



St. Anthony

Maronite Catholic Church

كنيسة مار أنطونيوس المارونية



OFFICE HOURS

M-TH: 9 AM - 4PM

Friday: Office is Closed

Saturdays: By Appointment

Phone: 978.685.7233

Fax: 978.688.4475

rectory@stanthonylawrence.org



LITURGIES

Daily Liturgies

Monday & Wednesday: 9 AM

Tuesday & Thursday: 7 PM

Weekend Liturgies

Saturday: Vigil Liturgy @ 4 PM

Sunday Liturgies:

8:15 AM - Arabic

9:30 AM - English

11:30 AM - English & Arabic

Holy days of obligation

Vigil Liturgy @ 7 PM

Feast Day @ 9 AM



SACRAMENTS

Baptism & Confirmation

1 month in advance with the Pastor

Matrimony

Couples should make arrangements six months prior to the wedding date

Reconciliation

One hour Before Thursday & Saturday Liturgies, or by appointment

Anointing of the Sick

Please notify the Rectory ASAP.

Please refer to our website for more Sacrament Celebrations Guidelines

Season of Resurrection

زمن القيامة المجيدة

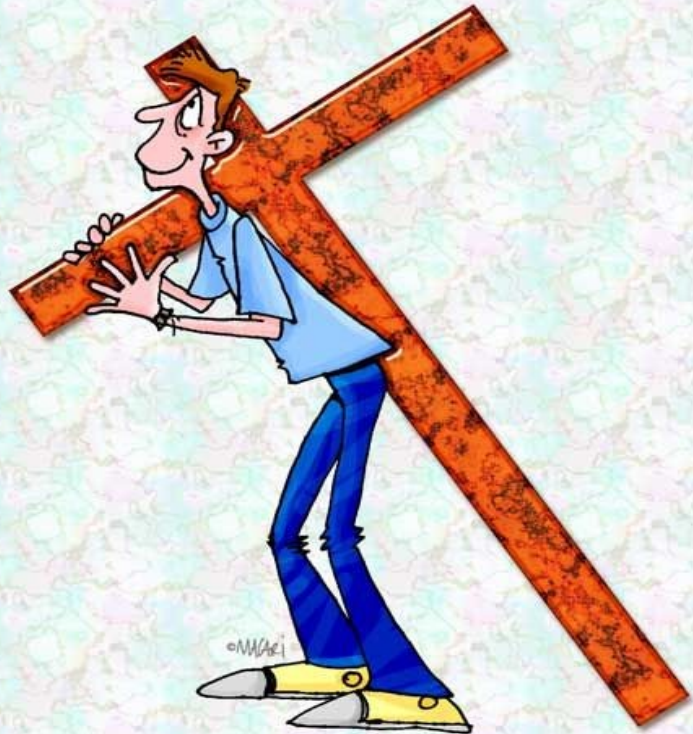
SAINTS FUN FACTS

by mario d. macari

"ENOUGH WITH THE PSYCHOBABBLE, THERE IS ONLY ONE PRESCRIPTION FOR HAPPINESS AND IT IS IN TAKING UP OUR OWN CROSS AND FOLLOWING JESUS

"THE HOUR HAS COME FOR EDUCATORS, SOCIOLOGISTS AND CITIZENS TO REVERSE THEIR STEPS, TO SEE THAT IF THE SELF IS TO BE REALLY HAPPY, IT MUST BE DISCIPLINED, PRUNED, DENIED AND NEGATED BY ITSELF. NO BETTER LAW FOR INNER PEACE HAS EVER BEEN GIVEN THAN THAT OF THE DIVINE SAVIOR: 'IF ANY ONE WILL COME AFTER ME, LET HIM TAKE UP HIS CROSS DAILY AND FOLLOW ME' "

-ARCHBISHOP FULTON SHEEN



Saint Anthony Maronite Church Lawrence, MA

Meet Our Staff

Pastor: Fr. Elie Mikhael

☎ 305.807.9087
✉ pastor@stanthonylawrence.org

Parochial Vicar: Fr. Tony Youssef
☎ 917-545-4955

Sub-Deacon James T. Demers

Sub-Deacon Nadim B. Daou

Parish Ministries

♦ Religious Education

✉ ccd@stanthonylawrence.org

♦ Publishing: Bulletin

✉ bulletin@stanthonylawrence.org

♦ Choirs (English, Arabic & Syriac)

♦ Kids Choir

♦ Knights of the Altar

♦ Knights of Mary

♦ Maronite Youth : MYO

♦ Maronite Young Adults

♦ Bereavement Ministry

♦ Cenacle of the Rosary

(Thursdays @ 6PM)

♦ Cenacle of Divine Mercy

(Sundays Before the Liturgies)

♦ Sacristan (s)

POPE PRAYER INTENTIONS

April - 2018

Formation in Spiritual Discernment:

That the Church may appreciate the urgency of formation in Spiritual discernment, both on the personal and communitarian levels.



