



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**



**JUNE 21, 2026**

**THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST  
& THIRD SUNDAY OF MATTHEW**

MARTYR JULIAN OF TARSUS; MARTYR APHRODISIUS OF CILICIA; NEW-  
MARTYR NIKITA OF NISYROS NEAR RHODES

الأحد الثالث بعد العنصرة وألأحد الثالث من متى

## **RESURRECTION APOLYTIKION IN TONE TWO**

When Thou didst submit Thyself unto death, O Thou deathless and immortal One, then Thou didst destroy hell 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 أَمَتَّ الْجَحِيمَ بِبِرِّقِ لَاهُوتِكَ. وَعِنْدَمَا أَقَمْتَ الْأَمْوَاتَ مِنْ تَحْتِ الثَّرَى، صَرَخَ نَحْوَكُ جَمِيعُ الْقُوَّاتِ السَّمَاوِيِّينَ: أَيُّهَا الْمَسِيحُ الْإِلَهَ، مُعْطِي الْحَيَاةِ الْمَجْدُ لَكَ.

## **TROPARION OF TRANSFIGURATION – TONE SEVEN**

When Thou was transfigured on the mountain top, O Christ our God. Thou didst reveal thy glory to thy disciples as they could bear it. Enlighten us poor sinners as well with thine everlasting light through the intercessions of the Theotokos, O Thou Giver of light, glory to Thee.

### **طروبارية التجلي على اللحن السابع**

لَمَا تَجَلَّيْتَ أَيُّهَا الْمَسِيحُ الْإِلَهَ فِي الْجَبَلِ، أَظْهَرْتَ مَجْدَكَ لِلتَّلَامِيذِ بِحَسَبِ مَا اسْتَطَاعُوا. فَأَشْرَقَ لَنَا نَحْنُ الْخَطَاةُ نَوْرَكَ الْأَزَلِيِّ، بِشَفَاعَةِ وَالِدَةِ الْإِلَهَ، 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 باللحن الثاني**

يَا شَفِيعَةَ الْمَسِيحِيِّينَ غَيْرِ الْخَازِيَةِ، الْوَسِيطَةَ لَدَى الْخَالِقِ غَيْرِ الْمَرْدُودَةِ، لَا تُعْرِضِي عَنِّ أَصْوَاتِ طَلِبَاتِنَا نَحْنُ الْخَطَاةَ، بَلْ تَدَارِكِينَا بِالْمَعُونَةِ بِمَا أَنَّكَ صَالِحَةٌ، نَحْنُ الصَّارِخِينَ إِلَيْكَ بِإِيمَانٍ: بَادِرِي إِلَى الشَّفَاعَةِ وَأُسْرِعِي فِي الطَّلَبَةِ، يَا وَالِدَةَ الْإِلَهَ، الْمُتَشَفِّعَةَ دَائِمًا بِمُكْرَمِيكَ.

## THE EPISTLE

*The Lord is my strength and my song.*

*With chastisement hath the Lord chastened me.*

### **The Reading from the Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans. (5:1-10)**

Brethren, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him also we have obtained our access by faith to this grace in which we stand, and we boast in hope of the glory of God. And not only so, but we also boast in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces patience; and patience produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put to shame, because the love of God has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us. For while we were still weak, in due season Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die, though perhaps for a good man one would even dare to die. But God shows his own love toward us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, through him shall we be saved from the wrath. For if we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, while we were enemies, much more, being reconciled, we will be saved by his life.

### الرسالة

قُوتِي وَتَسْبِيحَتِي الرَّبِّ. أَدَباً أَدَّبَنِي الرَّبُّ.

فَصَلِّ مِنْ رِسَالَةِ الْقَدِيسِ بُولُسِ الرَّسُولِ إِلَى أَهْلِ رومية. (10-1:5)

يا إخوة، إذ قد بررنا بالإيمان، فلنا سلام مع الله بررتنا يسوع المسيح. الذي به حصل أيضاً لنا الدخول بالإيمان إلى هذه التعممة التي نحن فيها مقيمون ومفتخرون في رجاء مجد الله. وليس هذا فقط، بل أيضاً نفتخر بالشدائد، عالمين أن الشدة تُنشئ الصبر. والصبر يُنشئ الامتحان والامتحان الرجاء والرجاء لا يخزي. لأن محبة الله قد أفيضت في قلوبنا بالروح القدس الذي أعطي لنا. لأن المسيح، إذ كنا بعد ضعفاء، مات في الأوان عن المنافقين. ولا يكاد أحد يموت عن بار، فلعل أحداً يقدم على أن يموت عن صالح. أما الله فيدل على محبته لنا بأنه، إذ كنا خطاة بعد، مات المسيح عنا. فبالأحرى

