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LEBANESE CITIZENSHIP AND CHRISTIANITY IN LEBANON

As many of you know, at this moment in history the status of Christians and the very presence of Christianity in Lebanon and throughout the Middle East is under great pressure. It is important for Lebanon, with the largest percentage of Christians of any country in the Middle East, to maintain a vibrant and significant Christian presence and witness. Our Maronite Patriarch, Cardinal Bechara Peter Rai, is asking those in a position to do so, to step forward and make a difference by helping to secure the role that Christians can play.

On 24 November 2015, the Lebanese Parliament ratified the Lebanese Nationality Law which gives descendants of Lebanese immigrants the right to acquire or reacquire their Lebanese citizenship. "The Lebanese Nationality Program" is an initiative launched by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Emigrants for people of Lebanese heritage around the world in order to apply for Lebanese Citizenship and to benefit from their business, financial, consular, personal, social and political rights as Lebanese, wherever they are. In particular, this initiative is relevant for the large Lebanese communities in different countries all over the world. Through this law you can now find your story, connect to your roots, and claim you Lebanese citizenship.

Among other advantages of acquiring or reacquiring your Lebanese citizenship and registering marriages and births in Lebanon, you will be able to vote for your preferred Lebanese politician, inherit property, reclaim any inheritances due you, and be exempt from the payment of taxes to Lebanon. More importantly, by obtaining your Lebanese citizenship, you will be helping to preserve both Christianity in Lebanon and the true cultural diversity that has always been a source Lebanese pride. Obtaining your Lebanese citizenship will not compromise or jeopardize in any way your American citizenship. This law is in effect for only 10 years and expires in 2025.

You are eligible to participate in this program if your name or the name of any of your male ancestors is registered on the 1921-1924 emigrants' or residents' census or on the 1932 emigrants' census. The

application process has been simplified and can be started by checking your eligibility and completing and submitting the form found at the link, <http://lebanity.gov.lb>. To apply and check your eligibility, start by filling in the online application. A professional team will review your application and will notify you within 5 business day of your eligibility. Once you are considered eligible for Lebanese citizenship you will be asked to submit supporting documents such as Lebanese civil registry extract of your ancestors and marriage and birth certificates. Once your application is submitted you will be able to track your application through a mobile app. You will be notified about the status of your application at each step of the process. The process is free of charge and requires 6 to 12 months to be finalized. If you need assistance in applying and completing the forms, contact your pastor or the Project Roots coordinator in your parish or contact the Christian Lebanese Foundation in the World/Project Roots through their email, info@projectroots.net, or via telephone 917-755-0499. Help with applying for citizenship can be obtained through the following site, <http://www.projectroots.net/registration-requests.html>.

As descendants of Lebanese immigrants, it is your right to claim your Lebanese citizenship and we encourage you to do so. We must work hand-in-hand to connect with our homeland and preserve our heritage. Let us step forward and make a difference.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

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