



Fr. Tony's Pastoral Letter of Introduction to St. Rafka Church

My name is Tony Aziz Massad. I was born to Aziz and Diane Massad on January 27th, 1983 in Sidon Lebanon. My father was born and raised in Lebanon in the village of Mjaydel and my mother was born and raised in Flint, MI. I was born in Lebanon, but left with my parents when I was 9 months old. We moved to Oman, as my father was working there, and that is where my sister Alicia was born. We made our move to Flint, MI in 1987. My younger brother was born in 1990. I am the oldest of three, my sister's name is Alicia, and my brother's name is Paul.

I grew up going to public schools in Flint, MI and I attended Our Lady of Lebanon Maronite Church for as long as I could remember. Some of my first memories are of activities and services in our church. I grew up in a very close and loving family and this type of loving and close environment was reflected in our church as well. I have nothing but fond and great memories of my time at Our Lady of Lebanon and I am very proud of the community and church we have. I attended Sunday school from the age of 4 until graduating high school. I was an altar boy at the age of 7 until the age of 21 (where I was practically thrown off the altar for being too big). I was a part of the MCO (Maronite Children's Organization) for kids ages 5-12 and after that join the MYO (Maronite Youth Organizations), and later becoming an advisor for the MYO. All of these things were very good and integral parts of my life and my development as a young Maronite Catholic Christian.

I graduated from High School in 2001 and I entered college in the fall of that year. I began my college studies at Mott Community College in Flint, MI and after two years of study there, transferred to the University of Michigan-Flint. I graduated college in 2005 with a Bachelor's in Philosophy and a minor in business. With these two degrees I noticed that there isn't much in the "real world" career wise but God had planted a seed in me for a different path.

The idea of being a priest and the priesthood was something I have thought about and prayed about since the age of 13 or 14. This vocation was nourished and nurtured not only in my home with my family but with the faith we practiced and also my close relationship with the church and those in the church. I thought about priesthood all throughout High School but pushed it to the back of my mind and after graduating I thought that I would be fulfilled getting married, having children, and becoming a deacon but the idea of the priesthood just never went away. I held many jobs, ultimately all very unfulfilling, between working retail, at different restaurants, substitute teaching, and other jobs. As I continued in college, the call only got stronger and I finally told myself that I have to try.

In the fall of 2006 I entered Our Lady of Lebanon Maronite Seminary in Washington, DC. This was a decision that set me on my course to the priesthood. I found the more I learned, the more I wanted to learn about the faith, about myself, and my relationship with God, and ultimately how to answer His call in my life. I spent four years in the seminary and was ordained on June 26th, 2010. My first assignment was at St. Maron's in Cleveland, OH as an associate pastor. I now come to you, with my "feet wet" a little bit and ready to continue to serve God and you as your pastor. I am very excited to start this journey together. My prayer is that whatever we do, is first for God, and in putting this as our first priority, I know God will take care of us.

God bless you all!

Fr. Tony Massad