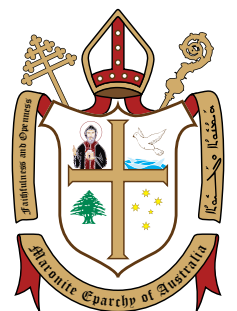




*Faithfulness  
& Openness*



*Pastoral Plan for the Maronite Eparchy of Australia 2014-2020*



## Faithfulness and Openness

The Pastoral Priorities for the Maronite Eparchy of Australia, 2014-2020 has been published by the Maronite Eparchy of Australia, and is distributed by the authority of Bishop Antoine-Charbel Tarabay.

© The Maronite Eparchy of Australia  
Design by: Peter Taouk - snapix.com.au

## Table of Contents

The Pastoral Plan of His Excellency Bishop Antoine-Charbel Tarabay	4
First Priority: Vocations to the Priesthood and Religious Life	6
Second Priority: Young People	8
Third Priority: Families	9
Fourth Priority: Care for the Elderly	12
Fifth Priority: MaroniteCare and Pressing Social Issues	14
Sixth Priority: Maronite Outreach	15
Seventh Priority: Diocesan Pastoral Synod	18
The Maronite Eparchy of Australia's Coat of Arms	19
The Shepherd's Prayer	21



## The Pastoral Plan of His Excellency Bishop Antoine-Charbel Tarabay

It is the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father and the communion of the Holy Spirit (2 Cor 13:14) that chooses us, calls us and sends us to the ends of the earth to proclaim the Good News of the Gospel and to bear witness to the great love of God for all people.

The grace of the Lord led me to consecrate myself to God in the monastic life, and prepared me to accept the Mystery of Holy Orders. He then called me to the fullness of the priesthood, appointing me one of the successors of the Apostles, becoming the shepherd of the Maronite Eparchy of Australia, entrusted with the tasks of sanctifying, teaching, and governing.

At the end of this, my first year as your shepherd, I affirm once more my dedication to you, my flock, in the spirit of "Faithfulness and Openness". I invite and even warmly encourage you to make your own the seven leading pastoral priorities for these first years of my episcopacy, through until 2020. These priorities are the reflection in our pastoral life of the spiritual ideal of "Faithfulness and Openness". Each aspiration, each goal, even the search for God, must be manifested here on earth in a practical way.

These priorities are based on the spiritual, liturgical and pastoral needs of our diocese, and thus reflect our vision for the future.

We have commenced planning projects and launching them. We are working together and have put in place the right framework and the necessary mechanisms for their implementation and completion.

In all this work, we know that we are not alone and that "the hand of the Lord is upon us" (Ez 1:3). In this booklet, you will see images of hands in most illustrations. The hand is the most frequently symbolized part of the human body and the most expressive. It gives blessing, and expresses strength, power and protection, as well as giving, greeting, sharing, and praying. In the Maronite liturgy, we pray "Lord, let us work by your hands and love by your heart." And in Isaiah, God tells us "I have engraved you on the palms of my hands" (49:16). Let us all put our hands together to remain faithful to our Church's teachings and our spiritual roots, and let us stretch out our hands to others, to work together to build bridges and open new ways of dialogue.

May the Lord preserve us all in the unity of faithfulness and openness: for the spirit of love abides only in a heart which is faithful and open.

With my Episcopal Blessing for yourselves and your families,

*Antoine-Charbel Tarabay*  
*Maronite Bishop of Australia*



*First Priority*

## Vocations to the Priesthood and Religious Life

God is forever calling men and women to serve him in the consecrated life and to live the Gospel values. Through his divine providence, he calls those whom he has chosen from the beginning to serve him as priests. In discerning vocations, it is critical to listen to the Word of the Lord and to respond in a spirit of acceptance: sacrificing one's personal comfort to spread the Word, distribute the sacraments and perform charitable service. Because the foundation of the Church is intrinsically sacramental and missionary, it depends on priests and consecrated people to carry out this mission of witnessing, here on earth, to the Kingdom of God.

It is therefore our duty to care for vocations to the priesthood and to encourage them, knowing that consecrated life is necessary for the Church. Without the sacraments and priests to serve and distribute them, there can be no nourishing of the faithful and formation in Christian life. Therefore, the fostering of vocations to the priesthood and consecrated life will be the first priority in our pastoral and apostolic plan.

