

# +St. John the Evangelist Orthodox Church

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**SUNDAY, MAY 18, 2025**

**TONE 4 / EOTHINON 7**

## **FIFTH SUNDAY OF PASCHA: SUNDAY OF THE SAMARITAN WOMAN & AFTER-FEAST OF MID-PENTECOST**

MARTYRS PETER, DIONYSIOS, ANDREW, PAUL, CHRISTINA, HERAKLIOS, PAULINOS AND BENEDIMOS;  
STEPHEN THE NEW, PATRIARCH OF CONSTANTINOPLE



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### **Sunday of the Samaritan Woman**

On May 18 in the Holy Orthodox Church, we commemorate the Martyrs Peter, Dionysios, Andrew, Paul, Christina, Heraklios, Paulinos and Benedimos; and Stephen the New, patriarch of Constantinople.

On this day, the fifth Sunday of Pascha, we celebrate the feast of the Samaritan Woman.

The Samaritan woman—the holy and glorious Great-martyr Photeini—met Jesus at midday at Jacob’s Well, which was located in the city of Sychar. And being tired from travel and the heat, Jesus sat at Jacob’s Well. A little after, the Samaritan woman came to draw water, and had a long conversation with Him (it is the longest recorded discourse between Christ and a single person in the entire Bible). Photeini did not want to talk to Jesus, because the Samaritans did not have any dealings with Jews; Jews considered her people heretics because Samaritans

kept only the first five books of the Old Testament. However, the Lord talked with her anyway, read her heart, revealed her secrets and gave her to drink of the “Living Water”—the grace of the Holy Spirit that leads to eternal life and flows to all humanity. Photeini immediately ran throughout the city to proclaim Christ. Through her, many other Samaritans believed in Jesus.

### **THE EPISTLE**

*How magnified are Thy works, O Lord.*

*In wisdom hast Thou made them all.*

*Bless the Lord, O my soul.*

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

In those days, when the apostles were scattered because of the tribulation that arose over Stephen, they traveled as far as Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to no one, except to Jews only. But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who upon coming to Antioch spoke to the Hellenists also, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number that believed turned to the Lord. The report concerning them reached the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent

out Barnabas, to go as far out as Antioch. When he came and saw the grace of God, he was glad; and he exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they should cleave to the Lord; for he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a great multitude was added unto the Lord. Then Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul; and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. For a whole year, they were gathered together in the church, and they taught a great multitude of people, and the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch. Now in these days prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. And one of them named Agabos stood up and signified by the Spirit that there would be a great famine over the whole world; and this took place in the days of Claudius Caesar. And the disciples, every one according to his ability, determined to send relief to the brethren who dwelt in Judaea; and they did so, sending it to the elders by the hand of Barnabas and Saul.

ما أَعْظَمَ أَعْمَالَكَ يَا رَبِّ، كُلُّهَا بِحِكْمَةٍ صَنَعْتَ.

بارَكِي يَا نَفْسِي الرَّبِّ.

فصلٌ مِنْ أَعْمَالِ الرُّسُلِ الْقَدِيسِينَ الْأَطْهَارِ.

(30-19:11)

