



The Maronite Voice

A Publication of the Maronite Eparchies in the USA

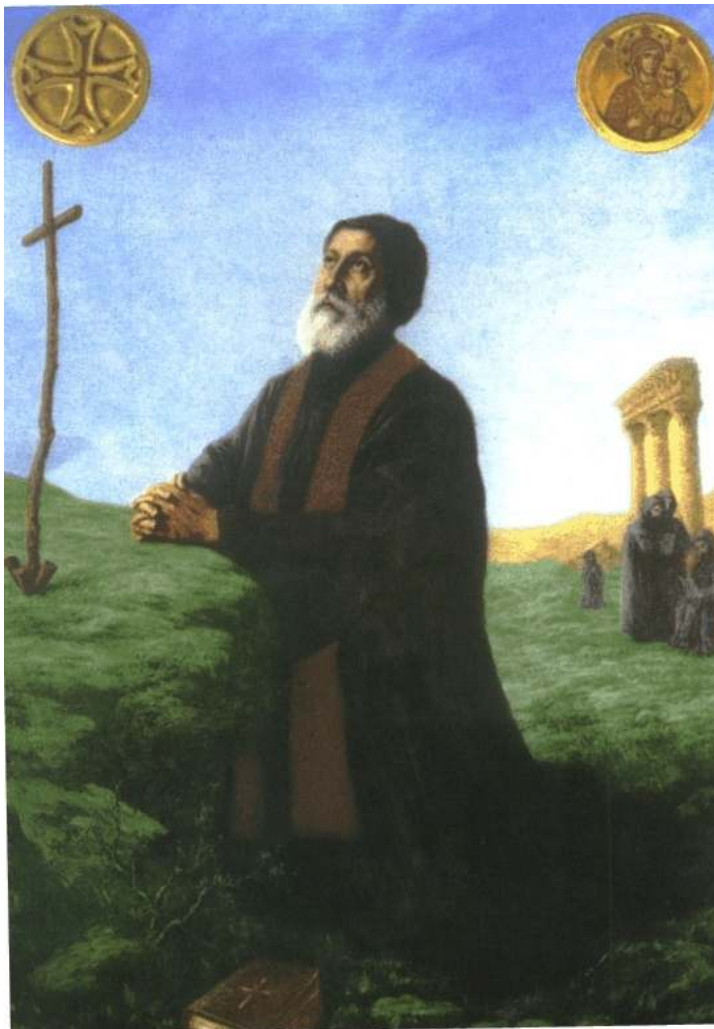


Volume V

Issue No. VI

June 2009

It is Up to Us to Hand Down Our History and Traditions to Future Generations



St. Maron, Founder and Patron of the Maronite Church.

Dear Friends,

As you receive this issue of *The Maronite Voice*, we will be ready for our yearly convention. The 46th Annual National Apostolate of Maronites Convention in Los Angeles, California, is quickly approaching, and I hope you are all counting down the days to this important event.

During the first NAM Convention that was held in Washington, D.C., during May 1964 I was ordained by Bishop Francis M Zayek. Now forty-six years later we continue to celebrate our Maronite faith and heritage. Even though we are removed from the land of our origin, we carry Lebanon and the Middle East in our hearts and celebrating it together each year keeps us connected to one another. During this time, we have grown and expanded to reach out to many people welcoming them into our Church.

The Maronite community has come together each year from all over the United States to celebrate as one family. This year is no different but it is a little more special. We are being joined by our extended family across the globe. His Eminence Cardinal Leonardo Sandri, Prefect of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches, Mr. Carlos Slim Helu, entrepreneur and businessman from Mexico, and Secretary of Transportation Ray LaHood are among our esteemed guests who will be joining us on this momentous occasion along with religious and civic dignitaries, city officials and a delegate from Lebanon as well.

I urge you all to follow the star to the City of Angels in order to attend the Convention this year. Let us come together to celebrate being Maronites. Our ancestors immigrated to this country seeking a better life, but they never lost touch with their heritage. It is now up to us to hand down our history and traditions to the future generations. We are alive thanks to the grace of God and its work in our midst.

Know that Bishop Gregory and I are keeping you in our thoughts and in our prayers. We hope to see you all in July.

With every best wish, I remain,

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Robert J. Shaheen, D.D.
Bishop of the Eparchy Of Our Lady of Lebanon

Schedule of Bishop Robert Shaheen

May 29-June 14, 2009

Annual Maronite Synod of Bishops, Bkerke, Lebanon

June 25, 2009

Los Angeles, Calif.

June 29- July 2, 2009

Annual Clergy Conference, Los Angeles, Calif.

July 1-5, 2009

Annual Maronite Convention, Los Angeles, Calif.

July 11, 2009

Dedication of St. Sharbel Apartments, Minneapolis, Minn., and Subdeaconate Ordination. □

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Maronite Convention 2009

Our Lady of Mount Lebanon
Cathedral
Los Angeles, Calif.

July 1-5, 2009

For more information
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or visit www.Namnews.org

Eparchial Assignments

His Excellency Bishop Robert Shaheen, Bishop of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon, with the approval of Bishop Gregory Mansour, Bishop of the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn, has made the following Eparchial appointments effective June 1, 2009:



Chorbishop Richard Saad, Pastor of Saint Elias Church in Birmingham, Alabama, as the Chaplain of the National Apostolate of Maronites (NAM) for both Eparchies. He will replace Fr. John Paul Kimes.



Chorbishop Joseph Kaddo, Pastor of St. Anthony of the Desert in Fall River, Mass., as the Chaplain for the Order of Saint Sharbel of the Eparchy of Saint Maron as well as the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon.



Fr. Elias Sleiman, Parochial Vicar of Our Lady of Mount Lebanon Cathedral in Los Angeles, Calif., to be in charge of the Maronite Young Adults (MYA) for the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon. He will work closely with **Fr. Elie Mikhael**, Pastor of Our Lady of Lebanon in Miami, Fla., who is in charge of the MYA of the Eparchy of Saint Maron.



Fr. Gary George, Pastor of St. Maron Church in Youngstown, Ohio, remains in charge of the Maronite Youth Organization (MYO) retreat for both Eparchies. □

Annual Clergy Conference

The Annual Clergy Conference, for the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon and for the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn, will be held from June 29 – July 2, 2009 at the Hyatt Regency Century Plaza Hotel in Los Angeles, California. The Conference will start with a Divine Liturgy at Our Lady of Mount Lebanon-St. Peter's Cathedral on June 29, at 6 p.m., and concludes with a luncheon with His Eminence Cardinal Sandri, Prefect of the Congregation for Eastern Churches, on Thursday, July 2, 2009 at 12:30 p.m. □



Maronite Servants of Christ The Light Marking First Year



Sister Marla Marie with His Excellency Bishop Gregory Mansour, Bishop of the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn.

by Dawn Eden

As the first-ever U.S. congregation of Maronite religious women prepared to celebrate its first anniversary on June 1, Bishop Gregory Mansour [Bishop of the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn] said he “could not be more pleased.”

Sister Marla Marie has carried out her work with the Maronite Servants “with dignity and integrity,” Bishop Gregory said. “She moves carefully and intently on Christ’s mission.”

That mission, as embodied in the Maronite Servants’ charism, is, in the words of Sister Marla Marie, “to pray for our people and to guide them, as a good spiritual mother, to a deeper relationship with Christ and his Church.

“In my mission visits and pastoral service, I have been able to give talks, retreats, and person-to-person spiritual guidance,” she said. “My parish visits have put me in touch with many great people who strive earnestly to live out their faith.”

Those visits took Sister Marla Marie to over twenty Maronite parishes during the past year throughout the United States as well as Lebanon and Australia. Thousands of faithful were touched by this witness, and two women responded to join her in the new congregation. They are Therese Touma of Sydney, Australia, who has been accepted, and Tresa Van Heusen of Atlanta, Ga., who is in the application process. They are slated to begin the novitiate next February 2, on the Feast of the Presentation.

The applicants are “two excellent young women,” Bishop Gregory said. Vocations for the Maronite Servants “have not come easy,” he added, “but whatever is beautiful is worth the effort.”

The Bishop praised Sister Marla Marie’s “personal

attachment to the Maronite Church. She feels one with this church and her mission.”

“For me, for Monsignor Michael Thomas [Vicar General], as well for all our priests, she is easy to work with; she is already our sister in Christ,” he added. “This gives me and all our priests great personal joy, encouragement and confidence in the future.”

For her part, Sister Marla Marie is grateful to Bishop Gregory for supporting and inspiring her in her mission, and thankful for the opportunities she has had to meet and talk with many Maronite clergy.

“Our parishes are blessed to have these dedicated *Abounas* [Fathers],” she said. “I look forward to the day when we can send out many sisters to serve alongside our priests, offering our spiritual motherhood to nurture our people.”

It was that emphasis on spiritual motherhood that attracted Therese Touma.

“The charism and spirituality of this mission spoke to me personally,” Touma said in a post on the Maronite Servants’ blog (RadiateHisLight.blogspot.com). “In imitating the humble and faithful response of Our Lady, the sisters are called to offer their spiritual motherhood, talents and service to the Maronite people. What a beautiful and challenging call to service!”

