



The Holy See

***LETTER OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO HIS BEATITUDE BÉCHARA BOUTROS RAÏ,
PATRIARCH OF ANTIOCH FOR MARONITES
ACCEPTING HIS REQUEST FOR ECCLESIASTICAL COMMUNION***

To His Beatitude

Béchara Boutros Raï

Patriarch of Antioch for Maronites

The election of Your Beatitude to the Patriarchal See of Antioch for Maronites is a very special event for the whole Church and I receive your request for Ecclesiastical Communion with great joy. The whole Church, particularly the Maronite Church, gives thanks to the Blessed Trinity for the gift she has been granted in you, Your Beatitude.

I address to you my most fraternal and cordial congratulations. My fervent prayer is raised to Christ Our Lord and our God, that he may accompany you in carrying out this new mission.

I wholeheartedly grant to you, venerable Brother, the Ecclesiastical Communion, in conformity with the Tradition and the wishes of the Catholic Church. Being united with the Successor of Peter from the beginning is a cause of pride for your Church. Peter was called by Jesus to keep his One Church in unity, truth and love. In accordance with a beautiful and ancient tradition, the name of Peter has been added to the Patriarch's first name.

I am certain, Your Beatitude, that with the good advice of your Predecessor, H.B. Cardinal Nasrallah Pierre Sfeir, and the collaboration of the Fathers of your Patriarchal Synod, in communion with the Episcopal College and above all with the power of Christ who, with his Resurrection triumphed over evil and death, you will have all the zeal, illuminated by wisdom and tempered by prudence, that you need to guide the Maronite Church. She will be able to go forth to the encounter with her Spouse, Our Saviour, clad in the glory of St Maron and of the throngs of Lebanese Saints, St Charbel, St Nimatullah, St Rafqa and Bl. Estéphan.

May the Lord help you in your ministry as “Father and Head” to proclaim the word that saves, so that it may be lived and celebrated in accordance with ancient spiritual and liturgical traditions of the Maronite Church! May all the faithful who are entrusted to you find consolation in your fatherly care!

May the Holy Mother of God, Our Lady of Lebanon, the Virgin of the Annunciation whose baptismal name you bear, make you a herald of unity so that the Lebanese nation — also thanks to the contribution of all the religious communities present in your country and with ecumenical and interreligious enthusiasm — may play its role of solidarity and peace in the East and throughout the world.

I greet you, Your Beatitude, “with the kiss of love” (1 Pt 5:14), in the Lord Jesus, the Good and Eternal Shepherd, and, as I assure my prayers for the whole Church entrusted to your care, I impart to you and to everyone, Bishops, priests, men and women religious and the faithful, my Apostolic Blessing.

From the Vatican 24 March 2011

BENEDICTUS P P. XVI

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