

+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, JUNE 29, 2025

TONE 2 / EOTHINON 3

THE HOLY, GLORIOUS APOSTLES PETER AND PAUL



On June 29 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.

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

يَا إِخْوَةُ، أَقُولُ هَذَا عَلَى سَبِيلِ الْهَوَانِ كَأَنَّنَا قَدْ ضَعُفْنَا. فَالَّذِينَ يَجْرُؤُونَ عَلَيْهِ -وَكَلَامِي كَلَامُ جَاهِلٍ- أَجْرُؤُ عَلَيْهِ أَنَا أَيْضاً أَخْدَامُ الْمَسِيحِ هُمْ؟ أَقُولُ هَذَا كَمُخْتَلٍ. أَعِبْرَانِيُّونَ هُمْ؟ فَأَنَا كَذَلِكَ، إِسْرَائِيلِيُّونَ هُمْ؟ فَأَنَا كَذَلِكَ، أَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّةِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ هُمْ؟ فَأَنَا كَذَلِكَ جَلَدَنِي الْيَهُودُ خَمْسَ مَرَّاتٍ. الْعَقْلُ فَأَنَا أَفُوقُهُمْ: أَفُوقُهُمْ فِي الْمَتَاعِبِ وَتَحْمِلِ الْجَلْدِ وَفِي السُّجُونِ، وَفِي التَّعَرُّضِ لِلْمَوْتِ مِرَاراً

وَضُرِبْتُ بِالْعِصِيِّ ثَلَاثَ مَرَّاتٍ، وَرُجِمْتُ مَرَّةً وَاحِدَةً، وَانْكَسَرَتْ بِي السَّفِينَةُ ثَلَاثَ مَرَّاتٍ، وَقَصِيْتُ يَوْمًا. أَرَبَعِينَ جَلْدَةً إِلَّا وَاحِدَةً بَنَاهُ وَلَيْلَهُ فِي عَرْضِ الْبَحْرِ، وَكُنْتُ فِي الْأَسْفَارِ مَرَّاتٍ كَثِيرَةً، وَفِي أخطَارِ السُّيُولِ، وَفِي أخطَارِ اللَّصُوصِ، وَفِي أخطَارِ مِنْ جَنْسِي، وَأخطَارِ مِنَ الْأُمَمِ، وَأخطَارِ فِي الْمَدِينَةِ، وَأخطَارِ فِي الْبَرِّيَّةِ، وَأخطَارِ فِي الْبَحْرِ، وَأخطَارِ مِنَ الْإِخْوَةِ الْكَذَّابِينَ، وَعَانَيْتُ النَّعَبَ وَالْكَدَّ وَالْأَسْهَارَ الْكَثِيرَةَ، وَالْجُوعَ وَالْعَطَشَ، وَالْأَصْوَامَ الْكَثِيرَةَ، وَالْبَرْدَ وَالْعُزْيَ، وَمَا عَدَا هَذِهِ الَّتِي هِيَ مِنْ خَارِجٍ، مَا يَتَقَالَمُ فَمَنْ يَضَعُ وَلَا أَضَعُفُ أَنَا؟ أَوْ مَنْ يُشْكِكُ وَلَا أَحْتَرِقُ أَنَا؟ إِنْ . عَلَيَّ كُلُّ يَوْمٍ مِنْ تَذْيِيرِ الْأُمُورِ وَمِنْ الْإِهْتِمَامِ بِجَمِيعِ الْكُنَاسِ كَانَ غَامِلٌ . وَيَعْلَمُ اللَّهُ أَبُو رَبَّنَا يَسُوعَ الْمَسِيحَ الْمُبَارَكَ إِلَى الْأَبَدِ أَتَيْ لَا أَكْذِبُ. كَانَ لَا بُدَّ مِنَ الْإِفْتِخَارِ فَإِنِّي أَفْتَخِرُ بِضَعْفِي الْمَلِكِ أَرْتَأَسَ بَدِمَشَقَ، يَحْرُسُ الْمَدِينَةَ لِيَقْبِضَ عَلَيَّ. فَذُلْتُ فِي زَنْبِيلٍ مِنْ كَوَّةٍ عَلَى السُّورِ وَنَجَوْتُ مِنْ يَدَيْهِ. وَإِنْ كَانَ لَا بُدَّ لِي إِنِّي أَعْرِفُ إِنْسَانًا فِي الْمَسِيحِ مُنْذُ أَرْبَعِ عَشْرَةِ . مِنَ الْإِفْتِخَارِ مَعَ أَنَّهُ لَا خَيْرَ فِيهِ، فَأَنْتَقِلُ إِلَى الْكَلَامِ عَلَى رُؤْيِ الرَّبِّ وَإِعْلَانَاتِهِ وَإِنَّمَا أَعْرِفُ أَنَّ هَذَا الْإِنْسَانَ اخْتُطِفَ . سَنَةً اخْتُطِفَ إِلَى السَّمَاءِ الثَّالِثَةِ، أَبِالْجَسَدِ؟ لَا أَعْلَمُ أَمْ بِغَيْرِ الْجَسَدِ؟ لَا أَعْلَمُ، اللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ، أَمَّا هَذَا . إِلَى الْفِرْدُوسِ، أَبِالْجَسَدِ أَمْ بِغَيْرِ الْجَسَدِ لَسْتُ أَعْلَمُ، اللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ، وَهَنَّاكَ سَمِعَ كَلِمَاتٍ سَرِيَّةً لَا يَحِلُّ لِنَاسٍ أَنْ يَنْطِقَ بِهَا فَإِنِّي لَوْ أَرَدْتُ الْإِفْتِخَارَ لَمَّا كُنْتُ جَاهِلًا، لِأَنِّي أَقُولُ الْحَقَّ، . الرَّجُلُ فَأَفْتَخِرُ بِهِ، وَأَمَّا مِنْ جِهَةِ نَفْسِي فَلَا أَفْتَخِرُ إِلَّا بِأَوْهَانِي لَكِنِّي أَتَحَاشَى الْإِفْتِخَارَ لِئَلَّا يَظُنَّ بِي أَحَدٌ فَوْقَ مَا يَرَانِي عَلَيْهِ أَوْ يَسْمَعُهُ مِنِّي. وَلِئَلَّا أَسْتَكْبِرَ بِفَرْطِ الْإِعْلَانَاتِ أُعْطِيتُ شَوْكَةً فِي تَكْفِيكَ نِعْمَتِي. لِأَنَّ « وَلِهَذَا طَلَبْتُ إِلَى الرَّبِّ ثَلَاثَ مَرَّاتٍ أَنْ تُفَارِقَنِي، فَقَالَ لِي: . الْجَسَدِ، مَلَاكُ الشَّيْطَانِ لِيَلْطِمَنِي لِئَلَّا أَتَكَبَّرَ فَبُكِّلَ سُورِي أَفْتَخِرُ بِالْحَرِيِّ بِأَوْهَانِي، لِئَسْتَقِرَّ فِي قُوَّةِ الْمَسِيحِ..» قُوَّتِي فِي الضَّعْفِ تَكْمُلُ

