

Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East

The Ministry of Social Charity

Fifth Encyclical Letter

By

Cardinal Mar Bechara Boutros Rai
Patriarch of Antioch and All the East

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To

The Bishops, Priests, Deacons, Monks and Nuns,

And

All the Faithful, Sons and Daughters of our Maronite Church

In the Patriarchal Domain and the Countries of Expansion

On the Sixth Anniversary of His Election

The Feast of the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary

March 25, 2017

Mar Bechara Boutros Rai
Through the Grace of God
Patriarch of Antioch and All the East
And Cardinal of the Universal Church

To our Brothers, their Excellencies, the Most Reverend Bishops,

Superiors General

**The Sons and Daughters of our Maronite Church, the Priests, Deacons,
Monks and Nuns,**

**And All the Faithful in the Patriarchal Domain and the Countries of
Expansion.**

Peace and Apostolic Blessing

Introduction

1. **The ministry of social charity** reflects the nature of God. For He is “**love**” and rich “**in mercy**”¹. This nature is the foremost attribute that takes precedence over administrative roles and responsibilities which look upon the ministry of social charity as a social sustenance. Hence, it becomes a spiritual energy and a fountain of altruism that never runs dry. This is what Saint Paul the Apostle wrote in his first letter to the Corinthians: “If I speak in human and angelic tongues but do not have love, I am a resounding gong or a clashing cymbal. If I give away everything I own, and if I hand my body over so that I may boast but do not have love, I am nothing” (1 Cor. 13: 1-3).

¹John. 4:16 ; Ephesians 2:4

The Ministry of Charity reflects the essence of the Church's existence and its spiritual, pastoral and social mission. I selected the Ministry of Charity as the subject of my Fifth Encyclical Letter, inspired from the Apostolic Exhortation "**Joy of the Gospel**" by his Holiness Pope Francis issued on November 24, 2013, and after the General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on the theme: "The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith", and from the Papal Bull "**Misericordiae Vultus**, Jesus Christ if the face of the Father's Mercy" that Pope Francis decreed in opening the Jubilee Year of Mercy on December 8, 2015. Inspiration was also gained from the encyclical of Pope Benedict XVI "**God is love**" on the tenth anniversary of its release.

2. In the first chapter, we examine the theological connection between Evangelization, the Holy Year of Mercy and the Ministry of Social Charity; in the second chapter we review the roles of the patriarchate, the parishes and the religious orders in the social field as well as its dimensions; in the third chapter we present the future plans for the Maronite Church's Ministry of Charity to be implemented in our parishes, religious orders and the Maronite institutions in Lebanon, the Patriarchal Domain and in the Countries of Expansion.

Chapter One

Ministry of Charity, Mercy of God and Evangelization

This chapter discusses the Catechism of the Church and its role vis-à-vis the conflicts and challenges.

First: Catechism of the Church

3. The Encyclical “**God is love**” states that love is part of the Church’s nature and an indispensable expression of its very being² for the Church is a community of love. The encyclical affirms that the ministry of charity (diakonia) is inseparable from the dual duties of proclaiming the word of God (kerygma) and celebrating the sacraments (liturgia). The nature of the Church and its mission cannot be achieved without these two united and integrated duties that form her foundation.

Therefore, **Evangelization** is an act of love driven by the love of the Word of God and the community. The **Sacraments** that we celebrate fidelity to the word of God are all symbols of Jesus’ loving presence. But the **Ministry of Charity** will be comprehensively established and purified by the Divine Word and the grace of the sacraments.

² God is Love, 25

4. **In the Bull of Induction** proclaiming the opening of the Jubilee Year of Mercy, referencing **“the Face of Mercy”**, Pope Francis chose the theme for the Holy Year, **“be Merciful like the Father”** to invite us to open our hearts to those who live in uncertain and painful situations, and the wounded in the flesh, and to those who have no voice because their cry is muffled and drowned out by the indifference of the rich. The Church –members, shepherds and institutions– is called even more to heal these wounds, to assuage them with the oil of consolation, to bind them with mercy and cure them with solidarity and vigilant care. These painful situations cannot be treated with humiliating indifference, or by the monotonous routine that dulls the soul or the destructive cynicism. Let us open our eyes and see the misery of the world, the wounds of our brothers and sisters who are denied their dignity, and let us recognize that we are compelled to heed their cry for help. May we reach out to them and support them so they can feel the warmth of our presence, our friendship, and our fraternity! May their cry become ours, and together may we break down the barriers of indifference that too often reign supreme and mask our hypocrisy and egoism³.

³ Refer to “The Face of Mercy”, 15.

5. The Apostolic Exhortation “**The Joy of the Gospel**” contends that Evangelization has an applied social dimension. Social life and the commitment to build a better society originate from the heart of the Gospel who calls for social charity. When we say Evangelization, we mean the presence of God, the One and Holy Trinity in the world, His continuous effect on creation, salvation and sanctification. **To believe in a heavenly Father** who loves all with an infinite love, means realizing that He thereby confers upon them an infinite dignity. **To believe in the Son of God** who became man and redeemed the human race by dying on the cross, makes us realize that God, in Christ, redeems not only the individual person, but also the social relations existing between men. **To believe in the Holy Spirit**, the fire that ignites our faith, shows us that he is at work in everyone and goes deeper to the essence of every human situation and all social connections until one reaches his/her highest status and full maturity⁴.

6. Evangelization would not be complete without taking into consideration the relationship between the Word of God and the personal and social life of a person. This is the principle of **universality intrinsic to the Gospel**, for the Father desires the

⁴ Refer to “The Joy of the Gospel”, 178

salvation of every man and woman. His plan consists of “gathering up all things in Christ, things in heaven and things on earth”⁵. Our mandate is to “go into all the whole world and proclaim the gospel news to every creation”⁶. The mission of proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ encompasses all dimensions of existence, all individuals, all aspects of community life, and all peoples⁷.

For this reason, **Pope Francis** cautions us to not use the charitable ministry as a “**charity on the identity card**”, as part of a series of gestures for fulfilling acts that aims only at clearing our conscience. Rather, charity is a service that should be performed in reverence to the love of God, the Ruler of the World. Thus, the extent in which God is present amongst us turns the social life into an epicenter of fraternity, justice, peace and dignity for all.

