

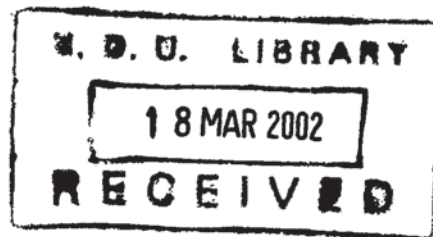
THE DIPLOMACY OF THE HOLY SEE  
IN LEBANON:  
CHALLENGES AND ENDURANCE

BY

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I thank God for this learning process that taught me a lot, and I hope this thesis would help everyone interested in the subject of the Holy See and its special role in our country.

## *Abstract*

Throughout its history, Lebanon has had diverse relations with a multitude of countries. Many of these relations faded away, others have changed drastically. However, one that has remained little changed and is today as strong as ever, is the relationship with the Holy See. This makes any observer wonder about the reasons for this solid relationship. While reviewing the long years of the history of the relationship between the two countries, this paper aimed at showing how stable and unchanged the Holy See diplomacy was in Lebanon. To do that, it was necessary to start from the very beginning, even if that gave a historical aspect to the first part of the paper. In fact, it was important to follow the logical and chronological development of the relationship to understand that the view of the Holy See for Lebanon is not the result of a certain crisis or situation in either one of the countries. This view is, as previously shown, the expression of a deep acknowledgment of the enormous mutual importance of this relationship, since the early centuries. Through the long years of war, the relationship survived many crises. In fact, even when the Holy See's perception of the situation was criticized by many Christian leaders whose actions it didn't approve of, both parties were still able, eventually, to understand each other's position. In post-war Lebanon the mission of the Holy See diplomacy was not easier, as it had the very ambitious objective of revitalizing the Christians, who were depressed because of the results of the war and the practices of the consecutive governments. This revitalization had to start through spiritual renewal and awareness, not through political change.

To evaluate the success of such diplomacy, which depends only on the power of moral values and on the charisma of its actors, is a very difficult task. One thing is sure, the endurance of this diplomacy for fourteen centuries, through all the challenges and wars, is enough proof that it is of the most successful ones ever.

# Introduction

Throughout its history, Lebanon has had diverse relations with a multitude of countries. Many of these relations faded away, others have changed drastically. However, one that has remained little changed and is today as strong as ever, is the relationship with the Holy See. This makes any observer wonder about the reasons for this solid relationship. What were and are its purposes and objectives? And what were and are the problems and challenges it has faced? These are the questions that this paper will try to answer.

Before addressing the question of the relationship between Lebanon and the Holy See, I shall define in the briefest and most general terms what I understand by these terms.

First, by Lebanon I mean not only the western chain of mountains known as Mount Lebanon, but the lands that became Greater Lebanon in 1920 including the coastline, the south, the Bekaa, and Akkar. The people living in these areas were tribes, clans, and families who came from all over the region seeking refuge in it.

This paper will focus mainly upon the people in the region, the Maronites (followers of St Maron), who had the most substantial and sustained relationship with the Holy See over the years. The original followers of St Maron were monks living on the banks of the Oronte River just north of the modern border of Lebanon. Primarily between the sixth and seventh centuries, these people, who by this time were not only monks anymore but families who belonged to the primitive Semitic people converted to Christianity, fled into the mountains of Lebanon and became its principle residents. With them the first contacts with the Holy See were established.



Second, by the Holy See, I mean primarily the Sovereign Pontiffs as consecutive heads of the Roman Catholic Church in the religious, moral and political powers they enjoyed. Without entering into the details of the Papal kingdoms through history, this paper will not neglect the effect of the 1929 convention with the Italian State, wherein the Holy See became the Vatican City State enjoying the privileges of sovereign states and assuring the Pontiffs' independence and universality.

In the light of these definitions, we can say that the relationship between those two ancient entities goes back to the 6<sup>th</sup> century when the followers of St Maron persecuted in Syria by monotheistic leaders, contacted the Sovereign Pontiff for the first time. They showed their submission to the Roman belief, and the Pontiff's divine supremacy, and they asked him for help. This contact signaled the start of a very long and fruitful relationship that will grow with the Maronites migration to Lebanon and their settlement there to form later on the independent entity of Mount Lebanon, which will become the Lebanon we know today. Therefore, studying the relations will have to go through the long centuries since the earliest contacts until our present day.

Although this relationship has been stable over so many centuries, it underwent, nevertheless, some difficult periods, especially during the war years, from 1975 to the early 90s. During these years of war, the Christians took the compelled decision to defend themselves by taking up arms. This policy was frowned upon by the Holy See, especially when some of the Christian leaders began to discuss the possibility of dividing the country into religious cantons. The Holy See, considering itself as the promoter of peace and reconciliation in the world, saw in Lebanon the living proof of the possibility of peaceful co-existence between people from different religions.

Consequently any threat to the unity of the country and its “mission”, would threaten the Holy See’s objectives. *This is why it has refused to see its biggest cause failing at the hand of its proper disciples and protectorates, the Maronites, and other Lebanese Christians.* On the other hand, it was clear for the Vatican that Lebanon, although it was always in the middle of a hostile surrounding of oppression persecution and subduing, it was the last refuge in the Levant and the Holy Lands for Christians generally and Catholics especially.

Thus, the continuity of the support for the Lebanese Christians, became a corner stone in the Vatican diplomacy toward Lebanon. But this support did not mean that the Vatican would give up its other causes of dialogue, peaceful coexistence, and the welfare of the other Christians in other countries of the region.

This exactly was the dilemma facing the Vatican diplomacy in Lebanon. It had to find a middle way between the unlimited support it had given to the Lebanese Christians along their long history of persecution, and the sacred policy of keeping Lebanon a land and space of peaceful coexistence and dialogue among religions. Thus the Holy See couldn’t approve the Christian leaders’ appeal to divide the country into religious cantons as the only way out of the vicious cycle of war.

The best way I found to cover the development of this relation was to divide the paper into three parts: Before, during and after the Lebanese war of 1975, because this war constituted the greatest challenge to the Vatican Diplomacy in Lebanon.

The first part of this paper aims at providing a general historical background of the relation, that started in the 6<sup>th</sup> century with a number of monks calling themselves Maronites and living in refuge in Mount Lebanon. We’ll follow the development of this relation until the nomination of a Maronite Patriarch (685 AD).



The conversion of oriental churches to the catholic belief, and the early contacts with Lebanese families and with the autonomous entity existing in Mount Lebanon between the 12<sup>th</sup> and the 18<sup>th</sup> centuries will also be discussed in the first chapter. The second chapter will deal with the modern history of the relationship, with the sending of a continuous envoy as a resident nonce in Beirut in 1762 and the period that follows. The new era of statehood and the exchange of official diplomatic representation will also be covered.

The second Part of this paper is devoted to the period of the Lebanese war between 1975 and 1990, including a close up analysis of the dilemma mentioned above and of the disharmony that arose between the Vatican and the Christian Leadership. This part also gives us the opportunity to study the practical steps that the Vatican took during the war by sending a multitude of envoys and missions of different kinds and with different objectives. It shows failed attempts of the Vatican to convince the Lebanese Christian leadership of its point of view for a solution and to enforce its diplomatic goal of preserving Lebanon a land for peaceful coexistence and dialogue between Christians and Muslims. Finally, this part sheds light on the inter-Christian conflict with respect to the Taef accord and to the different perceptions which eventually led to actual fighting among Christians. It also examines the role of the Apostolic Nonce in convincing the Christians to give up their weapons for peace and to start working together in rebuilding the country.

A new era in the relations began when, not very successful in ending the war peacefully, the Taef accord had to be enforced, and the Christians found themselves losers and took a depressive attitude. The Vatican played a major role in helping the Christians to accept the new status and in trying to show them the way to take better decisions for a better future.



All these effects of the war and their reflection upon the new aspect of the relation are in part three. Moreover, this part emphasizes the climax of the relation that was crowned with Pope John Paul II calling the Catholic Church of the world and the different Lebanese communities to a Special Synod of Bishops for Lebanon. This was a unique precedence in the history of the Catholic Church as Synods usually consider a whole region or a subject of common interest. This synod, coupled with the historical visit of the Pope, and other events to be mentioned later, shaped the new era of the relationship that will be dealt with in the last chapter that we may entitle, inspired by the Synod, “A New Hope for Lebanon”.

Going through these three parts should enable the reader to follow the development of the relationship between the Vatican and Lebanon, and the different phases it has gone through. One should reach a complete understanding of the objectives and challenges the “Holy” diplomacy was facing, is, and will be facing in Lebanon. This paper will set, on the light of all that, a futuristic prospect of the relationship or at least give the reader enough analysis to conclude his own.

The Holy See’s diplomacy in Lebanon and the mutual relations between those two countries have proven to be one of the most interesting and challenging topics a student or even a researcher in international affairs can encounter. So whatever the results of this paper are, going through it will, undoubtedly, give the readers as it gave me a very wide and clear vision of the Diplomatic Challenges in this relationship.

***PART ONE***

***HISTORICAL ORIGINS***

***OF THE RELATIONS***

***TILL 1975***

# Chapter I: Early Origins of the Relationship

## Earliest Contacts (517-1516)

The earliest contact of a people in this region with the Holy See in Rome refers back to the 6<sup>th</sup> century as mentioned in the introduction. A number of monks, followers of St Maron and living in monasteries by the sides of the Oronte river in the regions of Homs and Aleppo, sent in 517 AD a letter to the Pope Hormisdas (514–523) asking for his help. This letter still exists among the documents of the Holy Council of Costantinople (From 451 to 536). Although it probably was not sent from Lebanon, this letter can give us a clear idea of the situation of the Maronites and the whole region at that time and help us understand the historical background of the role played by the Holy See in the region.

In this letter, the monks expressed their hope that the Holy Pope will be their last refuge and they expressed their belief in the divine authority of the Pope as the successor of St Peter. They also described the massacres and persecution they were subjected to by Jacobite Churches and leaders. The letter said among other things:

“To his holiness, the ecumenical patriarch of the world. Honorable Hormisdas, sitting on the See of Peter, leader of the apostles... the blessing of Christ has inspired us to resort to your holiness, like refugees hiding from the rains and storms to the safety shore. Thus, we acknowledge that the problems facing us can not hurt us, we are facing them with happiness knowing that it is negligible compared to the compensation we will receive in the eternal life. Since our Lord Christ has given you the responsibility of leading and healing the souls, we saw the duty of informing you of the suffering we have endured at the hands of the wolfs messing with the people of God. ... They force us to abandon the Chalcedonian belief, and to disrespect the guidance of our Holy Father ... 350 of our men were massacred, and many others injured, not sparing those who resorted to the Sacred places ... therefore we ask for your mercy and beg you to restore the true faith, the right laws, the honor of the violated priests, and don't forget us suffering daily ... rise Holy Father and come to our rescue ...”.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>This is my translation into English is of the Arabic version found in the books of Fahed (p168) and Khater (p30). Although not professionally translated, this passage is enough to show the importance of the content of this letter as a reference in our subject.



From this letter we can conclude few things of great importance. The first point we can notice is the title the monks gave to the Pope Hormisdas embodying an explicit recognition of his position as the head of the Church. They accepted the fact that he was the successor of Peter with a divine authority. The letter also permits the reader to understand that the monks were persecuted at the hand of the Jacobite Bishops for following the beliefs of the council of Chalcedony (451) with great faith and conviction.

Pope Hormisdas was very flattered and happy to hear that there was a group of people in the East that had decided to follow the "True Belief" of the Holy Church of Rome. He expressed his happiness and support in a reply letter he sent to the monks. That letter was addressed to *"to the Priests, Monks, Monastery directors, and all the Orthodox believers on any side of the Orient who are in communion with the Holy See"* (Khater, p30). He also sent another letter to Anastas king of Constantinople asking him to help these monks and to correct the wrong belief spreading in his region of influence.

These letters didn't do much for the Maronites as the persecution and the killing continued. The monks and their followers started to emigrate to the mountains of Lebanon where finding and threatening them was no easy mission for anyone. However, this contact did notify the Holy See that it has followers in the East, it should care for and try to protect. Thus, these letters marked the beginning of a very long and tight relationship between the Holy See and one of the communities living in the region. It also encouraged the Maronites to hold strong to their faith as they continued to flee into Lebanon under more persecution. Their priests were able in spite of their small number, to debate and argue against the great monotheistic theologians and scholars about the truthfulness of their belief (Fahed, p170-175).

Around 685, as the patriarchal seat in Antioch had been empty for many years, the Maronite priests gathered from all around the Oronte and Mount Lebanon and they elected John Maron to be the new Patriarch. With John Maron the patriarchal seat moved to Lebanon and monasteries grew all over the high mountains of Qartaba, Mayfouq, the surroundings of the Cedar Forest, Besharre and the Qadisha Valley. Few years later when this act of the Maronites reached the Holy See, the Pope accepted the election and certified the authority of John Maroon as the first Maronite Patriarch. The new Patriarch then went in 690 AD in a long voyage, full of dangers at that time, to visit the Pope Serge 1<sup>st</sup> (687-701) and received from his hands the Papal Shield of Endorsement and the Pallium (Khater, p68).

Since that time, it became a sacred protocol for every Maronite patriarch to visit the Holy See as soon as possible after his election to receive the Shield and the Pallium from the hands of the Holy Pope. These were the symbol of his Holiness' acceptance of the authority of the Patriarch and his charging of the Patriarch with the spiritual and social wellbeing of the Catholic Church in his region of authority. Thus, we can say that the Patriarchs were the first Papal "*Nuncio*" to the Near East, or more specifically to Lebanon.

When a Patriarch was unable to travel to Rome he would send a messenger, asking for the Pope's blessing and endorsement. This is what the second Patriarch Korosh did in 710 AD, and he received back from the Pope the "Pallium" along with a crown and a ring, symbols of authority in the Roman church, that became also a tradition in the Maronite Church (Khater, p69). Letters, messengers, or occasional visits for the Endorsement and the Blessing of the Maronite Patriarch's authority in this region; This was the kind of apostolic relation the Popes had with the people of that nation in the early centuries (from the 6<sup>th</sup> to the 10<sup>th</sup>).



The relation started to take another aspect, with the break between the Roman and the Constantinople Churches, and especially with the start of the Crusades. Many historians mentioned the help the crusaders received from the nationals, and the villagers of Mount Lebanon, during their invasion of the Near East (1096-1291). In many ways from translation to orientation, to actual military support, did the Maronites show how happy they were to see the Christians of Europe finally taking interest in the Holy lands, the lands of the first Christians. The crusades were supposed to bring peace and harmony to the region after all the troubles and persecution the Christians had suffered during the Muslim empires of the Omayyades, Abbasides, Fatimids, and Seljoukites.

Along with the political, military and cultural relation that grew between the Maronites and the Crusades, the relation with the Holy See, took a new turn, with the Pope sending extraordinary envoys of higher importance with specific missions. These envoys were meant to enter in direct contact with the Maronite church and people to discover their faith and get to know their rituals and culture (Fahed, p10). The Maronite Patriarch Joseph of Gerges took advantage of the continuously traveling ships to contact Pope Urbane II (1088-1099), Pope Pascal II (1099-1118), Pope Gelase II (1118-1119) and Pope Calixte II (1119-1124).

The Holy See at that time witnessed many disputes over the Papacy. With the election of Pope Innocent II in 1130, another Cardinal claimed Papacy and the Pope sent Cardinal Golilmos to the East to seek the Patriarchs' subordination. The Maronite Patriarch Gregorius received him and swore subordination to the right Pope. Another dispute occurred with the election of Pope Alexander III (1159-1181) and Cardinal John was sent for the same mission. Patriarch John of Lehfed received him in 1160 and he stayed in the region until 1179 when the dispute was settled for good.



Pope Innocent III (1199-1216) also sent Cardinal Peter to tour in the region and contact the Patriarchs and the Latin Bishops seeking their subordination. He met Patriarch Aremia of Amchit and in 1213 transferred to him an invitation to participate in the Latren Council of 1215. The Patriarch traveled to Rome and participated in the council, and the Pope kept him there for a longer period to discuss with him the questions of the Crusades and the Holy Lands, and asked him what the Maronites could do to help. The story also tells that the Patriarch performed a miracle in the presence of the Pope. Upon his return, Aremia started to make some reforms to follow the Latin rituals bringing his church closer to Rome without altering the Maronite concepts, costumes and traditions (Khater, p71).

After the retreat of the Crusades following their consecutive defeats in front of Salah Ed-Dine El-Ayyoubi and then the Mamelouks, the Popes could no longer send cardinals safely to the region, so they depended more and more on the missionary brothers and priests. The Order of St Francis and of the Little Monks were the most trusted and they offered most of the Priests sent as extraordinary envoys. Pope Innocent IV started the chain by sending Fr. Lawrence (1245), who was received by Pt. Simon II. But the difficulties of safe traveling and secure arrival without natural, religious or political threats made the missions of the envoys almost impossible. Thus, there were no references for any envoy in the period between 1250 and 1438.

However, this break of almost 200 years didn't cause any weakness of the relationship and as soon as it became possible, envoys came back to Lebanon and the long chain continued. Some of these envoys will be mentioned here and others who came later will be mentioned afterwards.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>The entire list of special envoys with detailed information about the mission of each are cited in the book of Lahed Khater in the special section reserved for them (p. 37-48)

Fr. John attended the Florentine council (1438) representing the Maronite Church, and was sent back by Pope Eugene IV to Pt. John of Jaj with the Pallium and many gifts. The same Pope sent in an Apostolic visit Fr. Anthony and Fr. Peter (1442), who came back with a number of Priests seeking the blessing of the Pope and the enforcement of the relation between their community and the Holy See. Fr. Peter was sent again to act as a nonce to the whole region and to be in contact with all the Christians following the Roman belief. Pope Paul II nominated Fr. Griffin (1450) who was in Jerusalem as nonce in Lebanon during the term of Pt. Jacob of Hadeth and Pt. Peter Ben-Hassan. Pope Sixte IV assigned Fr. Alexander Ariusti (1476) to the same mission. While Pope Leo X nominated Fr. Francis Suriano (1513) and Pope Clement VII nominated Fr. Bernard Arthur (1526). Pope Pius V nominated Fr. John Darsiniano (1566) who got imprisoned in sea and was unable to accomplish his mission (See annex list).

This long list that is yet to be continued, permits us to conclude how great was the interest successive Pontiff Sovereigns have shown in tightening the relation with the people of the region and in getting the Maronite “oriental” church closer to the Holy See. We saw, however, that the relation was not continuous as there is no mention of any contact between 710 and 1000 and between 1250 and 1435. These periods made some historians argue about the untruthfulness of the Maronite belief, an argument that will emerge again with the two missions of Fr. Eliano (1578 – 1580). This argument may have some supportive evidences but it does not deny the originality of the earlier contacts mentioned here. Anyway, the next chapter will show the reader how the relation developed in an enduring way leaving no place for doubts.



### **Renewing the relations (1516-1762)**

With the arrival of the Ottomans (1516), the Christians thought they would know better days, but they quickly discovered that it was just a dream. The Maans, an influential Druze family, became the princes of the Chouf in return for their support to the Ottomans against the Mamlouks. These Maan princes tried to establish an autonomous entity in Mount Lebanon together with their Christian allies of the North. The response of the Ottomans to that attempt was too destructive. For many decades, there was no freedom at all, in the mountain people paid high taxes, and any independence movement was oppressed. Consequently, it was very hard to establish any kind of connection with the Holy See at this time. However, restoring the relations after this break was a renewal that brought the Maronites and their compatriots even closer to Rome and opened the door to the great development of the relations that will occur in the next centuries.

As soon as he was elected in 1524, Pt. Moses of Akkar sent a Bishop as a messenger to Rome to ask the Pope, and then King Charles V of Spain for help against the tyranny of the Ottomans. The Patriarch promised them an army of 50,000 Maronite soldiers who would fight under their command. In fact it took this same Patriarch 30 years, three failed attempts, and five changing Popes (Clement VII - Paul III – Jules III – Marcel II – Paul IV) to finally receive in 1562 the Pallium and Pope Pius IV's blessing. The capture of Fr. Darsiniano in sea before he could reach Lebanon, as mentioned before, is another proof of the difficulty of making contacts.

It could be useful here to note that Pope Marcel II is Cardinal Santa Cruise who was for many years the responsible (Lawyer) of the Maronite affairs at the Holy See. His election as Pope in 1555 filled the mountains of Lebanon with joy and hope, but unfortunately, he died only 20 days after his election (Fahed, p14-16).

Upon his election, the new Pope Gregory XIII (1572-1585) felt the necessity to check the faith of the Maronites as it has been several years since they were in contact with the Holy See. Many stories reached the Pope saying that the Maronite Church was influenced by the different ideologies and theories that were popular in that part of the world and that this drove them far from the true Catholic faith. Fr. Eliano was the right person for this mission, because he knew the Maronites from his friendship with Bishop George of Baslouqit who taught with him Arabic and Hebrew in the Roman School, and he knew the oriental culture as he was originally from Egypt. Fr. Eliano's main mission was to acquaint the Maronites with the laws of the "Tridentian Council", to make sure that they were following the true Catholic belief, and to make them get rid of all intruders to this faith.

Fr. Eliano reached Lebanon in 1578, and Pt. Michael Razzi made sure that he and his companions had the best reception in the Qanoubine monastery, after he sent someone to receive them at the port of Tripoli. Bishops, priests, and monks came from all over the Mountains, along with popular delegations and, a council took place in which Pt. Razzi announced to the presence some corrections that the Pope had asked the Maronites to apply. In fact the Pope wanted them to: follow the roman form of the "Holy" (Kuddous), refuse marriage between cousins, present children to the first communion only when they have full teeth, mandate confession on Easter and other great holidays, baptize children before 40 days of their birth, replace the divorce, in case of adultery, by a separation without the possibility of remarriage. Pt. Razzi swore submission to the Catholic Church and to the Pope in the Holy See in whatever matters they decided or refused. Fr. Eliano gave him then the Endorsement Shield and the Pallium, along with the Pope's gifts and blessings (Fahed, p30-42).



This was the beginning of the hard and long mission of Fr. Eliano to check all the ritual books and prayers of the Maronites, their culture and religious traditions. He made a big tour in the different villages of the Mountain and got in contact with the people and the local priests. The result of that was the burning of some books and other parts of manuscripts that may have contained contradictions with the Roman belief, in form rather than in content. A long detailed report was presented to the Pope about the Maronite church, its origins, history, culture, traditions and beliefs. Pope Gregory XIII decided to send Fr. Eliano in a second mission to Lebanon shortly after his return because he was pleased with the work accomplished.

The second mission started in 1580, when Fr. Eliano was received by the very sick Pt. Michael Razzi, who in fact died one year after receiving the Pallium and the endorsement shield from the hands of the papal envoy in a very prestigious ceremony. A few days afterwards, and in the presence of Fr. Eliano, the clergy elected the brother of Michael, Sarkis Razzi to be the new Patriarch in 1581. Fr. Eliano raised a letter to the Pope confirming the election and asking for the endorsement of the new Patriarch which happened in 1583 (Fahed, p132).

The important aspect in this second mission was the educational one. Fr. Eliano brought with him from Rome many books about the Catholic belief and rituals that he had printed especially in Karshoune in order to spread them around among the Maronite clergy. He also encouraged them to open primary schools everywhere near the churches and monasteries. Fr. Eliano also encouraged the Patriarch to send more bright youngsters to Rome to get their education and come back to open schools. His report and impression of the visit he gave in Rome encouraged Pope Gregory XIII to answer Pt. Razzi's request to open a school in Rome for the Maronite students after Pope Pius V had turned him down.

Indeed, when the number of Maronite students in Rome reached twenty, the Maronite (Roman) School was opened in February 24, 1584. Another remarkable development was the introduction of the first printing press into the Middle East, to the monastery of St Anthony Qozhaya in 1585. It was in Karshoune (Arabic words written in Syriac letters) and it was meant to print the prayer books, the Bible and other religious books, so that they could be preserved from manipulation and bad translation. It was administered by the Jesuit Order and was put under the direction of Fr. John Bruno, the companion of Fr. Eliano in his second visit.

However, some rumors went along Fr. Eliano's mission about the truthfulness of the Maronite belief, especially when the news of burning books spread around (Fahed, p117-142). Fr. Peter Fahed, of the Maronite Mariamite Order, discussed this issue in details in the book he published in 1961 titled, "The relation of the Maronites with the Holy See". Fr. Fahed criticizes the writings of the Jesuit historian, Fr. Chikho, who claimed that the Maronites at that time were distracted from the right "Catholic faith" influenced by the ideologies and pressures of the surrounding churches, sects and beliefs.

Fr. Chikho argued that it was Fr. Eliano who converted the Maronites back to Catholicism. He built his claims on a document presented to the Pope upon Eliano's return to Rome, that was signed by the Patriarch and a number of bishops and contained a list of wrong perceptions intruded in the Maronite faith and corrected by Fr. Eliano. Fr. Fahed basing his argument on Patriarch Dwaihy's studies which refuted all the claims of Fr. Eliano, and the argument of Fr. Chikho. Fr. Fahed said that the Patriarch and the Bishops were asked to sign a white paper on which Fr. Eliano wrote later on whatever he wanted. Fr. Fahed also argued that the corrections made by Eliano were only superficial and not in the heart of the Maronite faith.