كَثِيرًا، إِذْ قَدْ بُرِّرْنَا بِدَمِهِ، نَخْلُصُ بِهِ مِنَ الْعَصَبِ. لِأَنَّا إِذَا كُنَّا قَدْ صَوْلِحْنَا مَعَ اللَّهِ بِمَوْتِ ابْنِهِ وَنَحْنُ  
أَعْدَاءُ، فَبِالْأُخْرَى كَثِيرًا نَخْلُصُ بِحَيَاتِهِ وَنَحْنُ مُصَالِحُونَ.

## **THE GOSPEL**

### **The Reading from the Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew. (6:22-33)**

The Lord said, “The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is sound, your whole body will be full of light; but if your eye is evil, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness! No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon. Therefore, I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you shall eat or what you shall drink; nor about your body, what you shall put on. Is not the soul more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of heaven: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And which of you by being anxious can add one cubit to his stature? And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin; yet I tell you, even Solomon himself in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O men of little faith? Therefore, do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the Gentiles seek all these things; and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well.”

## الإنجيل

فَصَلِّ شَرِيفٌ مِنْ بَشَارَةِ الْقَدِيسِ مَتَّى الْإِنْجِيلِيّ الْبَشِيرِ وَالتَّمْلِيذِ الطَّاهِرِ. (6:22-33)

قَالَ الرَّبُّ: سِرَاجُ الْجَسَدِ الْعَيْنُ. فَإِنْ كَانَتْ عَيْنُكَ بَسِيطَةً، فَجَسَدُكَ كُلُّهُ يَكُونُ نَيِّرًا. وَإِنْ كَانَتْ عَيْنُكَ شَرِيرَةً، فَجَسَدُكَ كُلُّهُ يَكُونُ مُظْلِمًا. وَإِذَا كَانَ النُّورُ الَّذِي فِيكَ ظَلَامًا، فَالظُّلَامُ كَمْ يَكُونُ؟ لَا يَسْتَطِيعُ أَحَدٌ أَنْ يَعْبُدَ رَبِّينَ، لِأَنَّهُ إِمَّا أَنْ يُبْغِضَ الْوَاحِدَ وَيُحِبَّ الْآخَرَ، أَوْ يِلَازِمَ الْوَاحِدَ وَيَرُدُّ الْآخَرَ. لَا تَقْدِرُونَ أَنْ تَعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَالْمَالَ. فَلِهَذَا أَقُولُ لَكُمْ، لَا تَهْتَمُّوا لِأَنْفُسِكُمْ بِمَا تَأْكُلُونَ وَبِمَا تَشْرَبُونَ، وَلَا لِأَجْسَادِكُمْ بِمَا تَلْبَسُونَ. أَلَيْسَتْ النَّفْسُ أَفْضَلَ مِنَ الطَّعَامِ، وَالْجَسَدُ أَفْضَلَ مِنَ اللَّبَاسِ؟ انظُرُوا إِلَى طُيُورِ السَّمَاءِ، فَإِنَّهَا لَا تَزْرَعُ وَلَا تَحْصُدُ وَلَا تَحْزُنُ فِي الْأَهْرَاءِ، وَأَبْوَكُمُ السَّمَاوِيُّ يَقُوتُهَا. أَفَلَسْتُمْ أَنْتُمْ أَفْضَلَ مِنْهَا؟ وَمَنْ مِنْكُمْ إِذَا هُنَّ، يَقْدِرُ أَنْ يَزِيدَ عَلَى قَامَتِهِ زِرَاعًا وَاحِدَةً؟ وَلِمَاذَا تَهْتَمُّونَ بِاللَّبَاسِ؟ اعْتَبِرُوا زَنَايِقَ الْحَقْلِ كَيْفَ تَنْمُو. إِنَّهَا لَا تَتْعَبُ وَلَا تَعْزَلُ. وَأَنَا أَقُولُ لَكُمْ إِنَّ سُلَيْمَانَ نَفْسَهُ، فِي كُلِّ مَجْدِهِ، لَمْ يَلْبَسْ كَوَاحِدَةً مِنْهَا. فَإِذَا كَانَ عَشْبُ الْحَقْلِ، الَّذِي يُوجَدُ الْيَوْمَ وَفِي عَدِّ يَطْرُحُ فِي التَّنَوُّرِ، يُلْبَسُهُ اللَّهُ هَكَذَا، أَفَلَا يُلْبَسُكُمْ بِالْآخَرَى أَنْتُمْ يَا قَلِيلِي الْإِيمَانِ؟ فَلَا تَهْتَمُّوا قَائِلِينَ "مَاذَا نَأْكُلُ؟" أَوْ "مَاذَا نَشْرَبُ؟" أَوْ "مَاذَا نَلْبَسُ؟" فَإِنَّ هَذَا كُلَّهُ تَطْلُبُهُ الْأَمَمُ. لِأَنَّ أَبَاكُمْ السَّمَاوِيَّ يَعْلَمُ أَنَّكُمْ تَحْتَاجُونَ إِلَى هَذَا كُلِّهِ. فَاطْلُبُوا أَوْلًا مَلَكُوتَ اللَّهِ وَبِرَّهُ، وَهَذَا كُلُّهُ يُزَادُ لَكُمْ.



