



The Maronite Cross of Rabboola

Dear Friends,

Thank you for uniting with us in praying for vocations. As we shared previously, Natalie Salameh has joined us as a postulant (see below). Our 2014 has already welcomed a few women for an extended "come and see" visit. Please encourage young women in your parish to consider a vocation to religious life as a Maronite Servant.

We recommend that you share a video on religious life "Light of Love" that can be accessed on-line at <http://lightoflovefilm.com>. The website promotion states: "We often have ideas of religious life... either kneeling in a convent or out in the streets assisting the poor. While both of these scenes are essential to the life as a sister, Light of Love takes a deeper look into understanding the call... the "why" of religious life. By interviewing five sisters from five orders across the United States, the film places viewers face to face in intimate conversations with these amazing women. What does it mean to be called? What are the struggles of religious life? How have you seen God move through your ministry?"

During this season of Great Lent with its intensified prayer and fasting, would you consider offering an extra prayer each day for us, our mission, and for the women discerning with us? We value your support of prayer and promise the same for you.

Sister Marla Marie

Natalie's Entrance Day

The Feast of the Presentation and also the celebration of World Day for Consecrated Life were selected as the entrance day for Natalie Salameh to join the Maronite Servants of Christ the Light. At the Vigil Liturgy on February 1st, His Excellency Bishop Gregory blessed Natalie, and Mother Marla Marie welcomed her to the Maronite Servants at the parish of Our Lady of Lebanon in Waterbury, Connecticut. Father Dany Abi-Akar, pastor, hosted us for a dinner to offer congratulations.



Natalie Salameh comes to the Maronite Servants of Christ the Light from Sydney Australia, and she is the daughter of Joseph and Wendy Salameh, parishioners at the Maronite parish of St. Charbel. Please join us in praying for her family and for Natalie as she begins the journey of religious life.

It was an event of joy for our small community of Maronite Servants. Natalie said of her experience: "I felt an overwhelming sense of peace and happiness. I had come home because Jesus' heart is the place that I call home. I felt the all-embracing warmth of his great love as he welcomed me home into his heart."

**Illuminate Your Soul
Lenten Observances**

All Maronites who are physically capable are to abstain from meat on Ash Monday and all Fridays of Great Lent. Ash Monday and the Great Friday of the Crucifixion are also days of fasting. Fasting in the Maronite Church involves eating and drinking nothing at all (except water and medicine) from midnight until noon. The rest of the day normal meals can be taken, but without meat. All Maronites who are physically capable are to fast on these two days. Clergy, religious and laity who wish to observe the more traditional Maronite practice of fasting and abstinence are encouraged to do so. That practice is summarized in the following, taken from the Synod of Mt. Lebanon (1736): Every weekday of Lent (Monday through Friday) is a day of fasting and abstinence from meat and dairy products (eggs, butter, milk, etc.) Fasting involves eating and drinking nothing at all (except water and medicine) from midnight until noon. The rest of the day normal meals can be taken, but without meat or dairy products. Dairy products are excluded because they are animal byproducts. Saturdays and Sundays are exempt from fasting and abstaining, as are the following four feast days: St. Maron - February 9, The 40 Martyrs - March 9, St. Joseph - March 19 and the Annunciation - March 25.

Women's Overnight Retreat

On February 16-17, 2014, the Maronite Servants of Christ the Light hosted and facilitated an overnight retreat at the Mother of Light Convent for the young women of the Boston, Brockton and Lawrence parishes.

The focus of the retreat was on the life, spirituality and asceticism of St. Maron, founder of the Maronite Church, and the approaching season of Great Lent.

The retreatants were able to experience the healing power of forgiveness through the Mystery of Penance, followed by Divine Liturgy, offered by Fr. Nichols. Mother Marla Marie gave a presentation on the life and spirituality of St. Maron. As Maronites we have a lasting legacy and heritage of prayer and sacrifice given to us by our father founder, St. Maron. A life of love of God, prayer, and asceticism were the hallmarks of St. Maron's spirituality.



Using the example of St. Maron, the young ladies were guided and encouraged by Mother Marla Marie to think about the upcoming season of Great Lent and how we can make the most of it to deepen our relationship with Christ. St. Maron, because of his love for Christ and his desire to follow Him, went to the extreme limits of self-denial.

Jesus' love for us has no limits, and He held nothing back from us. His mission was one of sacrifice and prayer, as He obeyed His Father "unto death, death on a cross" (Philippians 2:8).

Mother Marla Marie encouraged and guided the women to ask themselves: "What am I really attached to, which part of my life isn't receiving the light of Christ?, in which area do I need to grow as a Christian?". With plenty of food for thought, and with the help of the Holy Spirit, the retreatants came up with their Lenten resolutions.

