

Fr. Edward T. Nedder
St. George Maronite Catholic Church Cranston, RI

Joseph P. Checallah, Jr.

As I write this, I am filled with both sadness and happiness - Fr. Edward T. Nedder, Pastor of St. George Maronite Catholic Church in Cranston, RI, is retiring as of October 1st, 2020.

Sadness, because the parishioners of the St. George Family are saying goodbye to an individual who has been an indispensable part of our lives for the past 15 years. Yet, happiness for Fr. Ed, who has given his all to his St. George family, a 1000% giver, a tireless, totally dedicated, selfless individual, a genuine Priest. A true man of God, a man who has had a dramatic, unforgettable, and ever-lasting impact on every life he has touched. His retirement is rightly earned, and more than well deserved.



Fr. Ed's journey to the Priesthood began in 1963 when he attended Queen of Apostles Seminary in Dedham, MA. He graduated from Catholic University with a bachelor's degree in 1967, and a Master's Degree in 1968. He had attained 15 credits toward a Doctorate when he chose to take a leave of absence to care for his ailing father. While caring for his father, Fr. Ed taught at Matignon High School in Cambridge, MA, and became Chairman of the Latin Department, while holding a second job at Sears & Roebuck for 14 years. He was recently honored with the Cardinal Cushing Medal for his service and dedication to Matignon. He also served as an Auxiliary Police Officer in Dedham, MA for three years. Fr. Ed was ordained a Deacon on May 14, 1983 and served at St. Anne Church in Readville, MA and Our Lady of Cedars of Lebanon Church, Jamaica Plain, MA.

In 1986, Fr. Ed returned to Our Lady of Lebanon Maronite Seminary, and was ordained to the Priesthood by the late Archbishop Francis M. Zayek at Our Lady of the Cedars of Lebanon Church on June 20th, 1987. He celebrated his first liturgy on Father's Day, June 21st, 1987 which he dedicated to the memory of his father. Fr. Ed was honored in 1989 as a Fourth Degree Knight, and granted the title Knight of the Holy Sepulcher in 1998, and has served on the Presbyterial Council of Priests for five years, a group chosen by the Bishop to assist in the governance of the Diocese. From 1987 to 1992, Fr. Ed was given his first assignment as Pastor of Our Lady of Purgatory Church in New Bedford, MA, and then as Pastor of St. Anthony Church, Springfield, MA from 1992 to 2006, where he oversaw a major renovation, and coordinated their 100th Anniversary Celebration.

In July of 2006, Bishop Gregory Mansour assigned Fr. Ed to serve as Pastor of Saint George Maronite Catholic Church, shortly after Fr. Paul Mouawad was transferred to Newtown Square, Pennsylvania to serve the Maronite parish of St. Sharbel Church.

From a personal perspective, my wife and I met Fr. Ed when he was first assigned to St. George in July, 2006. It was a very difficult time for us. My parents were both failing, yet within only days of his arrival, Fr. Ed began regular visits to my father in the hospital, a total stranger to him, and would sit and talk with him. My Dad would weave in and out of conscientiousness, but always became alert and almost vibrant with each visit. We saw a light in his eyes that had been long absent. I truly believe that Fr. Ed's presence did much for my Dad. It gave him the will and strength to fight, for more than a year, much more than any doctor or medicine ever could. My Mom passed unexpectedly in June, and my Dad just four months later in October. Fr. Ed was

with us throughout, giving my family the council and strength to face and get through the most difficult time in our lives. I will never forget the genuine warmth, compassion, strength, and support we received from him, a person we had known for only months.

Our St. George Parish was also going through a very difficult time. Our Church in Pawtucket had recently been destroyed by a devastating fire, and although we were sharing a building with the wonderful people of St. Raymond's, we longed for a place of our own. Fr. Ed quickly put together a building committee and began a plan to move forward to attain our goal. As I got to know Fr. Ed, I was amazed at how quickly his compassion, warmth, and sincere concern for his Parishioners spread throughout our Parish. I began to notice greater attendance at Mass, more parishioner involvement with the various Church Committees and functions, and a new growing interest by everyone in the once fledging family of St. George.

Through many false leads and disappointments, and with Fr. Ed's constant support and guidance, we changed direction from building a new church to focus on purchasing and renovating an existing church. We eventually found and bought St. Ann's in Cranston, RI, and in June, 2013, made it our new home. After a somewhat contentious start, Fr. Ed guided us through a sensitive transition and merger with the Parishioners of St. Ann's. With his direction, warmth, love and concern, the two church families quickly merged into one, with over 50 families from St. Ann's joining us, sharing both Roman and Maronite liturgies weekly. Fr. Ed proved to be a tireless servant of God, with an incredible inner strength surrounded by an infectious humbleness, traits found only in a true spiritual leader. Our St. George family has found a true Father to lead us.

Since his arrival in 2006, Fr. Ed has overseen the purchase of a new Church, the 100th Anniversary Celebration of St. George, the creation and hosting of an annual Lebanese Food Festival, numerous Haflis, the complete restoration of the new permanent home of St. George Maronite Catholic Church and Rectory, and has championed many more Parish activities too numerous to list.

Fr. Ed is among the most memorable individuals I have ever met. He has solidified the families of St. Ann and St. George into one, rebuilt a trust which had been long absent in our Parish, and is admired by all. He is truly loved and supported by all who meet him. As I have heard from many of fellow brother Priests and Deacons throughout the Eparchy, he is thought of as a Priest among Priests, a true gifted man of God, and his impact on everyone he meets is nothing short of unforgettable. He deserved to be promoted to Monsignor a long time ago, but has never had a personal ambition to go beyond his current station. He is everything a Priest should be....and more.

Fr. Ed, our St. George family wish you well, and want you to enjoy a long, healthy, relaxing, well-earned and deserved retirement. Thank you for being so much more than just a Priest to us. We love you Fr. Ed....we always will. You are family, and we will miss you terribly. We shall welcome your replacement with open arms, but he will have enormous shoes to fill. But most of all, we feel truly blessed that you have become such a positive, unforgettable, and immeasurable part of our lives that we will always treasure. And in this day of suspicion, anger, mis-trust and uncertainty..... Isn't this the way it should be?