IN 1596, 16 years later, another envoy was sent to Lebanon by Pope Clement VIII. This Special Envoy was Fr. Eronimus Dandini. In Qanoubine, he discussed the Maronite belief in all its details with Pt. Razzi and the bishops, in a Maronite Council. During that council, they all renewed their vow to follow the Roman belief all the time, all the way. After an apostolic tour around the villages, Dandini attended the election of Pt. Yousef Razzi after the death of his Uncle Pt. Sarkis (Fahed, p144-152). This mission gave the best conclusion to the dilemma as it asserted the truthfulness of the Maronite faith and its affiliation to Catholicism for good.

### **Contacts with non-Catholic Churches**

It's essential to study the period of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century in order to understand the diplomacy of the Holy See in Lebanon. Although there wasn't a real "diplomacy", the relation witnessed its largest development at this time. In fact the relation before was restricted between the Popes and the Maronite Patriarchs, or maybe the Maronite Church and people. However, since the visit of Fr. John Baptist Eliano, the relation grew to include other Lebanese communities, like the Druze and the Non-Catholic Churches, on an official and popular basis, as we will see later. This did not at all weaken the direct and special relation with the Maronites, but on the contrary, this period magnified the role of the latter as the best mediators between the Holy See and the people of the region.

Yet, let's examine now the contacts with the other oriental churches of the Greeks, Syriacs, and Armenians. These contacts resulted in the birth in all of these Churches, of Catholic communities willing to follow the Roman belief and to be united under the See of Peter. It was not a coincidence that many of the new Catholic Churches had their Patriarchal Seats in Lebanon.

**The Syriac Church** (Church of Syria; Antioch, Mt Lebanon, Bilad El-Cham) is the most ancient Church that still exists in the region. This oriental Church refused to accept the decisions of the Chalcedony council (451), and thus, split from the other Churches, influenced by the Jacobite and Nestorian ideologies. Since then many contacts were made and many theological and ideological discussions through letters and envoys took place but non led to unity.

In 1230, Pt. Agnates Daoud sent a message expressing his will for unity to the Pope Gregory IX. But, this step was soon aborted and seemed to be a political move rather than a religious one. Nevertheless, the contacts continued on individual basis. In 1662, a new Patriarch was elected, Pt. Agnates Akhigian, who lived during his early age in Lebanon, and was educated by the Maronite clergy. Indeed, he was sent by the Maronite Pt. Safrawi to the Maronite school in Rome to continue his education. When he came back, he became a priest and was sent with Fr. Stephan Dwaihy (Who became Maronite Patriarch later on) to Aleppo where they lived as missionaries bringing many to the Catholic belief. As soon as he was elected, he sent a letter of submission to Pope Alexander VII, who sent back an endorsement letter accepting him as the Patriarch of the Syriac Catholic Church (Khater, p114).

The following Patriarchs of this Church were oppressed and persecuted in Aleppo. Pt. Agnates Shahpadin (1678-1702) ran away to Rome but was captured in 1701 and died as martyr in Istanbul one year later. The Patriarchal seat stayed empty until 1782 when Pt. Agnates Jrouh was elected in Iraq and he was also persecuted until he ran disguised to Lebanon as he saw in these mountains his only refuge. He was received by the Maronites and was given the Monastery of "Chourfeh" that became his patriarchal seat. There, the succession of patriarchs continued safely as the contact with Rome went on (Khater, p.113-120).



**The Greek Church** was called “Melkite”, which means the followers of the King, by the people of the region and the Muslims because it followed the king of Costantinople when the break happened in 451 AD. The same story goes as for the Syriacs. In fact, many Greek patriarchs, bishops, and priests contacted Rome individually. The most important of those contacts mentioned by historians was the one made by Pt. Peter III (1052-1057) who declared his submission to the Catholic belief. The second important step was the declaration of Unity announced after the Florentine council of 1439 by Pt. Dorothy I.

However, a third transmission occurred with Pt. Cyrillic V who served three consecutive terms (1672-1682-1685 and 1694-1720) and was in contact with the Maronite Pt. Stephan Dwaihy and discussed with him theological ideologies. Finally, in a letter dated in 1716 and sent to Pope Clement XI he declared his Catholic faith. The Pope accepted him in the Catholic Church and prayed for his steadiness but did not endorse either him or his successor Atanathus III. This restriction proved to be wise as Pt. Atanathus refuted back his Catholic faith in 1720. Upon his death in 1724, Cyrillic Tanas was elected Patriarch with the help of the Catholic bishops. The rest of the bishops elected another patriarch and managed to get the Ottoman support. Pt. Cyrillic ran to Lebanon where he was received by the Maronites who took the blame for the schism, were attacked for that, and had their patriarchal seat invaded and their villages plundered. Pope Benedict XIV knew of the events and sent the Pallium and the endorsement shield as a declaration of the acceptance of Pt. Cyrillic as Patriarch of the Greek Catholic Church in 1744 (Khater, p97-111).

Since then, there was a succession of Patriarchs, many of whom will be referred to, later. In 1833, Pt. Mazloun held the seats of Antioch, Alexandria and Jerusalem, and in 1869, Pt. Yussef participated in the Vatican Council (Khater, p109).

**The Armenian Church** refuted the Chalcedony council, in the 6<sup>th</sup> century. This resulted in the division of the Armenian Patriarchy into five patriarchal seats, continuously changing their allegiance in and out of the Roman Catholic Church. In the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Pope created the independent seat of the Armenian Catholic Patriarchy, and the followers of this church were persecuted along with all the other catholic churches.

In 1722, Bishop Abraham Arzifian of Aleppo was captured by the Ottomans and exiled to the island of Arwad. Then, he managed to come to Lebanon where he took refuge. He was received by the Maronite Patriarch and was given a monastery to reside in. Some of his clergy followed him until their number reached 35. In 1739, he was able to go back to Aleppo where he was elected Patriarch. As soon as he was elected he traveled to Rome to tell his story to Pope Benedict XIV. He received a blessing, the endorsement, the Pallium, and the title of Catholic Patriarch of Celicia and the Armenians. Pt. Arzifian added Peter to his name, symbolizing his submission to the See of Peter in Rome the way the Maronite Patriarchs are used to do since many years (Khater, p123).

His successor Pt. Jacob built the monastery of Bzommar in Lebanon, which became the Patriarchal Seat of the Armenian Catholic Church in 1749. The succession of Armenian Patriarchs played an important role in spreading Catholicism in the region of Celicia and the rest of Turkey. Pope Pius IX tried to move the seat from Bzommar to Istanbul in 1867, but the Ottomans were not very receptive and a division in the Armenian church occurred for 12 years during which Pt. Hassoun ran to Rome then came back to Lebanon. However, he was nominated Cardinal by Pope Leo XIII in 1880 and he played an important role in tightening the relations between the Armenian Church and Rome (Khater, p121-128).



## **Relations with Lebanese Families and Leaderships**

The development of the relations between the Holy See and Lebanon was not restricted, as we mentioned before, to the oriental Churches, but it took another dimension; a secular one if we may say. The Pope had been, via his envoys, in contact with many powerful families of Mount Lebanon. Some of them were Christians, others were Druzes; some of them were feudal lords others were commoners. Presenting the entirety of these relations is almost impossible, however, we will focus on the most significant ones.

The Popes had tight relations with the “**Mukadamin**”, rulers of the mountains of Becharre. The earliest documented contact was between Pope Leo X (1513-1521) and Elias Yussef and other responsible people in 1515 asking them to enforce the religious, cultural, and political zeal of the Maronites. In 1543, Pope Paul III sent a friendship letter to Mukadam Hanna and the Maronite people. In 1609, Pope Paul V sent a message to all the Mukadamin Razzi, Faraj, Hobeich, and Khater (Khater, p199-202).

**Prince Fakhr El-Dine II** (1590-1633) the third Maani prince of the Chouf, had a great dream in mind. He wanted to create a large, independent Lebanon, free from any occupation. In order to achieve that, he had to win the support of the kings of Europe. The only door he knew toward those kings was through the Holy See and the influence of the Pope on those kings. We notice again the role of the Maronite clergy, especially John Makhlof and George Aamaira the two patriarchs who were close to the Emir and who played an important role in introducing him to the Popes and the ruler of Tuscany<sup>3</sup> and others. (Khater, p202-210).

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<sup>3</sup>He was earlier a Cardinal and was responsible for the Oriental and Maronite issues in the Holy See

Letters and Messages were numerous and mutual between the Prince and the Popes Clement VIII (1590-1605), Paul V (1605-1623) and Urban VIII (1623-1644). The Emir promised safe passage and assistance to the pilgrims to the Holy Lands, and the possibility of converting with his family to the Christian faith, in return for moral and material support. He even claimed in one letter that he is the descendant of a European king (De Bouillon) who came with the crusades and whose family stayed in Lebanon. Unfortunately, the internal problems of Europe deprived the Emir of any effective help when the Ottomans decided to get rid of him once and for all in 1633. However, the relation with the Maani princes didn't stop with Fakhr El-Dine but it continued in the days of Melhem, Korkomaz, and Ahmed (Khater, p171-172)

**The Chehabs**, Sunni cousins of the Maanis, took over as princes of the Chouf and Mount Lebanon in 1697. During the Chehabs rule, many contacts were also made between the Popes and the different princes. Historians talk about a number of letters exchanged between Pope Innocent XIII and Prince Haydar, concerning the money saved by Emir Fakhr El-Dine in a bank in Tuscany. Pope Clement XIII sent a letter to prince Mansour in 1765, asking him to acknowledge Theodosus and not his competitor as Greek Catholic patriarch. Prince Yussef had with the help of his advisor, Saed Khoury, established very close relations with the Holy See, especially with Pope Pius VI (1775-1799). Since then the majority of the Chehabi princes became Christians, and the relation with the Holy See became closer than ever during the rule of Prince Bashir Chehab II (1788-1840), (Khater, p211-222).

Other families not ruling at the time also had relations with the Popes and the envoys, and many of them were given aristocratic titles, decorations, medals, and orders of Merit and Honor<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup>Once again, historian Lahed Khater has offered the best record of those "The Pope & Leb. Families"



**The Khazen family** were the lords of Kesrwan and had a honorable history in protecting the Catholic faith and helping the Maronite Church. Among those who knew the Popes, we must mention Rabah (1624), Khazen (1630), Nader (1666), Haidar (1657), Fayad & Nawfal (1673), and Kais & Khaled (1705).

**The Hobeich family** lived in Foutouh Keserwan and Jbeil. They were an important Maronite family with great influence and connections with the Maronite clergy, the Holy See, the Ottomans, and the local rulers. Among the known names we mention, Yousef (1580), Youness (1630), Baz (1717) and others.

The descendent of Saed Khoury took his name and became **the Saed family** gave many important men to the Lebanese leadership. Saed himself was a notable and the first advisor of Prince Yousef Chehab. He was known for his wisdom and dignity. Saed had direct contact with the Pope and the Cardinals of the Holy See. Like other Maronite notables, Saed often hosted the Papal envoys and protected them. After his death his descendents especially Gandour, and Habib Saed followed the steps of their father and added many titles to the record of the family.

From **the Jumblats**, the family that took the leadership of the Druzes of the Chouf, we can mention Ali (1765), Kasem (1787) and Bashir (1799), up to Kamal Jumblat the great leader of post-independence time.

We should not forget the Abi Lameh, Tirazi, Dahdah, and other families. Lahed Khater has mentioned, 6 Counts, 22 clergy decorated men, and 35 decorated civilians until 1965 the date of publication of his book.

Before we conclude this chapter, it is important to get back to the list of extraordinary envoys that we have neglected when we entered into the details of the relations.

After the opening of the Maronite school and the development of the relations in the way we presented it, the sea road between Rome and Lebanon became very commonly used by Priests and other travelers. Thus, the necessity for special envoys diminished, and we see no record of any envoy from 1596 (Danidini's mission) till 1712 (Cusa's mission). But this break for more than a hundred years didn't cause any threat to the relationship because it was developing in many other aspects. Of these aspects we mentioned, the religious (converting oriental churches), cultural (missionaries, schools, students in Rome), social (families & individuals), and political ones (different rulers of the mountain).

Yet, the 18<sup>th</sup> century witnessed the return of extraordinary envoys in an important frequency (15 envoys in 80 years, almost one every 6 years). These envoys had specific objectives concerning the important events that occurred in Lebanon in that century (See List Annex).

## Chapter II: Official Representation

### Resident Envoys (1762-1929)

In the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Pope Clement XIII (1758-1769) saw the growing importance of Lebanon to the Holy See and to the whole Catholic presence in the Near East, especially after the return of parts of the Syriac, Greek, and Armenian Churches to Catholicism and their recurrence to Lebanon. The communication had to be enforced and the visits of extraordinary envoys for short periods were not enough anymore. Thus, the Pope decided for the first time, to send an envoy that will reside in the country and stay in direct contact with the different communities, Churches, families, and leaders.

A French guy named Arland Bosso was chosen to be this envoy. He arrived to Lebanon in 1762 and took the Jesuit monastery of Aintoura as residence. Bosso stayed in Lebanon until his death in 1774 and worked hard in tightening the relations with the Lebanese and developing it on different levels and in many aspects (Khater, p49). This mission was the first step towards fixing an official representation for the Holy See in Lebanon, while the clergy scholars were representers of the different Churches in Rome.

The missionary work grew wide and deep as Lebanon witnessed a very large number of families, commons and lords turning to Christianity. Among those the Druze Emirs of the Abillamaa family and the Sunni Emirs of the Chehab family. In 1771, Prince Yousef Chehab became the first Maronite prince of the Mountain. Under his rule and with the help of his advisor Saed El-Khoury, he presented his protection to the Papal envoy and restored the authority of the Maronite Patriarch. The number of letters exchanged between with the Pope increased more then ever (Khater, p217).



The constant residence of a Papal envoy in Lebanon didn't mean the end of extraordinary missions, it meant that those would be less frequent and that they would from now on deal with one specific issue, and once it was over the mission was over too. After the death of Bosso, there were no resident envoys until 1800. However, Pope Clement XIV sent Fr. Peter de Morta in 1775 with the mission to resolve the issue of Sister Hindieh and the order she had founded and to study the accusations launched against Pt. Yousef Stephan. The issue however needed a second visit after less than ten years, and Fr. De Morta came back in 1785 after he was nominated Bishop of Carafri to finally solve the whole issue according to the will of the Holy Father (Khater, p47 & 217-219).

In 1787, another special envoy, this time a Lebanese for the second time after Semaani in 1736 (see annex list), Bishop Germans Adam was sent by Pope Pius VI to solve a conflict between Pt. Stephan and one of his bishops. He did and then presided in the name of the Pope the Maronite Council of Bekerki in 1790 (Khater, p48).

Directly after his election in 1800, Pope Pius VII nominated Bishop Germans El-Khazen as resident envoy in Lebanon after 16 years of interruption. El-Khazen was the only Lebanese resident papal envoy to Lebanon. Prince Bashir Chehab II was by that time Emir of Mount Lebanon and he was also baptized at the hands of his uncle a member of El-Khazen family of Keserwan. His relation with envoy Germans El-Khazen (1800-1806) and his successor Louis Gendelfi (1806-1825) was good in general and he was also in direct contact with the Pope (Khater, p220-221). Gendelfi was even nominated as advisor of the Emir and educator of his children. Envoy Peter Lozana (1825-1832) built the first independent residence for the papal missions in Zouk Mikael (Khater, p50).

The succession of resident ordinary envoys continued till the independence of Lebanon, (see annex list). These envoys played a very important role in supporting the Christian population of the mountains all through the critical events of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Direct intervention, international pressure (France becoming the protector of the Maronites), and increasing power of the clergy were the results. During the crises of 1841 and 1860, the Papal envoys Villardel (1841-1853) and Falerca (1858-1873) played a major role in supporting the afflicted, homeless, and hungry people of the mountains (Khater, p50-51). Fr. Ludevic Piafi (1873-1889) moved the residence to Ras Beirut to be closer to the center of political life, and built the residence of Harissa as a summer house. Fr. Gonzales Duval (1895-1905) proposed to build the Statue and Church of Notre Dame of Lebanon in Harissa, and offered the land for the project right beside the Papal residence. Fr. Frediano Gianini (1905-1934) completed the project, during WWI. He brought material help and financial aid to the people suffering from the blockade, the famine, and the diseases. He also traveled to Istanbul to mediate in the name of the Pope with the ambassadors of the Great powers to ease the pain of the Lebanese dying under the blockade and to save Pt. Hwayek from being captured by Jamal Bacha (Khater, p50-53, 86).

Very important facts about the relation during the last decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the first ones of the 20<sup>th</sup> are worth mentioning. In Lebanon, this was a period of enlightenment, as the number of schools increased tremendously and university studies became available with the establishment of the American University (Evangelical College 1866) and the St Joseph University (Jesuit 1875). Printed books, newspapers, and magazines became common, and the Arabic language was revived and spread wide in all the regions where people were still using other languages like the Syriac, or Assyrian.



Also during this period, many Lebanese emigrants became renowned as distinguished thinkers and authors like Gibran, Naïmy and others members of “Al-Rabita Al-Qalamiya”. This enlightenment brought along different ideologies. Some people believed in an independent Arab Kingdom under Faysal, others believed in a Greater Syria including Mount Lebanon, Bilad El-Cham and the east and west banks of the Jordan. The majority of the Christian Catholics preferred to keep the Mountains of Lebanon as an independent entity where they can have a special status preserving their particularities from melting in any of the large communities surrounding them.

There isn't enough space in this paper to mention all the developments that occurred after the retreat of the Ottoman armies, the declaration of the Arab Emirates, the Sakes-Picot Agreement, the Peace Convention, the French Mandate, and the Lebanese delegations. However, it is necessary to mention that the major powers accepted to consider “Greater Lebanon” (the Mountains + Akkar, Bekaa, and the coastline) as an autonomous entity under the pressure of the Holy See and France who were concerned about the status of the Lebanese Christians. Therefore, some thinkers go to say that Lebanon may not be a Christian state, but it certainly is a state for the Christians, and they are its cause of existence, i.e. “Raison d'être”.

In all these and other critical events of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup>, the Maronite patriarchs played an important role in preserving the safety and prosperity of their church, people, clergy, culture, and wealth. From Yousef Hobeich (Bashir II, the Egyptian occupation, the events of 1840–45), to Paul Masaad (Mutasarifia, crisis of 1860), and Elias Hwayek (WWI, creation of Great Lebanon) they All the Patriarchs were in close contact with the Popes asking them constantly for advice and orientation.



The last but not least thing to be mentioned in this part is the creation by Pope Benedict XV (1914-1922) in 1917 of the Council of Oriental Churches. The council is supposed to take care of all issues concerning the oriental Churches and supervise their status and work as independent Churches having their own rituals, traditions, and culture within the doctrinal unity of the Catholic Church. Creating this council was a very important step toward strengthening and protecting these Churches.

This way of thinking of the Holy See became clear during the Vatican Council of 1869 in which participated all the oriental Churches represented by their patriarchs or special envoys sent by the latter to represent their Churches. During the council, Pt. Gregory Yousef of the Greek Catholic Church, along with bishops Boustani and Aoun that represented the Maronite Church were the most zealous in defending the rights and privileges of the oriental churches in front of Pope Pius 9<sup>th</sup> (1846-1878) presiding the council.

Pope Leo XIII (1878-1903) invited Pt. Yousef to Rome and discussed with him this issue among many others. As a result of the discussions, the Pope published in 1894 a general message under the title of "Honor of the Oriental Churches" (Khater, p 107-108). This message described the way to deal with the special status of these churches and the way they should preserve their differences, traditions, and rituals, within the unity. This was of course the basis upon which the Council of Oriental Churches was created later on, in 1917.

An observer may conclude that it was during this hard period that the Christians of Lebanon started believing more than ever in the necessity of a special relation with the Holy See. The latter was the only power that could protect them and support their dream of independence without asking for anything in return.

### **The Independence Era (1929-1958)**

By this era we mean not only the independence of Lebanon in 1943 and its effect on the relationship with the Holy See, but also the Convention of Lateran which resulted in a treaty between the Vatican and the Italian State in 1929.

The treaty of 1929 gave the Holy See a political status as an independent state. in the new concept of the word. The “Vatican City State” (VCS) became an independent country that has total sovereignty, securing the Pope’s absolute freedom asserting his temporal and spiritual reign, and recognizing the universality of his authority. VCS got borders, a government, and an international personality recognized by the international law like any other state. The new state is the leftover of the great historical Papal States that grew or shrunk according to the political situation in Europe and the Italian peninsula. All that is left today is the hill of the Vatican of 44 hectares outside the walls of ancient Rome and a few religious and historical sites inside and outside Rome (Farhat, p25, 36).

So since 1929, when we talk about the Holy See, we mean the Vatican City State and the Roman Curia combined, i.e. the political, legal, and international personality of the state, and the religious, moral, and universal value of the See of Peter. One may not differentiate easily between the two aspects. Yet, we should know that the Vatican as a state has international relations with all the states of the world and has continuous diplomatic representation on different levels in 130 states, among them 10 Arabic countries. In addition, the Vatican has representatives in all the International commissions and organizations like the United Nations, UNESCO, FAO, EU, SAO and many others (Farhat, p43).



These diplomats represent the Vatican as an entity restricted geographically to the Vatican City, that has a special international status, and a moral and ethical power spreading as far as the Catholic Church itself. The objectives of the Vatican diplomacy differ in time and space within the scope of world peace, development of humanity, and cooperation among the different communities of the world for the common good. Yet, its most sacred mission is preserving the wellbeing and safety of all Catholics around the world. So even if we can't talk about the Holy See diplomacy before the treaty of 1929 and the formation of a state, this diplomacy holds in its back satchel all the history of Papal relations. Thus, the legal status of the Holy See may have changed but its objectives and the way it deals with the different issues remained persistent and continuous in complete harmony with its history.

The normal continuity of events between 1929 and 1943 proved the unchanged direction of the relation between Lebanon and the Holy See. In 1932, Pt. Antoine Arida was elected, and he received the endorsement shield and the Pallium, as usual, from Pope Pius XI (1922-1939). As soon as he was able to, he visited the Vatican in 1937, met with the pope, and discussed with him the different issues of concern to both Lebanon and the Holy See. In 1935, Pt. Tabouny of the Syriac Catholic Church was nominated Cardinal and the roman church the pope designated for him was the one that has the tomb of the first oriental cardinal. In 1937, Pt. Gregory Akajianian was elected head of the Armenian Catholic Church and he also was nominated cardinal in 1946.

Another proof of this continuity was the nomination of Fr. Remy Liberter in 1934 as the 15<sup>th</sup> resident envoy in Beirut. In 1935, the church of the Maronite School was restored with the help of the Pope (Khater, p119, 128, 225).



Following the events of 1943 that lead as we all know, to the independence of Lebanon and the end of the mandate system, the Lebanese officials started an international diplomatic campaign to win the recognition of Lebanon as an independent state. In 1946, foreign minister Hamid Frangieh had the Vatican as his third destination after the peace conference in London and the treaty of retreat of the French troops in Paris. Along with Fr. John Maroon, he arrived to the Vatican and was received by the Secretary of State. They agreed on the recognition of Pope Pius XII (1939-1958) of the independence of Lebanon and on the exchange of diplomatic representation. The Pope received the Lebanese delegation and gave them a message of appreciation and love of the Lebanese president and people (Khater, p228).

In 1947, Mr Charles Helou (later president of the republic) was chosen as the first minister to represent Lebanon toward the Holy See. In the ceremony of receiving his credential papers, the Pope said that Lebanon with its diversity of cultures, ethnicities and linguistics resembles the multicolored eagle that prophet Hezikal (Hz. 17/3) saw in a vision flying over Lebanon. He emphasized the unique image of these different people living together a brotherly manner (Khater, p234). A few months later, the resident envoy Fr. Liberter was called back to the Vatican and Mgr. Alcid Marina was nominated as the first ambassador to the Lebanese republic. At his arrival, he had a great popular and official reception. Mgr. Marina helped creating the council of Catholic patriarchs and in easing the difficulties of the Palestinian refugees. In 1951 Mgr. Joseph Bartelemi replaced the diseased ambassador. During his service (1951-1959), the Lebanese government approved of the Christian personal status law, and it decided to raise the level of diplomatic representation from minister to ambassador upon the papal request. Thus, in 1953, Yousef Sawda was the first ambassador succeeding Minister Joseph Harfouch (1950-1953) (Khater, p250, 254).

The year 1954 witnessed an important event as the Lebanese churches decided to organize a Mariamite Convention in honor of the Virgin Mary and the festivities were of great importance. The organizing committee asked the pope for his patronage through sending a representative to preside over the council. The pope gladly accepted and sent Cardinal Roncali (later Pope John XXIII) who was received in the most honorable ways. Roncali was indeed given the Lebanese citizenship and the Great Cedars Vail of the rank of Commander. During the convention, the pope blessed Lebanon and the Lebanese on the Vatican Radio and it was transmitted live to all the participants (Khater, p257-260). The following year, and due to the great impression the convention had left in his heart, the pope invited president Chamoun to visit the Eternal City of Rome. The visit took place in March 1955 and the reception ceremony was described by some journalists, as the greatest since the end of World War II.

