



The Maronite Voice

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Bechara Peter Rai 77th Maronite Patriarch “Communion and Love”



Patriarch Bechara Peter Rai

Beloved People of God,

Our Maronite Church has recently witnessed the passing of the torch at the helm from His Beatitude and Eminence Cardinal Nasrallah Peter Sfeir to the newly elected Patriarch Bechara Peter Rai after convening a Synod in which I participated along with His Excellency Bishop Gregory Mansour on March 9, 2011. During the Synod, we prayed, we consulted, and we discussed the situation of our Maronite Church.

On Tuesday, March 15, through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, our Synod elected His Excellency Bechara Rai, Bishop of *Jbeil*, to be the next Patriarch who will lead the Maronite Church at this critical moment. He was enthroned on the Feast of the Annunciation on March 25, 2011, at the Patriarchal See in *Bkerke*, Lebanon.

Patriarch Rai has taken the motto "Communion and Love," promising he will place his ministry in that spirit and calling us to follow that motto as well. Our Maronite faithful received the news with great joy as people flocked to *Bkerke* to congratulate and extend their best wishes to His Beatitude, pledging their loyalty and support. For his part, realizing the weight of the tasks ahead, His Beatitude called on every one of us to keep him in our prayers so that he will be able to live up to the honor of his ministry.

On his first address after his election, Patriarch Rai expressed his thanks to God, to his predecessor, "the permanent Patriarch and father" His Beatitude Nasrallah Peter Sfeir, to all his brother bishops and to all the faithful. He declared his communion to the Holy Father and his obedience to his Divine office. He pledged to work untiringly to lead through communion and charity. He would focus on the implementation of the resolutions of the Maronite Patriarchal Synod (2003-2006). He wants to set in motion the Secretariat as a vehicle to coordinate the various committees. He expressed his desire to visit all the Eparchies where he will meet the people and pray with them. *(Continues on page 4)*

Schedule of Bishop Robert Shaheen

April 11 - 12, 2011

Eastern Catholic Bishops' Meeting, St. Louis, Mo.

April 14, 2011

History Committee Meeting, Maronite Heritage Institute Center, St. Louis, Mo.

April 17, 2011

Palm Sunday Celebration, St. Raymond Cathedral, St. Louis, Mo.

April 18 - 24, 2011

Holy Week and Easter Celebration, St. Raymond Cathedral, St. Louis, Mo.

April 21, 2011

Chrism Mass, St. Raymond Cathedral, St. Louis, Mo.

May 1, 2011

First Holy Communion, St. Raymond Cathedral, St. Louis, Mo.

May 2, 2011

47th Anniversary of Priesthood, Danbury, Conn.

May 19, 2011

Evening Prayer and Dinner for Clergy, Maronite Heritage Institute Center, St. Louis, Mo.

May 20, 2011

Dedication of the Maronite Heritage Institute Center, St. Louis, Mo.

May 21, 2011

Hafli, Cedars Hall, St. Louis, Mo.

May 22, 2011

Solemn Dedication Liturgy of the Heritage Culture Center, St. Louis, Mo. □

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contact the NAM office
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Retreats for Women



The Maronite Servants Sisters enjoy the company of two young adults from St. Theresa Parish in Brockton, Mass.

Take a break from the hectic rush of daily routine, and come apart for a time to renew your spirit in the presence of the Lord. The Maronite Servants of Christ the Light have opened their monastery for women to come for day or overnight times of retreat. Retreat visitors will participate in their Maronite schedule of daily prayer, meals, and spirit of prayerful silence. Also, arrangements can be made for a guided time of retreat offered by one of the Sisters, including talks, reflections, and sharing on topics of spirituality. Women are invited to contact Sister Marla Marie via email or phone to make arrangements. Contact information: sister@maroniteservants.org or 781- 331-3290. □

The Glory of Lebanon Has Been Given to His Beatitude Bechara Peter Rai The 77th Maronite Patriarch of Antioch and All the East



Patriarch Sfeir, assisted by Archbishops Roland Abou-Jaoude and Chokrallah Harb, ordains Bishop Rai as the 77th Patriarch.

The Synod of the Maronite Bishops, held in *Bkerke*, Lebanon, elected on Tuesday, March 15, 2011, His Excellency Bishop Bechara Rai, Bishop of the Eparchy of *Jbeil*, Lebanon, as the 77th Maronite Patriarch of Antioch and All the East. Patriarch Rai replaces Patriarch Nasrallah Peter Cardinal Sfeir, who had retired earlier this year at the age of 91 after twenty five-years as Patriarch.

The son of Youssef and Taminee Rai, he was born in *Hemlaya* (the town of St. Rafka) on February 25, 1940. He pursued his complementary and secondary studies at the Collège Notre Dame at *Jamhour*. He took his monastic vows with the *Mariamite* Order on August 31, 1962; was ordained a priest on September 3, 1967; and was consecrated Archbishop on July 12, 1986.

From 1986 to 1990 he served as a Patriarchal Vicar at *Bkerke*, and in 1990 he was appointed Archbishop of *Jbeil*. Patriarch Rai founded Notre Dame University in Louaizé and was its president from 1978 -1984. From 1982 to 1986 he presided over the Court of Appeal of the Maronite Tribunal. His Holiness Pope John Paul II named him

as the Coordinator of the Synod for Lebanon (1990-1995). He chaired the Episcopal Commission for the Affairs of the Family (1997) and that of Communications since 2009.

Patriarch Rai holds a degree in philosophy and theology and a doctorate in canon and civil law from the University of Saint John Lateran (the Rota Tribunal in Rome). He taught Canon Law and theology at St. Joseph University in Beirut (USJ) and at Holy Spirit University in *Kaslik* (USEK) and at the *Sagesse* University.

Patriarch Bechara Rai is the first Maronite Patriarch to come from a religious order in more than 200 years. The last in date was Patriarch Toubia el-Khazen (1756-1766), who also was a monk of the *Mariamite* Order.

As soon as the doors of the Patriarchal See were opened after the election, the inner courtyard was invaded first by media representatives, then by social, political and religious personalities and a multitude of people who had come to congratulate the newly elected Maronite Patriarch. In *Hemlaya*, his native village, there was a real explosion of joy, as there was in the Eparchy of *Jbeil*, of which he had been in charge for twenty-one years.

The election of the new Patriarch took place in record time. After two days of spiritual retreat beginning on March 9, Patriarch Rai was elected on the thirteenth ballot, by thirty-four votes of the thirty-seven Bishops comprising the Maronite Electoral College. Patriarch Rai chose "Communion and Love" as his motto.

After his election on March 15, arrayed in his patriarchal vestments, His Beatitude Patriarch Bechara Rai appeared on the staircase of the Patriarchal Seat with His Beatitude Patriarch Nasrallah Peter Cardinal Sfeir and the Papal Nuncio, Msgr. Gabriele Caccia, at his sides and surrounded by all the Maronite bishops.

The new Patriarch was received with long applause, joyful ululations and tears of joy from all those who had gathered at the Patriarchate at the announcement of his election. After imparting his apostolic blessing upon those present, Patriarch Rai led them to the Church of Our Lady of *Bkerke* for a prayer of Thanksgiving.

Patriarch Rai thanked the Bishops for electing him: "Blessed be God, and blessed be His Holy Spirit, for this election so full of joy, happiness and love. ... My brothers the Bishops have elected me to succeed Patriarch Nasrallah Sfeir, and I hope to be up to their expectations." He paid special and heartfelt tribute to Patriarch Sfeir: "to his spirit of prayer, patience, kindness, love, dependence on the Divine Providence ... He has borne his cross and has taught us to bear it on our shoulders and in our hearts."

He also thanked Archbishop Roland Abou-Jaoude, Patriarchal Vicar General, "for his service as Administrator of the Maronite Church;" His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI; Cardinal Leonardo Sandri, Prefect of the Congregation of the Oriental Churches; former President Amin Gemayel, who had come to *Bkerke*; and Amin and Farid Khazen, who according to tradition were the guardians of *Bkerke* during the conclave.

Patriarch Rai asked the faithful to pray with him for the unity of the

Lebanese and the building of a country that brings together all its children with love: "With Patriarch Sfeir and the Prelates, we pray for Lebanon, for an exit to the crisis ..., as the great Pope and soon to be Blessed John Paul II stated when he affirmed that 'Lebanon is a message for the East and for the West,' a message that we bear in our prayers ..." Patriarch Rai also expressed a special message of love and gratitude to his parents.

On March 25, 2011, Feast of the Annunciation, he was installed as the 77th Patriarch of the Maronite.

Congratulations of Lebanese Officials



Patriarch Bechara Peter Rai, President Michel Sleiman, and Patriarch Emeritus Nasrallah Peter Cardinal Sfeir.

From Tuesday noon [March 15] until Friday [March 18], there was a stream of well-wishers, both officials and faithful, coming to *Bkerke* to present their congratulations to the newly elected Patriarch.

