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SOPHIA

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Receiving the Eucharist Part 2

Eparchial Jubilee Pilgrimage

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All materials (photos/articles/parish news) for the Winter issue of *SOPHIA* magazine are due November 1, 2017.

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Have you ever dreamed of being a writer? Perhaps having your voice heard on the printed page? Is there a subject that you have wanted to address or a story that you are excited to tell? We would love to hear from you! *SOPHIA* welcomes updates and photos from all of our parishes and invites manuscripts, articles, and letters to the editor from parishioners. Submissions will be subject to review by the editorial staff and only those approved by the publisher will be published.

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PATRIARCH JOSEPH ABSI

Elected to Head Melkite Church

On Wednesday 21 June, the Holy Synod of the Melkite Greek Catholic Church elected Archbishop Joseph Absi as the Church's new patriarch. He received ecclesiastical communion from Pope Francis the following day.

Patriarch Joseph, aged 71, succeeds Patriarch Gregory III Laham, who retired 6 May at the age of 83.

The new patriarch was born in Damascus in 1946. He was ordained a priest of the Missionary Society of St Paul in 1973. In 1999 he became superior general of the society, and two years later was appointed curial bishop of the Melkite Patriarchate of Antioch. In 2007, he was appointed the Patriarchal Vicar of the Melkite Archdiocese of Damascus.

During the 2010 Synod on the Middle East, then-Archbishop Joseph lamented the strife among the Eastern Catholic Churches, calling the struggle a "fount of impairment and false testimony," according to *Vatican Insider*.

"The Christians of the East," he said, "are all in the same boat, and confront the same struggle. They cannot be disinterested each in the other."

The new patriarch holds licentiates in philosophy and theology, and a doctorate in musical sciences and Byzantine hymnography from Holy Spirit University of Kaslik in Lebanon. He has taught philosophy, Greek, and musicology at the university level.

Pope Francis wrote to Patriarch Joseph the day after his election, congratulating him and granting him ecclesiastical communion.

The Pope also noted the tribulation facing Christians in the region.

"The election of Your Beatitude comes at the time of a delicate situation for the venerable Greek-Melkite Church and when many Christian communities in the Middle East are called to bear witness in a special way to their faith in the dead and risen Christ," the Roman Pontiff said. "In this particularly difficult time, pastors are called upon to manifest communion, unity, closeness, solidarity, and transparency before the suffering people of God.

"I am certain that your Beatitude, in fraternal harmony with all the Synod Fathers, will know, in all evangelical wisdom, how to be not only *Pater et Caput* [Father and Head] in the service of the faithful of the Greek-Melkite Church, but also a faithful and authentic witness to the Risen One." †

From a report by Catholic News Agency

Highlights of the Summer



Preview of the Fall



**Most Rev.
Nicholas J. Samra**
*Eparchial Bishop
of Newton*

Happy Church New Year! The ecclesiastical (church) year begins 1 September; interestingly, this happens right around the time most parishes resume regular schedules after a two-month hiatus. Schools reopen and vacations slow down.

On my level things never seem to slow down; office work and parish visitations continue all year long.

Let me share some of the highlights of this season since the beginning of June.

Each event is important for the life and growth of our eparchy.

Orthodox/Catholic Bishops' Dialogue

The annual gathering of the Dialogue members was held at St John Center in Plymouth, MI, hosted by Archbishop Allen Vigneron of Detroit from 31 May to 2 June. I have been a member of this Dialogue for many years as one of the representatives of the US Conference of Catholic Bishops, presently the only Eastern Catholic bishop on the Dialogue. The bishops met with the Theological Dialogue members and then separately for the betterment of relations between our churches. Prayers from both Churches were offered and very fruitful discussions took place, particularly on marriage issues.

Funeral of Archimandrite Charles Aboody

After a long and serious illness, Fr Charles passed into eternal

life, comforted by the clergy and laity of Holy Transfiguration Church, McLean, VA. I cancelled a parish visitation to St Michael Church, Plymouth, MI, and flew to McLean for the funeral services and Divine Liturgy. I extend my sincere gratitude to Archimandrite Joseph Francavilla, the deacons, and laity for their good care and support of Fr Charles, especially during his declining days. Please see the obituary in this issue to learn about his life and ministry; he touched thousands of lives as a dedicated servant priest of the Lord.

Deacon Formation Program

We resumed our program for deacon formation after a year off for re-evaluating and updating. Director Fr Bryan McNeil, assisted by former director Archimandrite Paul Frechette, welcomed eleven men, some candidates, some observers. I spent one week with the candidates to get to know them better, praying daily Orthros (Morning Prayer) and Vespers, as well as the Divine Liturgy. The program runs for two weeks at Anna Maria College in Paxton, MA. Online classes during the year have been added to our renewed program. Since its inception in 1971, this program has provided us more than 70 deacons who serve and minister in the parishes. We encourage more men to pray and discern God's call to serve. We are blessed with our own clergy educators for this formation program. We also now have opened this formation program to laity, with several new courses in parish ministry and leadership. This aspect of the program needs a greater push among our laity. We closed the first week of the deacon formation program with the joyful ordination to priesthood of Deacon Dennis McCar-

thy at Our Lady of Perpetual Help church, Worcester, MA, on 10 June 2017. Fr Dennis will be receiving a parish assignment in the fall. Axios! He is worthy!

Melkite Synod for Election of Patriarch

The Holy Synod of our Church convened on 19 June to elect a patriarch, following the resignation of His Beatitude Gregorios III (Laham). After a one-day retreat presented by Archbishop Joseph Kallas, Emeritus of Beirut, the second day opened with an initial meeting to go over election rules as spelled out by canon law. Twenty-nine members of the Synod were present, requiring 20 votes (two thirds) for a new patriarch. After two ballots were held Tuesday, on Wednesday 21 June Archbishop Joseph Absi, Patriarchal Vicar of Damascus, received 20 votes on the first ballot. After accepting election, he chose to maintain his given name—making him Patriarch Joseph—and we immediately went to the chapel for his installation. News spreads fast with electronic media, and clergy and laity quickly began visitations to congratulate the new patriarch. The very quick election was a great sign to our Church—clergy and laity—that there was no dissension among the bishops and they were united from the first ballot to choose our new Father and Shepherd. Axios! I have invited His Beatitude to visit our Church in the USA and we will see when this will take place after he gets his schedule and work in order. While in Lebanon, I was blessed with the hospitality of the Choueirite religious in Khonshara and in Zahle where I spent a good amount of time with Fr Victor Samaha, retired pastor of St Joseph parish in Lansing, MI. He sends his love and regards to all. I also had the opportunity of seeing my cousins from Aleppo who are taking refuge in Lebanon.

Holy Land Pilgrimage

Our Eparchial Pilgrimage took place 6-18 July to conclude our 50th Jubilee celebration as a Melkite Church with a bishop shepherd and leader. Fr Hezekias Carnazzo and some of his staff from the Institute of Catholic Culture planned the pilgrimage. We were blessed with the presence of Fr Sebastian Carnazzo, priest of our San Jose, CA, community, to lead Bible studies at all the sites we visited. The Bible came alive to the 35 pilgrim participants, who all were very cooperative with the schedule. We were joined by two monks from the Romanian Catholic Holy Resurrection Monastery in St Nazianz, WI, and six nuns from the Ruthenian Catholic Monastery of Christ the Bridegroom in Burton, OH. On the first Sunday we celebrated the Liturgy in the Melkite Synagogue Church in Nazareth; this synagogue where Jesus prayed as a child is attached to our parish church there. On 16 July we were welcomed to the Patriarchal Cathedral in Jerusalem, where I celebrated the Divine Liturgy, assisted by Archbishop Joseph Jules Zerei. I had the opportunity to visit in Galilee retired Archbishops Elias Chacour and Boutros Mouallem. Our pilgrimage was holy, truly an experience of faith. Please read the article about it in this issue. We hope to continue having an annual pilgrimage to open our people to the importance of understanding the Bible better and celebrating it as a living presence of God, not just a book to read.

Knights of Columbus Convention

I was a guest at the Knights of Columbus convention in St Louis 1-3 August. Several thousand participants, including 13 cardinals and 90 bishops as well as hundreds of priests and deacons, participated in a joyous celebration. Liturgies, meetings, reports, and dinners all showed the great works of this international fraternal Catholic body. The annual report was superb, detailing how the Knights have helped the Catholic Church with many programs, financial gifts and grants, as well as insurance. They are helping the persecuted Christians in the Middle East, and the Supreme Knight and Chaplain hosted a small dinner for the bishops of Middle Eastern background, asking for our input to make more Catholics aware of the genocide of Christians in the Middle East, homeland of our Church traditions. I encourage every priest and parish to attempt to form a K of C council. I have heard some say that this is an organization for the Latin Church, not ours. How untrue this is. It is not a Latin Church organization; it is an organization for Catholic men in the Catholic Churches. We are part of the Catholic Church and we are helped tremendously by the K of C.

Odds and Ends—All Good!

I celebrated the Liturgy at St Basil the Great church, Lincoln, RI, on 30 July for several parish events: icon blessing, procession to Marian shrine, and festival. On 5 August, I joined the Salvatorian Fathers at St Basil in Methuen for their order's feast and festival (the Transfiguration). I made a visit to Our Lady of Redemption parish, Warren, MI, from 19 through 16 August for a three-day celebration of the Dormition as well as parish visitation and meetings. On 18 August I went to St Edmund's Retreat House on Enders Island, CT, for another Divine Liturgy celebrating the Dormition feast, planned by Archimandrite Edward Kakaty and parishioners from Rhode Island and Connecticut. I returned to St Ann church, Waterford, CT, for Divine Liturgy and parish mahrajan on 27 August.

Upcoming Events and Visits

Eparchial Finance Council will meet on 7 September at the Chancery office. Liturgy at St Joseph church, Lawrence, MA, on 10 September, will honor parishioners over 90 years of age. Our annual Clergy Conference will take place 18-22 September in, Wichita, KS. I will be on vacation in Palm Desert, CA, from 23 September through 14 October. In Defense of Christians (IDC) will meet in Washington, DC, 24-26 October. I have been asked to serve on the religious aspect of its Board with other Eastern bishops of Middle Eastern background. I will spend 13-16 November at the meeting of the USCCB (US Conference of Catholic Bishops) in Baltimore, MD. I plan to visit several parishes, October to December—Yonkers, NY; Plymouth, MI; Cleveland, OH; and Allentown, PA.

My brothers and sisters, give encouragement to your clergy—deacons and priests—and offer them your time, talents, and treasure to build up your parishes. Of course, in so doing, you build up the Eparchy. Please keep me in your prayers. †



Right Reverend
Archimandrite
James Babcock
Editor-in-Chief

FROM THE EDITOR

God's Blessings on our Church – *With Your Help*

She sings the *ison* all through the Divine Liturgy. She is two years old. Her name is Lucia and she is the daughter of Father Sebastian and Khouriyeh Leila Carnazzo. This beautiful child sings with more gusto than some entire choirs. She starts when the congregation begins singing and stops when they stop. She is extremely smart and as two-year-olds often are, somewhat aloof.

Another young lady, four-year-old Samantha Kaisak, listened so attentively to the homily at the Outreach liturgy in Las Vegas that she burst out with the comment, “Wow, that many!!!” when I preached about the Prophet Elias who slew the 450 prophets of the pagan god Baal. It’s a joy to know that anyone is paying attention when I preach. But this sharp young lady is a delight to behold.

These two young girls are both in tiny communities—one making a fresh start after difficult times and the other still in the early stages of development. These communities would not exist except for the support of the Bishop’s Appeal.

Little children like these two, and the boys and young men who serve at the liturgy and who are so actively engaged in what’s taking place, are like sponges, absorbing the scripture and tradition of our church. They are an affirmation that we are reaching them with the message of God’s love.

Since 1980 the teens of our church have gathered each summer for a program of prayer, fellowship, sports, and education. They are, in fact, the future leaders of our church. They deserve our support.

Joyfully, we have an increasing number of men studying in the seminary, preparing for ordination to the priesthood. Those of you who support the Bishop’s Appeal make it possible. The National Association of Melkite Women also plays a crucial role in supporting them.

And we are blessed with the programs presented throughout the Eparchy by Fr Hezekias Carnazzo on the true meaning of the Holy Scripture.

“You brought your Bible, right? You can’t come to a workshop on the Bible without one.”

In fact he reminds us that we should have it with us at all times. We can’t properly evangelize without it. Fr Hezekias is also responsible for the training of catechists, which now takes place live on-line.

And this year His Grace Bishop Nicholas and Fr Sebastian Carnazzo led our eparchy’s remarkable pilgrimage to the Holy Land. Not a tour, but a true pilgrimage with prayers at each



site relating to the place and a Bible study at each important location. See the article about it in this issue of *SOPHIA*.

This Fall the clergy will gather in Wichita, Kansas, for a conference on Christian Marriage presented by Father Josiah Trenham, PhD. Eparchial business is conducted annually at this conference, organized by Fr Christopher Manuele, and we may have a preview of our new liturgy books, so long awaited. The clergy also participate in annual regional retreats to reflect on their ministry.

Wait! There’s more, as they say in the commercials. We also have an annual deacon formation program now enhanced with on-line classes throughout the year.

Wait, there’s still more! Have you noticed all the new outreach communities and missions that have opened up in the last couple of years?

All of this is possible because of God’s blessings on our Church. We need to consider, however, that it is also possible because of your support and generosity which pay for making it all a reality. So, my dear brothers and sisters in Christ, please make it a point this year to generously support the Bishop’s Appeal and to help continue the growth and development of our Melkite Church in America.

And if you enjoy reading *SOPHIA* magazine, keep in mind that this too is made possible by your support. *SOPHIA* is mailed to 12,000 Melkites throughout America quarterly and can also be found on-line at Melkite.org. Oh, yeah, our website too is made possible by your generosity.

I hope you thoroughly enjoy this issue and may God bless you.

†
Fr James



Fr Dennis McCarthy Ordained Priest in Worcester, MA

BY SUSAN BAILEY

“Axios! He is worthy!”

So proclaimed the congregation at Our Lady of Perpetual Help parish on Hamilton Street in Worcester at the ordination of longtime deacon Dennis McCarthy to the priesthood on Saturday 10 June.

Bishop Nicholas celebrated the Divine Liturgy with Archimandrite Paul Frechette, pastor of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, and Archimandrite Edward Kakaty, pastor of St Ann parish in Waterford, CT. Fr Dennis served as deacon with both Fr Ed and Fr Paul. He served as a deacon for the final time at the two-hour ordination liturgy.

After the homily, Deacons Elias (Richard) Bailey (with whom he had served at Our Lady of Perpetual Help) and John Moses (Annunciation Cathedral, Boston) presented him to the bishop. He circled the holy table three times, kissing each corner as hymns were sung describing the priest’s mission to preach the Good News, witness to Christ as did the holy martyrs, and put on the flesh of Christ as did the Virgin Mary when she gave birth to Jesus.

He then was prayed over by Bishop Nicholas and ordained a priest, afterwards being vested in his priestly robes by the other priests. The bishop then presented Fr Dennis with a special cloth known as the “antimension,” depicting the Body of Christ in the tomb.

“You can lay the antimension on any table anywhere and celebrate the liturgy in an emergency situation,” Fr Dennis explained. “Most of the time you keep it at the parish. Sometimes priests have a duplicate one if they are traveling and they come up against an emergency where they would want to celebrate a liturgy.”

Several clergy were in attendance, as were 11 deacon can-

didates currently taking courses in the Eparchy of Newton’s Deacon Formation program at Anna Maria College in Paxton.

Fr Dennis and his wife Lisa have been married for 31 years. He is the tenth married priest to be ordained since Bishop Nicholas’ installation as eparchial bishop in 2011. The Vatican rescinded the ban on married priests in the Eastern Catholic Churches in the USA in 2014.

