



ST. GEORGE
ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CATHEDRAL
كاتدرائية القديس جاورجيوس للروم الأرثوذكس

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SUNDAY BEFORE NATIVITY OF CHRIST

tone 4

DEAN'S MESSAGE

EOthinon 7

ON THE NATIVITY OF THE LORD

+ Metropolitan Philip

W *hat is a merciful heart?
It is a heart that burns
with love for the whole
creation—for men, for birds, for
beasts, for demons and for every
creature. (St. Isaac the Syrian)*

Christmas music is filling the air. In every home there is a Christmas tree; some are real and some are plastic. Lights of every color are glittering in windows, shops, bars and even the discos. Some people are selling, some are buying, some are eating, some are drinking and some are starving to death.

I put a "Do Not Disturb" sign on my door because Christmas Eve is a very special and private time to me. I want to be alone in order to embrace all men and love all things. In the depths of my aloneness, the past, the present and the future become one single moment. In the depths of my aloneness I experience that boundless love which encompasses the whole creation. I am alone on Christmas Eve but not lonely, because in Christ Jesus there is no loneliness and there is no separation. The walls are destroyed and the barriers are no more. The Child of the manger has reconciled everything to Himself;

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henceforth, there is no race, no color, no conflict and no hatred; in Him there is "a new heaven and a new earth."

Christmas Eve, to me, is a time for reflection. The year is slowly sinking into the ocean of eternity, and in my reflection there are painful questions: Did I love Him enough? Did I serve Him enough? Did I suffer enough? Did I forgive enough? How many tears did I dry? How many wounds did I bind? Was I faithful to Him who loved me beyond measure? How loving and compassionate is God, that despite my sinfulness and unworthiness, He "became flesh and dwelt amongst us." What

an unfathomable condescension that He assumed our nature in order to make us par-takers of His nature. Despite His Incarnation, He will always remain incognito in this world if we don't care for each other. But do we really care? Have we seen the starving children on our television screens? Have we ever seen so much despair, so much misery and so much helplessness?

These are our brothers and sisters, His brothers and sisters. How sad it is that we do not see the tragedy unless it is projected for us on the screen!

Tonight the Body and Blood of this tender Child will touch millions of lips throughout this troubled world. This divine touch will make us Christlike if we

care and respond to His love. To be Christlike, we must be born with Him in the manger, crucified with Him on the Cross and resurrected with Him from the dead. The manger, the Cross, and the empty tomb—these are one single event which sums up the

entire history of salvation.

It is Christmas Eve, and another year is about to dawn on us. Let Your light shine upon us so that we may see a new vision, sing a new song and dream a new dream. And if we live to celebrate another Christmas, give us courage to love You more, serve You more and worship You more "in spirit and in truth."





RESURRECTIONAL APOLYTIKION IN TONE 4

Having learned the joyful message of the Resurrection from the angel the women disciples of the Lord cast from them their parental condemnation. And proudly broke the news to the Disciples, saying: Death hath been spoiled; Christ God is risen, granting the world Great Mercy.

APOLYTIKION OF SUNDAY BEFORE THE NATIVITY IN TONE 2

Thou hast justified by faith the ancient Forefathers, and through them Thou hast gone before and betrothed unto Thyself the Church of the Gentiles. Let the saints, therefore, take pride in glory; for from their seed sprouted forth a noble fruit, and it was she who gave birth to Thee without seed. Wherefore, by their pleadings, O Christ God, save our souls.

APOLYTIKION OF THE PARAMON OF THE NATIVITY IN TONE FOUR

(**Joseph was amazed**)

As the fruit of David's seed, Mary was registered of old * with the Elder Joseph in the small town of Bethlehem, * when she conceived with a seedless and pure conception. * Behold, the time was come that she should bear her Child, * but no place was found within the inn for them; * yet the cave proved a delightful palace * for the pure Lady and Queen of all. * For Christ is born now to raise the image that had fallen aforetime.

TROPARION OF ST GEORGE IN TONE 4

As the deliverer of captives and the protector of the poor, as the physician of the feeble and combatant of kings, holy champion and great martyr George, intercede with Christ our God to save our souls.

KONTAKION OF PREPARATION OF CHRIST'S NATIVITY IN TONE 3

(**The original melody**)

On this day the Virgin cometh to the cave to give birth to * God the Word ineffably, * Who was before all the ages. * Dance for joy, O earth, on hearing * the gladsome tidings; * with the Angels and the shepherds now glorify Him * Who is willing to be gazed on * as a young Child Who * before the ages is God.

أبوليتيكيون القيامة بالحن الرابع

إِنَّ تَلْمِيزَاتِ الرَّبِّ تَعَلَّمْنَ مِنَ الْمَلَائِكَةِ الْكُرَّزَ بِالْقِيَامَةِ
الْبَهْجِ، وَطَرَحْنَ الْقَضَاءَ الْجَدِّيَّ، وَخَاطَبْنَ الرَّسُلَ مُفْتَخِرَاتٍ
وَقَائِلَاتٍ: سُبِّي الْمَوْتُ وَقَامَ الْمَسِيحُ الْإِلَهُ، وَمَنَحَ الْعَالَمَ
الرَّحْمَةَ الْعُظْمَى.

