



**ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN
ARCHDIOCESE OF NORTH AMERICA
Diocese of Los Angeles and the West**

**ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH OF
THE REDEEMER
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**V. REV. FR. SAMER YOUSSEF, D. MIN
REV. FR. THEODORE SAKELLAR, MTS**



OCTOBER 12, 2025

**SUNDAY OF HOLY FATHERS OF SEVENTH ECUMENICAL
COUNCIL**

& FOURTH SUNDAY OF LUKE

MARTYRS PROBOS, ANDRONIKOS AND TARACHOS AT TARSUS; MARTYR
DOMNINA AT ANAZARBUS IN CILICIA; VIRGIN MARTYR ANASTASIA OF
ROME

أحد الأباء القديسين للمجمع المسكوني السابع

والأحد الرابع من القديس لوقا الأنجيلي

RESURRECTIONAL APOLYTIKION IN TONE ONE

While the stone was sealed by the Jews, and the soldiers were guarding Thy most pure body, Thou didst arise on the third day, O Savior, granting life to the world. For which cause the heavenly powers cried aloud unto Thee, O giver of life. Glory to Thy Resurrection, O Christ, glory to Thy kingdom, glory to Thy providence, O Thou Who alone art the lover of mankind.

أبوليتيكيون القيامة باللحن الأول

إِنَّ الْحَجَرَ لَمَّا خُتِمَ مِنَ الْيَهُودِ، وَجَسَدَكَ الطَّاهِرَ حُفِظَ مِنَ الْجُنْدِ، قُمْتَ فِي الْيَوْمِ الثَّالِثِ أَيُّهَا الْمُخَلِّصُ،
مَانِحاً الْعَالَمَ الْحَيَاةَ. لِذَلِكَ قُوَّتِ السَّمَاوَاتِ، هَتَفُوا إِلَيْكَ يَا وَاهِبَ الْحَيَاةِ: الْمَجْدُ لِقِيَامَتِكَ أَيُّهَا الْمَسِيحُ،
الْمَجْدُ لِمُلْكِكَ، الْمَجْدُ لِتُدْبِيرِكَ، يَا مُحِبَّ الْبَشَرِ وَحْدَكَ.

APOLYTIKION OF THE HOLY FATHERS IN TONE EIGHT

Thou, O Christ, art our God of exceeding praise Who didst establish our holy Fathers as luminous stars upon earth, and through them didst guide us unto the true Faith, O most merciful One, glory to Thee.

أبوليتيكيون لأحد الآباء باللحن الثامن

أَنْتَ أَيُّهَا الْمَسِيحُ إِهْنَا الْفَائِزُ النَّسْبِيحِ، يَا مَنْ أَسَسْتَ آبَاءَنَا الْقِدِّيسِينَ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ كَوَاكِبَ لَامِعَةٍ،
وَبِهِمْ هَدَيْتَنَا جَمِيعاً إِلَى الْإِيمَانِ الْحَقِيقِيِّ، يَا جَزِيلَ الرَّحْمَةِ، الْمَجْدُ لَكَ.

APOLYTIKION OF THE TRANSFIGURATION IN TONE SEVEN

When, O Christ our God, Thou wast transfigured on the mountain, Thou didst reveal Thy glory to Thy Disciples in proportion as they could bear it. Let Thine everlasting light also enlighten us sinners, through the intercessions of the Theotokos, O Thou Bestower of light, glory to Thee.

أبوليتيكيون تَجَلَّى رَبَّنَا يَسُوعَ الْمَسِيحِ بِاللْحِنِ السَّابِعِ

لَمَّا تَجَلَّيْتَ أَيُّهَا الْمَسِيحُ الْإِلَهُ فِي الْجَبَلِ، أَظْهَرْتَ مَجْدَكَ لِلتَّلَامِيذِ حَسَبَمَا اسْتَطَاعُوا، فَأَشْرَقَ لَنَا نَحْنُ
الْخَطَاةَ نَوْرَكَ الْأَزَلِّيَّ، بِشَفَاعَاتِ الْإِلَهَةِ، يَا مَانِحَ النُّورِ، الْمَجْدُ لَكَ.

