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the Maronite **Voice**



Saint Thérèse of Lisieux

PATRONESS OF MISSIONS



the Maronite Voice

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THE MARONITE VOICE

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“Take Up Your Cross Daily and Follow Me” (LUKE 9:23)

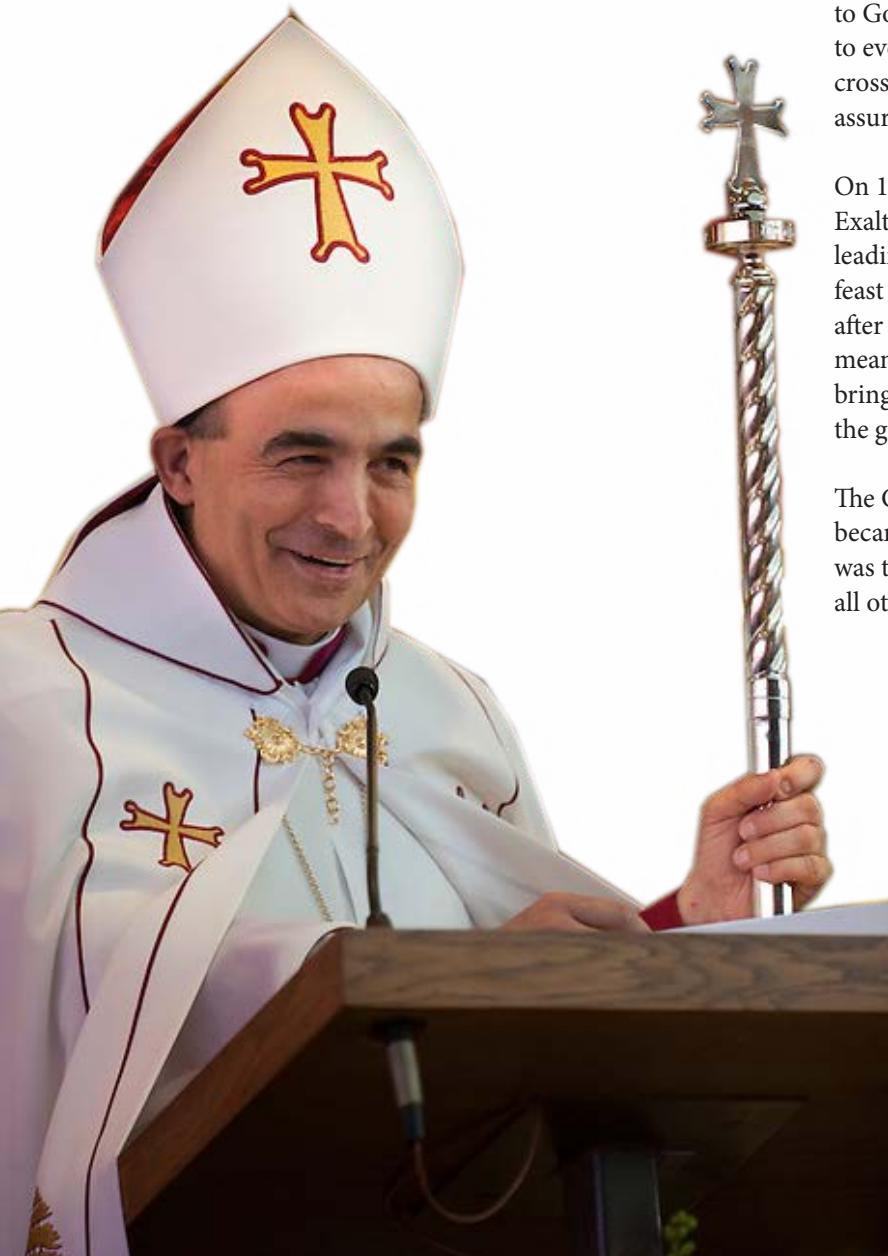
None of us likes to hear the word cross because of its association with pain and suffering; however, we cannot escape it. There are many crosses we all bear each day and throughout our lives. There is the cross of disease, misunderstanding, economic hardships, displacement, but it is a cross that we carry with the help of our merciful and loving God. We must remember that Christ bore the cross to Golgotha for the forgiveness of sins and to open the door to everlasting life. Christ died for our sakes and while our crosses may seem unbearable at times, we may always be assured that the Lord will help us carry our burdens.

On 14 September, the Church celebrated the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross. This feast ushers in the season leading up to the first Sunday of November. It is a festive feast day when we celebrate the joyous aspect of the Cross; after all, in the plan of God, the Cross of Christ became the means of our eternal salvation. *The Season of Holy Cross* brings our attention to prepare ourselves for the Parousia, the glorious second coming of Christ.

The Cross is the sign of our faith. For us the Cross of Christ became the “Tree of Life” found in the Garden of Eden that was taken from us by our sin. The Cross separates us from all other religions. As St. Paul says:

For Jews demand signs and Greeks desire wisdom, but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God. For God’s foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God’s weakness is stronger than human strength. (1 CORINTHIANS 1: 22-25)

In one of his many homilies/hymns, St. Ephrem the Deacon, teaches us that death seemed to have





triumphed over the Lord, but ultimately it had no power over him and it was that power of the Cross that called forth the dead from Sheol and is the source of our salvation to this very day. The Cross is a bridge through which we pass to heaven.

For Christians, the Cross represents not only suffering and death, but also victory and life. Jesus tells us “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me” (Luke 9:23). Originally the cross was a sign of death for criminals. With Christ’s death on the Cross it became a sign of victory. Perhaps the Lord is asking us to put to death all those things in our life that distract us from what is important to God so that we can be totally dedicated to Him. Of course, that does not always come easily. It is painful to put aside our desires and even our own needs.

In the United States, we currently carry many crosses as individuals and as a country. We carry the crosses of the Coronavirus pandemic, social upheaval, fires, hurricanes, displacement, human tragedies, and financial losses. The country is going through many challenges as the lockdowns and social distancing have caused some of us isolation and economic hardship and yet, the crosses we bear are nothing compared to the heavy hardships our brothers and sisters face in the Middle East.

1 September saw the 100th anniversary of the creation of the “State of Lebanon” — it was to become the “Republic of Lebanon” years later. I only mention this because, as a state, like so many other countries, Lebanon has borne many crosses over the years and its people continue to carry heavy burdens.

As a state in the Middle East with a sizable Christian presence, not just in numbers, but in influence and with an impact on the society, Lebanon must accept the current

crosses and possibly new ones, but must also look to the triumph that must surely come – not a military triumph or one of power, but a triumph of faith. Pope Saint John Paul II noted “Lebanon is more than a country. It is a message to the world.” He went on to say that it is a “message of fraternity — East and West.”

While not all of us who call ourselves “Sons and Daughters of Saint Maron” are of Lebanese ancestry and certainly most Maronites throughout the world have never been to Lebanon nor have any practical or actual connection to the country, however, all of us have a spiritual bond because it is the spiritual home for all of us, and the seat of our beloved Patriarch, His Beatitude and Eminence Bechara Peter Rai.

Lebanon and its people were under enormous strain due to governmental failure, heavy debt, and unemployment. The COVID-19 pandemic only added more adversities to the situation as the people faced yet another struggle. This was made all the worse and critical after the explosion at the port on 4 August, which rocked Beirut and caused around 200 deaths, thousands of injuries, billions of dollars in property damage, and leaving an estimated 300,000 people homeless. It was an additional cross that the people must now bear. On 5 August, after the explosion, the Patriarch said that the Church stands “in solidarity with the afflicted, the families of the victims, the wounded, and the displaced that it is ready to welcome in its institutions.” It is an enormous task; it is truly a cross that the people are bearing. Like Simon of Cyrene who helped Jesus carry his cross on the way of Golgotha, may all of us stand in solidarity with those people who are affected and less fortunate.

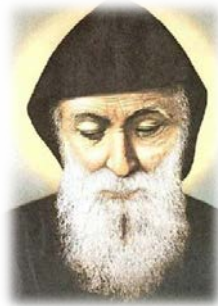
May we encourage and support each other in this time of difficulties. May the Lord send us His grace to carry on our crosses patiently with the firm hope that they become a bridge to a better life. ■

Bishop A. Elias Zaidan

Schedule BISHOP A. ELIAS ZAIDAN

- 21-31 OCTOBER** Bkerke, Lebanon | Maronite Synod of Bishops
- 10-11 NOVEMBER** Presbyteral Council Virtual Meeting
- 12 NOVEMBER** USCCB Subcommittee of Catholic Home Missions Meeting
- 15 NOVEMBER** Crestwood, MO | St. Raymond-St. Elizabeth Church
- 16-17 NOVEMBER** USCCB November 2020 Plenary Assembly
- 22 NOVEMBER** St. Louis, MO | St. Raymond Cathedral | St. Raymond Feast Day Celebration
- 9 DECEMBER** Caritas Lebanon USA Virtual Meeting
- 25 DECEMBER** Los, Angeles, CA | Our Lady of Mt. Lebanon- St. Peter Cathedral| Christmas Liturgies

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Schedule BISHOP GREGORY J. MANSOUR

- 10 OCTOBER** Cranston, RI | St. George Church | Diaconal Ordination of Farid Zaarour
- 13 OCT - 2 NOV** Bkerke, Lebanon | Maronite Synod of Bishops
- 8 NOVEMBER** New York | Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral (11:30am) | Manhattan Mission (5pm)
- 16-17 NOVEMBER** USCCB November 2020 Plenary Assembly
- 24 NOV - 1 DEC** Michigan | Thanksgiving & Family Visit
- 6 DECEMBER** New York | Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral (10:30am) | Manhattan Mission (5pm)
- 9 DECEMBER** Caritas Lebanon USA Virtual Meeting
- 25 DECEMBER** Brooklyn, NY | Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral | Christmas Liturgies
- 26 DEC - 5 JAN** Miami, FL | Our Lady of Lebanon Church | Pastoral and Family Visit

Eparchy of Saint Maron Appointments

His Excellency Bishop Gregory J. Mansour, Bishop of the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn, has made the following Eparchial assignments, all effective October 1, 2020:

Revoked the appointment of **Fr. Tony Mouanes** as Administrator of Saint Joseph Church in Olean, New York, and appointed him as Pastoral Administrator of Saint Maron Church in Torrington, Connecticut.

