

**The Charter of Political Action
in the Light of the Church Teachings
and Lebanon's Specificity
2009**

Dedication:

After deliberating about the standard to which political action has been reduced to in Lebanon, the Church, in all its communities, found out that its duty is to educate consciences. Thus, it worked for months, upon a document which was titled: «The Charter of Political Action in the Light of the Church Teachings and Lebanon's Specificities». This document was believed to be necessary, given the prevailing internal, regional and international circumstances and the norms which should be implemented, so that political action remains true to its nature and does not stray away from its aim and role at the service of Man and society.

Having acquired through generations a long experience in human matters based upon a broad and deep teaching in sociology, education, culture, development and economy the church deemed it necessary to publish a teaching which promotes political culture as a noble art at the service of the human being and his welfare. It was also necessary to bring out the specificity of Lebanon—Homeland and entity, covenant and formula, together committing ourselves to rebuild it on stable foundations so as it recovers its stability and role in both the Arab and international communities.

The «Charter» aims at enhancing a patriotic education and upbringing in schools, universities, family, society, parish councils, pastoral organizations and various committees at work in parishes and eparchies.

The Church looks forward to cooperate with mass media in organizing seminars about the «Charter», with the assistance of the Episcopal Committee for Social Communications. It also intends to call for spiritual retreats where talks about the Charter will be given. Homogeneous groups of politicians, syndicalists, young men, women and civil associations will be called upon to join in for a constructive Christian witnessing in temporal matters and good political performance for the public service.

It is indispensable to multiply meetings between Christians and Moslems to strengthen the unifying national culture and the will to live this unity. Homelands are built up by their children's ideas, will, heart and hands.

Foreword

The charter of political action is one of the Maronite Patriarchal Synod's recommendations in its nineteenth text «The Maronite Church and Politics». It was, also, among the recommendations made by the common session of the Catholic, Orthodox and Evangelical churches, which was held in March 2008(see the **Acts of this session, p. 167**). It sums up the church's teaching about the political community, its understanding, aims and biblical and theological bases, as well as about the ethics in the exercise of the political power. It determines the cooperation and connection between the two and their independence within the competence, attributions and means of each one. It points out the connection between political action and the dignity of the person, Man's right and public good.

Among the aims of this charter are the following: provide the Lebanese People with a political culture with universal, spiritual, moral, social and national dimensions; place politicians before their responsibilities and duties; determine the criteria which direct the citizens in choosing their representatives in the political community; and submit them to control and accountability.

In the first part, the Charter defines the principles related to politics as a noble art for the service of Man and public good, the relation between the Church and the State and the participation of Christians in the political action and its exercise.

In the second part deals with Lebanon as Homeland with its specificities, value, national pact and formula of coexistence and the shared responsibility in reviving it and establishing the civil democratic State.

In the third part it formulates, in summary, these principles which constitute the articles of the «Charter of Political Action in Lebanon».

Part One
The Principles

CHAPTER I

Politics is a noble art at the service of Man and public welfare.

1- Every human community needs an authority to organize its affairs, assure its public welfare and exercise political activity. The foundation of such an authority lies in the very human nature and submits, when exercised, to a moral rule God has engraved in the heart of Man, whom he has created to his image and likeness. This natural law is nothing else than the light of understanding through which Man distinguishes what is the good he must do and the evil he must avoid¹.

God has established an order in the world so as individuals and Peoples live in peace and mutual understanding, manage temporal affairs, and enjoy welfare and justice.

Thus was brought forth the political authority. It evolved through the stages of its creation, formation and competence. It is required to always seek God's will and salvation plan. It is the duty of the one in authority to **«govern your people with justice, your oppressed with right judgment» (2/72 Ps)**. God warned kings through the prophets, about their shortcomings and oppression of the People. **«Woe to those who enact unjust statutes and who write oppressive decrees. Depriving the needy of judgment and robbing my People's poor of their rights» (10/1-2)**.

2- In his conduct and through his teachings, Christ showed that authority is a service and a sacrifice of oneself for the whole, but it loses its sense if it becomes oppressive **(10/45 Mrk)**. **«For the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many»**. He tacitly condemned trying to divinize world authority or give it an absolute character which reduces it to extremism or dictatorship. He said: **«Repay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God» (12/17 Mrk)**, meaning by this that the exercise of authority must submit to God's moral rule. Saint Paul the Apostle assured that there

¹ Catholic Church Catechism, n. 1898 and 1955.

is no authority but in God and that he is at his service to urge people to do good. He asked to pray for the governors stressing that the political authority is required to provide «**quiet and tranquil life in all devotion and dignity**» (2/1-2 Tim.1). Peter the Apostle added to this teaching «**conscience objection**» which becomes an obligation whenever political authority overlaps its boundary and tackles matters opposed to faith, «**We must obey God rather than men**» (5/29 Acts). The book of the Catholic Church Catechism made it plain that «**the authority does not acquire its legitimacy by itself, neither should it act oppressively, but it must strive for public welfare. It is not exercised legally unless it strives for the welfare of the community and uses, to achieve it, the morally accepted means. If ever the authorities enact unjust laws or take measures that go against moral order, these do not obligate morally because of tyranny**» (n. 1903).

3- In the light of this teaching, the Church considers that politics is a noble art which undertakes economic, social, legislative, and administrative, and various culture activities, in order to consolidate public welfare, which is «**the social conditions which enable individuals and groups to better realize themselves**»².

It is a «noble art» for it is concerned with the human being's dignity and essential rights which are based upon the natural law engraved in the heart of Man and is found in various cultures and civilizations. The human being is at the summit of God's plan for the world and history³. It is «a noble art» on the ground that the holders of political authority are «**Servants of God for your good**» (Rom 4/13).

It compels them to exercise their authority and work, within the limits of the moral order established by God, bearing in mind that they are responsible for directing the citizens' abilities and the State's capacities towards the public welfare, for the good of all, and consolidate its elements which the most important ones are as follows:

a) The Respect of the human being for himself, in his vocation, fundamental rights and natural liberties which should be protected and defended.

b) The development of the human being in all his spiritual, cultural and economic dimensions, providing him with what he needs for an honorable life such as food, clothes, health

² *Christifideles laïcis*, n. 42; *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 26, 74.

³ Pope Benedict's XVI, UN Assembly 18-4-2008.

services, work opportunities, education, culture, proper information, the right to found a family, etc.

c) Providing peace, justice, security and stability through the regular state security institutions⁴.

4- Political action is at Man's service by force of God's plan, who wanted to make out of men and women, a one human family within which they deal with a spirit of brotherhood, with each other, and a filial spirit with the one Creator. Thus, all people are in need for each other and live in a state of connectedness. Political authority must strengthen this connectedness and integration among the citizens, facilitate their efforts to create associations, public and private organizations⁵; it must establish a social system that secures the welfare of every person. This social system is based upon truth, protected by justice, stimulated by love, and it grows through freedom and moves towards a better human harmony⁶.

Truth rejects lie, trickery and distortion. Justice requires that rights be secured and duties performed between the State and the citizen and between the citizens themselves. Love, in its warmth, moves the authorities so as they feel people's needs as if they were theirs and work at providing them with these needs. Freedom preserves the citizens' dignity in the practice of their private and public activities.

5- Political action assumes as well, the protection of citizens from the violation of their human rights and from the consequences of crises caused by nature or Man. It, also, assumes the protection of human life by taking care of the old, the neglected, oppressed workers and abandoned refugees; by safeguarding human life from crimes like killing, extermination, abortion, euthanasia and suicides. It protects the human being from aggression by amputation, corporal and mental torture or aggression against his dignity by inhumane living conditions, arbitrary detention, exile and slavery or degrading work conditions where people are treated as mere machines and not as free responsible beings⁷.

