

The Maronite Voice

A Publication of the Maronite Eparchies in the USA



Volume VIII

Issue No. X

November 2012

Only True, Sincere, and Reasonable Faith Can Save and Guide Us On the Right Path.

Our Marriages, Our Families, Our Engagement With Society, Our Personal Well Being and Happiness Need This Faith in God.



YEAR OF FAITH 2012-2013

Brother Priests, Deacons and Subdeacons, Religious Men and Women, Seminarians, Lay Faithful, Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

The Year of Faith proclaimed by the Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI, began October 11, 2012, and it could not come at a better time for our world. On the one hand in the Middle East, we have a religious fanaticism that threatens every peace-loving believer by a misguided sense of what God asks of us. On the other hand, in the West there is what the Holy Father calls a "crisis of faith" that makes even the best of believers question whether or not anything is

objectively true. Thus everything seems to be "negotiable," even to the point of thinking that we, not God, decide what is true and what has value.

This year in the United States we mark forty years since Roe vs. Wade, which has made abortion a "right" throughout all nine months of pregnancy. We sadly note that assisted suicide was on the ballot for Massachusetts. Marriage has been redefined in some states. The Federal Government has imposed "health" mandates which, contrary to being healthy, impose on our consciences to do that which we firmly believe is wrong. Catholic institutions and faithful are faced with legal penalties if they do not accept this or other government decisions.

Somewhere between the misguided religious fanaticism of the Middle East, and the misguided secular fanaticism of the West, we Catholics must now know our faith better than ever, and live and pass on this faith, in all its splendor and beauty, to our children.

Our Holy Father's recent visit to Lebanon brought the beauty of our Catholic faith into sharp contrast with what the world has to offer. For in between a world plagued by violence, division and hatred, and a world depressed by apathy, where nothing is true and good in and of itself, we Maronite Catholics find ourselves with a renewed mission and purpose for our weary world.

Here are a few simple things we can do during this Year of Faith:

- **Pray the Rosary.** The Holy Father asked us to pray each day the Nicene Creed. Why stop there? We can do the entire Rosary; it will take us twelve minutes, and we will be all the better for it.
- **Do something good for your marriage.** If you are not married, do something good for someone else's marriage. Live true to your state in life and find God's presence there.
- **Read Saint Ephrem:** Get to know better your Maronite liturgy, history and tradition and the valuable contribution our Church continues to make in the Middle East and throughout the world.
- **Go to Confession.** Attend daily Liturgy once a week. Forgive someone who hurt you. Reach out to someone who is estranged from you. Volunteer for something at Church.
- **Read the Catechism of the Catholic Church** or YouCat or the Compendium. Know better your faith. Read our eparchial website (www.stmaron.org). Talk to those around you about the importance and meaning of faith.

(Continues on page 20)

Schedule of Bishop Robert Shaheen

November 4, 2012

Thanksgiving Liturgy for the intention of our new Cardinal, Patriarch Bechara Rai

November 11 - 15, 2012

USCCB Fall Meeting, Baltimore, Md.

November 16, 2012

Anniversary of Saint Raymond Church, St. Louis, Mo.

November 18, 2012

Annual Liturgy and Banquet, Daughter of Saint Paul, Saint Louis, Mo.

November 25, 2012

Special Liturgy honoring the elders of Saint Anthony Church, Danbury, Conn.

December 9, 2012

Special Youth Liturgy, Saint Louis, Mo.

December 13, 2012

Lecture, Bellville, Ill.

December 14, 2012

Retreat for student group, Maronite Heritage Institute. 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>

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- Most Reverend Bishop Robert Joseph Shaheen
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Editing and proofreading

Mary Shaia

Anne-Marie Condlin

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Maronite Convention 2013

Sts. Peter and Paul Maronite Church

Tampa, Florida

July 3 - 7, 2013

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

Eparchial Condolences



Deacon Joseph W. Regan, who served for thirty-five years at St. Maron Maronite Church, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, passed away on October 1, 2012. He is survived by his wife, Maria, his son, Stephen, and daughter, Francesca, three grandchildren, two sisters and four brothers, many nieces and nephews, and seven great nieces and nephews. Condolences may be sent to his wife:

Maria Regan, 21 East Hollow Avenue, Sewell, NJ 08080.

Bishop Gregory Mansour along with the clergy and faithful of the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn extend their heartfelt sympathy and the promise of our prayers to Deacon Regan's family.

May the Lord God grant Joseph eternal rest in His Kingdom and consolation to his family and loved ones. □

Holy Father's Telegram of Condolence to Beirut Attack Victims

His Beatitude Patriarch Bechara Peter Rai,

Learning of the terrible attack that took place in Beirut [October 19, 2012], which injured and killed numerous people, His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI shares through prayer in the sorrow of the grieving families and the sadness of all the people of Lebanon. He entrusts the victims to God, who is full of mercy, imploring Him to welcome them into His light. He expresses his profound sympathy for the injured and their families, asking the Lord to aid and console them in their trial. As he did during his apostolic voyage to Lebanon, the Holy Father once again condemns the violence that brings about such suffering and asks God to grant the gift of peace and reconciliation to Lebanon and the entire region. His Holiness wholeheartedly invokes the abundance of divine blessings upon the grieving families and upon all the people of Lebanon!

Tarcisio Cardinal Bertone

Secretary of State of His Holiness

(Zenit.org, October 21, 2012. Translation by Joseph Trabbic)

Warren, Michigan Deaconate Ordination

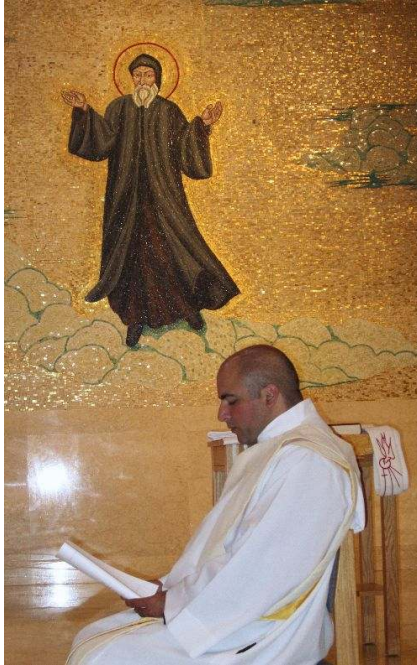
by Charlotte Fortuna

On September 14, 2012, Bishop Alfred Badawi and the community of Saint Sharbel Maronite Catholic Church in Warren, Mich., participated in the Divine Liturgy by His Excellency Bishop Robert Shaheen, as he celebrated the Ordination of Subdeacon George Hajj to the Order of Deacon.

In his homily, Bishop Shaheen referred to the Feast of the Holy Cross. Addressing the newly ordained His Excellency remarked,

"We need only to remember the Exaltation of the Holy Cross whose feast day is today." Deacon Hajj will have an additional year of theological studies and spiritual formation before being ordained to the priesthood.

As part of the ordination rite, the Bishop placed the Book of the Gospels in the hands of the candidate and said, "Receive the Gospel of Christ, whose herald you have become. Believe what you read, teach what you believe, and practice what you teach." "Preach the Gospel at all times, and when necessary, use words." Bishop Shaheen concluded his homily by addressing the new deacon, saying, "We depend on the handing on of a living faith, a living tradition joined to Jesus in His loving sacrifice ... for He has chosen us, He has chosen you, my brother, to be His friend and to bear fruit that will remain." □



Deacon George Hajj

Encounter 2012

by Maronite Servants of Christ the Light

On October 11 - 14, 2012, The Maronite Servants of Christ the Light attended the Eastern Catholic Churches Encounter 2012 at St. Mary Byzantine Catholic Church in Hillsborough, New Jersey. The theme of the conference was "Together In Christ." Clergy and the laity from the Armenian, Chaldean, Malankar, Malabar, Maronite, Melkite, Romanian, Russian, Ruthenian, Syriac and Ukrainian Churches were invited, and approximately eighty priests and 200 lay people attended.

Dynamic speakers included Bishop Nicholas Samra



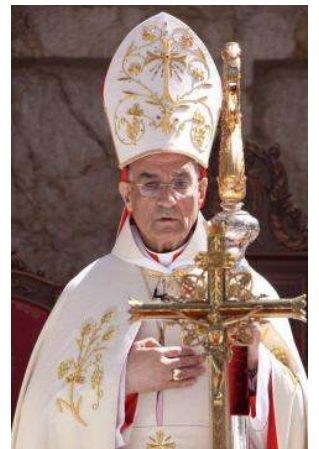
His Excellency Bishop Gregory Mansour, His Excellency Bishop Nicholas Samra, Maronite Servants, and young adults attending the Encounter 2012.