Fr Dennis recalled the exchange of his deacon vestments for priestly ones as a bittersweet moment.

“It’s a very humbling experience because you know when you’re doing that, you’re going to be a priest. As much as you prepare for it, you’re never really prepared for it. It’s an awesome feeling to be there; I was very moved by it.”

When presented with the Eucharist by the bishop, Fr Dennis said he was given a simple exhortation. “The words Bishop Nicholas spoke to me, essentially, were ‘Take this and keep it safe because Christ is going to hold you accountable for that.’ It’s very profound when you realize the seriousness of the ordination. You don’t technically take vows like in a religious community but at that moment when he says, ‘Take this,’ you’re going to be accountable for how you live your life, which we all are, but also how you sustain the Church of Jesus Christ.”

At a luncheon following the liturgy, the parishioners of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, where he had served since 2004, wished him well, offering their love and their prayers. Several people from St Ann parish in Waterford also attended.

Fr Dennis expects to be serving at St Ann, the parish where he first encountered the Melkite Church and the place where he discovered his vocation, he said. †

Susan Bailey is a correspondent for The Catholic Free Press, Worcester, MA.

REFLECTION:

My Long and Twisting Road to the Priesthood

BY FR DENNIS MCCARTHY



I can say that I had the idea of becoming a priest at the time of my First Communion at St Anthony Catholic School in Oxnard, California in 1959. I had no idea what that meant, of course, but I had the inclination!

It has been a long journey on a twisting road, rather than a straight path, from that day to 10 June 2017 when I was ordained a priest. I was raised as a Roman Catholic, but left the faith while in college. Ten years as an officer in the United States Marine Corps, serving all over the world, was next before I went to law school and then married my wonderful wife, Lisa.

It wasn't until my son was born that I felt the stirrings of a desire to focus once again on God. The sheer wonder of seeing a child born into this world was enough to make me start to ponder things other than day-to-day concerns. I tried other faiths before returning to my old home, the Roman Catholic Church.

One day I was driving by St Ann Melkite Greek Catholic Church in Waterford, CT. I had driven by it many times before, but this time I saw a priest walking down the driveway. On a whim, I pulled into the parking lot and asked him, "What kind of church is a Melkite Church?" Well, he was kind enough not only to answer my question, but also to give me a tour of the church and to invite me to Divine Liturgy the next day. I went the next day and continued attending, eventually getting more involved in parish life.

Fr Damon Geiger, then the pastor, approached me to see if I would be interested in becoming a deacon. After much prayer and discussion with my wife, I decided to enroll in the formation program. I was ordained in 2003, and since have served St Ann church and Our Lady of Perpetual Help church in Worcester, MA.

In 2011, Fr Damon asked me if I had ever considered becoming a priest. I told him that I had, but the likelihood of a married deacon being ordained a priest in the United States seemed remote. Things, however, were changing, and having just completed my Masters in Theology, I began to discern if this was where God was leading me. Bishop Nicholas and Archimandrite Philip Raczka encouraged me to take more courses at Boston College School of Theology. I eventually completed an advanced certificate in pastoral ministry and was ordained a priest on 10 June 2017.

It was a long road for me to the priesthood. It was humbling to be ordained a deacon and more humbling to celebrate the Divine Liturgy as a priest for the first time. I thank God for all the mentors I had on this journey—my wife, clergy, and friends. I feel honored to serve God's people in this next chapter of my life. I pray that God may give me the wisdom and fortitude to serve well. †

Newly-ordained Fr Dennis McCarthy serves St Ann parish, Waterford, CT.



Memory Eternal

Archimandrite Charles Aboody

The Rt Rev Archimandrite Charles Aboody, 85, of McLean, VA, faithful priest of the Melkite Greek Catholic Eparchy of Newton and of Holy Transfiguration Church, McLean, VA, reposed in the Lord on Monday 29 May 2017, in the presence of clergy and parishioners.

Born in Worcester, MA, on 6 December 1931, to Salem and Rose Halal Aboody, Fr Charles had five brothers and two sisters. He is survived by two sisters, Charlotte (Aboody) Stockhaus and Ruth (Aboody) Welsh; two brothers, Nicholas (Jacqueline) Aboody and Robert (Anne) Aboody; many nieces and nephews; and countless friends and loved ones.

He was employed in various jobs, including the family restaurant business, and served in the United States Navy from 1947 to 1950. A parishioner of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Melkite Church in Worcester, Fr Charles entered the seminary at age 23, was ordained a priest in 1962, and served six months at St Joseph Melkite Church in Lawrence, MA, until becoming assistant pastor at Annunciation Cathedral in Boston under Archimandrite Lucien Malouf.

He would go on to serve as a priest of the Melkite Church in this country for more than half a century. Having a talent for building and design, and a natural contractor, Fr Charles was involved in the building of the new Melkite cathedral on VFW Parkway in West Roxbury, MA, as well as in many other projects in many other churches throughout his priesthood. After eight years in Boston he became pastor of his home parish in Worcester.

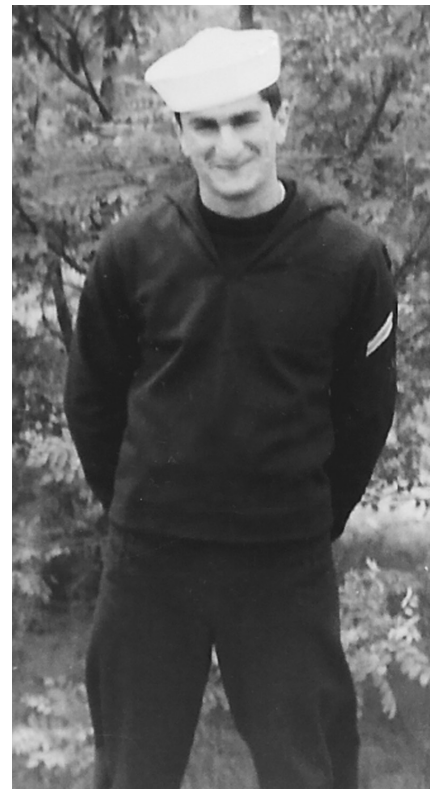
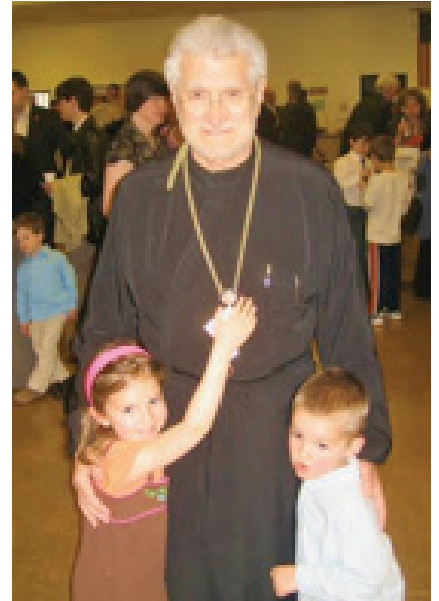
In 1970 was appointed vocations director for the Melkite Church in America, a role that evolved to rector of the new St Gregory the Theologian Seminary in Newton Centre, which he founded in 1975 at the direction of Archbishop Joseph Tawil. Shortly thereafter he was raised to the dignity of archimandrite. Father Charles served nine years as rector of St Gregory the Theologian Melkite Seminary, which prepared a great number of priests and deacons currently serving the Eparchy.

He then served as rector of the Annunciation Cathedral for three years and eventually as pastor of St Anne Melkite Church in North Hollywood, CA. He served there for eight years until retiring from parish ministry for health reasons. For his remaining years, Fr Charles resided at Holy Transfiguration Church in McLean, VA, assisting his longtime friend, Fr Joseph Francavilla, engaging in ongoing parish improvement projects, and offering a great deal of spiritual direction to countless parishioners and friends.

On the 50th anniversary of his ordination to the priesthood, Fr Charles summed up his ministry by saying, “the one thing that sticks out throughout the years is that God has always sent the right people to help when they were needed the most. I would do it all again without a second thought. It is for me a source of great joy.”

Funeral Prayers for a Priest were offered at Holy Transfiguration Church, McLean, VA, on Friday 2 June 2017, and the Divine Liturgy was served at Holy Transfiguration on Saturday 3 June 2017. Memorial contributions may be made to the Holy Transfiguration Building Fund.

May his memory be eternal and may he rest in a place where there is no pain, no grief, no sighing, but everlasting life. †



From an obituary published in the Los Angeles Times on 1 June 2017



The Blessings of a Lifetime: A Reflection on the Death of Archimandrite Charles Aboody

In the hospital at time of Fr Charles Aboody's death, his friend Fr Joseph Francavilla was pondering what people came to see in a dying old man. One of those friends and parishioners offered these observations.

The final scene of a man's life can seem, as Shakespeare's Jaques puts it (in a famous monologue from *As You Like It*), a "second childishness and mere oblivion, / Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything." Eyes cloud in unrecognition; tasteless sustenance pumps into the stomach through a tube; mottling skin stretches over limbs unable to bear the body's weight.

The day before he died, Fr Charles Aboody could hardly eat on his own or breathe on his own or move on his own. Eighty-five years of life, cancer, and recent illnesses finally drained his body of vigor. The hospital scene suggested Jaques's description, and yet revealed its inadequacy. Fr Charles's physical weakness made clear a different sort of strength; approaching death intimated a different kind of life.

Whenever Fr Charles awoke from sleep, even before his eyes focused on the group gathered around his bed, he would raise his hand in priestly blessing. By repeated acts throughout his lifetime, Fr Charles gave God's blessings to others, and so forged a habit of virtue with which, in the end, neither physical suffering nor fear of death could contend.

Jaques delivers his speech to argue for the inconsequence of a man's life. From the failure of the senses he concludes a final isolation and

absurdity. But Fr Charles's silent signing of the cross in blessing contradicts this.

What habits will remain at the end of my life when the ephemerals fall away? Am I feeding habits that will leave me isolated and absurd? I think about the questions St Edmund Campion put to a friend deliberating between worldly esteem and the cross of Christ: "What do you think yourself to be? What do you expect? What is your life? Wherein lies your hope?" And I pray to be more like Fr Charles. †

SAFEGUARDING OUR CHILDREN

The Lord Jesus said to his disciples: "Let the little children come unto me and forbid them not, for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven" (Luke 18:16).

The Melkite Church has always demonstrated love and concern for its children. The Eparchy of Newton is committed to ensuring that children served by our Church are always safe and never at risk of any abuse by Church personnel.

Eparchial policies and procedures currently in place seek to protect and enhance the trust that our faith calls for between Church personnel and the children and adolescents entrusted to our care. In accordance with the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People adopted by the Catholic Bishops of the US, everyone who ministers to children and young people under 18 years of age in our Church must undergo a criminal background check and participate in the safe environment training by Virtus, which is available on our website, melkite.org.

In addition, the parents of every child under 18 in our Melkite parishes should receive from their parish a copy of *Raising Champions for Christ, A Guide for Eastern Christian Parents*, the safe-environment resource for our families, which offers parents support, guidance, and encouragement in providing their children a truly Christian upbringing.

Finally, the Eparchy of Newton wishes to encourage any victim of abuse by church personnel to notify the Chancery at 617-323-9922. May Christ our God bless you and your families abundantly.

Part 5:

FROM ABRAHAM TO EGYPT

In this article, our series of studies in salvation history continues. It has led us from the story of our first parents, Adam and Eve, through the genealogies of Righteous Abel and his brother Cain, to Enoch, Noah, Shem (Melchizedek), and the Righteous Abraham. As always, I encourage you to get your Bible and read this article alongside the biblical texts we are covering. Remember that you can read or re-read previous articles on our diocesan website, www.Melkite.org.

In our most recent article, we focused on the identity of Melchizedek as a way to understand more clearly the person of Abraham, the reason for his divine calling, and the nature of God's gift of the Promised Land as an "inheritance." Understanding Abraham as the rightful heir to the kingly throne of Melchizedek (and through Melchizedek back to Noah, Enoch, Shem, and Adam, King of Paradise) will greatly assist us. Grasping this, we will more fully understand the movements of salvation history, and the many battles in which God's people will engage while defending the Promised Land, a place dedicated to the worship of the One True God.

With knowledge of the themes established in the early chapters of Genesis now in place, it is easy for us to raise our biblical vision to see and understand the broader stories that make up the rest of salvation history. The rest of the story of Abraham, of his son Isaac, and Abraham's grandson Jacob is well known to most of us. In many ways, the themes and stories of the later chapters of Genesis simply repeat the earlier stories with slight variation.

Over and over again, when God's people turn their backs on their relationship with their Creator and forget or reject their divine calling in the image and likeness of God, they find themselves exiled from their Father's house and enslaved to a foreign power. This enslavement represents to them the incarnation of the serpent who enslaved our first parents in Paradise. As the book of Ecclesiastes states, "there is nothing new under the sun" (1:9), and this statement couldn't be more clearly illustrated than in the stories and characters that make up salvation history. Often our sins follow us, and what we have done with evil intent to others comes back to curse us.

Probably the best example of this is the story of Esau and Jacob, sons of Isaac and Rebekah and grandsons of Abraham and Sarah (Genesis 25-33). As is well known, Esau, the eldest son and rightful inheritor of the throne of his father Isaac, sold his birthright for a bowl of lentils (some say it was *m'juddarab!*) to his younger brother Jacob (Genesis 25:29-34). Not satisfied with his apparent victory over his brother, and encouraged by his mother Rebekah, who favored him above her older son (Genesis 25:28), Jacob decided to trick his blind and aging father into blessing him with the blessing of the oldest son to become the head of the family and rightful heir to the throne of his fathers (Genesis 27:1-40).

It is apparent from the story that Rebekah encouraged her youngest son in this way to keep him near her as the one who would control the family inheritance (Genesis 27:39-40). But soon after their deceit, Jacob fled for fear of his brother Esau.

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Rebekah, who had sinfully attempted to keep Jacob close, lost her favorite son. Rather than trusting in God's promise that Jacob would be blessed by God (Genesis 25:23), Rebekah tried to take what was not hers, and would never see her favorite son again!

Jacob, who deceived his father and tried to become the first-born son in place of his older brother, had his own lesson to learn. After fleeing from his father's house and the vengeful hand of his brother, Jacob traveled to his uncle Laban's house, finding there a bride.

And while he fell in love with Laban's younger daughter Rachel, and worked hard for seven years to earn her hand, it was Rachel's older sister Leah who was given to him on his wedding day (Genesis 29:21-25). When Jacob asked why his uncle had deceived him in this way, Laban responded, probably with a little smirk, "It is not so done in our country, to give the younger before the first-born" (Genesis 29:26). The one who tricked his father in order to outstep his older brother was himself tricked in the end. From that day on, every time Jacob looked into the face of Leah, he was reminded of the sin of his youth.

Another seven years of work for his uncle earned Jacob the desire of his heart, Rachel, and through these two sisters the twelve tribes of Israel were established. Eventually, after the death of his mother Rebekah, Jacob did return to the land of his father. After repenting of his sins, he received the blessing of the Lord to become the head of God's family on earth (Genesis 32:22-32) and received a new name, Israel, to reflect his new role in salvation history (Genesis 35:9-15).

As with the covenant of circumcision established with Abraham as a reminder of his sins in Egypt, so now Jacob would be restored to his father's house only after bearing the mark of his previous sin. In Jacob's case, the mark of God's covenantal blessing was the limp which he would have the rest of his life, reminding him never again to walk away from the Lord (Genesis 32:22-32).

Following the genealogy of the sons of God, from Abraham and Isaac through Jacob (Israel), we meet the next generation of God's family and again face the important question of who will receive the blessing of the first-born to become the head of God's household. Chapter 35 of Genesis gives a full list of Jacob's twelve sons.

