



# +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

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## ORTHROS ON SUNDAY, DECEMBER 08, 2024; TONE 7 / EOTHINON 2 VENERABLE PATAPIOS OF THEBES

FOREFEAST OF THE CONCEPTION OF THE THEOTOKOS; SOPHRONIOS, BISHOP OF CYPRUS

### The Holy, Glorious Prophet Nahum

On December 8 in the Holy Orthodox Church, we commemorate our righteous Father Patapios of Thebes in Egypt.

Patapios abhorred the vanity of this world and withdrew into the wilderness of Egypt. There he devoted himself to a life of asceticism, cleansing his heart of all earthly desires and thoughts for the sake of God's love. However, when his virtues became known among the people, they came to him for solace in their sufferings. Fearing the praise of men, which darkens the minds of men and separates them from God, Patapios fled this wilderness to Constantinople, thinking he could hide himself more easily in a big city; but a light cannot be hidden. A child, blind from birth, was led by God's providence to Patapios. He besought the saint to pray to God that he be given

his sight to look upon God's creation and praise Him all the more. Patapios, having compassion on the suffering child, prayed to God, and the child's sight was restored. This miracle revealed God's chosen one, and people rushed to him for healing, comfort and instruction. Patapios performed many other miracles, all through prayer in the name of Christ and by the sign of the Cross. In great old age, he peacefully entered the Heavenly Kingdom in the seventh century.

### THE EPISTLE

*The Lord will give strength to His people.*

*Ascribe to the Lord, O sons of God, ascribe to the Lord honor and glory.*

**The Reading from the Epistle of St. Paul to the Ephesians. (2:14-22)**

Brethren, Christ is our peace, Who has made us both one, and has broken down the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in His flesh the law of commandments and ordinances, that He might create in Himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the Cross, thereby bringing the hostility to an end. And He came and preached peace to you, who were far off, and peace to those who were near; for through Him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the cornerstone, in Whom the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in Whom you also are built into it for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

### الرسالة

الرَّبُّ يُعْطِي قُوَّةً لِشَعْبِهِ. قَدِّمُوا لِلرَّبِّ يَا أَبْنَاءَ اللَّهِ.

فَصَلِّ مِنْ رِسَالَةِ الْقَدِيسِ بُولُسِ الرَّسُولِ إِلَى أَفَسُسَ. (22-14:2)

يا إِخْوَةَ، إِنَّ الْمَسِيحَ هُوَ سَلَامُنَا، هُوَ جَعَلَ الْإِثْنَيْنِ وَاحِدًا، وَنَقَضَ فِي جَسَدِهِ حَائِطَ السِّيَاحِ الْحَاجِزِ، أَيِ الْعَدَاوَةِ. وَأَبْطَلَ نَامُوسَ الْوَصَايَا فِي فَرَايِضِهِ، لِيَخْلُقَ الْإِثْنَيْنِ فِي نَفْسِهِ إِنْسَانًا وَاحِدًا جَدِيدًا بِإِجْرَائِهِ السَّلَامِ. وَيُصَالِحُ كِلَيْهِمَا فِي جَسَدٍ وَاحِدٍ مَعَ اللَّهِ فِي الصَّلِيبِ، بِقَتْلِهِ الْعَدَاوَةَ فِي نَفْسِهِ. فَجَاءَ وَبَشَّرَكُمْ بِالسَّلَامِ، الْبَعِيدِينَ مِنْكُمْ وَالْقَرِيبِينَ. لِأَنَّ بِهِ لَنَا كَلِينَا النَّوَصَلَ إِلَى الْآبِ فِي رُوحٍ وَاحِدٍ. فَلَسْتُمْ غُرَبَاءَ بَعْدَ وَنْزَلَاءَ، بَلْ مُوَاطِنُو الْقَدِيسِينَ وَأَهْلُ بَيْتِ اللَّهِ. وَقَدْ بُنِيتُمْ عَلَى أُسَاسِ الرُّسُلِ، وَالْأَنْبِيَاءِ، وَحَجَرِ الزَّاوِيَةِ هُوَ يَسُوعُ الْمَسِيحُ نَفْسُهُ الَّذِي بِهِ يُنْسَقُ الْبُنْيَانُ كُلُّهُ، فَيُنْمُو هَيْكَلًا مُقَدَّسًا فِي الرَّبِّ، وَفِيهِ أَنْتُمْ أَيْضًا تُبْنُونَ مَعًا مَسْكَنًا لِلَّهِ فِي الرُّوحِ.

