

The Maronite Voice

A Publication of the Maronite Eparchies in the USA



Volume VIII

Issue No. IX

October 2012

After the Mass and the Divine Office, The Rosary is Common Prayer of Most Catholics Throughout the World

Dear friends,

For many years, the month of October has been known as the month of the Holy Rosary of the Blessed Virgin Mary. After the Mass and the Divine Office, the Rosary is the most common prayer of most Catholics throughout the world.

In the Christian East, the Maronites were the first to adopt the use of the Holy Rosary, and it is the most popular prayer of the laity and even the clergy. The rosary is recited in the monasteries and convents each day, and it is well known by Maronites from a very early age.

In many places, families gather around their home shrine of the Blessed Virgin Mary and recite together this most beautiful prayer. It is often followed by the well-known Hymn of the Virgin Mary "Ya-Om-Allah."

The rosary is prayed in times of happiness and joy, and it is also the prayer that gives comfort to so many when times are difficult or when a loved one passes to eternal life.

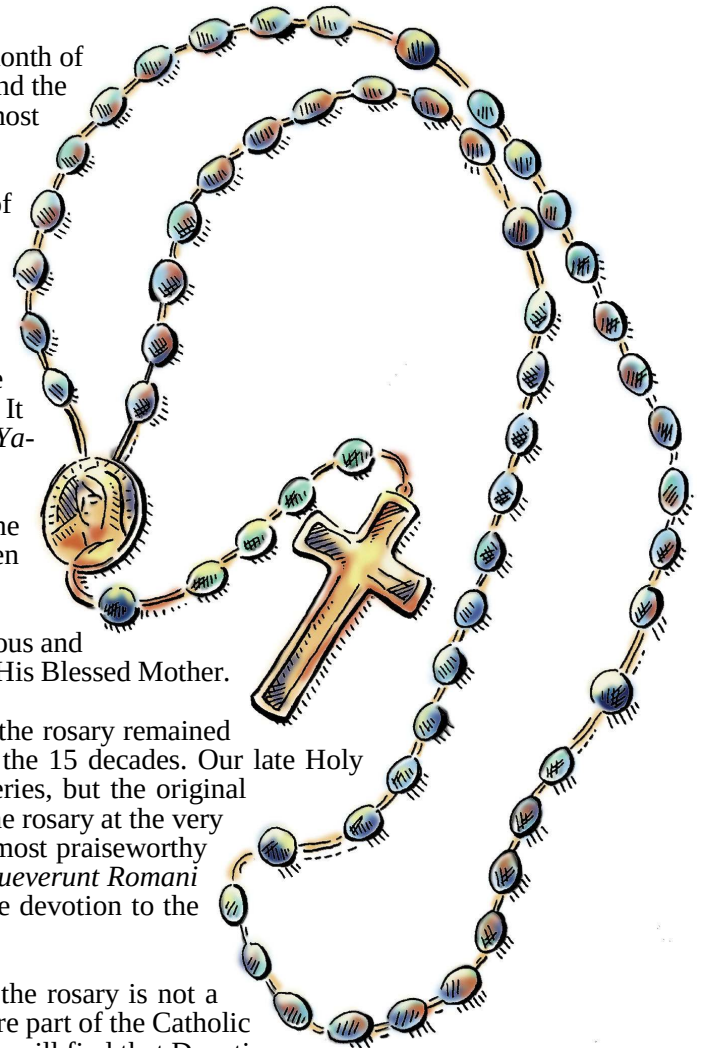
The Mysteries of the Rosary known as the Glorious, Joyful, Luminous and Sorrowful are an excellent way to meditate on the life of Jesus and His Blessed Mother.

From the sixteenth to the early twentieth century, the structure of the rosary remained essentially unchanged. There were 15 mysteries, one for each of the 15 decades. Our late Holy Father, Blessed John Paul II proposed the new [Luminous] mysteries, but the original mysteries are still most popular. The Blessed John Paul II placed the rosary at the very center of Christian spirituality and called it among the finest and most praiseworthy traditions of Christian contemplation. In 1569 the Papal Bull *Consueverunt Romani Pontifices* by the Dominican Pope Pius V officially established the devotion to the rosary in the Catholic Church.

Dear Brothers and Sisters, there may be some who tell you that the rosary is not a Maronite Devotion. They may forget that we are Catholic and we are part of the Catholic Church headed by our Holy Father the Pope. If we listen to him, we will find that Devotion to the Blessed Mother, the Rosary, is a source of strength and salvation.

Please, pray the Rosary daily and you will find much satisfaction and peace in your lives. □

+ Bishop Robert J. Shaheen
Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon



Schedule of Bishop Robert Shaheen

October 4 - 5, 2012

Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon Convocation - Preparation Committee.

October 6, 2012

Day of Recollection, Saint Louis, Mo.

October 10, 2012

Knights of Columbus, Warren, Mich.

October 13, 2012

Reception, Saint Louis, Mo.

October 19, 2012

Stewardship Council meeting, Saint Louis, Mo.

October 20 - 21, 2012

Dedication of Saint John Maron Church, Anaheim, Calif.

October 26, 2012

Slay/Lemon Wedding, St. Raymond Cathedral, Saint Louis, Mo.

October 29 - November 3, 2012

Private Retreat

November 12 -15, 2012

USCCB Fall Meeting, Baltimore, Md. ☐

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 \$20.00 per year. Advertising rates are available upon request.

Publishers

- Most Reverend Bishop Robert Joseph Shaheen
- Most Reverend Bishop Gregory John Mansour

Editor Msgr. George M. Sebaali

Consultor Fr. Abdallah Zaidan, M.L.M.

Editing and proofreading

Mary Shaia

Anne-Marie Condlin

Printed in Richmond, Virginia.

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

Matthew Dec, the father of Fr. Allan Dec of Most Holy Trinity Monastery in Petersham, Mass., passed away on August 18, 2012. Mr. Dec is predeceased by his wife Helen. In addition to Fr. Allan, he leaves his sister, Teresa Van Seters.

The Funeral Liturgy was celebrated at Saint John Kanty Church, in Clifton, New Jersey. Condolences may be sent to: Father Allan Dec, Most Holy Trinity Monastery, 67 Dugway Road, Petersham, MA 01366.

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 Fr. Allan and his family.

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

Albert G. Albert, Sr., a lifelong parishioner of Saint Anthony and Saint George Church in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, passed away on August 28, 2012. Mr. Albert, was predeceased in death by his brother Edward and his sister Lavonne, and is survived by his wife, Barbara, son, Albert, Jr., and daughters, Kimberly Boackle and Barbara Cuddy, four grandchildren, one brother, three sisters and several nieces and nephews. Mr. Albert's life revolved around his love for his family and in his dedicated involvement and generous support of the Maronite Church and its organizations. Condolences may be sent to Mrs. Barbara Albert, 236 South Franklin Street, Wilkes-Barre, PA 18701.

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 Mr. Albert's family.

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

Pope Benedict Arrives in Lebanon As a Friend of All the Inhabitants of the Middle East

Begins Historical 3-Day Visit to the Middle East

Shortly before 2 p.m. local time on September 14, 2012, Pope Benedict XVI landed at Rafik Hariri International Airport in Beirut at the start of his three-day visit to Lebanon. The Holy Father was greeted by Lebanese President Michel Sleiman, His Beatitude Bechara Peter Rai, Patriarch of Antioch of the Maronites, Nabih Berri, Speaker of the Lebanese Parliament, and Nagib Miqati, Prime Minister of Lebanon along with other members of the government administration and parliament.

Pronouncing his first words on Lebanese soil, the Pope recalled how, during President Sleiman's visit to the Vatican in February 2011, a ceremony had taken place to bless a great statue of St. Maron which stands in a niche on the outside wall of the Vatican Basilica. The presence of that statue, Pope Benedict said, "is a constant reminder of Lebanon in the very place where the Apostle Peter was laid to rest. It witnesses to a long spiritual heritage, confirming the Lebanese people's veneration for the first of the Apostles and for his successors." The Holy Father also expressed his satisfaction at the excellent relations that have always existed between Lebanon and the Holy See, and underlined the ecclesial importance of one of the reasons for his trip, "the signature and the consigning of the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation of the Special Assembly for the Middle East of the Synod of Bishops, *'Ecclesia in Medio Oriente'*."

He then went on to thank the Catholic patriarchs for their presence, particularly Patriarch Nasrallah Peter Cardinal Sfeir and his successor, Patriarch Bechara Peter Rai. He also greeted Lebanese bishops and, through them, "all the Christians of the Middle East." The Exhortation, he explained, is "addressed to everyone" and "is intended as a roadmap for the years to come. During these days I am also pleased to be able to meet many representatives from the Catholic communities of your country, so as to celebrate and pray together. Their presence, commitment and witness are a valued contribution and are highly appreciated in the daily life of all the inhabitants of your beloved country." The Pope also expressed his warm greetings to the Orthodox patriarchs and bishops who had come to welcome him, as well as representatives of the other religious communities in Lebanon.

"Your presence," he said, "shows the esteem and the cooperation which, in mutual respect, you wish to promote among everyone. I thank you for your efforts and I am certain that you will continue to seek out the paths of unity and concord. I cannot forget the sad and painful events which have affected your beautiful country along the years. The successful way the Lebanese all live together surely demonstrates to the whole Middle East and to the rest of the world that, within a nation, there can exist cooperation between the various Churches, all members of the one Catholic Church in a fraternal spirit of communion with other Christians, and at the same time coexistence and respectful dialogue between Christians and their brethren of other religions. Like me, you know that this equilibrium, which is



President Michel Sleiman welcomes His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI at Beirut's International Airport. (Photo is courtesy of bkerke.org.lb).

presented everywhere as an example, is extremely delicate. Sometimes it seems about to snap like a bow which is overstretched or submitted to pressures which are too often partisan, even selfish, contrary and extraneous to Lebanese harmony and gentleness. This is where real moderation and great wisdom are tested. And reason must overcome one-sided passion in order to promote the greater good of all."

"I have also come to say how important the presence of God is in the life of everyone and how the manner of coexistence, this conviviality to which your country wishes to bear witness, will run deep only if it is founded upon a welcoming regard for the other and upon an attitude of benevolence, and if it is rooted in God who wishes all men to be brothers. The celebrated Lebanese equilibrium which wishes to continue to be a reality, will continue through the goodwill and commitment of all Lebanese. Only then will it serve as a model to the inhabitants of the whole region and of the entire world. This is not just a human task, but a gift of God which should be sought with insistence, preserved at all costs, and consolidated with determination."

"I have come to Lebanon as a pilgrim of peace, as a friend of God and as a friend of men. ... Looking beyond your country, I also come symbolically to all the countries of the Middle East as a pilgrim of peace, as a friend of God and as a friend of all the inhabitants of all the countries of the region, whatever their origins and beliefs. ... Your joys and

sorrows are constantly present in the Pope's prayers and I ask God to accompany you and to comfort you. Let me assure you that I pray especially for the many people who suffer in this region. The statue of St. Maron reminds me of what you live and endure." Following the welcome ceremony the Pope traveled to the Apostolic Nunciature in Harissa. □

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Christians of the Middle East! How Can We Fail to Praise God for Your Courage and Faith?