For those interested in attending an overnight retreat for a spiritual recharge, the next one will be held in May of this year. Please contact Mother Marla Marie for further details at sister@maroniteservants.org.



Pro-Life March—Washington

We joined with the thousands of peaceful protestors in this year's 41st March for Life on Wednesday January 22 in Washington DC. His Excellency, Bishop Gregory J. Mansour led our Maronite group in the rosary as we braved below zero temperatures joining with people from all over the country gathered outside at the National Mall. Even Pope Francis sent his support and tweeted "I join the March for Life in Washington with my prayers. May God help us respect all life, especially the most vulnerable."

"A great poverty reigns in a country that allows taking the life of an unborn child." -Mother Teresa



Catechesis—Our Lady of the Cedars, Boston

On Sunday, February 23, the Maronite Servants of Christ the Light catechized the children on the approaching season of Great Lent at Our Lady of the Cedars parish in Boston. Mother Marla Marie explained to the children and youth that Great Lent is a forty-day journey in which we seek to deepen our relationship with Christ through prayer, sacrifice and fasting.

The children were encouraged by the Sisters to prepare for their forty-day journey by giving examples of some of the sacrifices they may consider. One little girl said that instead of watching her usual hour of television every night, she would be helping her mommy in the kitchen.

Fr. Georges El-Khalli, Pastor, visited the class and reminded the children to persevere in their sacrifices for love of Jesus. The class concluded with a Lenten craft project.



Upcoming Events

During Great Lent, we plan to serve in the following: March 21, 22, 23...St. Joseph in Maine, Retreat for the Rosary Sodality; March 29... Our Lady of Mercy, Worcester, Retreat for Children 12 to 5PM; March 30... Retreat Day for St. Anthony Desert Sodality 12PM-5PM; April 9...MYO at convent; April 10-21..."come & see" visit; April 12...Maronite Faith Formation at Our Lady of Purgatory; April 13...Prayer and Supper evening.

Afternoon of Recollection—Feast of St. Maron

On Sunday February 9, the Feast of St. Maron, the Maronite Servants of Christ the Light hosted an afternoon of recollection at the Mother of Light Convent for ladies from the New Bedford and Boston Maronite parishes.

The focus was on the life, spirituality and asceticism of the Saint Maron, founder of the Maronite Church. Mother Marla Marie explained the origins of St. Maron and his legacy, who he was, where he came from, and how he came to have such a large number of followers, today known as Maronites.

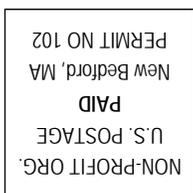
Mother Marla Marie explained that St. Maron sought to offer God more than routine acts of piety. He withdrew to a mountain at Kfar Nabo, Syria where he could more rigorously practice prayer, fasting and asceticism. St. Maron would spend long nights standing in prayer, fasting for weeks and lived out in the open, exposed to the elements.

This is the heritage and legacy that St. Maron has passed on today to us as Maronites, one of sacrifice and prayer. Mother Marla Marie encouraged the ladies to reflect on how they could apply the spirituality of St. Maron to their everyday lives. All of these women as wives and mothers understood that the life of St. Maron, the life of sacrifice, was indeed a reflection of their own lives, as they live to support and provide for their families.

The afternoon concluded with an hour before the Holy Mysteries in our Chapel of Saint Maron. A supper followed where our guests received a taste of the Maronite Servants' hospitality with lots of fellowship, sharing and laughter.



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Discerning With Us

Emily Sarbela Lattouf, 19, from Norton Massachusetts...

"The Lord said, "there is no greater love than this: to lay down ones life for one's friends" John 15:13. This is the love, which our Lord gave us; there is truly no greater love than his and he calls us as his children to imitate his love for us. We are all called by the Lord to make sacrifices for one another; to love one another with sacrificial love, but how far are we willing to serve one another in the Lord's name? To me the beautiful thing about the Maronite Servants of Christ the Light's mission is that not only are the sisters called to willingly sacrifice their worldly life in order to better serve the Lord and his people, but also they are called to radiate the Lord's light to all the people they encounter throughout their daily lives. At the end of each meal the sisters pray, "... may we be strengthened to do your holy will and to radiate your light to all those we meet." What better gift can we give to each other than Christ our Lord?"

Is God calling you or perhaps you can suggest the thought of religious life to a young woman in your parish. Let us pray for vocations. The Maronite Servants can be reached at sister@maroniteservants.org or 508/996-1753.

Our Priests Serve Us



We were blessed to have Qurbono with Abouna Jack of New Bedford and Abouna Gaby of Worcester, and later joining us for lunch Chorbishop Kaddo of Fall River. We enjoy the company of our area Maronite priests and are grateful for their service and support.

ON THE WEB

Check our blog updated every Friday. Visit our website for a copy of this newsletter. Also, find Maronite Servants on Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn.



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