



Aid to the
Church in Need

ACN INTERNATIONAL



LEBANON

» One year later...

PONTIFICAL
FOUNDATION



Pontifical Foundation

Aid to the Church in Need | ACN International

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*"We simply cannot forget our
brothers and sisters in Lebanon"*
Pope Francis

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*Beirut Port after the massive explosion resulting in devastating
destruction to the city and it's port on August 4th, 2020.*



1. Context of the country

Lebanon is a small country, bordered by the Mediterranean Sea to the west, Israel to the south, and Syria to the east and north. Due to its geographical position, Lebanon has become the main crossroads between the Mediterranean basin and the Arab hinterland, enriching its history and shaping its cultural identity characterized by a great ethno-religious diversity.

Lebanon is living an economic and social crisis for many years now. But after the revolution that started in October 2019, the financial and bank system collapsed, generating the closure of a huge quantity of companies and an increase of unemployment in the whole country. And then came the Beirut port explosion that led to a chaotic situation in the city and all of Lebanon.



Lebanese Republic

REGION **Asia, Middle East**

The national flag of Lebanon features the Lebanon cedar. The Cedars of Lebanon were the trees used by Solomon to build the temple of God, since cedar wood has a perfume that is similar to incense. It is a tree that can live for up to 2000 years, and thus it is a symbol of eternity. That is why Lebanon chose its cedar tree as the symbol of its enduring existence.

Languages:

Arabic (official)

French (recognized)



A C N

Capital

Beirut

Area

10,452 km²

Population

6,019,795

ca. 1,8 M living in Lebanon are not nationality holders

ca. 5.5 million Lebanese nationality holders worldwide

ca. 76% - 4.2 million reside in Lebanon

ca. 42% - 1.3 million live abroad

Martyrs' Square - in commemoration of the martyrs executed there under Ottoman rule.

During the Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990), the demarcation line that divided Beirut into East and West ran through Martyrs' Square.

In late 2019, Martyrs' Square became a major focal point of the anti-government protests.

The bell tower of Saint George Cathedral and the Christmas tree next to the minarets of the Amin mosque symbolizes religious coexistence.

1.1 Demography

Depending on the sources it can be estimated that between 53.6% and 59.7% of the 4,5 Million Lebanese are Muslims (30-32% Shiite, 21-25% Sunni, 5-7% Druze, Sufi and Alawites), between 40% and 35% are Christians (including 23-25% Maronite, 7-12% Greek Orthodox, 5% Greek Catholic and 4% Armenian Apostolic), and between 1% and 1.3% belong to other faith groups.

“Arabic” is a term that refers to people who live in the Arab region, speak Arabic and share an Arabic culture. The notion of “Arabic” as a synonym for Muslim can be confusing. In Lebanon, most of the population is Lebanese Arab, but almost half of them are not Muslim. Some communities in the region claim to have non-Arab linguistic, cultural and religious origins or backgrounds, but the statistics still consider them as Arab.

The Armenians fled from the genocide in Turkey between 1894 and 1915 and the Palestinians fled during or after the 1948 Arab–Israeli War.

Lebanon also has a population of Kurds (known as Mhallami or Mardinli) estimated to be between 75,000 and 100,000,

Name	Population 2020	%
Lebanese Arab	3,927,615	65.25%
Palestinian Arab	728,395	12.10%
Syrian Arab	541,782	9.00 %
Armenian (Ermeni, Armiane)	240,792	4.00%
Northern Kurd (Kermanji)	168,554	2.80%
Sinhalese	138,455	2.30%
Amhara (Ethiopians)	54,178	0.90%
West Aramaic	32,627	0.54%
Assyrian (Aisor, Chaldean)	30,099	0.50%
Iraqi Arab	24,380	0.41%
North Indian (Hindi)	15,049	0.25%
Egyptian Arab	12,040	0.20%
Turk	6,020	0.10%
Others	93,788	2.16%
Total	6,019,795	100%

most of whom migrated from Syria and Turkey and considered to be part of the Sunni population. In addition, many thousands of Arab Bedouins, who are Sunni Muslim, live today in the Bekaa valley and in the Wadi Khaled region.

1.2 Political context

Although there is no state religion in Lebanon, 18 religious communities are officially recognized by the Lebanese Constitution as agreed through the “Ta’if Agreement” of October 22nd, 1989. The Ta’if Agreement’s milestone provides a constitutional terms of equality between Christians and Muslims communities at the Lebanese parliament, government, as well as at the highest offices of the Lebanese state: The President must be Maronite Christian, the Prime Minister Sunni Muslim, and the Speaker of the Parliament Shiite Muslim.

The repartition of powers at the National Assembly, called as well Assemblée Nationale or Majlis An Nuwwab, is also representative of the Ta’if Agreement the 128 seats in the parliament are equally divided between Christians and Muslims with 64 each. Within the Christian communities there are 34 seats for the Maronite Christian, 14 for the Greek Orthodox, Greek Catholic (8), Armenian Orthodox (5) and Armenian Catholic (1), Protestant (1) and other Christian minorities (1). Within the Muslim communities there are 27 seats for the Shiites, 27 for the Sunnis, Druze (8) and Alawites (2).

Of the 18 officially recognized religious groups, twelve are Christian, four Muslim, one Druze and one Jewish.

Lebanon has often been praised as the Switzerland of the Middle East, not least because of its comparatively high level of prosperity and the peaceful coexistence of religions. Nevertheless the consequences of the civil war, the endless conflict with Israel, the influence of Iran and Syria due to the relationship with the Hezbollah, and economic decline have plunged the country into chaos. To compound matters, the flow of Syrian war refugees, the coronavirus pandemic and the trauma of the terrible explosion in Beirut in August 2020 are placing heavy burdens on Lebanese society and thus also on many Christians in the country.

With no regular government in place for the past 10 months, a vacuum of political leadership has left the country unable to address its woes — let alone COVID-19. Under these pressures, Lebanese are leaving the country in droves.

“We are asking for stability and a safe country to live in. We need a guaranteed environment to help our kids grow in the midst of a tight-knit Christian community. We are asking you, as the Holy Father did, to urge your governments and the international community to keep Lebanon away from the conflicts in the region.”

Father Jad Chlouk, parish priest of the Maronite Saint George cathedral



2. Economical crisis in 2019 and 2020

Lebanon was recovering from the Civil War that took place between 1975 and 1990. At the same time, throughout these years, there have been conflicts in its neighboring countries, which have led to a large number of immigrants.

At the start of October 2019, a shortage of foreign currency led to the Lebanese pound losing value against the dollar on a newly emerged black market for the first time in two decades. When importers of wheat and fuel demanded to be paid in dollars, they started to receive negative answers.

