

the Maronite **Voice**



June 2 – Feast of the Four Evangelists

“And the gospel must first be preached to all nations.”

MARK 13:10



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How Do We Put God First?

In my last article in *The Maronite Voice*, I raised the question “how important is God?” in our daily lives and in our world. Unfortunately, our world is gradually slipping in the “no religious affiliation.”

Therefore, I would like to mention here the Devil’s Beatitudes written by an unknown author, but quoted repeatedly in many sites:

1. *Blessed are those who are too tired, too busy, too distracted to spend an hour once a week with their fellow Christians – they are my best workers.*
2. *Blessed are those Christians who wait to be asked and expect to be thanked – I can use them.*
3. *Blessed are the touchy who stop going to church – they are my missionaries.*
4. *Blessed are the trouble makers – they shall be called my children.*
5. *Blessed are the complainers – I’m all ears to them.*
6. *Blessed are those who are bored with the minister’s mannerisms and mistakes – for they get nothing out of his sermons.*
7. *Blessed is the church member who expects to be invited to his/her own church – for he/she is a part of the problem instead of the solution.*
8. *Blessed are those who gossip – for they shall cause strife and divisions that please me.*
9. *Blessed are those who are easily offended – for they will soon get angry and quit.*





10. *Blessed are those who do not give their offering to carry on God's work – for they are my helpers.*

11. *Blessed is he/she who professes to love God but hates his/her brother and sister – for he/she shall be with me forever.*

12. *Blessed are you who, when you read this think it is about other people and not yourself – I've got you too!"*

It is often said, "Evil grows when good people do nothing." As good people, we can't stay still and do nothing. We are called to make a difference, to do God's work in this world which is looking for heroes of faith and love, and signs of hope.

When we look at our daily lives, they are busy and filled with earthly matters. We need to go to work, we need to go to school, we need to cook, and we need to...fill our days. In such a busy and chaotic world, how do we take care of our spiritual needs? How do we make sure that we are not just taking each day and filling it with worldly wants but seriously make an effort for the salvation of our immortal souls? How do we put God first?

When Jesus walked on this earth, he reminded us of the greatest commandments, "You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. The second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself"

(MATTHEW 22:37-39). These are the principles that should guide our lives above material goods and money.

To strengthen our relationship with God, there are important elements that we have to practice and live by: personal and communal times of prayer, reading of the Holy Scriptures and Sacred Tradition, regularly attending the Divine Liturgy in order to nourish our hearts, minds, and souls with the Word of God as well as receiving the Body and Blood of Christ, frequenting the Mystery of Reconciliation and many various devotions to the Blessed Mother and the Saints.

In our Christian faith, we are also commanded to love our neighbor as we love ourselves. The **Corporal Spiritual Works of Mercy** are a good manifestation of our love to others. It is just simply doing ordinary things with greater love.

I urge each and every one of us to always pray and reflect on how we should put God first in our lives. His love for us is infinite and endless. Let us choose to show our love of God by giving Him our time and attention instead of treating Him as a leftover of our time and effort. God always puts us first, we should do the same. ■

Bishop A. Elias Zaidan

Schedule BISHOP A. ELIAS ZAIDAN

- 3 JUNE** Cleveland, OH | St. Maron Church | Presbyteral Ordination of Deacon Christopher Nahra
- 4 JUNE** Detroit, MI | St. Maron Church | Subdiaconal Ordination of Seminarian Elias Hazkial
- 5-23 JUNE** Bkerke, Lebanon | Annual Maronite Synod of Bishops
- 28 JUNE** Simi Valley, CA | Sts. Peter and Paul Church | Patronal Feast Day Celebration
- 29-30 JUNE** North Canton, OH | National MYO Conference
- 1-2 JULY** Birmingham, AL | St. Elias Church | Pastoral Visit and Subdiaconal Ordination of Paul Boulos
- 3-9 JULY** Providence, RI | Clergy Conference and National Apostolate of Maronites Convention
- 16 JULY** Los Angeles, CA | Our Lady of Mt. Lebanon-St. Peter Cathedral | Celebration of the Feast of St. Sharbel
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- 16 JULY** Los Angeles, CA | Our Lady of Mt. Lebanon-St. Peter Cathedral | Celebration of the Feast of St. Sharbel
- 31 JULY-2 AUGUST** Orlando, FL | Knights of Columbus 141st Supreme Convention



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1021 South 10th Street | St. Louis, MO 63104

Schedule BISHOP GREGORY J. MANSOUR

- 1-20 JUNE** Bkerke, Lebanon | Annual Maronite Synod of Bishops
- 25 JUNE** Brooklyn, NY | Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral
- 27 JUNE** Danbury, CT | St. Anthony Church | 25th Ordination Anniversary for Fr. Naji Kiwan
- 28-30 JUNE** North Canton OH | National MYO Conference
- 2 JULY** TBD
- 3-9 JULY** Providence, RI | Clergy Conference and National Apostolate of Maronites Convention
- 16 JULY** TBD
- 17 JULY** Brooklyn, NY | Visit of Youth from St. Anthony-St. George Church, Wilkes-Barre, PA
- 20 JULY** Virtual | Oriental Orthodox-Catholic Dialogue
- 23 JULY** TBD
- 26-30 JULY** Napa, CA | Napa Institute Summer Conference
- 1-8 AUGUST** Morristown, NJ | Silent Retreat
- 11 AUGUST** Baden, PA | St. Theresa of Calcutta Church | Pastoral Visit
- 12 AUGUST** New Castle, PA | St. John the Baptist Church | Pastoral Visit
- 13 AUGUST** Pittsburgh, PA | Our Lady of Victory Church | Pastoral Visit
- 14-15 AUGUST** North Jackson, OH | Annual Assumption Pilgrimage to the Basilica Shrine of Our Lady of Lebanon

Eternal rest grant to her, O Lord.



PASSING OF SAMIRA DAIIF

Bishop Gregory Mansour received the sad news of the passing of Mrs. Samira Daiif, mother of Father Joseph Daiif. She passed suddenly. Fr. Joseph was enroute to see her after learning of her condition, and on the way, he received the sad news of her passing. The funeral was on 11 May in Zgharta, Lebanon.

Samira is survived by her husband, Sayed, as well as sons, Sarkis, Father Joseph and Semaan, and daughters Maria and

Rita. She is also survived by two brothers and many relatives and friends.

On behalf of the Eparchy of Saint Maron, Clergy, Religious and Laity, I extend to Father Joseph our heartfelt condolences and prayers.

May God grant her eternal rest in his kingdom, and grant consolation and peace to her family.

Gospel Harmonies and Tatian's *Diatessaron*

by Rev. Aaron J. Sandbothe

As the final temptation of Jesus by Satan on a high mountain (MATTHEW 4) or on the pinnacle of the Temple in Jerusalem (LUKE 4)? Does Jesus begin his ministry before (JOHN 3) or after (MARK 1) the arrest of John the Baptist? Did Jesus heal Peter's mother-in-law before (MARK 1, LUKE 4) or after (MATTHEW 8) the healing of the leper? After he fed the multitude, did Jesus go to Capernaum (JOHN 6) or to Gennesaret (MARK 6)? Did Jesus teach the Lord's Prayer to his disciples only (LUKE 11) or to the multitude during the "Sermon on the Mount" (MATTHEW 6)? Was Jesus crucified at the Third Hour (MARK 15) or was he still on trial before Pilate during the Sixth Hour (JOHN 19)? Did the centurion say, "Truly this was the Son of God" (MATTHEW 27), "Truly this man was the Son of God" (MARK 15), "Truly this was a righteous man" (LUKE 23), or was there even a centurion at all (JOHN 19)? Upon the arrival of the women to the tomb, was the stone in place (MATTHEW 28) or had it already been rolled away (MARK 16, LUKE 24, JOHN 20)? Did the women announce the resurrection to the Eleven (LUKE 24) or did they say nothing to anyone (MARK 16)?

The Church, throughout the ages, has wrestled with these divergences and contradictions in the gospels from the moment the ink was dry at the hand of the evangelists. Modern biblical scholarship views these differences in chronology or fact as evidence of the diversity in textual traditions between emerging Christian communities in the first century. Patristic writers point to the four evangelists themselves as the origin of these divergences. In the fifth century, Augustine of Hippo explained these variations as demonstrating the priorities and worldviews of the four evangelists: Matthew writes on royalty, Mark on humanity, Luke on priesthood, and John focuses on the divinity of Jesus Christ.

The early Church, as those who originally received the gospel accounts from the evangelists, found another method of addressing these variations — the gospel harmony. A gospel harmony seeks to collate these divergent accounts and either present them in parallel column or synopsis, or as is the case of the Syriac tradition, merge the four accounts into a single cohesive narrative. The most famous of the numerous gospel harmonies composed from the 2nd century to the medieval period was *Tatian's Diatessaron*. Tatian of Adiabene, an Assyrian Christian writer, theologian, and disciple of Justin Martyr, composed the *Diatessaron* (διὰ τεσσάρων) or "Gospel of the Mixed" (ܐܘܨܬܐܘܪܐ ܕܐܘܪܘܫܠܡ) in 160-175. Scholars disagree whether Tatian composed the text in Greek while he resided in Rome and then later translated it into Syriac upon his return to Mesopotamia in 172 or if the text was originally composed in Syriac.