Revoked the appointment of **Fr. Claude Franklin, Jr.** as Pastor of Saint John the Baptist Church in New Castle, Pennsylvania, and appointed him as Pastor of Saint Joseph Church in Olean, New York.

Revoked the appointment of **Fr. Hanna Karam** as Parochial Vicar of Our Lady of Victory Church in Carnegie, Pennsylvania, and appointed him as Pastor of Saint John the Baptist Church in New Castle, Pennsylvania.

Revoked the appointment of **Fr. Tony Saab** as Administrator of Saint Maron Church in Torrington, Connecticut, and appointed him as Pastor of Saint George Church in Cranston, Rhode Island.

Revoked the appointment of **Fr. Paul Damien** as Pastor of Saint Anthony and Saint George Church in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, and appointed him as Pastor of Saint Michael the Archangel Church in Fayetteville, North Carolina.

Revoked the appointment of **Fr. Fadi El Tabchi** as Parochial Vicar of Saint Anthony Church in Lawrence, Massachusetts, and appointed him as Administrator of Saint Maron Church in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Revoked the appointment of **Fr. Antoun Youssef** as Administrator of Saint Stephen Maronite Church in Charlotte, North Carolina, and appointed him as Administrator of Saint Ann Church in Scranton, Pennsylvania.

Revoked the appointment of **Fr. Samir Chebli** as Temporary Administrator of Saint Maron Church in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and appointed him as Administrator of Our Lady of Victory Church in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

Revoked the appointment of **Fr. Rudy Wakim** as Pastor of Our Lady of Victory Church in Carnegie, Pennsylvania, and appointed him as Administrator of Saint Stephen Maronite Church in Charlotte, North Carolina.

Revoked the appointment of **Fr. Edward Nedder** as Pastor of Saint George Church in Cranston, Rhode Island, as he is retiring, effective October 1, 2020.

Revoked the appointment of **Msgr. Francis Marini** as Pastor of Saint Ann Church in Scranton, Pennsylvania, as he is retiring, effective October 1, 2020, yet he will continue to serve as the Judicial Vicar of the Eparchial Tribunal.

Revoked the appointment of **Fr. Adib Salameh** as Temporary Administrator of Saint Michael the Archangel Church in Fayetteville, North Carolina, and appointed him as Administrator of Saint Anthony and Saint George Church in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania.

The Missionary Nature of the Church

by Fr. David A. Fisher

“We preach Christ crucified.” (1 CORINTHIANS 1:23)

We proclaim to the world Christ crucified, who reveals to all men and women the triune God who is love. It is the mission of Church to evangelize, that is, to share the gospel, the good news:

The pilgrim Church is missionary by her very nature, since it is from the mission of the Son and the mission of the Holy Spirit that she draws her origin, in accordance with the decree of God the Father.

—Second Vatican Council,
The Missionary Activity of the Church

The roots of the term “evangelize” in Greek refer to a “messenger with good news.” (“Angels” are messengers of God.) The term “gospel” evolved from Old English, “gōdspel,” literally a “good story.”

The New Evangelization

Saint John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI called for New Evangelization. However, in a wider sense the awakening of the Church to its challenge of evangelizing the modern world, with its unique challenges to spreading the faith, began with the Saints John XXIII and Pope Paul VI and the Second Vatican Council.

Ten years after the closing of the Second Vatican Council, Paul VI wrote that the Church:

“...exists in order to evangelize, that is to say in order to preach and teach, to be the channel of the gift of grace, to reconcile sinners with God, and to perpetuate Christ’s sacrifice in the Mass, which is the memorial of his death and glorious Resurrection.” (Saint Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*)

As Jesus teaches us: “No one lights a lamp and then puts it under a basket. Instead, a lamp is placed on a stand, where it gives light to everyone in the house.” (MATTHEW 5:15) The Lord has entrusted the Gospel of truth to the Church to spread throughout the world and the ages so that men and women of every race, culture, and region, will be transformed by the Good News of Jesus Christ. The Church’s mission is evangelization.

While the Second Vatican Council and Saint Paul VI were keenly aware that the Church was no longer primarily European. Therefore, evangelization involved making the Church speak the language of Asia, Africa and American culture. Saint John Paul II, Pope Benedict XVI, and Pope Francis have forced the Church to see that the old bastions of the Church are



now havens of secularism and religious indifference. Additionally, the new evangelization must not just be to the non-Christian peoples, but also to the *Old World*, where faith has grown lukewarm.

Benedict XVI reminded catechists that evangelization must penetrate into the way life is lived:

“To evangelize means: to show this path—to teach the art of living... This is why we are in need of a new evangelization—if the art of living remains an unknown, nothing else works. But this art is not the object of a science—this art can only be communicated by [one] who has life—he who is the Gospel personified.” (*Address to Catechists and Religion Teachers*)

The Ministry of Evangelization and the Laity

For many centuries, the idea of *ministry, mission, and evangelization* was associated within the context of the duties prescribed to ordained clergy and professed religious women and men. Contemporaneous with the *new evangelization* has been the calling of the laity to be ministers of the Gospel; by their lives, words, deeds, and in collaboration with the ordained clergy and professed religious.

Saint John Paul II wrote of the ministry of the laity in the modern world:

“The lay members of Christ’s Faithful People ... are those who form that part of the People of God which might be likened to the laborers in the vineyard mentioned in Matthew’s Gospel... The gospel parable sets before our eyes the Lord’s vast vineyard and the multitude of persons, both women and men, who are called and sent forth by him to labour in it. The vineyard is the whole world (cf. Mt 13:38), which is to be transformed according to the plan of God in view of the final coming of the Kingdom of God.” (*The Lay Christian Faithful*)

The missionary activity of the laity is of extreme importance in the secularized post-Christian culture of western society. The clergy often find themselves *preaching to the choir*, if you will, to those who remain in the churches. However, it is the committed Christian layperson who takes the gospel truth into the world of work, community, and society in a much greater fashion than the clergy. Saint John Paul II writes:

“How can one not notice the ever-growing existence of religious indifference and atheism

“The Missionary Nature of the Church”

Continued from page 9

in its more varied forms, particularly in its perhaps most widespread form of secularism? ... Individuals cut the religious roots that are in their hearts; they forget God, or simply retain him without meaning in their lives, or outrightly reject him, and begin to adore various “idols” of the contemporary world.

I myself have recalled the phenomenon of de-Christianization that strikes long-standing Christian people, and which continually calls for a re-evangelization. ... When persons in conscience have the courage to face the more serious questions of human existence—particularly questions related to the purpose of life, to suffering and to dying—they are unable to avoid making their own the words of truth uttered by Saint Augustine: “You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you.” (*The Lay Christian Faithful*.)

At the heart of the Church’s mission today, the new evangelization, is the activity of the laity. The committed layperson must know the faith, live the faith, and share the faith.

Evangelization and the Maronite Church

Following in the footsteps of Saint Thomas the Apostle, Syriac Christians traveled the ancient trade routes and by the seventh century had taken the Christian faith to Central Asia, Tibet, Mongolia, and China.

The Maronite Catholics of Lebanon like their ancient Phoenician ancestors, have taken their Syriac-Antiochene Christian faith from Australia to Canada, from Salt Lake City, Utah to Pretoria, South Africa, and all points in between. Therefore, the Maronites are uniquely built to share their faith in Christ, to the many cultures of the world that they not only encounter but where they take root and prosper. In his encyclical letters, Cardinal Rai, Patriarch of Antioch and All the East, has instructed the Maronite faithful in their ministry of evangelization; connecting it to the Maronite Divine

Liturgy and the Social Mission of the Church, His Beatitude Patriarch Bechara Peter Rai wrote:

“Evangelization would not be complete without taking into consideration the relationship between the Word of God and the personal and social life of a person. This is the principle of universality intrinsic to the Gospel, for the Father desires the salvation of every man and woman. His plan consists of ‘gathering up all things in Christ, things in heaven and things on earth.’ Our mandate is to ‘go into all the whole world and proclaim the gospel news to every creation.’ The mission of proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ encompasses all dimensions of existence, all individuals, all aspects of community life, and all peoples.” (*The Ministry of Social Charity*)

Evangelization is at the very heart and nature of the Maronite Church, indeed, of the Church of Christ. The One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church is a beacon of light and hope in a world that seems lost in fear, insecurity, and anxiety. It is of the nature of the Church to share this great gift of faith and salvation in Jesus Christ.

In his Third Encyclical Letter on the Divine Liturgy, Patriarch Rai ends with these words:

“Christ Jesus is our Light, our Way, our Truth and our Life (JOHN 8:12; 14:6). And our Lady, the Blessed Virgin Mary, our Mother, shows us the way to Him, as the guiding Morning Star, the star of the New Evangelization through the Gospel for our new world.”

May these words be our own. ■

Rev. David A. Fisher is a priest of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon and Adjunct Professor of Eastern Christian Thought at St. Charles Seminary.



PASSING OF THE SERVANT OF THE ALTAR, MONSIGNOR JOHN ANDARY

Reverend Monsignor John Andary passed away in Lebanon in April of 2020. His funeral was held in his hometown of Kefour - El Arbe, Lebanon.

Monsignor Andary was the last surviving member of his immediate family. He was born on July 10, 1923 in Kefour El Arbe to Jean and Amelia Andary. He was ordained in 1951 by Bishop Anthony Khoraiich. He taught three years at the Maronite Seminary in Ain Warka and Mar Abda in Lebanon, served as pastor of the Maronite parish in Baabda, Lebanon, and in 1964, he was assigned by Patriarch Paul Peter Meouchi as assistant, and then as pastor of Saint Louis Gonzaga Church in Utica, New York.

