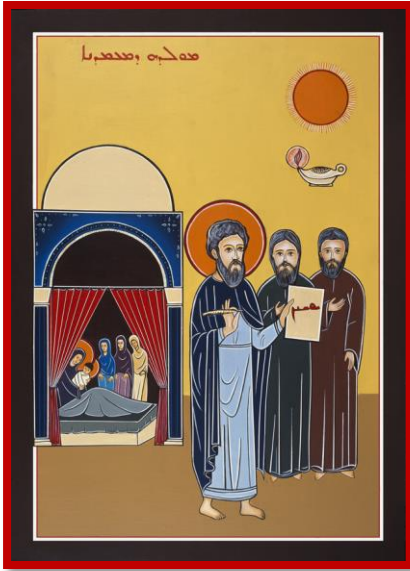


Saint Joseph Maronite Catholic Church



The Nativity of Saint John, the Forerunner

December 4, 2022

Welcome all visitors to the beautiful heritage of Antioch

3 Appleton Street
Waterville, ME 04901
Office Phone: 207-872-8515

Pastor: Rev. Fr. James Doran, KHS
Subdeacon: Mr. Stephen Crate
website: <http://www.sjmaronite.org>
e-mail: stjoesinmaine@yahoo.com

"For us, the men and women of the East are a symbol of the Lord Who comes again." Orientale Lumen, John Paul II

Qourboneh: Sunday: (Vigil, Sat. 4:30pm) Sunday Morning 9:00 and 11:00 a.m.; Tues. – Fr. 9:00 a.m.; Sat. 10:00a.m.
Sick Calls: To receive the Divine Eucharist and/or the Sacred Anointing, please call the rectory.
Confessions: One half-hour before the Sunday Liturgies and by appointment.
Baptisms: *Parents* should refer to the website and then contact the parish through the parish e-mail address.
Marriage: Please refer to the parish website and contact the parish a **minimum 6 months before** finalizing the date of your wedding.
Mass Intentions: For *specific* dates requested, please submit at least **two months in advance**. Recommended stipend: \$15
Monthly Memorials: Sanctuary Candles \$35; Altar Bread \$30; Sacramental Wine \$55
Catechism: Steve Crate, *Director* **Choir Director:** Dame Marie Fefa Deeb, DSG **Pastoral Council Chair:** Suzanne Paré
Pastoral Council Members: Suzanne Paré, *Chair*; Gayle Misner-Elias, *Secretary*; Steve Crate, *Religious Education*; Larry Mitchell, *Knights of Columbus*; Ruth Lunn, *Almoner*; Judith Metzger, *Finance Committee*

This Day's Epistle¹ Galatians 4: 21-5: 1

Tell me, ye who desire to be under the Law,
do ye not hear the Law?
For it is written, that Abraham had two sons,
one by a bondmaid, and one by a free woman.
But he that was by the bondmaid,
was born according to the flesh;

and he that was by the free woman,
was by the promise.

And these are *allegories* of the two *covenants*;
the one from Mount Sinai,
which bringeth forth unto bondage, is Hagar.
For Hagar is the mount Sinai in Arabia,

¹ Based on The New Testament, translated from the Syriac Peshitto Version, Gorgias Press, New Jersey, 2001, translated by James Murdock, STD, 1893

and correspondeth with the present Jerusalem,
and is serving in bondage,
she and her children.

But the Jerusalem above, is the free woman,
who is the mother of us.

For it is written,

*Be joyful, thou barren, who bearest not:
exult and shout,
thou who hast not travailed:
for more numerous
are the children of the desolate
than the children of the married woman.²*

Now we, my brethren, like Isaac, are the
children of the Promise.

And as then,

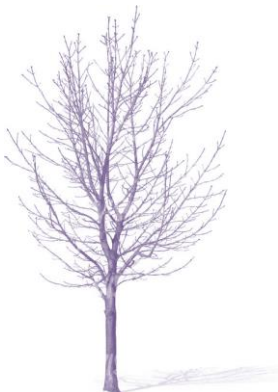
he that was born according to the flesh,
persecuted him (who was born) of the Spirit;
so also (it is) now.