Pope Benedict XVI signs the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation.

The evening of September 14, 2012, Pope Benedict XVI signed the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation of the Special Assembly for the Middle East of the Synod of Bishops, "Ecclesia in Medio Oriente" in the Greek-Melkite Basilica of St. Paul in Harissa, Lebanon. The basilica forms part of a complex which includes a major seminary and a "house for writers" who study the sacred texts and translate documents of the Magisterium into Arabic. Since 1909 it has also been the headquarters of the Missionaries of St. Paul.

The Holy Father was received by His Beatitude Gregorios III Laham, Patriarch of Antioch of the Greek-Melkites. Following the entrance chant in the Byzantine rite, the Pope paused to venerate the icons conserved inside the basilica. Archbishop Nikola Eterovic, secretary general of the Synod of Bishops, then pronounced some words after which the ceremony continued with the initial chants in the Maronite rite.

Following the readings Pope Benedict XVI delivered greetings to the patriarchs and a group of Oriental and Latin bishops, to Orthodox, Muslim and Druze delegations, as well as to representatives of the world of culture and civil society, and the Greek-Melkite community.

"The happy coexistence of Islam and Christianity, two religions that have helped to shape great cultures," he said, "is what makes for the originality of social, political and religious life in Lebanon. One can only rejoice in this

circumstance, which must absolutely be encouraged. I entrust this wish to the religious leaders of your country".

"Providentially, this event takes place on the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, a celebration originating in the East in 335, following the dedication of the Basilica of the Resurrection built over Golgotha and our Lord's tomb by the Emperor Constantine the Great, whom you venerate as saint. A month from now we will celebrate the seventeen-hundredth anniversary of the appearance to Constantine of the 'Chi-Rho,' radiant in the symbolic night of his unbelief and accompanied by the words: 'In this sign you will conquer!'"

"There is an inseparable bond between the cross and the resurrection which Christians must never forget. Without this bond, to exalt the cross would mean to justify suffering and death, seeing them merely as our inevitable fate. For Christians, to exalt the cross means to be united to the totality of God's unconditional love for mankind. It means making an act of faith! To exalt the cross, against the backdrop of the resurrection, means to desire to experience and to show the totality of this love. It means making an act of love! To exalt the cross means to be a committed herald of fraternal and ecclesial communion, the source of authentic Christian witness. It means making an act of hope!

"In examining the present situation of the Church in the Middle East, the Synod Fathers reflected on the joys and struggles, the fears and hopes of Christ's disciples in these lands. In this way, the entire Church was able to hear the troubled cry and see the desperate faces of many men and women who experience grave human and material difficulties, who live amid powerful tensions in fear and uncertainty, who desire to follow Christ - the One Who gives meaning to their existence - yet often find themselves prevented from doing so."

"At the same time, the Church was able to admire all that is beautiful and noble in the Churches in these lands. How can we fail to thank God at every moment for all of you, dear Christians of the Middle East! How can we fail to praise Him for your courage and faith? How can we fail to thank Him for the flame of His infinite love which you continue to keep alive and burning in these places which were the first to welcome His incarnate Son? How can we fail to praise and thank Him for your efforts to build ecclesial and fraternal communion, and for the human solidarity which you constantly show to all God's children?

"*Ecclesia in Medio Oriente* makes it possible to rethink the present in order to look to the future with the eyes of Christ. By its biblical and pastoral orientation, its invitation to deeper spiritual and ecclesiological reflection, its call for liturgical and catechetical renewal, and its summons to dialogue, the Exhortation points out a path for rediscovering what is essential: being a follower of Christ even in difficult and sometimes painful situations which may lead to the temptation to ignore or to forget the exaltation of the cross. It is here and now that we are called to celebrate the victory of love over hate, forgiveness over revenge, service over domination, humility over pride, and unity over division. In the light of today's Feast, and in view of a fruitful application of the Exhortation, I urge all of you to fear not, to stand firm in truth and in purity of faith. This is the language of the cross, exalted and glorious ... capable of changing our sufferings into a declaration of love for God and mercy for



Patriarch Nassrallah Peter Cardinal Sfeir (left), Patriarch Bechara Peter Rai and Pope Benedict XVI.

Summary of *Ecclesia in Medio Oriente*

Here is a Vatican summary of the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation that Pope Benedict XVI presented on Sunday, September 16, 2012, after Mass in downtown Beirut. The document, *Ecclesia in Medio Oriente*, takes up the conclusions from the October 2010 synod of bishops on the Middle East.

The Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Medio Oriente* is the document elaborated by Pope Benedict XVI based on the forty-four final propositions of the special Synod for the Middle East, which was held in Vatican City October 10 - 26, 2010, on the theme: "The Catholic Church in the Middle East: Communion and Witness. 'The company of those who believed were of one heart and soul.'" The text is subdivided into three parts, plus an introduction and a conclusion.

Introduction

The Exhortation invites the Catholic Church in the Middle East to revive communion within the Church, looking to the "native faithful" who belong to the Eastern Catholic Churches "sui iuris," and opening up to dialogue with Jews and Muslims. This is a communion, a unity to be reached within the context of geographical, religious, cultural and socio-political diversity in the Middle East. Benedict XVI renews his call to conserve and promote the rites of the Eastern Churches, heritage of all Christ's Church.

Part One

The Context

Firstly, the Pope exhorts us not to forget the Christians who live in the Middle East and who bring a "noble and authentic" contribution to the construction of the Body of Christ. Then, in describing the situation of the region and the peoples who live there, Benedict XVI dramatically emphasises the deaths, the victims of "human blindness," fear and humiliation. Without entering into detail, the Exhortation briefly recalls that the position of the Holy See on the various conflicts in the region and on the status of Jerusalem and the Holy Places is well known. Finally, a call is made for conversion to peace - understood not only as the simple absence of conflict, but rather as interior peace and linked to justice - overriding all distinctions of race, sex and class, and to practice forgiveness in the realms of both private and community life.

The Christian and Ecumenical life

This chapter is a call in favor of ecumenical unity, which "does not mean uniformity of tradition and celebrations." In a difficult, unstable political context inclined towards violence, such as the Middle East, in fact, the Church has developed in a truly multi-form fashion, encompassing Churches of ancient tradition and more recent ecclesiastical communities. It is a form of mosaic which requires significant effort in the reinforcement of Christian witness. In line with Vatican Council II the Pope encourages spiritual

our neighbor, ... of transforming those who suffer because of their faith and identity into vessels of clay ready to be filled to overflowing by divine gifts more precious than gold. This is more than simply picturesque language: it is a pressing appeal to act concretely in a way which configures us ever more fully to Christ, in a way which helps the different Churches to reflect the beauty of the first community of believers".

"*Ecclesia in Medio Oriente* provides some elements that are helpful for a personal and communal examination of conscience, and an objective evaluation of the commitment and desire for holiness of each one of Christ's disciples. The Exhortation shows openness to authentic inter-religious dialogue based on faith in the one God, the Creator. It also seeks to contribute to an ecumenism full of human, spiritual and charitable fervour, in evangelical truth and love."

"The Exhortation as a whole is meant to help each of the Lord's disciples to live fully and to pass on faithfully to others what he or she has become by Baptism: a child of light, sharing in God's own light, a lamp newly lit amid the troubled darkness of this world, so that the light may shine in the darkness. The document seeks to help purify the faith from all that disfigures it, from everything that can obscure the splendour of Christ's light. For communion is true fidelity to Christ, and Christian witness is the radiance of the paschal mystery which gives full meaning to the cross, exalted and glorious."

"'Fear not, little flock,' and remember the promise made to Constantine: 'In this sign you will conquer!'" Churches of the Middle East, fear not, for the Lord is truly with you, to the close of the age! Fear not, because the universal Church walks at your side and is humanly and spiritually close to you! It is with this hope and this word of encouragement to be active heralds of the faith by your communion and witness. ... God grant that all the peoples of the Middle East may live in peace, fraternity and religious freedom! May God bless all of you!" □

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ecumenism, and a communion understood not as confusion, but rather as recognition and respect for others. At the same time, the Exhortation reasserts the importance of the work of theology and the various ecumenical commissions and ecclesial communities, in order that - in line with the doctrine of the Church - they speak with one voice on the most important moral questions (family, sexuality, bioethics, freedom, justice and peace). Diaconal ecumenism is also important, in both charitable and educational fields. Several concrete proposals for an ecumenical pastoral outreach are then listed: among these, the application of conciliary openness towards a certain "communicatio in sacris" (i.e., the possibility for Christians to access the Sacraments in a Church other than their own) for the Sacraments of Penance, the Eucharist and the Anointing of the Sick. The Pope states his certainty of the possibility of reaching agreement on a common translation of the Lord's Prayer in the local languages of the region.

Inter-Religious Dialogue

Recalling the historical and spiritual links that Christians have with Jews and Muslims, the Exhortation reaffirms that inter-religious dialogue is not dictated by pragmatic considerations of a political or social order, but is based primarily upon the theological foundations of faith: Jews, Christians and Muslims believe in a single God and for this reason it is hoped that they may recognise in "the other believer" a brother to love and respect, avoiding the exploitation of religion for conflicts which are "unjustifiable for authentic believers." With particular regard to Christian-Jewish dialogue, the Pope recalls the common spiritual heritage, based on the Bible, which leads back to the "Jewish roots of Christianity;" at the same time he invites Christians to be aware of the mystery of the Incarnation of God and to condemn the unjustifiable persecutions of the past.

With regard to Muslims, Pope Benedict XVI uses the word "esteem," "in fidelity to the teachings of Vatican Council II;" however, it is regrettable that doctrinal differences have been used as a pretext by both Christians and Muslims to justify, in the name of religion, acts of intolerance, discrimination, marginalization and persecution. The Exhortation then shows how the presence of Christians in the Middle East is neither new, nor casual, but historical. An integral part of the region, they have given rise to "a particular form of symbiosis" with the surrounding culture, specific to the Middle East, and they have the right and the duty to participate fully in civil life, and should not be considered as second class citizens. The Pope affirms that religious liberty - the pinnacle of all freedoms, sacred and inalienable - includes the freedom to choose the religion one considers true and to publicly manifest one's belief and its symbols, without putting one's own life or personal freedom in danger. Force and constriction are not admissible in religious matters. The Pope calls for the step to be taken from tolerance to religious freedom, which does not imply an open door to syncretism, but rather "a reconsideration of the relationship between man, religion and God."

Two New Realities

The Exhortation considers at length the matter of

secularization, including its extreme forms, and the violent fundamentalism that claims to have a religious origin. A healthy secularity means distinction and collaboration between politics and religion, characterised by mutual respect. It requires the political sphere to operate without manipulating religion, and guarantees that religion may live without the encumbrance of political interests. Religious fundamentalism - which grows in a climate of socio-political uncertainty - seeks to take power for political ends, at times using violence, over the individual conscience and over religion. For this reason, the Pope issues a heartfelt appeal to all the religious leaders of the Middle East to endeavour, by their example and their teaching, to do everything possible to uproot this threat which indiscriminately and fatally affects believers of all religions.

