

Volume 19 | Issue 4 | July/August 2022

# *the* Maronite **Voice**



*Feast of St. Sharbel*  
23 July



# the Maronite Voice

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### THE MARONITE VOICE

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# Walking the Walk

Dear Friends,

I have “walked the walk” for the annual Pro-Life March in Washington, D.C., since I was a seminarian (for more than 40 years). *Roe v. Wade* has been overturned.

When the opinion draft was recently leaked, I read it carefully. And now that it is the decision of the court, I can say that I agree, for the most part, with its reasoning, which was basically this: some say life begins at conception, others say that it is a private matter between a woman

and her doctor, since this is a dilemma that only the people can decide, it should be decided not by the courts but by attempts at persuasion, and then by voting in the legislature.

Obviously, this opinion was not based on moral principles, but rather a reaffirmation of the originalist approach to the United States Constitution, as well as a respect for the governmental checks and balances intended in our Constitution, and of the important work of legislatures making laws. Now it is up to the states to decide the matter.



Nonetheless, the haunting moral question (which is really a scientific question) was not addressed: does life begin at conception?

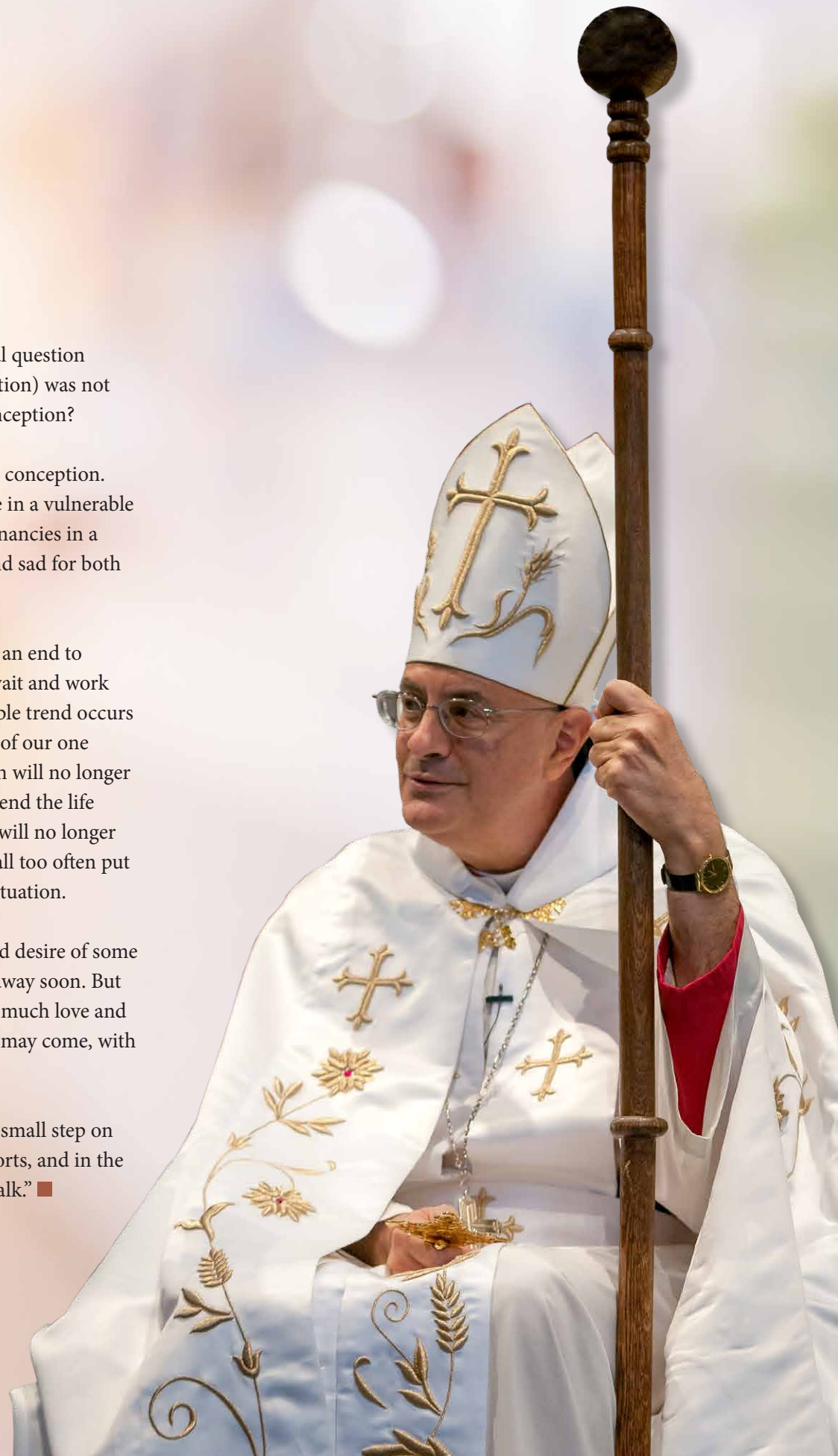
For a scientist, life does begin at conception. However, many women who are in a vulnerable situation want to end their pregnancies in a way that will always be tragic and sad for both mother and child.

Thus, for those who want to see an end to abortion in our land, we must wait and work until that day when an irreversible trend occurs in the moral and cultural fabric of our one nation under God, when women will no longer think that it is a good option to end the life of their unborn child, and men will no longer make light of the fact that they all too often put a woman in such a vulnerable situation.

The unfortunate and misdirected desire of some to seek an abortion will not go away soon. But if we work hard enough with as much love and forgiveness as possible, this day may come, with God's grace.

The reversal of *Roe v. Wade* is a small step on the way. Let us redouble our efforts, and in the meantime, keep "walking the walk." ■

+ Gregory



## Schedule BISHOP GREGORY J. MANSOUR

- 23-29 JULY** Family Time  
**30-31 JULY** Brooklyn, NY | Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral  
**31 JULY-7 AUGUST** Silent Retreat  
**13 AUGUST** New Castle, PA | St. John the Baptist Church | Pastoral Visit  
**13-15 AUGUST** North Jackson, OH | Basilica and National Shrine of Our Lady of Lebanon | Assumption Pilgrimage  
**20-21 AUGUST** Greer, SC | St. Rafka Church | 20th Anniversary Celebration  
**26-29 AUGUST** Pittsburgh, PA | Our Lady of Victory Church | Diaconal Ordination of Subdeacons Vincent Michael and Bahige Chweifati  
**18 SEPTEMBER** Brooklyn, NY | Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral | 40th Anniversary of Presbyteral Ordination of Bishop Gregory  
**20-21 SEPTEMBER** New Jersey | Oriental Orthodox – Catholic Dialogue



**Eternal rest grant to  
them, O Lord.**



### SUBDEACON RONALD FOSTER

Subdeacon Ernest “Ron” Ronald Foster, Sr., 76, passed away on Wednesday, 8 June, in Fayetteville, NC. He was preceded in death by his mother, Verona Earl Dixon. He is survived by his wife, Wanda; sons, Ron, Jr., Randal, Ryan, and Robin; many grandchildren, and a great granddaughter.

Ron served five years in the U.S. Army with one of those years in Vietnam. He graduated from the Physician Assistant (PA) school in 1978 and practiced in the Fayetteville area for many years. He founded the Methodist University PA program in 1993. In 2013, Ron was ordained as a subdeacon in our Maronite Church.

Condolences may be sent to his wife Wanda: 3572 Gables Drive, Fayetteville, NC 28311.

Bishop Gregory John Mansour, on behalf of the Eparchy of St. Maron, extends sincere condolences to Wanda, their children, and to all of Ron’s family and friends. He also expresses our sympathy to Father Paul Damien and the parishioners of St. Michael the Archangel Church. May Subdeacon Ron rest in peace.

