



# utreach

# utreach



WINTER 2022, DIGITAL VOLUME 01, No. 01

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER SERVING THE PARISH OF  
OUR LADY OF MT. LEBANON - ST. PETER CATHEDRAL  
LOS ANGELES - CALIFORNIA

**OBJECTIVES:**

RELIGIOUS - SOCIAL - CULTURAL - EDUCATIONAL

## **Directors**

Fr. Elias Sleiman M.L.M.  
Fr. Etienne Hanna M.L.M.

## **Editor**

Mrs. Pia Challita-Eid

## **Section Directors**

<b>Qadeesha Corner</b>	Fr. Elias Sleiman M.L.M.
<b>Parish News</b>	Mr. Tommy Tedros
<b>Around The World</b>	Mr. Antoine Dagher
<b>Z-Generation</b>	Mrs. Vera Moubayed Farah
<b>I-Generation</b>	Mrs. Grace Najjar
<b>Next-Generation</b>	Ms. Mireille Nasr
<b>Health Matters</b>	Dr. Rosana Ayoub

## **Graphics & Design**

Fr. Etienne Hanna M.L.M.

# Table of contents

RECTOR'S CORNER.....	4
HEALTH MATTERS .....	5
<i>The Road Back Home</i> .....	5
<i>Spotlight on Heal Beirut</i> .....	8
PARISH NEWS.....	9
<i>Sighs of Silence Lenten Spiritual Retreat</i> .....	9
<i>MYO Hike</i> .....	10
<i>First Holy Communion</i> .....	11
<i>Sunday of the Pentecost</i> .....	12
<i>Graduation Mass</i> .....	12
<i>Christmas Adult Spiritual Retreat</i> .....	13
<i>Christmas Concert</i> .....	13
<i>First Snow Experience</i> .....	14
<i>MYO Recent Activities</i> .....	15
<i>MYA Recent Activities</i> .....	16
<i>Bible Study</i> .....	16
<i>Interview with Fr Etienne Hanna</i> .....	17
CATHOLIC WORLD NEWS .....	21
<i>Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together</i> .....	21
Z-GENERATION.....	26
<i>2020-2021 First Communion Class and Celebration</i> .....	26
<i>CCD in the Era of COVID19</i> .....	28
I-GENERATION .....	30
<i>2020-2021 School Year</i> .....	30
<i>A conversation with Chadia Saade</i> .....	32
<i>INTERVIEW with Elias Saad</i> .....	33
<i>Meet some of the Graduating MYO Members</i> .....	34
NEXT-GENERATION .....	37
<i>The Bible's Guide to Hard Times</i> .....	37
<i>MYA Member Spotlight</i> .....	39
KADISHA CORNER .....	41
<i>The Venerable, Patriarch Elias El-Howayek</i> .....	41



The Apostle John began his version of the Good News of Salvation, saying: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (1:1), the Greek term for word is “logos”, and “logos” means “reason” and “speech”.

For John, being the “logos”, Jesus was the personification of what God intended to communicate with humanity. God expressed his love to the world and launched his Kingdom through the person and ministry of Jesus. Every word, every theological essay, every biblical study, every canon law, and every catechism are human “logoi” (plural of logos), human efforts, and “reasonable” attempts to interpret the Divine Logos within various cultures and human experiences. Those Logoi are the structure and the articulation of our understand-

ing of ourselves and various events, in light of Faith.

In previous years, Outreach Magazine was a space that Our Lady of Mt. Lebanon created for “Logoi” that are imagined, created, and written by a group of volunteers for parishioners of various ages to, learn, share, tell stories, interact, and somehow create a “memoir” of our Cathedral life and events.

The new “Outreach” will be available online to read and download, and I am very proud of all the members of our new team who have been working hard to launch the first issue after several years of interruption.

Father Etienne Hanna and I wish to thank Mrs. Pia Challita-Eid, Dr. Rosana Ayoub Zayek, Mrs. Vera Moubayed Farah, Mrs. Grace Najjar, Ms. Mireille Nasr, Mr. Tommy Tedros, and Mr. Antoine Dagher for investing their time, talent, and generosity to give all of us a product that will, hopefully, serve our people and strengthen their connection with Our Lady of Mt. Lebanon.

I pray that the “digital” Outreach will attract more pens and talents so that more people will be offered an opportunity to serve God and His people.

Yours in Christ,  
Father Elias Sleiman

# The Road Back Home

By Rosana Ayoub Zayek, Christian Zayek

For almost 2 years now, Covid-19 has been a thief of joy, community, and health, and it has robbing us of the most basic pleasures in life. One of these pleasures include gathering with our fellow Maronites in our spiritual home, to lift our prayers up to God. None of us can deny that powerful sense of peace and comfort that overcomes us as soon as we step through the doors of our church, and the feeling that, finally, we are home. In a sense, we have been homeless for the past year, but the time of our homecoming draws near.

**Over the past few months, we have seen new hope in the fight against Covid-19 in the form of vaccines. They have been proven effective at scaling back the number of hospitalizations and deaths of this highly transmissible virus. For our journey back to our church, they represent our ticket home.**

Leading public health experts cite Herd Immunity as one of the goals to end the pandemic. Herd Immunity occurs when a large portion of the com-

munity becomes immune to a disease, making the spread of the disease unlikely. This results in the entire community becoming protected, not only those who have developed immunity either through vaccination or previous infection. However, in order to reach herd immunity, a certain percentage of the population must have achieved immunity, thereby limiting the spread of the disease. While this percentage varies depending on the disease, the more contagious the disease, the higher the percentage needed for Herd Immunity. For Covid-19, it is estimated to be around 70-80%.

Currently, three vaccines are approved in the United States: Pfizer/BioNTech, Moderna, and Johnson and Johnson. Pfizer and Moderna are both mRNA vaccines, which give instructions to our cells to make a spike protein, which is found on the surface of the virus that causes Covid-19. After this piece is made, the cells break down the instructions and disposes of them. The cells then display the protein piece on their surfaces, and our immune system recognize that it does not belong there, and mounts an immune response and makes antibodies. As a result, our bodies learn how to protect against

future Covid-19 infection. The Johnson & Johnson vaccine uses a more traditional virus-based technology. This technology uses a disabled adenovirus to deliver the instructions. It is important to note that it cannot replicate in your body and will not give you a viral infection.

Some people have experienced side effects after the vaccine, including fever, body aches, chills, fatigue, nausea, or sore arm. A very small percentage of those who received the Johnson & Johnson vaccine suffered blood clots (15 cases out of over 6 million doses). The CDC recommends mRNA vaccines over the J&J vaccine as of December 2021.

### Several myths have been circulating regarding COVID-19 vaccines.

velopment or fertility. **In fact, there has never been any vaccine that has been linked with infertility.**

Others fear that vaccines may cause miscarriage or stillbirth. Pregnant women were not included in any of the original clinical trials conducted by Pfizer or Moderna, but since emergency authorization approval by the FDA, over 100,000 pregnant women have received one of these vaccines (and some even received the Johnson & Johnson vaccine). Thousands of these women are being closely monitored by the CDC, and their pregnancy outcomes have been no different than the general population.

It has also been rumored that the vaccines can cause the Covid-19 infection. However, this is scientifically impossible based on that physiology of the vaccines.