During the years following the independence, the Vatican ceased every opportunity to clearly show how it viewed Lebanon and what were the bases of its diplomacy toward it. For the Holy See, Lebanon had a great history of sacrifice that the Maronites and other Christian communities had given in order to preserve their faith and to make of Lebanon a land of freedom and peaceful coexistence. The best words to conclude this part and to describe this view of the Vatican may be the quote of Mgr. Bartelemi in a celebration he presided in the village of Ebrin. He said:

“The Holy Pope knows the history of Lebanon and the Maronites, and he appreciates the gravity of what they have suffered in order to preserve their faith. He also knows their tight attachment to the Holy See, and looks dearly at Lebanon as the key to Catholicism in the Orient” (Khater, p249).



Another clear quote is that of Pope Pius XII addressing the Lebanese delegation to the Italian Economic Convention in 1958. The delegation had asked to see the pope before returning back home. He started his words with "Lebanon, Lebanon, I love Lebanon..." then he concluded saying unto them:

"... Go home my children and transmit to your brothers the Lebanese of all religions, my blessings and my appreciation to this people small in number but great in morality. This people that knew how to make of its country a land of pardon and freedom, an intellectual and cultural beacon of the Orient. God bless you and bless your country" (Khater, p268).

### **The First Crisis (1958-1975)**

This shiny image of Lebanon didn't hold for long, as the first blow to the peaceful coexistence came quickly in 1958. The crisis divided the country into a pro-western ideology represented by Maronite president Chamoun and his allies, and a pro-eastern ideology represented by the leftist parties which had a majority of Muslim members. This conflict took a violent aspect and the division between the Lebanese seemed religious. These facts were reported in their utmost details to Pope Pius XII and he showed great concern and worry about the situation. He told his visitors and declared many times that he is doing everything possible on all levels to prevent the situation in Lebanon from deteriorating. He also started a personal daily prayer for the sake of peace in this country that he loved much (Khater, p270).

Thus, the war of 1958 ended just before it became uncontrollable. Some people say it had stopped in a miraculous way that no human mind could have achieved. Many other realistic analysts say that the fact that the war stopped was not so good because it was only delayed it 15 years and its return was inevitable. In fact, it resumed in a much worse and more ravaging way.



This first crisis didn't threaten the relation with the Vatican at all. The Holy See was very careful not to take side in the conflict. Although the Christian welfare in Lebanon was the higher interest of the Vatican, it was clear for the Holy See that this presence couldn't be continuous and stable unless the consensus in Lebanon was preserved. In the conflict of 1958, the Vatican Diplomacy saw a challenge in reaching two objectives that were contradictory in many aspects; Supporting the Lebanese Christians and preserving the Lebanese coexistence formula. This contradiction will develop to the extreme during the war of 1975, which will be discussed later. However, the growth of the stable relationship between the two countries was not affected at this stage. This steady growth was clear in the 1960's and the early 70s, and there are some important events that took place then and are worth mentioning.

Upon the death of Pope Pius XII (1939-1958), the Lebanese government declared a three-day mourning. This step and the great number of people from all religions, in spite of the ongoing crisis at that time, offering their condolences in the papal embassy, were clear proofs of how dear the relation with the Holy See was to the Lebanese people and government. The news of the election of Cardinal Roncali as new Pope under the name of John XXIII (1958-1963) made a good impression on the Lebanese people because the Cardinal had visited Lebanon twice (1906 & 1954) and he knew and loved the Lebanese people. During this election many journalists and analysts close to the cardinals whispered the name of Cardinal "Agajanian" (Pt. Of the Armenian Catholic Church) as nominee to the seat of Pope for the qualities he had shown. Later on, in 1962, he was nominated president of the "Propaganda Council" by the new pope (Khater, p128). In 1959, the Vatican nominated Mouchi as Maronite Patriarch (first time since 1742). Pt. Mouchi was received by the Pope and instead of the planed 20 minutes, the meeting took more than 40 (Khater, p92).

During the mandate of John XXIII, the yearly anniversary of the enthroning of the pope became almost a national festivity in Lebanon; after all, he was called “The Pope of all the World”. Unfortunately, John XXIII died before he was able to achieve all his projects especially the Second Vatican Council.

The new pope was Paul VI (1963-1978) and his mandate asserted the clear, steady, and tight relation between Lebanon and the Vatican. Vatican II was a very important council for the whole Church and for the Oriental Catholic Churches too. These Churches participated with four Patriarchs (Maronite, Greek Catholic, Syriac, and Armenian), 54 bishops, and 5 Abbots. This council witnessed the nomination of all four patriarchs along with the Latin patriarch of the Holy Land members in the Holy Council of Oriental Churches. The council asserted the special status of these oriental churches and the privileges their patriarchs have (Khater, p281).

At the end of the Vatican II Council, Paul VI decided to visit the Holy Lands. The visit was planned in January 1964 and a huge number of Lebanese delegations went there to receive the Pope. During the flight over the Lebanese land, the plane of the pope faced bad weather and the crew informed the Lebanese authorities that it might have an emergency landing in the Beirut International Airport. In less than 15 minutes, an official reception was organized in the airport and the Prime Minister, the Speaker of the Parliament, the ministers, and a number of deputies and government officials all got there in extreme rapidity. Although the papal plane sent a message later that it will be able to go on to Amman, the reception preparations were not dismantled until the plane landed safely in Jordan. Another event to be mentioned is the successful mediation the Lebanese Foreign minister had done between the Vatican and the Sudan upon the crisis between the two countries in 1964 (Khater, p 282, 284).



The election of Charles Helou as Lebanese president in 1964 was well received among the Vatican officials. Pope Paul VI was foreign minister of the Vatican when Helou was representing Lebanon there and the two men knew and respected each other very much.

As a proof of his deep appreciation and love for Lebanon, Pope Paul VI decided to stop in Lebanon during his trip to Bombay in Dec. 1964. The news spread quickly in Lebanon and the preparations were of extreme importance on the official, religious, and popular levels. In the morning of December 2, the papal plane landed in Beirut's airport and the Pope was received by the officials, along with a great numbers of people, priests, and students coming from all over the country. Some of them even slept in their cars on the road of the airport waiting for the great event. The number of people participating in the reception was estimated at 250 000 people. The bells of churches all over the country rang in joy for the event (Khater, p297-300).

The true guideline of this visit could be found in the speech of President Helou and that of Pope Paul VI, which we will quote here. President Helou said:

“On this land, different religions have coexisted united in their faith in one God and a common will of brotherhood. The Lebanese people, in all its parties and beliefs, welcomes your honorable person ... We all acknowledge that the destiny of Lebanon is related to its mission and tradition ... and to its regional and international role ...”

Pope Paul VI appreciated the word of the president and answered:

“... We are glad to have the chance to be in direct contact with a country so dear to us, that has the best friendly relations with the Holy See. We are happy to say that Lebanon has a special status among nations. and we can say that its history and culture, and the peaceful nature of its people gave it its value. The peaceful coexistence of the different Lebanese communities, the large religious tradition, and its apostolic, educational, cultural, and moral activities make Lebanon so precious to the Church ...”<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>The two speeches are cited in their whole in the book of historian Lahed Khater in a special section dedicated to the visit on the pages. 297 to 308.



The two leaders exchanged gifts and the pope insisted on blessing the audience and addressing them in words of love and appreciation hoping that Lebanon will always stay, faithful to its cultural mission and its faith in Christ. He concluded in spontaneous words saying three times: "Long Live Lebanon". The crowd shouted back enthusiastically: "Long Live the Pope". This visit of less than two hours held in its meanings a great support to Lebanon and showed how tight were the relations and how strongly both countries held to them.

Before concluding this chapter it is necessary to mention three events that occurred during this same period and that show the strength the relation gained between 1958 and the beginning of the Lebanese war in 1975. The first event was the nomination of Pt. Paul Mouchi of the Maronite Church and Pt. Maxim IV Saegh of the Greek Catholic Church as Cardinals among the group of 27 new ones the Pope assigned in January 1965. This fact raised the number of Lebanese Cardinals to four including Cardinal Agajanian of the Armenian Church and Cardinal Tabouny of the Syriac church. It was a precedence in the Holy See to have up to four cardinals from one small country like Lebanon. Yet, this was meant to show once more the importance of the oriental churches and the insistence of the Pope to make them share the responsibility and the decision making within the Universal Catholic Church. The second event was the visit of President Helou to the Vatican in May of the same year. The private meeting between him and the Pope took 40 minutes after which the pope insisted on meeting the whole Lebanese delegation of 150 people. The third event was the declaration of Charbel Makhlouf, the Lebanese hermit, as "Hero of Sainthood" and his beatification in December 1965 (Khater, p 309-349).

All the events mentioned in this chapter, are of extreme importance in showing how tight the relation was and stayed even through the crises and problems.

***PART TWO***

***CHALLENGES***

***OF THE WAR***

***OF 1975***

## Chapter III: The Lebanese Impasse

### The Importance of Lebanon

“The glory of Lebanon shall come unto thee, the fir tree, the pine tree, and the box together, to beautify the place of my sanctuary; and I will make the place of my feet glorious” (Is. 60,13)

“Is it not yet a very little while, and Lebanon shall be turned into a fruitful field and the fruitful field shall be esteemed as a forest? And in that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity, and out of darkness” (Is. 29, 17-18)

These two citations are among a multitude of times when Lebanon was mentioned in the Old Testament of the Bible. Any reader of the Bible can't but be interested in this country, the only one mentioned so many times. The name of Lebanon is in fact mentioned 70 times, the Cedars of Lebanon 75 times, the city of Tyre 59 times, and the city of Sidon 50 times. Thirty-five names of villages and cities, 10 regions, and 10 historical Lebanese personalities were also mentioned in the Old Testament. In the eyes of the prophets, Lebanon was the image of paradise, the dream of tormented nations, and the hope of oppressed people. They described it as the New Kingdom, the New Jerusalem, and the New Alliance. Since then, Lebanon had a mission; it is the refuge of the weak, the poor, and the persecuted; a land of hospitality and tolerance (Yacoub, p11-13).

In the New Testament, the Cedars of Lebanon became the image of Christ in his glory and majesty. The name “Lebanon” was used to symbolize the image of the Church in extent and strength. It also symbolized the Virgin Mary. Lebanon and the cedars are synonyms; they both represented the enchanted peace, the reign of Christ, and his final triumph.



The New Testament talks about the many trips of the Christ and his disciples to the villages and regions of South Lebanon, where people came in great numbers to listen to his teachings. It was in Tyre and Sidon that he talked about the universality of his mission and taught that all nations are “children of God” and are allowed into the paradise, perhaps even before the “chosen people”. When the Pharisees were harassing Him, the Christ came to these cities to rest and enjoy the hospitality of their people. He healed their sick and received their praise: “Thou art the Son of God” (Mk 3, 7-12). The first miracle of Christ was accomplished in Cana of Galilee near Tyre and in another visit to the surroundings of Tyre, He healed the son of the Canaanite woman who had “Great Faith”. In Caesurae, Peter declared the true identity of Jesus “Thou art the Son of the living God”. On Mount Hermon, Peter, Jacob and John witnessed the transfiguration. All this happened in Lebanon. After the death and resurrection of Christ, Lebanon was the first country to accept Christianity.

“The Acts of the Apostles” book tells us so. In fact, when the disciples were persecuted, they first ran to Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch (Ac 11, 19-20). The first Church was founded in Antioch, Peter was its first Bishop, and it was there that the disciples were first called Christians. It’s also known that Paul and Luke stayed seven days with the Church of Tyre in order to have time to meet all of the Christians in that city (Ac 21, 1-7). While in capture, Paul visited Sidon and the centurion permitted him to meet the believers and friends (Ac 27, 3-4). St John-Marc founded the Church of Byblos and the old church still standing there today carries his name. The Phoenicians as the first Christians and missionaries also played an important role in converting the European peoples with whom they had commercial contacts.

Many of the first Popes were Phoenicians or of Phoenician origins, namely: St Anicet of Homs (155-167), John V of Antioch (685-686), St Serge (687-701), Sisinius of Sour (707-708), Constantine of Sour (708-715) and St Gregory III (731-741) (Yacoub, p. 17).

Very few countries in the world had as much attention from the Vatican during the mandate of different Popes along history. The historical relations with the Holy See and the special role of Lebanon in Christianity can justify this particular interest. In fact, the relation of the Maronites with the Holy See, which we have gone through in details in the first part of this paper, made of Lebanon “the land holding with honor and preserving the rich past of common souvenirs”. This is what pope Paul VI said when receiving the credentials of Lebanese Ambassador Boutros Dib in October 1975. He added as if answering our question in a direct and clear way: “Doesn’t this, by itself, justify the particular interest that we are showing in Lebanon?” (Yacoub, p32). Yet, Lebanon still has other characteristics that came with the formation of the modern Republic of Lebanon in its special identity and status.

An important innovation that came in the wake of the Vatican II council was the creation and fostering of *interfaith* and *ecumenical* dialogues with non-Christian and non-catholic denominations. But since then, religious and political factors have been such that the dialogue in its two aspects – ecumenical and interfaith – is still theoretical. Thus, the papacy felt that the only place where it could get its message through was Lebanon. The movements inspired by Vatican II made the Lebanese formula of Christian-Islamic coexistence and the pluri-communitarian constitution of Lebanon of fundamental importance to the Holy See. This land has long been the refuge for persecuted people and thus became considered an example of peaceful coexistence among those multiethnic and multi-religious groups.



Different Popes stressed the importance given by the Holy See to the Lebanese formula in different occasions. This has always been and still is one of the major reasons why Lebanon is so important in papal diplomacy. The second reason, however, is of same importance. Lebanon, for the Catholic Church, “is the last citadel of Christianity” in the whole Levant, at the crossroads of three continents. The Levant the womb of the three monotheistic religions and the place where Christ lived and preached, had lost its Christian face, and was threatened to lose its last real Christian presence. For the Vatican, Christian “effective” presence in Lebanon had to be saved.

Yet, a divergence in the points of view came out on this level.

Among the Oriental Churches, the Maronites are the only group that remained united, were able to maintain their identity as a people, and developed a high degree of independence and cohesion throughout history. Thus, the one Maronite patriarch holds the title of “Patriarch of Antioch and all the East”. The political weight of the Christian community in Lebanon goes beyond its numerical importance. In fact, the Christians, in general, and mainly the Maronites believe that Lebanon is their last refuge and that any threat to their presence and privileges would transform the country into another Arab-Muslim state, and Lebanon would lose its “Raison d’être”.

This explains why the Maronite clergy have always played an important role in Lebanese politics and why the religious leadership is that influential in the Christian community. Nevertheless, the Vatican wasn’t convinced of the political role of the Christians and was not very enthusiastic about their readiness to do anything in order to preserve their political power. The explanations given by the Holy See did not in their turn convince the Lebanese Christians and the stands of the Vatican concerning the matter weren’t popular, as we will see later in this chapter.



## **Possible Choices for the Lebanese Christians**

As it is well-known, Lebanon developed after the independence into a modern state with a constitution giving the Christians political privileges assuring their survival and saving them from melting in a larger Muslim surrounding. The Maronites were not ready to give up these privileges for any reason or in any circumstances. Yet, a few years later, their partners in the same country started showing signs of dissatisfaction. The presidential election of 1949, the successive parliamentary elections, the crisis of 1958 and the Palestinian issue, displayed obvious signs of religious division. The Muslims accused Christian leaders of failing to share political power and take into consideration Muslim concerns. The Christians accused Muslim leaders of conspiring against the system and using any internal or external opportunity to overthrow the existing consensus favoring the Christians.

Moreover, throughout its history, Lebanon has been a microcosm of the socio-political and religious changes in the Arab world. As a land of refuge enjoying a high degree of freedom and tolerance, Lebanon became the ultimate testing ground. Finally, the Palestinian military presence in Lebanon and their military freedom of action was the “hair that broke the camel’s back”. Christian leaders saw the political situation getting out of hand little by little and the Muslims refused to take a firm stand against the Palestinians. On the contrary, they showed unconditional support to the Palestinian transgressions. In this situation, the Christian leaders had very few choices.

### First Choice: Concession

In fact, the Christians were facing the danger of a radical Islamism, which described them as traitors and intruders to the Islamic nation as much as the Jewish entity in Israel. They were facing oppression in the name of Arab nationalism, and

Arab leaders were taking important decisions in place of and for the Lebanese government. Finally, the Christians were also afraid of losing their identity as Lebanon started to be foreseen by some local and international powers as an alternative state for the Palestinians (Mansour, p225-232). In such a context, most Christians were pushed out of the political life and of the country, which initiated a massive wave of emigration. The Christians fled in great numbers to countries like the United States, Canada, and Australia, which facilitated their migration. Christian despair was enhanced by the economic and financial deterioration.

Yet, in spite of the many above-mentioned reasons of despair, some factors were playing in favor of the Lebanese Christians. The economic and financial deterioration in the situation was compensated by the financial support of the emigrants and the creation of new income sources (some of them illegal) in the absence of a strong government. As for the emigration, it worried very much the local Churches and the Holy See. Both parties started doing their best to avoid such an end to the long History tying the Christians to Lebanon. The Holy See was the only power strongly opposed to the Christian migration during and after the war, the thing that we will see throughout the rest of this paper.

#### Second Choice: Consensus

The Holy See also favored the continuity of peaceful coexistence through the establishment of equality among all citizens. This was described as the rational choice to make and it had to be applied on four levels: The religious encounter, the social coexistence, the political accord, and the common struggle for a better destiny. And for this to happen, social and political reforms were needed (Mansour, p 237) and that was strongly recommended by the Vatican.



The latter didn't stop calling for rationality and wise dialogue and inviting the Lebanese to avoid military actions by all possible means. In other words, the Vatican was for peace even if it would mean the loss of some of the privileges the Christians enjoyed. This could be deduced from the many speeches given by the Popes throughout the war, which will be covered later.

Yet, as said before, none of the Christian political parties was ready to give up the privileges given to Christians or the special status of Lebanon agreed upon through the Consensus and Constitution of 1943. This attitude could be explained by the natural fear for the future inspired by the persecutions of the past. Therefore, the Christians were ready to fight till the end. The idea was that if they could achieve a military victory, they would confirm their superiority and protect their privileges. Only afterwards would a dialogue start.

### Third Choice: Confrontation

Usually when humans feel threatened, their basic instinct for survival pushes them to fight back in the fiercest way possible and the Lebanese Christians were under many threats. Thus, for many, the one and only choice that could be taken was to give way to fanatic religious nationalism and to take action in order to force the solution. This meant that the public had to be mobilized in self-defense and the only way to achieve such a goal was the religious segregation that would push the Christian and Muslim communities to seek a separate future (Mansour, p234). Taking action in face of the threats and starting military fights weren't the end but only the beginning of the dilemma. Thus, later on, some Christians wanted to go as far as to the creation of an independent religious Christian state in response to the threat of a Muslim one, although this was not the objective in the beginning.



Finally, in spite of all its inconveniences, the third choice seemed to be the most convenient for the majority of the Christians and their leaders.

### **Conflicting Interests**

The failure of the Lebanese army to intervene against the Palestinians in 1973, because of political consensus, made it clear for the Christian leadership that they can depend no longer on the state and the army to defend them. Christian parties like the Phalanges (Kataeb), the National Liberal Party, the Guardians of the Cedars, and the Marada started to buy arms and to train young students to military fights. The objectives were to defend their lands, their families, and Lebanon (as they wanted it to be). It became clear that these parties, with the highest popular support among Lebanese Christians, had opted for military resolution of the conflict.

The “Lebanese Front” was formed to help them cooperate and coordinate their policies. The “Front” also included other *civilian* groups like the Maronite League and the Permanent Congress of the Lebanese Orders of Monks. However, other Christian leaders, less representative, like the National Bloc and the Armenian, Constitutional, and Democratic parties refused military action and supported the dialogue for the peaceful solutions. Yet, this didn’t seem really feasible at the time.

These were the Christian positions at the brake of *the war of 75*. It was normal that for most of the Christians back then, the safety of their families, and properties on the short run, and the freedom, independence and sovereignty of their country, was much more important than any inter-religious dialogue, or any Arab fraternity.

On the other hand, the Vatican, and from a Christian point of view, did not support such a choice. The major concerns of the Vatican diplomacy in Lebanon at that time were influenced by three major principles.

The first was that no party in Lebanon should jeopardize the Christian-Islamic dialogue. The second was that the behavior of some elements in the Christian community should not compromise the formula of coexistence sanctioned in the 1943 National Convention. And the third principle was that the Palestinians, who for years have suffered exile, should not be victims of a new injustice in Lebanon (Irani, p 102).

The Lebanese war constituted a threat to these objectives and, in order to prevent serious attempts to disrupt the Lebanese formula, the Holy See was omnipresent during the crisis and tried to take all possible measures. Although the possibilities of intervention were limited, the Vatican tried to intervene directly through its papal representatives, i.e. ambassadors, through special envoys or missions or through its relation with the local Church. On all of these levels, the Vatican aimed at searching with the different parties for better solutions and more peaceful ones. Its representatives worked to bring back peace and justice, helped all organizations of humanitarian aids, and preached the disarmament and the release of the kidnapped and the war prisoners (Yacoub, p19).

Unfortunately, among those who were trying to disrupt the Lebanese formula, so dear to the Holy See, were the Christians in general and the Maronites in particular, as their only possible choice to survive. The local clergy members that were supposed to offer effective support to papal policies were too much involved, to the extent that they even had political acts and positions. Only the Patriarchs kept a "Christian" speech reflecting the moderate position of the Holy See that called for peace and reconciliation and condemned violence in all its faces. This was totally unacceptable for the Vatican, which had some very serious objections to that. The divergence in the points of view eventually led to an internal crisis inside the Maronite Church, as the monastic orders contested the authority of the Patriarch.



However, those monks were only a part and a sample of the Lebanese Christian society that was unable in its majority to accept the Vatican's position. Fr Assis described the Lebanese formula of 1943 as an unfortunate case of "aborted coexistence". Justifying the active role played by the Maronite monks in the war, he said: *"The monks are existentially and organically linked to the people ... In order to defend himself, every Christian has the right to be trained to handle weapons"* (Irani, p182). Maronite monks were the most active proponents of Lebanese and even Maronite nationalism, as they became large landowners for working hard in agriculture, under the Ottoman rule and other periods of Lebanese history.

The University of the Holy Spirit in Kaslik (USEK), supervised by the Maronite Monastic Order, issued several pamphlets and books dealing with the origins of the conflict in Lebanon and the monks' stand in the conflict. These publications made it clear that the Lebanese Christians are opposed to any idea of pacific existence as "*dhimmi*" within an Islamic state. They called on the "moral forces" of the earth, headed by the Holy See, to do their utmost not to allow Lebanon to be engulfed in the flow of Arab and oil politics.

The war in Lebanon presented a formidable challenge to the diplomacy of the Holy See towards Lebanon. The problem of the conflicting interest that emerged between the Holy See and the Christian Maronite community made things worse. The Maronites, or more precisely some influential Maronite politicians and clergymen, did not share the equidistant and conciliatory attitude that the Papacy adopted in the clash between the Lebanese and the Palestinians. The main Maronite contention was that the *"Lebanese Christians were being sacrificed on the altar of Christian-Islamic dialogue. Rome seemed not to be taking the necessary steps to ease the fears of the Christian minorities in the Levant"* (Irani, p118).



The Maronites expected a total and unswerving support for them from the Holy See in their struggle against the Palestinians and their Muslim allies. It is, however, the welfare of Christianity in the Middle East in general that dictated the approach of the Holy See to Lebanese Christians. Therefore, Lebanon had to be saved as a sovereign entity in order to save the Christians. This explains the Pope's consistent opposition to the partition of Lebanon or other similar schemes. What mostly worried the Holy See was that, living in an autonomous Christian entity, *"Lebanese Christians would cut themselves from the people with whom they are intimately linked and would render their mission a dead letter"* (Irani, p119).

To conclude this part and this chapter, we should say that the Lebanese impasse represented one of the most perplexing challenges the diplomacy of the Vatican had faced. The decision-makers in the Vatican had to choose with a Christian heart, the best policy to adopt in Lebanon. Thus the Holy See couldn't but give humanitarian aids to the deprived people of Lebanon regardless of their religion and call upon all parties, especially the Christian leaderships, to adopt a less violent position. The Vatican diplomacy worked hard with different parties to find a possible solution to save the unity and sovereignty of Lebanon, as it put pressure on international world leaders to help Lebanon. In the Vatican's point of view, it had to succeed in all of the above in order to protect the Lebanese Christians, their interests and their privileges.

The next chapter will cover the period of the war trying to show the successes and failures of this policy of the Vatican.

## Chapter IV: Missions, Envoys and Letters

### Pope Paul VI (1975-1978)

Many would say that John Paul II is the pope who set the light on the Lebanese war and made it a priority for the Vatican diplomacy. This is because his pontificate, starting in 1978, coincided with the war of 1975-1990. To this we add, the emotional side of Pope John Paul II, whose Polish origins made him very sensible to the suffering and challenges facing Catholics in a hostile surrounding. However this does not mean at all that before this pope, Lebanon was not an important subject on the agenda of the Vatican diplomacy. Chapters one and two have shown the reader that Lebanon received special interest from the papacy since the early centuries of Christianity. This part of chapter four will set the light on the many interventions of the Holy See in the Lebanese war before the election of John Paul II.

