

Volume 20 | Issue 1 | January/February 2023

the Maronite **Voice**



You are Peter ... feed my sheep!

Week of Prayer for the Unity of Christians | 18-25 January



the Maronite **Voice**

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THE MARONITE VOICE

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How Important is God?

More and more, we read and hear about people staying away from God and the Church. The statistics show people identifying themselves as “no religious affiliation” or “nones” are growing in number. In a sense, our world has become a more secular and busy world. People make time for personal and societal responsibilities and needs, but they forget to make time for God. Of course, there are a limited number of hours in the day and there are many requirements to stay alive like sleeping and eating. There are also time-consuming activities that are not avoidable like work, meetings, and community. To take care of ourselves, we also must make time for our mental and emotional well-being by having some time to ourselves for fun and other pursuits. Then, if you have children, there are more responsibilities added to every day that need attention and time to be properly taken care of. The issue is that in trying to pursue everything our time demands of us we make less and less time for our spiritual well-being and communion with God.



That style of life leads us to drift away from God and consequently from the Church. Our disconnection and disaffiliation with the Church may start out as something small. Maybe one Sunday instead of attending Divine Liturgy, you would prefer to sleep in to recoup yourself from the work week. Maybe your child has a game or activity they are required to attend for school. It is also possible your friends decide to get together and have a party. Then it turns into two Sundays, only attending Divine Liturgy on Holy Days, then only Easter and Christmas, until eventually, it turns into not attending at all. Then if this behavior persists when we have children, we are teaching them to give God what is left over from our lives, not to put him first. Eventually, the next generation will attend less and less until the connection to our God, the Church, and community is broken. In reality, one of the best returns you make in life, it is the investment in the spiritual life of your children. Statistics reveal faith filled children do take better care of their parents. Let the Church be our second home where we renew our identity as Christians; in fact, the Church is the place where we celebrate the important events in our lives including our baptism, first communion, marriage, and eventually our final farewell from this earthly world.

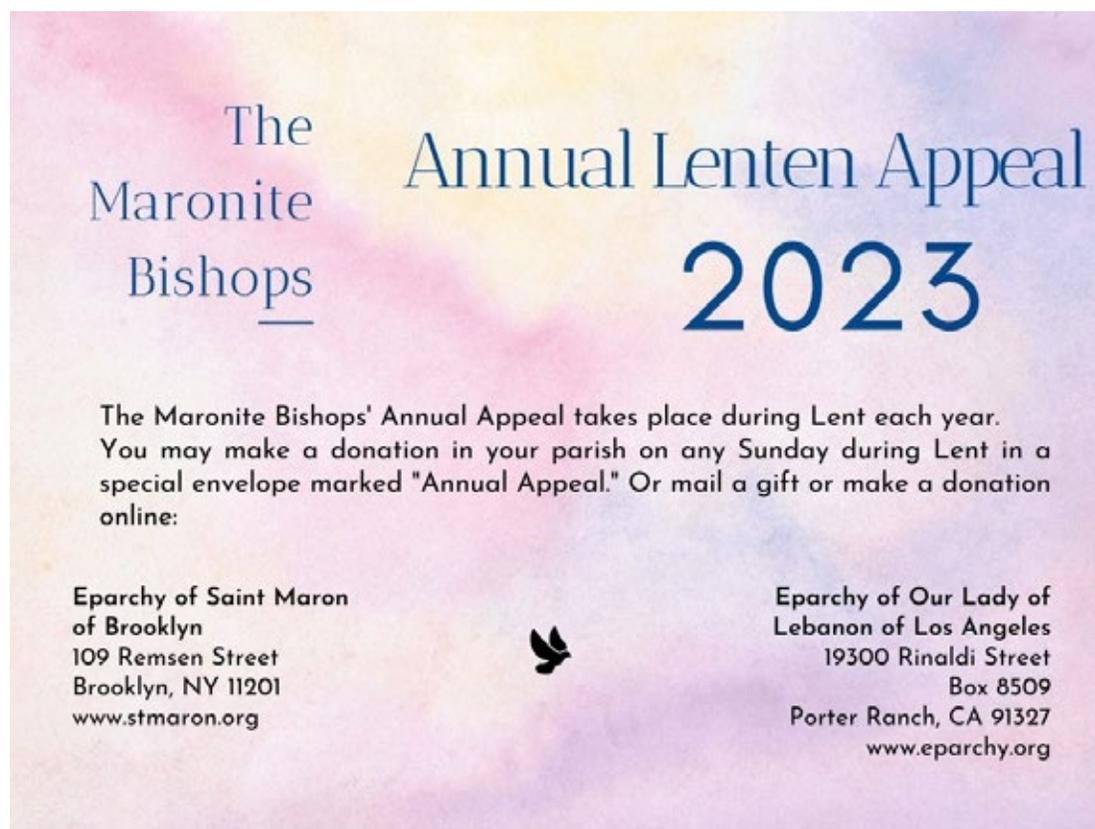
Each day, we nourish all of the other parts of our lives with time and effort, but we do not nurture our connection and communication with God. Life is busy and time slips by, but it is not just about physical wants and needs. It is also about our spiritual health. If we do not nourish our connection to God and speak to him, we become stagnant and wither spiritually. Our faith and devotion to God is what keeps us healthy and sane in a busy world. Without it, we become lost in a secular sea of instant gratification.

There is a common reality when good people do nothing, then evil grows. I hope and pray that everyone of us will realize the importance of God in our lives. Yes, God is merciful and loving but one day He will judge us according to the measure we loved Him, and we loved our brothers and sisters. This New Year, as you make resolutions, make a resolution to spend time with God through prayer, attending the Divine Liturgy, and most importantly to taking time for your spiritual well-being by nourishing your connection to God. ■

Bishop A. Elias Zaidan

Schedule **BISHOP A. ELIAS ZAIDAN**

- 28-29 JANUARY** Lombard, IL | Our Lady of Lebanon Church | Pastoral Visit and Capital Campaign Event
31 JAN-2 FEB Washington, DC | International Religious Freedom Summit
3-5 FEBRUARY Cleveland, OH | St. Maron Church | Pastoral Visit and Capital Campaign Event
11 FEBRUARY Detroit, MI | St. Maron Church | Pastoral Visit
12 FEBRUARY St. Louis, MO | St. Raymond Cathedral | St. Maron Celebration
18 FEBRUARY Los Angeles, CA | Our Lady of Mt. Lebanon Cathedral | St. Maron Celebration
3-5 MARCH San Antonio, CA | St. George Church | Pastoral Visit and Capital Campaign Event
13-15 MARCH Washington, DC | USCCB Administrative Committee
17-19 MARCH Phoenix, AZ | St. Joseph Church | Pastoral Visit
22-23 MARCH St. Louis, MO | Chancery | Eastern Catholic Bishops Meeting
25-26 MARCH West Covina, CA | St. Jude Church | Pastoral Visit
-



The Maronite Bishops' Annual Lenten Appeal 2023

The Maronite Bishops' Annual Appeal takes place during Lent each year. You may make a donation in your parish on any Sunday during Lent in a special envelope marked "Annual Appeal." Or mail a gift or make a donation online:

Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn
109 Remsen Street
Brooklyn, NY 11201
www.stmaron.org



Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon of Los Angeles
19300 Rinaldi Street
Box 8509
Porter Ranch, CA 91327
www.eparchy.org

Schedule **BISHOP GREGORY J. MANSOUR**

28-29 JANUARY	Danbury, CT St. Anthony Church Pastoral Visit
1 FEBRUARY	Virtual Eparchial Finance Council
2 FEBRUARY	Somerset, NJ St. Sharbel Church Parish Gala
5 FEBRUARY	Brooklyn, NY Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral Feast of St. Maron
7 FEBRUARY	Eparchial Pastoral Council Zoom Meeting
9 FEBRUARY	Torrington, CT St. Maron Church Feast of St. Maron
11 FEBRUARY	Fort Lauderdale, FL Heart of Jesus Church 40th Presbyteral Anniversary of Chorbishop Michael Thomas
12 FEBRUARY	Tequesta, FL Mary, Mother of the Light Church 40 Day Memorial for Rev. Leonard Basinow
16 FEBRUARY	Oriental Orthodox-Catholic Dialogue Zoom Meeting
19 FEBRUARY	Brooklyn, NY Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral Cana Sunday
20 FEBRUARY	Somerset, NJ St. Sharbel Church Ash Monday
21-28 FEBRUARY	Morristown, NJ Silent Retreat
6 MARCH	Washington, DC Our Lady of Lebanon Seminary Seminary Visit and Eparchial Review Board Meeting
12 MARCH	Brooklyn, NY Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral
13-17 MARCH	Lutz, FL Annual Eparchial Priest Retreat
18-19 MARCH	Orlando, FL St. Jude Church Pastoral Visit
21-23 MARCH	St. Louis, MO Eastern Catholic Bishops Meeting
24-26 MARCH	Washington, DC Our Lady of Lebanon Seminary and Church Seminary and Pastoral Visit

Appointments

EPARCHY OF SAINT MARON

Bishop Gregory J. Mansour has granted his permission for **Rev. Tony Mouanes** to leave the Eparchy and return to Lebanon to serve in his home Eparchy, effective 1 December 2022.

