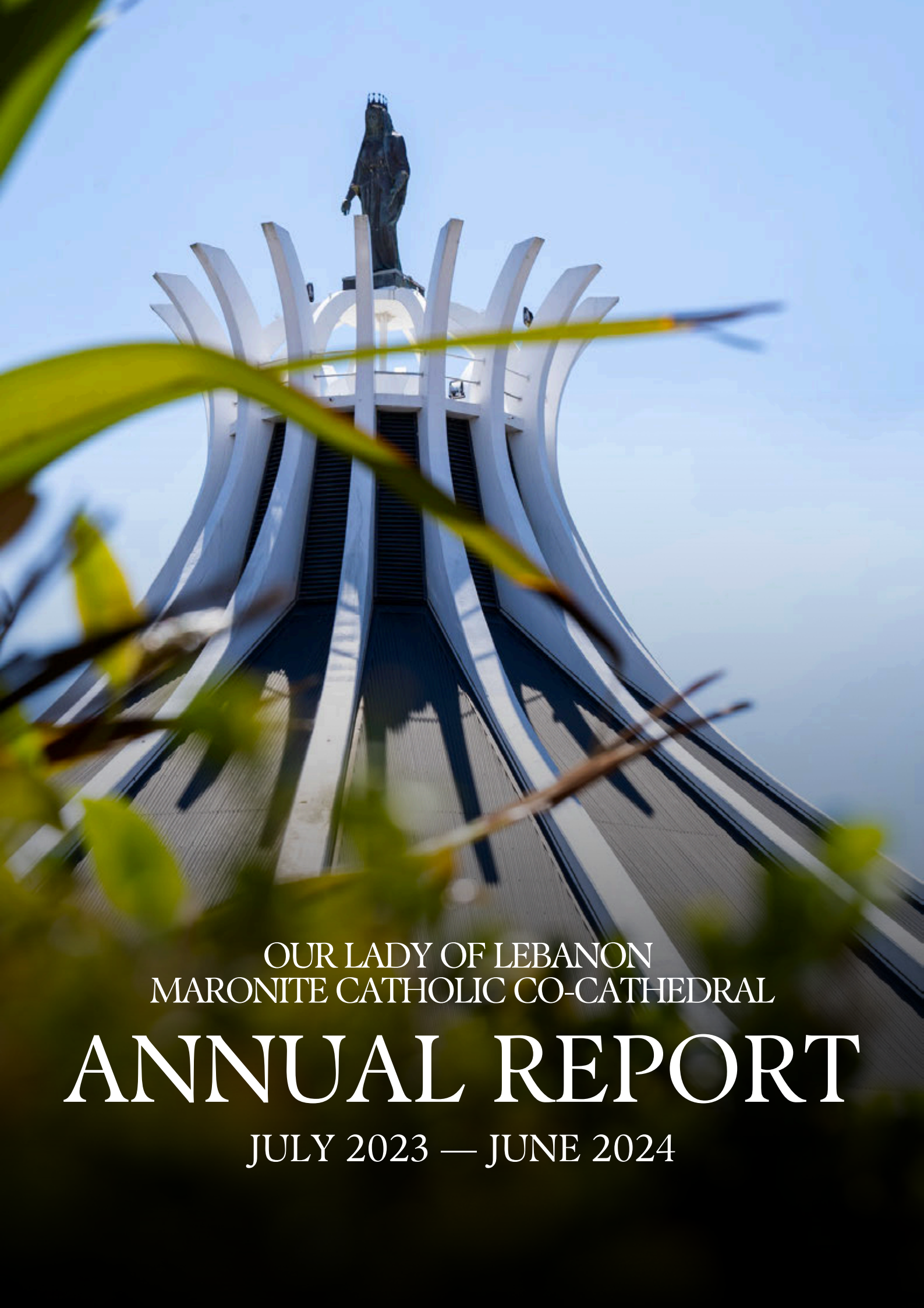




OUR LADY OF LEBANON  
MARONITE CATHOLIC CO-CATHEDRAL

# ANNUAL REPORT

JULY 2023 — JUNE 2024



*"O holy Virgin Mary, O beautiful lily and fragrant rose, the fragrance of your holiness has filled the universe. Pray for us, that we may become the sweet fragrance of Christ that spreads throughout the world."*

Etro - Maronite Liturgy



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# MESSAGE FROM *our* BISHOP

Dear Members of Our Lady of Lebanon Parish,

It is with joy and gratitude that I write this message for Our Lady of Lebanon's Annual Report which we present to the community to reflect on another remarkable year in our beloved parish. Over the past year, we continued to witness the vibrant life of our community, underscored by a dedication to our faith and rich heritage, and the continuity of our mission as Maronite Catholics.

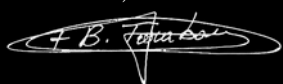
We celebrated several significant events and milestones. We were honoured by the visit of our Patriarch, His Beatitude and Eminence Mar Bechara Boutros Cardinal Rai, to Australia and to Our Lady of Lebanon Co-Cathedral, as part of his visit to celebrate the Golden Jubilee of our Maronite Eparchy in Australia. During his brief time in Sydney, he visited the precinct several times. The highlight was Eucharistic Adoration at the Co-Cathedral, where he prayed with us for Lebanon and Australia. The evening represented a profound connection with our homeland and our Maronite identity. It was a reminder of the critical importance of our faith and the unity needed for the greater Glory of God.

The parish was also blessed to host the relics of the Maronite and Australian Saints in the Golden Jubilee reliquary, multiple times, during the year. Additionally, we unveiled the new statue of our Blessed Mother on the Feast of the Assumption in 2023, which is set to replace the current statue atop of the Co-Cathedral. The concluding mass of the Golden Jubilee in December last year marked a fitting end to a year filled with spiritual enrichment featuring countless social, spiritual, and pastoral events that have strengthened our faith, bonds and traditions.

A significant milestone of the past 12 months was the purchase, in May, of a church in Guildford to be dedicated to St Rita. This acquisition signifies a physical expansion and importantly a deepening of our mission to serve and nurture our growing community. In June, the parish launched the Our Lady of Lebanon Masterplan, ensuring facilities and resources can cater to the needs of the next 50 years. Just as our predecessors did for us and our children, we will do for future generations. This landmark event exemplifies how together, as an Eparchy and parishes, we can achieve remarkable things and create an incredible legacy. Among the significant events was the announcement of Fr Danny Nough as Dean of the Cathedral, a role in which he has already shown great leadership. I wish to thank Fr Youwakim Noujaim who stepped into the role of Acting Dean prior to this appointment and fulfilled the responsibilities with passion and dedication.

I thank all the clergy of Our Lady of Lebanon, both past and present, who have tirelessly served our community and continue to work hand in hand with the Stewardship Committee, the Parish Pastoral Council, the various committees and groups and the beloved community of the parish. The fruits of your efforts are a beautiful testament to the bonds of community and spirituality and a vibrant example of the Holy Spirit at work, with positive signs of growth and vitality. Thank you for your continued support and commitment to your parish. Let us draw upon the wisdom and grace of our Holy Mother, Our Lady of Lebanon, as we continue to work together to build upon the foundation laid by our predecessors for generations to come.

In God's love,



+ Antoine-Charbel Tarabay  
Maronite Bishop of Australia, New Zealand and Oceania









# MESSAGE FROM *our* DEAN

Beloved Parishioners of Our Lady of Lebanon Parish,

With immense joy and pride, we present to you the annual report of our parish over the last year, 2023 – 2024. Our story has been a fruitful journey of faith, hope and love as we continued to minister to the spiritual and pastoral needs of our parish family and visitors.

The year that passed was marked with many milestones. From the Jubilee Year celebrations including the tour of the relics of Saints throughout the year and the visit of our Patriarch in September, to the acquisition of a Church in Guildford to be dedicated to Saint Rita, and the unveiling of our Masterplan, Our Lady of Lebanon Co-Cathedral parish is truly a thriving and growing hub of spiritual and pastoral activity. Over 20 committees and groups working with our bishop, clergy, religious sisters, stakeholders and parishioners, to faithfully and effectively serve our community.

Spiritually, we continue to minister the sacraments to the largest number of Maronites in the Southern Hemisphere. The sacraments are at the core of our priestly mission and in the last year we celebrated more than 1200 Masses, 251 Baptisms, 56 marriages, 197 children receiving their first Holy Communion and 126 funerals. The parish committees, specifically the Sodality of the Immaculate Conception, with its 300 members, and all the various prayer groups, carry us all in their prayers.

With 173 children enrolled in Fersen Al Adra, 263 enrolled in Teens, 137 enrolled in Arabic school, as well as the Men and Women faith formation groups, bible study in English and Arabic provided by the Living Word and Family of the Divine Word, the prophetic mission of our Lord continues through the work of the new disciples who continue the evangelising apostolate, spreading and teaching the Word of God.

Our ministries to youth, families, and seniors have flourished as well, providing essential support and community for each group and every stage in life. The Heaven on Earth ministry is a cornerstone of our parish's commitment to social justice, playing a vital role in supporting and sustaining the homeless and those facing hardships. By embodying our mission to manifest love and care in tangible ways, this ministry reflects the heart of our faith in action.

Our mission is underscored by the dedication of our Stewardship Committee and staff. In the last financial year, the parish underwent a comprehensive review of its organisational structure to enhance efficiency. An ongoing review of our systems, policies, and procedures ensures that we uphold best practice in serving our community with transparency and accountability.

Pastorally, we have initiated the Strategic Planning process to address the future needs of our growing parish over the next 10 years and beyond.

Together with our Masterplan, this Pastoral Plan will provide a visionary blueprint that charts the course of our future. Although we have accomplished much in the last 50 years, there is still a lot of work ahead. As we look to the future, it is imperative that we continue to work hand-in-hand to bring this plan to fruition. Together, we can ensure Our Lady of Lebanon remains a beacon of faith, hope and love for generations to come.



Finally, I extend my deepest gratitude to all who have contributed their time, talents and resources to Our Lady of Lebanon Co-Cathedral parish.

My thanks to His Excellency Bishop Antoine-Charbel Tarabay for his wisdom, vision, and leadership, and for placing his trust in us.

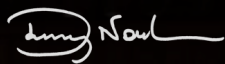
A heartfelt thank you to the clergy of Our Lady, who keep watch day and night; your dedication to serving our parish is truly invaluable. We are blessed with a remarkable team, and together with Bishop Tarabay, you bring everything together.

My appreciation also goes to the Maronite Sisters of the Holy Family for their unwavering support, as well as our parish and chancery staff, committees, sponsors, and parishioners.

As we reflect on the past year, our accomplishments stand as a testament to the commitment and faith of our entire parish community. Your continued support, prayers, and contributions are what make our vibrant community a reality.

Looking ahead, we remain committed to our mission of serving God and our community with renewed vigour and enthusiasm. Together, we will continue to grow and thrive, guided by our patroness, Our Lady of Lebanon.

Yours in Christ,



Father Danny Nough



# ABOUT *us*

The history of Our Lady of Lebanon Co-Cathedral in Sydney, Australia, is a testament to the faith and dedication of the Maronite community. It began on 12 January 1968, when Monsignor Peter Amin Ziade returned from Lebanon with the vision to build a Church, a presbytery, a school, and a hall in Parramatta. After searching for a suitable property, the Church Committee successfully located a piece of land with a beautiful, elevated view in Harris Park. The Our Lady of Lebanon (OLOL) Parish was officially opened on 6 August 1968.

