

Priest finds strong faith among Amman's Chaldean Catholic refugees

By Judith Sudilovsky
CATHOLIC NEWS SERVICE

AMMAN, Jordan (CNS) — At dusk, a handful of men and women begin to trickle into a stone-faced apartment building in Amman's Jabal Lweibdeh neighborhood. At the staircase leading to the entrance of the building a small sign proclaims "Chaldean Catholic Vicariate."

The people have come to attend the Wednesday Sacred Heart devotion and Mass said by Father Raymond Moussalli, patriarchal vicar, who was sent by the Chaldean Catholic Church in Baghdad five years ago to minister to the burgeoning Chaldean community in Jordan.

"Orthodox Christians go to (the) Orthodox church. I am Chaldean. I want to go to a Chaldean church," said Maisoun Gerdis, who has been in Jordan for seven years and regularly attends the Wednesday services in addition to Sunday Mass. Praying her own liturgy strengthens her, she said.

Father Moussalli is the sole Chaldean priest permanently assigned to Amman, although occasionally a priest is sent from Iraq or Syria to assist him.

The refugee population is always in transition, and the number of the faithful under his pastoral care can reach as high as 10,000 or fall to 8,000, Father Moussalli said.

Every Wednesday about 20 people come to the apartment — where a chapel has been set up in the living room — for the devotion and Mass, said Father Moussalli. Once a month

he conducts a Bible study for the community. He describes the spiritual faith of his flock as strong.

"The people feel their faith and like to be safe with us," said Father Moussalli. "But what they really want is (to get) a visa and go abroad. Here they have no house, no work, no studies. It is terrible ... this Bush peace. We don't understand the war. You are against Saddam Hussein, not against the people of Iraq."

Many Iraqi families have been separated

because of the situation in their country, he said, and they face great emotional strain and come to him asking for material and spiritual help.

"They ask why this is happening to them," he said.

While he can't give them material help, he tries to "give them Jesus," he said.

"I answer them that we need to have patience, that Jesus is with us all our lives. Maybe this is a temptation from the devil. We have to be very strong in our faith," he said.

"The situation here really affects people. ... I try to visit them in their houses, but I can't visit them all. I am alone here. But they are very happy a priest comes to visit."

Since his arrival he has performed 100 marriage ceremonies, 60 baptisms and 20 funerals, he said.

"Before, many people would send their dead back to Iraq for burial. Now it is terrible and not possible," he said, adding that he expects to be performing more funerals and burials in Amman. **occ**

Tennessee parishioners on a mission to supply Mass kits to world

By Kim Bastone
CATHOLIC NEWS SERVICE

COLUMBIA, Tenn. (CNS) — While the United States may be at war against terror, a small grass-roots group of individuals at St. Catherine's Catholic Church in Columbia is waging peace by sending out Mass kits rather than mess kits, hosts instead of hostilities.

"These Mass kits contain everything a priest needs," said parishioner Gale Wheaton, "and where there is a priest, all seven sacraments are available to the people."

Tucked inside a case the size of a child's lunchbox are a paten, chalice, stole, basic linens, a purificator, crucifix, two candles, a pyx and reliquary, a rosary, wine and water cruets, and an oil supply. There is also an image of the Divine Mercy.

The Mass kits came out of an idea Wheaton had during adoration, that it would be simple to send unconsecrated hosts to priests in need. "Originally I had Sudan in mind," she told the Tennessee Register, newspaper of the Nashville Diocese. Then hurricanes devastated the Philippines and Haiti.

She was discussing this idea with another parishioner when Pat Jakubisin, the owner of Yahweh's Garden, a Catholic bookstore in Columbia, approached them, explained she had a box of hosts with a broken seal, and asked, "Can you do something with these?"

At the same time Father Rebecca Valery of Haiti visited the parish and asked, "Can I get a box of those? We haven't had fresh hosts in more than a year." Father Valery returned home with 3,000 hosts.

Hosts are not expensive. A box of 1,000 costs \$14.95 plus shipping costs. The hosts can be sent anywhere in the world within 30 days, Wheaton noted.

Jakubisin also placed a donation basket in her store. Since then Yahweh's Garden, in conjunction with St. Catherine's Scripture study group, has sent out 22,000 hosts to missionary priests as near as Louisiana and as far away as the Philippines, Haiti, Jamaica and India.

"In the Philippines," Wheaton explained, "they are forced to break their hosts, so a shipment of 4,000 hosts actually serves 16,000 people. Talk about the multiplication of loaves and fishes."

Later, again while in adoration, Wheaton realized that St. Catherine could offer priests
Please see MASS KITS, page 18

Dead Sea Scrolls

ANCIENT · AUTHENTIC · AMAZING

June 29, 2007 — December 31, 2007

Don't miss this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to see the largest, most comprehensive Dead Sea Scrolls exhibition to-date, featuring 24 scrolls (10 never before seen).

Tickets go on sale October 1, 2006, for Museum members (call 800.507.2773) and November 1, 2006, for non members (call 877.946.7797).

For group sales call 800.290.4616.

www.sdscrolls.org

Sponsored by: Bank of America, Hilton Hotels, Waitt Institute for Discovery, C. Blazer Communications, California Homeland Security, Charmaine and Maurice Kaplan, Melvin Garb Foundation, Point Loma Nazarene University

SAN DIEGO NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM

WWW.SDNHM.ORG