Bishop Gregory likewise sees spiritual motherhood as key to the mission that the new congregation will carry out as it grows and its sisters are placed in local parishes.

“My hopes for the Maronite Servants are that they prosper and grow and make themselves available for mission in whatever parish calls upon them,” he said. “A mother’s touch, a woman’s touch is life-giving for our families. How can the spiritual family that is the Maronite Church do without it?”

Sister Marla Marie said that Maronite parishes have warmly welcomed her and are enthusiastic as she tells them of the congregation’s mission. “I think the priests and the faithful are grateful that efforts are being made to have Maronite sisters to serve in our parishes,” she said.

“Many of our young people in the States have never met a nun,” she added, “so I always take the opportunity to teach on the beautiful vocation of religious life.”

Among those touched by Sister Marla Marie’s witness to the religious vocation was Rebecca El Khoury, Our Lady of Mt. Lebanon, Los Angeles, Calif. She wrote on the Maronite Servants’ blog, “In my 19 years, I have not had the opportunity to speak with a nun before.”

Since Sister Marla Marie’s visit, El Khoury wrote, “I find myself praying more so that I can listen to God and truly hear what He wants me to do with my life. I realized that unless I open my heart to Him, I may not hear God’s call. I must open my eyes and my heart to listen and see what God truly has planned for me and follow the path that He has written and set before me, whatever it may be.”

Laymen and women as well as clergy and religious have a role in the Maronite Servants’ mission, Sister Marla Marie said. During the coming year, she plans “to deepen this connection by establishing a Maronite Servants lay organization to support and nourish the spirituality of our people in our Maronite tradition.”

The Maronite Servants' blog and its main website, www.maroniteservants.org, have attracted thousands of visitors and led to many inquiries from women wanting to know more about the congregation, as well as questions from people around the world who are interested in learning about Maronite Catholic spirituality.

The sites also enable the congregation to communicate its needs. "I always ask people to pray for the intentions of the Maronite Servants, especially for holy vocations," Sister Marla Marie said. Also needed is financial support so that the congregation may find and operate a monastery to house the women who are being called to it.

Bishop Gregory said he hopes "that some people will step forward and gather around Sister as spiritual and financial supporters in this effort.

"My hope is set on God and the graces he bestows on generous hearts," he said. "I hope Sister's dream and our dream as well will find blessings and spiritual fulfillment in Christ."

To that end, he prays "for more generous responses from young women discerning a total gift of self to God and the Church."

The model of that gift of self and the inspiration for the new community is Mary, he said. "If one looks at the first two chapters of Acts, the same author who penned the story of the Annunciation and the Visitation also notes that Mary and other women disciples were present at the Ascension and later Pentecost, the early Church's first prayer gatherings and missionary efforts.

"We need such women today. Although we have them in our married women and generous single laywomen, we also need them in women consecrated to God alone in the service of His people. Mary, Mother of the Light, pray for us." □



North Jackson, Ohio Joint Retreat at National Shrine

This year the Ladies Guilds of both Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral, Brooklyn, N.Y., and of St. Raymond's Cathedral, Saint Louis, Mo., are co-sponsoring a retreat that will be woven into the August 13-16, 2009 Pilgrimage at the National Shrine of Our Lady of Lebanon in North

Jackson, Ohio.

Monsignor Joubran Bou-Mehri and Father James Root, Cathedral Rectors, are supportive of the Ladies in this effort. The Retreat does not replace or detract from the Shrine's schedule. It is incorporated into the Shrine schedule, and is open to catechists, moms, dads, single people, busy people and everyone interested in spiritual refreshment.

Retreat Schedule

Thursday, August 13

- 4 p.m. Retreat Talk – Main Chapel
- 7 p.m. Divine Liturgy – Roman Rite
- 8 p.m. Candlelight procession

Friday, August 14

- 2 p.m. Retreat Talk – Main Chapel
- 6 p.m. Rosary – Main Chapel
- 8 p.m. Paracletis to the Blessed Virgin and procession

Saturday, August 15

- 10 a.m. Retreat Talk – Main Chapel
- 1 p.m. Rosary on the hour – Main Chapel
- 2 p.m. Maronite Divine Liturgy with Anointing of the Sick
- 4 p.m. Maronite Vespers sung by the Antonine Sisters
- 7 p.m. Maronite Divine Liturgy
- 8 p.m. Candlelight procession

Confessions available each afternoon

Celebrating God's Gifts – YOU

When was the last time you took a time out to realize just how special is God's grace for you? It is difficult to find good news on CNN or the local radio but you are cordially invited to do just that by attending the spiritual retreat at the Shrine this year. As a unique GIFT of God you are one of His instruments in the symphony of life. So come and be refreshed as you take time to listen, reflect and realize just how special you really are.

Whatever your age, status or position in life – you are welcome to share the Good News. Can you think of a better time or place? Please contact the Shrine at the number or email noted below to make arrangements. You may also visit the Shrine's website: www.ourladyoflebanonshrine.org

"In the fever and agitation of modern life, the need of meditation and spiritual repose impresses itself on Christian souls who desire to reflect on their eternal destiny, and direct their life in this world toward God."

The Catholic Encyclopedia

The National Shrine is located at 2759 North Lipkey Road in North Jackson, Ohio. For further information on the Shrine call (330)-538-3351 or by email info@ourladyoflebanonshrine.org or website. □



Boston, Massachusetts *Golden Jubilee of Priesthood*



Left to right: His Eminence Sean O'Malley, Archbishop of Boston, Chorbishop Joseph Lahoud and Bishop Gregory Mansour.

by Gary J. Matta.
Golden Jubilee Committee Member

First came the well-deserved accolades, congratulatory messages and awards, then came the thank yous and a humble response. The occasion was the celebration of the Golden Jubilee in the priesthood of Chorbishop Joseph Farid Lahoud, Pastor of Our Lady of the Cedars of Lebanon Maronite Catholic Church in Jamaica Plain [Boston], Mass.

After thanking the hundreds of parishioners, friends and guests who had rendered him several standing ovations, he explained that he "was following the boss' orders" when it came to holding such a grand celebration. He humorously added that the boss, Bishop Gregory John Mansour, Bishop of the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn, also set the date, based on his schedule. Chorbishop Lahoud then turned to Abbot William Driscoll of the Maronite Monastery in Petersham, Mass., and said, "I need a retreat to recover my humility."

During a banquet in the main ballroom of the Hyatt Regency Hotel in

Cambridge on May 17, Chorbishop Lahoud received a papal blessing from Pope Benedict XVI, presented by Fr. Dominique Hanna, Parochial Vicar; a citation from Lebanese President Michel Sleiman, presented by Ibrahim Hanna, the Honorary Consul in Boston; an award from the World Lebanese Cultural Union, presented by David Abi-Chaker, for his tireless efforts in support of the organization's activities; a citation from the International Maronite Congress, presented by Dr. Chadi Daher, for his dedication to promoting its mission; a \$500 donation from his parish's St. Maron Society to benefit St. Elias Church in his hometown of *Kartaba*, Lebanon, where he was baptized; and congratulatory letters from His Beatitude Patriarch Nasrallah Peter Cardinal Sfeir, Maronite Patriarch of Antioch and the Whole East, Archbishop Roland Aboujaoude, a seminary classmate, longtime friend and former pastor of Our Lady of the Cedars, who is now Vicar General to the Patriarch, and Archbishop Francis Zayek, retired Bishop of the Eparchy of Saint Maron.

Perhaps the most poignant award was bestowed by Archbishop Cyril

Bustrus of the Melkite Rite, who presented Chorbishop Lahoud with the gold chain and cross reserved for Archimandrites of the Melkite Rite. Archbishop Bustrus said that the recognition was well deserved because of the cooperation, collaboration and helping hand that Chorbishop Lahoud has willingly extended over the years in support of the endeavors of his Melkite brethren. It was also noted that he has given the same support to other rites.

Bishop Gregory also cited the tireless efforts that Chorbishop Lahoud has made on behalf of his parish and the Eparchy, and the influence and leadership he demonstrated while serving on national clerical committees.

Parishioner Charles Kanelos had the audience laughing non-stop during a roast of his pastor, parodying his usual response to every situation, good or difficult: "No problem."

In opening remarks at the banquet, Dr. Stephen Camer, the emcee, recalled, "When things were at such a low ebb (Our Lady of the Cedars was in bankruptcy in the midst of building the rectory and community hall), Father Lahoud became our pastor, and the upward climb started and has not stopped. The financial burden was quickly lifted and a new church was built. Most importantly, we became a parish again, a community and a family.

Chorbishop Lahoud, we are honored to call you our friend. We are honored to call you our brother. We are blessed to call you Father. The language of our heritage calls the priest *Abouna*, not just Father, but Father of us all. Congratulations *Abouna* Lahoud."

The momentous day began with Chorbishop Lahoud's celebrating his Golden Jubilee Liturgy with Sean Cardinal O'Malley, Head of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Boston, and Bishop Gregory presiding, and a dozen other priests as co-celebrants.

In his welcoming remarks at the Liturgy, Fr. Hanna used an analogy from the Gospel of Saint Matthew to describe the legacy of Chorbishop Lahoud: "The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet, it did not

fall, because it had its foundation on the rock.”

