



Eastern Catholic Churches

The Maronite Church of Antioch

Maronite

The Maronite Church of Antioch, Liturgical family: *Antiochene*

1. Cultural Background of Adherents

Countries of origin and history of migration to Australia

The first migrants came to Australia in the 1880s. The first Maronite priest came to Sydney in 1895 and established a Church in Redfern – St Maron’s. Few families migrated to Australia before the Second World War.

The second wave of migration took place after the Second World War. This brought whole families from the north of Lebanon and new parishes were established in Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide and Brisbane. The Melbourne parish was established in 1955 by Monsignor Paul El-Koury, the first parish priest. In 1974, the Maronite Diocese in Australia was formed with the appointment of Archbishop Abdo Khalife as Maronite Bishop of Australia. He was appointed by Pope Paul VI.

Due to the civil war in Lebanon that began in 1975 a third wave of Lebanese migrants came to Australia. During this time, religious orders of Maronite priests and nuns have been established throughout Australia.

Most of the new arrivals to the Maronite parish are from Lebanon, though some are from Syria, Egypt and parts of the Middle East.

The language used in the Liturgy

The liturgical language of the Maronite Church is Aramaic, a language that is now used a few parts of the liturgy. The main language of the Maronite Church is Arabic, but in Australia, English has become the main language for Liturgy.

2. Liturgical Seasons



The beginning of the liturgical year in the Maronite Church occurs on the first Sunday of November and is marked by 'the consecration and renewal of the Church'.

The Season of the Glorious Birth of the Lord

This is a season of preparation for the birth of Christ which includes:

1. Renewal and consecration of the Church
2. Announcement to Zachariah
3. Announcement to the Virgin Mary
4. Visitation to Elizabeth
5. Birth of John the Baptist
6. Revelation to Joseph
7. Genealogy Sunday
8. Glorious Birth of the Lord
9. Finding of the Lord in the Temple
10. New Year's Day – World Day of Peace

The Season of Epiphany

This season commemorates the Baptism of Jesus in the Jordan by John the Baptist. The Syriac word for epiphany is 'Denho'. It has the same meaning as apparition and manifestation. It celebrates the betrothal between Christ and his people and is seen as a 'new passage'. It is the passage through water for a new people (the Church) toward a new promised land (the Kingdom). The season begins on January 6. Its duration varies from four to seven weeks according to the date of Easter each year. The weeks include: Epiphany, Sunday of the Priests, Sunday of the Righteous and the Just, and Sunday of the Faithful Departed. On the Epiphany, people bring bottles of water to the church for a blessing ceremony during the liturgy. Many children are baptised and confirmed on this day. Parishioners' homes are usually blessed during this season.

The Season of the Great Fast (Lent and Holy Week)

This season begins on **Ash Monday** and calls Christians to repentance through prayer, fasting and abstinence and acts of charity. Fasting usually lasts until midday each day in Lent. It means no food or drink until 12 noon unless one is sick. Many people also give up meat, dairy products, and food cooked in oil. The season is marked by a special call to prayer which includes the Stations of the Cross, special Lenten devotions, special hymns and prayers in the liturgy, and the celebration of the Mystery of Reconciliation. The Sundays are: Cana Sunday, Sunday of the Man with Leprosy, Sunday of the Haemorrhaging Woman, Sunday of the Prodigal Son, Sunday of the Man who was Paralysed and Sunday of the Blind. The season of the Great Fast culminates in Holy Week. Holy Week is characterised by solemn chants and processions during the liturgy. Each of the following days has a specific focus:

Hosanna Sunday (Palm Sunday) celebrates the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem. This is a special children's day. All children carry candles or olive branches, and are led in procession around the church by their parents or godparents. It marks the beginning of Hosanna Week.

Thursday of Mysteries (Holy Thursday) commemorates the Last Supper and the washing of the feet of



the disciples.

Great Friday (Good Friday) the liturgy incorporates the Adoration of the Cross and the Liturgy of the Burial of the Lord. People bring flowers to the service as they would to a funeral, and ladies generally wear black. The ceremony incorporates prayers, readings, a procession, the burial and the Adoration of the Cross. Special food is prepared for meals on Good Friday.