ORDINARY KONTAKION IN TONE TWO

O protection of Christians that cannot be put to shame, mediation unto the Creator most constant, O despise not the suppliant voices of those who have sinned; but be thou quick, O good one, to come unto our aid, who in faith cry unto thee: Hasten to intercession, and speed thou to make supplication, thou who dost ever protect, O Theotokos, them that honor thee.

قنداق بالحن الثاني

يا شَفِيعَةَ الْمَسِيحِيِّينَ غَيْرِ الْخَازِيَةِ، الْوَسِيطَةَ لَدَى الْخَالِقِ غَيْرِ الْمَرْدُودَةِ، لَا تُعْرِضِي عَنْ
أَصْوَاتِ طَلِبَاتِنَا نَحْنُ الْخَطَاةَ، بَلْ تَدَارِكِينَا بِالْمَعُونَةِ بِمَا أَنَّكَ صَالِحَةٌ، نَحْنُ الصَّارِخِينَ إِلَيْكَ بِإِيمَانٍ:
بَادِرِي إِلَى الشَّفَاعَةِ وَأُسْرِعِي فِي الطَّلَبِ، يَا وَالِدَةَ الْإِلَهِ، الْمُتَشَقِّعَةَ دَائِمًا بِمُكْرَمِيكَ.

THE EPISTLE

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

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

The Reading from the Epistle of St. Paul to St. Titus. (3:8-15)

Titus, my son, faithful is the saying, and concerning these things I desire you to affirm confidently, that those who have believed in God may be thoughtful of how to preside in honorable occupations. These things are good and profitable to men. But avoid foolish disputes, and genealogies, and contentions, and controversies about the Law; for they are unprofitable and vain. A man who is a heretic after the first and second admonition reject, knowing that such a one is subverted, and sins, being self-condemned. When I send Artemas to you, or Tychicós, give diligence to come to me to Nicopolis; for I have determined to winter there. Set forward Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their journey diligently, that they may be lacking in nothing. And let our people also learn how to preside in honorable occupations, so as to help in cases of urgent need, that they should not be unfruitful. All who are with me salute you. Salute those who love us in the faith. Grace be with you all. Amen.

الرسالة

مُبَارَكٌ أَنْتَ يَا رَبُّ إِلَهَ آبَائِنَا .

لَأَنَّكَ عَدَلْتَ فِي كُلِّ مَا صَنَعْتَ بِنَا .

فَصَلِّ مِنْ رِسَالَةِ الْقَدِّيسِ بُولُسِ الرَّسُولِ إِلَى تَيْطُسَ .

يا ولدي تيطس، صَادِقَةٌ هِيَ الْكَلِمَةُ وَإِيَّاهَا أُرِيدُ أَنْ تُقَرَّرَ حَتَّى يَهْتَمَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِاللَّهِ فِي الْقِيَامِ بِالْأَعْمَالِ الْحَسَنَةِ، فَهَذِهِ هِيَ الْأَعْمَالُ الْحَسَنَةُ وَالنَّافِعَةُ. أَمَّا الْمُبَاحَثَاتُ الْهَذْيَانِيَّةُ وَالْأَنْسَابُ وَالْخُصُومَاتُ وَالْمُمَاحَاكَاتُ النَّامُوسِيَّةُ فَاجْتَنِبْهَا، فَإِنَّهَا غَيْرُ نَافِعَةٍ وَبَاطِلَةٌ. وَرَجُلٌ الْبِدْعَةِ بَعْدَ الْإِنْذَارِ مَرَّةً وَأُخْرَى أَعْرِضْ عَنْهُ. عَالِمًا أَنَّ مَنْ هُوَ كَذَلِكَ قَدْ اعْتَسَفَ، وَهُوَ فِي الْخَطِيئَةِ يَقْضِي بِنَفْسِهِ عَلَى نَفْسِهِ. وَمَتَى أَرْسَلْتُ إِلَيْكَ أَرْتِيمَاسَ أَوْ تِيخِيكُسَ، فَبَادِرْ أَنْ تَأْتِيَنِي إِلَى نِيكُوبُولِسَ لِأَنِّي قَدْ عَزَمْتُ أَنْ أَشْتِيَ هُنَاكَ. أَمَّا زِينَاسُ مُعَلِّمُ النَّامُوسِ وَأَبْلُوسُ، فَاجْتَهِدْ أَنْ تُشَيِّعَهُمَا مُتَأَهِّبِينَ لِئَلَّا يُعَوِّزَهُمَا شَيْءٌ. وَلْيَتَعَلَّمْ ذَوُونَا أَنْ يَقُومُوا بِالْأَعْمَالِ الصَّالِحَةِ لِلْحَاجَاتِ الضَّرُورِيَّةِ حَتَّى لَا يَكُونُوا غَيْرَ مُثْمَرِينَ. يُسَلِّمُ عَلَيْكَ جَمِيعُ الَّذِينَ مَعِيَ، سَلِّمُ عَلَى الَّذِينَ يُحِبُّونَنَا فِي الْإِيمَانِ، النِّعْمَةُ مَعَكُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ. آمِينَ.

