

# Radiate His Light NEWS



Dear Friends and Family,

I was recently re-reading His Excellency, Bishop Gregory's letter for the implementation of the Jubilee Year of Mercy for our Eparchy. I would like to highlight a few of his suggestions (for the complete letter see [stmaron.org](http://stmaron.org), click Maronite Voice November issue). The Sisters and I have been visiting parishes offering talks and retreats on the theme of mercy, and encouraging them to make intentional choices of living out the Seven Spiritual and Seven Corporal Works of Mercy. Many folks have shared that they actually do not know these Works. Our Holy Father has asked us to reflect on them during this Jubilee, and simply, they are Christian love and compassion put into action. (See [www.usccb.org](http://www.usccb.org) and search works of mercy.)



Our Bishop offers us specific ways we can live out these Works in order to put our love into action. In this instruction, Bishop Gregory challenges us to embrace the Spiritual Works:

"Every Maronite is asked to re-evaluate his or her way of life to see where more mercy, more patience and more listening can make for better relationships with others, in particular for those closest to us (as well as those estranged from us). We will find creative ways to reach out. For those who are far away or have distanced themselves over the years from us, for any reason, let us reach out as well."

In addition, another Spiritual Work is to make pilgrimage and pray.

"Seven parishes including the Cathedral will be designated as places of pilgrimages:

Our Lady of Mercy in Worcester, Mass/ Saint Louis Gonzaga in Utica, N.Y./ Our Lady of Victory in Pittsburgh, Penn/Our Lady of Lebanon in Washington, D.C. /Saint Joseph Church in Atlanta, Ga./Saint Jude Church in Orlando, Fla./ Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral in Brooklyn, NY. You can call these parishes to see what events and plans they have for pilgrimage." In regards to the Corporal Works, our Bishop is reminding us of our obligation to support those in need in a tangible effort. "Every Parish and Mission in the Eparchy is encouraged to do one or more fundraisers for the needs of the local poor as well as those in the Middle East." Let us take this suggestion to heart and give of our time, talents and treasures in serving the poor. As spring approaches, these words of Pope Francis urge us on to embrace Jesus, who is the face of the Father's mercy, with renewed and intentional resolutions:

"God's mercy can make even the driest land become a garden, can restore life to dry bones (cf. Ez 37:1-14). ... Let us be renewed by God's mercy, let us be loved by Jesus, let us enable the power of his love to transform our lives too; and let us become agents of this mercy, channels through which God can water the earth, protect all creation and make justice and peace flourish."

In advance, the Sisters and I wish you a blessed celebration of the Glorious Resurrection – a deeper experience of Christ's risen, triumphant and merciful love. We promise you our prayers.

In Mary, Mother of the Light,

*Sister Marla Marie*

## Illuminate Your Soul

### Jubilee of Mercy Prayer

By Pope Francis

Lord Jesus Christ, you have taught us to be merciful like the heavenly Father, and have told us that whoever sees you sees Him. Show us your face and we will be saved. Your loving gaze freed Zacchaeus and Matthew from being enslaved by money; the adulteress and Magdalene from seeking happiness only in created things; made Peter weep after his betrayal, and assured Paradise to the repentant thief. Let us hear, as if addressed to each one of us, the words that you spoke to the Samaritan woman: "If you knew the gift of God!" You are the visible face of the invisible Father, of the God who manifests his power above all by forgiveness and mercy; let the Church be your visible face in the world, its Lord risen and glorified. You willed that your ministers would also be clothed in weakness in order that they may feel compassion for those in ignorance and error; let everyone who approaches them feel sought after, loved, and forgiven by God. Send your Spirit and consecrate every one of us with its anointing, so that the Jubilee of Mercy may be a year of grace from the Lord, and your Church, with renewed enthusiasm, may bring good news to the poor, proclaim liberty to captives and the oppressed, and restore sight to the blind. We ask this of you, Lord Jesus, through the intercession of Mary, Mother of Mercy; you who live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit for ever and ever. Amen.