The Season of Resurrection and Pentecost

This season celebrates the Resurrection of Jesus and the new life gained through it. It begins with the Easter Vigil. It is a time of great rejoicing and includes special music and hymns in the liturgy. The Cross, buried in the flowers brought for Great Friday, is carried in a procession in the church during the Easter Vigil liturgy. The ritual of removing the Cross from its burial place symbolises resurrection and the empty tomb. The flowers from Great Friday are distributed to the people. The celebration marks the end of the fast.

Ascension Thursday is celebrated forty days after the Resurrection.

The feast of Pentecost completes the Easter celebration of new life in the spirit and water is blessed to symbolise this new life. The ceremony recalls the gifts of the Holy Spirit. The water is used by people to bless themselves and their homes.

The Season of Pentecost

This season celebrates the establishment of the Church. It commemorates the missionary activity of the apostles and the teachings of the prophets. It includes: Trinity Sunday; Memorials of the Lord's Resurrection; Angels; Prophets, the Just, and Confessors; Bishops, Priests, Doctors and Monks; the Virgin Mary, Mother of God; the Faithful Departed; the Apostles Peter and Paul; the Twelve Apostles; the Transfiguration; the Assumption.

The Season of the Exaltation of the Life-giving Cross

In this season we celebrate and remember that through the life-giving Cross, Jesus saved all people and overcame darkness by spreading light over the world.

This season begins on September 14th and concludes the liturgical year during the last week of October.

3. Significant Feast Days and Holy Days of Obligation

The following are some of the significant days for Maronite Catholics:

- **Baptism of Jesus** January 6
- **St Joseph** – March 19
- **St Maron** – February 9



- **St John Maron** – March 2
- **Saint Rafka** – March 23
- **St Charbel** – 3rd Sunday in July
- **Transfiguration** – August 6
- **Saint Nemtallah** – December 14

Feast Days for the Maronite Parish in Victoria

In Our Lady of Lebanon Maronite parish, the main parish celebration is the feast of the Assumption on August 15th. There is a nine-day preparation for this feast which includes fasting. The celebration is usually the main Sunday liturgy followed by a parish luncheon. St Charbel is a significant feast day for Maronites, especially the Lebanese. It is celebrated on the third Sunday of July. St Maron is the patron.

Orders of Priests and Nuns

The Maronite Rite has many Orders of priests and Nuns. In Melbourne The Antonine Order is represented by the Antonine Sisters who came to work in the Parish in 1980. The Sisters run the Child Care Centre, Antonine College and Saint Paul's Hostel. The Antonine Monks arrived in 1998 and they minister in the Parish with Diocesan Clergy.

In Sydney The Lebanese Maronite Order, The Lebanese Missionary Order (Kreimists), and the Holy Family Sisters work in different Parishes and Offer different ministries.

4. The Reception of Mysteries (Sacraments)

Initiation Mysteries

Baptism

Through the Mystery of Baptism a person is washed clean of Adam's sin and becomes part of the priestly community, a child of God, brother of Jesus, temple of the Holy Spirit, and a sharer in the divine life.

Chrismation (Confirmation)

The celebration of the Mystery of Chrismation seals the call to life for, in and through Christ, and intensifies what Baptism begins. This mystery is administered at Baptism.

Eucharist

The Eucharist is the centre of life and source of nourishment for all Christians. It is a means of power to witness, worship God and serve others. It helps the initiated Christian reach the promised glory and is



the sign and cause of unity. Baptism begins the process of divinisation, Chrismation perfects it and Eucharist fulfils it.

Healing Mysteries

Reconciliation

This mystery has a communal aspect since the healing of the Church occurs through the reconciliation of its individual members. The penitent confesses sins, receives absolution, forgiveness and spiritual healing. Then penance is given.

Anointing of the Sick

This mystery is given when a Christian is seriously ill. The Divine Physician (Jesus) is called upon to heal, forgive and restore the sick person.

Commitment Mysteries

Crowning

This mystery unites a man and a woman in the sacred union of love. It establishes a life-long covenant and intimate relationship between the couple and Christ, the Bridegroom.

Holy Orders

The mystery of Holy Orders manifests a continuation of the divine priesthood of Christ. Its goals are to serve at the altar, administer the mysteries and to build the Church.