(Melkite Bishop of the U.S.), Fr. Damien Geiger (Melkite pastor, Florida), Bishop Peter Anthony Libasci (Bishop of Manchester, New Hampshire), Maureen Daddona, Ph.D. and Sr. Marla Marie, who spoke on the blueprint for church growth. Sister Marla Marie emphasized the importance of deepening our prayer life and personal desire for holiness, in order to become effective witnesses of Jesus Christ, especially in this Year of Faith.

His Excellency Bishop Gregory Mansour of the Eparchy of Saint Maron also attended the conference and led a *Safro* (morning prayer) for the clergy and lay faithful. □

Pontifical Honor

On Wednesday, October 24, 2012, His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI bestowed the honor and dignity of Cardinal on His Beatitude Patriarch Bechara Peter Rai, Maronite Patriarch of Antioch and all the East. In response to a letter of congratulations from Bishops Gregory Mansour, Stephen Hector Doueiri and the Eparchial Presbyteral Council, His Excellency Archbishop Paul Sayah, Patriarchal Vicar General, said, "We feel that the elevation of His Beatitude is a great honor to our Maronite Church worldwide, to Lebanon that the Holy Father enjoyed so much visiting recently. But beyond Lebanon we feel that the Holy Father wanted to send a message of affirmation to the Christians of the Middle East in the difficult moments they are living in their various countries. Finally this is a great tribute to our Patriarch, his vision and the dynamism with which he is conducting his Patriarchal ministry." □



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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 or write

to

Eparchy of Saint Maron
Order of Saint Sharbel
109 Remsen Street
Brooklyn, NY 11201

Or

Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon
Order of Saint Sharbel
1021 South 10th Street
St. Louis, MO 63104

Cincinnati, Ohio Subdeacon Ordination



Chorbishop Michael Kail ordains Mark Floyd to the Order of Subdeacon at St. Anthony of Padua Church in Cincinnati, Ohio.

by Linda Conour

On Sunday, October 7, 2012, St. Anthony of Padua Church in Cincinnati, Ohio, celebrated the ordination of Mark Floyd to the Order of Subdeacon. Chorbishop Michael Kail, Pastor of Saint Maron Church in Youngstown, Ohio, officiated at the ceremony. Father David A. Fisher, Pastor, Father Jack Kroeger (retired), and Father Benedict O'Cinnsealigh, Rector of The Athenaeum - Mt. St. Mary Seminary, concelebrated. Subdeacon Tom Simon assisted in the special ceremony that took place during the Divine Liturgy. The Church was filled with family members and friends who came to support Mark and witness his ordination. Mark had studied and prepared for three years to reach this goal. He now joins Joe Mousie, Tom Simon, and Don George, Jr., as Subdeacons at St. Anthony of Padua Church. A luncheon reception was held immediately following the Ordination Liturgy in the Monsignor Joseph A. Aboud Maronite Center. □

Brooklyn, New York Year of Faith Retreat

by Salma T.Vahdat

On Saturday, October 20, 2012, the Graymoor Spiritual Life Center in Garrison, N.Y., was the scene for the "Year of Faith" retreat sponsored by the Confraternity of the Immaculate Conception, the ladies organization of Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral in Brooklyn, N.Y. Aside from the idyllic setting of the Center which hovers above the Hudson River, a mantle of peace cloaked the environs administered by the Franciscan Friars.

Father Justin Cinnante, SFO, was the main speaker in the morning sessions, stressing the need in this Year of Faith to strive for a better understanding of our faith and to share it with others. We are called to trust in God's love for us and to understand the importance of receiving the Sacraments, especially Confession and the Eucharist so we may be filled with grace to live, know and share our faith with others.

(Continues on page 20)

The Maronite Music Website

www.maronitemusic.org

by Fr. Geoffrey Abdallah, Director

This new website is provided by the Inter-Eparchial Music Commission as an official resource for the Maronite Catholic Church. The Commission was established in March 2008 by the four Maronite Bishops of the English speaking eparchies (dioceses) - Bishops Gregory Mansour and Robert Shaheen (USA), Bishop Ad Abikaram (Australia) and Bishop Joseph Khoury (Canada) - in response to the decision at the annual Maronite Bishops' Synod at *Bkerke* (Lebanon) to establish an inter-eparchial committee to work on one English translation of the Maronite Liturgical texts.

The demanding task of accurately translating and adapting over 250 Maronite Chants of the *Qorbono* (Mass) into singable English, while remaining faithful to the original Syriac melody, is now complete. The Entrance Hymns, *Qoleh*, and *Mazmooreh* for the whole Liturgical year are available on this website. The hymns for the Proper of the Mass, such as Glory to God, Pre-Anaphora Hymns, Peace Hymns, Fraction Hymns, Communion Hymns, etc., have also been placed on this website. This will allow parish choirs time to begin learning the new texts/hymns prior to the arrival of the new Mass Books.

The new English translation of the Book of Offering (Mass Book) has been approved by the Maronite Bishops of the English speaking eparchies and has been promulgated by the Maronite Patriarch, His Beatitude Bechara Peter Rai. It is in the process of publication.

Since the work of any Music Commission is always a "work in progress," this website will be constantly updated. It will provide Maronite Hymns in English, articles about Maronite Music, recordings and other resources to make the richness of our authentic Antiochian Syriac Maronite tradition available to future generations in the English speaking world. □

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Effective Ways YOU Can Help your Eparchy!

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

Planned Giving: Consider Your Legacy

This is a creative way to support the Church. Planned giving can involve contributing through your will, insurance policy, or retirement assets. Also, it can be a way to make a donation and to provide yourself with a steady source of income; a charitable remainder trust is one example of this.

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

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

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

"I give and bequeath to the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon, located in St. Louis, Missouri, _____% of the residue of my estate [or: the sum of \$ _____]."

Tax-Smart Giving of Appreciated Stock or other Assets

The gift of an asset such as common stock or mutual fund shares is a smart way to make a contribution and receive maximum tax benefits based on the value of the asset. Gifts of other appreciated assets such as land, antiques, and homes, can also be utilized as potential gifts with valuable tax benefits. Gifts of these assets should be considered on a case-by-case basis.

For more information on any or all of these options, please contact Stewardship Director John F. Kurey, Esq., MBA, at 718-237-9913 or 314-231-1021; or by e-mail at saintmaron@yahoo.com; or maroniteswest@yahoo.com.

Eparchy of Saint Maron Third Annual Benefit Dinner Features Edward Cardinal Egan, Archbishop Emeritus of New York



Cardinal Edward Egan praises the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn at Benefit Dinner.

by John Kurey

Nearly 200 people attended the Third Annual Benefit Dinner in Manhattan for the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn at the Roosevelt Hotel on October 26, 2012. The keynote speaker was Cardinal Edward Egan, Archbishop Emeritus of New York.

After an introduction by Bishop J. Gregory Mansour, Bishop of the Eparchy of Saint Maron, Edward Cardinal Egan delivered an amazing speech. A moment of prayer was offered for peace in the Middle East. Ms. Joumana Mdawar lifted the spirits of those present with spiritual hymns. The atmosphere was gracious.

Mr. Ed Shiner was Master of Ceremonies. The opening prayer was offered by Monsignor James Root, Rector of Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral in Brooklyn. The closing prayer was offered by Chorbishop Michael Thomas, Vicar General of the Eparchy. Among the distinguished guests in attendance were Honorable Majdi Ramadan, Consul General of Lebanon in New York; former Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell; and over ten members of the clergy.

Many attendees made generous donations during the evening. Bishop Gregory expressed his gratitude to everyone who attended the Benefit Dinner or made a contribution.

Proceeds from the Benefit Dinner will be applied to the needs of the Eparchy. Donations may be made payable to "Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn" and sent to 109 Remsen Street, Brooklyn, NY 11201.

The Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn consists of forty parishes and missions located in sixteen states along the East Coast, as well as a seminary in Washington, D.C., a monastery for contemplative monks and a convent for religious sisters. □

Brooklyn, New York Taste by the Bridge

by Salma T.Vahdat

The Community of Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral came together on Sunday, September 30, 2012, to sponsor the first annual "Taste by the Bridge," (Brooklyn, that is). In its continuing fundraising effort to restore the historic Cathedral, the Parish Council sponsored this fun affair which brought together approximately twenty-five neighborhood eateries with samples of their signature cuisine to the Cathedral's Social Hall following Sunday Liturgy.