A little-known figure, Reuben, heads the list, the first-born of Israel. But Reuben, like his uncle Esau, was passed over because he counted his birthright of little value (Genesis 49:3-4; compare with Genesis 35:22). Similarly, the next two sons of Israel, Simeon and Levi, were passed over because of the sins of their youth (see Genesis 34). Finally, Israel found in his fourth son, Judah, the makings of a godly leader, and to this son (see Genesis 38), that the ruler's staff was passed (Genesis 49:10-12).

Before we conclude our study of Genesis, one final figure requires our attention: the righteous Joseph, favored son of his father Israel. Again, according to the moral principle that our sins tend to follow us and have repercussions that we did not intend, the story of Joseph and the sin of his brothers who sold

him into slavery reverberates throughout salvation history. It is a constant reminder that God often brings good out of our evil actions.

Jealous of their favored younger brother, the sons of Israel sold their brother Joseph into slavery in Egypt. As a result of their sin, the brothers and the generations that follow them find themselves in Egypt enslaved to the very power to which they sold their brother. But Joseph reminds them, "You meant evil against me; but God meant it for good" (Genesis 50:20).

The journey of God's people into Egypt is the second great exile from paradise that we encounter in salvation history, as Israel and his family leave the land of promise and begin four hundred years of exile for the sin of selling their brother into slavery. But all is not lost.

This second exile is also the beginning of the second return, for we remember here at the close of the book of Genesis the promise that the Lord made to Abraham: "Know for surety that your descendants will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs, and will be slaves there and they will be oppressed for four hundred years; but I will bring judgement on the nation which they serve, and afterward they shall come out with great possessions" (Genesis 15:13-14).

As we noted earlier, the later chapters of Genesis often repeat and retell themes and stories from the early chapters of the book. The story of Joseph reminds us that "There is nothing new under the sun."

First, Joseph is an image or type of Christ who is to come. He is a son who is pleasing to his father (Genesis 37:3; Luke 3:22); whose Egyptian name, *Zaphenathpaneah*, means "Savior of the World"; who provides bread so that his brothers and the entire world might live; and to whom the people are commanded to "bow the knee" (compare Genesis 41:43 and Philippians 2:10).

Second, he is also an image of the pre-fallen or restored Adam. As we chant in church during Great Week, "The serpent found a second Eve in the Egyptian woman, and plotted the fall of Joseph through words of flattery. But, leaving behind his garment, Joseph fled from sin. He was naked but unashamed, like Adam before the fall. Through his prayers, O Christ, have mercy on us."

Notice how important knowledge of salvation history and of the persons and events of Sacred Scripture is to a proper and fruitful understanding of the prayers of the Church. And notice also how important it is to know the prayers that we chant in church, for they open our eyes to a proper understanding of the more obscure passages of the Holy Bible.

When we resume our journey through the Bible in the pages of *SOPHIA*, we will enter the book of Exodus. I encourage you in the meantime to re-read the entire book of Genesis, using all of the tools and principles learned thus far in our study, and then to begin to read the book of Exodus with these same principles in mind. †

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A Priest's Wife

BY KHOURIYEH LINDA CARNAZZO
St George parish, Sacramento, CA

Coming to Khouriyyeh

What is the role of the *khouriyyeh*? The title given to the wife of a priest (*presbytera* in Greek, *matushka* in Russian) can conjure up images of a small, pious old lady faithfully making *qurban* on Saturday night, bathed in the scent of rosewater. For me, it didn't conjure up anything.

I was raised in a very faithful Roman Catholic family, and early on decided that I wanted to dedicate my life to the Lord. I thought this meant that after college and a couple of years of teaching school, I would find a good convent and become a nun.

But instead, I began dating a good friend from college named Sabatino (now Fr Hezekias), and the Lord began to show me his plan for me to marry this man and start a family. But he belonged to a church I had never heard of; the Melkite Greek Catholic Church. As I attended this church with him, the pastor recommended him as a potential candidate for the priesthood.

Well now, this was a religious vocation I had never thought of—to be the wife of a priest! What would this life look like?

I found the answer in two places: at our parish, Holy Transfiguration (McLean, VA), and in an on-line class I took entitled “The Clergy Wife.” The class was taught by two very faithful Ukrainian *presbyteras*, Iryna Galadza and Halyna Chirovsky. Their faithful example, and very sage advice, gave me a glimpse into this venerable vocation.

At our parish, we already had a married priest—Fr Ephrem Handal—and his wife, Judy, gave me a great example of what a prayerful, joyful, life of service as a *khouriyyeh*

can be. Our deacons' wives—Cathy, Linda, Melissa, Barbara, Joyce, and Alicia—all showed me the many ways in which each of us can bring our gifts and use them to build up the church and serve Christ.

But more than that, I was introduced to the richness of the Eastern Christian Tradition, the depth and beauty of our liturgical life, and the precious wisdom of the Church Fathers. The culture and traditions of our Middle Eastern families opened my eyes to the culture in which Christ himself lived. (I even learned to make good hummus!) And I felt I had found my spiritual home.

Now, as the wife of a recently-ordained priest and the mother of six small children, I can await with confidence the Lord's next installment of his magnificent plan.



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I BELIEVE AND PROFESS:

Receiving *the* Eucharist *in Faith and Love* PART 2

BY FR DEACON DANIEL G. DOZIER

and Wine for us? The prayer gives us a supernatural perspective that is meant to reorient our thinking according to the wisdom of God. When one enters into the presence of the King, it is always the greater who receives the lesser, not the reverse. When we approach the Eucharistic Mystery and partake of the Lord's Mystical Supper, He is in fact at that very moment receiving us as participants in his divine life. The Lord has invited us to his Eucharistic Banquet to receive his sacrificial offering through the ministry of his priests.

It is important to note that from first to last this meal has been his gift to us, given to us as a Holy Mystery, but not without our essential and purposeful cooperation. Though we have prepared and brought the gifts of simple bread (*prospora*) and wine, it was the Lord who gave us the wheat, the grapes, the soil, the rain, and the sun, as well as the ingenuity to grow and produce such foods from them. Though the priest has prayed over them, it was the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit in power that transformed them into the Body and Blood of Christ. This synergy of God's grace and human work is the essence of our spiritual lives in the Kingdom.

As we approach these gifts with gratitude, we also ensure that we do so with a sincere heart and faith-filled intention. Within the prayer, Judas Iscariot is the model of one who receives the gifts of the Lord unworthily. In the account of the Last Supper in John's Gospel, we read that Judas received a morsel of bread from Jesus as a sign to Peter revealing the identity of the betrayer: "So when he had dipped the morsel, he gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. Then after the morsel, Satan entered into him. . . . So, after receiving the morsel, he immediately went out; and it was night" (John 13:26-27, 30). Although the Church Fathers do not unanimously agree that Judas received the Eucharist from Christ at that very moment, St John Chrysostom in commenting on this event says:

"Ah! How great is the blindness of the traitor! Even partaking of the mysteries, he remained the same; and although admitted to the most holy table, he did not change. And this Luke shows by saying,

Receive Me; I Will Not Betray You; Remember Me

The second of the Preparatory Prayers opens with an appeal that recalls our intimate relationship with the awesome God.

Receive me now, O Son of God, as a participant in Your mystical supper: for I will not betray your mystery to your enemies, nor give You a kiss like Judas (see Matthew 26:49 and Mark 14:45), but like the thief, I confess You; remember me, Lord, in your kingdom (Luke 23:42).

Here we note the paradox of the phrase "receive me now, O Son of God." Are we not in fact at that very moment preparing to receive Him, who has condescended to become the Bread

that after this Satan entered into him, not as despising the Lord's body, but laughing to scorn the traitor's shamelessness. For indeed his sin became greater from both causes, as well in that he came to the mysteries with such a disposition, as that having approached them, he did not become better, either from fear, or from the benefit, or from the honor. But Christ did not forbid him, although He knew all things, that you might learn that He omits none of the things that pertain to correction. (*Homily 82 on Matthew*)

Judas' betrayal of faith at the Last Supper is consummated by his betrayal of charity in the Garden of Gethsemane, when he leads the Temple guards to Jesus and by a kiss on the cheek identifies Him as the one to arrest. This leads a short time later to Jesus' passion and death while hanging on the Tree of the Cross and Judas' hanging himself by a rope from a tree in despair. Both in his unworthy reception of the Eucharistic Mystery and by his betrayal of his Master to his enemies with a kiss, Judas reminds us of the grave evil of engaging in the mere appearance of receiving Christ with faith and love, while inwardly rejecting Him through sin.

Rather, according to the prayer, the model for a worthy reception of the Sacred Mysteries is Dismas, the repentant thief. This thief who was crucified by the Roman State for his crimes called out to the innocent Lord who was crucified next to him on Golgotha, "Remember me, Lord, in your kingdom." This cry for remembrance was a cry for *hesed*, the mercy and loving-kindness of the Lord. With hearts full of repentance, we should also hear the Lord's own words spoken at first to the thief and now to us, "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise" (Luke 23:43). In the Holy Eucharist, we are once again restored to paradise lost and are given access to the fruit of the Tree of Life by the New Adam.

Not for Condemnation, but for Healing

Finally, the prayer concludes:

May the reception of your holy mysteries, Lord, be for me not to judgment or condemnation (1 Corinthians 11:27-34), but to the healing of my soul and body. Amen.

In St Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians, he admonishes and instructs these Gentile converts to Christianity on the worthy reception of the Body and Blood of Christ:

Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord. Let a man examine himself, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment upon himself. That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died. But if we judged ourselves truly, we should not be judged. But when we are judged by the Lord, we are chastened so that we may not be condemned along with the world. (*1 Corinthians 11:27-32*)

Here we see that the worthy reception of the Sacred Mysteries involves an examination of our own hearts regarding the

state of our souls. The commentary of the *Orthodox Study Bible (New Testament & Psalms)* summarizes this teaching:

To receive Christ's Body and Blood in an unworthy manner means coming to Him with hidden immorality, disunity, doctrinal heresy, or disorder, failing to see the gifts of God as holy things for holy people. We (therefore) prepare for the Eucharist by examining ourselves. This includes confessing our sins and being reconciled to one another in the sacrament of repentance. . . . Being "worthy" does not mean sinless, but being cleansed. It is not legalism but commitment to walk in righteousness before God. (p. 394)

In one of his final discourses to Israel, Moses speaks at Moab (see Deuteronomy 30) concerning the covenant God has made with God's people just before they take possession of the land of Abraham. At that moment, he prophesies that the Lord has placed before all of Israel the path of the blessing and the path of the curse, as recounted in the Law of Sinai. If they follow the path of blessing through loving obedience, the Lord will restore their fortunes, have compassion on them, gather them together as His people, and will circumcise their hearts and the hearts of their children (an image of Holy Baptism in the New Covenant; see Colossians 2:11-12) so that they will love the Lord their God and live. If they follow instead the path of disobedience, they will inherit only curses and death.

"See, I have set before you this day life and good, death and evil. If you obey the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you this day, by loving the Lord your God, by walking in his ways, and by keeping his commandments and his statutes and his ordinances, then you shall live and multiply, and the Lord your God will bless you in the land which you are entering to take possession of it. . . . I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse; therefore choose life, that you and your descendants may live, loving the Lord your God, obeying his voice, and cleaving to him." (*Deuteronomy 30:15-16, 19-20*)

In many respects, St Paul's exhortation to us to engage in a worthy reception of the Sacred Mysteries echoes some of the blessings and curses of Moses but in a New Covenant context. When we receive these great gifts of the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, the Lord has set before us two paths: 1) the path of blessing, healing of soul and body, and eternal life through a worthy reception by keeping the Lord's commandments, and 2) the curse of sin and death (in some cases bodily) through an unworthy reception by a unrepentant life of disobedience.

May we, through these Preparatory Prayers of the Divine Liturgy, choose the path of life and healing through worthy reception of the Sacred Mysteries of the Bread of Life and the Cup of Salvation in faith, repentance, and love! †

Part 1 of "I Believe and Profess" appeared in the Summer issue of SOPHIA.

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Eparchial Jubilee Pilgrimage Visits Sacred Sites in the Holy Land

BY FR SEBASTIAN CARNAZZO

From the 6th through the 18th of July, Sayidna Nicholas led a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. Thirty-four pilgrims, including Melkite clergy and laity and monastics from Holy Resurrection and Christ the Bridegroom monasteries, accompanied him.

From the very announcement of this pilgrimage almost a year earlier, it was quite obvious that this was going to be much more than a simple tour of various sites of historical interest.

This was going to be a pilgrimage, and that point became even more evident when we arrived in Tel Aviv, gathered around Sayidna Nicholas, and started our trip to Jerusalem.

As we began to climb the ascent of the Judean hill country and the landscape changed gradually from low grasslands to a high desert mountain terrain of boulders and cedar, Sayidna led the pilgrims in the chanting the Psalms of Ascent, the traditional songs of pilgrims to Jerusalem from the time of King David until today. Our chanting drew to a close with the Polyeleos (Psalm 135 [136]), and then, suddenly, there it stood. Before our eyes, with its ancient white limestone walls

bathed in the warm glow of the setting sun, was the Holy City, Jerusalem.

We began the next day on the Mount of Olives, looking across the Kidron Valley and gazing in contemplation upon this city and its Old Testament background. From there we traveled through the hill country to Ain Karem, the place where St John the Forerunner was born, and then to Bethlehem, to behold the birthplace of our Lord.

In these places, as well as in all the places we were to visit throughout the pilgrimage, we approached singing the troparion relevant to the site and were blessed to hear the corresponding Gospel chanted by one of our two pilgrim deacons, Fr Deacon John Moses of our Annunciation Cathedral and Fr Deacon Moses of Holy Resurrection Monastery. After each Gospel reading, Sayidna Nicholas or I provided a meditation on the Gospel passage and the holy site.

The next day we traveled to the Jordan River where Jesus was baptized. After a sanctifying plunge into the holy waters, we went to Nazareth to see where Jesus spent his childhood,

and there we celebrated the Sunday Divine Liturgy in one of the ancient synagogues of that city, which is also on the property of one of our Melkite parishes.

From there, as if in the footsteps of Jesus, we traveled to the Sea of Galilee where we would spend the next few days in the place He loved most. We sat on the shore where Jesus called the first disciples and watched hundreds of fish swell to the surface of the water at the conclusion of the chanting of the Gospel. We went to Capernaum and walked in the synagogue where Jesus healed a demoniac and delivered the Bread of Life discourse. We stood on the top of the hill where Jesus taught the Beatitudes, felt the cool breeze on our faces as we sailed on the Sea of Galilee, and later sang hymns as we tasted freshly-broken bread on the shore where Jesus multiplied loaves for the multitude.

Then it was time to leave Galilee and travel in the path of Jesus back to Jerusalem. Along the way we ascended Mount Tabor and beheld with our own eyes the breathtaking view from the place where Jesus was transfigured before his disciples, revealing his divine glory, so that, as the kontakion proclaims, when his disciples “should see him crucified, they would know that He suffered willingly.” Transfigured and strengthened in our faith by our experience on Mount Tabor we journeyed with Jesus to Jerusalem.

When we arrived in the Holy City we went to the Pool of Bethesda, where Jesus healed the paralytic and where, before 1967, the Seminary of St Anne formed Melkite priests. We saw the Pool of Siloam to which Jesus sent the blind man and visited the upper room where He celebrated the Mystical Supper. We prayed in the place where Jesus began his Passion and touched the ancient trees of the Garden of Gethsemane. We knelt in prayer in the place where Jesus was crucified, kissed the stone upon which his body was anointed, and, beholding his empty tomb, sang, with tears of joy, the stichera, hirmos, and troparion of Pascha.

We concluded our pilgrimage on the Mount of Olives, returning to the place from which we had begun, and there meditated upon Jesus’ Ascension and return to the place from which He had come.