The President of the Republic, General Michel Sleiman, after his private talk with Patriarch Rai stated: "I congratulate the Lebanese and the Maronites in particular, for the election of Bishop Rai on this glorious day ... I have great hope for the role he will play, which will pursue the development of the Church and maintain its constant principles so that it may remain the pillar of Lebanon and of the East." President Sleiman also praised the outgoing Patriarch Nasrallah Peter Cardinal Sfeir, "who has always been vigilant to see that *Bkerke* remains a place where all the Lebanese may be able to come together and a reference point for all the Christians of the East."

Prime Minister-designate Najib Mikati had a closed-door conversation with Patriarch Rai, to whom he wished all success and declared to the media: "His Beatitude is conscious of the weight of responsibility that awaits him on all levels, on the internal level as well as on that of the whole Middle East." He also voiced the hope that "the new Patriarch will complete the work which Patriarch Sfeir had already begun and will be able to consolidate national and spiritual values ..."

Former President Amin Gemayel, Head of the *Kataeb* Party, stressed that "Patriarch Rai is a man of faith. He is truly the Shepherd of Lebanon and has always worked for unity, never for dissension... He also paid tribute to Patriarch Sfeir.

Caretaker Prime Minister Saad Hariri congratulated

Patriarch Rai and had a closed-door talk with him. He noted that "*Bkerke* has always brought the Lebanese together ... We have always said that Patriarch Sfeir is the conscience of Lebanon, and we hope that the election of Patriarch Rai will be a good augury for the country."

House Speaker Nabih Berri presented his congratulations on Wednesday, March 16: "I hope that Patriarch Rai will be an *annunciation* [glad tidings] for all the Lebanese and a pastor for all those in whose name he speaks."

Dr. Samir Geagea, Leader of the Lebanese Forces, stressed that "Patriarch Rai will surely continue all that Patriarch Sfeir undertook over twenty-five years" adding that the Church needs more soul, on the one hand, and more organization and development, on the other."

General Michel Aoun also expressed his full support for the new Patriarch, voicing hope for the full success of his mission.

Several Shiite, Sunni and Druze leaders came with their people to offer their congratulations. Ali Abdel Karim, Syria's Ambassador to Lebanon, transmitted the congratulations of President Bashar Assad to His Beatitude Rai as well as an invitation to visit Syria. □

Bechara Peter Rai 77th Maronite Patriarch

Continued from page 1

Patriarch Rai has a great personality of a pastor, father and leader. He is highly educated and organized. He comes from the Maronite order of the Blessed Mother and has been a bishop for 25 years. He is an eloquent speaker and a familiar face on the TV stations, especially Noursat on his weekly program "Boushra El Rahi" (The Good News of the Shepherd). He is courageous in saying the truth and diplomatic in his dealings with others. He is definitely a great fit to lead our Church at this critical time.



Patriarch Rai

For our part, we pledge our support and obedience to him. We will pray for him and for the success of his ministry of bringing people together to live by his motto "communion and charity." May God grant him many years. □

+Robert J. Shaheen
Bishop of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon

Food For Thought

Every form of gift is, in a word, a sign of the presence of God, because it leads to the fundamental discovery that, at the origin, every gift is given.

Pope Benedict XVI

The Homily of Patriarch Bechara Peter Rai at his Enthronement as Patriarch of Antioch and all the East. Friday, March 25, 2011

"The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore, the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God" (Lk 1:35).



Patriarch Rai delivers the homily after his Enthronement on March 25, 2011.

With the annunciation of the Angel to Mary, "communion and love," which I have chosen as the motto for my patriarchal ministry, were brought forth. The One God, out of his love for us, entered into partnership with us. The Father sent the Angel Gabriel to Mary of Nazareth to announce to all of humanity his divine plan of redemption. The Son, Jesus Christ, fruit of divine love, with his supernatural power became flesh in the Virgin Mary by the descent of the Holy Spirit, to achieve the salvation of men and their redemption. Then, humanity entered, by the person of Mary, the Virgin Mother, into communion with the One God, in his Trinity, when she expressed her consent full of faith, hope and love. She said: "Behold I am the handmaid of the Lord, may it be done to me according to your word" (Lk 1:38).

What a miraculous exchange between God and man, an exchange of communion and love, which continues throughout history by the descent of the Holy Spirit and with his action!

The event of the annunciation, which has been reported by the Evangelist Luke, was also reported in the honored Koran, in *Surat Al-Omran* (44-48): "Behold! The angel said: "O Mary! Allah gives you good tidings of a word from him, his name will be Christ Issa, the son of Mary, held in honor in his childhood and in maturity... and Allah will teach him the Book and Wisdom, the Torah and the Gospel and appoint him a messenger to the children of Israel." The honored Koran also continues the story in *Surat Mariam* (15-36), adding that "the one born from Mariam said that he is a servant of Allah, his prophet, his sign and his mercy", and then later connects his incarnation, death and resurrection saying: "So Peace is upon me the day I was born, the day that I die and the day that I shall be raised up to life" (32).

This event of the annunciation, common to Christianity and Islam and which the Church celebrates on March 25, the Lebanese State has also decreed (Decree No. 2369-27/2/2010) that it be a national holiday, meaning by this initiative that Lebanon is a homeland of

"communion and love". Indeed it is already so by its National Pact, the covenant of common life which is fortified by its constitution which says: "There is no legitimacy for any authority that goes against common life" (Forward). It is based upon the mutual recognition of each other, the one destiny, and the forming of a perfect union within the national social fabric. It is likewise found in the Lebanese formula, based upon equality in the participation of Christians and Muslims in the government and the administration. Out of this we expect to assure stability in our existence and achieve democracy and economic prosperity, on the condition that this formula stays in a permanent development so as to meet the requirements of modernity and historical experience (Political Work Policy, page 30).

"Communion and love" have directed my whole life since my birth in *Hemlaya*, in the *Matn* district, on February 25, 1940. I was baptized at the Church of Our Lady of the Annunciation, in the village of *Chouya*, on March 25. "Communion and love" have accompanied me as a monk in the Mariamite Religious Order which I joined in September 1952 and professed my religious perpetual vows in July, 1962, and as I was ordained a priest by the late Bishop Mikhael Doumit, Bishop of *Sarba*, September 3, 1967, and then as Bishop, Patriarchal Vicar, at *Bkerke* on July 12, 1986 and later as Bishop of [the Eparchy of] *Jbeil* on July 8, 1990.

This same "communion in love," I have requested from His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI as soon as I was elected as Patriarch of Antioch and all the East on March 15 of this year. He granted this to me out of his affection and love, as the supreme shepherd of the Universal Church. This was told to us by His Excellency the Papal Nuncio

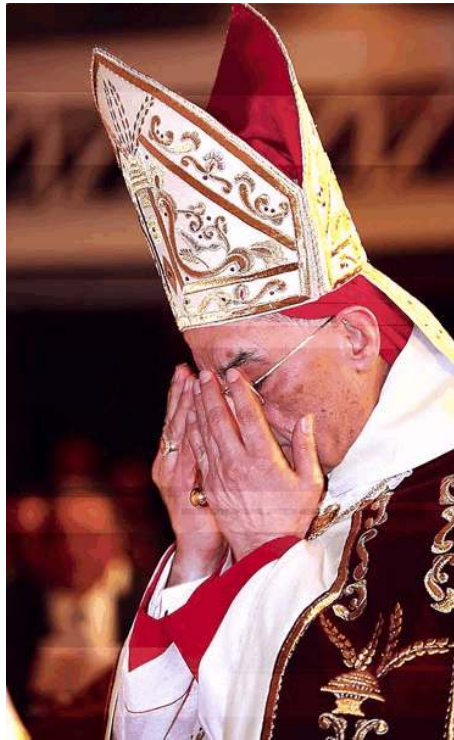
Monsignor Gabriel Caccia, who also made it public to us, and to whom I expressed my deep thanks for his solicitude and care which he showed and for his presence with us today representing His Holiness the Sovereign Pontiff.

Your Beatitude and Eminence, Our father venerable and beloved Cardinal Nasrallah Peter Sfeir:

Twenty-five years ago you imposed your blessed hands upon me and ordained me bishop by the grace of God and the choice of our Holy Bishops' Synod. Today by the imposition of your holy hands and the participation of my brother bishops you enthrone me upon the Antiochian Patriarchal See as your successor, Father and Head of our Maronite Church. This again is with the grace of God, the choice of our Holy Synod and the prayers of the sons and daughters of the Church, clergy and laity. While expressing to Your Beatitude and their Excellencies the Bishops my great thankfulness for the confidence and blessing, I promise you to continue my life in union and love as I receive today the canonical appointment from your hand and the hand of my brother and Patriarchal Vicar General and Administrator of our Patriarchal Church, His Excellency Bishop Roland Abou Jaoude, thanking him for all the sincere and loving efforts he exerted in this mission.

This communion in love, I have also expressed to my brothers, their Beatitudes, Patriarchs of our Oriental Churches, in the letter which His Excellency, the Administrator of our Patriarchal Church addressed, in the name of our Holy Synod and here you are, Your Beatitudes, with the venerable Bishops of your churches, exchanging this with me by your blessed presence with us and your generous participation in this solemn celebration. Thank you from the depth of my heart.

