



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

**ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH OF
THE REDEEMER
380 MAGDALENA AVE, LOS ALTOS HILLS, CA 94024
PHONE: (650) 941-1570**

www.orthodoxredeemer.org

**V. REV. FR. SAMER YOUSSEF, D. MIN
REV. FR. THEODORE SAKELLAR, MTS**



OCTOBER 19, 2025

**NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST
& THIRD SUNDAY OF LUKE**

THE HOLY PROPHET JOEL; MARTYR VAROS AND SEVEN MARTYRS WITH HIM;
MOTHER CLEOPATRA OF PALESTINE; VENERABLE JOHN OF RILA

الاحد التاسع عشر بعد العنصرة والأحد الثالث من القديس لوقا الأنجيلي

RESURRECTIONAL APOLYTIKION IN TONE TWO

When Thou didst submit Thyself unto death, O Thou deathless and immortal One, then Thou didst destroy hades with Thy Godly power. And when Thou didst raise the dead from beneath the earth, all the powers of Heaven did cry aloud unto Thee: O Christ, Thou giver of life, glory to Thee.

أبوليتيكيون القيامة باللحن الثاني

عِنْدَمَا انْحَدَرْتَ إِلَى الْمَوْتِ، أَيُّهَا الْحَيَاةُ الَّذِي لَا يَمُوتُ، حِينَئِذٍ أَمَتَ الْجَحِيمَ بِبَرَقِ لَاهُوتِكَ. وَعِنْدَمَا أَقَمْتَ الْأَمْوَاتَ مِنْ تَحْتِ النَّارِ، صَرَخَ نَحْوَكَ جَمِيعُ الْقُوَّاتِ السَّمَاوِيِّينَ: أَيُّهَا الْمَسِيحُ الْإِلَهَ، مُعْطِي الْحَيَاةِ 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 بِاللْحَنِ السَّابِعِ

لَمَّا تَجَلَّيْتَ أَيُّهَا الْمَسِيحُ الْإِلَهَ فِي الْجَبَلِ، أَظْهَرْتَ مَجْدَكَ لِلتَّلَامِيذِ حَسَبَمَا اسْتَطَاعُوا، فَأَشْرِقْ لَنَا نَحْنُ الْخَطَاةَ نَوْرَكَ الْأَرْلِيِّ، بِشَفَاعَاتِ الْوَلَدَةِ الْإِلَهِيَّةِ، 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.

قَتْدَاقُ بِاللْحَنِ الثَّانِي

يَا شَفِيعَةَ الْمَسِيحِيِّينَ غَيْرَ الْخَازِيَةِ، الْوَسِيطَةَ لَدَى الْخَالِقِ غَيْرِ الْمَرْدُودَةِ، لَا تُعْرِضِي عَنِّ أَصْوَاتِ طَلِبَاتِنَا نَحْنُ الْخَطَاةَ، بَلْ تَدَارِكِينَا بِالْمَعُونَةِ بِمَا أَنَّكَ صَالِحَةٌ، نَحْنُ الصَّارِحِينَ إِلَيْكَ بِإِيمَانٍ:

بادري إِلَى الشَّفَاعَةِ وَأُسْرِعِي فِي الطَّلَبَةِ، يَا وَالِدَةَ الْإِلَهِ، الْمُتَشَفِّعَةَ دَائِمًا بِمُكْرَمِيكَ.

THE EPISTLE

The Lord is my strength and my song.

The Lord has chastened me severely.

The Reading from the Second Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians. (11:31-12:9)

Brethren, the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, the One who is blessed for evermore, knows that I do not lie. In Damascus, the governor under Arétas the king guarded the city of the Damascenes, willing to seize me, and through a window I was let down in a basket by the wall, and escaped his hands. I must boast, though it is not expedient; but I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord. I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago—whether in the body, I do not know, or whether out of the body, I do not know; God knows—who was caught up to the third heaven. And I know that this man—whether in the body or out of the body, I do not know; God knows—was caught up into Paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which no person is allowed to utter. On behalf of this one I will boast, but on my own behalf I will not boast, except of my infirmities. For if I would desire to boast, I shall not be foolish, for I shall speak the truth. But I refrain from it, lest anyone should think of me above that which he sees me to be, or hears from me. And to keep me from being exalted above measure through the abundance of revelations, I was given a thorn in the flesh, an angel of Satan to buffet me, to keep me from being exalted above measure. For this thing I beseeched the Lord three times, that it might depart from me. And He said to me, “My grace is sufficient for thee, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.” Most gladly therefore will I rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

الرسالة

قُوَّتِي وَتَسْبِيحَتِي الرَّبِّ. أَدَبًا أَدَّبَنِي الرَّبُّ.

