



Saint Sharbel From His Contemporaries To Our Era

Father Hanna Skandar





Sharbel ... Impassioned by God

Sharbel - Impassioned by God! Yes! Because he heard the Word of Christ and lived it literally. Christ said, "He who loves his father, his mother, his brothers and sisters more than me, doesn't deserve to be my disciple." Sharbel, therefore, considered Christ to be the Beloved One so he was attracted to Him and he became crazy for Him -- until the end.

If only we take seriously the word of Christ in our lives, changing our lives radically for the better, and thus taking part in improving the life of our society so that its people live the moral values and the spirit of Christianity, literally and with accuracy, thus we contribute to building a better society and God remains always our only goal.

Bishop George Abou Jaoude
Archbishop of the Maronite Diocese of Tripoli
05/01/2007





Introduction

*This book is a popular version without footnotes to facilitate the understanding of the reader. I have mentioned the names of the witnesses only when the speaker talks in the first-person. If you wish to identify the source of the information, you can either read the book, *Sharbelogy 7*, or go to our website **www.saintcharbel.com**.*

We have kept some explanations to clarify some of the information that needed to be explained.

Feast of Saint Sharbel 07/19/2009
Our Lady of the Fortress Menjez-Akkar
Father Hanna Skandar

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

- Rona Ayache for helping me acquire editors.
- Patricia Angelides and Yolla Bseibes for editing the original English translation.



Chapter I: THE FIRST JOURNEY

A- Youssef Antoun in Bekaa Kafra

1 - A Holy Family

He was born in Bekaa Kafra on May 8, 1828. His father was Antoun Zaarour “Abu Hanna” from Bekaa Kafra and his mother Brigitta Elias Yaakoub Al-Shediak from Bcharre. He had two brothers, Hanna and Beshara, and two sisters, Kaoneh and Wardeh; he was the youngest. The original name of Father Sharbel was Youssef Antoun Makhlouf but he changed it when he entered the Order. He was baptized in the Church of Our Lady of Bekaa Kafra. His father was a simple farmer like the majority of the people in his village, living off the cultivation of his land, while his mother took care of the household chores. His parents were pious, righteous and raised their children with a true Christian education.

2 - The Death of His Father during Forced Labor

At that time the army of the Prince of Lebanon, Emir Beshir Shehab, was using owners of pack animals by forcing them to transfer his crops of various grains to Beit Edinn. In the harvest season of 1832 Antoun Zaarour had a donkey for burden and was working in the region of Mejdlaya, a town between Zgharta and Tripoli. There he was restrained and put into forced labor. On the donkey he carried crops from Mejdlaya to Jbeil and then on to Beit Eddin. While returning from Jbeil to Bekaa Kafra, when he reached Gharfine, he became ill and died. His body was returned to Bekaa Kafra and he was buried on August 8, 1832. His widow, Brigitta, took care of the children with the help of Antoun’s brother, Tannous Zaarour.

3 - To Escape the Cold and Poverty

The house of Saint Sharbel’s maternal grandfather is still in Khaldiyeh where it has been renovated and converted into a church. It is said that Brigitta used to come to Khaldiyeh in the winter with her family and their cattle to escape the cold and poverty. She helped her parents during the olive harvest and stayed for four months.

4 - The Remarriage of His Mother

Brigitta married Lahoud, the son of Georges Ibrahim, in October 1833. Then she moved with him to Shlifa and Btedii where he owned land. Around 1850 Lahoud was ordained a priest and was called Father Abdel-Ahad. He did not serve in Bekaa Kafra, but in the region of Baalbek and died in 1853.

5 - The Fatherless and the Uncle Guardianship

Youssef lived as an orphan. His uncle, Tannous, raised him and his siblings. The children remained in Tannous’s home after the remarriage of their mother. Brigitta looked in on them from time to time. The children looked after each other under the supervision of their uncle and other relatives.

6 -The Monastery School of Saint Hawshab

According to the custom of those days, Youssef was taught to read and write by the priests of the village school at the Monastery of Saint Hawshab. Even as a young child he always carried a prayer book in his hands. He was of good character and cared for his fellow students. As Youssef grew up, he exhibited knowledge, piety and righteousness and was a good example in word and deed among the children of his village. He prayed a lot and often went to confession and Holy Communion.

7 - The “Rock of the Saint” and the Cow

Youssef used to plow his father’s land while isolating himself from the other children of his age, avoiding frequent contact with people, seeking solitude and loneliness, not only to pray but also to avoid unpleasant conversations. He led his cow, inherited from his father, to pasture while he sat aside a place called “The Rock of Bhaiss.” a rock on the property of his family that resembled a cave. He visited so often that people called it the “Rock of the Saint.” When the cow had eaten enough, he let her rest saying, “**Rest now Zahra; it’s my turn and not yours. I want to pray.**” So he prayed while his cow rested, and if the cow got up to eat, he told her, “**Do not start now; wait until I finish my prayer because I cannot talk with you and God at the same time. God is my priority.**” There he spent long hours absorbed in prayer and it was never known that he let his cow ruin the property of others.

8 - “The Saint” and the Cave

When Youssef knelt in the church, he did so like a statue, with no movement and always praying alone. He also spent time in the cave for prayer which sometimes aroused astonishment and the scorn of his peers. This cave is now called “The Cave of the Saint.” There he took refuge often carrying a handful of incense and a bouquet of flowers to place before an image of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Because of his great devotion, tendency to prayer, attendance at mass and the ritual liturgies, and his distinction for good behavior, the children in the village called him “The Saint” to make fun of him.

B- Sharbel the Monk

1 - On the Way to the Monastic Life in the Convent of Quozhaya

Youssef had two uncles who were priests: Father Daniel, who resided at the Monastery of Our Lady of Mayfouk, and Father Augustine who resided at the Monastery of Quozhaya. Father Daniel visited Youssef often. On one of Father Daniel’s visits, he asked Hanna Antoun Zaarour to allow his brother, Youssef, to accompany him to visit his brother priest, Father Augustine at Quozhaya. Hanna said, “Uncle, I am afraid that Youssef will never come back and will stay in the monastery if he goes with you.” Father Daniel replied, “I hope that he will enter the Order; there’s nothing more important in this world.” Then Youssef accompanied his uncle to the Monastery of Quozhaya. After the visit, the two made their way to the Monastery of Mayfouk.

2 - In the Monastery of Our Lady of Mayfouk: Follow Me (Mk 2:14)

Youssef returned to Bekaa Kafra for eight days. He then returned to the Monastery of Our Lady of Mayfouk, and on August 8, 1851, Youssef officially entered the novitiate and was called Sharbel. Sharbel is a Syriac name, a compound of two words: Sharb meaning story or tale and El meaning God. The name of Sharbel, therefore, means the Story of God. This name was also carried by a Syriac martyr who was the Bishop of Edessa, now in Turkey, and crucified in 121.

3 - He Didn’t Look Back (Lk 9:62)

First his uncle and guardian, Tannous, followed him, then his mother and his two brothers, Hanna and Beshara, all trying to prevent him from entering the Order and bring him back home. But he refused to return with them. After that his mother, Brigitta, accompanied by her brother-in-law, Tannous, went to Mayfouk where Sharbel was a novice. She tried again to bring her son back to the village. She watched the novices heading to the fields hoping to see her son. When she saw him, she rushed and grabbed

him by his habit while he remained staring at the ground. She said, “Come home with me.” When she became distracted, he escaped and followed his brother novices.

4 - A Reckless Decision (Mt 18:8-9)

The superior general and his councils banned joint work between monks and women in the treatment of silkworms, even if the ban affected the monastery’s income. It was a habit at Mayfouk to send the novices to peel the bars of mulberry branches and pluck them while women and girls took care of feeding the worms; all while in the same house. It happened that one of the girls, who worked at the convent, noticed the decency of Father Sharbel which distinguished him from the other monks. Willing to test him, she threw a silkworm at him from above, then came down to pick up the worm and put it directly in his hand. This so disturbed Sharbel that he left the monastery that night and went to the Monastery of Saint Maron – Annaya, which was isolated and far from civilization.

Therefore, we read in the diary of the Monastery of Our Lady of Mayfouk, opposite the name of Brother Sharbel, the term “defrocked” which meant that he left the Order. In reality, when Sharbel recounted this event to the superior at Mayfouk, the superior consulted the superior general and he granted approval to allow Sharbel to return to Mayfouk to resume his second year of novitiate. The term “defrocked” annoyed his brother, Hanna, because he knew that the real reason for Sharbel leaving Mayfouk was his desire for a complete withdrawal from the world. Father Ephrem of Bekaa Kafra, one of his fellow villagers, was also in the Monastery of Saint Maron at that time.

5 - You Have the Words of Eternal Life (Jn 6,68)

After Brigitta learned of Sharbel’s return to Mayfouk, she hastened to bring him back to Bekaa Kafra. While he was leaving the monastery with the novices to work in the field, she rushed towards him and held him by his habit insisting he come back with her. But when she found that he was persistent in his vocation, she told him, “Either stay firm in the Order and become a good monk or come back home immediately with me.” Sharbel replied, “**What you have said, be done.**”

6 - My Burden is Light (Mt 11, 30)

After the novitiate, Sharbel made his solemn vows at the Monastery of Saint Maron with Father Antonios Al-bani on November 1, 1853 at the age of 25 and wore the angelic hood handed him by the superior. At that time the solemn vows were pronounced only one time while celebrating.

7 - We Will Meet Again in Heaven (Mk 3, 31-35)

Birgitta went again to visit her son in the Monastery of Saint Maron after he pronounced his solemn vows. She urgently requested to see him, but he didn’t meet her directly; instead he spoke a few words with her from inside the convent while she stayed outside. She told him, “Thus you deprive me from seeing you my son?” She was disappointed and admonished him for his behavior. He replied, “If I don’t see you now, we’ll meet again in Heaven.” Sad and moved to tears, she went back home. Sharbel had done so according to the Novice Rule: “Do not speak with non-monks, your family and others. As for the females, the novice should do his best to obey the superior who should not force him to meet them. If the monk is obliged to do so, he must strive not to look at their faces and talk only briefly with them. In observing the monastic rules a monk should be away from women even the women relatives.”¹

¹ Qoraali, the founder of the Order of Saint Sharbel, explained: It is known that many of the hermits saddened their parents and relatives because they didn’t allow them to talk with them, to see them, or to spend time together; as it is well known from the biography of Father Simeon the Pillar, Father Benjamin, his Brothers and many others.

8 - Alishaa the Hermit: A Spiritual Father for Sharbel

Father Alishaa, “the Saint.” discovered the charisma of Sharbel when he met him in the novitiate in the Monastery of Saint Maron. Sharbel visited Alishaa frequently in his hermitage and took him as his spiritual father early in his monastic life. After Sharbel’s solemn vows, it was decided to keep him as a Brother, so he remained three years at Annaya. Alishaa benefited from the presence of having Sharbel near him and took a personal initiative to give him linguistic and theological lessons on Sundays and Holy Days. In 1856 Rome appointed the monastic authority, Father Hardini Nehemtallah, General Counsel. Alishaa then asked Father Hardini to send Sharbel to the Monastery of Kfifane to study and become a priest. He saw in Sharbel the spirit of a holy priest.

9 - Sharbel: Student of Saint Nehemtallah Hardini

His superiors sent Sharbel to the Theological Institute at Saint Cyprien in Kfifane to complete the necessary studies for the priesthood. In this atmosphere of learning and sanctity Brother Sharbel found what he was looking for. By his efforts and diligence, he accomplished the greatest part of his studies in moral theology, along with the fundamentals of the Syriac and Arabic languages, and a harvest of monastic virtues and Christian perfection. When Father Al-Kafri was absent, Father Hardini Nehemtallah replaced him as teacher. Sharbel was one of the best and most talented students: smart, diligent, skillful in moral theology, and excellent in his other theological studies. His superiors and teachers showed a full appreciation of him, praising his virtues and monastic ideal behavior, so that he never had to be admonished or punished. He was a good model when he prayed, kneeling on the same spot with arms outstretched. There were neither pews nor kneelers in the church. His kneeling showed his perfect devotion so that other students felt a deep respect when they saw him in this position which led them to call him a “Saint.” Hardini said, “I have a holy student who is Brother Sharbel from Bekaa Kafra.”

10 - To Serve, Not to be Served

After Sharbel’s successful studies, he was ordained a priest on July 23, 1859, by the imposition of the hands of Bishop Joseph Al-Marid. Later his niece, Wardeh, came accompanied by some relatives to congratulate him and urged him to go to his village to celebrate a mass, to which he replied, “**The monk who enters the convent and then goes back to his village should repeat his novitiate.**” In fact, after his departure to join the Order he never returned to Bekaa Kafra.

11 - In the Convent of Annaya

Sharbel was sent to the Convent of Saint Yaaqoub Al-Hosson where he spent a period of time entirely dedicated to the ascetic life of abstinence and prayer. After a few months, Alishaa asked again for Sharbel to return to Annaya so he could help develop his talents, watch over him, and accompany him. Thus Sharbel was transferred to Annaya by the obligation of obedience. His name was already in Annaya in the local councils for the election of the delegates for the years 1868, 1871 and 1874. Sharbel also worked with the novices between the years 1869 and 1874, 1895 and 1898.

12 - The Miracle of 1865

In 1865 the locusts invaded the District of Batroun, but the government took no action. The monks tried in vain to drive them out, but did not succeed. Father Roukoz Meshmesh, the superior of the convent, ordered Father Sharbel to bless the water and sprinkle the properties of the convent to prevent the locusts from destroying the crops and trees. Sharbel walked through the fields sprinkling them with holy water and turning to the locusts said, “**Blessed are you. Eat from what is wild and not what is edible.**” Thus, God preserved the crops and the monastery’s mulberries from the damage caused by the locusts.

C- Sharbel the Hermit

1 - The Establishment of Sharbel’s Hermitage

In 1798 the Abu Ramia family gave land located on Mount Tabour to their brother, Youssef² and assisted by the villagers helped him build the Church of Saints Peter and Paul. In 1814 both brothers entered the Lebanese-Maronite Order and left their possessions to the Order. In 1828 the Monastery of Saints Peter and Paul was converted into a hermitage.

2 - The Description of the Hermitage

The hermitage is located on a hillside at an altitude of 1378 meters. The grounds of the church are paved with tiles made from simple stones. In the west wall is the actual entrance to the hermitage where the faithful can enter directly to attend mass. The corridor, which separates the cells from the church, ends in the north with a hallway opened by an arch. The hermitage is surrounded by a high wall of two to three meters and exposed to storms and thunderbolts. Few hermitages on such a high elevation on the mountaintops of Lebanon are inhabited.

3 - The Convent of Annaya until Sharbel’s Entry into the Hermitage

The monks of Jbeil, especially those of Meshmesh, took over the ministries of Convent of Annaya and began to minimize the Hermit Alishaa.³ Hardini was almost a superior in his hermitage and an excellent administrator. In 1856 the Maronite Patriarch proposed that Hardini be appointed superior general as a solution to the conflict between the two hostile camps in the Order. Hardini was considered to be one of the most famous monks in knowledge, virtue and administration. He invested the profits of the hermitage in the purchase of fifty lots and seven other properties between the years 1833 and 1870. Some of the properties were sold after his death. After 1870 when he bought the last property, a fight broke out between him and the Superior of the Convent of Saint Maron, Father Roukoz Meshmesh. Then the misunderstanding perpetuated to Father Abdel Massih, who was supported by Fathers Roukoz and Antoun Meshmesh. They sent a band to attack Brother Abdallah Al-Bani who was serving the Hermit Alishaa. As a result of this incident, the superior general had to intervene. The Hermit left the administration of the estate in its entirety. The monks, however, eager to assimilate everything sent Father Antoun Meshmesh to take away “the goats from their shepherd.” The Hermit then wrote a letter to the Patriarch in which he asked in the Name of Christ for his help.

4 - Alishaa Asked for Sharbel with the Audacity of the Saints

The membership of the region sorted the monks of the Order into five major groups; each consisting of a small team that linked with the kinship, particularly the affiliation to a village and personal interests. Father Alishaa “the Saint” loved his Order and regretted what was happening. He worked for the benefit of the Convent of Saint Maron and the Order and did not withdraw to the north to escape persecution. Rather, he asked the Superior General, Ephrem Geagea, who respected him for his virtues

² He is the one who established the Order of the Worshippers before he came to an agreement with the Lebanese-Maronite Order and joined them.

³ He had a passion for manual labor. It was he who paved the hermitage, carrying the plates on his back from a great distance. It was he, too, who planted the vineyard to the east of the hermitage after cutting the trees. He also dug and plowed the soil. God performed miracles through his intercession.

and good management, and because he was the brother of the “Saint of Kfifane.” to send Father Sharbel. Father Geagea granted his request by sending Sharbel to him and not transferring Father Alishaa to the north. Alishaa also sent the same request to the Superior of the Convent, Father Roukoz Meshmesh, who at first refused, and then after the miracle of the lamp performed in July 1869 by Sharbel, accepted his request. Father Sharbel officially inherited Alishaa on the eve of his death and funeral so that in one day they could both be two universal and important saints.

5 - Water in the Lantern (Mt 25, 1-13)

When Sharbel was at the convent during the triennium of Father Roukoz Meshmesh, he worked in the fields as one of the lowest of servants. One night while watching the goats during harvest time, he saw a group of thirty reapers having their dinner while the servers bustled to serve the tables. They were eager to serve the reapers. Father Sharbel came, and before the entire group, asked the server to fill his lantern with oil. The server scolded him and said, “Why didn’t you come in the daytime?” He replied, “**I was in the field.**” The server replied, “As a punishment I will not give you oil for tonight. Go away.” Father Sharbel obeyed and returned to his cell. One of the servants, however, placed a bench transversely to block his way so Father Sharbel stumbled and fell to the ground, however he did not complain. Saba, who was only thirteen years old and a servant in the convent, went up to him and asked for his lantern pretending that he wanted to fill it with oil. But in reality, he poured water into it from a metal container where ashes were kept. Father Sharbel took the lamp to light it; it was lit. Meanwhile, during Father Sharbel’s absence in the fields, he was unaware that the use of oil had been prohibited. It was a strict order from the superior that the monks not light their lanterns after the bell rang for sleep. That night the superior woke up because he needed something. As he was leaving his cell, he saw a light and went straight to see where it came from; it was from the cell of Father Sharbel. He told him, “Didn’t you hear the bell? Why haven’t you turned off your lantern? Haven’t you taken the vow of poverty?” Father Sharbel immediately knelt down begging forgiveness and said, “**I came back from the field and tried to finish my prayer; I was not aware of this ban.**” Saba who was close to the cell said to the Superior, “I really wanted to fill the lantern of Father Sharbel with oil, but the server refused. On my return I saw the metal tube and I filled the lamp with water.” The superior opened the lamp and made sure it was water. Then he could not restrain his feelings and went and told all the brothers in the monastery. This fact spread throughout the entire convent. In the morning after this event, the superior called Father Sharbel and said, “If you want to serve the hermits, I give you permission.” Father Sharbel replied, “**There is a big difference between my desire and the superior’s orders. I made a vow and I do not work due to my will because my will doesn’t belong to me anymore, but if you order me, I will obey and go.**” The superior replied, “Go.” Father Sharbel knelt asking for his blessing. So the superior recited a prayer and blessed him. He expressed his gratitude and hastened to gather his spiritual and prayer books, mat and blanket and tied them up with a cord. He put the burden on his back and entered the church to visit the Blessed Sacrament. He then walked back to the hermitage.

6 - Servant of Alishaa

The hermit, Alishaa Hardini, requested that Father Sharbel come to the hermitage and he immediately accepted. Father Sharbel was serving the hermits and particularly, Father Alisha. He would bring his food to the monastery and serve his mass. Sometimes he celebrated mass in the convent because there was nobody in the hermitage to serve his mass. He remained diligent on this plan for six years.

7 - Give Him Something to Eat (Mk 5, 43)

Skandar Beik Khoury witnessed: in 1873 when my uncle, Dr. Najib Beik Khoury, was a child, he was sick and about to die. My grandfather, who was also a doctor, believed that my uncle was in critical condition and there was no chance of recovery. My grandmother then sent someone to Father Sharbel asking him to bless my uncle, hoping he would be healed. Father Sharbel told the envoy that he “**would come at night.**” The messenger told him that the illness was critical and to come immediately. He then said, “**I will go immediately, but I don’t want people to see me.**” Because of his humility he didn’t want to attract people’s attention to him.

When Father Sharbel arrived at their house, the fever was already very high and the child who had typhoid had lost consciousness. After praying, Father Sharbel took a handkerchief, soaked it in holy water, and passed it over his forehead. After several days of unconsciousness, the child immediately opened his eyes and uttered two words, “Father Sharbel.” His mother said, “Kiss Father Sharbel’s hand.” and he did. Father Sharbel addressed those present saying, “**Praise God! The patient is cured give him something to eat.**” They hesitated because the child was suffering from typhoid and it was believed that food would cause his death. But Father Sharbel insisted “**to feed him**” and then left. They offered the child a meal which he ate and recovered. A short time later, his father, my grandfather, came back home and was told what Father Sharbel had done. He repeated, “More likely he has no chance of life since he ate.” But the child was healed, grew up, became a doctor himself, lived to the age of 85 and treated Father Sharbel several times during his lifetime.

8 - Alishaa Recommends Sharbel to be His Successor

After forty-four and one-half years in the hermitage of Annaya, and after receiving the last sacraments, Father Alishaa died on February 13, 1875 at the age of 76. He remained conscious till the last moments of his life. He was buried in a wooden coffin on Sunday, February 14 at 8:00 a.m. and placed in the cemetery of the Monastery of Saint Maron. Many people attended his funeral. The following day the head of the convent, Father Elias Meshmesh, ordered that Father Sharbel officially becoming a hermit together with Father Libaos Al-Ramaty.

9 - Servant of the Hermits (Jn 13,14)

Father Makarios Meshmesh entered the hermitage of Annaya on April 25, 1880. Father Sharbel used to go frequently to the convent weekly to bring food and drink for the two hermits, Fathers Makarios Meshmesh and Libaos Al-Ramaty. He would put the supplies in a bag made of goatskin and carry it on his back. He considered himself a servant to his companion, Father Makarios Meshmesh, the hermit.

Chapter II: THE EFFORTS OF LIFE

A - Portrait of Father Sharbel

1 - Description

He was 160 centimeters tall (5 feet, 3 inches), slender with arms as thin as a thumb, straight back, long and thin fingers, and a proportional neck and mouth. He had a long, refined nose and long hair according to the tradition of the hermits. His face was round and fine, overflowing with bright light, marked by the Serenity of God which drew all hearts to it. His forehead was wrinkled, brimming with gaiety, revealing the gentleness, tranquility and serenity of his heart.

His face reflected his devotion and love of God at all times, particularly during prayer. A heavenly light illuminated his face because the Lord was his strength, his wealth and his permanent joy. His face was pale, light brown and tanned from the sun. Due to his many mortifications, and long vigil nights of prayers, he became very slim - just skin and bones, but he walked quickly even in his old age. He was very ardent in all his affairs.

His beard was short, thin and inclined to be blonde in origin, but had gray hair in the middle and at the top sides. He rarely washed his hair so it became twisted from the lack of care. The hair on his head remained black almost until his death.

2 - His Daily Schedule

When the bell rang early in the morning, Father Sharbel could be seen kneeling straight, next to the door, behind everyone. He remained in this position, holding his book in his hand; the other hand resting on his chest with his face turned toward the ground. After the early mass, he went to the fields without a grace period or distraction, carrying a rope and pickaxe. He remained there until sunset. He didn't go due to his own desire, but according to the order of his superior or by the order of the landowner. He walked to his work in the near or far off fields or in the vineyard carrying his Rosary and praying, looking neither right nor left, speaking with no one. If someone told him; "Praise be God." he would answer, "**God bless you.**" When he arrived at his place of his work, he at once took his pickaxe and began working with the desire and energy of a wage earner who expected a large payment if he increased his work. He didn't care if the head of the work was a priest, a brother, or employee; they all represented the authority which comes from God. He worked with all his strength -- a constant continuous hard work, without taking a break, or raising his head from the ground.

He put all his energy into his work so that sweat would drip from his forehead and clothes. He never raised his hood to wipe the sweat, but his sweat always remained with him never dropping to the ground. Sometimes he built partition walls, gathered the stones with his hands, and cut the grass to isolate the ground in front of the sower. His hands chunked and became very dry from the hard work.

In the days of intense heat in the summer, he didn't raise the hood from his eyes and when the other brethren were resting, drinking cold water and hanging out together, he sat aside alone. He didn't speak or drink as if waiting impatiently to return to his job. If it hadn't been for obedience to the command, he wouldn't have rested.

When the bell rang for prayers, he retired to a hiding place, kneeling on the stones with his arms outstretched in prayer. After this pause, he resumed his job; always in perfect silence. If the head of the field delayed to invite Father Sharbel and the monks to eat at noon, he would not complain or say, "We are hungry or tired." These words never came to mind and he never uttered them. If the stones in the field and the trees spoke, Father Sharbel spoke.

The only sound around him was the sound of the hatchet when it came upon the stones, or the echo of the stones that he picked for the construction of the enclosure wall, or when he threw a pile of stones. Silence was his closest friend and intimate companion. The monks and workers revered him, respected his virtues, and avoided talking useless speech with him. No one dared to joke around with him, or talk with him about the incidents occurring in the world, because he wasn't interested in them. He cared neither what was happening in his country nor about matters relating to the Order's management. His main concern was only God and leaving everything to Divine Providence. He remained in the field until sunset, and if the supervisor kept them working until a late hour, Father Sharbel would remain working with the same energy with which he began his day. His enthusiasm increased with more work. He never pointed out to the field's supervisor that the time for work was over; he never objected to anything.

In the evening he gathered grass and wood, forming large bundles to carry on his back, and returned to the convent bent over from the weight of the bundle while holding the Rosary in his hand and praying. The days when it snowed or rained, on Sundays and the summer holidays, he never left the church or his cell.

3 - The Secret of the Existence of Lebanon

Nakhle Shaker Kanaan witnessed in 1897: I've known Father Sharbel since the summer of 1897 when I was 24 years old. At that time we used to visit friends every summer in a region of the high mountains. There were no big hotels, cars or paved roads. We used horses and donkeys for transportation. That year my friend, Shoukri Beik Arqash, returned from Paris after earning a graduate degree in law. I decided to go on excursion with him to Mayrouba to visit the dignitary Beshara Al-Khazen. Then we headed to the high mountain of Al-Akoura and Laqlouq. While we were at that mountain, we went to see the hermit, already famous in the region for his virtues and holiness. We went down to Ouwaïny to the hermitage of Saints Peter and Paul. We paused to rest under an oak tree. Some people had already camped there for several days waiting to get the blessing of the hermit. While our muleteer was preparing the meal, a thin monk came from the field holding a sickle and a load of grass. He greeted us with a bowed head and we asked him for permission to sit down and eat. With kindness and joy, he agreed. Then he started to serve us, offering some grapes and water, but without keeping our company. We invited him to dine with us, but he excused himself cautiously and discreetly and stammered, "**Thank you. I already ate at the monastery.**" From his conversation with Shoukri Beik, I still remember these words, "**It is God who created us; he takes care of us. God is omnipotent; we live well without any merit from our part. God be with you.**" As we were describing in detail the beauty of the vast landscapes lying at our feet from the mountains to the sea, the hermit replied, "**This is God's gift to the Lebanese; this site is a heavenly gift. It's located here so we will be able to praise His Holy Name. Everything we possess belongs to God.**" He didn't agree to receive any gift or present from us. Father Sharbel was listening to the speech of Mr. Arqash on the work of hermits and devotees in France and then said, "**France is the eldest daughter of the Church.**"

At this moment the bell of the Monastery of Saint Maron rang announcing the Angelus. I asked him to recite the Angelus. He did this, followed by the Litany of the Virgin and the Cult of the Veneration of Mary. We knelt in reverence, repeating the prayer after him; he sang softly lowering his head to the ground. His head was wrapped in his hood, and his eyes closed like an angel in human form, transported by the Spirit into the sky. When we left the hermitage, he stood up with incomparable modesty and delicacy with his eyes directed to a world beyond the cosmos, and with hands crossed on his chest, muttered the words, "**God be with you.**" I remember Shoukri kept talking about the hermit and said, "These pious hermits on the tops of the mountains are the secret of the existence of Lebanon with their purity and righteousness."

B - Sharbel the Apostle (Mk 4, 18; Mt 10)

1 – Definition

Father Sharbel was neither a parish priest nor a missionary, but whenever the opportunity arose to serve souls, he responded joyfully. Sometimes he heard the confessions of those who asked him: his fellow monks, priests or other people; his advice was very useful and extremely salutary.

When he was called to visit the sick and the sorrowful, he did his best to console them and invited them to surrender to the Will of God. At the same time, he was praying for them and for their sick. He prayed for both benefactors and sinners and carried their concerns when he celebrated his masses. He did not preach, but was ready to offer his advice and guidelines to those who requested them. If the superior ordered him to go and celebrate the mass for the farmers on Sundays and Holy Days, he obeyed and then returned to the monastery without talking to anyone. He willingly participated in the funerals in the neighboring villages, respecting the vow of obedience, but walked directly into the church without speaking. Once people noticed his arrival, they rushed toward him, so he could bless the water for them while the superior of the convent and the other priests went first to the house of the deceased and then returned with the body to church. After the funeral, he quickly returned to the hermitage.

2 - Healing the Sick (Mt 10, 8)

Once the Patriarch, Boulos Massaad, gave an order that they should send Father Sharbel to Ftouh-Kesserwan in Ghadress to pray and bless the sick sons of the dignitary, Salloum Al-Dahdah, who had five boys, three of whom had died from tuberculosis; the two survivors were also afflicted.

The superior sent Father Sharbel to spend some time with them to pray for the children to be healed. He went there accompanied by Abdallah Youssef Aoun. They remained there about a month until the two sons were healed. Upon his arrival, Father Ramyah came to the hermitage and asked him, "How are you? What have you seen on the road?" Sharbel replied, "**I went from here to there and I returned from there to here again.**"

3 - To Repent to God (Acts 20, 21)

One year during Holy Week, Father Elias Meshmesh, the Superior of the Convent of Saint Maron, sent Father Sharbel to Kfarbaal to the farmer-partners of the convent to help them fulfill their religious obligations during the Lenten season. Their parish priest didn't have enough theological knowledge and Father Sharbel gladly accepted spending an entire week with them.

4 - My Food You Do Not Know (Jn 4, 32)

Once he accompanied a priest to attend a funeral in the Village of Meshmesh. After the funeral, the relatives of the deceased invited the fathers for lunch, all except Father Sharbel, because they knew he would refuse and preferred to go back to the convent.

5 - Young Man Arise! (Lk 7, 14)

Father Elias Ehmej witnessed: My father was afflicted with typhoid and was treated by doctors known for their medical knowledge, but who didn't have medical degrees. His illness was so aggravated that all hope of a cure was lost and treatment stopped. My father lost consciousness and was in agony. The family appealed to the Superior, Father Elias Meshmesh, to order Father Sharbel to come and pray beside my father. Father Sharbel responded and came to our home during the night while many people were already gathered in the house. When he entered the home, he called my father three times by name saying "**Risha.**" My father opened his eyes and Father Sharbel told him, "**Do not be afraid.**" He loved my father because he was a deacon

and sometimes served with him in his masses. He prayed, blessed the water, sprayed it on my father and gave him a drink. Upon leaving he said, "**There is nothing more to fear.**" In fact, after my father regained consciousness, he ate and drank. Shortly afterwards he had a complete recovery and was able to leave his bed.

6 - Talitha Arise (Mk 5, 41)

On another occasion, Father Sharbel was summoned to bless Jibrael Gerges from Ehmej who was suffering from a serious illness. By the order of the superior, he went to spend the night with him in prayer. God healed the patient through the prayers of Father Sharbel.

7 - Lazarus is Dead! (Jn 11, 14)

Skandar Beik Khoury witnessed: My paternal grandfather, who was a physician without a medical degree, was called to Amshit to treat a patient who was the only son of a dignitary family of Amshit, called Jibrael Sleiman Abbas. My grandfather spent four or five days trying to heal the patient using all available means to cure him. As he despaired of his recovery, he sent a messenger to his son, my father, to tell him, "Go to the hermitage of Saints Peter and Paul, and ask the hermit, Father Sharbel, to accompany you to Amshit to pray for the patient." My father acted immediately and arrived at the hermitage in the afternoon. He asked Father Sharbel to go with him to Amshit and explained the mission he had to accomplish. At first he hesitated, then accepted on one condition - that they must get the permission of the Superior, Father Elias Meshmesh. After his approval, Father Sharbel prepared his lantern to light the way because he didn't leave the hermitage until nightfall so he would see no one and no one would see him. This was his habit throughout his life as a hermit. He preferred to walk and told his companions, Father Maron Meshmesh, Brother Elias Mahrini and the muleteer, "**I can't ride on the donkey. I'm scared to fall and I am not accustomed to riding on it.**" After the long journey, he said, "**Let us be obedient to the order given.**" Arriving above Mahrin, Father Sharbel stopped and seemed amazed. My father who rode his horse about twenty meters ahead of him asked, "What's wrong?" "Let us hurry!" He answered saying, "**Listen! Listen! They said he has died!**" My father stopped his horse and said, "With whom are you talking Father Sharbel?" He repeated, "**They said he has died.**" My father replied, "Why do you say that? What are you talking about?" At this moment, he turned to my father and told him, "**Recite the Angelus. Let's pray for the man because he has died!**" and he knelt and prayed. Then my father, disconcerted, made the Sign of the Cross, dismounted his horse and approached Father Sharbel with extreme reverence, begging him many times to continue his march. After that he looked at his watch and marked the time when Sharbel said the words indicated above. Father Sharbel repeated, "**It is useless to go there. It is no longer necessary to continue the way because the mission which the superior has ordered is terminated. The patient has died.**"

But since my grandfather was insistent that the presence of Father Sharbel in Amshit was very important, and because my father didn't believe that the patient had died, he insisted they continue the way. Then Father Maron told Father Sharbel, "Let's continue our walk in obedience to the superior's orders." After walking about one hour and a half, they heard screams and wailing cries from less than half a mile from the house. The patient had actually died. At that moment, my father began to question Father Sharbel on his ability to know the patient's death in advance while they were at least one and a half hours from Amshit and where they could not hear a sound or see the town. But Father Sharbel didn't say a word and continued his prayer. When we arrived at the home, my father inquired about the time of death which coincided with the moment when Father Sharbel stopped on his way to say, "**They said he has died!**" Then my father told them what happened on the road and they were astonished and regretted not having called

the hermit earlier. This news spread in Amshit and its regions. Following this event, the people of Houjoula, Bachtilda and Aalmat, all Shiite Muslims, came to Father Sharbel to receive his blessing. They brought with them their patients and asked him for healing. As for Father Sharbel, I never heard him mention this event, or others very similar that happened through his intercession, and the word which the people had spread.

8 - The Shiite Muslims Rushed (Jn 4, 39-42)

Once the locusts invaded the fields of the Village of Tourzaya, which was divided into two parts; one part inhabited by Christians, the other part inhabited by Shiite Muslims. The Christians and the farmers of the convent came to Father Sharbel and said, "Please, Father Sharbel, help us." He sent them to the superior who ordered him to accompany the residents. Assisted by another monk, they blessed the water and sprinkled it on the fields. The locusts left the lands and properties of the Christians and went to the lands and properties of the Shiite Muslims, who then rushed to Father Sharbel asking him to drive away the locusts from their fields. So he sprayed their lands and properties with holy water and the locusts abandoned the entire area sprinkled with holy water.

C - Work and Prayer

1 – Introduction

These were some of the Monks' Rules which were followed by Sharbel: "The monk must be silent, quiet and dynamic in his work. He does not seek out the easy work and the pleasant things, leaving the less agreeable things to others. Rather, he should choose the unpleasant work leaving the pleasant one to others; this must be done in all humility." Also, "The monk must subject himself to the lowest jobs in the monastery and its menial needs to free himself from the egoism without which hell wouldn't exist."

Sharbel had no ministry in the convent except the mass, prayer and his work in the fields. Most of his work was devoted to clearing stones and building terrace walls in front of the planter. Before he entered the hermitage, he helped the goat herders to pasture the goats and take care of them. Although he was a righteous priest, he worked earnestly and lovingly with the Brothers and servants in the field and vineyard as if he was sentenced to forced labor. He never looked around nor took a break, unless to repeatedly make the Sign of the Cross. While working, he prayed constantly. If he wanted to pass some free time, he would collect stones in the vineyard.

He never complained about working in the fields in neither cold nor heat. Rather, he remained in the fields until his Brothers told him to stop working or until the bell rang for prayer. Then he asked permission to leave for church for the Liturgy of the Hours or would kneel down on the stones and pray. When ordered to carry a load of thorny bushes or other objects, he contributed more than he could without saying a word about it whether it was difficult or easy.

He never complained or got angry, but he always stayed in the same mood. He never took a break. Instead, he hated to rest and didn't like to sleep, but loved the mortification and the work. All his monastic life was in constant prayer, work and silence. If the servant of the monastery asked him, for example, to take the plow to another place he would do it without hesitation.

2 - He Went to Church to Pray (Mt 14, 23)

Semaan Ghana witnessed: In 1880, Father Elias Meshmesh called me to build a furnace at the Monastery of Saint Maron. When I asked him for some workers to help me in the construction, among them he sent Father Sharbel. He worked with me for six days during which he was a model of perfection. At the beginning of work, he asked

me, "What should I bring to you Master?" I replied, "Stones – small, sharpening stones and clay." He started to hand them to me with diligence and energy, lifting the heavy stones on his chest to put them still higher on the scaffold. As for the small sharp stones, he dragged them by hand so that blood was flowing under his nails. I told him, "No! No! My master, be careful; don't wear yourself out. Go slowly." He said nothing to me, but continued his arduous work. He spent a whole week with me, without uttering a single word or asking any questions, but this, "What can I do for you?" I felt sorry for him and did my best to facilitate his work. During our breaks he always ran to church to pray.

3 - He Remained Silent (Mt 5, 11-12 & 41)

Father Ephrem Nakad witnessed: Most of the monks in the monastery were from Meshmesh. Only Father Sharbel was from the area of Jebbeh in north Lebanon. Whatever work they gave him, he did it quietly, never said no to anybody, or complained. Nobody took pity on him or did he have pity on himself. The chef, Francis, who was the brother of the superior ordered him to do the hardest work and abused him. Father Sharbel obeyed him, as he obeyed his superior, even though Sharbel was a priest and the Brother was a deacon.

When he returned from the field, his back curved and often laden with a heavy bundle of wood, Deacon Francis would order him to provide water or to perform some other tasks. Once when he told him to water the plants with a bucket, he carried so much water that day the skin on his hands was completely scraped.

4 - He Makes the Sign of the Cross

Father Ephrem Nakad witnessed: Father Sharbel went with us novices to the field as one of us. I was cultivating with an ox and he was plowing behind me, stopping from time to time to make the sign of the cross, as this was a Novice Rule. Whenever you start a job, you make the sign of the cross and offer the work to God saying, "My Lord and My God. I'm giving you my heart and my soul with this work. My God, give me strength to do it according to Thy Will and to glorify Thy Name." Maintaining a deep silence, he talked neither to me nor to others. If he was asked about something, he would answer usually only with yes or no, or with some brief and precise words.

D - The Poverty of Sharbel (Mk 10,21)

1 – Introduction

The Monks' Rules say: "The monk must have no personal possessions." So Father Sharbel's hands had never touched money -- like silver or gold. To observe the vow of poverty, he used the simplest of things and never threw anything large or small away, even the stem of a vegetable. If he saw a grape from a vine or a piece of bread on the road, he would pick them up and put them in the kitchen. He was as poor as a beggar; even a poor man wouldn't have accepted his food, his bed and his clothes. He considered all the things of the world like dust to be trampled under the feet.

The real poverty however was his dispassionate and plain appearance. Although he was very wealthy of the divine gifts, and of the highest virtues, he was detached from his family and never visited them his entire life. He never spoke or asked about them. When his brother visited him once or twice a year, he met with him for a short time due to the order of his companion. He was divested from his will, not only in matters concerning the rules, but in all things as if stripped of his will. Despite his intelligence, he never showed it in words or in writing. He never uttered words like, "This is for me. This is for us or for the convent."

He worked with all his strength in every task and prayed in the church with extreme fervor. When his companion ordered him to leave one chore for another, he directly obeyed as if a shadow walking beside his source. This was the ultimate self-renunciation. Rich with love for God, his heart was not related to anything in this world at all as though he didn't exist in this world, but in the world of God. Due to the Monks' Rule, he wasted no time in idleness. As often as he could, he prayed for the poor and the dead and avoided laziness by not falling into the traps of the devil. So he was very attentive to time and didn't leave even the slightest opportunity for completing a useful task, both for the Order and a good profit for eternal life, knowing for sure that time was given for us to be holy. When he had no work to do, he devoted himself to prayer and meditation.

2 - Take This!

When he attended a funeral and was given money, he handed it to his superior immediately upon arrival to the monastery, **"Take this."** "This" was either a pound or an Ottoman piaster. In general, the priests were given three Ottoman piasters (=5 pennies), however, Father Sharbel was given a pound (=20 to 25 pennies), yet he couldn't distinguish the currency. If he did not find the superior in his room, he would put the money on a tray under his bed.

3 - At Dawn

Father Ignatius Meshmesh testified: Once when I was superior of the convent, he came to me one morning and gave me money. He told me that some visitors had given him four Ottoman piasters and told him, "Buy with this money your personal necessity." He told me how Satan tempted him the whole night urging him to keep the money for himself, and that he had overcome him by the Grace of God. I told him, "Do you need anything?" He said, **"If you want, I need some cloth to use as towels."** I gave him four black handkerchiefs.

4 - Don't Let Me See the Money (Mk 10, 23-25)

Hawshab Nakad witnessed: The mother of Wardeh, who is the niece of Father Sharbel, owned a silver hat that women put on their head for adornment. After her death, her daughter, Wardeh, sold it for three hundred cents, the equivalent of two Ottoman piasters of gold. She brought the money to her uncle, Father Sharbel, asking him to offer masses for the repose of the soul of her mother. He refused to take the money addressing his niece from inside his cell, without seeing her face, saying to her, **"Give the money to the Father Superior."** She replied, "I want to give it to you so that you offer it for the masses." He replied, **"I mark it in my notebook and I offer masses, but the money I don't take. Go and give it to the superior and don't let me see it."** So she obeyed him.

E - The Clothing of Sharbel

1 - Introduction

The Monk's Rule required that the clothing, mattress and blanket must be suitable to a monk's vow of poverty. At this level, Sharbel dressed as the lowest of the poor and the smallest of the novices. He had never worn a new habit, but humbly sought to use the clothes left behind by his brothers - the cast-offs. He wore a monastic habit patched with thick woven threads, faded reddish since it had lost its color. However, it was always clean because he washed it with his hands and patched it without much care by making a stitch every five centimeters. In the summer and winter, he wore the same habit and kept it until it was so worn he was given another one.

His belt, like other monks, was made from leather but scratched by stones and bushes. His trousers were black, his shirt woven like calico, a bleached white fabric, and his vest cut from an old monk's habit. On the top he wore his monastic habit, but never wore socks despite the freezing cold. While inside the chapel or working, he put his cape outside the chapel and always took it off while working.

He wore his hood in summer and winter, day and night, except while conducting masses according to the liturgy. The hood covered his whole head, eyes, ears and also a part of his cheeks and neck. His shoes were worn and patched and known as the old monastic shoes. His hand towels were made from the calico fabric and were known as napkins.

2 - To Patch Them

Father Francis Al-Sirini witnessed: I had been entrusted the wardrobe of the Monastery of Saint Maron and Father Ignatius Meshmesh ordered me to go to the hermitage to check the clothing of the hermits and see what they needed. I went into Father Sharbel's cell and found nothing that could be worn, so I ordered him to get rid of these shabby clothes. Then, in front of him, I started to tear the clothing. He asked me to leave them so he could patch and keep them as a sign of poverty.

Then the superior told me to prepare two new sets of clothing for him. As I gave them to him, he apologized for wearing the new cloak and asked me to beg the superior to send him an old one, one more suitable to the nature of his work. He asked me not to send him shirts, since he only wore the cilice, a coarse cloth, and a vest made from a monastic old habit to hide the cilice underneath.

3 - Why Do You Neglect Yourself?

Moussa Moussa witnessed: Once I saw him wearing torn shoes and I told him, "Why do you neglect yourself like that? You must order suitable shoes because your feet are like those of a camel!" He did not answer.

F - His Mat, His Sleeping and the Furniture in His Cell

1 - Introduction

The eastern window of the Monastery from east to west reaches three meters; its width from north to south is 210 centimeters and its height is 240 centimeters. It consists of simple wood and two shutters, always closed, with a black curtain so nobody could see in from outside and nothing could be seen through it except the mountain of Ehmej with its rugged hills. In the eastern wall, an opening was recessed resembling a cabinet, where he put his lantern oil. Its ground was paved with stones from the mountain and the walls were made of stones plastered inside with clay. The roof was simply made of wood. The door had a worthless wooden bar with an outside handle made of wood.

His cell was almost empty and always opened but blackened with smoke. He had a bed of wood under which he placed a wicker tray where he deposited his spiritual and theological books. There was also a pitcher of drinking water. No one was allowed to enter his cell, except rarely or secretly without his permission.

2 - His Mat

His mat was filled with gall, oak leaves and pieces of bark. It was wrapped in a sort of carpet woven from goatskin and covered entirely with old felting. His pillow was a piece of wood wrapped in a black piece of cloth. On this very hard bed with no soft mattress and no blankets, he slept -- summer and winter. This shabby bed was laid over two planks, raised on two margins above the ground, and connected with a piece of blanket. Most often he slept on the ground.

3 - His Sleeping

He never stayed up at night with the monks, sleeping after the Compline and other prayers usually going to bed at about half past eight. He woke at midnight for prayer service, according to the hermit's Rule, after which he never went back to sleep except sometime to rest for an hour. He then resumed his meditation and prayer. He never slept during the day, and never played games such as playing cards, etc. in his life.

4 - Exhausted from Sleepiness (Mk 4, 38)

Father Elias Ehmej testified: I realized he was exhausted by the constant long prayer vigils. Sometimes while he was kneeling upright on the floor, sleep overcame him. He bent his head to one side and his body bent forward so that it touched the ground. Then suddenly he would quickly sit up, and overcoming his physical weakness, look up and sigh from the depths of his heart. Nobody ever saw him resting during the day or closing his eyes while under the shadow of a tree.

5 - The Woolen Pillow (Mt 8, 20)

His cell had no lock or key. Once while Father Sharbel was working in the field, Brother Boutros Al-Fraidiss took the opportunity to enter his cell. He took the wooden pillow, threw it away and replaced it with a woolen cushion. When Father Sharbel came back to his cell and noticed the change in his pillow, he went to Brother Boutros **begging him to take the woolen pillow and bring back his piece of wood; he insisted until his wish was fulfilled.**

G - Sharbel's Food

1 - Introduction

He ate only once a day after the prayer service in the afternoon. His food consisted of salad with olives and potato skins which he washed, cooked and then ate. When he came to the monastery to get supplies, he would choose for himself the moldy bread that often had been thrown to the dogs. He offered his companion the good bread and the best food while he ate the leftovers from the day before. He never ate meat, and his food was always prepared with oil except during major festivities like Christmas, Resurrection, Saint Anthony's feast day, and the feast days of Saints Peter and Paul, the patrons of the hermitage. Then the food was served with butter. The hermitage had a vineyard where the hermits worked picking fruits: grapes, figs and pears. The fruits were brought to the monastery and offered to the visitors. Father Sharbel assumed most of the work of picking the fruit, but deprived himself from eating or refraining from taking any refreshment. He didn't eat unless his companion told him to eat; then he ate only what Father Makarios offered him. In addition, he filled the water jar for his companions from the source of Annaya, a half hour away, while he drank from the hermitage well only during his one meal.