THE GOSPEL

The Reading from the Holy Gospel according to St. Luke. (8:5-15)

The Lord spoke this parable: "A sower went out to sow his seed; and as he sowed, some fell along the path, and was trodden under foot, and the birds of the air devoured it. And some fell on the rock; and as it grew up, it withered away, because it had no moisture. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns grew with it and choked it. And some fell into good soil and grew, and yielded a hundredfold." And when His Disciples asked Him what this parable meant, Jesus said, "To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of God; but for others they are in parables, so that seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand. Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. The ones along the path are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts that they may not believe and be saved. And the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear the word, receive it with joy; but these have no root, they believe for a while and in time of temptation fall away. And as for what fell among the thorns, they are those who hear, but as they go on their way, they

are choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life, and their fruit does not mature. And as for that in the good soil, they are those who, hearing the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bring forth fruit with patience.” As Jesus said this, He called out, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”

الإنجيل

فصلٌ شَرِيفٌ مِنْ بَشَارَةِ الْقَدِيسِ لَوْقَا الْإِنْجِيلِيِّ الْبَشِيرِ وَالتَّلْمِيزِ الطَّاهِرِ.

قَالَ الرَّبُّ هَذَا الْمَثَلُ: خَرَجَ الزَّارِعُ لِيَزْرَعَ زَرْعَهُ. وَفِيمَا هُوَ يَزْرَعُ، سَقَطَ بَعْضُ عَلَى الطَّرِيقِ، فَوُطِئَ وَأَكَلَتْهُ طُيُورُ السَّمَاءِ. وَبَعْضُ سَقَطَ عَلَى الصَّخْرِ، فَلَمَّا نَبَتَ يَبَسَ لِأَنَّهُ لَمْ تَكُنْ لَهُ رُطُوبَةٌ. وَبَعْضُ سَقَطَ بَيْنَ الشُّوْكِ، فَنَبَتَ الشُّوْكُ مَعَهُ فَخَنَقَهُ. وَبَعْضُ سَقَطَ فِي الْأَرْضِ الصَّالِحَةِ، فَلَمَّا نَبَتَ أَثْمَرَ مِائَةَ ضِعْفٍ. فَسَأَلَهُ تَلَامِيذُهُ مَا عَسَى أَنْ يَكُونَ هَذَا الْمَثَلُ. فَقَالَ: لَكُمْ قَدْ أُعْطِيَ أَنْ تَعْرِفُوا أَسْرَارَ مَلَكُوتِ اللَّهِ، وَأَمَّا الْبَاقُونَ فَبِأَمْثَالٍ، لِكَيْ لَا يَنْظُرُوا وَهُمْ نَاطِرُونَ، وَلَا يَفْهَمُوا وَهُمْ سَامِعُونَ. وَهَذَا هُوَ الْمَثَلُ: الزَّرْعُ هُوَ كَلِمَةُ اللَّهِ. وَالَّذِينَ عَلَى الطَّرِيقِ هُمُ الَّذِينَ يَسْمَعُونَ، ثُمَّ يَأْتِي إِبْلِيسُ وَيَنْزِعُ الْكَلِمَةَ مِنْ قُلُوبِهِمْ لِيَلَّا يُؤْمِنُوا فَيَخْلُصُوا. وَالَّذِينَ عَلَى الصَّخْرِ هُمُ الَّذِينَ يَسْمَعُونَ الْكَلِمَةَ وَيَقْبَلُونَهَا بِفَرَحٍ، وَلَكِنْ لَيْسَ لَهُمْ أَصْلٌ، وَإِنَّمَا يُؤْمِنُونَ إِلَى حِينٍ، وَفِي وَقْتِ التَّجَرُّبَةِ يَرْتَدُّونَ. وَالَّذِي سَقَطَ فِي الشُّوْكِ، هُمُ الَّذِينَ يَسْمَعُونَ ثُمَّ يَذْهَبُونَ فَيَخْتَنِقُونَ بِهِمْ هَذِهِ الْحَيَاةُ وَغِنَاهَا وَمَلَذَاتُهَا، فَلَا يَأْتُونَ بِثَمَرٍ. وَأَمَّا الَّذِي سَقَطَ فِي الْأَرْضِ الْجَيِّدَةِ، فَهُمْ الَّذِينَ يَسْمَعُونَ الْكَلِمَةَ فَيَحْفَظُونَهَا فِي قَلْبٍ حَيِّدٍ صَالِحٍ، وَيُثْمِرُونَ بِالصَّبْرِ. وَلَمَّا قَالَ هَذَا نَادَى: مَنْ لَهُ أُذُنَانِ لِلسَّمْعِ فَلْيَسْمَعْ.



