Fifty-Ninth Ordinary Session – Bkerké, 9 – 13 November 2026

Final Communiqué

"Towards a Renewed Church in Times of Crisis"

Bkerké, 13 November 2026

Introduction

1. The Assembly of Catholic Patriarchs and Bishops in Lebanon held its fifty-ninth ordinary session from 9 to 13 November 2026 at the Maronite Patriarchal See in Bkerké, under the presidency of His Beatitude and Eminence Patriarch Cardinal Mar Bechara Boutros Al-Rahi, with the participation of Their Beatitudes the Patriarchs: Mar Ignatius Youssef III Younan, Syriac Patriarch of Antioch; Mar Youssef Absi, Patriarch of Antioch and All the East for the Melkite Greek Catholics; and Mar Raphaël Bedros XXI, Catholicos-Patriarch of the House of Cilicia for the Armenian Catholics; together with Their Excellencies the Bishops, and the General and Provincial Superiors, men and women, of the religious orders. The Apostolic Nuncio in Lebanon, His Excellency Archbishop Paolo Borgia, took part in the opening session, conveying the greetings and blessing of His Holiness Pope Leo XIV and his love for the Church and the Lebanese people.

2. His Beatitude and Eminence the President of the Assembly opened the session with prayer. He then delivered an address presenting the general theme of the session, entitled: "Towards a Renewed Church in Times of Crisis".

The members of the Assembly then sent a message to His Holiness Pope Leo XIV, recalling with gratitude his historic visit to Lebanon from 30 November to 2 December 2025, and the message of peace, hope and encouragement it brought to the Lebanese, and affirming the need to preserve its spiritual and national fruits and to translate them into practical initiatives.

3. Drawing on the theme of the session, the Fathers reflected on the mission of the Church in the light of the three theological virtues: faith, hope and charity, inspired by the words of the Apostle Paul: "So faith, hope, love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love" (1 Corinthians 13:13).

The Assembly adopted the method of "Conversation in the Spirit", founded on prayer, mutual listening and communal discernment, seeking to discover the renewal to which the Holy Spirit calls the life and mission of the Church.

In the light of the reflections, interventions and discussions, the Assembly declares the following positions and orientations:

First: A Church that Bears Witness to Faith and Renews Its Mission

4. The Assembly affirms that faith in the Risen Christ is the foundation of the Church's life and mission, and that ecclesial renewal is not limited to reforming structures and institutions, but begins with the renewal of hearts and a return to the Gospel, and to a living relationship with God reflected in authentic witness in daily life.

The Assembly calls for strengthening faith, biblical and liturgical formation, for giving particular attention to families and young people, and for developing methods of catechesis and pastoral work that respond to cultural, social and technological changes and help new generations discover the meaning of faith and live its values.

It also stresses the importance of the witness of the lay faithful and their role in transmitting the faith and participating in the mission of the Church, and the need for parishes and ecclesial institutions to be living communities that welcome and accompany every person and open before them horizons of participation and service.

Second: A Church that Sows Hope and Builds the Future

5. In the face of the anxiety and loss of confidence in the future experienced by the Lebanese, the Assembly affirms that Christian hope is neither an escape from reality nor a disregard for difficulties, but a spiritual strength that leads to steadfastness, action and the assumption of responsibility.

Expressing its solidarity with the suffering of families facing poverty, unemployment and the decline of basic services, and sharing the fears of young people faced with a lack of opportunities and forced to emigrate, the Assembly calls for hope to be transformed into practical initiatives that promote human dignity and open horizons for a dignified life.

It also stresses the need to support free educational, healthcare and social institutions, and calls on the Ministry of Finance to pay the financial contributions owed to these institutions, so as to safeguard their mission and their role in serving all citizens.

Third: A Church that Bears Witness to Charity and Serves the Common Good

6. The Assembly reaffirms that charity is the essence of the Christian message, and that it is not limited to providing assistance, but is embodied in the defence of human dignity and rights, and in working for justice, reconciliation and peace.

It calls for strengthening coordination among ecclesial, social and humanitarian institutions and for developing mechanisms of cooperation among them, so as to ensure the sound use of resources, transparency in their management and the delivery of aid to those who deserve it, free from discrimination or favouritism. It stresses that the service of charity should move, wherever possible, from responding to urgent needs to sustainable projects that enable people to become self-reliant, preserve their dignity and help them take part in building their society.

In this context, the Assembly commends the mission of Caritas Lebanon and of the other ecclesial and humanitarian institutions, both local and international, and the efforts they make in the name of the Assembly of Catholic Patriarchs and Bishops in Lebanon to

serve those in need and those affected by crises and wars.