Type of Vaccine	Inactivated Virus	Viral Vector (non-replicating)	Viral Vector (non-replicating)	Viral Vector (non-replicating, 2 serotypes)	RNA	RNA
Other Vaccines using this technology	Whooping Cough, Rabies, Hepatitis A	Ebola	Ebola	Ebola	None	None
Preclinical Animal Testing	Mice, Rats, Monkeys	Monkeys, Hamsters	Pigs, Monkeys, Ferrets, Mice	Monkeys, Rabbits, Guinea Pigs, Rats, Mice, Hamsters	Monkeys, Mice	Monkeys, Mice
Dosage Number	Two, 14 days apart	One	Two, 12 weeks apart	Two, 21 days apart	Two, 28 days apart	Two, 21 days apart
Overall Efficacy	50% after 2 <sup>nd</sup> dose	66%	90% after 2 <sup>nd</sup> dose	92% after 2 <sup>nd</sup> dose	94% after 2 <sup>nd</sup> dose	95% after 2 <sup>nd</sup> dose
Adverse effects	None Reported	Anaphylaxis (<0.001%), Thrombosis and Thrombocytopenia	Thrombosis and Thrombocytopenia	None Reported	Anaphylaxis (<0.001%)	Anaphylaxis (<0.001%)
Time to maximal immunity	2 weeks after 2 <sup>nd</sup> dose (estimated)	2 weeks	15 days after 2 <sup>nd</sup> dose	2 weeks after 2 <sup>nd</sup> dose	2 weeks after 2 <sup>nd</sup> dose	2 weeks after 2 <sup>nd</sup> dose

Some people fear that the spike protein on covid-19 will attach itself to similar receptors on the placenta and cause infertility. However, the placenta is formed AFTER conception, invalidating this theory. There is no evidence that the vaccine will affect de-

At this time, the vaccines are approved for those age 5 and up in the United States, but clinical trials are currently ongoing for children as young as 6 months. It is therefore important to continue social distancing, proper

hand hygiene, and use of masks to protect our youngest generations.

With the emergence of the Omicron variant, infectious disease officials are urging all eligible Americans to receive the booster dose of the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines as soon as possible, noting that with 3 doses, this will bolster immune response. Omicron is suspected to be more transmissible than Delta, in fact, as transmissible as measles. This is a cause for concern, especially amongst the unvaccinated, but early data from South Africa indicate the vaccinated with breakthrough infections experience mild disease.

**Now, brothers and sisters in Christ, it is time to come home. We have been absent for far too long, homesick, away from our families and friends, and away from the most important aspect of our spiritual lives, the Eucharist.**

Many of us are health conscious, making sure to put healthy food into our bodies to prevent illness. The eucharist is healthy spiritual food for our soul to prevent spiritual illness, and we have been missing it. Let us all come together as a community, stronger now that we have overcome this great obstacle and knowing what it is like to be away from our home for so long. See you all on

Sunday!

To Find a vaccine location near you: Search vaccines.gov, text your Zip code to 438829, or call 1-800-232-0233



<https://cdc.gov/coronavirus>

<https://smhs.gwu.edu/covid-19-vaccine/myths-facts>

<https://www.mayoclinichealthsystem.org/hometown-health/featured-topic/>

# Spotlight on Heal Beirut

Healbeirut.com

Heal Beirut is an NGO created by two brothers born and raised in our parish. After the Beirut Port explosion on August 4th of last year, Marc Ayoub, an Internal Medicine resident at Elmhurst Hospital and Noel Fahed Ayoub, an Ear, Nose, and Throat Resident at Stanford University, compiled a network of health professionals to provide free medical care to the people of Lebanon.

This medical care is offered through telehealth sessions and is offered in 3 languages by American-Lebanese healthcare workers from all over the United States. This care is easily accessed by signing up on the Heal Beirut website: <https://www.healbeirut.com> . Patients are immediately matched with a caring and available volunteers.

# H E L B E I R U T



**Marc Ayoub**

Internal Medicine Resident  
Elmhurst Hospital



**Noel Fahed Ayoub**

Ear, Nose, and Throat Resident  
Stanford University



# Sighs of Silence Lenten Spiritual Retreat

By Tommy Tedros

A Lenten Spiritual Retreat that was held on Saturday, March 20, 2021 at the Cathedral and Cathedral Hall. Father Elias Sleiman served as the retreat master, while Father Etienne Hanna and Sister Lara assisted. Attendees enjoyed a day consisting of religious workshops and activities, as well as exercises in personal reflection. Those who attended took extra care in practicing social distancing and wore masks in order to ensure the safety of others. Participating in this spiritual journey was gratifying for those present and the interest will grow based on the favorable responses for future retreats.



# MYO Hike

A significant number of MYO members joined Father Elias, Father Etienne and Sister Lara on May 1, 2021 for a hike at the Temescal Canyon Trail in the Pacific Palisades. Hikers enjoyed a moderate trek complete with a waterfall and spectacular views of the Westside and beyond. It was a great bonding experience in a safe, outdoor environment and the MYO members were so happy to get together after many months of not seeing each other. Hopefully, more similar activities will be planned once the academic year ends and Covid-19 restrictions are lifted.



# First Holy Communion



The first step in preparing the young children of our parish prepared to receive the Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist, was by teaching them how much the Maronite religion affects their every day lives. Religion plays a huge part

in the upbringing of our children and it is important to teach them the true value and importance of being a Maronite Christian. Religion plays a huge part in the upbringing of the children. Catechism classes (whether virtual or in person) are intended to give the youngsters a guideline for life, guidelines which will guide them into adulthood and

teach them to live fulfilling lives.

It takes hard work and determination to raise good Christians and it wouldn't be possible without the support and dedication of our priests, CCD director, teachers, parents and the children, themselves. On Saturday, May 15, 2021, 7 parish children celebrated their First Holy Communion. The ceremony marked a special milestone in the children's spiritual lives, as they, actively, participated in liturgy, presented special intentions, made special expressions of gratitude and recited a hymn at the conclusion of the ceremony. We offer our sincere congratulations to all the First Communicants and their families.



# Sunday of the Pentecost



On Sunday, May 23, 2021, the cathedral celebrated the Feast of the Pentecost with the blessing of

Holy Water. The Pentecost reminds us of the gifting of the Holy Spirit to the church and allows the faithful to profess that “Jesus is Lord”. After the liturgy, many of the parish-

es dedicated volunteers prepared Man’ouche outdoors for the congregants to enjoy. As it was one of the first informal receptions held at the Cath-



dral Hall since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, our parishioners followed all health and safety guidelines, of course.



# Graduation Mass

The Cathedral community recognized MYO members of the High School gradu-



ating class of 2021 with a special mass on Sunday, May 30, 2021.

The graduates participated in a procession at the beginning of Mass. The Homily was dedicated to highlighting their educational growth and choices of college majors, all while reflecting and taking pride in their religious upbringing. A reception recognizing the graduates was held in the cathedral hall as the honorees, their families and parishioners enjoyed a light Lebanese fare and wonderful desserts, including a decorative graduation cake. Also, a keepsake was given to each graduate with the following passage: “Go into the whole world and proclaim the gospel to every creature” - Mark 16:15.



# Christmas Adult Spiritual Retreat



A good representation of members from our cathedral community took part in a Christmas Adult Spiritual Retreat on Saturday, December 11th of last year at the Sacred Heart Retreat House in Alhambra. Both Fathers Elias Sleiman and Etienne Hanna coordinated religious and crafting activities, as well as a celebration of the Liturgy followed by lunch. Many thanks to Sandra Nahra and her preparation of the details leading up to this day as this took place in the liturgical season of Christmas.



# Christmas Concert



On Sunday, December 12th of last year, the Cathedral hosted a Christmas concert featuring the Orchid Quartet. They performed during the 2020 Christmas season and it was well-received and such a beautiful event back then. The same ensemble came back with a splendid performance, including a variety of a cappella songs that captivated those in attendance. A small reception was held in the hall following this musical act as the tradition continues of wonderful spiritual and musical concerts at our cathedral venue.



# First Snow Experience



and we're grateful of our community showing this goodwill, especially during this time of year.



On Saturday, December 4th, there was actual snow in the parking lot! The children and parents enjoyed the winter presence with snow games and the feel and appearance of snow and didn't have to go to the local mountains for this. The day started with an 11:00am mass in the cathedral for those attendees and followed with food, gifts and music in the hall with Santa Claus taking time from his busy schedule to take pictures with the kids. A good number of families donated new clothes that day and will be given to kids in Lebanon. It was much needed



# MYO Recent Activities

On Saturday, May 1st, a good number of MYO members as well as Father Elias, Father Etienne and Sister Lara got their exercise in as they participated in a hike. It was at the Temescal Canyon Trail, near Pacific Palisades, that features a quite moderate trek and waterfall plus spectacular views of the westside and beyond. It was a good bonding session done in a safe, outdoor environment. It was nice to get the MYO together after many months of not seeing each other. Hopefully, more activities will be planned as school is out and a sense of normalcy is happening once again.



