



The Maronite Voice

A Publication of the Maronite Eparchies in the USA



Volume VI

Issue No. VII

July - August 2010

Feast of the Assumption Is An Excellent Time to Refresh Our Spiritual Life

Dear Friends,

Summer is well on its way. I hope that many of you are able to take a vacation or at least get refreshed. Take time to enjoy your family and friends.

I hope that you were able to attend the Maronite Convention sponsored by the National Apostolate of Maronites (NAM). Conventions are a very good time to meet old friends and make new acquaintances. It helps you to understand that we are one Maronite family scattered over the U.S.A.

August brings us to the important Feast of the Assumption. We all need some spiritual renewal. This is an excellent time to refresh our spiritual life.

Our Shrine in North Jackson, Ohio, is forty-five years young. Many of our people have never visited this special place. Please try to visit our Shrine the weekend of August 13-15, 2010. Take time out from your ordinary days, stay to pray, and rest from your labors. What better place can you find than your mother's home. She is there for us, and the Shrine is a place of refreshment and peace.

Very soon you will be hearing about the new Maronite Culture and Educational Center. It will be formally known as the Maronite Heritage Institute. It will be a vehicle for looking into the Past and preparing for the Future and a place for future generation to study and learn. It is part of the Pastoral Center of Our Lady of Lebanon Eparchy in Saint Louis, Missouri. Of course it is for all Maronites no matter where you reside. You will be proud of the new institution.

Have a safe summer. Please pray for vocations and for all clergy.

Best Wishes,

Bishop Robert J. Shaheen
Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon ☐



Dormition of the Blessed Mother by Fr. Abdo Badwi, University of Holy Spirit, Kaslik, Lebanon (USEK), Department of Sacred Art.

Schedule of Bishop Robert Shaheen

July 5 - 8, 2010

Eparchial Clergy Conference, Birmingham, Ala.

July 7, 2010

Evening Interview at EWTN Television, Birmingham, Ala.

July 8- 11, 2010

Maronite Convention, Birmingham, Ala.

July 21 -24, 2010

Maronite Youth Conference, Latrobe [Pittsburgh], Penn.

July 25, 2010

Our Lady of Snow, Belleville, Illinois

August 14 -16, 2010

Our Lady of Lebanon National Shrine, North Jackson, Ohio

August 22, 2010

Personal Visit, Danbury Conn. □

The Maronite Voice

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Maronite Convention 2011

St. Sharbel Church
Newtown Square, Pennsylvania

July 6- 10, 2011

For more information
contact the NAM office
at (914) 964-3070
or visit www.Namnews.org

Eparchial Condolences



Deacon Edward Corey of St. John Maron Church in Anaheim, California, passed away on June 3, 2010. He is survived by his wife Najat, his sons John and Fouad, one grandson, and a brother, Hector.

Deacon Ed served not only St. John Maron Parish in Anaheim, but also Our Lady of Mt. Lebanon Cathedral in Los Angeles and St. Jude Maronite Parish in West Covina, California. He also helped found Our Lady of Lebanon Church in Flint, Michigan, as he served in the choir there for four years beginning in 1971. He was ordained a deacon in October of 2000.

Condolences may be sent to Mrs. Najat Corey, 852 North Poinsettia Ave., Brea, CA 92821.

Ghantous Anis Tayar (90 years old), the father of Fr. Hanna Tayar, Pastor of Our Lady of Lebanon Church, Flint, Michigan, passed away on June 23, 2010. He is survived by wife Takla Antonious, four sons, Fr. Hanna, Joseph, Elias, and Boutrous, along with three daughters, Saidi, Therese and Jeanette.

Condolences may be sent to Fr. Hanna Tayar, OMM, 4133 Calkins Rd., Flint, MI 48532 or to his parents' home at 97 Arden St., New York, NY 10040.

Abdo BouMsallem (45 years), brother of Fr. Samuel Madel, Pastor of St. Jude Maronite Church in West Covina, California, passed away in Lebanon on June 19, 2010. He is survived by his mother, Madel, his wife, Aida, and his five children: Maroun, Maria, Rita, Pauline and Rebecca. In addition, he is survived by his siblings: Father Samuel, Hani, Msallem, Youssef, Assia and Jandark.

Condolences may be sent to Fr. Samuel Madel, St. Jude Maronite Catholic Church, 1437 W. Badillo St., West Covina, CA 91790-1207.

Bishops Robert Shaheen and Gregory Mansour, along with the clergy and faithful of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon and of the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn, extend their heartfelt sympathy and the promise of our prayers to Mrs. Najat Corey, Fr. Hanna Tayar,; and Fr. Samuel Madel and all of their families. May the Lord God grant Edward, Ghantous and Abdo eternal rest in His Kingdom and consolation to their family and loved ones. □



North Jackson, Ohio 45th Assumption Pilgrimage

August 13, 14, and 15, 2010, mark the 45th 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.

Pilgrimage Schedule

Friday, August 13

The Very Reverend James A. Root, Rector of Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral in Brooklyn, N.Y., will conduct a spiritual conference at 4:00, followed by a 7:00 p.m. Divine Liturgy in the Roman Rite celebrated by Bishop Roger W. Gries OSB, Auxiliary Bishop of Cleveland, and a Candlelight Procession

Saturday, August 14

- 10 a.m. Maronite Divine Liturgy
- 12 p.m. Tridentine Mass celebrated by Fr. Dennis Bouchard, FSSP, of Queen of the Holy Rosary, Vienna, Ohio
- 2 p.m. Melkite Divine Liturgy by St. Elias Church, Cleveland, Ohio
- 4 p.m. Conference titled “Mary, Icon of the Church’s Prayer” by Sister Mary Brendon Zajac SND, Notre Dame Education Center
- 7 p.m. Archbishop Basil Schott, D.D., O.F.M., for the Byzantine Catholic Diocese of Pittsburgh will celebrate a Byzantine Rite Liturgy followed by a Paracletis to the Blessed Virgin Mary led by Monsignor George Appleyard

Sunday, August 15

Feast of the Assumption

- 10 a.m. Maronite Divine Liturgy with Anointing of the Sick celebrated by Bishops Robert J. Shaheen, D.D., Bishop of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon, and Bishop Gregory Mansour S.T.L., Bishop of the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn
- 11 a.m. Spiritual Conference by Fr. Gary George C.S.s.R.
- 2 p.m. Maronite Divine Liturgy
- 4 p.m. Maronite Vespers chanted by the Antonine Sisters
- 7 p.m. Maronite Pontifical Liturgy celebrated by Bishop Robert Shaheen and Bishop Gregory Mansour. Candlelight procession will follow.

The National Shrine of Our Lady of Lebanon will open all three days at 9 a.m. The Cedars Dining Hall will be open

from 11 a.m. until 11 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.

Utica, New York Priest Honored



Chorbishop John Faris, Pastor, and Deacon Paul Salamy present Msgr. Francis Willenburg with a plaque at St. Louis Gonzaga Church.

On June 19, 2009, Pope Benedict XVI declared a Year for Priests for the entire Catholic Church. The celebration concluded with an international gathering of priests with the Holy Father from June 9-11, 2010.