7. **Since the earth is our common home**, and God brings us into existence on earth, then we are all brothers and sisters. Hence, it is our duty to love all human beings that live on earth with all their miseries and burdens, their aspirations and hopes, their values and weaknesses. **Today’s Church** is driven to act by its sons, daughters and institutions who mobilize their energy and resources to build a

⁵ Refer to Ephesians 1:10

⁶ Cf. Mk 16:15

⁷ Cf. “The Joy of the Gospel” 180 and 181

better world by concentrating all efforts into the social field, in planning and action. With the growth of its pastoral service as well as social, educational, medical, humanitarian, charitable and cultural services, all that is left for the Church is to heed the signs of the times and hear the call of all societies as a duty to expand its love and mission, and dedicate itself to the acts of charity, physical, spiritual, moral and cultural mercy.

8. Pope Francis lists in the “Bull of Induction of the Jubilee of Mercy” these actions as **corporal works of mercy**; to feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked, welcome the stranger, care for the ill, visit the imprisoned, and bury the dead. Jesus commands us to these works of mercy in the Gospel⁸.

As for the **spiritual works** of mercy: to counsel the doubtful, instruct the ignorant, admonish sinners, comfort the afflicted, forgive offences, bear patiently those who do us ill, and pray for the living and the dead⁹.

The needs of people is not limited only to the framework of corporal works, but also it extends to the framework of financial, moral, educational and spiritual needs. Pope Francis expounded that in each of these “little ones,” Christ himself is present. His flesh becomes

⁸ Cf. Mt. 25:35-36

⁹ The Face of Mercy, 15.

visible in the flesh of the tortured, the crushed, the scourged, the malnourished, and the exiled... to be acknowledged, touched, and cared for by us. Pope Francis concludes with the words of Saint John of the Cross: “as we prepare to leave this life, we will be judged on the basis of love”¹⁰.

Second: Contradictions and Response of the Church

9. In the Apostolic Exhortation, “**The Joy of the Gospel**” Pope Francis discusses the behaviors that increase **poverty and oppression** among people, and the responsibility of the Church to act. He notes the commandment, “**Thou shalt not kill**” also encircles an **economy of exclusion and inequality**. Such an economy kills individuals and communities, where money and wealth are amassed, food is thrown away, while people are starving and where the powerful feed upon the powerless. As a consequence, masses of people find themselves excluded and marginalized without work and without hope. Human beings are viewed as consumer goods to be used and then discarded¹¹. **The Church’s responsibility** is to restore the dignity of the individual and the human being to the place that God desires and to embrace those victims.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Cf. The Joy of The Gospel, 53

10. The **idolatry of money** that dominates our societies and the worship of the ancient golden calf¹², has returned to repudiate the preeminence of the human person, and to create a new order of an impersonal economy lacking a truly human purpose. At the heart of the idolatry of money and the new order is an anthropology crisis. It is the church's duty to provide education that makes society more humane, especially at the status of the national and international economic and financial system. The **Church** bears a **responsibility** to **call upon people's consciences** to return to their moral values according to the laws of God for the sake of every single human being¹³.

We should not condone the mockery and the discernment of ethics, rather we should show respect in order to create a social balance with a system that is more humane and just. From these ethical considerations comes justice and solidarity. Saint John Chrysostom says: "The Failure to share our own goods with the poor is theft and deprivation of their life resources. We do not own our earnings, they are theirs". Hence, our money must serve and not rule, and exhort us to be united. This becomes the powerful cause to commit ourselves to the common good

¹² Cf. Exodus 32:1-35

¹³ Cf. The Joy of The Gospel, 15

for the good of everyone and every individual, so we all feel responsible for one another¹⁴.

11. If **the scornful derision of the divine and moral law** is disregarded, injustice will spread and corruption will prevail. The spirit of unbridled consumerism, combined with inequality, will prove doubly damaging to the social fabric. Inequality eventually engenders violence that a recourse to arms cannot ever resolve. Rather than providing solutions, it creates new and more serious conflicts. **The Church faces all these challenges** in its pastoral and spiritual work and in its social charity¹⁵.

Third: Dangerous Challenges

12. Pope Francis, in the “**Joy of the Gospel**” speaks of **the challenges found in societies who look negatively** upon social and human rights. It is **the duty of the Church** to address such issues through evangelization and pastoral work. Among the challenges are:

A– **Attacks on religious freedom** and renewed **persecutions directed against Christians**. In some countries these attacks reached alarming levels of hatred and violence causing hopelessness

¹⁴ Ibid 57, Pope John Paul II: The Social Dimension, 38.

¹⁵ Ibid. 60

and despair among people. This in turn drives emigration and constrains the efforts of nation building.

B– **An accelerated decay of cultural roots** and a high respect for other cultures that are the result of globalization, the over-exposure to mass media and its newly developed technology that lacks governance.

C– **The proliferation of new religious movements**, some of which lean toward fundamentalism while others seem to propose a spirituality without God. On the one hand this is a human reaction to a materialistic, consumerist and individualistic society, and on the other hand a draw for those living in poverty and in the fringes of society. These religious movements exploit the frailties of the iniquities of their societies aided by the unwelcoming atmospheres found at some of the parishes, religious communities and institutions where the administrative aspect takes precedence over the pastoral care, and by the neglect to visit families in their homes to connect with their needs.

D– **The rise of secularism**, which minimizes faith, forgoes the worship of God and the teachings of the Church, limits spirituality to the inner of the person, and rejects the transcendent. This leads to a deterioration of ethics, desensitization of personal and collective sin, and a steady rise in relativism that creates a sense of detachment

among young people and future generations which fall prey to the denunciation of religious worship. It is **the Church's responsibility** to provide education that promotes the development of mature moral, spiritual values, teaches critical thinking and good judgement skills.

E– **The disintegration of the union of marriage** that causes an identity crisis where couples choose to separate the union that God graced through the sacred sacrament and the promise of love made to one another and to God. **The Church's responsibility** is to stand by couples who are going through rough times, to help them reconcile and communicate, and lead them back to a life of prayer and participation in the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Communion. **The family is the vital cell of society**; and for society to thrive it requires the well-being of the family. The Family is **the first school** that raises children to respect and honor human and moral values. It is the **domestic Church**, for it is the life lived at home that teaches children to learn faith, prayer and spiritual values¹⁶.