Migrants

The Pope faces a crucial question, the exodus - indeed, a hemorrhage - of Christians who find themselves in a delicate position, at times without hope, and are subject to the negative consequences of conflicts, often feeling humiliated, despite having participated throughout the centuries in the construction of their respective countries. A Middle East without, or with few, Christians would no longer be the Middle East. The Pope therefore asks political and religious leaders to avoid policies and strategies tending towards a monochromatic Middle East which does not reflect its human and historical reality. Benedict XVI also invites the pastors of the Eastern Catholic Churches to help their priests and their faithful in exodus to remain in contact with their families and their Churches, and encourages the Pastors of the ecclesiastical circumscriptions who welcome the Eastern Catholics to allow them the possibility of worshipping according to their own traditions. This chapter also considers the question of immigrant workers - often Catholics of Latin rite - from Africa, the Far East and the Indian sub-continent, who too often experience situations of discrimination and injustice.

Part Two

Patriarchs

Leaders of the "sui iuris" Churches, in perfect union with the Bishop of Rome, render tangible the universality and unity of the Church and, as a sign of communion, are able to reinforce this union and solidarity within the framework of the Council of Catholic Patriarchs of the Middle East and the patriarchal Synods, always favoring consultation and collegial action on questions fundamental to the Church.

Bishops

A visible sign of the unity in diversity of the Church understood as a Body, of whom Christ is the head, the bishops are the first to be sent forth into all nations to make disciples. They must proclaim God's Word with courage and firmly defend the integrity and unity of the faith, in those difficult situations which are unfortunately common in the Middle East. The bishops are also required to ensure a wise, honest and transparent management of the temporal goods of the Church and to this end, the Pope recalls that the Synod Fathers have requested serious revision of finances and assets, to avoid confusion between personal property and that

of the Church. The bishops, furthermore, must be vigilant in ensuring that priests receive appropriate remuneration, in order that they do not become distracted by material matters. The alienation of the goods of the Church must adhere strictly to canonical norms and the current papal legislation. Finally, the Pope exhorts bishops to ensure the pastoral care of all Christian faithful, regardless of their nationality or ecclesial provenance.

Priests and Seminarians

The Exhortation underlines that priests must educate the People of God in the construction of a civilization of evangelical love and unity, and this requires an in-depth transmission of the Word of God, and of the tradition and the Doctrine of the Church, along with intellectual and spiritual renewal of the priests themselves. To this end, celibacy is important - a priceless gift of God to the Church - as is the ministry of married priests, an ancient component of the Eastern tradition. As servants of the communion, priests and seminarians must offer courageous and unambiguous testimony, must conduct themselves irreproachably, and must be open to the cultural diversity of their Churches (learning, for instance, their languages and cultures), along with ecclesial diversity and ecumenical and inter-religious dialogue.

The Consecrated Life

Monasticism in its various forms was born in the Middle East and gave rise to several "sui iuris" Churches. Men and women religious must collaborate with the bishop in pastoral and missionary activities. They are invited to meditate upon at length and observe the evangelical counsels (chastity, poverty and obedience), as there cannot be spiritual regeneration - of the faithful, the community and the Church as a whole - without a clear and unequivocal return to the search for God.

The Laity

Members of the Body of Christ through Baptism, and thus fully associated with the mission of the universal Church, to lay people the Pope entrusts the task of promoting - in temporal matters, their proper domain - the sound administration of public goods, religious freedom and respect for the dignity of each person. They are invited to be bold in the cause of Christ. In order that their witness be fruitful, however, lay people must overcome the divisions and all subjective interpretations of Christian life.

The Family

A divine institution founded on the indissoluble Sacrament of Marriage between a man and a woman, today the family is exposed to many dangers. The Christian family must be supported in the problems and difficulties it faces, and must look to its own deepest identity, in order to become first and foremost a domestic Church which educates in prayer and in faith, a seed-bed of vocations, the natural school of virtue and ethical values, and the primary cell of society. The Exhortation gives considerable consideration to the question of women in the Middle East and to the need for equality with men, in the face of the discriminations they suffer which gravely offend not only women themselves, but also and above all, God. The Pope emphasizes that women must play

a greater role in public and ecclesial life. With regard to judicial disputes in matrimonial matters, the voice of the woman must be heard with equal respect to that of the man, without injustice. To this end, the Pope encourages a sound and just application of the law, in order that the judicial differences regarding matrimonial matters do not lead to apostasy. Finally, the Christians of the Middle East must be able to apply their own law, both in marriage and elsewhere, without restrictions.

Young People and Children

The Pope exhorts them not to be afraid or ashamed of being Christians, to respect other believers, Jews and Muslims, and to always cultivate, through prayer, a true friendship with Jesus, loving Christ and the Church. In this way, they may discern wisely the values of modern life that may be useful to their fulfilment, without allowing themselves to be seduced by materialism or certain social networks, the indiscriminate use of which may distort the true nature of human relations. With regard to children, in particular, the Exhortation calls upon parents, teachers, guides and public institutions to recognise the rights of minors from the moment of their conception.

Part Three

The Word of God, Soul and Source of Communion and Witness

After expressing recognition of the exegetical schools (of Alexandria, Antioch, etc.) which have contributed to the dogmatic formulation of Christian mystery in the fourth and fifth centuries, the Exhortation recommends a genuine biblical apostolate, to help dissipate prejudice or mistaken ideas which may be the cause of needless and humiliating controversies. This leads to the suggestion of proclaiming a Year of the Bible, in accordance with the pastoral conditions of each country in the region, and to follow it, if appropriate, with an annual Bible Week. The Christian presence in the biblical countries of the Middle East - which is far more than a question of sociological belonging or simple economic and cultural success - by rediscovering its original inspiration and in following Christ's disciples, will take on new vitality.

Liturgy and Sacramental Life

For the faithful in the Middle East, the liturgy is an essential element of spiritual unity and communion. The renewal of celebrations and liturgical texts, where necessary, must be based on the Word of God and undertaken in collaboration with the Churches who share the same traditions. The importance of Baptism is a key issue, which enables those who receive this sacrament to live in communion and to develop true solidarity with other members of humankind, without discrimination on the grounds of race or religion. From this point of view, the Pope hopes for an ecumenical agreement between the Catholic Church and the Churches with whom it is in theological dialogue on the mutual recognition of Baptism, in order to restore full communion in apostolic faith. The Exhortation also expresses hope for more frequent practice of the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation, and exhorts pastors and the faithful to promote initiatives for peace, even amid persecution.

Prayer and Pilgrimages

The Middle East is a privileged land of pilgrimage for many Christians who come to consolidate their faith and to seek a profoundly spiritual experience. The Pope asks that the faithful have free access, without restriction, to holy places. It is also essential that contemporary biblical pilgrimage returns to its original motivations of penitence and the search for God.

Evangelization and Charity: The Church's Mission

The Exhortation underlines that the transmission of faith is an essential mission of the Church. The Pope therefore encourages the new evangelization which, in a contemporary context, marked by change, makes the faithful aware of the testimony of their lives: this reinforces their word when they speak of God courageously and openly, to announce the Good News of salvation. In particular, in the Middle East, deepening of the theological and pastoral meaning of evangelization should look to both the ecumenical and inter-religious dimensions. With regard to ecclesial movements and communities, the Pope encourages them to act in union with the bishop of the place and according to his pastoral directives, with due regard for the local history, liturgy, spirituality and culture, without confusion and proselytism. The Catholic Churches of the Middle East are therefore invited to renew their missionary spirit, a challenge more urgent than ever in a multicultural and pluri-religious context. A strong stimulus for this may be given by the Year of Faith. With regard to charity, the Exhortation recalls that the Church must follow the example of Christ Who drew close to those most in need: orphans, the poor, the disabled, the sick, etc. Finally, the Pope praises and encourages all those who carry out impressive work in the educational centers, schools, higher institutes and Catholic universities of the Middle East. These tools for cultural formation, that should be supported by political authorities, demonstrate that it is possible to live in a spirit of respect and collaboration in the Middle East, through education in tolerance.

Catechesis and Christian Formation

The papal document encourages the reading and teaching of the catechism of the Catholic Church and a solid initiation in the social doctrine of the Church. At the same time, the Pope invites the Synods and other episcopal organisms to enable the faithful to have access to the spiritual wealth of the Fathers of the Church, and to focus on patristic teaching, as a complement to scriptural formation.

Conclusion

Pope Benedict XVI solemnly asks, in the name of God, that political and religious authorities not only alleviate the suffering of all those who live in the Middle East, but also eliminate the causes of this suffering, and do all in their power to enable peace to prevail. At the same time, the Catholic faithful are exhorted to consolidate and live together in communion, giving life to pastoral dynamism. "A lukewarm spirit is displeasing to God," and therefore the Christians of the Middle East, Catholics and others, are encouraged bear witness to Christ, courageously and as one - a difficult witness, but exhilarating. □

September 16, 2012, (Zenit.org)

Pontiff Appeals for Peace in Syria Says People Cannot Be Seen as Evils to Be Eliminated

Pope Benedict XVI made a strong appeal for peace in Syria and the Middle East on Sunday, September 16, 2012, just as he entrusted to the people of the region his own reflections on the necessary steps to bring an end to the conflicts. The Pope focused a brief address before praying the midday Angelus on the problems in Syria and neighboring countries, asking Our Lady for the gift of peace. He offered this prayer just after he had celebrated a large open-air Mass in Beirut and officially presented the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation on the Middle East.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Let us now turn to Mary, Our Lady of Lebanon, around whom both Christians and Muslims gather. Let us ask her to intercede with her divine Son for you and, more particularly, for the people of Syria and the neighboring countries, imploring the gift of peace. You know all too well the tragedy of the conflicts and the violence which generates so much suffering. Sadly, the din of weapons continues to make itself heard, along with the cry of the widow and the orphan. Violence and hatred invade people's lives, and the first victims are women and children. Why so much horror? Why so many dead? I appeal to the international community! I appeal to the Arab countries that, as brothers, they might propose workable solutions respecting the dignity, the rights and the religion of every human person! Those who wish to build peace must cease to see in the other an evil to be eliminated. It is not easy to see in the other a person to be respected and loved, and yet this is necessary if peace is to be built, if fraternity is desired (cf. 1 Jn 2:10-11; 1 Pet 3:8-12).

May God grant to your country, to Syria and to the Middle East the gift of peaceful hearts, the silencing of weapons and the cessation of all violence! May men understand that they are all brothers!

Mary, our Mother, understands our concern and our needs. Together with the Patriarchs and Bishops present, I place the Middle East under her maternal protection (cf. *Propositio* 44). May we, with God's help, be converted so as to work ardently to establish the peace that is necessary for harmonious coexistence among brothers, whatever their origins and religious convictions. □

September 16, 2012 (Zenit.org)

◆ 350,000 people were able to attend the Pope's Liturgy on Sunday, September 16, 2012, at Beirut's City Center Waterfront

◆ 300 bishops concelebrated

◆ The Holy Father gave Holy Communion to thirty people chosen by the Church

◆ 350 priests distributed Holy Communion to 100,000 faithful

◆ The liturgy was celebrated in Arabic, French and Latin.