Our local Maronite Youth Organization took part in a paintball game, held at the Hollywood Sports Park in Bellflower. This took place on November 20th and it was a first for our group to involve themselves in



an activity like this. It was certainly a lot of fun in a controlled environment. A couple months prior, the MYO end of Summer



gathering took place El Segundo on September 11th. The group took part in prayer, games and a potluck at the beach. These were much needed events to bring and unite our younger representation of our cathedral together and keeping them involved in fun activities and lasting memories.



# MYA Recent Activities



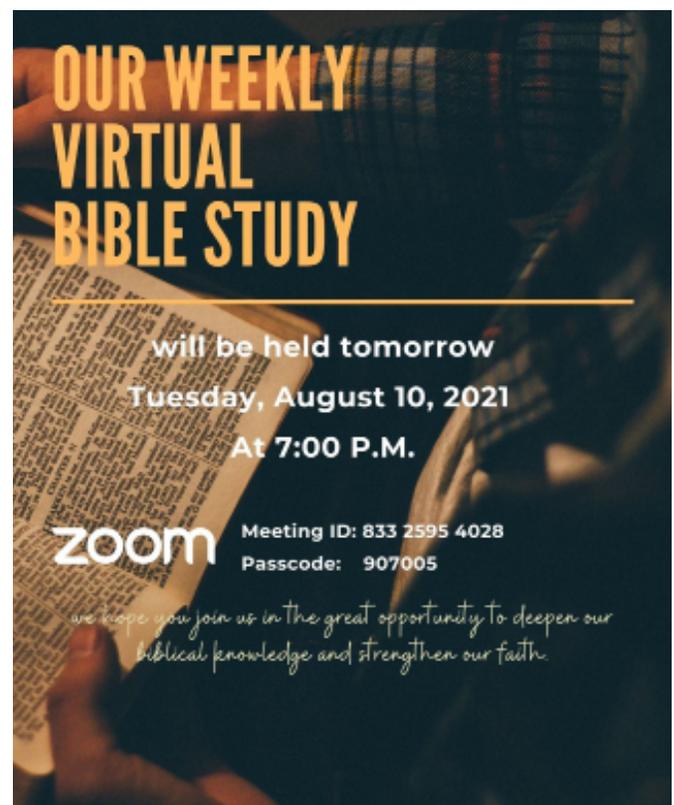
Although the pandemic has challenged our community, the MYA has done its best to remain active. The LA MYA has come together for a welcome night, which included icebreakers, dinner, and prayer in the church to kick off our events. This was followed by a “Mass and Meza” event, where members gathered after Sunday mass to meet one another and enjoy a meal together at a local Lebanese restaurant. Most recently, several MYA members participated in the first annual MYA West Regional Retreat in San Diego, CA. There, they spent a weekend in prayer, building relationships, and even learned how



to surf! We look forward to more social and spiritual events in the future, and hope that you join us!

## Bible Study

A number of virtual bible studies have been taking place online quite regularly. They are held normally on Mondays and the announcements are made via social media with Zoom instructions given to those that wish to participate. Various gospel passages are reviewed and discussed as there is so much history and meaning in each parable described. Many thanks to our cathedral clergy in providing this opportunity to deepen our biblical knowledge as it leads to strengthening our faith and having a true understanding of holy scripture and God’s revelation of himself.



# Interview with Fr Etienne Hanna



**Father Etienne Hanna, Lebanese Maronite missionary, from Kobayat, North of Lebanon. He had been ordained a priest in July 2020 in Ghosta, Lebanon and had assigned as an Associate Rector of Our Lady Of Mt. Lebanon - St. Peter Cathedral in Los Angeles, California in November 13, 2020. This interview is to get known more about our new priest.**

**Q: Why did you become a priest?**

A: It is one of the most difficult questions. My decision to become a priest was an answer to God's call. It can't be described fairly in plain words. This call had been seeking me for a long time. In fact, I conceived it in myself, in my personality, as Jeremiah mentioned in his Book "before I [God] formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born, I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations." During my spiritual and missionary journey that I lived in my youth, I started looking for the most satisfying way to be closest to God. I determined that I was not pleased by giving myself partially in serving God; I wanted to give myself fully to Him. I wanted to devote all my life in serving the Almighty. My main admiration was the Eucharist. Since my early childhood, I dreamed of holding the Body of Christ in my hands and uttering the words: "This is the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, giving to you for eternal life." My dream, which was in some sense my call became reality. I became what God made me to be, a priest.

**Q: When and how did you receive your call to become a priest?**

A: Since my first year of high school, I projected my future to be in priesthood. The decision was made after I graduated from college. It is worth mentioning that being a priest and being a father of a family are two different things, but they are both vocations

instituted by Christ. At age eighteen, I decided to take time for discernment. I attended five-year college and received an engineering degree. This did not mean that I was ignoring God's call, but I was not ready for priesthood. During those years of discernment, I matured spiritually. I recognized a new relationship with My Lord Jesus Christ through spending most of my free time in the church, contemplating his Word in the Bible and marveling his Presence in the Eucharist. I volunteered in many young adult organizations where I revealed my passion for preaching others about Jesus Christ. In my fifth year of college, I had a part time job as an engineer. I was independent and enjoying my life with my friends. Despite all that, I was not satisfied I felt something was missing in my life. At that moment and few months before graduating, I met a priest and started discernment sessions with him, which helped me understand God's call. Then I took my decision to devote my life to God and joined the Lebanese Maronite missionary. Nb: I finished my major and graduated two weeks after I started my first step in my priesthood's journey, called "pre-novice".

**Q: What attracted you to your order?**

A: Our congregation, the "Lebanese Maronite missionary", is an organization for priests who are called to be missionary, which means being always ready to go where God calls them to be. First, I discovered the

congregation's spirituality from my several visits to the "seminary" where new members received their formation. My brother, father Edward, was a seminarian at that time. The real reason of my repeated visits was to ascertain my place among them. I noticed their total devotion to the Eucharist, which is a major part of their monastic rules and their daily living. So, the sincere devoutness and missionary labors attracted me to this congregation. And if I have to choose again, I will choose them. I am honored to be a "Lebanese Maronite Missionary".



**Q: What advice would give to a young person who is considering religious life?**

A: First, I want to say for all our young people, be mature faithful people. I urge you to question your faith. Don't give up searching for answers for all your doubts. But always leave a chance for God to answer you in his own way.

For a young person who is considering religious life, I tell him the same as I have been told weeks before my decision. I remember

**Q: What is a typical day for you?**

A: Usually, I don't have a typical day, because we have different tasks to do every day: visiting parishioners, sick people, answering calls... but my normal day starts with the morning Mass then breakfast. Most of my mornings are consecrated for office work, related to our parish. Usually, I have my coffee break at 11 and then lunch. I always set time in the afternoon for personal prayer, reading, and contemplating the Word of God, in another word, for my Lectio Divina. When



ividly the moment when I asked an elder priest in our congregation about priesthood and devoting our life to God, he smiled at me and said: it is tough, but wonderful. And that's what I want to tell every young soul: Do it! Answer God's call even if it is hard, you will be content and fulfilled.

time permits, I work out; usually I take a long walk on the beach. At night, I like to prepare my dinner and watch my favorite series or movies.