He was named Chaplain to His Holiness on 31 January 1986, with the title Monsignor. In June of 1986, Monsignor Andary retired. He then moved to Lebanon, where he would stay until his death. He loved to return to Utica on occasion to visit his beloved parishioners.

PASSING OF MR. EDWARD NORTZ

Mr. Edward R. Nortz, father of Reverend Robert Nortz of Most Holy Trinity Monastery, died on 28 July 2020, at the age of 92. Edward was the beloved husband to Dorothea Nortz for 61 years; father of James, Laure (Samir Patel), Father Robert, Father Basil and Douglas (Ednny); and grandfather of 10 grandchildren. He is survived by his sister, Ellen Zimmer, and many nieces and nephews.

Condolences can be sent to Reverend Robert Nortz, Most Holy Trinity Monastery, 67 Dugway Road, Petersham, MA 01366.



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Congregation of Maronite Lebanese

Missionaries *by Father Elias Sleiman, MLM and Father Charles Khachan, MLM*

The month of October is dedicated to Evangelization. It highlights the efforts of the Church to bring the joy of the Gospel to all people. Since our Maronite Church



in America has missionaries working in different parishes, we are sharing with you an interview with the **Right Reverend Maroun Moubarak, MLM**, Superior General of the Congregation of the Maronite Lebanese Missionaries.

When and why was the Congregation of the Maronites Lebanese Missionaries founded?

The Congregation of the Maronite Lebanese Missionaries was founded by Father Youhanna Habib in 1865.

During his priestly ministry, Father Habib became aware of the spiritual needs of the Maronite people and the need for good homiletics, missions, spiritual direction and retreats. He wanted to set an example for others to follow. For these reasons, he founded the Congregation and based its spirituality on the fourth Gospel, taking the Blessed Mother and St. John the Evangelist as its patrons.

Who is the founder?

On 5 April 1841, Father Youhanna Habib was ordained to the priesthood and took the name Youhanna. His special calling was to serve the church and defend the faith during difficult



times: socially, religiously, and politically. By 1865, he purchased the Kreim Convent in Ghosta, renovated it, and started the new Congregation of the Maronite Lebanese Missionaries. He would remain there until 1889 when he was ordained as the Titular Archbishop of Nazareth. Archbishop Habib died on 4 June 1894 surrounded by the first Maronite Lebanese Missionaries and was buried in the chapel of the Savior at the Kreim Convent.

What is the current membership of the Congregation?

The Congregation currently has 98 priests and 4 transitional deacons, 6 seminarians, and 2 novices. We currently have 9 communities in Lebanon and 13 in various countries around the world.

How does the Congregation understand its role in Lebanon and in the countries of the Maronite expansion?

Our houses are an oasis of apostolic radiance. They include The Mother House in Ghosta, Saint John the Apostle Seminary in Harissa, Saint John Monastery in Jounieh, and the Mission Center of Our Lady of the Sea in Edde-Batroun. The Congregation also has two schools and runs the National Shrine of Our Lady of Lebanon. The Founder often repeated, "I have great hope that soon, the Congregation will expand, and a convent for the missionaries will be established in every eparchy, so they support the bishop of the diocese in carrying out the missionary work."

The Congregation serves under the guidance of the local bishop, and this is what the Founder himself asked of the missionaries. Therefore, its role in the countries of the Maronite expansion is characterized by three marks:



- The Lebanese and Maronite presence for the people.
- Spiritual, social, and cultural service in the pastoral work that we provide in coordination with the local Maronite and Catholic Church authorities.
- Caring for all the members of the community regardless of their religious affiliation in order to strengthen their attachment and support to the homeland.

Our mission is the mission of the Maronite Church, carrying the banner of Christ, respecting the host country, and honoring our homeland.

How does the Congregation live its mission through media?

The Congregation uses the motto “The Word for Every House” to reach everyone through all types of available media. The Congregation established the first Christian radio station in Lebanon “Radio Charity.” It was also the pioneer in social media by opening Opus Libani, a social media center for the church in Lebanon.

Today, the Congregation owns and manages: a radio station called “Voice of Charity,” a TV station, a

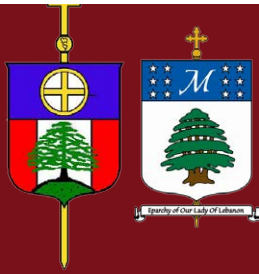
religious theater, a Website, and social media accounts. We use these means to spread the Good News of the Incarnate Word in a spirit of objective missionary work based on the Truth. These media outlets offer a variety of programs: spiritual, human development, educational, liturgies and prayer services, talk shows, and church news that are directed to all ages with special message of hope to the venerable and those in need of material support.

What is your message for the youth in today’s world?

To the youth of Lebanon, “be not afraid.” There is hope and pain in every new birth. The Spirit of the Lord is with us. He guides us, strengthens us, and renews us.

To the youth of the countries of expansion, “be wise and humble.” Give priority to the Lord. He will enlighten your life and so that you may become the light in the darkness of the world. Humility helps you foster relationships with the members of the living Body of Christ.

This is how you become missionaries and give witness to the world. ■



Effective Ways You Can Help Your Eparchy!

Please consider the following ways in which you can help the Maronite Church!

Legacy Giving

This is a creative way to support the Church. Legacy Giving can involve contributing through your *will*, *insurance policy*, or *retirement assets*.

You can get a tax deduction today and provide yourself with a steady source of income in future years through a *charitable trust*.

How to Remember Your Church in Your Will

Suggested wording for a bequest to the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn:

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

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

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

Tax-Smart Giving of Appreciated Stock or other Assets

The gift of an asset such as *common stock* or *mutual fund shares* that have increased in value can be a smart way to make a contribution and receive maximum tax benefits based on the value of the asset.

Gifts of other *appreciated assets* such as land, antiques, and homes, can also be utilized as potential gifts with valuable tax benefits.

Gifts of these assets should be considered on a case-by-case basis.

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

**Stewardship Director
John F. Kurey, Esq., MBA**

718-237-9913 or 314-231-1021
saintmaron@yahoo.com or
maroniteswest@yahoo.com

Saint Thérèse of Lisieux – Patroness of Missionaries and the Missions

In 1873, Marie Françoise-Thérèse Martin was born in Alençon, France. While still very young, she felt the call to the religious life. In 1887, her father took 15-year-old Thérèse and her sister to Rome with a diocesan pilgrimage. During a general audience, she asked Pope Leo XIII to give her permission to enter the Carmelite Order at that time. She was to enter in 1888 and took as her religious name, Thérèse of the Child Jesus and the Holy Face. She is popularly known as “The Little Flower.”

Her life as a Carmelite was to be short: in 1897, at the age of only 24, she was dead. It would seem easy to dismiss Thérèse as just another obscure nun in a country convent in France. It was the custom among the Carmelites to share the news of a death with a biography with other Carmels in the region. Many of the nuns who lived with Thérèse gossiped at her death that they would have nothing to write about her.

Thérèse was canonized by Pope Pius XI and declared a Doctor of the Church (someone who has made a significant contribution to the doctrine of the Church) by Saint John Paul II. The Church celebrates her feast on 1 October.

Saint Thérèse had a strong desire to be a missionary, to spread the word of God:

“In spite of my littleness, I would like to enlighten souls as did the Prophets and the Doctors. I have the vocation of the Apostles. I would like to travel over the whole earth to preach your Name and to plant your glorious cross on infidel soil. But...one mission alone would not be sufficient for me. I would want to preach the Gospel on all the five continents simultaneously and even to the most remote isles. I would be a missionary, not for a few years only, but from the beginning of creation until the consummation of the ages.”

It seemed that her desire to be a missionary was to be fulfilled because her convent had decided to send some nuns to Saigon. Until her health began to fail, Saint Thérèse was to be one of them. While she was never to leave her small convent, her powerful prayers support the missionary work of the Church throughout the world. The hidden life of this young woman was to inspire others to spread the Word of God. ■



WORKER IN THE VINEYARD

Father Sam Najjar retires as priest, veteran, lawyer and cancer survivor *by Brandon Shulleeta*

Father Sam Najjar's first stint as a "priest" was cut short, due to a slip of the hand involving a communion cup.

He was 9 years old and used potato chips and grape juice for communion. He had a Latin religious book and a tiny altar that his parents got him from an old church. He even used a sheet as a robe. He was good at pretending to be a priest — but his problem was breaking his communion cup. "My dad put an end to my priesthood at that time because one of his favorite martini glasses — I broke it while I was saying Mass one day. That was the end of that."



Father Sam turns 77 years old this month and recently retired as a longtime priest, most recently serving St. Michael the Archangel Maronite Catholic Church in Fayetteville, N.C.

Before being ordained a priest, he had already had a very decorated life: a U.S. Army soldier who fought in the Vietnam War. He was a professional graphic designer, a pilot and faculty advisor to the Georgia Tech Flying Club. He even got a law degree along the way.

Exactly what drew him to the priesthood is something he can't quite pinpoint, though he said he was often around



church as a kid. However, he does remember the precise moment when his journey to priesthood began. He was 37-years-old and sitting in a church pew.

“And I was watching and listening what was going on, and I go: You know what? I can do that,” Najjar recalls.

He got in touch with the deacon serving during that liturgy and told him he was thinking about becoming a priest, and within a year later, he was in the seminary and studying at Catholic University in Washington, DC.

“It happened so quickly; it was ridiculous. There was no chance I could even change my mind,” he said.

Reflecting on his now 36 years of priestly duties, just months after his July 1 retirement, he described his philosophy for successful priesthood: “I think that you become a good priest by the way that you treat people, when the people know you’re there to be their spiritual director and you’re there for their family and their kids.”

