

+St. John the Evangelist Orthodox Church

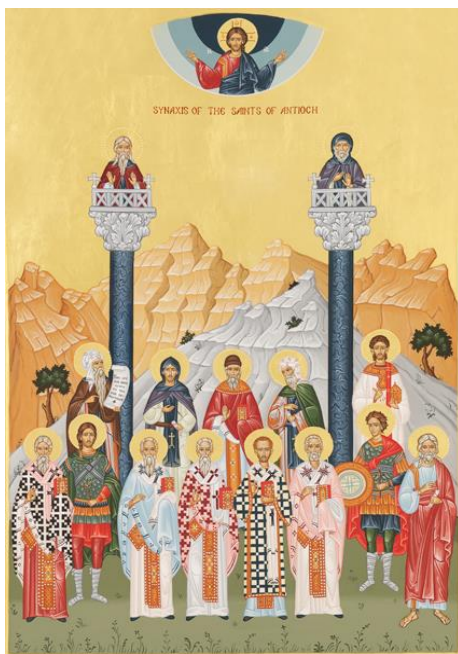
Antiochian Archdiocese of North America
Metropolitan Saba of New York and all North America
V. Rev. Fr. Nicholas Borzghol, Pastor
Dn. Nicholas Adranly

501 Moraga Way, Orinda, California 925-258-4255
www.stjohnorinda.org email: st.john.evangelist.orinda@gmail.com

SUNDAY, JUNE 22, 2025

TONE 1 / EOTHINON 2; SUNDAY OF ALL SAINTS OF ANTIOCH & SECOND SUNDAY OF MATTHEW

HIEROMARTYR EUSEBIOS, BISHOP OF SAMOSATA; MARTYRS ZENO AND HIS SERVANT ZENAS OF PHILADELPHIA IN ARABIA; ALBAN, PROTOMARTYR OF BRITAIN



On June 22 in the Holy Orthodox Church, we commemorate the Hieromartyr Eusebios, bishop of Samosata; Martyrs Zeno and his servant Zenas of Philadelphia in Arabia; and Alban, protomartyr of Britain.

On the Second Sunday after Pentecost, we celebrate the memory of the holy, glorious and all-laudable apostles, the Christ-loving shepherds and hierarchs, the holy and God-bearing Fathers, the glorious and victorious Martyrs and New Martyrs, and all the Saints who have shone as stewards of the Most Holy Patriarchate of Antioch, the Great City of God, from time immemorial to the present.

Most precious in the eyes of the Church is her choir of heavenly intercessors which stand before the throne of the Lord of hosts. The See of Antioch, whose apostolic establishment is recorded in the book of Acts (11:26), is especially blessed with an abundance of Saints in this glorified assembly. Being drastically reduced in both geographic area and numbers, having endured the ravages of time and wars, and bearing the loss of her finest church buildings and earthly goods, the Antioch knows full well the worth of having laid up its treasures in heaven. The harvest of Antioch includes the Chief Apostles Peter and Paul; the Martyrs Ignatius, Barbara and Christina; the Melodists Romanos and Cosmas; John Chrysostom and John of Damascus; Ephraim and Isaac the Syrians; Joseph of Damascus and Raphael of Brooklyn; the Hieromartyrs Nicholas and Habib Khasha; and countless other saints known and unknown. For two millennia, the light of Christ has shown brilliantly upon the See of Antioch through these glorified children and heirs of their Heavenly Father.

THE EPISTLE

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

The Reading from the Acts of the Holy Apostles. (11:19-30)

In those days, when the apostles were scattered because of the tribulation that arose over Stephen, they traveled as far as Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to no one, except to Jews only. But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who upon coming to Antioch spoke to the Hellenists also, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number that believed turned to the Lord. The report concerning them reached the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent out Barnabas, to go as far out as Antioch. When he came and saw the grace of God, he was glad; and he exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they should cleave to the Lord; for he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a great multitude was added unto the Lord. Then Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul; and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. For a whole year, they were gathered together in the church, and they taught a great multitude of people, and the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch. Now in these days prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. And one of them named Agabos stood up and signified by the Spirit that there would be a great famine over the whole world; and this took place in the days of Claudius Caesar. And the disciples, every one according to his ability, determined to send relief to the brethren who dwelt in Judaea; and they did so, sending it to the elders by the hand of Barnabas and Saul.