We also pondered our own approaching return to the places from which we had come for this pilgrimage. What would we do when we returned? How would we share the treasure we received?

Thank you to each and every one of you who participated in the pilgrimage and made it so memorable. Thank you, Bridegroom Sisters, for

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His Grace, Bishop Nicholas celebrates the Divine Liturgy at the former synagogue, now Melkite church, in Nazareth.



Pilgrims enter the Jordan River where Jesus was baptized.



His Grace onboard a boat on the Sea of Galilee recounts the story of Jesus walking upon the water.



You know a historic event is taking place when the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops takes five years to prepare a convocation that brings together over 3500 lay and religious men and women, 300 priests, 100 bishops, five cardinals—Daniel DiNardo of Galveston-Houston, Timothy Dolan of New York, Seán O'Malley of Boston, Joseph Tobin of Newark, Donald Wuerl of Washington—and the Apostolic Nuncio, Archbishop Christophe Pierre.

This throng met at the Orlando Convention Center 1-4 July 2017 to pray, listen to presentations, share experiences, and commit to cooperate to build a healthy and vibrant Catholic Church.

A meeting of so many representatives of Eastern and Roman Catholic dioceses from throughout the United States sounds like a very somber event. Well, though it was very serious, it was also full of great hope and joy.



Reflecting on the Joy of the Gospel: Convocation of Catholic Leaders

BY ARCHIMANDRITE PHILIP RACZKA, PHD
AND FR FRANÇOIS BEYROUTI, PHD

The theme of the convocation was Pope Francis' Apostolic Exhortation *The Joy of the Gospel*. It might seem strange that Pope Francis would write a long letter on "joy" and the United States bishops would spend so much effort to prepare a conference on the theme of joy. Actually, this should not surprise us, as the words "joy" and "rejoice" appear 109 times in the New Testament.

We find these words from the beginning of the Gospel all the way to the end. When the Archangel Gabriel appeared to Mary to announce to her that she will be the mother of Jesus, the Messiah, he said, "you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth" (Luke 1:14). When the shepherds saw the star, "they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy" (Matthew 2:10). During Jesus' sermon on the mount, He said, "Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven" (Matthew 5:12). And, when the women went to the tomb of Jesus, the Gospel of Matthew tells us "they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples" (Matthew 28:8).

The convocation focused on three important aspects of joy. First, great joy in the Gospel, which is the "good news." Second, great joy in noticing and helping the poor and the needy. Third, great joy when the Church, though extremely diverse, focuses on these two in a spirit of unity.

The word "joy" is an important one for our faith. It is often misunderstood. We sometimes associate joy with shallow comforts. Joy is not the comfort we receive from things that pass away; it comes from deep rooted happiness based on truth that grows and does not fade. We might be happy when we buy a new car or a new house, but we are living a very sad and empty life if material possessions constitute our joy.

True joy searches for something more meaningful, not just something that brings happiness for a day. Ironically, joy can sometimes bring us suffering and persecution. St Paul writes in his letter to the Romans, "we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance" (5:3).

The joy of the Gospel and of authentic Christian faith comes not from possessions but from Christ himself. When we rejoice in God, that kind of joy never wears out, but keeps growing. We often forget not only that "joy" is found throughout the gospels, but also that "Gospel" means the "good news." Therefore the greatest joy for us should be to hear the Gospel and to live it.

What does this mean in a practical way? Answering this question leads to the second focus of the convocation: that true Christian joy consists of noticing and helping the poor and needy.

What did Jesus do when He wanted to be happy and when He wanted to spread joy? He didn't go for an extra drink, He didn't go shopping, and He certainly did not go to a casino to try to win the jackpot that would change his fortunes.

When Jesus wanted joy, He went to the peripheries of society to serve those who were in most need and to be with people that everyone else avoided.

We tend to avoid discomfort, but Jesus found joy in being with and serving those who were abandoned. Real Christianity starts with knowing what brought Jesus joy, then going out and imitating the One we call our master.

One of the most touching stories we heard at the convocation told of Pope Francis' first trip outside the Vatican after he was elected on 13 March 2013. The plight of refugees touched him profoundly. The thought of their suffering came back to him repeatedly like "a thorn in the heart," he said. In particular, he turned his eyes to the deadliest immigration route in the world—from North Africa to the Italian island of Lampedusa. When he heard the weekly news of hundreds of refugees dying while attempting this route he decided to visit the island.

Pope Francis asked the Vatican Secretary of State to arrange a papal trip to Lampedusa, but he was discouraged from going because of security concerns. A week later the Pope told the Secretary of State told he had thought it through and would like to go as soon as possible. He was told that they would begin preparations but it would take at least six months to a year. This timing did not fit his urgency.

A few days passed. The vice-president of Alitalia called the Secretary of State and told him that Pope Francis had booked a seat on a regular flight from Rome to Lampedusa that was departing in a week. That became the fastest papal event the Vatican ever organized.

On 8 July 2013, Pope Francis went to Lampedusa to be with the refugees. He celebrated Mass on an altar made from boats washed up after capsizing and killing everyone on board. His homily reminded us that “The culture of comfort, which makes us think only of ourselves, makes us insensitive to the cries of other people, makes us live in soap bubbles which, however lovely, are insubstantial; they offer a fleeting and empty illusion which results in indifference to others; indeed, it even leads to the globalization of indifference. In this globalized world, we have fallen into globalized indifference. We have become used to the suffering of others: it doesn’t affect me; it doesn’t concern me; it’s none of my business!”

This convocation also reminded us that, for Christianity to be real, it has to be real in ways like this.

The third important message of the convocation is that de-

spite everyone’s background and everyone’s position the joy of the Gospel is everyone’s business. Bishop, priest, or lay person, we all have the responsibility to pray, to learn more about our faith, to live our faith in very practical ways, and to spread the joy of our faith to others.

Things we buy may bring us temporary happiness, but only Jesus brings us the deep joy of the Gospel, because He calls us to a long-lasting and deep happiness rooted in all God did and is doing for us. True joy is possible only when our eyes are opened to the needs of those around us.

The joy of the Gospel is not just happiness; it is a life rooted in what Jesus said and did. When we marvel at this wonderful message and live it we will discover the authentic joy of the Gospel. †

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Eparchial Jubilee Pilgrimage *Continued from page 17*



His Grace Bishop Nicholas and His Grace Elias Chacour, retired bishop of Nazareth.

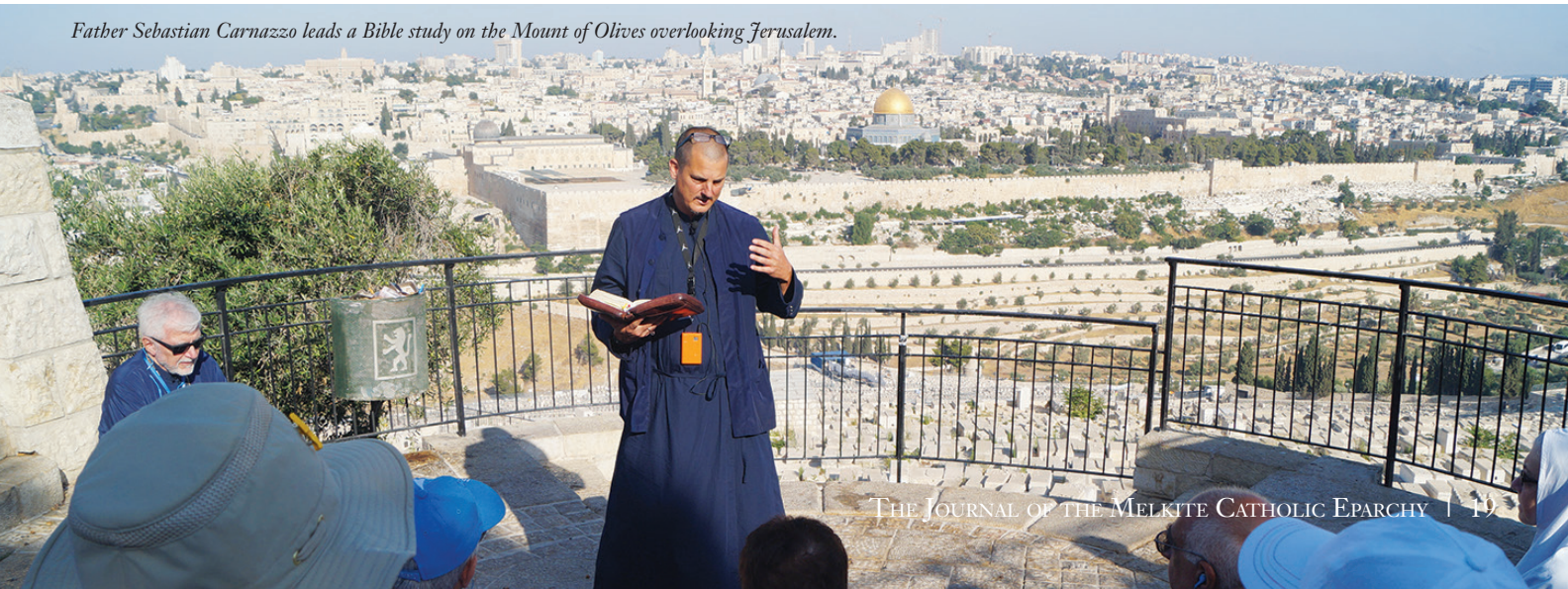
all of your wonderful singing. Thank you, deacons, for chanting the Gospel. Thank you, Fr Hezekias, for all you did in preparation. Thank you, Eric and Monica Ortiz, for all the administrative work you did along the way. Thank you especially, Sayidna Nicholas, for leading us on this pilgrimage and sharing your spiritual insights with us—and a personal thank-you from me for the gift and bestowal of the beautiful pectoral cross at the conclusion of the pilgrimage.

Through this pilgrimage, may God grant to our Melkite eparchy abundant grace that we may bear much fruit, and may, through his mercy, return someday again to the place where God walked on earth.

View a slide show of more pictures from the pilgrimage at steliasmelkite.org. †

Fr Sebastian Carnazzo is pastor of St Elias community in San Jose, CA.

Father Sebastian Carnazzo leads a Bible study on the Mount of Olives overlooking Jerusalem.



At the time of the Roe v. Wade decision, I was a college student—an anti-war, mother-earth, feminist, hippie college student. That particular January I was taking a semester off, living in the D.C. area and volunteering at the feminist “underground newspaper” *Off Our Backs*. As you’d guess, I was strongly in favor of legalizing abortion. The bumper sticker on my car read, “Don’t labor under a misconception; legalize abortion.”

The first issue of *Off Our Backs* after the Roe decision included one of my movie reviews, and also an essay by another member of the collective criticizing the decision. It didn’t go far enough, she said, because it allowed states to restrict abortion in the third trimester. The Supreme Court should not meddle in what should be decided between the woman and her

of their unborn babies, shocking us with the obvious humanity of the unborn.

We also thought, back then, that few abortions would ever be done. It’s a grim experience, going through an abortion, and we assumed a woman would choose one only as a last resort. We were fighting for that “last resort.” We had no idea how common the procedure would become; today, one in every five pregnancies ends in abortion.

Nor could we have imagined how high abortion numbers would climb. In the 43 years since Roe v. Wade, there have been 59 million abortions. It’s hard even to grasp a number that big. Twenty years ago, someone told me that, if the names of all those lost babies were inscribed on a wall, like the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, the wall would have to stretch for 50 miles.

Roe v. Wade



BY FREDERICA MATHEWES-GREEN

Abortion Won the Day, but Sooner or Later That Day Will End

doctor. She should be able to choose abortion through all nine months of pregnancy.

But, at the time, we didn’t have much understanding of what abortion was. We knew nothing of fetal development. We consistently termed the fetus “a blob of tissue,” and that’s just how we pictured it—an undifferentiated mucous-like blob, not recognizable as human or even as alive. It would be another 15 years or so before pregnant couples could show off sonograms

It’s 20 years later now, and that wall would have to stretch twice as far. But no names could be written on it; those babies had no names.

We expected that abortion would be rare. What we didn’t realize was that, once abortion becomes available, it becomes the most attractive option for everyone around the pregnant woman. If she has an abortion, it’s like the pregnancy never existed. No one is inconvenienced. It doesn’t cause trouble for

the father of the baby, or her boss, or the person in charge of her college scholarship. It won't embarrass her mom and dad.

Abortion is like a funnel; it promises to solve all the problems at once. So there is significant pressure on a woman to choose abortion, rather than adoption or parenting.

A woman who had had an abortion told me, "Everyone around me was saying they would 'be there for me' if I had the abortion, but no one said they'd 'be there for me' if I had the baby." For everyone around the pregnant woman, abortion looks like the sensible choice. A woman who determines instead to continue an unplanned pregnancy looks like she's being foolishly stubborn. It's like she's taken up some unreasonable hobby. People think, "If she would only go off and do this one thing, everything would be fine."

But that's an illusion. Abortion can't really "turn back the clock." It can't push the rewind button on life and make it so she was never pregnant. It can make it easy for everyone around the woman to forget the pregnancy, but the woman herself may struggle. When she first sees the positive pregnancy test she may feel, in a panicky way, that she has to get rid of it as fast as possible. But life stretches on after abortion, for months and years—for many long nights—and all her life long she may ponder the irreversible choice she made.

This issue gets presented as if it's a tug of war between the woman and the baby. We see them as mortal enemies, locked in a fight to the death. But that's a strange idea, isn't it? It must be the first time in history when mothers and their own children have been assumed to be at war. We're supposed to picture the child attacking her, trying to destroy her hopes and plans, and picture the woman grateful for the abortion, since it rescued her from the clutches of her child.

If you were in charge of a nature preserve and you noticed that the pregnant female mammals were trying to miscarry their pregnancies, eating poisonous plants or injuring themselves, what would you do? Would you think of it as a battle between the pregnant female and her unborn and find ways to help those pregnant animals miscarry? No, of course not. You would immediately think, "Something must be really wrong in this environment." Something is creating intolerable stress, so much so that animals would rather destroy their own offspring than bring them into the world. You would strive to identify and correct whatever factors were causing this stress in the animals.

The same thing goes for the human animal. Abortion gets presented to us as if it's something women want; both pro-choice and pro-life rhetoric can reinforce that idea. But women do this only if all their other options look worse. It's supposed to be "her choice," yet so many women say, "I really didn't have a choice."

I changed my opinion on abortion after I read an article in *Esquire* magazine, way back in 1976. I was home from grad school, flipping through my dad's copy, and came across an article titled "What I Saw at the Abortion." The author, Richard Selzer, was a surgeon, and he was in favor of abortion, but he'd never seen one. So he asked a colleague whether, next time, he could go along.

Selzer described seeing the patient, 19 weeks pregnant, lying on her back on the table. (That is unusually late; most

abortions are done by the tenth or twelfth week.) The doctor performing the procedure inserted a syringe into the woman's abdomen and injected her womb with a prostaglandin solution, which would bring on contractions and cause a miscarriage. (This method isn't used anymore, because too often the baby survived the procedure—chemically burned and disfigured, but clinging to life. Newer methods, including those called "partial birth abortion" and "dismemberment abortion," more reliably ensure death.)

After injecting the hormone into the patient's womb, the doctor left the syringe standing upright on her belly. Then, Selzer wrote, "I see something other than what I expected here...The hub of the needle that is in the woman's belly has jerked. First to one side. Then to the other side. Once more it wobbles, is tugged, like a fishing line nibbled by a sunfish."

He realized he was seeing the fetus's desperate fight for life. And as he watched, he saw the movement of the syringe slow down and then stop. The child was dead. Whatever else an unborn child does not have, he has one thing: a will to live. He will fight to defend his life.

The last words in Selzer's essay are "Whatever else is said in abortion's defense, the vision of that other defense [i.e., of the child defending its life] will not vanish from my eyes. And it has happened that you cannot reason with me now. For what can language do against the truth of what I saw?"

