

A Week with Our Lady

A Pilgrim's guide to the National Shrine of Our Lady of Lebanon

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Forward: Peter went Fishing

When I arrived at the Shrine, I received the special grace of beginning and ending my time with hearing my favorite Gospel passage, John 21. In this passage, which takes place after the Resurrection, Peter and the other disciples go fishing and catch nothing. Despite profound graces in my life, I too often fall into the pattern of Peter who returned to his old life, who went back to work unchanged from his encounter with Jesus for three years, and essentially ineffective at his job- he caught no fish all night. Not only that, he who had been a leader among the disciples had

led some of the disciples away with Jesus. Despite years of knowing Jesus, I find myself returning to my old ways and my old sins. I find myself well-trained, but ineffective.

In a moment everything changed for Peter- first, he was told to cast his net on the right side of the boat. Second, his net was filled to the brim with 153 fish. Third, the beloved disciple tells Peter it is the Lord, and Peter clothes himself and swims to Jesus. Jesus came after Peter, and showed Peter that alone he could do nothing, but with Jesus, Peter could do anything. Peter manifested zeal in swimming to the shore, and at the shore he was asked three times, “Do you love me?” and told three times to feed the sheep and the lambs.

Jesus is pursuing us, is calling out to us, even if we have fallen away, even if we have returned to our old ways, even if we have forgotten everything. Jesus is coming after us even if we were never with him. Jesus is calling out to us, Jesus has come to us.

In a retreat or a pilgrimage to a shrine, we can think that we are looking for Jesus, but it is he who has called us out of the little boat -our comfort zones, our mediocrity, or our work; to the shore, where he offers us food to eat. We come soaking wet, in the baggage of our lives, and he fills us and warms us. We become like what we eat –set on fire. On retreat or on pilgrimage there is no greater gift we can receive than the Eucharist- Christ feeding us, with Himself, making us like Himself, setting our hearts on fire with His love.

Jesus asks Peter, “Do you love me?” three times. On retreat or on pilgrimage love is the primary question, “Do we love Jesus?” Yet, we find that no matter how much we love Him, His love is deeper, His love is greater, His love is primary. Peter jumps into the sea before professing his love for the Lord. For us as for Peter, that sea is a mere symbol of the vastness of Jesus’ love for us.

On pilgrimage or retreat, we have the opportunity to experience the love of Jesus, in what we had considered an act of love toward Him. We are surrounded by the sights and sounds of God’s love for us, encouraged by the icons and examples of saints who are the people who were transformed by the sea of God’s love as Peter was transformed, and as Jesus wishes to transform us.

Jesus’ command, “feed my sheep”, “feed my lambs” points to the second aspect of pilgrimage and retreat- our vocation or what God is calling us to do. Peter went fishing, but God wanted him to be a shepherd. When we make a pilgrimage and open ourselves up to hearing from God, He may reveal what he wants us to do either in our vocation, or in our day to day life.

May those who visit this shrine have a blessed pilgrimage and a blessed retreat, may God answer your prayer, show you His love, and direct your path.

The story of Our Lady of Lebanon

In North Lebanon there is a small Church which used to hold an icon called Our Lady of Harissa. The Christians in the area were killed and the few who survived fled with the icon to the mountain above Jounieh in the coast of central Lebanon. The site of this icon became known as Harissa, and it was at this site that Our Lady of Lebanon. The shrine in Lebanon, composed of a bronze statue of Our Lady painted white and placed atop a tower with ascending steps, was completed in 1908, and is the model on which the National Shrine of Our Lady of Lebanon is

built. The shrine was also built to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception.

The National Shrine of Our Lady of Lebanon in North Jackson, Ohio was the dream of Father Peter Eid who found 75 acres for sale in 1960. The owner refused to sell the land for a Catholic shrine, but Fr. Peter Eid organized a novena (nine days of prayer for one intention) to Our Lady for the acquisition of the land. “Surprisingly, before the nine days were over, the lady owning the land, called Father Eid and declared, ‘Priest, come and take the land. Your Lady is bothering me in my sleep!’”¹

The Shrine was dedicated 5 years later on August 15, 1965 the Feast of the Assumption of Mary. Since this time the shrine has been a place of peace, prayer, and healing. The tower has 64 steps (representing each prayer in five decades of the rosary) leading up to a 16-ft rosewood granite statue of Our Lady of Lebanon. Under the statue is the inscription “Our Lady of Lebanon” followed by the Bible verse, “Come from Lebanon, my bride. Come from Lebanon.” Canticles 4:8. Inside the tower is the tower chapel.

