

Saint Rafka

Catholics of the East in the Upstate!



Cana Sunday Entrance into Great Lent

Saint Rafka Maronite Catholic Church is a Parish of the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn. The Antiochene Syriac Maronite Church is one of over twenty Eastern and Oriental Catholic Churches in communion with the Bishop of Rome. Led by His Beatitude, **Bechara Boutros Rai**, Patriarch of Antioch and all the East in Berke, Lebanon, the Syro-Maronite Church has parishes and missions on six continents. Saint Rafka Parish was established as a mission in 2002. The community grew and flourished and was raised to the rank of parish in 2021.

**Most Rev. Gregory
John Mansour**

Bishop

109 Remsen Street,
Brooklyn, NY, 11201
718.237.9913

chancery@stmaron.org



**Father Bartholomew
Leon**

Pastor

1215 S. Highway 14
Greer, SC 29650
864.469.9119

bartleon@gmail.com

OFFICE HOURS

10:00 AM - 4:30 PM
Monday - Friday

DIVINE LITURGIES

The Divine Liturgy is
celebrated on

Saturday,
4 PM Vigil
Sunday, 8:30 AM
11:00 AM
Tuesday, 10:00 AM
Wednesday, 7:00 PM
Thursday 10:00 AM
Friday, 10:00 AM
Holy Days
As Announced

CONFESSIONS

Saturday, 3:15 PM
Sunday 10:15 AM
Wednesday 6:30 PM
Weekdays before
liturgy as requested

FINANCE COMMITTEE

Joseph Chebeir
Paula Howard-Casby
Tom Judge
[Dee Kalata](#)
[Ron Rossi, Sr.](#)
Marlene Saad
Richard Sleiman

Joseph Chebeir
Financial Administrator
864.469.9119
[Joe Chebeir](#)



Bill Leon
Secretary
864.469.9119
[Bill Leon](#)

Sam Jordan Alamat
Organist
[Sam Alamat](#)

Nadia Najm
Choir Director
Scott Herr
Assistant Director
[Nadia Najm](#)
[Scott Herr](#)

Jessica Dagher Allen
First Holy Communion
[Jessica Allen](#)
Lisa Advent
MRE Students
[Lisa Advent](#)

Lisa Advent
MYO/MYA Leader
[Lisa Advent](#)

Knights of Columbus
Jim Dyer
Grand Knight
[Jim Dyer](#)

Marlene Saad
Scripture Sharing
[Marlene Saad](#)
If Interested, Call
864.580.1054

Marie Kidd
Food Pantry
[Marie Kidd](#)

Hospitality Committee
[Marie Kidd](#)
[Hannan Saade](#)
[Mark Duffy](#)

Bridget Nevin
Garden Club
[Bridget Nevin](#)

Candice King-Palgut
Prayers and Squares
[Candice King-Palgut](#)
Type to enter text

Building Committee
Phase 1
Richard Sleiman
Thomas Judge
Ron Rossi, Sr.

Anthony Sloan
Men's Bible Study
Monthly Meeting
Email for details
[Anthony Sloan](#)



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MASS INTENTIONS

Mass intentions are a good way to remember and pray for your loved ones, alive or deceased.

If you would like to request an intention please remember to submit your intentions for Liturgy ASAP by calling the parish office at 864.469.9119 or by email at bill@saintrafka.org. Please remember that it is rare to be able to have your intention the following Sunday! **Masses are now generally booked up about three months in advance.**

BAPTISM & CHRISMATION

Baptism in the Maronite Rite is always accompanied by *Chrismation* (Confirmation). Both Sacraments are given by a priest, and always in the same ceremony. Preparation to receive the Sacraments of Baptism and Chrismation is required. We encourage this to happen before the birth of your child. Please contact the [Church Office](#) for more details.

ANOINTING OF THE SICK

The Anointing of the Sick is routinely offered during the Divine Liturgy on Wednesday evening and during pastoral visits by the priest to homebound and ill parishioners. Let me know if you will be in the hospital or have other special needs. Contact the [Church Office](#).

THE MYSTERY OF CROWNING (MARRIAGE)

Couples must contact the pastor **at least** six months prior to the desired date of the wedding. To initiate the marriage preparation process or if you have questions for weddings taking place at Saint Rafka. Contact the [Church Office](#).

PARISH REGISTRATION

Registration forms and welcome packets are available in the church office and the vestibule. Membership is a condition for the reception of the sacraments of baptism/confirmation, first reconciliation, first Eucharist, and Crowning (marriage). Registration is also required before the parish can issue a sponsorship certificate for those asked to be sacramental sponsors. You must be a registered, contributing member for at least three months before a certificate is provided.

YOUTH MINISTRY

Teenagers are invited to join our Maronite Youth Organization, aka MYO. Contact **Lisa Advent** lisaadventphotography@gmail.com for more information.

Ramsho (Evening Prayer)

Join us on Tuesday at 5:45 PM for evening prayer and prayers of intercession to Saint Sharbel.

WICKETT HALL AND ASHY PAVILION

Wickett Hall and Ashy Pavilion can be used by our registered and supporting parishioners for family events, reunions, etc. Others may request permission to rent the Hall or Pavilion. Please contact the [Church Office](#).

MARONITE RESOURCES

Daily [readings](#) for the Divine Liturgy.
Daily morning prayer and evening prayer of the Divine Office [here](#).

TRAVELING AND NEED TO GO TO MASS?