Regardless, Tatian meticulously crafted the *Diatessaron* from the four canonical gospels primarily from the sequence of events established in Matthew and supplemented with non-Matthean material when required. Tatian's work eliminated duplication of parallel passages and sought to reconcile and solve the "problem" of divergences and contradictions in the words and order of works of Jesus. Because of the great differences between the *synoptica* and John's sequences, Tatian's narrative sometimes created unique intervening periods between events that existed neither in the synoptics nor in John. This demonstrates one of Tatian's working principles — the *Diatessaron* is internally coherent in narrative but may not be coherent with all or any of the four canonical gospels. Altogether, Tatian consolidated the number of verses of the gospels from 3,780 to 2,769, a 28 percent reduction in material, while preserving all the events and words of Jesus from the canonical accounts.

An example of Tatian's work to reconcile diverging accounts can be seen in the narrative of Jesus healing the blind in Jericho. In Tatian's Diatessaron there is only one man healed of blindness — Bartimaeus — as Jesus leaves Jericho, agreeing with the account in Mark 10. Tatian omits any references to the three other blind men healed in Matthew 20 or Luke 18 as Jesus entered Jericho.

No original text remains available to modern readers, but later translations exist in part in Persian, Arabic by *Ibn al-Tayyib*, and Latin (and even later translations into Medieval Dutch, Old Italian, Old English, etc.). Unique among the genre of gospel harmonies, the *Diatessaron* gained widespread use among Syriac Christians as the sole lectionary gospel for the celebration of the liturgy. The *Diatessaron* enjoyed a privileged place as the liturgical text for the gospel in the Syriac Churches from the 2nd to the 5th century. The 4th and 5th century Syriac fathers worked from the text of the *Diatessaron* when composing hymnody and other theological texts. Ephrem the Syrian composed a commentary on the *Diatessaron* in the 4th Century that provides insight into the theological reception of the *Diatessaron* among Syriac speaking Christians. Ephrem's commentary survived only in translation until the discovery of the *Chester Beatty MS 709* that preserved the original Syriac form. Ephrem's commentary in the original language stands out as an invaluable witness to the received form of the *Diatessaron* among Syriac Christians. The *Diatessaron* spread in Latin translation throughout the West as a supplement to the canonical gospels.

The liturgical use of the *Diatessaron* among Syriacs gradually declined during the mid-5th century under the reign and influence of Rabbula, Bishop of Edessa (411-435), who mandated every church in the region receive a copy of the four canonical gospels, and accelerated to a more or less decisive ending under Theodoret, Bishop of Cyrus (423-457), who ordered the destruction of the *Diatessaron* in the 200 of 800 churches of his diocese who still retained the use of the *Diatessaron* in the liturgy. The Old Syriac fourfold gospels that replaced the *Diatessaron* were subsequently replaced themselves by the introduction of the Syriac Peshitta text for universal use among all Syriac Christians.



Though the use of the *Diatessaron* is a relic of history, the legacy of this text remains as a testament to the influence of Syriac Christianity among Christians across the East and West from the earliest centuries. The outsized influence of the *Diatessaron* on many Syriac patristic writers influences the development of Syriac liturgical texts that outlived the lectionary use of the text. For readers of scripture, the *Diatessaron* provides one resolution to the questions posed earlier. The Church, from her earliest days, has not ignored the diversity and variations found in the gospel narratives and has sought to answer these questions through faithful scholarship and creativity from the second to the twenty-first century. ■

Fr. Aaron J. Sandbothe is a priest of the Eparchy of St. Maron, pastor of St. George Church in Uniontown, PA, and Managing Editor of The Maronite Voice.

The Scriptures, Jesus, and the Church

by Rev. Timothy V. Vaverek

The Bible says it; I believe it; that settles it.” While expressing a worthy devotion to Scripture, that old bumper sticker doesn’t convey the true nature of the Bible. Its inadequacy is evident the moment we realize the Bible itself doesn’t “say” anything; it’s filled with silent, printed words. So, what am I believing other

than my own interpretation of those words? Such an individualist approach, which is associated with the Reformation principal *sola scriptura* (“Scripture alone”), settles nothing. It results in contradictory private judgments.

Sola scriptura can’t even tell us which books are Scripture because the Bible itself didn’t originally include a Table of Contents (nor was it organized into chapters and verses). The list (or “canon”) of inspired Old and New Testament books was recognized through the early Church’s use of those writings in her missionary work, liturgies, and teaching. Over time, regional gatherings of bishops and Councils of the entire Church produced lists of which books actually belong in the Bible. The Protestants later objected to some of those books (like Wisdom and Maccabees), so today their Old Testament is smaller than ours.

An authentic approach to Scripture begins not with the Bible alone but with God and his people. John’s Gospel opens with the declaration: “In the beginning was the Word.” This Word is more than something written or spoken. It’s God’s eternal Wisdom, revealing God and accomplishing his purpose in the works of creation and salvation. Through this Word, God said, “Let there be Light,” and there was light (GEN 1:3). Through this Word all things were made, and light and life were restored to fallen humanity (JN 1:3). This is the Word that fashioned Abraham’s descendants to be a people uniquely God’s own and that was announced by the Prophets. Christians know this eternal Word to be God the Son, born of Mary as Jesus of Nazareth.



This means Christianity isn't primarily based on the written words of the Bible but on the incarnate Word of God, Jesus Christ. He came to gather everyone to himself and thereby to permit us to share his human and divine life as members of his Body and Bride, the Church. He is the Wisdom of God, the eternal Word who recreates us and accomplishes God's plan for, in, and through us. More than that, he is the Word for, in, and through whom we have received the grace to become the children of God (JN 1:12-13). Jesus, then, is the Word at work in the life of the Church through each of her members fashioning her apostolic witness to the nations. He is himself the source and measure of our beliefs and actions as Christians.

Consequently, the Bible is properly understood as a collection of writings crafted by various authors under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to announce all that God in his loving Wisdom has done, is doing, and will do for the sake of the lost children of Adam and Eve. In short, the Scriptures bear witness to who God is and to the work he accomplishes through his Eternal Word and Holy Spirit. The Bible is the Word of God only in the sense that through it the Word of God himself is present and active. And that eternal Word, made flesh as Jesus, "interprets" us; we don't interpret the Word.

The history of the Bible demonstrates that its inspired words arose from within the communal life of a particular people. Their language, culture, social structure, and shared experience shaped those to whom God spoke and those who later wrote the Bible under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. But it's essential to recognize that before being expressed in a written form, the Word of God was already at work and expressed in the life of God's people. And it was in the life and oral teachings of his people that God preserved his revelation until the time came to put it in writing.

Thus, Scripture didn't create the Jewish or Christian peoples. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit the particular writings of the Jewish Scriptures (or Tanakh) and the Christian Bible were fashioned out of a

communal life already shaped and illuminated by the Word of God. Similarly, the Holy Spirit guided those communities as they discerned which writings to accept as Scripture. In this sense, Jews and Christians aren't "peoples of the book;" their scriptures are "books of God's people."

This means that the Christian Bible is part of the Apostolic Tradition, that is, each of its books arose and remain within the life of God's people as "something handed down" (*traditio*). It's therefore incorrect to speak of "Scripture and Tradition" as if they were separate things. The Scriptures have been divinely formed within the life of the Church as inspired, normative expressions of and witnesses to the Word of God, Jesus, that foster and safeguard our life in him. They stand within, not outside or above, the apostolic life and ministry handed down in the Church. Therefore, they've been designed by God to be read within the Church and interpreted in light of her faith and history, the evangelical witness of her members, and the divinely protected official teaching (*magisterium*) of the successors of the Apostles (but not their personal opinions). No one, not even bishops or popes, has the authority to interpret the Bible or any aspect of the Christian faith according to their private judgments.

The Jews existed before the Tanakh and the Christians before the Bible, but not before God, his Eternal Word, and the Holy Spirit. To read the Bible authentically is to enter into the presence of God *as members of his people* and to discover who he is and the life that he hands down to us through Christ in the Church. The Scriptures never existed "alone" and they are not the source of our faith, but they remain a precious place for God's people to encounter him and his saving Word, Jesus Christ. ■

Fr. Timothy V. Vaverek is the author of the recently published book, As I Have Loved You: Rediscovering our Salvation in Christ

Saints in the Maronite Calendar

by Rev. Claude W. Franklin, Jr.

May – Holy Martyr Thalaleus of Lebanon

On 20 May, the Maronite Church commemorates the **Holy Martyr Thalaleus of Lebanon** (not to be confused with *Saint Thalaleus, Disciple of Saint Maron*, who is commemorated on 27 February.)

Thalaleus was a Christian physician from Lebanon, who lived during the reign of Emperor Numerian (283-284) and is numbered among the “Unmercenary Physicians” (physicians who did not charge money for their services).

In 284, Thalaleus, who was 18 at the time, was reported as a Christian to Roman Prefect Theodore of the City of Aegae in Cilicia. When he was before the Prefect he steadfastly said: “I am a Christian from Lebanon. ... During the former persecution of Christians in



Lebanon, I was brought before the Prefect Tiberius, and barely escaped execution. Now I stand before this Tribunal, you may do with me as you will. I want to die for Christ, ... and I hope to endure all torments with His help.”

Theodore was enraged and ordered two torturers, Alexander and Asterios, to bore through the knees of Thalaleus, and to pass a rope through the bone, and then suspend him upside down. Through God’s intervention the torturers bore into a block of wood and suspended it in place of Thalaleus. Alexander and Asterios confessed themselves as Christians, at which they were tortured and beheaded.

Then Theodore attempted to bore through Thalaleus’ knees himself, but was prevented from doing so by God; Theodore’s hand became paralyzed, and he fell to the ground. Thalaleus ran to his side, helped him up and healed him. Many people witnessed what happened and became believers, which enraged Theodore even more. Next, Theodore ordered that Thalaleus be drowned in the sea. The Prefect’s servants reported that they had carried out his order. Nevertheless, Thalaleus miraculously appeared before Theodore in a bright white garment, at which Theodore exclaimed: “Behold, this sorcerer has bewitched even the sea.”