For a nominal entry fee, guests were able to indulge their palates with a variety of ethnic treats which really showcased the diversity of nationalities which surround the Cathedral. Polish, Italian, Lebanese and Continental dishes and desserts were in abundance. Judging from the smiles of satisfaction which abounded, the event was very successful.

Many thanks to the volunteers from the Council, the Confraternity, the Knights, MYO and MYA who set up, served and cleaned up when all was said and done. Special kudos to Joseph Shaia, Jr., Council President, for proposing and organizing the event. □



North Jackson, Ohio A Sincere Thank You

A grateful thank you to the parishes of the Eparchies of Saint Maron and Our Lady of Lebanon for the Shrine collection taken in May 2012.

The kind generosity of the Maronites of the United States is greatly appreciated and it assists the Shrine in continued ministry to all who visit.

Be assured that the faithful of our parishes are remembered daily at the Divine Liturgy.

Sincerely,

Monsignor Anthony Spinosa
Rector

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, likely belonging to Monsignor Anthony Spinosa.

Saint Louis, Missouri Secretary Honored for 45 Years of Service



The Honorable Francis Slay presents Roxie Rask with a proclamation designating October 4, 2012, as Roxie's Day

by Shelly Vitale

St. Raymond Maronite Cathedral community in Saint Louis, Mo., along with visiting clergy, the Daughters of St. Paul, family and friends, gathered together on Thursday, October 4, 2012, to honor their beloved Secretary, Roxie Rask, for forty-five years of dedication and service. The event took place at the Cedar's Banquet Center with Radio personality Trish Gazall as the Master of Ceremonies. Because of Roxie's outstanding loyalty to the St. Raymond's community, she received a plaque from the Honorable Francis Slay, Mayor of the City of St. Louis, designating October 4, 2012, as Roxie Rask Day. She also received a plaque from Bishop Robert Shaheen which was inscribed with the organizations and committees to which she has dedicated her life including: St. Raymond's Cathedral Community, the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon, the Eparchy of Saint Maron, the Order of Saint Sharbel and the National Apostolate of Maronites. The plaque will be installed at the Maronite Heritage Institute in St. Louis. Speakers included Monsignor Moussa Joseph, Rector of St.

Raymond Cathedral; Father James Swift, C.M., Kenrick Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri; Chorbishop Faouzi Elia, Vicar General and Pastor of St. Sharbel Parish, Peoria, Illinois; and The Most Reverend Robert J. Shaheen, Bishop of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon. Additional clergy present were: Chorbishop Michael Kail, Pastor of St. Maron, Youngstown, Ohio; Chorbishop Alfred Badawi, Pastor of St. Sharbel Church, Warren, Michigan; Chorbishop Richard Saad, Pastor of St. Elias Church, Birmingham, Alabama; and Father Abdallah Zaidan, Rector of Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral, Los Angeles, California. A group of special friends from Danbury, Connecticut, attended in Roxie's honor, as well.

A movie commemorating her life was presented by her family. Roxie was very touched by the entire evening. In brief remarks, she thanked everyone for their friendship, love and support, especially to her late husband, Pete, and to her loving family for supporting her during all these years of service to the parish community. She expressed a sincere thank you to Bishop Shaheen for giving her the opportunity to serve as Parish Secretary throughout the years and as his Personal Secretary and allowing her to be a part of the growth and development of the parish. Roxie explained how it has been a pleasure for her to witness the expansion of St. Raymond from the former four-family flat to a square-block complex, containing the new Church/Cathedral, Rector, Parish Center, Pastoral Center and Maronite Heritage Institute.

On behalf of Bishop Robert Shaheen, Monsignor Moussa Joseph and the entire St. Raymond community, say thank you to Roxie Rask for her loyalty and dedication. □

Minneapolis, Minnesota A Day of Gratitude

St. Maron Church of Minneapolis, Minn., had the pleasure of honoring one of its very longtime dedicated couples. Duane and Elizabeth Nasser were honored with a special dinner on Sunday, June 17, 2012, following the Divine Liturgy. At a Lebanese buffet, speeches were given, the youth danced, their granddaughter sang for them, there was a slide show and a memory table, and Msgr. Sharbel presented them with a plaque of appreciation.

Duane and Elizabeth each grew up at St. Maron Church and were married there in 1957. Since then, this husband and wife team has provided over fifty years of support to the Parish. Duane has been a member and past officer of the American Lebanese Club for forty years. Elizabeth has been a longtime member and current and past officer of the Altar Society/St. Anne's Club. This couple belongs to the Order of Saint Sharbel, NAM and Serra Club and are recipients of the Silver and Golden Massabki Awards. □



Roxie Rask (center) surrounded by her family and relatives.

Flint, Michigan Annual International Festival



It was very successful, the whole community came together, and more than 250 parishioners volunteered their time and talent to work the Festival.

The children of the parish sang the Lebanese anthem in Arabic and performed a few Lebanese songs. The youths sang the American anthem and had a presentation about a story of a young man who emigrated from Lebanon to the States. Some of the community and local singers sang from the Lebanese tradition. More than 7,000 people attended the Festival and everyone is looking forward to next year's festival. □

Newtown Square, Pennsylvania Summer Festival



From noon to 8:00 p.m. on September 8, 2012, Our Lady of Lebanon Church took part in the First Annual International Festival of Flint, Mich., organized by the Downtown Development Authority.

The objective of participating in the Festival is to share our religion, culture, customs, traditions and food with the local community. Hundreds of people took over the streets to enjoy the live music, dancing, food and vendors that represented cultures from around the world.

Area churches and restaurants provided Italian, Mediterranean, and Mexican cuisine served under a tent. Vendors sold a variety of jewelry, clothing, fashion accessories and other items. Two stages were set up to showcase the music and dance.

At Our Lady of Lebanon Church parishioners spent several days preparing a popular menu of Lebanese food. The food was well received.

Besides the financial profit (all proceeds from the sales of this event went directly to the Church), by sharing our traditional food with people of other cultures and heritage, Our Lady of Lebanon was able to be involved in the community at large. □

San Francisco, California Annual Lebanese Festival

by Nichole Rishwan

Our Lady of Lebanon Maronite Church, San Francisco, Calif., organized its second annual Lebanese Festival in the Bay area of California, on Saturday, September 1, 2012.

On August 25 - 26, 2012, St. Sharbel Maronite Church, Newtown Square, Penn., held its Annual Summer Festival. This year's festival was co-chaired by John and Anne Marie Azzi, who both did an excellent job of coordinating the teams and organizing the events. It has gotten to the point where not only the "faithful followers of festivals" from other churches attend, but neighbors and friends from all over look forward to the good food and friendship.

This year we added an extra large tent to accommodate the growing number of guests. This year St. Sharbel's Youth Dabke Troupe included several of young boys. Having danced together for the first time they truly did an excellent job under the direction of their instructor, Evelyn Stilwell, who worked many long hours with the group. □

San Antonio, Texas *Magic Is The Night*



On September 29, 2012, St. George Maronite Church of San Antonio, Texas, under the leadership of Rev. Ghassan Matter, MLM, hosted its 49th Annual "Magic is the Night." This yearly event was held at the Grand Banquet Hall at St. George Church. Over 400 guests gathered for a most elegant evening of dinner and dance. The event began with a cocktail hour that included Lebanese appetizers. A dinner of twenty entrees, all prepared by the ladies of the parish, followed. The Argyles, a band from Austin, Texas, offered entertainment with a variety of musical styles that had the guests dancing until midnight. The Lebanese Folk Dancers of St. George performed *dabke* and Lebanese style dancing. St. George Parish looks forward to next year when all will be celebrating the 50th Anniversary of this event. □

Youngstown, Ohio *Feast of the Assumption*

by Amelia M. Yazbek

On August 13 - 15, 2012, the Tridium for Our Lady's Assumption into heaven, was celebrated at the National Shrine of Our Lady of Lebanon in North Jackson, Ohio.

On August 13, 2012, the Shrine staff and volunteers hosted the day's activities: Masses, confession and services. The day culminated in a Latin Rite Liturgy celebrated with local clergy. The cafeteria and gift shop were also hosted by the Shrine's staff all three days.

On August 14, 2012, the ladies of St. Maron Church, Youngstown, Ohio, hosted the day's activities at the National Shrine. An array of Lebanese foods and sweets were prepared, served and available all day in Cedars Hall to complement the day's religious activities. The food and sweets and anything needed for the day was graciously donated to the Shrine from the Maronite parishes in Uniontown and Pittsburgh, Penn., Brooklyn, N.Y., Youngstown, Akron and Cleveland, Ohio. Others also donated. At noon a Maronite Liturgy was celebrated and at

7:00 p.m. a Melkite/Byzantine liturgy was held culminating the evening with a procession honoring Our Lady.

