



EPARCHY  
OF ST. MARON  
CANADA

*Seventeenth letter of His Excellency  
Bishop Paul-Marwan Tabet  
To the Maronite Community of Canada  
Christmas 2021*

*To all Monsignors, Priests and Brothers, Nuns and Sisters, Deacons,  
To all people consecrated and committed to the life of the Church and the Society,  
To all Parents, Children, Young Men and Young Women,  
To all Parish Communities,  
Dear Brothers and Sisters,*

The advent of Christmas this year is marked by the launch of the Synod of Catholic Bishops around the world in a synodal journey initiated by His Holiness Pope Francis in October of this year and continuing until October 2023. It is a time when the whole Church is committed to **“walking together”** towards a new birth by listening to the Holy Spirit. It resembles, in this context, the process of preparing for the Nativity of Jesus in our lives, if we contemplate the Gospels that prepare us for that. We read about this journey in the Annunciation to Zechariah, to whom the angel said: *“Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard”* (Luke 1:13) and in the Annunciation to Mary: *“Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord, so be it unto me according to your word”* and *“Mary rose up and went quickly to the mountain, to the city of Judah[...].”* (Luke 1:38-39). We can also read about it in the announcement to Joseph: *“O Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife”* (Matthew 1:20) and *“Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt”* (Matthew 2:13), in the shepherds’ statement: *“Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place”* (Luke 2:15), and the Magi’s question: *“Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.”* (Matthew 2:2). This is the story of a walk and a journey, the story of communion, participation and mission.

It is the journey of the Lord's people, which bears witness that every divine action corresponds to a human movement and reaction. This describes the reality that applies to the circumstances of each one of us, in one way or another, according to his calling. We are all called to get up and walk.

At the present time, our Church has issued an invitation whose theme is: ***“For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation and Mission”***: Three pillars through which the Synod expresses the nature, form and mission of the Church. We contemplate it through the dynamism of mutual listening, that includes all church groups, spiritual and lay leaders. It also addresses any person who has either new propositions and ideas, or objections and observations. It is about listening to the Holy Spirit, the voice of God and His presence in every believer, as mentioned in the Book of Revelation: *“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches”* (Revelation 2:7).

The word “Synod” contains all the elements needed to understand the sentence: “to walk together”. It perfectly translates the story of God's journey with his people from the "beginning" until the birth, the cross and the resurrection. **“God's Word” accompanies us in our walk.** Every person is a pioneer in a certain way; every person is the disciple of the Holy Spirit through whom we discover the geography of the divine salvation, we open doors and windows, we break down walls, we break chains, and we

liberate borders. Therefore, it became necessary to change our course and overcome our beliefs that prevent us from taking action. Thus, with good perception and with the reality of life and the presence of the Spirit, we move forward as a Church, and walk together towards carrying out God's plan in our life and the life of the faithful community to which we belong. This is the meaning of Synodality.

This Synod is an opportunity for us to **become a listening Church**, to listen to our brothers and sisters' aspirations and crisis of faith in today's world, as well as the urgent need to renew the pastoral life. It is an opportunity to become a Church that is closer to its children, not only in words, but also by demonstrating a clear presence and a greater friendship with society and the world: a Church that does not separate itself from life, but takes upon itself the weakness and poverty of our time, heals wounds and broken hearts with the balm of God.

*"We are not creating another Church, but we are creating a different Church"*, said Father Congar, a Dominican theologian. For the sake of a "different Church", that is open to the newness to whom God proposes through us, let us call upon the Holy Spirit with strength and perseverance; let Him work in us with "indescribable" groans; and let us walk together with courage, according to His wishes, so that we can be born again and repeat with Saint Ephrem the Syriac: *"We came to see Your divinity, and we witnessed Your humanity. We came to see Your humanity, for Your divinity is glowing"* (Christmas hymns, 13:9).

**The Savior is born... Halleluiah!**  
**MERRY CHRISTMAS!**

**+Paul-Marwan TABET**  
**Bishop**