

+St. John the Evangelist Orthodox Church

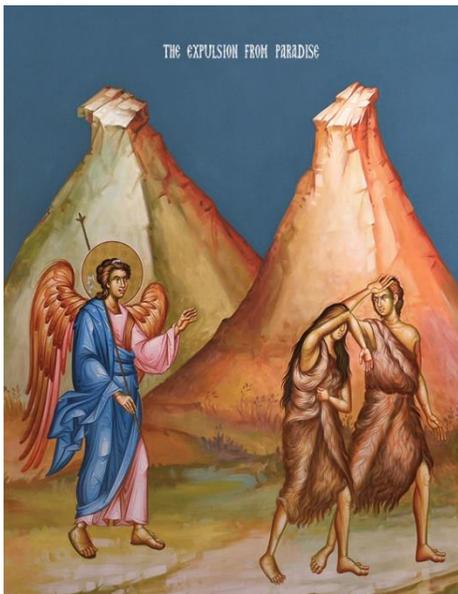
Antiochian Archdiocese of North America
Metropolitan Saba of New York and all North America
V. Rev. Fr. Nicholas Borzghol, Pastor
Dn. Nicholas Adranly

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SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 2026; TONE 4 / EOTHINON 4 **SUNDAY OF FORGIVENESS (CHEESE FARE)**

UNCOVERING OF THE SEVEN MARTYRS' RELICS AT GATE OF EUGENIOS IN CONSTANTINOPLE;
MARTYR ANTHUSA AND HER TWELVE SERVANTS



On February 22 in the Holy Orthodox Church, we commemorate the uncovering of the Seven Martyrs' relics at Gate of Eugenios in Constantinople; and Martyr Anthusa and her twelve servants. On this day, we make remembrance of the exile of the first-fashioned, Adam, from the Paradise of delight.

It is the Sunday of Forgiveness, known also as Cheese Fare Sunday. Today's lesson from the Holy Gospel teaches us about forgiveness and fasting, and how both are crucial to our own return to Paradise. The divine Fathers also set the anniversary of the exile of Adam from the Paradise of bliss on this day, at the entrance of Great Lent, to show us by deed as well as word how great is the benefit that accrues to man from fasting and repenting; and, on the contrary, how great the harm that comes from destructive gluttony and from disobedience to the divine commandments. The sin of gluttony resulted in Adam and Eve's banishment from Paradise, because they disobeyed God by eating from the tree which He had forbidden them. The Church reminds us of this event to encourage us to return to that ancient glory and primeval happiness by means of fasting and obedience to God and His commandments.

THE EPISTLE

O Lord, how magnified are Thy works. In wisdom hast Thou made them all.

Bless the Lord, O my soul.

The Reading from the Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans. (13:11-14:4)

Brethren, now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. Let us walk becomingly, as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness, not in chambering and licentiousness, not in strife and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh to fulfill its lusts. But as for the one who is weak in faith, receive him, but not for disputes over opinions. For one believes he may eat anything; but the weak person eats herbs. Let not him who eats despise him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats; for God has received him. Who are you to be the judge over the servant of a stranger? To his own master he either stands or falls; but he will be made to stand; for God is able to make him stand.

ما أَعْظَمَ أَعْمَالَكَ يَا رَبُّ، كُلُّهَا بِحِكْمَةٍ صَنَعْتَ.

بَارِكِي يَا نَفْسِي الرَّبَّ.

فَصَلِّ مِنْ رِسَالَةِ الْقَدِيسِ بُولْسِ الرَّسُولِ إِلَى أَهْلِ رُومِيَّةِ. (14:4-13:11)