Kh. Carla Zell

### St. James Orthodox Church of Modesto, California

With hope in the resurrection on the last day, Kh. Carla Zell reposed in our Lord Jesus Christ on Thursday, May 14, 2026. For years, she and her husband, Archpriest Thomas Zell, worked in Orthodox Christian publishing and built up [St. James Church of Modesto, Calif.](#). She reposed just two days shy of her 71st birthday, peacefully, with love surrounding her.

Kh. Carla was born in Hawaii on May 16, 1955. A military kid, she traveled here and there, landing in Santa Cruz, Calif. where Fr. George Washburn led her to Christ. She worked at Big Basin State Park building bridges and making trails.

In 1978, she started attending St. Athanasius Academy in Isla Vista, Calif. where she met her husband, Fr. Thomas. They married in 1980, and headed back up north to Boulder Creek, where they raised her nephew, Till.

Kh. Carla immediately started working for Conciliar Press, the predecessor to Ancient Faith Ministries. Fr. Thomas joined her in 1985, and through thick and thin, they served side by side.

In 2001, Fr. Thomas was ordained to the holy priesthood, and, in 2003, he was asked to help a mission in Modesto which became St. James Church. In 2006, he retired from Conciliar Press when he became the church's pastor.

After 40 years of service to Conciliar Press, Kh. Carla retired, only to work even more behind the scenes at St. James Church, tirelessly and diligently supporting the parish and Fr. Thomas both administratively and liturgically.

She served as president, secretary and treasurer of the parish's Antiochian Women chapter, and faithfully attended women's meetings at Fall Gatherings, Camp St. Nicholas, Parish Life Conferences and Archdiocese Conventions, always engaging and encouraging other women with her friendship. She was also a dame of The Order of St. Ignatius of Antioch.



### **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 all parishioners for the good health of all the Fathers, Grandfathers, Great Grandfathers and God Fathers on the occasion of Father's Day. Many Years!

**OFFERED BY:** Fr. Samer, the Clergy and all parishioners for the good health of all the graduates and their families. Mona Batmai, Dominic Youssef, Esai Madriz, Taleen Ammari, Angelena Hanani, Christina Labban, Lukas Srouji, Ashley Srouji, Maya Otell and Angelina Labban. Many Years!

**OFFERED BY:** Fr. Samer, Fr. Theodore and all parishioners of the Church of the Redeemer for the good health of Fr. Thomas Zell and his family, and the good health of all the parishioners of Saint James in Modesto. Many Years!

**OFFERED BY:** Bogdan and Kate Tanasa on the occasion of their wedding anniversary and the good health of their daughter, Sofia. We wish them God's blessings and every happiness as they relocate to Phoenix, Arizona, and begin this new chapter in their lives. Many Years!

**OFFERED BY:** Gus and Cristina Anagnos for the good health of their son Chris on the occasion of his birthday (June 18). For the good health of their family and the good health of Gus on the occasion of Father's Day. Many Years!

**OFFERED BY:** Rania Haddad on the occasion of her birthday (June 18) and the good health of her husband Hanna on the occasion of Father's Day and for the good health of the Haddad family. Many Years!

**OFFERED BY:** Dimitry, Dominic and Damian Youssef for the good health of their parents; Fr. Samer and Kh. Julianna on the occasion of their wedding anniversary (June 20) and the good health of the Youssef and Neyman Families. Many Years!

**OFFERED BY:** Basma, Mona and Alfred Batmani for the good health of beloved husband Nabil, on the occasion of Father's Day. Many Years!

