

+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

TRANSFER OF THE FEAST OF THE APOSTLES PETER AND PAUL (JUNE 29) TO SUNDAY 28TH, 2026



Today in the Holy Orthodox Church, we commemorate the holy, glorious, all-laudable and foremost of the Apostles, Peter and Paul. Together, they are the patrons and protectors of the Patriarchate of Antioch. Peter was the son of Jonah and the brother of Andrew, the First-called. He was of the Tribe of Simeon from the town of Bethsaida. He was a fisherman and, at first, was called Simon but the Lord was pleased to call him Cephas or Peter: “And when Jesus beheld him, He said, ‘Thou art Simon the son of Jonah; thou shalt be called Cephas,’ which is by interpretation, a rock” (John 1:42). He was the first of the disciples to clearly express faith in the Lord Jesus saying: “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matthew 16:16). His love for the Lord was great and his faith in the Lord gradually strengthened. When the Lord was brought to trial, Peter denied Him three times but after only one glance into the face of the Lord, Peter’s soul was filled with shame and repentance. After the descent of the Holy Spirit, Peter became a fearless and powerful preacher of the Gospel. Peter worked many

powerful miracles; he healed the sick, resurrected the dead; the sick were healed even from his shadow. By order of the evil Emperor Nero, Peter was condemned to death in 64 A.D. Installing Linus as Bishop of Rome, counseling and comforting the flock of Christ, Peter proceeded joyfully to his death. Seeing the cross before him, he begged his executioners to crucify him upside down for he considered himself unworthy to die as did his Lord. Thus the great servant of the Great Lord reposed and received the wreath of eternal glory.

Paul was born in Tarsus of the tribe of Benjamin. At first, he was called Saul, studied under Gamaliel, was a Pharisee and a persecutor of Christianity. He was miraculously converted to the Christian Faith by the Lord Himself Who appeared to him on the road to Damascus. “Suddenly, a light from heaven flashed about him. And Saul fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me?” And he said, “Who art Thou, Lord?” And He said, “I am Jesus, Whom you are persecuting” (Acts 9:3-5). Saul was blinded, but regained his sight when he was baptized by the Apostle Ananias. Then he was called Paul and numbered in the service of the great apostles. With a fiery zeal, Paul preached the Gospel everywhere from the borders of Arabia to Spain, among the Jews and among the Gentiles. As horrible as his sufferings were, so much more was his superhuman patience. Throughout all the years of his preaching Paul, from day to day, hung as one on a weak thread between life and death. Since he fulfilled all days and nights with labor and suffering for Christ, since he organized the Church in many places and since he attained such a degree of perfection he was able to say: “It is now no longer I that live, but Christ lives in me” (Galatians 2:20). Paul was beheaded in Rome during the reign of Emperor Nero at the same time as the Apostle Peter.

THE EPISTLE

Their sound hath gone forth into all the earth. The heavens show forth the glory of God.

The Reading from the Second Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians. (11:21-12:9)

Brethren, whatever anyone dares to boast of—I am speaking as a fool—I also dare to boast of that. Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they descendants of Abraham? So am I. Are they servants of Christ? I am a better one—I am talking like a madman—with far greater labors, far more imprisonments, with countless beatings, and often near death. Five times I have received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. Three times I have been beaten with rods; once I was stoned. Three times I have been shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been adrift at sea; on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brethren; in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure upon me of my anxiety for all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to fall, and I am not indignant? If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness. The God and Father of the Lord Jesus, He Who is blessed forever, knows that I do not lie. At Damascus, the governor under King Aretas guarded the city of Damascus in order to seize me, but I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall, and escaped his hands. I must boast; there is nothing to be gained by it, but I will go on to visions and revelations of the Lord. I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows. And I know that this man was caught up into Paradise—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows—and he heard things that cannot be told, which man may not utter. On behalf of this man I will boast, but on my own behalf I will not boast, except of my weaknesses. Though if I wish to boast, I shall not be a fool, for I shall be speaking the truth. But I refrain from it, so that no one may think more of me than he sees in me or hears from me. And to keep me from being too elated by the abundance of revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan, to harass me, to keep me from being too elated. Three times I besought the Lord about this, that it should leave me; but He said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness.” I will all the more gladly boast of my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

إِلَى كُلِّ الْأَرْضِ خَرَجَ صَوْتُهُمْ.
السَّمَاوَاتُ تُذَيِّعُ مَجْدَ اللَّهِ.

