

the Maronite Voice



Just as the bush on the mount of Horeb bore God in the flame, so did Mary bear Christ in her virginity.

— ST. EPHREM, SECOND HOMILY ON THE NATIVITY



the Maronite Voice

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2020 Quite the year for the “Practicing” Catholic!

by Bishop Gregory J. Mansour

“For I am certain that neither death nor life, neither angels nor principalities, neither the present nor the future, nor powers, neither height nor depth, nor any other creature, will be able to separate us from the love of God that comes to us in Christ Jesus, our Lord.”

ROMANS 8:32-36

These words from the suffering, yet ever joyful, Saint Paul, remind us of how much we have suffered since March of 2020. Although most of us reading (and writing) this letter have not suffered quite like Saint Paul, or the early Christians, nonetheless, we have been through quite a year!

The Venerable Bishop Fulton Sheen used to urge his listeners to “practice” for such difficult times. He said we should “practice” for suffering, and even for death. His logic was that if we practice well, then when it comes our time to suffer and to die, we might be able to do it well. These are his words:

“Death can be robbed of its greatest fearfulness if we practice for it. Christianity recommends mortification, penance, and detachment as a rehearsal for the great event.... The basic spiritual principle is this, that death must be conquered in every thought and word and deed by an affirmation of the eternal.”

“In the same way, the greatest way to prepare for ‘serious’ pain and anguish is to practice it on a daily basis. If you practice ‘offering it up’ on a daily basis with your less-than-ideal days, you will be better prepared to face and successfully navigate through your more intense moments. Essentially the daily life of a Christian should be



composed of multiple opportunities to practice suffering. Putting this into biblical language, 'The daily life of a Christian should really be composed of opportunities to pick up one's cross and follow Christ.'

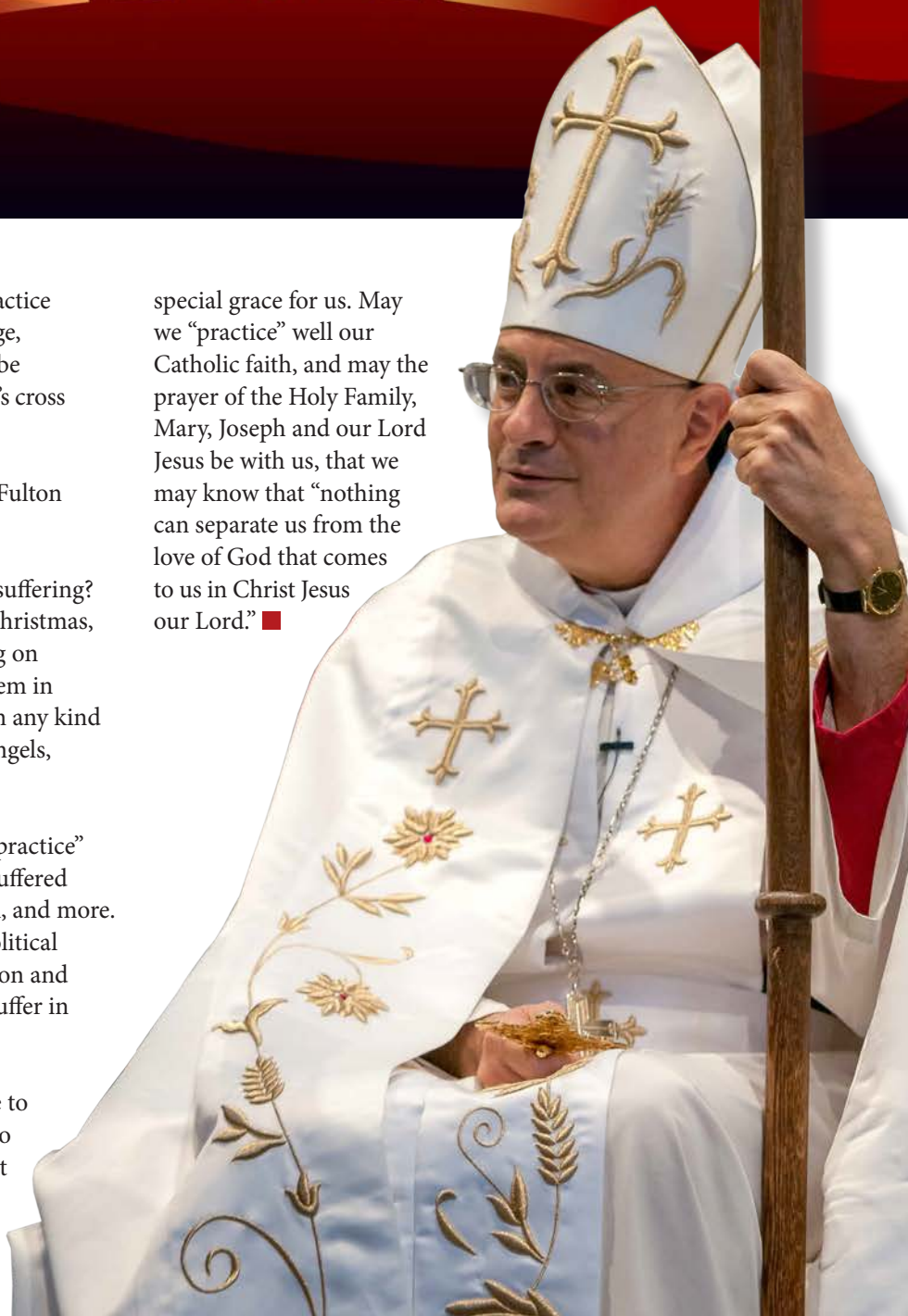
No one could say it any better than Venerable Fulton Sheen!

But Christmas is a time of joy, why talk about suffering? An answer may be found in the *true* story of Christmas, for the Holy Family had their share of suffering on that first Christmas. There was no room for them in Bethlehem. They were poor, they were far from any kind of comfort. But God was with them. He sent angels, shepherds, even kings!

The year 2020 has been an occasion for us to "practice" life's difficulties. In the United States we have suffered from COVID-19, civil unrest, political turmoil, and more. In Lebanon we have suffered the pandemic, political turmoil, economic distress, the August explosion and more. The rest of the world also continues to suffer in many ways.

Thus, this Christmas gives us one more chance to "practice." May we find the spiritual fortitude to live our lives with great hope, even in the midst of great challenges. May this Christmas be a

special grace for us. May we "practice" well our Catholic faith, and may the prayer of the Holy Family, Mary, Joseph and our Lord Jesus be with us, that we may know that "nothing can separate us from the love of God that comes to us in Christ Jesus our Lord." ■



Schedule **BISHOP GREGORY J. MANSOUR**

- 13 DECEMBER** Brooklyn, NY | Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral
18 DECEMBER MYO National Virtual Christmas Gathering
20 DECEMBER Brooklyn, NY | Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral
24-25 DECEMBER Brooklyn, NY | Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral | Christmas
27 DECEMBER Miami, FL | Our Lady of Lebanon Church | Pastoral & Family Visit
1 JANUARY 2021 Fort Lauderdale, FL | Heart of Jesus Mission | Pastoral Visit
2-3 JANUARY Tequesta, FL | Mary, Mother of the Light Mission | Pastoral Visit
10 JANUARY Brooklyn, NY | Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral
31 JANUARY Tampa, FL | Sts. Peter and Paul Mission | Pastoral Visit
1-5 FEBRUARY Lutz, FL | Bethany Retreat Center | Annual Priest Retreat
7 FEBRUARY Brooklyn, NY | Feast of Saint Maron
-

**BISHOP GREGORY AND BISHOP ELIAS WISH YOU A
HAPPY AND BLESSED CHRISTMAS SEASON**



As we prepare for the coming of Christ in our hearts and in the world,
consider giving a gift to your Eparchy this Christmas.

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www.stmaron.org/donate

Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon

www.eparchy.org

Schedule **BISHOP A. ELIAS ZAIDAN**

- 18 DECEMBER** MYO National Virtual Christmas Gathering
- 25 DECEMBER** Los, Angeles, CA | Our Lady of Mt. Lebanon-St. Peter Cathedral | Christmas Liturgy
- 25 DECEMBER** Simi Valley, CA | Sts. Peter and Paul Church | Christmas Liturgy
- 1 JANUARY 2021** Happy New Year!
- 6 JANUARY** Los Angeles, CA | Our Lady Mt. Lebanon-St. Peter Cathedral | Epiphany
- 16-17 JANUARY** Birmingham, AL | St. Elias Church | Pastoral Visit
- 20 JANUARY** The Year of Jacob of Serugh: Beginning of the Online Series of Lectures on the Writing and Theology of the Bishop of Batnan to Celebrate the 1500th Anniversary of His Death

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Christ is the Light of the Nations

by Deacon Kenneth L. Cavara

The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen gentium*, provides us with a mirror to tidy ourselves up. A meditative consideration upon the theme of “light” in *Lumen gentium* can deepen our identity as adopted sons and daughters of the Father in union with the Holy Spirit through the redemption won for us by Christ. As we prepare to greet and welcome the coming of Christ in preparation for His birth, we desire to prepare our homes, our very souls.