2 - He Ate No Grapes and Drank No Water

Father Ephrem added: at the time of our novitiate, we came to the monastery to help with the harvest. We were thirsty and decided to use the grapes to quench our thirst. We called in vain for Father Sharbel to join us but he turned his back and went away.

Father Hananya Al-Jaji continued: sometimes when I was with him during cultivation time, even though we kept drinking because of the heat and fatigue, he never drank water in spite of the high temperature. Also, he never got refreshments in summer.

3 - To Visit the Holy Eucharist

Semaan Gata testified: since I was assigned to work in the pantry in the convent, the superior allowed me to eat in the refectory with the monks. Father Sharbel

came only once a day to get three thick slices of bread. He would cut them into small pieces and mix them with his food. Once when his neighbor finished eating, he took his plate to wash it. He then poured the rinsed water into his plate and drank it in order to castigate himself and for mortification. While we had our nap after lunch, Father Sharbel always went to church to pray before the Blessed Sacrament. While we had our breakfast, he prayed as he ate only once a day.

4 - Bulgur with Butter

Shibley Shibley witnessed: in winter time, if by chance he ate in the monastery, he took the last place at the table. I remember when they wanted to do something special for the superior in the monastery they would cook him a dish of crushed wheat with butter. When it happened that Father Sharbel was in the convent on a rainy day, the father superior tried in vain to invite him to his table. Then he told me, "Take a bit of this dish of bulgur to Father Sharbel." I took it and put it before him, but he didn't touch it.

5 - Two Days Without Food (Lk 4,4 Mk 8,2)

Maron Abbud witnessed: when Father Sharbel was in the convent, it happened that I was there helping the monks in the field. He was working with us, but ate only when the head of the field told him to eat, thereby applying the Law of the Novice: "Do not eat every day without the permission of the person in charge. Then take what he gives you, withdraw alone and eat." Father Boulos Al-Sebrene added: Quite often when Father Makarios came to the monastery to work by the obligation of obedience, we insisted that he remain with us, however, he replied, "I want to go back to the hermitage to feed Father Sharbel." Once I asked him, "He doesn't know how to eat by himself, so you have to leave every time to feed him?" He replied, "He won't eat under any circumstances. If I do not call him and bring him food, even if I am gone for two days, he won't ask for food or eat by himself." Father Ignatius Meshmesh confirmed, "This is a well-known incident."

6 - The Stems of Purslane and Parsley

Father Alwan said: once I was with my fellow novices working around the hermitage and we decided to prepare "tabboule" so we plucked the parsley and purslane and threw away the stems. I personally witnessed Father Sharbel pick them up, chop and mix them with oil and salt and begin to eat.

7 - Willingly

Father Makarios told him, "My Brother there is no more food for you except this little bit that I left for the cat on her plate because I've forgotten you." He replied, "**Father I do not mind. I will willingly eat the portion reserved for the smallest animal.**"

8 - Moved to Tears

Father Semaan Abi-Beshara witnessed: Once I sat down to lunch with Father Sharbel and his companion, Father Makarios. The food consisted of a potato stew. I saw Father Sharbel take the burned bread and crumbs and put them carefully in his wooden bowl. I took pity on him and was moved to tears. Then I said to myself, "While this hermit undergoes arduous austerities, we, the monks, choose the tasty dishes and the comfortable bed."

9 - The Provisions Abound (Mk 6, 30-44)

Youssef Khalifeh witnessed: When the provisions of the monastery became low, a monk came to inform the superior. He called Father Sharbel and asked him to spray the storage box with holy water and pray. He obeyed and it overflowed with wheat. In another year, it happened that when the provisions were depleted, the superior summoned Father Sharbel, the hermit, who prayed and blessed the storage box and the provisions increased. This phenomenal event occurred many times. When the oil barrels were empty, by the prayers of Sharbel they were filled again.

H - The Sobriety of Sharbel

1 - Introduction

He lived soberly in the situation in which he found himself seeking only to please God. Wherever his superiors sent him, he found peace and joy. He didn't mind if he swept, cooked, dug, or did other work, if in all these services he could please God. His companion took care of him spontaneously and supplied him with the necessities. He even gave up everyday necessities and ordinary things, accepting the poorest and the most difficult ones. Pure as a child, he fled from snobbery, disdain and flattery. With his colleagues, he was lenient and righteousness and was never unjust towards others, except himself, applying the arduous of austerities. He never boasted of a case and did nothing of his own initiative, but what he was ordered or asked to do. Either at work, or in praying for long hours before the Holy Eucharist, he always returned to his vow of obedience. He was stable in his sobriety, diligent in his mortification and happy to fulfill it until the last breath of his life. He never complained during his life and was of the utmost in modesty whether in eating, drinking, or clothing. He interfered with no one, and took no initiative in relations with others, except whatever the vow of obedience ordered.

2 - Oh, Superior General!

During his term as Superior General, Father Mubarak Al-Matni visited the convent of Annaya. He took the opportunity to have lunch with the monks who were students and they prepared a meal for him near the hermitage. Father Sharbel, the hermit, came to greet him. The superior general told him, "Father Sharbel, you will be with us today for lunch; we will offer you a very good meal." Father Sharbel replied, "**We pronounced the vow of obedience in difficult things and this is very easy! Obedience in this matter is very good.**" The superior general believed that Father Sharbel would eat what would be presented to him at the table. At lunchtime the superior general called Father Sharbel. He came with folded arms so the superior asked him, "Would you have lunch with us?" Perplexed the hermit began to rub his hands and then replied softly with reverence, "**Father General! Father General!**" On the one hand, he didn't want to oppose his order, but on the other hand, he didn't want to eat the food prepared for the superior general and his companions. The superior general noticed his hesitation and let him have his way. So he went back to his hermitage.

3 - Look What Your Deacon is Giving Me!

Shibley Shibley witnessed: handkerchiefs were presented to the hermitage as votive offerings. Once when Father Sharbel brought a lot of handkerchiefs to the superior he told him, "Give them to the deacon." He gave them to me while looking at the superior and saying, "**Master can you give me a handkerchief to wipe my hands with?**" He replied, "They were all with you. Why didn't you take one of them?" He said, "**I do not take anything without your permission.**" The superior told me, "Give him one." I chose a new one. He smiled and told the superior, "**Look what your deacon is giving me!**" He replied, "Choose what you want." He took the most unpretentious one.

I - The Intelligence of Sharbel

1 - Introduction

He had the appearance of stupidity and naivety, but in reality he was perceptive, intelligent, unequivocally honest, and frank talking. When asked, he answered clearly and concisely, but pretended to be stupid and apathetic. He never uttered a word except necessary words that could strengthen the brotherhood and serve the salvation the soul.

His conversations always focused on theological subjects motivating all his works for eternal salvation. His opinion on theological matters was prudent and he was quick witted in spite of his absolute silence.

As for his ingenuity, it was reflected in the precision of his work, putting everything in its proper place. In spite of his excellent understanding and the strength of his knowledge, he made himself a slave to all. In his mortifications and the mastery of his instincts, he reached a level that is found in the Psalm of the Prophet David, "I became as a beast before you, but I am each day with you." He was humble in his heart and his intention was only one goal -- God. He wasn't stupid and dispassionate but was gifted with the wisdom of the saints. He didn't commit a single mistake that his superiors and his colleagues could blame him for because he offered no opportunity for them to find any blemish in his behavior. His remarkably accurate attention to the monk's rules and showed that he perfectly understood their meaning.

His "Word in Spirit" was sublime because he was heading towards perfection by the ideal way in which he never moved away a step from his vows. In his lifestyle, he put everything in its proper place not uttering a single inadequate word. His wisdom protected him from detestable superstition and exaggeration. He was a knowledgeable man who had completed his studies in Kfifane, even though he appeared a naive person.

As for his frequent and increased austerities and the oppression of his body, it caused him no disease which proves that they were exercised wisely. He was a serious and discreet person, balanced in his behavior, which imposed respect and esteem to all those who knew him. He was never "a stumbling block" for anyone; rather they all considered him a saint and asked for his blessing. He was wise not by the wisdom of this world, but by a supernatural wisdom. Superiors and monks were often advised to follow his example.

2 - Ask and You Will be Given (Mt 7, 7)

Father Youssef Ehmej witnessed: Father Sharbel had an inflamed and iron will that made him the master of his inclinations and emotions. He told me, "**My brother, life is illusory. God knows our whole being. Those who ask for His Grace with confidence will not be disappointed. Ask Him to give you all you need.**" During the whole time I spent at the Monastery of Saint Maron neither I, nor the superiors or monks, recognized any mistake in his conduct. He desired to be asked to serve not only by the superiors and brethren, but also by the workers of the convent and the servants. For example, if someone asked him to move the plowing machine, he would move it immediately. I myself witnessed numerous incidents of this kind. I never heard anyone complain about him or accuse him for any reason. His superiors and brethren respected and appreciated him; asking for his prayers in sickness and sorrow. His piety left a great influence on his fellow man.

3 - We Have No Thieves

Once a man came to the convent on Sunday to attend mass where the farmer-members and other people gathered on Sundays and holy days. He left his stick near the door and entered the church. At that time Father Sharbel was not yet in the hermitage. After the mass, the man couldn't find his stick. He yelled, raising his voice and cursing. Father Sharbel left the church and said softly and sweetly, "**My brother, my brother - no one yells in the convent.**" The man replied angrily, "They stole my stick. Are there thieves in the monastery?" Smiling, Father Sharbel replied calmly, "**No my brother. We have no thieves. Look at this basin stone at the entrance of the monastery. It stands here since it was built -- nobody stole it.**" Ashamed, the man became silent and all those present laughed because the basin was a large stone weighing over a ton. More than twenty people wouldn't have been able to move it.

J - The Library and the Culture of Sharbel

1 – Introduction

- His Books

He derived his meditations from the following books: Preparation for Death or Considerations on the Eternal Maxims by Saint Alphonsus Liguori, Confessions of Saint Augustine, The Christian Perfection, Moral Theology and Imitation of Christ, a book that he was very passionate about. He also read many other books: the theological books, Monks' Garden, Biography of Saint Anthony the Great, The Monastic Lamp and Spiritual Interpretation of the Holy Scriptures. There was nothing in his room except the regular mat, his prayer and meditation books.

Also other books he read: The Ladder of Divine Ascent by Saint John Climacus, Anchoritic of Saint Basil, Saint Ephrem Memri, Excerpts of Saint Isaac, the Syriac of Nivine, Memri of Spiritual Sage in the Monastic Life of John Daliyati, Contempt - the Vanity of the World, the Master Didoxe Stalleh from Saint Francis Order, and from Father John Eusebius Nirmubarak, the Jesuit: The Balance of Time and The Trap for the Eternity of Man. Also, The Glories of Mary by Saint Alphonsus Liguori, the Martyrology of the Novice Regulations, Rules and Constitutions of 1732.

Also transcripts found in the library of Annaya's monastery, Part Eight of the Science of Theology in Legislation, The Biography of the Saints of Jesus and Mary, and the Synod Daily Practice in the Eternal Truths Monastic discussion. Topics came under the form of ask and answer and sermons about the Virgin Mary, The Interpretation of the Breviary, an untitled book about the explanation in Honor of the Name of Jesus and on cautiousness from the wicked. Also mentioned are Death, Judgment and Purgatory, The Magnificat of the Virgin Mary, and Hell and Confession, another untitled book on the meditation on the Passion of Christ, The Spiritual War and the History of Times or the History of the Muslim by Patriarch Estephen El-Douaihi and the Divan of the Maronite Bishop Germanos Farhat Halabi.

- His Culture

Father Sharbel was a man of pure holiness. While he was perceived as naïve, at the spiritual level he was an expert, well educated, smart, and fluent in moral theology and the principles of the Syriac language, which he translated into Arabic. In addition to his knowledge of the Arabic language, he was judicious and convincing in his answers because in moral theology and spirituality, he belonged to the school of the famous Father Al-Kafri. In the theological discussions with the priests, he spoke voluntarily about spiritual topics especially regarding the direction of the soul and the Sacrament of Reconciliation in which he talked freely from the fullness of his heart which was inflamed with spiritual and divine matters.

2 - Religious Discussions

Father Alouan witnessed: during his presence at the convent, he was helping in the bakery all day while discussing theological issues which were of great benefit. He was more relevant in his answers than others, and the accuracy of his knowledge breathed with the sweetness of the expression, combined with the virtue of humility. In these discussions, he never answered if he hadn't been asked to reply. He exchanged religious discussions with us that demonstrated the depth of his faith by quoting verses from the Holy Bible and the scriptures, while asking us to find another verse which began with the last letter of his quote -- then he explained its meaning.

3 - Read This Chapter

Abbot Andari testified: I personally met Father Sharbel in September 1898 in the hermitage of Saints Peter and Paul on the occasion of my visit to the Monastery of

Saint Maron, a few months after taking my solemn vows. I was accompanied by Father Ibrahim Al-Haqlani,⁴ my classmate, who later died in the odor of sanctity. Upon our arrival, we entered the chapel of the hermitage where Father Sharbel was kneeling upright on a piece of log with reverence without moving. We visited the Holy Sacrament and prayed for a moment while staring at him as he persisted in his position while praying. Then we went into a narrow hallway that had a simple stone-built oven. There we saw the other hermit, Father Makarios Sawma from Meshmesh, cooking in a clay pot. The hermits ate only once a day in the afternoon. The dish consisted of seasoned lentils, chick peas, beans, cracked wheat and other grains -- a kind of soup called "Makhlouta."

Father Sawma welcomed us with a glowing face and smile that reflected his pure heart -- like the heart of a child. We sat on two curved stones which were at the bottom of a stony arch. After he chopped the onion, he called Father Sharbel. We greeted him and he replied in a soft voice, barely audible, while looking at the ground and uttering a single word, "Peace." Then Father Makarios gave him a metal pan in which he put a little oil and the chopped onions saying, "Take and fry the onions." He took them without looking at us. Father Makarios brought a tray made of wicker on which he placed two plates containing purslane, parsley, some bread known as "the loaves of monks." some of which were in pieces, others burnt. Then he told Father Sharbel, "Pluck off the leaves of purslane." He took the frying pan, poured the contents into the clay pot and filled the two plates, while Father Sharbel was still plucking the purslane, putting the leaves on a plate and the stems in the corner of the tray.

Father Makarios invited us to eat, but we apologized and thanked him. He turned to Father Sharbel and said, "Eat." Father Sharbel prayed and then began to eat carefully sitting on the floor, legs crossed, looking straight ahead in silence. He ate the stems of purslane that others didn't eat; he did not eat the leaves seasoned with salt and oil.

Father Makarios went to the vineyard and brought us grapes of the highest quality. Meanwhile Father Sharbel finished his meal, residing in the same position, arms crossed, head bowed, waiting for the order. So his companion told him, "Go visit the Blessed Sacrament and then come back to do the dishes." At sunset we said goodbye and very excitedly went back to the convent amazed at what we had seen.

In the summer of 1898, I spent the holiday at the convent of Annaya in the company of the brothers scholastic. One day around 9:00 a.m., we went to visit the hermits. We found Father Sharbel in church, kneeling straight on the same piece of wood at the same place we saw him the first time last year. While I was praying before the Blessed Sacrament, I turned my eyes towards him and saw him as motionless as a statue, a rosary in his hand, his eyes fixed on the altar. I felt he was in total ecstasy; he didn't even pay attention to us. After we prayed, we looked at him hoping that he would look back but he remained motionless and didn't look towards us. We then walked into the courtyard of the church on the west side. While we were discussing loudly, Father Sharbel opened the door and stood in silence watching us, arms crossed with a smile on his brilliant face, as if he wanted to tell us to not make noise and not disturb his prayer in his solitude. We recognized his veneration, went up to him and asked for his blessing and the kissing of his hand. Whenever someone approached to greet him, he bent his right knee slightly, bent his body and quickly touched us with the tip of his fingers to prevent us from kissing his hand. He greeted us with a smile, repeating a single word in a whisper, "Peace." We stood for a minute in front of him in reverence. He closed the door and returned to prayer. We withdrew into the woods west of the hermitage,

⁴ He frequently visited patients infected with the smallpox disease to console them and give them the sacraments. He got this contagious disease and died in 1906.

tiptoeing and whispering so as not to disturb his prayer in solitude. We were filled with joy and reverence on seeing him. I then left my brother and returned alone to the church to see him again to talk to him, but I couldn't find him. I went into the hallway but he was not there. I looked all over the hermitage but I didn't see him. Then I went up to the roof and saw him sitting on a roller near the church wall as if he was avoiding me. He was holding the biography of Saint Anthony the Great. When I approached him, he handed the book to me saying, "**Read this chapter.**" I read it aloud standing in front of him while he was listening. As soon as I finished reading, he took the book and without saying a word, disappeared into the church. I thought he had just given me this passage in order to avoid a conversation with me.

4 - Professor in Theology

He probably founded the School of Annaya where Father Antonius Meshmesh taught. Also Father Youssef, the son of Father Youssef Saad Al-Marouni from Meshmesh, who was born in 1876, was a neighbor of the Monastery of Saint Maron. He studied theology at the hand of Father Antonius Meshmesh in the monastery. He pronounced his solemn vows on May 31, 1898. Sharbel himself was teaching the novices in the Monastery of Saint Maron.

5 - He Never Tired of Reading the Bible

"La Croix" newspaper wrote, "Sharbel is a Saint. According to the Gospel, Christ was his only teacher. Sharbel consulted Him and listened to Him. He never tired of reading the Bible and reflecting on the life of Christ. Sharbel is a living example for the Gospel. He followed Jesus Christ and practiced His virtues due to the Disciples of Christ as obedience, mortification, humility, love and prayer which grew by the pure water of the Gospel."

K - The Confession of Sharbel

1 - Introduction

- The Weekly Confession

He hated sin and the causes that led to it; he even hated to mention it. All those who knew him testified that he didn't voluntarily commit a venial sin. What was known to all was that in his life he had never thwarted the Ten Commandments and those of the Church. Rather, he suffered when someone trespassed. However, every night he examined his conscience on all the acts of the day, just as a wise merchant, to discern whether he was a winner or a loser. First, he gave thanks to God, seeking more graces in order to increase his efforts in work and thereby increase his gain and merit. In the second case, although the loss was minimal, he made the resolution to heal his existing weakness. He confessed continuously, once a week, whether in his secular life or monastic and priesthood life. He was smart and wise, without being unscrupulous, for he knew the true spirit very well and never rejected any good advice throughout his life.

In the Convent of Kfifane he had two spiritual fathers: Father Nehemtallah Al-Kafri, who was later elected superior general, and Saint Hardini Nehemtallah. Also, early in his anchoritic life Father Alishaa was his spiritual father. After the death of Alishaa, Father Libaos Al-Ramaty became his companion. Later he transferred to the convent of Qattara. Finally, Father Makarios Meshmesh accompanied him until his death.

- Serving the Faithful

On February 20, 1863, he received permission from the Patriarch, Boulos Massaad, to practice the Sacrament of Reconciliation. But he only heard confession when his superior told him to because he was not appointed for the pastoral ministry.

Those who came to him in order to confess and listen to his guidance testified and praised his zeal for their own good. They felt the effective influence of his advice on their soul as it penetrated deep into their heart and left a spiritual influence on their spirit. So all praised his insight and wise advice for the construction of others, and progress in their spiritual life. If necessary, he did not withhold his advice from those who associated with him.

He loved a lot of souls and suffered for the perished ones. He prayed for the sinners and gave them wholesome advice at confession while strongly admonishing them for their sins and giving them a strict penance. He heard the confessions of women only when the superior ordered him.

2 - A Wise Counselor

Father Youssef Ehmej witnessed: he was smart and wise in his spiritual speech. I remember that he once told me, "Never speak a word that could cause a sin. If it is beneficial, say it or don't."

3 - I Felt a Deep Reverence after His Advice

Father Tabet Mubarak testified: when Father Sharbel left the church to return to his cell, I stopped him, begging him to hear my confession. He came back and told me, "**Follow me.**" After the confession, I looked inside the church where I saw cracks in the ceiling and walls that could cause the collapse of the stony roof. So I told him, "Father you spend all night in this chapel and this hermitage is exposed to lightning and thunder sufficient to cause its collapse over you. Why don't you renovate it?" He replied, "**Don't care.**" I said, "I will tell the father superior to restore it." He answered, "**No! Don't tell him, my son. Where could I find a more sacred place than this altar to die over?**"

I felt a deep reverence because of this response; the same feeling I had after listening to his advice during confession. Then he went back to his cell and we left.

4 - He Met the Qualifications of the Confessor

Father Ramyah testified: he was intelligent and very competent. He delighted the hearts of those who confessed to him by his advice and guidance. I myself had confessed to him several times and now I wish with all my heart that I could get the chance to find a priest like him to confess to throughout my life. Father Sharbel had a unique, ingenious memory in which one might think that he had access even to the invisible world, as he remembered even after a long time, the situations that were presented to him by his parishioners.

Although he was knowledgeable and accurate in guiding the souls, prescribing the medicine according to the disease, without mercy, he was capable of attracting the heart of the confessor despite the apparent severity of his exhortations to the sins committed and the severe compensation he imposed. His personality combined all the qualities of the confessor. He was very relevant in his advice, questions and admonitions -- a judge perceiving in his spiritual theology an excellent knowledge, a clever doctor who gave the right treatment and a loving father who opened his arms to the sinner and gave him the passion for repentance and confession.

L - Servant for Everybody (Mt 20, 28)

I - Introduction

The Rules of the Novice order: "The gestures and the works of the monks must be low and degrading regarding his brethren." So when Sharbel obeyed this rule, those around him, the secular and especially the monastic order, didn't understand him. Some people disrespected him for his despicable clothes and some of the monks laughed at his naiveté. Some even mocked him for his arduous austerities (including the one that

put water in his lantern). They spoke with him in anger and scolded him to the extent that Sharbel, who was known by his utmost patience and ultimate silence, once said to the hermit Makarios, **“If I am stupid, be patient with me for the sake of Christ.”**

He embodied the Christian by his humility and tried to conceal his virtues and good deeds. He would feel sad and tremble when others praised him. He was the reflection of modesty held apart from his brothers and others, preferring to hide isolation and silence. He was a human who appeared to actually be living in heaven.

When he was informed about something, even if he wasn't at fault, he would kneel down with folded arms asking for forgiveness, bowing his head towards the ground and not rising until he was ordered to do so as required by the Novice's Rule: **“If the novice is admonished, he must kneel down silently and quickly, with folded arms, without trying to justify himself, and not get up until the superior orders him so. He then receives his blessing and goes to work.”**

He was so meek and humble, more humble than a lamb and more pleasant than a spirit flowing in the body, yet he was humility itself never talking about himself as if he was dead from this world. If he could, he would have humbled himself until he faded out completely. He appeared to be without a will, with no mind, no senses. He was despicable in his clothing, food, sleep deprivation, kneeling on the mat in his cell, and in his hard work totally forgetting himself.

He willingly accepted the contempt of others and appeared happy if someone insulted him. He wasn't embarrassed about his despicable appearance, his poor food, or his miserable cell.

He always looked for the smallest service, the least position. We heard him once saying, **“I don't deserve to be among my brothers or to achieve their dignity because I am inferior to everyone.”** His words were the evidence of his deep humility. He considered himself entirely lower than all the monks, claiming every pettiness and lowliness, totally forgetting himself. He behaved as if he was a servant for all who worked with him in the fields by willingly choosing the modest services such as sweeping and washing the dishes -- services that weren't expected to be done by ordained priests. When the monks tried to kiss his hands and receive his blessing, he would do his best to stop them.

2 - Stranger

Father Maron Karam explained: the monk of the region became dependent on his district and couldn't be transferred without the permission of the superior, so the monk who was outside his region considered himself a stranger. Some of the monks would ask the alien one, **“What brought you here? No bread remains in your country?”** Father Sharbel was a stranger in the province because he was the only one in the convent who came from northern Lebanon from the region of Jebbeh. Yet, he obeyed in an exemplary manner, all who lived in the monastery.

Monks and laymen gave him orders to poke fun at him or make him the object of a joke but he never rejected any order. Nobody defended or respected him, except the superior, who became angry at those who tortured Sharbel or mocked him. As for Father Sharbel, he devoted himself to work, prayer, and obedience without indignation against his mockers. He rarely spoke and only when he answered a question. In this context, Saint Therese cried out, **“What contempt on the strange shore didn't you endure for me? I want to disappear from the earth and be the last in everything for You, Oh Jesus.”**

3 - I Am a Great Sinner

Nobody was aware of his presence because he was attached to his life of isolation. When the visitors asked for his blessing and his prayers, he gave to them without looking

saying, **“Ask the Lord to give you according to your faith.”** If someone told him, **“You are a saint.”** he would get disturbed and say: **“I am a great sinner.”** At the hermitage he performed the lowest and the most humble of works. Though he was the superior in the hermitage, he subjected himself to the obedience of his companion, Father Makarios, who was younger than him. It was Saint Sharbel who washed the dishes and swept the floor. If it happened that the superior admonished a monk in his presence or warned him for something, even if he wasn't at fault, he would kneel according to the monks' custom seeking forgiveness and never getting up until the superior asked him.

4 - Do Not Put Him to the Test

Hanna Houssaini testified: I heard Father Elias Meshmesh warning the visitors of the convent not to put Father Sharbel to the test verbally or otherwise, saying, **“This is a man of faith; the Spirit of God is upon him, so respect him.”** Father Elias liked and esteemed him for his unique virtues. He once said to me, **“Many times I tried to dissuade Father Sharbel from practicing the arduous work in the field and to give him an easier job in the convent so he could rest his body, but he would finish his work in the monastery and go immediately to the field.”**

5 - Insults

- Blessed are you if they insult you and persecute you (Mt 5,11)

Once when reciting the prayer service, Father Ignatius Meshmesh called him and told him rigorously, **“Leave the prayer and come here.”** He obeyed respectfully. He endured the insults and ridicules of others, sometimes with humbleness, but always with patience and joy. For whoever humbles himself will be exalted, the humble of heart will find rest for his soul, and he of whom they say all evil against him, his reward will be great in heaven. So Sharbel rejoiced and was glad.

- Rejoice and be glad because great is your reward in heaven (Mt 5,11)

Francis Kartaba witnessed: as we collected the grapes in the vineyard of the hermitage, the superior asked me to fill the jug from the hermitage's well. When I got there, I quickly tied the rope to the handle of the jug and carelessly threw it into the well without realizing that Father Sharbel was behind me watching. He said, **“My Brother, Saint Anthony chose the discernment and you're throwing the jug quickly, taking a risk to break it, and then it will be against poverty.”** I replied emphatically, **“Go to your church! You're living in the hermitage pretending to be a saint!”** He answered politely and gently head bowed, **“Forgive me, my brother, for the sake of Christ.”** Then he went to church and I went to the vineyard.

- For in the same way they persecuted the prophets before you (Mt 5, 11)

Brother Boutros Meshmesh witnessed: One day while I was plowing in the vineyards of the hermitage with some other workers, I saw Father Sharbel in the process of raising the vines while a cow was crossing. It happened that the cow trampled over the vine and broke it. Then Father Makarios told him, **“What are you doing? Here is a broken vine because of your negligence.”** Immediately, Father Sharbel knelt down, arms folded and said, **“Forgive me for the sake of Christ!”** praying and asking forgiveness for his sin.

M - No One Could Hear His Voice (Mt 12, 19)

I - Introduction

The Rules of the Novice require: **“The monk must keep the tranquility.”** So Father Sharbel spoke very rarely. We didn't hear his voice except in reading the Bible, the words of consecration, and in unison prayers. He embodied the rule -- he didn't converse with men, women, or monks. At work he spoke with no one, sought no

superfluous words with a visitor or a muleteer, or passed the time gossiping or asking about a particular person. But if you asked him, he would answer politely and calmly, but very briefly. He spent the evening in silence, but was available to speak when asked about spiritual or theological issues. There he voluntarily abounded with answers.

His life resembled that of cloistered silence and his speech was dedicated to speaking with God. He concentrated on silence, isolation and meditation. He was a monk of work, prayer and contemplative silence to such a degree that one might think he was from another world. At church, as in the hermitage, he was like an angel -- no one could hear his voice.

2 - I Have Strayed From the Path

Father Ephrem Nakad witnessed: once he went to Meshmesh to a funeral and didn't come back until evening. I asked him why he came so late and he replied, "**I have strayed from the path as the fog was too dense and I found myself in Houjoula.**" Then I gradually found the way and reached the monastery." I replied, "Didn't you meet anybody?" He said, "**Imet many.**" I asked again, "Why didn't you ask for directions?" He didn't say a word. The fact is he wouldn't have asked anyone even if he had lost his way.

How strange he was in his condition! No anchorite or hermit had lived as he did neither before nor after him. I haven't met a person like him among the monks, laity, priests and bishops. God is wonderful in His saints! The case of this monk is very amazing!

3 - Do You Practice Your Spiritual Obligations?

Once his brother came from Bekaa Kafra to visit him and rang the bell. Father Sharbel came to see who was ringing and the visitor said, "I am the brother of the hermit Sharbel." He said, "**Just a moment while I ask the hermit if he could open the door.**" He went to his companion and told him, "**My brother is at the door. Do you allow me to open it?**" He replied, "Of course, welcome him." During their meeting, he simply repeated the same thing, "**How are you? Is everything all right? Do you and your family practice your spiritual obligations?**" Shortly afterwards, he dismissed his brother.

4 - As Saint Nester

Father Ephrem Nakad testified: I found Father Sharbel intelligent, knowledgeable in moral theology, with a passion for learning. However, he behaved like Saint Nester, a donkey in his silence, a philosopher in his prayer, and the lifestyle of a hermit.

5 - Listening to the Beloved One (Lk 10, 39)⁵

Although Father Sharbel was not stupid, melancholic, or like those who hate to have contact with people, he promised that his mouth didn't utter a word except to praise God in resonant prayer or to respond to his neighbor in a spiritual matter. Therefore, he spoke very little and rarely took the initiative in conversation, but his speech was almost always an answer. So he was distinguished among the hermits, not only in his observance to the hermit's rules, but also by his constant silence and continuous work. He seemed like a quiet, contemplative monk, rather than a Lebanese monk, and all the other hermits were astonished with his great perpetual silence.

6 - Nothing Can Entertain Him

Moussa Moussa witnessed: I befriended several monks and hermits, all venerable, but no one was like Father Sharbel. The other hermits, living or those that had passed

⁵ The basic motive of the life of Sharbel is Love. He obeyed his Beloved Jesus, and all who represented Him, so he was captured by His Love. He had a deaf ear, and a mute tongue to the world. He listened only to the Beloved one. He lived away from women ... and from the beauty of nature, to be faithful to his lover.

on, spoke with us when we visited them, seeking entertaining news and looking at our faces. On the other hand, Father Sharbel spoke to no one, sought no distractions, and did not even look at the face of a living creature.

7 - The People Thought He was Dumb

Father Sharbel was an angel in a human body, a philosopher without a philosophy, and an ideal of holiness and perfection. He had a tongue, but people thought he was dumb, as if he was a little child in his mother's arms with one difference -- we couldn't hear his voice.

8 - He Rarely Spoke

Father Alouan witnessed: During the period I spent at Saint Maron, I saw in him only a silent man who lived in isolation, not only from people, but also from the monks. He didn't talk in front of me, so I cannot tell you stories about his life and he never engaged in anything that would describe how he dealt with people. He worked four or five hours with the novices, but remained silent while they were talking around him.

N - Rejoice in My Sufferings (Col 1, 24)

I -Introduction

This is what the Rules of the Novice required: "The monk must give thanks to God for the disease more than the health, confident that it's a test from the Lord for his own good." Father Sharbel suffered from horrible stomach pains, worse during the winter season, yet he never complained or asked for treatment. Although he endured a chronic colic, he never told anyone about his condition, asked for a doctor, or requested a heater be put in the hermitage of the Monastery of Saint Maron during the severe winters. He never said, "**I am sick.**" but endured his sufferings with remarkable patience, imitating the humility and patience of Christ, concealing his troubles from others with discretion. What happened to him, either from God or man, he accepted with patience and serenity. He didn't take medicine or painkillers, even when the pain became unbearable, but he kept repeating, "**The will of God be done.**" He wore the same habit in summer and winter and did not approach the fire like other hermits but spent his time praying in the church mostly kneeling on the bare ground.

His whole life was molded with mortification so his pure body got used to it and it became a shelter for him where he relaxed after long years of ascetic practice. He always wore the cilice directly on the flesh and not over flannel. Boutros Moussa wondered how he could bear it, especially during the summer. He also put a cilice, the thorny, iron belt directly on his flesh.

2 - He Captivated My Heart

Father Hassrouni testified: once while Brother Elias Al-Mahrini, head of the field, the worker, Suleiman Al-Manzili, Father Makarios and Father Sharbel were plowing the vineyards of the hermitage, I noticed that Father Sharbel began to cling onto himself, bending his back, his hands clutching his hips while moaning with a severe pain. I asked Father Makarios, "What's wrong with the hermit? I see him in pain!" He replied, "He has severe renal colic." I replied, "Then let him rest and ask a worker to replace him." Father Makarios replied, "He wants to abuse himself with such pain and hard work." In the afternoon, Father Makarios went to bring the lunch, while Father Sharbel kept running behind three pairs of cattle, in spite of his unbearable pain. Then he saw the cattle in front of me about to trip over the vine, so he ran and saved it. Then his groaning increased which meant he had even more pain.

I told him, "Go slowly, Master. I can stop the cattle." He replied in a low, intermittent voice that captivated my heart, "**My master it will be damage on my conscience against poverty.**" and continued his work all the day despite his pain.

3 - My Eyes Bathed with Tears

Father Hassrouni testified: in May 1897, we were plowing the vineyard of the hermitage and stopped to eat our breakfast. Father Sharbel continued to rebuild the walls surrounding the vines. I asked his companion, Father Makarios, to call him for breakfast and he replied, "He eats in the afternoon." At lunchtime, he continued his work on the walls, so I asked Father Makarios, out of compassion for Father Sharbel's frail health, to order him to come and eat with us, but his companion replied saying, "He will eat later." In the evening, we brought the cattle to graze in the woods. A moment later, I returned to the hermitage to get some water and saw Father Sharbel eating the stems of purslane that he had picked up from the ground. My eyes became bathed with tears from this impressive scene and I blamed Father Makarios saying, "Have mercy on the hermit. How do you let him eat the stems of purslane after his hard work and painful illness?" He replied, "He is happy with what he eats; leave him alone." Then I told myself, "How far we are from the virtues of this father? He really embodied all the virtues of the hermits in Sketis (Upper Egypt) and far exceeds what is written in the book "Garden of the Monks" and the book "The Christian Perfection."

4 - I was Deeply Moved by Compassion

Father Hassrouni witnessed: I saw him once transporting wood on his back from the depths of the forest to the vineyard. He was carrying a very heavy bundle and ascending to the hermitage. I was deeply moved to pity for this old man who was over 65 years of age. I blamed his companion, Father Makarios, who rapidly disposed of it saying, "He wants to subdue himself."

5 - Rice and Butter in the Hermitage!

Once Father Makarios said, "You endure a pain in the kidneys. Let me prepare a rice soup with butter for you." Father Sharbel replied in a low voice, "**Rice and butter in the hermitage? No thanks!**"

6 - For the Sake of Jesus's Passion

Moussa Moussa witnessed: When I asked him why he had a small branch of the vine tied around his head and a goatskin around his wrist, he sometimes replied, "**I have a headache. I put them on for the sake of Jesus' Passion!**"

7 - I Shouldn't Savor the Sweets

Once Father Makarios proposed that he make Father Sharbel a hot drink with bitter herbs as a sedative for the pain he endured. He agreed, but with one condition -- that he didn't put sugar in it. Father Makarios replied, "But the herbs are very bitter and it's impossible to drink it!" Father Sharbel answered, "**I shouldn't savor the sweets because My Lord, Jesus, drank vinegar on the cross when He was at the peak of His thirst and suffering.**"

O - Everlasting Peace (Jn 14, 27)

1 - Introduction

His courage was exceptional because it came from heaven and not earth. In all times we saw him amiable and cheerful, as if everything was going well. He never grumbled about someone or complained about work -- summer or winter. When lightning struck the roof of the hermitage, he didn't move from the spot in

the church where he was praying. He endured all the difficulties put in front of him -- his supernatural goal. He suffered from colic that sometimes assaulted him during long hours of manual labor, but never groaned, repeating, "**Oh, Jesus! Oh, Blessed Virgin!**" When his companion, Father Makarios, told him to go to rest and pray before the Blessed Sacrament, he always obeyed. If he was called, he stood and saluted with the usual greeting, "**Praise be to God.**" He stayed upright, arms crossed, until ordered to sit. He was serene, serious, good tempered, and gentle as a dove. He was docile with kindness and tenderness. Anyone who spontaneously looked at him would love him. If someone annoyed him, he bore it with patience and kindness.

2 - His Heart and His Mind Are in Heaven (Mt 6, 19-21)

He did not speak of earthly things or ask about the income of the hermitage. From the vow's offerings, he did not wish that the monastery would be rich nor was he proud of the richness of the monastery in its territories or otherwise. He didn't speak about family or relatives or cared about their loss or wealth. He never asked about them, or about money, or their livelihood. He did not work for the sake of gratitude, and didn't expect any help from anyone. He never looked for compensation from his superiors. If he was asked to provide a service by someone, his relationship with them was brief. When commanded, he obeyed without the slightest hesitation. He wasn't carried away by emotions of sadness or happiness. If a disaster happened to the monastery, or to one of his fellow brethren, he neither grieved nor rejoiced. If one of his brethren got a promotion in the priesthood, or any other gratifying things, he did not respond. He always kept the same mood in all situations, confident in God, and repeating the phrase, "**God provides. This is the Will of God.**" He prayed for a harvest of plenty, but showed no affection for a good or bad harvest saying, "**The Divine Providence provides.**" He always said, "**Thy Will be done. What we have in this world? We are but pilgrims towards eternity.**" In a word, his heart and his thoughts were always directed towards heaven.

3 - Pray for Him

He showed a strong faith in God. So when the parent of a sick person came to him, begging for prayer for the healing of their child, he sometimes replied, "**Your patient is in good health. Pray for him.**" as if the will of God inspired him to say these words of consolation. Other times he replied, "**Plead and pray for him.**" and he prayed with them, urging them to trust in God. On other occasions, he consoled them by advising them "**to have patience and surrender to God's Divine Will.**" Each time they mentioned a patient or needy person in difficulty, he said, "**God provides. Let's depend on Him.**" and if someone asked him for help, he would convince them to turn to God and plead to Him for the Grace desired.

4 - The Scattering of Ashes

The hermits celebrated their masses separately, so Father Sharbel served the masses of his companions, Father Makarios Meshmesh and Father Semaan Ehmej. However, in winter each one undertook to serve his mass every other day because of the bitter cold. Once it was very cold and the snow accumulated very thickly. Father Sharbel served the masses of both his companions. Then they went after the masses to warm up near the fire while Father Sharbel was preparing to celebrate his mass. The two hermits, after getting warm, surrendered to sleep. Suddenly the stove bumped against the wall leaving the embers and ashes scattered over them. They woke up frightened and went directly to church where they found Father Sharbel already dressed for mass, standing before the altar waiting for someone to come serve his mass. Upon their arrival, he showed no disappointment or said a word and they considered that the incident of embers was a warning for them to go and serve the mass.

P - No One Could Take Away His Joy (Jn 16, 22)

1 - Introduction

He was always gentle and cheerful, happy in God, pleased in his condition. He never grumbled or complained about anything, remaining sober, patient, and joyful. He knew no boredom, weariness, sadness, anxiety, or fear. He practiced the austerities spontaneously, easily and happily, until the last day of his life. He was joyful in all his work and always happy, practicing it constantly and persistently, never hesitating on doing it or grumbling about it.

He considered himself a servant for all, obeying with joy and energy, not only what his superiors ordered, but also what others asked of him including novices and servants. He considered himself lucky to perform each service for others. He served with content alongside the laborers, who worked in the fields of the monastery, or the vineyard of the hermitage. He accomplished completely all services required of him, and was pleased to take over hard work for a brother.

When the superior ordered him to go and pray for the patients, he went willingly and with joy, praying for them by asking God for their recovery and health. He had a zeal for the salvation of souls receiving kindly those who wanted to confess, and did his best to bring them to conversion. If he was told about an unusual or funny event, he would reply only briefly and with an amiable smile.

When he was lecturing about theological subjects, he spoke in a friendly way pursuant to the Novice rule: The novice should speak with kindness to all people.

His gaiety transferred to his surroundings. Brother Boutros Meshmesh testified: I felt great pleasure when I was serving his mass. Brother Elias Al-Mahrini affirmed: I participated with him in reciting the rosary. While he was kneeling and praying, you witnessed the enjoyment and warmth which radiated from him and it filled me. Father Hassrouni added: In reciting the rosary with him, when close to him, I felt an unusual ardor invading my soul with an unknown pleasure. Father Nehemtallah Meshmesh explained: Silent as he was, he urged everyone to be silent by imposing decency in their speech; everyone was happy to work with him. He put no value on any interest that distracted him or interfered with his love for God, joyfully fulfilling all his obligations. He found no pleasure, comfort or gaiety except in the mass and in prayer -- in them he found full satisfaction.

2 - More Pleasant Than the Pleasure Itself

Al-Tannouri witnessed: after my arrival to the hermitage, I showed Father Sharbel the permission sent to him from the superior general to lecture me during the retreat that was to precede my priestly ordination. He told me, "You are a master of Israel (Jn 3, 9) and you need someone like Father Sharbel to lecture you in your spiritual retreat? But I am at your disposal in anything you want." When the retreat came to an end, I hoped that it would have lasted more than one week. When I heard his words, I felt as if I tasted a very delicious food, like honey, because his words pierced the rocks and softened the iron. They were more pleasant than the pleasure itself! That's why I decided to spend my vacation every year with him in the hermitage until the end of his life. So I spent four years in a row with him and each time he welcomed me with his angelic smile.

3 - He Replied Smiling

Father Alouan testified: At the request of the head of the field and the approval of the superior of the monastery, Father Sharbel often accompanied us in the sowing of wheat. One day after we finished seeding a field above the fountain, everyone, novices and laborers, had to go to another field. We had to move all the equipment and necessary items. The laborers and I were dealing with oxen and ploughs, while Father Sharbel, the

other novices and the remaining workers, had to carry other cultivation equipment. Since we knew how obedient Father Sharbel was, we decided to put his virtue to the test. We gathered the entire field's utensils: hoes, water jar, jug, seed basket and the food bucket.

For fun I asked Father Sharbel to carry all these objects. He replied, "**I am at your disposal.**" I began to put the objects on his back, piece by piece, waiting for him to say "that's enough" but he showed no reluctance or complained, accepting all these willingly. He put the picks on one shoulder, hung the basket on the other, the water jar in one hand and the bucket on his elbow. The jug remained so I told him, "Carry it." He replied "**How can I carry it?**" I told him, "Hang it on your finger." He obeyed. A few other items remained on the ground that he couldn't carry, so he told me, "**Put more on my body.**" The novices laughed. Seeing us laughing, he looked at us and said smilingly, "**Woe to those who overwhelm people with heavy burdens while not bothering themselves to move one of their fingers.**" Then he left with his burden, satisfied and happy and we took the other utensils.

4 - He Used to Say in Jest

"La Croix" newspaper wrote: Sharbel requested the hard work from his superior. He transported the stones and plowed the fallow land without the help of an animal. His daily rate wasn't less than ten hours a day, bearing the summer heat and the winter cold. His hands became chapped, his ankles and armpits ripped by the thorns, and he used to say in jest, "I must become tough."

Q - Amazing Love (Jn 1, 13)

1 - Introduction

He expressed what he had in his heart saying, "**My God, my heart belongs to You.**" He offered his heart to Him entirely without ever being touched one day by an earthly love. His soul was enkindled with the fire of God's Love. The time he spent before the Blessed Sacrament was the best time for him. No wonder! Because the lover has a passion to be with his beloved, and be cherished in his attendance, for the heart of man is where his treasure lies. That's what the Book of Proverbs mentions.

He chose the Love of God over his body, sacrificing everything for God's Love. That love drove him to the point where he liked to be despised and treated as if he was nothing. Throughout his life he was never interested in acquiring the satisfaction of a superior or the friendship of a fellow brother. He did nothing for his own sake, but he offered himself entirely to God.

He served his neighbor through his prayers without ever being concerned about being praised. He never complained to the superior about one of his brethren, or about a worker, but was kind to everybody. He replaced his brethren in the hard work allowing them to rest by performing the most menial jobs, like carrying wood, without being charged by the superior's order, but driven by his love for them.

Pursuant the Novice's Rules: "He comes to love God and the neighbor, and not to hate them. He comes to suffer and be despised, not to be praised and to rest. He comes to serve not to be served." He prayed for the repentance of sinners and the conversion of the misguided to the right path. Sometimes, especially on Sundays and holy days, he delayed his mass so the shepherds who came from far away could participate in the Eucharist.

2 - The Family of Sharbel (Mt 12, 46-50)

Once when his brother and sister came to visit him at the hermitage, his companion, Father Makarios, told him about their arrival. He replied, "**You are my**

brother and my sister. Offer them food and drinks, then dismiss them to return to the village and tell them that I am praying for them to be saved and delivered from the snares of this world.” He didn’t meet them.

3 - Do You Want to Have Lunch?

Father Mubarak Massaad came to visit the hermitage at lunchtime, so Father Sharbel and his companion asked him, “Do you want to have lunch?” He agreed, but the meal was just enough for two persons. Thus, Father Sharbel discreetly withdrew leaving the visitor his portion. He ate the leftovers in the bottom of the pot, though the hermits eat only one meal per day.

4 - Work for Food that Endures to Eternal Life (Jn 6, 27)

Father Sharbel prayed a lot for the conversion of sinners and for the sick, giving beneficial advice, depending on the circumstances. I still remember the words he once told me, “**Do not worry about the things of this world, but about the eternal life and the judgment. For the one who will judge us knows everything and doesn’t need anyone to tell him.**” He had a great compassion for the souls in purgatory, especially those who had nobody to pray for them; he prayed for them and invited others to pray for them.

5 - Out of Pity for Her

Father Elias Ehmej testified: one day in November during my childhood, I accompanied my mother to attend mass at the hermitage. On our way it rained incessantly, so we were all soaked with rain. When we reached the hermitage, I entered and prepared the supplies for the liturgy to serve the mass for Father Sharbel. He looked at me and saw me drenched with water from head to toe, so he asked me to go to the kitchen to dry my clothes. I didn’t accept and he took pity on me bringing me a pair of his shoes but I didn’t use them because they were too big. At the beginning of the mass when he turned to us with the incense, he saw my mother standing outside of the door participating in the mass while bathed in water. He took pity on her and asked me to bring her inside to continue her mass at the back of the church. I called her and she came in. This was strange because he had never allowed women to enter the church, but he had compassion for her because of the bitter cold and stormy wind and he let her enter.