فصلٌ مِنْ رِسَالَةِ الْقَدِيسِ بُولُسَ الرَّسُولِ الثَّانِيَةِ إِلَى كُورِنْثُوسَ. (9:12-21:11)

يَا إِخْوَةَ، أَقُولُ هَذَا عَلَى سَبِيلِ الْهَوَانِ كَأَنَّنَا قَدْ ضَعُفْنَا. فَالَّذِينَ يَجْرُؤُونَ عَلَيْهِ -وَكَلَامِي كَلَامُ جَاهِلٍ- أَجْرُؤُ عَلَيْهِ أَنَا أَيْضًا. أَعِبْرَانِيُونَ هُمْ؟ فَأَنَا كَذَلِكَ، إِسْرَائِيلِيُّونَ هُمْ؟ فَأَنَا كَذَلِكَ، أَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّةِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ هُمْ؟ فَأَنَا كَذَلِكَ. أَخَذَّامُ الْمَسِيحِ هُمْ؟ أَقُولُ هَذَا كَمُخْتَلِّ الْعَقْلِ فَأَنَا أَفُوقُهُمْ: أَفُوقُهُمْ فِي الْمَتَاعِبِ وَتَحْمِلِ الْجَلْدِ وَفِي السُّجُونِ، وَفِي التَّعَرُّضِ لِلْمَوْتِ مِرَارًا. جَلَدَنِي الْيَهُودُ خَمْسَ مَرَّاتٍ أَرْبَعِينَ جَلْدَةً إِلَّا وَاحِدَةً. وَضَرَبْتُ بِالْعِصِيِّ ثَلَاثَ مَرَّاتٍ، وَرُجِمْتُ مَرَّةً وَاحِدَةً، وَانكَسَرَتْ بِي السَّفِينَةُ ثَلَاثَ مَرَّاتٍ، وَقَضَيْتُ يَوْمًا بَنَهَارِهِ وَلَيْلِهِ فِي عَرْضِ الْبَحْرِ، وَكُنْتُ فِي الْأَسْفَارِ مَرَّاتٍ كَثِيرَةً، وَفِي أخطَارِ السُّيُولِ، وَفِي أخطَارِ اللَّصُوصِ، وَفِي أخطَارٍ مِنْ جِنْسِي، وَأخطَارٍ مِنَ الْأَمَمِ، وَأخطَارٍ فِي الْمَدِينَةِ، وَأخطَارٍ فِي الْبَرِّيَّةِ، وَأخطَارٍ فِي الْبَحْرِ، وَأخطَارٍ مِنَ الْإِخْوَةِ الْكَذَّابِينَ، وَعَانَيْتُ التَّعَبَ وَالْكَدَّ وَالْأَسْهَارَ الْكَثِيرَةَ،