But what saith the Scripture?

*Cast out the bondmaid, and her son;
because the son of the bondmaid
shall not inherit
with the son of the free woman.³*

So then, my brethren,
we are not sons of the bond woman,
but sons of the free woman.

Stand fast, therefore, in the liberty with which
the *Messiah* hath made us free;
and be not subjected again
to the yoke of bondage.



² Isaiah 54: 1

³ Genesis 21: 10



*You will progress in understanding
the Holy Scriptures
only to the degree that you yourself
have made progress
through contact with them.*

St. Gregory the Great (AD 540-604)⁴

ABOUNA'S REFLECTIONS

Because Divinity infinitely surpasses all creation,
God is not something we can directly experience by
nature. All our human knowledge comes to us
through our sense experience, so God, Who is pure
immateriality and spirit, is unable to be seen,
smelled, touched, tasted, or heard by men.
Divinity cannot be "felt". To the human mind, God
can be known only *indirectly*. However, there is
divine experience possible to men, but this is a
grace.

God Himself must touch us so that we can
experience Him, but, we must note, this is not a
"feeling" or sentiment (which, of course, would
simply be another sense experience). Therefore,
when the Hidden One chooses to touch His
creature it is through grace, and while it is a true
experience it will always remain *ineffable*.

⁴ Homily 1.7.8 "on Ezechiel"

The mystics have always found it nearly impossible to articulate and speak of their experiences of grace and God. It is because of this that we say that the Good One manifests Himself in presence and absence. Both are necessary for a creature to perceive Divinity: **presence**, because God is the Infinite I-Am-Who-Am; but **absence**, because God is not able to be sensed by human agency.

These are philosophical ideas, and explanations of what is evident once one thinks about it. These philosophical ideas lay at the heart of why the Syriac Church expresses her **theology in poetry**. Since Divinity is the truly Ineffable One, human language and expression will always fall short.

Language used in the field of scientific observation will work for the most part (everything observed is observed by the senses in some way) but that kind of precision (literally, “cutting”) is impossible when dealing with a Reality that exceeds all human observation. Poetry, however, allows human language to express and deny, clarify and veil, define and silence, all at the same time. Poetic language dances and flirts around the Ineffable with human words speaking truths that simultaneously veil.

This *poetic manner is also the way God leads us in His Providence*. He can only “tell” us so much – we simply cannot understand; for the rest, He is present by absence in our lives. He guides mankind, individually and as a whole, through inspiration, unfelt grace, and in absence that calls us forward, drawn by yearning for the unseen. All these aspects are seen beautifully in the conception and birth of Saint John the Baptist.

These just parents conceive no life between them for decades, but that absence of life does not limit their practice of the Law, they remain just and faithful throughout. In humility they live until the day that God sent Gabriel the Archangel to speak to Zachary in the Holy Place. At that moment, Saint Zachary, thinking in merely human terms, was unable to accept the words of the angel. Loss of speech then was made the sign of absent faith, and being made mute was the way in which God opened the father’s heart to the mystery announced.⁵

Silence became the sign of the coming of the Forerunner, who, as Voice of the Word, was to proclaim and announce the Kingdom of God. The name of this last and greatest of the prophets, “John”, was spoken by heaven, received by the parents, and imposed in the observance of the Law. When response to absence and sign took place at the circumcision, words returned to the father, and Saint Zachary sang the glory of God in thanksgiving.

This historical event shows us the way that *God leads His friends through ineffability, into grace, through absence, into the life of holiness*.

These things we must always keep in mind as we live the life of the Gospel. Not every silence is a rebuke, and not every darkness is bad. We live by faith and not by sight, so necessarily darkness comes to us, but this is not from the Luminous One (that would be impossible as God is in Himself the most knowable, most vibrant, and most radiant of all beings) but is due to our minds fragmenting, obscuring, and darkening perception of Him and His ways. When we think it is that “God is not listening”, the silence most likely originates in us and not in the Good One. This is wisdom to the faithful, and scandal to those who do not believe.

