

# *the* Voice Maronite



The Many Faces of *St. Nicholas*



# the Maronite Voice



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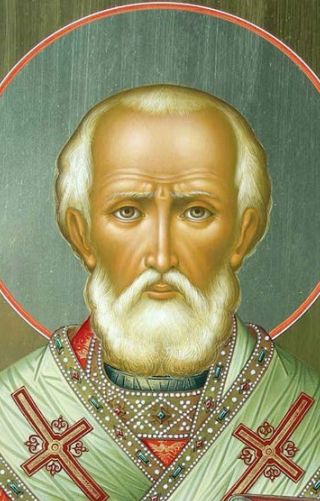
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### THE MARONITE VOICE

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# The world is a mess. But we don't have to be.

**O**ur world is in a mess, but we do not have to add to the mess or make it worse. We, who share in the Judeo-Christian tradition of four-thousand years, have the privilege to love and worship the one true God, who loves us and shares in our lives. Thus, our souls can find rest, and our hearts be at peace, even in the midst of many troubles.

We can help this world because we believe in truth, which includes all the truths that Jesus himself taught us. When God created the world, he made it good. Our human nature is good; being created, male and female, is good; the meaning of marriage for a man and a woman, is good; and the world in which we were created is good. "God saw all that he had made and indeed it was very good". (GENESIS 1:31)

Moreover, God, who is all good, is worthy of our trust. We know that life has meaning, we are not here by chance. Rather, from the moment of our conception to our natural death we are God's beloved sons and daughters, created in his image and likeness. (GENESIS 1:27)

In a messy world of suffering and pain, our Lord Jesus Christ taught us that even these can be a means of grace and goodness, if we offer all to God and seek his way.

Our Lord Jesus taught us by his own suffering and death, that neither sin nor death has any power over us. He likewise taught us how to forgive and how to love, and he asked that we treat others as we want to be treated ourselves, no matter what.

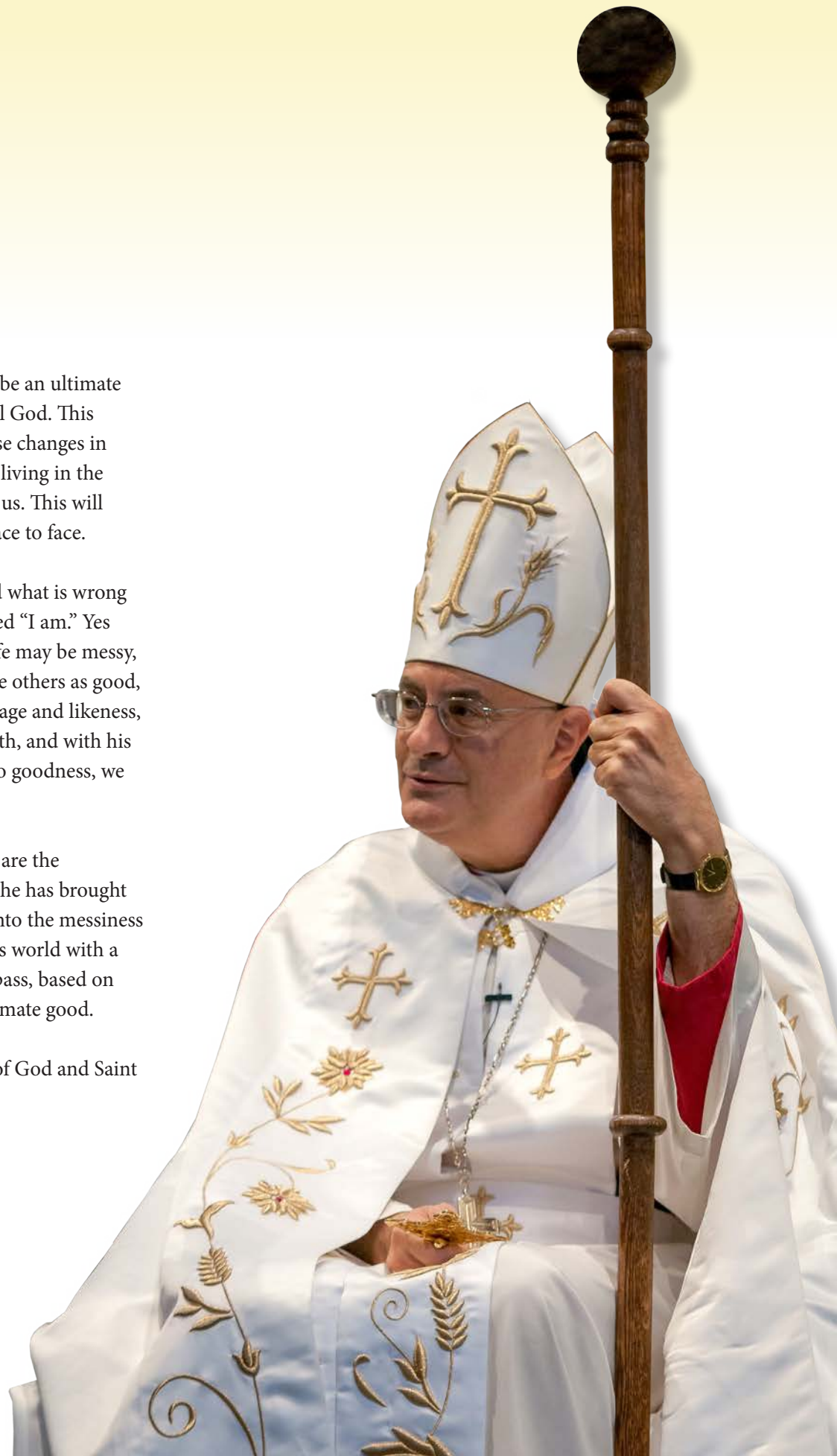
Lastly, we realize that there will be an ultimate judgment, by a just and merciful God. This ought to inspire us to make those changes in ourselves now to be sure we are living in the truth—the truth that Jesus gave us. This will prepare us to one day see him face to face.

G.K. Chesterton was once asked what is wrong with the world, and he responded “I am.” Yes the world may be a mess, and life may be messy, but we don’t have to be! If we see others as good, honor them as created in his image and likeness, if we live according to God’s truth, and with his help turn suffering and pain into goodness, we can make this world better.

It helps if we remember that we are the redeemed children of God, and he has brought order, goodness, hope and joy into the messiness of life. Thus, we can surprise this world with a steady moral and spiritual compass, based on truth, that leads to God, the ultimate good.

May the prayers of the Mother of God and Saint Joseph be with us. ■

+ Gregory



## Schedule **BISHOP GREGORY J. MANSOUR**

- 26-27 NOVEMBER** Olean, NY | St. Joseph Church | 25th Anniversary of Priestly Ordination for Father Claude Franklin
- 3-4 DECEMBER** Brooklyn, NY | Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral
- 8-9 DECEMBER** Petersham, MA | Most Holy Trinity Monastery | Visit
- 10 DECEMBER** Worcester, MA | Our Lady of Mercy Church | Parish Visit
- 11 DECEMBER** Springfield, MA | St. Anthony Church | Parish Visit
- 16-18 DECEMBER** Roanoke, VA | St. Elias Church | Parish Visit
- 20 DECEMBER** Newtown Square, PA | St. Sharbel Church | Christmas Novena
- 21 DECEMBER** Easton, PA | Our Lady of Lebanon Church | Christmas Novena
- 22 DECEMBER** Sleepy Hollow, NY | John Paul II Church | Christmas Novena
- 24-25 DECEMBER** Brooklyn, NY | Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral | Christmas
- 26 DEC - 2 JAN** Miami, FL | Family Visit
- 8 JANUARY** Brooklyn, NY | Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral
- 14 JANUARY** Brooklyn, NY | Visit of Bishop Simon Fadool
- 17 JANUARY** Brooklyn, NY | The Chancery | Presbyteral Council Meeting by Zoom
- 19-20 JANUARY** Washington, DC | Vigil and March for Life
- 22 JANUARY** Washington, DC | Our Lady of Lebanon Seminary and Church | Visit
- 28-29 JANUARY** Danbury, CT | St. Anthony Church | Parish Visit

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



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

**Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn**  
[www.stmaron.org/donate](http://www.stmaron.org/donate)

**Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon**  
[www.eparchy.org](http://www.eparchy.org)

## Schedule BISHOP A. ELIAS ZAIDAN

- 28 NOV - 2 DEC** Scottsdale, AZ | Franciscan Renewal Center | Retreat for the Clergy of the Syriac Catholic Eparchy
- 3-4 DECEMBER** Nashville, TN | St. Sharbel Mission | Pastoral Visit
- 8 DECEMBER** Minneapolis, MN | St. Maron Church | Diaconal Ordination of Subdeacon George Younes
- 10-11 DECEMBER** Dayton, OH | St. Ignatius of Antioch Church | Pastoral Visit
- 18 DECEMBER** St. Louis, MO | St. Raymond Cathedral
- 25 DECEMBER** Los Angeles, CA | Our Lady of Mt. Lebanon-St. Peter Cathedral | Christmas Liturgies
- 1 JANUARY** Happy New Year!
- 6 JANUARY** Los Angeles, CA | Our Lady of Mt. Lebanon-St. Peter Cathedral | Epiphany Liturgies
- 7-8 JANUARY** Lewisville, TX | Our Lady of Lebanon Church | Pastoral Visit and Subdiaconal Ordination of Joe Marincell
- 9-13 JANUARY** Scottsdale, AZ | Franciscan Renewal Center | Annual Eparchial Clergy Retreat
- 14-15 JANUARY** Las Vegas, NV | St. Sharbel Mission | Pastoral Visit and Capital Campaign Event
- 22 JANUARY** West Covina, CA | St. Jude Church | Subdiaconal Ordination of Antoine Klaib
- 28-29 JANUARY** Lombard, IL | Our Lady of Lebanon Church | Pastoral Visit and Capital Campaign Event



## Eternal rest grant to him, O Lord.

### PASSING OF CHORBISHOP WILLIAM LESER

On 12 October, Bishop A. Elias Zaidan announced the passing of Right Reverend Chorbishop William (“Bill”) Leser on 9 October 2022. Chorbishop Leser was 85 years old.

