



EPARCHY
OF ST. MARON
CANADA

***Twenty first letter of His Excellency
Bishop Paul-Marwan Tabet
To the Maronite Community of Canada
Christmas 2023***

*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 Sheperds heard... “And they went with haste” (Luke 2:16)
From the silence of the manger, the Lord speaks to us!

I wish you a blessed Christmas and a new year filled with spiritual blessings and the fruits of goodness. My prayers are with you and for you, that the Lord's joy and presence fill your homes and families.

Yes, from the silence of the manger, the Lord preaches the **Good News** so that we become the resounding voice. Only the Almighty breaks the silence of heaven to enter the hearts of people and convey to them the words of love through His Son Jesus. *“On many past occasions and in many different ways, God spoke to our fathers through the prophets. But in these last days, He has spoken to us by His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, and through whom He made the universe”* (Hebrews 1:1-2); so that this Son be *“the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of His nature, sustaining all things by his powerful word”* (Hebrews 1:3), *“the Way, the Truth, and the Life”* (John 14:6), the Good News and salvation for every human being.

The Holy Spirit's inspiration wrote the events, words, and situations of life, which are God's way of speaking. His words became a holy book, and a living presence in Christ: the eternal Word who *“became flesh and dwelt among us”* (John 1:14); who loves us, shares the path of life with us, and is united with our humanity forever. He did not come to visit us and depart, but rather to live among us and stay with us as a child, a man, and a teacher.

From the silence of the manger, the Lord guides us to the “Good News of Grace,” where His love is freely revealed, so that he can make us His children and save us from the burden of sin and all kinds of evil: *“so that in the ages to come, He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ*

Jesus. For by grace you are saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, for it is the gift of God... (Ephesians 2:7-8).

From the silence of the manger, the Lord brings us the “**Good News of the Kingdom**,” so that we become true disciples of Christ. Through his birth and life, Jesus proclaims the Kingdom of God as the Kingdom of peace and love that is open to all humans. In the process of evangelization, he continuously calls his disciples to hear the Word of God, the Word of salvation, the Word of healing, and the Word of life. This call is still as relevant today as it was more than two thousand years ago. By preaching the Good News, the Church participates in the attainment of this Kingdom “*always, to the very end of the age*” (Matthew 28:20). The truthfulness of our faith in our relationships with God and others is made evident when we listen to this declaration.

Do we know how to listen?

The act of listening is an act of humility above all. It's acknowledging that we don't have all the answers, and that there are still things we can learn from others. Listening is an act of faith that affirms that God truly speaks through people; and by listening to others, we are able to gain a new understanding of God. Active listening is not only a channel for God's grace in our lives, but it is also an essential communication skill that influences the quality of our relationship with the people close to us.

Listening to the voice of the Lord, in silence and while welcoming faith spiritually, is a skill that very few people possess. We need to listen like children do: “*I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children...*” (Matthew 11:25). In order to truly hear, we must actively listen: Our ability to listen is not limited to just our ears, but also encompasses our heart and all our senses. We also listen through the Holy Bible and the Eucharist, as well as through events and manifestations of nature. The blessings we receive in our lives make every experience a learning opportunity for those who observe and listen; and the words of the Lord become spirit and life. It is only then that we can receive the Good News and lead a prosperous life.

Today marks the birth of Jesus, so let's listen to the Lord with care, as every soul has a mission and receives secrets from Him accordingly. Let us call him: “*Speak, O Lord, for your “son/daughter” is listening*”; let us understand and testify, as He offers us the spirit, kindles the heart and unveils the meaning. He strengthens, illuminates, and grants the “*understanding of what we hear*”.

Today marks the birth of Jesus; and while the world is experiencing sadness and hearing the noise of wars and challenges of all kinds, will we be the ones crying out in the wilderness? Without the Word, which is Jesus, a voice is worthless because it lacks meaning.

Let us go with haste, as the shepherds did... and turn the silence of the manger into a hymn of the Good News with the angels, a hymn of peace and joy: “*Fear not: For behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.*” (Luke 2:10-11).

Emmanuel became “God with us”, Jesus was born to you, and He is the Word.

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

+Paul-Marwan Tabet
Maronite Bishop of Canada