In mid-October, the government proposed new taxes on tobacco, petrol, and voice calls via messaging services such as WhatsApp to try to fill the gap and get more revenue, but a major protest forced them to cancel the plan. Protests against the country's elite erupted in October 2019, with hundreds of people protesting in the main cities of the Country. Since then, a lot of confrontations have been registered and people have been injured as a result of security forces deploying water cannon and rubber bullets to disperse stone-throwing protesters. Politicians have failed to agree on a government or an economic rescue plan since due to the huge social conflicts Hariri had to quit as prime minister at the end of October 2019, paralyzing efforts to recover from a crisis that has shattered confidence in banks and raised investor concerns about its ability to repay steep foreign debt. Deep financial strains have sunk the currency, pushed up prices and driven banks fearing on withdrawing and transferring dollars. The country's consumer protection association said they have seen **“a rise in prices for the first time in Lebanon's history at rates exceeding 100%”**.

Its public debt-to-gross domestic product is the third highest in the world. By the end of last year the central bank was borrowing from commercial banks at above-market interest rates

to pay back its debts and maintain the Lebanese pound's exchange rate with the US dollar fixed.

At the same time, people were getting increasingly angry and frustrated about the government's failure to provide even basic services. They were having to deal with daily power cuts, a lack of safe drinking water, limited public healthcare, and some of the world's worst internet connections. The Lebanese pound has lost about 10 times of its value over the past 18 months.

Days of tens of thousands of Lebanese taking to the streets caused the resignation of Western-backed Prime Minister Saad Hariri and his united government.

The Covid-19 pandemic has aggravated the country's poverty situation. These factors in a country with political and economic difficulties, such as Lebanon, have led to **an increase in the unemployment rate and an increase in the percentage of the population living below the poverty line, which is currently estimated to exceed 50% of the population.** The country is experiencing one of the worst economic crises in the world since 1850. Every week the inflation grows, the country's currency plunged to a record low of 20,000¹ to the U.S. dollar, having lost 90% of its value since an economic crisis began in 2019.

Mounting anger against the government has been exacerbated by a fuel crisis. A shortage of foreign reserves necessary to import fuel has left many Lebanese waking up at 3:00 a.m. to line up at petrol stations, in scenes more reminiscent of Venezuela than one of the region's more prosperous countries.

In its report **“Lebanon's Shipwreck: The Three Worst Global Crises”²**, the World Bank describes the crisis in Lebanon as **a collapse similar to the result of a war.**

¹ As of 13 July 2021

² <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/394741622469174252/pdf/Lebanon-Economic-Monitor-Lebanon-Sinking-to-the-Top-3.pdf>



3. Emigration and immigration

Lebanon is the country that has taken in the highest number of refugees in the world, in proportion to its own population. Lebanon's population is around 6 million, of which 4,5 are Lebanese, the rest are refugees or migrants.

There are an estimated 12 million Lebanese living outside Lebanon itself. There is a large Lebanese community in Latin America, namely in Argentina, Mexico, and Chile. However, the biggest community is in Brazil, where there are almost 6 million Lebanese. This is the largest community of Lebanese origin in the world. In the United States there are over 2 million.

Many Lebanese have been forced to leave their country.

There were many acts of genocide against Christians, even before the First World War. The most important ones were those by the Druze against the Christians in 1840 and in 1860. That was under Turkish rule. Many poor people were forced to leave, not knowing where to go. Wherever the ships docked, that was where they disembarked. Initially, most went to Argentina, then Brazil and the United States.

Lebanon has been obliged to see itself bleed dry by emi-

gration, but at the same time it has also welcomed many people who themselves have fled from wars and religious persecutions – for example, the Armenians in 1915.

After the 1947–1949 war between Israel and Palestine, Palestinians came to Lebanon, because they were fleeing or being expelled from the country. To this day there are still at least ten Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon. They have their own laws, they are protected, and they have their own legislation within the country, nevertheless they are contributing to the destabilisation of Lebanon.

The ongoing Syrian refugee crisis since 2011 raised the number of displaced persons living in Lebanon to 1.5 million, the majority of them being Muslims. Absorbing a large number of Sunnis, in this way threatens the country's internal equilibrium.

After the explosion of 4th August 2020, more than 380,000 requests for emigration visas were presented to the embassies of countries of the EU and of North America. Most of them were from Christians, who unfortunately do not feel safe in their own home country. This is negatively affecting



the whole Christian community, because it is losing most of its brightest and best, and especially its young people, who are supposed to be the future.

Hence, the number of Christians in the country is decreasing day by day, and this is causing still more pressure for those who remain and look with fear on the reality of their closest neighbours, including Syria, Iraq, Palestine and Israel.

“Christians are experiencing tough times, doubt, and confusion after the pandemic, the economic crisis, and on top of all these, the explosion. Sadly, our country is now experiencing a brain drain. While all Lebanese are suffering, Christians are particularly prone to emigrate to the West, where many already have family from among the large Lebanese diaspora.” explains Father Jad Chlouk, parish priest of the Maronite Saint George cathedral.

The economic consequences of this huge number of refugees and migrants is one of the reasons - along with corruption, COVID and political crisis - for the current critical situation. The coun-

try's infrastructure cannot support and offer services for all. Lebanon had a huge problem with electricity, for years public electricity is running just several hours per day. The country's infrastructure is very small, and the number of migrants very numerous. Immigration is one of the causes for social problems on the economic and security level.

The demographic changes of the present time should not blur the reality that Lebanon is a Christian country, and not just because of the figures but of its roots.

“The demographic changes must not be allowed to undermine the importance of the existence of these Christian communities, not only here but also in Iraq and in other countries. Whether large or small, these communities express the continuity of the era of Christ, right up to our own times. The significance of the Christians of Lebanon is not merely one of numerical importance. The numbers may change greatly, but the essence of the Church is very important and symbolic.”

Father Raymond Abdo, the provincial of the discalced Carmelite Fathers in Lebanon

Our Lady of Lebanon, Harissa

Harissa, 27 km north of Beirut, is one of the most important shrines in the world honoring Our Lady of Lebanon (Notre Dame du Liban). The shrine was inaugurated in 1908 by Patriarch Elias Hoyek, who put Lebanon under the protection of the Virgin Mary: “Oh Mary, Queen of mountains and seas and Queen of our beloved Lebanon ...”



4. Lebanon's Christian roots

Lebanese Christianity's origins date back to the time of Jesus Christ. Lebanon is Holy Land. Jesus walked in Lebanon. Tyre and Sidon are biblical places. The word Lebanon is found 72 times in the Bible.

Christians in Lebanon today are organized in five dominant groups: Catholic, Oriental Orthodox, Eastern Orthodox, Assyrian, and Evangelical.

