

SOLEMN MASS MARKS FEAST OF THE ASSUMPTION AT OUR LADY OF LEBANON CO-CATHEDRAL

On Friday, 14 August, His Excellency Antoine Charbel Tarabay, Maronite Bishop of Australia, New Zealand and Oceania, presided over a solemn Mass at the Our Lady of Lebanon Co-Cathedral in Harris Park to celebrate the Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The liturgy was concelebrated by Father Danny Nouh, Dean of the Co-Cathedral; Fr Sid Isaac, Fr Michael Bou Daher and Fr Ghassan Nakhoul.

The celebration welcomed dignitaries, including His Excellency Mr Raymond El Chamlati, Consul General of Lebanon; Her Excellency Mrs Sarah Al Dirani, Consul of Lebanon and Mr Jaafar Mehydeen; Ms Donna Davis MP, Member for Parramatta; Lord Mayor Martin Zaiter of the City of Parramatta; Councillor Tanya Raffoul; Mr Kieran McKenna, CEO of Bank of Sydney, and Mrs Carolyn McKenna.

Also present were Very Reverend Msgr Marcelino Youssef, Vicar General; Monsignor Shora Maree; Father Maroon Moussa, the Maronite Sisters of the Holy Family and presidents of Maronite organisations, who joined the community in prayer.

A Homily Centred on Hope, Renewal and Carrying Christ

In his homily, Bishop Tarabay invited the faithful to “look up” on the Feast of the Assumption, to contemplate Mary, what God accomplished in her, and what God continues to accomplish in each person. He described the Maronite Church as deeply Marian, rooted in Catholic faith, Antiochene heritage and Syriac tradition, noting that Mary “received Christ, carried Him within her and gave Him to the world,” a mission the Church must continue today.

He reminded the faithful that Mary’s life shows where discipleship leads: “At the end of her earthly journey, Christ carried His Mother to her heavenly home.” Her Assumption, he said, is a sign that *evil does not have the final word* and that God brings to completion what He begins.

Lebanon: A Land of Saints

Referencing the recent beatification of Patriarch Elias Howayek, Bishop Tarabay highlighted that Lebanon’s story is not defined solely by hardship:

“Lebanon is a land of saints.” He praised ongoing efforts to strengthen institutions under President Joseph Aoun and called on the Lebanese diaspora to support renewal through prayer, unity and generosity.

A Call to Peace in Australia

Reflecting on the Feast Week theme, “*Mary, Queen of Peace, Pray for Our World*,” Bishop Tarabay urged Maronite Australians to be builders of peace and encounter:

“Christians cannot simply become one more angry voice in the crowd. Our task is not to win every argument. Our task is to carry Christ into the way we meet one another.”

He reminded the community of their responsibility not to recreate in Australia the divisions once experienced in Lebanon, but instead to build bridges, heal wounds and uphold human dignity.

Bishop Tarabay announced the commencement of Stage 1 of the Master Plan, including a new car park, forecourt and ANZAC Memorial. Stage 2 will introduce a new chapel and Maronite Heritage Centre, followed by Stage 3, a full renovation and interior redesign of the Co-Cathedral ahead of its Golden Jubilee in 2028.

He thanked the Federal Government, parishioners and generous donors for their support.

The Bishop also announced an Eparchial Assembly to be held in April 2027 — a synodal gathering of clergy, religious and lay faithful to discern the future of the Maronite Church in Australia, New Zealand and Oceania.

A Community United in Faith

Bishop Tarabay expressed gratitude to Fr Danny Nouh, clergy, parish teams and volunteers whose unseen efforts make the Feast Week possible. He concluded by returning to Mary’s words: *“My soul magnifies the Lord.”*

He urged all Maronite families, parishes and communities to carry Christ into their homes, workplaces, conversations and nations, trusting that as Mary was carried to heaven, Christ will carry all who follow Him faithfully.

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