Where to go to Mass when traveling? Look here!
MassTimes.org
[The Catholic Directory](#)
[Parishes Online](#)

SOCIAL MEDIA

Please follow us at @saintrafkagreenville on **Instagram** and/or **St. Rafka Maronite Church** on **Facebook**. <http://www.facebook.com/strafka>
Also [YouTube](#)!

SAINT RAFKA FOOD PANTRY

Established in 2019, the Saint Rafka Food Pantry is for those who need immediate food assistance. Need food? Call the church office or come by, 10 AM - 2 PM. You can also email **Marie Kidd** who is coordinating this project. All gifts of food are anonymous. Donations of food are accepted either at the Church Office or the back of the church.

SCRIPTURE SHARING

Scripture sharing discussion following the Carmelite Way with Saint Therese of the Little Flower and Saint John of the Cross

IN DEFENSE OF CHRISTIANS [IDF](#) Individuals banning together help and make know the plight of the Christians in the Middle East and their suffering.

SHRINE OF THE PERSECUTED CHRISTIANS in the United States. [Video here](#).

Scripture Readings

Romans 6: 12-23

2 Kings 5:1-14

Naaman, the army commander of the king of Aram, was highly esteemed and respected by his master, for through him the LORD had brought victory to Aram. But valiant as he was, the man was a leper. Now the Arameans had captured from the land of Israel in a raid a little girl, who became the servant of Naaman's wife. She said to her mistress, "If only my master would present himself to the prophet in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy." Naaman went and told his master, "This is what the girl from the land of Israel said." The king of Aram said, "Go. I will send along a letter to the king of Israel." So Naaman set out, taking along ten silver talents, six thousand gold pieces, and ten festal garments. He brought the king of Israel the letter, which read: "With this letter I am sending my servant Naaman to you, that you may cure him of his leprosy."

When he read the letter, the king of Israel tore his garments and exclaimed: "Am I a god with power over life and death, that this man should send someone for me to cure him of leprosy? Take note! You can see he is only looking for a quarrel with me!"

When Elisha, the man of God, heard that the king of Israel had torn his garments, he sent word to the king: "Why have you torn your garments? Let him come to me and find out that there is a prophet in Israel."

Naaman came with his horses and chariot and stopped at the door of Elisha's house. Elisha sent him the message: "Go and wash seven times in the Jordan, and your flesh will heal, and you will be clean." But Naaman went away angry, saying, "I thought that he would surely come out to me and stand there to call on the name of the LORD his God, and would move his hand over the place, and thus cure the leprous spot. Are not the rivers of Damascus, the Abana and the Pharpar, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them and be cleansed?" With this, he turned about in anger and left.

But his servants came up and reasoned with him: "My father, if the prophet told you to do something extraordinary, would you not do it? All the more since he told you, 'Wash, and be clean?'"

So Naaman went down and plunged into the Jordan seven times, according to the word of the man of God. His flesh became again like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.



Therefore, do not let sin exercise dominion in your mortal bodies, to make you obey their passions. No longer present your members to sin as instruments of wickedness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and present your members to God as instruments of righteousness. For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace. What then? Should we sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness? But thanks be to God that you, having once been slaves of sin, have become obedient from the heart to the form of teaching to which you were entrusted, and that you, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness. I am speaking in human terms because of your natural limitations. For just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to greater and greater iniquity, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness for sanctification. When you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. So what advantage did you then get from the things of which you now are ashamed? The end of those things is death. But now that you have been freed from sin and enslaved to God, the advantage you get is sanctification. The end is eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Mark 1: 35-45

In the morning, while it was still very dark, Jesus got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed. And Simon and his companions hunted for him. When they found him, they said to him, 'Everyone is searching for you.' He answered, 'Let us go on to the neighboring towns, so that I may proclaim the message there also; for that is what I came out to do.' And he went throughout Galilee, proclaiming the message in their synagogues and casting out demons. A leper came to him begging him, and kneeling he said to him, 'If you choose, you can make me clean.' Moved with pity, Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, and said to him, 'I do choose. Be made clean!' Immediately the leprosy left him, and he was made clean. After sternly warning him he sent him away at once, saying to him, 'See that you say nothing to anyone; but go, show yourself to the priest, and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded, as a testimony to them.' But he went out and began to proclaim it freely, and to spread the word, so that Jesus could no longer go into a town openly, but stayed out in the country; and people came to him from every quarter.

Reflection

On this Sunday, in our Maronite prayers, Christ Our Lord is called *the Physician of our souls and bodies*. The Symbolic connection between *Leprosy* and *Sin* cannot be overlooked in our gospel readings for today. In the first reading St. Paul speaks of *the grace of Christ* that makes us righteous before God though we are sinners. In a parallel way, in the Gospel of Mark, Jesus heals the leper because of *his great compassion* towards him and makes him whole.

This timed presentation, of Jesus the Lord as our healer, in the Church's teaching during Lent is quite intentional. Combined with the *Sunday of the Prodigal Son*; the healing Sundays work together in unity to emphasize this important teaching for us from the church: that we need to be healed, and that we need to let Christ the Lord be the healer of our whole being.

In our Syriac tradition this *healing power of Christ* is presented to us by his bride, the Church, and our mother, through her sacramental mysteries. Thus, we find Saint Ephrem praying to Christ Jesus saying:

With three medicines
You have cured our sickness;
Humanity was weak, suffering and failing;
You have strengthened it
by your blessed *bread*,
You have consoled it with your sober *wine*,
And You have given it joy
with your holy *anointing*.