Pope to Mideast Youth: Don't Taste 'Bitter Sweetness' of Emigration Asks Them to Show That Islam and Christianity Can Live Side by Side Without Hatred

On Saturday evening, September 15, 2012, the Holy Father paid a visit to the Maronite Patriarchate at *Bkerke*. Since 1832, *Bkerke* has been the winter residence of the Maronite Patriarch of Antioch and All the East, while his summer residence is located at *Dimane* in northern Lebanon.

At *Bkerke*, which stands on the hillside of *Harissa* and is dominated by the Shrine of Our Lady of Lebanon, the Holy Father met with young people of the Middle East.

"You are living today in this part of the world which witnessed the birth of Jesus and the growth of Christianity," the Holy Father told his youthful audience. "It is a great honor! It is also a summons to fidelity, to love of this region and, above all, to your calling to be witnesses and messengers of the joy of Christ. ... Many of the Apostles and saints lived in troubled times and their faith was the source of their courage and their witness.

Find in their example and intercession the inspiration and support that you need!

"I am aware of the difficulties which you face daily on account of instability and lack of security, your difficulties in finding employment and your sense of being alone and on the margins. In a constantly changing world you are faced with many serious challenges. But not even unemployment and uncertainty should lead you to taste the bitter sweetness of emigration, which involves an uprooting and a separation for the sake of an uncertain future. You are meant to be protagonists of your country's future and to take your place in society and in the Church.

Young people of Lebanon, you are the hope and the future of your country. You are Lebanon, a land of welcome, of openness, with a remarkable power of adaptation.

"You have a special place in my heart and in the whole Church, because the Church is always young! The Church trusts you, ... (she) needs your enthusiasm and your creativity! Youth is the time when we aspire to great ideals, when we study and train for our future work. ... Seek beauty and strive for goodness! ... Open the doors of your minds and hearts to Christ! ... Christ says to you: My peace I give to you! This is the true revolution brought by Christ: that of love.

"The frustrations of the present moment must not lead



Pope Benedict XVI greets young people of Lebanon in *Bkerke*.

you to take refuge in parallel worlds like those, for example, of the various narcotics or the bleak world of pornography. As for social networks, they are interesting but they can quite easily lead to addiction and confusion between the real and the virtual. Look for relationships of genuine, uplifting friendship. Find ways to give meaning and depth to your lives; fight superficiality and mindless consumption! ... Seek out good teachers, spiritual masters, who will be able to guide you along the path to maturity, leaving behind all that is illusory, garish and deceptive".

"Meditate on God's word! Discover how relevant and real the Gospel can be. Pray! Prayer and the Sacraments are the sure and effective means to be a Christian and to live rooted and built up in Christ. ... In Him, all men and women are our brothers and sisters. The universal brotherhood which He inaugurated on the cross lights up in a resplendent and challenging way the revolution of love. "Love one another as I have loved you." This is the legacy of Jesus and the sign of the Christian."

"Christ asks you, then, to do as He did: to be completely open to others, even if they belong to a different cultural, religious or national group. Making space for them, respecting them, being good to them, making them ever more rich in humanity and firm in the peace of the Lord. ... Experiencing together moments of friendship and joy enables us to resist the onset of division, which must always be rejected! ... Be heralds of the Gospel of life and life's authentic values. Courageously resist everything opposed to life: abortion, violence, rejection of and contempt for others, injustice and war. In this way you will spread peace all around you. Are not "peacemakers" those whom in the end we admire the most? Is it not a world of peace that, deep down, we want for ourselves and for others? ... Truly

discovering God's forgiveness and mercy always enables us to begin a new life. It is not easy to forgive. But God's forgiveness grants the power of conversion, and the joy of being able to forgive in turn. Forgiveness and reconciliation are the paths of peace; they open up a future."

"Young people of Lebanon, you are the hope and the future of your country. You are Lebanon, a land of welcome, of openness, with a remarkable power of adaptation. At this moment, we cannot forget those millions of individuals who make up the Lebanese diaspora and maintain solid bonds with their land of origin. Young people of Lebanon, be welcoming and open, as Christ asks you and as your country teaches you.

"I should like now to greet the young Muslims who are with us this evening. I thank you for your presence, which is so important. Together with the young Christians, you are the future of this fine country and of the Middle East in general. Seek to build it up together! And when you are older, continue to live in unity and harmony with Christians. For the beauty of Lebanon is found in this fine symbiosis.

It is vital that the Middle East in general, looking at you, should understand that Muslims and Christians, Islam and Christianity, can live side by side without hatred, with respect for the beliefs of each person, so as to build together a free and humane society.

"I understand, too, that present among us there are some young people from Syria. I want to say how much I admire your courage. Tell your families and friends back home that the Pope has not forgotten you. Tell those around you that the Pope is saddened by your sufferings and your griefs. He does not forget Syria in his prayers and concerns, he does not forget those in the Middle East who are suffering. It is time for Muslims and Christians to come together so as to put an end to violence and war."

At the conclusion of his meeting with the young people, the Pope greeted Catholic patriarchs of Lebanon in the chapel of the Assumption inside the Patriarchal Palace. □

VIS, September 16, 2012

the Deadline is... **Deadline for next month's issue** of *The Maronite Voice* is October 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

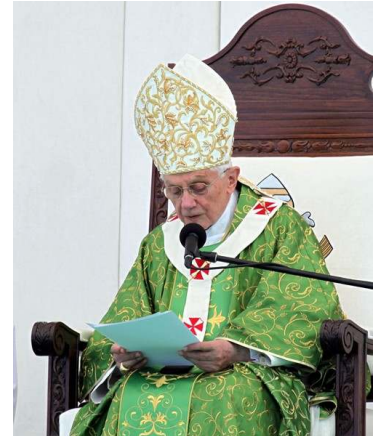
Email: Gmsebaali@aol.com

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. □

Serving Justice And Peace Is An Imperative Task of The Church

Pope Tells The Church in Lebanon

On Sunday morning, September 16, 2012, in Beirut, Lebanon, His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI celebrated Mass at the City Center Waterfront, a coastal area reclaimed from the sea using the debris of buildings in the old center of Beirut, which were demolished at the end of the Civil War prior to the reconstruction.



The Holy Father traveled by car from the Apostolic Nunciature in

Pope Benedict XVI delivers his homily.

Harissa, then covered the final stretch along the seafront from Jounieh in the Popemobile. He was greeted on arrival by the mayor of Beirut who presented him with the keys to the City. The Mass was attended by over 350,000 faithful, the Lebanese authorities and 300 bishops from all over the Middle East. The liturgy was celebrated in Arabic, French and Latin.

In his homily the Pope commented on the day's reading from the Gospel of St. Mark [Mark 8:29] in which the true identity of Jesus is revealed. In Mark's narrative, Jesus is walking with His disciples along the road leading to the villages in the region of Caesarea Philippi when He asks them: "Who do people say that I am?"

"The moment He chose to ask this question is not insignificant," the Holy Father explained. "Jesus was facing a decisive turning-point in His life. He was going up to Jerusalem, to the place where the central events of our salvation would take place: His crucifixion and resurrection. In Jerusalem too, following these events, the Church would be born."

In the episode, after Peter has proclaimed Jesus as the Messiah, Christ tells the disciples that He must suffer and be put to death before rising again. "He realizes that people could use this answer to advance agendas which are not His, to raise false temporal hopes in His regard. He does not let Himself be confined to the attributes of the human savior which many were expecting," the Pope said.

"Jesus wants to make them understand His true identity. He is a Messiah Who suffers, a Messiah Who serves, and not some triumphant political savior. He is the Servant Who obeys His Father's will, even to giving up His life. ... Jesus thus contradicts the expectations of many. What He says is shocking and disturbing. We can understand the reaction of Peter who rebukes Him, refusing to accept that his Master should suffer and die! Jesus is stern with Peter; He makes him realize that anyone who would be His disciple must become a servant, just as He became Servant." → → →



Syriac Catholic Patriarch Younan (left), Maronite Patriarch Bechara Rai and His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI.

Therefore, the Pope went on, "following Jesus means taking up one's cross and walking in His footsteps, along a difficult path which leads not to earthly power or glory but, if necessary, to self-abandonment, to losing one's life for Christ and the Gospel in order to save it. We are assured that this is the way to the resurrection, to true and definitive life with God." In this context, Pope Benedict pointed out that the Year of Faith, due to begin on October 11, is an invitation to "each member of the faithful to renew his or her commitment to undertaking this path of sincere conversion. Throughout this Year, then, I strongly encourage you to reflect more deeply on the faith, to appropriate it ever more consciously and to grow in fidelity to Christ Jesus and His Gospel.

"Brothers and sisters, the path on which Jesus wishes to guide us is a path of hope for all. Jesus' glory was revealed at the very time when, in His humanity, He seemed weakest, particularly through the incarnation and on the cross. This is how God shows His love; He becomes our servant and gives Himself to us."

Pope Benedict XVI then turned his attention to the second reading, in which St. James states that, if our adherence to Jesus is to be authentic, it requires "concrete actions. ... It is an imperative task of the Church to serve and of Christians to be true servants in the image of Jesus," he

said. "Consequently, in a world where violence constantly leaves behind its grim trail of death and destruction, to serve justice and peace is urgently necessary for building a fraternal society, for building fellowship! ... I pray in particular that the Lord will grant to this region of the Middle East servants of peace and reconciliation, so that all people can live in peace and with dignity. This is an essential testimony which Christians must render here, in cooperation with all people of good will. I appeal to all of you to be peacemakers, wherever you find yourselves."

Likewise, the Pope went on, "service must also be at the heart of the life of the Christian community itself. Every ministry, every position of responsibility in the Church, is first and foremost a service to God and to our brothers and sisters. This is the spirit which should guide the baptized among themselves, and find particular expression in an effective commitment to serving the poor, the outcast and the suffering, so that the inalienable dignity of each person may be safeguarded.



Patriarch Bechara Rai greets His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI.

"Dear brothers and sisters who are suffering physically or spiritually," the Holy Father added, concluding his homily, "your sufferings are not in vain! Christ the Servant wished to be close to the suffering. ... Along your own path, may you always find brothers and sisters who are concrete signs of His loving presence which will never forsake you! Remain ever hopeful because of Christ!"

"May God bless Lebanon; may He bless all the peoples of this beloved region of the Middle East, and may He grant them the gift of His peace." □

VIS, September 16, 2012

Food For Thought

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to Him and He will make your paths straight.

Proverbs 3: 5- 6



Pope greets faithful upon his arrival at Beirut City Center to celebrate the Mass.

Apostolic Trip To Lebanon: An Opportunity For Dialogue

On Wednesday, September 19, 2012, Pope Benedict XVI dedicated his general audience to a review of his recent apostolic trip to Lebanon. "It was," he said, "a journey I was very keen to make despite the difficult circumstances, because a father must always remain alongside his children when they face serious problems. I was moved by the desire to announce the peace which the Risen Lord left to His disciples in the words: 'My peace I give to you.'"