HOLY BREAD OF OBLATION

OFFERED BY: Fr. Samer, the Clergy and the parishioners for the good of the parish council members, the building committee and the Ladies Auxiliary and their families. Many Years!

OFFERED BY: Fr. Samer, the Clergy and the parishioners for the good health of all the families in Gaza, Palestine, Syria, Lebanon and Ukraine and all the countries has the unrest in the world. Many Years!

OFFERED BY: Fr. Samer, the Clergy and the parishioners for the good health of the Youth, the SOYO and their families. Many Years!

OFFERED BY: George Omran and his daughters for the good health of beloved wife and mother, Jeanette wishing her a speedy recovery. Many Years!

OFFERED BY: Salim and Wardeh Asfour on the occasion of their wedding anniversary (Oct 13) and the good health of the Asfour family. Many Years!

OFFERED BY: Faten Mansour, Lara, Chris and Christian Zeidan in remembrance of their beloved Mom and Grandmother Margo Mansour on the occasion of her ten years memorial (Oct 20, 2015). Memory Eternal!

OFFERED BY: Stella, Yousef, Suhair, Osama, Amani Nijmeh and Haifa Shadid in remembrance of their beloved Father and Grandfather Elias Nijmeh on the occasion of his five years memorial (Oct 18, 2020). Memory Eternal!



COFFEE HOUR AND LUNCHEON

Offered By: The Parish Community

Appreciation Lunch for our Annual Food Festival Sponsors, Workers and Donors.

(To host the Coffee Hour, please contact Wardeh Asfour @408-718-3339)

office@orthodoxredeemer.org

Online Link: <https://holytransfiguration.breezechms.com/form/26c422>

Services Schedule Every Week

Matins @ 9:00 AM

Divine Liturgy @ 10:00 AM

Vespers: Every Saturday @ 5:00 PM

(Please check your email in case of any cancellations for Vespers)

The Church Office Needs a Laptop

Our Church Office is in need of a new laptop for daily administrative work.

If you are able to donate a laptop, please contact the office at office@orthodoxredeemer.org

Or reach out to **Ibtisam Kreitem at (408) 594-3000.**

Thank you for your generosity and continued support.

God Bless, Church Office Secretary.

PARISH COUNCIL 2025

The Parish Council members' of 2025. Chair President; Bassam Khoury, Vice-Chair; Linda Salah, Treasurer; Dania Amireh Baker, Secretary; Maria Segal, Jad Bateh, Sana Eideh, Johnny Khamis, Didi Kreitem, Maher Fasheh and Rowida Barghouth. Sheila Veizades will represent the Antiochian Women Committee and Salem Aweiss will represent the Men Fellowship Committee.

ANTIOCHIAN WOMEN 2025

The Antiochian Women Committee Leaders of 2025. Wardeh Asfour, Rowida Barghouth, Rima Gannage, Diana Khoury, Sheila Veizades and Hala Aboujudom (Sunshine).

