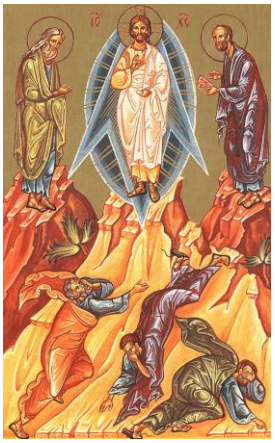

ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN
ARCHDIOCESE OF NORTH AMERICA
Diocese of Los Angeles and the West

ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH OF THE REDEEMER
380 MAGDALENA AVE, LOS ALTOS HILLS, CA 94024
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V. REV. FR. SAMER YOUSSEF, D. MIN
REV. FR. THEODORE SAKELLAR, MTS

OCTOBER 26, 2025

Great-Martyr Demetrios the Myrrh-Streaming & Sixth Sunday of Luke

Commemoration of the Great Earthquake in Constantinople in 740; Venerable-martyr Joasaph of Dionysiou monastery on Athos

القدّيسِ دِيمتْرِيُوس والأحد السادس من القديس لوقا الأنجيلي

RESURRECTIONAL APOLYTIKION IN TONE THREE

Let the heavens rejoice and the earth be glad, for the Lord hath done a mighty act with His own arm. He hath trampled down death by death, and become the first-born from the dead. He hath delivered us from the depths of Hades, granting the world the Great Mercy.

أبوليتيكيون القيامة باللحن الثالِث

لِتَفْرحِ السَّماويَّاتُ وتَبْتَهِجِ الأرْضِيّات، لأنَّ الرَّبَّ صَنَعَ عِزًّا بِساعِدِهِ، ووَطِئَ المَوْتَ بالمَوْتِ، وصارَ بِكْرَ الأمْواتِ، وأنْقَذَنا مِنْ جَوْفِ الجَحيمِ، ومَنَحَ العالَمَ الرَّحْمَةَ العُظْمى.

APOLYTIKION FOR THE EARTHQUAKE IN TONE EIGHT

O Thou Who lookest upon the earth and makest it tremble, deliver us from the fearful menace of earthquake, O Christ our God, and by the intercessions of the Theotokos, send down upon us Thy mercies in abundance, O only Friend of man.

أبوليتيكيون لِحُدوثِ الزَلْزلةِ باللحن الثامِن

يا مَنْ يَنْظُرُ إلى الأرضِ فيَجْعلُها تَرْتَعِد، أنْقِذْنا مِنْ وَعيدِ الزَلْزَلَةِ الرَهيب، أيُّها المَسيحُ إلهنا وأرْسِلْ لَنا مَراحِمَكَ الغَنِيَّة، بِشَفاعاتِ والدَةِ الإلهِ وخلِّصنا.

APOLYTIKION FOR ST. DEMETRIOS IN TONE THREE

A great champion hath the whole world found thee to be when in grave perils; for thou dost put to fight the heathen, O victorious one. As thou didst humble Lyaeus' arrogance and gavest boldness to Nestor in the stadium, thus, O holy Great Martyr Demetrios, do thou entreat Christ God that we be granted Great Mercy.

أبوليتيكيون لِلقدّيس دِيمتْرِيُوس باللحن الثالِث

يا دِيمِتْرِيوس بِكَ المَسْكونة في الشَّدائدِ تَلْقى المَعونة، بِجِهادِكَ قَهَرْتَ شُموخَ الأُمَم. فلِلَهاوُشْ ظَهَرْتَ مُروِّعًا، وفي الميدانِ لِنِسْطُر مُشَجِّعًا. لابِسَ الجِهاد، تَشَفَّع بنا إلى المسيح أَنْ يَمْنَحَ الجميعَ الرَّحْمَةَ العُظمى.

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 تَجلّي ربّنا يَسُوعَ المَسِيح باللحن السابع

لمَّا تَجَلَّيْتَ أيُّها المَسيحُ الإلهُ في الجَبَلِ، أظْهَرْتَ مَجْدَكَ لِلْتلاميذِ حَسْبَما اسْتَطاعوا، فأَشْرِقْ لنا نَحْنُ الخَطَأة نورَكَ الأزَليّ، بِشَفاعاتِ والِدَةِ الإلهِ، يا مانِحَ النّورِ، المَجْدُ لك.