The Bishop has also made the following appointments:

Rev. Toni Jabbour, OMM, as Parochial Vicar to Saint Rafka Church in Greer, SC, effective 1 November 2022;

Rev. Fadi El Khawand, from Parochial Vicar of Saint Anthony of the Desert Church in Fall River, MA, to Administrator of Saint Maron Church in Torrington, CT, effective 1 December 2022;

Rev. Joseph Taouk, as Parochial Vicar of Our Lady, Star of the East Church in Pleasantville, NJ (and also to assist at Saint Sharbel Church in Somerset, NJ), effective 1 December 2022;

Rev. Michael Charchafflian, Parochial Vicar of Our Lady of Lebanon Church, Miami, FL and also serving the Maronite Community in Naples, FL.

Rev. Charles Van Heusen, as Parochial Vicar of Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral, Brooklyn, NY, effective 1 December 2022;

Rev. Rahib Aoun, MLM, as Parochial Vicar of Saint John Paul II Church in Sleepy Hollow, NY (and also to serve the Maronite Community in Manhattan, NY), effective 1 January 2023.

Bishop Gregory has also appointed **Rev. Boutros El-Hachem** as Eparchial Director of the Maronite Youth Organization, while maintaining his position as Pastor of Saint Louis Gonzaga Church in Utica, NY, effective 1 January 2023. Father El-Hachem will replace Sr. Therese Maria, MSCL in this capacity, but Sr. Therese will maintain her position as Eparchial Director of the Maronite Young Adults.

A Prayerful Commitment for the Unity of Christians

by Rev. Ronald Roberson, CSP

A little more than a century ago, a small group of Anglican Atonement Friars and Sisters gathered in a chapel at Graymoor, New York to inaugurate a prayer movement called the Church Unity Octave. The idea was to dedicate the week between what was then the feast of the Chair of Peter on 18 January to the Conversion of St Paul the Apostle on 25 January to prayer for the unity of Christians. The idea caught on, and by 1916 Pope Benedict XV was encouraging all Catholics to observe this annual prayer cycle. Over the years the idea has gathered strength and spread so much that today the week is observed by millions of Christians in some 75 countries around the world.

Initially, however, the Catholic Church was very cautious about this fledgling “ecumenical” movement (movement towards the unity of Christians), and generally did not allow Catholics to participate in it. But alongside this official position, a number of Catholic theologians were working quietly in the background to change attitudes towards ecumenism. To this was added the personal experience of Archbishop Angelo Roncalli who, before he was elected Pope John XXIII in 1958, had served as Vatican ambassador to Bulgaria, Turkey and Greece where he gained an appreciation of the Orthodox churches and became a passionate advocate of Christian unity. So, when he decided to convoke the Second Vatican Council, he was determined from the beginning that it would focus on Christian divisions and try to find ways to overcome them.

One of the documents that came out of Vatican II was the Decree on Ecumenism, known by its Latin title *Unitatis Redintegratio*. It was finalized on 21 November 1964, with the firm support of the whole body of bishops, who approved it with a vote of 2,137 to 11.

This Decree represented an extraordinary about-face in Catholic attitudes towards ecumenism.

The Decree on Ecumenism begins with praise for the modern ecumenical movement, and notes approvingly that in these days all Christians, “though in different ways, long for the one visible Church of God, a Church truly universal and set forth into the world that the world may be converted to the Gospel and so be saved, to the glory of God.” All this is based, of course, on the prayer of Jesus in John 17 the night before he died that his followers might be one, in a visible unity, so that the world might believe. The Decree says that theologically speaking, there can be only one Church because the Body of Christ cannot be divided, and yet the sad truth is that many divisions among Christians have taken place over the centuries. Often enough, the document says, “both sides were to blame.”

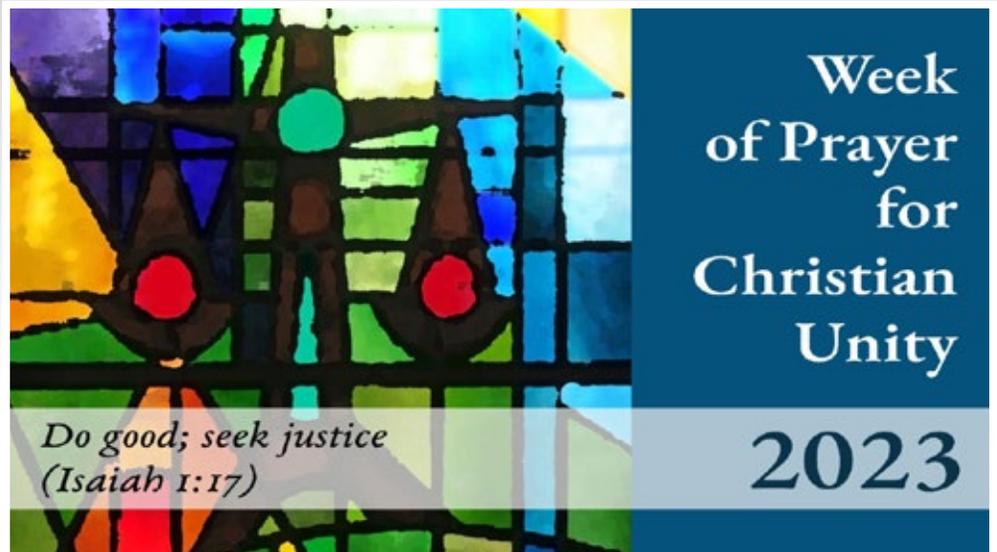
It goes on to say that in spite of our divisions, Christians are still united by virtue of our baptism, and that therefore other Christians share a real if imperfect communion with the Catholic Church. It also says that the one Church of Christ extends beyond the visible Catholic Church because outside of it — in other churches and ecclesial communities — there exist “elements and endowments which together build up and give life to the church itself.” It uses strong words to describe our state of division, saying that this “openly contradicts the will of Christ, scandalizes the world, and damages ... the proclamation of the Gospel.”

Unitatis Redintegratio also deals with the practice of ecumenism. It says clearly that everybody in the church must be involved, clergy and laity alike. Ecumenism demands the “continual reformation” of the pilgrim church as it moves through history, and the continual

personal conversion of every Catholic. In fact, the document says, the “very soul of the ecumenical movement is the change of heart and holiness of life.” This can be fostered by prayer for unity, including joint prayer with other Christians. It also talks about the need to understand each other’s traditions, the importance of ecumenical meetings and dialogues, and the value of giving common witness, especially with regard to social issues.

As a result of the Decree on Ecumenism’s encouragement of dialogue with other Christians, in the years that followed the Vatican became engaged in a series of international dialogues with various churches, including Anglicans, Lutherans, Reformed Churches, Methodists, Disciples of Christ, Eastern and Oriental Orthodox, the World Baptist Alliance, and certain groups of Pentecostals and Evangelicals. These conversations have made enormous headway in clearing away the debris of misunderstanding and caricatures of one another that grew up between us over the centuries, and some extremely important theological agreements have been reached. Perhaps the best example of this was the *1999 Joint Declaration* on Justification between the Vatican and the Lutheran World Federation. It’s hard to overemphasize the importance of this text, since it represents a big step towards resolving the central issue of the Protestant Reformation: the role of faith and good works in our salvation.

With the encouragement of the Holy See, these international dialogues have been accompanied by parallel dialogues on the national level in many parts of the world. And I think it’s fair to say that these national dialogues have been the most productive in the United States, in part because of the substantial presence of so many different Christian traditions on our soil. In fact, in some cases the dialogues established here were already up and running, sometimes for many years, before an international dialogue could be established. By 1966 theological dialogues had already been set up with five



different churches, and more have been established since then. The US Conference of Catholic Bishops is also a participant in Christian Churches Together in the USA, a new ecumenical forum that brings together churches from all the major streams of Christianity in our country.

During his 26 year pontificate, Pope St. John Paul II strongly encouraged the progress of these relationships. His most important statement about ecumenism was his 1995 encyclical, *Ut Unum Sint*. In this document he examined the progress of the dialogues, gave thanks to God for their many steps forward, and listed the many fruits of these dialogues, which he describes as a mutual exchange of gifts. Among these fruits he mentioned a renewed sense of brotherhood among Christians, a greater sense of solidarity in the service of humanity, convergence in liturgical matters and the increased possibility for sacramental sharing, which he described as “a source of joy.”

But perhaps most importantly, in this document Pope John Paul reaffirmed the contents of the Decree on Ecumenism, and even said that the promotion of unity is “the way of the Church.” Indeed, he wrote that “This unity, which the Lord has bestowed on his Church and in which he wishes to embrace all people, is not something added on, but stands at the very heart of Christ’s mission. Nor is it some secondary attribute of the community of his disciples. Rather, it belongs to the very essence of this community.” In this encyclical John Paul II wanted to say that there was no going back on Vatican II’s embrace of the ecumenical movement, and that he wanted to do his best to move things forward.

