

History of St. George Ladies Altar Society

by Julia D. Karam

The Ladies Altar Society (LAS) was organized in the 1925 by several ladies who foresaw the need to help with the newly founded St. George Maronite Church. The Charter members who joined together to work under the leadership of Fr. Elias Nagem were Rajoon Lahood, who became the first president of the LAS, Cazoon Ablan, Cecilia Monsour, and Afife Andry. The objective of the organization, then, and to this day, is to supply and maintain the altar of the Church with such items as vestments, linens, candles, and everything necessary for holding the divine services and beautifying the House of God. The members also participate in any parish project or event deemed necessary or desirable by the pastor.

During the difficult time when the church was being moved from Frio Street to Babcock Road, the LAS held frequent dinners and bingo games at McArthur Park. These events were enjoyed by everyone and kept the parishioners together. Through the grace of God the parish survived.

In 1925 membership dues were 25 cents a month, and now it is \$2.00 a month. The meetings were originally held in the homes of members. All of the funds necessary to carry out their goals are raised by the LAS through dues, donations, or fund-raising events.

As time went on, the LAS membership and our spirituality grew; now the LAS has an enrollment of 60 members. The LAS initiated the following spiritual activities: (1) bi-annual spiritual retreats for the parishioners; (2) crowing of the Blessed Virgin Mary on May 1st each year; (3) recitation of the Rosary before Liturgy; (4) attend monthly communion as a group; (5) special liturgy for all living and deceased members; (6) mercy meals after funerals for family and friends of the deceased.

The LAS also initiated the following fund-raising events for the church: (1) Lebanese dinners held on the last Sunday of each month; (2) annual Lebanese bake sales held in November-December; (3) snack and food sales during bingo sessions at the Hall; (4) style shows; (5) serving refreshments after Midnight Mass for Easter and Christmas services; and (6) raffles.

One of the most rewarding services its members perform is the care of the Altar of God. It is a joy to see the altar clean, sparking, and beautifully decorated for

the liturgies, the holiday services, and other special occasions. Also a great deal of satisfaction is felt by its members when they serve the mercy meals to bereaved families and friends and the funeral of a loved one.

For 75 years, the Ladies Altar Society has been an important pillar of St. George. The group of the faithful women have, over the years, stood by in times of stress and hardship and in times of joy and happiness. Their firm, guiding hand has proved invaluable to their community and their Church. Because of their love and dedication to St. George, the Ladies Altar Society continues to serve and support the church and its parishioners in any endeavor that is needed.