



By the grace of God, at the Electoral Synod of the Patriarchal Melkite Greek Catholic Church held at Rabweh, Lebanon and presided by the Patriarchal Administrator the Most Reverend John Mansour on November 27-29, 2000, the Most Reverend Archbishop Lutfy Laham, Patriarchal Vicar of Jerusalem was elected as the new Patriarch of Antioch and all the East. The new Patriarch took a new name, as is the custom. He chose the name of Gregory III, following the famous Patriarch Gregory II Youssef, the great champion of Eastern traditions and of the rights of Patriarchs in the First Vatican Council (1870).

Patriarch Gregory III was born in Daraya, near Damascus, Syria, in 1933. The village of Daraya is known traditionally to be the place of the conversion of St. Paul on his way to Damascus. His Beatitude entered the Seminary of the Holy Savior of the Basilian Salvatorian Fathers in the Shoof, Lebanon in 1944. He took his simple religious vows in the Basilian Salvatorian Order in 1949 and his solemn religious vows in 1954. He received his religious and philosophy education at the Holy Savior Seminary, Joun, Lebanon. He continued his Theological studies in Rome where he was ordained priest in 1959.

He obtained the Doctorate degree in Oriental Theology at the Pontifical Oriental Institute in Rome. He was superior of the Holy Savior Major Seminary in 1961-64.

In 1962, His Beatitude founded the Magazine "Al-Wahdah - Unity in Faith," the first ecumenical magazine to be published in the Arabic language. He founded, in the same year, the "Center for Young Girls" in several Lebanese villages in East Sidon area. In 1966, he founded together with the Most Reverend George Kwaiter, now Archbishop of Saida and Deir-el-Kamar, and the Right Reverend Salim Ghazal, now Superior General of the Basilian Salvatorian Order, the Providence Home, at Salhiyeh, near Saida, Lebanon, as an orphanage and a trade school for boys.

In 1974, he was appointed Administrator of the Patriarchal Vicariate of Jerusalem. In 1976, in Jerusalem, he founded the "Student Fund" to help needy students and in 1978 the Family Assistance Fund to help needy families in the troubled areas of his Diocese. In 1967, he founded at the Patriarchate the Oriental Library to promulgate the knowledge of Eastern traditions. He initiated many social projects such as repairing churches, opening clinics and building popular housing, including a guest house for pilgrims at the Patriarchal Center in Jerusalem.

In 1981, he was ordained Archbishop and continued his work as Patriarchal Vicar of Jerusalem as successor to Archbishop Hilarion Cappucci. He is well known throughout the Middle East and Europe as an Ecumenist and a Theologian.

Appointed by Patriarch Maximos V Hakim as president of the Patriarchal Liturgical Commission, he edited "the Anthologion," the prayer book of the Melkite Greek Catholic Church in four volumes, and "the Book of the Liturgies," a complete and updated compendium of the Divine Liturgy. As Secretary of the Ecumenical Commission of the Melkite Patriarchate, he has been very active in the Dialogue between the two Sister Churches, the Melkite Greek Catholic and the Greek (Antiochian) Orthodox Churches. He is also a member of the League of the Universities and institutes of Religious Studies in the Middle East.

The installation of the New Patriarch took place at 11:30 AM, Wednesday, November 29, immediately after his election by 30 Bishops assembled in a special Synod for that purpose. Present at the installation was His Beatitude Maximos V Hakim who had resigned for reasons of health at 92 years of age. Many religious and political personalities rushed to Rabweh to attend the Installation, as soon as the good news was caught and spread by the media.