Once the construction of the Church began in 1970, it ignited an overwhelming sense of enthusiasm in the hearts of many Maronite people. On Palm Sunday, 22 March 1970, more than 10,000 Maronites gathered on the site of the Church to welcome Cardinal Gilroy and to celebrate with palms, olive branches and candles. On this day, Monsignor Ziade and the Cardinal blessed and laid the foundation stone.

On 10 December 1972, Our Lady of Lebanon's hall and school were blessed and officially opened. From December 1972 until 1978, the hall was used to celebrate Mass while the development of the Church complex continued. On 6 August 1978, the Church was officially opened and blessed by Archbishop Abdo Khalifé. The newly constructed Church was about 20m high with a statue of Our Lady that sits on top of the Church. Inspired by a cathedral in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, it is a single-storey structure starting at 4m and transforming into a peak that reaches 20m, creating an architectural structure resembling a hyperbolic crown.

On 6 March 2012, the Community, Youth and Pastoral Centre was blessed and opened by Bishop Ad Abikaram, the third Maronite Bishop of Australia, and Premier Barry O'Farrell. The Centre was opened to serve the needs of all generations of the Maronite and wider community.

On 11 October 2014, the Vatican officially elevated Our Lady of Lebanon Church's status to Co-Cathedral in the presence of Bishop Antoine-Charbel Tarabay and Archbishop Paul Gallagher, Apostolic Nuncio to Australia. The elevation was due to the parish's size and significance to the Maronites in Sydney.

Today, the Co-Cathedral caters for the largest Maronite Catholic Parish in Australia, which has more than quadrupled in the last few decades to over 40,000 people. The Co-Cathedral continues to maintain a tight-knit community that plays a critical role in preserving the Maronite Catholic faith, Arabic language, and Lebanese culture for future generations.

More than 22 scheduled masses are celebrated at the Co-Cathedral every week, attended by approximately 10,000 parishioners, as well as special masses, memorials, funerals, weddings, baptisms, and holy communions.

It is a thriving hub of activity on any given day, featuring a community, youth, and pastoral centre, a childcare centre, an Arabic school, and a residential aged care home, all adjoining the Maronite College of the Holy Family, an independent co-educational school for primary and secondary education.

OLOL Co-Cathedral is a vibrant parish, actively encouraging the growth of the Maronite community by serving the needs of all generations through over 20 committees and groups. These include the Stewardship Committee, Pastoral Council, Sodality of the Immaculate Conception, Seniors Group, Maronite Youth Organisation, Fersen Al Adra, OLOL Flame Teens, and many others. OLOL Heaven on Earth also coordinates weekly homeless feeds in Parramatta and undertakes various initiatives to support the needy both in Australia and overseas.