For Najjar, being a priest is about far more than just showing up for the Divine Liturgy. He’s always shown a genuine care for parishioners and has put emphasis on things like being a mentor to kids and visiting the sick.

“Your life is no longer your own. You’ve given up your life for the Church and the people you serve. You have to do what Jesus did,” Najjar said.

In a nearly two-hour interview, Najjar spent much of the time discussing the importance of making children feel welcomed in church.

“When the disciples were pushing the children away, Jesus said ‘No, no, no, bring the children to me so that I might bless them,’” Najjar said. Adding that Jesus also said that to enter heaven, one must be like a child. Najjar explains: “which meant innocence.”

Father Sam has always gotten along with children and enjoyed their presence, and they’ve gotten along well with him. It’s one of the things he’s most proud of. After all, he said, when children feel welcomed in the church at a young age, they’re far more likely to feel comfortable and attend Mass.

Father Sam decided one Easter to call the kids up during the Divine Liturgy and have them sit on the floor with him as he talked about the Resurrection. At first, they seemed nervous, but then grew fond of the idea as time

passed. It became a tradition for Najjar on Christmas and Easter for many years.

“And all I had to say is ‘OK, kids, it’s story time,’ and they couldn’t get up to the sanctuary fast enough. Every year I told them a different story,” he said, adding that it was just another way make the kids feel unintimidated by the priest and welcomed in the church.

Being relatable to his parishioners has always been important for Najjar, who said his sermons are not a theological lesson, but instead, an opportunity to tell a story that relates to the gospel and resonates with parishioners. He often adds humor to his sermons.

Prior to his time in Fayetteville, he was the pastor of St. Joseph Maronite Catholic Church in Waterville, Maine, for 20 years, beginning in 1986. He also served as the assistant pastor at St. George and St. Anthony Parishes in Wilkes-Barre, PA.; and St. Maron Parish in Detroit, MI.

Father Sam had seen war as a young man. Later in life, he was to wage another battle, one that was more challenging than he had anticipated. In April 2019, he was diagnosed with Stage 3 colon cancer. He initially rejected the idea of undergoing chemotherapy and radiation, because he had seen others deteriorate and die from the treatment. His doctors insisted. “I told them I’d do that under one condition: that it doesn’t interfere with my ministry,” Najjar said.

It was a challenging time, but he continued to serve as a priest, often half-days, though he was saddened by some occasions when he couldn’t visit ill parishioners because of his own condition. He said he’ll always be thankful for his parishioners who were so supportive of him in such a hard time in his life; as well as his brothers and sisters who were with him every step of the way.

“During that whole time, the parish was behind me 100 percent,” he said. “I had some bad days.”

Najjar has been cancer-free for more than six months and is living in Atlanta, Georgia, where he was raised and still has family. He’s attending St. Joseph Maronite Catholic Church in the Atlanta area — the very church where he was once an altar boy and imagined one day becoming a priest. ■

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

LIVING CHURCH

St. Jude Maronite Catholic Church: The Maronite Church in Utah Continues to Grow *by Anna Salloum*

As we take note of states around our beautiful country, we can usually recall certain qualities even of those states that we've never visited. What comes to mind when Utah comes to mind? The Sundance Film Festival is definitely an event that many follow and look forward to. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, commonly referred to as the Mormons, is also a group very distinctly recognized when we see a map of Utah.

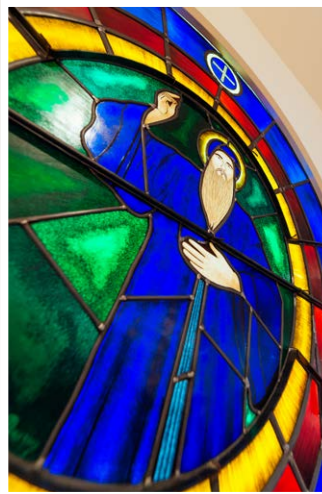
Look a little closer at that map of the Salt Lake City valley and you'll find a Maronite parish, St. Jude, comprising about 125 families, still welcoming visitors. Part of the

appeal in visiting the parish is that English is spoken, even during its Liturgies, making the new visitors feel very welcome and comfortable. Steady growth in new visitors and parishioners has taken place thanks to the "new normal" of online Divine Liturgies. The local Catholics who have never heard of the Maronite church have also found themselves attracted to the way that the Eucharist is celebrated at St. Jude.

"Everything in English" has been one of the secrets of success, thanks to Monsignor Gebran Bou-Merhi. A native of Damour, just south of Beirut, Abouna Gebran

arrived in the United States in 1986 and was ordained in June 1988, in Youngstown, Ohio. Two months later the newly ordained priest learned that his first assignment was out West, in Utah. Abouna expressed some resistance, explaining to the Bishop that he wanted just a little bit more experience in Youngstown. Nevertheless, in October, Abouna Gebran found himself in Salt Lake City, Utah. Abouna recalls, "It was all new and, at the beginning, I wasn't happy at all and not ready to be alone. However, I was very lucky to be surrounded by good priests from Salt Lake City to help and support me, and over the years





I learned to be content and happy.” The assignment lasted from 1988 until 2006.

After Abouna Gebran’s departure, the parish experienced ebbs and flows, related to finance, attendance, and growing pains. In 2011, after assignments that took him through San Francisco, St. Louis, Denver, and Michigan, Abouna returned to Saint Jude Church, describing the second time around like a “successful marriage.” This not to say that this second time around hasn’t brought new challenges.

A couple of years ago, the parish purchased an acre and a half of property to allow for growth. The building was a Protestant Baptist church, and the Maronite parish community was able to remodel the chapel, enlarging it and modifying it to give it a Maronite character.

Everything was ready and the official move-in took place during the second week of March. And then the pandemic arrived: within two weeks the church was shut down. “For the first three weeks, I

didn’t know what to do. I had very little knowledge of live streaming,” confessed Abouna Gebran. “Some parishioners knew basic computers and helped out. Now the attendance with livestream is excellent. Almost every time we celebrate, over 200 people attend virtually.” Faithful followers have watched the live stream all the way from Canada, Australia, and Europe. Abouna Gebran believes this has a lot to do with people being able to understand the Maronite liturgy in English. Personal attendance has also been good. The Divine Liturgy is celebrated every morning, giving consolation to the faithful who are able to receive the Eucharist.

He is confident that St. Jude Church will come out of this strong! Catholic Extension pledged to award a \$10,000 grant to the parish if St. Jude matches it. Fortunately, the church has few expenses, because most work is done by volunteers. The next project is remodeling the kitchen. Once that is complete, the volunteers will once again roll up their sleeves, this time to bake pies for sale.

Abouna Gebran is confident that the faithful will work to keep this legacy of the Maronite church in Salt Lake City. Until the “new normal” arrives, Abouna Gebran encourages everyone to watch the Divine Liturgy online. If anyone plans on visiting “the Valley,” they are most welcome to stop by and enjoy the fellowship of this pocket of Maronite faithful. ■

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



First Holy Communion 2020



Fayetteville, NC
St. Michael the Archangel

*Congratulations Declyn Hurley,
Paul VanWy, Hope Schmitz and
Philomena Nesbitt.*

Glen Allen, VA
St. Anthony Church

*Photo Left: Mauro Mastrapasqua,
Kaylee Ransom, Mikel Aboutanos,
Vanessa Yazbeck, Henry Craig,
Elena Abou-Assi, Bryce Mullens*

*Photo Right: Grayson Funk,
Magdalena Choueifati, Riad
Alexander Habib, Wyatt Savage*

*Austin Light, not in the photos,
also received his First Communion
this year.*



Lewisville, TX
**Our Lady of Lebanon
Church**

*Pictured left to right: Jad Helou, Pierce
Morgan, Isaac Hooks, Chase Morgan,
Joseph Elakattu, Naya Abillama,
Mallory Heithaus, Angelina Hana,
Maya Akhlaq*

**Livonia, MI
St. Rafka Church**

*In the photo from left to right are:
Christian Moussa, Elias Mikhael,
Julia Karromi, Marinelle Hanna,
Jude Karromi, Vincent Mikhael,
Peter Alkhozouz, Camille Tannous*

*The celebrant pictured is:
Rev. Dr. Rodrigue Constantin*



**Portland, OR
St. Sharbel Church**

First Communicants: Rhett Daniel, James Gama



**Uniontown, PA
St. George Church**

Conner Barton, Michelle Shandor, Toufie Michael, and Isaac Handlin



**Williamsville, NY
St. John Maron Church**

*Row 1 (L to R): Peter Boulos, Vincent Lattanzio,
Anthony Harfouche, Emilio Mansour,
Christopher Mansour*

*Row 2: (L to R): Jozlynn Chbat, Nicolette Behlok,
Kara Rittling, Amelia Habib,Christine El Khoury*

The Old Testament and Our Maronite Church (Part II)

by Father Anthony J. Salim

In this Part II of a three-part series, I will try to show how the Writers of the New Testament, especially the Four Evangelists (Gospel-Writers) and the Apostle Paul used the only Bible they knew, namely the Old Testament, to compose the New Testament. Only when we grasp this concept can we fully understand the deeper meaning of the New Testament and see how the Writings of the Old Testament point to Jesus the Christ as their fulfillment. From there, we will be able to venture in Part III into the vision of our Syriac-Maronite ancestors, as they read the Bible and how this is reflected in our liturgical tradition today.

As Christians, the Old Testament is to be revered as God's revelation to us as well as to the Jews. For us, that same Old Testament serves as God's long preparation for the coming of the Jesus the Messiah/Christ. In this article, I will try to show how the Christian Church sees that the New Testament is founded on the Old Testament.

In my many years as a preacher, I often observed that the Four Evangelists and St. Paul (as well as the other New Testament writers) were very skilled in presenting their message. As I reflected more and more on the texts on which I long preached, I discovered that there was "more to the story."

There are ways by which we can delve more deeply into the story:

- One practical resource may be found in many recent Catholic Bibles published in the United States. On virtually every page there is a section that refers the reader to other places that are related to a particular verse.