فَصَلِّ مِنْ رِسَالَةِ الْقَدِيسِ بُولُسِ الرَّسُولِ الثَّانِيَةِ إِلَى أَهْلِ كورنثوس.

يَا إِخْوَةُ، قَدْ عَلِمَ اللَّهُ أَبُو رَبِّنَا يَسُوعَ الْمَسِيحِ، الْمُبَارَكُ إِلَى الْأَبَدِ أَنِّي لَا أَكْذِبُ. كَانَ بِدِمَشْقِ الْحَاكِمُ تَحْتَ
إِمْرَةِ الْمَلِكِ الْحَارِثِ، يَحْرُسُ مَدِينَةَ الدِّمَشْقِيِّينَ لِيَقْبِضَ عَلَيَّ. فَذَلَيْتُ مِنْ كُودَةٍ فِي زَنْبِيلٍ مِنَ السُّورِ،

وَنَجُوتُ مِنْ يَدَيْهِ. إِنَّهُ لَا يُوَافِقُنِي أَنْ أَفْتَحِرَ، فَآتَى إِلَى رُؤْيِ الرَّبِّ وَإِعْلَانَاتِهِ. إِنِّي أَعْرِفُ إِنْسَانًا فِي الْمَسِيحِ مُنْذُ أَرْبَعِ عَشْرَةِ سَنَةً (أَفِي الْجَسَدِ، لَسْتُ أَعْلَمُ، أَمْ خَارِجَ الْجَسَدِ لَسْتُ أَعْلَمُ، اللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ) اخْتُطِفَ إِلَى السَّمَاءِ الثَّالِثَةِ. وَأَعْرِفُ أَنَّ هَذَا الْإِنْسَانَ (أَفِي الْجَسَدِ أَمْ خَارِجَ الْجَسَدِ لَسْتُ أَعْلَمُ، اللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ) اخْتُطِفَ إِلَى الْفِرْدَوْسِ، وَسَمِعَ كَلِمَاتٍ سِرِّيَّةً لَا يَحِلُّ لِنَاسٍ أَنْ يَنْطُقَ بِهَا. فَمِنْ جِهَةٍ هَذَا أَفْتَحِرُ، وَأَمَّا مِنْ جِهَةٍ نَفْسِي فَلَا أَفْتَحِرُ إِلَّا بِأَوْهَانِي. فَإِنِّي لَوْ أَرَدْتُ الْإِفْتِحَارَ، لَمْ أَكُنْ جَاهِلًا لِأَنِّي أَقُولُ الْحَقَّ، لَكِنِّي أَتَحَاشَى لِئَلَّا يَظُنَّ بِي أَحَدٌ فَوْقَ مَا يَرَانِي عَلَيْهِ أَوْ يَسْمَعُهُ مِنِّي. وَلِئَلَّا أَسْتَكْبِرَ بِفِرْطِ الْإِعْلَانَاتِ، أُعْطِيتُ شَوْكَةً فِي الْجَسَدِ، مَلَائِكَةُ الشَّيْطَانِ لِيَلْطِمَنِي لِئَلَّا أَسْتَكْبِرَ. وَلِهَذَا طَلَبْتُ إِلَى الرَّبِّ ثَلَاثَ مَرَّاتٍ أَنْ تُقَارِقَنِي. فَقَالَ لِي "تَكْفِيكَ نِعْمَتِي، لِأَنَّ قُوَّتِي فِي الضَّعْفِ تَكْمُلُ." فَبِكُلِّ سُورٍ أَفْتَحِرُ بِالْحَرِيِّ بِأَوْهَانِي، لِيَسْتَعْرِ فِي قُوَّةِ الْمَسِيحِ.