The largest group with about two million faithful is the Catholic divided into six oriental Churches and one Latin Church: The Maronite Catholic Church, the Byzantine Melkite Greek Catholic Church, the Syriac Catholic Church, the

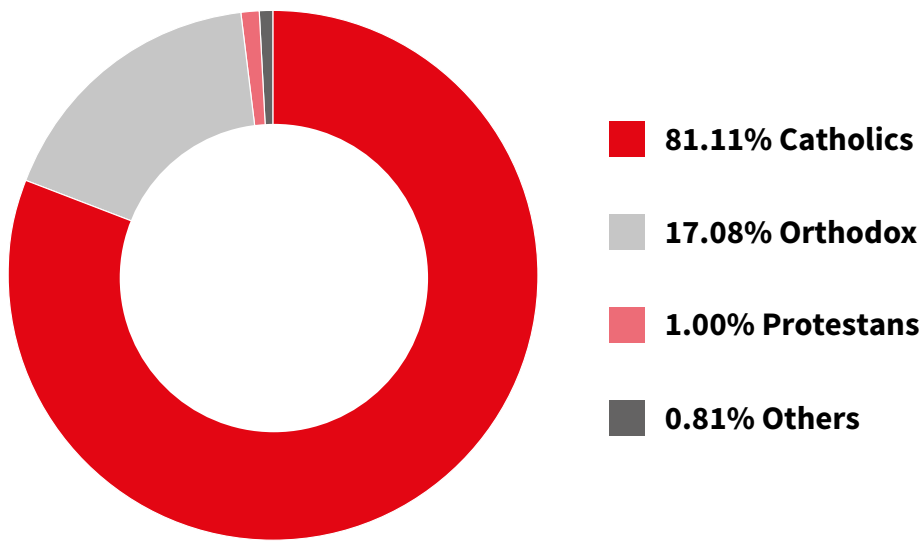
Armenian Catholic Church, the Chaldean Catholic Church, the Coptic Catholic Church, and the Roman Latin Catholic Church.

The Oriental Orthodox Church is divided into three: The Armenian Apostolic Church, the Armenian Orthodox Church, and the Coptic Orthodox Church.

To the Eastern Orthodox belongs: The Greek Orthodox Church of Jerusalem, the Greek Orthodox Church of Antioch, and the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria. There is also the Assyrian Church of the East and the Evangelical Anglican-Episcopal Church.



Christian traditions breakdown



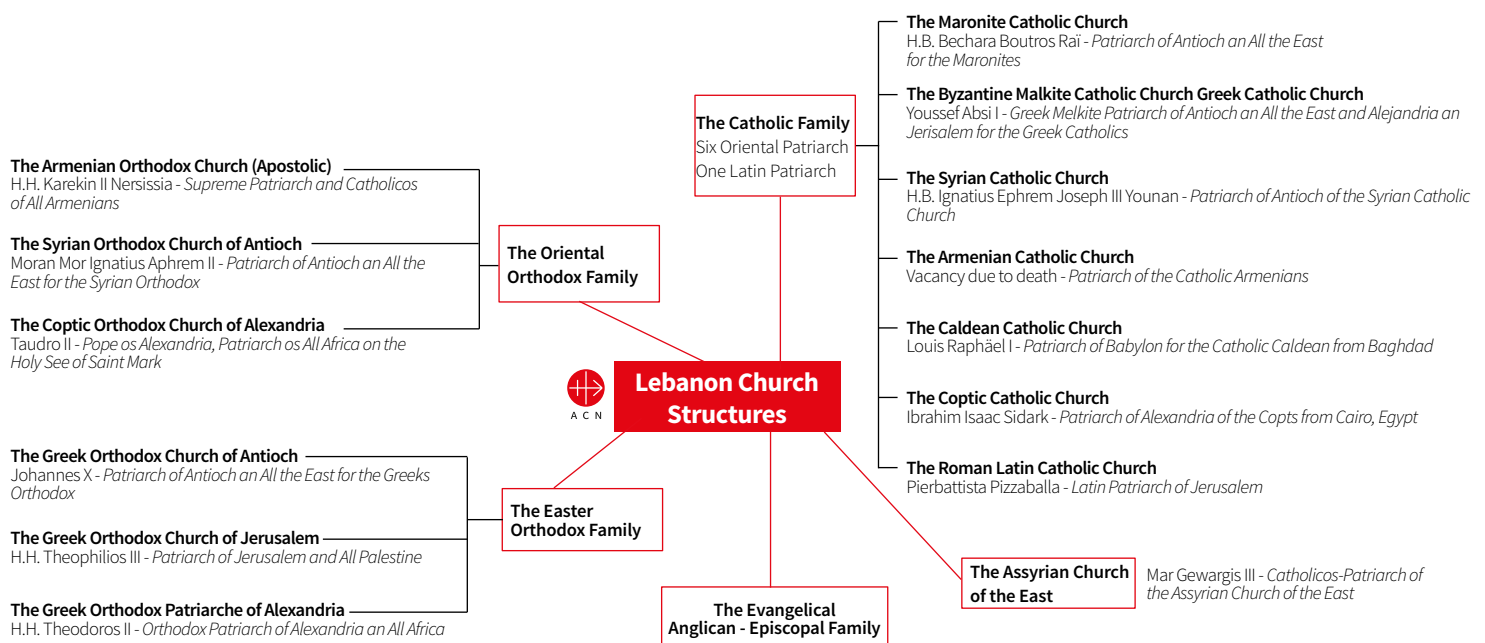
**As the Christians can be double-affiliate, the sum of the categories may exceed 100% bringing "Others" to a negative number.*

There are currently three Catholic Patriarchs holding the title of Antioch and All the East (Maronite, Greek Catholic and Syriac Catholic) with H.B. Bechara Boutros Raï, Patriarch of Antioch and All the East for the Maronites, H.B. Youssef Absi I, Greek Melkite Patriarch of Antioch and All the East and Alexandria and Jerusalem for the Greek Catholics, and H.B.

Ignatius Ephrem Joseph III Younan, Patriarch of Antioch of the Syrian Catholic Church.

Since Lebanon is part of the Patriarchate of Antioch, there is a Latin Patriarch who is today H. B. Pierbattista Pizzaballa, Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem.

The following chart shows the different branches of the Christian faith in Lebanon.