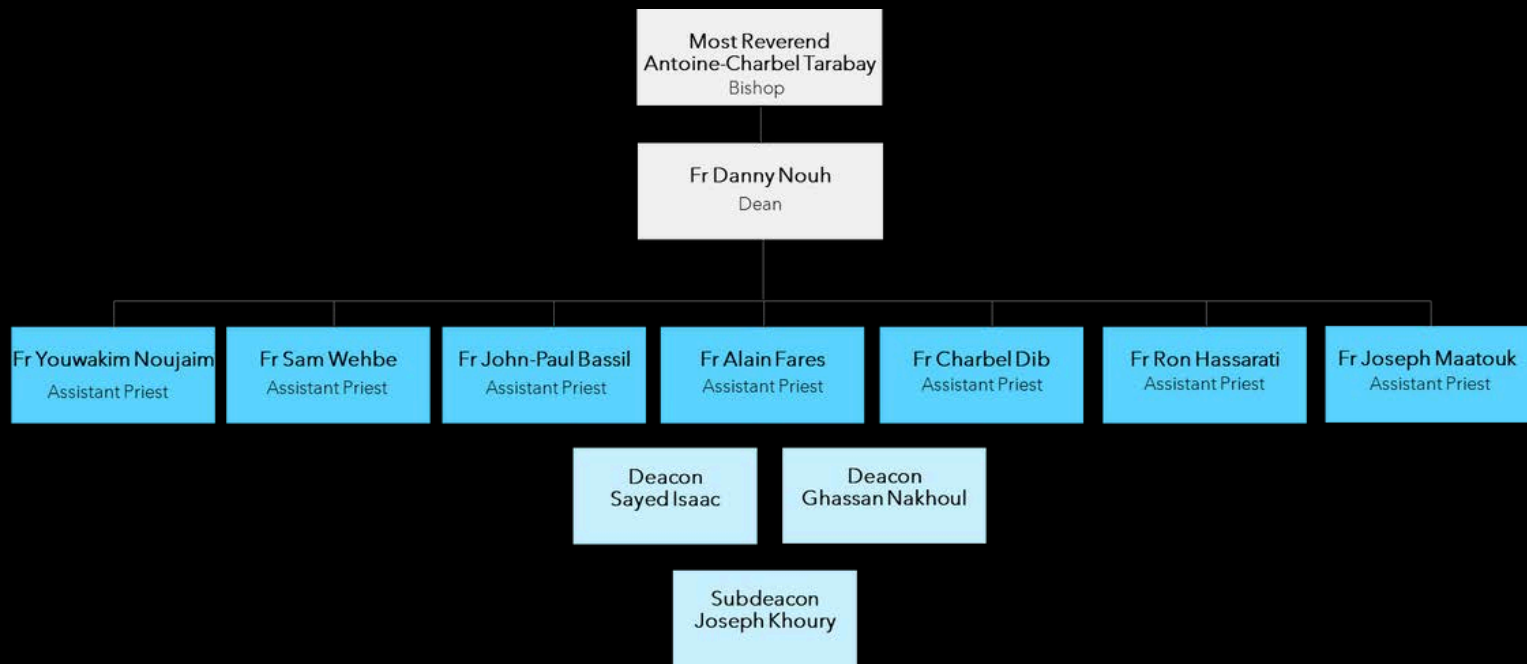








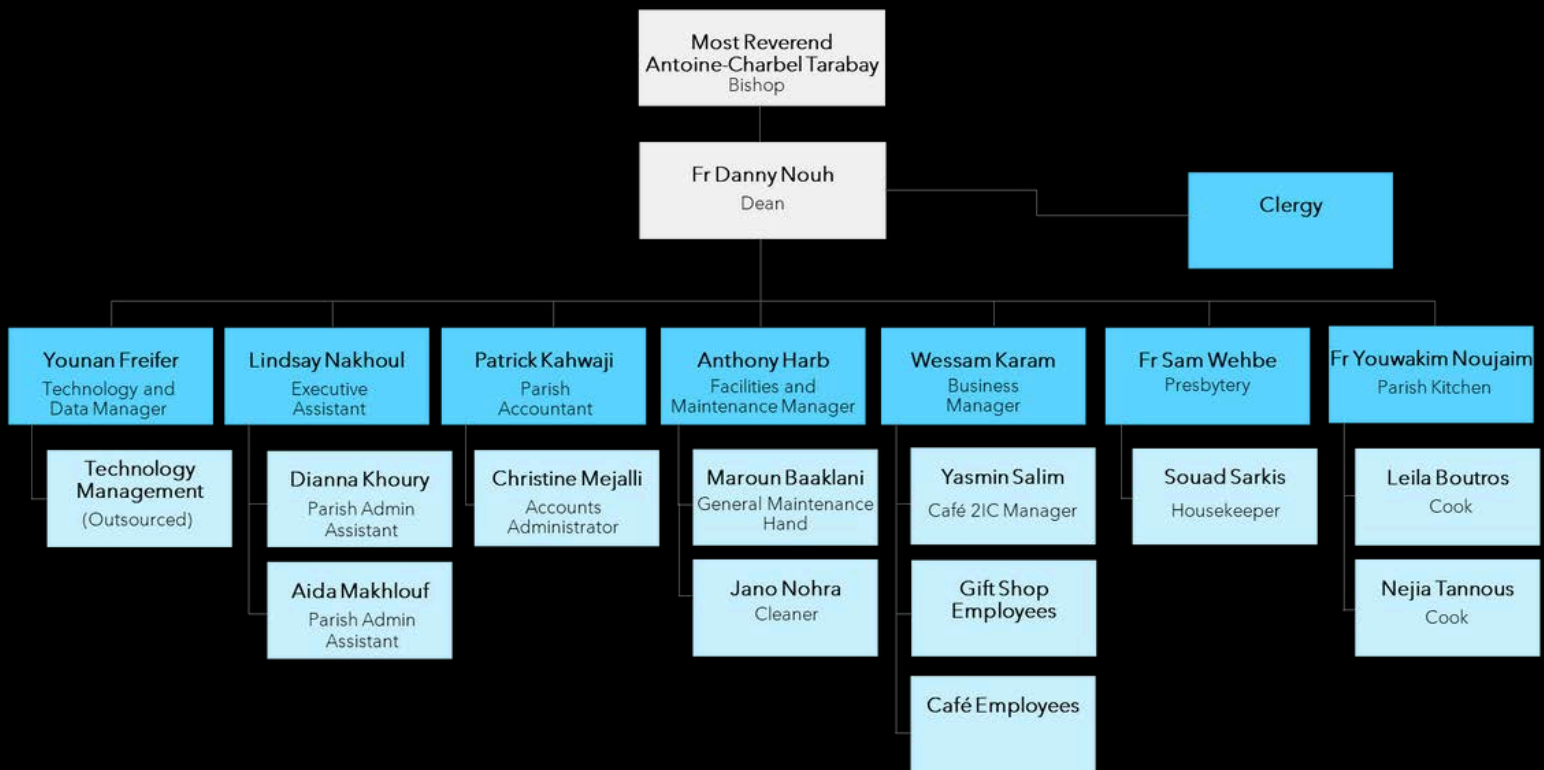
# PARISH *clergy*





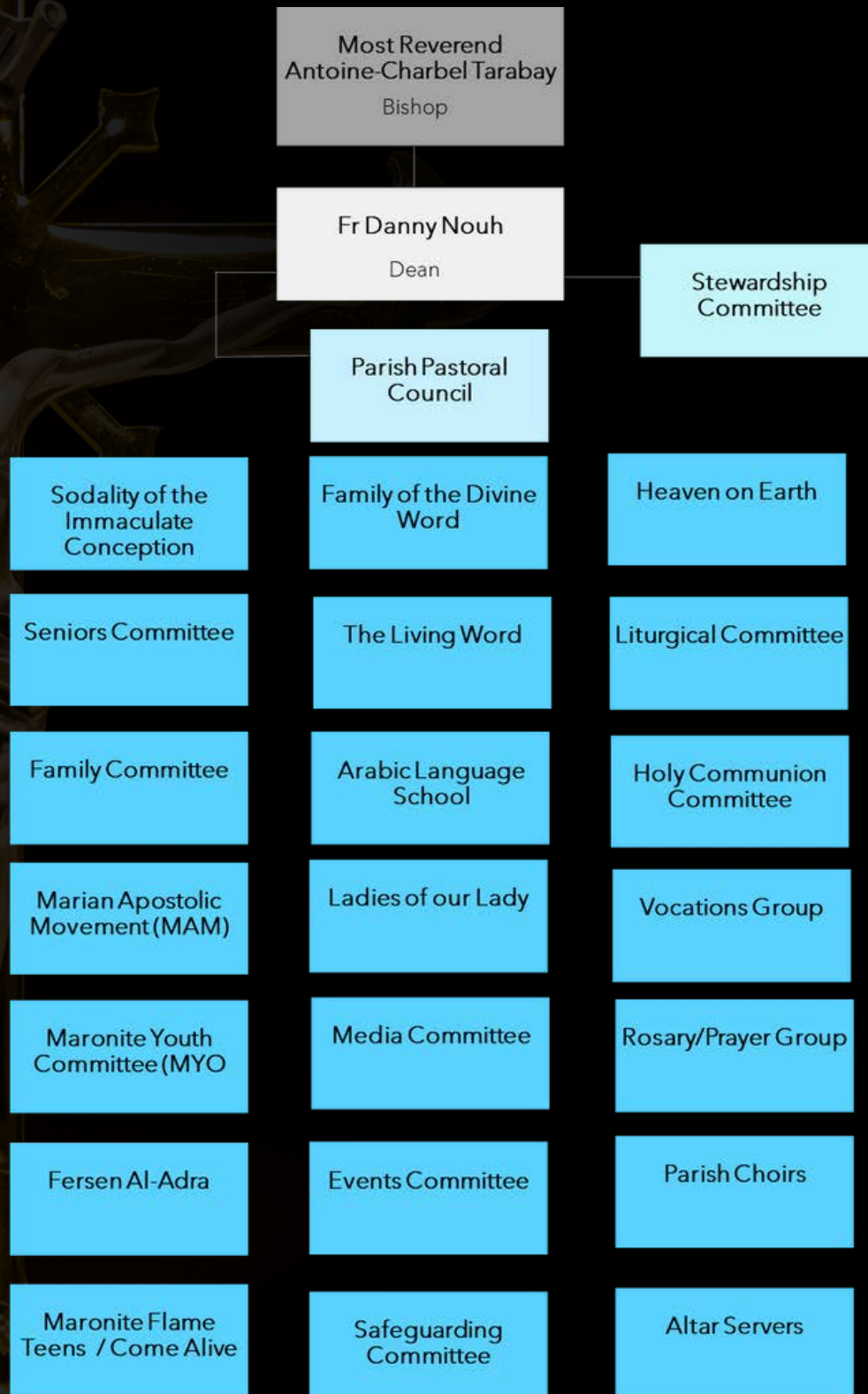


# ORGANISATIONAL *structure*



# ORGANISATIONAL *structure*

## PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL





# PARISH *committees*





# STEWARDSHIP *committee*



Over the last financial year, the Stewardship Committee has provided support, counsel and collaboration with Bishop Antoine-Charbel Tarabay and the clergy in their mission of service to our parish community, and their mandate of sustaining our Co-Cathedral temporally in a spirit of custodian leadership, whilst focusing on the future of our parish. Our responsibilities included assisting with financials, asset and resource management, ensuring that parish operations and procedures remained optimised, with a commitment to proper and transparent financial reporting and fiscal processes.

Regarding our facilities and maintenance, we have worked to uphold our parish grounds, landscapes and facilities, including ongoing preventative and scheduled works to preserve the beauty of our cathedral precinct and improve the parishioner experience. Commercially, we have enhanced the revenue streams in the parish operated businesses, with more efficient operations and further advanced customer experiences in both the Gift Shop and Five Loaves Café. We have also improved our procurement processes to reduce costs in the current economic climate.

Organisationally, we have successfully implemented a restructure, which will remedy any previous skill-gaps highlighted across the various roles within the parish and also created new roles that will better serve the next chapter of our growing and developing parish operations and businesses. Our community engagement over the last year has been substantial, including productive meetings with numerous federal and state ministers, members of parliament, and local members from Parramatta City Council. We successfully advocated for the current and future needs of our community. Whilst advancing our interests, we were constantly cognisant of our need to renew our commitment to being active citizens of the wider and broader community. We remain dedicated to contributing positively to the fabric of our society and being examples of Christ's love and mercy in our everyday lives.



# PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL

The Parish Pastoral Council (PPC) is composed of members from all the committees within the parish. The PPC's focus is supporting the clergy with the pastoral care of the parish. During monthly meetings, the Council discusses the spiritual and pastoral needs of the parish, coordinates activities and events, shares updates and reviews previous parish activities. They also workshop ways to support the various committees and identify opportunities to enhance the parish's spiritual life and draw people to Christ. A key aspect of the PPC's work is setting the vision, which then informs the objectives of each committee.



## SODALITY OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

The Sodality of the Immaculate Conception is the first branch of the Marian family. Our objective is to deepen our faith and to live more fully with Mary as a role model. We aim to support our members and other family branches in their spiritual journey and activities.

Members of the Sodality meet for weekly prayer in Arabic on Sunday morning and English on Wednesday evening. On Sunday mornings, we also share a coffee after Mass and meet to discuss the week's activities.

The English-speaking Sodality group is a new initiative that was started to be inclusive of the community who wish to pray but are not fluent in Arabic. A Sodality prayer book is now available in Arabic and English so all can pray together.

Our ministry is twofold; spiritual and social. Sodality activities include prayer nights, adoration, rosary prior to weekly Mass, monthly rosary and Mass for the Apparition of Our Lady of Fatima on the 13th day of each month, month of May home visits and visits to sick parishioners, spiritual retreats and trips to various shrines.

Other activities include the monthly bakery where members and parishioners come together baking Lebanese sweets, bread and treats and raise money for charitable projects. The members come together also to make sweets for the various religious feast days. Lenten lunches this year saw many members and parishioners come together to support charities in Lebanon.

Fundraising for Church projects is also an important activity. Recently, this has included such things as the installation of the solar panels and the purchase of a car to be raffled during Feast Week.

We also visit and support the Sodality groups of other parishes and join them in celebrating with prayer.

The Sodality renew their vows every year on 8 December, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, where we also welcome new members into the Sodality during this celebration.





# THE LIVING WORD

The Living Word committee provides parish wide English Faith Formation. Now meeting weekly on Thursdays, this youth-led committee aims to provide formation on the Scriptures and Church teachings, with a strong devotion to Maronite traditions. Our initial series of talks this year focused on the theology and importance of prayer, as Pope Francis declared this year as 'The Year of Prayer'. The Living Word committee has also worked to produce an English prayer book for the parish, and aims to distribute it to the faithful at the Feast of the Assumption of Our Lady.



# VOCATION DISCERNMENT GROUP

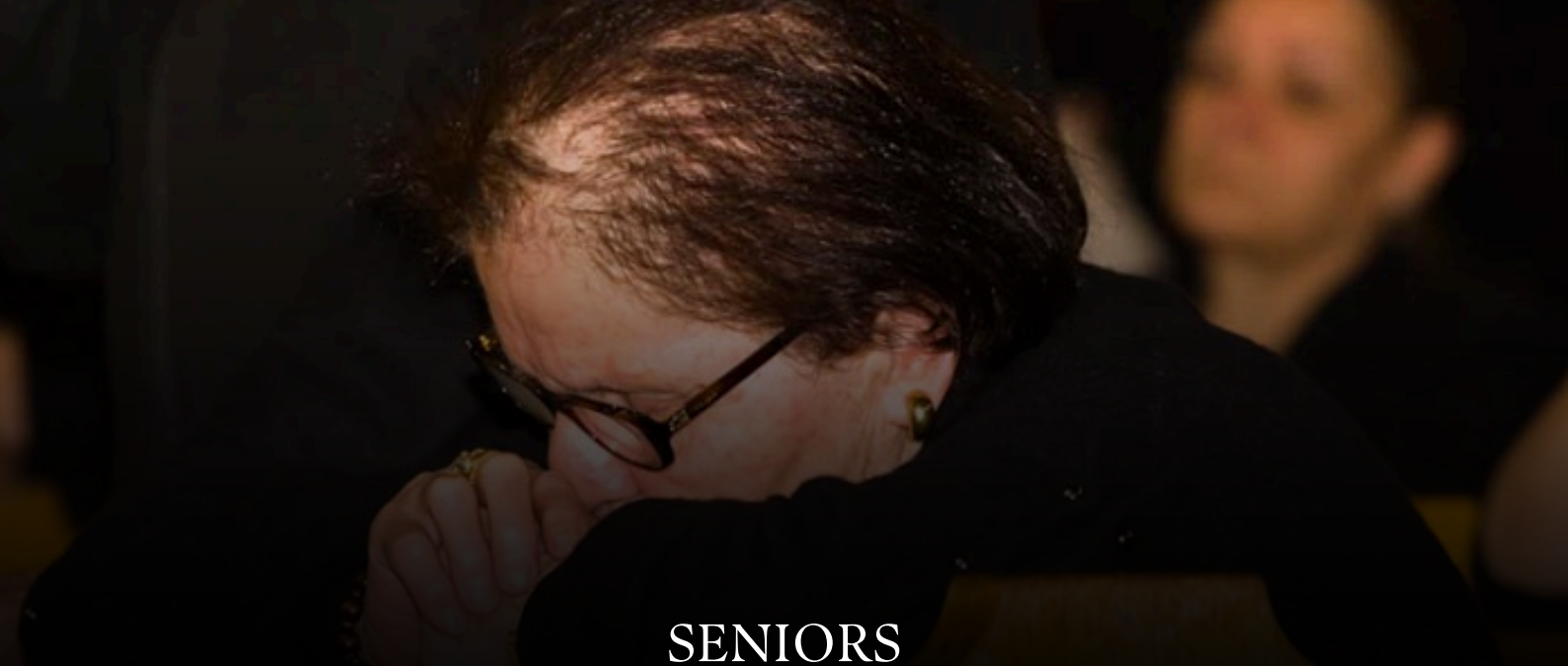
The purpose of the Our Lady of Lebanon Vocation Discernment Group is to help individuals discern their calling within the Church, whether that be to the priesthood, religious life, or marriage. This group provides spiritual guidance, prayer, fellowship and resources to assist members in understanding and responding to God's call in their lives. Our gatherings include prayer sessions, retreats, discussions and one-on-one mentorship. The group meets regularly and focuses on the Maronite spirituality in order to grow individually and together. Our goals include discernment, formation, vocation promotion and cultural heritage.

By engaging in these activities and embracing these goals, the Our Lady of Lebanon Vocation Discernment Group, under the guidance of our Bishop, Dean and Assistant Parish Priests, aims to nurture and guide individuals in their journey of faith and vocational discernment, enriching both their personal and spiritual lives and the wider Church community.









## SENIORS

The Seniors committee meets monthly and holds a seniors' gathering for parishioners every two weeks. The day begins with Mass, followed by lunch prepared by our committee. During the lunch, various activities are organised, including music and dancing, and screening of religious movies and documentaries. Excursions are also arranged twice a year and seniors' parties are held three times a year around the major feasts.