- For the more advanced student, there are also modern scholarly works for this. One indispensable work for the advanced reader is G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson, eds., *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007

I must admit here that I did not always appreciate the profound way that the early followers of the Risen Christ reinterpreted the words of the Old Testament as they understood and wrote about them in light of the amazing realization given to them after the Resurrection.

The Evangelist Luke relates the story (Lk 24:13-35) that on that first Easter morning the initially unrecognized Stranger (Jesus) explains to the men on the journey home to Emmaus what the Scriptures revealed. "Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them what referred to him in all the scriptures" (v. 27). Right away, we see the Evangelist shows us that his Gospel has its foundation in the Old Testament. Similarly, Paul, the staunch Pharisee, has heard the preaching of the first Disciples (i.e., the early Church). His stunning conversion causes him to reflect on his Jewish Scriptures; and, with the help of the Holy Spirit, to write what we now accept as the first, amazing and accepted written testimony to Christ.

Before we go on, there is an important point to consider when we think about how the New Testament Writers used the Old Testament to compose their works. That is a Greek version of the Old Testament known by a special term: "Septuagint," a word that is formed from the Greek word for "seventy." This translation was used by the early Church, including the Evangelists.

People who emigrate from their original countries of origin to new homelands must face the possibility that within a few generations, their children and grandchildren inevitably lose the ability to speak the language of the motherland. American Maronites are no exception. I have often heard people in the United States say that they wished they had kept up the language of their grandparents, or in many cases, their parents.

The reason for the point I just brought up in the previous paragraph is to express that this same thing happened to the Jews in the third century before the coming of Christ, especially for Jews in the city of Alexandria, Egypt, a city to which many of them had emigrated. The world at that time was Hellenistic (that is, culturally Greek), a culture that was adopted by the Roman Empire, in which Greek was its official language, even as local languages (such as Syriac, for example) were also used locally. In a few generations after Jews left Jerusalem, they could no longer speak or read the original Hebrew and Aramaic of the Old Testament. Thus, the Old Testament was translated into Greek. A strong tradition holds that the task was carried out by seventy translators, hence, Septuagint. This version included some additional biblical works not included in the original Hebrew Scriptures. As I wrote in Part I, this resulted in a fuller Old Testament collection, consisting of the original Hebrew Canon as well as what we Catholics (and Orthodox) today call the “Deuterocanonical” (other or second) Writings and what the Protestants refer to as the “Apocrypha.”

Today we do not use the Septuagint for contemporary translations, because translators again do what the seventy translators did for their generation, that is, we go back to the original Hebrew and Aramaic Old Testament and translate it into the modern languages of the world. Regardless, consulting the Septuagint is still helpful for Bible work today.

Let us see how all of this works. Of the four Gospel-writers, only Matthew and Luke tell the story of the Birth of Jesus. Both of them knew of his Birth from the Virgin Mary, and each tells this truth of faith in his own particular way. Matthew knows of the idea in the Old

Testament, and he wants to show that is fulfilled in Jesus. He reads in the Prophet Isaiah, Chapter 7 verse 14:

Therefore, the Lord himself will give you a sign; the young woman, pregnant and about to bear a son, shall name him Emmanuel (Is 7:14).

He knows that in Isaiah’s day King Ahaz wants a sign from God that Israel will be safe from invading armies from Syria. In the footnote to this verse in the New American Bible Revised Edition we read:

7:14 Isaiah’s sign seeks to reassure Ahaz that he need not fear the invading armies of Syria and Israel in the light of God’s promise to David (2 Sm 7:12–16). The oracle follows a traditional announcement formula by which the birth and sometimes naming of a child is promised to particular individuals (Gn 16:11; Jgs 13:3). **The young woman:** Hebrew *‘almah* designates a young woman of marriageable age without specific reference to virginity. The Septuagint translated the Hebrew term as *parthenos*, which normally does mean virgin, and this translation underlies Mt 1:23. **Emmanuel:** the name means “with us is God.” Since for the Christian the incarnation is the ultimate expression of God’s willingness to “be with us,” it is understandable that this text was interpreted to refer to the birth of Christ.

In light of his Christian faith, Matthew sees that this Old Testament prophecy is fulfilled in the lives of Mary and Jesus, and so Matthew crafts the well-known New Testament verse in his Gospel (1:23):

“Behold, the virgin shall be with child and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel,” which means “God is with us.”

Thus, we see that like the other New Testament authors, Matthew uses the Old Testament to teach us our own Christian belief. We also see the Plan of God for our salvation in Christ written in the pages of the Old Covenant and fulfilled in the New. ■

ADULT FAITH FORMATION FALL 2020

MARONITE SPIRITUALITY

Learn more about the Maronite Faith and Traditions.
Open to all adults in our Eparchy of St. Maron Brooklyn

VIRTUAL WORKSHOPS

OCT. 1: THE MARONITE CHURCH

FR. DOMINIQUE HANNA

OCT. 8: DIVINE LITURGY

MSGR. JIM ROOT

OCT. 15: SCRIPTURE & TYPOLOGY

FR. VINCE FARHAT

OCT. 22: STS. EPHREM &

JAMES OF SERUG

FR JAMES DORAN

OCT. 29: VOCATIONS IN

THE MARONITE CHURCH

FR. ELIE MIKHAEL

Via Zoom on Thursdays 8:00-9:15PM

[Register Here](#)

HOSTED BY THE MARONITE SERVANTS OF CHRIST THE LIGHT

The Order of Saint Sharbel New Members

ANNUAL

JOHN AMULA | *Our Lady's Parish* | Austin, TX

MARCUS ACOSTA | *Our Lady's Parish* | Austin, TX

ELIZABETH HAYKEL | *St. John Maron Church* | Williamsville, NY

RICHARD KOVACS | *St. Anthony Church* | Danbury, CT

JULIE MERY | *St. George Church* | San Antonio, TX

DEACON PAUL SALAMY | *St. Louis Gonzaga Church* | Utica, NY

PERPETUAL

JOCELYNE RAAD | *Our Lady of Lebanon Church* | Lewisville, TX

SHARON FERNANDEZ | *St. George Church* | San Antonio, TX

REV. MHANNA-JOSEPH KALLAS | *St. George Church* |
San Antonio, TX

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

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

EPARCHY OF SAINT MARON
109 Remsen Street | Brooklyn, NY 11201
or
EPARCHY OF OUR LADY OF LEBANON
1021 South 10th Street | St. Louis, MO 63104

Our Lady of Lebanon Seminary Washington, DC



Our Lady of Lebanon Maronite Seminary began the new academic year recently and celebrated the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross as a community on 14 September 2020. The Liturgy was celebrated by Fr. Armando Elkhoury, Vice-Rector, along with Seminary Rector, Msgr. Peter Azar, and the seminary community.



Current Seminarists for 2020-2021:

Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn

- Lector Vincent Michael, 2nd Theology
- Christian Hbaiter, 2nd Theology
- Jakob Wyder, 1st Theology
- Vincent Mowad, Pre-Theology

Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon of Los Angeles

- Subdeacon Christopher Nahra, 4th Theology
- Alejandro Landin, 1st Theology
- Elias Hazkiel, Pre-Theology
- Anthony Cherabie, Philosophy

MYA Summer Roundup

Maronite Young Adult groups across the nation have been busy, despite the “new normal” we find ourselves in, both virtually and socially distanced!

From online discussions with Bishops Gregory and Elias, to hikes, outdoor cookouts, and online fundraisers for disaster relief in Lebanon, the MYA has been engaging our young adults spiritually, socially, and constructively.

Here are a few highlights from across the country! ■

Theology with Bishop Gregory
RECONCILIATION & CONFESSION

Thursday, August 6th
at 8 pm EST

Via Zoom:
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89317504941>

THANK YOU!

We partnered with the Eparchy of St. Maron of Brooklyn and the Eparchy Our Lady of Lebanon of Los Angeles, to collect and donate funds towards the recent catastrophe in Beirut, Lebanon.

Donations have been made on Venmo to @NationalMYA, our website via PayPal, and by check to either Eparchy. They will be equally distributed to the following charities for Lebanon relief efforts:
Caritas, St. Vincent de Paul,
Lebanese Red Cross

We have collected \$3750

"We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed."
-2 Corinthians 4:8-9



Lawrence, MA: St. Anthony's MYA spent a Saturday hiking up to Mt. Major as a group. Once they reached the top of the mountain alongside the beautiful scenery, their new board members were announced. May their group prosper and flourish for their young adults!



Livonia, MI: St. Rafka's MYA had a summer cookout and game night. After sharing a meal, they played volleyball and visited together, while welcoming their new priest, Abouna Rodrigue. We are happy to see such a lively group! Please keep them all in your prayers.

Parish News

BIRMINGHAM, ALABAMA

St. Elias Church Celebrations

The weekend of 19 July 2020, St. Elias Church in Birmingham, AL, celebrated three very special events:

- The 40th Anniversary of the priesthood of Monsignor Peter Fahed Azar, Rector of Our Lady of Lebanon Maronite Seminary, who was ordained at St. Elias
- The 20th Anniversary of Fr. John Paul Kimes, a native son of Birmingham and St. Elias
- The recent ordination of Fr. Peter John Zogbi, Associate Pastor of St. Elias

Chorbishop Richard Saad, Pastor of St. Elias, welcomed Bishop Elias Zaidan as well as the honorees for the weekend. This would normally have been the weekend of our annual Feast Day picnic. Because of all the restrictions with COVID 19, the large scale event was not possible. However, with careful planning and following the health guidelines, we were still able to celebrate our honorees and their many years of service and commitment to the priesthood with a series of events, both large and small.