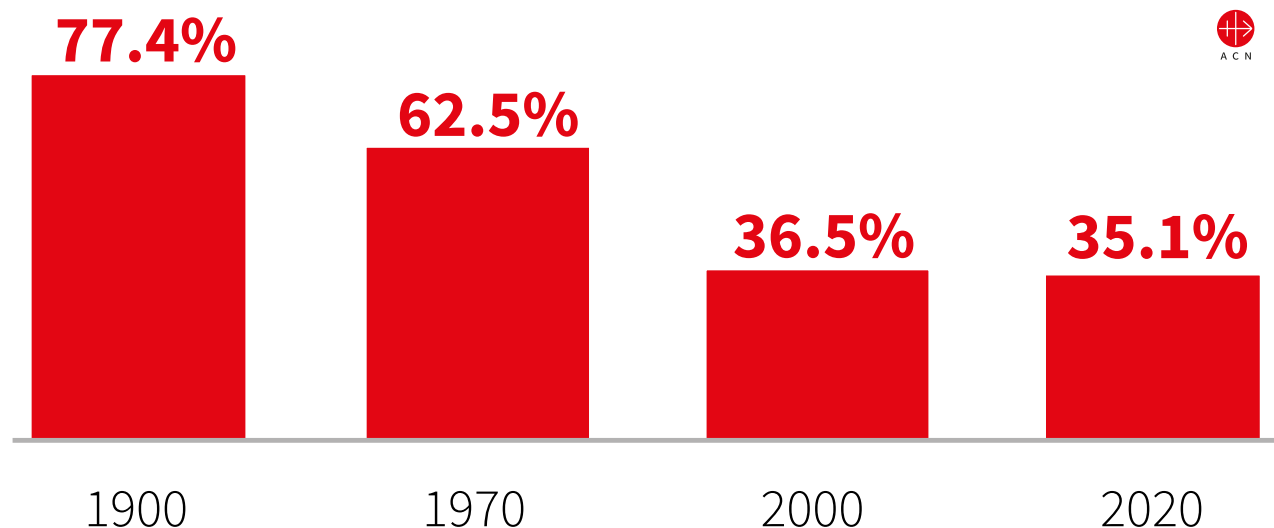


Decline of the Christian population

Before the Civil War between 1975 and 1990, the **Christian religion represented 60% of the population and was known as the largest Christian community in the East.** Today, it is less than 40%. The emigration of Christians is the main factor causing the Christian population in Lebanon to decline.

"We have seen in other countries of the Middle East how the number of Christians has been decreasing. Over the years, when we have seen a rise in extremism in other countries, Lebanon has been a place where the Christians and the Muslims could live together, be educated together, to work together, and we would like to see this continue."

Regina Lynch, Director of projects ACN



Sister Micheline LATTOUF, Sister of the Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd - Lebanon.

"We are currently living through catastrophic times. One crisis after another. Immersed in the reality of the whole region, Christians in the Middle East are faced with essential questions. The question for me is not demographic, but essentially existential: Why are we here? and not, how many of us are here? What is the reason for our presence in this part of the world? Is our presence just a political or demographic colour, or do we have a mission? What value does our presence add? Pope John-Paul II reminds us that "Lebanon is more than a country, it is a mission." And I think the question we need to remember is this: are we aware and convinced of the current

urgency of the mission of conviviality and respect for difference, tolerance and reconciliation to which we are called and to which it is essential to bear witness? As Christians of the Middle East, this is our message to the world and it is our responsibility, despite all the various facets of persecution. Of course, it is not easy, it is demanding and requires a lot of sacrifice, but, above all, faith. Faith in a God who is present and who accompanies us, faith in a God who said to us: "Do not be afraid, I am with you until the end of the world," a God who speaks and who is true to his word. "



Catholic Church Total



Libreria Editrice Vaticana 2018



24 Ecclesiastical territories
1,117 Parishes
46 Other centres



5. Catholic church in Lebanon

Today the largest Christian Church in Lebanon is the Maronite Church, which is small on a global scale, but is a majority within the country. This Church came into being with Saint Maron in the fourth and fifth centuries. The Maronite community lived originally in Syria, in a region that was close to Lebanon, but in the eighth and ninth centuries they sought peace and security in Lebanon, fleeing from the persecutions of the Jacobites. They suffered great persecutions, and during the several centuries lived totally hidden and isolated in the mountains, before finally being able to emerge into the light during the 11th century. Since then, the Maronite community has distinguished itself by its identity of very strong fidelity to Rome and to the Pope.



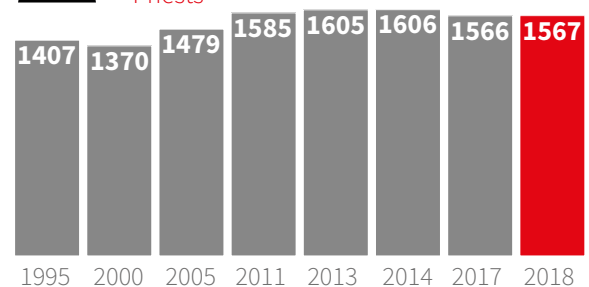
Catholic clergy and Religious congregations