¹⁶ Cf. The Joy of the gospel 61-66; The Synod of the Catholic Patriarchs of the East: The Eighth Episcopal Letter: "The family is the responsibility of the Church and the government" (2005), p. 5-6

Chapter Two

The Social Activities in the Institutions of the Maronite Church

First: The Perspectives of The Church's Social Ministry

13. **Christ instilled His Church** as the channel for humans to embrace **the unity of faith, hope and charity**. The Church ministers the truth and grace bestowed by Christ on all people. The Church nurtures a union with God and the harmony of the whole human race¹⁷. Even though, her mission is not bound to any particular political, economic or social order, the Church has a unique role in society to free the world from all that the barriers that affect the spiritual and human development, because “the glory of God is a fully alive man”, as described by Saint Irenaeus¹⁸.

In this regard, our Maronite Church has established social and charitable institutions, academic and vocational schools, universities, colleges, faculties, hospitals, clinics, centers for seniors and children with special needs, disabled and orphans. It provides an opportunity for her sons and daughters to invest in its properties and belongings on the levels of agriculture, industry, tourism and trade. In these areas it creates job opportunities, employment, financial help and support for families to earn a living wage. Furthermore, the Assembly of Catholic

¹⁷ The Church in the Modern World, 42

¹⁸ The New Hope for Lebanon 19

Patriarchs and Bishops in Lebanon established *Caritas Lebanon*, as the social and developmental arm of Catholic Churches.

14. Since, the Church is at once **a visible society and a spiritual community**, it moves forward together with humanity and experiences struggles as the world does. She serves as a grain of wheat and as a soul for human society. Thus, she must be constantly renewed in Christ. Through her spiritual mission and social service, the human community is transformed into God's family, the bonds of its external unity emanating from union of minds and hearts are solidified, and the bonds between social communities and nations are strengthened without being bound to a specific political, economic or social system¹⁹.

15. In the sphere of the whole of mankind—this man is the primary that the Church must travel in fulfilling her mission, the way traced out by Christ himself, the way that leads invariably through the mystery of the Incarnation and the Redemption. The Church of today must be aware in an always new manner of man's "situation". That means that she must be aware of his possibilities; she must likewise be aware of the threats to man and of all that seems to oppose the endeavor "to make human life ever more human and make every element of his life correspond to man's true dignity. She takes care of his very existence as a person, as a member of a family, community, society within the

¹⁹ The Church in the Modern World, 40 and 42

context of his educational, cultural and national life. This man is the way for the Church, for his "destiny," that is to say his birth and death, calling, salvation or perdition is so closely and unbreakably linked with Christ²⁰.

Second: The Maronite Church Institutions: Education and Health Care

16. The following lists the scope of works relevant to the schools, universities, hospitals and clinics. It shows the number of people who benefit from those services, the employees and the families that find job opportunities and the financial support that these institutions provide to the needy and others.

1– The schools (academic year 2015–2016)

We refer to Catholic schools in Lebanon; there are 275 including the schools that are part of the Maronite eparchies and religious orders of which there are 123 schools. It provides quality academic education and pedagogy to two-thirds of the young generation of Lebanese students. It covers academic and vocational education, and the private schools that charge tuition as well as free tuition and quasi free tuition schools that are in contract with the ministry of social affairs.

²⁰ Pope John Paul II : REDEMPTOR HOMINIS, 14

Number of Schools	275
Number of Students	192,000
Number of Staff, Priest, Monks and Nuns	891
Number of Academic Faculty	13,143
Number of Employees	2,957
Value of Annual Assistance for Disadvantaged Families	40,107,252,000 LBP (=) \$26,527,304.800
Value of Tuition Discounts for the Children of Academic Faculty and Employees	30,514,958,000 LBP (=) \$20,182,695.344
Value of Unpaid Tuition Annually	47,089,058,000 LBP (=) \$31,144,679.191

These schools provide jobs for sixteen thousand lay employees, in addition to eight hundred ninety-one religious members. The annual assistance for the parents and the children of the academic staff and employees reach seventy billion twenty-two million two hundred and ten thousand Lebanese pounds (that is \$ 46,579,197.98). The schools offer financial aid for parents each year. The unpaid accumulated amount reached forty-seven billion eighty-nine million and fifty-eight thousand Lebanese pounds (that is \$31,235,602.33)

2- The Universities (Academic year 2015-2016)

17. The focus is only on **the five Maronite universities, all others are excluded**. They are as follows: Holy Spirit University of Kaslik, Sagesse University, Notre Dame University–Louaize, Antonine University, and Holy Family University. They are known for their high academic standards nationally and worldwide. They offer relevant majors that apply to today’s job market so the graduate is well positioned to find employment. In addition, new campuses are being opened in various regions of Lebanon making education accessible for students near their homes, eliminating the need for parents to pay additional expenses for housing and long distance transportation. Although these campuses often are unable to pay the incurred teaching expenses, the social service that they provide for the parents of the nearby areas is invaluable.

This study does not include Saint Joseph University – Beirut for the Jesuits and the Institute of Theology founded by the Paulist Fathers–Harissa. Therefore, there are seven Catholic universities.

Number of Maronite Universities	5
Total Number of Students	22, 287
Number of Administrators, Teachers and Employees	3,494
Number of Students Who Receive Financial Aid	10, 087

Value of Annual Tuition Discounts	15,017,933,000 LBP (=) \$9,934,670.45
Value of Unpaid Tuition Annually	21,162,067,000 LBP (=) \$13,998,546.282

3– Hospitals and Medical Centers

18. Referenced are only the hospitals and medical centers of the Maronites eparchies and religious orders. These are as follows:

- a. Our Lady of Zghorta University Hospital
- b. Lebanese Hospital Geitaoui
- c. Maounat (Our Lady of Help) University Hospital –Byblos
- d. Saint Georges Hospital – Ajaltoun
- e. Saint Louis Hospital – Jounieh
- f. Saint Therese Hospital – Hadath
- g. Beit Chabab Hospital
- h. Our Lady of Peace Hospital – Kobayat
- i. Dar El–Rahmeh (House of Mercy) Hospital – Ain Saadeh
- j. Al Inaya (Providence) Hospital for the Maronite Order– Mission for life
- k. Dar Al Riaya Al Marouni (Maronite House of Providence) for the Sisters of St. Therese of the Child Jesus
- l. Deir El Ahamr Medical Center

These hospitals and medical centers adhere to the highest quality standards in the medical industry. They provide medical services to all, by entering into agreements with the insurance companies in Lebanon and the Ministry of Public Health that guarantees care for low income patients. Reimbursement for services is often received late from the government which causes a substantial financial burden for the hospitals. Despite all these problems, our medical institutions do their best to continue to provide their services to the public, to preserve jobs and when possible create new employment opportunities.