## HEAVEN ON EARTH

The Heaven on Earth committee is dedicated to aiding the homeless, supporting struggling families, visiting those in orphanages, jails, or the sick, and organising overseas aid in Lebanon and Fiji.

The committee's mission is to serve vulnerable members of the community by providing nourishment, support, and hope through initiatives like homeless feeds and international aid missions. These efforts aim to offer warmth, clothing, essential items, and a listening ear to help individuals regain their dignity and value.

Additionally, the overseas missions in Lebanon and Fiji provide financial and resource support to families, orphanages and nursing homes in need.

The committee's ultimate goal is to create a compassionate environment where everyone, regardless of their circumstances, can access the necessary resources and assistance to thrive in life.









## HOLY COMMUNION

The First Holy Communion Committee guides children on their faith journey, helping them to walk by faith and not by sight. Our mission is to prepare children to receive the Eucharist with understanding and reverence, fostering a lifelong relationship with God. We aim to instil in them the belief that, even though they may not see God working in their lives now, they can trust that He is preparing them for future blessings.

Over the past year, we have made significant strides in fulfilling our mission. The children from Our Lady of Lebanon Co-Cathedral Parish received the Sacrament of Reconciliation in March and then the First Holy Communion in June, at a blessed Mass celebrated by the Dean of our Cathedral, Fr Danny Nouh, and the First Holy Communion Committee's Chaplain, Fr Charbel Dib. In 2024, two Masses were celebrated, involving a total of 112 children.

The sacramental program spans five months, with sessions held every Wednesday afternoon for 1.5 hours. Additionally, we hold three parent sessions led by a priest or deacon, allowing parents to witness and reignite the flame within their hearts as they too prepare for this sacred sacrament, helping their children receive the true Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, our Saviour.

On the day of the celebration, over 1,800 parishioners, family members, and friends experienced the joy and participated in the Holy Mass, marking the beginning of a memorable journey for the children and everyone involved.









# MARONITE YOUTH ORGANISATION

The Maronite Youth Organisation (MYO) has a mission dedicated to fostering and strengthening the faith, commitment and fellowship of the youth of Our Lady of Lebanon Co-Cathedral. Knowing that the youth are the future of the parish, the MYO is committed to developing an environment where their spiritual needs are supported and nourished.

The youth committee hosted its first Night Market in October 2023 which saw over 1800 young people gathered together for a night of food and friendship, and raised over \$30,000 to fund various youth initiatives. A pre-Lenten retreat was held in February of 2024 for over 120 people with the theme “My presence will go with you and I will give you rest”. Other notable initiatives include Sunday night dinners, Youth Hour in First Friday Adoration, and our weekly faith-talk series on the Seven Mysteries.

A photograph of three young people, two women and one man, standing together and smiling. They are outdoors at night, with a brick wall and some foliage visible in the background. The image is slightly faded and serves as a background for the OLOL Flame Teens section.

## OLOL FLAME TEENS

Now is the most difficult time it has ever been to be a teenager. They face unique battles that no previous generation has encountered. It is more important now than ever that teens build a strong relationship with Christ and understand the teachings of our Maronite Catholic Church. Only through this can they stand firm in their faith and share the light of Christ with others. That is our aim at OLOL Flame Teens.

This past year has been a remarkable journey for OLOL Flame Teens, filled with faith, fellowship, and great memories. Starting with our Registration Day, we had over 250 teens register during a day with games, ice cream and inflatable sumo wrestling. In addition to our regular classes, we hosted many events to engage in their spiritual and social lives.

One highlight was our Berrima Road Trip, where we visited the Shrine of Our Lady of Mercy with 87 teens. We were overwhelmed with the number of teens who wanted to attend, leading us to arrange extra buses. The trip was a tremendous success, balancing both spiritual enrichment and social benefits.

Our dedicated team of over 20 leaders has worked consistently and tirelessly to spread the love of Christ and strengthen our teens in their Maronite faith. In April, we held a retreat for the teen leaders to keep our minds and hearts fixed on the Lord. We cannot give what we do not have, and the leaders must first build their relationship with God to effectively guide others.

Our ultimate goal is to inspire a passion and love for learning about God and His teachings in the hearts of the teens. This is primarily achieved through regular class attendance, where teaching and catechesis occur. Ultimately, we create an environment for teens to feel comfortable in developing their relationship with the Lord alongside other like-minded teens.









## FERSEN AL ADRA

Fersen Al Adra is the fourth and youngest branch of the Marian Family Sodality focusing on the spiritual formation of children. Our goal is to help them to know, live and love their Maronite Catholic faith through the example of Mary, Mother of God.

This year, Fersen Al Adra has made significant strides in deepening our impact and expanding our reach, with over 170 children enrolled and 18 actively participating leaders, allowing us to touch even more lives with God's love. Our team has worked tirelessly to develop and implement both existing and new initiatives, including our monthly Fersen Masses, Fersen Fridays Posts, Mary home visits in May, Palm Sunday procession, Mother's Day workshop, and our very first Disco Party.

As we look to the future, we are excited to build upon our progress and continue serving the next generation with passion and dedication. We are grateful for the support and collaboration that has made our achievements possible and look forward to another productive year ahead.









# ARABIC SCHOOL

The Our Lady of Lebanon Arabic School is a member of the NSW Federation of Community Language Schools Inc and is recognised for teaching the Arabic language, heritage and culture through the skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing, using traditional and interactive learning programs in collaboration with NESAs (NSW Education Standards Authority). There are twelve qualified teachers catering for both primary students (K-6) and high school students (7-12). Classes are offered on Monday afternoons and Saturday mornings during the school terms. There are eight classes ranging from beginners to advanced where each class caters for students according to their ability. Students are supported to showcase their Arabic language skills by participating in parish and multicultural performances such as singing, dancing and drama. Adult Arabic classes are offered on Tuesday nights too. Furthermore, the parish encourages students to have pride in their Lebanese culture and heritage and to communicate in Arabic with their family, friends, parish and community in Australia and abroad.

## LOL FAMILY COMMITTEE

Inspired by the Holy Family of Nazareth, the Family Committee embodies the truth and beauty of the Maronite Catholic faith, nurturing a deep sense of belonging within our church, community, and society. Our mission is to strengthen familial and marital spirituality through thoughtful planning, organisation, and promotion of family-oriented spiritual, social, and community initiatives within the parish.

Our activities are diverse, ranging from delightful family brunches following the 9:30 am Sunday mass to our annual picnic, Renewal of Marriage Vows ceremony, and Family Fun Day during the Assumption Feast Week. We also celebrate Father's Day with a special bacon & eggs brunch, host Online Family Rosary sessions, and offer enriching retreats for married couples and family spiritual days, designed to renew and strengthen their faith bonds.

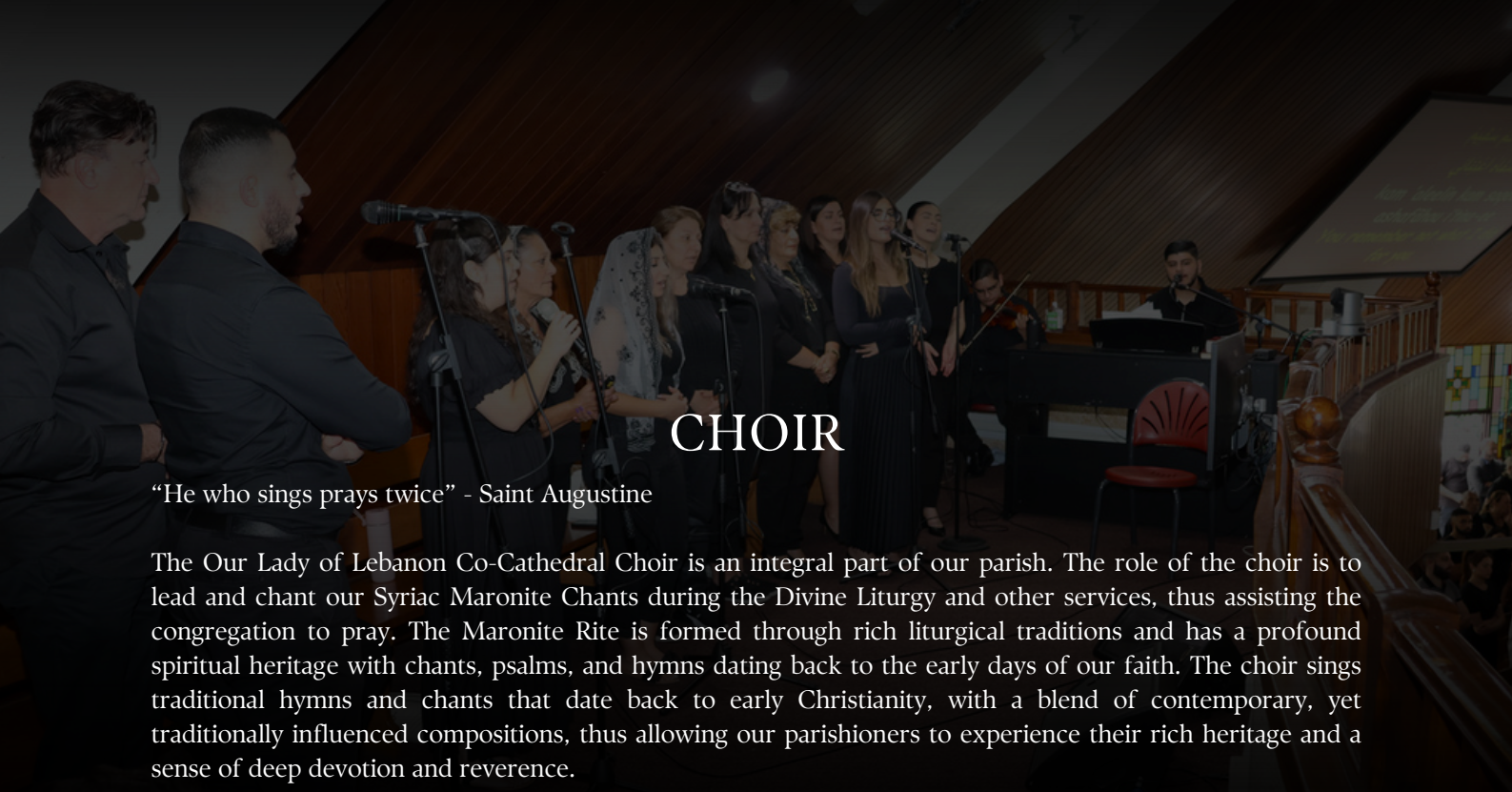
Central to our efforts is the long-standing Men and Women Faith Formation program, fostering enduring fellowship and friendship for over a decade. Recently, our Mother-Daughter Brunch received significant acclaim, reflecting our commitment to creating meaningful connections.

Collaborating closely with the Youth and Teens Committee, we forge strong relationships, working together with unity of heart and mind, echoing the spirit of St. Paul's exhortation to the Philippians: "Make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others" (Philippians 2:2-4).







A photograph of a choir performing in a church sanctuary. The choir members, both men and women, are dressed in dark, formal attire. They are standing in a line, singing into microphones. In the background, a piano and other church furniture are visible. The lighting is warm and focused on the choir.

