



## *Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon of Los Angeles* Office of the Bishop

May 12, 2019

Dear Monsignor/Father, Deacon, Brother and Sister,

As you know, His Beatitude and Eminence, Mar Nasrallah Peter Sfeir entered into eternal life yesterday, May 11, 2019. He died in hospital.

Patriarch-Emeritus Sfeir was born May 15, 1920 in Rayfoun, Lebanon. He was elected Patriarch of Antioch for the Maronites April 27, 1986, and his resignation was accepted on February 26, 2011. He was created a Cardinal on November 26, 1994 by Pope St. John Paul II and he was the 76th Patriarch of the Maronite Church with the official title of "His Beatitude and Eminence Maronite Patriarch of Antioch and the Whole East".

Patriarch Sfeir was educated in Lebanon, first at Mar Abda School in Harharaya where he completed his primary studies, and Ghazir where he completed his secondary studies at St. Maron seminary. He earned a degree in literature and also graduated in philosophy and theology in 1950 at Saint Joseph's University in Beirut; he also was awarded a degree in Literature. He was ordained to the priesthood in the same year on May 7. Thus, he was a priest for 69 years. From 1951 to 1955 he served as priest to the parish of Rayfoun. In 1956, he was appointed the secretary of the Maronite Patriarchate in Bkerké. In the same year, he became the professor of translation in literature and philosophy at the Marist Brothers School in Jounieh. On June 23, 1961 Sfeir was appointed Titular bishop and Patriarchal vicar. On July 16, 1961, he was consecrated the titular bishop of Tarsus by Patriarch Paul Peter Meouchi. He then served as Patriarchal vicar under Patriarchs Meouchi and Khoreiche until his election as Patriarch in 1986.

Patriarch-Emeritus Sfeir presided over the Maronite Patriarch Synod from 2003 to 2006 and oversaw the revision and publication of the Maronite Divine Liturgy and many liturgical rituals. A number of new Maronite Eparchies were created during his time as Patriarch, including the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon of Los Angeles. Patriarch-Emeritus Sfeir ordained over 40 bishops and ordained and enthroned Bishop Robert Shaheen as Bishop of our Eparchy in 2001 in the United States. He made a number of pastoral visits to the United States and attended Conventions of the National Association of Maronites. As bishop and as Patriarch he met many religious and civil leaders in the world. As a Cardinal he served on the boards of various Vatican

Congregations and Councils as well as attended many different Synods of Bishops in Rome. A number of Maronite saints were beatified and canonized during his time. He also authored several books.

Patriarch-Emeritus Sfeir was a staunch and out-spoken defender of the freedom and sovereignty of Lebanon and rights of Christians to live in peace and harmony in their homeland. With his passing, our Maronite Church loses a cherished icon. He was a true father and shepherd who capably led. By word and deed, our Church during very difficult and critical times. History will definitely mark his name as one of the great Maronite Patriarchs.

I have known Patriarch Sfeir to be a man of principles, a true leader who did not search for popularity, instead he always sought to do what was right and proper. He was also a faithful son and true servant of the Church and her people. He knew how to serve as a vicar respecting his superiors, and how to lead as a patriarch. He carried his crosses patiently and accepted praise gracefully and with gratitude.

At this time we would like to extend our sincere condolences to our beloved Patriarch, His Beatitude and Eminence, Bechara Peter Cardinal Rai, to the Maronite Synod of Bishops and to his family.

I ask that all parishes and institutions of the Eparchy include prayers for the repose of the soul of Patriarch-Emeritus Sfeir at each Divine Liturgy for a period of 7 days. May the Risen Lord reward his faithfulness and endeavors, and may He grant to him eternal rest among all the Righteous and Jus in Heaven.

Sincerely yours in Christ,



+A. Elias Zaidan

Bishop of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon of Los Angeles