

يوسف السادس اسطفان -- Joseph VI Estephan



Joseph VI Estephan (1729–1793), (Arabic: يوسف السادس اسطفان), was the Maronite Patriarch of Antioch from 1766 until his death in 1793.

Joseph Estephan was born in the village of Ghosta, in the Keserwan District, Lebanon in 1729. He studied in Rome in the College of the Propaganda where he remained from 1739 to 1751. Returned in Lebanon, on May 21, 1752 he was ordained priest by his uncle, bishop John Estephan, and in August 1754 he was consecrated bishop of Beirut by Patriarch Simon Awad.

His uncle, John Estephan, participated to the 1736 Council of Mount-Lebanon and in 1742 became bishop of Beirut. In 1754 John Estephan retired in order to let his nephew, Joseph, to be appointed bishop of the same town. Joseph Estephan remained bishop of Beirut till 1762, when he quarreled with Patriarch Tobias El Khazen, because he refused to support the uncanonical arrangement of dioceses decided by Tobias, and also because he was accused to be ordained bishop at 23 years in place of 25 years as Joseph Estephan always claimed.

After Tobias' death, Joseph Estephan was elected patriarch on June 9, 1766, and confirmed by Pope Clement XIII on April 6, 1767. He summoned a synod in Ghosta in 1768 concerning the distribution of the tithes, issue on which he collided with many bishops who complained with Propaganda Fide. The main complains against him were anyway caused by his strong support to the visionary nun Hindiyya al-'Ujaimi. The Jesuits, as well as some Maronites, became more and more mistrustful of her doctrine and personal cult, and finally obtained from Rome an inspection carried out in 1775 by Pietro Craveri of Moretta (1726–1801). Following the advices of Moretta, on July 17, 1779 Pope Pius VI issued a decree stating that Hindiyya is deluded and her revelations and doctrines false. Moreover the Pope suspended the Joseph Estephan from all functions (apart the episcopal appointments and consecrations) and nominated Michael El Khazen as Vicar.

Joseph Estephan, known the news, tried to travel to Rome, but his health forced him to stop at Mount Carmel. In the meantime Michel Khazen summoned a synod, on July 21, 1780 in which he not even invited Estephan. This situation lasted till the young secretary of Pietro Craveri of Moretta, Joseph Tyan, took it upon himself to travel to Rome, against the will of Craveri, to plead Estephan's case. On September 28, 1784 Propaganda Fide restored Joseph Estephan in all his functions.