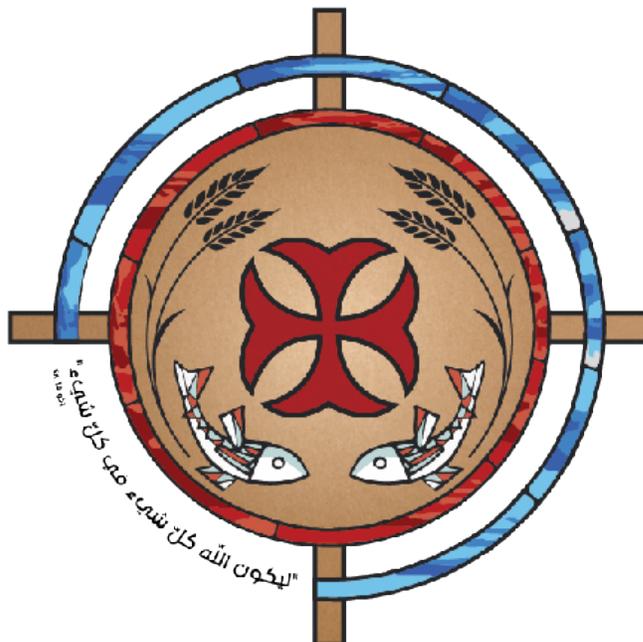
**Q: What are your hobbies and interests?**

A: My hobbies are reading most preferably on the beach, graphic designing, and swimming. I do not consider myself athletic by any means. I have little experience in designing programs such as illustration and photoshop. I like to design posters, books' covers, magazines... I made many of those. By the way, I discovered this skill in me when I was

asked to make some posters for our youth organizations, since then I became passionate about it.

**Q: What are your expectations of the cathedral community?**

A: I am a new priest. It is my first experience in a big parish and in a new country. Since the Church reopened and I started meeting parishioners, I felt home. You are so kind to interview me. I sense in you the Maronite spirit and attachment to your Church. What I expect from our community, especially from you, is to spread this spirit to our youth and young generation. The Church needs every one of you. Today more than ever, we need to be active and preach our generation about Jesus. I am primary responsible of that as priest, but you are too as fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, and friends. We are all called to serve the Word of God. Come back to Church, and let us witness together.



# Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together

By Mr. Antoine Dagher

**The present article discusses the “Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together”**

**SIGNED IN ABU DHABI ON FEBRUARY 4TH, 2019  
BY POPE FRANCIS AND THE GRAND IMAM OF AL-AZHAR, AHMAD AL-**

First, we will describe the vision and content of this historic mutual agreement. Second, we will present some responses of the international and religious communities to this initiative. We will conclude by reflecting on the attainability of the document’s aspirations while keeping in mind the most fundamental human need; that is the awareness of the one true God and His infinite love and divine providence for all humankind.

**“Through faith in God, who has created the universe, creatures and all human beings, believers are called to express this human fraternity by safeguarding creation and the entire universe and supporting all persons, especially the poorest and those most in need.”**

This transcendental value inspired several interreligious meetings where friendly discussions and sincere reflections about the condition of the modern world took place. This open dialogue brings hope in a bright future which manifests in the conception of this joint declaration. The document “invites all persons who have faith in God and faith in human fraternity to unite and work together so that it may serve as a guide for future generations to advance a culture of mutual respect in the awareness of the great divine grace that makes all human beings brothers and sisters”. This historic accord declares a culture of open dialogue with cooperation and reciprocal understanding. It is a bold appeal in the name of justice and mercy to restore human dignity and unite humankind. It is a declaration of peace that breaks through the old boundaries of separate religions and brings all people under one God, the father.

It is an interrelation between Christians and Muslims to once and for all end all hate and religious extremism.

**The world leaders are called upon to open up to a culture with more tolerance while aspiring to stop the killing of the innocent in useless wars. Intellectuals, philosophers and religious figures are being called upon to abrupt the dominant individualism and materialism that swept our contemporary world and replace it with values that are “anchors for salvation” such as peace, justice and love.**

It is to lift the generation which has fallen into a vortex of atheistic, agnostic and religious extremism, and which continues to lead souls to self-destruction. It is an acknowledgment of a “third world war being fought piecemeal” while number of victims, widows and orphans are unknown. What makes the condition more dire is the arms race that is building up globally and is causing fear of the future. It is also an affirmation of the acute lack of equitable distribution of natural resources. It is an attempt to break the silence of the international community about the millions of children dying from hunger and poverty. Furthermore, the attack on the institution of the family is “one of the most evils of our era.” The only way to fight radicalism and blind extremism is to awaken

the awareness of God in the heart of man. It is the condemnation of acts that threatens the gift of life such as genocide, acts of terrorism, forced displacement, human organ trafficking, abortion and euthanasia. “The first and most important aim of religions is to believe in God, to honor Him and to invite all men and women to believe that this universe depends on a God who governs it. He is the Creator who has formed us with His divine wisdom and has granted us the gift of life to protect it. It is a gift that no one has the right to take away, threaten or manipulate to suit oneself.” It is a call to refrain from using the name of God to incite and justify wars for political gains. **“God, the Almighty, has no need to be defended by anyone and does not want His name to be used to terrorize people.”**

This cornerstone mutual declaration demands peace to be rooted in all religious teachings. It aims at reawaking religious awareness in the hearts of the young people, so greed and materialism are dimmed. It is also about freedom of belief, thought and expression. “The pluralism and the diversity of religions, color, sex, race and language are willed by God in His wisdom, through which He created human beings.” It is an invitation to all believers to come together as one to live in harmony peace and love. It is to respect and protect all places of worship: churches, synagogues and mosques. A fruitful relation between East and West is to

be nurtured while reenforcing fundamental human rights so to restore human dignity. The rights of children to grow in a family environment and the right of women to education and employment must be protected while safeguarding all women and children from sexual exploitation.

**The Catholic Church and Al-Azhar pledge to convey the vision of this joint declaration of Human Fraternity to authorities and influential leaders while integrating its principles in the very heart of our educational and civic institutions. So, “this declaration may be a witness to the greatness of faith in God that unites divided hearts and elevates the human soul” while hoping to find “a universal peace that all can enjoy in this life”.**

But the question is, who is listening? Is a universal peace an evasive goal forever lingering and hoped for but never grasped or attained?

Let us now present some reactions to the document of Human Fraternity. The document was well received in the United States by Cardinal Blase Cupich, Archbishop of Chicago and Catholic Chair of the National Catholic-Muslim Dialogue, and Most Rev. Joseph C. Bambera, Bishop of Scranton and Chair of the U.S. Bishops’ Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs: “In

our increasingly hostile world in which violence too often predominates between Christians and Muslims—violence that has led to tragic consequences for the most vulnerable humans—we welcome with great joy this historic joint statement on human fraternity by Pope Francis and the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, Ahmad Al-Tayyeb. The statement, which represents the culmination of the first papal visit to the Arabian Peninsula and marks the occasion of the 800th anniversary of the encounter between St. Francis of Assisi and Sultan al-Malik al-Kamil in Egypt, is a clarion call for robust dialogue that leads to peace. We commend it to all people of good will, especially leaders of nations and religious groups, in the hope that it might serve as a resource to overcome division through a renewed commitment to dialogue and the establishment of goodwill.”

Inspired by the Document, the Higher Committee on Human Fraternity was formed. They continue to work to implement the ideals found in the document among all people of good will, including further documents from events and reflections. It is made up of different international religious leaders, scholars and cultural leaders who are dedicated to sharing Human Fraternity’s message of mutual understanding and peace. Their main work is to act concretely according to the aspirations of the Document and to spread the values of mutual respect and peaceful coexistence. The Secretary General

of the Higher Committee of Human Fraternity is Judge Mohamed Mahmoud Abdel Salam.