## Schedule BISHOP A. ELIAS ZAIDAN

- 24 JULY** Los Angeles, CA | Our Lady of Mt. Lebanon-St. Peter Cathedral
- 31 JULY** Los Angeles, CA | Our Lady of Mt. Lebanon-St. Peter Cathedral
- 7 AUGUST** St. Louis, MO | St. Raymond Cathedral | Diaconal Ordination of Subdeacon Tony Simon | Five Year Memorial Liturgy for Bishop Robert Shaheen
- 13-15 AUGUST** North Jackson, OH | Basilica and National Shrine of Our Lady of Lebanon | Assumption Pilgrimage
- 24-25 AUGUST** Virtual | Religious Education Training Sessions
- 27 AUGUST** Portland, OR | St. Sharbel Church | Presbyteral Ordination of Deacon Antoine Karam
- 12-14 SEPTEMBER** Washington, DC | USCCB Administrative Committee
- 16-18 SEPTEMBER** Cleveland, OH | St. Maron Church | Pastoral Visit
- 16 SEPTEMBER** Cleveland, OH | St. Maron Church | Capital Campaign Event
- 18 SEPTEMBER** Cleveland, OH | St. Maron Church | Ordination of Mario Ghosn to the Minor Orders of Cantor, Lector, and Subdeacon
- 24-25 SEPTEMBER** Clinton Township, MI | St. Sharbel Church | Pastoral Visit

### SUBDEACON OLIVER CROSBY SPARKS

Subdeacon Oliver Crosby Sparks III, 80, of Wilkes-Barre, PA, passed away peacefully on 10 June 2022.

Subdeacon Crosby was born in Sikeston, Missouri, moving to Wilkes-Barre at age five. He graduated from GAR Memorial High School in 1959, lettering in football, wrestling, and track and field. He was a District II wrestling champion, student council president and Gentleman Scholar Athlete Award winner. He earned the rank of Eagle Scout in 1958. After attending Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, he transferred to King's College. He graduated in 1964, earning a Bachelor of Science degree in Biology. He began teaching biology later that year in New Castle, Delaware. In 1967, he returned home to Wilkes-Barre to teach biology and environmental sciences at GAR. Over the next 34 years, he taught, advised and coached thousands of students. He retired after the 2000-2001 school year, having spent 40 years at GAR as a student and teacher. He earned two Master of Science degrees.

In 2006, he was ordained a subdeacon in our Maronite Church.

He is survived by his wife of 55 years, Jacqueline; his son, Travis, and his wife, Jennifer, and their twin daughters. He is also survived by his brother and many other relatives.

Condolences may be sent by visiting Crosby's obituary at the following website: [www.natandgawlas.com](http://www.natandgawlas.com).

Bishop Gregory John Mansour, on behalf of the Eparchy of Saint Maron, extends sincere condolences to Jacqueline, and to all of Subdeacon Crosby's family and friends. We also offer our sympathy to Father Adib and all of the parishioners of St. Anthony and St. George Church. May Subdeacon Crosby rest in peace!

# “What God will perform after his death...” – The Tomb of Saint Sharbel

by Rev. David A. Fisher

*“Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom the master has put in charge of the servants in his household to give them their food at the proper time?”* MATTHEW 24:45

Saint Sharbel lived a life that answered this question about who is a wise servant. His faithfulness to his Christian calling and his monastic vocation, inspired many people during his life, from many faiths, and he continues to bless many as an intercessor before the throne of God. He is a saint of the Maronite Catholic Church, but touches the hearts of all cultures. Saint Sharbel was a child of Lebanon, but a gift to the world.

Saint Sharbel (sometimes rendered in French as Charbel) Makhlof was born on 8 May 1828, in the land of the ancient Cedars of Lebanon, in the northern Lebanese town of Bekaa Kafraa, a village of simple families with deep faith. For example, Sharbel himself had two uncles who were already living the monastic life when he was born.

Sharbel was baptized as Youssef Antoun Makhlof. He was the fifth child, with two older brothers and two older sisters in his family. Sadly, when he was only three years of age, his father died after returning from his conscripted duty in the Turkish military.

Already nicknamed the saint by the people of his village, at 23, Youssef decided to enter monastic life at the monastery in Mayfouk. For his religious name, he took, or was given, the name Sharbel; after Saint

Sharbel of Edessa, who was martyred in 107 during the persecutions of the Roman emperor Trajan. The monk Sharbel made his final perpetual vows in 1853, after completing his formation at the monastery of Annaya.

Another future saint, Father Nemtallah Kassab El-Hardini, was the theology teacher in the monastery. He taught Sharbel until he was ordained in July of 1859. For 16 years, Sharbel lived a life of great austerity and prayer in the monastery. In 1875, he was granted permission to move to the hermitage of Saints Peter and Paul on a nearby hill. There, he lived a life of prayer and contemplation for 23 years, only leaving at the request of his superiors to visit the sick who asked for him. He entered eternal life on Christmas Eve 1898, after suffering a stroke while celebrating the Divine Liturgy. His religious superior wrote in the monastic records of the community:

“On the 24th day of the month of December 1898, Father Sharbel, the hermit of Bekaa Kafra, died after suffering a stroke and receiving the Sacraments of the dying. He was buried in the monastery’s cemetery. He was 68 years old. Father Antonios Mishimshany was the superior of the monastery. **What God will perform after his death** will be sufficient proof





of his exemplary behavior in the observance of his vows, to a degree such that we can say that his obedience was angelic, not human.”  
(Emphasis Added)

### Miracles

From the moment of his passing, miraculous events surrounded the remains and tomb of Saint Sharbel. Indeed, it was in death that Sharbel became a saint for all seasons and for all peoples, even non-Christians.

For sixty-five years after his death his body continued to bleed and perspire, many who made pilgrimages to his tomb were healed, Christians, Muslims and those estranged from religious practice.

At the close of the Second Vatican Council, Sharbel was beatified by Pope Saint Paul VI, for the confirmed healings of Sister Maria Abel Kamari and Alessandro Obeid. His canonization was also presided over by Pope Saint Paul VI on the 9 October 1977. The healing from throat cancer of Miriam Awad was accepted as valid and therefore fulfilled the requirements for sainthood.

Among the thousands of miracles, let us look at a few attributed to the intercession of Saint Sharbel.

Sister Maria Abel Kamari was a thirty-year old nun who became ill with gastric ulcers in 1936. Despite multiple surgeries, Sister Maria wasn't able to eat. Swallowing became difficult and her voice was weak. Eventually, she became bedridden. Sister Maria asked to be taken to Sharbel's tomb. When she touched the tomb of the hermit, she described what felt like an electric shock go through her body. She stood up unassisted and completely cured. — *Six Miracles Attributed to Saint Sharbel*, by Chloe Langr, in *Epic Pew*, 2019.

Mariam Doumit had spleen cancer. While she was being treated at St Joseph's Hospital in Dawra, Lebanon, St Sharbel appeared to her on his birthday and put his hand on her belly. Doctors conducted further tests and discovered that she was cured without any surgery. Mariam visited St Maron Monastery in Annaya, Mount Lebanon to thank St. Sharbel for healing her. Mariam recorded her miracle on 10 December 2005. — [familysaintsharbel.org](http://familysaintsharbel.org)

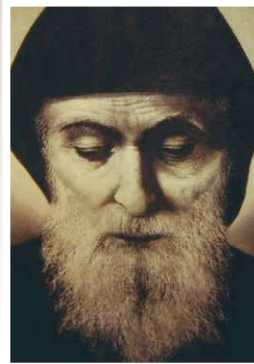
The mother of Leo Sharbel Shakkour tells this story. “During my second month of pregnancy with my son, Leo Sharbel, I had a blood test to check the health state of the fetus. The doctor told me that the child had abnormalities. After confirmation from a second test, I started praying to Saint Sharbel and asked for his intercession.

