



The Maronite Voice

A Publication of the Maronite Eparchies in the USA



Volume VI

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November 2010

The Synod of Bishops for the Middle East October 2010 Rome, Italy

The task before him was great, but only Peter, aided by the prayer of the Mother of God and the entire Church, could gather such a diverse group of bishops and faithful. From Libya to Saudi Arabia, Armenia to Ethiopia, the Holy Father, in the person of Peter, gathered them in love and good order. His desire was to "confirm" his brothers, as Jesus asked him to do (Luke 22:32). The brothers were indeed confirmed and the Lord would have been pleased.

All Maronite, Melkite, Syriac Catholic, Chaldean, Coptic and Armenian Catholic bishops were present, including their patriarchs. Likewise, there were representatives from the Ukrainian, Ethiopian, Syro Malabar, Syro-Malakar and Latin Churches who also have faithful in the Middle East.

The opening and closing liturgies were a solemn show of unity in diversity as the Holy Father presided and each patriarch and bishop was vested in the tradition of his own Church *sui iuris*. The daily deliberations, attended timely and attentively by the Holy Father, began with the morning prayer of each different Church. The discussions revealed the deep anguish of marginalized Christians, yet also their dynamic and loving presence in the hospitals, universities, schools, health care facilities and other Catholic social services which remain open to all, Muslims, Jews and Christians alike, and which continue to make a difference in the lands where they live. Each Synod Father and observer had five minutes to speak. We listened, everyone had a chance to speak, we learned.



Bishop Gregory Mansour, Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn, and Bishop George Abi-Younes, Maronite Bishop of Mexico, join other Catholic Patriarchs, Cardinals and Bishops for the Synod for the Middle East.

During the two-week long Synod, the hard work of forging consensus sometimes revealed our human side, showing differences of opinions and approaches dealing with the difficulties Christians face. Nonetheless, the final message and suggestions revealed a spirit of communion and a renewed intention to witness to Christ no matter what the cost, including suffering, humiliation and even death itself.

The Synod gathered 185 bishops along with dozens of lay experts (men and women), priests and religious, Orthodox and Evangelical fraternal observers, Media, as well as guests

from the Jewish and Muslim faiths. The final message of the Synod was one of hope and encouragement, and all who work for peace, justice and dignity will find in it a word of encouragement and appreciation. The final draft of the Synod's Exhortation will be forthcoming after the Holy Father himself reviews all the deliberations of the Synod and can once again, this time not in person, but in writing, "confirm his brothers."

(Continues on page 12)

Schedule of Bishop Robert Shaheen

November 5 - 7, 2010

Hundred Years Celebration, Saint Elias Church, Birmingham, Alabama

November 12, 2010

Open House: Maronite Heritage Center

November 12 - 14, 2010

Kick off weekend: Hundred Years of Saint Raymond Parish, St. Louis, Mo.

November 20 - 21, 2010

Our Lady of Lebanon, Chicago, Illinois

November 25, 2010

Thanksgiving Liturgy, St. Raymond Cathedral, St. Louis, Mo.

December 4 - 6, 2010

Visit to St. George Maronite Church, San Antonio, Texas

December 12, 2010

Children's Liturgy, St. Raymond Cathedral, St. Louis, Mo. □

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Growing Vocations

by *The Maronite Servants of Christ the Light*

The late Pope John Paul II used the image of a garden to help parents understand their responsibility in nurturing religious vocations. "The task of Christian parents is as important as it is sensitive, because they are called to prepare, cultivate and protect the vocations which God stirs up in their family." The Pope explains that God generously sows the seeds of vocation and the family is the "garden" where a vocation to priesthood and religious life blossoms and grows.

How can you, as a parent, tend the seed of vocation? Pope John Paul II gives guidance. "They must, therefore, enrich themselves and their family with spiritual and moral values, such as a deep and convinced religious spirit, an apostolic and ecclesial consciousness, and a clear idea of what a vocation is."

Parents are to be living models of mature self-giving love, flowing from generous hearts bound in the Sacrament of Matrimony. "Christian parents, demonstrating a loving care for their children from their earliest years, communicate to them, by word and example, a sincere and lived-out relationship with God, made up of love, fidelity, prayer and obedience. In this way, parents encourage the holiness of their children and render their hearts docile to the voice of the Good Shepherd, who calls every man to follow him and to seek first the kingdom of God" (Pope John Paul II, XXXI World Day of Prayer for Vocations).

The Maronite Servants of Christ the Light pray each day for an increase of vocations in our Maronite Church in holy priests, generous nuns and monks, and faithful marriages. Young women are invited to consider giving their life in service to the Maronite Church as the spiritual mothers of the parish family. Contact MaroniteServants.org for more information on a religious vocation. □



Brooklyn, New York *Interfaith Service at St. James Cathedral Offers Prayers for Peace in Middle East*



Maronite Bishop Gregory Mansour leads prayers at an interfaith prayer service at St. James Cathedral-Basilica, Downtown Brooklyn, N.Y., for the success of the Synod in Rome on the life of the Church in the Middle East. Bishop Mansour has been chosen by Pope Benedict XVI to be a delegate to the Synod.

The following article, written by Marie Elena Giossi, was published in The Tablet, the newspaper of the Catholic Diocese of Brooklyn, New York, on Tuesday October 26, 2010, Volume 103, issue 29. The copyright belongs to the Roman Catholic Diocese of Brooklyn and the photo is © Marie Elena Giossi.

Peace in the Middle East and the success of the Synod of Bishops working toward that goal was the cause for prayer in Downtown Brooklyn Wednesday evening, Oct. 6. More than 50 members of the Christian, Jewish and Muslim faiths gathered at St. James Cathedral Basilica for an Interfaith Evening of Prayer, co-sponsored by the Diocese of Brooklyn and the Maronite Eparchy of St. Maron of Brooklyn.

The Synod of Bishops for the Middle East began October 10 at the Vatican on the theme, "The Catholic Church in the Middle East: Communion and Witness." Now the company of those who believed were of

one heart and soul" (Acts 4: 32). The assembly ended on October 24.

Local representatives from the Jewish, Christian Orthodox, Druze, Catholic and Muslim traditions gathered in St. James Cathedral's sanctuary to participate in a modified form of *Ramsho*, the Maronite Catholic Church's evening prayer, and share individual reflections on peace. Among the clergy present were Sheikh Sami Merhi of the Druze Council of North America; Sheikh Fadhel Al-Sahlani of the Imam Al-Khoei Islamic Center, Jamaica; Bishop Anoushavan Tanielian, vicar of the eastern prelate of the Armenian Apostolic Church; Rabbi Serge Lippe from the Brooklyn Heights Synagogue; and Father Eugene Pappas, pastor of Three Hierarchs Greek Orthodox Church, Brooklyn.

Leading the service was Maronite Bishop Gregory Mansour, of the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn, who has been appointed by Pope Benedict XVI as a synod delegate. Earlier in the afternoon, the soft-spoken bishop, who resides in Bay Ridge and

whose diocese includes much of the eastern seaboard shared his thoughts on the special assembly. "The desire of the Holy Father is to gather all Catholics connected to the Middle East to deepen our communion, our heartfelt love and witness to Christ, and increase our ability to reach out to non-Catholics," he said, explaining the purpose of the session. "It's a beautiful and noble intention and I'm proud to be part of it."

The 54-year-old bishop brings a unique perspective to the assembly in that he is American-born, from Michigan originally, but traces his lineage to *Ehden, Tibneen* and *Damour* in Lebanon, *Nazareth* in Palestine (now Israel), and *Damascus, Syria*.

He has joined with Christian clergy, religious and lay people as well as representatives from other faith traditions for two weeks of meetings and discussions and expects the proceedings will involve "a lot of work ... but that's what it takes."

"The time is right for the Church to look at how we care for Christians of the Middle East," he said.

Among the current challenges facing Christians in that region, he said, are that their numbers are shrinking due to emigration, they face more resistance from non-Christian neighbors and they tend to be disconnected from the universal Church.

"These people are the salt of the earth," he said, noting in particular how the Church in the Middle East offers an "amazing service with schools and nursing homes and rehabilitation centers for the people. But they don't always have the support they need."

Bishop Mansour expects that the assembly will discuss "how we, as Catholics, can care, know and support one another and how we can support our Orthodox and non-Christian ecumenical partners."

He said they must deliberate over regional political situations, particularly the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and ways to improve dialogue and relations with area Arabs and Jews is very important.

In Lebanon, where many of the members of his congregation have their ancestral roots, he said "Christians politically are more marginalized because they're between the Sunnis and Shiites." He noted the "beauty of their witness" to the faith and for their sake, he said, "I'd like to see more engagement in the political decisions of Lebanon not from the West or East but from the Lebanese themselves, not Iran for instance.