**OFFERED BY:** Wardeh Asfour for the good health of her husband Salim on the occasion of Father's Day, and the good health of their daughter Rosanna, her husband Johnny Scorsur and their children; Sadie, Cody and Aubree. For the good health of Osama Elmasu and his family. Many Years!

**OFFERED BY:** Hala Elmasu for the good health of her husband Osama and the good health of Yaqoub, Faris, Michael, Matthew and Tarik on the occasion of Father's Day. Many Years!

**OFFERED BY:** Fr. Samer, Fr. Theodore and all parishioners of the Church of the Redeemer, in memory of Kh. Carla Zell, who fell asleep in the Lord on May 14, 206. Memory Eternal!

**OFFERED BY:** Fr. Samer, Kh. Julianna Youssef and their sons in memory of their beloved, Fr. Nicholas Neyman and Elias Youssef on the occasion of Father's Day. Memory Eternal!

**OFFERED BY:** Ibtisam Kreitem and her children in memory of their beloved Issam Kreitem and Michael Halteh on the occasion of Father's Day. Memory Eternal!

**OFFERED BY:** Osama and Hala Elmasu in memory of Hanna Elamasu and Emil Anastas on the occasion of Father's Day. Memory Eternal!



### **COFFEE HOUR**

Offered By: Wardeh Asfour

*(To host the Coffee Hour, please contact Wardeh Asfour @408-718-3339  
[office@orthodoxredeemer.org](mailto: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)*

*We would like to warmly welcome Fr. Thomas Zell, who is attending our church today. We offer our condolences to him and pray that God grants him many years of good health and faithful ministry. We also extend our best wishes and prayers to all the parishioners of St. James Orthodox Church in Modesto, asking the Lord to bless them with good health, peace, and abundant blessings.*

## **Reserve the Date!**

- **Sunday, August 9** – We will celebrate the **Feast of the Transfiguration of Our Lord Jesus Christ**, the feast day of our church. A festive luncheon will be served following the Divine Liturgy.
- We will also joyfully welcome the newly ordained **Fr. John Dibs**, who will be ordained to the holy priesthood at The Parish Life Conference on July 4th.
- More information and details will be provided soon.

We invite everyone to participate in these joyous celebrations.

## **Honoring The Graduates of 2026** **Special Prayers Honoring the Graduates** **will be held on Sunday June 21<sup>st</sup>.**

We offer thanks to God for giving our parish such educated members who graduated from different levels of schooling. The Church is so proud of you and your children. We pray that Christ our God gives them a bright future with faithfulness to His teachings. Please send us your children's name and which school and degree they are graduating this year to put in the bulletin and honor them on a special Sunday.

- **Mona Batmani:** Graduated with honors from Chicago-Kent College of Law with a Juris Doctor degree.
- **Dominic Youssef:** Graduating with three Associate Degrees from West Valley College with honors, and transferring to San Jose State University studying Aviation and minor in Business.
- **Esai Madriz:** Graduated from Santa Clara Mission College Fire Academy with a Certificate of Firefighter 1.
- **Taleen Ammari:** Graduating from Presentation High School and will be attending Santa Clara University.
- **Angelena Hanani:** Graduating from Archbishop Mitty High School and will be attending Santa Clara University.

- **Christina Labban:** Graduating from Saratoga High School and will be attending NYU.
- **Lukas Anthony Srouji:** Graduating from Mount Carmel High School in San Diego and will be attending San Jose State University.
- **Ashley Jean Srouji:** Graduating from Foothill High School in Pleasanton and will be attending CalPoly.
- **Maya Otell:** Graduating 8<sup>th</sup> grade from Bret Harte Middle School and will be attending Leland High School.
- **Angelina Labban:** Graduating from Redwood Middle School and will be going to Saratoga High School.

### **PARISH COUNCIL 2026**

The Parish Council members' of 2026. Chair President; Bassam Khoury, Vice-Chair; Linda Salah, Treasurer; Henry Veizades, Secretary; Rima Gannage, Maher Fasheh, Sana Eideh, Johnny Khamis, Jake Timothy, Edmund Khinno and Sal Hanhan. Roula Haddad will represent the Antiochian Women Committee and Salem Aweiss will represent the Men Fellowship Committee.

### **ANTIOCHIAN WOMEN 2025**

The Antiochian Women Committee Leaders of 2026. Roula Haddad (Chairwoman), Dania Amireh (Vice- Chairwoman), Ibtisam Kreitem (Secretary/ Communication), Wardeh Asfour (Kitchen/Coffee Hour), Rima Gannage (Bookkeeping), Diana Khoury (Myrrh Barrier), 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 Dimitry Youssef (President of the Young Adults in the Diocese of Los Angeles and the West) @ (408)364-5670, or 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; Riad Akery, Secretary; Mila Haddad, Treasurer; Gabreilla Ajlouni, Social Media Coordinator; Adriana Ajlouni.

