

+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, MAY 11, 2025

TONE 3 / EOTHINON 5; FOURTH SUNDAY OF PASCHA

SUNDAY OF THE PARALYTIC

HIEROMARTYR MOKIOS, PRIEST IN MACEDONIA;
CYRIL AND METHODIOS, EQUALS-TO-THE-APOSTLES AND ENLIGHTENERS OF THE SLAVS



Sunday of the Paralytic

On May 11 in the Holy Orthodox Church, we commemorate Hieromartyr Mokios, priest in Macedonia; and Cyril and Methodios, equals-to-the-Apostles and enlighteners of the Slavs.

On this day, the fourth Sunday of Pascha, we commemorate the Paralytic and, as is right, we celebrate the miracle wrought for him.

Jesus healed the Paralytic at the Sheep's Pool, located near the Sheep's Gate of Jerusalem, where people sacrificed their beasts and washed their insides. The pool had five sides, with a porch and arch on each. A number of people, afflicted with various diseases, passed through them, waiting at the water for an angel to come down and stir it. Once it moved, whoever stepped into the water first was instantly healed. One poor man, whose story is recounted in today's Gospel lection in the Divine Liturgy, waited 38 years for someone to lower him into the water, because he was unable to move into the water himself. However, the Savior merely commanded the man to get up and walk, and he was healed.

THE EPISTLE

O chant unto our God, chant ye. Clap your hands, all ye nations.

The Reading from the Acts of the Holy Apostles. (9:32-42)

In those days, as Peter went throughout all regions, he came down also to the saints who dwelt at Lydda. There he found a certain man named Aeneas, who was bedridden for eight years and paralyzed. And Peter said to him: "Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you; arise and make your bed." And immediately he arose. And all who dwelt at Lydda and Sharon saw him, and they turned back to the Lord. Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha (which means Gazelle). She was full of good works and of charitable deeds which she did. And it came to pass in those days that she fell sick and died; and when they had washed her, they placed her in an upper chamber. Since Lydda was near Joppa, the disciples, hearing that Peter was there, sent two men to him entreating him: "Come to us without delay!" So Peter arose and went with them. And when he arrived, they took him into the upper chamber. All the widows stood by him weeping, showing the tunics and other garments which Tabitha made while she was with them. But Peter put them all outside and knelt down and prayed; then turning to the body, he said: "Tabitha, arise!" And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter, she sat up. And he gave her his hand, and raised her up. Then he called the saints and widows and presented her alive. And it became known throughout all Joppa, and many believed in the Lord.

الرسالة

رَتِّلُوا لِإِلَهِنا رَتِّلُوا. يَا جَمِيعَ الْأُمَمِ صَفِّقُوا بِالْأَيْدِي.

فَصْلٌ مِنْ أَعْمَالِ الرُّسُلِ الْقَدِيسِينَ الْأَطْهَارِ.

فِي تِلْكَ الْأَيَّامِ، فِيمَا كَانَ بُطْرُسُ يَطُوفُ فِي جَمِيعِ الْأَمَاكِنِ، نَزَلَ أَيْضاً إِلَى الْقَدِيسِينَ السَّاكِنِينَ فِي لُدَّة. فَوَجَدَ هُنَاكَ إِنْسَاناً اسْمُهُ أَيْنِاسُ، مُضْطَجِعاً عَلَى سَرِيرٍ مِنْذُ ثَمَانِي سِنِينَ، وَهُوَ مُخْلَعٌ. فَقَالَ لَهُ بُطْرُسُ: "يَا أَيْنِاسُ، يَشْفِيكَ يَسُوعُ الْمَسِيحُ؛ فَمُ وَافَتْرَشْ لِنَفْسِكَ." فَقَامَ لِلَوْفَتِ. وَرَأَهُ جَمِيعُ السَّاكِنِينَ فِي لُدَّة وَسَارُونَ فَرَجَعُوا إِلَى الرَّبِّ. وَكَانَتْ فِي يَافَا تَلْمِيزَةٌ اسْمُهَا طَابِيتَا، الَّتِي تَفْسِيرُهُ ظَبْيَةٌ، وَكَانَتْ هَذِهِ مُمْتَلِئَةً أَعْمَالاً صَالِحَةً وَصَدَقَاتٍ كَانَتْ تَعْمَلُهَا. فَحَدَّثَتْ فِي تِلْكَ الْأَيَّامِ أَنَّهَا مَرَضَتْ وَمَاتَتْ. فَغَسَلُوهَا وَوَضَعُوهَا فِي الْعُلْيَةِ. وَإِذْ كَانَتْ لُدَّةَ يَقْرُبُ يَافَا، وَسَمِعَ التَّلَامِيزُ أَنَّ بُطْرُسَ فِيهَا، أَرْسَلُوا إِلَيْهِ رَجُلَيْنِ يَسْأَلَانِهِ أَنْ لَا يُبْطِئَ عَنِ الْقُدُومِ إِلَيْهِمْ. فَقَامَ بُطْرُسُ وَأَتَى مَعَهُمَا. فَلَمَّا وَصَلَ، صَعِدُوا بِهِ إِلَى الْعُلْيَةِ، وَوَقَفَ لَدَيْهِ جَمِيعُ الْأَرَامِلِ يَبْكِينَ، وَيُرِينَهُ أَقْمَصَةً وَثِيَاباً كَانَتْ تَصْنَعُهَا ظَبْيَةٌ مَعَهُنَّ. فَأَخْرَجَ بُطْرُسُ الْجَمِيعَ خَارِجاً، وَجَثَا عَلَى رُكْبَتَيْهِ وَصَلَّى. ثُمَّ التَفَّتْ إِلَى الْجَسَدِ وَقَالَ: "يَا طَابِيتَا قُومِي." فَفَتَحَتْ عَيْنَيْهَا. وَلَمَّا أَبْصَرَتْ بُطْرُسَ جَلَسَتْ. فَنَاولَهَا يَدَهُ وَأَنْهَضَهَا. ثُمَّ دَعَا الْقَدِيسِينَ وَالْأَرَامِلَ، وَأَقَامَهَا لَدَيْهِمْ حَيَّةً. فَشَاعَ هَذَا الْخَبَرُ فِي يَافَا كُلِّهَا، فَأَمَنَ كَثِيرُونَ بِالرَّبِّ.