أبوليتيكيون الأحد قبل عيد الميلاد بالحن الثاني

عَظِيمَةٌ هِيَ أَفْعَالُ الْإِيمَانِ، لِأَنَّ الْفِتْيَةَ الثَّلَاثَةَ الْوَدَيْسِينَ قَدِ
ابْتَهَجُوا فِي يَنْبُوعِ اللَّهْبِ كَأَنَّهُمْ عَلَى مَاءِ الرَّاحَةِ، وَالنَّبِيَّ
دَانِيَالَ ظَهَرَ رَاعِيًا لِلسَّبَاعِ كَأَنَّهُمْ غَنَمٌ، فَبِتَضَرُّعِهِمْ أَيُّهَا
الْمَسِيحُ الْإِلَهُ خَلِّصْ نَفُوسَنَا.

أبوليتيكيون بارامون عيد الميلاد بالحن الرابع

فِي ذَلِكَ الْوَقْتِ، كُتِبَتْ مَرْيَمُ مَعَ يُوسُفَ الشَّيْخِ فِي بَيْتِ
لَحْمٍ، بِمَا أَنَّهَا مِنْ زَرْعِ دَاوُدَ، وَكَانَتْ حَامِلَةً الْحَمَلِ الَّذِي
بِعَبْرِ زَرْعٍ. فَلَمَّا حَانَ وَقْتُ الْوِلَادَةِ وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهَا مَكَانٌ فِي
الْقَرْيَةِ، ظَهَرَتْ الْمَغَارَةَ لِلْمَلِكَةِ، كَبَلَاطٍ مُطْرَبٍ. الْمَسِيحُ
يُولَدُ مِنْهُضًا الصُّورَةَ الَّتِي سَقَطَتْ مِنْذُ الْقَدِيمِ.

طروبارية القديس جاورجيوس بالحن الرابع

بِمَا أَنَّكَ لِلْمَاسُورِينَ مُحَرَّرٌ وَمَعْتَقٌ وَلِلْفُقَرَاءِ وَالْمَسَاكِينِ
عَاضِدٌ وَنَاصِرٌ وَلِلْمَرْضَى طَبِيبٌ وَشَافٍ وَعَنْ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ
مُكَافِحٌ وَمُحَارِبٌ أَيُّهَا الْعَظِيمُ فِي الشَّهَادَةِ جَاورْجِيُوسُ
اللابس تشفع إلى المسيح الإله في خلاص نفوسنا.

قنداق تقدمة الميلاد بالحن الثالث

الْيَوْمَ الْعَذْرَاءُ تَأْتِي إِلَى الْمَغَارَةِ لِتَلِدَ الْكَلِمَةَ الَّذِي قَبْلَ
الدُّهُورِ، وَوِلَادَةٌ لَا تَعْسُرُ وَلَا يُنْطَقُ بِهَا، فَأَفْرَجِي أَيُّهَا
الْمَسْكُونَةُ إِذَا سَمِعْتِ، وَمَجْدِي مَعَ الْمَلَائِكَةِ وَالرُّعَاةِ، الَّذِي
سَيَطْهَرُ بِمَشِيئَتِهِ طِفْلاً جَدِيداً وَهُوَ الْهَنَا الَّذِي قَبْلَ الدُّهُورِ.

THE EPISTLE

Blessed art Thou, O Lord, the God of our Fathers.

For Thou art just in all that Thou hast done for us.

The Reading from the Epistle of St. Paul to the Hebrews

Brethren, by faith Abraham sojourned in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. For he looked forward to the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God. And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets—who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, received promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched raging fire, escaped the edge of the sword, won strength out of weakness, became mighty in war, and put foreign armies to flight. Women received their dead by resurrection. Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, so that they might rise again to a better life. Others suffered mocking and scourging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword; they went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, ill-treated—of whom the world was not worthy—wandering over deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And all these, though well attested by their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had foreseen something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect.



الرسالة

مُبَارَكٌ أَنْتَ يَا رَبُّ يَا إِلَهَ آبَائِنَا.

لَأَنَّكَ عَدْلٌ فِي كُلِّ مَا صَنَعْتَ بِنَا.