## **UPCOMING EVNTS AT THE CHURCH**

### **Please save the date**

**July 1-5:** 2026 Parish Life Conference, PLC in San Diego

**July 23-27:** Camp Three Holy Youths, July 23rd – July 27th @Daybreak Camp, Ben Lomond. <https://campthy.com/camper-registration/>

**August 6:** Transfiguration Liturgy Service @ 10:30AM

**August 9:** Feast of the Transfiguration of Our Lord Jesus Christ

**Food Festival Sept 12 & 13:** Our Annual Food Festival

## **CAMP THREE HOLY YOUTHS**

**July 23rd – 27th**

On Thursday, July 23rd, campers will check in at St. Nicholas church before we head to the San Francisco Zoo. Admission to the zoo will be completely free for all children registered for Camp THY. After our zoo visit, we will travel together to our camp location in Felton to begin an amazing week of camp activities.

As we wrap up camp on Monday, July 27th, we will make a special stop at our sister parish, Church of the Redeemer in Los Altos. They will be graciously hosting us for a celebration before we continue our journey back to San Francisco. **[Click here to register today!](#)**

### **Summer Spiritual Reading Program**

*A Sunday School - Bookstore Partnership*

Calling all students! Our parish is hosting a spiritual reading challenge that will run June - July. Students are invited to select a story from the lives of the saints and complete a small reflection (artwork, essay, poster or other). Reflections will be displayed at our Summer Family Night (date to be announced) and all participants will receive a \$10 gift card to our bookstore; teens will receive \$15. A great opportunity to read as a family!

## **The Faithful and Secularism, Part Two**

*By His Eminence Metropolitan Saba (Isper)*

What are we to expect when the spirit of piety and the sanctifying life grow weak; when the spirit of prayer is neglected and reduced to the mere performance of rituals; when the life of prayer is replaced by work and organizations; when the spiritual dimension is neglected; when the faithful lose the sense of sin and forget repentance; and consequently, when the eschatological dimension of the Christian faith disappears—or is made to disappear?

Then the Church becomes an institution of this age and loses the very essence of her existence. At best, she is transformed into a humanitarian institution, perhaps even one of high caliber, but she loses her mission of sanctifying man, raising him up to the Kingdom of God, and thus bringing him to salvation.

One of the dangers of secularism is that it changes the mind without coercion. It confines the mind's thinking to what is sensible and tangible, causing the household of God—the children of the Church—to rush into following the ways and methods of the people of this age, even in ecclesial ministries. Thus, you see them pursuing dazzling achievements at the expense of the human person. They give priority, in their planning, to establishing institutions and ensuring their survival, with the aim of serving man; yet they neglect serving the very man they intend to serve until construction of the institution is completed. Then they discover that the institution itself requires constant development and support, exhausting the efforts of those responsible for it. And so the poor, the wounded, the suffering, the despairing, and the grieving remain forgotten. Where, then, is living and active love embodied?

They may also seek to modernize pastoral and spiritual ministry by following the methods of this age: planning, calculations, and endless meetings. God is forgotten, and souls no longer hope for His blessing upon the ministry they seek to offer. At that point, the work becomes entirely a human endeavor, while those carrying it out remain convinced that they are serving God. The spiritual dimension may disappear without anyone noticing, and the Church becomes a “sector” that may be called “spiritual,” but only alongside a number of other sectors that human beings need. What remains of her essence if she becomes

like the rest, and is no longer the one who directs, gives meaning to, and grants life? Indeed, when she loses the essence of her existence and imitates the other sectors, she appears either feeble or artificial, and she loses her precedence before other worldly institutions and organizations, which may surpass her in reaching the intended goal because they are more specialized and professional.

In his book *For the Life of the World*, Father Alexander Schmemmann says: “The Church is in the world but not of the world. Only because she is not of the world can she reveal the ‘world to come,’ that which transcends the world.” What truly remains of her if she loses this role? Activism prevails and prepares the way for fundamentalism to arise as a reaction to the loss of purpose.