THE GOSPEL

The Reading from the Holy Gospel according to St. John. (5:1-15)

At that time, Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Now there is in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate a pool, in Hebrew called Bethesda, which has five porticoes. In these lay a multitude of invalids, blind, lame, paralyzed, waiting for the moving of the water. For an angel of the Lord went down at certain seasons into the pool and troubled the water; whoever stepped in first, after the troubling of the water was healed of whatever disease he had. One man was there, who had been ill for 38 years. When Jesus saw him and knew that he had been lying there a long time, He said to him, "Do you want to be healed?" The sick man answered Him, "Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool when the water is troubled, and while I am going another steps down before me." Jesus said to him, "Rise, take up your pallet, and walk." And at once the man was healed, and he took up his pallet and walked. Now that day was the Sabbath. So the Jews said to the man who was cured, "It is the Sabbath, it is not lawful for you to carry your pallet." But he answered them, "The man who healed me said to me, 'Take up your pallet, and walk.'" They asked him, "Who is the man who said to you, 'Take up your pallet, and walk'?" Now the man who had been healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had withdrawn, as there was a crowd in the place. Afterward, Jesus found him in the temple, and said to him, "See, you are well! Sin no more, that nothing worse befalls you." The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus Who had healed him.

الإنجيل

فَصْلٌ شَرِيفٌ مِنْ بَشَارَةِ الْقَدِيسِ يوحنا الْإِنْجِيلِيِّ الْبَشِيرِ وَالتَّلْمِيزِ الطَّاهِرِ. (15-5:1)

فِي ذَلِكَ الزَّمَانِ، صَعِدَ يَسُوعُ إِلَى أُورُشَلِيمَ. وَإِنَّ فِي أُورُشَلِيمَ عِنْدَ بَابِ الْغَنَمِ بَرْكَةً، تُسَمَّى بِالْعِبْرَانِيَّةِ بَيْتَ حِسْدَا، لَهَا خَمْسَةُ أَرْوَاقَةٍ. كَانَ مُضْطَجِعاً فِيهَا جُمُهورٌ كَثِيرٌ مِنَ الْمَرْضَى مِنْ عُيَانٍ وَعُجْرٍ وَيَابِسِي الْأَعْضَاءِ، يَنْتَظِرُونَ تَحْرِيكَ الْمَاءِ. لِأَنَّ مَلَكَاً كَانَ يَنْزِلُ أحياناً فِي الْبَرْكَةِ وَيَحْرِكُ الْمَاءَ. وَالَّذِي كَانَ يَنْزِلُ أَوَّلًا مِنْ بَعْدِ تَحْرِيكِ الْمَاءِ، كَانَ يُبْرِأُ مِنْ أَيِّ مَرَضٍ اعْتَرَاهُ. وَكَانَ هُنَاكَ إِنْسَانٌ بِهِ مَرَضٌ مِنْذُ ثَمَانٍ وَثَلَاثِينَ سَنَةً. هَذَا إِذْ رَأَى يَسُوعُ مُلْقًى، وَعَلِمَ أَنَّ لَهُ زَمَاناً كَثِيراً، قَالَ لَهُ: "أَتُرِيدُ أَنْ تَبْرَأَ؟" فَأَجَابَهُ الْمَرِيضُ: "يَا سَيِّدُ، لَيْسَ لِي إِنْسَانٌ مَتَى حَرَكْتُ الْمَاءَ يُلْقِنِي فِي الْبَرْكَةِ، بَلْ بَيْنَمَا أَكُونُ آتِياً، يَنْزِلُ قَبْلِي آخَرٌ." فَقَالَ لَهُ يَسُوعُ: "قُمْ، أَحْمِلْ سَرِيرَكَ وَامْشِ." فَلِلْوَفَتِ بَرَى الرَّجُلُ، وَحَمَلَ سَرِيرَهُ وَمَشَى. وَكَانَ فِي ذَلِكَ الْيَوْمِ سَبَبٌ. فَقَالَ الْيَهُودُ لِلَّذِي شَفَى: "إِنَّهُ سَبَبٌ، فَلَا يَحِلُّ لَكَ أَنْ تَحْمِلَ السَّرِيرَ." فَأَجَابَهُمْ: "إِنَّ الَّذِي أَبْرَأَنِي هُوَ قَالَ لِي 'أَحْمِلْ سَرِيرَكَ وَامْشِ.' فَسَأَلُوهُ مَنْ هُوَ الْإِنْسَانُ الَّذِي قَالَ لَكَ 'أَحْمِلْ سَرِيرَكَ وَامْشِ؟' أَمَا الَّذِي شَفَى فَلَمْ يَكُنْ يَعْلَمُ مَنْ هُوَ. لِأَنَّ يَسُوعَ اعْتَزَلَ، إِذْ كَانَ فِي الْمَوْضِعِ جَمْعٌ. وَبَعْدَ ذَلِكَ وَجَدَهُ يَسُوعُ فِي الْهَيْكَلِ، فَقَالَ لَهُ: "هَا قَدْ غُوفِيتَ، فَلَا تَعُدْ تُخْطِئُ لِيَلَّا يُصِيبَكَ أَشَرٌ." فَذَهَبَ ذَلِكَ الْإِنْسَانُ، وَأَخْبَرَ الْيَهُودَ أَنَّ يَسُوعَ هُوَ الَّذِي أَبْرَأَهُ.

