



MARONITE EPARCHY OF AUSTRALIA
NEW ZEALAND AND OCEANIA

MEDIA RELEASE

Faith and history embodied; Maronite Eparchy Hosts Apostolic Nuncio and Catholic Bishops of Australia for Golden Jubilee Mass and relics welcome at OLOL parish

Sydney, Australia, 5 May 2023 - The Maronite Eparchy continues to celebrate in 2023, the Golden Jubilee of its official establishment in Australia and today hosted His Excellency Archbishop (Most Rev) Charles Balvo, Apostolic Nuncio to Australia and the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference (ACBC) for a procession, to welcome the first class relics of Australian and Maronite Saints, and celebrate the Divine Liturgy at Our Lady of Lebanon Co-Cathedral.

The highlight was the welcome of the relics of saints; St Maroun, the spiritual father of the Maronite Church, as well as Saints Charbel, Rafqa, Nehmetallah, and Mary of the Cross MacKillop in a specially designed reliquary. The relics were greeted with great joy by parishioners and guests, who formed a guard of honour on the Co-Cathedral forecourt.

Bishop Antoine Charbel Tarabay, Eparch of the Maronite Eparchy of Australia, New Zealand and Oceania emphasised the importance of the Jubilee Year and event, "Celebrating the Golden Jubilee this year is a source of hope and countless blessings. It is also a time of grace which we are living today, in our parishes first and foremost, because of the presence of the relics of saints in our midst.

The Divine Liturgy was celebrated according to the Maronite Rite. It was concelebrated by His Excellency Archbishop (Most Rev) Charles Balvo, Apostolic Nuncio for Holy See, Most Reverend Archbishop Timothy Costelloe, President, The Australian Catholic Bishops Conference, Archbishop of Perth, Most Reverend Archbishop Robert Rabbat, Melkite Catholic Eparchy of Australia and New Zealand and all the bishops and the priests.

Bishop Tarabay expressed his gratitude to Archbishop Balvo and the ACBC for their presence at the event, saying, "We are privileged by your presence for this special occasion. What better way to celebrate a Golden Jubilee for our Eastern Catholic Eparchy in this great country, than to come together as one in Christ to pray and to give thanks to Him who has gathered us in faith and communion all these years."

The relics will remain at the Co-Cathedral for prayer and veneration for just over a week, after which they will continue their tour of Maronite Parishes across the country until the end of the year.

The Maronite Eparchy has a long history in Australia, dating back over 170 years. However, the establishment of the Eparchy and the appointment of the first Maronite Bishop took place on 13 July 1973. The Golden Jubilee Year was launched on the feast of St Maroun earlier this year on 9 February, under the theme - *The Maronites in Australia: A Journey of Holiness and Openness*.

The year will culminate in a Mass celebrated by His Beatitude and Eminence Mar Bechara Boutros Cardinal Rai, Maronite Patriarch of Antioch and All the East, on the 24th September and will conclude on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception of Mary on 8 December.

The Maronite Eparchy's Golden Jubilee celebration is an important event that highlights the faith and unity of the Catholic community in Australia, and the presence of the Apostolic Nuncio and the Catholic Bishops of Australia underscores the significance of this occasion as an opportunity for spiritual renewal and hope for the wider Catholic Church.

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Media contact (not for publication)

Mary-Anne Boustany

Phone: 02 8831 0000

Email: media@maronite.org.au