The principle, «**Responsibility of protection**» known since the old ages the *ius gentium*, was considered as the basis of any action taken by the authorities towards those they governed

⁴ The Church in Today's world, n. 74.

⁵ The Church in Today's World, n. 25.

⁶ Peace on Earth, n. 35.

⁷ The Church in Today's world, n. 74.

and an aspect of the natural Peoples' rights. The Church considers it attached to the concept of Man created to the image of the Creator⁸.

6- Political action includes, on the public welfare level, basic sectors which are structuring public life in its daily necessities and ramifications like running the interior state affairs: administrations, services, plans, and projects in the fields of economy, sociology, legislation, and culture. Political action also includes foreign activity, which establishes relations with states; concludes treaties for the benefit of all; strengthens the love for homeland and its dignity; enhances its values, patrimony, emblems, history and traditions; fulfills the citizens' hopes and expectations; dispels their apprehensions; and wards off the dangers threatening them.

It is incontestable that there cannot be a sound public national life, built upon true human foundation, except by consolidating the sense of justice and good will at the service of public welfare, working daily with a spirit of service combined with virtues, competence, efficiency, dedication in fulfilling the duty with impartiality, transparency and integrity in the exercise of authority⁹.

Political activity is a moral activity which does not match with domination, corruption and ambiguity. The citizens, who place their confidence in the political authorities and political leaders, expect them to secure the welfare of every person, run the government with self-denial and dignity and be ready to listen to everybody.

That is why, every political action is condemned whenever it is actually and exclusively performed for personal and partisan interests, on the account of the public good and whenever it subjects the citizens' rights and dignity to their political belonging, religious adherence or opinion, which limits public liberties, particularly liberty of opinion and expression; limits civil and religious liberties; neglects the minorities depriving them from their right; and undertakes to divide and split ranks.

7- Since political authority is exercised in the name of the People, it supposes diversity of opinions, which democratically starts on individual level to take shape in political parties and movements, this without depriving the one different from his right to expression or restraining him or ignoring him.

⁸ Pope Benedict XVI, speech at the UN, 18 April, 2008.

⁹ Pope John Paul II, *Sermon of the Jubilee of Governments and Politicians*, 10-11-2000.

They all expect the political authority to provide individuals, families and groups their common welfare assuring the vital, economic and social conditions necessary to fulfill themselves. Political action will then become a competition between better plans set up to secure the execution of these duties in the best and most complete way without fight, mistrust or clash.

CHAPTER II

Relations between the Church and the State

8- Between the Church and the State there is distinction and independence. Although they meet at the service of Man, society and public welfare, they still are distinct in form, structure and ways. But it is necessary that they cooperate, understand each other and unite their efforts to ensure the welfare of Man who is made of soul and body, matter and spirit.

9- The Distinction

The State exercises political power in all its aspects and obligations to achieve the public welfare of Man and Society. This is achieved through taking care of the whole social, economic, cultural, ethical and political conditions of life which enable people, families and groups, specially the neediest ones, to ascertain themselves fully¹⁰.

But the Church, which also works for the public welfare of Man and Society, distinguishes itself from the State by its nature, fields of service and ways. It is the communion of faith, hope and love at the service of the truth and grace, granted freely by Christ to all to strengthen the union of every man, a personal union, with the Divine Trinity and human kind¹¹. Its mission is not to establish or adopt a defined political, economic or social system. The duty, her divine founder had assigned to her, is to build up human society and establish it according to God's law. But she may, rather she must when necessary, considering circumstance place and time, take initiatives of establishing, for the service of all specially the needy ones, charitable, cultural, social and medical institutions¹².

Since the Church's mission is religious, it is, therefore, concerned with regulating the faithful's relations with his God, Brother Man, Community and other creatures, on spiritual and moral levels. The Church undertakes activities with national character related to Man's personal dignity, rights and eternal destiny; to human society in view of establishing justice, equality in

¹⁰ The Church in Today's World, n. 74.

¹¹ «New Hope for Lebanon » 10 may 1997.

¹² The Church in Today's World, n. 2-42.

rights and duties, moral integrity, solidarity and cooperation for the common good; to the homeland in order to secure the safety of its territory, independence, dignity and unity¹³.

Independence

10- The Church and the State are independent from each other in their respective activities. The Church's organization includes institutions which provide the faithful with their spiritual needs, while the community of politicians create institutions and establish relations to promote everything which leads to the secular public welfare. But, being independent requires that the Church and the State live a mutual understanding without interference, togetherness without conflict. Cooperation means that the Church does not rival with the political power, but acknowledges the prerogatives of the civil and political society and its independence. At the same time, the Church expects the State to provide it with the circumstances and conditions necessary to perform its mission.

11- Out of the distinction between the Church and the State and of their independence towards each other, some Western States have adopted «Secularism», i.e., separation between religion and State. But Lebanon has adopted the «Civil State» formula which respects religions, in creed and worship. Both formulae acknowledge the sovereignty of the State, its independence in the temporal field and the exclusive right in the daily management of political, judicial, administrative, financial and military matters of society. In other words, it means everything that is related to the political and economic technicity. It also means that it is the duty of the State to protect liberty of creed and worship in a country with several religions.

The Church does not accept «secularism» whenever it is understood as a philosophical doctrine, with materialistic and atheistic understanding of human life and society; and whenever it is considered by the State to be the only political system to be imposed upon citizens, even in private life, schools, and universities in the whole nation. It does not accept it either if it implies that the State refuses to submit to any higher moral authority acknowledging its own interests as the only basis for its action. The Church respects the State, its programs, and its political system.

¹³ Patriarch Sfeir, letter for 1990 lent: The Church and Politics 6- 12.

It does not interfere in these programs and the political system except in as far as their consequences on religious and moral levels¹⁴ are concerned.

That's why it cannot be indifferent whenever Man's sacredness, religious and moral fundamentals are violated; as if God had neither revealed his commandments nor had he enacted laws and «sent his only Son into the world so that we might have life through him» (**1 John 9/4**).

Cooperation

12- It is a duty that a strong cooperation be established between the Church and the political authority for the public welfare and their own benefit. This is done on the ground of mutual understanding and respect. Separation between religion and State does not mean rejecting each other or enmity between the two. It rather requires mutual recognition, common efforts and integration on the ground of coordination and planning so as to reach solidarity for the whole development of the human being and society. As much as they soundly cooperate the more the service they render becomes efficient for all¹⁵.

Such cooperation requires that the political authority realizes what role and impact religion has. «Whatever is the type and system of government, the State must seek help in spiritual values and find in them guidance capable to support the fragile texture of society and strengthen it»¹⁶.

The State must acknowledge legally the identity of the Church whose mission covers the whole human being. The Church feels that it is deeply united in solidarity with mankind and its history¹⁷. It demands liberty of expression, teaching, preaching the Gospel, public worship and other public liberties¹⁸.

Cooperation requires also that the Church acknowledges the existence of the State, admits its sound views about life, Man and things, and encourages the faithful to bear respect towards it, urging them to work loyally with its institutions on the basis of justice and love. The

¹⁴ Pope John Paul II: The Year *Centesimus Annus*, 47.

¹⁵ Patriarch's Lent letter 1990, 30-38. *The Church in Today's World*, 76.

¹⁶ Cardinal Etchegaray, *Osservatore Romano*, N. 35 on 31-8-1999.

¹⁷ *The Church in Today's World*, 1.

¹⁸ Pope John Paul II, to head of states (1 Sept. 1980), 4.