Now is the season to apply ourselves for the *help* of the healing-sacraments (*Raze*) of Christ and the Church. It is the time that we use the confessional as a means of acknowledging our sinfulness, and the Eucharist as the channel through which the graces of Christ – of healing and forgiveness – with the overflowing power of his Holy Spirit are poured out into us.

Listen again to the song from the *Qolo*:

The faith of the man
with leprosy
reached out for our savior
and he obtained the help
that he desired.
For the compassion
of the Son of God,
like rain,
poured down on him
and brought forth
a total healing.

Let us have courage then, and not hesitate, to ask for the help we need: for *the Healer* graciously awaits us!

Steven Bonian, S.J.

Online Webinar

**Q&A
on the Maronite
Liturgy & Spirituality**

 **03/13/2025**
 **7:30-9:00pm**

SPEAKER

Fr. Claude Franklin
*St. Joseph Maronite Church,
Olean NY*

REGISTER HERE

HOSTED BY THE EPARCHIAL RELIGIOUS EDUCATION OFFICE

Abouna's Corner

Dear Parishioners and Friends,

Great Lent has begun and I hope that you have a holy and Grace-filled season of preparing for Glorious Easter. Please remember that all of the music changes during this season. Our music becomes very somber befitting the season. Keep your eyes on the booklet and join us in prayer and song. May these holy days help transform us, body and soul, in closer union with Our Lord who suffered and died for us.

Further back in the bulletin you will find the pastoral letter of the Patriarch, entitled **The Great Lent Collective Procession**. Please read and reflect upon what His Beatitude is asking us to do during Great Lent.

We now have an update from *Universal Church Directories*. They are scheduling the make up day for photos of parishioners on March 18. Photos will be begin at 2:00 PM and continue till 8:30 PM. If you did not have a chance to have your photo taken, please go the this link: UCDIR.com. Navigate to the "Photography Session Sign Up" and enter the Church ID: SC303 and password: photos. This will be the last opportunity to have your picture included in the church directory. No pic, no problem! Other pertinent information will be included in the directory. This is a first time event, but it certainly does not have to be the last! Thanks for your help and assistance. **UPDATE: As of Wednesday, March 5, NO ONE has signed up yet! Don't wait till the last minute!!! Sign up now!**

March will bring several guests to Saint Rafka Parish. As announced, **Bishop Gregory Mansour** will make a Pastoral Visit March 14 - 16. The following weekend, **Father Fadi Rouhana**, Pastor of Saints Peter and Paul Maronite Church, will bring his MYA group to the Upstate for a retreat and will pray Friday night Stations of the Cross with us on March 21. Lots of events to look forward to!

Next Sunday, we will host a potluck luncheon with Bishop Gregory after the 11:00 AM Liturgy. This will be the first potluck during Great Lent. Some will eat meat on Sundays and some will not. The parish will provide a meat and a meatless option along with what you bring. Let's have a great turn out of people and food for our bishop. Please remember that we will have a lot of people and a lot of kids. Thanks for all your great help and generosity!

We have a parishioner who lives in the Five Forks area who needs a ride to Church at this time. This parishioner likes to attend the 11 AM Mass. Live close by? Like to help? Contact [Abouna](#) for more details.

Newest **Maronite Voice** is now online. View it [here](#).

Have a holy and prayerful Season of Great Lent!

Have a great weekend! See you in Church!

Ab. Bart

Potluck Luncheon Items

March 16, 2025

A - M	N - Z
Main Dishes and Sides	Desserts and Drinks

Pastoral Visit of Bishop Gregory

Brief Outline

Friday: Arrival, *Ramsho* and Benediction of the Cross, light reception in Wickett Hall
Saturday: Morning - Meeting with Finance Committee. Afternoon - Short Meetings
Vigil Mass, Meet and Greet
Sunday: 8:30 AM Mass, Meet & Greet, 11:00 AM Mass, luncheon to follow, departure

The Servants of Mary and Joseph Lay Carmelite Community

The Lay Carmelite is called to the Family of Carmel to be deeply involved in the mission of the Church and to contribute to the sanctification of the secular world through our charisms of prayer, community and service.

The Community meets on the First Saturday of every month from 9:00 AM - 1:30 PM at Saint Joseph Catholic Church, 1200 Cornelia Rd, Anderson, SC for the Liturgy of the Hours, Mass and meeting.

Catholic men or women interested in learning more may contact Jon at joanelizabethrn@gmail.com



MRE - Maronite Religious Education Classes

Our thanks to **Jessica Dagher Allen** preparing our children for First Holy Communion and to **Lisa Advent** and assistants for teaching our other children in our religious education program. Below is the schedule of classes for this "academic" year. Classes meet after the 11 AM Divine Liturgy.

First Confessions, Practice, etc. to be announced.

First Holy Communion, May 18, 2025 at the 11 AM Divine Liturgy.



Church Offerings and Attendance

March 2, 2025		
4 PM	87	\$3215.00
8:30 AM	38	\$867.00
11 AM	82	\$834.00
Mail		\$205.00
PayPal/Electronic		\$120.00
Total	207	\$5,241.00
Budget 2025	230	\$4,350.00
+/-	-23	\$891.00
Year to Date		\$39,166.00
Budget for year +/-		\$16.00
Building Fund		
4:00 PM	0	\$561.00
12:00 AM	0	\$924.00
11:00 AM	0	\$276.00
Total	0	\$1,761.00
Holy Hour		19
Funeral, Wickett		99
2025 Totals		
4:00 PM		771
8:30 AM		258
11 AM		968
Weekday Masses		665
Holy Hour		58
Holy Day		221
Ash Monday		57
Funerals		150
Weddings		60

Average Attendance

4 PM	8:30 AM	11:00 AM
86	29	107

Facts regarding our bulletin!

