

John XI Boutros Helou -- يوحنا الحادي عشر بطرس الحلو



John XI Helou (Dolce), (Arabic: يوحنا الحادي عشر الحلو) was the Maronite Patriarch of Antioch from 1809 until his death in 1823.

John Helou was born in the village of Ghosta, in the Keserwan District, Lebanon. He was known in Europe as *John Dolce*, because *Dolce* is the Latin translation of his surname. John Helou was consecrated titular bishop of Acre in 1786 by Patriarch Joseph Estephan and he remained near the Patriarch as auxiliary bishop.

Patriarch Joseph Tyan communicated his resignation to the Maronite bishops on September 24, 1808, and consequently Aloisio Gandolfi, who was appointed Apostolic visitor in the Maronite Patriarchate since 1807, summoned a meeting of all the bishops in Harissa. Short time later, on June 8, 1809, John Helou was elected Patriarch. The formal approval of Pope Pius VII arrived only on 19 December 1814, due to the fact that Pope Pius VII was actually kept in confinement from 1809 till May 1814 by Napoleon.

After the turbulent years in which the previous Patriarch Joseph Tyan supported Napoleon in the Siege of Acre (1799) and came in conflict with the emir Bashir II, Patriarch John Helou chose a low and neutral course of action, and from 1811 he retreated in the Qannubin Monastery, the ancient and abandoned patriarchal residence, located in the deep gorge of Kadisha Valley, which he restored.

John Helou converted in seminaries and colleges the former monasteries of Saint Maron of Kfarhay (Batroun District) and of Saint Maron of Roumieh.

As demanded by Pope Pius VII with the brief of November 18, 1816, Patriarch John Helou tried to implement two of the more controversial decrees of the Maronite Synod of 1736: the separation of monasteries where lived both men and women, and the definition of a fix episcopal residence into each Maronite dioceses. With this intent he summoned a synod in the church of Our Lady of Louiaze in Zouk Mosbeh, near Harissa, which was held on April 13 and 14, 1818. The acts of this synod were formally approved on May 25, 1819 by the Pope, but they were implemented only by Helou's successor, Patriarch Joseph Peter Hobaish. John Helou died on May 12, 1823.