In April 2014, I personally hosted an overnight Vocations Discernment Retreat for men, at the Benedict XVI Centre. I spent time with each and every one of the thirty men who attended. As a result, I have established a firm basis for what is proving to be the most successful vocations project this Eparchy has yet seen.



*Second Priority*  
**Young People**

Our Eparchy is distinguished by its young people, a source of pride, and the beating heart of our Eparchy. Our youth are talented and have high aspirations. They possess a deep spirituality and zeal for their Church and Maronite heritage. They need the wisdom of the Church, which is both their teacher and servant at the same time. Youth needs the experience and witness of its shepherds to lead their steps, harness their energies, strengthen their faith and encourage them on the path of truth, goodness and life.

In order to allow our youth direct access to me, I am not only engaging with them on committees and planning sessions, but I am also encouraging informal meetings and gatherings at Beit Maroun, the episcopal residence.

We have also re-energised the Diocesan Youth Council, so that all the Eparchy's youth work is coordinated. In addition to personally attending these meetings, I have called for a most important event to take place in July 2015, namely, our first Australian Maronite Youth Conference, a new initiative in the life of our Eparchy. This conference shall be an occasion to listen to our young people, to allow them to express their aspirations and ambitions, and to understand their difficulties and problems, so that we can respond together to the challenges that face them. As such, this conference will be an opportunity to rediscover our Antiochian roots so as to nourish our Australian Maronite identity.



*Third Priority*  
**Families**

The future of humanity depends on the family, according to St John Paul II (*Apostolic Exhortation: "On the Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World", 86*). The family remains the prime building block of the Church and of society, because it is a domestic church, the school of love, the first place of Christian witness and the source of holy vocations (*Apostolic Exhortation: "A New Hope for Lebanon", 46*).

The family is a focal point in our pastoral and apostolic priorities. I therefore call on everyone to cooperate with us in animating the Eparchy's Family Committees, and to support us in expanding the counselling services at Our Lady of Lebanon, Harris Park into a specialised Family Listening Centre.

The most important element in marital and family life is constant renewal on the basis of Christian values: faith, prayer, Gospel virtues and humane principles. For this purpose, a review of our marriage preparation programs will be carried out. We will be adding a special session on the Maronite Church to the programs.

It is also becoming increasingly important to prepare the parents of children receiving the holy Mysteries of Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Communion. All this compels us to relaunch a series of focused workshops to support family life in our parishes, and to help our families aspire to and achieve a spiritually fulfilling key role to the future of our community.



#### *Fourth Priority*

### **Care for the Elderly**

Due to the fact that we are an ageing community, and due to the increasing difficulty of maintaining the elderly at home, there is a demand for more centres and facilities to assist in caring for the aged and the chronically ill. This call is coming not only from the elderly themselves and their middle-aged children, but even from young grandchildren who are urged by love to help and cherish their dear parents and grandparents, but simply do not have sufficient expertise, time or resources.

Accordingly, we have decided to reestablish the Our Lady's Aged Care Centre in Harris Park. A professional team is working on plans to restore and reopen these facilities. In addition to providing aged care, it shall provide specialised dementia services, and have the capacity to offer home assistance.

Our Lady's Aged Care Centre in Harris Park will be the first of several projects which the Eparchy intends to develop in coming years in order to serve not only our local Maronite people, but also the wider Australian community.



“The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the people of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ.”

*(Pastoral Constitution, “Gaudium et Spes”, 1).*

#### *Fifth Priority*

### **MaroniteCare and Pressing Social Issues**

Three social problems that require our utmost attention have been identified, namely: drug, alcohol and gambling addictions; anger management; and addiction to electronic digital games. To address these problems requires a lot of effort and labour. The Eparchy will be working through *MaroniteCare* to take initiatives and launch projects, the most important being *White Stone*, which has already begun.

Works of mercy and charity go hand in hand with a life of prayer and faith. They are an integral part of the life and mission of the Church. Because the children of the Maronite Church in Australia are so active in charitable works and rendering humanitarian aid, it was necessary to carefully organize the charity work being undertaken. Therefore, a central diocesan committee for mission and charity will be established to welcome and evaluate, approve and oversee all charitable initiatives in our Eparchy.

Since the launch of *Maronites on Mission* at Saint Charbel's Parish, it has become one of the main undertakings of the Eparchy, performing charitable works at the domestic and international levels, especially in Lebanon and the Philippines. We encourage the priests and youth in all our Maronite parishes to create *Maronites on Mission* teams to care for the poor.