## March for Life – Washington DC

By Sister Natalie Sayde

On Friday, January 22, the Maronite Servants of Christ the Light were in Washington D.C. for the 2016 March for Life. This was my first experience of the “March for Life”, and I absolutely loved it.

As we tuned into all the weather and news channels in Washington D.C. we knew that a blizzard was on the way on Friday afternoon, the actual day of the March. Despite the warnings of very bad weather, tens of thousands of people



gathered at Washington Monument (including the Maronite Servants) and prepared to march up Constitution Avenue towards the U.S. Supreme Court in witness to the dignity of the unborn, and to peacefully protest the moral evil of abortion.

Personally, I was so proud to see people of other faiths and other Christian denominations marching against abortion, in an attempt to safeguard everybody's right to life. It just made me think that at the core of every human being is a desire and yearning to exist, to live a full life and to be respected.

As we were marching we encountered many other religious communities including the Sisters of Life, the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal, and a hosts of seminarians and priests who were happy to be out despite the weather. We also

encountered women who were marching because they had regretted their abortion and were deeply wounded by the experience, and also young people who had been conceived through the crime of rape. I truly felt that I was part of something very sacred and special in upholding my belief that God loves each human life from the instant of his or her conception. It was a privilege to participate in this event, and to walk alongside those who uphold the value and dignity of human life from conception.



## MYO Regional -- Philadelphia, PA

On the weekend of February 19, 20, and 21, St. Maron in Philadelphia, hosted a regional MYA retreat focusing on the theme of “mercy” during this Jubilee Year. The retreat gathered approximately 60 youth from St. Maron's, Philadelphia; St. Anthony of the Desert, Lawrence, MA; Our Lady Star of the East, Pleasantville, NJ; and St. Charbel's, Newtown Square, PA.

Sister Therese Maria, Maronite Servants of Christ the Light, facilitated the weekend with Father Vince Farhat, pastor of St. Maron's, and many dedicated chaperones and youth leaders. Sister shared encouraged the teens to think about how God manifests His mercy personally to them in their lives, and in the Works of Mercy. The teens participated



in a service project on Saturday morning where they helped a needy local parish with indoor and outdoor maintenance. The MYO participated in adoration, confession, and fun activities like ice skating at Penn's Landing.

On Sunday morning, the teens shared on what aspect of the weekend they found most enlightening. Many loved adoration and confession, while others enjoyed the service project and having a chance to give back to the community. They enjoyed being with one another and forming new and deeper friendships.

## Reflection on my Renewal of Vows: Transfigured by Mercy

By Sr. Therese Maria Touma

In response to God's captivating invitation to lay down my life, in love, and for love, I joyfully renewed the total gift of myself in service to God and His people, on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception (December 8th). My sole desire is to be "wholly consumed" (holo-meaning "total") by love, through faithfully living the evangelical counsels of obedience, chastity and poverty, in order that I may reflect Mercy Himself, Jesus, who was obedient, chaste and poor.

"Let us not be afraid. Let us allow ourselves to be embraced by the mercy of God who is waiting for us, and who forgives everything. Nothing is sweeter than his mercy. Let us allow ourselves to be caressed by God. The Lord is so good, and he forgives everything. Through the intercession of Mary Immaculate, may mercy take hold of our hearts and transform our entire life." --Pope Francis--

As I reflect over the past six years of my religious formation journey, I cannot but give thanks to God for his merciful and transforming love at work in my life (and those of my sisters!). I see his gracious providence in all things, especially lately in the mission trips and retreats our community has offered, to maternally reach out in sharing Jesus' love and healing with young and old. Pope Francis' insightful words on God's unconditional mercy and forgiveness resonates deep within my heart. Indeed, nothing is sweeter than experiencing first-hand his life-giving mercy. Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good. His mercy endures forever (Psalm 136:1). I thank God each day for the gift of his limitless mercy, which has strengthened me in my vocation of love and spiritual motherhood.