On this blessed day which God wants us to enjoy and to be happy, I am pleased to express my love and thanks to you, Your Excellency, the President



Patriarch Rai in a moment of meditation after his enthronement.

of the Republic of Lebanon, General Michel Sleiman. It is God, who by his divine wisdom and concern, called upon both of us, successively, from the regions of *Jbeil* and *Amchit*, where we are neighbors, only a narrow path separates your parents' home and the Eparchial Residence, you to the presidency of our country and me to head our Church. We ask Almighty God to lead our steps in communion and love, at the service of the homeland and the Church. Thank you for your presence with the First Lady.

With communion and love I shall cooperate with you, Your Excellency, Speaker of the House of Parliament, Mr. Nabih Berry, and with you, Your Excellency Prime Minister Sheikh Saadeddin Hariri, and with Your Excellency the Appointed Prime Minister Mr. Najeeb Mikati and with their Excellencies the Ministers, members of Parliament and Lebanese government, staff and Ambassadors.

Thank you all for your presence, prayers and love. May God help us, with the intercession of the Holy Virgin Mary, Our Lady of the Annunciation, to complete our national structure in "communion and love", so that Lebanon will always prosper in this

East by its example and mission, as saluted by the Venerable Pope John Paul the Great, who is to be beatified by His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI on Sunday May, 1, Feast Day of the Divine Mercy and of Our Lady of Lebanon.

With regards to "Communion and Love," communion in its vertical dimension is the union to God and, in its horizontal dimension, the union [to] others. At the same time Love joins and secures all, the way cement secures building stones. For this communion and love we work inside our Maronite Church, eparchies and religious orders, clergy and laity, fraternities, apostolic associations and institutions. In "communion and love" we also cooperate on the Catholic level in the Assembly of Catholic Patriarchs and Bishops and their committees, as well as in the Assembly of Oriental Catholic Patriarchs. And in "communion and love" we also work on the ecumenical level, collaborating with all in total love and a sense of responsibility, with their Beatitudes and Holiness, the Patriarchs of the Orthodox Churches and their Bishops and the heads of the Evangelical Churches, especially through the Middle East Council of Churches.

We shall live together this "communion in love" in Lebanon, whose "glory is in its mission." The saying "the glory of Lebanon was given to him" has been applied to the Maronite Patriarch, and was taken from the prophecy of Isaiah 35:2. However, it is given to him and to his Church only in as much as we engage in the building up of communion and witness to love. The glory of Lebanon however, is damaged when we shut ourselves off to others or close in upon ourselves. However, it develops and rises when we are open to the other, to this East and to the world. "This glory" is given to Lebanon and to its people "if we are all for the homeland" as we sing in our National Anthem. This homeland is not for one community, party or group alone. It should not be monopolized by any, because being monopolized by a group is a humiliation to all and a loss to "this



The Papal Nuncio Monsignor Gabriel Caccia congratulates Patriarch Rai upon his enthronement.

glory" whose greatness is in the diversity of its spiritual families and their richness. I do not say in the "diversity of its confessions" for they have all been tainted by political and partisan colors which have stripped them of their sanctity, the purity of their faith and the spirituality of their religion. As lamented by the son of the Cedars, Gebran Khalil Gebran: "Woe to a nation with too many confessions but little faith."

For the sake of "communion and love" we work together in the countries of the Middle East and with you the representatives of the leaders of our brother and sister countries, and we work to preserve and strengthen our relations of solidarity with the Arab world, and to establish a sincere and complete dialogue with our Muslim brothers and sisters and build together a future in common life and cooperation. For one single destiny links Muslims and Christians in Lebanon and the countries of the region in which a culture particular to all of us was built up by the diverse civilizations which passed one after another in our lands, and thus we have a common patrimony in which we all shared in its creation and now work at its cultural development.

We accompany with anxiety the uprisings and protests which are taking place here and there in our Arab

countries. We regret the victims and the wounded and we pray for stability and peace.

For "communion and love," we work and cooperate in the world of the expansion, where the sons and daughters of our churches live on the five continents. We salute them wherever they are and we feel their presence with us in this holy celebration. We treasure them in our hearts and minds and we carry them with our continued prayers. Their bishops and priests have conveyed to our Synod their hopes, expectations and their needs and we shall work earnestly to meet them in their needs.

All of you, dear brothers, will ask me about the program of my ministry. You have expressed your expectations, thoughts and challenges in the media, in personal letters, in scientific studies and in social and academic discussions. I have also read them in your eyes and in your faces before my election as Patriarch, and after, during your many delegations which filled *Bkerke* and in the celebrations of joy in your villages and cities and in the banners which you raised high.

My program is a continuation of the program of my predecessors throughout 1600 years, from what was constant in

the faith and national position:

- ★ From the founding event, who is Saint Maron and his disciples;
- ★ from the first Maronite Patriarch, Saint John Maron, who established the Maronite Church on Catholic doctrine and made of her an independent nation with her government in Mount Lebanon;
- ★ from Patriarch Jeremias El Amchiti who professed the Maronite faith at the Fourth Lateran Ecumenical Council in 1213;
- ★ from the Patriarch Martyr Gabriel Hjoula who offered himself to the *Mamluke* Governor of *Tripoli* in redemption of those arrested bishops, monks, and noble men, and who was burned in the city square in 1367;
- ★ from the Patriarchs Rizzi who were open to the modernity of Europe and in their time founded the Maronite College in Rome in 1594, which gave a galaxy of learned men who built bridges of culture between East and West and were the foundation of the Arab Renaissance;
- ★ from the two Patriarchs John Makhoulf and George Omeira, who established relations between the Emirs of the mountains, the Popes, and the Kings of Italy and Europe in the 17th Century.
- ★ from the honorable Patriarch Estephan Doueih, Father of Lebanese history and the herald of Church reform, who in his time and with his blessing, the three Maronite Religious Orders were founded;
- ★ from the Patriarch Joseph Dergham El Khazen, Patriarch of the well known Lebanese Synod held in 1736 in the Monastery of Our Lady of *Louaizy, Zouk Mosbeh*;
- ★ from the Patriarch Joseph Hbeich who confirmed the unity of the Lebanese - Christian, Druze and Muslim - through a common pact in *Antelias* in 1840;
- ★ from Patriarch Elias El Hoyek, the Father of the independent Great Lebanon, who presided at the official

Lebanese delegation to the Peace Conference in Versailles - Paris in 1919;

★ from the Patriarch Anthony Arida who sold even his pectoral cross to feed the hungry of World War II and who worked at completing the independence of Lebanon by the final withdrawal of all foreign armies in 1943;

★ from the Patriarch Paul Peter Cardinal Meouchi who was open, very wisely, to the wisdom of both the Arab and the Western World and calmed the revolution of 1958;

★ from the Patriarch Anthony Peter Cardinal Khoreich, who was a wise navigator, and led the boat of the Church and the homeland during the midst of the surging waves of the Lebanese war and refused the project of dividing Lebanon and accepting outside alliances;

★ from our father the Patriarch Nasrallah Peter Cardinal Sfeir, who struggled with insistence to free both the national decision making and the land of Lebanon from all forms of tutelage and occupation, worked for reconciliation in Mount Lebanon and realized needed Church reforms, and in his time great Church events took place:

! The beatification and canonization in our Church of Hardini, Rafqa, Father Yacob and Brother Estephan;

! the publication of *The Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches* in 1990;

! the Special Assembly of Bishops for Lebanon in 1995, which gave us the Apostolic Exhortation, a New Hope for Lebanon, 1997;

! the convocation of the Maronite Patriarchal Synod from 2003 to 2006;

! and finally the Special Assembly of the Synod of Bishops for the Middle East in 2010. All of these constitute an extension of the Church's spring-time started by the Second Vatican Council (1961 to 1965).

My program is to complement the implementation and realization of the resolutions and suggestions of those Synods at the level of the structures of the Patriarchal See as well as at the level of the ecclesial, educational and social institutions in Lebanon, the Middle East and throughout the world.

All of this will not be done without the help of everyone and without modern and efficient means. In the midst of all of this we have ever before our eyes our youth, our young men and young women, and the 1,300,000 students - boys and girls in schools and universities - who are our future and the hope of our Church and homeland.

Our concern is also the family, the essential cell of our society and the natural and first school of our values, and the "domestic church" which educates in faith and prayer.

Our strength is our bishops and priests, monks and nuns, our faithful men and women. Our future and promising strength is found in our priestly and religious vocations. The link which keeps us in communication both inside, outside, and throughout the world is the social media and communications, which we salute and wish continual prosperity, and thank them for their presence today and throughout all these days and for their continued cooperation with us. Our assurance is Christ our hope, the Holy Spirit who renews us, the love of God the Father who overshadows us.

Finally, I would like to express my great thanks to the "unknown soldiers" - the technicians, those who worked with all the logistics, the security team, the choir, benefactors and all who participated and prepared this ceremony, working day and night sacrificing their time, money and the effort of their hands. May God reward them with an abundance of his grace and blessings.