فِي تِلْكَ الْأَيَّامِ، لَمَّا تَبَدَّدَ الرُّسُلُ مِنْ أَجْلِ الضِّيقِ الَّذِي حَصَلَ بِسَبَبِ اسْتِفَانُوسَ، اجْتَازُوا إِلَى فِينِيقِيَّةٍ وَقُبْرُصَ وَلَكِنْ قَوْمًا مِنْهُمْ كَانُوا قُبْرُصِيِّينَ وَقَيْرَوَانِيِّينَ. فَهَؤُلَاءِ. وَأَنْطَاكِيَّةَ، وَهُمْ لَا يُكَلِّمُونَ أَحَدًا بِالْكَلِمَةِ إِلَّا الْيَهُودَ فَقَطْ وَكَانَتْ يَدُ الرَّبِّ مَعَهُمْ، فَأَمَّنَ عَدَدٌ كَثِيرٌ. لَمَّا دَخَلُوا أَنْطَاكِيَّةَ، أَخَذُوا يُكَلِّمُونَ الْيُونَانِيِّينَ مُبَشِّرِينَ بِالرَّبِّ يَسُوعَ. فَبَلَغَ خَبْرُ ذَلِكَ إِلَى أَذَانِ الْكَنِيسَةِ الَّتِي بِأُورُشَلِيمَ، فَأَرْسَلُوا بَرْنَابَا لِكَيْ يَجْتَازَ إِلَى أَنْطَاكِيَّةَ. وَرَجَعُوا إِلَى الرَّبِّ لِأَنَّهُ كَانَ رَجُلًا صَالِحًا. فَلَمَّا أَقْبَلَ وَرَأَى نِعْمَةَ اللَّهِ، فَرَحَ وَوَعَّظَهُمْ كُلَّهُمْ بَأَن يَتَّبِعُوا فِي الرَّبِّ بِعَزِيمَةِ الْقَلْبِ ثُمَّ خَرَجَ بَرْنَابَا إِلَى طَرُسُوسَ فِي طَلَبِ مُمْتَلِنًا مِنَ الرُّوحِ الْقُدُسِ وَالْإِيمَانِ. وَأَنْضَمَّ إِلَى الرَّبِّ جَمْعٌ كَثِيرٌ وَتَرَدَّدَا مَعًا سَنَةً كَامِلَةً فِي هَذِهِ الْكَنِيسَةِ، وَعَلَّمَا جَمْعًا كَثِيرًا، وَدَعَا شَاوُلَ. وَلَمَّا وَجَدَهُ أَتَى بِهِ إِلَى أَنْطَاكِيَّةَ فَقَامَ وَاحِدٌ مِنْهُمْ. التَّلَامِيذُ مَسِيحِيِّينَ فِي أَنْطَاكِيَّةَ أَوَّلًا تِلْكَ الْأَيَّامِ، أَنْحَدَرَ مِنْ أُورُشَلِيمَ أَنْبِيَاءٌ إِلَى أَنْطَاكِيَّةَ اسْمُهُ أَغَابُوسَ، فَأَنْبَأَ بِالرُّوحِ أَنَّ سَتَكُونُ مَجَاعَةٌ عَظِيمَةٌ فِي جَمِيعِ الْمَسْكُونَةِ، وَقَدْ وَقَعَ ذَلِكَ فِي أَيَّامِ كَلُودِيُوسَ فَعَزَمَ التَّلَامِيذُ، بِحَسَبِ مَا يَتَيَسَّرُ لِكُلِّ وَاحِدٍ مِنْهُمْ، أَنْ يُرْسِلُوا خِدْمَةً إِلَى الْإِخْوَةِ السَّاكِنِينَ فِي قَيْصَرٍ وَفِي. فَفَعَلُوا ذَلِكَ، وَبَعَثُوا إِلَى الشُّيُوخِ عَلَى أَيْدِي بَرْنَابَا وَشَاوُلَ..أُورُشَلِيمَ

#### THE GOSPEL

#### **The Reading from the Holy Gospel according to St. John. (4:5-42)**

At that time, Jesus came to a city of Samaria, called Sychar, near the field that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there, and so Jesus, wearied as He was with his journey, sat down beside the well. It was about the sixth hour. There came a woman of Samaria to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give Me a drink." For His Disciples had gone away into the city to buy food. The Samaritan woman said to Him, "How is it that Thou, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?" For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans. Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God, and Who it is that is saying to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water." The woman said to Him, "Sir, Thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep; where do you get that living water? Art Thou greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank from it himself, and his sons, and his cattle?" Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst forever; the water that I shall give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." The woman said to Him, "Sir, give me this water, that I may not

thirst, nor come here to draw.” Jesus said to her, “Go, call your husband, and come here.” The woman answered Him, “I have no husband.” Jesus said to her, “You are right in saying, ‘I have no husband’; for you have had five husbands, and he whom you now have is not your husband; this you said truly.” The woman said to Him, “Sir, I perceive that Thou art a prophet. Our fathers worshiped on this mountain; and Thou sayest that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.” Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for such the Father seeks to worship Him. God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.” The woman said to Him, “I know that Messiah is coming [He Who is called Christ]; when He comes, He will tell us all things.” Jesus said to her, “I Who speak to you am He.” Just then His Disciples came. They marveled that He was talking with a woman, but none said, “What dost Thou wish?” or, “Why art Thou talking with her?” So the woman left her water jar, and went away into the city, and said to the people, “Come, see a man Who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?” They went out of the city and were coming to Him. Meanwhile the Disciples besought Him, saying, “Rabbi, eat.” But He said to them, “I have food to eat of which you do not know.” So the Disciples said to one another, “Has anyone brought Him food?” Jesus said to them, “My food is to do the will of Him Who sent Me, and to accomplish His work. Do you not say, ‘There are yet four months, then comes the harvest’? I tell you, lift up your eyes, and see how the fields are already white for harvest. He who reaps receives wages, and gathers fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together. For here the saying holds true, ‘One sows and another reaps.’ I sent you to reap that for which you did not labor; others have labored, and you have entered into their labor.” Many Samaritans from that city believed in Him because of the woman’s testimony, “He said to me all that I ever did.” So when the Samaritans came to Him, they asked Him to stay with them; and He stayed there two days. And many more believed because of His words. They said to the woman, “It is no longer because of your words that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is indeed the Savior of the world.”