"It was a poignant ecclesial event and, at the same time, an opportunity for dialogue in a country which is complex but emblematic for the region, thanks to the tradition of cohabitation and diligent collaboration between its various religious and social components. In the face of the suffering and drama which persist in that area of the Middle East, I expressed my heartfelt participation in the legitimate aspirations of those dear peoples, bringing them a message of encouragement and peace. I think in particular of the terrible conflict which is ravaging Syria and which causes, apart from thousands of deaths, a flow of refugees who move around the region desperately seeking security and a future. Nor do I forget the difficult situation in Iraq. During my visit, the people of Lebanon and the Middle East (Catholics, representatives of other Churches and ecclesial communities and the various Muslim communities), in a serene and constructive atmosphere, were able to enjoy an important experience of mutual respect, understanding and fraternity, which constitutes a powerful sign of hope for all humankind. Yet it was above all the meeting with the Catholic faithful of Lebanon and the Middle East, who were present in their thousands, that aroused a feeling of profound gratitude in my heart for the ardor of their faith and witness."

"I was able to see directly how the Lebanese Catholic communities, thanks to their two-thousand year presence and their hope-filled commitment, offer an important and highly appreciated contribution to the daily life of all the country's inhabitants," the Pope said. He also expressed his thanks to the country's authorities for "their cordial



Pope Benedict XVI wishes the people of Lebanon farewell before he boarded the plane back to the Vatican.

welcome," a fine expression of "the famous Lebanese hospitality." And he went on: "The Muslims welcomed me with great respect and sincere consideration. Their constant affable presence gave me the opportunity to launch a message of dialogue and collaboration between Christianity and Islam. I believe the time has come to bear sincere and definitive witness together against division, violence and war."

The Holy Father then turned his attention to the events of his apostolic trip, beginning with the signing of the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *"Ecclesia in Medio Oriente"* in the Greek-Melkite Basilica of St. Paul in Harissa. "On that occasion," he said, "I invited Middle Eastern Catholics to fix their gaze on the crucified Christ in order to find, even at times of difficulty and suffering, the strength to celebrate the victory of love over hatred, of forgiveness over revenge, of unity over division. I assured everyone that the universal Church is closer than ever ... to the Churches in the Middle East. Despite being a 'little flock,' they must not fear, in the certainty that the Lord is always with them."

During the meeting with representatives of State institutions and the world of culture, the diplomatic

corps and religious leaders, "I indicated," the Pope recalled, "the path to follow to ensure a future of peace and solidarity. This involves working to ensure that cultural, social and religious differences are resolved in sincere dialogue: a new fraternity where what unites us is a shared sense of the greatness and dignity of each person, whose life must always be safeguarded and protected. On that same day," he went on, "I met with the heads of Muslim communities, an event which took place in a spirit of dialogue and mutual benevolence. I thank God for that meeting. The world today needs clear unequivocal signs of dialogue and collaboration, something of which Lebanon has been and must continue to be an example, for the Arab States and for the rest of the world."

Pope Benedict XVI then mentioned the "irrepressible enthusiasm of the thousands of young people from Lebanon and neighboring countries," who greeted him at the residence of the Maronite Patriarch. "I emphasized their good fortune to live in that part of the world where Jesus was crucified and rose for our salvation, and where Christianity developed, exhorting them to fidelity and love for their land, despite the difficulties caused by lack

(Continues on page 24)

Vatican II And The Year of Faith A Continuing Challenge

by Brother John M. Samaha, S.M.

On the feast of the Conversion of St. Paul, January 25, 1959, Pope John Paul XXIII had announced the convocation of a general council for the universal Church. And the Second Vatican Council was born. John XXIII had been pope for fewer than a hundred days. Trembling with emotion, he issued the call for an ecumenical council in the Basilica of St. Paul Outside the Walls in the presence of seventeen cardinals of the Curia and other Church servants.

The immediate reaction was - silence. Later Pope John mentioned that he expected the cardinals to be elated and overjoyed with enthusiasm. But this was not the case. Quickly and from various parts of the world several cardinals expressed skepticism, saying this was "a rash and impulsive decision," "a hornet's nest," and "premature, senseless, and doomed in advance to failure." But history quickly exposed their poor judgment, and John XXIII's dauntless confidence in the working of the Holy Spirit bore rich fruit.

Now in 2012 we observe the 50th anniversary of the opening session of Vatican II. And Vatican II still challenges us.

A Significant Anniversary

Three years of preparation led to the four sessions of Vatican II, which began in 1962 and concluded in 1965. Blessed John XXIII passed to his eternal reward after the first session, and Pope Paul VI presided over the remaining three sessions.

Three decades earlier Pope Pius XI had considered a general council, and in the early 1950s the same thought occupied Pope Pius XII. But conditions were not right. The 1959 announcement by Blessed John XXIII was welcomed by the majority of leading theologians, who wondered if this new council would be a continuation of Vatican I held almost a century earlier. But the intrepid Dominican Yves Congar expressed the confidence that this would be a new council and not a continuation of Vatican I: "I saw in the council an opportunity for the recovery of the true meaning of the episcopacy and of ecclesiology. This would be a pastoral council."

In the nascent Church, the Council of Jerusalem (Gal 2:1-10 and Acts 15:1-35), like the Second Vatican Council, dealt with challenging pastoral questions. Paul, Titus, Barnabas, and others came to Jerusalem to meet with Peter, James, and other leaders of the Apostolic Church to meld different but complementary charisms and gifts for the good and growth of the Church. The Jerusalem Council is an early example of the very real interrelationship between the human and the divine in Christ's Church. A similar interplay was experienced at the Second Vatican Council.

The Proper Perspective

The past is prologue, so with wisdom we recall the past as

well as point to the future. Today it is important to recall the insight of Blessed John Henry Newman at the time of the First Vatican Council (1870), that there is always a lack of historical perspective after an ecumenical council. "It is rare," Newman wrote, "for a council not to be followed by great confusion.... The century following each council has ever been a time of great trial...and this seems likely to be no exception."

This perceived lack of historical perspective after Vatican II caused some observers to suggest erroneously that the Council rejected the historical consciousness of the Church in order to meet the needs of our contemporary world, overlooking history and tradition. Pope Benedict XVI aptly described this as a "hermeneutic of discontinuity and rupture" by which Vatican II is seen as an end of tradition, a new start from scratch, a history and a theology based on a false distinction between a "pre-conciliar Church" and a "post-conciliar Church."

Our faith reminds us that the Holy Spirit guided the Church through all the centuries before [Pope] John XXIII's inspiration to convoke a council. The Holy Spirit was with the Fathers of the Council during Vatican II. The Holy Spirit has been with the church during the past fifty years as we gradually incorporated the Council's teachings. And the Holy Spirit will be with the Church in all the years to come. St. Paul made this crystal clear in his writings. If we lose sight of this fundamental truth, we risk the confused thinking that the Holy Spirit would abandon Christ's Church. But we know that the Holy Spirit, like Christ Himself, is with us always.

An Important Lesson of Vatican II

Pope Benedict XVI prudently teaches us that the false "hermeneutic of discontinuity and rupture" needs to be replaced by an authentic "hermeneutic of continuity and reform." History shows us that the Church is not always the same, but is reformed and always reforming. Continuity and reform provide the correct directional map for the study and implementation of Vatican II.

Blessed John XXIII told us: "This Council wishes to transmit doctrine pure and whole without attenuating it or falsifying it, but not watching over this precious treasure as if we were concerned only with antiquity. We wish to present the sure and immutable doctrine in a way that answers the needs of our time. The deposit of faith and our venerated doctrines are one thing; the way they are announced is another thing." Pope John called for the Second Vatican Council to be a synthesis of faithfulness and dynamism in the spirit of Saints Peter and Paul and the Council of Jerusalem.

Cardinal Newman shrewdly projected that it takes a century to integrate fully the wisdom of an ecumenical council. At the outset of Vatican II Pope John XXIII noted that "It is now only dawn...." We are still digesting the work of Vatican II: sixteen important decrees approved by more than 2,500 Council Fathers, who cast over 1,200,000 ballots

after more than 1,000 speeches and over 6,000 written interventions.

As we enter the fiftieth anniversary celebration of the Second Vatican Council, let us consider this an invitation and opportunity to refresh and renew ourselves by rereading (or reading for the first time) the dynamic teachings of the Council. These documents reveal a Church ever faithful, a divine gift, a Church ever dynamic, and a grace that continues from that very first council at Jerusalem.

Both continuity and reform are the call of Vatican II, the great Council that will always have the power to draw us closer to Jesus Christ and to each other.

Pope Benedict XVI reminds us that "The Church both before and after the Council is the same one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church journeying through time." He invites us to ponder this truth with special attention in a Year of Faith, beginning on October 11, 2012, and concluding on November 24, 2013, the feast of Christ the King.

The Year of Faith marks the fiftieth anniversary of the opening of Vatican II and the twentieth anniversary of the promulgation of the Catechism of the Catholic Church. Pope Benedict XVI announced this second Year of Faith in his apostolic letter, *Porta Fidei* (Door of Faith), dated October 11, 2011. Pope Paul VI proclaimed a Year of Faith in 1967 to mark the nineteenth centenary of the martyrdom of Saints Peter and Paul.

How will you observe these anniversaries? ☐

Statistics for the Catholic Church In Lebanon

For the occasion of Pope Benedict XVI's Apostolic trip to Lebanon, September 14 -16, 2012, during which he will sign and issue the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation of the Special Assembly for the Middle East of the Synod of Bishops, statistics concerning the Catholic Church in that country have been published. The information, updated to December 31, 2011, comes from the Central Statistical Office of the Church.

Lebanon has a surface area of 10,452 square kilometers and a population of 4,039,000. There are 24 ecclesiastical circumscriptions; 1,126 parishes and thirty-nine pastoral centers of other kinds. Currently, there are fifty-three bishops; 1,543 priests; 2,797 religious; two members of secular institutes; 2,301 lay missionaries and 483 catechists. Minor seminarians number sixty-two and major seminarians 390.

A total of 427,180 children and young people attend 907 centers of Catholic education, from kindergarten to universities, as well as twenty-eight centers for special education. Other institutions belonging to the Church or run by priests or religious in Lebanon include thirty hospitals; 168 clinics; thirty-nine homes for the elderly or disabled; sixty-three orphanages and nurseries; twenty-two family counseling centers and other pro-life centers; and twenty-eight institutions of other kinds. ☐

VIS, September 5, 2012

Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon

Office For the Protection of Minors



Mission Statement

The "Eparchial Office for the Protection of Minors" was established in 2002 to insure the safety of children and young people who have been entrusted to our care in our parishes, schools, religious education classes, and other programs.

We pursue this mission in three ways:

- By thoroughly screening and supervising all Church ministers, employees and volunteers who work with children and young people as part of their ministry
- By providing appropriate training in recognizing and reporting child abuse to appropriate civil and Church authorities
- By holding all Church ministers, employees and volunteers who work with children and young people to Christ-centered and professional codes of conduct.