I begin my spiritual and pastoral service in all the variety of dimensions and levels with your help and with the words of Our Mother, the Virgin Mary,

"Behold I am the handmaid of the Lord," realizing that I am called to carry the redemptive cross with all its weight. I ask the help of the Divine Redeemer, "My grace is sufficient unto you." I ask the intercession of St. Rafqa, the daughter of *Hemlaya* and the respected Lebanese Maronite Order, as well as the missionary of suffering, and I rely upon the merits of the blood of the martyrs of Lebanon, the intercession of her saints and on the prayers of the sick, the handicapped, the elderly, and those who suffer in their body, soul or spirit and who join their suffering to the redemptive suffering of Christ. You are in the depth of my heart, mind and prayer - you, your families and all who look after you in homes, hospitals, centers and institutions.

I place our Church and our beloved homeland under the watchful eyes of the Virgin Mary, Our Lady of the Annunciation and of Lebanon, consecrating both of them to her Immaculate Heart, and awaiting the consecration of the countries of the Middle East to her motherhood in one act, in recognition of the suggestions of the Bishops of the Middle East gathered last October in Rome.

O Mary our Mother, extend your holy hands and bless our homeland, Lebanon, and this Middle East; intercede for us that we may live like you in communion and love (*mahabbawa shiraka*) and serve the new humanity redeemed by the blood of Christ your Son. Grant that we may all meet, through your help, in a universal brotherhood, as it is seen in this day in which we celebrate the Feast of the Annunciation and our National Holiday, and with you we shall raise glory and thanksgiving to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit now and forever. Amen. □



The New Maronite Patriarch and American Maronites

by

Very Reverend Francis J. Marini, J.C.O.D.

Most Maronites in America probably think that our new Patriarch, His Beatitude Bechara Peter Rai, Maronite Patriarch of Antioch and all the East, is the head of Maronite Church here and around the world. Is this true? The answer is both "yes" and "no." As his title implies, he has formal authoritative power in the East, which could be defined loosely as Lebanon and the Middle East. Outside of that area, he actually has more limited formal authority, except in liturgical matters. Nevertheless, just by being our Patriarch he does command considerable moral authority among the Maronites everywhere.

The Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches, in effect since October 1, 1991, has this to say about Patriarchal authority: "The power of the patriarch is exercised validly only inside the territorial boundaries of the patriarchal church unless the nature of the matter or the common or particular law approved by the Roman Pontiff (the Pope) establishes otherwise." (CCEO Canon 78, § 2). Although attempts were made to extend Patriarchal authority during the codification process, the issue was left as the Canon states - basically the same as before the new Code. The result is that the Maronite Church in America is under the direct jurisdiction of the Vatican, which allows us to conduct our affairs as an Eastern Catholic Church now present in the West.

The situation is very different in the Patriarchal Territory of Lebanon and the Middle East. There, the Patriarch and the Synod of Maronite Bishops exercise full normative power, including the right to establish new eparchies (CCEO Canons 146 and 147).

The Patriarch does have the right and obligation to obtain information about the Maronite Faithful who reside outside of Lebanon and the Middle East, and he can do this himself or through a special visitator or emissary appointed by the Patriarch with the consent of Rome. After such an

inquiry, the Patriarch and Synod of Maronite Bishops can propose definite measures to Rome for the protection and enhancement of the Maronites living outside of Lebanon and the Middle East, such as new Maronite parishes or eparchies (CCEO Canon 148), but it is for Rome alone to make the decision about those matters. There are a few other rights which the Patriarch has everywhere, such as the right to be commemorated at all Divine Liturgies, to receive the honor and respect from the Bishops, to ordain and enthrone Bishops, to seek to resolve conflicts between the Bishops, to confer dignities on clerics under certain conditions, etc.

The election of Bishops is also different: inside the Patriarchal Territory the Synod elects a single candidate and the Pope approves or does not approve the person to be consecrated a Bishop; but for Bishops outside the Patriarchal Territory, the Synod of Bishops elects a list of at least three candidates for each vacancy and submits the list, called a terna, to the Holy See, and the Pope may appoint one from the list (CCEO Canon 149). Although the Bishops of Eparchies outside the Patriarchal Territory belong to the Synod of Maronite Bishops and have the same rights and obligations of the other Bishops, the laws and decisions enacted by the Synod of Maronite Bishops only apply inside Lebanon and the Middle East, except for liturgical laws which apply everywhere, although an Eparchial Bishop outside the Patriarchal Territory may voluntarily give them force of law in his own eparchies if he so chooses (CCEO Canon 150).

Dissatisfaction with this limited authority of the Eastern Patriarchs came out of the First Congress of the Catholic Patriarchs and Bishops of the Middle East (Lebanon, May 9-21, 1999). Under the Propositions of the Congress, Chapter 1, Title 3 (cited from *The Maronite Voice*, Summer 1999 edition, pg. 13), it is stated:

"Many of the Eastern faithful emigrated and settled in the world of expansion;

because they are an organic continuation of their Churches, and because the Patriarchs are the fathers and the head of their Churches, the members of the Congress propose to work to let the jurisdiction of the Patriarch reach all the children of their Churches, wherever they are."

This statement clearly recognizes that the current situation is that in America and other countries of emigration, direct Patriarchal authority is limited, and states the desire to change that situation.

Why should this legal subject of "jurisdiction" matter to us? It is not simply a matter of prestige, but of a more full realization of the beautiful concept that an Eastern Catholic Patriarch is the "father and head" of his Church.

Traditionally, the Maronite Church did not have substantial "churches of emigration". Only since the late nineteenth century has emigration of Christians from the Middle East and Eastern Europe and India created Eastern Catholic Churches, including our own Maronite Church, in (mainly) Western countries outside of Patriarchal authority. Certainly the Latin Church has always been dominant in the Western world, and it would require an accommodation for the Maronite Church to become uniformly treated world-wide vis-a-vis our Patriarch and the Synod of Bishops. What type of accommodation would be necessary?

It would be an organizational change to accommodate the Patriarchal/Synodal structure of the Maronite Church. This is because the working concept of the Latin Church is a diocesan model. Within a diocese, parishes under their priests answer to the Bishop, who in turn answers to the Pope, who is both Patriarch of the West and Supreme Pontiff. It is simple and has worked well for the Latin Church.

(Continues on page 12)

What is A Patriarch?

by
Chorbishop John D. Faris, J.C.O.D.

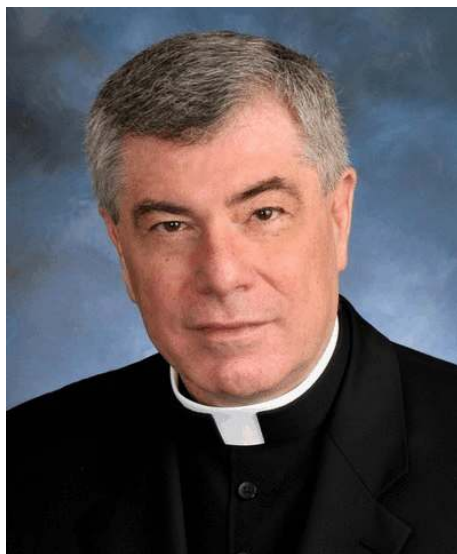
The Maronite Church, indeed the Catholic world, rejoiced at the news that Bechara Raï, formerly the Bishop of *Jbeil*, Lebanon, had been elected as the 77th Patriarch of the Maronite Church. The occasion of the election of the Maronite Patriarch, the head of the largest Catholic patriarchal church, is an occasion for us to reflect on the nature of a patriarch and a patriarchal church.

A Catholic Communion of Churches

Before we can do this, we must reflect upon the nature of the Catholic Church. Most Catholics perceive the Church to be a large monolithic pyramid, with the pope at the top, followed by the bishops and then all the clergy, religious and laity. If any distinctions are ever made, they are usually in terms of ethnicity or nationality, an Italian church, an Irish church, a French church. It is more accurate to perceive the Catholic Church as a communion of churches: each with its own bishops and each following its own rites. The Catholic Church comprises 22 churches. The largest of these is the Roman or Latin or Western Church with almost 1.2 billion faithful. The other 21 Catholic Churches are Eastern Catholic (Eastern because they find their origins in the ancient Eastern Roman Empire). They are small, with a total population of only 15 million. The Maronite Church is one of these Eastern Catholic Churches, the only one named after a saint.

The legal status of these Eastern Catholic Churches is that they govern themselves in all matters not reserved to the Holy See. They can elect the heads and bishops of their churches; they can pass their own laws and judge their own disputes. To be precise, however, they are not equally autonomous; some churches enjoy a greater degree of self-governance than others.

◆ The patriarchal churches enjoy the



Chorbishop John Faris

highest degree of independence. There are six Eastern Catholic patriarchal churches:

1. the Maronite Church (3.3 million)
2. the Melkite Church (1.6 million)
3. the Armenian Church (593 thousand)
4. the Chaldean Church (490 thousand)
5. the Coptic Church (164 thousand)
6. and the Syriac Church (160 thousand)

◆ The major archiepiscopal churches, i.e., Ukrainian Church (4.4 million), followed by the Syro-Malabar Church (3.8 million), the Romanian Church (707 thousand) and the Syro-Malankara Church (420 thousand) are for the most part canonically equated with the patriarchal churches. The greatest difference is that the election of the major archbishop must be confirmed by the Pope.