Since we are to start with the year 1975, Pope Paul VI (1963-1978) will be the first concerned in this study. After the death of Cardinal Moushi, Mgr. Khoreish was elected new Patriarch for the Maronite Church in January 1975. Like his predecessors he received a letter of congratulation from the Pope, giving him unlimited blessing and support, and bringing back to minds the fidelity of the Maronite Church, its missionary presence in Lebanon and the Middle East, and its prestigious position in the heart of the Vatican. Yet since his election Anthony-Peter Khoreish faced the eruption of the Lebanese crisis and the clash of battles in April of the same year. In September, Paul VI replied to the declaration of the Lebanese bishops, insisting once again on the Vatican view of Lebanon and how the Christians should face this crisis:

“Till now, Lebanon has given us and the whole world, a model of peaceful and fractious coexistence ... Suddenly his populations entered furious fighting, while only the cordial and friendly attitudes can assure the homogeneity and the international vocation of this dear country” (Yacoub, p31).



The position and statements of Pope Paul VI confirmed, however the Vatican Policy, of unconditional support for Lebanon as we have concluded from the previous chapter. The Pope was convinced that a solution can be reached only if the Lebanese would renounce violence, the fights and the destruction, and become engaged in solving their disaccords radically and rapidly. Love of the country and attachment to moral and spiritual values could be the bases for accord. The Christian political privileges weren't and shouldn't be a primordial issue. Whenever Paul VI addressed the Maronites or the Patriarch, it was to beg him, in the name of the Bible, to use all the weight and influence he had to facilitate the pacification and reconciliation, in order to preserve the unity and the mission of Lebanon. Although it was a hard and delicate mission that required a lot of efforts, the Pope showed certitude and confidence in its feasibility.

Thus, Pope Paul VI took advantage of every opportunity and occasion to mention Lebanon and to insist more and more on the Vatican's position, condemning violence and calling for peace and reconciliation. The *Osservatore Romano* (Vatican Newspaper) in its issue of June 5<sup>th</sup>, 1975 -describing and analyzing the visit of US president Gerald Ford to the Vatican- mentioned that the Pope insisted on the necessity of supporting and preserving countries like Lebanon built on the cooperation and coexistence of different faiths and tradition groups. Again while receiving President Anwar Sadat, Christian-Muslim dialogue and Lebanon's role in that were on the agenda. The canonization of St. Charbel, official ceremonies, general audiences, receiving the new Lebanese ambassador and the Maronite Patriarch, letters to Lebanese official and religious leaders, were all occasions to show His Holiness deep emotions and interest in the details of what was going on in Lebanon. This kind of personal invocations continued till one month before his death.



During a general audience in July 1978 (one month before his death), Paul VI remembered the Lebanese Christians in the residential streets of Beirut, under heavy bombing by the Syrian troops. He said:

“... We want to share with you the deep pain that we are feeling when receiving the news coming from Lebanon ... violent bombing is targeting the Christian streets of Beirut ... We wonder when will the painful Calvary of the Lebanese people be over. This people worries about the uncertain future of its country tormented by violence and hatred saving no youth, no institutions and bombing the feelings of fraternity among its children who were at a time, proud to see their nation become the example of peaceful collaboration in the eyes of the whole world... We call on all parties to immediately restore the truce and to respect it punctiliously...” (Yacoub, p65)

The special time of crisis needed special considerations. Thus the concern of Paul VI in the Lebanese crisis exceeded the normal diplomacy instruments of letters speeches, and resident nuncio missions, to a number of special envoys sent in different periods for different missions. These missions aimed mainly at having a better understanding of the Christians' position, trying to convince them of the Holy See's position, helping them to find a common ground between the conflicting parties, and last but not least bringing ease and aids to those who were in need.

The first special envoy was Cardinal Paolo Bertoli, who was apostolic *nuncio* in Beirut from 1959 to 1960 and had previous experience with Lebanese politics when sent to Lebanon on a mission during the 1958 civil war. Bertoli was considered to be a veteran of the Vatican Diplomacy. Two other experts in Middle Eastern affairs (Mgr. Monterisi, Mgr. Di Baggio from the Congregation of Oriental Churches) came along with him in his fact-finding mission that got to Lebanon only few months after the beginning of the war. The mission was inspired by the message of Pope Paul VI to the Lebanese where he asked them “to lay down their weapons definitively and to solve their differences in a reciprocal understanding and a brotherly dialogue... in order to safeguard Lebanon's sovereignty and independence ” (Irani, p127).

From November 9 to 16, 1975, Bertoli met different conflicting parties including Yasser Arafat. The Christians counted on the mission's unconditional support for their struggle and the Muslims expected the mission to provoke a radical change in the Christian policy. Both sides were disappointed one way or the other, because all what the mission did was expressing the previously declared aim of the Holy See to save Lebanon as a sovereign entity, in order to preserve a safe presence for the Christians. The mission emphasized the dialogue between the conflicting parties, in order to find a way to revive the coexistence formula. The decision of President Frangieh and Prime Minister Karame to discuss certain institutional reforms -which were overdue according to the Muslims- was almost the only success it achieved in the horizon. The mission's goal was very difficult to reach given the wide gap that existed between the perceptions of the Maronites and the Holy See regarding the future status of Lebanon. For Bertoli, and consequently for the Vatican, "a small Lebanon is an utopian idea that can never exist" (Irani, p128). And for the Maronites, the mediation efforts were practically without effect because the crisis required something more than a mission of good offices. According to them, the Holy See, with its great international influence and prestige, could have changed the course of events if it wanted to.

However, the mission was not a complete failure, on the contrary it did achieve many important things that could be summarized in the following. First, it made clearer to the international community the importance of the Lebanese formula. Second it tried to put the Lebanese war in its proper perspective with respect to the regional conflict. Third, it demonstrated that the Holy See was well aware of the true nature of the conflict. Finally it signaled the great part that Lebanon and the Maronites occupied in the Pope's mind and his solidarity with them. (Irani, p131)



Pastoral and humanitarian considerations dominated the second pontifical mission to Lebanon. Sent in April 1976 and headed by Monsignor Brini, the mission met with major Lebanese political and religious leaders, and the PLO chief Yasser Arafat. The report after each meeting emphasized again the Holy See's opposition to partition and the importance of the formula of coexistence. However, voices were heard criticizing and saying that the Holy See did not mobilize all its resources to save Lebanon from its internal and external enemies (Irani, p131).

After his return to Rome, Mgr. Brini painted a grim picture of the destruction brought by the war. He declared that: *"Only the Lebanese can reestablish coexistence in the framework of the original formula inspired by tradition ... provided it is modified to adapt the current needs and conditions"* (Irani, p133). This statement referred to the fact that the Holy See had acknowledged the Muslims' demands for constitutional reforms. When receiving the delegation back, the Pope launched an appeal, directed to the *"universal church and the whole world to provide all the necessary help to the victims of the strife ... because the Lebanese Churches have reached the limits of their abilities ... and it is necessary and urgent to do more, much more..."* (Yacoub, p45-46).

In addition to emphasis on the humanitarian situation and asserting the Vatican main line policies, the mission coincided with the presidential elections of 1976 and it had an important role in introducing the different candidates and their policies to the Vatican. The mission also worked on a global dimension, as Mgr. Brini met the American mediator Dean Brown and the French mediator, both present in Lebanon at the time. What was discussed then, we still don't know, we just know for sure that the Great Powers knew that the Vatican will always have a say that they should take in consideration in any decision concerning Lebanon.



### **Transitional Period (1978)**

After the death of Paul VI, John Paul I was elected Pope on August 26, 1978. Although he stayed in position for only one month and a few days, this Pope mentioned Lebanon twice. It was the only country mentioned expressively by this Pope in his first message to the world right after his election. Indeed he sent salutations to those who were suffering at that moment, fighting for their Catholic belief, their liberties, and primordial rights, especially in "*the martyr land of Lebanon*". Again in his first general audience, as he discussed the Camp David accord taking place at the time and through it the whole Middle East crisis, John Paul I mentioned Lebanon as a victim of this crisis (Yacoub, p68-70).

This could only be another proof of the great importance the Vatican gave to Lebanon and its crisis. To the new Pope, it was clear that Lebanon was a very special country with very special relations with the Holy See and he realized that the conflict taking place in this little country was of extreme interest to the Catholic Church. Pope John Paul I did his best, and mentioning Lebanon in his first message and in the first general audience assured the Lebanese that Lebanon still had the exact same importance in the heart of the new Pontiff.

The sudden death of Pope John Paul I left the Holy See vacant for a few days until the Sacred College of Cardinals was able to meet again and elect the new Pope, John Paul II on October 16, 1978. The five days vacancy until the election of a new pope was very natural upon the death of any pope. During those few days, the Sacred College had the duty to assure the routine work of the State and it rarely dealt with issues beside the internal work and the calling for the election of a new pope. However, the days between October 2 and 16 of that year were very agitated in Lebanon, and the Sacred College found it inevitable to take action.

The urgency of the Lebanese situation obliged the Sacred College to discuss the situation in its second meeting on October 2. While the Christian Streets of Beirut were still under heavy bombing by Syrian troops in Lebanon, the College addressed a letter to the Maronite Patriarch Anthony-Peter Khoreish asserting the great concern with which the Sacred College was following the latest details of the Lebanese crisis and the great sympathy it had for the victims. The letter said:

“The Sacred College follows with the greatest preoccupation and the deepest pain the tragic evolution of the situation in Lebanon, especially concerning the intensification of the bombing of the capital and other localities, causing massive destruction and a great number of victims. Expressing its participation in the grief and suffering of the families and communities and uniting its prayers to theirs, the Sacred College addresses an urgent call upon every authority able to intervene, to do so urgently in order to cease the terrible massacres and to reach, as soon as possible, an effective and durable truce. The Sacred College wishes that this call would be heard and that peace, in the fraternal accord of the all the components of the Lebanese society, would return finally to this land so tempted” (Yacoub, p73).

As the situation was still deteriorating, the Sacred College saw the necessity and urgency to discuss once again the Lebanese situation in its 5<sup>th</sup> meeting and to take action by sending calls to Syrian president Hafez el-Assad and to the UN secretary general Dr. Kurt Waldheim. The Sacred College called both men to use their influence and authority to restore order in Lebanon and to ease the pain of the Lebanese people.

The letter to Hafez El-Assad said: *“We address to you a persistent call ... to impose an urgent cease-fire, in order to stop the bombing hurting mainly defenseless civilians...”*. The letter to Dr. Waldheim said: *“We address to you a call ... to intensify the efforts for peace and to push the international community to have greater interest in finding a solution to the Lebanese crisis ... and to bring all necessary assistance to those in need”* (Yacoub, p73-75).



Without any doubt this was the most expressive action done by the Vatican City State to show its extreme interest in the Lebanese conflict and to give us a clear view of the institutional decision making process in this State. The Sacred College of Cardinals, whose role according to the protocol, as we said before, is restricted to the mission of electing a new pontiff and assuring the safe transaction of authority acted exceptionally openly, as a decision-making organ. Yet, this showed that in fact it is in this College, that the decision making process takes place and the relation of this College with the Pontiff is very interactive.

The Pontiff nominates Cardinals from all over the world to represent their Churches and to serve as an advisory council that formulates the Vatican's internal and international policies and eventually elects the Pontiff's successor.

According to this, we conclude that the Vatican State is a very institutional state that has clear objectives, goals, and ways of action and implementation. Thus, a change in the Head of the Catholic Church doesn't change much in the policy and diplomacy adapted by this State. Therefore, very little changes in the policy of the Holy See toward Lebanon have taken place throughout History. The great interest shown by the first Popes continued vividly until the days of Paul VI. And as previously said even John Paul I and the Sacred College of Cardinals reigning in the transitional period, had Lebanon in their utmost priorities. Thus, little changes occurred with the election of John Paul II who showed Lebanon not only the usual interest, but also great affection and sympathy because as he said Lebanon reminded him of his mother country Poland and its suffering.

His first message to the world was the first opportunity he seized without hesitation to express this great affection, as he said:



“...If we may say now, how cordially we take the grave problem that the College of Cardinals has emphasized during the vacancy of the See, that of the so dear land of Lebanon, and that of its people, for whom we all wish peace and liberty...” (Hachem, p10)

However, as it was predictable, little changes occurred in the policy and diplomacy of the Holy See toward Lebanon. The same goals, objectives, ways of actions and implementations, were still adapted. In fact, in an important address to the General Assembly of the United Nations (2 Oct. 1979), the Pope reasserted his intention to work from all his heart for the “cause of peace”, especially in the Middle East and stated that the solution to the ongoing Lebanese war was linked to the just settlement of the Palestinian question. He also expressed his wish that the formula of coexistence be maintained in Lebanon “with the adjustments required by the development of the situation” (Irani, p134). It seemed then that the call for the modification of the national covenant of 43 had become a constant theme of the Holy See’s diplomacy. These statements were not what most Christians, holding tight to their political privileges, hoped for.

Another assertion of the consistency and continuity of the Papal diplomacy was the choice of Cardinal Bertoli, who was sent to Lebanon a second time on head of the third mission since the beginning of the war. However, in the heart of all that, the Lebanese saw hope because they were able to feel the great sentimental link that tied them to the new Pope John Paul II, who had an exceptional extraordinary personality.

Cardinal Bertoli arrived to Lebanon on December 6, 1978, less than two months after the election of John Paul II, which showed how urgent the Lebanese problem was for the new Pope. Mgr. Monterisi and Fr. Brogi from the “Congregation of Oriental Churches” accompanied him.

It is important here to consider how the nature of the papal missions evolved along with the Lebanese War. The first delegation came to Lebanon on a fact-finding, exploratory trip, seven months after the beginning of the fighting. The second mission, five months later was mostly pastoral and humanitarian considering the great destruction and suffering that took place. The third mission was informative and aimed at narrowing the gap between the different points of view towards the realization of national understanding.

Thus, the third mission came to complete the task initiated by the first two missions. After exploring the situation and giving aids it was time for the Holy See to take action and start suggesting solutions. Therefore, this mission unlike the first two, was preceded by letters sent from the Holy See to the presidents of the great powers concerned with the Lebanese conflict, two weeks before dispatching Cardinal Bertoli. The presidents of the USA, France, Great Britain, and West Germany, were hence informed about the papal initiative, and they all showed acceptance and hoped it would reach its aims.

In fact, Bertoli came back to Lebanon on a conciliatory mission. The papal envoy had three purposes in mind, unifying and reconciling the Maronite community, seeking a common denominator between all the parties in Lebanon in order to revive the formula of coexistence, and creating a united Lebanese stand toward the possibility of a permanent settlement of the Palestinians in Lebanon. The Pope didn't forget meanwhile, to pray for Lebanon, and for the mission of Cardinal Bertoli, during the general audience he held on December 10<sup>th</sup> while Bertoli was still in Lebanon.



Cardinal Bertoli met president Sarkis, important government officials, heads of religious communities, and several party leaders. However, two leftist leaders, Assem Kanso of the Syrian Baath and Ibrahim Koleilat of the Murabitoun refused to meet Bertoli. This showed the clear displeasure of Damascus toward the papal initiative. Bertoli did not meet with PLO leaders this time to make it clear that the Holy See had taken stock of the fact that there were external pressures (Israeli, Palestinian and Syrian) on Lebanon which the Lebanese needed to overcome, as he declared in his final statement before leaving Beirut (Irani, p135-137).

The mission made a good impression on the different parties and especially on the leaders of the Lebanese Front since it recognized the external dimension of the war and didn't meet with Palestinian leaders. Yet, regarding its conciliatory goal, the mission didn't seem to have achieved any concrete results. Bertoli, couldn't get any consensus from the Christians or the Muslims. Moreover, the Israeli-American plan of settling the Palestinians in Lebanon had gained some local and international support, which electrified the whole situation.

To conclude this part of chapter four, it is necessary to reemphasize the importance of the transitional period in 1978, from the death of Paul VI to the election of John Paul I to the vacancy of the Holy See and the action of the Sacred College of Cardinals, and to the election of Pope John Paul II finally. All these changes occurred in a very critical time for Lebanon, which made the study of this period very significant to those who follow the relationship between the two countries. The analysis of this period showed the institutional aspect of the decision-making process in the Vatican City State, and consequently the important continuity existing and enduring from one pontiff to the other and even during vacancy periods.



## **John Paul II (1978-1990)**

This part of the chapter is supposed to cover a very large period of time and a great deal of events, since the election of John Paul II till the crisis of the Lebanese presidential elections in the late 80s. Such an assignment could be impossible if we were to take all the incidents, details, messages, actions, letters, and envoys, through which the Holy See dealt with the Lebanese crisis. Therefore, I will try to concentrate in this part on the most significant events, in order to allow the reader to follow the logical chronology of the war and the related development of the Holy See diplomacy.

One important event that can not be neglected in the early years of John Paul II pontificate, was his address to the General Assembly of the United Nations (previously mentioned) on October 2, 1979. In this speech, the Pope explained the Vatican's position on the Middle East conflict and the only strategy it sees fit to end the struggle. Among the essential conditions for peace, the Pope mentioned restoring the security and stability in Lebanon, safeguarding its unity and independence, and preserving it as an example of peaceful coexistence and dialogue, after introducing some modifications to the 1943 National Consensus, as prerequisites for an enduring peace in the region (Hachem, p13). This speech seemed to assert once again the unchanged Vatican guidelines in the diplomacy of John Paul II.

In 1980, it was the turn of the Secretary of State, the chief diplomat of the Vatican to head himself the fourth mission to Lebanon. Cardinal Augustino Casarolli arrived to Lebanon on March 29<sup>th</sup>, at a time when the dispute among Christians themselves was increasing following the massacre of Ehden and the surrounding events. Casarolli encountered discouraging great differences between the Holy See and most of the Christian parties and between the Christians themselves to an extent that made him unable to narrow the split.

Casarolli's "spiritual" visit<sup>6</sup>, started with the announcement that "The world needs Lebanon to return as the example we know" (Nahar, 30/3/80) was in fact a mission to warn indirectly and diplomatically the Lebanese not to pin too much hope on the actions of the Holy See, which was unable to force a solution on them. The secretary of state stressed once again the spiritual function of the Holy See. Consequently, unrealistic hopes held by some parties that the Papacy alone could effectively resolve their country's problems should be put in realistic perspective. He pointed out that the resolution of the Palestinian question was of fundamental importance for peace in Lebanon, and that the Holy See had concerns about the whole problems of the region and not only those of Lebanon (Safir, 20/10/92).

The gap between the different points of view threatening the relationship grew wider, with the events of 1982. The Israeli invasion received with flowers consecrated the Christian choice of cooperation with Israel, a direction to which the Vatican was always opposed. Bashir Gemayel's election as president symbolized best the supremacy of the Christian choice of military action. Bashir had written:

"The Vatican should understand that the Lebanese Christians are not a test field for the inter-religious dialogue nor a bridge for the East-West conflict. In order to survive in a Muslim environment the Christians had no other choice but to resort to arms and defend themselves" (Safir, 20/10/92).

The Pope received Yasser Arafat, symbol of the Palestinian problem in Lebanon. The Massacres at Sabra and Shatila camps provoked a strong reaction from the Pope who said :

"With a spirit of abundant pain and sorrow, I received the news of the horrible massacres ... killing hundreds and hundreds of children, women and elders, without pity or mercy. There are no words enough to condemn these crimes resented and refuted by the human and Christian conscience" (Hachem, p33).

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<sup>6</sup>Casarolli's visit was under the title of the participation to the ceremony of naming Mgr. Paul Tabet Bishop before, he would start his new mission as the first Vatican ambassador chosen from an Oriental Church.



The bloodbath of Bashir's assassination and the massacres of Sabra and Shatila were a warning to the Holy See that something more radical had to be done. Pope John Paul II was careful not to brake the link with Lebanese Christians. He expressed his heartfelt will to visit Lebanon as soon as possible, nominated Pt. Khoreish Cardinal, and replaced the nuncio in Beirut as a sign of opening a new page. Mgr. Luciano Angeloni replaced Mgr. Carlo Forno in an attempt to overcome the small but important misunderstandings that had occurred in the past. Yet, Angeloni soon became the target of bitter criticisms from the militant Maronite leaders and the religious figures that supported them, especially Abbot Naaman.

Angeloni ordered Naaman to stop attending the meetings of the Lebanese Front and told him that the Maronite Patriarch should be the only spokesman for the Maronite community. During Naaman's visit to Rome he was in vain told to heed the Holy See's call for moderation. Finally he was called to a meeting with the four Catholic Patriarchs of Lebanon in the Vatican. The meeting turned not very calm upon the argument about the cooperation with Israel considered by Naaman as the only protector of Christians. The issue of Christian disobedience to religious authorities was also raised. I should note here that the position of the Maronite Patriarch was always the closest to the Holy See's position (Irani, p146-147).

The Holy See favored the policy followed by the new president Amine Gemayel, as he started movements toward reconciliation and rapprochement with Syria, and refused to sign a unilateral accord with Israel. In fact, Gemayel's first international visit, one month after his election, was to the Holy See, where he met the Pope seeking support for his policies. A few months later he also sent the former Lebanese president Charles Helou, as special envoy to Rome, to cooperate and coordinate with the Pope.



Things became worse in Lebanon with the Israeli withdrawal in 1983 - 84, the act that prepared the ground to terrible confessional massacres in the Mountain between the Christians and the Druzes. The aggression on the US embassy and the withdrawal of the multinational peacekeeping forces, after another aggression on their headquarter in Beirut, deepened the feeling of distress and abandonment in the heart of the Lebanese Christians. Pope John Paul II was following closely the development of the events, from the first massacre in Bmariam to the spreading of fighting and the siege of Deir El-Kamar, and the numbers were frightening; 2000 dead, 114 villages swept, 25000 houses destroyed, 168314 persons displaced, and 10000 still under siege at Deir El-Kamar (Yacoub, p121).

The Pope felt the necessity to take action. On the eve of the Lausanne convention for dialogue among the Lebanese, Mgr. Mario Brini came to Lebanon to meet president Gemayel and a number of religious and political leaders. He then continued to Syria and gave President Assad a letter from the Pope, while other letters were sent to President Reagan and other world leaders. Moreover, John Paul II on the event of Easter, sent three very important letters about Lebanon to the Catholic Bishops of the world, to all the Lebanese, and to Cardinal Khoreish afterwards<sup>7</sup>.

The letter to the Catholic Bishops was unique because it was the first time such a message – usually related to doctrinal or disciplinary matters only – dealt with a country, Lebanon. The Pope repeated the Holy See's constant theme and assured the Lebanese Christians that they are not forgotten. He said:

“We are not forgetting them. Moreover, we are counting on them and on their presence in a democratic Lebanon, open to others ... and able to insure their existence in an environment of dignity and freedom... The development of Christianity in Lebanon is a necessity for the presence of Christian minorities in the Middle East. Of this the Pope and the universal Church are aware” (Yacoub, p149-Hachem, p60).

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<sup>7</sup>The entire three letters in French and Arabic are available in an “annex” to the Paper

In short the Pope was telling the Lebanese Christians, in all three letters, that they should first think and behave as Christians, then worry about their national problems. Implicitly, he had singled out Lebanon as democratic harbor for minorities. He also called on the Christians not to be timid when it comes to defending their freedoms and particularly the freedom to proclaim and live together the gospel values, side by side with non-Christians. One effective result of these letters was the remarkable decrease of local criticism for the policy and the officials of the Vatican.

In 1985, the fighting continued in East Saida and other regions. During March and April alone, 60 villages were destroyed and 87 churches and sanctuaries were profaned, burned or destroyed. The Pope received the speaker of the parliament Mr. Huseini and a large number of deputies to whom he asserted the importance of the Lebanese unity and the role of the Lebanese in the salvation of their country (Yacoub, p161). He repeated the same words to the new Lebanese ambassador, Ghazi Chidiac while presenting his credentials (Yacoub, p172). Moreover, Pope John Paul II didn't hesitate to address the UN Secretary General once again about the Lebanese issue. He said, "Don't abandon Lebanon; help its people to set the bases of an active dialogue, in order to build a really renewed country" (Yacoub, p168). Yet, the fear was great, as many of the displaced took refuge in the Christian town of Jezzine, where they lived in terror worrying about their future and starting to lose hope.

In this context came the mission of Cardinal Etchegaray, who arrived to Lebanon in June 1985 and visited the president, the Maronite Patriarch, many religious and political leaders, but most importantly, he visited the town of Jezzine. There, he listened to the deprived and displaced, trying to ease their pain and give them support and comfort. He reported back a dim picture of the situation to the Pope, asking in the name of the Lebanese for the help and solidarity of the world:



“I felt the heart of Lebanon still beating stronger than the drums of war... and I say unto you that it is time to increase the solidarity of the world’s Church with the Christians of Lebanon, so that the heart of the whole world would beat for Lebanon... and its special mission” (Nahar, 12/07/85).

As a direct result of Etchegaray’s visit, the Pope chose Fr. Celestino Bohigas to be a special envoy with a humanitarian mission among the people of Jezzine. He was to cooperate directly with the nuncio and the Bishop of the region. In addition to its great humanitarian aspect, this step was a very symbolic one; It showed the extreme importance Pope John Paul II gave to holding the Christians of Lebanon in their lands and homes. Bohigas arrived to Jezzine in October 85, after he was stopped near Saida for few hours; an accident that showed the discontent of some parties of the nature of his presence. When asked if he would meet with the Israelis, he replied that he was ready to meet with the devil if it secures peace. He stayed there till 1998.

