

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

**ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH OF
THE REDEEMER**

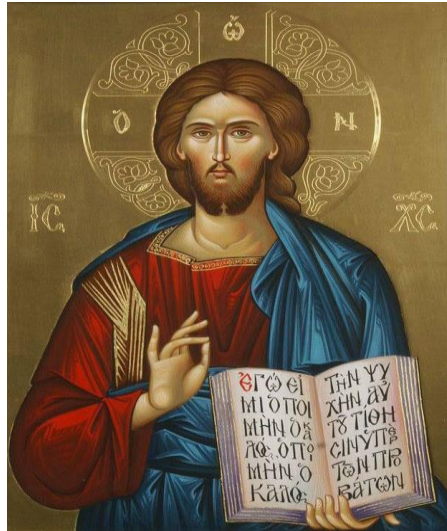
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V. REV. FR. SAMER YOUSSEF, D. MIN

REV. FR. THEODORE SAKELLAR, MTS



JULY 5, 2026

**VENERABLE ATHANASIOS OF ATHOS
& FIFTH SUNDAY OF MATTHEW**

**VENERABLE LAMPADOS OF IRENOUPOLIS; HIEROMARTYR CYPRIAN OF
MOUNT ATHOS**

القديس أثناسيوس و الأحد الخامس بعد العنصرة

RESURRECTION APOLYTIKION IN TONE FOUR

Having learned the joyful message of the Resurrection from the angel the women disciples of the Lord cast from them their parental condemnation. And proudly broke the news to the Disciples, saying: Death hath been spoiled; Christ God is risen, granting the world Great Mercy.

أبوليتيكيون القيامة بالحن الرابع

إِنَّ تَلْمِيزَاتِ الرَّبِّ تَعَلَّمْنَ مِنَ الْمَلَائِكَةِ الْكَرَّرَ بِالْقِيَامَةِ الْبَهْجِ، وَطَرَحْنَ الْقَضَاءَ الْجَدِّيَّ، وَخَاطَبْنَ الرُّسُلَ مُفْتَخِرَاتٍ وَقَائِلَاتٍ: سُبِّحِ الْمَوْتُ وَقَامَ الْمَسِيحُ إِلَهُ، وَمَنَحَ الْعَالَمَ الرَّحْمَةَ الْعُظْمَى.

APOLYTIKION OF ST. ATHANASIUS OF ATHOS IN TONE THREE

The Angels' ranks were awed by thy life in the flesh, how, though corporeal, and clad with earthly clay, thou didst set forth with courage to invisible wars and wrestling and didst boldly smite the hordes of the demons with mortal wounds. Wherefore, Christ rewarded thee with abundant gifts in return. Entreat Him that our souls find salvation, O most renowned Father Athanasius.

أبوليتيكيون القديس أنثاسيوس بالحن الثالث

لَقَدْ دَهَشَتْ طَعْمَاتُ الْمَلَائِكَةِ مِنْ سِيرَتِكَ بِالْجَسَدِ أَيُّهَا الدَّائِمُ الذِّكْرِ، كَيْفَ أَتَى، وَأَنْتَ بِالْجَسَدِ، سَعَيْتَ نَحْوَ الْمَصَافِّ غَيْرِ الْمَنْظُورَةِ، وَجَرَحْتَ مَوَاكِبَ الْأَبَالِسَةِ. فَلِذَلِكَ، قَدْ كَافَأَكَ الْمَسِيحُ بِمَوَاهِبَ غَنِيَّةٍ. فَيَا أَيُّهَا الْأَبُ أَثَنَاسِيُوسَ، تَشْفَعْ إِلَيْهِ أَنْ يُخَلِّصَ نَفُوسَنَا.

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 إِلَهُ فِي الْجَبَلِ، أَظْهَرْتَ مَجْدَكَ لِلتَّلَامِيذِ بِحَسْبِ مَا اسْتَطَاعُوا. فَأَشْرَقَ لَنَا نَحْنُ الْخَطَاةَ نُورُكَ الْأَزَلِيِّ، بِشِفَاعَةِ وَالِدَةِ إِلَهُ، يَا مَانِحَ النُّورِ الْمَجْدِ لَكَ.