رِسَالَةُ الْقَدِيسِ بُولُسَ الرَّسُولِ إِلَى الْعِبْرَانِيِّينَ

يَا إِخْوَتِي، بِالْإِيمَانِ نَزَلَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ فِي أَرْضِ الْمِيعَادِ نُزُولَهُ فِي أَرْضٍ غَرِيبَةٍ، وَسَكَنَ فِي خِيَامٍ مَعَ اسْحَقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ الْوَارِثِينَ مَعَهُ لِلْمَوْعِدِ بَعَيْنِهِ. لِأَنَّهُ انْتَهَرَ الْمَدِينَةَ ذَاتِ الْأَسُسِ الَّتِي اللَّهُ صَانِعُهَا وَبَارئُهَا. وَمَاذَا أَقُولُ أَيْضاً؟ إِنَّهُ يَضِيقُ بِي الْوَقْتُ إِنَّ أُخْبِرْتُ عَنْ جِدْعُونَ، وَبَارِقَ، وَشَمْشُونَ، وَيَفْتَاخَ، وَدَاوُدَ، وَصَمُوئِيلَ، وَالْأَنْبِيَاءِ، الَّذِينَ بِالْإِيمَانِ قَهَرُوا الْمَمَالِكَ، وَعَمَلُوا الْبِرَّ، وَنَالُوا الْمَوَاعِدَ، وَسَدُّوا أَفْوَاهَ الْأَسُودِ. وَأَطْفَأُوا حِدَّةَ النَّارِ، وَنَجَّوْا مِنْ حِدِّ السَّيْفِ، وَتَقَوَّوْا مِنْ ضَعْفٍ، وَصَارُوا أَشِدَاءَ فِي الْحَرْبِ، وَكَسَرُوا مُعَسْكَرَاتِ الْأَجَانِبِ، وَأَخَذَتْ نِسَاءً أَمْوَاتَهُنَّ بِقِيَامَةٍ. وَعَذَّبَ آخَرُونَ بِتَوْتِيرِ الْأَعْضَاءِ وَالضَّرْبِ، وَلَمْ يَقْبَلُوا بِالنَّجَاةِ لِيَحْصَلُوا عَلَى قِيَامَةٍ أَفْضَلِ. وَآخَرُونَ ذَاقُوا الْهَزْءَ، وَالْجُلْدَ، وَالْقَيْودَ أَيْضاً وَالسِّجْنَ. وَرُجِمُوا، وَنُشِرُوا، وَامْتَحِنُوا، وَمَاتُوا بِحِدِّ السَّيْفِ، وَسَاحُوا فِي جُلُودِ غَنَمٍ وَمِعْزٍ، وَهُمْ مُعَوِّزُونَ مُضَائِقُونَ مَجْهُودُونَ — وَلَمْ يَكُنِ الْعَالَمُ مُسْتَجِيقاً لَهُمْ — وَكَانُوا تَائِهِينَ فِي الْبَرَارِيِّ، وَالْجِبَالِ، وَالْمَغَاوِرِ، وَكُهُوفِ الْأَرْضِ. فَهَؤُلَاءِ كُلُّهُمْ مَشْهُوداً لَهُمْ بِالْإِيمَانِ، لَمْ يَنَالُوا الْمَوَاعِدَ، لِأَنَّ اللَّهَ سَبَقَ فَنَظَرَ لَنَا شَيْئاً أَفْضَلَ، أَنْ لَا يَكْمَلُوا بَدُونِنَا.

THE GOSPEL

Matthew. (1:1-25)

The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, and Judah the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar, and Perez the father of Hezron, and Hezron the father of Aram, and Aram the father of Amminadab, and Amminadab the father of Nahshon, and Nahshon the father of Salmon, and Salmon the father of Boaz by Rahab, and Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of David the king. And David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uriah, and Solomon the father of Rehoboam, and Rehoboam the father of Abijah, and Abijah the father of Asa, and Asa the father of Jehoshaphat, and Jehoshaphat the father of Joram, and Joram the father of Uzziah, and Uzziah the father of Jotham, and Jotham the father of Ahaz, and Ahaz the father of Hezekiah, and Hezekiah the father of Manasseh, and Manasseh the father of Amon, and Amon the father of Josiah, and Josiah the father of Jechoniah and his brothers, at the time of the deportation to Babylon. And after the deportation to Babylon: Jechoniah was the father of Shealtiel, and Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel, and Zerubbabel the father of Abiud, and Abiud the father of Eliakim, and Eliakim the father of Azor, and Azor the father of Zadok, and Zadok the father of Achim, and Achim the father of Eliud, and Eliud the father of Eleazar, and Eleazar the father of Matthan, and Matthan the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, Who is called Christ. So all the generations from Abraham to David were fourteen generations, and from David to the deportation to Babylon fourteen generations, and from the deportation to Babylon to the Christ were fourteen generations. Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When His mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child of the Holy Spirit; and her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. But as he considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit; she will bear a son, and you shall call His Name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins." All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: "Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and His Name shall be called Emmanuel" (which means, God with us). When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord had commanded him; he took his wife, but knew her not until she had borne a son; and he called His Name Jesus.



الإنجيل

(لِلأَحَدِ الَّذِي قَبْلَ عِيدِ الْمِيلَادِ : أَحَدِ النِّسْبَةِ)