“A Prayerful Commitment for the Unity of Christians”

Continued from page 9

As Pope John Paul said, the purpose of these dialogues has been to examine the issues that keep us apart, to try to get beyond the different terminology we have used in the past to describe our faith, and when possible to find new common understandings that may underlie our apparently conflicting formulas. Much work has been done on such matters as Baptism, the Eucharist, the ordained ministry, justification, the date of Easter, the Virgin Mary, and conciliarity and primacy in the Church.

Most recently, increasing attention has been given to a common study of the role of the Pope — the Bishop of Rome — in the Church, often referred to as “the Petrine Ministry.” In *Ut Unum Sint* Pope John Paul II invited other Christians to join with him in a “patient and fraternal dialogue” in an effort to overcome the longstanding disagreements about the papacy. The goal would be to enable the Pope to carry out his ministry of preserving the unity of Christians more effectively, and allow us to give a united witness to the Gospel with a clear and consistent voice, in what Pope John Paul called “a service of love recognized by all concerned.” There have been some encouraging tentative first steps in this direction.

Pope Benedict XVI committed himself to following this same ecumenical path. In fact, on the day after his election, on 20 April 2005, the new Pope made this very strong statement about ecumenism in his address to the Cardinals in the Sistine Chapel:

With full awareness, therefore, at the beginning of his ministry in the Church of Rome which Peter bathed in his blood, Peter’s current Successor takes on as his primary task the duty to work tirelessly to rebuild the full and visible unity of all Christ’s followers. This is his ambition, his impelling duty.

Pope Francis has followed in the footsteps of his predecessors and given priority to Christian unity. But he has also seen the need to expand that commitment beyond the theological dialogues to include the practical daily experience of Christians living side by side. In so doing, the unity of Christians will be deepened and increasingly made real.

The theme of the 2023 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, prepared by an ecumenical group of Christians in Minnesota, is “Do good; seek justice (ISAIAH 1:17).” Their reflection on the theme echoes the call of Pope Francis for Christians to work together to make a better world. As the group wrote, “Let us be open to God’s presence in all our encounters with each other as we seek to be transformed, to dismantle the systems of oppression, and to heal the sins of racism. Together, let us engage in the struggle for justice in our society. We all belong to Christ.” ■

Father Roberson is Associate Director of the USCCB Secretariat for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs and serves on numerous official international and national dialogues as well as the unofficial Saint Irenaeus Joint Orthodox-Catholic Working Group.

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity began in 1908 as the Octave of Christian Unity, and focused on prayer for church unity. The dates of the week were proposed by Father Paul Wattson, co-founder of the Graymoor Franciscan Friars. He conceived of the week beginning with the Feast of the Chair of Saint Peter, which was then kept on the General Roman Calendar on 18 January — the same day that the Anglican Church kept the Feast of the Confession of Saint Peter — and concluding with the Feast of the Conversion of Saint Paul on 25 January.

Saints Peter and Paul, pray for us!



Eternal rest grant to them, O Lord.



PASSING OF MSGR. PAUL MOUAWAD

Bishop Gregory John Mansour received the sad news of the passing of Msgr. Paul Mouawad in Lebanon.

He was born in Lebanon on 29 June 1941, the son of Faris and Emilie Mouawad. Msgr. Mouawad attended Our Lady of Lebanon Maronite Seminary in Washington, DC graduated from The Catholic University of America with a bachelor's degree in theology in 1970 and from San Francisco State University in 1979 with a master's degree in public administration.

Archbishop Francis M. Zayek ordained Paul Mouawad to the priesthood on 15 August 1969. Msgr. Mouawad was a zealous priest in the Maronite Church in the United States for more than fifty-two years. He was the founder of the Maronite parishes in Portland, OR and San Francisco, CA and also served in the parishes in Providence, RI and Newtown Square, PA.

He was given the title of "Monsignor," by the Holy See, but remained "Father Boulos" for all who knew and loved him.

The Eparchy of Saint Maron, the clergy, religious and laity, will miss Monsignor Paul and extend our condolences to his family, former parishioners and friends.

May God's good and faithful servant rest in peace and joy.

PASSING OF MANSOUR YOUSSEF

Bishop Gregory John Mansour received the sad news that Mr. Mansour Youssef, the father of Father Antoun Youssef, passed away recently in Syria.

Mr Youssef is survived by his first wife, Aziza, and his present wife, Georgette, along with his children to Aziza: Sawssan, Fadi, Kamil, Elham, Father Tony, Father Jihad and Élie.

On behalf of the Eparchy of Saint Maron, clergy, religious and laity, we extend our condolences to Father Antoun and his family. May the soul of his good servant, Mansour, rest in peace.

Condolences can be sent to: Rev. Antoun Youssef,
Saint Ann Church, 1320 Price Street, Scranton, PA 18504-3336

PASSING OF FATHER LEONARD BASINOW

Bishop Gregory John Mansour received the sad news of the passing of Father Leonard Basinow, on 19 December. He was the son of the late Frank and Ethel (Thomas) Basinow. He is survived by his cousins, Barbara Harris Geagan, her husband Thomas of Chatham and their daughter Jennifer Wood and her husband Derek of Marblehead, Mr. Barry Thomas of TX, and Mrs. Tarry Rothman of Woodland Hills, CA.

Fr. Basinow graduated from St. John's Seminary College in Boston. His degree in Theology was earned at the Gregorian University in Rome. He also earned a Doctoral degree in Education with a specialization in Rehabilitation. He was licensed by the Massachusetts Division of Professional Licensure.

Fr. Basinow was ordained to the priesthood in the Maronite Church by Bishop Butros Sfeir in Rome. In his service as a priest, he ministered in Maronite and Latin Catholic Churches in the Archdiocese of Boston and in the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn.

The churches in which he served included Our Lady of the Cedars of Lebanon Church in Boston, Saint James Church, Medford, and Saint Ann Church, Gloucester. He also served in the Maronite Churches of Our Lady of Lebanon in Brooklyn, New York, and Mary, Mother of the Light Maronite Church, in West Palm Beach Florida, from where he retired from parish ministry.

A Divine Liturgy for the Faithful Departed was celebrated on 6 January at Our Lady of the Cedars of Lebanon Church by Monsignor Georges El Khalli and other priests, deacons and subdeacons.

Bishop extends his condolences, and that of all the clergy, religious and laity of the Eparchy of Saint Maron to the family, friends and faithful who were served by Father Basinow. May he rest in peace.

Why the Supposed Conflict between Science and Religion Is Tragic Nonsense

by Bishop Robert Barron

Just last week, I had the joy of speaking at Youth Day at the Los Angeles Religious Education Congress. My audience was about four hundred high school students from around the country, and my topic, at the request of the organizers of the congress, was the relationship between religion and science. They knew, as I have been arguing for years, that a major reason that many young people are disaffiliating from our churches is the supposed conflict between science and the faith. I told my young audience that this “war” is in fact a fantasy, an illusion, the fruit of a tragic misunderstanding. And I attempted to show this by looking at four themes, which I will briefly summarize in this article.

First, in a very real sense, the modern physical sciences *came from religion*. The great founders of science — Kepler, Copernicus, Galileo, Newton, Descartes, etc. — were, without exception, trained in ecclesially sponsored schools and universities. It was under the aegis of the church that they took in their physics, their astronomy, and their mathematics. More specifically, they learned in those institutions two essentially theological truths necessary for the emergence of the experimental sciences — namely, that the universe is not God and that the universe, in every nook and

cranny, is marked by intelligibility. If nature were divine — as indeed it is considered to be in many religions, philosophies, and mysticisms — then it could never be an apt subject for observation, analysis, and experimentation. And if nature were simply chaotic, void of form, it would never yield up the harmonies and patterned intelligibilities that scientists readily seek. When these two truths, which are both a function of the doctrine of creation, obtain, the sciences can get underway.

Second, when science and theology are properly understood, they are not in conflict, since they are not competing for primacy on the same playing field, like opposing football teams. Utilizing the scientific method, the physical sciences deal with events, objects, dynamics, and relationships within the empirically verifiable order. Theology, employing an entirely different method, deals with God and the things of God — and God is not an object in the world, not a reality circumscribed within the context of nature. As Thomas Aquinas put it, God is not *ens summum* (highest being), but rather *ipsum esse* (the act of being as such) — which is to say, God is not a being among beings, but instead the reason why there is an empirically observable universe *at all*. In this way, he



ST. ALBERT THE GREAT

Albertus Magnus, also known as Albert the Great, was a scholar, philosopher, bishop, and doctor of the Church, as well as the teacher of St. Thomas Aquinas. His extensive writings, occupying more than forty volumes, touch the whole of theology and scripture, as well as almost every branch of human knowledge in the Middle Ages, such as logic, natural science, mathematics, astronomy, ethics, and metaphysics. (He discovered the element arsenic!) In 1931, he was canonized by Pope Pius XI and declared the patron saint of the natural sciences, a fitting role considering his tremendous influence in the field.

is like the author of a richly complex novel. Charles Dickens never appears as a character in any of his sprawling narratives, yet he is the reason why any of those characters exist at all. Accordingly, the sciences, as such, can never adjudicate the question of God's existence nor speak of his activity or attributes. Another type of rationality — not in competition with scientific rationality — is required for the determination of those matters.

