

CAIRO CAROL SERVICE SHOWS EGYPTIAN CHRISTIANS' UNITY

The Christmas carol service at St Joseph Church in Cairo, broadcasted to millions via SAT-7 ARABIC is an encouraging picture of Christian impact and unity in Egypt.

“The role of the Church in Egypt is very important. It is not numbers that determine if people can be effective. Even if Christians are small in number, they can still have a strong impact through schools, hospitals, charity events, arts events and others. That’s the best message you can give,” says Father Boutros Danial, priest and choir leader at St Joseph Church.

Regularly attended by Egyptian celebrities, officials, and foreign diplomats, the church’s annual Christmas carol concert is an example of this outsize impact. And the choir themselves – who file into the church’s nave dressed in red, white and black – are also evidence of Christian unity. As their angelic voices blend in the high-ceilinged church, they represent the coming together of many different denominations.

Father Danial explains that the church is a hub for all. “Our Christmas choir has 130 members,” he says. “Our choir is not restricted to members of our own church. We are very proud of our choir members who participate here and also serve God in their own churches,” he says.

Situated in the heart of Cairo, St Joseph Church stands out with a unique patterned, colourful exterior design among the surrounding grey buildings. Built in 1875 by a renowned Italian architect, the church is evidence of the diverse Christian faith in Egypt. Although it started out as a church for Italian expats, it now serves all denominations of Egyptian Christians.

St Joseph’s is also a leader among churches in Egypt in holding Christmas carols, which are a relatively new tradition in the country. Since the church started its annual concert in the early 2000s, other churches, keen to gather their congregations for Christmas celebrations outside of the traditional celebratory mass, have begun holding their own carol services.



Prayer † News



The Christmas carol service at St Joseph Church in Cairo,

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MAKING HOPE VISIBLE

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CELEBRATING CHRISTMAS IN SECRECY

Many believers in Iran celebrate Christmas alone or in secret. Despite this, their messages to SAT-7 PARS demonstrate their resilient hope during this season.

“Like many believers in Iran, I am isolated and unable to be in fellowship with other Christians,” explains Pedram*, a SAT-7 viewer. “Our only means of joining in Christmas celebrations is through Persian-speaking Christian networks such as SAT-7. It is now nearly five years since I gave my heart to God, but I know no other believers in the town where I live. And some believers, because of the oppression and threat of persecution, prefer not to make themselves known to others.”

These messages are not uncommon from SAT-7’s Iranian viewers. Official churches in Iran are only open to ‘culturally Christian’ Armenians or Assyrians. However, believers from other backgrounds must meet discretely and cannot openly celebrate Christmas. Often, they even have to hide their faith from family and friends.

Delshaad*, explains: “We can’t easily celebrate Christmas here – and it’s impossible for new believers. If someone – family, friend, or neighbour – finds out, it will cause problems. I cannot celebrate Christmas, unless it is within my heart that I worship and express my joy to the Lord.”

Sirious*, an Armenian SAT-7 viewer, reports: “At Christmas time many Persian-speakers approach Armenian churches, but I am not sure how many of these are genuine believers. It may be that there are some spies among them. We are having to turn them away – all we can do is to pray for them.”

“We are a Christian family of four in complete isolation,” writes Arvand* from Iran. “We put up a small tree and have presents for our children. During Christmas I remember that I was lost and now I am found; I was in sin and through the Lord’s intervention, Creator God is now my Father. There may be many difficulties, but praises be, for in Christ we are children of the King – what could be better?”

*All names have been changed for security purposes.

- **Plead with God for freedom to worship Him openly in spirit and truth, and to protect and provide for MENA believers**



PRAYER TENT OFFERS BEACON OF LIGHT DURING LEBANON PROTESTS

The nation of Lebanon continues to be in an uproar affecting the lives of the people. The people’s desire for basic social and economic opportunities has led to an unprecedented unity among various religious groups.

A prayer tent was set up in Martyr’s Square in Beirut, Lebanon. One of the organisers shared with SAT-7 ARABIC, who broadcasts the events unfolding at the prayer tent, how they wanted to honour God with “a special place as a lighthouse of prayer in this country.”

The church doesn’t just minister to her own people, but rather sees the need of the world and goes out to meet it. This place where the tent is set up was purposely selected with being a place of high political activity and lots of interaction with the community. A mosque is located right across the street from the tent’s location, speaking to the heightened level of tolerance and coexistence happening in the nation of Lebanon during the past weeks of protests.

The organisers of the tent speak with protesters, telling them that “no human power can save Lebanon—that is why Jesus is our priority.” The presence of God is tangible to those passing by. They tell the tent organisers, “There’s peace in this place.”

A Sunday service was held in the tent, including worship and taking communion. Muslims were also in attendance and experienced the times of prayer and worship alongside Christian believers. Songs such as “Come, Now is the Time to Worship” were sung in both Arabic and English.

A young woman told SAT-7 reporters, “I came today to pray for Lebanon, for the rulers, for the protesters, for everyone.” She explained how the protesting has been going on for a month to no avail. She continued, “We trust the Lord has a good plan for Lebanon.”

A woman shared that they aren’t gathered merely to protest and make their voices heard, but that they are asking for the Lord’s presence to be with them. She emphasized how they want the Lord’s will in their country. Referring back to a biblical passage in 1 Samuel, the woman said, “There was a time when the people chose, but when King David came, the Lord chose. He was a man after God’s own heart, and now we want for God to choose the leaders, not the people.”

One man at the prayer tent explained, “We believe no one can make a change in Lebanon except the Lord through prayer because prayer changes society... we want to see God’s promises to Lebanon come to fruition. We hold on to God’s word and ask of Him, “This is the nation that we want you to take over.”

Another man offered a similar comment: “This is our hope, that more and more would understand we must pray.” In his prayer with the rest of the group he said, “The Lord of lords is the final champion of all battles. The final word belongs to the Lord.”

The common hope of all gathering in the prayer tent is to see a real change in their beloved nation. They believe faith binds the people together and acknowledge that “only God can bring real change.” A man states, “We must humble ourselves in front of God and ask Him to heal our land.”

SAT-7 viewer Samar called SAT-7 ARABIC to say, “We have no fear, for our future is in God’s hands... if everything seems dark now, we believe that He will shine His true light in the middle of the darkness.”

- **Please continue to keep the people of Lebanon in your prayers. Pray for a peaceful resolution to the conflict and for a sound governing body to be established that will restore the nation and its people.**



[Watch video:](#)
[“The church isn’t just walls”](#)

MEET OUR VIEWERS

Please pray for the following viewers while reading their messages:

FROM A VIEWER IN IRAN

“Our church is limited to lighting candles outside the building. I thirst for meeting the Lord. I want to give my heart to Christ.”

FROM A VIEWER IN TURKEY

“I look at Jesus’ picture and love Him so much, but I don’t know anything about Him. I can’t share this with my family or anyone else. Help me learn about Jesus.”

FROM A VIEWER IN THE MIDDLE EAST

“We were part of a worship group, but it closed. We don’t dare contact the other Christians. Praise the Lord that we can connect to other believers through your programs that help us get to know Christ.”

FROM A TEENAGE VIEWER IN ALGERIA

“It bothered me seeing authorities dragging women out of church. Pray for our rights to be enforced in our country.”

FROM A VIEWER IN IRAN

“I watch your programs and hear the prayers so lovingly offered for people. I am then filled with peace. That is why I want to find out about Christianity. Help me to know about Jesus.”