CHURCH OF THE REDEEMER YOUNG ADULTS

Young adults (college age and up to 39-1/2) meet on the first Sunday of the month and organize social, educational, and volunteer activities. For more information, please contact Fr. Theodor Sakellar @ 408-455-8145

SOYO (YOUTH GROUP 12-18 YEARS)

Our SOYO (Youth Group) is active through the leadership of the Advisors: Dominic Youssef and Caesar Haddad. The officers are: President; Isabella Zarzar, Vice-President; Riad Akery, Secretary; Adriana Ajlouni, Treasurer;

Breanna Zarzar, Social Media Coordinator; Eliana Halteh.

October Youth Month

October is youth month. We encourage all youth group (SOYO) to participate in this month by reading the Epistle, prepare and read a Sermon, or ushering at the church during the Divine Liturgy.

Sermon: Christina Alnweisser

Epistle: Riad Akkary



Sunday School Registration is now open. Please register your children ASAP. Registration forms are available at the church hall or on church Website: <http://www.orthodoxredeemer.org/schoolregistration>

School Schedule:

Sunday school starts 9/14/25 and ends 5/17/26. Sunday school graduation Ceremony will be on 5/17/26. Sunday school classes begin after communion and ends at 12:30pm.

Teachers: Samuel Hage, Hussam Ibrahim, Dimitry Youssef, Heather Simonovich, Randa Hanani and Jocelyn Mikhael. Caitlin Timothy and Alia Nystrom as back-up/support.

Orthodoxy 101 Class

Have you ever wondered why St John the Forerunner is depicted with wings? Or, why do we have a 2 headed eagle on our rug?

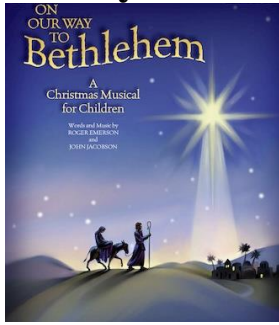
Join us in the church during coffee hour (after getting a cup of coffee and a bite!) to learn about Icons in the Orthodox Church. We will aim for 30 minutes. Everyone is welcome!

OCTOBER 12th and 19th: No class!

OCTOBER 26th: The Liturgical Calendar

NOVEMBER 2nd, 9th, and 16th: Christ and the Incarnation.

"On Our Way to Bethlehem"



CHRISTMAS PLAY

Sunday December 21, 2025

This year's Sunday School Christmas pageant is "On Our Way to Bethlehem" to be performed after Divine Liturgy on Sunday December 21st.

We will begin casting after church this Sunday October 5, 2025, and rehearse every Sunday for about 1 hour following the end of Sunday School. Dress rehearsal will be on Saturday December 20 from 2:00 to 4:00 PM, and the play will be after Liturgy on Sunday December 21. Parents are requested to sign up their children this Sunday and to bring them to church/rehearsal every Sunday. Thank you! --Nancy Godfrey—email any questions to:

pianogurl26@gmail.com

UPCOMING EVENTS AT THE CHURCH

Please save the date

- **Advent Fast:** Fast starts November 15- December 24.
- **Blessing of the Girls:** November 23, blessing of the girls after the Divine Liturgy. Please make sure to bring your daughter to church.
- **Thanksgiving Agape:** Potluck Luncheon on Sunday November 23 after the Divine Liturgy.
- **St. Barbara Day:** December 7, sponsored by the ladies auxiliary. Please bring a pot of our traditional Burbara to share with everyone.
- **Christmas Play:** December 21, Christmas play after the Liturgy.
- **Christmas Services:** Evening, Divine Liturgy for the Nativity on Dec 24th @ 8:00pm.

The Broken Church

By Metropolitan Saba (Isper)

The Church, in her visible and human face, is always broken by the sins of her children. She is hanged upon the Cross of tension stretched between her longing for the heavens as a radiant bride without blemish or fault; and the passions, weaknesses, and falls of her earthly members who knowingly or unknowingly stain her garment, hinder her mission, and pull her downward. This is also the image of the Christian. A believer is one who fully recognizes his weakness and his inclination toward sin yet continually strives toward the heights. This is the struggle of a lifetime. He draws from the grace of God and from constant repentance both his hope and his path to salvation. That is why we find, in the lives of the saints, men and women who reached great heights of purity and holiness, yet still, on their deathbeds, begged for a few more days so that they might begin repentance.

