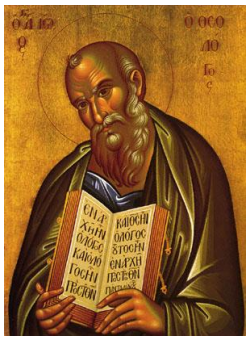
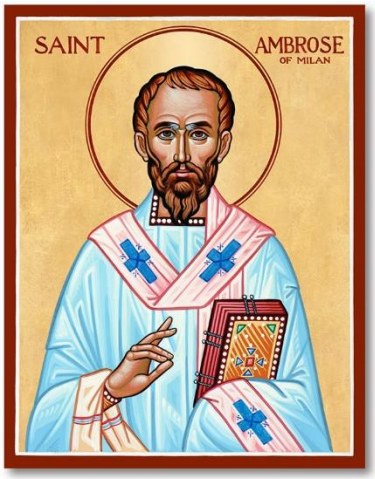


+St. John the Evangelist Orthodox Church

Antiochian Archdiocese of North America
Metropolitan Saba of New York and all North America
V. Rev. Fr. Nicholas Borzghol, Pastor
Dn. Nicholas Adranly
501 Moraga Way, Orinda, California 925-258-4255
www.stjohnorinda.org email: st.john.evangelist.orinda@gmail.com

Sunday, December 07, 2025 Ambrose, bishop of Milan

Martyr Athenodoros of Mesopotamia;
Venerable Gregory, founder of Gregoriou monastery on Athos



On December 7 in the Holy Orthodox Church, we commemorate our father among the saints Ambrose, bishop of Milan. His father was the imperial governor of Gaul and Spain, and a pagan, while his mother was a Christian. On the death of his father, the Emperor made him governor of Liguria, of which province Milan was the chief city. When the bishop of Milan died, there was great dissention about the choice of a new bishop. Ambrose went into the church to keep order. Thereupon, a child at its mother's breast cried out: "Ambrose for bishop!" All the people took this to be the voice of God, and unanimously elected Ambrose as their bishop, although it was against his will. Ambrose was baptized, and passed through all the necessary ranks in one week. As bishop, he strengthened the faith of the Orthodox, restrained heretics, adorned churches, spread the Faith among the pagans, wrote many instructive books and was an example of a true Christian and a true shepherd. Ambrose died peacefully at daybreak on Pascha in 397. On this day, we also commemorate the Martyr Athenodoros of Mesopotamia; and Venerable Gregory, founder of Gregoriou monastery on Athos.

THE EPISTLE

Let Thy mercy, O Lord, be upon us.
Rejoice in the Lord, O ye righteous.

The Reading from the Epistle of St. Paul to the Ephesians. (5:8-19)

Brethren, walk as children of light—for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true—and try to learn what is pleasing to the Lord. Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. For it is a shame even to speak of the things that they do in secret; but when anything is exposed by the light it becomes visible, for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore, it is said, "Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light." Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of the time, because the days are evil. Therefore, do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery; but be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with all your heart.

لتكُنْ يا ربُّ رحمَتُكَ علينا، إبتَهِجوا أيُّها الصدّيقونَ بالربّ.

(5:8-19).فصل من رسالة القديس بولس الرسول إلى أهل أفسس

يا إخوةُ، أُسلُكوا كأولادٍ للنور (فإنَّ ثمرَ الروحِ هو في كلِّ صلاحٍ وبرٍّ وحقٍّ) مُختَبِرينَ ما هُوَ مَرضِيٌّ لدى الربِّ. ولا تشتَرِكوا في أعمالِ الظُلمَةِ غيرِ المُثمِرَةِ بل بالأحرى وبّخوا عليها. فإنَّ الأفعالَ التي يفعلونَها سِرّاً يَقْبُحُ ذِكْرُها أيضاً. لكنَّ كلَّ ما يُوَبَّخُ عليهِ يُعلَنُ بالنور. فإنَّ كلَّ ما يُعلَنُ هو نورٌ. ولذلكَ يقولُ: استيقظ أيُّها النائمُ وَقُمْ من بينِ الأمواتِ فيُضيءَ لكَ المسيح. فانظُروا إذنْ أن تسلُكوا بِحَذَرٍ لا كَجُهلاءَ بل كحُكماء، مُفْتَدينَ الوقتَ فإنَّ الأيامَ شريرةٌ. فلذلك لا تكونوا أغبياءَ بلِ افهموا ما مشيئةُ الرب. ولا تَسكَروا بالخمرِ التي فيها الدعارَةُ بل امتلئُوا بالروح، مُكَلِّمينَ بعضُكم بعضاً بمزاميرَ وتسابيحَ وأغانيَّ روحيَّةٍ مُرَنِّمينَ ومرتِّلينَ في قلوبِكم للربّ.