6 - Like a Mother Who Cares for Her Baby

Father Ephrem Nakad witnessed: in the past, it was the custom that when a monk was getting old or sick, and he had a monk at the monastery that was a relative or was from his village; the latter undertook to serve him. In the Monastery of Saint Maron, there were many monks and if one of them got sick or aged, and he had a monk to take care of him, Father Sharbel would only visit him as often as the other monks. As a mother who takes care of her child, he devoted himself day and night to serve the sick and elderly who had no relatives or friends from their village. I remember that at the Monastery there was a monk named Moussa Ehmej who was old, sick, and disabled. He had nobody from his village to care for him, except Father Alishaa, who himself was already old and senile. When Father Moussa got sick, Father Sharbel was responsible to care for him, and slept on the floor beside him during the night. One day he came out of Father Moussa’s cell and went directly to church to celebrate holy mass. I noticed that his habit was covered with spit on his back. I called him saying, “It is shameful to celebrate mass with this habit.” so he changed it. Indeed, Father Moussa was spitting all night without noticing that Father Sharbel was sleeping on the floor beside him.

7 - Sharbel “The Passionate Lover”

His heart was in love with Jesus and he felt no attraction to live without Him, so he kept repeating, “**God is my love and that’s enough for me.**” He felt neither pleasure nor joy, or rested, except in the church before the Blessed Sacrament. In the dead of winter when it was impossible to work outside and there was nothing to do inside the monastery, he spent his time conversing with God in prolonged visits to the Blessed Sacrament. He who loves always thinks of his beloved and would like to extend his presence with him. Father Sharbel liked to spend long periods meditating on the Eucharist. His life was absorbed by God because he was always thinking of Him. When someone spoke with him, it was as if he was wakened from a deep sleep. Even in hard manual labor, he was always immersed in meditation with God.

8 - Unlimited Love

Father Ephrem Nakad testified: he showed the novices and me, who were from his village, no special affection and he refrained from contacting us. Once the Superior of the Convent, Father Elias Meshmesh, asked him, “Father Sharbel, don’t you feel more affection to the novices who are from your hometown than others because it is a natural inclination in men?” He replied softly, as usual, “**I don’t incline to them neither inward nor outward because all the brothers are equal to me.**”

9 - He Wept Over a Shiite (Lk 19, 41)

Once Father Youssef Beiruty entered the hermitage and found Father Sharbel crying bitterly and striking his head with his hands with great regret. He asked him why he was weeping, but he didn’t answer. He persisted, asking him a second and third time, then he said, “**I’ll tell you but it must remain confidential; you must not tell anyone until after my death. Today a Shiite man from Almatte died and his soul went to hell.**” A moment later a gunshot (gunshots are a custom that people used in funerals or weddings of important people) was heard from Almatte and news of the death of a rich man, who was in America, was spread.

10 - Even Animals Will Pick up Snakes with Their Hands (Mk 16, 18)

Antonios Nehme testified: during the cultivation and pruning of the vineyards I went with all the monastic folk, monks, and workers to the hermitage to work in the vineyards. Suddenly, we saw a fearsome snake. We rushed to kill it, but couldn’t. The viper slithered on the ground uttering a terrible and awful hissing sound, one time raising its head, and the other time its tail. Unable to find a way out and overwhelmed with fear, I shouted, “Where is Father Sharbel? Call him.” We couldn’t see him because he was working alone on a slope in the vineyard. As soon as he heard us, he came. When he stood in front of the snake, it became frozen in place. He said, “**Don’t touch it.**” Each one of us had something in his hand -- a stone, pickaxe, a sling. Stretching out his hand, he turned to the viper and said, “**Go out of here.**” and it crept in front of him as he kept waving his hand until it disappeared. Then he returned to work. We thanked God for saving us from this danger. Father Sharbel would not kill any animal, poisonous insect, scorpion, not even an ant or a scorpion, because his sensitive heart believed they were creatures of God and that God alone could take their lives.

11 - The Wolf Lives With the Lamb (Isa 11, 16)

Father Semaan Abi Beshara witnessed: When I was a student, I spent a summer at the Monastery of Our Lady of Mayfouq, where I had to share the room with Brother Bartholomew of Aito. On the mattress on the bed, I saw a lot of bugs that were very small. They walked on my face and hands, but didn’t bite me. I was surprised and I asked Brother Bartholomew about this strange phenomenon. He replied, “Don’t you see water in that bottle? Father Sharbel had blessed it.” Since I sprayed my room with the water, the bedbugs have become smaller and unable to sting.”

R - The Freedom of Sharbel and His Audacity (Lk 13/31-33)

1 – Introduction

He wasn't interested in anything of this world or concerned about specific matters. Rather, he worked with care to fulfill his obligations, never seeking to gain the consent of anyone in particular. In the observance of divine truth, he was extraordinarily bold, without fear or favor, vis-à-vis, to others. He recognized no value in dignity, but was pleased with the insults, indifferent to be praised or be despised, and famous in saying these words, **"The gifted person is not the one who praises himself or who is praised by people but the one to whom the Lord gives his Grace."** If a bishop or a dignitary visited the monastery, he wasn't interested in meeting them. In fact, he lived on earth but his thoughts and his heart were in heaven. He was inattentive to what was happening around him, as if he lived in exile on earth knowing that he belonged to the heavenly homeland.

2 - He Wasn't Attached to Anything

His heart wasn't attached to anything not even to his personal devotions or spiritual obligations. Following the vow of obedience, he would abandon his prayer services or any spiritual exercise, and do what was asked with joy. I remember one night while he was praying with his companion in the church of the hermitage, a messenger came and told him, "The superior is looking for you." He didn't hesitate at all to stop his prayer, in unison, and went to the convent that night. The superior asked him to bless the water and sprinkle it on the goats because they were diagnosed with gallbladder. Once the herd was sprinkled with holy water, they recovered. Then after getting permission from the superior, he went back to the hermitage, even though the superior insisted on him staying the night at the convent.

3 - From Where Sin Can Enter Your Soul?

He worked silently in baking while the others sometimes joked and despised his continuous silence. He didn't let an opportunity pass without giving a spiritual lesson, sealed with profound wisdom, on how not to hurt his neighbor. His responses were unique and insightful, in understanding not only in the Order's situations, but also elsewhere.

Once in winter while helping the monks in the bakery, the Pastor, Youhanna Shehad from Meshmesh, came to the convent. He was the Patriarchal Vicar of Jbeil, an honorable person from a very rich and dignified family, famous for his relationships with major people of his country. Proud of himself, fat, leading an easy life, not fully applicable with the simplicity of those days, and the situation of the priesthood, his position was taken into consideration in the entire region of Kesserwan, Jbeil and Batroun.

When he came to the convent, he was wearing over his cassock a thick fur coat worn only by princes and the nobles. He walked into the bakery to talk with the monks where a conversation took place about sin and its causes. He congratulated the monks because they were far from the motives of the sin. Meanwhile, Father Sharbel remained silent as usual listening to the dialogue. His hands bore witness to his hard work and his muteness pronounced the most expressive advice and preaching. Suddenly, all turned to Father Sharbel, because they heard him talking not according to his custom. Glancing over at the priest Youhanna, with a small smile on his lips, **"And you! From where can your soul enter? It couldn't reach you with this thick fur!"** All laughed, exchanging winks, because they saw in those words a significant moral and a subtle wise lesson to the priest Youhanna. Also this meeting was proof that Father Sharbel, in his retirement from the world, his silence and abstention from any conversation beyond the monastic matters, understood from just a hint or small word what was happening among his contemporaries. It was as if he wasn't satisfied with the priest's opulence that was clear in wearing the fur, so he gave him this hint.

4 - This is to be Announced When the Day is a Holy Day

The debt was accumulating on the Monastery of Saint Maron when Father Roukoz Meshmesh was the Superior (1865-1871), so they made the novices and the farmer-members work on Sundays and holy days to support the monastery's economy. Once when the Superior, Father Roukoz Meshmesh, asked Father Sharbel to celebrate the solemn mass, he obeyed immediately. He was well known for obeying in everything, but sin. In this mass, he announced that a holy day of obligation was coming the following week, but he ended his mass without announcing the holy day. At the end of the mass, the superior told him, "You haven't announced the Ascension for next Thursday! Don't you know that it's a holy day? Announce it tomorrow." Since the farmers were coming to the mass, Father Sharbel replied kindly and humbly, **"My master, somewhere else is a holy day. Those who do not take off on Sundays or holy days, the feast does not need be announced for them. This is done where the day is a holy day."** He was referring to the decision of the superior to make the novices work on Sundays and holy days, so they could fulfill the various tasks in the monastery, because this year the economy was bad. Father Sharbel didn't take part in this work, yet no one dared to call him to work during these holy days, out of respect for his virtue and holiness. Therefore, he replied with this speech in the church, to defend the canon and the divine law, without being afraid of anyone. The superior had grasped Father Sharbel's intention and realized his mistake. His words, spoken in a very gentle way, were considered a critical sermon to the superior, who very well understood the meaning. After that, the superior declined to make the novices and laborers work on Sundays and holy days. The monastic folk considered that this observation was from God's Voice and rejoiced in it.

S - A Rightful Worshiper

1 – Introduction

- Toward His Lord: He practiced the rites of worship with the perfection required from a creature to the Creator; he was profoundly committed to God's Commandments. His heart and hands were always lifted up to God and testified the adequate reverence with perseverance unto death.

- Towards His Fellow Men: He hurt no one; neither violated the right of a person nor bothered anyone. Rather he considered himself a servant to all and a faithful servant to his Lord. He carefully observed his solemn vows, which imposed respect to all his brethren. When he descended from the hermitage to the monastery, and they gathered to greet him to kiss his hand, he treated them courteously and venerated them with great kindness. He never hurt anyone, either face to face or from a distance, respecting their properties and reputations.

2 - When I Became a Monk, I Died from this World (Mt 6, 24)

Alishaa Nakad witnessed: my grandfather, Hanna Zaarour, the brother of Father Sharbel passed away on January 25, 1898. Since he had no children except my mother, and a girl wasn't allowed to inherit from her father except half of his legacy, the relatives of her father claimed that the second half was theirs, considering that the brother of the deceased is a monk, and a hermit, who under the Order's Law of the Novice, didn't inherit or give inheritance. My mother said, "Indeed my uncle, Father Sharbel, is the one who should inherit the second half. So she came to the Monastery of Saint Maron, to tell him about the death of her father and ask him to give her a cession (assignment) of the legacy of his brother and her father. I accompanied her during the spring to the hermitage of Saints Peter and Paul. Father Sharbel was told that my mother had come to meet him, but he didn't accept seeing her. Instead, he entered the church and

closed the door. My mother stood at the door of the church from outside, while he was inside the church near the locked door, and he asked her what she wanted from him. She told him about the death of her father and asked him to give her a cession of his share. She recounted to him that her father's relatives claimed half of the inheritance. He told her in my hearing, **"Oh, my niece! I have no concern left for this world! My brother died a few months ago but I have been dead from this world since I have pronounced my solemn vows in the Monastery of Saint Maron 45 years ago and a dead person does not inherit or give inheritance! And this is the case of each monk. So you don't have any business with me. I cannot give up on something I do not own."** So we went back with no result. Father Skandar Beik Khoury commented on this incident. This phrase became a verse in that region that ran through the town as a sign of Father Sharbel's impartiality, his justice, and his sincere priestly spirit.

3 - He Prayed for the Souls in Purgatory

Brother Elias Al-Mahrini witnessed: Father Sharbel was multiplying the sign of the cross, so I asked him, "My master, Father Sharbel, why do you multiply the sign of the cross today, unlike your habit? Does it derive great benefit in doing so? With beaming face he replied, **"Today is the Holy Souls' Friday and the sign of the cross holds a great treasure of indulgences that could be transferred to help the poor suffering souls in purgatory, precisely those who nobody remembers. Every time you make the sign of the cross with faith and you are in the state of grace, you obtain an indulgence. When you walk into or out of the church anointing your forehead with holy water and making the sign of the cross, you are in the state of grace and obtain for every time an indulgence. Every time you say 'Oh, Mary!' you also obtain an indulgence. If, for example, you make the sign of the cross twenty times a day, you obtain many indulgences. If you offer these indulgences for the repose of one or more souls suffering in Purgatory, you will profoundly relieve their pain and obtain abundant compensations for your deed! Does it cost you any fatigue or effort? Of course not!**

The man works his property, irrigates it from the sweat of his hard work, and waits a year or more to get a harvest. If the harvest is plentiful, he will be overjoyed. It's better for him to invoke the Virgin's Name calling her with reverence, 'Oh, Mary!' one hundred times a day so he will obtain many indulgences, without tiring, without disturbance, and then he can continue his usual work. He even gets profit from it, derives benefit for the repose of the souls in Purgatory, and shortens the time of their suffering. He also finds behind this great name a barrier against any satanic temptation. If the man is used to make the sign of the cross and to call the Virgin's Name, he would decline any sort of temptation because the sign of the cross is a way to expel the demons and the Name of the Virgin will subjugate and defeat them into the abyss of their destruction. "If you hear me, hold a permanent devotion to help the souls in Purgatory. In doing this, you show devotion to God. The Holy Bible says: One who is gracious to a poor man lends to God and God who does not neglect a reward of a glass of cold water given in His Name. How can He neglect the reward of a benefactor to a beloved suffered soul? It salvation is guaranteed and shortens the day of its expiation."

T - A loyalty to the Beloved One

1 – Introduction

Father Sharbel had an angelic chastity which showed through his mortification and his lack of interest in eating, drinking and clothing. As for his threadbare habit, it was a striking testimony that spoke of his chastity. He hated every comfort in life. He practiced

the asceticism to the point that he became like a shadow -- skinny and thin, nothing left in his body more than skin and bones. So many people said that this is not the life of a human being; rather it's the life of an earthly angel who mortified his human nature.

He didn't raise his eyes toward a person, whoever the person might be, but always kept them lowered to the ground avoiding any contact with people and devoting himself fully to the Creator. If he had to speak with a man, it was only for few minutes, and he lowered his eyes even if the man was a monk. He looked down with an attitude of meditation inside and outside the church and didn't look at a woman pursuant to the Monks' Rule: "The monk must completely suppress his senses." There were no women in the hermitage or its surroundings at all and he stayed away from them, despite the decency and simplicity of their clothes. If he met some women on the main road while heading to the field, vineyard, or carrying water from the fountain to the convent, he would immediately change his path. This became well known in the neighborhood, and when women saw him from afar, they changed their way out of respect for him.

2 - Use of Masculine Gender

Maron Abbud witnessed: I know that when some women came to ask for holy water or other services, he called them from the window of his cell by the masculine gender, **"What do you want?"** After finding out the reason for the visit, he sent them to his companion. Gerges Sassine added: Once I went to the hermitage where I saw a woman standing outside the fence. I asked her, "Who are you?" She replied, "I am a woman from Bakaa Kafra, the sister of Father Sharbel. Please tell him I want to see him." I went in and told him. He replied, **"Go and tell Father Makarios."** who then ordered him to meet with her. He stood behind the closed door and said in the masculine gender, "How are you?" Then he retired to church but I didn't understand why he addressed her in the masculine gender.

3 - He Blessed Them

Once I was in the hermitage and a group of men and women were in the church. Father Makarios came and asked the women to leave because Father Sharbel wanted to celebrate the holy liturgy. On leaving, the ladies asked for Father Sharbel's blessing. As they stood outside the church, they bowed their heads, which were covered with a sheet. The hermit stretched his hand out the window and blessed them. Then he celebrated the holy mass.

4 - The Body is Like a Donkey

The monks heard him always repeating these words, **"This body is like a donkey. If you satiate him, he will become ungrateful, and if you starve him, he will be humble."**

5 - Put the Bottle Down and Walk Away

When women came to the hermitage asking for holy water and Father Sharbel was alone at the hermitage, he talked with them from inside saying, **"Put the bottle down and walk away."** Then he took the bottle, filled it with holy water, put it back in its place and disappeared. When a woman unexpectedly encountered him on the way, he withdrew and took a different path wandering among the thorns.

6 - A Temptation Had Harassed Me

Once Father Sharbel stayed in the convent of Annaya-Laqlouq to celebrate the mass for the head of the fieldwork, Bother Boulous Meshmesh. While his brother was plowing the ground, he heard Father Sharbel, who was a little further, screaming and asking for help like a little child. He left his work and ran to see what had happened to him. He found him safe, so he asked him, "What's wrong?" He replied, **"Nothing."** As

soon as the brother resumed his work, he heard him screaming again and approached him asking, "Are you crazy? Why are you screaming? Tell me! How can I help you!? What's going on?" He answered calmly and in a low voice, "**A temptation had harassed me. Forgive me and pray for me.**"

7 - Why This "Crank"?

Father Elias Ehmej testified: his love for God removed from his heart any other earthly love, even the love of his parents. He belonged to the Almighty and devoted himself to His Love so he emptied his heart from the love of his relatives. As I passed the summer at the Monastery of Saint Maron with my master, Father Nehemtallah Al-Kafri, I once went to visit the hermits. Arriving near the shrine, I found a number of women waiting, who greeted me saying, "We have been waiting here for a long time. We came from Bekaa Kafra, a day's walk from here, to see Father Sharbel, who has refused to meet us." I replied, "Who are you?" They said, "This is his sister and we accompany her. We beg you to persuade him to allow his sister to kiss his hand because she hasn't seen him in such a long time and she misses him so much." I was very touched, so I hastened to Father Sharbel who was in church. I begged him to have mercy on his poor sister, who came from afar to quench her affection, by giving just a single glance from her brother. He replied, "**No I don't go out.**" Then I came back saying, "Your sister is asking you to stretch out your hand from the window so she can kiss it. After that she promises to leave." He said, "**I don't stretch out my hand from the window.**" A third time I told him, "Your sister asks you to hold this handkerchief in your hand and pass it on the Images of Saint Peter and Saint Paul, so it will be a blessing and a remembrance for her." He replied, "**Do it yourself and give her the handkerchief.**" I continued, "Why this crank? Why this strange behavior?" He didn't answer, so I put the handkerchief on the end of a long stick and passed it over the images of Saint Peter and Saint Paul which were placed very high in the church. I then gave it to his sister, who returned to her town Bekaa Kafra, sad with tears in her eyes. I myself was very surprised by this harsh behavior and didn't understand its meaning. After he left the church I argued with him saying, "You shouldn't have sent your poor sister away inconsolable. Where is the tenderness and where is the compassion?" He gave me no answer. I then understood from his silence that he had no place in his heart for earthly love; his heart beat only for the Love of God.

U - Prisoner of the Beloved[1]

1 - Introduction

He did nothing on his own initiative but only in obedience to the authority represented by God. He deserved the reward given for the obedient person pursuant the Law of the Novice: "The monk must consider his superior as Christ." His obedience wasn't of foolishness, or habit, but of piety and virtue. The vow of obedience was embodied in him all his life. He practiced it as a vow and a virtue. If he could hold the pulses of blood in his veins and subject them to the command of obedience; this was his dearest wish. He excelled in his respect for God. Whatever happened in the church, he never turned right or left. As for his respect for authority, it was one of his ultimate goals. He was careful in preserving the rituals of the church and its sacraments on a daily basis with his companions in the hermitage. This obedience was literally blind as a stick obeys and serves the blind. If the supervisor called him for any matter, he would instantly abandon his work and obey without delay. I don't remember ever having seen Father Sharbel showing any aversion or anxiety when he received an unusual order. Rather, he was always in the same condition, never apologizing for healthy reason or for other reason, even in matters in which were clear to everyone that he should be absolved from doing them. He didn't submit by

stupidity or habit, but by the spirit of devotion and virtue. The vow of obedience was embodied in him all his life, practicing it as a vow and a virtue, as if it was his dearest wish to submit. Even his blood pressure was a result of the obligation of obedience. He excelled in his respect for God. Whatever happened in the church, he never turned right or left. As for his respect for authority, it was one of his ultimate goals. He was careful in preserving the ritual of the church and its sacraments on a daily basis which he celebrated with his companion in the hermitage on all the religious processions.

2 - Ask Father Makarios

Father Nehemtallah Meshmesh witnessed: when we asked him for a meal, he replied, "**I don't know. Go and ask Father Makarios.**" If we wanted to eat grapes, he also sent us to his companion. If a worker asked him for a bunch of grapes, he would reply "**I don't know. Ask Father Makarios.**" He never even gave a grape leaf from the monastery's property of his own accord, and never asked permission from his superior to give something to someone.

3 - He Kept Lifting His Pick

Tannouri witnessed: before my ordination, I made a retreat in the Monastery of Saint Maron. Once while I was standing at the edge of the hermitage, I saw Father Sharbel plowing in the vineyard. I felt sorry for him and asked Father Makarios, who was preparing lunch near me, to call him to rest and eat. When the food was ready, Father Makarios called him, "Father Sharbel" but he didn't respond. So he called him a second time, this time louder. When he heard him, he was lifting up his pick, so he kept on lifting it, waiting for the order. Then when he asked him again to come for lunch, he put down his pick and came.

4 - He Obeyed Even the Novices

While the novices were working and the bell rang for prayer, they stopped and prayed without calling Father Sharbel, who continued his work. When they asked him why he didn't pray with them, he replied, "**You didn't order me.**" They thought he was making fun of them and got angry. The second day, they didn't call him to pray, so he continued his work. Then they realized that Father Sharbel didn't do anything without being ordered. In fact, the third day when they ordered him to participate in prayer, he left his work and obeyed.

5 - As a Joke

One day Father Sharbel told his companion, Father Makarios, "**In the convent they need wood and here we have no more. Where should I go to get wood?**" He replied angrily with the purpose of kidding him; "Go to the forest of Mihal." which is a three hour walk from the hermitage. Father Sharbel then went to Mihal, cut wood and carried it back to the hermitage. He reached the hermitage in the evening, exhausted bathed in sweat, with the burden on his back. Father Makarios asked him, "From where did you get the wood? Why are you so late and very tired?" He answered him, "**From the mountain of Mihal as you commanded me.**" Father Makarios replied, "Why have you gone there when the hermitage is surrounded by wood?" He answered, "**Didn't you ask me to go to Mihal? You commanded and I obeyed.**" Father Makarios was very surprised at the trouble he bore!

6 - He Didn't Ask About the Purpose

Mr. Rashid Al-Khoury, the Prefect of the region, requested Father Sharbel come to Ehmej to bless the water and sprinkle the places where locusts were intensely spread. It was well known that with Father Sharbel's prayers, he could drive away the locusts. So the superior ordered him to go. Without knowing the purpose of this order, and with no objection, he headed toward Ehmej. Once he reached Ehmej, Mr. Rashid Beik asked

him to bless the water with the attendance of all the villagers. He blessed it and returned to the hermitage. At harvest time as many as 100 people from the village of Ehmj mowed the crops of the monastery free of charge out of gratitude for Father Sharbel.

V - His Hope is a Yearning for the Beloved One

1 - Introduction

His hope in God was firm he looked at life in all its dimensions as scrap and his only concern was Christ. When changes occurred in the Order, he expressed neither joy nor distress. He never asked if an acquaintance in the priesthood was ranked in his position so he can depend on him; he didn't distress because of the changes in the hierarchy of superiors and officials or the removal of those who showed kindness toward him. Whatever was happening in the Order didn't affect in his spiritual life or in his services. He was interested in the affairs of the monastery only as much as the vows of obedience ordered him to do so; he showed no joy for material progress in the convent or sadness for a loss.

He lived in the monastery and the hermitage as if he didn't exist; all his thoughts were turned to God; all his interests were devoted for the salvation of souls and his own salvation; his only concern was to please God; for the sake of this goal he endured all the difficulties and the hardships and bore the extreme severity which he imposed upon himself.

2 - More Competent Than Me

He never counted on men. I remember once he was surprised at a remark that the consultant wanted to appoint him for the superiority he said, **"In the Order many are more qualified and suitable than me. It's a noble gesture from the Order to accept a lazy one like me."**

3 - Work for the Glory of God

Father Alouan witnessed: he performed his work to glorify God and obtain eternal happiness; he kept saying, **"Work for the glory of God and your reward will be eternal happiness."** This hope led him to despise the things of this mortal life and practice mortification and asceticism; also he kept repeating this sentence, **"This life is perishable it cannot offer anything."**

W - A Refuge for the Faithful and the Poor (Lk 18, 3)

1 - Introduction

People were flocking to him. They brought their children's bottles to fill with water to asking him to bless the water so they could take the bottles home and use them to heal their sick, keep away disasters, protect their livestock and properties from diseases and epidemics, increase the production and fertility in their crops, and sprinkle it in their houses. He welcomed them with tenderness, compassion, and sympathy; moved by their plight and prayed for them. When he blessed the water, a strange power emanated from it. He never took any reward for his blessing nor accepted any offering, but did it all for the love of God.

The sick, disabled, afflicted, and suffering flooded from all sides seeking the grace of God by his intercession because they all believed in his goodness and powerful prayer. Many Muslim women from the vicinity around the monastery put their children at the door of Sharbel's hermitage asking for healings and blessings.

He never let down those who were seeking spiritual help. If someone visited him in the hermitage, they would leave astonished by his holiness, influenced by his piety, comforted, and happy to have met him.

2 - All Represent the Image of Christ

Father Sharbel didn't deal with people but his love for them was known from his prayers for the sick, the travelers, the needy, and for all who asked for his prayers. His heart was touched by pity and he interceded fervently to the Lord to have compassion on his sick servants. As for his relations with his brethren in the convent and the hermitage, and with his acquaintances, it was clear that his heart embraced them all equally, without distinction. To him all represented the image of Christ, so he respected them all.

3 - He Offered Him Something to Eat

He was compassionate and kind to the poor, sick and those who suffered. When they came to the hermitage in the cold days of winter, he brought them close to the fire to get dry. He loved all people -- rich and poor. Although he didn't deal with visitors, except in spiritual matters; such responsibilities were entrusted to his companion. If it happened that someone poor or hungry visited him in the absence of his companion, he would give him his own small portion of food while he remained without food. This compassion towards the poor was within the limits of his capabilities. If a poor man came to the hermitage, he would ask his companion to offer him something to eat. In winter when it was cold, he allowed the men to enter the hermitage so they could warm themselves by the fire.

4 - I'm Just a Sinful Man

For the people who asked for his prayers he replied, **"I'm but a sinful man; may the prayers of the saints meet your demands."** When someone asked him for a spiritual grace, he always answered, **"I am the least of people; just a sinful man."** When someone told him he was a saint, he didn't answer, but trembled, shook his head and frowned. He considered himself the least of people and the greatest of sinners.

5 - Have Faith in God

When he was asked for prayer, he said quietly, **"The prayer of the saints is with you; depend on God and He will take care of you."** then walked away from them. When visitors asked him for prayers and blessing, he did so without looking at them and said, "Ask the Lord to give you according to your faith."

6 - "You Can Be a Saint!"

When someone asked him to pray for them, he replied, **"You also pray. What is the difference between you and me? God listens to you as much as he listens to me."** When someone told him, "You are a saint." he replied, **"We are alike. What prevents you from being a saint?"**

X. - His Passion for Prayer

1 - Introduction

The Law of the Novice orders, "He must go before the brothers to church and be the last one to leave it." So when he woke up, he immediately ran to church where he stayed for about five hour kneeling straight until his knees got numb. He neither leaned nor turned to the left or right. He prayed around the lectern with his brethren and participated in all the unison prayers in complete breviary. He recited them very carefully as if he stood in the presence of a king and in full ecstasy. He could be

seen in sensory eyes, but he was absent from the senses sharing all the prayers in repeated prostrations, and sometimes in mental meditation. His verbal prayers had a special practice spent in recitation for three hours a day; completing half of them in the daytime and the other half in the night. He pronounced all his prayers carefully, word by word. During the day, he fervently recited his offices, always kneeling, and if there was nobody in the church during the choir prayer, he would say it alone in a loud voice. As for the midnight prayer, he always recited it without tardiness.

He sublimated in piety and holiness so he became an intimate friend for God and a companion for the angels. His whole life was a life of contemplation, prayer, and liturgy. He did this with zeal, non-routine, and with heartfelt love for God so that he was always united with Him in his thoughts and his heart. God abode in his mind, prayers, work, eating, and sleeping. In short, he no longer lived for himself but for God. He no longer spoke about earthly things, but about spiritual matters.

If you love a person or a thing, you think of them often, speak of them and what they do, and if you can frequently visit them and be with them, you won't delay. So it was with Father Sharbel. He was always silent in his thoughts; always turned to God, his Beloved. In his heart there was no room except for God. He outpaced other hermits with his nocturnal visits to the Blessed Sacrament. Every time we lost Father Sharbel, we found him in the church. Sometimes he was seen before the Blessed Sacrament in complete ecstasy. Deep sighing came from his heart showing his extreme love for the Lord concealed in the Sacrament of the Eucharist. You could constantly hear his sighs, nostalgia and spiritual hum. His features could soften the rocks and infuse the onlookers showing reverence and veneration. His face always overflowed with a divine light.

He prayed the rosary, kneeling on a tray woven by hand from rough rods, covered by a piece of black cloth. He knelt upright, motionless with his hands outstretched on his chest. He remained in this position throughout the duration of the Holy Rosary.

2 - It is I (Mk 6, 50)

Father Ignatius Meshmesh witnessed: One night I went to church at midnight to check whether the pilot light in front of the Holy Sacrament was still lit. I found it off and began to grope in the dark to light it again. I bumped into someone, got scared and the person said, "**Do not be afraid, it's I.**" I recognized his voice. It was Father Sharbel kneeling in the church meditating at midnight.

3 - He Spoke With the Angels to God

Tannouri witnessed: I watched him during his prayer as if he was out of his senses, rapt in God, and oblivious to everything around him -- people and things he didn't realize were there, as if someone accompanied him in prayer. When it was my turn to answer, he continued the prayer alone. I visualized him in heaven as if he was talking with God face to face, mouth to ear, and heart to heart; as if his body wasn't on this earth. However, I had the impression that his soul was united with the angels praising and glorifying God with them.

4 - Noah's Ark (Jn 17, 15)

One year the locusts invaded the region in large numbers and swept through everything. The Superior of the Monastery, Father Elias Meshmesh, ordered Father Sharbel to spray the boundaries of the monastery to prevent the locusts from entering. Father Sharbel obeyed. The locusts entered the region, devoured the green and the dry, and spared only the properties of the monastery. In fact, everyone including the Shiites kept witnessing this event and were amazed that all the plain's peaks and hills were completely stripped except the land around the monastery which remained green and saved from damage. It was like Noah's Ark in the midst of absolute devastation.

Y- The Faith of Sharbel

1 - Introduction

The faith of Sharbel was reflected through:

- In his masses he celebrated as if he saw Christ behind the forms, addressed him heart to heart, saying the words carefully, with extreme reverence and respect, as if he stood before God.

- In the recitation of his prayers and the reflection in his meditation, he said his prayer services word by word in a soft and gentle voice. If someone talked to him, he would need some time to return to reality and hear the speaker as if he was totally absorbed in God. When he committed to a spiritual conversation, he was inflamed with zeal, speaking from the abundance of his heart and the fervor of his faith. In all his life he never showed a sign of boredom, fatigue, or resignation, when it came to spiritual matters, but he indulged them fervently as if he was enjoying the things that his heart desired.

- In his obedience to his superior or who represented the superior, there was clear evidence that he saw God in his superior without considering whether this one was worthy or not.

- In his work he did nothing on his own for he firmly believed that the only voice of authority is the Voice of God. All his actions were carefully crafted and expressed with warmth and the authenticity of his fervent faith. God had bestowed upon him the gift of precognition because of his living faith; therefore, he was a burning flame of faith.

2 -A Lightning

Shibley Shibley witnessed: one day in 1888, Father Sharbel was kneeling upright in the church absorbed in prayer before the Blessed Sacrament when a violent bolt of lightning fell on the hermitage burning a new jumper embroidered with silver that had been placed on the altar. The lightning crisscrossed the middle of the church, passed him, and set fire to the edge of his habit without injuring him. I hastened with the monks of the monastery to see what happened. We found that the lightning had hit on the south side of the hermitage demolishing the stone retaining walls which held the plots of the vines. The lightning then entered the church, setting fire to the altar cloths and vestments, threw the chalice to another place, and damaged some images. When the doors were opened, there was an odor that caused dizziness to the two companions of Father Sharbel. We found them in the kitchen, almost semi-unconscious and warming themselves by the fire. When regained conscious, they believed that Father Sharbel had been killed and rushed to church. They found him praying as if nothing had happened. The Superior, Father Immanuel Al-Jaji, asked him, "Father Sharbel, couldn't you extinguish the fire at least from the table cloths and the vestments?" "He replied, "**My Brother, what could I extinguish? It started fast and ended so fast.**" That is to say that everything happened at the speed of lightning and he couldn't do anything, so he remained in his place.

3 - The Convent's Silkworm Harvest Remained Intact

Father Nehemtallah Nehme witnessed: At the time of my mandate in the Monastery of Saint Serge in Kartaba, drought had already been damaging the silkworm harvest for the past eight years. The silkworms only reached the fourth phase of nine days and then died. So I sent one of the monks to the hermit, Father Sharbel, in the hermitage of Annaya. He brought holy water and we sprinkled it on the silkworms; they recovered. Thus the harvest was saved during my entire three-year term there and also in subsequent years.

4 - My Crop Was Plentiful This Year

Youssef Abbud witnessed: once the epidemic attacked the silkworms in my house because the mulberry trees were sick. The caterpillars became yellow and fell over the edge of the boxes on the ground. I rushed to the hermitage and brought consecrated water given to me by Father Sharbel which I sprinkled on the caterpillars. They recovered immediately, crawled back into their crates, and began to eat again. That year my harvest was plentiful because of Father Sharbel.

5 - Don't Talk At All About This (Mk 1, 44)

Saba Obeid said: One year mice proliferated in his house and devoured the silkworms to the point of wiping them all out. He brought blessed water from Father Sharbel and sprinkled the silkworms. The next day he came to see the boxes and found that the mice were dead. Someone went to tell this event to Father Sharbel who said, "Don't talk at all about this."

6 - Am I God to Prevent Death? (Mk 10, 18)

A man from the family of Shmouty from Batroun owned a flock of sheep that was attacked by a deadly epidemic disease. He lost most of his sheep. Having heard of the reputation of Father Sharbel, he came to ask him for holy water explaining the disease of the sheep. The hermit said, "Am I God to prevent death?" The man turned back to go, but he told him, "Do you have a container to fill with water?" Then he blessed the water and gave it to him. The man sprinkled the herd and it recovered.

Z - His Mass is the Highlight of His Love

1 - Introduction

In winter and summer, he always knelt upright before the mass near the door on a wicker tray to avoid the moisture on the ground. He celebrated the mass in the morning on the days of work and two hours before noon on Sundays and holy days. A large number of the faithful came to attend his mass and receive his blessing. The people were amazed with his presence and the respect which he exuded while saying the liturgy in a soft voice and with great reverence. After the mass, he remained kneeling upright in the church, absorbed in thanksgiving before going out to work in the vineyard. All his life was spent preparing for the mass and thanksgiving.

He was always in ecstasy, especially during the invocation of the Holy Spirit. After the words of consecration, he looked at the Blessed Sacrament with reverential respect, as if he saw with the naked eye, the hidden and incarnated God. He understood he was addressing a very powerful person. When he raised the Holy Sacrament with his hands reciting "Father of Truth," he seemed to be rejoicing in the Spirit of God as if he was seeing God face to face. He was clean, especially during the celebration of the mass, and kept a coat and a pair of shoes that fit well, for use during the Eucharist. Then he immediately took them off after mass. The towel and soap which he used during the sacred service was never used for any other occasion in respect for the Divine Liturgy. Also, he washed his hands in an unusual way before the mass and gave outstanding attention on cleaning the objects of the church.

2 - Like a Magnet

Miriam Shamoun witnessed: when I was young, I went with my parents from Ehmej to the hermitage to participate at the mass on Sundays and holy days. Quite often we attended the mass of Father Sharbel, but we never saw him except during the mass. My family said a brother of our family had founded the hermitage, so we had a special

penchant towards the hermitage, or rather a passion, because it reminded us of our uncle. We used to spend our summers in Ouwaïni near the hermitage, a village where there was no church. In addition, the holiness of Father Sharbel attracted the souls like a magnet, so the hermitage was always filled with many visitors on Sundays and holy days. All those attending the Father Sharbel's masses were deeply touched and didn't want to leave the church, especially when he pronounced the words of consecration. We were very moved by his reverent and sad voice which was intermittent with his crying.

3 - Do You Want to Eat Some Grain Soup?

Once a priest came to the hermitage to say the mass and was in a hurry. Father Sharbel approached him at the end of the Liturgy saying, "Why are you in a hurry? Do you want to eat some grain soup? Makhlouta?"

4 - Receive the Holy Communion (Mk14,22)

Alishaa Nakad witnessed: I went to the hermitage with my mother, Wardeh, to see Father Sharbel but he refused to meet her. When she expressed her desire to kiss his hand, he replied from inside the locked door at the church, "Receive the Holy Communion at mass and you'll have in your mouth and your heart the Son of God himself and he is sufficient for you. When the Son of God is in your heart, there is no use from kissing my hand!"

5 - The Tears Flowed From His Eyes

His love was a burning fire. When on the altar, he often seemed as if a hot flame was ignited in his chest. His eyes sparkled and tears ran down his reddened cheeks. His sighs heaved deeply from his chest like a flaming vapor as if he saw Christ with his own eyes. Hence he shed his tears abundantly. Ouwaïni added: When he uttered the words of consecration, "This is my body! This is my blood!" I saw the tears flow from his eyes twice. Once a tear even fell on his corporal. After consuming the body and blood, when he washed his hands, he saw the trace of tears. He became confused because he thought that a drop of blood had fallen on it. I told him, "What's the matter? This is a trace of a tear that fell from your eye after the words of consecration." Yet he remained concerned, carried the corporal and showed it to the superior to calm his soul and mind.

Chapter III. - TOWARD HEAVEN (Jn 13, 1)

A - He Bore Our Sufferings (Mt 8, 17)

1 - He Saved a Girl from Death (Lk 7, 11-17)

Youssef Abbud witnessed: While my sister was pulling grass from the top of a rocky slope called “the slope of the church of Ehmej.” she stumbled and fell from the top of a twenty-meter high cliff, hit the ground and was unconscious and motionless. Her body was covered with bruises and her face marred with injuries. She became cold and yellowish; her pulse was shallow. The villagers laid her on a mattress, and carried her home thinking she was already dead. When I heard about the accident, I hastened, very disturbed, to the hermitage of Saint Maron. I told Father Sharbel about the accident, asking him to intercede for her with God, and bless the holy water for me. When he saw me so troubled, he said, **“But your sister is still alive and she will be healed. Take the holy water and sprinkle it on her.”** When I went back home, I found her unconscious and people moving around her weeping. I sprinkled her with the holy water. Her temperature returned to normal; she opened her eyes and spoke. Two days later she left her bed fully recovered.

2 - The Healing of a Mute Man (Mk 7, 32-37)

Brother Francis Kartaba, who lived in the Monastery of Saint Maron, testified: I have a brother called Asaad Hanna Salem who suddenly fell ill. For two months, he could not speak. My parents sent me a letter telling me about my brother’s illness. My father superior gave me permission to visit my sick brother. In my village of Kartaba, people thought my brother was crazy and advised me to take him to the convent at Kozhaya where they exorcised possessed people. Instead, I drove my brother to the hermitage and asked Father Sharbel to pray on his head, begging him to tell me whether he was going to be cured or not. He replied, **“Get him into church.”** I brought my brother into the church and made him kneel on a bench in the choir. Then Father Sharbel came with the Bible in his hand and a stole around his neck. He put the Bible on my brother’s head and read from it for about three minutes. Then he poured some holy water in his hand and let my brother drink saying, **“Do not be afraid. He will recover.”** We left to return to our village, me, Saba Tannous Moussa, and my mute brother. After ten minutes of walking, my brother shouted loudly calling me “My brother.” A distance from us, some monks were heading towards the shrine. He began to call them, “Oh, Brother Boutros Mayfouk, O Brother ...” Thus he spent all day singing and rejoicing until he arrived at his house in Kartaba.

3 - The Crazy of Ehmej (Mk 5, 1-20)

Boutros Moussa witnessed: I lived with a man named Jibrael Youssef Saba from Ehmej, who after his marriage to a girl from the village, was suffering from insanity. He married her despite the objection of her parents. He tore his clothes, uttered insults, and ran naked through the fields. One day I saw him naked from a distance carrying a pistol in his hand and aimed at his chest. The ball came out of the pistol, but it missed him. I ran behind him to his house and found him in the process of cursing and breaking his wife’s rosary beads. Since I was his best friend, I advised his parents to take him to visit Father Sharbel. Initially they thought to bring him to the Grotto of Saint Anthony in Kozhaya as it was the custom in those days to take the mentally ill there to be cured. Following my advice, Jibrael was led naked to the hermitage. Upon reaching it, he refused to go in. We tried in vain to bring him inside. One of the hermits, Father Libaos, tried to force him, but my brother refused to go in.

I told Father Sharbel about his case. He went out and ordered him saying, **“Enter the church.”** He obeyed without the slightest opposition, but sat improperly. The hermit said, **“Kneel upright.”** He knelt with his arms folded like an angel. The hermit read the Bible and prayed on his head. He was healed immediately. With tears in his eyes, he looked at his parents and told them, “Give me my clothes.” Then he left the church, healthy and completely normal. At present, he is in the United States.

4 - Your Son is Alive (Jn 4, 50)

Youssef Antoun Jibrael from Kfarbaal was sick with a high fever for twenty days to the point of unconsciousness. So Boutros Gerges, the muleteer of the convent and Youssef’s cousin, ran to the hermitage to ask Father Sharbel for holy water and for his prayers. Father Sharbel met him at the door and before he could say anything, told him, **“Slowly, when you go back home you will find your sick relative healthy, having regained consciousness, and sitting in his bed.”** And so it was. The muleteer was surprised how Father Sharbel had known the purpose of his visit before he had asked him anything, and how he knew about the healing of Youssef.

5 - Your Son is Well! (Mt 15, 25)

Maron Abi Ramia from Tourzaya came to Father Sharbel at the hermitage for holy water and to ask him to pray for his son who was seriously ill and unconscious. After seeing the hermit and receiving the holy water, he quickly retraced his path. When Father Sharbel saw him rushing eagerly, concerned and worried, he took pity on him. He told Maron’s companion, **“Call him and tell him to go slowly because his son is all right.”** When the man arrived home, he found his son conscious and well even though the doctor, Wakim Beik from Jbeil, had given up all hope of his recovery.

6 - A Barren Woman Conceives (Mk 7, 24-30)

Nehme Mdawar testified: I went to the hermitage of Annaya three months before the death of Father Sharbel with the hope that my barren wife, Zarifeh, would conceive by the intercession of Father Sharbel. Before returning home, Father Makarios, Father Sharbel’s companion, gave me a blessing from the hermit. Four months later, my wife became pregnant and gave birth to a baby girl, followed by three more girls, and then a boy.

7 - The Healing of Ouwaini’s Daughter (Mk 7, 24-30)

Ouwaini witnessed: My wife gave birth to a daughter who suffered from complications of the bile so she couldn’t breastfeed. When Father Sharbel recited a prayer over my daughter’s head, the infant recovered and resumed breastfeeding.

8 - Who Touched Me? (Mk 5, 30)

Father Jibrael Jibrael witnessed: Mariam, the widow of Mikhael Nehmeh from Ehmej, was bleeding for over three months. She had been treated by the doctors, Najib Beik Houry from Ehmej, Wakim Nakhle and Gergi Baz from Jbeil, with no result. So she gave me a Turkish rial to take as an offering to Father Sharbel and asked that I bring a blessed from him. Father Sharbel gave me a scarf, which he took from the Image of Our Lady of the Rosary, which had been placed in the chapel of the hermitage, saying that she should encircle herself with it and she would be cured. As for the rial, he didn’t accept it, but said, **“Put it on the altar until Father Makarios will arrive and receive it.”** As for the woman, as soon as she was surrounded by the scarf, she was immediately healed.

9 - Holy Water in the Medicine

Saba Ouwaini took blessed water from Father Sharbel and mixed it with the medicine that he gave to his patients; the patients benefited greatly from the medicine.

B - The Last Mass

1 - A Sudden Illness

Kafa, the wife of Ouwaini, testified: one Sunday I went with a group of people to participate in the Eucharist at the hermitage of Saint Maron. Father Sharbel began the mass, but when he had finished the words of consecration, a sudden illness attacked him. Father Makarios, his companion, hastily helped him to kneel. Then he got better and continued the mass. When he lifted the Blessed Sacrament, he stiffened and his companion remarked that he raised the Host for an unusually long time. He approached Father Sharbel and found him full of pain. He gently pulled the Host from his hand, and placed it on the paten. Assisted by Brother Boutros, the servant of the hermitage, he made Father Sharbel sit on a chair near the altar. Half an hour after the crisis passed, he completed the Holy Sacrifice despite his illness.

2 - Do Not Leave

Kafa continued: The following Sunday I returned with some women to attend mass at the hermitage. When we entered the church, we found Father Sharbel kneeling, totally absorbed in prayer. At our request, one man inquired about the time of the mass. Because it was very cold and we couldn't wait any longer, he told us, "Don't leave. It's Father Sharbel who will celebrate the mass soon. Wait for him." Shortly afterwards, the hermit put on his chasuble and began the mass. Prior to the words of consecration, the same symptoms began again. They removed his vestments and he remained in the church. When we decided to go back home, Father Makarios stopped us and said "Do not go. Father Sharbel has a pain in his heart. When he gets better, he will resume the mass." Then the hermit got up and continued the Holy Sacrifice.

3 - This Beautiful Child

After Father Sharbel read the words of sanctification, when he raised the host, Rachel, the daughter of Joseph Saba, saw a beautiful child in the place of the Eucharist. She cried to her aunt, "Look how beautiful is this child!" Her aunt silenced her by putting her hand on Rachel's mouth in order to silence her during the mass.

4 - Oh, Father of Truth

When Father Sharbel came to the lifting of the chalice and the Host, during which time the priest recites the prayer that begins, "Oh, Father of Truth." the crisis strongly attacked him again. He remained motionless for a few minutes while raising the chalice and the Host. Father Makarios noticed that he was pale and his feet remained in the same position. As he put on his stole, Father Makarios came trembling and said, "Let down the chalice and the Host." But the hands of Father Sharbel clung firmly to them and he stood motionless like a statue. Father Makarios told him a second time, "Let go of the chalice, Father Sharbel. Give me the Body of Christ; do not be afraid to leave it." Father Makarios snatched the chalice and the Host, while Father Sharbel opened his hands with great difficulty, and then sat him down. After this incident, we looked at Father Makarios and saw him blushing and trembling with fear. After a brief rest, Father Sharbel resumed the mass.

5 - The Hermit Cut the Child

When he broke the bread, Rachele sobbed and her aunt asked her, "Why are you sobbing?" She replied, "Don't you see that the hermit is dividing the child into two?" Her aunt silenced her while Father Sharbel continued his mass until he felt chills and pain in his heart. So Brother Boutros Jawad Meshmesh called his companion, Father Makarios, who came towards him, took off his chasuble, and sat him down. After a long rest, Kafa came up and asked Father Makarios if Father Sharbel can still

continue the mass. He replied, "I don't think so." Then she walked away. After having rested for the third time, he did resume the mass.

