

**Message of Bishop Antoine-Charbel Tarabay
on the occasion of
The Feast of the Resurrection, Easter 2025**

Dearly Beloved, Sons and Daughters of our Maronite Eparchy;

**We are People of the Resurrection, and Our Hymn is:
"Christ is Risen ... Truly He is Risen!"**

The truth of the Resurrection is based on the reality of the Passion, Crucifixion, and Death of Our Lord Jesus. Therefore, we renew our faith on Easter Sunday, confessing that the Lord truly suffered, was truly crucified, and truly died ... but more, that He has truly risen!

Our Lenten journey has ended, during which we meditated on God's plan of salvation, especially during Passion Week, when the Scripture readings centred on the theme of the righteous suffering, ultimately leading us to the good news of Easter: salvation has been achieved, and Our Lord Jesus Christ has triumphed over death, evil, and sin. Life has been renewed, because Our Lord's love for humanity is stronger than death.

Let us now go back to that very morning of the first Easter Sunday, and contemplate the women's astonishment arriving at the tomb and seeing that the large stone has been rolled away from its entrance. We witness their shock and sadness when, having come to anoint Our Lord's body, they do not find Him in the tomb; rather, the tomb is empty!

Then an angel appears to reassure them, telling them the truth of what occurred: "Do not be afraid. Do you seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified? He has risen! He is not here!" (Mark 16:6).

The sudden shock they received on the morning of that memorable day was transformed into joy, gladness and good news for all people and nations. It has fundamentally changed the course of history, as it is a resounding confirmation of Our Lord's Resurrection. At the same time, it is the victory of love over hatred, grace over sin, and life over death. The empty tomb has become the womb of new life in Christ Jesus.

The Resurrection would be nothing more but another event in history if a personal encounter with the living and risen Lord Jesus Christ does not occur in our lives. But because of this encounter, the Resurrection does not belong in the past, but reaches forward into the here and now, into the present and is with us today and every day. Because the Lord is alive for all eternity, we can live and reign with Him (2 Timothy 2:12). He alone enables us to experience God's goodness and love; He alone frees us from evil and sin; He alone restores us to the dignity of children, so that we may become sons and daughters of God, calling Him "Abba", Father.

This experience of encountering the Lord Jesus, risen from the tomb and eternally alive, was lived by a woman, who recently received the Sacraments of Baptism, Chrismation, and the Eucharist in our Church. She expressed this in a letter, writing: "In my previous religion, I

learned not to question but to follow the teachings as they were, because God wants our obedience, not our questioning. But when I received a copy of the Bible, I read the Gospels in one day. That was when I began my journey of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. I asked many questions and finally understood what it means to have God in my heart. He enlightened my mind and my life to bear witness to the truth of His Resurrection from the dead.”

The Resurrection of Christ calls us to be apostles and to answer His call: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations... and I am with you until the end of the age” (Matthew 28:19). In this context, our Eparchy last week launched the Maronite Centre for Evangelisation, which will work to spread the faith, develop pastoral programs, and train parish leaders, within the framework of the Synodal vision for the Church launched by His Holiness Pope Francis.

This year, Easter falls in the midst of the campaign for the Federal elections, set for the 3rd of May. Australian Maronites have an active role to play in building a “civilisation of love,” as Pope Saint John-Paul II said, through their participation and voting in the elections. This is an opportunity to advance the common good and build a future filled with hope. Voting is a free act of conscience to choose those best suited to ensure the sanctity of human life, defend freedom of religion and belief, protect the vulnerable, support the family and its values, and build a just and safe society for all Australians.

On this blessed Easter day, we pray for peace in the world and the Middle East. We also pray for our homeland, Lebanon, and its suffering people. May the process of rebuilding the state and its institutions, which began with the election of His Excellency General Joseph Aoun as President of the Lebanese Republic, be successful. We pray that this year may be a true year of hope for Lebanon, a year in which the trust of the Lebanese people, both residents and expatriates, is restored in their homeland, their state, and in one another. We pray that the door of hope may open, and that a new chapter may begin, one filled with light and great hope for a promising future.

Beloved, Easter cannot be limited to a single day or fleeting celebrations, because it is present with us every day, especially in the celebration of the Eucharist. It is the Feast of Feasts, calling us not to stay at the threshold of faith in the Lord’s Resurrection, but to go forth and proclaim it.

Christ not only revealed to us the victory of life over death through His Resurrection, but also reconciled us with His Heavenly Father and restored to us the life of grace. Today, He reminds us that no matter how much darkness increases and evils worsen in our world, we must not fear. God’s love, radiant with the light of His Resurrection, always triumphs over all darkness and evil.

Christ is Risen ... Truly He is Risen!

+ Antoine-Charbel Tarabay

Maronite Bishop of Australia, New Zealand and Oceania

Easter Sunday, 20 April 2025