On August 15, 2012, the ladies of St. John Church, New Castle, Penn., hosted the day's activities. They donated and prepared the food for Cedars Hall. This third day of devotion culminated with a Maronite Divine Liturgy concelebrated by Bishops Robert Shaheen, Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon, and Gregory Mansour, Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn, assisted by numerous priests, deacons and subdeacons from both eparchies. A large crowd participated in a candlelight procession that ended in prayer, song and beautiful fireworks. Some participants were from neighboring cities, while others took buses from Brooklyn and Utica, N.Y., Uniontown, Penn., and Saint Louis, Mo., Many more people drove from various cities to pray with the Blessed Mother on her special day. Also present in the procession were some members of the Order of Saint Sharbel and NAM members including Regional Vice President Samir Farrah. □

Schedule of Bishop Gregory Mansour

November 2 - 4, 2012

Maronite Young Adults Retreat, Washington, D.C.

November 9, 2012

USCCB Catechesis and Evangelization Committee Meeting, Baltimore, Md.

November 10, 2012

A day with the Seminarians, Our Lady of Lebanon Seminary, Washington, D.C.

November 11, 2012

11:00 a.m. Liturgy at Our Lady of Lebanon Parish, Washington, D.C.; 2:00 - 5:00 p.m. USCCB Pro-Life Committee Meeting, Baltimore, Md.

November 12 - 15, 2012

USCCB Fall Meetings, Baltimore, Md.

November 18, 2012

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

November 20 - 27, 2012

Personal and family time

December 1, 2012

Ordination to Diaconate of Seminarian Alex Joseph, Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral, Brooklyn, N.Y.

December 2, 2012

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

December 7 - 9, 2012

Pastoral Visit to Our Lady of Purgatory Maronite Church, New Bedford, Mass.

December 8, 2012

11:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy and reception of the first vows of Sister Therese Maria Touma of The Maronite Servants of Christ the Light, St. Anthony of the Desert Church, Fall River, Mass. □

Reflections on the Year of Faith: Are We the True Church?

“And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it” - Matthew 16:18.

by Fr. David A. Fisher

We know from our recitation of the Creed¹, that we believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church. We know that this Holy Church is filled with the gifts of Pentecost, founded on the rock of Peter's proclamation of faith in Christ and has been sanctified in the blood of its martyrs. Yet today many call into question the truth of the Church, the necessity of the Church and the importance of the sacramental life for salvation. Are we the true Church? What does it mean to affirm that we are?

Blessed John Henry Newman, in his work “An Essay In Aid of a Grammar of Assent,” speaks of faith as an assent of the will to certain propositions. That is to say, faith is the giving over of our will to *this* set of faith propositions proclaimed by this religion as compared to the faith propositions of another religious tradition. It is interesting to note that he uses the term “will.” By using the term “will” Newman means that faith is not just an assent of our minds, and reason, not only an emotional attachment, rather faith encompasses our total faculties, our mind, reason, logic, feelings emotions, hopes and desires. To paraphrase a term from our own Maronite scholar of catechesis, Fr. Anthony Salim, “We are captivated by the Church and her teachings.” The truth of the Catholic Faith resonates in our will, in our total being and we come to accept the pilgrimage of faith that is offered.

While the previous reflections relate our will to the propositions of faith offered by the Church, there is also the “existential” or experiential aspect of living the Catholic Faith. The Second Vatican Council teaches that the fullness of Christian revelation, “subsists” in the Catholic Church. What the Council Fathers were trying to convey was that the Christian faith is a living, dynamic reality, whose fullness lives in and is experienced in the Catholic Church. The Church is indeed the Sacrament of Salvation, in which, through living a sacramental life, we experience the “grace filled” life of a Christian.

The sacramental life is grounded in the truth of Christian tradition and life. Unlike the “biblically fundamentalist” churches that seek to engender an individualistic pietism based on one's personal interpretation of Scripture, the sacramental life of Catholicism address the ontological (transformed being) character of one who lives a life of “communion” with God and neighbor, within the community of faith. Transformed by the “Mysteries” of Baptism, Chrismation, and Eucharist, being a member of the worshipping Church allows us a foretaste of the Kingdom of

Heaven. *Lumen Gentium*, the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church from the Second Vatican Council states it this way:

In that Body the life of Christ is poured into the believers who, through the sacraments, are united in a hidden and real way to Christ who suffered and was glorified. Through Baptism we are formed in the likeness of Christ: “For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body.” In this sacred rite a oneness with Christ's death and resurrection is both symbolized and brought about: “For we were buried with Him by means of Baptism into death;” and if “we have been united with Him in the likeness of His death, we shall be so in the likeness of His resurrection also.” Really partaking of the body of the Lord in the breaking of the Eucharistic bread, we are taken up into communion with Him and with one another. “Because the bread is one, we though many, are one body, all of us who partake of the one bread.” In this way all of us are made members of His Body, “but severally members one of another.”²

Lastly, if we are to take to heart the call to a New Evangelization, we must be willing to share this **Truth** which shapes and transforms our lives. Sacred Scripture in the Gospel of Luke tells us, “No one after lighting a lamp puts it in a cellar, but on the lampstand so that those who enter may see the light.” It seems only natural for human beings to want to share that which they find most meaningful and valuable in their lives with others. There should never stand between us and the evangelization of the world, any barrier of race, gender, culture or nationality. If there is one thing any of us should never keep to ourselves - it is faith. □

About the Author

Father David A. Fisher is the Pastor of St. Anthony of Padua Maronite Church in Cincinnati, Ohio. He is also an Adjunct Professor in Philosophy, Central State University, Wilberforce, Ohio.



¹ The Nicene-Constantinopolitan Symbol of Faith was formulated at the Ecumenical Councils of Nicaea and First Constantinople.

² *Lumen Gentium*, 1,7

The Story of A Vocation



Bishop Shaheen, assisted by Chorbishop Badawi, ordains George ElHajj to the Order of Deacon

by Deacon George ElHajj

It is with a joyful heart that I write to announce my ordination to the Order of Deacon that took place on September 15, 2012, at Saint Sharbel Maronite Church in Warren, Michigan, by the invocation of the Holy Spirit and the laying on of hands by His Excellency Robert Shaheen, Bishop of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon, and assisted by Chorbishop Alfred Badawi, Pastor. It was in the presence of my spiritual director, my brother seminarians, my family and the Maronite community of greater Metropolitan Detroit including the parishes of Saint Maron, Saint Sharbel and Saint Rafka, and with friends from Flint and Youngstown.

In one sense this is the culmination of a journey that officially started with my entrance into seminary formation at Our Lady of Lebanon Seminary in Washington D.C., in August of 2008. In another sense, however, ordination to the diaconate marks the beginning of my lifelong public ministry in the Maronite Church.

The period of discernment leading up to now has been a long and winding road for me. Any path worth taking is going to take us places and introduce us to people entirely

unforeseen when we took the first step.

Before entering the seminary, the longing for the priesthood was pulling me to serve in the Church. In Lebanon I was an altar boy, I joined a prayer group and I studied Syriac in college, yet the commitment to ordained ministry was a step that I was scared to take.

I migrated to the United States when I was twenty-five years old, where I studied business administration and was working with my family. Throughout this period of seven years in Michigan, as my faith continued to deepen, what I wanted out of life remained constant. I wanted to be successful. I wanted to be rich. I wanted a beautiful wife and 5-7 children. Slowly, however, another quiet idea started to grow upon my consciousness, I say "grow" because the seed was in my heart since my young age. Perhaps God was calling me to something else. The more I read the lives of Saints and the more I began attending daily Divine Liturgy the more I began to have this feeling that maybe I was supposed to be a priest.

However, it would not go away. Every time I rid myself of the notion, it would come back again, stronger than before, like the persistent widow in Luke 18:1-8. I tried to convince myself that there was no way that I could be a priest since I am the only son in my family, but to no avail. Several bizarre experiences in those years made clear God's will for my life. In the first week of my arrival to Michigan, while chatting with my uncle Gaby, he said out of nowhere: "Why don't you become a priest?" He was not the first or last person to ask this question. I have heard it several times, from many people, some who were close but many who were not.

