assisi at the end of his life come to mind: "Let us begin, for until now we have done little or nothing." □

About the Author

Former Vicar General of the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn, Chorbishop John D. Faris, J.C.O.D., is the Pastor of Saint Louis Gonzaga Maronite Church in Utica, New York. He is also a professor of Eastern Canon Law at Catholic University of America (CUA) in Washington., D.C. □

"Life-Giving" Repentance

Continued from page 1

This sums up the reality of Christian faith. How happy we are when we acknowledge the simple truth that God truly loves and forgives us. Hearing and welcoming this truth is never a burden, but rather a joy. This "revolution" of tenderness naturally brings us to a "life-giving repentance," for who would not want to respond generously to such a generous God? Thus, every person, from the most devout Christian or the once baptized and fallen away, to the one who has never considered the free gift of Jesus Christ, all are invited to welcome this love and forgiveness. A beautiful and real experience of this is a good confession!

May the Virgin Mary, Mother of Christ and the Church, help us during this Lent to embrace a "life-giving repentance," which Saint John the Baptist, Jesus, Saint Peter, and all the early disciples preached with enthusiasm, conviction and love. May we encounter the "God who is Trinitarian love ... who orients and guides our lives," and may we "repent and believe in the Gospel, for the kingdom of God is at hand!" □

+Gregory John Mansour
Bishop of the Eparchy of Saint Maron

In the Footsteps of Saint John Paul II

Father John Gatzak of the Office of Radio & Television/WJM Radio of the Archdiocese of Hartford, Conn., and Father Naji Kiwan and the Blessed John Paul II Maronite Catholic Mission, Sleepy Hollow, N.Y., invite you to join them on a special pilgrimage "In The Footsteps of Saint John Paul II: Rome, Krakow, Zakopane, Wadowice, Stochowa and Warsaw" from May 11- 22 2014 (12 Days /10 Nights).

The cost per person, double (twin) occupancy, from JFK, New York is \$4,017. Single occupancy is \$4,612 (limited availability). The cost includes all government taxes and airline fuel surcharges and fees of \$728. The price is subject to change until tickets are issued. For more information call Scott at (203) 758 - 7367. □

THE ORDER OF SAINT SHARBEL



Perpetual Members

★ **Fr. Milad Yagi, M.L.M.**

*Our Lady of the Cedars Church
Houston, Texas*

★ **Karen George**

*St. Anthony of the Desert Church
Fall River, Mass. (changed from
Annual)*

Annual Members

★ **Lisa Rock**

*St. Sharbel Church
Warren, Mich.*

★ **Samir T. Ayoub**

*Our Lady of Mt. Lebanon
Cathedral
Los Angeles, Calif.*

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

The Call to Priesthood

by *Chorbishop Seely Beggiani, S.T.D.*



The call to priesthood is made to all who are baptized. It is an invitation that comes from Christ himself. In the Gospel of John 15: 16, Jesus tells his disciples: "It was not you who chose me, but I who chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit that will remain ..." By our baptism and chrismation, we are all called to preach the Gospel to all whom we meet.

The Priesthood of the Faithful

For the laity, who are the priesthood of the faithful and who have been called to holiness, the mission is to bring Christ to their families, their neighbors, to those with whom they work. The laity are called to advocate Christian values in the public forum, in the marketplace, and in political life. They preach the Gospel by the example of their lives and by persuasion. As the Second Vatican Council teaches, it is the laity as laity who are to change society, transform culture, and affect the course of history.

The Ordained Priesthood

However, in God's plan the grace of salvation is to come to us through the mysteries (sacraments), through visible means, through water, oil, bread and wine. And these means are to be conveyed through the words, hands and actions of human beings. Throughout the centuries Christ would single out certain persons who would minister to the larger community. They are called to be available on a full-time basis, twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. As the ancient Maronite rite of priesthood notes, Christ does not choose angels but human beings with all their limitations and failings. The Epistle to the Hebrews teaches: "For every high priest taken from among

men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins" (Hebrews 5:1).

The Ministry of the Priest

The priest is called to be with the believing community at every stage of its life. At baptism he pours the life-giving water, which is the vehicle of grace for infants and adults being incorporated into the church of Christ. His preaching celebrates the new birth that was intended for every human from the beginning of creation. His hand anoints the newly baptized with the spirit-filled chrism manifesting the reception of the Holy Spirit.