THE GOSPEL

The Reading from the Holy Gospel according to St. Luke. (13:10-17)

At that time, Jesus was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. And there was a woman who had had a spirit of infirmity for eighteen years; she was bent over and could not fully straighten herself. And when Jesus saw her, He called her and said to her, “Woman, you are freed from your infirmity.” And He laid His hands upon her, and immediately she was made straight, and she praised God. But the ruler of the synagogue, indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, said to the people, “There are six days on which work ought to be done; come on those days and be healed, and not on the Sabbath day.” Then the Lord answered him, “You hypocrite! Does not each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or his ass from the manger, and lead it away to water it? And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan bound for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath day?” As Jesus said this, all His adversaries were put to shame; and all the people rejoiced at all the glorious things that were done by Him.

(13:10-17) فصلٌ شَريفٌ مِنْ بِشارَةِ القِدّيسِ لوقا الإنْجيلِيِّ البَشيرِ والتلْميذِ الطاهِرِ.

في ذلكَ الزمانِ، كانَ يسوعُ يعلِّمُ في أحَدِ المجامِعِ يَوْمَ السبتِ، وإذا بِامْرأةٍ بِهَا روحُ مَرَضٍ مُنْذُ ثَماني عَشْرَةَ سَنَةً، وكانَتْ مُنْحَنِيَةً لا تَسْتَطيعُ أنْ تَنْتَصِبَ البَتَّةَ. فلَمَّا رَآها يَسوعُ، دَعاها وقالَ لَهَا: إنَّكِ مُطْلَقَةٌ مِنْ مَرَضِكِ. وَوَضَعَ يَدَيْهِ عليْهَا، وفي الحالِ اسْتَقامَتْ، ومَجَّدَتِ الله. فَأَجابَ رئيسُ المَجْمَعِ، وهُوَ مُغْتاظٌ لإبْراءِ يسوعَ في السَّبْتِ، وقالَ لِلْجَمْعِ: هِيَ سِتَّةُ أَيّامٍ يَنْبَغِي العَمَلُ فيها، فَفيها تَأْتونَ وتَسْتَشْفُونَ، لا في يَوْمِ السَّبْتِ. فَأَجابَ الرَّبُّ وقالَ: يا مُرائِي! أليْسَ كُلُّ واحِدٍ مِنْكُمْ يَحُلُّ ثَوْرَهُ أَوْ حِمارَهُ في السَّبْتِ مِنَ الْمِذْوَدِ ويَنْطَلِقُ بِهِ فَيَسْقيهِ؟ وهَذِهِ، وهِيَ ابْنَةُ إبراهيمَ التي رَبَطَها الشَّيْطانُ مُنْذُ ثَماني عَشْرَةَ سنَةً، أمَا كانَ يَنْبَغِي أنْ تُطْلَقَ مِنْ هذا الرِّباطِ يومَ السبْتِ؟ ولَمَّا قالَ هذا، خَزِيَ كُلُّ مَنْ كانَ يقاوِمُهُ، وفَرِحَ الجَمْعُ بِجَميعِ الأُمورِ المَجيدَةِ التي كانَتْ تَصْدُرُ مِنْهُ.

Upcoming Events

Coffee Hour

December 7th	**Borbara pudding- Fairouz Freij, good health of Issam and family, Rania Shuhaiber and family**
December 14th	**Rose's Bake Sale**
December 21st	**Luis and Joan**

Thank You for Donating Towards the Bishops Chair and Chanter's Stand

The Bishiop's chair has been donated by Raif and Sonia Rihani and family!

The chanter's stand is donated by George Theodosi and family!

