



MARONITE EPARCHY OF AUSTRALIA NEW ZEALAND AND OCEANIA

MEDIA RELEASE

Maronite Eparchy celebrates Feast of the Assumption, Bishop unveils and blesses new Our Lady of Lebanon Co-Cathedral statue

Sydney Australia, 15 August 2023 - The Maronite Bishop of Australia, New Zealand and Oceania, Bishop Antoine-Charbel Tarabay, has marked the Feast of the Assumption with the Divine Liturgy at Our Lady of Lebanon Co-Cathedral in Harris Park (NSW) on Monday evening at 6pm.

The Feast mass, which this year holds a unique significance as it falls within the Golden Jubilee Year of the Maronite Eparchy in Australia, took place in the presence of the relics of the Maronite and Australian Saints in the Golden Jubilee reliquary, and preceded the official unveiling, lighting and blessing of the new statue of Our Lady of Lebanon Co-Cathedral.

The new statue, a unique piece of sacred art made specifically for the Parish by renowned international artist Rudy Rahme, is the realisation of a project which started in 2014 and is set to replace the existing one atop Our Lady of Lebanon in due course.

“The Feast of the Assumption is the perfect time to unveil and bless the new statue of Our Lady of Lebanon,” said Bishop Antoine-Charbel Tarabay. “For through this Feast, we are reminded of a radiant testament that emerges yet again through the Blessed Mother, and that is the affirmation of the fulfilment of God's promise and His boundless love for His creation. For Mary taken to heaven body and soul is a foretaste of what God also has in store for us.”

“While the new statue can never capture the full magnificence of Our Lady, it stands as a testament to our devotion and love for her. It is also the outcome of true collaboration of a wonderful community. My deep gratitude to the clergy, the Stewardship Committee, the Parish Pastoral Council, staff and volunteers, and every parishioner who contributed to the project.”

Everyone is encouraged to take the opportunity to appreciate the beauty of the statue up close before it is raised high, and contemplate the symbolism in its intricate detail:

- **The crown** on her head symbolises her Queenship of Heaven and Earth.
- **Her head** slightly tilted towards humanity, to raise it to salvation.
- Her **kind and smiling face** speaks but the words are silent, her eyes are full of compassion and tenderness, reflecting the serenity of the sky. Her face is the face of the Mother of God and mother of all who believe in her Son Jesus.
- Her **open hands**, are a sign of her constant giving and an expression of her love.
- Her **feet** trample the head of the snake, because through her obedience to God, salvation came to the world in the person of Jesus Christ, and humankind was liberated from the power of evil.
- The **movement of her dress** indicates her march against the winds of this world, the winds of selfishness, of war, and of corruption.

“The Golden Jubilee Year of our Eparchy has certainly been a grace filled year with countless blessings,” said Bishop Tarabay. “And through this Feast, we see a glimpse into the mystery that awaits us, that will be fulfilled if we stay in loving relationship with God. It offers us a foretaste of our reunion with God and it is no wonder the Church makes this day a holy day of obligation. May we always be compelled to take a closer look at what God is telling us through Mary’s assumption.”

Following the conclusion of the Mass and the blessing of the statue and liturgy, the relics of the Saints began their journey to Victoria, to visit Maronite parishes and organisations there.

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