

يوسف الثامن بطرس حبيش - - Joseph VIII Peter Hobaish

Joseph VIII Peter Hobaish (1787–1845), (Arabic: يوسف الثامن بطرس حبيش), was the Maronite Patriarch of Antioch from 1823 until his death in 1845.

Joseph Peter Hobaish was born in the village of Sahel Aalma, near Jounieh, in the Keserwan District, Lebanon on April 23, 1787. He studied at the seminary of 'Ain Warqa and was ordained priest on June 26, 1814, and later he was consecrated bishop of Tripoli on January 30, 1820 by Patriarch John Helou.

Patriarch John Helou died on May 12, 1823, and Joseph Peter Hobaish was elected Patriarch on May 25, 1823. Pope Leo XII confirmed his election on May 3, 1824 even if there were some canonical irregularities in the election: actually Hobaish didn't reach the two-thirds majority of votes, nor he was already forty.

As Patriarch, Joseph Hobaish urged to improve the formation of priests, and thus reorganized the seminary 'Ain-Warka and opened two new seminaries, Mar 'Abda Harharaia in 1830 and Mar Sarsik & Bakhos in 1832. In 1840 he founded a religious congregation of missionaries. He introduced a modified liturgical ritual book which included many latinizations, and he took measures to limit the increasing Protestant missionary activity. Joseph Hobaish further definitively implemented 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 diocese.

Joseph Hobaish moved the Patriarchal residence from the Qannubin Monastery, located in the deep gorge of Kadisha Valley, and established two separate Patriarchal residences: the summer one at Bkerké near Jounieh and the winter one in the more accessible village of Dimane which overlooks the Kadisha Valley.

Till when it was possible, Joseph Hobaish acted as impartial arbiter between Druzes and Christians, but when the Great Britain armed the Druzes against the Maronite peasants, he took a fierce position in unifying all the Christian population of Lebanon. The last years of Joseph Hobaish were saddened by the bloody events of the 1840-1845 attacks to the Christian population. Joseph Peter Hobaish died on May 23, 1845 at Dimane and was buried in the Qannubin Monastery.