Number of Hospitals and Medical Centers	12
Annual Number of Patients	283,960
Number of Doctors, Nurses and Employees	3,869
Value of Annual Aid for the Patients	7,855,776,000 LBP (=) \$ 5,198,762.644

4. Medical Clinics

19. Our Eparchies and Religious Orders have licensed clinics in different regions of Lebanon that distribute medicines and provide specialized medical services for people in need. Medical professionals and volunteers staff these clinics.

Number of Clinics	25
Number of Patients that Benefit Annually	227,487
Number of Monthly Salaried Employees	476
Total Budget	1,425.152,000 LBP (=) \$ 943,018.26

Third: Other Maronite Social Institutions

20. The Maronite Church, as commanded by our Lord Jesus, seeks to serve him through the poor, the sick and the prisoner (Matthew 25: 31-40). She endeavors to serve to the best of her ability, the traditional and current needs of her communities and of society. This is the motive for establishing other social institutions in addition to schools, universities, hospitals, medical centers and clinics. She established orphanages, centers for people with special needs, nursing homes for seniors and different charitable organizations.

1-Organizations of Child Care

21. The Maronite Church owns nine child care organizations that provide food, clothing, shelter, education and complete care for children.

Number of Maronite Organizations	9
Number of Employees	128
Number of Beneficiaries (children)	1,203
Total Budget of these Centers	10,827,000,000 LBP (=) \$ 7,163.422.80

2–Centers for People with Special Needs

22. There are five centers that employ one hundred twenty–nine people who provide care for three hundred ninety–five people.

Number of Maronite Centers	5
Number of Employees	129
Number of Beneficiaries	395

3–Nursing Homes for Seniors

23. There are ten nursing homes that provide three hundred forty job opportunities and provide care for eight hundred eighty–eight elderly people.

Number of Maronite Nursing Homes	10
Number of Employees	340
Number of Beneficiaries	888

4–Different Charitable Institutions

24. Our Church established nine different charitable Institutions who provide specialized services for addicts, prisoners, homeless and others. It serves three thousand nine hundred thirty–five people and provides sixty–five job opportunities.

Number of Maronite Organizations	9		
Number of Employees	65		
Number of Beneficiaries	3,953		
Total Budget	2,552,000,000	LBP	(=)
	\$16,897,508.558		

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Fourth: Investment of Church Properties and Endowments

25. The Church Endowments (waqf) are goods that the faithful have entrusted to the Church, and properties that the Church earned or buildings constructed, for three main purposes: Divine Worship and all the temporal goods that are necessary to pursue its proper ends; formation of Clergy and their living expenses; works of charity and of the apostolate²¹. Thereby, the Maronite Church has never considered

²¹ CCEO1007

her properties and her endowments as mere economic possessions. Instead, she puts them at the service of her sons and daughters to invest in agricultural, industrial, commercial and tourism sectors. Moreover, she has constructed residential buildings to house low income families.

The Properties of the Dioceses and Religious Orders

Agricultural Leases	1,834
Industrial Leases	309
Miscellaneous Leases	1, 109
Real Estate for different Social Services	228
Total Real Estate	3,480 piece of land
Residential Buildings	4,072 apartments

Fifth: Employees and Associates in the Maronite Monasteries and Eparchies

26. In this section we list the number of employees and families that find employment opportunities at the Maronite monasteries and eparchies, as well as the financial help offered to disadvantaged families and the monetary value of this assistance.

1– The Monasteries

Number of Maronite Orders	9
Number of Employees in the Monasteries	673
Annual Financial Assistance	7,118,200,000 LBP (=) \$4,711,954.88
Identified Annual Assistance (*)	2,149,000,000 LBP (=) \$1,422,843.69
Total of Annual Assistance	9,267,211,000 LBP (=) \$6,134,861.37

2– The Eparchies

Number of Maronite Dioceses in Lebanon	13
Number of Employees in the Eparchies and Parishes	1,034
Annual Financial Assistance Offered by the Eparchies	1,127,623,000 LBP (=) \$747,984.40
Annual Financial Assistance Offered by Parishes	1,914,615,000 LBP (=) \$1,270,020.28
Annual In-kind Assistance Offered by the Eparchies(*)	188,500,000 LBP (=) \$125,037.58
Annual In-kind Assistance Offered by Parishes worth	1,306,700,000 LBP (=) \$866,772.43
Total Annual Assistance	4,537,438,000 LBP (=)

	\$3,009,815.70
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Sixth: Service of Charity in the Maronite Patriarchate and its Administration

27. The Service of Charity in the Patriarchate See is distributed in different sectors:

1. Employees and associates in the Patriarchal See in Bkerke, Diman and the secretariat

Number of Employees	67
Number of Investment Contracts of Properties and Endowments Managed by the Patriarchate Office	1,110
Financial Assistance in 2016 for Disadvantaged Families	317,000,000 LBP (=) \$210,275.52

2. Social Activities and Institutions

28. The Patriarchate established along with the Eparchies and the Maronite orders in 1987 “The Maronite Social Fund” which is today “**The Maronite Social Institution**”. This organization has built **residential apartments** for low income families totaling **2,030**

apartments in Zouk Mosbeh, Baabdet, Bleibal, ElQariya (East of Saida), Ardeh (Zgharta), Zahle.

It provides employment at its offices for six employees in addition to the companies, engineers, contractors and workers who build these residential buildings.

29. In the context of the Social Maronite Institution, a **Social Health Care Fund** was created in **1992**, as a non-profit medical and health care organization. Its purpose is to encourage solidarity among the sons and daughters of the Church to carry the burden of medical expenses of those in need and to support them through household, school and other donations.