يا إِخْوَةُ، إِنَّ خَلَاصَنَا الْآنَ أَقْرَبُ مِمَّا كَانَ حِينَ آمَنَّا. قَدْ تَنَاهَى اللَّيْلُ وَاقْتَرَبَ النَّهَارُ، فَلَنَدْعُ عَنَّا أَعْمَالَ الظُّلْمَةِ وَنَلْبَسَ أَسْلِحَةَ النُّورِ. لِنَسْلُكَنَّ سُلُوكًا لائِقًا كَمَا فِي النَّهَارِ، لَا بِالْقُصُوفِ وَالسُّكْرِ، وَلَا بِالْمَضَاجِعِ وَالعَهْرِ، وَلَا بِالخِصَامِ وَالْحَسَدِ، بَلِ الْبُسُوبِ الرَّبِّ يَسُوعَ الْمَسِيحِ وَلَا تَهَنَّمُوا بِأَجْسَادِكُمْ لِقَضَاءِ شَهَوَاتِهَا. مَنْ كَانَ ضَعِيفًا فِي الْإِيمَانِ فَاتَّخِذُوهُ بِغَيْرِ مُبَاحَثَةٍ فِي الْآرَاءِ. مِنَ النَّاسِ مَنْ يَعْتَقِدُ أَنَّ لَهُ أَنْ يَأْكُلَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ، أَمَّا الضَّعِيفُ فَيَأْكُلُ بُقُولًا. فَلَا يَزِدِرِ الَّذِي يَأْكُلُ مَنْ لَا يَأْكُلُ وَلَا يَدِينُ الَّذِي لَا يَأْكُلُ مَنْ يَأْكُلُ، فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ قَدْ اتَّخَذَهُ. مَنْ أَنْتَ يَا مَنْ تَدِينُ عَبْدًا أجنبيًّا؟ إِنَّهُ لِمَوْلَاهُ يَنْبُتُ أَوْ يَسْقُطُ. لَكِنَّهُ سَيَنْبُتُ لِأَنَّ اللَّهَ قَادِرٌ عَلَى أَنْ يُثَبِّتَهُ.

THE GOSPEL

The reading from the Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew. (6:14-21)

The Lord said to His Disciples: If you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father also will forgive you; but if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. And when you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by men. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that your fasting may not be seen by men but by your Father Who is in secret; and your Father Who sees in secret will reward you. Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

فَصَلِّ شَرِيفٌ مِنْ بَشَارَةِ الْقَدِيسِ مَتَّى الْإِنْجِيلِيِّ الْبَشِيرِ وَالتَّلْمِيزِ الطَّاهِرِ. (21-14:6)

قَالَ الرَّبُّ: إِنَّ غَفَرْتُمْ لِلنَّاسِ زَلَّاتِهِمْ، يَغْفِرُ لَكُمْ أَبُوكُمُ السَّمَاوِيِّ أَيْضًا. وَإِنْ لَمْ تَغْفِرُوا لِلنَّاسِ زَلَّاتِهِمْ، فَأَبُوكُمْ أَيْضًا لَا يَغْفِرُ لَكُمْ زَلَّاتِكُمْ. وَمَتَى صُمَّمْتُمْ، فَلَا تَكُونُوا مُعَبِّسِينَ كَالْمُرَائِينَ. فَإِنَّهُمْ يُنْكِرُونَ وَجُوهَهُمْ لِيُظْهِرُوا لِلنَّاسِ صَائِمِينَ. الْحَقُّ أَقُولُ لَكُمْ، إِنَّهُمْ قَدْ أَخَذُوا أَجْرَهُمْ. أَمَّا أَنْتَ فَإِذَا صُمَّمْتَ، فَادْهِنِ رَأْسَكَ وَاغْسِلِ وَجْهَكَ لئَلَّا تَظْهَرَ لِلنَّاسِ صَائِمًا، بَلْ لِأَبِيكَ الَّذِي فِي الْخَفِيَّةِ، وَأَبُوكَ الَّذِي يَرَى فِي الْخَفِيَّةِ يُجَازِيكَ عَلَانِيَةً. لَا تَكْنِزُوا لَكُمْ كُنُوزًا عَلَى الْأَرْضِ، حَيْثُ يُفْسِدُ السُّوسُ وَالْأَكَلَةُ وَيَنْقُبُ السَّارِقُونَ وَيَسْرِقُونَ. لَكِنْ اكْنِزُوا لَكُمْ كُنُوزًا فِي السَّمَاءِ حَيْثُ لَا يُفْسِدُ سَوْسٌ وَلَا أَكَلَةٌ وَلَا يَنْقُبُ السَّارِقُونَ وَلَا يَسْرِقُونَ. لِأَنَّهُ حَيْثُ تَكُونُ كُنُوزُكُمْ، هُنَاكَ تَكُونُ قُلُوبُكُمْ.