Chorbishop Leser answered God’s call to the priesthood and was ordained for the Archdiocese of Los Angeles on 1 May 1963. While a priest in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, he served in many parishes including St. Bede the Venerable Church, St. Charles Borromeo Church, St. Bernard Church, Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church, St. Barnabas Church, St. Martha Church, and St. Jude Catholic Church.

In the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon of Los Angeles, Chorbishop Leser served in our Tribunal and as Judicial Vicar for many years. He celebrated the Divine Liturgy in many of our Maronite parishes across

the United States, especially in California. He would also substitute for our priests whenever needed.

According to his wishes, two services were celebrated for Chorbishop Leser: a Maronite Service and a Roman Catholic Service.

Chorbishop Leser dedicated his life to serving God’s people. He was admired and respected for his kind and generous heart. Now that his heart has stopped beating on earth, it is time for him to enjoy everlasting life in the Father’s home.

Chorbishop Leser will be dearly missed by everyone whose lives he touched in his many years of ministry. Our sincere condolences to his family and friends. May the soul of Chorbishop Leser rest in peace.

# Behold the Man! | To Be Human

by Fr. Aaron J. Sandbothe

*“In swaddling clothes, the shepherds saw Your glory.”*

**E**cce homo... “Behold the man!” These words of Pilate to the crowd as he stood in judgment over Jesus Christ before His crucifixion might seem quite odd to focus on as we, as a Church, turn our gaze to the Infant Lord in a creche in Bethlehem. “Behold the man!” Pilate, after an intimate conversation with a broken, bleeding, and tortured man, convinced of his innocence, displays Jesus to the crowd at his most vulnerable. Jesus, humiliated and stripped of his dignity, poses no obvious threat to the Romans or the elite of Jerusalem. Yet, the earthly powers of Jerusalem and the Roman Empire, when they beheld Jesus

Christ, despite his humiliation and shame, insisted that Jesus posed a greater threat to the safety and security of their society than Barabbas, a bloodthirsty insurrectionist. How does this dark and tragic scene from Good Friday draw our minds to the City of David three decades prior? St. Ephrem connects these two points in time through a hymn sung to the Infant Jesus by His mother:

However great was the ivory palace of the kings of our people, greater and more beautiful is the little cave in which I bore You. In swaddling clothes, the shepherds saw Your glory.

A small nature, if it wears a diadem, by the diadem becomes great. Your nature is great, O son of poor people, and through You something small becomes great; if someone places thorns on Your head, they are like a diadem.

A worthless body may be adorned with jewels. Through You, Honorable One, even worthless [things] become beautiful. So great is contact with You that even if someone cast a stone at You, it would be a pearl.

Even your sweat, for one who is worthy, is a baptism, and the dust of Your garments, for one who is infirm, is a great fount of all aids, and even Your spittle, if it reach the face would enlighten the eyes.







If upon a stone You should rest Your head,  
they would divide and tear it apart, and if  
You slept upon a dunghill, it would become  
a church for prayers, and if, again, You  
broke ordinary bread, for us it would be the  
medicine of life.

Who will revile You? For even Your abuse is  
a blessing of the peoples. Who will kill You?  
For even Your death is the Word of life for  
men, and even if You mount a cross, You are  
the Paschal Lamb!

(NATIVITY 19:12-17)

This passage from Ephrem's *Hymns on the Nativity* connects the shame and humiliation suffered by the Lord Jesus in Jerusalem with the voluntary humbling He endured to become man in the cave of Bethlehem. In these two starkly different moments, the God of the Universe lowered himself to abject destitution and vulnerability to show His love for His creation. It is in these moments of total vulnerability that Jesus

Christ, true God and true *man*, shows His strength. This paradoxical *power* of the *powerless* "King of the Jews" and Ancient of Days *crawling* as a Babe through the streets of Zion lies not in armies of men or angels, but in how powerless He was willing to be to save those who had strayed from His love. Yet, it was this *powerless* power that drove the powerful men of Jerusalem to commit unspeakable atrocities. Why? What does the mystery of the God-Man teach us about ourselves?

The One whom the Prophet Isaiah called "Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace" who would sit "upon the throne of David, and over his kingdom, to establish it, and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness...for evermore" was the same "man of sorrows" who Isaiah prophesied would be "despised and rejected by men." The God of All stripped off His glory, His might, His power, His beauty, His dominion, and His Divinity, and clothed Himself in dust, in shame, in mockery, in humiliation, in poverty, and in vulnerability and sacrifice. When

## “Behold the Man! | To Be Human”

Continued from page 9

laid bare by Pilate before the people of Jerusalem or before shepherds, magi, and livestock in the cave of Bethlehem, stripped of every beauty and vesture of Divinity, the only thing that remained for others to see was love.

When the elite of Jerusalem *beheld* Jesus at the praetorium they were threatened not by the gold of His armor, or the swiftness of His sword, or the fierceness of His armies. They were threatened by His love — the love shown by someone stripped of everything else. The powerless One would vanquish the powers of sin, death, and evil through love. No empire, citadel, army, or shield would have the power to withstand the simple love of a baby in a manger or a broken man hanging upon a cross. It was the powerful who were truly powerless against Him.

guilt? It will be whatever love we have shown, great or small, towards others and toward God.

Ephrem tells us that “even worthless [things] become beautiful” through contact with the Incarnate Lord. When we strip ourselves down to our most vulnerable state, shared by the rich and poor and the mighty and meek alike, our beauty is revealed, and we have kinship with the Rich One who became poor. When we truly *behold the Man* who is God, He shows us who we are through Himself. The Incarnation confused and confounded the powers of this world. When Herod at His Birth, or the powerful men of Jerusalem at the Passion, motivated by pride and selfishness, beheld Jesus, they lashed out to kill Him, because they saw themselves in His Humanity and they were revolted by their sinfulness and pride.

## *The Incarnation teaches us how to love, for God has loved us first.*

When Christians behold Jesus Christ on Christmas, or Good Friday, or any other moment made sacred in our liturgical year, we are not threatened by the Man who was born in a cold damp cave in Bethlehem, who cared for lepers, who slept upon stones in the desert, or who sweat and cried in the Garden of Gethsemane. Rather, when we behold the face of our Savior in these moments of humanity, we see ourselves — we who are made in His image. And, on the last day when we are stripped of our idolatry, our vanity, our sinfulness, and our pride, and stand like the “man of sorrows” not before the earthly throne of Pilate or kings, but before the Throne of God — what will we have to show that will testify to our innocence or

When people of faith, moved out of love behold the same God made Man, and see themselves, they see the true unconquerable power of love. The Incarnation teaches us how to love, for God has loved us first. Ephrem’s Mary tells her Son: “In swaddling clothes, the shepherds saw Your glory” and “if someone places thorns on Your head, they are like a diadem.” In the rags of His birth and the thorns of His death, we behold not only His glory, but the robe and crown He has promised to us who love Him. ■

*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 Order of Saint Sharbel New Members

## ANNUAL

REV. MICHAEL BARONE | *Archdiocese of Newark*  
ANONYMOUS | *Our Lady of Lebanon | Brooklyn, NY*  
ELANORE HILOW | *St. Maron | Cleveland, OH*  
FR. ELIAS YAZBECK | *St. Maron | Cleveland, OH*  
AMIRA JOSEPH | *St. Maron | Cleveland, OH*  
KAMAL SAHLANI | *St. Maron | Cleveland, OH*  
NAIM & GLADYS SAKER | *St. Maron | Cleveland, OH*  
SOUHEIL & DARLIN FARAH | *St. Maron | Cleveland, OH*  
PIERRE & LENA ELHINDI | *St. Maron | Cleveland, OH*  
SUSAN HASHEM | *Our Lady's Parish | Austin, TX*

## PERPETUAL

CAROLINE NASSOUR | *Our Lady of Lebanon | Brooklyn, NY*  
ABDO CONSULTING GROUP | *St. Maron | Minneapolis, MN*  
KALIL BOULOS | *St. Maron | Cleveland, OH*  
NINA EL-HAYEK | *St. Maron | Cleveland, OH*  
SARA ABUDAYYEH | *Our Lady of Mt. Lebanon | Los Angeles, CA*



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



9 NOVEMBER 2022

The Holy Father has appointed as Apostolic Administrator *sede plena* of the Eparchy Notre-Dame du Liban de Paris of the Maronites (France) Bishop Peter Karam, Bishop of the Curia of the Patriarchal Church of Antioch of the Maronites.

Bishop Karam is an alumnus of Our Lady of Lebanon Seminary and served the Maronite Church in the United States for many years.



## Purgatory and Prayers for the Dead

by Rev. Timothy V. Vaverek

**W**e Catholics pray for the dead. This is foreign to many Christians, especially Protestants, who think “going to heaven” is primarily a matter of repenting from sin and receiving God’s forgiveness. Were that true, then once someone died, they’d go to heaven or hell and there would be no purpose in praying for them.

