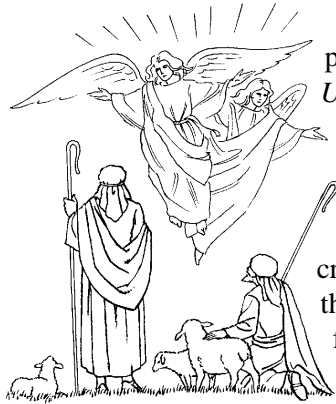


Birth of Our Lord

The Maronite Divine Liturgy often mentions the title *Mary, Mother of the Light*. This title is rich in theological and spiritual significance and is indeed one of the treasures of the Maronite Church.

The image of light conveys a sense of joy, festivity and life. Religion uses the image of light to express the notion of purity and the presence of God. Since light is the element which is proper to the divine being, from ancient times the pagans adored the sun. At the end of December, the pagans celebrated a feast dedicated to the *unconquerable Sun*. In fact, on December 21st the nights, which had been becoming longer and longer, begin to shorten. The ancient celebrated this conquest of the light over darkness.



When Constantine granted freedom for Christians to worship publicly, it was appropriate to replace the celebration of the *Unconquerable Sun*, with the feast of the New Sun of the world, to celebrate the birth of Jesus, the Light of the World (John 3:19).

The image of light is found throughout salvation history. The Aramaic Fathers of the Antiochene tradition teach us that creation is a preparation for the incarnation of the Son of God. All was created by the Father through the Son. Scripture tells us that the first thing that was created is the sun. It is the heavenly body which gives forth light, warmth and life itself. The sun is the image of the Son of God because Christ Himself is that light which comes from heaven. As a ray of light coming through a cloud, He appeared from the Virgin Mary. When God created the world, He separated the light from the darkness. In the New Testament, there is a constant struggle between light and darkness.

The genealogy in the gospel of Matthew describes the human ancestry of Jesus in the flesh and, as such, lists the sinners whose sins Jesus had to bear. This is the side of darkness in the spiritual realm. St. John describes Jesus as coming from God, Light from Light.

The account of the birth of Jesus contains the image of light throughout. The shepherds saw a great light (Luke 2:9) and the Magi saw a brilliant star in the skies (Matt. 2:9-11). Throughout the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, we find the image of light used to express His divinity. His baptism was a true revelation, a great enlightenment. During the transfiguration, Jesus was surrounded by light. When Jesus died on the cross darkness came upon the earth. The Resurrection itself was a blinding light (Matt 28:2). The descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost is described as *tongues of fire* (Acts 2:3). Upon seeing a great light and being thrown from his horse, Saul came to believe (Acts 9:3) While in prison, Peter saw a great light and was freed from his chains (Acts 12:6).

Just as the Magi and Shepherds saw and followed the light, we who have seen the Light must follow. This feast of the Birth of Our Lord should be an incentive for us to be the light of the world (Matthew 5:14).

The night shall be no more. They will need no light from lamps or the sun, for the Lord God shall give them light and they shall reign forever (Revelation 22:5).

Saint Anthony's Maronite Catholic Church

Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn

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Msgr. George M. Sebaali, Pastor

Fr. Kamil Al-Chouefati, Parochial Vicar

Christmas 2005



*The Gift that
Changed the World*

Christmas Eve at 6:30 P.M.

Members & Benefactors of St. Anthony, Living & deceased

Sunday, December 25, at 10:00 A.M.

Nina and Leo Kouri

Saturday, December 31, 2005 at 6:30 P.M.

Harry & Zackia Shaia and Philip & Mary Gibrall

Sunday, January 1, 2006 at 11:00 O'clock

Special Intention

Daily Liturgy in the Chapel at 9:00 A.M.

- Monday:** Elizabeth Arnold
- Tuesday:** Abe and Julia Massad
- Wednesday:** Dorothy Dynda
- Thursday:** Elizabeth Arnold
- Friday:** Mary Madison

Friday, January 6, 2006 (Epiphany)

- 9:00 A.M.:** Abe and Julia Massad
Fr. Anthony Gemayel
- 6:30 P.M.:** Faten Abou Chabke

Sunday, January 8, 2006 at 8:30 A.M.