ORDINARY KONTAKION IN TONE TWO

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

قنداق بالحن الثاني

يا شَفِيعَةَ الْمَسِيحِيِّينَ غَيْرَ الْخَازِيَةِ، الْوَسِيطَةَ لَدَى الْخَالِقِ غَيْرَ الْمَرْذُودَةِ، لَا تُعْرِضِي عَنْ أَصْوَاتِ طَلِبَاتِنَا نَحْنُ الْخَطَاةَ، بَلْ تَدَارِكِينَا بِالْمَعُونَةِ بِمَا أَنَّكَ صَالِحَةٌ، نَحْنُ الصَّارِخِينَ إِلَيْكَ بِإِيمَانٍ: بِادِرِي إِلَى الشَّفَاعَةِ وَأُسْرِعِي فِي الطَّلِبَةِ، يَا وَالِدَةَ الْإِلَهِ، الْمُتَشَفِّعَةَ دَائِمًا بِمُكْرَمِيكِ.

THE EPISTLE

The saints shall boast in glory, and they shall rejoice upon their beds.

Sing unto the Lord a new song; His praise is in the church of the saints.

The Reading from the Epistle of St. Paul to the Galatians. (5:22-6:2)

Brethren, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. Let us have no self-conceit, no provoking of one another, no envy of one another. Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Look to yourself, lest you too be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.

الرسالة

لِيَتَّبِعِ الْإِثْقَاءُ بِمَجْدٍ، لِيُرْتَمَوْا عَلَى مَضَاجِعِهِمْ.

غَنُوا لِلرَّبِّ تَرْنِيمَةً جَدِيدَةً، تَسْبِيحُهُ فِي جَمَاعَةِ الْإِثْقَاءِ.

فَصَلِّ مِنْ رِسَالَةِ الْقَدِيسِ بُولُسِ الرَّسُولِ إِلَى أَهْلِ غَلَاطِيَةِ. (2:6-22:5)

يا إِخْوَةُ، أَمَّا ثَمَرُ الرُّوحِ فَهُوَ الْمَحَبَّةُ وَالْفَرَحُ وَالسَّلَامُ وَطَوْلُ الْأَنَانَةِ وَاللُّطْفُ وَالصَّلَاحُ وَالْإِيمَانُ وَالْوَدَاعَةُ

وَالْعَفَافُ، وَهَذِهِ لَيْسَ نَامُوسٌ ضِدَّهَا. وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ لِلْمَسِيحِ، صَلَبُوا أَجْسَادَهُمْ بِكُلِّ مَا فِيهَا مِنْ أَهْوَاءٍ

وشَهوات. فَإِنْ كُنَّا نَعِيشُ بِالرُّوحِ، فَلَنَسْلُكَ بِالرُّوحِ أَيْضًا، وَلَا نَكُنْ دَوَى عُجْبٍ وَلَا نُغَاضِبُ، وَلَا نَحْسُدُ بَعْضُنَا بَعْضًا. أَيُّهَا الْإِخْوَةُ، إِذَا أَخَذَ أَحَدٌ فِي زَلَّةٍ فَأَصْلَحْهُ أَنْتُمْ الرُّوحِيِّينَ بِرُوحِ الْوَدَاعَةِ، وَتَبَصَّرْ أَنْتَ لِنَفْسِكَ لئَلَّا تُجَرَّبَ أَنْتَ أَيْضًا. إِحْمِلُوا بَعْضُكُمْ أَثْقَالَ بَعْضٍ وَهَكَذَا أَيْمُوا نَامُوسَ الْمَسِيحِ.

THE GOSPEL

The Reading from the Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew. (8:28-9:1)

At that time, when Jesus came to the country of the Gergesenes, two demoniacs met Him, coming out of the tombs, so fierce that no one could pass that way. And behold, they cried out, "What have we to do to Thee, O Son of God? Art Thou come here to torment us before the time?" Now a herd of many swine was feeding at some distance from them. And the demons begged Him, "If Thou castest us out, send us away into the herd of swine." And He said to them, "Go." So they came out and went into the swine; and behold, the whole herd rushed down the steep bank into the sea, and perished in the waters. The herdsmen fled, and going into the city they told everything, and what had happened to the demoniacs. And behold, all the city came out to meet Jesus; and when they saw Him, they begged Him to leave their neighborhood. And getting into a boat He crossed over and came to His own city.