Church has to educate the citizens' conscience to the love of their homeland and the respect of the State's organizations and institutions, by protecting and developing them and by submitting to its laws. It must urge them to hold responsibilities in the State, strengthen the morals of society, and participate in the public service through its social, cultural and development institutions.

Cooperation between the political authority and the Church requires that, if need be, pacts be concluded between the two to protect the Church's properties, institutions and mission so as to secure harmonious relations between the two and spare them conflicts¹⁹.

13- It is the right of the Church and its duty to give its judgments about the right and wrong human acts in order to evaluate these acts in the light of the divine and moral law. It pronounces «its moral judgment» about all matters, including political ones; whenever Man's basic rights or the salvation of souls requires it²⁰. Every political method or action which threatens human dignity and life, hurts the Church in its very heart and deals a blow to its faith in the Son of God, who—by his incarnation and redemption—was somewhat, united to every Man.

The Church has no right to keep silent about injustices; it must rather arm itself with courage so as to be the voice of the one who has no voice, always echoing the Gospel's outcry in defending the miserable, threatened, disgraced, oppressed and deprived of his human rights. No one can prevent it from doing so²¹.

The Church must guide consciences and enlighten them but does not rate this or that policy, or the relevance of this economy or its scientific aspect. It leaves it to the laity to conduct temporal matters in the light of their enlightened conscience, for no human act, even in temporal matter, can escape God's authority²².

On the other hand, the Church does not adopt any special political system; neither can it be tinted by this or that political color. But, it approves every action and system which ensures the rights, welfare, stability and dignity of Man and allows all citizens to realize themselves in an atmosphere of liberty, social justice, equality and even opportunities²³.

¹⁹ Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, Summary of the Church Social Teaching, n. 427.

²⁰ The Church in Today's World, n. 76; Catechism of the Catholic Church, n. 2246.

²¹ The Gospel of Life, n. 5; Redemptor Hominis, n. 13.

²² Lumen Gentium, n. 36.

²³ The Church in Today's World, n. 76.

CHAPTER III

The participation of the Christian in political Life

14- Participating in political life is a right attached to the dignity of the human being. Man is far from being a mere tool in society, or an irresponsible passive member. He must rather be its dynamo, basis and goal. Those holding political authority have no right to restrict the citizens' opinions, aspirations, ambitions and responsible participation. They rather must allow them to act out of their self free decision and provide them with the possibility of exercising their rights and performing their duties, serve others in society through a good, efficient and competent participation in public life activities. These include economy, society, legislation, administration and culture. This participation must be done with the spirit of initiative and sense of responsibility and not under the weight of coercion or inducement. A human society standing by force, coercion and domination is not, in anyway humane, because people in this society would enjoy only a diminished liberty²⁴.

15- For the Christians, participation in political life is a duty by virtue of their baptism through which they share in Christ's threefold mission: as priest, prophet, and king. As priest, they make of their work a praise of the Creator by furthering creation. As prophet, they incorporate the newness of the Gospel, its efficiency in their daily, family and social life; they participate in the changes which lead to a better common life. As king, they overcome sin, follow the path of love and justice, in brotherhood and solidarity; they work at developing Man and Society²⁵.

Participation in political life is also a duty so as to spread the Gospel spirit in the temporal system: legislation, administration, judiciary, economy, sociology and culture. They must not live in doubt and withdraw from the public stage or give up participation²⁶, whatever are the difficulties they encounter and the accusations directed against the members of the Government, Parliament and ruling class. The Church holds in esteem those who consecrate their

²⁴ Peace on Earth, n. 34.

²⁵ New Hope for Lebanon, n. 113.

²⁶ Christefideles Laicis, n. 42.

life for the service of public welfare and bear its burden²⁷. Participation requires them to work, with a spirit of shared responsibility, at unifying various opinions, promote the homeland love in the spirits, without fanaticism or sectarianism, devote themselves to the art of politics with a spirit of detachment from self interests and material gains. They must oppose injustice, oppression, arbitrary judgment, excessive firmness exercised by individuals or parties, and exert every effort for the public welfare with sincerity, rectitude, love and courage.

16- The exercise of political authority by Christians must have the following characteristics:

a) It must take into account the independence of secular matters so as people in authority differentiate between works they do by themselves, as citizens inspired by their Christian conscience, and those they do in the name of the Church in solidarity with their pastors. In any case, they should not separate between their duty towards the State and towards God for they are, at the same time, citizens of the State by birth and citizens of Heaven by faith and baptism. This requires them to conciliate between the requirements of political work and moral principles and establish a harmony between the spiritual and the human. The Church draws the attention that the Christian does not live two parallel lives: spiritual life with its values and requirements, and secular life with values different from the first one and opposed to them. His life is rather one imprinted with spiritual, moral, humane and social values by virtue of baptism which made him a new born²⁸.

b) It must have a spirit of service coupled with virtue, competence and efficiency. Their work would then be clear and noble. They would turn away from enticements, resorting to mean maneuvers, lies, embezzlement of state's money, political partisanship, and the use of illegal crooked ways to reach power, to keep it and extend it at any cost. Engagement into political service is not limited to stating general principles or declaring good intentions; it rather is a precise daily engagement which requires great strength to fulfill its duty, high virtue in the exercise of authority, detachment and transparency²⁹.

²⁷ The Church in Today's World, n. 75.

²⁸ New Hope for Lebanon, n. 112.

²⁹ Pope John –Paul II Sermon of Jubilee, Nov. 10,2000. & Ignatius IV, Patriarch of Antioch and the entire East. Balamand Ed, 2002, p. 338-344.

c) It must witness for human and evangelical values related to political activity like liberty, justice, true dedication to public welfare, simplicity of life and preferential love of the poor enlightened by the Church social teachings.

d) It must regard solidarity as a method and way to implement policies aiming at achieving a right human development. This requires efficient and responsible participation on behalf of every citizen, groups, unions, parties, etc. Solidarity is a firm determination in any responsible engagement in favor of the public welfare.

e) It must engage for the cause of peace founded on human rights as a fruit of political activity. It must endeavor to eliminate all that endangers peace such as violence, war, torture, terrorism, detentions and militarization of politics. Thus, Christians devote themselves, as Disciples of Christ the «Prince of peace» (**Is. 5/9**), «for he is our peace» (**Eph 2/14**), at being «peace makers» (**Mat 5/9**). Peace is possible and an obligation: for its basis is absolute truth, the truth of God, Man and history which Christ the Lord had announced. The motive to peace is love poured forth into our hearts by the Holy Spirit. Justice yields peace (**Is. 17/32**), and liberty cannot exist and be lived without peace³⁰.

f) There must be reconciliation and pardon which are the starting point towards a better new future. With reconciliation the war of private interests, which is more dangerous than the armed war, is brought to an end. With reconciliation differences die out, enmities disappear and mentalities change.

It is the solution to the problems of individuals and groups³¹. Therefore reconciliation begins with oneself by restoring one's relation with God who reconciled us through Christ. He calls upon us to repent our personal sins, change our way, our position and our vision with the help of the Holy Spirit. It then moves from the personal spiritual level to become a social reconciliation. It restores the relation with the other, and settles down differences, conflicts and misunderstandings: with the poor and needy ones by charitable initiatives, with all by strengthening social justice, eliminating oppression and corruption and securing basic rights. It rises up to the level of politicians and parties to become a political reconciliation to rebuild

³⁰ Pope John XXIII: *Pacem in Terris*

³¹ New Hope for Lebanon, n. 89-98

national unity and the good just authentic State³². It is, finally, completed by national reconciliation based upon the commitment to a social constitutional charter which consolidates coexistence, fair and just participation of all in running the country's affairs.

