



MARONITE EPARCHY OF AUSTRALIA NEW ZEALAND AND OCEANIA

MEDIA RELEASE

Maronite Patriarch to visit Australia during Eparchy's Golden Jubilee

Sydney Australia 25 July 2023 - The Maronite Eparchy of Australia is pleased to officially announce the upcoming visit of the Maronite Patriarch, His Beatitude and Eminence Mar Bechara Boutros Cardinal Rai, Patriarch of Antioch and All the East, to Australia, from 15 to 24 September of this year.

The Patriarch's presence will primarily be for the celebration of the Golden Jubilee Solemn Mass on Sunday the 24 September, at Ken Rosewall Arena (Homebush NSW) and to preside over the 6th Congress of Maronite Bishops of Eparchies outside the Patriarchal Territory and General Superiors of Maronite Religious Orders. The congress, which is held every three years on rotation, will be hosted in Australia this year coinciding with the Golden Jubilee of the establishment of the Maronite Eparchy in Australia.

Bishop Antoine-Charbel Tarabay said, "The Golden Jubilee serves as an opportunity to reaffirm our commitment to living out our Maronite Catholic values, to be guided by our faith, and to let our actions speak volumes about who we are as followers of Jesus-Christ. The visit of our Patriarch, who is the father of our Maronite Church, will reinforce our unity and will indeed uplift the spirits of the Maronite faithful in Australia. His visit will also strengthen our commitment to preserving our Maronite identity and further reconnecting us with our Maronite Syriac Antiochian heritage and traditions."

The Golden Jubilee Solemn Mass, with an expected attendance of up to 10,000 people, is at the heart of the Jubilee year celebrations. It is a blessed occasion to worship together, to praise the Lord and to share his love for us through His presence in the Holy Eucharist.

A Gala Dinner will also be held on Thursday 21 September in honor of His Beatitude. Proceeds from the Dinner will be directed towards providing assistance to students in need in Lebanon, ensuring their access to education is unhindered by the economic crisis gripping the country.

With very few families able to afford tuition fees, schools are unable to maintain their facilities let alone remunerate their staff adequately. Some schools have already shut down and others, still crumbling under the weight of Lebanon's economic collapse, are on the brink of unwillingly closing their doors.

Once known for producing a highly skilled and educated work force, Lebanon is today already seeing an entire generation missing out on good schooling with many children as young as 11, forced to attend school less frequently in order to work support their families financially.

While remittances from the diaspora are now Lebanon's last economic lifeline, the hope remains in education said Bishop Tarabay, adding, "By directing the proceeds from the Jubilee Gala Dinner to enable students to complete their schooling and schools to continue their education mission, we are together building hope in a better future."

The visit of His Eminence and Beatitude Patriarch Rai is an important juncture in the history of the Maronites in Australia, providing a momentous occasion to come together and to pray with their Patriarch and Shepherd - the symbol of their unity - and to support students in need in Lebanon to continue their education.

ENDS

Note to editors:

- Schedule of Patriarch's visit to follow.
- Interviews with His Beatitude Mar Bechara Boutros Cardinal Rai can be arranged upon request and depending on availability.

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