كِتَابُ مِيلَادِ يَسُوعَ الْمَسِيحِ ابْنِ دَاوُدَ ابْنِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ. فإِبْرَاهِيمُ وَوَلَدَ إِسْحَاقَ، وَإِسْحَاقُ وَوَلَدَ يَعْقُوبَ، وَيَعْقُوبُ وَوَلَدَ يَهُوذَا وَإِخْوَتَهُ. وَيَهُوذَا وَوَلَدَ فَارِصَ، وَفَارِصُ وَوَلَدَ حَصْرُونَ، وَحَصْرُونَ وَوَلَدَ أَرَامَ. وَأَرَامُ وَوَلَدَ عَمِينَادَابَ، وَعَمِينَادَابُ وَوَلَدَ نَحْشُونَ، وَنَحْشُونَ وَوَلَدَ سَلْمُونَ. وَسَلْمُونَ وَوَلَدَ بُوعَزَ مِنْ رَا حَابَ، وَبُوعَزُ وَوَلَدَ عُوبِيدَ مِنْ رَاعُوثَ، وَعُوبِيدُ وَوَلَدَ يَسَى، وَيَسَى وَوَلَدَ دَاوُدَ الْمَلِكِ. وَدَاوُدُ الْمَلِكُ وَوَلَدَ سَلِيمَانَ مِنَ الَّتِي كَانَتْ لِأُورِيَا. وَسَلِيمَانُ وَوَلَدَ رَحْبَعَامَ، وَرَحْبَعَامُ وَوَلَدَ أَبِيآءَ، وَأَبِيآءُ وَوَلَدَ آسَا. وَآسَا وَوَلَدَ يُوْشَافَاظَ، وَيُوْشَافَاظُ وَوَلَدَ يُورَامَ، وَيُورَامُ وَوَلَدَ غَزِيَا. وَغَزِيَا وَوَلَدَ يُوْثَامَ، وَيُوْثَامُ وَوَلَدَ أَحَاظَ، وَأَحَاظُ وَوَلَدَ حِرْفِيَا. وَحِرْفِيَا وَوَلَدَ مَنَسَّى، وَمَنَسَّى وَوَلَدَ آمُونَ، وَآمُونَ وَوَلَدَ يُوْشِيَا. وَيُوْشِيَا وَوَلَدَ يَكُنْيَا وَإِخْوَتَهُ فِي جَلَاءِ بَابِلَ. وَمِنْ بَعْدِ جَلَاءِ بَابِلَ، يَكُنْيَا وَوَلَدَ شَالْتِيَلِ، وَشَالْتِيَلُ وَوَلَدَ زَرُبَابَيْلَ. وَزَرُبَابَيْلُ وَوَلَدَ أَبِيهُودَ، وَأَبِيهُودُ وَوَلَدَ أَلِيَاقِيمَ، وَأَلِيَاقِيمُ وَوَلَدَ عَاذُورَ. وَعَاذُورُ وَوَلَدَ صَادُوقَ، وَصَادُوقُ وَوَلَدَ أَحِيمَ، وَأَحِيمُ وَوَلَدَ أَلِيهُودَ. وَأَلِيهُودُ وَوَلَدَ أَلْعَازَارَ، وَأَلْعَازَارُ وَوَلَدَ مَتَّانَ، وَمَتَّانُ وَوَلَدَ يَعْقُوبَ. وَيَعْقُوبُ وَوَلَدَ يُوْسُفَ رَجُلَ مَرْيَمَ الَّتِي وُلِدَ مِنْهَا يَسُوعُ، الَّذِي يُدْعَى الْمَسِيحَ. فَكُلُّ الْأَجْيَالِ مِنْ إِبْرَاهِيمَ إِلَى دَاوُدَ أَرْبَعَةَ عَشَرَ جِيلًا، وَمِنْ دَاوُدَ إِلَى جَلَاءِ بَابِلَ أَرْبَعَةَ عَشَرَ جِيلًا، وَمِنْ جَلَاءِ بَابِلَ إِلَى الْمَسِيحِ أَرْبَعَةَ عَشَرَ جِيلًا. أَمَّا مَوْلِدُ يَسُوعَ الْمَسِيحِ فَكَانَ هَكَذَا. لَمَّا خُطِبَتْ مَرْيَمُ أُمُّهُ لِيُوسُفَ، وَوُجِدَتْ مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ يَجْتَمِعَا خُبْلَى مِنَ الرُّوحِ الْقُدُسِ. وَإِذْ كَانَ يُوْسُفُ رَجُلًا صَدِيقًا، وَلَمْ يَرِدْ أَنْ يُشْهِرَهَا، هَمَّ بِتَحْلِيَّتِهَا سِرًّا. وَفِيمَا هُوَ مُتَفَكِّرٌ فِي ذَلِكَ، إِذَا بِمَلَاكِ الرَّبِّ ظَهَرَ لَهُ فِي الْحُلْمِ، قَائِلًا: يَا يُوْسُفُ ابْنَ دَاوُدَ، لَا تَخَفْ أَنْ تَأْخُذَ امْرَأَتَكَ مَرْيَمَ فَإِنَّ الْمَوْلُودَ فِيهَا إِنَّمَا هُوَ مِنَ الرُّوحِ الْقُدُسِ. وَسَتَلِدُ ابْنًا فَتُسَمِّيهِ يَسُوعَ، فَإِنَّهُ هُوَ يُخَلِّصُ شَعْبَهُ مِنْ خَطَايَاهُمْ. وَكَانَ هَذَا كُلُّهُ لِيَتِمَّ مَا قِيلَ مِنَ الرَّبِّ بِالنَّبِيِّ الْقَائِلِ: هَا إِنَّ الْعَذْرَاءَ تَحْبَلُ، وَتَلِدُ ابْنًا، وَيُدْعَى عِمَّاثُويِلَ (الَّذِي تَفْسِيرُهُ اللَّهُ مَعَنَا). فَلَمَّا نَهَضَ يُوْسُفُ مِنَ النَّوْمِ، صَنَعَ كَمَا أَمَرَهُ مَلَاكُ الرَّبِّ. فَأَخَذَ امْرَأَتَهُ. وَلَمْ يَعْرِفْهَا حَتَّى وَوَلَدَتْ ابْنَهَا الْبِكْرَ، وَسَمَّاهُ يَسُوعَ.

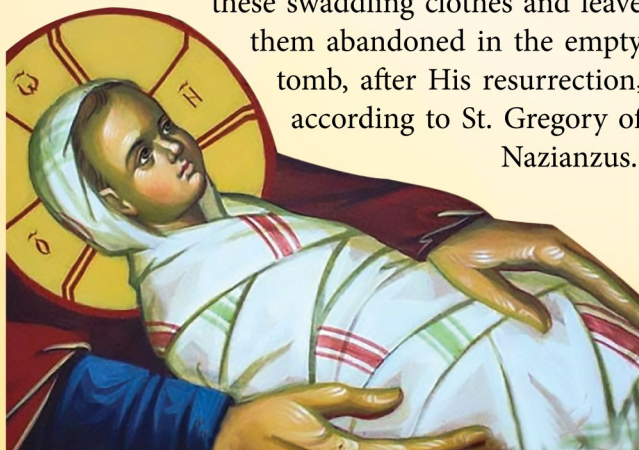
ICON OF THE NATIVITY OF CHRIST: EXPLAINED

Fr. Ayman Kfouf

The Nativity icon tells the story of Christ's birth, as found in the Scriptures and the Holy Tradition. Like most festal icons, the Nativity icon is not only a mere historical record of Christ's birth but also a reflection of the theological meaning of the feast. The feast's central theme is the mystery of the Incarnation of the Son of God, who emptied Himself of His divine glory and accepted a human flesh for the salvation of the world.