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 باللحن الثاني

يا شَفيعَةَ المَسيحيينَ غَيْرَ الخازِيَة، الوَسيطَةَ لَدَى الخالِقِ غَيْرَ المَرْذُودة، لا تُعْرِضِي عَنْ أصْواتِ طَلِبَاتِنا نحْنُ الخَطَأة، بَلْ تَدارَكينا بالمَعونَةِ بِما أنَّكِ صالِحَة، نحْنُ الصارِخِينَ إلَيْكِ بإيمانٍ: بادِرِي إلَى الشَفاعَةِ وأسْرِعِي في الطِلْبَةِ، يا والِدَةَ الإلَه، المُتَشَفِّعَةَ دائِمًا بِمُكَرِّميكِ.

THE EPISTLE

The righteous shall rejoice in the Lord.

O God, hear my prayer.

The Reading from the Second Epistle of St. Paul to St. Timothy. (2:1-10)

Timothy, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus; and what you have heard from me before many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No soldier on service gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to satisfy the one who enlisted him. An athlete is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules. It is the hard-working farmer who ought to

have the first share of the crops. Think over what I say, for the Lord will grant you understanding in everything. Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, descended from David, as preached in my gospel, the gospel for which I am suffering and wearing fetters like a criminal. But the word of God is not fettered. Therefore, I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain salvation in Christ Jesus with its eternal glory.

الرسالة

يَفْرَحُ الصدّيقُ بالرَّبِّ. إسْتَمِعْ يا اللهُ لِصَوْتي.

فَصْلٌ مِنْ رِسالَةِ القِدّيسِ بولُسَ الرَّسولِ الثّانِيَةِ إلى تيموثاوس. (1:2-10)

يا وَلَدي تيموثاوس، تَقَوَّ في النِّعْمَةِ التي في المَسيحِ يَسوعَ. وما سَمِعْتَهُ مِنّي لَدى شُهودٍ كَثيرينَ، اسْتَودِعْهُ أُناساً أُمَناءَ أَكْفاءَ لأَنْ يُعَلِّمُوا آخَرينَ أيضاً. احْتَمِلِ المَشَقَّاتِ كَجُنْدِيٍّ صالِحٍ لِيَسوعَ المسيحِ. لَيْسَ أَحَدٌ يَتَجَنَّدُ فَيَرْتَبِكُ بِهُمومِ الحياةِ، وذلِكَ لِيُرْضِيَ الذي جَنَّدَهُ. وأَيْضاً، إنْ كانَ أَحَدٌ يُجاهِدُ، فَلا يَنالُ الإكْليلَ ما لَمْ يُجاهِدْ جِهاداً شَرْعِيّاً. ويَجِبُ أنَّ الحارِثَ الذي يَتعَبُ أَنْ يَشْتَرِكَ في الأَثْمارِ أَوَّلاً. إفْهَمْ ما أَقول. فَلْيُؤْتِكَ الرَّبُّ فَهْماً في كُلِّ شَيْءٍ. أُذْكُرْ أنَّ يَسوعَ المَسيحَ، الذي مِنْ نَسْلِ داودَ، قَدْ قامَ مِنْ بَيْنِ الأَمْواتِ على حَسَبِ إنجيلي. الذي أحتَمِلُ فيهِ المَشَقَّاتِ حتَّى القُيودَ كَمُجْرِمٍ، إلاَّ أنَّ كَلِمَةَ اللهِ لا تُقَيَّدُ. فلِذلِكَ أنا أَصْبُرُ على كُلِّ شيءٍ مِنْ أَجْلِ المُخْتارِينَ، لِكَيْ يَحصُلُوا هُمْ أيضاً على الخَلاصِ الذي في المَسيحِ يَسوعَ، مَعَ المَجْدِ الأَبَديّ.

