



EPARCHY
OF ST. MARON
CANADA

*Twentieth Letter of His Excellency
Bishop Paul-Marwan Tabet
To the Maronite Community of Canada
Easter 2023*

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

“The light is among you...Walk while you have the Light!” (John 12:35)

I greet you today with the joy of the Resurrection, with the joy of the risen Christ, who refreshes our hearts and strengthens our determination to continue our journey in and towards the light. The Resurrection of Christ opens the horizon before us to the Resurrection with **God**, with **ourselves** and with our **fellow human beings**. In hope of the Resurrection, I invoke the Lord Jesus, who endured pain and death, to rise on the third day, so that He may pour His blessings upon us and upon the whole world, so we remain a flame of faith, and enjoy a life of abundant spiritual fruits, and the light of the Resurrection, amidst the darkness of our world, a distinguishing mark of the civilization of love, unity, joy and peace.

The Creator revealed the first pages of the Genesis by separating light from darkness (Gen 1:3-4), and at the end of the history of salvation, He will be that same light of the new creation (Rev 21:5 and 23). Therefore, everything that is light emanates from Him; and from beginning to end, the fate of humankind depends on his/her experience and choice. The connection is close between light and life, as birth is a spiritual and human “beholding of the light”, and the Resurrection is but the end of the journey towards this light.

1. The believer walks towards the light

In the New Testament, the light promised to the prophets was realized in Jesus Christ. Through His incarnation, mission and resurrection, He “reveals himself” that He is “*the true light who gives light to every man was coming into the world*” (John 1:9). And He is “*the first to rise from the dead, He would proclaim light to our people and to the Gentiles*” (Acts 26:23). God has called us to his “*marvelous light*” (1Pet 2:9). Indeed, we experience this grace through the Sacraments: through **Baptism**, when “*Christ shone for us*” (Eph 4:14); through the **Confirmation** that imparts the “*special power of the Holy Spirit*” that Jesus promised to His disciples and fulfilled at Pentecost, “*...tongues of fire appeared, which parted and came to rest on each one of them...they began to speak in tongues*” (Acts 2:1-13); through the **Sacrament of Reconciliation**, sign of God’s infinite love, where forgiveness is possible: “*whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained*” (John 20:21-23); through the sacrament of the **Eucharist** (Communion), which is the Paschal banquet, sign of unity and bond of love, in which we receive Christ and are given a pledge of eternal life “*...do this in remembrance of Me*” (1Cor 11:24); through **Priesthood**, which makes the priest in the image of Christ, with a special grace from the

Holy Spirit, to be his tool in the service of the word, the sacraments, and pastoral care: “and to some, His gift was that they should be *apostles, to some prophets, to some evangelists, to some pastors and teachers...*” (Eph 4:11-13); through **Marriage**, since God, who created mankind out of love, called them to love: “*Therefore, they are no longer two, but one*” (Matt 19:6) and blessed them both, saying, “*Be fruitful and multiply*” (Gen 1:28); and at the end of this life, through the **Anointing of the sick**, where the presence of the Lord by our side in times of adversity, illness or old age is fundamental: “*Is anyone among you sick? Let them call the elders of the church to pray over them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord*” (James 5:14-15).

God puts before us, in the course of our life, a clear plan, that is “*to walk as children of light*” (Eph5:8), in which the Holy Sacraments are the focal point through which the Church accompanies us and we accompany Her through our faith and commitment.

2. The believer walks in the light

To love is a sign that we are walking in the light: “*Beloved, anyone who loves their brother and sister lives in the light, and there is nothing in them to make them stumble. But anyone who hates a brother and sister is still in darkness. He who loves his brother lives in the light*” (1 John 2:10-11). We have received love from the Lord. It motivates us to walk in the light, practice justice, its precepts, and love our neighbor: “*I am the light of the world, he who follows me does not walk in darkness*” (John 8:12-20). Thus, walking in the light leads us to align our lives to the word of God.

A proper example the Bible presents to us about walking in the light is the “eye”. It represents the “lamp of the body”. Hence, the wonderful verse: “*The lamp of the body is the eye. Therefore, when your eye is healthy, your body also is full of light. But when your eye is sick, your body also is in darkness*” (Lk 11:34). This verse reminds us that our eyes are the source of all physical light, and our conscience is the source of all spiritual light. We reflect in our lives this balance between the lights of the body and of the soul. It is the result of the Resurrection!

Likewise, our point of view determines our attitude towards truth and light. With the risen Lord, we wear His face through our personal attitudes and overcome any darkness that may interfere with our lives or impede our path in this light that His presence reflects in us. It takes us, in the environment we live in, on a continuous pilgrimage towards the light, with love, joy, kindness, perseverance and fruits of the spirit that grow in the light.

Beloved,

Wherever the believers go, they must be a sign of hope for the Resurrection. From this perspective, we are called every day to bring a new light to the world, the light of our eyes, our smile, and the good that we can offer. In order to come into the light, we have to fight the darkness that confronts us and that requires us to make courageous choices in life and motivate our good habits. The Risen Jesus is close to us and desires to enlighten our hearts to bring us into the light, as he said to His disciples: “*You are the light of the world*” (Mt 5:14). “*Arise then, you who sleep, and Christ gives you light*” (Eph 5:14). Let us clothe ourselves with light and love, and put on the grace of sonhood, for “*the weapons of our warfare are not human, but have divine power to destroy strongholds*” (2 Cor 10:4). Let us walk in the company of the Risen King of Glory and the procession of the sons of light.

Christ is Risen...! He is truly Risen!

+ Paul-Marwan TABET
Bishop