The theme of light and darkness is central to salvation history. In the opening chapter of Genesis, the creation of light proceeds from the Almighty Creator’s spoken words, “Let there be light, and there was light” (GEN. 1:3). From the foundation of the created world, light is imparted as an inherent gift. In a continual gaze on the created world as gift,

we notice the utter gratuitousness of God’s call to gather a people to be His own. As *Lumen gentium* teaches:

The eternal Father, by a free and hidden plan of His own wisdom and goodness, created the whole world. His plan was to raise men to a participation of the divine life. Fallen in Adam, God the Father did not leave men to themselves, but ceaselessly offered helps to salvation, in view of Christ, the Redeemer “who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature.” All the elect, before time began, the Father “foreknew and pre-destined to become conformed to the image of His Son, that he should be

the firstborn among many brethren.” He planned to assemble in the holy Church all those who would believe in Christ. Already from the beginning of the world the foreshadowing of the Church took place. It was prepared in a remarkable way throughout the history of the people of Israel and by means of the Old Covenant. (§2).

Christ as light for the nations has come to gather us to be with the Father. The very idea of the Church begins with, in, and through the divine mind.

The Church Fathers use the image of the sun and moon to illustrate the relationship of Christ and His Church. For just as the moon does not generate light in itself but rather illuminates the night sky by reflecting the light from the sun, so too the Church does not generate her light from within, but rather reflects Christ, the divine Sun and true light of the world. Thus, the mission of the Church is none other than to proclaim Christ as the saving light for the world that has become darkened through sin (JN 8:12). Today, our challenge is to proclaim Christ as Light for the world by reflecting Him in our lives through a participation in the sacramental life of the Church and living out the Gospel proclamation which is rooted in love.

The theme of Light in Christ as Head of the Church which is manifested to the members of His body, helps us grasp the divine and human element of the Church. After establishing Christ as Light, *Lumen gentium* teaches how we are to reflect this saving light through a universal call to holiness. Since our minds are darkened by the two-fold gloom of sin and ignorance, we are constantly inspired to renew our baptismal promises and rely on Christ as Light. Our reliance on Christ as Light by reading Sacred Scripture, learning more about our faith, and practicing virtue illumines our minds and strengthens our wills to live out a call to holiness aided by grace through a unique vocation. Accordingly, *Lumen gentium* highlights how the

Church reflects the Light of Christ in the various states of life which include the priesthood, laity, and consecrated religious. Each member of Christ’s body is commissioned to share in the mission to make Christ known as the saints have done for us.

Lumen gentium reiterates the reality of our participation in the three-fold office of Christ as *priest, prophet, and king*. Our baptismal call mirrors the call of John the Baptist who gave witness to Christ as Light rather than himself (JN 1:7-9). Therefore, *Lumen gentium* teaches:

The classes and duties of life are many, but holiness is one—that sanctity which is cultivated by all who are moved by the Spirit of God, and who obey the voice of the Father and worship God the Father in spirit and in truth. These people follow the poor Christ, the humble and cross-bearing Christ in order to be worthy of being sharers in His glory. Every person must walk unhesitatingly according to his own personal gifts and duties in the path of living faith, which arouses hope and works through charity. [...] Finally, all Christ’s faithful, whatever be the conditions, duties and circumstances of their lives—and indeed through all these, will daily increase in holiness, if they receive all things with faith from the hand of their heavenly Father and if they cooperate with the divine will. In this temporal service, they will manifest to all men the love with which God loved the world. (§ 41)

The more we embrace Christ the Light in our pursuit of holiness, the more we live out the two-fold commandment to love God with all our heart, soul, and mind and our neighbor as ourselves (see MT 22:37-40). For to love God necessitates a love of neighbor (see 1 JN 4:20). Moreover, our love for neighbor is an indicator of our love for God and growth in holiness which is an immersion in the

“Christ is the Light of the Nations”

Continued from page 9

Light of Christ. As St. Teresa of Avila explains in *The Interior Castle* (5,3,8):

We cannot know whether or not we love God, although there are strong indications for recognizing that we do love Him; but we can know whether we love our neighbor. And be certain that the more advanced you see you are in love for your neighbor the more advanced you will be in the love of God, for the love His Majesty has for us is so great that to repay us for our love of neighbor He will in a thousand ways increase the love we have for Him.*

If we nurture a contemplative attitude toward our identity as members of the Church founded by Christ, then we should see the image of Christ reflected back to us in the mirror. This reflection is not static but dynamic for we see Christ in our thoughts, words, and actions.

A consideration on the Church would not be complete without an acknowledgment of the perfect reflection of Christ seen in our Blessed Mother. The final chapter of *Lumen gentium* offers a profound teaching on the life of Mary as our Mother and model. Our Blessed Mother’s reflection of Christ is a model for us to imitate. In addition, her motherly intercession is for our great benefit throughout our struggling pursuit of holy perfection. *Lumen gentium* teaches,

But while in the most holy Virgin the Church has already reached that perfection whereby she is without spot or wrinkle, the followers of Christ still strive to increase in holiness by conquering sin. And so they turn their eyes to Mary who shines forth to the whole community of the elect as the model of virtues. Piously meditating on her and contemplating her in the light of the Word made man, the Church with reverence enters more intimately into the great mystery of the Incarnation and becomes more and more like her Spouse. (§ 65)

Our call to holiness as members of the Church is an invitation to prayer and action. The simple soul will make great strides by relying on the Lord for all things and seeking Him in all things. To pursue a self-understanding of the Church, as in a mirror, is not a vain focus on us but rather a gaze into the person of Christ who enlightens our understanding on the great gift of faith. Moreover, we can renew our motivation to be transformed by Christ in anticipation of our future destiny where there will be no need for lamps or the sun (REV 22:5). For the Church is both the means of salvation filling us with the Light of Christ and our end; insofar as, we will continue to be the People of God gathered together offering everlasting praise to the glory of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. ■

Deacon Kenneth L. Cavara is in fourth theology at St. Charles Seminary, in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia

*Teresa of Avila, *The Interior Castle* (New York: Paulist Press, 1979), 100.



PASSING OF MARIAM SEMAAN ABOU ZEID

Mrs. Mariam Semaan Abou Zeid, mother of Father Nadim Abou Zeid, M.L.M. and grandmother of Father Rami Razouk, passed into eternal life.

Mariam is survived by her husband Sleiman Abu Zeid, her sons, Father Nadim, Fandy and Antoine and her daughters Mona, Noha, Najat and Saide. She was preceded in death by her son Rachid.

Condolences may be sent to Father Nadim Abou Zeid, M.L.M. at Saint Sharbel Maronite Catholic Church, 10325 Rancho Destino Road, Las Vegas, NV 89183; and to Father Rami Razouk at Our Lady of Lebanon Maronite Catholic Church; 600 El Camino Real; Millbrae, CA 94030

We offer our sincere condolences and prayers to the family of Mrs. Mariam Nassib Semaan.

May she rest in Peace.

PASSING OF PAUL M. ASMAR

Paul M. Asmar, the son of Monsignor Maroun Asmar, who was retired and living in Lebanon, passed away Wednesday, October 7, 2020, at the age of 57.

Paul was predeceased by his mother, Genieve Asmar. Surviving are his devoted father, Monsignor Maroun Asmar, his sister and brother-in-law Mary and Charlie Smith of North Brunswick, his brother Peter Asmar of Raleigh, NC and four nieces and nephews.

There will be a Divine Liturgy at Saint Sharbel Maronite Church at a later date.

Our sincere condolences to Monsignor Maroun, to Mary, Peter and their families. Paul was a special part of our lives. May our Lord welcome Paul with the choir of angels and saints in the Heavenly Jerusalem.

PASSING OF ELIAS DAMIEN

Mr. Elias Damien, the father of Reverend Paul Damien, on Sunday, 6 December 2020 at the age of 90.

Elias now joins his beloved wife Saydeh and younger son Gilbert. He is survived by his daughter Desiree and his oldest son, Father Paul.

The funeral was held 7 December at Saint Moura Church in Kobayat, Lebanon.

Condolences may be sent to Father Paul at: Saint Michael the Archangel Maronite Church, 806 Arsenal Avenue, Fayetteville, NC 28305



An Ordinary Teen on His Way to Sainthood

by Anna Salloum

Antonia Salzano is a mother whose son transformed the ordinary into the extraordinary. Her son was ordinary: a computer geek who enjoyed web design, played video games, and was in general a normal teenager. He loved animals, soccer, and hanging out with friends. He enjoyed spending time with his many pets, four dogs, two cats, and many goldfish. As a boy, Carlo liked to make students and teachers laugh, but made an effort to quiet down when he realized it was distracting.

He was also extraordinary: Antonia's son is Carlo Acutis, now known as "Blessed Carlo Acutis," a millennial teen who was beatified in October 2020. His body was recently displayed for veneration; it was touching to see the remains of this teen dressed in jeans, sneakers, and a hooded sweatshirt.