والجوع والعطش، والأصوام الكثيرة، والبرد والعري، وما عدا هذه التي هي من خارج، ما يتفاقم عليّ كل يوم من تدبير الأمور ومن الإهتمام بجميع الكنائس. فمن يضعف ولا أضعف أنا؟ أو من يشكك ولا أحترق أنا؟ إن كان لا بد من الإفتخار فإنني أفتخر بضعفي. ويعلم الله أبو ربنا يسوع المسيح المبارك إلى الأبد أنني لا أكذب. كان عامل الملك أرتاس بدمشق، يخرس المدينة ليقبض عليّ. فذليت في زنبيل من كوة على السور ونجوت من يديه. وإن كان لا بد لي من الإفتخار مع أنه لا خير فيه، فأنقل إلى الكلام على رؤى الرب وإعلاناته. إنني أعرف إنساناً في المسيح منذ أربع عشرة سنة اختطف إلى السماء الثالثة، أبالجسد؟ لا أعلم أم بغير الجسد؟ لا أعلم، الله يعلم. وإنما أعرف أن هذا الإنسان اختطف إلى الفردوس، أبالجسد أم بغير الجسد لست أعلم، الله يعلم، وهناك سمع كلمات سرية لا يحل لإنسان أن ينطق بها. أما هذا الرجل فأفتخر به، وأما من جهة نفسي فلا أفتخر إلا بأوهاني. فإني لو أردت الإفتخار لما كنت جاهلاً، لأنني أقول الحق، لكنني أتخشى الإفتخار لئلا يظن بي أحد فوق ما يراني عليه أو يسمعه مني. ولئلا أستكبر بقرط الإعلانات أعطيت شوكة في الجسد، ملاك الشيطان ليلطمني لئلا أتكبر. ولهذا طلبت إلى الرب ثلاث مرات أن تفارقني، فقال لي: «تكفيك نعمتي. لأن قوتي في الضعف تكمل». فبكل سرور أفتخر بالحري بأوهاني، لتستقر في قوة المسيح.

THE GOSPEL

The Reading from the Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew. (16:13-19)

At that time, when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His Disciples, "Who do men say that the Son of man is?" And they said, "Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter replied, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father Who is in Heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hades shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in Heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in Heaven."

فصل من بشارة القديس متى الإنجيلي البشير والتلميذ الطاهر. (16:13-19)

في ذلك الزمان لما جاء يسوع إلى نواحي قيصرية فيلبس سأل تلاميذه قائلاً: من يقول الناس إنني أنا ابن البشر؟ فقالوا: قوم يقولون إنك يوحنا المعمدان، وآخرون إنك إيليا، وآخرون إنك أرمياء، أو واحد من الأنبياء. قال لهم يسوع: وأنتم من تقولون إنني هو؟ أجاب سمعان بطرس قائلاً: أنت المسيح ابن الله الحي. فأجاب يسوع وقال له: طوبى لك يا سمعان بن يونا. فإنه ليس لحم ولا دم كشف لك هذا، لكن أبي الذي في السماوات. وأنا أقول لك، أنت بطرس، وعلى هذه الصخرة سأبني كنيسة وأبواب الجحيم لن تقوى عليها. وسأعطيك مفاتيح ملكوت السماوات. فكل ما ربطته على الأرض يكون مربوطاً في السماوات، وكل ما حللته على الأرض يكون مخلولاً في السماوات.

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 Addes, Henriette Hilal, Souhad Halaka, George Cawog, Rocky Dudum and Norma Khalil**. Many years!
- † St. John Parish Family for the good health of **Nader Hanna**. Many years!
- † St. John Parish Family in memory of **Laila Mashy**. May her memory be eternal!
- † St. John Parish Family in memory of **David Romley**. May his memory be eternal!
- † St. John Parish Family for the good health of **Jean Harb**. Many years!
- † St. John Parish Family for the good health of **Fairouz Freij**. Many years!
- † St. John Parish Family for the good health of **Violet Jaber**. Many years!
- † St. John Parish Family for the good health of **Laila Adranly**. 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

Upcoming Events

June 27th	Ladies meeting Saturday June 27 after finishing rolling grape leaves, your attendance is appreciated
June 27th	Potluck and viewing the Jordan vs. Argentina World Cup game at 6:30 PM in the hall
July 19th	One year memorial service for the handmaid of God Aida Yowakeem
July 19th	40 day memorial for David Romley.
1st and 3rd Sundays	St. Anastasia's Fellowship for those struggling with substance abuse. 1st and 3rd Sundays of the month. 6pm meeting; 7pm Readers Paraklesis at St. John's. Contact Joseph: (310) 227-9848

Coffee Hour

June 28th	Samara Family to celebrate our mother, Fadwa's birthday
July 5th	Sponsor Needed
July 12th	Nelly and Maureen in memory of Paula and good health of the Nassif Family
July 19th	Yowakeem Family for the one year memorial of Aida Yowakeem
July 26th	Irene and Zzane Guajardo

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

You could use this QR code for your donation



Announcements

World Cup Watchparty and Potluck

Join us in the hall on June 27th at 6:30 PM for a potluck and viewing of the World Cup game between Jordan and Argentina!

