



## **ERECTION OF MARONITE EPARCHY, A TESTIMONY OF THE UNIVERSALITY OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH**

Jun 11, 2018

### **IBADAN, NIGERIA -**

The Bishop of the Maronite Eparchy of Our Lady of the Annunciation, Ibadan, Nigeria, Most Rev. Simon T. Faddoul has described the erection of the Eparchy and his installation as the first Bishop as a divine act of the Holy Spirit to further confirm the universality of the Catholic faith and Church.

Bishop Faddoul made this remark in his homily at the celebration of the Mass for his installation and official erection of the Eparchy of Our Lady of the Annunciation in Ibadan, Oyo State, recently. According to him, Pope Francis was inspired by the Holy Spirit to articulate God's will to make the Exarchy to become an Eparchy "with full rights and responsibilities and let the Exarch, myself , his humble servant , become your servant, your shepherd, the first Bishop over this new Ecclesiastical entity".

Describing the elevation as a dream fulfilled in the life of the Maronite Catholic faithful across West and Central Africa, Bishop Faddoul emphasized the role of Mary in the life of the Church and how they have placed their hope and trust in her maternal care, since April 2014. This hope became fulfilled on February 28, 2018 when Pope Francis elevated the Exarchy to an Eparchy, he added.

The local ordinary of the Maronite Eparchy went down memory lane on the history of the Maronite Church, since the

fifth Century when “it started as a purely spiritual movement that followed the example of St Maron, who was a priest-hermit”. He continued: “It has never known internal divisions, and has always been faithful to official Church Teachings in unity with the See of Peter in Rome.”

Bishop Faddoul disclosed that the Church has dioceses in Lebanon, where the head of the Church resides; Syria, Holy Land, Egypt, Cyprus, Europe, Africa, USA, Canada, Brazil and Argentina. He expressed his gratitude to the members of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Nigeria (CBCN), under the Presidency of Most Rev. Augustine Akubeze, for their support and collaboration and assured them of cooperating and working assiduously for the progress of the Church in Nigeria as a member of the conference.

The Erection and installation ceremony was attended by Monsignor Tuomo Vimpari , Charge de’ Affairs at the Apostolic Nunciature, who represented the Papal Nuncio, Archbishop Antonio Guido Filippazi, Archbishop Gabriel ‘Leke Abegunrin, the Catholic Archbishop of Ibadan, Archbishop Felix Alaba Job, emeritus of Ibadan Archdiocese and representatives of the bishops of Oyo and Osogbo Dioceses.

Also present were: Archbishop Michael Aoun who represented his Beatitude Mar. Bechara Boutros Cardinal Al Rai, Patriarch of the Maronite Church; Most Rev. Abbot Neemtallah Hachem, Superior General of the Lebanese Maronite Order; Rev. Fr. Joseph Elkamar, Assistant General of the Lebanese Maronite Order; Rev. Fr. Michael Abou Tacca, Secretary General of the Lebanese Maronite Order and Rev. Fr. Ralph Madu, Secretary General, Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria (CSN).

The ceremony took place on Pentecost Sunday, May 20, 2018. It will be recalled that the Episcopal Ordination of Bishop Fadoul took place in Lebanon in April 7, 2018; and the ceremony was attended by the President of the CBCN, Most Rev. Augustine Obiora Akubeze, who led the Nigerian delegation. Also in the delegation were: Most Rev. Gabriel Leke Abegunrin of Ibadan Archdiocese, Bishop Matthew Hassan Kukah of Sokoto Diocese and Rev. FR. Ralph Madu, CSN Secretary General.