Bulletins emailed last weekend: 409 +
Percentage opened 65% -

Opened emails: 265 - Unopened emails: 143 +

Masses, Sanctuary Lamp & Flowers

To have the Sanctuary Light for your relatives or intentions, please use the envelope provided at the entrance. Donation is \$5.00.

To have flowers for a memorial of a loved one, please use the envelope provided at the entrance. Donation is \$50.00 per Sunday.

If you would like a **Mass** offered for your loved ones, please call the church office at 864.469.9119 or secretary@saintrafka.org. Envelopes for Masses also available at the door of the church.



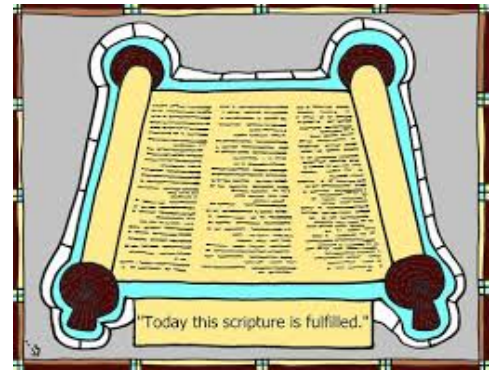
CATHOLIC
INFORMATION CENTER

<https://catholic.center/>



Liturgical Readings

Old Testament (English) 2 Kings 5:1-14	Lama H. Haddad
New Testament (Arabic) Romans 6: 12-23	Jessica Dagher Allen



Mass Intentions

March 8 - 9	Healing of the Leper	
Saturday, 4 PM	+Virginia Guzman & Rebecka Caberra	Paula Howard Casby
Sunday, 8:30 AM	+Leila Chebeir	Marie Kidd
Sunday 11:00 AM	Karen Krings	Deacon Joe Sanfilippo
Tuesday, 10:00 AM	Matt Mytych	Barb Mytych
Wednesday, 7:00 PM	Healing Intentions - Divne Mary Prayer Group	Christenne Fratturo
Thursday 10:00 AM	Greg Mytych	Barb Mytych
Friday, 10:00 AM	Brendan Killough	Kristie Killough
March 15 - 16	Hemorrhaging Woman	
Saturday 4 PM	+Ron Payne	Ceil & Andy
Sunday, 8:30 AM	+Joseph Frisari	Slusz Family
Sunday 11:00 AM	+Virginia Guzman & Rebecka Caberra	Richard & Afaf Sleiman
Tuesday, 10:00 AM	+Tola Dinko	Amos Hykes
Wednesday, 7:00 PM	+Joseph Frisari	Paul & Anna Shimow
Thursday 10:00 AM	+Gerald (Garry) Ozzimo, 6 year anniversary	Lenore Ozzimo
Friday, 10:00 AM	+Frances Hykes	Amos Hykes

All men of the parish are invited to join men from Prince of Peace Parish for breakfast and fellowship. The Catholic Men's Breakfast meets on the first Thursday of each month at 8:00 AM at the Eggs Up Restaurant, 3935 Pelham Road, Greenville. Please join us and feel free to bring a friend! Any questions call Jack Stewart, 864 787-7592.

Video on the Sainted Massabki brothers on Facebook. <https://www.facebook.com/NoursatEnglish/videos/1008068293229859>

Calendar of Events

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
9 Healing of the Leper 8:30 AM, Divine Liturgy 10:30 AM, Holy Rosary 11:00 AM, Divine Liturgy 5:00 PM, Syro-Malabar Divine Liturgy	10 7:00 PM KC Meeting	11 10 AM Divine Liturgy Arabic Devotions to follow 5:45 PM <i>Ramsho</i>	12 6:00 PM, Marian Catechists 6:30 PM, Holy Rosary 7:00 PM, Divine Liturgy	13 10:00 AM Divine Liturgy	14 10:00 AM Divine Liturgy 7:00 PM, Stations of the Cross	15 3:15 Confessions 4:00 PM, Vigil Liturgy
					Pastoral Visit of Bishop Gregory	
16 Hemorrhaging Woman 8:30 AM, Divine Liturgy 10:30 AM, Holy Rosary 11:00 AM, Divine Liturgy Luncheon with Bishop 5:00 PM, Korean Mass	17	18 10 AM Divine Liturgy Arabic Devotions to follow Directory Photo Day 5:45 PM <i>Ramsho</i>	19 6:00 PM, Marian Catechists 6:30 PM, Holy Rosary 7:00 PM, Divine Liturgy	20 10:00 AM Divine Liturgy	21 10:00 AM Divine Liturgy 7:00 PM, Stations of the Cross Tampa MYA to join us	22 MYA Adoration 3:15 Confessions 4:00 PM, Vigil Liturgy
					Pastoral Visit of Bishop	
23 Prodigal Son Saint Rafka Feast Day 8:30 AM, Divine Liturgy 10:30 AM, Holy Rosary 11:00 AM, Divine Liturgy 5:00 PM, Syro-Malabar Divine Liturgy	24	25 10 AM Divine Liturgy Arabic Devotions to follow 5:45 PM <i>Ramsho</i>	26 6:00 PM, Marian Catechists 6:30 PM, Holy Rosary 7:00 PM, Divine Liturgy	27 10:00 AM Divine Liturgy	28 10:00 AM Divine Liturgy 7:00 PM, Stations of the Cross	29 3:15 Confessions 4:00 PM, Vigil Liturgy
					Pastoral Visit of Bishop	
30 Prodigal Son 8:30 AM, Divine Liturgy 10:30 AM, Holy Rosary 11:00 AM, Divine Liturgy Luncheon with Bishop	31	April 1 10 AM Divine Liturgy Arabic Devotions to follow 5:45 PM <i>Ramsho</i>	2 6:00 PM, Marian Catechists 6:30 PM, Holy Rosary 7:00 PM, Divine Liturgy	3 10:00 AM Divine Liturgy	4 10:00 AM Divine Liturgy 7:00 PM, Stations of the Cross	5 3:15 Confessions 4:00 PM, Vigil Liturgy
					Pastoral Visit of Bishop	