In his homily, Chorbishop Lahoud recalled the day of his ordination, April 12, 1959. “On that day, we were given the gifts of the Holy Spirit, the privilege to preach the Kingdom of God, and the power to offer prayers on behalf of the people and to implore God’s blessings upon them. ... The details of that day seem to be of yesterday. Every morning I relive the long ceremony filled with meanings and details, filled with responsibilities and symbols, and loaded with tradition and divine. Kneeling on the steps of the altar, I made the grand offering: my life, my future, my destiny, and my whole being without reservation in the most simple and joyful fashion.”

He said his decision to enter the priesthood “is thanks to my parents, who guided me, with their refined personalities, their deep faith, and their attachment to their religion, toward the steps of the altar.”

And now that the fifty years of the future have become fifty years of the past, I offer this Liturgy in thanksgiving to the Lord for His blessings, for the people I served and for those who helped me accomplish His will ... I thank the Lord for the bishops who guided me through these years, for the faithful who put up with me, who accepted my mistakes and went along with my decisions. Today I renew the offering of fifty years ago. I offer what I have left to give with joy and enthusiasm, in spite of the declining energy and weight of the years.”

As an example of the esteem Chorbishop Lahoud has earned by his guidance and leadership, former organist and choir director Dr. Sami Njeim returned from Michigan to play at the Mass and at the banquet.

The reading during the Liturgy was given by his namesake nephew, Joseph Lahoud, and the petitions were made by his niece, Rita Rajev.

The nephew also recalled at the banquet the reverence that his family and hometown had for him. Even though he was still a youngster at the time, he understood the importance of his uncle’s task of building a new church.

The nephew Lahoud also recalled that, when his family emigrated to the United States, his uncle -- like he has done for countless other immigrants

and students from Lebanon -- was a guiding force that led him to attend Catholic Memorial High School and then Boston College. He said he will be eternally grateful for the fruits of the path than his uncle chose for him. □

Homily of Chorbishop Lahoud at His Golden Jubilee Liturgy

On the pathway of our pilgrimage on this planet there are certain dates, events, and occasions that remain anchored in our minds and memories and hold a meaningful significance, such as birthdays, first c o m m u n i o n s , g r a d u a t i o n s , engagements, marriages, ordinations, and many others.

These events shape our life and give us the opportunity to reflect on the beauty of life and the role that each of us has been assigned to fulfill in beautifying God’s world and leaving an imprint during our pilgrimage. These significant events prompt a celebration like the one we are holding today.

As I reflect in retrospect, I know that many were looking forward to this day and to this celebration. Several months ago, our beloved bishop reminded me of it and later on chose the date for it. Also, a group of parishioners took it upon themselves to surprise me: They chose the date, the location, and all the other arrangements that such a celebration requires. I am deeply indebted to them.

Allow me first to take this opportunity to thank you all for sharing in the joy of this celebration and in offering your prayers and support. Allow me to thank in particular Fr. Dominique and the organizers of this event and to welcome his Eminence Cardinal O’Malley, His Excellency Bishop Gregory, Abbot William Driscoll, my brothers in the priesthood, the respectable sisters, the Honorable Mayor and Mrs. Menino, His Excellency Ibrahim Hanna, the Consul of Lebanon, the presidents and members of the religious and civic organizations, and the guests and friends of this community and my friends, as well. Allow me to thank also Dr. Sami Njeim, our organist who came especially from Michigan to be with us and with the choir.

Yes, it was on April 12, 1959 when nine of us, seminarians and theology students of Saint Joseph University in Beirut [Lebanon], were ordained to the priesthood by the Imposition of the Hands of the late Archbishop Joseph Khoury, Vicar to the Maronite Patriarch. In addition to the nine, two of the classes were ordained by their respective bishops two weeks prior to that date and a third was ordained two weeks later.

It is my information at this time that while Lebanon is busy preparing for the Parliamentary elections, several bishops and priests are busy celebrating the jubilee of those who dedicated a half a century of their lives at the service of the church and God’s people. What a contrast! I take this opportunity to salute them from across the ocean and through the air waves and wish them a continued success in their ministry.

I would be remiss if I did not mention in particular the only one of the class who is now with the Lord and who happened to be the Former Pastor of this church. I mean Father David Gabriel, my classmate and friend and the friend of all of those who knew him and whom he served between 1960 and 1970. A special remembrance in your prayers will be greatly appreciated.

My dear friends, it is said that time flies. I have said it often and I repeat the Arabic saying to young people: *il sinnie wara il bab* (the year is behind the door). However, on this 50th anniversary of my ordination, I feel closer to the truth of this saying. I admit I was fifty years younger and perhaps fifty pounds lighter, but it was a blessed day that never left my memory.

Nine of us, out of a group of twelve and a class of twenty, at Saint Joseph University in Beirut knelt in front of the ordaining bishop on a beautiful spring Sunday to have our hands anointed with the sacred oil and to receive the priesthood through the imposition of the Bishop’s hands, which made us priests forever. On that day we were given the gifts of the Holy Spirit, the privilege to preach the Kingdom of God, and the power to offer prayers on behalf of the people and to implore God’s blessings upon them. That imposition of hands made us members of that fraternity established on Holy Thursday by Our Lord and which began

with Saint Peter and the Apostles and which throughout the centuries included Saint Maron, Saint Sharbel and millions of other priests and monks.

The details of that day seem to be of yesterday. Every morning I relive the long ceremony filled with meanings and details, filled with responsibilities and symbols and loaded with tradition and divine. Kneeling on the steps of the altar I made the grand offering, my life, my future, my destiny, and my whole being without reservation in the most simple and joyful fashion.

The joyful and total offering was that of a young priest who was aware of what was happening. That young priest was giving his past, his present, his future, his life and what the age will give and what the world will bestow on him. All of this was offered as a package and sacrificed in advance. Then came the procession.

At that moment, I could not help but look at my father and mother who were sitting in the front pew. As the chalice and the sacred host were placed on my head and escorted by two saintly priest cousins of mine, I noticed the tears in my parents' eyes as if they were joining me in that offering. In fact, if I became a priest, it is thanks to my parents who guided me with their refined personalities, their deep faith, and their attachment to their religion, towards the steps of the altar. Others who were helpful also, the priests, the seminary faculty and their good example have allowed my vocation to stand on solid ground. It is also thanks to my spiritual director who introduced me to the spirituality and books of Thomas Merton, the Trappist priest whose book *The Seven Storey Mountain* attracted many young men to the religious life. I relive everyone's help, advice, and cherish that special moment when I heard the Lord tell me "You did not choose me, no, I chose you and I command you to go out and bear fruit." I listened. A few weeks after my ordination, when the exams were over, the Patriarch said, "Your assignment is for overseas." Again I listened. Here was my destiny and here was my field of work, here I had to learn a new language, adapt to a variety of customs and cultures in order to be at the service of the people entrusted to my care.

And now that the fifty years of the

future have become fifty years of the past, I offer this Liturgy in Thanksgiving to the Lord for his blessings, for the people I served and for those who helped me accomplish His will during those fifty years. I thank the Lord for the bishops, who guided me throughout these years, and the priests who were the example to follow, for the faithful who put up with me, who accepted my mistakes and went along with my decisions.

Today I renew this offering of fifty years ago; I offer what I have left to give with joy and enthusiasm, in spite of the declining energy and weight of the years.

A few weeks ago, I listened to a lecture at Boston College, given by Cardinal Tauran, the former Secretary of State at the Vatican, and now President of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue. He spoke about secularized Europe and the fear that this secularization will reach other continents. With the world getting smaller and with the internet connecting the four corners of the globe, an atmosphere of materialization of the souls and paganization will hover over the Christian world. I am not sounding an alarm, but I am inviting you today to join me in prayer for the increase of vocations.

I realize how difficult the recruitment is. There is a shortage of vocations and of priests while there is so much to be done in the vast vineyard of souls. We are witnessing a progressive materialization of the souls in a paganized atmosphere. Will this be a cause of discouragement? I hope not. The resurgence of Christianity after the collapse of the Soviet Union proves it. The Lord told his apostles "Go therefore, make disciples of all nations, baptize them in the name of the Father and the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teach them to observe all the commands I gave you. And know that I am with you always, yes, to the end of time."

My dear friends, people will live and die. God does not, and His church will survive. Let us pray today that the Lord will bless this Church with Holy Priests who will spread His Gospel and show His love to all. Let us ask this through the intercession of Our Lady, the patroness of this sacred edifice, the patroness of Lebanon, the Mother of the Church and the Mother of each one of us. Amen. □

THE ORDER OF SAINT SHARBEL



Perpetual Members

★ *Tommy Tedros*

*Our Lady of Mount Lebanon
Cathedral
Los Angeles, Calif.*

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 or write

to

Eparchy of Saint Maron
Order of Saint Sharbel
109 Remsen Street
Brooklyn, NY 11201

Or

Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon
Order of Saint Sharbel
1021 South 10th Street
St. Louis, MO 63104

Torrington, Connecticut Diaconate Ordination



Bishop Gregory Mansour ordains Steven P. Marcus to the Order of Deacon at St. Maron Church in Torrington, Conn. Chorbishop Michael Thomas is to the right.

