



# MARONITE EPARCHY OF AUSTRALIA

## Media Release

### **Maronite Diocese of Australia expanded to Archdiocese of 16 countries and countless islands across Australia, New Zealand, and Oceania**

*His Grace Bishop Antoine-Charbel Tarabay calls for mission and charitable works to reconnect with Maronites in South Pacific.*

**Sydney 26 May 2021** - A mass of thanksgiving took place at Our Lady of Lebanon Co-Cathedral (Harris Park NSW) last night, for the expansion of the boundaries of the Maronite Eparchy of Saint Maroun of Sydney, from Australia, to include New Zealand and all the countries of Oceania (Papal Decree number 204/2019 announced 29 March 2021).

His Grace Bishop Antoine-Charbel Tarabay, who becomes the first Maronite Archbishop of Australia, New Zealand, and countries of Oceania said, "This is a great privilege and responsibility bestowed on us by Pope Francis and speaks to the growth in numbers of Maronite faithful across New Zealand and Oceania, as it is evidence of the confidence the Apostolic See has in our mission.

"It is wonderful news for the global Maronite Church, and means that we will have the joyous task of reconnecting the Maronites in this huge sprawling region, with their history, spiritual heritage and liturgical traditions: the traditions of the Maronite Catholic Church, and to understand and meet their pastoral and spiritual needs."

Archbishop Tarabay also announced a review of Maronite outreach in his plan of the pastoral priorities for the coming seven, to now incorporate New Zealand and the islands of Oceania which - with a population of 41 million and spanning Melanesia, Micronesia, and Polynesia – include major countries of Papua New Guinea, Fiji, the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Samoa, Kiribati, Tonga, the Marshall Islands, Palau, Tuvalu, and Nauru.

He called on all Maronites, clergy, religious sisters and laity alike, to share in the responsibility for a new mission to the *Maronites of the Expansion*. He asked all Maronite organisations in Australia including MaroniteCare, Maronites on Mission and Heaven on Earth as well as the Maronite Catholic Society, the Australian Maronite Professionals Council, The Family of the Divine Word, the sodalities and youth organisations to continue sponsoring charitable missions in the South Pacific, as the new Archdiocese works to reconnect with Maronites in New Zealand, and Oceania.

"Although we are now an Archdiocese in sixteen countries and countless islands, we are one Church. We are one people with one heart, one liturgical and spiritual tradition, one mind, and one spirit," said Archbishop Tarabay.

Motivated by a desire that the increasing numbers of Maronites in these countries might be spiritually cared for in their own religious culture and tradition, the historic decision was made on 29 March 2021 by the Holy Father at the request of the Maronite Synod of Bishops, and on the advice of Cardinal Sandri, Prefect of the Congregation for Oriental Churches. The Thanksgiving Mass was also an occasion to mark the eighth anniversary of the episcopal ordination of Archbishop Tarabay.

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