

They devoted themselves to the teaching
of the apostles and to the communal life,
to the breaking of the bread
and to the prayers.

ACTS 2:42

Issue 17 | December 2023

Peace of Christ



New Year's Blessings!

The Family of Saint Sharbel USA presents its 17th Newsletter. We are grateful and happy to be walking with you, and we ask for your prayers as our community of faith continues to grow!

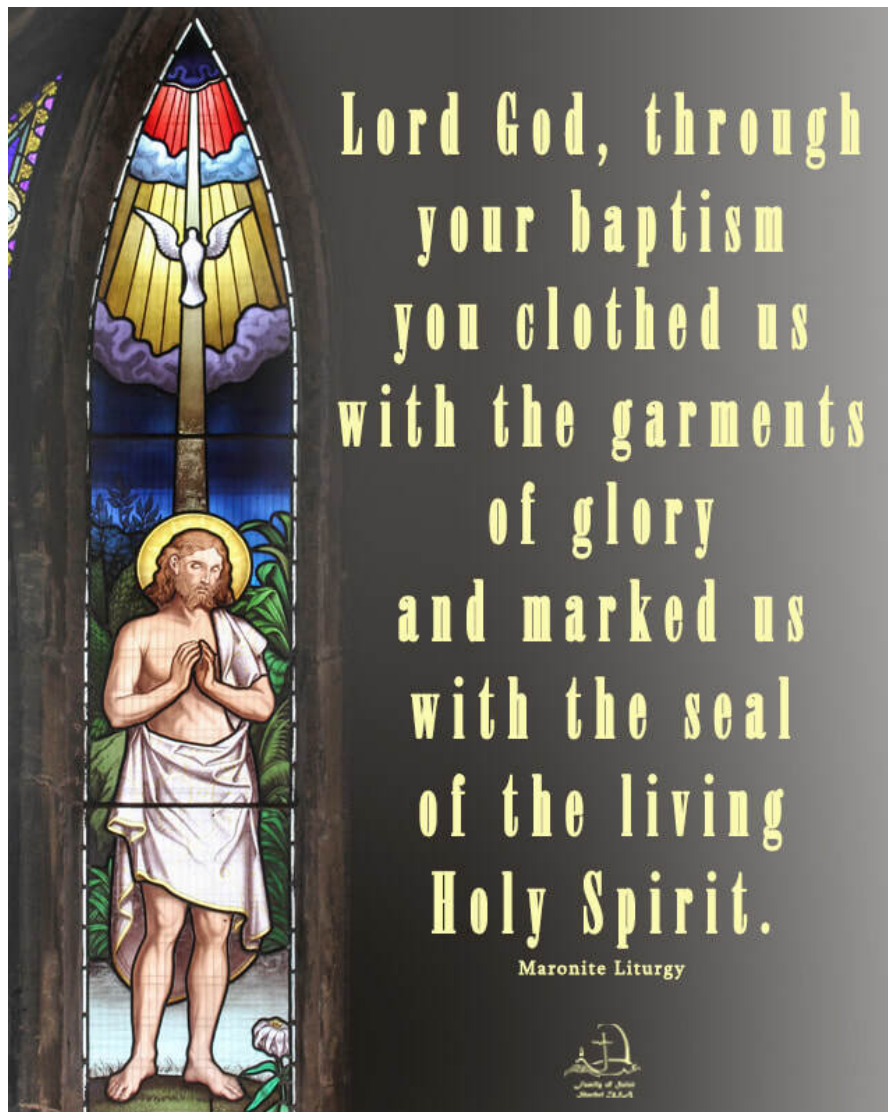
Please spread the word among your family and friends; we would love to have you all join us.

- CLICK HERE TO ACCESS OUR NEWSLETTER ARCHIVE -

View this Letter as a PDF

Contemplation Corner

A Reflection by Father George El-Andari, Associate Pastor of Our Lady of Lebanon Maronite Church in Lewisville, TX & Family of Saint Sharbel Board Member



<https://www.familyofsaintsharbel.org/spiritual-designs/through-your-baptism-you-clothed-us-with-the-garments-of-glory>

The Glorious Epiphany of the Lord

Epiphany is a Greek word (ἐπιφάνεια, epipháneia); it means manifestation or appearance. It is derived from the verb φαίνειν, phainein, meaning "to appear." There are writings about it dating to 200 A.D. However, the earliest reference to Epiphany as a Christian feast was in 361 A.D., by Ammianus Marcellinus. At the time, it was celebrated as a double feast of the baptism and birth of our Lord. It is also said by many early Church Fathers that Jesus was at the age of 30 when it took place, though not necessarily exactly that age. Today, the Maronite Rite and many Eastern Churches still celebrate the feast of the Epiphany of Jesus Christ on January 6, focusing on the Baptism of Jesus by St. John the Baptist.