"Resolving the Israeli-Palestine problem is an essential issue. We're praying for George Mitchell (U.S. envoy for the Middle East) and the U.S. to bring resolutions and for Jerusalem to be settled in an equitable way. I think George Mitchell could succeed if he has the proper cooperation.

"The most important goal of the synod is to better know one another and deepen our appreciation for each other. We can all change ourselves for the better and become better at what we do," he said.

At the prayer service Wednesday evening, Bishop DiMarzio echoed that sentiment. "If we here in New York are able to understand the message of being neighbor to one another, we can model that respect, care and support so that others may see how we take the tenets of our various religions seriously. ... We are neighbors and God assures us that when we act with respect for one another, we will support our common faiths and bring about peace among us."

Present at the service were Brendan Dugan, President of St. Francis College, Brooklyn Heights; Frank Macchiarola, former president of St. Francis College, and his wife Mary; and Brother Thomas Barton, O.S.F., campus minister at Bishop Ford H.S., Park Slope.

Zanzibar native Muhsin Alidina, a member of the Imam Al-Khoei Islamic Center, said the service is "a good way of bringing people of all faiths together to pray for peace and a way of knowing each other."

Alidina spoke with Barbara Kuesell, a Quaker, and the two noted how many of the virtues, such as love, mercy, respect and understanding, expressed in the Maronite prayers are also prevalent in other faith traditions. "There are so many similarities. I don't understand why we fight," Alidina said. □

Washington, D.C. *Deacon/Subdeacon and Wives Retreat*

by *Subdeacon Dennis and Mary Somerville.*

October 1, 2010 was a beautiful day at Our Lady of Lebanon Seminary in Washington D.C. Besides being the feast day of St. Therese of Lisieux, the Little Flower, it was the opening of the annual retreat held for deacons, subdeacons, candidates, and their wives.

Bishop Gregory presided at an evening Divine Liturgy at the Seminary Chapel. Chorbishops Michael Thomas and Seely Beggiani concelebrated, and the deacons and subdeacons as well as seminarians assisted.

Bishop Gregory's homily touched on St. Therese, her parents Louis Martin and Marie Zeligue Guerin, and how they both wanted to remain celibate for their love of God, but He had other plans for them. Out of their "yes" to God, they became the parents of nine children; five died early, four entered religious life. One of those four is a Doctor of the Church. This homily was a prelude into the emphasis of the sanctity of married life that would be expounded upon during the weekend.

Dinner and fellowship followed in the seminary library. After dinner we met again in the chapel for Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, quiet meditation, and Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. Msgr. Michael Thomas' exhortation to truth gave us much to ponder, with a "what if" situation regarding our being representatives of the church and how we must side with the truth in social situations even though it may be uncomfortable.

The next day we met for morning prayer (*Safro*), then found ourselves captivated for over an hour with a teaching from Fr. Brian Bransfield, which was based on his book, "The Human Person According To John Paul II," by Paulist Press. Fr. Bransfield is a priest of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, and he currently serves in the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops as Assistant General Secretary. He was the retreat director for the Eparchy of Saint Maron priests retreat this past winter.

His talk began with a brief history

of Fr. Karol Wojtyla and how he would meet with married couples and learn about marriage from their sharing about their lives, and how he continued doing so even while he was Pope. Fr. Bransfield went on to discuss the changes in society and their impact on marriage and family life. The first was the Industrial Revolution and how it took the father away from the home and agricultural living. The second was the Sexual Revolution and how human sexuality shifted from the family to the individual. And the third was the Technological Revolution, which may keep us more informed, but also more isolated from each other within the family relationship. He then moved into the Theology of the Body and the creation account in the Bible. He stated that on the sixth day, when God has created everything, one could almost feel God pause and reflect before He created man.

Msgr. Beggiani's homily that afternoon addressed our spirituality. Our relationship with God is primary in our roles as deacons and subdeacons.

Later that afternoon we met for a discussion concerning service in the church, led by Bishop Mansour.

Dinner was held in Our Lady of Lebanon Church Hall, hosted by Chorbishop Dominic Ashkar and parishioners.

Why be a Deacon? Why be a Priest? Women are more naturally relational than men. There are always exceptions, of course. So when you find that man who is the exception, it is like finding a treasure. These men, along with the priests, are the treasure of the Maronite Catholic Church. They all have a personal relationship with their God. He is of primary importance in their lives. God's church is important in their lives. That's why they've pursued the vocation. They needed more than what was offered by just going to Liturgy. They needed to be part of the Liturgy. They needed more than just being part of the congregation. They heard the "call" and they answered, "Yes, Lord." You may be one who needs more, also. Have you heard the "call?" How have you responded? □

Westchester, New York MYO Regional Retreat



Fr. Jean Younes and Fr. Jack Morrison with the participants at the regional retreat.

by Frances J. Mourani, MYO Advisor

“Magnificent beyond belief. I met people I did not know existed on this earth. They were from Massachusetts, Connecticut, and New York. We had fun and learned things that we didn’t know before about our faith”—Hameed Mourani, 13, Westchester Maronite Mission.

“What a great experience, something I’ll remember for the rest of my life. Definitely no complaints, but I do hear that the salmon cakes weren’t too popular. Still, to bring so many parishes from four different states together, and having people of the same religion bond as a group is just great. I really do hope I’ll be back again next year and I hope everyone else does the same.”—Alex Minassian, 14, Westchester Maronite Mission

Hameed and Alex, from the Westchester Maronite Mission in Westchester, New York, joined 56 other young people and their advisors from Maronite Youth Organizations who traveled to Litchfield, Connecticut, for the second Eparchial Region One Youth Conference over the weekend of October 22 - 24.

The Wisdom House Conference Center in Litchfield provided the perfect setting for this spiritual retreat. Run by the community of Catholic sisters, the Daughters of Wisdom, the center is set on fifty-four acres of meadows, woods and brooks nestled in the foothills of the Berkshires. Vibrant New England fall colors surrounded us: on trees and bushes, the ground, and big orange pumpkins the nuns had placed outside their retreat house. As my son said, “It just made you want to stop and look, and really put us in the mood for a weekend of reflection and fun.”

The MYO youth conference was organized by Fr. Jean Younes of St. Anthony Maronite Church, Danbury, Conn., and Fr. Jack Morrison of Our Lady of Purgatory, New Bedford, Mass. MYO groups came from five of the twelve

Maronite parishes spread across the New England area—St. Anthony Maronite Church, Lawrence, Mass. (advisors Mounira Daher and Colette Maksoud); Our Lady of Lebanon, Waterbury, Conn. (advisor Hiam Atallah); St. Anthony Maronite Church, Danbury, Conn.; the Westchester Maronite Mission (advisors Frances Mourani and Sana Barakat); and Our Lady of Lebanon, Easton, Penn. (advisor Dora Elias). Chip Jowdy from St. Anthony in Danbury served as the retreat’s coordinator and did a good job keeping an eye on the schedule and making sure all of us were at the right place at the right time.

The opening session on Friday night included “ice breakers” designed to get the youth mixing and mingling to find out about each other, especially important for retreat “first-timers.” The next day began with *Safro* (morning prayer) followed by the main presentation from Dr. Allan Ramey, a local physician who has lectured extensively on the theology of the body. He impressed all of us by his ability to make a complex philosophical subject something we could understand. His message to the youth was the necessity of bringing God and the church into personal relationships. He told them how the death of his 18 year-old daughter, and the unexpected death of his wife just three months before 9/11 left him alone to raise seven children, yet his faith was so strong, so contagious, that one MYO participant later said that he seemed to “...place an aura around us all.”

The beautiful fall weather inspired the retreat organizers to adjust the schedule to include a visit to Lourdes in Litchfield, just a short drive from the retreat center. Built of local fieldstone by two Montfort Brothers and seminarians, the replica of the grotto of Our Lady of Lourdes in France was opened in 1958 to encourage devotion to Mary.

Fr. Jack led the group through the grounds to complete the Stations of the Cross. This was followed by some down time and an intense game of “touch football,” played by both boys and girls, on a large open field opposite the grotto.

Back at Wisdom House, we prepared ourselves for the Mystery of Reconciliation. Fr. Vincent Farhat came in from Lawrence, Mass., to assist so that nobody would feel rushed. Several from the group spoke about how they had really enjoyed going to Reconciliation because, as one of them said, not only did she feel good knowing that her sins had been forgiven but it was also “...nice to have that weight off my mind.”

Fr. Jean then joined the youth in an evening of *dabke* and games. All of the participants said how much they enjoyed getting together with other young people from the same heritage.