Fourth: Synodality, a Path to the Renewal of the Church

7. The Assembly affirms the commitment of the Catholic Churches in Lebanon to accompany the implementation phase of the synodal path in the universal Church, leading up to the great celebration in October 2028 in Vatican City.

The Assembly calls on dioceses, religious orders, parishes and ecclesial institutions to strengthen the effective participation of all members of the People of God, especially the laity, women and young people, and to adopt dialogue, listening and discernment in pastoral planning and decision-making, in accordance with canon law and the competences of the relevant authorities.

In this context, the Assembly continued its reflection on ways of accompanying the synodal journey at the national level, and to this end established a special episcopal commission chaired by Bishop Mounir Khairallah, comprising representatives of the Catholic Churches in Lebanon from among the clergy, consecrated men and women, and the laity. In coordination with the General Secretariat and the Executive Committee, the commission will follow up on the stages of the synodal journey and facilitate the exchange of experiences among the Catholic Churches.

Fifth: Lebanon Called to Peace and Recovery

8. The Assembly renews the Church's commitment to serving Lebanon, a homeland of freedom, diversity and coexistence, and expresses its deep concern over the continuing political, economic, social and security crises and their repercussions on the lives of citizens and the future of new generations. It affirms that building a just and capable State is the essential gateway to restoring confidence and stability, and that respect for the Constitution and the rule of law, the independence of the judiciary, the fight against corruption, the protection of public funds, and the guarantee of rights and freedoms are necessary conditions for national recovery.

The Assembly stresses the need to respect Lebanon's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity, to protect its legitimate institutions, and to keep it neutral in the conflicts of the region. It calls for the extension of State authority over all its territory, for the decision of war and peace to rest exclusively with its constitutional authorities, and for weapons to be held exclusively by the Lebanese Army and the legitimate security forces. In this context, the Assembly affirms the Church's support for the diplomatic efforts and negotiations conducted by the Lebanese Government to end the war and consolidate the cessation of hostilities, and demands the withdrawal of Israeli forces from all occupied Lebanese territory and the full implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1701 and all other relevant

international resolutions, so as to strengthen security and stability and prevent the resumption of war.

It calls on officials and political forces to give priority to the national interest, to adopt dialogue and understanding instead of confrontation, and to work seriously to address the crises and restore trust between the State and its citizens.

The Assembly affirms that true peace is not built on the logic of force and domination, but on justice, dialogue and respect for the rights of peoples and human dignity, and that Lebanon is called to remain a space of encounter and interaction between religions and cultures. Accordingly, the members of the Assembly renew their attachment to coexistence and to fraternal relations between Christians and Muslims, and call on religious, educational and social leaders to cooperate in spreading a culture of peace and citizenship, and in rejecting extremism, violence and exclusion.

Sixth: Solidarity with the South and the Border Villages

9. The members of the Assembly expressed their deep regret at the war and attacks Lebanon is enduring and the destruction and displacement they have caused. They affirmed that the Church suffers with all those affected and stands by them without discrimination, in solidarity with the people of the villages and towns in the districts of Bint Jbeil, Tyre, Zahrani, Nabatieh, Marjayoun and Hasbaya, and with the people of all other areas of the South and the Bekaa, Christians and Muslims alike. They offered their condolences to the families of the martyrs and wished the wounded a full recovery.

They paid particular tribute to the steadfastness of the people of Debel, Rmeish and Ain Ebel and their perseverance on their land, and affirmed that preserving the historic Christian presence in the South is a shared national responsibility, given the role of this presence in safeguarding Lebanon's diversity, its unity and its message of coexistence.

The members of the Assembly stressed the right of the inhabitants to remain safely on their land, and the right of all displaced persons, including the people of Qaouzah, Alma al-Shaab and Yaroun, to a voluntary, safe and dignified return to their homes and villages. They called on the Lebanese State and the international community to assume their responsibilities in protecting civilians, guaranteeing freedom of movement, providing basic services, especially healthcare and education, rebuilding what has been destroyed, and fairly compensating those affected.

They expressed their concern over the potential security, humanitarian and economic repercussions of the end of the mandate of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), and called for the necessary measures to be taken to avoid any security vacuum and to ensure the continued delivery of humanitarian aid.

Seventh: The Appeal of the Mayors of the Southern Border Villages

10. The members of the Assembly paid particular attention to the appeal issued by the mayors of the five border villages, which set out the suffering of the inhabitants and their legitimate demands for security, steadfastness and a dignified return.

The members of the Assembly commend the humanitarian and diplomatic efforts of the Apostolic Nuncio in Lebanon, His Excellency Archbishop Paolo Borgia, and the initiatives of the Holy See and His Holiness Pope Leo XIV in supporting those affected, particularly through medical, educational and humanitarian assistance.

