

## 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.

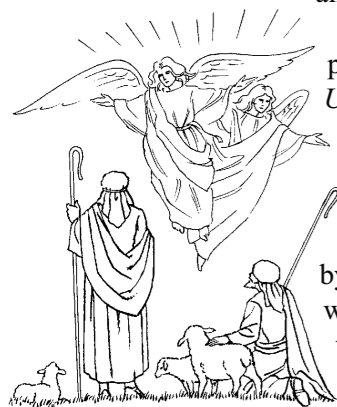
When God created the world, He separated the light from the darkness. In the New Testament, there is a constant struggle between light and darkness.

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

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*Christmas 2007*

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☩ WONDERFUL  
COUNSELOR  
EVERLASTING  
FATHER

Mighty  
God  
Prince of  
Peace

**Sunday, December 23, 2007 at 8:30 A.M.**

Msgr. B. Salwan

**Sunday, December 23, 2007 at 11:00 o'clock**

Stuart & Anthony Beasley

**Christmas Eve Liturgy at 6:30 P.M.**

Members and Benefactors of St. Anthony's, Living & deceased.

**Midnight Liturgy**

For Vocations

**Christmas Day at 10:00 A.M.**

Special Intention

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

**Monday:** Abe and Julia Massad

**Wednesday:** No Morning Liturgy

**Thursday:** No Morning Liturgy

**Friday:** No Morning Liturgy

**Saturday:** No Morning Liturgy

**Sunday, December 30, 2007 at 8:30 A.M.**

Charles & Alice Anthony

**Sunday, December 30, 2007 at 11:00 o'clock**

Roslyn Simon

### *Altar Boys*

**Sunday, December 30, 2007 at 8:30 A.M.**

Jack and Sam Zohab, John Saad and Evan Joseph

**Sunday, December 30, 2007 at 11:00 o'clock**

Christopher Siefke, Adam Yesbeck, William King and Drew Scott



### *Christmas Liturgical Schedule*

**Monday, December 24, 2007**

*(Christmas Eve)*

**4:00 P.M.- 5:00 P.M.:**

Confession will be available

**6:00 P.M.** Pre-Liturgy Christmas Carols

**6:30 P.M.:** Christmas Eve Liturgy

**12:00 Midnight:** Divine Liturgy

**Tuesday, December 25, 2007 (Christmas Day)**

**10:00 A.M.:** Christmas Day Liturgy

**Sunday, December 30, 2007**

**8:30 A.M.** Divine Liturgy

**11:00 A.M.** Divine Liturgy

**Monday, December 31, 2007 (New Year's Eve) at 6:30 P.M.**

Evening Liturgy (New Year's Day is a Holy Day of Obligation)

**Tuesday, January 1, 2008** at 11:00 A.M.: Divine Liturgy.

### *Sunday School*

Due to the Christmas and New Year celebrations, there will not be Sunday School on December 23-30, 2007. Religious Education program will resume on Sunday, January 6, 2008 following the 8:30 A.M. Liturgy.

### *2008 Contribution Envelopes*

The 2008 Contribution envelopes are available in the back of the church. Envelopes are in numerical order. If you have been using the envelope system in 2007, you will have the same number in 2008. Envelopes were issued to the registered members. While we welcome everyone to worship with us, we encourage you to contact the Church Office this week if you would like to register in the parish.

### *Ushers*

**Christmas Eve Liturgy at 6:30 P.M.**

Paul Thomas, John Fadool, Tom Anthony, Chet Wade, Steve Fahed, Danny Shibley Jr. and Raymond Khoury.

**Midnight Liturgy**

John Nadder Jr., John Aaron, Elie Talej & Victor Reynolds

**Christmas Day, Dec. 25, 2007 at 10:00 o'clock**

Kenneth Sledd and Michael Yesbeck

**Sunday, December 30, 2007 at 8:30 A.M.**

Arthur Zohab, Tom Dailey, Tom Anthony and Victor Shaheen

**Sunday, December 30, 2007 at 11:00 o'clock**

John Fadool, Michel Zajur, Michael Yesbeck, John Sheffield and Sam Shibley

### *Readers*

**Christmas Eve at 6:30 P.M.**

Bruce Amateau

**Midnight Liturgy**

John Zeheb

**Christmas Day**

Kenneth Sledd

**Sunday, December 30, 2007 at 8:30 A.M.**

Joseph George, Jr.

**Sunday, December 30, 2007 at 11:00 o'clock**

Kenneth Sledd

NEW YEAR'S EVE party will take place on December 31, 2007. DJ Music will be provided. For more information, please contact Gloria Nadder, Chairperson.



Thank you very much for your generosity and for your participation in our Christmas Tree Charitable Drive. Over 350 gifts were distributed to needy families in the Richmond area.

Again this year, the Breakfast with Santa was big success. The net proceeds of the Breakfast (\$650) were donated to Sgt. Santa's Charities. Again thank you and may the Infant Savior bless you, love you and protect and reward you.



Indeed God has blessed us tremendously in 2007. For that let us offer a prayer of praise and gratitude and beg Him to make 2008 another year filled with His blessings and graces.

Thank you for all your cooperation, zeal and generosity during this year. May God reward your efforts and grant you His love and peace.

“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 2008.*

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