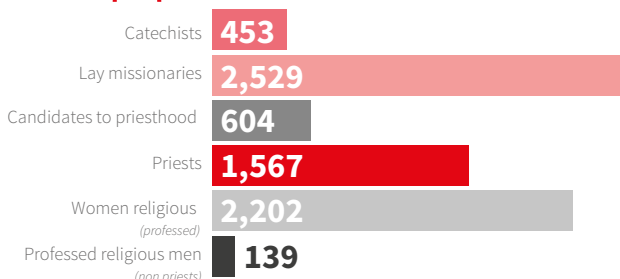
Libreria Editrice Vaticana 2018



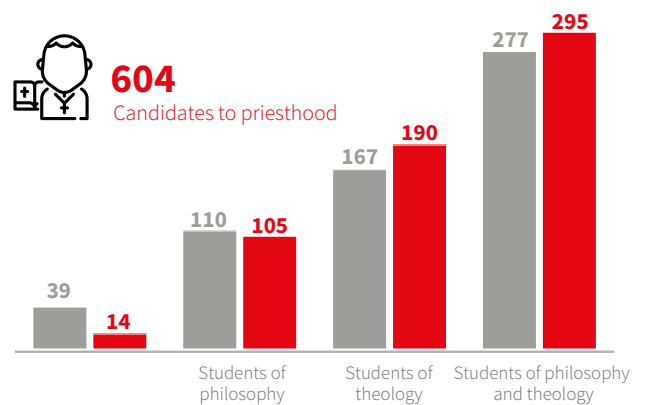
1,567
Priests



5,326
Persons in Church workforce



604
Candidates to priesthood



■ 2014 ■ 2018



Catholic welfare institutions

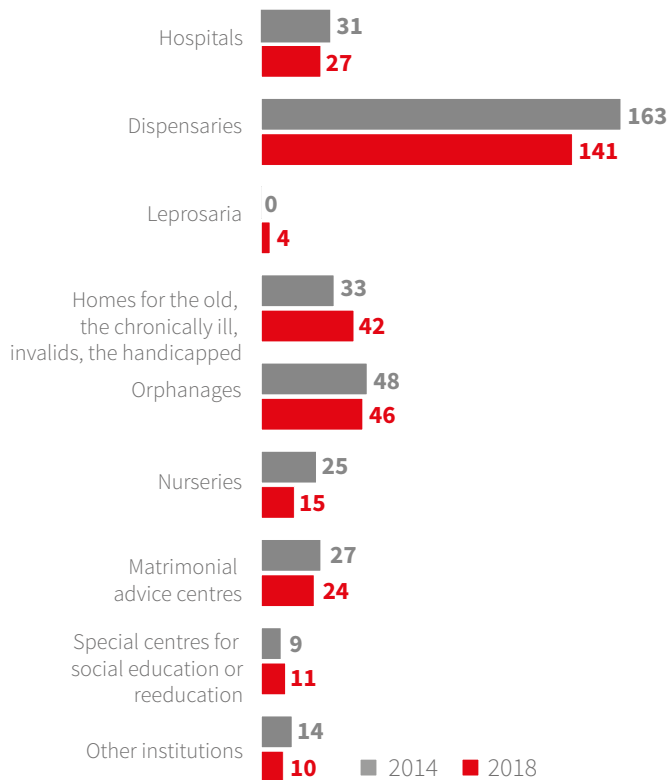


Libreria Editrice Vaticana 2018



320

Welfare institutions



Catholic education network



Libreria Editrice Vaticana 2018

The Church in Lebanon has done an enormous job to reduce the distances between religions and between cultures. The Church had a strong educational force. They have educated generations, whether Muslims or Christians. In some Catholic schools almost 90% of the students are Muslim, especially in areas where there is a Muslim majority. Christians have their schools, but they are open to everyone. This has positively influenced the way of thinking of many Lebanese and for this reason fanaticism is not widespread as in other countries of the Arab world. A culture of dialogue, a concept of respect and of mutual coexistence is being promoted by the different Catholic welfare institutions, like hospitals, dispensaries, orphanages, but specially through schools.

*“The Catholic schools are in danger of closing. The Catholic institutes like hospitals and clinics are struggling to survive, even to find the funds they need to be able to buy vital medicines and important medical equipment, so **it’s really five minutes to zero hour now in Lebanon**,”*

Regina Lynch, Director of projects ACN





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Catholic education facilities

Nevertheless, the situation of Catholic schools in Lebanon is difficult, even desperate. School fees are normally paid partly by families but subsidised by the government. Due to the financial and economic crisis, parents are no longer able to pay school fees, and in some cases the Lebanese government has not paid anything for four years. As a result, schools find themselves in a disastrous financial situation. They can no longer pay their teachers. The great risk is that they will be forced to close.

CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

282

Kindergartens

358

Primary or elementary schools

198

Secondary junior and senior schools



Lebanese Christians are a source of hope

to move the country forward and the young generations are the key to that future. It is essential that they stay in Lebanon and, for this, their spiritual formation is important to bring light to so many suffering people. Lebanon is a young country, with a high percentage of youth compared to the global average, according to Government of Lebanon and UN the 44% of Lebanon's population are under the age of 24. Despite the dramatic situation inviting them to leave the country to seek better outlets outside its borders, many young Christians have decided to stay to pitch in and move their country forward.

*"Lebanon is facing a lot of problems: Many of the businesses closed and many of the people are without work. And I found out that in my parish many of the families are in need for the food. So, I decided to do something, to be their support and to bring hope for them. **During all the situation in the country, we need a little candle in this darkness.** We are formed by the Catholic Church how to serve, how to love, how to act when there is one need. **This is the revolution of the younger generation.** Because we look at Jesus, He never let the people down. So, when you look to people and see sadness in their heart and their eyes, try to do something. Just bring hope to them."*

John Khoury, a young catholic leader, Beirut





6. The 4th august 2020 bomb blast

On August 4th at 6 p.m., 2,750 tons of ammonium nitrate exploded in a warehouse in the port of Beirut. Father Raymond Abdo, ACN project partner, said “ it felt like an atomic bomb with red smoke everywhere and enormous damage”.

This explosion has been considered one of the most powerful non-atomic explosions ever recorded. The blast left more than 200 dead, 6,500 injured and nearly 300,000 houses and homes destroyed or severely damaged. More than 100 churches, convents, church-run schools and other institutes were reported to be in need of repairs following the blast.

The intensity of the explosion was felt more than 150 miles away in Cyprus. Christian neighborhoods were among the nearest to the explosion , where houses, churches, and hospitals were destroyed.

Father Samer Nassif said that “in one second, more damage was done to the Christian quarter of Beirut than throughout the years of the civil war”.

To read more about this:



News: Beirut, ACN offers emergency food package



“The explosion has changed my life”

4 August should have been the happiest day in the life of Jad, a young Lebanese man. For it was the day when his wife Christelle gave birth to their first son, Nabil, in St. George's Hospital, in Beirut. Their happiness lasted just fifteen minutes. For at 6.07 p.m. 2,750 tonnes of ammonium nitrate exploded in Hanger 13 in the nearby port of Beirut. “Everything flew through the air; I thought war had broken out. My first thought was for my wife and child. It was a miracle. When I see the cradle in which Nabil was lying, I can only give thanks to God. It was directly beneath the shattered window, covered in shards of glass that had bored into the blankets like small lances. But Nabil was completely unscathed, untouched,” says the 32-year-old teacher to the Aid to the Church in Need Foundation.

Jad took the uninjured child into his arms – and marvelled. St. George's Orthodox Hospital, the oldest and one of the three lar-

gest hospitals in the country, was almost completely wrecked. Christelle had to be taken with Nabil to another hospital 50 miles (80 km) away.






“The explosion has changed my life”, says Jad to ACN during a visit of the Charity to Beirut. Despite all the difficulties, he says he has worked and fought to build the country “which I love”. “But”, he adds with dismay, “in order to remain, we need security and the feeling that someone cares about us Christians. We feel quite alone, abandoned, forgotten.” In the midst of all that darkness Jad remembers every day the miracle of the birth of his firstborn: “I say to our child again and again, ‘You are alive because Christ has saved you. Your mother and I were both injured, but you didn't receive a scratch. Never forget that. Jesus was with you at that moment. Have no fear, He will always be with you.’”



7. ACN support during the crisis

Funded projects 2020 67

Type of project


-  19 Construction / reconstruction
-  2 Means of transport
-  8 Mass stipends
-  23 Emergency aid
-  5 Training of priests
-  4 Existencial help
-  6 Faith formation

Projects approved Jan. 2020 - Jun. 2021

CHURCH BUILDINGS RECONSTRUCTION after port blast	2.738.550,00 €	50,40%
OTHER CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS	168.527,00 €	3,10%
EMERGENCY AID	2.250.999,73 €	41,40%
PASTORAL AID PROJECTS	26.000,00 €	0,50%
SUBSISTANCE HELP PROJECTS	19.454,55 €	0,40%
FORMATION PROJECTS	52.000,00 €	1,00%
TRANSPORTATION PROJECTS	27.727,27 €	0,50%
MASS STIPENDS PROJECTS	155.574,00 €	2,90%
	5.438.832,55 €	100,00%

ACN has supported 19 projects related to the blast. All the projects are still in progress, except for the church of St Joseph of the Jesuit Fathers. They have completed the urgent work to secure the buildings structure and protect them from the rainy season. All that remains is to restore the buildings to their pre-explosion condition. Several project partners report that they discovered that the damage was greater than initially identified.