However, going to heaven is about much more than the pardon of sin. It’s about being perfectly united to Jesus and eternally sharing in his love for God and neighbor. That perfection can’t be achieved by human effort. It’s not the fruit of some type of perfectionism. It’s the work of God dwelling within us and purifying us of all selfishness in order to fill us with his life. He accomplishes that work by drawing us into the heart of Christ in the course of our daily life.

When Jesus said that only the pure of heart will see God (Mt 5:8), he was restating a basic truth of Scripture. Fallen human beings can’t enter God’s unveiled presence because his glory and beauty cause our imperfections, selfishness, and sins to stand out in all their ugliness. That’s why Adam and Eve tried to hide. Seeing God face to face would be overwhelming. In fact, God told Moses it would be deadly (Ex 33:17-23).

To understand the problem, imagine that you died this instant with your sins mercifully forgiven. You wouldn’t go to hell. Yet, the death of your body can’t change your soul. So, if you entered heaven, your selfish inclinations and narrowness of heart would

be what they are right now. You’d be surrounded by saints who had lived truly holy lives; sacrificed for God, family, and others; and perhaps accepted an excruciating death rather than commit sin. Above all, you’d see the Holy Trinity.

You’d be in heaven, but you’d clearly see that you don’t love as Jesus loves—or as the saints do. There would be no guilt, because God forgave you. Yet the sight of your imperfect love and selfish inclinations would cause unspeakable sorrow and grief. St. John Henry Newman described this impossible and unendurable situation by observing that heaven would be hellish for those not fully purified.

If you think otherwise, consider how we sometimes find God troublesome, annoying, or boring. We get impatient or angry about fulfilling our duties to him, our families, our work, and those in need. These reactions indicate our hearts aren’t perfected in Christ and we aren’t ready to see God face-to-face.

The whole Christian life is the means by which God is purifying us to share his life and love. St. Paul describes this way of life when he insists Christians must have the “attitude” of Christ, who emptied himself out to the point of death on the Cross (PHIL 2:5-7). By “emptying himself,” St. Paul doesn’t mean Jesus stopped being himself. He means Christ loved God and the fallen human race enough to pour himself out completely in loving service to them, even unto death. At the Last Supper, Jesus declared there is no greater love. That’s the love he places in



our hearts when he comes to dwell in us and which he commands us to share: “Love one another as I have loved you.”

This “self-emptying” love is *metanoia*, the life of conversion through which Jesus draws us closer to himself. By prayer, self-sacrifice, and works of mercy, he calls and enables us to join him in turning to God, away from selfishness and sin, and toward those who need our spiritual and material support. In this way, our whole life—at home, at work, at school—becomes a service of love that perfects and purifies us in his life and brings his blessings to others. At the same time, in ways known and unknown to us, God works within us to complete our purification.

One way to envision *metanoia* and our growth in God’s love is to consider recovery from physical trauma. Surgery and physical therapy may be necessary. We have to cooperate with the doctor’s work by practicing various movements in order to gain strength and agility. It’s painful and slow, so many people fail to do as much as they should and don’t fully recover.

If we cooperate with God, his work in us and in our life of *metanoia* can unite us completely to Jesus and transform us into saints. We would then become “pure of heart” and prepared to see God face-to-face. If we don’t fully cooperate with God’s love during life, we’ll die with residual selfishness that needs to be purified. That will be difficult, because we’ll have

to let go of the selfish attachments to people, attitudes, and things that have held us back from fully loving as Jesus loves. Although painful, such “detachment” will be a participation in Christ’s work of setting us free to love perfectly.

The process of purification (or purgation) after death is called “Purgatory.” We can understand it as the completion of the disciple’s path of *metanoia*. At last, a person pours himself out fully in love for God and neighbor with Jesus.

It should be clear, then, that we pray for those in Purgatory for the same reason we pray for the living. We’re asking God to bring them safely to himself and to strengthen them in his love in the face of the difficulties they face. We’re united and able to pray for each other because we’re one in Christ—it’s a work of mercy (GAL 6:2; JAM 5:16; II MACC 12:43-46).

When we pray for the dead or ask the prayers of the saints, we’re only showing our love for one another in the Lord. Our heavenly Father, like a true parent, delights to see his children helping each other and readily answers our prayers. In this way, through our life and our prayer, he permits us to participate and rejoice in the “wondrous deed” by which Christ saves us. How generous is his love! ■

*Rev. 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 Fr. Claude W. Franklin, Jr.

### November – Saint Bishoy

On 30 November, the Maronite Calendar commemorates Saint Bishoy (Pishoy), known in the Greek Church as Paisios. Saint Bishoy was born around 320 in the village of Shansa, Egypt, the youngest of six other brothers. An Angel of the Lord appeared to his mother in a vision and said: “The Lord says to you, give Me one of your children to serve Me.” She replied, “Lord, take whoever you want.” When the Angel took Saint Bishoy by the hand, who was thin and frail, his mother said, “Take one who is strong to serve the Lord.” The Angel replied, “This is whom the Lord has chosen!”



In the year 340, at the age of 20, Saint Bishoy decided to go to the desert of Scete, where he became a monk, along with Saint John the Dwarf, by the hand of Saint Pambo. Upon the death of Saint Pambo, an Angel appeared to Saint Bishoy and guided him to a site in the desert to establish a monastery, which bears his name to this day. Saint Bishoy lived the life of a hermit and practiced extreme asceticism. But his real fame grew due to his love, simplicity, and kindness.

The Copts believe that Saint Bishoy saw Jesus a few times during his life. On one such occasion, the disciples of Saint Bishoy learned from him that Jesus would be appearing on

the mountain near their monastery. Filled with joy at the good news, his disciples, on the appointed day, rushed to the top of the mountain. Along the way, they passed by an elderly man who was having difficulty, due to his age, to climb the mountain. In their haste to see Jesus, Saint Bishoy’s disciples ignored the elderly man who stretched out his hand for help. However, as Saint Bishoy approached him, he not only stopped, but agreed to carry the elderly man to the top of the mountain. As he climbed the mountain, he noticed that his load was getting lighter and lighter, eventually that he was carrying the Lord Jesus Himself! Jesus told him that due to his act of love, his body would remain incorrupt. On another occasion, Saint Bishoy is said to have washed the feet of Jesus, who had visited him in the guise of a poor stranger.

Around 408, the Berbers invaded the desert of Scete, so Saint Bishoy departed and went to dwell on Mount Ansenia, where he met Saint Paul of Tammah and the two became very dear friends. They had such a dear friendship that God promised them that they would not be separated, even in death. Saint Bishoy departed this life on 15 July 417; he and Saint Paul of Tammah were buried next to one another. On 13 December 841, the Patriarch of Alexandria moved Saint Bishoy’s remains, to fulfill Bishoy’s request to be buried at his monastery in the desert of Scete. Initially, they attempted to move only Saint Bishoy’s body, however the boat which they placed it on, in the Nile River, would not move until they brought along the body of Saint Paul of Tammah, fulfilling what God had promised them. Eyewitnesses have testified that the body of Saint Bishoy remains incorrupt to this day where it is buried in the Monastery of Saint Bishoy in the desert of Scete, next to his beloved friend Saint Paul of Tammah.

## December – Saint Barbara

On 4 December, the Maronite Church commemorates the *Holy Martyr Barbara*. Saint Barbara lived in the early fourth Century, during the reign of Emperor Maximian (305-311). Her father, Dioscorus, was a rich pagan who lived in the City of Heliopolis (modern day Baalbek, Lebanon). Following his wife's death, he devoted himself to the care of his daughter, Barbara.

Saint Barbara was beautiful so Dioscorus decided to hide her from the eyes of strangers. He built a tower and locked her inside, allowing only her pagan teachers to see her. From the tower she was able to see the wooded hills, rivers, and flowery meadows by day, and at night, the stars in the heavens. She began to question and became convinced that the soulless idols of her pagan teachers, which were the works of human hands, could not have created the beauty of the world she gazed upon from her tower. Saint Barbara had a desire to know the One True God and dedicate herself to Him, by spending her life in virginity.

Her beauty became known throughout the city and her father desired to marry her off, however, Saint Barbara refused all her suitors. Dioscorus believed that her negative attitude towards marriage was due to her seclusion in the tower and decided to permit her to leave the tower and freely go into the city and make friends. Saint Barbara met some young Christian maidens in the city, who taught her about the One True God, the Creator of the world. During this time, a priest came from Alexandria, Egypt, to Heliopolis, disguised as a merchant. He secretly instructed Saint Barbara in the Mysteries of the Christian Faith and Baptized her, and then he returned to Egypt.

Around the same time, Dioscorus had begun constructing a bathhouse, which was to have two windows in it. While he was on a journey, Saint

Barbara ordered the workers to add a third window, forming, as it were, a “Trinity of Light”. Upon Dioscorus' return he was dissatisfied by the change in his building plans. Saint Barbara explained that she had had the window added in honor of the Triune God, the One True God, and about the futility of worshipping idols. Dioscorus, filled with rage, grabbed a sword and was about to strike her, when God prevented it. Saint Barbara ran away and went into hiding, disguising herself. Eventually, she was discovered, and tortured severely under the Prefect Martianus, including having her body raked, and being led through the city streets naked. Dioscorus himself beheaded Saint Barbara, on 4 December, and for which he was struck by lightning and died.