Saint Louis Gonzaga Maronite Catholic Church, Utica, New York, celebrated the year with a “traveling chalice” belonging to native son of Utica, the late Father Richard Rasi. Each week a family took the chalice home with them and prayed for one of the bishops and priests serving in the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn and all the priests who had served in St. Louis Gonzaga Church from its establishment in 1910. Occasionally the families wrote to the priests and told them of their spiritual support of the priest and his ministry.

The parish concluded its celebration by honoring a priest well-known in the Diocese of Syracuse for his work with Catholic Charities and for his pastoral ministry at Saint Agnes Church, the Rev. Msgr. Francis J. Willenburg. Msgr. Willenburg had assisted at the parish for some time during the pastorate of Msgr. Francis Lahoud and was appointed as parish administrator subsequent to the untimely death of Msgr. Lahoud.

On June 6, 2010, Chorbishop John Faris invited Msgr. Willenburg to concelebrate at the Divine Liturgy and to deliver the homily. After the homily, Chorbishop Faris and Deacon Paul Salamy presented Msgr. Willenburg with a plaque as a sign of their grateful love for him. The Holy Name Society, under the direction of Mr. Thomas Mitchell, prepared a pancake breakfast for everyone following the liturgy. □

THE ORDER OF



SAINT SHARBEL

Annual Members

★ **Mr. Kamal Jbeili**

*Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral,
Brooklyn, N.Y.*

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

Saint Louis, Missouri *Papal Honor*



Sam Mueckl, Kathy Mueckl, David Mueckl, Bishop Robert Shaheen, and Alex Mueckl.

On April 25, 2010, Bishop Robert Shaheen, Bishop of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon, presided at the conferral of Papal Honor upon Dr. David Mueckl, Ph.D., of Saint Raymond Cathedral in Saint Louis, Missouri. Dr. Mueckl was awarded the honor of Knight Commander with Star of the Pontifical Order of Saint Gregory the Great in recognition of his work at the Vatican. Following the ceremony a banquet reception was held at St. Raymond's Cedars Hall. □

San Diego, California *Mother's Day*



On Saturday, May 8, 2010, the Language & Religious Education School in San Diego, California, celebrated Mother's Day with a nice program. Students recited and read poems in classical Arabic, sang an Arabic song expressing their love for their mothers and gave them handmade cards saying: "I love you Mom" in Arabic. Father Nabil Mouannes, Pastor, blessed all the attending mothers, and all had coffee, cake and sweets. □

Washington, D.C. *Maronite Servants of Christ*



Therese Touma, Tresa Van Heusen, Sister Marla Marie and Chorbishop Seely Beggiani.

by *Therese Touma*

The Maronite Servants of Christ the Light were in Washington D.C., June 1-4 to attend classes with Chorbishop Seely J. Beggiani, Rector of Our Lady of Lebanon Seminary. We studied Maronite Liturgy and Eastern Catholic Spirituality. We discussed the origins of the Liturgy and went through the parts of the Liturgy, making references to the chapters of Chorbishop Beggiani's books on "The Maronite Divine Liturgy" and "Eastern Catholic Spirituality".

Highlights From Class on the Divine Liturgy

- ★ The *Qurbano* (Syriac name for the Divine Liturgy) literally means to come close, God reaching out to us in the Liturgy and we the faithful reaching out to Him. It is not a static prayer but organic in its nature, flowing from one part to the other through its different elements. "The language, music, gestures, and ornaments of the Liturgy are directed to bring about dialogue and union between God and the worshipping community."
- ★ John Chrysostom, Church Father of the East and Doctor of the Church, beautifully portrays the Liturgy as a "celestial spectacle" where we, the faithful, join and imitate the angels in heaven, as we sing praise to God in the hymn "Holy, Holy, Holy." Chorbishop Beggiani in his book, *The Maronite Divine Liturgy*, captures this awesome idea about the prayer of the Liturgy. "An invisible exchange takes place between earth and heaven. While on Earth, it is near the celestial throne."

Learn more about the Maronite Servants of Christ the Light at maroniteservants.org or at RadiateHisLight.blogspot.com.

Maronite History Committee *Maronites Remembered*

by *Ramona Melford*

The Maronite History Committee continues to gather information for the archives of Maronites in the United States. We want to reserve a place in the archives to recognize those Maronite lay persons, whether famous or not as famous, who are now deceased.

Perhaps the person you submit is your great-grandparent, your uncle, a teacher, a doctor, your friend, cousin, etc. There are guidelines that we ask you to follow so that all entrants can be treated equally and the History Committee will reserve the right to edit the submission only if necessary.

We already have a special segment for recognition of deceased priests and religious so this section will only include lay persons.

There is no limit to the number of submissions a person can make but each entry must follow the guidelines noted below. A couple (husband/wife) is considered one submission.

- ★ The person must have been Maronite and died in the United States between the late nineteenth century and the present
- ★ You need to provide the person's full name, date of death and location (city/state).
- ★ One color or black/white photo (jpeg format) per submission
- ★ Not more than 150 words per submission (word format)
- ★ The 150 word limit begins after the name, date of death and location.
- ★ Both the photo and written information must be submitted together, along with your full name and contact information

We ask that you consider a \$25 donation per submission to cover our site management and materials cost. You may pay with a check made payable to *The Maronite Heritage Institute*. All checks can be mailed to;

Chancery Office

Attention: Maronites Remembered

1021 South 10th Street
St. Louis, MO 63104

All entries can either be mailed to the above address or emailed to: ramonamarie26@gmail.com.

The Maronite History Committee is an inter-eparchial Committee working under the direction of Bishops Gregory Mansour and Robert Shaheen. Thank you for your support. Please, send all questions to the email noted above.

(This illustration is only an example of what your submission may include.)

Kahlil Gibran Died: April 10, 1931 in New York, NY

Gibran Kahlil Gibran was born to a Maronite family, in *Bsharri*, Lebanon, and spent the last twenty-five years of his life in the United States. Although known as a poet, philosopher and artist he is the third most widely read poet of all time, behind Shakespeare and Lao-Tzu, ... □



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Houston, Texas Groundbreaking Ceremony



Fr. Abdallah Zaidan with clergy and parishioners of Our Lady of the Cedars Church at the groundbreaking ceremony.

Almost two years ago, Our Lady of the Cedars Parish in Houston, Texas, initiated the design of a new facility, the Georges Mouawad Pastoral Center. Named after the late Georges Mouawad, a long-time parishioner and benefactor, the building will house the Parish offices, conference rooms, and classes for the Religious Education program. On Pentecost Sunday, May 23, 2010, the construction of this building officially kicked off with the ceremonial groundbreaking taking place under the patronage of Reverend Abdallah Zaidan, Rector of Our Lady of Mount Lebanon / St. Peter's Co-Cathedral in Los Angeles, Calif., and Superior of the Maronite Lebanese Missionaries in the United States.

The design of the new building was coordinated by the Parish's own Building Committee. The building's architect is Kashou Architecture, and the site layout, acoustical, structural, electrical, and plumbing designs were completed under the umbrella of the firm Innovative Engineering Design. Both are parishioner-owned professional firms.