6 - He Drank the Blood of Christ

Brother Boutros Meshmesh witnessed: The crisis attacked him again when he was about to drink the Blood of Christ and it prevented him from receiving it. With all his strength, he held the chalice, embraced it with his lips and teeth, and remained motionless until Father Makarios came and tried to take the chalice from him. He barely took it, but Father Sharbel had already managed to consume the Blood of Christ.

7 - I Want to Celebrate the Mass

They took off his vestments and carried him to the kitchen. He was unconscious, yet he kept repeating, "**Oh, Father of Truth. Oh, Jesus. Oh, Mary. Oh, Joseph.**" Because of the bitter cold, Father Makarios put him on a rug made from goatskin to warm him. The snow had already piled up to a height of over one meter. When they covered him, however, he threw away the blanket. Sometime later when he regained consciousness, he said, "I want to say the mass; prepare the altar for me." He also said in Syriac, "**Praise the Lord from Heaven; praise Him in the highest.**" And, "**Lord have mercy on me.**" He kept repeating these words during the last six days of his life.

C - His Last Days

1 - A Piece of Bread Dipped in Water

Brother Francis Kartaba witnessed: I was appointed to serve Father Sharbel during his last illness until his death. The most he ate, after insistence, was a piece of bread dipped in water or some vegetable soup. He systematically refused milk, yogurt and meat. During all the period of his illness, he hadn't removed his hood, habit, sackcloth or the thorny belt. He was stable in one case lying on a rug of goatskin without agitation or crying. We heard nothing from him except these words, "**Oh ... Oh God!**" He also mumbled some words in Syriac that I couldn't understand. When I noticed he had to go to the restroom, I brought the chamber pot, but when it came to my raising his coat, he struggled raising his voice, waving his healthy hand, and saying, "No... No... No. " I replied, "I am your brother. Do not be afraid." Then he remained silent and let me do it.

2 - He Blessed ... Despite His Severe Pain

With his hand, he blessed everyone who entered and asked for his intercession. He was quiet and placid. Nothing was heard from him, neither groaning nor restlessness. Rather, he bore his illness with amazing patience despite the agonizing pain he endured. His suffering was total abandon to the Divine Will while invoking Saints Peter and Paul, the patron saints of the hermitage's church, until his illness reached its peak and he lost consciousness.

3 - Simon of Cyrene (Lk 23, 26)

Ouwaini witnessed: When they called me to visit and treat him medically, he had already lost consciousness. From time to time I noticed he let some words slip out invoking the names of Jesus, Mary and Saint Joseph. In his last hours, I was accompanied by Father Mikhael Abi Ramia, who I summoned to assist him spiritually, and receive his blessing. We stayed at his bedside most of the night of December 24, 1898. In the morning, we returned home to come back to the hermitage around noon.

4 - His Ardent Love!

Father Ramya witnessed: With his ardent love, he repeated throughout the period I spent with him, "**Oh Father of Truth, Jesus, Mary and Saint Peter**" and The Litany for Saint Jacob which he recited many times. I read him the agony prayers.

5 - Wine Mixed with Myrrh (Mk 15, 23)

The Law of the Novice orders: "If the disease persists on the hermit, he is to be brought back to the convent and must abstain from eating meat accepting death as a true hermit." Doctor Najib Al-Khoury instructed that they should give him a fatty soup to sustain his physical weakness, but when he smelled the odor, he stirred, muttered and refused to eat. However, when they told him that this was the order of the Superior Father Antonios Meshmesh, he obeyed and took a little bit.

6 - He Fainted from Crying (Mt 26, 75)

When he was about to pass away, Ouwaini cried out asking Father Makarios, "Raise your hand and give him the absolution." He couldn't because he was crying bitterly, sobbing and refused to approach him; he then fainted from the crying. So Father Ramya replaced him as required by the duty of charity towards the dying. He was delighted by this unique opportunity to have served the agony of this Saint and he gave him the last absolution.

7 - Into Thy hands I Commit My Spirit (Lk 23, 46)

In the last hour of his agony these individuals were present: the priest, Mikhael Abi Ramia, the Vicar Father Maron Meshmesh, Saba Tannous Moussa, Brother Francis Kartaba and Brother Boutros Jawad from Meshmesh. Father Maron asked him, "Shall we call the doctor from Jbeil?" He replied with a shake of his head that meant No. Then by opening and closing his mouth, he bowed his head and died quietly and peacefully saying, "**Lord into Thy hands I commit my spirit.**" After six days of agony it was a virtuous and honorable death with a life full of goodness.

8 - Hemiplegia

The cause of death was hemiplegia (or stroke) at age 70 which coincided with the death of Patriarch Youhanna Al-Hajj, who also died on Saturday, December 24, the Vigil of Christmas. Ouwaini said, "After his death, I prayed the Litany of the Virgin Mary with Father Mikhael, Father Makarios and Brother Boutros, his companions at the hermitage. After sending a messenger to the Monastery to inform them of the death of Father Sharbel, I went home accompanied by Father Mikhael.

D - To the Tomb

1 - They Divided My Garments (Jn 19, 24)

Brother Francis Kartaba witnessed: They wanted to change Father Sharbel's clothes, but Father Mikhael Meshmesh objected saying, "My brothers, put them back until the superior comes. Some might say that those who changed his clothes took what he had." I replied, "He is a hermit. What can he have?" When taking off his habit, we saw below it his cilice, a hair-shirt covering his hands and his chest, falling to his thighs. He had a cloth extension taken from an old coat and had added it from his elbows to his wrist to hide it from the eyes of others. The cilice was stuck to his skin and when we took it off, it scattered and shattered from the sweating and the long time he used it.⁶ Later Father Makarios took it and gave it to Brother Boutros Jawad Meshmesh. We also could see that his hood, which he had not taken off even during his illness, was tied to his neck with a thread made from his hair. The white extension that fell to the back

⁶ The basic motive of the life of Sharbel is Love. He obeyed his Beloved Jesus, and all who represented Him, so he was captured by His Love. He had a deaf ear and a mute tongue to the world. He listened only to the Beloved one. He lived away from women ... and from the beauty of nature, to be faithful to his lover.

under the habit to keep the hood on his head wasn't there anymore; it had been worn out with time and sweat. It was replaced by a piece of folded cloth, stuffed with something thick and heavy, so we said, "This is the money of the hermit!" We opened it and found that the hermit had put pebbles inside to maintain its weight and keep the hood on his head. We realized that the hood caused him pain by pricking him when he was sleeping or moving. We were deeply touched when we saw this. His body was frail, bearing a scar caused by the iron belt around his waist, the width of three fingers. Brother Boutros Jawad Meshmesh removed a chain with a cross and a medallion from his neck.

2 - Christmas of 1898

The snow that reached the height of one meter, and in some places two meters, blocked the roads. The monks were confused saying, "Can we transfer the body of Father Sharbel tomorrow to the convent's cemetery in this hard weather and dense snow? Will we be able to mourn him and let the neighborhood know of his death?" It was as if those same Angels of God, who had announced that night the birth of the Savior to the shepherds of Bethlehem, also proclaimed in the nearby villages of Annaya, Father Sharbel was born in heaven.

The monks of the monastery, the peasants, the villagers of nearby villages, all woke up in the early morning and saw the snow still falling. They believed they would not be able to reach the hermitage to participate in the transfer of the body from the hermitage to the Monastery. They thought that those who were in the hermitage would be obliged to bury him in the yard of the hermitage's church.

Some farmer-members put on their winter clothes, wrapped their heads in turbans that showed only their eyes, and put on boots that reached to their knees. With shovels in hand, they began to clear a path with great courage to reach their saint, and carry him to the monastery. At 8 a.m. a group of youths gathered at the hermitage. At 9 a.m. they brought a stretcher covered with a cloth made from goatskin. Father Makarios came with the brothers and monks to carry the body and put it on the stretcher. Then the young people lifted it on their shoulders and all were ready for the descent from the hermitage to the monastery. They walked the rough path that had been cleared, while the snow continued to fall. There was the risk the path would be blocked again. All feared a possible tilting of the stretcher with the body of Father Sharbel because the path was so difficult to see because of the snow. So the hermit, Father Makarios, said, "Walk and trust in God! Don't worry! Father Sharbel will facilitate the path for us!"

3 - The Transfer of the Body to the Convent

When they carried him out of the hermitage, the clouds had dispersed and the sun appeared before them, while behind them the snow was falling! The procession progressed without difficulty as if they were walking through a path covered with "ostrich feathers." All said, "This is one of the miracles of Father Sharbel!" They took him to the convent and put him in a coffin in the church according to the monks' custom; the superior was absent.

4 - The Funeral Prayer

At 3 p.m. the funeral was held at the convent and because of the density of the snow only the monks and the farmer-partners were present. In addition to Shiites, Hjoula and the surrounding countryside, expressions of grief and depression were on their faces. They came to venerate him and receive his blessing. They knelt before him, kissed his hands, and took a piece of his clothes or his beard as a blessing. The funeral was simple, but very impressive. The attendants were repeating the words from the Scripture, "Precious before the Lord is the death of His Just." They didn't say a eulogy, as if Father Sharbel had intended to die in silence, a testament to his humble life.

5 - The Funeral

The monks witnessed: because the cemetery of the monks was filled with rainwater, some of the monks wanted to bury him in a place prepared especially for him. According to them, he was worthy of a private grave because he was a saint. So they insisted on putting him in a coffin to keep his relics. While the other monks, including the assistant superior, wanted to bury him in the cemetery of the monks according to the rule, the assistant superior said, "If he is a saint, he will preserve his own body." We went down just two steps in the cemetery and dug at the door, because the ground outside tilted in a strong decline. We sunk in mud from the water dripping from the roof. The water penetrated the grave from all sides because the grave was very low compared to the outer surface of the earth around it. The ground was filled with mud and water most of the year. We entered the cemetery one by one. The cornice inside was elevated about 15 centimeters above the ground where there were no bones or skulls. All the bones were gathered at the corner of the cemetery. We laid out stones on which we placed two planks covered with a piece of goatskin carpet. We did this out of respect for Father Sharbel, for the high spiritual position he had in the heart of everyone, and to prevent the possibility of the grave being flooded with water and mud due to the high land around the cemetery.

We buried his body, wrapped with his habit according to the custom of the monks, without ever imagining that he would remain incorrupt. His mouth was closed with a scarf tied around his head, but a layman took it away leaving his mouth open. So we said, "We are dust and to dust we return." All present at the funeral said, "Blessed is he. He is a saint. He went directly to heaven."

6 - Weeping Bitterly

Father Makarios had mourned him bitterly because after his departure he lost a merciful father, a brother, a compassionate friend and an obedient servant, whose intimacy he enjoyed. He was feeling lonely and far from him. He was very distressed by the absence of this heavenly angel as he remembered and longed for him. Because of his deep sadness, he saw Father Sharbel in a dream, in a state of bliss in heaven. The venerable Father Makarios said, "I am not worthy to be in this hermitage where the holy Father Sharbel lived." Eid Nakad said, "Once I saw my mother weeping bitterly and I asked her the reason." she replied, "My uncle, Father Sharbel, died during Christmas Lent in the time of cold and snow." Tannouri added, "How great was my grief when I was informed about his death! I shed abundant tears for a long time."

E - The Light of the Resurrection

1 - The Wonderful Light

Some of the farmer-members witnessed: after the first night of his funeral, from our houses we started to see a bright light, different from the regular light, from the south side, opposite the convent, at a distance of about a ten minute walk. It was like an electric light that appears and disappears, keeping the same pace as long as we looked at it; some people thought initially it was lightning! With this light, we saw the dome and east wall of the church adjoining the cemetery better in the evening than during the day. We came to the monastery and told the monks but they didn't believe us, and didn't pay any attention to us! When we informed the superior, he expressed his disbelief saying, "When you see the light, tell me or send me a signal." The signal was to shoot when we saw the light. Every time the superior heard a shot, he went out of the convent with his monks, but few of them saw anything. So the Superior, Father

Antonios Meshmesh, went to the house of Tannous Shehade opposite the south side of the convent and he saw the light. Whenever we visited our friends, whose houses were opposite the cemetery, we kept seeing this strange light. All those who spent the evening there, saw it. Rumors began to spread and this phenomenon was repeated every night for a month and a half.

Once this news had spread among the residents of Meshmesh, Ehmej Kfarbaal and the Shiite villages of Hejoula, Rass Osta, Mazraat, Al-Ain, and others, they would come to see the light. They actually saw it and confirmed this phenomenon to the monks and to others. Those farmer-partners who also saw it were Tannous Shehade, Elias Abi Suleiman, Magames from Kfoun and, Raja herself, who could see the light from her house in Meshmesh which was located on the summit overlooking the monastery.

2 - Father Sharbel Has Dazzled Me

One night at the end of the evening, the Superior Father Antonios Meshmesh, ordered Brother Boutros Meshmesh to bring drinking water from a fountain located above the cemetery. He took a little jar, a lantern and left to get water. He was gone more than twenty minutes, but the distance can usually be traveled in five minutes. So the monks opened the east room which overlooked the fountain, and called him. He replied from near the cemetery saying, "Father Sharbel appeared to me like a star. That's why I couldn't come back and the lantern gone out." They brought a lantern and found him sitting at the gate of the cemetery shivering, his clothes soiled by mud and the jar intact in his hand. He told them that while he was descending from the fountain, he saw a bright, colorful flame in the shape of a star. It dazzled him and he fell to the ground.

3 - Father Sharbel is...Stupid!

Tannous Shehade from Ehmej, a farmer and worker in the convent, was suffering from pain in his throat, hips, and shoulders. He had been treated by Ouwaini and others for seven years with no result. One day some visitors from Kartaba came to visit the grave of Father Sharbel seeking healing. They approached Tannous Shehade and he mocked them. Brother Elias Al-Mahrini and some farmers who were with him said "Do not say that!" He repeated his words, "You are people with little understanding! When has Father Sharbel become a saint?"

When visitors who came to ask his intercession became numerous, some of them told him, "Pray for Father Sharbel; he will cure you." He replied, "I should ask for healing from this stupid monk? I do not believe in his holiness. Rather, I would seek healing from our ass and not from him!" His wife chastised him saying, "You are an infidel." Then after he fed the cows and returned from the field, he thought he saw a ghost before him. He approached the ghost and saw the hermit with a stole around his neck, a frown on his face, and a crutch in his hand. He asked him, "**What did you say about me today in the field?**" Tannous put his hand on his neck and replied haltingly, "I didn't say anything. I was just kidding, but I beg you, heal me!" He leaned before him crying, "My Father, I beg you." He gave him a blow with the crutch in the place where he had a pain saying, "**Father Sharbel is stupid?**" Then he left him and immediately all his pain disappeared.

4 - And... They Became Friends

A year later, one night Tannous felt a dangerous attack coming on and thought he was about to die. He called the monks, but nobody answered him, so he asked for help from Father Sharbel who appeared to him and touched his cheek saying, "**Stand up; do not be afraid.**" At that moment he stood up healthy.

5 - Mahmud Hamada or Abu Sabta

On February 8th on the Vigil of Saint Maron, the patron saint of the convent, the Prefect of the region of Al-Mounaitra in Tourzaya, Sheikh Mahmud Hamada, a Shiite from Aalmat, came escorted by several policemen in pursuit of some robbers from Houjoula. Among the members of the group, was a Christian Executive Secretary named Abdallah Mouawad. Believing that the robbers were lying in the woods surrounding the Monastery, they tied their horses in Al-Ouwaini during the night and headed towards the convent. They arrived at a place near the convent; it was a gloomy and rainy night. They couldn't continue to Houjoula so they returned to the convent area. Before arriving they saw a light from afar which appeared low at first, and then glittered and shone like a star. It appeared to be coming from near the east door of the convent's church. It was sparkling high and circular in motion; then disappeared.

They believed that the bandits hiding there were communicating by signals, so the Prefect hoped to catch them in the convent. When they reached the convent, the light disappeared! They had already surrounded the monastery so they hurried to the spot where they saw the light and found nothing. They knocked at the door and Brother Boutros Mayfouk replied from inside, "The convent is closed. It is late and the monks are already asleep. This is not the time for hospitality." They replied, "Open for us. When you see who we are, you will no longer refuse!" When he opened the door, they entered and questioned and searched without finding anybody except those who inhabited the convent.

The farmer-members heard the knocking at the convent's gate late at night so they came to see what was going on. They saw Abu Sabta, a Shiite, and the Prefect Sheikh Mahmud Hamada, accompanied by five policemen. They all gathered in the office of the Assistant Superior, Father Maron Meshmesh. The Prefect asked, "Why didn't you open the door for us right away?" They answered, "Because we were asleep." He replied, "How were you asleep? While I was with my men we saw the light on the east side near the portal appearing and disappearing. It is a proof that there is someone awake in the convent." They said, "Where you saw the light is in the cemetery where the hermit, Father Sharbel, is buried. For several nights the farmer-members and many other people have seen the light above the cemetery." Sheikh Mahmud replied, "I swear! At the first opportunity I will tell the Patriarch about this issue and I will publish the news in the newspapers! I myself have known the death of bishops and patriarchs. I have gone through a lot of graves, but I have never seen such a scene that dazzles our eyes!" Then he wrote a verbatim record of what he saw and sent it to His Beatitude, Patriarch Elias Al-Howayek.

F - Thy Just Will Not See Decay (Ps 16, 10)

1 - An Adventure on the Feast of Saint Maron in 1898

Some of the monks witnessed: the night after the passing of Mahmud Hamada, I Father Alouan, went to the grave with Brother Elias Al-Mahrini, Saba Al-Ouwaini, and the muleteer of the convent. The superior was absent and in Jbeil. We opened the grave and found it full of water to the level of the boards supported by two stones on which the body of Father Sharbel was laid. The land was very muddy. The body was wrapped in a tattered monastic tunic and covered with worms from the neck to the feet. We gave thanks to God who had preserved the body of Father Sharbel despite the worms that covered it. He seemed like a monk lying on his back with his hands folded on his chest. His body was in a good condition but the water from the roof had dripped on his face. The water coming from the shutters of the church and the roof of the

convent affected his beard, nose, and lips. It uprooted a part of his hair and pierced the flesh. His right eye was slightly whitened and somewhat more hollowed and damaged than the other eye. Saba Ouwaini took a small piece of wood and cleaned the worms off of Father Sharbel. Then we closed the door with stones. The assistant superior informed the superior about what happened. The Prefect and the Shiite told him, as well, about the light they saw in the convent with the men that night

2 - Attempts to Kidnap It...

While rumors about the appearance of the light multiplied, visitors with their patients flocked from neighboring villages. Some tried to open the door of the tomb by force and at the end they succeeded. They examined the body, plucking hairs from his beard, taking pieces from his fingernails and habit, or soil from the cemetery as a blessing. Therefore, the monks asked the superior for permission to open the grave and he granted their request.

G - Outside the Cemetery

1 - The Transfer of the Body

His Beatitude ordered the body removed from the cemetery and put in an isolated place where nobody was allowed to visit it. So the grave was opened and the body removed before Father Maron Meshmesh, the Assistant Superior Father, Antoun Meshmesh, Father Youssef Meshmesh, and Father Makarios, his companion at the hermitage, Brother Boutros Meshmesh, Brother Elias Meshmesh, and Father Youssef Ehmej. The body was placed in the nave of the church, on the ground, until they could prepare it for a special place out of sight. The monks asked permission to change the clothes that Father Sharbel had worn since his death and to clean the mold from the body, but the Assistant Superior Father Maron, refused their request, and the body was left in the church until morning.

2 - A Light Around the Body

Father Francis Al-Sebrene witnessed: at midnight as usual, Brother Elias Al-Mahrini made his visit to the Holy Sacrament. After reciting the rosary and evening prayers, he came running and woke me. Trembling, he said "I saw something strange. I have never seen anything like it in my life. Come and see. It is a light streaming from the tabernacle, bypassing the body of Father Sharbel, rising to the chandelier and then returning to the tabernacle." I hurried with him to the church, but saw nothing. I argued with him, but he insisted pointing with his finger where he was seeing something substantiated in front of his eyes. Many confirmed that the light no longer appeared from the grave once the body of Father Sharbel had been transferred from the cemetery.

3 - The Body was Bathed with Water

Ouwaini witnessed: when I arrived at the convent, the monastic folk met me saying, "Today Father Sharbel drove away the assistant superior and prevented him from saying the mass in the church. He came early to celebrate the Holy Eucharist but the stench of mold bothered him so much." We went into the church and found the body bathed with water and the strong smell of mildew. We carried the body and laid it in the cloister of the convent on a goatskin mat. We removed the clothes, and wiped the mold with a cotton quilt from the monastery that I kept in my house. At first, it smelled of mold, but then a pleasant smell emanated from it. I kept it as a precious treasure and many have asked me for a piece of it as a blessing and I gave it to them. Unfortunately, a month later someone stole it from my house.

4 - The Condition of the Body

We found the body intact in every way, flexible, fresh, and soft, as if his soul was still in it. His body was blackish in color with a thin belly and a scar on the hip where he had put the thorny, metal belt but there were no wounds on it. His eyebrows, hair, beard and hairy chest were preserved and tended to be gray. The hands and face bore traces of mold that were dazzling white as cotton. After cleaning up the mold from the body, the face and hands seemed to belong to a living, sleeping person with no trace of corruption but it emanated a bad smell. We took off the clothes, but we didn't need to tear them off because the limbs were as flexible as those of a living person. When we washed the mud off the body, we found it in a good condition with a fine normal color. His knees were calloused, but once the mud was removed, the calluses disappeared showing tender soft knees. After having exposed him naked on the roof throughout the day to drive out the moisture, we dressed him in new clothes.

5 - Blood and Water Gushed Forth (Jn 19, 34)

Ouwaini witnessed: I learned that the monks decided to bring out the body and expose it to the sunlight on the roof of the convent and then put it back in the tomb. Water was dripping from the roof and gave an unpleasant smell. I came to the monastery after a short time, but I don't remember exactly which monastic folk were present with Boutros Saba Al-Khoury from Ehmej, who practiced the old medical treatment. The body was transported to the roof of the convent. It was stripped, placed on a straw mat and exposed to the sun and wind.

Deeply touched, I told the monks, "Why do you expose the body like that? Write to His Beatitude, the Patriarch, and he will decide what is appropriate. The idea of the physician, Boutros Saba, to expose the body to the sun and wipe it with alcohol is unnecessary as long as the body isn't showing any decay. You see all the parts are intact even his sexual organ." I then began to turn his body while they watched and found no trace of corruption.

Father Francis Al-Sebrene added: Ouwaini stabbed him in his hip with a surgery knife and instantly blood gushed forth. He took a large bottle, filled it with the blood and kept it with him; the blood was dark red. The monks reprimanded Ouwaini, wiped the wound with cotton and bandaged it, so the blood ceased to flow.

H - In the "Mambash" Room

1 - In the Sun

The monks witnessed: before we put the body in the "exhumation" room in a small attic, we carried it to the roof of the church, and placed it in a coffin to be exposed to the sun. When we took it out of the tomb, it was extremely humid. We thought the body would get dry in the heat because that day as it was very hot. In the evening, the body was already a bit dry so we changed his clothes and put him again on the roof in the sun. However, his body continued to drain.

Brother Boulos Lehfed added: once I saw the body exposed to the sun on the roof of the convent. At that time, I was just a boy looking after the cattle of the convent in the nearby field and I didn't know why they put him on the roof that day. But because I was so young, I didn't care about this issue.

2 - In Fear His Fans Would Steal Him

Above his monastic clothes, he was dressed in a white alp and placed in a simple wooden coffin without a lid. He was then put in a small room located at the top of the northern wall of the church between the vault and the upper steps of the outer

wall that was used to store coal and old vestments. This room was called "Mambash." The access was blocked with a stone covered with clay so that visitors and viewers couldn't reach him. There was fear that the admirers of his virtues and holy life would steal him. Also for confirmation that it was his body and not be confused with other bodies.

People flocked from all areas around Kartaba, visiting Father Sharbel whom they called the saint. The monks prevented them from going to the little room where he was laid and the body remained in the "Mambash" for about two years. Then it was transferred to an isolated room near the gate of the monastery.

3 - The Healing of a Dumb Child (Mk 7, 31-44)

Once a man came from the town of Foutouh with his mute child. After persistence and much solicitation, the monk took him to where the body was laid. The man and his child knelt, prayed, kissed the hand of the Father Sharbel, and returned home. While they were going down the dark stairs, the mute child cried to his father, "Father, I beg you hold me." The father called out, "Thank you Father Sharbel!"

4 - Oozing Out of the "Mambash"

Blood and water were oozing out of the body. It was a combination of red and white blood but there was more white than red. It ran down the stairs and spread into the church emanating the smell of blood. This bothered the monks who noted that it didn't emit any odor until after it oozed out.

I - In the Hands of Father Youssef Khoury

1 - On the Roof of the Convent

Father Youssef Khoury testified: two days after my arrival, the superior asked me to take care of the body. I opened the coffin which had not been properly closed. I saw Father Sharbel in his monastic clothes and noticed no smell that was bad or unpleasant. I found the body in good condition as if it was a monk who died an hour ago. Three days later at night, with the help of Brother Egidious Tannouri, I took his body from a room on the northwest side of the Monastery and laid it naked on the roof exposing it to the wind. I hoped that the abundant blood that dripped from his back and hips would dry. Below his body, I put two white sheets that I changed every day because they would be soaked with water and blood. The blood was more common than water. I rarely let two days go by without changing the sheets. The sweat was leaking profusely from every pore in his body. I kept on exposing the body to the night air for about four months, however, the dry east wind that dried up the land, and sometimes affected the living trees, didn't affect his body. It remained intact and the monks, who sometimes tripped over it, became very scared.

I was doing all of this on my own initiative because the superior was away working on the properties of the convent located between the mountains and the coast. After the blood still oozed profusely from his chest for four months from late spring until late summer, I thought it best to extract the intestines hoping to stop the leakage of the blood. I thought the stomach had absorbed a lot of water when the body was buried in the cemetery.

2 - They Wanted to Stop the Oozing by Any Means Necessary!

Ouwaini witnessed: when the body of Father Sharbel was removed from the tomb, it was oozing a copious amount of red water like that of reddish meat and spreading an unpleasant smell. The monks wanted to stop this leakage by any means necessary. I don't know why? So they asked Boutros Saba, an uncertified doctor, to

view the body. He examined it and advised that it be put in the sun to dry out. The body was exposed for a period to the heat and I wiped it with alcohol as recommended by the doctor. Then it was put it back in the old coffin, without a lid, in a room on the ground floor but it continued to ooze even more than before.

3 - For the Reburial of the Body

Father Youssef Khoury witnessed: the visitors were numerous and complained of the smell that emanated from the body. Even I smelled it, so sometimes I sprinkled the floor and around the coffin with perfume. I normally used about three bottles. Father Elias Meshmesh proposed the body be reburied, but the monks opposed this suggestion. I then sought advice from the Superior Father Mikhael Tannouri, who suggested the body be put back into the grave. I replied, "It's not good for our reputation to return it to the cemetery after taking it out for it is now well known about the miracles he has performed. I think we should take out the intestines. Perhaps the body would get dry and there would be no seepage or odor." I think he told me, "Do what you want."

4 - The Surgery!

Father Youssef Khoury testified: I consulted Ouwaini who was living near the convent. He said, "Don't dare touch the body of Father Sharbel because he performed miracles during his lifetime. I fear that would cause the death of my children." I replied, "We have no intention of offending him by extracting his stomach, but only want to stop the oozing of the blood." He agreed and we kept the matter secret. I went along with Saba during the day but I cannot remember the hour. With a lancet he opened the hip below the ribs, entered his hand and extracted the stomach and the intestines. We found them so fresh, like the ones of a sheep that had been slaughtered just an hour ago, without any trace of corruption or worms. The smell was the same as the odor of blood effluent from a corpse but I don't remember any unpleasant odor. I put the internal organs in a regular metal container. There was no blood from the part of the body that we opened and I don't remember if any blood and water came out from the stomach and intestines. The heart, lungs, liver and gallbladder were intact; the same as the ones of a recently slaughtered sheep. The water was stained with blood and flowed abundantly. We carried the organs to an old part of the church with no roof called "Saint Georges" where we dug a hole in a corner and buried them that night. I told myself, "If the body will transfer to Rome to justify that Sharbel is a saint, at least we kept something from it." I buried the closed metal container. After a while, I asked Brother Egidious Tannouri, who accompanied me, to examine the stomach and intestines. He checked saying that he found the body empty. I informed the superior when he came back about what I did.

5 - Ouwaini Distributed Blessings to His Patients

Later Ouwaini went alone, dug up and took the stomach! Brother Tanios Al-Qady told us that he put the organs in a pot, boiled them, and distributed them as blessings to his patients. This was obvious from the questions asked by the Commission of Inquiry. "It's well known that you used the blood of this body in order to treat patients and they were cured by his blood! The quantity you took must have been great!"

Ouwaini said he felt deep regret in his heart and added, "I remember I grabbed the liver and the heart. The heart was red; oozing blood mixed with water, and had no smell at all. Since then, my act was constantly present in my mind and I blamed myself because I didn't keep the heart in my house as a precious treasure. I asked him earnestly to let me have the heart, or a part of what I had removed, but he didn't allow me to have anything.

6 - He Continued to Ooze

Father Youssef Khoury testified: the surgery was unsuccessful because the body continued to ooze. The smell didn't emanate from the body, but from the seepage. I didn't know where the liquid and smell came from! The body was reduced to skin and bones! This was sufficient proof that we were dealing with a strange and amazing fact. We and the laity deeply believe in the sanctity of Father Sharbel and visitors came from all over seeking his intercession. I felt a strong odor before changing the wet and stained clothes, and then after changing and replacing them with clean ones, the smell was reduced, but remained strong on the exchanged clothes. The lawyer for the beatification process brought an alb which had been laid on the body for a week and removed it yesterday for examination and evidence. I smelled the scent and noted that this is the same strong smell that I tried my best to take away and the yellowish-red spots on this alb are the same as before but the leakage was more abundant.

7 - Extraction of the Brain

The medical examination showed when the brain had been extracted that the skull was opened to the occipital bone which had been pierced by a very sharp instrument. Father Youssef Khoury witnessed: I believe that this act was done by one of the visitors to take as a blessing during the period of two years and eight months when I assumed responsibility for the body. If I had not been so diligent in keeping it, the visitors would have taken pieces for blessings, especially after his miracles became well known. In particular, after the seepage of blood and water during the miracle of Tabarja's paralytic. Most visitors had known him during his lifetime because he performed miracles for them, so they tried to have a souvenir when they asked for his intercession during difficult times.

It seemed to me that Saba Ouwaini did this extraction because of his firm belief in the sanctity of Father Sharbel, and to use it as a medicine to cure his patients. My hypothesis is based on the fact that Saba was very attached to Father Sharbel, deeply respecting his virtues, and had believed in his ability to perform miracles. After the death of Father Sharbel, Saba used to pray one Our Father and a Hail Mary before preparing the medication seeking his intercession for the healing of the sick. He also asked me to wipe the body of Father Sharbel with some towels so he could keep them in his house. I think maybe after I left the convent, Saba removed the brain. The beatification lawyer hypothesized that the doctors extracted the brain secretly.

8 - Recovering from Total Paralysis (Mt 9, 1-8)

Maryam Zuwain witnessed: following the birth of my eldest daughter, Abla, I was suffering from a disease of the hands, feet and the rest of my body for over six months. As a result of this disease, I was unable to move and became like a piece of wood. My pain was unbearable and my mother-in-law, Jalileh, took care of me. I remember when my daughter was crying and no one was there. So I bent over, raised her by my teeth, and laid her on my chest to breastfeed her because I was unable to hold her with my hands. Once she fell from my chest and clung to a hot stove. In vain I tried to save her. I felt like I was in a dream in which I tried to walk, but couldn't move. I tried three times to get up for my only daughter was threatened to be burned, but I couldn't move. I shouted with all my strength for help and a man named Fares Lahoud, who was flattening the roof in the rain, ran and caught her.

My disease is not the type of depression that can be cured by emotional stimuli but what could be more emotional than seeing my little girl fall into a charcoal stove to stimulate my nerves, my maternal feelings, forget my pain, and prompt me to save her. Yet I remained paralyzed and my condition worsened. This paralysis wasn't only on my hands and feet but on my whole body, including my lower jaw, so I couldn't eat for

three months except to drink milk. I followed multiple treatments from many doctors with no result, so I surrendered to sadness and tears. I despaired of being healed.

One day a Shiite woman from the village of Ferret came into my house asking for alms. She asked me, "What's wrong with you?" Crying I told her about my illness and she replied, "Not far from here there is a saint who is performing miracles. His name is Saint Sharbel from the Monastery of Saint Maron. Go there and you will be cured of your illness." Father Roukoz Meshmesh was in our village at that time and I called him to ask if what the Shiite woman told me is true. He replied, "Yes it's true." He encouraged me to go and visit Saint Sharbel. I decided to make a visit to the tomb of Saint Sharbel and made a vow to him. Then I told my husband about my vow and my insistence on visiting the tomb. He rushed and called a mule driver who took me to Annaya with my aunt Wardeh. I suffered a lot during this trip. The entire way the carrier supported me on one side and my aunt with another woman on the other side. In my sickness, I wasn't able to change my clothes or eat by myself, but my mother-in-law took care of everything.

Arriving at the convent, they took me to the tomb. I was crying from pain and fatigue because I had spent five hours on the back of the mule from my village of Yahshouch to the convent. I was praying fervently and asking Saint Sharbel to heal me and let me go back walking. Then they took me to the cemetery where the body of the Saint was first laid to rest. The Superior, Father Mikhael Tannouri, came and was very touched by my situation. He encouraged me and told me, "Be strong in your faith and you will be healed today." He brought me water from used to wash the hands of the saint and old cloths that were soaked with blood that had exuded from his body. My aunt and the woman with her, Karimeh Azar Karam from Yahshouch, wiped my body, hands and feet with this water and cloths. At once I felt strength in my right hand while I was in the cemetery. I started moving my fingers and supporting myself with my hand. I felt the pain gradually leaving my left hand which was more deficient and paralyzed with pain. While I was at the cemetery, I felt my whole body strengthen and I realized that I was on my way to recovery through the intercession of Saint Sharbel. I left the cemetery by myself and went home on the back of the mule without eating anything because I made a vow not to eat or drink before my healing. Prayer and crying were my food. The superior constantly encouraged me and strengthened my faith. When I got on the mule, I needed no help. I felt that my left hand was tingling. When we arrived at the village of Sannour, I had absolutely no pain. I was sure of my recovery. I moved my hands and my feet normally, exalted with joy. I got down from the mule and walked about fifteen minutes on our way back. I arrived home the same day, completely cured through the intercession of Saint Sharbel, and since then I pray to Saint Sharbel daily. My relatives rejoiced and that was a day of joy and pleasure for all of us.

9 - Tabarja Paralytic (Mk 2, 1-12)

Jerges Sassine witnessed: I saw the paralytic of Tabarja named Beshara Antoun Azzi when he was brought to the tomb of Saint Sharbel transported on a mule. In my presence, he was carried down to the gate of the convent unable to move his hands and feet. We took him into the room on the northwest side where the body was laid. His companions explained to me that he was afflicted by a stroke since infancy. At the age of fifteen he became seriously ill and disabled. Shortly thereafter, he was brought back to the portal and he began to move his hands and feet; easily stretching them back and forth and returned back to his village.

In the spring I saw him walking to the monastery and I asked him, "Are you Beshara Azzi who came last summer to this convent?" He replied, "Yes I am the one

who has been cured of his illness and now I'm visiting Saint Sharbel to thank him because without him I would have never walked my entire life." In fact, every year he comes twice in summer and spring carrying votive offerings for Saint Sharbel, and then returns home without eating anything. I asked him, "Why don't you eat in the convent?" He replied, "I have vowed not to eat anything!"

Brother Francis Kartaba added: When I was appointed to serve the guests in the convent, Beshara Azzi of Tabarja, one of the guests, came to me carrying a basket containing grains, nuts and other gifts. He gave it to me saying, "I have collected these offerings for the convent in gratitude to Saint Sharbel." Each time the superior told him, "My son, you are poor; take back what you have collected."

Eid Nakad said: Beshara asked us to show him the house in which Father Sharbel was born and brought up. When we asked the purpose of his visit, he told us he was paralyzed and Father Sharbel cured him. So each year he travels the villages of Lebanon expressing his gratitude to Father Sharbel and collecting alms. We celebrated with him, especially my mother, and he continued to come to Bekaa Kafra for three years to celebrate.

J - The Lodging

1 - The Women at a Separate Location

The feeling of faith prompted the pilgrims to go walking to the Monastery at Annaya, traveling distances of more than fifty kilometers, including women, children, the sick, and the poor, who were unable to afford pack animals, but came walking. Some walked barefoot, asking God to have mercy on them, and gratify them with the cure of their patients from an incurable disease or a chronic infirmity, such as a limp, deafness, or paralysis. The pilgrims arrived at the convent exhausted after two to three days walking and, because the monastery is in the wilderness, there was no place to shelter them. In addition, women were forbidden to enter the Monastery, even the church. There was no room to accommodate people except in a dark basement to the right of the entrance which was called the lodging or the accommodation. The visitors stayed in this lodging. The men entered the church of the convent while the women remained in the lodging and attended mass standing near the window of the church on the south side just like the women of the farmer-members in Annaya.

2 - The Insistence of Visitors

The men insisted on seeing the body of Father Sharbel on the first step of the "Mambash" room inside the church near the north wall. They knelt praying and imploring, while the women knelt near the north wall outside the convent. There, in the open air, they cried begging for help, praying, kissing the wall, or holding a handful of earth to take home for their patients. The monks took pity on the visitors, especially, Father Youssef Khoury, who allowed the men access to the small room to see Saint Sharbel in his modest coffin. The visitors who could see Father Sharbel were comforted by the sight of his preserved body and returned home happy telling others they had seen Father Sharbel sleeping like a living human being! The women were very disappointed to be deprived of seeing the body of Father Sharbel so they asked the monks with abundant tears to allow them to see it.

3 - The Lodging is Converted Into a Chapel

Two years passed, the number of visitors multiplied, and their insistence to allow them to see the body of Father Sharbel increased. Father Youssef Khoury suggested at a local council that they transform the lodging into a chapel which

would enable women to participate in the mass. They would put the body in a glass-fronted cabinet so that visitors could see him. He would be responsible to prevent any veneration forbidden by the church. The proposal was raised to the superior general who requested the authorization of the Patriarch. So the lodging was transformed into a chapel for the celebration of the Holy Eucharist on Sundays and feast days. The monks put the body in a room outside the right portal of the convent. On cold days female visitors were unable to hear the mass through the outside window of the church and were unable to enter the church because of the ban. In 1901, by order of the superior, they placed a portable altar for the female visitors to celebrate mass.

4 - The Body is Standing

Father Youssef Khoury prepared a glass-fronted cabinet and laid the body upright supported by two crutches under both armpits. It was always oozing, and from time to time, its clothes were changed. The clothes consisted of the regular monastic habit and a stole around the neck. The upper cabinet was glazed in a wooden frame that opened in two parts like shutters.

Father Moubarak Tabet witnessed: I saw a coffin of wood leaning against the wall and the body of Father Sharbel stood up on his feet. His whole body was as if he was still alive. His eyes were closed and he was wearing a white alb that was wet with sweat and blood. I took his hand to kiss it and I found it more supple than mine; his skin was soft and of natural color, but yellowed by death. The joy of the faithful to see the body upright was great because they wanted him standing among them. In contrary, most of the monks were dissatisfied with this position because they felt it was a childish idea that was desecrating the body Father Sharbel.

5 - The Healing of a Girl and the Raising of a Dead Child (Jn 11, 1-44)

Maryam Shamoun witnessed: My little girl, Esther, suffered from the age of three with epileptic seizures and fainting. I brought her to Saba, a healer who had no medical training, with no results. I made a vow to Saint Sharbel and she was healed. Then I gave birth to a boy who died on April 17, 1901. My third child at the age of one year suffered from epilepsy for more than eight days. Since he was a child, we didn't understand his illness and his condition became gradually worse. In the first days of his illness, he woke up and nursed little bit. Then he stopped nursing and lost consciousness. When I lost hope of seeing him cured, and it was clear that he's going to die like his brother, I was desperate. I decided to take him to the tomb of Saint Sharbel. I used to attend his mass during his lifetime in the hermitage of Saint Peter. **His mass cheered me up, impressed me, and made me feel a deep reverence.** So I carried my child alone and walked. I didn't want anyone to assist me and prayed God may have mercy on my fatigue and save him. In route, I met a woman who took pity on me, and carried him for me. Then I met another woman who looked at the child and said, "Where do you take the child? Do not wear yourself out! The child is dead!" I started screaming and crying as I saw my baby dead between my hands. The two women pinched the child and shook him but he showed no signs of life. I was about to go back. I was weeping over my dead child and saw it useless to continue. However, they encouraged me and we continued walking, hoping that Father Sharbel would cure him. This happened in Farshaa, a farm near Meshmesh, about an hour away from the convent. I said to the woman carrying my child, "Let's depend on God and go to Father Sharbel." Upon our arrival at the convent, I called my cousin, Father Elias Ehmej. When he went down into the room where my child's body was laid, he saw me kneeling by the coffin crying. I was accompanied by two women standing near the door. On the step of the altar, I put my dead child wrapped in his clothes. He turned to me and said, "Are you crazy? Why did you bring this funeral here?" He hurt me with these words, but I didn't answer. The

two women told him, "Your cousin came seeking the intercession of Father Sharbel to heal her sick son." He went in and found the child dead, his mouth shut. He turned him several times and opened his mouth but he felt no sign of life! I said to my companions, "Put the child on the ground as the deceased should be placed, near the coffin of the saint, before the altar with his face toward the sea. If Father Sharbel is a saint, he will raise him up." Then Father Elias opened the coffin, washed the hands of Father Sharbel with water, opened the mouth of the child with a spoon of incense, and poured the water into the mouth of the child. After the first, second, and third time, the child swallowed the water and started breathing. I sobbed deeply and we were very amazed. He put a candle in my son's hand, and gave him back to me. I breastfed him and he suckled. I began to weep with joy. I returned home happy with the woman who helped me. My son is already a young man -- full of life and health.

6 - A Mysterious Hand

Reverend Ibrahim Haqlani was flattening the roof of his bedroom located on the south side of the convent of Annaya while using a cylinder stone. When he reached the edge of the roof, a violent storm arose and he fell down with the cylinder stone from a height of four meters. His brothers, the monks, hastened to help him and were amazed when they found him running toward the gate of the convent unharmed. When they asked what happened with him, he replied, "When I slipped with the cylinder stone, I screamed, "Father Sharbel help me!" I felt as if a hand was carrying me and then putting me down gently on the ground after taking the cylinder stone away from me."

K- In the Chapel

1 - Transfer of the Body

Dr. Georges Shekralah made a coffin of walnut wood worthy of Father Sharbel, and in the autumn of 1909, Boutros Daher carried it on the back of a mule from Beirut. He asked the monks to put it in a proper place. The body was transferred to a larger room, located south of the first one in the basement at the southeast corner of the convent, left of the gate. The ground is paved with stones and the room is arched with stones as well. The coffin was placed horizontally in a corner and closed. Many people from the neighborhood and the farmer-members came to attend the handover ceremony of the body. No epitaph had been placed on the tomb of Father Sharbel, neither during his funeral, nor after his transfer. Father Boutros Damien witnessed: I was present when the body was moved into the chapel. We dressed him in an alb, but the body still oozed a special liquid that soaked the alb and the other clothes, so we had to change them every few days. The people were flocking to visit him, kissing his hand, soliciting his blessing to cure their diseases, and asking for the blessing of God through him.

2 - Visiting the Tomb

The visitors were many and from all nations and all races. They were pleading for his intercession, as we usually ask from the saints, because they believed in his holiness and goodness. Those who owned livestock offered some of them to the convent. Many people of Christian communities, and non-Christians, flocked to visit him to cure them from their illnesses. When many of them reached the Monastery grounds, they continued crawling on their hands and knees to show respect.

3 - I Took His Hand and Put It on My Sick Eye

Akel Hayek witnessed: A neurological disease affected my right eye. On June 8, 1903, my eye was continuously twitching. The doctors in Beirut were unable to cure

it. I heard about Father Sharbel, so I went to visit him. I found him laid out in a coffin in a room in the Monastery. I took his hand and put it on my sick eye. After a short period of time, the pain disappeared and it returned to normal.

L - Dr. George Shekrallah

1 - I Was Amazed

As a physician, when I saw him for the first time, I was stunned. I have never seen, heard, or read about a similar case in any medical book. I examined his body from a purely scientific point of view; wanting to understand the mystery of his body. After a general examination of the entire body, I found it uncorrupted. Some of his muscles remained flexible, and a part of his joints were folded. Some of his hair and beard still remained, despite the pulls applied by the visitors, who took them as relics. The rest of his organs suffered no damage, with the exception of his eye, which was deformed from the water which dripped while he was buried in the tomb. As for his stomach, I found it like that of a living body, without any apparent of damage. I didn't notice it had been opened; other than it was slightly dried by time.

2 - Plasma or Sores Serum (Lk 22, 44)

The strangest phenomenon that confused me was that I saw, with my own eyes, the stains on his white clothes from a viscous substance which emanated from his pores. These stains matched the color and density of normal plasma which exude from living bodies riddled with sores.

As for the smell, it resembled to the smell of protoplasmic substances that are excreted from the body during illness. The smell wasn't unpleasant; rather it was moldy. The body was as soft as it was at the time of his death. It was as if he were sweating, so we wiped it with tissues, and kept them as blessings. Ouwaini filled a bottle with this fluid so people knew that it had a blessing from the body of Father Sharbel and they took this fluid to use in case of sickness.

3 - The Mystery of the Body!

The attorney for the canonization process asked, "Is it possible for natural circumstances such as freezing cold, excess water, or reasons prior to death, such as abstaining from meat, low food intake, mortification of the body, or a vegetarian diet, could cause the preservation of the body after death?"

He replied, "I have never experienced or read that such ills could be cause in a corpse with such symptoms." After examining the body, I consulted with competent physicians in Beirut and Europe, where I have traveled several times, and nobody was able to provide an explanation regarding this matter. The case of this body is unique, and no doctor has ever seen anything like it. Nobody could tell me if such a case had ever been reported in medical history. I constantly sought to obtain an explanation on whether there was a similar case in the world where a body had been preserved under such circumstances.

4 - Impossible!

Then he asked him, "Do you think the status of this body is natural or supernatural? Or do you think a clever monk managed to discover a drug that can preserve the body?"

He replied, "My personal conviction is based on my study and experience after having examined the body two or three times a year for seventeen years since 1909. I would say that this body is preserved by a supernatural force. If we assumed that a monk would have discovered a drug that can keep the body so well preserved, we would present the following:

First: If this is proven true, the inventor of this amazing discovery would earn the admiration and esteem of the entire scientific community, exceeding the accomplishments of such people as the great scientist, Louis Pasteur. Medical scientists are making every effort to discover a drug that could preserve a corpse but they haven't been able to preserve it properly without odor for a period of more than two weeks. As for the seepage from this body, it would have never occurred to medical scientists to consider it. Also, such a discovery would be impossible considering the continuous seepage. It is well known that the healthy body of a living man contains an average of five liters of blood with only three liters of plasma. This fluid could be secreted at a rate of 60%, while the remaining 40% is salt, blood cells, and solids. If the body secretes after death, the remaining natural plasma in the pores secretes a gram or two each day. It follows that the quantity of secreted plasma has exceeded the stored plasma in his body at the time of his death. In addition, the total amount of plasma would be depleted within eight years of death, if we consider that the secretion was fully preserved, and didn't lose some amount due to evaporation. What I've observed is that the body is oozing over one gram per day. Consequently, the liquid would be depleted even if the body of Father Sharbel secreted only one gram daily.