In Lebanon, on 4 December, many villages celebrate *Eid Il-Burbara* by having children dress up in costumes, thus recalling how Saint Barbara disguised herself. Traditionally, *Burbara* is served, which is a bowl of boiled barley, pomegranate seeds, raisins, anise, and sugar, often with walnuts or almonds. Saint Barbara became known as the saint to invoke against lightning, due to her association with the lightning that struck her father, as well as patron saint of protection for those who deal with explosives, such as artillerymen and miners. ■

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



## Bishop Gregory John Mansour: Being Present for Others *by Brandon Shulleeta*

**F**orty years ago Gregory John Mansour was ordained a Maronite Catholic priest by Bishop John G. Chedid. The young man from Flint, Michigan was eventually to be the bishop of the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn.

But long before any interest in priesthood and or any thought that he might one day become a bishop — he was just a kid in a grocery store who learned something that would later help him oversee 45 parishes, a seminary, a convent and a monastery in the eparchy.

The role of bishop comes with heavy and widespread responsibilities. There is always the danger of being distracted. But when Bishop Gregory is with someone — whether a cleric or a layperson — he wants to be focused on that person, entirely present for them.

Being present for others is key, he said, and knocking out the difficult tasks first can help bring peace of mind, to keep from passing on to others the burdens of his responsibilities. “I try to do the hard things that I don’t really want to do as soon as possible so that my mind is a littler freer, so I can really engage with other people; I can really be present,” Bishop Mansour said. “I hate being distracted by a hundred things when I’m with other people.”

The 67-year-old bishop finds the kernel of this philosophy from his days working with his father, George, in a grocery store when he was about 12 or 13 years old. (“Apparently there was not so much concern for child labor laws in those days,” he laughed.)

He learned then to focus on his least favorite and most difficult work tasks first, so that he could then focus on the other things that he wanted to do and have “peace of mind.”

He never expected that small life lesson would later come into play as a bishop.





For that matter, he never even considered priesthood in his youth.

He was raised in Flint, Michigan by devout Catholic parents. He was the oldest of six children and went to Western Michigan University, where he soon discovered something was missing in his life.

“And what I was missing was really not something but someone,” he said. “And that was my relationship with Christ. So I opened my heart to Him.”

He said he’d seen some fellow students who had made a deeper commitment to “the person of Jesus.”

“That was a powerful turning point. I guess you can say I was born again,” Bishop Mansour said, saying that he remembers it was precisely the third Saturday of September 1975 when he felt this change.

chancellor and financial officer of the Our Lady of Lebanon Maronite Eparchy in Los Angeles, California.

In January 2004, Pope John Paul II appointed him third bishop of the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn.

When he became a priest, he had no aspirations of becoming a bishop. He explained that it’s a position of service appointed by Church superiors. “If anyone tries to become a bishop, the Church is better off not honoring their request,” Bishop Mansour said.

In his first homily as a bishop, he quoted St. Augustine who said: “With you I am a Christian. For you, I am a bishop.”

“For me, the following of Christ is the most important. It’s more important than the priesthood, more important than being a bishop,” he said.

*“For me, the following of Christ is the most important. It’s more important than the priesthood, more important than being a bishop.”*

Seven years later, almost exactly, he was ordained a priest on 18 September 1982 after attending Our Lady of Lebanon Maronite Seminary in Washington, D.C. He became the pastor of Saint George Church in Uniontown, Pennsylvania a year later.

Sadly, his beloved mother, Gloria, passed away in 1985, when he was still a young priest.

In the late-1980s and early-1990s, he was responsible for deacons and subdeacons in the Diocese of Saint Maron – USA. And in 1994, he was appointed vicar general,

### **Salvation**

Bishop Mansour found a renewed love for Jesus while in college. He said Catholics shouldn’t be afraid to share their stories of salvation. “I do think we ought to talk a little bit more about our experience of God saving us, God helping us, so that others would feel free to speak about their own personal experience,” Bishop Mansour said.

Bishop Mansour said that by telling his parents about his experience of salvation, he learned they also experienced salvation in powerful ways — his mother

## “Bishop Gregory John Mansour”

Continued from page 17



while praying for help raising six children, and his military father on his knees alone in a chapel far from home.

He added that it's also important for people to recognize that not everyone has the same type of experience, and we shouldn't expect others to have that same experience. "We shouldn't necessarily think 'My experience has to be the same as everyone else's.'"

### Shepherding the Shepherds

As bishop, one of his primary responsibilities is overseeing priests. He said he works to understand others' perspectives, but he doesn't shy away from tough conversations or even tough critiques.

He said being a good priest requires sincerity and a desire to pass on love for Christ. "A bishop has to try to

help everyone he serves to be the best follower of Christ that they can be, and to correct them when they're wrong," he said. "Most people will accept the toughness if they feel it's fair and it's sincere."

"I think what makes a good priest is someone who really believes what he speaks about from the pulpit. He's found salvation from Christ himself, and he wants to pass that salvation along to others," Bishop Gregory said.

"Being saved by Christ means that his sins are forgiven," he said. "He wants to pass on the forgiveness of sins to others. He wants to pass on hope because he's been given hope. He wants to pass on love because that's the whole purpose of Christ coming among us." ■

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

# Ordinations

## Presbyteral Ordination of Fathers Daniel Thomas and Raphael Jude Thaddeus | Castle Rock, WA

On Sunday, 2 October 2022, Bishop A. Elias Zaidan ordained monastic Fathers Daniel Thomas Harris and Raphael Jude Thaddeus Lefevre of the Maronite Monks of Jesus, Mary and Joseph (MMJMJ) to the presbyterate. The ordinations took place in the newly consecrated Monastery of the Sacred Heart of Jesus for the Maronite Monks of Jesus, Mary and Joseph. Under clear blue skies on a notably beautiful warm day in the Pacific Northwest, over 200 clergy and religious, families and friends of the Maronite Monks of Jesus, Mary and Joseph gathered for the ordinations to the sacred priesthood. In his homily on the Gospel of Peter's reconciliation, Bishop Elias referred to three different kinds of love, reflecting on the question of Jesus to Peter, "Do you love me more than these?": The love of the material world, self-seeking love of other people, and true sacrificial love. Only the third kind, sacrificial love, is the love of a disciple of Jesus, and it is this love which monks and priests are specially called to exercise. Christ asks each of us, do you love me more than these?

Father Daniel Thomas Harris entered the Monks of Jesus, Mary and Joseph in 2015. He is the son of David and Sherry, now residing in Georgia. His religious patrons are the Old Testament prophet Daniel and the apostle Thomas. Father Raphael Jude Thaddeus Lefevre entered the novitiate of the Maronite Monks of Jesus, Mary and Joseph in 2016. He is the son of Don and Susan, who continue to reside in the birthplace of Father Raphael, Rapid City, South Dakota. His patronal saints are the archangel Raphael and the apostle Saint Jude.

The Maronite Monks of Jesus, Mary and Joseph express their gratitude firstly to Almighty God for His heavenly gift of these two new priests; secondly, to Bishop Elias for his instrumental fatherly blessing and support; and finally, to their friends and benefactors for their spiritual and temporal support. For more information or inquiries into the Maronite Monks of Jesus, Mary and Joseph in the Pacific Northwest, you can visit their website, [www.mmjnj.com](http://www.mmjnj.com). ■



## Diaconal Ordination of Deacons Christian Hbaiter and James Demers | Lawrence, MA

On Saturday, 24 September 2022, St. Anthony Church in Lawrence, Massachusetts, celebrated the ordination of two of its own parishioners. Bishop Gregory Mansour ordained Subdeacons Christian Hbaiter and James Demers to the diaconate. Deacon Christian was ordained a transitional deacon, in expectation of his presbyteral ordination in the coming year. He was presented by Msgr. Peter Azar, Rector of the Maronite Seminary in Washington, DC. Deacon James was presented by Fr. Elie Mikhael, Pastor of St. Anthony Church, and was ordained to the permanent diaconate. Pews were filled as clergy, family, friends, and parishioners traveled from near and far to attend this milestone!

The Rite of Ordination took place towards the end of the Divine Liturgy, following the communion of the priests and before the communion of the faithful. After the imposition of hands by the Bishop, during which Bishop Gregory touches the Sacred Mysteries and then lays his hands on the candidates' heads to demonstrate that Christ is actually the one who ordains, the newly ordained were vested with the Deacon's Stole, and then there were three processions that took place to exhibit a Deacon's functions. During the first procession, Deacon Christian, led by Fr. Elie Mikhael, and Deacon James, led by Msgr. Peter Azar, held to their chest the Book of Epistles, from which they then read. During the second procession, Deacon Christian, led by Fr. Edward Hanna, and Deacon James, led by Fr. Elie Mikhael, were handed the censer and proceeded to incense the altar, the Sacred Mysteries upon it, and the congregation. Finally, during the third procession, Deacon Christian, led by Msgr. Peter Azar, and Deacon James, led by Fr. Shawn Therrien, were handed an Anaphora Veil which was fluttered over the Sacred Mysteries, the altar, and the congregation. The Anaphora Veil represents the Deacon's role to unveil the Mysteries to the people.



