



MARONITE EPARCHY OF AUSTRALIA NEW ZEALAND AND OCEANIA

MEDIA RELEASE

Reconsecration of Altar and Official Opening Marks a New Chapter for Our Lady of Mercy Maronite Church Goulburn

Beit Maroun, Australia, 11 September 2023 - In a ceremony infused with faith and reverence, the Our Lady of Mercy Maronite Church in Goulburn resounded with spiritual jubilation on Saturday, 9 September at 5pm.

The historic church witnessed the re-consecration of the altar and the official opening, by His Excellency Bishop Antoine-Charbel Tarabay, Bishop of the Maronite Eparchy of Australia, New Zealand and Oceania, as part of the Diocese's pastoral plan to elevate the spiritual journey of the Goulburn- Canberra Maronite community.

The event garnered added significance in the presence of the newly elected General Superior of the Maronite Order of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Abbot Edmond Rizk, visiting from Lebanon for the occasion and to take part in the 6th Congress of Maronite Bishops of Eparchies Outside the Patriarchal Territory and General Superiors of Maronite Religious Orders later this month.

Abbot Rizk concelebrated the liturgy with Bishop Tarabay and Father John-Paul Bassil, Superior of the order in Australia, and parish priest of Our Lady of Mercy Maronite Church, with Bishop Tarabay expressing his joy on this occasion, "Today marks a momentous step in our journey of faith. The Church re-opening is a momentous occasion that holds great significance for the Maronite Eparchy in Australia, as it coincides with its Golden Jubilee since official establishment in 1973. It brings immense joy and renewed enthusiasm among Maronites in the Goulburn-Canberra region, who had eagerly anticipated having a spiritual home.

“The Our Lady of Mercy Maronite Church and the adjoining Monastery underwent meticulous restoration in 2020, preserving the sanctity of its spaces while ensuring suitability for the community's needs. This landmark event not only renews the physical structures but also rejuvenates the spirit of the Maronite community in Goulburn and Canberra.”

Bishop Tarabay also expressed his gratitude to all those who played a part, “I want to acknowledge and thank all those who worked hard to help establish the Parish in Goulburn-Canberra and make this event possible. My thanks to the Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy, the previous owner of this Chapel and convent and to Father John-Paul Bassil, Father Superior and parish priest of Our Lady of Mercy, its parishioners and all those who traveled to be here for the opening of this beautiful church.

Goulburn, and South Eastern NSW more broadly, hold great significance as Lebanese Maronites flocked to the region from the late 1880s. Communities which formed in and around the region continued to sustain their own cultural and religious practices and traditions, however, they integrated easily into the local faith community, and played an important part in the area’s commercial history.

As part of the Golden Jubilee of the Maronite Eparchy of Australia, a national tour of the relics of all the Maronite saints along with the relics of St Mary of the Cross MacKillop will now also visit the Parish of Our Lady of Mercy Maronite Church on the weekend of 7-8 October.

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