Love Your Neighbor

May – Project Mexico/ St Innocent Orphanage

Project Mexico is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization that performs works of mercy in the name of Jesus Christ, building homes for the poor in Mexico and by providing education and shelter for orphaned boys through St. Innocent Orphanage.

PROJECT MEXICO & ST. INNOCENT ORPHANAGE

At St. John's, many of our teens have had the opportunity to volunteer to build homes for communities in need in Northern Mexico, just across the US border (about 30 minutes from San Diego). We have some interest in taking a group down this summer, June 12-18th. This is a wonderful, transformative volunteer experience as part of "a mission to build hope, one home at a time" and has been a blessing to participate in. <https://www.projectmexico.org/homebuilding#gl>

The homebuilding program is open to all teens 14 years & above or adults of any age!!! Younger teens under 14 can join along with a parent chaperone. If you're interested or have questions, please contact Rula Adranly rulaadranly@comcast.net or Nadine Potts nbhpotts@sbcglobal.net.

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

Upcoming Events

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

Coffee Hour

May 11th	Dn. Nicholas and Rula Adranly
May 18th	Joumana Najjar for the 6-year memorial of her Dad Alphones Jammal. May his memory be eternal!
May 25th	Evan Silvernale and Family.
June 1st	Luncheon hosted by Fadwa Samara, Nelly Nassif and Samia Shaheen. \$20 per person.

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!
- † Victor and Angela Husary for the good health of **Chris, Tony and Mike Husary**. Many years!
- † St. John Parish family for the good health of **Samir and Pat Jeha**. Many years!
- † Romley, Farradj and Lawyer families in memory of **Kh. Patricia Romley**. May her memory be eternal!
- † St. John Parish Family for the good health of **George Adranly**. Many years!
- † St. John Parish Family for the good health of Donna Potter. 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
- † Thank you to Ziad and Charlene Nassoura for donating the communion wine.
God bless you and your children!

ONLY IN THEATERS: JUNE 6TH, 2025 AT 6 PM

EXCLUSIVELY AT THE RUSSIAN CENTER
2460 SUTTER ST, SAN FRANCISCO



SF ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN YOUTH COMMITTEE

PRESENTS A YOUTH BALL

A NIGHT with THE STARS



"A masterpiece"

- AVERAGE BALL ATTENDANT



"FOOD WAS TO DIE FOR!"
- Wilted Lentils

FEATURING: DJ, OPEN BAR, STUNNING DECORATIONS, DANCING, THREE-COURSE DINNER,
AWARDS, PHOTO BOOTH, COAT CHECK, PHOTO PROPS, AND MORE!