لِتَكُنْ يَا رَبُّ رَحْمَتُكَ عَلَيْنَا.

اِبْتَهِجُوا أَيُّهَا الصِّدِّيقُونَ بِالرَّبِّ.

فصلٌ مِنْ أَعْمَالِ الرُّسُلِ الْقِدِّيسِينَ الْأَطْهَارِ.

(30-19:11)

في تلك الأيام، لما تَبَدَّدَ الرُّسُلُ مِنْ أَجْلِ الضِّيقِ الَّذِي حَصَلَ بِسَبَبِ اسْتِفَانُوسَ، اجْتَازُوا إِلَى فِينِيقِيَّةَ وَقُبْرُصَ وَأَنْطَاكِيَّةَ، وَهُمْ لَا وَلَكِنْ قَوْمًا مِنْهُمْ كَانُوا قُبْرُصِيِّينَ وَقَيْرَوَانِيِّينَ. فَهَؤُلَاءِ لَمَّا دَخَلُوا أَنْطَاكِيَّةَ، أَخَذُوا يُكَلِّمُونَ. يُكَلِّمُونَ أَحَدًا بِالْكَلِمَةِ إِلَّا الْيَهُودَ فَقَطْ. فَبَلَغَ خَبْرُ ذَلِكَ إِلَى آذَانِ الْكَنِيسَةِ الَّتِي. وَكَانَتْ يَدُ الرَّبِّ مَعَهُمْ، فَأَمَّنَ عَدَدٌ كَثِيرٌ وَرَجَعُوا إِلَى الرَّبِّ. الْيُونَانِيِّينَ مُبَشِّرِينَ بِالرَّبِّ يَسُوعَ. فَلَمَّا أَقْبَلَ وَرَأَى نِعْمَةَ اللَّهِ، فَرِحَ وَوَعَظَهُمْ كُلَّهُمْ بَأَنَّهُ يَنْبَغِي فِي الرَّبِّ بِعَزِيمَةِ الْقَلْبِ. بِأُورُشَلِيمَ، فَأَرْسَلُوا بَرْنَابَا لِكَيْ يَجْتَازَ إِلَى أَنْطَاكِيَّةَ. ثُمَّ خَرَجَ بَرْنَابَا إِلَى طَرَسُوسَ فِي طَلَبِ. لِأَنَّهُ كَانَ رَجُلًا صَالِحًا مُمْتَلِئًا مِنَ الرُّوحِ الْقُدُسِ وَالْإِيمَانِ. وَانْضَمَّ إِلَى الرَّبِّ جَمْعٌ كَثِيرٌ وَتَرَدَّدَا مَعَ سَنَةٍ كَامِلَةٍ فِي هَذِهِ الْكَنِيسَةِ، وَعَلِمَا جَمْعًا كَثِيرًا، وَدُعِيَ التَّلَامِيذُ مَسِيحِيِّينَ فِي. شَاوُلَ. وَلَمَّا وَجَدَهُ أَتَى بِهِ إِلَى أَنْطَاكِيَّةَ فَقَامَ وَاحِدٌ مِنْهُمْ اسْمُهُ أَغَابُوسَ، فَأَنْبَأَ بِالرُّوحِ أَنَّهُ سَتَكُونُ. وَفِي تِلْكَ الْأَيَّامِ، انْخَدَرَ مِنْ أُورُشَلِيمَ أَنْبِيَاءٌ إِلَى أَنْطَاكِيَّةَ. أَنْطَاكِيَّةَ أَوَّلًا فَعَزَمَ التَّلَامِيذُ، بِحَسَبِ مَا يَتَيَسَّرُ لِكُلِّ وَاحِدٍ مِنْهُمْ، أَنْ. مَجَاعَةٌ عَظِيمَةٌ فِي جَمِيعِ الْمَسْكُونَةِ، وَقَدْ وَقَعَ ذَلِكَ فِي أَيَّامِ كَلُودِيُوسَ قَيْسَرِ. فَفَعَلُوا ذَلِكَ، وَبَعَثُوا إِلَى الشُّيُوخِ عَلَى أَيْدِي بَرْنَابَا وَشَاوُلَ. يُرْسِلُوا خِدْمَةً إِلَى الْإِخْوَةِ السَّاكِنِينَ فِي أُورُشَلِيمَ.