And this brings me to my third point: *scientism* is not science. Sadly rampant today, especially among the young, scientism is the reduction of all knowledge to the scientific form of knowledge. The undeniable success of the physical sciences and the extraordinary usefulness of the technologies to which they have given rise have produced in the minds of many this conviction, but it represents a tragic impoverishment. A chemist might be able to tell us the chemical makeup of the paints that Michelangelo used on the Sistine Ceiling, but he couldn't, qua scientist, tell us a thing about what makes that work of art so beautiful. A geologist might be able to tell us the stratification of the earth below the city of Chicago, but he could never, again qua scientist, tell us whether that city is being justly or unjustly governed. There isn't a trace of the scientific method in *Romeo and Juliet*, but who would be so stupid as to assert that that play tells us nothing true about the nature of love. In a similar way, the great texts of the Bible and the theological tradition are not "scientific," but they nevertheless speak the profoundest truths about God, creation, sin, redemption, grace, etc. Both the cause and effect of scientism, sadly, is the attenuation of the liberal arts in our institutions of higher education. Rather than appreciating literature, history, philosophy, and religion as conduits of objective truth, many today relegate these to the arena of subjective feeling or subject them to withering ideological criticism.

My fourth and final point is this: Galileo is one paragraph in one chapter of a very long book. The great astronomer is often invoked as the patron saint of heroic scientists struggling to free themselves from the obscurantism and irrationality of religion. The censorship of his books by the Church, and the great scientist's virtual imprisonment at the behest of the pope, is taken as the dark paradigm of the Church/science relationship. Obviously, the Galileo episode was hardly the Church's finest moment, and in point of fact,

John Paul II, expressing real contrition, explicitly apologized for it. But to use it as *the* lens for viewing the play between faith and science is crucially inadequate. There have been, from the earliest days of the modern sciences, thousands of deeply religious people involved in scientific research and investigation. To name just a handful: Copernicus, revolutionary cosmologist and a third order Dominican; Nicholas Steno, the father of geology and a bishop of the Church; Louis Pasteur, one of the founders of microbiology and a devout Catholic layman; Gregor Mendel, the father of modern genetics and an Augustinian friar; Georges Lemaître, formulator of the Big Bang theory of cosmic origins and a Catholic priest; Mary Kenneth Keller, the first woman in the United States to receive a doctorate in computer science and a Catholic religious sister. I believe it is fair to say that all of these figures understood the fundamental points that I have laid out in this article and therefore saw that they could be utterly devoted to both their science and their faith.

In conclusion, I might especially urge Catholic scientists today — researchers, physicians, physicists, astronomers, chemists, etc. — to talk to young people about this issue. Tell them why the supposed warfare between religion and science is in fact a delusion, and even more importantly, show them how you have reconciled them in your own life. We simply cannot allow this silly justification for disaffiliation to stand. ■



Bishop Robert Barron is the founder of Word on Fire Catholic Ministries and bishop of the Diocese of Winona-Rochester in Minnesota. He is also the host of CATHOLICISM, a groundbreaking, award-winning documentary about the Catholic Faith, which aired on PBS. Bishop Barron is a #1 Amazon bestselling author and has published numerous books, essays, and articles on theology and the spiritual life. He is a religion correspondent for NBC and has also appeared on FOX News, CNN, and EWTN. Bishop Barron's website, WordOnFire.org, reaches millions of people each year, and he is one of the most-followed Catholics on social media. His regular YouTube videos have been viewed over 90 million times. Bishop Barron's pioneering work in evangelizing through the new media led Francis Cardinal George to describe him as "one of the Church's best messengers." He has keynoted many conferences and events all over the world, including the 2016 World Youth Day in Kraków, Poland, as well as the 2015 World Meeting of Families in Philadelphia, which marked Pope Francis' historic visit to the United States.

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Three Massabki Brothers to be Named Saints

Maronite Patriarch Bechara al-Rai announced that Pope Francis has approved the decree proclaiming the brothers Francis, Abdel-Mooti and Raphael Massabki “martyrs of the faith.”

The three men, who died during the infamous Damascus massacres of 1860, will be counted among the saints of the universal Church, regardless of any miracle performed at their intercession because they are Christina martyrs.

“This is our Christmas present,” said the head of the Maronite Church, speaking of the honor bestowed upon his community through them. The date of the canonization ceremony, which is normally celebrated in Rome, has not yet been set.

The Patriarch added that Archbishop Yohanna Rafic Al-Warsha will follow up on the matter before the Dicastery for the Causes of Saints.

On 10 July the Maronite Church celebrates the feast of the three Massabki Martyrs, brothers of a noble Christian family in Damascus in the nineteenth century. They were known for their piety, generosity, and Christian values.

The Massabki brothers were 3 of 6 children, Francis, Abdel Mooti, Raphael, (the three martyrs) Abdullah (who later becomes a priest), Mariam and Martha.

They lived in a time of great persecution of Christians. There was much political and religious tension for Maronites and other Christians in both Damascus and Mount Lebanon.

On 9 July 1860 a fire broke out through the Christian area of Damascus. Many Maronite families took refuge in a Franciscan monastery along with the Massabki brothers and the Superior, Father Emmanuel.

Father Emmanuel closed the Monastery and called everyone to the church where they prayed, went to confession, and received Holy Communion. While everyone took refuge on the roof, Francis one of the Massabki brothers remained kneeling at the feet of an image of the Mother of God. Moments later the church was attacked, the Father Superior was captured and told the attackers that he would lead them to the treasure inside the church. He proceeded to the altar, where he lit the candles and took out the Eucharist from the tabernacle. Father Emmanuel was then put to death.

The attackers then noticed Francis kneeling in prayer and recognized him. They told him that the Sheikh had sent them to save him and his family from death on the condition that he deny his faith and convert. Francis answered them, “Sheikh Abdullah can take my money, he can also take my life; but my faith no

one can make me deny. I am a Christian and in the faith of Christ, I will die.” Francis was then put to death.

The attackers then confronted Abdel Mooti in the convent yard and also asked him to renounce his faith to escape death; He refused and was also martyred.

Raphael, who was hiding inside the convent was offered the same as his brothers, but also refused and was also martyred. According to witnesses, the three Massabki brothers were buried in the convent along with the eight martyr priests and others who had sought refuge there.

On 7 October 1926 Pope Pius XI proclaimed the beatification of the three brothers. The Massabki brothers are great role models for Maronite families. Although they were rather wealthy, they remained faithful and humble. We give thanks to Almighty God, that these great Maronites will soon be raised to the altars of the Church as Martyr Saints. We ask for their

intercession to help us live our lives as honest Christians, and we pray for all those who are being persecuted around the world. May their prayers be a fortress for us. Amen. ■



Chorbishop Joseph F. Kaddo Celebrates Golden Jubilee of Priesthood *by Brandon Shulleeta*

 In order to commemorate Chorbishop Joseph Kaddo's recent 50th anniversary of priesthood, many showed up for a celebration at St. Anthony of the Desert in Fall River, Massachusetts, where he most recently served as the pastor for fifteen years.

Among them were recent parishioners and others from long ago, including men who had been his altar boys when Chorbishop Kaddo was the pastor of Our Lady of Lebanon in Waterbury, Connecticut.

For a priest who has dedicated his life to spreading the word of God and sees his parishioners as family, it was a touching moment for him.

"I was so moved by that," said Chorbishop Kaddo, 78, who retired in 2018 due to health struggles. "The parishioners become your family," he said. "You live with them in the parish. You laugh with them. You cry with them. You walk with them. You seek to deepen your faith together with them."

Over five decades, Chorbishop Kaddo's service to the Catholic Church has been vast.

He grew up going to Catholic schools in Troy, New York, where his parents were devout Maronites. From an early age, he planned to become a priest. But when his mother passed away unexpectedly, he

decided to delay seminary school, so that he could be home with his father and grandmother.

From ages 18 to 21, he worked at Marine Midland Bank in Northern New York, becoming the head teller and then working his way up to oversee bookkeeping. In addition to banking, on nights and vacation days, he worked at a grocery store owned by family friends, as well as a market owned by a cousin.

It was a life of hard work, something he was accustomed to, having worked at his father's gas station in his youth. While he enjoyed being a banker, he said, "something was missing."

When he was 21, he was set to earn a promotion at the bank but told his boss that he would enter seminary instead. And just like with his early career, his path to priesthood advanced quickly. He graduated from Catholic University of America in 1969 and then completed a three-year master's program in theology at the Washington Theological Coalition.