The retreat ended on the right note with Divine Liturgy Sunday morning. We were blessed to hear our Maronite hymns sung beautifully in Arabic by the girls’ choir from Easton, Penn. Thank you to Basma Joseph, Cristina Koorie, Selena Koorie, Alessaundra and Gabriella Karam, Diana Karam and Sara Koury. These girls are all American-born and do not speak the language, yet they were able to sing these difficult songs with perfect pronunciation. □



Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania *Month of the Holy Rosary*



Row one: Krystal Haertter, Erica Fellerman, Trystan Wielgopolski, Naythan Wielgopolski, Ben Fenster, Julia Lewis, Rachel Lewis, Kurtis Nordmark, Andrew Wallace, Charles Wallace. Row two: Jessica Fellerman, Simon Peter, Christina Kasper, Sarah Chekan, Calyn Manganiello, Elena Fenster, Frankie Nockley. Row three: Kenny Wallace, Lauren MacMullen, Collin MacMullen, Alexandra Nockley, Nicolas Chekan, Samantha Nordmark.

by Anne Kasper

The St. Anthony/St. George Maronite Church, Wilkes-Barre, Penn., Religious Education Program celebrated the Month of the Holy Rosary on Sunday, October 3, 2010. The children watched a video on Our Lady and Fatima, had a lesson on how to pray the Rosary and on the Mysteries reflected upon when praying the Rosary. The children learned that Mysteries of the Holy Rosary teach us about the life of Jesus and Mary, his Mother. The lesson continued with the children each making a Rosary, which Father Hanna Karam blessed. Following the blessing of the Rosary, the children prayed a decade of the Rosary with their teachers and the Ladies from the Altar and Rosary, who sponsored the Rosary Kits and joined in helping the children to make their rosaries. □

Atlanta, Georgia *Talent Show*

St. Joseph Maronite Church in Atlanta, Ga., hosted the first parish talent show called MARONITES GOT TALENT on Saturday, September 25, 2010. The event was organized by the Maronite Young Adults Organization (MYA) and featured contestants of all ages and talents in the community. Twenty-eight contestants kept crowds at the edge of their seats as they competed before judges for the top prize in three age categories - children, teenagers and adults. The talent show was the MYA's biggest fundraiser of the year in order to raise money to send representatives to Miami, Fla., for the 2nd Annual Maronite Leadership Workshop in October. The MYA likes to thank all parishioners for their support and all the contestants, judges, volunteers, Fr. Dominique Hanna, and MYA members who worked very hard to put this event together. It was a night to remember and one that will be repeated as an annual parish event in the years to come. Congratulations to the following winners!

(Children / Dancing) - Rita Khalil and Claire Murad, (Teenagers / Guitar and singing) - Christopher Murad, and Ella Doueir (Adults / Stand-up Comedy). □

Utica, New York *Maronite Catholic Admitted to American College of Trial Lawyers*

by Chorbishop John D. Faris

Attorney Peter M. Hobaica has become a Fellow of the American College of Trial Lawyers, one of the premier legal associations in America. The induction ceremony at which Mr. Hobaica became a Fellow took place before an audience of 1,078 persons during the recent 2010 Meeting at the J.W. Marriott in Washington, D.C.

Founded in 1950, the College is composed of the best of the trial bar from the United States and Canada. Fellowship in the College is extended by invitation only after careful investigation, to those experienced trial lawyers who have mastered the art of advocacy and whose professional careers have been marked by the highest standards of ethical conduct, professionalism, civility and collegiality. Membership in the College cannot exceed one per cent of the total lawyer population of any state or province.

Peter Hobaica is the owner of Peter M. Hobaica, LLC, and has been practicing law for over 25 years. The newly inducted Fellow is a life-long parishioner and trustee of Saint Louis Gonzaga Church in Utica, New York. □

Columbus, Ohio *Cradling Christianity Dinner*

by Adele Knieser Busch

On September, 9, 2010, Fr. Pierre Bassil and the parishioners of Our Lady of Lebanon Maronite Mission in Columbus, Ohio, were privileged to participate in the fifth annual dinner and fundraiser for Cradling Christianity. Cradling Christianity was founded in 2006 by a group of Catholics from Columbus, Ohio, upon their return from a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. Cradling Christianity strives to assist in the work of the Franciscan Foundation to provide education, housing, and employment opportunities for all Holy Land Christians. The event was held at St. Charles High School in Columbus. The chairpersons were Don and Monica Brown of Columbus, who are friends of Our Lady of Lebanon Maronite Mission.

The evening began with a concelebrated Mass in St. Charles Chapel, followed by cocktails and dinner. Fr. Bassil was one of the concelebrants with Fr. Peter Vasko, OFM, President of the Franciscan Foundation for the Holy Land; Fr. Mitch Pacwa, S.J.; and priests and deacons from the Roman Catholic Diocese of Columbus. Fr. Ignatius Harrington, Pastor of Holy Resurrection Melkite Church, and Fr. Terrence Farmer of St. John Chrysostom Byzantine Catholic Church of Columbus were also among the concelebrants.



Fr. Mitch Pacwa, S.J. (center) with parishioners of Our Lady of Lebanon Mission at Cradling Christianity fundraising event in Columbus, Ohio.



Our Lady of Lebanon Shrine celebrated its 45th annual Assumption pilgrimage with fireworks.

Fr. Pacwa, who is a bi-ritual priest and a popular EWTN program host, was the keynote speaker for the event. Fr. Mitch is also an accomplished linguist, author and Catholic scholar. He has a unique understanding of the peoples and cultures of the Middle East. It was an honor for the Maronite Community to meet Fr. Pacwa personally.

The Maronite, Melkite and Byzantine congregations were introduced as "special guests" by Chairman Don Brown. These Eastern Rite Catholic congregations in Columbus, Ohio, are proud to be among the representatives of the churches where many of our Christian brothers and sisters have worshiped in the Holy Land and Near East for centuries. The evening concluded with a silent auction and closing prayer offered by Fr. Basil. It was a special evening of prayer, fellowship and stewardship for all. □

The Feast Day of the Assumption was filled with spiritual and social celebrations. The Liturgy of the Anointing of the Sick was celebrated by our Maronite bishops and was filled to capacity. Throughout the day, additional liturgies were held to accommodate the many pilgrims.

During the three days, the evening liturgies were followed by candlelight processions that included hymns of devotion to Our Lady. Many pilgrims were able to participate and happily noted it was a prayerful experience.

The Pilgrimage ended with the singing of the *Ya UM Allah* by the Antonine Sisters, the benediction with the icon of Mary, and fireworks celebrating Our Lady's Assumption into Heaven.

The Assumption Pilgrimage would not be a success without hard work and dedication. Many thanks go out to the Shrine staff, the volunteers, and our parishes who assist with food service and other aspects of the Pilgrimage. May Our Lord bless all who gave so generously of their time, talent, and treasure! □

North Jackson, Ohio Annual Assumption Pilgrimage

The National Shrine of Our Lady of Lebanon celebrated the 45th Annual Assumption Pilgrimage on August 13-15, 2010. The celebration fell on the weekend which allowed more people to attend the entire Pilgrimage.

Once again, there were pilgrims from many parts of the United States and Canada. Buses arrived from Brooklyn, Saint Louis, Utica, Flint, and Detroit. There were many pilgrims from nearby cities and states as well.

The opening Liturgy was celebrated in the Roman Rite. Msgr. Peter Polando of Youngstown was the principal celebrant.

On the eve of the feast day (Dormition), the Byzantine Liturgy was celebrated by Fr. Eugene Yackanich from the Archeparchy of Pittsburgh. This Liturgy was celebrated in memory of a great friend of the Shrine, Archbishop Basil Schott, who passed away shortly before the Pilgrimage.

Deadline for next month's issue of
the Deadline is... *The Maronite Voice* is November 26, 2010.

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Pictures must be original. Digital pictures must be in "JPG" format and in high resolution. *The Maronite Voice* is also available online, in PDF format, at www.stmaron.org. □

Lawrence, Massachusetts *Eucharistic Adoration*



Jesus said, "Come to me, all you who are weary and find life burdensome, and I will refresh you" (Matthew 11:28). Truly, those who attended the MYA-sponsored Eucharistic Adoration left feeling rejuvenated. On Friday, October 1, 2010, the Maronite Young Adults hosted a time of prayer and meditation at St. Anthony Maronite Church in Lawrence, Mass., which welcomed members of the entire church.

As music quietly played in the background, the Blessed Sacrament was exposed and the attendees were given time to quietly pray and reflect. Meanwhile, Fr. Vincent Farhat, Parochial Vicar, and Fr. Antoine Saab were available to administer the Sacrament of Penance. After this time of reflection, the night continued with the Litany of the Blessed Sacrament. Indeed this was a night where many relationships with our Lord, Jesus Christ, were strengthened and renewed. The MYA extends their gratitude to all those that were in attendance, and we look forward to seeing many more people at the next Adoration.