The Sanctuary Lamp

The Light that Symbolizes
the Eternal Sacrifice

Right Sanctuary Lamp

This week's Sanctuary Lamp will burn

In Loving Memory of

Albert & Helene Ghossoub

Offered by Wadad Whiffen.

Left Sanctuary Lamp

This week's Sanctuary Lamp will burn

In Loving Memory of

Albert & Helene Ghossoub

Offered by Wadad Whiffen.

Divine Liturgies Intentions

4th Sunday of Resurrection

أحد الأربعاء بعد القيامة

Saturday, April 21 @ 4:00 PM:

- For: + 40 Day Anniversary –Thomas Bistany,
By his wife, Juliette & Family.

Sunday, April 22 @ 8:15 AM:

- For: + 40 Day Anniversary– Angele Rizk *By Her Friends*

Sunday, April 22 @ 9:30AM:

- For: + 40 Day Anniversary– Sadie Souma,
By her children & family.

Sunday, April 22 @ 11:30 AM:

- For: + Nassif Touma and daughter, Patricia Touma
By Rita Touma, Wife of Mr. Paschal Costantine & family

4th Week of Resurrection

الأسبوع الرابع بعد القيامة

Monday, April 23 @ 9 AM:

- For: Private Intentions

Tuesday, April 24 @ 7 PM :

- For: Safety & Good health of Joseph Saade, *By The Pastor*

Wednesday, April 25 @ 9AM:

- For: + James Michael Tarshi, *By his mother and family.*

Thursday, April 26 @ 7PM:

- For: Michel and Marie Azzi, *By their Family.*

Friday, April 27 No Liturgies—Office Closed

5th Sunday of Resurrection

أحد الخامس بعد القيامة

Saturday, April 28 @ 4:00 PM:

- For: + Jeanne and Al Farrah,
By their children & Families.

Sunday, April 29 @ 8:15 AM:

- For: + Special Intention.

Sunday, April 29 @ 9:30 AM:

- For: + Arthur J. Mansor, Sr., *By his wife, Grace, & Family.*

Sunday, April 29 @ 11:30 AM:

- For: + Special Intention.

“ If angels could be jealous of men, they would be so for one reason; Holy Communion.”

St Maximilian Kolbe

SUMMER LITURGIES SCHEDULE
JUNE 17, 2018—SEPTEMBER 2, 2018

DAILY LITURGIES: M-TH 9AM

WEEKEND LITURGIES:

SATURDAY: 4PM

SUNDAY: 9AM & 11AM

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مواعيد القدايس الصيفية

أبتداءً من الأحد 17 حزيران و لغاية 2 أيلول

القدايس اليومية: 9 صباحاً فقط

قدايس نهاية الأسبوع

ألسبت : 4 مساءً

الأحد:

9 صباحاً

11 صباحاً

KINDLY READ CAREFULLY
ALL SACRAMENTAL GUIDELINES

Baptism & Confirmation: (Check our Website)

Guidelines :

<http://stanthonylawrence.org/guidelines/>

Registration Form :

<http://stanthonylawrence.org/online-registration-form/>

Sacrament of Marriage: (Check our Website)

Guidelines :

<http://stanthonylawrence.org/guidelines-2/>

FOCCUS: <http://stanthonylawrence.org/foccus/>

Pre-Cana: <http://stanthonylawrence.org/pre-cana/>

Banquet Hall Guidelines:

Contract Form & Usage Donations:

<http://stanthonylawrence.org/banquet-hall/>

Burial Guidelines

Burial Charges and Fees: (Check our Website)

Membership Registration

<http://stanthonylawrence.org/member-information-form/>

Online Donation

<http://stanthonylawrence.org/donate-now/>

Upcoming Events

<http://stanthonylawrence.org/upcoming-events/>

Monthly Calendar:

<http://stanthonylawrence.org/upcoming-events/calendar/>

TITHES & OFFERINGS - April 15, 2018

Sunday Collection (Online)	\$ 4,002.00
Candles	\$ 127.75
2nd Collection: Catholic Home Mission	\$ 421.00
Fuel	\$ 15.00
In Memory of	\$ 100.00
CCD-Sunday School (Registration, 1st Communion)	595.00
Miscellaneous (Baptism, MYO Retreat, Easter Charities)	\$ 165.00
Total Deposit	\$ 5,425.75

Online Donation

Contribute to Our Parish Growth. Apply Online:

<http://stanthonylawrence.org/donate-now/>

Monthly Operational Expenses - April 2017

Health Insurance , Retirement & Disability	\$4,020.00
Total Household (Table Expense,)	\$896.95
Salaries	
Clergy (Base Salary, Table & Auto Expense)	\$5,650.00
Organist / Singers (9:30am & Funerals)	\$500
Secretarial	\$2,200.00
Payroll Expenses	\$169.54
Eparchial Assessment	\$2,500.00
Donations to Others	\$700.00
Maintenance & Repairs (Cleaning, Dumpster , Janitorial Supplies & ..)	\$4,164.14
Religious Supplies (Candles, Hosts & Wines,	\$280.60
Utilities (Phone, Cable, Internet, Electric, Fuel, Sewer & Water)	\$1,210.52
Decorations and Flowers	\$526.99
Office Administration (supplies, Postage, Printing, Subscription)	\$2,631.94
Parish Programs (Knights of Mary, MYO, MYA, Sunday Coffee Hours)	\$610.76
Advertisement & Public Relations	\$638.13
Furniture & Equipment	\$2,274.44
Total Monthly Expenses	\$28,974.01
Net Income needed to Balance per Week	\$7,243.51

PARISH MINISTRIES & NEWS

Religious Education

Registration 2018-2019

We are winding down the year. Last week, your child is went home with a 2018-2019 registration from for CCD. I would like to have all children registered for next fall BEFORE we finish our year in May. You will be registering for the next grade. This gives us a chance to set up lists early and start right away on September. You may fill out the form (one per child) and either return it in an envelope to your child's teacher or I am always available to receive the registrations once the CCD classes have started on Sunday.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.
Susan Veilleux, ccd@stanthonylawrence.org

First Communion

First Communion: Upcoming Preparations

- **Saturday, May 5** Reconciliation at 10am.
- **Sunday May 6** Crowning of Mary. Grade 2 will help serve at the 9:30 or 11:30 liturgies Parents will chose which liturgy works for their family. Children should be prepared to wear their First Communion outfits. We will do a practice at 10:30 in lieu of CCD between liturgies that day.
- **FRIDAY, May 18** will be rehearsal for First Communion with parents. This will begin at 5:30 p.m. and last approximately an hour.
- **Saturday May 19 at 10:30 a.m.** First Communion Celebration.

Bonheur Du Ciel - Fr. Majdi Allawi

Our Lord calls us all to follow in His footsteps. Some, like Vincent De Paul and Mother Teresa, spend their lifetime following the directions given in Matthew 25, to feed the hungry, cloth the naked, care for the ill and to welcome the stranger.



We are blessed to have one of our own, Abouna Majdi Allawi, visit our parish on April 29th. All are invited following the 11:30 AM Liturgy for a gathering and a chance to meet him.

MYA - Maronite Young Adults

Next Meeting : TBD

Children's Choir

Saturdays: May 5 & May 12

Practices are held from 5:00PM - 6:30PM

Knights of Mary

April 28th: 5PM - 7PM After 4PM Liturgy

Dates are Subject to change

MYO - Maronite Youth Organization

Friday April 28th: Regional Retreat

Faith Formation Events run from 5PM - 7PM

Eucharistic Adoration

Thursday, May 3rd @ 7PM - After Liturgy

The Family of Saint Charbel

Thursday, May 17th - الخميس 17 أيار

- ♦ 6:30 PM - Rosary - صلاة المسبحة - مساءً 6:30
- ♦ 7:00 PM - Divine Liturgy - القداس الالهى - مساءً 7:00
- ♦ 7:30 PM - 8:30 PM - Sharing the Word of God - مشاركة روحية - مساءً 7:30

Rosary Group - صلاة المسبحة

Wednesday @ 6PM - الأربعاء: 6 مساءً

Bible Study

English Session: Tuesdays April 24 @ 7PM

Arabic Session: Wednesdays April 25 @ 7PM

Mahrajan Committee Meeting

Monday, April 30 @ 7PM - Parish Office

Maronite Monks in Petersham

Monthly grocery donation will be scheduled for May 6, 2018 after the Liturgies

Item list will be forthcoming.