THE GOSPEL

The Reading from the Holy Gospel according to St. Luke. (8:26-39)

At that time, Jesus arrived at the country of the Gadarenes, which is opposite Galilee. And as He stepped out on land, there met Him a man from the city who had demons; for a long time he had worn no clothes, and he lived not in a house but among the tombs. When he saw Jesus, he cried out and fell down before him, and said with a loud voice, “What hast Thou to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beseech Thee, do not torment me.” For Jesus had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. [For many a time it had seized him; he was kept under guard, and bound with chains and fetters, but he broke the bonds and was driven by the demon into the desert.] Jesus then asked him, “What is your name?” And he said, “Legion”; for many

demons had entered him. And they begged Jesus not to command them to depart into the abyss. Now a large herd of swine was feeding there on the hillside; and they begged Jesus to let them enter these. So, He gave them leave. Then the demons came out of the man and entered the swine, and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and was drowned. When the herdsmen saw what had happened, they fled, and told it in the city and in the country. Then people went out to see what had happened, and they came to Jesus, and found the man from whom the demons had gone, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind; and they were afraid. And those who had seen it told them how he who had been possessed with demons was healed. Then all the people of the surrounding country of the Gadarenes asked Jesus to depart from them; for they were seized with great fear; so He got into the boat and returned. The man from whom the demons had gone begged that he might be with Jesus; but Jesus sent him away, saying, "Return to your home, and declare all that God has done for you." And he went away, proclaiming throughout the whole city all that Jesus had done for him.

الإنجيل

فَصْلٌ شَريفٌ مِنْ بِشارَةِ القِدّيسِ لوقا الإنْجيلِيّ البَشيرِ والتلْميذِ الطاهِرِ. (26:8-39)

في ذلكَ الزمانِ، أَتى يَسوعُ إلى كورَةِ الجِرْجِسِيينَ، فَاسْتَقْبَلَهُ رَجُلٌ مِنَ المَدينَةِ بِهِ شَياطينُ مُنْذُ زَمانٍ طَويلٍ، ولَمْ يَكُنْ يَلْبَسُ ثَوْباً ولا يَأْوِي إلى بَيْتٍ، بَلْ إلى القُبورِ. فَلَمَّا رأى يَسوعَ، صاحَ وخَرَّ لَهُ، وقالَ بِصَوْتٍ عَظيمٍ: "ما لي ولَكَ يا يسوعُ ابْنَ اللهِ العَلِيّ؟ أَطْلُبُ إليكَ ألاّ تُعَذِّبَني." فإنَّهُ أَمَرَ الرّوحَ النَجِسَ أنْ يَخْرُجَ مِنَ الإنْسانِ، لأنَّهُ كانَ قَدِ اخْتَطَفَهُ مُنْذُ زَمانٍ طَويلٍ، وكانَ يُرْبَطُ بِسَلاسِلَ، ويُحْبَسُ بِقُيودٍ، فَيَقْطَعُ الرُّبُطَ ويُسَاقُ مِنَ الشَيْطانِ إلى البَراري. فَسَأَلَهُ يَسوعُ قائِلاً: "ما اسْمُكَ؟" فَقالَ لَهُ: "لَجِيُون"، لأنَّ شَياطينَ كَثيرينَ كانوا قَدْ دَخَلُوا فيهِ وطَلَبُوا إلَيْهِ أنْ لا يَأْمُرَهُمْ بالذَهابِ إلى الهاوِيَةِ. وكانَ هُنَاكَ قَطيعُ خَنازيرَ كَثيرَةٍ تَرْعَى في الجبَلِ. فَطَلَبُوا إلَيْهِ أنْ يَأْذَنَ لَهُمْ بالدُخولِ فيها، فَأَذِنَ لَهُمْ. فخَرَجَ الشياطينُ مِنَ الإنْسانِ، ودَخَلُوا في الخَنازيرِ. فَوَثَبَ القَطيعُ عَنِ الجُرْفِ إلى البُحَيْرَةِ فَاخْتَنَقَ. فَلَمّا رَأى الرُعاةُ ما حَدَثَ، هَرَبُوا وأَخْبَرُوا في المَدينَةِ وفي الحُقولِ. فخَرَجُوا لِيَرَوْا ما حَدَثَ وأَتُوا إلى يَسوعَ، فَوَجَدُوا الإنْسانَ الذي خَرَجَتْ مِنْهُ الشَياطينُ جالِساً عِنْدَ قَدَمَي يَسوعَ لابِساً صَحيحَ العَقْلِ، فَخافوا وأَخْبَرَهُمْ الناظِرُونَ أَيْضاً كَيْفَ أُبْرِئَ المَجْنونُ. فَسَأَلَهُ جَميعُ جُمْهورِ كورَةِ الجِرْجِسِيينَ أنْ يَنْصَرِفَ عَنْهُمْ لأنَّهُ اعْتَراهُمْ خَوْفٌ عَظيمٌ. فَدَخَلَ السَّفينَةَ وَرَجَعَ. فَسَأَلَهُ الرَّجُلُ الذي خَرَجَتْ مِنْهُ الشَياطينُ أنْ يَكونَ مَعَهُ. فَصَرَفَهُ