He was ordained a priest in 1972, and the next year, he became the founding priest of Our Lady of Lebanon Church in Coral Way, Miami. It was the first Maronite parish in Florida.

“The parishioners become your family... You live with them in the parish. You laugh with them. You cry with them. You walk with them. You seek to deepen your faith together with them.”



After three years in Miami, he started Our Lady of Lebanon Church in Waterbury, Connecticut, where he was the pastor for 22 years, from 1975 to 1997. At times, he was simultaneously the pastor at Saint Maron Church, 20 miles away in Torrington, Connecticut.

Over the years, he held numerous positions in the Church, including protopresbyter of the Northern Region of the Eparchy, executive director of the presbyteral council, president of the Priest Senate, tribunal official, vicar general, vicar for priests, chancellor, and chaplain to the Order of St. Sharbel, among others. “I was all over the place,” he said.

Reflecting on his 50 years as a priest, Chorbishop Kaddo said that a key to being a good priest, “first

and foremost, is a good prayer life.” “When the parishioners see how involved a priest is with them and his prayer life, they respond very, very well,” he said.

Chorbishop Kaddo also emphasized the importance of being genuine. “Be yourself. God created you. And you be yourself, and be nothing else,” he said. While this is true, most of his brother priests would immediately use words such as “considerate” and “supportive” to describe him. ■

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



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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,
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Ordination

Ordination to the Priesthood

On 19 November St. Michael the Archangel Church in Fayetteville, NC hosted the ordination to the priesthood of Deacon Chuck Van Heusen. The Divine Liturgy and reception were hosted at a local Latin parish, St. Ann's, to better accommodate the large number of attendees.

Fr. Chuck was ordained to the diaconate in February 2020 after completing the diaconate formation program in the Diocese of Raleigh. He continued his priestly formation at Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral in Brooklyn, NY and St. Rafka Church in Greer, SC.



The Divine Liturgy and Ordination were celebrated by Bishop Gregory John Mansour. Concelebrating with the Bishop were many priests and deacons of the Eparchy of St. Maron and the Roman Catholic Diocese of Raleigh, including Fr. Dominique Hanna, Fr. Bartholomew Leon, Fr. Paul Damien, Fr. Jack Morrison, Fr. Robert Farah, Fr. Ian Van Heusen, Monsignor Jerry Lewis, Fr. Mike Coveyou, Subdeacon Norbert Vogel, Deacon Joe Sanfilippo, and Subdeacon Vincent Michael. Beautiful music was provided by St. Michael's choir joined by members of the St. Ann's Filipino community and St. Rafka's and led by Tresa Van Heusen, Fr. Chuck and Marie's

daughter. The Van Heusen grandsons and boys from St. Michael Church served. In a particularly beautiful moment of the Liturgy, Fr. Ian Van Heusen, Fr. Chuck's son and a priest in the Diocese of Raleigh, led his father in procession with the veiled chalice on his head. The following day, Fr. Chuck celebrated his first Divine Liturgy at St. Michael. The ordination proved a time of great celebration and grace for the parish community.

Father Chuck and his wife Marie are not strangers to service after a career in the US Army retiring as a colonel and have been longtime active parishioners of St. Michael the Archangel in Fayetteville ministering to local and military families. The couple has three grown children and five grandchildren.

Fr. Chuck will serve as parochial vicar at the Cathedral of Our Lady of Lebanon in Brooklyn, NY. ■



“More Like a Church Family”

St. Louis Gonzaga Church | Utica, New York *by Chet Wade*

“Home” and “family” are two words that come up quickly when people talk of St. Louis Gonzaga Church in Utica, New York. It doesn’t matter whether they are new to the community or have lived there for their whole lives.

“I arrived on a Saturday, woke up on Sunday morning and I felt like — and this is no exaggeration — like I had been here 100 years,” said Father Boutros El Hachem, one of the newer members who happens to be the Pastor. He came from Lebanon in 2019 to serve as parish administrator and then was appointed as pastor in 2021. “I feel I am home. I feel that I am welcomed. You feel you are family here.”

The same goes for Betty Karrat, a life-long parishioner who was baptized and married in the church.

“I feel it’s more like a church family,” Karrat said. “It’s that everyone is there for each other. It’s just a feeling of coming home.”

Father Boutros and Karrat credit the willingness of parishioners for the welcoming and warm atmosphere. They not only attend liturgy together but also help with the many parish activities and welcome newcomers. Among the biggest annual events are the Taste of

Lebanon in July, summer golf outing, Festival of Baskets in November, and the Lebanese cookie sale in December.

The Festival of Baskets is one of the largest such events in the Utica area. Karrat, who is chair of the event, said more than 300 gift baskets were auctioned this year as a fund-raiser for the church.

“It’s not just one person,” Karrat said in highlighting the success of the many events. “It’s everyone. Everyone participating and enjoying being together to do what they can to help our church.”

Utica is a tight-knit community of 65,000 people in the Mohawk Valley of central New York, about 200 miles north of New York City. The first Maronites arrived there from Lebanon by 1885. A few years later, the first regular Maronite liturgies were being celebrated in the city’s St. John’s Roman Catholic Church.

St. Louis Gonzaga dedicated its own church in 1910 at Albany and Elizabeth streets. It was named to honor Father Louis Lotaif, who was pastor and a driving force in the founding of the parish. By the 1930s, the parish had outgrown the building and it commissioned the





construction of a new church. That building, located on Rutger Street, was dedicated in 1936 and still serves as the parish's home. Over the years, the church has been renovated, side altars were added, and a rectory was built.

Father Boutros said that while the parish celebrates its Lebanese heritage, it is very much American. The vast majority of the parishioners were born in the Utica area. There have been relatively few immigrants from Lebanon or elsewhere in the region in recent years.

St. Louis Gonzaga has about 250 active families and about 480 who are registered with the church. The community has become a mixture of families of longtime members, those who "marry into" the church, and others attracted by the Maronite faith. It has become what Father Boutros calls "like a small village in the United States but in a city of thousands."

"It's a Lebanese-American parish," he said. "For example, one woman who is Lebanese is married to a great guy who is Italian and there is another guy who is Polish who is married to a woman who is Lebanese. Everybody's welcome at St. Louis Gonzaga."

James Salamy, a fourth-generation member of the church, said that while the ties many church members have to Lebanon may be becoming more distant, they remain united in their Maronite faith. They are eager to share their faith and cultural traditions as well as be important contributors to the community.

"It's a place where people are still cognizant of where they are from, but they are also looking ahead to the future," Salamy said.

Karrat agreed. She noted comments from one former parishioner who has returned recently as being typical.

"She was just in awe of how active everyone in our church is," Karrat said. "We are always looking for ways to bring the church together."

That sense of bringing the church together helped Father Boutros when he arrived from Lebanon. But he also was used to adjusting to change.

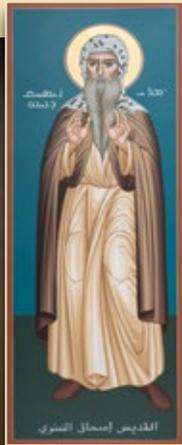
Assisting Father Boutros are Deacons Paul Salamy and Peter Hobaica. The church also has many active organizations. They include the pastoral council, finance committee, Daughters of Mary, Holy Name Society, St. Mary's Guild, St. Joseph's Society, Maronite Young Adults and Maronite Youth Organization.

Church members make annual pilgrimages to the Our Lady of Lebanon Shrine in North Jackson, Ohio, and Our Lady of Lebanon Maronite Cathedral in New York City for the consecration of the Holy Myron and Holy Oil used in the eparchy during the year.

Karrat said Father Boutros has been helping the church not only preserve its traditions but also add new ones. On the Saturday before Christmas this year, he organized a pre-liturgy concert followed by a shared-dish dinner.

"Everyone loved it," she said. "It was a beautiful evening and everyone was saying how nice it was and that it will be a new tradition." ■

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.



We are pleased to announce the publication of *Introduction to Syriac Spirituality: A Thematic Approach*, by the well-known Syriac scholar Chorbishop Seely Beggiani. The work is a clear, comprehensive examination of the themes and insights of major Syriac writers from the fourth to eighth centuries. This book offers a synthesis of the works of these writers according to the principal themes found in their body of work, and presents an orderly presentation of the progression of Syriac spirituality during this time period. The first chapter also provides a theological context for better understanding the approach of these writers. In addition to Syriac writers, the teachings of Evagrius of Pontus and Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite are included, as they had a significant influence on many of the Syriac writers cited. We invite you to delve into the rich spiritual tradition of the Syriac writers with *Introduction to Syriac Spirituality: A Thematic Approach*.

The book can be ordered from SaintMaronPublications.org or Amazon.

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Appointment of Melkite Bishop François Beyrouti *by TMV Staff*

“For many years!” This was the chant of the clergy and faithful at the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Annunciation in West Roxbury, Massachusetts when the newly-ordained Bishop François Beyrouti was installed as Eparch of Newton for the Melkite Faithful in the United States.