ACN Projects

 Areas of Beirut with a majority Christianity



Support due to the Lebanon crisis and covid

ZAHLE

ASSISTANCE PLAN FOR SYRIAN REFUGEES:

The Archdiocese of Zahle is supporting 350 Syrian families, refugees of war from the neighbouring country. The program includes:

- Governmental yearly dues for 200 families - According to Lebanese regulations, each person should pay a fee once a year to the general security body in order to renew their papers and thus stay legally in Lebanon.

- Food, Hygiene, Rent, Diapers, heating oil for 350 families for 1 year.

"Certainly, the situation in Lebanon is a complete disaster. And unfortunately, it gets worse day after day. However, you standing by our side allowed us to protect refugees and provide them with their basic needs. And for that, we are grateful." Archbishop Issam John Darwish, Archbishop of the Melkite Greek Catholic Archeparchy of Zahle and Forzol

- Medical assistance "Primary care" (medications and visiting doctors) + "Secondary care" (invoices for hospitalization).

HELP FOR SYRIAN REFUGEES AND NEEDY LEBANESE FAMILIES:

- St John the Merciful Table for 400 to 600 meals a day for refugees and vulnerable Lebanese families.

"Saint John the Merciful table is an experience and a project that every Christian, every donor, every volunteer is proud of. It reflects the true meaning of humanity and Christianity. Standing next to each other in these difficult times is a sign of love, the love that Jesus Christ asked for." Archbishop Issam John Darwish, Archbishop of the Melkite Greek Catholic Archeparchy of Zahle and Forzol

- Medical assistance Covid: testing center & respirators.
"It is thanks to you and to all the benefactors that the hospital is doing its mission in facing the Corona Virus and saving the lives of many people." Archbishop Issam John Darwish, Archbishop of the Melkite Greek Catholic Archeparchy of Zahle and Forzol
- Food packages for 2000 needy Lebanese families due to Covid.

BEIRUT

MEDICAL ASSISTANCE COVID

- Food packages: Emergency ecumenical project for 5000 Lebanese families & support to the "Volunteers together" organizing daily food delivery for more than 560 people of different beliefs.
- Medical assistance Covid: respiratory machines for health families and support for elderly religious sisters

BAALBEK-DEIR AL AHMAR AND TRIPOLI

ASSISTANCE TO VULNERABLE FAMILIES:

- The Bekaa region, on the Syrian border, and the region of Tripoli are some of the poorest regions in Lebanon. With the project 100 families in the Bekaa region and 500 families in Tripoli have been provided with food and hygiene items.

"Thank you so much for this generous donation which was of a great help and especially a big Thanks for offering to help out in this critical situation. Together we made a big difference. We are confident that you are going to be pleased with the results: 200 of the poorest families have profited significantly from this collect to survive with dignity for 3 months" Bishop Hanna Rahmé, Maronite Bishop of Baalbek-Deir El-Ahmar.

NATIONAL

PROJECTS FOR SCHOOL FEES AND EDUCATION:

- Three schools run by the Carmelite Order in Lebanon: Mar Doumit, Mejdlaya and Tripoli.
- Three schools run by Jesuits in the Bekaa Valley.

ACN PROJECT: FOOD PACKAGES



Ashrafieh, one of the oldest districts of Beirut

Just 2km from the port of Beirut is one of the areas affected by the explosion. The Karagheusian center was one of those that received emergency aid. Sister Marie Justine el Osta of the congregation of the Maronite Sisters of the Holy Family is the director of the intercommunity socio-medical facility. She said that “during the 15 years of the Civil War, we had never witnessed such destruction at a glance”. No house, no store, no institution was spared the damage”. Many nearby houses have suffered damage, but he is thankful that the weather is good now, as repairs will take months. Although he also mentioned that they will need help, especially for those who “are without work, money and food”.



ACN Project: Food packages for needy Lebanese families following Beirut port blast and the economic conditions/ Covid-19 pandemic

To read more about this:



News: Lebanon: “throughout the 15 years of civil war we had never witnessed such destruction at one glance”



News: Lebanon: “in crisis we need a miracle”



“The sisters are a living testimony of Christ on earth.”

Lebanon is a country with no retirement plans or social security or other pensions, so the elderly or weaker members are supported by their children and relatives. However, with the economic crisis marked by the pandemic and the collateral effects of the explosion, this has become unsustainable. For example, Mona, a 52-year-old Lebanese woman who lives with her 91 year old mother Juliette, and has witnessed at least 5 wars, tells us that despite all this “since the explosion of August 4 she has been traumatized, she is frightened by every noise”. Mona has been without a job for five years but her family has “enough problems to take care of oneself”.

“Without faith we would not be able to go on, it is the only thing that helps us to endure the current situation; it is the

only thing we have left” she says, adding **“Sr. Rita comes when we need her (...) she always manages to find a time for us. For me, this is the living testimony of Christ on earth”**.

Just at this moment when so many people are talking about leaving and emigrating “it is the exact moment to stay here. This is the time to support and stand by our people, because here each and every one of them has his or her problems” said Sr. Josephine, another sister working with Sister Rita. “Lebanon is a message. We Christians here have an important role to play in this country, and the day we forget this message, Lebanon will no longer be Lebanon” says Sister Josephine.

ACN Project: Food packages for needy Lebanese families following Beirut port blast and the economic conditions/ Covid-19 pandemic

To read more about this:



News: Lebanon: “The sisters are a living witness to Christ on earth”



Daily struggle to feed the family

ACN Project: Food packages for needy Lebanese families following Beirut port blast and the economic conditions/ Covid-19 pandemic

The economic situation in Beirut was hard enough, but the crisis caused by the explosion worsened the conditions of those affected. Georgette explained her personal situation to ACN's team: "I live in a poor neighborhood and our situation is very bad, especially after the explosion. I live there with my three grandchildren. I am responsible for them and I have no one to help me, except God and ACN's benefactors."

Georgette is one of the beneficiaries of the food packages distributed thanks to ACN and its benefactors. No matter how difficult the trials, her faith will always be a safe haven for Georgette: **"the situation of Christians in Lebanon is uncertain, but Jesus is always with us and no one can force us out of here"** she concludes.

To read more about this:



News: Lebanon: Georgette's daily struggle to feed her three grandchildren



A survivor of the explosion describes it as “our Hiroshima”.

“Our Hiroshima”, is how one survivor describes the tragic explosion of August 4th in which she lost her house and home. “It was worse than a war, because it happened so suddenly. All the hard work of years was destroyed in just seven seconds”, says this woman from the devastated quarter of the Lebanese capital Beirut. Even before this, the country was on its knees economically, but now the explosion has left many people deeply traumatised.