يَسوعُ قائِلاً: "إرجَعْ إلى بَيْتِكَ وحَدِّثْ بِمَا صَنَعَ اللهُ إليْكَ." فَذَهَبَ وهُوَ يُنادِي في المَدينَةِ كُلِّها بِما صَنَعَ إليهِ يَسوع.

TRISAGION PRAYER

3-9 days Memorial service in memory of Imad Eideh, offered by his parents; Hanna and Suad Eideh, his sisters; Sana Eideh, Lena and her husband Nick Khoury, and the Eideh, Khoury and Hanhan 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: Kh. Julianna, Dimitry, Damian and DominicYoussef for the good health of Father Samer on the occasion of his birthday (Oct 27th). For the good health of Fr. Samer's mother Victoria on the occasion of her birthday (Oct 30) and the good health of his father Elias Youssef. For the good health of Dimitry Youssef on the occasion his name day and the Neyman and Youssef families and all parishioners of the Church of the Redeemer. Many Years!

OFFERED BY: Richard and Annette Eid for the good health of their son Dimitri on the occasion of his name day and the good health of their children; Mario, Gianna, Jimmy Joelle and the Eid Family. Many Years!

OFFERED BY: Osama and Hala Elmasu for the good health of their granddaughter Kali on the occasion of her birthday (Oct 27) and the good health of her parents Faris and Celia Elmasu. Many Years!

OFFERED BY: Nawal Jaber on the occasion of her birthday (Oct 25) and the good health of the Jaber family. Many Years!

OFFERED BY: Caitlin Timothy for the good health of her husband Jake on the occasion of his 36th birthday (Oct 29) and the good health of their children, Isabelle, Anna, James, Jack and Daniel. Many Years!

OFFERED BY: Salem and Samia Aweiss, Emsais, Aweiss, Kiskek and Saba families in memory of Samia's sister, Zakieh Mousa Emsais, (Born in Lod 12/12/1945 - 10/21/2025), who fell asleep in the Lord in Orange County, CA. Memory Eternal!

OFFERED BY: Nawal Jaber in memory of her beloved nephew Dr. James Jaber and in memory of her brother Jad and his wife Suad Jaber. Memory Eternal!

COFFEE HOUR

Offered By: Suad and Sana Eideh

(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)

Please keep Father Samer and his family in your prayers. He is currently in Montreal attending to his father, Elias, who is on comfort care.
We extend our sincere gratitude to Fr. Theodore for serving and offering the Divine Liturgy this Sunday in Fr. Samer's absence.
May God grant healing, comfort, and peace to Elias, and strength to all his loved ones.

Note from the Church Office

Our church secretary will be working from home for the next few weeks due to a Bunionectomy surgery. She can be reached by email at ***office@orthodoxredeemer.org*** *or by cell phone at* ***408-594-3000*** *for any requests or questions.*

The ***weekly bulletin*** *will continue to be available on our church website at www.orthodoxredeemer.org , but* ***printed copies will not be available*** *until she returns to the office.*

Please keep her in your prayers for a ***speedy and smooth recovery****, and thank you for your understanding and support.*

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: Wyatt Sutton
Epistle: Christina Alnweisser

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

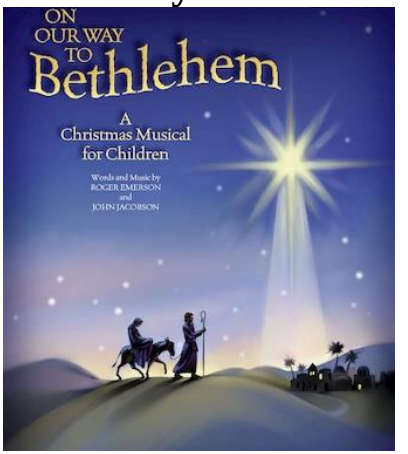
School Schedule:
Sunday school starts 9/14/25 and ends 5/17/26. Sunday school graduation Ceremony will be on 5/17/26. Sunday school classes begin after communion and ends at 12:30pm.