On Saturday, May 16, 2009, His Excellency Gregory John Mansour, S.T.L., Bishop of the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn, ordained Subdeacon Steven P. Marcus to the Diaconate for the altar of St. Maron in Torrington, Conn.

Chorbishop Michael Thomas, J.C.D., Protosyncellus and Chancellor of the Eparchy of Saint Maron; Reverend Lawrence P. Michael, Pastor of St. Maron Church, Torrington; Chorbishop John Faris, Pastor of St. Louis Gonzaga Church, Utica, N.Y.; Monsignor David George, Pastor of St. Anthony Church, Springfield, Mass.; Monsignor Christopher D. Connelly, Vicar General for the Diocese of Springfield, Mass.; Monsignor Archmandrite Robert L. Stern, P.A., Secretary General of the Catholic Near East Welfare Association; Reverend Joseph Khoueiry, Pastor St. George Church, Dover, N.H.; and Reverend Warren J. Savage of Our Lady of the Elms College, Chicopee, Mass., concelebrated the Divine Liturgy.

Reverend Dr. Enzo DiGiacomo of St. Anthony Church, Springfield, Mass., served as Deacon for the liturgy. Several recently ordained deacons (and classmates of Marcus) from the Diocese of Springfield were also present.

In his homily Bishop Gregory spoke of how deacons are a bridge between the people and the priest; of how deacons are able to help people draw closer to God by proclaiming the Gospel and by preaching thoughtful homilies; and of how deacons are called to live an exemplified life. Bishop Gregory added that in addition to all of this, Deacon Steven will be bringing communion to shut-ins, making hospital visits,

assisting at baptisms and funerals, and helping the pastor with parish projects.

The parishioners were moved by the Bishop's visit and delighted to witness Marcus' ordination – the only time in its ninety-year history that a diaconate ordination has taken place at St. Maron's. After the ordination, over two-hundred parishioners attended a reception in the parish hall. As everyone celebrated the festive occasion, Deacon Steven shared: "I am most thankful to Almighty God, *Sayedna* Gregory, Renee and our boys. I look forward to serving the people of St. Maron as together we build up the Kingdom of God."

Steven P. Marcus is the President and Chief Executive Officer of New England Geriatrics, a Massachusetts-based healthcare company. New England Geriatrics provides long term care, psychiatric care and hospice care throughout the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Marcus is married to Renee Simon Marcus. They are the proud parents of Steven, a junior in high school, and Ben, a freshman.

Marcus sits on the International Board of Governors for *Legatus*, an organization for Catholic CEOs. He also serves as the Chair of the Development Leadership Council for The Catholic Near East Welfare Association, as well as being a Board of Trustee member of Wilbraham and Monson Academy.

At the liturgies on Sunday, May 17, Marcus assumed his responsibilities as Deacon by proclaiming the Gospel and preaching his first homily. □

Schedule of Bishop Gregory Mansour

May 28-June 15, 2009

Annual Maronite Synod of Bishops, *Bkerke*, Lebanon

June 20-21, 2009

Fr. James Root's 25th Anniversary of Priesthood, Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral, Brooklyn, N.Y.

June 22, 2009

New York Bishops' Meeting

June 28- July 7, 2009

Annual Clergy Conference, Maronite Convention and *Telelumiere* Board of Directors Meeting, Los Angeles, Calif. □

the Deadline is... Deadline for next month's issue of *The Maronite Voice* is **June 25, 2009**. Pictures have to be original. Digital pictures must be in "JPG" format.

The Maronite Voice is also available online in a pdf format at www.stmaron.org. □

San Antonio, Texas *St. George Feast Day Celebration*



by Judy Perillo

St. George Maronite Church in San Antonio, Texas, began in 1925. It has become a tradition to celebrate its Patron's Feastday, St. George, with a community celebration. St. George, a knight and martyr, who defended the church with his life, is represented on a horse slaying a dragon. A prayer to St. George reminds us of the dragon of evils that continues to plague the church and people of faith. It reads, *"You fought boldly against the dragon of pride, falsehood, and deceit... help us to overcome the temptations that surround us, and to bear bravely the trials that oppress us."*

A special presentation by the Knights of the Guild was part of a celebration for families on the tree covered grounds of St. George on May 17, 2009. The Guild is a nonprofit organization that provides character education based on examples of historical men and women. The program encourages young people to develop ethical judgment, a strong moral compass, self-discipline, and to take their place as responsible members of church and society.

Several parishioners were asked to share their thoughts about the experience. "I liked the horse show because the horses did tricks," stated Stephanie Younes, age seven. Her sister Madeleine, eight years, added "It was fun and there was good food." They both agreed, "The best thing of all was petting the horses and taking pictures with them." Ilya Noujeim, six years, said "I thought before I came that the horses were going to fight with each other, but instead they played games with each other like you would play a video game. I had a really good time and the best thing about it was petting the horses." Tiana Faddoul, three years old, said "The best thing is that I saw a big horse."

Marcel Noujeim, a member of the Parish Council, stated, "It was a very lively and educational experience. They told the story of Joan of Arc and talked about the values of chivalry. Most of the presentation was directed to the children." Marian Wells, who managed the food concession and is a member of the Ladies Altar Society and choir, echoed this idea by noting, "All the stories that were told had

a moral and brought out the character of a knight as one who lived a moral life."

Fr. Charles Khachan, M.L.M., Associate Pastor, stated, "It was a lot of fun and something new, especially for the children." Miriam Wells summed it up when she said, "It was a relaxed and comfortable atmosphere and the weather was wonderful! It might be nice to continue the Renaissance theme next year."

We extend a special thank you to Cinder Obeid, General Chairperson of this event. □

Wheeling, West Virginia *Architectural Award*



Fr. Bakhos Chidiac and the architect Larry Siebieda receiving the Award from the President of the Friends of Wheeling.

Our Lady of Lebanon Church in Wheeling, West Virginia, was honored with an award from The Friends of Wheeling Group. The Friends of Wheeling is an organization dedicated to the preservation of the city and its architecture. The "Outstanding Sympathetic Addition" award was given in recognition for maintaining the architectural integrity of the original building and was given at an awards banquet on May 6, 2009 in the original Capitol building of the State of West Virginia. The Parish Council and many parishioners attended the event, and it was with great pride and humility that the award was accepted. The Pastor, the Rev. Bakhos Chidiac, and the architect, Larry Siebieda, worked very hard to ensure that the new addition fit perfectly with the existing building, and along with the Parish Council, studied several plans and made many changes to achieve the end result. The new addition which houses a beautiful social hall, a state of the art kitchen, and new handicapped-accessible restrooms along with an elevator, is the pride of the parish and a much welcomed addition to the Central Wheeling area. □

Torture and Human Dignity

by
Bishop Gregory Mansour

What has been coming to light recently about the torture of some detainees during interrogation by some American military persons is devastating. One who believes in the dignity of the human person is ashamed at the low level of decency to which we have stooped. With the breaking news of several CIA prisons throughout the world, the scandals of Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib, one can certainly understand the harsh reality of war, the necessity of prisons, the need to accommodate detainees, the importance of questioning suspects, and even the slow wheels of justice. But one can never and must never acquiesce, accept, condone or be silent about torture, even to produce needed intelligence information. Human dignity warrants that no matter what we have done, if we must be imprisoned, we should not be tortured.



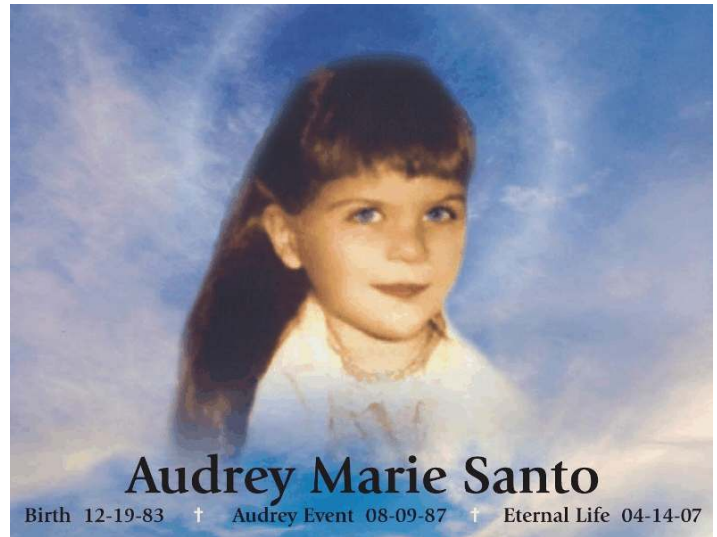
It is important to affirm the dignity of each human person from the moment of conception to natural death. Dignity is not negotiable; it does not matter what we have done. We cannot deserve or warrant it. Rather, it is something inherent in every human person, regardless of who they are, what they have done, or what stage of life they are in.

Let us not be fooled by any arguments. Human dignity is not given to some and not to others. All people have the right **not** to be tortured, **not** to be killed in the womb, **not** to be used in medical experiments, and **not** to be assisted in taking ones' own life, no matter how convincing the argument goes. One has the right to be respected, even loved and appreciated, no matter who they are and what they have done. Human rights are not bestowed by man, but by God.