◆ The metropolitan churches, i.e., Ruthenian Church (650 thousand), Slovak Church (240 thousand) and the Ethiopian Church (230 thousand), have further restrictions imposed on the authority of the head of their church and the other bishops. For example, three

candidates for the office of metropolitan are proposed by the council of hierarchs to the Roman Pontiff, who makes the appointment. Further, legislation of the council of hierarchs cannot be promulgated without official reception by the Pope.

◆ There is a fourth category, vaguely designated as other churches, that includes all those churches which, because of a variety of circumstances, have a limited degree of self-governing authority. These churches include the Albanian, Belorussian, Bulgarian, Greek, Hungarian, Krizevci, Italo-Albanian, and Russian churches.

Eastern Catholic Patriarchs

Six of the Eastern Catholic Churches have a patriarch as their head:

1. Coptic Catholic Patriarch of Alexandria, head of the Coptic Catholic Church
2. Syriac Catholic Patriarch of Antioch and all the East, head of the Syriac Catholic Church
3. Melkite Greek Catholic Patriarch of Antioch and all the East, of Alexandria, and of Jerusalem, head of the Melkite Greek Catholic Church
4. Maronite Catholic Patriarch of Antioch and all the East, head of the Maronite Catholic Church
5. Chaldean Catholic Patriarch of Babylon, head of the Chaldean Catholic Church
6. Armenian Catholic Patriarch of Cilicia, head of the Armenian Catholic Church

How is the Patriarch Elected?

When the office of the patriarch becomes vacant because of death or resignation, the senior bishop of the

patriarchal church summons all the ordained bishops for the election of a new patriarch. Bishops who are too ill are excused from attending. This assembly is known as the *synod of bishops of the patriarchal church*. Everything is done in secret. The synod has fifteen days to elect a patriarch; if they reach an impasse, the matter goes to the pope after fifteen days.

During the first three rounds of voting, a two-thirds majority is required for the election. Provisions can be made so that the subsequent rounds of voting only require an absolute majority (50% +1) in order to be elected.

If the one elected is already a bishop, the election is to be proclaimed immediately. The synod is obliged to notify the pope that the election took place according to the law of the Church and that the newly-elected patriarch made a profession of faith and took the oath to fulfill his office faithfully. Conforming to ancient tradition, the synod sends letters to the other patriarchal churches, notifying them of the election of the new patriarch.

The newly-elected patriarch is then enthroned. The patriarch is obliged to request from the pope *ecclesiastical communion*; only after receiving this can he convoke the synod of bishops or ordain a bishop.

The traditional form of address for a patriarch is "His Beatitude." In the Maronite Church, the patriarch customarily takes the name of "Peter," the first bishop of Antioch. The full title of the Maronite Patriarch is *Patriarch of Antioch and all the East* (the phrase "and all the East" refers to the ancient civil division of the Roman Empire, the *Oriens* [East]).

Is the New Patriarch Automatically A Cardinal?

The patriarch is not automatically a cardinal. Cardinals are - at least theoretically - part of the clergy of the Church of Rome. For that reason, each of them is assigned a church in Rome. The appointment of a cardinal is strictly a prerogative of the Pope, done during a meeting of the *College of Cardinals* called a *consistory*.

Pope Paul VI in 1965 determined that Eastern Catholic patriarchs could be appointed to the College of Cardinals. The last three Maronite patriarchs have all been given the title of cardinal, a testimony of the vitality of the Maronite Church and its importance in the life of Christians in the Middle East. Presently there are four patriarchs who are also cardinals:

! His Beatitude Ignace Cardinal Daoud, Prefect Emeritus of the Congregation for the Eastern Churches, Patriarch Emeritus of Antioch for the Syrians

! His Beatitude Nasrallah Cardinal Sfeir, Patriarch Emeritus of Antioch for the Maronites

! His Beatitude Emmanuel III Cardinal Delly, Patriarch of Babylon for the Chaldeans

! His Beatitude Antonios Cardinal Nagib, Patriarch of Alexandria for the Copts

The most well-known role of the cardinals is the election of the pope; only cardinals under the age of 80 are permitted to participate in the election. Because of his age, our Patriarch Emeritus, Nasrallah Peter Cardinal Sfeir was not involved in the election of Pope Benedict XVI.

What Does A Patriarch Do?

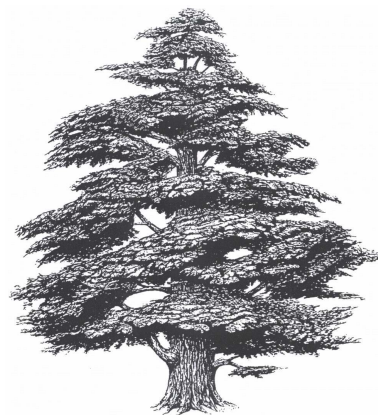
The Second Vatican Council (1962-65) identified the patriarch as *head and father* of his church. Regarding the governance of the patriarchal church, the Council further indicated that *the patriarch with his synod* is the highest authority of the patriarchal church. This succinct phrase manifests the beauty of governance in the Eastern Catholic Churches: the patriarch (an individual) shares in the responsibility of governing the patriarchal church with a synod of bishops (a group). It is a wonderful manifestation of interaction between the one and the many.

The Council does not indicate who is higher and leaves it to the law to determine who exercises what power. Generally speaking, the powers are

allocated as follows: the patriarch exercises executive authority while the synod of bishops is responsible for enacting the laws, acting as the supreme court of the patriarchal church and conducting the election of the patriarch and the bishops.

As we stated the patriarch is *head and father* of the patriarchal church. As *head*, the patriarch represents his church before the world and the other churches. He signs into law the enactments of the Synod of Bishops and is responsible for the correct observance of the rite (e.g., the liturgy) and good discipline. As chief teacher, he communicates to the faithful Catholic teaching. As father, he supports and encourages all of us in various ways on our journey to holiness.

The liturgy of the Eastern Churches places great importance on the commemoration of the heads of the churches during public prayer. During our public worship, we shall now pray for our Pope, Benedict XVI, our Patriarch, Bechara Peter, and our Bishop, Robert or Gregory. These commemorations are an expression on the part of the community of our love, respect and obedience for the fathers of our church. And as a Maronite Church, we pray especially for wise leadership and paternal love of our beloved shepherd, Bechara Peter, for many years to come. □



The Cedar of Lebanon

Pontiff Affirms Communion With New Maronite Patriarch

Pope Benedict XVI has officially affirmed communion with the new Patriarch of the Maronite Church, who was installed in the office Friday, March 25, 2011. Bechara Peter Rai, succeeds Cardinal Nasrallah Peter Sfeir, becoming the 77th Patriarch of Antioch and All of the East of the Maronites. Ten days before the Patriarch's installation, Pope Benedict XVI granted "*Ecclesiastica Communio*."

"It is a motive of pride for your Church to be united from the beginning to the Successor of Peter," wrote the Pope in a letter granting the official recognition of communion, in conformity with the Code of Canon Law of the Eastern Churches. "Peter was called by Jesus to preserve the unity of his one Church in truth and in love. Following a beautiful and ancient tradition, Peter's name is added to the patriarch's."

In the letter, the Holy Father said he hoped the new Patriarch would be able to have "all the ardor, illumined by wisdom and tempered by prudence, to guide the Maronite Church."

He spoke of the glory of St. Maron, who established this Church, as well as the "array of Lebanese saints."

"May the Lord assist you in your ministry as 'Father and Head,'" continued Pope Benedict XVI, "to proclaim the Word that saves, so that it is lived and celebrated with mercy according to the ancient spiritual and liturgical traditions of the Maronite Church! May all the faithful entrusted to you be able to find consolation in your paternal solicitude!"

The Bishop of Rome expressed his prayer that Our Lady would make the Patriarch a "messenger of unity," so that Lebanon would "be able to carry out in the East and in all the world her role of solidarity and peace."

The Maronite Church has always been in communion with Rome, even while maintaining its own liturgy and calendar. Their liturgy is celebrated in Arabic, except in ancient songs and ancestral prayers of the Eucharist, for which Aramaic is used.

The Church was established by St. Maron, who lived between the 4th and 5th centuries as a hermit on Mount Tauro, an ancient city of northern Syria. Today the Maronite Church has more than three million faithful and is present in Lebanon, Syria, Egypt, the Holy Land, and in countries of the diaspora, such as Argentina, Brazil, Canada, the U.S., and Australia. □

Zenit.org, March 28, 2011

The New Maronite Patriarch and American Maronites

Continued from page 9

This model was applied to the Maronite Church and the other Eastern Catholic Churches in what was then called the "diaspora" or Western lands to which their Faithful had emigrated, at a time in history when the Holy See was operating under an assumption referred to as *praestantia ritus Latini*, or the preeminence of the Latin Rite, where the Latin Church was seen as the more prominent and the Eastern Catholic Churches were considered less prominent.