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 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.*

On Spiritual Fatherhood

By Metropolitan Saba (Isper)

The Orthodox tradition does not recognize the phrase "spiritual father." This is a modern term that appeared in Western languages, possibly influenced by Catholic spirituality. The Orthodox tradition uses the term "elder," which corresponds to *geronda* in Greek and *starets* in Russian.

This term embodies the Orthodox understanding of what is now commonly called a "spiritual father." One who has grown old in his life with God and has come to know it through personal, living experience is called an elder (*geronda*). This means that he has spent time as a disciple in the spiritual life and has advanced in it to the point of becoming a great expert, capable—through the testimony of recognized and holy fathers—and guiding others in it.

Likewise, the Orthodox tradition does not recognize an academic method that one follows to obtain the role of a spiritual father. The only path is discipleship under an experienced elder for growth in what we call "the life in Christ." The gift of serving as an elder comes from God, not from studying theology academically or only holding the priestly office.

For this reason, liturgical tradition includes the service of "appointing a priest as a spiritual father." In this service, the bishop grants a priest the blessing to administer the sacrament of confession. A newly ordained priest performs all priestly functions except hearing confessions until receiving this blessing.

This tradition arises from the Church's long experience, which affirms that not every priest is fit to minister this sacrament of healing. Some priests may never receive permission to hear confessions due to lack of experience or sufficient maturity. Others may be prohibited from continuing in this ministry if they commit serious errors that are destructive to those who come to confess.

To understand the difference between a confessor and an elder, we must return to the Orthodox concept of an elder. In his book *The Inner Kingdom*, Metropolitan Kallistos Ware explains the Orthodox rule is that an elder is discovered—he is revealed by the Holy Spirit, not appointed nor self-appointed. The faithful recognize his gift and spiritual authority through their experience of him, accepting his advice and witnessing its good fruit. They begin to flock to him, opening their hearts to him. Many times, the elder refuses those who seek his counsel and sends them to others. But under their persistence and out of love, he accepts them and thus discovers his role as a spiritual father (see p. 155).

A confessor, on the other hand, holds a significant position in the Church as institution. He is a canonically ordained priest whom his bishop deems qualified to hear confessions, offering guidance from the Holy Gospel and the teachings of the Church Fathers to help believers walk their Christian path in a way that pleases the Lord.

If the elder is a priest, he may fulfill both roles, serving as a confessor while providing spiritual fatherhood. The faithful, as guardians of true faith, discern who possesses the gift of spiritual fatherhood based on the fruits of his guidance over time.

An elder does not only offer guidance and encouragement with words but also strengthens and comforts the faithful through his living example—and sometimes through his silence. In Orthodox monastic life, there is a well-known saying: "It is enough for me to look at your face, Father." An elder carries his spiritual children in prayer, interceding for them before God. Many a time, the spiritual children will leave confession without an immediate solution, and later, the answer to their struggles comes from God by the intercessions of the elder's prayers that provide healing and guidance. The elder does not offer advice from his own intelligence, reasoning, or study, but speaks through the Holy Spirit, which dwells in him. Therefore, an elder's response may sometimes shock those who seek his guidance, as it may be completely different from what they expect.

St. Basil the Great describes the spiritual father as "the physician of souls who heals with great tenderness according to the teachings of Christ." He also calls him the

"healer of the passions" (Letter 45:5-6). A true elder is a spiritual doctor who heals the soul from its diseases and struggles, liberating the person from the bondage of sinful passions. He focuses on the inner transformation of a person rather than external behaviors. The elder, through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, creates a new person in Christ, not the other way around.

One of the greatest qualities of an elder is the gift of discernment. Spiritual guidance requires deep understanding of the human soul, its struggles, and the ways in which the devil tempts people. A confessor who lacks this discernment may offer wrong spiritual advice which can harm rather than heal. Metropolitan Athanasios of Limassol, a disciple of St. Paisios the Athonite, states: "Bad spiritual advice is like giving the wrong medicine to a sick person." He warns that if an elder lacks discernment, he can misguide his spiritual children away from salvation. In one of his talks to nuns, he advised: "You must learn how God works in the hearts of people so that you do not give advice that could harm them" (*Gifts of the Desert*, Chapter 8).