Preaching at the Divine Liturgy, the priest meditates on the events of the liturgical year, and his words repeating the words of Christ at the Last Supper and calling down the Holy Spirit on the bread and wine make Christ truly present.

As confessor, his words attempt to echo the compassion of Christ and articulate God's forgiveness to those seeking healing. He relies on God's inspiration to be a wise guide to the penitent.

He witnesses God's presence to those getting married. He reminds the couple that their married love embodies the mystery of Christ's love for his church.

He calls on those present to support the married couple on their life's journey.

The priest represents Christ through the power of anointing on those who are ill, and he repeats God's promises as the last companion to those who are passing on to eternal life.

The priest is the confidant of the youth as they pass through adolescence, and the elder brother to young adults as they face life's serious choices. He is the support of young families and the constant visitor to the elderly, especially those who are alone.

(Continues on page 13)

The Priestly Vocation

The Gospels show us that Christ has his own criteria in choosing his priests. Among those chosen Apostles were fishermen, a tax collector, and a member of the Zealot party. They were old and young. Some were originally too ambitious or impetuous or skeptical or fearful. Yet, in the end they changed the world, and all but one died as martyrs.

When one looks upon any group of priests, it is apparent that Christ chooses men from all walks of life, all backgrounds, with all types of characteristics. It seems that the Lord desires a wide range of persons possessing various gifts and different personalities.

Our Lord chooses whom He wills. Those who are called should be persons of good character and integrity who are seeking to live a life of virtue. The most important quality is generosity of

spirit and the desire to dedicate one's life to minister to God's people.

Perhaps one obstacle to God's call is the temptation for a person to believe that he is not worthy. The reality is that no one is worthy. It is God who evaluates our worth. Fulfilling the responsibilities of the priesthood is not due to our efforts, but to the daily grace of God which is given in abundance. God's call to the ordained priesthood may become known to a person in subtle ways or through various life experiences. What is necessary is that those who are called be open in their minds and hearts to God's inspirations, and have the courage to respond.

The Life of the Priest

The life of the priest is filled much more with joy and satisfaction, than with difficulties. His daily encounters are with people who are either trying to live lives of virtue or seeking reconciliation from their sins. The young look upon him as a hero and the old as their support. He is surrounded by "holy things," who sometimes keep him holy in spite of himself. He may become disappointed at times when his best efforts do not seem to bear fruit. However, he should be consoled by the words of St. Paul in First Corinthians 3: 7: "Neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who causes the growth."

St. Gregory of Nyssa in his treatise on "The life of Moses" teaches that the perfection of life is: "to be known by God and to become his friend." He concludes, "We consider becoming God's friend the only thing worthy of honor and desire." In John 15:15, Jesus declared to his disciples: "I no longer call you slaves, because a slave does not know what his master is doing, I have called you friends, because I have told you everything I have heard from my Father." The ultimate reward of the priesthood is to become a friend of God. □

About the Author

Former Rector of Our Lady of Lebanon Maronite Seminary, Washington, D.C., Chorbishop Seely Beggiani, S.T.D., is a professor of Eastern Studies and Spirituality at Catholic University of America (CUA) in Washington., D.C. □

SAVE THE DATE! Vocation Discernment Weekend

On April 5 - 6, 2014, Our Lady of Lebanon Maronite Seminary in Washington, D.C., will be hosting its annual Discernment Weekend for men, 18 and over, interested in finding God's will in their lives. This weekend will be a chance to meet current seminarians, the Vocation Directors, and Fr. Geoffrey Abdallah, Rector of the Seminary. It is also an opportunity to sightsee in one of the greatest cities in the world. This weekend is open for men who feel the call to priesthood or are interested in finding out how to discern God's will. More details to come soon. □

Prayer For Priestly Vocations

Father, in every generation You provide ministers of Christ and the Church.

We come before You now, asking that You call forth more men to serve our eparchies in the ministerial priesthood.

Give us priests who will lead and guide Your holy people gathered by Word and Sacrament.

Bless us with priestly vocations so that we can continue to be a truly Eucharistic Church, strengthened in our discipleship of Jesus Christ, Your Only Son.

Raise up, we pray, men who are generous in their service, willing to offer their lives and all their gifts for Your greater glory and for the good of Your people.