الإنجيل

فصلٌ شريفٌ من بشارَةِ القديسِ متى الإنجيلي البشير والتلميذِ الطاهر. (8:28-9:1)

فِي ذَلِكَ الزَّمَانِ، لَمَّا أَتَى يَسُوعُ إِلَى كَوْرَةِ الْجَرَجِسِيِّينَ اسْتَقْبَلَهُ مَجْنُونَانِ خَارِجَانِ مِنَ الْقُبُورِ، شَرِسَانِ جِدًّا، حَتَّى إِنَّهُ لَمْ يَكُنْ أَحَدٌ يَقْدِرُ أَنْ يَجْتَازَ مِنْ تِلْكَ الطَّرِيقِ. فَصَاحَا قَائِلَيْنِ: "مَا لَنَا وَلَكَ يَا يَسُوعُ ابْنُ اللَّهِ؟ أَجِئْتَ إِلَى هَهُنَا قَبْلَ الزَّمَانِ لِنُعَذِّبَنَّا؟" وَكَانَ بَعِيداً مِنْهُمْ قَطِيعُ خَنَازِيرٍ كَثِيرَةٍ تَرعى. فَأَخَذَ الشَّيَاطِينُ يَطْلُبُونَ إِلَيْهِ قَائِلِينَ: "إِنْ كُنْتَ تُخْرِجُنَا، فَأَنْذِرْ لَنَا أَنْ نَذْهَبَ إِلَى قَطِيعِ الْخَنَازِيرِ." فَقَالَ لَهُمْ: "ادْهَبُوا." فَخَرَجُوا وَدَهَبُوا إِلَى قَطِيعِ الْخَنَازِيرِ. فَإِذَا بِالْقَطِيعِ كُلِّهِ قَدْ وَثَبَ عَنِ الْجُرْفِ إِلَى الْبَحْرِ وَمَاتَ فِي الْمِيَاهِ. أَمَّا الرُّعَاةُ فَهَرَبُوا وَمَضَوْا إِلَى الْمَدِينَةِ، وَأَخْبَرُوا بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَبِأَمْرِ الْمَجْنُونِينَ. فَخَرَجَتِ الْمَدِينَةُ كُلُّهَا لِلِقَاءِ يَسُوعَ. وَلَمَّا رَأَوْهُ، طَلَبُوا إِلَيْهِ أَنْ يَتَحَوَّلَ عَنْ ثُخُومِهِمْ. فَدَخَلَ السَّفِينَةَ وَاجْتَازَ وَأَتَى إِلَى مَدِينَتِهِ.



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: Arwa, Rasha and Yara Aweiss for the good health of their parents, Salem and Samia on the occasion of their wedding anniversary (July 3), and the good health of the Aweiss family. Many Years!

OFFERED BY: George Mitri for the good health of his wife Mona on the occasion of her 80th birthday (June 30), and the good health of their children, grandchildren and the Mitri family. Many Years!

OFFERED BY: Simone and Catherine Gannage for the good health of their parents, Michel and Rima on the occasion of their wedding anniversary (July 2), and the good health of the Gannage and Smine families. Many Years!

OFFERED BY: Michel and Rima Gannage in memory of Rima's sister, Randa. Memory Eternal!



COFFEE HOUR

Offered By: Ladies Auxiliary

*(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

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

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

Save 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 invite everyone to participate in this joyous celebration.

Fr. Samer will be out of town **July 1-6** attending **The Diocese of Los Angeles and the west Parish Life Conference** in San Diego.

He can be reached by phone @ **408-375-5673**

We would like to express our sincere thanks to **Fr. Theodore Sakellar** for **serving the Divine Liturgy** on **Sunday, July 5**. May God grant him many blessed years!

On July 12th we will joyfully welcome the newly ordained **Fr. John Dibs**, who will be ordained to the holy priesthood at The Parish Life Conference on July 4th.

Following the Divine Liturgy, We invite all our parishioners to attend the picnic sponsored by St. Nicholas Church, SF @ Blackberry Farm, Cupertino. Please see the flyer below for details.

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 Akkary, Secretary; Mila Haddad, Treasurer; Gabreilla Ajlouni, Social Media Coordinator; Adriana Ajlouni.

UPCOMING EVNTS AT THE CHURCH

Please save the date

July 12: *St. Nicholas Annual Picnic @ 12:00PM*

August 1: *Book Club, Saturday August 1st @ 2:00 PM – 5:00 PM*

August 6: *Transfiguration Liturgy Service @ 10:30AM. Fish will be Provided. Please bring a side dish and dessert to share. Please RSVP to the office*

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!

Book Club



*Due to a successful gathering turnout on June 13, we look forward for a continued conversation on **August 01, 2026 from 2:00 to 5:00 PM**, at the church hall.*

We will be covering the whole book. If you don't have the book, you are still invited to join us and hear the stories.