Second: You know better than me about the inadequate education of the monks in the medical field, especially those of this convent who spend their days in the field, and know nothing except prayer and manual labor. I believe that the simplicity of the monks, their inexperience, and failure to take care of the body, were sufficient to advance the corruption of the body unless a supernatural force had protected it."

I also said, "During the war I saw people die of hunger after having spent long days without food. Their stomachs were empty, dry, and their bodies deteriorated within seven hours of their death. Also a typhoid patient, who survived about twenty-five days while drinking only water, as the body decomposed, the remaining water secreted from his body within a few hours after death. In addition, cold, humidity, and heat, help to decompose the body. All these factors are not protective elements, but rather destructive elements for the body. Yet all these phenomena have been exposed to the body of Father Sharbel. Assuming that the monks had discovered the ancient Egyptian method of mummification, how could they stimulate the body to exude fluid?"

In other words, the body of Father Sharbel is preserved by a supernatural force and I am ready to pay the sum of 10,000 francs as an award, a high sum for me, to the one who can keep a corpse in this same state."

5 - This is Medically Impossible!

The attorney in the canonization process asked him, "Couldn't this secretion be a result of an injection of plasma into the body through a syringe?"

He replied, "It is medically impossible because the plasma found in the body of man is not a pharmaceutical product. I studied pharmaceuticals before I studied medicine and I practiced it for some time. I also have my legal degree from the School of Lyon. Who can donate blood for twenty-seven years[1] to get it then injected into the body of Father Sharbel? Moreover, the operation of the extraction of plasma from the blood can only be made by specialists equipped with special instruments for this work. If this is possible, it wouldn't remain a secret. Who among the monks, renowned for their simplicity, could obtain the plasma, and be able to use it? Let's assume all this was available. It would be impossible to inject the corpse twenty-seven years after death. Rather, it becomes impossible within a month after death to do this because the veins and arteries through which the plasma must pass, dry up shortly after death, and even the pores of the body are blocked to prevent seepage.

6 - It Only Delays the Corruption!

He also asked him, "Could the extraction of the heart and intestines be the result of this seepage?" He replied, "The taking of the heart and intestine didn't result in anything of this nature and the extraction of the stomach, where corruption starts, would only delay decay for a certain amount of time."

M - Other Examinations

1 - Dr Elias Anaissi

Dr. Elias Anaissi witnessed: I saw in the convent of Saint Maron – Annaya, the body of Father Sharbel. When I approached the coffin, I smelled an indescribable odor from the body. It was similar to odors that emanate from a living body. After I had focused and examined it, I saw a substance oozing from the pores -- a strange and scientifically inexplicable phenomenon in a body inert for many years. I repeated the examination on the body several times at different periods and it remained as it was. Signed on October 16, 1926.

2 - Examinations of 1927

The body was examined and it was found that the entire body was yellowish red with the skin mostly dry, but still soft on the hands and the back. The muscles were absorbent and the absorption was particularly evident under the skin. The skin, though dried, was exuding a sticky substance that had the color of solid plasma. The smell was similar to decaying plasma, as if the substance decomposed as soon as it emerged from invisible pores.

A significant amount of hair still existed on the chest, chin, head, and hands, and also in all sections of the body where hair grows. The hair that was present during his lifetime still remained the same as a living body. The neck shows sections of the bones, cartilage, and skin, the same as in dead bodies before the corruption process begins. The eyes and nose are a little deformed because of the water dripping from the roof of the tomb where he was first buried. The bones, as well as the nails, are well preserved. The joints are still moving and folding. The chest and back still have the same appearance of a body shortly after death. The belly is thin and we could see a twenty centimeter long scar from the lower sternum to the left thigh a result of surgery prior to his death. In the stomach there appear to be traces of an iron-like color, more salient than the body color. Perhaps this is an indication that Father Sharbel was wearing an iron belt. The sexual organs are still visible and the knees bore the marks of callosity indicative to his long periods of kneeling. The soles of his feet and hands, especially the left hand, which was exposed the most to sight and touch, showed scratches caused by human hands. The flesh visible beneath the skin was a reddish white. Below the skull there is a four centimeter by one centimeter opening which is the result of a slashing by a knife. All the deformities on the body were caused by human hands, except for the eyes and nose, which have been deformed by the instillation of water. After Dr. George Shekrallah opened the abdomen from left to right, and the middle of the chest, the abdomen was reopened and showed very little of his gut. The intestines, stomach and liver were extracted. As for the skin and its layers, they were still preserved and flexible. They opened the layers of the skin before the committee and the layers were still intact and uncorrupted like those of an animal slaughtered just two days ago.

N - Till the Year 1950

1 - The Transfer of the Body

In 1927, the body of Father Sharbel was laid in the tomb by the Order of the Holy See. The four walls were coated with sand which had been molded with lime and covered with a layer of cement. The same layer of plaster covered the ground, and the walls and ceiling were bleached with lime. That tomb was inside the convent on the ground floor in the wall near the south gate, formerly used as a henhouse. This basement became a new tomb for Father Sharbel and he remained there from 1927 until April, 1950. On the epitaph it was written only the following expression, "This is the Tomb of Father Sharbel."

2 - Saint Veronica's Veil

Because it was forbidden for women to enter the church, the superior general ordered the door of the church opened to allow women to pass through it. At the same time, the visitors observed some moisture in the bottom of the wall where the coffin had been placed, so they informed the superior of the Monastery. The superior and the monks suspected rain might have infiltrated inside the tomb and affected the body. The superior came, accompanied by Immanuel Immanuel, at 10 p.m. and started digging. Immanuel asked the superior, "What do you think if I dig and see what's under the saint?" He replied, "Do what you want."

Immanuel witnessed: The Superior, Father Boutros Abi Younes, asked me in early February of 1950 to execute the Order to begin excavation. I began by removing the stones to see if moisture had damaged the tomb or the body. I opened the tomb and went down, lantern in hand, and found it dry on all sides. But I saw water dripping from the coffin and it turned into a puddle. When I found the body, the clothes were all wet. The seepage of liquid from the body was stored in the coffin which had been rusted by zinc. This made a hole where the water dripped outside and poured out from the wall and the people saw it. I asked the superior to bring me the baptismal vessel from the church with some towels.

Before me laid a man! Yes a man! A dead man! His hand was so soft I dared to kiss it! His hands were seeping water as if he was a living man who was sweating. The more I wiped his sweat the more he oozed profusely! I cut out a twenty centimeter by five centimeter piece of his flesh. Then I took another piece, smaller than the first, and put it in my pocket. I also pulled up two canines and a tooth. The superior came and wiped the face and hands of Father Sharbel with a white cloth; his image was imprinted on it and we then closed the tomb.

The next day we went to Beirut and informed Superior General Andari about what we had done. He blamed the superior of the Monastery for having made this decision without seeking the proper approval of authority. The latter apologized saying that he only sought to know the source of the water because he feared it would penetrate and corrupt the body. Then the Superior General informed the Commission on Investigation, including the Lawyer of Faith, Father Mansour Awad, about what had happened. The next day people came by the thousands to Annaya to visit the tomb of Father Sharbel. We didn't know how they knew about what had happened, and many miracles and healings took place through Father Sharbel's intercession. They were also reported to the press and listed in the records of the Monastery. Whoever enters the monastery now, can see near the gate a room full of crutches left behind by those who obtained healing through the intercession of Father Sharbel -- a sign of their gratitude.

3 - Shroud of Jesus Christ

Abbot Andari explained: Then a petition was presented to the Patriarch to appoint a committee of doctors to examine the body. The appointed doctors were: Youssef Hitti, Shikri Milane and Teophile Maron. On April 22, 1950, the Committee of the General Orders, the prelates, Bishop Aql, the Vicar of the Patriarch, the attorney for the canonization process, Father Mansour Awad, and an innumerable crowd of people, gathered at the tomb. No one knew how the people were informed about the event. The tomb was opened, the coffin placed in the church and the doctors opened it before all present. They found the clothes, mat, pillows and dalmatic all wet. These are all now preserved in the convent of Saint Maron. The doctors testified that the water didn't come from outside, but inside from the body of Father Sharbel. They took a small sample from the body to examine it in the laboratory. They wrote a detailed report about everything they saw and raised the body to the body, which had been placed naked on the sheet, to be examined. The features of the body of Father Sharbel were found imprinted on the sheet such as the image of Christ was imprinted on the Shroud at the moment of Resurrection.

4 - What Was Found in the Tomb and in the Coffin?

The body was found sweating. Red blood had accumulated on the body itself and the priestly clothes. The plasma had accumulated in the coffin and covered the body and the clothes. It filled the coffin up to the shoulders of the body and that part of the dalmatic was worn out. The tube, which was placed inside, was rusted. Also the bottom of the wood coffin was worn out with the zinc also worn out and split under the feet. The white blood or plasma spilled over the stone underneath and leaked on the western wall to the outside. The black blood was all frosted and attached to the skin. The body was still soft inside and the joints of the arms and feet could be folded.

5 - Examination of the Body and Closure of the Tomb

After the examination of the body, it was dressed with new clothes, a new chasuble, and put back into the same coffin. Then the body placed into the tomb. After the coffin had been sealed with red wax, the access was blocked with stones and cement. The old clothing was entrusted to the Prosecutor of Faith with a quantity of soil that had been mixed with plasma secreted from the body.

On August 1950, they reopened the tomb and the examination took place before a clerical committee consisting of Bishop Boulos Aql, the Prosecutor of Faith, Father Mansour Awad, Bishop Abdallah Njeim, the Superior General Father Andari, the council, and many priests and monks. Also, a committee of doctors was present which consisted of the doctors from the previous commission with Dr. Mershed Khater, the Dean of the Faculty of Medicine in Damascus, an Armenian doctor who came especially from Egypt to examine the body, Dr. Elias Al-Khoury, who was the Minister of Health, and other doctors. Also the Mayor of Kesrwan, Toufiq Haidar, was present with the representative of the former President, Mansour Lahhoud, and the wife of the ex-president, Mrs. Laure Khoury, along with many others. After the committee members had taken the oath in the chapel, they opened the tomb before the whole assembly and took out the coffin. Then the doctors entered the tomb. Dr. Mourshed Khater examined the walls, which proved to be dry, and determined there was no way that water could enter the tomb through the walls. They found a burgundy colored secretion under the coffin towards the feet. They opened the coffin and saw the chasuble, mat, and pillows, all wet with the fluid oozing from the body. In the hood they could see mold. The body was still intact and in the same condition. Dr. Theophile Maron cut a little piece of flesh from his chest and put it in a glass vial. The members of the committee and all those assembled saw the plasma oozing from the cut. Then

they changed his clothes, the chasuble, mat, and pillows. They sealed the coffin, put it back into the tomb, and closed it as before. A detailed report describing the entire examination was written and signed by the doctors and the clerical committee. A copy was placed in the coffin and another delivered to the lawyer for the canonization process. When the coffin was opened on April 23, 1950, they found the metal container

in which they had put the report at the time of burial in 1927, was worn out and when touched it broke, but the report itself was intact except that the edges were stained with a maroon color due to the sweating.

6 - Exposition of the Body and Visits

When the body was transferred for the last time, permission was given to expose it by Order of Ecclesiastical Decree. The following people came to visit the body: the Syriac Catholic Patriarch, Cardinal Tabbouni, Cardinal Aghajanian and a large group of clergy with many bishops, including Bishops Njeim and Aql, and other Maronite bishops. Patriarch Antoun Arida celebrated the mass in the hermitage of Saints Peter and Paul on their feast day.

People flocked to visit his tomb from all levels of society, young and old, illiterate and educated, Christians and non-Christians. They came from Lebanon, the Arab countries, Europe, the United States, and from all over the world. Most of these visitors were suffering from various illnesses, disabilities and problems, which needed help and divine assistance. Among the visitors, President Beshara Al-Khoury, ministers, deputies, and other statesmen. The groups continued to flock to his tomb, in particular on Sundays and holy days, driven by their belief in the sanctity of Father Sharbel and the efficacy of his intercession.

O - Sharbel's Image

1 - A Monk With a Transparent Body!

Brother Elias Nohra witnessed: on Monday May 8, 1950, the day of the feast of Saint John the Evangelist, Patron of our Missionaries Congregation, I headed under the order of the Principal of the Apostles' School in Jounieh, Father Youssef Merhi, who would later become a bishop, to visit the Monastery of Saint Maron with Father Boutros Shalhoub, Father Sassine Zaidan, professed brothers, novices, scholars and servants. We were about 40 people in a school bus. Arriving at noon, we visited the church of the tomb of Saint Sharbel and the convent. The crowd was immense. The number of patients afflicted with disabilities was great. The prayers in the church were continuous and the public in the midst were participating in prayers with faith and fervor. We celebrated the Ceremony of Saint Maron and then the Blessed Sacrament.

After that a part of our team ascended to the hermitage of Saints Peter and Paul where I really wanted to take a picture with some brothers who were with me: the novice, Youssef Antoun from Ebrine, and on his right, the student, Hanna Ghosn from Dar-Baashtar, who was behind him under a tree adjacent to the hermitage, and to his right, a young man who was visiting the shrine, Youssef Tannous from Hawqa, and on his right, Brother Boulos Yazbek from Kartaba. Seated before him was Father Elias Abi Ramia from Ehmej, the head of the Hermitage. The photo was taken with a "Kodak Brownie" camera. On May 9th, we developed the film and behold before the young man from Hawka was the image of the venerable monk. We saw his face, white beard, his hood on his head and right hand fingers blackened like a mummy. His body was transparent and dressed in a black habit like all Lebanese monastic monks.

Behind him, there appeared through his body, the stones and herbs on the ground as if the monk was transparent like glass. The figure of the monk kneeling appeared clearly and seemed closer to the camera than the other two young men standing behind him. His hood was also transparent.

2 - I Want to Take a Picture With You!

Youssef Tannous witnessed: I visited the hermitage of Saint Sharbel on May 8, 1950. Some visitors from the Monastic of Kreim came to me saying, "Would you like to take a picture with us?" I replied, "That's OK" and I stood up arms crossed. Then suddenly a monk appeared before me saying, "**I want to take a picture with you and sit in front of you.**" Brother Nohra Elias shot the picture and suddenly the monk disappeared. After the development of the film, the monk, who I alone had seen, reappeared in the picture. Those who knew him said it was Saint Sharbel.

3 - The Superior General Ighnatio Al-Tannoury

"The Way of Holiness" magazine wrote, "We had enlarged the picture of Father Sharbel, collected about thirty pictures of the old fathers of the Order, and then we went to Al-Tannoura asking him to recognize each of the fathers represented in the pictures. This was like a trick to see if he could recognize the image of Father Sharbel. Gradually he gave us the name of the fathers in the photos and when he arrived at the photo of Father Sharbel, he took it, stared at it, and looked at it closely until tears flowed from his eyes. He then kissed the picture and bathed it with his tears. We knew well that it was the miraculous image of Father Sharbel that appeared in the photographer's shooting. We asked him, "Father is this picture to one of your relatives or your loved ones that has touched you so deeply?" He replied, sobbing like a child, "No this is the picture of Father Sharbel. From where did you bring it? He never took a picture in his lifetime!"

4 - The Order Didn't Rely Only on this Picture!

Andari adds: We had showed the picture to many photographers to get their professional opinion because some people who were knowledgeable in photography, had confirmed that the image in its current form, is the result of two scenes which had been shot on a single image before developing the first scene. The result of our research was that the picture is real and all that was said to deny its credibility resulted from a lack of experience with photography. We offered this image to the public as the real picture of Saint Sharbel. The Order depended only on this picture. It was unaware of any other image of Sharbel. Many of those who Sharbel appeared to in a particular vision, assured us when they looked at this picture that it was the image of the Sharbel who appeared to them. In addition, there was no priest in the Lebanese Order, or in any other Order, who had this appearance!

P - I Pour Out My Spirit (Acts 2, 17)

1 - The Healing of a Cripple and a Paralytic

Andari witnessed: as they opened the tomb on April 22, 1950, I saw a young man from Mayfouk in the hallway who was called Emile Boutros and who was limping with crutches because of an infirmity in his knee. I encouraged him to seek the intercession of Father Sharbel. While we were in the church examining the body, we heard applause and cheers. The young man was cured of his infirmity. I also heard that a man from Bmariam (I don't remember his name), who worked as a telephone operator, visited the day of the examination of the body at the convent of Annaya. Since he was unable to enter the tomb, he wiped his hat on the wall as a blessing and

then returned to his village. His niece was paralyzed and her parents knew that he visited the tomb of Father Sharbel. They asked him if he had brought a blessing and he told them that he couldn't enter to the tomb but gave them the hat he passed over the wall. When they wiped the paralytic girl with the hat, she recovered and walked.

2 - Their Hearts Softened (Acts 2, 37)

The crowds flocked to visit the tomb from all social groups and all faiths: scientists, common people, governors and subjects, wanting to be cured from their diseases and chronic disabilities. But the greatest miracle was among those who for decades had distanced themselves from the sacraments, especially the sacrament of reconciliation. When these people visited the tomb, they were overwhelmed with repentance and reverence and, with tears in their eyes, asked to confess.

3 - The Healing of a Bleeding Woman (Mk 5, 25-34)

The sister-in-law of Father Lattouf Andari was diagnosed with bleeding for two years and was about to die but was cured by the intercession of Father Sharbel.

4 - In the Footsteps of the Lord (Mt 20, 29)

The Jesuit, Father Fallom wrote: I went personally to the Mount of Jbeil. The scene was wonderful with dozens of minibuses and hundreds of cars that brought the crowds. This made me think of the crowds who had rushed behind the Lord Jesus 2,000 years previous. This scene gives an impression of deep faith! I think that there are miracles of conversion more than those of healing.

5 - Tongues of Fire (Acts 2, 3)

The healing events had grown beyond the borders of Lebanon, Egypt, Jordan and Syria to the United States and Europe and Sharbel became well known in the whole world. The visitors to the shrine counted no less than 5,000 per day on Sundays, 15,000 on holy days, and exceeded 40,000 on Pentecost! On the second day of the feast, pilgrims from all countries, many of whom were carried to the tomb of Father Sharbel, recovered from their chronic illnesses -- sudden and miraculous healings. Approximately 5,000 people who stood on the eastern side of the shrine in the open air on Pentecost, confirmed that the grave of Father Sharbel was lit up in the middle of the day with a heavenly, clear off-white light. Then it turned to red tongues of fire such as those that descended on the Apostles from heaven in the attic at Zion. Joy, fear and crying overwhelmed all the spectators and they glorified God in Sharbel.

6 - The Blind See, the Lame Walk, the Sick are Cured (Lk 7, 22)

Al-Aamal Newspaper wrote on June 1th 1950: We just listed the details of three miracles that took place on Thursday in the sight of all the people who came to the convent at all hours of the day including diplomats, officials, clergy, laymen and well-known family members.

7 - Miss Mary Maalooof

She was from Zahleh living in Al-Rmaile-Beirut. She had one leg shorter than the other about eight centimeters. That Thursday she headed to Monastery of Saint Maron. As soon as she visited the tomb of the Saint, her leg returned to normal and she no longer felt any shortness. She went back to her home in Beirut which became a center for visitors.

8 - Saeedeh Asaad Farhat

She was 17 years old from Jarmaq-Nabatiyeh. She was born deformed, hunchbacked and couldn't stand up straight. She visited Saint Sharbel on Thursday, bowed before the tomb, praying and saying, "I am not leaving till I get cured." Then, instantly, she stood up straight and started walking among the crowds like she had never been deformed.

9 - Muhammad Walks

His feet were paralyzed; he couldn't walk without crutches, and even then it took a lot of effort. On Thursday, he visited Saint Sharbel and the moment he touched the tomb, the two crutches were seen falling to the ground. In the midst of the people's astonishment, the man stood up on his feet and walked quickly without any help. He headed straight to the monastery and asked the superior to accept him as a monk among the monks, but the superior apologized and asked him to go back to his family and his relatives.

10 - Mir Caesar Abi El-Lamaah

I had a stomach ulcer and always threw up what I ate accompanied by bleeding. I spent several months of the year bedridden and in weariness. I visited Saint Sharbel and it has been two years since I have not vomited or bled. Also, the acid reflux disappeared which in the past was so strong it burned my throat. I was treated by many physicians with no results -- except from my visit to Saint Sharbel.

11 - He Requested a Piece of Cotton Soaked with Oil

Dr. Skandar Gharib testified on June 6, 1950: when my grandson, Sami, was two years old, he was afflicted with polio in his right foot. After recovering from the fever, he started walking on his toes to keep his balance and avoid limping which caused swelling on the top of his foot. So we added a four centimeter heel in his right shoe. When he turned 12, his father heard that Miss Juliette Nasr was cured from polio after visiting the tomb of Sharbel. He asked her for a piece of cotton soaked with holy oil from Saint Sharbel and wiped the paralyzed foot of his son. It went back to normal, the swelling disappeared and he walked normally. We thanked God for this extraordinary result.

12 - He Visited Sharbel for Ten Minutes

Sheikh Mahmud Taqi Ed-Din witnessed on June 10 1950: Four years ago I started losing my hearing in my right ear until I was almost completely deaf. I consulted Dr. Eliver two years ago and then Dr. Diab who both agreed I had an incurable hole in my eardrum. An intuition led me to go to Annaya to visit the tomb of Saint Sharbel to ask for his intercession. I stayed there about ten minutes and returned to Beirut without feeling anything strange. A few days later I realized that I could hear in my sick ear.

13 - Inserting Sharbel's Tomb in the Tourist's Guide Book

Lisan-Elhal newspaper wrote on June 1950: In the months of July and August convoys of tourists arrive in Lebanon coming from the United States, all across Europe and Asia. Some of the chief representatives of the tourist companies in Lebanon informed our agent that some amendments have been inserted lately on the tour program for their visit to the country of Lebanon by adding "The Visit of Sharbel's Tomb in Saint Maron Annaya" and its news has spread all over the world. The Supreme Commander of the Gendarmes Al-Khatib ordered that a police station be set up next to the monastery, consisting of one corporal and four gendarmes. Another station is to be established on the way to the monastery in Mounaytra in order to control the traffic because of the large number of people that congregate on the roads day and night to visit the monastery.

Q - The Signs Will Accompany Those Who Believe (Mk 16, 17)

1 - I Saw Father Sharbel

Naeem Ghawry from Wady Shahrour testified: I had the chance to be appointed as a physician by Dr. Elias Khoury, Minister of Health, for the Monastery

of Saint Maron in 1950. The people were crowded everywhere, inside and outside the monastery, and the patients were filling the hallway where the body of Father Sharbel was placed.

A 13 year old Armenian boy came to the monastery after spending a long time in the American Hospital receiving treatment for a bone tuberculosis disease. He was accompanied by his father who brought statements from the hospital to prove the seriousness of his condition. He wasn't able to move, so his father carried him, assisted by Father Youssef Khashan, until he reached the tomb. The next day I was informed that this patient was having serious chest pain. I rushed to him and tried in vain to persuade his father to take him to the nursing room so the doctor could care for him but he answered firmly, "It's better for my son to lose his life and not lose his place near the tomb."

In the same night at midnight, four buses from Deir El-Qamar and its vicinity arrived at the monastery; the visitors came down and entered the church singing hymns. Upon starting the procession, one of the visitors tried to pass the prayer book to an old monk who had accompanied them thinking that he was one of the convent's inhabitants so he could recite the prayer dedicated to the priest. Suddenly a great astonishment came over the people and they held their breath in fear. What happened? When the visitor got closer to the monk, he suddenly disappeared! I was then close to church when I noticed this sudden quietness. I rushed toward the window to see what had happened thinking that someone must have fainted as this happens sometimes. Before I reached the window, I saw a monk walking out of the church. He passed so close to me that our shoulders touched. As I knew what happened from one of the visitors, I rushed outside to find out who was this strange monk. When I looked toward the hermitage, I saw him walking toward the east. I chased after him and pointed my flashlight at him. The moment I reached him and my hand touched his clothes, I stopped, perplexed, and was about to lose consciousness from fear. The monk suddenly disappeared. I was so confused, looking here and there, when I saw above the hermitage a strange brilliant light blurring my sight. While I was in this state of fear, I heard coming from the side of the tomb, cheers and applause. I ran to see what happened and I found the young Armenian boy completely recovered.

2 - I Was Making Fun of Sharbel's Miracles as if They Were Superstitions

Muhammad Ali Mrouweh, a Shiite from Zrariyeh in Southern Lebanon, testified: I entered the jail on November 9, 1948. I was healthy but I had a neurological disease. While I was in jail, my worries increased because I had a family that depended on me. Five months ago, I felt pain in my body and weakness in my left eye. The fingers in my right hand became stiffened. I was treated by the doctors, Hitti Joseph Farha, and Albert Zbouney, the head of the Medical Examination in "Hotel Diex" Hospital. After a long treatment, I lost all the vision in my left eye. Then a month ago, I got joint inflammation.

I heard about Sharbel's miracles and I was making fun of them at first as if they were superstitions. I thought these miracles were propaganda to raise money. Finally, when I read in the newspapers about the numerous miracles and saw the photos of patients who had received healing through Sharbel's intercession, I believed in his holiness and vowed fifty Lebanese Liras. I asked the nurse, Avduca Saliba, to visit his tomb and here is the text of the petition I wrote: I am a man who was imprisoned unjustly. I lost my vision and my health in prison. Therefore, I have recourse to God and Saint Sharbel. If he heals me from my sicknesses and I get out of jail, I would owe him five hundred Lebanese Liras. If I am guilty, I don't want to get out of the jail and remain blind and lame. Here is fifty Lebanese Liras with Avduca as down payment.

The nurse went to Annaya, along with a nun, the principal of the hospital, and Corporal Shafiq Beydoun, the chief officer. I felt optimistic about this visit. Upon their return in the evening, they gave me incense, blessed water, some soil, and a piece of cotton from Sharbel's tomb. I soaked it with the blessed water and started rubbing my eye and the swollen and painful spots all my body. After two hours, tears flowed from my eye after four months of dryness. I thought it was a good sign. The next morning I woke up early and realized that my body was completely cured. There was no trace of the inflammation or pain. I also could move my stiffened fingers normally. My eye began to improve day by day. I am now reading large letters and my eye is on the way of full recovery.

R - Go and Make Disciples of All Nations (Mt. 28,19)

1 - Sharbel in Iraq

Noura Karkaji testified: my son, Nowel, who is four years old, had typhoid when he was only 25 days old. It started in the nerves of his legs, cramped his toes and left him a hunchback. Dryness hit the nerves in his brain and then it spread all over his body. His situation was utterly deplorable. If I wanted to sit him on the ground, he would fall down on all four sides. He suffered from this condition throughout his entire life. His father took him to all the physicians in Basrah and even showed him to the English doctors, Dr. Terd and Dr. Davis, the physicians for the petrol company in Kirkook. Our house became like a pharmacy due to the large number of drugs. But despite all these efforts, he received no benefit. Finally in 1949, his father brought him to Beirut and took him to many doctors, among them the pediatrician, Dr. Philip Shedid. After several treatments, the child remained the same and was more tired as a result of the long treatments.

Then his father decided to take him to London, but when the news of Sharbel's great miracles became widespread in 1950, we went to visit his holy tomb many times. The boy made a remarkable recovery after each visit until his back completely straightened and returned to normal. His continuous headaches left him and he regained his full health. He also got his appetite back. Prior to his healing, if we put a bit of food in his mouth, it would stay there 24 hours without him swallowing it. Now he's eating well and having calm sleep.

She continued: On June 27, 1950, Saint Sharbel appeared in the hermitage to my son before a lot of people. After that, I asked Saint Sharbel to untie the blessed gird from my son's legs. He started talking to the boy with a loud voice that everybody could hear. It was then we saw a palm and a wrist on Nowel's leg and he started crying. After that we found the gird loosed out of the boy's leg and he also took out his socks.

2 - Sharbel in Brazil

The Brazilian newspaper "The News" wrote: Victor Kimawy, residing in the city of Byron Pears in Sao Paulo State, is the Director of Health and Rescue in that city. He was suffering from a very complicated stomach ulcer and was healed.

He said, I had an ulcer in the 12th intestine duodenum for more than 15 years. I consulted many specialists, and I took adequate diet in eating and drinking, but all my efforts were in vain. During this period I had heart disease as well.

The illness intensified so I entered one of Saint Andrew's hospitals through its Director, a famous surgeon and a specialist in stomach diseases. After taking an x-ray, he decided on surgery after four days during which all the necessary precautions would be taken. At the time several doctors gathered around. After they examined me,

they found that my heart was so weak it couldn't endure the surgery so they decided to cancel it and left me in a state of despair.

That night a Lebanese friend came to visit me and saw my situation. He tried to calm me down saying, "There is a doctor who is able to heal you as he has healed many others who is present and absent! alive and dead!" Then he recited the biography of Father Sharbel. **I vowed to him to confess and receive the Holy Eucharist every Friday for nine months.** Then I started a novena for the Sacred Heart of Jesus through the intercession of His beloved Sharbel to obtain the grace of healing. That night I slept very well. In the morning I woke up feeling hungry. I asked for food and ate with such an appetite without feeling the pain as before. I quit taking medicine, stopped abstaining from certain foods and started eating whatever I desired. Three days passed and I still didn't feel any pain in my stomach or in my heart. I left the hospital and went back home resuming my work in the Department of Health. More than a year has passed, and I am in complete good health with energy even though I am 65 years old. **Beside the physical health I have received a spiritual healing.**

3 - Sharbel in Egypt

Abdul Aziz Mohammad Ali testified in 1950: I am the business representative of the Count Edward Shedid in Egypt. I was in Lebanon when I heard about Father Sharbel's miracles so I decided to visit him and get oil and water as blessing. When I arrived to my city, Zaqaqiq in Egypt, I entered my house and found my daughter, Amal, sick with typhoid. She had already been treated by two physicians but she was in a critical condition. I anointed her forehead with the oil that I brought back from Lebanon and she slept that night unconscious. The morning was good for all of us as we found my daughter healthy and in a good condition. God had removed the danger away from her. My daughter is now in a good health and thanks to God that I've visited the tomb of Father Sharbel. May God have mercy on me and on all people. Amen.

4 - Sharbel in Syria

Miss Yvonne, the daughter of Georges Khoury from Damascus, fell ill with typhoid when she turned one year old. It deformed her hips and left her lame, limping in her walk, attracting attention to her and moving the hearts of many with pity toward her youth. Her mother, Hassiba, had been stricken by a sickness in her right knee 30 ago so her knee stiffened and she had also heart disease for many years.

On June 3, 1950 Yvonne and her mother came to Beirut accompanied by her newlywed brother Dimitry who is married to a lady from Ashrafieh-Beirut. At 5 p.m. Dimitry headed with his mother and sister to visit Saint Sharbel. Yvonne had already prepared herself for this visit by fasting three full days on water only to get the grace of healing together with her mother through the intercession of Saint Sharbel.

The three went in a car about two miles before they reached the Monastery of Saint Maron. They got out and continued walking the bumpy road full of thorns and stones.

Dimitry held his mother's arm from one side and his sister's from the other side. They walked for an hour and a half. Dimitry took his mother's heart medicine, but she refused to take it on the way saying that she's depending on God and Saint Sharbel.

Then they arrived to the Saint's tomb and found large numbers of visitors gathering around the tomb. The sick were praying, crying and asking for healing. They numbered in the hundreds with some staying at the tomb hall while others slept in the walkways of the Monastery or in the new chapel next to the tomb. The mother and her daughter were deeply touched seeing all the sick, most of them afflicted with disabilities that prevented them from working for a livelihood. So they felt pity for them and said to each other, "We are in a better condition than these miserable ones because we can at least work for a living but what can these paralyzed people do?"

The mother and daughter forgot about their sickness and started praying for the sick that were lying before the tomb. They spent the night between the church and the tomb praying and imploring without sleeping. At six in the morning the three of them went back to Beirut with happiness in their hearts and fervent faith. But Yvonne and her mother didn't receive any miracle.

When they arrived to Ashrafieh, the mother laid down in the bed to relax from the tiresome long journey. Not even half an hour passed when she felt her stiffened leg numbing; then she felt a severe pain in her knee and heard a sound like a crack in the knee bone. So she screamed, "Oh! What's happening to me?" Right away she stood up and without noticing bent her leg and immediately knelt on her knees praying. Her daughter Yvonne yelled, "My mother is recovered! A miracle! A miracle!"

Dimitry and the members of the house hastened to see what happened and rejoiced seeing his mother kneeling, crying and praying. Then he turned towards his sister, Yvonne, and shouted out, "You also, Oh my sister, you are cured!" For he saw her knee moving freely and his sister walking normally toward his mother like she had never been crippled. Yvonne was greatly troubled and didn't believe herself or her brother. She shouted, "How can this be?" Her brother was afraid something might happen to her because of this great joy so he told her to go upstairs and stand in front of the mirror to see herself and how she was walking straight, so she did. When she saw herself for the first time standing and walking straight, she cried with joy, rejoiced and shouted loudly, "Thank you Saint Sharbel! Two miracles in our house for me and my mother!"

She called home in Damascus and proclaimed the good news to her kin and neighbors and asked them to slaughter an animal and call the poor in the neighborhood for a ceremony of joy and thanksgiving to God. June the fifth the family went back to Damascus. People hastened to their house: parents, acquaintances and friends to congratulate and participate in the joy, but first and foremost to see the two miracles. All of Damascus spoke about these two miracles which happened in one house. Yvonne was walking all day and sometimes late at night before her visitors so they can see her and glorify God for her healing.

5 - Sharbel in the United States

Salim Ghantous wrote from Florida: I was sick with diabetes and my physician intended to put me in the hospital to try and regulate my high blood sugar level. The doctor said I was in critical condition. But I received a little piece of Sharbel's clothes. I put it in a little wrapping cloth and hung it on around my neck. I also vowed to offer seventy-five dollars and to do a Novena prayer. Since there is no Novena to Saint Sharbel **I vowed to confess and receive the Holy Eucharist for nine consecutive Sundays.** After three days God granted me healing through the intercession of Sharbel.

6 - Sharbel in Australia

Joseph Antoun from Sidney testified on July 6 1955: I was bedridden because I wasn't able to walk on my feet except with crutches; my left foot was deformed. I was suffering from severe pain for two weeks so I told Saint Sharbel, "Oh Sharbel, be with me so I can walk without crutches and relieve me from my pain." The next day I stood up and threw the two crutches away and started to walk little by little. The physicians were perplexed about this issue. I thank Saint Sharbel for this grace.

7 - Sharbel in Argentina

Saint Sharbel's Hotel in Noken City is one of the most modern hotels owned by two Lebanese people, Wadih and Emily Saadeh, from Mayrouba-Keserwan. A private plane pilot had a reservation in the hotel along with three of his companions. They came to Noken to complete some transactions with the state governor regarding an

orphanage and a shelter for the poor to be called the Evangelical School for Orphans. They spent three days in the hotel. Then when it was time to go back to their country, they asked the hotel owners why this hotel is called Saint Sharbel? And who is this Saint? They told them that he is a Saint from Lebanon who performs a lot of miracles around the world. The pilot and his companions said, "We are afraid about a malfunction in the plane on our way back so we want some pictures of Saint Sharbel to protect us. They gave them pictures.

The pilot's name was Edwardo Muraria, and the passengers Jose Befran, the engineer Antonio Morgio and Benito Befran and they had a private plane, the Bayber. Half an hour after their departure from Noken airport a malfunction occurred in the engine and the passengers shouted, "Saint Sharbel save us!" The plane fell and crashed but they came out safely. Pilot Edwardo Moraria declared, "This was the first plane in the world that broke up without causing casualties, and we are going to visit Saint Sharbel in Lebanon to thank him. Argentine newspapers also wrote about the incident on the front page with pictures of Saint Sharbel and his biography.

8 - Sharbel in France

Lower Seine France on February 10, 1952, I received in the month of December a relic of Saint Sharbel from the Saint Maron Monastery - Annaya. When my husband, who had cancer carried it, he started recovering in a strange way. His physician was very astonished because he gave up every hope of his recovery.

9 - Sharbel in Belgium

O. De Munch 94, Brussels, Belgium on October 26, 1951, wrote: Most righteous Father, I thank you so much for your letter that included some of Saint Sharbel's relics. I feel better. When I gave a piece of the relics to a friend of mine in pain, she as well benefited greatly from it. The effect of cancer that was scaring me disappeared. All my thanks to Saint Sharbel.

10 - Sharbel in Malta Island

Malta Island on December 30, 1951: Father Superior I thank you for Saint Sharbel's relics that I received. I am pleased to tell you that many of those carrying Saint Sharbel's relic and asking for His intercession, have received special graces. Among them a lady who was in danger of death due to a poisoning in her kidney during childbirth. As soon as she put the relic on her exhausted body, the pain disappeared. Thus she called her newborn Alexander-Sharbel. The doctor was astonished at the sight of this sudden change.

S - Sharbel the Beatified

1 - The Healing of Akl Wakim:

- Falling From His Bike

Akl Wakim was a student at "Hekmeh School" and it happened that the father of one of his teachers had died in Bekfaya on April 11, 1940. He went there with four of his classmates to offer condolences; he was fourteen years old. Coming back on his bike in a place called Jouret Al- Zaitoun on the steep road to Bekfaya, the bike overturned on the side of the road from a height of eight meters. His hip was broken and a stone pierced his waist. His friends carried him with the help of a police officer from the Municipality of Antelias to his home in Karantina-Beirut; he was deformed and unconscious.

- A Simple Matter!

When his father saw him in this state, he was very troubled. He hastened to

carry him to Dr. Paul Tutunji and found that his hip was broken and his leg flipped backwards. He was also severely wounded in his waist, chest and face. The doctor tried in vain to bring the hip back to its position. After half an hour he said, "Take him to a specialist." They went to Dr. Rizk, but couldn't find him. Finally at 11:00 p.m., they went to the American University Hospital. They treated the wounds and said, "Wait for tomorrow when the specialist will come."

The next day Dr. Samy Haddad came, examined him, took x-rays and then conducted surgery. He told his parents, "It's a simple matter. His hip was moved off and I brought it back to its place." He remained in the hospital six days and then came back home. He stayed bedridden for three weeks lying on his back. Then when he tried to walk, he found that his leg was stiffened both on the hip and the knee.

- His Leg Won't Heal!

Then his parents took him to an uncertified Arabic physician called Elias Arbeed from Msaytbeh. He treated him with hot water baths and a variety of steaming. Then he massaged his infected leg with some creams; the boy started bending his knee, but not his hip. Then Mansour Saab from Al-Rmayleh, also an Arabic physician, treated him in the same manner, but didn't succeed.

After two months, he went back to Dr. Haddad at the American University Hospital who requested an x-ray and said later, "His leg won't heal even with surgery!" They asked him about the reason for that? He replied, "There is some dried blood that gathered in a hole in the hip!" So they said, "Why did you say last time he was healed?" He replied, "I am responsible for my patient when he comes out of the hospital, and I am not responsible for what happens after that."

- Shy to Hang Out with Young Ladies!

Akl then continued his school year for another six months. One day he jumped from a train but didn't dare to tell his father because he was afraid of him. His father was very strict in disciplining him which increased his limping. As he was growing, one leg grew while the other didn't, so his limping increased.

They again consulted an Armenian Arabic physician from Bourj Hammoud. He hung a bag of sand on the boy's leg with a weight fifteen kilograms, but he received no benefit. His hip was bumpy, and the shortness of his leg obliged him to wear a boot seven centimeters higher than the other which resulted in his heavy limping. He didn't hang out with girls because he was shy because of his lameness.

- Carrying a Gun!

Akl got a bump on his hip until it was perceived by everyone who saw it as if he was carrying a gun or a box of meal on his side. If he wanted to sit on a chair or kneel down, he would bend the normal leg and stretch the other one forward because he wasn't able to move the hip joint. If he walked for five minutes, he would feel severe pain in the hip, get tired and need to relax. Then some people advised his father to take him to the great surgeon, Dr. Rovrito, for surgery, but he didn't accept the advice fearing that he may get worse.

- He Became a Burden to His Parents

Finally, they gave up on him and he became disabled; no one offered him in a job. His application to join the Ministry of Public Works was rejected and he was not accepted in the railroad company where his brother was working. He became a heavy burden to his parents, so he opened a grocery store for a living. He wasn't able to ride a bike, except on the way down, using his right leg only, and wasn't able to ride it back up. If he wanted to bow to the floor to pick up something, he would bend his back and right leg while extending the left one to the back. He remained in this state for ten years. The wife of Dr. Hanna Riyashi, Akl's doctor, always told her children when they asked her to buy them a bicycle, "Look what happened to Akl because of the bike."

- Toward Sharbel

Akl heard about Saint Sharbel's miracles so he decided to visit him one Sunday. When his brother heard about the healing of Mary Gemayel Maalouf, who was born lame, he went to her house. When he was sure of her recovery, he went flying back like crazy to his brother's market and told him, "Shut the store right now!" The tone of his voice showed how thrilled and eager he was! Akl asked him, "Why do you want me to close the market now?" He repeated, "Close the store now. We want to visit Saint Sharbel. Mary Gemayel was healed!" Akl felt a great fervent faith, got excited about the visit and closed the store. Some people laughed and said, "How is he going to benefit; he has been limping for years!"

- A Minister Protests

The Minister of Finance, Emile Lahoud, rushed to the Palace of the President of the Lebanese Republic, Bsharah El-Khoury, and with a loud angry voice said, "All the noise that flared out about this monk is funny and the worst is that the press is also affected. We should put an end to these tricks!"

The First Lady interfered saying, "We need to see for ourselves what is going on there. This is the only possible way for us to know the truth."

The minister continued, "It sounds too fishy! It's shameful that in Lebanon, the country of culture and progress, we hear about these denounced deeds and this deplorable sorcery!"

The President answered with intimacy, "Emile you are the best one to clarify this case. Go to Annaya and see what's going on. Then when you come back, we'll take the necessary procedures."

The minister added, "People are crazy! One of my neighbors, Akl Wakim, who has been sick for over ten years was taken to Annaya and then the whole neighborhood had nothing else to talk about but him. Isn't this craziness!"

The President cut his Minister off saying, "We are relying on you to go and bring us the right news. Verify yourself and then come back and tell us. We will be waiting for you."

The minister's car went through the curved roads towards Annaya between Tourzaiya, Ehmej Meshmesh, and the Monastery. He saw the roads, paths, trails and avenues overflowing with people as the flowing of rivers into the sea. It was almost impossible to drive through. The minister resented the tardiness this caused and the fact that many people recognized him and were surprised! The superior of the monastery welcomed Mr. Lahoud and was amazed with this sudden visit by a well-known politician.

- He Got Up and Walked

Akl, his brother Tanios, mother and two uncles took a car straight to Annaya. Akl vowed if he got cured, he would fast for a week on bread and water only. He was praying all the way in his heart, the Our Father and Hail Mary, without looking neither left nor right. When they arrived, Akl entered directly to the tomb's hall despite the difficulty in accessing it because of the crowds. He bent down on the floor under a table used to light candles, prayed and recited the Litany of Our Lady with the faithful. His mother was wiping the tomb with her hand, rubbing his side and putting soil from the tomb in his mouth.

They were almost halfway through reciting Our Lady's Litany when he suddenly felt an electric current running in his hand passing from the palm to the elbow. When it reached his elbow, it intensified and he got scared and trembled! He shook violently then found his crippled leg lying normally next to the other one! He was so astonished and implored much stronger, repeating in his heart, "I hope this is the miracle!" Then he continued praying with the faithful yet he wasn't sure of the

occurrence of a full recovery. When the Litany ended, he got up and walked. He was feeling great improvement, but he didn't dare to announce it fearing a scandal!

- The Bells Rang!

When Akl walked out of the tomb's hall with his mother, he said to her, "It seems I am limping on the right leg now! Perhaps I am cured!" He went walking comfortably, bending, kneeling and standing. His uncle started applauding from joy saying, "My nephew you got healed!" Then he took off his high boot and started walking normally. The people were very enthusiastic cheering and clapping was heard outside and the bells rang!

- I Believe in God

When the Minister Emile Lahoud heard the bells ringing, he thought the people were delighted at his arrival so he told to the superior of Annaya nervously, "Please! I'm not here in an official visit so calm down these demonstrations outside and stop ringing the bells."

The superior answered with a smile that he couldn't hide, "You surprised us with your visit. This isn't on your account, your Excellency, because we weren't informed about your visit! Perhaps these good people have seen a miracle and started applauding."

The minister screamed terrified! "Miracles!" He pulled himself through the flock overcrowded from every direction. While he was crossing the yard, he saw a young man hastening towards him energetic, delighted, rejoicing and surrounded with his relatives and acquaintances who were applauding and cheering. He knew him, "This is Akl Wakim calling him, You are here! Your Excellency?" So the minister answered with a question, "You are Akl? Or I am wrong?" Akl answered, "Yes this is me as you see but by the intercession of Saint Sharbel I am healed!"

The minister put his hand on his forehead, puzzled and disturbed he mumbled as if he was in a dream; something so strange like a dream! Then he looked to the Superior who was following him and said, "Father I don't know what's happening to me! I know this man had permanent disability for ten years. The power of God has cured him and healed me of my disbelieving! I believe in God, in Saint Sharbel, in the Catholic Church and in heaven."

- He Has Repented

At night Akl came back home and was walking like a horse. For fifteen days people filled his house, congratulating him for his healing. He was no longer in pain or limping. As for the growth of the muscles on his left leg, it has been occurring gradually. Akl wasn't a regular man in his behavior. He was a troublemaker and had no good morals. He complained sometimes about having no work. He went to church infrequently and was lukewarm in his religious duties.

After his healing he changed and became a peaceful man practicing more of his religion. He has repented and no longer neglects any spiritual duty. Whenever he gets the chance and has enough money for a cab, he goes to visit Saint Sharbel to pray and work in the convent for free carrying on his side sandbags and heavy stones vigorously in gratitude to Saint Sharbel

- The Healing of an Atheist

Edmond Khoury from Sid-El-Bushrieh testified: After the healing of Akl Wakim, and despite the fact that my brother Edward's right hand remained paralyzed and he didn't recover after his visit to Saint Sharbel, Akl's healing touched me deeply. **I have thought that no power is above man's power but after this miracle I now believe in a Divine Power superior to that of the human being.** Now I have more willingness and desire to worship and to fulfill my religious duties. While before I used to say, "It's enough for the man to do his moral duties toward others." My frame

of mind has changed towards this concern and if until today I wasn't practicing my religious duties, it goes back to my upbringing and the habits that have been rooted inside me. It will take time to change.

I was accidentally shot by a bullet in the stomach on July 25, 1950. The bullet tore my intestines in seven spots. I was taken to the hospital and had a very serious operation. After the incident I immediately asked Saint Sharbel's help and told him, "Oh, Saint Sharbel save me like you have saved others! I needed; I have survived thanks to God!" I left the hospital after fifteen days.