Another incident that comes to mind now involved the rather childish game of opening the Bible and randomly selecting a passage to see what God might want to tell me. It was a Sunday afternoon and I was in my bedroom. I spotted that purple Bible that my late grandfather and Godfather autographed for me on the day of my Baptism. It was on the nightstand, and I could not resist the temptation. I opened the book and my finger landed on Hebrews 7:17, where the author says: "*For it is testified: You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.*" I was in awe. I quickly closed it and placed it back on the nightstand, thinking, "Oh no, you really want me to be a priest!" The idea was gut-wrenching, and I still remember how impossible and far away it seemed to me then. But I learned an important lesson that day: Never tempt God; He may actually answer you. And chances are you won't like what he has to say!

In seminary, I have seen and grown to believe that the fingerprints of God are guiding us. The life in the seminary is like the story of the disciples on their way to Emmaus. The Lord is walking with us on that way, he is guiding us and teaching us to reach that Eucharistic table. Once we are there, he sends us out to proclaim to the world and live the Gospel. Today, while approaching the village of Emmaus, I made a deep act of invitation to the Lord to stay, and he gave me the ministry of service and proclaiming His Word through the diaconate. (Continues on page 20)

North Jackson, Ohio Assumption Pilgrimage 2012



Msgr. Anthony Spinosa, Rector, and Bishop Gregory Mansour anoint the pilgrims with the Holy Oil.

The National Shrine of Our Lady of Lebanon in North Jackson, Ohio, celebrated its 47th Annual Assumption Pilgrimage on August 13 - 15, 2012. Pilgrims came to the Shrine from parts far and near to honor the most important feast of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

The three-day celebration included liturgies of the Roman, Melkite and Maronite traditions. Even though the Pilgrimage occurred during the week, all liturgies were well attended.

The actual feast day of August 15 saw many visitors attending the four Maronite liturgies celebrated during the day. The Liturgy for the Sick is becoming a tradition of the Feast Day with capacity attendance in the Prince of Peace Chapel.

As always, the evening liturgy celebrated by Bishop Robert Shaheen and Bishop Gregory Mansour was enhanced with the choir from Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral, Brooklyn, N.Y., and with choir members from nearby parishes. The celebration concluded with the traditional candlelight procession, the singing of the *Ya Um Allah* by the Antonine Sisters and a fireworks display that lit up the sky over the tower and statue of Our Lady of Lebanon.

A sincere thanks is in order to all who helped with the preparations and who donated so generously. Thank you to the men and women of the neighboring parishes of Youngstown, Akron, and Cleveland, Ohio, and New Castle, Penn., who assisted with the hospitality of the celebration. □

Minneapolis, Minnesota MYO Retreat

by Joannie Moses, Saint Maron Church

"In Africa, I walked to her humble hut. She kissed my hand. I gave her the Eucharist. She gave me bread. Her only food. This is the first time someone gave me



Fr. Gary George addresses the MYO of St. Maron and Holy Family Church at their retreat in September.

Jesus," said Father Gary George as he addressed twenty-nine youth.

Father Gary gave an invigorating and inspiring workshop to the youth of Saint Maron Church, Minneapolis, and Holy Family Maronite Church of Saint Paul, Minnesota, on Sunday, September 16, 2012. The excited members of MYO and three young adults joined together in activities of trust and bonding. The group got to know Father Gary as he told them his life story and shared details of his health and his calling.

He led them through a day of discovery. Each participant explored his or her own burdens and gifts. They created visions of a perfect world in four group projects and learned that no world can be perfect without community.

The whole Saint Maron MYO group is the Parish's dance troop. They demonstrated their *dabke* performance routine and all others joined in to dance together before retiring for prayer in the sanctuary. In a solemn ceremony, all participants approached the altar and touched the holy bread in prayer. A fulfilling day was had by all with Father Gary's joy in knowing the Lord, eating delicious foods, meeting new friends, learning new concepts, sharing ideas, dancing, and spiritual growth. All youth, parents and staff who attended agreed that the day was well spent under the direction and motivation of Father Gary. □



Deadline for next month's issue of *The Maronite Voice* is November 25, 2012.

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

Pictures must be original. Digital pictures must be in "JPG" format and in high resolution. *The Maronite Voice* is also available online, in PDF format, at www.stmaron.org. □

Fall River, Massachusetts Youth Day



On Sunday, October 14, 2012, St. Anthony of the Desert Parish, Fall River, Mass., celebrated its third annual Youth Day event. Coordinated by Terry Galib, Rachael Shaker-Filipe and Shannon Martin, and sponsored by the Blessed Mother's Guild, this free day started with lunch at the parish center followed by a field trip to a local farm. At the farm, the children and their chaperones participated in many activities such as pumpkin painting, scarecrow creating, corn maze navigating and a fall-themed hay ride. Thank you to all involved on this successful and fun-filled day! ☐

Somerset, New Jersey Pre-Teen Camping

by Lina Stephan

This past year Saint Sharbel Church in Somerset, N.J., started the "Saint Sharbel Pre-Teen Organization," also known as SSPO. It is for children between the ages of ten and thirteen years old. The group started with twenty-eight members and grew to forty-eight this year. Our mission is:

"Love the church and be part of it- Participate in liturgies and understand our faith, while creating a safe gathering place for pre-teens to come and experience the grace and forgiveness of God; Be a family of believers. Seek to improve the well-being of people in order to continue making a difference, as inspired by the life of Jesus Christ. Strengthen our friendships and have fun - Learn more about each other, model the body of Christ in the inclusiveness of gifts of all people and with ones relationship with others. Hoping that through our activities we create opportunities of fun."

Some of the activities in 2012 were decorating church



pews for Christmas, ice skating, visiting the nearby nursing home, helping with fundraisers, visiting St. Fatima Shrine and researching saints' lives and sharing what we learned about the saints with parents and guests.

The children embraced the idea that "Together we are a team that is motivated by God and supported by each other," so Father Tony Akoury, Pastor, approved a three-day camping trip filled with fun activities and workshops. On Saturday, September 29, 2012, we started with the *saftro* prayer followed by "Year of Faith" workshop prepared and led by Mr. Sami Stephan. The workshop emphasized the importance of faith and the consequences of our actions. It was followed by a scavenger hunt, hiking, soccer and s'mores on the bon fire. On Sunday, September 30, we celebrated Liturgy, during which Fr. Tony Akoury took the time to explain step-by-step the Maronite Liturgy. The trip ended with canoeing in the nearby lake.

The SSPO members had a memorable time. Here is what some of them had to say:

- "My experience at camp taught me how to listen and respect my peers. I really enjoyed camping and would like to go another time." - Basheer Matar
- "The camping trip was really fun. I loved the area and staying with my best friends. It was a great idea. I had an awesome time and learned a lot. It was definitely a great experience that I will remember." -Mary Joe Stephan
- "I loved the camping trip! I loved roasting marshmallows, playing soccer, and especially the food. The only bummer was that it was only 3 days and I wish it could have been in the summer. I also loved the view going hiking. I would love to go back." - Rawad Sayah
- "I enjoyed camping because I learned how to play chess, made new friends, and really liked my roommates!" - Chris Hachem
- "I realized that just because there is no electronics you can still find something to do with your friends." -Rita Choukair. ☐



Uniontown, Pennsylvania Annual Summer Festival



by Dr. Mabel George Howard

Crowds of patrons enjoying a variety of ethnic foods, games, amusements, and entertainment described the bustling atmosphere at the St. George Church Festival in Uniontown, Penn. September 19, 2012, marked the 18th annual St. George Church Festival in which parishioners and community members gathered to celebrate Uniontown's Middle Eastern heritage. The St. George Ladies Guild prepared traditional Lebanese delicacies, Lebanese bread and sweets and American foods. In addition, the festival boasted a bake sale, cash prizes, basket raffles, religious gift purchases, church tours, archives display, and a "kids" carnival featuring a silent auction, face painting, bounce tent and numerous children's games. The Ladies Guild, Maronite Men's Group, Church Committee, Altar Rosary Society, and the MYO worked cooperatively to make this event a success. This collaborative effort, among others, reaffirmed the parishioners' commitment to God and to the continual growth of their parish community. Pleased with the many parish activities, Father Nadim Helou commented, "Through the grace of the Holy Spirit and the hard work and dedication of those who came before us, the St. George Maronite parish family has grown from celebrating liturgy in a small chapel in the 1920s to a thriving parish today." In tandem with Father Nadim's remarks, the flourishing St. George congregation continues to sponsor projects that interest, attract and involve all groups. The purpose is to develop and strengthen spiritual and social bonds among family, friends, and parishioners for the common good of our church and Lebanese ancestry. □

Warren, Michigan A Taste of Lebanon

by Charlotte Fortuna

St. Sharbel Maronite Church of Warren, Michigan, hosted its 5th Annual Lebanese Festival on September 7 - 9, 2012. "A Taste of Lebanon" was a success due to the outstanding participation of visitors and the very generous



St. Sharbel Dance Troupe with Chorbishop Alfred Badawi.

donations from over 150 sponsors from throughout the community.