All four apostles, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, reveal the Baptism of Jesus by St. John the Baptist as the first manifestation of the Holy Trinity to mankind. From the Angel's appearance to Mary until this event, everything was God acting in preparation for this moment. This moment—the epiphany at Jesus' baptism—indicates the starting point of the road each of us must also take for the sake of our salvation.

Click here to read Father George's full reflection.

Click here to view more of our spiritual designs.

Saint Sharbel Events in the USA

Explore the links below to find an event near you.

Healing Masses in Honor of St. Sharbel:

St. Joseph Maronite Catholic Church, Phoenix, Arizona

St. Sharbel Maronite Catholic Mission of Stockton, California

National Shrine Grotto of Our Lady of Lourdes, Emmitsburg, Maryland

St. Sharbel Maronite Catholic Church, Clinton Township, Michigan

Our Lady Star of the East Maronite Catholic Church, Pleasantville, New Jersey

St. Joseph Roman Catholic Church, Astoria, New York

Our Lady of Lebanon Maronite Cathedral, Brooklyn, New York

Our Lady of Victory Maronite Catholic Church, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

St. Sharbel Mission of Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Healing Holy Hour in Honor of St. Sharbel:

Shrine Church of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, Brooklyn, New York

Newsletters: Maronite Monks of Adoration

With gracious permission from the Maronite Monks of Adoration, the Family of Saint Sharbel is happy to share with you an archive of the monks' newsletters, which contain inspired and insightful spiritual reflections from 2012 to today. Please see below to explore their writings!

An excerpt from the monks' [December 2023 Newsletter](#):

"These are some of the meditations of the Syriac Fathers on the marvels of the Incarnation. They also wondered at God becoming a man without leaving His Divinity behind: How is it that Almighty God, Who gives nourishment to all, is now, as Man, in need of nourishment from His mother? How is it that the little Infant, clutching at Mary's breast, is the same Person as the God before Whom the army of angels tremble? St. Ephrem also marvels at the transformation that takes place in Mary's womb—the Lord entered it and came out a servant; the Rich One entered and came forth poor; The Exalted One entered and came out meek; He who clothes everything came forth naked and stripped..." [Click here to read the full article.](#)

[Access the Archive Here](#)

In Case You Missed It

The Family of Saint Sharbel's 2023 Christmas Retreat

From December 7 - December 10, 2023, a group from the Family of Saint

Sharbel (FSS) USA came away from the tasks of daily life for a Christmas retreat at Most Holy Trinity Monastery in Massachusetts, home to the Maronite Monks of Adoration. While there, participants listened to talks, joined the monks in their liturgical activities (including Morning Prayers [Safro], Divine Liturgy, Midday Prayers, Evening Prayers [Ramsho], Night Prayers [Sootoro], Confessions, and dedicated time to adore the Blessed Sacrament), and generally cultivated time for reflection in anticipation of Christ's birth. To see more from this prayerful weekend, please click the button below. May all who joined continue to receive graces and blessings from the Lord through all seasons.



FSS Christmas Retreat 2023

Saint Spotlight

Saint Ephrem the Syrian



Mosaic depicting St. Ephrem holding a scroll (a common way to depict St. Ephrem in iconography due to his reputation as a writer). This mosaic is located in Nea Moni of Chios (11th century); public domain image.

Maronite Feast Day: January 28

Saint Ephrem (Ephraim) the Syrian, also called the “Harp of the Holy Spirit” and “Pillar of the Church,” was said to be born in Nisibis at the beginning of the fourth century AD. He studied under the tutelage of bishop James of Nisibis, and he later (as tradition holds) became a deacon and lecturer at Nisibis (modern-day Nusbyien, Turkey). After the fall of Nisibis after attacks by Persia, Ephrem departed from the city and began to live a solitary, ascetic life in a cell on Mount Edessa. Through nearly all his years, however, Ephrem was known to be a **prolific writer**, often explaining theological concepts and dismantling heresies through poems, sermons, and hymns, though he is best known for the latter.