Day Trip/Pilgrimage to Holy Assumption Monastery: Saturday, January 17th

Holy Assumption Monastery in Calistoga, 1519 Washington St., Calistoga

Approximate schedule

11am: Arrive and explore the grounds (the monastery has birds, cats, ducks, a coy pond and a wonderful bookstore)

12:15pm: 6th hour

12:45pm: lunch

1:30pm: children's activities

3:30: Wrap-up & group photo

4:00: Depart

Additionally, there will be a vigil at 5pm and anyone is welcome to stay, but the nuns recognize that with smaller children, it's much easier for families to get home on the earlier side. The monastery will be providing lunch. Donations to the monastery are welcome. Dress is modest. Please RSVP here so the sisters can make plans for lunch and the craft. If you can include the names of family members attending, along with the children's ages and if there are any food allergies or dietary restrictions that would be helpful. **Please RSVP ASAP by December 17th.**

I hope to see you there! Please let Irene know if you have any questions: Irene Guajardo: 925-413-3242, iyrini.nino@gmail.com

Christmas Bake Sale

The Christmas bake sale will be held on December 14th

Crab Feed

This year we are proud to have our 44th Annual Crab Feed at our NEW St. John Hall. Saturday February 7th, 2026. Please SAVE THE DATE, and let us celebrate together to make it as successful as possible

Dave & Buster's Campaign

Our Dave & Buster's champaign got extended so we can maximize on our return. We are currently at $700.00
How it works:

1. Place an order using St. John link.
2. 50% of each Dave & Buster's Power Card purchased is donated back to the organization.
3. Visit any Dave & Buster's location to pick up your Power Card and start playing!

Thank you all for joining us and pouring your love into our annual Jolly Christmas Cars event!
Your presence, joy, and hearts made the kids excited, as well as, the adults. May God bless each of you for sharing His love with our community in such a beautiful way.

Talent Night

After the holidays I'd like to put together a talent night for anyone who would like to participate. Pianists, instrumentalists, Singers, Dancers etc. I'd like to get an idea if we have any interest in "Putting on a show" in our new hall! Please call me and let me know what your talent is. It's important to share your talents in life, especially with our beloved St John family. All ages welcome. ❤️ Lynn Farradj 925-323-5746

Holy Oblations

This week, Holy Oblations are offered by:

† St. John Parish Family for the good health of **Nick Nicola, Sandy Dudum, George Messih, George Adranly, Fred Addas, Henriette Hilal, Souhad Halaka, George Cawog, Sam Nassab, Sue Gideon, Rocky Dudum** and **Norma Khalil**. Many years!

† St. John Parish Family for the good health of **Hala (Sandra) Mitry**. Many years!

† St. John Parish Family for the good health of **Bradley Youakim.** Many years!

† Siham Mitry and family in memory **Donna Potter**. May her memory be eternal!

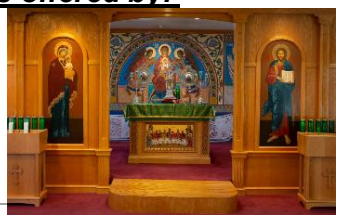
† Siham Mitry for the good health of her granddaughter **Madeline and Toby Solis** on the recent birth of their twin children **Ava and Noah.**

† Rania Shuhaiber and family for the good health of **Mikhail Shuhaiber**. Many years!

† St. John Parish Family in memory of **Mikhail Boudnik**. May his memory be eternal!

Candles for the altar table and in front of the icons of Christ and the Theotokos offered by:

† Ibrahim Fasheh in memory of Hanada Fasheh for one full year. May her memory be eternal!



† Altar Servers:
Nathan Sweis, Clayton Morgan, Elias Freij, Angelo Freij, Andrew Freij, Mazyn Haddadin, James Dudum, John Dudum, David Evans, Evan Kawar, Mason Kawar, Jonathan Juha, Maron Juha and Zaiden Karanikola

Poinsettia plants to adorn the Royal Doors in Loving Memory of: Nick Sr. And Helen Nicola offered by Nick Jr., Ron Nicola and Georgianna Rishwain and families

St. John Orthodox Church
501 Moraga Way
Orinda, CA 94563

You could use this QR code for your donation

An Invitation

"Christianity is not a matter of persuading people of particular ideas, but of inviting them to share in the greatness of Christ. So pray that I may never fall into the trap of impressing people with clever speech, but instead I may learn to speak with humility, desiring only to impress people with Christ himself."