A great deal of gratitude and appreciation goes to the Festival Committee, chaired by Mr. George Habbouche, whose members worked endless hours together with over 140 volunteers in preparation for the 2012 Festival.

Thousands of visitors who attended the three-day event enjoyed a taste of Lebanese cuisine, music, dancing, and outstanding performances by St. Sharbel's own *Dabke* Dance Troupes. A raffle of cash prizes, autographed sports memorabilia, gift certificates and jewelry, as well as a variety of fun-filled family activities were enjoyed by all!

For the first time in the history of St. Sharbel Church festivals, a portion of the proceeds was donated to a local non-profit organization, Childhelp, that provides assistance to abused and neglected children. During a 9/11 tribute "Honoring American Heroes," parishioners from various first respondent occupations, including doctors, nurses, police and firefighters and those who have served as veterans, were honored. Also acknowledged was a disabled veteran who was granted a monetary gift of assistance. The Lebanese Consul General and other local dignitaries addressed those present with encouraging words of appreciation for the service of these individuals and the presence of St. Sharbel Maronite community in the greater metropolitan Detroit community. Congratulations to Chorbishop Alfred Badawi, Pastor, and the community of St. Sharbel Maronite Church on a very successful fundraising event! □

Lincoln, Rhode Island Fall Fashion Show

The 2012 "Fall into the Holidays" Family Fashion Show was held at the West Valley Inn in West Warwick, Rhode Island, on October 12, 2012. The show was presented by the Holy Rosary Sodality of St. George Maronite Catholic Church, of Lincoln, Rhode Island. Fall fashions were provided by local retailers - Botticelli's of North Providence, Buckle of Providence, Our Place Tuxedos of North Providence, Sonya's of Cranston, and Teddy Bearskins of Wickford.

The afternoon commenced with Chairperson Kitty Pires' welcome and her introduction of St. George's Pastor, Fr.



Gianni Farhat displays Fall fashion for young people at St. George Church Fashion Show.

Edward Nedder, who began with the Invocation. He then thanked the organizers of the event, the attendees, and everyone who had generously donated the time, effort, resources and gifts to bring this family event together.

A stuffed chicken dinner was served, followed by the festivities of the evening. Models, male and female, young, and young at heart, had their makeup and hair beautifully done by Enza's Hair Studio of N. Scituate, and Total Elegance of Cranston, R.I., who generously donated their time and skills. The models paraded down the runway showing off dozens of beautiful fall and winter outfits.

The event concluded with the Sweepstakes Raffle Drawings for dozens of prizes, which included money trees, handbags, scarves, jewelry, theater tickets and gift certificates for local restaurants.

Over 200 people attended the 2012 St. George Maronite Catholic Church Fashion Show. It was a wonderful success made possible by the many parishioners and friends who always work together to support Fr. Ed and St. George in this close knit Lebanese community. □

Minneapolis, Minnesota *Touch of Lebanon Festival*

by Joseph Nahoum Moses

The Parishioners of St. Maron Church in Minneapolis, Minn., brought their Lebanese heritage to their Minneapolis community on September 22 - 23, 2012, with the Annual Touch of Lebanon Festival.

St. Maron Church has been a member of the NE Minneapolis community for 108 years and is a leader in the religious community in Minneapolis.

"It is an honor and privilege to bring our Maronite tradition and Phoenician roots to our NE Minneapolis community and to remind them that the Middle East is not all chaos and instability," said Monsignor Sharbel Maroun, the Parish's Pastor. "We have a loving relationship with the community and sharing our food, music, dance and culture with them through the festival only strengthens that bond."



Youth Dance Troupe of Saint Maron Church.

Live music was provided by John Khoury Ensemble and the Youth *Dabke* group performed live periodically throughout the weekend.

"It was humbling to work in the kitchen all week preparing food with the women," said Carla Bedros, Festival Chairperson. "And it was even more rewarding to see all the volunteers come together and share the event with the hundreds of people that attended!"

Besides food, music and dancing, attendees got to browse and shop in the Festival Gift Shop and take tours of the Church to learn more about the Maronite Church and view the Church building. □

Houston, Texas *Welcoming a New Friend*

by Tommy L. Cordova, MRE

On Sunday, October 21, 2012, the clergy and parishioners of Our Lady of the Cedars, Houston, Texas, welcomed Auxiliary Bishop George Sheltz to their parish community. This was Bishop Sheltz's first visit to Our Lady of the Cedars and the first time to co-celebrate the Maronite Liturgy. He was ordained as the Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston on May 2, 2012.

In his homily Bishop Sheltz spoke of the Year of Faith and its importance to Catholics in the United States and around the world. The Bishop told the congregation of the challenge the Church has to re-evangelize and re-catechize each and every Catholic, especially Catholics who are no longer practicing their faith. He also spoke of attending a Maronite Liturgy at Annunciation Parish in downtown Houston during the 1950s and how he had to sneak into the church and watch the Divine Liturgy from one of the side chapels located inside the church.

At the end of the Liturgy, Bishop Sheltz was presented with a plaque commemorating his visit to the parish and with greeting cards from the students in the CCE program. A luncheon reception was held in the parish hall for Bishop Sheltz. □



Journey to Lebanon Maronite Pilgrimage 2012 with Pope Benedict XVI

by Patricia Marie McKee

Never having traveled to the Middle East, I suddenly found myself traveling to a distant faraway land with a Maronite priest, whom I had not met. While visiting a friend in Portland, Oregon, I spied a flyer about a pilgrimage to Lebanon with Pope Benedict XVI. I inquired about the trip and, to my surprise, Msgr. Sharbel Maroun from Minneapolis, Minnesota, returned my call. Soon I had room accommodations and a flight to Beirut.

My family thought I was out of my mind. But my son, Father Shane McKee, thought it would be a wonderful experience and that is truly what it was. Arriving in Beirut, we were met with many smiling faces, all willing to help get us on our way to *Jounieh*. Driving through the streets of Beirut in a taxi during a busy rush hour was a little crazy to say the least. There were banners everywhere announcing the visit of the Pope, and there seemed to be military guards on every street corner. Still I was not afraid, as only a sense of anticipation awakened my senses as to what was about to take place during these nine days in Lebanon.

The highlight of the trip was seeing Pope Benedict XVI, experiencing the Mass with hundreds of thousands of others from the various regions of Lebanon. I was proud to be an American, to be there, to witness with these same people, to shout out loud our joy as we shared our religious heritage as Christians.

After that awesome experience we made everyday journeys into the hills and valleys of Lebanon from the breathtaking expanses of the Mediterranean Sea to the mountain region (North Lebanon) and from there into the *Qadisha* and the *Qannoubine* Valley (which in Aramaic means the Sacred or Holy Valley). This is a valley quite unlike any other in Lebanon. It had sheltered holy men, the hermits who sought solitude in the caves carved out of the mountain rock. This majestic valley was the refuge of Maronites for centuries, and even today I can hear the call to enter into a certain sense of peace, to remain quiet and hear the whispering of those Lebanese ancestors.

The magnificent Shrines of St. Sharbel, St. Rafka, St. Nimatullah, Blessed Estephan Nehme and Blessed Jacob Haddad brought to mind a new awakening of the heritage of my son-in-law, Michael Neme. I wanted to bring home a little piece of Lebanon for him, whose grandparents were Joseph and Rose Neme, descendants of Lebanon, so I brought home relics and memories of the past and present that he might share with his children. And it would have been nice to have them taste the fresh lemonade poured for us at San Stephano Resort [*Batroun*, North Lebanon]. This refreshing drink lingers on my palate reminding me that this coastal city of *Batroun* is famous for its many citrus groves and the lemonade.

Then there were those majestic tall Lebanon Cedars. A small forest boasts of what once was a forest of plenty. Solomon in all his splendor sought out these grand cedars to build the First Temple in Jerusalem. I brought home a little

remembrance and soon I hope to plant a small Lebanon cedar on our property that is mostly limestone like the rock found in Lebanon. "I will put in the wilderness the cedar, the acacia, the myrtle, and the olive" (Isaiah 41:19). All these trees we have planted, and now we will have the Lebanon Cedar. How grand is that!