The truth of what he saw disturbed me deeply. There I was, anti-war, anti-capital punishment, even vegetarian, and a firm believer that social justice cannot be won at the cost of violence. Well, this sure looked like violence. How had I agreed to make this hideous act the centerpiece of my feminism? How could I think it was wrong to execute homicidal criminals, wrong to shoot enemies in wartime, but all right to kill our own sons and daughters?

For that was another disturbing thought: Abortion means killing not strangers but our own children, our own flesh and blood. No matter who the father, every child aborted is that woman's own son or daughter, just as much as any child she will ever bear.

We had somehow bought the idea that abortion was necessary if women were going to rise in their professions and compete in the marketplace with men. But how had we come to agree that we will sacrifice our children, as the price of getting ahead? When does a man ever have to choose between his career and the life of his child?

Once I recognized the inherent violence of abortion, none of the feminist arguments made sense. Like the claim that a fetus is not really a person because it is so small. Well, I'm only 5 foot 1. Women, in general, are smaller than men. Do we really want to advance a principle that big people have more value than small people? That if you catch them before they've reached a certain size, it's all right to kill them?

What about the child who is "unwanted"? It was a basic premise of early feminism that women should not base their sense of worth on whether or not a man "wants" them. We are valuable simply because we are members of the human race, regardless of any other person's approval. Do we really want to

Continued on page 22

say that “unwanted” people might as well be dead? What about a woman who is “wanted” when she’s young and sexy but less so as she gets older? At what point is it all right to terminate her?

The usual justification for abortion is that the unborn is not a “person.” It’s said that “Nobody knows when life begins.” But that’s not true; everybody knows when life—a new individual human life—gets started. It’s when the sperm dissolves in the egg. That new single cell has a brand-new DNA, never before seen in the world. If you examined through a microscope three cells lined up—the newly fertilized ovum, a cell from the father, and a cell from the mother—you would say that, judging from the DNA, the cells came from three different people.

When people say the unborn is “not a person” or “not a life” they mean that it has not yet grown or gained abilities that arrive later in life. But there’s no agreement about which abilities should be determinative. Pro-choice people don’t even agree with each other. Obviously, law cannot be based on such subjective criteria. If it’s a case where the question is “Can I kill this?” the answer must be based on objective medical and scientific data. And the fact is, an unborn child, from the very first moment, is a new human individual. It has the three essential characteristics that make it “a human life”: It’s alive and growing, it is composed entirely of human cells, and it has unique DNA. It’s a person, just like the rest of us.

Abortion indisputably ends a human life. But this loss is usually set against the woman’s need to have an abortion in order to freely direct her own life. It is a particular cruelty to present abortion as something women want, something they demand, they find liberating. Because nobody wants this.

The procedure itself is painful, humiliating, expensive—no woman “wants” to go through it. But once it’s available, it appears to be the logical, reasonable choice. All the complexities can be shoved down that funnel.

Yes, abortion solves all the problems; but it solves them inside the woman’s body. And she is expected to keep that pain inside for a lifetime, and be grateful for the gift of abortion.

Many years ago I wrote something in an essay about abortion, and I was surprised that the line got picked up and frequently quoted. I’ve seen it in both pro-life and pro-choice contexts, so it appears to be something both sides agree on.

I wrote, “No one wants an abortion as she wants an ice cream cone or a Porsche. She wants an abortion as an animal, caught in a trap, wants to gnaw off its own leg.”

Strange, isn’t it, that both pro-choice and pro-life people agree that is true? Abortion is a horrible and harrowing experience. That women choose it so frequently shows how much worse continuing a pregnancy can be. Essentially, we’ve agreed to surgically alter women so that they can get along in a man’s world. And then expect them to be grateful for it.

Nobody wants to have an abortion. And if nobody wants to have an abortion, why are women doing it, 2,800 times a day? If women doing something 2,800 times daily that they don’t want to do, this is not liberation we’ve won. We are colluding

in a strange new form of oppression.

And so we come around to one more March for Life, like the one last year, like the one next year. Protesters understandably focus on the unborn child, because the danger it faces is the most galvanizing aspect of this struggle. If there are different degrees of injustice, surely violence is the worst manifestation, and killing worst of all.

If there are different categories of innocent victim, surely the small and helpless have a higher claim to protection, and tiny babies the highest of all. The minimum purpose of government is to shield the weak from abuse by the strong, and there is no one weaker or more voiceless than unborn children. And so we keep saying that they should be protected, for all the same reasons that newborn babies are protected. Pro-lifers have been doing this for 43 years now, and will continue holding a candle in the darkness for as many more years as it takes.

I understand all the reasons why the movement’s prime attention is focused on the unborn. But we can also say that abortion is no bargain for women, either. It’s destructive and tragic. We shouldn’t listen unthinkingly to the other side of the time-worn script, the one that tells us that women want abortions, that abortion liberates them. Many a post-abortion woman could tell you a different story.

The pro-life cause is perennially unpopular, and pro-lifers get used to being misrepresented and wrongly accused. There are only a limited number of people who are going to be brave enough to stand up on the side of an unpopular cause. But sometimes a cause is so urgent, is so dramatically clear, that it’s worth it. What cause could be more outrageous than violence—fatal violence—against the most helpless members of our human community? If that doesn’t move us, how hard are our hearts? If that doesn’t move us, what will ever move us?

In time, it’s going to be impossible to deny that abortion is violence against children. Future generations, as they look back, are not necessarily going to go easy on ours. Our bland acceptance of abortion is not going to look like an understandable goof. In fact, the kind of hatred that people now level at Nazis and slave-owners may well fall upon our era. Future generations can accurately say, “It’s not like they didn’t know.” They can say, “After all, they had sonograms.” They may consider this bloodshed to be a form of genocide. They might judge our generation to be monsters.

One day, the tide is going to turn. With that Supreme Court decision 43 years ago, one of the sides in the abortion debate won the day. But sooner or later, that day will end. No generation can rule from the grave. The time is coming when a younger generation will sit in judgment of ours. And they are not obligated to be kind. †

Read more at: <http://www.nationalreview.com/article/430152/abortion-roe-v-wade-unborn-children-women-feminism-march-life>

From National Review. *Frederica Mathewes-Green is the author of Real Choices: Listening to Women; Looking for Alternatives to Abortion.*



Melkite Association of Young Adults 2018 National Summer Retreat

SAVE THE DATE JUNE 30 - JULY 4, 2018 HOUSTON, TEXAS

We invite all Melkite young adults to join us for the 23rd Annual National Retreat. Attendees must be ages 18 to 30 and at least one year out of high school. Connect with us on Facebook, our website, or by email for more information.

In the meantime, **start a local MAYA group in your parish!**

Like us on Facebook:
fb.me/MelkiteYoungAdults

Visit our website:
www.usmaya.org

Email us:
themayaboard@gmail.com



MARK YOUR CALENDAR JULY 5-8 2018

51st National MELKITE Convention *hosted by* Mission of St. Barbara Houston, Texas

Rise Again Project Provides Prosthetic Limbs for Syrian Children Injured in War



BY HAYA KALIOUNJI

I am from Syria. I am 19 years old and I go to Pasadena City College, majoring in biology.

In February 2013 I left my lovely mother country because of the war and escaped with my family to the United States. After I integrated well at school, I decided to join the Girl Scouts of Greater LA.

As a Girl Scout, I worked on obtaining the Gold Award, the highest award a Girl Scout can earn. My project “Rise Again” had the purpose of raising money and providing prosthetic devices for children who lost their limbs because of the war in Syria. Within six months, I raised enough money to help five children.

This outcome exceeded my established target and helped fulfill my goal of helping children in need. It made me realize that I could have an impact on the world. I decided to turn my project into a non-profit organization.

After a year full of obstacles and challenges, I was able to partner with my parish priest, Fr Fouad Sayegh, and our church. After listening to my story and the story behind my project, he suggested that we make this project a permanent part of the parish.

Since I intended to turn it into a non-profit organization, I proposed that we create a parish organization with the sole purpose of providing prostheses for victims in Syria. The con-

tract was signed in July 2016, a committee was set, and we are continuing our mission.

Now, Rise Again is a non-profit organization, established in 2016, that belongs to St Anne Melkite Greek Catholic Cathedral in North Hollywood.

So far, eight more victims have benefited from our organization, but there are currently more than 40,000 amputees who can’t afford a prosthetic limb. One device can cost between \$300 and \$1000. Our efforts can’t take effect unless we have the support of everyone in our community.

Through this organization, I wish to inspire people to make their own impact on the world, and to show them that no matter their age, through perseverance and hard work, they can achieve anything. †



Haya Kaliounji

Haya Kaliounji, president of Rise Again, may be contacted by telephone at (626) 773-0904 and by email at riseagainla@gmail.com.

AMERICAN MELKITE DONATIONS HELP THOUSANDS OF SYRIAN FAMILIES



In November and December 2016, the Eparchy sent \$60,000 to the five Melkite bishops in Syria to assist those families most in need and hurt by the ongoing war. This money came from donations by Melkites and many non-Melkites, who continue to send gifts to assist those in need. The Eparchy also devotes a percentage of the Annual Bishop's Appeal for charitable needs here and abroad.

In the last issue of *SOPHIA* we reported how Archbishop Nicolas Antiba used the share allotted to the Metropolitan Archdiocese of Hauran and Jabel Ed-Druze. This archdiocese has numerous villages, and historically, during the Roman and Byzantine eras, was a large archdiocese with many suffragan dioceses. Without good irrigation, this area is now arid and dry; most of the families live from agriculture where some irrigation is available.

In this issue we add three more reports on how your generous donations were used.

Patriarchal Eparchy of Antioch in Damascus

Archbishop—now Patriarch—Joseph (Absi) gave Bishop Nicholas a very detailed accounting of how the \$12,000 was used, including signed documents with pictures of each recipient. Each of 265 families received 25,000 Syrian pounds, which today is about \$50. Before the Syrian war this would have been \$125. This assisted each family with food, rent, and medical necessities.

- Distributed by Patriarch Joseph, Fathers El-Khoury, Aldabbay, Mousleh, Abboud, Sister Renee Kousa, Lamia
- Obeid and Nabil Cowya—169 families in Damascus.
- Fr. Elias Aghia—40 families in Jaramana.
- Fr. Elias Francis—36 families in Tabbale.
- Fr. Salameh Salameh—20 families in Haresta.

Metropolitan Archdiocese of Homs, Hama and Yabroud.

Archbishop John Abdo Arbash's letter of 7 July 2017 quotes the Gospel of Matthew, 25: 35-46: "I was hungry and you gave me food, thirsty and you gave me drink, stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me . . ." He continues, "Your gifts were inspired by the Gospel . . . from the bottom of my heart sincere thanks for your gift. Your service and help was a

great support for us."

The archbishop sent a full list of names of those to whom the money was distributed. The financial help included rent, food, water, and medicine.

- 78 families received house rent in February 2017.
- 196 families received financial help in March 2017.
- 198 families received financial help in April 2017.

Archbishop John ends his letter: "God grant many more years to all the donors who opened their hearts to assist us."

Metropolitan Archdiocese of Aleppo

In a long and detailed report, Archbishop Jean Jeanbart speaks about the present condition of Melkites in Aleppo with regard to pastoral works, education, emergency aid, jobs, and reconstruction. Only six out of twelve Melkite churches are functioning. Nine schools are struggling with the assistance of Apostolic Action groups.

On the level of emergency aid, storage places for essential foodstuffs were set up since most of the Christians who remain in the city are destitute. Through an emergency fund, 1500 families received food from the storage facilities. Another 850 families also benefit from this program, which is granting them half of their regular salaries, lost through lack of work. A community dispensary provides proper medical care, with medication given to patients in need. Those not needing full hospitalization are also treated at the Medicare Center. Needy families receive financial aid to assist with rent and generators when there is no electricity. Heating fuel is provided for more than 1100 families during the cold winters. Since the Syrian pound is severely devaluated, 1500 families receive food allotments brought to their homes by volunteers. Volunteers also help restoring homes and apartments damaged by bombing. More than 260 so far have been restored.

Archbishop Jean has established a campaign called "Build to Stay," with the hope that those who fled will return. We pray with him and all the church leaders in Syria that, in his words, "our faithful will return to their work and once more find a normal life, in tranquility and in an atmosphere that is serene, full of friendliness and mutual understanding among the citizens of this country dramatically tried by war." †

THREE PARISHES COMPLETE RENOVATION PROJECTS

Renovation projects have been completed at one of our oldest churches, one of our newer churches, and one that was built in 1965.

ST GEORGE CHURCH IN MILWAUKEE, WISCONSIN, built as a Melkite church in 1917, has a new ceiling to replace a false ceiling installed some 50 years ago. The restoration uncovered many interesting aspects of the church's history.

OUR LADY OF REDEMPTION CHURCH IN WARREN, MICHIGAN, is one of our newer church buildings. In fact, it is so new it was never really finished. Be sure to read Fr Michel Cheble's fascinating account of all the work that has now been completed.

ST ANNE CATHEDRAL IN NORTH HOLLYWOOD, CALIFORNIA, was constructed in 1965. A donor recently offered to give a beautiful Pantocrator icon for the ceiling. After the scaffolding went up, however, workers discovered that the "popcorn" ceiling was disintegrating, so it had to be removed before the icon could be installed. Since so much rubble would fall onto the pews and floor, the community decided also to refinish the pews and replace the floor.

Here are the stories of the three church renovation projects:

Ceiling Renovation Produces Much Excitement at St George, Milwaukee

BY DANA CALLAN-FARLEY

Early in the fall of 2016, a small group of parishioners and friends erected scaffolding to begin renovating the ceiling at St George church in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Worshipping for months within the structure, the parish wondered with anticipation to the day the project was complete. Finally, at the end of spring 2017, the new ceiling was unveiled to everyone's awe and appreciation.

Built and dedicated in 1917, St George has served many parishioners; at one point, most of them lived within a brief walk of the church. The simple but beautiful church originally had no iconostasis and was, basically, a Latin church. The inscription above the front doors reads "St George Syrian R.C. [Roman Catholic] Church." Many mosaic-style frescoes, paintings wall-papered to the plaster, ornamented the ceiling. As the community grew and then shrunk, a great deal of delayed maintenance caused problems with the ceiling and pieces began to fall. It was so bad that by the 1960s the Divine Liturgy was celebrated in the basement, as the church itself seemed to be falling apart.

A suspended ceiling was installed and many repairs were made to support the roof and catch any small pieces that might fall. This kept St George from being condemned by the City of Milwaukee. This situation continued until the demolition of the old ceiling, overloaded by heavy plaster, and the additional 20,000-pound gypsum drop-ceiling. It all had to be completely removed and plastered. Many of the paintings were saved for restoration and replacement later.

Led by parishioners John and Ann Rebholz, the "fun



project” benefited from the gifts and generosity of many people: none of the cost came from parish funds. Volunteers did all the work. Among them was the father-in-law of John’s best friend. Joe Welch is a well-known, experienced contractor whose vision, project orientation, and building skills provided the needed expertise for the two-part project, which dealt first with the back and then with the front of the building. The completion of the first section excited the people, who had to wait another four months for completion of the project.

The new ceiling wrought a dramatic change in the church interior and the congregation’s experience. In the past, no one ever raised their eyes to the ceiling, even during prayer. Now, people are craning their necks to enjoy the beauty and simplicity of St George’s renovated ceiling, with its icons and decorative borders, deepening their encounter with Christ. As a bonus, the improved acoustics have transformed the congregational singing into something like that of angels.