## CHOIR

“He who sings prays twice” - Saint Augustine

The Our Lady of Lebanon Co-Cathedral Choir is an integral part of our parish. The role of the choir is to lead and chant our Syriac Maronite Chants during the Divine Liturgy and other services, thus assisting the congregation to pray. The Maronite Rite is formed through rich liturgical traditions and has a profound spiritual heritage with chants, psalms, and hymns dating back to the early days of our faith. The choir sings traditional hymns and chants that date back to early Christianity, with a blend of contemporary, yet traditionally influenced compositions, thus allowing our parishioners to experience their rich heritage and a sense of deep devotion and reverence.

At OLOL Co-Cathedral, there are five Sunday choirs, the 8am Arabic Choir, 9:30am Family Choir, 11am Arabic Choir, 5pm Choir, and the 7pm Youth Choir. Each choir consists of talented singers and musicians of various ages who offer their time and talent to their parish, and ultimately, to give praise to God who is the ultimate goal of our service. On feast days and events, the choirs join together to lead the congregation in prayer, uplifting the Maronite Liturgy to the most-worthy standard. As our parish continues to grow, the choir will always provide a unique opportunity to deepen every individual's faith, develop their musical talent, and be part of a thriving community of worshippers.

## FAMILY OF THE DIVINE WORD

The Family of the Divine Word (FDW) holds weekly bible study sessions in Arabic every Tuesday evening. The main theme of this year's program is “My grace is sufficient for you” (2 Cor 12:9). It is based on the spirit of Pope Francis's 2024 “Year of Prayer” theme for the Catholic Church. Throughout the year, we use biblical texts to reflect on the numerous graces in our lives. We also contemplate the lives of our Maronite Saints and some biblical figures from both Testaments to better comprehend the grace of God in their lives and how we might learn from them. Pope Francis exhortations, ‘On Confidence’ and ‘Amoris Laetitia’, have also been included in our 2024 program.

For the first time since its inception in 2009, FDW convened this year its First General Conference during the Great Lent, under the patronage of His Excellency Bishop Antoine-Charbel Tarabay, and the participation of OLOL Dean, Fr Danny Nouh. The conference day was an occasion to reflect on FDW's journey, evaluate its goals as a group that aspires to live according to the Gospel, and plan for the future.

In addition to its weekly bible study nights, FDW hosts an annual two-day retreat. The theme of this year's retreat was “Is the Kingdom of God a grace or merit?” The main speaker was FDW Founder, Sr Rose-Therese Tannous, from the Maronite Sisters of the Holy Family.







## EVENTS COMMITTEE

The Events Committee is responsible for the management of major community parish events, main liturgies and processions. The committee facilitates the planning, execution and governance of such parish events. Its tasks include organising the schedule of events, coordinating volunteers, organising entertainment and third-party vendors, organising the traffic management plans and planning the logistical requirements of each event.

The Events Committee works in collaboration with the Dean of the Cathedral and various parish committees to ensure the viability of major parish events. Together with the Parish Dean, the committee also brainstorms new and potential ideas and determines the requirements to execute the events.

## LITURGICAL COMMITTEE

The Liturgical Committee prepares liturgical celebrations within the parish so that parishioners can fully participate in prayer with reverence. Their responsibilities include preparing for liturgical events, sacraments, and para-liturgical services; preparing readings, selecting readers, writing prayers of the faithful; providing and maintaining clergy vestments and altar server robes; overseeing church décor such as altar linens, icons, and visual presentations for Mass; coordinating choir rehearsals; organising ushers and lectors for major celebrations and everything necessary to ensure that all services are prayerful and fitting for the worship of God.

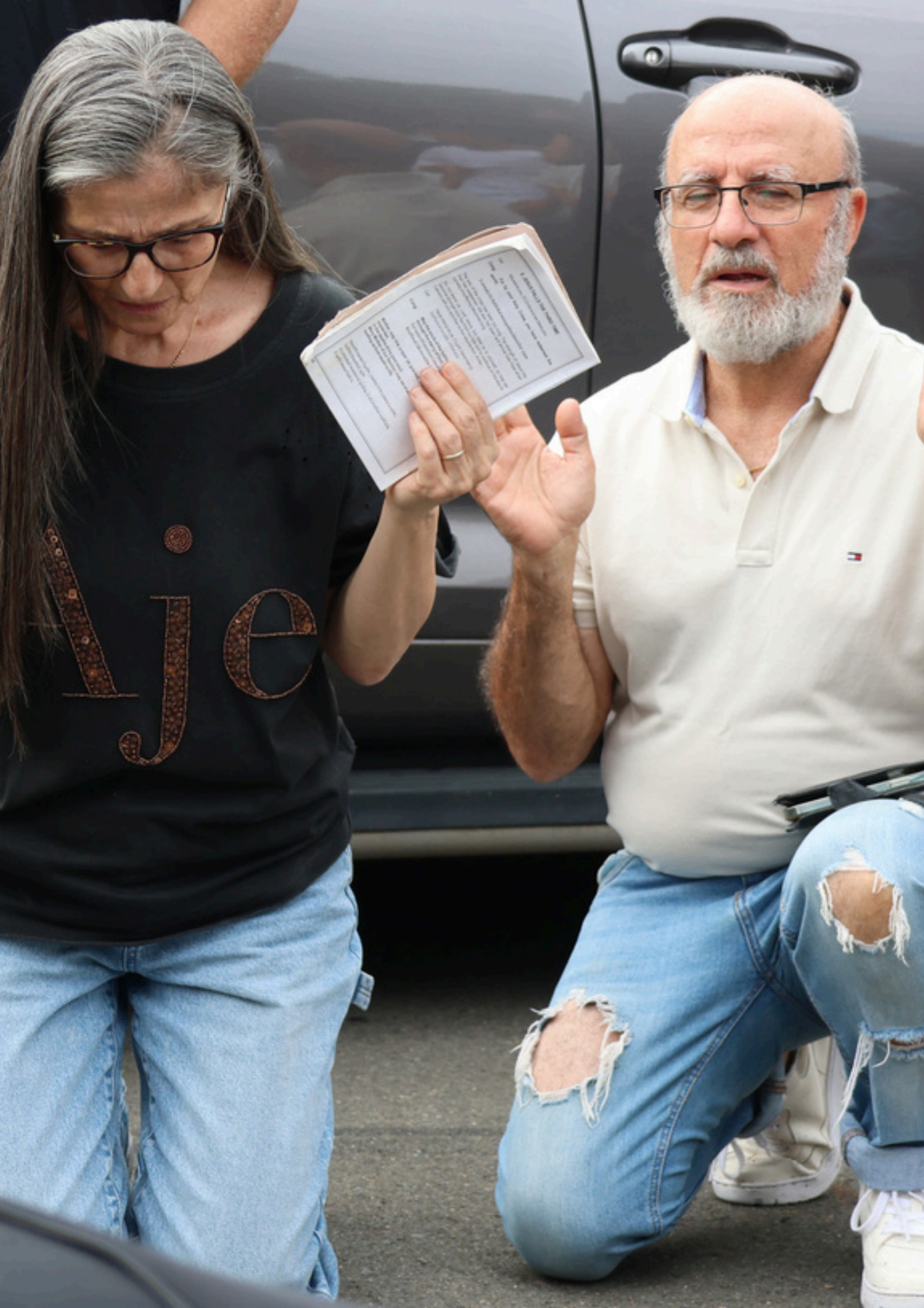


## ALTAR SERVERS COMMITTEE

The Altar Servers committee promotes full and active preparation and participation for the altar servers within the parish. Their role is to lead the congregation in prayer and reverence through their service at the altar. The committee oversees all aspects of Mass preparation, ensuring that all servers are well-prepared, understand their roles, and serve with the utmost reverence.

Their duties include providing and preparing altar servers, ensuring gowns are ready for use, organising timetables for servers to be present at all Masses, and conducting training sessions. In 2024, the training sessions for altar servers saw an inspiring participation from 25 adults and 12 children aged 7–18, engaging in this vital ministry.







# MEDIA COMMITTEE

Our Media Committee, comprised of members from all parish committees, aims to evangelise and connect with parishioners by leveraging traditional and social media platforms to share the Maronite Catholic faith, nurture spiritual growth, and build a vibrant community that embodies Christ's love and compassion. The committee is responsible for organising the live streaming of Masses, producing parish videos, handling photography, creating flyers, and managing the website and weekly announcements. The committee ensures consistent branding and styling of parish flyers, continually updates the parish's social media feeds, and engages parishioners through the community WhatsApp group, ensuring that those not on social media are also kept informed about parish news and upcoming events.



# ROSARY/ PRAYER GROUP

Every Monday to Thursday evening at 9:30pm, our devoted Rosary/ Prayer group gathers to offer their heartfelt prayers for the special intentions within our parish community. Alongside our clergy, united in faith, they focus on the needs and concerns of those around them, bringing their collective prayers and intentions to God. This daily offering develops a prayerful solidarity that enriches our community and fosters a deep sense of compassion and connection.

On Tuesday nights at 8:00pm, the group also organises and dedicates prayers and rosaries for the sick in our parish community, as well as any other specific intentions. This dedicated time allows for focused, heartfelt intercession for those in need of healing and support, further strengthening the bonds of care and solidarity within our parish community.

















## LADIES OF OUR LADY

Working closely with the clergy, this committee is committed to active community service and is involved in nearly all parish events. Over the past year, the ladies have organised the sweets, hrissi, and catering for Our Lady Lebanon feast week and other major feast days in the Maronite liturgical calendar. In 2024, the committee orchestrated a memorable Mother's Day cruise, bringing together 230 women to celebrate the occasion in style and unity.

## MARIAN APOSTOLIC MOVEMENT (MAM)

We are delighted to announce the return of the Marian Apostolic Movement (MAM) to our parish community. Their efforts will focus on weekly meetings that include Bible discussions, conversations about current social issues and how they relate to our faith, reflection nights, and opportunities to deepen the community's understanding of the Catholic Church and Maronite traditions. MAM is not just a committee or group, but a spirit of apostolic zeal.

## SAFEGUARDING COMMITTEE

The Safeguarding Committee, consisting of representatives from all OLOL committees, aims to proactively address safeguarding concerns by creating safe and nurturing environments for all who visit the parish. The committee works in collaboration with the Maronite Eparchy Safeguarding Office to ensure all legislative requirements are adhered to within the parish. The committee also endorses and enacts the strict policies set by the Maronite Eparchy Safeguarding Office and provides regular training sessions to ensure staff and volunteers are held accountable for their dealings with minors and vulnerable people. Our focus is to enable children and vulnerable people to participate in decisions affecting them. It is the parish's and committees' main priority to take the safety of all minors and adults at risk seriously and prioritise their interests during decision making.

Every person involved in this parish has the responsibility to understand the significant role they play in ensuring the safety and wellbeing of our parishioners. OLOL is committed to the safety and wellbeing of all who attend the parish and has a zero tolerance for the abuse, neglect and marginalisation of minors and adults at risk.



GOLDEN JUBILEE *year*







# GOLDEN JUBILEE *year*

The Golden Jubilee of the Maronite Eparchy in Australia provided a monumental backdrop for Our Lady of Lebanon Co-Cathedral, where several milestones and events were celebrated. The year was an opportunity for the parish to honour the rich heritage and traditions of the Maronite faith while celebrating the journey of holiness and openness of the Maronites in Australia.