We held a special liturgy on Saturday evening at 5 p.m., having the honorees concelebrating the liturgy with Bishop Elias in attendance. As a

special touch to the liturgy, each honoree wore his ordination vestments. During the socially-distanced banquet, Bishop Elias addressed those in attendance and acknowledged how special the evening was for our church and the priests we were honoring. Chorbishop Richard shared memories and comments about each of the priests being honored as each priest had personally served under him for at least a time period. Prior to each honoree's address to the attendees, we were treated to a video clip of his ordination.

On Sunday, the pastoral council and finance committee hosted a luncheon with Chorbishop Richard Saad, Bishop Elias, the newly appointed Bishop of the Birmingham Diocese, Bishop Steven Raica, and the honorees. Sunday afternoon, a reception was held in the parish hall especially for those who were unable to attend the Saturday banquet.

The weekend was a wonderful celebration of Saint Elias and the priesthood! May God continue to bless our priests. ■



CINCINNATI, OHIO

St Anthony of Padua Church

by Fr. George Hajj

The parish family of St. Anthony of Padua and the Lebanese community of the tristate thanks everyone for the moral support and presence during the tragic explosion in Beirut on 4 August 2020. Thank you for standing by the people of Lebanon during these indescribably hard times.

The parish family of St. Anthony Church, established in 1910 in Cincinnati, celebrated the feast of the Assumption of the Mother of God on Saturday, 15 August 2020. The parishioners, largely composed of Lebanese and other Middle Eastern Christians, expressed their solidarity with the victims and first responders of the tragedy in Lebanon.

A candlelit procession, which followed the celebration of the Divine Liturgy, was led by the icon of Our Lady of Lebanon and icons of other Maronite saints. Those in the procession chanted hymns honoring the Mother of God in celebration of Her feast. According to the readings of the day, taken from the Letter of St. Paul to the Romans, standing and processing with one another represents our human pilgrimage to heaven, "Bless those who persecute [you], bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep." ■



TEQUESTA, FLORIDA

A Maronite Approach to Enduring the Pandemic



On 8 March 2020, Mary, Mother of the Light Mission in Tequesta, Florida, was blessed to welcome Fr. Gary George as their new administrator. Following his arrival, the Diocese of Palm Beach suspended public Masses due to the coronavirus. This situation resulted in several blessings for the small Maronite mission. First, Mary, Mother of the Light was blessed to have the approval of our bishop to remain open according to state and local law. In order to continue celebrating the liturgy, the clergy and faithful worked together taking precautions and sanitizing the church according to guidelines. The second blessing was that the congregation grew dramatically due to the closings of the Latin Rite churches. Additional liturgies and altar boys were scheduled, and numerous spiritual activities were implemented. Father Gary led the rosary prior to each liturgy, adoration to the Eucharist, an extra hour of prayer dedicated to our country, the confession schedule was expanded, and many sacraments were celebrated. The third blessing was the institution of monthly spiritual retreats led by Fr. Gary. A Marian Retreat consisting of spiritual discussions and videos, reflection, adoration, rosary, confession, candlelight procession, and Divine Liturgy was offered to 80 Catholics. A two-day retreat commemorating the Feasts of the Holy Cross and Our Lady of Sorrows was held 14-15 September. The fourth blessing was the promotion of traditional devotions including: reciting the rosary and the Divine Mercy Chaplet, devotions to Our Lady of Fatima, and consecration to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Fr. Gary welcomed many local Catholics to the Maronite Liturgy and heritage. He is very grateful watching his flock work together to repair, build, organize, clean, donate, and lead church activities/events for the common good of the church. ■

Parish News

CRANSTON, RHODE ISLAND

Father Edward Nedder Retires

by Joseph Checralah, Jr.

The parishioners of St. George Church in Cranston, RI, are filled with both sadness and happiness in bidding farewell to their pastor, Fr. Edward T. Nedder, who is retiring. They are sad to say goodbye to a wonderful priest who has had an everlasting positive impact on their lives. The congregation is also happy that their parish was blessed with such a dedicated, selfless, and humble priest for 15 years.



Father Ed's journey to the priesthood began in 1963 when he attended Queen of Apostles Seminary in Dedham, MA. He continued his education earning a Bachelor's and Master's Degree from Catholic University. Father Ed was ordained a deacon in 1983 and served at several parishes. In 1986, Father Ed attended Our Lady of Lebanon Maronite Seminary. He was ordained to the Priesthood by the late Archbishop Francis M. Zayek at Our Lady of the Cedars of Lebanon Church on 20 June 1987.

Under the guidance of Father Ed, Saint Ann's Roman Catholic Church in Cranston was purchased and renovated as the new Saint George Church and rectory. Father Ed gave tirelessly to the church and his flock — visiting the sick, rebuilding his churches, organizing Lebanese festivals, advising church committees, and much more. His genuine warmth, strength and support resulted in more parishioner involvement in church functions. He is truly a servant of God — spiritual, kind, and sincere. Father Ed guided his faithful through a sensitive transition and merger with the parishioners of Saint Ann's Church. The two church families beautifully unified sharing both Latin and Maronite liturgies.

The Saint George family admires Father Ed for his passion and compassion in serving God and leading his congregation. He will truly be missed as his parishioners wish him an enjoyable, healthy, and well-deserved retirement. ■

HOUSTON, TEXAS

Summer is Coming to an End

by Susan Hage

While people are trying to adjust to the normalcy that is this pandemic, our parish [Our Lady of the Cedars Church] has been doing all that we can to keep our community engaged and as active as possible. We have faced the challenges of social distancing by offering online bible studies, as well as online MYO and MYA events, such as the MYA South Regional Theology on Tap. We have had great turnouts so far for each event, with our parishioners so excited to see one another, regardless if it's from their own living room.

To do our part as a community to help our families in Lebanon face the horrific damages caused by the blast on 4 August 2020, our parish has successfully raised nearly \$73,000 in Aid to Lebanon. The amazing MYA community started their very own fundraiser and received over \$2,000! This horrendous event left everyone shaken to their core, and we will continue to do all that we can for our brothers and sisters in Lebanon.

As we enter the new school year, our parish is preparing to offer remote CCE classes. It is important to help our children continue to grow and remain attached to their Maronite faith, and allow them to interact with their peers. But before classes begin, we will be welcoming our First Communicants that were unable to celebrate this sacrament in May due to the pandemic that has swept through our world.

We hope everyone is staying safe and pray that we may gather in person, as a community, very soon! ■



MARONITE SISTERS OF CHRIST THE LIGHT

Our Lady of Lebanon Pray For Us

by Emily Lattouf, MSCL Postulant

Turning to Mary in times of trouble is a lesson I learned from my earliest youth. One of the lullabies my mother would sing is the hymn, "We Run for Protection." This Marian hymn was a source of great comfort to her during the civil war in Lebanon. My mother told us that whenever there was a bombing near the school, the Sisters would gather the children into the chapel, and they would sing this hymn asking the Blessed Mother's intercession. When my father fled the civil war and came to America as a young boy of ten, he brought with him a picture of the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

Jesus teaches us that we can depend on Mary to be with us when we are experiencing crosses in our life. Christ looking down from the cross saw His mother standing beneath and I am sure this brought Him great comfort. Our Blessed Mother is with us and for us, she brings us comfort and consolation. My parents held fast to this and passed it on to me.



Mary knows and understands our pain. We can turn to her and rest assured that she will take care of us. Mary carries our needs in her heart to the foot of the Cross of Christ. Our crosses may not disappear, but our Mother is walking the road to Calvary with us and she will lead us to her Son who is the Resurrection and Life. Mary be a mother to us now. Our Lady of Lebanon pray for us. ■

Hymn to Mary

*We run for protection to you
Mary, we come to you for aid.
We implore you turn not away
Mother who must be obeyed.*

*Mary Heaven's gate
Mother of our Lord
Through you source of all our hope
Guiding light has poured.*

*Perfection of the pure
Mother undefiled.
By your merit plead for us,
let us know your Child.*

*Look down upon us all
serving faithfully
We implore your help and care
at our Mother's knee.*

LAS VEGAS, NEVADA

Ordination to the Subdiaconate

by Michael Rohlin



On Saturday, 1 August 2020, at St. Sharbel Church in Las Vegas, five men were ordained to the subdiaconate by Bishop A. Eilas Zaidan. The candidates, Tom Harder, Raul Abejuela, Ramon Hidalgo, Dino Mapili and Mike Rohlin were ordained in the presence of their pastor, Fr. Nadim Abou Zeid, the candidate's families and the congregation. Also in attendance were Frs. Nicholas Assi and Elias Steiman. It was a blessing to have so many men ordained at the same time for one parish.

The two-hour liturgy was highlighted by Bishop Elias' homily about each unique role every member of a parish has to their church. There is no greater or lesser role each individual has in serving God. He reminded the congregation to focus on what we have rather than what we don't have. Using God's gifts of service for others is the essential purpose of one's life, not just for the ordained but for everyone.