Elevation to Basilica

In 2015 the Shrine of Our Lady of Lebanon was elevated to a Basilica. A Basilica is named at the request of the local Bishop to the Holy See, because of its special spiritual and historical importance to the diocese or eparchy. It ought also be a fittingly beautiful church with reverently and regularly celebrated liturgies. The Basilica shares a special link with the See of Peter and so the symbol of Peter’s crossed keys may be displayed in a privileged way. The designation and consecration of a Church as a basilica confers an additional privilege of mercy. A basilica is a place of favors and indulgences on on the anniversary of the dedication of the same basilica: on the day of the liturgical celebration of the title; on the Solemnity of Saints Peter and Paul, Apostles; on the anniversary of the granting of the title of basilica; once a year on a day to be determined by the local Ordinary; and once a year on a day freely chosen by the each of the faithful.²

An Introduction to Pilgrimage

For the Jews in the time of Christ, “pilgrimage” meant a journey to Jerusalem to the temple to offer sacrifice or participate in a feast. The temple was the place of most direct contact to God on earth. Just as God had instructed Moses that the ground around the burning bush was “holy ground” (Ex 3:5), the temple was holy ground. For Christians, pilgrimage began as journey to the

¹ <http://www.ourladyoflebanonshrine.com/About/History.aspx>

² *Domus Ecclesiae, Norms for the Granting of the Title of Minor Basilica*, Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, November 9, 1989. Available on <http://www.usccb.org/about/divine-worship/policies/minor-basilica.cfm>

Holy Land where Jesus walked. Today, in addition to the Holy Land, people make pilgrimage to places around the world where there were special outpourings of grace.

Another aspect of pilgrimage is the concept of journey. Several of the psalms are pilgrimage songs including Psalms 120-134 and Psalm 84 for the journey to Jerusalem. The journey of pilgrimage can represent the journey of life in which the person strives toward heaven or the Heavenly Jerusalem. It can be of great spiritual benefit to pray along the road to a shrine, and to make the journey a pilgrimage.

An Introduction to Retreat

In its military definition, retreat, refers to the leaving of battle. This can be done out of defeat and cowardice, or out of prudence and strategy so as to regroup and live to fight another day. Too often we retreat *into* television, Internet, books, golf, working, or gossip because we are defeated by life and overwhelmed by the emotions and stresses of daily living. At the shrine we are invited to a different kind of retreat, a retreat to regroup and to rest, so that we are strengthened by God to face life and its challenges with peace and joy. We bring our burdens and struggles and lay them at the altar and at the lap of Mary, so that we can find healing. We can pray, “God, help me in my fear, my sadness, my regret, my shame, my resentment, my embarrassment and shine your light into the dark corners of my heart, that there may be only light and I may have your peace and joy, and know your love.” And, “Mary, my mother, you struggled through life and know sorrow well, yet, in giving all you had to your Son, you were able to have peace, help us to find peace through surrendering our sorrows and our burdens to your Son.”

Discovering God as Creator

One of the first things one encounters at the shrine are the beautiful sights and sounds of nature. I enjoyed seeing the mist covering the ground and hearing the birds sing their songs of praise. I enjoyed hearing the pitter patter of the rain and feeling the warmth of the sun. At the shrine one is surrounded by creation, which points to the Creator. In Genesis, God declares creation good, and we can attest to that goodness which points to His Goodness. Furthermore, nature can often be a place of quiet from the distractions of our busy lives and for meditation on God’s care for us by giving us the blessing of creation.

An Introduction to the Theology of Icons

Icons are traditionally a praise of God by all creation. Man, animal, plant, and mineral goes into a traditional icon. The image is of a person, the painting was glossed over with the yolk of an egg, the image was painted on wood, and the paint was derived from different kinds of inorganic matter.

In the shrine we find all kinds of icons including paintings, stain glass, tapestries, and statues. These images provide a tool for meditation and a special place to ask for the help of a particular saint.

Many of our Protestant brothers and sisters, question our use of icons. Yet, the use of icons is rooted in scripture and theology. First and foremost is the ultimate example of the incarnation. God, who had remained unseen, revealed Himself to us. God took a visible form at the

incarnation, and Jesus retains His visible form at the Resurrection. Second, we look to Genesis, where God declares creation good. Created things are good.

The common objection is against the second commandment, which forbade idols. Idols are not the same things as images, and even the Jewish Temple contained images of angels and animals. An idol is meant to be a god, and this is forbidden. The crucifix is not God, rather, a crucifix depicts God.

Furthermore, the use of icons is rooted in divine images, particularly the Shroud of Turin and Veronica's Veil. These images are supernatural images, and show a divine model which later artists imitated.

Related to icons is the honoring of saints and asking for their intercession. In both the Old and New Testament we see the power of God flowing through holy men and women, who through the grace of God bring healing to those they encounter. Among these accounts are the accounts of people seeking to have the shadow of Peter fall upon them as he was walking by them (Act 5:15) or to touch handkerchiefs to Paul and then bring those handkerchiefs to the sick for healing. Healings occurred in both instances (Acts 19:12). In the Old Testament we find a man raised to life after his corpse is touched to the bones of Elisha (2 Kings 13:21). This foreshadows relics (which are bones from the saints.)