The Co-Cathedral played a pivotal role throughout the year, hosting significant events that resonated deeply with parishioners and visitors alike.

The parish hosted the relics of Maronite and Australian Saints in the Golden Jubilee reliquary, multiple times, during the year. The relics of four revered Lebanese saints—St Maroun, St Charbel, St Nehmetallah, and St Rafqa—along with Australia's first saint, Mary of the Cross MacKillop in a beautifully crafted reliquary by sculptor Toufic Mourad, were welcomed into the Co-Cathedral by the parish and the broader community, with prayerful processions and marching bands.

A highlight of the Jubilee celebrations was the Mass held at the Co-Cathedral on 7 May 2023, which was celebrated by Bishop Antoine-Charbel Tarabay, alongside Archbishop Charles Balvo, Apostolic Nuncio to Australia, and over 30 Australian Catholic Bishops. In his homily, Bishop Tarabay emphasised the importance of unity and reflected on the Maronite Church's growth in Australia since the 1850s, acknowledging the support of the Latin Catholic Church. The Co-Cathedral was a fitting location for this historic Mass, representing the rich history and legacy of the Maronite community.

Archbishop Timothy Costelloe SDB, President of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference, expressed his appreciation for the Maronite community's warm hospitality, highlighting the enriching contribution of Eastern Rite churches to the Australian Church and the importance of deepening connections as we continue to fulfil God's mission in Australia.

In September 2023, the Maronite community gathered for Eucharistic Adoration with our Maronite Patriarch His Beatitude and Eminence Mar Bechara Boutros Cardinal Rai, alongside Bishop Tarabay, to pray for Lebanon and Australia. The presence of Maronite Bishops from Eparchies outside the Patriarchal Territory and General Superiors of Maronite Religious Orders added to the evening's significance, underscoring the importance of faith and unity.

The most remarkable event of the Golden Jubilee Year was the gathering of over 7,000 Maronites at Ken Rosewall Arena, Homebush, on 24 September 2023. This grand assembly participated in the Divine Liturgy celebrated by Patriarch Rai during his 10-day visit to Australia. It was wonderful to see committees and volunteers from Our Lady of Lebanon parish play a key role in helping with coordination and volunteering at the Mass.

The Golden Jubilee Year concluded with a liturgy on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, on 8 December, at the Co-Cathedral. In his homily, Bishop Tarabay reflected on the spiritual journey undertaken by the Maronite community throughout the year and described the Jubilee Year as a "time of grace" and a testament to the community's enduring strength. The spiritual graces received during the Jubilee Year have certainly continued to inspire us all to live our faith actively in the parish, serving God and one another.













# PARISH *statistics*

IN THE YEAR 2023-2024

Maronites residing in the Parish

Est. 40,000

Baptism & Chrismation

251

First Holy Communion

112 (Parish)  
85 (MCHF)

Chrismation only

6

Marriages

56

Deaths

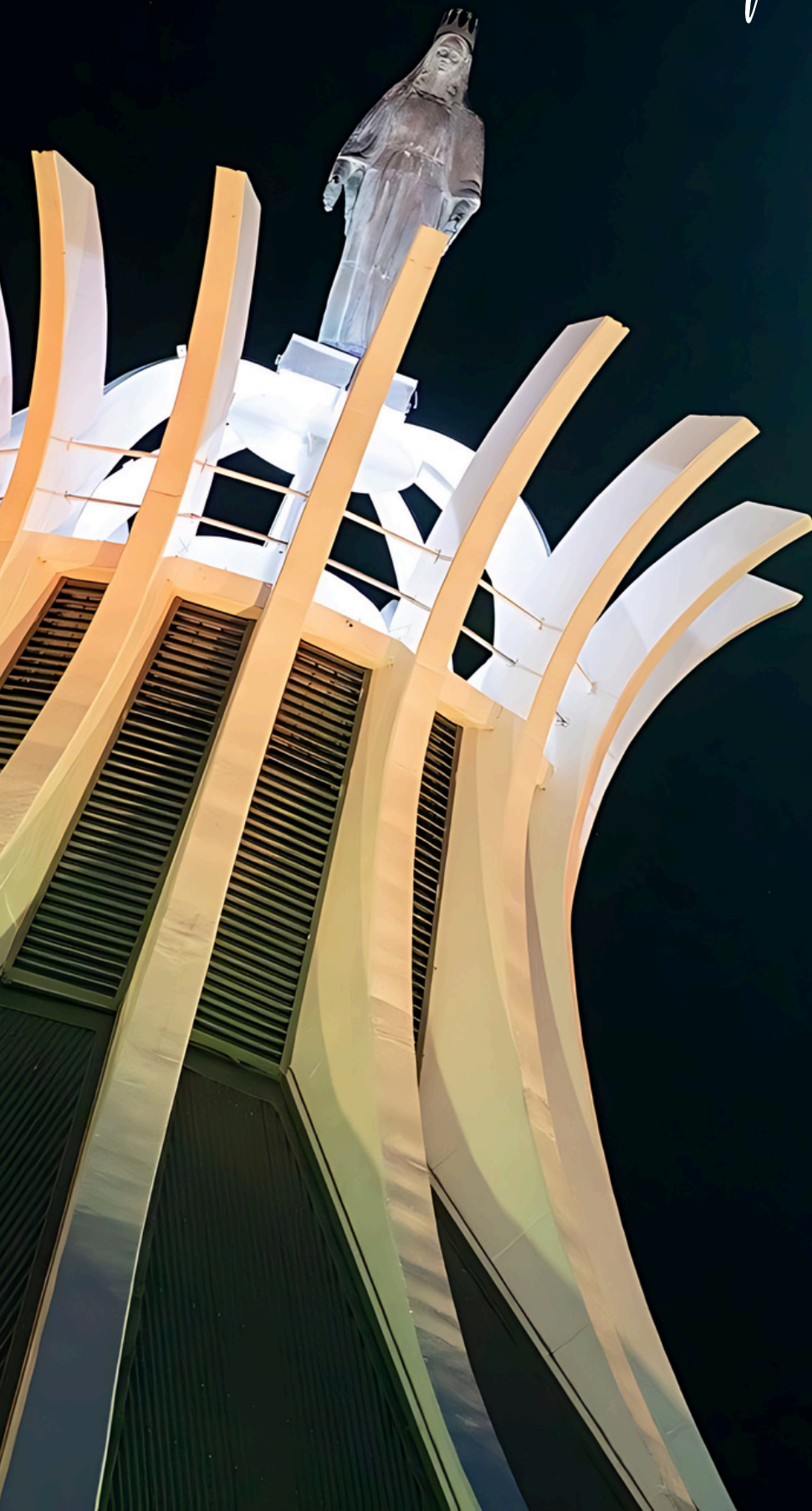
126







# FINANCIAL *reports*





# PROFIT AND LOSS

## income

| INCOME                  | 2024             | 2023             |
|-------------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Plate collections       | 785,025          | 754,454          |
| Donations               | 525,339          | 633,290          |
| Functions & fundraising | 359,467          | 152,933          |
| Giftshop sales          | 844,666          | 861,212          |
| Café sales              | 1,973,769        | 1,858,668        |
| Rental income           | 664,182          | 548,629          |
| Hall & salon income     | 125,423          | 97,530           |
| Committee contributions | 13,807           | 7,227            |
| Interest received       | 3,070            | 1,795            |
| Other income            | 26,322           | 48,630           |
| <b>TOTAL INCOME</b>     | <b>5,321,069</b> | <b>4,964,368</b> |



# expenses

| EXPENSES                                        | 2024             | 2023             |
|-------------------------------------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Administration expenses                         | 157,600          | 159,621          |
| Cleaning expenses                               | 155,658          | 153,314          |
| Café expenses                                   | 1,748,894        | 1,682,005        |
| Depreciation                                    | 120,647          | 115,917          |
| Diocesan expenses                               | 159,180          | 144,265          |
| Giftshop supplies                               | 355,717          | 385,119          |
| Holy Communion expenses                         | 33,362           | 32,232           |
| Insurance                                       | 99,359           | 94,842           |
| Interest expense                                | 368,993          | 317,455          |
| Motor vehicle expenses                          | 40,940           | 37,738           |
| Other expenses                                  | 190,283          | 125,693          |
| Parish fundraising & function expenses          | 124,823          | 159,365          |
| Presbytery supplies                             | 74,943           | 73,071           |
| Repairs & maintenance                           | 76,171           | 45,959           |
| Salaries & allowances                           | 579,993          | 449,171          |
| Stipends & supplements                          | 364,018          | 296,203          |
| Utilities (electricity, telephone, water & gas) | 109,851          | 113,420          |
| <b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>                           | <b>4,760,432</b> | <b>4,385,390</b> |

|                            |                |                |
|----------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| <b>SURPLUS / (DEFICIT)</b> | <b>560,637</b> | <b>578,978</b> |
|----------------------------|----------------|----------------|



# BANK BALANCES

| BANK ACCOUNT              | 2024         | 2023         |
|---------------------------|--------------|--------------|
| DDF Main Parish           | 302,803.13   | 39,793.01    |
| DDF Sundry                | 2,154.61     | 198,556.35   |
| DDF Projects              | 275,611.50   | 397,032.49   |
| BOS Offset                | 43,006.46    | 126,562.09   |
| DDF Liturgical            | 6,656.56     | 69,262.35    |
| Giftshop                  | 166,365.03   | 55,310.68    |
| Five Loaves Café          | 185,728.23   | 140,371.98   |
| DDF Faith and Light       | 9,192.72     | 9,184.30     |
| DDF Heaven on Earth       | 5,571.16     | 5,958.03     |
| DDF Arabic Language       | 72,162.63    | 56,655.42    |
| DDF Sodality              | 121,912.32   | 143,380.96   |
| DDF Teens                 | 2,881.68     | 7,148.75     |
| DDF Fersen                | 18,980.53    | 17,537.42    |
| DDF Youth                 | 33,254.02    | 6,078.58     |
| DDF Ladies                | 50,502.07    | 3,651.95     |
| DDF Seniors               | 4,132.84     | 1,358.51     |
| DDF Family                | 8,686.68     |              |
| DDF St Rita's Mass Centre | 509,268.55   |              |
|                           | 1,818,870.72 | 1,277,842.87 |



# LAND AND BUILDINGS VALUES

|                                             | 2024                 | 2023                 |
|---------------------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Land - 40 to 46 Alice St (at valn)          | 14,699,440.00        | 14,699,440.00        |
| L&B-306 Woodville Rd,Guildford<br>(deposit) | 330,000.00           |                      |
| L&B - 58 Alice St (at valn)                 | 3,100,000.00         | 3,100,000.00         |
| Buildings - Church, Hall & CC (at<br>valn)  | 16,187,000.00        | 16,187,000.00        |
| Buildings - Carpark (at valn)               | 4,490,000.00         | 4,490,000.00         |
| Buildings - PCYC (at valn)                  | 6,178,850.00         | 6,175,000.00         |
| Buildings - Ancillary (at valn)             | 361,000.00           | 361,000.00           |
|                                             | <b>45,346,290.00</b> | <b>45,012,440.00</b> |

# BORROWINGS

|                           | 2024                | 2023                | MONTHLY<br>REPAYMENTS |
|---------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| BOS Community Centre      | 3,257,161.98        | 3,428,734.31        | 38,153                |
| BOS 58 Alice Street Units | 1,061,490.01        | 1,127,177.42        | 12,653                |
|                           | <b>4,318,651.99</b> | <b>4,555,911.73</b> | <b>50,086</b>         |







# PARISH *projects*







# PARISH *masterplan*

Psalm 102:18: "Let this be written for a future generation, that a people not yet created may praise the Lord."

