



The Maronite Voice

A Publication of the Maronite Eparchies in the USA



Volume VII

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January 2011

When We Strive For Holiness Something Beautiful Happens In Our Family, In Our Church and In Our Society. We Become What God Desires.



The three Maronite Saints: Rafka, Sharbel and Nimuttallah Al-Hardini.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

On February 9, 2010, at the beginning of this Year of Saint Maron, 1600 years after his death, our Patriarch, His Beatitude Nasrallah Peter Cardinal Sfeir, wrote a beautiful message, his 25th Pastoral, entitled Saint Maron, What it means to be Maronite, and the Mission of Lebanon (for the entire Pastoral see www.stmaron.org). One could spend hours to mine the treasures of this letter which forges a profound vision for Maronites throughout the world.

The Patriarch writes in the beginning of this Pastoral:

“Our Church was not built after a name of a See or Apostle, but rather took its identity from the radiance of a man and a monastery: the Maronite Church, a Church of asceticism and adoration attached from the beginning to a solitary man, not a man of rank or a Church leader.”

What a powerful testimony to the truth that one person can make a difference if that person follows Christ! The Patriarch then writes about the heroes of faith, Sharbel, Rafka, Al-Hardini,

etc., and summarizes that the Maronite Church returns to its essence each and every time one of her sons or daughters strives for holiness. He then quotes Bishop Hamid Mourani who wrote about the meaning of our lives of holiness when lived together in community with one another:

“The faith lived out by the hermit Maron became the inner strength of a people's history. As for the successive migrations from Syria (in the 5 - 10th centuries), the Maronites gave them one meaning, that is, giving up land, wealth and comfort in Syria, moving toward a poor land where anxiety and austerity prevail, so they could preserve their faith and remain attached to their freedom ... This event is not a simple historical fact among others... it is the very beginning of a new history, the history of the Maronites.”

This can also be said of the migration of Maronites throughout the world. They left everything worldly, as the late Archbishop Francis M. Zayek would always tell us, to possess one thing, the freedom to live, to worship and to raise their families in the faith which they inherited, and to pass on that faith to others.

(Continues on page 20)

Schedule of Bishop Robert Shaheen

January 15, 2011

Meeting, Belleville, Ill.

January 13, 2011

Ordination Of Bishop Edmund Rice St. Louis

January 15 - 16, 2011

St. Raymond Cathedral, St. Louis, Mo.

January 20, 2011

Meetings in Springfield, Mo.

February 5 - 6, 2011

St. Maron's Feast Day, Detroit, Mich.

February 12 - 13, 2011

St. Anthony Church, Danbury, Conn.

February 19, 2011

St. Raymond Cathedral, St. Louis, Mo. ☐

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St. Sharbel Church
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For more information
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Maronite Servants of Christ the Light Vocation Prayers

by the Maronite Servants

The Maronite Servants of Christ the Light have written prayers of petition for vocations according to each Sunday of the Maronite Liturgical year. These brief prayers are designed to be included in the weekly church bulletin as a reminder to the faithful to pray for vocations. The prayers are available on the vocations website: VineyardoftheLord.com at the "Get Involved" link, under the category of "vocations." Please

encourage your bulletin editor to make use of these weekly prayers by including a vocations corner in each bulletin.

Here is a sample of an upcoming prayer for the Third Sunday After Epiphany: "Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the Kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit.' Gracious Father, grant that the families of our parish may grow in your spirit of holiness. We especially pray that parents may encourage their children to seek first the Kingdom of God in choosing their life's vocation."

For more information on the mission and life of the Maronite Servants, visit our website at MaroniteServants.org and our blog at RadiateHisLight.blogspot.com. ☐



Sister Marla Marie and Sister Therese Maria of the Maronite Servants pray at the Shrine of Saint Jude at the parish of Saint Maron, Philadelphia, Penn.

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

A Maronite Priest Retires



Surrounded by Bishop Gregory Mansour, Chorbishop Michael Thomas, Vicar General, and Maronite clergy and seminarians, Msgr. Romanus Sharbel Lichaa, seated, is congratulated on his retirement after almost four decades of service to the parishioners of St. Maron Church in Philadelphia.

He was gifted with a voice, a love for music, an intense desire to serve his God, and it was most fitting he was born on the same day as his namesake, St. Sharbel, after whom he took his priestly name as a monk.

He was born in *Mejdlaya* on the feast of St. Sharbel, just on the outskirts of the mountain village *Zghorta* above *Tripoli* [Lebanon], in 1933 as Romanus, one of six children, to the family of Simon Lichaa.

Of his many reminiscences of his early childhood, a highlight is his story about the Vatican Commission's visiting the Tomb of Saint Sharbel, his namesake. At the age of eight, Romanus entered the Monastery where the Saint had lived and died.

He recalls having run frantically to report to the Abbot "They're stealing our saint! Those people are cutting the skin and hair of our Saint!" The Abbot answered back, "Get the other children, surround the body."

That they did, kids his age, clambering all over the saint, moving the Vatican investigators aside until the Abbot saw for himself what needed to be done to verify the sainthood of their beloved St. Sharbel. An early video of the removal of the body of St. Sharbel from his tomb found one of those handling the body to be the young monk.

In the telling, Msgr. Sharbel demonstrates how he would stand at the head of the open casket of St. Sharbel and fling his arms back and forth, as he says, "St. Sharbel looked so alive to all of us."

As he grew in the service of God, he developed skills as an administrator, teacher, and musical director. He had been gifted with a voice that can only be described as "fabulous." He was a stickler for details and managed to transmit to the countless numbers of seminarians he taught how to properly celebrate the full Maronite liturgy.

A fighter in the battle to maintain a Maronite presence

amid the increasing strife that began to tore at the fabric of the Christian soul of this mountainous country, he had become a target. His superiors made the decision to send him to another beleaguered community, the parish of St. Maron in Philadelphia, Penn., the oldest Maronite Church in America.

Here, as the eighth pastor in the church's long history, in 1974, he began slowly to knit back the parishioners who had begun to drift away from the church, which had suffered through a rough history.

He began by rallying the parish around the construction of a new hall adjacent to the church at Alder and Ellsworth Streets, just across from the modest two story row home which became the church rectory and his residence. The huge hall was built, proving to be a wise decision since it is now the home for receptions of all kinds, not only for the parish, but for neighbors as well.

Not satisfied with that achievement, he renovated the interior of St. Maron Church, replicating many of the features seen in the ancient Maronite stone churches in Lebanon. People immediately knew this easily could have been a Church transplanted from the motherland.

Through all the years, Msgr. Sharbel never distanced himself from his role as a shepherd, confessor, and religious leader. He tirelessly worked with his congregation so that even the youngest would understand that theirs was a heritage, and they were left with a legacy to constantly practice their religion. Often the parish members would take to the streets during Mass in a procession marking a specific Church holiday or Saint's feast day.

Another achievement of his was raising another church, which began as a mission in the suburb of Newtown Square, Penn. Land which had been bequeathed to St. Maron Church by now-deceased parishioner Joseph Barakat was used to establish a mission center for the many Maronites in the area, saving them the Sunday trips to St. Maron, quite a distance away. Under his tutelage, the new priests assigned were able to develop the center [St. Sharbel swimming recreation] into another full parish.

Through it all, he had grown to become an icon in the South Philadelphia neighborhood in which his church is located. It is adjacent to the famous Philadelphia landmark, the Italian 9th Street Market, which features outdoor produce stands for five long streets, just one block east of the Church.

There, the many Italians, who predominated the market and had a long history intertwined with the Lebanese who lived around the Church, adopted him as their own pastor. Often he would be seen hearing confessions, administering ashes, or just listening to the vendors. The Market's top vendors are often seen at Mass at St. Maron, and are very involved in its activities.

During those years he instituted the summer tradition of turning the streets around St. Maron into a Lebanese festival, further introducing Lebanon and the Maronite tradition to those who attended ... and, naturally, one of the top features was his singing, bringing out the best in traditional popular Lebanese music.

In 1986, his work had become legendary. Bishop Francis Zayek elevated Father Sharbel to Monsignor.

His home, which was always open to the public since he shares it with the Church rectory, became a beacon of hope and support for immigrants from throughout the Arabic

speaking world. Often one would find him taking care of Moslems as well as Christians and Jews in need.

His neighbors invited him to take over their backyards when they witnessed his green thumb, and fruit and vegetables grew in profusion.

Over the last several years, his health began to set him back, so when it came time for him to retire, he sadly welcomed it as relief from some of his responsibilities.

The parish threw a sellout banquet for him attended by Bishop Gregory Mansour and other Maronite Clergy. Though retired, parishioners know he is still their *Aboona*, and they look forward to when he is able to attend Mass with them.

St. Maron is uncontested as the first Maronite parish in North America. It dates back to the 1860s with the arrival of the first Lebanese Maronites to the city of Philadelphia. Fr. Istfan Korkemaz, a traveling Lebanese priest, established the parish in 1887 on Washington Avenue, a block north of the present church, between 9th and 10th Streets. The Lebanese community grew around it, becoming a little colony in the heart of the Italian American community surrounding the outdoor market. □

Houston, Texas *Order of Saint Gregory*



From left: Fr. Pierre El Khoury, Nicole Joubran, Salim Joubran (award recipient), Mino Dow, Joe Dow (award recipient), Bishop Robert Shaheen, Mrs. Busra Mouawad (award recipient), Dr. Karl Karim Morrow (award recipient), Janet Morrow, and Fr. Milad Yaghi, Pastor.