On December 21, 2020, the United Nations General Assembly unanimously declared February 4th as International Day of Human Fraternity. February 4, 2021 marks the first celebration. The theme of 2021 is “Pathway to the Future”. Pope Francis took part in a virtual celebration of the event with the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, Ahmad Al-Tayyeb, Secretary General António Guterres of the United Nations, and more. It was hosted by Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed in Abu Dhabi, capital of the United Arab Emirates. Pope Francis has encouraged the Holy See to join in the celebration of International Human Fraternity Day under the leadership of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue. In the January edition of the Pope’s Video, “At the service of human fraternity,” the Holy Father highlights the importance of focusing on what is essential to the faith of all faiths: worship of God and love of neighbor. “Fraternity leads us to open ourselves to the Father of all and to see in the other a brother, a sister, to share life, or to support one another, to love, to know,” Pope Francis emphasizes in this video:

<https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2021-01/pope-s-january-prayer-intention-at-the-service-of-fraternity.html>

On the other hand, some critics seem to question the willingness of the Holy Father to employ novel theological formulations and questionable assertions of facts, that according to some scholars, are pronouncements about God’s will that are nowhere to be found in the Gospels. Others scrutinize a specific passage mentioned above about plurality and diversification of religion. They reject this passage of the document and assert that Christianity is the only God-willed religion. Therefore, it can never be placed complementarily side by side with other religions. Those who claim that the diversity of religion is the will of God would be violating the truth of Divine Revelation, as it is clearly affirmed in the First Commandment of the Decalogue. According to the will of Christ, faith in Him and in His Divine teaching must replace other religions, however not by force, but by loving persuasion, as expressed in the hymn of Lauds of the Feast of Christ the King: “Non Ille regna cladibus, non vi metuque subdidit: alto levatus stipite, amore traxit omnia” (“Not with sword, force and fear He subjects peoples, but lifted up on the Cross He lovingly draws all things to Himself”). Jesus Christ thought that outside faith in Him there cannot be a true and God-pleasing religion: “I am the door. By me, if any man enters in, he shall be saved” (John 10: 9). God commanded to all men, without exception, to hear His Son: “This is my most beloved Son; hear Him!” (Mk. 9: 7). God did

not say: “You can hear My Son or you can hear other founders of a religion, for it is My will that there are different religions.” God has forbidden us to recognize the legitimacy of the religion of other gods: “Thou shalt not have strange gods before me” (Ex. 20: 3).

**We cannot deny that the vision of the document on “Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together” seems inclusive and welcomes all humankind to come together in one love.**

In conclusion, whether you agree with the Pope’s unprecedented initiative or not, and while some are praising his holiness’s open mindedness and others are calling him her-

etic, we cannot deny that the vision of the document seems inclusive and welcomes all humankind to come together in one love. The interreligious breaking of barriers is bold and never seen before. Perhaps our world needs a new way of dialogue between nations and religions. The question remains the same: Is world peace ever possible? Is this declaration practical or is just another lofty unattainable goal of world peace and modern utopia? And what about salvation? Is everyone to be saved regardless of religion or is only through faith in Jesus Christ? Lots of questions and very little answers, but we pray that Human Fraternity will bring Christians and Muslims closer together and perhaps learn how to coexist for a better future in the light of God the father in Jesus Christ.

# 2020-2021 First Communion Class and Celebration

by Vera Moubayed Farah

May 15, 2021, a date that culminated a year of unprecedented “firsts” for eight young lives, marked the beginning of their journey with the most important of “firsts” in their Christian lives, their First Holy Communion. Isabel, Jasmin, Kate, Lily, Mia, Kevin, Giovanni, and Toni were the first ever students in the history of Our Lady of Mt. Lebanon, Saint Peter’s Cathedral to experience their First

for 45 minutes of instruction led by their dedicated volunteer teachers, Mrs. Grace Najjar and Miss Antonia Frangiyyeh. Mrs. Grace commented on the impressive commitment of the students, some of whom would login to the Zoom class even before their scheduled meeting time.

While the virtual experience did present missed opportunities for in-person



Communion education in a virtual environment due to the school shutdown as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic during the 2020-2021 academic year.

The students diligently signed onto their Zoom classes every Sunday morning (with the exception of holiday breaks)

interaction, forming of bonds among the students, and the ability to engage in creative or hands-on projects, the lessons were delivered without the need for significant alteration much to the credit of Sister Lara. With her invaluable addition to the CCD team in 2019, she



helped create lesson templates to keep the curriculum organized. The first communicants benefited from the fruits of her labor combined with the efforts of Ms. Grace and Ms. Antonia, presenting each session with instructor-led narratives, age-appropriate biblical videos, and digital games and quizzes.

The very first opportunity for the students

and teachers to meet in-person was during a spiritual retreat held at the church hall— a day that they students and teachers alike recall as one of their fondest memories of the entire year.

In the truest Our Lady of Mount Lebanon style of elegance and class, the ceremony on May 15, 2021 was simply glorious. Father Elias and Father Etienne presented a blessed mass in which all students participated. They humbly received their sacrament of Eucharist, while their proud family and friends witnessed the memorable event. The beautiful mass was followed by an equally exquisite reception, filled with savory sweets, many of which were personalized with photos of the first communicants.

To further crown an already impeccable ceremony and celebration, Sister Lara produced a touching tribute to each student, featuring baptism photos and video mes-



sages from the parents to each child. As the mother of a first communicant this year, I can attest to the fact that no words can remotely express the purest love of a mother and father, yet you can certainly feel the love in the expressions and emotions of each of the parents in this special video:

<https://www.facebook.com/ourlady.mtlebanon/videos/4200672936651881>

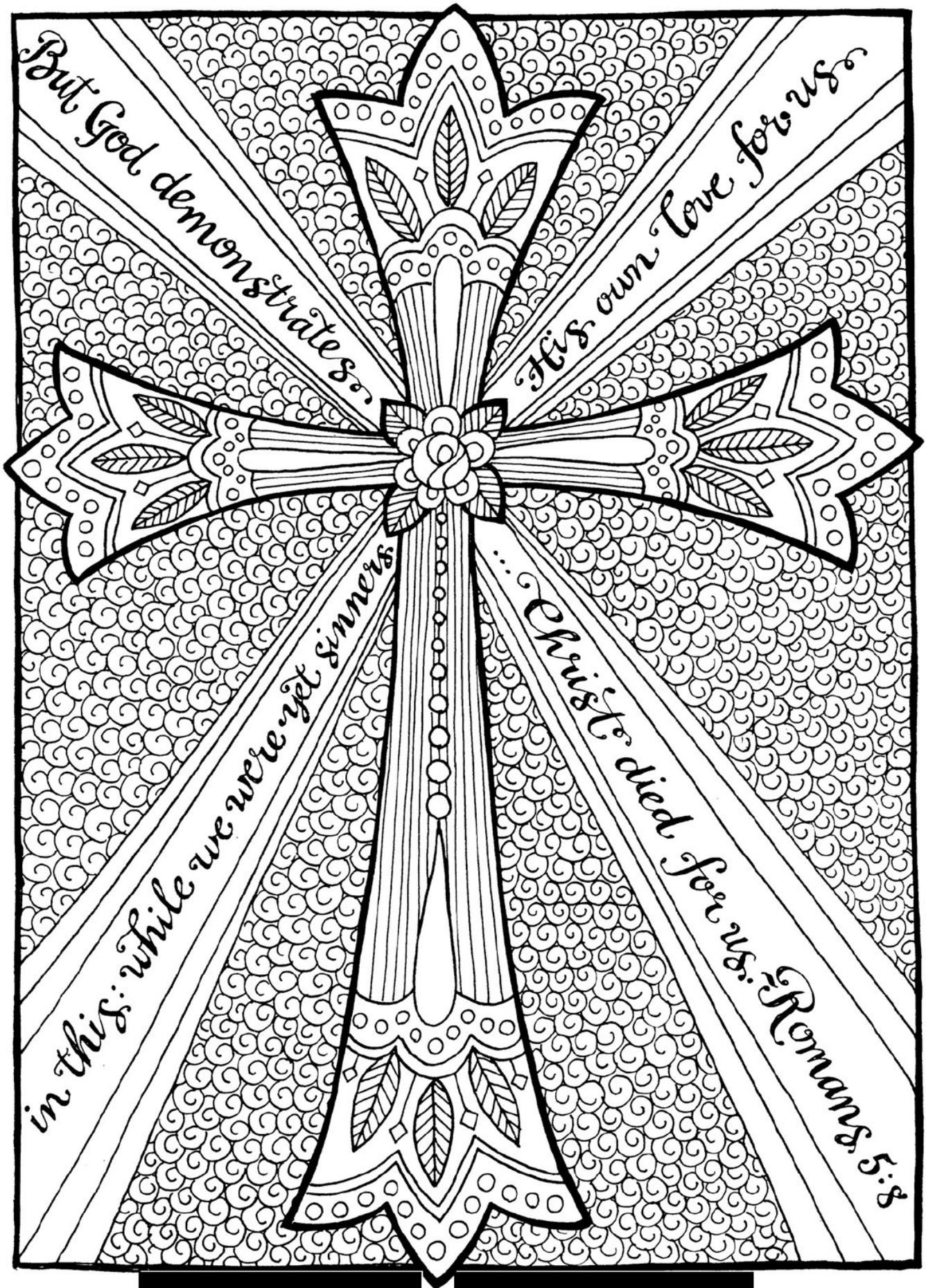
**Congratulations to the First Communicants of Our Lady of Mt. Lebanon, Saint Peter Cathedral 2021!**

# CCD in the Era of COVID19

Giselle Frangiyyeh, CCD Director

The school year was unlike any other. Our only CCD class for 2020-2021, the First Communion class, had to be taught virtually through Zoom. We had eight wonderful students and two amazing teachers Mrs. Grace and Ms. Antonia. All their hard work paid off. Despite the unprecedented times, we still had a heartwarming ceremony and a beautiful reception for the students and their families to enjoy.

