

Radiate His Light NEWS



The Maronite Cross of Rabboola

Dear Friends and Family,

Peace be with you!

*In our daily spiritual reading at the convent, we have been reflecting on the first Apostolic Exhortation of Pope Francis: *Evangelii Gaudium*, *The Joy of the Gospel*. Pope Francis develops the theme of proclaiming the Gospel in our modern world by challenging all the faithful to participate in the mission of the new evangelization: "I invite all Christians, everywhere, at this very moment, to a renewed personal encounter with Jesus Christ, or at least an openness to letting him encounter them; I ask all of you to do this unfailingly each day. No one should think that this invitation is not meant for him or her."*

As Maronite Servants of Christ the Light, our Holy Father's teaching speaks to the heart of our charism as evangelizers in the parish offering our spiritual motherhood in imitation of Mary, to radiate the light of Christ's hope and mercy. Our mission efforts and life of prayer and penance are offered for the spiritual renewal of our people.

*An excerpt from *Evangelii Gaudium* is printed here in the sidebar, and we recommend that you download the full document for your reflection. The Pope is reminding us of something many of us already know, we are called to join in the missionary life of the Church. I first learned this a while back in Catholic grade school when we studied the Precepts of the Church. However, we often think of this witness in formal ways, church programs, organized missions and religious sponsored efforts neglecting to remember our baptismal call. I think the Pope reminds us that this sharing of the joy of the Gospel is a natural response to knowing how loved we are by Christ. "May the world of our time, which is searching, sometimes with anguish, sometimes with hope, be enabled to receive the good news not from evangelizers who are dejected, discouraged, impatient or anxious, but from ministers of the Gospel whose lives glow with fervor, who have first received the joy of Christ."*

Our prayer is that you discover anew the enduring joy of loving and being loved by Christ, and without hesitation, give witness to this love in your family, work place, circle of friends and the folks who enter your life. Please pray for us to be faithful witnesses to our mission. Thank you.

In Mary, Mother of the Light,

Sister Marla Marie



Illuminate Your Soul

**An excerpt from Pope Francis'
"Joy of the Gospel" no. 264**

"The primary reason for evangelizing is the love of Jesus which we have received, the experience of salvation which urges us to ever greater love of him. What kind of love would not feel the need to speak of the beloved, to point him out, to make him known? If we do not feel an intense desire to share this love, we need to pray insistently that he will once more touch our hearts. We need to implore his grace daily, asking him to open our cold hearts and shake up our lukewarm and superficial existence. Standing before him with open hearts, letting him look at us, we see that gaze of love which Nathaniel glimpsed on the day when Jesus said to him: "I saw you under the fig tree" (Jn 1:48). How good it is to stand before a crucifix, or on our knees before the Blessed Sacrament, and simply to be in his presence! How much good it does us when he once more touches our lives and impels us to share his new life! What then happens is that "we speak of what we have seen and heard" (1 Jn 1:3). The best incentive for sharing the Gospel comes from contemplating it with love, lingering over its pages and reading it with the heart. If we approach it in this way, its beauty will amaze and constantly excite us. But if this is to come about, we need to recover a contemplative spirit which can help us to realize ever anew that we have been entrusted with a treasure which makes us more human and helps us to lead a new life. There is nothing more precious which we can give to others."

Pope Saint John Paul II—Sleepy Hollow, NY

On Friday, April 25 to Sunday, April 27, the Maronite Servants of Christ the Light were invited by Father Naji Kiwan, pastor of the St. John Paul II Maronite Mission in Sleepy Hollow, NY, to participate in the weekend festivities the Mission held in honor of the canonization of their patron, Pope Saint John Paul II.

The parish MYO of the Mission, and a number of other teens arranged a concert by the Catholic band, Full Armor. Sr. Therese Maria was chosen by the band to sing and dance with them.

On Sunday, April 27, his Excellency, Bishop Gregory, celebrated Maronite Divine Liturgy, concelebrated with Fr. Naji and Fr. Christopher, pastor of the Roman Catholic Parish of the Immaculate Conception. The Liturgy was followed by a brunch in the parish hall, where the parishioners not only celebrated the canonization of their patron, St. John Paul II, but also celebrated and honored the 10-year anniversary of the installment of Bishop Gregory.



Retreat for Children—Worcester

On Saturday, March 29, the Maronite Servants of Christ the Light offered a retreat day for the children of Our Lady of Mercy Parish, Worcester, M.A. The focus of the day's retreat was on the sacrificial love of God as seen in Passion Week, beginning with Hosanna Sunday, Thursday of the Mysteries, Great Friday and culminating on the Glorious Resurrection.

The children watched an animated version of the passion, crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus, beginning with Jesus washing the feet of his apostles. Later on in small group bible catechesis, they learned our Maronite tradition of the priest washing the feet on the Thursday of the Mysteries as a reminder to us of Jesus' lesson to His apostles – that we must serve one another with love.