Upcoming Events

February 22nd	Forgiveness Vespers, Sunday, February 22nd at 6:00 pm
February 22nd	Ladies meeting; all are welcome to attend

Coffee Hour

February 22 nd	Norma Khalil in memory of Randa and Charlie
March 1 st	Sam and Carol Syriani for the good health of their family
March 8 th	3-year memorial for Mariam Khalil Munayer from Amal Ibrahim Munayer, Joseph, Stephen, Charlie, and Eden Munayer. May her memory be eternal!
March 15 th	Sponsor Needed
March 22 nd	Dudum, Deitzmann, and Morgan Families in memory of Jim and Rose Romley, Ray, Gloria and Brad Zachariah, and Sig Dietzmann. May their memory be eternal!
March 29 th	Sponsor Needed
April 5 th	Palm Sunday. Bakesale instead of Coffee Hour
April 12 th	Pascha!

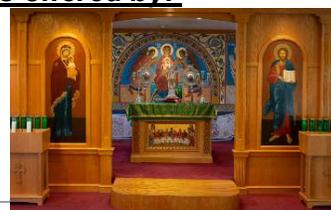
Holy Oblations

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 **Nadia Frangieh** Many years!
- † St. John Parish Family for the good health of **Ron and Ruth Jeha** Many years!
- † St. John Parish Family for the good health of **Bradley Yowakim.** Many years!
- † St. John Parish Family for the good health of **John Freij.** Many years!
- † St. John Parish Family for the good health of **Suhad Halaka.** Many years!

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

General Parish Meeting

Last Sunday at the general meeting of the parish, we elected 2 new members for the parish council: Elias Shaheen and Jimmy Juha.

Also, Nicole Youakim was appointed by the priest.

Thank you for your willingness to serve your church in this capacity.

We thank those who served and their term expired.

God bless you all. -Fr. Nicholas

Ladies Meeting

Ladies meeting on Sunday, February 22nd. All are welcome to attend!

Talent Show Meeting

Talent Show meeting after church on March 1, in the admin building. Anyone who wants to participate, please attend. It won't take long. We need people to serve refreshments, help with the production and Talent! It's not too late to sign up! Call Lynn Farradj 925-323-5746

Annual Easter Egg Hunt

Saturday April 11th is our annual Easter Egg hunt event. After morning service. Anyone who would like to co-chair this fantastic event, please contact Rania Kashou asap 415.722.0774 or raniamariakashou@gmail.com

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

You could use this QR code for your donation



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About St. John's

This is the first in a series of messages in the Weekly Bulletin about our new Fellowship Hall, and about our parish's history. One of the many stories about building the Fellowship Hall we will recall for years to come has to do with how St. John Parishioners rallied and contributed the funds needed to see this dream become a reality.

In 2 Corinthians we find one of the most familiar and often spoken Bible passages. "But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly. And he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver."

Hanada Fasheh a beloved daughter, sister, aunt, friend, and devoted servant to her faith, family, and community, lived this passage, marked by compassion, dedication, and a genuine desire to uplift others. After earning a degree from UC Berkeley, she began a career in business and held leadership roles at Bank of America and Wells Fargo. Her passion to serve led her to earn Masters and Doctoral degrees in Behavioral Health and Psychology. Hanada mentored younger counselors and found ways to counsel underserved families. Her work helped individuals navigate educational, social, and healthcare systems with dignity and hope.

Grounded in her strong faith, Hanada taught Sunday School at St. John, was an active member of the Order of St. Ignatius, and faithfully attended services at St. John with her dear father, Ibrahim.

Following Hanada's heartbreaking passing in September 2017, our parish learned that Hanada left instructions in her estate that resulted in a generous and selfless donation to St. John Building Fund of \$536,000.00. Her gift lit the flame for the Fellowship Hall Fund Raising Drive.

Hanada's legacy lives on through her humility, kindness, faith, and the many lives she touched. Seeing her father, Ibrahim, and her sister, Jordis, in church is a loving reminder of God's cheerful giver, Dr. Hanada Fasheh.

