

**Homily of His Beatitude Bechara Peter Cardinal Rai  
At the Funeral of Bishop Stephen Hector Doueihi in Lebanon**

"The Good Shepherd Goes Ahead of His Sheep, and Leads them to Pastures Green" (John 10:2 - 4)

On Saturday, December 27, 2014, His Beatitude Patriarch Bechara Peter Cardinal Rai presided at the funeral service of the late Bishop Stephen Hector Doueihi, Bishop Emeritus of the Eparchy of Saint Maron, at St. John Cathedral in Zghorta, Lebanon.

With deep sorrow and in the hope of Christmas, we bid farewell to the late Bishop Stephen Hector Doueihi, who passed away the morning of the seventeenth of this month, in Brooklyn, New York, at the age of eighty-seven. He passed his years with sincere faith in Christ and the Church. The Good Shepherd, Jesus Christ, called him to participate in the leadership of His people as a priest, a bishop, an author and a scholar. Throughout the different stages of his life as a priest and as a bishop he was that "Good Shepherd who goes ahead of his sheep and leads them to green pastures" (John 10:2 - 4).

He is the son of Ehden-Zghorta, that Maronite city in the North of Lebanon, rich in its ecclesiastic, patriotic and cultural heritage, the city of patriarchs, bishops, priests, monks and nuns. Two Presidents of the Lebanese Republic came from Ehden-Zghorta, along with many ministers, deputies, men of government, politicians, intellectuals as well as men of culture and science. Bishop Stephen Hector Doueihi belongs to the Doueihi family, the family of the great Venerable Patriarch Estephan Doueihi, whose canonization's cause we accompany with our prayers, so that the Lord may reveal his sainthood and the Church may venerate him on its altars. Hector was born to Youssef and Hassibeh Zakhia Doueihi. He had three brothers and a sister who preceded him in death to the House of the Father with the oldest of his brothers, the late Badwi. At that home filled with faith, he was called to priestly life. He answered the call with joy, faithfulness and commitment. These three were his companions for his entire life.

After completing his elementary education at Saint Joseph School in Zghorta, he received priestly formation respectively at Saint Maron Seminary, Ghazir, and the University of Saint Joseph, Beirut, and at the Propaganda Fide University and the Gregorian University, Rome. He received his Doctorate in Theology and Liturgy. He was ordained by the imposition of the hands of the late Patriarch Paul Peter Cardinal Meouchi on August 14, 1955, at the beginning of his Patriarchal Enthronement, and he has granted him his complete trust.

Father Hector started his priestly ministry as a fervent shepherd in the parish of Zghorta for ten years, from 1959 to 1969. He enriched his parish, giving out of himself and collaborating with other priests, among them was Father Emile Saade who later became Patriarchal Vicar General of the Patriarchal Vicariate of Batroun and Ehden-Zghorta, then the Bishop of the Eparchy of Batroun after its declaration as an independent eparchy.

There, we got to know Father Hector, whose star was bright like the Christmas Star and who has become the focal point of attention and admiration. We have known him as a fervent priest who consecrated all his efforts to reconcile and unite all of the children of Zghorta, that was divided by the bitter incidents of 1958. He gathered the priests of Zghorta in one priestly residence, and gathered the youth of Zghorta in a committed and dedicated group at the priestly residence, which he turned into a center of spiritual, cultural and social gathering, along with the Folklore Group and the Festivals of Ehden-Zghorta, and the Medical Dispensary which later became Notre Dame Hospital, one of the greatest hospitals in North Lebanon.

On what concerns the Maronite Church he, with other fervent priests like him, took many primordial initiatives inspired by the teaching of the Ecumenical Council Vatican II (1962-1965), which was called by Pope St. John Paul II "the Spring of the Church." He called for a renewal movement within our Church in the spirit of that Council as he published a series of Articles under the name "Our Church in Questions"; revitalized the "Priests' League"; the "Fraternity of the Priests of North Lebanon" and the movement "A Church for Our World." At the same time he taught Theology at Saint Anthony of Padua Institute, Karm Saddeh, at the University of Saint Joseph, Beirut; the University of the Holy Spirit, Kaslik; and at Our Lady of Lebanon Seminary, Washington, D.C. He expressed in all of these institutes his renewing and aspiring ideas that he left for us as a heritage in the Arabic language, namely: Our Church at the Edge, The Church of People and the Church of Stones, Saint Sharbel and The Council of Vatican II.

With this apostolic enthusiasm, Patriarch Paul Peter Cardinal Meouchi sent him in 1969 to serve our Maronite Mission in Mexico, namely in the city of Puebla where he spent three years. He moved after that in 1972 to the service of our Maronite Eparchy in the United States of America. He was called to its service by the late Bishop Francis Zayek. He dedicated himself and fully utilized his talents and his spiritual, intellectual and cultural heritage and the seven languages he spoke: Arabic, French, Italian, Spanish, English, Syriac and Latin. He was the Vice-Rector of Our Lady of Lebanon Seminary in Washington, D.C., and served Saint Sharbel Parish in Peoria, Illinois; Our Lady of Lebanon Church in Washington, D.C.; Saint George Church in Wilkes-Barre, Penn.; Saint George Church in San Antonio, Tex.; and Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral in Brooklyn, N.Y.