It is not only the poorest suburbs of the city that have suffered, in the vicinity of the port, where immigrants and migrant Christian workers had previously settled, moving down from the mountain regions in search of a better life, into areas which

have now been totally destroyed by the catastrophe. Even in some areas of central Beirut, which have also suffered from the consequences of the explosion, there is now an exodus of the population.

“Around 10% of the population of this particular suburb have left, because they can no longer live in their homes. I can’t do anything to stop them because I can’t offer them the security, which is what they are seeking. There are still people who are remaining hopeful, but every day it gets more difficult”, said Father Nicolas Riachy, former parish priest of the church of Saint Saviour, which lost its roof in the explosion.

Project ACN: Reconstruction of the Saint-Sauveur church roof after the explosion of the port on August 4th in Beirut

To read more about this:



News: Lebanon: “Our mission is to bring light into the darkness we are living through”



Holy Rosary Hospital in Beirut: “We have to rise from the ruins”.

The convent on the ninth floor of the building, was also damaged, with a wall falling on one of the sisters and injuring her arm. The hospital of the Rosary Sisters, located in the northwest of Beirut in a densely populated area, served many families affected by the economic crisis, “sometimes they cannot pay, so I tell them to pay half, which sometimes is not possible either, so I tell them to pay what they can or in parts,” explains Sister Nicolas. “The hospital was the pearl of Beirut and our chapel is the pearl of the hospital. That’s where the staff - 80 doctors and 92 nurses - patients and family members who want to recharge their batteries, seek comfort and regain hope.”

The hospital is located in the Gemmayzé district of Beirut, less than 500 meters from the port, and before the explosion it had 200 beds, as well as important and highly modern research

equipment and operating rooms, distributed over 18 floors, nine underground and nine above ground. Undoubtedly, the hidden engine, the heart of this hospital are the nuns. They all combine their professional work in the various departments of the hospital with their pastoral work of human and spiritual care of patients and staff.

The sisters are used to difficult times. The experience during the last civil war is all too present in their minds. “Because of our location between areas of different religions, our hospital was the shelter for all patients without any discrimination. The sisters gave all their time and affection towards the healing of their patients, even in the most difficult times when there was no bread or food available for months.”

ACN supports the reconstruction of the sisters’ convent on the ninth floor of the building.

To read more about this:



News: LEBANON: “We have to rise again from the ruins”, says director of Holy Rosary hospital in Beirut

The foundation Aid to the Church in Need (ACN) is helping to repair the sisters’ convent. Sister Nicolas sends a message to ACN’s benefactors: “I know that God is with us, I see it in the hands of so many who will not leave us alone, with your help we can continue our work and start over. We have to rise from the ruins. Our Lady of the Holy Rosary guides us in our work.”

ACN PROJECT: RECONSTRUCTION



“Hope is our daily bread.”

ACN Project: Reconstruction of Saint George cathedral after 4th of August port blast, Achrafieh quarters



“We highly appreciate your contribution in funding Saint Georges Cathedral which is considered to be a significant symbol of the presence of the Maronites in the Capital of Lebanon and their expansion through the Lebanese territory. We hope we will be able to preserve this historical monument hand-in hand and raise the flag of Christianity and faith again in the center of the capital – Beirut, which is desperately in need of hope in this devastated country.”

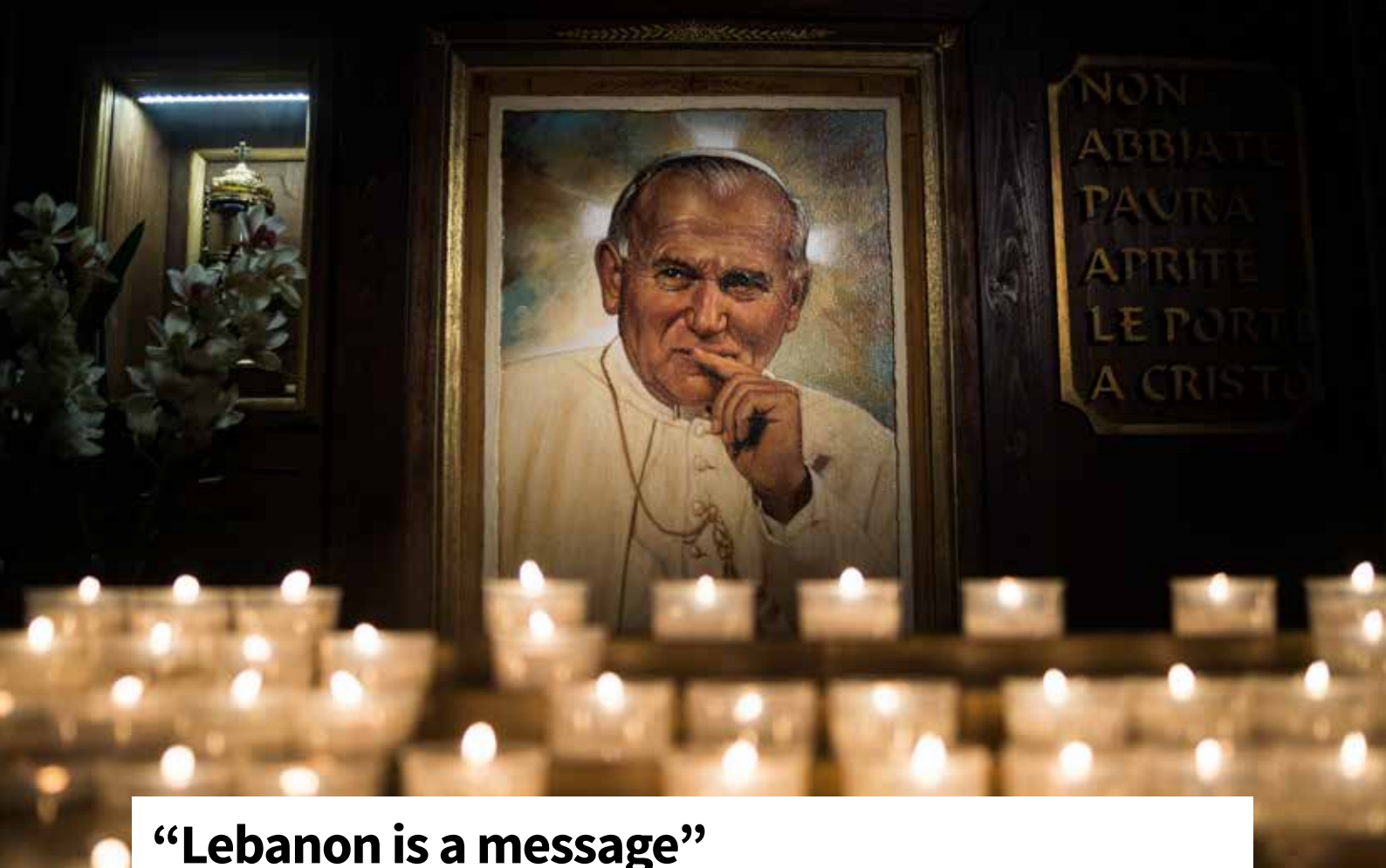
“Many of the Christians now they are thinking to emigrate to other countries where they can find peace, they can find stability. Rebuilding this cathedral will be really a motivation to not leave our land. When they see that they can practice again their faith, then they will be encouraged to remain here”

Rev. Fr. Jad Chlouk, parish priest of the Maronite Saint George cathedral

To read more about this:



News: Interview with Fr. Jad Chlouk, parish priest of the Maronite Saint George cathedral:



“Lebanon is a message”

Saint John Paul II during his visit to Lebanon, Sunday, 11 May 1997

Since the end of the war in 1990, Lebanon had worked for a country of peace and tolerance. “Lebanon is more than a country - it is a message,” was the slogan on posters for the Pope John Paul II visit and a theme that the Pope himself was to pick up on.