When asked how he felt about the new ceiling, St George’s pastor, Fr Philaret Littlefield, commented, “Only that I thank every parishioner, from young to old, for their contribution to this endeavor. Whether it was monetary, work effort, or prayer, it is a sight to behold and an aid to our worship in God’s temple.” †

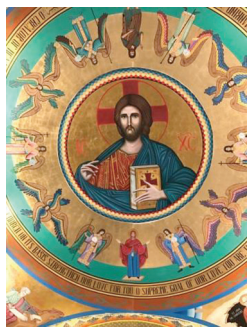
St Anne Cathedral Remodels and Adds New Icons

St Anne Cathedral in North Hollywood, California, recently added several icons and remodeled the church interior to deal with issues of the aging building. Work began on Monday 9 January 2017, when the church was closed and the hall turned into a church. The church reopened on 9 April 2017 so that the parish could celebrate Palm Sunday in the newly renovated cathedral.

The Finance and Maintenance committees discussed and approved all studies of the project. Project executive Khader Azuz donated all of his time and talents to accomplish the work. Many thanks to him and his team for leading the project to a successful completion.

Many thanks also to all the generous benefactors of the project. The parish is grateful for the support from Bishop Nicholas and the parishioners to ensure its success.

New Iconography



In August 2016 St Anne’s commissioned icons of the Pantocrator and the four Evangelists, and three medallions of Christian symbols. A generous benefactor donated all of these icons.

The icon of the Pantocrator was painted on canvas, then glued to the ceiling between the altar and the chandelier. This icon depicts the Lord surrounded by the different angelic hosts with the Theotokos and St John the Baptist at either side, showing their intercessory power before Christ. The icon itself measures 36 by 26 feet.

At the four corners of the Pantocrator are the four Evangelists. They are shown with their traditional symbols writing the Gospels.

The first symbolic medallion portrays the Seraphim with six wings.

The second medallion depicts the Cross as



shown on the Lamb (Holy Bread) offered during the Divine Liturgy—the Greek letters “IC XC NI KA” in the four quarters divided by the Cross. This is an abbreviation of the Greek words for “Jesus Christ, Conqueror.”



The last medallion contains the first two letters of the word “Christ” in Greek—Chi Ro (X P)—with the letters Alpha and Omega (the first and last letters in the Greek alphabet) beside it, signifying that Christ is the beginning and the end.

Local iconographer Shadi Krit of Covina, CA, executed the iconography. Anyone interested in engaging his services may call him at 718-577-5600.

Interior Remodeling

To accommodate the new icons the “popcorn” ceiling was removed and covered with stucco, then smoothed with “mud” before painting. This required emptying the church of all the pews and setting up scaffolds.

The electrical system in the ceiling was completely renewed, replacing the old fluorescent and track lighting with modern fixtures, adding more lights to illuminate the icons and the ceiling, and installing energy-efficient bulbs throughout.

Once the pews were removed from the building, they were sanded down and refinished, along with all of the wood in the church.

All of the old carpet was removed, revealing some bubbles

Continued on page 28



and unevenness from 50 years of wear and tear, and all of this had to be repaired. A beautiful and highly durable carpet of the same color replaced the old carpet, and the flooring under the pews was replaced with wood. Generous benefactors paid for this phase of the project.

Since a new air conditioning system was installed in July 2016, the floor vents all around the edge of the church interior were also removed.

For the Future:

A New Church Entrance and Narthex

The next project will be constructing a new entrance to the church. The permits are completed and the start of the project is waiting for bids.

This phase will create a narthex for the church, with two sets of doors. This will provide a handicapped restroom, a preparation room for weddings and funerals, and a storage area. The restroom entrances are now at the back of the church and will be relocated to the new narthex. The narthex will also be used as an area where people can pick up candles, bulletins, prayer books, etc. Relocating the exterior doors from directly into the church will decrease the noise and cause less distraction made by people entering the church, promoting a more prayerful environment.

The bell tower at the entrance to the church is badly rusted and also needs repairs.

At the completion of the whole project, Bishop Nicholas will be invited to bless all that has been accomplished. †



Our Lady of Redemption Renovation Project— A Labor of Love in Warren, Michigan

BY FR MICHEL CHEBLE

Words cannot really describe the gratitude and admiration I have learned to feel for my parish and parishioners. When I was appointed pastor of Our Lady of Redemption parish in Warren, Michigan, but before I joined the parish in May 2008, I was warned and cautioned and made to fear: a divided parish, severe in-fighting and bickering, no workers, no management, too many chiefs, issues with the church, the building, problems, problems, problems . . .

So Jesus and I made the journey. I was reluctant at first. Jesus carried me. We met with many parishioners. We had many discussions. We reviewed volumes and volumes of information. It took us a couple of days (Jesus is a fast reader). Then Jesus declared to me and to the parishioners, “I am the Light.”

This parish had recently built one of the country’s biggest Melkite churches. Every building needs normal maintenance. But after some time, the building really needed to be updated.

Everyone took responsibility for working towards one goal: One church, indivisible, under God. So Jesus was very happy; He bestowed more of his blessings on Our Lady of Redemption.

Increasing numbers of young children joined Eastern Christian Formation, NAMY and MAYA increased their activities and drew more participation, a Knights of Columbus chapter was formed and is slowly growing, and of course the backbone of the church, the Ladies Society, saw a spike in the number of members and activities. And let us not forget the choir members who never fail to serve the Liturgy and chant in praise of the Lord. The parish also reduced its mortgage by a substantial amount.

In July 2012 Our Lady of Redemption hosted the most successful convention in the Melkite eparchy (we humbly and proudly claim). All parishioners worked together in love and harmony to prepare and execute the plan.

The façade and columns at the main entrance of the church needed to be re-engineered. A circular drive became necessary. This work, which was done in 2015, not only created a majestic entrance to the church but also permitted closer drop-offs and pick-ups for our elders and a couple of parishioners who cannot decide whether they are young or older.

They say housework never ends. The same is true of work in the house of God. More needed to be done. The pews that had been brought from the old church grew old, squeaky, and unsafe. The carpet had outlasted its normal life, becoming tattered and dangerous. Many areas of the ceiling were deteriorating.

Committees were formed, the machine was oiled. After many months of preparation and planning, in November 2016 the “200 Club” presented a wine tasting augmented by an auction. We also had funds put aside from a raffle in celebration of the Dormition of the Theotokos.

You remember Jesus? He was with us when we started this jour-



ney. You remember the first miracle that Jesus performed? Yes, He did it again. The more wine we offered the more people bought. But Jesus didn't do it alone! At the wedding in Cana, He asked others to bring the water. He did the same here. The more parishioners signed up for the event, the more parishioners asked to sign up, the more wine we had to buy (a great problem to have).

Yes! Our Lady of Redemption parishioners, family, and friends carried out the miracle. You remember how many people Jesus fed with “five loaves of bread and two fish” (Matthew 14:13-21)? Some doubters could not imagine. Some faithless could not believe. The parishioners knew it. We all witnessed what love, harmony, unity and respect could achieve!

We made enough money to undertake and complete a very large project. And yes, we celebrated the joyous day of Palm Sunday 2017 in our newly renovated church (new pews that don't squeak, new carpet and tile that doesn't trip). Best of all, we made the procession of Jesus' entry to Jerusalem in our church and in our hearts. And even more: this Palm Sunday, the weather cooperated and for the first time in many years we were able to have the procession outside the church.

Our parishioners do know this: there is more work to be done. Next will come the designing and building of a new iconostasis. This is our challenge. We will, Jesus at our side, continue to fix and beautify the house of the Lord.

I offer my sincere thanks and gratitude to all the planners, workers, donors, and well-wishers for a job well done. We are still receiving money from more benefactors and will earmark those funds for the next project.

We do all this in loving memory of all those parishioners who preceded us and for the health and salvation of all in Jesus Christ. †

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السنة الليترجية احتفال بالمسيح ومسيرة نحو الله

The Liturgical Year,
Celebrating Christ and Journeying towards God
مقدمة

الليترجيا مدرسة الإيمان

الليترجيا، بالنسبة إلينا نحن الشرقيين، هي مدرسة الإيمان. سأل زائر غربي البطريرك الروسي ألكسي، كيف يُعرّف الكنيسة الشرقية، فأجاب غبطته: "إنها كنيسة تحتفل بالليترجيا الإلهية". جواب كهذا ليس غريباً عن ذهنية المسيحي الشرقي بسبب الدور الذي تلعبه الليترجيا في حياة الشرق المسيحي. فالكنيسة الشرقية هي قبل كل شيء كنيسة ساهرة في حضرة الله، ومحتفلة بأسرار ابنه منذ القديم من خلال طقوس ورتتها عن الآباء القديسين بالإيمان¹.

في عهد سابق منعت الشيوعية الملحدة في روسيا اقتناء الكتاب المقدس وكل تعليم ديني، ولكنها لم تستطع أن تمنع القديسين من الاستمرار في البلاد، فأين تعلم هؤلاء الإيمان؟ وكذلك العثمانيون منعوا العلم وضغطوا على المسيحيين في بلادنا الشرق أوسطية، ولكنهم لم يستطيعوا أيضاً أن يمنعوا الإيمان والقداسة اللذين تناقلهما أجدادنا جيلاً بعد جيل، فكيف حفظ هؤلاء إيمانهم؟



إنها الليترجيا، مدرسة الإيمان، فالتعليم والصلاة لا يفترقان، إنهما وجهان لعملة واحدة. وهذا ما أكدّه إيفاغريوس البنطيّ إذ قال: "إذا كنت لاهوتياً فأنت رجلٌ صلاة، وإذا كنت رجلٌ صلاة فأنت لاهوتيّ". وهذا يتلاقى مع المقولة اللاتينية: "قانون الصلاة هو قانون الإيمان" (Lex orandi Lex credendi). تقول فتاة يونانية في شهادة لها عن الإيمان: عندنا لا يوجد "التعليم المسيحي". نقيم الليترجيا، الميستاغوجيا، فقط، ومن خلالها نتعلم الإيمان ونحياه.

وعندما تدخل الليترجيا عتبة البيت، وتصبح ركيزة حياة العائلة وتتغذّى إلى قلوب أفراد الأسرة كباراً وصغاراً ندرك أن البيت هو الكنيسة الأولى التي ينشأ فيها المسيحي منذ نعومة أظفاره.

الليترجيا حياة الله فينا

يقول القديس إيريناوس في ردّه على الغنوصيين: "الإنسان الكامل مؤلف من ثلاثة عناصر: الجسد والنفس والروح... أما النفس فتارة يشدّها الروح ويرفعها إليه، وطوراً يشدّها الجسد إلى الشهوات الأرضية. ومن الناس من لا يملك الروح الذي يخلص، وهم الذين يسميهم القديس بولس "الجسديين"... أما الذين يخافون الله

TAFT, Robert SJ, *Beyond East and West, Problems in Liturgical Understanding, Pastoral* ¹
Press 1984 Ch 8 n 111

ويؤمنون بمجيء ابنه، وبإيمانهم هذا يُسكنون روحَ الله في قلوبهم، فهؤلاء يستحقون أن يسموا "روحيين"، لأن عندهم روح الآب الذي يقَدِّس الإنسان ويرفعه إلى الحياة في الله (روما 8، 5-10؛ 1 كورنثس 2، 14-15). هذا التعريف بالإنسان، الذي اعتمده الآباء القديسون عمومًا، مستقى من الكتاب المقدس نفسه. فالقديس بولس يقول في هذا الصدد: "ليقدسكم إله السلام نفسه تقديسًا كاملاً، وليحفظ كلَّ ما فيكم: أرواحكم ونفوسكم وأجسادكم بغير لوم عند مجيء ربنا يسوع المسيح" (1 تسالونيكي 5، 23). وفي إنجيل لوقا نقرأ أن السيد يسوع المسيح "كان ينمو في السن والحكمة والنعمة" (لوقا 2، 40).

وبمطالعتنا الآباء القديسين نجد أن هذا الإيمان بالروح يزداد ثباتًا وإلحاحًا، فيصفون الإنسان الملتزم بإيمانه بالإنسان الروحي، أي إنه يتميّز بحضور الروح فيه. وهذا الروح هو بنفس الوقت "عنصر إنساني" من عناصر الإنسان، و"عنصر إلهي" متميز عن الإنسان. يسميه مكاريوس الثاني "نزيرًا أو ضيفًا" (guest). إنه يشبه سر الحب (الزواج)، الذي يجعل الزوجين يعيشان في آن معًا سرًّا وحدةً وتباين (Mystery of union and of distinction).

وما الحياة الروحية إلا دخول المسيح في الحياة الإنسانية. يقول أفرهات السرياني: "لقد حصلنا على روح المسيح حتى أصبح روح كلِّ منا بالذات". وهذا القول إن هو إلا صدى لقول القديس بولس: "لست أنا الحيِّ بعدُ، بل المسيح يحيا فيّ" (غلاطية 2، 20).

الحياة المسيحية هي "روحنة مستمرة" (Progressive Spiritualization)، هي دخول في أثير الروح، كما يؤكد ثيوفانيس المتوحّد (Theophan the Recluse). والليترجيا هي الوسيلة والتعبير عن هذه الروحنة، الليترجيا هي القناة والصورة لهذه الروحانية.

إن حضور المسيح في المؤمن، من خلال الليترجيا، هو حضور حقيقي ولكن سرّي. وعملنا ليس أن نفكر بهذا الحضور، بل أن نعيشه بالروح.

الليترجيا هي حياة الله فينا، والشهادة بهذه الحياة الإلهية أمام البشر، كما يؤكد المجمع الفاتيكاني الثاني. الليترجيا هي تشخيص للمسيح (Personnification)، ومحوّرة حوله (Christocentralization). الليترجيا هي إفخارستيا (الكلمة من أصل يوناني، تعني الشكر) مستمرة ترفعها الكنيسة، شكر دائم تقدمه جماعة المؤمنين إلى الله القدوس الذي صنع بكنيسته عظام، كما هتفت مريم التي هي صورة حية للكنيسة، عروس المسيح (لوقا 1، 49)، وصنّيعه هذا لم يكن عن استحقاق منا، إذ ليس "لأعمال بر عملناها" (روما 9، 12؛ 2 تيموثاوس 1، 9؛ تيطس 3، 5).

ليست الليترجيا إداً تعليمًا أو تربية أو تهذيبًا فحسب، بل هي اشتراك في شخص المسيح وخلصه، واتحاد بالعالم الجديد والخليقة الجديدة. إنها جواب الخليقة عن دعوة الله الخلاصية. "إني أكمل في جسدي ما نقص من آلام المسيح"، يقول القديس بولس (كولسي 1، 24)، وبتساءل ماذا نقص من آلام المسيح. أما أتى وأتم كل شيء؟



أجل لقد أتى، وهو "واقف على الباب يقرع" (رؤيا 3، 20)، ويبقى أن نفتح له باب قلوبنا. هذا ما نقص، وعلينا أن نكمله، ولا أحد يستطيع أن يكمله بالنيابة عنا، ولا الله نفسه، لأنه خلقنا أحرارًا.

هذا التجاوب مع دعوة الله، وهذه الروحنة لحياة المؤمن تقدمهما لنا الكنيسة من خلال احتفالاتها الليترجية في جعلنا نعيش من خلال سنتنا العادية "سنة ليترجية، سنة نعمة من الرب". وهكذا، فإنها، سنة بعد سنة، تجعلنا نعيش "الحياة بالرب".

السنة الليترجية

السنة الليترجية هي لوحة من الصلوات والأعياد المنظمة في دورة سنوية. ولكننا نخطيء إذا اعتبرناها مجرد تقويم / رزنامة / نتيجة (Calendar).

فهي مسيرة تُدخلنا في ذهن المسيح وتعاليم الإنجيل وأهمّ مراحل التاريخ المسيحي (الصعيد التربوي - *Educational, Pedagogical Function*)، وتوجّه صلاتنا في خطوط عريضة، وتسكبها في قالب تعبيريّ رسميٍّ وموضوعيّ وفنيٍّ. بكلمة الليترجيا هي نمط صلاة (Method of Prayer). إنها إحضار سرّيٍّ لما تقيم من ذكرى إذ تجعل الحدث - الذكرى حاضرًا حقيقيًا، وتجنّي منه نعمًا للمؤمنين إن كانوا على استعداد لقبول هذه النعم.