However, Vatican II changed the relationship between the Latin Church and the Eastern Catholic Churches. In the Decree on the Eastern Catholic Churches, *Orientalium Ecclesiarum*, the Council Fathers repudiated the principle of *praestantia ritus Latini* and instead stated that all the rites are of "equal dignity", that "none of them is superior to the others because of its rite" and that "they enjoy the same rights and are under the same obligations" (OE n. 3). The Decree also provided for the organization of Eastern Catholic parishes and hierarchies where needed anywhere in the world (OE n. 4), leading to the establishment of the two current Maronite Eparchies in the United States. It allows the Eastern Catholic Churches to "govern themselves" in order to preserve their heritage (OE n. 5) and even provides for the establishment of new Patriarchates (OE n. 11). Yet it stopped short of extending Patriarchal authority world-wide, leaving that matter to the revision of Canon Law which would be necessary by reason of Vatican II. Thus, today the diocesan model is still in effect for Eastern Catholic Eparchies outside of the Patriarchal Territories, and this is considered by many as not fully allowing the Eastern Catholic Churches to operate as equal in dignity and rights to the Latin Church because it eliminates the Eastern Patriarch from direct involvement in most matters.

This matter is still under consideration by the Holy See. The recent Synod of Bishops for the Middle East raised the question again. It is a matter of balancing the rights and responsibilities of the Holy Father, who alone has universal jurisdiction throughout the world, with the rights and responsibilities of the Eastern Catholic Patriarchs who also have the responsibility to follow the faithful wherever they are in the world.

Nonetheless, even in the "less than perfect" communion that exists in the Church, it is still a model that works well to bring 21 eastern and one western Church together with the Holy Father, a communion that is enviable to non Catholics.

Maronite Prelates See Holy Spirit in New Patriarch

The Maronite leaders who elected Bishop Bechara Rai as the 77th Patriarch of that Church are affirming the Holy Spirit's role in the decision. In a statement following the March 15 election, the Maronite prelates affirmed that this event is "a further confirmation of the work of the Holy Spirit that continues, and is essential beyond the suppositions and expectations."

"We entrusted ourselves to the Holy Spirit to elect the right person for the right post," they affirmed.

The prelates stated, "This work was carried out with the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit that guides the Church through the Apostles and their successors; it is the Holy Spirit who chooses the person to be father, head and patriarch."

The new Patriarch of Antioch of the Maronites chose as his motto "Communion and Charity," expressing the hope that "the Maronite Church will continue her journey in history under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the blessing of Our Lady of *Bkerke* and of Lebanon, and this because she will be guided by the Spirit who is with us." □

Zenit.org, March 23, 2011

THE ORDER OF SAINT SHARBEL



Perpetual Members

- ★ Mr. Jad P. Daye
- ★ Mr. Albert Ashkouti

Annual Members

- ★ Mr. Michael A. Hiffa
- ★ Mr. Zeidan Abou Zeidan
- ★ Mr. Bassam Monzer
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- ★ Mr. Louis Isaf
- ★ Mr. Simon M. Endraos
- ★ Mr. Georges Moussa
- ★ Mr. Danny Joseph Fuleihan

*St. Joseph Maronite Church,
Atlanta, Ga.*

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.

His Eminence Cardinal Leonardo Sandri Blesses the Maronite Heritage Institute



by Shelly Vitale

An inspirational evening was held in St. Louis, Missouri, on February 24, 2011, when His Eminence Cardinal Leonardo Sandri, Prefect of the Congregation for the Eastern Churches, arrived from the Vatican to officiate over the blessing of the Maronite Heritage Institute. He was graciously welcomed by over two hundred people at a cocktail reception during which he gave a very moving speech that included well wishes and blessings from His Holiness Benedict XVI. He referred to a statement by The Most Reverend Robert J. Shaheen, Bishop of Our Lady of Lebanon: "The Maronite Heritage Institute will be a center for education, research, and preservation." This blessing concluded the 1600th Anniversary of St. Maron.

The Honorable Francis G. Slay, Mayor of the City of St. Louis presented the Cardinal with a proclamation and declared February 24, 2011 as His Eminence Cardinal Leonardo Sandri Day. Following the blessing, a special dinner was hosted by Bishop Shaheen at the Chancery in the Cardinal's honor.

Clergy in attendance were His Eminence Cardinal Leonardo Sandri, Prefect of the Congregation for the Eastern Churches; Monsignor Maurizia Melvestiti, Under Secretary for the Congregation of Eastern Churches; Most Rev. Robert J. Shaheen, Bishop of Our Lady of Lebanon; Most Rev. Edward Rice, Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of St. Louis, Missouri; Father Gary George, C.Ss.R., Rector of St. Raymond Cathedral, St. Louis, Missouri; Chorbishop Faouzi Elia, Vicar General and Pastor of St. Sharbel Church, Peoria, Illinois; Chorbishop Michael Kail, Pastor of St. Maron Church, Youngstown, Ohio; Father Abdallah Zaidan, MLM, Rector of Our Lady of Mt. Lebanon Cathedral; Chorbishop Alfred Badawi, Pastor of Our Lady of Lebanon Church, Lombard, Illinois; Monsignor Anthony Spinosa, Rector of Our Lady of Lebanon National Shrine, North Jackson, Ohio; Rev. Bakhos Chidiac, Pastor of Our Lady of Lebanon Parish, Wheeling, West Virginia; Rev. Elias Abi-Sarkis, Pastor of St. Therese of the Child Jesus Church, Tulsa, Oklahoma; Deacon Wissam Akiki, St. Raymond Cathedral; and Deacon Louis Peters, St. Raymond Cathedral.

Bishop Shaheen thanked everyone for making the evening so special, and said that he felt proud to be part of this historic project. A formal dedication and official opening, with a *Hafli*, will take place on the weekend of May 19 - 22. □

St. Louis, Missouri Centennial Kick-off



St. Raymond Maronite Cathedral, St. Louis, Mo., kicked off its 100th Year Centennial Anniversary on November 13, 2010. The evening began with a divine Liturgy officiated by Bishop Robert Shaheen and Father Gary George, who was recently appointed as the new Rector of the Cathedral. The celebration continued at a grand banquet attended by hundreds of guests held at the Cedars Hall. Many more events will take place throughout the year. The official closing celebration will be November 12, 2011. □

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania Convention Update

Please note that the contact information provided for the Sheraton Hotel for the Maronite Convention in Philadelphia in last month's issue of *The Maronite Voice* was incorrect. The correct phone numbers are listed below.

Sheraton Philadelphia City Center Hotel
201 North 17th Street
Philadelphia, PA 19103
Phone: (800)325-3535
Phone: (215)448-2000

The room rate is \$119 per night single/double/triple/quad. Ask for NAM Convention. One room night will be billed to your credit card as soon as you make your room reservation. Self-Parking - \$10 day with in/out privileges for hotel guests with valid convention badge. □



Dedication of the Maronite Heritage Institute (MHI) MAY 19-20-21-22, 2011

Thursday, May 19th Clergy Day

6:00 p.m. Divine Liturgy - St. Raymond Cathedral
7:00 p.m. Reception-Pastoral Center

Friday, May 20th

9:30 a.m. Pick-up from hotel
10 -11:30 a.m. Conference/Meeting MHI
12:00 p.m. Lunch
1- 4:00 p.m. Free Time
4:15 p.m. Pick-up from hotel
5:00 p.m. Liturgy and Blessing of MHI
6 -7:30 p.m. Reception-MHI

Saturday, May 21st

Free Day to enjoy the City of St. Louis

5:00 p.m. Liturgy - for those leaving early Sunday morning
6:00 p.m. Cocktail Hour - Cedars Banquet Center
7:00 p.m. Grand *Hafli* - \$40.00 per person - Cash Bar

Sunday, May 22nd

11:00 a.m. Closing Divine Liturgy
12:00 p.m. Light lunch - Cedars Banquet Center
NAM Spring Drawing

Hotel: Drury Plaza at the Arch 314-231-3003, 1-800-378-7946, www.druryhotels.com, Group #2113791. Reservation must be made no later than May 3, 2011. Room rate is \$99.00 per night single through quad. Free breakfast, 5:30-7:00pm hot food and cold beverages, 3:00-10:00pm soda, popcorn, free WiFi. □

Houston, Texas *Dedication of New Building*



Mr. Nijad I. Fares, Leonardo Cardinal Sandri, and Zeina Fares.