After leading a life of contemplation, prayer, teaching, asceticism, service, and more, Deacon Ephrem of Syria passed from this life sometime in the 370s AD. Today, the Church venerates him as a Saint, and Pope Benedict XV named him a doctor of the Church on October 5, 1920. Some of his writings have been preserved to this day, including “Hymn to the Light,” which Maronites pray daily as part of their Divine Office.

Saint Ephrem, Pray for Us!

To watch a video about St. Ephrem, check out [this resource](#) on FORMED.

Read St. Ephrem's “Hymn to the Light” in English [Here](#)

Editor's Pick: FORMED Resource



Click the image above (copied from the FORMED online streaming platform) to be directed to "Forgiveness: It's More Radical Than You Think" on the Chris Stefanick Show.

The Family of Saint Sharbel offers a FREE subscription to FORMED, a Catholic online platform with thousands of resources for spiritual growth. This month, we would like to highlight "[Forgiveness: It's More Radical Than You Think](#)," an episode of the Chris Stefanick show centered on one of life's most necessary subjects.

For Context: In the Maronite Church, the Feast of Epiphany commemorates the baptism of Jesus, the moment when God the Father identifies him as His beloved Son (Mark 1:11) and the Holy Trinity is manifested to mankind—an "epiphany" for the rest of the world. The way in which God chose to reveal His Son is telling: the Father prepared the way for Jesus's coming by sending John the *Baptizer* - a prophet who would "go before the Lord to prepare his ways, to **give knowledge of salvation to his people by the forgiveness of their sins**" partly by baptizing them with water. After that, He willed to reveal His Son's identity through this same holy but imperfect man's baptism, which he performed for the forgiveness of sins, even though Jesus himself was sinless. God chose the forgiveness of sins to be part of "preparing the way" for Christ, the signal for the presence of the Lord and so a window into the Father's heart, and an unconditional command for all members of His Body—one on which our salvation hinges (Matt. 6:14-15). He even forgave His own executioners while nailed to a cross (Luke 23:34). Yet, in the face of great pain, **what does forgiveness mean?**

In "[Forgiveness: It's More Radical Than You Think](#)," Chris Stefanick takes a deeper look at forgiveness. What is forgiveness, really, and what is it not? Why, given this information, would God choose forgiveness of sins to be the sign of salvation and a command for every Christian? [Click here](#) to view this thought-provoking resource.

May we always receive the grace to be full of God's forgiveness and to heal from all spiritual wounds, and may God truly forgive us in fullness as we accept His forgiveness for ourselves and others.

Watch “Forgiveness: It’s More Radical Than You Think” on
FORMED

To view this resource and many others, sign up for FORMED **FOR FREE** by following these simple steps:

- (1) **Go to:** <https://formed.org/signup>
- (2) **Enter:** Family of Saint Sharbel
- (3) **Enter** your name and email address and you’re in!

Below are the links to FORMED on social media:

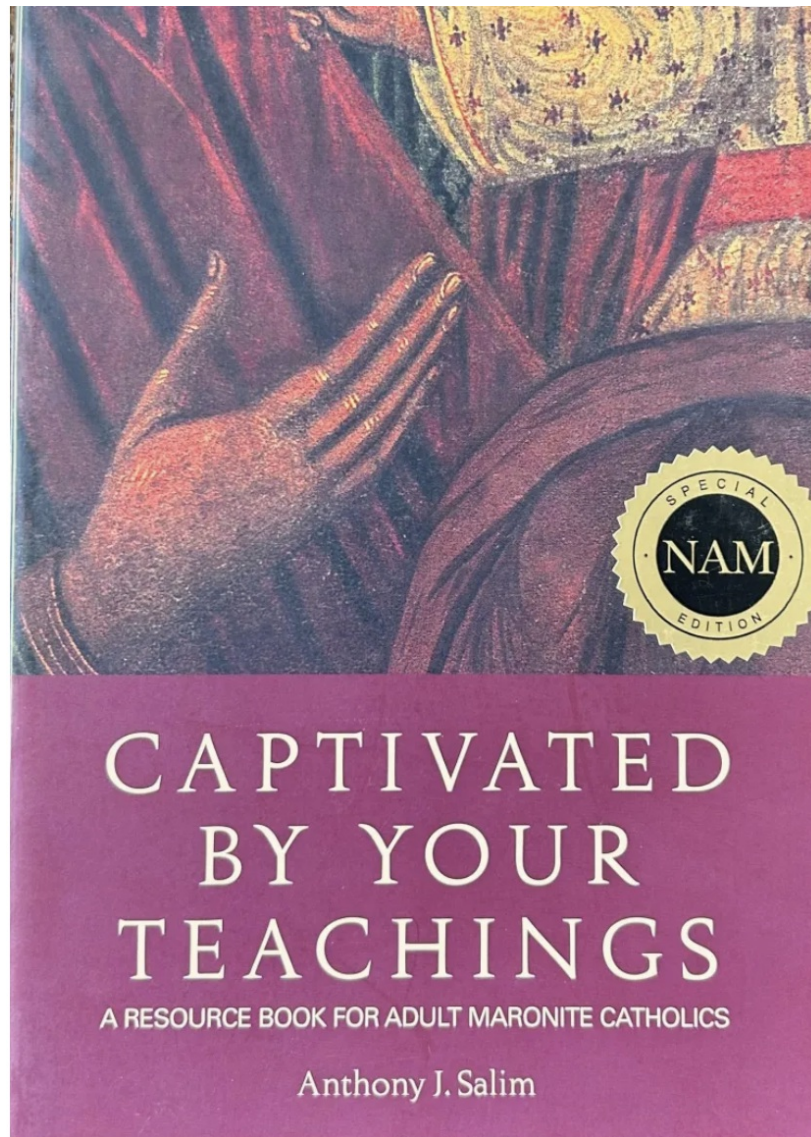
Instagram: [formedcatholic](#)