- Saint Ignatius of Antioch

The Ribbon & The Cross Is An *Invitation* To Become Part Of A Ministry

An Invitation Not Recognition

When you become part of the Order of Saint Ignatius of Antioch, you become part of a ministry. The Order is not a club that you join. It is not a secular status symbol for recognition. The Cross and the Ribbon that Order supporters wear is an invitation to become part of a ministry. It serves as an invitation to share with one another in the greatness of Christ by giving in a manner that is unconditional and quiet. Supporting the Order's projects, Archdiocese Departments and numerous programs as one group, with Christ in our minds and hearts, should be how we ***invite*** the world to become part the Order's ministry.

Initiate the Questions of What? & How?

When those supporting the Order wear their ribbon and cross, it is meant to initiate others to inquire about the Order and how they can help strengthen its ministry. When people see the red ribbon and Cross that we wear, it helps begin the conversation to share what the Order does and provide the initial welcome to help expand its ministry. It provides an opportunity to ask, "What does the Order do and how can I help?"

The Order Provides A Lesson In Giving

When you give to the Order of Saint Ignatius of Antioch, you are giving in a way we are all called to give ... unconditionally. Your gift is not individually recognized. You are not able to designate your gift to a specific need you select. You are giving without recognition, without conditions, without direct gratitude of the Order's recipients. This is the manner in which a "true gift" is made. A gift made in the way Christ directs us.

The Order Teaches Us How To Give

... the Order is teaching us how to share, the Order is teaching us how to give, the Order is teaching us how to sacrifice, and how to reach out for Orthodox and non-Orthodox alike. This is the miracle of The Order of Saint Ignatius of Antioch."

- His Eminence Metropolitan Philip of thrice blessed memory, Founder of the Order of St. Ignatius of Antioch

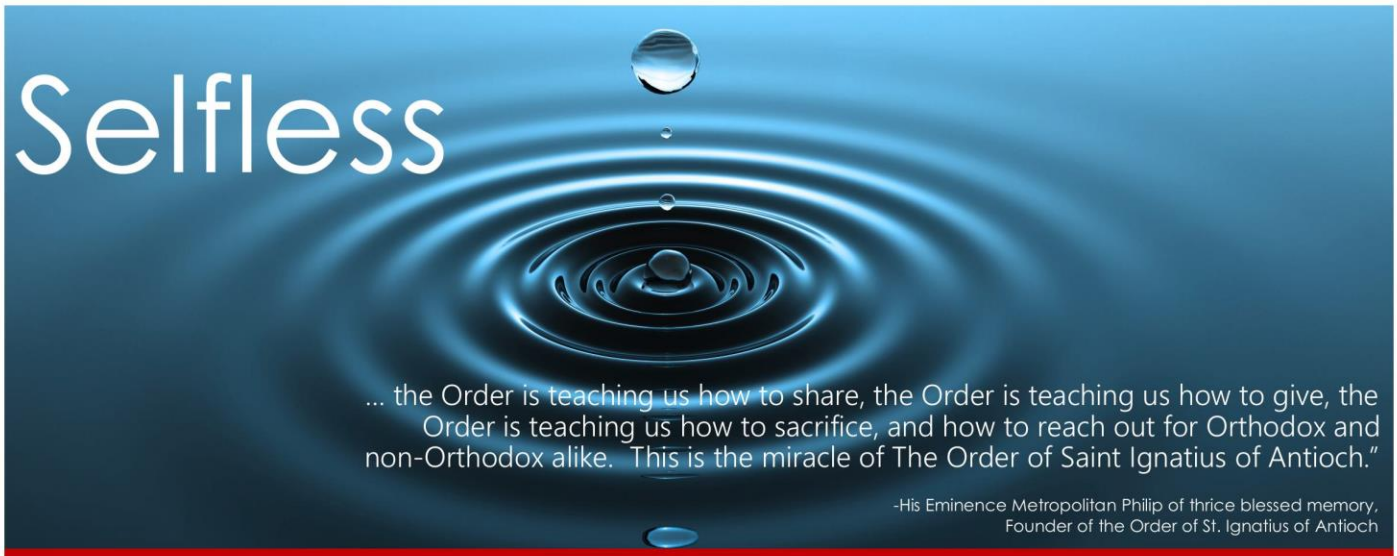
The Order of Saint Ignatius of Antioch

Let no man's place, or dignity, or riches, puff him up; and let no man's low condition or poverty abase him. For the chief points are faith towards God, hope towards Christ, the enjoyment of those good things for which we look, and love towards God and our neighbor.