The poster features a light blue background with several colorful Easter eggs and bunny ears. The eggs are decorated with various patterns: a green egg with white flowers, a pink egg with blue polka dots, a yellow and white striped egg, and a pink egg with blue polka dots. The bunny ears are white with pink inner linings. The text is centered and reads:

ST. JOHN'S
PASCHA
EGG HUNT

APRIL 11, 2026 | AFTER MORNING LITURGY

PETTING ZOO (12PM-2PM)

\$10 DONATION/KID

EGG HUNT, FOOD, ARTS & CRAFT

**IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO VOLUNTEER AND/OR DONATE
PLEASE USE EVENT SIGN UP GENIUS LINK OR
CONTACT RANIA KASHOU**

**Diocese of Los Angeles and
the West 2026 Parish Life
Conference**

**Marriott Marquis San Diego
Marina (July 1st - 5th)**

**Host Parish: St. George
Church (San Diego, CA)**



Happy New Year PLC Family!

We are so excited to kick off our 2026 Parish Life Conference in beautiful San Diego, CA, during the 250th anniversary of our great Nation! Thanks to all the wonderful feedback you've shared over the years, the CPCC has heard you and has made some meaningful changes to make the PLC more affordable this year and for the years to come. Below are some of the major changes that will be implemented:

- Due to the positive feedback from the 2025 PLC, **one full day** has been removed from the 2026 PLC and will remain that way for all future PLCs. This will create significant cost savings for our Clergy and their Parishes.
- The standard public room rate at the Marriott Marquis during the 2026 PLC weekend is approximately **\$450 per night**. Through CPCC negotiations and donor support, attendees will receive a **\$199 per night rate (plus taxes)** during one of the most expensive weekends of the year. The CPCC is also working hard to secure room rates below **\$199 per night** for the 2027 and 2028 PLCs.
- Ticket prices on all events this year will be **~20% lower** than 2025 prices

We can't wait to be together in July for a weekend full of events, fellowship, and meaningful time together! Thanks to the incredible room rate secured, the prime PLC location, and the holiday weekend, rooms are filling up earlier and at a higher rate than usual. We highly recommend booking your rooms early using the link below.

Additionally, there is **limited seating for our Saturday night event**, offering a front-row view of the San Diego Marina and the famous San Diego 4th of July firework show. Be sure to register and purchase your tickets as soon as possible to secure your spot.

On behalf of the CPCC, we wish you a very Happy New Year! May 2026 be filled with countless blessings for each of you. We look forward to seeing you in July!

St John Fellowship Hall Donor Recognition

The St John Fellowship Hall Building and Fundraising Committees along with the Parish Council would like to thank and recognize those donors who have given over the years to the Building Fund. All donors will be recognized on a donor wall feature located in the reception area (foyer) of the hall at the levels shown below. If you would like your contribution recognized in another way, or if you have questions regarding your donation level, please contact the church office. The Parish Council has chosen March 15th as the last day to make corrections or changes to the list. At that point we will order the donor wall.

Recognition level	Names of Donors	
Cornerstone \$500,000 +	Hanada I. Fasheh	
Patron \$100,000-249,000	Rick and Sandra Dudum Jack and Sylvia Dudum	Jason and Lena Dudum Fuad and Nadia Sweiss
Benefactor \$50,000 - 99,999	Keith Dudum Joseph Sweis and Family	The McClintic Family
Provider \$25,000 - 49,999	Sami and Kathy Adranly Jay Cawog and Family James and Denise Dudum Rocky and Nada Dudum	Nick and Deena Farrah Jon and Larissa Geleris Stephen and Angela Kreta Elias and Samia Shaheen
Supporter \$10,000-24,999	Dn. Nicolas and Rula Adranly George and Samar Adranly ADOBE – matching gift for Hanna Family Anonymous Dominick and Joby Aranda George and Freida Cawog Ibrahim Fasheh Jordis Fasheh Lisa and David Hanna and Family Phillip and Gina Jaber Jawad and Violet Jaber	Ron and Ruth Jeha, in Memory of Michael Elias Jeha Sam Khoury Ron and Nancy Nicola Fady and Joumana Najjar Orthodox Vision Foundation The Potts Family Raymond and Georgianna Rishwain Raif and Sonia Rihani and Family Eddie and Evleen Salem Ernest and Noha Shulze and Family Daniel and Mona Thayer Samir and Abba Toubassy Ramsay Zacharia