It is time to restore dignity to every person whether in embryonic form or in old age, born or unborn, healthy or unhealthy, guilty or not guilty. Dignity is dignity. Torture in any form is unacceptable, plain and simple. We do not have the right to play God to determine who lives and who does not. Likewise, we do not have the right to determine who gets tortured and who does not. All people have the right to life. All people have the right not to be tortured. This is common sense. This is human dignity. □

The Story of Little Audrey Santo

Audrey was born on December 19, 1983 in Worcester, Massachusetts. When she was three years old, she fell into the family pool on August 9, 1987. She was brought to the hospital and was stabilized. Then she was moved to another hospital and was overdosed with phenobarbital and went into a coma for three weeks. Audrey remained in the hospital until November 14. When she was ready to be released, the "professionals" wanted to place her



in a pediatric nursing home but Linda, her mother, placed Audrey in her arms and brought her home! She remained at home until God took her April 14, 2007, twenty years later. Even though the doctors said she would be dead in two weeks.

Many things happened while Audrey was in the hospital. People of many faiths came, prayed, sent gifts and cards. The media carried her story and continue to do so right up until now!

Audrey comes from a multi cultural background. Her mother is Lebanese and Spanish, Maronite and Roman Catholic. Her father is Irish and Italian. Because of Audrey's rich spiritual and cultural background we feel blessed and very much open to God's plan!

Bishop Robert McManus of the Diocese of Worcester has signed a document to begin the process of Beatification and Canonization of Little Audrey Santo. This took place September 11, 2008 one year after Audrey's eternal rest.

For more information about Little Audrey please write or e-mail:

The Foundation for the Beatification and Canonization of
Little Audrey Santo,
64 South Flag St.
Worcester, Massachusetts 01602
e-mail: audrey@littleaudreysanto.org
website: www.littleaudreysanto.org. □

Prayer of Intercession

Oh wonderful little Audrey on whom God has deigned to prove his love for the innocent and pure of heart by indelibly stamping his seal of salvation on you for our sanctification and salvation.

I (We) beg you to intercede for us poor sinners for the grace and courage to bear whole-heartedly whatever cross God has chosen for us before the foundation of the world.

Your silence is more eloquent than a thousand words. Your sufferings and resignation to His holy will is a soothing balm for the wounds of Jesus and His cross, so despised and rejected in these days of darkness. Amen. □



North Jackson, Ohio

Our Lady of Lebanon Shrine 44th Assumption Pilgrimage

August 13, 14, and 15, 2009, mark the 44th Annual Pilgrimage to the National Shrine of Our Lady of Lebanon in North Jackson, Ohio. "The years have passed quickly and many visitors and pilgrims have come to Mary's home for many reasons. All have left with God's blessings and graces," says Monsignor Anthony S. Spinosa, Rector. This year the Pilgrimage Celebration will include two new additions: a retreat talk sponsored by the Ladies Organizations of Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral in Brooklyn and St. Raymond's Cathedral in St. Louis and a Post Feast Day Celebration Lamb Roast.

Pilgrimage Schedule

Thursday, August 13

Father John Keehner, Rector of St. Columba Cathedral and Pastor of St. Casmir in Youngstown, Ohio, will celebrate the 7 p.m. Divine Liturgy according to the Roman Rite followed by a candlelight procession.

Friday, August 14

10: a.m.: Maronite Divine Liturgy
6: p.m.: The Rosary will be recited

Archbishop Basil Schott, D.D. O.F.M., for the Byzantine Catholic Diocese of Pittsburgh will celebrate the 7:00 p.m. Byzantine Rite Liturgy followed by a Paracletis to the Blessed Virgin Mary led by Monsignor George Appleyard.

Saturday, August 15

Feast of the Assumption

12 p.m. Melkite Divine Liturgy
1- 4 p.m. Rosary on the hour
2 p.m. Maronite Divine Liturgy with Anointing of the Sick celebrated by Bishops Robert Shaheen and Gregory Mansour
4 p.m. Maronite Vespers chanted by the Antonine Sisters
7 p.m. Maronite Pontifical Liturgy celebrated by Bishop Robert J. Shaheen D.D., Bishop of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon, and Bishop Gregory J. Mansour S.T.L., Bishop of the Eparchy of St. Maron of Brooklyn. Candle procession will follow.

Sunday, August 16

Post Feast Day Celebration

10: a.m. Maronite Divine Liturgy
11:a.m. - 3 p.m.: Lamb Roast Dinner prepared by Shrine Volunteers
5 p.m. Maronite Divine Liturgy

The National Shrine of Our Lady of Lebanon will open all four days at 9:00 a.m. The Cedars Dining Hall will be open three days from 11:00 a.m. until 11:00 p.m. with many varieties of ethnic foods and desserts.

The National Shrine is located at 2759 North Lipkey Road in North Jackson, Ohio. For further information on the Shrine call (330)-538-3351 or visit the website www.ourladyoflebanonshrine.org. □

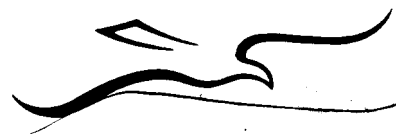
Baton Rouge, Louisiana *Pastoral Visit*



Left to right: Bishop Robert Shaheen and Bishop Munche, Bishop of the Diocese of Baton Rouge. (Standing) Mary Shaheen Michael and Jean Fairfield.

St. Sharbel Maronite Catholic Mission in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, held a banquet in March of 2009 to welcome His Excellency Bishop Robert Shaheen, Bishop of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon, for his pastoral visit. Bishop Munche, Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Baton Rouge was also present.

The Divine Liturgy is celebrated once each month at St. Sharbel Mission in Baton Rouge. □



A Desert Pilgrimage

by Rev. Samuel A. Najjar, J.D.
Director, Ecumenism and Interreligious
Dialogue
Eparchy of St. Maron of Brooklyn



Ecumenical Officers and Ecumenists from various faiths met in Phoenix, Arizona, April 27 -30, 2009, for the annual National Workshop on Christian Unity (NWCU). Within that workshop is the Catholic Association of Diocesan Ecumenical and Interfaith Officers (CADEIO) Seminar.

This year's theme was "A Desert Pilgrimage" reflecting on the many times that Jesus spent in the desert fasting and praying.

The opening worship was conducted at St. Mary's Basilica, hosted by the Franciscan fathers with participants from the various faiths represented at the workshop. After the welcoming address given by The Most Rev. Thomas J. Olmsted, Bishop of the Diocese of Phoenix; the Rev. Dr. Clifton Kirkpatrick, President of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC), gave a reflection on the Ecumenical Movement in the United States.

The Keynote Address on the first full day of the workshop was given by Metropolitan Gerasimos, Greek Archdiocese of San Francisco. Just coming off of celebrating their Easter, he gave us an "Eastern" approach to the joyous Season of the Resurrection. By the end of his talk he had everyone chanting: *Truly He is Risen*.

During the Workshop, several services are offered for the various religious groups attending. On the evening of Tuesday, April 28, The Holy Mass was offered at the Immaculate Heart of Mary Church for Catholics (and anyone wishing to attend); while at Holy Eucharist (Lutheran Use) at the Trinity Episcopal Church.

Bishop Olmsted was the principal celebrant at the Holy Mass which was concelebrated by priests from throughout the U.S. The homilist, Bishop Gerald F. Kicanas, Bishop of Tucson, Ariz., used "Father, I put my life in your hands" as his topic.

Two bible studies were conducted for the general assembly by Dr. Margaret Mitchell, Professor of the New Testament and Early Christian Literature at the University of Chicago Divinity School. She spoke eloquently on St. Paul's Letters.

After the closing luncheon on Thursday, the torch was passed to the committee that will make preparations for next year's workshop in Tampa, Florida. □

Lombard, Illinois Sacrament of Confirmation

by Lena Danu

On Sunday, April 19, 2009, forty-nine candidates from the Mexican Community were confirmed by Father Dominique Hanna at Our Lady of Lebanon Church, Chicago, Illinois. A special permission was granted by the Diocese of Joliet, Ill. □

Lawrence, Massachusetts Knights of the Altar



Apprentices in the *Knights of the Altar* program at St. Anthony Church, following their installation Liturgy. (Front, left to right :) Raymond Nammour, Thomas Demers, Matthew Haddad, Jacob Godfrey, Anthony Hassan, Youssef Chahine. (Back, L to R :) Mansour Chaya, Michael Chaya, James Demers, Msgr. Peter Azar, Mark Haddad, John Elhelou, Fadi Chahine. (Not pictured :) Elias Azzi, Elias Daou, Khalil Matta, Andrew Veilleux.