Save The Dates

First Communion Liturgy
Saturday, May 19th @ 10:30 AM

Feast of the Ascension
Liturgy: Thursday, May 10th @ 7 PM

SATURDAY MAY 12

Mother's Day
SUNDAY BRUNCH

11AM - 3PM



Memorial Day Divine Liturgy

Weather permitting, we will carry on the tradition of celebrating Memorial Day Divine Liturgy at the Cemetery Grounds on **Monday, May 28th at 10:00 AM**. In case of inclement weather, we will celebrate the liturgy in the church.

Honoring Our Graduates in the Divine Liturgy

We, at Saint Anthony, will acknowledge our 2018 High School and College graduates with a Liturgy in their honor on **Sunday June 10th**.

If you are a 2018 Graduate, we kindly ask you to forward: your full name, a (high resolution) photo, grade level, graduating school name and for high school grads, the College you will attend in the fall, to the Rectory or by e-mail. Please be sure to pass in your information ASAP in order for us to properly recognize their achievements. Thank you for your participation.

****Deadline to Submit is May 30th****

Annual Father's Day Picnic
Sunday, June 17th: 11:00 AM Liturgy
Saint Basil Salvatorian Center Grounds

LECTORS

Saturday, April 21 @ 4:00 PM: Joel Habib
Sunday, April 22

8:15AM Zizi Francis

9:30 AM Elaine Brousseau

11:30 AM

English: Mounira Daher

Arabic: Marcel Saade

Saturday, April 28 @ 4:00 PM: Nancy Bistany
Sunday, April 29

8:15AM Hugette Sfeir

9:30 AM Elaine Ferris

11:30 AM

English: Meriana Jamous

Arabic: George Saab

ALTAR SERVERS

Saturday, April 21

4:00 PM

Elias Saab

Sharbel Saab

Sunday, April 22

8:15 AM

Volunteers

Sunday, April 22

9:30 AM

Noah Hassan

Michael Bejjani

Sunday, April 22

11:30 AM

Anthony Chamoun

Rudy Bouraphael

Giorgio Abounasr

Ryan El Khoury

Congratulations on your Baptism

We join with the parish family of Saint Anthony to offer our sincere congratulations to the families of:

- ♦ **Veronica Cherabie, Child of Remy and George Cherabie**
- ♦ **Lucas Maroun, Child of Chantal & Danny Maroun**

who received the Blessed Sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation. Our best wishes to the parents and godparents. May Christ continue to bless these children whom we welcome into the flock.

Hebrews 13:18-25

4th Sunday of the Resurrection - الأحد الرابع من زمن القيامة

13:18-25 العبرانيين

Pray for us; we are sure that we have a clear conscience, desiring to act honorably in all things. I urge you all the more to do this, so that I may be restored to you very soon. Now may the God of peace, who brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, make you complete in everything good so that you may do his will, working among us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory for ever and ever. Amen.

I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, bear with my word of exhortation, for I have written to you briefly. I want you to know that our brother Timothy has been set free; and if he comes in time, he will be with me when I see you. Greet all your leaders and all the saints. Those from Italy send you greetings. Grace be with all of you.

صَلُّوا مِنْ أَجْلِنَا، فَإِنَّا وَاقِفُونَ أَنَّ صَمِيرَنَا صَالِحٌ، وَنَحْنُ نُرِيدُ أَنْ نَسْلُكَ مَسْلَكًا حَسَنًا فِي كُلِّ شَيْءٍ. وَأَطْلُبُ إِلَيْكُمْ بِالْحَاحِ أَنْ تَفْعَلُوا ذَلِكَ، حَتَّى يَرْدِّني اللَّهُ إِلَيْكُمْ سَرِيعًا! وَاللهُ السَّلَامُ، الَّذِي أَصْعَدَ مِنْ بَيْنِ الْأَمْوَاتِ رَبَّنَا يَسُوعَ، رَاعِي الْحِرَافِ الْعَظِيمِ بِدَمِ عَهْدِ أَبَدِيٍّ، هُوَ يَجْعَلُكُمْ كَامِلِينَ فِي كُلِّ صَلاحٍ، لِتَعْمَلُوا بِمَشِيئَتِهِ، وَهُوَ يَعْمَلُ فِينَا مَا هُوَ مَرْضِيٌّ فِي عَيْنَيْهِ، بِيَسُوعَ الْمَسِيحِ، لَهُ الْمَجْدُ إِلَى أَبَدِ الْآبِدِينَ. آمِينَ.