In all of these, he was the good shepherd who led the souls entrusted to him to the fountain of salvation - the Word of the Gospel, the teaching of the Church and the grace of the Sacraments. He was loved and respected by all. He acquired the trust of the Eparchial Bishop who granted him the Order of Periodeut and the trust of His Beatitude and Eminence Nasrallah Peter Cardinal Sfeir who granted him the Order of Chorbishop. He was well-respected and loved among the priests, and he was entrusted with many positions at the eparchial level and in the Maronite Church: Director of the Eparchial Commission for Liturgy; Director of the Eparchial Commission for the Synod for Lebanon; member of the Patriarchal Commission for Liturgy; and member of the Presbyteral Council and Eparchial College of Consultants.

The most noble and dignified task Chorbishop Hector accomplished with great effort and attention was the translation of the liturgical books into English, after the latest liturgical reform and the responsibility of editing the English texts of the Liturgy and of the Sacraments published by the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn. He left us several books on the liturgy in English, namely the Liturgical Year, the Mystery of Crowning, the Mystery of Christian Initiation, Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist, the Book of Funerals, the Book of Prayers and Blessings and the Pontifical.

He regarded the Liturgy as "The authentic connection between all the Maronites throughout the whole world" and he considered it "the second nation for all Maronites." He said: "Lebanon, the nation and the land, is no longer able to assemble all Maronites throughout the world, and is no longer capable of containing them. However, the Liturgy brings them together and contains all of them, and it is enriched by their particularities."

When the late Bishop Francis Zayek attained the canonical age and resigned from the administration of the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn, the Synod of the Bishops of our Maronite Church elected Chorbishop Hector Doueihy as his successor, and Pope John Paul II appointed him as the Bishop of the Eparchy on November 23, 1996, and he took the name of Stephen Hector. He served the Eparchy with his attentiveness, vigilance and future perspective. He served at the time of the immediate preparation for the Maronite Patriarchal Synod and its sessions (2003-2006). He greatly contributed to this Synod, especially

in what it concerns the world of expansion, of which he was an expert. He considered Lebanon the "Spiritual Nation" of Maronites regardless of their citizenship and belonging. They are connected through it and through the person of the Patriarch. He said: "We, Maronites, have no life in the countries of the world unless we are rooted in Lebanon - the land, with all what it represents as spiritual patrimony: it is the cradle of our faith, the land of our holy places and the tombs of our Saints, and the union to the very person of the Patriarch and the Patriarchal institution in Bkerke and Dimane."

He was very eager to unite the Church in the countries of expansion to the Church in Lebanon, which he called the Mother Church, and the other the Daughter Church, which is fed the milk of the Mother Church; she grows and develops in the cultural background in which she lives. According to him, the Maronite Church in the countries of expansion is not a photocopy of the Maronite Church in Lebanon, it will be Maronite in the full meaning of the word, will preserve its originality and faithfulness, will always be united to Lebanon, "the Spiritual Nation," by the bond of spirit, rite, theology and roots, under the complete leadership of the Patriarch.

He explained that the Maronite Church in the countries of expansion lives the universal characteristic of Catholicity in the One, Catholic, Holy and Apostolic Church, according to the unique flavor of "Beit Maroun" and the Antiochene Maronite Patriarchal See (or Chair). With this characteristic she preaches the Gospel for every individual and nation in every place, nation and land. She is originally from the East, and namely from Lebanon, but as a Maronite Church she goes beyond Lebanon and its history and its language. She is not only a national Church at the service of the Maronite immigrants from Lebanon and other countries. In the light of this vision, Bishop Stephen Hector asked to deal with the Maronite Expansion, and to get to know its facts, principles and perspectives, so that it will be contained within the Maronite Church, and the Church will always be One, Catholic, Holy, Apostolic and Ecumenical.

When he attained the canonical age, he resigned from the administration of the Eparchy. Bishop Gregory Mansour, here present, succeeded him, receiving the trust in 2004. He took good care of him, and consulted with him in eparchial affairs, especially the Liturgy, and invited him to participate in different occasions.

After he arranged the funeral with local bishops and the priests and the faithful of the Eparchy, he accompanied him to Lebanon, where he wished to be buried in the tomb of Saints Peter and Paul Church in *Ehden*. A big thank you also to Ms. Michelle [Thomas] who took immediate care of him at his residence at Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral in Brooklyn, N.Y.

We express our deepest sympathy to the Holy Synod of our Church, and to the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn and to the Patriarchal Vicariate of *Ehden-Zghorta*, and to the all clergy of *Ehden-Zghorta* and to his two brothers and their families, and to the families of his late brother and late sister and to the families of his late uncles and aunts and to all his siblings and relatives and to all the beloved children of *Ehden-Zghorta*.

Our prayer to Christ the Lord, the Good Shepherd, and the "Great Chief Shepherd" (1 Peter 5:4) to reward with the beatific vision in heaven the late Bishop Stephen Hector, who knew how to be, following His example, a good shepherd, and who provided to the souls entrusted to him the springs of salvation and life divine. We ask the Lord to send to the Church "good shepherds after his own heart" (Jeremiah 3:15). To the Holy and Glorified Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, all praise and thanksgiving, now and forever, Amen.□

*Zghorta* - Church of Saint John the Baptist, December 27, 2014