Our cathedral renewal project, the Master Plan, with an anticipated completion date of August 2028, coincides with the Golden Jubilee of the consecration of our church. This plan is not just about preserving our past; it's about building a foundation for tomorrow, as we work together to ensure the cathedral remains a vibrant hub of worship, fellowship, and outreach in the community. With proposed modern amenities, developing sustainable practices, and an expanded sense of purpose, we are poised to serve our community in new and meaningful ways. The plans for our cathedral's renewal are a testament to the power of faith, community, service, and the enduring spirit of hope. The Federal Government has generously provided a grant of \$10million towards our plans to renew, harmonise and improve interconnectivity within our parish precinct, leaving a shortfall of \$5million we need to complete this project.

Our renovation and refurbishment work inside the cathedral will have a singular focus - to enhance our liturgical and spiritual experience and preserve its timeless character. From restoring our tired pews, introducing a Parental Space for our young families, refurbishing and relocating our sacristy, sanctuary and altar further outwards to provide more spatial symmetry and focus for the summit of our liturgical worship, and providing more accessible and inclusive areas for our parishioners with additional needs, every decision is made with careful consideration for preserving the beauty and reverence that has captivated hearts for generations. With the further inclusion of a purpose-built air conditioning system, we will ensure greater comfort and improve the parishioner experience during worship.

Our vision extends beyond the walls of our cathedral into the outdoor landscape. An addition of an architecturally aesthetic bell tower will echo the chimes of prayer near and wide and resound our exultant celebrations. Our revitalisation of the concrete foreground from the existing carpark into a reconverted expanded outdoor greener landscape, amidst gardens and tranquil open spaces, we will create sanctuaries of serenity in our new reflection grounds. With this space reconversion, the carpark will be relocated underground beneath the reflection grounds with the creation of two underground levels of parking, delivering an additional 150 car spaces. Integrated into this landscape, we will be constructing a chapel in a serene position in the cathedral's piazza, designed to hold intimate prayer services and devotions. Before we enter the chapel, we will first pay our respects and offer prayers of thanksgiving at the ANZAC Memorial Shrine, a reminder of the sacrifice of our fallen soldiers and an enduring ode to how fortunate we are for the freedoms and privileges bestowed by our Australian identity. Here in our new open green landscape, one can find solace, peace, and a connection to something greater than themselves.

Since August 1978, our church doors have been opened to all who sought solace, connection, and spiritual nourishment. Our parish has been a source of affinity to our ancestral Lebanon for our forebears, our grandparents and parents, who sacrificed and laboured to ensure we, too, stand today in the welcoming gaze of Our Lady, with her arms stretched out in loving embrace. Imbued by gratitude for our rich history and vibrant spirit, and with the understanding that our cathedral continues to be a place where tradition and innovation intersect, let us now embark on a journey of renewal, building the next fifty years together, inviting all our Maronite faithful to join us as we create a space where all are welcome to find respite, renewal, and a sense of belonging. Let us come together in unity and commitment to writing the next chapter of our cathedral's story, to be lived and shared by the generations of today and tomorrow.





Embracing Tradition, Building Tomorrow:  
'The Story of Renewal for the next 50 years'











# CLADDING *project*

In light of updated safety regulations, we have been directed by the City of Parramatta Council to replace the existing cladding at Our Lady of Lebanon Co-Cathedral Youth & Pastoral Centre. This decision is a direct response to the tragic Grenfell Tower fire in the UK in 2017, which brought global attention to the dangers of combustible cladding.

To ensure the safety of our parish community, we commissioned a Fire Safety Engineer to conduct a comprehensive Fire Safety Audit of the cladding materials affixed to the external walls of our Community Building. This audit was carried out in strict accordance with Section C of the National Construction Code (NCC) and the Building Code of Australia 2019 (BCA).

During the audit, Aluminium Composite Panels (ACP) from the building's exterior were rigorously tested. Analysis of four different samples revealed that the ACP contained polyethylene cores of 39%, 71%, and 98%. Given these findings, the ACP has been deemed combustible and does not comply with the Deemed-to-Satisfy Provisions of Clause C1.9 (Non-Combustible Building Elements) of the BCA. The proportion of polyethylene in these panels exceeds the 30% limit set by the NSW Government's Product Ban, issued under Section 9(1) of the Building Products (Safety) Act 2017.

To uphold the highest safety standards and ensure compliance with these regulations, we have undertaken the necessary steps to replace the cladding. After close collaboration with the City of Parramatta Council and a thorough tender process, an agreement has been signed, and work commenced on August 19, 2024. If all proceeds according to plan, we anticipate completing the project by December 2024, God willing.

The costs associated with this critical project extend beyond the supply and installation of new cladding and the responsible disposal of the old materials. They also include additional expenses such as Façade Engineer certification, Fire Engineer certification, scaffolding hire, decommissioning and recommissioning of power and video cameras by an electrician, the removal and re-installation of the awning, and overall project management.

While we will reach out to parishioners who may be able to assist, the estimated cost of this project is approximately \$800,000.00. This essential upgrade is not just about compliance; it's about safeguarding our community for the future.

As we proceed with this project, we anticipate some temporary changes to car and pedestrian traffic around the church. We sincerely apologize for any inconvenience this may cause and deeply appreciate your patience and understanding during this time.

Thank you for your continued cooperation and support as we undertake this vital safety upgrade. Together, we are ensuring that our parish remains a safe and welcoming place for all.



SAINT RITA MASS *centre*



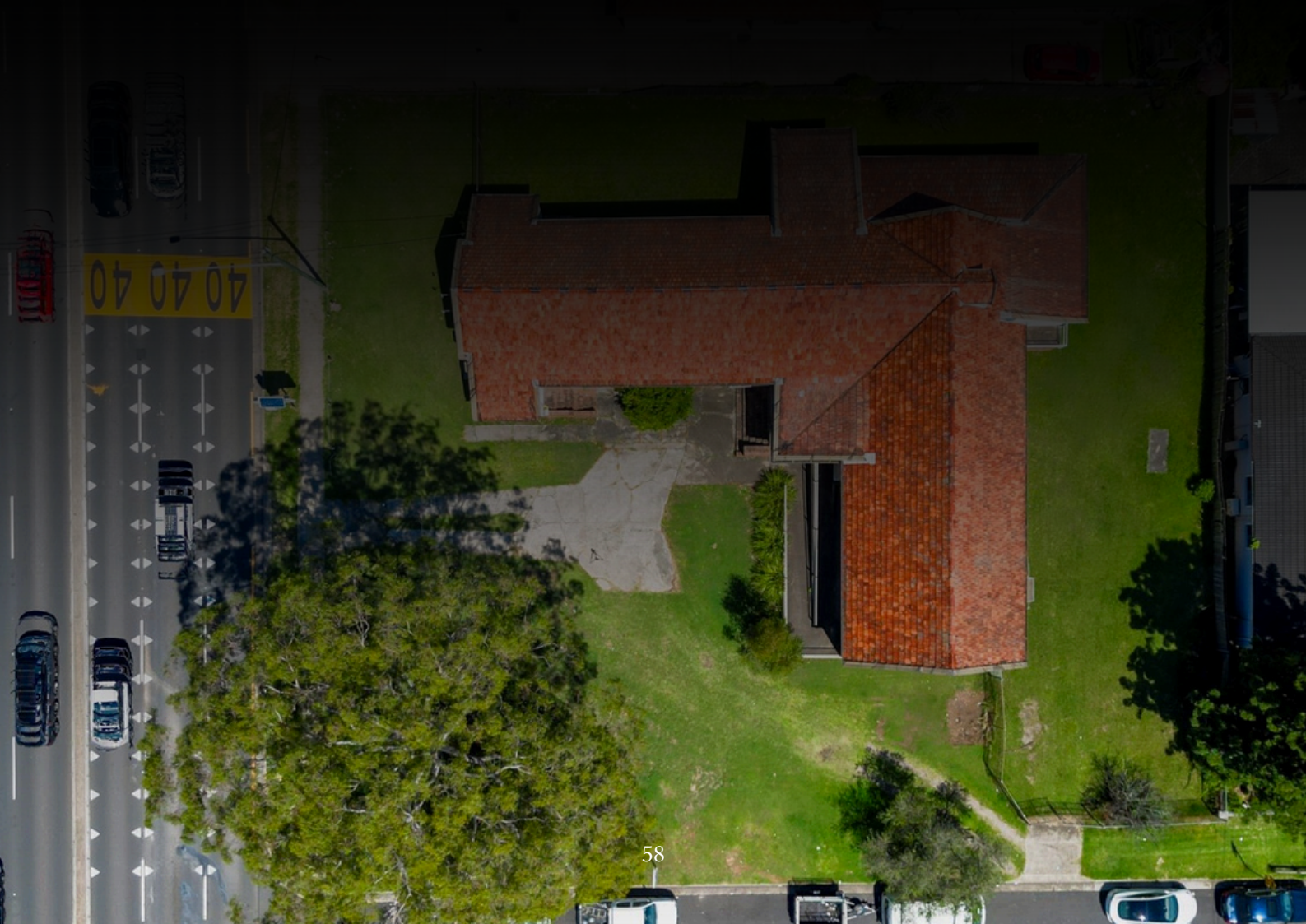


"You are co-workers in God's service; you are God's field, you are God's building." (1Cor 3:9)

Our parish recently settled on the purchase of 304-308 Woodville Rd, Guildford for \$3million. The property is the future site of St Rita of Cascia Maronite Church. The property is spread across three land titles and is 1,700 square metres, previously serving as a Place of Worship (the Providence of the Lord!) and stands on a corner position, with prime location in terms of public exposure, foot traffic and access. The land currently has two adjoined buildings- an old existing church and a tired community hall. This location is geographically strategic in Bishop Antoine-Charbel Tarabay's missionary vision of outreach and evangelisation, as it is a short walking distance for hundreds of Maronite faithful in Guildford, Guildford West and South Granville and a very short drive for many more Maronite families, young and old, in Merrylands, Granville, Smithfield, Fairfield and Villawood; bringing Christ to our people wherever they may be.

Over of the next six months, we will collaborate with our generous benefactors and all those in our community who will heed the call to be co-workers in God's service and help build our newest church together; creating His dwelling place, where God's presence will dwell among us, in a new sanctuary in Guildford, the same suburb where her devotion in Western Sydney started over ten years ago. The church to be dedicated to St Rita of Cascia, the Saint of Impossible Causes, will require renovation and refurbishment works to welcome the faithful and create a conducive space for worship in the Maronite spirituality and foster a sense of community. It will serve as a mass centre for our parish where we can continue to grow, to worship, and to serve our Maronite community with renewed vigour and dedication. The vision for our new church extends far beyond mere bricks and mortar. It is a symbol of our commitment to stewardship and to unity. It is a place where families will gather to celebrate life's joys, where the weary will find comfort, and where the lost will find direction.