On September 19, the St. Anthony Maronite Young Adults in Lawrence, Mass., hosted their Kick-Off event which introduced their new event year. The event was hosted in the church hall and had about thirty attendees. The night began with opening remarks given by Fr. Vincent Farhat followed by a special guest speaker. The MYA was blessed to have Dr. Allan Ramey, Jr., as their guest speaker for the night; he focused his discussion on the Theology of the Body-Pope John Paul II. The attendees enjoyed an assortment of hors d'oeuvres and drinks. This was a great way to start off their new year as they continue to host spiritual and social events in an effort to bond the young adults within the parish family. □

Food For Thought

*Love is an act of endless forgiveness,
A tender look, which becomes a habit.*

Peter Ustinov

Jacksonville, Florida *Youth Group Visit "The Mission of Nombre de Dios"*



by Fr. Elie Abi Chedid

Honoring the Holy Rosary during the month of October, Saint Maron Youth Group in Jacksonville, Florida, made a pilgrimage on Saturday, October 2, 2010, to "the Mission of *Nombre de Dios*" in Saint Augustine, Florida, that is referred to as "America's Most Sacred Acre." The Mission of *Nombre de Dios* traces its origins to the founding of the city of St. Augustine, America's oldest city, in 1565. It was on these grounds that the first parish Mass was celebrated and the work at America's first mission began.

Father Elie Abi Chedid led the group in the pilgrimage and the prayer of the Rosary at the Shrine of Our Lady of *la Leche* which is the first shrine dedicated to Our Blessed Mother in the United States. Devotion to Our Lady of *la Leche* was brought from Spain in 1598 by the Spanish settlers of St. Augustine. Father Elie also gave a presentation on the history of this "Mission" and a reflection on the newly declared Blessed Chiara Luce Badano, presenting her as a living example of strong faith for today's youth to follow.

The youth also visited the Prince of Peace church that was built in 1965 to commemorate the Mission's 400th Anniversary; it is a votive Church dedicated to prayers that God would spare the world from atomic warfare. The youth also visited the newly established Mission's museum. On the same grounds, there are the 208-foot Great Cross that was erected as a memorial of the Four Hundredth Anniversary of the Mission, other shrines and memorials, and a gift shop. □

Holy Days of Obligation for 2010

In the Eparchy of Saint Maron the following feasts cannot be moved to a Sunday and cannot be suppressed:

December 8, 2010
December 25, 2010

The Immaculate Conception,
The Nativity of the Lord, Christmas
Day. □

Houston, Texas Pastoral Center Building Update

by the Building Committee

Anyone visiting the Church grounds of Our Lady of the Cedars in Houston, Texas, will easily notice the new building, now under construction for a few months. After an apparent slow start, which was actually the period when the steel was being fabricated and shipped, and the site work and preparation were taking place, the construction is now full steam. By the time this issue is published, the building shell should be almost completed, with the steel completely erected, the concrete floors poured, and the wall framing underway. Next will be the finishing tasks both on the inside and the outside.

The priests and the Parish's building committee continue to oversee the work of the General Contractor, Zenith Construction. Biweekly progress meetings are taking place on a regular basis, and coordination is continuing for approval of materials, colors, and finishes. In addition, the building committee has been involved in decision-making in the field, as site and other conditions have so far necessitated few modifications to certain aspects of the design.

Despite some delays in the delivery of materials, all of which were out of the control of the contractor and the building committee, an aggressive construction schedule has kept the overall progress on target, with completion anticipated for early Spring.

As with any construction project, especially a major undertaking like this one, there is always debris, dirt, and mud being dragged by the equipment and construction vehicles. As a result, there is an ongoing effort on part of the construction team to keep the grounds clean and maintain accessibility to all used areas of the Church grounds (i.e. church, hall, playground, and rectory). The construction crews have been dedicating Friday afternoons for site cleanup, to make sure that on Saturdays and Sundays, there is minimum inconvenience to the parishioners and visitors to our Church. The contractor also maintains a chain link fence around the construction site, to safeguard the equipment and materials, but more importantly, to prevent anyone from wandering on the site and potentially getting injured. □

Chicago, Illinois Annual Lebanese Festival

by Lina Daou

Our Lady of Lebanon Church in Lombard [Chicago], Illinois hosted its Third Annual Lebanese Food Festival on the weekend of September 11, 2010. During the festival, many new faces were seen gathering together with parishioners both indoors and outdoors to celebrate our Lebanese food and culture. Volunteers cooked for days so that friends and families could enjoy a wide array of our favorite foods and desserts.

Children took turns jumping on a huge moon bounce while others waited in line for face paintings, tattoos and a variety of fun games. In addition to the food and games,



MYO members perform a few steps of *dabke*.

entertainment was provided by singer Doris Farhat and her band. Also, the MYO group performed a few sets of *dabke* dressed in their authentic costumes, choreographed and directed by Mrs. Jihan Sebaaly Nasrallah. There was also several raffle drawing that had everyone excited about the prizes. □

Schedule of Bishop Gregory Mansour

November 1, 2010

Feast of All Saints, Our Lady of Lebanon Church, Waterbury, Conn.

November 4, 2010

Theology on Tap for Young Adults, Our Lady of Lebanon Church, Easton, Penn.

November 7, 2010

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

November 10, 2010

Meeting of the Capital Campaign Committee and First Eparchial Benefit Dinner with Archbishop Dolan, New York, N.Y.

November 12, 2010

USCCB Catechetical Committee Meeting, Baltimore, Md.

November 14, 2010

Divine Liturgy at Our Lady of Lebanon Church at 11:00 o'clock, Washington, D.C.; 2 - 5pm: USCCB Pro-Life Committee Meeting

November 15 - 17, 2010

USCCB Meetings, Baltimore, Md.

November 18, 2010

Seminary Alumni Day, Our Lady of Lebanon Seminary, Washington, D.C.

November 22 - 30, 2010

Family Visit, Flint, Mich.

December 2, 2010

Lecture on the Synod for the Middle East, Huntington Seminary, Long Island, N.Y.

December 5, 2010

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

December 12, 2010

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

***Intervention to the Instrumentum Laboris for the Synod of Bishops:
Special Assembly for the Middle East,
The Catholic Church in the Middle East: Communion and Witness
"Now the company of those who believed were one heart and soul"
(Acts 4:32).
Vatican City 2010***

The Preface to the *Lineamenta* reminds us that the situation surrounding the missionary efforts of the first Christians is very similar to ours today. In the early days of the Church, the small Christian community in the Middle East faced numerous challenges and were in the minority. The chances of their surviving, let alone thriving, were slim. Today after much history, we are once again in the minority and facing numerous challenges. Like the first Christians, we must understand our graced vocation, improve our common witness and strengthen our communion and love for each other.

From the perspective of a Maronite living in the United States, whenever I visit the Middle East I notice with great appreciation the ways in which Catholics make a profound difference in the lives of those around them. The schools, universities, hospitals, nursing homes, drug rehabilitation centers, hospices, orphanages, and other facilities which they operate are open to Muslim, Jew and Christian alike. These Catholics are the "salt of the earth" and the "light of the world" (Matthew 5:13-14).

For us in the West, this witness should inspire us to greater solidarity with them, urging us to support those who serve with such dignity and love. Their story of sacrificial love and service, beyond race, religion and social status, is not often told in media outlets of the West, but it should be. Catholic media in the Middle East have done quite well to tell their story. Likewise, they have taken great strides to become international and ecumenical, wisely including Catholic, Orthodox and Evangelical communities in their news and programming. Their efforts are truly something to be proud of. Much more needs to be done outside the Middle East to promote Catholic news media in the Middle East, and much more needs to be done to support the service programs themselves, operated by Catholics with little or no help from elsewhere.

Christians outside the Middle East must understand, appreciate, and take an active part in supporting those efforts. Unfortunately, we have much to improve in this regard. We need to not only find ways to better express our love for one another and support our fellow Catholics who serve in the name of Christ, but also to extend this communion and love to our ecumenical partners. Jesus said, "By this everyone will



Bishop Gregory Mansour greets His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI at the Synod for the Middle East.

know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:35).

Through love, we will not only strengthen our communion and common witness, but our joy in witnessing and our longing for greater communion with one another will serve to bring us ever closer to Christ Himself.

Like the early Christians, we face seemingly unsurmountable challenges, and our chances seem slim. But we live by faith not by sight (2 Cor 5:7). We may never convince with words our Muslim or Jewish neighbors that our presence is truly a real blessing for them, but our love will certainly help. The same antidote which helped the first Christians survive and overcome all challenges is also available to us: a share in God's generous and Holy Spirit and an apostolic love for one another that has the power to make us once again able to be "of one heart and soul" (Acts 4:32). This extraordinary Synod of Bishops is certainly an important step forward to help us keep moving in the right direction.