Stories of young saints are usually in a rural setting in the late 1800s and early 1900s. It's hard to imagine that a saint was born in 1990 in a big city. Carlo's parents of Polish and Italian backgrounds were working in London when he was born on 3 May. His parents moved to Italy shortly after his birth and settled in Milan.

Carlo's true love was Jesus and the Eucharist. He asked to receive his First Communion at a young age and required a special dispensation to receive it early. He wanted to be as close to the Eucharist as possible and said that the Eucharist was his "highway to Heaven." He enjoyed going to Mass every day. Many recall his words, "If we get in front of the sun, we get sun tans, but when we get in front of Jesus in the Eucharist, we become saints." The teen was also attentive to receive the sacrament of Confession weekly.

Carlo didn't come from a particularly religious background.

On the contrary, he was the one constantly reminding his mother of God's mercy and love pushing her to go to church, not the other way around! His mother had actually only been to Mass but a few times in her life. Because her young son brought her back to the faith, she called him "her little savior." Carlo's zeal inspired Antonia to take classes to improve her knowledge of the Catholic faith; He asked many questions and the only way for his mother to be able to answer him was to take a theology class.

Even the little facets of everyday life had an impact on the soul of Blessed Carlo. His sweet tooth and love for Nutella drove him to practice self control. He limited himself to one hour of video games a week. He made sure to straighten up his room on his own even



though they had people to clean the house. Because of his example, the household staff converted to Christianity and were baptized.

The young man encouraged his teenage friends and classmates to treat each other with respect and dignity. While walking his dog, he picked up litter, and while swimming, gathered trash that was polluting the ocean. Generosity was a way of life for Blessed Carlo too. Most children save up for video games or the latest gadgets that are later quickly forgotten. Carlo spent his money on the poor so they could stay warm. His simplicity was such that he argued with his parents over not needing a second pair of shoes.

At the age of 11, Blessed Carlo was confirmed and then began the creation of a website (link available at the end of the article) on which catalogued Eucharistic miracles from all over the world. He loved traveling on pilgrimages and learning more about places where these Eucharistic miracles took place. This website, designed by the 11-year-old, has been displayed in more 10,000 parishes worldwide. Carlo also became a catechist and even served as a sponsor for a baptism. This zealous boy didn't understand how football stadiums could get packed, but not churches.

In 2006, at the age of fifteen, Carlo was diagnosed with an aggressive form of leukemia. He knew that he wasn't going to leave the hospital. In fact, he only lived for another week. Doctors were concerned about his comfort and pain management; Carlo told them that there were other people going through far worse.

Blessed Carlo offered his pain and suffering for Pope Benedict XVI, the Church, and those in pain around the world. He did this as a means of becoming even closer to Jesus and hopefully making it straight to Heaven. It was this deep example of fortitude and understanding that helped his mother cope with his illness, and ultimately, his death. The death of an only child is something devastating to a parent, but it was how he handled his situation that inspired and encouraged his mother to pull through. After receiving Communion and Anointing of the Sick, he went into a coma and passed away on 12 October 2006. He had no regrets because he felt that he "never wasted a minute on those things that were not pleasing to God."

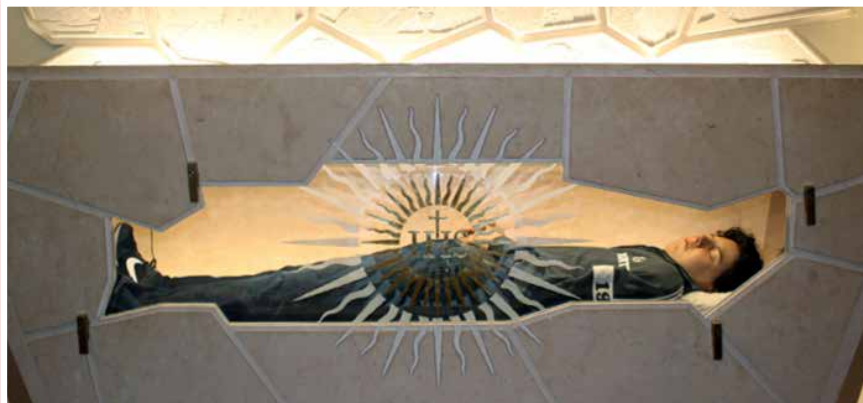
Blessed Carlo left an impression on many lives around him, especially the poor and homeless, who made up a large part of those people who attended his funeral. People began to pray to this young man very soon after his death.

The road to sainthood for Carlo Acutis was a short one. A miraculous healing took place in Campo Grande, Brazil. A young boy with a pancreatic disorder came into contact with a piece of cloth that was part of Blessed Carlo's clothes, and was cured. The young boy's mom recalls that after having been fed strictly on a liquid diet, the boy requested solid food and did not vomit or get sick from eating it. That miracle was approved, and now many people around the world are asking Blessed Carlo Acutis for his intercession. The intercession of this young man has even reached his mother, who at the age of 44, had a pair of twins, exactly four years to the day of her son's death.

Like so many teenagers, Blessed Carlo was glued to his computer; but he constructed a website that would unite people to Christ, the Eucharist, and Heaven.

Blessed Carlo Acutis, pray for us!

To learn more about the Eucharistic Miracles that Blessed Carlo catalogued, please visit <http://www.miracolieucaaristici.org/> ■



Father Elie Kairouz calls Priesthood “a humbling calling”

by Brandon Shulleeta

Without hesitation and with no unnecessary verbiage, Father Elie G. Kairouz responded decisively when asked what makes a good priest. “A good priest is a humble priest,” he said.

For Kairouz — a 54-year-old man who has been a priest for two decades — the journey to priesthood began much sooner than when he was ordained. At a very young age, he felt a calling. He remembers as a 7- or 8-year-old living in the suburbs of Beirut, Lebanon, excitedly waking up Sunday mornings,

anxious to get to church. He had the high privilege of being an altar boy. At 16, he entered a monastery.

“I’m the one who said: I’m going to the monastery. It’s not like somebody said, ‘Hey, go there.’ No, I made that decision at that age,” he said. “Reflecting upon it now, it was the Holy Spirit ... nothing more than that.”



When discussing his parish, St. John Maron Maronite Church in Williamsville, NY, he insisted that the Holy Spirit is also to credit for any achievements, not himself. He pointed to the ongoing successes of the annual church festival. The priest even sees the hand of God dealing with nagging issue of illegal trash dumping on the church property. Kairouz had been praying over how to deal with the troubling illegal dumping issue, which he was concerned was a liability. About that time, the local YMCA had requested an easement, to use church property to gain access to the YMCA. As a good neighbor, he said yes to the YMCA; they were so thankful that they gifted about \$100,000 worth of work clearing the overgrown church acreage, to resolve the dumping problem.

It’s one of the many instances, Kairouz said, of a need that far

exceeded his expertise but was resolved. He said the Holy Spirit helps guide the church through struggles. Even his homilies are guided by the Holy Spirit, he said. He notes that while he spends a lot of time preparing, with a focus on delivering a message that resonates with parishioners, the ultimate sermon tends to be a bit different — usually better — because he feels the Holy Spirit speaking through him.

Importantly, Kairouz sees himself as “one of them” in his church community, as opposed to “above them.” For him, being a humble leader means a willingness to do the very things he asks of his parishioners. So, when they’re cleaning and cooking for the festival, he’s right in there with them, cleaning and cooking.

Kairouz said he has no biological family in America, but considers his parishioners his family. He’s been the pastor at St. John Maron for about 10-and-a-half years, and he felt the same way about his parish of St. Anne’s in Watervliet, New York, where he had been the pastor for a little over nine years. The two parishes are about four hours away on opposite ends of Upstate New York. “It’s a family. I’m a native Lebanese. I have no family here. Every parish that I’m assigned to is my family. ... It’s not an easy assignment if you don’t see it that way,” he said. He said that while becoming a priest was a calling, he believes serving God is achieved through serving people. “That’s how we serve God. That’s how we love God.” He said. “Christianity is to serve the Lord through His people. And He says it clearly, ‘If you do that to the least of my brothers, you do it to me, and if you deny that to the least of my brothers, you deny me.’”

While understanding God’s will is an ongoing mission in his life, Kairouz said it’s something he strives to do daily, and he does so humbly.

“We are here to serve our people,” he said. “It’s a humbling calling.” ■

Brandon Shulleeta is a freelance journalist and parishioner of St. Anthony Maronite Catholic Church in Glen Allen, Va.



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St. Rafka Maronite Mission: Where the American South Meets the East *by Anna Salloum*

A common denominator used by immigrants in their decision of where to settle is the availability of work. In the case of the early Lebanese and Syrian immigrants to the area of Greenville, South Carolina, textile factories were the attraction. America in the 1800s offered work in this trade and a group settled in this area nestled between North Carolina and Georgia. The immigrants enjoyed religious freedom and were able to practice and remain firm in their Maronite Catholic roots. It took almost a century of perseverance and determination to finally plant those roots in a formal way. These families were blessed to establish St. Rafka Maronite Mission in 2002.