ولا معنى للاشتراك في المسيرة الليترجية السنوية إن لم ترافق الدورة الخارجية بدورة داخلية، وإن لم تجد الأحداث التي نقيم ذكرها صدىً سرّيًا حقيقيًا متجددًا في أذهاننا. فالسنة الليترجية لا تثمر إن لم تكن صلاةً وسجودًا "بالروح والحق".

وهي خصوصًا وسيلة للاتحاد بالمسيح ومرافقته في مراحل حياته: من البشارة إلى الميلاد، إلى التبشير، إلى الآلام والموت، إلى القيامة والصعود، إلى حلول روحه القدس في الكنيسة، أي في كل منا نحن المؤمنين. السنة الليترجية تُكوّن المسيح فينا. يقول مثل لاتيني من القرون الوسطى: "Annus est Christus".

- تقسيم السنة إلى أسابيع



أقرّ العهد القديم تقسيم السنة إلى أسابيع يتألف كل أسبوع من سبعة أيام، كما هو واضح من اشتقاق كلمة "أسبوع" في كل اللغات السامية. هذا التقسيم الذي يرقى إلى ما قبل أيام موسى، والذي ساد على الحضارات الإنسانية في

العالم كله². وقد بنى الله شريعة السبت على مبدأ الأسبوع هذا: يعمل الإنسان ستة أيام، وفي اليوم السابع يستريح. تنطبق هذه الشريعة على الغني والفقير، والعبد والخادم، وعلى الحيوانات (خاصة البقرة والحمار)، والحقل...

² حاولت الثورة الفرنسية أن تفسف هذا النظام الأسبوعي يجعلها الأسبوع مؤلفًا من عشرة أيام، والشهر من ثلاثة أسابيع، والعطلة السنوية من خمسة أو ستة أيام. كذلك الثورة الروسية. ولكنهما باءتا بالفشل، وسرعان ما عادتا إلى النظام المعهود.

وترافق الراحة الجسدية راحة روحية: صلاة، قراءة الكتاب المقدس وشرحه، سماع الوعظ، تقديم الذبائح، شكر الله، استعطافه، التكفير... لذلك سمي هذا اليوم يوم الرب، وكانت الوصية: "احفظ يوم الرب وقَدِّسه". وقد سمى الكتاب المقدس أيام الأسبوع بحسب الأرقام، مبتدئًا كل يوم من المساء: وكان مساء وكان صباح يوم واحد (أو بالأحرى: وكان مساء وكان صباح يوم أحد) وكان مساء وكان صباح يوم ثانٍ (أو بالأحرى: وكان مساء وكان صباح يوم اثنين)... وكان مساء وكان صباح يوم ثالث (أو بالأحرى: وكان مساء وكان صباح يوم ثلاثاء)... وكان مساء وكان صباح يوم رابع (أو بالأحرى: وكان مساء وكان صباح يوم أربعاء)... وكان مساء وكان صباح يوم خامس (أو بالأحرى: وكان مساء وكان صباح يوم خميس)... وكان مساء وكان صباح يوم سادس (الجمعة يوم الاستعداد)... وكان مساء وكان صباح يوم سابع (السبت أي يوم الراحة)3.

اشتركت اللغات السامية في هذه التسمية، بينما سمّت اللغة اللاتينية أيام الأسبوع بأسماء الآلهة (Sunday, Monday,...).

وكان يعيّد الشعب اليهودي ثلاث مرات في السنة (الفصح والخمسين والمظال)، ويدوم كل عيد سبعة أيام (أي أسبوعًا كاملاً)4.

- أسبوع السنين (اليوبيل): نقرأ في الكتاب المقدس أن اليهودي يزرع أرضه ست سنوات ويفلحها ويرعاها... وفي السنة السابعة يرتاح هو والأرض والعبيد والخدم. وتكون الثمار التي تعطيها الأرض في هذه السنة حصة الغريب واليتيم والأرملة والفقير...

- أسبوع أسابيع السنين: وبعد أسبوع أسابيع السنوات، في السنة الخمسين تكون سنة يوبيل، أو سنة مقدسة تُفتتح باحتفال عظيم في كل مدن اليهودية بنفخ البوق الخاص، وتدوم الاحتفالات سنة كاملة، فيها تتم المسامحة الكاملة والشاملة، ويترك الدائن للمديون دينه إذا لم يستطع أن يوفيه، وتعاد الأراضي المرهونة إلى أصحابها وكذلك الأراضي المباعة بدافع الحاجة. ومع تحرير الأملاك يحزّر أيضًا العبيد والخدام والأجراء. فسنة اليوبيل هي سنة مسامحة ومصالحة5.

(للمقال صلة)

³ أيام الأسبوع عند العرب العبراء هي: أوّل، أهون، جبّار، دُبّار، مؤنس، عروبة (الجمعة)، شتّار. جمعها أحد الشعراء بهذين البيتين:

أؤمل أن أعيش وإن يومي لأول أو لأهون أو جبار

أو التالي دبار أو فيومي لمؤنس أو عروبة أو شتّار

وقال أبو العلاء المعري في وصف لشعوره عن مجمع الدرور الذي كان يشارك فيه كل يوم جمعة: (عروبة)

تَهَيِّجُ أشواقِي عُروبةَ أَمَّا إِيكَ زوتني عن حضور مجمع

(عبد الله النجار، مذهب الموحدين الدرور، ص 65 و66).

⁴ هذه الأعياد السباعية الأيام لا تزال نجد آثارًا لها في أفراحنا وأحزاننا التي غالبًا ما تدوم "سبعة أيام وسبع ليال". كما أن العطلة السنوية في قوانين التوظيف عمومًا والتي مدتها 21 يومًا أي ثلاثة أسابيع هي من تأثير الكتاب المقدس.

⁵ انطلاقًا من هذا المفهوم الكتابي، درّج البابوات عادة اليوبيلات البابوية واعتبروها حافظًا لتحرير الإنسان ولممارسة الدعوة المسيحية بطريقة أفضل. ثم كُتفت ليُحتفل بها كل 25 سنة. ثم أضيفت إليها يوبيلات تتعلق بحياة المسيح (1933 يوبيل الفداء أعلنه البابا بيوس الحادي عشر، 1983 يوبيل آخر للفداء أعلنه البابا يوحنا بولس الثاني، 1987 سنة يوبيلية مرجعية، 2000 يوبيل السنة الألفين لميلاد السيد المسيح...).

QUIZ

WHAT'S YOUR MELKITE IQ?


The Bible in the Divine Liturgy

BY ABOUNA YACOB

See how much you and yours know about your faith and traditions by completing this self-quiz. You can find the correct answers on page 42. In this issue, the questions are about the biblical origins of the Divine Liturgy. For each quotation from the Liturgy, choose the quotation from the Bible that inspired it. Do some research to learn more about the items that especially interest you.

QUOTATIONS FROM THE DIVINE LITURGY OF ST JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

1. In the Creed, we say of Jesus Christ that "He rose again on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures."
2. We proclaim in the Creed that we believe in the Holy Spirit, "the Lord, the Giver of Life, who proceeds from the Father."
3. The Creed describes the Holy Spirit as One "who spoke through the prophets."
4. Immediately after we recite the Creed, the deacon invites us to be attentive to offer the holy oblation in peace, and the priest stands in the Holy Doors, saying, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you."
5. Then the priest says, "Let us lift up our hearts."
6. At end of the first part of the Anaphora, the priest chants that "there stand before You thousands of archangels and myriads of angels, Cherubim and Seraphim, six-winged, many-eyed, soaring on their pinions."
7. After the priest chants that the angels are singing, proclaiming, and shouting the hymn of victory, the people respond, "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord of Sabaoth, heaven and earth are filled with your glory."
8. Then the people continue, singing, "Hosanna in the highest! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest!"
9. As the priest continues to pray the Anaphora, just before the sanctification of the Bread and Wine he says, "who so loved your world as to give your Only-Begotten Son, that everyone who believes in Him shall not perish but may have eternal life ."
10. At the sanctification of the Wine, the priest says, "Drink of this, all of you, this is my Blood of the new covenant, which is shed for you and for many for the remission of sins."
11. After the sanctification of the Body and Blood of Christ, they are raised above the Holy Table as the priest proclaims, "We offer You your own, from what is your own, in all and for the sake of all."
12. At the end of the Anaphora, after we ask God to remember those who bring offerings, those who support the Church, and those who are mindful of the poor, the priest chants, "And grant that with one mouth and one heart we may glorify and extol your most noble and magnificent name."
13. Before Holy Communion, we pray the Lord's Prayer, which begins, "Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name."
14. In our prayer before Holy Communion, we proclaim, "I believe, Lord, and profess that You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God."

- 
15. Also in the prayer before Holy Communion, we pray, "I will not reveal your mystery to your enemies, nor give You a kiss like Judas, but like the thief, I acknowledge You: Remember me, Lord, in your Kingdom."
 16. Before Holy Communion, we sing the Kinonikon. On most Sundays these are the words: "Praise the Lord from the heavens! Praise him in the highest. Alleluia!"
 17. When the deacon or the priest invites us to approach for Holy Communion, we respond by singing, "Amen. Amen. Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord. The Lord is God and He has appeared to us."
 18. After Holy Communion, when the deacon and priest take the Holy Gifts back to the Prothesis Table, after the priest exclaims that God is blessed at all times, we sing in response, "Let our mouths be filled with your praise, O Lord."
 19. At the end of the Liturgy, the priest comes out from the Holy Place and prays the Ambon Prayer, including the phrase "save your people and bless your inheritance."
 20. Also in the Ambon Prayer, we hear the phrase "every good gift and every perfect grace is from above, coming down from You, the Father of Lights."

QUOTATIONS FROM THE BIBLE *(New Revised Standard Version)*

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> A. "For all things come from You, and of your own have we given You." 1 Chronicles 14 B. "O save your people, and bless your heritage." Psalm 28:9 C. "My mouth is filled with your praise, and with your glory all day long." Psalm 71:8 D. "Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord. We bless you from the house of the Lord. The Lord is God, and he has given us light." Psalm 118:26-27 E. "Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord from the heavens; praise him in the heights." Psalm 148:1 F. "And one called to another and said: 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory.'" Isaiah 6:3 G. "Let us lift up our hearts as well as our hands to God in heaven." Lamentations 3:41 H. "Pray then in this way: 'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.'" Matthew 6:9 I. "Simon Peter answered, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.'" Matthew 16:16 J. "Then He took a cup, and after giving thanks He gave it to them, saying, 'Drink from it, all of you; for this is my blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.'" Matthew 26:27-28 K. "Then those who went ahead and those who followed were shouting: 'Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.'" Mark 11:9 | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> L. "Then he said, 'Jesus, remember me when You come into your kingdom.'" Luke 23:42 M. "For God so loved the world that He gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life." John 3:16 N. "When the Advocate comes, whom I will send you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who comes from the Father, he will testify on my behalf." John 15:26 O. "So that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." Romans 15:6 P. "And that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures." 1 Corinthians 15:4 Q. "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you." 2 Corinthians 13:13 R. "Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets." Hebrews 1:1 S. "Every generous act of giving, with every perfect gift, is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change." James 1:17 T. "Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels surrounding the throne and the living creatures and the elders; they numbered myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands." Revelation 5:11 |
|---|--|

VOCATIONS OFFICE RECEIVES A GIFT

A promise made is a promise kept!



**Archimandrite
John Azar**
Director of the
Office of
Vocations

We reported in the recent article “Vocations Tour Swings South Again” that an icon was commissioned to coincide with the Vocations visit to St Nicholas church in Del Ray Beach, FL. Miami-based iconographer Chady Elias was asked to write an icon for the parish that would be a creative and focused prayer intention for Vocations during Great Lent. It was unveiled following the Divine Liturgy

At the same time, Exarch Gabriel Ghanoum, pastor of the parish, announced that he was requesting Chady to write an additional icon for the Vocations Office. A package then arrived at our Atlanta office. With much appreciation to Exarch Gabriel and to iconographer Chady Elias, we now have an icon of *The Miraculous Catch of Fish*, depicting the Holy Apostles bringing their fish-laden nets onto the boat. Christ is seen on the shore, having directed the tired and once-disbelieving fishermen to trust him, so that they would not only realize a bountiful catch but also that He would make them fishers of men.



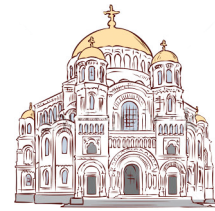
Having received permission from the iconographer, we will soon print prayer cards with this icon for distribution from the Vocations Office among our Melkite parishes.

All of us share the Call of Christ, depicted in this icon, to become fishers of men: to pray constantly for this intention, to actively seek potential candidates to serve the Church, and to encourage those whom we feel could become priests.

Again, we urge and welcome all of you to become Vocations Office Team Members by sending in the application, to offer periodic liturgy intentions at your local parishes, and to become personal “prayer warriors” for Vocations. An article we recently sent to your pastors to be shared with all of you recorded an increase of vocations abroad because of committed prayer.

Vocations are the work of all of us! †

Archimandrite John Azar, Director of the Office of Vocations, is pastor of St John Chrysostom parish, Atlanta, GA.



I wish to be a
Member of the Vocations Office Team
by pledging my commitment
for Vocations in the Melkite Church
by
_ reciting the Vocation Prayer daily
_ saying the Jesus Prayer daily
_ lighting a candle in church periodically
_ requesting a Vocation Commemoration
for Divine Liturgy periodically
_ fasting periodically
_ prostrations periodically

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Atlanta, GA 30307

vocations@melkite.org

NAMY Conference Considers Our Creation in God's Image

BY FR JAMES K. GRAHAM

About half of the teens attending this year's NAMY Conference from 25 through 29 June had never attended one before. This makes the future of the National Association of Melkite Youth look promising, although it may have caused a small drop in enthusiastic participation in this year's activities as newcomers figured out how the conference works.

Held once again at the Colombiere Retreat Center in Clarkston, Michigan, the conference had as its theme "Love Your #Selfie: Appreciating God's Masterpiece in the Mirror." In three general sessions, National Director Fr Thomas Steinmetz, pastor of Our Lady of the Cedars parish in Manchester, NH, and Fr James Graham, pastor of St Joseph parish in Lansing, MI, explained the biblical concept of human beings created in the image and likeness of God, and discussed how the Church expresses and reinforces that concept in the three Holy Mysteries of Christian Initiation: Baptism, Chrismation, and Holy Eucharist.

Around 90 conference attendees also prayed the Little Hours, Vespers, and Compline in the chapel daily, participated in the Holy Mystery of Repentance (Confession), enjoyed making s'mores around a campfire, presented skits based on the conference theme, shared their gifts in the annual Talent Show, and took advantage of the good weather and beautiful grounds for swimming, soccer, and the traditional volleyball tournament.

St Basil the Great parish (Lincoln, RI) walked away with the award for best skit and the team from Our Lady of Redemption parish (Warren, MI), augmented with strong players from St Joseph (Lansing, MI), captured the volleyball trophy. The awards were announced at the lively last-night dance.

Out of the many impressive nominees for 2017-2018 NAMY officers, the group elected Edmond Haddad (President, St John the Baptist parish, Northlake, IL), Eve Anderson (Our Lady of the Cedars, Manchester, NH), Diana Makdah, (St John the Baptist, Northlake, IL), and Karissa Massud (St Basil the Great, Lincoln, RI). The officers will work with the National Director to plan next year's conference, which will be held in conjunction with the National Melkite Convention hosted by St Barbara Mission, Houston, TX.