- Saint Ignatius of Antioch

The Order of St. Ignatius Of Antioch 140 Church Camp Trail Bolivar, PA 15923 Email: theorder@antiochian.org Ph: (724) 238-3677, xt 410

Selfless



... the Order is teaching us how to share, the Order is teaching us how to give, the Order is teaching us how to sacrifice, and how to reach out for Orthodox and non-Orthodox alike. This is the miracle of The Order of Saint Ignatius of Antioch."

-His Eminence Metropolitan Philip of thrice blessed memory,
Founder of the Order of St. Ignatius of Antioch

Your gift is selfless. You help support the Order's ministry without recognition or conditions. There are no banquets, plaques or special awards given in your honor. Your gift is given unconditionally to support the Orthodox Faith in North America, the Spiritual strengthening of our youth and to care for our beloved clergy in their Golden years.

$98.22	Administrative Expense
$294.64	Youth Programs & Camp Scholarships
$15.04	Project Mexico
$15.04	IOCC
$21.32	Projects & Grants
$7.52	SOYO Special Olympics
$6.40	Clergy Symposium & Convention Support
$15.49	Seminarian Assistance
$116.54	Archdiocese Departments
$18.80	Parish Development & Missions
$97.75	Missions & Evangelism
$15.03	Archdiocese House of Studies
$75.19	Internet Ministry
$203.02	Retired Clergy Fund

How Your Annual Gift Is Allocated

Based On A **$1,000** Knight &/or Dame Commander Level Annual Gift

61.41%

Of Annual Order Gifts

29.46%
Youth Programs & Camp Scholarships

20.30%
Retired Clergy Fund

11.65%
Missions & Evangelism & Parish Development

*Only **9.82%** In Administrative Expense
**Based On Fiscal Year 2024

The Order of Saint Ignatius of Antioch

Let no man's place, or dignity, or riches, puff him up; and let no man's low condition or poverty abase him. For the chief points are faith towards God, hope towards Christ, the enjoyment of those good things for which we look, and love towards God and our neighbor.
- Saint Ignatius of Antioch

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ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN MISSION CENTER

TREK 4 MISSIONS

GOING THE DISTANCE TO SHARE THE FAITH

Help the Church Send More Missionaries!

Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church Evangelism Committee invites you to join the Bay Area Walk4Missions at 1:30pm on March 15th 2026.
We will be meeting at 999 Brotherhood Way in San Francisco.

Christ's disciples walked thousands of miles to bring the good news to people around the world. The Trek4Mission is being held to raise awareness and support for Orthodox missionaries and the work of the Orthodox Christian Mission Center. We plan to walk **"the measured mile trail"** around Lake Merced, and are asking other communities, and their youth groups to join with us. Mark the date on your calendars and plan to join us for the Divine Liturgy, Procession of the Holy Cross and a hosted lunch with a presentation on Missions before the Walk begins around 1:30. **Signing up is easy!**

1. **Go to** the Trek website using the info below
2. **Click** the START OR JOIN A TEAM BUTTON
3. **Find** the Bay Area Walk for Missions team
4. **Create** an account or **Login** and join!
5. **Enjoy** the fun, fellowship and prayer!

LET'S GET WALKING

www.ocmc.org/Trek4Missions

Dave & Buster's Power Cards to Support St. John Church

50% Donated Back

December 31

https://grouprai.se/davebusters59958s

GroupRaise + DAVE & BUSTER'S

Let Us Give Thanks and Rejoice

By His Eminence Metropolitan Saba (Isper)

Gratitude, my dear friends, is a quintessential Christian virtue. A person who appreciates God's grace and understands the importance of His blessings in their life is always grateful. The Holy Scriptures repeatedly urge us to always give thanks without ever growing weary of it. Grateful persons rejoice in what they have, whether much or little. They are content with what they have, whether great or small. They are satisfied with what they possess and calmly seek better things, without fuss, without agitation, without inner turmoil. They are filled with their Lord and look to Him first and foremost, and from Him they draw every other gift. As long as God, the source of life, is with them, they never feel lacking.

When we grumble, when we complain, when we are not satisfied with what we have, and when we are troubled because we want more, we are expressing, indirectly, that we have not yet had enough of our Lord, and that we have not yet grasped, as we should, the purpose of the Christian life.