Ladies Meeting

Saturday June 27th after finishing rolling grape leaves, your attendance is appreciated.

Festival Children's Debka Group

As we gear up for our Festival in September, we'd love to get the kids involved in a Debka group! This was a huge hit last year, and we're excited to bring it back. If your child is 5 years old or older and would like to participate, please contact Rania K. at (415) 722-0774.

Since its a short timeframe, these are the requirements:

- Must attend practice every Sunday beginning August 2 through Festival week (some exceptions maybe accommodated).
- Practices will be approximately 30 minutes each Sunday after coffee hour.
- Must be available both days of the Festival. We anticipate two performances per day (schedule TBD).
- A black t-shirt must be provided during the first week of practice.

Please note that Rania K. is not a professional Debka instructor. If you have experience with Debka and are interested in helping coordinate or lead the group, we would greatly appreciate your assistance. Please contact Rania K. if you'd like to help. Let's make this year's Festival another memorable one!

Organizing Items in the Hall

We are beginning an important project to organize and improve the kitchen and storage areas in our hall. Our goal is to label all storage rooms, cabinets, shelves, and kitchen areas so that items can be easily returned to their proper place after use and the space can remain clean, organized, and well-maintained.

With the help of Joby, a professional organizer by trade, we will be starting this process on Sunday, July 19th at 1:00 PM, immediately following coffee hour. Please plan on dedicating at least 4+ hours. This project will take place in 2-3 phases, and we would greatly appreciate all volunteers who are willing to lend a hand. If you would like to help, please let Rania K know. Thank you in advance for your support as we work together to improve and maintain our shared space!

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

FESTIVAL PREP WORKSHOPS: Saturdays at 9:30 AM in our new kitchen!

June 27th	Grape leaves	July 11th	Spinach & Cheese Pies
August 1st	Sfeiha & Zatar Pies	September 12th	Knafeh & Date Mamoul



Please sign up for **any or all** workshops with Rula Adranly at rulaadranly@comcast.net or 510-508-0929

We're accepting pre-orders for grape leaves - will be available at the festival on September 25th & 26th or as early as June 27th. Delicious for your family to enjoy, for summer parties, graduations and more!!

- Large Tray - (approximately 180 leaves) \$200	- Small Tray - (approximately 90 leaves) \$100
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Ecclesiastes 4:9 Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil

ST. JOHN ORTHODOX CHURCH

MIDDLE EASTERN FOOD FESTIVAL



MUSIC



FOOD



CULTURE

CELEBRATING
32
YEARS

SEPTEMBER 26 - 27

501 MORAGA WAY, ORINDA, CA

SAT 11AM - 8PM | SUN NOON - 7PM

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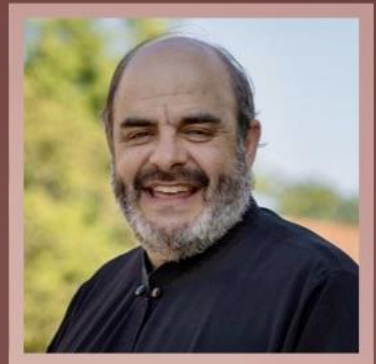
Youth and Young Adult Ministry Summit

Teen Directors & Advisors | Church School Directors & Teachers
Camp Directors & Staff | Young Adult Advisors & Leaders



*Registration
now open!*

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Keynote Speaker



<https://registration.antiochianvillage.org/Summit2026>



V. Rev. Fr.
Michael Nasser



Rev. Dr.
Greg Abdalah



Dr. Ann Bezzerides



Sh. Shell Keim

Save the date

★ AUGUST 15TH ★

St. John

DINNER DANCE

★ Under the stars ★



\$75.00
PER PERSON

Hope to
see you there!