At the advice of Urbician the Magician, Thalaleus was ordered to be thrown to wild beasts, but neither the bear, lion or lioness, would touch Thalaleus. Having witnessed this, the crowd shouted: “Great is the God of the Christians. O God of Thalaleus, have mercy on us!” The crowd then turned on Urbician and threw him to the wild beasts to be torn apart.

Finally, Theodore ordered that the Holy Martyr Thalaleus be beheaded by the sword. Thalaleus knelt, prayed to God, bent his neck beneath the sword and achieved martyrdom. May his prayers be with us!

June – Saint Awtel

On 3 June, the Maronite Church commemorates **Saint Awtel**. He is also commemorated on 27 August as the patronal saint of the village of Kfarsghab, Lebanon. The Church of Saint Awtel in Kfarsghab is the only church dedicated to him in Lebanon, and its architecture still preserves some old Maronite characteristics. It has been posited that the different date of celebration in Kfarsghab is because the village had been divided but reunited by 27 August. On the patronal feast after the Divine Liturgy, the village celebrates together by handing out the *Hrissé*, a traditional meal prepared after the slaughter of a goat or sheep.

Little was recorded about his life. There are different versions with facts that are for the most part consistent. We will follow here the version as found among the Maronite Synaxaria, adding a few details from the other accounts which do not contradict the “Maronite Version.”

Saint Awtel (*spelled variously Awtel, Awtilios, Aoutel, Autel or Eutel*) was born in a city named Magdal in the land of Lycia in Asia Minor in the middle of the third century to pagan parents and was converted to Christianity as a youth and baptized. His father wanted him to marry, but Awtel had made a vow to God to remain a virgin. Thus, to avoid breaking his vow of celibacy, he left for the city of Byzantium (*later known as Constantinople; modern day Istanbul*).

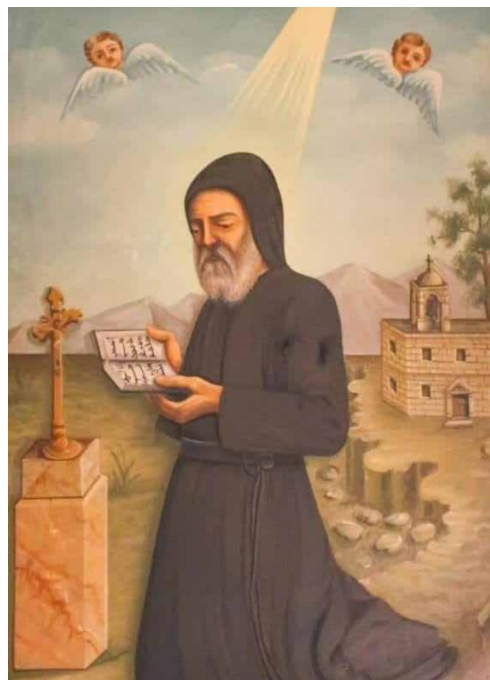
Along the sea journey to Byzantium a severe storm stirred up. It tossed and turned the boat and endangered all on board, so Awtel prayed to God for deliverance. Our Lord heard the prayer of Saint Awtel and the boat and all on board were saved from destruction. As a result, those on board converted from paganism to Christianity and were baptized.

Saint Awtel arrived safely to Byzantium, where he spent 20 years living a life of asceticism. Having received

word that his father had died, Awtel returned to his former homeland. Along the way, he performed numerous miracles, including the curing of a pagan man. This cure of the pagan man led to his conversion, as well as the conversion of 10,000 other pagans, and their subsequent baptisms.

Saint Awtel eventually entered monastic life and remained in the monastery for 12 years. His fellow monks wanted to elevate him as the superior of the monastery. Saint Awtel, not wanting to be the superior, left the monastery and became a hermit. He remained a hermit for the remainder of his life, assisted by a man whom he had cured from a poisonous snake bite. Saint Awtel departed this world in peace in the year 327. May his prayers be with us! ■

Fr. Claude W. Franklin, Jr., is pastor of Saint Joseph in Olean, NY.



Telling Others About the Maronite Church *by Brandon Shulleeta*

Rosanne Solomon, 74, of Boston, has volunteered for the Catholic Church more times than she can count. And hundreds of times, she's explained the Maronite faith to others — including to some Catholics who didn't know that Maronites are Catholic. Others referred to Maronites broadly as members of the “Lebanese church,” with some even wrongly assuming that the Maronite Church is some sort of off-shoot of Islam.

She's been glad to see over the decades how things have changed.

“I think people have become more educated,” Solomon said. “More people know about the Maronites now than ever. ... I think we've come a long way. ... We've finally been recognized as a church.”

In many ways, Solomon has played a part in that education.

Born and raised in Boston, she went to Catholic school, from grade school through college, with primarily Latin Rite Catholics. Solomon, on the



“The goal is ... to make it to heaven, and if you can take as many people with you, that's the important thing.”

other hand, is a Maronite and parishioner of Our Lady of the Cedars of Lebanon in Boston.

She recalls times growing up when she even had to explain to Latin Rite nuns that Maronites are Catholic. Sometimes, she had to ask her mother to help explain.

“And we had to educate people as we went along that, ‘Yes, we’re part of the same Catholic Church,’” Solomon said. “Yes, we believe in the pope. Yes, we believe in the Blessed Virgin. We believe in everything you believe. We just have a difference in the rite, in the way that we express our prayers and in the way that things are done.”

Over the years, she’s taken on many prominent volunteer roles within the Church.

For many years, she was on the board of the National Apostolate of Maronites, commonly known as NAM. She became the secretary and then vice president, before becoming the president for two years beginning in 2002.

“The biggest thing that NAM does is to educate young people about the Maronite Church and to spread the word about it,” she said, “and to get the Maronites to join together and work for the church and be part of the life of the church.”

She was part of a family deeply ingrained in the life of the Maronite Church. She remembers her mother rounding up the family to attend the first NAM convention in 1961 in Washington, DC. “My mother packed us all up in the car and took us to the very first convention because she said it was very historic and we should be part of it.”

In her youth, she washed the linens used on the church altar, which have to be handled in a careful and very particular manner, since they’re sacred.

Over the years she took roles that have included everything from being a member of church boards to becoming the first victim assistance coordinator for the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn, a role she still has 20 years later.

At one point, she also oversaw Catholic Charities.

A mother, grandmother and widow of a faithful Maronite, Solomon said she’s proud that her family has remained devout Maronites.

As the daughter of a Lebanese mother and a father with European ancestry, she’s proud the Maronite faith has increasingly become inviting to non-Lebanese people too.

“We embrace anyone that wants to be a part of our spirituality and live life as a Maronite,” she said.


“There is something very unique about the Maronite tradition. The Maronite tradition is very deep in spirituality,” she said. “I would say the Latin Rite is big on ceremony and things like that. But the deep spirituality, the close connection to the church and the life of the church and the saints and the whole relationship with God in the Maronite Church is deeper to me.”

For Rosanne, volunteering for the Church remains a way of life.

“I enjoy doing what I’m doing! As long as we’re helping other people in this world and making lives better and, you know, trying to put people on the right track, that’s the goal. The goal is for all of us together to make it to heaven, and if you can take as many people with you, that’s the important thing.” ■

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

Parish Life is a Family Affair *by Chet Wade*



oe Joseph said he didn't usually address adult parishioners as "Mr." or "Mrs." when he was growing up in St. Maron Church in Youngstown, Ohio, during the 1940s and 1950s. It was not because of a lack of respect. Far from it.

"When our parents would introduce us [to other adults], they would say, "This is Uncle So-and-So or Aunt So-and-So," Joseph said. "I knew them mostly by their last names preceded by aunt or uncle although they weren't my aunt or uncle. That's how I was brought up. We always had a sense of family at our church."

That sense of family remains strong today at St. Maron's. Many of the parishioners trace their roots to a wave of immigrants who came from Jbail and Batroun in northern Lebanon early in the 20th century. Through ancestry and marriages, many — if not most — of the parishioners are related.

"When I walk into the church, I want to celebrate seeing everybody there," said Carol Essad, who like Joseph is a lifelong parish member. "We've known each other [our entire lives] because we're either related ... or grew up together."

Father Tony Massad, who has been St. Maron's pastor since January 2020, said the connectedness of the parishioners shows in how active the parish members are in church life.

"There's a deep ownership of the parish," Father Tony said. "It permeates everything they do and how they see their parish. It's a second home."

St. Maron's is about 3½ miles southwest of downtown Youngstown, the largest city in a metropolitan area of 500,000 people located midway between Cleveland and Pittsburgh. The parish has about 100 active families and about 300 registered families.

Beyond the parish community, St. Maron's may be best known for two things:

- Its role in the founding and continuing support of the National Shrine of Our Lady of Lebanon in nearby North Jackson, Ohio, and
- The 23-acre campus that is home to not only the church but many parish facilities and community events.

Both accomplishments are credited to the vision and energy of the late Monsignor Peter Eid, who served as St. Maron's pastor from 1939 until his retirement in 1970. Monsignor Peter remained active at St. Maron's until his death in 1982.

Monsignor Peter organized three parishes — St. Maron's, Our Lady of Cedars in Akron, Ohio, and St. John the Baptist in New Castle, Pennsylvania — to acquire 80 acres for the shrine in 1961. The purchase came after Monsignor Eid and several other priests prayed a novena to help convince a reluctant landowner to sell. The three parishes cooperated to raise the funds needed for the shrine, which was dedicated in 1965 and the deed was given to the eparchy.