Among its most important attributes:

- No minimum age requirement
- Contributions are allotted to cover the cost of artificial organs
- School and family financial assistance, newlywed grants, death benefits and other benefits.

The number of current participants is approximately 45,000 persons.

The Social Health Care Fund pays annually about one and a half million U.S. dollars distributed as follows:

Family and Social Assistance	\$ 776,023.00
Educational Assistance	\$ 703,000.00
Newlywed Grants	\$78,405.00
Newborn	\$96,872.00
Number of Employees	30
Number of Brokers (paid on % commission)	60

30. In 2014, the Patriarchate established “**the Maronite Center for Documentation and Research**”. Its objective is to conduct cultural and scientific researches in various fields and dimensions. The center will develop studies and document information in a variety of areas to help the Maronites learn more about their history, raise cultural awareness to enrich their lives, plan for their future and carry out their missions. The research and development sector will include areas such as **social development, health care and employment opportunities**.

The Center provides **job opportunities for fifteen employees**.

31. The Patriarchate established in 2006 “**The Maronite Foundation in the World**” with the purpose to connect with the Maronite expansion, to promote among them the sense of belonging and attachment to their Lebanese Maronite heritage and roots. The foundation will encourage them to register and obtain Lebanese citizenship and for those who are able, invest in Lebanon and

contribute to the economic development that the Lebanese people can remain in their land.

The Maronite foundation provides employment for more than forty people in Lebanon and the Countries of Expansion and it pays their monthly salary that cost \$70,000.00 (that is \$840,000.00 per year).

32. In 2015 the Patriarchate established the “**World Patriarchal Maronite Foundation for Integral Development**” with the objective to collect the money needed to strengthen the Christian presence in all the regions by supporting the development of projects and creating employment opportunities.

It provides administrative **jobs for ten employees**.

3. Patriarchal Institutions

33. We must mention two ecclesiastical institutions, not because they are involved directly with charity service but because they **provide job opportunities** for clergies and laities alike:

A. The Patriarchal Seminary in Ghazir is dedicated to the formation of seminarians and deacons. The number of seminarians reached 150 in the previous year. It provides **employment opportunities for forty-one people**. The cost of their living expenses at the seminary and their education at the Pontifical Faculty of Theology at the Holy Spirit University –Kaslik, reached in 2016 one billion eight hundred million

Lebanese pounds (that is \$1,193,994.18) that the Patriarchate and the Eparchies assume.

B. The Unified Maronite Patriarchal Tribunals of Appeal and First Instance provide employment opportunities for sixty-four people, among them 48 that are judicial employees and 16 non-judicial. It discounted legal fees last year for low income plaintiffs, also known as “legal aid” to the value of 317,000,000.00 LBP (\$210,275.64).

4. Office buildings and real estate for the Patriarchate for the purpose of social, humanitarian and pastoral institutions.

34. The Patriarchate placed buildings and real estate properties at the service of institutions to realize their mission, humanitarian, social and pastoral service and they are as follow:

A- Buildings

1. The Missionary Sisters of The Blessed Sacrament (for orphan girls and special cases) school of AinWarka, Ghosta.
2. Caritas Lebanon, The Patriarchal See of Saint Sarkis and Bacchus in Rayfoun.
3. CIRDIC Organization (International Center of Interfaith and Cultural Dialogue), **Monastery of St. George, Qlayaat.**

B. Real Estate Properties

1. Saint Michael Organization (Orphanage and Nursing Home) **13,789 m² in Shayleh**
2. Oum el Nour Organization, **13,745 m² in Shayleh**
3. Mariam Apostolic Movement, **6,193 m² in Shayleh**
4. Maronite Scouts, **1,000 m² in Shayleh**
5. Ozkornee Fi Malakoutak Movement (Remember me in Your kingdom), **1,326 m² in Shayleh**
6. Rabitat AL Mahaba (Charity Guild) **3,720 m² in Ghosta**
7. Sesobel Organization **6,000 m² in Ayntoura**
8. Caritas– Sarba **652 m² in Sarba**
9. Sanadee Organization **6,000 m² in Sarba**
10. The Center to build the United Municipality of Bechare District, **4,000 m² in Diman.**
11. The Agricultural Ministry: To build the center of agricultural scientific research, **2,000 m² in Diman.**

5. Coordination of the Maronite Institutions

35. In 2016 we established “Office of Coordination” that includes the Maronite institutions directly and indirectly affiliated with the Patriarchal administration. They are as follows:

1. The Maronite Social Organization
2. The Social Security Fund
3. The Maronite Center for Documentation and Research

4. The Maronite Foundation in the World
5. The Maronite Foundation for Integral Development
6. Secretariat of the Patriarchate
7. The Maronite League
8. The Maronite General Council
9. The Collaborative Association for Development
10. LABORA Organization
11. Voice of Charity Radio
12. Tele Lumiere/ Noursat
13. Charity TV
14. Qanoubeen League for Mission and Heritage
15. The Catholic Media Center (*)
16. The Land Movement

*It is known that **The Catholic Media Center** is affiliated with the Council of Catholic Patriarchs and Bishops in Lebanon. We did not mention the Committee of Caritas Lebanon because it is not included in the coordination of projects. However, we are collaborating with Caritas given that it is the official social institution for the Church in Lebanon and it is affiliated with the Council of Catholic Patriarchs and Bishops in Lebanon.

* The in-Kind assistance includes: Weekly meals, nutrition rations, clothes, medicines, heating oil and others.

36. In agreement with these organizations, we appointed an engineer, Antoun Azour, as coordinator. He developed a guidebook highlighting the details of each organization, the year it was established, its mission, objectives and the dimension of its work. The guidebook includes a table illustrating the objectives of these institutions to ensure coordination of efforts, its integration and wealth by showing the “**common goal**” which is to “strengthen the Christian existence, role and presence in Lebanon” and its presence in the Middle East, the Countries of Expansion and the various ways to do so.

The collaboration of these organizations is necessary and essential to ensure coordination and management of the ministry of social service in all its dimensions.