## 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.

### الإنجيل

#### فصل شريف من بشارة القديس لوقا الإنجيلي البشير والتلميذ الطاهر. (17-10:13)

في ذلك الزمان، كان يسوع يعلم في أحد المجامع يوم السبت. وإذا بامرأة بها روح مريض منذ ثمانى عشرة سنة، وكانت منحنية لا تستطيع أن تنتصب البتة. فلما رآها يسوع، دعاها وقال لها: إنك مُطلقة من مرضك. ووضع يديه عليها، وفي الحال استقامت، ومجدت الله. فأجاب رئيس المجمع، وهو مغتاظ لإبراء يسوع في السبت، وقال للمجمع: هي ستة أيام ينبغي العمل فيها. ففيها تأتون وتستشفون، لا في يوم السبت. فأجاب الرب وقال: يا مرائي! أليس كل واحد منكم يحل ثوره أو حماره في السبت من المدود وينطلق به فيسقيه؟ وهذه، وهي ابنة إبراهيم التي ربطها الشيطان منذ ثمانى عشرة سنة، أما كان ينبغي أن تطلق من هذا الرباط يوم السبت؟ ولما قال هذا، حزى كل من كان يقاومه، وفرح المجمع بجميع الأمور المجيدة التي كانت تصدر منه.

### Love Your Neighbor

#### December – Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano

Leading the fight to end hunger, in partnership with our community and in service of our neighbors in need. We distribute food directly to low-income people at community sites and make food available for other nonprofit organizations serving the ill, needy and infants.

### Rose Bake Sale

It is that time of the year for the Christmas Rose bake sale. Ladies: Please contact Denise Dudum at 925 360-3350 and let her know of your special sweets which you will bring for the bake sale, also those who suggested to bring already baked and boxed cookies to also inform Denise. Thanks!

### Thank you for a Great Jolly Christmas Cars Event!

Our fourth Jolly Christmas Cars event was a success. Thank you to all the participants that made this tradition so much fun. It was very heartwarming seeing our parking lot being filled with so many decorated cars, pulling the community together, especially the little ones. God bless you and your family abundantly!



## **Annual Christmas Recital**

Hi Everyone!

I want to extend a special thank you to Rania Kashou for organizing last Sunday's Christmas Cars event and to all of the families that participated! It was a beautiful turnout and another memorable event for our kids and the Church community. So many sweet, frosting-face smiles in the group photo :)

We are now less than 2 weeks away from our annual Christmas Recital which will take place on Sunday, December 15th! As we have done in previous years, I need at least 5 student volunteers to read sections of the attached poem, "Calling All Ancestors of Christ to the Feast of His Nativity." Please contact me at Paulakassouf25@gmail.com or (951)662-9387, if your child will participate and I will assign their lines.

After reading the poem, all students will participate in singing the below Christmas Carols and the Nativity Dismissal Hymn. Please take time with your kids to listen to both and practice before December 15th. The youth group will be instrumental to helping the younger students follow lines of each song/hymn. Please encourage their participation!

- O Come all ye Faithful: <https://youtu.be/BldRKXtn6MQ>
- Joy to the World: <https://youtu.be/TX6ThHbts5Y>
- Nativity Dismissal Hymn: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IN27x6zW2KQ>

Thy Nativity, O Christ our God, / has shed upon the world the Light of knowledge; / for they that worshipped the stars, learned there from to worship thee the Sun of Righteousness / and to know that from the East of the highest, Thou didst come / O Lord, glory to Thee!

All children should wear white, green, and/or red for the Christmas Play.  
Any questions, let me know!

In Christ,  
Paula

## **Poinsetta Flowers for Christams**



Poinsetta Plants to adorn the Royal Doors during this holy season in loving memory of Nick Sr. and Helen Nicola offered by Georgianna and Raymond Rishwan, Nick Jr. and Najat Nicola, Ronald and Nancy Nicola, and families. Never forgotten, you live in each of us.



## **Upcoming Events**

<b>Every Sunday at 7pm</b>	St. Anastasia Fellowship Meeting.
<b>December 8<sup>th</sup></b>	General Parish Meeting after Divine Liturgy to entertain the idea of obtaining a loan to finish the fellowship hall.
<b>Friday, December 6<sup>th</sup></b>	Divine Liturgy at 11:00 am at St. Nicholas in San Francisco for the feast of St. Nicholas!