Father Tony said the parishioners have maintained a close relationship with the shrine and the Antonine Sisters there.

Monsignor Peter also saw the wisdom in moving the church from its East Side neighborhood home of many years to its current location in the early 1970s. The site — farmland at the time of the purchase — allowed for construction of a new church, education building, rectory, two social halls and an outdoor recreation center. The larger of the two social halls seats 800 people and operations have been turned over to a catering company because it has become so popular for community events. The recreation center with a covered pavilion, playground and ball field is named after Monsignor Eid.



“He had quite a vision for the future of the parish,” Joseph said. “The credit goes to him for what we have today.”

St. Maron’s remains a hub of activity for parish and community members. Father Tony noted the Maronite Children Formation (MCF), Maronite Youth Organization (MYO), and Maronite Young Adults (MYA) as being active. A religious education group also meets at the church.

Essad said one of her favorite activities is what is informally called the “Silver Bullets,” a group for older parishioners to share a meal and fellowship.

And Joseph cited the Knights of St. Maron men’s group. They meet twice a year and are a major force in fund-raising, especially for needy families.

The church also has established the St. Maron Education Foundation to award college scholarships. The foundation has been awarding scholarships since 1987, raising funds through an annual dinner, memorial contributions and estate gifts. There are now a dozen named scholarships with some giving out more than one award annually.

Father Tony previously served as associate pastor of St. Maron Church in Cleveland and pastor of what is now St. Rafka Church in Livonia, Michigan. He said he quickly felt comfortable in his current parish.

“It feels like a village church or a church in the old country in America in many ways,” he said.

Father Tony is ably assisted by the Parish Council as well as Deacon William George and Subdeacons Albert Dohar and Dr. James Essad. Father Tony said the parish still misses longtime Deacon Joseph Nohra, who died in 2015 after serving more than 40 years as a subdeacon and deacon and who also served for several years as parish administrator.

Earlier this year, the church held its annual St. Maron’s Day dinner, a highlight of the winter season.

The big summer event is the Lebanese Festival, which was brought back years ago after a hiatus. It is scheduled for July 22 and 23 on the church grounds.

Essad said the family feel of St. Maron’s should continue to serve it well in the future. It is the glue that holds the community together.

Now retired, she has lived everywhere from South America to Russia and China during her professional career. No matter where she went, she never felt far from St. Maron’s and made it a point to return.

“Every holiday, every time I came home,” Essad said. “I was at my church.” ■

Chet Wade has worked for more than 45 years in mass communications. He and his wife Mary Lou recently returned to his hometown of Pittsburgh and Our Lady of Victory Church.



WELCOME TO
PROVIDENCE, RI

58TH NATIONAL
MARONITE
CONVENTION

JULY 5 - 9
2023

Hosted by St. Anthony of the Desert Church
Sponsored by The National Apostolate of Maronites
namnews.org



OMNI HOTEL
PROVIDENCE

\$189/night

Reservations must be made no later than Monday, June 12, 2023.

The Omni Hotel is located in the heart of downtown at 1 W. Exchange St., Providence, RI 02903.

For reservations call 1-402-952-6646 and ask for the National Maronite Convention room block or visit www.omnihotels.com/hotels/providence/meetings nam-national-convention-2023-07022023.

THURSDAY, JULY 6

ENTERTAINMENT



PLATED DINNER FOLLOWED BY WORLD-RENOWNED SINGER **ABEER NEHME** & VOCALIST **CHRISTINE LATTOUF**

NEWPORT, RI

EXCURSIONS



BREAKERS MANSION TOUR
A symbol of the Vanderbilt family's social standing in the Gilded Age, the Breakers is the flagship of the Newport Mansions.

WORK SHOPS


BEACHES OR SHOPPING
Enjoy sun and surf at the popular Easton's Beach or Shopping on famous Thames St. and America's Cup Avenue.



- **THE SYNOD**
- **EUCCHARISTIC ADORATION**
12:30 PM THURSDAY TO 12:30 PM FRIDAY

FRIDAY, JULY 7


ENTERTAINMENT



HAFLI DINNER FOLLOWED BY TALENTED **AMIN SULTAN** & LOCAL TALENT FROM ST. ANTHONY OF THE DESERT **EVAN MASSOUD & THE KHOURY FAMILY**


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EXCURSIONS



BOATING
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- **PSYCHOSOCIAL EFFECTS ON OUR YOUTH TODAY**
- **MCF SUMMER CAMP K - 6**
- **MYO YOUTH ACTIVITIES 7 - 12**
- **MYA ROUND TABLE AND PROFESSIONAL DISCUSSION:** Explore spirituality, investing in real estate, 401K, resume writing and more.

SATURDAY, JULY 8

ENTERTAIN
M E N T



GRAND BANQUET FEATURING INTERNATIONAL LEBANESE SUPERSTARS **GEORGE & ABEER NEHME**

EXCURSIONS



AMAZEMENT ON TAP: MYA
Enjoy meeting with Bishop Mansour and Bishop Zaidan at Reiner's Pub right next door for conversation, drinks and light fare.

PROVIDENCE WALKING TOURS

Choose from five self-guided walking tours: Downtown Historic Tour, Early Black History Tour, East Side Historic Tour, Jewelry District Tour or the West Side Historic tour. Maps will be provided at registration.

WORK
SHOPS

- **CHOIR WORKSHOP**
- **CARL ANDERSON**, former CEO & Chairman of the Board of the Knights of Columbus and **CHORBISHOP SEELY BEGGIANI** will speak on the Commission of Lebanon.
- **MCF SUMMER CAMP K-6**
- **MYO YOUTH ACTIVITIES 7 - 12**

SILENT AUCTION

Our Silent Auction is planned for **Thursday, July 6 and Friday, July 7th**. We will have wonderful items for you to bid on. We hope you will attend as this event **supports NAM service programs and host parish, St. Anthony of the Desert Church.**

For more information: Please visit the NAM website at: www.namnews.org. We also recommend you visit our Convention Microsite at www.goprovidence.com/nam Connect with us on both the NAM and St. Anthony of the Desert Maronite Catholic Church Facebook pages.

SUNDAY, JULY 9

CLOSING

CLOSE OUT THE CONVENTION by attending a beautiful, Pontifical liturgy with our bishops and then enjoy a wonderful brunch.

Safe travels home!
SEE YOU IN DETROIT IN 2024!



St. Anthony of the Desert Maronite Catholic church in Fall River, Massachusetts is proud to host the 58th National Maronite Convention. Our theme this year is: "Eucharistic Amazement - The Maronite Way". We look forward to hosting you and offering an exceptional

convention experience! Enjoy spiritual engagement, liturgies, educational workshops for all ages, sing-a-longs, and New England hospitality.

Our dinner and entertainment festivities will begin on Thursday evening this year and we are proud to present fabulous talent to you!

Our raffle has four cash prizes: \$10,000 grand prize, followed by \$7,500, \$5,000, and \$2,500.

Thank you to all who are considering placing an ad in the Convention Ad Book. It is a tradition that we all look forward to and each family will receive the book at registration!

Come celebrate July 4th in Providence and thank you in advance for your support.

In Christ,
Monsignor James Root

ADDITIONAL HOTEL OPTIONS

The Graduate Providence, 11 Dorrance St., Providence, RI 02903

Group Registration Code: **2307APOMAR**

BOOKING LINK:

<https://www.graduatehotels.com/providence/#/booking/step-1?group=2307APOMAR&arrive=7/07/2023&depart=7/09/2023>

Hotel Registrations: **401-421-0700**

RESERVATIONS MUST BE MADE NO LATER THAN JUNE 8, 2023

**Providence Courtyard Downtown (Courtyard by Marriott)
23 Exchange Ter., Providence, RI 02903**

BOOKING LINK:

<https://www.marriott.com/events/start.mi?id=1661189358566&key=GRP>

RESERVATIONS MUST BE MADE NO LATER THAN JUNE 2, 2023



58TH NATIONAL MARONITE CONVENTION

Sponsored by the National Apostolate of Maronites

REGISTRATION FORM

Pre-registration Deadline: **Monday, June 5, 2023**

Please complete all information or register online: www.namnews.org

Incomplete forms will not be processed. Please PRINT legibly. You will receive a confirmation via email or mail.

Primary Registrant: *(Please add additional family members on reverse side)*

First Name: _____ Last Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Parish: _____

Check all that apply:

- NAM Member NAM Delegate
 NAM Board Order of St. Sharbel
 Conv. Comm. Child (5-11)
 Youth (12-18) Young Adult (18-35)

Allergies: _____

PACKAGES ONLY – Enter number of packages desired and make sure to fill in Grand Total. Daily Workshops are included with any purchase. NAM members whose 2023 dues have been paid will receive \$15 off of the full adult package and \$10 off all other packages. This discount is void after the pre-registration deadline of June 5, 2023. If you wish to pay for your membership with this registration: send a check payable to NAM.

Excursions are additional and not included in packages. Saturday Banquet seating is available on-line or please contact NAM office at 914-964-3070. The "Covenant of Behavior" MUST be completed for all Child and Youth registrants- if not accompanied by parent. See forms on-line.

****YOUTH:** If you are 18 and did not graduate from high school by summer; **YOUNG ADULT:** If you are over 18 and a high school graduate and younger than 35.