Our era, my dear friends, is a consumerist era par excellence. As you know, it compels us to work harder to earn more money so that we can spend more. The cycle continues in a closed loop, and we remain in a frantic pursuit of more work, more earnings, more spending, and so on. But the real tragedy lies in the fact that the further we progress on this economic journey, the more possessions we feel we need, and so we remain dissatisfied, constantly demanding, forgetting even to appreciate what we have and what we possess.

Joy has become rare in these troubled times. Moments of delight may be available from time to time, but true joy is far away. Why? Because the desire for what we need – or what we think we need – is stronger than the joy of enjoying what we have.

In one of his letters, the Evangelist John warns us that everything in this world is driven by the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life (1 John 2:16). The Apostle Paul urges believers to beware of and avoid these desires (Gal. 5:19-21). Why? Because the desires of this world are endless, never truly satisfying, and

consequently, they drive us to constantly seek them. Experience teaches us that the disappointment that follows is immeasurably greater than the pleasure of indulging in them. The pursuit of desires leads from one disappointment to another.

The fountain of life is within us, yet we go, as the prophet Jeremiah says, to dig broken cisterns that cannot hold water (2:13). We have "the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6), yet we neglect it and pursue a glittering allure that captivates our hearts and deceives us with the illusion of attaining fulfillment. We forget what He has given us and forget this ever-flowing, inexhaustible fountain, and instead seek polluted waters in different places.

The tragedy of our modern world is that it makes us forget gratitude, and consequently, all the blessings we enjoy. Our world constantly tries to open our eyes to new, deceptive, and illusory things, making us believe they are essential and indispensable. This is why the wise, guided by the Gospel, rejoice in what they have and thank God for it. We enjoy good health, but we only appreciate it when we fall ill! We can see. Isn't sight a blessing? We only truly appreciate it when we see a blind person! We can walk. Well, that too is a blessing. But we don't give thanks for it, nor do we recognize its value, until we see a disabled person! There are countless things in our lives that should make us give thanks joyfully and gratefully, and we must truly see them.

One of our contemporary spiritual fathers said, "If we were to give thanks for everything, we would have no time to complain." Complaining means not being thankful, not being grateful, and not being content with the good things the Lord has given us. It also means that we are not satisfied with our Lord and that we are not content with our situation.

Someone might ask: Should we be content with what we have and not strive for better? Doesn't a Christian have the right to be ambitious? Don't we, as Christians, have the right to ask for the best? Yes, certainly. We have all these rights, but with a spirit of gratitude, a spirit of contentment and joy, a spirit of thankfulness for what we have. We ask for the best quietly, not noisily. We ask for the best knowing that the very best is to be in the Lord's presence, and from there, by the Lord's grace, we improve not only ourselves but the whole world around us. This is not only a

right, but also our duty. It is our duty to make our world a reflection of the Kingdom of Heaven. But if we are always angry, always complaining, always resentful, always sad, always restless, always agitated, how can we improve ourselves and improve our world?

Once there was a priest thrown into solitary confinement during the days of communist religious persecution in Russia. He spent many years in his solitary cell. There was only a small window at the top of the room through which light entered. Every day, he would recite a prayer of thanksgiving, which he had written on the walls of his cell. It was a prayer overflowing with gratitude to God, thanking Him that there were people who could see the light of heaven and rejoice, that there were people who could hear the birds chirping and rejoice, that there were people who could eat and drink whatever they wanted and rejoice. He, deprived of everything, thought of others who had been given what they needed, and he rejoiced for them and thanked God for giving it to them. Where are we in relation to such a contemporary example?

This example encourages us to rise to the required Christian spiritual level, and teaches us to give thanks at all times, not just with our lips, but with our hearts.

Let us learn well and remember today that true joy is found in Christ. "I bring you good news of great joy: to you a Savior has been born" (Luke 2:10-11). Does not the Gospel begin with this good news? Let us not forget, beloved, that the greatest joy is within us; we only need to open our eyes and see it. May God perpetuate joy in your lives, in your hearts, and in your homes, always. Amen.

