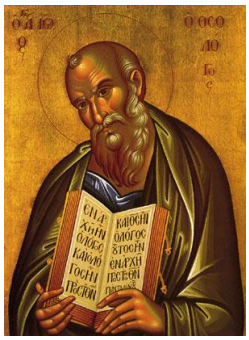

+St. John the Evangelist Orthodox Church

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, June 15, 2025
Tone 8 / Eothinon 1
First Sunday after Pentecost and First Sunday of Matthew
The Sunday of All Saints

Prophet Amos; Apostles Achaikos, Stephen and Fortunatos of the Seventy

On June 15 in the Holy Orthodox Church, we commemorate the Prophet Amos; and the Apostles Achaikos, Stephen and Fortunatos of the Seventy.

On this day, the Sunday after Pentecost, we celebrate the feast of All Saints who shone forth throughout all the world, North and South, East and West.

David the Prophet and king, who revered the beloved of God, and respected them because of his great piety, said in the Psalms, "How precious are Thy beloved unto me, O God" (138:17). And the Apostle Paul, in his Epistle to the Hebrews, recounted the lives of the saints, when he wrote, "Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin that so easily besets us; and let us run with patience the race that is set before us" (12:1). Therefore, as Orthodox Christians, we honor the beloved saints of God, respecting them as keepers of God's commandments, shining examples of virtue and benefactors of humanity. We commemorate all of the holy ones every year on this day, as the list of saints ever increases, even though some of their names escape us. Nevertheless, we honor them for their piety and strive to imitate their good works.

THE EPISTLE

God is wondrous in His saints.

In the churches, bless ye God.

The Reading from the Epistle of St. Paul to the Hebrews. (11:33-12:2)

Brethren, all the saints through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, from weakness were made strong, became mighty in war, and turned

to flight armies of the aliens. Women received their dead by resurrection, and others were tortured, not accepting their deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. And others suffered mocking and scourging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, they were tempted, they were slain with the sword; they went about in skins of sheep and goats, being destitute, afflicted, tormented (of whom the world was not worthy), wandering in deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And all these, having obtained a witness through their faith, did not receive the promise, since God had foreseen something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect. Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which does so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the Author and Perfecter of our faith.

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عَجيبٌ هُوَ اللهُ في قِدِّيسيه.

في المَجامِعِ بارِكوا الله.

فَصْلٌ مِنْ رِسالَةِ القِدّيسِ بولُسَ الرَّسولِ إلى العِبْرانِيين. (11:33 –2:12)

يا إخْوَة، إنَّ القِدِّيسينَ، بِالإيمانِ قَهَروا المَمالِكَ، وَعَمِلُوا البِرَّ، وَنالوا المَواعِدَ، وَسَدّوا أَفواهَ الأُسُود. وَأَطفَأوا حِدَّةَ النّارِ وَنَجَوا مِن حَدِّ السَّيفِ، وَتَقَوَّوا مِن ضُعفٍ، وَصاروا أَشِدّاءَ في الحَربِ، وَكَسَروا مُعَسكَراتِ الأَجانِب. وَأَخَذَت نِساءٌ أَمواتَهُنَّ بِالقِيامَةِ، وَعُذِّبَ آخَرُونَ بِتَوتيرِ الأَعْضاءِ والضَّربِ، وَلَمْ يَقبَلوا بِالنَّجاةِ لِيَحْصَلُوا عَلى قِيامَةٍ أَفضَل. وَآخَرُونَ ذاقوا الهُزءَ والجَلدَ والقُيودَ أَيضًا والسِّجنَ. وَرُجِموا وَنُشِروا وامتُحِنوا وَماتوا بِحَدِّ السَّيفِ، وَسَاحوا في جُلودِ غَنَمٍ وَمَعَزٍ وَهُم مُعْوَزونَ مُضايَقونَ مَجْهودون. وَلَم يَكُنِ العالَمُ مُستحِقًّا لَهُمْ، فَكانوا تائِهينَ في البَراري والجِبالِ والمَغاوِرِ وَكُهوفِ الأَرض. فَهَؤلاءِ كُلُّهُمْ مَشْهودًا لَهُمْ بِالإيمانِ لَمْ يَنالوا المَوْعِد. لأَنَّ اللهَ سَبَقَ فَنَظَرَ لَنا شَيئًا أَفضَلَ، أَنْ لا يَكْمَلوا بِدونِنا. فَنَحنُ أَيضًا إذ يُحدِقُ بِنا مِثلُ هَذِهِ السَّحابَةِ مِنَ الشُّهودِ فَلنُلقِ عَنّا كُلَّ ثِقَلٍ وكُلَّ خَطيئَةٍ مُحيطَةٍ بِنا، وَلنُسابِقْ بِالصَّبْرِ في الجِهادِ الذي أَمامَنا، ناظِرِينَ إلى رَئيسِ الإيمانِ وَمُكَمِّلِهِ يَسوع.

.

THE GOSPEL

The Reading from the Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew.