They also salute the pastoral and humanitarian efforts of Their Excellencies Bishop Charbel Abdallah, Bishop Georges Iskandar, Bishop Georges Haddad and Bishop César Essayan, and of all the bishops, the General and Provincial Superiors, men and women, and the priests, religious brothers and sisters who have remained alongside the faithful of their parishes.

The Assembly launched an ecclesial solidarity initiative, with the contribution of the Catholic dioceses and religious orders, to meet the urgent humanitarian needs of the southern border villages. It also formed a special episcopal commission chaired by Bishop Elias Nassar, comprising the bishops of the dioceses concerned and representatives of the women's and men's religious orders working in the South. The commission will follow the situation of the inhabitants, coordinate assistance and mobilise support in liaison with the Lebanese State, the Holy See, international bodies and humanitarian organisations.

They call on all the faithful of the Church, in Lebanon and in the diaspora, to contribute to this journey of solidarity, so that ecclesial communion may become tangible support for the inhabitants, helping them to remain steadfast on their land and to resume their normal lives.

Eighth: Ecclesial, Organisational and Administrative Affairs and Upcoming Pastoral Activities

11. The members of the Assembly reviewed the reports of the Presidential Council, the Executive Committee, the General Secretariat, the episcopal commissions and the bodies affiliated with the Assembly. They continued their study of the draft amendment to the internal statutes, aimed at clarifying competences, activating the work of the episcopal commissions and strengthening their coordination with the General Secretariat, in a spirit of synodality.

They continued their study of the regulations on the protection of minors and vulnerable adults, emphasising prevention, accountability and transparency. They also reviewed the situation of Caritas Lebanon and affirmed the importance of strengthening

governance and institutional oversight during the second General Assembly, held at the close of the ordinary session.

They were informed of the preparations for the celebration of the Sunday of the Word of God in Bkerké on 24 January 2027, under the theme “Fear not, little flock”, and for the biblical congress “The Book of the Prophet Jeremiah: Hope from the Heart of Trials”, to be held from 25 to 28 January at the theatre of Saint Elias Church in Antelias. They also reviewed the preparations for the participation of the youth of the Catholic Churches in Lebanon in World Youth Day in Seoul, from 3 to 8 August 2027, in the presence of His Holiness Pope Leo XIV.

Ninth: Renewal of Mandates, Elections and Appointments

12. In order to renew responsibilities and ensure continuity of work in the episcopal commissions and the bodies affiliated with the Assembly, the Assembly considered the mandates that had expired and the vacant positions, in accordance with the provisions of its internal statutes.

This process included the renewal of first mandates meeting the canonical requirements, and the election of new presidents and vice-presidents for the commissions whose second and final mandates had ended. The Assembly also elected two supervising bishops and a general chaplain. The results of the elections were as follows:

أ. Election of Bishop Elie Bechara Haddad as President of the Commission for Legal Affairs and Ecclesiastical Tribunals.

ب. Election of Bishop Krikor Badichah as Vice-President of the Commission for Ecumenical Relations.

ج. Election of Mgr Mashdots Zahterian as Vice-President of the Commission for Missionary Cooperation among the Churches.

د. Election of Bishop Mathias Charles Mrad as Supervisor of the League of Confraternities in Lebanon.

هـ. Election of Bishop Antoine Aoukar as Supervisor of the Marian Apostolic Movement.

و. Election of Sister Clémence Haddad as Vice-President of the Commission for Catechesis in Lebanon.

ز. Election of Fr Joseph Kairouz as General Chaplain of the League of Confraternities in Lebanon.

The Assembly affirms that these responsibilities are, above all, an ecclesial service requiring a spirit of communion, cooperation and fidelity to the mission, and expresses its appreciation to the bishops and all those responsible who have completed their mandates, thanking them for the efforts they have made in the service of the Church.

Conclusion

13. At the close of its fifty-ninth session, the Assembly of Catholic Patriarchs and Bishops in Lebanon gives thanks to God for the spirit of prayer, fraternity and dialogue that accompanied its work, and expresses its gratitude to all who contributed to the preparation and success of this session. It also addresses a word of encouragement to the Lebanese who face difficulties with courage and patience, and calls on them to live in hope, to hold fast to their homeland and to work together for its future.

The Assembly places its work and aspirations in the hands of the Virgin Mary, Our Lady of Lebanon, imploring her intercession for the Church and the nation, that Lebanon may enjoy peace, stability and justice, and regain its role as a homeland of freedom, dignity and coexistence.

May our Church, in times of crisis, be a Church steadfast in faith, firm in hope and generous in charity, bearing witness to Christ, serving humanity and building peace.

Fr Jean Younes, M.L.



Secretary General
Assembly of Catholic Patriarchs and Bishops
in Lebanon