SF ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN YOUTH COMMITTEE
PRODUCTIONS



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

You could use this QR code for your donation



California
FISH GRILL
CASUAL KITCHEN



CALIFORNIA FISH GRILL IS PROUD TO SUPPORT St. John Church

Thursday, June 12 at 11AM-8PM
2910 Ygnacio Valley Rd. Bldg. G
Walnut Creek, CA 94598

IN-STORE USE ONLY



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

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

A BETTER WAY TO *Seafood*™

Dine & Donate

A dine and donate fundraising event, where a portion of a restaurant's sales on a specific day are donated to our church when mention St. John and/or show the flyer. Essentially creating a win-win situation for both the restaurant and St. John. Plus you can gather with fellow community members and have no mess to clean. Additionally you don't have to cook or worry about what to eat that day. :)



**GREAT FOOD
GREAT CAUSE**

JACK'S WILL DONATE 15% OF PROCEEDS

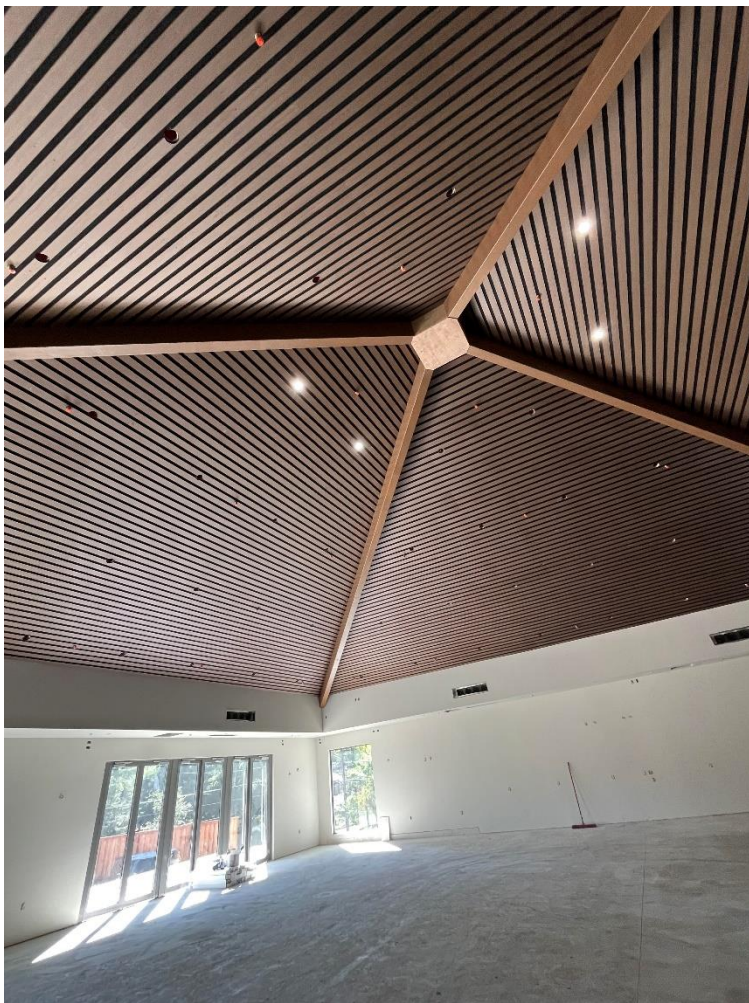
PRESENT THIS FLYER (OR SIMPLY MENTION THE ORGANIZATION ABOVE)
AND JACK'S WILL HAPPILY DONATE 15% OF FOOD AND BEVERAGE SALES.

ST. JOHN CHURCH

5/19/25

JACK'S
BREAKFAST • LUNCH
DINNER • DRINKS

RESTAURANT & BAR
60 CRESCENT DRIVE
PLEASANT HILL | 94523 | (925) 849-6195
ILOVEJACKS.COM
SUNDAY-THURSDAY: 8AM-9PM | FRIDAY & SATURDAY: 8AM-10PM



Fellowship Hall Update

Due to delays out of our control from county officials, we had to slow the pace of construction work, but thankfully, this past Friday the inspectors have come and approved us to continue moving forward. As you can see from the pictures, the ceiling in the hall is completed, with final light fixtures and sprinkler heads to be installed shortly. The walls, floors and fixtures are installed in the restrooms, and we are awaiting partition walls as well as lighting and ceiling panels. The kitchen hoods are installed and walls are going up. Painting is moving ahead this week and hall floors are to be installed soon after. Members of the parish are working with the building committee and contractor to finalize kitchen equipment.

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 \$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. To date, we have received more than \$925,000 in direct donations, not counting contributions from church events such as the crab feed, dinners, and the Men's Fellowship and Ladies of St John. We would like to show that we have raised more than \$1 million dollars, and are asking all to consider their donations to see if we can close the \$75,000 gap before we finalize the plaque design. However, we kindly ask that you do not divert your pledges and donations from the parish operating funds to do so.