Reconciliation, in all its aspects, is the message of Christians who repeat with St. Paul the Apostle: **«namely, God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ not counting their trespasses against them and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. So we are ambassadors for Christ, as if God were appealing through us» (2 Cor 5/19-20).**

g) It must consolidate a democracy founded upon moral natural bases. If these are missing, a moral, political, social, and economic anarchy will befall. Peoples and homelands need a sound democracy to guide political work, thought and convictions; otherwise democracy will be exploited for the advantage of those holding power. A democracy without values changes easily into an open or masked totalitarianism, as witnessed in history³³.

Democratic life is excluded wherever the moral law, which is rooted in the human being's nature, is missing and is replaced by political influence and money weight in elections and issues, at the expense of justice and moral standards.

Then, an atmosphere of suspicion and indifference reigns, people's patriotic feeling weakens because of their deception, and participation rate in public life diminishes for the benefit of personal and partisan interests which prevail over the public interest. All of that is because of the disrespect of Man's dignity and rights. The human being is the reason for the creation of social, economic and political institutions. He is their goal and their end³⁴.

There are principles upon which the implementation of democracy is based. They are truth, out of which follows out the relation between the authority and the citizens; transparency in public administration and impartiality; respect of the political opponents' rights; protection of the rights of defendants who are subjected to an arbitrary trial; fair spending of public money; and refusal to seize power, keeping it and extending it at any cost and on the account of public welfare³⁵.

³² Maronite Synod: Maronite Church and Politics, n. 46.

³³ Pope John Paul II. The Radiance of Truth, n. 101.

³⁴ Congregation for the Doctrine of the faith: The engagement of Catholics 2 & 7. Centesimus Annus, n. 47. The church in today's World, n.25 - 26

³⁵ Radiance of Truth n. 101; Christefideles Laicis, n. 42.

17- Political work is «the difficult way to live the Christian commitment at the service of others», said Pope Paul VI. It requires integrity in the Christian political man's life, so as he conciliates between faith and life, culture and revelation, and fulfills his worldly obligations led by the spirit of the Gospel»³⁶. History abounds with Christian prominent political figures that were sanctified by political work. The Church has raised a number of them to the altars, among them are contemporaries who witnessed for Christ's truth and marked worldly matters with the Gospel's values³⁷.

Pope John Paul II declared, by Apostolic decree, the saint martyr Thomas More, the British man of state (1478-1534), a high example for those in governments and people of politics, because of his exemplary life and political exercise, specially the protection of the moral conscience rights, the total harmony between the natural and super-natural, between faith and activities³⁸.

³⁶ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, 24/11/2002, n. 9

³⁷ We mention blessed king Charles emperor of Austria (1880-1922), blessed Giorgio Frassati (1901-1925), Robert Schuman (1886-1963), etc.

³⁸ Osservatore Romano Weekly (in French) N° 45, 7 Nov. 2000.

Part Two
Lebanon's Specificity

Chapter I

Lebanon, Homeland and Specificity

18- Political action bears a specific character in Lebanon as a homeland having its entity, its cultural value, its singularity in the structure of its plural society, its national pact, its historic experience, as a mission and a model. (See "A new Hope for Lebanon" and Patriarch Ignatius IV: "Positions and Statements", p. 164, 181, 189).

Lebanon, the Homeland and Entity.

Lebanon is a sovereign, free and independent country. It is a final homeland for all its citizens. It is one in territory, people and institutions within the boundaries defined by its constitution and internationally recognized. Lebanon is Arab in identity and belonging. It is a founding and active member of the United Nations Organization. It abides by its covenants and by the universal declaration of Human Rights. Lebanon is a democratic parliamentary republic, based upon the respect of public liberties, specially the freedom of opinion and belief, and the respect of social justice and equality of rights and duties among all citizens without discrimination or preference. Its people is the root of authority and the holder of sovereignty which it exercises through the constitutional institutions. Its territory is one for all the Lebanese. There is no discrimination among people on any ground, no fragmentation, no partition and no settlement (of Palestinian Refugees). No legitimacy is acknowledged to any authority which infringes upon coexistence³⁹.

«The finality of the Lebanese Identity» places all Lebanese, who are a founding element of Lebanon, before the sacred duty to defend its independence, the total sovereignty of the State,

³⁹ Preamble of the Lebanese Constitution.

and freedom of the citizens in their self-determination, and to oppose any attempt of occupation of its territory or curtailment of its sovereignty⁴⁰.

Lebanon's Membership in the U.N. means that it is committed to this organization's aims and foundation principles. That means total welfare of the human family, longing for peace, seeking justice, respecting the human person, and humane cooperation. It also means its commitment to «**The Universal Declaration of Human Rights**» in its totality and with all its requirements⁴¹. This membership also requires that Lebanon respect the resolutions of the international legitimacy and implement them completely so as to preserve its existence and the interests of its people and protect it from greediness⁴². Lebanon's membership in the Arab League commits Lebanon to Arab world's causes and makes of it a full partner in this world culture and in the progress of its peoples⁴³.

Its Civilization Value

20- Lebanon is a «**precious civilization value**»⁴⁴, thanks to its characteristics and contributions.

a) It is a patrimony for humanity because it is the cradle of a noble civilization and one of the Mediterranean light houses. The name of Jbeil (Byblos) reminds of the start of writing⁴⁵. Its position along the Mediterranean basin and the fact that it is the starting point of one of its most important civilizations enabled Lebanon to become a bridge between the East and the West on cultural, economic and social levels. This position requires Lebanon to commit itself to the questions of its Eastern shore, especially by contributing to find a just solution to the Palestinian question, by deterring terrorism, spreading democracy, and strengthening human rights.

b) In Lebanon there is the encounter of religions. This makes of it an exemplary land where people of different cultures and religions are called upon to live on the same soil, and

⁴⁰ Maronite Church Constants, 6 Dec, 2006, n. 4.

⁴¹ Pope Benedict XVI at the UN, 18 April, 2008.

⁴² Maronite Church Constants, n. 5.

⁴³ New Hope for Lebanon, n. 93.

⁴⁴ Letter of Pope John Paul II to all Lebanese, 1/5/1984

⁴⁵ New Hope for Lebanon, n.1

build up a society of peace, dialogue, and coexistence⁴⁶, which guarantees a stable and creative society.

c) It is out of Lebanon that cultural dialogue, between East and West started centuries ago. It was intensified in the middle Ages, especially in the sixteenth century with the Maronite school founded in 1584. Out of it the cultural renaissance was initiated in the Arab world, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, and modern thoughts were spread out by schools, universities and the press⁴⁷.

d) In Lebanon, ecumenic initiatives took place thanks to the atmosphere of freedom of expression and creed, openness towards cultures and religions and to the Antiochian patrimony which is common to various Catholic and Orthodox Oriental churches⁴⁸.

e) Freedom is lived in Lebanon, especially freedom of creed, and with it the freedom of opinion, social and political, beside the spirit of understanding, hospitality and openness.

f) Lebanon is distinguished by its plural consensual democracy which the Lebanese have agreed upon and the constitution opted to preserve all the constituents of the Lebanese plural society. It allows them all to equally share in the national life, self-determination, running of national affairs, building up the State, strengthening and developing it⁴⁹.

21- This civilization value and the constants of the Lebanese homeland require that home, school, university, and society provide an education whose aim is to develop homeland's love, heighten pride for its common patrimony, make its tradition and historic mission known, and hand them over to the rising generations. Love of the homeland includes all the people in all its groups which constitute its richness; it also includes its territory which is God's present that we must protect till martyrdom and a space for a free honorable life for the human and cultural interaction. The land is the root of the cultural, social and political identity; preserving it, protecting its environment, exploiting its resources, enjoying its produce, and abstaining from selling it are a sacred duty⁵⁰.