The "Office for the Protection of Minors" requires each program that serves minors or vulnerable adults in the Eparchy to actively promote participation in the "Safe Environment Program." It also asks every parent/guardian to prayerfully respond to the opportunities provided to help form their children in a safe and Christian manner. In our day and age, it is essential that children be well-formed in respecting their own sacred dignity, as well as the sacred dignity of each person they meet. Indeed, it is necessary that adults, too, be reminded of the need to respect the sacred dignity of every person, particularly of those that are vulnerable and need protection. As an Eparchy, we must model that respect, and we accept the responsibility to do all we can to protect all of God's children. The "Office for the Protection of Minors" exists to offer help to parents/guardians and Church personnel in the formation of their children. We believe that children and young people need to be formed to understand the importance of appropriate boundaries in their lives and in their relationship with other people.

Safe Environment Programs

It is the firm belief of the Eparchy that all parishes, learning programs, and youth organizations must ensure that children and youth who worship, study, or participate in activities sponsored therein can do so in the safest and most secure setting possible. Participation in these programs and activities is based on the sacred trust that parents/guardians place in us as ministers in the vineyard of the Lord.

In June 2001 the United States National Conference of Catholic Bishops adopted the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People, which mandates that every Diocese/Eparchy must have safe environment programs. Article 12 of the Charter states: "Diocese/Eparchies will establish "safe environment" programs. They will cooperate with parents, civil authorities, educators and community organizations to provide education and training for children, youth, parents, ministers, educators and others about ways to make and maintain a safe environment for children. Dioceses/Eparchies will make clear to clergy and members of the community the standards of conduct for clergy and other persons in positions of trust with regard to sexual abuse." Moreover, Article 13 mandates that: "Dioceses/eparchies will evaluate the background of all diocesan/eparchial and parish personnel who have regular contact with minors. Specifically, they will utilize the resources of law enforcement and other community agencies."

The following information is given to assist Eparchial personnel, volunteers and parents/guardians in the implementation of "safe environment" programs.

Our Eparchial safe environment program begins with a "Code of Conduct" for all adults who work with youth on a regular basis. The Eparchial "code of conduct" establishes acceptable behavior that is legal, professional and responsible and it includes standards of conduct with regard to sexual abuse and harassment. Written copies are provided to each church personnel and volunteer who must acknowledge in writing that they understand it and must abide by it.

In accordance with the Eparchial policies and procedures concerning safe environment programs, we require training of parents, ministers, educators, church personnel, volunteers and others regularly involved with minors as to the issue of abuse of children, to include sexual abuse. Training includes age appropriate materials pertaining to personal safety. It provides information about improper touching and relationships. While it is clearly understood that children are not expected to be fully knowledgeable about child abuse or of the laws governing care of children, the program provides them with the necessary information they need to know when they should seek assistance from a trusted adult. Our Eparchy stipulates that the safe environment program must include these four essential components: prevention of abuse, identification of abuse, response and reporting of abuse.

A. What are the Safe Environment Requirements?

All Eparchial personnel and volunteers who are in "regular contact with minors" must complete the "Safe Environment Requirements." This means that they must complete a Safe Environment Interview (for lay employees and volunteers, the interview must be conducted by the Pastor/Administrator) and a background check. They must acknowledge that they have received the Eparchial Policy Relating to Sexual Misconduct and the appropriate Code of Conduct, and they must complete the Safe Environment Training appropriate to their position.

B. Which Training Program Do I Have to Attend?

Our Eparchy does not have a Safe Environment Program of its own. Clergy, professional and supervisory personnel must attend whatever safe environment program training class offered by the local Roman Catholic [diocese] where the eparchial parish/institution is located. This would include program directors and assistant directors, teachers, teachers' aides, guidance counselors, directors and coordinators of religious education (whether paid or volunteer), social workers, counselors and youth ministers.

Furthermore, the Eparchy requires that all parents in our parishes are adequately informed about the issue of child abuse. To reach as many parents as possible, attempts should be made to provide sessions led by experienced child-safety professionals.

Likewise, the Eparchy mandates that all children in parish religious education programs and youth organizations should receive the same basic information as those who attend Catholic schools. It is incumbent upon pastors and administrators that all children under their care have received safe environment training which meets the standards of the Eparchial safe environment training.

C. Background Check

Even if Church personnel and volunteers have already had a background check from another agency or program, the Eparchy still requires everyone to submit to a background check with us. The reason is that our standards are different from other agencies, and we have to make sure that everyone satisfies those standards. The background check is good for five years.

D. How Do I Report Abuse?

Allegations of sexual abuse of minors by church personnel and volunteers can be reported to:

The Reverend Peter Karam, professional case administrator and director of the Eparchial Office for the Protection of Minors, by calling (216) 781-6161 or via e-mail at Peterkaram10@gmail.com. ☐



Washington, D.C. *Deacon/Subdeacon Retreat*



Bishop Gregory Mansour addresses a group of deacons and subdeacons and their wives for their annual retreat.

by Subdeacon Dennis and Mary Somerville

There are so many incredible reasons why being a Maronite Deacon/Subdeacon is so fulfilling. We take Holy Communion to the sick; we work with adults and youth teaching them the Gospel and how to be a good witness for Christ. We are close to the altar at the time of consecration during Liturgy, and we are surrounded by people searching for God. We have the best of both worlds—we are married and we are ordained servants of God. Our ministry is to serve - *Diakonia* - in the church. We wear the clerical collar - a personal sign of being a witness to Christ.

The order of Subdeacon is the highest of the *minor* orders of Lector, Cantor, and Subdeacon. An ordained subdeacon can re-marry if his wife dies. A Deacon is the lowest of the *major* orders of Bishop, Priest and Deacon. He cannot re-marry if his wife dies.

The deacon/subdeacon takes responsibility in the organizational development of the parish, defers in loyalty to his pastor and facilitates and collaborates with him to move the parish forward in its development. He is just as important to the parish as the priest. His job is service. The deacon/subdeacon is not ordained to a particular priest but to the entire Eparchy under the Bishop, and he can have ministries outside of his own particular parish. The Sacrament of Holy Matrimony is more important than the diaconate. We must always put God first, family next, job, and diaconate in that order.

A particular blessing of being a deacon/subdeacon is the annual retreat with Bishop Gregory Mansour and Fr. Jack Morrison. The weekend of Sept 14-16, 2012, forty-one deacons, subdeacons, candidates and wives met at Our Lady of Lebanon Maronite Seminary in Washington, D.C. and stayed at the local Marriott in Silver Spring, Md.

Friday evening the retreat began with Liturgy in the seminary chapel, followed by *Ramsho* (evening prayer). Afterwards Chorbishop Seely Beggiani, Rector, hosted a dinner in the Seminary library (the retreat multi-purpose room). Three of the nine seminarians were present, and they each shared about themselves and how they chose to answer the call for the priesthood.

After dinner, Fr. Jack Morrison led the group in a quiet reflection, Eucharistic Adoration and Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament in the seminary chapel. Later that evening many of us met in the hotel for social time to get re-acquainted and meet the new subdeacon candidates and their wives.

Saturday was a full and wonder-filled day. Visualize the women on one side (the sheep, according to Fr. Jack) and the men on the other side (the goats, according to Fr. Jack) in the chapel all chanting the *Safro* with Bishop Mansour leading the women and Fr. Jack leading the men. The women were, perhaps, a bit daunted by the grace allowed them by Bishop Mansour to be fully involved in their husbands' daily prayer, but they rallied and came through well.

Returning to the library, Bishop Mansour talked about the New Evangelization and brought us into an energetic dialogue reminding us that the purpose of the Church is to evangelize and we are to be witnesses to Jesus Christ. He reminded us of his Third Pastoral Letter entitled "Liturgy and Prayer," and encouraged us to not become discouraged by the smaller number of people attending our churches, but to be strengthened in our relationship with God by our daily quiet time alone with Him, morning and evening prayer, rosary, frequent confession and spiritual direction. He reminded us to honor the cross and to become more generous in giving witness to our Lord and how He has transformed our lives. "Throughout Scripture we read that our Lord prayed both alone and with others; it is His will that we do the same."

Some of those on retreat shared their thoughts to foster the New Evangelization:

- Discouragement – go beyond it
- Have faith and renewal as the early Apostles did
- Love should be your witness
- Forgive others and forget their offenses
- Pay it forward; random acts of kindness
- Submission to the Holy Church
- Apologetics – non-violent militancy and respect
- Physical witness – the clerical collar affects others and it questions
- Do not become lukewarm as is written in Rev 3:15.
- Remember that the Pharisees were pious in appearance, but not in their hearts.
- Educate yourselves about the differences between the Catholic religion and others.
- St. Francis prayer, let it begin with me. People are transformed one person at a time

(continues on page 24)

Orange County, California Women's Retreat



by Regina Turner

The Maronite Servants of Christ the Light traveled to Southern California to facilitate a women's retreat for Saint John Maron Maronite Parish in Orange County. A parishioner opened her home in Lake Arrowhead for the venue which offered a setting for retreat. Twenty women began the retreat on Friday evening, August 24, 2012, and concluded on Sunday with Liturgy at the Parish.

On the Saturday evening, Fr. Antoine Bakh, Pastor, came to the mountain home to hear confessions and to bring the Blessed Sacrament for Eucharistic Adoration.

Mother Marla Marie gave three presentations on: finding strength, light and healing in the prayers of the Maronite Liturgy; how to reflect on the scriptures through *Lectio Divina*; and the importance and blessings of the Mysteries of the Eucharist and Penance.

The Women's Retreat was successful. The women have not stopped talking about how each of them was ministered to in a beautiful way with love and kindness. The combination of the teachings and the holiness of the Maronite prayers and tradition made it perfect for all the women. □

Pleasantville, New Jersey Spanish Liturgy

by Rana Rehani

Our Lady Star of the East Maronite Mission in Pleasantville, N.J., is excited to announce that she has begun having Liturgy in Spanish. On Sunday, September 2, 2012, the first Spanish Liturgy was celebrated by Fr. Elie Saadeh, Administrator. Over a hundred people turned out and that number is continuing to grow. It has been quite sometime since the Spanish Community was able to call the formerly known St. Peter's Catholic Church home. The Mass will be conducted in Spanish every Sunday at 2p.m. Everyone is invited to attend. □

Youngstown, Ohio Education Foundation Scholarships

by Amelia M. Yazbek

During the "Back to Cedar Lake" 20th anniversary picnic at St. Maron Church, Youngstown, Ohio, the Education Foundation presented its annual scholarships after Liturgy on August 4, 2012. The Foundation is an independent committee funded through the generosity of parishioners and gracious benefactors.

The Foundation provides to the Diocese of Youngstown the grade school subsidy and the high school tuition fees for the students of St. Maron Church. It also provide the supplies for the church Maronite Formation program and contributes to the MYO. The Foundation contributes to any cause that supports and promotes the Maronite Faith.

This year a total of \$36,500 was awarded for eighteen general scholarships and twelve named scholarships for [Chorbishop] Dominic F. Ashkar; Dr. John J. Stephens Memorial; John J. and Ann Stephens; Mary Louise and Edward R. Beshara; Josephine Hanna Memorial; Betty Claire Nohra Memorial; Thomas and Mary Zachea Joseph Memorial; St. Maron Education Foundation Scholarship for Special Achievement and Dedication; two Helen Jabley Beshara Grants for graduate studies; Beverly Mike Nard Excellence in Nursing; and Nasif T. Thomas Memorial.