THE GOSPEL

The Reading from the Holy Gospel according to St. Luke. (7:11-16)

At that time, Jesus went to a city called Nain, and many of His disciples and a great crowd went with Him. As He drew near to the gate of the city, behold, a man who had died was being carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow; and a large crowd from the city was with her. And when the Lord saw her, He had compassion on her and said to her, "Do not weep." And He came and touched the bier, and the bearers stood still. And Jesus said, "Young man, I say to you: arise." And the dead man sat up, and began to speak. And Jesus gave him to his mother. Fear seized them all; and they glorified God, saying, "A great prophet has arisen among us!" and "God has visited His people!"

الإنجيل

فَصْلٌ شَرِيفٌ مِنْ بَشَارَةِ الْقَدِّيسِ لَوْقَا الْإِنْجِيلِيِّ الْبَشِيرِ وَالتَّلْمِيزِ الطَّاهِرِ. (16-7:11)

فِي ذَلِكَ الزَّمَانِ، كَانَ يَسُوعُ مُنْطَلِقًا إِلَى مَدِينَةٍ اسْمُهَا نَايْنُ، وَكَانَ كَثِيرُونَ مِنْ تَلَامِيذِهِ وَجَمْعٌ غَفِيرٌ مُنْطَلِقِينَ مَعَهُ. فَلَمَّا قَرَّبَ مِنْ بَابِ الْمَدِينَةِ، إِذَا مَيِّتٌ مَحْمُولٌ، وَهُوَ ابْنٌ وَحِيدٌ لِأُمِّهِ، وَكَانَتْ أَرْمَلَةً، وَكَانَ مَعَهَا جَمْعٌ كَثِيرٌ مِنَ الْمَدِينَةِ. فَلَمَّا رَأَاهَا الرَّبُّ، تَحَنَّنَ عَلَيْهَا وَقَالَ لَهَا: "لَا تَبْكِي." وَدَنَا، وَلَمَسَ النَّعْشَ

فَوَقَّفَ الحَامِلُونَ. فَقَالَ: "أَيُّهَا الشَّابُّ، لَكَ أَقُولُ فُمْ." فَاسْتَوَى الْمَيْثُ، وَبَدَأَ يَتَكَلَّمُ، فَسَلَّمَهُ إِلَى أُمِّهِ. فَأَخَذَ
الْجَمِيعَ خَوْفٌ، وَمَجَّدُوا اللَّهَ قَائِلِينَ: "لَقَدْ قَامَ فِيْنَا نَبِيٌّ عَظِيمٌ، وَافْتَقَدَ اللَّهُ شَعْبَهُ."

TRISAGION PRAYER

3-9 days Memorial service in memory of Asal Ayad, offered by her children: Yvonne, Nader, Nabil, Larry, Neveen, Lamia and their families, and the Ayad, Saba and Tarazi families.



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: Nancy Eways, Jennifer Atala, Aileen Ajlouni and their families for the good health of their parents, Basem and Maha Ajlouni, on the occasion of their 50th wedding anniversary (Oct 19). Many Years!

OFFERED BY: Basem and Maha Ajlouni for the good health of Nancy, Jennifer, Aileen, George and John, and their grandchildren; Basem, Geo, Julian, Lana, Mila, Nehme and Jude. Many Years!

OFFERED BY: Ramsey and Jennifer Habib on the occasion of their 4th wedding anniversary (Oct 10) and the good health of their children Isabella and Yousif. For the good health of Amal Habib on the occasion of her birthday (Oct 14) and the Habib family. Many Years!

OFFERED BY: Jenna and Jesus Mendoza on the occasion of their 2nd wedding anniversary (Oct 14) and the good health of the Salah and Mendoza families. Many Years!

OFFERED BY: Ibtisam Kreitem for the good health of her granddaughter Yasmin on the occasion of her 1st birthday (Oct 12), and the good health of Samer, Sara, Laila and Pierre, and the Kreitem and Halteh families. Many Years!

OFFERED BY: Hanna and Rania Haddad for the good health of their son Rabih on the occasion of his birthday (Oct 15), and the good health of their children Rami, Rita, Roula and the Haddad family. Many Years!