Help us build a new home for many in our parish—one that will stand as a testament to our faith for generations to come. Together, let us build St Rita's Church—a sanctuary where all are welcome, and where the light of faith shines brightly for all to see; 'and in this place, He will grant peace.' (Haggai 2:9)









PARISH *businesses*







# FIVE LOAVES *café*

Over the past 2-3 years, Five Loaves Café, a cherished community hub affiliated with OLOL Co-Cathedral, has achieved a remarkable operational turnaround. Under a new team in 2023, the café implemented strategic changes that revitalised its operations, boosting parishioner engagement, team member satisfaction, and profitability, contributing to the overall mission of the Cathedral.

A key aspect of this transformation was a streamlined menu featuring popular items, which enhanced both customer satisfaction and operational efficiency. Investments in staff training and incentive programs have improved service speed, customer service, and food quality. By building local relationships and actively supporting parish projects through various committees, the café has become a pivotal component of the Cathedral.

Financially, the café reported record profits, driven by increased in-café sales. The café has grown in profit from F23 to F24. This financial stability has allowed Five Loaves Café to significantly increase its contributions to the Cathedral, supporting various community projects and charitable activities.

Moving forward, Five Loaves Café plans to expand its offerings with the introduction of catering services while continuing to enhance community engagement. Additionally, a key focus will be investing in a refresh of the café's format to ensure it remains a beloved fixture in the community and a strong supporter of the Cathedral's outreach efforts. The café will maintain its commitment to providing high-quality food, while innovating and offering new options to parishioners.







# CATERING

Mercy Meals | Sympathies | Baptisms | Holy Communions  
Birthday Parties | Graduations | Engagements | Pre-Weddings



02 8898 1550  
[5loavescafe.com.au](http://5loavescafe.com.au)

[info@5loavescafe.com.au](mailto:info@5loavescafe.com.au)  
4/40-46 Alice Street, Harris Park



# GIFT *shop*



The OLOL Gift Shop is a premier destination for Catholic items in Sydney, offering one of the most extensive selections. Catering to all budgets and featuring exclusive items, our range includes indoor and outdoor statues, rosaries, gifts, Arabic and English faith books, Bibles, our own jewellery line, incense, candles, apparel, veils and much more. The gift shop continued with an impressive growth and reach to accommodate special orders for significant life events such as baptisms, weddings, and funerals, while making it easy for customers to browse and purchase our products from the comfort of their homes through our online store [www.giftshop.olol.org.au](http://www.giftshop.olol.org.au) and various social media platforms.

The success of the gift shop has been underpinned by the dedication of the staff and volunteers. Its success reflects our commitment to serving the Catholic community with a diverse and comprehensive selection of religious items.



PARISH *partners*







# MARONITE COLLEGE OF THE HOLY FAMILY (MCHF)

Dear MCHF and OLOL community,

It gives me pleasure to provide you with a report on the ongoing collaboration between Maronite College of the Holy Family and Our Lady of Lebanon Co-Cathedral. From the beginning, both the Parish and the College have worked closely together. The following provides an overview of the many ways we have been collaborating over the last two years.

The year 2023 was an important year with the College celebrating its 50 Year Jubilee. From humble beginnings as a Primary school located in what is now the hall space of the Church, to a College catering to 1320 students, we celebrated our journey with the local community.

- A Fete held on Sunday 26 March 2023 where many of the parishioners joined us.
- On 28 April, we celebrated the Official 50-Year Jubilee Mass at Our Lady Co-Cathedral followed by a Luncheon. Bishop Antoine-Charbel Tarabay and numerous clergy joined us for this important occasion.
- The highlight of our 50-year celebration took place on 18 September 2023 when His Beatitude and Eminence Mar Bechara Boutros Cardinal Rai visited the College for an assembly in the presence of the Maronite Sisters of the Holy Family, Bishops, Priests, staff, students and parents.

The College and Parish work together to cultivate and celebrate Maronite spirituality and to promote service, dignity and justice. This is achieved through:

- Regular Masses, reconciliation and reflection days. These include, Mother's Day, Father's Day and Grandparents Masses followed by morning tea. They were an opportunity to recognise the many who assist in the education of the young. Many of these parents and grandparents are local parishioners and include priests from the Parish who have children and grandchildren at the College.
- Our College Chaplains work both at the College and the Parish (Fr Ron Hassarati and Fr Charbel Dib) and preside over Mass and Reconciliation. They also do presentations for our student retreat days.
- Student leaders attended the ANZAC ceremony on 25 April at Our Lady of Lebanon to assist with welcoming and ushering, giving out poppies and serving breakfast.
- The College participated in the Lenten Appeal to assist Catholic schools in Lebanon at the request of the Bishop.
- Every Saturday morning, students, teachers and parent volunteers assist with Heaven on Earth homeless feed in Parramatta. All have been touched by this experience.



- In 2024, students commenced visiting the Aged Care located on the parish grounds, to spend time with the elderly. This has proven to be an emotional time for all:

Y9 student: 'Visiting an aged care centre was very moving. The residents' stories, resilience, and wisdom were inspiring. The experience reminded me of the importance of compassion, community and respecting our elders.'

Y12 student: 'We were grateful to be presented with this opportunity to visit the aged care home. Interacting with the elderly and engaging in gardening activities was a deeply rewarding experience. One memorable interaction was when a resident decided to grow carrots after enjoying a carrot that day. Overall, it was a wonderful and enjoyable opportunity which we enjoyed taking part in.'

- Our student drummers were invited twice to play the drums and entertain the elderly at their BBQ lunch. It was an opportunity to showcase our community and culture.
- On 18 June, our students performed at the Maronite Ladies of the Gospel event: Maronites have Talent. Our Secondary students performed a dabke and drumming and our Primary students performed a dance on stage. They were the highlight of the day!
- Our school drummers have also been invited to entertain the parishioners at the Assumption Feast Week.
- A Youth night was organised between the Parish and MCHF religion staff in Term 3, 2024. The evening included a talk by Fr Charbel Dib, social time, dinner and Eucharistic Adoration. This was the first time such an event was run in collaboration with the parish to encourage adolescents to draw closer to their faith and parish. Approximately 120 students attended.
- Since 2023, our College Chapel is used every Sunday to celebrate an accessible Mass for families with children with special needs. Parish Priests (Fr Yuhanna and Fr Ron) preside over the Mass.

*50 Year Jubilee*  
1973-2023







#### Retreat Day

Every year we have a combined staff reflection day (MCHF and St Maroun's staff). In 2024, it was held on 22 July with the theme 'Journey of Faith.' Fr Danny Nouh was the keynote speaker, and 9 workshops were provided for staff. Workshops were presented by different staff members from both schools as well as Priests from OLOL and the Maronite Sisters of the Holy Family.

#### Greater Collaboration with Maronites

The Annual Public speaking competition which has been running for a number of years between MCHF and St Maroun's College was extended in 2024 to include St Charbel's College and Holy Saviour School. It was held at MCHF on 25 June 2024. Students from Stage 2 to 6 participated. This was a way to connect with the wider Maronite community.

#### Greater Collaboration with Members of Parliament

Both the College and the Parish have worked together to lobby the governments on important issues. As the Executive Principal I have met with:

- State Liberal Opposition Leader Katie Mullen and also State Labor Leader for Parramatta Donna Davis to raise issues that concern the College and Parish
- Meeting on Religious Discrimination Legislation at the Office of Dr Andrew Charlton MP on 23 April 2024 to discuss concerns if legislation implemented. Dr Andrew Charlton attended the College on Thursday 9 May 2024 to discuss our concerns including values in schools and Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR).

Over the next few years, both the College and the Parish will be undertaking major projects which will impact the operation of both. As such, MCHF Board and the Parish Stewardship Committee have met twice in 2024 to communicate each other's plans and discuss ways we can assist one another. We will work together to support one another and ensure the growth of both Maronite College of the Holy Family and the Our Lady of Lebanon Parish, for the glory of God.

Sr Margaret Ghosn  
Executive Principal



# MARONITECARE



Established in 2004, MaroniteCare's journey over the past two decades has been driven by the needs of our Maronite community. In the past 12 months, MaroniteCare has launched several impactful initiatives to better serve our community. The introduction of the Accessible Church, driven by Fr Yuhanna Azize and supported by the Maronite Sisters of the Holy Family, addresses the needs of families with neurodiverse children. Our affiliation with Heartbeat International and Pregnancy Help will enable free confidential pregnancy support in the future. Additionally, our collaboration with Montessori Care has expanded our support for people with disabilities and seniors, responding to the high demand for these services within our community.

Our strategic priorities remain focused on enhancing service delivery, improving accessibility, strengthening partnerships, and maintaining robust governance. We continually review and adapt our services to meet emerging needs, ensuring that our offerings are both evidence-based and innovative. Key areas of focus include mental health, suicide prevention, and support for families of children with neurodiverse abilities. As we go into the coming year, new initiatives and services include a focus on youth programs dealing with social media addiction and gambling prevention, to name a few as identified by community needs.

The support from the NSW and Commonwealth governments, along with the generous contributions from the Maronite community, has been crucial in significantly impacting countless lives. Our volunteers and staff, who provide essential free counselling and frontline support, are also at the heart of our efforts. As we look to the future, we remain dedicated to enhancing the quality of our services and introducing new programs to address critical needs.

Barbara Perry  
MaroniteCare Chair









Start your child's future today at  
**Young Academics Harris Park**

☎ 1300 668 993

🔍 [youngacademics.com.au](http://youngacademics.com.au)



## MEET LOUIE

As the proud Centre Manager of Young Academics Harris Park, Louie brings a wealth of knowledge and passion to the forefront of our dedicated team. With a background in psychology, she has cultivated a profound understanding of the unique needs and stages of childhood.



Located in the grounds  
of Our Lady of Lebanon  
Co-Cathedral



# OUR LADY MERCY PLACE HARRIS PARK

## HOW WE CARE FOR YOU

Mercy Health is a leading provider of aged and home care services. Grounded in a 2,000 year tradition of caring for others, we provide a wide range of flexible and individualised care options. At Our Lady Mercy Place Harris Park, we value your life story, knowing this is what makes you the person you are today. We support you to live a healthy and fulfilling life that nourishes your physical and mental wellbeing. Our qualified and compassionate care teams tailor your care according to your personal interests and needs.

Our goal is simple: to enable you to have the best day possible, each and every day.

## CONTACT US

Our Lady Mercy Place Harris Park  
128A Alfred Street Harris Park NSW 2150  
Phone: 02 6022 5800  
Email: [OLMPHarrisPark@mercy.com.au](mailto:OLMPHarrisPark@mercy.com.au)  
[mercyhealth.com.au](http://mercyhealth.com.au)







Our Lady of Lebanon  
Co-Cathedral

ABN: 92 475 205 390  
40 Alice Street, Harris Park NSW 2150  
[ololsyd@olol.org.au](mailto:ololsyd@olol.org.au) | 02 9689 2899  
[www.olol.org.au](http://www.olol.org.au)