We make our prayer in the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, through Christ, our Lord. Amen.



***If the Lord
is Calling
You, The
Church
Needs
You!***

If you feel that you have a vocation to the Priesthood or religious life, please contact your Pastor or write to:

Fr. Gary George, Director
Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon
Office of Vocations
1021 South 10th Street
St. Louis, MO 63104

Or

Fr. Dominique Hanna, Director
Eparchy of Saint Maron
Office of Vocations
c/o St. Joseph Church
502 Seminole Ave. NE
Atlanta, GA 30307

Or

Our Lady of Lebanon Seminary
7164 Alaska Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20012

Cincinnati, Ohio 100th Birthday Celebration



Mable Howatt (left) with young members of St. Anthony of Padua Church.

by Linda Conour

On Sunday, February 9, 2014, St. Anthony of Padua Parish, Cincinnati, Ohio, celebrated the 100th birthday of long-time parishioner Mabel Howatt. It was truly a joyous celebration as Mabel is an ever-present member of the parish community and a friend to all. Mabel has generously supported the St. Anthony of Padua Parish since the beginning, and constantly participates in whatever event or happening is taking place. Most importantly, her faith as a Maronite Catholic has stayed strong and unwavering throughout her entire life.

Following the Liturgy, Mike and Kathleen Mezher sponsored a luncheon. Father Benedict O'Connors, Rector of The Athenaeum - Mt. St. Mary Seminary, gave the blessing. Mike Mezher then eloquently toasted Mabel, and following the luncheon, a beautifully decorated cake was presented. The children of the parish helped Mabel to blow her candles out, too!

St. Anthony of Padua Parish is honored to have such a special and dear lady as part of its parish community and wishes to congratulate her on such a wonderful achievement. □

Fall River, Massachusetts Death of a Parish Leader

Saint Anthony of the Desert Maronite Church in Fall River, Massachusetts, has a proud history of helping the Maronite Church. This accomplished past is due in part to the dedication of its pastors, it is also thanks to laypeople who have committed themselves for decades to the good of the Church. One such person recently passed away: Loretta George.

Loretta worked closely with the late Monte Ferris, brother

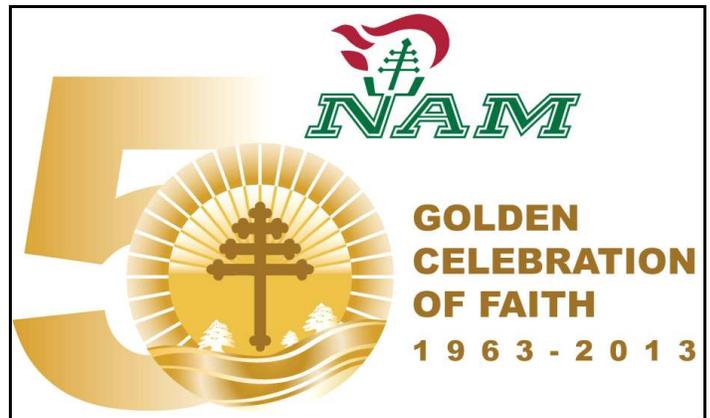
of Chorbishop Norman Ferris, to help found the Order of Saint Sharbel. In addition to being a charter member of the Order, Loretta served as its Vice President. She was an active member of the National Apostolate of Maronites, and was the first woman to be awarded NAM's Gold Massabki Medal. In her parish, she served as the General Chairman for the Dedication Committee in 1975, the Mortgage Burning Committee in 1978, and as a charter member of the Blessed Mother Guild.

Loretta proved that a person can be fully dedicated to her local parish while also being totally dedicated to the Eparchy. Her commitment to her parish and to her Eparchy strengthened her.

Like many other fine individuals who are generous with their time in helping the Church, Loretta's commitment was inspired by her parents' example: Peter George and Madeleine (Saad) George were among founding members of St. Anthony of the Desert Church.