## **Coffee Hours**

<b>December 8<sup>th</sup></b>	Fairouz Freij in memory of Angel & Emily. Also for the good health of the Freij family and Rania Shuhaiber and family.
<b>December 15<sup>th</sup></b>	Rose's Bake Sale – No Coffee Hour
<b>March 2<sup>nd</sup></b>	In memory of Sal Freij (20 yr.) May his memory be eternal!

### Holy Oblations

This week, Holy Oblations are offered by:

- † St. John Parish Family for the good health of **Nick Nicola, George Messih, Henriette Hilal** and **Aida Youakeem**. Many years!
- † St. John Parish Family for the good health of **Sam Nassab**. Many years!
- † St. John Parish Family for the good health of **Fairouz Freij**. Many years!
- † Rocky and Nada Dudum for the good health of **Sandy Dudum Bennett**. Many years!
- † St. John Parish Family for the good health of **George Wahbeh**. Many years!
- † St. John Parish Family for the good health of **Ron Jeha**. Many years!
- † St. John Parish Family for the good health of Yasmeen Kasouf on her name's day. Many years!
- † Marina Khalaf and family in memory of **Shawqi Khalaf** (5 yrs.) 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

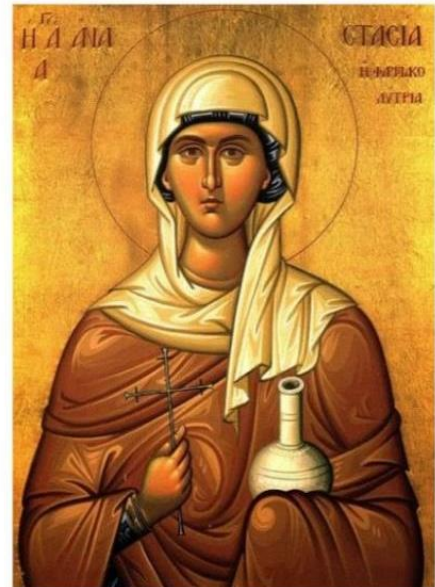
### Building Committee Update:

Due to low funds in the Building fund, work on the Fellowship Hall has been slow, and may soon be coming to a complete halt after some safety features such as guards and handrails are installed. More information will be provided at the Special Parish Meeting after services on Sunday December 8. This meeting is being called for the sole purpose of determining if the parish should secure an additional \$1 million loan to help complete the hall project. Please see the email sent Monday Dec 2 from the church office for information regarding the conditions of this loan and the financial information to support it.

In the meantime, we are in the process of getting additional bids and more information on cost projections for completion of the hall, specifically for the kitchen and bathrooms. Funds raised from the Fundraising dinner are available to cover some of these costs.

## St. Anastasia's Fellowship

**A 12-Step Fellowship for Orthodox Christians seeking recovery from alcoholism and addiction in its many forms**



**Every Sunday @ 7pm**

**St. John the Evangelist Orthodox Church**

**501 Moraga Way  
Orinda, CA 94563**

**Contact Joseph: (310) 227-9848**

# St. John Financial Snapshot

Year to Date Actual Finances as of 10/31/2024

INCOME	2024 Year To Date	% of Total Income	2023 Year to Date	
Membership Pledges	\$ 129,504	29%	\$ 164,774	-\$35K difference vs. 2023 YTD. -\$20K difference vs. YTD Budget.
Tray Collections	\$ 11,528	3%	\$ 9,534	
Preschool Contribution*	\$ 231,995	53%	\$ 248,081	Includes transfer of preschool net income in October 2022 to date, to support hall loan payments
Crab Feed and Festival	\$ 48,625	11%	\$ 17,166	
Ladies Contribution	\$ -	0%	\$ -	
Other**	\$ 17,520	4%	\$ 18,171	
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>\$ 439,172</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>\$ 457,725</b>	
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$ 439,172</b>		<b>\$ 206,145</b>	
<b>YTD Net Income</b>	<b>\$ -</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>\$ 251,580</b>	

\* In addition to the above, preschool payments to the church include \$400 per month to offset expenses paid by the church and \$4,883.33 per month towards the building fund (deposited directly into building fund)

\*\*Other includes bookstore, candles, flowers, palms, coffee hour, memorials, Amazon Smile program, weddings, prior year pledges