That was just the beginning. The second challenge was to find a home, as all prior gatherings were being held at St. Mary's, a neighborhood Catholic church and a nearby monastery. In 2009, a parishioner drove by a property that was for sale. Abouna Bartholomew "Bart" Leon, the Mission's administrator, was contacted immediately and assessed the situation with the help of two parishioners. The location was ideal



— only later did everyone find out that it was already under contract. God, however, knows exactly what we need, when we need it. The contract fell through and the property was again available. After votes, parishioner fundraising efforts, renovation and construction, the new mission was able to celebrate its first Divine Liturgy during Easter of 2010 with a little over 200 parishioners in attendance.

Since then, the Mission has continued to thrive under the pastoral leadership of Abouna Bart. One of the most beautiful developments has been that of welcoming families from all walks of life. The surrounding area is primarily a non-Catholic one, but the population has been growing. St. Rafka Maronite Mission is home not only to Maronite families, but also Korean, Ukrainian, Byzantine, and other Easterners, from



Palestine, Lebanon, Jordan, and Syria. Chaldean and Orthodox visitors enjoy praying here as well. “They love the community and liturgy. Culturally some didn’t know that Eastern churches existed and it has been educational for them,” said Abouna Bart.

This Maronite community, still in its teens, has given a priestly vocation to the Church. Father Aaron Sandbothe, serving at St. George in Uniontown, Pennsylvania, was ordained to the priesthood in 2016.

The pandemic has not stopped the parishioners from worshipping and supporting the church. Especially during these trying times, the community has come together to help one another. The Mission was challenged, as were other fellow houses of worship, but it never closed during the pandemic. Abouna Bart had to get creative. He recalls, “I took an iPhone out, started filming, and used a computer for streaming. Then a family from the Latin Church offered to buy a good quality camera to livestream on Facebook and YouTube. Parishioners can now feel a part of a worshipping community, even if they are

confined to their homes.” Abouna Bart also observed that attendance numbers are picking back up. Parishioners are still coming, and encouraged to wear masks. “They have been super cooperative. We didn’t tie off pews, but social distancing has been respected and parishioners have adapted,” said Abouna Bart. Parishioners who don’t wish to sit inside the church at the pews can still participate in the Divine Liturgy by means of a monitor in the hall.

Abouna Bart is especially proud of the food pantry that was recently established, to help parishioners and those outside the parish. Those in need are receiving meals consisting of turkey, ham, and other foods. The parish MYO has been decorating boxes to deliver to various families. The Maronite youth will also enjoy the “Far South Retreat,” which is a bonfire and get-together for young people. They will enjoy hamburgers, hot dogs and s’mores. Along with the fun, there will be opportunities for learning about confession, gratitude, and religious freedom. The guest speaker is an Iraqi parishioner who will talk to the teenagers about persecution of Christians in the region.

Spiritual hunger is also satisfied at the Mission through different ministries. One of those is the quilting ministry. Parishioners gather to make quilts, which will go to sick people in need of some comfort. Just recently, six new Mission babies were born, and became recipients of baby quilts. Parishioners have also received quilts to make them more comfortable before and after surgery. The quilting ministry is a beautiful way to make new friends, learn something new, and offer warm comfort.

In between hafalis, food festivals, and homemade suppers, there is a new project that Abouna Bart is working on. “There is a great need for consecrated soil,” Abouna Bart explained. His plans are to install a mausoleum with 100 units or so, and parishioners are on board. The Mission, in just 18 years, has surpassed many milestones that would make its ancestors proud. The wishes and dreams that are in the works, are ones that will make the next generation proud, as well as seen and remembered. ■

Anna Salloum is a parishioner of Our Lady of Lebanon in Miami, Florida.

Order Of Saint Sharbel Sunday 2020

11 October was designated as "Order of Saint Sharbel Sunday" in both Maronite Eparchies in the United States. Bishops Gregory Mansour and A. Elias Zaidan asked all Maronite parishes and priests to promote the Order in a special way on that day.

The Order of Saint Sharbel has played an important role in helping to support Maronite seminarians since its founding over 40 years ago. The Order's Annual Membership fees help pay seminarian expenses; Perpetual Membership fees are put into an endowment fund, the interest on which also pays seminarian expenses.

Despite reduced church attendance due to lockdowns, Order of Saint Sharbel Sunday was successful in both Eparchies this year. For example, Saint Joseph Maronite Church in Sandy Springs, Georgia, and Saint George Maronite Church in San Antonio, Texas, each enrolled five new members; and several other parishes also enrolled new members!

As an added incentive in 2020, if each Eparchy receives \$75,000 in new Perpetual Membership fees or special donations by 31 December, Catholic Extension Society will make a \$25,000 grant to each Eparchy's Seminarian Endowment Fund. The Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon of Los Angeles has already reached its goal; the Eparchy of Saint Maron needs just \$22,000 more to reach its goal!

The Order of Saint Sharbel is vitally important in providing for the future of our Maronite Church. Please prayerfully consider joining the Order. You may enroll online at www.orderstsharbel.org. Thank you, and may God bless you for your dedication to the Church!

The Order of Saint Sharbel New Members

ANNUAL

CINDY ABDOU | *St. Joseph* | Atlanta, GA
DIANA EL DAHDAH | *Our Lady of the Cedars* | Houston, TX
REVEREND JOSEPH DAHIF | *St. Theresa* | Brockton, MA
TERRANCE HOLIHEN | *Mary Mother of the Light* | Tequesta, FL
CHRISTA ISAF | *St. Joseph* | Atlanta, GA
THOMAS ISAF | *St. Joseph* | Atlanta, GA
REBEKAH CATHERINE MANDEL | *St. Joseph* | Waterville, ME
REVEREND ELIE MIKHAEL | *St. Anthony* | Lawrence, MA
RAYMOND MILLER | *St. Michael the Archangel* | Fayetteville, NC
BRUCE AND JULIE NASSER | *St. Maron* | Minneapolis, MN
RICK SAHADY | *St. Anthony* | Fall River, MA
SAINT JOSEPH SODALITY | *Our Lady of Purgatory* | New Bedford, MA
JULIE ISAF WALKER | *St. Joseph* | Atlanta, GA

PERPETUAL

PATRICIA BROWN | *Mary Mother of the Light* | Tequesta, FL
IRA MANDEL | *St. Joseph* | Waterville, ME
JOSEPH RIZZO | *St. George Church* | San Antonio, TX
DOROTHY SANCHEZ | *St. George Church* | San Antonio, TX

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

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

EPARCHY OF SAINT MARON
109 Remsen Street | Brooklyn, NY 11201

or

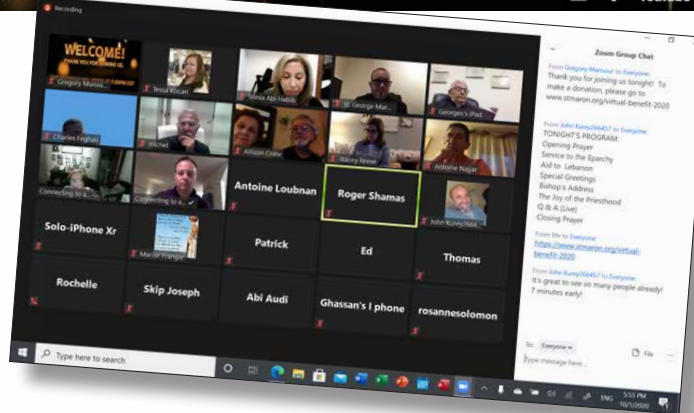
EPARCHY OF OUR LADY OF LEBANON
1021 South 10th Street | St. Louis, MO 63104

First-Ever Virtual Benefit Event for Eparchy of Saint Maron Raises over \$150,000

The Eparchy of Saint Maron replaced its annual Fall Benefit Dinner in Manhattan with its first-ever Virtual Benefit Event online on 1 October. Highlights of the evening included:

- ▶ A composite of 12 short videos from priests in the Eparchy reflecting on “The Joy of the Priesthood.” These inspiring short videos are now available on the Eparchy’s website at <https://www.stmaron.org/virtual-benefit-2020!>
- ▶ Patriarch Bechara Peter Rai, Cardinal Timothy Dolan, Archbishop Gabriele Caccia from the Vatican Mission to the United Nations, Bishop A. Elias Zaidan and other luminaries offered their greetings.
- ▶ Several leaders of the Eparchy’s ministries, such as Youth and Young Adult Ministry, Catechesis, Social Media, and Family Life shared their thoughts about this important work.
- ▶ Bishop Gregory personally hosted the program, and afterwards greeted individual participants from Maine to Florida.

Proceeds from the Benefit will be used to educate seminarians, support poor parishes, assist retired priests, and fund ministries of the Eparchy.



A video from the event can be found online through the Eparchy’s website (<https://www.stmaron.org/virtual-benefit-2020>).