Bishop François was born on 3 July 1971, in Hadeth-Beirut, Lebanon. His family immigrated to Canada in 1976 and where the future bishop was raised in North Vancouver, British Columbia. He studied at the Seminary of Christ the King in Mission, British Columbia (1989-1993) and received a Bachelor’s degree with concentrations in history, English and philosophy; and a baccalaureate in theology at Sheptytsky Institute of Eastern Christian Studies, Ontario (1996). He also received a Master’s degree in theology (1997), a licentiate in theology (1998), and a doctorate in theology (2012) from Saint Paul University. He was ordained to the priesthood on 4 October 1998.

As a priest, Bishop Beyrouti served as associate pastor at Saints Peter and Paul Melkite Catholic Church in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada

(1998-2010). From 1998-2010, he was a member of the College of Consultors for the Eparchy of Saint Sauveur (Montreal) for the Melkite Catholics in Canada, and from 2004-2010, he was vocations director for the Eparchy of



Saint Sauveur. He has been pastor at Holy Cross Melkite Catholic Church in Placentia, California since 2012. He has also served as a member of the Eparchy of Newton’s presbyteral council, and as president of the Eastern Catholic Pastoral Association. Bishop François speaks English, French, German, and Arabic.

The Melkite Eparchy of Newton ministers to 21,691 Melkite Greek Catholics in the United States.

Bishop Gregory and Bishop Elias congratulate Bishop François as he begins his ministry of Chief Shepherd for the Melkites in the United States. ■



Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon MYA

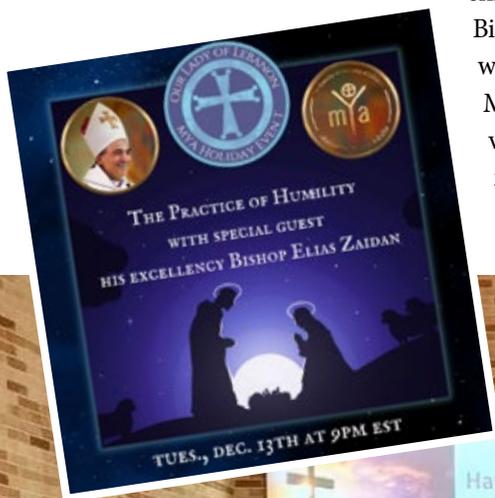
Virtual Talk on Humility *by Johnny Azzi*

During this recent Christmas season, our Maronite Young Adults in the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon gathered to celebrate our Lord's birth and to better understand the meaning of Christmas. The young adults hosted a Zoom call with Bishop Elias Zaidan to talk about the virtue of Humility and what it truly means to be a follower of Christ preparing to celebrate the Lord's coming. The presentation was enriching and rewarding.

Bishop Zaidan shared how we can become humbler Maronites by allowing the virtue of humility to come naturally to us.

Randy Chenault, of St. Anthony of Padua Church in Cincinnati OH, participated and wrote the following reflection on the presentation, "most powerful part for me was when he said that as Christians, we don't just minister to people with our words, but by being a *living example* of how Christ wants us to live. When people see us, they should see *Jesus through us*. So, in reality, we have the ability to minister to people directly and indirectly with humility in this lost world."

Young adults across the Eparchy also spent this holiday season hosting local and regional MYA events, rekindling connections with peers they had lost touch with during the pandemic, and also





making new friends along the way. The Mid-West MYA region had a Fall Meetup in September that was a big success with over 80 attendees. The West also hosted a regional potluck at a local park, with over 50 attendees. Many of the young adults kept in touch with friends they made at several different events over the year as well, like last year's regional conferences, attending local MYA dinners, Friendsgiving dinners, and social gatherings. They are looking forward to more in-person events and conferences this year.

The Eparchial MYA board of Our Lady of Lebanon would like to present our newest board members as

of August 2022! Formation Committee members: Leah Bostany and Eliana Francis. Our Social Media Committee is happy to have Paul Ghafari on board. The Expansion Committee welcomes Mireille Nasr and Mark Bsaibes as West Regional Coordinators, and our first-ever Mid-America Regional Coordinator, Karen Sayegh. Our new board heads into 2023 ignited with the Holy Spirit. In the midst of our preparation for upcoming spiritual events and social gatherings, we kindly ask for you to keep our board members and initiative's success in your prayers. Please stay tuned via our website www.ololmya.org and be sure to follow our Instagram @ololmya for updates! ■

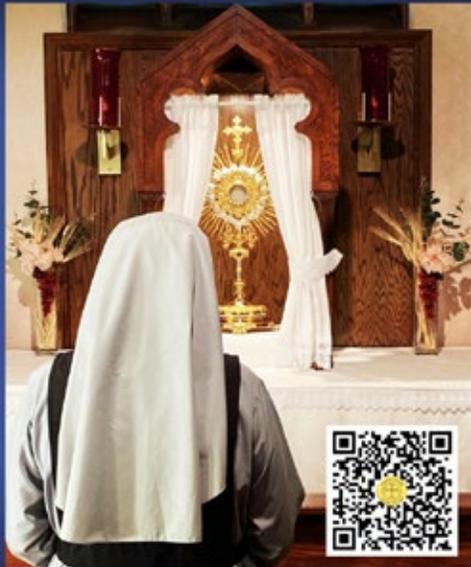
"TASTE AND SEE THE GOODNESS OF THE LORD." -- PSALM 34:9

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Regional MYO Christmas Gathering



On 10 December 2022, the MYO groups from Cleveland, Akron, and Youngstown, Ohio, and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania gathered for a youth Christmas party at St. Maron Church in Youngstown. The party was hosted by pastor Fr. Tony Massad and the St. Maron Youngstown MYO advisors.

Many of the youth joined the Saturday evening liturgy at the parish and the party began right after with food, fun, dancing, and friendship. MYO members were also asked to bring hats, gloves and a \$5 donation to be given to those in need through a local charitable organization.

Events like this give our youth a chance to celebrate their friendships, heritage, and faith. The MYO Christmas party was a great opportunity for our youth to connect and keep their friendships strong as we all look forward to the regional youth retreat in February.

May God continue to bless our youth, our advisors, and the parents who help to support this great program and the future of our church. ■



SAVE THE DATE!

58th Annual NAM National Convention, July 5 – 9, 2023

The 58th Annual National Apostolate of Maronites (NAM) National Convention will be held at the Rhode Island Convention Center in Providence, Rhode Island from July 5 – 9, 2023. Please join our host parish, St. Anthony of the Desert Maronite Catholic Church of Fall River, Massachusetts, to experience the theme of this year's convention: "Eucharistic Amazement – The Maronite Way".

We look forward to hosting our attendees and offering an exceptional convention experience! Enjoy spiritual engagement, liturgies, educational workshops for all ages, sing-a-longs, meeting old friends and even making new acquaintances.

Excursions exploring Southern New England's many attractions include ocean views and mansion tours in beautiful Newport, Rhode Island, Downtown Providence revitalization, excellent shopping and dining opportunities, Roger Williams Park Zoo with botanical gardens and over 150 animals from around the world, and many other attractions within walking distance from the hotels.

The silent auction will offer wonderful items for attendees to bid on and the 2023 Convention Raffle has four cash prizes totaling \$25,000.

We have added an additional meal on Thursday night along with talented local individuals to entertain you. And, in keeping with tradition, we will have dinner and Lebanese entertainment on both Friday night and at Saturday night's Grand Banquet.

Registration information will be available on the NAM website: www.namnews.org. Take a sneak peek at what the convention has to offer on our microsite: www.goprovidence.com/nam. We also encourage you to connect with us on both the NAM and St. Anthony of the Desert Maronite Catholic Church Facebook pages.

We look forward to seeing you in July 2023 and creating new NAM memories together!

Sincerely,

Monsignor James A. Root
Pastor ~ St. Anthony of the Desert Maronite Catholic Church

Rose Sahyoun
Executive Director ~ National Apostolate of Maronites

Joe & Lila Camara
NAM Convention Chairpersons

Parish News

CLINTON TOWNSHIP, MICHIGAN

Friendsgiving

On Friday, 18 November, the MYO of St. Sharbel Church in Clinton Twp., Michigan, joined together for a beautiful Friendsgiving celebration. They shared a delicious potluck and enjoyed each other's fellowship which included playing musical chairs and other ice breaking games. The MYO

appreciates all the donors, MYO advisors, and all that contributed to making this event a success. May our Youth continue to gather in the spirit of love and friendship. ■



NORMAN, OKLAHOMA

Food and Heritage Festival

After a two-year hiatus due to the pandemic, the Lebanese Food and Heritage Festival at Our Lady of Lebanon Church in Norman, OK was back with our 10th Annual Festival. We celebrated it with music, dancing and lots of food. Led by our energetic priest, Fr. Nabil Mouannes, parishioners of all ages volunteered from open to close to serve food, entertain, and celebrate our culture. The menu included traditional Lebanese dishes. Kids of all ages were kept busy with a bounce house, obstacle course and face painting. The main attraction was the dancing which featured a local dance troupe, Marjan and the Mystical Hips, a Mexican dance troupe called Danza de Matachines de San Jose and the dabke, which was performed by our parishioners and festival goers, who were invited to learn the basic steps. We hope to see you all there next year! ■



NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE

Visit of Bishop Elias Zaidan and Bishop Mark Spalding

The newly-established Maronite community of St. Sharbel in Nashville, TN celebrated a special Christmas season by welcoming Bishop Elias Zaidan, Bishop Mark Spalding of Nashville, and Father Jean-Maroun Helou.