The Sisters explained to the children that the Friday of Passion Week is called Great Friday of the Crucifixion and how much Jesus endured to set us free from the darkness of sin and selfishness. It was the greatest act of sacrificial love! The children were then asked by the Sisters to reflect on how they can best imitate Jesus in His sacrificial love for us.



The children were able to meditate more on the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus, as Fr. Gaby Hoyek, pastor, led the children in a prayerful meditation on the Stations of the Cross.

The children enjoyed a craft decorating their own crosses to remind them of God's great love for them.

The day concluded with Fr. Gaby celebrating the Saturday Vigil Liturgy and the children participated as altar servers, transferring the gifts, singing and reading the intercessions.

For those interested in holding a similar retreat day at their Maronite Parish, please contact the Maronite Servants of Christ the Light by email sister@maroniteservants.org.

Parish Lent Retreat—Maine

By Natalie Salameh

On Saturday, March 22, the Maronite Servants of Christ the Light offered a day long retreat for the parishioners of St. Joseph's Maronite Church in Waterville, Maine. The focus was the gospel parable of the Prodigal Son emphasizing the theme of repentance and coming home to the love of our Father.

The day opened with a meet and greet of the retreat participants, followed by the praying of our Maronite Morning Prayer (*Safro*) led by Father Larry Jensen, pastor. Mother Marla Marie began the day's first reflection followed by a *Lectio Divina* (Divine Reading) on the parable. She explained that the younger prodigal son and the self-righteous elder brother both lived in the same house with a compassionate and loving father, but neither of them really knew their father. Both brothers were closed in on themselves, which prevented them from having a meaningful relationship with the father.

In the words of one of the participants, "we had such an enriching day! The talks led to a very deep scrutiny of the Prodigal Son parable. This was richly enhanced by the quiet personal meditations throughout the day and in our rosary prayer which made it truly a retreat in all our senses. I am positively changed and more closely bonded through this experience with my parish family". - Lyn Rowden



I Am Ready, Lord

By Rebecca Chedid

"Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid." (Matthew 14: 27)

This was meant to be my big year. As a PhD candidate, I was going to present my research study at the largest occupational therapy conference in the world in Baltimore Maryland! Little did I know that God had other plans for me too. While planning my trip to the US from Sydney, Australia, where I live, I felt the Holy Spirit giving me continuous signs to visit the Maronite Servants of Christ the Light.

I had been in touch with Mother Marla Marie for a few months prior and I thought this would be a great opportunity. Many questions came to mind. What should I expect? What do I bring with me? Is God calling me to religious life? I arrived a few days before Hosanna Sunday and spent Passion Week and Easter with the Sisters.

Before I arrived to the convent, I prayed, "I am ready Lord for whatever you want from me. I am ready." Since the first dinner with the Sisters, I felt Jesus in the midst. It felt like home.

In the twelve days I spent with the Sisters, I was moved by their great love for Our Lord and the Maronite parishes that they serve. I saw how authentic they were in preserving the Maronite traditions and liturgies and in living their vows of obedience, chastity, and poverty. I also joined them in at recreations playing Yahtzee, Pictionary, going on walks, singing, and watching *The Sound of Music*.

The Sisters lead a balanced life of prayer, service, study and recreation. So I joined the Sisters in their prayers and fast, especially during Passion Week. This allowed me to delve deeper into my spiritual journey and to share in the Lord's passion and resurrection. God showered me with an abundance of blessings during the time I spent there. I felt his immense love for me in every moment. I encourage young women to "come and see," to be open to God's will in their lives.

As Mother Marla Marie explained to me, God speaks through the silence of our hearts and through prayer. Even if you do not think that religious life is your calling, still come and visit the Sisters for some time. You will discover how much God loves you all over again. You will be able to go deeper in your spiritual journey. I continue to pray for more vocations to religious life and especially to the *Maronite Servants of Christ the Light*.





Prayer & Supper

On Mother's Day, May 11, the Maronite Servants of Christ the Light hosted their monthly Ramsho and Supper at the Mother of Light Convent and were blessed with the presence of his Excellency, Bishop Gregory J. Mansour, Chorbishop Joseph Kaddo, pastor of St. Anthony of the Desert in Fall River, and Fr. Jack Morrison, pastor of Our Lady of Purgatory in New Bedford, and several parishioners from our Boston and Brockton parishes.



We Offer to Serve

How may we serve you and your parish on the journey of faith in our Maronite tradition? As spiritual mothers serving alongside our priests, we are able to offer: parish retreats, day of prayer for a sodality or parish groups, an overnight retreat at the convent (women only), children's faith formation day, summer vacation bible camp, MYO or MYA workshops or retreats. Contact us via phone or email.

ON THE WEB

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