*Thank you,
The Ladies Auxiliary*

What can we learn from America's first Orthodox bishop?

By His Eminence Metropolitan Saba (Isper)

“I am an Arab by birth, Greek by primary education, American by residence, Russian at heart, and Slav in soul.” — St. Raphael of Brooklyn

Many saintly, dedicated, and faithful servants helped plant the seeds of Orthodoxy in America, but few were as well-prepared for such labor as St. Raphael of Brooklyn. As the quotation above suggests, St. Raphael embodied the evangelical and missionary spirit needed in his own time which is all the more needed in ours as we mark the 250th anniversary of our nation.

Before reflecting further on St. Raphael and his example, I would like to mention a photograph that struck me in the hall of our St. Nicholas Cathedral in Brooklyn, N.Y. Taken at the consecration of our current Cathedral on State Street in 1920, the photograph shows a massive crowd gathered outside. What covered the cathedral's façade was not, as one might expect today, a mix of American flags and those of the immigrants' countries of origin. Rather, the façade was completely draped in the flags of the United States of America alone. That image left a profound impression on me and speaks volumes to the mindset of those early immigrants. They loved the cities, villages, and families they had left behind, yet they knew they were here to stay in America. They desired to be full participants in their adopted land while preserving their ancient faith and traditions. It was into this context that St. Raphael, then Archimandrite Raphael Hawaweeny, arrived to New York in 1895.

Prior to arriving in the United States, St. Raphael lived in several centers of Orthodoxy, from his native Damascus, to Constantinople and the island of Halki where he studied, and to Kiev and Moscow. It is in this way that, through his extensive travels and his acquisition of multiple languages in both colloquial and liturgical contexts, St. Raphael, by God's providence, was well-prepared to undertake his mission in this new land: to help establish parishes for newly-arrived Orthodox immigrants of various ethnic backgrounds. Although his primary calling was to serve Arabic-speaking immigrants from Greater Syria—that is, modern-day Syria and Lebanon—through the newly-formed Syro-Arab Mission of the Russian Orthodox Church, St. Raphael became a respected and beloved figure among Orthodox immigrants more broadly, especially in the New York area. His tireless missionary efforts took him across the United States, Canada, and even Mexico, where he baptized, married, and served memorials for faithful people living in remote areas. In each locale, he also encouraged the faithful to found parishes and promised them priests once they committed themselves to this holy task.

As the mission grew, the then-head of the Russian Orthodox diocese in North America, St. Tikhon of Moscow, recognized that St. Raphael should be made a bishop to oversee the young mission parishes throughout the United States expanding work, with the agreement of both the Patriarch of Moscow and the Patriarch of Antioch. On March 13, 1904, St. Raphael was elevated to the episcopacy at St. Nicholas Cathedral in Brooklyn, New York, becoming the first Orthodox bishop of any background to be consecrated on American soil. Without his missionary zeal and steadfast dedication to serving the faithful, many Orthodox immigrants might well have been religiously assimilated as they pursued the American dream in their new homeland.

St. Raphael's ability to move between cultures and to draw on the best of Orthodox customs makes him a model for our own time. He could speak to people in their own language and understood their traditions because of his life experiences, while also encouraging them to adapt to their new homeland. He upheld the teachings of the Church with vigor and protected his flock from ravenous wolves, while adapting to the realities and norms of the American experience without compromising the faith.

What, then, can we learn from St. Raphael's life as we celebrate 250 years of the American democratic experiment? We should be deeply grateful for figures like St. Raphael who cultivated the seeds of Orthodoxy in America. Just as American citizens look to the founding fathers of our nation and to the sacrifices they made to build a stronger and better country, so too should we look to our own "founding fathers," of Orthodoxy in America, learn from their witness, and make it our own. We must continue to nurture what has grown from their early labors, even as we welcome those who now embrace the Holy Orthodox Faith by choice.

Just as America has been called "the great melting pot," so too does the Orthodox faith gather into one those who seek to embrace Jesus Christ within the ark of the Church, where "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28). To Him be all glory and honor forever and ever.

This article is published as part of the America at 250: Orthodoxy in a New Homeland media initiative co-organized by the Orthodox Observer and the Department of Inter-Orthodox, Ecumenical, and Interfaith Relations of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America to honor the contributions and experience of Orthodox Christianity in America and celebrate 250th anniversary of America's founding.