On Friday, December 3, 2010, four members of Our Lady of the Cedars Maronite Catholic Church in Houston, Texas, were awarded the Pontifical Equestrian Order of St. Gregory the Great.

The evening began with a Pontifical Divine Liturgy celebrated by His Excellency Robert Shaheen, Bishop of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon. Following Bishop Shaheen's homily, he informed the congregation that His Holiness Pope Benedict the XVI has bestowed the Pontifical Equestrian Order of St. Gregory the Great upon Mrs. Busra Mouawad, Mr. Joseph Dow, Mr. Salim Joubran and Dr. Karl Karim Morrow. Afterwards, Fr. Milad Yaghi, MLM, Pastor of Our Lady of the Cedars, presented the four honorees to Bishop Shaheen.

Following the Divine Liturgy, Mr. Adrian Garcia, Harris County Sherriff, presented each of the honorees with an official Harris County Sherriff Department Cowboy Hat. The parish also honored the recipients with a reception in the parish hall.

Pope Gregory XVI established the Pontifical Equestrian Order of St. Gregory the Great on September 1, 1831, seven months after his election to the papacy. It is one of the five orders of knighthood of the Holy See. The order is bestowed on Catholic men and women in recognition of their personal service to the Holy See and the Church, unusual labors, support of the Holy See, and the good example set in their communities and country. □

Jacksonville, Florida *Installation of Officers of Knights of Columbus*



Fr. Elie Abi Chedid, Chaplain, and District Deputy Harry Kimball with the new officers.

A ceremony of installation of new officers for St. Maron's Council of the Knights of Columbus #13328 in Jacksonville, Florida, took place on Sunday December 12, 2010 at Saint Maron Church. The ceremony was led by Florida Worthy District Deputy Harry Kimball. Special congratulations are conveyed to the new Grand Knight Elie Assi, and Deputy Grand Knight Haissam Barakat. □

Deadline for next month's issue of *The Maronite Voice* is January 25, 2011. Send all changes of address, news, pictures and personal correspondence to:
The Maronite Voice

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

Lombard, Illinois Ordination to the Rank of Chorbishop



Chorbishop Alfred Badawi

On Saturday, November 20, 2010, a banquet was held in honor of Msgr. Alfred Badawi, Pastor of Our Lady of Lebanon Church, Lombard [Chicago], Illinois, to celebrate his ordination to Chorbishop.

Mr. Sami Daou, President of the Parish Pastoral Council, welcomed 700 people at the Drury Lane Banquet Center in Oak Brook, Illinois. Mr. Tom Shaer served as the Master of Ceremonies, and Msgr. Mansour Labaki of Lebanon delivered the invocation. On behalf of the Board of Trustees Mr. Sam Ibrahim, Sr., expressed admiration for the new Chorbishop, and Chorbishop Faouzi Elia, Vicar General of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon, voiced personal gratitude for the new Chorbishop. Father Dominique Hanna, Pastor of St. Joseph Church, Atlanta, Ga., and a cousin to Chorbishop Badawi, spoke with love on behalf of the Badawi family. Bishop Shaheen expressed with fondness his memories of Chorbishop Alfred. In response Chorbishop Alfred spoke with appreciation, humility, gratitude, and sincerity on this special occasion. Father Paul Mouawad, Pastor of St. Sharbel Church, Newtown Square, Penn., gave the benediction.

On Sunday, November 21, 2010, in an historic moment for Our Lady of Lebanon of Chicago, Most Reverend Robert J. Shaheen, Bishop of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon, presided at the Ordination and Elevation ceremony of Msgr. Alfred to the rank of Chorbishop.

The choir joined their voices. Soon the tall gold cross flanked by lighted candles approached. The Knights of Columbus and of Saint Gregory added their splendor. Members of the Order of Saint Sharbel lined the sides of the center aisle and stood as an honor guard in the procession of religious. Attending priests were Chorbishop Faouzi Elia, Msgr. Mansour Labaki, Father Paul Mouawad, Father Dominique Hanna, Father Tom Paul, Father Matt Pratscher and Father Tony Taschetta. Father Dominique Hanna served as Master of Ceremonies and incensed the entry of Bishop Robert Shaheen and Bishop Joseph Siegel, Auxiliary Bishop of the Diocese of Joliet, Ill.

Msgr. Alfred took his place in the open chair before the altar and waited with patience and humility. He remained at his place throughout most of the Liturgy. During the homily, Bishop Shaheen explained to the faithful the duties of the Chorbishop.

After the communion of the bishops and concelebrating priests, the Bishop's chair was placed in the forefront of the altar, and Bishop Shaheen began the proper rite of Imposition of Hands.

After Communion Bishop Siegel spoke on behalf of Bishop Sartain of how wonderfully impressed he was by Chorbishop since their earliest meeting.

On behalf of the Parish, Mr. Anthony Shaker, member of the Board of Trustees, spoke of the dedication, enthusiasm and organizational abilities of the new Chorbishop.

Chorbishop Alfred's parents, Albert and Mouna Badawi, his brother Wahib, his sister-in-law Leyal, his niece Marie Belle Badawi (Saint Jude Hospital patient), and many of his friends were present for the celebration.

A reception was served at OLL Shaker Hall in honor of Bishop Shaheen and the newly elevated Chorbishop. □

Schedule of Bishop Gregory Mansour

January 2, 2011

Pastoral Visit, Our Lady of Lebanon Church, Miami, Fla.

January 6, 2011 (Feast of Epiphany)

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

January 9, 2011

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

January 10 - 15, 2011

Annual Clergy Retreat, West Palm Beach, Fla.

January 16, 2011

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

January 23, 2011

Pastoral Visit, St. Sharbel Church, Newtown Square, Penn.

January 24 - 25, 2011

Pro-Life Mass and Rally; Installation of Catholic University's New President, Washington, D.C.

January 26 - February 2, 2011

Holy Land, Visit with the Neo Catechumenal Way

February 12, 2011

Feast of Saint Maron, Danbury, Conn. □

Waterville, Maine *A Journey to Subdeaconate*



Chorbishop Ashkar ordains Stephen Crate to the Order of Subdeacon at St. Joseph Church in Waterville, Maine.

by Stephen Crate

My journey to ordination to the minor order of Cantor, Lector and Subdeacon started in 1974 when I met Allison Ferris, a beautiful and wonderful Lebanese woman at the University of Maine at Augusta. The wonderful thing about Allison was her quiet faith. She never talked about it much but just lived it and still does. I had grown up in Church and studied eastern philosophy, meditation and religion in college, and I immediately became fascinated by the combination of eastern thinking and Christianity. I never thought it possible that my interest in the Eastern mystical ways could be combined with Christianity. Then I met Allison's father, Deeb Ferris, on one Sunday in the spring of 1975. Allison had invited me to the traditional Sunday dinner that so many Lebanese families enjoy. It was a family time and I learned about some new foods. *Raw kibee, hushwee, taboulee* and grape leaves were served. If you have ever seen the movie "My Big Fat Greek Wedding," that was my experience, only with a Lebanese twist. I asked Deeb for Allison's hand in marriage that Sunday. He paused and gave us his blessing.

My faith formation really started when I first met Fr. Paul Coury and attended marriage classes with Allison that summer of 1975. His instruction was really my first experience with a priest other than attending Mass a few times earlier in my life. His knowledge of languages, the saints, the Bible and his entering the Priesthood at age twelve really amazed me. I got a chance to know him much better when he became ill and I took him on Sunday afternoon drives for supper a few times a month. He was a remarkable teacher and scholar.

Allison and I were married in Augusta in 1975. Father Bill Bartoul came about two years later and taught me Catholic catechesis and Maronite theology. I converted when my first son was baptized in February of 1979. Fr. Bill then got me involved with teaching religious education, NAM and the parish council. Father Sam Najjar came and I continued my service as a lector and parish council member.

After several years of feeling a nudge to study to be a subdeacon, and with the children raised and life settling down, that feeling of being called grew stronger and surer, so I finally decided to formally apply (with the encouragement of Fr. Larry Jensen, Pastor). I was accepted to study for the Subdeaconate, and after finishing the two year program, that call and dream came true. I developed a deeper relationship with God through that call and dream that has been nurtured by faithful members of the St. Joseph Maronite Church who have become my family. I am truly grateful for being accepted into this family, and in many ways they have saved my life. I am honored to give back to the Church my time and service as a subdeacon.

On October 24, 2010, at St. Joseph Maronite Church, I was ordained to the minor orders of Cantor, Lector and Subdeacon by Chorbishop Dominic Ashkar, the Pastor of Our Lady of Lebanon Maronite Church in Washington, D.C. The Clergy attending were Father Larry Jensen, Pastor, Father James Roy, longtime friend of the parish, and Father Paul Murray, my Spiritual Director from the local Roman Diocese of Portland, Maine. Deacon Peter Joseph, a lifelong member of the parish, a loyal minister to St. Joseph and a cousin and close friend to my father-in-law Deeb Ferris (who was ordained to the subdeaconate with Peter in 1979) served as Deacon. The servers were Ben and Jake Hodgkin. The ordination included an honor guard of the Knights of Columbus in full regale.