OFFERED BY: Henry, Sheila and Gregory Veizades for the good health of Michael Veizades on the occasion of his birthday (Oct 9), and the good health of Henry on the occasion of his birthday (Oct15). For the good health of the Hanna, Northway and Veizades families. Many Years!

OFFERED BY: Fr. Samer, Kh. Julianna Youssef and the kids for the good health of Fr. Samer's dad, Elias Youssef, wishing him a speedy recovery. Many Years!

OFFERED BY: Marge Hanna and Sheila and Henry Veizades in memory of beloved daughter and Sister Tamara Hanna Northway (4 Years memorial, Oct 9). Memory Eternal!



COFFEE HOUR

Offered By: Maha Ajlouni and the Ayad family

(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: Adriana Ajlouni

Epistle: Theodore Nystrom



SUNDAY SCHOOL CORNER

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.

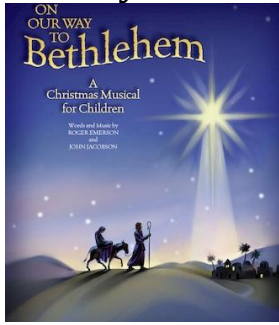
Orthodoxy 101 Class

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 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 Barbara 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.

A Bishop's Scribbles

By Metropolitan Saba (Isper)

This title may surprise many. This article was written to convey the suffering of the bishop who seeks the face of God and the sanctification of his people. It aims to shed light on the suffering of the Church in the East—a Church that, together with her people, lives under harsh conditions, leading the faithful to look upon the Church as a lifeline of salvation. Yet, amid this suffering, they have come to demand from the Church more than she can bear. The article is, in essence, an indirect call for us to intensify our prayers for our Church.

Most believers are used to relating to their pastor in only one direction — he gives and they receive. They expect his hand to remain always extended toward them, carrying whatever they think they need or desire. To them, he exists to fulfill their requests. They often treat him like a “superhuman” or someone who must not make mistakes, get tired, or need rest! Why, they think, should he even have to worry about food or drink? They forget that he is a human being, and that he too needs to feel a living spiritual and emotional connection with his flock and with others. In fact, such connection is not a luxury, it is essential for him to continue his ministry and fruitful service.

For a pastor to endure being forgotten by his people, he would have to be an angel in a body without human limits. But if he is a man with a sensitive conscience and a tender heart, living his priestly calling in sincerity and truth, then he can only accept carrying his cross daily, fixing his eyes on the Lord and seeking from Him alone true comfort and consolation.

The needs of God's people are many and varied — spiritual, social, material, psychological. That is why the role of faithful believers, who are conscious of their responsibility, is indispensable. How can a pastor meet all these needs when so many expect only to be embraced, but few ever embrace him?

I sometimes wonder: what image do believers really have of their pastor? Many are astonished to discover that he is, in fact, human — that he needs human connection, if not also spiritual companionship. In their minds, they place him on a very high pedestal — yet they leave him there alone, excusing themselves from striving for that same holiness to which he and they are equally called.

At the same time, they show him little mercy for any action, behavior, or even word that displeases them. Their measure is not whether his ministry aligns with the Gospel. What matters to them is that he didn't fulfill their request, even if he tried his best and went beyond his strength.

Saint Tikhon of Zadonsk described this painful reality from his own experience: “If a priest guards himself from sin, they call him rigid;

If he grieves over his sin, they call him gloomy;

If he gives alms, they call him a hypocrite;

If he prays much, they call him an extremist;

If he is insulted and forgives, they call him weak;

If he gives generously to the poor, they call him a fool.”

A Romanian metropolitan, whose diocese numbers just over a million people, once confided to me that his greatest suffering lies in how to shepherd his flock according to the demands of the Gospel, when many of them do not want that Gospel, and sometimes even ask him to do what contradicts it.

His words reminded me of the great Saint Isaac the Syrian, who in the seventh century was appointed bishop of Nineveh. Two men once came before him, quarreling over a field. He told them, “The Gospel says so-and-so.” One of them replied, “What do I have to do with the Gospel? I just want my rights.” At that, the bishop said, “Then what am I doing here? I have no work except the Gospel.” He left the episcopate for the desert, where he became one of the greatest spiritual saints.

