

**Address of Most Reverend Superior General Abbot Tannous Nehme  
at the Opening Ceremony of the Photo Gallery  
Organized by the Monastery of Saint Elias Almtoshi - Cyprus**

Your Grace Archbishops Youssef Soueif, Archbishop of the Maronite Diocese of Cyprus,

Your Grace Bishop Gregorios, representing his Beatitude Archbishop of Cyprus, Chrysostomos II,

Excellencies, Mr. and Mrs. ambassadors of the Holy Maronite Monastery of St. Elias in Strovolos,

Reverend Father Joseph Mikhael, Superior of the Holy Maronite Monastery of Prophet Elias Mar Elias in Cyprus,

Reverend Fathers and Sisters,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to share with you, on this wonderful occasion, in which we take a glimpse at the various historical stages of the Lebanese Maronite Order's presence in this ancient island of Cyprus.

I am pleased to go back with you to the beginnings, when Superior General most Rev Abbot Mikhail Iskandar sent in 1735 a number of monks from Lebanon, and among them some Cypriot monks, namely Rev Father Boutros Mousawer. In that historical document Rev Abbot Mikhail Iskandar stated: "We send you to the island to offer good deeds to its people and to build a monastery so that this good will last and be preserved".

Today, we inaugurate this exhibition on the Monastery of Saint Elias for the Maronite, before and after 1974.

The Lebanese Maronite Order of monks has been, for three centuries, accompanying the Maronites of Cyprus and other compatriots in their happiness and pain. Our great hope is in seeing preserved and flourishing our cultural, religious and architectural heritage in the whole Island.

We will pray with you and will do our utmost best so that history and heritage be respected. The faith lived by our ancestors and passed on to generations created, wherever it was truly lived, an oasis of peace, hope and courage.

The Maronite monastery of Mar Elias, whose past and present are celebrated today in this exhibition, has been such an oasis and is aiming to remain so in all stages of history.

As messenger of the peace of the Lord, I would like to take this opportunity, to claim a just and fair solution to the case of displaced Cypriots. We would like to see them returning soon to their villages, churches and homes. And, hence, we make a call to all the concerned authorities in all countries, so that endangered historical monuments be preserved and restored, and hope, goodness and history prevail.

We congratulate Reverend Father Superior Joseph Mikhael for his marvellous work, contribution and perseverance to promote the spiritual tradition and protect the cultural heritage in this land. We thank him for his contribution in translating the majority of the Maronite liturgical texts into Greek, and refine them according to the Syriac Maronite tune.

We wish him all the best and a continued success. He is a great ambassador of the Lebanese Maronite Order, with his knowledge of its spiritual authenticity. We hope that monastic and clerical vocations keep increasing in the Church for the glory of God and the good of human beings.

We Thank His Excellency, Archbishop Youssef Soueif Archbishop of the Maronite Diocese, for supporting the spiritual and cultural renaissance in this Diocese in all its aspects. We thank His Grace Archbishop of Cyprus who blessed us by his valuable presence represented by His Grace Bishop <sup>Youssef</sup>....., and we thank His Excellency Mayor of Strovolos and you all present here today at this event.

Long live Cyprus and long live Lebanon.

God bless you all.