

Saint Nimatullah Al-Hardini

Feast Day: December 14, 1858

Birth: 1808

Death: December 14, 1858

Beatified: May 10, 1998

Canonized: May 16, 2004

"Nimatullah Youssef Kassab Al-Hardini" was born in the Emirate of Mount Lebanon, in 1808. He was the son of George Kassab and Marium Raad. His mother was the daughter of a Maronite priest. As a boy, he attended a religious school, studying under the monks of the Lebanese Maronite Order at the Monastery of St. Anthony, in Houb. He completed his studies there in 1822. In 1828, he entered the monastery of St. Anthony in Qozhaya. He took the name, "Nimatullah," which means "God's grace."

Nimatullah spent long hours in prayer, often staying awake all night to pray in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament. He made his vows in 1830 and was sent to the Monastery of Saints Cyprian and Justinian to study for his ordination. He was ordained on Christmas Day, 1833. He was then sent to teach at the order's seminary and became the director of the seminarians. However, he was reluctant to accept positions of leadership due to his humility. Once, when offered a post as Superior General of his order, he declined saying, "better death than to be appointed Superior General."

Throughout his career, he was observed to be strict with himself and his own observance of the rules. However, he was remarkably lenient with the other monks. In fact, he was reprimanded for showing so much leniency. He remarked that his first concern should be to do no harm or trouble his bothers.

There were two civil wars in the region, during 1840 and 1845. These were occasions of great suffering for Nimatullah and the people. One of his biological brothers, who had also entered the monastery and become a monk, advised him to become a hermit as well. But Nimatullah dismissed this suggestion, explaining that the true challenge of being a monk involved communal life.

Nimatullah was well-known for his spirituality and is said to have performed many miracles. On one occasion, he ordered his students to move away from a wall, because he had a premonition that the wall was going to collapse. The wall subsequently fell, but thanks to his vision, the students were kept safe. He miraculously cured an altar boy who was deathly ill, and when his monastery's donation box was nearly empty, he prayed and soon it was found to be overflowing with food.

In the late fall of 1858, Nimatullah fell ill with a high fever while teaching. He remained in bed for two weeks, holding tightly an icon of the Blessed Virgin, and entrusting his soul to her. He died on December 14, 1858. In 1864, his tomb was opened for reburial and his body was discovered incorrupt. His body was venerated by the public until 1827,

when he was finally reburied in a chapel.

His case for canonization was opened on September 7, 1978, and he was declared venerable. In 1997, a miracle was attributed to him. Pope John Paul II beatified him on May 10, 1998. He later canonized Nimatullah on Sunday, May 16, 2004. The Maronite Church celebrates his feast day on December 14.

He is the patron saint of Beirut, Lebanon.