## “What God will perform after his death”

*Continued from page 9*

“I then requested a third test. The doctor at first refused her; the first two were enough and 99% accurate. I insisted on doing a third examination. He set a date for the new examination, but told me to expect that my child would be born with an abnormality.

“I took the test on 21 February 2021. The next day, the doctor called me to inform me that the result was negative and that it was the first time in his 40 years of being in his field that this had ever happened. Sharbel was born as a normal child in good health. I came all the way from Germany to Annaya to offer thanks to Saint Sharbel for the grace of the miracle. This miracle was registered on 18 October 2021.” [familysaintsharbel.org](http://familysaintsharbel.org)



## “Ask and it will be given to you”

Fr. Louis Mattar, the coordinator of the Shrine of St. Sharbel in Annaya, Lebanon, once remarked to a Catholic

news reporter that, “Saint Sharbel has no geographic or confessional limits. Nothing is impossible for [his intercession] and when people ask [for something], he answers. ■

*Rev. David A. Fisher is a priest of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon and Professor of Eastern Christian Thought, St. Charles Seminary, Philadelphia, PA*

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## Saints in the Maronite Calendar

by Rev. Claude Franklin

### July

On 21 July, the Maronite Church commemorates *Saint Simeon the Holy Fool and his friend Saint John*. Saint Simeon was one of the first “Fools for Christ.” He, and his friend, Saint John, lived in the Sixth Century. Simeon and John were from Edessa. They were friends from childhood. Simeon was unmarried and lived with his aged mother, while John had a young wife and lived with his father. Both families were wealthy.



When Simeon was 30 years old, and John 24, they made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. Along their return to ancient Edessa (today, Urfa in Turkey), they decided to leave their former lifestyles behind and enter monastic life. After having become monks and living in the Monastery of Abba Gerasimus, in Syria, for a number of years, the spiritual brothers decided to go into the desert to pursue a life of complete asceticism.

Initially, they experienced demonic attacks and were tempted by grief over having left their families behind. However, they continued to recall their monastic vows and persevered over these temptations. Later, the monks had a vision from God telling them that their families had

died and passed from this world to the next. Simeon and John continued to live in the desert for 29 years.

After having conquered his passions, Simeon was inspired by God to re-enter society to serve the people of God, but John felt he was not ready to leave the desert, so the two spiritual brothers parted with tears. Simeon prayed to the Lord to show him how he could serve the people of God while remaining humble, and that no one should acknowledge or thank him.

And so, Simeon was inspired to live as a “Fool for Christ.” He entered the City of Emesa, dragging a dead dog behind him. On a Sunday, he entered the Church and blew out all the candles and threw nuts at the women. As we read from Leontios of Neapolis:

Simeon played all sorts of roles, foolish and indecent, but language is not sufficient to paint a picture of his doings. For sometimes he pretended to have a limp, sometimes he jumped around, sometimes he dragged himself along on his buttocks, sometimes he stuck out his foot for someone running and tripped him. Other times when there was a new moon, he looked at the sky and fell down and thrashed about.

Despite this foolish behavior, Simeon was able to heal many sick and possessed, feed the hungry and preach the Gospel. Simeon died around 570 and was buried by the poor of Emesa in the place of the homeless. It is said that as they carried his body to be buried, they heard angels singing. It was only after his death that his “imitative foolishness” was discovered. Later, Saint John also fell asleep in the Lord, having lived out his life in the desert.

## August

On 23 August, the Maronite Church commemorates *Saint Isaac of Nineveh*, also known as Saint Isaac the Syrian. Saint Isaac lived during the seventh century and according to sources was born in the region of modern-day Qatar, where he received his earliest monastic training, becoming familiar with writers, both Syriac and Greek, on spiritual life.

The only approximate chronological date we know about him is that he was consecrated Bishop of Nineveh by George, Catholicos-Patriarch of the Church of the East (661-681). Saint Isaac's episcopacy only lasted five months, after which he retired for, as one biographical note says: "a reason which only God knows."

Following his short episcopal ministry, Saint Isaac began to live the life of a hermit in the mountains southeast of the Monastery of Rabban Shabur. It is here that he lived to a great age and at the urging of his disciples began to commit to writing his advice on many different aspects of the spiritual life. Through his spiritual writings and the very practical nature of his advice, Saint Isaac became well known, even beyond the borders of his own Assyrian Church of the East, and was even recognized, despite the tensions between the various Eastern Churches over the Christological Controversies, as a 'saint' by them.

What has survived of Saint Isaac's writings were collected into three parts. The 'First Part,' consists of 82 Homilies, originally written in Syriac and subsequently translated into Greek by the ninth century in the Greek Orthodox Monastery of Saint Saba in Palestine. From this Greek translation, the 'First Part' was also translated into Georgian, Arabic, Ethiopic, Latin, and Slavonic, during the Middle Ages. And, by the sixteenth century, it was translated from Latin into Portuguese, Catalan, Spanish, French and Italian. We have an English translation of the 'First Part,' directly from Syriac.

The 'Second Part' consists of 41 Chapters, and the 'Third Part' consists of 17 Chapters. Neither of these 'Parts' were ever translated into Greek, and therefore never translated into other languages, until recent years in which some of the chapters have been made available in English and in Italian also directly from Syriac.

A nice selection of quotes from Saint Isaac of Nineveh can be found in *The Wisdom of Saint Isaac the Syrian*, translated by Sebastian Brock. Here are a couple of examples:

*"Even if you are not a peacemaker, at least do not be a trouble-maker."*  
[HOM.50]

*"You should not wait until you are cleansed of wandering thoughts before you desire to pray. If you only begin in prayer when you see that your mind has become perfect and raised above all recollection of the world, then you will never pray."*  
[KEPH. IV.34] ■

*Father Claude Franklin, Jr., SEOL, is pastor of Saint Joseph in Olean, NY*



## The Church felt like ‘home’ — Msgr. Antoine Bakh *by Brandon Shulleeta*

**M**sgr. Antoine Bakh is the pastor at St. John Maron Maronite Catholic Church in Orange County, CA. When he was only days shy of his 22nd birthday, he saw something that changed his life: a statue of the Blessed Mother bowed before a crucifix that he had just hung in the living room, he said. It was far from subtle and seen clearly, unmistakably, by himself and five other family members.

At the time, he lived in California in the Oakland/Berkeley area. But when he was a child, he lived in Cairo, Egypt, where the Virgin Mary (Our Lady of Zeitoun) had appeared over a church over the course of a few years beginning in 1968. The apparition was reportedly witnessed by no less than hundreds of thousands of people.

“Our Lady called me. There was a miracle that took place with myself and my family,” Msgr. Bakh said of the miracle. He confessed that he’s never shared for publication before now, and he was hesitant to do so, because he considered himself undeserving of the miracle. It was a “very humbling”



experience, he said. But the miracle itself was indisputable and changed his life and that of the other family members who witnessed it, he said.

A few months before that miracle, he saw a Protestant televangelist on a TV program who told his audience to “kneel down and give your life to Jesus Christ.” “So I did that, and when I did that, the Holy Spirit came upon me in a very powerful

**“Our Lady called me.  
There was a miracle that  
took place with myself  
and my family,”**

*Msgr. Bakh said of the miracle.*

way,” he said. Before the miracle, he was caught between Protestant ideas and Catholic teachings, and the miracle helped him realize the Catholic Church is the true church, he said. And after that, when he went to church, he said: “I would feel like I’m going home.”

He became a more prayerful man after that, and then he felt called to priesthood after the Blessed Mother statue miracle.

Just months later, Antoine entered seminary school and was ordained a priest when he was 28. He’s been a priest at St. John Maron for 33 years.

As a priest, he prepares his homily through prayer and trying to share the word of God in relatable terms. “A good priest has to be in touch with God, first of all, and in touch with the people,” he said.