+ Gregory J. Mansour
Bishop of the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn, USA
For the Maronites

***Intervention of His Excellency Bishop Robert Shaheen
at
the Synod of Bishops: Special Assembly for the Middle East,
The Catholic Church in the Middle East: Communion and Witness***



*Your Holiness,
Your Eminences, the Cardinals,
Your Beatitudes, the Patriarchs,
Your Excellencies, Archbishops and Bishops,
Reverend Clergy,
Brothers and Sisters in Christ,*

It is definitely a sign of the time to gather in this Synod to discuss the Catholic Church in the Middle East: Communion and Witness. We are all united to support our brothers and sisters who are living in the land where our Lord Christ was born, lived, died and rose from the dead. It is the land that saw the rising of the Patriarchs and Prophets in the Old Testament. It is the land that gave birth to the first Christian communities. It is the land that witnessed the birth of three Monotheistic religions and where they coexist in a very special way. It is the same land that is going through a very delicate and sensitive period at this time.

In reflecting upon the topic of Emigration as outlined in the Working Document of the Synod, I would like to share my

own observation and thoughts, especially through my experience as bishop in the United States of America.

Our faithful are divided into groups according to their attachment to their roots:

- ! Many of the people have emigrated to the USA in the late 19th Century through the early 20th Century. We have lost many of those people due to the lack of pastors and a shepherd to bring them together at that time. However, some groups were formed and have established our early parishes. Many of those people see their countries in the Middle East as a spiritual home, the land of their ancestors.
- ! A large group has emigrated due to the instability in the last forty-five years: the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, the civil war in Lebanon, the war in Iraq... These and other economic and religious reasons have pushed many to find refuge in more stable countries with opportunities. Our Churches became the natural and national home for these people who usually keep strong ties with their extended families in the Middle East, who support them morally and financially, and who visit them frequently. This group gets involved politically by lobbying the government to stand for the cause of their families back home.
- ! Unfortunately, for some reason or another, there is a group who severs all ties with the Middle East. This group refuses to participate in any activity, and even does not associate with any of their compatriots. They become citizens of the new world with new opportunities, new visions and new dreams. They are usually fed up with their political, ecclesiastical, social and cultural systems and they prefer to keep their distance.
- ! There is also a group of people who don't have any blood connection to the Middle East but feel attracted to the Eastern liturgies and their beauty. Thus, they become attached spiritually to that part of the world; they become an integral part of our Churches. They attend our Services regularly; they volunteer in the different ministries and support our Churches in its efforts of evangelization and ministry of care and service.

Based on this affiliation, our Church stands as a home for all, a true representation of the image of the "body of Christ," as outlined by St. Paul, with different members with various talents and gifts doing different things. Our Churches are a place to worship, to celebrate our beautiful tradition of the Faith of the Mountains; they are home for all people seeking to remain connected to their roots; they are the place to celebrate their heritage; they are the constant reminder of the importance to support their loved ones in the land of their ancestors.

Departing from this reality, I would suggest some ideas and projects for your consideration:

The Synod of Bishops for the Middle East

! I wholeheartedly agree that we need to work for the sake of peace and democracy. I support the concept that "the particular Churches in the West could exercise an important role in sensitizing the governments in their respective countries to pursue political activity which contributes to the development of the countries in the Middle East at every level." (Para.45) Thus, the lobbying effort will not be restricted to our faithful in the Eastern Churches, but would gather more support and definitely a better impact when the Mother Roman Catholic Church joins forces.

Continues from page 1

! We need to have respectful dialogue with the Muslims especially those of the Middle Eastern regions. This applies to the Jews as well. In that dialogue, we will exchange our views, concerns and visions for a world built on the principles of respect of human rights and equal opportunity for all. Maybe our humble initiative could alleviate some of the misunderstandings and tensions.

Beyond the written texts, suggestions and decisions, the Synod was a wondrous communion, where the College of Apostles, with Peter as head, once again became "one heart and one soul," as the first Christians of the Middle East were. The friendships formed among the Synod Fathers, with the Synod members, and with the representatives of the Holy See provide a new impetus to continue our common work of charity and pastoral outreach.

! I would like to emphasize the importance of working with the other Christian Churches. It is a matter of existing and survival for all Christians, not just Catholics. In the same spirit, it would be beneficial to work together with the Orthodox and Protestant Churches abroad in finding ways to support our brothers and sisters in the Middle East. Therefore, we would get more support at all levels.

The final success of the Synod is still a work in progress. A large part of it depends on us. Whether from the Middle East or not, a Latin Catholic, an Eastern Catholic or any person of good will, the Synod makes a difference only if we redouble our efforts to support the Christians of the Middle East who each day witness to Christ by their daily lives. We can support by prayer, financial assistance, visits and by becoming more aware of what one member of the Synod described as the "heroic daily sacrifices" of loving Christians in the midst of all the troubles of the Middle East.

! It would be a great initiative to have on a yearly basis a Worldwide Weekend Awareness about the Christians in the Middle East to be conducted in all the Churches along with the use of the Media (TV, Radio, Internet, Newspaper...). It will also be an opportunity to showcase the universality of the Church by highlighting the Eastern Churches [and] encouraging the members to go back to their proper Churches. It will be an opportunity to bring attention to the situation and plight of the Christians of the Middle East. This Awareness Weekend will send a resounding message of solidarity to our brothers and sisters back home.

Our marriages and families can give witness to Christ. Our youth and elders, teachers and all who work for peace and justice and who assist the poor, the sick, the imprisoned, the abused and the marginalized can make a difference. All who are Christians, not in name only, but in every aspect of their lives, can continue the work of Christ, who calls us to be the "salt of the earth" and "light of the world."

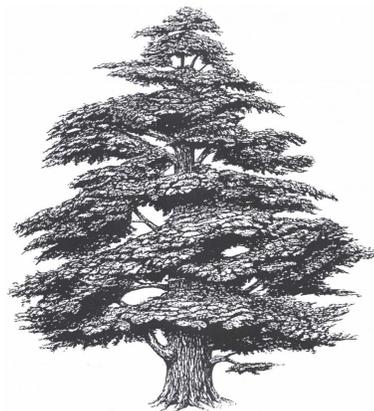
! Many of our people support their relatives. It would be beneficial to create some type of funds to help create jobs and opportunities. Thus, they will become more productive and independent.

The prayer of Saint Peter, the Apostles, and the Mother of God is always with us, and the hope of Pope Benedict is that the Christians of the Middle East and all who support them will find that through our common efforts we shall become more and more what Christ Himself wanted, to witness God's saving mercy in the midst of a sometimes merciless world, and to all be one in Him for the good of the Church and as a blessing for the world.

In a final note and relying on God's grace, I hope this Synod will bear good fruits pleasing to our loving God. We commit ourselves to pray more and work harder for the sake of Christianity in the Middle East. Our efforts are daily witnessing of the love of Christ to all people, especially the little ones, those who are most in need. May our efforts lead to the glory of God and the support of our brothers and sisters.

+Bishop Gregory J. Mansour
Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn

+Robert J. Shaheen, D.D.
Bishop of the Maronite Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon
USA



The Cedar of Lebanon

Brooklyn, New York

The Eparchy of Saint Maron Celebrates the 40 Day Anniversary of Archbishop Francis M. Zayek

On Wednesday, October 27, 2010, His Excellency Bishop Gregory Mansour presided at a 40 Day Memorial Liturgy of Archbishop Francis M. Zayek, the first Maronite Bishop in the U.S.A. Archbishop Zayek passed away in Lebanon on September 14. Following is Bishop Mansour's homily.

“**F**or to those who loved God, and are called in his plan, everything works out for the good” (Romans 8: 28). “The Good Shepherd lays down his life for his flock” (John 10:11).

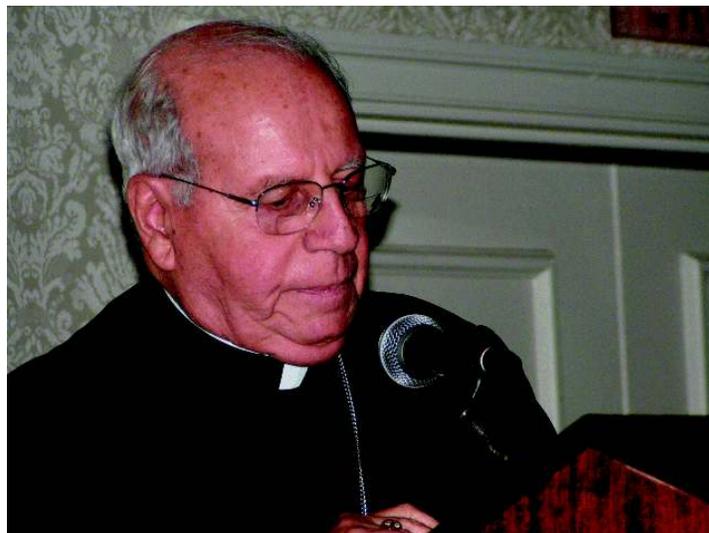
There are two ways to imitate the Good Shepherd's gift of self on the Cross. One is to face one's enemies with love and accept the highest witness anyone can give to Christ – martyrdom. This was the fate of all the apostles except John the Beloved and the fate of many others, including our own, the Massabki Brothers, in 1860 Damascus. This martyrdom is still happening today in many parts of the world, as the recent Synod of Bishops for the Middle East confirms.