Facebook: [FORMEDCatholic](#)

YouTube: [Augustine Institute](#)

Reading Nook

Captivated by Your Teachings: A Resource Book for Maronites



The cover of Captivated by Your Teachings - sourced from St. Maron Publications.

Title: *Captivated by Your Teachings: A Resource Book for Adult Maronite Catholics*

Author: Fr. Anthony J. Salim, Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon (USA)

Language: English

Pages: 400+

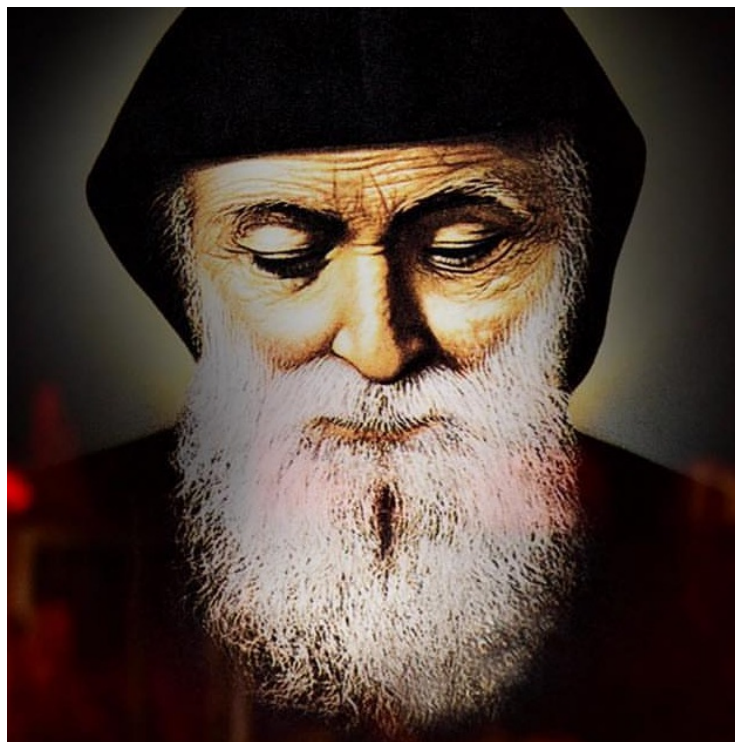
Abstract: Renew your faith in 2024! Straightforward and informative, *Captivated by Your Teachings* is a clear and user-friendly resource that makes the Maronite Divine Liturgy (Qurbono), Sacraments, theology, and other teachings and traditions easy to comprehend and follow. Crafted for a broad readership, this book is an accessible tool for those who have no working knowledge of Catholicism as well as those seeking to deepen or refresh their understanding of general Church teaching or the Maronite rite. This book is separated into sections by subject (28 chapters divided across four parts followed by seven appendices) and includes a thorough glossary and index for quick searches.