The design was approved by the regulatory agencies, and thanks to donations made by many benefactors, both monetary and in-kind, the Parish will be able to proceed with this construction with minimal borrowed capital. Several general contractors were invited to bid on the construction. Zenith Construction, Inc. won the contract award, having presented the lowest and best bid and having demonstrated vast experience in the construction of buildings for many parishes within the local Galveston-Houston Catholic Archdiocese.

After con-celebrating the Divine Liturgy with the Parish clergy, Fathers Milad Yaghi, Andre Estephan, and Pierre El-Khoury, Father Zaidan sprinkled the Pentecostal Holy Water on the site of the new building while reciting prayers of blessing for the new project. With the Church Choir in the background chanting hymns to the Virgin Mary and the parishioners gathered all around the site, the clergy, joined by Parish Council president Dr. Nicolas Nammour, Mr. Mouawad's daughter Mrs. Carole Mouawad Zehri, parish benefactors, and the building committee, used gold-plated shovels to break ground indicating the start of construction.

Following the ceremony everyone enjoyed a small reception in the Parish hall.

The construction is set to be completed by the spring of next year. With the continued prayers and support from parishioners and friends, Our Lady of the Cedars continues to grow as a parish in ways people could only dream of not too long ago. This is a truly blessed Parish. ☐

Schedule of Bishop Gregory Mansour

July 4, 2010

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

July 5 - 8, 2010

Annual Clergy Conference, Birmingham, Ala.

July 7 - 11, 2010

Maronite Convention, Birmingham, Ala.

July 18, 2010

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

July 22 - 23, 2010

Annual Youth Conference, Latrobe [Pittsburgh], Penn.

July 25, 2010

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

July 31, 2010

Enthronement of Bishop Habash, Syriac Catholic Bishop, Bayonne, N.J.

August 1, 2010

Divine Liturgy and Festival, Easton, Pennsylvania

August 18, 2010

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

August 13 - 16, 2010

Our Lady of Lebanon National Shrine, North Jackson, Ohio

August 18 - 22, 2010

Family Wedding in Michigan

August 23, 2010

Capital Campaign Meeting, Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral, Brooklyn, N.Y.

August 25 - September 2, 2010

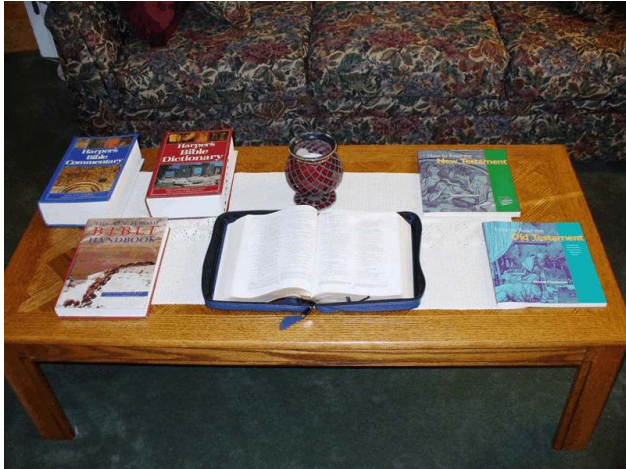
Personal Silent Retreat ☐

Summer Break

The Maronite Voice wishes its readers an enjoyable, safe and God-filled summer. *The Maronite Voice* will not be published in August. It will appear again in September. The deadline for the September issue is August 25, 2010. ☐

Brockton, Massachusetts

Breaking the Bible Open



by Fr. Anthony J. Salim

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path. (Ps 119:105, New International Version)

Is the Word of God truly a Lamp to our Feet?

Increasingly, since the jump-start for Bible study at the Second Vatican Council, and more recently in our days the Patriarchal Synod for our Maronite Church (see Text 14, #10c), for Catholic parishes throughout the world, including Maronite parishes, the answer is a resounding “Yes!” And what a grace and blessing from our God, who sent His Word to dwell with us, and whose Bible chronicles that sending and the teaching of the One who is the Word-Made-Flesh, the Lord Jesus.

But the journey is not easy. Bible study in the parish still meets with difficulties as people of good will—but not always possessing sufficient skills—attempt to “break open” the Word. Some of us here at St. Theresa Parish in Brockton, Massachusetts, have taken to heart this call to explore the riches of God’s Word in the Scriptures more deeply.

However, for a long time now I have been bothered by something that is fundamental to Bible study but not always recognized. And it often accounts for the quick dropping off of attendance from attempts at regular Bible study. Simply put, the call comes from the pulpit to form a study group. But when the group meets, those not familiar with the basics about the Bible hold the class back with basic questions that should be learned before deeper study begins—questions like:

- ★ What writings are in the Bible?
- ★ What belongs to the Old Testament (OT) and what belongs to the New Testament (NT)?
- ★ How are the books of the Bible organized?
- ★ When were the books of the Bible divided into chapter and verse?
- ★ How do I find a certain book?
- ★ Who wrote the many books of the Bible, and to whom were they written?

- ★ How does one interpret the Bible?
- ★ What are good resources for Catholic Bible study?
- ★ What is a lectionary, and how does our Maronite Lectionary differ from those of other Catholic Churches (Byzantine, Latin, Coptic, others)?

There are many other basic questions that must be learned before we can delve more deeply into the Sacred Scriptures, or more familiarly, the Holy Bible.

To answer this very real need, I composed a four-session introductory course addressing all of these basic questions. We had about twelve parishioners attend on a weekday evening for sessions lasting approximately two hours. There was one ten-minute break, during which refreshments were available. At the end of the series all agreed that the course was valuable for many reasons: that there was so much about the world’s best seller that they never knew; and that four weeks was simply not enough time to learn what was needed to make the Bible a Friend. Finally, armed with tools and skills, the students, whose appetites were whetted, were eager to proceed on to the next step: weekly Bible study.

During Lent this year we began the weekly Bible study. Eight students and I meet on Wednesday evenings from 7:00 to 8:30 p.m., in the rectory parlor, a casual and inviting setting for study. One of the initial considerations was: What will we study, and how? At my recommendation we focus on the Lectionary Readings for the following weekend. I send out electronically a commentary on both the non-Gospel (i.e., from Paul, or from Acts of the Apostles, or from the non-Pauline Letter the Hebrews—regrettably never from the Old Testament, since our Lectionary, sadly, does not offer the Old Testament) and the Gospel assigned for the week or feast. I have developed these commentaries for use in my previous parish and educational work. They are brief but easily understood, and they provide not only a simple preparation for the following meeting, but also a springboard for discussion.

Each session begins with initial socializing, an introductory recorded song, almost always based on Scripture, and a brief prayer to the Holy Spirit. Then I present a brief introduction, from which discussion takes place, either on the passage as a whole or of individual verses. An observation from one of the students is, I think, quite helpful here. He said that it is difficult to listen to especially the First Reading (Epistle) because it is always pulled out of context and, regrettably, too often poorly delivered by untrained and unrehearsed lectors. Unless one can study context and background, these Lectionary Readings will remain a mystery to most listeners in the pews. The same might conceivably be said about the Gospel Reading, especially if it is a difficult one (for example, see Mt 24:27-29 or Mk 11:19-21) and if the preacher has not taken sufficient care to research the meaning by diligent study himself.