وَأُنَاشِدُكُمْ، أَيُّهَا الْإِخْوَةُ، أَنْ تَحْتَمِلُوا كَلَامَ التَّشْجِيعِ، فَإِنِّي كَتَبْتُ إِلَيْكُمْ بِإِنْجَازٍ! إِعْلَمُوا أَنَّ أَخَانَا طِيمُوثَاوُسَ قَدْ أُخْلِيَ سَبِيلُهُ. فَإِنْ أَسْرَعَ فِي مَجِيئِهِ، سَأَذْهَبُ مَعَهُ وَأَرَاكُمْ. سَلِّمُوا عَلَى جَمِيعِ مُدَبِّرَيْكُمْ وَجَمِيعِ الْقِدِّيسِينَ. يُسَلِّمُ عَلَيْكُمْ الْإِخْوَةُ الَّذِينَ فِي إِيطَالِيَا. الْبَرَكَاتُ مَعَكُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ!

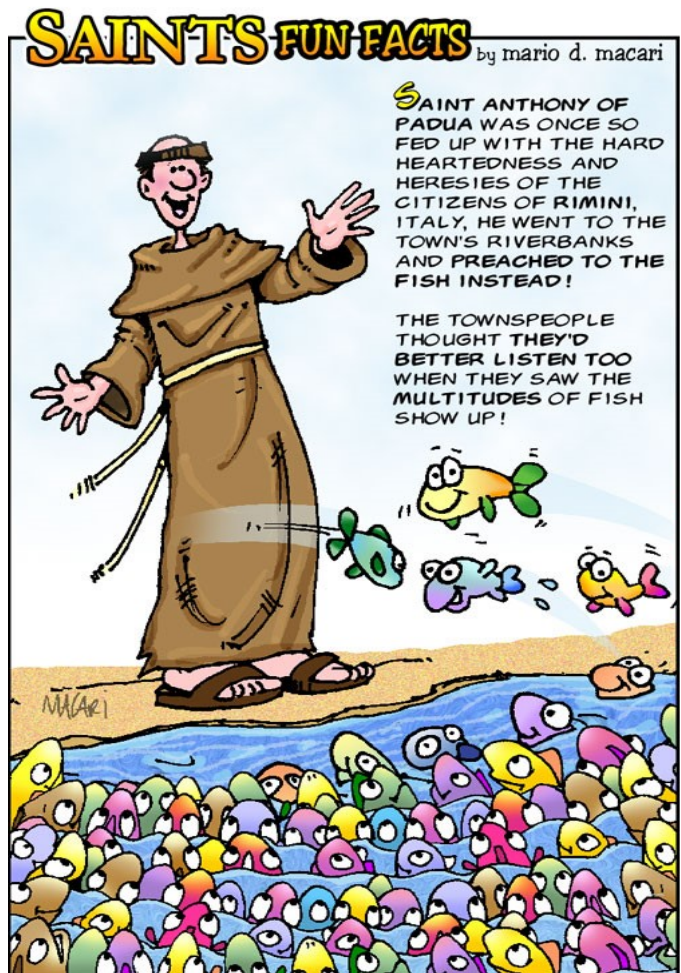
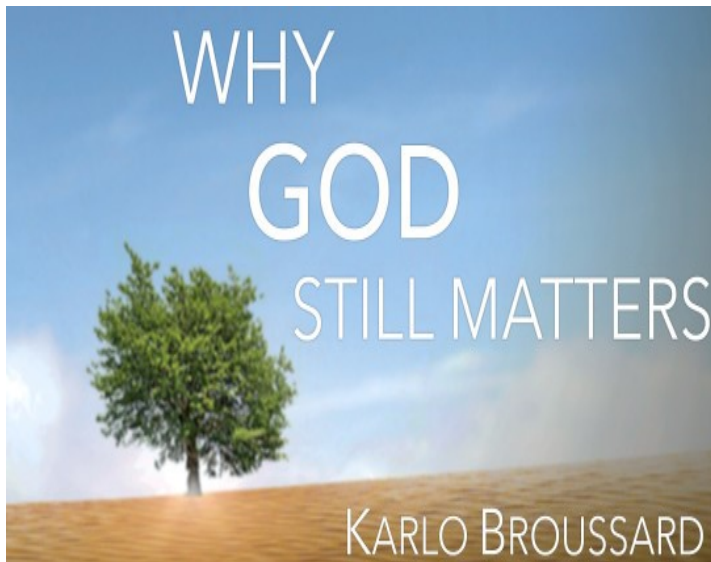
Banns of Marriage