THE GOSPEL

The Reading from the Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew. (4:18-23)

At that time, as Jesus was walking by the Sea of Galilee, He saw two brothers, Simon who is called Peter and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. And He said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men." Immediately they left their nets and followed Him. And going on from there He saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets, and He called them. Immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed Him. And He went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and preaching the gospel of the Kingdom and healing every disease and every infirmity among the people

فصلٌ من بشارَةِ القديسِ متىّ الإنجيليّ البشيرِ والتلميذِ الطاهرِ. (23-18:4)

في ذَلِكَ الزَّمانِ، فيما كانَ يَسوعُ ماشِياً على شاطئِ بحرِ الجليلِ، رأى أَخَوَيْنِ وَهُما سِمعانُ المَدْعُو بَطْرُسَ وَأَندراؤُسَ أَخوهُ، يُلقِيانِ شَبَكَةً في البَحْرِ (لأنَّهُما كانا صَيَّادَيْنِ)، فَقَالَ لَهُما هَلُمَّ وَرَأْيِي فَأَجْعَلَكُما صَيَّادَيِ النَّاسِ. فَلِلْوَقْتِ تَرَكا كُلَّ شَيْءٍ وَتَبِعاهُ. وَجازَ مِنْ هُنَاكَ، فَرَأى أَخَوَيْنِ آخَرَيْنِ وَهُما يَعقوبُ بْنُ زَبْدَى وَيوحنا أَخوهُ، في وَلِلْوَقْتِ تَرَكا السَّفِينَةَ وَأَباهُما وَتَبِعاهُ. وَكانَ يَسوعُ يَطوفُ سَفِينَةً مَعَ أَبِيهِما زَبْدَى يُصْلِحانِ شَباكَهُما فدَعاَهُما، الجَلِيلَ كُلَّهُ يُعَلِّمُ في مَجامِعِهِمْ وَيَكْرِزُ بِبِشارَةِ المَلَكوتِ وَيَشْفِي كُلَّ مَرَضٍ وَكُلَّ ضَعْفٍ في الشَّعبِ.

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

Memorial for Jose Rodrigues

40-day memorial for Jose Rodrigues on Sunday, the 29th, after Divine Liturgy.

Dave & Buster's Fundraising Campaign

We have something new and exciting!!

Dave & Buster's fundraising campaign will begin NOW until December 31, 2025. Get Your Power Cards through St. John link.

How it works!

1. Place an order using St. John fundraising link. Here is the link:

https://www.groupraise.com/offer-campaigns/59958-st-john-church-dave-busters-fundraising-campaigns?utm_source=sendgrid&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=o_offers_day_1

And/or ask: Rania Kashou

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!

Awesome gift for kids, grand kids, parents, even yourself. Who doesn't like to play??
This link can be forwarded to friends, families, neighbors, coworkers, businesses, anyone!!

Upcoming Events

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

Coffee Hour

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!
- † **St. John Parish Family** for the good health of **Souhad 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 Kavar, Mason Kavar, 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



Laith Ghantous is the grandson of Helene Ghantous. He graduated from Santa Clara University with a BS in Accounting. He will start working with EY this fall in San Francisco.



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 Ghanous. She graduated from Carondelet High School in May 2025. She is heading to McGill University in Montreal to study medicine



ST. NICHOLAS CHURCH
DIOCESE OF LOS ANGELES AND THE WEST
PARISH LIFE CONFERENCE
PRESENTS:

Dinner & Middle Eastern Hafli

Featuring:

Fadi Hanani

JUNE

SATURDAY

28

AT 7:30 PM



Hyatt Regency San Francisco Airport:

1333 Old Bayshore Hwy, Burlingame
Grand Peninsula Ballroom

Price with elegant dinner:

\$110 (Adults), \$85 (Teens 13-18), \$55 (Children 3-12)

Plus \$15 conference registration

Tickets:

Please register using the QR code or at
antiochianevents.org/LA

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



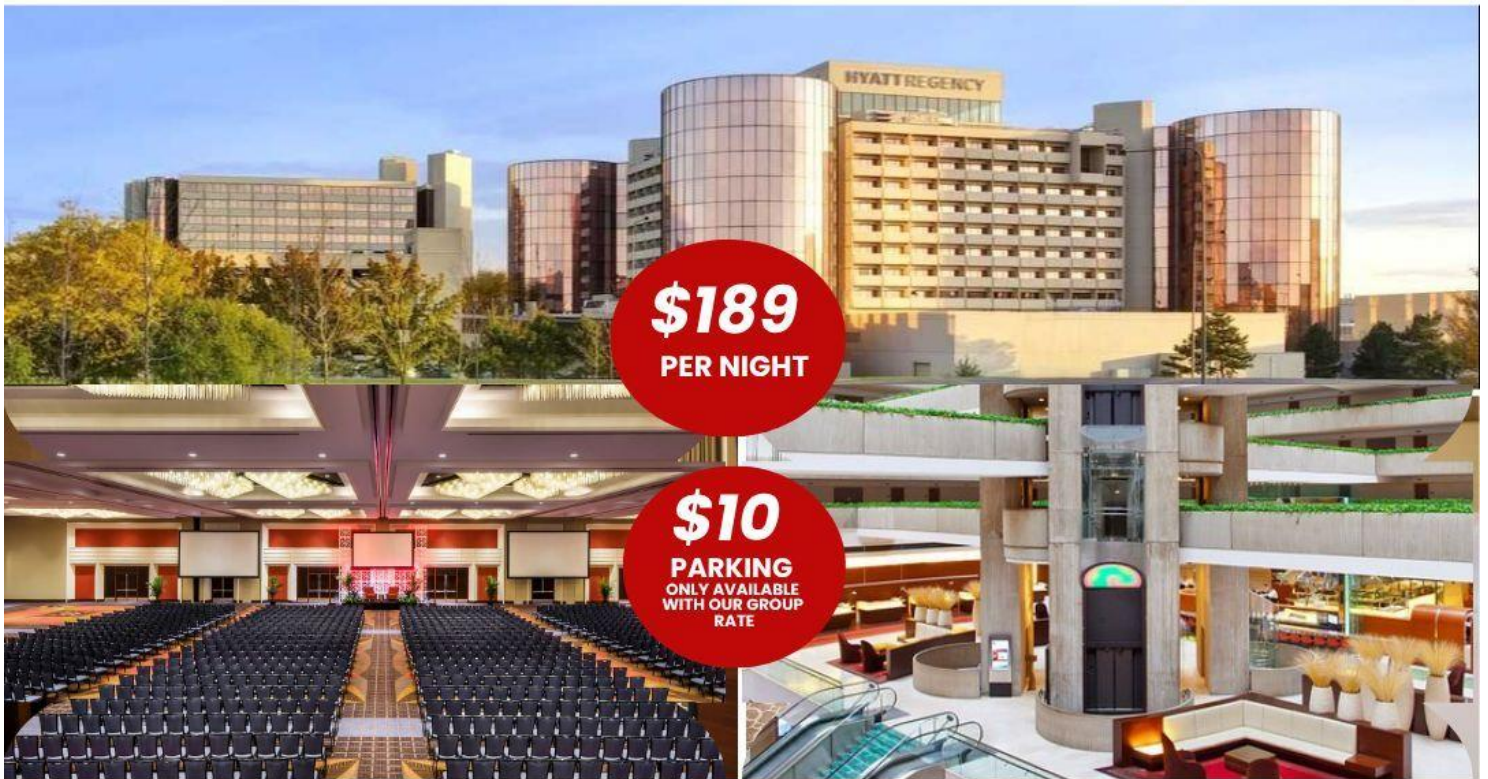
57TH BIENNIAL ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN
Archdiocese Convention

July 20 – 27, 2025



Hotel Deadline Is Almost Here!

**Rates are only guaranteed through June 21!
Rooms are selling FAST don't wait!**



Book your room before it's too late!

**Reserve now at:
www.ac2025chicago.org/hotel**





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 \$1 Million 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

Antiochian Distinctions

By Metropolitan Saba (Isper)

Believers often ask me about the distinctive characteristics of the Antiochian Church or what constitutes the "Antiochian spirit," especially during my pastoral visits. In my most recent meeting with the youth in Los Angeles, the question was posed: *"What are the key theological principles that distinguish the Antiochian Church?"*

To begin with, there are no doctrinal or faith-based principles in the Antiochian Church that differ from those of other canonical Orthodox churches. Theology, faith, doctrine, spirituality, and liturgy are unified across them all. What appears to be distinctive lies in the way the Christian faith is lived and expressed, which is inseparable from the character, mindset, and philosophy of the people, as well as from the history of each church and how the Holy Spirit has shaped it through various trials and ruling civil authorities.

