



EPARCHY  
OF ST. MARON  
CANADA

*Thirtieth Letter of His Excellency  
Bishop Paul-Marwan Tabet  
To the Maronite Community of Canada  
Easter 2019*

*To dear Monsignors, Priests, Brothers and Sisters,  
To those Consecrated and involved in the life of the Church and Society,  
To Parents, Children, Young Men and Young Women,  
To Parish Communities,  
Dear Brothers and Sisters,*

We rejoice today with all faithful in the world: ***“Christ is truly risen!”***

The resurrection of Christ, after suffering and death, became the foundation of our faith and a cause of joy. In our faith, the Resurrection is of essence and pivotal.

Between Sunday morning when the women were at the tomb (Luke 24:1) and the evening of the same day with the two disciples on the way to the village of Emmaus (Luke 13:24), two encounters occurred with the risen Christ. It was a sequel and a beginning, a recount of a cross-over and a transformation.

***“Stay with us, Lord, for it is almost evening”*** (Luke 24:29).

This was the insistent invitation the two disciples addressed to the **“Wayfarer”** who had accompanied them along the way to the village of Emmaus that very evening of the Resurrection day. Weighed down with sad thoughts, they did not realize that this traveler was indeed their Master, now resurrected. The light of the Word melted the hardness of their hearts. ***“As He took the bread blessed it and gave it to them”*** (Luke 24:30), their eyes were opened. They ***“recognized Him”*** (Luke 24:31) as he spoke to them while "explaining" the Scriptures. They experienced a deep “burning desire” (Luke 24:32). With the darkness of the night, this Traveler was the light that awakened in them the hope and the desire for a full light: **“Stay with us”**.

I take a moment on this occasion to meditate with you on this evangelical scene. It helps us understand the Sacrament of the “Eucharist”, which means “the Sacrament of Thanksgiving” and its presence in our journey of faith, and our lively and renewed relationship with the Lord. Christ, the **“divine traveler”**, accompanies us on our lives journey, be it full of joy or sadness perseverance or anxiety, hope or despair. When the meeting takes place, in the light of the Word emanating from the “Bread of Life”, Christ fulfills his promise to remain with us ***“every day until the end of time”*** (Matthew 28:20).

The “breaking of the bread”, as referred to by the emerging Church, has been from the beginning its life pulse. Through it, Christ makes in the *hic and nunc* (here and now), the mystery of His death and resurrection. He is received in person as “*living bread descended from heaven*” (John 6:51) and with Him is given to us the pledge of eternal life and the pre-taste of the eternal banquet at the heavenly Jerusalem.

Through this Letter, I offer some basic orientations, inspired from Saint John Paul II thoughts, to rediscover the Eucharistic Celebration as the heart of the Sunday, the day of the Lord.

## 1- THE EUCHARIST, A MYSTERY OF PRESENCE

At every Mass, the liturgy of the “Word” precedes the liturgy of the “breaking of the bread”, i.e. the Sacrament of the Eucharist. The listening to the word of God has duly prepared the two disciples of Emmaus to recognize Christ when he broke the bread with them at the table “*they recognized Him at the breaking of the bread*” (Luke 24:35). These explicit signs explain to every faithful the mystery of the presence of Christ. Here are two major components:

- Be it a “**banquet**”, is the most evident component of the Eucharist celebration. The Eucharist was instituted on the evening of Holy Thursday, in the setting of a Passover meal. Being a meal is part of its very structure: “*Take this and eat it, for this is my body. Then He took a cup, and when He had given thanks, He gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you"*” (Matthew 26: 26-27). As such, these words express the fellowship that God wishes to establish with each one of us, as well as ourselves and with one another.
- Be it a “**sacrifice**” constitutes the other important component. In the Eucharist, Christ makes present to us the sacrifice offered on Golgotha. As the Risen Lord, he nonetheless bears the marks of His passion. Here is what the acclamation that follows the words of the consecration during the Liturgy represents: “We announce your death, Lord, we proclaim your resurrection...”.

These two components complete each other: God wants our devotion through faith of the real presence of Jesus Christ, living and life-giving presence.

## 2- THE EUCHARIST, A CONFIRMATION OF COMMUNION

“*Abide in me, and I in you*” (John 15:4). The disciples of Emmaus asked Jesus to stay “**with**” them. However, through the Sacrament of the Eucharist, Christ wanted to remain “**in**” them. Receiving the Eucharist means entering into a profound communion with the risen Lord. It is an act of unity no one can understand it or experience it apart from the ecclesial communion.

Through the Eucharistic mystery, Christ builds up the Church as a communion, in accordance of the supreme model evoked in His *priestly prayer*: “*Even as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they may also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me*” (Jn 17:21).

## 3- THE EUCHARIST, A MISSION PROJECT

Upon recognizing the Lord, the two disciples of Emmaus “*set out immediately*” (Luke 24:33), [and returned to Jerusalem] in order to report what they had seen and heard. Once we truly experience the Risen Christ and partake of his body and blood, we cannot keep to ourselves the joy we receive. Living with Christ summons every Christian as well as the faithful community to

testimony and evangelization. Saint Paul says: “*as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes*” (1 Cor 11:26). The dismissal at the end of each Mass is *a charge* given to Christians, inviting them to work for the spread of the Gospel and imbuing society with Christian values.

**Dear Brothers and Sisters,**

Jesus in the Holy Communion awaits to pour into your hearts the grace of His friendship, which alone can give meaning and fulfilment to your life.

I encourage you on the “day the Lord has made” to rediscover the gift of the Eucharist as light and strength for your daily life in the world, and amid any situation you are in now.

I refer to you the lives of the Saints as example. They found their nourishment, in this Holy Sacrament, on their journey towards perfection. May the Blessed Virgin Mary help you. She incarnated through her entire life the “logic” of the Eucharist.

Our resurrection takes place every morning, every evening and every day. We are called to the path of resurrection in order to fulfill the work of the Lord and to foster love into our families, our communities and the world.

**Christ is Risen...! He is truly Risen!**

**+ Paul-Marwan TABET  
Bishop**