Building Fund Balance                   \$     **387,236.57**

Those who wish to see the full financial statement should contact Parish Council Treasurer Matthew Simon

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

You could use this QR code for your donation



*Sunday, December 15th (6:00 pm) - Free Admission*

# *Christmas Concert*

*St. John Church of Orinda*

*proudly presents*

# *Al-Salam Choir*



*directed by Vocalist/Psalmist*

# *Nader Zaki*

*music by Taghreed Haddad*

*Cantors (by Alphabetical order)*

*Dalia Salman, Georgina Totah,  
Ghada Zarzar, Maha Raie, Mira Aranki,  
Suheir Khori, Windy Jizrawi, & Zain Qatami*



*501 Moraga Way, Orinda, CA 94563*



## الكتاب المقدس زاد المؤمن، الجزء الثالث المتروبوليت سابا (اسبر)

### ماذا بعد؟

بعد "إله آبائنا" بدأ الله يكشف ذاته عبر صفاته، ولكن عملياً. فالشعب الذي اختاره جاهل وجاحد: "لا لأنكم أكثر من جميع الشعوب فأنتم أقلها" (تث ٧/٧: ٧). شعب قاسي الرقبة، لا يفهم إلا عملياً وبصعوبة بالغة "فأنت شعب عنيد" (تث ٩: ٦)، ليس هذا هو واقع البشر حتى اليوم؟ فعرف موسى أولاً أنه هو الكائن: "أنا هو الذي هو" (وبالعبرية: "أشير إهيهه آشير" (خروج ٣: ١٤)، وبدأ المسيرة فعلياً. فصار الله يُعرف بفعله في الطبيعة/ صار إلهنا الذي يرعانا. الإله الذي جفف البحر الأحمر، الذي أطعمنا ممناً في البرية، الذي فجر الماء من الصخرة، الذي شفانا من لدغات الأفاعي... وهكذا بان الله سيّد الطبيعة.

بدأت المواجهة مع القبائل والشعوب الأخرى. والنزاعات هذه كانت مألوفة، في ذلك الزمان، خصوصاً مع الشعوب الرحل (لنتذكر غزوات القبائل، غارات البدو...). وما زالت الأرض تزرع تحت الاستعمار والاحتلال بكل أشكاله. هنا ظهر الله سيّد التاريخ، لكن سياسته مع جماعته اختلفت. فمع أنه القوي بامتياز، والأقدر من كل الآلهة، فهو لا ينصر قبيلته في كل حين. عندما ينتصرون يكون هو الناصر والأقوى، وعندما ينجبون يكون هو المنسحب من نصرتهم والأقوى أيضاً. لماذا تركنا الله؟ سؤال يتردد مراراً على صفحات العهد القديم. وما زلنا، حتى اليوم، نتساءل لماذا تركنا الله في هذه المحنة أو تلك؟ لماذا سمح بالتجربة؟ لماذا لا يوقف الشرور عنا؟ ألا نتصرف كشعب العهد القديم في أحيان كثيرة؟ ألا نتصرف كما لو أنّ الله إلهنا نحن فقط جماعته بامتياز، وباقي البشر ليسوا من صنيعته، وفي أحسن الأحوال من درجات دنيا؟

وكان الجواب الإلهي أنا معكم طالما أنكم أوفياء، لكنكم عندما تتركون عهودي أترككم لما تركتموني من أجله. فعرفوا أنه إله سيّد وعليهم طاعته. وفروضه ووصاياه تُلزم بتغيير أخلاقي وسموّ روحي.

آن الأوان، إذًا، لأن يرتفع البشر إلى مستوى العدل، فصارت شريعة الله لهم أن يقيموا العدل "العين بالعين والسنّ بالسنّ..." (خروج ٢١: ٢٤). وكانت قفزة نوعيّة أمام مجتمع يسوده الثأر والانتقام أضعافاً مضاعفة.

## وماذا يريد هذا الإله بعد؟

العدل جيّد، لكنّه درجة على طريق المعرفة الإلهيّة، لكنّها درجة ليست كافية، وعلى الإنسان أن ينتقل من الحرف إلى الروح، من القانون إلى غاية القانون، من الشرائع إلى هدفها، من الطقوس إلى قلب ربّها. عليه النفاذ من الجسم إلى القلب. فالرحمة أهمّ من العدل (مت ٩: ١٣). والذبيحة الحيوانيّة صورة لذبيحة القلب "الذبيحة لله روح منسحق" (مز ٥٠: ١٧). والعبادة ليست بالأناشيد والبخور والاحتفالات الفخمة، بل بالرحمة والعدل والإحسان. يطلب هذا الإله قلوباً لحميّة لا حجريّة (راجع الأنبياء، وبخاصة إشعياء ويوثيل).