ماذا يمكننا أن نتعلّم من أوّل أسقف أرثوذكسي في أميركا؟

المتروبوليت سابا

"أنا عربيّ بالولادة، يونانيّ بالدراسة، أميركيّ بالإقامة، روسيّ بالقلب، وسلافيّ بالنفس." (القديس روفائيل أسقف بروكلين)

لقد ساهم كثيرون من الخدام القديسين المخلصين والأمناء في زرع بذور الأرثوذكسيّة في أميركا، لكن قلة منهم كانوا مهتّين لهذه الخدمة، كما كان القديس روفائيل أسقف بروكلين. وكما توجي العبارة الواردة أعلاه، جسّد القديس روفائيل الروح الإنجيليّة والبشارية التي كانت مطلوبة في زمنه، والتي نحن بأمرّ الحاجة إليها اليوم فيما نحيي الذكرى المئتين والخمسين لتأسيس أمّتنا.

وقبل أن نغوص في تأمل شخص القديس روفائيل ومثاله، أودّ أن أشير إلى صورة فوتوغرافيّة لفتت انتباهي في قاعة كاتدرائيّة القديس نيقولاوس في بروكلين، نيويورك. الثّقطت هذه الصورة أثناء تكريس كاتدرائيّتنا الحاليّة، في شارع "ستيت" سنة ١٩٢٠، وتظهر فيها حشودٌ غفيرة مجتمعة خارج الكنيسة، فيما واجهة الكاتدرائيّة مغطاةً بكليتها بأعلام الولايات المتّحدة الأميركيّة فقط، لا بمزيج من الأعلام الأميركيّة وأعلام البلدان التي جاء منها المهاجرون آنذاك، كما قد يتوقّع المرء اليوم. لقد تركت هذه الصورة أثراً عميقاً في نفسي، لأنّها تعبّر بوضوح عن أمانة المهاجرين الأوائل للبلد الذي استضافهم (أميركا). لقد أحبّوا المدن والقرى والعائلات التي تركوها وراءهم مضطرين، لكنّهم أدركوا أنّهم جاؤوا ليستقروا في أميركا. وأرادوا أن يكونوا شركاء كاملين في الوطن الذي تبنّوه، مع المحافظة في الوقت نفسه على إيمانهم الأصليل وتقاليدهم المقدّسة وبلدانهم الأصليّة.

هذا هو مناخ الأبرشية حين وصل القديس روفائيل، وكان يومئذٍ الأرشمندريت روفائيل هواويني، إلى نيويورك سنة ١٨٩٥.

قبل وصوله إلى الولايات المتّحدة، عاش القديس روفائيل في عدد من مراكز الأرثوذكسيّة المهمّة، من دمشق مسقط رأسه، إلى القسطنطينيّة وجزيرة خالكي حيث درس اللاهوت، إلى كييف وموسكو حيث تابع دراساته العليا. من خلال الأسفار الواسعة وإتقانه لغات عديدة، باستعمالاتها اليوميّة والليتورجيّة، أعدّه الله بعنايته الإلهيّة إعداداً

فريداً للرسالة التي كانت تنتظره في هذه الأرض الجديدة، من تأسيس رعايا للمهاجرين الأرثوذكس الوافدين حديثاً من خلفيات إثنية متنوعة.

ومع أنّ دعوته الأساسية كانت خدمة المهاجرين الناطقين بالعربية القادمين من سوريا الكبرى، (من سوريا ولبنان والأردن وفلسطين حالياً)، وذلك من خلال الإرسالية السورية العربية التي أنشأتها الكنيسة الأرثوذكسية الروسية، غير أنّ قديسنا روفائيل صار شخصية محترمة ومحبوبة بين المهاجرين الأرثوذكس عموماً، ولا سيّما في منطقة نيويورك. وقد حملته جهوده البشارية الدؤوبة إلى مختلف أنحاء الولايات المتحدة وكندا والمكسيك. فكان يزور المؤمنين حيثما وجدوا، ولو في مناطق نائية، فيعمّدهم ويبارك زيجاتهم ويقيم الجنائز للراقيدين منهم. كما كان يشجّع المؤمنين، في كل مكان يزوره، على تأسيس رعايا جديدة، ويعدّهم بإرسال كهنة إليهم متى التزموا بهذا العمل المقدّس.