Although Loretta passed on to the heavenly mansions of light on November 30, 2013, she leaves an exemplary legacy for all of us. May her memory be eternal in the hearts of all who knew and loved her! □

NAM 50th Anniversary Book



- * Many pictures from the last fifty years
- * Timeline of all the accomplishments for the past half a century
- * Letters from all previous presidents
- * A Maronite Book of America by Bishop Stephen Hector Doueih
- * The Maronites a Living Icon by Sebastian Paul Brock

Give this book as a gift, or buy it to enrich your library and get to know more about your history and apostolate. The hardcover book is available for \$30, and the softcover is available for \$20. Shipping is \$5 per book. You may order your copy (ies) online at www.namnews.org or by calling the office at (914) 964 - 3070. □



Detroit, Michigan *Feast of Saint Maron*



St. Maron Church in Detroit, Mich., was established at the beginning of the twentieth century. The Liturgy used to be celebrated at St. Peter and Paul Jesuit Church in Detroit. In 1915 construction was started on St. Maron Maronite Church on Congress and Orleans in Detroit. The inaugural Divine Liturgy was celebrated on April 30, 1916, by Chorbishop Joseph Shebaia.

The current location of St. Maron Church, was completed in 1966, and was elevated to the first Maronite Cathedral in the United States with the establishment of the first Maronite Exarchate and appointment of His Excellency Bishop Francis M. Zayek as the first Maronite Bishop to shepherd the Maronite flock in the U.S.A.

February 8, 2014, was a special day for St. Maron Parish in Detroit. The Community celebrated St. Maron's Feast Day with pride and excitement. Msgr. Louis Baz, Pastor, celebrated an evening Divine Liturgy in honor of St. Maron. Chorbishop Alfred Badawi, Pastor of St. Sharbel Church in Warren Mich.; Father Tony Massad, Administrator of St. Rafka Mission in Livonia Mich.; Fr. John Paul Bassil, Superior of the Mariamite Order in Ann Arbor, Mich.; and Fr. Nabil Habshi from the Mariamite Order in Ann Arbor concelebrated. The Choir of St. Maron Church served the Liturgy.

Following the Liturgy, parishioners and guests moved to St. Maron Banquet Center to join in the celebration. The evening started with a short introduction by Rudy Jabbour, the Chairman of the event, followed by the American National Anthem sung by Miss Mary Anderson, then the Lebanese National Anthem sung by St. Maron Church Choir. The invocation was given by Fr. John Paul Bassil. Msgr. Louis Baz gave a speech and kicked off a gourmet dinner prepared by Ike's Family Dining. Singer Jad and his band played traditional Lebanese music until the morning hours. The dance floor was filled with guests dancing the *dabke* nonstop. This yearly event ended the same as every year - with a big smile on everyone's face and the promise to look forward to future events and to meet again and keep the spirit and love of St. Maron alive. □

Birmingham, Alabama *Burning of the Mortgage*



Chorbishop Richard Saad and John Boohaker burn the mortgage of St. Elias Church on February 9, 2014.

St. Elias Maronite Parish in Birmingham, Ala., celebrated the feast of St. Maron with a banquet in the church hall on Sunday, February 9, 2014, following the Divine Liturgy. The men and women of the parish cooked the beef tenderloin meal while the youth, all the way from the Jr. MYO through Young Adults, helped with the hall setup and serving the meal.

One highlight of the banquet was the burning of the mortgage for the first and only loan St. Elias has ever had. The loan was taken out in 2009 to help with the renovation of the church interior, the redesign of the north parking lot and the building of the St. Elias Columbarium and the Our Lady of Lebanon Grotto at St. Elias. John Boohaker, Chairman of the Stewardship Committee, assisted by Chorbishop Richard D. Saad, burned the mortgage in front of a cheering crowd.

Nasri Akl and George Aboujaoude were presented with the 2014 Parishioner of the Year Awards for outstanding service to the church over many years. □

Food For Thought

"I'm not a man who constantly thinks up jokes. But I think it's very important to be able to see the funny side of life and its joyful dimension and not to take everything too tragically. I'd also say it's necessary for my ministry. A writer once said that angels can fly because they don't take themselves too seriously. Maybe we could also fly a bit if we didn't think we were so important." *Pope Benedict XVI*

Stockton, California *Silver Massabki Award*



by Nicole Rishwan

On Sunday, February 16, 2014, the Maronite Community in Stockton, Calif., was blessed by the first visit of Most Reverend Elias Zaidan, Bishop of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon. Bishop Zaidan celebrated the Divine Liturgy. Fr. John Nahal, Administrator, and Fr. Pierre Azzi, a Maronite priest in Halifax, Canada, concelebrated. Elias and Moni Boudames were awarded the Silver Massabki medals. William Saleh, Peter Jacobs, Raef Ohan, Marzouka Sulaiman and Georgette Houbaika Feather were awarded Certificates of Dedication from the Bishop. Everyone was invited to a reception. □