The minister added: After these miraculous events, my faith became firm and my tenet strengthened. The lukewarm come back to the faith, the believers' faith increased and their argument reinforced in facing the atheists. The fanatic atheists were shocked.

2- Sister Mary-Abel Kamary:

- Good health

Since her youth Sister Mary-Abel was living like the other Christian villager girl -- a true Christian life in her house and school. After joining the monastic Order, she became a nun eager for holiness and to set a good example for others. She was pious, zealous, had a good spirit, nice behavior and a clear mind.

She was diligent in her work, sober and wise in her precisions and decisions. She had a brilliant and perceptive mind, good judgment and solid will, invoking her mind on taking decisions rather than her passion. She was a teacher in the elementary school of the Jesuits. She had good health and a strong body.

- A Chronic Disease

In 1936 on New Year's Day she started vomiting and it lasted for a while. She told the Mother Superior about her condition who called Dr. John Shami. When he examined her and saw how healthy and strong she looked, he said this vomiting is nothing but a nervous situation deriving from her sharp mood and prescribed her simple medications like carbon and bicarbonate. But the vomiting increased day after day and she lost a lot of weight. However, she continued her job in the school as usual till the end of the school year.

The day of the exams she felt so dizzy she couldn't continue her job so she was sent to bed. The next day when she tried to get up, she started sweating and lost consciousness. She became so skinny -- she had lost thirty kilograms.

She went to Dr. Yousef Hetti and when he saw how skinny she was, he recommended good nutrition, rest, changing the climate and e said, "We cannot give her any treatment or surgery in her condition."

So she was sent to Ain-Zhalta but the climate was not suitable for her. Instead she had severe diarrhea with continuous vomiting until she became totally exhausted. From there she was sent to Hamana where an Egyptian physician, Joseph Marajel, a specialist in stomach diseases and there for summer holiday, examined her. He gave her a treatment for eight days with a special diet and the vomiting decreased a little due to the small amount of food she was taking in. Then he ordered an x-ray and the result showed a huge ulcer in the intestines so he gave her some injections but she received no benefit.

After that she was sent to Dr. Baaqlini and when he consulted with her, he started blaming the physicians who treated her until now. So she entered Sacred Heart a French hospital in Beirut. She underwent a series of injections, serum and washing of the stomach, but the vomiting kept increasing and blood appeared in the stools. She took another x-ray after which Dr. Baaqlini decided on surgery. So the surgery was done in the presence of Dr. Ibrahim Abou-Haidar and another assistant doctor. She

remained in surgery for two and half hours. They found the kidney and gallbladder connected to each other within the intestines. She stayed in the hospital for more than thirty days and the wound was left open for excretion of pus and dirt. Then when the wound was healed, she started vomiting more than before and some yellow-greenish substance was seen when she threw up. They thought this was a result of nervousness, so they took away the basin and she tried to control herself not to throw up. But all was in vain.

Then she had a second operation that lasted four and a half hours. The doctors found not only the kidney, liver and gallbladder were stuck together, but also all the intestines. Dr. Baaqlyni couldn't finish the surgery because her heart was beating 170 beats per minute and he lost hope of achieving separations of all the organs. He gave up and left her to the Divine Mercy Providence. Her condition worsened and she received the sacrament of the anointing of the sick and remained under risk for a while. She wasn't able to eat and serum was her only nutrition. Later when she started eating, she started throwing up but less than before. Dr. Baaqlyni attributed this to a momentary recovering emanated from the inner cleaning he achieved in the surgery. She left the hospital in mid-October headed to Bekfaya where she stayed three months while the vomiting increased.

Then in 1938 she was sent to Dr. Kalimat to Hotel Dieu Hospital where he recommended surgery to extract the gallbladder, but she refused to do it. After taking the permission of her Superior, she thought about how much pain she had gone through with no result. After that she was sent to the Novitiate's Monastery for rest. There she spent many years between life and death. She wasn't given any job except teaching religious education and tutoring. In the beginning she was walking back and forth within the monastery without the help of anyone, but because of the constant vomiting, she was no longer able to walk without a crutch or the help of a nun.

In mid 1941 she had a paroxysm, turned mute, her right hand was paralyzed and she got a severe pain in her spinal column and in the back of her head until she was no longer able to sit down. Her condition worsened and she had more than one paroxysm until she was about to die. Father Youssef, the novitiate's pastor, anointed her again. After seven days she got little better but her hand stayed disabled and the pain in her back remained the same. Dr. Abu-Haidar and Dr. Michel Farhat from Hammana agreed that the reason for these repeated crises was the weakening and drying in the bones and veins because of a lack of nutrition. Her hand remained disabled for seven years. Then after she wiped it with the blessed soil that the superior had brought from Rome the next day she got healed.

Then she stayed in this state until 1950 with the crises repeated more often. The vomiting caused her teeth to rot and she was in a critical condition. Dr. Hikmat Jabbour who was treating her kept saying that her sickness was incurable and her stomach wasn't able to hold neither light food nor liquid. Father Youssef, the Jesuit novitiate pastor said he didn't know how Sister Mary-Abel is still alive as long as she is throwing up whatever she is eating, and whenever he saw one of the nuns he asked, "Is she still alive?" She remained in bed with a vessel for vomiting ner and couldn't get up from the bed; daily everybody was expecting her. **In her sickness she showed extraordinary virtues by her patience, smiling, her love for prayers and complete surrendering to God's Will. Sometimes they called her a saint.**

- They Brought Her to Die Here!

Sister Mary-Abel heard about Saint Sharbel's miracles. His picture was next to her bed and his relic around her neck. Before she visited him, she implored him saying, "If you want to cure me, let me see you in a dream." Not too long after that she did see him in a dream. He appeared to her wearing a white garment, standing next to her bed

while extending his hands above her; then he disappeared. He appeared to her again in another dream and blessed her. The first time he appeared to her she told the nuns. They asked her if he looked like the picture that showed him kneeling on a cane tray; the only image that was known and widespread. She replied, "No he didn't look like that image!" So they said, "Then this is not him." However this didn't weaken her faith in him. Even though she never asked to visit him, she wanted to go knowing for sure he's was going to heal her.

On July 11, 1950, Sister Mary-Abel visited the Monastery of Saint Maron-Annaya accompanied by Mother Isabel Ghrabeb, the Mother Superior of Jbeil's monastery, who insisted that she should be taken to Annaya. Also going was Matild Zanbaka, the Mother Superior of Boushrieh's monastery, Mother Bernadette Naffaa, the novices' teacher, and Sister Leotinin Rahmeh. On the way there, she was so very ill and vomiting all the way. The car stopped from time to time so the nuns could give her some injections; they were afraid she would die on the road. They even offered to let her rest one night in Jbeil's monastery, but she refused. After five hours on the road, they arrived at Annaya. Sister Mary-Abel was very exhausted. When she was brought out of the car on a seat in such bad condition, people around her said, "How narrow minded are these Jesuits nuns! They brought her to die here! Let her die on her bed at home!"

- Throw Me With the Poor!

The employees of the Health Squad Department in Annaya's monastery, Michel El-Sroujy, Victor Ghawi, and Fouad El-Sayegh, all carried Sister Mary-Abel to the tomb's hall on the chair. Upon entering the tomb area and touching the tombstone, she felt a chill in her back and a strange power flowing into her body. She also felt the presence of the Saint. She had not perceived this feeling before the empty coffin, or in the church, but only at the door of the tomb.

Then she was taken to a room where she laid down on a bed prepared for her. They gave her some fruit and the moment she ate she started to throw up. At night she told the Mother Superior, Isabel Ghrayeb, "I don't sleep on a good bed. Put me with the poor on the tomb's ground!" She replied, "There is no room for you near the tomb!" So she submitted and said to Saint Sharbel, "You are a monk and I am a nun. You know what obedience is, so I obey, and the rest depends on you." Then she spent that night praying with the nuns in a room that was prepared for them.

In the early morning the nuns participated in a procession for The Host. After the mass and Holy Communion, she was put before the tomb where she participated in three more masses. She was visiting with the people, discussing their cases, praying with them, crying and wailing like them. An extraordinary atmosphere of prayer was prevailing in the room with mutual love. At that time she started feeling a severe pain in her waist, but especially in her right knee. But she expected that this meant something good and said to herself, "He is healing me, no doubt!" She thought this because she she had been told that if Saint Sharbel will heal, sometime he would increase the pain.

- A Touch From God

At 9:15 a.m. after participating in the procession from the monastery to the hermitage, Mother Isabel asked Sister Mary-Abel to go with her to have some food or drink, but she refused and said, "It's better for me to stay here and pray! Leave me and go. I won't go out of here except by walking on my feet!" So she went and left her there.

After a short while the Health Squad team came for cleaning and spraying the hall for insects and took the sick outside. When they reached Sister Mary-Abel, she asked them to put her in front of the tomb on the outside. They carried her on the

chair she was sitting on and put her where she requested. After finishing spraying, they brought her back and put her in front of the tomb. She thanked them saying, "I bothered you twice! But this is the last time!"

She sat before the tomb staring at it as if something was attracting her to it and wasn't able to move her eyes away from it! She was deeply touched. Beside her there was a blind man rubbing his eyes on the marble and saying, "Have mercy on me. Oh God, have mercy on me." He lifted up his head and tried to open his eyes with his hands. Her pain was still the same, but while she was praying she turned and saw the name of Saint Sharbel where it was engraved in the tombstone and it was wet with drops of sweat sticking to it! She rejoiced and said, "This is for me!" She became determined to take a napkin and wipe the drops to rub on her stomach and body. She stood up, got a napkin and walked to the tomb. A woman tried to help her, but she refused. She was determined to do it herself. When she put the napkin on the marble and saw it wet with sweat, she was excited and started rubbing her stomach, back and side with it. However, no one else had seen the drops of sweat on the marble! Then she turned to see whether her sisters were around to witness her healing and rejoice with her. They had worked so hard to help her for many years and she was sure of her healing. So she found some of them and asked the nurse to call Mother Bernadette. The nurse rushed and brought her. Mary-Abel stood next to her, gave her the stick and she stood up straight! She shouted with a loud voice, "Move away! Make room for me!" Then she walked! Her steps in the beginning weren't stable, lifting her feet more than usual, but then she began to walk like everybody else. People around her were cheering and applauding. Next to her there was a Muslim man who saw her when she arrived at the monastery and then when she was healed. He raised his voice shouting, "I want to become a Christian." The bells rang! The crowds rejoiced!

Sister Isabel Ghrayeb hearing of the curing of Sister Mary-Abel felt a chill over her body and was deeply touched. She said, "By the Grace of God our nun has walked!" She rushed out feeling both hope and fear! Then she met Sister Matild Zambaka shouting, "Sister Mary-Abel is walking!" Father Ageya walked slowly. Upon arriving at the church he entered with his knees shaking; he could barely stand up because he was so deeply touched. The church was packed and one of the monks was preaching with enthusiasm about the Power of God and the intercession of Saint Sharbel. Sister Mary-Abel was standing upright on the steps of the altar like a bamboo stick, looking at the priest and listening to his words. When the homily was over, Father Ageya felt a desire to speak so he called for repentance and returning to the faith. The faithful were crying with joy and sharing his feelings. Sister Mary-Abel participated in the procession of The Host that lasted more than two hours and didn't feel tired. She was even jumping over stones piled in the monastery yard. Michel El-Sroujy carried her up again shouting to the crowds and saying, "Look nothing is impossible for God! Woe to him who has no faith!"

- Who is Michel El-Sroujy?

I was sick from 1947 until May 9, 1950. I had arthritis which affected the internal and external membranes of my heart and caused me an inflammation that prevented my working. I was referred for retirement from my job as a policeman on November 1, 1949.

On December 27, 1950 at 5:00 p.m., a quarrel happened between me and a man named Victor Khoury from Hadath-Beirut. He kicked me and threw me out of the bus to the ground. My back hit the edge of the sidewalk and I lost consciousness. This caused a fracture in the eleventh and twelfth vertebrae. My legs and bladder were paralyzed as confirmed by x-ray and by the doctors' certificates which I kept.

I stayed in this condition until May 9, 1950 when I heard about Saint Sharbel's miracles. I asked my wife to take me to visit the tomb of Saint Sharbel. She called for a car and asked her cousin, Father Boutros Tannoury, to go with us to the Monastery. Because I couldn't walk, I was carried to the car. We headed to the monastery. On our way I was very distraught and my heart was still in bad condition. When I arrived at the Monastery, the monastic physicians examined me. There were Dr. Ibrahim Bakhos, Dr. Sakher Al-Khazen and Dr. Antoine El-Beayni. They reported that I was in very bad health and their reports are registered in the records of the Monastery.

I was carried down to the tomb, but couldn't enter because of the crowds. I was then brought back to the church. I confessed while standing up as a priest and Father Gebrayel held me up and then received Holy Communion. After that I was carried again down to the tomb, and remained before the tomb crying and praying. I was broken-hearted. After 45 minutes I experienced a trembling all over my body and felt as if I was suffocating. I stood up quickly, shaking, sobbing and screamed a loud shout as if I was very frightened! There was a worker called Espiro who was paving the floor inside the tomb. He went out and said that a miracle had happened to me! I went toward the door shivering and walking like a baby taking his first step! I heard the bells ringing, the women ululating, and the people shouting, "Miracle! Miracle!" I took a handkerchief to wipe the sweat pouring from my face. The napkin was wet with a yellow liquid. I walked forward and found a cloak hanging on the wall by the church door and wiped my face with it. Then people rushed toward that cloak tearing it apart and distributing it among them as a blessing. I walked to the church by myself without leaning on anybody and received the Holy Eucharist.

After that I came to a room where Mr. Boulos Salami was laid on a stretcher. It was just 15 minutes since I was cured. I approached him and told him, "Prince of poets. May God heal you like he has healed me." Then people gathered to look at me. After that Dr. Sakhr El-Khzaen came and examined me. He took off all my clothes and carefully checked my heart, examining my entire body and found me healthy. After that I dropped the case I had brought in the criminal court against Victor Khoury in gratitude to Saint Sharbel.

- The Presence of God

At night Sister Mary-Abel went with some of the nuns to the hermitage and spent the night sitting on a chair before the cell of Father Sharbel, the hermit. In the morning she went back to Bekaa Kafa where the congregation of the Monastery rejoiced. She had breakfast with them without vomiting. She went back to doing both mentally and physically hard work like the rest of the nuns who were in good health. Because she had lost her teeth, she kept taking vitamins and supplements and wasn't able to take adequate nutrition. She became more zealous and strove for more holiness than before. Once she told the story of her healing before large number of people in Hemmana. Among the crowd there was a Druze man who cried when he heard the story of her healing.

3 - The Church Declares the Beatification of Sharbel

On December 5, 1965, in the presence of 3,500 Catholic bishops, Pope Paul VI declared the beatification of Sharbel during the closing of the Second Vatican Council. After studying the four above-mentioned miracles and achieving a legitimate investigation with over 12 witnesses for each miracle, the church took into consideration two of the miracles. We put into account these miracles in detail knowing how interested people wanted to know the cause and progression of the diseases, as well as facts about the healings and spiritual results. We also wanted to make it known how precise and accurate the church is in determining what is truly a miracle.

T - Sharbel the Saint

1 - The Retired First-Lieutenant in the Syrian Army Mohammad Helmi Irbelli

While I was sitting in my home in Al-Shreibat-Damascus on December 5, 1965, I saw on Lebanese television a presentation on the life of Father Sharbel Makhlouf. It was the story of his beatification in Saint Peter's Basilica in Rome in the presence of His Beatitude and the Pope. I saw all the scenes until the end of the show watching the ceremony with attention and concern.

I was deeply touched by these scenes so it came to my mind to speak with this Saint before going to sleep and beg him to heal the pain in my foot which was injured six years ago. I had gone to Germany several times and consulted many doctors, including Dr. Schroeder, the Director of Louison Hospital in the town of Aven, but all these treatments were without benefit. I despaired about taking drugs and lost hope of a cure for my foot.

On the same night I went to bed and said, "Oh Father Sharbel Makhlouf, if you are really a saint, I implore God to heal my foot. If it is healed, I'll believe you are a saint." I fell asleep. I saw in my dream an old man, sleeping in a long box, wearing white clothes, and the same headdress that was worn by His Holiness, the Pope. It was ornate brocade and the old man had a wooden cross on his chest. He stretched out his hand, cut a small piece of my ear and told me, "**This won't hurt you.**" and it really didn't hurt at all. The morning of December 6, 1965, when I woke up I wasn't wearing the stretch socks that reduced the pain in my foot like usual. I thought maybe I was healed. Then I walked around my house and I didn't feel any pain! I went to the market for four hours and I didn't feel any pain like before. Now six months have passed and I feel no pain. I walk on my feet very comfortably. I am sending you this statement not for publicity. I am a Muslim man.

2 - I Prayed to Saint Sharbel and I Recovered

Father Ghassan, the parish minister, narrated on January 11, 1966: A Druze woman, married to Ramez Hmaidan, had water congestion on her knee and severe pain in her left shoulder. She tried all medical means possible to remove the water from her knee, but received no benefit. The more water that was removed, the more her knee became congested. The physicians ordered surgery to insert an outlet under the skin to drain the water. She agreed, but didn't show up on the day surgery was scheduled..

I went to church on December 5, 1965, and after the mass, I passed by her house. She asked me if Saint Sharbel was still performing miracles. I answered "Yes, and in fact today is the day of his beatification in Rome. Would you like to know about Saint Sharbel?" She said, "Yes, sure." So I gave her a booklet that was in my car.

Then on Thursday, December 9, before 2:00 p.m., I passed by her house. She met me out by the door shouting, "Father Ghassan! Father Ghassan!" Her eyes were bathed in tears. I asked her, "What happened? Are you upset?" She started bending her knee and twisting her left shoulder. I asked her, "Who is your doctor? Have you had a surgery?" She said, "Sharbel, Sharbel. I prayed to Saint Sharbel and I got healed!"

3 - An American Physician's Report

I the undersigned, Alexander Thomas, registered as an expert in autopsies and death burial administration in Boston Massachusetts, License Number: 3789, since 1936, state: On August 15, 1966, I examined the body of the Blessed Sharbel and was astonished! The liquid covering his body consisted of a combination of blood and water with a density of three inches. The color of his clothes was reddish. In all the years that I transferred dead bodies from one coffin to another, they were all totally corrupt.

When the Superior of the Monastery, Father Tobiya Ziadeh, told me that Father Sharbel died 68 years ago in 1898, I was astonished. He seemed as if he had been dead only 12 to 13 weeks. The blood and water in the shroud is clear, sanguine and the liquid in the body is similar to the blood that is extracted from a corpse during the taxidermy process.

The rest of Sharbel's body was intact -- an entire body, as well as his clothes, in good condition compared to the number of years he had been dead. During all the years of my examinations, I have never seen anything comparable to the preservation of this miraculous body and the divine scent emitted from it!

The clothes of Father Sharbel should have absorbed all the bloody liquid during the years in the coffin. I also learned that the coffin was opened to the public in 1950. His body should have turned to ashes and disintegrated. My only interpretation for this phenomenon is that it is done by the hand of Almighty God.

4 - The Canonization Miracle

Mariam Assaf Aawad, from Shakra Ezra Dara in Syria, is now a resident of Hammana Lebanon. Miriam underwent three cancer operations between 1963 and 1965: one in the stomach, the second in the intestine and the third in the right side of her neck. These surgeries were not successful in removing the cancer from her body, so Mariam began to pray to the Blessed Sharbel.

Her tonsils became infected with cancer. She was enduring a lot of pain and having great difficulty in swallowing. Her voice started to weaken and the tonsils became red and very enlarged. She refused all treatment and radiation, but she kept asking Saint Sharbel for either a healing or the strength to bear this disease.

One day when she was sitting on her bed, she raised the following prayer and supplication to Saint Sharbel, "Will you grant me recovery from this disease? You the great Saint who heal the blind and the lame! If I get healed from this sickness, I will go and give you thanks in your shrine." She asked for healing that night before she slept. The next day the healing took place -- she was cured. Then Mariam went to the Monastery of Saint Maron - Annaya, to the tomb of Saint Sharbel, to fulfill her vow of thanks and bear witness to the greatness of God's Work through Annaya's Saint. Pope Paul VI canonized Sharbel on October 9, 1977.

5 - Sharbel Baptizing a Child the Night of His Canonization

A boy from a Lebanese family was born in Australia and had heart problem. He was in critical condition so a nun in the hospital asked the child's father to get a priest to give him the Sacrament of Baptism before he died. The father rushed to the Monastery of Saint Sharbel in Sydney, Australia, and asked the monks if any of them could baptize the boy. The monks apologized, one after the other saying, "We cannot leave the church on the eve of the canonization because of the heavy crowds in the monastery. In addition, some monks have gone to Rome to attend the ceremony of sanctification in the Vatican."

The father lost hope of his child's baptism and was waiting for the news of his death within a few hours. During the night or in the morning, no one contacted him. Around noon, the father called the nun asking about his child's condition? She said, "He got well after one of your monks baptized him." The father was astonished and said, "No one agreed to baptize him!?" She replied, "Yes, a priest came. He had a white beard and gave him the Sacrament of Baptism." The father realized the truth. He understood that Saint Sharbel went to the hospital, baptized and healed his son. The boy is a young man now, full of life and works as a bulldozer driver.

6 - Sharbel is Blessing the Crowds

The day of the canonization October 9, 1977, after a massive parade from Jbeil to Annaya that lasted for more than five hours, Sister Jaqueline narrated in Parish Journal: I was standing up, praying, with my eyes fixed on Saint Sharbel's statue which had been erected in the courtyard of Annaya's monastery. When the hand on the statute moved and made the Sign of the Cross slowly, I thought it was due to eye fatigue. I rubbed my eyes with my hands, but the hand moved a second time in front of me. I looked at my sister nun and she whispered in my ear, "He is moving and blessing!" We heard whispers among the crowd, "He is blessing!" Some people started kneeling, others making the sign of the cross. When the same movement was repeated from the Sharbel's blessed hand, the people shouted, "He is blessing!"

A young man, Antoine K. who participated in the parade said, "I had a camera in my hand and when I got close, I stopped. Every time I saw the hand move, I took a picture. When he extended his hand over the crippled boy who was healed, I took two photos of the outstretched hand." Some people saw the statue's eyes blinking and others saw teardrops coming from its eyes. There was astonishment, crying, and rejoicing reigned over the majority of those present. Reverend Father Boulos Azzi, who was present on the eve and the day of canonization, was in the confessional booth in Annaya. He told us that repentance was the most important miracle. A lot of people came to confession with tears and many of them hadn't approached the confessional booth for decades.

7 - A Grain of Incense in the Hand of a Newborn Baby

Father Antoine Sadaqua testified: Maria De Nazareth, a resident of Brazil, was barren and medical disabilities made her unable to conceive. This failure increased her sadness and despair.

One day she met a Lebanese lady who had recently been to Brazil. She was carrying some blessed incense from Saint Sharbel and started talking about the abundant miracles that he had performed. Among the miracles was that God grant barren women the grace of bearing children. Maria was deeply touched and wished that the Lord would grant her a child. Then the Lebanese woman gave her some incense and asked her to pray over the incense; instead she swallowed one grain of incense after which she conceived a child.

She began waiting impatiently for her baby. When the hour of the birth came, she went to the hospital to deliver. The doctor was astonished after seeing the newborn boy closing one hand and opening the other; he never seen such a thing before. So he opened the boy's hand fearing that something bad had happened to his hand and was amazed to find a grain of incense in his hand. This was the grain that his mother swallowed in order to conceive.

U - The Joy of Faith

1 - Nohad El-Shamy

- I wish I Could Live His Life

Mrs. Nohad El-Shamy testified: I have seven sons and five daughters. I used to fulfill my religious duties in a complete way by attending Sunday mass, praying the Rosary, and the Litany of the Blessed Virgin every day while kneeling with my children. I was praying the Rosary in the morning and, at noon, the Angelus as this is the custom of most people.

My first meeting with Saint Sharbel was when he appeared in 1950. While visiting the hermitage, I saw Saint Sharbel's tools, was deeply touched, and cried. I was twelve years old and my mother asked me, "Why are you crying?" I told her, "I

wish I could live his life. I don't want money or castles!"

I got married and moved to Al-Mezarib, although I was a resident of Jounieh. I lived the life of a peasant with all its difficulties: cooking, washing on firewood, baking bread in the furnace, carrying wood from the forest, washing clothes with ashes in the river, cultivating and looking after the cows, sheep, and chickens. I had two elderly persons to take care of. One of them, was my mother-in-law, who gave me a hard time. No one wanted to take care of her, but when she became infirm I forgave her and served her with all my heart.

I also used to gather the children of the village and teach them the Our Father, the Hail Mary, the Act of Contrition and the Creed. My husband objected saying, "Be careful. A child might fall!" But the Virgin Mary always protected us. We prayed her Rosary every night and celebrated her Ascension.

Then when I moved to Halat, people started bringing me a sick child or other sick people for healing. As recommended by the Blessed Virgin, I was praying on the water three times: the Creed, the Our Father, and the Hail Mary for Christ's wounds. When I put the Cross in that water and many were healed.

- First Surgery on the Kidney

I had a stone in the kidney the length of one and a half centimeters which was causing inflammation. I used to get treated in the hospital for a week, rest at home for 24 hours, then return to the hospital again.

Dr. Antoine El-Shamy, the owner of Saint Martin Hospital, ordered surgery for me, but when he learned that I had just delivered a child, he cancelled it. So I went to Annaya's hermitage. I prayed, took some soil from the hermitage and swallowed it.

Saint Sharbel came to me in a dream calling me, "**Nohad! Nohad! Are you awake?**" I answered, "Yes, I am." He told me, "**Sit. Which kidney hurts you?**" I said, "The left one." He cut me, and I was so scared when I saw the skin without blood. I called on the Blessed Virgin, "Oh Virgin, help me! How is he going to do surgery without anesthetic?" He answered me, "**I am Father Sharbel. I did surgery on your kidney.**" My husband hurried to me, surprised and said, "Why are you screaming like that?" I replied, "Saint Sharbel came and did surgery on my kidney." My husband approached and saw the trace of the surgery -- a red spot that was oozing liquid. I then made a complete recovery.

- No Cure for Hemiplegia!

On January 9, 1993, I was affected with hemiplegia (stroke) on my left side. My left hand and tongue were paralyzed. I entered Saint Martin Hospital in Jbeil and consulted Dr. Joseph El-Shamy, a specialist in heart disease, arteries, and nerves. He took me to the intensive care unit and examined me along with Dr. Nashanakian and the family physician, Dr. Majid El-Shamy. After radiology treatments, the tests results showed as follows: dryness in the neck's artery with a degree of 80% on the left side, and 70% on the right which made me partially paralyzed. There was no treatment for this disease. I was advised to go home and after three months go to the Hotel Dieux Hospital to take new x-rays. Possibly then they could perform surgery on my neck to replace the clogged arteries with plastic ones.

- A Touch from Saint Sharbel

After that my oldest son, Saad, went to Annaya's monastery and prayed with a wounded heart before Saint Sharbel's statue. He brought me some oil and soil as blessings from Saint Sharbel's tomb. When my daughter anointed me with these blessings, I felt a numbness in my left hand and foot. After nine days, I came out of the hospital and stayed home bedridden. My husband was taking me to the restroom, and my children were giving me food and water with a straw. I spent three days in this situation after I left the hospital.

- Admonition and Regretting

Then when I was sleeping I dreamed that I was walking on the stairs of the hermitage in Annaya. I attended mass with the monks where Saint Sharbel gave me the Eucharist! On the fourth day, in the early morning of January 22, 1993, I felt a pain in my head and in the right side of my body. I prayed and asked the Virgin Mary and Saint Sharbel, "What I have done? Why have you crippled me in the bed? What is my sin? I raised a family of twelve children with hard work, prayer and perseverance until they grew up. I am not trying to oblige you, but if you want to heal me, do so or let me die. I am satisfied with whatever you want! Death is a must, but don't let my family suffer from serving me!" Then I regretted what I had said and asked, "Forgive me, Oh Blessed Virgin. I must carry the cross and not escape from the pain for the sake of your Passion, Oh Jesus."

- I am Coming to Make You a Surgery!

My husband and children left me to sleep and rest. At eleven o'clock while I was dreaming, I saw a ray of light entering my room and two monks heading towards my bed. Then Saint Sharbel approached me, uncovered my neck, put his hand on me and told me, "**I am coming to you to do surgery!**" So I turned around, but I couldn't see his face because a power of light was shining from his eyes and body. I was perplexed and said, "Father, why do you want to do surgery -- a surgery that the physicians don't recommend?" He said, "**Yes, you need surgery and I, Father Sharbel, came to do it for you.**" I looked at the statue of the Virgin Mary next to me and said, "Oh Blessed Virgin, please intercede for me. How can these monks do surgery on me without anesthetic and then stitch me?"

Then I looked at the Statue of Virgin Mary and saw it coming and standing between the two monks. It wasn't just a static statue but rather a beaming light full of life. At that moment, I felt a great pain under Saint Sharbel's fingers rubbing my neck. After Saint Sharbel finished the surgery, Saint Maron approached, took a pillow and made me sit. Then he put it behind my back. He took a glass of water from beside me, took the straw from the glass, put his hand under my head and said, "Drink this water." I told him, "Father I can't drink without a straw." He replied, "Yes, we did surgery. You can drink. Now you are going to drink the water, and stand up and walk." Then he approached, held my head with his right hand, and made me drink with his left hand.

- The Joyful Tears

After that I woke up. The water was going down naturally in my throat, and I found myself sitting as the monk had sat me. I looked at the Virgin's statue and found it back in its place on the table. I felt an involuntary burning in my neck. I put my hand on my neck to see what was happening. Then I noticed my left hand, the paralyzed one, had become normal and I felt my left foot was moving normally under the quilt. So I asked my daughter, who was sleeping in her bed next to me with her newborn baby, "What time is it?" She said, "Two in the morning." I got out of bed, and without full awareness, I knelt before Saint Sharbel's photo and the Blessed Virgin to thank them. It was the first time I could kneel on my knee because of the arthritis. The doctor had indicated he might have to amputate to relieve the pain.

I walked to the bathroom and saw two wounds on my neck – one on the left side and one on the right. The length of each wound was approximately twelve centimeters. Then I walked to my husband's room, adjacent to mine, and turned on the light. My husband was praying the Rosary. He looked at me and shouted loudly, "Woman how did you come alone? You may fall down and it will be another affliction. Be careful not for my sake but for yours!" I lifted up my hand and told him, "Don't worry. Saint Sharbel did surgery and I walked!" My husband fell down and fainted! I approached him and slapped him several times saying, "Oh Semaan! Oh Semaan!" When some of my children found out, they fell down also. Then they started informing each other by telephone and gathered together crying with joy.

- I Cut You by the Power of God so They Could See You

In the morning I went with my daughter and husband to the hermitage to thank the Saint for his graces. I met with the administrator, Father Michael Mghames, and when I told him my story and showed him the wound, he said, "This wound is not for you alone. This is a sign for the whole world; you should inform the radio and television stations to spread the news." My husband answered, "We thank God the woman is healed and Saint Sharbel needs no advertisement." We attended mass with the Father in the hermitage. When we returned home, it was a big surprise for the neighbors and relatives who had visited me when I was paralyzed.

The next day I woke up and three strings appeared in my neck – one on the right side and two on the left side. Dr. Majid EL-Shamy pulled two of them but couldn't pull the third because he was electrified whenever he touched the string. Then doctors declared that my healing was a result of the medicines they gave me for the migraines I had. Regarding the wound in my neck, they explained that it was because I had scratched myself from the pain! LBC television came, photographed me and the news began to spread. Visitors came from all over Lebanon by the thousands and our house was always packed with hundreds of visitors.

A week after my healing miracle, Abdo Yaaqoub, our parish priest in Halat, as well as Dr. Majid El-Shamy told me, "We want to send you afar to your son's house so you can rest for a couple of days." I agreed.

But that night Saint Sharbel appeared to me and told me, "**Don't leave the people. Keep your faith. I had cut you by the Power of God so they could see you because some people have strayed away from praying, from attending church and from respecting the saints and you cannot do anything to people! But whoever needs anything from me, I, Father Sharbel, am always present in the hermitage. I ask you to visit the hermitage every 22nd of each month and attend the mass all your life.**"

- Pictures Oozing Oil

I kept on celebrating Saint Sharbel's procession in my house in Halat every Thursday, the day of the miracle. On August 15, 1993, when I was in my village of El-Mzarib, Saint Sharbel appeared to me in my dream and told me, "**Nohad, I want you to make the Rosary procession in your house every first Saturday of every month for a year for the intention of your family.**"

In the morning, I got up as usual and offered incense before the altar, lit a candle, and began my prayers. When I looked at the picture of Saint Sharbel, I saw oil oozing from it. It still does to this day. When I was celebrating the Rosary procession as recommended by Saint Sharbel, and I was accompanied by a flock of visitors and faithful at my home (and it was the first procession falling on November 6th), Saint Maron's picture started oozing oil and also still does until this day.

On September 2nd, Saint Rita appeared to me in a dream while I was in front of the Shrine of the Virgin Mary near our house in the mountains. She laid her hand on my shoulder, kissed me on my forehead and said to me, "I congratulate you for this faith!" I turned to tell her what happened to me, but she said to me, "I know Saint Sharbel did surgery and Saint Maron gave you the glass of water."

- The Oak Leaves

As is the custom I set up the Christmas manger and tree every year. We decorate a pine tree which we cut from the forest, but that year the government prevented the cutting of pine trees for Christmas. So I asked my son, Issam, to bring me an oak tree instead. The tree was nice with thick leaves in the shape of a dome bell.

The night of the Epiphany, Father Sharbel came with Saint Maron and told me, "**We want to bless the tree.**" I knelt down and prayed with them three times: the Our Father and Hail Mary. Then Saint Sharbel chanted a very beautiful Syriac hymn.

When we were done praying, he brought a bucket of water with a sprinkler in it. He put it on the carpet and a light shined from the bucket. He sprinkled the manger, the oak tree and continued sprinkling in the house. Then he came back. I was still before the manger with Saint Maron when he told me, **“Do not throw this in the garbage; this you will give to people as blessings.”** He continued, **“I’ll tell you how they should use it. Tell them to put three leaves in a pot in the name of the Holy Trinity and boil them. The leaves should be taken away and burned; then the water will be blessed and they can drink it. They should pray one Our Father and one Hail Mary for the wounds of Christ, who sacrificed his blood for his people and let their sick drink from it.”**

I didn’t take these words seriously because people would say Nohad is going crazy and doing strange things. I was living in fear of people gossiping about me. I stayed living in this fear for two years. Saint Sharbel kept encouraging me in dreams telling me, **“Don’t be afraid. God chose you from among his people to be a sign on earth and many people are going to come back to faith and prayers through you. Don’t retreat from people.”** He continued to bless the manger and the Christmas tree every year.

- Don’t be Afraid to Give the Oak Leaves

I scattered the oak leaves and burnt the tree as he told me but I didn’t dare give anyone the leaves. I told people, who came to pray daily in my house, the story of the dream and the oak leaves. They then took the leaves and one evening they told me, “Your neighbor, Nawal Eid, is sick and they want to take her to the hospital. So I decided to visit her. But in the morning before I went, she came to my house and told me she had an asthma attack. Her family wanted to take her to the hospital so she told her daughter, “Put three oak leaves we got from Nohad in a pot and boil them.” When I drank from it, I was healed, and she continued, “Do not be afraid to give oak leaves. I was very sick and when I drank I was relieved.” Then she never felt this disease again.

- She Gave Birth to Twins

Once a pediatrician called Caroline Abou-Jawde visited me. She stood before Saint Sharbel’s photo which exudes oil and cried fervently. I asked her, “What’s the matter?” She said, “I don’t have children.” I told her, “May God give you some.” She said, “I gave up hope. I have been treated for a long time and subject to implants twice but I didn’t conceive! Now I’ve been married for twenty years and I have no hope of having children.” I told her, “God the Almighty is able to do anything.” and I gave her some oak leaves. After a month, she called and told me she was pregnant. We started praying for her and she gave birth to twins, a boy and a girl. This miracle was repeated hundreds of times with families who had no children but their faith in God and Saint Sharbel’s intercession, gave them children and I became Godmother for about four hundred fifty of them.

- A Trip to Mexico

Sharbel became well known in Mexico. Everybody loves him and his statues have been placed in churches, hospitals, houses, and shops. His posters are everywhere even in the taxicabs. If someone has surgery, he won’t enter the operating room unless he kisses Saint Sharbel’s statue first.

Nohad continued: The Lebanese Community invited me, through Bishop Bshara El-Rahey, to go to Mexico. I went and they welcomed me with a festival. Because of the large number of people, we celebrated holy mass in the central stadium. I anointed people with Saint Sharbel’s oil for about three hours.

Many miracles occurred there and these are some of them: A 30 year old man, walking on crutches, left his crutches and walked. A nine year old girl had cancer in her uterus and recovered completely. A pregnant woman with a baby who had cancer

wanted to abort him. I asked her to trust in God and keep the baby. Then a day before I left Mexico, she returned to me and told me God had responded and healed her son; her physician confirmed this for her. Also during the last liturgy in the Church of Our Lady of Guadalupe, a blind woman led by her two daughters came forward. I gave her a small piece of cotton soaked with Saint Sharbel’s oil to swallow and wiped her eyes with my hands. Then I asked Saint Sharbel, with a burning heart, to have pity on her. The moment they took her back to her place, she shouted and said, “I can see.” and people cried and started applauding.

2 - Sharbel with the Muslims

A young Muslim lady testified: on a very cold night in 1994 I was with my little brothers at home alone while my mother was with my little sister in the hospital. I was eleven years old and so scared. An elderly man entered, wearing a black habit with a cap on his head, and a long white beard. He said, **“Don’t be afraid!”** The stove was off because we didn’t have diesel for it. He took the empty tank, filled it and lit the stove. In the kitchen there was a pot of milk my mother wanted to use to cook rice. He entered the kitchen, cooked the rice pudding and then came back and tutored my little brothers, putting his hand on his mouth saying, **“Don’t be afraid!”** The next day we had exams and we all got straight A’s.

Several hours later my mother came back home. When she opened the door, the elderly man walked out quickly. I told my mother, “Have you seen the elderly man that was with us?” She said, “No! Who is the elderly man?” I told her that he had lit the stove, cooked the rice with milk and tutored my brothers all the while telling us, **“Don’t be afraid!”** So my mother went to the kitchen and touched the pot of the rice pudding; it was still hot. She said, “Thank God for everything.”

Shortly after that day, we went with my mother to visit a friend of hers, a Christian lady, who had a portrait of Saint Sharbel hung on the wall of the living room. I pointed with my hand to the picture and said to my mother, “This is the elderly man who came to our house that night! Oh, how charming are you Saint Sharbel! You are the beloved of the frightened children! You warm them, cook for them, tutor them and stay with them until their mother comes back!”

3 - Sharbel in Africa in 1995

A person from a very pious family decided to go from Burkina Faso where he lived, to another area far away, despite the opposition of his mother for this transition.

When his mother failed to persuade him to cancel this perilous journey, she had no choice but to put a picture of Lebanon’s Hermit under her son’s car seat. After traveling for a few hours into the region of his destination, he ran out of fuel in an isolated area filled with thieves and predators where many die every year. When fear and anxiety overwhelmed the young man, he saw an old man approaching him carrying a tank in his hand. The old man asked the reason for his stopping, gave him the tank he was carrying, and asked him to fill up the car tank as its contents would enable him to get to the nearest station.

When he reached the nearest gas station, he asked the employees there to fill the tank of the car. When they opened it, they looked at the young man displeasingly and told him, “Are you mocking us? You’re asking us to fill up the reservoir while it is already full.” When the young man returned from his trip, he told his mother everything that happened. So she rushed to the car and pulled the Saint Sharbel’s picture from under the seat. It was then the young man got to know who saved him from inevitable death. Now this young man has become a better Christian than any other in the region.

4 - Magdalene on June 22, 2002

Rafqua was eleven years old when her father died. She grew up with many problems. When she turned eighteen, she had a romantic relation with Mansour and thought this love would culminate in marriage. After her sister had a car accident and was in the intensive care unit, her mother had to stay with her in the hospital. So Rafqua stayed alone at home. Mansour took advantage of this situation and seduced Rafqua causing her to lose her virginity. Their relationship continued for over five months. Then she felt dizzy and went to the doctor with Mansour only to find out she was pregnant! She was greatly troubled and scared especially because she knew her family would refuse to accept this situation. Her two brothers might dare kill her if she told them that she was pregnant! She wanted to have an abortion, but Mansour comforted her saying, "Fear not, we're going to get married." But he kept on postponing the wedding until she reached her fifth month. Once her mother told her, "Rafqua why are you gaining weight?" She answered, "Mom I am in a good health, thank God." Then Mansour shirked his responsibility and refused to marry her. It was a terrible shock for her and she didn't know how to escape her painful and dangerous fate. On one hand she lost her love to Mansour who betrayed her, and on the other hand, she was exposed to scandal and the threat of being killed. She searched for a solution with many doctors until one of them agreed to abort her child. That night she stayed at her grandmother's house and the next day went to work like usual despite the psychological and physical pain she was feeling because of the abortion and separation from Mansour.

- A Temporary Solution

She met Mary and told her about her situation. Mary invited her to go out that night with her friends, offered her a cigarette of hashish, and told her, "This will let you forget your troubles!" So she smoked the first cigarette, then a second, and a third. She forgot her problems until the effects of the cigarette ended. Because she started going out at night and staying out late, she started arriving late to work and making excuses for herself. One night a young man put heroin in her soda and she asked him, "What's this?" He told her, "Drink it." She drank the soda and felt a long-lasting ecstasy she had never felt before! He said, "Isn't it good?" She said, "Yes." The next day he put the heroin in her whiskey and she asked him, "What is this?" He said, "Just drink." She enjoyed the feeling for a long time. Now her life started changing. She became addicted to heroin and could no longer stay away from it. The young man did this to entrap her, so she in turn would give it to other young people. Thus he could sell more heroine and make even more money!

- The Hell of Pleasures

Because of staying up late at night, she started sleeping during the day and missing work ruining her relationship with her employer. Then she resigned. Because of high expenses -- \$100 a day for heroin -- she was forced to sell her body. She abandoned her religious practices even though she had been a member of a famous chorus. She silenced the Voice of God in her conscience. Indeed she refused to listen to any hymn. She thought at first glance that this was happiness and wandered from pleasure to pleasure, ecstasy to ecstasy, but didn't reap anything except anxiety, misery, sadness, and emptiness. She no longer trusted anyone and disliked everybody. She felt nobody loved her. They would have sex with her at night and in the morning they denied her and talk badly about her!

She gave her life to hatred, lies, hostility and rebellion against God and people. She also practiced devil worship with her friends and celebrated black mass by using blessed candles for the lighting. She insulted God by spitting on the Eucharist, swearing, and prostituting next to it. She despised her life and tried to commit suicide five times! Once she took a large amount of painkillers. On two occasions when

brought to the hospital, her blood pressure level was incredibly low. In the late spring of 2002, after two years of addiction to heroin, she made a final decision to commit suicide but planned on doing it after enjoying the summer.

- Prayer of the Mother

On June 22, 2002, Rafqua's mother knew that Rafqua and her friends were going to visit Saint Sharbel so she asked her to light candles for the intention of her children. Her mother's love was the only love left in Rafqua's heart, and she began to rethink committing suicide because of the grief it would cause her mother. She agreed to light the candles knowing this was just one of many lies she told her mother every day.

They headed to Annaya. Rafqua was surprised when she saw Saint Sharbel's poster placed in the woods above the road. She was shocked and said, "What am I coming to do here? You Liars! We agreed to spend the night in Kaslik!" The young driver answered, "A quick visit only." Rafqua screamed, "Who is Saint Sharbel? What has Saint Sharbel done for me? You keep telling me Sharbel, Sharbel, Sharbel!" She pointed her finger to his poster, mocking and saying, "Look at this picture!" Her friend interfered saying, "Why are you talking like that Rafqua? Don't speak like this about Saint Sharbel!" Rafqua went crazy, cursing and said, "We didn't see anyone die and come back to tell us what's in there! Who is Saint Sharbel? The people invented Saint Sharbel! Where is God? Where is the justice?" (She said that remembering what had happened with Mansour, how he left her, how she aborted and that she was poor and couldn't afford going to the dentist, but now she has lots of money.)

The argument was over and they reached the hermitage. They asked Rafqua to come down to pray. She refused, but they insisted. Then she said, "The church is closed; I don't want to come out." But because they insisted, she got out, took off her high heels, and started kicking the shoes of each of them and cursing. Again her friend put his hand on her mouth and silenced her. She arrived at the hermitage and put the candles down by the door but refused to light them. Her friend lit them while Rafqua mocked her saying, "You lit the candles? Heh! What has changed?" Her friend didn't answer. They went down to the monastery at about 10:00 p.m. Rafqua didn't want to come down to the monastery. She wanted to stay in the car, but her friends insisted saying, "The church is open, pray and come back." So she went down just to silence them."

- The Love of God

She entered the church, but before going down the stony stairs, she noticed a monk entering the door opposite her. He was about to go down the stairs parallel to her. Here Rafqua testified about the miracle of her sudden change: I no longer see anything but this monk! I couldn't think of anything but confessing! I rushed toward him, and before he reached the confessional booth that was at the end of the stairs, I pointed to him several times to sit in the confessional booth. So he did. I knelt down and burst into tears! I confessed my sins as a prostitute, an atheist and a drug addict. When the priest heard the word drugs, he understood what advice would help me. So he took me to the guidance room and offered to help me immediately. I thanked him, and told him tomorrow, and gave him my address. I felt heaviness in my head and body. I wanted to sleep and not stay awake anymore. The next day the priest took me to a place where I got treated and received full recovery. Thanks be to God.

Later I fell in love with Paul. We got married and God gave us children. We taught them putting the seeds of holiness in their hearts and the free love which my Lord Jesus and his disciple, Sharbel, granted me -- to be a Christian family and an initial cell in the Body of Christ. Now I know the meaning of life! I know the taste of love. I love my children and my husband loves me! I feel the Love of God, and I am sure that in reality, He adores me as I adore Him! I am the lost sheep who He went

looking for and carried me on His shoulders joyfully. Thanks for the Blessings of God, the Father, who loves his children immensely! In the end, I offer my testimony to every soul who walks in the way of sin and evil which leads to a dead end. Perhaps this soul will find in my story the peace and joy they are looking for because you won't find it in yourself, but in the Heart of Christ, the Savior of the world.

5 - Nothing Left to do But Cry

Claude Messouh testified: in 2002 during my study in France and while working inside the laboratory of the university, I felt a severe pain in my eyes.

I went immediately to the hospital where the physician treated me and returned home. In my handbag there was a little bottle of water from Saint Sharbel's house in Bakaakafra. I opened it and wiped my eyes with full confidence that I'm not going to have any problems. I recovered gradually. During the second and third days, I thought this improvement was from the medicine especially because I didn't know the reason for my eye problems.