(10:32-33, 37-38; 19:27-30)

The Lord said to His disciples, “Everyone who acknowledges Me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father Who is in heaven; but whoever denies Me before men, I also will deny before My Father Who is in heaven. He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who does not take his cross and follow Me is not worthy of Me.” Then Peter said in reply, “Lo, we have left everything and followed Thee. What then shall we have?” Jesus said to them, “Truly, I say to you, in the New World, when the Son of Man shall sit on His glorious throne, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And every one who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My Name’s sake, will receive a hundred fold, and inherit eternal life. But many that are first will be last, and the last first.

فَصْلٌ شَريفٌ مِنْ بِشارَةِ القِدّيسِ يوحنا الإنجيليّ البَشيرِ والتلميذِ الطاهِر. (7:37–52؛ 12: فصلٌ شريفٌ من بشارة القديس مَتّى الإنجيليّ البشيرِ والتلميذِ الطاهر.

(10: 32–33، 37–38؛ 19: 27–30)

قالَ الرَّبُّ لِتَلاميذِهِ، كُلُّ مَنْ يَعْتَرِفُ بي قُدَّامَ النّاسِ، أَعْتَرِفُ أَنا بِهِ قُدّامَ أَبي الذي في السَّماواتِ. وَمَن يُنكِرُني قُدّامَ النّاسِ، أُنكِرُهُ أَنا قُدّامَ أَبي الذي في السَّماوات. مَن أَحَبَّ أَبًا أَو أُمًّا أَكثَرَ مِنّي فَلا يَستَحِقُّني، وَمَن أَحَبَّ ابنًا أَو بِنتًا أَكثَرَ مِنّي فَلا يَستَحِقُّني. وَمَن لا يَأخُذُ صَليبَهُ وَيَتبَعُني فَلا يَستَحِقُّني. فَأَجابَ بُطرسُ وَقالَ لَهُ: هُوَذا نَحنُ قَد تَرَكْنا كُلَّ شَيءٍ وَتَبِعناكَ، فَماذا يَكونُ لَنا؟ فَقالَ لَهُم يَسوعُ: الحَقَّ أَقولُ لَكُمْ، إِنَّكُمْ أَنتُمُ الذينَ تَبِعْتُموني في جيلِ التَّجديدِ، مَتى جَلَسَ ابْنُ البَشَرِ عَلى كُرسِيِّ مَجدِهِ، تَجلِسونَ أَنتُم أَيضًا عَلى اثنَي عَشَرَ كُرسِيًّا تَدينونَ أَسباطَ إسرائيلَ الاثنَي عَشَرَ. وَكُلُّ مَن تَرَكَ بُيوتًا أَو إِخْوَةً أَو أَخَواتٍ أَو أَبًا أَو أُمًّا أَو امرَأَةً أَو أَولادًا أَو حُقولاً مِن أَجلِ اسمي، يَأخُذُ مِئَةَ ضِعفٍ، وَيَرِثُ الحَياةَ الأَبَدِيَّة. وَكَثيرونَ أَوَّلونَ يَكونونَ آخِرين، وَآخِرونَ يَكونونَ أَوَّلين.

Dear Parents of Graduates, We at St. John's, would like to recognize our graduates by publishing their names, photos and biographies in the church bulletin. This way, we can all know who they are and what is next for them in life. We are proud of them. Please help us to do this by submitting their pictures and bio via email

Financial Pledges

Dear Parishioners,
I would like to thank you for your generosity in supporting the church and its projects. I'm asking you to fulfill your primary responsibility in meeting your financial pledges before your contributions to any project such as the Hall .. etc.!
In the Risen Christ,
Fr. Nicholas Borzghol

Father's Day Lunch

Nobody yet has sent RSVP to Rula about attending the Father's Day lunch. Please do so if you intend to attend.

Upcoming Events

June 25th - 29th	**Parish Life Conference:** Hyatt Regency San Francisco Airport **2025 Host Parish**: St. Nicholas Church (San Francisco, CA)
September 20th-21st	St. John's annual Middle Eastern Food Festival

Coffee Hour

June 15th	Father's Day Lunch
June 22nd	Sponsor Needed
June 29th	Fairouz Freij in Memory of Angel Freij. May her 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, Sam Nassab, Sandy Dudum Bennett, Fairouz Freij, Henriette Hilal** and **Aida Youakeem**. Many years!

† St. John Parish Family for the good health of **George Adranly**. Many years!

† St. John Parish Family for the good health of **Fred Addas**. Many years!

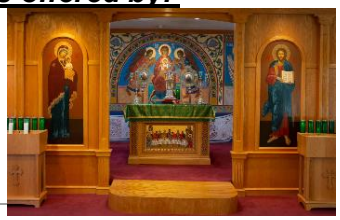
† **St. John Parish Family** for the good health of **Najat Nicola**. Many years!

† **St. John Parish Family** for the good health of **Hala Youakeem**. Many years!

† **St. John Parish Family** for the good health of **Norma Khalil**. 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

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

You could use this QR code for your donation

CONGRATS GRADS!