After the processions, the newly ordained were handed the Mysteries to distribute Communion to the Faithful. Following the ordination, an elaborate and delicious luncheon was offered by the parish community in the Parish Hall. May God bless these Deacons in their new ministries. ■

## Diaconal Ordination of Deacon Bahige Alchoufete | Pittsburgh, PA

On 27 August 2022, Bishop Gregory Mansour, ordained Subdeacon Bahige Alchoufete to the diaconate at Our Lady of Victory Church in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Deacon Bahige's wife, Micheline, and children, Therezia, Tamara, and Fadi, were in attendance. They presented the vestments to Bishop Gregory as he vested the new Deacon. Family members also read the Epistle and carried the gifts in procession. Deacon Bahige was sponsored by Father Samir Chebli, Pastor of Our Lady of Victory. Deacon Bahige's brother, Father Kamil Choueifati (Pastor of Star of the East Maronite Church in New Jersey) and Rev. Lou Vallone, of the Diocese of Pittsburgh, led him in procession. Numerous Maronite and Latin clergy, family, friends, classmates, and parishioners, attended the ordination including: Auxiliary Bishop Mark Eckman, Chorbishop Anthony Spinosa, Chorbishop Michael Kail, Rev. Antoine Kairouz, Rev. John Donahue, Rev. Hanna Karam, Rev. Tony Massad, Rev. Jacques Kik, Rev. Aaron Sandbothe (Master of Ceremonies), Deacon William George, Subdeacon Norbert Vogl, Deacon Stephen Byers, and Deacon Richard Fitzpatrick.



Deacon Bahige was inspired by Bishop Gregory and Fr.

Rodolph

Wakim (former pastor of Our Lady of Victory) to pursue his vocation. Deacon Bahige is the first permanent deacon to serve Our Lady of Victory Church. He studied in the Diaconate Program of the Diocese of Pittsburgh. Bishop Zubick and his staff prepared Subdeacon Bahige for his ordination to the diaconate. A luncheon was held in Victory Hall for all attending the ordination. ■



## Saint Joseph Church | Phoenix, Arizona

by Chet Wade

The intercession of St. Sharbel on a cool January day in 2016 is what St. Joseph Maronite Catholic Church in Phoenix is best known for. A woman made blind by a medical condition came to the church to venerate the relics of the hermit saint as they toured Maronite churches in the United States. After confession, prayer, and anointing by holy oils, the woman's vision was restored within two days.

Father Wissam Akiki, pastor of St. Joseph then and now, praises God for the gift given to the parish visitor, Daphne Gutierrez. After a year-long investigation by doctors found no other answer, Father Wissam has no doubt God is responsible for the cure.

"God works in his mysterious way," Father Wissam said. The healing made a glorious and profound change in him and his parish.

St. Joseph parish is relatively new. It was established in 1997 through the efforts of a small group of Maronite Catholics. Prior to its establishment, Maronites worshiped at Roman Catholic parishes around Phoenix and a Maronite priest would travel to the city monthly to perform mass in the Eastern Rite tradition. Thanks to the efforts of the small group of Maronites, funds were raised to purchase a former Baptist church. St. Joseph's began celebrating liturgies there later that year and it



was officially dedicated on 7 November 1999.

The parish has a small-but-growing membership of about 80 registered families with a very active "core." Father Wissam credits St. Sharbel's intercession with the recent growth.

As news of the healing spread, attendance at the church quickly increased. This was especially true at the St. Sharbel Divine Liturgy, held on the 18th of each month to coincide with healing prayers and blessing with holy oil. Hundreds pack the church for those services. For those who cannot be there in person, the church Facebook page offers the opportunity for faithful to be united in prayers.

Others come to pray, meditate, and venerate St. Sharbel at the shrine Father Wissam had constructed at the church after the healing. It is the largest shrine in North America dedicated to the saint and the church has been designated a pilgrimage destination.

What also has Father Wissam pleased is how attendance has increased at the weekly Saturday evening liturgies. Many of those who come to the liturgies are not Maronites. Most are Hispanic and Spanish is their first language.

"I said, 'You know what? I am going to start practicing Spanish as much as I can,'" he said. "I am going to celebrate the Maronite Mass in



Spanish. Since the healing happened, every Saturday night I celebrate the Divine Liturgy in Spanish.”

The result is what was once a sparsely attended service now has 70 to 80 people in the church each week.

“And I am teaching them catechism,” Father Wissam said. “I am baptizing them. I am giving them the Sacrament of First Communion. And some people, I am marrying them. I am turning every year about 10 families from non-Catholic to Catholic to Maronite.”

That, Father Wissam said, may be one of the intentions of the healing — extending the faith.

He also knows the healing has had a personal effect.

“It changed me from the inside out,” Father Wissam said. “I see what I need to see spiritually.”

Father Wissam’s path to the priesthood began when he was a boy growing up in Zahle, in Lebanon’s Bekaa Valley. Even at an early age, he became a devotee of God through St. Sharbel. After studying theology at

Holy Spirit University, he emigrated to the United States in 2001 — just two days before the 9/11 attacks.

Continuing his studies in the United States, Father Wissam became a subdeacon in 2002 at St. Raymond Maronite Cathedral in St Louis.

In 2003, he married “the love of his life,” Manal. They have welcomed two daughters, Perla and Katherine.

Father Wissam continued his studies at the Maronite Seminary in Washington, D.C., and the Aquinas Institute of Theology in St Louis. He became a deacon in 2009.

On 14 February 2014, Bishop A. Elias Zaidan of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon of Los Angeles ordained Father Wissam. (It was memorable for Bishop Elias because as a young bishop, it was his first ordination.) While it is common for married men to become priests in the Maronite church in Lebanon, Father Wissam’s ordination marked the first time a married man with a family became a Catholic priest in the United States.

Shortly thereafter, Bishop Elias assigned him to be pastor of St.

Joseph parish. The assignment has special meaning to Father Wissam.

“St. Joseph is the father of Jesus and head of the family,” he said. “I am the first married priest. He assigned me here to this church.”

Along with the blessings of God and the intercession of St. Sharbel, Father Wissam credits the efforts of many others for the successes at the parish. He acknowledged the work of the Parish Council and its Finance Committee, the Ladies Guild, and “beautiful” Choir. He also credits the work of his wife Manal, who oversees the Faith & Heritage religious education program that has 82 students — a large number given the size of the parish.

Father Wissam and the parish are looking forward to their Annual American Lebanese Festival in November. It has become a mainstay of the Phoenix cultural scene, attracting more than 3,000 people. ■

*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 after being a member of St. Anthony Church in Glen Allen, VA, for 19 years.*

## MYA Eparchial Conference: Tampa, FL

# ***Faith in Everyday Life*** by Sussan Saikali

Over 100 participants gathered in Tampa, Florida, at the end of October for the second MYA Eparchial Conference. The MYA Eparchial board had prepared a weekend full of fellowship and fun, including spiritual talks about how to incorporate the Maronite faith into everyday life. It was an unforgettable weekend!

The conference kicked off with introductions by Bishop Gregory Mansour, Sister Therese Touma, Eparchial Director of Youth and Young Adults, and Maya Khoury, Eparchial MYA President. After dinner, Bishop Gregory gave an enlightening talk about how to include the Maronite faith in daily routines and how to live with

Christ every day. The young adults then celebrated the first night of the conference with a costume party, complete with a contest, candy, and, of course, *dabke*.

Saturday started bright and early with breakout discussions each led by Bishop Gregory, and two of our seminarians, Vincent Paul Mowad and Nadim Khaled. In these discussions, the speakers gave the young adults advice and guidance on how to walk through life with Jesus, challenging them to include and prioritize the Maronite faith in every part of daily life. The discussions were then followed by brunch, Liturgy, regional breakout sessions, and an MYA panel discussion, where







young adults had the opportunity to ask the board members for advice on how to create, grow and nourish their local MYAs. Adoration followed, where there was a chance for confession and private prayer. After adoration, the young adults had some free time to have an open discussion with the clergy and Sister Therese, take a dive in the hotel pool or enjoy a nice walk along the riverfront, socializing with friends — old and new — before dancing the night away at the masquerade *hafli*.

On Sunday, the young adults joined parishioners of Sts. Peter and Paul Church for Liturgy, and after enjoyed a lunch, hosted by the parish and its MYA, outside in the warm Florida sun.

We look forward to our next MYA Eparchial Conference tentatively scheduled for the fall of 2023 — more details to follow. Stay tuned! Follow our MYA activities on Instagram @mya. eparchystmaron ■



Save the Dates!

The Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn presents

**POWER + LOVE**  
**SURVIVOR**  
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2022 - 2023 MYO Regional Retreats

<p>New England Region Lock-in          St. Anthony Parish          Lawrence, MA          Oct. 8-9, 2022</p>	<p>Mid-Atlantic Region          Christian Blue Mountain          Retreat Center          New Ringgold, PA          Nov. 11-13, 2022</p>	<p>Far South Region          Pine Lake          Retreat Center          Groveland, FL          Jan. 13 - 15, 2023</p>
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For God did not give us a spirit of fear but rather of power and love and self-control [2 Tim 1:7]

**SET FREE**  
 2023 Eparchy of OLOL MYO Regional Retreats

<p>Southwest          January 27-29          Running Springs, CA</p>	<p>South          February 24-26          Giddings, TX</p>
<p>Midwest          February 17-19          Centerburg, OH</p>	


**SAVE THE DATE!**

2023 National MYO Conference  
**AWAKEN**

**June 27 - July 1, 2023**  
 Walsh University  
 North Canton, OH

Castle Rock, Washington

# Consecration of the First Maronite Monastery in the Western United States

 On Saturday, 1 October 2022, Bishop A. Elias Zaidan consecrated the first Maronite monastery in the western United States, the Sacred Heart

Monastery for the Maronite Monks of Jesus, Mary and Joseph. Over 300 people were in attendance for this solemn and joyous event.

the church's inside walls. Finally, the bishop consecrated the altars of the monastery. He anointed each altar with Myron.