Chorbishop Ashkar shared a remarkable story about the altar. When he was ten or eleven years old he remembers his father assembling this altar for shipment to the United States. He learned years later that this altar was the same altar shipped here to St. Joseph Maronite Church in 1950. This was an emotional moment, expressed by Chorbishop Ashkar, to see the same altar he was awed by as a young boy.

Guests who attended included my wife Allison and my two sons, Matthew and Daniel. My brother Doug and his two sons participated in the offertory procession. Extended family and friends were also in attendance as well as a full church of regular St. Joseph parishioners. A reception was held in the church hall. □

Utica, New York *Centennial Celebration*

by Chorbishop John Faris

The weekend of October 22, 2010, Rutger Street and the surrounding area was bustling with activity as St. Louis Gonzaga Maronite Catholic Church celebrated the joyous occasion of their 100 year anniversary. Coordinated by chairpersons Glory Rasi and Louis Raya, it was a momentous occasion for parish families to honor their ancestors who built the church and to take pride in their Maronite heritage.

Records show the first Maronites arrived in Utica in 1885. Father Louis Lotaif came to Utica in 1907 and ministered to the Maronite community even before the church was built, celebrating the Divine Liturgy at Old Historic St. John's Church in Utica. The first church was built in 1910, and the altar of the current church was consecrated in 1936.



“The church was built through the sacrifices of grandparents and great-grandparents of many of our current parishioners,” said Chorbishop John D. Faris, pastor of St. Louis. “We are standing on the shoulders of giants!” Multi-generational families gathered to bear witness to the dawn of the next century of faith and family.

The Divine Liturgy, celebrated Sunday, was the highlight of the weekend as it brought the parishioners together as a family to profess their faith. The principal celebrant and homilist, was Chorbishop John D. Faris joined by the Most Reverend Robert J. Cunningham, Bishop of Syracuse presiding. Concelebrating clergy included Chorbishop Joseph Lahoud (nephew of the Msgr. Francis Lahoud, who built the present church in 1935), Fr. Bassam Saade (former pastor of 16 years currently serving in Orlando, Florida), Fr. Tony Mouanes, Parochial Vicar, Msgr. Francis Willenburg (a priest of the Diocese of Syracuse and former administrator of St. Louis Gonzaga), Fr. Guido Gockel, MHM, of the Catholic Near East Welfare Association. Several other priests from neighboring parishes were present in the sanctuary for the Divine Liturgy.

In honor of the parish’s hundredth anniversary, the Rite of the Consecration of the Church, which is normally celebrated on the first Sunday of November — the beginning of the Liturgical Year — was celebrated during the Divine Liturgy. The Rite involves the sprinkling of Holy Water, the dressing of the altar, and the offering of incense. The Rite began with Chorbishop Faris blessing the main altar with holy water. Chorbishop Lahoud then blessed the two side altars which his uncle, Msgr. Lahoud, designed and built by hand. Bishop Cunningham then blessed the four walls of the church with holy water. The women of the Altar Society, assisted by the Daughters of Mary, dressed the main altar representing generations of the church’s past, present and future. Music was provided by the choir, led by Dr. H. Joseph Obeid and Mrs. Janet Massoud under the direction of Mr. Richard Thornton with Mr. Greg Giacovelli as organist.

Following the recessional, everyone present filled the front steps of the Church for a historic group photo to mark the occasion. One hundred balloons were then released followed by a celebratory round of fireworks. A luncheon for over 225 people followed.

On Saturday evening, a celebratory grand banquet and hafli was held and the grand ballroom was filled to its

capacity of 450 people. The evening began with a cocktail hour and Lebanese mezza as the guests mingled and enjoyed viewing a historical multi-media presentation featuring pictures and video from throughout the parish’s hundred year history prepared by parishioner Zachary Lewis. The dinner began with an Invocation by Deacon Paul Salamy. Attorney Peter Hobaica served as the Master of Ceremonies. Mary Magdalene Tehan, age 11, sang the American National Anthem and Dr. H. Joseph Obeid sang the Lebanese National Anthem. Speakers included Chorbishop Faris, Fr. Saade, Fr. Gockel, Parish Council President Louis Raya, and Theresa Abi-Habib, Regional Vice-President of the National Apostolate of Maronites, who presented the parish with an original icon of the Blessed Massabki Brothers, written by Judy Soma. The evening celebration continued with lively Arabic music, by parishioner John Massoud and his ensemble, and traditional Arabic dancing. Each guest who attended the grand banquet and hafli received a piece of history to take home in the form of a beautifully prepared commemorative book designed and produced by parishioner Glory Rasi.

The events of the weekend began on Friday evening as everyone who had been part of the parish youth group from its inception, fifty years ago to the present, was invited to a first ever reunion in the parish hall. People who grew up together in the church but had not seen each other in over forty years gathered from across the country to reminisce and share stories. Old pictures and scrapbooks were on display for everyone to enjoy. A delicious Lebanese dinner, prepared by a local restaurant, and dancing to Arabic and American music helped complete the evening.

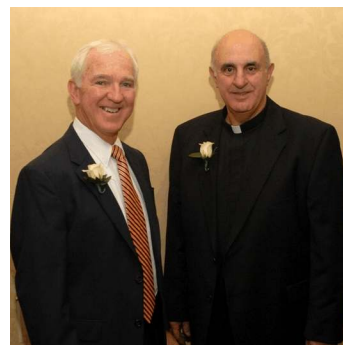
Adding to the festivities of the weekend was the publication of “Sitto’s Legacy,” a cookbook of traditional Lebanese and Syrian recipes compiled by the St. Mary’s Guild. All the recipes in the cookbook - many of which were handed down over several generations - were from the women of the parish.

The parishioners of Saint Louis Gonzaga are filled with joy and hope as they begin their second century of faith and family knowing that, in the words of Chorbishop Faris, their task of maintaining and continuing the parish is more difficult than that of their ancestors who built it. □

Easton, Pennsylvania Community Recognition

by Naomi Karam Koerwitz

On Sunday, November 14, 2010, Deacon Anthony P. Koury of Our Lady of Lebanon Church in Easton, Penn., and Dr. Arthur L. Scott, Ph.D., President of Northampton County Community College in Bethlehem, Penn., were honored at a testimonial roast/toast at the Best



Dr. Arthur L. Scott and Deacon Anthony Koury



Deacon Anthony Koury with members of his family and friends.

Western Inn and Conference Center in Bethlehem. The Easton Area Community Center sponsored the testimonial. The event, currently in its 15th year, raises much needed funds for the center, a facility that serves more than 300 underprivileged children who live in Easton's West Ward. Both Deacon Koury and Dr. Scott were presented with photographs of the center and key rings from the children.

More than 140 of the 300 in attendance were from the Maronite community of Easton. Fr. Paul Damien, Pastor of Our Lady of Lebanon Church, attended along with the following members of the local clergy: Rev. Msgr. Alfred A. Schlert, Vicar-General of the Diocese of Allentown, Penn.; Rev. Daniel Gambet, President Emeritus of DeSales University, also in Allentown; Rev. Msgr. John Grabish, Pastor of Sacred Heart and Mt. Carmel parishes in Allentown; and Rev. Avitus Kazi Siriwa, Catholic Chaplain at St. Luke's Hospital in Bethlehem.

Many members of the legal and legislative community were also in attendance: Deacon Koury's nephew, Northampton County Court of Common Pleas Judge Michael J. Koury Jr.; Judge Edward G. Smith; Penn. State Representative Robert Freeman; Mayor Salvatore Panto Jr. of Easton; Northampton County District Attorney John Morganelli; and Assistant District Attorney Abraham Kassis, a member of Our Lady of Lebanon Parish. Rep. Freeman was on hand to issue resolutions from both the Penn. State Senate and House of Representatives to Deacon Koury and Dr. Scott, and Mayor Panto officially issued a proclamation declaring Sunday, November 14, 2010, Deacon Anthony P. Koury Day in the city of Easton.

The choral ensemble from Notre Dame High School, where Deacon Koury is Athletic Director and has been an administrator and educator for over forty years, sang the National Anthem. Attorney Keene Jabbour, a lifelong friend and a member of Our Lady of Lebanon parish, roasted and toasted the Deacon along with James Steiner, principal of Notre Dame, Msgr. Schlert and many others.

In response, Deacon Anthony thanked the many people who have been an important part of his life, including the Most Rev. Gregory J. Mansour, Bishop of the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn; the Most Rev. John O. Barres, Bishop of the Diocese of Allentown; and the Most Rev. Edward P. Cullen, Bishop Emeritus of the Diocese of

Allentown. All were unable to attend the testimonial due to their attendance at the National Conference of Catholic Bishops in Baltimore, Md. Deacon Anthony also thanked the Most Rev. Stephen Hector Doueih, Bishop Emeritus of the Eparchy of Saint Maron, who was unable to attend due to health reasons.

Deacon Anthony also remembered those clergy who had a significant influence on his life: the late Archbishop Francis M. Zayek, who ordained him as subdeacon and then deacon and officiated at his wedding to his wife, Cheffie; his former pastors, the late Rev. Norman S. Peter; Msgr. Bernard Khachan; the late Rev. Hares D. Zogheib; Msgr. Sami Hayek; Rev. Kamil Al-Chouefati; and his current pastor, Rev. Paul Damien.