Second Banns of Marriage are announced for :

- * Sabine Bouraphael and Richard Keyrouz
- * Sharbel Azzi and Kimberly Almonte

FORMED: PARISH CODE N3CCNK

<https://formed.org/watch/58b9c236f97abb9410ff0c79>



After these things Jesus showed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias; and he showed himself in this way. Gathered there together were Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples. Simon Peter said to them, 'I am going fishing.' They said to him, 'We will go with you.' They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing. Just after daybreak, Jesus stood on the beach; but the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to them, 'Children, you have no fish, have you?' They answered him, 'No.' He said to them, 'Cast the net to the right side of the boat, and you will find some.' So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in because there were so many fish. That disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, 'It is the Lord!' When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on some clothes, for he was naked, and jumped into the lake. But the other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they were not far from the land, only about a hundred yards off. When they had gone ashore, they saw a charcoal fire there, with fish on it, and bread. Jesus said to them, 'Bring some of the fish that you have just caught.' So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, a hundred and fifty-three of them; and though there were so many, the net was not torn. Jesus said to them, 'Come and have breakfast.' Now none of the disciples dared to ask him, 'Who are you?' because they knew it was the Lord. Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. This was now the third time that Jesus appeared to the disciples after he was raised from the dead.

بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ، ظَهَرَ يَسُوعُ لِتَلَامِيذِهِ مَرَّةً أُخْرَى عَلَى بَحِيرَةِ طَبْرِيةَ، وَهَكَذَا ظَهَرَ: كَانَ سَمْعَانُ بُطْرُسَ، وَتُومَا المَلْقُبُ بِالْثَوَامِ، وَتَتْنَائِيلُ الَّذِي مِنْ قَانَا الْجَلِيلِ، وَابْنَا زَبْدَى، وَتَلْمِيذَانِ آخَرَانِ مِنْ تَلَامِيذِ يَسُوعَ، مُجْتَمِعِينَ مَعًا. قَالَ لَهُمَ سَمْعَانُ بُطْرُسُ: «أَنَا ذَاهِبٌ أَصْطَادُ سَمَكًا». «قَالُوا لَهُ: «وَنَحْنُ أَيْضًا نَأْتِي مَعَكَ». فَخَرَجُوا وَرَكِبُوا السَّفِينَةَ، فَمَا أَصَابُوا فِي تِلْكَ اللَّيْلَةِ شَيْئًا. وَلَمَّا طَلَعَ الصُّبْرُ، وَقَفَ يَسُوعُ عَلَى الشَّاطِئِ، وَلَكِنَّ التَّلَامِيذَ لَمْ يَعْلَمُوا أَنَّهُ يَسُوعُ. فَقَالَ لَهُمَ يَسُوعُ: «يَا فَتَيَانِ، أَمَا عِنْدَكُمْ قَلِيلٌ مِنَ السَّمَكِ؟». «أَجَابُوهُ: «لا!». «فَقَالَ لَهُمَ: «أَلْقُوا الشَّبَكَةَ إِلَى يَمِينِ السَّفِينَةِ نَحْدُوا». «وَأَلْقَوْهَا، فَمَا قَدِرُوا عَلَى أَجْتِدَائِهَا مِنْ كَثْرَةِ السَّمَكِ. فَقَالَ ذَلِكَ التَّلَامِيذُ الَّذِي كَانَ يَسُوعُ يُحِبُّهُ لِبُطْرُسَ: «إِنَّهُ الرَّبُّ». فَلَمَّا سَمِعَ سَمْعَانُ بُطْرُسَ أَنَّهُ الرَّبُّ، إِتْرَزَ بِثَوْبِهِ، لِأَنَّهُ كَانَ عُرْيَانًا، وَأَلْقَى بِنَفْسِهِ فِي الْبَحِيرَةِ. أَمَّا التَّلَامِيذُ الْآخَرُونَ فَجَاؤُوا بِالسَّفِينَةِ، وَهُمْ يَسْحَبُونَ الشَّبَكَةَ الْمَمْلُوءَةَ سَمَكًا، وَمَا كَانُوا بَعِيدِينَ عَنِ الْبَرِّ إِلَّا نَحْوَ مِائَتِي ذِرَاعٍ. وَلَمَّا نَزَلُوا إِلَى الْبَرِّ، رَأَوْا جَمْرًا، وَسَمَكًا عَلَى الْجَمْرِ، وَخُبْزًا. قَالَ لَهُمَ يَسُوعُ: «هَاتُوا مِنَ السَّمَكِ الَّذِي أَصْبِئْتُمُوهُ الْآنَ». فَصَعَدَ سَمْعَانُ بُطْرُسَ إِلَى السَّفِينَةِ، وَجَذَبَ الشَّبَكَةَ إِلَى الْبَرِّ، وَهِيَ مَمْلُوءَةٌ سَمَكًا كَبِيرًا، مِئَةً وَثَلَاثًا وَخَمْسِينَ. وَمَعَ هَذِهِ الْكَثْرَةِ لَمْ تَتَمَرَّقِ الشَّبَكَةُ. قَالَ لَهُمَ يَسُوعُ: «هَلُمُّوا تَعَدُّوا». وَلَمْ يَجْزُوا أَحَدٌ مِنَ التَّلَامِيذِ أَنْ يَسْأَلَهُ: «مَنْ أَنْتَ؟»، لِأَنَّهُمْ عَلِمُوا أَنَّهُ الرَّبُّ. وَتَقَدَّمَ يَسُوعُ وَأَخَذَ الْخُبْزَ وَتَنَاوَلَهُمْ. ثُمَّ فَعَلَ كَذَلِكَ بِالسَّمَكِ. هَذِهِ مَرَّةً ثَالِثَةً ظَهَرَ فِيهَا يَسُوعُ لِلتَّلَامِيذِ بَعْدَ أَنْ قَامَ مِنَ الْأَمْوَاتِ