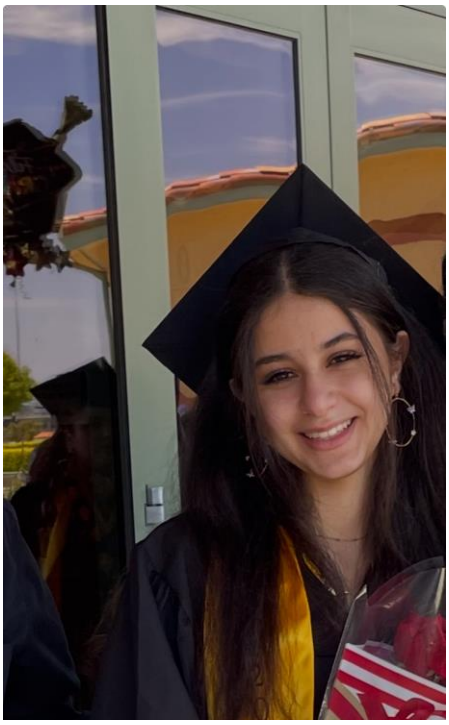
Dominic Farradj earned his Master of Science degree in Data Science from University of San Francisco

Mason Walter Burt, son of Lillian (Mitry) Burt and grandson of Siham Mitry, graduated from Ponderosa High School in Cameron Park, CA. He will be attending Folsom Community College to start his studies in music appreciation

Katarena Borzghol

Graduated from Peninsula High School.

Going to San Francisco State University to study interior design

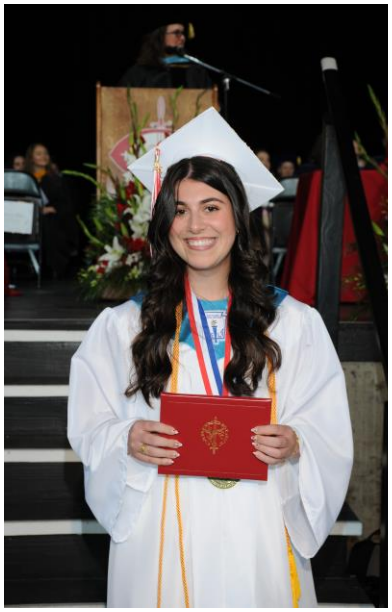


Joseph David Rodrigues

MA in Theology and MA in Philosophy from the Dominican School of Philosophy and Theology in Berkeley, CA.

Thesis title: "Lessons from the Tombs: A Pragmatic Analysis of the Asceticism of St. Antony the Great and the 12-Step Program"

Diala Hanna is the granddaughter of Helene Ghantous. She graduated from Carondelet High School in May 2025. She is heading to McGill University in Montreal to study medicine



St. John's Church

FATHER'S DAY PICNIC

Sunday, June 15th

Let's treat all the Fathers, Grandfathers, Godfathers & Uncles to a delicious BBQ Lunch complete with burgers, hot dogs, salad, chips, cold drinks & a delectable homemade dessert bar!!!

Immediately following Divine Liturgy on the church grounds

$15/adult

Kids 12 & under – FREE

Organized by the St. John Ladies

All proceeds to benefit the Building Fund!!

For more information contact Rula Adranly at rulaadranly@comcast.net

The online registration deadline is quickly approaching. Register by June 20th to avoid long lines at the on-site registration desk at the hotel. The number of tickets per event is limited so it is recommended to register online ASAP

California FISH GRILL®
CASUAL KITCHEN

CALIFORNIA FISH GRILL IS PROUD TO SUPPORT

St. John Church

Thursday, June 12 at 11AM-8PM
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IN-STORE USE ONLY

California Fish Grill will donate 25% of sales from this event back to the organization. Simply present this flyer, mention the organization upon ordering or **scan the QR code at kiosk.**

If placing an order online, please enter code at checkout: **fund2025**

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DIOCESE OF LOS ANGELES & THE WEST PARISH LIFE CONFERENCE

JUNE 25 - 29, 2025

HOSTED BY:
ST. NICHOLAS ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH, SAN FRANCISCO

WWW.LAPLC.ORG

SCHEDULE HIGHLIGHTS:

THURSDAY JUNE 26

- Morning and Afternoon Workshops
- Order of St. Ignatius Reception
- Young Adult Dinner
- Taco Thursday Welcome Reception

FRIDAY JUNE 27

- Organization Meetings
- Bible Bowl
- Ice Cream Social & Teen Dance "Candyland" Theme

SATURDAY JUNE 28

- Young Adult Pilgrimage to Holy Virgin Mary Russian Cathedral
- Awards Brunch
- Oratorical & Choir Festival
- Middle Eastern Dinner and Dance (Hafli)

SUNDAY JUNE 29

- Hierarchical Divine Liturgy

Visit our website for more information

JOIN US AT HYATT REGENCY SAN FRANCISCO AIRPORT FOR THE 2025 PLC!

- Hotel Group Rate: $179/night plus local taxes/fees
- Group rate is valid 3 days before and 3 days after Conference
- Complimentary shuttle to & from San Francisco airport
- Self parking $15/Day
- 10% discount at all hotel food outlets

Fellowship Hall Update

We had a kitchen inspection last week for fire and safety issues and have ordered most major kitchen equipment items and countertops. Floors throughout the building are nearing completion and restroom partitions will be completed soon. Chandeliers are in and look fantastic against the beautiful ceiling in the hall. HVAC equipment is being completed as well as water heating systems.

Great news on the fundraising side. We have been approached with some generous pledges to help complete the kitchen equipment. You may recall that the actual kitchen equipment was not scoped in the construction contract, and these donations will help us to get to full use of the hall sooner.