The icon's focal point is the newborn Child, shown in a cave, lying in a manger. The Gospel records that when the time came for the Virgin Mary to give birth, she and Joseph were unable to find a room at an inn, and so Mary gave birth to Jesus in a manger in a cave.

The infant Christ is shown wrapped in white swaddling clothes, foreshadowing His death and His burial. The white swaddling clothes remind us of the white linen shroud that will wrap Jesus' body after His death on the cross, "And Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen shroud and laid it in His own new tomb" (Mt. 27:59). Thus, as we see Christ wrapped with white swaddling clothes at His birth, we are assured that He will release these swaddling clothes and leave them abandoned in the empty tomb, after His resurrection, according to St. Gregory of Nazianzus.



The dark cave, where the newborn Child lies, represents the world's darkness in sin before Christ. It also symbolizes the tomb of Christ, where He was buried after His death on the cross.

Notice how the Nativity icon draws conjunction between the dark cave as Christ's birthplace and the dark tomb as the place of His resurrection. On the one hand, at Christ's birth, the dark cave becomes the place from which the Sun of justice shines forth His light upon the whole world. On the other hand, at His resurrection, the dark tomb becomes the place from which the light of the resurrection shines forth upon the whole creation.



The manger of Christ is depicted as a coffin, a symbolic indication of Christ's sacrifice for the life of the world.

Other variants of the Nativity icon depict the manger as an altar table, symbolizing the Prothesis, Table of Oblation, on which the holy gifts are offered, and later become the Body and Blood of the Lord, Jesus Christ. St. Cyril of Alexandria explains that by the way that the manger is a crib for feeding cattle, then [metaphorically]

as we see Christ lies in the manger, He, Himself, becomes the fodder and heavenly bread that feeds all; a clear indication of Christ's eucharistic sacrifice: "I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats this bread will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world" (Jn 6:51)

In the Nativity icon, the white swaddling clothes, the dark cave, and the manger draw powerful parallelism between the birth and the death of Christ: the newborn Child is Himself the Son of God incarnate, who accepted to die on the cross for the life of the world. St. Ephraim the Syrian (c. 306-373) explains this parallelism between the birth and death of Christ, expressing that "... because death was not able to devour Him without the body, nor Sheol to swallow Him up without the flesh, He came unto the Virgin, that from thence He might obtain that which should bear Him to Sheol... With the body then that [was] from the Virgin, He entered Sheol and plundered its storehouses and emptied its treasures." Thus, as we celebrate the Lord's Incarnation at His birth, the Nativity icon prepares us, by anticipation, to celebrate the fullness of Christ's redemptive work: His crucifixion, His Death, His descent into Hades, and His glorious resurrection.



At the center of the icon, the Virgin Mary is depicted kneeling towards the newborn Child. Compared to the rest of the characters, her larger size and unique position, beside the Baby, at the heart of the icon, emphasizes her essential role in the divine plan of salvation. Her model of obedience, accepting the incarnate Word of God, gave her a dominant place in the mystery of the Incarnation.

In some icons, Mary is depicted reclining on a mattress and looking towards Joseph with compassion, as if she was encouraging him to overcome his doubts and his inability to comprehend the mystery of the Incarnation.

In Orthodox iconography, the Virgin Mary is always depicted wearing a veil with three stars on her forehead, the right, and the left shoulders. The three stars signify her inviolate and perpetual virginity, before, during, and after giving birth to Christ.



The Angels in the icon have two roles: to announce Christ's birth and give Him glory. To the right, we see the angel announcing the good news to the shepherds. To the left, the angels appear dressed in long garments, standing in a posture of reverence for the newborn Child, offering praises: "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, goodwill toward men" (Lk. 2:14).

The shepherds stand, on the right, listening to the good news brought to them by the angel: "...I bring you good tidings of great joy, ... For unto you is born this day... a Savior, which is Christ the Lord." (Lk. 2: 11).

Additionally, we see a young shepherd sitting on a rock playing his flute, showing humanity's joy in the Good tidings of Christ's birth, adding the music of humankind to the angels' hymns in glorifying the incarnate Word of God.

On the left side of the cave are the Wise Men, royal figures from the East, who came to witness the fulfillment of the prophecy of Jesus's birth. Guided by the star, the Magi came to honor Jesus with gold, frankincense, and myrrh gifts.



Symbolically, the gift of gold signifies Christ's kingship; the gift of frankincense signifies His divinity; the gift of myrrh signifies His sacrifice, His death, and His resurrection.

The Magi's gifts, therefore, indicate the purpose for which Christ was born: He is the royal king of all (gift of gold) whose kingdom shall have no end; He is God Himself, the divine Son of God (gift of frankincense); who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven and was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and was born from the Virgin Mary, to die on the cross (gift of myrrh) and to grant us life through His glorious resurrection.

An ox and a donkey stand inside the cave near the manger. The Gospels do not mention an ox and a donkey, yet they appear in all images of the Nativity of Christ, as early as the 4th century.