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."

فصلٌ من بشارَةِ الْقَدِيسِ مَتَّى الْإِنْجِيلِي الْبَشِيرِ وَالتَّلْمِيزِ الطَّاهِرِ. (19-13:16)

فِي ذَلِكَ الزَّمَانِ لَمَّا جَاءَ يَسُوعُ إِلَى نَوَاحِي قَيْصَرِيَّةِ فِيلِيسَ سَأَلَ تَلَامِيذَهُ قَائِلًا: مَنْ يَقُولُ النَّاسُ إِنِّي أَنَا ابْنُ الْبَشَرِ؟ فَقَالُوا: قَوْمٌ قَالَ لَهُمْ يَسُوعُ: وَأَنْتُمْ مَنْ تَقُولُونَ. يَقُولُونَ إِنَّكَ يُوْحَنَّا الْمَعْمَدَانُ، وَآخَرُونَ إِنَّكَ إِبِلْيَا، وَآخَرُونَ إِنَّكَ أَرْمِيَاءَ، أَوْ وَاحِدًا مِنَ الْأَنْبِيَاءِ فَأَجَابَ يَسُوعُ وَقَالَ لَهُ: طُوبَى لَكَ يَا سِمْعَانُ بَنَ يُونَا. فَإِنَّهُ . إِنِّي هُوَ؟ أَجَابَ سِمْعَانُ بُطْرُسُ قَائِلًا: أَنْتَ الْمَسِيحُ ابْنُ اللَّهِ الْحَيِّ وَأَنَا أَقُولُ لَكَ، أَنْتَ بُطْرُسُ، وَعَلَى هَذِهِ الصَّخْرَةِ سَأَبْنِي كَنِيسَتِي. لَيْسَ لَحْمٌ وَلَا دَمٌ كَشَفَ لَكَ هَذَا، لَكِنْ أَبِي الَّذِي فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ فَكُلُّ مَا رَبَطْتَهُ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ يَكُونُ مَرْبُوطًا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ، . وَسَأُعْطِيكَ مَفَاتِيحَ مَلَكُوتِ السَّمَاوَاتِ. وَأَبْوَابُ الْجَحِيمِ لَنْ تَقْوَى عَلَيْهَا وَكُلُّ مَا حَلَلْتَهُ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ يَكُونُ مَحْلُولًا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ.

