

Declaration of The Maronite Church Fundamentals

Lebanese live today, specially Maronites among them, a critical period of their history. Many are the questions asked about their destiny and their homeland's destiny. Fear about their future keeps growing with the dread of internal mutual fights' renewal , because of the going on struggles accompanied by hatred and stirring of instincts.

The Homeland is in a critical situation which threatens its existence and being. It augurs very dangerous repercussions upon the whole region.

The People is being pulled out by antagonist currents and struggling regional axes. Some of the People range behind this or that axis, while the silent majority stand wandering, lost and unable to hold out against the currents and choose its position.

The State is threatened to be dismembered , being gripped by its confessional affiliation, struggle of forces and partisan interests. The role of Christians in it has become marginal. The State has become unable to perform its role in uniting the Lebanese society, preserve its security, human dignity and basic rights.

Before this tragic reality, the Maronite Church cannot give away the basic role it has played, through history, in building up this homeland, defending it against all incursions and occupations, setting up the independent State and casting down its parliamentary democratic free system. Neither can the Maronite Church neglect to oppose the dangers which threaten the existence of the homeland, the future of the People and the continuity of the State.

Therefore, stemming out of the instructions of the Apostolic Exhortation "**New Hope for Lebanon**" and the Patriarchal Maronite Synod, we are keen , at first, to recall some basic principles which form binding national fundamentals . Out of these , we treat the urgent matters which will help in bringing the country out of the present crisis and set the bases for a long duration treatment of the essential matters related to the homeland's future and perennity.

I – Maronite Fundamentals

1 – Liberty : Maronites have held fast to their liberty of creed throughout history. They lived it from the start in the middle of various religions conflicts. It went together with the other dimensions known to it : intellectual, social and political. The Maronites took refuge in the Lebanese mountains to preserve their liberties which have become, for them , the treasure of treasures.

2 – Conviviality : The Maronite attachment to liberty did not prevent them from being open to others sharing with them good and bad. They struggled to defend the Lebanese soil with brothers from other religions confessions. Together they founded one entity in an atmosphere of equality among all and assured dignity for all. They always lived in conviviality with their brothers and co-citizens in Lebanon, at first, then in all the countries they emigrated to. This conviviality stands upon mutual acknowledgement, the one destiny and the complementarity of the spiritual families which form the one national texture. The Lebanese Constitution consecrated this principle, since it stripped off from legitimacy any authority which contradicts conviviality.

3 – Consensus Democracy : Lebanese have agreed upon a consensus democracy system. The Constitution consecrated this to preserve all the constituents of the pluralistic Lebanese society, allow them all to share in a balanced participation in national life, in great decisions, in running the homeland affairs and building up the State, strengthening and developing it.

4 – Lebanese entity sole homeland : The Lebanese Constitution confirmed , in its prologue, the acknowledgement of Lebanon as a "sole homeland for all its children", beside conviviality and its total belonging to the Arab world. This, of course, requires defending the independence of this homeland, the total sovereignty of the State over all its territory and the free decision of its children in matters having to do with its destiny. It, also, requires facing any attempt to meddle with this independence , wherever it comes from, or its territory occupation and sovereignty impairment or foreign meddling in its affairs, placing its high interest above the interest of any other State.

5 – Commitment to the International Community resolutions, and claim the total implementation, for they are the most successful means to preserve this small homeland, protect it from its neighbors' greed and prevent it from being a means of solving their problems on its account,

either by making of it a country of replacement for those who lost theirs or compensation for the one who has lost part of its territory.

6 – Preserving the Lebanese State, by avoiding what can dismember it and weaken its role. Harming the State is dangerous for the homeland. What is required is rebuilding this State upon the bases of truth, justice, equality and partnership. All its institutions must be restored upon competence, cleanliness of mind, equality and the fighting of corruption, which has nested in its corners.

7 – Insistence upon implementing Taef Agreement totally, with clarifying what's still obscure in it and correcting the shortcomings which showed up in implementing it. This, in order to improve the State performance, and fortify the homeland against dangers.

II – Treating urgent matters

Out of these fundamentals and uncontested principles, we call upon the Maronite leaderships, at first, then upon the other national leaderships to :

1 – Conclude a pact of honor, among themselves and before the nation, assuring their attachment to the dialogue principles and solving divergences within the frame of democracy and law , refusing to resort to any type of violence and armed fights under any pretext or reason. They also, by virtue of this pact, avoid the use of words of scorn and abasement in their speech, the stirring of hatreds and susceptibilities be they confessional, partisan or personal. Avoid to go down, in their speech, as to use vile words which do neither suit them nor those addressed against.

2 – Working at forming the Court with international character called for by their belief in the principles of justice and right, rejecting terrorism, condemning crime, be it political or non political, in order to do justice, put an end to the series of killing and assassinations ranging Lebanon among countries ruled by the law of jungle.

3 –Refuse to be engaged in conflicts of regional or international axes, or join in any external alliances struggling for their interests and influence on Lebanese soil and on Lebanon's account. While being keen on their openness to, and cooperation with their environment and the world.

4 – Defuse the explosive situation by forming a government of national consensus which would insure wide participation on national

level and find solutions to the citizens problems , specially on security and economic levels.

5 – In case this is not feasible, resort to the **formation of a government composed of independent people**. It would work at elaborating new electoral law based on small constituencies, in order to insure true representation of all sections of the People. Give emigrants the right of voting, hence giving them part of their rights, strengthening their relation with their mother homeland and increase their efficient participation in rebuilding it . It, also, will work at organizing anticipated parliamentary elections.

6 – **Find a solution to the problem of the Presidency** which cannot go on with internal and international boycotting. This increases the aggravation of the crisis and the unbalanced situation . Thus, there should be presidential anticipated elections to choose a person around whom there is consensus and who is able to unite the People under a fair State, launch the procedure of reform and rebuild all the State institutions.

7 – **Work together at implementing fully the Taëf Agreement**, particularly the article about administrative decentralization and extensive development. Affirm Palestinians' right to go back to their homeland and refuse their final settlement in Lebanon, settling the problem of Palestinians' arms within the frame of human rights and restrict arms to Lebanese legitimate security forces.

Conclusion

We invite all the Christians to tighten their ranks, unify their word, not to stand against other communities, but to be able to play their historic national role. It is a role to bring together and unify diverse communities and sections of the Lebanese society . It is a security value before the tensions and clashes between the other communities in order to prevent sectarian and confessional conflicts. Thus, they will saveguard Lebanon which is "More than a Country" , it is a message of openness , dialogue, entente and conviviality between religions and cultures.

Bkerkeh, 6 December 2006 .