There is another way to imitate the Good Shepherd in his gift of self, and that is the way that Francis Mansour Zayek chose for 90 years, every day of his life. This gift of self, in imitation of the Good Shepherd, is much like the way you and I most likely will witness to Christ. Archbishop Francis wanted to be a missionary when he was young. Little did he know that he would become one, but not as he thought, as a Franciscan friar among the poor in some part of the world in need. Rather, his life would be a different kind of missionary as a priest, then a bishop. He would serve in Lebanon, Rome, Egypt and Brazil and finally in the richest country in the world, which had a poverty that **only he** could have enriched, and enrich he did!

In the great American movie “It's a Wonderful Life,” the well known star of the movie faced some difficulties and thought that the world would be better off without him. Before he jumped off that bridge to end it all, an angel was sent to show him what life would have been without him. He was stunned by the emptiness all around him, an emptiness that only he could fill. When he awoke from his dream-like vision, he was eager to return to his life and make the difference that God had allotted for him to do.

When Saint James the Apostle was discouraged in his missionary journey to Spain, the Virgin Mary, Our Lady of the Pillar, visited him and told him not to be afraid. It was the first of the Marian appearances and one that still inspires pilgrims today to walk the footsteps of Saint James.

Francis M. Zayek did not have a visit of an angel, nor of the Virgin Mary, but what he did have was the daily perseverance of prayer, love and sacrifice, and a deep understanding that God's providence was always at work in the hearts of those “who loved him and are called according to his purpose” (Roman 8:28).



We the clergy, religious and laity of the United States of America, as well as his family and those he served in Lebanon, Rome, Egypt and Brazil and throughout the world, are all the better for the choice of Francis to follow Christ and to follow him generously. One can only imagine the Maronite Church without him. A missionary in spirit, a true spiritual father, a churchman without parallel, a Maronite through and through, a prankster with an unusual sense of humor even in the midst of difficulties, Francis M. Zayek will never be forgotten as long as we are here to thank him and to God for him. Let us also pray for his eternal repose, as he asked us.

Now it is our turn to do as he did, to follow Christ the Good Shepherd, perhaps not on the road to a red martyrdom, witness to Christ, but in a white martyrdom, a witness that will find us each day choosing to follow Christ in all of our decisions, and actions – whether as clergy, religious, or lay faithful, single and married alike. In our missionary zeal we too can make a difference and build up and promote the beauty of the Maronite Church and the Gospel of Christ. Thus we will honor the rich legacy of our father in faith, Archbishop Francis M. Zayek, and continue his work in the Church that we love, and that he so well loved, until the day we meet Christ, Good Shepherd, and Lord of Providence, face to face.

“Eternal rest grant unto him O Lord, and may the perpetual light shine upon him. May his soul, and the souls of all the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen. □

Dayton, Ohio *Annual Lebanese Festival*



St. Ignatius of Antioch Church *dabke* troupe.

St. Ignatius of Antioch Maronite Catholic Church, Dayton, Ohio, celebrated its 17th Annual Dayton Lebanese Festival at their new Miami Township location for the second year on August 27-29, 2010. The weather was beautiful the entire weekend! The Festival began with an Opening Ceremony with Lebanese Festival Chair Jim Zaidain welcoming everyone to the Festival. The Wright-Patterson Air Force Base Honor Guard presented the colors and mounted the flags on the Main Stage. St. Ignatius parishioner 12-year-old Joyce Eid sang the U.S. National Anthem followed by the Lebanese anthem. Miami Township Chief of Police Chris Krug, on behalf of the Miami Township Trustees, presented to St. Ignatius' Pastor, Father Pierre Bassil, a Proclamation commending the Parish for holding the Dayton Lebanese Festival as a major cultural event in the Township. Father Pierre welcomed everyone to the festival and presented Chief Krug with a book of Lebanese culture to be placed in the local library as a token of appreciation from the Parish.

This year's festival featured authentic Middle-Eastern food, assorted Lebanese pastries and Lebanese coffee, and continuous live entertainment featuring traditional dancing by St. Ignatius *Dabke* Troupe. In addition the festival featured cultural booths, a dozen of the Dayton area's best original arts and craft designers, amusement rides and game booths by the well-known Murray Brothers Amusement Company.

On display were Miami Township police and paramedics and their vehicles and the City of Dayton Police Department.

The perfect weather conditions helped make this year's Dayton Lebanese Festival a hit and a success! With enthusiasm St. Ignatius parishioners have begun planning their 18th annual Dayton Lebanese Festival scheduled for August 26-28, 2011. □

Flint, Michigan *Our Lady of Fatima Visit*



Parishioners light candles before the statue of Our Lady of Fatima.

Over seventy-five parishioners and friends of Our Lady of Lebanon Church in Flint, Mich., shared in a short visit of the Statue of Our Lady of Fatima Friday, September 24, 2010. The National Pilgrim Virgin Statue of the U.S.A., is a hand-carved Image of Our Lady of Fatima given to the United States by the Bishop of Fatima in 1967 and crowned by Cardinal O'Boyle in the National Basilica in Washington, D.C., in 1971. It was blessed by Pope Paul VI during his visit to Fatima in 1967. The Statue travels around America under the sponsorship of the World Apostolate of Fatima-USA, spreading the important Message of Our Lady of Fatima. The statue visited the Lansing, Mich., Diocese during the month of September. We were blessed to be able to schedule the last visit of the statue to a Michigan church for this year during the noon Liturgy on September 24. □

Minneapolis, Minnesota *Touch of Lebanon Festival*

by Joan Moses

Saint Maron Church of Minneapolis, Minn., celebrated its 19th Touch of Lebanon Festival on September 25- 26, 2010. Saturday was breezy but well-attended. Sunday was a perfect day to play games, eat heartily, and dance to live music in the sunshine. The music, dancing, and the aroma made a festive presence in the neighborhood and drew scores of visitors, often on repeat visits, who said they attend every year and would not miss the festival. Rows of tents for food, games, and dining surrounded the large open dance area in the parking lot of the church. Children's games and a moon jump were available all day. Children played happily while parents socialized and danced to the live music of John Khoury and Ensemble of Saint Paul, Minn. All present were invited to join in the dance, and lessons were freely offered. Foods were cooked and served by parishioners, many of



Telemiere TV Station was also present at Minneapolis' festival.

whom donned Lebanese costumes.

A silent auction, gift and craft fair, church tours, and the Divine Liturgy took place inside. Church tours told of the history of the parish and showed off the exquisite mosaic, stained glass, and holy iconic art throughout the building. The auction offered a variety and another large area filled offered new and gently used items.

The top raffle prize of two round-trip tickets to anywhere in the Middle East, Europe, or Latin America plus \$1500 cash was won by a deacon from Somerset, Wisconsin, and the second prize of \$500 was won by a local eleven year-old girl. Come join us on September 24 - 25, 2011 for next year's Touch of Lebanon Festival. □

Boston, Massachusetts ***Assumption Day Lebanese Festival***

by Michel Hajjar

August 15, 2010, was a day to remember. This was Assumption day, a day where Catholics celebrate the day on which the blessed Virgin Mary was assumed to Heaven in body and soul. This was also the day the Maronite community in the Boston, Mass., area held what turned out to be the largest Lebanese festival in recent memories. More than 1,200 people gathered to celebrate and to enjoy Lebanese food and entertainment.

Food and drinks were just one aspect of the event. There were enough activities available to satisfy every age group. Children had plenty of activities like face painting, Balloon magic, Chinese Raffle, Bean Toss, Moon walk, Dunk Tank, Rocket Toss, Can shot toss, Magnetic Rock Toss, potato sack race, hula hoop race, limbo competition and water balloon toss. Adults danced to the music of Mitchel Kalsunas and his ensemble.

The event was the brainchild of Fr. Georges El-Khalli, the new pastor of Our Lady of the Cedars of Lebanon



Fr. Georges El-Khalli samples the food at the Assumption Day Lebanese Festival in Boston.

