

## Media Release 06.08.2020

### ACN Australia Launches National Emergency Appeal for Lebanon

The Australian office of the international Catholic charity *Aid to the Church in Need* (ACN) has launched a national emergency appeal for Lebanon, requesting prayers for victims and their families, and raising funds in the wake of the deadly explosion in Beirut on the 4th of August, which has killed at least 135 people, injured 5000 and decimated the capital city. The funds that are raised will be used to support the most urgent needs in Lebanon (such as emergency food packages) but they will also respond to the physical and spiritual needs that arise in the coming weeks, months and years.

ACN is grateful that the appeal has been given the endorsement and support of Bishop Antoine-Charbel Tarabay of the Maronite Catholic Diocese of Australia and Bishop Robert Rabbat of the Melkite Catholic Eparchy of Australia and New Zealand.

In launching the appeal, the National Director of ACN Australia, Mr Bernard Toutounji, is asking the Catholic people - and all people of goodwill - to offer a prayer and a donation for the Lebanese people. "Australians love the Lebanese people, who have been an integral part of this nation since the 19<sup>th</sup> century; indeed almost 250,000 Australians claim some Lebanese ancestry. Lebanese Australians have, and continue to, contribute significantly to our civic, religious and business fabric. The explosion in Beirut has devastated the lives of our Lebanese brothers and sisters, and we feel their pain today. I appeal to the Catholic and wider community to support the people of Lebanon with their prayers and financial resources. The sort of carnage we have witnessed cannot be fixed overnight, this will take years, and even though all of us are currently living through the stress of the coronavirus pandemic, we must put ourselves in solidarity with Lebanon and her sons and daughters."

Bishop Tarabay, the spiritual leader of 160,000 Maronites in Australia, expressed his gratitude for the appeal. "I give my blessing to this national appeal. ACN has been on the ground in Lebanon for many, many years working with the priests, religious and the people to keep the faith alive. Our people have suffered so much for so long, but I know Australians will be carrying them in their prayers and I thank them for anything they can do to help us."

Bishop Rabbat leads the 50,000 Melkite Catholics of Australia, many of whom are themselves Lebanese. "This is a shocking situation, this is the land of my own birth, and I mourn with the people of Lebanon. I am conscious though that in this month we will commemorate the Dormition (Assumption) of the Mother of God, so we must pray that the Theotokos will bring hope and healing in the lives of all those who have been affected. For those who have died, memory eternal! I thank everyone for supporting this appeal."

Founded in 1947, *Aid to the Church in Need* has long-term and trusted project partners on the ground in Lebanon, and around the world. These project partners are already providing

vital information as to where resources are most needed and how they can be most effectively used. ACN supports more than 5000 projects annually around the world and all are undertaken with strict processes of accountability and transparency in place.

To donate to ACN's National Emergency Appeal for Lebanon visit: [www.aidtochurch.org/lebanon](http://www.aidtochurch.org/lebanon) or call ACN on **1800 101 201** during business hours, 8am-5pm, AEST.

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