

Ordination of Fr Ray El Fakhry at Our Lady of Lebanon, Melbourne

The Maronite Eparchy of Australia, New Zealand and Oceania joyfully celebrated the priestly ordination of Fr Ray El Fakhry on Saturday, 22 August 2026, at Our Lady of Lebanon Maronite Church in Melbourne. The solemn liturgy was celebrated by His Excellency Bishop Antoine-Charbel Tarabay, in the presence of clergy, hundreds of parishioners, and the newly ordained priest's family.

Bishop Tarabay was assisted by Fr Richard Jabbour, parish priest of Our Lady of Lebanon, and Fr Elie Yamine, who concelebrated the ordination rite.

A Call Rooted in Love and Service

In his homily, Bishop Tarabay reflected on the Gospel encounter between Christ and St Peter, reminding the faithful that priesthood begins not in human perfection but in Christ's love and mercy. He emphasised that the heart of priestly ministry is the simple yet demanding question Christ asks: *"Do you love me?"* and the mission that follows: *"Feed my sheep."*

He highlighted Fr El Fakhry's long journey shaped by his childhood in Lebanon, his deep love for the Maronite liturgical tradition, and more than twenty years of service in the Australian Army, including engineering, leadership, overseas deployments and chaplaincy.

Bishop Tarabay paid tribute to Fr El Fakhry's wife, Eleanor, and their daughters Esther, Teresia, Miriam and Celine, acknowledging the essential role of family in nurturing a vocation. He also thanked the El Fakhry family and the parish community for supporting and encouraging the new priest.

The Bishop invited the faithful to continue praying for vocations: *"Let tonight be more than a celebration of one vocation. Let it become a prayer for the next."*

A Life Shaped by Faith, Family and Service

Fr El Fakhry spoke of a calling nurtured through family prayer, the influence of Lebanese monastic spirituality, and the profound experience of God's providence during his daughter's premature birth.

He shared, "my simple prayer is to be *good at the basics*: to celebrate the divine liturgy correctly, and reverently; to provide parishioners with the opportunity for confessions and the other mysteries; and to answer questions and accompany the flock in line with the teachings of our holy mother church and humbly admit when I do not know the answer"

Reflecting on the long path that led him to the altar, he added, "Unlike in my engineering career, where I had a very specific degree and job that I pursued at all costs, with this calling to the priesthood, I am completely open to whatever the Lord asks of me."

His chosen priestly motto, drawn from Syriac tradition expresses his desire to be "luminous in the fundamentals."

A New Chapter of Service

As the liturgy concluded, the community welcomed Fr El Fakhry with great joy, entrusting his ministry to the protection of Our Lady and the intercession of Saint Nohra, his chosen patron.

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