Saint Louis, Missouri *Feast of Saint Maron*



Chorbishop Moussa Joseph with Gerri and Ameal Nassif, recipients of the Silver Massabki Award.

by Shelly Vitale

The St. Raymond Maronite Cathedral community joined together to celebrate the Feast of St. Maron during the evening Liturgy on Saturday, February 8, 2014, celebrated by Bishop Emeritus Robert Shaheen. Chorbishop

Moussa Joseph, Rector of St. Raymond Cathedral, and Father James Swift, C.M., concelebrated.

After the Liturgy, the parishioners gathered at the Cedars Banquet Hall for a reception in honor of St. Maron. Chorbishop Joseph welcomed everyone and asked Bishop Emeritus Shaheen to open the evening with a blessing. Chorbishop Joseph was pleased to announce the recipients of two special awards. He bestowed the Silver Massabki award on Gerri and Ameal Nassif and awarded the Faith of the Mountain award to Kaitlin Gilliam. Chorbishop Joseph thanked them for their dedication and service. He introduced Father Swift, who gave an enlightening talk about St. Maron, the topic of sainthood, the devotion of the saints and the great example they have been for us. A meal was served followed by a fun evening of fellowship and dancing. □

San Francisco, California *Silver Massabki Award*



Fr. John Nahal with the recipients of the Silver Massabki and Faith of the Mountain Awards.

by Nicole Rishwan

On Sunday, February 9, 2014, Our Lady of Lebanon Maronite Community in the Bay Area of California celebrated the Feast Day of St. Maron. During the Divine Liturgy, all members and officers of the different organizations and committees were installed. At the end of the Divine Liturgy Fr. John Nahal, Pastor, awarded the Massabki Medals to Larry and Vivian Kuzni and the Faith of the Mountain Award to Elias Makhoul from Our Lady of Lebanon Church in Millbrae. Roger and Jeanette Hajjar, from St. Joseph Maronite Mission in San Jose, Calif., received the Silver Massabki Medals. Afterward, everyone was invited to a reception, which was sponsored by the Maroun family, in the Maronite Educational Center. □



A Catechetical Response To Same-Sex Marriage

First published in *Our Sunday Visitor* on February 16, 2014, it is republished with permission of the author's office. John Cavadini, Director of the Institute for Church Life at the University of Notre Dame, uses a logical argument to explain the Church's position on a difficult issue.

by John Cavadini

Why does the Catholic Church oppose same-sex marriage? This question is a burning one for many Catholics.

The recent outpouring of local support for Mark Zmuda, former vice principal at a Catholic high school in Seattle, is an example of how the emotions involved in addressing this question cross our own hearts.

Zmuda resigned from Eastside Catholic High School in December after failing to honor his contract - which states he must follow the Church's teachings - by marrying his same-sex partner in July. Since Zmuda's departure, the school's students have staged a walkout, spoken out on social media and collected signatures for a petition to the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

As is evident by these actions, the Church's position seems especially inexplicable to young people. Anyone reading this may find him or herself to be same-sex attracted, and certainly all of us know and love people who are. Why, then, should there be any difficulty for the Church with same-sex civil marriage? Isn't this a simple matter of civil rights?

Marriage's Redefinition

Indeed, this is the way it appears to many. In fact, the Church's position is often misunderstood or caricatured because the question is usually put this way: "Why does the Church oppose the extension of the right to marry to same-sex couples?" But to think of the Church's opposition to same-sex marriage as a refusal to extend the right to marry to same-sex couples, and then to try to defend that refusal, is to guarantee that the Church's position will be greeted with hostility and contempt, even, perhaps, in our own hearts.

The Church would put the question differently: "Why does the Church oppose the redefinition of marriage, such that it is no longer the same social institution?" The Church opposes



Eastside Catholic High School students display signs during a rally in support of the school's former vice principal, Mark Zmuda, outside the Archdiocese of Seattle chancery building December 20 (CNS photo).

giving up a conception of marriage in which the complementarity of man and woman is the defining feature and replacing it with a conception of marriage where the complementarity of man and woman is, instead, completely accidental to it.

