

"A Church of Hope" Chosen for NAM '07 Theme

"A Church of Hope" has been selected as the theme of the 44th annual Maronite Convention, which is scheduled for July 25-29, 2007, in Richmond, Virginia. The convention theme and programs will explore the recently released text of the 2003-2006 Maronite Patriarchal Synod. The Synod was the first for the Maronite Church in nearly than 200 years. The previous major Synod was held in 1736.



The theme comes from the fact that a call for hope and an adherence to faith were among the primary goals established for the Synod. Other primary goals were to rediscover the Maronite heritage and traditions, perform a renewal in the ecclesiastical life, and confirm the unity of the Maronite Church while looking forward to its continued growth in Lebanon and abroad.

The fruit of the Synod is an 850-page text that was presented last year. The 2007 Maronite Convention will explore how the Synodal Text relates to our youth, family, laity and religious formation for adults. Workshops will discuss the foundations of our faith, the exciting growth that is underway and the role each of us has to play. Members of four parishes will be asked to study each of the four chosen texts, present findings on how the text can be applied, and participate in panel discussions with Their Excellencies Gregory John Mansour, Bishop of the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn, and Bishop Robert J. Shaheen, Bishop of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon.

The convention is sponsored by the National Apostolate of Maronites and hosted by St. Anthony Maronite Church of Glen Allen, Va. The event will be held at the Marriott Richmond in downtown Richmond and at St. Anthony's. "The greatest commandment our Lord gave us was to love one another, and from love comes hope," said Monsignor George M. Sebaali, pastor of St. Anthony's. "If we learn to love one another, we will always have hope. It is a perfect theme for this convention as our first chance as a broad Maronite body to come together to study the Synod's texts."

At the suggestion of Bishop Gregory Mansour, the convention logo features the Rabbula Cross, which is the oldest cross in Christianity. It dates back to 586 AD and is often featured in Maronite art. It is a cross surrounded by a circle and symbolizes that the Savior God brings salvation from the four corners of the universe.

The Rabbula Cross has been found carved in ancient caves throughout Lebanon. In the logo, it serves to remind convention participants of one of the Synod's other important goals, rediscovering the Maronite heritage and traditions. The logo shows the cross being held carefully and securely in two upraised hands. The hands symbolize the important role that all Maronites have in cherishing and protecting the church. The uplifted direction indicates the praise and reverence of the people.

Along with the workshops and presentations for all ages, there will be plenty of social opportunities. There will be a dinner at the hotel on Wednesday, a Lebanese cookout and Las Vegas night at St. Anthony's on Thursday, a "Welcome to Virginia" barbeque and silent auction at the hotel on Friday night, and the traditional banquet on Saturday night for registered attendees. Lebanese and American entertainment will be featured throughout.

To make your reservation, please call the Marriott worldwide reservation center toll-free at 1-800-228-9290, or call the Richmond Marriott Hotel directly at 1-804-643-3400 and mention the National Apostolate of Maronites. If you prefer you may also make your reservation via the web at www.marriott.com/ricdt. You need to input the group code of "namnama" in the group code field. Deadline for Hotel Reservation is June 18, 2007. Room rate is \$102.

For more information on the Maronite Convention of 2007 and all of NAM's programs and events visit WWW.NAMNEWS.ORG or call (914) 964-3070 or email at NAM@NAMNEWS.org.

For more information from the host parish contact Monsignor George M. Sebaali at St. Anthony Church, 4611 Sadler Road, Glen Allen, VA 23060. He also may be reached by telephone at 804-270-7234, by fax at 804-273-9914, or by e-mail at gmsebaali@aol.com, or visit the church's website at www.StAnthonyMaroniteChurch.Org