The Bishop took special care in knowing each of the newly ordained and learning about their journeys for this special occasion. Moreover, the visual role of the subdeacon can serve others as a reminder of Christ's work in the church. This abundance of ordinations can be attributed to the tutelage and encouragement from Fr. Nadim and the support of the parish. All five men have contributed greatly to the St. Sharbel community over the years and now look forward to continuing and expanding their roles as subdeacons. ■

Parish News

CLINTON TOWNSHIP, MICHIGAN

St. Sharbel Church MYO Outdoor Adoration for Lebanon

by Rita M. Yammine

On Friday, 7 August 2020, the MYO of St. Sharbel Church, Clinton Township, Michigan, hosted their first Outdoor Adoration to pray for our beautiful and broken land of Lebanon. There was a beautifully decorated makeshift outdoor altar with a banner on it that highlighted a powerful verse of Scripture. There was also an outline of a cedar tree made from battery-powered candles on the ground. Individuals could write their intentions on the back of miniature paper Lebanese flags and stick them in the grass before the altar. In between personal prayer, some individuals prayed aloud in both English and Arabic, asking for peace in Lebanon and the fulfillment of the intentions in our hearts. The evening was also graced with beautiful voices, as some of the youth sang as well! At the end of this spiritual night, the youth surrounded Chorbishop Alfred and prayed around him, thanking our Lord Jesus for continuing to protect him throughout his 30 years of priesthood. A heartfelt thank you to Chorbishop Alfred Badawi, Deacon Michael Maggyar, Amanda Abi-Samra, Anthony Fawaz, Elias Yammine, and all MYO E-Board members for all the efforts they put into making this night memorable. Our Lady of Lebanon, pray for us! ■



UTICA, NEW YORK

Deacon Paul Salamy Celebrates 25 Years

On 9 September, Deacon Paul Salamy celebrated his twenty-fifth anniversary of ordination to the diaconate. He was ordained on 9 September 1995 by Archbishop Francis M. Zayek at Saint Louis Gonzaga Church, Utica, New York. Deacon Paul's anniversary was recognized at a Divine Liturgy on Sunday, 13 September. We thank Deacon Paul for his over thirty years of dedicated service to our parish, first as a Subdeacon, and the last twenty-five years as a Deacon. Our parish family wishes Deacon Paul many more blessed and healthy years doing God's work. ■



UNIONTOWN, PENNSYLVANIA

“Blue Mass”

by Dr. Mabel George Howard

On 12 September 2020, the Saint George Church of Uniontown, PA, paid tribute to the men and women of its community who serve and protect the citizens. A “Blue Mass” was celebrated by Father Aaron Sandbothe, pastor, to say “thank you” to our local First Responders including firefighters, police officers, EMS personnel, 911 operators, rescue teams, and the military. The color blue relates to the blue-colored uniforms worn by a majority of community safety services. The First Responders, dressed in uniform, attended and participated in the liturgy. The “Blue Mass” pays tribute to those who have fallen in the line of duty and those currently serving their communities. Local dignitaries and persons of other faiths also gathered in prayer at the liturgy to show their appreciation for the efforts of our Frontline Defenders. In his homily, Father Aaron emphasized the significance of the symbol of the Cross. For hundreds of years, the Cross has been a representation of protection, refuge, safety, medical services, humanitarian aid, feelings of trust and strength, and victory. Father Aaron stated that many First Responders have adopted the Cross not only as their “logo” but have become a “living” sign of the Cross to protect and serve others themselves. These men and women demonstrate courage and risk their safety for others in difficult times. We are grateful for these caring souls who strive to keep our communities safe. Following the liturgy, the First Responders and their guests enjoyed a delicious dinner in the church hall sponsored by the ladies of Saint George. There was a wonderful feeling of camaraderie among everyone. Saint George Church is proud of our First Responders, compassionate and caring individuals who keep us safe and secure. ■



WATERVILLE, MAINE

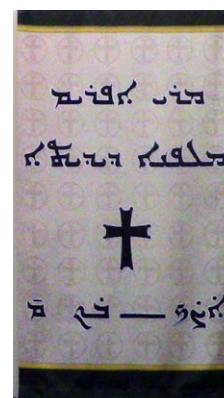
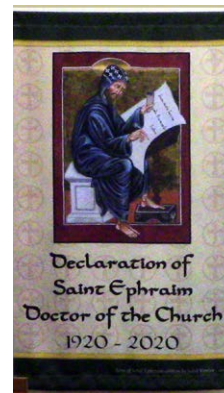
Commemorating Saint Ephraim as a Doctor of the Church

“You (Jesus) alone and your Mother are more beautiful than any others, for there is no blemish on you nor any stains upon your Mother.”
~ St. Ephraim (Ephrem)

Besides being a Doctor of the Church, St. Ephraim is called: *The Sun of the Syrians, Pillar of the Church*, and most importantly, *The Harp of the Holy Spirit . . .* Quite the accomplishment for one poor hermit.” (St. Ephrem the Syrian: *“The Harp of the Holy Spirit.”* Retrieved from Aletia). Saint Ephraim, a humble hermit and monk, wrote teaching hymns of the Christian faith.

Predating the historic schisms of the fifth century, which brought about ecclesiastical divisions that endure to this day, Saint Ephraim and his writings are a beautiful **treasure of unity** among all the Churches that share the Syriac tradition. Saint Joseph Parish in Waterville, Maine, recognizes this hero of faith and apologist of orthodox and apostolic doctrine in the centennial year of the declaration by Pope Pius XI as Doctor of the Catholic Church in 1920.

Due to the present global crisis, Father Doran and his congregation were unable to celebrate Saint Ephraim in a jubilant festive manner. Therefore, they commemorated him within their liturgies, homilies, prayer and discussion. Beautiful banners, created by graphic artist and parishioner, Suzanne Pare, hung from the walls in honor of Saint Ephraim. Also, many Roman Catholic parishioners attend the Divine Liturgy at St. Joseph Church. Six new Latin Rite families were happily welcomed into the beauty of the Antiochene and Maronite heritage. It appears that the tiny Maronite parish in central Maine has truly become a **Harbor of Salvation** for many faithful who are drawn to the written lines and songs of *The Harp of the Spirit*. ■



Parish News

PITTSBURGH, PENNSYLVANIA

Rededication of Our Lady of Victory Church

On 16 August 2020, His Excellency Bishop Gregory Mansour, Father Rodolph Wakim, and Father Hanna Karam concelebrated the rededication of Our Lady of Victory Maronite Catholic Church. The Maronite family of Our Lady of Victory is making their new parish home in the city of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Due to the consolidation of several Roman Catholic Churches, the Maronite congregation purchased the Saint Pamphilus Church building as their new place of worship.



Coincidentally, Saint Pamphilus is the namesake of a 3rd century saint from Beirut, Lebanon. Saint Pamphilus, an educated biblical scholar, was born into a rich and noble family. Ordained a priest in Caesarea, he sold his riches to lead a humble life helping the poor. He died a martyr in 310 by decapitation defending his faith. At the conclusion of the liturgy, Bishop Gregory bestowed a blessing upon the new church and the faithful.

Afterwards, a reception was held for those in attendance. Bishop Gregory announced the transfers of Father Rodolph to St. Stephen Church in Charlotte, North Carolina, and Father Hanna to St. John the Baptist Church in New Castle, Pennsylvania. Father Samir Chebli was assigned as the new administrator to Our Lady of Victory Church. ■

NEW BEDFORD, MASSACHUSETTS

OLOP Education Foundation Scholarships

The Our Lady of Purgatory Education Foundation 2020 Scholarship Award Recipients:

(L to R) Christopher Chedid, Gabrielle Chedid, Michael Mello, and Natalya Chedid ■



ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA

Holy Family Church Lebanon Trip

by Anne Marie Schwery

It's been almost a year since approximately 32 members of our church, led by our Pastor, Father Emmanuel Nakhle-Ghorr, had the opportunity to travel to Lebanon in October 2019. Only a few of us had been to Lebanon prior to this trip. We were blessed and so grateful for the opportunity to travel with our church family to the home of our ancestors.

For many of us, after our arrival, this was the first time we fully processed where we were and the meaning behind it. We visited countless sites through the course of the trip. We enjoyed our first mezza meal and explored Byblos, one of the oldest, continuously inhabited cities of the world. We visited Dimane, the summer residence of the Patriarch, and were fortunate enough to have a private audience with him at his winter residence in Bkerke. We saw the birth home of St. Sharbel, walked among the Cedars of Lebanon, visited the ancestral hometowns of some of our members, and went to the monastery of St. Antonious Kozhaya overlooking the magnificent Qaddisha Valley. We were able to celebrate liturgy with relatives in Bhairi, Tula and Aslout. Many of us grew up hearing about family in Lebanon and had always hoped to meet them. The three towns had a combined liturgy in Bhairi. Afterwards, they held a coffee social and some of the visitors were able to tour their ancestors' village.

We truly felt the presence of God and our ancestors throughout this trip. We felt connected to our ancestors and as we frequently reminded ourselves that we were in their homeland, we tried to imagine what life was like for them. We continue to share our memories about our time in Lebanon and our strong desire to return. We keep Lebanon in our prayers and feel even more connected to the country, the people, and the faith. ■



Parish News

YOUNGSTOWN, OHIO
St. Maron Church

Final Vows of Sr. Mary Rafqa Boulos, MD

Samar Boulos is the oldest of seven children and an active parishioner of St. Maron Church in Youngstown, OH. She worked with the Maronite Youth Organization, along with various other groups, in planning events and retreats. She eventually graduated from Youngstown State University with a degree in Biology before perusing a medical degree at Ohio University, followed by her residency training. Despite over 10 years of post-high school studies, Samar couldn't shake the feeling that she was called to something greater. That is when she took the next eight years of her life answering God's call and serving with the Religious Sisters of Mercy. On 16 August 2020, Sister Mary Rafqa professed her final vows surrounded by her family and friends, as she along with four other new sisters excitedly began this new chapter in their lives, spreading God's love in one of the most beautiful ways possible.

Seminarian Assignment

St. Maron Church in Youngstown, Ohio, was blessed to have hosted one of our seminarians this past summer. Subdeacon Christopher Nahra joined our parish family for a few months as a part of his formation. Using his high energy, he helped us host events and activities including a Vacation Bible



School, MYO meetings and events, MYA meetups, graduation and birthday parties, and even weddings!

Chris brought laughter and joy to each of our lives through his positive outlook, especially reconnecting the youth with their roots in Jesus Christ. He encouraged our youth to strive to be active in every aspect of their lives. While Fr. Tony ignited the spark in us to reconnect in our parishes, Chris gave us ways of encouraging that spark to remain ignited, and not just through our weekly bonfires. His encouragement lasted up until his final day with us on 14 August 2020, when he was ordained a subdeacon at the National Basilica and Shrine of Our Lady of Lebanon in North Jackson, OH, during the annual Assumption pilgrimage.