Where to Buy: St. Maron Publications | **\$45.00**

Find It Online

Articles and More

Healing Testimony of Randy Yoel Uraha



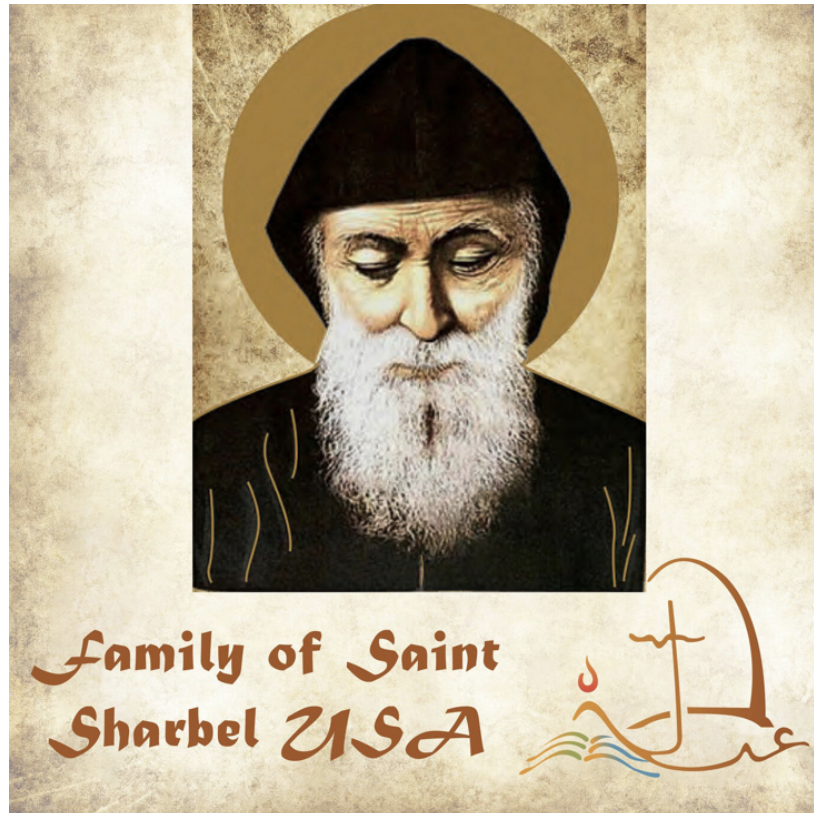
<https://www.familyofsaintsharbel.org/testimonials.html>

Mr. Randy Yoel Uraha, born in Baghdad in 1989, belonging to the Chaldean sect, an expatriate in Michigan, USA, working as a driver. While he was driving his mother, he had a severe car accident where his car crashed into a huge tree and was completely wrecked. His mother miraculously survived, but he suffered multiple fractures, the most crucial of which was the fifth vertebra in his neck, which was shattered. He was rushed to Henry Ford Hospital and received care from Dr. Mohammed Mowafak Abdulhak. After X-rays and radiological examinations, the decision was made to perform surgery to replace the shattered vertebra with an artificial one...

*Read the full Testimonial **HERE**.*

You can read more personal testimonials on our Testimonials page [HERE](#).

Family of Saint Sharbel Podcast



<https://www.familyofsaintsharbel.org/podcast>

The Family of Saint Sharbel (FSS) Podcast is now available in English and Arabic! Episodes currently include talks on the Maronite Divine Liturgy, Syriac Spirituality, the Silence of God, and more—listen at the link below or through your podcast app of preference, and please feel free to share!

[Listen Now](#)

Zoom Prayer Gathering - Arabic



Every Tuesday night at 8:00 PM (ET), members of the Family of Saint Sharbel from various locations gather on Zoom to pray Ramsho (evening prayer from the Maronite Liturgy of the Hours) in Arabic. A priest leads the celebration, cantors sing hymns, and lectors read Scripture passages, then the priest reads the day's Gospel and gives a short homily. Following the prayers, the presiding priest proceeds to share the scheduled teaching and engage in a Q&A session.

Come experience the serenity that prayer instills in us and the fellowship our meeting creates among all the members of our Family!

Email communications@familyofsaintsharbel.org for more information and be put on the Prayer Group email list.

Where to Find Us

- [Website](#)
- [Shrine](#)
- [YouTube.Healings](#)
- [YouTube.Family.Channel](#)
- [Facebook](#)
- [Instagram](#)
- [Online.Shop](#)
- [Amazon.Store](#)
- [Spanish.Website](#)
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- [Sanctuary.of.Saint.Charbel.in.Lebanon](#)

**God Bless,
The Family of Saint Sharbel USA**



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