Along our journey I encountered a nomad goat herder and humbly he let me take his picture. A Muslim family invited me to join their family picture and then gave me a big hug. A *sheik* and his family also embraced me and his daughter took a picture. I shook hands with priests and bishops and was very welcomed as the mother of a priest. All these encounters make me think that this is a people who are welcoming, kind, and respectful. Strangers in a strange land, but somehow this is not what I experienced. No longer are these little ones strangers, but friends in a familiar place.

If I close my eyes I can imagine a time long ago when the Lebanese people inhabited villages, very much like those today. As I walk along the seashore I see fishermen casting out their nets for the day's catch. I might even pick up a sea shell. As I look toward the hills, I can see smoke rising from what might be a little shop that makes bread, and the aroma of fresh baked bread fills me. I am now hungry and imagine all the abundant fruit and the generous array of fresh vegetables. Someone is roasting lamb. A feast is being prepared. So I open my eyes and truly a feast has been prepared for us. I have never experienced such a table of plenty. Then there is the *arak*. My first taste was wonderful! I look at Father Jean Younes and see the glint in his eye. "This is good," I hear him say. And then I can almost hear God saying, "This is truly good." We celebrated our last meal high on a hilltop in the home of *Abouna* Sharbel Maroun with his large Lebanese family and friends and with Father Jean Younes and his wonderful family. From the balcony the Mediterranean sea was inviting and the thousands of night lights beamed brightly. A moment cannot be forgotten, a moment to remember forever.

The memory of Lebanon will forever be etched into my being. The wonderful, happy, grateful people will remind me of all that they have endured throughout the centuries. Like those famous Lebanon Cedars of God, these people stand firm in their faith and give testimony to all of us that God is all good. For me this land, this Lebanon of the East, is likened to the Garden of Eden. And from her shrine in *Harrisa* overlooking the bay of *Jounieh*, Our Lady of Lebanon watches over all her children. □

White Plains, New York Concern For Immigrants, Middle East Christians Focus Of Catholic Dialogue With Oriental Orthodox

Don Clemmer
USCCB Department of Communications

Catholics and Oriental Orthodox church leaders agreed that they would benefit from a better exchange of information regarding the programs available for new immigrant arrivals in the United States. The group of twenty participants, representing Roman Catholics and five Oriental

Orthodox churches were gathered for the Oriental Orthodox-Roman Catholic Consultation, October 15-16, at the Divine Compassion Spirituality Center in White Plains, New York.

As part of its mission to foster Christian unity, the Secretariat for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) meets annually with members of the Oriental Orthodox churches. Along with ministering to immigrant communities, the dialogue also discussed the plight of Christians in the Middle East.

Bishop Howard J. Hubbard of Albany, New York, and Metropolitan Mor Cyril Aphrem Karim of the Eastern Archdiocese of the Syriac Orthodox Church of Antioch (Oriental Orthodox) co-chaired the dialogue. This was the Metropolitan's first meeting since his appointment as new co-chairman of the dialogue. He succeeds Very Reverend Chorbishop John Meno, also of the Syriac Orthodox Church, who had served as Oriental Orthodox co-chairman since 1985 and recently retired from active ministry. The members expressed their gratitude to Father Meno for his many years of faithful service to this dialogue.

Presenters at the dialogue were Maronite Catholic Bishop Gregory Mansour of Brooklyn; Allison Posner, Director of Advocacy for the Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc. (CLINIC); Julianne Barsoum Jabaly of the Syriac Orthodox Church; and Michael Guglielmo, Executive Director of the Armenian Eastern Diocese.

On Monday evening the members traveled to St. Nersess Armenian Seminary in New Rochelle, New York. Together they celebrated Armenian Vespers in the seminary chapel and attended a dinner hosted by Father Daniel Findikyan, the rector. Later in the evening the members had a wide-ranging discussion of major events in the lives of their churches, both in the United States and overseas.

On Tuesday morning the dialogue examined the situation of Christians in the Middle East. Bishop Mansour presented the recent Apostolic Exhortation of Pope Benedict XVI, *Ecclesia in Medio Oriente*. He discussed the structure and functioning of the Synod of Bishops, and what the document had to say about the Christian presence in that part of the world. The members are deeply worried about the future of Christian communities in the region.

At last year's October meeting, the members examined the history of this dialogue and the 2010 statement of the North American Orthodox-Catholic Theological Consultation, entitled "Steps Towards a Reunited Church: A Sketch of an Orthodox-Catholic Vision For the Future" (www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/dialogue-with-others/ecumenical/orthodox/steps-towards-reunited-church.cfm). It is scheduled to meet again in October 2013.

The Oriental Orthodox-Roman Catholic Consultation was established in 1978, and is sponsored jointly by the USCCB Committee for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs and the Standing Conference of Oriental Orthodox Churches America www.scooch.org/. . . (SCOOCH), which includes representatives from the Armenian (Catholicosate of Etchmiadzin), Coptic, Ethiopian, and Syriac Orthodox Churches.

More information on the U.S. bishops' ongoing dialogue with the Oriental Orthodox is available online: www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/dialogue-with-others/ecumenical/oriental-orthodox/. □

The Council at Fifty: *Religious Liberty Major Worldwide Issue for Church Today*

by Sr. Mary Ann Walsh
USCCB, Director of Media Relations

“The Vatican Council declares that the human person has a right to religious freedom.” This is the opening sentence of Chapter I of *Dignitatis Humanae* (Of Human Dignity), the Declaration on Religious Liberty, approved in 1965 by the bishops at the Second Vatican Council.

The first U.S. bishop – John Carroll, a cousin of Charles Carroll who signed the Declaration of Independence, favored religious liberty. A century later, Cardinal James Gibbons of Baltimore [Maryland] advocated religious liberty in a landmark sermon he gave in Rome. Jesuit Father John Courtney Murray, who is one of the few Catholic theologians to appear on the cover of Time magazine, wrote a series of articles prior to the Council which explored religious liberty systematically and deeply.

The Declaration on Religious Liberty began with the work of Cardinal Augustin Bea, S.J. and his Secretariat for Christian Unity. Father Murray wrote two of its twelve drafts. Murray had devoted his life to showing the relationship of Catholic philosophy and theology to American thinking on religious freedom. His work and that of French theologians undergird the Declaration.

In the Declaration the Council Fathers

- Held that the right to religious freedom “is based on the very dignity of the human person as known through the revealed Word of God and by reason itself.” [2]
- Declared that persons, “... are both impelled by their nature and bound by a moral obligation to seek the truth, especially religious truth.” [2]
- Contended that “religious freedom should be given the fullest possible recognition and should not be curtailed except when and in so far as necessary.” [7]
- Acknowledged that “Although in the life of the people of God in its pilgrimage through the vicissitudes of human history there has at times appeared a form of behavior which was hardly in keeping with the spirit of the Gospel and was even opposed to it, it has always remained the teaching of the Church that no one is to be coerced into believing.” [12]
- Noted that “The Church also claims freedom for herself as a society of men with the right to live in civil society in accordance with the demands of the Christian faith.” [13].

Dignitatis Humanae was approved overwhelmingly at the final session of the Council. Its approval was affected by the support of religious liberty by bishops from Communist Eastern Europe as well as U.S. bishops.

The document is singular in its importance and has had a sustained impact. Who can forget the robust calls for religious liberty by Pope John Paul II in the face of dictators during his travels? Religious liberty has become a cornerstone of Catholic social ethics and action throughout

the world.

The Declaration has sustained the Catholic pilgrimage toward full communion with our Protestant, Orthodox and Anglican sisters and brothers. As Cardinal Bea and other Council Fathers knew, without Catholic support for religious liberty, any attempts at ecumenical dialogue would ring hollow.

Dignitatis Humanae has enabled Catholic intellectuals to continue to probe the reasons for, the implications of and the limits to religious liberty. The work of John Courtney Murray is still being discussed four decades after his death.

The Declaration undergirds current efforts by Catholic bishops in the United States to challenge moves in various quarters to limit or redefine U.S. religious liberty and demands support for a robust definition of religious liberty. How interesting that the Catholic Church is now the prime promoter of religious liberty on the planet! □

Official Summary of the Final Message of the Synod of Bishops

Here is the translation of the summary released by the Holy See Press Office of the Final Message For the People of God of the Synod of Bishops on the New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith.

At the beginning of the document, the bishops recalled the evangelical passage from John which tells about the encounter of Jesus with the Samaritan woman at the well: this is the image of contemporary man with an empty vessel, who is thirsting and is nostalgic for God, and to whom the Church must turn to make the Lord present to him. And just like the Samaritan woman, who encounters Jesus, he can but become a witness of the proclamation of salvation and hope of the Gospel.