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

Paraklises Service

Paraklises service will be held at the Parish life conference at the Hyatt Hotel In Burlingame for victims of the terrorist attack on the Church of Prophet Elias in Damascus. Letter from Metropolitan Saba regarding Paraklises is below.

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 20th-21st	St. John's annual Middle Eastern Food Festival

Coffee Hour

June 29th	Fairouz Freij in Memory of Angel Freij. May her memory be eternal!
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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



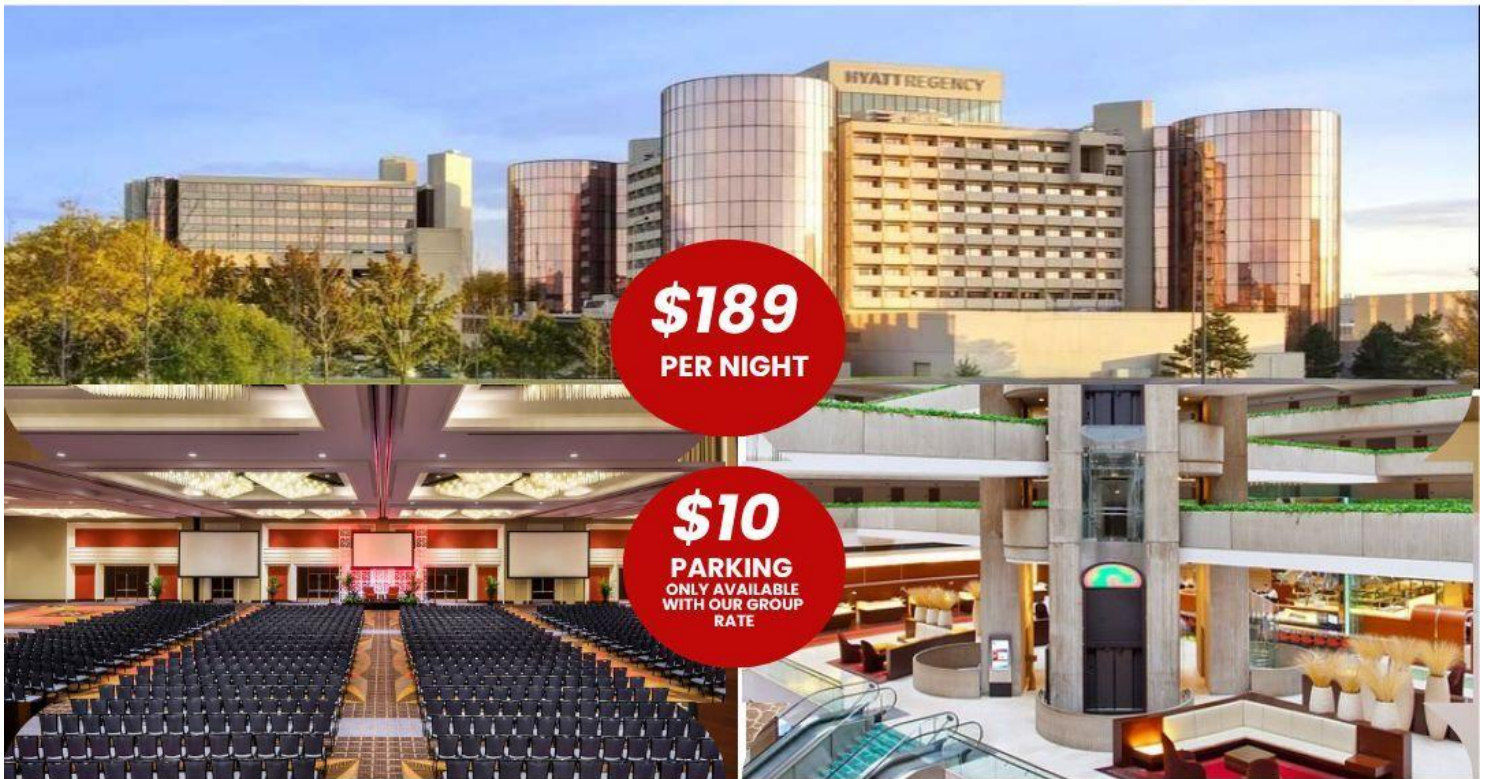
57TH BIENNIAL ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN
Archdiocese Convention

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

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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

His Eminence
The Most Reverend
Metropolitan SABA



Archbishop of New York
and Metropolitan of
All North America

**ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN ARCHDIOCESE
OF NORTH AMERICA**

Prot. no.: 332/2025

June 24, 2025

Beloved in Christ,

I greet you with a heavy heart as we continue what has otherwise been a joyous time for me, leading our seminarians, recent seminary graduates, and clergy on a pilgrimage through Jordan and Lebanon. This journey has allowed them to deepen their roots and gain a richer understanding of the Patriarchate of Antioch and Christianity in the Middle East.