A week later when I felt better and my eyes began to open, I went back to my work in the laboratory at the university. After four hours of work, I began to turn off the machines and lights. When the doctor walked in and told me, "Claude, do not forget to turn off the ultraviolet light." I said to him, "Where is it? Nobody told me about it?" He pointed to the place where I work. I found out later that these rays are used to kill microbes. I was shocked when he said that to me and started crying. I was very disturbed, but at the same time I had an inner feeling telling me not to worry. I took off my white robe and told the doctor what happened! He went crazy thinking how I had worked four hours under ultraviolet rays! I called a taxi, went to the hospital and consulted with the same doctor. I told him, "I have the same pain in my eyes and I added my new information being four hours under ultraviolet rays. At first, he didn't believe me, but then he gave me a unit of serum for each eye. I was aware of the seriousness of the situation because when we see an eclipse of the sun just for even a few seconds, we are exposed to blindness. What about being exposed for four hours? The doctor returned and asked if he could examine the retina. I entered the examination room and put my chin on the machine so he could examine the inside my eyes. Then the doctor started shaking his head and biting his lip! I asked him, "What's the matter?" He didn't answer! I insisted, so he asked me, "How did you come here?" I said, "Alone, you can tell me anything; I'm not scared!" He told me, "For sure you didn't come here alone, because you can't see!" I told him, "I can see!" He said, "There are black spots on the retina and the grid cells are burned!" At that moment, I could do nothing but to cry and I cried in a strange way! I didn't know why my tears flowed! The doctor continued, "Can you come back to see me in two days." I went home with the same medicines and I used the same blessed water because I knew this is the medicine and nothing else.

After a week, I went back to Lebanon and went immediately to an eye specialist to examine my eyes. He told me they were well. I insisted he examine my retina. He did and said it was very good and added there was no need for all these examinations!

I visited Saint Sharbel and thanked him. My life started changing. I started praying from my heart when before my prayer was from my lips. I have experienced that a moment of prayer with the heart is better than all that I prayed with my lips when my mind was somewhere else! If I skip a night without prayer, I feel a lack of joy even on the happiest day of my life when people congratulate me for my successes.

When this change happened to me, I felt that life was trivial and nothing was required of us but to sweeten our lives with the presence of the Lord, Who said, "I am standing at the door knocking." We can or cannot open the door for him; our

freedom is something very important. Usually we are interested in material stuff but today I see it is ridiculous. Now I know that my guardian angel is Jesus Christ and He appears to us through his saints. I started considering Saint Sharbel more like a friend, a companion, or a father. In all situations he is with me. I feel a responsibility toward the healing grace I've received and that I must speak of what the Lord has done for me. People are motivated by the Greatness and Goodness of God. Since this miracle happened to me, I neither tire of speaking about it, nor do people get tired of listening to my story. The presence of God in our lives is a great matter!

I started visiting Annaya frequently. Once my friend bought a car and wanted to visit Saint Sharbel. We were driving around midnight when the car slipped at a sharp juncture. A large rock crashed into the car, just as seen in the movies, and it overturned several times. We came out of the car safely, simply shaking off the dust. He came out of my door, and I came out of his door, without knowing how! The glass in the car didn't break despite the violent accident! We stood astonished before the scene. I thanked God for our rescue while my friend said, "Oh, I lost the car!" Later my friend began to feel the Divine Providence and, after careful thought, reflected on what happened and how we survived. Thanks to God, Our Father, for everything.

6 - Sharbel in the Philippines 2005

A Philippine lady worked as a housemaid for a Christian Lebanese family in Beirut. She called her mother in the Philippines and her mother was crying, saying, "I am going to die without seeing you. This sickness has strained me and I am in my last days." The daughter cried a lot. Because of financial difficulty she could not make the trip to the Philippines. Also she had signed a contract for two years to take care of two young children while the parents worked. The parents were in real need of her to care for their children. She burst into tears and the parents couldn't find a way to comfort her. Finally, they invited her to visit Saint Sharbel and she gratefully agreed.

She arrived at Annaya and knelt down near the tomb for two and a half hours, supplicating and saying, "Please Saint Sharbel! Have mercy on me and heal my mother! I want to see her before she dies and you know how poor I am. I cannot go to her." Then she went back with the family her eyes were red from weeping!

When she arrived in Beirut, her mother called her and said, "Thank you, my daughter, for sending me the doctor from Lebanon. He healed me. The young woman replied, "I didn't send you anybody!" "Yes." the mother insisted. He told me "You sent him to me from Lebanon!"

Here the daughter realized the truth and said, "What does he look like? What was he wearing?" The mother answered, "He was wearing a black habit and had a white beard." The daughter was shocked, "When did he come to you?" The mother continued, "At 1:15 p.m."

The daughter rejoiced and said, "This was Saint Sharbel. He visited you after I knelt before him, and while I was praying before his tomb, he was healing you in the Philippines. The Lord is glorified in His saints!"

7 - Healings in 2008 - 2009 (Annaya's Archives)

- Sharbel Nasr was stricken with brain stroke and entered into coma for fifty days. Dr. Sandra Sabbagh treated him in the Hotel Dieux hospital. After being transferred to his home in a wheelchair, his mother took him to the Monastery of Saint Maron- Annaya and dressed him with Saint Sharbel's habit. Coming back home while they were praying, he stood up, walked and his health improved gradually.

- Jalileh Ahmad Wehbeh, a Shiite, was born in 1964. She had breast cancer and had surgery to extract the cancer in 2006. After a year and four months, the disease appeared in her bones and she needed chemotherapy. She visited Saint Sharbel's tomb

and asked him for healing and she put her hand on the wall and said, “Don’t forget me.” She heard a voice saying to her, “**One moment.**” and she recovered.

- Secilia Mardilli from Aleppo, a Roman Catholic, was affected with a deformity in her spine and became hunched. On July 31, 2008 her mother brought her to the Monastery of Saint Maron asking Sharbel to heal her daughter. When she came back to the hotel she felt an unbearable pain in her back as if there was somebody treating her vertebrae one by one with their fingers. She felt cold in her hands and her feet, but her parents nearby couldn’t do anything for her. After an hour of pain, she slept in her bed. In the morning, she stood upright and was healed.

- Antoine Abboud from Karm-Saddeh, a resident of California born in 1936, had cancer in his stomach. He had two surgeries, but his wound became infected and his health condition worsened. The physician ordered chemotherapy for him. He prayed to Saint Sharbel to exempt him from the chemotherapy. While he was in the hospital, he saw Saint Sharbel entering the doctor’s room. After a moment, the doctor came out to tell him that the chemotherapy would be delayed for one month. This event was repeated twice. Then Antoine was set free from the chemotherapy treatments because every time they were scheduled, Saint Sharbel appeared to him and healed him.

- Yvonne Michel from Menyara, a resident of Chicago, fell from a ladder and fractured her back. Two years after her accident, she saw some people building a small shrine for Saint Sharbel so she asked them for a little picture for the Saint. An elderly woman gave her an old picture. She asked the Saint to look at her and heal her. After this request, she felt someone pull her leg and shoulder; she was healed.

- Sonia Abi-Khalil had four surgeries in Saint George’s Hospital in Ajaltoun by doctor Khattar Rashwan to extract her thyroid gland, but each time the gland reappeared so the doctor decided on a fifth surgery to extract it. Sonia despaired from all these surgeries, asked for the intercession of Saint Sharbel, and put his icon on her thyroid gland spot. While sleeping she saw a monk in her dream sewing on her neck and he told her, “**Who did the surgery for you did it wrong and I made you the surgery.**” When she woke up she saw the pus on her clothes and chest and the trace of three surgical stitches on her thyroid gland.

- Rashideh Merhej from Quartaba, born in 1937 and a resident of London, had pain in her shoulder joint and needed medication for six months. She watched a program on TV called, “Your Faith Has Saved You.” The theme of the episode was a miracle through the intercession of Saint Sharbel. When Saint Sharbel’s statue appeared on the TV screen, she asked him for healing and immediately recovered from her pain.

- Pedro El-Sheaar Rosa, born in 1999 and a resident of Brazil, had cancer of the liver in five spots and underwent two surgeries. His maternal grandfather, Emilio El-Sheaar from Hadath El-Jebbeh, prayed to Saint Sharbel and asked him to heal the boy. Saint Sharbel appeared to him with Saint Rafqua and the boy was healed.

- Sharbel Abou-Eid from Berbarah-Zahleh, a resident of London born in 2008, was an embryo when a swelling like a big bag appeared on his backside where the arteries of the legs and the nerves pass through. Physicians asked his parents to abort the child because he would be born deformed and paralyzed. The mother came from London to Lebanon and slept in the car facing the statue of Saint Sharbel asking him to save her baby. She took with her blessed oil and incense and a tape of Maronite hymns. While delivering the child, she asked that the tape of the hymns be played. At the moment of the birth of the baby, she asked her husband to immediately anoint him with Saint Sharbel’s oil. After the birth of the child, he was carried to another hospital to remove the swelling and they found that the bag was full of water!

- Madonna Kalash, a Roman Orthodox from Btorram, had an infection in her thyroid gland and needed a surgery to extract it. She prayed to Saint Sharbel and he appeared to her in a dream telling her, “**I want to make the surgery for you.**” He put one of his hands on her head and the other hand on her neck. When she woke up, the image of Saint Sharbel’s fingers appeared on her neck for an hour. She anointed her neck with Saint Sharbel’s oil like he told her. She went immediately to her doctor, Hasan Harmoush in Al-Zahraa Hospital, and he found that the surgery had been done and she was cured.

- Natasha Antony Watson, an English lady born in 1984 and a resident of the United States, is married to Johny Issa from Kbayyat. In 2006 she was diagnosed with sickle cell anemia. After the failure of long-term treatments, she came to Lebanon to visit her mother, Labibeh Watson, a resident of Zouk Mikael, who asked her to come to visit Saint Sharbel. When she arrived in Lebanon, and before her visit to Saint Sharbel, her mother gave her a drop of blood from Saint Sharbel to drink which she had in her home. When she drank it, she felt a severe pain and spasm in her body. Relatives and neighbors started praying to Saint Sharbel asking for her healing. She felt a person begin to treat her starting from her toes through the rest of her body, lungs, chest and head. After an hour of pain she recovered from her illness.

- Lucia Hanna Khalifeh, born in 1938 from Al-Husaniah South Lebanon, had cancer in her chest and hand due to being hit by shrapnel during the war. The disease spread to her stomach and throat. After confessing, visiting Saint Sharbel, and the blessing of her house, Saint Sharbel appeared to her and told her, “**There is no need for the surgery.**” After that her son took her to visit Saint Sharbel and she wore his habit. She underwent chemotherapy sessions for two years in Hotel Dieu Hospital, but the disease spread to her neck so it was decided to perform surgery on her neck. St Sharbel appeared to her and told her, “**Do not make the surgery before they renew the implant test.**” They requested a new test and the result came out free from any disease. She repeated the tests three times over nine years and it was verified that she recovered. Currently **her house is like a shrine and the oil exudes from her hand and from the pictures** in her home.

8 - Jesus is Alive (Lk 24, 6)

More than 13,000 healing miracles, some of which have left perpetual physical marks, such as Mrs. Nohad El-Shamy and Mr. Raymond Nadar, have been reported to date in the records of the Convent of Saint Maron - Annaya. In addition, there are millions of miracles reported in Lebanon and abroad that do not appear in the records. The important point is the work of the Spirit in conversion. The Shrine of Saint Sharbel is considered one of the most important among the international shrines which leads to repentance and reconciliation with God and thereafter the rest of consciousness. Jesus is still alive, healing the wounds of the suffering humanity and forgiving the sins which caused His inevitable death and gives us eternal life.

*** CONCLUSION**

Before this “crowd of witnesses.” the wise reader can only reflect deeply on this amazing Saint during his lifetime and after his death! Maybe we aren’t able to imitate him or his virtues, but he continues to draw us strongly to the Love of Our God and our neighbor by the measure of the ability of each of us, and according to our particular vocation to which God has called us, and we repeat with faith and devotion, “O God, You’re wonderful in Your Saints!”

APPENDIX

WORDS OF SAINT SHARBEL'S

By celebrating the Holy Liturgy, conducting prayers, holding conferences, printing tens of books, and by putting on formal and popular festivals and feasts, the Lebanese Maronite Order on the 10th of November 1994 - together with its counterpart the Mariamite Order - launched religious and civil celebrations marking the 300th Jubilee of its foundation. On that very night, as he was praying in the cold, open air, near Saint Sharbel's hermitage, a young, married man had an experience, new to him, of God's love, fatherhood and care (the purpose for which Orders are formed). That man was Raymond Nader, and here is his story:

I was praying, as was my custom of many years, and this time in front of St. Sharbel's hermitage in Annaya ... I found myself in another world... everything had stopped: I could see neither the candles, which I had lit, nor the trees, nor the ground anymore... I could hear no sound at all... I could not feel my body. I started seeing - but not with my eyes - things I had never seen in my life. I stopped hearing with my ears, but started hearing things I had never heard before. I started feeling in my heart what I had never felt before, as if my heart was no longer made of flesh and blood. I saw a strange and amazing light, unlike any light I had ever seen: it was a sea of light that extended from one end of the universe to the other. The sun would look like a small candle compared to that light... But it was not a natural light; despite all its strength, it neither dazzled nor burned... A soft and smooth light; gentle, yet strong and powerful at the same time. It had a crystalline color, and an extremely clear and pure light. I felt as if I were a tiny drop, swimming in a very great sea of wonderful crystal light... I felt very safe, like a tiny baby swimming trustfully in the water of his mother's womb... I felt an indescribable joy and great amazement!

I felt as if I were perhaps standing, sitting or swimming, or something else that I do not know. I was either present before a great being, or in the heart of a very powerful and marvelous being: the perfection of power, of knowledge, and of compassion and love... I felt as if I were in contact with someone: in a strange way, as if I was in contact with all the creatures of the universe, together and at the same time. It seemed the whole universe had become one, and I was a drop of it, as if the universe melted in this light and so did I... Then, in a strange way, I entered into a dialog with that light. He would talk to me without words, without voice, without language, but in a way clearer than any words, and more eloquent than any language. That light was talking directly to my soul, and addressing my mind and my heart directly -without passing through my ears or my eyes or any of my senses, of which I was no more aware ...

I said to myself: "I must be dreaming." He answered me in His way and in His language which is devoid of words, sounds or languages. He made me understand - in a very clear way that He can neither be misinterpreted, misunderstood, or wrongly explained- that I was not dreaming, as if He were telling me: "No, you are not dreaming." Yet, I repeated to myself: "I am certainly not conscious..." In the same marvelous and clear way He explained to me that I was at the pinnacle of consciousness, and that I had never in my life reached a level of awareness of my existence and of my being as I had at that moment. It was as if He were telling me: "You are now more conscious than you have ever been in your life. You are at the most conscious moment of your life."

Then I started wondering: where am I? What is this light? Who is this talking to me? At that moment I felt the most awesome sensation a person can ever feel: a very great peace, an indescribable joy, an intense and absolute happiness... a complete and wonderful clarity... a pure and strong love that exceeds by millions of times the love that exists in the hearts of all human beings together... a great and tremendous love, yet unlike that of humans, a different one... a great divine love which only that light can grant... As I was overwhelmed by that wonderful feeling, and completely melted in it, I 'heard' Him telling me: "This is me." as if I had known Him for a very long time; since my birth, or even perhaps before I was born.

I felt as if He knew me perfectly, since I had been formed in my mother's womb and even before that... As if He knew each and every atom of my body; and knew each and every cell of my brain; and as if he knew the thoughts of my soul, and my feelings far better than I did... I felt completely naked in front of Him and I felt that the light went through my body from one side to the other... This light does not cast shadows; He passes through everything... I felt that He entered every corner of my heart.

I said to myself, and thought, that I wanted that light to stay permanently, and that I remain in Him always and that if He wanted to go away, that He might take me with Him. But He answered me in His way, as if He was saying to me: 'I am always here and everywhere; I do not go anywhere... I am always in time, and out of it; in space and out of it. So far, this experience has been repeated twenty-two times; each time, Mr. Raymond Nader receives a message. Here we are now publishing most of them. According to Raymond, five messages are not yet published. Here are their contents:

1- Christ is the Truth of Love Incarnate

Before the beginning, was love. Everything came to be through love, and without love, nothing of what has existed since the beginning, or is now, or will be forever, would have come to be. In the very beginning was love; the basis of the universe - its law and regulations - is love. When all ends, only love will remain; all that is outside love will pass.

God is love. God is truth. God is the true love. The world of God is the world of love; it is the world of truth, and there is no truth outside love. Man is not fulfilled except through love, and he does not reach the truth except in the world of God. Man belongs to God; he is the child of love, the child of God, and his real home is the world of God.

There is a way to God's world, and that way is Christ. Christ is the truth of love incarnate. He is the proclamation of the truth of life, and He is the way to God's world. Every man, during his journey through this world to the other, is called to follow this way. And, as in every journey in this world, a man must take along provisions and weapons in his journey to the other world. The only provision for this journey is love, and the only weapon is love. This love can only be encompassing of all human beings, can expect nothing in return, can know no boundaries, and be only unconditional. That is how God loves you, so love each other with the same love, with God's love.

One cannot give this love from oneself, but can get it from God, through Jesus Christ, to be filled with it, in spirit. This is achieved through prayer. Only through prayer can love be obtained from God the Father, the source of love, through God the Son, Jesus Christ -Love Incarnate - and this love is the Spirit of God in man. Pray to obtain this love, to love all human beings without recompense, without boundaries, without conditions, as God loves, **and then you will become Children of God. Man came from the heart of God, and will return to God's heart.**

2- *And you will achieve the Objective for which God Created You*

Why are people going downward, whereas the road to God is upward?! People are carrying many loads and burdens that are causing their backs to bend; their foreheads are touching the ground, and they are no longer able to stand upright and raise their heads to see the face of their Lord. They are trying to free themselves and each other of these burdens; they throw them on each other and make each other carry them, making their loads heavier.

Only Jesus Christ is able to free all human beings of all their loads, burdens and weights, for a slave cannot set another slave free. Man is born bound with ropes and chains, and shackled in bonds within which he is reared and lives, and very many are those who die in them.

People are getting used to these bonds which are becoming part of them, thus making it difficult to save them from them. The glittering of their bonds is dazzling them so that they can no longer see the face of the Lord, and the rattling of their chains is deafening them so that they can no longer hear the voice of the Lord. They boast of the glitter of their bonds, which hobble them, and delight in the tinkling of the chains which bind them; shackles remain shackles no matter how they shine, and the chain that binds you remains a chain of bondage even if it is of gold. Instead of polishing your shackles, shatter them, and instead of composing music from the tinkling of your chains, untie and break free of all of them.

The Lord is in pain seeing as shackled slaves looking for happiness in places in which they will not find it, the people for whom He became man to set free, and for whom he died and rose from the dead to give life and eternal happiness.

- Your happiness in this world is not from this world. If you were from this world, you would stay in it.

- Your happiness is not in stones. Stones do not give happiness: Why does man seek after gold? Is it to give value to himself? Man is far dearer than gold, man is the child of God; his value is intrinsic. Gold does not set man free of his shackles, but only makes them shine more.

- Your happiness is not found in other humans either, for they cannot offer happiness as they do not own it, and no one can give something one does not own.

Only Jesus Christ can give you true happiness. People, however, have become arrogant, living amidst asphalt and cement, their minds have become asphalt and their hearts cement. Their minds produce only dark and gloomy thoughts, and their hearts are hardened, cruel and devoid of love. People have become matter that moves without spirit, and some of them are mobile rocks spreading the stench of sin. People have become arrogant and they insist on finding happiness in sin. Sin only gives them anxiety, sadness, misery and emptiness. People have become arrogant; they boast to themselves, they boast to others and they boast to God. Are they not aware that God can turn them back into dust at the speed of lightning?

But the love of our Lord is great. Our Lord loves humans greatly because they are His children, and He has made of them a light to the world.

Every person is a torch of light; our Lord created him to illumine the world. Every person is a lamp made by our Lord to shine and give light. Whoever gets a lamp, receives it to illuminate the darkness. The lamp was made to illumine the darkness. But these lamps are preoccupied with their outer frame: they are coloring their lampshades, painting them, decorating them and embellishing them. These shades that our Lord had made thin and transparent to protect the light, have become thick and hard, and they are blocking the light, and so the world has become immersed in darkness. These lamps that our Lord had made to carry the light, and illumine the world, have become

works of art that are decorated, embellished and colored but unable to give light. What is the use of a lamp that cannot light the dark? A lamp cannot be seen in darkness unless it lights up. No matter how beautiful a lamp is, its light is more beautiful than it. The world is drowning in darkness and this while you are the light of the world. Your glass should regain its thinness and transparency so that you may **light up the world, and achieve the objective for which God has created you.**

God made every creature to fulfill the purpose of its existence. Observe the creatures of this earth; each one is performing its duty with utmost precision and integrity, and no creature is miserable. The most miserable creature on the face of the earth is happier than the sinner. **At the day of reckoning, the sinner will not so much worry about the harsh reckoning as much as he will feel ashamed before the greatness of God's love,** that love which created the universe and gave life. Love is the only treasure that you amass in this world, and which remains with you through to the next world.

All your treasures, money, glories and achievements that you think you have owned in this world and believe are yours, will remain in this world; even your own bones are not yours. **Only love will go with you to the next world, and whoever gets to stand before the Lord devoid of love will die of shame,** and that will be the moment of his real death, not when he departed from this world.

Man dies if he does not turn into love, for God is love, and only love is eternal. Let love reign over your hearts and humility guide your minds. Pray and repent. Pray to Jesus Christ and He will hear you; open your hearts to Him, He will enter them and peace will come into them. But pray with all your heart. Do not mumble words that come from your lips while your hearts are with another lord. Our Lord knows what is in your hearts and He wants your hearts.

Do not tire yourselves looking for the truth outside of Christ. There is no truth outside of Christ. Christ is the truth, and when you know Christ you will know the truth and become free; and Christ wants you free. Do not be afraid, be strong and be sure and confident that Christ has defeated the world.

3- *Your Work in this World*

Christ is the way; remain firm in Christ and follow the way, and do not let anything move you away from Him.

Stop by every Brother of yours even for a very brief moment, point the way out to him, point the light out to him: should he choose to walk by your side, then let him go before you, and should he ask you to hold his hand, then hold both his hands; should he try to move you away from the way, or push you back, then let go of him, for the road is long and the work is plentiful: your work is to sow the earth with prayer and incense. Sow the earth with love. Sow in the rock because crops will grow in every rock that has a grain of earth. Crush the rock that needs crushing. Keep striking at the rock and never weary, for if it does not break after the first and second strikes, it will break after a hundred strikes. Do not weary and fall behind because if you do, someone else will crush the rock, plow and sow; one sows in season and reaps in season.

Strike at the rock and do not be afraid because the arm is yours but the land is not yours nor the sledgehammer is yours. Do not nag, grumble, fidget and complain: the wheat spikes undergoing threshing to separate hay from them do not grumble under the weight of the thresher, and because of the harshness of the threshing floor, for they are being prepared to become bread and nourishment. And the grapes do not fidget while being pressed, squeezed and crushed on the rocks of the press, for they become wine and joy. Without the cross there is neither bread nor wine. Whoever wants to become bread and wine must carry the cross. Carry the cross and go toward the light. In this world, man

is moving from the shore of darkness and nonexistence to the shore of eternal light, and he passes through the seas of this world in a ship, and the ships of this world are many:

1- Some ships are very beautiful, very luxurious, and also very comfortable, because their sails incline to the wind, and their rudders sway with the waves. They face up neither to the winds nor to the waves. They have neither direction, nor destination to reach. Most people rush to embark upon these ships because they see nothing in this world except the journey, and all they want is their trip to be pleasant and their travel to be comfortable. But no journey in this sea lasts forever; the trip ends and the passengers of these ships end up at the bottom of the sea, near the shore from whence they had departed.

2- Another type of ships has thin sails and weak wood; these ships are wrecked as soon as they are on the high seas, where waves rise high and storms gain strength, and the passengers of these ships end up somewhere at the bottom of the deep sea.

3- A third type includes ships that have strong wood, solid sails, and that look nice and inviting. But its captain is an impostor who takes the passengers from one shore of death to another. And so the passengers of these ships end up on some death shore from whence the return is impossible.

4- There is the Lord's ship which has strong wood and solid sails, and whose captain is full of wisdom, courage and love. This ship sails across the deep seas, faces up strong storms and winds, and plows the high waves in the open sea: **The journey in this ship is rough, but its arrival is sure.**

Hang on to the Lord's ship; do not be afraid of the storms and high waves. Do not let the luxurious and comfortable ships lure you into boarding them because they do not arrive. Be concerned more about arriving than about the journey. Do not let the depths of the sea fascinate you and draw you to dive into them. The sea of this world is for you to sail upon rather than to dive into. You cannot be at the same time on board the ship, and deep in the sea water, or in two ships at the same time.

Hang on to the Lord's ship and help your Brothers hang on with you: At every port you reach, invite people to join you in your journey so you may share the arrival with them; tell them about your ship and Captain and about the shore of light. But, rest assured that **it is not what you say that will make people embark on the Lord's ship, but rather it is your love for each other and your love for the Captain and your trust and your belief in Him, and the joy on your faces.**

Rest assured also that the journey on this ship will only end on the shore of light in order to continue with the light, because man is a cosmic creature whose limits are the light and not an earthly creature whose limits are earth and water. Man is dust and light: Whoever lives in the dust returns to the dust and dies in the dust, and whoever lives in light, returns to light and lives in light. Do not let earth confine you, because the boundaries of your homeland in this world are the end of the sea and the beginning of heaven. Do not let earth enslave you; be free, freedom can only be in freedom from sin; if you are free from sin, then you are free and nobody can enslave you. But if you are a slave to sin, then you are a slave even if you hold the king's scepter in your hand.

Keep the grace of love and the mark of humility. Be true witnesses of Jesus Christ. Confront evil with love, but do not use love as an excuse to avoid confronting evil; a farmer does not use rubble as an excuse to stop plowing. Do not be afraid, evil will destroy itself.

Fully commit yourselves to the Church and all her teachings, and unwarily persevere in prayer. Honor our mother the Virgin Mary, and arm yourselves with the Rosary, because the name of the Virgin Mary drives away darkness and crushes evil. Be monks in the heart of this world, even if without the habit. Sow the earth with prayer and incense. Be saints and sanctify the earth. The road of sanctity is long, but

be sure that when the thoughts of God are in your minds and the love of God is in your hearts, then the strength of God will be in your arms and you will arrive. Rest assured also that whenever you are praying, I will be praying with you so that you may be sanctified and the name of the Lord be glorified.

4- Your Weakness is there for you to overcome

Every padlock has a key, and every door has a lock that can be opened only by its key. Death has closed Heaven's door and sin has locked it. The Cross is the key that undoes the padlock of sin, trips the lock of death and opens Heaven's door. **The Cross is the key to Heaven's door;** there is no other key.

Heaven's door is where Heaven and earth meet, at the summit of Golgotha. This door is clear, tangible and visible, and every man with eyes can see it. Some think that it has no lock and opens to whoever pushes it. But when you approach the door, you will realize that it has a lock and it can only be opened with its proper key.

The true key cannot be recognized unless you put it into the padlock. There is only one true key: the Cross of Christ. Do not weary yourselves searching for keys aside from this Cross that opens the door of Heaven, and do not in vain make another key. Many are the people who waste their lives in designing their own keys; they cast and strike keys reflecting their own designs, believing that these keys will open the door for them. Many are the people who mock the Cross of Christ. But at Heaven's door, the truth will be revealed and all other keys will fail.

All the journey of your life is a trip toward this door; at the end of this trip, you either have the key and you will open, or you will stand there holding keys on which you have wasted your life, and which now have failed and disappointed you. Take up the Cross of Christ, and you will hold the key of Heaven's door.

Take up the Cross of Christ with joy, determination, and courage, do not heed the mockers, do not stop and cry with the wailing, and do not lament when you fall along with the lamenting. Neither weeping and lamenting make the history of salvation, nor does beating on the chest and wailing open Heaven's door. The history of salvation is made through tears of true repentance. One tear of repentance opens the door of Heaven. The tear of repentance will roll down only on the cheek of the courageous faithful.

Take up the Cross of Christ and walk in His footsteps, then the Blessed Virgin will be by yours as she was by His side; and every time you are wounded, say: With the wounds of Christ! Every time you suffer pain, say: With Your passion, O Jesus! And every time you are persecuted, contemned and insulted, say: For Your glory, O Lord!

Your Weakness is there for you to overcome and not to use as an excuse. When you take up the Cross of Christ, neither pain will bend you, nor will fatigue crush you, and you will walk with firmness, patience and silence. When you arrive at the door, the joy of your crossing over its threshold will exceed by far your pain and the exhaustion of your trip and the happiness of your arrival will exceed by far the suffering of your journey.

Your way to Golgotha is very long in this point of the world, and the Cross of Christ in the East is upon your shoulders; you have many enemies because they are the enemies of the Cross. Do not make them your enemies. Speak to them always in the language of the Cross, even though they are your enemies because of it. The coming months and years will be very difficult, hard, bitter, and as heavy as the Cross. Endure them with deep prayer from faith, with patience from hope, and with love from the Cross. Violence will fill the earth, the planet will be wounded by the knives of ignorance and hatred; all the peoples around you will stagger under the pain, fear will

be over the whole Earth like a wind, and sadness in the hearts of all people. Ignorant and hate-filled people will control the destiny of their peoples and lead them to misery and death through blind hatred which they will call justice, and through dark ignorance which they will call faith. Hatred and ignorance will prevail throughout the world. But you, remain firm in faith and love.

The face of the earth will be changed; you retain the face of Christ. Borders, communities and human systems will be wiped out and written anew, and peoples will falter under fire and steel. **Let your love be without boundaries, your community be the Church and your rule the Gospel. Be the anchor that guides the ships straying in the raging seas, and let your hearts be harbors of peace for those lost, homeless, and seeking help. Through your prayers you will invoke mercy, and shower love on earth.** Pray that hardened hearts will be softened, dark minds will open, and calamities and horrors will be reduced. Do not be afraid, in the end the light of Christ will rise, the sign of the Cross will shine, and the Church will radiate light. Remain firm in your faith in Christ and do not be afraid, and trust in the God of the resurrection and life; His glory is ever coming.

5- Axis of the Universe

The whole universe revolves around the mystery of the Cross. Every man thinks that the universe revolves around him and that he is the axis of the universe. The Cross is the axis of the universe, and **whoever wants to be on the axis of the universe, will have to be with the crucified on the Cross.** He who does not live the mystery of the Cross cannot comprehend the mystery of the universe: Everyone has a form and entity in time and place, like a piece of ice, and people, in order to preserve their entity, are afraid to draw near fire so they will not melt: What is the use of ice if it keeps its form and entity? If it does not melt and become water it will neither permeate the earth nor water the trees or quench the thirst of people? Do not be afraid to draw near the fire that melts you because it will turn you into life-giving water to irrigate the earth. Let your love be like a fluid permeating all places; do not keep it frozen and give it a form and design it because then it will not pass anywhere.

The salt that does not dissolve will not make salty. Spoiled salt muddies the water that it is supposed to salt, and spoils the food. Good salt that dissolves, disappears in water and does not show in food any form, color or entity, but provides the taste. You are the salt of the earth; if you make your life your own property, it will then be very cheap. The more you give your life, the more its value will increase, and when it reaches its full value it becomes the property of all. The loaf of bread is the same, be it on the table of the rich or that of the poor. A tasty loaf does not ask who is going to eat it when it comes out of the oven; a loaf is meant to be eaten; a good person is a good loaf. The history of mankind is empty without the Cross, because it is a passing history, while the Cross is steady, unchangeable. Your own history will be empty without the Cross, because you are passing and only the crucified gives you life and confirms you in eternal life. It is the Cross that will sanctify you in time.

The beginning of creation, the present time and the end of the world are all occurring, for God, at the present moment. Sanctify through love the present moment of your life; thus you will come to realize the mystery of eternal life in the presence of God. A man is immortal through love with God. Sanctify time, sanctify your life, sanctify every moment of your life. Do not get distracted by the ticking of the clock: you cannot stop the ticking of the clock, but you can be ready when the clock strikes. **Whoever removes God from his life, mind and heart, will be crushed by time and will drown in death; this does not mean that God no longer exists, but rather that he exists no more.**

As light reveals the existent to the eyes, Christ too reveals existence to the mind and the heart. Without light the human eye is blind to the existent, and without Christ man is blind to existence. God created matter and set order, He also created the mind and instilled the spirit and gave life; just as through logic and analysis, the mind comprehends order and understands matter, so too through faith, prayer and true worship, the spirit realizes the love of God and the mystery of the universe, and gives life.

Some flowers are picked in spring for decoration, other flowers grow old and are left till autumn for seed, while other flowers let their leaves be scattered by the wind to deliver their scent far into the distance and fill the earth with their fragrance. God has wisdom in every movement; pray to understand God's wisdom and live His will, and not to change His will. You Father's will is always your good. Keep wearing the fragrance of oak and thyme, and do not take on the colors of this world and be filled with its odors. The touches of God's fingers upon you are more important than anything the world would dress you up and decorate you. Walk firmly on the road of sanctity, and let Christ live in you. Then you will live in the heart of the mystery of the universe, in the source of light.

6- Your Journey in this World is the trip of your Sanctity

All people were given ears to hear, but those who do hear are few; and of those who hear, those who understand are few, and very few from among those who hear and understand are living what they heard and understood. Those who are heading towards the Kingdom are few and the door is narrow.

Listen, understand and be witnesses. Listen to the voice of the Lord, understand the truth, and witness to the truth that you have perceived and live in it. Be silent so you may hear, and listen to the voice of the Lord. But be careful not to hear the resounding of the echo of your thoughts and listen to yourself: transcend your own thoughts, and let the word of God purify them, erasing what it erases and writing what it needs to write again.

Man is a part of the whole; the part must listen to the whole. Just, as the drop of water is to the river: a drop of water cannot be a river, even if it contained from everything that's in the river, but the river is all drops of water on the same course. A drop of water in the river is a river, but the drop of water that is outside the river's stream, is drop of water. Listen to the course of the universe, for you are part of it. The whole universe is on a pilgrimage journey towards the heart of the Father, like the journey of the rivers towards the sea. Do not accept being out of this journey. The drop of water outside of the river can never reach the sea.

Listen, understand the truth and let it permeate your spirit. Break all outer layers and break up all accumulations in which the world has wrapped you and which have covered you and blocked off God's face from you. Humble yourself and relinquish the thoughts that blocked off God's voice from you, even if some of them have formed you and made you. Listen with humility and let your heart be soft and your mind free. Listening without humility and repentance is like an echo lost in the valleys: no matter how strong the echo is, the mountain remains a mountain, the valley a valley, and the rock a rock. Listen with humility, understand the truth deeply, and bear witness with courage.

Listen so you may understand and know, and live in accordance with the truth that you have known: it is not enough for you to know the way to arrive, you must walk it.

God will shed light for you on the pages, but it is you who must read; God will light your way, but it is you who must do the walking. Whoever goes up goes up using his feet, and whoever goes down goes down using his feet.

Wherever you arrive, it is your own feet that got you there. Be always in a state of listening and permanent examination of conscience. Redo your calculations

every day, change your life and renew it. If you listen with humility you will hear and understand the truth and the truth will set you free. Free yourself from the ropes that bind you: your own thoughts, your personal beliefs and your passions tie you up like the ropes that tie the boat to the shore. A boat on the shore in a port is held by its ropes which provide it safety but prevent it from sailing. Let the word of God untie your ropes and cut that which needs to be cut, rope after rope, even if you suffer. Do not live inside your own passions and thoughts even if they give you rest and security. **Security is illusion without the peace of Christ, and rest is a deception if it is not in the heart of God.** Do not fear to free yourselves from the shore and to depart from the port. Let God set you free, His word guide you and the Spirit fill your sails. Then you will reach the shore of light. A boat is meant to sail across the sea and not to remain in the port. In order for a boat to sail and reach to the far deep seas, it must untie all its ropes, and if even one rope keeps it tied, then the boat will remain in the port.

Keep only the ropes that tie your sails and guide you, along with the ropes of love and partnership that bind you to your Brother in humanity. **Your journey in this world is the trip of your holiness. Holiness is a state of constant transformation from matter into light.**

Pray to listen, pray to understand, and pray to live your faith, apply and bear witness. Pray to be transformed into light. Listen with prayer, understand the truth with prayer, live and bear witness with prayer. Let all your life be prayer and service: if you pray without serving, then you turn the Cross of Christ into a piece of wood in your life, and if you serve without praying, then you will be serving yourself only. Pray in your bedroom. Pray with your family; and pray in your Church community. Pray in your bedroom in intimacy with the Lord; then you will preserve your soul and open your mind to the mystery of God. Pray with your family; then you will protect your family and place it in the heart of the Holy Trinity. Pray with the Church community: then you will protect your church and bring the kingdom closer. Your personal prayer alone with the Lord will put you in the heart of God, your prayer in the bosom of the family will place you in the bosom of the Trinity, and your community prayer in the heart of the church confirms you in the body of Christ. Pray: **A person who prays lives the mystery of existence, while the person who does not pray barely exists.**

Become experienced with silence; the kind of silence that is attentive, alive, and far from the silence of nothingness. Become experienced with silence; forge yourself in love, mature in sanctity. Listen to hear, humble yourself to understand, believe and have courage to bear witness, and **love so you may be sanctified.**

7- Christ is the Foundation of God's Building

When the lamp dims into pitch-darkness, it is filled with oil. Now the lamp is dimming, its light is fading and darkness is pitch-black. Fill your lamp with oil before it goes out and darkness engulfs you.

Attend to the oil of the lamp by whose light you remain awake. Attend to the oil of the lamp that lights up your nights. The lamp that watches over you, watch over it. Your lamp is dimming and the light of your home has become darker. You are absorbed, looking in front of you, ignoring the light that lights up your darkness.

Light up your darkness with your lamp as it is night; do not sleep in darkness awaiting the light of day to shine. When the light of day shines, another work starts and you will be asked about the night's work. If the light of your lamp dims due to lack of oil, fill it up with oil, do not stay up under your Brother's light and leave your lamp to go out; you will be asked about your lamp under the light of which you should stay up, and that went out. Let the light shine in every lamp until the day shines. A lamp is filled

with oil; it is neither filled with intentions and wishes nor with water for humiliation; take care of your lamp's light before your work and your production.

Reexamine your priorities. Your ladder is upside down. The small rung is at the bottom and the big rung is at the top. See how the wise builder's building rises: the biggest stone at the bottom and the smallest stone at the top. Many people nowadays are building their walls in reverse: they no longer know the large from the small, the first from the last, and the important from the most important. The wall whose smallest stone is at the bottom, and whose biggest stone is at the top, will crumble and the building will collapse. Many are the walls that are collapsing, and the bonds that are breaking due to the ignorance of the workers and the pride of the builders.

You, raise your building with wisdom; build on the foundation of Christ, the essential stone for all your building that supports all your bonds. Place your large stones at the foundation and the smaller ones at the top; and if in one of the walls of your building you see a big stone in the high course and a small stone in the foundation, then take down your entire wall and build it anew. No matter how big and high your building is, you had better rebuild it from the beginning than to let it tumble down, collapse and fall down on your head, or on the heads of your Brothers or your children.

Rest assured that if Christ is not the foundation of every building, it will collapse and fall down. Do not be dazzled by the tall building based on man, for it will collapse no matter how high it rises, and time will erase it. If you have already built your building and have discovered of late that it is not built on Christ, then take it down and build it again. A course built on Christ is better than a high tower that tumbles down under the wind. **Christ is the foundation of the Lord's building, you are its living stones and the Holy Spirit is the keystone.** Christ bears up the whole building, and the Spirit gathers together all the stones of the vault and supports the walls. The Spirit is the spirit of love. Love is the keystone. If you remove the Spirit, you remove the keystone; the vault breaks up, the stones come apart and the whole building collapses. The Holy Spirit, the spirit of love, is the keystone that keeps the covenant. Every stone in the building has its place; every stone in a course is supported by stones from beneath, supported on its side by stones which it also supports. Above it are stones that it supports. Every stone is cut to fill its place. The stone missing from a building leaves an empty space in its place, but leaves place for rain, air, dust and wind as well. Do not leave a space between one stone and another, or else the building will end up weak. Also do not leave sand between one stone and another, for the rain will intensify and snow will accumulate causing the sand to slip and the building to fall apart. It is the power of the Spirit that holds the stones of the building together and not the sand which glues them together.

Remain firm in the building of the Lord. Persevere in building up the Kingdom, and be living stones in the Lord's temple; the stone that is not in the Lord's temple remains a stone in a pile of other stones; it has volume but no shape, or place or role, just a stone thrown in a pile of stones.

Surrender yourself into the hands of Lord, the wise builder, let Him smooth and carve you, let Him remove excess from you and complete in you what you lack, let the Lord give you the shape, the size and place. Whether you were a large stone or a small stone, you have your place to which size you were carved.

Let the Lord build you and then you will take your place in the course. Do not put yourself in the place that attracts you: if you take a place bigger than your place, you will remain protruding and you will disjoint the whole wall, and if you take a place smaller than the place prepared for you, there will be an empty space around you. Fill your place, support what is above you, support those around you, and lean on the one carrying you. Christ bears all and the Spirit brings you together and leads you.

8- Sanctity is Your Goal

Sanctity is your goal, and perfection in love is your ultimate end. Do not stop at the means of sanctification and worshiping them. Do not make the means an end, or the end a means. Do not turn the means into an end, nor the end into a means. Do not make the means of sanctification your goal and end, and do not let sanctity be your means to other ends. Prayer is there to sanctify you; do not sanctify prayer. Fasting is there to strengthen you; do not deify fasting. Mortification is there to purify you, do not worship mortification. Your hymns are there to glorify God; do not glorify your hymns. Do not replace Christ with talking about him, for then you would be worshiping your words, and do not replace the truth with expressions that express it, for then these expressions of yours will become “the truth”. A word is never more important than the idea it expresses, and the idea is never more important than the truth it is thinking. A safe is never more important than the treasure it holds, and a chalice is never more important than the wine. The tabernacle is never more important than the bread, and the monstrance is never more important than the host.

Christianity is neither a religion nor a temple, it is not a book or a place of worship; Christianity is the person of Jesus Christ Himself. The mirror that reflects light is not the light. Distinguish between the light and the mirrors that reflect it. Do not focus your attention on the mirror, but keep your heart in the light. Do not escape from yourselves to go to God, and do not go to God so you may escape from yourselves. God wants you to present yourselves to Him as they are so that He might elevate and sanctify them. Do not let the world push you toward God, rather let God pull you toward Him. Do not blacken through your writings the white pages that your holy fathers had written. The truth is always the same. In order for you to speak about God, you must be in the heart of God; you cannot speak about God if you are outside of Him. And the Word was made flesh is not a sound flying through the air. Carve in your mind every word you want to say, sculpt it in your spirit, and smooth it in your heart, bring it down from your mouth just as you set a stone in its proper place in the course. And do without the word that does not build. Do not speak except when your words are deeper and more eloquent than your silence.

Do not let your words about what is beyond the seas distract you from sailing. Go towards the essence, and distinguish between the essential and the superficial in your life, and between the fundamental and the marginal, between the core and the shell. In this world, you do not fill a basket with water, or a pitcher with grapes, or a jar with figs: just as you use the things of this earth for your service, learn how to use the things of heaven with wisdom from God for your salvation, and for the glory of God.

Every land has its own soil and climate, it has its proper tools which you use to plough and plant it, and it has its plants which blossom there and yield fruit. You can neither crush rocks with a garden fork, nor plough the earth with a sledgehammer, nor chop wood with a pick-axe. Neither do cedar and oak grow in the sand of the coast, nor do bananas and oranges grow in the rocks of the mountains. With the tools in your hand do your work, and where the Lord has planted you, blossom and bring forth fruits. If you do not take roots you cannot tower.

Accommodate your mind to existence, do not seek to accommodate existence to your mind; existence precedes you and will remain after you. The Spirit alone suffices you and brings you into harmony with God. You will understand the depth of the mystery of existence through the light of the eternal Spirit that is in you. Do not seek to comprehend the truth through your senses, for then you will be limited by the limits of these senses.

Know that your senses exist so that you may love through them, and not so that you may love them. When you love your sight, you start worshiping the creatures

you see and forget the Creator Who is beyond the limits of your eyes. When you love your hearing you start loving the melodies and sounds of the world, and forget to hear the voice of God in the silence that does not reach your ears. And when you love your nose, you start to give yourself over to the perfumes of the world and forget the flowers of the prairies (the source of perfume) that God has formed for man with His love. And when you love your taste, you become enslaved to food and drink and forget nourishment. And when you love your [sense of] touch you become enslaved to the outer and forget the inner. Transcend your senses and do not drown in them; reach through them to the truth as the ray of light reaches through crystal.

If you harden your senses they will thicken, and the rays will bounce back from them like a mirror, and they will reflect to you images of the world. Do not sink into your senses, for then their joy will start deceiving you; true joy is not the joy of the senses, true joy is the one that transcends your senses, and goes past them to the heart of the light where you would drown in the heart of God, see His light and melt in His love. Go beyond your senses and go past them, go beyond yourself and then you will touch the edge of the light. Whenever you want to look to the outside, close your eyes and look to the inside, then start seeing the outside more clearly; and whenever you want to hear, cover your ears and listen to the inner voice; then you will start hearing better. **Guide your senses in order to glorify God, and do not let your senses lead you to glorify His creatures. Love to the point of self-sacrifice: love is the only ink with which love is written,** and everything else is ink on paper. In Christ, every man is a word in the mouth of God so that all humanity becomes a song of love; and glory be always to God.

9- Your Future is the First Day in the Next World

Observe the birds of the sky how they carefully build their nests, gently lay their eggs, tenderly watch over their nestlings until they grow feathers and fly, and safeguard the trees of the Lord. You are building your nests, laying your eggs and hatching your young in trees the roots of which are struck by decay, mites are eating into their trunks and gypsy moths are feeding on its branches. If the tree falls, your nests will scatter, your chicks will disperse, and you will be left only with bare branches to lay your wings on. You are toiling and overworking to build strong and warm nests where your young will grow, grow feathers and fly, and nest- they too.

Look after the tree just as you look after the nests; and just as you were entrusted with your nests, so are you entrusted with your trees. Look after the roots, look after the trunk, look after the branches and look after the leaves, and a few straws and a few grains of soil will be enough for you to build your nests; the branches of the tree will protect you and its leaves will shade you. Do not sink into your nests and raise their edges high so they give you security; work with the trust of the Lord, and the Lord will give you security.

As you race to ensure your future and that of your children, always remember that your future is not the last of your days in this world, but it is the first day in the next world. You ensure your children's future when you ensure heaven for them. Your children are for you to give them life, and there is no life except in Christ. Give Christ to your children, but if Christ is not in you, it is difficult for you to give Him to your children.

If you do not sanctify yourselves, how would you sanctify your children?! **If Christ were not in you, how would you give Him to your children?!** If you do not give them Christ, everything else you offer them is useless and ephemeral vanishes and will cease to exist with them. It is not with tall buildings and the guarantees of this

world that you give your children security and a future. Give them your sanctity and prayers, and you will ensure their safety in this world and their future in the next world. You are seeking your success and your children's success in life, while success in life is to stand before God without shame.

Go down to the roots, look after them and be disinterested. Working on the roots is hidden, does not show and requires effort and self-denial. People see the tree, they neither see the roots nor see your work, but God Who is in heaven, sees and blesses. Look after the roots, guard the trunk, preserve the branches, take care of the leaves, and maintain the tree; God will keep your works. Look after the tree - which is enfolding, shading and housing you - from its roots to the tips of its branches, even if this is at the expense of the size of your nests.