Among the messages he’s found himself repeating to parishioners is this: We must all be willing to sacrifice, and at times, carry our own crosses, to live our lives the right way. ■

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

## The Order of Saint Sharbel New Members

### ANNUAL

**JEAN-PAUL AZZI** | *Mary, Mother of the Light* | Tequesta, FL

**PAUL BARTILUCCI** | *St. Matthew (Latin Church)* | Norwalk, CT

**BLANCHE MACHALANY** | *St. Sharbel* | Somerset, NJ

**PIERRE MACHALANY** | *St. Sharbel* | Somerset, NJ

**LEBANON AMERICAN MEN’S CLUB** | *St. Maron* | Minneapolis, MN

### PERPETUAL

**LILY EID KHOURY** | *St. Anthony* | Fall River, MA

**RICHARD ISSA** | *St. Elias* | Birmingham, AL

**ANTOINE MEFLEH** | *St. Maron* | Minneapolis, MN



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

For more information about the Order ask your Pastor, visit [www.orderstsharbel.org](http://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

## Mary, Mother of the Light Church *by Chet Wade*



Parishioners of Mary, Mother of the Light Maronite Catholic Church have faith in the power of prayer. They believe it is what finally led their mission to become a parish after more than 30 years.

Mary, Mother of the Light is in the south Florida community of Tequesta. As it says on its Website, the parish sees itself as “Bringing the Light of Christ to the Palm Beaches.”

The mission was founded in 1990. It had several worship sites and homes before purchasing its current church, school, and social hall in 2015. Bishop Gregory Mansour elevated Mary, Mother of the Light to a parish on 1 October 2021.

The parish pastor, Father Gary George, C.Ss.R., said what has been accomplished by the parish over the last 2½ years — becoming a parish, conducting major renovations, and getting its pre-school on firm footing — is little short of a miracle;

especially considering the challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Father Gary credits the 150 families that make up the congregation. They have worked hard, he said, but do not like to take credit for their work. “They don’t want their names on anything,” Father Gary said. “If you put up a plaque (recognizing them for their efforts), they will leave.”

They also enjoy parish social events and sharing their culture.

But what really binds them together and brought them their recent successes is prayer and participation in the sacraments. Under Father Gary’s direction, parishioners have increased participation in confession, praying the rosary and venerating the Blessed Sacrament before each Divine Liturgy.

Many of the parishioners travel more than an hour to attend the Divine Liturgy and pray in English, Arabic

and Syriac. They love the Maronite Liturgy and reverence for the Eucharist, Father Gary said.

They also are active in pilgrimages and right-to-life activities in the community and beyond. There has been an increase in the number of parishioners who have stepped forward to join the Order of St. Sharbel, which provides financial support to seminarians of the Maronite Church in the United States.

It is this renewed commitment to participating in prayer and the sacraments and engaging others in their faith that has brought them success, he said.

“We have moved from being a social parish to a praying parish,” Father Gary said. “If you humble yourself and show your love, He will bless you.”

Father Gary grew up in a Maronite family in South Africa. He was called to be a Redemptorist priest, a member of the Congregation of the





Most Holy Redeemer, a community of missionary priests and brothers commonly known as “Redemptorists.” However, he never left his Maronite roots. After being ordained a priest, he celebrated his first Divine Liturgy the following day in the Maronite church he grew up attending. He emigrated to the United States in 1998, joining his family.

When he was appointed Administrator of Mary, Mother of the Light Maronite Mission in March 2020, Father Gary already was well known to many Maronites across the United States. He has served as MYO director for both eparchies and as vocation director for the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon. He also has served as pastor at a number of parishes and as rector of the Maronite Cathedral in St. Louis.

What he may be best known for, however, are the numerous highly regarded retreats he has led across the country. Father Gary brought with him to Mary, Mother of the Light his passion for outreach and teaching.

Father Gary thanked Bishop Mansour for placing him at Mary, Mother of the Light. It allowed him to be close to his mother after the death of his father. And it meant



being reunited with his calling. “For the first time in my life, I stopped being an administrator and moved into the spiritual world which I was trained for,” Father Gary said.

The parish was given special permission to remain open during the height of the pandemic to continue its retreat mission. Also, during the pandemic, Father Gary and the parishioners continued their pro-life outreach.

“That’s a huge thing in my parish,” he said. “We pray and live the pro-life movement. We want to end abortion.” A right-to-life event organized last January by the Diocese of Palm Beach to commemorate the 49th anniversary of Roe v. Wade attracted more than 400 people. Many participants were from the Mary, Mother of the Light parish. Father

Gary was the main celebrant at a mass with 10 other priests concelebrating.

“I don’t do protests,” he said. “We don’t hold up banners. I don’t believe

in that. We do it very quietly, not in their face. We pray.”

In addition to spiritual blessings, the dedication of the parishioners has been returned in temporal form.

While the community is new as a “parish,” its facilities are not. The parish home formerly was a Lutheran church complex. By the time the pandemic arrived, it needed renovation and repair.

Father Gary said when they moved ahead with the repair work, he was overwhelmed by the donation of time, skills, and resources. Many did work for free or at greatly reduced rates because they were impressed with the spiritual efforts of the parish.

The work involved renovations to the church, social hall, and school. A new roof was put on, new air-conditioning units were installed, and other work was completed.

“It was all done in two years,” Father Gary said. “It was wonderful.” ■



# Ordinations

## Presbyteral Ordination of Fr. Wadih Z. Kaldawi

On Saturday, 29 January 2022 at St. John Maron Church in Orange, CA, His Excellency, Bishop A. Elias Zaidan ordained Deacon Wadih Z. Kaldawi to the presbyterate. Father Wadih's wife, Mona and son, Zaki, as well as Msgr. Antoine Bakh, Pastor of St. John Maron Church, Father Wadih's Pastor of St. Sharbel Church in Portland, OR, Fr. Christopher Fabre, Abbot of the Monastery of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, Jonathan Decker, M.M.J.M.J., Fr. Albert Constantine, Eparchial Chancellor, and Fr. Elias Sleiman, Rector of the Co-Cathedral, and other clergy were in attendance.



Father Wadih embraced the Holy Spirit's call to service at the altar of St. Sharbel Church in Portland, Oregon as a deacon since 2013. His ordination to the presbyterate represents the culmination of much theological study, as well as intense spiritual formation. In his homily, Bishop Elias reminded the ordinand that the life of the priest points the people not to self but always to Christ.



On Sunday, 30 January 2022, Father Wadih celebrated his first Divine Liturgy at St. John Maron Church surrounded by the visiting priests and monks from Oregon that helped shape his priestly vocation. Father Wadih shared his heartfelt gratitude, acknowledging his beloved wife and children, the parishes of St. Sharbel in Portland, OR and St. John Maron in Orange, CA, and the many clergy who helped him in his formation. ■



## Ordination of Alejandro Landin

On Sunday, 15 May 2022, Our Lady's Maronite Catholic Parish in Austin, TX, celebrated the ordination of one of its own parishioners. Alejandro Landin was ordained to the minor orders of Cantor, Lector and Subdeacon through the imposition of hands by Chorbishop Don Sawyer as delegated by Bishop Elias Zaidan. Alejandro was joined by his parents, Alolfo and Dianna, and family members who came to share his special day.

During Communion, Alejandro was first ordained to the minor order of Cantor. After receiving the tonsure (hair being clipped in the sign of a cross), Alejandro held the book of psalms and then was led with a stole in a procession inside the church by his sponsor Father James Olhhausen. Alejandro was then ordained a Lector (Reader). Finally, he was elevated to the minor order of subdeacon through the imposition of hands by Chorbishop Don Sawyer. To demonstrate that Christ is actually the one who ordained Alejandro, Chorbishop Donald touched the Eucharist and chalice then laid his hands on Alejandro's head. This was immediately followed by a final procession inside the church, which included opening and closing the back door of the church, ringing the bell and lighting all candles to represent the responsibilities of a subdeacon as he prepares for Divine Liturgy.