PACKAGE OPTIONS AND PRICING

Package Options	Adult and Young Adult 18+ years		Youth 12 - 18 years		Child 5 - 11 years		
	Before 6/5/2023	After 6/5/2023	Before 6/5/2023	After 6/5/2023	Before 6/5/2023	After 6/5/2023	
DOES NOT INCLUDE HOTEL ROOMS							
Full: Thursday-Sunday	# ____ @ \$390	# ____ @ \$410	# ____ @ \$380	# ____ @ \$400	# ____ @ \$170	# ____ @ \$190	
Weekend: Friday-Sunday	# ____ @ \$350	# ____ @ \$370	# ____ @ \$340	# ____ @ \$360	# ____ @ \$150	# ____ @ \$170	
Saturday-Sunday: Entertainment & Dinner (Sunday Brunch Included)	# ____ @ \$250	# ____ @ \$270	# ____ @ \$240	# ____ @ \$260	# ____ @ \$140	# ____ @ \$160	
Saturday Entertainment Only at 10 PM							# ____ @ \$175

EXCURSIONS AND PRICING

Date	Excursions - transportation is included in pricing below where applicable	Time	# of Attendees	Price
Thursday, July 6	Newport, RI — Explore beaches or shopping on famous Thames St. and America's Cup Avenue <i>All ages welcome, cold beverages and snacks provided</i>	11 AM - 6 PM		# ____ @ \$25
	Newport, RI — Explore the historic Breakers mansion and more <i>All ages welcome, cold beverages and snacks provided</i>	11 AM - 6 PM		# ____ @ \$45
Friday, July 7	Roger Williams Park — Zoo: Admission <i>Toddlers 1 year and younger are free</i>	12:30 PM - 4:30 PM		# ____ @ \$45
	Roger Williams Park — Boating: Swan boats, Electric boats, Kayaks, and Pirate Boat *BUS ONLY: All boat rental tickets purchased on site (Avg. Price \$5-\$15 p/p)	12:30 PM - 4:30 PM		# ____ @ \$25*
	Roger Williams Park — Botanical Center *BUS ONLY: All admission tickets purchased on site (Avg. Price \$2-\$5 p/p)	12:30 PM - 4:30 PM		# ____ @ \$25*
Saturday, July 8	"Amazement on Tap" with the Bishops at Reiner's Pub with light fare (<i>MYA Only</i>)	2 PM - 4 PM		# ____ @ \$25
	Providence Walking Tours — Self guided, maps provided	1 PM - 5 PM		FREE

GRAND TOTAL \$ _____

Please make checks payable to "NAM Convention" and mail to NAM 2110 Redwood Pl, Canfield, OH 44406

Do not send cash. If using a Credit Card register online or call 914-964-3070

Omni Hotel Rate is \$189.00 + tax. For Reservations please call 1-402-952-6646 and ask for the National Maronite Convention room block or visit www.omnihotels.com/hotels/providence/meetings/nam-national-convention-2023-07022023

Reservations must be made no later than **Monday, June 12, 2023**

Please note the nearest airport is TF Green Airport in Warwick, RI.

Ordinations

Cantor and Lector Ordinations at Seminary

On 25 March, the second time in our liturgical year that we commemorate the Annunciation, two seminarians from Our Lady of Lebanon Seminary were ordained to sing and proclaim the words of God in His holy Church.

Nadim Khaled of Lehfed, Lebanon, and Jakob Wyder of Waterville, Maine, both received ordination to the orders of Cantor and Lector. Bishop Gregory Mansour celebrated the Divine Liturgy and ordained these two men from the Eparchy of St. Maron of Brooklyn. The liturgy was concelebrated by Chorbishop Seeley Beggiani, Chorbishop Dominic Ashkar, Chorbishop Don Sawyer, Monsignor George Sebaali, Monsignor

Peter Azar, Father Armando Elkhoury, and Father Jaime Robledo of Theological College. Subdeacon Adonis Elasmr also served the altar along with seminarians Deacon Christian Hbaiter and Subdeacon Alejandro Landin. The rest of the seminarians added their voices to the choir.

This summer, Nadim will serve at St. Theresa parish in Brockton, Massachusetts, and then visit his family in Lebanon. Jakob will serve at St. Sharbel in New Brunswick, New Jersey, and St. Sharbel in Newtown Square, Pennsylvania, as well. May they announce the word like Gabriel to Mary throughout their ministry and all their lives. ■



Maronite Young Adults Spring 2023 Regional Retreats

*God's Healing Mercy: Finding Your Path to
Freedom and Forgiveness*



The New England Region

Over 30 young adults attended our MYA New England Regional Retreat day at the Mother of the Light Convent in Dartmouth, Massachusetts. The retreat, hosted by the sisters, consisted of conferences, icebreakers, adoration, Liturgy, small group discussions and meals.

Fr. Vince Farhat from Our Lady of Purgatory Church in New Bedford, Massachusetts, and Mother Marla Marie from the Maronite Servants of Christ the Light were the two keynote speakers as they shared on the importance of forgiveness and divine mercy. A beautiful day of spirituality and fellowship was enjoyed by all those who attended.



The Mid-Atlantic Region

St. Sharbel Church in Newtown Square, Pennsylvania, hosted over 40 young adults from across the region for the very first regional retreat. The day consisted of talks led by Fr. Joseph Daiif and Sr. Therese Maria Touma on the topics of mercy, forgiveness and healing. The talks were followed by riveting discussions in smaller breakout groups, a spontaneous basketball competition during lunch, adoration, confession, and Liturgy.

The group ended the day with a dinner, a cake in celebration of St. Joseph's feast day (and our very own Fr. Joseph!), music, and a bonfire. New friendships were made, and old ones reignited through dancing, food, and laughter. It was a full, long day of spirituality and fun for everyone.

The Far South Region

The Far South Regional Retreat, hosted by Our Lady of Lebanon Church in Miami, Florida, brought together Maronite Young Adults from Georgia, Florida, and South Carolina. The event kicked off with a brief introduction and insightful presentations by priests and seminarians about mercy and healing. The group then had a follow-up discussion and a delicious Lebanese breakfast served by the ladies of the parish!

After socializing at brunch, the priests and seminarians shared their perspectives on forgiveness, which was followed by another enlightening group discussion. After this, everyone proceeded to the chapel where the priests hosted a beautiful adoration for



the young adults along with confession. Everyone was then given time to clean up before the first ever Miami Gala held in the church hall! Hibachi was cooked and catered live at the church hall while everyone was on the dance floor. The young adults had a great time and wrapped up their night with karaoke.



Catholic End of Life Care *by Vivian M. Akel, LCSW*

As Catholics, our guiding principle and belief is that “human life is sacred from the first moment of conception to the moment of natural death.” In addition, life is a gift from God, and we are called to not only respect it but to protect it.

The Church has always embodied concern for the sick, demonstrated by Jesus throughout His ministry and evidenced by the many acts of healing highlighted in the Scriptures. To mention just a few, the cleansing of the man with leprosy, giving sight to the blind man, enabling a mute man to speak, healing the hemorrhaging woman, raising both a young girl and Lazarus from the dead. And of course, we know that Jesus’ ministering to the sick went much further than their physical ailments. He tended to emotional, mental and spiritual needs and healing as well. The Church has faithfully continued the model Jesus established for us in caring for every aspect of our fellow men and women’s ailments both physical and spiritual. We see this through the many ministries the Church is engaged in throughout the world and the many charitable and service organizations sponsored by the Catholic Church. We see it also in our parishes through the many ways our clergy serve their congregations in times of need.

In this article however, we focus on a topic that most of us will find ourselves facing at one time or another in our lives, and one in which the Church gives us both guidance and ultimately peace: that is, *Catholic End of Life Care and Decisions*.

There are four key “concepts” that Church speaks to in assisting lay faithful, clergy, and health care professionals, in making end of life care decisions. They grew out of Catholic moral teaching from as early as the book of Genesis, the 13th century teaching of St. Thomas Aquinas, the 18th century teachings of St. Alphonsus Liguori, and well into the 20th century teachings of Pope Pius XII and St. John Paul II in his encyclical “The Gospel of Life.” These key concepts are the following:

Ordinary vs. Extraordinary Treatments Benefit vs. Burden Nutrition and Hydration Pain Management

1. Ordinary vs. Extraordinary Treatments

The Church teaches that we are morally obliged to provide and accept “ordinary” means of sustaining life, and Catholic patients should make every reasonable effort to restore health through ordinary treatments. These are treatments that offer a reasonable hope of benefit without excessive burden. Ordinary treatments are those that have a high percentage of effectiveness and prolong life without excessive burdens to the patient and the family. Some examples include medications for chronic conditions such as heart disease, hypertension, and diabetes, procedures to insert stents to aid blood flow throughout the body, and minor surgery such as hernia repair or appendectomy.

Excessive burdens can be described as excessive pain, risk, or expense. Therefore, if a particular treatment entails or causes significant burdens on a family that are out of proportion to the expected benefit, it can be termed “extraordinary” and is thus optional.

Extraordinary treatments can be described as ones that have a low percentage of success, are experimental trials, or are known to be very high risk for death and serious complications. Additionally, if they may cause severe physical or emotional pain and may seriously compromise the family unit financially.

2. Benefit vs. Burden

This concept considers many factors including the extensive nature of the treatment itself, (i.e., heart lung transplant, stem cell transplant), the cost to each patient and family, the prognosis, the side effects and pain caused by the treatment (as in chemotherapy), and the emotional consequences both to the patient and the family. Each patient and their family support system

should make these decisions together with their medical team, support networks and their spiritual advisor, usually their parish priest or pastor while weighing the impact on the patient and family.

3. Nutrition and Hydration

In principle, there is an obligation to provide patients with food and water, including medically assisted nutrition through a feeding tube. At times feeding tubes may be determined to be excessively burdensome or of little benefit as in the end stage of life when death is imminent, and the body can no longer assimilate food and water. At these times, the body itself may reject the feeding tube. Often, efforts are made to reinsert the feeding tube, resulting again in the body's rejection of it. When this occurs, death occurs or results from the underlying condition, and not from starvation. This is markedly different from the decision to remove the feeding tube while the patient is still benefiting from nutrition and hydration.