Another deep pain for a bishop comes when his flock shows no interest in renewing their lives, purifying their hearts, or growing spiritually, and they are content to remain as they are. For what is the bishop’s role, if not to sanctify the lives of his people and help them walk that path? His primary service is to nurture everything that leads them to progress in living their Christian faith.

Saint Tikhon of Zadonsk served his spiritually and materially poor diocese with selfless devotion. He tried with all the wisdom and strength God gave him to lift up his people spiritually. Yet he wrote in his notes about the preacher he had invited to teach them: “In vain does the poor preacher wear out his voice.” His illness – the reason he gave the Russian Holy Synod when asking to be relieved of his episcopal duties — was no doubt the result of deep suffering among a people unprepared to live the ways of the Gospel and unwilling to learn. He spent the rest of his life in a monastery, devoted to prayer, contemplation, and charity.

People generally treat a bishop more as a social or political figure than as a spiritual father watching over their salvation. They want him to provide for their material needs, not their spiritual ones. In our Eastern lands, where religion and society intertwine, they often

expect him to approve whatever they desire, even if it contradicts the Gospel. If he refuses, he's labeled "strict" or "fanatical."

This places him in constant inner struggle: How far can his conscience go in accommodating people? Can he look the other way when they insist on imposing their will in matters of faith, twisting or wounding its essence? Has he fulfilled his duty if he guides them according to God's will and they still refuse to follow?

Some expect him to be a businessman, building projects, launching initiatives, managing investments. Others expect him to be a politician, and by "politics," they mean securing their own interests and influence. Some want him at their social events, presiding at grand banquets, engaging in all conversations except those that concern his true spiritual mission. Then they call him "charming" or "well-mannered."

But if he is truly a man of God — pure, prayerful, devoted to visiting his people, strictly faithful to the Gospel commandments — they say, "He belongs in a monastery, not a diocese," even if he gives his very body to the poor.

Our Christian people in the East have yet to move beyond the Ottoman-era idea of the "strong bishop" — the powerful community chief who, for four hundred years, acted as both governor and representative of his people before the civil authorities.

What most deeply isolates a pastor, however, is when he finds no response within his own diocese, when his flock shows indifference to his preaching, when they abandon their responsibilities toward the Church yet still expect him to produce wonders and achievements. For some to consider the diocese and its resources as the bishop's personal property shows a complete withdrawal from their faith commitment. But to expect every service and every solution to come from the bishop or priest alone is ignorant at best and tragic at worst.

Many are quick to criticize their pastors "for every little thing," whether fair or not, whether it concerns something that displeases them or simply doesn't benefit them personally, while at the same time excusing themselves from any responsibility. They seem to think their only duty is to complain and attack. Worse still, they scrutinize every aspect of the bishop's personal life, his home, his spending, his daily habits. They watch him and judge him on how he lives, while only a few truly care for him, support him, and connect with him at a deeper level. Those who genuinely want him to be a man of God are fewer still.

And yet, they wonder why he sometimes feels alone in their midst.

خربشات أسقف المتروبوليت سابا (اسبير)

عنوانٌ قد يستغربه الكثيرون. هذه المقال كتب لينقل معاناة الأسقف الذي يطلب وجه الله وتقديس شعبه. وهي لتسليط الضوء على معاناة الكنيسة في المشرق هذه الكنيسة التي تعيش وشعبها تحت ظروف قاسية مما جعل الشعب ينظر الكنيسة كخشبة خلاص ومع المعاناة أضحووا يتطلبون من الكنيسة ما هو أكثر من طاقتها. المقال ما هو الا دعوة غير مباشرة من أجل أن نكثف الصلاة لكنيستنا.