Catholics serving Catholics

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Downtown Chapel
 639 North Main Street
 Greenville, SC 29601
 (864) 232-6733

Northwest Chapel
 6710 White Horse Road
 Greenville, SC 29611
 (864) 294-6415

Southeast Chapel
 1604 NE Main Street
 Simpsonville, SC 29681
 (864) 688-1600

Saints of the Day

March

March 9, The Forty Martyrs of Sebaste
March 18, Saint Cyril of Jerusalem
March 19, Saint Joseph, Foster Father of Our Lord
March 21, Saint Benedict
March 23, Saint Rafka, Virgin-Confessor
March 25, The Annunciation of Mary
March 26, Gabriel the Archangel
March 29, Saint Cyril, Deacon of Baalbek
March 30, Saint John Climacus of Mount Sinai
April 1, Saint Mary of Egypt
April 23, Saint George the Martyr
April 25, Saint Mark the Evangelist
April 27, Saint Simon the Apostle

Prayer List

Karen Krings, John Davis, Pat Moore, Deacon Bob Smith, Anna Maria Portilla, Sandra Reece, Charles Howard, Marcia Palmer, Mary Howard, Lisa Moman, Leslie Ziminsky, Dan Beckman, Lisa Bolt, Crysten Yammine, L. Mary Killough, Thomas Sloan, Ciera D, Irene Ponce, Philomena Reed, Rick Argon, Sister Mary Emmanuel, OSC, Hewitt Dickerson, Brielle Sheriff, Carol, Gina, Jeni Yacu, Rodena and Bruce Thompson, Andrea Emilia Bernabey, Nadim Chebeir, Mike, Leo, B J Dursse, Deacon Dick Murtaugh, Vicki Gosnell, Sam Clutter, Michael Tierney, Paul Shimow, Betty Mileski, Doug Logan, Rita Charbonete, Frances Danton, Diane Hickey, Alan Frechette, Jacob and Jaxson Rivera, Andrea Wise, Patrizia, Susan Clarke, Andy Frisari, Beth, Mary Dowden, Karen Rodgers, Nancy Georgion, Rosemary & Jim King, Mark Knight, Stephen Wedgeworth, MR, Hilda Hix, Catherine Caul, Albert Martin, Nanine D'Aquin, Elizabeth Fallet, Anthony Kozakiewicz, Bill Riley, KG, Linda Crosby, Jenny Gould, Maurice Mercier, Breese, Jennifer Payne, Matt Smith, Leila Chebeir, Tammy Lopez, Anthony Fagliarone, Fernando, Carolyn Groner, Tim Eaton, Kelly Mullens, Carol Craven, Mel Casby, Vincent Howard, K.F., Eileen Howard, Jack Campbell, Hilda Hix, Sue Bauer, Chrisoula, Theresa Woodson, Noah Scott Kestler, Art and Judy Pape, Suhail Yousiff, Tom Craven, Jr., Michael Rau, Chris Davis, Pixie Geren, Mike Dyer, Christian Pereira, Art Newton, Recovery of RS, Claire Barnett, Ethel Brassel, Katrina Shunk, George Vargo, Irma Galvan, Mary Cleary, Joe Lemire, Virginia LaFave, Nabeel Howard, Paul Cote

Birthdays

March

10, Mark Duffy
10, Luke Dagher
11, Reema Askar
11, John Alan Chebeir
12, Luka Haddad
13, Emad Marzouka
16, Antoine Sleiman
18, Bill Seif
22, Tom Craven
23, Joseph Chebli
23, Clara Rebecca Saad
24, Mariana Elizabeth Saad
24, Giselle Sleiman
24, Paul Leonardi
25, Sophia Therese Sloan
25, Jane Howard

Anniversaries

April

13, John and Yvonne Maroun
21, Nabil and Soraya Chackal
24, Lorraine and Maurice Mercier
25, Richard and Afaf Sleiman
25, Sam and Sherri Sandbothe
26, Khader & Nehad Jadallah

Necrology

+Gerald (Gerry) Peter Ozzimo, March 8, 2019
+Lorice Dow Black, March 9, 2021
+Father Christopher Henderson, March 12, 2017
+Diane Dyer, March 17, 2011
+Violet Monsour Howayeck, March 20, 2013
+William (Bill) Baccarny, March 24, 2023
+Fadwa Chalouhi, March 26, 2014