One of the most important characteristics of the Antiochian Church is that it has been, since the beginning of Christianity, a multicultural church. In the early centuries, the geographical reach of the Antiochian Church was vast, stretching from the southern Taurus Mountains (modern-day Turkey) in the north to the Sinai Desert in the south, and eastward as far as India. This is why it still bears the title "Antioch and All the East." The Georgian Church was under its jurisdiction until the fourth century, which is why the Antiochian patriarchal *phimi* (title) still includes mention of the "Georgian lands."

As a result, the Antiochian Church never faced issues with language or culture. Its faithful prayed and expressed themselves in Greek and its culture along the Syrian coast (which then extended along the entire eastern Mediterranean), in Syriac and its Semitic culture in inland Syria, in Armenian and its culture in the north (Cilician Kingdom), and in Arabic and its culture in the south (the Arab province), in addition to Assyrian and Persian beyond the Euphrates.

One example of this cultural diversity is Saint Saba the Sanctified (439–532), who gave Armenian monks in his monastery near Jerusalem a separate church so they could perform their daily prayers in Armenian, while the rest of the monks prayed in Greek.

The Levant – the heart of the Antiochian Church – has historically been a battleground for great power struggles, which exposed it to constant interaction with various civilizations and cultures. This helped shape the Antiochian person as someone open to others, unafraid of dialogue, and accepting of differences without coercion—while still distinguishing between their own thoughts and those of others. This cultural cross-pollination fostered intellectual richness, creative thinking, and a resilient identity that could engage flexibly with others. It is no coincidence that the Antiochian Church has played a mediating role among Orthodox churches and in interfaith dialogue with non-Orthodox churches and Islam.

Moreover, its long history under non-Christian rule since the seventh century purified it from the dream of establishing a Christian kingdom on earth. It never adopted the theory of *symphonia* (harmony between church and state, symbolized by the double-headed eagle). The succession of calamities and wars—first between Byzantines and Muslims, then with the Crusaders, and later under foreign rule until the end of the French Mandate in the twentieth century—shaped a theology of incarnation as the primary spiritual identity of the Antiochian Church. This led to an eschatological (eternity-focused) outlook, as continuous hardships and persecutions drove it to seek consolation, steadfastness, and protection from God. History freed it from ethnic and nationalistic entanglements, resulting in a theology untainted by a fusion of religion and nationalism.

This allowed the Church to seek Christ first and organize its existence around Him, cooperating with other Orthodox churches that could offer support at certain times. This freedom from ethnocentrism made it the first Orthodox church in North America to open its doors of evangelization to converts to Orthodoxy. This was no coincidence, but the fruit of a heritage refined by God through a heavy historical journey. History did not allow it to pursue missionary work for centuries, as it was preoccupied with survival and nurturing its faithful. But once circumstances allowed, it quickly took the lead in evangelism.

Because it lived for centuries under non-Christian rule, Antioch avoided the temptation of using Orthodoxy for nationalistic purposes, resulting in a pure ecclesial theology. I vividly recall the positions of its senior metropolitans and theologians in the 1970s regarding the future of Orthodoxy in North America. Their

vision was rooted in Orthodox ecclesiology. Unfortunately, that dream now seems distant due to the current geopolitical conflicts affecting Orthodox churches and nations.

Living under non-Christian rule since the seventh century exposed the Church to various persecutions. Yet, wherever possible, it engaged with its surroundings, rulers, and citizens of different sects, remaining a witness to its faith and spirituality while playing a significant role in the advancement of the societies in which it lived.

During the Umayyad period (662–750), religious freedom still existed, and public religious debates took place in the squares of Damascus. Christians played roles in translation, finance, and even served as departmental ministers. In the Abbasid period (750–1258), they were instrumental in transferring knowledge and sciences from Greek and Syriac sources to Arabic, and many of the rulers' physicians were Christians. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, their numbers increased, and they played a major role in cultural, political, and civilizational awakening. Their schools spread everywhere, and they continue to bear witness to their faith with all the strength, ability, and grace they possess.

A quick glance at this article reveals how much our Antiochian Archdiocese in North America resembles the experiences of the Antiochian Patriarchate—from diversity in culture and language to nationality not limited by ethnicity. How beneficial it is to learn from these experiences and draw inspiration from them as we face the many challenges confronting our Archdiocese today.