Thank you to all who prayerfully and financially supported this event! May God bless you for your generosity! ■



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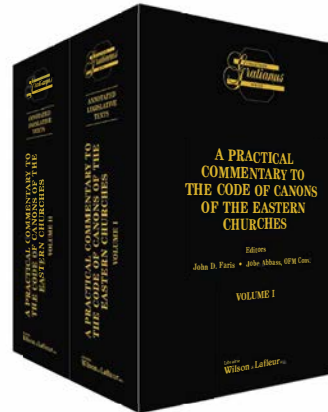
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Practical Commentary on the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches

– John D. Faris and Jobe Abbass



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

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

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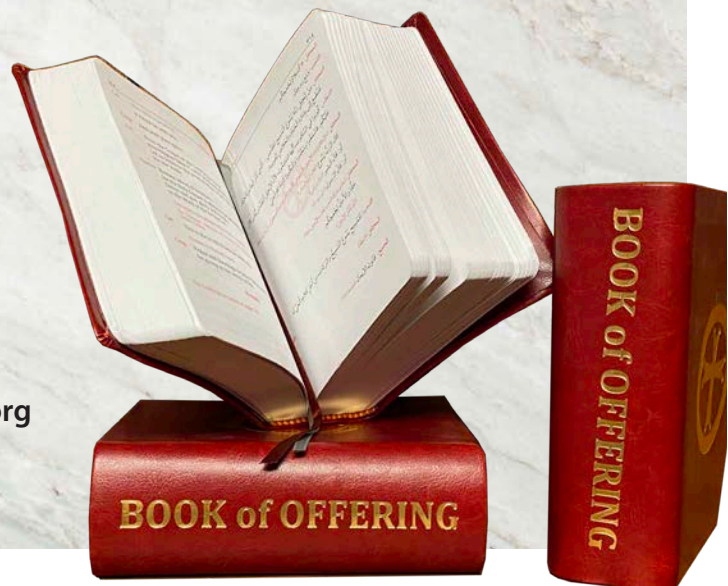
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MYA Fall Events

In early October, the National MYA Worship team led a virtual rosary night. What made this event unique was that in addition to reciting the rosary, with intentions collected from MYA members, a presentation was given on its history and significance. Pictures as well as the story of Our Lady of Fatima were displayed and explained to help express the power of prayer.

Later in October, we had guest speakers Marise Frangie and Dr. Anne Borik lead a discussion about the importance of women's fertility, and our call as women and men to protect and nurture human life from Womb to the Tomb. Marise shared the story of her infertility, and experience of being a Creighton Model practitioner. Dr. Anne Borik shared her experience as a doctor and how she has taken an oath and sworn to preserve life. Following these testimonies there was a fruitful Q&A session before closing the night in prayer.

We began November with an event celebrating All Saints Day, virtually led by the National MYA board Worship Team. Attendees were asked to come prepared to share their favorite saint. The team presented the overall process of becoming a saint. This included the timeline and cost. To help describe the process, the highlighted saint of the evening was St. Barbara. We discussed her upbringing and the journey of her becoming a saint.

Be sure to follow the National MYA on Facebook and Instagram for upcoming event flyers as well as recordings from our previous events! We love to feature local MYAs by sharing photos of their events on our social media accounts every week. As always, you and your family are in our prayers. Stay warm and safe! ■

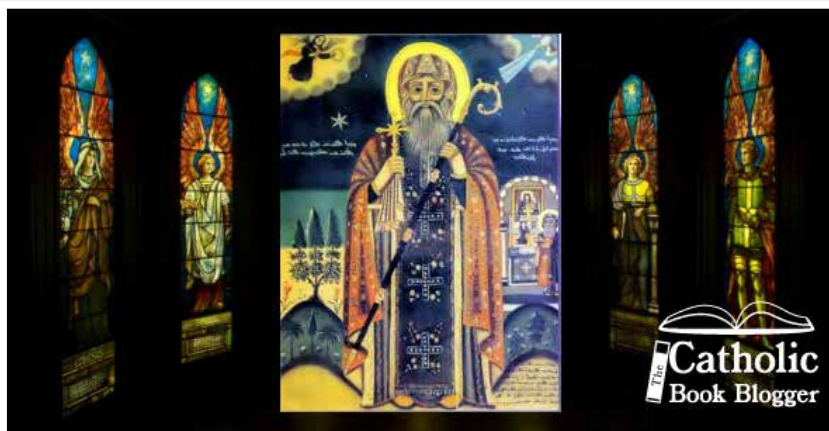
Lecture Series Marking 1500th Anniversary of Death of Jacob of Serugh

Bishop A. Elias Zaidan of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon announced a year-long lecture series on the Writings and Theology of **Jacob of Serugh**, Bishop of Batnan, to Celebrate the 1500th Anniversary of His Death.

Every month in 2021 a prominent scholar on Jacob of Serugh will deliver an online Zoom lecture on the third Wednesday of the month at 10:00 am (Eastern US time).

The series will begin with a lecture by Prof. Sebastian Brock on 20 January.

Make sure to mark your calendar. More details will be furnished in the near future on <https://thehiddenpearl.org/jacobofserugh>.



The Old Testament and Our Maronite Church (Part III)

by Father Anthony J. Salim

As readers of the Bible, we Maronites of the Antiochene and Syriac heritage must make the effort to see how our ancestors once read the Old and New Testaments. The purpose of the third part of this series is to try to see how they did this, to see how today's biblical scholars write about this, and finally to see how the Old Testament is used in at least some of our liturgies.

Encouraged to do the above by the very leaders of the 2006 Maronite Patriarchal Synod (Text 12, ¶21) we read these words:

“The Maronite liturgy is rooted in the Sacred Scriptures. It occupies *in both the Old and the New Testaments* (emphasis mine) a fundamental place.” It goes on to say, “There is no liturgy without the Sacred Scriptures ... Consequently, the Maronite community is considered to be a biblical community centered, in prayer, on the ‘meeting with the Word of God,’ on explaining it, on announcing the Good News, which the Church carries on as a living mission to the whole world.”

When we read the works of the ancient Church Fathers and Teachers of all Church Traditions, we see that they not only provide early attempts to present ideas about theology and spirituality, they also often preserve for us biblical passages which are for various reasons otherwise lost to us. Among these Church Fathers we see the powerful writings of the Syriac Fathers. Notable among them are Aphrahat, the so-

called “Persian Sage,” and James of Sarug, and above all, St. Ephrem, the so-called “Harp of the Holy Spirit.”

As Maronites trying to read the Bible in the context of our own Tradition, we recognize that there is an ancient and famous version/translation of the Bible known as the Peshitta, a Syriac version of the Bible which our ancestors read and a translation that ought to guide us in our own Antiochene/Syriac biblical and liturgical use. The limited space here will not allow more than an important mention of the Peshitta. However, a small but now famous example of how our current Liturgy uses the Peshitta may be seen in our liturgical text of the Hymn of the Angels, the “Glory to God in the highest” (Lk 2:14) in which we pray, “... and peace on earth and *good hope* to all.

Our Tradition is Antiochene, Syriac and Maronite. All these descriptive terms are important.

As Antiochenes we interpret the Bible — Old and New Testaments — in a way characteristic of the Writers who lived in and around the famous city of Antioch, one of the important cities of the Roman Empire. These biblical scholars of the so-called “Antiochene School” of Bible interpretation, such as the famous bishops, Diodore of Tarsus, Theodore of Mopsuestia and John Chrysostom (to name a few), wrote in Greek. They paid close attention to the historical and grammatical aspects of the ancient biblical text. In the words of Robert A. Kitchen, “An authentic signature of Antiochene exegesis is its respect for the biblical narrative.” By doing this, they

sought to discover the meaning the Old Testament authors intended *in their own times and places*. We call this the “literal meaning” or “plain sense” of the verse or passage, not to be confused with the *literalistic* or fundamentalist understanding of Bible texts as used so often by contemporary evangelical preachers. Historical criticism of the biblical text remains an important tool to unlock the meaning of the Bible today.

As Syrians, we see that the Syriac Fathers and Teachers as interpreters of the Bible shared the wider understanding of the School of Antioch as described above. However, characteristically, the Syrians also effectively used the important biblical tool for interpreting known as *typology*. Stated simply, typology sees persons and events in the Old Testament (“types”) as fulfilled in the New (“antitypes”). A well-known example can be seen in the Israelites crossing the waters of the Red Sea to freedom from their enslavement in Egypt, and Christian Baptism, whereby through the immersion in water Christians are freed from the slavery of sin.

Such rich typology is seen abundantly in the poetic reflections of the Syriac Fathers, especially James of Sarug and St. Ephrem. A very good example, known by many of the Church Fathers of all Traditions, is the story of Jonah and the “big fish,” sometimes translated as a “whale” (Mt 12:40): Jesus said “Just as Jonah was in the belly of the whale three days and three nights, so will the Son of Man be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights.” We see especially James of Sarug spending a good deal of time showing us that Jonah’s spending time (“three days”) in the belly of the big fish before being spewed out ashore in Nineveh was a type of Jesus spending a similar time in the tomb before his glorious emerging from that tomb in the Resurrection.

Typological reading of the Old Testament is important, for it helps us to see the *unity of the Bible*, as these events tie the events of the First Covenant to the New Covenant, sealed in the Blood of Jesus on the Cross and lived in the Church and fulfilling the ancient types.