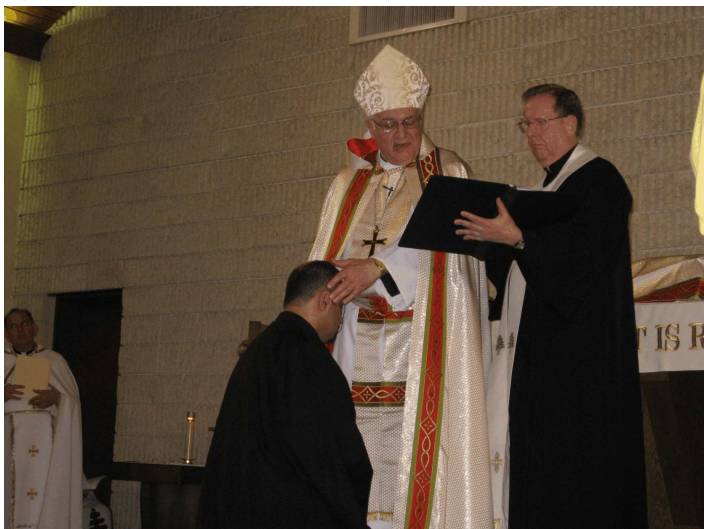
by Msgr. Peter Azar

St. Anthony Parish in Lawrence, Mass., held an installation Liturgy for its altar boys on May 3, 2009. They entered into the *Knights of the Altar* program with the rank of Apprentices. Fifteen knights are actively serving at the parish, with monthly meetings that contain spiritual, training, and social aspects. Only three months old, this group has continued to grow each month. Advancement through the ranks will occur after certain requirements are met, including faithful service, knowledge of the Liturgy, and volunteer activities. Camaraderie has developed among the servers, and their diligent, respectful, and dedicated service has provided an inspiration to the parish. The Knights are grateful to Msgr. Peter Azar for his support with his time, knowledge, and energy, and to the parents who have made the time commitment to ensure the knights are able to attend their meetings and assigned Liturgies. □

Food For Thought

The Lord does us the honor of placing his confidence in us and calling us to the ministry, showing us his mercy. This call is not reserved for a few; it is for everyone, each in his own state of life.
Pope John Paul II

Fall River, Massachusetts Subdeacon Ordination



Chorbishop Joseph Kaddo, Pastor of St. Anthony of the Desert Church in Fall River, Mass., ordains Seminarian Dany Abi-Akar to the Minor Orders of Cantor, Lector and Subdeacon.

On Friday night May 8, 2009, Chorbishop Joseph F. Kaddo ordained Seminarian Day ABI-Azar to the Minor Orders of Cantor, Lector and Subdeacon at St. Anthony of the Dessert Maronite Church, Fall River, Massachusetts.

Chorbishop Joseph Lahoud, Reverend Monsignors Ignace Sadek, Peter Azar, David George, John Smith, Reverends John Morrison, Edward Nedder, Dominique Hanna, Elie Kairouz, John Kelleher, O.S.B., John Driscoll, George Almeida, Jose dos Santos, James McLellan, Michael Racine, Manuel Ferreira and Horace Travesties concelebrated. Also participating in the ceremony were Deacons Dr. Andre Nasser, Donald Massoud, Jean Mattar, Subdeacons Vincent Farhat and Tony Masaad and Seminarian George El-Hajj.

Dany is the son of George and Aida Abi Akar of Beirut, Lebanon. He has one brother, Sharbel, and two sisters: his twin sister, Denise, wife of Naim Hojeij and mother of Alan, Andrew and Sharbel; his sister Micheline, wife of Joseph Abi-Hatem and mother of Jack and Dominique. Dany was born in Beirut. He completed his studies at The Antonine University and is presently furthering his studies at Our Lady of Lebanon Seminary in Washington, D.C. Subdeacon Dany will commence his summer assignment on June 1 at St. John Maron Church in Williamsville (Buffalo), N.Y.

Following the ordination ceremony, the Blessed Mother's Guild along with the parish community hosted a dinner reception in his honor. □



Houston, Texas Massabki Brothers Award



Joseph and Anastasia Abboud surrounded from left to right by Fr. André Estephan, Fr. Milad Yaghi, Dr. Eddie Abdalla, Parish Council President, and Fr. Pierre El-Khoury.

by Alberto G. Tohmé

On April 19, 2009, the community of Our Lady of the Cedars in Houston, Texas, honored Joseph and Anastasia Abboud with the Massabki Award for their relentless efforts in supporting the church community since the inception of the parish. Fr. Milad Yaghi expressed his gratitude for Joseph's many accomplishments for the church community, including, but not limited to, his leadership in the design and construction oversight of the church building, the rectory, and, more recently, the repairs to the damaged church after Hurricane Ike. "Joseph was always ready to help and he never said no to any of my requests," said Fr. Yaghi. Similarly, Fr. Yaghi praised Anastasia's continued volunteerism and leadership in the ladies' organization and the CCE program, among the multitude of activities in which she has participated over many years.

This award is given every year to one or more individuals who have shown unconditional dedication to our church and have distinguished themselves as true Maronite Catholics in word and deed. We are indebted to Joseph and Anastasia for their generosity and genuine care for our community. □

Newtown Square, Pennsylvania Tenth Annual Festival

Saint Sharbel Maronite Catholic Church in Newtown Square, Pennsylvania, will hold its Tenth Annual Lebanese Heritage Festival on June 20, 2009 from noon- 11 p.m. and on June 21 from 11 a.m. - 9 p.m. For more information call the Church Office at 610-353-5952 . □

Glen Allen, Virginia 25th Annual Lebanese Food Festival



Patrons at the St. Anthony's Lebanese Food festival enjoying the activities.

by Chet Wade

The silver anniversary edition of its Lebanese Food Festival really sparkled for St. Anthony Maronite Catholic Church in Glen Allen, Va.

More than 20,000 people attended the 25th annual event held May 15-17 in suburban Richmond. They enjoyed three days of homemade traditional Lebanese food, delicious desserts, folk dancing and live music on the church's fifteen wooded acres.

"Each year we say, 'It can't get any bigger or any better,'" said Monsignor George M. Sebaali, St. Anthony's pastor. "But then, the parishioners pull together and they do make it bigger and better. It is a tribute to their love of their church, their culture and wanting to share with the entire community."

The festival started small, but has since grown into one the spring season highlights of Central Virginia. Visitors come from all around the state.

Planning for the next year starts almost as soon as the latest festival ends. Church members begin cooking in February, starting with items that can be frozen. Food that cannot be frozen is prepared during the week leading up to the festival and some items – such as *shawirma* and *tabouli* – must be made fresh throughout the festival.

The final week before the festival becomes nearly a 24-hour effort. The church grounds are prepared, tents raised, lighting installed, tables and chairs are put in place, and food booths are set up.

During the festival, long lines formed at the ten food booths during peak times. It takes ninety church members and friends to cover each of the three daily work shifts. They staff the food and beverage booths and kitchen, carry food from the kitchen to the booths, keep the tables and grounds clean, and serve sit-down dinners in the church social hall. *Zalabia* and three kinds of *katayif* were made right before patrons' wide eyes. There also was a wide selection of Lebanese

pastries, with many patrons stopping at that booth first to make sure they didn't miss out. A "bulk" booth allowed patrons to take home large quantities to enjoy later at home.

Feeding such a large crowd requires "super-sized" amounts of food. About 21,000 homemade meat, cheese, spinach, and feta and spinach pies were sold and about 1000 pounds of *kibbee* was served. Other dishes included roasted lamb; baked chicken; stuffed squash, grape leaves and cabbage; beef and chicken shawirma; shish kabob; *homus bi tahini* and other Lebanese delicacies.

Guests were entertained throughout the three days by live music by the Mazloom Family Band. About ninety dancers ranging in age from four years old to adults performed traditional Lebanese folk dances.

"Everyone is tired when it is over, but it is a good tired," Monsignor Sebaali said. "It is the kind of tired that comes from doing something good and doing something well. We are already starting to think about how to make our 26th festival the best yet." □

From the Book Shelf

Maronite Book of Hymns according to the Antiochian Syriac Church, published in 2008 by the Patriarchal Liturgical Commission, contains Maronite Syriac tunes for the Maronite *Qurbono*; psalms as well as various Maronite and Marian hymns.

This 569 page hard cover book is available from Saint Maron Publications for \$25 plus \$5 shipping.

Maronite Syriac Hymns CD of the Maronite *Qurbono*, prepared by the Patriarchal Liturgical Commission in 2008 with Fathers Nassim Hage and Youhana Geha, soloists, on a double CD is available from Saint Maron Publications for \$25 plus \$5 shipping.

The Maronite Icons according to the Maronite Liturgical Year and the Feasts of the Saints was prepared by the Icons Workshop at the Maronite Eparchy of Cyprus. It consists of 60 icons (41 for Sundays and Holy Days and 19 for Maronite Saints). This collection of icons (14" x 20") along with a booklet explaining each icon is available from Saint Maron Publications for \$100 plus \$10 shipping.

Mary in the Maronite Church, by Archbishop Boutros Gemayel and translated by Fr. Georges El-Khalli, is now available from Saint Maron Publications for \$15 plus \$4 shipping.

To order your copy (ies) please write to:
Saint Maron Publications
4611 Sadler Road
Glen Allen, Virginia 23060

For a complete listing of publications carried by Saint Maron Publications, please visit www.stmaron.org. □



Plenary Indulgence Offered for Year for Priests

The Vatican is offering a plenary indulgence for all faithful on the occasion of the Year for Priests, which is set to begin June 19, 2009 and last one year.