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

St John Fellowship Hall Donor Recognition

The St John Fellowship Hall Building and Fundraising Committees along with the Parish Council would like to thank and recognize those donors who have given over the years to the Building Fund. The contributions shown below include cumulative donations to the initial \$2 Million in the building fund at the start of construction, in addition to those donations to the current fundraising effort. Please note that our very generous Cornerstone Donor, as well as several of the Partner and Friend level donors have donated prior to the beginning of our current campaign. All donors will be recognized on a plaque or donor wall feature located in the reception area (foyer) of the hall at the levels shown below. If you would like your contribution recognized in another way, or if you have questions regarding your donation level, please contact the church office

Recognition level	Names of Donors	
Cornerstone \$500,000 +	Hanada Fasheh	
Patron \$100,000-249,000	Rick and Sandra Dudum	Jack and Sylvia Dudum
Benefactor \$50,000 - 99,999	The McClintic Family Fuad and Nadia Sweiss	Joseph Sweis and Family
Provider \$25,000 - 49,999	Jason and Lina Dudum Rocky and Nada Dudum Nick and Deena Farrah	Jon and Larissa Geleris Stephen and Angela Kreta Elias and Samia Shaheen
Supporter \$10,000-24,999	Dn. Nicolas and Rula Adranly George and Samar Adranly Sami and Kathy Adranly George and Freida Cawog Jim and Denise Dudum Lisa and David Hanna and Family Phillip and Gina Jaber Jawad and Violet Jaber Anonymous	Sam Khoury Ron and Nancy Nicola The Potts Family Raymond and Georgianna Rishwain Raif and Sonya Rihani Ernest and Noha Shulze and Family Daniel and Mona Thayer ADOBE – matching gift for Hanna Family Orthodox Vision Foundation
Partner \$5,000-9,999	Charles and Marilee Ajalat Dominick and Joby Aranda Leila Farradj Lynn and Usama Farradj Ibrahim Fasheh Jordis Fasheh Health of the Freij Family Miranda Halaby	John and Sylvia Jaber Fady and Joumana Najjar Darrin Rishwain Munah Terazi George Theodosy Ramsey Zacharia

Friend

\$1,000-4,999

Samer Nassar

Jack Ajlumi

Richard and Joyce Ayoob
Anthony and Kimberly Bailey
William and Judith Bosl
Challenger Enterprises
Jack and Sylvia Dudum
F&M Bank
Fadi and Rana Feghali
Alex and Helen Ghantous
Khalil and Leila Hakeem
Ronald Issac
JDO Dakota Ventures
Ronald and Ruth Jeha
Mary Karadsheh
Maha Kuri-Peterson
Brandon Laidlaw
Lieman Properties
MCC Realty
Azmie and Melanie Madanat
Chris and Eva Malki
Margaret Mas
Siham Mitry
Myers Restaurant Supply
George Najjar

Samir and Abla Toubassy
In Memory of Dwight Underhill
Robert and Katrina Waddell
George and Afaf Wahbeh
Nabil and Souhila Wakileh
William Wood Architects
Hala Yowakeem
Samir and Nadia Zeidan
Dn George and Jane Nassief
Ramzi and Marina Nassoura
Naim and Helen Nazzal
Nicholas Luengo Construction
Nick Jr. and Najat Nicola and Family
Antone Nino
Fawda Samara
Jeanne Shikany
Samir and Caroline Syriani
Sami and Alia Sahouria
Andrew Thayer
Steven Thayer
The Kabob Shop Restaurant
John and Jan Theodosy

Builder
\$100-999

Saleem & Samya Abudawood
George E. Adranly
Felice and Eric Ajluni
Howard & Marilyn Ashcraft
Eman Baalbaki
Tania & Daniel Bajada
Randy and Barbara Bray
Ken Bullock Ins & Fin Services
Robert and Renee Crawford
Mary Cubeisy
Dn. John and Irena Dibs
Herb & Tania DeGroot
Daryl & Katherine Dudum
Tony Dudum
Fuad and Mary Farradj
Naim & Nadia Frangieh
John & Dina Freij
Fairouz Freij
Fred and Sue Gedeon
Sandra Gedeon
Benjamin and Ashley Geleris
Zzane & Irene Guajardo
Julianna Greensides
Bahij & Yardenah Hanhan
Raymond Hilal
Mounir and Muna Hobaika
Angela Husary
Jack's Restaurant
Eddie and Evleen Salem
Wanda and Leonard Sarkissian
See's Candies
Jabra & Rania Shuheiber
Marie Simon
Matthew Simon
Summit Landscape Development
Christina Tast
Suzanne & Nabil Taovil
Sami Tawasha
Christina Thabit
Kamal & Samar Wahbe
TP Wolf
Khalil Yowakeem
Sam & Nevine Yowakim

Carol Jeha
Samir Juha
Andreas Kamlot
Rima Kashou
Norma Khalil
Elia Khalilieh
Elizabeth Kreta

Mary Lodge
William and Mary Massarweh
Daniel & Amy McLellan
Mendocino Farms Restaurant
Paul and Arwa Mogannam
Alan & Dale Morgan
Khalil Mounzer
Ibrahim Munayer
Marwan Mukhar
Sam & Nelly Nassif
Ziad & Charlene Nassoura
William and Jida Nasser
Maureen Nelson
Mark Nicola
Michelle Nicola
Pacer Physical Therapy
Jacob Ritter
Alexis Robbins
Rocco's Restaurant & Pizza
Neezar Samara