In addition to honoring his parents, the late Frank and Catherine Koury, Deacon Anthony made special mention of his family in attendance: his wife of forty years, Cheffie; his son, Anthony; daughter, Frances, and her husband, Jason; his sister, Frances; his sister-in-law, Josie; his niece, Cathy; his nephew, Michael and his wife, Elaine, and their children, Josie, Rebecca and Michael III. He also recognized his 90-year-old aunt, Lillian Constantine, and thanked her for being like a second mother to him and thanked his wife's family in attendance, as well. He also recognized the late Honorable Raymond Baurkot, who was an instrumental figure in the Lebanese community... a philanthropist and humanitarian for both the local community and for his ancestral village of *Kfarsghab* in Lebanon. But it was his late brother, District Judge Michael Koury Sr., for whom he paid the most special tribute. Deacon Anthony said his brother was and continues to be an inspiration and role model for him.

Deacon Koury expressed gratitude to all his relatives and friends, including members of the Notre Dame High School community who were unable to attend. In addition, he thanked the banquet committee and the Board of Directors of the Easton Area Community Center, who all work tirelessly on behalf of children.

In closing, he quoted Khalil Gibran: "When you give of your possessions, you give little; it is when you give of yourself, that you truly give." And while this honor was bestowed on Deacon Anthony P. Koury, he was quick to point out that since he is a representative of his community of Our Lady of Lebanon Church in Easton, they also share in this honor. □

San Jose, California *Liturgical Schedule*

The Maronite Community of San Jose, California, is blessed to begin having Divine Liturgy on the last Saturday of every month at 6 p.m., at St. Christopher Catholic Church. San Jose is located in the South Bay of San Francisco, about forty-five minute drive from Our Lady of Lebanon Maronite Church. Fr. John Nahal is also serving Stockton Maronite community with a Divine Liturgy on the First Saturday of every month at St. Mary's High School Catholic Chapel.

The San Jose Maronite Community has been active and meeting at least once a month, the second Friday of every month, for an evening of Bible study and camaraderie. □

Cleveland, Ohio Sodality Luncheon

by Deacon George Khoury

On Sunday, December 12, 2010, after the Divine Liturgy at which the incoming officers of the Immaculate Conception Sodality were sworn in, they hosted their annual Christmas Luncheon in the Carnegie Room at the Garden Hilton Hotel to capacity crowd.

Before turning over the gavel to the new president, Diane Maroun took us down memory lane of the last four years of her tenure.

Spiritually: Besides beginning each meeting with *Ziyah Al Adra* [Benediction with the Icon of Mary], they made pilgrimages to three shrines - in 2007 to Our Lady of Sorrows in Bellevue, Ohio; in 2008 to Our Lady of Fatima and St. Theresa's Shrines in Detroit, Michigan; and in 2010 to the Shrine of St. Theresa in Chicago, Illinois, as well as to Our Lady of Lebanon in North Jackson, Ohio.

They supported and attended our shrine by donating *kibbee* on the Feast of The Assumption as well as the NAM Retreats in Youngstown, Ohio. Traditionally, they have sponsored our May Crowning and the Immaculate Conception Feast Day liturgical celebration.

Socially: They attended Cleveland Indians baseball games and Scott Hamilton's Skate for The Cure of Cancer at Quicken Arena; they participated in the Juvenile Diabetes Walk; and sponsored Wine and Cheese Tasting events and a fashion show.

They made blankets and visited former members who are shut-ins. In order to build a budget through the years they dedicated countless hours in the kitchen for the annual *kaak* [cookies] sale, *kibbee* sale, and this year the *mahmoul* [pastry] sale.

Before striking the gavel for the last time and presenting the new officers she thanked her officers and the parish for their support, then said with sincerity of heart, "Four years ago I didn't know what the outcome of my leadership as president would be. How this responsibility would affect me. I now realize that I have grown tremendously. I have learned the true meaning of humility. It is through this virtue that one learns to serve selflessly and to love unconditionally. These past four years will remain in my heart forever."

New Officers are: Karan Farhat, President, Claire Naoum, Vice-President, Theresa Abood-Martin, Treasurer, Rose Habeeb, Secretary, and Alya Ezzie, Corresponding Secretary.

Kibbee Throw Down

On Saturday, November 14, 2010, when the members of the Immaculate Conception Sodality were making *kibbee* for their annual sale on Sunday the 15th, Fr. Tony Massad, Associate Pastor of St. Maron Parish, Cleveland, Ohio, boasted that he was the fastest *kibbee* kabob maker at the seminary. He made the mistake of telling them that he could make kabobs faster than anyone.

The ladies on the kabob assembly line took up the challenge and put him up against 97 year-old, Zahra Tannous, to see who could make the fastest dozen.

While he was still working on his first kabob, she had made three. While working on his second, she finished six. In twenty minutes, she finished a dozen while he was still working on his eighth.

Graciously, he conceded and said, "I'll never make another statement like that again, especially to the ladies of the Immaculate Conception Sodality." Zahra in turn, looked at him and said, "You're not too bad." □



Zahra Tannous and Fr. Tony Massad.

NAM Semester in Lebanon Scholarship Recipients

NAM Scholarship Committee is pleased to announce the winners of the 2010 "A Semester in Lebanon Scholarships" for the 2011 school year. Each winner will receive full tuition and dormitory expenses and \$500 after completing the semester with a 3.0 GPA or above.

Notre Dame University (NDU – Louaize)

Fall Semester

Philip Pierre Chelala St. Maron Church, Cleveland, Ohio

Summer Semester

Sofia Elisa Martinez St. Anthony of the Desert Church, El Paso, Texas

University of the Holy Spirit (USEK – Kaslik)

Summer Semester

Catherine Anne Egeland St. Elias Church, Birmingham, Alabama
Cody George St. Maron Church, Cleveland, Ohio
Gabrielle Ghreichi St. Maron Church, Minneapolis, Minnesota
Dora Srour St. Sharbel Church, Somerset, New Jersey
Christine Zaccack Our Lady of Lebanon Church, Washington, D.C.

Congratulations to all and good luck. □

Pope Benedict, The Enigma

A book-length interview dispels many of the falsehoods and sneering judgements of the pontiff. His revelations might not answer all of the world's questions, but he certainly leaves Catholic and non-Catholics alike with plenty to think about. (The following article is taken from The Forum/USA Today, November 29, 2010, by Amy Welborn. She is the author of seventeen books, including Come Meet Jesus: An Invitation From Pope Benedict XVI. Her website is www.amywelborn.com.)



Forbes recently named Pope Benedict XVI the fifth-most-powerful person in the world, right between Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin and German Chancellor Angela Merkel and well ahead of any other religious leaders - Iran's top ayatollah (26th) and the Dalai Lama (39th).

An 83-year-old man, the out-of-town figurehead of a dying mythological system, is the fifth-most-powerful person in the world? How can this be?

The *Forbes* ranking is certainly subjective, but still standing of the continuing importance of Catholicism on the world stage and even in the U.S., where almost a quarter of the population - around 69 million people - claim a Catholic identity.

Revealing, too, was the explosion of headlines about and analysis of two sentences - about condoms, no less - uttered by this same 83-year-old man. To garner that sort of worldwide attention without even trying? That's power.

A Man Out of the Box

The remarks were from *Light of the World*, Pope Benedict's new book-length interview with German journalist

Peter Seewald. The fruit of a week of interviews - their third such book together, but the first since Benedict's election - recorded over the summer at the papal summer residence in Castel Gandolfo outside Rome, this is simply not the kind of thing that popes do. In fact, no pope has ever participated in such a conversation before.

The questions cover the high and low points of Benedict's papacy: his reaction to being elected pope, his assessment of the abuse crisis, his reasons for lifting the ex-communication of bishop-leaders of the SSPX (a movement that opposed the changes of the Second Vatican Council), and the explosive reaction to his remarks about Islam at the University of Regensburg. He answers every question, jokes, expresses a few regrets on some matters and stands firm on still more.

One would think that a book full of questions and answers would clarify who a person is. For some it certainly will, but others might find themselves even more perplexed as the responses to the condom remarks from both left and right inside and outside the Church clearly show. Benedict keeps jumping out of the box. A few thoughts to ponder:

★ How are we to understand the Pope's

mind when he both consistently describes the Catholic Church in the most elevated terms - where Christ dwells and all people are invited to find the fulfillment - but also doesn't hesitate to name and condemn the "filth" within that same church?

★ Benedict highlights the destructive nature of modern notions of progress and scientific thinking, but then he insists that it's vital to bring "reason" back into public conversations about human life and faith. How to reconcile the two?

★ How about his assertion that the Church is strong because it develops "new ways" of being in the world? How does that match up with his confident explanation that a male-only priesthood is God's will, or his order freeing up celebration of the Mass as it was said before Vatican II?

★ What of his affirmation that the Catholic teaching against contraception is "correct," his insistence that "sexuality has an intrinsic meaning and direction, which is not homosexual" alongside his now-infamous suggestion that if an HIV-positive male prostitute uses a condom, it might, in that very particular context, be viewed as a "first assumption of responsibility on the way to recovering an awareness that not everything is allowed."

How Does All of this Work Together?

There is, it seems, something for everyone in this exhaustive interview - something to annoy everyone on every side of these issues, that is as recent events clearly showed. The truth is, though, that for anyone who has been following Benedict and read any of his numerous works over many years, none of this is shocking or a surprise, and it's all quite consistent.