The Beauty of the Universal Church

Historically, the Catholic Church developed fairly independently in different regions and cultures of the world. Due to modern transportation, communication, and immigration the various expressions of the Catholic Church have come into closer contact.

The Shrine is happy to be a place where various expressions of the Catholic Church including the Maronite Church, the Roman Church, the Melkite Church, the Chaldean Church, and the Ukrainian Church interact and enrich each other. Exposure to and enrichment by an expression not one's own, can provide spiritual renewal as well as a greater understanding of the beauty of the Universal Church and Christ's command, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you." (Mt 28:19-20 NRSV)

Reconciliation

A visit to the Shrine can be a great opportunity for Reconciliation. Sin isolates us, and separates us from God, others, and ourselves. Confession, reconciles us to God, to others, and to ourselves, and it involves three people, God, the priest, and me. At the Shrine we have time to be honest with ourselves, honest with God, and to be ourselves in front of others, which is honesty. We need not be trapped or isolated by our sins. When we are honest in Confession, we invite God into the dark corners of our life. This honesty involves searching beyond surface sins and habitual sins to underlying causes so that we can kill sin at the root. If we ask him, the priest can often help us to realize what our root sins are, so that we can know ourselves and hand our sins over to God. O, how good it is to hear the words of forgiveness and begin life anew.

The Tower Chapel

The doors of the Tower Chapel feature stained glass images of St. Sharbel and St. Maron.

St. Maron is the patron and father of the Maronite Church. He was a hermit in the 4th century who as a hermit sought to live alone with God. Maron would spend his day in prayer and abandoned all that the world had to offer for union with God. He lived in the run down ruins of an ancient pagan temple, ate very little and his love of God made him forget to care about his own personal comfort. People began visiting him for advice and prayer and as he became known for his holiness, those seeking holiness flocked to him to learn to imitate Christ through living like St. Maron.

St. Sharbel is a 19th century Maronite priest and hermit, who was known for his holiness and for his miracles during his life and after his death. He abandoned the world for love of God and never looked back. He would spend the whole day in prayer with the morning dedicated to preparation for the Qurbono (Mass/ Liturgy) and with his afternoon dedicated to thanksgiving for the Qurbono which he offered at noon.

When one enters the Tower Chapel one immediately sees the **Coronation of Mary** by the Holy Trinity. Paul tells the Corinthians to strive to receive an everlasting crown (1 Cor 9:25) and tells Timothy that there is a crown of righteousness in store (for Christians) (2 Tim 4:8). However, Mary's crown goes beyond this for she is the "woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head... she gave birth to a Son who will rule all nations." (Rev 12:1,5). The Holy Trinity is depicted as three figures, Jesus is a young man with a cross, the Father is depicted as an old man, and the Holy Spirit is depicted as a dove. This image is based on an image in the Qadissha valley of Annoubine in Lebanon and which was commissioned in the 18th century by Maronite Patriarch Douay. The Qadissha valley was a difficult terrain which provided shelter to monks, patriarchs, and lay Christians in times of persecution and Our Lady of Qadissha Monastery was the home of Maronites for hundreds of years.

The **Tabernacle** is a scale model of the tower, and the Eucharist is kept in it. Our Lord, who humbled himself to come as man, similarly humbles Himself to come to us in the appearance of bread and wine. "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you; he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him" (John 6:53–56). "The Body and Blood of the Lord Jesus Christ are given to you for the forgiveness of sins and everlasting life" (From the Maronite Liturgy). Covenants are promises made with a shared meal and a sacrifice, and the greater the promises the greater the meal and the greater the sacrifice. Christ's promises to us of forgiveness and life are the greatest covenant which He seals with the greatest sacrifice and the greatest meal, His own self-sacrifice on the Cross and his own flesh and blood to eat and drink.

Next to the tabernacle is a **vigil lamp**, which is always burning when Christ is present, just as a fire was always burning in the ancient temple to show that God was present. The Tabernacle is kept on a stand shaped like an angel, just as in the holiest item in the Temple, the Ark of the

Covenant, was guarded by cherubim statues made of gold so it is fitting, that the Eucharist is guarded by a cherubim statue, which represents the service, and worship made by the angels which we cannot see.

The **ceiling** of the chapel has twelve stars on it depicting Mary's crown of twelve stars (Rev 12:1).

Christ Prince of Peace Chapel Foyer/ Vestibule

St. Sharbel is depicted as a wood statue standing in prayer in a traditional posture of prayer, wearing his monastic hood and monastic clothing- an under-cassock and an over-cassock.