Important Dates to Remember

Pastoral Visit of Bishop Gregory,
March 15-16

Directory Photo Make Up Date, March
18

Shaneenee (Palm) Sunday, April 13

Easter, April 20

First Holy Communion, May 18

Lenten Regulations

Fast & Abstinence: Ash Monday and Great Friday of the Crucifixion are days of **total abstinence from meat and all meat products**. In addition to being days of abstinence from meat and meat by products, they are days of mandatory fast, i.e., NOTHING but water is consumed from midnight until noon. One main meal may be consumed after noon. **Water and medicine do not break the fast**. The law of abstinence binds all Maronite Catholics over fourteen (14) years of age. The law of fasting binds all Maronite Catholics between the age of eighteen (18) and sixty (60). Diabetics and those with health issues are excused from extreme fasting. *You are encouraged to fast on all Wednesdays and Fridays of Great Lent; and as many additional days as you find appropriate.*

Services for Great Lent: The Services for Great Lent will take place each weekday Tuesday thru Friday. On Tuesdays thru Fridays, the Divine Liturgy will be celebrated. On Friday evening at 7:00 PM., *Stations of the Cross* will be celebrated.





Pilgrimage With Mary, Pilgrims of Hope



May 20 - June 3, 2025

13 Day & 13 Night Tour Includes

Rome • Montecassino • Padre Pio • Lanciano • Loreto
St. Veronica Giuliani • La Verna • Florence Pisa • Assisi
Foligno • St. Rita • Greccio

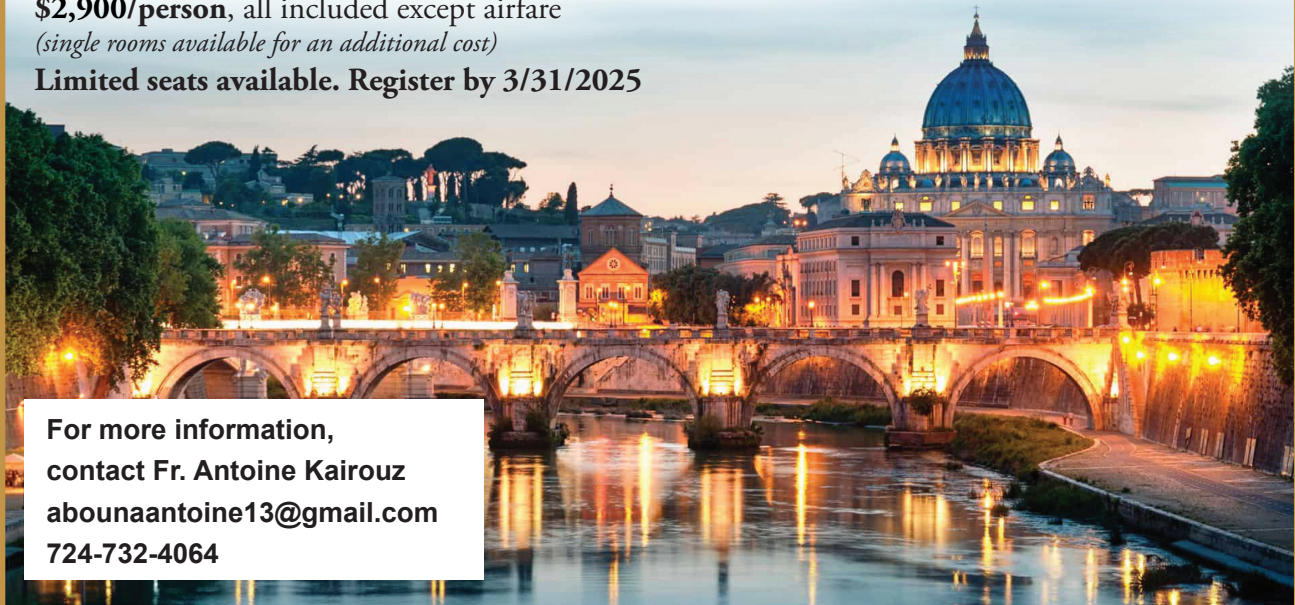
Package Includes

Single bed in a double room, international full coverage insurance, bus transportation, monument entrance fees, hotel breakfast & dinner

\$2,900/person, all included except airfare
(single rooms available for an additional cost)

Limited seats available. Register by 3/31/2025

For more information,
contact Fr. Antoine Kairouz
abounaantoine13@gmail.com
724-732-4064



This trip is hosted by the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn.

The Great Lent Collective Procession

We are all called to observe Lent, following the example of Our Lord Jesus Christ who, “After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry” (Matthew 4:2). The forty-day community journey rests on three integrated and interconnected foundations: fasting, prayer and almsgiving.

Fasting, abstaining from food from midnight until noon, as a sign of repentance, contrition and remorse for venial and mortal sins, while confessing them. It is a time of renewal for the repentant, and the beginning of a new life. Lent is a time of returning to God through the sacrament of reconciliation, instituted by Our Lord Jesus Christ, with the abundance of his love and divine mercy; it is like a new birth, erasing the old life deformed by sins. Fasting is a sacred time during which we return to God, stand in solidarity with our brothers and sisters, share Christ's fasting, life and sufferings, and resist the tempter.

Prayer is the elevation of mind and heart to God, a human response to the Word of God that nourishes our faith. It is humility of heart before the magnificence of God, and man's need for God, from whom comes all that is good. Lent is a time of prayer and renewal through divine grants. Authentic and effective prayer is that of the heart, not of the lips, for if the heart is far from God, prayer of the lips is meaningless. The heart is God's dwelling place, where our prayer becomes a relationship of covenant and communion with God.