Honesty on both sides of the debate would recognize that the Church's position - that we are dealing with a change in the definition of marriage and not just an extension of it - is a plausible account of the situation. Opposing this change is not a *priori* bigotry or contempt, and it deserves a hearing as such, both in our own hearts and in society at large.

Procreation Not Accidental

Marriage, in all ages and under all forms, has been defined by the complementarity of male and female, and it was ordered, as that complementarity is ordered, toward procreation.

When marriage is redefined so that it can include a type of couple that, by its very type, and not by the accidents of

circumstance or ill fortune, is incapable of procreative union, then we have endorsed a public, social declaration that procreation is completely accidental to marriage and not in any way intrinsic to its meaning. It means we are, as a society, declaring that procreation is completely accidental to marriage and irrelevant to its identity.

Formation of Society

But this also means we are creating a society in which the natural unit of human procreation, the male/female couple, no longer has a social institution that is peculiarly its own. We are making the decision that this natural unit of procreation will have no social footprint, no social recognition, no social prestige, no social standing, no institutional trace. We are forming our imaginations, and those of our young people, in such a way that the natural unit of human procreation, the male/female couple, has no special claim on our hopes and dreams as a society. We have decided that society no longer has an institution to which

procreation is anything but accidental. Procreation is no longer a primary end of any social unit, but accidental to all.

Is this a good thing? It is a reasonable and vital question, not easily dismissed by charges of bigotry or contempt. If procreation is accidental to all and every legally defined social unit, then it ends up as a competitor with other ways of reproduction, all of which - all of which - are technological means of production and ultimately subject to a market economy. We are saying that, as a society, we have come to be able to see or value no difference between natural human procreation and artificial production of children.

In some indirect but real way, aren't we saying that a child can be a commodity? Aren't we saying, more directly, that it is completely socially irrelevant whether a child has a mother and a father, or is instead artificially generated in a production line, first with surrogate wombs for rent, and then, when technology catches up with our social cues, with artificial wombs and laboratory produced gametes?

Human Production

The Church invites us to see that, as our social imagination continues to be redefined, we may very well begin to see the procreative human couple as a kind of outmoded technology, somewhat disgusting, even a little repulsive, as, for example, Gary Taylor talks about such a couple in his book, "Castration: An Abbreviated History of Western Manhood" (Routledge, \$38.95).

Is this the proper direction for a society that values human dignity? A society that has divested itself from natural human procreation by eliminating any social institution that is intrinsically connected to the natural procreative couple has declared, in effect, that reproduction is essentially a kind of production, and that human beings can be, consequentially, a kind of product.

This is not such a distant prospect in the popular imagination. Take the ideal put forward in a recent book by Aarathi Prasad, "Like a Virgin: How Science is Redesigning the Rules of Sex" (Oneworld, \$19.95). In a recent interview about her book, Prasad reflected on how gestating babies outside of the body would get away from the question of mother and father, and on how an artificial womb can be the same or even better than gestation in a mother's womb. After all, we are just substituting one machine for another: "I mean, we are machines, after all ... the body is a machine." But is it?

To What End?

The Church poses this burning question back to us, asking us to think: "Is this really where we want to go as a society? Is this really what we want to teach our young people? Are we really ready to institutionally relativize the natural procreative unit of mother and father, so that it becomes just one equal option among many for reproduction? Is that really equality? Is it really fair to children?" It is not bigoted or contemptuous to worry about these implications or these outcomes.

Nor does it mean severing the bonds of love for persons of same-sex attraction. Rather, we are inviting everyone to ask if this very love is really compatible with a way of organizing society that in the end devalues human persons, making it easier for us to treat some as products and commodities.

Is that really OK? Doesn't it end up reducing the value and scope of all human love? Can't we find another solution? □

Pope Francis Meets With Over 10,000 Engaged Couples

by Junno Arocho Esteves

Love was in the air in Vatican City as an estimated 25,000 young people, all of whom are engaged couples preparing for marriage, met with Pope Francis for a special St. Valentine's day audience.

The event, which was promoted by the Pontifical Council for the Family, was filled with music and dancing prior to the Holy Father's arrival. After an introduction by Archbishop Vincenzo Paglia, President of the Pontifical Council, several couples asked the Holy Father questions about the challenges of Christian couples on their way towards marriage.