St. Rocco is depicted with a dog, and a wound on his leg. He lived in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, and was named a saint after a huge show of popular support and devotion. After his parents died he gave all of his possessions to the poor. When plague struck Italy he cared for plague victims. He himself caught the plague and was exiled to the wilderness where he was cared for by a dog who brought him bread and licked his wounds, causing them to heal. When he returned to town he was arrested as a spy by his uncle, and rather than reveal who he was and risk the money and glory his uncle would give him, he went quietly to prison, where he died five years later. At his death miraculous occurrences were said to have occurred which revealed his identity and demonstrated his sanctity.

St. Rocco, holds a special place in the Shrine of Our Lady of Lebanon because of several miracles attributed to him which took place here after friends of the Shrine brought his statue to the Shrine.

Our Lady of Lebanon is here represented as a white statue with a crown on a hand crafted wooden altar saved from a parish which was closing. This statue makes Our Lady of Lebanon accessible to those guests and pilgrims who are unable to ascend the tower.

St. Anthony of Padua is depicted in brown Franciscan robes holding the child Jesus. St. Anthony was became a Franciscan and later a priest in the early thirteenth century. He lived a quiet life until a preacher was unable to attend a mission service and St. Anthony was asked to preach in his place. Everyone was so amazed at his preaching that he was made a full time mission preacher. He would preach for long hours, hear dozens of confessions and then offer mass for weeks in a row when on mission. The people were amazed at his words and his miracles. After one long mission he made a private retreat in a small house. Someone saw a great light coming from the house and thought it was a fire, but when they looked through the window they saw that it was the Child Jesus shining his light on St. Anthony.

St. Rita is depicted with a wound on her forehead and a crucifix in her arms. She desired to enter the convent, but was forced into an arranged marriage, where she lived a holy life, praying for her husband, who was abusive, and her two sons. She was metaphorically nailed to the cross of an abusive relationship and like Christ she prayed for the one persecuting her. After twenty years her husband had a deathbed conversion and died. Rita's two sons died shortly after the death of

her husband and she became a nun. Rita had a great devotion to the Passion. She prayed to share in the passion and was miraculously struck by one of the thorns from Jesus' crown on a favorite crucifix. The wound never left her.

The Infant of Prague, thought to have been the personal statue of St. Theresa of Avila, is reproduced at the shrine. After changing hands several times the original statue, ended up in a Carmelite friary, where there was a strong devotion to the image. During the Thirty Years War the friary was plundered and the statue forgotten. Seven years later a Father Cyrillus found the statue without hands, and reported to hear the statue say to him, "Have pity on me, and I will have pity on you. Give me my hands, and I will give you peace. The more you honor me, the more I will bless you." Jesus is depicted wearing the robes of an emperor and holds a globe representing the earth topped by the Cross representing his dominion over the earth. Expectant mothers often pray to Jesus under the title of Infant of Prague.³

The large Crucifix is a favorite place to leave vigil candles. Above our Lord is the acronym INRI which translates from Latin into English as Jesus of Nazareth king of the Jews. After Resurrection Sunday, the crucifix is draped with a white cloth representing the burial cross, the empty tomb, and Christ's victory over death.

The Divine Mercy image is a replica of the image in Poland. St. Faustina Kowalska a nun in Poland began witnessing apparitions of Jesus who proclaimed to her a message of Mercy. She had an image of her apparition painted with a phrase translated from Polish to English as, "My Jesus, I trust to you."

The image of **Our Lady of Guadalupe** is a reproduction of the apparition of Mary in Mexico responsible in large part for millions of conversions in what is present day Mexico. In 1531, Mary desired the building of a Church where she may show her love. She appeared to St. Juan Diego in Tepayac hill near what is now Mexico city. When the local bishop asked Juan Diego for a sign, Mary told Juan Diego to return to the hill. At the top of the hill Mary told Juan Diego to collect roses in his Tilma (a piece of cloth worn to keep warm). When Juan Diego revealed the image to the bishop they were both surprised to see this miraculous image and apparition on the cloth. The image employs Aztec symbolism to communicate the Incarnation as well as the power of God over the devils to whom human sacrifices were offered by the Aztec priests. Even the most skeptical critics admit the lack of fading in the image as well as the unknown method of composition of the original image.⁴

The **Reliquary** case holds relics of many saints. As mentioned above relics are the bones of saints whose bodies were often a cause of miracles or encounter with God. The saints were so united to God that even in death they testify to our hope in the Resurrection.

³ Wong, Anders, *History of the Infant Jesus of Prague*. Available at ewtn.com/library/CHRIST/INFHIST.TXT.

⁴ See <http://www.ewtn.com/saintsholy/saints/O/ourladyofguadalupe.asp>. For a skeptical view see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Our_Lady_of_Guadalupe.