While we cannot say that we have exhausted the riches of God’s Word here at St. Theresa, I am confident that we are working in the right direction. We have every confidence in the Holy Spirit that God will help us grow in the study of the Word in a manner worthy of a Catholic Tradition that values the Bible as the foundation of our Christian life.

If you have questions or comments, please don’t hesitate to contact me at salim48@aol.com (put “Brockton Bible Study” in the Subject box), or call St. Theresa Church at 1-508-586-1428. □

North Jackson, Ohio

The Antonine Sisters

A Segment of an American Legacy



Antonine Sisters at the Exhibit.

by Sister Celine Nohra

A remarkable exhibit came to Cleveland, Ohio, recently, featuring the contributions of religious women to the American society. The exhibit, named *Women and Spirit: Catholic Sisters in America*, opened last year at the Cincinnati museum center, then was transferred to Dallas, Texas, and from there to the Smithsonian in Washington D.C., with an overwhelmingly positive response in all three places. This August, it will head off to the Ellis Island Immigration Museum.

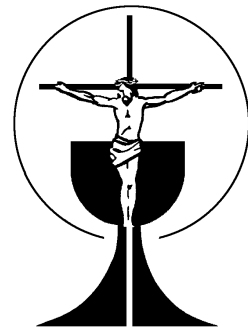
I thought it was noteworthy and quite exciting for this kind of exhibit to show in major cities. In a world that is often corrupted by violence and distracted by noise, here comes a silent witness with a life-giving message: a message that resonates Elijah's experience of God who was not present in the strong wind or earthquake or fire but in the gentle and quiet breeze (1 Kings 19:11-12). Religious women are often like that unnoticed breeze that refreshes the soul thirsty for justice, for meaning and for Gospel values. Like

Mary, they bring God to the world, reminding people that only God gives meaning to our life and peace to our hearts.

As I was navigating through the exhibit, I was amazed by the impact religious communities have had on American history. They transformed societies through service and advocacy, playing a major role in national crises such as wars, epidemics and natural disasters. There were several displays of stories of powerful and courageous women, armed with unconditional love and untiring hope, women who gave their lives completely to God and placed their trust in his words. They faithfully served the communities to which they belonged, responding to the needs of people of every cultural, religious and social background. Some were American born women, such as Elizabeth Ann Seton, the first American-born saint, and Sister Dorothy Kazel, the Cleveland Ursuline who was murdered in El Salvador in 1980 along with two MaryKnoll Sisters and a lay missionary. Others were brave immigrants such as Mother Cabrini and Saint Angela Merici of Italy, who established religious communities here

in the United States and whose influence continues to this day. Some stories are recognized only by a few, while others are more famous. Yet, many stories remain untold and more unfold each day. Stories of unknown religious women, sacrificing their lives for the sake of others, impacting generations of faith, helping women and men, Christians and non-Christians.

In the local section of the Cleveland exhibit, twenty-six orders of religious women are chronologically featured on a separate wall. These are the orders that originated in or came to Northeast Ohio in the early nineteenth century and are still active to this day. Among these twenty-six orders is our Antonine Order, the only Maronite congregation featured in the exhibit, active in Ohio since 1959. Looking at that wall, I was overwhelmed by a feeling of gratitude and thanksgiving: thanksgiving to God for all his blessings, and gratitude for my Antonine congregation. I felt personally grateful to all the Antonines who quietly spent their lives serving the sick, the poor, the young and the old, in different parts of the world, and especially here in the United States. They became entwined with the history and culture of those people. They started a legacy of faith and laid strong foundations on which this generation and future generations can build. I am deeply thankful to God for my Maronite heritage, for calling me to be part of such an astonishing legacy. I am also thankful for my local community, who dynamically represented and still represents the splendor of the Maronite faith and is now part of the American history. □



Forty Years As A Priest In America



by Msgr. Victor Kayrouz

This is the story of a priestly life of someone who lived for God and His people, who to the best of his ability followed his master Jesus and his Blessed Mother. Let this account of my priesthood not be one of self-glorification but simply a song of thanksgiving to God who called me to be his minister and, unworthy as I am, filled me with His grace. The following lines are a simple narration of multiple experiences filled with uncertainties, difficulties and joy and yet all with total abandonment to His divine will. The story of my ministry is rich with the Lord's encounters. Forty years of ministry in America ... What a blessing and "I did it my way!"

I was called by God at the age of ten to begin a dedicated life to the priesthood of the Church. In this year dedicated to praying for priests, I have decided to retire in *Besharri*, Lebanon, from my duties in the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon. Mine has been a very simple priestly life, yet full of surprises and miracles.

One such surprise occurred when, at the age of 31 I visited our Patriarch Paul Cardinal Meouchi to ask his permission to visit my family and grandmother in Louisville, Kentucky. It happened that Bishop Francis Zayek was visiting the Patriarch also. He asked the Patriarch if I could go to Chicago because the pastor, Msgr. John Naffah (Father John), was hospitalized after a major heart attack. I knew then that I would be ministering in this great city of Chicago and would fall in love with it.

I soon arrived in Chicago. Waiting for me at the gate at O'Hare International Airport, a world by itself, was the venerable priest, Father John, in a wheel chair, with his brother to welcome me. After a wonderful meeting with his family and a loving welcome, I was taken into the rectory located in the west side of the city. One thought and question had come to my mind that first night when I slept at the rectory. Why had God sent me to represent Him in this amazing and huge city? Consequently, that first night I was filled with fear, yet calm because I had abandoned myself to God.

The Church was majestic and beautiful, the product of the Frank Lloyd Wright School and a landmark within the city. Annexed to it was a lovely rectory that the parish had just proudly built a few years before. I was happy to see the accomplishment of my former pastor but at the same time, saddened to know that the Church and property had lost all value because of the changing demographics of the neighborhood.

Eventually, I had to learn about the danger of living in the Austin area of the west side of Chicago, then known as the most dangerous part of the city. The worsening situation of the neighborhood made my *trustees* call repeatedly to ask me to move out and rent an apartment which I refused to do until I sold the building. With Fr. John's guidance, and the tremendous dedication of the three trustees called then The Three Musketeers (two unique Joes and one George) whose love and support was unprecedented to both Father John and later to myself, I persevered. Every week, we would meet for lunch with the board of trustees who would take time out of their busy schedules to look after the needs of our parish, and many times pay the church's bills out of their own offices. Often they directed me to go and visit different cities or buildings or sites to relocate our parish, and to report to them immediately. Eventually, I accepted their decision to live under police protection but did not move out until I sold the Church in 1972 to a group of black ministers from Milwaukee, Wisconsin, who I convinced to buy the Church. Now that I recall the experience of my first

ministry in these forty years, my heart tells me that it was all about a young priest willing to be obedient to the call of the Church and to enter into a new ministry of different cultures and traditions.