The visible face of the Church is revealed through her members. They are human beings who, through their union with Christ the Head of the Church, are united to one another as one Body. At least, that is how it should be. In reality, they are not always this bright image. Their ongoing repentance, which should be their daily way of life, helps them approach that ideal. But in truth, many within the Church, in all her ranks and orders, are caught up in many other concerns more than in the Lord of the Church Himself who is the very reason for their being in the Church at all.

The believers who are still living in this world are known as the “Church Militant,” while those who have entered eternal life are called the “Church Triumphant.” Yet the Church remains one; these are only educational terms, not dogmatic distinctions. The “Church Militant,” like every human community, is always vulnerable to corruption and failure. Therefore, she constantly needs spiritual struggle, correction, and renewal. Every human group is susceptible to weakness, and the earthly Church is no exception though she possesses the gift of repentance that can wash away the soot of her children from her face. As the Apostle Paul said,

“We have this treasure [faith] in earthen vessels [sinful humans], (2 Cor. 4:7)” not in vessels of steel.

The more her members long for eternal life and begin to live it here and now, the more the Church reflects the image of the Kingdom in this world. Otherwise, everything in her remains of this world, even if wrapped in religious language and called “Christian.” Renunciation of worldliness and freedom from its temptations are essential conditions for the Church to remain faithful to her Lord. Whoever does not believe with certainty that in the Church we are “poor, yet making many rich; having nothing, yet possessing everything” (2 Cor. 6:10) is still far from the mind of Christ, which the Scriptures command us to acquire and make our own.

For many, the Church is seen as an organization to be run by the spirit of this world, since it holds resources, institutions, and influence. They think that as long as the Church has money, property, and administrative structures, her witness is secure. They imagine that material wealth alone can ensure her mission and thus they become careless about how it is obtained, justifying questionable means. They forget that the Lord of the Church provides what is needed when there are pure and faithful hearts devoted to Him. Certainly, earthly goods, when placed in service of the Gospel, can support the Church’s witness and ministry. But they cannot create it. True witness is born only from souls in love with Christ, who have made eternal life their goal.

When the People of God are consumed by earthly concerns, they fall into the trap of forgetting the Giver and losing sight of the goal. When believers rely on their own cleverness, planning, and worldly wisdom as though the Head of the Church (Christ) were absent, they estrange the Church from her Lord, instead of estranging themselves from the world (2 Cor. 5:8). Then, they begin to justify whatever seems profitable or advantageous, even crossing the boundaries of what the canons forbid, offering a thousand excuses. The Church needs saints to remain upright. The saints possess discernment, the ability to distinguish between what belongs to God and what belongs to the world. Only the humble keep the Lord’s voice audible and obeyed within the Church.

If you desire the Church to be faithful and striving, begin with yourself. Change yourself. Purify and cleanse your heart. Listen to the divine Word with reverence. Examine your thoughts and actions daily. Shake off the dust of sin and clothe yourself with repentance without ceasing. Then you will become a new person able to recognize your Lord's voice and will, to act according to His pleasure, and to pass that breath of life to your brothers and sisters.

Once, a journalist tried to trap Mother Teresa of Calcutta with a provocative question: "What should change in the Church?" She replied with deep wisdom, "You and I." Indeed, as long as believers continue to indulge in easy criticism, casting accusations at this or that person while excusing themselves, the face of Christ in His Church will remain wounded and nothing will change. With their constant criticism, they disfigure His face with their own hands often without realizing it. But ignorance does not excuse responsibility.

Christ is present in His Church: in the Liturgy, in the Holy Mysteries, in lives of virtue, in the patience of those who are suffering, in the joy of the pure, in the faces of those who love, in the struggle of the repentant, in the innocence of the chaste, in the smile of the gentle, in the cheerfulness of the generous, in the simplicity of the humble, in the detachment of the wealthy, in the contentment of the poor, in the integrity of the faithful, in the service of the needy, in the silence of those who are content, and in the hearts of those who are positive. Christ is in our midst, so let us recognize His presence, bear witness to Him, and work so that our sight of Him never fades from among us. Let us be those who light candles instead of merely cursing the darkness.