The decree was made public on May 12 and signed by Cardinal James Francis Stafford and Bishop Gianfranco Girotti, respectively Penitentiary Major and Regent of the Apostolic Penitentiary.

The Year for Priests marks the 150th anniversary of the death of St. Jean Marie Vianney, also known as the Curé de Ars.

The decree noted that Benedict XVI will preside at the opening liturgy June 19, the solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, "a day of priestly sanctification." He will celebrate vespers before the relics of the saint, brought to Rome for the occasion by the Bishop of the French Diocese of Belley-Ars.

The Year will end in St. Peter's Square, in the presence of priests from all over the world "who will renew their faithfulness to Christ and their bonds of fraternity."

For priests, the plenary indulgence can be gained by praying lauds or vespers before the Blessed Sacrament exposed to public adoration or in the tabernacle. They must also "offer themselves with a ready and generous heart for the celebration of the sacraments, especially the sacrament of penance."

The plenary indulgence, which under current norms must be accompanied by sacramental confession, the Eucharist and praying for the intentions of the Pope, can also be applied to deceased priests.

Priests are granted a partial indulgence, also applicable to deceased priests, every time they "devotedly recite the prayers duly approved to lead a saintly life and to carry out the duties entrusted to them."

For the faithful, a plenary indulgence can be obtained on the opening and closing days of the Year for Priests, on the 150th anniversary of the death of St. Jean-Marie Vianney, on the first Thursday of the month, or on any other day established by the ordinaries of particular places for the good of the faithful.

To obtain the indulgence the faithful must attend Mass in an oratory or Church and offer prayers to "Jesus Christ, supreme and eternal Priest, for the priests of the Church, or perform any good work to sanctify and mould them to his heart."

The conditions for the faithful for earning a plenary indulgence are to have gone to confession and prayed for the intentions of the Pope.

The elderly, the sick, and all those who for any legitimate reason are unable to leave their homes may obtain the plenary indulgence if, with the intention of observing the usual three conditions as soon as they can, "on the days concerned, they pray for the sanctification of priests and offer their sickness and suffering to God through Mary, Queen of the Apostles."

A partial indulgence is offered to the faithful when they repeat five times the Our Father, Hail Mary and Glory Be, or any other duly approved prayer "in honor of the Sacred Heart

of Jesus, to ask that priests maintain purity and sanctity of life." (Zenit.org, May 12, 2009) □

Pray a Lot and Well, Pope Urges Priests

Pope Benedict XVI is encouraging priests to pray a lot and pray well, saying that in this way they will be increasingly united to Christ. The Pope made this invitation on May 3 when he ordained nineteen new priests for the Diocese of Rome at a Mass held in St. Peter's Basilica.

The Holy Father encouraged them to live a life of total surrender to God, like that of the apostles who changed the course of history proclaiming salvation in the name of Christ.

"The disciple, and especially the apostle, experiences the same joy of Jesus in knowing the name and face of the Father; and he shares as well his same sorrow at seeing that God is not known, that his love is not reciprocated," the Pontiff said.

He added: "On one hand, we exclaim as John did in his First Letter: 'See what love the Father has bestowed on us that we may be called the children of God. Yet so we are.' And on the other hand, bitterly we attest: 'The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him' (1 John 3:1).

"It is true, and we priests know this from experience: The 'world,' in the sense that John uses the word, does not understand the Christian, does not understand the ministers of the Gospel -- in part, because in fact it does not know God and in part, because it does not want to know him."

Trapped

Nevertheless, Benedict XVI cautioned, the "world" also ensnares the Church, "contaminating its members and even the ordained ministers."

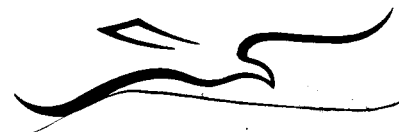
This world, he explained, "is a mentality, a way of thinking and living that can contaminate even the Church, and in fact does contaminate it, and therefore demands constant vigilance and purification."

"We are 'in' the world and we run the risk of also being 'of' the world," the Pope added. "And in fact, sometimes we are."

Prayer, he said, is the way to reach sanctity and a complete surrender to God, "above all, in the holy Mass of each day."

"The Eucharistic celebration is the greatest and highest act of prayer and constitutes the center and the fount from which the other forms of prayer receive their 'sap': the Liturgy of the Hours, Eucharistic adoration, lectio divina, the holy rosary, meditation," the Holy Father stated.

"The priest who prays a lot and prays well becomes ever more detached from himself and ever more united to Jesus, the Good Shepherd and Servant of his brothers," he went on. "In conformity with him, the priest too 'gives his life' for the sheep who have been entrusted to him" (Zenit.org, May 3, 2009). □



Scranton, Pennsylvania *May Crowning*



Anna Catherine Ligorio crowning the Blessed Virgin.



His Excellency Bishop Stephen Hector Doueïhi, Retired Bishop of the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn, presided at the Divine liturgy on Sunday in the presence of the Most Reverend Thomas J. Olmsted, Bishop of Phoenix, and the Byzantine Catholic Bishop of the Byzantine Catholic Eparchy of Van Nuys, California, His Excellency Gerard Dino, and many Eastern Roman Catholic clergy. □

by Fr. Francis J. Marini

On Sunday, May 17, 2009, St. Ann Maronite Church in Scranton, Pennsylvania, celebrated its annual May Crowning during the 11a.m., Divine Liturgy. The May Crowning was sponsored by Our Lady Queen of Peace Sodality, as was the Mother-Daughter Tea which followed immediately in the Church Hall. During the liturgy, the newly commissioned Icon of Our Lady Queen of Peace was presented by the iconographer and parishioner Judy Soma, accepted on behalf of the Sodality by Sodality Prefect Ann Abbott Bryant and Vice-Prefect Kathryn Karam Cawley and blessed by the Pastor, Father Francis J. Marini.

The liturgical ministries of lecturing, carrying the gifts and giving the sign of peace were performed by the members of the May Court. After Communion, the members of the May Court processed to the altar of Our Lady, and a crown of roses was placed on the statue of the Virgin by First Communicant and May Queen Anna Catherine Laager, daughter of Atty. Donald C. and Maria Deep Laager. Co-chairs of both events were Sodality members Maria Deep Laager and Nicole Siconolfi Wheeler. □

Phoenix, Arizona *Mission's Tenth Anniversary*

by Fr. Ghattas Khoury

St. Joseph Maronite Church in Phoenix, Arizona, celebrated the tenth anniversary of the Dedication of the actual church building on March 21-22, 2009 with a banquet held on Saturday evening.

Gift to the Holy Father



Mr. Wadie Abounassar presents "The Savior" to His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI.

Mr. Wadie Abounassar, the Executive Director of the Assembly of Catholic Bishops in the Holy Land, presented and gifted a signed limited edition (2/500) print of "The Savior," an oil painting done by artist Micheline E. Abounassar, to His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI on May 12, 2009. The Pope accepted and blessed the artist's work at the luncheon with the Ordinaries of the Holy Land, the Abbots and the Papal Entourage in the Patriarchal See of the Latins in Jerusalem.

The artist is a member of Our Lady of Mount Lebanon-St. Peter Cathedral in Los Angeles, California. □

First Holy Communion in the Maronite Eparchies in the U.S.A.

San Antonio, Texas



Cecilia Chavez, Ana de la Cruz, Alyssa Flores, Gabriella Gallegos, Stephanie Younes, Madeleine Younes, Douglas Karam, Federico Chavez, Maroun Harb, Vincent Malven, and Jared Rusnak received their First Holy Communion on April 26, 2009 at St. George Maronite Church in San Antonio, Texas. □

San Francisco, California



Eliana Abboud, Matthew Hajjar, Nicole Turk, Eleege Eidson, Lena Hammack, and David Assio received their First Holy Communion on May 3, 2009, at Our Lady of Lebanon Church in Millbrae (San Francisco), California. □

Newtown Square, Pennsylvania



Elizabeth Durr, Maxwell Durr, Christopher Madanat, Helen Madanat, Reneen Muqbel, and Noel LoMonaco received their First Holy Communion at St. Sharbel Church in Newtown Square, Pennsylvania, on May 10, 2009.

Williamsville, New York



Jacob Chabat, John Michael Moran, Elijah Khoury, Julia Khoury, Joy Moussa, Evan Mansour, Lucian Issa and Jonathan Mansour received their First Holy Eucharist on Sunday, May 17, 2009 at St. John Maron Church in Williamsville (Buffalo), N.Y. □

A Real Story of Struggle and Pain and an Opportunity to Send a Message of Hope

by the Maronite Outreach Sponsorship Team

The Maronite Outreach shares the story of Simon Assaf, a 13 year-old child in Lebanon who needs our help!

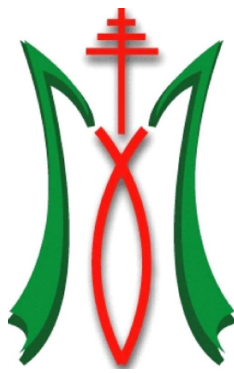
Simon belongs to a family that has had more than its fair share of suffering and struggle. He is the eldest of three siblings who lost their mother, Maguy, at the age of 45, to metastatic breast cancer. They all live with their father in the village of *Kfar Emay* in the *Chouf* area.