The Maronite Monks of Jesus, Mary and Joseph are a contemplative men's monastic community serving the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon of Los Angeles and the entire Maronite and Catholic Church through their dedicated ministry of prayer.

To begin the ritual for his first ever consecration of a monastery, Bishop Elias first blessed the outside walls of the monastery with holy water and with incense. Then he knocked on the entrance door three times. Once inside the church, he continued the consecration Liturgy by signing the inside of the doors with the oil of catechumens, and then made the sign of the cross with the Holy Myron three times on each of the four walls of the monastery church.

Bishop Elias explained that the consecration of a church is both a baptism and a wedding. The church receives the water and oil of catechumens to symbolize baptism, and then is anointed with Myron and adorned as a bride for Christ, signified by red ribbons set around

Sacred Heart Monastery rests on a cleared hilltop within the surrounding forest and pasture lands of the Cowlitz River tributary region north of the Columbia River in the state of Washington. Sacred Heart Monastery is a place of prayer for the monks and of peace and occasional spiritual refuge for the faithful who seek communion with God in prayerful solitude and silence.

The Maronite Monks of Jesus, Mary and Joseph offer personal gratitude to Almighty God, to Bishop Elias, to their brother priests, family, friends and supporters, for their continued prayers and offerings, which help to meet their temporal needs and to strengthen their souls in faithfulness to the call of Jesus Christ, our Divine Spouse.

For inquiries regarding the Maronite monastic vocation and life in the Pacific Northwest, please visit the website of the Maronite Monks of Jesus, Mary Joseph: [www.mmjmj.com](http://www.mmjmj.com) ■

# Parish News

CHARLOTTE, NORTH CAROLINA

## Father's Day Picnic & Festival of Lebanon

On 19 June 2022, Fr. Rodolph Wakim and the congregation of St. Stephen Church in Charlotte, North Carolina, celebrated a Father's Day Liturgy to recognize the important role that a father holds as protector and provider of his family. At the conclusion of the Liturgy, Father Rodolph presented the fathers with a St. Joseph Mug and extended a special blessing to them. Afterward, everyone in attendance enjoyed a picnic with delicious homemade food, music, dancing and games.

On 1 October, parishioners celebrated their annual "Festival of Lebanon." Potential disruption from Hurricane Ian was a major concern, but after several days of heavy rain and high winds, festival activities were not impacted.

The rain stopped, the sky cleared, and the sun shone. There were many attractions to enjoy at the festival including: homemade Lebanese/Middle Eastern food, music, dancers, a Lebanese cultural booth managed by the Maronite Young Adults, hospitality tables, and games. People participating in the raffles and silent auctions won gift items from Lebanon. One outstanding piece was a wood carved Madonna created by a parishioner. The festival was extremely successful, and the congregation was excited to attend the event that drew an unprecedented number of patrons. Fr. Rodolph commented, "Thanks be to God and to all the hard working and committed people of St. Stephen Church." ■



MENDOTA, MINNESOTA

## Breakfast Fundraiser for Lebanon

by Larry Josephs

In early September 2022, Holy Family Church in Mendota, Minnesota, decided to promote a fundraising breakfast to raise much-needed funding for 10 Maronite Churches in Lebanon.

A typical parish breakfast brings in approximately \$1,500 to \$2,500, but with much prayer and hard work, this fundraising breakfast brought in over \$5,500.00.

Many thanks to parishioners who spent hours baking Lebanese "Talami" on Saturday, producing more than enough for the breakfast and to sell at the event; the MYO who volunteered to setup the hall, bus tables and sell items during the breakfast; the parishioners who cooked scrambled eggs (25 dozen eggs), shredded golden brown hash browns, and prepared 40 pounds of sliced smoked ham. We had parishioners bringing cakes, sweets, fruit and vegetable trays that we needed to stack up on racks. Thanks are offered finally to the same hard-working crew who stayed and cleaned up the church social hall and kitchen. We were astonished by the enormous turnout and generosity, thank you! ■

# Parish News

UTICA, NEW YORK

## Recognizing Senior Parishioners

Sunday, 25 September was a very special and historic day at Saint Louis Gonzaga Church in Utica, New York. Parishioners who were 90 years of age and older were honored. In total, 22 remarkable men and women of the parish achieved this milestone. Eleven of them were able to be present for the Divine Liturgy and the reception that followed. Fr. Boutros El Hachem presented each recipient with a hand-carved Cedar of Lebanon with the image of Saint Sharbel. In his homily, Fr. Boutros referred to each of the recipients as the “Cedars of the parish, with roots deep and strong.” God willing, this will become an annual event for years to come. ■



CLINTON TOWNSHIP, MICHIGAN

## St. Sharbel Canonization Anniversary and Annual Gala

Over the weekend of 23-25 September 2022, St. Sharbel Church in Clinton Township, MI, celebrated numerous milestones. First, the community recognized the 4th Anniversary of the church's dedication at its new location. This milestone coincides with the 45th Anniversary of the canonization of Saint Sharbel Makhlof, the parish's patron.

Additionally, the community recognized the seniors of their congregation. Each senior was honored at liturgy with a personalized Papal Blessing by Pope Francis.

Beginning the celebrations on Friday, Bishop Elias and Chorbishop Alfred met with the finance committee and the advisory board members, who were then joined with the 2022 Gala Committee members for a dinner in the church hall.

On Saturday morning, Bishop Elias and Chorbishop Alfred met with the officers of several organizations: the Ladies Altar Society, the Men's Club, Knights of Columbus, Maronite Youth Organization, and the Religious

Education Staff. In the evening, Bishop Elias and members of the clergy joined parishioners and friends to celebrate at their 2022 Gala, hosted at the Palazzo Grande in Shelby Township, MI. The Gala was filled with delicious food and a full dance floor that did not clear until the last second.

Sunday morning was the perfect ending to a joyous weekend as Bishop Elias and several members of the clergy celebrated Liturgy, followed by brunch in the parish hall. St. Sharbel Church hosted a memorable weekend for all to enjoy, with parishioners and friends near and far. The parish thanks all those who coordinated and attended these events and looks forward to future community gatherings. ■



NEW BEDFORD, MASSACHUSETTS

## Pastoral Visit

On Saturday, 8 October 2022, the parishioners of Our Lady of Purgatory Church in New Bedford, Massachusetts, welcomed Bishop Gregory Mansour for a pastoral visit. Bishop Gregory concelebrated the Liturgy with Father Vincent Farhat, pastor. During his homily, Bishop Gregory spoke about the importance of building a relationship with the Lord throughout our entire lives, rather than waiting for the hour of our death to meet Him.


Following the Liturgy, everyone gathered for a reception to honor Bishop Gregory's 40th Anniversary of Ordination to the Priesthood. Deacon Jean Mattar also celebrated his 25th Anniversary of Ordination to the Diaconate. Congratulations and God Bless! ■



Join  
**BISHOP GREGORY J. MANSOUR**  
**FR. VINCENT FARHAT**  
&  
**OUR LADY OF PURGATORY PARISH**  
*to pray the Rosary*  
*for our faithful departed*  
**EVERY THURSDAY**  
**5:00PM - VIA ZOOM**

*May the souls of the faithful departed rest in peace*

Meeting ID:  
890 3889 9691



Scan the QR code to join the meeting

JAMAICA PLAIN, MASSACHUSETTS

## Anniversary Breakfast

On 16 October 2022, members of the Order of St. Sharbel and the St. Maron Society of Our Lady of the Cedars of Lebanon Church in Boston, Massachusetts, hosted an "American Breakfast" to honor the 45th Anniversary of the Canonization of St. Sharbel.

Our Pastor, Monsignor Georges El Khalli, led us in prayer, especially for our seminarians and for vocations. The event was well attended, and those who could not come sent generous donations. We are most grateful for all those who supported us. All proceeds were forwarded to Bishop Gregory for seminary expenses. We are proud to contribute to the future of the Maronite Church in the United States! ■

# Parish News

BIRMINGHAM, ALABAMA

## Men's Group Pilgrimage

by Maron Boohaker

The Maronite Men of Saint Elias (Men's Fellowship Group) invited parishioners of St. Elias Church in Birmingham, Alabama, on a pilgrimage to the Shrine of the Most Blessed Sacrament in Hanceville, Alabama, on 27 August 2022.

Since its doors opened in 1999, people have come from all over the world to experience an encounter with Christ in the Eucharist. Thirty-six parishioners made the trip. The pilgrimage began with a tour of the St. John Paul II Conference Center, which pays tribute to the Holy Eucharist and the saints devoted to the Holy Eucharist. A dynamic tour guide explained the doctrine of the Real Presence of the Eucharist and highlighted key points in the development of the doctrine's history. Beginning from the Old Testament to the present day, life-sized models assisted in the explanation of Old Testament types and New Testament stories that taught of the significance of the Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist.

From there, parishioners toured the shrine, which included the main church, a year-round nativity crèche, the Shroud of Turin display, and the crypt chapel, where Fr. Peter Zogbi celebrated the Maronite liturgy. Mother Angelica, Foundress, is buried there and she often commented that St. Elias was her favorite parish in Birmingham.

The main church is famous for containing one of the largest monstrances in the world. The Eucharist is constantly exposed for adoration by pilgrims and the religious sisters who live there. The day ended with a luncheon and time in the gift shop in the Castle of St. Michael catered by a local deli.

The Men's Group's next project is preparing box meals and distributing meals for the Community Food Bank of Alabama, which serves a five-county area.