Discovering our Syriac roots, we can often see typology at work in many of the prayers in our liturgical tradition. This is seen especially in the elements of the Liturgy of the Word known as the *hoosoyo* (Prayer of Forgiveness) and accompanying Lectionary Readings. Regrettably, in the 1991 publication of our current Maronite Lectionary, Old Testament Scripture Readings are lacking. However, a fine example of typology of the two Joseph-dreamers can be seen in a former Lectionary Reading and *Hoosoyo* used in the United States for the Sunday of the Revelation to Joseph used in the United States until 1991. Contrasting the Joseph in Egypt, who saved his brothers from famine and sent them back to Israel, the Divine Service of the day speaks of Joseph the Dreamer, husband of Mary, who takes Mary and the infant Jesus back to Israel after the malicious Herod is dead, thus saving Jesus from possible death under another Herod. The recurring anthem of the Qolo for that Service was: “O Mystery of Jacob realized, O true and perfect dream come true.” Sadly, we no longer hear this in the revised *Qoorbono*.

Finally, we are Maronite. The liturgical texts we have used in worship from the beginning have at times changed. Yet these texts of the Divine Liturgy, of our Lectionary, of the Divine Office or the sacramental Mysteries define who we are as disciples of Jesus in the spirit of our Father, St. Maron.

Despite this lack in the current Lectionary and *Qoorbono*, and lest we Maronites be accused of

“The Old Testament and Our Maronite Church (Part III)”

Continued from page 23

neglecting the Old Testament altogether, let us remember that we do find Old Testament Readings when we pray *Ramsho* (Evening Prayers, or Vespers) and *Safro* (Morning Prayers, or Lauds), as well as the other “hours” of the Divine Office.

In conclusion, by restoring Old Testament Readings to a revised Lectionary, we would be enriched because:

- we would better see the innate richness that the Old Testament offers, especially if we have chosen to read (and study) it on our own, which we ought to do anyway
- such study can also help us better to see how the Old Testament was used as a basis for New Testament Writings
- we could better see how the Old Testament could fit into the Word Service of the *Qoorbono*
- we would hear fuller biblical preaching by our priests and deacons
- we would more readily see the typology which our Liturgy employs, because we will be more familiar with the Old Testament allusions which Saint Ephrem and others were so fond of using

Let us hear St. Ephrem’s challenge to the Scribes and the Pharisees about their lack of understanding of their own Scriptures about how they point to Jesus:



Woe to you, lawyers, because you have hidden the keys! That is, because they had hidden the knowledge of our Lord’s manifestation which was in the prophecies. If our Lord is the door, as he has said, it is clear that the keys of knowledge belong to him. The scribes and Pharisees did not want to enter through this door of life, in keeping with what he had said, “See, the kingdom is among you. He was referring to himself, for he was standing in their midst (Commentary on Tatian’s Diatessaron 18.8).

In conclusion, with our Syriac Fathers, it is crucial for us not only to appreciate the use that the New Testament Writers made of the Old Testament, but also to appreciate our own Antiochene-Syriac heritage as well, especially in our Maronite liturgical tradition. This can only be accomplished by earnest attention and study. In doing so, we can better welcome the opportunity to be the kind of Catholic Bible lovers that our God wants us to be. ■

Virtual MYO Retreats 2020

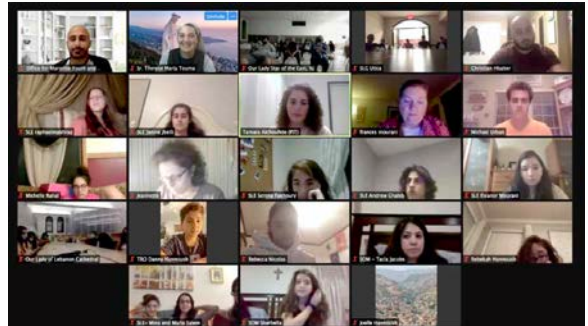
The Office for Maronite Youth and Young Adults in the Eparchy of Saint Maron hosted two Regional Virtual MYO Retreats in October to inspire, connect and strengthen our youth especially in these difficult times. We were blessed to have close to 100 youth and leaders participating from about 20 parishes. Here are some testimonies.

Susie Chahwan | Boston, MA:

“Participating in the MYO Regional Retreat was a great opportunity to meet Maronite youth from different states in the USA. I enjoyed talking to people who have the same interests as me. The theme of the retreat was “Anchored in Hope.” It was a well needed reminder! I learned in the midst of the current events; we should never lose hope knowing that Jesus is always by our side. He is ready to help us overcome any obstacle we cannot go through on our own. We need to be patient and believe that Jesus can calm the turbulence in our hearts if we let Him take more control of our lives.”

Robert Ayoub | Washington, DC:

“The Virtual MYO retreat was an amazing event that I was blessed to join. It consisted of fun ice-breakers, a video from Dr. Mario Sacasa, a guest speaker speaking on the topic of “Hope,” and a special worship song



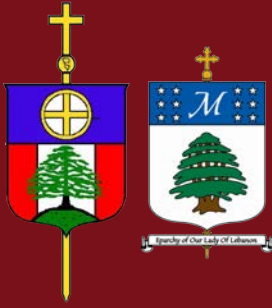
“Way Maker” that was very inspiring. My favorite part of the evening was hearing everyone’s perspectives during the discussion time. While in the breakout room, it felt like everyone was so close with each other, even though I had never met most of the people there! Hearing other people’s stories in the breakout rooms created a personal connection with everyone, which is something I did not expect. My biggest take away from the guest speaker was to always “try” with anything I deal with in life. Even though this sounds much easier than it really is, this idea is something I want to live by as I grow as a Maronite. It was great meeting several new Maronites from around the country, and I can’t wait for the next retreat!”

Julia Benkovic | Fort Lauderdale, FL:

“It was a nice experience being put in a group with a smaller number of people, it made the whole experience feel personal, even if it was online. I really enjoyed hearing people my age talk about their lives as Maronites! It is always hard for me at school, where the faith is often ridiculed and the Lord’s name is abused, I’m never able to talk about my faith there...But this experience allowed me to be open about my faith with my peers. It made me feel accepted.”



Stay tuned for more MYO Virtual events in 2021! Contact the Office at myyaoffice@gmail.com for more information and resources to strengthen your youth ministry. ■



Effective Ways You Can Help Your Eparchy!

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

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

"I give and bequeath to the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon of Los Angeles _____% of the residue of my estate [or: the sum of \$_____]."

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For more information on any of these options, please contact:

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maroniteswest@yahoo.com

Ordination

St. George | Uniontown, PA | Subdiaconal Ordination of Charles Michael

by Dr. Mabel George Howard

On 9 October 2020, clergy, family, and friends gathered for the Ordination of Charles Michael to the Minor Orders of Cantor, Lector, and Subdeacon at St. George Maronite Church in Uniontown, Pennsylvania. The Reverend Chorbishop John D. Faris from St. Anthony Maronite Church in Glen Allen, Virginia, celebrated the Divine Liturgy assisted by Fr. Aaron Sandbothe, Pastor & Sponsor; Fr. Alex Harb, Pastor of St. Ignatius of Antioch Maronite Church in Dayton, Ohio; Fr. Ron Simboli; Rev. Ron Larko, Pastor of St. John Byzantine Church in Uniontown, PA; St. George Church Subdeacons: Thomas R. George, Dr. Mallard George, and Dr. Charles Machesky; and Noah Michael, altar server. In his homily, Chorbishop Faris discussed the importance of the role and responsibilities that the subdeacon has in maintaining the sacred space in the church. He stated, “subdeacons are instruments and tools of God, and God will take care of you as you serve the church and its people.”

When asked why he pursued ordination to the subdiaconate, Charles commented, “I am a lifelong Maronite, and I respect our ancient traditions. There have been countless individuals (family, clergy, friends) who have influenced and encouraged my religious journey.” Charles has remained active in the church throughout the years as an altar server, youth religious instructor, and organization officer. Charles feels that the subdiaconate strengthens his faith and allows him to serve the church and community while involving others in his mission. Charles and his wife, Ginelle (Gina) have two children, Amelia and William (Toufie) who have supported him on this new religious journey. Following the ordination, a reception was held in the parish hall to celebrate the joyful event. Congratulations Subdeacon Charles! We wish you many blessed years of serving God and His Church. ■



Parish News

PITTSBURGH, PENNSYLVANIA

Farewell to Father Rodolph

On Sunday, 27 September 2020, at the newly consecrated altar of Our Lady of Victory Church, parishioners and Fr. Antoine Kairouz, administrator of St. Theresa of Calcutta Mission, gathered to bid farewell to Fr. Rodolph Wakim. The youth of the parish were especially sad to say goodbye to Fr. Rodolph who had been their spiritual leader for thirteen years. However, they were also pleased that Fr. Rodolph was about to embark upon his new religious mission to the people of St. Stephen Church in Charlotte, North Carolina.