Almsgiving means sharing with our brothers and sisters what they need from what we have, whether it is a lot or a little. Through sharing and communion, we overcome the temptation of selfishness, possessive greed and the love of money, which stand in the way of God's priority in our lives. The worship of worldly riches separates us from God and our brothers and sisters, and deceives us with illusory happiness. Almsgiving is an act of love towards those in material, moral, spiritual or social need. Christ identifies with these brothers and sisters (cf. Matthew 25:35-36).

Almsgiving can be carried out directly or through groups, charitable associations and institutions, and well-known organizations such as Caritas Lebanon, which is the social body of the Church in Lebanon and is present throughout the country. Caritas is conducting a collection campaign throughout Lent.

We would like to express our gratitude to all donors, individuals and groups.

Pastoral guidelines

A- Great Lent and fasting during and outside Lent

1. **Great Lent** lasts seven weeks, in preparation for Easter. It begins on Ash Monday and ends on the evening of Holy Saturday. It is based on **abstinence from food** from midnight to midday, as well as abstinence from meat and whites (milk, its derivatives and eggs).

2. The Saturdays, Sundays and the following public holidays **are exempt from fasting and abstinence**: Saint Jean Maron (March 2), the Forty Martyrs (March 9), Saint Joseph (March 19), the Annunciation (March 25) and the Patron Saint of the parish. Throughout Holy Week, from Monday to Holy Saturday, fasting and abstinence remain mandatory.

3. **Exempted from fasting and abstinence** are, in general, the sick and elderly whose state of health requires them to eat adequately in order to regain their strength, in particular those undergoing medical treatment for chronic illnesses or in special, delicate health conditions.

This exemption also applies to patients undergoing temporary or regular hospitalization. It is also established that children begin fasting the year after their First Communion, while taking into account their situation during school days.

Those who are exempt from the law of fasting and abstinence are asked to make do with a breakfast sufficient to take the medicine.

In view of the necessities of life and to ease the burden on the faithful, the law of abstinence remains obligatory during the first week of Great Lent and during Holy Week, provided that those who cannot adhere to abstinence must compensate by acts of charity.

4. **Abstinence is practiced in the Church on the occasion of three feasts**, each limited to one week according to our authority. These are: **the abstinence of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul**, and of the Twelve Apostles (June 21 to 28), **the abstinence of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary** (August 8 to 14) **and the abstinence of Christmas** (December 16 to 24).

5. **The Friday fast** lasts all year round. Fridays excluded: the Friday before the start of Great Lent, the Fridays between Easter and Pentecost, and between Christmas and Epiphany. Fridays coinciding with the following feasts are also excluded: The Circumcision of the Child Jesus (January 1), Saint Anthony the Great (January 17), The Presentation of Jesus in the Temple (February 2), Saint John Maron (March 2), The Forty Martyrs (March 9), Saint Joseph (March 19), The Annunciation (March 25), Saints Apostles Peter and Paul (June 29), Assumption of the Virgin Mary (August 15), Beheading of John the Baptist (August 29), Nativity of the Virgin Mary (September 8), Exaltation of the Cross (September 14), Immaculate Conception (December 8), Christmas (December 25), Patron Saint of the parish, Sacred Heart of Jesus.

B- Eucharistic fast

This is the abstinence from light food by priests and faithful in preparation for receiving the Most Holy Eucharist during the Divine Liturgy, at least one hour before the start of Mass. And we take this opportunity to remind you of the importance of maintaining a state of grace, decency of dress and piety, as well as invoking Christ the Lord present in the bread and wine.

Conclusion

6. Great Lent is the **“favorable time”** for spiritual and human merits, stemming from fasting, prayer and almsgiving, as well as repentance and reconciliation. It is a **“time of grace”** that leads us to the “crossing over” to new life with Christ's Passover.

We pray God, through the intercession of our Mother, the Virgin Mary, Our Lady of Lebanon, and of our father Saint Maron, to grant His grace to all the members of our Church: pastors, priests, monks, nuns and faithful, in Lebanon, in the patriarchal territory and in the countries of the diaspora. We implore stability and peace for our homelands, for the glory of the Most Holy Trinity: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

With my love, prayers and Apostolic blessing.