Our Lady of Chestohova is depicted on a tapestry which reproduces the image of the famous icon in Poland. The original icon is said to have been painted on the dinner table of the Holy Family by Saint Luke. The image in traditional eastern style shows Mary with Jesus and pointing to Jesus. Historically, in the east Mary is never depicted alone. The two wounds on Mary's cheek are said to be from when a military conqueror in 1430 tried to steal the icon but was unable because of a miraculous intervention so he struck the icon twice with his sword, he wanted to strike a third time, but was unable too because of another miraculous intervention. In 1656, Our Lady Chestohova was named the Queen and Protectress of Poland after a military victory was attributed to her intercession. Our Lady of Chestohova is also called the Black Madonna because of the dark appearance, possibly caused by years of smoke from candles or a fire said to have occurred. This icon was a favorite of St. John Paul II. **(No Longer on Display)**

Christ Prince of Peace Chapel

The Church is shaped like a cross with the altar in the intersection. The church faces east which is the direction of the rising sun which represents the Resurrection and our anticipation for the second coming of Jesus, who will come from the East.

To the east we see **Jesus, Prince of Peace**, He is seated as a teacher and prince and is offering Himself in the Eucharist to us. He is wearing red and blue which represent His divinity (red) and His humanity (blue). The almond shape around Jesus traditionally represents His intercessory role for He is both in Heaven and on Earth. The design of the columns and baldachino or canopy, which are traditionally placed over a throne, are in a traditional Maronite motif most famously found in the Rabulla Illuminated Lectionary. The two Peacocks represent phoenixes and are symbol of the resurrection.

St. Peter is to the left of Jesus and **St. Paul** is to the right. St. Peter is depicted as the rock of the Church (for he is holding the Tower Chapel) and as the holder of the keys to the kingdom. St. Paul is depicted with a sharp double edged sword (Hebrews 4:1-12), because of his zeal in spreading the Gospel and also because he was martyred by beheading (with a sword).

The **altar** is made of marble and has a decorative front depicting a lamb in front of a cross. The lamb represents Jesus who offered Himself like a lamb (Acts 8:32). On either side of the lamb are the Greek letters "Alpha" and "Omega" (which look like an "A" and an upside down "U"). These are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet (like "A" and "Z" in English) and represent that Jesus is great, powerful, and eternal (Rev 22:13).

The **tabernacle** is located in the center of the Eastern wall directly under the image of Jesus, Prince of Peace. Christ is present Body and Blood Soul and Divinity in the Eucharist.

South of the altar is **St. Jude Thaddeus**. he is one of the twelve apostles. He is depicted with a flame above his head because he was present at Pentecost (Acts 2:3) and holding an icon of Christ. The icon represents a miraculous image of divine origin which St. Jude brought to the city of Edessa. He is the patron of desperate causes.

North of the altar is **St. Therese of Liseaux**. From a young age she desired holiness and got special permission to enter the convent at younger than conventional age. She had aspirations to

do great things, but God revealed to her that her vocation was not to great external acts, but to love God in everything she does. She is depicted with roses because she wanted to spend her time in heaven doing good on earth symbolized by giving out roses. Often people report receiving roses as a sign that she will intercede for them and their prayer will be answered. Her last words were, "Oh!...I love Him!...My God, I..love...Thee!!!"

On the ceiling above the altar one finds a **dove** and **tongues of fire** which are two symbols of the Holy Spirit (Luke 3:22, Acts 2:3). In every Qurbano, the priest calls down the Holy Spirit from heaven. The deacon refers to this descent in the following way, "How awesome is this moment, my beloved, for the living Holy Spirit descends and rests upon this offering for our sanctification." (Book of Offering, 842)

As reminders that the Church is privileged to be a basilica the shrine now features an **umbrellino and tintinnabulum**. *TheStMaryParish.org* explains, "The Umbrellino ("little umbrella") is a distinctive symbol used in basilicas throughout the world. Designed with stripes of yellow and red (traditional papal colors), the silk canopy is a symbol of the Pope's authority. During the Middle Ages, the Umbrellino would be carried above the Holy Father during processions." "The Tintinnabulum, like the Umbrellino, indicates that the Basilica Shrine of Saint Mary has a special relationship with the Holy Father. The Tintinnabulum, a bell mounted on a pole, is placed in a Roman Catholic Basilica to signify the church's link with the Pope. During the Middle Ages and Renaissance, the Tintinnabulum was used to alert the people of Rome of the approach of the Holy Father during papal processions."⁵

The Hallway

St. Joseph is depicted with a lily and a carpenter's square. St. Joseph is the foster father of Jesus and is presented as a dreamer of dreams (Mt 1:20-21, 2:13, 2:19-20) like the patriarch Joseph (Gen 41). He was a carpenter and is thus presented with a carpenter's square. The lily represents that Joseph was chaste. St. Joseph was a faithful guardian to Mary and Jesus.