Jean Lyell

Sunday, January 8, 2006 at 11:00 O'clock

Elizabeth Arnold (40 day anniversary)

Sunday, January 15, 2006 at 8:30 A.M.

Mary Madison

Sunday, January 15, 2006 at 11:00 O'clock

Harry and Zackia Shaia; Philip & Mary Gibrall



Choir Practice

Tuesday, January 10, 2006 at 7:30 P.M. there will be a Choir practice for both Liturgies

Readers:

Saturday, December 31, 2005 (New Year's Eve) at 6:30 P.M.

Paul Thomas

Sunday, January 1, 2006 (New Year's Day) at 11:00 A.M.

George Yesbeck, Jr.

Altar Boys

Saturday, December 31, 2005 (New Year's Eve) at 6:30 P.M.

Jack Zohab, Daniel Edwards and Joseph Saad

Sunday, January 1, 2006 (New Year's Day) at 11:00 A.M.

Kevin Ferguson and Lawrence Talej

Ushers

Saturday, December 31, 2005 (New Year's Eve) at 6:30 P.M.

John Sheffield, Jay Pettit, John Aaron and Joseph Shulleeta, Jr.

Sunday, January 1, 2006 (New Year's Day) at 11:00 A.M.

Sam Dip, John Zeheb, Edward Yesbeck, Jr., and Kenneth Sledd

Scripture Readings

(Feast of Circumcision and World Day of Peace)

Romans 7:1-6 (Freedom from the Law)

Luke 2:21 (Circumcision of Jesus)

Sunday School

In observation of the Christmas holiday, there will be no Sunday School on Sunday, December 25, 2005 and on Sunday January 1, 2006. Sunday School will resume again on **Sunday January 8, 2006** following the 8:30 A.M. Liturgy.

Holy Day of Obligation

Friday, January 6, 2006, Feast of the Epiphany or Baptism of Jesus, is a Holy Day of Obligation. Liturgies will be at 9:00 A.M. and 6:30 P.M. During both liturgies we will consecrate the Epiphany water. If you wish you may bring a small water bottle to have it blessed during the liturgy.

Altar Boys Meeting

Sunday, January 8, 2006 at 10:15 A.M., there will be a meeting for all Altar Boys and for those (boys) who are interested in becoming Altar servers.

We Need Your Help

If your address has changed, or your name is not on our active membership list, please let us know so that we can update our records. If you don't tell us, we cannot be sure that various mailings will reach you. You may call the office with your updated information at 270-7234.

Christmas Liturgical Schedule

Sunday, December 25, 2005 (Christmas Day)

10:00 A.M.: Christmas Day Liturgy

Saturday, December 31, 2005 (New Year's Eve)

6:30 P.M.: Divine Liturgy

Sunday, January 1, 2006 (New Year's Day)

11:00 A.M.: Divine Liturgy

Friday, January 6, 2006 (Baptism of the Lord)

9:00 A.M.: Divine Liturgy

6:30 P.M.: Divine Liturgy

Consecration of Epiphany Water will take place at both liturgies.

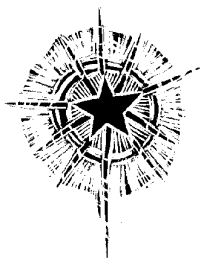
New Year's Eve Dance

Join fellow parishioners and celebrate the New Year with live Lebanese music and American music provided by a DJ. The fun begins at 9:00 P.M. and ends by 1:00 A.M. The location is St. Anthony's Social Hall. Heavy Hors D'oeuvres and mixers provided. B.Y.O.B. Tickets are \$25 per person and \$15 (per person) for teenagers. For more information or to purchase tickets, please see Gloria Nadder.

Christmas Reflections

The best gift you can offer not only this Christmas but throughout the new year:

- To your enemy, forgiveness
- To an opponent, tolerance
- To a friend, your heart
- To all, charity
- To every child, a good example
- To yourself, respect *(Oren Arnold)*



On this day when the Rich One was made poor for our sake, Let the rich man also make the poor man a sharer at his table.

On this day a Gift came to us without our asking for it, Let us then give alms to those who cry out and beg from us. *(St. Ephrem, Hymn on the Nativity, 194-95)*

Merry Christmas and a Blessed and Peaceful 2006 to all.

May the Star of Bethlehem guide you always to "where you find a Child wrapped in swaddling clothes ..."

