



# Saint Sharbel Maronite Catholic Church

Saint Sharbel, Pray for Us!

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[www.stsharbel.org](http://www.stsharbel.org)

## December 29, 2019

### Sunday After the Birth of Our Lord



**Next Sunday**

*Finding in the Temple*

**Heb 7:11-19** (Melchizedek, a Type of Christ)

**Lk 2:41-52** (The Boy Jesus in the Temple)

## Liturgy Intentions

Sunday, December 29th 10:30 am

+Antoine and Georgette Zogbi

Monday, December 30th

Fr. Giles Michael Gilbert, OFM Conv.

Tuesday, December 31st

Francesca Rooney

Wednesday, January 1st

Available

Thursday, January 2nd

Available

Friday, January 3rd

Available

Saturday, January 4th

Available

Sunday, January 5th

Servant of God Cyril

**Adoration/Exposition every Sunday at 9:30 am before the morning Liturgy.**

**Confession every Sunday at 9:45 am before the morning Liturgy.**

**Also join us to pray the Rosary on Sundays at 10:00 am before the Liturgy begins.**

## Your Gifts To God

*Offering Report for December 15th - 21st*

Online.....\$455.00

Collection.....\$483.00

Weekly Total.....\$938.00

YTD Total.....\$90,438.14

YTD Goal.....\$94,146.00

YTD Difference.....**-\$3,707.86**

## Altar Sponsorship

Sunday, December 29th

Karam Family

Sunday, January

Available

## *Parish / Community Events*

**Feast of Circumcision:**  
Wednesday, January 1, 10:30 am

### Parish Council

+Bruce Ashford  
(Treasurer)

Charlie Ashou  
Gus Bekahi

Nick El Hajj

Agopos Ghossein  
Adib Karam

+Claude Karam  
Anne Marentette  
(Secretary)

Doug Raab  
+Thaddeus Rask  
Nadia Redmond  
Mitch Siekmann  
Laif Waldron

Ex Officio  
+Deacon Tony  
+Deacon Wadih

+Finance  
Committee

### The Cedars of Saint Sharbel Youth Group Discussion Schedule:

All meetings held in upstairs classroom immediately following Sunday Mass.

- JAN:**      **12th** - Truth vs. Tolerance  
                 **26th** - Church Authority: What is It? and Apologetics
- FEB:**      **9th** - Youth and Young Adult Saints  
                 **23rd** - Mary : Her Motherhood, her Apparitions, the Rosary
- MAR:**      **8th** - Sacraments and Mysteries : Their meaning, Grace  
                 **22nd** - TBA
- APR:**      **19th** - The Truth About Human Sexuality and God
- MAY:**      **17th** - Social Event: TBA

# **Reflection**

## Sunday After the Birth of Our Lord

Mt: 2:13-18

Christmas seems to be the most joyous time of the year, and rightfully so as we celebrate the day our Lord Jesus Christ came into the world in His love to save us. It is interesting to ask, why, then, do we celebrate two dark events the week of Christmas – the martyrdom of St. Stephen, the first martyr (Dec. 27) and the Holy Innocents, slain by King Herod (Dec. 29)? Why would we celebrate two feasts about death during the same period we celebrate the birth of God as a man? The answer to the “why” can be found in looking exactly “what” both feasts are.

St. Stephen’s feast comes two days after Christmas every year. He was one of the men appointed to be a deacon by the Apostles. In Acts 7, St. Stephen recounts how God has always guided His people, as Pope Benedict XVI says, to prove how Jesus Christ is the completion of God’s plan of salvation for all He has done for us. The Jewish Sanhedrin, or council of leaders, was enraged by this, as well as the rest of his preaching of Christ, and they had him stoned to death. But, imitating Christ’s own words on Good Friday during His crucifixion, St. Stephen prayed that God receive his spirit and forgive those who killed him. As such, St. Stephen is known as the first martyr (coming from the Greek word witness) to the faith of Jesus Christ.

The Holy Innocents, then, are considered in their own way to also be first martyrs. As Matthew writes in the second chapter of his record of the Gospel, Herod met the Magi before they made it to the Christ Child and so he heard the King of the Jews had been born. King Herod feared that such a king should be born in his jurisdiction and threaten his own rule, so he commanded that all boys in Bethlehem under the age of two be killed so as to kill Christ. Jesus, Mary and Joseph successfully fled to Egypt to avoid Herod’s persecution, but unfortunately Herod slaughtered many children. The Maronite Office likens Herod to the Pharaoh in Exodus:

Two Kings traveled on two paths: they made war against infants. Pharaoh, the wicked king, and Herod, hater of truth. Pharaoh drowned infants to lessen the children of Israel and Herod killed youths for he willed to kill the Lord of All. Woe to both of them for they fought against truth. Behold, they [the children] were made heirs of the Garden of Eden, and torment is reserved for the kings.

Why, then, do we celebrate the death of saints so near to the birth of Christ? In both their own ways, St. Stephen and the Holy Innocents were martyred (that is, witnessed) for Christ, Who is the Truth – St. Stephen in his words, and the Holy Innocents in the purity of their being. Because of their witness, they are known as the first martyrs. But by witnessing to Christ, they did not die. They were killed in body, but as the prayer above says, “They were made heirs of the Garden of Eden” while those who persecuted them will receive torment. As we reflected last week, by Christ’s birth He has united His divinity to our humanity. Those who witness to Him will receive life eternal in heaven, even if they should be killed – as Christ Himself says, “Whoever loses their life for me will find it” (Matt. 16:25). Christ was killed on Good Friday but He rose on Easter Sunday because He Himself is life – and He has united His life to those are Christian.

Each of us who call ourselves Christian must witness to Christ. Certainly only a few are called to physically die in profession of Christ, but persecution comes to all Christians, in one form or another. We are called to profess Christ in all we do for, as Christ has told us, “My Father’s will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day” (John 6:40). After the Birth of Our Lord in the flesh, we celebrate St. Stephen and the Holy Innocents’ entrance into eternal life through the same Lord – may their prayers be a rampart to us.



**Gibran N Zogbi**

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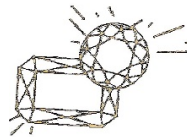
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