Then, perhaps, He will forgive our shortcomings and make us part of His little flock.

الكنيسة المكسورة المتروبوليت سابا (اسبر)

الكنيسة، بوجهها المنظور، البشري، مكسورةٌ أبداً على خطايا أبنائها. إنَّها معلَّقة على صليب التوتر، بين انشدادها إلى السموات، عروساً بهيَّة لا شائبة فيها ولا عيب، وبين أهواء أعضائها الأرضيين وطبائعهم وسقطاتهم، الذين لا ينفكون، بمعرفة وبغير معرفة، يشوّهون ثوبها ويعطلون رسالتها، ويشدّونها إلى السفليات. هذه صورة المسيحي أيضاً. فهو إنسان مدرك، تماماً، ضعفه وانشداؤه للخطيئة، لكنّه ساعٍ، دوماً، إلى العلى. هذا جهاد عمره. يتّخذ من نعمة الله، ومن توبته المستمرة، رجاءً وسبيلاً إلى الخلاص. لذا نجد في سِرِّ القديسين من بلغ شأواً عظيماً في الطهارة والقداسة، وظلّ، وهو على فراش الموت، يطلب تأجيل انتقاله لبضعة أيام، كيما يبدأ التوبة!!

يبدو وجه الكنيسة المنظور في أعضائها. هؤلاء بشر يستمدّون من اتحادهم بالمسيح، رأس الكنيسة، اتحاداً في ما بينهم، يجعلهم جسداً واحداً. أو قل هكذا يجب أن يكونوا. لكنهم، في الواقع، ليسوا على هذه الصورة المشرقة، دوماً. توبتهم المستمرة، المفروض أن يكونوا عليها، تساعدهم على أن يصيروا أقرب ما يكون إلى المثال. لكن الواقع يُظهر كثرة من أعضاء الكنيسة، بكلّ تنوع فئاتهم، مأخوذين بأمور كثيرة أكثر ممّا برّب الكنيسة، الذي هو علّة وجود كلّ منهم فيها، أساساً.

يسمّي بعضهم المؤمنين الأحياء، الذين لم ينتقلوا إلى الحياة الأبدية بعد، "كنيسة مجاهدة". أمّا الذين انتقلوا إلى الحياة الأبدية فـ "كنيسة ظافرة". الكنيسة واحدة، وما هذه سوى تسميات تعليميّة، لا عقائدية. "الكنيسة المجاهدة"، كلّ تراكم مجتمعي، عرضة للفساد والسقوط، في كلّ حين. لذا تراها بحاجة إلى جهاد روحي دائم، بغية التقويم والتصحيح. كلّ جماعة بشريّة قابلة للمعطوبية، ولا تشدّ الكنيسة الأرضيّة عن هذه القاعدة، ولو أنّها مزودة بطاقة التوبة، القادرة على مسح سخام أبنائها عن وجهها. وقد قال بولس الرسول: "لنا هذا الكنز [الإيمان] في أوانٍ خزفيّة [بشر خطائون]، (٢كو٧/٧)" ولم يقل في أوانٍ فولاذية.

بقدر ما يكثر فيها التائقون إلى الحياة الأبديّة، والساعون إلى عيشها منذ الآن، تعكس الكنيسة صورة الملكوت، في هذه الدنيا. عدا ذلك، كلّ شيء فيها من هذا الدهر، ولو اتّخذ مسحة إنجيليّة، سُمّيَت بالمسيح. الزهد بالدنويات، والتحرّر من إغراءاتها، شرطان أساسيان لبقاء الكنيسة على الأمانة المطلوبة. من لا يؤمن، يقيناً، بأننا، في الكنيسة، "فقراء ونغني كثيرين، ولا شيء عندنا ونحن نملك كلّ شيء" (٢كو١٠/١)، فهو لا يزال بعيداً عن فكر المسيح، الذي طالبنا الكتاب المقدّس بأن نملكه ويكون فينا.