★ KIDS 12 AND UNDER \$40.00 ★

★ 5:30 PM – Cocktails (No Host Bar) ★

RSVP by August 2nd to
Evleen Salem (925) 788-6775

The Faithful and Secularism, Part Two
By His Eminence Metropolitan Saba (Isper)

What are we to expect when the spirit of piety and the sanctifying life grow weak; when the spirit of prayer is neglected and reduced to the mere performance of rituals; when the life of prayer is replaced by work and organizations; when the spiritual dimension is neglected; when the faithful lose the sense of sin and forget repentance; and consequently, when the eschatological dimension of the Christian faith disappears—or is made to disappear?

Then the Church becomes an institution of this age and loses the very essence of her existence. At best, she is transformed into a humanitarian institution, perhaps even one of high caliber, but she loses her mission of sanctifying man, raising him up to the Kingdom of God, and thus bringing him to salvation.

One of the dangers of secularism is that it changes the mind without coercion. It confines the mind's thinking to what is sensible and tangible, causing the household of God—the children of the Church—to rush into following the ways and methods of the people of this age, even in ecclesial ministries. Thus, you see them pursuing dazzling achievements at the expense of the human person. They give priority, in their planning, to establishing institutions and ensuring their survival, with the aim of serving man; yet they neglect serving the very man they intend to serve until construction of the institution is completed. Then they discover that the institution itself requires constant development and support, exhausting the efforts of those responsible for it. And so the poor, the wounded, the suffering, the despairing, and the grieving remain forgotten. Where, then, is living and active love embodied?

They may also seek to modernize pastoral and spiritual ministry by following the methods of this age: planning, calculations, and endless meetings. God is forgotten, and souls no longer hope for His blessing upon the ministry they seek to offer. At that point, the work becomes entirely a human endeavor, while those carrying it out remain convinced that they are serving God. The spiritual dimension may disappear without anyone noticing, and the Church becomes a “sector” that may be called “spiritual,” but only alongside a number of other sectors that human beings need. What remains of her essence if she becomes like the rest, and is no longer the one who directs, gives meaning to, and grants life? Indeed, when she loses the essence of her existence and imitates the other sectors, she appears

either feeble or artificial, and she loses her precedence before other worldly institutions and organizations, which may surpass her in reaching the intended goal because they are more specialized and professional.

In his book *For the Life of the World*, Father Alexander Schmemmann says: “The Church is in the world but not of the world. Only because she is not of the world can she reveal the ‘world to come,’ that which transcends the world.” What truly remains of her if she loses this role? Activism prevails and prepares the way for fundamentalism to arise as a reaction to the loss of purpose.

When activism overwhelms the Church—that is, when pastoral activities or practical witness dominate while the spirit of prayer and repentance recedes—the balance is disturbed, and the scales tip toward resembling the fallen world. Activities then become the goal in themselves. Conversely, when the Church removes active pastoral care from her ministry, isolates herself from this world in her thought and service, cuts herself off from it, and contents herself with preserving the right faith apart from Christian love in imitation of Christ—when she does not strive unceasingly to embrace the world and seek its salvation—then she falls into fundamentalism. In truth, both secularism and fundamentalism are forms of alienation from the spirit of the Gospel and a terrible betrayal of true Christianity.

I will take an example from the Catholic Church, since she confronted contemporary secularism and modernity before others in Western Europe. In the years immediately following the Second Vatican Council, despite all its positive aspects, the Catholic Church fell into a very powerful movement of activism. The Italian Jesuit Father Giovanni Martinetti described her condition in prophetic words in his book *Ragioni per credere oggi*:

“The post-conciliar Church lost her mystical face, and became the Church of constant dialogue, organizations, consultations, conferences, councils, committees, academies, parties, pressure groups influencing public opinion, functions, structures and restructuring, social experiments, and statistics. Thus the Church became, more than ever before, the Church of men—that is, an entity without identity.”