#### (42-5:4). فَضْلُ شَرِيفٍ مِنْ بَشَارَةِ الْقَدِيسِ يوحنا الإنجيليِّ البشيرِ والتلميذِ الطاهرِ

في ذلكَ الزمانِ، أتى يسوعُ إلى مَدِينَةٍ مِنَ السَّامِرَةِ يُقَالُ لَهَا سُوخَارُ، بِقُرْبِ الضَّيْعَةِ الَّتِي أَعْطَاهَا يَعْقُوبُ وَكَانَ هُنَاكَ عَيْنُ يَعْقُوبَ. وَكَانَ يَسُوعُ قَدْ تَعَبَ مِنَ الْمَسِيرِ. فَجَلَسَ عَلَى الْعَيْنِ، وَكَانَ نَحْوَ لِيُوسُفَ ابْنِهِ . فَجَاءَتِ امْرَأَةٌ مِنَ السَّامِرَةِ لَتَسْتَقِيَ مَاءً، فَقَالَ لَهَا يَسُوعُ: أَعْطِينِي لِأَشْرَبَ. لِسَادِسَةِ. Type equation here. السَّاعَةِ ا فَقَالَتْ لَهُ الْمَرْأَةُ: كَيْفَ تَطْلُبُ أَنْ تَشْرَبَ مِنِّي، وَأَنْتَ .فَإِنَّ تَلَامِيذَهُ كَانُوا قَدْ مَضَوْا إِلَى الْمَدِينَةِ لِيَبْتَاعُوا طَعَاماً أَجَابَ يَسُوعُ وَقَالَ لَهَا: لَوْ عَرَفْتَ عَطِيَّةَ اللَّهِ، وَمَنْ .يَهُودِيٌّ وَأَنَا امْرَأَةٌ سَامِرِيَّةٌ؟ وَالْيَهُودُ لَا يُخَالِطُونَ السَّامِرِيِّينَ قَالَتْ لَهُ الْمَرْأَةُ: يَا سَيِّدُ إِنَّهُ لَيْسَ مَعَكَ مَا .الَّذِي قَالَ لَكَ "أَعْطِينِي لِأَشْرَبَ" لَطَلَبْتَ أَنْتِ مِنْهُ فَأَعْطَاكَ مَاءً حَيًّا تَسْتَقِي بِهِ وَالْبُئْرُ عَمِيقَةٌ. فَمِنْ أَيْنَ لَكَ الْمَاءُ الْحَيُّ؟ أَلَعَلَّكَ أَنْتَ أَعْظَمُ مِنْ أَبِيْنَا يَعْقُوبَ الَّذِي أَعْطَانَا الْبُئْرَ، وَمِنْهَا شَرِبَ هُوَ وَبَنُوهُ وَمَاشِيَّتُهُ؟ أَجَابَ يَسُوعُ وَقَالَ لَهَا: كُلُّ مَنْ يَشْرَبُ مِنْ هَذَا الْمَاءِ يَعْطَشُ أَيْضاً. وَأَمَّا مَنْ

