

20/05/2025

Homily of His Beatitude Patriarch John X At the Divine Liturgy for the Consecration of the Church Our Lady of Joy



The venerable Church of Christ surpasses in glory the upper firmament, not that it surpasses the radiance of visible light, but because it carries the Divine Sun of Justice that does not set.

Its rays shine with the words of the Spirit day and night in a befitting manner. By these God enlightens the eyes of the soul, saying, "Let there be light."

He is the Life and Resurrection of all.

Your Eminences,

Dear friends,

I have found no words more eloquent than these, spoken 1,500 years ago at the dedication of the Church of Holy Wisdom (Hagia Sophia) in Constantinople, to describe this holy church that is being planted today in the heart of Zahle by the right hand of God Most High. It is meant to radiate in splendor over Zahle, Lebanon, the East, and around the globe, saying to the world: We are the children of this

East, with all our denominations, planted like olive trees. We are the makers of its history and the farmers who planted its cedars and olives. We are those who planted its cedars and olive trees. We are in this land as sprouts of the Creator of the cedars and the Maker of the olive trees.

We come from the lights of the One who said: "Let there be light." This is the message of this church, which reflects in the golden domes, the golden hearts of its faithful, and the pure heart of its founder, Bishop Niphon Saikaly. We come from the radiance of its light because it bears the radiance of the Sun of Justice. We come from its joy, which reflects the joy of the myrrh-bearers at the sight of the empty tomb. We come from the Church of Antioch, steeped in history, rooted in the moment, and looking ahead with eyes that put their hopes solely in the Lord of Glory.

From Our Lady of Joy in Zahle, we send greetings of the Resurrection and joy of hope to Lebanon, the East, and the whole world. From this land that was first stamped with the name of Christ, then stamping the world with the purple-red of His Heavenly Kingdom, we send greetings of peace and tidings of joy to the whole world. From Zahle, which presses the fruit of its vineyards for the Creator, greetings of peace to the East and to the world that is caught in a whirlwind of conflicts. From the East of world's Easts, shaded by the snow of Hermon, from the lands of love and Baalbek, with a storied past, we send greetings of the Resurrection and a glimmer of joy that we wish it today as springing from the Virgin Mary, whom we all honor, both as Muslims and Christians. Oh, how our world needs the joy of Christ! How it needs His true peace amidst these conflicts and wars!

Perhaps what distinguishes the service of consecration of churches is its similarity to baptism, so to speak: a stone is washed, chrism is anointed, and water is poured. Perhaps the most beautiful of these is the lit oil lamp, which is positioned at the spot for the Gospel, since the latter is the light of the soul and the life-giving word. We also see the relics of the saints sown inside the Holy Table. Hence, we notice the beauty of this service, which demonstrates the importance of the luminous nature of human life and its dignity before its Creator. Planting the relics of the saints means, first and foremost, that man is called to be the true Holy Table of the Lord. He, too, must radiate virtue and light, just like the lamp we lit and placed on the Holy Table.

Brother Niphon, you wanted this church to be the Lady of Joy, whose foundation stone we laid in September 2019, and God has given us once again the blessing of its consecration. May the Virgin Mary bestow upon you the joy of her Son and embrace you with her divine tenderness. May His grace be taken by your right

hand and by the right hand of the Pastor of the archdiocese, Metropolitan Antonios Al-Soury, so that the joy of Christ may overflow and fill the hearts of the people of Zahle and the surrounding area with it.

As for those who gave generously so that this church could see the light, their blessing lies in the words of the Apostle Paul: "God loves a cheerful giver." May God bless you all and shower you with His heavenly gifts and bestow upon you abundantly from His inexhaustible fountain of bounties. You wanted it, Your Eminence, to be in Zahle. We know the place that Zahle holds in your heart. You are the one who carried it with you to the ends of the earth. We see in you the authenticity of Zahle, which we love and adore, and we see in it the authenticity of faith and the love of Christ on the faces of its children. Blessed be Zahle and blessed be its children who press the vine juice of their hearts together with the vineyards of their fields and pour it out in love and peace. We congratulate you on the museum that you wanted to be attached to the church, which bears your name with all your zeal and love, embodying the nobility of faith and the fragrant Antiochian authentic value.

We dedicate this church with our eyes on Lebanon and our prayers to God to ward off the war whose specter looms from time to time. We reaffirm Lebanon's mission of coexistence among all sects and emphasize that the principle of numbers and numeracy fades in the face of the principle of role and mission. This is what the Lebanese Constitution intended, transcending the logic of numbers and the scourge of minority and majority to embrace the principle of role and mission.

We dedicate this church in the heart of Zahle, our eyes fixed on God in prayer for Syria. Our call and prayers are dedicated to Syria, for the consolidation of coexistence among all components of this country. Our call is for consolidating a society of solidarity, mutual support, and unity, and for a democratic state that treats all the country's people, its denominations, and components equally under the rule of law.

We are in the Bekaa, and our hearts bleed for what is happening in Palestine and specifically in Gaza. Peace be upon Gaza and the souls of the martyrs of Gaza and our Palestinian people who are paying with the blood of their children the price of a tragedy entering its eighth decade. All this while, some are competing to support a usurping entity that stole the land and expelled people from their homes. Peace be upon Palestine in all its parts, from the West Bank to Jerusalem to Gaza. Even if the tragedy is prolonged, the fate of history and geography tells us that the land belongs to the authentic people who have kept until now the key to a house from which they were expelled and have kept until now the scent of lemons they have

not forgotten.

From here also, we must draw attention to the case of the two bishops of Aleppo, our brothers Youhanna Ibrahim and Boulos Yazigi, who have been kidnapped since April 2013 amidst a condemning silence veiled in an unacceptable logic, as if the people of this East, whose dignity has been violated through kidnapping, killing, and displacement, have no value.

We dedicate this church with a heart that bleeds for what is happening between Russia and Ukraine. Our prayers to the Mother of Mercy and Our Lady of Joy are to stop the war out of mercy for the people who are bleeding from hunger, spirit, violence, killing, and displacement. We pray for our brothers and sisters in the entire Slavic world and ask the Lord of Mercy to be with our brothers and sisters in faith who are suffering and paying the price of the global conflict with their lives. Our prayers are for our brothers and sisters in the Ukrainian Orthodox Church who are paying the price of their faith with the closure of churches, the confiscation of property, and the prohibition of religious practices.

We appreciate the historical role of the Russian Church, which has stood and continues to stand by the Church of Antioch from the days of Tsarist Russia to the present day. We welcome Metropolitan Anthony, Head of the Department for External Relations of the Patriarchate of Moscow and All Russia, and his accompanying delegation. We welcome you and send from here our best wishes to His Holiness Kirill, Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, and through him to all our brothers and sisters in the Russian Church. We affirm that the Church of Antioch has been and will remain in the orbit of the truth of Jesus Christ. From His truth alone she derives strength and relies on His hope, and no other, to remain in this East and ring her bells there, despite the hardships of history with its many ups and downs. However numerous, these will only increase her attachment to the bosom of the Lord, to Him the glory.

To the people of Zahle, the neighbor of the valley, we say: You are in the heart, and Zahle is in our hearts. It is the one that presses the grapes of its vineyards for the one who said, "I am the vine and you are the branches." To Him be glory and exaltation forever and ever. Amen.

[سكذوثرألا مورلل قرشملا رئاسو ةيكاظنأ ةيكريرطب Antioch Patriarchate](#)