It only puzzles us when we insist on

filtering the pope's works through our own expectations and ideologies, our own understanding of what religion and rationality and morality must be all about. We're not starting from the same page, which might explain much of the invective directed at the pope by a curious but often oblivious press.

The thing is, he really believes the stuff. *Really*. He believes that God exists and we exist because God loves us. We're free to love him back, or not. So the basic job of the Church is to be Christ in the world, inviting human beings to find love and truth. To find themselves. As Benedict puts it in *Light of the World*, the Church "communicates the light of Christ."

The Pope You Don't Hear About

Now what confuses and even angers some Catholics is that along with this high sense of church is the acceptance of the reality - very clear throughout this interview - that human beings interact with the church at different levels of commitment. Some go to Mass every day, and others once a year. Some are saints, while others are barely hanging on. There certainly have been through history various ways to articulate God's call to humanity, some more forceful and dire, but that is not Pope Benedict's language. The way he has always expressed it is that it's not the church's role to force an individual to come closer, but rather to constantly invite. Not to impose, but to "propose" - one of Pope Benedict's favorite turns of phrase.

What about the church's teaching on contraception, always a lightning rod of criticism? In the interview, the Pope says, "I think that there will always be core groups of people who are really open to being interiorly convinced and fulfilled by the teaching and who then carry everyone else." So in essence, he's saying some will agree, some won't. But what of "everyone else?" Contrary to popular impression and maybe even the hopes of some Catholics, Pope Benedict doesn't see it as his job to issue blanket condemnations of that "everyone else." "We are sinners," he says. "We should try to do as much good as we can and to

support and put up with each other."

That doesn't sound like "God's Rottweiler." a nickname Benedict earned as a cardinal. Nor does it sound like the words of a man too often condemned as intolerant, rigid and stuck in past centuries. In short, Pope Benedict is saying: It's not my job to either change the teaching or declare you eternally condemned for your failures in living it. That's God's job. And I'm not God.

This pleases hardly anyone, of course. It doesn't fit with our favored ideologies or our scripts of what it means to be liberal or conservative or even religious. But to an 83-year-old man convinced of the gift of God's love and truth and who says to his interviewer that when he prays, he really does no more than come as a "simple beggar before God," it does.

You might even call it.....powerful. □

Pastoral Initiative for Marriage



Bishop Gregory Mansour

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

This Christmas season is the perfect time to strengthen and affirm something so very dear to all of us: marriage. This past year in each pastoral visit I made, I have tried to "tell it like it is" about the lofty beauty and the practical difficulties of marriage. What I have found over and

over again is that marriage is worthy of every effort.

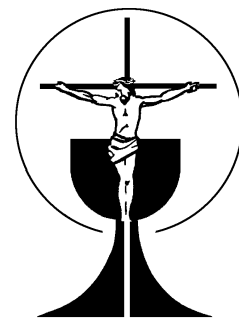
In the National Pastoral Initiative for Marriage, the United States Catholic Bishops call attention to the meaning and value of married life for the Church and for society. Bringing Catholic belief into dialogue with contemporary needs, the Bishops urge all Catholics to become a community of hope and help for marriages and to join others in building a culture of marriage. The Initiative weaves together the Catholic faith tradition and the experience of married couples in order to offer guidance and resources to promote, strengthen, sustain and restore marriages. More information about the Initiative can be found at www.usccb.org/laity/marriage/npim.

The Maronite Church also realizes our obligation to join in this common Initiative. Drawing from our rich tradition and from contemporary wisdom, we are able to offer much on the subject of marriage. To see how the Eparchy of Saint Maron is trying to do its part, please visit www.stmaron.org. See especially the new Office for Family and the Sanctity of Life, as well as the articles on Family Life.

The greatest spouses of all time, Saint Joseph and the Virgin Mary, are a great source of spiritual support for all spouses who seek their help. May their prayer help each of us to do our part to protect, strengthen and restore marriage as the sacrament revealing God's life giving love and peace in the world.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+Gregory John Mansour
Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn
December 2010 □



Minneapolis, Minnesota *Benefactor Honored*



John Nasseff and Msgr. sharbel Maroun.

by Joanne Moses

Sunday, December 12, 2010 arrived with twenty-two inches of snow in Minneapolis, Minnesota, and yet more than four hundred parishioners, family and friends attended a celebration to honor Mr. John Nasseff, our benefactor and friend. Mr. Henry Estephan emceed the event with tributes given by all clubs and groups of the parish including Saint Anne's Club, Saint Rafka Club (with each member wearing a beret as he does), Lebanon American Men's Club, Maronite Youth Organization, Maronite Young Adults, the Maronite Christian Formation (MCF) and the Parish's choir. Reception speeches were given by Helene Houle, wife of Mr. Nasseff, by his brother Art, and son Mickey. A power point slide show of the life of Mr. Nasseff ran continuously throughout the day.

Eighty-six children hand delivered a blue rose each for Mr. Nasseff. Accolades were offered with personal gifts of gratitude: three orphans sponsored in Lebanon in his name; cedar trees to be planted; Masses to be said for his parents, Betros and Zmeroud Nasseff, in each of their home towns in Lebanon for an entire year; a basketful of favorite Lebanese foods and drinks; a memorial book depicting projects Mr. Nasseff made possible at Saint Maron Church and other memories; a poem written especially for him; and a picture of our mosaic of Saint Maron surrounded by the names of more than one hundred students and staff who appreciate his gift of partially publishing the Faith of the Mountain religious education series. Also T-shirts were made for him and for the young adults who will be having a special dinner with him. A blue and black beret and tailored jacket were made for him and decorated with Lebanese and American flags. Traditional songs were sung by the choir and Msgr. sharbel.

There were two more very special items. A gold-leafed hand-carved "Gospel Stand" in our sanctuary was dedicated in thanksgiving to God and in honor of Mr. Nasseff, and a stone from his parents' house in Lebanon was scribed in his honor and decorated with cedar trees.

The event was flawlessly chaired by Mr. and Mrs. Duane Nasser. Tables were decorated in Mr. Nasseff's favorite

colors of powder blue and white and held perfectly crafted centerpieces and tableware. Mrs. Malake Khozah chaired the committee that prepared the meal. □

Christmas Play



On December 19, 2010, Saint Maron of Minneapolis, Minn., held their 19th annual Nativity Play with about forty children, preschool through 6th grade, from Maronite Christian Formation. The students participated beautifully by narrating, playing an instrument, or performing in the portrayal which was aptly directed by Carla Bedros. □

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For the Historic Memorable Event of
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Maroun at abouna@stmaron.com or 612-876-2133

Space is limited (50 people).

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Waterbury, Connecticut *The Angel Tree*



MYO and MYA of Our Lady of Lebanon Church in Waterbury, Conn., prepare gifts to deliver to underprivileged children.

by *Theresa Al Hayek*

It was with great pride that Our Lady of Lebanon Church in Waterbury, Connecticut, successfully completed its third annual Angel Tree program this past Christmas season. The Angel Tree is a community service project aimed at spreading the joy of Christmas to underprivileged children in the Greater Waterbury area who are currently residing at a homeless shelter. The children, ranging from newborn to fourteen years old, are assigned an angel ornament, listing their name, age, gender, clothing size and the item(s) they would like or need. These ornaments are hung on the Angel Tree at Our Lady of Lebanon Church, where parishioners can adopt an ornament and purchase the requested items in time for Christmas.

Through the wonderful generosity of many parishioners and collaboration from members of the parish's MYO and MYA organizations, the project successfully delivered well over 150 gifts, including toys and clothing, to more than fifty children this year. □

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania *Christmas Season Festivities*

by *Michael Saba*

Parishioners and friends of Our Lady of Victory Church, Carnegie [Pittsburgh], Penn., welcomed a busy weekend which began on Saturday, December 18, 2010, with its annual Cookie Walk. Smiling volunteer faces were kept engaged by eager patrons and cookie fans who came from all around the Pittsburgh area to attend what many exclaimed to have "the best cookie selection of any cookie walk attended!" How could they not be excited over the forty different varieties of homemade delectable treats which were made by



our selfless volunteers. Thank you to all who baked, volunteered, and attended!

The Church's Christmas festivities continued the very next day with its annual Parish Christmas party which was sponsored by the parish's active young adults group [MYA]. After liturgy, parishioners enjoyed two adorable Christmas plays put on by the youth group followed by a blessing by Fr. Rodolph Wakim, Pastor. The children were entertained with games and a craft table where they could make reindeer puppets and customized ornaments, and then sang Christmas carols. Singing *Santa Claus is Coming to Town* loudly, Santa answered their call as he joyfully greeted the excited, awe-faced children. They eagerly told Santa what they would like this Christmas as he handed them gifts. □

New Castle, Pennsylvania *Christmas Play*



by *Marcia Rudley*

On Sunday, December 19, 2010, St. John the Baptist Church in New Castle, Penn., held its annual children's Christmas party in the basement of the church after the Divine Liturgy. Pizza, cookies and beverages were served by the catechists to all the parents, children and friends that attended. □

Fall River, Massachusetts Ordination to Minor Orders

by Subdeacon
Brian and Colleen
Dunn

Friday evening December 10, 2010, was a very special and beautiful evening for the parishes of St. Anthony of the Desert Church, Fall River, Mass., and St. Theresa Church, Brockton, Mass. They came together for the Ordination of Brian M. Dunn to the Minor Orders of Cantor, Lector and Subdeacon.