St. Anne, the grandmother of Jesus, is depicted with her daughter Mary. She is first referred to in the Protoevangelium of James which is mainly about the life of Mary. She was barren and gave birth in her old age after God answered her prayer. Others knew her and her husband Joachim for their holiness of life.

St. Dymphna, depicted with a sword and a devil, was fourteen when her mother died. Her father who suffered from a mental illness wanted to marry her. She fled the country and her father went after her and eventually beheaded her at age 15 in the year 620. The sword represents her martyrdom.⁶

St. Pio of Pietrelcina, or **Padre Pio**, is the first priest known to have received the stigmata, which are the wounds of Christ in his hands and feet. He was known for his simplicity and for

⁵ *Umbrellino & Tintinnabulum*,

<http://thestmaryparish.org/wordpress/umbrellino-tintinnabulum-2/>

⁶ http://www.catholic.org/saints/saint.php?saint_id=222

being a great confessor. He would hear confession several hours almost every day. He was also known for great miracles such as understanding other languages, flying, and being in two places at once (bilocation).

St. Philomena was a virgin martyr from the year 304 about whom little is known. Her bones were found in the catacombs with her name, and miracles were soon attributed to her. After miracles were attributed to her mystics began to have visions about her life. According to the mystics, her parents betrothed her to the emperor, but she had betrothed herself to Christ. When she refused to marry she was killed.

St. Joseph's garden

The **bell tower** has a prominent place in the garden as a canopy over the **large crucifix**. Church bells receive special blessings and not only call the faithful to Church and mark the times of prayer during the day, but also can cast away devils for as far as the sound travels. The Shrine now uses electronic bells.

The **St. Joseph** statue is positioned over a small fountain.

Behind the Shrine complex is an outdoor **Stations of the Cross** which provide a meditation on and a reenactment of the the Great Friday of the Crucifixion. The traditional numbering is fourteen stations though sometimes a station for the agony in the garden or a station for the resurrection will be included.

In front of the shrine one finds a statue of **Jesus and the children** which depicts the encounter of Jesus when He says, "Jesus said, "Let the children come to me, and do not prevent them; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." (Matthew 19:14 NAB)

The statue also reminds us of Jesus exhortation to humility and faith, "Amen, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.

Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoever receives one child such as this in my name receives me. 'Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea.'" (Matthewe 18:3-6 NAB)

Some Maronite Prayers

A Morning Prayer

Be praised and glorified, O God, who created light and dispelled the darkness.
You have taken us from the sleep of error and granted us this morning to fill us with joy.
You reveal to us the light of your creative power
and the sublime grandeur of your wisdom,
for you created the heavens and spread the earth over the waters.

We beg you to keep us from the places where sin lies in wait
to wound the virtues within us.
Illumine our souls with the rays of your love
and the hope of your glorious manifestation of that great Dawn that will never end.
In all our actions and conduct,
may the presence of your light and the splendor of your revelation guide us to eternal happiness.
Joyfully we shall sing praise to you, O Christ, the light of truth, and to your Father, the Father of
mercy,
and to your life-giving Spirit, light of all beings,
now and forever.
Amen. (Prayer of the Faithful III, 81)

A Marian Prayer

Hail to you, O Mary!

While remaining a virgin, you became the Mother of the
almighty One who fills heaven and earth.

Hail to you, O Mary!

While remaining a virgin, you became the Mother of the
Ancient of Days, whose name existed before the sun.

Blessed and holy are you, O Mary,

the Mother of the One who poured forth sanctity upon the sons of Levi.

Blessed are you, for within you has been placed in all purity the eternal Son,
the splendor of the incarnate Light.

All generation will joyfully proclaim your virginity,

for the One begotten within you has canceled the debt of our sins.

And behold, we ask you to present our requests;

you who turn no one away, hear us.

Glory to you, O Lord, who from the virgin manifested yourself and became a man,
who acquired two natures and one person.

To you, the Father, and the Spirit, three persons in one God, is due thanksgiving.

We celebrate the glory of the Father, the only Son and the Spirit.