The faithful and visitors in attendance posed for a photo as a remembrance of their beloved priest. To show their love, respect, and appreciation for Fr. Rodolph, a delicious meal was provided for everyone to enjoy. This celebration was a wonderful opportunity for family, friends, and parishioners to visit with Fr. Rodolph. The congregation was grateful for his support, guidance, dedication, and kindness at Our Lady of Victory Church. Fr. Rodolph had touched so many hearts. May God's blessings be with Abouna Rudy! ■



AKRON, OHIO

Our Lady of the Cedars | First Communion



1 October 2020

Front: Antony Joseph Adam Lababidi, Bruce Leonardo Naseeb Nieman. Alexander Fares Joseph Sabbagh // Back: Sabina Maria Sabbagh, Jane Theresa Nemr, Mila Rose Daher, Maria Rose Silfani



17 October 2020

Front: Maria Filomena Reusch and Maryn Terez Stewart // Back: Deacon Thomas Maroon

Not Present: Maria Stewart, Director Religious Ed.; Teachers Claudine Sabbagh and Jessica Ghorayeb ■

CLINTON TOWNSHIP, MICHIGAN

St. Sharbel Maronite Church Fall Events

The parishioners of St. Sharbel Maronite Church in Clinton Township, MI, joined in celebrating the 105th Birthday of Diane George during the Divine Liturgy on Sunday, 25 October 2020! Chorbishop Alfred Badawi, pastor, honored her with a special acknowledgement and blessing. Diane has been an active member of the Maronite Church in the Detroit metropolitan area her entire life. She has also been a longstanding member of the St. Sharbel Church Ladies Altar Society. May God continue to bless Diane with good health, happiness, and peace this coming year!



by Rita M. Yammine

In preparation for Thanksgiving, the Ladies Altar Society of St. Sharbel Church coordinated a Thanksgiving Food Drive. The food drive was promoted in the church bulletin and weekly announcements at liturgy. Parishioners could place the items they brought in marked Thanksgiving Food Drive boxes. Some suggested foods included pasta, spaghetti sauce, flour, and canned vegetables. Additionally, parishioners could donate gift certificates and gift cards, as these items were needed to purchase turkeys. The Ladies Altar Society found beautiful success in their efforts, as more than 30 families were fed. What a blessing it is to aid the less fortunate! ■

EASTON, PENNSYLVANIA

Aid for Lebanon

When news of the 4 August explosion at the Port of Beirut reached the United States, Maronite churches and communities across the country wanted to help. The explosion resulted in over 200 fatalities, more than 6,500 injured, and nearly 300,000 left homeless. This catastrophe impacted Lebanon's ongoing economic crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the intense civil and political strife. Religious and charitable organizations, the lifeline of many Lebanese communities, were among those hit the hardest.

On 5 August, the Most Reverend Bishop Gregory Mansour sent a call-to-action letter to all Maronite parishes in the Eparchy of St. Maron. Stating that "these unprecedented times call for unprecedented prayer, fasting, and almsgiving," Bishop Gregory prompted organizations and individuals to generate donations for those in need.

The youth groups of Our Lady of Lebanon Church in Easton, PA, formed a social media connection called @lv4lebanon. To raise funds, they held a spinach pie sale and organized a gift card raffle working with Lebanese business owners and others in the area. Additionally, the St. Theresa Sodality sold "Beirut Strong" face masks to raise money for Lebanese charities and to bring a message of hope and strength to the Lebanese people. The ongoing "Beirut Strong" mask sale has been a tremendous success. Proceeds are forwarded to the Missionary Sisters of the Most Blessed Sacrament and other charities. If interested in purchasing a mask, please email: lolchurch@yahoo.com or contact the rectory at 610-252-5275. ■



Parish News

MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA Supporting Beirut

St. Maron Church of Minneapolis, like many communities throughout the world, participated in supporting our brothers and sisters in Lebanon, who were devastated by the explosion at the Beirut harbor on 4 August 2020. The parishioners and friends of St. Maron in Minneapolis, and Holy Family in St. Paul, have contributed to support the poor and the needy. A container was shipped to Lebanon in mid-October that holds new clothes, school supplies, medical equipment and materials, food, and blankets. The container was sent to Caritas Lebanon, which is the charitable arm of the Maronite Church in Lebanon.

A very special thanks to all those who contributed, and a big thanks to all the parishioners who flocked to sort, package, and load the donations. We continue to pray that the people of Beirut may find healing and strength to overcome this catastrophic tragedy.

St. Maron Church was able to contribute over \$70,000 to support Caritas Lebanon. May the Lord reward all those who have helped in any way and bless our beloved Beirut and her beautiful people.

On 9-10 October, St. Maron's held a 24-hour Adoration and Prayer for Lebanon. The Eucharist was exposed and broadcasted live for 24 hours. The day started with a concert that was held in honor of



the 43rd Anniversary of the Canonization of St. Sharbel. The concert featured Ft. Emmanuel Nakhle on the keyboard, Chorbishop Sharbel Maroun with seven hymns for St. Sharbel, and Deacon Mikael Jalkh offering meditations.

You can watch the concert again on the first page of the website of St. Maron Church by visiting www.stmaron.com. ■

JAMAICA PLAIN, MASSACHUSETTS

Our Lady of the Cedars Rosary Night

On 7 October 2020, the Daughters of Our Lady of the Cedars of Lebanon Church in Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts, held a Rosary Night in honor of the feast day of Our Lady, Queen of the Holy Rosary. While practicing social distancing in the church, parishioners recited the rosary in both English and Arabic to celebrate the Mother of God. Many other faithful prayed the rosary at home. The participants prayed for the people of Lebanon who suffered greatly during the 4 August 2020 explosion and for worldwide healing from the COVID-19 pandemic. Special prayer intentions were offered to Our Lady who intercedes to God for His blessings. ■

UNIONTOWN, PENNSYLVANIA

Autumn Activities

by Dr. Mabel George Howard

20 September 2020 marked the 31st Annual Uniontown Rosary Walk sponsored by the Altar & Rosary Society of St. George Maronite Church. This spiritual event, honoring the Mother of God, began in the St. George Church Garden of Prayer with the recitation of the first decade of the rosary. The Knights of Columbus led the participants in a procession to five other parishes where the faithful from three Catholic traditions — Syriac, Latin and Byzantine — prayed in unison. The Rosary Walk concluded with a final Benediction, religious hymns, and the Litany to the Mother of God.

On 24 October, the Youth Faith Formation students enjoyed a “spooktacular” Halloween “Trunk or Treat Night” sponsored by the MYO. The children, dressed in colorful costumes, were excited to collect loads of candies and gifts from St. George parishioners.

Fall activities continued on 25 October as St. George held its first “Fall Food Festival To-Go.” Crowds of patrons enjoyed a variety of Middle Eastern Ethnic Foods and traditional delicacies prepared by the St. George Ladies Guild, including grape leaves, kibbee, luban, tabouli, hummus, lamb, lubia, pita, falafel wraps, spinach pies, cabbage and veggies, fried dough, baklava, and namoura. Customers placed their food orders and were directed to “drive-thru” the parking lot as runners delivered the prepackaged purchases to their cars. Basket raffles and prizes were also available. While following specific safety guidelines during this COVID-19 health crisis, St. George church members worked collaboratively to strengthen bonds for the common good of the parish and its Lebanese heritage. ■



Parish News

HOUSTON, TEXAS Fall Festivities

by Marcella Georges

For the last few months, Our Lady of the Cedars has remained quite busy! Keeping our safety measures as consistent as ever, we have adjusted to this new normalcy, and we have adjusted well.

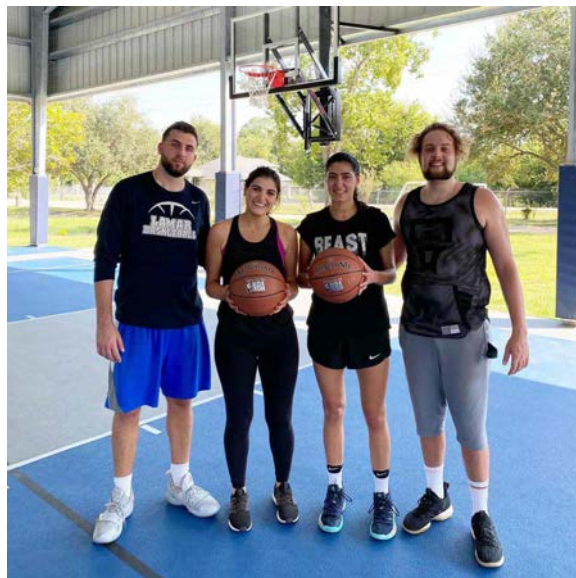
With the weather on their side, our parish organizations were each able to host outdoor events at least twice a month. Our MYO held their board election, along with two dinners with Abouna. MYA had two very successful events: a Basketball Tournament held by our own MYA and their National Retreat.

For the first weekend of October, MYA packed and headed to Austin for their weekend-long camping trip. Their turnout was greater than expected, and just as fun as, if not more, than they anticipated. The Knights of the Cedars held a Barbecue for all male parishioners ages 35 and up, which included a Spiritual Talk by Abouna Edward. Halfway through October, the Parish Council put together a Parish-wide movie night and dinner. The movie was projected outdoors with tables and chairs set up for and attended by over 100 people. To keep the kids and youth in high spirits, MYO and MYKids both hosted an incredibly successful Halloween event with games, food, pumpkin painting, and much more!