Partner
\$5,000-9,999

Anonymous
Adranly, Maha
Charles and Marilee Ajalat
John and Dina Freij
Miranda Halaby
Sandy Hodges
John and Sylvia Jaber
Leila Farradj

Lynn and Usama Farradj
Issam and Rania Freij
Salem and Antoinette Mufarreh
Darron Rishwain
George Theodosy
Suzanne & Nabil Taovil
In Memory of Najat Nicola,
Ghada, Nassif and Yasmina Malouf

Friend
\$1,000-4,999

Saleem & Samya Abudawood
Jack Ajluni
Anonymous
Richard and Joyce Ayoob
Anthony and Kimberly Bailey
Sandy Bennett
William and Judith Bosl
Fr. Nicholas Borzghol
Chris and Bethany Cichon
Challenger Enterprises
Dana Dietzmann
Daryl and Katherine Dudum
J.D. and Jessie Dudum
Luke and Tim Ernst
F&M Bank
Fadi and Rana Feghali
Alex and Helen Ghantous
Khalil and Leila Hakeem
Ronald Issac
JDO Dakota Ventures
Mary Karadsheh
Maha Kury-Peterson
Brandon Laidlaw
Lieman Properties
Azmie and Melanie Madanat
Chris and Eva Malki
Margaret Mas
Fred and Tanya Milkie
Siham Mitry

Myers Restaurant Supply
George Najjar
Samer & Maram Nassar
Sam & Nelly Nassif
Dn George and Jane Nassief
Ramzi and Marina Nassoura
Ziad & Charlene Nassoura
Naim and Helen Nazzal
Susan Nazzal
Nicholas Luengo Construction
Nick Jr. and Najat Nicola and Family
Antone Nino
Fawda Samara
Jeanne Shikany
Samir and Caroline Syriani
Sami and Alia Sahouria
Andrew Thayer
Steven Thayer
The Kebab Shop Restaurant
John and Jan Theodosy
Samir and Abla Toubassy
In Memory of Dwight Underhill
Robert and Katrina Waddell
George and Afaf Wahbeh
Kamal and Samar Wahbe
Nabil and Souhila Wakileh
William Wood Architects
Hala Yowakeem
Samir and Nadia Zeidan

Builder
\$100-999

George E. Adranly
Felice and Eric Ajluni
Howard & Marilyn Ashcraft
Eman Baalbaki
Tania & Daniel Bajada
Randy and Barbara Bray
Ken Bullock Ins & Fin Services
Robert and Renee Crawford
Mary Cubeisy
Dn. John and Irena Dibs
Herb & Tania DeGroot
Tony Dudum
Fuad and Mary Farradj
Naim & Nadia Frangieh
John & Dina Freij
Fairouz Freij
Fred and Sue Gedeon
Sandra Gedeon
Benjamin and Ashley Geleris
Zzane & Irene Guajardo
Justin and Julianna Karanikola
Bahij & Yardena Hanhan
Raymond Hilal
Mounir and Muna Hobaika
Angela Husary
Jack's Restaurant
Carol Jeha
Marc Johnston and Monica Mikhail
Samir Juha
Andreas Kamlot
David Kashou
Rania Kashou
Rima Kashou
Sandy Kashou

Norma Khalil
Elia Khalilieh
Elizabeth Kreta
Peter and Courtney Kreta
Mary Lodge
William and Mary Massarweh
Daniel & Amy McLellan
Mendocino Farms Restaurant
Paul and Arwa Mogannam
Alan & Dale Morgan
Khalil Mounzer
Ibrahim Munayer
Marwan Mukhar
William and Jida Nasser
Maureen Nelson
Mark Nicola
Michelle Nicola
Pacer Physical Therapy
Jacob Ritter
Alexis Robbins
Rocco's Restaurant & Pizza
Neezar Samara
Wanda and Leonard Sarkissian
See's Candies
Jabra & Rania Shuheiber
Marie Simon
Matthew Simon
Summit Landscape Development
Christina Tast
Sami Tawasha
Christina Thabit
TP Wolf
Khalil Yowakeem
Sam & Nevine Yowakim

Revised 2-11-26

“God, Where is the Wound?”