في معرفة الله المترولوجيت سابا (اسبر)

الله لا يُعرَف. هو يُعرَف عن ذاته. لا يستطيع الإنسان أن يعرف، بقدراته البشرية المحدودة، الله. هو يتلمَّس وجوده، يتحسَّس شيئاً من صفاته، يقيسه انطلاقاً من العالم المخلوق، لكنّه لا يدركه أبداً، ولا يعرفه معرفة كيانيّة، حقيقيّة، إلا بتدخل إلهيّ، بفعل كشفٍ لقدراته الإلهيّة. وهذا يحتاج إلى نفوس نقيّة وبارّة ومتواضعة، حتّى تراه وتتجاوب معه. فالله يضيء بنوره على الأخيار والأشرار، على الأبرار وعلى الذين يختارهم هو، برحمةٍ منه، لمقاصد وحده يعرفها. "الله يريد الكل أن يخلصوا وإلى معرفة الحق يُقبلوا" (١ تيم ٢: ٤).

يستدلّ الإنسان على الله، يساعده عقله على رؤية السبل التي تؤدي إليه. الله يُعرَف بالحب. برهان وجوده مرتبط ببرهان فعله فيك وفي الكون.

قيل قديماً "أرني إلهك"، أرني البرهان على إلهك. صفات إلهك تُرى بواسطتك. كيف تسلك، كيف تتصرف، كيف تواجه العالم، ما هي أخلاقك؟... إن كنت مؤمناً بالله تطيعه، وتسلك بحسب وصاياه ومرضاته، فيظهر هذا في مسلكك في دنياك. المؤمن يتشبه بإلهه. وفي المسيحيّة، الإنسان مدعوّ إلى أن يصير على صورة الله. لقد خُلِق، في الأصل، على صورته. وإن كانت، هذه الصورة الإلهيّة، قد تشوّهت بسقوط الجدّين الأوّلين من الفردوس، إلا أنّ آثارها ما تزال موجودة، ويستطيع الإنسان، بالمسيح، أن يرمّمها، ويرقي بها إلى جمالها الإلهيّ الأصيل.

عرف المسيحيّون، منذ القدم، طريقتين لمقاربة الله، هما، في الوقت ذاته، متوازيتان ومتكاملتان. قالوا بالإثبات، عن طريق الاستدلال والقياس، وبالتنزيه، عن طريق السموّ بالله، عن كلّ صفة موجودة في الخليقة.

في الطريقة الأولى، أنت، على سبيل المثال، تطلق صفة الجمال على الله، لأنّك ترى الجمال في الخليقة، التي برأها، له المجد. وهكذا ترى إلى كلّ

حُسْنٍ وخيرٍ في هذه الدنيا، وتثبتته في الله. ترى رحمة فائقة في مخلوق ما، فتقول إذا كان المخلوق قادراً على أن يصل إلى هذه الدرجة من الرحمة، فكم رحمة الله عظيمة إذن!

هذا طريق استدلالي، منطقي، ينطلق من الخليقة إلى الخالق. سمّاه اللاهوتيون لاهوت الإثبات أو اللاهوت الإيجابي.

الطريقة الثانية تسمى التنزيهية. وهي على العكس من الطريقة الإثباتية. تنطلق من أنّ الله مَنزّه كلياً عن محدودية خليقته. فعدل البشر، على سبيل المثال، ناقص، أمّا الله، فليس فيه نقصان، وتالياً، عدله يتجاوز العدل البشري، بما لا يمكن قياسه، ولا معرفته، ولا حدّه. لذلك وصل بعضهم إلى القول بلا عدالة الله، إذا ما قورنت أو قيسست بالعدالة كما يفهمها البشر. لأنّ عدالة الله، غير المحدودة، وغير المُدرّكة، تجعلنا ننفي العدل عنه، انطلاقاً من عدلنا البشري الناقص والمحدود. تُسمّى هذه الطريق في مقاربة الله باللاهوت السلبي أو لاهوت النفي، لأنّه ينفي كلّ صفة بشرية، مهما كانت صالحة وحسنة، عن الله، باعتباره، تعالى، يفوقها بما لا يُقاس.

ولأنّ الإنسان لا يستطيع أن يفهم الله مباشرةً، تراه يستعين بالصور والرموز، على قدر ما يستوعب عقله ومخيّلته. لذلك، فإنّ كلّ كلام عن الله، في النهاية، هو كلام رمزي وغير مباشر، وبشري، يحمل النفحة واللغة البشريتين، اللتين لا يمكنهما الإحاطة بالله.