Looking specifically at the context of new evangelization, the Synod therefore reminds of the necessity to revive faith, which risks being made obscure in the context of today's cultures, also faced with the weakening of the faith by many baptized persons. The encounter with the Lord, which reveals God as love, can only come about in the Church, as the form of receptive community and experience of communion; from this, then, Christians become its witnesses also in other places. However, the Church reasserts that to evangelize one must be evangelized first of all, and sends out a plea - starting with herself - for conversion, because the weaknesses of Jesus' disciples weigh upon the credibility of the mission. Conscious of the fact that the Lord is the guide of history and therefore that evil will not have the last word, the bishops invite the Christians to overcome fear with faith and to look at the world with serene courage because, while full of contradictions and challenges, this is still the world God loves. Therefore no pessimism: globalization, secularization and the new scenarios of society, migration, even with the difficulties and suffering they entail, they must be seen as opportunities for evangelization. Because this is not a question of finding new strategies as if the Gospel was to be spread like a market product, but rediscovering the ways in which individuals come close to Jesus.

The Message looks at the family as the natural place for evangelization and reasserts that it should be supported by the

Church, by politics and by society. Within the family, the special role of women is underlined and there is a reminder about the painful situation of divorced and remarried persons: while reconfirming the discipline with regards to access to the sacraments, it is reasserted that they are in no way abandoned by the Lord and that the Church is the welcoming house for all. The Message also mentions consecrated life, witness of the ultra-earthly sense of human existence, and the parishes as centers for evangelization; it recalls the importance of permanent formation for priests and religious men and women and invites the laity (movements and new ecclesial realities) to evangelize, remaining in communion with the Church. New evangelization finds a welcome cooperation with the other Churches and ecclesial communities, they too moved by the same spirit of proclamation of the Gospel. Special attention is focused on the young persons in a perspective of listening and dialogue to redeem and not mortify their enthusiasm.

Then, the Message looks at dialogue, seen in many ways: with culture, which needs a new alliance between faith and reason; with education; with science which, when it doesn't close man in materialism it becomes an ally for the humanization of life; with art; with the world of economy and work; with the ill and the suffering; with politics, where an uninterested and transparent involvement towards the common good is asked for; with other religions. In particular, the Synod emphasizes that interreligious dialogue contributes to peace, refutes fundamentalism and denounces any violence against believers. The Message recalls the possibilities offered by the Year of the Faith, by the memory of Vatican Council II and by the Catechism of the Catholic Church. Finally, it indicates two expressions of a life of faith, which are especially meaningful for new evangelization: contemplation, where silence allows for the better reception of the Word of God, and service to the poor, in the view of recognizing Christ in their faces.

In the last part, the Message looks at the Church in the various regions of the world and addresses a word of encouragement for the proclamation of the Gospel to each of them: to the Eastern Churches wishing to be able to practice faith in conditions of peace and religious freedom; to the African Church asking for develop evangelization in the encounter of ancient and new cultures, calling then upon the governments to cease the conflicts and violence. The Christians of North America, who live in a culture with many expressions distant from the Gospel, must look towards conversion, to being open to welcoming immigrants and refugees. Latin America is invited to live the permanent mission to face today's challenges such as poverty, violence, even the new conditions of religious pluralism. The Church in Asia, even while being a small minority, often placed at the edges of society and persecuted, is encouraged and exhorted to the steadfastness of faith. Europe, marked by an even aggressive secularization and wounded by past regimes, has nevertheless created a humanistic culture capable of giving a face to the dignity of man and to the building of the common good; today's difficulties therefore must not dishearten the European Christians, but must be perceived as a challenge. Oceania is asked to feel once again the involvement of preaching the Gospel. Finally, the Message closes with trust in Mary, the Star of New Evangelization. □

Zenit.org, October 27, 2012



Tampa, Florida Convention Preparations Kick Off



Dr. Dany Sayad, Convention Chairman, carries NAM banner into St. Peter and Paul Church.

by Lina Sfeir

On the weekend of July 4 - 7, 2013, Saints Peter and Paul Maronite Church in Tampa, Florida, will be hosting the 50th anniversary of the NAM convention. With joy and happiness we were all anxious to meet up with the NAM board members coming from all over the country.

In preparation for the convention, meetings were held over the weekend of October 12 - 13, 2012. It all started Friday with a board meeting at the hotel, after which a buffet was served at the Tampa Palms Community Club, prepared by members of Sts. Peter and Paul Convention Committee.

During this enlightening evening, members were introduced with their roles and responsibilities for the 2013 event. Moreover, we appreciated all the ideas and experiences from prior event holders coming from different regions.

After a long meeting on Saturday, participants gathered at Byblos Café for a dinner on Saturday evening. That even helped bringing ideas closer and gave us motivation to achieve a successful and a special convention.

The highlight of the weekend came during the Sunday morning Liturgy, when all the NAM Board members

processed behind Dr. Dany Sayad, Chairman, holding the NAM banner, and Father Peter celebrated the Divine Liturgy.

The Board was pleased and impressed with the community's ability and determination to make the dream come true for a special 50th NAM anniversary.

For more information about the NAM Convention 2013, and all of NAM's programs and events, please visit www.namnews.org or call (914) 964-3070 or by email at nam@namnews.org. For more information from the host parish, call (813) 886-7413 or by email at peterpaultampa@gmail.com. □

Sacramento, California Walk for Peace



by Carolyn Aboubechara

On October 20, 2012, Bishop Jaime Soto with the parishioners of Our Lady of the Rosary and many friends of the parish from the Middle East and from the city of Sacramento, Calif., walked for peace in the whole world and especially in the Middle East.

Bishop Soto and Fr. Nabil Mouannes started the Walk for Peace from St. John the Evangelist Church in Carmichael by praying the Act of Faith with the people that assembled for the walk. Fr. Thomas Bland joined Bishop Soto and Fr. Mouannes in giving a blessing at the start of the walk. Following the blessing the attendees walked out to the streets in Carmichael holding a big rosary, banners, a cross, a statue of Our Lady of Fatima, picture of the Virgin Mary and a big staff which had written upon it in English, Spanish, Arabic, Hebrew, Japanese, Russian, Sign Language, and Braille, "Peace on Earth." This big staff was offered by the parish of the Holy Savior. During the walk, Bishop Soto led everyone in praying the Rosary.

Bishop Soto with Fr. Mouannes promised the walkers that next year again in this beautiful capital of California, we will gather to walk and pray to bring the power of peace to our land, to our hearts, and to the whole world. □

Brooklyn, New York Year of Faith Retreat



Members of Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral at the Graymoor Retreat Center. Photo by Marleine Aflak Safi.

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Following the first session, Brother David, CFR, explained the Eucharistic Healing Service. The ladies were invited to come up to Jesus when the priest initiated the service, hold the humeral veil and pour out their pain, worries and struggles to the Lord, who is waiting to help us and heal us. It was a cathartic event.

Subsequent discussions touched on "relativism," noting that the truth is true regardless of our point of view. Prayer and its meaning was another topic. It is a relationship with God that fulfills us. Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, the Rosary and the Divine Liturgy concluded the retreat. Certainly it was a perfect environment to remove ourselves from the bustle of everyday struggles to renew our relationship with God. □

Year of Faith

Continued from page 1

Dear brothers and sisters, only true, sincere, and reasonable faith can save and guide us on the right path. Our marriages, our families, our engagement with society, our personal well being and happiness all need this faith in God.

It is my sincere hope that each one of us will find a way to renew our faith, rekindle its flame, water its seeds, planted so long ago by our ancestors, love and live this faith vibrantly within our Maronite Church with all the love of our hearts.

With prayerful best wishes, I remain,

Sincerely yours in Christ,
+ Gregory John Mansour
Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn

The Story of A Vocation

Continued from page 11

In this last year of seminary formation in Washington D.C., along with my bishop, I look forward to the blessed days of July 3 - 7, 2013, where, God willing, I will be ordained to the priesthood during the golden jubilee of the National Apostolate of Maronites in Tampa, Florida. This Maronite convention marks a significant milestone in the life of our Maronite Church in the United States, since we celebrate also the fifty years of priesthood of Bishop Shaheen, who is the first priest alumnus of Our Lady of Lebanon Seminary. This ordination, as His Excellency Bishop Gregory Mansour expressed it, "will complete the circle of life of Bishop Shaheen."

I give thanks to God for the part you - the readers of The Maronite Voice - have played in my life, especially for your encouragement, prayers and confidence. If I have learned one thing over the course of my life it is that we are all in this together. I pray that our path will continue always towards Emmaus, and back to the Eternal Jerusalem. □