A Review by Metropolitan Saba (Isper)

([God, Where is the Wound?](#) by Sister Siluana Vlad, Sebastian Publishing, 2022)

Mother Siluana is a radiant face – an illumined person. She is a witness to our times of what divine grace does in those who allow it to dwell within them—when that grace encounters a person open to both human beings and the knowledge of their era, discerning wisely what is good to receive.

Mother Siluana was born during the Second World War, in 1944. In her youth, she experienced deep suffering caused by the lack of meaning in life, and the emptiness and dryness of the soul. She sought to confront this void. After discovering Christ, she experienced the work of divine grace through prayer and self-knowledge. She became certain that He had accompanied her in her pain, waited for her, forgiven her, and—most importantly—loved her with an infinite love. She consecrated her life to Him, striving to love Him passionately and limitlessly with all her heart.

Her wounded heart, healed by the grace of faith, found great consolation in the writings of St. Silouan the Athonite. Metropolitan Theophan of Moldovia and Bukovina, Romania, said of her: “Saint Silouan offered her the image of true prayer, the icon of the love of God and neighbor, and the strength to rise from the hell of despair.”

She studied philosophy and taught it for a year, after which she engaged in social work among youth. In 1999, she entered a period of monastic discernment while continuing her charitable and social efforts, focusing especially on street children and offering spiritual guidance to young people.

She was tonsured a nun in 2001 and, with the blessing of Metropolitan Theophan, she founded the Center of the Archangels Michael and Gabriel for Formation and Counseling, serving as its coordinator. In 2008, she moved with the center to the city of Iași and, together with several nuns, founded the Monastery of St. Silouan the Athonite in Iași, Romania.

She gave important lectures at many conferences and workshops in Romania and abroad, addressing topics such as relationships among youth, stages of love, family

and contemporary society, the causes of depression in modern man, self-knowledge, the spiritual life, etc. She reposed in the Lord in 2021.

Her explanations of Christian anthropology are profoundly attractive. Readers discover with amazement, through her precise descriptions of psychological experience, how deeply they relate to her insights. She uses concepts from modern science to make it easier to understand the common human experiences with which every reader can identify.

She distinguishes between *life as mere survival* and *life as a gift from God*. The life for which God created us becomes possible only when we open ourselves to His grace through prayer and the keeping of His commandments. She gives great importance to discovering God as a living Person, active in every moment of the soul and life of Orthodox Christians. She writes, “God is enamored of us.”

Her book [*God, Where is the Wound?*](#) contains the texts of three conferences she delivered in Germany in 2012. In this work, she addresses the common difficulties modern people face in their relationship with God: what prevents them from receiving or even desiring divine grace, what preserves that grace once received, and how it operates within us. She addresses anxiety, stress, depression, trauma, suicide, relationships, sexuality, and the consequences of inherited family traumas that remain unresolved.

She speaks of the effect of deep-seated trauma stored in the subconscious, noting that some philosophies suggest avoiding or ignoring it. She explains that the thoughts emerging from repressed wounds *poison the soul*. Therefore, “we must pay attention to them, to what lies beneath them, to what we feel through them—and we must offer them to the Lord for healing.” She calls this offering to God “the body of prayer.”

She writes:

“Emotions are the fire, and thoughts are the logs—the combustible material. Let us note that the devil does not attack us through our emotions. Sin does not enter us through sadness, fear, hatred, or pride expressed as feelings. These are the energies

of a sick soul, bursting forth from our fallen nature, beyond the control of our will. Sin enters through evil thoughts that promise deliverance from the pain caused by those feelings—thoughts that lead us to the Evil One, to evil words, and to destructive actions.”

