

Talk at the Banquet for our 50th Anniversary of the Presence of a Maronite Bishop in the United States

Archbishop Pierre  
Archbishop Auza  
Bishop DiMarzio  
Bishop Zaidan  
Archpriest Zain representing Metropolitan Zahlawi  
Bishop Habash  
Chorbishop Michael, Monsignor Jim  
Brother Priests from the Eparchy of Saint Maron and Our Lady of Lebanon  
Deacons, Subdeacons, and Spouses  
Honorable and Mrs. Ramadan  
Senator Marty Golden

Cathedral Parishioners  
Parishioners from Parishes throughout the Eparchy  
Order of Saint Sharbel  
Members of NAM

What a beautiful "Pentecost" is today: so much joy, which is a sure sign of the Holy Spirit. I see this joy in the eyes of our priests when they see God's people happy. Thank you dear brother priests. Thank you one and all.

I also want to thank Cardinal Sandri for his letter just read and for the kindness he expressed years ago when he called Archbishop Francis M. Zayek shortly before Sayedna died to thank him for his beautiful work as a bishop.

I want to thank Monsignor Jim Root for the beautiful work he has done in preparation for this 50th Anniversary, I thank his committee, who worked so hard to make this such a success. Lastly, I thank Chorbishop Michael Thomas. I get the credit for the hard work he does. Thank you.

From Psalm 133 we read:

"How good it is and how pleasant when the brethren dwell at one. It is like fine oil on the beard, upon the beard of Aaron, upon the collar of his robe."

"Like the dew of Mount Herman coming down upon the mountains of Zion. There the Lord has decreed a blessing: Life forever more!"

Almost four thousand years old, this Psalm expresses the joy of today as we commemorate fifty years since Archbishop Francis M. Zayek was sent to us by Pope Paul VI as our first bishop. It was not easy for him, but he and all who collaborated with him worked hard, and God has blessed us! The unity we now share in Christ Jesus is truly a gift from above, and we pray it always will be "good and pleasant".

One of the most beautiful aspects of our Maronite Church in the United States is that we remain true to our spiritual heritage, and at the same time are open to all who come into our Churches. Unity and love for Christ!

When my home parish of Our Lady of Lebanon in Flint, Michigan first opened, we rediscovered our great spiritual heritage. We cherished our own unique spiritual heritage, but we also saw ourselves as

missionaries to all who wanted to find a spiritual home. I thought being Maronite meant kibee, coosa, and beit enjan, how little did I know it was so much more!

I was in the first youth group, my father, the first building committee, my mom the first catechist. When the local Latin priest advised my mother not to get too involved with this Maronite Church because "it was an ethnic Church and it will go the way of all ethnic Churches and will one day die out", she catechized him saying: "No Father, it is not an ethnic Church. It has its own unique spiritual heritage that goes back to the time of the apostles and is open to everyone".

By her loving and yet confident, faith she was able to convince him about the truth of the Maronite Church: faithful to her apostolic call and open to all who share in her mission. The Maronite Church is worth living for and thus worth dying for as well.

We have much yet to do. May God give us the grace to do it in his name and for his good purpose. "How good and how pleasant it is when the brethren dwell at one".  
Thank you everyone for being here.