

## Media release

### **Enough fake condemnations and empty statements**

*Bishop Antoine Charbel Tarabay renews his call for justice on the anniversary of the Port Beirut Blast*

**Sydney 5 August 2022** - On Thursday 4 August 2022, the Parish of St Joseph Croydon (NSW) hosted a two- year memorial mass for the victims of the Port of Beirut explosion.

The mass was celebrated by Bishop Antoine-Charbel Tarabay, Eparch of the Maronite Church in Australia, New Zealand, and Oceania, and attended by members of the Lebanese community in Sydney, and families who lost loved ones on that day.

The blast, which killed more than 215 innocent people, injured thousands, and caused untold psychological harm to an entire population, damaged 77,000 homes, displaced over 300,000 people, changed the landscape of a city, and made time stand still at 6.08pm on 4 August 2020.

In his homily, Bishop Tarabay re-issued his call to the Lebanese political system, to stop with the fake condemnations and empty statements about the Port of Beirut explosion - the largest non-nuclear blast in history - and work to reveal the truth of what happened, to expose the culprits.

Bishop Tarabay also added, "To those in government or controlling the government, in our homeland Lebanon, we ask, when are you going to change? When will you truly put yourselves at the service of the people who have entrusted their lives and their dreams to you?

"When will your hardened hearts be softened? When are you going to let go of your false patriotism, in order to see the suffering of the people and work for them? What happened at the port of Beirut on the 4<sup>th</sup> of August is a crime against humanity. We join our voices to those calling for an international investigation about this tragedy and for a fair trial before an international tribunal.

Excerpts from the homily are included below:

"The blast devastated all of us, who watched and heard the cries of heartbroken mothers, fathers, spouses, siblings, children, neighbours, and friends left with no answers, no recourse. And their nightmare continues. Evil, greed and darkened hearts and minds caused all this.

"365 days multiplied by two multiplied by all kinds of pain, anxiety, misery, oppression, anguish, and anger, and yet not one person responsible for this crime, this tragedy, no

one has been brought to justice yet. The Lebanese people are tired of waiting for a pre-emptive decision that sheds some light on who is responsible? Who bears the burden of the pain of the families of the victims, the injured, and the blood which ran through the streets of Beirut on that day?

“4 August 2020, a date forever etched in the minds and hearts of every Lebanese citizen and immigrant, a day when the government entrusted to protect and care for its people allowed their killing instead.

“This evening we celebrate Mass to renew our firm belief and faith that our deceased, taken away so violently and so harshly, are alive in the heart of God and are present among us at this moment and in this church.

“Their absence is bitter to us, and their death is an unbearable suffering. We share the extreme pain of their families and friends. The void they leave behind can never be filled.

“We owe it to every victim, to every grieving family and to every Lebanese person to know: Why did the explosion happen? How did this happen? Who is the perpetrator and how will they be brought to justice? All what we know so far is that: justice and truth are imprisoned and the criminals, those responsible for the blast, are still out there free and protected.

“However, we will not despair, and we commit to fight with them for justice. We commit to support Lebanon and the Lebanese to remain in their land and country and to rebuild - not just the buildings but the legacy of those were taken away from them.

“On this evening, I thank our Maronite community here and the wider Australian community for the tremendous support to our Lebanon appeals. I thank the Australian Government for its aid to Lebanon. It is only through friends like Australia that Lebanon will be able to rise again.

“Friends, the voices of the Lebanese people may have been silenced but let us continue to be their voices all around the world and continue to support those who demand justice. Let us pray for better days for Lebanon and hope for its people.”

ENDS

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