In the first month of 1986, Samir Geagea overthrew Hobeika from the leadership of the Lebanese Forces, as an expression of his opposition for the tri-partied agreement signed in Damascus between Hobeika (Maronite), Jumblat (Druze), and Berry (Shiite). For Geagea, the Syrian sponsorship of the agreement was too dangerous to be accepted. The Christian refusal of this accord resulted in a very tense environment and a large break within the Maronite and Lebanese community. Mgr. Gatty arrived in March to prepare Mgr. Achilles Sylvestrini’s mission to Lebanon and Syria. This mission was meant to calm the tensions, reunite the Christians, and initiate a Christian project for the solution to replace the tri-partied agreement.

The journalist Nicolas Nassif extracted in one of his articles three main guidelines for Sylvestrini’s initiative: 1- No concessions on the rights of any party. 2- No concession in the principles of independence and sovereignty. 3- Special relations with Syria based on equal and mutual respect (Nahar, 24/4/86).



Sylvestrini's visit took a special aspect since it coincided with the election of a new Maronite patriarch. The election of Nasralla Sfeir, with his special personality and character, was a victory for the moderation and dialogue requested by the Holy See over the radicalism and the arduousness requested by some Christian Leaders. "The Holy See held high hopes on the New Patriarch to work on what Sylvestrini started doing which consisted in uniting the Christians and braking the ice with Syria, in order to reach a mid-way solution, a meeting point" (Nahar, 24/4/86). Today, this election seems to have started the return of Lebanese Christians to the Holy See laps.

The results of Sylvestrini's initiative started to show in August when it became possible to extract a list of uncontestable ideas that were secretly presented to Syria. Ending the war, Lebanese sovereignty, Arab identity, democracy, freedom, the power of the president, and special relations with Syria were the bases of the Christian initiative that was not enthusiastically accepted in Damascus. The whole country plunged in a stalemate situation and an infinity of propositions, projects and work papers. Yet, each one's initiative was refused by all the others.

The beginning of the year 1988 emphasized the end of president Gemayel's term, and the country seemed to be heading toward a political and financial bankruptcy if no consensus was reached. At that time, the Maronite Patriarch launched an initiative to group the Christian leaders and try to reach a common ground. Preparing his move, the Patriarch started by sending in January 88, two of his bishops to the Vatican to cooperate and share information with the Holy See before taking any practical action. This step was followed up with the report presented in February 88 by Cardinal Sylvestrini, after a long hard work of almost two years since his visit to Lebanon in Marsh 86, about the results of this visit. The report included a deep and clear analysis of the Lebanese situation and his proposition for solution.

Cardinal Filibrends arrived to Lebanon and Syria in April of the same year to confirm and insist again the necessity of Christian unity around their Church and to try to narrow the gap between the “Christian” view and the Syrian one. In the same month, Patriarch Sfeir met with *nuncio* Angelloni to coordinate with him before leaving on a trip to the Vatican and the United States. At his return and with the closing deadline for the election of a new president, Syria and the USA had given the Lebanese an ultimatum to accept the only choice of “Michael Daher or the Chaos”. Several meetings took place in Bkerki, after which a unified Christian decision came up. The Christians refused the ultimatum. In other words, they opted for their freedom and independence once again. Yet, an expensive price was to be paid.

During the long years of war, in addition to all the above-mentioned letters, messages, and missions the Pope sent, there were many symbolic acts that showed his emotional attachment and moral support to the Lebanese people in general and to the Christians in particular. Among those, I mention the many Vangelus and general audiences in which he called on the people to pray for Lebanon. Many masses were held in Rome in *Oriental* rituals. The Pope also received many official and non-official delegations, with whom he discussed the Lebanese issue and listened carefully to their opinions. Last but not least, the beatification of the Lebanese nun Rafqa in November 1985 was also a sign of support to the suffering people.

In conclusion, looking at the great risks and threats of this period, the Vatican showed remarkable concern about the dismantling of the state. The Holy See acted with every means possible to prevent this from happening. It has given humanitarian aids, moral help, and even political mediation in order to achieve its diplomatic aim of seeing Lebanon and its co-existence formula survive this long crisis. The extent of the success and failure of this very active diplomacy will be studied in the next chapter.



***PART THREE***

***POST-WAR***

***DIPLOMACY***

## Chapter V: A New Era of the Relations

### The Challenge of the Last Years (1989-1990)

In this section, I will go quickly throughout the events of 1989 and 1990 as these years were different from the other years of the war and crucial for the Christian future position in post-war Lebanon.

In After the Christian refusal of the ultimatum “Daher or chaos”, it was clear that the presidential elections wouldn’t reach a result. In fact, no candidate was able to have enough support, and it wasn’t even possible to form a temporary consensus government to run the elections. President Gemayel left office giving authority to the military council of the Lebanese Army headed by General Michel Aoun and divided equally between Christian and Muslim generals. The three Muslim generals soon resigned showing the Islamic disapproval. Realizing that the situation was not turning the way he wanted, General Aoun forbade the deputies from meeting within his region of influence and declared war on Syria. In reply, Syria and its allies forced an embargo on the Christian enclave and started intense bombing of the Christian regions. The result was catastrophic, and devastating.

By that time, the Lebanese deputies, unable to meet in Lebanon, were invited to meet in Taef (Saudi-Arabia), which they did under Arab and International “sponsorship”. The Christian deputies were in direct contact with General Aoun, Dr. Geagea of the Lebanese Forces and mainly the Pt. Sfeir, in addition to the Vatican and the American Catholic Church. They were seeking a better negotiation position. Eventually, Dr. Geagea and the Maronite Patriarch (two of the three most powerful Christian leaders) accepted the constitutional amendments resulting from the Taef accord, as the best and maybe only available solution at the time to stop the war.



These amendments were not in favor of the Christians in general, as they minimized the power of the Maronite president in favor of the Council of Ministers, rearranged the parliamentary division equally between Christians and Muslims, and made legal the Syrian presence in Lebanon. These amendments were exactly what many Christians had refused in the tri-partied agreement and other projects. However, the accord had guaranteed the essential Christian prerequisites, an international and regional recognition of Lebanon's independence and sovereignty and the possibility of future ameliorations within the new system through practice. Unfortunately, this practice proved very quickly to be much worse than the concessions themselves, because the Christians were "practically" treated as the losers of the war.

As for the third powerful Christian leader, General Aoun, he refused the whole negotiations and the resulting accord. He refused to cede for the new elected president Rene Moawad, known for his honesty, moderation and great political skills. Less than one month after his election, President Moawad was assassinated; some said because he refused to take office and enter the Christian regions by force. Within few days only, Elias Herraoui was the new president, and he was very firm and determined about bringing the "mutiny" of the General to an end. A clash seemed inevitable.

Meanwhile, the General decided to take the Lebanese Forces militia under his command, and when they refused, he started a war of "rescission" against them. This was in fact the worst thing that ever happened to the Lebanese Christians all throughout the war; Fighting each other, while everybody around was targeting them. This brought the Christians to their weaker negotiating position ever and made them accept many things they wouldn't have agreed to in other situations. In this very critical and crazy environment, the Papal diplomacy emerged, very active, like it has always been in times of crisis.

Throughout the two years of General Aoun's rule, the Holy See was following the news closely and with great interest and concern. During the "Liberation" war against Syria that turned out to be catastrophic for the Christian regions, the Pope acted directly in many ways. He mentioned Lebanon 27 times in the year 1989 alone, 6 of them in one month, the month of April when the situation was the worst. The beginning of that month was marked with heavy Syrian bombardment that reached Bkerki and the Papal embassy for the first time. On April 5<sup>th</sup>, John Paul II called for the relief of the Lebanese people who were under bombing and threatened to lose their country and their very existence (Hachem, p112). On the 15<sup>th</sup> of the same month, Card. Casaroli sent in the name of the Pope two telegrams to the UN and the Arab League General Secretaries. He asked them to use their best efforts in order to reach an immediate cease-fire and facilitate the arrival of aids to the deprived people under siege (Hachem, p113).

Another letter was sent by the Pope himself to the UN Secretary General and a number of presidents, exactly one month after the first telegram. In this letter the Pope was very firm and pressuring. He said:

"Under the eyes of the whole world, the destruction of Lebanon continues. This is the responsibility of all the international community. The struggle in Lebanon has been going on for years and it is related to the interference of the armies of neighboring countries. The very existence of Lebanon is threatened.. International moral principles do not permit the stronger to attack and kill the weaker. Whoever is doing so, is guilty in front of God, the ultimate judge, and in front of human history. Moral guilt falls on everyone that doesn't defend the weak while they can... I call upon you to take the necessary steps to prevent the destruction threatening Lebanon..." (Hachem, p117).

The Pope also received the Maronite bishops in June and explicitly discussed with them the situation. In August, he expressed his will to visit Lebanon and in the Youth Forum in Compostella, he asked the youth to share with him his prayers for Lebanon, as he declared, "NO for the destruction of Beirut" (Hachem, p119-124).



On September 7<sup>th</sup>, the Pope addressed for the second time in less than six years, the Catholic bishops of the world, in a special message about Lebanon. In this message, he asked every Catholic in the world to be involved in prayers and deeds in the Lebanese crisis. He wanted to show the Lebanese Christians, especially the Catholics, who were testifying for their faith and fighting for their survival, that the world Church was beside them and supported them. These people should, according to the Pope, *“not only have the right to the freedom of Belief, but also the right to practice their faith publicly and to stay faithful to their cultural traditions”*. He asked the bishops to set a special day of prayer consecrated to Lebanon<sup>8</sup>(Hachem, p133-138). In the conclusion of the message, he considered the destruction of Lebanon as the greatest reproach to the world’s conscience and said that protecting this country is not only a must, but also a matter of honor that the world should undertake today<sup>9</sup>.

On the same day, the Pope sent another message about Lebanon addressed this time to all the Muslims. He addressed it in the name of the one God they worship, asking them to make their voices heard and to work harder to reach a solution for Lebanon. John Paul II wished for a close cooperation between the Muslims and Christians of the world to support the Lebanese that are suffering in their hearts and bodies, and were able, in the midst of violence and suppression, to keep their faith in the one God and in the spirit of righteousness.

This was only a part of the many efforts the Pope has done to stop the fighting, but the deepest pain to the heart of the Pope was caused by the Christians as they fought each other in a very tragic and bloody way.

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<sup>8</sup>This day was set in Italy on the October 4, 1989, and a messe was celebrated in St. Peter’s Cathedral, in which the Pope gave a long spiritual speech about helping Lebanon through faith and prayers.

<sup>9</sup>Both messages to the Catholic Bishops and to the Muslims are available in the annexes, in Arabic.



To show his direct involvement, Pope John Paul II appointed a new *nuncio* in Beirut to escort the extremely serious situation. Mgr. Pablo Puente replaced Mgr. Angelloni and started a very active movement of mediation and conciliation. In one of his first declarations, Mgr. Puente said that in such a time all parties should offer big sacrifices for peace; a peace that should be based on unity, sovereignty, and consensus. Since his arrival, Puente did every possible effort to reach a common ground between the radical General Aoun, the unclear position of the Lebanese Forces, and the internationally supported legitimacy of the new president Haraoui. Puente was on the first pages of newspapers and magazines many times a week, all through 1990, presenting projects for solutions and so many different propositions<sup>10</sup>.

Radio Vatican announced an unofficial but very important statement on February 8, 1990, when it wondered, "*whether the Lebanese Christians will be able to forgive General Aoun for all the victims that have fallen*". This in fact was an indirect condemnation for the General and it came as an echo of the international (Syro-American) consensus to put him down (Nahar 8/2/90). This international consensus was clear in the collaboration of US envoy McCarthy with the Vatican and in Dr. Geagea's declaration that "*the Lebanese Forces would find a solution to this crisis at any price because the situation is unbearable*" (Nahar 30/4/90). I should note here that this inter-Christian war witnessed a very strange precedent, as the supporters of General Aoun attacked Pt. Sfeir in Bkerki and forced him to kiss the picture of the General. This was a precedent in the history of the Maronite church and it showed the high level of discontent that party felt for Pt. Sfeir's position from the fighting taking place and from the Taef Accord. Pt. Sfeir, who tried to be as moderate as possible and to embrace all parties, found himself rejected by all parties.

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<sup>10</sup>I chose 12 articles from this period to give an overview of the very difficult role Puente was playing.

The Pope himself sent three letters to Pt. Sfeir, supporting his position and adopting his calls for reason and the ending of the fighting immediately in favor of the dialogue, which was the only logical solution. These letters were sent on February 5<sup>th</sup>, April 12<sup>th</sup>, and May 25<sup>th</sup> of 1990. The Pope expressed in these letters his deep pain for seeing brothers of the same faith fighting against each other, ignoring all calls for ending violence, and making the people suffer more than they had (Hachem, p142).

At a certain time, the Liwaa newspaper reported about a meeting in Paris between a number of Lebanese Christian Deputies and Abbot Basil Hachem, President of the Lebanese Maronite Order. This article showed the large discontent of the deputies from too much moderation in the position of the Maronite church and the Holy See. They wished for a clearer position condemning General Aoun and supporting the Taef unconditionally. The Abbot tried to explain that the middle way position was the only position they could take for the sake of Lebanon and the Christian political future (Liwaa, 2/6/90).

However, in all that, the Holy See did not accept the Taef accord as it is. For the Vatican, this accord was merely a means to end the war, but it considered that there were many points that should be amended in favor of a better solution that satisfies all parties. In an analysis for the Holy See position from the Taef accord, the Nahar newspaper reported from a source close to the Vatican, the following position: The Holy See condemned the fighting among Christians which was weakening them, shrinking their powers, and threatening their political future. The Holy See saw in that fight a door opening in front of the implementation of the Taef accord by force, disregarding the opinion of large group of Lebanese. Last but not least, the Holy See considered the constitutional reforms as not fair and thought that they should be ameliorated to insure a better future to the different religious groups (Nahar, 24/5/90).



From all that, one can imagine how tough the mission of the papal *nuncio* was. Puente was trying to make the General accept to yield the power and to acknowledge the legitimacy of the new government resulting from the Taef accord. On the other hand, Puente was trying to make the new government share power with the General and accept to discuss some possible amendments of the Taef. As the major mediator in that period, Puente had so many propositions and gave different possible solutions, but none was accepted by both parties (Anwar, 4/6 & 16/6/90).

Unfortunately, time was passing, and the new government became more and more determined to end the so-called “mutiny”, with higher stakes of using force. But the French embassy and the Catholic Church refused to give up hope until the last day. They were trying to avoid the bloodshed and the consequent violent results. Until one day before the military action against the General, they were still waiting for his positive answer, especially that they had informed him of the inevitability of such an action. The answer didn’t come (Nahar 3/10/90 & Safir 13/10/90).

The inevitable happened, and the general was driven out on the morning of October 13<sup>th</sup>, while the Lebanese Forces stood neutral and the Church helpless. The results were not only a large number of dead and damages, but also the loss of the opportunity to amend the Taef accord for good. The fact that the accord had to be militarily implemented left no card for the Christians to play. They had to depend from that moment on, on the international and regional guarantees for a good and fair practice of the accord.

The war ended and the Hraoui government took control of the country under Syrian regency. In fact the implementation of the Taef Accord was much worse than the accord itself and the international and regional powers were too busy with the regional problems to interfere and risk instability in Lebanon.

### **Change in the Christian Attitude (1990-1996)**

The way the war ended placed the Lebanese Christians in their weakest position ever, while the implementation of the Taef accord began and the second republic was taking shape. A government of National Unity was supposed to take office and deal directly with all the files to end the war and its results, rebuild the institutions, and launch the reconstruction of the country. Unfortunately, none of that took place. Two governments were formed after the war, with Prime Ministers Solh and Karame, but none of them was a real national unity government. The Christian representation was very weak, no parliamentary elections took place (deputies were appointed for the vacant seats), the Syrian redeployment didn't take place in the time range set, and the general amnesty law as well as the disarmament plan had exceptions. In addition to all, that many incidents showing revenge and superiority of one party over the other, took place in the Christian regions, including Dani Chamoun's (Liberal Nationalist Party) assassination with his wife and two children.

The situation alarmed the Holy See and exhorted it to play a more effective role in convincing the Christians to accept the accord as is. A few days after the military action, and one day before the assassination of Chamoun, the Pope had sent a letter to Pt. Sfeir in which he called him to act with every possible party to help the Lebanese overcome their hatred, disputes, controversies, and antagonism. John Paul II hoped that Lebanon would soon be free from all foreign military presence, so that the Lebanese can regain their liberty and dignity (Hachem, p150). As for the Chamoun family massacre, the Pope resented it and compared it to the crime of Cain killing his brother. He affirmed in a general audience the same day that *"This is not the path of mankind, of nations, nor of the human civilization"* (Hachem, p151).



At this crossroad, the Christians were facing, once again, the three choices (3 Cs) already mentioned in chapter three. The choice of confrontation was unacceptable for almost everyone because the people and the country couldn't take any more. And even though the boycott of the elections was considered as a confrontation decision, as we will see later, what happened proved to be a complete failure because the train went on leaving the boycotters behind. The second choice, consensus, was supposedly the most popular, but again the Christian experience with reconciliation and national unity in the first years after the war wasn't very good. The third choice, concession, seemed to be the only attitude to adopt. The Christian leaders, the local Church, and the Holy See tried very hard but in vain to avoid this attitude (Mansour, p226-41).

The spirit of defeat spread very fast among the people who after suffering for 15 years of war, felt as losers and nothing happened to change this feeling. On the contrary, every official policy was another proof of neglect and superiority. For the first time in two thousand years of history, the Lebanese Christians seemed to yield and to give up their feeling of attachment to this land. As a direct result of that choice, emigration skyrocketed and Christian's political participation became almost null.

This catastrophic and "suicidal" attitude worried John Paul II extremely, so he decided to do something in order to counterbalance it. His action was unique and extraordinary as he called for a special Synod for Lebanon on June 12, 1991, although Synods were usually preserved for whole regions or general themes concerning the entire Catholic Church. The preparation, details and results of the Synod will be discussed in the next chapter. However, working on this large scale couldn't replace the usual traditional diplomacy. In an international environment too busy with the Gulf War, Lebanon was unquestionably abandoned in Syrian custody, and the Vatican had to make practical steps to achieve its goals.

This situation made Card. Etchegaray announce that his visit to Lebanon in July 1991 was a message of hope not related to politics. The focus during this visit was on the large burden of reconstruction and reconciliation, and how these should be the priority of every Lebanese, so he wouldn't lose hope in his country. Another practical step but with an international aspect, was the Pope charging Card. O'Connor head of the Catholic Church in the USA, of the Lebanese file. His predecessors Cardinals Seblemen and Cook, had the same interest in the Lebanese crisis, had visited Lebanon more than once, and had given social and financial aids to the Lebanese. This step was supposed to have direct influence on the US society and administration through sensibilizing the public opinion, mainly the Catholic, to the Lebanese question and the situation of the Christians in it (Irani AR, p177-78).

The new post-war perspective of the stable and unchanged Vatican diplomacy, and the role of the papal *nuncio* in this period, were discussed in a special interview with Mgr. Pablo Puente given to the Safir daily newspaper. In this interview, Puente presented the situation from his point of view. According to him, the long years of war had left deep scares in the hearts of everyone, especially the Christians. It was up to the Lebanese now to work together hand in hand to rebuild a new Lebanon, a united, independent and sovereign country, in which all citizens enjoy security, freedom, human rights, and social and economic security. Puente considered achieving this as the only way to avoid the concession and despair of a group of the Lebanese that were treated as losers of the war, and to give the Lebanese their new-old expected role in linking the Arab world to Europe and the West within the New World Order. A real and deep reconciliation process along with the awareness of the dangers of the emigration of the Christians should be omnipresent in the mind of all Lebanese.



Puente wished that the Lebanese Christians would never fall in despair, but learn from their mistakes that war is not the solution for their problems and that they should be not only very open to the Arab world but also its leaders (Safir, 4/10/91). Puente started intensive contacts to carry the Holy See point of view to all Lebanese parties. Through his visits to Baalbek, the institution of "Imam Sadr" in Sour, Tripoli, the Chouf, and many other places, Puente discussed these points with leaders of different religions and different parties (Nahar, 17/01/94).

Internal pressure along with that of the Holy See and France pushed the government to call for parliamentary elections in the summer of 1992. However, in order not to lose any point for the opposition, the government adopted a mutated election law that was manipulated in a way to keep the non-allies out. One more time, the Maronite patriarch and the papal *nuncio* played the role of coordinators and tried to group all the Christian leaders in one position. That was achieved, as the majority refused to participate in the election under the unfair and unconstitutional law, on the hope that, it will be postponed and the law amended. On the contrary, the government went on with an election in which the average percentage of voting was less than 20%, ignoring the opinion of a large number of opponents. That fired the last shot on any Christian hope in the Taef accord.

Many symbolic events accompanied this period, but their effect on raising the morale of the Christians was very poor. Pope John Paul II ordered a Statue for Notre Dame of Lourdes, blessed it, and sent it to Lebanon to tour in the Lebanese villages, holding a message of hope that Lebanon would continue to be a place for dialogue. Mgr. Angelloni's visit bringing social aids to the deprived was also not very influential in easing the despair.

Another attempt was the letter of Card. Sylevestrini to the Oriental Patriarchs, in which he witnessed for the glowing hope of Lebanese Christians, and emphasized the need for sovereignty, trust, democracy, religious freedom, and respect of human rights as the bases of any reconstruction and reconciliation efforts. However, the situation was completely opposite and it caused a kind of embarrassment for the Holy See, especially toward the Christians. The Taef amendments that the Holy See pushed the Christians to accept, were being applied in the worst ways, and the results were catastrophic upon them. On the other hand, the Holy See was not being able to change the attitude and the acts of the government in a way to moderate the Christian disappointment (Irani AR, p177).

The year 1993 and the new government with the new Prime Minister Rafic Hariri brought new hopes and expectations, even for the Christians. A few months afterwards, came the visit of Mgr. Jean-Louis Tauran, right after the Pope's announcement of his visit to Lebanon. All these factors, along with the advance reached in the Peace negotiations, gave the Christians an expecting hopeful attitude. However, in their minds there were still crucial concerns through which they would look at the situation in a hopeful or deceived way. Vaticani expectations in this period were summarized in an article of the Hayat daily newspaper. To the author, the first concern was stopping the emigration of the Lebanese in general and the Christians in particular. The second was the insistence not only on political and official coexistence, but also on the social and cultural one, including the return of every displaced to his home. The third was ending the gap and even animosity that existed between the government and the Christians, and taking them out of the fix perceptions of having lost the war and of not belonging to this country. The fourth concern was the impact of the Peace settlements on Lebanon (Hayat, 10/2/93).



It is true that the visit of Mgr. Tauran came within a tour to the region, but as he clearly said, the visit to Lebanon had a special and particular aspect. In his final declaration before leaving to Syria, he focused on the necessity to build a new country for all and loved by all without any fears, *“faithful to its historical vocation of pluralism, conviviality, and collaboration for freedom”*. He explicitly asked the Christians to be fully involved in this process, acknowledging that the mission may be difficult and long especially *“in a country whose sovereignty is incomplete”*, meaning the Israeli, Palestinian, and Syrian presence (Declaration 31/3/93).

Less than a year after that slight hope came in the horizon, a sequence of events pushed the Christians back into concession, despair, and emigration. That backward process started with the signing of the “basic agreement” between the Vatican and Israel (Dec. 93), and the explosion at the N.D. of Deliverance church (Feb. 94) which led to the postponing of the Pope’s visit (to be discussed later on). The deterioration of the internal situation went from bad to worse between 94 and 97. After the explosion of the church, the Lebanese Forces were accused, the party dissolved, and Dr. Samir Geagea imprisoned. The exile period of 5 years of General Aoun was over and his return to Lebanon was not welcomed. The Parliamentary elections of 1996 were manipulated as much as the ones of 92. Syrian troops didn’t withdraw according to the Taef. President Heraoui’s term was renewed for three more years without elections. News broadcasting and demonstrations were banned.

All these events killed any possibility of success for the Holy See to give hope to the Christians and to make them feel involved and belonging to the “second republic” of Taef. One event however, is of a special interest to this paper namely, the postponement of the papal visit to Lebanon and all the surrounding events. Therefore, the next part of this chapter will discuss it in details.

## **Postponing the visit of 1994**

Since 1982, only three years after his pontification, John Paul II had expressed his will to visit Lebanon, the tortured land, as soon as possible, to work for the cause of peace. In 1989, and within two months, he expressed twice this will. In a general audience on August 15, he said:

“...I have wished so many times to visit Lebanon, and I do visit it every day in my prayers in a visit to it. As for my trip to the region, and my apostolic service among my brothers there, I was advised to postpone it for the moment because of the current situation that is in continuous deterioration. In spite of that, now more than any time before, I feel an internal urge ordering me to go to Lebanon...” (Hachem, p123)

Less than one month after, on September 7, in the letter to all Muslims, he said:

“... You must know, how often I live in my mind the happy moment when I will be able to visit Lebanon and meet its children. I am eager, indeed, to go there, to express my respect to this honorable land, and my trust in the Lebanese and their capability to live together and rebuild Lebanon better than it was...” (Hachem, p131)

These two quotations show clearly how eager John Paul II was to visit Lebanon. As soon as things started to calm down, and when the preparation period of the Synod was over, the Pope announced enthusiastically his visit. In his periodical meeting with the Roman Curie on December 21, 1993, John Paul II said that he will have a first visit to the Middle East in the following spring, as he will visit the tortured land of Lebanon that had suffered so much. He explained that the direct purpose of the visit will be apostolic, to help the Lebanese and strengthen their efforts in preparing the special Synod for their country (Hachem, p181).