* * *

Chapter Three

The Future Plan for the Service of Charity

First: A Look at the Roots

37. In view of the above two chapters, the Church has always brought together the three services of **Evangelization** of the word of God to educate about the faith and enlighten minds; **Celebration of the Sacraments** and the liturgy for the sanctification of souls; and **Service of Charity** for a proper life to all that benefit from it. This is how the

history of our Church maintains witness since its beginning until the present day, starting with the early church as described in the Acts of the Apostles, “They devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles and to the communal life, to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers. **All who believed were together and had all things in common. The community of believers was of one heart and mind**”²², there was no needy person among them.

38. **The Maronite Patriarchal Synod** explains in “**The Maronite Church and the Social Issue**” (text 20), how she previously performed the Service of Social Charity among the Maronite community in order to safeguard their presence by providing for two main needs: A land for them to cultivate, and a dwelling to take shelter in as a family (paragraph 3). The text describes how they lived in the **Middle Ages** as a tightly knit society who revolved around the Church under the guidance of a Patriarch who was the religious and civic president. The Patriarch shared with his people their lives and their farming during good and bad times surrendering to the will of God and relying on the intercession of the Blessed Virgin. Among the travesties that occurred during these times is an incident in 1475, when poor Maronites who lived in the mountains were treated with disdain, suffered beatings, and were invaded by the ruling Mameluke authorities because of their inability to pay the high taxes levied upon

²² Acts 2: 42 and 44; 4:32

them. Youssef Boutros Ben Yaacoub, who was the Patriarch at that time, decided to relinquish all the revenues of his churches to pay these unjust taxes and protect his people from the greed of the tyrants²³.

39. In Modern Ages, and during the Ottoman Empire period, the Church continued to stand by her parishioners, partaking in their lives without any formal hierarchy and protecting them against violence or persecution.

As the Maronite population grew, it expanded into other regions of Lebanon since the mid–sixteen century. This expansion was realized with direct political and social accompaniment from the Patriarchate and the newly organized religious orders since the reign of the servant of God Patriarch Estephan El Douaihy. This spurred an economic and demographic renaissance.

40. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries an **educational renaissance** emerged led by the graduates from the School of Rome founded in 1584, and the establishment of schools by Latin western missions. In 1736 the Lebanese Synod held at the Monastery of Our Lady of Louaize – Zouk Mosbeh mandated compulsory education of all people, not just for the wealthy, but also for the orphans and the poor, for boys and girls. Education evolved from “schooling

²³ The Maronite Church and the Social Issue, paragraphs 4-7

underneath the oak tree” with the parish priest, to the monastery with the monks, to finally school buildings like the school of Ain Warka 1789, St. John Maron Kfarhaya 1812, Roummieh school (Kleiat) 1817, St. Abda school in Harharya 1830 (Ghazir), Al-Karim school in Jounieh 1872, Sagesse School Beirut 1875, St. Joseph School Cornet Chehwan 1884, in addition to the schools in the monasteries for the formation of monks and priests²⁴.

41. **During the Ottoman Empire**, influenced by Europe’s evolving educational system, the social reform movements were created known as the Social Uprising Movement (Amiyat or “Commonalty Movements,” in reference to the public who initiated them). The movement called for new ideologies centered on a contemporary concept for authority based on equality, common good, freedom and the right for sovereignty. All this occurred with the support of the Maronite clergy.

With **Al-Mutasarrifiyya**, the Church became the primary advocate of people’s rights. During **World War I**, the Church dedicated all its political and economic resources to protect and feed whomever she could.

²⁴ The Maronite Patriarchal Synod, the Maronite Church and Education: General and Vocational, paragraphs 6-8

42. After World War I, a delegation led by the servant of God, Patriarch Elias El-Howayek, called for establishing and confirming the Lebanese nation by declaring the State of Great Lebanon on September 1, 1920. **During the French Mandate**, the social charity institutions were established such as hospitals, nursing homes, and others. At the end of the French Mandate, Patriarch Antoun Arideh led the campaign of the Social Lebanese demands, holding the banner of defense for the oppressed against the economic hegemony and monopoly of the market. Therefore, with him, Bkerke was transformed into a pilgrimage-like location for Muslims as for Christians. It became a ground where the interests of the people and entity of independence converged²⁵.

43. **In the twentieth century and the current century**, the Church recognized an urgent need to build more schools to educate the future generation that is on the move with a high-quality spiritual, moral and national education. If we take a look at the Guide to the Maronite Church published by the Office of the Expansion in the Maronite Patriarchal Vicariate issued on January 22, 2015, we find that the number of free and nearly free elementary, middle and high schools, technical and vocational at different levels that are associated with parishes, nuns, monks and religious orders in Lebanon is one hundred and twenty-three schools (123 schools); 26 are eparchial schools, 40

²⁵ The Maronite Church and the Social Issue, paragraphs 10-14

are affiliated with the religious orders of monks, 57 for the nuns. This is in addition to the twenty schools outside Lebanon located in Argentina, Uruguay, Canada, France, Egypt, South Africa, Ghana, Burkina, and Australia²⁶. There are also the schools affiliated with parishes and orders from other churches that are all part of the Catholic schools.

44. The Maronite Church found a **need for universities** and colleges to offer programs for advanced college degrees and specialties. For this reason the following universities were established: Sagesse University for the Archeparchy of Beirut; Holy Spirit University of Kaslik and its three satellite campuses in Rmaich, Zahle and Checca for the Lebanese Maronite Order, Notre Dame of Louaize–Zouk Mosbeh and its two satellite campuses in Deir al–Qamar and Barsa (North Lebanon), the Antonine University and its two satellite campuses in Riyaq (Bekaa) and Mejdlaya (Zgharta) for the Antonine Order– Hadath, the Holy Family University, the School of Computer Science (Batroun), the School of Nursing and Computer Science (Beit el Shaar –Matn) for the Congregation of Maronite Sisters of the Holy Family . These five universities along with Saint Joseph University (Beirut), in addition to the School of Theology for the Congregation of the Paulist Fathers, form the six Catholic Universities.

²⁶ Cf. The Maronite Church Directory (2015), page 656-676

45. The Church became part of **the hospital and nursing sector** that is one of the biggest needs due to the scarcity and inadequacies of public hospitals. Therefore, it established a total of twelve hospitals and medical centers in Lebanon and two hospitals outside the country. It also set-up twenty-five medical clinics²⁷. Also, There are hospitals and medical centers administered by other orders of the Latin Church which offer high quality medical services.