What wonder strikes us when we consider how God makes His most faithful servants often bear the most humiliating difficulties and crosses! This is the example given to us in Saint Zachary and his wife Elizabeth. Providence made them labor under the shame of barrenness for decades, before He gave them John.

This is the path of the saints. The world – “the flesh” – would rather say that God lavishes His material blessings on His most faithful servants, and this the televangelists do indeed say. How deceiving, and how ignorant of the ways of God this is.

These are mysteries to us. To read the lives of the saints is to contemplate a parade of hardships and human disappointments; and yet, they remained faithful to the divine promise and they walked in

⁵ Sedro, The Announcement to Zechariah, **Book of Offering**, p. 21

hope. “Hoping against hope”, as Saint Paul beautifully wrote.⁶

It is not in externals, or in “stuff”, or in the judgment of the world, or from the sympathies of “the flesh” that we can judge whether we are following the will of God and being disciples of the Lord Jesus. In fact, it is just the opposite.

When the world applauds us we should fear: *If you were of the world the world would love its own.*⁷ And even in the Old Law it was stated: *For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.*⁸ Salvation is not found in the mundane thoughts of worldly concerns and commerce. Rather, these interests must be lifted to the Mind of God.

This all means that we can discern the will of God **only by knowing His revelation both in its clarity and in its obscurity**, because it is here that He reveals His Mind to us. When we correspond to this light of grace and faith we see, judge, and act accordingly. We may get it wrong at times, but most often, when we do respond to grace, the Lord God sets us right on the path. This is why Saint Elizabeth and her husband Zachary never despaired – even if they were burdened with the shame of their sterility and did not understand the conception of John.

The Church’s proclamation, her gift to the world, is none other than the Gospel of salvation. It saves because it enlightens and corrects the human mind to correspond to the thoughts of the Hidden and Good One. Sins are forgiven because our wills are corrected and we are raised up to pursue virtue and goodness.

The Divine Mind can only be known (like any other mind) by the owner revealing himself and communicating with those whom he loves. Our friends know us because we love them, and in loving them we communicate our thoughts and ideas to them. Those who are strangers to us do not know our minds, concerns, ideas, or worries. So it is, humanly speaking, the same with the ways of God. When we embrace the apostolic faith and

pray, we come to know this Mind as it translates into our own lives.

Saints Zachary and Elizabeth understood this, and in understanding this they were made fit instruments for God’s work. So often we blunt our lives in their aptitude for God’s working because we fill ourselves only with our own ideas and plans, stifling the Voice of God in our lives, and wandering without true purpose as a result.

We must first get out of the way of God, receive His grace, learn **His** ways, and then He can work as He wishes through us.

From this kind of life, Saint John the Forerunner was born. A man like no other, he was mistaken for the Messiah Himself, and Our Lord said *none greater had been born of woman.*⁹ What a testament not only to Saint John the Baptist, but also to the fidelity of his parents, faithful through many years of obscurity.

We need not be theologians professionally trained, but we do **need to pray and know our catechism**. One Gift, one clarity of spirit, one rectitude of will, one salvation is conferred in that Gospel proclaimed to us throughout the centuries, received in apostolic tradition; and the catechism is the transmission of that treasure. In it is found the light of the ages, and by it we are strengthened to walk the vast stretches of obscurity that dapple the path of life.

Schedule of Readings

THE NATIVITY OF JOHN, THE FORERUNNER

December 4, 2022

Gal 4: 21 – 5: 1 St. Luke 1: 57-66

THE REVELATION TO SAINT JOSEPH

December 11, 2022

Eph 3: 1-13 St. Matthew 1: 18-25

⁶ Romans 4: 18

⁷ St. John 15: 19

⁸ Isaiah 55: 8-9

⁹ St. Matthew 11: 11



The Sanctuary Lamp
burns in December
in memory of **Edmund
& Lucille Paré**
at the request
of Suzanne Paré.

May their memory be eternal!

The Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception



Wednesday, December 7th:

**5:30pm Ramsho and
Vigil Liturgy**

Thursday, December 8th:

10:00am Mass of the Holy Day



For the Healing of the wounded
world ***through the Immaculate
Heart of Mary***
an alms of Sacramental Wine
(October through December) has
been offered by Kevin Koski

*May the Mother of God bring health
and well-being to the world through the
Divine Eucharistic Sacrifice of her Son!*

*Grant them health, and raise them up
from their illness, and make them
to have perfect health of body and soul
and strengthen them in spirit;
for Thou art our Savior and Benefactor,
the Lord of lords and Weaver of crowns,
Thou art Lord and King of all. Amen*

Those for whom we pray: Celina Knippling,
Stephen Michaud, Dame Fefa, Kevin J. Michaud,
Sheila Bonenfant, John Gallant, Gareth Belton,
Katrina Nappi, Holly Perron, Christian Disuag,
Daja Gombojav, Margaret Mae Lambert, Mary
Theresa Huebner, Mary Morin, Larry Grard, Sarah
Grace Misner-Elias, Cindy Elias, Barbara Joseph,
Madeleine Dombroski, Sally Derosby, Tala Poulin,
Richard Karter, Rita Hikel, and all those who may
suffer from illness, disease, want, or depression.

The Nativity Fast

December 15-23rd inclusively

As we were reminded by our Patriarch in his recent
Lenten Letters, it is our tradition to fast in
preparation for the great feasts, and all are
encouraged to do so faithfully, *par.* 25:

*This fast is known as "The Fast of the Nativity",
during which the faithful abstain from eating
meat, dairy products, and eggs, from December
16th and ends December 24th.*

**NB: for the faithful in the USA, who celebrate
Christmas Eve much as Christmas, the dates are
15th-23rd December inclusively.**

We are reminded in paragraph 21 of the same
letter that "a fast" is **to go without all foods
from midnight to noon**, after which we
abstain from animal flesh and almost all
animal products – this is most similar to a
"vegan" diet as one would call it these days.

When a fast day falls on a Saturday or a Sunday (as will be the case this year on **December 17-18th**) one can eat as they wish throughout the day, but should still abstain from all animal flesh and animal products, although, by tradition, shellfish may be eaten on these days, but no fish.

These observances are **for all who have attained the age of the use of reason**, *par. 22*.

LAST WEEK'S COLLECTIONS

(Budgeted: \$3,100.00)

Regular Collection Last Week: \$1,405.00

(Budget Deficit 2022: \$36,254.00)¹⁰

Donations to date to install **next heat-pumps** in the church to burn cleaner, more efficiently, and lower fuel-oil costs: **\$11,035.00¹¹**

Second Sunday each month is a second collection to cover our **monthly fuel-oil costs**. The next twelve months will cost us **over \$30,000.00**.

Please be as generous as you can.

Please remember to sustain the apostolic work of this parish through regular contributions.

VOCATION ICON

"Request therefore the Lord of the harvest to send forth laborers into His harvest." St. Matthew 9: 38

Sun	Dec	4	Michael & Gayle Misner
Sun	Dec	11	Steve & Allison Crate
Sun	Dec	18	Anne Marie Mathieu
Sun	Dec	25	Suzanne Paré
Sun	Jan	1	Daja Gombojav & Family
Sun	Jan	8	Ira & Catherine Mandel
Sun	Jan	15	Dean & MaryAnn Carter

¹⁰ Deficit 2019: \$72,270.59/Deficit 2020: \$34,473.00/Deficit 2021: \$35,178.00

¹¹ The next twelve-month contract for heating oil is set to cost over **\$30,000.00**. The projected cost for these heat-pumps

SERVERS OF THE DIVINE ALTAR

December 4th:

9:00am: M. Carter / A. Michaud

11:00am: J. Gamble / P. Carter

December 11th:

9:00am: C. Gombojav / N. Carter

11:00am: I. Gombojav / S. Nappi

December 18th:

9:00am: A. Michaud / M. Carter

11:00am: R. Nappi / S. Nappi

December 25th:

4:00pm Ramsho & Vigil: M. Carter / L. Michaud

10:00am: I. Gombojav / P. Carter

January 1st:

4:00pm Ramsho & Vigil: N. Carter / C. Gombojav

10:00am: J. Gamble / S. Nappi

January 8th:

9:00am: L. Michaud / M. Carter

11:00am: R. Nappi / P. Carter

January 15th:

9:00am: C. Gombojav / N. Carter

11:00am: S. Nappi / I. Gombojav

INTENTIONS FOR THE QOURBONEH (MASSES)

Sun 4 9:00am Parishioners of Saint Joseph

11:00am Sava Nappi

(Misner-Elias Family)

Mon 5 -----

Tue 6 †Scott Seelig

(Ed & Margie Laabs)

Wed 7 †Sam & Latifa Deeb

(Paul & Stephen Maroon)

**5:30pm Ramsho and Vigil
of the Immaculate Conception**

Private Intention

installation is \$9,700.00. Your generosity to this project has been exceptionally edifying.

Thu 8 **10:00am Solemnity
of the Immaculate Conception**
Parishioners of Saint Joseph
 Fri 9 **Ira Mandel**
(Misner-Elias Family)
 Sat 10 **Saturday, 10:00 am**
Gayle Misner-Elias
(Michael Misner-Elias)

No Sunday Vigil
 Sun 11 **9:00am Parishioners of Saint Joseph**
11:00am Tony Miklaszewski
(Virginia Miklaszewski)
 Mon 12 -----
 Tue 13 **†Lolo Salazar**
(Audrey Yotides)
 Wed 14 **†Albert & Rose Bellamah**
(Paul & Stephen Maroon)
 Thu 15 **Angelica Gosselin**
(Jodi Gosselin)
 Fri 16 **Kayla Mandel**
(Ira & Catherine Mandel)
 Sat 17 **Saturday, 10:00 am**
†Subdeacon Deeb & Sumayah Ferris
(Allison & Steve Crate)

4:30 Sunday Vigil
Private Intention
 Sun 18 **9:00am Parishioners of Saint Joseph**
11:00am †Joan Gottardi
(Donna-Jo Mitchell)
 Mon 19 -----
 Tue 20 **†Violet Elhilow**
(Paul & Stephen Maroon)
 Wed 21 **†Carmen Guzman**
(Jodi Gosselin)
 Thu 22 **†Harry and Hannah Mitchell**
(Paula & Larry Mitchell)
 Fri 23 **Feldman Family**
(Ira & Catherine Mandel)

Calling all Volunteers!



In Preparation for the Glorious Nativity, the generous of heart will make a thorough and deep cleaning of the church to beautify the House of God

(bring your buckets and your favorite cleaning tools)

Saturday, December 10th, following the 10:00 am Saturday Mass, organized by our indomitable sacristans.

Contact Sue Paré for further details.

As a result, there will be no Sunday Vigil on that day.



*After the Divine Mysteries,
at both 9:00 and 11:00am,
there is a gathering in the parish hall
for coffee and freshly baked muffins
on the **second and fourth**
Sunday
of each month.*



Anyone wishing to help
with this service
is asked to contact Ruth,
or sign up on the form in
the parish hall.

PRE-ANAPHORA:

Transfer of Gifts: LB *The Lord Reigns*

Incense Hymn Offertory: SB *I'maryam yoldat*

ANAPHORA:

Saint Mark the Evangelist: p 835

Sign of Peace: SB *tou ba*

Communion: SB *Father of Truth; Praise God*

Recessional: SB *Joyful, Joyful*

!مُكَلِّمًا خَلْقَهُ: Priest

Shlomoh l'koulkhoun!

(literally: Peace [be] to all you!)

!هَؤُلَاءِ وَهَؤُلَاءِ: People

w'am rouHoh deelokh!

(literally: and with spirit your!)

The Nativity of Saint John, the forerunner p. 48

Lighting of the Church: LB p 5
Jesus Christ, O Source of Light

Entrance Hymn: LB *fsheeto* 233

Glory: SB *al majdu*

Qolo/Hymn: LB *toobaik 'eedto* 234

Creed p 748



The Immaculate Conception

Holy Day of Obligation

December 8th