It was a time of grace and sharing of faith, fellowship, joy, and gratitude for this new community. After the lamb banquet, everyone appreciated a banquet of Lebanese food. This young faith community was blessed by with Bishops Elias and Mark Spalding, bishop of Nashville, as they establish a permanent Maronite Catholic presence the beautiful city of Nashville. ■



FAYETTEVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA

Fall Events

On 30 October, the children of St. Michael the Archangel Church in Fayetteville, NC celebrated the Feast of All Saints by dressing as their favorite saints including: Saints Andrew, Agnes, Rita, Mary, and Raphael. The children “saints” processed through the church aisles at the beginning and end of the Liturgy. Following liturgy, the Religious Education Instructors sponsored a party for everyone in the parish to enjoy.

On 5-6 November, the Ladies Guild held a very successful “Good Stuff” Yard Sale. High quality items were donated by the parishioners and community members to support the Ladies Guild projects. Contributors filled the church social hall with generous donations for purchase. The Guild used the money from this sale to benefit many individuals and groups such as religious programs for the children, special celebrations, assisting with funerals and mercy meals, helping new mothers with gifts and meals, charity work for the homeless. ■



Parish News

HOUSTON, TEXAS

The Most Wonderful Time of the Year



It really is the most wonderful time of the year at Our Lady of the Cedars in Houston, TX! With tradition, community, and of course we can never forget Santa Claus! Our amazing MYKids program led by Vera Kmeid was able to bring both spirituality and our very rich culture to life in the hearts of many of our children. On 3 December, the day before the feast of St. Barbara, our children were able to learn the origins of this feast day. Fr. Edward taught them why this day was so important and they learned the traditional Lebanese Saint Barbara song. They concluded their feast day celebration by planting their wheat to watch it grow until Christmas next to their nativity scenes at home. Of course, no St. Barbara celebration can happen without eating the traditional wheat as well! What a better gift to give our children a taste of their heritage!

Our parish has always been blessed with an abundance of great people working together for the good of the church. Our wonderful priests hosted the Parish Council, Deacons, and office staff dinner on 6 December to show their appreciation and support for the work and fellowship of our church organizations. Frs. Milad and Edward opened their home to provide a wonderful meal with open hearts and festive vibes. We are so very thankful to be able to celebrate the Christmas season together as one family!

Finally, Santa came to town this year bringing gifts for all of our children! After Liturgy on 11 December Santa was waiting as cookies and hot chocolate were served by the Parish Council. With the joy of the season, we were also able to celebrate Fr. Milad's birthday! It is always a beautiful time to see all our children and even the adults enjoying this joyous time of year! God bless our great community this Christmas and always! ■

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WILLIAMSVILLE, NEW YORK

Fall Season

On Friday, 21 October, the parishioners of St. John Maron Church in Williamsville, New York, held a party for the children to celebrate the Fall Season. After a three-year hiatus from holiday parties due to the pandemic, the parish community was eager to spend quality time together. The children dressed in Halloween costumes, and everyone enjoyed a fun-filled night of games and prizes, dancing, music, and eating delicious treats sponsored by the parents of the parish. The congregation and community members strive to create a strong bond with the youth to show them the importance of being close to God and the Church. ■



UNIONTOWN, PENNSYLVANIA

Fall & Winter Activities

On 28 October 2022, the MCF Religious Education students at St. George Church in Uniontown, PA enjoyed a “spooktacular” Halloween “Trunk or Treat” and party. The children, dressed in colorful costumes, were excited to receive delicious foods, treats, candy bags, and prizes. The parents and children roasted marshmallows at the bonfire, and everyone went home with a field pumpkin.

The St. George Altar & Rosary Society celebrated a Memorial Liturgy on 13 November, remembering and honoring the deceased members of the Society for their spiritual and cultural contributions to the church. The Society members recited the rosary, announced the names of their deceased loved ones, and offered flowers in their memories.

On 20 November, St. George members prepared over 200 Thanksgiving dinners in the parish hall for the less fortunate and for any church or community member that wished to share a meal together. Also, church volunteers held their annual Food Drive for the less fortunate in the community. The Society of St. Vincent de Paul distributed the donations to the needy.

The Ladies Guild and Altar & Rosary Society held their annual Christmas celebration on 4 December in the parish hall. The ladies enjoyed a delicious meal, won prizes, and exchanged gifts. These dedicated women, affectionately referred to as “the backbone of the church,” were recognized for their efforts and hard work in serving God and the parish.

During December, St. George parishioners collected “Toys for Tots” donations for the needy children in the area. The Ladies Guild sponsored a breakfast and Christmas party for the MCF youth. Santa Claus made a surprise visit, and the children received an abundance of gifts and treats. Finally, the faithful of St. George honored their living and deceased loved ones by donating Christmas poinsettias that adorned the church. ■



GLEN ALLEN, VA

Good People Doing Good Works



Parishioners of Saint Anthony Church in Glen Allen, VA know that charity begins at home—but are also aware that charity does not stop there.

During the Year of Saint Joseph, we established the Society of Saint Joseph the Provider, to offer assistance wherever or in whatever way it is needed. Every month a small group under the direction of Kathy Hobbie serves dinner at the Salvation Army. It is an opportunity of service, but also a learning opportunity for our young people.

Following the example of Connie Yesbeck, parishioners prepare a Benefit Dinner to help needy children in Lebanon. This year the need was never so great. We take pride that more than \$12,000 was collected to be sent to where the need is the greatest. On a separate note, another parishioner, always concerned that he is not doing enough, gave a check for \$10,000 to support the soup kitchens in Lebanon.

We have the Christmas star program, directed by Theresa Shibley, in which families take a star from a tree with Christmas requests, and then bring back beautiful gifts for needy families.

We realize that we did not change the world, but we have managed to brighten a few corners of it. ■

Parish News

MIAMI, FLORIDA

A Busy Christmas Season

On 4-6 November 2022, Our Lady of Lebanon Maronite Church in Miami, FL welcomed Bishop Gregory John Mansour. Throughout his stay, Bishop Gregory concelebrated liturgy with Fr. Manuel Rahmeh, Fr. Michael Charchaflian, Fr. Jorge Perales, and Subdeacon Joe Lahoud in four languages: English, Arabic, French, and Spanish. Bishop Gregory met with the church staff and organizations to discuss new developments and plans for the upcoming year. Knowing that Bishop Gregory liked the Spanish song, "Guantanamera," arrangements were made for a Mariachi Band to play several tunes during lunch prepared by the Ladies Guild.

There were many December festivities at Our Lady of Lebanon Church. On 5 December, the Ladies Sodality enjoyed a wonderful lunch, socializing, and dancing at the Maroosh Middle Eastern Restaurant in

Coral Gables. In the early afternoon of 10 December, the MYO met in the church hall to make pizzas, cupcakes and decorate bulletin boards with holiday crosses, flowers, and hearts. Santa made an exciting appearance with treats and gifts for everyone. In the evening, relaxing with friends, the MYA had a Barbecue at the fire pit on church grounds.

On 11 December, church sponsors set up a Christmas Village equipped with five different stations of games, activities, and a bouncy house for the young children. The children's choir performed in a Christmas concert for the congregation and residents in Miami. As a concert surprise, adult parishioners, accompanied by the children, sang songs in English, Arabic, French, Spanish, Syriac, Greek, and German to accommodate the various ethnic groups. ■



LEWISVILLE, TEXAS

Men's Retreat

Our Lady of Lebanon Church in Lewisville, TX recently held its first men's retreat from 10-13 November under the patronage of St. Joseph with the theme "Do not be afraid" (Matthew 1:20). Forty-five men spent the days together in prayer and friendship sharing their thoughts on how to become better men, husbands, fathers, and most importantly, better disciples of our Lord. Discussions included examples of how a disciple should not be afraid to entrust his life entirely to Jesus or to go deeper in his prayer life.