When asked about his spiritual journey, Subdeacon Alejandro said, "It started in 2014 with a desire to grow in personal holiness and sanctity to the love of God and to give my life completely to

the Lord and to serve His church." Alejandro is drawn to the Maronite Church in its approach to God as the mystery that is explained through poetry. He believes, "The more we come to know and love Him, His ways are unknown to us and He still remains a mystery."

Congratulations Subdeacon Alejandro! May God always guide you as you serve His people. ■



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- I. Camel
- J. Gents Cedar Tree Ring
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- L. Small Circle Cedar
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# First Holy Communion 2022



## ST. ANTHONY CHURCH | Danbury, CT

Fr. Naji Kiwan, Nancy Michael, DRE Debbie Urban (not pictured), Giuliana Madkour, Sophie Jowdy, Andrew Gehie, Michael Tawk, Camden Kvale



## ST. LOUIS GONZAGA CHURCH | Utica, NY

Elizabeth Aery, Aria Mishlanie, Fr. Boutros El Hachem, Raymond Zoghby, Benjamin Virkler and Charlotte Bihl.



## OUR LADY OF THE CEDARS CHURCH | Houston, TX

L to R, bottom to top: Fawzi Aschkar, Amelia Sabbagh, Emilio Haidar, Charbel Yaghi, Ava Dow, Valerie Fefle, Raymond Hage, Philip Saba, Joseph Rickert, Gianna Shami, Julianna Yammine, Charbel Elmessan, Kate Fleyhan, Colette Abboud, Taim Khayat, Mia Wehbe, Zoe Moubarak, Marc Anthony Sahyoun, Antoine Haddad, Joseph Dow, Lian Muqattash, Joelle Mukattash, Aya Dagher, Charbel Moubayed, Ghassan Ghafari, Mia Tayar, Abraham Yehyan, Chris Hajjar, Stephen Kreit, Karl Kreit, Ms. Theresa Abdallah, Fr. Edward Hanna, Mrs. Rima Chehade, Susie Hage, and Father Milad Yaghi.  
\* Zach Hemphill (not pictured)



**OUR LADY OF MERCY CHURCH | Worcester, MA**  
 L to R: Paul Zogby, George Richmond, Harold Richmond, Adalyn Zoghbi, Nadia Daou, Ellie Thomas, Julia DeLianedis, Jovie Thomas



**ST. GEORGE CHURCH | Uniontown, PA**  
 Front (L to R): Subdeacon Charles Michael, Aubrey Wingard, Asher O'Brien, Hope Conway, Josh Reed (Altar Server); Middle (L to R): Lincoln Clelland, Morgan Rogers; Back (L to R): Matt Schwartzfeger (Altar Server), Fr. Aaron Sandbothe, Bishop Gregory Mansour, Subdeacon Mallard George, Donna George (Youth Faith Formation Teacher), Nathaniel Sykes (camera shy)



**SAINT JOSEPH CHURCH | Atlanta, GA**  
 Front row L to R: Maryam Mazin Albeer, Lukas Donald Reichardt; Back row (L to R): Fr. Tony Akoury (Pastor), Masami Uemoto (catechist)



**ST. SHARBEL CHURCH | Portland, OR**  
 Fr. Christopher Fabre, Deacon Antoine Karam;  
 L to R: Adam Sinan Charbel Rafteh, Francesca Josephine Fought and Anthony Abdo Elias Azar



**ST. MARON CHURCH | Detroit MI**  
 Fr. Roby Zibara, Jane Merheb, Christy Khoury

# First Holy Communion 2022



**ST. MICHAEL THE ARCHANGEL CHURCH | Fayetteville, NC**  
 Left Photo: Back row (L to R): Fr. Jack Morrison, Fr. Paul Damien; Front row (L to R): Jack Roysce, Jonathan Kornbluth; Right Photo: Trevor VanWy and Fr. Jack Morrison



**SAINT RAFKA CHURCH | Greer, SC**  
 Abouna Bart, Joseph Hanna, Cameron Nassif, Anna Oakley, Maya Hanna, Romy Aazan, Marc Abraham, MRE Director Jessica Dagher Allen



**ST. ANN CHURCH | Watervliet, NY**  
 L to R: Alexander Nammour, Christina Hannoush, Sophia Deeb, Michael Rezey



**ST. ANTHONY OF THE DESERT CHURCH | Fall River, MA**  
 Back row (l to r): Deacon Brian Dunn, Reverend Fadi Khawand, Monsignor James A. Root, and Altar Server – Lucas Dunn; Front row (l to r): Altar Server – Joey Saliba, George Assi, Alexis Assi, Charbel Zaarour, Ava Catalan, Joe Charbel Ammouri, Altar Servers – Sami Ammouri and John Paul Ammouri



**ST. ANTHONY CHURCH | Glen Allen, VA**

Front row (L to R): Valentina Orenduff, Harper Hale, Maria Garcia, Emma Yazbeck, Lucas Garcia, Isabella Orenduff; Middle row (L to R): Patrick Savage, Wilby Craig, Grady Mullens, Reid Fodill, Magnus Lord, William Trace; Back row (L to R): Francine Maynes (Catechist), Chorbishop John D. Faris (Pastor), Subdeacon Michael Maynes (Catechist)



**ST. MARON CHURCH | Philadelphia, PA**

Back row (L to R): Zeina Topalian (Youth Faith Formation Teacher), Fr. Andrawos El Tabchi, Samar Dawlabani (Youth Faith Formation Teacher), Janah Szewczyk (Youth Faith Formation Director) Front row (L to R): Jesline Dabbour, Clara Hourani, Sophia Dawlabani, Sarah Akkari, Leila Takfour, Ruby Salloum  
Pictured Individually: Joseph Takfour



**HEART OF JESUS CHURCH | Fort Lauderdale, FL**

Chorbishop Michael Thomas and Teacher Ms. Myra Molina; (L to R): adriana Dawood, Liliana Ghazal, Christa-Marie Matta, Joseph Abi Daoud, Leonidas Parsons, Grace Motokos, Yasmira Abo Daoud and Maximus Parsons



**ST. RAFKA CHURCH | Livonia, MI**

Jordan Alamat, Sanad Alamat, Talia Chalhoub, Mayva Chamoun, Rami Chamoun, Emma Chilson, Sophia Chilson, Maroun Dalou, Jonathan Hanna, Anthony Mourani, Tia Mourani, Peter Rahal, John Shahin, and Elie Zogheib. We also thank our Director of Religious Education, Alice Bodagh, and our teachers Diana AlBarchini, Faten Azwat, Rebecca Dagher, Carol Janowski, Jackie Moussi, and Loraine Salamouni. The Divine Liturgy was celebrated by our pastor, Rev. Dr. Rodrigue Constantin.

# First Holy Communion 2022



## SAINT MARON CHURCH | Minneapolis, MN

John El Khouri, Lucas Younes, Anissa Bejani, Emma Harb, Isabel Roukoz, Rebecca Farhet, Lulu Alexander and Nicholas Mueller, Chorbishop Sharbel Maroun, and teacher Harriett Abdo



## MARY, MOTHER OF THE LIGHT CHURCH | Tequesta, FL

L to R: Andy Andraos, Elle Azzi, Sophie Parra, Gabriella Santos, and Jacob Seal; Catechists: Michelle Azzi (pictured) and Patricia Anderson (not pictured); Not pictured: Austin Ames, Kailee Rodriguez, Yatziri Rodriguez, and Benjamin Rush



## ST. TERESA OF CALCUTTA MARONITE MISSION | Baden, PA

Amir Betters, Amani Betters, Joe El Helow and Celena Fajtak appear with Fr. Antoine Kairouz and Fr. Maroun El Helow.