The choirs of both communities sang for the Liturgy of Ordination. Brian grew up in Brockton and was very active in the parish community of St. Theresa. After moving to the Fall River area in 2003, he and his family became members of St. Anthony of the Desert Church. Brian is presently a member of the St. Anthony of the Desert Parish Council.

His Excellency Bishop Gregory J. Mansour, Bishop of the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn, delegated Chorbishop Joseph F. Kaddo, Pastor of St. Anthony of the Desert Church to ordain Brian. Fr. Jack Morrison, Pastor of Our Lady of Purgatory Church, New Bedford, Mass., and Director of Ministries for the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn was the Master of Ceremonies.

Msgr. David M. George presented Brian for Ordination. Brian's Spiritual Director, Fr. Manuel Ferreira led the first procession for the ordination of Cantor. Fr. Anthony Salim, Pastor of St. Theresa Church, led the second procession for the ordination of Lector. Msgr. David M. George led the third procession for ordination of Subdeacon.

Priests from the Fall River Dioceses attended the Liturgy of Ordination as well as Msgr. Peter Azar and Fr. Vincent Farhat, St. Anthony Church in Lawrence, Mass. Also present were Deacons Andre Nassar, Donald Massoud, Jean Mattar, Enzo DiGiacomo, and Stephen Markus and Subdeacons Joseph Abraham, Norman Hannoush and Paul Comeau.

Following the Ordination Liturgy, the Blessed Mother Guild of St. Anthony of the Desert Church held a reception for Subdeacon Brian at the St. Sharbel Parish Center. Terri Galib, President of the Guild, along with parish members that included John and Jackie Duarte, Dennis and Connie Abdow, Anne Turley, Sandy Grimo, Veronica Abdullah, Rachel



Newly ordained Subdeacon Brian Dunn, Chorbishop Joseph Kaddo, Fr. Jack Morrison and Msgr. David George.

Fillipe, Shannon Burke-Martin and Mizette Nasser, prepared and served the reception. □

Glen Allen, Virginia Charitable Drive and Christmas Activities



High School students depict the nativity at St. Anthony Church on December 19, 2010.

St. Anthony Maronite Catholic Church in Glen Allen [Richmond], Virginia, began and ended its 2010 charitable and religious activities with children in mind.

St. Anthony's Annual Golf Tournament, held on Sunday, September 26, raised \$15,000 for orphaned children in Lebanon. The golfers and their supporters enjoyed the day that ended with a Lebanese meal.

The annual Benefit Dinner held on December 5 also was widely supported. More than three hundred people attended the event raising \$15,100 for orphaned children in Lebanon. The money was sent to Bishop Gregory Mansour who then sent it on, earmarked "orphaned children," to Patriarch Nasrallah Peter Cardinal Sfeir.

The annual Christmas Star program began the Sunday after Thanksgiving. Parishioners chose stars from the tree in the vestibule of the church and brought more than two hundred gifts by December 19 for the elderly at St. Francis Home in Richmond; for participants in Hilliard House, a center for battered women and children; and for disadvantaged families in the Richmond area.

To celebrate the Genealogy Sunday and to prepare for the Nativity of the Lord, the teens in the religious education program presented a Nativity play prior to the Divine Liturgy. The Sunday School classes sang Christmas carols. During the Liturgy, the high school youth lectored, read the readings and petitions, carried the gifts and ushered. The children of the parish sang during the liturgy.

After the liturgy, approximately 300 people attended a breakfast with Santa in the Parish's social hall. The children brought canned food to benefit the Central Virginia Food Bank. □





Christmas Note to Priests and Deacons

"Jesus of Nazareth Repeats to His Disciples: Do Not Be Afraid"

Here is the message Cardinal Mauro Piacenza, Prefect of the Congregation for Clergy, wrote to priests and deacons for Christmas.

Dear Priests and Deacons,

At this time, when the Holy Father has graciously named me as the new Prefect, I would like to take the opportunity to convey a cordial greeting to each and every one of you.

The Year for Priests, recently brought to a conclusion, remains always before us, both in its content and in its model of sanctity, St. John Mary Vianney. With regard to its content, it is to be fully assimilated into the environment of the formation of the Clergy, both in the initial and ongoing stages, especially concerning to the central place it wished to recognise of the Eucharist, celebrated and adored; with regard to the model of sanctity that was offered, the heroic participation of the Curé of Ars in the self-giving of Christ for the life of men shines forth, and that witness spurs us continually to offer ourselves to the Lord in the "fragrant sacrifice".

Even in the face of the storm of the "worldly sea," Jesus of Nazareth repeats to his disciples, "Do not be afraid!" To the temptation of activism and of the fitful searching after solutions that are human, and all too human, He beckons us gently, "Remain in my love" (Jn 15: 9).

As the Holy Father Benedict XVI pointed out, "If we continue to read this Gospel passage attentively, we also find a second imperative: "abide," and "observe my commandments." "Observe" only comes second. "Abide" comes first, at the ontological level, namely that we are united with him, he has given himself to us beforehand and has already given us his love, the fruit. It is not we who must produce the abundant fruit; Christianity is not moralism, it is not we who must do all that God expects of the world but we must first of all enter this ontological mystery: God gives himself. His being, his loving, precedes our action and, in the context of his Body, in the context of being in him, being identified with him and ennobled with his Blood, we too can act with Christ" (Allocution at the Pontifical Roman Major Seminary, February 12, 2010).

Dear friends, it is precisely this primacy of the ontological over the ethical, of the "abiding" over the "doing" that is the guarantee, and the only guarantee possible, of the fruitfulness of our apostolate!

In the face of prevailing secularism and rampant relativism, Blessed John Henry Cardinal Newman reminds us that, "Christianity has been too often in what seemed deadly peril, that we should fear for it any new trial now. So far is certain; on the other hand, what is uncertain, and in these great contests commonly is uncertain, and what is commonly

a great surprise, when it is witnessed, is the particular mode by which, in the event, Providence rescues and saves His elect inheritance. Sometimes our enemy is turned into a friend; sometimes he is despoiled of that special virulence of evil which was so threatening; sometimes he falls to pieces of himself; sometimes he does just so much as is beneficial, and then is removed. Commonly the Church has nothing more to do than to go on in her own proper duties, in confidence and peace; to stand still and to see the salvation of God" (Biglietto Speech, May 12, 1879).

With these sentiments of profound, radical fidelity to the Lord in the Church and in history, in the Lord of my and of your sacerdotal existence, I ask a particular remembrance in your prayers, while I assure you of my pastoral concern, entrusting each one of you to the powerful protection of Her who, by virtue of a most special title, is the Mother of Priests: the Blessed Virgin Mary. □

December 25, 2010 (Zenit.org)

Pontiff Entrusts Pastors of the World to St. Joseph, Reflects on Figure of Christ's Legal Father

Pope Benedict XVI is entrusting to the protection of St. Joseph all the pastors of the Church, so that they are able to offer to the world the message of Christ.

On December 19, 2010, the Pope reflected on the birth of Christ -- from the "perspective of St. Joseph" -- before praying the midday Angelus together with those gathered in St. Peter's Square.

Joseph, he recounted, "was the betrothed of Mary, who, before they lived together, was found to be with child by the power of the Holy Spirit."

"The Son of God, realizing an ancient prophecy, became man in the womb of a virgin," the Pontiff stated, "and such a mystery simultaneously manifests the love, wisdom and power of God on behalf of humanity wounded by sin."

St. Joseph, the Holy Father continued, is presented in the Gospel as a "just man," as well as a man "faithful to God's law, ready to do his will."

"On account of this," he added, Joseph "enters into the mystery of the Incarnation after an angel of the Lord appears to him in a dream and tells him: 'Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary your wife with you. In fact the child that has been conceived in her comes from the Holy Spirit; she will give birth to a son and you will call him Jesus: he in fact will save his people from their sins.'"

"Forgetting the thought of repudiating Mary in secret, he takes her in because his eyes now see the work of God in her."

Quoting St. Ambrose, Benedict XVI commented that "in Joseph there was amiability and the figure of a just man to make the quality of his witness more worthy." The Pope noted that Joseph "did as the angel of the Lord ordered him," and that he was "certain of doing the right thing."

"Also," he added, "giving the name 'Jesus' to that child who rules the entire universe, he enters into the ranks of the

faithful and humble servants, like the angels and prophets, like the martyrs and the apostles -- in the words of ancient eastern hymns. St. Joseph proclaims the wonders of the Lord, witnessing Mary's virginity, the gratuitous deed of God, and caring for the earthly life of the Messiah."

The Holy Father said that the Church "venerates the legal father of Jesus, because the new man takes form in him, who looks to the future with confidence and courage, does not follow his own project, but entrusts himself totally to the infinite mercy of him who fulfills the prophecies and inaugurates the season of salvation."

The Pope then said that he entrusted the pastors of the Church to St. Joseph, "exhorting them to offer to faithful Christians and the whole world the humble and daily proposal of the words of Christ." □

December 19, 2010 (Zenit.org)

The Birth of the Savior Brings Peace to the World

At midday on December 25, 2010, the Solemnity of the Nativity of the Lord, the Holy Father pronounced his traditional Christmas Message from the central loggia of the Vatican Basilica, and imparted the "*Urbi et Orbi*" blessing. Extracts of the Message are given below:

"Dear brothers and sisters listening to me here in Rome and throughout the world, I joyfully proclaim the message of Christmas: God became man; He came to dwell among us. God is not distant: He is 'Emmanuel', God-with-us. He is no stranger: He has a face, the face of Jesus.