The Miracle

One rainy night Father Luigi Gianbastani, a "Servite monk," knocked at my door for a personal spiritual need. He had come by taxi and after a wonderful visit and chatting in Italian with him, he asked me to call a taxi for him. I refused and offered my personal services to take him home instead. Upon arriving at the Servite seminary in Hillside, Ill., I was taken by the awesome and magnificent building and lovely chapel they had. I put all my trust in our Blessed Mother, and I really cried for deliverance.

Before dawn I was back at the seminary waiting at the door of the superior Father Frank O'Conner. When he opened the door of his bedroom to take a shower he found me sitting next to his door with the rosary in my hand. He said he had only a few minutes for me because he had a meeting with the Provincial. I prayed more right then than I ever had before. I told Father Frank that we were an important Catholic community in Chicago and that we had been searching for a church for three years. I visited the chapel and loved it and it was fitting for our community. He immediately said, "We are selling it for half a million" and that he would give it to me for \$450,000. I pleaded with him to be more merciful. He then said he would sell for \$425,000. He had a picture of the Blessed Mother at his door. I looked to her and I screamed, "Blessed Mother help me" and I immediately told him that we do not have that kind of money. "Let us give you \$100,000 and instead of relocating the seventeen monks already in their 80's and 90's, let them stay here until they die, thus we will share the building." He looked me in the eyes and told me to repeat what I said. I looked at the Blessed Mother Mary and felt as though I was under a cold shower sweating. I repeated my offer and Father Frank said, "I'm going to see the Provincial ... come and see me this afternoon." So I stayed in the

chapel all day and waited for him there. When he came back his answer was “yes” and our Blessed Lady gave us a home for thirty years. I realized that this was the gift of Mary to my priesthood.

That same evening I spent a long time on the phone trying to reach Father John who had been recuperating with his family in Lebanon. Father John started crying on the phone and I told him, “*Abouna*, you have your Church.” To this day, I still have the beautiful letter he wrote with his shaking hand. This is a story of two joyful priests in their encounter with the human and the Divine through the simple ministry of trust, hope and joy. That was the longest night of my life.

God had blessed our ministry and when Father John was able to regain his full strength, Bishop Zayek assigned me to be pastor of St. Anthony Church in Wilkes-Barre, Penn. I served the community of St. Anthony with dedication and zeal. I was so happy to see about forty plus families walking to Church, a unique reality in our diocese. The community of St. Anthony was one thirsty for God and they loved their Church so much. An unusual situation in our diocese is there are two Maronite Churches within two or three blocks of each other. My priestly ministry at St. Anthony was to break the ice and get them doing things together. On March 17, 1977, I became a U.S. citizen and was given the Keys to the City by the Mayor.

The Return to Chicago

It took three months of private negotiations before I was convinced to return to minister in Chicago and accept Father John’s retirement in the rectory for the next eighteen years. It was a ministry of love, patience and respect. As for the building, we had a remodeling project and created a beautiful hall inside the facility.

My ministry extended beyond the spiritual need of the parish. With the Grace of God and the help of Cardinal Bernardin, I was able to send six containers of medical supplies, food and other necessities to the children of war-torn Lebanon. As pastor, I assisted in filling out immigration papers and my office became like a consulate-annex serving a variety of needs including translations, obtaining passports and powers of attorney,

counseling, paying of bonds for prisoners (some of them until today), boarding people in the rectory for years (up to twenty seven young men at one time), finding them jobs, helping the migrants, welcoming priests, nuns and religious on their way to Notre Dame University. They all had a home at Our Lady of Lebanon and all of this in addition to the spiritual/pastoral obligations. All of these are part of any church community’s obligations, but the boundaries of this particular Church extended over two hundred miles.

As for the spiritual activities of the parish of Chicago, we were blessed to have built a shrine to Our Lady of Lebanon in Hillside recognized by the late Cardinal Bernardin to be one of the twelve Shrines of the Archdiocese of Chicago. We hosted the closing of the “*Pro-Oriente*” attended by seventeen Bishops and Archbishops from around the world, under the leadership of Archbishop Mattar of Beirut. A novena to Saint Sharbel became famous around the city and took place every Tuesday night, attended by faithful from all around the city. Our activities extended also to two missions, Michigan City, and Louisville, Kentucky.

God’s grace has been with me and my family in other ways. With the money I earned while in Chicago for a third of a century and the generous donations from friends and the good people of Chicago, God allowed me to build a twenty-two bed hospital in my hometown of *Besharri*, Lebanon. I gave it to the government and it has been in operation a full ten years helping the poor of the mountains. In addition, I wrote a letter to Mother Theresa of Calcutta eleven years ago at the request of my sister, Antoinette, and her husband, Antoine Fakhr. They wanted to donate their home in *Besharri* in memory of their son, Captain Fakhr of the Lebanese Army. My letter was chosen by Mother Theresa from among six other petitions. Today my sister’s home is The Convent of the Venerable Sisters of Mother Teresa of Calcutta, “THE HOME OF JOY” for the Franciscan sisters of the venerable Mother Teresa of Calcutta. This is how holiness comes to your family.

In 2003, the Mayor of Hillside expressed his interest in our building. I spoke with our Bishop and Church Council and then our Church was sold. Two weeks later, on June 1, 2003, I

took a leave of absence for a few months. The Most Reverend Bishop Robert Shaheen asked me to assume the pastoral ministry of the mission of St. Anthony of the Desert in El Paso, Texas. This was, for me, like going to the end of the world.

The work of the priest in a mission is full of surprises, abnegations, joys and difficulties. I was in El Paso only one week and was offered a Church to use instead of renting. Three years later, on the morning of the lovely ordination of our Subdeacon Rev. Mr. George Karam, the local Bishop, Most Reverend Armando Ochoa offered our Bishop, Most Reverend Bishop Robert J. Shaheen, the use of a small Church with a rectory and a hall, also asking me to take care of the ecclesiastical and spiritual needs of the local Latin community as well. It was a “win-win situation for both Communities.”

Leaving a most wonderful community, my heart is very saddened. I do not think they are ready to assume the responsibility on their own. Most of them are very involved in their local parishes and it is very hard to bring them back to their roots. During my time in El Paso, we missed the opportunity to have our own Church facilities twice. Although some of them are adamantly enthused and conscious of the dream that they will one day build on the hill top a St. Anthony’s of their own, the retirement of their pastor is probably an occasion for them to have different opportunities.

All in all, it has been a worthwhile ministry and I have tried to do God’s will everyday and I have experienced how God works in the lives of people through the loving hand of a Priest. In my case, I have been so blessed to minister not only to Maronites but to a dozen other cultures, and I have tried my best to witness to my Priesthood every day of my life with a smile. I thank God for helping me to live in peace with myself. Despite all of the difficulties there was never a time that I felt abandoned, undeserving as I am. He never left me.

Finally, I ask the Lord and my friends to forgive my failures and if I have offended anyone please forgive me, and remember me in your prayers.□

Providence, Rhode Island *Fashion Show*



All of the Models on the runway for the closing ceremony.

by Joseph P. Checrallah, Jr.