Bkerke, February 24, 2025

+ Cardinal Bechara Boutros Raii

Patriarch of Antioch and All the East

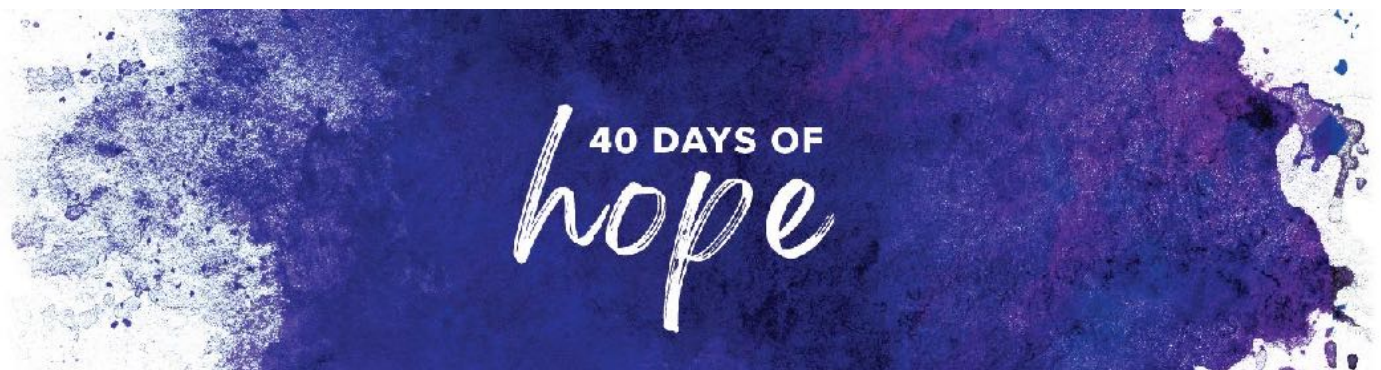
Saint Rafka Food Pantry

In May of 2020 our parish established a food pantry. There are so many hungry people around us, including parishioners and friends of the parish. We have established an area in Wickett Hall for a storage area and a section of the freezer for this purpose. Want to bring food? Bring it during office hours (10 AM - 2 PM) or drop it in the foyer of the church. Need food? Contact **Marie Kidd** (864)202.0317. Marie will handle the details, assisted by **Mark Duffy** and **Bill Leon** at the the church office. Thank you for sharing of your abundance with those less fortunate during this difficult period.

Food Pantry Needed Food Items

FOOD GIFTS CARDS or MONEY DONATIONS

Macaroni & Cheese in the boxes
Velveeta Macaroni & Cheese
Hamburger Helpers
Cold Macaroni Pasta in the boxes
Spaghetti noodles (only) No rotini or egg noodles needed at this time!
Spaghetti sauces in jars or in the cans
Dinty Moore Beef Stew in the cans
Tuna in the cans
Spam
Chili Bean in the cans
Salmon in the cans
Campbell Soups (Any kind)
Peanut Butter (Creamy Style) in jars
Any jellies (Strawberry, Peach, Raspberry, etc)
Jello Puddings or Jello in the boxes
Saltine Crackers, Vanilla Wafers, Oreo Cookies Graham Crackers, etc
Cereals in the boxes for Adults and Children
Oatmeal packages in the boxes
Canned peas, carrots, green beans, etc
Canned pears, peaches, applesauce, pineapple or in small plastic containers



Mary's Mantle Daily Rosary Group

Daily Rosary group that meets by Zoom. Call opens at 8:30pm each day. Info at rosary400@gmail.com.

The session consists of:

Call for Intentions

Prayers

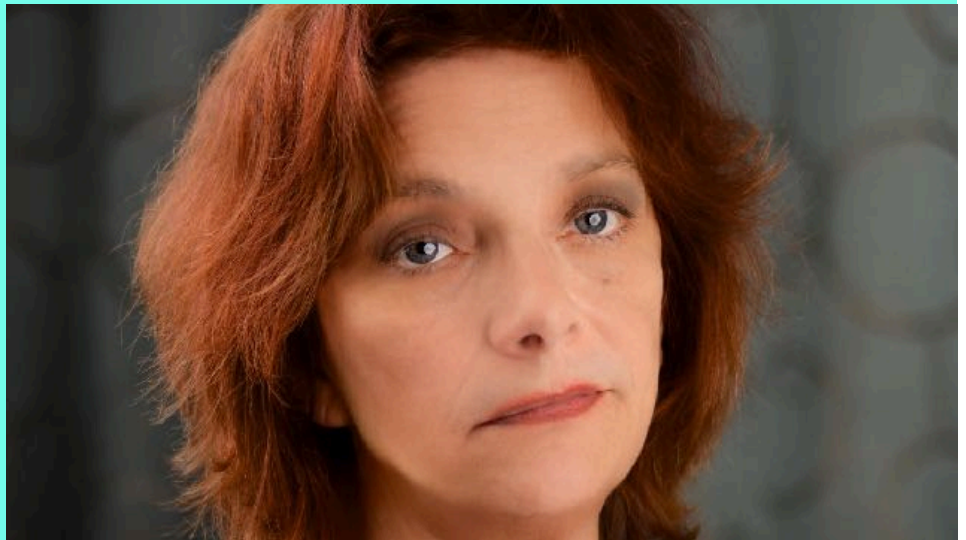
- Unity Prayer
- Rosary
- Hail Holy Queen or Salve Regina
- Spiritual Communion
- Seasonal Novena or Selected Prayer (Currently we are praying the "Let Love Litany")
- (Optional) practice of Silence and contemplative prayer (On Mondays, right after the Rosary)
- (Optional) Brief discussion of spiritual book or scripture - (Tuesday - Sunday)

Zoom call closes between 9:30 and 9:45

Participants may attend for the Rosary & prayers only, or join for the entire call.



Mary Dowden suffered a debilitating stroke on November 5, 2021 and she and husband Greg are in great need of having to add ramps, bars, etc. to their home as well as facing great medical bills. **Greg Dowden** has set up a [GoFund.Me page](#) for anyone who would wish to help with the great expenses involved. You can also write a check to



Saint Rafka for Mary Dowden. Thanks to all who have reached out. May God continue to heal Mary and bless each one who helps this loving family in their time of need.

Support Those Who Support Us!

Personal Care Assistant

Joan Songer, Personal Care Assistant with 20 years experience ministering to people in their homes. CNA nursing training at Greenville Technical College.

Cell: (864)434-2445
References available.
Parishioner recommended!

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