We congratulate our recipients on a job well done and look forward to many more years of success for our youth and the Education Foundation. □

Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn

Third Annual Benefit Dinner to feature Edward Cardinal Egan, Archbishop Emeritus of New York

Maronite Catholics and friends from the greater New York area will gather on Friday, October 26, 2012, at the Roosevelt Hotel in Manhattan for the Third Annual Benefit Dinner for the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn featuring Edward Cardinal Egan, Archbishop Emeritus of New York.

The evening will begin with a cocktail hour and hors d'oeuvres at 6:00, then Dinner at 7:30pm. Individual tickets cost \$300 each. Tables are \$5,000 and up. Additional donations are encouraged. Approximately 200 guests are expected.

Proceeds from the Benefit Dinner will be applied to educating Seminarians, funding missions, renovating the Cathedral and helping retired priests. The Eparchy serves 43 parishes, a Seminary, a Convent and a Monastery encompassing 16 states from Maine to Florida. All faithful of the Eparchy, and other people of good will, are invited to join in this special gathering.

Further information may be found at www.stmaron.org or by emailing saintmaron@yahoo.com. □

Birmingham, Alabama Charitable Distribution

by Wanda ElKhourie

A portion of the proceeds of the Fourteenth Annual Lebanese Food & Cultural Festival that was held at St. Elias Maronite Catholic Church, April 20 - 21, 2012, has been given to local, national, and international charities, as follows:

\$5,000 to Patriarchal Charities
\$2,000 to *Tele-Lumiere* Television station in Lebanon
\$2,000 to Bell Center
\$2,000 to Big Oak Ranch
\$2,000 to the Birmingham Catholic Center of Concern
\$2,000 to Birmingham YMCA Strong Kids Campaign
\$2,000 to Catholic Charities
\$2,000 to Firehouse Shelter
\$2,000 to Her Choice
\$2,000 to Holy Family Cristo/Rey School
\$2,000 to John Carroll Building Fund
\$2,000 to St. Andrew Episcopal Church "The Red Door"
\$2,000 to St. Rose Building Fund
\$1,000 to Crohn's Colitis Foundation
\$1,000 to Jimmie Hale Mission
\$1,000 to Mitchell's Place
\$ 500 to Hear Center

St. Elias started its Lebanese Food & Cultural Festival in 1999 to showcase to the citizens of Birmingham the rich heritage, culture and food that is a part of this Christian Lebanese community. The festival has always given a part of the proceeds to charity - over \$277,500 in the last fourteen years to 32 different charitable causes. This is one way that its church family is working together to help with Christian causes here and abroad.

Be sure to mark your calendars for the Fifteenth Annual St. Elias Maronite Catholic Church Lebanese Food & Cultural Festival which is scheduled for Friday and Saturday, April 12 - 13, 2013. □

Uniontown, Pennsylvania 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 and American delicacies and sweets. The festival also featured 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 games. The Ladies Guild, the

Maronite Men's Group, the Church Committee, the Altar Rosary Society and the MYO worked cooperatively to make this event a success. Pleased with our 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. □

Schedule of Bishop Gregory Mansour

October 5 - 6, 2012

Ordination of Brother Patrick to the Order of Deacon, Petersham, Mass.

October 7, 2012

100th Anniversary of Saint Anthony of the Desert Parish and 40th Anniversary of Chorbishop Joseph Kaddo, Fall River, Mass.

October 12 - 13, 2012

Eastern Catholic Conference, Hillsborough, N.J.

October 14, 2012

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

October 15 - 16, 2012,

Oriental/Orthodox/Catholic Dialogue, Bronx, N.Y.

October 19, 2012

Antiochene Orthodox Banquet, Manhattan, N.Y.

October 20, 2012

First Meeting of the newly formed Eparchial Pastoral Council, The Chancery Office, Brooklyn, N.Y.

October 21, 2012

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

October 24, 2012

Eparchial Presbyteral Council Meeting, the Chancery Office, Brooklyn, N.Y.

October 25, 2012

Eparchial Finance Council Meeting, The Chancery Office, Brooklyn, N.Y.

October 26, 2012

Third Eparchial Benefit Dinner, Manhattan, N.Y.

October 27 - 28, 2012

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

November 2 - 4, 2012

Maronite Young Adults Retreat, Washington, D.C. □

Roanoke, Virginia Silver Jubilee of Priesthood



Bishop Gregory Mansour (right) presented Fr. Kevin Beaton with a Papal Blessing on the occasion of 25th Anniversary.

by Mandy Tolano

The weekend of Saturday, July 28 - 29, 2012, was a momentous occasion at St. Elias Maronite Church in Roanoke, Va., celebrating twenty-five years of priesthood for Father Kevin Joseph Beaton, S.F.O., Pastor. We were also honored to have in attendance Bishop Gregory Mansour, who combined his pastoral visit with this jubilee celebration. Although Fr. Kevin's 25th anniversary was on June 13, 2012, scheduling conflicts delayed celebrating his anniversary until after the parish's annual Lebanese festival in June and the Clergy Conference and NAM Convention in July.

The Saturday event began with the Divine Liturgy celebrated by Bishop Gregory, Fr. Kevin, Deacon Nicholas Mammi, and several altar servers. The Knights of Columbus Honor Guard from Council 562 and member of the Order of Saint Sharbel led the procession into the church. Following the Liturgy a formal dinner in the parish hall was served. Mr. Ray Ferris served as Master of Ceremonies and warmly welcomed the attendees, especially Bishop Mansour. Following, Mr. Ferris, on behalf of the parishioners of St. Elias, sincerely thanked Fr. Kevin for his numerous years of religious service and dedication to the Maronite Church. He hoped that this celebration would be a memorable one for him and a sign of how much his new family of St. Elias loves and needs him. Additionally, this joyous occasion was made very special because of the attendance of Fr. Kevin's family, his niece, Adrianna, and her husband, David Jimm, and their two "little pumpkins," as Fr. Kevin fondly refers to them, who traveled from New Castle, Penn., to be with their uncle and great-uncle. Also in attendance was Fr. Kevin's sister, Maureen Lenza, who has recently moved to Roanoke and works at the VAMC.

After the dinner, Bishop Gregory thanked Fr. Kevin for his unwavering devotion, commitment, and obedience over
(Continues on page 20)

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 reminder 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.

the years, not only to him (as Bishop), but to the Church. Bishop Gregory remarked about how much Fr. Kevin cares deeply for his parishioners, so much so that he did not want to leave his last parish, St. John the Baptist Maronite Church in New Castle, without reassurance from the Bishop that the priest replacing him would be just as caring for them. The Bishop also remarked that evidenced by the attendance at this memorable event, he was pleased to see that the parishioners of St. Elias have embraced Fr. Kevin with their love and friendship for him. Bishop Gregory presented Fr. Kevin with a beautifully framed Papal Blessing in honor of his twenty-fifth anniversary in the priesthood.

Following the Bishop's presentation, and representing the parish, members of the Parish Council presented Fr. Kevin with a wooden statue of Fr. Kevin's favorite saint, Padre Pio. Also presented was an engraved signature frame with a photograph of Fr. Kevin on the day of his ordination at the Shrine of Our Lady of Lebanon in Ohio. Everyone had the opportunity to sign the frame's border with well wishes for Fr. Kevin's anniversary. Last, but not least, Fr. Kevin was presented with a monetary purse from his parishioners, friends and family.

On a lighter note, and because of Fr. Kevin's infamous reputation for jokes and play on words, the religious education teachers, accompanied by Bishop Gregory and Deacon Nick, sang a song composed by Jerry Brunning, Director of Religious Education, to mark this momentous event. For those of you who have known Fr. Kevin over the years, this was probably the highlight of the program. The performance of this song was well done and well received by all in good fun, but more important it showed that priests are human and enjoy a good joke once in a while.

Though a bit overwhelmed by this event, Fr. Kevin addressed the attendees and eloquently expressed his love and appreciation to everyone for coming to celebrate this milestone. He talked about his vocation over the years and where he is now. Towards the end of his talk, he thanked Bishop Mansour for his spiritual leadership and guidance throughout the years, he nostalgically remembered his parents (now deceased) for their love, encouragement and nurturing of his desire during his discernment into the priesthood. He thanked his siblings for their love and "putting up with him" throughout the years, and all those, past and present, who formed him into the priest he is today. Lastly, he expressed his gratitude to the parishioners of St. Elias, for he never expected such a grand event and a show of affection and love for their priest. He was deeply and visibly moved and assured his flock that he looks forward to remaining at St. Elias for many more years to come. At the end of his talk, Fr. Kevin was given a standing ovation and applause by all in attendance. The event ended with Fr. Kevin giving the final blessing. Afterwards, people surrounded Fr. Kevin for a Kodak moment and to personally congratulate him on this most joyous event. □

Atlanta, Georgia *Catechetical Workshop*

St. Joseph Maronite Church of Atlanta, Ga., held its first Maronite Catechetical Workshop on Labor Day weekend, Sept 2 - 3, 2012. Sister Marla Marie Lucas



Sister Marla Marie Lucas with the Catechists of St. Joseph Maronite Church in Atlanta, Ga.

was the guest catechetical presenter who guided the three session workshop over two days. Experienced and new catechists of different generations from the Parish attended. Sister Marla Marie's main theme was based on scripture: "Go and Make Disciples" Mat 28: 19 - 20. During her, Sister Marla reminded everyone to take confidence since the catechetical program is God's program. She began the workshop with an excellent video/song about the impact that catechists make on their students. Sister then talked about the mission and journey of faith with emphasis of the roles of the catechists, the pastor, the families and the children. Sister offered valuable Maronite information and resources to use for the program. She also spent time teaching the six tasks of catechesis: promoting knowledge of the faith; liturgical education; moral formation; teaching to pray; building up the Maronite Christian communities; and missionary initiative. In Sunday's session, Sister Marla offered a presentation on praying with children. The session ended with the catechists praying before the tabernacle. Then each catechist was presented with a certificate by Deacon Bob Calabrese. On behalf of all the catechists and Fr. Dominique Hanna, Pastor, we gratefully thank Sister Marla Marie for her presentations which are invaluable sources of information. □

San Francisco, California *Parish Retreat*

by Nicole Rishwan

Our Lady of Lebanon Maronite Church, San Francisco and Bay area, Calif., organized a Spiritual Retreat during the week of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Feast day. Twenty-five adults from the parish attended. Fr. John Nahal, Pastor, was the retreat master at the church of Our Lady of Peace in the middle of the Silicon Valley, where all the high-tech company headquarters are located. The topics were mainly about the church's four dogmas on the Blessed Virgin Mary. There were prayers and devotions to the Blessed Mother, and we prayed for a fifth dogma on Mary the Mediatrix and Co-redemprix. □

Warren, Michigan *Maronite Formation Kickoff*



by Christine Akroush

On Sunday, August 26, 2012, the Catechists of St. Sharbel Maronite Christian Formation program in Warren, Mich., had a mini-retreat to prepare them for the upcoming school year. The mini-retreat was led by Sr. Maximilian Marie, O.P., and joining her was Sr. Mariana McGlynn, O.P. from the Dominican Sisters of Mary, Mother of the Eucharist. The Dominican nuns are from Ann Arbor, Mich. They have even been featured on an episode of Oprah!