## Visit of Bishop Joseph Mouawad of Zahle, Lebanon

St. Elias Maronite Church in Birmingham, Alabama, was privileged to have a visit from Bishop Joseph Mouawad, from Zahle, between 24-26 September 2022. Many of our founding parishioners, their families, and recent families have ancestors in Zahle, but the entire parish turned out and appreciated the visit. On Saturday, Bishop Joseph attended the Altar Service practice session and then had lunch with them at the St. George Melkite Church Food Festival.



He celebrated the Saturday Liturgy along with Fr. Peter Zogbi, Fr. Jean-Maroun Helou, and Chorbishop Richard Saad.

On Sunday morning, Bishop Joseph had breakfast with the MYO and visited the MCF classes. He celebrated the Sunday Liturgy for the parish along with the priests and deacons and Father Mitch Pacwa. After the Liturgy, the parish hosted a reception for parishioners in the parish hall. Bishop Joseph shared his insights on conditions in the Eparchy of Zahle. Many parishioners were able to speak with him and gain more information about their home village.

Later Sunday evening, Fr. Peter hosted a dinner at the rectory for the clergy, members of the Parish Council, the Finance Committee, and their spouses. This gave everyone an opportunity to listen more intently while Bishop Joseph shared additional information about Lebanon.

On Monday, Bishop Mouawad had the opportunity to visit EWTN Studios and conduct an interview with Fr. Mitch Pacwa, which will air on 22 November.

Our parish collected over \$28,000 that will be sent to Bishop Joseph Mouawad's eparchy. We hope he felt welcomed to visit us again. ■

UNIONTOWN, PENNSYLVANIA

## Blue Mass, Baby Shower, Rosary Walk

by Dr. Mabel George Howard

On 10 September 2022, Saint George Church in Uniontown, Pennsylvania, paid tribute to the men and women first responders from the community. Fr. Aaron Sandbothe celebrated a “Blue Mass” to honor the First Responders. In his homily, Fr. Aaron expressed a comparison between the Cross and the First Responders, saying: “The liturgy describes the Holy Cross as a refuge where we find protection in times of trial. Members of our various first responder organizations live this mystery of the cross by becoming living refuges for those who need help in times of trial.” Fr. Aaron blessed the First Responders before inviting them to a delicious dinner in the parish hall provided by the *St. George First Responders Committee*.



On 11 September, the Ladies Guild and Altar & Rosary Society of St. George Church sponsored a Baby Shower for the Center of Hope, a Christian Faith-Based Crisis Pregnancy Outreach Community Service in Uniontown. The Center of Hope representatives presented an overview of free and confidential services offered to expectant mothers: emotional, spiritual, and material support, family and finance counseling, pregnancy tests, resources, and referrals. An abundance of necessities for mothers and babies were donated to the Center from clothing and formula to diapers and strollers. Fr. Aaron commented, “Efforts like these give Catholics an opportunity to actually *walk the walk* in the pro-life movement here in our community.” Everyone in attendance enjoyed games, prizes, and a delicious lunch.

18 September marked the 33rd Annual Uniontown Rosary Walk organized and sponsored by the Altar & Rosary Society of St. George Church with over 150 people in attendance. The Rosary Walk began at St. George Church with the group chanting a Syriac-Marionite hymn to the Mother of God. The Knights of Columbus led the participants to five other parishes where the faithful from Maronite, Latin, and Byzantine Churches sang hymns and prayed a decade of the rosary in each church. The Rosary Walk concluded with the Litany to the Blessed Mother and Benediction. ■

HOUSTON, TEXAS

## MYO Activities and Events

by Anthony Atallah

This year, the Maronite Youth Organization (MYO) in Houston held two main events: MYO Annual Camp and Village Night. The camp was held on Labor Day weekend at Stoney Creek Ranch. The main theme for the event was to “Carry your light.” This event was the first main event after the summer, and usually has the most attendance. The camp was established for the MYO to interact with each other, create new friendships, foster a closer relationship with God, and learn new things. The children also participated in many recreational activities like water games, and an outdoor rope obstacle course high in the air! Some of the kids’ favorite part of camp was the dance party at night, as it was an opportunity for everyone to relax and have a good time. An annual tradition at this event is to establish new officers for the upcoming MYO board, to plan new events and help at events. This is everyone’s most exciting event, by far.

The second major event that the MYO participated in was Village Night. Village Night is not just for the MYO, but for the whole parish. The MYO volunteers help the church while also having fun. The night is filled with food and drinks, entertainment, and games. The MYO usually volunteers by selling drinks for the night, while parishioners either dance to the music (usually the dabke), eat delicious food like chicken shawarma or beef shawarma, or interact with the rest of the youth playing basketball, or other games. Village night is for everyone, including the youth and adults, because everyone can come and enjoy themselves and each other. ■



# Parish News

LAWRENCE, MASSACHUSETTS

## MYA Gatherings

"For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them," (Matthew 18:19-20). This quote introduces the 40 Maronite Young Adult (MYA) members who assembled at St. Anthony Church in Lawrence, Massachusetts, for their Kick-Off Fall meeting. On 25 September 2022, Fr. Marwan, Fr. Elie, Fr. Nehmtallah, Deacon James Demers and Deacon Christian Hbaiter, led the group in a discussion about death and the afterlife. Guests from Norwood, Massachusetts, and Atlanta, Georgia, also participated in the

meeting sharing their thoughts and experiences on the topics. All attendees were respectful and attentive as their conversations led to strengthening personal faith and spiritual bonds with God. Considering an array of topics, MYA gatherings are informational, enlightening, and purposeful. The group also assists with several parish events including the annual parish Mahrajan, their Middle Eastern food festival. Also, several MYA members prepared to attend the MYA Conference in Tampa, Florida. ■



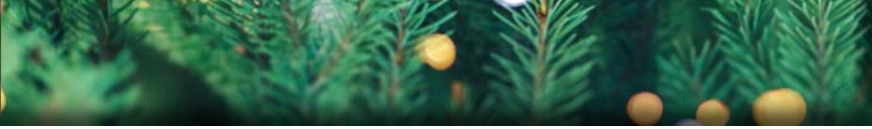
SLEEPY HOLLOW, NEW YORK

## Youth Activities

After summer ended and people returned from their vacation, St. John Paul II Church got back into the swing of things by getting the parish youth involved. The parish launched the Heritage Program on Catechetical Sunday and resumed faith formation classes. The parish celebrated its first children's liturgy served by the fourth and fifth graders, followed by two fun activities. Each child discovered their inner chef by making pizzas to enjoy. They also made autumn art for the annual "Children's Hope Chest Coat Drive", helping keep the needy children in the Bronx warm during the winter. The MYO had their first meeting followed by the Divine Liturgy, and activities under the title: "Build the church and keep it alive." We look forward to many more activities throughout the year, helping our children to keep involved in church and growing in their faith. ■







PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA

## “Good-bye Summer / Hello Fall”

As the heat of the summer turned into the cool breezes of the fall, the parishioners of St. Maron Church in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, set their sights on numerous activities. Their annual Blue Mass and Buffet was held on Thursday, 29 September 2022, to honor local police, firefighters, and *coasties* (Coastguard service members) who serve the community and surrounding areas. Over 100 first responders participated in the event beginning with the Liturgy, followed by an afternoon and evening buffet featuring a wide variety of edibles including a roasted pig, pasta dishes, and other homemade foods.

Next, the congregation celebrated their first “Good-bye Summer/Hello Fall” Neighborhood Block Party on Saturday, 15 October. This attracted both parishioners and community patrons for an entire day of Lebanese food and music. The following day, the faithful welcomed Bishop Gregory Mansour for a pastoral visit to the parish. Bishop Gregory was also honored for the 40th anniversary of his priestly ordination.

The annual St. Jude Novena is one of the oldest recurring events on the parish calendar dating to its inception in the 1950’s. For nine days, parishioners and friends devoted to St. Jude attended liturgy and inspirational homilies each night focusing on the gifts of the Holy Spirit. The novena concluded with a pasta dinner in the church hall.

Finally, the annual Children’s Halloween Party concluded a busy month of events. Parish children — both ghouls and goblins alike — gathered in the church hall for a fun evening of games, activities, snacks, and a Children’s Costume Contest. The parents joined together in their first Parent’s Costume Contest judged by the children. ■



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# Parish News

TAMPA, FLORIDA

## Maryamet Ladies Retreat

Sts. Peter and Paul Church's first women's trip was a huge success due to the overwhelming response from the women of the parish. They embarked on a weekend trip to St. Augustine, the nation's oldest city, on 10 September 2022, where they shared many happy moments and memories for years to come. The trip consisted of spirituality and bonding among each other, including a bible study with Fr. Fadi and

Liturgy. They visited the downtown area which included Castillo de San Barco Fort, St. Augustine Basilica, the oldest congregation in the United States, as well as the Shrine of La Leche where the first Catholic Mass in North America took place in 1565. The retreatants aimed to gain a greater appreciation for their faith and a deeper commitment to their church and parish community. ■



OLEAN, NEW YORK

## Beautifying Parish Grounds

On 7 July 2022, the parish grounds of St. Joseph Church received much needed landscaping and TLC (*Tender Loving Care*). Fr. Claude Franklin, Steve Zlockie, and the Morning Star Homeschool Families rolled up their sleeves for an afternoon of pulling weeds, trimming hedges, pruning trees, and clearing pathways. The saying is, "Many hands make light work." Joining together in this project made an overwhelming task manageable and uplifting. The afternoon was full of laughter, conversation, and a sense of camaraderie. At the end of the day, the volunteers were proud of the beauty they had created. ■



SOMERSET, NEW JERSEY

## “Helping Hands”

On Saturday, 1 October 2022, more than 85 parishioners from Saint Sharbel Church in Somerset, New Jersey, packed 10,000 meals to aid the poor people of Burkino Faso, Africa. It is difficult for the people of Burkino Faso to produce enough crops to feed the population. Many factors affect the lack of productive agriculture in Burkino Faso including the poor quality of arable land and drastic climate changes.