This visit had also an indirect purpose. At the time when the Christians were falling in complete despair as mentioned before, the Pope had to do something urgently until the first results of the Synod started to show.



Unfortunately, a few days before the announcement of this visit, the Vatican had signed a treaty with the state of Israel, the thing that incited a large wave of replies and reactions all over the Arab world and especially in Lebanon. The fact that the two events coincided, had a very bad effect on the Lebanese receptivity for the visit. Entering in the details of the “basic agreement” would mean opening the file of the Vatican position toward the Arab Israeli conflict, which is out of subject in this paper. However, it is necessary to take a look at the most significant reactions toward this agreement, and to do so, we will focus on the Lebanese reactions and their influence on the Papal visit. Unable to understand the timing and the reason behind the agreement with Israel nor the diplomatic move of the Vatican, many Lebanese considered this agreement as a provocation and a challenge right before the visit of the Pope.

Pro-Syrian and pro-Iranian figures took advantage of this agreement to express their opposition to the papal visit. The most violent response was that of Druze leader Walid Jumblat. Jumblat attacked the Pope, the Vatican, and the Local church saying that this agreement was the result of the alliance between the Christian West and Zionism against the Muslims and the Arabs, and that this alliance would be completed with the papal visit to Lebanon and the occupied land of Palestine. To him, this was the only possible comment on this visit. Jumblat asked the Pope to stop the war against the Muslims in Bosnia and give them their rights before preaching about human rights (Irani AR, p190). In his book on the papacy and the Middle East, George Irani sees that Jumblat has had such a cruel reaction because Mgr. Puente visited the Chouf region in search for possible places to be visited by the Pope, without coordinating with its leader (Jumblat). Moreover, Pt. Sfeir had repeatedly refused Jumblat’s invitation to visit the Chouf before the return of every displaced.

Shiite Imam Mohammed Hussein Fadlallah declared that the recognition of the state of Israel was a non-Christian act that symbolized the recognition of the Arabs' defeat in front of Israel. The Syrian Social Nationalist party and Hizbollah also refused the agreement and criticized the timing of the visit. The influence of the agreement was very apparent in the South, the region that was mostly affected by Israeli aggressions. Mgr. Sadder, the Maronite bishop of Sour, organized a referendum asking the people of the region about their opinion in the papal visit. The results showed that a majority was against the visit. A Shiite sheik from the South declared that it seemed that the Pope needed to satisfy Israel and get its approval for his visit. He blamed the Pope for not taking the opinion of the people of the South, the daily victims of Israeli attacks. Another citizen accused the Pope of taking a neutral position between the offender and the victim, as he recognized the offender, Israel, and is visiting the victim, Lebanon (Irani AR, p189-192).

However, a few thinkers like Mohammed Sammak, who represented the Sunni community in the Synod, had positive opinions about the agreement. The local Churches and the papal *nuncio* worked hard with every means possible to explain to the public that the Vatican didn't change its position and that the agreement was intended to improve the Vatican's negotiator's position in the conflict.

Puente explained in one of his speeches that the principles and convictions of the Vatican remain unchanged. The recognition was only a change in attitude to give the Vatican a better negotiating position. Puente expressed his sadness for hearing many wrong and inaccurate interpretations. He argued that Israel was trying to keep the Vatican and its moral power out of the battle because it favored the position of the Arabs, and that the agreement made that impossible. Puente concluded saying that the Vatican has been more Arab than the Arabs regarding this issue (Nahar, 17/1/94).



The Lebanese environment started to look not very appropriate for the papal visit and the accomplishment of its purposes. Doubts started to grow on how effective would the visit be in such a hostile environment and with so little cooperation from the state in the most basic demands of the Vatican and the Lebanese Church. The organizers had another essential concern in their minds, protecting the Pope from any internal and regional threats, and watching over his safety.

This concern was accentuated when an extraordinary event shook the Lebanese society in its whole. Indeed a bomb exploded during the Sunday Mass in the Church of N.D. of Deliverance in Keserwan. That accident had very special significance because of its timing and location. The bombing was the first incident causing that large number of casualties since the end of the war. It was the first of its kind against a Holy place in a densely populated region. Last but not least, it came a few months before the arrival of the Pope, while the preparations were starting to move fast. The story was not over here, for as it is known a Christian party, “the Lebanese Forces”, was accused of the accident, which was a real precedent and was meant to hit the last solid ground of the Christian community. Four years after this accident, and after being convicted of many other cases, Dr. Geagea (LF leader) was found not guilty in the bombing of the Church, and the real actors remain unknown.

All the events cumulated and the tensed situation obliged the Pope to postpone his visit to Lebanon to an unknown date. This was another large step backwards in the process of assuring the Christians to their situation in the country. In fact all through the period from 1990 to 1996, the Holy See diplomacy was working hard, with the government towards building a new country that respects the liberties and rights of everyone, and with the Christians to motivate them to stay in Lebanon and participate in the political life. Thus the failure of the first have lead to the failure of the other.

## Chapter VI: A New Hope for Lebanon

### Preparation of the Synod

As said by the end of last chapter, Pope John Paul II wanted to do something extraordinary and very special for Lebanon. The situation of the Christians in Lebanon at the end of the war was very depressing and things seemed to go for the worse. On June 12, 1991 the Pope called the entire Catholic Church to share with him his concern about Lebanon and to participate in the Special Assembly for the Synod of Bishops for Lebanon, that he had decided. Before we go into further details, it is necessary to explain the meaning of a Synod and its significance.

Synod is a Latin word meaning “*walking together*,” and it is used in the apostolic sense to mean the structure created by Pope Paul VI in 1965 for the entire Catholic Church and including Archbishops chosen from the different parts of the world. This structure is known as the “Synod of Bishops,” and it is supposed to meet regularly in a collegial way to reinforce the union with the Roman Pontiff and to discuss matters of concern to the world Church. The Synod can be of two kinds, either a general assembly or a special one. General Assemblies can meet in normal or extraordinary sessions to discuss doctrinal matters concerning the entire Church. Since 1967 there have been 9 normal and 2 extraordinary sessions for the general assembly. The Special Assembly meets to discuss the matters concerning a region or a number of regions directly. Since 1967, there have been 5 special assemblies concerning consecutively: The Lowlands (Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg), Europe, Africa, Lebanon and Asia (Haddad, p90-91). From this short introduction, one can conclude the extreme importance this Special Assembly for Lebanon had. Taking this decision meant that the Pope considered the situation of the Christians in Lebanon a matter of concern for the entire Catholic Church.



**The objectives** of this extraordinary act, which was by nature pastoral, but had a direct influence on the cultural, social, economic and political levels, must be examined at this point. We can probably find the most information about the objectives of this Synod in the speeches of the Pope. Indeed, he called for the Special Assembly in a general audience on June 12, 1991 and sent a letter to the Catholic Patriarchs and Bishops of Lebanon about it on July 8<sup>th</sup>. He finally addressed the Lebanese public in an audio-visual message on July 11<sup>th</sup>. Out of these three occasions, I will try to extract the clear direct objectives of the assembly according to the Pope.

“...This will be a pastoral Synod, in which the Catholic Churches of Lebanon will do some examination of conscience in front of God... This will lead to a spiritual renewal for their communities... and will help them discover the roots of their faith in order to look for the best ways to bear witness for it, in a society troubled by long years of war... We seek the support of every Christian Church in Lebanon... and of the Lebanese Muslims, who are called to appreciate the effort of their Catholic fellow citizens. In fact, this effort reflects the Catholics’ will to be closer to them in a society motivated by the will of common living and true cooperation to rebuild the country...” (Hachem, p167-168).

“...The World Church is committed to pray and think with you and to share your spiritual expectations and pastoral projects... The Church of Lebanon is called to bear witness for the Bible in the difficult situation of its country and to perceive the most essential needs and pastoral requirements in the current status with a renewed apostolic leap...” (Hachem, p168-179).

After this long quotation from the three messages of the Pope, the objectives of the Synod become very clear. The Pope was once again reconfirming the Holy See’s view for Lebanon, and right in the heart of their despair he wanted to give the Lebanese Christians *hope*. He wanted to give them hope in God as the only refuge in time of trouble, the hope of living a common life with fellow citizens of different religions, the hope of rebuilding together a better country, and the hope of being missionaries of peace, love, freedom, and human rights to the whole Orient. The way to do so was by reviving the roots of their faith in God, in the great traditions of the Oriental Churches, and in a country which historical vocation has been renovated.

**The Preparation** of every Synod goes through a series of steps before reaching the actual assembly. First of all, the initiation of such a long process takes place after the announcement of the Pope, which happened in this case on June 12, 1991, in the presence of the four Catholic Patriarchs directly concerned. The second step was to nominate the members of the central committee in the Vatican formed of Cardinals. These members for the Lebanese special assembly were: Card. Sudano (Secretary of State), Card. Ratzinger (Doctrinal C.), Card. Silvestrini (C. Oriental Churches), Card. Cassidi (Christian Unity C.), Card. Arinze (Inter-religious Dialogue), Card. Etchegaray (Justice & Peace C.), and finally Card. Scott (secretary Gen. Of the Synod of Bishops) (Haddad, p94-95).

The choice of the members of the committee reflected clearly the large importance the Pope was giving to this special assembly. It was clear that this assembly would discuss the issues of Christian unity, inter-religious dialogue, peace and justice in society, the values and roles of Oriental Churches, and all the other issues that Lebanon is directly concerned with. This also meant that through Lebanon and this special assembly, all these issues were to be promoted and accentuated in a way to serve the Lebanese Catholics first, and then all the Lebanese and all the Christians of the Orient.

The third step was to nominate the members of the local preparing committee. It was formed by the beginning of 1992 of eight bishops representing all six Catholic Churches<sup>11</sup> having parishes in Lebanon, and the Maronite bishop Mgr. Bechara Raii was appointed as coordinator of this committee (Haddad, p95). This committee led a large consultation process to set the main lines for the Synod. Half of the answers were taken from laic Christians in order to emphasize the importance of their role.

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<sup>11</sup>The Maronite, the Greek C., the Syriac C., the Armenian C., the Caledonian, and the Latin Churches.



The local preparing committee presented the **“lineamenta”** or the main lines-headlines- of the Synod to the Pope. He adopted it and accordingly sent a letter to the Catholic bishops of Lebanon on June 20, 1992, in which he emphasized the heroic nature of the Lebanese faith and launched the consulting process (Hachem, p175-177). The results concluded from the large consulting process and the people’s opinions were made public in Bkerki on March 13, 1993. Another period began, in which further discussions, comments, and propositions of amendment from any interested party were received. Afterwards, the local committee was to set the **“Instrumentum Laboris”** or the Agenda of the meetings of the Synod accordingly (Haddad, p92).

Reflecting the will and expectations of the consulted people, the **“lineamenta”** came under the title of **“Christ is our hope, renewed in his Spirit, in solidarity, we bear witness to His love”**. This title clarified even more the guidelines of the Synod.

**“Christ is our hope”** was a definite message for the Christians that their hope in the future should be depending on Christ not on their political privileges and strong presence, which they had already lost anyway. **“Renewed in his Spirit”** was an explicit call for renovation and regeneration of the Catholic presence in that region of the world, rising on the solid bases and precious traditions of the Oriental Churches. **“In Solidarity”** was not meant only among Catholics, but among all Christians, and consequently all the Lebanese of all religions. The divisions of the war had led the country and especially the Christians into the worst situation ever and a lesson was to be drawn out of that. Last but not least, **“we bear witness to His love”** was the concluding segment of the title as if it was the ultimate mission and the aim to be reached. After putting their hope in Christ, the Catholics were invited to bear witness to the Love of Christ and become, with their Lebanese brothers of all religions, the

apostles of freedom and democracy in the whole surrounding region. The “lineamenta” implied that, without the three first segments of the title, the fourth one, which is the only reason for the Catholic presence in the Orient, couldn’t be applied.

Within that period of open discussions, an important incident took place. The Muslim religious leaders, invited to participate in the Synod, met, discussed the “lineamenta”, and refused the invitation because, as they concluded from the document, the Synod seemed to be an internal Christian issue. However, some newspaper articles gave more probable reasons. The “lineamenta” didn’t mention at any time the Taef accord, the Muslims suffering in Bosnia, the UN resolutions concerning the South, nor the Lebanese-Syrian relations. Yet on the contrary, the document had mentioned the role of the Lebanese Christians in protecting the Christians of the Orient. In addition to that, the Muslim leaders were not so enthusiastic about enlarging the role of the Vatican in Lebanon before it had taken a clear position from the peace negotiations, and a pressuring position against Israel (Shams, April 94). Eventually Muslim religious leaders did not participate in the Synod but they sent representatives to participate in all the sessions and in the special meetings with the Pope. Dr. Mohammed Sammak represented the Sunni community, Dr. Saoud El-Mawla the Shiite, and Judge Abbas Halabi the Druze. All of them mentioned their satisfaction and pleasure in the whole environment.

After the end of the long preparation period that went on for more than four years, from June 91 till September 95, the dates for the special assembly of the Synod were set from November 26 to December 14, 1995. This long period of preparation witnessed the renovation of the “Laws of the Oriental Churches” in October 1993, in addition to the many political events mentioned earlier, and the postponing of the papal visit of 94, often explained as a resentment of the Lebanese status quo.



## **The Synod, the Message, and the Visit**

On the morning of Sunday November 26, 1995, the great event long awaited started with a mass in the St Peter cathedral, with the participation of the Pope, 3 Patriarchs, 10 Cardinals, 17 Archbishops, 19 Bishops, 56 priests, and around 400 Lebanese among them the 120 participants in the Synod. Along 18 days, the Synod met in a special assembly and dealt with all proposed issues. A total of 120 general meetings, 14 discussion sessions, and 3 press conferences took place. 11 briefings and 26 press releases were released in four languages. 98 speakers and 300 reporters from more than 20 countries participated in the event. All this was needed to accomplish the wished aims of the Synod (Khadra, p 33).

After the end of the special assembly of the Synod, the participants reported a set of recommendations to the Pope and asked him to write an apostolic exhortation according to them. During the last day, the Pope invited the participants to a final reception dinner, in which he said the words that became famous afterwards: *“Before this, I’ve loved Lebanon so much and followed its news closely, I was affectively Lebanese. But today after meeting all Lebanon gathered here, my affection materialized and I became effectively Lebanese”* (Khadra, p 280).

While waiting for the *Exhortation*, these recommendations were published in a Concluding Message, under the same title as the “lineamenta”: *Christ is our hope, renewed in His spirit, in solidarity, we bear witness to His love*. A post-synodal follow-up committee was formed of Cardinals Sfeir<sup>12</sup>, Etchegaray, Silvestrini, Cassidi, Arinze, and eight bishops. The committee contributed in writing the *Exhortation* that was announced during the Papal visit, a year later (Khadra, p 302).

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<sup>12</sup>Sfeir was the third Maronite Patriarch consecutively to be nominated Cardinal. This act of appreciation from the Pope to the patriarchs of Oriental Churches became almost a trend.

**The Message** of the Synod had a dramatic influence on the Lebanese society. Its content didn't vary much from the "lineamenta" previously mentioned or from the *Exhortation* that will be discussed later on. The only difference about it was its direct and explicit way of presenting the issues. This followed method initiated a large vague of opposition, mainly among the Muslim communities. It is better not to discuss the content of the Message to avoid repetition, but we'll discuss only the objections to it and the related responses.

The most aggressive reaction was that of Imam Shamseddin. He criticized mainly three terms used in the message: Cultural pluralism, the "departure" of the Syrian forces, and "pluralistic" democracy. The Imam argued that Lebanon was a unitary not a pluralistic political society and that the Lebanese should work to create one national culture. For him, the Syrian presence and the complementation between the two countries had no effect on Lebanon's sovereignty and freedom because Lebanon is the final home for all its citizens. Pluralistic democracy for Shamseddin was closely related to the confessional system he refuses. He wanted it to be replaced with a numeric democracy controlled by an elite majority not a religious one, as he claimed (Haddad, p139).

Imam Fadlallah criticized the term "departure" and the equal statuses given to Syria and Israel in the message. The Sunni Mufti, Sheik Kabbani, declared that the Lebanese crisis has never been a confessional one like the message implied. Sheik Ghaith (Druze religious chief) argued that the message would have bad effects on the reconciliation process. Hizbollah considered the Synod an internal council that couldn't be considered either national or comprehensive. The assembly of eminent Muslims considered that the message used an escalating accent and that cultural pluralism was in contrast with the Taef accord (Haddad, p 140-141).



Responses came from many civil and religious Christian figures. The best and the most comprehensive and clarifying response was that of Pt. Sfeir who gave an answer to every accusation. The different participants in the Synod from different Lebanese sects also gave separate comments.

First, talking about cultural pluralism didn't mean at all plurality in the political identity, it meant preserving the particularity and the social and religious traditions of each Lebanese community. On the contrary, the message had emphasized the necessity to reinforce "conviviality" and not co-existence. Second, the message had differentiated between the Israeli occupation and the Syrian presence, and talking about "departure" is out of pure principles. On this point, Pt. Maxim V (G.C.) elaborated saying that the departure is the final step to assure sovereignty, after the liberation of the occupied parts of the country. Bishop Khodr (G.O.) argued that implying that the Muslims are not for a Syrian departure was not for the best of the country. Third, the Lebanese system was built on pluralistic democracy since before the independence, and it was the normal system to follow. Bishop Saad (G.C.) added that it became clear to everyone in Lebanon that no party can build the country or destroy it alone. Fourth, not mentioning the Taef accord explicitly didn't mean refusing it because it is known that without the Maronite Church's accord the Taef couldn't have been applied. Finally, bishop Khodr (G.O.) wished the reactions hadn't come within half an hour without deep reading and contemplation, focusing on one small part in a very comprehensive and progressive message (Haddad, p 143-147).

As a result of the different accusations and responses, there was a cordial wish from everyone, that the *Exhortation* would avoid such blunt language and leave no place for doubts or interpretations. The Pope took all these reactions into consideration while writing the *Exhortation* with the help of the follow up committee.

**The Papal Visit** on May 10 and 11, 1997 was the next step. The objectives of the visit were mainly five; to launch the application of the Synod, to ablaze the faith of the Catholics, to take the Christians out of their despair, to give a push to the Islamo-Christian dialogue, and to emphasize the ecumenical relation with the Orthodox and Evangelical Churches. On the other hand, some fears grew around the preparations for the visit. Some Christians feared for the life of John Paul II from criminal attempts and others feared that the visit would consecrate the status quo disfavoring the Christians. The Muslims feared that the visit would give some more power back to the Christians, and revive religious sentiments. Whatever were the objectives or the fears, this visit exceeded every expectation, and the title it gained unquestionably was "Historical".

Papal visits usually have main features in common; Protocol meetings (as with heads of states), a public Mass with the masses (bain de foules), a meeting with the youth, some contact with the handicapped, and a meeting with the clergy and religious people. In that, the visit to Lebanon was not a special one, except for the meetings with the Muslim religious leaders in the presidential palace, and with non-Catholic Christian religious leaders in the Papal embassy. During the visit, the Pope gave 4 speeches, Pt. Sfeir gave 3, and four other persons gave each one speech (Haddad, p167). In all the speeches, there were no surprises and no change in the opinions that were already known by the majority of the Lebanese people. However, journalists gathered a number of quotations that were very expressive and were printed in the minds of the Lebanese. Upon his arrival to the airport, the Pope said:

“...I come to you as a friend, who wishes to support this people in its daily struggle... Everyone is invited from now on, to volunteer in the service of peace, reconciliation, and brotherhood... The condition for a true democracy, is the just equilibrium between the different components of a nation, and the participation of every responsible person in the decision-making process... regardless of their cultural and religious differences...” (Andary, p46).



From his speech to the youth in Harissa, they quoted:

“... It is up to you to destroy the barriers that have risen in the past... don't build new borders inside your country... On the contrary, its up to you to build bridges... You are the fortune of Lebanon, you the thirsty for peace and brotherhood... you must anticipate the Lebanon of tomorrow, and make out of it one people in spite of the cultural and spiritual differences... I urge you, to participate in the implementation of the recommendations of the Synod... I invite you to be the prophets of life, love, and joy...” (Andary, p63).

During the celebration of the Eucharist at the port, John Paul II said:

“... We want let the world know the importance of Lebanon... This country has always proved that different religions can live together in peace, brotherhood, and cooperation... and that religious freedom can and should be respected, as long as all are united in the love of the country... I am sure that the pains of the past won't be in vain: it will strengthen your will for freedom and unity” (Andary, p79).

As usual, John Paul II hated protocol and ceased every opportunity to create a friendly environment with an act, a joke or a smile. As he arrived to the airport, he blessed the masses in Arabic, saying: “Allah Yubarikukum”, and in the Mass the next day he said: “Assalam lakum”. When they wanted to celebrate his birthday, 8 days before it was due, he asked joking, “Why do you want to make me old before time?” In his meeting with the youth and before giving his speech, he said, “It is hot in here, I think I will go out to the balcony and talk to the people outside,” which he did assuring that there should be no privileges for anyone. When the youth started shouting, “John Paul II, we love you” he asked them to say it in Arabic, and they answered his request (Andary, p98).

Reactions about the visit came full of hope. Young people said that he respected their freedom and knew how to talk to them. He gave them the proof that they are not facing the difficulties alone and chose them as the source of the renewal message and they hoped they would be up to his trust. At the same time, the youth were aware that this great emotion won't last, and that they'll have to wait for the implementation of the exhortation to start perceiving awesome results (Haddad p195).

## **The Apostolic Exhortation**

The Apostolic exhortation was the post-synodal document written by the Pope John Paul II according to the will and request of the Fathers of the Synod. The work on the *Exhortation* started immediately when “the special assembly of the Synod of bishops for Lebanon” ended its job. While writing it, the Pope referred to the consulting reports, the “lineamenta”, the “Instrumentum Laboris”, the discussion of the Synod, the minutes of the meetings, the concluding Message, and the reactions on that Message. In short, the *Exhortation* was to be the outcome of all the synodal process. Thus, for more than a year, every word was measured and discussed, so that no place would be left for misinterpretation. The translation into Arabic was also very critical, and the Lebanese had to wait another year after the publication of the French version in May 97. That mission was entrusted to a committee carefully chosen by the Pope (Khadra, p344).

The word *Exhortation* was translated into Arabic as “Irshad” meaning guidance, advice or preaching, which was probably the best translation. However, the word *Exhortation* has a stronger meaning, it means urging, inciting, impelling, and actuating. Bishop Haddad proposed the title, “Message of Renewal for the Lebanese Church,” for the Arabic version inspired by the “aggiornamento” (renewal) of the Catholic Church in Vatican II. Thus, the *Exhortation* was meant to have on the Lebanese Church the same effect Vatican II had on the World Church.

A second argument was whether the Pope in the *Exhortation* should address the Catholics only or all the Lebanese. Addressing the Catholics would have meant excluding the others, which was not acceptable. Addressing all Lebanese would have offended many that disfavored the Pope dealing with general Lebanese issues. In his special way, the Pope addressed both without offending anyone, as we will see later.



Another argument, in favor of the Arabic translation this time, was the word “Rajaa” for hope and not “Amal”. The differentiation in Arabic is between the temporal worldly hope that wishes and expects something to happen, and the spiritual hope that awaits from God what is impossible for Man. Using “Rajaa” by the translator could have been meant to exclude the worldly (political and economical) hope and changes that some Christians wished for as results of the Synod.

However, this did not mean that political, social, and economic aspects were excluded from the exhortation. It meant that changes in these aspects were necessary and obligatory, but were not the final aim of the Synod, they were only the partial or primary objectives in order to reach the ultimate spiritual renewal.

Such focus on the significance of the *Exhortation* is deliberate because entering into the details of it, would need a study by itself and it would have a religious aspect rather than a diplomatic one. Thus, I will go through some of the controversial issues dealt with in the *Exhortation* without claiming to cover the whole.

The Pope considered Lebanon as a Holy Land because Christ passed in it and he considered his visit to this land as a pilgrimage. “*Every land where our Lord has trailed was made Saint*” (pr8).

“*One of the characteristics of the Catholic Church in Lebanon is that it is multiple and one at the same time...*” (pr8). The Pope used the term multiple and not diverse, meaning that each of the six churches has complete independence. These churches are “united in the communion of love and faith” with the Roman pontiff, as a circle around him, and not under his authority by rule of law, as a pyramid of hierarchy. That, among other privileges, was reflected by the renewal of the laws of oriental churches we mentioned before.

*“... For a constructive dialogue, and a reciprocal recognition, disregarding the diversions between religions... we should discern what makes the Lebanese one people and how their brotherhood is manifested each day, mainly through “conviviality”. Moreover, Christians and Muslims should consider themselves as partners in building their country... ” (pr14).* Paragraph14 negated every proposition or will of division. It insisted on the partnership through which every initiative or decision is taken by consensus. John Paul II emphasized the need to acknowledge the great differences and not to hide them and to start a real deep and continuous dialogue.

