



MARONITE EPARCHY OF AUSTRALIA NEW ZEALAND AND OCEANIA

Media Release

A Man of Faith, A Scholar, A Shepherd—Honouring Blessed Patriarch Estephan El Douaihy

Sydney, Australia – 5 May 2025, Bishop Antoine-Charbel Tarabay, Maronite Bishop of Australia, New Zealand, and Oceania, presided over a solemn Mass on Saturday, 3 May, at Our Lady of Lebanon Co-Cathedral in Harris Park. He was assisted by Father Maroun Moussa and Father Danny Nouh, the Parish Priest, in celebrating the feast of Blessed Patriarch Estephan El Douaihy. The Mass was a heartfelt tribute to a revered leader of the Maronite Church, marking the first official feast day since his beatification.

The celebration held special significance, as it took place during the Marian Month of May, a time dedicated to devotion and reflection. Reflecting on this consecrated time, Bishop Tarabay shared, *"As we begin the month of May, the Church invites us to turn our hearts to the Blessed Virgin Mary, our Mother and model of discipleship."*

Blessed Estephan El Douaihy was known for his strong devotion to the Virgin Mary, incorporating her image into his Patriarchal Seal. His legacy continues to inspire the faithful, as Bishop Tarabay reminded the congregation, *"Mary was so important to him that he placed her image, seated on a throne and holding the Christ Child, in the centre of his Patriarchal Seal."*

Speaking on the profound contributions of the late Patriarch, Bishop Tarabay explained, *"Patriarch El Douaihy was not only a man of faith; he was a scholar, reformer, and defender of the Maronite tradition. He preserved our liturgy, wrote extensively about our history, and helped clarify our identity during a time of pressure and persecution. His contributions to theology, liturgy, history, and even architecture laid the foundation for the modern Maronite Church. He built churches and schools, revived the Maronite liturgy with a clear focus on the Eucharist, and always remained close to the people."*

The Mass also provided an opportunity to remember Pope Francis, who had a lifelong devotion to the Virgin Mary. Bishop Tarabay reflected on his faith, quoting the late pontiff: *"Mary is not only the bridge joining us to God, she is more. She is the road God travelled to reach us, and the road that we must travel to reach Him."*

In his closing remarks, Bishop Tarabay reminded the faithful of the central message of the evening: *"The lives of Blessed Estephan El Douaihy and Pope Francis remind us of something very simple, yet very profound: that Mary always leads us to Jesus. When we entrust our lives to her, she walks with us. When we pray with her, she opens our hearts to God."*

The evening was filled with prayer and reflection, as the Maronite community celebrated the life of a beloved Patriarch and renewed their devotion to the Virgin Mary.

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