The 2010 “Reflections of Spring” Fashion Show was held at the Providence Marriot Hotel on May 11, 2010. The show was presented by the Holy Rosary Sodality of St. George Maronite Catholic Church, of Lincoln [Providence], Rhode Island. Spring fashions were provided by CABI, an Internet based clothing company, and Botticelli’s of North Providence.

Georgeann Thomas, President of Holy Rosary Sodality, introduced St. George’s Pastor, Fr. Edward Nedder. After he offered the Invocation, he thanked the organizers of the event, the attendees, and everyone who had generously donated the time, effort, resources, and gifts to bring the evening together.

A Dijon Chicken Dinner was served, followed by the festivities of the evening. Parishioners, young and young at heart, had their makeup and hair done by Euphoria Institute of Beauty Arts and Science, and wore jewelry designed by John Mederios Jewelry Collections. Both generously donated their time, effort, and wares. All of the models looked radiant as they paraded down the runway showing off dozens of beautiful spring and summer outfits.

The evening concluded with Sweepstakes Raffle Drawings for dozens of prizes, which included money trees, handbags, scarves, jewelry, and gift certificates from local restaurants and food chains.

Over 150 people attended the 2010 St George Maronite Catholic Church Fashion Show. It was a wonderful success made possible by the many parishioners and friends who always work together to support Fr. Ed and St. George in this closeknit Lebanese community. □

Food For Thought

*Our faults are like a grain of sand beside
the great mountain of the mercies
of the good God.*

St. John Vianney

Uniontown, Pennsylvania *Graduation Celebration*



Class of 2010 of St. George Maronite Church in Uniontown, Penn.

by Joanne John, Youth Advisor

St. George Maronite Church in Uniontown, Pennsylvania, recognized and congratulated all the graduates of the parish including seven high school, four college and two graduates from Law School.

Fr. Tony Akoury, Pastor, presented all with a certificate of recognition and congratulations at the Divine Liturgy on June 13, 2010.

Emilee Madison, Nicole Hart, Anna Howard, Kendall George, Mallory Sanner, Joshua Horvath and Matthew Macar graduated from High School. They are pictured in the front row.

Kate George graduated from Indiana State University, Courtney Sanner from Wheeling Jesuit College, Sandy Risha from Penn State University, and David Macar from the University of Pittsburgh.

Although not able to be present at the celebration, the Law School graduates were recognized as well. Bernard Michael John graduated from Duquesne University and G. T. George from West Virginia University. □

From the Book Shelf

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 further information, call (804) 762-4301. □

Minneapolis, Minnesota *Altar Society Awards*



Members of the Altar Society - St. Anne's Club at St. Maron Church in Minneapolis, Minn.

by Joanne Moses

The Altar Society - Saint Anne's Club of Saint Maron, Minneapolis, Minnesota, awarded four members and honored thirteen thirty-year members on Sunday, May 9, 2010. Msgr. sharbel Maroun, Pastor, spoke highly of the dedicated women of our parish who spend decade after decade chiring events, serving in the kitchen, the sanctuary, the office, and gardens, and accepting even the most menial tasks with devotion and care. Some of the members have belonged over fifty years and began with the original Sodality and/or the Altar Society. Those honored were Colleen Risk, Marie George, Gen Resha, Saidie Anton (Saidie is 101 years old and has been a member her whole adult life), Rosemary Hennun, Rose Hitti, Elaine Jacob, Malake Kozah, present, and those not present were Catherine LaFerriere, Rose Anton, Therese Jacob, and Luella Simon. Also recognized was Lorraine Thomas who recently passed away. Each honoree was given special blessings by Monsignor sharbel Maroun and a wall plaque of Jesus and Mary as a token of appreciation for service to their club and the parish.

Those who received annual award plaques were Diane LeClaire, Amira Farah, Wadad Bejjani, and Malake Kozah. New members installed were Lisa Gleason and Josephine Dahdah. Club officers are Amira Farah, president, Elizabeth Nasser, vice president, Barbara Saba, secretary, and Carla Bedros, treasurer.

This was a beautiful "Saint Anne's Sunday" which began with their traditional silent gathering and reciting of the Rosary in unison before Liturgy. Over thirty members assembled, wearing their purple ribbons with gold medals, seated together near the beautifully embroidered club banner. Lisa Gleason gave the Reading, six members brought up the gifts, and another five gave the intercessions. As this took place on Mother's Day, the service ended with these ladies and all mothers each receiving a rose and enjoying a celebratory breakfast in Cedar's Hall courtesy of the men of the Lebanon American Club. □

San Francisco, California *Knights of Columbus*



Fr. John Nahal, Pastor, with members of Our Lady of Lebanon Church Knights of Columbus.

by Nicole Rashwan

The Knights of Columbus Council at Our Lady of Lebanon Maronite Church, San Francisco Bay area was chartered by the Supreme Council. The number of the OLL council is 15040. Election of officers and appointment of directors was held during the first meeting. Sir Knight Khalil Saikali was elected Grand Knight for the local council.

The Knights of Columbus was formed to render financial aid to members and their families. Mutual aid and assistance are offered to sick, disabled and needy members and their families. Social and intellectual fellowship is promoted among members and their families through educational, charitable, religious, social welfare, war relief and public relief works.

The Knights of Columbus has grown from several members in one council to more than 15,000 councils and 1.7 million members throughout the United States, Canada, the Philippines, Mexico, Poland, the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, Panama, the Bahamas, the Virgin Islands, Cuba, Guatemala, Guam and Spain. □

Deadline for next month's issue of *The Maronite Voice* is August 25, 2010. *The Maronite Voice* is the official Newsletter of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon and of the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn.

Send all changes of address, news, pictures and personal correspondence to:

The Maronite Voice

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Email: Gmsebaali@aol.com

Pictures must be original. Digital pictures must be in "JPG" format.

The Maronite Voice is also available online, in PDF format, at www.stmaron.org. □

St. Paul, Minnesota *Silver Massabki Award*



Fr. Rodrigue Constantin, Pastor, Mardelle Whebbe, Award Recipient, Bishop Robert Shaheen and Ted Tedros, NAM President.

by John Kempe

As the feast day of the Blessed Massabki Brothers approaches, the faithful at the Church of the Holy Family in Mendota Heights [St. Paul], Minnesota, express their gratitude and appreciation to the National Apostolate of Maronites (NAM) for awarding a Silver Massabki Medal to Mardelle Whebbe at the occasion of the dedication of our new church building on Saturday November 7, 2009.

For those unfamiliar with it, the Silver Massabki Medal is awarded at the parish level to celebrate and honor those who selflessly provide generous and untiring service to others with love. The Massabki Brothers were martyred on July 10, 1860 for refusing to renounce their faith, and are models of Maronite spirituality by exemplifying the integration of faith, hope and love into our daily lives and actions. □



47th Annual Maronite Convention Held in Birmingham, Alabama

by Wanda Elkourie, Public Relations Chairman

St. Elias Church, host of the 47th Annual Maronite Convention, extends a loving “thank you” to all those who joined us in Birmingham July 7 – 11. The Maronite Convention in Birmingham was the centerpiece of St. Elias’s Centennial Celebration, which continues through the remainder of 2010.