"This message is ever new, ever surprising, for it surpasses even our most daring hope. First of all, because it is not merely a proclamation: it is an event, a happening, which credible witnesses saw, heard and touched in the person of Jesus of Nazareth!

"The Word became flesh'. Before this revelation we once more wonder: how can this be? The Word and the flesh are mutually opposed realities; how can the eternal and almighty Word become a frail and mortal man? There is only one answer: Love.

"God does not change; He is Love. ... Only those who are open to love are enveloped in the light of Christmas. So it was on that night in Bethlehem, and so it is today. The



Incarnation of the Son of God is an event which occurred within history, while at the same time transcending history".

"And what do our hearts, in effect, seek, if not a Truth which is also Love? Children seek it with their questions, so disarming and stimulating; young people seek it in their eagerness to discover the deepest meaning of their life; adults seek it in order to guide and sustain their commitments in the family and the workplace; the elderly seek it in order to grant completion to their earthly existence.

"The proclamation of Christmas is also a light for all peoples, for the collective journey of humanity. 'Emmanuel,' God-with-us, has come as King of justice and peace. We know that His Kingdom is not of this world, and yet it is more important than all the kingdoms of this world. It is like the leaven of humanity: were it lacking, the energy to work for true development would flag: the impulse to work together for the common good, in the disinterested service of our neighbor, in the peaceful struggle for justice. Belief in the God who desired to share in our history constantly encourages us in our own commitment to that history, for all its contradictions. It is a source of hope for everyone whose dignity is offended and violated, since the One born in Bethlehem came to set every man and woman free from the source of all enslavement.

"May the light of Christmas shine forth anew in the Land where Jesus was born, and inspire Israelis and Palestinians to strive for a just and peaceful coexistence. May the comforting message of the coming of Emmanuel ease the pain and bring consolation amid their trials to the beloved Christian communities in Iraq and throughout the Middle East; may it bring them comfort and hope for the future and bring the leaders of nations to show them effective solidarity. May it also be so for those in Haiti who still suffer in the aftermath of the devastating earthquake and the recent cholera epidemic. May the same hold true not only for those in Colombia and Venezuela, but also in Guatemala and Costa Rica, who recently suffered natural disasters.

"May the birth of the Savior open horizons of lasting peace and authentic progress for the peoples of Somalia, Darfur and Cote d'Ivoire; may it promote political and social stability in Madagascar; may it bring security and respect for human rights in Afghanistan and in Pakistan; may it encourage dialogue between Nicaragua and Costa Rica; and may it advance reconciliation on the Korean peninsula.

"May the birth of the Savior strengthen the spirit of faith, patience and courage of the faithful of the Church in mainland China, that they may not lose heart through the limitations imposed on their freedom of religion and conscience but, persevering in fidelity to Christ and his Church, may keep alive the flame of hope. May the love of 'God-with-us' grant perseverance to all those Christian communities enduring discrimination and persecution, and inspire political and religious leaders to be committed to full respect for the religious freedom of all."

Following his Message, the Pope extended Christmas greetings in sixty-five languages and imparted his blessing "*Urbi et Orbi*" (to the city and the world). □

Vatican Information Service December 25, 2010

Secularism and Fundamentalist Intolerance Are Equal Threats to Religious Freedom, Pope says



In his annual message for the World Day of Peace, Pope Benedict XVI concentrates on the crucial importance of religious freedom, and argues that militant secularism can be as dangerous to religious freedom as sectarian intolerance.

The Church marks the World Day of Peace on January 1, the feast of the Mother of God. The Vatican released the Pope's message for the upcoming observance on December 16, with

a press conference chaired by Cardinal Peter Turkson, the president of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace. The papal message—which was made available in French, English, German, Polish, Portuguese, and Spanish as well as Italian translation-- is entitled “Religious Freedom, the Path to Peace.”

The Pope opens his message with a reference to the October 31 massacre of 52 Iraqi Catholics at a parish church in Baghdad. He calls special attention to the continued campaign of violence against Iraq's Christian minority, but observes that the persecution of Christians continues in many places around the world. “At present,” the Pope remarks, “Christians are the religious group which suffers most from persecution on account of its faith.”

While he decries the severe restrictions on religious practices that are commonplace in the Middle East, and thereby implicitly criticizes the approach taken by Islamic governments, Pope Benedict is also critical of the secularized societies that have pushed religion out of the public square, following a false ideal of secularism or individual freedom. “A freedom which is hostile or indifferent to God becomes self-negating and does not guarantee full respect for others,” the Pope writes.

“It should be clear that religious fundamentalism and secularism are alike in that both represent extreme forms of a rejection of legitimate pluralism and the principle of secularity,” Pope Benedict argues. Some of the toughest language of the papal message is directed at Western democracies. He expresses the hope that “in the West, and especially in Europe, there will be an end to hostility and prejudice against Christians.”

Governments have a moral obligation to ensure the religious freedom of their people, the Pope argues. He notes that religious liberty is derived from natural law, and has claims prior to those of the state. He challenges governments by saying: “Whenever the legal system at any level, national or international, allows or tolerates religious or antireligious fanaticism, it fails in its mission, which is to protect and promote justice and the rights of all.”

In introducing the papal document, Cardinal Turkson underlined the message that religious freedom is not confined to “those who kneel in church and pray.” True religious

freedom, he said, citing the Pope's text, allows the believer to express his faith freely and openly in public and to be a full participant in the life of his society.

Cardinal Turkson told Vatican Radio that the violence against Christians in Iraq has drawn the world's attention to a problem that lingers in many other places; he mentioned Nigeria, southern Sudan, and the Balkans. In Iraq, the cardinal said, one sees “the naked face of this religious intolerance and how it can lead us to be really murderous and give vent to the worst sentiments within us.”

Questioned about Pope Benedict's claim that secularism is as great a threat to religious liberty as fundamentalist intolerance, Cardinal Turkson replied:

It is. It's easier to identify religious fundamentalism because you can see where it's coming from, from its traits. Secular fundamentalism is more difficult to deal with because it becomes a pervasive culture in which people live and that gets expressed in its forms of governance, so that imperceptibly you have governments assuming and adopting certain positions that are not so friendly to the human spirit and human growth. □

Catholic World News (CWNEWS) December 16, 2010

Vatican: Pope Benedict XVI's Words Were Manipulated

Doctrinal Congregation Clarifies Pope's Thoughts on Condoms

The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith is lamenting that the words of Pope Benedict XVI in the recent interview book “Light of the World” have been manipulated and misinterpreted. The congregation released a statement “On the Trivialization of Sexuality: Regarding Certain Interpretations of ‘Light of the World’” today, regarding the book that was released by Ignatius Press last month.

The statement noted that “a number of erroneous interpretations have emerged which have caused confusion concerning the position of the Catholic Church regarding certain questions of sexual morality.”

“The thought of the Pope has been repeatedly manipulated for ends and interests which are entirely foreign to the meaning of his words -- a meaning which is evident to anyone who reads the entire chapters in which human sexuality is treated,” it added.

The Pontiff's sentence from the book that was largely misunderstood is: “There may be a basis in the case of some individuals, as perhaps when a male prostitute uses a condom, where this can be a first step in the direction of a moralization, a first assumption of responsibility, on the way toward recovering an awareness that not everything is allowed and that one cannot do whatever one wants.”

The congregation noted that “some interpretations have presented the words of the Pope as a contradiction of the traditional moral teaching of the Church.”

“In reality,” it clarified, “the words of the Pope -- which specifically concern a gravely disordered type of human

behavior, namely prostitution – do not signify a change in Catholic moral teaching or in the pastoral practice of the Church."

"As is clear from an attentive reading of the pages in question," the statement affirmed, "the Holy Father was talking neither about conjugal morality nor about the moral norm concerning contraception."

Humanae Vitae

It continued, "This norm belongs to the tradition of the Church and was summarized succinctly by Pope Paul VI in paragraph 14 of his encyclical letter 'Humanae Vitae,' when he wrote that 'also to be excluded is any action which either before, at the moment of, or after sexual intercourse, is specifically intended to prevent procreation -- whether as an end or as a means."

"The idea that anyone could deduce from the words of Benedict XVI that it is somehow legitimate, in certain situations, to use condoms to avoid an unwanted pregnancy is completely arbitrary and is in no way justified either by his words or in his thought," the congregation asserted.

It explained, "On this issue the Pope proposes instead -- and also calls the pastors of the Church to propose more often and more effectively – humanly and ethically acceptable ways of behaving which respect the inseparable connection between the unitive and procreative meaning of every conjugal act, through the possible use of natural family planning in view of responsible procreation."

"On the pages in question," the statement added, "the Holy Father refers to the completely different case of prostitution, a type of behavior which Christian morality has always considered gravely immoral."

"In this regard, it must be noted that the situation created by the spread of AIDS in many areas of the world has made the problem of prostitution even more serious," the congregation stated.

It explained, "Those who know themselves to be infected with HIV and who therefore run the risk of infecting others, apart from committing a sin against the sixth commandment are also committing a sin against the fifth commandment -- because they are consciously putting the lives of others at risk through behavior which has repercussions on public health."