46. It is noteworthy to mention the support of the private organizations and initiatives taken by the faithful of our Church toward the Church institutions and its counterparts through financial support.

Second: Looking Toward the Future

47. We took a step back and looked through the historical pages from the past and from the present to evoke awareness that **Social Charity** is at the core of the Church mission along with **Evangelization and Celebration of the Holy Sacraments** as a source of divine grace. These pages invite us to record the new history of social charity that chronicles today's dire state. Pope Saint John Paul II in Chapter six of the Apostolic Exhortation "**New Hope for Lebanon**", that he issued and signed in Lebanon on May 10, 1997 after the Assembly of the Synod of Bishops for Lebanon, made clear the path that the Catholic

²⁷ Cf. the Directory, page 686-689

Church should follow to realize the aim of **Social Charity** as it pertains to the socio-economic crisis, the management of the church's properties, the academic and collegiate education, the role of the media, the political engagement, and human rights²⁸.

48. **The Maronite Patriarchal Synod** held between 2003 and 2006, discussed these subjects and others with most of them presented in the above-mentioned Apostolic Exhortation. Our Maronite Church has lived in the service of charity, beginning with the **basic principles** incorporated in the social teachings of the Church. These principles are summarized in the ecumenical text "The Maronite Church and the Social Issue" as follows²⁹:

- A. **Solidarity** refers to the firm determination to commit oneself to the common good and to acknowledge that we bear responsibility for one another.
- B. **Justice** upheld with two beliefs: That **Natural Justice** is the creation of God. It implies equality in the human dignity and enjoyment of basic rights. **Social Justice** that is developed by the people: the individual, the community and the state, where each person will be granted his/her right for living with dignity in return for upholding their responsibilities.

²⁸ The New Hope for Lebanon, paragraphs 100-116

²⁹Cf. the Maronite Church and the Social Issue, par. 22-24

C. **Progress** is built on the complete economic growth and social progress that is of benefit for both human beings and society.

49. **Our Church**, through the Social Service Charity, deals with the effects of current technological advances and breakthroughs as well as the repercussions of the civil war in Lebanon, in addition to the conflicts in the Middle East, such as moral, emotional and financial issues. Today's **materialistic mentality, culture of consumerism, the desire to possess** and accumulate money and goods, as well as "**instant gratification**" permeate our society as if they are a reason by themselves. The Lebanese civil war displaced hundreds of thousands of people and families, it multiplied the number of orphans and peoples living with disabilities and special needs. It made the youth and the upcoming generations susceptible to juvenile delinquency, exposed them to the dangers of drugs, prostitution, immorality and lead to a loss of spiritual values.

The Church is affected by these problems and works amidst these challenges through her institutions, spiritual, pastoral and social work. Financially she is required to increase the aforementioned area of assistances in Chapter Two of this letter. Morally and spiritually, the Church's responsibility is to stand by her youth and people, to defend their rights, to unite with them, to help them, to free them and to plant hope in their hearts, and to give meaning to their lives³⁰.

³⁰ The Maronite Church and the Social Issue, paragraphs 16-19

50. On this basis **the Maronite Church** is focused on helping her sons and daughters by ensuring their basic rights are guaranteed as the Maronite Patriarchal Synod instructs in its twentieth text “the Maronite Church and the Social Issue”. The most important of these rights are³¹:

A. The Right to Establish a Family: A family with sufficient income that can have and raise children and who works in the homeland.

B. The Right to Proper Housing: A home that is safe and supports a proper environment for the well-being of the person, promotes the warmth of family and offers a stable home life.

C. The Right to Work: Work is a living, economic and social necessity. Through work, the person ensures his/her existence, develops his/her talents and interests. He/she contributes to a productive society in different fields and industries.

D. The Right to Health Care and Medical Service: Each human has the absolute right to avoid disease and pain. He/she also has the right to receive medical treatment when he/she is taken ill so he/she can live in peace and have the strength to work and be productive.

E. The Right to Education and Knowledge: Education and knowledge are our innate common inheritance. God gave the Lebanese people a special talent in this realm. We claim that this learning talent is a natural gift that God ceded specially for our Lebanese land.

³¹ Ibid., paragraphs 28-37

51. Driven by the obligation of acting to provide these rights, the Maronite Church defines her course of action in the **social work** with respect to three different aspects³²:

A. Values and Morals – the Church acts according to her spiritual and moral authority to develop and safeguard the fundamental spiritual, ethical, moral and social values. She is committed to be “the Church of the Word, of the Truth and of the Prophecy” and not “the Church of silence and compromise”.

B. Individuals – the Church works on deepening Christian virtues and high morals such as impartiality, humility, gratification, spirit of service and freedom from the world’s temptations.

C. Institutions, the Maronite Church endeavors to develop the unadulterated spirit of service among its personnel and trains them accordingly so their institutions will not be built on profit and loss but rather on Christ’s program; the program of the Good Samaritan; the program of Jesus Christ, where it is “a heart which sees where love is needed and acts accordingly”³³.

³² The Maronite Church and the Social Issue, paragraphs 39-42

³³ Pope Benedict XVI: God is Love, 31, b.

Third: Organizing the Service of Social Charity

52. Given that the Church is an organization, it should manage the charity as an organized social service to reach its universality. For this reason, the Church complied as mandated by the Maronite Patriarchal Synod to “**establish an institution to support social service.**” In support of the “**Social Maronite Institution**” we created the “**Job Development Department**”, in addition to two separate “Housing Departments”, the “Health Care Fund”, we established likewise the “World Patriarchal Foundation of Integral Development” to satisfy the mandate of running the charity as an organized service. It is noteworthy that this effort is in collaboration with the “**the Maronite Center of Documentation and Research**” and with Caritas Lebanon, that is present all over Lebanon, other non-governmental social organizations and governmental institutions.

53. It is necessary to organize the service of charity at the eparchial level as a local Church. For the church is the family of God in the World. No one should ever suffer if they lack the essentials for living. Above all, the charity goes beyond the boundaries of the Church to include every person in need, that we may happen to meet by chance, as it is remarked in the parable of the Good Samaritan (Cf. Lk. 10:31)³⁴.

³⁴ God is Love, 25, B.