⁴⁶ Same, n. 119.

⁴⁷ Maronite Synod, text 18: Maronite Church and Culture, n. 20-22. Text 3: The Presence of the Maronite Church..., n. 14-18.

⁴⁸ New Hope for Lebanon, n. 85-88

⁴⁹ Maronite Constants, n. 3.

⁵⁰ Maronite Synod, text 23, the Church and the Land; Patriarch Sfeir, lent letter, 2007

Lebanon with its values and constituents is a token of hope to all. **«The prosperity of Christianity in it is a guarantee to the existence of the Christian minorities in the Middle East countries»⁵¹. «The destiny of Christians is tightly linked to the destiny of Lebanon in its special mission»⁵². This prosperity reflects positively upon the East and gives its societies a distinguished fragrance. Besides, **«dialogue and cooperation between its Christians and Moslems do help to realize the same in other countries, i.e., building up a future life of social interaction and cooperation which aims to give their peoples human and moral development. Through this, Lebanon will bloom again and respond to its mission by being a light for the Peoples of the region and a token of peace coming from God»⁵³.****

22- Thanks to the national pact which is based on freedom individuals and groups, equality among them and on the will of Christians and Moslems to live together, Lebanon's political system is characterized by being in the middle between the theocratic regime, which combines between religion and state, and the secular regime which totally separates between them. Lebanon, by force of article 9 of the constitution, separates between Religion and State but considers as absolute **«the freedom of creed, the duty of God's worship, the respect of all religions and confessions as well as their respective personal statutes and religious interests»**. The national pact, which is soul-like for Lebanon's existence, has embodied this midway system out of the slogan: **«Neither the East nor the West»**. It means neither melting away in its Eastern environment, nor subordinating its will to the West. Today we mean neither to theocracy, nor to atheistic secularism. The principles of this pact imply that Lebanon is a fully independent republic, Arab in identity and belonging, cooperating with Arab and foreign countries, while keeping a balance between all, giving no mandatory authority or privilege or uniting with any of them⁵⁴.

The national pact has been materialized by the Lebanese formula which is based on equal partition of power between Christians and Moslems. If the office has a technical character,

⁵¹ Pope John-Paul II: Letter to the Catholic Church Bishops, 1st May 1984

⁵² New Hope for Lebanon, 6.

⁵³ New Hope for Lebanon, 93-125.

⁵⁴ Adapted from the speech of President Béchara El Khoury on his election day 21/9/1943, and from the first ministerial declaration by Prime Minister Riad Solh on 7/10/1943. It was integrated by the Lebanese constitution of 23 May 1926 by force of the constitutional law on 9 Nov. 1943. It was put in the 1990 constitution preamble, law of 21 Sept 1990, based on Taef agreement 22/10/1989.

competence is taken into consideration. The agreement is that the President of the Republic is Maronite, the Speaker of the House of Parliament is Shiite, and the Prime Minister is Sunni. This formula requires equal distribution of seats between Christians and Moslems in the Parliament (art. 24), in the Cabinet of Ministers (art. 95a) and in the first rank posts, or equivalent appointments (art. 95 b). Nevertheless, it has been reduced to distributing public responsibilities equally among all communities. The outcome expected from this formula was securing stability and achieving democracy and economic prosperity, this if it had evolved according to the requirements of recency and historic experience.

The National Pact has been a model to the East as well as to the West⁵⁵. Communal coexistence, while ascertained by the constitution which says «**There is no constitutional legitimacy for any authority which contradicts the pact of communal coexistence**» (foreword J), is based upon mutual acknowledgement, unity of destiny and the integration into one national structure⁵⁶. It goes beyond cohabitation to become a way of living which provides Man with an opportunity to communicate and interact with the others. His personality is enriched by what's new in the other and he enriches the other without eliminating his particularities and differences which are a source of enrichment to all⁵⁷.

Communal coexistence is a responsibility which Christians and Moslems together assume before God, who had called upon them to live together and together build up a one homeland where they are responsible for each other⁵⁸. It is their duty to «**preserve moral values, social justice, peace, and liberty; defend human life and the family; and consolidate confidence in each other and in the future which induces them to be open to what is best in recency**»⁵⁹.

⁵⁵ Pope John-Paul II: Letter to the Catholic Church Bishops about Lebanon (7-9-1989), 6.

⁵⁶ Maronite Constants, N° 2.

⁵⁷ Maronite Synod, text 19, "Maronite Church and Politics" n. 56 -37.

⁵⁸ Assembly of Catholics Patriarchs : « Together Before God » p.27

⁵⁹ New Hope for Lebanon, n. 92.

CHAPTER II

Reviving Lebanon and the Civil Democratic State.

23- Reviving Lebanon is a shared task among the Lebanese on the ground of a constructive dialogue, mutual acknowledgement and elucidation of what unites them as one People in brotherhood, and their eagerness to develop understanding, strengthen cooperation among themselves and work at realizing national unity⁶⁰.

The will of putting Lebanon on its feet again springs out of the attachment of the Lebanese to their faith in God and the homeland and to their eagerness to consolidate the bonds of brotherhood, love and mutual respect. «The Moslem believer is, like the Christian believer, in his faith a guarantee to his brother in the homeland and humanity»⁶¹.

Reviving Lebanon requires that politicians and all those who are concerned with public affairs stick to the principles of holding dialogue and settling divergences within the constitutional institutions while refusing to resort to any kind of violence and armed clashes for any pretext or cause. They rely upon the Lebanese army and internal security forces alone, to defend the citizens' security and keep stability. They are also required to avoid degrading and debasing terms in speech, stirring up confessional, partisan, factional or personal grudges and chauvinism. They are rather required to rise up, with their political language, to the level of the unifying patriotic responsibility in order to spare Lebanon the evils of converting differences in views and the results of elections into a political crisis along the whole homeland»⁶².

24- Putting up Lebanon on its feet again requires that the political authority works at the following:

a) It should set up a mechanism which would prevent the obstruction of constitutional institutions and render them more efficient. Only institutions can guarantee the consolidation of political security and economic stability. This requires that governmental, administrative, and judicial offices be assigned to those who are distinguished by competence, honesty, and experience. It also requires that judicial verdicts be respected by the administration and that control councils and boards be activated to avoid the squandering of public money⁶³, establish equilibrium between public

⁶⁰ Same, n. 1, 14, 90.

⁶¹ Statement of the Spiritual Summit, held at the Presidential Palace, Baabda 24-7-2008.

⁶² Maronite Church constants and Spiritual Summit statements, n. 3, 4 and 6.

⁶³ 9th appeal of Maronite Bishops Assembly (3/9/2008).

responsibilities and the mandatory power, and generalize constitutional and legal time-limits on all levels of decision.

b) It should keep away from regional and international axes and from subordinating to foreign alliances engaged in a struggle of interests and influence on Lebanese soil and on Lebanon's account, while being keen on openness and interaction with its surroundings and the whole world⁶⁴. It is necessary to endeavor, in cooperation with the United Nation Organization and the Arab League, to keep Lebanon **neutral** while strengthening its defense power, so as to make of it a model country for religious and cultural dialogue worldwide, **open** to all countries with a spirit of friendship, cooperation and mutual respect, **committed to** the region and world causes which are related to peace, justice, human rights, and peoples development.

c) It should realize a wide decentralization, in order to assure a real opportunity to build up national unity, secure stability through lessening the vehemence of the struggle for the central power, and enhance a balanced development. Broad decentralization is an utmost national priority.

d) It should strengthen economic and social life and reform it by the following measures: implementing moral principles which assure the revival of solidarity and mutual agreement; curbing corruption, speculation, and illegal deals; modifying the tax system so that it becomes more just and efficient; supporting the productive sectors: industry, agriculture, services, tourism, and foreign investments; restructuring of monetary policies and settling debts; establishing between the State and the private sector economic and financial relations based upon cooperation, coordination and transparency; preventing monopoly practices and assuring equal opportunities; modernizing the laws to accompany globalization and inspire confidence to investors⁶⁵.

e) It should fight corruption in order to build up a transparent State of rights which establishes firmly the authority of the law and gives confidence to its citizens. This requires to edict efficient laws, take enforcement measures, prevent political interference in administrative appointments, and punish the corruptor and the corrupt.