Mother Teresa of Calcutta, in the final years of her life, to the astonishment of the volunteers in her humanitarian works, ordered the closure of all the bank accounts

of the international body that supported the works of her charitable religious order, and the cancellation of the meetings of the international group that supported her humanitarian activities, when she learned how enormous the expenses of those meetings had become!

Those in whom the Spirit of God acts shock the world by their attitudes and conduct. But what kind of Christianity is it that goes along with the world and its sins, instead of awakening it from its heedlessness and deviation?

There is a great difference between caring for humanity, accompanying it, and sharing in its pain in order to raise it from that pain toward salvation, and accepting its sin. The Christian loves the sick person, not the sickness. The Christian comes from eternal life, not from secular life; meaning, he illumines earthly life with the light of eternity. He does not reduce his life, its needs, and its goal to the limited years he spends upon this earth.

Therefore, the mission of the Church lies in raising the world with her to where it once was and to what it once was; in reminding the world of the life to which God has called it—not only by preaching, but in practice; and in manifesting the action and truth of God’s Incarnation in human history by embodying His presence in the heart of the world in which she lives.

If God’s action and fruit are not visible in the life and service of Christians, do they not become a secular social organization, depriving the world of the transfiguration to which it is called?

When the Church, in her ministry, does not make room for the hesychastic life—or what is today called spirituality—and directs nearly all her concern and energy toward action, she becomes secularized. That is, she loses her connection to the heavenly Kingdom, by which she is called to transform the earthly world, through its transfiguration in her authentic work, which must be done by the inspiration, presence, and action of the Holy Spirit.

The secularization of the Church deprives human beings of the grace of truly becoming children of God, not merely in word. They then search for the meaning of their lives in other places, and the word of the prophet Jeremiah becomes true of them: “They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, and hewn out for themselves broken cisterns that can hold no water” (2:13).

I will give two examples.

- Is it not possible for ecclesial media, when placed in the hands of those who are not prayerful and spiritually watchful, to become a means of displaying achievements and boasting about them, rather than urging viewers or readers to cultivate the spirit of love, service, and giving?
- And is it not possible for the goal of “pastoral” activities to shift toward fundraising, instead of being a practical means of supporting the faithful spiritually, helping them experience joy in the midst of the community, solidarity among the brethren, growth in the life of virtue, and the living out of love with greater effectiveness?

These are some of the deviations we can easily fall into without even noticing. To the extent that the life of prayer—and I emphasize the word *life*—grows within us, the children of the Church, we become more aware and vigilant so as not to lose sight of the goal, and the influence of worldliness weakens within us, and we truly become the Church of Christ.

(To be continued)

المؤمن والدهريّة، الجزء الثاني بقلم المتروبوليت سابا (اسبر)

ماذا ننتظر عندما تضعف روح التقوى، والحياة التقديسيّة، ونُهمل روح الصلاة، باقتصارها على مجرّد إتمام الطقوس، وتُستبدل حياة الصلاة بالأعمال والخدمات، ويُهمل البعد الروحي، ويخسر المؤمنون الحسّ بالخطيئة، وينسون التوبة، وتالياً يغيب، أو يُغَيَّب، البعد الأخروي للإيمان المسيحي؟

آنذاك ستصير الكنيسة مؤسّسة من هذا الدهر، وتفقد جوهر وجودها. وتحوّل، في أحسن الحالات، إلى مؤسّسة إنسانية، من طراز رفيع ربّما، لكنّها ستخسر مهمّة تقديس الإنسان ورفعته إلى ملكوت الله، وتالياً خلاصه.