St. Sharbel’s “Helping Hands” volunteers sponsor this annual service project to support Catholic Relief Services and Rise Against Hunger. The nonperishable food items are purchased and transported in sealed containers as a donation from St. Sharbel Church. God’s work is to help others in need. ■



NORMAN, OKLAHOMA

## Archbishop Coakley Visit and Book Release

Archbishop Paul Coakley congratulated Mitchell Gray, author of a new book on the making of modern Lebanon and Bashir Gemayel, during a Sunday Liturgy celebrated by Father Nabil Mouannes at Our Lady of Lebanon Church in Norman, Oklahoma. The new book, *Sons of Resistance: Bashir Gemayel and Ali Hassan Salameh in “Freewheeling and Open” Beirut—What Shaped Modern Lebanon*, is available on Amazon. The book reviews important events since 1840 in Mount Lebanon with an extensive timeline and roster of notables in Lebanon. ■



# Parish News

SOUTH BEND, INDIANA

## New Maronite Mission

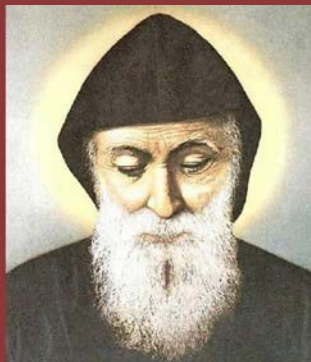
On 11 September, fifty faithful gathered to pray at the Maronite celebration of the Feast of the Holy Cross offered at Notre Dame University's Law School chapel. The incense hymn was offered afterwards in memory of the victims of the 9/11 terrorist attack. The feast marked the first Divine Liturgy of the first Maronite mission (or parish) in the United States dedicated to the Blessed Massabki Martyrs. The new mission provides the only parish of the Maronite Tradition in Indiana. The faithful eagerly prayed and sang God's praises, many of whom are Maronites who have not had an opportunity to attend a Maronite liturgy since moving from Lebanon to Notre Dame — now they find great relief in having a home away from home.

The Blessed Massabki Martyrs, who are the Mission's patrons, are also the patrons of NAM (the National Apostolate of Maronites). They were martyred in 1860 in Damascus for refusing to renounce the Christian faith. The Divine Liturgy was offered by Fr. Michael



Shami and Fr. John Paul Kimes, both priests of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon, who are respectively a doctoral student and a professor of law. Since then, the Mission has been a point of encounter for the Maronite faithful every week — whether they are Notre Dame students, Indiana residents or ND football game-goers.

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PITTSBURGH, PENNSYLVANIA

## Lebanese Festival

On 9-11 September 2022, Our Lady of Victory Church in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, held their annual Lebanese Festival. This year's festival broke all records as an estimated 8,000 patrons attended the festivities. The delicious food included: lamb kabobs, grape leaves, chicken with garlic sauce, kibbee, gyros, falafel, delectable desserts, and several other traditional dishes. Music, provided by the David Hakim Band, dancing, and entertainment continued throughout the three days. Under the supervision of Father Samir Chebli, pastor, and Chorbishop Michael Kail, parish adviser, more than 120 parishioners and friends worked diligently for months preparing for the event. Father Samir commented, "It is heartwarming to see the people of Our Lady of Victory work together side by side for so many hours and days. They truly honor God, our parish, and the



community by sharing our Maronite faith and Lebanese culture in such a loving way." Our Lady of Victory's first festival was held in the 1980's in Pittsburgh's Brookline region. Currently, the parish is now relocated to spacious grounds in Pittsburgh's Beechview neighborhood. ■

ST. SHARBEL CHURCH,  
SOMERSET, NEW JERSEY

## First Holy Communion

Front Row (Left to Right): Luca Jirgis, Nassif Maroun, Victoria Chamoun, Robert Kayyal, George Azar and Altar Servers: Sharbel Azer and Matteo Aboujaoude

Middle Row: Gia Elia, Liam Barrood, Elena Roldan, Christopher Batour, Teacher: Ashley Machalany and Altar Server: Marounicio Jacobs

Back Row: Director of Religious Ed.: Christine Zeinoun, Deacon Joe Chebli, Pastor Fr. Simon El Hajj, and Fr. Elias Adwan ■



## A Program for Eucharistic Revival

by Sister Theresa Maria Touma

In the “Going Deeper” series this year we are going to unpack Bishop Gregory Mansour’s recent letter to the faithful, “Eucharistic Amazement.”



As we reflect more on the gift of the Holy Eucharist in these next three years of Eucharistic Revival, Bishop Gregory makes the following requests of the faithful to increase our respect and appreciation of the Mystery of unity and charity that we celebrate at each Liturgy, and which we reserve in the tabernacles of each of our churches:

1. Prepare ourselves properly for the celebration of the Eucharist, including a deep reflection on the readings, preparation of the music, observance of the one hour fast before receiving Holy Communion, proper thanksgiving afterwards, the appropriate dignity due the Liturgy of the Word and Eucharist, and careful observance of the ritual itself, abiding by the canonical and liturgical norms of the Church;
2. Examine our consciences before receiving Communion, taking full advantage of the ordinary ways that we can live in closer union with Christ, i.e., confession, spiritual reading, spiritual direction, retreats, daily rosary, scripture readings, and other devotions of the Church;
3. Discern the real presence of our Lord in the Eucharist, as all Catholic and Orthodox Christians have done over the ages; and live this reverence appropriately with respect for our Lord’s abiding presence with us;
4. Pray and work for Church unity, especially praying

that the Holy Father, and his Petrine ministry, may bring all Christians closer to one Eucharistic sharing;

5. Spend some quiet time, outside of the Divine Liturgy, visiting and adoring the Lord, hidden and present there, wherever the Eucharist is reserved;
6. Every parish, mission and institution in the Eparchy is to foster Eucharistic Adoration at least once a month for vocations, and for the needs of the Church and the world, and properly prepare for and celebrate the nine-day Christmas Novena with renewed reverence and respect for the Eucharistic Lord present with us at the altar; and
7. Honor our family, see our work as an extension of the Eucharistic call to service, see our sufferings and anxieties as a participation in the sufferings of Christ, and live moral and ethical lives consistent with the teachings of the Church and the Eucharist we share.

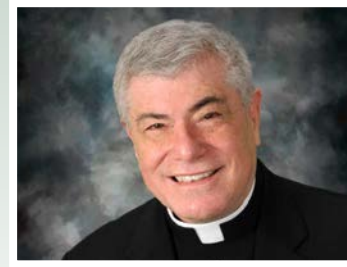
As the Catholic Church in the United States celebrates Eucharistic Revival, “Going Deeper” will focus on six topics:

1. Proper preparation for the Eucharist and thanksgiving
2. Examination of Conscience & Confession
3. Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament
4. Meditation on God’s Word in preparation for Sunday
5. Spiritual direction in deepening communion with Christ
6. Living the Eucharist and Serving the Body of Christ

We hope this series will deepen your love and gratitude for Christ in the Mysteries of the Eucharist.



## From the Editor



I was at the Richmond Airport. It was very early. I had some coffee, but not enough. This meant that it was going to take a lot for me to check in with the attitude and a smile that is always expected of a priest (but that does not always come easily).

Because the airport had just opened, there was a lady cleaning the screens of all the check-in kiosks. She greeted me enthusiastically with a big smile. (She must have had her coffee.) I summoned the strength and the goodwill to return the greeting and proceeded to use the machine to get my boarding pass and luggage tag. The kind lady—who had been circling around me—eventually approached me, looked down at the luggage with the tag and said, “Oh, you did it.” My gray hair had planted seeds of doubt in her head. Don’t get me wrong; her intentions were good, but it was a little insulting to be presumed as helpless.

Let’s take another scenario. When someone being pushed in a wheelchair approaches us, do we speak to the person in the chair or the person pushing the chair? Do we presume that people in wheel chairs are incapable of speaking for themselves? Being ignored is worse than being insulted!

The Evangelist Luke, after describing how the news of Jesus’ healing power had spread throughout

Galilee and even had drawn officials from Jerusalem, tells us of some men who carried a paralyzed man to be healed by Jesus. Because of the crowds, they lowered him through the roof so that he could be in front of Jesus. Did Jesus look up at them and ask, “What’s wrong with this man you brought to me?” completely ignoring the paralyzed man? No, Jesus spoke directly to the man, “Your sins are forgiven.”

When we see someone with gray hair, or a disability, or even poorly dressed, do we presume that we know everything about them? Do we presume to know what they need? Do we try to take over? Do we talk about them and not with them? Good intentions cannot make up for poor behavior.

One more thing. Sometimes we must deal with a person who, instead of having difficulties, is difficult. But the same approach is true. Don’t talk about that person: Talk with that person. “If another member of the church sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone.” (MATTHEW 18:15)

Let’s take the approach of Jesus. Respect the person. Talk with the person. Listen to the person. It takes more time, but the experience will benefit all of us.

In the fellowship of Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John D. Faris". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Chorbishop John D. Faris

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*Merry Christmas*

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*The Maronite Voice Staff*