4. Pain Management

Our Church teaches that patients should be kept as free from pain as possible, therefore pain medications that may indirectly shorten a person's life are morally permissible provided the intent is to alleviate pain and not to hasten death.

The challenges we face as Catholic families are how to balance these decisions while staying faithful to Catholic teachings while protecting our loved ones from pain, excessive physical, emotional and financial burden. Our relationship with our loved ones, our pastors and spiritual guides and most importantly God, weigh heavily on these decisions. Accompanying our loved ones through their final journey is enormously important and requires tenderness and a sense of confidence that the decisions we make for and with them are anchored in faith and in love. When caring for loved ones at life's end, it is important to ask God to join and accompany us. We need to listen to our loved ones and assure them we will do all we can to protect them from what they might fear most, usually pain and a fear of helplessness. We can tell them of the joys and accomplishments they have achieved and help them to find closure with their loved ones and prepare to meet God face to face. We should ask for a visit with the parish priest for Anointing and the Sacrament of Penance. Bishop Fulton Sheen often reminded us how important it is to prepare to die well. Our Catholic faith gives us a moral compass to live by and to help us die in peace, accompanied by God. Understanding these four guiding principles will be helpful, even if only to highlight what questions to ask when faced with these situations. ■



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- L. Small Circle Cedar
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Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn Policy on Child and Youth Protection

The Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn publishes its reviewed and revised Policy on Sexual Abuse of Minors by Priests or Deacons. The same policy is also available online at <http://www.stmaron.org>. The Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon has its own policy and it is also available online at eparchy.org

As Catholics and Maronites, we consider the welfare and protection of our children a sacred responsibility. We hereby promulgate the following Eparchial norms as an implementation of Essential Norms for Diocesan/Eparchial Policies Dealing with Allegations of Sexual Abuse of Minors by Priests or Deacons approved by the Congregation for Bishops on December 8, 2002.

Definitions

Sexual Abuse of a minor includes sexual molestation or sexual exploitation of a minor; the acquisition, possession or distribution of pornographic images of a minor; and other behavior by which an adult uses a minor as an object of sexual gratification.

For purposes of this policy, a minor shall be construed to include anyone who has not attained the age of eighteen (18) years as well as anyone who lacks the use of reason regardless of his or her actual chronological age.

Response

The healing of victims, their families and their community from the effects of sexual abuse by church leaders begins when the allegations of such abuses are received. When victims decide to disclose the abuse, it is important that the response they receive be compassionate and non-judgmental.

Anyone receiving an allegation of abuse will respond in a pastoral, supportive manner, leaving investigative concerns to those who serve in that role.

An allegation will be received without initial judgment as to the truth of the complaint. No intimation of blame will be made by the initial recipient of information. Individuals making allegations will be supported positively in their decision to disclose.

The Eparchial Bishop will designate a competent person to coordinate assistance for the immediate pastoral care of persons who claim to have been sexually abused when they were minors by priests or deacons. This Victim Assistance Coordinator will assess and respond to the immediate and long-term needs of the alleged victim and family, the alleged offender, parish communities and others that are affected by the disclosure of sex abuse.

The Victim Assistance Coordinator will serve as a consultant to the Eparchial Bishop and the Review Board.

Any individual wishing to report a claim of sexual abuse is encouraged to contact the Victim Assistance Coordinator, Rosanne Solomon, at:

Eparchy of Saint Maron | 109 Remsen St. | Brooklyn, New York 11201
Tel: (617) 327-1317 | (718) 237-9913

Review Board

The Review Board is a predominantly lay board composed of a variety of professionals duly appointed to assist the Eparchial Bishop in a strictly confidential and consultative capacity. It will have no final decision-making authority, which authority will continue to reside exclusively with the Eparchial Bishop.

Board Functions

- To advise the Eparchial Bishop in his assessment of allegations of sexual abuse of minors and in his determination of suitability for ministry;
- To review Eparchial policies for dealing with sexual abuse of minors;
- To offer advice on all aspects of sexual abuse cases, whether retrospectively or prospectively.

Membership

The Review Board, established by the Eparchial Bishop, will be composed of five members of outstanding integrity and good judgment in full communion with the Church. The majority of the board will be lay persons not in the employ of the Eparchy. These will include:

- A parent
- A parish pastor/administrator
- An attorney
- An individual with investigative experience

The Eparchial Bishop may deem it desirable that the Promoter of Justice participate in the meetings of the Review Board. The Vicar General and Eparchial Attorney participate in the annual meeting of the Review Board but are not considered members of the Board.

Appointment

Members appointed by the Eparchial Bishop will serve a five (5) year term.

All Review Board members will adhere to the rules of strict confidentiality with regard to all deliberations and information received.

Reporting

In all cases of alleged or suspected or known child abuse committed by a priest or deacon, the Eparchy will comply with all applicable civil laws in respect to reporting the allegations and will cooperate with civil authorities in the investigation.

Any priest or deacon, who knows from the external forum that a minor has been sexually abused, is required to report that knowledge or suspicion to the Eparchial Bishop in accordance with the norms of canon law and to the civil authorities.

Investigation

When an allegation of sexual abuse of a minor by a priest or deacon is received, a preliminary investigation in accordance with canon law will be initiated and conducted promptly and objectively (Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches [CCEO], c. 1468). The purpose of the Eparchial investigation is to ensure that the Eparchial Bishop has a complete, thorough, and accurate report of the alleged incident. The investigation will be conducted by an investigator appointed by the Review Board. The investigator will report his findings in writing to the Eparchial bishop and to the Review Board.

The accused will immediately be called by the Eparchial Bishop or his delegate and be made aware of the allegation against him and the identity of the accuser. The accused will remain in his position until the initial investigation is completed, which is to be done as expeditiously as possible.

All appropriate steps shall be taken to protect the reputation of the accused and the accuser during the investigation. The accused will be encouraged to retain the assistance of civil and canonical counsel and will be promptly notified of the results of the investigation.

When there is sufficient evidence that sexual abuse of a minor has occurred, the Eparchial Bishop will notify the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. The Eparchial Bishop shall then apply the precautionary measures mentioned in CCEO, c. 1473 that is, remove the accused from the sacred ministry or from any ecclesiastical office or function. The Eparchial Bishop may impose or prohibit residence in a given place or territory, and prohibit the public participation in the Most Holy Eucharist pending the outcome of the process.

In every case involving canonical penalties, the processes provided for in canon law will be observed, and the various provisions of canon law will be considered.¹ Unless the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, having been notified, calls the case to itself because of special circumstances, the Eparchial Bishop will follow the directions of the Congregation on how to proceed.² If the case would otherwise be barred by prescription, because sexual abuse of a minor is a grave offense, the Eparchial Bishop shall apply to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith for a dispensation from the prescription, while indicating appropriate pastoral reasons.

For the sake of due process, the accused is encouraged to retain the assistance of civil and canonical counsel. When necessary, the Eparchy will supply canonical counsel to the cleric.

The Eparchy will conduct a judicial process of the case according to the appropriate canons and practice of the Church. The accused may be requested to seek, and may be urged voluntarily to comply with, an appropriate medical and psychological evaluation at a facility mutually acceptable to the Eparchy and the accused.

In every instance, the Eparchy will advise and support a person's right to make a report to public authorities.

Ministry/Service

No priest or deacon removed from an Eparchial position for allegations of sexual abuse of a minor will return to ministry or service before their case is assessed and fitness is determined by the Eparchial Bishop in consultation with the Review Board. The safety of children is the paramount consideration governing the formation of recommendations regarding the future ministry of one accused of abuse.

An allegation of sexual abuse of a minor made against a priest or deacon will be deemed established if, with due respect for the provisions of canon law:

- The accused individual admits to conduct defined by this policy as sexual abuse
- A civil court of criminal law finds the accused guilty of a crime that consists of conduct defined by this policy as sexual abuse, or the accused pleads guilty or no contest to a crime that consists of conduct defined by this policy as sexual abuse.
- The appropriate ecclesiastical tribunal finds the accused guilty of the crime.

When an act of sexual abuse by a priest or deacon is admitted or is established after an appropriate process in accord with canon law, the offending priest or deacon will be removed from ecclesiastical ministry, not excluding dismissal from the clerical state, if the case so warrants.

At all times, the Eparchial Bishop has the executive power of governance, through an Administrative act, to remove an offending priest or deacon from office, to remove or restrict his faculties, and to limit the exercise of his ministry. For the sake of the common good and observing the provisions of canon law, the Eparchial Bishop shall exercise this power of governance to ensure that any Priest or Deacon who has committed an act of sexual abuse of a minor as described above shall not continue in the active ministry.

The priest or deacon may at any time request a dispensation from the obligations of the clerical state. In exceptional cases, the Eparchial Bishop may

¹Cf. *Canonical Delicts Involving Sexual Misconduct and Dismissal from the Clerical State*, 1995; Letter from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, May 18, 2001.

²Article 16, of the 2010 Revised Procedural Norms for the *Moto proprio Sacramentorum sanctitatis tutela*.

Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn Policy on Child and Youth Protection

Continued from Page 27

request of the Holy Father the dismissal of the priest or deacon from the clerical state *ex officio*, even without the consent of the priest or deacon.

Care will always be taken to protect the rights of all parties involved, particularly those of the person claiming to have been sexually abused and the person against whom the charge has been made. When an accusation has proved to be unfounded, every step possible will be taken by the Eparchial Bishop to restore the good name of the priest or deacon falsely accused.