The same time passes for the good and the bad, and if the good do not fill up time with good, then the bad will fill it with evil, and time will be empty. Every moment of your life is a basket placed before you so you would fill it from your harvest, your reaping and your crops; it stays before you for an instant, then it disappears and passes behind you and you can never bring it back. If you stop and look back and observe your empty buckets, only the tears of your repentance by the mercy of God, from the grace of God, fill them up, and the grace of God is sufficient for you; and every second is a drop of eternity if you fill it up with God. Do not let the world seize the baskets of your life, then your baskets will remain empty, and you will pile up behind you sheaves of hay that time will burn and nothing of them will be left.

Do not enter into a dialogue with the Devil; end your conversation with him before its first word, and keep your dialogue always with God. Tamp your roof after each round of rain and before it leaks, for if you slacken, heavy downpours, floods, and snow will come, and water will leak to the beams, and then the ceiling will collapse on your head and your family.

No matter how tempting the temptation is, it does not justify sin. Fill your life from the love of God and sanctify the time you are in, then your harvest will be worthwhile and your provisions lasting. Only the master of time can fill the time. Only the lord of harvest and crops can fill your baskets. Offer your baskets to Him, and your crops will abound.

10- Do Good Untiringly

The journey of the universe is the construction site of the kingdom of God. It looks like the construction site of a great temple, whose stones are from the rocks of this world's quarries, and people are the workers by the power of God and they are the builders according to His will. They extract stones from the rocks of the quarries in this world, they build them one by one, and one course after another, God gives them life and they become living stones in the temple building.

A large number of people build their own temples with stones that they extract from rocks and they claim they own them, they build them one by one, and one course after another, but they cannot give them life and they remain dead, because only God gives life. These passing people leave the stones, the rocks and the quarries and depart from this world, and their small temples built from dead stones wear away and vanish with time. Ephemeral, they do not persist, and neither do their temples. Only the temple of the Lord is eternal and permanent because it is alive. Build the eternal temple of the Lord and be living stones in it, do not build your temporary little temples from dead stones that time will wipe out. Work with perseverance, joy, solidarity, and love; work with patience, humility and obedience to the Lord of the Temple. Because you are working with His power, build according to His will.

Do good untiringly. Do not seek after rest- rest is a great danger for you. If you see a worker not doing his work, do not criticize or judge or curse him, but rather, take your pick-axe or your sickle and continue your work; your work will cause him to work. The building is yours and his, the harvest is yours and his, and all of it is for the Lord of the temple and the God of the harvest. Look at your Brother in the same way you look at yourself. You have in yourself from everything you see in your Brother, because every man is you with a few differences; and instead of talking about your Brother, go talk to him or keep loving silence. Do not ever condemn and do not judge based upon what your eyes see. Do not judge the water you see in the pot, for you cannot know with your eyes whether it's sweet or salty, fresh or stale, and wine casks look alike on the outside, even if the wine inside them differs. Look with your eyes at the outside and look with your heart to the inside. The heart does not condemn.

Do not claim to have absolute knowledge, and build temples the size of your knowledge, for they will collapse on your heads and kill you. Knowledge needs love in order to become discernment. No matter how much you know, if you don't love you will not understand even if you know much. Love is greater than intelligence. The logic of love is more exalted than the logic of intelligence. Knowledge devoid of love is devoid of the spirit and destructive to man. Earth is a holy planet, where the feet of the God of the universe trod, which the lights of the Spirit lit and upon which the heart of God is.

Human beings, through their knowledge void of love, have made the Earth ill; their food has become their poison and their drink their thirst, their medicine their illness. Their air is choking them, their rest is fatigue, and their peace, anxiety; their joy is sadness and their happiness suffering; their truth is illusion, and their illusion, truth; and their light has become darkness.

Man has acquired more knowledge and less wisdom. Theories in peoples' minds have become like fog on the mountain and in the valleys, it does not allow them to see anything as it is: their theories are veiling their sight. Their buildings are rising, their morals are declining. Their possessions are increasing, their values are decreasing. Their words are increasing and their prayer, decreasing. Their interests are deep, their relationships are shallow. Their window displays are full, their inside is empty. Their roads are Bradening, while their vision is becoming narrower. Their roads are numerous, but don't lead them to one another. Their means of communication are many, but not bringing them to each other. Their beds are big, strong and comfortable, and their families are small, disunited and worn out. They know how to hurry but they don't know how to wait. They hurry to acquire their livelihood, but forget to ensure their living and their lives. They rush quickly to the outside and neglect the inside.

Prisoners, boasting of the luxury of their prisons; lost, bragging of the distances they have crossed; dead, priding themselves on the splendor of their graves; they are dying of hunger while sitting on bread bowls, poor while sitting on treasures they themselves buried. Why do you go down under the table to eat the fallen crumbs, while the table is all laid for you? People are sowing the earth with thorns which now are soft and tickling their feet, but when they grow and harden, they will tear and wound the feet of the coming generations. You chop wood, stack, burn, kindle, throw yourselves into the fire you set, and you wonder why you get burned?! Humanity is lost, man is ill, and the world is burning.

God is love, He is the goal and guide for lost humanity; Christ is the medicine for the sick man, and the water of the Baptism in fire is what puts out the blaze of the world. Build every knowledge on Christ; every knowledge that is built outside the foundation of Christ will destroy you. Knowledge without spirit is ignorance. The more the building built on man rises, the more it will crush the human being.

Man will keep living in grief and worry, and will not be content or quench his thirst until he is united with himself in the heart of God. Reach out to each other, look at each other, listen to each other, greet each other, console each other with words of love and encouragement, get out of yourselves [and go] to one another, and embrace one another in the love of Christ. Work in the field of the Lord untiringly and without wearying, let the sounds of your pick-axes fill the valleys and overcome the noise of the world, and let the sounds of your sickles remind people of the harvest season. Let your prayers to the Lord cleave the deaf rocks, and cause the dumb springs to gush out. Rocks do hear prayer and springs do speak, and they all pray and give glory to God.

11- Walk the Path of Sanctity in the Joy of the Resurrection

You are walking on the paths of your life carrying many loads, burdens and concerns, carrying jars and jars, some of which are needed and others that are useless, and you have distributed your treasures amongst your jars, mixing your treasures with your trifles, and you no longer know where your treasure is or in which jar. Some jars fall and break and treasures are lost, and you do not see or know because of the noise of your jars; and some people waste their treasures on the paths of their lives and arrive laden with pottery. Every jar that you carry which does not contain your treasure will be filled with distraction and excess weight that will hinder your journey and tire you out.

Lay down the jars of drudgery to which the world subjects you, even if you have carried them for a long journey, exhausted yourselves for them, suffered for them, and perhaps have gotten used to them. Know where your treasure is and put your whole heart in it. Put your whole treasure in one jar and carry it well. Thus you will safeguard your treasure and arrive full.

Carry one jar: the jar of Christ, and He will pile it up with love and carry it with you. No matter how full it gets it will still hold; and no matter how heavy it gets, it will remain light. All the remaining jars are all clay, and even if they were empty, they are heavy and bend your back. Choose for yourself your ways in this world, do not let the paths of the world choose you, and do not carry the jars of this world, which burden you to distract you and tire you out.

The more you increase your jars, the more you distance yourself from your neighbor. Every jar requires space, and the more your jars increase, the more space increases around you, and you start moving away from your Brother to keep the jars from bumping against each other and break. The jars become more important than your Brother. In order for you to safeguard your jars, you lose your Brother and neighbor. Know that your treasure is very precious, but you carry it in pottery. Every Brother of yours has a very precious treasure, which he also carries in an earthenware jar. You make your jar with your hands and fold yourself inside it, you sit inside the jar and say that the world is clay; whoever sits inside a jar will see the whole world as clay. Get out of your jar and see the world as it is and not as you have fashioned it inside your jar.

Let everyone fill his jar from the treasure of Christ, because He alone is the true treasure. **In order for you to understand your Brother, do not go toward him with an intellectual system created by your mind, but rather go toward him with love from the Spirit of the Creator which He has placed in your heart.**

Be full grains of wheat on the threshing floor of the Lord, when the winnower works on you and throws you up in the air in order to purify you, you would be heavy and would fall on the threshing floor to be gathered into the barns of life, do not be light, empty grains like hay straws, carried away by the wind which will disperse them outside the threshing floor and scatter them. Rest assured that nothing will fill you up and give you weight except Christ.

Fill yourselves up with Christ and you will remain on the threshing floor and come be gathered up; and as long as you are on the threshing floor, the winnowing fork will keep winnowing you, and hay and chaff will fly away. On the threshing floor every grain of wheat remains alone even if it was gathered, measure and bagged with the other grains, its sisters.

The millstone, water and fire turn the grains of wheat into one grind and one loaf. From the field to the loaf the journey is long: pray for the sickle that reaps you, for the thresher that threshes you, for the threshing floor that gathers you, for the winnowing fork that refines you, for the millstone that grinds you, for the water that kneads you, and for the fire that bakes you. **The way of sanctity is from the field to the loaf, from the earth to the light, from the manger to the Cross and resurrection: walk it in the joy of the Resurrection.**

12- Sanctity is not a Chance, Sanctity is a Choice

People seek for miracles so they may believe and see, and for messages so they may hear and know, and for a road so they may walk and reach salvation and happiness. The miracle is the Eucharist, the sign is the Cross, the message is the Gospel and salvation is through the Church.

1- The most important, greatest and holiest sign is the sign of the Cross. The Cross is the sign of God's love for you; let it also be the sign of your love for God. The sign of the Cross is a sign of love not a sign of challenge; and the light of this sign will shine throughout the whole world.

2- The salvation of humanity is through the Church, the Church is the one who is carrying on the project of salvation which Christ had begun two thousand years ago and which will not end before the end of the world. All the waves of evil will break on the rock of the Church. Commit yourselves fully to the Church and all her teachings, and do not select from among them.

3- The most important and greatest message is the message of the Gospel, which bears the teaching of Christ, and not one jot of His words shall pass away before the world passes away. Whoever does not know the Gospel remains ignorant and living in darkness, even if he had all the knowledge of the world; and whoever does not live the Gospel, is not living; do not misinterpret to justify. The truth of the Gospel remains always as it is.

4- **The most important and greatest miracle is the Holy Eucharist, the body of Christ, the Paschal Lamb who takes away the sins of the world, the living God risen from the dead.**

In vain you would search for signs more important than the sign of the Cross. Do not ask for messages that you believe are more important than the message of the Gospel. Do not search for your salvation outside the Church of Christ. Do not be distracted, running after miracles that dazzle your eyes, greater than the miracle of the Holy Eucharist. Keep away from deceptive magic because it will lead you to emptiness.

Avoid the sign that does not direct you to the sign of the Cross. Ignore the message that does not stem from the Gospel. Reject the miracle that does not lead you to the Eucharist; and through the Church you can discern them all. Through the Cross, the Church, the Gospel and the Eucharist, you will be sanctified. God created you so you might be sanctified and not so that you might die.

Sanctity is not chance, sanctity is a choice. Do not wait for it to descend on you from the outside; you must live and attain it from the inside. The Kingdom of God is in your heart.



Sanctity is grace and will; the grace is from God and the will is from you.
You are a potential saint; strive to be an actual saint.

13- Love is a Light that Shines

Love is not attachment, because love is freedom and attachment is bondage. God is freedom. Love is not a human emotion; love is a divine power of creation and a heavenly power of resurrection. Love is not an instinct stemming from the physical senses; it is a power of life flowing from the spirit. Love is not a dead habit that binds and attaches us, it is a power of perpetual renewal and it renews us and sets us free. Love is not a feeling directed in a specific direction, love is a light that shines in all directions.

God is not a feeling, God is not a sentiment, God is not a habit, and God is not affection, God is not an idea. "God is truth, God is life, God is the creator and giver of life. Love does not ask for a price or compensation for giving itself. Love always goes to the end.

Love that springs from a human being has for its purpose a return to the human being from which it stems. When a man loves from his self, he loves for his self, whatever be the type of his love or its strength. Love that originates from God, and which a man gets from Him, has the other for its purpose.

If your love is from God, then it is for your Brother, and if your love is from you then it is for you. The man whose love comes from his self, loves his self in others, and thinks that he loves them. Never confuse love and desire, love and sentiment, love and habit, or love and attachment.

14-Confess your Sins and you will kill the Evil that's in you

When Christ ascended, the devil fell. Those people clinging to him are going with him, and whoever is standing in his way is subject to falling. Do not hold on to him and do not stand in his way. His entire concern is to falsify the image of God in your mind and heart, and falsify your own image in your sight. He wants you to know God incorrectly and see yourself wrongly. He falsifies, distorts and deludes: he tries to magnify you when you should diminish, and diminish you when you should be honored. He tries to stop you when you should walk, and make you walk when you should stop, to make you speak when you should be silent, and to silence you when you should speak. He tries to persuade you to hurry when you should slow down, and to walk slowly when you should hasten. In every case, he wants to mislead you. The devil is the biggest deceiver; the greatest forger, a vicious crook; the Lord and the teacher described him as liar and the father of lies.

The devil never comes in his real image, never does he come under an ugly image; he knows what humans like and are attracted to; he tells you about things you like to hear, shows you things you like to see, gives you things you like to touch, and feeds you things you like to taste.

When crooks forge gold, they forge it with something that resembles it, yellow and shining; and so too in order for the devil to fake the image of God – who is Love in your life - he uses the things that people call love and mixes them up with God, who is Love. The feelings arising from instinct, passion, the bonds of affection, and the enslaving habits, are all used by the devil to confuse man about the truth of God, the life-giving love.

The devil's sole concern is to impede those walking up toward the Lord. On your way toward the Lord, the devil wants:



1- Either to push you off the road; he will create a goal for you that would attract you and toward which you would head, so that you might go astray and be lost.

2- Or he will cause you to fall so you would stop; he will set you a trap in which you would fall.

3- Or he will push you back; he will weary you and discourage you so you would retreat and go back. The important thing to him is that you do not make it.

Everything that gathers and unites around good is from God, and everything that divides and scatters is from the devil. The devil prevails over people through the things of this world; the more man rids himself of them the more he is shielded against the evil one, and the more he clings to them, the more he would be under the influence of evil. The Devil is the master of this world. The more you are submerged in the world, the more you come under his power, and the more you detach yourself from the world, the more you free yourself from him. Do not forget that you are not of this world! Do not immerse yourselves in it! Sail through it, rise above it, and raise it to the Lord by the power of Christ elevated on the Cross.

In the beginning the Devil makes a man laugh, in order to make him cry in the end; and he always takes a man to hell while he is laughing, but there, there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. The man who is now laughing with the Devil will surely weep in the end.

God might make you weep in the beginning, but with God you will always laugh in the end. God always makes you weep in order to discipline you, while the devil comes to make you laugh and lead away you from Him, and when God makes you laugh, and the devil comes to make you weep, do not let him fool you.

The devil hates the image of God, he hates the man who is taking on the image of God, and wants to distort this image that is in him. The only way Satan can deform the image of God in a person is for him to stop the work of God's Spirit in him. Then, the only image that remains in this person is the image of the animal. The devil's desire is to give to the human being the image of an animal.

The first and essential weapon against the devil is truthfulness; **every word of truth you say is an arrow you shoot into the heart of the evil one; and every honest confession of sin is a spear with which you pierce his heart.**

The next essential weapon is humility. Sincerity and humility mean confession. **Confess your sins and you will kill the evil in you.**

The Devil's only concern is to distract you from God. Beware! He tries to distract you from God even in the matters of God; he distracts you from the meaning of the word that you are praying with the word itself, and he distracts you from praising the Lord, with the melody of the hymn with which you are praising Him. He distracts you from God with the prayer that you are praying to Him.

Remember well that you cannot stand in the face of the Devil if you cannot kneel before God. The Devil does not come through the windows and apertures that you keep watch over and close well. The devil comes through the door that you open.

15- Motion and Life

There is a big difference between motion and life. A person can be in motion without having life in him; and he can also have life in him but not movement. Man is motion and life. The universe with its many galaxies, stars and creatures is full of movement but not all of them have life. Life is only in God the creator. God is life.

Every movement in the universe is doomed to die, but life is eternal. Every motion has an end no matter how great it is, but life has no end. Life is eternal because life is God, and God is eternal. Motion will pass away but life will not. Man has in him

motion and life; motion is limited by space and time, but life is neither limited by time nor by space. Human movement is doomed to die and has an end no matter how long it lasts, but the life that is in him is eternal.

Christ has come to give us life, and to sanctify the movement that is in us. Christ gives eternal life because He is the Son of God and life is from God. **Without Christ, our motion is doomed to an inevitable death; and with Christ we have eternal life;** and there is no option in between: either death, or life.

Sanctify the motion that is in you through life from Jesus Christ. Do not seek immortality in this world, in the time of this universe, by extending your motion in time forever, because even time is destined to die and has an end. Immortality is only in eternal life in Jesus Christ, and there is no immortal and eternal life in time because all of time is not eternal.

16- Every Family is a Holy Family

The human family on earth is the image of the Holy Family in heaven. The family passes on the plan of God from one generation to another. It transmits the love and word of God through the generations. The collapse of the family means the collapse of God's plan in humanity. It means the breakup of the message of salvation and sanctity to humanity. **Every family is a holy family because it is the image of God the Trinity.** The corruption of the family means a corruption of the image of God. The family carries the torch of light and passes it from one generation to another so the world may remain lit by the light of the Lord.

The family is the rope that binds humanity together through time, binds generations through history, so that humanity may grow and increase; and if this rope which binds humanity together was broken, and humanity gets separated from its history, it would be no more than lost generations which have neither history nor identity. The family is what gives people their human identity and impresses the image of God in them. The family is what preserves the memory of humanity; humanity without family is humanity without memory. A person without memory keeps turning in place, and humanity without memory will stop in history and die.

The family is the basis of the Lord's plan; and all forces of evil are focusing all their evil on destroying the family because they know that by destroying the family, the foundations of the plan of God will be shaken. The war of the Evil One against the Lord is his war against the family, and the war of the Evil One against the family is the core of his war against the Lord. Because the family is the image of God, from the beginning of the creation of this universe, The Evil one is focusing on destroying the family, the foundation of God's plan.

The family is the place where a man communicates with God and with his Brothers in humanity. Without the family, this communication is broken and nothing can ever make up for it, and if man attempts to reconnect the broken contact using his human means, it will become fragile, weak and twisted, and humanity will become ill and warped - moving towards a slow death.

Guard your families and keep them from the schemes of the evil one through the presence of God in them. Protect and keep them through prayer and dialog, through mutual understanding and forgiveness, through honesty and faithfulness, and most importantly, through listening. Listen to one another with your ears, eyes, hearts, mouths and the palms of your hands, and keep the roaring of the noise of the world away from your homes because it's like raging storms and violent waves; once it enters the home, it will sweep away everything and disperse everyone. **Preserve the warmth of the family, because the warmth of the whole world cannot make up for it.**

17 - Sentens from St. Sharbel

The shepherd's stick is used to guide and protect the flock against the wolves and the beasts of the forest; the stick of the Good Shepherd remains stick in his hand even though it is a scepter. The oak's crook in the hand of the good shepherd becomes as a scepter, and the ornamented scepter remains in his hand as the oak's crook. The full thimble and the full pot are alike, if you are a pot or a thimble; the most important is that you are full. Try always to be full, whatever your size may be.

Don't be distracted with outside things; the things around you, before you and behind you are less valuable than the things inside you. The truth always arises, while the world collapses. The world never gives you, but always puts you in debt, God alone gives. You cannot lift people higher than you; you can go up and draw them to you, the higher you climb, pull your brothers towards you. Christ raises you when he was lifted up, so you raise your brothers, when you are raised through the power of Christ. As you are drawn towards Christ you draw people who are around you.

Do not sell your souls in the markets of this world; your souls are very valuable; whatever the value-coin that the world pays to you, it remains cheap and low compared to their true value. Do not sell your souls, because the world cannot repay you their price, because their price is the blood of Christ, fully paid on the Cross. The kingdom of God is not a goal but a path that you could realize in yourself by the power of the Holy Spirit; step by step, day by day, in the small details that fill the moments of your life, second after second. The meditation is to look at things as they are, not as you imagine them in your mind, or as you want them to be.

You love your idea about the person not the person himself, and you hate your idea about the person not the person himself. Beware, do not condemn, do not put in your mind preconceived ideas and judgments about anyone. Prejudices are colored lenses you put on your eyes; through which you see each person with the color of your lenses, and not with the true color of the person. Put on your head the wisdom of the nature, in your heart its beauty and in your spirit the power of its constant renewal.

When you make a mistake admit it, profess your misdeed, confess it, and correct as much as you can; acknowledging the error and correcting it make you great and do not put you down; correct what you can fix, and the rest when you confess it to God, He will recover what you aren't able to fix, and offset what you aren't able to restore... Do not justify your mistake by your good intentions: the good intentions do not lead you to heaven; your works must be good like your intentions; what count are the fruits of your labor and the consequences of your words, not your good intentions. The good intention is the argument of the ignorant; and ignorance resembles to a sleep: you don't realize that you are sleeping, till you get up. Wake up the sleepers, when they are awake they understand that they were sleeping; do not speak with a sleeper, he doesn't hear you, wake him up and then speak to him.

The more the holiness grows in man, the more he ceases to grasp it, and when he observes his holiness, it would be disappeared. Turn the word in your head, like the stone-thrower rotates the stone in the sling, and doesn't let it down unless he is sure to aim the target. The word in your mouth is like the stone in the sling, once released you won't be able to take it back. If your word won't get to its target, don't throw it because it will hurt; the inappropriate word will surely cause harm. Avoid saying the words that have several explanations, say the word that has only one explanation. Be a good example instead of giving good advices. Whenever you see a mistake, correct it in silence rather than criticizing.

The stone in the wilderness under the sun, or in the river submerged with water, or bathed with aroma, or soaked with incense or coated with colors, it will remain a

stone. Only rubbles, stones, pebbles and sand, came out of the rock; and as much as it becomes soft, it gives, in its best, only dust. Being a saint is something completely different from showing that you are a saint; one is possible without the other.

Always distinguish between your desires and your needs; man longs for many things he doesn't need, and needs many things he doesn't desire. Your wealth is measured by the lack of your needs, not by the plenty of your possessions. Everything you think that you possess in this world; in reality it owns you. Whatever you think is under your dominion in this world, in reality it is dominating you. All the things in this world about which you control, make you a partner of the devil. You exist in this world to give and serve, not to possess and command. There is a big difference between involvement and commitment; live the commitment in the church not by getting involved with the community. The direction taken is more important than the speed adopted; what is the benefit from the speed and acceleration if the direction is wrong? Do not start anything on earth, if it doesn't end in heaven; and do not walk on a path on earth, that doesn't lead to heaven.

Your five senses are incomplete, the sensation completes them. You cannot be holy without passing through humanity. Things that take place in you are much more important than those that occur in your life. Always discern between the opportunity and the temptation; to grasp the opportunity is different from capitulating to the temptation; for trying to seize an opportunity is a good initiative, while submitting to the temptation is a downward spiral to evil.

The sin is like the poison; when you sin is like you drank poison; you are the one who is going to be poisoned, it doesn't matter how you drank it or who gave it to you; when you get poisoned and you die, it is unavailing to blame others.

The ignorant man clings to the dust until he becomes dust; the wise and prudent man clings to heaven until he reaches heaven. The place where you hang on, you will belong to it. Whatever gets into you and you receive it, is not yours; and whatever emanates from you and you give it away belongs to you. Your opinion doesn't lie in what you get, but in what emanates from you; what gets into you is not you, what comes out of you is yourself. By the power of the Spirit which you derive from your prayers, transform everything that gets into you and you do not possess, to holiness that radiates from you and makes you own everything.

On the Lord's way, if you stand back a step, the devil makes you go back ten; but if you advance a step, the Lord helps you go forward a hundred.

He who spends his entire life ringing the bell of the Church, it is not necessarily to be the one who enters to heaven and saves his soul; it's better that he listens to the bell of his conscience when it announces a sin; many are those who chime the bell of the church not to hear the one of their conscience.

Do not eat to the satiety, eat to quell your hunger; for man knows when he is not hungry but does not know when he is satisfied. Man never gets satisfied. The taste of chastity is more delicious than the taste of sexual pleasure. It's not the wine that makes the man drunk, it is the man who gets drunk.

* * *

THE SOURCES

- 1- **Bkirki archive.**
- 2- **Doctors' reports:** George Shukralah, page 3, 1926; Jeffero Droman, page 7, 1927; Joseph Hitti, Shikri Betjan, Theophile Maron, Simon Jargorian in ten pages, 1950; Manuscript at the Library of Kaslik, prepared by Father Hanna Skandar, Our Lady of Fortress, Menjez-Akkar, Lebanon, 2006, Charbeliat 4.
- 3- **The Cause of beatification and canonization of the servant of God Fr. Sharbel Makhlof,** Bkirki, 1955, contains 16 questionnaires with witnesses who knew Sharbel in his life 316+3 pages, manuscript in Bkirki, prepared by Father Hanna Skandar, Our Lady of Fortress, Menjez-Akkar, Lebanon, Charbeliat 6, 2006.
- 4- **Our Lady of refuge, Jbeil, or archive of the General Presidency,** index of Archive, prepared by Fr. Hanna Skandar, Our Lady of Fortress, Menjez- Akkar, 262 pages, contains indexing for more than 15000 documents, 2006. To be found in the library of Kaslik.
- 5- **Monastery of Our Lady of Maifouq,** documents and photographs, prepared by Fr. Hanna Skandar, monastery of Saint George-Jennin, Akkar, about 1000 documents, Maifouq and Kattara's calendars, 1997.
- 6- **Monastery of Saint Maron Annaya,** documents and manuscripts, prepared by Fr. Hanna Skandar, Our Lady of Fortress, Menjez-Akkar, 95 pages, contains the indexing of documents, about 1000 documents, and manuscripts: the calendar, books, records, books of accounts, and antiques, 2006.
- 7- **Monastery of St. Jacob El-Housin-Beshroudar,** documents and photographs, prepared by Fr. Hanna Skandar, St. Antonios monastery- Nabatieh, about 500 documents, 1994.
- 8- **The registry of Ehmej, baptisms, confirmation, engagements, marriages, deaths,** between the years 1800-1905, 179 numbered manuscript in the parish of Ehmej, Jbeil-Lebanon.
- 9- **The Registry No. 1, of Bkaakafra,** baptisms, marriages, deaths, 1830-1931, 8 torn pages+251+199 pages, manuscript in the Parish of Bkaakafra.
- 10- **Rules of the novice in the Lebanese Order,** manuscript No. 142 Jbeil, now kept at the Library of Kaslik, under the number 714ACPEO . Published by Fr. Elie Azzi, in the Journal of the **Order's paper**, No. 81, April 2005, 87-118 pages.
- 11- **The report of Abbot Ignatius Dagher Tannoury, for the Maronite Patriarch Elias Howayik,** 1922, twelve pages, manuscript in the library of Kaslik, prepared by Fr. Hanna Skandar, Our Lady of Fortress Menjez,Akkar Lebanon, 2006, Cherbelyat 3.
- 12- **General chapters of the Lebanese Maronite Order,** Fr. Elie Azzi, unpublished.
- 13- **The Positio of the Sanctity of the Servant of God Fr. Sharbel of Bkaakafra, his virtues and his miracles in general,** 1926, and an **exceptional Positio in** 06/20/1927, and 01/04/1928, contains 34 questionnaires with witnesses who knew Sharbel in his life, 148 pages, manuscript at the Library of Kaslik, prepared by Fr. Hanna Skandar, Our Lady of Fortres- Menjez-Akkar, Lebanon, 2006, Charbeliat 1.
- 14- **The Positio of the picture of Fr. Sharbel,** which appeared in the zoom lens of photographer Br. Elias Nohra the Lebanese missionary, before the hermitage of St Peter and Paul in Annaya on May 8, 1950, manuscript at the library of Kaslik, 10 pages, prepared by Fr. Hanna Skandar, Our Lady of Fortress -Menjez- Akkar, Lebanon, 2006, Charbeliat 5.



- 15- **The Positio of the Servant of God Fr. Neamtallah Al-Hardini**, 1926 contains questionnaires with a number of witnesses, 115 pages, and manuscript in the library of Kaslik.
- 16- **The Positio of the prohibition of worshiping the servant of God Fr. Sharbel of Bkaakafra**, 1926, contains 13 questionnaires with witnesses knew Sharbel directly or received the body of Sharbel, in the early years of his death, 39 pages, manuscript in the library of Kaslik, prepared by Fr. Hanna Skandar, Our Lady of Fortress- Menjez-Akkar, Lebanon, 2006, Charbeliat 2.
- 17- **File of the beatification's miracles**, Sister Mary-Abel Kamary, Iskandar Obeid, Akel Wakim and Boulos Akiki.

* * *

THE REFERENCES

- 1- Fr. Sharbel Makhlof of Bakaakfarh, Fr. Antonios Shibley the Lebanese, Beirut, 1950.
- 2- A relic from the tomb of St. Sharbel, Fr. Mansour Awad , Beirut, 1952.
- 3- The history of Al-Jebbeh monasteries, Fr. Youssef Ibrahim Al-Hourani Al-Hasrouni, Lebanon, 1998.
- 4- Monks from our village, Fr. Maroun Karam, Kaslik, 1975.
- 5- Monks in Lebanon, Fr. Louis Wehbeh the Lebanese monk, Lebanon, 1980.
- 6- Way of holiness a monthly religious magazine from 1955-1957; and other issues from Sharbel's magazine.
- 7- Sharbel a man drunken with God, Fr. Boulos Daher, monastery of St. Maron-Annaya, Lebanon, 1978.
- 8- Sharbel a Lebanese Saint, poem, Ferz Tawk, Brazil, 2009.
- 9- Sharbel the Saint of miracles, Fr. Antoine Saifi, Lebanon, 2003.
- 10- Unveiling, the hidden from the hermits and the hermitages in Lebanon, Fr. Libaous Dagher Al-Tannouri, Beirut, 1923.
- 11- The four stars, St. Sharbel ... Fr. Joseph Khashan, Lebanon, 1985.
- 12- The monastic lamp, to explain the Lebanese law, Bishop Abdullah Qaraali, Beirut, 1956.

* * *

CONTENTS

Chapter I: THE FIRST JOURNEY (Pages 7 to 13)	7
A- Youssef Antoun in Bekaa Kafra	7
1 - A Holy Family	
2 - The Death of His Father during Forced Labor	
3 - To Escape the Cold and Poverty	
4 - The Remarriage of His Mother	
5 - The Fatherless and the Uncle Guardianship	
6 -The Monastery School of Saint Hawshab	
7 - The "Rock of the Saint" and the Cow	
8 - "The Saint" and the Cave	
B- Sharbel the Monk	8
1 - On the Way to the Monastic Life in the Convent of Quozhaya	
2 - In the Monastery of Our Lady of Mayfouk: Follow Me (Mk 2:14)	
3 - He Didn't Look Back (Lk 9:62)	
4 - A Reckless Decision (Mt 18:8-9)	
5 - You Have the Words of Eternal Life (Jn 6,68)	
6 - My Burden is Light (Mt 11, 30)	
7 - We Will Meet Again in Heaven (Mk 3, 31-35)	
8 - Alishaa the Hermit: a Spiritual Father for Sharbel	
9 - Sharbel: Student of Saint Nehemtallah Hardini	
10 - To Serve, Not to be Served	
11 - In the Convent of Annaya	
12 - The Miracle of 1865	
C- Sharbel the Hermit	11
1 - The Establishment of Sharbel's Hermitage	
2 - The Description of the Hermitage	
3 - The Convent of Annaya until Sharbel's Entry into the Hermitage	
4 - Alishaa Asked for Sharbel with the Audacity of the Saints	
5 - Water in the Lantern (Mt 25, 1-13)	
6 - Servant of Alishaa	
7 - Give Him Something to Eat (Mk 5, 43)	
8 - Alishaa Recommends Sharbel to be His Successor	
9 - Servant of the Hermits (Jn 13,14)	
Chapter II: THE EFFORTS OF LIFE (Pages 14 to 51)	14
A - Portrait of Father Sharbel	14
1 - Description	
2 - His Daily Schedule	
3 - The Secret of the Existence of Lebanon	
B - Sharbel the Apostle (Mk 4, 18; Mt 10)	16
1 - Definition	
2 - Healing the Sick (Mt 10, 8)	
3 - To Repent to God (Acts 20, 21)	
4 - My Food You Do Not Know (Jn 4, 32)	
5 - Young Man Arise! (Lk 7, 14)	



6 - Talitha Arise (Mk 5, 41)	
7 - Lazarus is Dead! (Jn 11, 14)	
8 - The Shiite Muslims Rushed (Jn 4, 39-42)	
C - Work and Prayer	18
1 - Introduction	
2 - He Went to Church to Pray (Mt 14, 23)	
3 - He Remained Silent (Mt 5, 11-12 & 41)	
4 - He Makes the Sign of the Cross	
D - The Poverty of Sharbel (Mk 10,21)	19
1 - Introduction	
2 - Take This!	
3 - At Dawn	
4 - Don't Let Me See the Money (Mk 10, 23-25)	
E - The Clothing of Sharbel	20
1 - Introduction	
2 - To Patch Them	
3 - Why Do You Neglect Yourself?	
F - His Mat, His Sleeping and the Furniture in His Cell.....	21
1 - Introduction	
2 - His Mat	
3 - His Sleeping	
4 - Exhausted from Sleepiness (Mk 4, 38)	
5 - The Woolen Pillow (Mt 8, 20)	
G - Sharbel's Food.....	22
1 - Introduction	
2 - He Ate No Grapes and Drank No Water	
3 - To Visit the Holy Eucharist	
4 - Bulgur with Butter	
5 - Two Days Without Food (Lk 4,4 Mk 8,2)	
6 - The Stems of Purslane and Parsley	
7 - Willingly	
8 - Moved to Tears	
9 -The Provisions Abound (Mk 6, 30-44)	
H - The Sobriety of Sharbel	24
1 - Introduction	
2 - Oh, Superior General!	
3 - Look What Your Deacon is Giving Me!	
I - The Intelligence of Sharbel	24
1 - Introduction	
2 - Ask and You Will be Given (Mt 7, 7)	
3 - We Have No Thieves	
J - The Library and the Culture of Sharbel	26
1 - Introduction	
2 - Religious Discussions	
3 - Read This Chapter	
4 - Professor in Theology	
5 - He Never Tired of Reading the Bible	
K - The Confession of Sharbel	28
1 - Introduction	
2 - A Wise Counselor	
3 - I Felt a Deep Reverence after His Advice	
4 - He Met the Qualifications of the Confessor	
L - Servant for Everybody (Mt 20, 28).....	29
1 - Introduction	
2 - Stranger	

3 - I Am a Great Sinner	
4 - Do Not Put Him to the Test	
5 - Insults	
M - No One Could Hear His Voice (Mt 12, 19).....	31
1 - Introduction	
2 - I Have Strayed From the Path	
3 - Do You Practice Your Spiritual Obligations?	
4 - As Saint Nester	
5 - Listening to the Beloved One (Lk 10, 39)	
6 - Nothing Can Entertain Him	
7 - The People Thought He was Dumb	
8 - He Rarely Spoke	
N - Rejoice in My Sufferings (Col 1, 24)	33
1 -Introduction	
2 - He Captivated My Heart	
3 - My Eyes Bathed with Tears	
4 - I was Deeply Moved by Compassion	
5 - Rice and Butter in the Hermitage!	
6 - For the Sake of Jesus's Passion	
7 - I Shouldn't Savor the Sweets	
O - Everlasting Peace (Jn 14, 27).....	34
1 - Introduction	
2 - His Heart and His Mind Are in Heaven (Mt 6, 19-21)	
3 - Pray for Him	
4 - The Scattering of Ashes	
P - No One Could Take Away His Joy (Jn 16, 22)	36
1 - Introduction	
2 - More Pleasant Than the Pleasure Itself	
3 - He Replied Smiling	
4 - He Used to Say in Jest	
Q - Amazing Love (Jn 1, 13).....	37
1 - Introduction	
2 - The Family of Sharbel (Mt 12, 46-50)	
3 - Do You Want to Have Lunch?	
4 - Work for Food that Endures to Eternal Life (Jn 6, 27)	
5 - Out of Pity for Her	
6 - Like a Mother Who Cares for Her Baby	
7 - Sharbel "The Passionate Lover"	
8 - Unlimited Love	
9 - He Wept Over a Shiite (Lk 19, 41)	
10 - Even Animals Will Pick up Snakes with Their Hands (Mk 16, 18)	
11 - The Wolf Lives With the Lamb (Isa 11, 16)	
R - The Freedom of Sharbel and His Audacity (Lk 13/31-33)	40
1 - Introduction	
2 - He Wasn't Attached to Anything	
3 - From Where Sin Can Enter Your Soul?	
4 -This is to be Announced When the Day is a Holy Day	
S - A Rightful Worshiper	41
1 - Introduction	
2 - When I Became a Monk, I Died from this World (Mt 6, 24)	
3 - He Prayed for the Souls in Purgatory	
T - A loyalty to the Beloved One	42
1 - Introduction	
2 - Use of Masculine Gender	
3 - He Blessed Them	



4 - The Body is Like a Donkey
5 - Put the Bottle Down and Walk Away
6 - A Temptation Had Harassed Me
7 - Why This “Crank”?
U - Prisoner of the Beloved44
1 - Introduction
2 - Ask Father Makarios
3 - He Kept Lifting His Pick
4 - He Obeyed Even the Novices
5 - As a Joke
6 - He Didn’t Ask About the Purpose
V - His Hope is a Yearning for the Beloved One.....46
1 - Introduction
2 - More Competent Than Me
3 - Work for the Glory of God
W - A Refuge for the Faithful and the Poor (Lk 18, 3)46
1 - Introduction
2 - All Represent the Image of Christ
3 - He Offered Him Something to Eat
4 - I’m Just a Sinful Man
5 - Have Faith in God
6 - “You Can Be a Saint!”
X. - His Passion for Prayer.....47
1 - Introduction
2 - It is I (Mk 6, 50)
3 - He Spoke With the Angels to God
4 - Noah’s Ark (Jn 17, 15)
Y- The Faith of Sharbel.....49
1 - Introduction
2 -A Lightning
3 - The Convent’s Silkworm Harvest Remained Intact
4 - My Crop Was Plentiful This Year
5 - Don’t Talk At All About This (Mk 1, 44)
6 - Am I God to Prevent Death? (Mk 10, 18)
Z - His Mass is the Highlight of His Love50
1 - Introduction
2 - Like a Magnet
3 - Do You Want to Eat Some Grain Soup?
4 - Receive the Holy Communion (Mk14,22)
5 -The Tears Flowed From His Eyes
Chapter III. - TOWARD HEAVEN (Jn 13, 1) (Pages 52 to 105)
A - He Bore Our Sufferings (Mt 8, 17)52
1 - He Saved a Girl from Death (Lk 7, 11-17)
2 - The Healing of a Mute Man (Mk 7, 32-37)
3 - The Crazy of Ehmej (Mk 5, 1-20)
4 - Your Son is Alive (Jn 4, 50)
5 - Your Son is Well! (Mt 15, 25)
6 - A Barren Woman Conceives (Mk 7, 24-30)
7 - The Healing of Ouwaini’s Daughter (Mk 7, 24-30)
8 - Who Touched Me? (Mk 5, 30)
9 - Holy Water in the Medicine
B - The Last Mass54
1 - A Sudden Illness
2 - Do Not Leave

3 – This Beautiful Child
4 - Oh, Father of Truth
5 - The Hermit Cut the Child
6 - He Drank the Blood of Christ
7 - I Want to Celebrate the Mass
C - His Last Days55
1 - A Piece of Bread Dipped in Water
2 - He Blessed ... Despite His Severe Pain
3 - Simon of Cyrene (Lk 23, 26)
4 - His Ardent Love!
5 - Wine Mixed with Myrrh (Mk 15, 23)
6 - He Fainted from Crying (Mt 26, 75)
7 - Into Thy hands I Commit My Spirit (Lk 23, 46)
8 - Hemiplegia
D - To the Tomb.....56
1 - They Divided My Garments (Jn 19, 24)
2 - Christmas of 1898
3 - The Transfer of the Body to the Convent
4 - The Funeral Prayer
5 - The Funeral
6 - Weeping Bitterly
E - The Light of the Resurrection58
1 - The Wonderful Light
2 - Father Sharbel Has Dazzled Me
3 - Father Sharbel is...Stupid!
4 - And... They Became Friends
5 - Mahmud Hamada or Abu Sabta
F - Thy Just Will Not See Decay (Ps 16, 10)60
1 - An Adventure on the Feast of Saint Maron in 1898
2 - Attempts to Kidnap It...
G - Outside the Cemetery.....61
1 - The Transfer of the Body
2 - A Light Around the Body
3 - The Body was Bathed with Water
4 - The Condition of the Body
5 - Blood and Water Gushed Forth (Jn 19, 34)
H - In the “Mambash” Room62
1 - In the Sun
2 - In Fear His Fans Would Steal Him
3 - The Healing of a Dumb Child (Mk 7, 31-44)
4 - Oozing Out of the “Mambash”
I - In the Hands of Father Youssef Khoury63
1 - On the Roof of the Convent
2 - They Wanted to Stop the Oozing by Any Means Necessary!
3 - For the Reburial of the Body
4 - The Surgery!
5 - Ouwaini Distributed Blessings to His Patients
6 - He Continued to Ooze
7 - Extraction of the Brain
8 - Recovering from Total Paralysis (Mt 9, 1-8)
9 - Tabarja Paralytic (Mk 2, 1-12)
J - The Lodging67
1 - The Women at a Separate Location
2 - The Insistence of Visitors
3 - The Lodging is Converted Into a Chapel



4 - The Body is Standing
5 - The Healing of a Girl and the Raising of a Dead Child (Jn 11, 1- 44)
6 - A Mysterious Hand
K- In the Chapel69
1 - Transfer of the Body
2 -Visiting the Tomb
3 - I Took His Hand and Put It on My Sick Eye
L - Dr. George Shekrallah70
1 - I Was Amazed
2 - Plasma or Sores Serum (Lk 22, 44)
3 - The Mystery of the Body!
4 - Impossible!
5 - This is Medically Impossible!
6 - It Only Delays the Corruption!
M - Other examinations72
1 - Dr Elias Anaissi
2 - Examinations of 1927
N - Till the Year 195073
1 - The Transfer of the Body
2 - Saint Veronica’s Veil
3 - Shroud of Jesus Christ
4 - What Was Found in the Tomb and in the Coffin?
5 - Examination of the Body and Closure of the Tomb
6 - Exposition of the Body and Visits
O - Sharbel’s Image75
1 - A Monk With a Transparent Body!
2 - I Want to Take a Picture With You!
3 - The Superior General Ighnacios Al-Tannoury
4 - The Order Didn’t Rely Only on this Picture!
P - I Pour Out My Spirit (Acts 2, 17).....76
1 - The Healing of a Cripple and a Paralytic
2 - Their Hearts Softened (Acts 2, 37)
3 - The Healing of a Bleeding Woman (Mk 5, 25-34)
4 - In the Footsteps of the Lord (Mt 20, 29)
5 - Tongues of Fire (Acts 2, 3)
6 - The Blind See, the Lame Walk, the Sick are Cured (Lk 7, 22)
7 - Miss Mary Maaloof
8 - Saeedeh Asaad Farhat
9 - Muhammad Walks
10 - Mir Caesar Abi El-Lamaah
11 - He Requested a Piece of Cotton Soaked with Oil
12 - He Visited Sharbel for Ten Minutes
13 - Inserting Sharbel’s Tomb in the Tourist’s Guide Book
Q - The Signs Will Accompany Those Who Believe (Mk 16, 17)78
1 - I Saw Father Sharbel
2 - I Was Making Fun of Sharbel’s Miracles as if They Were Superstitions
R - Go and Make Disciples of All Nations (Mt. 28,19)80
1 - Sharbel in Iraq
2 - Sharbel in Brazil
3 - Sharbel in Egypt
4 - Sharbel in Syria
5 - Sharbel in the United States
6 - Sharbel in Australia
7 - Sharbel in Argentina
8 - Sharbel in France

9 - Sharbel in Belgium
10 - Sharbel in Malta Island
S - Sharbel the Beatified83
1 - The Healing of Akl Wakim:
- Who Fell From His Bike
- A Simple Matter!
- His Leg Won’t Heal!
- Shy to Hang Out with Young Ladies!
- Carrying a Gun!
- He Became a Burden to His Parents
- Toward Sharbel
- A Minister Protests
- He Got Up and Walked
- The Bells Rang!
- I Believe in God
- He Has Repented
- The Healing of an Atheist
2 - Sister Mary-Abel Kamary:
- Good health
- A Chronic Disease
- They Brought Her to Die Here!
- Throw Me With the Poor!
- A Touch From God
- Who is Michel El-Sroujy?
- The Presence of God
3 - The Church Declares the Beatification of Sharbel
T - Sharbel the Saint92
1 - The Retired First-Lieutenant in the Syrian Army Mohammad Helmi Irbelli
2 - I Prayed to Saint Sharbel and I Recovered
3 - An American Physician’s Report
4 - The Canonization Miracle
5 - Sharbel Baptizing a Child the Night of His Canonization
6 - Sharbel is Blessing the Crowds
7 - A Grain of Incense in the Hand of a Newborn Baby
U - The Joy of Faith94
1 - Nohad El-Shamy
- I wish I Could Live His Life
- First Surgery on the Kidney
- No Cure for Hemiplegia!
- A Touch from Saint Sharbel
- Admonition and Regretting
- I am Coming to Make You a Surgery!
- The Joyful Tears
- I Cut You by the Power of God so They Could See You
- Pictures Oozing Oil
- The Oak Leaves
- Don’t be Afraid to Give the Oak Leaves
- She Gave Birth to Twins
- A Trip to Mexico
2 - Sharbel with the Muslims
3 - Sharbel in Africa in 1995
4 - Magdalene on June 22, 2002
- A Temporary Solution
- The Hell of Pleasures
- Prayer of the Mother



- The Love of God
- 5 - Nothing Left to do But Cry
- 6 - Sharbel in the Philippines 2005
- 7 - Healings in 2008 - 2009 (Annaya's Archives)
- 8 - Jesus is Alive (Lk 24, 6)

*** CONCLUSION.....105**

APPENDIX

WORDS OF SAINT SHARBEL.....106

- 1- Christ is the Truth of Love Incarnate.....107
- 2- And you will achieve the Objective for which God Created You108
- 3- Your Work in this World109
- 4- Your Weakness is there for you to overcome.....111
- 5- Axis of the Universe112
- 6- Your Journey in this World is the trip of your Sanctity.....113
- 7- Christ is the Foundation of God's Building.....114
- 8- Sanctity is Your Goal.....116
- 9- Your Future is the First Day in the Next World117
- 10- Do Good Untiringly118
- 11- Walk the Path of Sanctity in the Joy of the Resurrection120
- 12- Sanctity is not a Chance, Sanctity is a choice.....121
- 13- Love is a Light that Shines.....122
- 14- Confess your Sins and you will kill the Evil that's in you122
- 15- Motion and Life123
- 16- Every Family is a Holy Family.....124
- 17 - Sentens from St. Sharbel.....125

THE SOURCES.....127

THE REFERENCES.....128

CONTENTS.....129

PHOTO LIBRARY.....137