The ox and donkey direct our attention to the fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah about the birth of Christ: "The ox knows its owner, and the donkey its master's manger..." (Is 1:3). According to St. John Chrysostom, the ox symbolizes the Jews and the donkey symbolizes the Gentiles. Before the cross, neither the Jews recognized Christ nor the Gentiles knew Him, while after His resurrection, the whole world flocked to Him.



On the bottom left side of the icon, the righteous Joseph sits distant from the cave, perplexed and confused, questioning in his heart how a virgin can give birth and remains a virgin.



In front of Joseph, we see the Devil disguised as an old hunchbacked shepherd holding a stick, confronting Joseph and planting the seeds of doubt in his heart. According to tradition, the Devil stands pointing to Joseph, telling him sarcastically that if it is possible for this dry stick to sprout leaves and branches, then it may be possible for a virgin to give birth and remains a virgin.

Joseph's confusion reflects humanity's disbelief and struggle to understand the mystery of the Incarnation of Christ. Eventually, however, Joseph overcomes his doubts and serves the mystery of the Incarnation, as he becomes the human guardian of Christ, the Child.

Above the cave, the radiant star shines out brightly from heaven and descends upon the infant Christ in the dark cave. According to Matthew, this is the star that led the Magi to the place of the newborn Child (Mt 2:9). The three rays of the star, above the Baby, represent the involvement of the Holy Trinity in the divine economy of salvation at the birth of Christ.

At the lower right corner of the icon, we see a midwife and a woman called Salome, washing Christ. According to tradition, Joseph brought the two women to help with the birth of Christ. The



washing scene affirms that Jesus was fully human at His birth and that he came to the world through a real physical birth and assumed a complete human nature, excluding sin.

Some church fathers view the washing of the infant Christ in the Nativity icon as an indication of the sacrament of the holy baptism. Thus, some icons depict the basin, where the Baby is washed, in the shape of a baptismal font.

The Nativity icon reveals the story of Christ's birth and portrays the purpose of His Incarnation: "The Son of God was born as a child so that we may become perfect humans. He was wrapped in swaddling clothes so that we may become free from the snares of death. He was in a manger so that we may be in the altar. He was on earth that we may be in heaven. He had no other place in the inn, so that we may have many mansions in the heavens," according to St. Ambrose, the 4th-century bishop of Milan.

HOLY BREAD OF OBLATION SUNDAY 12/24/2023



✠ For the health and spiritual welfare of Salah and Soraya Wassef and family, especially Andrew on the occasion of his birthday. Offered by Salah and Soraya Wassef.

- ✠ For the health and spiritual welfare of Fateh and Sonia Daya family. Offered by Fateh and Sonia Daya.
- ✠ For the health and spiritual welfare of Suhel and Najwa Turjman and their family. Offered by Suhel and Nawja Turjman.
- ✠ In loving memory of beloved Parents, George and Julia Abdenour, offered by George E. Abdenour.

SPECIAL COFFEE HOUR



The Special Coffee Hour for this Sunday, December 24, 2023, is sponsored by Fateh and Sonia Daya, for the health and welfare of their family.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

WEEK OF 12/23—12/30
KHALIL MOUFARREJ 12/26
HAIFA KHOURY 12/27
ANDREW WASSEF 12/27
DAVID ALFONSO 12/29
WAJDY FAHEL 12/29



EPISTLE READERS
SUNDAY, DECEMBER 24, 2023

SDN. ELIE BARDAWIL — ENGLISH
ZEINA BARDAWIL FARAH— ARABIC

ST. GEORGE PRAYER LIST PLEASE REMEMBER IN YOUR PRAYERS FOR HEALTH FOR THE WELLBEING SPEEDY RECOVERY

Souad Nahas, Mouna and Laura Dahlan, Wadi, Maha, Nicholas, Nicole Mabardi, Shammaseh Pat Nimer and the Nimer & Ameen Families, Tabte, Jamal, and Mona Habib; Carol Bardawil, Laila Soufia; Dr. George Bikhazi, Najat Zacur, Haifa Khoury.

FOR THE DEPARTED

IN THE HOPE OF RESURRECTION

+Archdeacon David Nimer, +Elias Ede, +Ernesto Carralero
 +Mary Bikhazi, +Donna Nimer, +George Chukrallah Habib,
 +Ibrahim Khoury, +Kareem Zakharia, +Sean Nicholas O'Brien,
 +Michael Dahlan, +Jorge Diab Zacur, +Maurice Bardawil,
 +Emile Farah

ALTAR VIGIL CANDLE (DECEMBER)

- * Mouna Dahlan & Family, Mabardi Family.
- * Shammaseh Pat Nimer In Memory of +Archdeacon David Nimer.
- * In memory of Sean Nicholas O'Brien For the good health of the O'Brien and Hatem families.



Date	Holy Bread Offered by	Coffee Hour
2023/24		
December 24	-Suhel and Najwa Turjman (Health) -Fateh & Sonia Daya (Health) -Salah and Soraya Wassef (Health)	Fateh & Sonia Daya
December 31	-Suhel and Najwa Turjman (Health)	Open
January 7	-Suhel and Najwa Turjman (Health) - George and Myrna Khouri (Health)	Open
January 14	-Tony and Hiam Nahas (Health) -Suhel and Najwa Turjman (Health) - George and Myrna Khouri (Health)	Tony & Hiam Nahas
January 21	- Suhel and Najwa (Health) - Cathedral Council (Health) - George and Myrna Khouri (Health)	Cathedral Council
January 28	- George & Widaa Khoury (Memorial) - Suhel and Najwa (Health)	George & Widaa Khoury (Memorial)

The Holy Bread and Coffee Hour are ministries of the Antiochian Women. Please see the coordinator of these ministries, Mrs. Salma Zacur, to inquire on scheduling and requirements.