It was an honor to have Subdeacon Christopher join us for the summer, and we pray for his continued growth as a new vocation is fostered in the Maronite Church. ■

UTICA, NEW YORK

Summer Drive-Thru Events Well Received

Abouna Boutros El Hachem and the parishioners of St. Louis Gonzaga Church in Utica, New York have had a busy summer with three very successful drive-thru events:

- 1 — **PIZZA FRITTE/FRIED DOUGH DRIVE-THRU:** Held every Saturday during the summer.
- 2 — **CHICKEN BARBECUE DRIVE-THRU:** Hosted by the Holy Name Society and sold out within an hour.
- 3 — **TASTE OF LEBANON DRIVE-THRU:** Our largest community event of the year was challenged by the COVID-19 pandemic. "Taste of Lebanon" became "Taste of Lebanon Drive-Thru" — held on 28 and 29 August on the church grounds. Due to our committee's innovative thinking and endless planning, it turned out to be a huge success! The menu was streamlined and food packaged so that orders could quickly be assembled and delivered to cars. The delicious Lebanese food made by our family of volunteers — grape leaves, hummus, tabouli, kibbeh, gyros, gyro bowls, fried dough, baklava and assorted

sweets — received rave reviews! Abouna Boutros is grateful not only to our volunteers and patrons, but our sponsors — whose support and generosity was overwhelming. ■



National MYO Virtual Prayer Service for Lebanon

“United in Faith: A Night of Prayer for Lebanon”

Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati, a young saint of his day, once said: “Modern society is drowning in the sorrows of human passions, and it is distancing itself from every ideal of love and peace. Catholics, we and you, must bring the breath of goodness that can only spring from faith in Christ.”

Drowning in sorrows were, also, the people of Lebanon along with so many families, friends, and youth that were affected by the horrific explosions on 4 August at port in Beirut. No words can describe the pain and sadness that

drifted across the country of Lebanon and the world as we stood confused and shocked at the terrible sight of the explosion. Many lost their lives, homes were destroyed, thousands were injured, and so many youths in Lebanon were left in need of food and support. However, what could the Maronite youth of America do to help Lebanon amidst such distance and the COVID pandemic? We quickly discovered the answer to that question is found in one thing: “faith in Christ.”

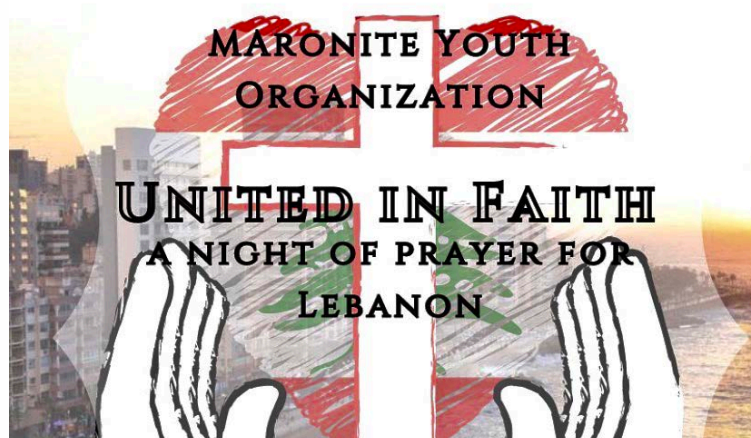
Four days later, on 8 August, the National MYO gathered virtually for a night of prayer and solidarity on Zoom. Accompanied by our directors, Fr. Edward Hanna and Sister Therese Maria, MSCL, many youths from across the country gathered to show support to

our brothers and sisters in Lebanon through prayer, praise, and worship. The prayer service was led by the National MYO Team including testimonies, intercessory prayer, and Maronite prayers. It was a “breath of goodness” to see so many youths come together and offer up their sorrows, confusion, and

intercessions to Our Lady that she may comfort the afflicted, console the grieving, and grant peace to the suffering people of Lebanon. We truly felt unified as a Maronite Church, all together, under Beit Maroun, as a people united in faith because of Christ. Finally,

the prayer service ended with a beautiful hymn to Our Lady that she may protect the country of Lebanon and its people.

During the following weeks, we learned that many Maronite youth came together in their communities to continue to pray for Lebanon and to fundraise money to support Lebanon’s restoration. Our hearts still break for Lebanon and its people, but we remain united through faith in Christ because we know that Christus Vivit — Christ is alive (Pope Francis)! May Christ’s living breath of goodness spread throughout the country of Lebanon and the world so that we may live in love and peace as united brothers and sisters! ■



The One-Step Rule *by Antoine Richa*



In a year flooded with challenges, I thought I'd let everyone in on a secret. What if I told you that the difference between those who overcome hardship and those who don't, came down to one step? Have I lost you yet? No? Great!

For the purposes of this message, I ask that you picture the journey of overcoming any obstacle as one that requires a total of 100 footsteps... Let the journey begin!

We have been given a miraculous gift — the gift of life. No matter how miraculous life may be, the Bible often reminds us that trials and tribulations will come. We bear responsibilities of personal and professional development, physical and mental health, family — the list goes on. We are inundated by news, social pressures, and political influences — grabbing at our attention, fighting for control. Despite those challenges, we manage to stumble along for the first 50 steps. Sometimes, we do so gracefully and with purpose. Other times, we drift aimlessly, bumping into everything along the way. After that stumbling, we find ourselves completing half our journey. Here, we reach the most critical of steps. The next step is *the* step.

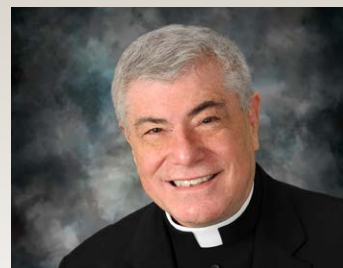
At the mid-point, we face two temptations — give up or continue alone to the finish line. The problem is both options won't work. Those options represent two of our biggest fatal flaws. Giving up represents our addiction to hiding behind our problems, allowing for excuses to justify why we cannot succeed nor fail. Instead, we live somewhere in between. The other option represents our pride. We believe we can go at it alone, confusing our worldly success with self-sufficiency.

The right option for our 51st step, however, is best represented by several of Jesus's miracles. In the healing of the 10 lepers, Jesus says **“Rise and go; your faith has made you well.”** To the hemorrhaging woman, **“Your faith has healed you. Go in peace.”** Jesus does not just perform a miracle; he calls upon that person to first take a step of faith. It's not enough to call out to God in prayer; we must *choose* to walk with Him too. On the other end of that 51st step is Jesus — awaiting with open and loving arms ready to help us carry the load for the final 49 steps of our journey. If we choose not to step in Faith, then we may make it another 20 or 40 steps. However, without God by our side, completing our journey will always be in sight but never attainable. If we do anchor our next step in Faith, the burden lightens. The path becomes clear. 100 steps are complete.

So, my friends, when you are faced with your next challenge and you've managed to stumble half-way through, you will need to decide what you will do with that next step. Will you choose to give up, go at it alone, or are you willing to take that one step of Faith? ■



From the Editor



On 18 October, we celebrate the 100th anniversary of the birth of Archbishop Francis M. Zayek, the first bishop for the Maronites in America.

This son of Lebanese parents, Mansour and Miriam Zayek, was born in Cuba. When young Francis was 12, the family returned to Lebanon, where the family continued to speak Spanish in their home in Ghazir.

Francis was to be ordained to the priesthood, though not the Franciscan missionary he always wanted to be. While he was never to be a friar, his life was truly missionary and took him to five continents.

After serving in Egypt, he worked in the tribunals in Rome. The Vatican was looking to send someone as an auxiliary bishop of the Archbishop of Rio de Janeiro who could provide pastoral care to the Maronites in Brazil. Vatican officials were aware that they had a Spanish-speaking Maronite priest under their noses. (In Brazil, Portuguese is spoken — but Spanish was apparently close enough!) So, after being ordained as a bishop by Maronite Patriarch Paul Peter Meouchi in August 1962, Bishop Zayek moved to Brazil.

In the early 1960s the Catholic Church had an ecumenical council, a most significant event in the life of the Church. There have only been 21 in the entire history of the Church.

Bishop Zayek was to be one of the last surviving bishops who had attended all sessions of the Second Vatican Council, but he later confessed his participation in the Council was distracted; there was so much work he wanted to do in Brazil. Again, God had other plans.

The Council dealt with many matters, one of which was the Eastern Catholic Churches. In November 1964, the Council issued a decree that focused on the needs of

these Churches. The Council Father wanted the Eastern Catholic Churches (n. 4) to prosper and therefore urged:

Means should be taken therefore in every part of the world for the protection and advancement of all the [Eastern Catholic] Churches and, to this end, there should be established parishes and a special hierarchy where the spiritual good of the faithful demands it.

In carrying out the mandate of the Council to establish hierarchies (communities subject to their own bishops), the Pope wanted to create eparchies for the Melkites and the Maronites in the United States. Bishop Francis was plucked from Rio de Janeiro in 1966 and ordered to go to Detroit, Michigan. (His English language skills were weak to say the least — he had visited the United States only once to confer priestly ordination on Robert Shaheen, who was later to be the second bishop of the Maronite Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon.)

The new bishop moved into the unfinished rectory of Saint Maron Cathedral in Detroit and began to establish the Maronite eparchy in the United States. It was not an easy task: the priests were independent, and the communities were isolated. The challenges and accomplishments are too numerous for this space, but the important legacy of Bishop Francis was his vision of a Maronite Church in the western hemisphere that could live out authentically the Maronite faith and nurture the bonds of love with Lebanon.

Archbishop Francis from Cuba brought a missionary vision to the United States, a vision still being realized today. ■

Chorbishop John D. Faris

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We have seen the disaster that struck Lebanon on 4 August. This is a country already struggling with pandemic and crushed by economic collapse. As Christians, as Maronites with Lebanese blood in our veins, we cannot ignore the situation.

Please, do what you can to help. Bishop Gregory J. Mansour and Bishop A. Elias Zaidan can safely transfer your contributions to those in Lebanon who can effectively help.



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