These and other new donations bring us well over the $1Million mark for parishioner donations, and will help us complete ancillary parts of the project that might have had to be deferred until a later date. Of course continued donations are still welcomed and again, we ask that any donations to the hall be designated as such, and do not detract from your regular pledges to the church operating fund.

As we are approaching hall completion and occupancy, we are resuming work on our donor recognition plaque. The list attached shows the names of the donors to the hall that have donated or pledged $1,000 or more since 2013. We ask that you let us know soon if we have inadvertently misspelled any names, or if you would like to change the way your donation is recognized on the plaque. Also, if you would like to know your exact contribution amount that we have on record, please contact the church office. If you have pledged donations to the hall, and have not yet completed your pledge, we ask that you please let us know when you will be able to do so.

We thank you all for your contributions of time, talents and resources to this project, for your patience as we approach the finish line, and we look forward to a wonderful celebration in the new fellowship hall soon

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. The contributions shown below include cumulative donations to the initial $2 Million in the building fund at the start of construction, in addition to those donations to the current fundraising effort. Please note that our very generous Cornerstone Donor, as well as several of the Partner and Friend level donors have donated prior to the beginning of our current campaign. All donors will be recognized on a plaque or 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.

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 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 Anonymous Dominick and Joby Aranda George and Freida Cawog Nick and Deena Farrah Ibrahim Fasheh Jordis Fasheh Lisa and David Hanna and Family Phillip and Gina Jaber Jawad and Violet Jaber	Ron and Ruth Jeha Sam Khoury Ron and Nancy Nicola Fady and Joumana Najjar The Potts Family Raymond and Georgianna Rishwain Raif and Sonya Rihani Ernest and Noha Shulze and Family Daniel and Mona Thayer ADOBE – matching gift for Hanna Family Orthodox Vision Foundation

Partner
$5,000-9,999

Anonymous
Charles and Marilee Ajalat
Miranda Halaby
Sandy Hodges
John and Sylvia Jaber
Leila Farradj
Lynn and Usama Farradj
Issam and Rania Freij
Salem and Antoinette Mufarreh
Darrin Rishwain
George Theodosy
Ramsay Zacharia

Friend
$1,000-4,999

Saleem & Samya Abudawood
Jack Ajluni
Richard and Joyce Ayoob
Anthony and Kimberly Bailey
Sandy Bennett
William and Judith Bosl
Fr. Nicholas Borzghol
Challenger Enterprises
Daryl and Katherine Dudum
J.D. and Jessie Dudum
F&M Bank
Fadi and Rana Feghali
Alex and Helen Ghantous
Khalil and Leila Hakeem
Ronald Issac
JDO Dakota Ventures
Ronald and Ruth Jeha
Mary Karadsheh
Maha Kury-Peterson
Brandon Laidlaw
Lieman Properties
Azmie and Melanie Madanat
Chris and Eva Malki
Margaret Mas
Fred and Tania Milkie
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Myers Restaurant Supply
George Najjar
Samer Nassar
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
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
Julianna Greensides
Bahij & Yardena Hanhan
Raymond Hilal
Mounir and Muna Hobaika
Angela Husary
Jack's Restaurant
Carol Jeha
Samir Juha
Andreas Kamlot
Rima Kashou
Norma Khalil
Elia Khalilieh
Elizabeth Kreta
Mary Lodge
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Mendocino Farms Restaurant
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Marie Simon
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Summit Landscape Development
Christina Tast
Suzanne & Nabil Taovil
Sami Tawasha
Christina Thabit
Kamal & Samar Wahbe
TP Wolf
Khalil Yowakeem
Sam & Nevine Yowakim

Rev: June 5, 2025

Contemporary Luminous Faces: Metropolitan Anthony Bloom, Part One
His Eminence Metropolitan Saba (Isper)

"Consciously and at every hour I wish to take part in the redemption of the world, remaining a light amongst the storms, to be one of Thy beacons.

I go, O Lord, into the world to do Thy will. My only desire is to stand firm as a faithful servant at the post to which Thou didst appoint me, in order to meet Thee worthily." – Metropolitan Anthony Bloom (1914-2003)

A brilliant contemporary witness to the work of Christ in the hearts of His devoted followers, Metropolitan Anthony Bloom was a man of prayer and spiritual insight of the highest caliber. He embodied unwavering faith in Christ, a profound insight into humanity, especially the modern individual, refined theological scholarship and language, and a steadfast, boundless compassion. A master of dialogue and conversation, he was renowned for his sharp insight, analytical clarity, and ability to grasp reality before expressing any judgment or opinion. No one crossed his path without being deeply and positively moved by him.

The son of a Russian diplomat, he was born in Switzerland and named Andrei. His family later relocated to Iran for his father's post and eventually settled in France following the Communist Revolution.

His father had to give up his diplomatic career and took up jobs in various places, which plunged the family into financial hardship. Yet, his distinctive personality left a lasting impact on Andrei. His father once told him: "Never forget that it doesn't matter whether one lives or dies. What matters is what we live for and for which we are prepared to die." These words indicated the spirit that prevailed in their home and the deep sense of life's meaning that profoundly shaped Metropolitan Anthony from an early age.

