

Eastern Catholic Bishops Tarabay and Rabbat issue a united plea to both the religious and civil leaders of Lebanon

“Without reconciliation, there is no resurrection for the nation, and without forgiveness, there is no life and hope for a modern pluralistic society”

Bishop Antoine-Charbel Tarabay, Eparch of the Maronites in Australia, New Zealand and Oceania, along with Bishop Robert Rabbat, Eparch of the Melkites in Australia, New Zealand and Oceania have issued a joint call for a National Reconciliation in Lebanon:

We first offer our heartfelt condolences to the families of the victims who fell during the tragic recent events at Tayouneh (Beirut), and we fervently implore the Good Lord to grant a strong recovery to the wounded and a quick return of peace.

We now appeal to all the Lebanese leaders to expedite the convening of a Conference of National Reconciliation and Forgiveness under the auspices of the United Nations and the Arab League. All elements of civil society and religious denominations will be invited to participate in this conference with the shared intention of healing wounds and strengthening the foundations of the State.

For many it may seem that a solution to the national issues that are plaguing Lebanon is unattainable. However, the desire of the Lebanese people, especially those in the Diaspora, to achieve mutual understanding and to live in peace, is much stronger than any disagreement or antagonism. We are convinced that the first steps for the Conference of National Reconciliation and Forgiveness must begin within the Christian Community. Therefore, we seek the full support of the Vatican, and we place this initiative under the auspices of the Christian spiritual leaders of Lebanon, especially His Beatitude Patriarch Mar Beshara Boutros Al-Rahi in his capacity as head of the Conference of the Catholic Patriarchs and Bishops in Lebanon. His Beatitude is the foremost defender of Lebanon's sovereignty, freedom, coexistence and “positive” neutrality.

We would especially urge the following proposals:

1- Endeavour to create a consensus amongst the diverse political decision-makers. The Lebanese People, both resident and in the Diaspora, expect their leaders to act, above all, as statesmen and stateswomen, who listen to the voice of conscience and who adopt the language of respectful dialogue. No matter how difficult the circumstances may be, there is no other way but to address the crises, to establish the authority of the State, and to achieve justice wisely and responsibly.

2- Cease all treachery and campaigns of incitement within the national community, and work to promote and propagate a peaceful discourse with the help and support of the media and social media platforms.

3- Launch a new “Marshall Plan” similar to that which operated in Europe after World War II.

4- Restore and strengthen relations with the Lebanese of the Diaspora and consolidate the rights of expatriates in matters of citizenship and participation in legislative elections.

5- Agree on the premise that the interest of Lebanon and the wellbeing of its people are paramount, whilst reiterating that the best course for the Palestinian refugees and for the displaced Syrians in Lebanon is to return to their homelands with dignity. Moreover, the time has come to work on the renewal of normal and respectful relations between Lebanon and

the Arab States of the region.

6- Invoke the multiple resolutions of the United Nations and the League of Arab States concerning Lebanon.

7- Call for a Day of Prayer on April 13 of each year, a day which will become a national occasion for peace and reconciliation.

8- Hold an international academic conference in Lebanon, organised by a Lebanese University. The theme of the conference will be: National Reconciliation and Forgiveness.

9- Call for meetings with the spiritual, civil and political leaders of the Lebanese and Arab community in Australia, in order to start the process of National Reconciliation and Forgiveness.

10- Finally, launch a petition calling for reconciliation and forgiveness, asking all Lebanese officials to include the national reconciliation as a basic entry point for their political and national proposals. This is to acknowledge that "Lebanon is more than a country. It is a message of freedom and an example of pluralism for East and West." (St. Pope John Paul II)

Without national reconciliation, there can be no resurrection for the Land of the Cedars, and without forgiveness there can be no life or continuing hope for a multi-faith and pluralistic society such as Lebanon. With Gibran Khalil Gibran, we affirm and repeat today and every day, "If Lebanon were not my country, I would have chosen Lebanon for Homeland."

ENDS

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