When activism overwhelms the Church—that is, when pastoral activities or practical witness dominate while the spirit of prayer and repentance recedes—the balance is disturbed, and the scales tip toward resembling the fallen world. Activities then become the goal in themselves. Conversely, when the Church removes active pastoral care from her ministry, isolates herself from this world in her thought and service, cuts herself off from it, and contents herself with preserving the right faith apart from Christian love in imitation of Christ—when she does not strive unceasingly to embrace the world and seek its salvation—then she falls into fundamentalism. In truth, both secularism and fundamentalism are forms of alienation from the spirit of the Gospel and a terrible betrayal of true Christianity.

I will take an example from the Catholic Church, since she confronted contemporary secularism and modernity before others in Western Europe. In the years immediately following the Second Vatican Council, despite all its positive aspects, the Catholic Church fell into a very powerful movement of activism. The Italian Jesuit Father Giovanni Martinetti described her condition in prophetic words in his book *Ragioni per credere oggi*:

“The post-conciliar Church lost her mystical face, and became the Church of constant dialogue, organizations, consultations, conferences, councils, committees, academies, parties, pressure groups influencing public opinion, functions, structures and restructuring, social experiments, and statistics. Thus the Church

became, more than ever before, the Church of men—that is, an entity without identity.”

Mother Teresa of Calcutta, in the final years of her life, to the astonishment of the volunteers in her humanitarian works, ordered the closure of all the bank accounts of the international body that supported the works of her charitable religious order, and the cancellation of the meetings of the international group that supported her humanitarian activities, when she learned how enormous the expenses of those meetings had become!

Those in whom the Spirit of God acts shock the world by their attitudes and conduct. But what kind of Christianity is it that goes along with the world and its sins, instead of awakening it from its heedlessness and deviation?

There is a great difference between caring for humanity, accompanying it, and sharing in its pain in order to raise it from that pain toward salvation, and accepting its sin. The Christian loves the sick person, not the sickness. The Christian comes from eternal life, not from secular life; meaning, he illumines earthly life with the light of eternity. He does not reduce his life, its needs, and its goal to the limited years he spends upon this earth.

Therefore, the mission of the Church lies in raising the world with her to where it once was and to what it once was; in reminding the world of the life to which God has called it—not only by preaching, but in practice; and in manifesting the action and truth of God’s Incarnation in human history by embodying His presence in the heart of the world in which she lives.

If God’s action and fruit are not visible in the life and service of Christians, do they not become a secular social organization, depriving the world of the transfiguration to which it is called?

When the Church, in her ministry, does not make room for the hesychastic life—or what is today called spirituality—and directs nearly all her concern and energy toward action, she becomes secularized. That is, she loses her connection to the heavenly Kingdom, by which she is called to transform the earthly world, through its transfiguration in her authentic work, which must be done by the inspiration, presence, and action of the Holy Spirit.

The secularization of the Church deprives human beings of the grace of truly becoming children of God, not merely in word. They then search for the meaning of their lives in other places, and the word of the prophet Jeremiah becomes true of them: “They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, and hewn out for themselves broken cisterns that can hold no water” (2:13).

I will give two examples.

- Is it not possible for ecclesial media, when placed in the hands of those who are not prayerful and spiritually watchful, to become a means of displaying achievements and boasting about them, rather than urging viewers or readers to cultivate the spirit of love, service, and giving?
- And is it not possible for the goal of “pastoral” activities to shift toward fundraising, instead of being a practical means of supporting the faithful spiritually, helping them experience joy in the midst of the community, solidarity among the brethren, growth in the life of virtue, and the living out of love with greater effectiveness?

These are some of the deviations we can easily fall into without even noticing. To the extent that the life of prayer—and I emphasize the word *life*—grows within us, the children of the Church, we become more aware and vigilant so as not to lose sight of the goal, and the influence of worldliness weakens within us, and we truly become the Church of Christ.

## المؤمن والدهريّة، الجزء الثاني بقلم المتروبوليت سابا (اسبر)

ماذا ننتظر عندما تضعف روح التقوى، والحياة التقديسيّة، وتُهمل روح الصلاة، باقتصارها على مجرد إتمام الطقوس، وتُستبدل حياة الصلاة بالأعمال والخدمات، ويُهمل البعد الروحي، ويخسر المؤمنون الحسّ بالخطيئة، وينسون التوبة، وتالياً يغيب، أو يُغَيَّب، البعد الأخرى للإيمان المسيحي؟

آنذاك ستصير الكنيسة مؤسّسة من هذا الدهر، وتفقد جوهر وجودها. وتحوّل، في أحسن الحالات، إلى مؤسّسة إنسانيّة، من طراز رفيع ربّما، لكنّها ستخسر مهمّة تقديس الإنسان ورفعته إلى ملكوت الله، وتالياً خلاصه.