---



But God demonstrates

His own love for us

in this: while we were yet sinners

... Christ died for us. Romans 5:8

# 2020-2021 School Year

BY GRACE NAJJAR

By end of school year 2020-2021, only 7% of high school students have returned to campus in the Los Angeles Unified School District, where extensive safety measures have failed to lure back the vast majority of families in the final weeks of school for many reasons in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, attendance numbers at all grade levels in the nation's second-largest school district have been lower than expected based on earlier parent back-to-campus surveys: about 30% of elementary school children have returned and 12% of middle school students. Despite low expectations for secondary schools from the onset, the district had anticipated that more than twice as many middle and high school students would return.

The vast majority of the district's 465,000 students have not had in-person classes on campus since March 13, 2020 — most of that time due to pandemic-forced school closures, but more recently by choice.

Although Los Angeles attendance is particularly low, many of California's largest school districts are struggling to persuade high school students to return to campuses amid coronavirus safety

restrictions that limit interactions with friends, restrict movement and offer part-time schedules. Majority of the state's secondary school students ended their year much like it began — fully online.

## IN PERSON OR VIRTUAL SCHOOL?

The answer to this question is different for every student. Ultimately, it depends on what satisfies personal needs, goals, and priorities. A feature or requirement beneficial for one student might be disadvantageous for another, making it crucial to evaluate both options thoroughly. With that in mind, let's take a closer look at some of the benefits of being in the in classroom and virtual.

### What are the benefits of being in the classroom?

**Improved social skills:** In the classroom, kids learn how to interact with peers and teachers, which is vital for development. Some kids who are shy may be forced to come out of their shell, while others are forced to control their disruptive behavior.

**Collaborative learning:** Kids have the opportunity to work in groups, which can increase a child’s self-awareness and understanding of how to work with others.

**Builds critical thinking skills:** Kids are engaged in live discussions and are forced to use critical thinking to formulate opinions or arguments, and gives them the chance to practice problem solving.

**Structured environment:** Kids have a set schedule and are being made to do their work, instead of it being up to the child’s own willpower. Kids have to be organized and show up for class on time.

**Increased retention:** Live interaction and face-to-face activities with teachers keep kids stimulated, so they are more willing to listen and pay attention, which increases retention. Students also can ask questions if they don’t understand and receive immediate feedback.

### **What are the benefits of virtual classrooms?**

**Health and safety:** By staying home, kids reduce their exposure to COVID-19.

**Flexibility:** Families can make their own daily schedules and decisions based on what is most important for them.

**Involvement:** Parents are more involved in schoolwork and can watch their kids grow and develop academically. They will see more clearly their child’s strengths and weaknesses, so they can help kids take advantage of their strengths, while overcoming weaknesses.

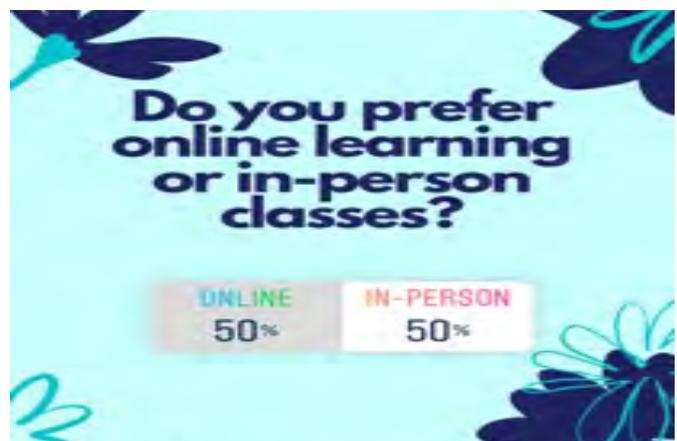
**Self-paced:** Kids can take breaks several times throughout the day and get active. They can run around outdoors, ride bikes or go for a family walk.

**Independence:** Kids will learn responsibility and accountability. They will take pride in their work and gain more independence.

**One-on-one attention:** For subjects they’re struggling with, students will receive more individualized assistance and instruction.

The results of the youth group poll at Our Lady of Mt. Lebanon, St Peter’s Cathedral in Los Angeles are as follow:

There is no right or wrong answer, there are risks to both sides. Virtual school or



in-person school, either way, it is a parenting decision. Because nobody knows what is best, it is a “wait and see” with the most uncertainty any of us have ever experienced. While others are forced to control their disruptive behavior.

**We ask God’s protection over our family and kids. A Bible verse reminding us not to worry. Philippians 4:6 says, “Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.”**

## **A conversation with Chadia Saade**

pre- K teacher, about education during the pandemic

1. Virtual learning was helpful for students to get their education during the pandemic and it would really depend on the age of students to decide if schools should implement online learning into their normal curriculum. As for preschool, I wouldn’t recommend it at all as children at preschool age need the social interaction more than the academics.

2. There were lots of changes that we had to do during the pandemic, starting with closing down the school and going virtual for a while. Then, we opened up our school in the fall of 2020. All our policies and rules changed to be in compliance with the CDC and Community Care Licensing Guidelines. We had to take into consideration all the new health guidelines, parent feedback on returning, new classroom and school design to comply with the CDC guidelines, parent teacher interaction, etc.

3. It was hard to go virtual, especially at the preschool age. At this age, the children find it challenging to stay focused and keep their attention in the virtual space. The teachers felt unprepared to teach in the virtual space since they were never trained to do so. We had to adapt and pick up this new way of teaching, which the teachers did so graciously; however, it was a challenge. Therefore, the teachers have a strong preference to go back in person schooling.

4. I think we could have an option in the fall for children who prefer to attend online, rather than in-person. Despite my preference for students to return (when they all feel comfortable to do so), I understand the hesitation. Perhaps it would be wise to let families choose their modality of attendance for this upcoming term.

# INTERVIEW with Elias Saade

A teacher at Pepperdine University, for the College environment perspective

1. I teach at the university level, and it has been a unique, challenging, and enriching experience teaching online. The classes I teach were originally delivered in an online format; however, we would have one weekend that would be face-to-face. Therefore, the challenge for me was converting that in-person weekend to a fully online weekend of teaching. Despite having taught online more often than in-person (pre-covid), translating an entire weekend of instruction to virtual instruction was challenging. In addition to teaching at the university level, I also assist other professors in developing and designing their courses online. In this role, I help lead multiple workshops, trainings, and presentations describing the best practices to online teaching, tech tips to incorporate into their online class site, and strategies for designing a curriculum. During these sessions, most teachers said virtual learning was difficult in the beginning, but are now getting used to it, though not being preferred.

2. The main challenge I noticed with myself and the rest of the faculty, is the quick switch and adoption of virtual learning. Many courses are designed for in-person instruction. Additionally, many faculty members are not trained on how to teach online, and on the best practices for creating an effective online learning environment. It was a

lot to learn for all the teachers, including all the various communication technologies.