NAMY members and adult advisers from nine parishes spanning the USA attended the 2017 conference: Our Lady of the Cedars, Manchester, NH; St Basil the Great, Lincoln, RI; St Jude, Miami, FL; St Elias, Brooklyn, OH; Our Lady of Redemption, Warren, MI; St Joseph, Lansing, MI; St John the Baptist, Northlake, IL; and St Anne Co-Cathedral, North Hollywood, CA. Everyone attending the conference also appreciated visits from Fr Michel Cheble (Our Lady of Redemption) and Fr Ezzat Bathouche (St John the Baptist).

These groups account for only about one-fifth of the Melkite communities in the USA. Where are the groups from the other communities? Teens, adult lay people, and clergy in every parish, mission, and outreach should organize and promote local NAMY affiliates and plan to come to next year's conference, where they will deepen and strengthen their relationships with God, the Church, and one another. †

Fr James K. Graham is pastor of St Joseph parish in Lansing, MI, and Copy Editor of SOPHLA.



Young Adults Gather to Exemplify Christian Values

BY RICHARD McNEIL

In his first letter to Timothy, St Paul provides the young disciple with instructions regarding beliefs and practices of the Christian Church in order to become a “good servant of Christ” (1 Timothy 4:6) and to teach others according to the true faith. Paul then reassures Timothy, “Let no one despise your youth, but set the believers an example in speech and conduct, in love, in faith, in purity” (1 Timothy 4:12).

This summer, in the last week of June, 40 young Melkites took Paul’s words to heart during the 22nd Melkite Association of Young Adults (MAYA) National Retreat. For five days we gathered at Loyola University of Chicago to align our speech, our conduct, our love, our faith, and our purity according to the teachings and traditions of the Melkite Church.

Speech

Throughout the week, we participated in a number of presentations and discussions led by our spiritual leader, Fr Justin Rose. We discussed the fundamental principles and beliefs of our faith and how they can be used to spread God’s message. In a special presentation, Fr Thomas Loya of the Ruthenian Byzantine Catholic Church taught us how to see the world around us through a Byzantine Catholic perspective. We even heard a presentation on the conversion of St Paul from one of our own members, Najeeb Haddad of St Michael parish in Hammond, IN, who is a PhD Candidate in Theology at Loyola.

Conduct

We are taught as Christians to serve our communities through good works. A service project has been a focal point of MAYA retreats since the beginning. It is essential that members are given the chance to put their faith in action and serve others in the various retreat locations. This year, we were able to work with the Green Star Movement to help beautify two public places by creating large mosaic murals.

Love

Many members find the friendships and community built during a MAYA retreat as important as any other aspect of the retreat. Our group comprises individuals of various ages and backgrounds who come from parishes across the country. During our retreats, we have the opportunity to build long-lasting and meaningful relationships based on the common bond of our Melkite faith. This year we had attendees from parishes in California, Florida, Illinois, Indiana, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, and Rhode Island.

Faith

MAYA retreats give us an opportunity to practice our faith through daily prayer. Three times a day, we gather to pray the services of Typika, Vespers, and Compline. Our members take turns reading prayers and chanting psalms, while together we sing the hymns. This year, our services were held in the truly stunning Madonna Della Strada Chapel on Loyola’s campus. The stone walls, high ceiling, and immense icons provided us with a glimpse of what it

must have been like to pray in Hagia Sophia.

Purity

The Holy Mystery of Reconciliation (Confession) has always been a part of MAYA retreats. During a time when we are so focused on our faith and prayer, retreats offer members a great opportunity to make their confessions. In a more informal manner, Fr Justin has made the teaching and practice of the Jesus Prayer a mainstay at MAYA retreats, encouraging us to incorporate prayers of forgiveness in our daily lives.

Retreat, Not Vacation

The spiritual growth and wonderful relationships built at MAYA retreats create deeply meaningful experiences for many, which is why we held our National Retreat this year despite the lack of a National Convention. In fact, this was the third time members of MAYA have gathered from across the country to pray, to learn, and to serve even though there would be no hotel and Grand Haffleh afterwards.

That is why it can be frustrating to hear MAYA referred to as a group of trouble-makers and partiers, who use retreats as an affordable vacation where they can spend late nights partying with their friends. From the very beginning, this perception of MAYA has persisted among both clergy and laity.

Where does this reputation come from? Admittedly, there have been some individuals in the past who have approached retreats in this way, but that is not the MAYA I know and love; a group filled with young people interested in learning how to better understand and practice our faith. Perhaps it all comes from the fact that many people simply think we are too young to be this committed to our faith.

Do Not Let Our Youth Fool You

Do not let our youth fool you! We are very much committed to the Melkite faith and to being the stewards of the mystery that has been entrusted to us.

You will find current and former members of MAYA scattered throughout our eparchy, as priests, readers, parish council members, and religious educators.

At conventions you may find us dancing late into the night at a haffleh, but you will also find us singing in the choir at Vespers and actively participating in the many discussions and lectures available.

That is why, despite being far from perfect, we plan to continue using retreats as a tool to learn the true faith and serve as an example to believers.

At this retreat, we elected a new Board to direct MAYA for the next two years. Some of these new MAYA leaders are already leaders in their home parishes. Patrick Moussawer (Our Lady of Redemption, Warren, MI) and Mirna Romhen (Virgin Mary, Brooklyn, NY) will serve as Co-Chairs; Samia Shaheen (St Elias, Cleveland, OH) as Secretary; Peter Sabak (Our Lady of Redemption) as Treasurer; and Kameel Sabak (Our Lady of Redemption) as Membership Chair.

I hope you will ask some of the MAYA members in your parish about their retreat experience. If you do not have any MAYA members in your church, please encourage your young adults to join our group and attend the 23rd National Retreat in Houston, TX, next summer! †

Richard McNeil is a parishioner at St Joseph parish in Lawrence, MA. His term as Co-Chair of the Melkite Association of Young Adults ended in June 2017.

Around the EPARCHY

Great Lakes Protopresbyterate

Once again the clergy of the Great Lakes Protopresbyterate gathered for their annual retreat at the Capuchin Retreat Center in Washington, Michigan. From 22 through 26 May, priests and deacons from the region enjoyed beautiful weather in the peaceful, wooded grounds of the retreat center as they prayed together, walked, talked, and enjoyed presentations and discussions with retreat director Fr Steven Hurd, SJ.

Fr Steve planned a series of reflections on different types of church organization and style found in the New Testament, and invited the fathers to use those examples as starting points for discussing experiences and issues in their own communities and ministries. Hence, the title of the retreat: “The Church Ancient and Current.”

The Great Lakes Protopresbyterate encompasses Melkite parishes in Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, and western New York.

The following priests and deacons attended: Fr Ezzat Bathouche (St John the Baptist, Northlake, IL), Fr James Graham (St Joseph, Lansing, MI), Protodeacon Joseph Daratony (St Joseph, Lansing), Fr Elie Eid (St Michael, Plymouth, MI), Protopresbyter Fr Michel Cheble (Our Lady of Redemption, Warren, MI), Deacon David Herr (Our Lady of Redemption, Warren), Fr Ignatius Harrington (Holy Resurrection, Columbus, OH), Archimandrite Eugene Mitchell (St Joseph, Akron, OH), Fr Naim Khalil (St Elias, Brooklyn, OH), and guest Fr Michael Hull (St Ignatius, Augusta, GA).

Regrettably, Fr Philaret Littlefield (St George, Milwaukee, WI) could not attend because of ill health and Fr Sergio Ayala (St Michael, Hammond IN), Fr Khaled Anatolios (Notre Dame University, South Bend, IN), and Fr Michael Copenhagen (St Nicholas, Rochester, NY) could not attend because of their non-pastoral employment. They were missed.



Clergy attending the Great Lakes Protopresbyterate Retreat posed in the garden at the Capuchin Retreat House (left to right): FRONT ROW – Protodeacon Joe Daratony, Deacon David Herr; MIDDLE ROW – Fr Naim Khalil, Fr Michael Hull, Fr Elie Eid, Fr Ezzat Bathouche. BACK ROW – Archimandrite Eugene Mitchell, Fr Ignatius Harrington, Fr James Graham, Fr Michel Cheble



Hammond, Indiana

Pastor of St Michael the Archangel Mission in Hammond, IN, Fr Sergio Ayala, and parishioners recently honored Archimandrite Edward Kakaty upon his retirement from active ministry. Fr Ed served this community some 25 years ago while he was assigned to St John the Baptist Parish in Northlake, IL. Shown at the presentation of a plaque to commemorate his service are (left to right) Fr Sergio, Fr Ed and Jamil Nemri. Fr Ed has served St Ann Parish in Waterford, CT, for the past 15 years until his retirement.

Around the EPARCHY

Placentia, California



During the last few months Holy Cross parish completed several maintenance projects. Parishioners trimmed the trees and bushes around the whole property; planted 38 hanging baskets around the Church, hall, offices, and classrooms; replaced missing external light covers around the buildings; planted two rose bushes at the parking lot entrance; planted succulents around the east side of the lot; and cleared dead trees and bushes on the northern side of the lot to prepare the area for grading and a layer of base to expand the parking lot.

This year a record number of 800 people attended Palm Sunday Divine Liturgy and procession and equally large numbers were present for Holy Week and Pascha. For the past few years most of these prayers have been celebrated under a large tent rented and placed on the main lawn. These successful Paschal celebrations gather under one roof many regular parishioners along with many from other parishes who love the prayerful atmosphere and processions.

Seminarian Neven Peša worked in the parish from 9 June through 9 August. He actively participated in the daily life of the parish, including house visits, baptisms, youth meetings and trips, leading a Vacation Bible Camp station, and organizing the youth retreat. He will remain in the parish's prayers during his third year of studies at the Byzantine Catholic Seminary of SS Cyril and Methodius in Pittsburgh, PA.

Deacon Elias Kashou has been very active visiting sick parishioners, making sure the Holy Place is neatly maintained, and leading well-attended monthly spiritual talks.

Preparations for the parish festival on 8-10 September began early. This special fundraising weekend is particularly important for reaching the goal of building a new church and hall. For the second year the festival will include a "Wine and Dine" fundraising dinner.

Following the Divine Liturgy on 25 June David Paddison and Jennifer Drader from Project Faith in Youth led a discussion in the hall for our whole community entitled "A Family Conversation: Alcohol, Drugs, and the Family."

On 9 July the youth went on a field trip to historic Mission San Juan Capistrano. The week of 17 July saw Holy Cross's fourth annual Vacation Bible Camp, with the theme "Maker Fun Factory: Created by God, Built for a Purpose." Each day highlighted a Bible verse and story to focus on how God created each person for a purpose. Forty-five youth and parents volunteered to make this an exceptional learning opportunity for the children and a fun activity for all.

On 30 July the youth prepared food in the church kitchen and went to provide a meal at Isaiah House women's shelter operated by the Catholic Worker Community.

Omaha, Nebraska

Melkite Deacon Fred Abboud was ordained on 6 May 2017 by the Most Rev George J. Lucas, Archbishop of Omaha, with permission from Bishop Nicholas Samra and the Congregation for the Eastern Churches. With the blessing of Bishop Nicholas, the new deacon serves the Melkite communities in Omaha/Lincoln, Nebraska. This photo of Deacon Fred with his wife Marie and children (left to right) Juliet, Aaron, Christian, Clare, Jocelyn, and Ethan, was taken on the day of his ordination at Deacon Fred's first liturgy, in St Gerald Roman Catholic Church in Ralston, NE, where the Omaha Byzantine Catholic Community celebrates its liturgies.



Woodland Park, New Jersey



The parishioners of St Ann Church in Woodland Park, NJ, held a happy retirement/going away party for Fr Jean Ghaby on Saturday 10 June 2017. St Ann clergy, as well as clergy from neighboring parishes, and over 150 people from the community came together to share in a special night of food, wonderful memories, and a beautiful sense of community. Fr Jean was presented with a plaque from parishioners, as a remembrance of service and dedication to the St Ann community. Fr Jean will be missed, but the community wishes him well as he travels to Lebanon to enjoy his retirement!



San Diego, California

Young adult and teen members of Saint Jacob community in San Diego have formed a new group for Bible study. The young adults first joined with St Mark Syriac Orthodox Church Bible Study, which now meets monthly at St Jacob community. In addition, the teen members participated in the Youth Retreat at Celebrity Ranch in Temecula in August along with teens from Holy Cross and other Melkite parishes.

Recently the entire community enjoyed a bonfire at the beach, which proved a huge success with more than 70 people participating. The new and younger Advisory Council organized the event. Other activities have included family nights and luncheons. Under the leadership of Fr Rezkallah Samaan attendance at the Sunday liturgy has increased markedly. There seems to be much potential for this small but growing community.





BY SUSAN ELEK
NAMW PRESIDENT

NAMW Members Support our Future Priests

The National Association of Melkite Women is thrilled to welcome two new seminarians, Mikhael Naddaf from Ballwin, MO, and Christopher Davel from Milwaukee, WI, who will join Oliver Black and Neven Pesa at SS Cyril and Methodius Byzantine Catholic Seminary in their journey to become Melkite priests. We pray for the success of these young men.

NAMW sincerely thanks the following parishes for sponsoring fundraisers:

- Church of the Virgin Mary (Brooklyn, NY)
- Holy Transfiguration (McLean, VA)
- Our Lady of Redemption (Warren, MI)
- St Anne Cathedral (North Hollywood, CA)
- St Basil the Great (Lincoln, RI)
- St John of the Desert (Phoenix, AZ)
- St John Chrysostom (Atlanta, GA), and
- St Joseph (Lansing, MI).

These fundraisers, along with dues, enable us to send monthly stipends to our seminarians.

We strongly urge all women in the eparchy to become members of NAMW, but we have several parishes with no members! Everyone in the eparchy benefits from new priests. NAMW is dedicated to helping these men. Please consider joining now. Complete and send the application below along with ten dollars. Show your support for our future priests.



SUSAN ELEK
President
Our Lady of Redemption
586-939-0650
elek70@comcast.net

SYLVIE NAJDARIAN
Vice President
Annunciation Cathedral
339-364-1380
sylviefn@hotmail.com

COLETTE SABAK
Treasurer
Our Lady of Redemption
313-683-1085
coco999@gmail.com

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF MELKITE WOMEN

To join or renew your membership in the National Association of Melkite Women, complete and mail this form with your dues check for \$10.00 made payable to NAMW to:

COLETTE SABAK . 17870 Maple Hill Drive . Northville, MI 48168

PLEASE PRINT:

NAME _____

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PARISH _____ Please circle one: **NEW MEMBER RENEWAL**

Remember to keep our need for vocations in your prayers. Be an advocate, encourage our youth to participate in your parish.

NAMW CONTACT INFORMATION

NAMW MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Answers to **What's Your Melkite IQ?** from pages 34-35

1. P	3. R	5. G	7. F	9. M	11.A	13.H	15.L	17.D	19.B
2. N	4. Q	6. T	8. K	10.J	12.O	14.I	16.E	18.C	20.S



BISHOPS APPEAL



My Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ, it gives me great joy to express my profound gratitude to all those whose names are inscribed in grateful remembrance in this Honor Roll of Benefactors as generous contributors to the Bishop's Appeal 2016. Thank God, you have answered the Lord's call to come to the aid of our Melkite Church in America even in these times of economic sacrifice. Through your generosity and support, the Lord has blessed us tremendously!

It is my fervent prayer that all the members of our Church in America will see your good works and give glory to our Father in Heaven and that all the faithful of our Eparchy will follow your good example and take an active role in the necessary duty of the monetary support of our Melkite Church in America! May Christ our Heavenly Benefactor bless and reward your generosity abundantly and may He bestow upon you the riches of His grace unto eternal life.

+ Nicholas

In Christ our God,

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GRAND TOTAL	\$500,000.00	\$465,068.00

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