St. Louis, Missouri *47th Annual Assumption Pilgrimage*



Bishop Robert Shaheen (right) with a group of parishioners of St. Raymond Cathedral at the National Shrine in Ohio.

by Shelly Vitale

The parishioners of St. Raymond Maronite Cathedral in St. Louis, Mo., united as one to celebrate the Feast of the Assumption of Our Lady during the August 13 -16, 2012 pilgrimage. They were blessed with the presence of their dear shepherd, Bishop Robert Shaheen, who rode along with them on the bus trip. The Bishop gave his blessing

before they departed from St. Louis, and joyful Joan Rask led everyone in the Rosary, praying for a safe and inspirational pilgrimage. The whole journey was a great bonding experience for the parishioners. They shared prayers, stories, laughter, inspirational movies, and snacks. Their motto is "Pray, eat, play: it's the Maronite way."

They arrived to the Shrine to see the statue of the Blessed Mother and immediately gathered around her for another group Rosary. The spiritual power was exhilarating. These pilgrims were a true family in every sense of the word. They cared for one another and cherished their special journey. During their visit, they met many kind people who showed them wonderful hospitality and friendship.

They attended the Maronite Liturgy daily, and the "Anointing of the Sick" along with hundreds of pilgrims receiving the precious holy oil.

The Maronite Pontifical Liturgy was held on Wednesday evening. An enormous crowd of pilgrims attended, along with the celebrants: Bishop Robert Shaheen, Bishop Gregory Mansour and other clergy. The final candlelight procession was breathtaking to see as all the pilgrims walked and sang praises to Our Lady. The evening ended with a magnificent fireworks display.

The St. Raymond pilgrims were sad to leave, but they gathered around their *Mother* once more to say goodbye. They were fulfilled and renewed and ready for next year. □

Washington, D.C. *Young Adults Retreat*

The annual Maronite Young Adults (MYA) Retreat/Workshop will take place November 2 - 4, 2012, in Washington D.C. Msgr. Seely Beggiani, Rector of Our Lady of Lebanon Seminary, will give the talks. There will be time for prayer, confession, socializing and the deepening of our Maronite Catholic faith.



"This Retreat/Workshop is especially important because it takes place in the beginning of the Year of Faith which starts on October 11. Our young adults are a special gift to our churches, as many of them, once they are committed, are great volunteers, choir members, and helpers in our parishes. Good faithful marriages and possible vocations to priesthood and religious life grow from these spiritual opportunities that we offer them," said Bishop Gregory Mansour.

The Workshop will take place in the Crowne Plaza Hotel at 8777 Georgia Avenue in Silver Spring, Maryland. The registration fee is \$250 per person (hotel and food included). Please make a parish check payable to Our Lady of Lebanon Church, 2055 Coral Way, Miami, FL 33145 and have it earmarked MYA Workshop. For more information, please contact Father Elie Mikhael, MYA Director, at ololmiami@bellsouth.net. □



50th NAM Convention in Tampa, Florida

by Lina Sfeir

Preparations are under way for a once-in-a-lifetime Golden Anniversary Celebration of the annual convention of the National Apostolate of Maronites (NAM). The 50th annual convention will be held July 3 - 7, 2013 in Tampa, Fla. - a jewel in the crown of the Sunshine State. Activities and attractions for all ages include four beaches located within city limits, the Florida Aquarium, Busch Gardens and Adventure Island, Lowry Park Zoo, quality museums (such as the Henry B. Plant Museum, Museum of Science and Industry (MOSI), the Tampa Museum of Art, Glazer Children's Museum, and the Tampa Bay History Center) and The Tampa Bay Performing Arts Center.

The Convention will be sponsored by NAM and hosted by the small but vibrant parish of Sts. Peter & Paul Mission, Tampa, Florida.

Situated near the center of the Sunshine State's attractive Gulf Coast, Tampa boasts everything you'd normally find in a big city, from offices perched in high-rises to educational museums and historic landmarks to top-notch dining and dazzling nightlife. But thanks to its location near the Gulf of Mexico and its proximity to miles of sparkling beaches, life in this big city is a bit more laid-back and the Cuban roots of the city provide a unique ethnic feel that sets Tampa apart from other cities on Florida's west coast.

There aren't too many towns that celebrate pirate legends. Tampa, however, annually recognizes the antics of the legendary buccaneer José Gaspar (Gasparilla) and turns the legend into a festival extravaganza that is one of the year's most anticipated events.

The cigar industry, originally brought to Tampa in the

late 1800s by Don Vicente Martinez Ybor, created a 12,000-strong immigrant workforce that churned out 700 million cigars a year.

Tampa has its own busy international airport. Additionally, travelers may also choose the St. Petersburg-Clearwater International Airport across the bay or the smaller Sarasota Airport, about forty miles south. A bus system operated by Hillsborough Area Regional Transit (HART) runs throughout the city and some of the surrounding suburbs. A small streetcar line with ten stops is also a fun way to traverse parts of the city and is reminiscent of early public transportation in Tampa.

Visitors to the central Gulf Coast of Florida will quickly learn that the Tampa Bay area is more than just the wonderful city of Tampa. While guests could stay busy for several days without ever leaving the city limits, the towns and cities outside Tampa are equally as enticing. The two cities most often considered together with Tampa are Clearwater and St. Petersburg. Located across Tampa Bay and accessible from Tampa via your choice of three bridges and causeways, these cities each boast a character of their own. St. Petersburg, the fourth largest city in the state and a popular retirement destination, has earned its "Sunshine City" nickname, thanks to its average 360 days of sunshine per year. Clearwater, the smallest of the three cities, boasts an ideal location on the intracoastal waterway, with close proximity to dozens of pristine beaches. Travel further south and you'll reach Sarasota and the beautiful islands of Longboat Key, where you can shop at ritzy St. Armand's Circle; and Siesta Key, where the sand is as white as powder.

The Convention will be held at the Marriott, Tampa Waterside Hotel & Marina, 700 South Florida Avenue, Tampa, Fla. 33602.

For more information on 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 email peterpaultampa@gmail.com. □

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NAM Convention Raffle Winners

The Board of Directors of the National Apostolate of Maronites (NAM) is pleased to announce the winners of the Convention Raffle:

- **Rev. Paul Mouawad** of Newtown Square, Penn., won the first prize
- **Gus Lehrer** of Youngstown, Ohio, won the second prize
- **Mike Kermec** of Gerard, Ohio, won the third prize
- **Pierre Gabriel** of Hingham, Mass., won the fourth prize.



MIDWEST REGIONAL CONVENTION

November 16 – 18, 2012

Hosted by:

SAINT MARON CHURCH

Cleveland, Ohio

Friday

3:00PM-8:00PM -Registration

7:00PM -Ramsho (Evening Prayer)

8:00PM -Welcome Sahra (finger foods, refreshments, DJ)

Saturday

Workshop I: Maronite Liturgy: History and explanation of the liturgy, its structure and components

Workshop II: A discussion of Maronite identity and how it affects Maronites living in the USA

Excursions

MYA and MYO events

Dinner & Hafli with Amin Sultan and Band

Sunday

11:00AM - Closing Liturgy (church)

12:00PM- Farewell Brunch

For More information call Samir Farah (216) 401-7523 or Jeannie Farah (216) 401 6039

Register online at: www.namnews.org

Convention Hotel: Holiday Inn
6001 Rockside Road
Independence, Ohio 44131
(216) 524-8050 ext. 298



Room Rate: Standard/Queen \$82.00 / Standard King \$82.00
Mention NAM when making reservations (deadline: 11/1/2012)

Apostolic Trip To Lebanon An Opportunity For Dialogue

Continued from page 12

of stability and security. ... Seeing young Christians and Muslims celebrate in great harmony, I encouraged them to build the future of Lebanon and the Middle East together, and to oppose violence and war. Harmony and reconciliation must be stronger than the forces of death."

During Sunday Mass at the City Center Waterfront in Beirut, the Pope had encouraged everyone "to live and bear witness to their faith without fear, knowing that the vocation of Christians and of the Church is to bring the Gospel to all without distinction, following the example of Jesus. In a context marked by bitter conflicts, I drew attention to the need to serve peace and justice by becoming instruments of reconciliation and builders of communion. At the end of the Eucharistic celebration, I had the joy of consigning the Apostolic Exhortation which brings together the conclusions of the Special Assembly for the Middle East of the Synod of Bishops. ... This document reaches out to all the faithful of that dear region, to support them in their faith and communion, and to encourage them on the path of the ... new evangelization. In the afternoon, at the headquarters of the Syrian Catholic Patriarchate, I then had the joy of a fraternal ecumenical meeting with the Orthodox and Eastern Orthodox Patriarchs, as well as representatives of those Churches and of other ecclesial communities."

"The days spent in Lebanon," the Pope concluded, "were a wonderful manifestation of faith and religious feeling and a prophetic sign of peace. The multitude of believers from the entire Middle East had the opportunity to reflect, to talk and especially to pray together, renewing their commitment to root their lives in Christ. I am sure that the people of Lebanon, in its varied but well blended religious and social make-up, will know how to witness with renewed impetus to the true peace that comes from faith in God. I hope that the messages of peace and respect that I sought to give, will help the governments of the region to take decisive steps towards

peace and a better understanding of the relationship between Christians and Muslims. For my part, I continue to accompany those beloved people in prayer, that they may remain faithful to their commitments." □

VIS, September 19, 2012

Deacon/Subdeacon Retreat

Continued from page 16

- Be encouraged. Don't just go by what the media presents. There are seven or eight Bible studies going on at Capitol Hill every day, but the press won't ever cover it. Some people are afraid of the Cross. They know they are going to die, but they ignore what is going on and pretend death is nothing. The world moves by love. Truth is deeper than the media alludes to.
- The faith of our youth is pure; they ask questions. Give them something to do in the Church.

The day continued with a lunch at Our Lady Of Lebanon Church festival; another session with Bishop Mansour; *Ramsho*; dinner at a nearby restaurant and more social time back at the hotel.

The retreat concluded on Sunday morning with *Safro* chanted at Our Lady of Lebanon Church. Along with the catechists for Catechetical Sunday, there was the entrance procession of Bishop Mansour, Chorbishop Dominic Ashkar, (Pastor), Chorbishop Seely Beggiani, Fr. Jack Morrison, and Deacons and Subdeacons beginning the Divine Liturgy, which was a witness of the New Evangelization: the ordained love between man and His God, which is lived out in married life, as well as celibate.

Bishop Mansour commented on what a fine group of deacons, subdeacons and wives we have. As he said, "They are a great gift for the Church. Many of them made great sacrifices to be with their brothers and sisters, and all of them were so very glad they did." He expressed how grateful he is to us. □