The Pope took a clear position from secularization, in paragraph15 refusing to accept it without the necessary modification to preserve religious values and particularities. Secular Lebanese, who demand that the state be separate from religion, rejected that argument. But the point to be noticed is that the Pope asked for guarantees and didn't refuse the whole thing: *“The Church is naturally called upon, to be attentive toward today's cultures, to distinguish the good seeds from the bad ones. Moreover, it is important for the country and the region not to yield for secularization” (pr15).*

If we compare pr17 to what came in the concluding message of the Synod, we can see the huge difference in dealing with political issue. Here, the Pope acknowledged the situation and the consequent difficulties, without taking a clear political position that might be considered offending to some. *“I am conscious of most of the important current difficulties: the threatening occupation of the South, the economic crisis, the presence of non-Lebanese armed forces, the continuing problem of the displaced people, in addition to the threat of extremism and the feeling of a group of Lebanese that they and their rights are violated” (pr17).*



That reflected the philosophy of political commitment that was discussed again in other paragraphs. John Paul II, in his words, considered the role of the Church as very essential in politics and economy, yet, it should not take positions or propose solutions condemning one party and supporting the other. The Church should remind the authorities continuously of the moral and human values to respect (pr112).

To the Christians who were worried about the future, from melting, from losing their identity, and from Islamic fanaticism; who suffered so much that they preferred to live alone in a small Christian nation, to those who were in despair, the message was very clear and explicit:

“To have hope is to be engaged. Christians have an actual responsibility to realize God’s plans and to speed them up” (pr32). “The hope of Lebanese Christians is built mainly on responding to the requirements of the Lord in the place where he put them... The difficult situation the Lebanese Church is facing should not make us run away, put ourselves aside, or be dissolved. It should bring us back to the roots of our faith where we can find strength, perseverance, confidence and hope. In this troubled region of the world, Christians should realize the gravity of their mission... Christians are called to overcome their fears continuously in order to reach the wise fear of God “fear not who kill the body but are not able to kill the soul” (Mt 10/28)” (pr33).

In paragraph 41, the Pope called upon the Oriental Churches to pursue the evaluation of “*Arabic Christian writings in the fields of theology, spirituality, liturgy, and general knowledge*”. He considered those as “*the treasures that had enriched the Antiochian tradition since the 7<sup>th</sup> century*”. In paragraph 45, the *Exhortation* also incited “*laic believers to be engaged directly in intellectual research and studies, so that the Christian culture in the Arab world would grow*”.

In chapter four, the renewal of the communal structures was mentioned. In fact, the *Exhortation* said that the Catholic Churches of the Middle East should be in constant communion with all the other Catholic communities and with the entire Catholic Church. On a second level, it had to commune with the Orthodox Church, the Evangelical Church and the rest of the Middle Eastern Churches.

The 5<sup>th</sup> chapter of the *Exhortation* discusses the commitment of the Lebanese Catholic Church in its Arabo-Islamic surrounding. The Islamo-Christian dialogue according to this chapter, “*should be pursued on different levels:*” (pr91) in daily life, at work and in the practical national life. Conviviality shouldn’t be the privilege of the educated elite, but it has to be propagated to the large public.

Solidarity with the Arab World is also one of the controversial issues discussed. After making unquestionable the belonging of the Christian Arabs to the Arab world, the Pope noted the differences that distinguished their culture:

“The Catholic Church wants to be open to dialogue with the Muslims of all the Arab world of which Lebanon is an integral part. In fact, one destiny ties the Christians and the Muslims in Lebanon and all the countries of the region. Each culture distinguishes itself with what it holds as religious and profane effects of the different civilizations that passed on their land... I want to insist on the necessity for the Lebanese Christians to enforce their solidarity with the Arab world...” (pr93). “Every party must take into consideration the needs and expectations of the other parties and rather of the entire Humanity” (pr94). “Everyone should recognize the other’s legitimate rights in the social, political, economical, cultural and associative life, and in the spiritual and cultural traditions within public interest and national life” (pr95)

In paragraph 98, the *Exhortation* has set *real reconciliation, peace, and justice* as the three prerequisites for launching the hope in a new future for Lebanon.

In a post-war society where the economic situation was deteriorating, the Church’s large ownership and financial power were criticized regardless of the role it played, especially during the war, in promoting Lebanese nationalism and in supporting the survival of Christian communities. Thus, the *Exhortation* wanted to settle this discussion. In paragraphs 104 and 105, the Pope condemned any criticism for the clergy and at the same time he reminded the latter to make proper usage of that power for the benefit of the served society and only for that. The Pope saluted the processes that had already started especially the building of marital houses with payment facilities for the Lebanese youth.



Women, children, youth, Catholic schools, higher education, human rights and all the other aspects of Christian life were discussed in the *Exhortation*, but further observations are not possible or relevant here.

To conclude the talk about the *Exhortation*, we can say that it is the written document that contains the most complete Holy See view of Lebanon. Embodied in the words of the document, an analyst can extract all the objectives of the Holy See diplomacy in Lebanon, the problems it has faced, is, and will be facing, and the means to reach these objectives. Finally, one can find in this *Exhortation* a new hope for Lebanon and the possible ways for it to rise back again from the long years of difficulties in which the Lebanese suffered much.

What were the effects of the Synod, the visit, and the exhortation? No study, no anticipations or expectations can answer this question. It is true that, on the surface, there have been no changes in the Lebanese environment. The same political, social, and economic problems were still there, and they have probably worsened. So did the Synod fail? Not really because the change was not to be measured on these worldly levels but on the spiritual (not religious) one. The primary objective of the Synod was the renewal of the Catholic Church in Lebanon as well as its acknowledgment of the roots of its faith and the importance of its mission of dialogue and enlightenment in this Holy region of the world. This continuous process did really begin. Signs of the spiritual renewal became obvious in every aspect of life. Within the families and the universities and on the political and social levels we could see more Christian involvement. Less fanaticism and a return to the precious traditions of faith, common moral values, and human rights were witnessed. It's true that not much palpable progress was achieved, but the Synod passed the message, "*there is still hope for a new Lebanon.*"

## Conclusion

Since the end of the Papal visit and the launching of the renewal process within the Lebanese Church, many events occurred and had different effects on the relationship between the Holy See and Lebanon.

On the religious level, two major events marked the history of the Maronite Church. In fact, the beatification of Naamtallah El Hardini (1998) and the canonization of sister Rafqa (2001) brought the Maronite Church and the Lebanese in general closer than ever to the Holy See. The large number of Lebanese youth, who participated in the “World Youth Days” in France (1997) and in Rome (2000), was a clear sign of their Christian involvement and their evolvment in the spirit of the exhortation. The celebrations of the Jubilee Year (2000) were also an occasion for encounters between the Lebanese and the Vatican, especially during the Maronite days in Rome, which the Pope had dedicated to honor the Maronite Church.

On the internal level, again many events took place: The withdrawal of the Israeli army on May 25, 2000, the first municipal elections in 40 years (1998), the election of a new president (1998), and the minimal improvement in the law and honesty of the parliamentary elections of 2000. Yet, all this wasn't enough to stop the deterioration of the situation on all levels.

It was time for the Church to make a crucial step, and it did. The “Council of the Maronite Bishops” led by Patriarch Sfeir presented a comprehensive and very daring report of the situation in the country in September 2000. The Council also demanded the revival of democracy and freedom and of the reconciliation process, and the correction of the Syro-Lebanese relations. This “call” of the bishops opened the door for a debate that was, in spite of its negative aspects, the first real dialogue that the different Lebanese parties have had in years. Consequently, a few positive



actions have begun to take place in favor of the national unity, the dialogue, and Lebanon's sovereignty.

Between 1997 and 2001, John-Paul II fulfilled his dream of following the footsteps of the main figures in the "History of Salvation." Having Lebanon as the departure point to this series of trips was another symbolic sign of the Holy See's special relation with this country. His trips included Egypt, the Holy Land in Israel and Palestine, Jordan, Greece, Syria and Malta; but, unfortunately, he wasn't able to visit Iraq.

Through these last years, the Holy See diplomacy in Lebanon was, as always, present and very active. The new prospect revealed in the Exhortation needed new blood. In 1998, a change took place on the head of the diplomatic mission; Antonio Maria Vellio was appointed as the new apostolic *nuncio*. Before leaving, Pablo Puente made a large number of visits to many Lebanese figures, received the Great Vail decoration from president Heraoui, and decorated, in the name of the Pope, ten Lebanese figures. Moreover, in compliance with the new prospect, Cardinals Angellini, Arinze, Cassidi, and Sylvestrini have visited Lebanon consecutively. Their basic mission was to enforce the implementation of the Exhortation, each within his jurisdictions. In the year 2000, Lebanon was also proclaimed as Holy Land and land of pilgrimage, and Cardinal Bedaouid, Patriarch of the Syriac Catholic Church, was the first Oriental churchman to be nominated president of the "Council of Oriental Churches".

Finally, while reviewing the long years of the history of the relationship between the two countries, this paper aimed at showing how stable and unchanged the Holy See diplomacy was in Lebanon. To do that, it was necessary to start from the very beginning, even if that gave a historical aspect to the first part of the paper. In

fact, it was important to follow the logical and chronological development of the relationship to understand that the view of the Holy See for Lebanon is not the result of a certain crisis or situation in either one of the countries. This view is, as previously shown, the expression of a deep acknowledgment of the enormous mutual importance of this relationship, since the early centuries.

Through the long years of war, the relationship survived many crises. In fact, even when the Holy See's perception of the situation was criticized by many Christian leaders whose actions it didn't approve of, both parties were still able, eventually, to understand each other's position. On one hand, the Holy See, who was radically opposed to military solutions, understood that, at a certain time, the Lebanese Christians had no choice but to fight back and defend themselves in order to survive and that was the primary interest of its diplomacy.

On the other hand, the Holy See continued to oppose some ideas defended by some Christian leaders -like the cooperation with Israel and the division of the country- because they jeopardized other Holy See objectives -like the inter-religious dialogue, and the Catholic presence in Islamic countries. In addition, the continuous divisions among the Christian leaders, often turned violent, weakened the position of all Christians and presented a huge challenge to the Holy See diplomacy.

In post-war Lebanon the mission of the Holy See diplomacy was not easier, as it had the very ambitious objective of revitalizing the Christians, who were depressed because of the results of the war and the practices of the consecutive governments. This revitalization had to start through spiritual renewal and awareness, not through political change.

To evaluate the success of such diplomacy, which depends only on the power of moral values and on the charisma of its actors, is a very difficult task. One thing is



sure, the endurance of this diplomacy for fourteen centuries, through all the challenges and wars, is enough proof that it is of the most successful ones ever.

Today and after the many years of fighting and despair, the majority of the Christians have rejected the alien ideas they had accepted in the past. They've realized that leading the concepts promoted by the Holy See for so long, i.e., the dialogue and equality among the Lebanese and the unity and Arab belonging of Lebanon, is their only hope for salvation. After long years of differences, the Christians seem to be united around the above-mentioned major concepts. Yet, bridging the gaps is a long process that has to be completed and a major challenge for the Holy See diplomacy.

The challenges persist with the continuing problems and crises in Lebanon and the surrounding region. The Peace Process and the price that each party will have to pay for it, are probably the greatest of these challenges. Between the assurances of the US administration and the solicitude of the Holy See, Lebanon is trying to benefit as much as possible from the diplomacy of the latter and from other international friends, in order not to pay the price of peace. This, however, may be a good subject for another study.

Meanwhile, the Holy See is still working hard with every means possible to perfect the Lebanese image, the way it sees it. The Apostolic Exhortation or the "New Bible," as some people like to call it, was after all the reflection of the ideas that the Lebanese themselves have come up with in a time of prayer, meditation, recollection and blessings. Indeed, it covered all issues from the Lebanese independence, sovereignty, and freedom, to the internal process of reconciliation and conviviality that should lead to the development of the Lebanese society. The implementation of that Exhortation will most probably be the major focus of the Holy See diplomacy in Lebanon through the coming years.

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”فحوار مع سوريا
- أتشيغاراي اختتم زيارته: آن الأوان ليتطور تضامن الكنيسة – 12 July 85 – Anonymous  
”مع مسيحي لبنان
- ”كازارولي: العالم يحتاج إلى لبنان“ – 30 March 80 – Anonymous

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- ”جنبلات في الكسليك: الأبعاد والدلالات“ – 28 Oct 2000 – Mwaness, Rev. Yousef
- ”اليوم الماروني في الفاتيكان“ – 20 Feb 2000 – Bashir, George – p 4
- ”السيرة التاريخية للدبلوماسية الفاتيكانية“ – 10 Apr 94 – Matta, Joseph

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- مشروع بواني: ٦ وزراء دولة مناصفة، حكومة تسترد – 16 June 90 – Anonymous  
”الطائف من المجلس النيابي
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”الطائف – Daaboul, Fouad
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## List of Extraordinary Papal Envoys

Year	Name	Pope	Receiving Patriarch	Remarks
1130	Card. Goliimus	Innocent II	Gregorius III	Disputes over Papacy
1160	Card. John	Alexander III	John of Lehfed	Stayed till 1179
1199	Card. Peter	Innocent III	Aremia of Amchit	Letter of 1215
1245	Fr Laurencius	Innocent IV	Shamoun II	
1438	Fr John	Eugene IV	John of Jaj	Florence Council
1442	Fr Anthony	Eugene IV	John of Jaj	+ Fr Petro
1450	Fr Greffon	Paul II	Jacob of Hadeth & Peter ben Hassan	Letter of 1469
1476	Fr Alex Ariusti	Sixte IV		
1513	Fr Francis Suriano	Leon X	Shamoun of Hadeth	
1526	Bernardino Arthur	Clement VII	Moses of Akkar	
1566	Fr John Darsiniano	Pie V		Imprisoned before arriving
1577	Fr J.B. Eliano	Gregorius XIII	Michael Razzi	Theological Arguments
1580	Fr J.B. Eliano	Gregorius XIII	Sarkis Razzi	Contact Non-Cath church
1596	Fr Eronim Dandini	Clement VIII	Sarkis Razzi	Apostolic Visits
1712	Laurence Cusa	Clement XI	Jacob Awad	Disputes over Patriarchal elections of Maronite
1720	Ferdindos Carmel			
1729	Dorotheos Capucin	Benedict XIII	Kirillos Tanas	1 <sup>st</sup> Greek Catholic Patriarch
1736	Yousef Semaani	Clement XII	Yousef El-Khazen	Lebanese Maronite Council
1740	Emanuel Carmel	Benedict XIV		Greek Cath. Organization
1742	Jacob De Locca	Benedict XIV	Semaan Awad	Harissa Mar. Council 1743
1747	Fr Desidario	Benedict XIV	Semaan Awad	Maronite Organization
1756	Bishop Arsanios	Benedict XIV	Toubia Khazen	Mar. Patriarchal Elections
1760	Fr Peter Carfiari	Clement XIII	Theodosios Dahan	Greek Catholic disputes
1767	Fr Louis De Bastia	Clement XIII		Maronite order disputes
1770	Fr Dominic	Clement XIII	Maximus Hakim	G.C. Patriarchal Elections
1773	Fr Valeria Dabruto	Clement XIV	Yussef Stephan	Maronite disputes between Patriarch and Bishops + Sister Hindieh's Order
1775	Bishop Carafri			
1785	Bishop Carafri			
1790	Bsh G. Adam	Pie VI	Yussef Stephan	Bekerki Maronite Council

## List of Ordinary Envoys (Residents)

Year	Name	Pope	Remarks
1762-74	Arland Bosso	Clement XIII	1 <sup>st</sup> Resident Envoy – Jesuit Monastery of Aintoura
1800	Germanos Khazen	Pie VII	Only Maronite Envoy
1806	Louis Gendelfi	Pie VII	Close to Emir Bashir
1825	Peter Lozana	Leon XIII	Built the 1 <sup>st</sup> Residence at Zouk Michael
1832	John Baptist Overni	Gregory XVI	
1836	Fr Angelo Fazzio	Gregory XVI	Franciscan Order
1841	Fr Francis Villardel	Gregory XVI	Reconciliation between Maronite Sheiks
1853	Fr Paul Brononi	Pie IX	Bkerki's Council of 1856 Patriarch Boulos Masaad
1858	Bsh Joseph Falerca	Pie IX	Great Help for the afflicted of 1860
1873	Fr Seraphim Milani	Pie IX	Unqualified, removed after one year only
1873	Fr Ludevic Piafi	Pie IX	Moving the residence to Ras Beirut & Harissa Sum
1889	Bsh Godens Ponfili	Leon XIII	
1895	Fr Gonzales Duval	Leon XIII	Proposed the Project of the Statue ND of Harissa
1905	Fr Frediano Gianini	Pie X	Great aid and help during WWI – Statue of Harissa
1934	Fr Remy Liberter	Pie XI	Last Resident Ordinary Envoy

## رسالة رسولية إلى الشهادَة مطارنة الكنيسة الكاثوليكية في العالم.

أيها الإخوة الأعزّاء في الأسقفية ،

ذكّرنا أسرار خلاصنا الكبرى التي احتفلنا بها، في هذه الأيام الأخيرة، بأي ثمن افتدانا المسيح "الذي أسلم من أجل خطايانا، وقام ليبرّنا" (روم ٤، ٢٥). وأنشئت الكنيسة جمعاء "هللوا"، وهي فرحة بمعرفتها أنها تحمل رسالة الحياة والرجاء، التي يعرضها الفصح على البشرية.

ولكنّ وعينا انتصار المسيح على الظلام ، يزيدنا شعوراً بالإهتمام بإخوان لنا عديدين، نعرف أنهم في مواجهة دائمة للشرّ بجميع أشكاله . ولهذا ، إنّ التفكير في المأساة التي يعيشها لبنان ، منذ عشر سنوات ، ليعصر قلبنا عصراً.

إنّ لبنان اليوم ، هو مبعث ألم للعالم وللكنيسة، ذلك أنّ هناك إخواناً في الإنسانية ، يتألّمون فيه ويتطلّعون بقلق إلى المستقبل. ولقد وجّهنا منذ حين ، إلى جميع اللبنانيين ، رسالة أردنا أن نجدد لهم فيها ثقتنا بلبنان ، وبجميع أبنائه التواقين إلى بعث بلد جديد وأمين، في وقت معاً، لتراثه الروحي الثمين.

وهذه الرسالة، بوّدنا أن تصبح رسالة الكنيسة جمعاء. ولهذا، إنّ نوجّهها إليكم أيها الأخوة الأجلّاء، لكي تطلعوا عليها جماعاتكم، وتغذّي صلاتكم، وتحمل على التفكير ، جميع الناس، أصدقاء السلام والحقيقة المتعلقة بمأساة شعب تألّم طويلاً من العنف.

لا يمكننا ، بكوننا مسيحيين، ألا أن نكون بناء سلام، هذا السلام الذي تتغنّى به الطوباويات، والذي هو، في آن، هبة ومهمّة يقوم بها كلّ واحد من الناس.

ولكن هذا التضامن يصبح واجباً ملزماً ، عندما يكون الذين يتألّمون ، أخوة مسيحيين، يجب أن يعرفوا أنّ نشاطهم روحياً مصيرهم، ونعي أنّا ننتمي إلى عائلة واحدة، و أنّا لا ننساهم ، لا بل إنّنا نعتمد عليهم، وعلى وجودهم في لبنان ديموقراطي، منفتح على الآخرين، في حوار مع الثقافات والديانات، هو وحده قابل للحياة ، وبإمكانه أن يؤمّن وجودهم في مناخ من الحرّية والكرامة. وإضافةً إلى ذلك ، إن ازدهار المسيحية في لبنان



هو شرط لوجود الأقليات المسيحية في الشرق الأوسط. وهذا ما يعيه البابا والكنيسة جمعاء. وإنّ كلّ جماعة مسيحية في العالم لترغب، دونما شك، في أن تسهم في المحافظة على الكنائس الشرقية التي كانت مهداً لإيماننا، والتي نحن مدينون لها بالكثير: وبإمكانها أن تعتمد على مساندة الكنيسة الكاثوليكية جمعاء، مساندة أدبية وروحية.

ولهذا السبب ، إننا ندعوكم ، أيها الإخوة الأجلاء ، إلى الصلاة ، وإلى دعوة غيركم إلى الصلاة ، من أجل إخوانكم المسيحيين اللبنانيين ، لتكون لهم الشجاعة ليؤمنوا بالمستقبل، وبالتالي ليلتفوا دائماً، أكثر فأكثر، حول أساقفتهم ، ليحملوا في الكنيسة اسم الله إلى مواطنيهم. إنّ من المهمّ جداً ، في لبنان الذي لا يزال فريسة انقسامات وتنازلات من جميع الأشكال، أن تبدو الجماعات المسيحية خميرة وحدة ومصالحة.

ولنصلّ أيضاً لأجل إخواننا اللبنانيين غير المسيحيين ، الذين كتبوا مع مواطنيهم المحاهرين بالإيمان بالمسيح، تاريخ لبنان، أرض تلاقٍ وحوار. كيف لا يتوصّل أناس يعيشون على الأرض عينها، ويعرفون أنهم أبناء الله عينه ، إلى تجاوز مسلسل العنف والثأر المحزن، ليتطلّعوا معاً إلى مستقبل يجب بناؤه. وآية كارثة للعالم إذا صار هؤلاء وأولئك إلى تنازلات باسم الدين؟ وأما مسيحيو العالم العربي، من جهتهم، فقد شعروا دائماً بأنهم في بيتهم ، في هذه المنطقة التي أسهموا فيها بنشر رسالة ثقافة ورقي أفاد منها الجميع.

لنصلّ أخيراً إلى الرب ، لكي يلهم أصدقاء لبنان في العالم، وبنوع خاص أولئك الذين يضطلعون بمسؤوليات على مستوى القرارات السياسية ، فلا يستسلم أحد منهم للمل، بل ليكونوا بأجمعهم ، مستعدين لمتابعة مساعدتهم لبنان على استعادة وجهه الأصيل. على جميع الذين يحبّون هذا البلد أن يساعدوا اللبنانيين على أن يعيدوا بناءً بجهودهم الخاصة ، ملتفتين حول السلطات الشرعية: ولن يحصل هذا إلاّ إذا كان كلّ واحد مستعداً ، في لبنان وفي الخارج ، أن يضحي بمصالحه الخاصة لكي يتغلّب الخير المشترك.

وإننا نعهد إليكم، أيها الأخوة الأجلاء، بهذه الخواطر، لتكون هذه الرسالة الموجهة إلى اللبنانيين، هي التي توجّهونها إليهم ، أنتم وجميع من وكلت إليكم رعايتهم . وإننا على مثال اخواننا الأول في الإيمان ، الذين كانوا ، بعد القيامة ، "عاكفين على الصلاة... مع مريم أم يسوع" (أعمال ١ ، ١٤)، نشترك في ابتهاج الكنيسة في لبنان، لتعطي النعمة فتنهل

من صليب المسيح، الذي تحمله في جسدها، القوّة لتحيا يوم الله ، ومثالية الأخوة والمصالحة. ونرغب أيضاً في الإعراب مجدداً ، عن تقديرنا للبنانيين غير المسيحيين، ونسأل الله أن ينيهم ليعرفوا أن يقاوموا تجربة الانفصالات ، وما تولد بسهولة من حذر.

وليهب الله كلاً منا ، من الشجاعة والإيمان ، ما يمكنه من التغلب على الظلام. ولا تكون هذه أول مرّة يكون فيها اللبنانيون قد تحدّوا المحنة والريبة.

وإنّا نعهد إلى شفاعة العذراء القديسة ، بهذه الأمانى والصلوات ، ليعود لبنان ، عمّا قريب ، لشعوب المنطقة والعالم ، علامة رجاء منصوبة للجميع. وإنّا بمحبّة خاصة بالرب ، نمنحكم بركتنا الرسولية.

الفاثيكان، أوّل آيار ١٩٨٤

البابا يوحنا بولس الثاني.

١ آيار مايو ١٩٨٤

رسالة قداسة البابا يوحنا بولس الثاني إلى جميع اللبنانيين.

أيها الأبناء والأخوة، أبناء لبنان الأعزاء،

إنّا، بعد أن استمعنا ، في هذه الأيام الأخيرة ، إلى شهادة بطاركة لبنان الكاثوليك وشاطرناهم همومهم ، نشعر بالحاجة إلى أن نظهر، مرّة أخرى ، اقترابنا الروحي من جميع الذين لا يزالون ، في بلادكم العزيزة ، يعانون من ويلات الحرب . وإنّا لنتهزها فرصة لنسترعي انتباه العالم لمصير أمة، لا تزال، منذ عشر سنوات، تواجه ما يجرحه عليها عنف مزمن ، من أوحم العواقب.

وإنّ ما نكنّه، منذ زمن بعيد، من عميق المحبّة، لهذه البلاد وشعبها المنكوبين، يخولنا، فيما نعتقد، أن نوجّه كلمة صداقة إلى جميع اللبنانيين: كاثوليك ومسيحيين، ومسلمين. وإنّا لنعرف أنّها تجد الطريق إلى قلوبهم.



وإننا نفعل ذلك في ضوء الفصح الذي لا يضاهاى، وهو مظهر الحياة، ذلك أنه، إذا كان اللبنانيون يحتاجون، في الظروف الحاضرة، إلى كلمة، فهي في الحقيقة، كلمة قيامة، وكلمة من أجل المستقبل.