### *Sixth Priority*

## **Maronite Outreach**

Our Maronite people are spread throughout the six Australian States and two Territories: they exceed 250,000 persons, the majority of which live in the State of New South Wales. Employing the geographical and demographical study being undertaken by the Maronite Centre for Research & Studies in our Eparchy, and based on all available information, we aim to open new Mass Centres, and develop some of our existing ones into fully functioning parishes. Better Christian formation can be achieved when families, parishes and schools are brought together and work in harmony. By building community networks, we can increase our Maronite presence in society, and our people will be more closely connected not only within each parish but across the Eparchy.

We have begun a parish registration program, and a Directory of Parishes so that you may more easily find us, and we can be in touch with you.

We will aim to reach those Maronites who reside far from our parishes through the Eparchy's media team, especially through the monthly diocesan magazine, *eMarounia* (which we have relaunched as an online only magazine with a printed annual edition), and via visual and digital media.

I am also concerned to connect the Maronites with their homelands, especially Lebanon. The Maronite Foundation in the World has opened an office here in Sydney to help registration of personal civil status in Lebanon, in which they are assisted by the Maronite Catholic Society and the Australian Lebanese Christian Federation of Sydney. I am hoping to launch two projects in the near future: the "Lebanese Australian House" as an Australian Maronite Centre in Lebanon, to strengthen ties with Lebanon and to facilitate collaboration; and the "Australian Lebanese Professional Council" to enhance the links between the Maronites in different professional fields in Australia.

Significant for this initiative will be the visit of His Beatitude Patriarch Beshara Cardinal Al-Rai, to our shores at the end of this year. I am touched to see how much effort and goodwill this wonderful news has already met with.





### *Seventh Priority*

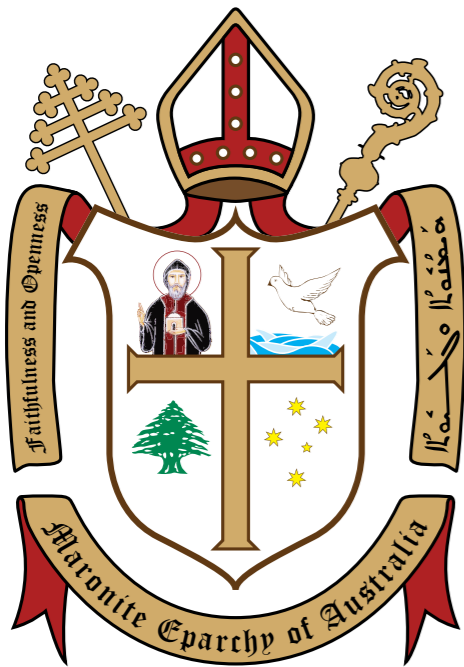
## **Diocesan Pastoral Synod**

I have a firm conviction that the constant spiritual renewal we need is only possible through raising awareness of our Maroniteness, becoming conscious of our Maronite identity, and nourishing that identity by returning to and understanding our Antiochian Syriac roots. This work which was given particular attention by my brother bishops, most recently by Bishop Abikaram, will continue with a new vision to shape and enrich our Australian Maronite personality.

At the same time, the Church needs to keep abreast of contemporary developments within society. To facilitate this updating, we conceived the idea of convoking a Diocesan Pastoral Synod.

We will be forming a central committee to prepare for this synod, as required by Canon Law. We expect the Synod to commence in November 2016. One of the objectives of the Synod is to undertake studies and discuss the conclusions of the Maronite Patriarchal Synod, especially as they relate to the Eparchies of the Maronite Expansion. It will also study the liturgical situation in the Eparchy and prepare recommendations to the Maronite Patriarchate in this regard.

The Synod will be a unique opportunity to study and review our relationships with other churches. It will be a means of evaluating the Eparchy's projects, initiatives and activities, of facilitating improvements, and of sustaining the anticipated outcomes.



## Coat of Arms

*The Pontifical Mitre* symbolises responsibility and dignity. The colour red signifies that the bishop is to give witness of his faithfulness to the teachings of Jesus Christ and the Church, even to the sacrifice of his blood in martyrdom. The seven dots on the mitre symbolise the seven sacraments which the bishop serves and administers to believers, so that through these they may participate in the divine life.