Our Lady of the Cedars Maronite Church in Houston, Texas, recently celebrated the dedication of the Georges Mouawad Pastoral Center with a banquet and Divine Liturgy. The celebration began with a banquet at the JW Marriott in Houston on Friday, February 25, 2011. The banquet honored Mr. and Mrs. Nijad I. Fares, who were the major benefactors of the pastoral center. Among the honored guests were His Eminence Leonardo Cardinal Sandri, Prefect of the Congregation for the Oriental Church; His Eminence Daniel Cardinal Di Nardo, Archbishop of Galveston - Houston; His Excellency Robert Shaheen, Maronite Bishop of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon; His Excellency George Abi Younes, Maronite Bishop of the Eparchy of *Nuestra Senora de Los Martires del Libano* in Mexico; His Excellency Joseph Fiorenza, Archbishop Emeritus of Galveston-Houston; His Excellency Vincent Rizzotto, Retried Auxiliary Bishop of Galveston-Houston; Rev. Elie Madi, Superior General of the Congregation of Maronite Lebanese Missionaries; Rev. Abdullah Zaidan, Superior for Maronite Lebanese Missionaries in the United States; other priests, and local, state and national dignitaries.

On Saturday, February 26, 2011, a Pontifical Divine Liturgy was celebrated by Bishop Robert Shaheen and concelebrated by Cardinals Sandri and DiNardo, Bishop Abi Younes, and other priests in attendance. Following the Divine Liturgy Cardinal Sandri blessed the Georges Mouawad Pastoral Center and helped to unveil the dedication plaque with Mrs. Georges Mouawad, wife of the late Georges Mouawad, and Mr. and Mrs. Nijad I. Fares. Following the blessing and dedication Cardinal Sandri joined the members of Our Lady of the Cedars for a reception in the Parish Hall.

The Georges Mouawad Pastoral Center is a 9,000 sq. ft. building which will house the parish offices and religious education classrooms. The building is named in honor of Mr. Georges Mouawad, who was instrumental in the growth of Our Lady of the Cedars and who died in 2007. His widow, Bassira along with two of their five adult children still reside in the Houston area. □

SAVE THE DATE

BISHOP GREGORY MANSOUR

Invites you to join him and special guest

CARDINAL DONALD WUERL

at a

BENEFIT DINNER

in WASHINGTON, D.C.
for the EPARCHY OF SAINT MARON

Thursday, May 12, 2011

6:00 pm. Cocktails at the Seminary
7:00 Dinner at Our Lady of Lebanon Parish Hall
7142 Alaska Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C.

This Benefit Dinner for the Eparchy will provide assistance for the establishment of a Maronite Chapel at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C.; a better retirement for priests who have served so faithfully; ongoing expenses for seminarians at Our Lady of Lebanon Seminary in Washington, D.C.; support for various Maronite mission communities; and needed renovations of Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral in Brooklyn, New York.

The Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn consists of 40 parishes and missions located in 16 states along the East Coast, as well as a seminary in Washington, D.C., a monastery for contemplative monks and a convent for religious sisters.

For more information contact:
John F. Kurey, Stewardship Director
(718) 237- 9913

saintmaron@yahoo.com
www.stmaron.org

Utica, New York Saint Maron Feast



Cardinal DiNardo delivers the homily at St. Louis Gonzaga Church.

Saint Louis Gonzaga Maronite Church in Utica, New York, was honored with a visit from His Eminence Daniel Cardinal DiNardo, Archbishop of Galveston-Houston on February 20, 2011. The festivity marked the closure of the Year of Saint Maron - 1600 years since the death of the hermit-monk. Saint Louis Gonzaga Church had been designated as a pilgrimage site. *Ramsho* and Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament in honor of Saint Maron were celebrated every Tuesday evening.

On Saturday evening, Chorbishop John Faris, Father Tony Mouanes and Deacon Paul Salamy welcomed the Cardinal to the Maronite community of Utica. The last visit of a cardinal to Utica took place in 1950 when Cardinal Eugène Cardinal Tisserant, then Secretary of the Sacred Congregation for the Eastern Church, visited the Maronite community.



The Sunday celebration began with a breakfast for the Cardinal and parish leadership at the Radisson Hotel. A lively, informal exchange allowed for everyone present to enjoy the Cardinal's warm presence, lively personality and quick wit.

Chorbishop Faris celebrated a pontifical Divine Liturgy in English, Arabic, and Syriac at the church. In addition to Cardinal DiNardo, Bishop Robert Cunningham, the bishop of Syracuse, and other local priests and deacons attended the liturgy. All parish groups and programs were represented in the procession, led by more than twenty altar servers.

Cardinal DiNardo delivered an eloquent homily on the beauty of the traditions of the Maronite Church and encouraged everyone in the church to deepen their appreciation of their rite.

The Divine Liturgy was followed by an informal luncheon at Hart's Hill Inn where all 300 guests were given an opportunity to greet the Cardinal personally. Cardinal DiNardo urged all in attendance to be proud of the Maronite Church and to take it seriously not only during major events. "It means you take it seriously during the day-to-day things," insisted the Cardinal.

To mark the sixteenth centenary in Rome, Pope Benedict XVI blessed a newly-placed statue of Saint Maron at Saint Peter's Basilica in Rome, Italy. Attending the celebration was Patriarch Emeritus Nasrallah Peter Cardinal Sfeir and Lebanese President Michel Sleiman. □

Schedule of Bishop Gregory Mansour

April 8 - 10, 2011

Pastoral Visit, St. George Church, Uniontown, Penn.

April 12 - 15, 2011

Eastern Catholic Bishops Meeting and Eparchial History Committee Meeting, St. Louis, Mo.

April 17, 2011

Palm Sunday Liturgy at 11:00 a.m., Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral, Brooklyn, N.Y., and Westchester Mission at 3:00 p.m.

April 19, 2011

Chrism Mass at the Latin Cathedral, Brooklyn, N.Y.

April 20, 2011

Rite of the Lamp, Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral, Brooklyn, N.Y.

April 21, 2011

Liturgy of the Washing of the Feet, St. Maron Church, Philadelphia, Penn.

April 22, 2011

Burial of the Cross, Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral, Brooklyn, N.Y.

April 24, 2011

Easter Liturgy, Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral, Brooklyn, N.Y.

May 1, 2011

Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral, Brooklyn, N.Y., at 11:00 a.m.; and Pleasantville Mission, N.J., at 4:00 p.m.

May 12, 2011

Eparchial Benefit Dinner with Cardinal Wuerl, Our Lady of Lebanon Parish, Washington, D.C.

May 20, 2011

Dedication of Maronite Heritage Center, St. Louis, Mo. □

Waterbury, Connecticut *Archbishop's Visit and Pilgrimage*



by Subdeacon Camille J. Atallah

Our Lady of Lebanon Parish in Waterbury, Connecticut, celebrated the 1600th Anniversary of Saint Maron in a very special way: a Visit from the Most Reverend Henry J. Mansell, Archbishop of Hartford on February 9, 2011, and a pilgrimage to Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral in Brooklyn, N.Y., on February 26, 2011.

It was a great honor to celebrate this special Feast Day of Saint Maron in the presence of His Excellency Archbishop Mansell as a strong symbol of faith, unity and communion of the Church "East and West are the two lungs by which the Church breathes" as Pope John Paul II said some years ago; their unity is essential to the healthy life of the one, holy, catholic and Apostolic Church. The Divine Liturgy was celebrated by Reverend Monsignor David George, and presided by His Excellency Archbishop Mansell surrounded by his Secretary Reverend Jeffrey Romans, and Reverend Naji Kiwan, Pastor. Reverend Jean Younes, Pastor of Saint Anthony Maronite Church in Danbury; Archmandrite Edward Kakaty, Pastor of Saint Ann Melkite Church in Waterford; Reverend John Gatzak, Executive Director of WJMJ Radio and the Office of Radio and Television of the Archdiocese of Hartford; Reverend Vito De Carolis; Reverend Thomas Hickey; and Deacon George Hajjar concelebrated, and the Knights of Columbus served as Honor Guards.

Those historic moments were engraved in the hearts of all our parishioners and in the heart of Archbishop Mansell, who was moved and touched by the celebration of the Maronite Divine Liturgy and especially by the Words of Consecration in Aramaic. The visit of Archbishop Mansell was commemorated by an engraved plaque, an Icon of Saint Maron and a Marian Chasuble offered by the Parish.

Also, our parish has answered the call to a pilgrimage to Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral in Brooklyn, N.Y., to mark the end of this special Jubilee Year. A group of forty-four parishioners accompanied by our Pastor, Reverend Naji

Kiwan, visited the Cathedral in pilgrimage. Hosted by Very Reverend James Root, the Rector of the Cathedral, the pilgrimage was an enormous opportunity for recollection and self renewal. Reverend James Root met our group with an open heart and gave a brief history of the Maronite Church in the United States of America and its very beginning in New York City, the History of the Cathedral and the first immigrants. After that, he lectured on the meaning of making a pilgrimage on this special occasion in order to obtain the indulgence based on the usual conditions: 1) to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation, 2) to receive the Holy Eucharist, 3) and to pray the "Our Father, Hail Mary and the Glory Be" for the intentions of the Holy Father. A Divine Liturgy was concelebrated by Father James and Father Naji, and everyone gathered afterwards in the Parish Hall to share a meal prepared by the ladies of the Cathedral and Father James.