من مخاطر الدهريّة أنّها تغيّر الذهن دونما قسر، فتقصر تفكيره على المحسوسات والملموسات، ما يجعل أهل بيت الله (أبناء الكنيسة) يندفعون إلى أتباع طرق أهل هذا الدهر وسبلهم، حتّى في الخدمات الكنسيّة. فتراهم يسعون إلى الإنجازات الباهرة على حساب الإنسان، ويعطون الأولويّة في التخطيط لإنشاء المؤسّسات وبقائها، بهدف خدمة الإنسان، الذي يهملون خدمته إلى حين اكتمال المؤسّسة وبدء خدمتها، ليكتشفوا أنّها بحاجة إلى تطوير ودعم دائمين، يستنفذان جهود القائمين عليها. فيبقى الفقير والموجوع والمتألّم واليائس والحزين، منسيين. فأين تتجسّد المحبّة الحيّة الفاعلة آنذاك؟

وقد يسعون إلى تحديث سبل الخدمة الرعائيّة والروحيّة باتباع طرق الدهر في ذلك، من تخطيط، وحسابات واجتماعات لا تنتهي، فيُنسى الله، ولا تعود النفوس ترتجي مباركته للخدمة المرتجاة. آنذاك يصير العمل نتاجاً بشرياً بالكلية، والقائمون عليه مقتنعين بأنّهم يخدمون الله. قد يغيب البعد الروحي دونما انتباه، وتصبح الكنيسة قطاعاً، يمكن أن يُسمى "روحياً"؛ ولكن، إلى جانب جملة من القطاعات الأخرى التي يحتاج إليها الإنسان. ماذا يبقى من جوهرها إذا ماثلت غيرها، ولم تكن هي الموجّه والمعطي المعنى والحياة؟ لا بل عندما تفقد جوهر وجودها، وتحاكي القطاعات الأخرى، فإنها تبدو إمّا مهلهلة أو متكلّفة، وتخسر السبق مع غيرها من المؤسّسات والهيئات العالميّة، التي قد تفوقها في الوصول إلى الهدف، لأنّها أكثر اختصاصيّة وجرفيّة منها.

يقول الأب ألكسندر شميمن: "الكنيسة هي في العالم وليست من العالم. فقط لأنها ليست من العالم، يمكنها أن تكشف "العالم الآتي"، [أي] ما يتخطى العالم." فماذا يتبقى منها، حقاً، إن خسرت هذا الدور؟ آنذاك تغلب النشاطية، وتهيء الطريق لنشوء الأصولية كرد فعل على ضياع الهدف.

عندما تطغى النشاطية على الكنيسة، أي فعاليات الرعاية أو الشهادة العملية، مع تقهقر روح الصلاة والتوبة، يختلّ التوازن، وتميل الكفة إلى مماثلة العالم الساقط، وتصبح النشاطات، بحدّ ذاتها، الهدف. في المقابل، عندما تعتزل الكنيسة الرعاية الناشطة من خدمتها، وتنعزل عن هذا العالم، في تفكيرها وخدمتها، وتقاطعها، وتكتفي بالحفاظ على الإيمان المستقيم، بمعزل عن المحبة المسيحية، اقتداءً بالمسيح، فلا تسعى، دون توقف، إلى احتضان العالم وخلصه، فإنها تقع في الأصولية. في الحقيقة، إنّ كلاً من الدهرية والأصولية تغرّب عن روح الإنجيل، وخيانة رهيبه للمسيحية الحقّة.

سأخذ مثلاً من الكنيسة الكاثوليكية، لكونها واجهت قبل غيرها الدهرية والحدائث المعاصرتين، بحكم مواجهتها لهما في أوروبا الغربية. فقد وقعت الكنيسة الكاثوليكية في السنوات، التي تلت المجمع الفاتيكاني الثاني مباشرة، بكل ما فيه من إيجابيات، في حركة نشاطية قوية جداً. فوصف الأب جيوفاني مارتيني اليسوعي الإيطالي حالها، بكلمات نبوية، في كتابه "Ragioni per credere oggi" فقال:

"فقدت كنيسة ما بعد المجمع وجهها الصوفي، فأضحت كنيسة الحوار الدائم والمنظمات والاستشارات والمؤتمرات والمجامع واللجان والأكاديميات والأحزاب، وتكتلات التأثير في الرأي العام، والوظائف والبني وإعادة البناء، والتجارب الاجتماعية والإحصاءات. وبذا أصبحت الكنيسة أكثر منها في أيّ وقت، كنيسة البشر، أي كياناً من دون هوية."