سنوات الحرب الطويلة هذه يجب ألا تنال من ثقتكم ببلبان عينه. فهو قيمة حضارية ثمينة: ولنفكر في ما الإنسانية جمعاء مدينة له به منذ عهد الفينيقيين البعيد، من دون أن ننسى تلاقى الأديان، والحوار الثقافي بين شرق وغرب، والمبادرات المسكونية، والحرية، والتفاهم، والضيافة وانفتاح الروح، إن هذه كلها كانت القيم التي نهض عليها لبنان الأمس، وهي في أساس لبنان الغد. وإن مجتمعاً تنعشه مثالية ديموقراطية، متعددة، له تراث ثمين لا يمكن أحداً أن يسلم بأن يراه في طريق الزوال. ولا تستطيع جميع البلدان، صديقة السلام والحرية إلا أن تقدم دعمها للبنان، لتساعده على استعادة وجهه الأصيل، وهذا ما سيكون عمل اللبنانيين وحدهم، وهو عمل يقتضي له صبر وسخاء.

لهذا، لا بد لكل مواطن لبناني، من أن يحافظ على ثقة كاملة بالإنسان. فكروا، أيها اللبنانيون الأعزاء، في ما تمكنتم، في الواقع، من بنائه معاً: إنه مجتمع حوار وازدهار، كان موضوع حسد الجميع. ما من شك في أن عوامل داخلية وخارجية لا يمكن التقليل من أهميتها، جاءت تشوه لبنان. لكنّ الفشل المتتالي وخيبات الأمل، والإقتال، وحتى المجازر لا تستطيع أبداً، أن تطفىء تماماً هذه الشعلة الصغيرة التي هي في قلب كل إنسان، والتي تدعى المحبة، والتي بها يشابه هذا الإنسان، أكثر ما يشابه، الله. إننا نعرف أن موجة العنف الرهيبة التي طغت في هذه السنوات الأخيرة، قد خلقت مناخاً من الشك والإرتياب، يحمل أحياناً على نبد من يفكر مثلنا أو لا يدين بالدين نفسه. ولكننا، في الوقت عينه، لعلنا يقين من أنه لا يزال بالإمكان تخطي هذه الحالة. والقبول بالتلاقي رجلاً، وبالتعاطي إخوة، يشكّل بدء الحل. وهذه مجاهرة برفض التسليم بالفشل. واللبنانيون مؤمنون، ويعرفون أن الخالق وكلّ إليهم الأرض، ليجعلوها قابلة للسكن والاستقبال للجميع، على الرحب والسعة.

"من قلب جديد يولد السلام"، هذا ما قلناه في بدء هذه السنة لمناسبة يوم السلام العالمي. وكيف لا يجب التشديد على أن كلّ لبناني مسؤول، في النهاية، عن مستقبل

بلاده؟ على كل واحد أن يكون مستعداً لإجراء فحص ضمير، أن يسلم بالتخلي عن شيء ما، أن يعيد النظر في شؤونه ، لترفع القيم التي يتقاسمها الجميع: الإستقامة الأدبية، العناية بالحقيقة، معنى الإنسان، التضامن الحق، الدفاع عن الحريات واحترام التقاليد، وكل هذا على صعيد الأشخاص والجماعات، على حدّ سواء. أما الغطرسة ، وحب السيطرة ، والتعصب ، والتخاذل أو الخوف، فتحمل كلُّها عناصر موت ، لا تضعف الروح الوطنية وحسب ، لكنّها قد تقود بلادكم إلى تفتت محتوم . على لبنان سنة ١٩٨٤ أن يرفع تحدّي النهضة المعنوية ، وقيام مجتمع وفيّ لتراثه الحضاري العظيم، بصير بما يواجه من مستقبل.

إن للمسيحيين، في هذه المغامرة المشوّقة، دوراً خاصاً ، عليهم أن يقوموا به . وإننا نرغب في الآن ، أن نتوجّه إليهم ، بصورة خاصة ، وهم ماثلون دائماً منّا ، في قلب الأب وصلاته.

أيها الأبناء الأعزّاء، إنكم، في لبنان اليوم، مسؤولون عن الرجاء، عن هذا الرجاء الذي يتفجّر من قبر الفصح المفتوح، قبر المسيح القائم من بين الأموات. "فيه قتل يسوع العداوة" (أفسس ٢، ١٦): فيا لها من بشرى ، عليكم أن تعلنوها حولكم: إخلقوا، بشار الروح الفصحية هذه التي هي "الإستقامة والحق" (١ كور ٥، ٨)، حيثما تعيشون وتعملون، بيئة أخوية. إعرفوا، دونما سداجة، كيف تثقون بالآخرين ، واستنبطوا الوسائل لتغلبوا قوّة الغفران الخلاقة ، والرحمة . إنا نحبّ أن نقول لكم مع الرسول بولس: "لا تجازوا أحداً شراً بشراً... لا يغلبكم الشرّ، بل اغلبوا الشرّ بالخير" (روم ١٢، ١٧ و٢١). لا تخافوا ولا تستحيوا أبداً عندما يجب أن تدافعوا عن حرياتكم ، وخصوصاً عن حرية القيم الإنجيلية التي تحيونها معاً. فالكنيسة جمعاء إلى جانبكم ، تشارككم في محنكم ، مثلها في تطلّعاتكم ، لأنّها تذكر أن تلامذة المسيح قد تلقوا ، لأول مرّة في منطقتكم ، إسم "مسيحيين" الجميل. وهي فخورة أيضاً ، بجميع تضحيات مسيحي الشرق ، في سبيل المحافظة على إيمانهم سليماً بالمسيح يسوع، الإله الحقّ والإنسان الحقّ. وهي ، لا يمكنها أن تسلم بأن ترى هذا الحضور المكتسب بفضل هذا الإستمرار البطولي، يتضاءل في لبنان وفي غير مكان.



أعطوا ، معاً ، بوصفكم أعضاء كنيسة يهّمها ، بقطع النظر عن التنوّع المشروع ، أن تجمع قواها ، شهادة على جماعة متّحدة ، تسعى إلى تجاوز الخلافات المصطنعة التي خلقتها الحرب.

على الكنيسة في لبنان أن تؤمّن، بصورة نبويّة، هذه الخدمة، خدمة الحوار والمصالحة التي تتبع من قلب المسيح الذي، على ما ذكّرت به الكنيسة طوال الأسبوع المقدّس، جاد بحياته من أجل الكثيرين. وبقيادة رعائكم، ومع كهنتكم الغُير، وبما يستحثكم عليه رهبانكم وراهباتكم من الشهادة، ومع إخوانكم في الكنائس المسيحية الأخرى، شاركوا، دونما تردّد، في كلّ ما يسير في اتجاه الخير. تعاونوا ، أنتم ومواطنوكم، من ذوي الإرادة الصالحة – وهم الأكثرية – لتسجوا مجدداً لحمة الحياة الوطنية، وتمدّوا الأمة اللبنانيّة بما يمكنها من الثبات مستقبلاً ، في وجه الهزّات الداخليّة والضغط الخارجيّة.

إن الأجيال الطالعة ستدينكم على مدى مقدرتكم ، في التغلّب على التوتّرات الحاضرة ، وعلى خوف الغد: "إن المستقبل هو في أيدي الذين يكونون قد عرفوا أن يعطوا الأجيال الطالعة ، أسباب الحياة والأمل . أما نحن فنعني بذلك المسيح ، فادي الإنسان.

وإنّا نكل هذه التطلّعات وهذه الأمانى ، إلى العذراء القديسة ، التي تدعوها باسم سيّدة لبنان، والتي تفتح ذراعيها من على قمّة حريصا، وتطلّ على لبنان ببسّمها وحنانها ، حتى لكأنّها تذكر بأنّ المحبّة وحدها تأتي العظام.

إلى جميع اللبنانيين، ولا سيما إلى الذين يكون أعزّاء عندهم، إلى المرضى وجرحى الحرب، إلى الشبّان القلقين على مستقبلهم، إلى جميع الذين يتطلّعون إلى لبنان حرّاً مشعّاً، إلى المسيحيين الذين احتفلوا مؤخّراً بسرّ قيامة الرب، إنّا نبعث من صميم القلب بركتنا الأبويّة الخالصة، عربوناً لتعزيزات الله التي تدعونا إلى الحياة.

الفاثيكان، أول أيار ١٩٨٤

البابا يوحنا بولس الثاني.

فإليكم جميعاً ، يا أيها الشبان والشابات والكبار ، بركتي الرسولية .

٧ أيلول سبتمبر ١٩٨٩

رسالة قداسة البابا الرسولية الى جميع أساقفة الكنيسة الكاثوليكية في شأن الوضع في لبنان.

١- مرّة جديدة ، وبالثقة نفسها ، ولكن بمزيد من الأسي ، أناشد مؤازرتكم الأخوية ، أخوة لنا في لبنان ، ما يزالون ضحية عنف شرس لا مبرر له.

أمام المآسي المتكررة ، التي يقاسيها سكان هذه الأرض ، ندرك الخطر الشديد الذي يهدد وجود هذا البلد بالذات: لا يمكن أن يترك لبنان في عزلة.

٢- منذ بدء ولايتي الحبرية ، وعلى غرار البابا بولس السادس ويوحنا بولس الأول ، منذ عام ١٩٧٥ ، لم نأل جهداً ، لإيقاظ الرأي العام على قيمة لبنان الفريدة ، وتراثه الإنساني والروحي ، ولمؤاساة سكانه الرازحين تحت شتى أنواع العنف ، وتشجيعهم ، وللتفاوض في حلّ ملائم ، يزيل الخلافات بين المتنازعين ، مستعطفين الرب نعمة السلام الدائم المبني بكل صبر وأناة.

٣- أردت ، في هذه الأشهر الأخيرة ، وقد تأثرت في الصميم ، من تدهور الوضع وتفاقم الإقتتال الدامي ، أن أتبه من خلال نداءاتي المتكررة ، إلى الواجب الملقى على عاتقنا ، في ألا ننسى لبنان ، وألا نألف المصائب القاسية التي ترهقه منذ زمن طويل.

إلى ذلك ، لم أتردد في طرق كل باب ، لوضع حدّ لما سمّي بإبادة شعب بكامله. ويجدر بالكنيسة جمعاء ، أن تكون على معرفة بالجهود المبذولة ، لإنقاذ بلد يسير في طريق الزوال.

وهكذا وجّهت في الخامس عشر من شهر أيار ، نداء إلى العديد من رؤساء الدول والمسؤولين في المؤسسات العالمية. وقد رأيت من الضروري ، أن أذكّر ببعض المبادئ الخلقية ، حيال بلد شريك كامل الشرعية ، وعضو مؤسس لمنظمة الأمم المتحدة ، ولجامعة الدول العربية . رافقت هذه المبادرة ، اتصالات جانبية متعدّدة ، بين الكرسي الرسولي



وحكومات الدول التي تُظهر صداقتها للبنان، أو تقييم معه علاقات تاريخية ثابتة ؛ فيما لا يزال بعض تبادل وجهات النظر جارياً.

٤- لا يعود ، من دون شك ، الى البابا ، أن يقدم حلولاً تقنيّة ؛ ولكن ، حرصاً منّي على الخير الروحي والمادي لكل إنسان ، من دون أية تفرقة بين إنسان وآخر، رأيت أن من واجبي الملزم ، أن أشدد على بعض الواجبات التي تقع على عاتق المسؤولين في الأمم. فإن تجاهل هذه الواجبات، يقود حتماً الى زعزعة نظام العلاقات الدولية ، والى دفع الإنسان ، مرة أخرى ، الى التسلط على أخيه الإنسان . ولأنه لا يجوز ازدياء الحقوق والواجبات والآلية ، التي أعدها منظّمو الحياة الدولية وألزموا أنفسهم بها ، من دون أن تتعكّر العلاقات بين الشعوب ، ويتهدّد السلام ، ويصبح الإنسان رهينة لمطامع الأقوياء ومصالحهم ؛ لذا أردت أن أكرر - وأعيد اليوم على مسامع الكنيسة جمعاء - ان حق البشر ، والأنظمة التي ترعى هذا الحق ، تشكّل مرجعاً لا بديل منه ، لحماية كرامة الشعوب والأشخاص على السواء.

٥- ولكنّي ، بصفتي راعي الكنيسة الجامعة ، تكلمت لمصلحة المسيحيين ، وبنوع خاص ، بالتأكيد، لمصلحة الكاثوليك الذين يعيشون ويشهدون لإيمانهم في لبنان ، جنباً الى جنب مع إخوتهم المسلمين.

يا أيها الأخوة بالأسقفية ، لا يمكن أن ننسى روابط الإتحاد الروحي ، التي تشدنا الى هؤلاء الأخوة ، الذين غالباً ما أثبتوا مسيحيّتهم في التاريخ البعيد والتاريخ القريب ، بفضل ما بذلوه من تضحيات بطولية . فعلى الكنيسة أن تعبئ طاقاتها لمساندتهم ، فيما هم اليوم تحت وطأة سلاح العنف والكلمة.

بالكلمة أولاً: أمام إعلام منحاز ، وسطحي أحياناً ، علينا أن نبين التقاليد الغنيّة والعريقة في تعاون المسيحيين والمسلمين ، في هذا البلد . تلك هي إحدى ملامح المجتمع اللبناني المميّزة ، التي جعلت منه ، الى زمن غير بعيد ، نموذجاً في التعايش . إن التعارف المتبادل ، وممارسة الحوار المشترك في خدمة الإنسان، لهي شروط لا بدّ منها ، للحرية والسلام واحترام كرامة الشخص البشري . لقد أصبح القبول بهذه التعددية وممارستها ،

قيمة أساسية في مسار تاريخ لبنان الطويل. إذا زال هذا البلد ، فإن قضية الحرية بالذات ، هي التي ستصاب بالفشل المفجع.

ثم بالصلاة: لا سلاح ، لنا نحن المؤمنين ، سوى سلاح التضرع ، الذي نرفعه من أعماق بؤسنا نحو ذلك الذي "دعانا من الظلمات الى نوره العجيب" (رسالة بطرس الأولى ٢، ٩). فلا يسعنا، في هذه الأوقات المفجعة التي يهدد فيها العنف غير المبرر ، جزءاً من العائلة الإنسانية والمسيحية ، ويفتك بها ، إلا ان نرفع إلى الله ، أبي جميع البشر ، أصوات الخوف واليأس ، الصادرة عن أخوة لنا ، غالباً ما شعروا أننا تخلينا عنهم ، في وقت كان فيه وطنهم يُعرض للزوال.

٦- لذلك أودّ أن أدعوكم ، أيها الأخوة الأعزّاء ، وأدعو بواسطتكم ، كل أبناء الكنيسة الكاثوليكية ، الى يوم صلاة شاملة ، من أجل لبنان. عيّن هذا اليوم ، في إيطاليا ، في الرابع من تشرين الأول المقبل ، عيد القديس فرنسيس الأسيزي ، الذي ما زال يدعو كل الناس الى أن يكونوا "أداة سلام" كي "نضع الحب حيث البغض". ويعود الى كل كنيسة محلية ، أن تختار اليوم المناسب لإقامة الصلاة المشتركة ، علماً أن لبنان يحتفل بعيدة الوطني ، في الثاني والعشرين من تشرين الثاني.

وهكذا ، فالكنيسة ، كل الكنيسة المصلية ، وجميع الذين يرغبون في الإنضمام الى مبادرتنا، تستعطف من الآب السماوي ، السلام والخلاص للبنان . وإني لا أزال أعهد الى الله ، أمر الزيارة الراحوية التي أنوي بعزم ، القيام بها الى هذا البلد ، على نحو ما سبق وأعلنته في الخامس عشر من آب الماضي.

وإذ تقوم الكنيسة بهذه المبادرة الروحية، تريد أن تُظهر للعالم ، أن لبنان هو أكثر من بلد. إنه رسالة حرية ونموذج في التعددية ، للشرق كما للغرب.

٧- أريد أن أظهر، لأبناء الكنيسة الكاثوليكية ، المدعوين الى أن يعيشوا إيمانهم وأن يشهدوا له، في بلد تعبت به المحن القاسية ، مشاركة جميع اخوتهم في الصلاة . فإننا لا نطالب لهم ومعهم ، بأي امتياز ، إنما نطالب باستمرار ضمان حقهم ، لا بالإيمان فحسب ، وفقاً لصوت ضميرهم ، بل أيضاً بممارسة إيمانهم، وبالبقاء مخلصين لتقاليدهم الثقافية ، على قدم



المساواة مع اخوتهم المسلمين ، من دون خوف من العزل أو التمييز العنصري ، في البلد الواحد.

حبذا لو يشترك معي جميع الكاثوليك في الصلاة ، كي يلهم الله مختلف الأفرقاء ، في هذا النزاع ، مشاعر السلام الصادقة.

أيها الأخوة الأعزاء ، في الأسقفية ، إني أعهد الى عنايتكم الراحوية ، بأمر إعداد هذا اليوم العظيم وتنظيمه ، للصلاة من أجل لبنان . وهكذا ، لا تكون الكنيسة صامتة: بل يلجأ البابا والمؤمنون الى الصلاة والكلمة والعمل ، من أجل أن لا تُقطع جذور الحياة الاجتماعية، وتعاون مختلف الفئات في لبنان.

إن زوال لبنان هو ، من دون شك ، أكبر تبيكيت لضمير العالم ، وإن حمايته هي من أكثر الواجبات إلحاحاً وشرفاً . لذا ، يتعين على العالم اليوم ، أن يأخذها على عاتقه.

٨- وإننا نستودع سيّدة لبنان في حريصا ، قلقنا وآمالنا ، مرة أخرى ، طالبين إليها أن تساعد المحزونين ، وتشجّع جميع الساعين الى السلام ، وتتوسّل إلى ابنها ، لكي تتوفر الحلول العادلة والمنصفة، لجميع قضايا شعوب أخرى في الشرق الأوسط ، تفتش بدورها ، عن حياة آمنة توافق طموحاتها.

وإذ نحن على موعد معكم ، أيها الأخوة بالأسقفية ، ومع المؤمنين الذين هم في عهدتكم الراحوية ، للصلاة المشتركة من أجل لبنان وجميع أبنائه ، أضرع الى "الذي يعزينا في جميع شدائدنا، لنستطيع ، بما تلقينا نحن من عزاء من الله ، أن نعزي سوانا في آية شدة كانت"

( ٢ كورنثس ١ ، ٣ - ٤ ) .

مع بروكتي الرسولية.

عن الفاتيكان في ٧ أيلول ١٩٨٩ .

يوحنا بولس الثاني.

نداء البابا يوحنا بولس الثاني الى جميع المسلمين في شأن لبنان.

- ١- إن المأساة التي يعيشها لبنان ، تدفعني الى أن أتوجّه اليكم ، مخاطباً إياكم بثقة ، لا باسم فريق خاص ، ولا باسم عائلة روحية خاصة ، بل باسم الإله الواحد الذي إياه نعبد ، وفي خدمته نسعى جاهدين.
- ٢- تعرفون النداءات المتكررة التي وجهتها الى أبناء الكنيسة الكاثوليكية والمسؤولين في العالم ، وإلى جميع أصحاب الإرادات الحسنة ، وكلّها تهدف الى الإسهام في إنقاذ لبنان ، بعد أكثر من أربعة عشر عاماً من النزاعات الدامية على أرضه ، وهو البلد الذي شاءه أهله حراً مستقلاً ، وفيّاً لغنى تراثه الثقافي والروحي.
- ٣- إن العالم بأسره ، يشهد بأمّ العين أرضاً خربة ، وكأنّها لا يُحسب فيها للحياة البشرية حساب . فالضحايا تسقط من اللبنانيين ، مسلمين ومسيحيين ، فيما تتراكم ، يوماً بعد يوم ، آثار الدمار فوق التراب اللبناني . فيا أيها المؤمنون ، يا أبناء الله الرحمن الرحيم ، الخالق والهادي والديان ، ما بالنا نقف لا مباليين ، حيال شعب برّمته يقاسي الموت تحت أبصارنا؟
- ٤- سبق لي أن أشرت ، في رسالتي التي وجهتها الى رؤساء مختلف الدول ، والمسؤولين في المنظمات الدولية ، في ١٥ أيار /مايو/ الماضي ، الى أنه ، على صعيد الحياة الدولية ، كما على صعيد الحياة الخاصة ، ينطبق المبدأ الخُلقيّ القائل: واجب القوي أن يهبّ الى مساعدة الضعيف . وهذا أمر بالمعروف ، لا يجوز للمؤمنين أن يتهرّبوا منه . وقلت في ١٩ آب أغسطس ١٩٨٥ للشبان المسلمين الذين وفدوا لاستقبالي في الدار البيضاء: "إن الله يأمر كل إنسان ، أن يحترم كل مخلوق بشري ، وأن يحبّه محبّته لصديقه ورفيقه وشقيقه ، وإن الله يدعو الى مساعدة هذا المخلوق، عندما يُعرّض لمخاطر الإصابة والتخلّي والجوع والعطش ، وبوجيز العبارة ، عندما يهيم على وجهه في دروب الحياة".<sup>١</sup>

<sup>١</sup>م٧-جلة أعمال الكرسي الرسولي، مجلد ٧٨، سنة ١٩٨٦ ص ٩٧.



٥- لذلك ، شئت اليوم أن أتوجه اليكم ، أنتم ، يا أبناء الإسلام ، يا أيها المؤمنون بدين يعلم، بكلام بليغ ، معاني العدل والسلام . أسمعوا أصواتكم، وابدلوا ما في وسعكم من جهود ، تضمونها الى جهود من يطالبون للبنان بحقه بالحياة ، والعيش الحر، والسلام ، والكرامة . إنه لواجب التضامن البشري ، الذي يمليه على كل فرد منكم ، وجدانه الإنساني وامتأؤه الى عائلة المؤمنين الكبرى.

٦- تدركون جيداً ، كم أعيش في بالي ، تلك اللحظة السعيدة ، التي سيتاح لي فيها زيارة لبنان، والتقاء جميع أبنائه . إنني متشوق ، بالفعل ، إلى الذهاب الى هناك ، لأعرب عن تكريمي لتلك الأرض التي ارتوت بدماء العديد من الضحايا البريئة ، ولأكرر ثقتي باللبنانيين، وبقدرتهم على العيش معاً ، وإعادة بناء لبنان على أجمل مما كان عليه.

٧- ولكن ، لتحقيق هذه الغاية ، لا بدّ من الآن فصاعداً ، من أن يتحد جميع أجباء لبنان ، وجيرانه ، وَمَنْ تَجَمَّعَهُمْ به روابط الإيمان والأخوة ، من أجل العمل على إسكات أصوات المدافع، والحؤول دون إدخالها الى البلاد ، ومن أجل أن تحلّ حيوية الحوار والتفاوض ، محل منطق التنازع والافتتال ، ومن أجل أن يُتاح للبنانيين ، وهم متحررون من كل احتلال، أن يصوغوا معاً ، مشروعاً وطنياً مبنياً على الحق ، والإقرار بالخصائص المشروعة التي تتسم بها فئات المجتمع اللبناني.

٨- من دون ذلك ، يبقى المأزق الحالي قائماً ، وهو ما لن يؤدّي إلاّ إلى تعطيل الحوار ، وتعميق الانقسامات ، وانهيار لبنان ، إجتماعياً وإقتصادياً ، وبالتالي ، سيكون الكل مغلوباً ، والحل متعذراً ، والمطالبة بالمكتسبات باطلة.

٩- يا أبناء الإسلام الأعزاء ، لا أخالكم تضنون بأدعتكم وأعمالكم ، في سبيل التحرك التضامني، الداعي الى إنقاذ لبنان. واعلموا أنّ بإمكانكم دائماً ، أن تعتمدوا على معاونة المسيحيين . فالحوار الإسلامي - المسيحي ، القائم في أكثر من بلد ، أتاح مزيداً من التفاهم المتبادل ، بل فسّح في المجال ، أحياناً ، لقيام العديد من الإنجازات المشتركة . هكذا كان لبنان على مدى أعوام كثيرة .

١٠- إئذنوا لي هنا ، أن أستشهد بأية من الرسول بولس ، يقول فيها : "لينصرف المؤمنون بالله الى القيام بالأعمال الصالحة" (الرسالة الى تيطس ٣ ، ٨).

عسى أن يَجِدَنَا الله ، نحن المسلمين والمسيحيين ، جنباً الى جنب ، في موازرة  
أشقائنا اللبنانيين، المصائب في قلوبهم وفي أجسادهم . وليبارك الله جهود جميع الذين  
عرفوا كيف يكونون ، في خضمّ العنف والضيق ، عباداً حقيقيين لله ، بالروح والحق له  
يسجدون.

لفاتيكان ٧ أيلول / سبتمبر ١٩٨٩  
يوحنا بولس الثاني.

١ تشرين الاول أكتوبر ١٩٨٩

قبل تلاوة صلاة التبشير الملائكي

"لنسال الرب عطية السلام من اجل لبنان والعالم كله"

" تطلعاً الى هذا السلام ، سأحتفل صباح الاربعاء المقبل ، في ساحة القديس بطرس  
بalfاتيكان ، "بليتورجية الكلمة" فأرفع الى الله ، صلاة حارة من أجل لبنان ، الذي  
قادته سنوات الحرب الطويلة الى شفير الدمار الكامل .  
إنني على ثقة بأن كثيرين سيشاركون في لقاء الصلاة هذا ، الذي أمل أن تعقبه  
بادرات مماثلة، في مختلف الكنائس المحلية. ولنطلب الآن ، عطية السلام للبنان والعالم  
أجمع .

ولنكل صلاتنا هذه ، الى العذراء الكلية القداسة ، سلطانة السلام ، ولا ننس أن  
نزرع اليها كل يوم ، عبر تلاوتنا صلاة السبحة الوردية .  
وليكن عون مريم السماوي ، درعاً لنا في خدمة السلام."