Nicolas Pecino and Marie Alexa Gaggero, a couple from Gibraltar, asked the Holy Father about the difficulties of commitment for the rest of their lives. "Many feel that the challenge of living together forever is beautiful, enchanting, but very demanding, almost impossible. We ask your word to enlighten us on this," they asked.

The Holy Father said that in today's fast paced world, many couples are afraid of making a definitive choice in life, contributing to a mentality that brings couples to "stay together until this love lasts." Love is more than just a feeling or a psychophysical state, but a relationship that grows like the construction of a house.

"Just as the love of God is stable and forever, so we would want the love that is the foundation of the family to be stable and forever. We cannot let ourselves be overcome by the 'throwaway culture,'" the Holy Father said.

The Pope told the couples gathered that the fear of "forever" is cured day-by-day through a life of prayer. Recalling the Lord's prayer, the Pope told the couples to ask Christ to multiply their love.

"In the 'Our Father' we say: 'Give us this day our daily bread.' Married couples can learn to pray like this: 'Lord, give us this day our daily love' because daily love is the bread of married couples," he said.

An Italian couple, Stefano Campoli and Valentina Mirabella, asked the Pope on what "style" of spiritual life that couples should live. Reiterating a point made in his meeting with families late last year, the Holy Father said that to live together is an art that can be summarized in three words: excuse me, thank you and I'm sorry.

"'Excuse me' is the gentle request to enter into someone's life with respect and attention," he said, adding that to ask permission means to know how to enter into other's lives with courtesy. "Courtesy," he stressed, "conserves love. And in our families, in our world, where there is much violence and arrogance, there is a greater need for courtesy.

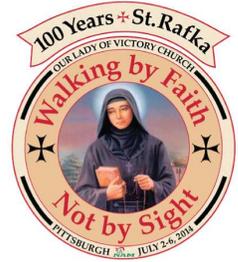
The 77-year-old Pontiff went on to say that 'thank you' is not just a polite manner of speaking but a sign of gratitude. "I'm sorry," he said, allows us to learn from and recognize our mistakes and faults.

"We all know that the perfect family doesn't exist, nor the perfect husband, nor the perfect wife," he said. "We won't even talk about the perfect mother-in-law," the Pope said jokingly.

(Continues on page 20)



July 2-6 2014
Pittsburgh, PA



Pre Registration Deadline: Monday, 09 June 2014

Please complete all information, or Register on-line: www.namnews.org

Incomplete forms will not be processed - Please PRINT legibly - You will receive an EMAIL confirmation

Primary Registrant – Please add additional family members on reverse side

First Name: _____ Last Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Parish: _____

Package/Program Purchased: _____

Check all that Apply

-]NAM Member]NAM Delegate
-]NAM Board]Ord. St. Sharbel
-]Conv. Comm.]Child [5-11]
-]Youth [12-18]]Yng. Ad [18-35]
-]Vegetarian Age: _____

PACKAGES ONLY - Enter # of packages desired and make sure to fill-in Totals and Grand Totals

NAM members, whose 2014 dues have been paid, will receive \$15 off of the Full Adult Package and \$10 off all other packages.

This members' discount is void after the pre-registration deadline of 09 June 2014. If you wish to pay your dues or become a member with this registration, please send a separate check payable to NAM.

Child and Young Adult Day Programs are additional and not included in the packages

Individual event registrations are available online only.

The "Covenant of Behavior" MUST be completed and SIGNED for all Children and Youth Registrants - if not accompanied by a parent

Package Options Does Not Include Hotel Rooms	Adult 18 years old +		Youth 12 to 18 years		Child 5 to 11 years		Entertainment Only 35 and under - No Meals Included Entry after 10 PM - Valid Student ID Required	
	Pre- Registration Before 6/09/2014	Registration	Pre- Registration Before 6/09/2014	Registration	Pre- Registration Before 6/09/2014	Registration	Pre- Registration Before 6/09/2014	Registration
Full (Wed-Sun)	# ___ @ \$300	# ___ @ \$330	# ___ @ \$270	# ___ @ \$300	# ___ @ \$185	# ___ @ \$215	# ___ @ \$120	# ___ @ \$150
Long Weekend (Thu - Sun)	# ___ @ \$270	# ___ @ \$300	# ___ @ \$240	# ___ @ \$270	# ___ @ \$160	# ___ @ \$190	# ___ @ \$100	# ___ @ \$130
Weekend (Fri-Sun)	# ___ @ \$240	# ___ @ \$270	# ___ @ \$210	# ___ @ \$240	# ___ @ \$140	# ___ @ \$170	# ___ @ \$80	# ___ @ \$110
Saturday & Sunday	# ___ @ \$185	# ___ @ \$215	# ___ @ \$155	# ___ @ \$185	# ___ @ \$95	# ___ @ \$125	# ___ @ \$60	# ___ @ \$90
Totals	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$