A true elder is not appointed by certificates or titles but is recognized by his fruits. St. John Climacus advises great caution when choosing a spiritual guide:

> "When we, out of humility and a desire for salvation, decide to submit and entrust ourselves to another person in the Lord, let us first examine and scrutinize, and even test our guide, so to speak, especially if we are somewhat malicious or arrogant, so that we do not encounter a sailor instead of a pilot, a sick person instead of a physician, a person enslaved to passions instead of a person freed from them, a sea instead of a port, and thus we encounter the imminent drowning of our souls" (*The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, Step 4:6).

Similarly, St. Paisios the Athonite offers this guidance in his letters:

> "Strive as much as you can for your spiritual father to be a spiritual person, adorned with virtues in practice, rather than just a teacher. He must be a true captain of souls, not just someone who applies rules to others that he learned through study without having lived them himself. He should be by nature of great love, seasoned with the salt of discernment, so that he shares the sufferings of his children and does not send them directly to paradise in the manner of Diocletian, that is, to die as martyrs. The spiritual father should be very strict only with himself and have great love for others, a love that is not false, but with much discernment, because, if he loses this discernment he will harm his children with his love, similar to the love of Eli the priest (1 Kings 1:2), and thus the wrath of God will descend upon him and his children."

في الأبوّة الروحيّة

بقلم المتروبوليت سابا (اسبر)

لا يعرف التقليد الأرثوذكس تعبير الأب الروحي. هذا تعبير حديث ورد في اللغات الغربية، وقد يكون بتأثير الفكر الروحاني الكاثوليكي. يتداول التقليد الأرثوذكسي لفظة "الشيخ،" ويقابلها في اليونانية "يروندا" وفي الروسية "ستارتس."

تلك اللفظة تحمل المفهوم الأرثوذكسي لما يطلق عليه اليوم "الأب الروحي". فمن شاخ في الحياة مع الله حتّى عرفها بالاختبار الحيّ الشخصيّ يُدعى شيخاً (يروندا). هذا يعني أنه قضى زمناً في التتلمذ على الحياة الروحية والارتقاء فيها، حتّى غدا خبيراً كبيراً بها، وقادراً بشهادة آباء مشهود لهم بالقداسة، على تدريب الآخرين عليها.

كذلك لا يعرف التقليد الأرثوذكسي منهجاً أكاديمياً يتابعه الإنسان كي يحصل على وظيفة الأب الروحي. المنهج الوحيد هو التلمذة على يدي شيخ مختَبِر من أجل النمو في الحياة التي نسميها "الحياة في المسيح". تأتي موهبة ممارسة وظيفة "الشيخ" من الله، لا من اتّباع دراسة اللاهوت أكاديمياً أو ممارسة الوظيفة الكهنوتية فحسب.

لذلك يعرف التقليد الليتورجي خدمة "تصيير الكاهن أباً روحياً." وهي خدمة يعطي الأسقف فيها الكاهن الإذن بممارسة خدمة سر الاعتراف. إذ إنّ الكاهن المرسوم حديثاً يمارس كلّ وظائف الكهنوت إلّا خدمة سرّ الاعتراف.

ينبع هذا التقليد من خبرة الكنيسة الطويلة القائلة بأنْ ليس كلّ كاهن أهلاً لخدمة هذا السرّ الشفائي. وقد لا يُعطى بعض الكهنة الإذن بممارسته على الإطلاق لعدم الخبرة أو النضج الكافي، وقد يوقَف بعضهم عن ممارسة هذه الخدمة لأخطاء مدّمرة ارتكبوها بحقّ بعض المعترفين.