لنشكر فنفرح

بقلم المتروبوليت سابا (اسبر)

الشُكرُ، يا أحبّة، فضيلةٌ مسيحيةٌ بامتياز. والإنسان الذي يشعرُ بقيمة نعمة الله، ويعي أهميّة بركته في حياته، هو إنسانٌ شكورٌ في كلِّ حين. ويطالبنا الكتاب المقدَّس، مِراراً وتَكراراً، بأن نقدِّم الشكرَ في كلِّ حين، غيرَ متعَبين منه. الإنسانُ الشَّكورُ إنسانٌ فَرِحٌ بما عندَه، أكانَ كثيراً أم قليلاً. إنّه إنسانٌ راضٍ عمّا حصَّله، أكانَ عظيماً أم بسيطاً. هو إنسانٌ مُكتَفٍ بما عنده، ويطلبُ الأفضل بهدوءٍ، من دون صَخَبٍ، من دون قلاقل، من دون اهتياجٍ داخلي. إنّه إنسانٌ شَبعان من ربِّه، ويتطلَّع إليهِ أوّلاً وقبل أيّ شيءٍ آخر، ومنهُ يستمدُّ كلَّ عطيَّةٍ أخرى. طالما أن الله، مصدرُ الحياةِ معه، فإنَّه لا يشعرُ بالنُقصانِ أبداً.

عندما نتذمَّر، عندما نتشكَّى، ولا نرضى بما عندنا، ونضطرب لأننا نريد المزيد، فإننا نعبّر، بطريقة غير مباشرة، عن أنَّنا لم نكتفِ من ربِّنا بعد، وأنَّنا لم نُدركْ، كما ينبغي، غاية الحياة المسيحية بعد.

عصرُنا هذا، أيُّها الأحبَّة، عصرٌ استهلاكيٌّ بامتياز. وكما تعلمون، يجعلنا نعمل كثيراً لكي نحصلَ على مدخول ماليّ أكثر، لكي نصرفَ أكثر؛ وهكذا دواليك، تبقى الدائرة تدورُ مغلقةً، ونبقى في سعيٍ محمومٍ نحو العملِ أكثر، لنحصِّلَ أكثر، لنصرِفَ أكثر. لكنّ الطامةَ الكبرى تكمن في أنَّنا كلَّما تقدَّمنا في مسيرتنا الاقتصادية هذه، نشعرُ بأنَّنا نحتاج إلى الأكثر، ولذلك نبقى في عدم الرضى، ونستمر في الطلب، وننسى حتى أن نفرحَ بما حصَّلناه، وبما صارَ عندَنا.

صار الفرحُ، في هذا الزَّمن الرَّديء، نادراً. قد تكون أويقات البهجة متوفرة من حين إلى آخر، لكنّ الفرح بعيد. لماذا؟ لأنَّ المطالبة بما نحن بحاجةٍ إليه، أو هكذا نظن، لهو أقوى من فرح التمتُّع بما حصَلنا عليه.

نبَّهَنا الإنجيلي يوحنا، في إحدى رسائله، إلى أن كل ما في هذا العالم، هو شهوةُ العين وشهوة الجسد وتعظُّم المعيشة (١ يو ٢: ١٦). ويحث الرسول بولس المؤمنين على أنْ يتجنَّبوا هذه الشهوات ويحذروها،(غلا ٥: ١٩-٢١) لماذا؟ لأنَّ شهوات هذه الدُّنيا لا تنتهي، كونها لا تُشبعنا، وتالياً، تجعلنا نجدّ في طلبها باستمرار. والواقع يعلّمنا، بالخبرة، أن الخيبة التي تليها، أقوى من لذة التمتع بها، بما لا يقاس. طلب الشهوات يقود الإنسان من خيبة إلى أخرى.

نبعُ الحياة عندنا ونحن نذهب، كما يقول إرمياء النبي، لنحفرَ آباراً مشقَّقةً لا تضبطُ الماء (أر ٢: ١٣). عندنا "الطَّريقُ والحقُّ والحياة" (يو ١٤: ٦)، ومع ذلك نهمله ونسعى وراء بريق يأخذ بألبابنا، ويخدعنا بوهم الحصول على الملء. ننسى ما أعطانا وننسى هذا النَّبع الذي يفيض باستمرارٍ ولا ينضبُ أبداً، ونطلبُ مياهاً ملوَّثةً من هنا وهناك.

