

Our Lady of Lebanon Maronite Catholic Church
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Msgr. George M. Sebaali, Pastor

Pastor's personal Email: Gmsebaali@aol.com

Pastor's cell number: (804) 240-9820

Sunday, December 24, 2023, Genealogy Sunday & Christmas

Sunday, December 24, 2023 at 11:00 o'clock (Sunday Liturgy)

Sunday, December 24, 2023 (Christmas Eve) at 5:30 P.M.

Members of the parish, both living and deceased

Monday, December 25, 2023 (Christmas Day) at 11:00 o'clock

Private intention

Saturday, December 30, 2023 at 1:00 P.M.

Salam Mikhael Hanna Elmur (40 day anniversary, requested by Elham Khoury and Alain and Christian Khoury)

Sunday, December 31, 2023 at 11:00 o'clock

Monday, January 1, 2024 at 11:00 o'clock

Friday, January 5, 2024 at 7:30 p.m. (Eve of Epiphany)

Faten Abou Chabke

Saturday, January 6, 2024, at 11:00 o'clock (Feast of Epiphany)

Sunday, January 7, 2024 at 11:00 o'clock

Souria Youssef Noujaim Karam (40 Day Anniversary)

Sunday, January 14, 2024 at 11:00 o'clock

Alice Gebara and Boutros Abboud Zoghbi

Reconciliation (Confession) is available every Sunday between 10:15 and 10:45 a.m. before the Divine Liturgy.

Let us Pray the Rosary

Please join fellow parishioners as we pray the Holy Rosary every **Sunday at 10:15 a.m.** in preparation for the Divine Liturgy and in honor of our Blessed Mother, Mary.

Ushers for Sunday, December 24, 2023

Roger Abou Jaoude, Elie Malkoun, Kevin Pitzer and George Choueiry

Ushers for Sunday, December 31, 2023

Halim Younes, Gebran Fattouche, Antoine Issa and Joseph Nasr

Altar Servers for Sunday, December 31, 2023

George Beasley and Marek Oszwaldowski

Thank you for your generosity

Summary of the Collection for Sunday, December 17, 2023

Regular collection \$ 2409

Pledge \$ 270

Donation by mail \$ 515

End of the year contribution \$ 2060

Thank you for your generosity and may God bless you all.

Holy Days of Obligation

Feast of the Circumcision of the Lord

Monday, January 1, 2024, Feast of the Circumcision of the Lord, is a Holy Day of Obligation. The Liturgy will be at **11:00 o'clock**.

Baptism of the Lord (Epiphany)

Saturday, January 6, 2024, Feast of the Epiphany or the Baptism of the Lord, is a Holy Day of Obligation. The Divine Liturgies with the Blessing of the Epiphany Water will be on:

◆ **Friday, January 5, 2024 at 7:30 PM**

◆ **Saturday, January 6, 2024 at 11:00 o'clock**

Scripture Readings

Sunday, December 24, 2023, Genealogy Sunday

Rom 1-12; Mt 1:1-17

December 25, 2023, Birth of the Lord

Heb 1:1-12; Lk 2:1-20

Sunday, December 31, 2023, Finding in the Temple

Heb 7:11-19; LK 2:41-52

Sunday School

Due to the Christmas and New Year holiday, there will be no Religious Education (Sunday School) on **Sunday, December 24** and **Sunday, December 31, 2023**. Sunday School will resume on **January 7, 2024 at 10:00 o'clock**

Liturgical Schedule

Christmas Eve (December 24, 2023)

◆ **4:15 p.m. - 4:45:** Reconciliation (Confession) will be available

◆ **5:30 p.m.** Christmas Eve Divine Liturgy

Please note that there will be no Midnight Divine Liturgy.

Monday, December 25, 2023 (Christmas Day)

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

Sunday, December 31, 2023

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

Monday, January 1, 2024

Feast of the Circumcision of the Lord (*A Holy Day of Obligation*)

★ **11: 00 A.M.** Divine Liturgy

Friday, January 5, 2024 (Eve of the Baptism of the Lord)

★ **7:30 P.M.** Divine Liturgy and Blessing of the Epiphany Water

Saturday, January 6, 2024 (the Baptism of the Lord)

★ **11:00 A.M.** Divine Liturgy and Blessing of Water

As we continue to prepare for Christmas, I want to express my deepest gratitude for your unwavering commitment to Our Lady of Lebanon. Thank you for all that you do to make our church a guiding light to all who seek refuge in the love and compassion of the Lord.



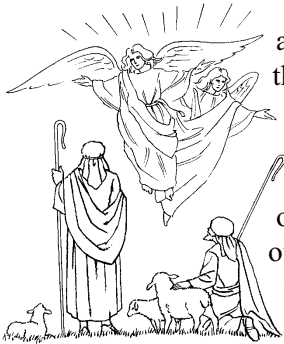
I wish you a very Merry Christmas and a Blessed and joyful New Year filled with joy, laughter, health, prosperity, and treasured moments.

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

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). [*Maronite Divine Office, Volume 1*]

