

## The Lebanese Maronite Order

The Lebanese Maronite Order (known also as Baladites or Valadites), is a monastic order in the Maronite Church. The order was founded in 1695 in the Monastery of Mart Moura, Ehdén, Lebanon, by three Maronite men from Aleppo in Syria who left their homes and sought to live the monastic life in Lebanon. These three men, under the patronage of Venerable Patriarch Estéphan El Douaihy (1670–1704), formed the Lebanese Maronite Order to become the first formal and official Order in the region. It was the first order to have written formal laws which were approved by the Vatican in 1732.

The Lebanese Maronite Order follows a traditional monastic life of prayer, asceticism and silence. The Order is known for its agricultural lifestyle with a high degree of attachment to both the land and the people. It places great emphasis on the traditional Syriac monastic life and pastoral service as it grants most of its monks the order of Priesthood, so as to serve in parishes within their monasteries' jurisdiction or nearby villages. The Order's monks are known for their hard work in cultivating the land, serving the community and educating them. The people in return gave many lands to the Order out of gratitude for their care. During World War I and the famine that occurred under the Ottoman Empire, the Order pledged its properties to the French government in order to be able to feed the hungry, poor and afflicted. This happened again during the Lebanese War (1975-1993), when the monasteries opened their doors to the displaced and those in need. The order shared in the suffering of the people in Lebanon and mirrored the persecution they suffered and played a great social and political role later on to preserve the Christian presence in Lebanon. Today, the Lebanese Maronite Order has 64 monasteries in Lebanon, and 20 monasteries in the diaspora. The Order has established and runs various institutions, such as schools, universities, hospitals, etc. Saint Sharbel Makhluf along with Saint Rafqa Ar-Rayès, Saint Nimatullah Al-Hardini and Blessed Estéphan Nehme belonged to the Lebanese Maronite Order.