إذ اعتاد معظم المؤمنين على التعاطي مع الراعي باتجاه وحيد؛ هو يعطي وهم يستقبلون. يريدون ليده أن تبقى ممدودةً باتجاههم، وحامله ما يعتقدونه، هم، اللازم لهم، أو ما يرغبون، هم، به. عندهم، هو موجود لتأمين مطالبهم. يتعاملون معه ك "سوبر إنسان": لا يجوز أن يخطيء، ويتعب، ويرتاح!! ولماذا عليه، حتى، أن يفكر بالطعام والشراب!! ينسون أنه إنسان، ومن حقه، أن يشعر بتواصل روحي وجداني مع أبناء رعيته، ومع غيرهم. لا بل إن هذا التواصل حاجة أساسية ولازمة له، من أجل تأمين استمرار خدمته ونجاحها. يحتاج الراعي إلى أن يكون ملاكاً بجسد لا جسدي، حتى يتحمل نسيان رعيته له. أما إن كان ممن يتمتعون بضمير مرهف، وقلب حنون، ويعيش رسالته الكهنوتية، بكل صدق، فليس له إلا أن يرتضي حمل صليبه بشكل دائم، متطلعاً، أبداً، إلى ربه، ملتمساً منه، ومنه وحده، التعزية الحقيقية.

حاجات شعب الله كثيرة ومتنوعة؛ فيها الروحي والاجتماعي والمعيشي والنفسي ... ما يجعل دور المؤمنين، الواعين لمسؤوليتهم الإيمانية، لا غنى عنه. فكيف للراعي أن يحقق في شخصه كل هذه الأمور، وهو لا يرى إلا من يطالبه باحتضانه، فيما ما من أحد يحضنه هو.

أنساءل بين حين وآخر: ما هي صورة الراعي حقاً في أذهان المؤمنين؟ في الواقع، ثمة من يُدهش منهم، عندما يكتشفون أنه إنسان، وبحاجة إلى تواصل إنساني على الأقل، إن لم نقل روحياً!! فصورته في أذهانهم تصنّفه في مرتبة سامية جداً. ولكنهم يقيمونه وحده فيها، ويعفون أنفسهم منها، متناسين أنه وإياهم مدعوون إلى القداسة ذاتها.

وفي الوقت ذاته، لا يرحمونه إزاء أيّ تصرّف أو سلوك أو موقف أو حتّى كلمة لم تعجبهم. ليس المقياس، عندهم، مدى توافق رعايته مع الإنجيل! المهم، عندهم، أنّه لم يؤمّن لهم مطلبهم، حتّى لو حاول وبذل ما يفوق طاقته ولكنته عجز.

وصف القديس تيخون الزادونسكي هذه الحالة، منطلقاً من معاناته الشخصية، فقال: "إذا حفظ نفسه من الخطيئة قالوا إنّهُ "مترمّت!"؛ وإذا حزن على خطيئته قالوا إنّهُ "سوداوي!" إذا ورّع الحسنات قالوا إنّهُ "مراء!"؛ وإذا استزاد من الصلاة، قالوا "من الغيورين"، إذا أهدن وسامح، قالوا: "لا يقوى على الدفاع عن نفسه!" وإذا سخي على الفقراء، قالوا: إنّهُ "أحمق مبدّد!"

أسرّ لي مطران روماني، تعدّ أبرشيّته ما يزيد قليلاً عن مليون نسمة، بأنّ معاناته العظمى تكمن في كيفة رعاية المؤمّن عليهم، بحسب متطلّبات الإنجيل، في حين لا يريد ذلك كثر منهم، بل يطلبون منه أحياناً ما يخالف الإنجيل.

ذكرني كلامه بالقديس الكبير اسحق السوري، الذي أقيم أسقفاً على مدينة نينوى (العراق)، في القرن السابع. هذا أتى إليه رجلان متخاصمان حول حقل. قال لهما يقول الإنجيل كذا. فأجابه أحدهما مالي وللإنجيل، أنا أريد حقّي. فقال الأسقف ماذا أفعل هنا إذن؟ وليس لي عمل سوى الإنجيل! فهجر المطرانيّة إلى البريّة حيث تنسك، وصار من أكبر القديسين الروحانيّين.

