



AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

Maronite Eparchy welcomes bishops during jubilee year

MEDIA RELEASE

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More than 30 bishops concelebrated Mass at Our Lady of Lebanon Co-Cathedral on Sunday, taking part in ongoing celebrations for the 50th jubilee of the Maronite Eparchy in Australia.

Bishop Antoine-Charbel Tarabay was the principal celebrant for the Divine Liturgy, which was celebrated according to the Maronite Rite. He said the Maronite community was “privileged” to welcome the bishops, who are in Sydney for the biannual plenary meeting, during the jubilee year.

“What better way to celebrate a golden jubilee for our Eastern Catholic Eparchy in this great country than to come together as one in Christ to pray and to give thanks to Him who has gathered us in faith and communion all these years,” Bishop Tarabay said in his homily.

He shared some of the history of the Maronite Church in Australia, which dates back to the 1850s in South Australia, and saw its first parish established in 1897 in the Sydney suburb of Redfern.

It wasn’t until 1973 that the Eparchy was founded, though.

“Today, when we stand and look back at the last 50 years, we can only be grateful to the Lord for all His blessings,” Bishop Tarabay said.

Part of Sunday’s celebrations included the welcome of a specially designed reliquary containing relics of five saints: St Maroun, the spiritual father of the Maronite Church, as well as Sts Charbel, Rafqa and Nehmetallah, and Mary of the Cross MacKillop.

Parishioners and guests greeted the relics with joy, forming a guard of honour on the co-cathedral forecourt.

The Maronite Eparchy explained that welcoming the bishops of Australia and the Apostolic Nuncio in Australia, Archbishop Charles Balvo, “underscores the significance of this occasion as an opportunity for spiritual renewal and hope for the wider Catholic Church”.

Australian Catholic Bishops Conference president Archbishop Timothy Costelloe SDB said the bishops of Australia were grateful to the Maronite community for their prayerful welcome and hospitality.

“Our visit to the vibrant parish of Our Lady of Lebanon offered a glimpse into the life of the Maronite Eparchy in Australia as it celebrates its 50-year jubilee,” he said.

“The Church in Australia has been enriched by our Eastern Rite churches, allowing us to breathe with the two lungs of East and West.

“We pray that our connections will continue to deepen as we carry out God’s mission in this country.”