3. The pandemic greatly impacted the students. In the program I teach, we have one hybrid weekend per term where the students attend class all day on campus. This weekend allows them to get to know their professors and colleagues. However, the pandemic forced these Hybrid weekends to be conducted fully online. Even though we had been trained to teach online prior to the pandemic, we had to develop new curriculums to maximize student engagement and effectiveness in a fully online environment. It was still not the same as having been in-person. It is hard to replicate the feeling of talking in person to your colleagues, working on assignment together, or other social aspects. Having to be online for 7-8 hours is mentally exhausting for the students. On the other hand, this proved to be quite beneficial for students who lived far from campus. They were able to attend class without having to buy a plane ticket and fly to be on campus in person.

**Moving forward, I believe we should continue to offer the option for students to attend in-person or online.**

# Meet some of the Gradu- ating MYO Members



PERLA GERMANI

I'm mostly influenced by **Mother Teresa**, she's a kind-hearted, compassionate and a risk taker. She dedicated her whole life to helping others specially young girls. She taught me to simply love and give help to others without asking of either in return.

**My favorite memory at church** was the camp, I en-

joyed it a lot and I wish I was able to make it every year. It is a lot of fun specially the pranks and all the activities. I met most of my best friends at the camp and we always talk about the good times and the camp memories that we share.

**My favorite passage of Scriptures** is, *"and we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose"* ROMANS 8:28. It's my favorite because it helped me accept whatever God choose for me because it's always for my best.



GABRIELLA FRANGIYYEH

**My family** has most influenced my life, mainly because I am constantly around them.

**My most favorite memory at church** is probably when I was the first female altar server at this church. I was so nervous even though there was almost nobody in the pews (which is why I had to serve). I love to see other girls up on the altar, it makes me happy to know that I contributed to this change.

**My favorite passage of scripture** is probably Matthew 27:46: *"About three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" (which means "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?")."* I enjoy this one because it is one of the seven last sayings of Jesus while he was on the cross.

## MYRIAM ABOU HAIDAR

There are several individuals in my life who have influenced me to say the least. However, if I had to narrow it down it would be **my mother** no hesitation. My mother has been one of the only people in my life that has never failed to make me smile. She is one of the only people I could ever truly trust. She is so selfless and does everything in her power and beyond that just to make me happy. My love for her is unconditional and its hard to describe in just a few words how she has impacted my life. Most of all, she keeps me motivated in several ways. Examples are like school, overcoming difficulties in life, and when in doubt. She has taught me the importance of faith and hope. She is the reason I am the resilient, passionate young woman I am today.

**My favorite memory in Church** would be when I was in the children's choir and we were able to perform in Church. It created this unity that brought the people of the Church together to celebrate the Lord. We were able to pray with hymns and answer fun questions when Abouna would ask. Although I have only attended one camp, it was an unforgettable experience. We were able to expand our faith, participate in fun activities with our friends, and learn more



about our Lebanese culture.

*“Trust in the Lord with all you hear, and do not lean on your own understanding.” Proverbs 3:5*

**This is my favorite passage of scripture** because it has helped me when in doubt. It reminds me that there is a reason faith is based on belief. We must completely trust in the Lord because he is promised to never leave us. Faith is based on belief not evidence and proof and that is what we tend to forget. When we hit a bump in the road that is when we need to trust God the most because he will guide us back to the right path. This passage has taught me that things in life happen for a reason nonetheless whether good or bad we must always trust the Lord for he will never leave us.



**ALEXA- MARIA SAAD**

The person who has influenced my life the most would probably be **my mother** since i'm around her so often. She inspires me everyday

**My favorite memory from church** is definitely camp, i loved going and seeing my friends.

I will give you rest (Matthew 11:28–30)

*“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”*



**ANTHONY ALAM**

**My parents** are definitely the most influential people in my life.

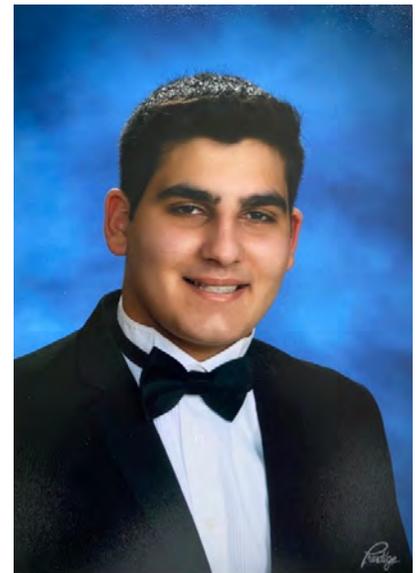
**My favorite memory at church** is hanging out with all my friends at camp.

**JOYCE BITAR**

**My mom** has influenced me most in my life. I always look up to her for advice, and I know I can always count on her during my hardships.

**My favorite memory at church** was during my first year at camp. Everyone at camp was standing in a circle, praying. Then, I started throwing up and everyone turned their heads at me and it was really embarrassing, but funny.

Jeremiah 29:11: *For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.*



**NIKOLAS GHAREEB**

Most influenced my life:  
**Mom**

**Favorite memory of church:** Camp

**Favorite passage of scripture:** Rise up... take courage and do it

# The Bible's Guide to Hard Times

by Mireille Nasr

Approximately two year ago, all our lives changed without warning. Suddenly, the Covid-19 pandemic forced many of us to disregard distractions and address the struggles we were facing. For many of us, the last year brought forth new challenges, and it often felt like there was little advice on how to navigate them. However, the Lord has given us a guidebook for any ailment, struggle, or hardship that may arise in our day-to-day lives. The scripture of 2 Timothy 3:16-17 says it best: **“All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work.”** Whenever we are faced with adversity, we can look to the Bible for advice. As we emerge from that difficult season of our lives, one thing is certain: we can always rely on our faith to guide us through the struggles. We have curated a selection of Bible verses that provide comfort and guidance for some of the most common issues that our community members are often facing.

## On Health:

“Nevertheless, I will bring health and healing to it; I will heal my people and will let them enjoy abundant peace and security”  
Jerimiah 33:6

## On Friendship:

“One who forgives an affront fosters friendship, but one who dwells on disputes will alienate a friend”  
Proverbs 17:9

## On Anxiety:

“Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus”  
Philippians 4:6-7

## On Marriage/ Relationships:

"Conduct yourselves with all humility, gentleness, and patience. Accept each other with love, and make an effort to preserve the unity of the Spirit with the peace that ties you together"

Ephesians 4:2-3

## On Uncertainty:

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future"

Jeremiah 29:11

## On Education:

"How much better to get wisdom than gold, to get insight rather than silver"

Proverbs 16:16

## On Finances:

"Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?"

Jeremiah 17:7-8

## On Loss:

"The righteous perish, and no one takes it to heart; the devout are taken away, and no one understands that the righteous are taken away to be spared from evil. Those who walk uprightly enter into peace; they find rest as they lie in death"

Isaiah 57:1-2

## On Moral Decisions:

"For the commandments, "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet," and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law"

Romans 13: 9-10

## On Career:

"Commit your work  
to the Lord, and  
your plans will  
be established"  
Proverbs 16:3

Reading through these Bible verses is a wonderful way to lift your spirits when you are facing discouragement or stress in your life. Keep these in mind the next time you find yourself struggling—these verses are a great starting point for your morning prayers when things feel heavy.