## ST. EPHREM CHURCH | El Cajon, CA

Allan Alsayegh, Blake Baillargeon, Joseph Battikha, Joseph Jd Farrage, Mateo Frangieh, Antoine Barrera-Farris, Isabella Gergy, Noah Kabban, Lazar Matthews, Toni Rahi, Elene Salloum, Merna Salloum, Natalee Yaqoob and Mathew Yakub; Pastor, Rev. Toufic Nasr, Liliane Massery Catechist





by Mark Kortbaoui, MYA member From Portland, Oregon

In the Gospel of Matthew (15: 21-28), a Syro-Phoenician woman came boldly yelling and interceding for the exorcism of her daughter. As she yelled, it seemed that Jesus ignored her and the apostles wanted to send her away, but she persisted until Jesus acknowledged her. When Jesus finally engages the woman, he converses with her and indirectly invites her to a deeper awareness of who she is in relationship to God. From there, her deep faith prompts Jesus to respond “O woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish.” Like our ancestor in faith, we want Jesus to encounter young

adults so they grow deeper in their understanding of their relationship with Him and, from there, intercede for the Maronite church with great faith.

Come to us with your needs and prayer intentions! Prayer Warriors is a group of Maronite young adults from all over the United States who are united and focused on prayer. Our mission is to support the Maronite community in the U.S. by turning daily activities into prayer, entering deeper into our relationship with Christ, and interceding for the intentions and needs of the Maronite

Church all over the world. We have been meeting once a month for formation and fellowship via Zoom, including presentations

as a powerful intercessor with Dr. Anne Borik. As we learned and entered deeper into different forms of prayer, we brought prayer intentions from people in the community to Christ with us. Via our group chat on WhatsApp, people bring their intentions and the needs of their friends, family, and parishes. The intentions are then prayed for privately by all in the group chat. It has been a powerful testimony to God’s generosity. Some of the prayers that have been answered include but are not limited to successful brain cancer treatment, passing of medical school exams, acquiring a new job, the war in Ukraine, the Lebanon government elections, and help with anxiety.

on: types of prayer, Maronite spirituality with Chorbishop Beggiani, the Rosary with Mother Marla Marie, St. Faustina and the Chaplet of Divine Mercy, Ignatian Spirituality and the Examen prayer with Vivian Akel, and the example of St. Sharbel

Our plans for the summer are to try and meet once a month to just pray together in some way and then resume more formation and prayer in the fall. All young adults (18-35) are welcome to join the Prayer Warriors, but anyone can present their petitions to us and they will be prayed for! Please reach out to Sandy Risha, Mira Aoun, Aleina Soueidi, Julia Abboud, myself, or your local MYA leaders for more information.



## MYO | *Hello, My Name Is...* by Peter Harb

*H*ello, my name is regret...defeat... despair...All of these are names that we have seen on ourselves as we journey through life and its difficulties, and these hardships can make it easy for us to forget what our true identities are.

The 2022 National MYO Conference allowed our Maronite teens from across the United States who face this reality each day to truly realize the dignity they have. In a society filled with constant negativity for our young people, now more than

ever, our youth are facing doubts and uncertainties with their self-image and worthiness of love.

The week of 23-27 June was filled with reaffirmation as we highlighted our theme of "Introducing Me." After years of confusion and turmoil because of the COVID-19 pandemic, it was time for our youth to rediscover who they truly are. Our youth not only introduced themselves to each other and created lifelong friendships, but also reintroduced themselves as beloved

children of God, loved beyond measure, and created in none other but His image and likeness.

We were blessed to have had both Bishop Elias Zaidan and Bishop Gregory Mansour present with us and lead discussions for our youth on this important topic of identity. In addition, world renowned speaker, Chris Padgett, provided our keynote addresses highlighting our main focuses, while Deacon Marwan El Khoury, Nicky Riccardi and Lily Hildago, Fr. Boniface Hicks,





and Landis Erwin all joined us to enlighten the souls of our youth. They touched on topics such as the true meaning of Christ in the Eucharist, mental health, and the courage to be chaste, among others.

We also had the opportunity to take some time outdoors as the sun was setting to have a scripture reflection and healing service together. As we reflected on the story of the Prodigal Son, we realized that no matter how far we might stray, God will always welcome us into His open arms.



We ended the week with fellowship at a waterpark, and celebrated our journey with a haflfi.

Hello, my name is...child of the One True King! Hello, my name is... Chosen, Forgiven, Transformed, and His Masterpiece!

Follow us on Instagram, Facebook, Snapchat, Twitter, and TikTok! @maroniteyouth for information on the 2022-2023 regional retreats!

Mark your calendars tentatively for 27 June - 1 July for the 2023 National MYO Conference! ■



# Parish News

UNIONTOWN, PENNSYLVANIA

## Spring Activities

by Dr. Mabel George Howard

Throughout the Lenten Season to Passion Week, the faithful of St. George Church in Uniontown, Pennsylvania, celebrated the treasury of Maronite traditions, rituals, and prayers. Following the Easter Sunday liturgy, the Ladies Guild sponsored a breakfast for the children, and the MYO organized an Easter Egg Hunt and visit from the Easter Bunny. As an Easter surprise, all adults attending were served donuts and mimosas.

During the weekend of 23-24 April 2022, the congregation happily welcomed His Excellency Bishop Gregory Mansour back to his "hometown" parish for our Patronal Feast Day. On his Pastoral visit, Bishop Gregory concelebrated Saturday night liturgy with Fr. Aaron Sandbothe, pastor, in honor of the feast. Bishop Gregory's homily focused on the piety, bravery, honor, and selfless devotion of Saint George, dragon slaying Christian martyr and namesake of the church.

In the evening, a wonderful dinner reception was held in the church hall to observe the Feast Day and spend time with Bishop Gregory. On Sunday, Bishop Gregory and Fr. Aaron concelebrated the First Holy Communion liturgy. Bishop Gregory emphasized to the Communicants, "Jesus loves you, and the privilege of receiving the Sacrament of Holy Communion is the greatest treasure of the church, because the body and blood of Christ instills love in your hearts." Following liturgy, a



brunch was provided for the congregation to enjoy as they reconnected with Bishop Gregory.

On 15 May 2022, the Ladies Guild celebrated their annual Memorial Ceremony honoring the deceased members of the Guild. Together, the ladies recited the rosary and litany, attended liturgy, and adorned the commemorative bricks in the Saint Rafka Grotto with flowers in memory of their loved ones. This beautiful tradition pays tribute and appreciation to the legacy of many special women who faithfully served God and their church. Afterwards, the ladies enjoyed a delightful lunch. ■

SOMERSET, NEW JERSEY

## Loaves & Fishes



On Saturday, 28 May 2022, the parishioners of St. Sharbel Church in Somerset, New Jersey, hosted a "Loaves & Fishes" meal service. Volunteers prepared a variety of foods and served over 300 homeless people a sit-down dinner. Those in need were also provided with a second packaged meal to take with them. It was a blessing and a humbling experience to see the smiling faces of the brothers and sisters. Jesus cares for the less fortunate as He cares for all of us. As servants of Christ, the volunteers hope to host another meal in the near future, remembering this quote from our Lord, "Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of my brothers and sisters, you did for me." ■

SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS

## Bishop Zaidan's Pastoral Visit to St. George

by Regina Aune

The weekend of 23 April was a festive weekend for the parishioners of St. George in San Antonio, Texas. Bishop Elias Zaidan's pastoral visit that weekend coincided with the parish's celebration of its patronal feast day of St. George on 23 April. The bishop's visit provided an opportunity for the members of both the MYO and the MYA to meet with the bishop, get to know him, hear his thoughts, share their thoughts with him, and for all to share a delicious luncheon together.