Church. Fr. El-Khalli was only in the Parish for a few weeks when he proposed the idea of having a Lebanese festival. A group of volunteers immediately gathered around him to plan the event in a six-week period. By the day of the event, over one hundred volunteers had come together to work out the details and contribute their services to ensure a very successful event.

Due to everyone's efforts and contributions, the event was a great success and a source of pride for the Lebanese and Maronite community in the Boston area. It also was a great way for the community to celebrate the Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary and to be thankful for the blessings bestowed upon us, her children, and to pray for her to continue to intercede for us in Boston and to protect the Maronite Church around the globe. □

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania ***Lebanese-American Day***

by Gene Kail

For more than a century, the Lebanese-American community in Pittsburgh made incomparable contributions in any number of fields - business, education, the arts, and medicine, among others. Local religious lore was enriched by the pastor's vow that changed the name of the parish from St. Anne to Our Lady of Victory. (Monsignor Basil, concerned for the welfare of the parishioners serving with great distinction in WWII, promised the new name if they all returned home. 155 St. Anne parishioners went to war. 155 Our Lady of Victory parishioners returned.)

The fame of the community, however, seemed to rest as much on its cuisine as on its history. Significantly more people could tell you the difference between hummus and baba ganoush than understood the difference between Lebanon and Syria. It began with the Hill District's famous Samreny's Restaurant during the depression. The restaurant became a favorite of Mayor (later Governor) Davey Lawrence and much of the entrenched political establishment. The line stretches unbroken to today. Middle-Eastern



proclamation on Tuesday, September 14. In his brief remarks, he pledged that the Maronite community would continue to share its culture and history to enrich Western Pennsylvania. The heart of the proclamation is contained in its final two clauses:

“NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Council of the City of Pittsburgh does hereby commend and honor the Lebanese-American community of Our Lady of Victory Maronite Catholic Church for the length and quality of its service to the community; and,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Council of the City of Pittsburgh does hereby declare Sunday, September 19, 2010, to be Lebanese-American Day in the City of Pittsburgh.”

It may have been a coincidence that this year's Food Festival was more successful than ever, but a large number of the Our Lady of Victory parishioners simply see it as the latest event in a series of contributions stretching back for more than a hundred years. □

Warren, Michigan Annual Festival



Members of St. Sharbel Church prepare food at their annual festival.

Parishioners and friends of St. Sharbel Church, Warren, MI came together in their annual church Festival September 11 -12, 2010, to celebrate Lebanese culture. Everyone enjoyed the family atmosphere while wandering between food, sweets, music and games for young children.

The most remarkable time of the day was the eye-catching performance of our young *Dabke* troupe. It was a proud moment for the parents and a dazzling show for the crowd.

Through the dedication and hard work of 160 volunteers along the generosity of the parishioners and friends, young and old united; the festival raised needed funds to support the church, which shows the work of God amongst his faithful. □



eating places introduce Lebanese culture to a geographic area that once thought that "ethnic" was synonymous with "Italian."

For many years, while the foods of Italy reigned supreme, second place in the culinary contests varied back and forth between Chinese and Middle-Eastern restaurants. The primarily Lebanese dishes proved so popular that steelmaking families from Central Europe became almost as familiar with *tabouli* as they were with *pierogies*. The openness to new foods - and, eventually, new cultures - was strengthened as Pittsburgh became a major educational and medical center, bringing immigration from all over the world. Now it is an influential metropolitan area; its population reflects a true mosaic, possessing a sophisticated palate.

It is fitting, then, that the annual Food Festival at Our Lady of Victory inspired parishioner Theresa Kail Smith to apply to the Pittsburgh City Council to recognize the Maronite contributions to Western Pennsylvania. Of course, it helped that she had been elected to City Council the year before. The Council responded with a proclamation declaring Sunday, September 19, 2010, to be "Lebanese-American Day" in Pittsburgh. The proclamation fittingly included a brief history, as well as a "plug" for the annual Food Festival held the same week. Current pastor, Rev. Rudolph Wakim, appeared before Council to receive the

Uniontown, Pennsylvania *Holy Rosary Sunday*



Members of the St. George Altar & Rosary Society, and Subdeacon Tom George are seen gathered together with Father Nadim Helou, MLM, Administrator of St. George Maronite Church, Uniontown, Penn., after participating in the Divine Liturgy to celebrate Holy Rosary Sunday.

Father Nadim presented all members with a beautiful medallion of the Blessed Mother adorned with a blue ribbon in remembrance of the occasion.

Members shown are, first row: Pauline Habit, Mary Crackovich, Devona Unice, Sylvia Roger, Joanne John, Kheristine Risha, Connie Ferris, and Kimberly George. In back: Barbara Michael, Rose Hensh, Shirley Gribben, Ethel Frangipani, Patricia Rogers, Katherine Deeds, Helen Carom Adams, Susan Thomas and Theresa Gilbert. □

San Francisco, California *Children's Choir*



St. Augustine of Hippo (+430) is often quoted as having said, "He who sings, prays twice." Our Lady of Lebanon Maronite Church, San Francisco Bay area, California, is proud to have the children's choir group serving some of the Divine Liturgies during the main feasts of the Liturgical year.

Jesus said, "Let the children come to me. Don't stop them! For the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to those who are like these children" (Matt. 19:14). Based on Jesus' teachings, Roula Jamhouri Haddad, with the help of the children's parents, started the "praise while singing" ministry for the children in our parish.

Also, Roula recorded and donated a "Psalms & Hymns" CD (Aramaic, Arabic, Latin, and French) to benefit the church scholarship fund for the senior high school graduates from our community. The CD is available (donation \$10 minimum) to all the parishes in the States. To order, please email the parish office at ollsf@aol.com. □

Phoenix, Arizona *Parish Picnic*



The Maronite Young Adults [MYA] are part of the life of Saint Joseph Maronite Church in Phoenix, Arizona. Every year the group sponsors many activities to promote life in the parish. This year, like every year, the MYA sponsored the Parish Picnic. Early Sunday, they went to the park to prepare the Place for the Divine Liturgy and other activities.

Sunday, October 3, 2010, was a cool day. The community started with the Divine Liturgy. The MYA served Luncheon. During the day, the Children enjoyed running and playing. The youth had different games, and the parents were busy talking and discussing. They ended with hoping for a successful Festival November 5 - 7, 2010. □

Available From St. Maron Publications

The Maronite Pontifical by His Excellency Bishop Stephen Hector Doueih, Bishop Emeritus of the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn. *The Maronite Pontifical* contains all rites delegated to the bishop in the liturgical celebrations. It describes the actions which the pontiff, as a celebrant, performs and the prayers he says during these celebrations. It includes mainly the rites of ordination to the priesthood and the solemn consecrations reserved to the bishop in the Christian worship.

The Maronite Pontifical is available for \$20 plus \$5 shipping.

Mideast Synod's Concluding Statement

"An Appeal to Safeguard the Faith"

On October 10, 2010, His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI convoked a Special Assembly for the Middle East of the Synod of Bishops. The theme of the two-week synod was: "The Catholic Church in the Middle East: Communion and Witness." On October 22, during the Thirteenth General Congregation of the Synod, the Synod Fathers approved their Final Message. Extracts from the English-language version of the Message are given below.

The Church in the Middle East: Communion and Witness throughout History Th Journey of Faith in the Middle East

"The first Christian community was born in the Middle East. From there, the Apostles after Pentecost went out to evangelize the whole world. ... We are now at a turning point in our history: The God Who gave us the faith in our Eastern lands 2000 years ago calls us today to persevere with courage, strength and steadfastness in bearing the message of Christ and witnessing to His Gospel, the Gospel of love and peace."

"Today we face many challenges. ... What Christ asks from our Churches is to strengthen communion within every *'sui iuris'* Church, and between the Catholic Churches of different traditions, and to exert every effort in prayer and charitable acts in order to attain the full unity of all Christians."

"We have evaluated the social situation and the public security in all our countries in the Middle East. We have taken account of the impact of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict on the whole region, especially on the Palestinians who are suffering the consequences of the Israeli occupation: the lack of freedom of movement, the wall of separation and the military checkpoints, the political prisoners, the demolition of homes, the disturbance of socio-economic life and the thousands of refugees. We have reflected on the suffering and insecurity in which Israelis live. We have meditated on the situation of the holy city of Jerusalem. We are anxious about the unilateral initiatives that threaten its composition and risk changing its demographic balance. With all this in mind, we see that a just and lasting peace is the only salvation for everyone and for the good of the region and its peoples."

"In our meetings and our prayers we reflected on the keen sufferings of the Iraqi people. We recalled the Christians killed in Iraq, the continued suffering of the Church in Iraq, and her children who have been displaced and dispersed throughout the world, taking their concerns for their country and their homeland with them."