من مخاطر الدهريّة أنّها تغيّر الذهن دونما قسر، فتقصر تفكيره على المحسوسات والملموسات، ما يجعل أهل بيت الله (أبناء الكنيسة) يندفعون إلى اتّباع طرق أهل هذا الدهر وسبلهم، حتّى في الخدمات الكنسيّة. فتراهم يسعون إلى الإنجازات الباهرة على حساب الإنسان، ويعطون الأولويّة في التخطيط لإنشاء المؤسّسات وبقائها، بهدف خدمة الإنسان، الذي يهملون خدمته إلى حين اكتمال المؤسّسة وبدء خدمتها، ليكتشفوا أنّها بحاجة إلى تطوير ودعم دائمين، يستنفذان جهود القائمين عليها. فيبقى الفقير والموجوع والمتألّم واليائس والحزين، منسيّين. فأين تتجسّد المحبّة الحيّة الفاعلة آنذاك؟

وقد يسعون إلى تحديث سبل الخدمة الرعائيّة والروحيّة باتّباع طرق الدهر في ذلك، من تخطيط، وحسابات واجتماعات لا تنتهي، فيُنسى الله، ولا تعود النفوس ترتجي مباركته للخدمة المرتجاة. آنذاك يصير العمل نتاجاً بشريّاً بالكلّيّة، والقائمون عليه مقتنعين بأنّهم يخدمون الله. قد يغيب البعد الروحي دونما انتباه، وتصبح الكنيسة قطاعاً، يمكن أن يُسمّى "روحياً"؛ ولكن، إلى جانب جملة من القطاعات الأخرى التي يحتاج إليها الإنسان. ماذا يبقى من جوهرها إذا ماثلت غيرها، ولم تكن هي الموجّه والمعطي المعنى والحياة؟ لا بل عندما تفقد جوهر وجودها، وتحاكي القطاعات الأخرى، فإنها تبدو إمّا مهلهلة أو متكلّفة، وتخسر السبّاق مع غيرها من المؤسّسات والهيئات العالميّة، التي قد تفوقها في الوصول إلى الهدف، لأنّها أكثر اختصاصيّة وجرفيّة منها.

يقول الأب ألكسندر شميمين: "الكنيسة هي في العالم وليست من العالم. فقط لأنها ليست من العالم، يمكنها أن تكشف "العالم الآتي"، [أي] ما يتخطى العالم." فماذا يتبقى منها، حقاً، إن خسرت هذا الدور؟ آنذاك تغلب النشاطية، وتهيء الطريق لنشوء الأصولية كرد فعل على ضياع الهدف.

عندما تطغى النشاطية على الكنيسة، أي فعاليات الرعاية أو الشهادة العملية، مع تقهقر روح الصلاة والتوبة، يختلّ التوازن، وتميل الكفة إلى مماثلة العالم الساقط، وتصبح النشاطات، بحدّ ذاتها، الهدف. في المقابل، عندما تعزل الكنيسة الرعاية النشطة من خدمتها، وتنعزل عن هذا العالم، في تفكيرها وخدمتها، وتقاطعه، وتكتفي بالحفاظ على الإيمان المستقيم، بمعزل عن المحبة المسيحية، اقتداءً بالمسيح، فلا تسعى، دون توقف، إلى احتضان العالم وخلاصه، فإنّها تقع في الأصولية. في الحقيقة، إنّ كلّاً من الدهرية والأصولية تغرّب عن روح الإنجيل، وخيانة رهيبة للمسيحية الحقّة.

سأخذ مثلاً من الكنيسة الكاثوليكية، لكونها واجهت قبل غيرها الدهرية والحدائث المعاصرتين، بحكم مواجهتها لهما في أوروبا الغربية. فقد وقعت الكنيسة الكاثوليكية في السنوات، التي تلت المجمع الفاتيكاني الثاني مباشرة، بكل ما فيه من إيجابيات، في حركة نشاطية قويّة جداً. فوصف الأب جيوفاني مارتيني اليسوعي الإيطالي حالها، بكلمات نبوية، في كتابه "Ragioni per credere oggi" فقال:

"فقدت كنيسة ما بعد المجمع وجهها الصوفي، فأضحت كنيسة الحوار الدائم والمنظمات والاستشارات والمؤتمرات والمجامع واللجان والأكاديميات والأحزاب، وتكتلات التأثير في الرأي العام، والوظائف والبُنى وإعادة البناء، والتجارب الاجتماعية والإحصاءات. وبذا أصبحت الكنيسة أكثر منها في أيّ وقت، كنيسة البشر، أي كياناً من دون هويّة."

