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ACN Australia raises \$250,000 in National Appeal for Lebanon

ACN Australia is pleased to announce that it has raised just over \$250,000 to help Christians in Lebanon. This was the result of ACN Australia's Emergency Appeal for Lebanon after ACN International announced that it would provide \$8 million (5 Million Euro) towards the rebuilding of churches, convents and church facilities in Lebanon.

Bernard Toutounji, the National Director of ACN Australia, recently met with Bishop Robert Rabbat, the Eparch of the Melkite Eparchy of Australia and New Zealand and Bishop Antoine Tarabay, the Maronite Bishop of Australia who both expressed their gratitude to ACN and all who have supported the projects in Lebanon.

Bishop Rabbat made the following statement to ACN: "After the disaster that struck central Beirut on 4 August 2020, there was an immediate and universal response to the call for help not only by the Lebanese Diaspora but from many governments and national communities. Aid to the Church in Need has been amongst those that have offered generous and much appreciated support. As St Basil the Great said in the 4th century, "A tree is known by its fruit, people by their deeds. A good deed is never lost; they who sow courtesy reap friendship, and they who plant kindness gather love."

Bishop Antoine-Charbel Tarabay, also expressed his gratitude to ACN, "I wish to thank Aid to the Church in Need Australia (ACN) for the campaign to aid Lebanon, and particularly Beirut, after the explosion. I also thank every individual or organisation which supported and donated to this appeal, aware that times have been hard for all people around the world."

Bishop Tarabay also reflected on his recent trip to Lebanon in October 2020 which he explained was very different from past trips. "The joy and hope I always felt amongst the Lebanese people was replaced by a feeling of despair and a lack of hope that the situation will not change anytime soon. The impact of the socio-economic crisis, the repercussions of the explosion at the port of Beirut, the stalemate situation of the political life and the health crisis caused by COVID-19 have had catastrophic effects on Lebanon and its people, who are quickly falling below the poverty line. The only active organisations on the ground are NGOs and Church organisations, such as ACN, to which we owe all our gratitude. These organisations are doing their best but the need is immense. Lebanon needs the support and attention of the international community. Otherwise, its existence and demographics will change in an irreversible way in a very short period of time, posing a real threat to the presence of Christians in the Middle East."

ACN exists to provide hope and ensure that the flame of faith is never extinguished. For the Christian

people, their churches are not just buildings but tangible extensions of the living Church – the people of God. The reconstruction projects that ACN will be funding in Beirut include Saint Saviour Melkite Catholic Church, Saint George Maronite Catholic Cathedral and the Sisters of the Rosary Hospital and Residence.

ACN thanks everyone for their generous support and prayers for Lebanon and continues to welcome any further support for this work. www.aidtochurch.org/Lebanon

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