She continues:

“There is addiction to negative emotions just as there is addiction to alcohol; therefore, healing is difficult.” (p.93)

And she adds:

“What matters to me is the pain of the person before me. When I come into contact with another’s pain, I can transform it into the ‘body of prayer’ on their behalf. Their pain reverberates within me—it hurts me without becoming my own pain—but I experience it, and this makes my prayer for them possible, just as I pray for myself when I am in pain.” (p.95)

Throughout her book, she stresses the importance of *listening* and the modern person’s deep need to be heard. She insists that one must not suppress the effects of trauma but instead bring them before God. She writes: “When we repress the effects of trauma and do not offer them to God, we contribute to passing them on to our children and grandchildren.” (p.101)

She adds: “We must remember that every child who enters a family is a potential savior for that family and its descendants.”

Mother Siluana teaches that the mystery of Orthodoxy lies in transforming all that we are—everything we have received from God—so that it may return to Him. The human heart is the arena where created energies are transformed into divine-human energies by the power and operation of grace.

This is a book well worth reading, especially for all those involved in education, pastoral work, and spiritual guidance.

"الله، حيث الجرح؟" قرأت لك بقلم المطران سابا

(الله، حيث الجرح؟ للراهبة سلوانا فلاد سيباستيان للنشر ٢٠٢٢)

الأم سلوانا وجهٌ مستنير. إنها شاهدٌ من عصرنا على ما تفعله النعمة الإلهية، في من تسكن فيه هذه النعمة، ويكون منفتحاً على إنسان وعلوم عصره، فيعرف كيف ينتقي المناسب منها.

وُلدت الأم سلوانا خلال الحرب العالمية الثانية، وتحديدًا في العام ١٩٤٤. اختبرت في صباها آلاماً أساسية من جرّاء نقص معنى الحياة، وفراغ النفس الداخلي وجفافها، فسعت إلى مواجهتها. وبعدها اكتشفت المسيح اختبرت عمل نعمة الله بواسطة الصلاة ومعرفة الذات، فتأكدت من أنه كان يرافقها في أوجاعها وينتظرها، وأنه غفر لها، والأهمّ أنه يحبّها بواسع محبّته. فكّرت حياتها له، وسعت إلى أن تحبّه بشغفٍ وتوقٍ بلا حدود، من كل قلبها. كما وجد قلبها المجروح والمشفيّ بنعمة الإيمان، في كتابات القديس سلوان الآثوسي تعزيةً كبيرة، حتّى قال فيها ثيوفان ميتروبوليت مولدوفا الحالي: "قدّم القديس سلوان لها صورة الصلاة الحقّة، وأيقونة حبّ الله والقريب، والقوّة للنهوض من جحيم اليأس."

درست الفلسفة وعلمتها لسنة واحدة. لتخرط بعد ذلك في نشاطات اجتماعية مع الشبيبة. دخلت مرحلة اختبار الحياة الرهبانية في العام ١٩٩٩، وتابعت نشاطاتها الخيرية والاجتماعية مركزةً على الأولاد المتشردين ومقدّمة الإرشاد للشبيبة. صارت راهبة في العام ٢٠٠١، و بركة المطران ثيوفان، أسّست مركزَ رئيسي الملائكة ميخائيل وجبرائيل للتشكيل والمشورة، وعملت منسقةً له. انتقلت مع المركز إلى مدينة ياشي في العام ٢٠٠٨. وأسّست مع عدد من الراهبات دير القديس سلوان الآثوسي في مدينة ياشي، رومانيا.

قدّمت أحاديث مهمّة في الكثير من المؤتمرات وورش العمل، التي عُقدت في رومانيا وخارجها؛ منها العلاقات بين الشبيبة، مراحل الحبّ، العائلة والمجتمع المعاصر، مسببات اكتئاب الإنسان المعاصر، معرفة الذات، الحياة الروحية... إلخ.

رقدت في الرب في العام ٢٠٢١.

إنّ توضيحاتها للأنثروبولوجيا المسيحية لجذابة جداً. عبر توصيفاتها المتقنة للخبرة النفسية، يكتشف القراء باندهاش مدى تألفهم مع رؤاها. فهي تستعمل مفاهيم من العلم الحديث لتسهّل فهم الخبرات العامة المشتركة التي بإمكان كلّ القراء التماهي معها.