No priest or deacon who has committed an act of sexual abuse of a minor will be transferred for ministerial assignment to another eparchy/diocese or religious province.

Before a priest or deacon is transferred for residence to another eparchy/diocese or religious province, the Eparchial Bishop shall forward, in a confidential manner, to the local bishop or religious superior of the proposed place of residence any and all information concerning any act of sexual abuse of a minor

and any other information indicating that he has been or may be a danger to children or young people.

The Eparchial Bishop will not consider receiving a priest or deacon into the Eparchy from another jurisdiction without previously obtaining the necessary information regarding the moral and civil record of the priest or deacon in question.

Prevention

The Eparchy of Saint Maron has promulgated a Code of Ethics and Integrity in Ministry to be adhered to all persons in positions of trust in the Eparchy.

All Eparchial programs designed to certify clerics, eparchial employees, and volunteers who serve children on a regular basis will include segments that address child sexual abuse. The training curriculum will include information concerning: signs and symptoms, dynamics of child abuse, impact of child abuse, intervention strategies, reporting requirements and community resources. ■

Internet and Social Media Guidelines for the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn

The following are a list of general guidelines to cover the use of the Internet websites and other social media sites. These guidelines, along with the recently issued United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) Social Media Guidelines <http://www.usccb.org/comm/socialmediaguidelines.shtml>, should cover most situations faced by any Pastor Administrator.

- The use of official parish websites and other social media platforms are entrusted to the confidence of the Pastor/Administrator and the Bishop. It is important to remember that once something is placed on the Internet, there are no deletions; it will remain forever in cyberspace. Thus, the Pastor/Administrator or his delegate should keep close watch over all postings to ensure that none of them is harmful, embarrassing, dangerous, or illegal.
 - Any unofficial websites associated with the parish must carry a disclaimer reflecting that postings are not the expressed opinion of the Parish, Eparchy or the Magisterium of the Catholic Church.
 - The official website of the parish must reflect the dignity of the Church, thus web-hosting companies, paid for by advertising, should be avoided. The Church has no control over the advertising that could, at a minimum, reflect badly on the dignity of the Church.
 - Due to privacy concerns, only business (not personal) accounts may be established on all social media platforms. That is because business accounts do not have an open wall and only allow for posting by the administrator. The Pastor/Administrator or a designated responsible adult should be the only administrator and the account should carry a disclaimer.
 - No photos of children taken in a private setting should be posted on a parish or personal website or on other social media sites. Photos of children taken in public settings should be posted according to the desires of the parents.
 - Church personnel are not to use Church computers for personal social media sites.
- These sites raise numerous security and privacy concerns for the Church. The Pastor/Administrator is to make sure there are enough filters in place to prevent access to improper and unwanted material.
- Use by Church personnel of a Church computer to access, view and/or download pornographic images of a person under the age of eighteen (18) years or of a person who lacks the use of reason regardless of his or her chronological age shall constitute grounds for dismissal. The Pastor/Administrator shall immediately report such conduct to the appropriate civil authority for investigation and/or prosecution, as well as to the Vicar General or Eparchial Bishop.
 - Although the Eparchy cannot monitor or control personal accounts, in the context of one's use of social media (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc.), priests, deacons, religious, employees and volunteers should be mindful that postings and other statements made in these forums can be seen as connected to both their professional role and the Church. ■

Parish News

FAIRLAWN, OHIO

Passion Week

Like Maronites around the world, Our Lady of the Cedars of Mount Lebanon in Fairlawn, Ohio, commemorated the season of Great Lent. Throughout the journey of fasting, prayer, and almsgiving, Fr. Ronald Eid, led the community in a reflective and spiritual journey which culminated in the celebration of the Glorious Resurrection. On the Fridays of Lent, the community prayed the Way of the Cross followed by meatless meals prepared by families and church clubs in turn. Guest speaker, Randy Malek, came to the last Friday of Lent to focus the parish's thoughts on the week to come. On Hosanna Sunday, the church celebrated Christ's entrance into Jerusalem and the children dressed in fine clothes carrying decorated candles. The brunch that followed liturgy had a fun photo-op visit from the Easter Bunny. The parish celebrated the services of Great Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday. The parish celebrated the Thursday of the Mysteries through the commemoration of the washing of the apostles' feet and Last Supper. The somber services of Great Friday of the Crucifixion left parishioners with a reflection on the suffering and death of our Lord highlighted by ancient prayers and music. Saturday of the Awaited Light found the faithful in prayerful anticipation of the Resurrection and ended with the Easter Vigil Liturgy. With the breaking of day, the community rejoiced Easter Sunday morning by resounding with the anthem of Alleluia! Our life was made new by the love of Jesus through His suffering, death, and resurrection. ■



DARTMOUTH, MASSACHUSETTS

Maronite Servants' Parish Outreach



Since February 2023, the Maronite Servants of Christ the Light in Dartmouth, Massachusetts, have been offering various parish missions inspiring the Maronite people to pray with the Word of God and grow in love for our Lord. The Maronite Servants' first mission was held in the beginning of Great Lent at St. Rafka Church in Greer, South Carolina. The Sisters met with parish groups including: the children, MYO, MYA, and the Ladies and Men's groups. Their mission theme, "Be Made Clean," taught the groups to pray with God's Word and receive the love of Jesus.

Their second mission, "Vocations," was presented in March at St. Anthony Church in Danbury, Connecticut. The Sisters visited with the MYO, and Sr. Therese Maria offered a Vocation witness at the liturgies. Christy Tawk, MYO member, quoted her recollection of the Maronite Servants' visit. "It was a blessing to have the opportunity to spend an evening with the Sisters of the Maronite Servants of Christ the Light. It was inspirational how they connected with us on both a spiritual and youthful level. It was such a beautiful experience to hear how each sister was called by Jesus from different places and walks of life to do the work of God through the Maronite Church. The Nuns helped us to pray with the Bible through *Lectio Divina*, a technique of reading the Bible that allows for reflection to strengthen our relationship with Jesus. I felt close to Mother Marla, Sister Therese Maria, and Sister Emily because of their amazing devotion to the youth and the Maronite Church. Their messages and missions are truly inspiring for anybody who has the privilege to meet them."

The third mission, "Radiant Light," was held in April at Our Lady of Lebanon Church in Miami, Florida. The Sisters offered discussions and activities to the Ladies' Sodality, MYO, MYA, and the Catechetical children to open their hearts and minds to the Lord.

For a parish visit from the Sisters, please email them at: sister@maroniteservants.org. ■

Parish News

JAMAICA PLAIN, MA , MASSACHUSETTS

National Eucharistic Revival

The Holy Father, the Latin Catholic Bishops, and the Eastern Catholic Bishops are urging all faithful to have greater awareness of the true presence of Our Lord in the Holy Eucharist. The purpose is to re-catechize Catholics about the essence of the Eucharist. The bishops are reminding us that the Eucharist is not some sort of medieval magic source, nor is it a mere symbolic sign; but it is a real gift given to us by Jesus Himself. Church teaching is consistent in this matter, and that is to ensure the actual presence of Jesus among us on this earth until the end of time.



The faithful are being urged to educate themselves more and more about the Eucharist. The clergy and religious leaders are being asked to dedicate several sessions throughout these two years concerning the true meaning of the Eucharist.

This Eucharistic Revival will conclude with the celebration of a National Eucharistic Congress, which will take place in Indianapolis, IN, 17-21 July 2024.

In the spirit of this revival, Our Lady of the Cedars of Lebanon Church in Boston conducted a Three-Wednesday-Session-Retreat about the Eucharist. This took place during the first three weeks of Great Lent. Father Joseph Abi Saad diligently explained the roots of the Eucharist in the Old Testament. He addressed the permanent presence of God in the twelve loaves of bread, in the Ark of the Covenant, and how this evolved into the perpetual presence of Christ's Body and Blood by consecrating the bread and wine during the Divine Liturgy. He

spoke about Agape—love of God the lover, Jesus the beloved, and the Holy Spirit. He explained the love between both of them, and by the cross, by loving each other, and by loving God, we are in union within this cycle of love. To no one's surprise, the great attendance at the retreat testified to its success. All those who attended were generously nourished by the Word of God and yearned for more wisdom and knowledge.

MYO Boston | Monthly Meetings

The MYO of Our Lady of the Cedars of Lebanon in Boston, MA, has been active this winter participating in monthly meetings with other MYO teams at St. Anthony of the Desert in Fall River, MA; Our Lady of Purgatory in New Bedford, MA, and visiting the monastery of "The Most Holy Trinity" in Petersham, MA. We look forward to attending the National Conference in North Canton, Ohio, this summer. ■

NORMAN, OKLAHOMA

The Eucharist and Blessed Carlo Acutis – Parish Discussion

On 26 March, Our Lady of Lebanon Church in Norman, OK, hosted a Sunday discussion about the Eucharist and Blessed Carlo Acutis. Carlo was an amateur Italian programmer who died of leukemia at the age of 15 leaving behind a beautiful legacy of archived Eucharistic miracles around the world. Father Nabil Mouannas, pastor of the parish, celebrated the Liturgy asking for the intercession of Blessed Carlo for the youth of the parish and all young people around the world. Following the Liturgy, Jad Ziolkowska, Ph.D., from the National Shrine of the Infant Jesus of Prague, OK, gave an opening talk. She presented how science can be used to better understand and learn more about Eucharistic miracles. Group discussions among adult and young parishioners about the inspiring young saint followed. In a lively spirit of learning, participants exchanged information about the Eucharistic miracles. During their discussions, the parishioners expressed their esteem for Carlo and his remarkable example of love and devotion to the Eucharist. “Carlo had a special gift from God. He was so close to the



Eucharist,” said Jeanne Roegiers. Her friend, Sandy Vincent, agreed, stating, “I imagine he will be inspiring to so many young people, but his example resonates with older Catholics as well.” Several young people in the group enthusiastically expressed their appreciation for Carlo proclaiming Christ through his life and work. “I would like to be like Carlo. Everything he has done is so inspiring,” said Mateo. He continued to say, “I come to serve as the altar server for this purpose, to deepen my relationship with the Lord.” Concluding the discussion, Father Nabil emphasized, “I invite everyone in my parish and around the world to a frequent visitation of Jesus in the tabernacle. In the Blessed Sacrament we can find the only true source of love, grace, power, pardon, peace and joy.” ■

WEST COVINA, CALIFORNIA

Statue Dedication



St. Jude Church in West Covina celebrated a very memorable Statue Dedication on 25 March 2023.