The family of Simon Assaf had originally been displaced from *Kfar Emay* in the early 1980's due to the war; they lost relatives, their house and their land. Simon's family had the courage to return to their native village after the end of the war in 1990. Since then, they have faced multiple challenges that are threatening their ability to stay united as a family and the ability of the children to continue their education.

Simon's father, Bechara Assaf, is 44 years old and a widower for the last three years. Upon his return to their native village, he opened a shop that sold construction tools and sanitary items. Due to the poor economic situation and the small number of people living in that area, he changed his store into a wood shop where he manufactured boxes for agricultural products. He was again forced to change his line of business and opened a small grocery store. The store makes very minimal profit because the few residents of the previously deserted village are generally poor and pay for groceries in installments. Simultaneously, he owns a pickup truck which he uses to transport items for a fee. His monthly income from the grocery store and the pickup truck is limited to US \$550.

This small monthly income has to support Bechara and his three sons. Simon, age 13, and Gilbert, age 9, attend the Antonine Sisters School in *Rechmaya*, a small neighboring town; the yearly tuition for each one amounts to US \$1000. Their brother, Jean Paul, age 10, has attention deficit disorder and learning disabilities for which he is enrolled at a special program school in *Aley* at no cost. In addition to the tuition, the father has to provide for the basic needs of food and clothing. This is not to mention the cost of his medication for diabetes, as well as a debt of over US \$10,000 accumulated during the treatment of his wife's breast cancer.

Simple mathematics easily show that the small income of US \$550 per month cannot provide for all the needs of the father and the three sons, as well as help to pay off the large medical debt. We call upon you to urgently lend a helping hand by sponsoring Simon, the eldest son, which will take his tuition cost off the shoulders of his father and allow him to remain in school. A monthly payment of US \$90 will cover the majority of Simon's tuition and academic expenses such



Maronite Outreach
Dedicated to the
preservation of
Christianity in
Lebanon

as books. Your generosity and sacrifice will undoubtedly have a major impact on Simon's life by allowing him to stay in school, by giving hope for a better future, and by lessening the burden on his widowed father. More importantly, the impact of such generosity goes beyond the material to touch the hearts of children and families in need because they experience the real meaning of Christian charity and solidarity.

If US \$90 on a monthly basis is beyond your means, we invite you to partner with a family member or friend to help sponsor Simon.

The Maronite Outreach currently sponsors 120 children in Lebanon thanks to the help of committed donors like you. Many children have similar stories and struggles to Simon's. The list is long but not beyond our ability as a Maronite community in the U.S.A., to make a difference. A child sponsorship can change a child's life, give hope to his or her family and is a real investment in the future of our community in Lebanon. Once you become a sponsor, you receive a formal socioeconomic report about the child. You will also be able to exchange letters and pictures, and even visits!

To sponsor Simon or another child, please visit us at www.maroniteoutreach.org or call (213) 458-0580. □

Springfield, Massachusetts Church Fundraiser



Front row from left to right: Sally Mitson, Beverly Place and Donna Clarke; back row: Bea Ellis, Kathy LaBella, Leila Abdala, JD Mitson and Ruth Shecrallah.

A group of individuals from St. Anthony's Maronite Church in Springfield, Massachusetts, has been hosting a monthly fundraiser for the church for the past several months. Orders for spinach pies have been taken every month and then a group of church volunteers gets together and cooks the spinach pies. It has been a huge success. □



Final Preparations for the 46th Annual Maronite Convention

The 46th Annual Maronite Convention is approaching. Sponsored by the National Apostolate of Maronites and hosted by Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral, it will be held July 1-5, 2009 at the luxurious Hyatt Regency Century Plaza in Los Angeles, California. The Convention will be a great opportunity for Maronites and friends from all over the United States to see the City of Angels while celebrating our Maronite faith, heritage and history. The Convention is great for all ages as everyone will have a program that fits his/her liking.



The Los Angeles skyline.

This year we will have several important events:

Welcome to Los Angeles Reception

The Convention will open with a welcoming reception with Lebanese food, drinks and music on Wednesday, July 1, 2009 at 8 p.m. This event is great for the whole family as we gather as a single, united Maronite Community.

Cardinal Leonardo Sandri



We will be honoring His Eminence Cardinal Sandri, Prefect of the Congregation for Eastern Churches, on Thursday, July 2, 2009 at 12:30 p.m. This is a great event to learn about the Maronite Church and its connection to the Vatican. Cardinal Sandri will join us during the whole convention.

Joumana Mdawar



Superstar Joumana Mdawar, a familiar face on Noursat, will hold a special concert on Thursday, July 2, 2009 at 8:30 p.m. along with the performance of the Talent Show finalists and the presentation of the NAM scholarship recipients. Joumana will delight you with her angelic voice as she will be singing in various languages.

Mr. Carlos Slim Helu

Successful businessman and Mexican Maronite entrepreneur of Lebanese descent Mr. Carlos Slim Helu will be joining us for a special reception and luncheon in his honor on Friday, July 3, 2009 at 1p.m., preceded by a private reception for people with tickets of \$500, \$750 and \$1,000. This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to meet one of the richest men in the world who has greatly succeeded and is leaving a great legacy behind.



Hollywood Night

Friday, July 3, 2009 at 8 p.m. we will have Hollywood Night. This is a great chance to experience the glamour of Hollywood and to know more about our Lebanese stars in the entertainment industry. We will have special shows. There will also be performances by two American and Lebanese bands along with an elegant dinner and perfect setting.

Grand Banquet

Don't miss this gala event taking place on Saturday, July 4, 2009 at 7 p.m. Secretary of Transportation Ray LaHood will celebrate Independence Day along with His Eminence Roger Cardinal Mahony and many distinguished dignitaries. We will have an exciting program that showcases our contributions to the U.S.A. and that highlight our distinctive culture. We will also celebrate the 4th of July with a special tribute to this beloved country, the U.S.A. Then superstar Ghassan Saliba will delight us with his performance.



'Till we meet in Birmingham

The closing brunch will take place Sunday, July 5, 2009 at noon. Each NAM Convention comes to a close with the promise that next year we will gather together once again as a family united by our faith and heritage.

The Convention will also have children's activities for the younger children who are not part of the MYO. They will have the opportunity to learn and play as well in a very specific and exciting program designed for them.

We will have exciting tours and activities for the different groups.

The Convention will be a week full of special guests, learning, praying, socializing and much more. Don't miss this opportunity to visit the City of Angels and learn about our Maronite faith and heritage. Fill out your registration form and don't delay! We are opening our hearts and hands to welcome you to our beautiful city.

For more information please contact the NAM office at 914-964-3070 or Our Lady of Mt. Lebanon Rectory at 310-275-6634; or visit the website at www.namnews.org □

Scranton, Pennsylvania *Annual Spring Hafli and Award*



Fr. Francis J. Marini, Pastor, presents Ann Abbott Bryant with the Silver Massabki Award.

by Fr. Francis J. Marini

The Fourth Annual Spring *Hafli* was held by the parishioners of Saint Ann Maronite Church in Scranton, Penn., on Saturday evening, April 25, 2009, at the Saint Mary's Center in downtown Scranton.

The evening began with *mezza* and cocktails followed by a Lebanese meal prepared and served by Khairallah and Sonia El-Ghazal and their staff at the Savory Maza Restaurant. A brief program began at 8:00 PM, followed by dancing to live Lebanese music by Joe Tayoun and his Middle East Ensemble from Philadelphia, Penn.

The highlight of the evening was the presentation of the Silver Massabki Award to Ann Abbott Bryant, a lifelong member of the parish, and current Prefect of Our Lady Queen of Peace Sodality. Ann's family were all in attendance to

witness the conferral of this award by the Pastor, Father Francis J. Marini on behalf of the National Apostolate of Maronites.

The evening was a great success thanks to the leadership and hard work of this year's co-chairs Atty. Joseph C. Peters and Mrs. Joyce Abdalla. □

National Youth Workshop 2009

The National Maronite Youth Retreat will take place Tuesday, July 21, 2009, through Sunday, July 26, 2009, in Ligonier, Penn., at the Antiochian Village Conference and Retreat Center. Located in the foothills of the Laurel Mountains in Ligonier, the retreat center is surrounded by God's finest natural creations and will serve as a spiritual and social backdrop for the summer retreat.

This summer, the youth will explore their spiritual roots under the theme "The just man shall flourish like a palm tree, and will grow like a Cedar of Lebanon." Youth Director Father Gary George, C.Ss.R, has said numerous times that in order for Maronites to fully understand and appreciate both their faith and their traditions, they must first understand where they have come from

The retreat is for youth participants ages 13 through 18 (including 2009 high school graduates). Father Gary is eagerly anticipating the event, and he, along with Bishop Robert Shaheen and Bishop Gregory Mansour, are asking that each parish be represented by at least two youth participants. The retreat offers experiences and memories that are both inherently valuable to the participants and often treasured by the participants, as well.

For more information about the retreat, please visit the youth office's Web site at www.maroniteyouth.com, or email Father Gary at abounag1@hotmail.com or by phone at (330) 792-2371. □