

Our Lady of Elige - - سيّدة إيليج



The Month of May is Dedicated to Our Lady.

The depiction of Our Lady called Our Lady of Elige, is also known as Our Lady of the Maronites. It was discovered at the ancient Patriarchal Church of Elige, Lebanon and is dated around the tenth century. In the twentieth century restoration of this work, several layers of paint that were applied over centuries, were carefully removed to reveal this icon depicting the Virgin Mother supporting on her lap, the Child of her womb, Jesus Christ. This marked an historic event in the history of Syro-Maronite iconography as it shows a continuity of the tradition initiated by the famous Rabbula manuscript of the sixth Century.

The antiquity and authenticity of this icon seem to be supported and verified by the following elements: the colors of Mary's robes, deep blue, and of Christ's tunic, deep purple. Blue, the color of the sky, signifies divinity, and purple, the color worn by kings, signifies royalty. The halos of both figures are a simple gold wide band typical of Syriac iconography and free of Byzantine influence, namely a cross in Christ's halo and lettering for the "Mother of God" in Mary's halo. The symbolic form of blessing of Jesus' right hand, three fingers joined, signifies the Trinity, and the other two fingers signify that Christ is both God and man. Moreover, the two fingers of Mary's right hand reiterate the duality of Christ's natures: divine and human.

As is typical in Syriac icons, the Virgin Mother's hair is completely covered by the headband worn in the Semitic culture of the day. The two star-like symbols, one on Mary's head and the other on her shoulder, represent her enduring virginity before and after Christ's birth.

The Eastern Syriac facial features of both figures reveal a delicate, gentle, and transparent divine presence.