إلا أنّ قساوة الإنسان تدفعه إلى مقاومة السمو الروحي، فكان المنفى وسيلة التطهير من أدران الدنيوية والدهريّة. وسمح لنبوخذنصر بهدم الهيكل الذي هزأ الله بالشعب عندما أراد أن يحصره فيه. وفي المنفى في بابل، وكانوا قد قطعوا ألف سنة مع هذا الإله، وما زالوا لا يستطيعون إدراك أنّ الإله الأوحيد، وأنّه ليس أسير أيّ مكان ولو كان هيكل أورشليم. فرتلوا: "على أنهار بابل... كيف نرتّم للربّ ترنيمه في أرض الغربة" (مزمور ١٣٦: ١). والقصد هل يسمع ترنيمنا، فنحن بعيدون جداً عنه. صدمة النفي كانت شديدة لكنّها مطهّرة ومنقيّة. لقد خلق السبي البابلي البقية الأمانة، التي ستكون وفيّة لتعليم إلهها، وستجعل حياتها موافقة لوصاياها. ومنها سيأتي المعمدان ومريم العذراء، وكلّ الذين استطاعوا قبول يسوع المسيح.

على ضوء هذه القراءة، نفهم الكتاب المقدّس ونسمع كلام الله الموجّه إلينا شخصياً. قراءة كهذه تعرف أنّ الكتاب المقدّس كتاب ديني، لا كتاب تاريخ، وإن حوى بعضاً منه، ولا كتاب علم وعلوم، وإن ذُكرت معلومات تطابقت أو تناقضت مع العلم الحديث، ولا كتاب حكمة بشريّة، ولو استخدم حكمة زمانه لتربية البشر وتهذيبهم. إنّها مسيرة الله مع البشر. مسيرة شخصيّة ومرافقة حميمة لهم، حتّى إنّها اكتملت بموته على الصليب، من أجلهم ومن أجل خلاصهم. هو كتاب نلقى فيه إلهنا ونتعرّف إليه ونسمع كلامه.

فهلّا بدأنا بفهم قراءةنا المسيحيّة للكتاب؟



## **The Holy Scriptures: Nourishment of the Faithful, Part Three**

*By His Eminence Metropolitan Saba (Isper)*

### **Then what?**

After revealing Himself as “the God of our Fathers,” God began to reveal Himself through His attributes by practical application. The people He had chosen were ignorant and ungrateful: “Not because you were more numerous than other peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples” (Deut 7:7). They were a stubborn people who understood only practical things with great difficulty: “For you are a stiff-necked people” (Deut 9:6). Is this not the reality of human beings even in our present day? God first revealed to Moses that He is the Existing One: “I am who I am” “ehye ‘ăšer ‘ehye” in Hebrew (Exodus 3:14), and the journey effectively started. God became known through His action in nature: He became our God, the One Who takes care of us. He is the God Who made the Red Sea into dry land, Who fed us in the wilderness with manna, Who brought water out of the flinty rock, Who healed us from snake bites, etc. Thus, God appeared as the Master of nature.

Confrontations began with other tribes and nations. These conflicts were common in those ancient days, especially among nomadic peoples (we can recall the tribal invasions, the raids of the Bedouins). The land was still under various forms of colonization and occupation. Here, God appeared as the Master of history, but His program with His people was different. Although He is supremely powerful and mightier than all gods, He does not always grant victory to His tribe. When they win, He is the victor and the strongest, and when they lose, He has withdrawn from them His support yet remained the strongest. Why did God abandon us? This question recurs many times in the Old Testament. We still ask today why God left us in this or that ordeal. Why does He allow temptations? Why doesn't He stop evils from happening to us? Do we not often behave like the people of the Old Testament? Do we not act as though God is exclusively our God, as if we were His chosen people and other peoples are not of His creation, and are, at best, of a lower rank?

God's answer was, I am with you as long as you are faithful, but when you abandon My covenants, I leave you to what you have left Me for. They knew, then, that He is the sovereign God and that they must obey Him. His laws and commandments require moral change and spiritual transcendence.