In imitation of Mary, our sisters are called as servants of the Lord to radiate the light of Christ's merciful love and hope by offering the gift of their spiritual motherhood to nurture God's life in the hearts of children, families, and people of all ages through the works of mercy in service to the Maronite Church (Maronite Servants' Rule no. 3).

As part of our well-balanced formation program directed by Mother Marla Marie, we are actively engaged in the corporal and spiritual works of mercy. The corporal works include: feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, clothing the naked, sheltering the homeless, visiting the sick and the imprisoned and burying the dead. The spiritual works include: counseling the doubtful, instructing the ignorant, admonishing the sinner, comforting the sorrowful, bearing wrongs patiently, forgiving all injuries, and praying for the living and the dead. At present, we are also blessed in our mission to be serving on a weekly basis at a local food pantry in our community where we teach, pray and support those who are materially poor and lead them closer to Jesus in a weekly bible sharing and/or prayer gathering.

If you are interested in reaching out in service opportunities or would like us to come and offer a Mercy Recollection day or Retreat day please contact Mother Marla Marie at 508-996-1753.



Sister Therese Maria serving the needy.



## My Religious Name as a Novice

Sister Natalie Sayde Salameh

With deep gratitude to God, I entered the Novitiate of the Maronite Servants of Christ the Light on Cana Sunday, February 7. I received the religious habit, a white veil, and a religious name, Sr. Natalie Sayde. The novitiate usually lasts for two years where the novice begins to learn more about the rule of the community and vows of obedience, poverty and chastity, which she will profess when the novitiate concludes.

So my first name doesn't change, but in the Maronite Servants when a candidate enters her novitiate, she chooses a second name in honor of the Blessed Mother of God. With the blessing of Mother Marla Marie, I chose the name "Sayde". The name "Sayde" in Arabic literally means "Lady" in

English. But the name "Sayde" has become a familiar word used among Lebanese speaking people to refer to "Our Lady of Lebanon" in Harissa, Lebanon – "Saydet Luban" (Arabic). So they would say [I'm paraphrasing], "we're going up to visit the Sayde".

When I entered religious life as a postulant on February 2nd, 2014, Mother Marla Marie placed around my neck the medal of Our Lady of Lebanon, and I wore it every day for the last two years. The Sayde was my constant companion; everyday as I would place the medal around my neck I would give her my vocation, my cares, my joys, my concerns. I handed over everything to the Sayde, trusting and knowing that she was smiling at me and telling me "your mother never leaves you."

## Our Maronite Servants' Mission

The Maronite Servants of Christ the Light are a congregation of consecrated religious serving the Church in the parish as spiritual mothers in imitation of Mary, radiating the Light of Christ in their mission to children, youth, young adults, families, the sick, the dying, the grieving... They serve alongside the priests in pastoral ministry reaching out with a maternal touch to many needs of the parish family.

*"Consecrated life is a call to incarnate the Good News, to follow Christ, the crucified and risen one, to take on "Jesus's way of living and acting as the Incarnate Word in relation to the Father and in relation to the brothers and sisters."—Pope Francis*



Celebrating Deacon Joseph Abisaad's ordination. Pictured to the left is Monsignor El Khalli.

### 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.

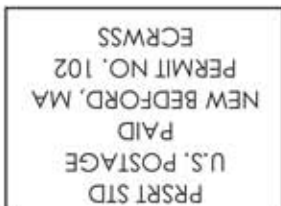


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EMAIL - [sister@maroniteservants.org](mailto:sister@maroniteservants.org)  
WEBSITE - [maroniteservants.org](http://maroniteservants.org)  
BLOG - [RadiateHisLight.blogspot.com](http://RadiateHisLight.blogspot.com)  
VOCATIONS - [Vineyardofthelord.com](http://Vineyardofthelord.com)  
PHONE - (508) 996-1753  
ADDRESS - Maronite Servants  
856 Tucker Road, Dartmouth, MA 02747

**ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED**



Servants of Christ the Light  
856 Tucker Road  
Dartmouth, MA 02747

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