مميزات أنطاكية

المتربوليت سابا (اسبر)

كثيراً ما يسألني المؤمنون حول ماهية الصفات المميزة للكنيسة الأنطاكية أو ما هي الروح الأنطاكية، وذلك خلال زيارتي الرعائية. لقد صيغ السؤال في اجتماعي الأخير بشيئة لوس أنجلس بالشكل التالي: "ما هي المبادئ اللاهوتية المفتاحية التي تميز الكنيسة الأنطاكية؟"

بدءاً ما من مبادئ عقائدية إيمانية للكنيسة الأنطاكية تختلف عن المبادئ العقائدية الإيمانية للكنائس الأرثوذكسية الأخرى. اللاهوت واحد في كل الكنائس الأرثوذكسية، وكذلك الإيمان والعقيدة والروحانية والليتورجيا. ما يبدو تمييزاً له بطريقة عيش الإيمان المسيحي والتعبير عنه، وهذا لا ينفصل عن طباع الشعب وفكره وفلسفته، وكذلك لا ينفصل عن تاريخ كل كنيسة وما صاغه الروح القدس فيها في ما اختبرته خلال تاريخها من شذائد متنوعة وسلطة حاكمية، وما إلى ذلك.

من أهم صفات الكنيسة الأنطاكية أنها، منذ بدء المسيحية، كنيسة متعددة الثقافات. فقد امتدت الجغرافيا الكنسية الأنطاكية على مساحة واسعة جداً في القرون الأولى. فوصلت إلى جنوب جبال طوروس (تركيا الحالية) شمالاً، وحتى صحراء سيناء جنوباً، وامتدت شرقاً وصولاً إلى الهند. لذلك لا تزال تحمل لقب "أنطاكية وسائر المشرق". كما أن الكنيسة الجيورجية كانت تتبع لها حتى القرن الرابع، ولذلك لا يزال دعاء (فيحي) البطريرك الأنطاكي يحتفظ بذكر "البلاد الكرجية" إلى الآن.

نتيجة ذلك لم تعرف الكنيسة الأنطاكية مشكلة، لا في استعمال اللغة ولا الثقافة. فقد صلب مؤمنوها وعبروا باليونانية وثقافتها في الساحل السوري [كان يمتد آنذاك على كامل الساحل الشرقي للبحر الأبيض المتوسط]، وبعض المدن الداخلية الكبرى المتيونة ثقافياً، وبالسريانية وثقافتها السامية في الداخل السوري، والأرمنية وثقافتها في الشمال (مملكة كيليكيا) والعربية وثقافتها في الجنوب (المقاطعة العربية)، بالإضافة إلى الآشورية والفارسية في ما بعد نهر الفرات.

أكتفي بمثال واحد على هذا الواقع الثقافي المتعدد. فالقدّيس سابا المتقدّس (٤٣٩-٥٣٢) أعطى الرهبان الأرمن الذين اختاروا الحياة الرهبانية في دير، الواقع إلى اليوم، بالقرب من مدينة القدس، كنيسةً خاصّةً بهم كي يتّمموا صلواتهم اليومية باللغة الأرمنيّة، فيما كان وباقي الرهبان يصلّون باليونانية.

كانت بلاد الشام - وهي قلب الكنيسة الأنطاكيّة - ساحة صراع القوى العظمى عبر التاريخ، منذ أن بدأ تدوينه إلى الآن، ممّا جعلها تعيش وتتفاعل دوماً مع حضارات وثقافات مختلفة. هذا ساهم في تكوين الإنسان الإنطاكي إنساناً منفتحاً على الآخر، لا يخاف الدخول معه في حوار، ويتقبّل المختلف دونما قسر أو ضغط، مميّزاً، في الوقت ذاته، بين فكره وفكر الآخر. تلاقح الحضارات أنتج خصوبةً فكريّةً عند الإنسان الأنطاكي، وفكراً خلاّقاً، وصلابةً في الحفاظ على ذاته مع مرونة في التعاطي مع الآخر. فلم تلعب، صدفةً، الكنيسة الأنطاكية دور الوساطة بين الكنائس الأرثوذكسيّة، وحوار الحياة مع الكنائس غير الأرثوذكسية والإسلام.