It was time for humans to rise to the level of justice. God's law for them became to establish justice: “An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth” (Exodus 21:24). This was

a qualitative leap for a society dominated by vengeance and disproportionate retaliation.

### **What does this God want next?**

Justice is good, yet it is merely a step towards knowing God, but not in itself sufficient. Man must move from the letter to the spirit, from the laws to their goal, from the canons to their purpose, from the rituals to the heart of the Lord. He must move from the flesh to the soul. Mercy is more important than justice (see Matthew 9:13). Animal sacrifice is a symbol of the sacrifice of the heart: “Sacrifices to God are a broken spirit” (Psalm 50:17). Worship is not in hymns, incense, and grand celebrations but in mercy, justice, and kindness. This God seeks hearts of flesh, not stone (read from the prophets, especially Isaiah and Joel).

However, the harshness of man drives him to resist spiritual transcendence. Hence, exile was a means of purification from worldly and eternal impurities. God allowed Nebuchadnezzar to destroy the ancient temple, thus mocking the people who tried to confine Him to it. In the exile in Babylon, they had spent a thousand years with this God, yet they still were unable to grasp that He is the one true God, not confined to any place – not even the temple of Jerusalem. They lamented: “By the rivers of Babylon... how shall we sing the Lord’s song in a foreign land?” (Psalm 136:1). Their concern was whether He would hear their song, as if they were far removed from Him. The shock of exile was severe yet purifying and cleansing. The Babylonian captivity created the faithful remnant who remained loyal to their God’s teachings and aligned their lives with His commandments. From them would come the Virgin Mary, John the Baptist, and all who would accept Jesus Christ.

In light of this reading, we understand the holy scriptures and hear God’s word directed to us personally. Such a reading recognizes that the holy scriptures are a religious book, not a history book, although they contain elements of history. They are not a book of science and secular knowledge, even if they mention information that may align or conflict with contemporary scholarship. They are not a book of human wisdom, although they used the wisdom of the time to educate and refine humanity. They are the journey of God with humanity – a personal journey and intimate companionship – culminating in His death on the cross for them and their salvation. They are a book where we encounter our God, get to know Him, and hear His word.

Shall we now begin to understand our Christian reading of the Holy Scriptures?

His Eminence  
The Most Reverend  
Metropolitan SABA



Archbishop of New York  
and Metropolitan of  
All North America

**ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN ARCHDIOCESE  
OF NORTH AMERICA**

**Prot. no.:** 568/2024

“Nothing so arouses the soul, gives it wing, sets it free from the earth, releases it from the prison of the body, teaches it to love wisdom and to despise all the things of this life, as concordant melody and sacred song composed in rhythm.” +St. John Chrysostom (On Psalm 41)

Beloved Brother Hierarchs, Reverend Clergy, and Christ-Loving Faithful,

Every year we set aside the second Sunday of December to remember and pray for our faithful church musicians. With God’s help and inspiration, they are always praying for us by chanting the sacred hymns of our Church. On this day we, in turn, say thank you and pray for them.

The hymnography of our Orthodox faith is an expression of theology. One could never pick up an academic or dogmatic book about the faith his entire life, but could still become a theologian by simply listening to and internalizing the words of these hymns.

At the same time, the richness of our hymns becomes even richer when they are chanted and sung correctly and with beauty. It is not by chance that countless numbers of people over the centuries were first attracted to the faith by the beauty of our services.

On the Sunday of Musician Appreciation Day, we extend heartfelt thanks to Ms. Mareena Boosamra-Ball and all the members of our archdiocesan Department of Sacred Music for their commitment in supporting this sacred ministry. They continue to expend the possibilities for people to learn how to chant and sing praises to our Lord through various means. We are especially grateful that, for the first time this year, we have started our Antiochian Orthodox Online Ecclesiastical Music School that trains people in both Western and Byzantine Music, according to their preferences and interests. This, in addition to the various Sacred Music Institutes, and youth and parish workshops sponsored by the Department, helps us to further develop and train our current and future musicians.

We also gratefully honor all of our choir directors, singers and chanters, the vast majority of whom dedicate themselves to this sacred ministry for little or no compensation. For them, it is indeed a labor of love. Wishing you God’s every blessing, I remain,

Your Father in Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "SABA". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "S" and "A".

✠/SABA

Archbishop of New York and Metropolitan of All North America

*“The disciples were first called Christians in Antioch” (Acts 11: 26)*

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