أمّا عدم اهتمام الرعيّة بإصلاح حالها، وتطهير نفوسها، وبرودتها الروحية، واكتفائها بما هي عليه، فميدان آلام روحيّة أخرى للراعي. ما هو عمل الأسقف إن لم يكن تقدّيس حياة أبنائه، ومساعدتهم على السير في هذا الطريق؟! تقوم الأولويّة في خدمته على رعاية كلّ ما من شأنه أن يؤدّي بهم إلى تقدّم في عيش إيمانهم المسيحيّ.

خدم القديس تيخون الزادونسكي أبرشيّته الفقيرة، روحياً ومادياً، بتفانٍ، وحاول إنهاض شعبها، روحياً، بكلّ ما منحه الله من حكمة وقوّة. لكنّه كتب في مذكراته عن الواعظ، الذي استقدمه لكي يعلم الرعيّة: "عبتاً يُتعب الواعظ الفقير صوته." ولا شكّ في أنّ مرضه، الذي احتجّ به، ليطلب من المجمع المقدّس الروسي إعفاءه من خدمة الأسقفية، إنّما كان نتاج معاناته الأليمة، مع شعب لم يتحصّر بآداب الإنجيل، ولا يريد ذلك. فأكمل بقيّة حياته في أحد الأديرة، منصرفاً إلى حياة التأمل والصلاة وعمل الصدقات.

يتعاطى الناس، عموماً، مع الأسقف، بصفته صاحب مركز اجتماعي أو سياسي، له مكانة عليا، أكثر ممّا يعاملونه أباً روحياً، مُقاماً للسهر على خلاصهم. يريدونه أن يؤمّن احتياجاتهم المادّية لا الروحية. وفي بلداننا الشرقية، حيث لا ينفصل الديني عن الاجتماعي، يريدونه موافقاً لهم على ما يرغبون به، ولو كان مضاداً للإنجيل. وإلا كان بنظرهم متشدّداً، أو مترمّناً.

هذا يجعله في مخاض ضميريّ دائم. فإلى أيّ حدّ يمكن لضميره أن يسايرهم، ويغضّ الطرف عن بعض تصرفاتهم، خاصّة، عندما يفرضون مشيئتهم على قضايا إيمانّية أساسية، فيحرفونها ويطعنونها في الصميم؟ أليكون قد بلّغ الأمانة إن وجههم بحسب مرضاة الربّ، ولم يستجيبوا؟

بينما يريده بعضهم رجل أعمال، بّناء، مُطلقاً لإنجازات، مستثمراً في الوقف، يراه آخرون رجل سياسة. والسياسة، في عرفهم، تثبيت لوجودهم، وتحقيق لمنافعهم. بعضهم يطالبونه بتلبية ما يعتبرونه واجبات اجتماعية، ويرغبون بترؤسه ولائهم الفاخرة، ولو كان الحديث يطرق كلّ الميادين، إلا ما يختصّ برسالته الدينية أو الروحية. آنذاك يكون، في عرفهم، محدّثاً لبقاً "يببّض الوجه".

أمّا أن يكون رجل الله، طاهراً، نقياً، رجل صلاة، وافتقاد، مُلزماً نفسه بوصايا الإنجيل، فلا يعتبرونه وافياً بالمطلوب. يقولون: مكانه الدير لا الأبرشية، ولو وُزّع جسده على الفقراء. لم يخرج شعبنا المسيحيّ في الشرق من مفهوم المطران القبضاي، المدعوم أربعمئة سنة من النظام العثماني، الذي قام على أساس الملة، وجعل المطران بمثابة محافظ لطائفته، ومدير لشؤونها الزمنية أمام السلطات.

أمّا أكثر ما يُشعر الراعي بالغربة الداخلية، فهو أن لا يجد تجاوباً معه، في نطاق أبرشيّته. كأن لا يلاقي اهتماماً من رعيّته، سواء وعظ أم لا؛ أو أن يتحلّلوا من مسؤولياتهم تجاه كنيستهم، ويطالبوه في الوقت ذاته، باجتراح الإنجازات والعجائب. أن يعتبر المؤمنون أنّ الأبرشية ومواردها مزرعة الأسقف الشخصية، لهو منتهى الانسحاب من التزامهم الإيماني، ولكن أن يجعلوا تأمين كلّ خدمة، على أكتاف الأسقف أو الكاهن، فهو منتهى الجهل، إن لم نقل توصيفاً واقعياً أقسى.