His sharp intellect enabled him to continue giving private tutoring in mathematics and in any subject his students struggled, and that he had mastered. This covered his living expenses and allowed him to continue his studies, though not without hardship and struggle.

Tutoring consumed all his evenings, leaving only the weekends for his own studies, which took a toll on his health. Nevertheless, he managed to complete his education. Reflecting on that period, he said: "My life was very different from that of today's student; at times, I was harsh, hungry, and rough, and I was incapable of preaching a gentle and warm sermon."

He pursued studies in physics, chemistry, and biology at the Sorbonne, and later enrolled in medical school, earning his doctorate at the outbreak of World War II in 1939. By then, he had acquired French citizenship and served as a military surgeon in the French army at both the beginning and end of the war.

Until the age of fifteen, he did not believe in God. In fact, he hated and harbored a strong sense of hostility toward the Church. The idea of God stirred no interest in him; he even despised everything associated with it, whether directly or indirectly.

However, he experienced two spiritual events that deeply affected him. The first occurred when he was around eleven years old, during a summer camp, where he met a priest in his thirties whose gentle and unconditional love for the children stirred Andrei's (Anthony's) curiosity, prompting him to wonder about the source and secret of such love.

The second experience occurred after he returned home from boarding school and was reunited with his family under one roof for the first time in years. This brought him immense happiness, so much so that he realized that if happiness is aimless, it is unbearable. He decided to give himself one year to discover whether life had any meaning. If he found none, he resolved that he would no longer continue living.

Months passed without any sign of meaning on the horizon, until one day, the leader of a Russian youth group invited him to attend a lecture by a priest hosted by the youth organization. Anthony vehemently

refused, saying: "I don't care about the Church, and I don't believe in God." But the leader persuaded him to attend out of respect for the organization: "Just show up physically; you're not required to actually listen." Thus, he went but soon discovered that the priest was a remarkable man.

When he got home, he asked his mother for a Bible so he could verify the priest's words for himself. He began reading the Gospel of Mark, as it was the shortest. He described his experience as follows:

"I do not know how to tell you what happened. I will simply describe it, and those who have had a similar experience will understand. While I was reading the beginning of the Gospel of St. Mark, before reaching the third chapter, I became aware of a Presence but saw nothing. It was not a hallucination but rather a quiet certainty that the Lord was standing there, and I was in His presence. This, even though I had begun reading His life story out of an impulsive reaction and with a bad will."

From that moment on, he read the Gospel in the light of the Resurrection, which for him became a firm conviction and a reality beyond any doubt.

Since Christ was alive and sat in his presence as he described, he could establish with absolute certainty that the Gospel's account of the crucifixion of the prophet from Galilee was true, and that the Roman centurion was not mistaken when he cried out, "Truly, this was the Son of God" (Matthew 27:54).

Thus, he became certain that Christ is alive and there was no doubt of His existence. He trusted that in his journey of seeking to understand life more deeply, he would eventually be given the answers to his many questions. This quest pushed him to keep asking, keep exploring, and keep moving forward in his search for meaning.

After practicing medicine for some time, he took monastic vows, taking the name of Saint Anthony. However, due to the war and the shortage of priests at the time, he lived his monastic life in secret. After his monastic tonsure, he told his spiritual father: "You tonsured me as a monk, but you never gave me a rule of prayer!" To which his spiritual father replied: "What rule of prayer do you need? You are a monk now; pray at all times." His monastic commitment became publicly known only when he was ordained a priest in 1948.

He went on to live the rest of his life as a priest, a bishop, and a true monk. In response to a journalist who once asked him how he could be a monk while living such a public life as priest and bishop, he said:

"It is all the same to me, whether I live among people or in the desert. In some ways, it is easier to be materially poor than to be poor in one's inner life. I am indebted to the vow of poverty, for it has allowed me to truly evaluate everything. But for that to be possible, one must first be free within."

وجوه نورانية معاصرة: المطران أنطوان بلوم، الجزء الأول

المتروبوليت سابا (اسبر)

"أَرْغَبُ، يا رَبُّ، بِكامِلِ وَعْيِي، وَفِي كُلِّ ساعَةٍ، فِي أَنْ يَكُونَ لِي نَصِيبٌ فِي فِداءِ العالَمِ، وَفِي أَنْ أَظَلَّ نُورًا وَسْطَ العَواصِفِ، لِأَكُونَ واحِدًا مِن مَناراتِكَ.

أَذْهَبُ، يا رَبُّ، إِلَى العالَمِ لِأَعْمَلَ مَشِيئَتَكَ .كُلُّ مُشْتَهايَ أَنْ أَبْقَى، كَخادِمٍ أَمِينٍ، ثابِتًا فِي المُهِمَّةِ الَّتِي أَسْنَدْتَها إِلَيَّ، كَيْ أَلْقاكَ بِاسْتِحْقاقٍ." – المِتْرُوبُولِيت أَنْطُونِي بْلُوم (١٩١٤-٢٠٠٣)