"The Synod Fathers expressed their solidarity with the people and the Churches in Iraq, expressing the hope that the emigrants, forced to leave their own country, might find in their host countries the support necessary to be able to return to their homeland and live in security."

"Our mission, based on our faith and our duty towards our homeland, obliges us to contribute to the construction of our countries together with all citizens, Muslims, Jews and Christians alike."

Communion and Witness Within the Catholic Churches of the Middle East

To the Faithful of Our Churches,

"We wish to greet you, Christians of the Middle East, and thank you for all you have achieved in your families and societies, in your Churches and nations. We commend you for your perseverance in times of adversity, suffering and anguish."

"Those of you who suffer in body, in soul and spirit, the oppressed, those forced from your homes, the persecuted, prisoners and detainees, we carry you all in our prayers. Unite your sufferings to those of Christ the Redeemer and seek patience and strength in His cross. By the merit of your sufferings, you gain God's merciful love."

"We now wish to address the women of our Churches. To you we express our appreciation for what you are in the various states of your life: girls, mothers, educators, consecrated women and those engaged in public life. We honor you because you harbor human life within you from its very beginnings. ... God has given you particular sensibility for everything pertaining to education, humanitarian work and apostolic life. We give thanks to God for your activities and we hope that you will be able to exercise greater responsibility in public life."

"Young women and men, ... plan your life under the loving gaze of Christ. Be responsible citizens and sincere believers. The Church joins you in your desire to find work commensurate with your talents. ... Overcome the temptation of materialism and consumerism. Be strong in your Christian values."

"We appreciate the role of the communications media, both printed and audio-visual. ... With regard to the Middle East, *'Tele Lumiere-Noursat'* merits a special mention. We hope it will be able to continue its service of providing information and education in the faith, working for Christian unity, consolidating the Christian presence in the Middle East, strengthening inter-religious dialogue and the communion of all peoples of Middle Eastern origin all over the world."

"To our faithful in the diaspora, ... you the children of our Churches and our countries who have been forced to emigrate, we accompany you with our prayers. ... Look to the future with confidence and joy. Hold fast to your spiritual values, to your cultural traditions and to your national heritage, in order to give your host countries the best of yourselves and the best of what you have. We thank the Churches of the countries of the diaspora which have

received our faithful and unceasingly collaborate with us to ensure they receive the necessary pastoral care."

"We send our greetings to all immigrants of various nationalities, who have come to our countries seeking employment. ... We ask our Churches to pay special attention to these brothers and sisters and their difficulties, whatever their religion, especially when their rights and dignity are subject to abuse. ... This is why we call upon the governments of host countries to respect and defend their rights."

Communion and Witness Together with the Orthodox and Protestant Communities in the Middle East

"We share the same journey. Our challenges are the same and our future is the same. We wish to bear witness together as disciples of Christ. Only through our unity can we accomplish the mission that God has entrusted to us, despite the differences among our Churches. ... We acknowledge and encourage all initiatives for ecumenical dialogue in each of our countries."

Cooperation and Dialogue with our Jewish Fellow Citizens

"The same Sacred Scriptures unite us: the Old Testament, which is the Word of God for both you and us. ... Vatican Council II published the document '*Nostra aetate*' which concerns inter-religious dialogue with Judaism, Islam and the other religions. ... Ongoing dialogue is taking place between the Church and representatives of Judaism. We hope that this dialogue can bring us to work together to press those in authority to put an end to the political conflict which continues to divide us and to disrupt daily life in our countries."

Cooperation and Dialogue with our Muslim Fellow Citizens

"We are united by faith in the one God and by the commandment that says: do good and avoid evil. ... Together we will construct our civil societies on the basis of citizenship, religious freedom and freedom of conscience. Together we will work for the promotion of justice, peace, the rights of persons and the values of life and of the family. The construction of our countries is our shared responsibility. ... Our duty, then, is to educate believers in inter-religious dialogue, in the acceptance of pluralism and mutual esteem."

Our Participation in Public Life: An Appeal to the Governments and to the Political Leadership in our Countries

"We address you concerning the importance of equality among all citizens. Christians are original and authentic citizens, loyal to their homeland and to their national duties and obligations. It is natural that they should enjoy all the rights of citizenship, freedom of conscience, freedom of worship, freedom of education and teaching, and access to the communications media. We appeal to you to redouble

your efforts to establish a just and lasting peace throughout the region and to stop the arms race. This will lead to security and economic prosperity and stop the haemorrhage of emigration which empties our countries of its living resources."

Appeal to the International Community

"The citizens of the countries of the Middle East call upon the international community, particularly the United Nations, to work conscientiously to find a peaceful, just and definitive solution in the region, by applying Security Council resolutions and taking the necessary legal steps to put an end to the occupation of various Arab territories.

"The Palestinian people will thus have an independent and sovereign homeland where they can live with dignity and security. The State of Israel will be able to enjoy peace and security within internationally recognized borders. The Holy City of Jerusalem will be able to acquire its proper status, which respects its particular character, its holiness and the religious heritage of the three religions: Jewish, Christian and Muslim. We hope that the two-State solution will become a reality and not just a dream.

"Iraq will be able to put an end to the consequences of a deadly war and re-establish security, something which will protect all its citizens with all their social, religious and national structures.

"Lebanon will be able to enjoy sovereignty over its entire territory, strengthen its national unity and continue its vocation as a model of coexistence between Christians and Muslims, through dialogue between different cultures and religions, and the promotion of basic public freedoms.

"We condemn violence and terrorism from wherever it may proceed as well as all religious extremism. We condemn all forms of racism, anti-Semitism, anti-Christianism and Islamophobia, and we call upon religions to assume their responsibility to promote dialogue between cultures and civilizations in our region and in the entire world."

Conclusion

Continue to Bear Witness to the Divine Life that was Shown to Us in the Person of Jesus

"Brothers and sisters, in closing, we say with St. John the Apostle: ... 'This life was revealed, and we have seen it and testify to it, and declare to you the eternal life that was with the Father and was revealed to us - we declare to you what we have seen and heard so that you also may have fellowship with us'. ... This Divine Life ... will always remain the life of our Churches in the Middle East and the object of our witness, sustained by the promise of the Lord: 'Remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age'. Together we proceed on our journey with hope".

"We confess that thus far we have not done everything in our power to experience better communion in our communities.
(Continues on page 20)

Philadelphia to Host 2011 Maronite Convention



The Liberty Bell in Philadelphia, Penn.

by Claudine EL-Beyrouty

Preparations are under way as the parish of St. Sharbel is set to host the 2011 NAM convention in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, this July. Nestled less than 150 miles between its two well-known neighbors New York and Washington D.C., Philadelphia is a city with both a rich cultural heritage and plethora of modern day attractions. It is a destination for both young and old, those looking for education, entertainment, and excitement.

Best known for our historical significance, Philadelphia continues to celebrate its role in U.S. history, with many historic sites that visitors can enjoy including the Liberty Bell and National Constitution Centers, the Betsy Ross House, and Independence Hall. It is a great place for families to bring to life their children's education in history and for adults looking to retrace our steps as a young country.

Philadelphia celebrates the past while being a modern city boasting a vibrant cultural scene including the world renowned Philadelphia Museum of Art made famous in the "Rocky" movies. The theaters offer award winning shows, and educational and fun attractions include the Philadelphia Zoo, Please Touch Museum, and Franklin Institute. Our streets are lined with murals celebrating many aspects of life in Philadelphia, and the shopping districts present plenty of opportunity for the fashion hungry to indulge.

Evenings in Philadelphia offer a dining scene with award-winning restaurants and chefs, including the newest Iron Chef, Jose Garces. The city now hosts two casinos and easy access to the excitement of Atlantic City. Short drives out of the city provide access to beaches, amusement parks, wine tours, and more.

Our convention this July will bring folks to Philadelphia in time to celebrate the Welcome America! Festival, a week of events including food, fireworks, concerts, and parades which culminates in a spectacular

celebration of the fourth of July. Conventioneers are encouraged to come early, take advantage of all our city has to offer, then spend five days with us at the beautiful Sheraton Hotel reviving our Maronite spirit, reconnecting with old friends and making new ones as we learn, pray, and party together. Mark your calendars for July 6-10, 2011, and we'll see you in Philly!

For more information on the convention visit www.namnews.org and our parish website at www.saintsharbel.org. □

Mideast Synod's Concluding Statement

Continued from page 19

We have not done everything possible to confirm you in your faith and to give you the spiritual nourishment you need in your difficulties. The Lord invites us to conversion as individuals and communities. Today we return to you full of hope, strength and resolution, bringing the message of the Synod and its recommendations, that we might study them together and put them into practice in our Churches, each according to its state. We hope also that this new effort may be an ecumenical effort." □

(VIS, October 23, 2010)