كذلك فإنّ تاريخها الثقيل وعيشها منذ القرن السابع تحت حكم غير مسيحي ساهما في تطهيرها من حلم بناء مملكة مسيحية على الأرض، فلم تعرف نظرية التناغم (السيمفونيّا) بين الكنيسة والدولة (النسر ذي الرأسين). كما أنّ توالي النكبات والحروب بين البيزنطيين والمسلمين أولاً، ثمّ الفرنجة (الصليبيين) لاحقاً، فالحكم الأجنبي وصولاً إلى انتهاء الانتداب الفرنسي في القرن العشرين جعل لاهوت التجسّد الهويّة الروحيّة الأولى في الكنيسة الأنطاكية، ممّا أثر في صياغتها كنيسة اسخاتولوجية (أخروية)، أي تتطلّع إلى الأبدية. فالشدائد والاضطهادات المتوالية جعلتها تتوجّه إلى الله طلباً للتعزية والثبات والحماية. لقد حرّرها التاريخ من البعد القومي والإثني، فكان لاهوتها صافياً من التماهي القائم بين البعدين الديني والقومي.

هذا ساعدها على أن تطلب المسيح أولاً، وتنظم وجودها بالاستناد إليه، والتعاون مع بعض الكنائس الأرثوذكسية التي استطاعت تقديم المعونة لها في أوقات معيّنة. هذا التحرّر من الإثنية جعلها، في أميركا الشمالية، أولى الكنائس الأرثوذكسيّة التي تفتح أبواب البشارة للمهتدين إلى الأرثوذكسيّة. هذا لم يتّم صدفةً، بل بسبب تراثها الذي نقّاه الله عبر التاريخ الثقيل الذي عاشته

ولا تزال. لم يسمح لها التاريخ بمتابعة التبشير، فأنحصرت طوال قرون من الظلم والاضطهاد في الحفاظ على استمرار وجودها وتغذية مؤمنها، وحالما ساعدتها الظروف في نقل جوهر إيمانها الكثيرة الثمن سارعت لتكون سبّاقة في هذا المضمار.

ولأنّها عاشت قروناً تحت حكم غير مسيحي تخلصت من تجربة استخدام الأرثوذكسية لمصلحة الدولة القومية، فكان لاهوتها الكنائسي صافياً نقيّاً. أذكر تماماً مواقف كبار أساقفتها ولاهوتيين في السبعينيات من القرن الماضي بخصوص مستقبل الكنيسة الأرثوذكسية في أميركا الشمالية. كانت رؤيتهم نابعة من الرؤية اللاهوتية الأرثوذكسية الكنائسية. للأسف صار الحلم اليوم بعيداً بسبب الصراع الجيو سياسي الذي تشهده الكنائس والبلدان الأرثوذكسية حالياً.

عاشها منذ القرن السابع في ظل حكم غير مسيحي عرضها للتقلب ما بين الاضطهادات المتنوعة، لكن على الرغم من ذلك، وحيثما استطاعت، كانت تتفاعل مع محيطها ومع الحكام ومواطنيها من مختلف المذاهب، وبقيت شاهدة لإيمانها وروحانيّتها ولعبة دوراً مهماً، في بعض الأزمان، في تقدّم المجتمعات التي تعيش فيها.

ففي الفترة الأموية (٦٦٢-٧٥٠م) كانت الحرية الدينية لا تزال متوفرة، والمناظرات الدينية تجري علناً في ساحات دمشق. وقد لعب المسيحيّون دور الترجمة وحفظ المال وكان منهم وزراء. أمّا في الفترة العبّاسية (٧٥٠-١٢٥٨م) فلعبوا دور نقل الثقافات والعلوم من اليونانية والسريانية إلى العربية، وكان أطباء الحكام مسيحيّون. وفي القرنين التاسع عشر والعشرين ارتفعت نسبة أعدادهم ولعبوا الدور الأهمّ في نمو الوعي الحضاري والسياسي والثقافي، فانتشرت مدارسهم، في كلّ مكان، وهم مستمرّون إلى اليوم في الشهادة لإيمانهم بكلّ ما أُوتوا من قوّة وقدرة ونعمة.

لمحة سريعة على جاء في هذا المقال تبين كمّ التشابه القائم بين أبرشيتنا الأنطاكية في أميركا الشمالية وبين خبرات البطريركية الأنطاكية. من المجتمع الثقافي المتنوع، إلى اللغات إلى الانتماء الوطني لا القومي بمعناه الضيق، كم يفيدنا أن نطلع على هذه الخبرات ونستلهمها في مواجهة التحديات الكثيرة التي تواجهها أبرشيتنا اليوم.