تكمن تجربةُ عالمنا المعاصر، في أنه يُنسينا الشُّكرَ، وتالياً، كلَّ النِّعَم التي نحن فيها. يحاول عالمنا، بشتى الطرق، أن يفتحَ عيوننا دائماً على أمورٍ جديدة، خادعة ووهمية. يجعلنا نظنُّها أموراً لازمةً لا نستطيع الاستغناء عنها. من هنا الحكيم السائر على هدي الإنجيل، يفرحُ بِما عنده ويشكرُ الله عليه. نحنُ بصحةٍ جيدة لا نقدِّرُها إلا عندما نمرض! نحن نرى. أو ليس النظر نعمة؟! لا نقدِّرها إلا عندما نرى ضريراً! نحن نمشي. حسناً هذه نعمة أيضاً. لكننا لا نشكر عليها ولا نعرف قيمتها إلا عندما نرى إنساناً مُقعَداً! هناك أمورٌ كثيرةٌ، أكثر من أن تُعَدّ، في حياتنا تجعلُنا نشكرُ ونشكرُ بفرحٍ وامتنان، وعلينا أن نبصرَها جيِّداً.

يقول أحد آبائنا الروحيين المعاصرين: "لو شكر الإنسان على كلِّ شيء، لما وجدَ وقتاً للتذمُّر." التذمُّرُ يعني عدمَ الشُّكر، وعدمَ الامتنان، وعدم الاكتفاء بما أعطانا الرب من الصالحات. كما يعني أننا لم نشبع من ربنا، وأننا غير راضين عما نحن فيه.

قد يقول قائل: أنقبل بما عندنا ولا نسعى إلى الأحسن؟ ألا يحقُّ للمسيحي أن يكون طموحاً؟ ألا يحقُّ لنا، مسيحيين، أن نطلبَ الأفضل؟ بلى بالتأكيد. يحقُّ لنا هذا كلُّه ولكن بروحِ الشُّكران، بروحِ الرِّضى والابتهاج، بروح الامتنان لما عندنا. نحن نطلب الأفضل بهدوءٍ، لا بصخَب، نطلب الأفضل ونَعلمُ أنَّ أفضلَ الأفضل هو أن نكون في كنف الرَّب، ومن هناك وبنعمة الرَّب نحسِّن، لا أنفسنا فقط، بل كلَّ العالم الذي حولنا. هذا ليس حقٌّ فقط، بل هو واجبٌ علينا. واجبنا أن نجعلَ عالمنا صورةً عن ملكوت السموات. ولكن إن كنَّا في الغضبِ دوماً، في التذمُّرِ دوماً، في السَخَطِ، في الحزنِ، في القلقلة، في الاضطراب، كيف لنا أن نحسِّنَ أنفسَنا ونحسِّنَ عالمنا؟

قضى أحدُ الكهنة، الذين أُلقوا في زنزانةٍ فرديةٍ، أيام الاضطهاد الديني الشيوعي في روسيا، سنواتٍ طويلة، في زنزانته المنفردة تلك؛ لم يكنْ فيها سوى طاقة صغيرة في أعلى الغرفة، يدخل منها النور. وكان يردد يومياً، صلاة شكر، كتبها على جدران زنزانته، صلاة مفعمةً بالامتنان للرَّب، يشكر الله فيها لأن ثمّة أناسٌ يرَون نورَ السماء ويفرحون، ولأنّ ثمّة أناسٌ غيره يسمعون زقزقة العصافير ويفرحون، ولأنّ ثمّة أناسٌ يأكلون ما يُريدون ويشربون ما يُريدون ويفرحون... كان يفكِّرُ، وهو المحروم من كلِّ شيء – كان يفكِّرُ بالآخرين، الَّذين أُعطي لهم ما يحتاجونه، ويفرحُ لهم ويشكرُ الله لأنَّه أعطاهم هذا. أين نحن من شهادةٍ معاصرةٍ كهذه؟!

مثاله هذا يشجّعُنا على أن نرتفعَ إلى المستوى الروحيّ المسيحيّ المطلوب، ويعلّمنا أن نشكرَ في كلِّ حين، لا منَ الشفاه فقط، بل من القلب.

فلنتعلَّم جيداً ولنتذكَّر اليوم، أنَّ الفرح يكون بالمسيح. "إني أبشّركم بفرحٍ عظيم، وُلدَ لكم مخلِّص" (لوقا ٢: ١٠-١١). ألا يبدأ الإنجيل بهذه البشرى!! فلا ننسَ أيُّها الأحبة أنَّ الفرح الأعظم هو عندنا، علينا فقط أن نفتح أعيننا ونراه. أدامَ الله الفرح في حياتكم، وفي قلوبكم، وفي بيوتكم، دوماً، آمين.