

JULY 24 2025 FATHER BRANDEN GORDON

We, as Catholic Christians, are sometimes criticized by other Christians for our devotion to the saints. They tell us that we shouldn't worship the saints, as worship is due to God alone. Well, we agree with our separated brethren that we shouldn't worship the saints. And we try to explain to them that there is a difference between the worship due to God alone and the honour that we give to the saints.

In the same way that we honour our parents, our country, and all those to whom honour is due, so do we honour the saints. For they are our spiritual heroes, men and women who lived out the teachings of Christ in an exemplary way. In addition to honouring the saints, we ask them to pray with us and for us. By virtue of our baptism, the sacrament by which we are adopted into God's family, the saints are indeed our spiritual relatives. And so, just as we can ask a relative or a friend to pray with us and for us, so we can ask the saints.

There's hardly a saint in whom these principles have been more clearly demonstrated than in Saint Charbel Makhlouf, also known as the miracle monk of Lebanon. Charbel was born on the 8th of May, 1828, in the mountain village of Bekaa Kafa. He was raised in a pious home and from an early age read copiously of the lives of the saints.

In his early 20s, Charbel responded to a call to monastic life. He left his family behind and entered the Monastery of Our Lady in Mayfouq, about 65 kilometres north of Beirut. He was eventually ordained and transferred to the monastery of Saint Maron in Annaya, where he lived a life of profound prayer, manual labour, and rigorous self-denial. With the permission of his abbots, he withdrew from his brother monks in the year 1875 and spent the last 23 years of his earthly life as a hermit in a nearby chapel.

It was on Christmas Eve of the year 1898 that the Lord called him to his eternal reward. And it was only a few months after his death that the first of his posthumous miracles would occur. Visitors to Charbel's tomb reported seeing a bright light surrounding him. Shortly afterwards, the monastery superiors decided to open the tomb and examine the monk's remains. To their great astonishment, Charbel's body was still intact and exuded a blood-like liquid. Medical examiners were called in, and they were at a complete loss to explain the body's incorruptibility and life-like suppleness. This was a sign that Charbel was highly favoured by God and on the road to canonized sainthood.

Charbel had worked several miracles during his earthly life, and he continued to work miracles even after his death. To this date, over 26,000 miracles have been attributed to his intercession. One such miracle was the healing of a 55-year-old woman named Nohad El Shami, who had suffered from partial paralysis. On the night of January 22nd, 1993, Nohad dreamt that two Maronite monks appeared by her bedside. One of the monks held a pillow under her back for support while the other monk performed surgery on her neck.

When Nohad woke up in the morning, she found two wounds on her neck, one on each side. It was then that she realized that her pain was gone and that she had regained the ability to walk. That very night, one of the monks appeared to her again in a dream. It was Saint Charbel, and he said the following: "I did the surgery to let people see, and return to faith. I ask you to visit my hermitage on the 22nd of every month, and attend Mass regularly for the rest of your life."

Why does God so often perform miracles through the intercession of his saints? It's because he wants to draw our attention to the saints, who are our models and intercessors. You see, during their earthly lives, the saints pointed our attention to God through their words and actions. And now that they're in heaven, God points our attention to them by working

miracles through their intercession. He wants us to be devoted to the saints and to follow their footsteps to heaven.

Through the intercession of Saint Charbel, may we obtain the grace to pray, to work, and to do penance for the salvation of souls. We entrust ourselves and all our loved ones, especially those who are suffering from illness or injury, to Charbel's prayers, confident that God will hear his pleas on our behalf.

Saint Charbel Makhoul, pray for us.