The celebration opened with a Liturgy celebrated by Bishop Elias Zaidan, Pastor Fr. Ramsine Hage Moussa, Fr. Elias Sleiman, Monsignor Antoine Bakh, Fr. Etienne Hanna, Fr. Albert Constantine, and several clergy from neighboring churches. The San Gabriel Valley Knights of Columbus were also present to witness the momentous occasion. The entire congregation was filled with joy and excitement as they watched the clergy bless the St. Jude statue, which is located in front of the Church. After the dedication, there was a dinner reception on the church grounds. The reception was a grand and elegant affair enjoyed by all in attendance. The guests were treated to a delicious meal and a warm, welcoming atmosphere. The event was a perfect opportunity for the parishioners to come together and celebrate their faith and community. The success of the event was made possible by the diligent efforts of the various parish committees including the Parish Council, Social Committee, and Construction Committee. They worked tirelessly to ensure that the ceremony was a memorable one for everyone involved. It was truly a day to remember for St. Jude Church and its parishioners. ■

Parish News

UNIONTOWN, PENNSYLVANIA

WVU Vespers and Activities

On the evening of Hosanna Sunday, 2 April 2023, the clergy and parishioners of Saint George Church in Uniontown, Pennsylvania, joined with the students and parishioners of Mountaineer Catholic (the Newman Center at St. John's University Parish in Morgantown, WV) for Vespers of Great Monday and the celebration of the Arrival at the Harbor. Dozens of West Virginia University students attended vespers, and for most of them, it was their first time attending a Maronite liturgical service. Within a few minutes, the student community learned the melodies and rhythms of Syriac Maronite chant and were singing the antiphonal chants and psalms loudly with the clergy. In his homily, Fr. Aaron Sandbothe, pastor of Saint George Church, explained the structure of the Maronite Divine Office, the history of the Rite of the Arrival to the Harbor at the beginning of Passion Week, the symbolism of handheld candles, the Parable of the Wise Virgins, and the theological imagery of the Harbor of Salvation. Fr. Aaron thanked Frs. Brian Crenwelge and Phillip Szabo of Mountaineer Catholic for their hospitality and for fostering an environment of prayer and love for the Church's diverse liturgical patrimony among the students at the university.

The Saint George Church congregation celebrated the many services, traditions, rituals, and liturgies of Passion Week. On Palm Sunday, led by Fr. Aaron, subdeacons, and altar servers, the parishioners carried palms and olive branches as they processed through the neighborhood streets singing hymns of praise. Following the Easter Sunday Liturgy, the parish children enjoyed breakfast sponsored by the Ladies Guild and an Easter Egg Hunt organized by the MYO. The



MYO is involved in several cultural projects including: learning to cook ethnic Lebanese dishes (majadra and grape leaves), attending Bible Study discussions, decorating the church for feasts, and holding events for the catechism students. The MYO members also helped with the Ladies Appreciation Dinner honoring the women of the church for their years of hard work and dedication. ■

PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA

Parish Activities

Members of the Maronite Youth Organization (MYO) at Saint Maron Church in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, sponsored various Pre-Lenten and Lenten activities. In February, the Girl Scouts of the parish held a Girl Scout Cookie sale. They learned the basics of business and sales to help prepare them for future church events including *Inshallah*, the annual Church Festival. A healthy bit of competition appeared to be on the rise. The adult parishioners hosted a Saj breakfast (flat grilled zaatar bread) on 12 February. Also, the congregation and community members were able to enjoy a weekend *Marfaa* Take-Out (the last Sunday to eat meat before Lent). This was followed by the MYO hosting a Philadelphia Pretzel sale on 26 February to support the youth groups. The adults returned with organizing a Falafel Sandwich sale on 5 March, and a Foul Breakfast (consisting of onions, tomatoes, fava beans, lemon and olive oil) held on 19 March.

On Hosanna Sunday, St. Maron Church held their annual Bake Sale open to the parishioners and neighborhood community members. They enjoyed delicious mammoul, cookies, and biscotti. Also, on Hosanna Sunday, the children, dressed in their best outfits, processed through the neighborhood streets carrying candles and palms. Their 45th annual Hosanna Sunday Brunch following liturgy was attended



by over 150 patrons. During brunch, the MYO surprised Harold Smith, church custodian, with a beautiful birthday cake. They thanked Harold for his 40 years of service taking care of the church and the needs of the children, parishioners, and clergy. The congregation sang "Happy Birthday" to Harold, and several youth addressed Harold with sincere words of appreciation for his dedication to St. Maron Church and the congregation. Finally, St. Maron Church's Lenten Season concluded with their traditional Parish Potluck Dinner following the 7 April Great Friday Services. ■

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Come, Let Us Adore Him

by Sister Marla Marie Lucas, Maronite Servants of Christ the Light

Adoration changed my life. My journey to making daily adoration in front of the Blessed Sacrament part of my prayer life had an unusual beginning. I was a young adult in college and had recently begun a prayer commitment including scripture reading as part of my spiritual life, adding it to my Sunday Mass attendance. I considered that a lot of prayer, and some of my friends thought it was saintly! At the time, I didn't realize that more was to come and that I would learn of an amazing way to encounter Our Lord in addition to Mass attendance.

I was on summer break from studies and rented a house off campus with friends. I remember the day very well, it was in June, a very hot, humid Saturday. Since I was off from work, I thought I would connect with some friends. My housemates were all out, so I called a few people but no one answered. Restless, with nothing to do, I decided to take a short walk to get a cold soda at the market. Then I found myself

passing by the store, and walking on further as if something was guiding me. One mile later, I stopped at the Catholic chapel attached to the local parish. It was my first time in the chapel and I found it empty, then the next thing I did was go right up to the tabernacle as if drawn by a gentle but compelling attraction. I knelt down in prayer.

This doesn't sound so unusual but for me it was. What only felt like a minute of kneeling there in quiet prayer turned out to be three hours! I just had to return the next day, and then the next. I had encountered Jesus in His Real Presence. Our Lord waits for us in the tabernacle. He invites us to come to Him in the Eucharist to be with Him, to receive His love.

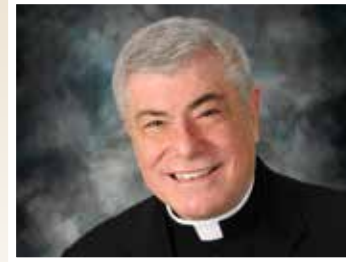
Pope Francis invites us, "I would like to tell you: Let us return to Jesus! Let us return to the Eucharist! While we are broken by the travails and sufferings of life, Jesus becomes food that feeds us and heals us." (25 September 2022, at the Italian National Eucharistic Congress)

There are many prayer aids that can help one to pray to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament and are available from publishers such as Word on Fire, Our Sunday Visitor, Magnificat, Ascension Press, to name a few. The time spent, and the prayers offered can vary but what is most important is to visit Jesus waiting for you in the tabernacle of every Catholic Church and Chapel.

Pope Saint John Paul II captures perfectly why we should do this: "It is pleasant to spend time with him, to lie close to his breast like the Beloved Disciple (CF. JN 13:25) and to feel the infinite love present in his heart." (ECCLESIA DE EUCHARISTIA #46). ■



From the Editor



Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

It is time to ‘fess up. I have gambled. It was in 1977 when I went to Lake Tahoe with my grandmother and aunt. The only game that I knew how to play was the slot machine—I won a little and then lost \$60. Since then, I have not even bought a lottery ticket.

Why am I telling you this? I have been thinking about something and realize that **I need to become a gambler.**

Let me explain. What if someone approached you while you were standing at a roulette wheel and promised you that if you bet everything you owned—even the shirt on your back—and put it on *red 21* that you would win and become the richest person in the country. Would you do it?

It would all depend on who was making the promise.

You may know the person to be a liar and an embezzler. You would send such a person on his or her way!

But what if it was a good friend whom you know to be truthful and honest? You know your friend is

sincere, but don’t believe that he or she could fulfill such a promise.

Or the person could claim to be the Savior, the Son of God. It would all depend on whether we believed him or not. If we doubted him, of course we would not recklessly gamble everything. But what if we did believe him, what would we do?

In the Gospel of Matthew (19:16-30), a rich young man asked Jesus what he needed to do to earn eternal life. Note: we are not talking about a pile of money, but eternal life. The man told Jesus that he had always followed the commandments. Jesus then told him, “You lack one thing; go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.” When the young man heard this, he was shocked and went away grieving, for he had many possessions. He couldn’t do it. He couldn’t simply trust in Jesus and follow him. He could not put everything on red 21 and **walked away from eternal life!**

What would we have done?

Do you know what we call someone who puts everything on red 21? A saint. God bless you and your loved ones. ■



Chorbishop John D. Faris

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