DIGITAL GLUTTONY: The 2015 Bank of America Trends in Consumer Mobility Report revealed the following alarming statistics:

36 percent of people check their phones constantly, while 54 percent of young adults are checking constantly.

Nearly 40 percent of people never disconnect from cell phones even while on vacation.

44 percent of Americans say they couldn't go a day without their mobile devices.

In addition, 50 percent of teens admitted feeling addicted to using their mobile devices, according to a May 2016 report by Common Sense Media. Experts suspect the actual number is even higher.

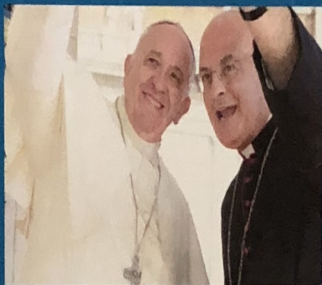




Save the Date

Thursday, October 4, 2018

Save This Date!
Thursday, October 4, 2018



And join Bishop Gregory Mansour at the Eparchy of Saint Maron's 9th Annual Benefit Dinner on Thursday, October 4, 2018 at the New York Athletic Club.

The proceeds of this Benefit Dinner provide essential funding for:

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We look forward to seeing you there!
Thank you for your support.

- **To all parents:** Thank you for your great love and sacrifice! . . . You are the first guardians and teachers of your children and are called to be their models of chaste and fruitful love.
- Children and teens who view pornography in effect receive an education about sexuality from what they are viewing
- Parents and guardians, protect your home!

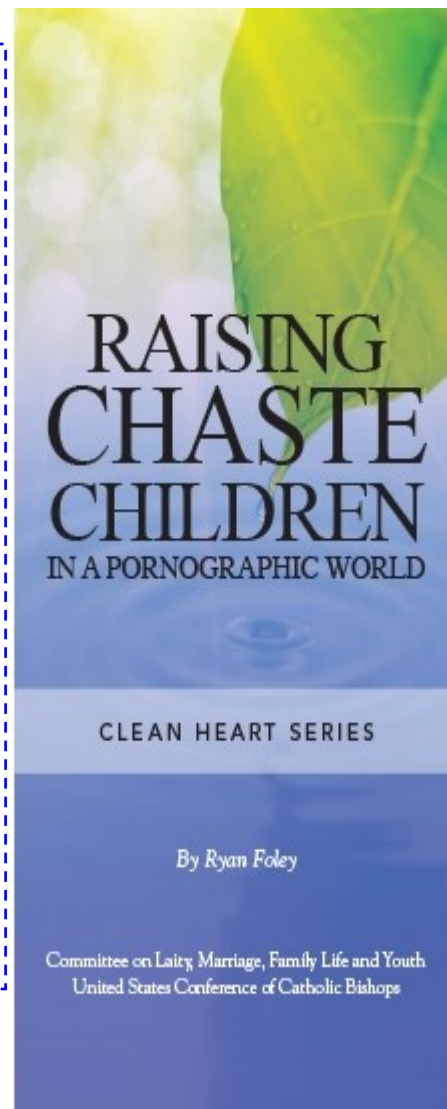
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DCG Annual Golf Fundraiser Event:

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REASONS TO BELIEVE IN GOD

Today belief in God is often seen as a naïveté. For many, believing in God is like believing in Santa and the Easter Bunny, nice, something for the kids, a warm nostalgia or a bitter memory, but not something that's real, that stands up to hard scrutiny and indeed stands up to the dark doubts that sometimes linger below the surface of our faith. Where's there evidence that God exists?

A true apologetics, I believe, needs at a point to be personal. So here are my own reasons why I continue to believe in God in the face of the agnosticism of our overly-adult world and despite the dark nights that sometimes beset me.

First, I believe in God because I sense, at the deepest level of my being, that there's an inalienable moral structure to things. Life, love, and meaning are morally-contoured. There's an inalienable "law of karma" that's experienced everywhere and in everything: good behavior is its own happiness, just as bad behavior is its own sorrow. Different religions word it differently but the concept is at the heart of all religion and is in essence the very definition of morality: *The measure you measure out will be the measure that's measured back to you.* That's Jesus' version of it, and can be translated this way: *The air you breathe out is the air you will re-inhale.* Simply put: If we cut down too many trees we will soon be breathing in carbon monoxide. If we breathe out love, we will meet love. If we breathe out hate and anger we will soon enough find ourselves surrounded by hatred and anger. Reality is so structured that goodness brings goodness and sin brings sin.

I believe in God because blind chaos could not have designed things this way, to be innately moral. Only an intelligent Goodness could have built reality this way.

My next reason for believing in God is the existence of soul, intelligence, love, altruism, and art. These could not have emerged simply from blind chaos, from billions and billions of cosmic bingo chips coming out of nothing, with no intelligent loving force behind them, endlessly churning through billions of years. Random chaos, empty of all intelligence and love from its origins, could not have eventually produced soul and all that's highest inside it: intelligence, love, altruism, spirituality, and art. Can our own hearts and all that's noble and precious within them really be just the result of billions of fluke chances colliding within a brute, mindless process?

I believe in God because if our hearts are real then so is God.

Next, I believe in God because the Gospel works – if we work it. What Jesus incarnated and taught ultimately resonates with what's most precious, most noble, and most meaningful inside of life and inside each of us. Moreover, this checks out in life. Whenever I have the faith and courage to actually live out the Gospel, to roll the dice on its truth, it always proves to be true, the loaves multiply and feed the thousands and David defeats Goliath. But it doesn't work unless I risk it. The Gospel works, if we work it.

The objection could be raised here, of course, that many sincere, faith-filled people risk their lives and truth on the Gospel and, from all appearances in this world, it doesn't work for them. They end up poor, as victims, on the losing side of things. But again, that's a judgment we make from the standards of this world, from the Gospel of Prosperity where whoever has the most worldly success wins. The Gospel of Jesus undercuts this. Anyone who lives it out as faithfully as he or she is able, will be blessed with something beyond worldly success, namely, the deeper joy of a life well-lived, a joy which Jesus assures us is deeper, less ephemeral, and more lasting than any other joy.

I believe in God because the Gospel works! As does prayer!

Finally, though certainly not least, I believe in God because of the community of faith that stretches back to the beginning of time, that stretches back to the life and resurrection of Jesus, and that baptized me into the faith. Throughout all of history virtually all human communities have been also communities of faith, of belief in God, of worship, and of sacred ritual and sacrament.

I believe in God because of the existence of families of faith and the existence of church and sacrament.

I wrote my doctoral thesis on the classical proofs for the existence of God, arguments for God's existence taken from some of the great intellectuals in history: Anselm, Thomas Aquinas, Descartes, Leibnitz, Spinoza, and Alfred North Whitehead. I rambled through nearly 500 hundred pages of articulating and evaluating these proofs and then ended with this conclusion.

We don't come to believe in God because of the compelling power of some mathematical equation or logical syllogism. God's existence becomes real to us when we live an honest, sincere life.