WELCOME BISHOP NICHOLAS

We welcome His Grace, Bishop Nicolas, on his esteemed archpastoral visit to our Cathedral as he presides over the services of the Feast of Nativity of Christ. We pray that our Lord grant him health, length of days, to rightly divide the word of truth.

POINSETTIAS

Thank you to those who generously donated towards the Poinsettias used to adorn our church during the Nativity season services. May God bless you with health, salvation, and divine visitation, and may He grant eternal rest to your departed loved ones. Many thanks to:

- ✦ **Hafia Khoury**, offering for the health of her family; and in loving memory of Subdeacon Hanna Khoury.
- ✦ **George Mayez Khoury**, offering for the health of George, Wasseem, Ghadeen Khoury; and in memory of Mayez and Josephine Khoury.

THANK YOU! ANTIOCHIAN WOMEN



We express our deepest appreciation to our Antiochian Women for their dedication and hard work in preparing and organizing the bake sale. Your labor of love and continued commitment to our Cathedral is truly inspiring. May God bless you all, in His service.

CONDOLENCES

The clergy and parishioners of St. George Cathedral extend their deepest condolences to Michel Nasr Sr., on the passing from this life to life eternal of his beloved aunt, Violette Banat of Jacksonville, FL. May our Lord God may grant His handmaiden Violette rest with the saints and eternal peace and to her family, consolation, and comfort. Memory Eternal.

THANK YOU! ANTIOCHIAN

Many thanks to everyone who has contributed in support of our Advent humanitarian Drive. Your commitment to donating toys for the CHILDREN HOME SOCIETY is a beautiful expression of the faith and love of our community.

We are grateful see the hard work and collaboration between our Sunday School and the Antiochian Women in supporting Donna's Angel Tree initiative. Your commitment and generosity is a true testament to the caring and compassionate heart of our Cathedral.

May God bless you all for your kindness and generosity.

THANK YOU!

Many thanks to all who participated and contributed to the Saint George Cathedral Sunday School Annual Christmas Concert on December 17, 2023. The event was a beautiful showcase of talent and dedication of our children and staff. Many thanks to all volunteers who made the concert a success, including Lama El-Haj, Noura Sofia, and Jackson King, along with the many others who assisted during the rehearsals. May God bless you all.

CHRISTMAS CARD

Many thanks to all of those who contributed towards the 2023 Christmas card, in support of our Teen SOYO. May the light of the new born Child shine in your hearts and bless you always.





An Invitation



"Christianity is not a matter of persuading people of particular ideas, but of inviting them to share in the greatness of Christ. So pray that I may never fall into the trap of impressing people with clever speech, but instead I may learn to speak with humility, desiring only to impress people with Christ himself."

Saint Ignatius of Antioch

The Ribbon & The Cross Is An Invitation To Become Part Of A Ministry

An Invitation Not Recognition

When you become part of the Order of Saint Ignatius of Antioch, you become part of a ministry. The Order is not a club that you join. It is not a secular status symbol for recognition. The Cross and the Ribbon that Order supporters wear is an invitation to become part of a ministry. It serves as an invitation to share with one another in the greatness of Christ by giving in a manner that is unconditional and quiet. Supporting the Order's projects, Archdiocese Departments and numerous programs as one group, with Christ in our minds and hearts, should be how we desire to impress and *invite* the world to become part the Order's ministry.

Initiate the Questions of What? & How?

When those supporting the Order wear their ribbon and cross, it is meant to initiate others to inquire about the Order and how they can help strengthen its ministry. When people see the red ribbon and Cross that we wear, it helps begin the conversation to share what the Order does and provide the initial welcome to others to help expand its ministry. It provides an opportunity to ask, "What does the Order do and how can I help?"

The Order Provides A Lesson In Giving

When you give to the Order of Saint Ignatius of Antioch, you are giving in a way we are all called to give ... unconditionally. Your gift is not individually recognized. You are not able to designate your gift to a specific need you select. You are giving without recognition, without conditions, without direct gratitude of the Order's recipients. This is the manner in which a "true gift" is made. A gift made in the way Christ directs us.

The Order Teaches Us How To Give

... the Order is teaching us how to share, the Order is teaching us how to give, the Order is teaching us how to sacrifice, and how to reach out for Orthodox and non-Orthodox alike. This is the miracle of The Order of Saint Ignatius of Antioch."

- His Eminence Metropolitan Philip of thrice blessed memory, Founder of the Order of St. Ignatius of Antioch



The Order of
Saint Ignatius
of Antioch

Let no man's place, or dignity, or riches, puff him up; and let no man's low condition or poverty abase him. For the chief points are faith towards God, hope towards Christ, the enjoyment of those good things for which we look, and love towards God and our neighbor

- Saint Ignatius of Antioch



Understanding **what** your gifts fund through The Order of St. Ignatius of Antioch is important but the better question is **why** we do it. Be a part of the why.