شاهِدٌ مُعاصِرٌ لامِعٌ لِما يَعمَلُهُ المَسيحُ في قُلوبِ أَتباعِهِ مِنَ المُحِبّينَ .رَجُلُ صَلاةٍ وَفَهمٍ روحِيٍّ مِنَ الطِّرازِ الرَّفيعِ. جَمَعَ في شَخصِهِ دَرَجَةً عالِيَةً مِنَ الأَمانَةِ لِإيمَانِهِ بِالمَسيحِ، وَفَهمًا عَظيمًا لِلإِنسانِ، المُعاصِرِ بِخاصَّةٍ، وَعِلمًا وَلُغَةً لاهُوتِيَّةً راقِيَةً، وَحَنُوًّا حازِمًا وَغامِرًا في آنٍ. رَجُلُ حِوارٍ وَمُقابَلاتٍ مِنَ الطِّرازِ الرَّفيعِ. عُرِفَ بِنَظَرِهِ الثَّاقِبِ لِلأُمُورِ، وَقُدْرَتِهِ عَلَى التَّحْلِيلِ وَمَعْرِفَةِ الواقِعِ قَبْلَ إِطْلاقِ حُكْمِهِ وَرَأْيِهِ. ما لَقِيَهُ أَحَدٌ إِلَّا وَتَأَثَّرَ بِهِ إِيجابًا.

وُلِدَ في سُويسْرا، حامِلًا اسمَ أندريه، لِوالِدٍ يَعمَلُ في السِّلكِ الدِّبلوماسيِّ الرُّوسِيِّ، ثُمَّ انْتَقَلَت العائِلَةُ إِلَى إِيرانَ بِسَبَبِ عَمَلِ الأَبِ، وَانْتَهَى بِهَا المَطافُ فِي فَرَنْسا، بَعْدَ الثَّوْرَةِ الشُّيُوعِيَّةِ.

اضْطُرَّ والِدُهُ إِلَى التَّخَلِّي عَن مِهْنَةِ الدِّبْلُوماسِيَّةِ، وَعَمِلَ فِي أَماكِنَ مُتَفَرِّقَةٍ، مَا جَعَلَ العائِلَةَ تَعِيشُ فِي فاقَةٍ شَدِيدَةٍ. لَكِنَّ شَخْصِيَّتَهُ المُمَيَّزَةَ تَرَكَتْ تَأْثِيرًا عَلَى أندريه. قالَ لَهُ مَرَّةً: "لا تَنْسَ أَبَدًا أَنَّهُ لا يُهِمُّ إِذَا كانَ عاشَ المَرْءُ أَوْ ماتَ. المُهِمُّ هُوَ ذَاكَ الَّذِي مِن أَجْلِهِ نَعِيشُ وَمِن أَجْلِهِ نَكُونُ عَلَى اسْتِعْدادٍ لِلْمَوْتِ." يَدُلُّ كَلامُ الوالِدِ عَلَى الرُّوحِ الَّتِي سادَتْ فِي البَيْتِ، وَعَلَى أَهَمِّيَّةِ مَعْنَى الحَياةِ الَّتِي نَشَأَ عَلَيْهَا المِطْرانُ أَنْطُونِي مُنْذُ نُعُومَةِ أَظْفارِه.

مَكَّنَهُ ذَكاؤُهُ الحادُّ مِنَ الاسْتِمْرارِ فِي إِعْطاءِ الدُّرُوسِ الخُصُوصِيَّةِ فِي الحِسابِ وَكُلِّ ما كانَ طُلّابُهُ يَجْهَلُونَهُ وَيَعْرِفُهُ هُوَ؛ مِمّا أَمَّنَ لَهُ نَفَقاتِ المَعِيشَةِ وَمُتابَعَةِ دِراسَتِهِ، وَلَكِنْ بِمُعاناةٍ وَجِهادٍ.

فَقَدْ كانَتْ هذِهِ الدُّرُوسُ تَمْلَأُ كُلَّ أُمسياتِهِ، فَلا يَتَبَقّى لِدِراسَتِهِ هُوَ إِلّا عُطْلَةُ نِهايَةِ الأُسْبُوعِ، مِمّا عَرَّضَ صِحَّتَهُ لِلِاعْتِلالِ، وَلَكِنَّهُ اسْتَطاعَ إِكْمالَ دِراسَتِهِ. قالَ عَن تِلْكَ الفَتْرَةِ: "كانَتْ حَياتِي مُخْتَلِفَةً عَنْ حَياةِ طالِبٍ هذِهِ الأَيّام؛ كُنْتُ، فِي بَعْضِ الأَوْقاتِ، قاسِيًا، جائِعًا وَخَشِنًا، وَما اسْتَطَعْتُ أَنْ أَعِظَ عِظَةً رَقيقَةً وَدافِئَةً."

تابَعَ دِراسَةً فِي الفِيزْياءِ وَالكِيمْياءِ وَالبَيُولُوجْيا فِي السُّوربُون، وَمِن ثَمَّ دُرُوسَ الطِّبِّ، وَحَصَلَ عَلَى الدُّكْتُوراه فِي فَتْرَةِ اندِلاعِ الحَرْبِ العالَمِيَّةِ الثّانِيَةِ، أَي فِي العَامِ ١٩٣٩. وَكانَ قَدْ حَصَلَ عَلَى الجِنْسِيَّةِ الفَرَنْسِيَّةِ، فَعَمِلَ فِي بِدايَةِ الحَرْبِ وَنِهايَتِها طَبِيبًا جَرّاحًا فِي الجَيْشِ الفَرَنْسِيِّ.