May mercy be poured forth upon us in this world and in the next. (Prayer of the Faithful III, 163)

Prayer to Our Lady of Lebanon-

“O Mary, you who are called “The Cedar of Lebanon” look upon your children who today and
always beg your guiding hand. Grant us the faith to withstand the sweeping blows of life as the
cedar stands straight against the wind. Develop in us the hope of Resurrection, that what we
believe as your Divine Son has revealed it to us, we may appreciate the joy that should be ours.
Dear Mother, increase our love, the love we should have for the Blessed Trinity: Father, Son, and
Holy Spirit; our filial love for you; and to the perfection of this love; to love our neighbor not in

theory but in solid prayer and practice. We now kneel at your feet dear Lady, begging for your blessing and your intercession to your Divine Son for all our Church and government authorities, for ourselves, all our relatives, and friends, especially... Our Lady, Queen of Lebanon, America, and the Universe pray for us. Amen

A Prayer for the Dead

O compassionate Lord, hear our prayers and
open your door to our requests.
Have mercy on our dead, our teachers,
and all who now sleep in the true faith.
They have asked us to pray for them in your Mysteries;
pardon the offenses which they have committed against
your majesty.
From your book erase their sins and faults and
may they attain the joy of paradise, the dwelling of the just.
May those departed this life in the true faith,
who have partaken of your body and blood, the treasure of
forgiveness, stand at your right hand, O Good One.
May they be treated as your closest friends, Peter and John,
the beloved.
When you judge the nations with justice,
do not treat us according to our faults.
And then we will celebrate the great glory of God,
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in a perfect love. (Prayer of the Faithful III, 164)

A Prayer during Trials

In expectation and trials, our souls praise you.
Like the five virgins, behold our lamps.
Our faith, our hope and our love are wounded;
the wind lashes at our burning lamps.
O desire of my soul, it is to you that I cry:
When will the bridal party come?
Already my spirit is weakening. (Prayer of the Faithful III, 162)

Prayer before Meals

O Lord God, may your plenty, blessing + and prosperity come down upon this meal prepared by your worshippers, and bestow upon those who partake of it the abundance of your favors. Amen.

Prayer after Meals

May food abound and never fail; may it remain plentiful, through the prayers of Our Lord's Mother, and the prayers of the righteous and the just, who pleased the Lord with their deeds.

O Lord, you are a good God and we praise and thank you, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, now and forever. Amen.

Discernment Prayer

Lord, have mercy on us and save us.

O God, guide our steps in the paths of your saints
and let our deeds be like theirs, a witness to your living Spirit,
so that seeing us, people may glorify you as the saints have done,
now and forever. Amen. (Prayer of the Faithful III 728)

A Prayer before Sleeping

O Lord,
as you rested on your cross you cried out:
"Father, into your hands I commend my spirit."
We, therefore, commend our spirits into your hands, O Lord,
tonight and all the days of our lives,
but especially at the hour of our death,
represented now by our sleep.
To you we abandon our bodies, thoughts, feelings and all that we are.
Keep us without stain
that our sleep may glorify you.
At the end of our days,
may a peaceful sleep carry us to you,
who neither slumbers nor sleeps.
To you be glory, forever. Amen. (Sootoro Prayer of the Faithful III)

A Prayer for Vocations

Gather us, Good Shepherd, into your holy Church, your sheep fold, and send us shepherds and pastors who will model their lives on yours, and who lead us to graze in your Spirit.
Place in the hearts of young men and women your call to serve your house, spread your gospel and save the poor.
Call your people to care for the sick, feed those who are hungry, teach your children, and offer your spiritual worship, so that your kingdom may be perfected.
We shall praise and glorify you, for ever. Amen.

A Final Note

God wants to go with you!

I hope that your time at the shrine has been a time of peace and joy, a time of hope and prayer, a time of union and communion with God and the saints and angels. We also hope that it was a time of transformation. The peace you find here, take it with you. The conversation you begin with God, keep it up. The friends you make, keep in touch with them. The hope, self-worth, or faith you acquire, never let them fade away. We invite you to reflect on your time here, and we know that wherever you go you will be in our prayers, and more importantly in the arms of God and of Our Lady. Know that you are always welcome back at the shrine.

The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you; The LORD lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace. (Num 6:24-26)

Go in Peace and pray to Christ for the intentions of the shrine.

Appendix

An Introduction to the Maronite Church

Who are we? When answering this question it is fitting to start broadly and work our way narrowly.

1. We are a Church. Together we make up the people of God, the flock of Christ, the body of Christ. We have a hierarchy centered on our bishops and our patriarch.
2. We are a Chalcedonian Church. We accept the council of Chalcedon which means that we believe that Jesus has two natures in one person. Jesus is God and man without being a mix of the two.
3. We are a Catholic Church.

We have a mission to the whole world, and we are in communion with the Pope.

4. We are a Antiochene-Syriac Church. The city of Antioch was one of the original four (and later five) hubs of the church. The theological school in Antioch (one of two major schools in the 3rd through 6th centuries) taught that the Bible should be interpreted literally rather than allegorically. Syriac theology focused on typology (looking for promises and signs of Christ in the Old Testament (the death of the Passover lamb and the death of Christ)).
5. We are Maronite. We have our own history, liturgy, theological expression, spirituality, and organization.