**When you seek comfort, advice, guidance, or hope, consider the Scripture to be your guidebook through hard times.**

# MYA Member Spotlight

## ANTHONY AZZI

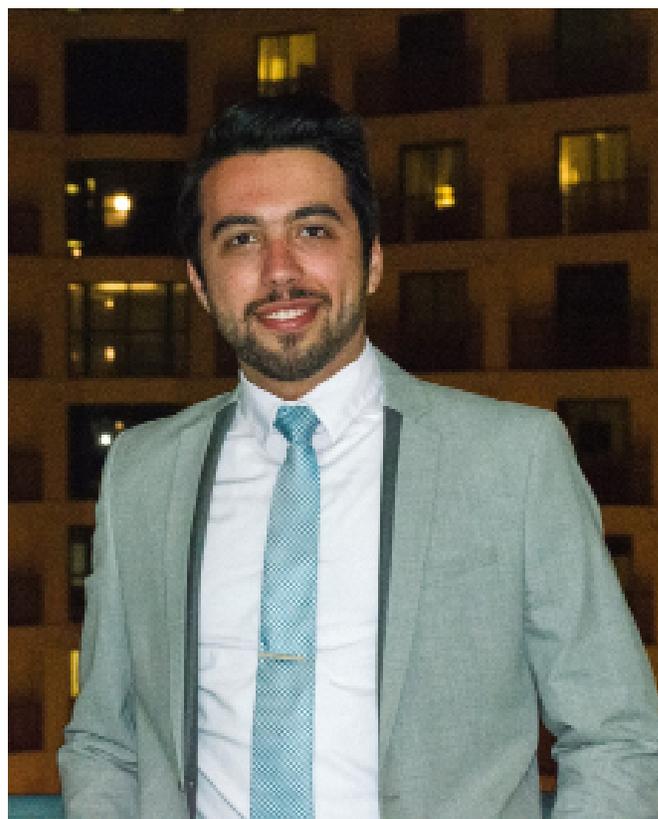
**Age:** 26

**MYA Member since:** 2013

**Education/ Occupation:** B.S. in Business Administration (Concentration in International Business); Relationship Banker.

**Q: What is your favorite aspect of the Maronite community?**

A: I love that this faith of ours unites us into a strong community. I have seen how people come together for events, volunteering, religious, and social purposes. I feel that our sense of community is the greatest aspect itself- the fact that we operate like a family even though we aren't all related.



**Q: How do you practice your Maronite faith in your daily life?**

A: It is important for me to attend or observe mass on Sundays, and I also try to make an effort to always pray before I sleep. I also find

myself listening to Maronite hymns—sometimes you need to start your day on a peaceful note, and when you can't find the words for a prayer, the song will find the words for you.

**Q: What has been your favorite MYA memory?**

A: When I moved to San Francisco for school, I attended mass at Our Lady of Lebanon in Millbrae, CA. I was noticed by MYA members in that parish and was welcomed with open arms. I ended up participating and even serving on their MYA board. That showed me how connected our members can be, no matter where we are geographically.

**Q: What have you gained from your participation in MYA so far?**

A: I have gained friendships, a strong community, knowledge about my faith and culture, and memories that will last a lifetime.

**Q: What are you looking forward to in MYA?**

A: I am looking forward to getting back to our events, being able to physically travel to national and regional retreats, and connecting again in person.

**Q: Is there a social cause you care about?**

A: Right now, something I care about is Leb-

anon's struggle: helping Lebanon by working with the non-profit organizations that the Church has introduced us to in order to support those families in need.

**Q: Any advice for those seeking to be involved in MYA?**

A: As nervous as you may be, or socially shy, don't think twice and put yourself out there.

**Q: What Bible verse means a lot to you?**

A: "For truly, I say to you, if you have faith like a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move, and nothing will be impossible for you." Matthew 17:20. It means that with faith, we can move mountains.

**Q: How do you enjoy spending your time outside of work and MYA?**

A: I enjoy anything that has to do with cars: photography, shopping, car shows.... even car statistics.

If you would like to be featured in the next MYA Spotlight, please contact: [ourladymtlebanon@yahoo.com](mailto:ourladymtlebanon@yahoo.com)

# The Venerable, Patriarch Elias El-Howayek

“The Venerable, Patriarch Elias El-Howayek” was how Pope Francis declared him on July 5th, 2019; The Patron of the Family and the Nation.

The Patron of the family, because he truly was a son of a family, that lived a life of virtue and holiness. His dad was Father Boutrous and his mom Gherra Tanous. He grew up on prayer, piety and the service of the mass.

He studied under the “Oak tree”, then at the school of St John in “Kfarhay”

At the age of fifteen, he received his calling and he transferred to Ghazir Seminary, and there he was known among his brothers for his sharp intelligence, virtue and obedience.

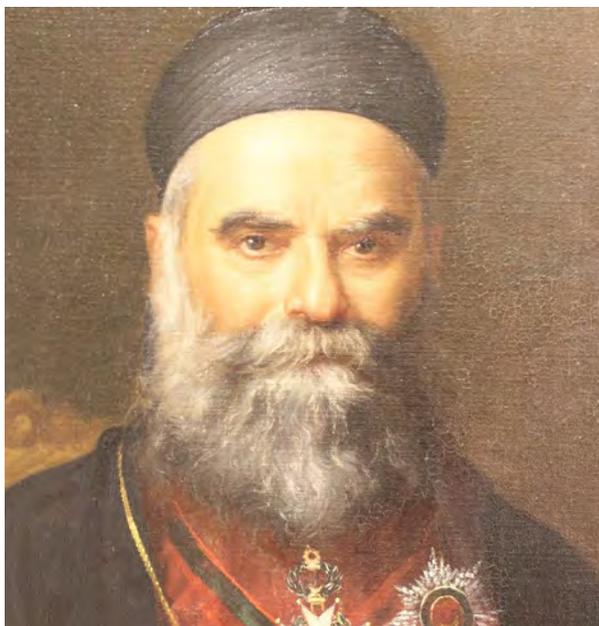
Later on, Patriarch Boulus Massaad sent him to Rome where he studied and graduated with a Doctorate in Moral Theology and Eastern Canon Law.

It was written about him he is a man born for great deeds.

Indeed, it was a prophecy about the Venerable Patriarch El-Howayek, he who had endless accomplishments at the

ecclesial, social and national levels.

Upon Father Elias El-Howayek’s return to Lebanon with his doctorate degrees in Moral Theology and Eastern Canon Law, he unfortunately found out



that his father had passed away leaving behind him a large amount of debt.

With all humility he started working again in the field as a farmer to repay his father’s debts. At the same time, he also taught at St Youhana Maroun School.

He was summoned by Patriarch Boulus Massaad who appointed him Secretary of Bkerke (Patriarchal Headquarter), for seventeen years. He also served

as Marriage Attorney.

During that period, Father El-Howayek saw the enormous challenges that families faced. God instilled in his heart to found a Religious Lebanese Congregation for women to focus on Family upbringing. It was his hope that raising today's daughters to be the mothers of the future.

He believed that the woman was the backbone of the family. And according to his saying, "Tomorrow's future is based on the upbringing of today's girls. They are the mothers of the farmer, the ruler, the priest etc..."

This is why we believe, the Congregation of the Nuns of The Holy Family, is continu-



ing the mission of The Venerable, Patriarch Elias El-Howayek by caring for the family from the youngest member to the oldest.

In the year 1899, Bishop Elias El-Howayek was elected unanimously by the Maronite bishops as the Patriarch of the Maronite Church.

He served for 32 years under very difficult conditions the country was facing from the Ottoman rule, World War I, and the demand of returning rightful Lebanese territories that were taken away, to realize the Greater State of Lebanon.

He is the one who accompanied families, one by one, especially during the days of war. With one of his famous sayings, "If you have life in my death, I'll be happy to die."

He mortgaged many properties of Bkerke, and Religious Maronite Orders, and sold many of the Church Vessels to France so that he can buy wheat at night and distributed it to the poor and starving families. He suffered internally and externally with all these forces that worked against the declaration of the statehood of the "Greater Lebanon". Some were among the closest people to him; when he chose individuals to form an Administrative Council for Lebanon, French General Gouraud, sent him a telegraph informing him that he was being betrayed by some of the closest people to him. And that Prince Faissal bought them with 125 "liras". Their intention was to unite Lebanon with Syria.

His answer was clear, "We are Lebanese and we will remain Lebanese", "my sect is Lebanon and I am for all Lebanese".

He said, "I cannot rely on politics, only on God and on this rosary".

And he went to France to ensure that the demands of the Lebanese people, regardless of their religion, are met, and that Lebanon

will remain for the Lebanese and we shall never settle for less than Greater Lebanon. And that's what truly happened as we are all witnesses to this accomplishment on this 100th anniversary of the declaration of the Country of the Greater Lebanon, all thanks to the efforts of The Venerable, Patriarch Elias El-Howayek.