أمّا الأم تيريزا (كلكتا)، في السنوات الأخيرة من حياتها، ووسط دهشة المتطوعين في أعمالها الإنسانية، فأمرت بإغلاق كلّ الحسابات المصرفية للهيئة العالمية المساندة لأعمال جمعيتها الرهبانية الإنسانية، وإلغاء اجتماعات المجموعة العالمية، التي تدعم نشاطاتها الإنسانية، حين علمت بضخامة المصاريف التي تتكلفتها هذه الاجتماعات!!

من يفعل فيهم روح الله يصدمون العالم بمواقفهم وسلوكهم. ولكن أيّ مسيحية هذه التي تساير العالم على ما فيه من خطايا، بدلاً من أن توظفه من غفلته وانحرافه؟

الفارق العظيم بين رعاية الإنسانيّة ومرافقتها ومشاركتها ألمها، بغية إنهاضها منه إلى خلاصها، وبين قبول خطيئتها. المسيحيّ يحبّ المريض لا المرض. هو يأتي من الحياة الأبدية لا من الحياة الدهريّة، بمعنى أنّه يضيء على الأرضيّة بنور الأبدية. فلا يقصر حياته ومتطلّباتها وغايتها، على تلك السنين المحدودة، التي يقضيها فوق هذه الأرض.

لذلك فإنّ رسالة الكنيسة تكمن في أن ترفع العالم معها إلى حيث كان وإلى كيف كان؛ أن تذكّره بالحياة التي دعاه الله إليها، عمليّاً ووعظاً فقط، أن تُظهر فعل تجسّد الله وحقيقته في تاريخ البشر، عبر تجسيدها لحضوره في قلب العالم، الذي تعيش فيه.

إن لم يكن فعل الله وثمره بادياً على حياة المسيحيّين وخدمتهم، ألا يصبحون هيئة اجتماعيّة دهرية، فيُحرّم العالم من التجلّي المدعو إليه؟!

عندما لا تلحظ الكنيسة، في خدمتها، مكاناً للحياة الهدويّة، أو لما يسمّونه اليوم بالروحانية، وتوجّه جلّ همّها وطاقتها نحو الأفعال، فإنّها تتدهرن، أي تفقد صلّتها بالملكوت السماوي المدعوة إلى العمل على تحويل العالم الأرضي إليه، عبر تجلّيه في عملها الأصيل، الذي يجب أن يكون معمولاً باستلهاام الروح القدس وحضوره وفعله.

دهرنة الكنيسة تحرم البشر من نعمة تصيرهم أبناء الله حقّاً لا قولاً. فيفتشون عن معنى حياتهم في أمكنة أخرى، ويصخّ فيهم قول النبي إرمياء: "تركوني أنا ينبوع الماء الحيّ وحفروا لأنفسهم آباراً مشققة لا تضبط الماء" (٣:٢)

أكتفي بمثالين:

- أليس من الوارد أن يصير الإعلام الكنسيّ، في أيدي غير المصلّين واليقظين روحياً، سبيلاً إلى عرض الإنجازات والتباهي بها، أكثر من حثّه للمشاهدين أو القراء على تنمية روح المحبّة والخدمة والعطاء!!
- أن يتحوّل هدف النشاطات "الرعوية" نحو جمع التبرّعات، بدلاً من أن يكون وسيلة عمليّة لدعم المؤمنين روحياً، ومساعدتهم على اختبار الفرح وسط

الجماعة، والتضامن في ما بين الإخوة، والنمو في حياة الفضيلة، وعيش المحبة  
بفعالية أقوى!!

هذه بعض من الانحرافات التي قد نقع فيها بسهولة دونما، حتى، انتباه. بقدر ما تنمو  
فينا، نحن أبناء الكنيسة، حياة الصلاة، [وأشدد على كلمة حياة]، نصبح أكثر صحواً ويقظة  
لعدم ضياع الهدف، فيضعف تأثير الدهرية فينا، ونصير كنيسة المسيح حقاً.

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*Thanks to the generosity of our parish family, **the \$50,000 Matching Fund has been fully matched** for our building project. We are deeply grateful to the anonymous donor who offered this challenge gift and to everyone who contributed to make it possible.*

*If anyone would still like to participate in supporting our building project through this matching initiative, please contact Fr. Samer for more information about additional giving opportunities. Thank you for your continued prayers, generosity, and support as we work together for the future of our parish.*