What

Time Period: Jan 1, 2016 - August 31, 2023

Clergy	\$2,266,260
Retired Clergy Allowance	\$2,070,000
Married Seminarian Assistance	\$95,795
Clergy Symposium & Convention Assistance*	\$100,465
Archdiocese Youth	\$2,604,446
Summer Camp Scholarships*	
Due To COVID, Total Would Have Been Higher	\$1,153,184
Youth Ministry*	\$910,000
SOYO Special Olympics*	\$26,000
SOYO Leadership & Youth Worker Training*	\$123,334
Christian Education	\$303,303
College Conference*	\$88,625
Archdiocese Development & Growth	\$2,085,265
Missions & Evangelism	\$985,803
Parish Development / Mission Grants	\$189,553
Internet Ministry	\$758,303
Antiochian House of Studies	\$151,606
Other Grants	\$437,440
Project Mexico	\$60,000
IOCC	\$90,000
Syrian Relief	\$140,000
Other Archdiocese Projects & Needs	\$147,440

Figures represent a **portion of the total expenses** for the time period of January 1, 2016 through August 31, 2023.
 *Denotes a reduced amount due to COVID restrictions.

Why

So our children can pray, sing, laugh and even cry with one another as they grow stronger in their Orthodox Faith and closer to our Lord ... *together*.
Summer Camp Scholarships

To help build the foundation and provide the essential tools of knowledge, relationships and memories that help our children remain steadfast in their Orthodox faith.
- SOYO Leadership & Youth Worker Training & Youth Ministry

To make sure orphaned children feel loved and safe, and promise them that everything is going to be alright and that they are not alone.
- Project Mexico

To provide guidance, reassurance and compassion, to unwed mothers who choose life rather than abortion.
- Treehouse Ministries

To help give comfort and financial assurance to our retired clergy and their families. But even more, express our gratitude to our spiritual leader and friend who's been with us during all our times of joy and sorrow.
 Retired Clergy Housing Allowance



The Order of Saint Ignatius of Antioch

Let no man's place, or dignity, or riches, puff him up; and let no man's low condition or poverty abase him. For the chief points are faith towards God, hope towards Christ, the enjoyment of those good things for which we look, and love towards God and our neighbor.
 - Saint Ignatius of Antioch

St. George Antiochian Orthodox Cathedral

The Most Reverend Metropolitan SABA
Primate of the Antiochian Orthodox Archdiocese of North America

The Right Reverend Bishop NICHOLAS
Auxiliary Bishop of Miami and the Southeast

V. Rev. Archpriest Ayman Kfouf
Cathedral Dean

CATHEDRAL COUNCIL:

V. Rev. Archpriest Ayman Kfouf, *Presiding Officer*
Andrea M. Abu-Akel, *Chairlady*
Lama El Haj, *Vice-Chairlady*
Jackie Barakat-Wanna, *Secretary*
George M. Khoury, *Treasurer*
Muazzi Hatem, *Financial Secretary*
Sdn. Elie Bardawil, *Member*
Zeina Bardawil Farah, *Member*
Douglas Ede, *Member*
Jamal Habib, *Member*
Hannan Mounayyer, *Member*
Diana O'Brien, *Member*
Noura Soufia, *Member*
Basel Zacur, *Member*
Yamil Zacur, *Member*
Tony Zammar, *Member*

COUNCIL STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE:

Muazzi Hatem, *Finance*
Douglas Ede, *Legal*
Jamal Habib, *Membership*
Lama Elhaj, *Property Usage*
Yamil Zacur, *Property Management*
Noura Soufia, *Public Relations/Web Master*
Nasser Soufia, *Vision and Development*

BROTHERHOOD OF THE NOBLE JOSEPH:

V. Rev. Archpriest Ayman Kfouf, *Dean*
Sdn. Charles Khoury
Sdn. Elie Bardawil
Sdn. Sean Hatem
Sdn. Louis Hatem
Sdn. Hanna Soufia
Acolytes (servers)
Jackson King, *Choir Director/Lead Chanter*
Dr. Don Shalhub, *Chanter*
Yamil Zacur, *Lead Usher*
All Choir Members and Ushers

ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN ARABIC SCHOOL

Reem Yazji, *Coordinator*

COUNCIL EX OFFICIO MEMBERS:

Lama El Haj, *Sunday School Principal*
Yola Hayek, *Antiochian Women*
Hanna Soufia, *Young Adult Fellowship*
Luke Hatem, *SOYO*
Zeina B. Farah, *Order of Saint Ignatius*
Tony Zammar, *Antiochian Men*

Cathedral Office:

Mrs. Elsa Herrmann, *Office Secretary*
Mr. Frank Marco, *Custodian*

SOYO Advisory Team:

Hannan Mounayyer, *Lead Advisor*
Said Elhaj, *Advisor*

CONTACTS

Office Hours

Monday - Friday: 10:30 AM - 4:00 PM

Cathedral Address

St. George Antiochian Orthodox Cathedral
320 Palermo Avenue
Coral Gables, FL 33134

Contact Numbers

Cathedral Office: (305) 444-6541
Fax: (305) 445-6530

Email Contacts

Father Ayman Kfouf: Dean@stgmiami.org
General Inquiries: office@stgmiami.org
Website Support: webmaster@stgmiami.org

Worship Services

Saturday: Great Vespers: 5:00 PM
Confession: 4:30 PM - 5:00 PM (or by appointment)

Sunday: Orthros: 9:15 AM
Divine Liturgy: 10:30 AM

Pastoral Care and Input

For concerns, pastoral care, or to provide input, please reach out to:
V. Rev. Archpriest Ayman Kfouf

Telephone: (248) 565-5353
Email: dean@stgmiami.org

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