⁶⁴ Maronite Church constants, n.3.

⁶⁵ Patriarchal Synod, text 21: Maronite Church and economic questions 36-54..

f) It should put a great interest in youth potential. It is the greatest wealth of the country and a force of renewal in society and the Church. Young people should be provided with a scientific and professional education coupled with a human moral and social upbringing, which will prepare them to a conscious participation in national decisions and to join in the public sector services with a new mentality and aspirations. This preparation will secure them job opportunities up to their skills and qualifications, give them the opportunity to stay in their homeland, stimulate achievements on its soil, secure their future, establish a family, and have hope in a better future and real change⁶⁶.

g) It should promote the woman's sharing in public responsibilities and her participation in political life, considering her rights and capacities, the liveliness, openness and sincerity she enjoys when tackling problems, in addition to her ability to sense human, educational, health and environmental issues⁶⁷.

h) It should demonstrate real interest in the Lebanese of the «expansion». The State must acknowledge their national rights, specially the right to recover citizenship for those who are entitled to it. The State must take advantage of their capacities and invest in them so that they do not stay estranged to the homeland; they rather contribute in preserving identity of Lebanon and its presence in the region and the world. They would back its just causes and invest their capacities in rebuilding its various sectors⁶⁸. The State is requested to cooperate with the Church to strengthen ties with them due to Lebanon's historic vocation and mission⁶⁹.

25- Lebanon's revival will be fully achieved by establishing a modern democratic State, with a just and equitable⁷⁰ social system, according to the following conditions:

a) Make unequivocal distinction, to the limit of separation, between religion and State. Neither is religion politicized nor does the State rely upon religion. Confusion between religious and civil law often leads to stifling religious liberties, limiting basic human rights, resorting to rigidity and violence, war waging in the name of religion. This means, basically, that there is a wrong understanding of God and consequently a wrong understanding of Man⁷¹.

⁶⁶ New Hope for Lebanon, n.96; Patriarchal Synod, text 11, the youth.

⁶⁷ New Hope for Lebanon, n.50.

⁶⁸ Maronite Synod, text 4: Maronite Church in its world expansion, n. 38.

⁶⁹ Maronite Synod, text 19: Maronite Church and Politics, n. 57.

⁷⁰ Constitution preamble, 9; New Hope for Lebanon, 89; Synod text 19: Maronite Church and Politics 44.

Spiritual Summit statement: 1st, 2nd and conclusion.

⁷¹ Pope Benedict XVI: World Day for Peace 2007: the human being heart of peace, n. 10; Pope John –Paul II: World

b) Implement democracy properly and spread out its culture, so as to assure alternation of power, renewal of political elite and continuity of reform. Democracy is usually based on a variety of opinions, policies, and parties, etc. It also promotes the acknowledgement of the other and the existence of a majority and minority working according to democratic principles and alternation of political leadership. Thus, democracy becomes competitive within the confessionally homogeneous group and consensual within the larger and confessionally diversified society of the country, not only according to the majority trends, but also on the basis of real welfare for all the civil groups, including the minority, so as to secure the necessities of a decent life⁷².

c) Reconcile between citizenship and plurality. Citizenship requires equality in rights and duties among all, through constitutional institutions which can establish a true and equitable justice. Plurality requires an active, balanced, and efficient participation of all communities, confessions, and individuals, in the government and administration; this means without excluding or denying anyone's role in social, political, economic and cultural life, while not according any special privileges to anyone or any community⁷³.

d) Guarantee the citizens' liberty and enhance their right to questioning and controlling. This is done through a parliamentary electoral law which secures a true representation of the various groups of the people and allows holding periodic unblemished elections which give the citizens a chance to express their opinion by choosing their representatives who should strengthen their relations with their constituents and make their options and expectations known. This law will also give the Lebanese living abroad the opportunity to use their right of participating in the elections. This would deeply root their relation with their mother homeland and increase their efficient participation in rebuilding it⁷⁴.

26- Other commitments are also necessary to build up the Lebanese State and fortify its sovereignty; the most important are:⁷⁵

Day for Peace 1990; Synod, text 19: Maronite Church and Politics, n. 45

⁷² Gaudium et Spes, No 26, §2; Catholic Catechism, art. 1908; Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace: Summary of Church Social teaching, n. 169.

⁷³ Synod text 19: Maronite Church and Politics, n.44; Maronite Church constants, n. 7.

⁷⁴ Maronite Church constants, n. 5.

⁷⁵ Synod text 19: Maronite Church and Politics, n. 34; Maronite Church constants, n. 7.

1- Organize the relations between the State of Lebanon and the Palestinian Authority. Find out a solution to the problem of arms inside and outside the Palestinian camps and control security affairs. Endeavor to reach a just solution to the Palestinian question based upon the creation of a viable Palestinian State. This will give the Palestinians the right to return to their homeland, relocate and travel freely. Cooperate with concerned international powers to prevent the settlement of Palestinians in Lebanon and improve their living conditions.

2- Restrict the possession of arms on the Lebanese territory to the legal armed forces and confine defense and security responsibilities to the political authority excluding anybody else. Consolidate confidence in the armed forces, give them support, equip them and encourage young people to enlist with them.

3- Restore normal relations with Syria on the basis of parity, equality, common interests, mutual respect of the sovereignty and frontiers; establish sound diplomatic relations for the benefit of both countries, and strengthen ties of cooperation and solidarity with the other Arab countries.

Third Part

The Charter

27- The articles of this charter are issued from the principles submitted in the first two parts of this charter. The references quoted in the titles, refer to the paragraphs of these two parts.

I - General principles:

Politics at the service of Man and public welfare⁷⁶

Article 1: Politics is a noble art at the service of Man and public welfare. The exercise of politics includes economic, social, legislative, administrative, and cultural activities so that all the citizens are provided with living conditions which enable them to realize their ownself in a better way, on the level of individuals and groups. Every human group needs an authority to organize its affairs and assure its welfare, stability and prosperity. This authority submits to a moral system engraved by God the creator in Man's heart.

Article 2: Political action takes into consideration the human being, his dignity, and basic rights founded upon the natural law engraved in Man's nature and which exists in various cultures and civilizations. It is the duty of political authorities to work with a spirit of responsibility in managing the citizens' capacities and the State's resources towards the public welfare and the benefit of all that pivots around the following:

- a) Respect of the human being as such with his basic rights and natural rights;
- b) Development of the human being spiritually, humanly, culturally, economically and backing him to obtain food, cloths, health care, work, education, information and the right to found a family;
- c) Strengthening peace, justice and stability of security.

⁷⁶ Paragraphs 1 till 8.

Article 3: The political action engages in the service of man by encouraging the creation of a social system with all its requirements, such as public and private associations which tighten the national family ties and assure welfare. This social system is founded upon truth and is protected by justice; it prospers in love and develops in freedom.