لنفهم الفرق بين أب الاعتراف والشيخ علينا أن نعود قليلاً إلى المفهوم الأرثوذكسي للشيخ. يقول الأسقف كاليستوس وير في كتابه الملكوت الداخلي: القاعدة الأرثوذكسية أنّ الشيخ يُكتشَف، يكشفه الروح القدس، ولا يُنصَّب أو يُنصِّب نفسه، شيخاً. يكتشف المؤمنون موهبته وقدرته الروحية عبر احتكاكهم به وتقبّل نصائحه ويرون نتائجها الحسنة، فيبدأون بالتوافد إليه وبثّه ما في دواخلهم. وكثيراً ما يرّد الشيخ من يطلبون مشورته

ويرسلهم إلى آخرين. وتحت إصرارهم ومثابرتهم يقبل بدافع المحبة أن يساعدهم فيكتشف دوره كأب أو شيخ روحي (ص ١٥٥).

أمّا أب الاعتراف فله في الكنيسة المؤسسة مكانة مهمة. إنّه كاهن قانوني، عنده، بحسب تقدير أسقفه، الأهلية لأن يسمع اعترافات المؤمنين، ويرشدهم بكلام من الإنجيل المقدّس وخبرات الآباء ما يساعدهم على إتمام سيرتهم مسيحيّاً بما يُرضي الربّ.

وإذا ما كان الشيخ كاهناً مارس الدورين: الاعتراف والأبوّة الروحية. فشعب الله حافظ الإيمان المستقيم يكتشف موهبة الأبوّة أو الأمومة الروحية في هذا أو ذاك. ويظهر صدق هذا الاعتراف في صلاح ثمار إرشاد الشيخ عبر الزمن.

وهو إذ يرشد الناس ويقّويهم ويعّزيهم، لا يرشدهم فقط بالنصائح والكلام، بل بمثاله الحيّ وشخصه أيضاً، وأحياناً بصمته. "يكفيني أن أتطلّع في وجهك يا أبت" قول مأثور في الحياة الرهبانية. إنّه يحملهم في صلاته ويبذل نفسه عنهم أمام الله. وكثيراً ما يعيد الابن إلى بيته دونما حلّ، ليأتيه الحلّ من الله بواسطة صلاة الشيخ. هو لا يرشد من عندياته، ولا من ذكائه، ولا من علمه، بل من الروح القدس الذي سكن فيه ويتكلّم من خلاله. لذلك قد يصدم جوابه أحياناً إذ يأتي بخلاف تامّ مع ما يتوقعه الابن.

يقول القدّيس باسيليوس الكبير إنّ الأب الروحي هو "طبيب النفوس الذي يعالج بتحنّن كبير بحسب علم تعاليم المسيح." ويسّميه "شافي الأهواء" (الرسالة ٤٥: ٥-٦). إنّه طبيب روحيّ يداوي النفوس لكي يعتقها من أمراضها الداخلية ويحرّرها من أسر الأهواء. نطاق عمله الإنسان الداخلي. يخلق الشيخ إنساناً جديداً بالمسيح، يقوده الروح القدس بمساعدة الشيخ وليس العكس.

لذلك، تُعَدّ موهبة "التمييز" أهمّ صفات الشيخ الروحي، لأنّ ممارسة الإرشاد الروحي تتطلّب معرفة مستوى طالبي الإرشاد الروحي ودهاليز النفس الإنسانية وتجارب الشرّير، وإلّا فإنه يقدّم لهم نصائح خاطئة. يعتبر المطران أثناسيوس (قبرص)، تلميذ القدّيس بايسيوس الأثوسي "النصيحة الخطأ، هي تلك التي لا تساعد الإنسان على التقدّم روحياً، إنّها مثل دواء خاطئ تعطيه لأحد المرضى." هذا إذا لم تؤذه وتسّبّب له هلاكاً بدل الخلاص. وقد حثّ الراهبات اللواتي يرشدهن في أحد أحاديثه على "وجوب تعلّم الطرق

التي يعمل الله بحسبها في قلوب البشر كي يتجّنبن أيّ مشورة يُحتمل أن تؤذي إنساناً ما" (كتاب عطايا البرية ، الفصل الثامن).