ومع نموّ الإرسالية الأنطاكية، أدرك القديس تيخن، رأس الأبرشية الروسية في أميركا الشمالية آنذاك، [كان الحضور الأرثوذكسي الكنسي الوحيد آنذاك للميتروبوليا الروسية] ضرورة أنّ أن يرسم الأرشمندريت روفائيل أسقفًا، للإشراف على الرعايا العربية الفتية المنتشرة في أنحاء الولايات المتحدة، وذلك بموافقة كلّ من بطريرك موسكو وبطريرك أنطاكية. وهذا ما صار، إذ رُفّع القديس روفائيل إلى الدرجة الأسقفية في كاتدرائية القديس نيقولاوس في بروكلين، نيويورك، ليصبح أوّل أسقف أرثوذكسي، من أيّ خلفية كانت، يرسم على أرض الولايات المتحدة الأميركية. حدثت رسامته في الثالث عشر من آذار سنة ١٩٠٤. والحقيقة أنّه لولا غيرته الرسولية وتفانيه الثابت في خدمة المؤمنين، لكان كثير من المهاجرين الأرثوذكس قد ذابوا دينياً في محيطهم الجديد، وهم يسعون إلى تحقيق الحلم الأميركي في وطنهم الجديد.

إنّ قدرة القديس روفائيل على التنقّل بين الثقافات المختلفة والاستفادة من أفضل ما في التقاليد الأرثوذكسية تجعله نموذجاً صالحاً لعصرنا. فقد كان قادراً على مخاطبة الناس بلغتهم وفهم عاداتهم وتقاليدهم بفضل خبراته الحياتية المتنوعة، وفي الوقت نفسه كان يشجّعهم على التأقلم مع وطنهم الجديد. وقد تمسّك بتعليم الكنيسة وحما رعيته من الذئاب الخاطفة، وفي الوقت عينه تفاعل بحكمة مع واقع الحياة الأميركية ومتطلّباتها من دون أيّ مساومة على الإيمان.

فماذا يمكننا أن نتعلّم من حياة القديس روفائيل ونحن نحتفل بمرور مئتين وخمسين عاماً على التجربة الديمقراطية الأميركية؟

علينا أن نكون ممتّين بعمق لشخصيّات مثل القديس روفائيل الذين زرعوا بذور الأرثوذكسية في أميركا. وكما ينظر المواطنون الأميركيون إلى الآباء المؤسسين لأمتهم وإلى التضحيات التي قدّموها لبناء وطن أقوى وأفضل، كذلك ينبغي لنا أن ننظر إلى "آبائنا المؤسسين" للأرثوذكسية في أميركا، فنتعلّم من شهادتهم ونقتدي بمثالهم. كما ينبغي أن نواصل رعاية ما نرى من أعمالهم الأولى، فيما نرحّب أيضاً بكلّ الذين يعتنقون اليوم الإيمان الأرثوذكسي المقدّس عن اقتناع واختيار.

وكما وُصفت أميركا بأنّها "بوتقة انصهار" للشعوب والثقافات، كذلك يجمع الإيمان الأرثوذكسي- في وحدة واحدة جميع الذين يسعون إلى اتّباع يسوع المسيح داخل فلك الكنيسة، حيث "لَيْسَ يَهُودِيٌّ وَلَا يُونَانِيٌّ، لَيْسَ عَبْدٌ وَلَا حُرٌّ، لَيْسَ ذَكَرٌ وَأُنْثَى، لَأَنَّكُمْ جَمِيعًا وَاحِدٌ فِي الْمَسِيحِ يَسُوعَ" (غلاطية ٣: ٢٨). له المجد والكرامة إلى أبد الآبدين.

نُشر هذا المقال في إطار مبادرة "أميركا في عامها المئتين والخمسين: الأرثوذكسية في وطن جديد"، وهي مبادرة إعلاميّة مشتركة بين صحيفة "الأرثوذكس أوبزرفر" ودائرة العلاقات الأرثوذكسيّة والمسكونيّة والعلاقات الدينيّة التابعة لرئاسة أساقفة أميركا اليونانيّة الأرثوذكسيّة، تكريماً لإسهامات المسيحيّة الأرثوذكسيّة وخبرتها في أميركا، واحتفاءً بالذكرى المئتين والخمسين لتأسيس الولايات المتّحدة الأميركيّة.

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BUILDING OUR FUTURE TOGETHER

End-of-Year Campaign Update

- Raised: \$3.5M for the new hall & learning center
- County requirements nearly complete
- Promising discussions with school operators
- Goal: Break ground by mid-2026
- Remaining need: **\$750,000** for loan approval

If you are able, please consider an end-of-year tax-deductible gift to support our parish's future.

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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.