"In this situation," it noted, "the Holy Father clearly affirms that the provision of condoms does not constitute 'the real or moral solution' to the problem of AIDS and also that 'the sheer fixation on the condom implies a banalization of sexuality' in that it refuses to address the mistaken human behavior which is the root cause of the spread of the virus."

Objective Evil

"In this context, however, it cannot be denied that anyone who uses a condom in order to diminish the risk posed to another person is intending to reduce the evil connected with his or her immoral activity," the congregation affirmed.

It noted that "some commentators have interpreted the words of Pope Benedict XVI according to the so-called theory of the 'lesser evil.'"

The statement continued: "This theory is, however, susceptible to proportionalistic misinterpretation."

"An action which is objectively evil, even if a lesser evil, can never be licitly willed."

"The Holy Father did not say -- as some people have claimed -- that prostitution with the use of a condom can be chosen as a lesser evil."

The statement concluded, "In the battle against AIDS, the Catholic faithful and the agencies of the Catholic Church should be close to those affected, should care for the sick and should encourage all people to live abstinence before and fidelity within marriage."

"In this regard," it added, "it is also important to condemn any behavior which cheapens sexuality because, as the Pope says, such behavior is the reason why so many people no longer see in sexuality an expression of their love." □

December 21, 2010 (Zenit.org)

Vatican Confirms Heroic Virtue

In a series of decrees released on December 10, 2010, with the approval of Pope Benedict XVI, the Congregation for the Causes of Saints proclaimed the heroic virtue of:

Bechara (born Selim) Abou-Mourad (1853-1930), a Lebanese Melkite religious, who is now eligible for beatification if a miracle is attributed to his intercessions. □

Grace Is Greater Than Sin ... God's Mercy Is More Powerful Than Evil

Here is a translation of the address Benedict XVI gave on December 8, 2010, Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception, when reciting the midday Angelus with several thousand pilgrims gathered in St. Peter's Square in the Vatican.

Dear Brothers and Sisters:

Today our meeting on the occasion of the prayer of the Angelus acquires a special light, in the context of the solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of Mary. In the liturgy of this feast, the Gospel of the Annunciation is proclaimed (Luke 1:26-38), which presents, precisely, the dialogue between the angel Gabriel and the Virgin.

"Rejoice! Full of grace, the Lord is with thee," says God's messenger, and in this way reveals Mary's most profound identity, the "name" so to speak with which God himself knows her: "full of grace."

This expression, which is so familiar to us from our childhood, as we say it every time we pray the Hail Mary, explains to us the mystery that we celebrate today. In fact, from the moment she was conceived by her parents, Mary was the object of a singular predilection on the part of God, who in his eternal plan chose her to be the mother of his Son made man and, hence, preserved her from original sin. For this reason, the angel addresses her with this name, which implicitly signifies: "ever full of the love of God," of his grace.

The mystery of the Immaculate Conception is source of interior light, of hope and of consolation. In the midst of life's trials, and especially of the contradictions man experiences in his interior and around him, Mary, Mother of Christ, tells us that Grace is greater than sin, that God's mercy is more powerful than evil, and it is able to transform it into goodness.

Unfortunately, we experience evil every day, which manifests itself in many ways in relations and events, but which has its root in man's heart, a wounded, sick heart, incapable of curing itself. Sacred Scripture reveals to us that at the origin of all evil is disobedience to the will of God, and that death has prevailed because human liberty has yielded to the temptation of the Evil One. However, God does not fail in his plan of love and life: through a long and patient path of reconciliation, he has prepared the new and eternal Covenant, sealed with the blood of His Son, who to offer himself in expiation "was born of woman" (Galatians 4:4).

This woman, the Virgin Mary, benefited in advance from the redeeming death of her Son and from conception was preserved from the contagion of guilt. Because of this, with her immaculate heart, she says to us: Trust Jesus, he saves you. □

December 8, 2010 (Zenit.org)

Pope's Message to Newlyweds: Follow Mary

Pope Benedict XVI is proposing the "shining example of the Immaculate Virgin" as an aid in the lives of youth, those who suffer illnesses, and those who are newly married.

The Pope spoke of Our Lady on December 1, 2010, when he concluded the general audience with his traditional greeting to youth, the sick, and newlyweds.

"The time of Advent, just begun, presents to us in these days the shining example of the Immaculate Virgin," he said. "May she be the one to spur you, dear young people, on your path of constant adherence to Christ; for you, dear sick, may Mary be the sustenance for a renewed hope; and for you, dear newlyweds, may the Mother of Jesus be your guide in building your family on the solid rock of faith." □

December 1, 2010 (Zenit.org)

Iraqi Prelate Vows Church Will Persevere

As Christians in Iraq observed a quiet Christmas, foregoing decorations and midnight liturgical celebrations for fear of new violence, Archbishop Louis Sako of Kirkuk insisted that the Christian presence in Iraq will continue.

Although tens of thousands of Christians have left the country, the Archbishop said that some must stay, "because Iraq without us loses its beautiful multi-identity. ... "We remain because we are committed to love and to return to each other," Archbishop Sako said. □

(CWNews, December 27, 2010)

The Maronite Icons, Saints of the Maronite Church: constitutes the second volume of Maronite Icons that have been painted by the Maronite Archbishopric in Nicosia, Cyprus. It contains a collection of icons that illustrate the most revered saints in our Maronite Church. The book is composed of four parts:

- ★ **Part One** presents icons depicting Old Testament figures who prepared for the coming of the Messiah
- ★ **Part Two** presents icons depicting evangelists, saints and apostles of the First Church
- ★ **Part Three** is dedicated to the icons of the most venerated saints in the Maronite Church
- ★ **Part Four** is an artistic reproduction of the most important icons of the Rabbula Gospel.

The Maronite Icons (both volume one and volume two) are available for \$50 each volume plus \$7 shipping.

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

The Prayer of the Faithful, three volumes of morning and evening prayer of the faithful in English, is available from Saint Maron Publications.

Volume One (Sundays of the Church; Season of Announcements; Birth of the Lord and Epiphany) is available for \$40 plus \$5 shipping.

Volume Two (Seasons of Great Lent and Resurrection) is available for \$40 plus \$5 shipping.

Volume Three (Seasons of Pentecost and Holy Cross) is available for \$30 plus \$5 shipping.

Maronite Book of Hymns according to the Antiochian Syriac Church, published in 2008 by the Patriarchal Liturgical Commission, contains Maronite Syriac tunes for the Maronite *Qurbano*; psalms as well as various Maronite and Marian hymns. This 569-page hardcover book is available from Saint Maron Publications for \$25 plus \$5 shipping.

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

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

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

The Year of Saint Maron

Continued from page 1

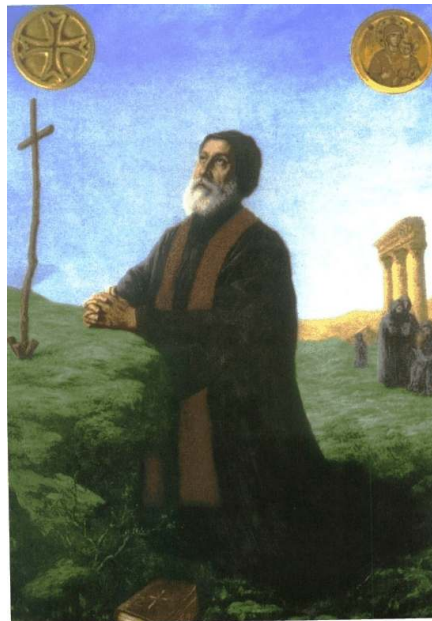
Later in the Pastoral the Patriarch moves his thoughts to Lebanon by quoting the late Father Michel Hayek who wrote:

"Lebanon has no right to exist haphazardly; she either has a mission for humanity in the East and the world or she ceases to exist." This is her historical calling, and that is the meaning of what His Holiness Pope John Paul II described when he said that "Lebanon is more than a country, it is a mission."

The Patriarch reminds us that Christian life itself is not haphazard; it has a mission. There is meaning to life! The family has a mission, the Church has a mission, Lebanon has a mission! Our Patriarch is trying to teach us something so very profound: when we strive for holiness something beautiful happens in our family, in our Church and in our society. We become what God desires.

This same wisdom shows forth in the constant theme of Pope Benedict who so often repeats: "Open your lives to God. You lose nothing and gain everything!"

In this New Year, in this Jubilee Year of Saint Maron, in this new chapter of our lives may we continue to strive for



holiness as did the saints, for each time we do, the Maronite Church, in fact the entire Church, returns to her essence.

Happy New Year and Happy Jubilee Year of Saint Maron!

+Gregory John Mansour
Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn ☐

Official Prayer for the Jubilee of Saint Maron

February 9, 2010 - March 2, 2011

Lord God,
you called your chosen one, Saint Maron, to the monastic life,
perfected him in divine virtues,
and guided him along the difficult road to the heavenly kingdom.

During this jubilee year, commemorating 1600 years since the death of your chosen one, Saint Maron,
when he was called to the house of your heavenly Father;

We ask you, through his intercession,
to immerse us in your love
that we may walk in your path,
heed your commandments,
and follow in his footsteps.

May his holy example resonate throughout our lives.
With your love, may we achieve that final destination
reached by our father, Saint Maron,
and carry your Gospel throughout the world.

Through his intercession, may we attain the glory of the
resurrection and everlasting life in you.

Glory and thanks are due to you, to your blessed Father,
and to your living Holy Spirit, now and forever. Amen.