With the blessings of Fr. James, we left the Cathedral to visit the Cathedral of Saint Patrick in New York City before we headed home filled with joy for such a wonderful, fruitful and blessed pilgrimage. □

Sacramento, California *Our Lady of the Rosary*



On the day of the installation of the statue of St. Maron at the Basilica of Rome, February 23, 2011, the Maronite Catholic Community of Sacramento closed escrow on their new church in the capital of California, Sacramento.

The Maronite Catholic Community of Sacramento already had their first Liturgy at the new church in January, and the community gathered with their Administrator, Father Nabil Mouannes. We are announcing to you this great event because Sacramento is the capital of California, and we can see already the work of the spirit of St. Maron growing all over the world. Let us share together the good news.

Whenever you come to the West, we invite you to Sacramento, and we invite you to visit your home away from home, Our Lady of the Rosary. Very soon we hope to dedicate it. Bishop Robert Shaheen and Chorbishop Faouzi Elia, Vicar General, blessed our efforts to have our community and church in Sacramento and they were a great help. □

Portland, Oregon *Farewell to Deacon*



From Left to Right: Claude Karam (Deacon's brother), Nadia Karam (mother), Joseph Karam (nephew), Deacon Antoine Karam, Karam Karam (son), and Gennifer Karam (sister-in-law).

by Nadia Redmond

On February 6, 2011, St. Sharbel Church, Portland, Oregon, celebrated two events: the Jubilee of Saint Maron's 1600th Anniversary and a farewell of Deacon Tony Karam. On this very special day, His Excellency Kenneth Steiner, Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of Portland, concelebrated the Divine Liturgy with Fr. Jonathan Decker, SJMJ, Pastor. During the homily, Fr. Decker explained who St. Maron was and his significance, not only to the Maronites, but to all Catholic Christians, especially in the Middle East.

Following the Liturgy, the congregation was invited to a reception in the Parish Hall where American and Lebanese food was served. The head table was graciously set for our special guests: His Excellency Bishop Kenneth Steiner and Chancellor Mary Jo Tully from the Archdiocese of Portland; Frs. David Jasper and Eric Anderson; and Sisters Mary Rose, Mary Danielle, and Noelle from the Sisters of Mercy; and Superior General Sr. Anne Marie from the Franciscan Missionary of Our Lady of Sorrows.

Parish Council member Wadi Kaldawi gave a warm-hearted speech to Deacon Tony Karam saying, "His name, 'Karam,' says it all about this wonderful man." He continued to say, "Karam in Arabic means 'generous' and that is Deacon Tony." Mr. Kaldawi presented Deacon Tony with a plaque as a gift from the parish in grateful recognition of his work. Besides his duties as deacon, Tony Karam has given much of his time and enthusiasm to the needs of St. Sharbel Church, including the remodeling of the parish hall, the constant upkeep of the church, and the painting of the sanctuary of the church, as well as being the spiritual guide for the Oblates of Jesus, Mary and Joseph. We wish Deacon Tony farewell as he will be joining his family in Lebanon this spring.

On behalf of St. Sharbel Parish, Eva Bekahi, events coordinator, also expressed her love and gratitude to Deacon Tony. Kiala and Matea Ellingson (ages 14 and 12, respectively) concluded the luncheon by their harmonious singing. □

Brooklyn, New York *St. Joseph Feast Day Celebration*



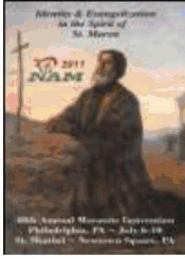
Front row, left to right: John Katra, John Shakal, William Shakal and Pierre Haddad. Back row: Left to right: Rev. Geoffrey Abdallah and Very Rev. James Root, Rector.

by Salma T. Vahdat

On Sunday, March 20, 2011, at the Divine Liturgy celebrated at Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral, Brooklyn, N.Y., the parish community celebrated the Feast Day of St. Joseph. The Knights of St. Maron, the Cathedral's men's organization, traditionally hosts the day and this year was no exception.

Pierre Haddad, President of the Knights, used the occasion to award Certificates of Appreciation to three members who have served the Cathedral in a host of capacities for many years. In his brief address before awarding the certificates to John Katra, John Shakal and William Shakal, he reminded the parish that all men should aspire to follow the example of St. Joseph as husband, father and faithful servant to the community. The joy of service was compared to the sweet aroma of jasmine which lingers in our consciousness interminably. It also behooves us to recognize and thank those who give of their time and effort to better the life of our community.

Following the Divine Liturgy the Knights of St. Maron hosted a luncheon in the Parish Hall. □



48th Annual Maronite Convention

Sponsored by: The National Apostolate of Maronites
 Hosted by: St. Sharbel Church, New Town Square, PA
 July 6 - 10, 2011 Philadelphia, Pennsylvania



Pre-Registration Form *Deadline – June 13, 2011*

Please complete all information, or register on-line: www.namnews.org. Incomplete forms cannot be processed. Please PRINT legibly:
 E-mail is the preferred way of communicating back to you a confirmation for your registration

First Name: _____ Last Name _____ **Check all that apply:**
 Address: _____ NAM Member NAM Delegate
 City/State/Zip: _____ NAM Board Ord. St. Sharbel
 Phone: _____ Email: _____ Conv. Comm. Child (5 – 10)
 Parish: _____ Youth (11-18) Yng Ad (18-35)
 Package/Program purchased: _____ Vegetarian Age: _____

PLEASE READ CAREFULLY:

PACKAGES ONLY - Enter # of packages desired and dollar amount. Fill in Totals and Grand Total
 NAM members, whose 2010 dues have been paid, will receive \$15 off of the Full Adult Package and \$10 off other packages.
 This discount is void after the pre-registration deadline of 13 June 2011.
 If you wish to pay your dues or become a member with this registration, please send a separate check payable to NAM.
 The “**Covenant of Behavior**” **MUST** be completed and SIGNED for all Youth Registrants, and must be accompanied by a parent
Entertainment Packages ONLY for students with valid IDs (18-35), allows entry to evening events after 10 PM.
No dinner, No seating, music only.
 Day programs for Youth, Young Adults, and Young Adult Professionals are additional and not included in the packages
 Individual event registrations are available online only

Pkg. Options	Adult (18 & over)		Youth (12-18)		Children (5-11)		Entertainment Only		Totals
	Pre-Reg.	Late	Pre-Reg.	Late	Pre-Reg.	Late	Pre-Reg.	Late	
Full (Wed-Sun)	___\$280	\$310	___\$250	\$280	___\$165	\$195	___\$120	\$150	\$
Lg Wknd(Thu-Sun)	___\$250	\$280	___\$220	\$250	___\$140	\$170	___\$100	\$130	\$
Weekend (Fri-Sun)	___\$220	\$250	___\$190	\$220	___\$120	\$150	___\$ 80	\$110	\$
Saturday – Sunday	___\$165	\$195	___\$135	\$165	___\$ 75	\$105	___\$ 60	\$ 90	\$
Youth Day Events*	___ \$70 (Wed – Sun)		___ \$50 (Fri – Sun)						\$
Young Adults Day Events*	___ \$150 (Wed – Sun)		___ \$120 (Fri – Sun)						\$
Young Adults Professionals Day Events*	___ \$150 (Wed – Sun)		___ \$120 (Fri – Sun)						\$
Grand Total									\$

*These events are age specific, onsite and late registrations may incur \$20 late fee
 Thursday evening no dinner, only concert with Evangelical Singer Joumana Moudawar
Make checks payable to “NAM Convention” and mail to NAM P.O. Box 717– Yonkers, NY 10702-4611.
Please DO NOT SEND CASH.
If using credit card – complete the information below and mail to address above or FAX to 914-964-3071.
For further information call the NAM Office 914-964-3070 email: nam@namnews.org.

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*For Hotel Reservation contact the Sheraton City Center 800-325-3535 or 215-448-2000 code NAM Convention
 Convention room rate \$119 per room per night*

Warren, Michigan *Christian Witness at Work*



by Kathy Housey

On Friday, February 25, 2011, students and parents from St. Sharbel's Maronite Christian Formation Classes in Warren, Michigan, participated in a Christian Service Project at the Gleaners Food Bank. Gleaners is an organization that provides thousands of tons of food annually for needy families within the local community. This has become an annual event for the students during their mid-Winter break, and they have other service projects planned in upcoming months. □

Boston, Massachusetts *Year of St. Maron*



Fr. Georges El-Khalli (left), Pastor, Chorbishop Joseph Lahoud (seated), Fr. Anthony Salim (right), and the Maronite Servants.

by Therese Abouzeid

Our Lady of the Cedars Maronite Church in Boston, Massachusetts, celebrated the conclusion of the Year of Saint Maron and the feast of Saint John Maron at a Divine Liturgy on March 7, 2011. The Pastor, Father Georges El-Khalli, and Chorbishop Joseph Lahoud, Pastor Emeritus, spoke of the Maronite heritage to over 400 people who gathered for a special brunch in Cardinal Cushing Hall. The successful celebration was coordinated by Therese Abouzeid with the combined efforts of the Parish's St. Maron Society and Daughters of the Cedars Club. □