حَتّى سِنِّ الخَامِسَةَ عَشْرَةَ، لَمْ يَكُنْ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللهِ، كَما وَيَكْرَهُ الكَنِيسَةَ وَيَكِنُّ لَها شُعُورًا عَدائِيًّا .لَمْ يَكُنِ اللهُ لِيُثِيرَ اهْتِمامَهُ، لا بَلْ كانَ يَمْقُتُ كُلَّ ما يَمُتُّ لِفِكْرَةِ الإِلَهِ مِن قَرِيبٍ أَو بَعِيدٍ.

وَلَكِنَّهُ عاشَ خِبْرَتَيْنِ روحِيَّتَيْنِ أَثَّرَتا فِيه. الأُولَى، وَكانَ فِي سِنِّ الحادِيَةَ عَشْرَةَ تَقْرِيبًا، حِينَ تَعَرَّفَ، فِي مُخَيَّمٍ صَيْفِيٍّ، عَلَى كاهِنٍ فِي الثَّلاثِينِ مِن عُمُرِهِ، أَثارَتْ مَحبَّتُهُ الحانِيَةُ وَغَيْرُ المَشْرُوطَةِ لِلأَوْلادِ اهْتِمامَ أندريه (أَنْطُونِي)، مِمّا دَفَعَهُ إِلَى التَّساؤُلِ عَنْ سِرِّ وَمَصْدَرِ هذِهِ المَحَبَّةِ.

أَمّا الخِبْرَةُ الثّانِيَةُ فَحَصَلَتْ بَعْدَ عَوْدَتِهِ مِنَ المَدْرَسَةِ الدّاخِلِيَّةِ وَاجْتِماعِهِ بِالعائِلَةِ لِأَوَّلِ مَرَّةٍ تَحْتَ سَقْفٍ واحِدٍ، مِمّا مَنَحَهُ مَصْدَرَ سَعادَةٍ مُطْلَقَةٍ، فَأَدْرَكَ فِي تِلْكَ الفَتْرَةِ أَنَّ كُلَّ سَعادَةٍ بِغَيْرِ هَدَفٍ لا تُطاقُ. فَقَرَّرَ أَنْ يُمْهِلَ نَفْسَهُ مُدَّةَ سَنَةٍ لِيَكْتَشِفَ ما إِذا كانَ لِلْحَياةِ مَعْنًى ما، وَإِلّا فَإِنَّهُ لَنْ يَسْتَمِرَّ فِي العَيْشِ.

وَمَضَتِ الشُّهُورُ وَلَمْ يَظْهَرْ فِي الأُفُقِ أَيُّ مَعْنًى، إِلَى أَنْ دَعاهُ قائِدُ الشَّبِيبَةِ الرُّوسِيَّةِ إِلَى حُضُورِ مُحاضَرَةٍ لِكاهِنٍ دَعَتْهُ مُنَظَّمَةُ الشَّبِيبَةِ. رَفَضَ أَنْطُونِي الحُضُورَ بِعُنْفٍ قائِلًا: "لَا تَهُمُّنِي الكَنِيسَةُ وَلَا أُؤْمِنُ بِاللهِ. "فَأَقْنَعَهُ القائِدُ بِالحُضُورِ كَرَمًى لِكَرامَةِ المُنَظَّمَةِ وَقالَ لَهُ" :أَثْبِتْ حُضُورَكَ بِالجَسَدِ فَقَطْ .لَسْتَ مُضْطَرًّا إِلَى الإِصْغاءِ إِلَيْهِ. "وَهَذَا مَا صَارَ، لَكِنَّهُ اكْتَشَفَ أَنَّ الكَاهِنَ كَانَ إِنْسَانًا عَظِيمًا.

وَعِندَمَا عَادَ إِلَى البَيْتِ طَلَبَ الكِتَابَ المُقَدَّسَ مِنْ أُمِّهِ، لِكَيْ يَتَأَكَّدَ مِنْ حَقِيقَةِ كَلامِ الكَاهِنِ بِنَفْسِهِ .وَبَدَأَ بِقِرَاءَةِ إِنْجِيلِ مَرْقُسَ لِأَنَّهُ الأَقْصَرُ. لِنَسْتَمِعْ إِلَيْهِ وَهُوَ يَصِفُ خِبْرَتَهُ هَكَذَا:

"لَا أَدْرِي كَيْفَ أُخْبِرُكُمْ بِمَا حَدَثَ .سَوفَ أَصِفُهُ بِبَسَاطَةٍ وَسَوْفَ يَفْهَمُ الَّذِينَ مَرُّوا فِي خِبْرَةٍ مُمَاثِلَةٍ مَا قَدْ حَصَلَ .بَيْنَمَا كُنتُ أَقْرَأُ بَدَايَةَ إِنْجِيلِ القُدِّيسِ مَرْقُسِ، وَقَبْلَ أَنْ أَصِلَ إِلَى الفَصْلِ الثَّالِثِ، وَعِيتُ حُضُورًا .لَمْ أُشَاهِدْ شَيْئًا .لَمْ يَكُنْ هَلْوَسَةً، بَلْ تَأَكُّدٌ بَسِيطٌ مِنْ أَنَّ الرَّبَّ كَانَ وَاقِفًا، وَأَنَا مُوَجَدٌ فِي حُضُورِهِ، هُوَ الَّذِي كُنتُ قَدْ بَدَأْتُ قِرَاءَةَ سِيرَتِهِ كَرْدَةَ فِعْلٍ مُفَاجِئَةٍ وَإِرَادَةٍ مَرِيضَةٍ."