For that reason, a **committee for the service of charity** should be established in the parishes, eparchies and monasteries where a specific percentage of their income is given to help the organizations for the needy. An experienced, empathetic social worker should preferably chair the committee. This is what was done **at the Patriarchal See**.

Regarding **organizing and managing the social charity** for our church, **an Office of Coordination** will be formed at the Patriarchal Curia to work with parishes, religious orders, secretariat of Catholic schools, and universities to access their capabilities for social charity, to issue an annual newsletter summarizing the yearly efforts and to provide support and bring awareness to the public.

54. As for **the service of charity at schools**, special attention should be given to the call of the **Maronite Patriarchal Synod**³⁵, that advocates:

1– To provide tuition assistance to students who cannot afford it, so that no student is forced to halt his/her education for economic or financial reasons. Regarding the extreme need and the increase of poverty; a separate fund should be set-up at schools to collect special donations to help these students. This requirement is mandatory for

³⁵ Text sixteen: The Maronite Church and Education : General and Vocational, Refer to requirements 6, 8, 9 and 10

schools and goes beyond their financial responsibilities as explained in Chapter Two of this letter. The increase of those in need requires demand for more donations.

2- Schooling should be free for the fourth child of a Maronite family at one Maronite school.

3- To encourage students to pursue vocational and technical degrees as dictated by the job market and provide job opportunities that pay a solid income.

4- To solicit the government that is responsible for public charity, to abide by the principle of equal distribution to support education in the private sector as well as the public sector and to establish standards and requirements that define and ensure a quality education.

5-To support the public schools in collaboration with the national Ministry of Education, with society and the parents so they may accept higher enrollment and provide a quality education in a proper educational environment.

The first and second requirements outlined above are applicable to the **students of higher education and universities.**

55. In reference to job opportunities; the Church strives to provide as many job opportunities as possible in its offices and monasteries as well as in its educational, health care and social institutions. For this reason, to offer better service and to help stimulate the economy, the

church proactively focuses greater attention toward expanding her buildings to increase the potential number of job opportunities.

The church presents various opportunities to invest in her properties and lands in accordance to the general laws of the Church so that more families may benefit from them.

56. However, we ask **the government** to fulfill its duties: to thwart corruption, bribery, stealing and waste of government money; to work and apply economic reform in all sectors; to take action to lift the poor population out of poverty, to rebuild the middle class and to reimburse in a timely manner all payments due to the private hospitals, free schools and the specialized social centers, year by year.

57. We offer **our thanks to God** for all the help the Church's organizations are providing to families for social, educational, medical services and for creating job opportunities. We graciously recall all the different private initiatives taken by individuals, communities and organizations on all these levels.

And we find it helpful to present **a list that summarizes the ministry of social charity in the Church:**

Families leasing the church's properties	1,110
Job Opportunities	26, 574
Beneficiaries of the Educational and Medical Services	498, 614
Beneficiary of the Social Work Centers	233,926
Total of Annual Beneficiaries	732,543
Financial and in-kind Assistance offered by the Patriarchate, Parishes and Religious Orders	14,121,649,000 LBP (=) \$9,367,318.68
Tuition Discounts at Schools and Universities, and the Cost of Hospitalization	107,977,568,000 LBP (=) \$71,624,800.28
Total of Annual Assistance	122,695,720,000 LBP (=) \$81,387,797.51
Unpaid and Overdue Tuitions	68,251,125,000 LBP (=) \$45,273,044.10

Conclusion

58. We found it necessary to issue this letter with the topic “**The Ministry of Social Charity**” to remind you that charity is at the core of the Church’s mission with her clergy, people, individuals, communities, facilities and institutions.

The plan of God in the Sacred Scriptures and according to the social teaching of the Church, is for human beings to live with joy, satisfaction

and happiness. Therefore, God is generous, He provided enough daily bread for every person on earth. Since every human is the “son of God” and “is created in His image” (Gn.27:1) so God put on Earth enough daily bread for every person that is born to this world. This is the just right promised by God for He said: Give us this day our daily bread” (Mt.11:6). In this teaching, He revealed to us His will that for every person there will be enough from the bounties of the Earth.

We understand from this that poverty is a strange and abnormal matter for the purposes of God, and a situation that breaks His heart and defeats His plan. The Holy Bible shows that **the first and main reason** for poverty in this world is the greed of the rich people and their voracity to amass wealth and cause a scarcity of bread that is to the detriment of the poor, the orphaned and the widowed. Many times, the prophets screamed in the face of the wealthy on this earth that their money is a proof of their sins and it causes a fire that burns them in their sleep (Amos 5) Is God against wealth? God wants us to be happy and enjoy ourselves. He wants to see us living and doing well. But the prophets emphasized that great wealth does not come through the straight ways of God (Gn.3:19) if a person is working hard to earn his living, he cannot collect great fortunes. Therefore, the person who amasses money and wealth is depriving the poor from his share of income and is causing him to starve and become needy. For the wealth of earth is assembled by God to satisfy all His people.

After reviewing the Church's capacities and resources, we presented in detail and by numbers the work of the Church and her institutions in the service of charity, so she can grow along with her sons, daughters and organizations, the service of charity for her people that is falling under the burden of poverty, knowing that God is the source of all prosperity, and He is the One Who opens the door of benevolence in front of her, so she can remain a sign of hope for every human being.

59. By doing this, **the Church is far from being arrogant**, rather she is **giving thanks to God** Who is the giver, donor and provider of everything. She acknowledges the rule that God has put forth for her: **"But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right is doing"**. (Mt. 6:3)

As for the **charity work**, it remains in the eyes of Christ, and it should be the same for the Church with her clergy and people, a duty for which not be praised as Jesus said: **"Is he grateful to that servant because he did what was commanded? So should it be with you. When you have done all you have been commanded, say, "We are unprofitable servants; we have done what we were obliged to do"**. (Lk 17:9-10)

60. In the light of the word of God, **we put in your hands this letter**, to be a program of work for all of us during this year where we establish the service of social charity handed to us by Christ as a witness to the

Love of God. And we do this asking for the intercession of the Virgin Mary, our Mother, the Mother of Charity, and our Father Saint Maron, Saint John Maron, and all the Maronite Saints.

From our See in Bkerke, on March 25, 2017.

The Feast of the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

+ Cardinal Mar Bechara Boutros Rai

Patriarch of Antioch and All the East

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