أمّا الأم تيريزا (كلكتا)، في السنوات الأخيرة من حياتها، ووسط دهشة المتطوعين في أعمالها الإنسانية، فأمرت بإغلاق كلّ الحسابات المصرفية للهيئة العالمية المساندة لأعمال جمعيّتها الرهبانية الإنسانية، وإلغاء اجتماعات المجموعة العالمية، التي تدعم نشاطاتها الإنسانية، حين علمت بضخامة المصاريف التي تتكلّفها هذه الاجتماعات!!

من يفعل فيهم روح الله يصدّمون العالم بمواقفهم وسلوكهم. ولكن أيّ مسيحية هذه التي تسير العالم على ما فيه من خطايا، بدلاً من أن توقظه من غفلته وانحرافه؟

الفارق عظيم بين رعاية الإنسانيّة ومرافقتها ومشاركتها ألّمها، بغية إنهاضها منه إلى خلاصها، وبين قبول خطيئتها. المسيحيّ يحبّ المريض لا المرض. هو يأتي من الحياة الأبدية لا من الحياة الدهريّة، بمعنى أنّه يضيء على الأرضيّة بنور الأبدية. فلا يقصر حياته ومتطلّباتها وغايتها، على تلك السنين المحدودة، التي يقضيها فوق هذه الأرض.

لذلك فإنّ رسالة الكنيسة تكمن في أن ترفع العالم معها إلى حيث كان وإلى كيف كان؛ أن تذكره بالحياة التي دعاه الله إليها، عملياً لا وعظاً فقط، أن تُظهر فعل تجسّد الله وحقيقته في تاريخ البشر، عبر تجسيدها لحضوره في قلب العالم، الذي تعيش فيه.

إن لم يكن فعل الله وثمره بادياً على حياة المسيحيّين وخدمتهم، ألا يصبحون هيئة اجتماعيّة دهرية، فيُحرّم العالم من التجلّي المدعو إليه؟!

عندما لا تلحظ الكنيسة، في خدمتها، مكاناً للحياة الهدويّة، أو لما يسمّونه اليوم بالروحانيّة، وتوجّه جلّ همّها وطاقتها نحو الأفعال، فإنّها تتدهرن، أي تفقد صلتها بالملكوت السماوي المدعوة إلى العمل على تحويل العالم الأرضي إليه، عبر تجلّيه في عملها الأصيل، الذي يجب أن يكون معمولاً باستلهام الروح القدس وحضوره وفعله.

دهرنة الكنيسة تحرم البشر من نعمة تصيرهم أبناء الله حقّاً لا قولاً. فيفتشون عن معنى حياتهم في أمكنة أخرى، ويصحّ فيهم قول النبي إرمياء: "تركوني أنا ينبوع الماء الحيّ وحفروا لأنفسهم آباراً مشققة لا تضبط الماء" (٣:٢)

أكتفي بمثالين:

- أليس من الوارد أن يصير الإعلام الكنسيّ، في أيدي غير المصلّين واليقظين روحياً، سبيلاً إلى عرض الإنجازات والتباهي بها، أكثر من حثّه للمشاهدين أو القراء على تنمية روح المحبة والخدمة والعطاء!!
- أن يتحوّل هدف النشاطات "الرعية" نحو جمع التبرّعات، بدلاً من أن يكون وسيلةً عمليّة لدعم المؤمنين روحياً، ومساعدتهم على اختبار الفرح وسط

الجماعة، والتضامن في ما بين الإخوة، والنمو في حياة الفضيلة، وعيش المحبة
بفعالية أقوى!!

هذه بعض من الانحرافات التي قد نقع فيها بسهولة دونما، حتى، انتباه. بقدر ما تنمو
فيها، نحن أبناء الكنيسة، حياة الصلاة، [وأشدد على كلمة حياة]، نصبح أكثر صحواً ويقظة
لعدم ضياع الهدف، فيضعف تأثير الدهرية فيها، ونصير كنيسة المسيح حقاً.
(للمقال صلة)