يكتفي الكثيرون بانتقاد رعاتهم "ع الطالع والنازل"، بما يصحّ ولا يصحّ، بما لا يعجبهم ولا يروونه نافعا لهم، وفي الوقت ذاته يعفون أنفسهم من كلّ مسؤوليّة. وكأنّ مسؤوليتهم تُختصر في الانتقاد والتهجّم! والأُنكى من هذا، أنّهم يتناولون حياته الشخصية في كلّ تفصيل، بدءاً ببيته وليس انتهاء بمصروفه. يراقبونه ويحاسبونه على أمور معيشتهم، وقلة منهم فقط، هي التي تهتمّ به حقّاً، لترعاه وتتواصل، في العمق، معه. أمّا الذين يريدونه رجل الله بامتياز فهم أقلّ من القلّة!

ومع ذلك يستغربون أن يختبر الغربة وهو في وسطهم.

Slavyanka Chorus

On Sunday, November 16th at 3:30 PM, sixty singers of the Slavyanka Chorus will give a performance of Sergei Rachmaninoff's *All Night Vigil* (aka, "Vespers") in the sanctuary. Written in 1915, many consider this sublime piece the high point of Russia's golden age of sacred music -- and a window into a 1000 year old spiritual tradition little known in the West. In the musical richness and spiritual depth of this music you can hear the liturgical chants of ancient Russia --and the harmonies and rhythms of an enormously gifted composer giving those ancient chants new life for a modern era. More information at <<http://www.slavyankachorus.org>>.

SLAVYANKA CHORUS PRESENTS

Rachmaninoff's All-Night Vigil



ARTISTIC DIRECTOR IRINA SHACHNEVA

Thursday, November 13 at 7:30 pm	Friday, November 14 at 7:30 pm	Sunday, November 16 at 3:30 pm
Church of the Redeemer 380 Magdalena Avenue Los Altos Hills, CA	St. Mark's Church 2300 Bancroft Way Berkeley, CA	Star of the Sea Church 4420 Geary Boulevard San Francisco, CA

TICKET RESERVATION:
www.slavyankachorus.org

SPECIAL OLYMPICS

Awareness Day

AS NAC TEEN SOYO PREPARES TO SPONSOR THE HISTORIC 45TH ANNUAL SPECIAL OLYMPICS SPORTS CAMP AT ANTIOCHIAN VILLAGE IN AUGUST 2026, WE ASK FOR YOUR GENEROUS SUPPORT TO HELP MAKE THIS BELOVED MINISTRY POSSIBLE.

EACH YEAR, APPROXIMATELY 300 SPECIAL OLYMPICS ATHLETES AND COACHES PARTICIPATE IN THE CAMP. TEEN SOYO MEMBERS FROM ACROSS OUR ARCHDIOCESE VOLUNTEER A WEEK OF THEIR TIME AND LIVE IN SERVICE TO THE ATHLETES—FULFILLING THE SCRIPTURAL CALL TO SERVE “AS WORKING FOR THE LORD, NOT FOR MEN” *1 Corinthians 3:23*



Today our teens will be collecting financial donations to help sponsor this remarkable event. Your contributions make it possible for every athlete, coach, and teen volunteer to attend the camp at no cost. They also help cover travel expenses for the SOYO members who come to serve.

As a token of appreciation, our teens will offer bookmarks featuring the icon of Christ the High Priest to all who contribute.

Thank you for prayerfully considering a gift to this ministry. Your support helps our youth grow in Christ by giving them a unique opportunity to love and care for others.

Checks may be made payable to your local Teen SOYO group, with “SOAD 2025” in the memo line.

Donations can also be made online at www.teensoyo.org/special-olympics.

Venmo @NAC-SOYO

Your donations make this ministry possible!

DID YOU KNOW?

Each year, NAC Teen SOYO covers the cost of the camp, approximately \$75,000, through the generosity of our fellow parishioners. Through the years, we have hosted more than 8,500 athletes and coaches. Around 1,200 of our teens have had the unique experience of being a coach or volunteer at the camp.



venmo



Special Olympics