يَشْرَبُ مِنَ الْمَاءِ الَّذِي أَنَا أُعْطِيهِ، فَلَنْ يَعْطَشَ إِلَى الْأَبَدِ، بَلِ الْمَاءُ الَّذِي أُعْطِيهِ لَهُ يَصِيرُ فِيهِ يَنْبُوعٌ مَاءٍ يَنْبَعُ . فَقَالَتْ لَهُ الْمَرْأَةُ: يَا سَيِّدُ، أَعْطِنِي هَذَا الْمَاءَ لِكَيْ لَا أَعْطَشَ وَلَا أَجِيءَ إِلَى هَهُنَا لِأَسْتَقِي. إِلَى حَيَاةٍ أَبَدِيَّةٍ أَجَابَتِ الْمَرْأَةُ وَقَالَتْ: إِنَّهُ لَا رَجُلَ لِي. فَقَالَ لَهَا يَسُوعُ: اذْهَبِي وَادْعِي رَجُلَكَ، وَهَلِّمِي إِلَى هَهُنَا فَإِنَّهُ كَانَ لَكَ خَمْسَةُ رِجَالٍ، وَالَّذِي مَعَكَ الْآنَ لَيْسَ رَجُلَكَ. هَذَا قُلْتِهِ. يَسُوعُ: قَدْ أَحْسَنْتِ بِقَوْلِكَ إِنَّهُ لَا رَجُلَ لِي أَبَاؤُنَا سَجَدُوا فِي هَذَا الْجَبَلِ. وَأَنْتُمْ تَقُولُونَ إِنَّ الْمَكَانَ الَّذِي . قَالَتْ لَهُ الْمَرْأَةُ: يَا سَيِّدُ أَرَى أَنَّكَ نَبِيٌّ. بِالصِّدْقِ قَالَ لَهَا يَسُوعُ: يَا امْرَأَةُ صَدِّقِي، إِنَّهَا تَأْتِي سَاعَةٌ لَا فِي هَذَا الْجَبَلِ. يَنْبَغِي أَنْ يُسَجَدَ فِيهِ هُوَ فِي أُورُشَلِيمَ أَنْتُمْ تَسْجُدُونَ لِمَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ وَنَحْنُ نَسْجُدُ لِمَا نَعْلَمُ. لِأَنَّ الْخَلَاصَ هُوَ . وَلَا فِي أُورُشَلِيمَ تَسْجُدُونَ فِيهَا لِلآبِ وَلَكِنْ تَأْتِي سَاعَةٌ، وَهِيَ الْآنَ حَاضِرَةٌ، إِذِ السَّاجِدُونَ الْحَقِيقِيُّونَ يَسْجُدُونَ لِلآبِ بِالرُّوحِ وَالْحَقِّ. مِنَ الْيَهُودِ اللَّهُ رُوحٌ. وَالَّذِينَ يَسْجُدُونَ لَهُ، فَبِالرُّوحِ وَالْحَقِّ يَنْبَغِي أَنْ . لِأَنَّ الْآبَ إِنَّمَا يَطْلُبُ السَّاجِدِينَ لَهُ مِثْلَ هَؤُلَاءِ قَالَتْ لَهُ الْمَرْأَةُ: قَدْ عَلِمْتُ أَنَّ مَسِيًّا، الَّذِي يُقَالُ لَهُ الْمَسِيحُ، يَأْتِي. فَمَتَى جَاءَ ذَاكَ فَهُوَ يُخْبِرُنَا بِكُلِّ . يَسْجُدُوا وَعِنْدَ ذَلِكَ، جَاءَ تَلَامِيذُهُ، فَتَعَجَّبُوا أَنَّهُ يَتَكَلَّمُ مَعَ امْرَأَةٍ. وَلَكِنْ لَمْ . فَقَالَ لَهَا يَسُوعُ: أَنَا الْمَتَكَلِّمُ مَعَكَ هُوَ شَيْءٌ يُقَالُ أَحَدٌ مَاذَا تَطْلُبُ؟ أَوْ لِمَاذَا تَتَكَلَّمُ مَعَهَا؟ فَتَرَكَّتِ الْمَرْأَةُ جَرَّتَهَا، وَمَضَتْ إِلَى الْمَدِينَةِ، وَقَالَتْ لِلنَّاسِ: تَعَالُوا وَفِي أَثْنَاءِ ذَلِكَ. انْظُرُوا إِنْسَانًا قَالَ لِي كُلُّ مَا فَعَلْتُ. أَلَعَلَّ هَذَا هُوَ الْمَسِيحُ؟ فَخَرَجُوا مِنَ الْمَدِينَةِ وَأَقْبَلُوا نَحْوَهُ فَقَالَ التَّلَامِيذُ فِيمَا بَيْنَهُمْ: . فَقَالَ لَهُمْ: إِنَّ لِي طَعَامًا لَأَكُلَ لَسْتُمْ تَعْرِفُونَهُ أَنْتُمْ. سَأَلَهُ تَلَامِيذُهُ قَائِلِينَ: يَا مُعَلِّمُ كُلَّ النَّاسِ أَلَعَلَّ أَحَدًا جَاءَهُ بِمَا يَأْكُلُ؟ فَقَالَ لَهُمْ يَسُوعُ: إِنَّ طَعَامِي أَنْ أَعْمَلَ مَشِيئَةَ الَّذِي أَرْسَلَنِي وَأَتِمَّ عَمَلَهُ تَقُولُونَ أَنْتُمْ إِنَّهُ يَكُونُ أَرْبَعَةُ أَشْهُرٍ ثُمَّ يَأْتِي الْحَصَادُ؟ وَهَا أَنَا أَقُولُ لَكُمْ: إِرْفَعُوا عُيُونَكُمْ وَانْظُرُوا إِلَى الْمَزَارِعِ، . وَالَّذِي يَحْصُدُ يَأْخُذُ أَجْرَةً، وَيَجْمَعُ ثَمَرًا لِحَيَاةٍ أَبَدِيَّةٍ، لِكَيْ يَفْرَحَ الزَّارِعُ وَالْحَاصِدُ مَعًا. إِنَّهَا قَدْ ابْتِئِصَتْ لِلْحَصَادِ " إِنِّي أَرْسَلْتُكُمْ لِتَحْصُدُوا مَا لَمْ تَتَّعَبُوا أَنْتُمْ فِيهِ. فَإِنَّ . فَفِي هَذَا يَصْدُقُ الْقَوْلُ إِنَّ "وَاحِدًا يَزْرَعُ، وَآخَرُ يَحْصُدُ" فَآمَنَ بِهِ مِنْ تِلْكَ الْمَدِينَةِ كَثِيرُونَ مِنَ السَّامِرِيِّينَ مِنْ أَجْلِ كَلَامِ الْمَرْأَةِ. آخَرِينَ تَعَبُوا وَأَنْتُمْ دَخَلْتُمْ عَلَى تَعَبِهِمْ " وَلَمَّا أَتَى إِلَيْهِ السَّامِرِيُّونَ، سَأَلُوهُ أَنْ يُقِيمَ عِنْدَهُمْ. فَمَكَثَ هُنَاكَ . الَّتِي كَانَتْ تَشْهَدُ أَنَّ "قَدْ قَالَ لِي كُلُّ مَا فَعَلْتُ وَكَانُوا يَقُولُونَ لِلْمَرْأَةِ: لَسْنَا مِنْ أَجْلِ كَلَامِكَ نُؤْمِنُ . فَآمَنَ جَمْعٌ أَكْثَرَ مِنْ أُولَئِكَ جَدًّا مِنْ أَجْلِ كَلَامِهِ. يَوْمَئِذٍ الْآنَ. لِأَنَّا نَحْنُ قَدْ سَمِعْنَا، وَنَعْلَمُ أَنَّ هَذَا هُوَ بِالْحَقِيقَةِ الْمَسِيحُ، مُخَلِّصُ الْعَالَمِ.