The Daughters of Mary kicked off the first Saturday of the Month of the Rosary by praying the rosary before liturgy. They honored the rest of this month with an organized rosary every Sunday between our 9:30am and 11am liturgies.

Aside from all the fun and safe activities we were able to host outdoors, we remained extra cautious when it came to our organizations' monthly meetings, Bible Study, and Spiritual Talks, by keeping them virtual.

We are looking forward to all of our upcoming events and hope everyone is staying safe and healthy! ■



Our Lady of the Cedars First Communion Class 2020

FALL RIVER, MASSACHUSETTS

Knights of Columbus Council

by Msgr. James A. Root

Whenever one hears Knights of Columbus, you automatically think about capes, swords, and feathered hats. Here at St. Anthony of the Desert we think of hard-working Catholic men gathered to work for the good of 'humanity' in every sense of the word. Two years ago, one of the Catholic churches in Fall River closed its doors. As the old saying goes — *when one door closes, another opens*. That is what has taken place at St. Anthony of the Desert. The Knights of Columbus were looking for a new home. Honestly, they scoped out six churches in the greater Fall River area and decided to come to our parish home. Their decision was based on many criteria: from space availability to handy-capped accessibility to a vibrant, spiritually-centered community of faith. Here, they found all the above.

From day one to the present, the men of the Knights of Columbus have been such an asset to our Maronite Church. Together we have grown in faith, service, and friendship. On 4 October 2020, immediately following the 10:00am Divine Liturgy, the Council swore in the newly elected officers for the Msgr. Jean A. Prevost Council #12380. During the announcements, Deacon Brian Dunn, a Knights member, got up and informed everyone that the Knights had a presentation for the Parish. Paul A. Flanagan, immediate past State District Deputy, along with Rich Zopatti, current District Deputy, presented Msgr. James and the community with the Icon of Our Lady Help of Persecuted Christians as a sign of solidarity and hope for all persecuted Christians throughout the world. This icon had traveled to all of the councils in Massachusetts and, at the request of the local Council, was given to St. Anthony Church as its permanent home.

We encourage every Catholic man to join this outstanding organization. The parish family of St. Anthony of the Desert is so glad that the Knights are a part of their community of faith. ■



AUSTIN, TEXAS

Mission Doctors for Lebanon

by Msgr. Don Sawyer

We have witnessed the bravery of doctors, nurses and all those who work in the medical field during this pandemic. We appreciate their sacrifices and their commitment to help all of us to stay safe. We Maronites have many such unsung heroes. They are in our midst and contentedly labor for us out of their love and commitment to God.



I have had the pleasure and honor of knowing one such person for some years when we were founding Our Lady's Maronite Parish in Austin, Texas. Dr. Ray Hachem is an epidemiologist, the president of the American Lebanese Medical Association, and also the executive director of the World Institute of Medical Education. He served several years on the executive board of the National Apostolate of Maronites and is serving several other humanitarian organizations that are focused on bringing health care to the most vulnerable and needy people of the Middle East and around the world.

Dr. Hachem saw the need of elderly Christians in the villages of the mountains of Lebanon who do not have the means to travel to doctors or the resources to pay for treatment. For some years now he has led missions of doctors and medical personnel who commit to going to Lebanon and seeing those who would otherwise go without the needed medical attention.

Working with several charitable organizations including St. Vincent de Paul Society and with the American University of Beirut, medical students are paired with the team that comes from the USA. The students get firsthand experience in the field working as translators with seasoned specialists. They learn the need within their own country and most importantly, they learn how to give back. All medical attention and medications are given freely to the very appreciative patients. Unselfishly, Dr. Ray and his team of experts do this important ministry yearly, which touches and shapes the quality of lives for so many Christians and, in particular, our Maronite brothers and sisters.

Let us give a hand to thank these men and women and let us emulate them in our own parishes. Our Lord said, "when you do it for the least of my brethren you do it for me!" As St. Paul says, "let us not tire of doing good". If you wish to be a part of this great ministry you may reach Dr. Ray Hachem at: 713-907-2839. ■

Choices Are Defining

by Tamara Alchoufete, MYA from Our Lady of Victory, Pittsburgh, PA

Life is full of choices. I have had to make many choices in 2020 and it's been tough with all the challenges, especially juggling the fear of illness, social distancing, and adapting to virtual life. My own world went virtual eight months ago and I am still adjusting to the hyper-accountability of this new age.

It is difficult to anticipate what the future holds. SO much uncertainty can make it nearly impossible to determine if I am making the right decisions. I have come to realize that choices are not simply “yes” or “no,” but how I accept and make them are daily defining who I am.

For young people in the Church like myself, having to learn complex courses through a screen, balancing a professional and personal life, and all the while trying to grow in our spirituality is anything but simple. Not to mention all the gray areas that come with transitioning into young adulthood.

The experiences and events of the past year have taught me about personal growth and my capacity to develop even in isolation. It has shown me that we not only need others to help us progress, but also that we need to allow ourselves to move forward without fear of the unknown. My world going virtual gave me a moment for the constant noise to subside and for the blessing of silence to take its place. This gave way to the blossoming of my spiritual life.

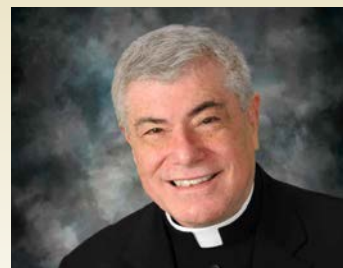


This past April, I had the honor to not only receive training in the Praise and Worship style of music, but I was also blessed with an opportunity to become a member of the Office for Maronite Youth and Young Adults for the Eparchy of Saint Maron. I am now their Social Media and Marketing Coordinator. I also assist in leading prayer using music and scripture to connect young Maronites in the Eparchy.

Why did I say “yes” to these opportunities? To put it simply, I made the choice to accept the awesome gifts God has given to me and use them to serve in youth ministry. I always think back to “The Parable of the Talents” from Matthew 25:25 when the servant with the one talent admits, “...so out of fear I went off and buried your talent in the ground. Here it is back.”

God does not give us gifts just for us to sit around and never use them. Each of us holds talents that no one else has. It wasn't until I began tapping into mine that I started to develop a strong relationship with God. It is that which gives me the confidence to be an active young Christian today. We have our own individuality. When we take hold of that power, the possibilities are endless. ■

From the Editor



We are all familiar with the Beatitudes, so named because, in Latin, each verse begins with *Beati*, the plural form of “blessed” or “happy.” The Beatitudes list a variety of conditions and results. Jesus proclaims that persons who are poor, who are hungry, who are crying, who are meek, who are merciful, who thirst for justice are blessed because they will receive their reward, ultimately the Kingdom of Heaven.

An Italian boy, Carlo Acutis, born in 1991, was a normal teenager, but still special; He loved God and people around him to an extraordinary degree. He was courageous in defending his schoolmates who were bullied, he was involved in helping the poor and the homeless, he was passionate in sharing news about miracles relating to the Eucharist. He said that the Eucharist was his “highway to heaven.”



In 2005, Carlo was diagnosed with leukemia. Throughout his painful ordeal, Carlo offered his suffering for the Lord, for the Pope, and the Church.” He died in 2006 and was buried in his soccer uniform in Assisi according to his wishes.

People appreciated the holiness of this short life. Soon after his death, there was a call for him to be made a saint. In consideration of the holiness of his life and death, in 2013, he was declared a Servant of God, the first stage of sainthood. A miracle would confirm God’s approval of the holiness of this boy.

Mattheus Vianna, a young boy like Carlo, was born with a birth defect that made eating difficult—he survived on an all-liquid diet. His mother prayed for a cure and asked

for Carlo Acutis’ intercession at a prayer service. At the end of the service, Mattheus told his mother that he felt healed; indeed, he went home and ate solid food.

Could it be that Carlo is a saint? The Vatican conducted a thorough investigation of Carlo’s life. After a medical board verified that there was no natural reason for the cure of Mattheus, Pope Francis declared this to be a true miracle and declared the fifteen-year-old, Carlo, to be *Beatus* (“Blessed”); the next step would be sainthood.

The Beatitudes describe various conditions, all of which are possibilities for true holiness. Carlo, in being a teenager of his times, used the circumstances of his life to live out holiness and showed us that...

Blessed are those who wear sneakers
and soccer uniforms;

Blessed are those who create Web sites;

Blessed are those who protect schoolmates from bullies;
Blessed are those who support friends from troubled families;

Blessed are those who like television, comics and movies;
Blessed are those who help the destitute and the homeless;
Blessed are those who play video games;
Blessed are those who love the Eucharist.

Teenagers should reflect on Blessed Carlo’s life and discover their own paths to the Kingdom of God. May the example of this blessed “millennial” serve as an example for all of us, but especially the young.

Blessed Carlo, pray for us. ■

Chorbishop John D. Faris

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