There was “something for everyone” as participants enjoyed workshops about our Maronite heritage, which were hosted by Maronites from around the world, mingled with

priests and fellow conventioners, sampled the tasty treats in “The Oasis,” our Hospitality and Exhibition Center, along with our *Argileh* Café. We were able to fill our spirits with daily *Safro*, Divine Liturgy and *Ramsho*. From age 4 to 104, we had daily activities to keep you occupied inside and outside of the hotel. The nights were filled with wonderful food and entertainment by local musicians, The Fred Astaire Dance Company, the Saint Elias Dancers, Amin Sultan and Band and DJ Yaoob Jacobs.

Be sure to mark your calendars for next year’s 48th Annual Maronite Convention which will be held in the City of Brotherly Love, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, July 6-10. The wonderful blend of spirituality and fun while celebrating our Maronite Heritage can only be found at our annual Maronite Conventions.

For more information about NAM, NAM membership and NAM travel, visit www.namnews.org. □

Newtown Square, Pennsylvania *May Crowning*



Emily Estephan crowned the Blessed Mother after her father Sami is handed the floral wreath to her.

On May 16, 2010 St. Sharbel Maronite Church in Newtown Square, Pennsylvania, held a May Procession and Crowning of the Blessed Mother following the Divine Liturgy and benediction. The faithful processed outside on the grounds and Emily Estephan, assisted by Nabih Sleiman who carried the Icon of Our Lady of *Ilege*, crowned the Blessed Mother. Timothy Carr was the candle bearer. □

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

Denver, Colorado



Anna Conkling, Elissa Maalouf, Natalie Cohlmia, Farid Dagher, Sharbel Dagher, and Dani Haddad received their First Holy Communion on May 16, 2010, at St. Rafka Church in Denver, Colorado. □

Lombard [Chicago], Illinois



Abigail Sfire, John Sfire, Isabella Akouri, Fouad Anawis, Michael Bendok, Anthony Elkareh, George Estephan, Joseph Estephan, Alexis Ibarra, Jose Guttierrez, Benjamin Luka, Yanira Pompa, Nicolas Ripamonti, Sean Saad, and Edgar Zarco received their First Holy Communion on May 2, 2010, at Our Lady of Lebanon Church in Lombard [Chicago], Illinois. □

Dallas, Texas



Patrick Arzoumanian, Austin Blanchard, Matthew Boulos, Aaron Dooghe, Andrew Farhat, Mark Ghadban, Dany Ghreichi, Jason Hamad, Alison Harik, George Issa, Liana Karkabi, Mary Kleiner, Gabriel Medina, Ifunanya Moore, and Jessica Semaan celebrated their First Holy Communion on May 2, 2010, at Our Lady of Lebanon Church in Lewisville [Dallas], Texas. □

San Francisco, California



George Sabbagh, Tatiana Feghali, Nicolas Majdalani, Grace Hajjar, Joe Haddad, Kira Minaise, Andrew Issa, Mirabel Saikali, Anthony Tanios, Lucia Sarimsakci, Christopher Rizkallah, and Reema Bousaba received their First Holy Communion on May 2, 2010, at Our Lady of Lebanon Church, San Francisco, California. □

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

Utica, New York



Gabrielle Lewis, Jasmine Curles, Isabella Scholl, Jeremy Adamczyk, Ronald Alesandro, Robert Tehan, Alex Hobika, Molly Roefaro, Jacob Lewis, Matthew Lewis, Celina Zeina, and Steven ElKhoury received their First Holy Communion on Sunday May 2, 2010, at St. Louis Gonzaga Church, Utica, New York. □

Buffalo, New York



Elias Kabalan, Peter Hayak, Lena Issa, Adelene Moawad, Matthew Ibrahim, Michael Hayak, Jonathon Kabalan, Sophia Sayers, Olivia Khang, Pamela Khoury, Jessica Molle and George Newcomb received their First Holy Eucharist on Sunday, May 16, 2010, at St. John Maron Church in Williamsville [Buffalo], N.Y. □

Danbury, Connecticut



Jennah Haddad, Alan J. Kovacs, Zack Harb, Jr., Matthew Ledney, and Lauren Stuart received their First Holy Communion on May 2, 2010, at St. Anthony Church, Danbury, Conn. □

Newtown Square, Pennsylvania



Timothy Carr, Emily Estephan and Nabih Sleiman received their First Eucharist on May 9, 2010 at St. Sharbel Church in Newtown Square, Penn. □

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

Flint, Michigan



Jacob Damouni, Manideepa (Mandy) Rossie, Sophie Klanseck, Chris Kalo, Miriam Botani, Selina Hannosh, Katrina Hanna, Daniella Lahoud, Michael Chammas, Allison Haddad, Juliett Hawa, and Amber Dabish received their First Holy Communion on May 2, 2010, at Our Lady of Lebanon Church, Flint, Mich. □

Tulsa, Oklahoma



Makayla Mejia, Kathlynn Mejia, Joseph Saffa, Robert Saffa, and Andrew Saffa received their First Holy Communion on May 2, 2010, at St. Therese of the Child Jesus, Tulsa, Oklahoma. □

Houston, Texas



Elie Tarabay, Tara Chbeir, Rachel Stevens, Sarah Mekha, George Mourad, Samara Srouji, Roy Atallah, Louis Toumajian, Vanessa Kmeid, Pierre Koutani, Anthony Reaidy, Mara Therese Bousleiman, George Joubran, Anthony Fegali, Alexandre Zehri, Gianni Germani, Edmond Lahlouh, John Andari, Sasha Azar, Jessica Moubayed, Samantha Elmessan, Joseph Obeid, Celine Farhat, Ricardo El-Kareh, Kamal Nader, and Joey Charbel Baaklini received their First Holy Communion on May 16, 2010, at Our Lady of the Cedars Church, Houston, Texas. The Most Reverend Vincent M. Rizzotto, Retired Auxiliary Bishop, Archdiocese of Galveston, Houston, was the main celebrant. □

Akron, Ohio



Zoey Kahwaji, Chelsey Akiki, Lena Nemer, Madeline Owen, Jackie Binkley, Jose Awais, Michael Elias, John Paul Boulos, Alex Shamatta, Martin Whitley, Ben Michael, and Jonathon Owen received their First Holy Communion on May 9, 2010, at Our Lady of the Cedars, Fairlawn [Akron], Ohio. □

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

Jacksonville, Florida



Myriam Abi Khaled, Christa Assi, Michael Chehade, Mira Chehade, Elio El-Hajj and Angela Naddaf received their First Holy Communion on Sunday May 16, 2010, at Saint Maron Church in Jacksonville, Fla. □

Waterville, Maine



Julia Bard and Katherine Taddeo received their First Holy Communion on May 16, 2010, at St. Joseph Church, Waterville, Maine. □