تميّز ما بين الحياة لمجرد الاستمرار، والحياة باعتبارها هبة من الله. فالحياة التي خلقنا الله من أجلها تصير ممكنة عندما نفتح أنفسنا لنعمة الله بالصلاة وتحقيق الوصايا. كما تولى أهمية لاكتشاف الله باعتباره شخصاً حياً وفاعلاً في كلّ لحظة في نفس وحياة المسيحيين الأرثوذكسيين. تقول: "إنّ الله مغروم بنا."

يضمّ كتابها "الله، أين الجرح؟" محاضر ثلاثة مؤتمرات عُقدت في ألمانيا في العام ٢٠١٢.

تعالج في هذا الكتاب الصعوبات الشائعة التي يختبرها الانسان المعاصر في علاقته مع الله: ما الذي يمنعه من استقبال نعمة الله أو حتى الرغبة فيها؟ ما الذي يحفظ النعمة الإلهية وكيف تتفعل فيه؟ تتطرق إلى القلق والتوتر والاكتئاب والصدمات والانتحار والعلاقات والجنس وعواقب الصدمات الموروثة من الأهل والأجداد، تلك التي لا تزال من دون حلول.

تتكلم على أثر الصدمات المخزونة في الأعماق (اللاوعي)، والتي تُمة فلسفة تقول بعدم إثارته والعبور عنها. تقول إنّ الأفكار الناشئة عن هذه الآثار المكبوتة تسمم النفس، وتالياً "علينا أن ننتبه إليها وإلى ما يكمن تحتها، الى ما نشعره بواسطتها، ونحتاج إلى أن نقدمه إلى الرب من أجل الشفاء منه". تسمي تقدمتنا هذه لله بـ "جسد الصلاة".

تقول: "إنّ المشاعر هي النار والأفكار هي قطع الحطب؛ المواد القابلة للاشتعال. لنتنبه إلى أنّ الشيطان لا يهاجمنا من خلال مشاعرنا. لا تدخل الخطيئة إلينا من خلال الحزن والخوف والكرهية والغرور المُعبّر عنها بالمشاعر... هذه طاقات مرض النفس المبلّوة، وهي تنفجر وتخرج من طبيعتنا الساقطة من دون أن نكون قادرين على السيطرة عليها وضبطها بواسطة قوّة إرادتنا. تأتي الخطيئة من خلال الأفكار الشريرة التي تعدنا بالنجاة من العذاب التي تسببه هذه المشاعر، والتي تقود إلى الشرير، وإلى كلمات شريرة وأفعال إجرامية."

"ثمة إدمانٌ على المشاعر السلبية كما هو الإدمان على الكحول، ولذلك يكون الشفاء صعباً" (ص ٩٣).

"المهمّ بالنسبة لي"، والكلام لها، "هو ألم الإنسان الذي أمامي. عندما أتواصل مع ألم الإنسان الآخر أستطيع أن أحوله ليصير "جسد الصلاة" بالنسبة له. يتّردد ألمه فيّ، يؤذيني من دون أن يصبح ألمي، لكنّي أختبره (أشعر به)، وهذا ما يجعل صلاتي له ممكنة تماماً كما أصلي لأجل نفسي، وكما أفعل عندما أتأذى في داخل ذاتي" (ص ٩٥).

تشدد، في كتابها، على أهمية الإصغاء وحاجة الإنسان المعاصر إلى من يسمع له. كما تنادي بضرورة عدم كبت آثار الصدمات التي يتعرّض الإنسان لها وعلى فائدة تقديمها لله. تقول في هذا السياق: "عندما نكبت آثار الصدمة ولا نقدّمها لله فإننا نساهم في نقلها لأولادنا وأحفادنا" (ص ١٠١). "يجب أن نحفظ في أذهاننا أنّ كلّ ولدٍ يصل إلى العائلة هو "مخلصٌ" محتملٌ لها ولأنسالها."

تعتبر أنّ سرّ الأرثوذكسية يكمن في تحويل كلّ ما هو إيّانا، الذي لدينا من الله، ليصير ما يعود إلى الله. القلب البشري هو المختبر الذي فيه تتحوّل الطاقات المخلوقة إلى طاقات إلهية - بشرية، وذلك بقوة وفعل النعمة.

كتاب جدير بالقراءة، خاصة لكل من يتعاطى الشأن التربوي والإرشادي.