The retreat focused not only on personal spiritual growth, but also on how we can better serve our families and the wider parish community. In a busy world filled with noise and distraction, the retreat provided a place to be renewed in the Holy Spirit and commit oneself more deeply to our faith. The men were grateful for the time together and fellowship, "how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell together as one" (Psalm 133:1). ■



Parish News

WILKES-BARRE, PENNSYLVANIA

Feast of All Saints

On Sunday, 30 October, the Maronite Religious Education and Maronite Youth Organization of St. Anthony - St. George Church in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, celebrated All Saints Day. The religious education teachers taught the children about the lives of many saints and how they followed the word of the Lord. In honor of the feast, each child chose a saint and dressed in clothing similar to that saint. The saints represented were the following: St. Rita, St. Francis, the

Virgin Mary, St. Maron, St. John the Evangelist, St. Raphael, St. Martin, St. Sharbel, St. Faustina, St. Therese of Infant Jesus, St. Michael, St. George, St. Teresa of Avila, St. Rafka, St. Anthony the Great, St. Peter, St. Maria Goretti, and St. Cecelia. Following Divine Liturgy, the children processed through the church in costume as their program director and catechists introduced them and read a brief account of the lives of their respective saints. ■



LAWRENCE,
MASSACHUSETTS
Knights of Mary

The “Knights of Mary” Children’s Religious Group and their advisors at St. Anthony Church in Lawrence, MA were excited to begin their program again this year. On Saturday, 1 October 2022, the parish youth and community members (ages 5-13) attended Divine Liturgy followed by a religious and ethnic program to learn about their Maronite Faith, traditions, customs, and Lebanese culture. Over 100 youth meet twice each month during the school year and summer Bible camp to complete many activities and projects such as: sending Easter, Thanksgiving, and Christmas cards to the elderly to brighten their days. The Knights of Mary also participate in Maronite religious discussions, crafts, games, music, and culinary activities to help gain knowledge of their Maronite heritage and Lebanese roots. ■



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Parish News

EASTON, PENNSYLVANIA

Saint Sharbel Shrine

On 15 October 2022, Fr. Youssef Keikati, the St. Theresa Sodality, and the Holy Name Society of Our Lady of Lebanon Church in Easton, PA sponsored a bus trip to the St. Sharbel Shrine at the National Grotto of Our Lady of Lourdes in Emmitsburg, Maryland. The pilgrimage was to commemorate the fifth anniversary of the dedication of the shrine. The faithful recited this devotion at the shrine, "O St. Sharbel, son of Lebanon, you are the symbol of martyrdom and faith. To you we raise our prayer, and in you we place our hope."

Fr. Youssef concelebrated the Liturgy in the Grotto with clergy members from Mount St. Mary's University for all visitors in attendance. The Nuns

of Mount St. Mary's University care for the many religious shrines on the grounds. Our Lady of Lebanon Choir joined the Family of St. Sharbel USA in singing hymns and prayers honoring the monk-saint. Liturgy was followed by the blessing and veneration of the Relic of St. Sharbel and an outside procession in the Grotto led by the clergy.

Fifty parishioners joined the Family of St. Sharbel (a non-profit organization of St. Sharbel that promotes prayer and helping others). The faithful vowed to visit the St. Sharbel Grotto annually to honor this hermit-saint in a beautiful and prayerful setting. ■



JAMAICA PLAIN, MASSACHUSETTS

Celebrating Christmas

On 11 December 2022, following the 11 am Divine Liturgy, children of Religious Education Program of Our Lady of the Cedars of Lebanon Church in Jamaica Plain, MA performed a Christmas caroling program for the congregation. The children, ages 6-14 years, were accompanied by violinist, Emile Abouzeid. Following their presentation, the children celebrated the birth of Jesus together with breakfast, cake, and a visit from Santa. All parishioners were invited to participate in this Christmas celebration. ■



PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA

Holidays at St. Maron

St. Francis of Assisi teaches us that it is in giving that we receive. Thanksgiving and Christmas should be the focus of this teaching — the spirit of giving without always receiving.

St. Maron Church in Philadelphia, PA, created a series of outreach events allowing all community members, young and old, to embrace the joy of giving to others. Parishioners began the events with their annual Thanksgiving Food Drive. Turkeys with all the fixins' were donated to families at St. Cyprian's Parish in the Cobbs Creek section of Philadelphia. The MYO and CCD groups joined with the "Care for Friends" Charity to cook and pack frozen meals for individuals and families in need. The youth also held a holiday bake sale, and they donated the proceeds to a home for the elderly in Batroun, Lebanon.

For the Christmas holiday, church members contributed gifts to underprivileged children as part of the "Giving Tree." The parish



youths expressed their holiday spirit through musical and theatrical talents. The CCD children produced a Christmas play, and the MYO group held a Christmas Concert presented at the annual Holiday Potluck Luncheon held on 18 December. ■

Preparing for the Eucharist: The Mystery of Incomprehensible Love

by Seminarian Mark Farah

We ought to appreciate the love that we receive. We thank our parents, friends, priests, and family members for all the selfless charity they offer us. However, from where does this love and goodness come? Does not all love and good have its origin in God who “is love”? (JAMES 1:17 & 1 JOHN 4:7-21)

In our Catholic Faith, this sacrificial love peaked at the cross where Jesus poured out his life and blood for our sins. The night prior, He sealed this burning love with the words that transformed bread and wine to become His body and blood. At Mass, our priests obey Jesus’

command that night to “Do this in memory of me.” (LUKE 22:19) Therefore, when we observe the crucified Jesus, it is His silent presence in the Eucharist that expresses this same burning love. Imprisoning Himself in a tabernacle, we can

begin to see the nails that fastened him to the cross. The Pharisees and mockers of the Lord were blinded from this supreme act of Divine charity taking place before their eyes. My concern is that we treat Jesus with the same coldness and neglect. Do we take a moment to realize who it is we are receiving? How unworthy we are to approach such an awesome God who lowers himself to the state of seemingly just a piece of bread? He desires it this way so we can understand His humble love for us. Here are four practical ways that have helped me prepare to receive our Lord in a fruitful manner.



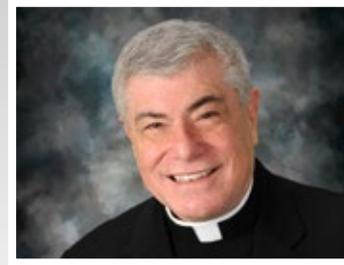
1) Coming to a greater knowledge of Him. Meditating on subjects, such as the text above, that will draw us deeper into the mystery of the Eucharist. In John 6, Jesus explicitly commands us to consume Him multiple times. “Truly, Truly I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you.” (JOHN 6:53)

2) Preparing with prayer and confession. Throughout our days in the week, it is important to put aside time every day for prayer. This will help deepen our love, faith, and trust in God which will prepare us to receive Him at Mass. Confession wipes our sins and failings away, as Jesus so desires to do, preparing us to worthily receive Him. As the Church and St Paul teaches, (1 COR 11:29) we must not have unconfessed mortal sins when receiving the Eucharist.

3) Spending time in silence before and after Mass. The purpose of which to dispose ourselves to Whom we are receiving. This time could be spent praying the Rosary, meditating on scripture, or just simply adoring the Eucharistic Lord in the tabernacle.

4) Asking the Virgin Mary for her assistance. There is no one more qualified in helping us in preparing to receive Jesus than His mother. He gave her as our mother too on the cross (JOHN 19) and she eagerly waits to have us ask for her help in preparing our souls for her Son. ■

From the Editor



Dear Friends,

A few weeks ago, I was blessed with the opportunity to spend a few days in Assisi, the home of two thirteenth-century saints, Francis and Clare. Most recently, a tomb for Blessed Carlo Acutis, a 15-year-old Italian-British boy, was constructed at the Cathedral in Assisi.

This mystical place has been very special to me since my days in Rome as a seminarian (50 years ago!). The Church of Santa Clare houses the famous crucifix of San Damiano. This Byzantine style cross originally hung in the small Church of San Damiano (hence the name), situated two miles outside of Assisi. The crucifix is fascinating: While it is painted on a flat surface, it appears to be three dimensional with the arms of Jesus extending out to embrace us. Jesus is not depicted as suffering, but as offering hope.

Francis encountered the cross when he was out in the countryside to meditate. He found himself in front of San Damiano Church, which was almost 200 years old at the time and falling down. **Francis knelt in prayer and soon he heard a voice descend to him from the cross and say three times, “Francis, go and repair my church which, as you see, is all in ruins!”**

Astonished and trembling, Francis rolled up his sleeves and began to repair the walls of the church, carrying stones that were needed from Assisi. Francis was soon to realize that his mission was not to repair a church, but the Church!

Amazing. And here I was kneeling in front of the same crucifix. No spectacular visions came to me, but I must confess that I was inspired. While in Assisi, I reflected on the lives of Saint Francis and Saint Clare and really wanted to see how I could imitate them. I have had this plan before, but it never really went anywhere.

Kneeling in that cold church, I realized that God does not want another Saint Francis. The role was taken. The job was done.

But God does want a “Saint Father John.” In His divine heart, there is a version of me that he wants. In His divine plan there is a job that He wants me to do. I could run around trying to be someone else or making my own flawed plans, but that will never work.

God knows who He wants us to be and what He wants us to do.

Let us pray that God shows us how to be our best selves and how to carry out His plan. Warning: If you think it is difficult to imitate Saint Francis or Saint Clare, it is much harder to discover and be ourselves and to carry out the plan given to us. ■

In the fellowship of Christ,

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

Chorbishop John D. Faris

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