DAY PROGRAMS

• Thur. National Aviary Child # ___ at \$25*	• Sat. Ducky Tour Child# ___ at \$20*
• Thur. Hofbrauhaus Young Adults # ___ at \$60*	• Sat. bike tour and Hooka bar Young Adults # ___ at \$50*

* These events are age specific. Onsite registration will incur a \$20 late fee

OPTIONAL EXCURSIONS

Thursday afternoon: St. Anthony Chapel (Tour and Transportation)	# _____ X \$25
Friday morning: Our Lady of Victory Church tour (Tour and Transportation)	# _____ X \$0
Saturday morning: Ducky land and water tour (Tour and Transportation)	# _____ X \$30

GRAND TOTAL \$

Make checks payable to "NAM Convention and fax to 914.964.3071 or mail to NAM P.O. Box 717- Yonkers, NY 10702-4611

If using a **credit card** - complete the information below - **DO NOT SEND CASH**

For Credit Card: Visa MC Disc AMEX Acct. #: _____ Exp. Date: _____

V-code (3 or 4 digit # on front/back of card): _____ Signature: _____

OFFICE USE ONLY: AMT. PD: _____ DATE: _____ CHK #: _____ REG. #: _____

For Hotel Reservation call Wyndham Grand Pittsburgh Downtown 412-391-4600 Reservations: (ask for "NAM Convention")

Hotel rate: \$125.00/night for single/double/triple/quad room. Rate valid until June 09,2014

One night deposit is required for all reservations

Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania Saint Maron's Food Drive



From Left to Right: Samira Chamoun, Maria Kaspar (President), Mayrula Homsy, Ilene Osmanski (Vice President), Marie Michael (Secretary), Terry Thomas, Lena Michael, and Cynthia Collins (Event Coordinator).

by JoAnn M. Schultz

The Altar & Rosary Society of St. Anthony/St. George Maronite Church, Wilkes-Barre, Penn., and Pastor, Father Hanna Karam, held their Annual Saint Maron Food Drive during the month of February. For over twenty years, the Ladies of the Altar & Rosary Society have been collecting non-perishable food items in honor of the Feast of Saint Maron and donating the food to needy families or charitable agencies for distribution. The Church parishioners are the main contributors, while the Society women assemble and deliver the donated items. This February, the collected food was given to Ruth's Place, a women's shelter located in the city of Wilkes-Barre. □

Pope Meets With Engaged Couples

Continued from page 18

“Jesus knows us well. He teaches us a secret: to never end the day without asking for forgiveness, without returning peace to our house, to our family.”

The final question, asked by a couple from Tuscany, Miriam and Marco, was how to best celebrate the Sacrament of Marriage. Concluding his dialogue with the couples, the Holy Father said that while the marriage is a feast, that it is important to highlight what matters most. “Some are worried more about the exterior signs, the banquet, the photos, the dresses and flowers.”

While they are important for a feast, they are only useful if they serve to show the true reason for their joy: the blessing of God over their love.

“Do it in such a way that, like the wine in Cana, the exterior signs of your feast reveal the presence of the Lord and remind you and all present the origin and reason for your joy,” he said. □ (Zenit.org, February 14, 2014)

Lent in Syria

Continued from page 4

- An abundance of priestly vocations flourishes, despite the decline in the birth rate
- Religious, nuns and lay people animate centers of psychological support for children and young people traumatized by violence
- A new strategy for living, based on the social teaching of the Church, is being implemented through ecumenical dialogue involving all groups in this country at war
- A family pastoral mission has developed that is based on listening and accompaniment. Without the family there is no Church.

All of these are made soft by the gaze of Mary, Mother of God, Our Lady of Peace. "Happy are the peace makers ..." Mt 5: 9. □

+Samir NASSAR
Maronite Archbishop of Damascus