*“At this exceptional assembly **we wish to declare before the world the importance of Lebanon, its historical mission, accomplished down the centuries:** a country of many religious faiths, Lebanon has shown that these different faiths can live together in peace, brotherhood and cooperation; it has shown that people can respect the rights of every individual to religious freedom, that all are united in love for this homeland which has matured over the centuries, preserving the spiritual heritage of their forbears, notably of the monk Saint Maron.*

We are here in the region where the feet of Christ, the Saviour of the world, trod two thousand years ago. The Holy Scriptures teach us that Jesus went to preach beyond the borders of the Palestine of that time, that he visited also the territory of the ten cities of the Decapolis — Tyre and Sidon in particular — and that he worked miracles there. Men and women of Lebanon, the Son of God himself was the first to preach the Good News to your ancestors. This is an extraordinary privilege. [...] The authors of the Old Testament turned often in their writings to the mountains of Lebanon and Hermon, which they saw on the horizon. Lebanon, then, is a biblical country. Being very near the places where Jesus accomplished his mission, it was among the first countries to receive the Good News.

[...] “Come, Creator Spirit, visit the souls of your people, Fill with grace from on high the hearts which you have created...”

I am moved as I repeat this prayer of the Universal Church with you, dear Brothers and Sisters, sons and daughters of Lebanon. We are confident: the Holy Spirit will renew the face of the earth.

*[...] People often spoke of the “martyr Lebanon”, especially during the period of war which afflicted your country more than ten years ago. In this historical context, the words of Saint Peter can well be applied to all who have suffered in this land. The Apostle writes: “In so far as you share in Christ’s sufferings, rejoice because the Spirit of God rests upon you, and that is the Spirit of glory” (cf. *ibid.*). I am mindful that we are gathered near the historic heart of Beirut, Martyrs’ Square; but you have also called it Freedom Square and Unity Square. I am certain that the sufferings of the past years will not be in vain; they will strengthen your freedom and unity.*

*The Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Jesus Christ, is a Spirit of glory. Let us pray today that this divine glory will encompass all who are familiar with suffering in this land of Lebanon. **Let us pray that it will become a source of spiritual strength for all of you, for the Church and for the nation, in order that Lebanon may be able to fulfil its role in the Middle East, among the neighbouring nations and with all the nations of the world.”***

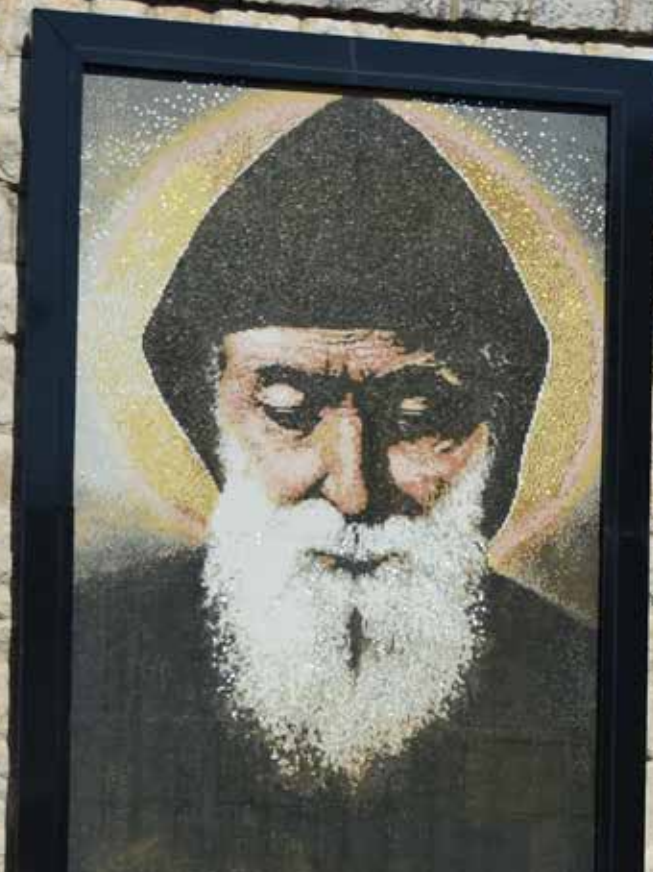
A large background photograph of Pope Francis. He is wearing his white papal attire, including a zucchetto and a pectoral cross. He is smiling broadly and waving his right hand towards the camera. The background is a blurred stone wall, likely part of St. Peter's Basilica.

“The Lord God has plans for peace. Together for Lebanon”

Pope Francis, Saint Peter's Basilica
Thursday, 1 July 2021

“Let us not desist, let us not tire of imploring heaven for that peace which men and women find so difficult to build on earth. Let us insistently offer this prayer for the Middle East, and for **the beloved country of Lebanon, a treasury of civilization and spirituality that has radiated wisdom and culture down the centuries and bears witness to a singular experience of peaceful coexistence. Lebanon cannot be left prey to the course of events or those who pursue their own unscrupulous interests. It is a small yet great country, but even more, it is a universal message of peace and fraternity arising from the Middle East.**

“In these woeful times, we want to affirm with all our strength that Lebanon is, and must remain, a project of peace. Its vocation is to be a land of tolerance and pluralism, an oasis of fraternity where different religions and confessions meet, where different communities live together, putting the common good before their individual interests. [...] Stop using Lebanon and the Middle East for outside interests and profits! The Lebanese people must be given the opportunity to be the architects of a better future in their land, without undue interference.”



Lebanese Christians have a great devotion to St. Charbel Makhluf (1828-1898), a monk of the Lebanese Maronite Order, whose mortal remains are venerated in Lebanon in the monastery of St Marone in Annaya.

*“We believe that Saint Charbel will not let Lebanon collapse.
We entrust our homeland and our people to him.”*

Maronite Patriarch Bechara Boutros Al-Rai, July 18th 2021.



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