The Saturday evening Divine Liturgy, celebrating the feast of St. George, was concelebrated by Bishop Zaidan, Father Charles Khachan, MLM, pastor, and Father Mhanna Joseph Kallas, MLM, associate pastor. Following the liturgy, a festive St. George's Day dinner and celebration with music, dancing and a performance by the St. George folk dancers was held in the Phoenician Ballroom.



Bishop Zaidan, Father Khachan, and Father Kallas, concelebrated the Sunday 11:00 am Divine Liturgy and Bishop Zaidan received five new members into the Order of St. Sharbel. Father Kallas, Lee Cancio, Ernest Karam, Marie Saleh, and Dorothy Sanchez were received into

the Order of St. Sharbel as perpetual members. Following the liturgy, the annual awards were presented to the 2022 recipients. Bishop Zaidan presented the Bishop's Award to Cathy Van Delden; the Silver Massabki Award to Tanios Bou Onk; the Faith of the Mountain Award to Maroun Harb; the St. George Appreciation

Award to Andrea and Tony Wazir; and the Altar Server Award to Oliver Geha. Following the liturgy, a luncheon reception honoring the award recipients and the new Order of St. Sharbel members was held in the Phoenician Ballroom. ■

CHARLOTTE, NORTH CAROLINA

## Mother's Day

On 8 May 2022, Fr. Rodolph Wakim celebrated the Sunday Liturgy in honor of Mother's Day at St. Stephen Church in Charlotte, North Carolina. In his homily, Fr. Rudy emphasized the fact that he is inspired by motherhood. He commented, "Motherhood is a role model for patience, forgiveness, unconditional love, serving without expecting recognition, and realizing how much God loves us. The gentle touch of a mother is like the gentle touch of God."

Fr. Rudy invited all the mothers to stand before the altar as he offered a special prayer of blessing to them. Each mother was presented with a beautiful bouquet of flowers to show appreciation for their reverence to God and their important role in the family.



Pictured Front (left to right): Zana Zidane Lord, Amy Shaheen, Sabine Keyrouz, Aline Karam, Bertine Francis, Judy Zaidan; (Back): Marieanne Soudir, Fr. Rudolph Wakim, Grace Bou-Ghazale, Nicole Casaceli ■

# Parish News

BROCKTON, MASSACHUSETTS

## Fr. Joseph Daiif Wished Well On His New Assignment

The parishioners of Saint Theresa Church in Brockton, Massachusetts, received Father Joseph Daiif's announcement of his reassignment to Saint Sharbel Church in Newtown Square, Pennsylvania, with both sadness and joy.

As an introduction to Fr. Joseph's upcoming position, Joseph Bukuras, a parishioner from St. Theresa Church, sent an open letter to the congregation at St. Sharbel Church expressing their feelings about Fr. Joseph's ministry, his love for Jesus, and his devout shepherding.

On his last Thursday Night at St. Theresa Church, the young adults of the parish treated Fr. Daiif to a nice restaurant dinner. The evening



was a perfect last event with Fr. Daiif. The group ate together, prayed together, laughed together, shared memories together, and wished him well on his new assignment. ■

DETROIT, MICHIGAN

## St. Maron Church

The Maronite Church venerates the Mother of God in a particular way during January, May, and August. The parish of St. Maron in Detroit, MI, honored our Blessed Mother in May by praying the rosary three times a week at parishioners' homes. The parish also honored our earthly mothers for the selfless sacrifices they perform each day by praying together followed by a special lunch. More than 200 people enjoyed freshly made sweet and savory crepes.

On 21 May, the parish held their annual fundraising gala, with over 450 participants celebrating the Divine Liturgy followed by a catered dinner, music and a dance.

St. Maron also honored its graduates on 12 June with a Divine Liturgy offered in their honor, allowing the entire parish community to join in celebration with each smaller family. ■



GLEN ALLEN, VIRGINIA

## Graduates and Scholarships

by Cathy George

The annual blessing of the graduates on 12 June 2022, included 13 high school graduates and eight university and post-graduates at Saint Anthony Church in Glen Allen, Virginia. Chorbishop John Faris and Father Peter Frangie celebrated the Divine Liturgy and Father John blessed the graduates after the homily. At the end of the Liturgy, John Zeheb, Finance Council Chair, explained the scholarships that are available to college students who are active in parish liturgical life, Maronite Christian Formation and other organizations and volunteer activities. The scholarships, initiated by Msgr. George Sebaali, are supported by the parish's annual Lebanese Food Festival and the generosity of parishioners. Each scholarship can be renewed yearly for three years as long as the student remains involved in the life of the parish and meets a minimum GPA requirement.

The Saint Anthony Scholarships and the Margaret Gibrall Shaia Scholarships are awarded based on parish involvement and academic achievement and can give a total of \$6000 in four years. The Msgr. George Sebaali Scholarship also highlights church involvement, and when financial need is demonstrated, provides funding up to the amount of the average tuition of a Virginia state university. In addition, this year George and Brenda Gibrall and their family foundation have generously provided more scholarships based on parish involvement and financial need in honor of George's parents, Mary and Philip Gibrall, Sr.

For the 2022-23 academic year, Harry Shaia, Samuel Shaia, and Clarke Sawyer are the recipients of the Saint Anthony Scholarships. Brianna Cassidy is the recipient of the Margaret Gibrall Shaia Scholarship. Jacob Maust is the recipient of the Msgr. George Sebaali Scholarship. Anthony Greco will receive the Saint Anthony Scholarship as well as the Mary and Philip Gibrall, Sr. Scholarship. Danielle Shibley and Paige Shibley are also the recipients of the Mary and Philip Gibrall, Sr. Scholarship.

Several university students are receiving renewals for 2022-23. Christina Maynes and Nicolas Khattar will receive the Msgr. George Sebaali Scholarships, Andie Bouhaidar will receive the Margaret Gibrall Shaia Scholarship, and Adam Shaia will receive the Saint Anthony Scholarship. ■

HOUSTON, TEXAS

## Spring Blessings

CCE classes ended with a big bang! We had the pleasure of welcoming over 180 students back to in-person lessons this year. As a token of our gratitude, the children were treated to a barbecue, fun activities, and inflatables on our last day, 23 April.

On Sunday, 24 April, Dr. Ray and Sandra Hachem were awarded the Silver Massabki Medal in recognition of their dedication and involvement in the parish and with NAM, for many years. They have both generously given their time, talent, and treasure to our community and especially to those Lebanese doctors and students in the medical field who have come to Houston to continue their education and to work. Dr. Ray has been on the NAM board for several years and is also a delegate of the board. Congratulations to Dr. Ray and Sandra for an award that is very well deserved.



Our parish also celebrated the beginning of May by holding its bi-annual Village Night on 30 April. The evening started with a Divine Liturgy followed by a procession outside the church with the statue of the Mother of God. Our parishioners and guests enjoyed amazing Lebanese food and entertainment.

For the little ones, we had face painting stations, a petting zoo, moonwalks, and even a mechanical ride.

The live entertainment was also one for the books! It included songs by our wonderful choir, with additional dances by the Youth Dabke Team, and a live performance by Chris Hawat. Everyone danced the night away.

Our MYA, MYO, and MYKids are kicking off the summer days with various events such as basketball tournaments, picnics, a trip to Schlitterbahn Waterpark, and an outing at Pump It Up!