Article 4: The political authority endeavors to protect the citizens against having their rights violated and against the consequences of crisis and calamities and to protect human life, as early as its creation, from any attack against the human being's body, spiritual life, or dignity. This protection, in all its aspects, is a sacred duty for it is tightly attached to the conception that the human being is created to God's image and likeness.

Article 5: The political authority organizes public life by running the State's internal and foreign affairs, strengthening the love of the homeland in citizens hearts, educating them up to being loyal to it, and to living an engaged citizenship. The civil authorities perform these duties with impartiality, transparency, and morality in a spirit of service combined with generosity, competence, and efficiency, away from authoritarianism, ambiguity, and corruption.

Article 6: The political authority exercises its role in the name of the People democratically, by accepting variety of opinions and crystallizing them. It exercises a democratic competition through economic, social and development programs which assure the welfare of the citizens, without clash or deceit.

Distinction and Cooperation between the Church and the State⁷⁷:

Article 7: It is a duty to respect the distinction between the State and the Church; it results from the nature of each of them and from the field and means of action of each. It is, also, an obligation to respect the independence of each towards the other in the field of its special action, while both work for the benefit of Man and welfare of society. That's why there must be cooperation between the two on the ground of mutual understanding and respect, completing each other through common coordination and planning and responsible solidarity. The service rendered by each of them, through its special means and structure. The more efficient, the more solid is the cooperation between the two.

Article 8: The separation between religion and State requires the establishment of a civil State which respects religions and protects liberty of creed and worship, while it manages alone, without any one else, political, economic, financial and military affairs. It remains the right of religion to give its moral judgment about the actions of this administration and its performance in regard to their moral and humane consequences. But the State is committed to giving religion its place and role in the spreading of spiritual values which animate the fragile social life.

Article 9: It is the right of the Church and its duty, by virtue of its mission which aims at creating a human society and establishing it according to divine law, to perform activities having public character concerned with: Man's dignity, rights and eternal destiny; Society's need to social justice, equal rights and duties, integrity of morals and the preservation of moral values; Unity of the People of the homeland, its sovereignty of decision and the honor of its independence. By authority of its mission, the Church gives its moral judgment about all matters, including the political matter, whenever human being's basic rights, dignity and salvation of souls require it. That's to say, it gives its judgment about the probity and immorality of human acts in the light of divine and moral law.

⁷⁷ Paragraphs 9 till 14.

Article 10: On the other side, the Church acknowledges the actuality of the State and its sound views about life, people, and things. It encourages the faithful to deal with the State and work devotedly in its institutions and organizations, educates their conscience to the homeland's love and total loyalty to it, and urges them to perform the duty of sharing in public responsibilities with detachment, transparency and devotedness. It also participates in the public national service through its educational, cultural, social, health and development institutions. But the State must acknowledge the identity of the Church, and provide it with what it needs for the performance of its mission, which is liberty of expression and right to teach and preach the Gospel and other public liberties.

Christians and Political Action⁷⁸

Article 11: Christians must participate, like other Lebanese, in political life. This is a right attached to the dignity of the human being; it cannot be forbidden, limited, abolished or restrained. It gives every citizen—whatever is his religion, race or political opinion—the right to participate with creative ability, efficiency, and competence in all the sectors of public life activities with a responsible and ambitious spirit, not under the influence of inducement, compulsion, or bribery.

Article 12: Christians participate in public life by virtue of their baptism which associates them to Christ's threefold mission: through Priesthood they make of their worldly activity a praise to God by furthering the work of creation; Prophethood urges them to embody the newness of the Gospel and spread its spirit in their daily familial, cultural and social life as the ferment in the dough and the salt in the food; kingship makes them follow the way of truth, love, justice and enjoy the liberty of God's Children, reject sin, and destroy the forces of evil, darkness and oppression.

⁷⁸ Paragraphs 15 till 18.

Article 13: The exercise of political authority by Christians must have the following characteristics:

- a- Dealing with temporary matters by seeking inspiration in their Christian conscience, associate political activities with moral principles, and realize unity of life through creating a harmony between the spiritual and the human values.
- b- Having a generous detached spirit of service, which opposes enticements, cheap maneuvers, lies, embezzlement of the State's money and the use of illegal and immoral ways to hold the authority, keeping and extending it at any cost.
- c- Be endowed with evangelical and humane values, especially simplicity of life, sacrifice for the public good, and having a preference for the poor and a spirit of solicitude and sacrifice.
- d- Commitment to the cause of peace, making of it the fruit of justice and the result of the development of the individual and society, strengthening it on the bases of truth, love, justice and liberty with the rejection of violence, terrorism and political militarization.
- e- Reconciliation and pardon on the spiritual level with oneself and with God, on social level by solidarity, understanding, help of the poor and the needy ones, and realization of effective just distribution, on the political level by building up national unity, a right, good, just and powerful State, and on the national level, by ratifying a social covenant which fortifies coexistence and secures the just and equitable participation in directing the country's affairs.
- f- Strengthening a democracy that stands upon the moral law, which is rooted in the human being, upon submitting private and partisan interests to the public interest and upon practicing the duty of questioning the civil authorities and controlling them.

II - Lebanon, Homeland and Specificity

Lebanon the homeland, the entity and the cultural value⁷⁹

- Article 14:** The political action is based upon Lebanon's fundamentals as homeland and entity, as determined in the preamble of the Lebanese constitution and upon the requirements of its finality as an entity, member of the United Nations and the Arab League, and its place on the Eastern coast of the Mediterranean.
- Article 15:** Political action is committed to preserve Lebanon's civilization value, strengthen it, promote it and educate the rising generations and other citizens up to it. Lebanon is Humanity's patrimony, the ideal land where religions meet and cultural dialogue takes place between the East and the West, as well as ecumenical initiatives, and where plural democracy is practiced. Lebanon is, thus, with its values and constants a token of hope offered to all.
- Article 16:** Civil authorities and the other citizens assume the duty of preserving Lebanon's land and protecting its environment. The land is the source of the national, cultural, social and political identity and a space where to live a free honorable life in a homeland where a civilized human interaction with other Peoples takes place. It is the responsibility of the civil authorities and other citizens to preserve the land, protect its environment, exploit its sources, profit from its yield, and avoid selling it to foreigners.

⁷⁹ Paragraphs 19 till 21.

The Pact and the Cause⁸⁰

Article 17: Political authorities work with the spirit of the national pact, based upon coexistence between Christians and Moslems, with loyalty to the Lebanese formula which embodies this pact by the actual participation of all, ensuring equality and fairness in the government and administration, according to the stipulations of the Constitution and the spirit of the national consensus. They endeavor to develop the adopted formula so as to secure the stability of the Lebanese identity, its democracy, and its economic prosperity according to the requirements of recency and historical experience.

Article 18: The national Lebanese pact requires that Lebanon's regime be in the middle between the theocratic regime, which totally combines between Religion and State, and secular regime, which completely separates between them. While Lebanon's regime differentiates between Religion and State and protects the independence of each of them, it constitutes a civil State which respects God and his law and acknowledges freedom of creed and the private and public worship of God. It acknowledges to all religions and confessions the right to legislate, administer, and rule in spiritual and temporal matters that have religious dimensions. The Lebanese are committed to the requirements of this national pact while avoiding, at the same time, to join into ideological unification projects or be totally subordinate to the West. At the same time they keep equilibrium and cooperation with all countries.

Article 19: The Lebanese bear their responsibilities before God, who calls upon them to live together, with their different cultures and religions. Together they build up one homeland model of coexistence and dialogue between religions and cultures. It is hoped that this endeavor will make other countries take the same step, and will help driving peoples towards human and social development, building up a human family governed by respect, understanding and unity and consolidated by a just, total and permanent peace.

⁸⁰ Paragraph 22.