جاء في سيرة المغبوط أغسطين، أنّ ملاكاً، بهيئة ولد، ظهر له فيما كان يتمشّي على شاطئ البحر، متفكراً، بتركيز وإجهد، في سرّ الثالوث القدّوس، وعلاقة الأقانيم بعضها ببعض. كان الولد - الملاك ينقل بكفّيه ماءً، من البحر، ليضعه في حفرة صغيرة، صنعها في رمل الشاطئ. فلما رآه أغسطين، قال له: ألا ترى اتساع البحر ومداه؟ كيف لهذه الحفرة الصغيرة أن تتسع لكلّ هذا الماء؟ فأجابه الملاك: وكيف لعقلك المحدود أن يتسع لله اللا محدود؟

لأنّ الرموز والصور واللغة البشريّة لا تكفي للتعبير عن سموّ الله الفائق، وكذلك عن اختلافه عنّا، ترانا نحتاج إلى استخدام أسلوب النفي، لكي نقول ما ليس هو الله، أكثر من القول ما هو الله. فطريقة إثبات الصفات في الله تتوازي وطريقة نفي هذه الصفات عنه تعالى.

كلّ تعبير بشري إنّما هو تصوير قاصر، على الرغم من صدق القصد منه. ويبقى الله سرّاً. إنّهُ يتجاوز كلّ ما هو بشريّ. عندما نقول بالسّرّ نعني، على حدّ قول المطران كاليستوس وير، أنّ أمراً ما قد استبان لفهمنا، غير أنّنا لا ندركه، البتّة، إدراكاً كاملاً.

الله في المسيحيّة، هو الإله الذي عُرف، في الكتاب المقدّس، بالإله الذي لا يني يكشف عن أفعال قدرته للبشر، ليجعلهم يعرفونه على حقيقته. لذلك دعا الكثيرون المسيحيّة بدين الكشف الإلهي، الذي بدأ بمخاطبة الله لإبراهيم، وانتهى بالتجسّد الإلهي، في شخص المسيح. نعرف الله بيسوع المسيح. "ما من أحد يعرف الآب إلاّ بي" (يو ٦: ١٤).

من هنا يفرّق اللاهوت الأرثوذكسي بين جوهر الله أو طبيعته أو ذاتيّته، من جهة، وبين قدراته أو صنائعه أو أفعال قوّته، من جهة أخرى.

جوهر الله لا يمكن إدراكه أبداً، لا في هذه الحياة، ولا في الأبدية. لو عرفنا جوهر الله لما بقينا مخلوقين. هذا أمر مستحيل على الإنسان "الله في النور الذي لا يدنى منه." لكنّه يكشف لنا عن قدراته أو أفعال قوّته. وذلك عندما يعزّينا أو يهدينا أو يرشدنا... إلخ. نرى قدراته في أفعاله، التي يتمّمها فينا، وفي العالم المحيط بنا: في خليقته.

يقول القدّيس سمعان اللاهوتي الجديد: "أيّها العالم غير المنظور، نحن نراك، أيّها العالم غير الملموس، نحن نلمسك، أيّها العالم الممتنعة معرفته، نحن نعرفك، أيّها العالم المحتجز إدراكه، نحن نمسك بك."

هذا يستلزم عيوناً روحيّة ترى ما لا يُرى بعيني الجسد فقط. هذا يُعطى لمن لظفت النعمة الإلهيّة أهواءهم، فاستنارت بصيرتهم الداخليّة.

كيف لقاسي القلب، مثلاً، أن يتحسّس أفعال الرحمة؟ وكيف لمن أعمت الغيرة قلبه، أن يرى الصلاح الذي في غيره، وهو يتمزّق غيرةً وتحرقاً وحسداً وكراهيةً؟

لكي تعرف الله على حقيقته يلزمك حباً وتواضعاً وحساً إنسانياً مرهفاً. تعرفه بقدر ما تعاشره، ويكون حاضراً فيك. ولا تعاشره حقاً إلا إذا كنت مُخلصاً، حتّى المنتهى، لوصاياه وتعاليمه، التي كشفها لك في يسوع المسيح. آنذاك يظهر فعله فيك، وإلا فأنت تعبد ذاتك متوهماً إيّاها إيّاه، وتغلق، بذلك، الطريق أمام فعل قدرته فيك.

يقول الشيخ المستنير صفروني زاخاروف: "الله يمكن معرفته في كلّ مكان، لأنّه حاضر في كلّ مكان. وحتّى يمتلك الإنسان هذه المعرفة، فإنّ المدارس والكتابات اللاهوتية ليست كافية قطعياً. ولكن متى كان حاضراً معنا، فإنّ المعرفة الحقّة تخرق، وبشكل لا يُفسّر، كياننا كلّه."

On Knowing God

By His Eminence Metropolitan Saba (Isper)

God is unknowable, but He makes Himself known. Man, with his limited human abilities, cannot know God. He senses His existence, senses some of His attributes, and measures them from the created world, but he never comprehends Him, nor does he know Him with a true, existential knowledge, except through divine intervention and the revelation of His divine powers. This requires pure, righteous, and humble souls to see Him and respond to Him. God shines His light on the good and the evil, on the righteous and those He chooses, out of His mercy, for purposes that only He knows. "God desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2:4).