Lawrence, Massachusetts



Rita Geha, Hana Youssef, Michelle Francis, Leila Ata, Marita Merheb, Carla Bouchrouch, Andrea Ata, Yara Daher, Abigale Maroun, Grace Owaida, Caren Mansour, Sophia DiSarrono, Farrah Kannan, Nida El-Boustany, Silvia Caddell, Leila Geha, Rudy Bourouphael, Charbel Saab, Julian Bouchrouche, Tony Conway, Jonathan Hanna, Andrew Abirached, Anthony El-Hashem, Peter Bousleiman, Joshua Maroun, Charbel Merheb, Noah Hassan, Andrew Archambault, Connor Murach, Sebastian Ramey, Michael Sader and Elie Wazem received their First Holy Communion on May 2, 2010, at St. Anthony Church in Lawrence, Mass. □

Easton, Pennsylvania



Marcella Karam, Blake Daniel, Veronica BouDaher, Joseph Jabbour, Rosina Symia, Giorgio Waked, Marina Melhem, Victor Karam, Elessa Jacobs, William Cornish, Abigail Melhem, Jacob Koerwitz, Jacqueline Karam, Joseph Khoury, and Katerina Nehme received their First Holy Communion on May 2, 2010, at Our Lady of Lebanon Church, Easton, Penn. □

Maronites: Treasure Your Inheritance As A Precious Gift



Patriarch Sfeir greets the Holy Father at Our Lady of Grace Maronite Cathedral in Larnaca, Cyprus.

Following the Holy Father's words, His Beatitude Nasrallah Peter Cardinal Sfeir, Patriarch of Antioch of the Maronites, prayed the prayer of forgiveness in the Syriac rite, followed by a hymn of invocation to the Virgin. Pope Benedict XVI traveled by car to the airport at Larnaca. □

Vatican Information Service (VIS) June 6, 2010

Pope Stresses Respect for Mideast Christians Calls for International Effort to Avoid Bloodshed

Pope Benedict XVI is underlining the need for respect for Christians in the Middle East, and is calling for increased international efforts to resolve conflict in that region. The Pope said on June 6 in an address at the Eleftheria Sports Centre in Nicosia, Cyprus, before he presented the "*instrumentum laboris*" (working document) for the Special Assembly for the Middle East of the Synod of Bishops, which will take place in Rome this upcoming October 10-24.

"Christians everywhere continue to look to the Middle East with special reverence," the Pontiff acknowledged, "on account of the prophets and patriarchs, apostles and martyrs to whom we owe so much, the men and women who heard God's word, bore witness to it, and handed it on to us who belong to the great family of the Church."

Speaking to the Christians in that region, he affirmed that the upcoming synod assembly "will attempt to deepen the bonds of communion between the members of your local Churches, and the communion of these churches with each other and with the universal Church."

He continued, "The Assembly also aims to encourage you in the witness of your faith in Christ in those countries where the faith was born and from where it spread."

"It is also known that some of you have endured great hardships due to the current situation in the region," the Holy Father acknowledged. "The Special Assembly is an opportunity for Christians from the rest of the world to offer spiritual support and solidarity to their brothers and sisters in the Middle East."

Christian Presence

He noted that "this is an opportunity to highlight the significant value of the Christian presence and witness in countries of the Bible, not only for the Christian community worldwide, but also for your neighbors and fellow citizens."

Pope Benedict XVI acknowledged that the Christians "want to live in peace and harmony with your Jew and Muslim neighbors." "Often, you act as peacemakers in the difficult process of reconciliation," he affirmed, "You deserve recognition for the invaluable role you fill."

The Pope expressed the "serious hope that your rights are increasingly respected, including the right to freedom of worship and religious freedom, and that you will never again suffer discrimination of any kind."

(Continues on page 20)

On June 6, 2010, at 4.30 p.m. the Holy Father visited the Maronite Cathedral of Cyprus, which is dedicated to Our Lady of Grace. The cathedral, consecrated in 1960, was built with funds collected from the faithful and a donation from the Cypriot government.

Having been greeted by Archbishop Joseph Soueif, Maronite Bishop of Cyprus, the Pope delivered his address. "As I visit this building," he said, "in my heart I make a spiritual pilgrimage to every Maronite church of the island. Be assured that, moved by a father's care, I am close to all the faithful of those ancient communities.

"This Cathedral church in some way represents the very long and rich - and sometimes turbulent - history of the Maronite community in Cyprus," he added. "Maronites came to these shores at various times throughout the centuries and were often hard-pressed to remain faithful to their distinct Christian heritage. Nevertheless, in spite of their faith being tested like gold in a fire, they remained constant in the faith of their fathers, a faith which has now been passed on to you, the Maronite Cypriots of today. I urge you to treasure this great inheritance, this precious gift."

The Holy Father went on: "This cathedral building also reminds us of an important spiritual truth. St. Peter tells us that we Christians are the living stones which are being 'built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ'. Together with Christians throughout the world, we are part of that great temple which is the mystical Body of Christ. Our spiritual worship, offered in many tongues, in many places and in a beautiful variety of liturgies, is an expression of the one voice of the People of God, united in praise and thanksgiving to him and in enduring communion with each other. This communion, which we hold so dear, impels us to carry the Good News of our new life in Christ to all mankind.

"Commending you and your families, and especially your beloved children to the intercession of St. Maron, I willingly impart to all of you my apostolic blessing," he concluded.

Boston, Massachusetts New Pastor Welcomed



Chorbishop Joseph Lahoud, Pastor Emeritus (left) and Fr. Georges El Khalli, Pastor.

On June 6, 2010, Our Lady of the Cedars parish in Jamaica Plain [Boston], Massachusetts, welcomed its new pastor Father Georges El Khalli. The 2010 Bazaar Committee hosted the event. Approximately three hundred people came to welcome Father Georges including parishioners from his former church in Buffalo, New York. His enthusiasm towards his new parish was evident in his sermons and speeches throughout the weekend. He met with many parishioners during the welcome. Our Lady of the Cedars is excited and optimistic for the future of their church with Father Georges leading the way! □

Pope Stresses Respect for Mideast Christians

Continued from page 19

He continued, "I pray that the work of the Special Assembly will help to focus the attention of the international community on the plight of those Christians in the Middle East who suffer for their beliefs, so that just and lasting solutions may be found to the conflicts that cause so much hardship."

"On this grave matter," the Pontiff said, "I reiterate my personal appeal for an urgent and concerted international effort to resolve the ongoing tensions in the Middle East, especially in the Holy Land, before such conflicts lead to greater bloodshed." □

Pope Urges Christians in Middle East to Remain Despite Sacrifices

Pope Benedict XVI said that he would encourage the Christians living in the Middle East "to keep the faith and, despite numerous sacrifices, stay in the land where they were born." He urged the Christians who had emigrated from the region "not to forget their origins, especially their religious origins."

The Holy Father made these remarks in a June 25 talk to representatives of the Aid Agencies for the Oriental Churches (ROACO). He thanked the group for helping to maintain the Christian presence in the region, as well as for help in preparing for the October meeting of the Synod for the Middle East.

The Pope drew attention in his remarks to the "Christians who suffer violence because of the Gospel, especially in the Middle East. He said that world leaders have a duty to promote the rights of religious minorities and the security of all believers. □ (CWNNews June 25, 2010)