الكنيسة، عند كثيرين، هيئة يجب أن تدار بروح هذا العالم، ما دام فيها الكثير من المنافع والمصالح. وبما أنّها، كجماعة منظمة تملك مالاً وعقارات واستثمارات ومؤسسات وجمعيات وإلى ما هنالك من أمثالها، فإنّهم يعتقدون بأنّ مجرد وجود الهيكلية الإدارية وتوفر الأمور الماديّة، يجعل الشهادة المسيحية مؤثّنة. يتوهمون بأنّ مجرد توفّر المال يمكنهم من تأمين احتياجات الكنيسة، وتفعيل شهادتها. فيتساهلون في كيفية الحصول عليه، ويبرّرون لأنفسهم طرق استجلابه. يغيب عن ذهنهم أنّ سيّد الكنيسة يؤمّن اللوازم عندما تتوفّر النفوس النقيّة والأمانة له. من المؤكّد أن توفّر الخيرات الأرضيّة، إذا وضعت في خدمة الإنجيل، يساهم في تفعيل الخدمة، وفي الشهادة لمحبة المسيح وخلصه، لكنه لا يخلقها ولا يستطيع أن يوجدّها. هذه تأتي من نفوس عشقت الرب وجعلت الحياة الأبدية هدفها.

عندما يكون همّ شعب الله محصوراً في تأمين الخيرات الأرضيّة، يقع في فخاخ نسيان معطيها وتضييع هدفها. عندما يسلك المؤمنون بالاعتماد على ذكائهم وحنكتهم وحكمة هذا العالم، كما لو أن رأس الكنيسة (المسيح) غير حاضر فيها، يغربون الكنيسة عن سيّدّها، بدلاً من أن يتغربوا هم عن العالم (٢كو٨/٥). آنذاك قد يحلّلون ما يرونه مناسباً [ربّيحاً]، ويتجاوزون ما حرّمته القوانين أو منعتّه، بألف حجّة وحجّة. تحتاج الكنيسة إلى قديسين حتّى لا تخرج عن استقامتها. يمتلك القديسون حسّ التمييز بين ما هو لله وما هو للعالم. وحدهم المتواضعون يُبقون صوت السيّد مسموعاً ومُطاعاً في الكنيسة.

إن أردت أن تكون الكنيسة مجاهدة أمانة أبداً بنفسك. غير ذاتك، طهرها، نقّها، اسمع الكلمة الإلهية بورع، قيّم سلوكك وفكرك يومياً، وانفض غبار الخطيئة، والبس رداء التوبة

دونما انقطاع، فتصير إنساناً جديداً قادراً على أن تميّز صوت ربّك ومشيتته، فتعمل بحسب رضاه، وتنقل هذا النّفس إلى إخوتك.

حاول أحد الصحافيين أن يوقع الأم تيريزا (كلكتا)، فسألها: ما الذي يجب أن يتغيّر في الكنيسة؟ فكان جوابها في غاية العمق والصواب، وأجابته: أنا وأنت. ورامين بالتّهم على هذا وذاك، مبّزين أنفسهم، سيبقى وجه المسيح، في كنيسته، مدعّى، ولن يتغيّر شيء فيها. بالانتقاد المستمر يشوّهون وجهه بأنفسهم. قد يفعلون هذا الشرّ وهم لا يدرون. لكن نتيجة جهلهم لا تعفيهم من المسؤولية.

المسيح حاضر في الكنيسة، في الليتورجيا، في الأسرار الإلهية، في حياة الفضيلة، في صبر المتألمين، في فرح الأنقياء، في وجوه المحبّين، في جهاد التائبين، في براءة الأطهار، في بسمّة الودعاء، في بهجة المعطين، في بساطة المتواضعين، في زهد الأغنياء، في رضى الفقراء، في موضوعيّة المؤمنين، في خدمة المحتاجين، في صمت الممثلّين، في قلوب الإيجابيين. المسيح حاضر في ما بيننا، فلنحضره، حيث يوجد، ولنشهد له، ولنعمل على ألا يغيب. ولنكن من الذين يضيؤون الشموع بدلاً من الاكتفاء بلعن العتمة.

علّه آنذاك يغفر لنا قصورنا، ويجعلنا من قطيعه الصغير.