Man finds evidence of God; his intellect helps him see the paths that lead to Him. God is known through love. The proof of His existence is linked to the proof of His action in you and in the universe.

It was said in ancient times, "Show me your God. Show me the proof of your God." The attributes of your God are seen through you. How do you behave, how do you act, how do you face the world? What are your morals? If you believe in God, obey Him, and act according to His commandments and His pleasures, then this is evident in your behavior in this world. The believer imitates his God. In Christianity, man is called to become the image of God. He was originally created in His image. Although this divine image was distorted by the fall of the first two ancestors from paradise, its traces still exist, and man, through Christ, can restore it and elevate it to its authentic divine beauty.

Christians have known, since ancient times, two ways of approaching God, which are simultaneously parallel and complementary. They spoke of Cataphatic affirmation, through deduction and analogy, and of Apophatic approach, through God's transcendence of every attribute of creation.

In the first way, for example, you attribute the characteristic of beauty to God because you see beauty in creation, which He created, and to Him be glory. Thus, you see all goodness and virtue in this world and attribute it to God. You see

supreme mercy in a creature, and you say, "If a creature is capable of attaining this degree of mercy, then how great is God's mercy!"

This is a deductive, logical path that extends from creation to the Creator. Theologians have called it affirmative (Cataphatic) theology or positive theology.

The second method is called Apophatic theology. It is the opposite of affirmative theology. It proceeds from the premise that God is completely free from the limitations of His creation. Human justice, for example, is imperfect, but God cannot be imperfect. Consequently, His justice transcends human justice in a way that cannot be measured, known, or limited. Therefore, some have gone so far as to say that God has no justice when compared or measured with justice as humans understand it. This is because God's justice, which is unlimited and incomprehensible, leads us to deny Him justice, based on our imperfect and limited scale of human justice. This approach to God is called negative theology or theology of negation, because it denies every human attribute, no matter how good and beautiful, from God, considering Him, the Almighty, to be immeasurably superior to them.

Because man cannot directly understand God, he resorts to images and symbols to the extent that his mind and imagination can comprehend. Therefore, all speech about God is, in the end, symbolic, indirect, and human, carrying the human flavor and language that cannot encompass God.

It is mentioned in the biography of the Blessed Augustine that an angel, in the form of a boy, appeared to him while he was walking along the seashore, contemplating, with concentration and effort, the mystery of the Holy Trinity and the relationship of the divine persons to one another. The boy-angel was scooping water from the sea with his hands, placing it in a small hole he had made in the sand of the beach. When Augustine saw him, he said to him, "Don't you see the vastness and breadth of the sea? How can this small hole contain all this water?" The angel replied, "And how can your limited mind contain the infinite God?"

Because symbols, images, and human language are insufficient to express God's exceeding transcendence, as well as His difference from us, we need to use

negation to say what God is not, rather than what God is. The method of affirming attributes in God is parallel to the method of denying these attributes in Him.

Every human expression is only a limited depiction, despite its sincere intent. God remains a mystery. He transcends all that is human. When we speak of mystery, we mean, in the words of Metropolitan Kallistos Ware, that something has become clear to our understanding, but we never fully comprehend it.

God in Christianity is the God known in the Bible as the God who continually reveals the works of His power to humans, enabling them to know Him for who He truly is. Therefore, many have called Christianity the religion of divine revelation, which began with God speaking to Abraham and ended with the divine incarnation in the person of Christ. We know God through Jesus Christ. "No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6).

From here, Orthodox theology distinguishes between the essence, nature, or identity of God, on the one hand, and His powers, works, or acts on the other.

The essence of God can never be comprehended, neither in this life nor in eternity. If we knew the essence of God, we would no longer be created beings. This is impossible for man, "God in the unapproachable light." But He reveals His powers or acts of power to us when He comforts, guides, and directs us. We see His powers in the actions He accomplishes in us and in the world around us, His creation.

Saint Symeon the New Theologian says: "O invisible world, we see you. O intangible world, we touch you. O unknowable world, we know you. O imperceptible world, we grasp you."

This requires spiritual eyes that see what is invisible to the eyes of the body alone. This is given to those whose passions have been softened by divine grace, enlightening their insight.

How, for example, can a hard-hearted person recognize acts of mercy? How can someone whose heart is blinded by jealousy see the good in others, while being torn apart by jealousy, passion, envy, and hatred?

To truly know God requires love, humility, and a keen sense of humanity. You know Him to the extent that you associate with Him, and He is present in you. You can only truly associate with Him if you are faithful, to the end, to His commandments and teachings, which He revealed to you in Jesus Christ.

The enlightened Saint Sophrony Zakharov says, "God can be known everywhere, because He is present everywhere. For man to possess this knowledge, schools and theological writings are absolutely not enough. But when He is present with us, true knowledge inexplicably penetrates our entire being."