- a. History

St. Maron was a fourth century hermit who left the world to be with Christ and drew followers because of his holiness. A monastery was built around his grave, and grew in theological and ecclesial importance. The Monks of the Proto-monastery and monastery were known as

defenders of the Council of Chalcedon (see theology). The monastery began to plant other monasteries, priests of the monastery were ordained bishops and when Patriarchal See of Antioch was empty, the monastery was in the natural position to fill the void and name a patriarch- John Maron in the 9th century. Around this time, due to persecution, the Maronites began to migrate to the Lebanon Mountains from further north. The group became known as Maronites. In the 11th century during the first crusade the Maronites supported the crusaders, and the crusaders (and the Roman Church) in turn began to support the Maronite Church (sending gifts and priests) and a vibrant relationship followed. The Maronites and the Roman Church have always been in communion.

b. Liturgy

The Maronite liturgy has roots in Antioch, in Jerusalem, and in Edessa. The liturgical language is Syriac which is a dialect of Aramaic, which is the primary language spoken by Jesus and the apostles. What the Roman Church calls the Mass, Maronites refer to in Syriac as the Qurbono (which translates as offering and is often called Liturgy or Divine Liturgy). The Qurbono is marked by a preparatory service which includes a candle lighting hymn and the preparation of the gifts, “Sedro” or a teaching prayer which precedes the first reading and explains the meaning of the liturgy of the day; a “Mazmooro” which is a psalm style hymn, a reading from the Epistles or Acts and from one of the Gospels, an elaborate sign of peace which emphasizes that peace comes from God, a prominent epiclesis (calling down of the Holy Spirit upon the gifts), an elaborate fraction rite (breaking and blessing of the consecrated hosts and mixing the consecrated hosts with the Chalice), an absolution, communion received under both elements simultaneously on the tongue (intinction), a sending off in peace, and a moving prayer which takes the form of the Priest speaking to the altar, stating that he might die before the next Qurbono.

c. Theology

Maronites focus on the Mystery of God as beyond knowledge. We know only what God has revealed to us about Himself. The primary revelation is through Jesus Christ. Maronites focus on the idea of divinization or Jesus making us like God by his own becoming like us. We are filled with the life of the Spirit, given eternal life through Jesus’ Resurrection, made heavenly by eating the Bread from Heaven, and robed in glory through Baptism and Chrismation.

Poetry is the best way to convey theology, especially poetry that employs paradox and rapid change of focus to demonstrate the interconnectedness of Revelation- “who Jesus is” is related to “what Jesus did”, is related to “Jesus’ relationship to the Father and the Spirit”, is related to all of “the prophecies and signs of the Old Testament”, is related to the truth about “who man himself is”, is related to “man’s final destiny”.

d. Spirituality

Spirituality is the practical relationship of God’s people to God. I would like to make a distinction between those practices which have been adopted by and beneficial to many Maronites that we have received from others and those practices which the Maronite Church to offer for our own benefit and for the benefit of the greater Church.

Many Maronites have great devotion to Mary in litanies and in the Rosary. Many Maronites love the Stations of the Cross. Many Maronites enjoy reading the writings of St. Therese the Little Flower, St. Ignatius, St. Aloysius, St. Francis deSales, and the writings of Franciscan fathers. In recent years, Maronites have readily accepted the new devotions promulgated by recent popes or encouraged by recent lay movements. These devotions are spiritually beneficial and readily promulgated by those in the Maronite Church.

Yet, the Maronite Church is not a mother unable to nurse her children. The Maronite Church purposes a liturgical spirituality, which inserts daily life into a liturgical frame and inserts liturgy into life. The Maronite spirituality is centered on the liturgies of the monasteries. Yet, the laity would participate through participation in the morning and evening prayer before going off to work where they would sing hymns. The monks would be the teachers and spiritual fathers to the people, and monasticism was an option for most children. The Syriac fathers (Ephrem, Jacob of Serugh, Balai, Aphrahat) provide spiritual food. Scripture and the Eucharist are fountains of spirituality. The Eucharist is something for the people, not for the priest alone and not for the perfect alone, but Christ comes to us to forgive our sins and to be new life in us. Scriptures are read frequently and expounded upon for the benefit of the hearer, and neither the Eucharist nor Scripture are diverted into public acts, but are ordered to connect the community to God.

Maronites express their love and gratitude through the walking of pilgrimages and through the building of small private shrines and large public shrines such as the National Shrine of Our Lady of Lebanon.

The Maronite Church offers blessings throughout the year to divinize each aspect of life from natural events to supernatural and divine events.

e. Organization

The Maronite church is centered historically on the monastery of the patriarch and the bishops. Today the Maronite church continues in this tradition through a church centered on the patriarch together with the synod of bishops.

f. Genius-

The genius of the Maronite Church is in her life, in her liturgy, in her scriptural interpretation, in devotion, and in her single-mindedness that unites all of these elements