Two days ago, for the first time, we celebrated the feast of the Sunday of All Saints of Antioch, recalling the many martyrs and other great saints of our ancient and Apostolic Church where “the Disciples were first called Christians” (Acts 11:26). Sadly, in addition to the martyrs of history like Ignatius, Barbara, Christina, Joseph of Damascus and the recently canonized father and son priests Nicholas and Habib, new faithful were added whose blood will nourish the soil of our Church, allowing it to grow and flourish in the days and years to come. During the sacred and holy Divine Liturgy, there was a terrorist attack on our church of the Prophet Elias in the suburb of Dweilaa in Damascus, Syria. As of this letter, more than 25 people have been martyred, and dozens more have been injured. This is the first such deliberate bombing of a church in Syria since the start of the war in 2011.

Along with praying for the souls of the departed, the families of these new martyrs for the Faith need our prayers and encouragement. With that in mind, I ask that all our churches hold Paraklesis services in the coming days, asking the Most-Holy Theotokos to comfort those who are suffering. At the same time, I am directing all our parishes to hold Trisagion Prayers of Mercy this Sunday, June 29, for those who lost their lives in this cowardly act of violence directed at people who were simply trying to pray and participate in the Divine Liturgy.

Finally, this Sunday is especially significant, as it marks the feast of Saints Peter and Paul, the patrons and protectors of our Holy See of Antioch. The successor of these holy apostles is our Father in Christ, His Beatitude Patriarch John X. A notable

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

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layman, Mr. Carol Saba, wrote a piece after the bombing which began, “The Patriarch consoles everybody, but who consoles the Patriarch?” As the successor of our patron saints, let us also pray for him, that he may continue to lead the Church of Antioch through this difficult time.

Wishing you and your families peace, and asking for your continued prayers as we continue our pilgrimage, I remain,

Your Father in Christ,



+**SABA**

Archbishop of New York and Metropolitan of all North America

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

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Again we pray for all those who are afflicted by the bombing of Prophet Elias Orthodox Church in Dweilaa, Damascus; for our Father and Patriarch JOHN to lead the flock of our Church during this pressing time; the wounded and the families of the martyrs, that the Physician of our souls and bodies may heal their wounds; and we also pray for the doctors, nurses and all those providing shelter or help, that the Lord God may protect them from despondency and discouragement; and for all civil authorities to act in compassion, humility and wisdom to stop any future attacks and restore peace immediately.

و أَيْضاً نَطْلُبُ مِنْ أَجْلِ جَمِيعِ الْمُصَابِينَ فِي الْإِنْفِجَارِ فِي كَنِيسَةِ مَارِ الْيَاسِ
الْأُورْثُودُكْسِيَّةِ فِي دَوِيلَعَا، وَ مِنْ أَجْلِ آبِينَا وَ بَطْرِيْرْكِنَا يُوْحَنَّا لِكِي يَقُوْدَ الْكَنِيسَةَ وَ
شَعْبَهَا، الْجَرْحَى وَ عَائِلَاتِ الشُّهَدَاءِ لِكِي يَشْفِي طَبِيبُ النُّفُوسِ وَ الْأَجْسَادِ جُروحَهُمْ ،
وَ أَيْضاً نَطْلُبُ مِنْ أَجْلِ جَمِيعِ الْأَطْبَاءِ وَ الْمُمرِّضَاتِ وَ كُلِّ الَّذِينَ يُقَدِّمُونَ الْمَلْجَأَ وَ
الْمَعُونَةَ لِكِي يَحْمِيَهُمُ الرَّبُّ الْإِلَهُ مِنْ الْيَاسِ وَ الْكَآبَةِ وَ لِكُلِّ مَسْئُولٍ أَنْ يَمْنَحَهُمُ الْعَطْفَ
وَ التَّوَاضُّعَ وَ الْحِكْمَةَ لِكِي يَوْقِفُوا أَيَّ إِعْتِدَاءٍ فِي الْمُسْتَقْبَلِ وَ يُعِيدُوا السَّلَامَ سَرِيعًا.

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 المتيوتنة 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.