Reviving Lebanon: Requirements and Conditions⁸¹

Article 20: A common responsibility falls upon all the Lebanese; it is reviving Lebanon by adhering to the rules of faith in God and the homeland, strengthening the bonds of brotherhood and unity by a spirit of understanding and cooperation.

Article 21: The duty of reviving Lebanon requires, from all those who practice politics and handle public affairs, to hold to the principles of dialogue and to settle differences within the frame of the constitutional institutions. They must refuse to resort to any kind of violence and armed clashes, relying solely upon the Army and Internal Security Forces to keep the citizens' security and stability. They must rise up, in their political speech, to the level of moral and national responsibility, sparing Lebanon the evils of making out of differences and election results a political crisis on the level of the entire homeland.

Article 22: Reviving Lebanon requires from the political authority to ensure the following:

- a) Adopt procedures which would prevent the obstruction of constitutional institutions which solely guarantee the consolidation of security, political and economic stability. Render these institutions more efficient, improve their cadre and strengthen the councils and boards of control. Realize parallelism between public responsibilities and mandatory powers and generalize institutional and legal time limits on the level of decision making.
- b) Work at not letting Lebanon be carried off into regional and international politics, avoid alignment with foreign alliances engaged in a struggle of interests and influence on Lebanese soil and at its expense. Make of Lebanon a model country for world dialogue committed to the cause of peace, justice and peoples' development.
- c) Consider a broad administrative decentralization as the utmost priority, for it weakens the vehemence of the struggle over the control of power and strengthen balanced development.

⁸¹ Paragraphs 23-26.

- d) Strengthen economic and social life and ameliorate it by implementing the moral principles which assure the curbing of corruption, speculations and illegal deals. Take measures which include: modifying tax system, supporting productive activity in the different sectors, ameliorating monetary policy, settling debts, rectifying the State's relations with the private sector and renovating the laws to accompany globalization and inspire confidence to the investors.
- e) Fight corruption by force of the law which must be enforced without exception or partisanship, prevent political interference in administrative appointments and punish the corruptor and the corrupt.
- f) Give priority to the youth potential culturally, educationally and employment in both public and private sectors. Provide them with job opportunities according to their specializations and skills.
- g) Support Woman's participation in public responsibilities given her rights, capacities, presence and right approach.
- h) Strengthen with the Lebanese of the expansion the patriotic and spiritual bonds, use their capacities, give them back their rights, specially the right of citizenship, to those who are entitled to it, and the right to vote.

Article 23:

Reviving Lebanon requires that a civil, democratic modern State be established with the following conditions:

- a) Make an unequivocal distinction, to the limit of separation, between religion and State.
- b) Implement democracy properly, spread out its culture so as to assure alternation of power, renewal of the political elite, continuity of reforms, and provide the necessities of a decent life for all.
- c) Find the right balance between citizenship necessities and plurality. Citizenship requires equality in rights and duties among all, plurality calls for an efficient and balanced participation of all.

- d) Devise a just parliamentary electoral law which secures true representation and equal participation enabling the citizens to question their representatives and control them.

Article 24: The Political authority commits itself to rebuild the Lebanese State and fortify its sovereignty by committing itself to:

- a) Normalizing the relations between the Lebanese State and the Palestinian authority. This is achieved by: working towards a just solution of the Palestinian question, securing them the right to repatriation and having a viable State, endeavoring with concerned countries to prevent the settlement in Lebanon, controlling their possession of weapons and improving their living conditions.
- b) Restricting the possession of arms to the legitimate armed forces and submit the defense and security responsibilities to the decision of the political authority alone.
- c) Building up sound relations with the Syrian Arab Republic and other Arab countries on the bases of mutual respect of the sovereignty and borders of each country, establishing diplomatic relations and tightening the bonds of cooperation and solidarity.

III -The criteria for the elections, control and questioning

Article 25: Since the People is «the source of powers and entrusted with the sovereignty which it exercises through the constitutional institutions»⁸², since the Lebanese citizen is the basic⁸³ elector and that «the member of parliament represents the whole nation and it is not allowed to bind his representation by any restriction or reservation on behalf of his electors»⁸⁴, it is the duty of the Lebanese elector to assume his responsibility in the election, according to the following criteria:

⁸² Lebanese Constitution preamble, alinea d.

⁸³ Lebanese Constitution, art, 21.

⁸⁴ Lebanese Constitution, art 27.

Article 26: It is the duty of the Lebanese elector to vote in total freedom without compulsion, bribery or cheating, putting before his eyes the benefit of the homeland. He chooses, before God and his conscience, the best candidate who enjoys a spirit of service combined with qualifications and efficiency, who is adorned with humane and evangelical values, with vigilant care over the public good, with detachment from personal and partisan interests.

Article 27: The elector should vote for the one whom he sees to be culturally, humanely and morally ready to exercise the noble art of politics; the one who has had a long experience at the service of the nation and was distinguished by his respect of Man and his concern towards his dignity and rights.

Article 28: The elector should choose the one he sees to be committed to reviving Lebanon through:

- a) Rendering constitutional institutions efficient and working for: the neutrality of Lebanon, the realization of a broad administrative decentralization, the protection of Lebanon, the uprooting of corruption, and preventing the squandering of public money.
- b) Investing in youth capacities by affording them opportunities according to their diplomas and skills.
- c) Giving special attention to the Lebanese of the expansion so as to give them their rights and citizenship, to cooperate with them according to their abilities and to encourage individual creative initiatives.
- d) Strengthening economic life, improving living conditions and getting rid of the huge debt.
- e) Putting a plan to curb emigration, bring back those who were compelled to leave the country for political, economic or security reasons.

Article 29: The candidate to parliament must fulfill the following conditions:

- a) To bear total allegiance to Lebanon. To be aware of its value as a homeland distinguished by characteristics intrinsic to its entity, cultural value,

national pact and formula which he endeavors to develop till he secures liberty, stability and prosperity. To have a past that confirms by words, facts and positions this allegiance and awareness. To believe in coexistence based upon mutual acquaintance, respect, communication and interaction in a spirit of equality before the law and patriotic dignity without subjection, ascendancy or exploitation for personal or partisan aims.

- b) To believe in sound democracy and practices it, in Human Rights which he endeavors to assure and protect. To defend fiercely Lebanon's sovereignty, security, stability and the dignity of its institutions and People. To strive to strengthen its legitimate armed forces rendering them capable to protect everybody, thus, the need for any exception will exist no more.
- c) To enjoy good morality that makes him work at consolidating social justice by love for Lebanon and its People, asking for inspiration from God and his conscience, endeavoring to establish peace as the fruit of justice and the development of the human being and society.
- d) To live in his campaign as a candidate the democratic competition on the basis of a clear program of which Man is the center, to propose visions and solutions to the citizens' various crises and to commit himself to this program.

Article 30: Every candidate should commit himself to the genuine democratic spirit, therefore he will accept the election results, respect the electors' will and freedom, and he will congratulate the winners.

Article 31: Sound democracy requires that the citizens ask their representatives to account for their deeds and question them about all that concerns public good, promises they had made and competitive plans they had presented. They are also required to question them about the conditions upon which they presented their candidacy.

Epilogue:

28- The Church in Lebanon publishes this Charter to enlighten minds, waken up consciences and cleanse souls, hoping that all will abide by it to rectify the exercise of politics, this noble art and grave responsibility, for the growth of the human being and development of society.

The Church, image of her divine founder, follows up in this work what he said about himself: «For the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many» (**Mrk 10/45**).

* * * * *

***N.B.:** This is an English translation of the CHORAA. In case of a conflict of interpretation the original Arabic text remains the reference.*