لأنّ الشيخ الروحي لا يُعَيَّن بشهادات علمية، بل اختبارية، ويثبت أبوته من خلال ثمارها، ينصح القدّيس يوحنّا السلّمي بخصوص اختيار الأب الروحي هكذا:

> "متى أزمعنا بدافع الاتّضاع وطلباً للخلاص أن نُخضِع ذواتنا لشخص آخر ونأتمنه في الربّ، فلنعمد أولاً إلى الفحص والتدقيق، بل إلى اختبار مرشدنا إذا جاز القول، لاسيّما إذا كنّا على شيء من الخبث أو التكبر، وذلك لئلا نصادف نوتياً بدلاً من ربّان، ومريضاً بدلاً من طبيب، وانساناً مُستعبَداً للأهواء بدلاً من إنسان متحرّر منها، ولجّة بدلاً من ميناء، فنلاقي غرقاً وشيكاً لنفوسنا" (المقالة ٤: ٦).

أمّا القديس بايسيوس الآثوسي فينصح، في رسائله، قائلاً:

> "اسعَ بقدر استطاعتك: أن يكون أبوك الروحي إنساناً روحياً، مزيناً بالفضائل عملياً، على أن يكون معلّماً فقط. حسن أن يكون قبطاناً "نوتياً"، وذلك لكي لا يطبّق على أكتاف غريبة كل قوانين الهيمنة التي تعلّمها بالدراسة. أن يكون بطبيعته ذا محبّة كبيرة مملّحة بملح التمييز، ليشارك آلام أبنائه ولا يرسلهم إلى الفردوس مباشرة على طريقة ديوكليتيانوس [أي بالموت شهداء]. إنّ الأب الروحي يجب أن يكون شديد القسوة فقط على نفسه وذا محبّة كبرى للآخرين، محبّة غير كاذبة، مع تمييز كثير، لأنّه، إنْ فقد التمييز سوف يسيء بمحبّته إلى أولاده، على غرار محبّة عالي الكاهن (ملوك١: ٢)، وبالتالي يحلّ غضب الله عليه وعلى أبنائه."

THE SYNAXARION

On October 26 in the Holy Orthodox Church, we commemorate the holy, glorious, and right-victorious Great-Martyr Demetrios, the Wonderworker and Myrrh-Streaming.

Verses

Spears have pierced Demetrios, O Christ my Savior,
Who emulated Thy pierced side in Thy Passion.
On the twenty-sixth spears did away Demetrios.

His father was the military commander of Salonica, and, when he died, the Emperor Maximian made Demetrios commander in his place. In doing this, the Emperor, an opponent of Christ, particularly recommended him to persecute and exterminate the Christians in Salonica. Demetrios not only disobeyed the Emperor, but he openly confessed and preached Christ the Lord in the city. Demetrios even proclaimed openly before the Emperor that he was a Christian, and, furthermore, denounced the Emperor's idolatry. The enraged Emperor cast him into prison. Knowing what awaited him, Demetrios gave his goods to his faithful servant, Lupus, to give away to the poor, and went off to prison, glad that suffering for Christ was to be his lot. After several days, the Emperor sent soldiers to the prison to kill Demetrios. They came upon the saint of God at prayer, and ran him through with their spears. Christians secretly took his body and gave it burial, and there flowed from it myrrh by which many of the sick were healed. Demetrios entered the heavenly mansions in 306.

On this day, we remember the great and terrible earthquake in Constantinople in 740. This was a terrifying and long-lasting disaster in the time of Leo the Isaurian, the first of the iconoclast emperors. The people realized that this was God's punishment for their sins, and entreated the most holy Mother of God and St. Demetrios with great penitence, until God had mercy and ended the earthquake.

On this day, we also commemorate the Venerable-martyr Joasaph of Dionysiou monastery on Athos. By the intercessions of Thy Saints, O Christ God, have mercy upon us. Amen.

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>.

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Vespers & Dinner to Support IOCC's Relief Efforts in Gaza

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 1, 2025

Vespers 4:00 pm | Dinner 5:00 pm | Brief IOCC Presentation 5:30 pm
Q&A with IOCC Gift Officer 7:00 pm

St. Basil the Great Greek Orthodox Church

6430 Bose Lane | San Jose, CA 95120

St. Basil Greek Orthodox Church cordially invites you to Vespers and a Palestinian-inspired dinner to celebrate Pan-Orthodox fellowship and learn about IOCC's relief work in the Holy Land.

IOCC Gift Officer, Luke O'Dell,
will be available for Q&A during the event.

All donations will be dedicated to IOCC's relief efforts in Gaza.

Please RSVP by Wednesday, Oct. 29.

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