

The Year of the Priest

by Fr. Milad Yaghi, M.L.M.

Our Holy Father Pope Benedict XVI declared the year spanning from June 2009 to June 2010, the "Year of the Priest". He invited all people to pray for their priests and for more vocations to serve the universal church.

Although the church is a large part of our lives, many of us have not given much thought to the priesthood or why a man would consecrate his life to serve the church. During this year of the priest, I hope that you will think about the identity of the priest. A priest is a man of God. He serves the church, and his role within the community is to help people to make their way back to God when they stray and to bring God to his people.

I have been a priest for 21 years. I served two years in France before I came here to my beloved church in Houston to serve this community. I am not a perfect man. I am a weak person, but God gives me the power to serve his church, to carry his word everywhere I go. As a priest, I am a servant of God. I have consecrated my life to God and have given up many earthly pursuits to follow the Lord Jesus. Like other priests, I find joy and happiness in the Lord Jesus and in the act of bringing my brothers and sisters to Christ.

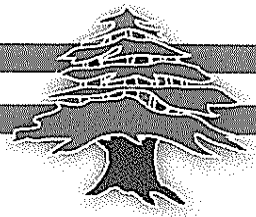
A priest is a man of the sacraments. It is the priest who baptizes us, confirms us, gives us the body of the Lord in the Eucharist, and hears our confessions. We call on the priest to pray over the sick. He gives us the sacraments of marriage and extreme unction when we leave this earth. We should always preserve the image of the priest as the man who carries Jesus to us.

This year, I ask you to pray for us as your priests and to forgive all of our mistakes. Remember that our objective is to work for God in our community, and that together with our parishioners, we are called to discover the word of God in our lives. As priests, we are here to serve you, and one day, we will be called to go elsewhere to serve God in another parish. Wherever we are, we will need your prayers.

Also pray for guidance on how best you can serve Our Lady of the Cedars, your home and church. You could join the Daughters of Mary, Knights of the Cedars, the choir, the youth organizations, the CCE program, or the adult education program. You could support the church in many other ways as well. Just reach out to us.

Pray for vocations, for the priests who are living their vows, and for yourselves as you seek ways to serve your church.

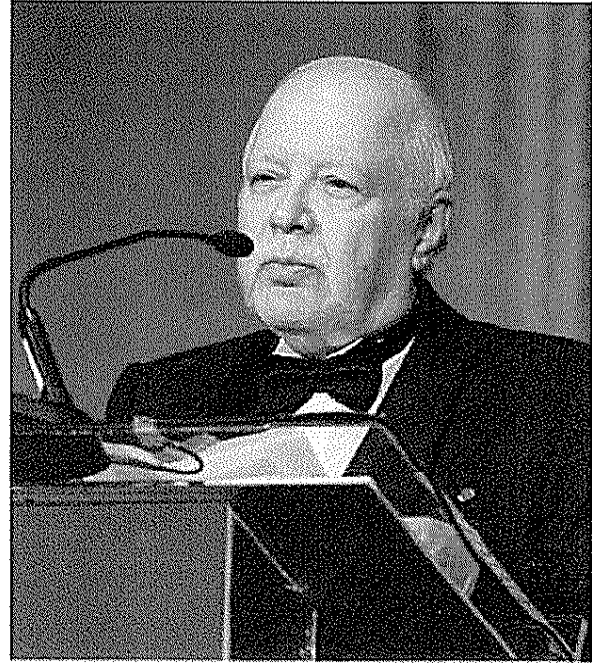




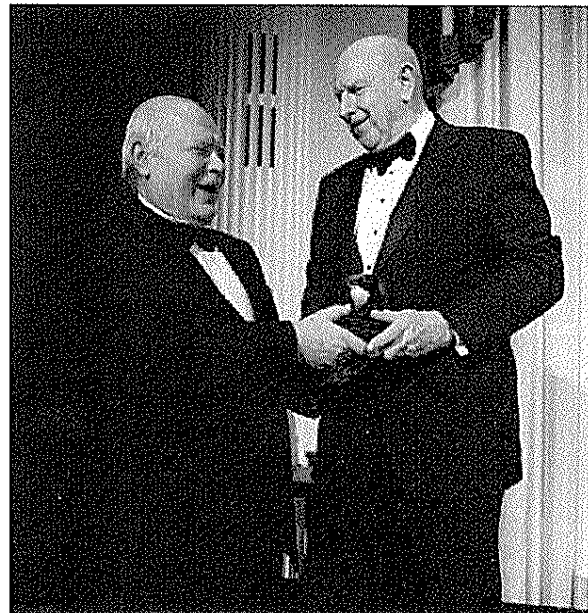
International Crisis Group Honors World Leaders The Honorable Issam Fares receives The Chairman's Award

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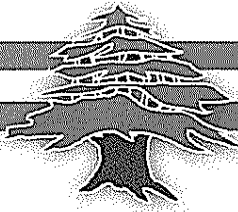
During a prestigious event - "In Pursuit of Peace" - His Excellency Issam Fares, the former Deputy Prime Minister of Lebanon, was awarded the International Crisis Group's 2009 Chairman's Award for his efforts in diplomacy and in promoting peace. Honored alongside Mr. Fares were the 41st and 42nd presidents of the United States, George H. W. Bush, and William Clinton.



The award dinner was held at the prestigious Waldorf Astoria Hotel in New York City on Wednesday, October 28, 2009. Dignitaries from around the world were in attendance, alongside the families and friends of the honorees. The evening featured CNN's Chief International Correspondent, Christiane Amanpour, as the Master of Ceremonies. In her comments, Ms. Amanpour remarked "...In all my years of reporting... I've encountered so many times when the world has turned away... You have made it your mission to ensure that the world does not turn away... to ensure that nobody can say 'we did not know' in the face of unspeakable atrocity and unspeakable crime..."



The International Crisis Group was founded in 1995 as an international non-governmental organization and recognized as the world's leading independent, non-partisan, source of analysis and advice to governments and intergovernmental bodies like the United Nations, European Union and World Bank. Crisis Group's annual honorees are leaders selected because of their worldwide contributions in the



efforts to prevent and resolve deadly conflicts, and for their leadership in the area of international diplomacy.

No one embodies those traits more aptly than His Excellency, The Honorable Issam Fares. The mere mention of his name commends respect; yet his presence is a lesson in humility. His Excellency enjoys worldwide notoriety as a first-class statesman, a generous philanthropist, and a visionary ahead of his time.

This recent award, to be added to many previous ones His Excellency has received over the years, is a certain indication of his continuing efforts to promote peace and favor diplomacy in the resolution of conflicts. The country of Lebanon and the entire Middle East region have been honored through his tireless work and leadership.



I am fortunate to have met His Excellency when he was in Houston on a recent visit. I have experienced firsthand, the humility of the person and generosity of his heart. Of course, this was no surprise to me, having known His Excellency's family in Houston - his son and daughter-in-law, Mr. and Mrs. Nijad and Zeina Fares and their lovely family.

How much better the world would be today, if more people followed the example of Mr. Issam Fares' in the promotion of peace and diplomacy? We thank God for the gift of His Excellency, and congratulate him and his family, on receiving this prestigious award.