We are looking forward to resuming our parish activities in August. Until then, we wish everyone a great summer. ■

# Parish News

CINCINNATI, OHIO

## The Taste Of Lebanon

by Linda Conour



On Sunday, 5 June 2022, St. Anthony of Padua Church in Cincinnati, Ohio, hosted its 80th Annual Mahrajan: The Taste of Lebanon! After a two year hiatus, both the parish, led by Fr. George Hajj, and the large crowd of people from all over the Cincinnati area, were ready for this big day. Festival-goers lined up for the delicious homemade Lebanese food to either eat on the parish grounds or to take home from the carry-out line. It was a joy to see so many people enjoying themselves and eating wonderful food after being apart for so long. In addition to the food, a fashion show led by Dr. Lina Anaissie took place representing traditional attire in the Middle East. ■

JAMAICA PLAIN, MASSACHUSETTS

## Sacrament of Reconciliation

The faithful of Our Lady of the Cedars of Lebanon Church in Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts, teach their young children about living a Christian life according to Maronite traditions. The second grade children are prepared for the Sacrament of the First Reconciliation (Confession) as a necessary step before their First Holy Eucharist which is held in third grade. They learn the concept of right and wrong and of sin and forgiveness. They are taught that Jesus is full of love and mercy; and by practicing the Sacrament of Reconciliation, they may obtain forgiveness for their sins and reconcile with God and the Church. The second grade program also includes learning about the Rosary, Maronite Liturgical Seasons, Seven Holy Mysteries, and the Ten Commandments. Their religious instruction expresses how all Saints, including Saint Rafka, Saint Sharbel, Saint Nimatullah Hardini, Blessed Yacoub, and Blessed Estephan, are role models to follow for a full Christian life. At the conclusion of the program, the children make their First Confession, receiving the Holy Sacrament of Reconciliation, and are awarded with a certificate of completion. Eight children received the Sacrament of Reconciliation this year. The children also presented a skit representing the Raising of Lazarus.



Pictured (Left to Right):  
Msgr. Georges El-Khalli (Pastor), Anthony Bachir Awad, Pascal Bouhaya, Alana Paul Aoun, Danah Paul Aoun, Maya Paul Aoun, Maria Christina Habchi, Jovani Dany Manseur, Mrs. Joelle Aoun (Second Grade Catechist), (Camera Shy: Brielle) ■



PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA

## Lebanese Festival

by by Suzanne Tavani

Following the two-year Covid-19 pandemic, the parishioners and the neighborhood community of St. Maron's Church in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, planned their "Welcome Back to St. Maron's Annual Lebanese Festival." The Festival was held the weekend of 3-5 June. Initially, during the month of May, Fr. Andrawos El Tabchi, pastor, peaked everyone's interest in the event by posting pictures of the food preparation (Tabouli, Warak Enab, and Kabobs, etc.) on the parish's social media. Fr. Andrawos commented, "This was my first Festival at St. Maron's, and I was overwhelmed with pride watching the parishioners and community members work together after a difficult two years. They prepared a variety of foods, and a set-up team assembled a tent and necessary equipment spanning Ellsworth Street. The Festival was literally held in the middle of the city street alongside houses. I had to see this amazing set-up to believe it. Even Mother Nature blessed us with perfect springtime weather."



At the Festival, a record number of patrons enjoyed a wide selection of Lebanese foods and drinks including Lebanese beer and wine. Singer, George Malouf, entertained the crowd, and a group of young parishioners performed the Dabke. Fr. Andrawos mentioned, "At 7:00 pm on Saturday night the food line extended the length of the street. It was an hour wait for food orders. Guess what? They all waited!" Everyone was pleased with their very successful Lebanese Festival. ■

NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE

## Nashville Maronite Mission

St. Sharbel Maronite Mission of Nashville, TN, is a brand-new parish that held its first Divine Liturgy on 5 December 2021. Since its first celebration, the church's congregation has grown steadily. On Sunday, 29 May 2022, St. Sharbel held its first Healing Liturgy, one that was attended by a plethora of newcomers who joined prayers intended for the healing of physical, spiritual, and emotional health. In September, St. Sharbel plans to hold monthly liturgies on a regular basis, recurring on the first Sunday of each month. The congregation currently meets and celebrates the Divine Liturgy at the Catholic Church of Korean Martyrs, located on 2319 Lebanon Pike in Nashville, TN. The upcoming Liturgy for the church is scheduled on 14 August 2022, at that same location. All are welcome! ■



## Passing on the Faith *by Anne Borik*

The task of passing on the Maronite Catholic Faith is a huge responsibility. I would like to focus on two important doctrines and how each one can be used to fulfill the task of passing on the Faith and growing spiritually.

### *Love for the Eucharist*

Jesus said, "I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you do not have life within you." (JOHN 6:53) Recognizing the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist is the source and summit of our Catholic Faith. It is not merely a symbol, but truly the body, blood, soul and divinity of Jesus Christ. Eucharist means 'Thanksgiving'. We must be filled with gratitude to God for giving us His body to eat and His blood to drink in order to strengthen and sustain us. Let us ask God to help us to be more reverent when receiving Him so that our posture in itself might be a means of passing on the Faith.

### *Love for Mary*

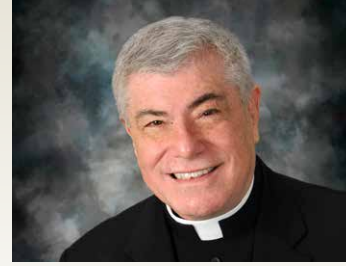
Jesus said, "Woman, behold your son. Son, behold your mother." As Jesus was hanging on the cross, He gave us His mother. Let us never be afraid of loving her too much because we can never love her more than Jesus did. In LUKE 1:28 it says, "Hail, full of grace" (Greek: *Chaire Kecharitomene*). This unique word *Kecharitomene* means 'you who were



filled with grace from the beginning' is reserved just for Mary. No one else in the history of the world is '*Kecharitomene*'. Mary is the Immaculate Conception, the one endowed with God's grace from the very beginning of her existence in her mother's womb. Let us ask God to draw us closer to Mary's Immaculate Heart and, when we pass on the Faith, to never forget to proclaim loud and clear that Mary is the handmaid of the Lord, The Immaculate Conception who is filled with Grace.

In conclusion, we must personally strive to grow deeper in love with Jesus, who is truly present in the Eucharist, and our love for Mary. It is our duty as followers of Christ to pass on this truth found in the One Holy Catholic Apostolic Faith. ■

## From the Editor



*A* fourteenth-century German priest, Meister Eckhart, tells us, “**If the only prayer you ever say in your entire life is thank you, it will be enough.**” So all we really need to do is to say “thank you” to God? Yes, but it is not always so easy.

**Sometimes the *thank you* comes easy.** When someone hands us something, the words *thank you* come from our lips almost automatically. They may not be expressions of our undying gratitude, but such expressions of appreciation create a pleasant atmosphere. So let’s keep it up and perhaps do it more.

**Sometimes we owe God a *thank you*.** When our prayers are answered, when good things happen, when we realize how many ways we are blessed.

**Sometimes we forget to thank God.** On one occasion when Jesus entered a village, he healed 10 lepers.

One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice. He threw himself at Jesus’ feet and thanked him—and he was a Samaritan. Jesus asked, “Were not all 10 cleansed? Where are the other nine? Has no one returned to give praise to God except this foreigner?”

Only one of the 10 who had been cured returned to thank Jesus. Jesus responded with three questions that can be summed up with one: “Where’s the *thank you?*” Jesus had given their lives back to the 10 men—but nine of them failed to say thank you. Do we ever forget to thank God for the great blessings we have received?

**Sometimes we fail to see why we should thank God.** Sometimes God blesses in a most challenging or even painful way: the blessing can come in the form of a mountain to climb or a cross to bear. The blessing may come in the form of a wake-up call. But it is still a blessing, something that will draw us closer to God.

When the blessings are “disguised,” and come in unexpected forms, we may be angry or confused or discouraged. Or all the above. We are not at all inclined to say thank you. To recognize the blessing takes patience and prayer. **The journey to *thank you* is sometimes difficult**, but we will realize that it is worth the trip. ■

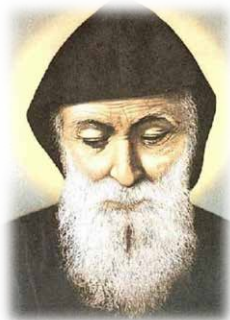
In the fellowship of Christ,

Chorbishop John D. Faris

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