هَكَذَا قَرَأَ الإِنْجِيلَ عَلَى ضَوْءِ القِيَامَةِ الَّتِي كَانَتْ يَقِينًا وَوَاقِعًا لَا شَكَّ فِيهِ أَبَدًا.

فَلِأَنَّ المَسِيحَ كَانَ حَيًّا وَلِأَنَّهُ جَلَسَ فِي حَضْرَتِهِ كَمَا يَقُولُ، كَانَ مِنَ المُمْكِنِ أَنْ يَتَثَبَّتَ بِكُلِّ تَأَكُّدٍ بِأَنَّ مَا قَالَهُ الإِنْجِيلُ عَنْ صَلْبِ نَبِيِّ الجَلِيلِ كَانَ صَحِيحًا، وَأَنَّ القَائِدَ الرُّومَانِيَّ لَمْ يَكُنْ عَلَى خَطَأٍ حِينَ هَتَفَ: "حَقًّا كَانَ هَذَا ابْنَ اللهِ" (متى ٢٧: ٥٤).

هَكَذَا وَجَدَ ذَاتَهُ مُوقِنًا كُلَّ اليَقِينِ بِأَنَّ المَسِيحَ حَيٌّ، وَأَنَّ ثَمَّ أشياءً لَا يَرْقَى لِوُجُودِهَا أَيُّ شَكٍّ، وَوَثِقَ بِأَنَّهُ سَيُعْطَى الأَجْوِبَةَ عَنْ الأَسْئِلَةِ الكَثِيرَةِ خِلالَ مَسِيرَتِهِ سَعْيًا لِاكْتِشَافِ حَقِيقَةِ الحَيَاةِ بِشَكْلٍ أَفْضَلَ. لَقَدْ دَفَعَهُ هَذَا السَّعْيُ إِلَى طَرْحِ الأَسْئِلَةِ وَاكْتِشَافِ المَزِيدِ مِنَ الأُمُورِ وَالسَّيْرِ قُدُمًا فِي سَبْرِ الأَغْوَارِ.

بَعْدَ فَتْرَةٍ مِنْ مُمارَسَةِ الطِّبِّ نَذَرَ نَفْسَهُ لِلْحَيَاةِ الرَّهْبَانِيَّةِ، مُتَّخِذًا اسْمَ القُدِّيسِ أَنْطُونِيُّوسَ، لَكِنَّهُ عَاشَها سِرًّا بِسَبَبِ الحَرْبِ وَنَقْصِ عَدَدِ الكَهَنَةِ آنَذَاكَ. بَعْدَمَا رُسِمَ رَاهِبًا قَالَ لِأَبِيهِ الرُّوحِيِّ" :لَقَدْ رَسَمْتَنِي رَاهِبًا لَكِنَّكَ لَمْ تُعْطِنِي قَانُونَ صَلاةٍ قَطُّ؟ "فَأَجَابَهُ ذَاكَ" :أَيُّ قَانُونِ صَلاةٍ تُرِيدُ؟ أَنتَ رَاهِبٌ الآن – صَلِّ طِوالَ الوَقْتِ." وَلَمْ يُعْرَفْ أَمْرُ رَهْبَنِيَّتِهِ إِلَّا عِندَمَا رُسِمَ كَاهِنًا سَنَةَ ١٩٤٨.

استَمَرَّ فِي العَيْشِ طِيلَةَ حَيَاتِهِ البَاقِيَةِ، كَاهِنًا وَمُطْرَانًا، رَاهِبًا حَقِيقِيًّا. يَقُولُ فِي مَعْرِضِ سُؤَالِ أَحَدِ الصَّحَفِيِّينَ لَهُ عَنْ كَوْنِهِ رَاهِبًا وَيُمَارِسُ الحَيَاةَ العَامَّةَ بِصِفَتِهِ كَاهِنًا وَمُطْرَانًا مَا يَلِي:

"سِيَّانِ عِندِي بَيْنَ العَيْشِ مَعَ النَّاسِ أَوِ العَيْشِ فِي صَحْرَاءَ .فَمِنَ الأَسْهَلِ فِي بَعْضِ النَّوَاحِي أَنْ يَكُونَ المَرْءُ فَقِيرًا فِي إِمْكَانَاتِهِ المَادِّيَّةِ عَلَى أَنْ يَكُونَ فَقِيرًا فِي حَيَاتِهِ الدَّاخِلِيَّةِ. أَنَا مَدِينٌ لِلنَّذْرِ الفَقْرِ لِأَنَّهُ مَكَّنَنِي مِنَ الإِجَادَةِ فِي تَقْيِيمِ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ، وَلَكِنْ يَنْبَغِي مِنْ أَجْلِ ذَلِكَ أَنْ يَكُونَ الإِنسَانُ حُرًّا فِي دَاخِلِيَّتِهِ أَوَّلًا."