*The Maronite Patriarchal Cross* expresses the unity of our faith in the Trinity, which is symbolized by the symmetrical triangular Cross.

*The Pastoral Staff* signifies the staff given by God to the bishop for the care of the flock entrusted to him, because the bishop is the Good Shepherd who, in the likeness of Christ, protects and defends his flock and leads it to green pastures.

*The Dove* floating over the waters signifies the Holy Spirit, who is the giver of gifts and of heavenly graces. He has accompanied the bishop ever since his spiritual birth on the day he received the Sacred Mystery of Baptism. The Holy Spirit is the chrism with which the bishop's hands were anointed on the day he received the Sacred Mystery of Priesthood. The Spirit has chosen him to serve the Church as bishop, a successor of the apostles, in proclaiming the Mystery of Jesus Christ. The waters represent the springs of the land where the bishop was born into this world, his hometown Tannourine, which is famous for the plentiful generosity with which nature has endowed it, and especially for the abundance of its waters.

*Saint Maroun* embodies the spirituality of the Maronite Church, which is based on monasticism, asceticism and the defence of the true faith. Saint Maroun is the Patron of the Diocese where the bishop serves to build his flock up in faith, to shepherd them, and to sanctify them, so that they may all obtain salvation.

*The Green Cedar* has three aspects:

It symbolises the Holy Virgin Mary, Mother of God. In the Maronite tradition, we implore her saying: "O Cedar of Lebanon, Pray for us!" She reigns over the bishop's heart, steadying his steps on the path to the Kingdom of God, for he has heard Our Lord Jesus Christ say: "This is your mother."

It is the emblem of Lebanon, from where the bishop started his journey in response to the Voice of God which said: "Go from your country and your kindred ... to the land that I will show you." (Gen 12:1)

It is the symbol of the Lebanese Maronite Order, which has nurtured Bishop Tarabay's vocation to a consecrated life. The LMO has been, for him, the field where he has grown and where his talents have developed, and his personality refined. In the Order, he learned to walk the path of sanctity, in the footsteps of those who have reached the glory of holiness: Saint Charbel, Saint Rafqa, Saint Neemtallah and the Blessed Brother Estephan.

*The Stars of the Southern Cross*, symbol of Australia, signify the land of his mission, the field in which he serves, almost the Promised Land. Through faithfulness to Australia and serving the values of the Gospel, Bishop Tarabay contributes to develop an Australia of humane and moral values: the values of openness, cooperation and diversity.

*The Maronite Cross* in the middle represents the sign of victory against enemies. It unites the elements of the Episcopal Arms in faithfulness and openness. The Cross of the Lord is the source of faithfulness which generates faith and peace. Openness is represented by the arms of the Cross, spread wide, to embrace everybody in the unity of love of which Bishop Tarabay has become a servant.

## The Shepherd's Prayer

*Bishop Antoine-Charbel Tarabay  
Monastery of Our Lady of Qannoubine, 17 May 2013*

Lord Jesus, Good Shepherd,  
pastor filled with compassion, gentleness and wisdom;  
teach me to live in your likeness,  
to give myself to my flock,  
and to dedicate myself for their sake.

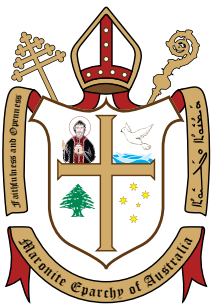
Grant me, Lord, through your grace,  
to be gentle and patient, to be compassionate,  
and to help them to discern the truth.

Help me to console those who are sad,  
encourage those who are weak,  
and aid those who have fallen to rise up again,  
so that I may lead to you all those entrusted to my care.

Place on my lips, Lord, fitting and noble words  
that I may edify my flock in faith,  
shepherd them in hope,  
and sanctify them in charity  
that they may adore you in spirit and in truth.

I place them all in your holy hands  
and entrust them to your infinite care.  
Merciful Lord, meek and humble,  
to you be glory forever. Amen.





## Maronite Eparchy of Australia

40 Alice Street, Harris Park NSW 2150

*Telephone* +61 2 9642 0211  
*Facsimile* +61 2 9633 2544  
*Email* [bpoffice@maronite.org.au](mailto:bpoffice@maronite.org.au)  
*Website* [www.maronite.org.au](http://www.maronite.org.au)