### Love Your Neighbor

### 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

### **Don't go Into the Fellowship Hall**

Dear Parishioners,

Please refrain from going to the new Fellowship Hall for the next 2 weeks. The workers are doing the flooring. The Hall will be blocked.

Thank you for your understanding!

### **Upcoming Events**

<b>June 1st</b>	Memorial service for Anwar Nassar by Samir Nassar and family In memory of his brother. May his memory be eternal!
<b>June 25th - 29th</b>	<b>Parish Life Conference:</b> Hyatt Regency San Francisco Airport <b>2025 Host Parish:</b> St. Nicholas Church (San Francisco, CA)
<b>September 20<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup></b>	St. John's annual Middle Eastern Food Festival

### **Coffee Hour**

<b>May 18<sup>th</sup></b>	Jordis Fasheh
<b>May 25<sup>th</sup></b>	Evan Silvernale and Family.
<b>June 1<sup>st</sup></b>	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 in memory of **Donna Potter**. May her memory be eternal!

### **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



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*™

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

You could use this QR code for your donation



## 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**

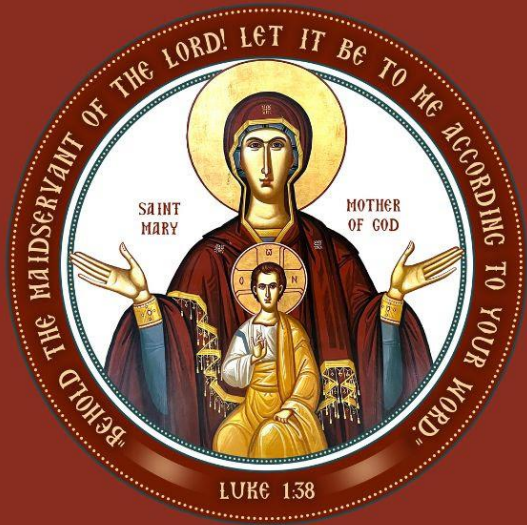
**JACK'S WILL DONATE 15% OF PROCEEDS**

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**

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BREAKFAST • LUNCH  
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# DIOCESE OF LOS ANGELES & THE WEST PARISH LIFE CONFERENCE

JUNE 25 - 29, 2025

HOSTED BY:

ST. NICHOLAS ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH, SAN FRANCISCO

[WWW.LAPLC.ORG](http://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

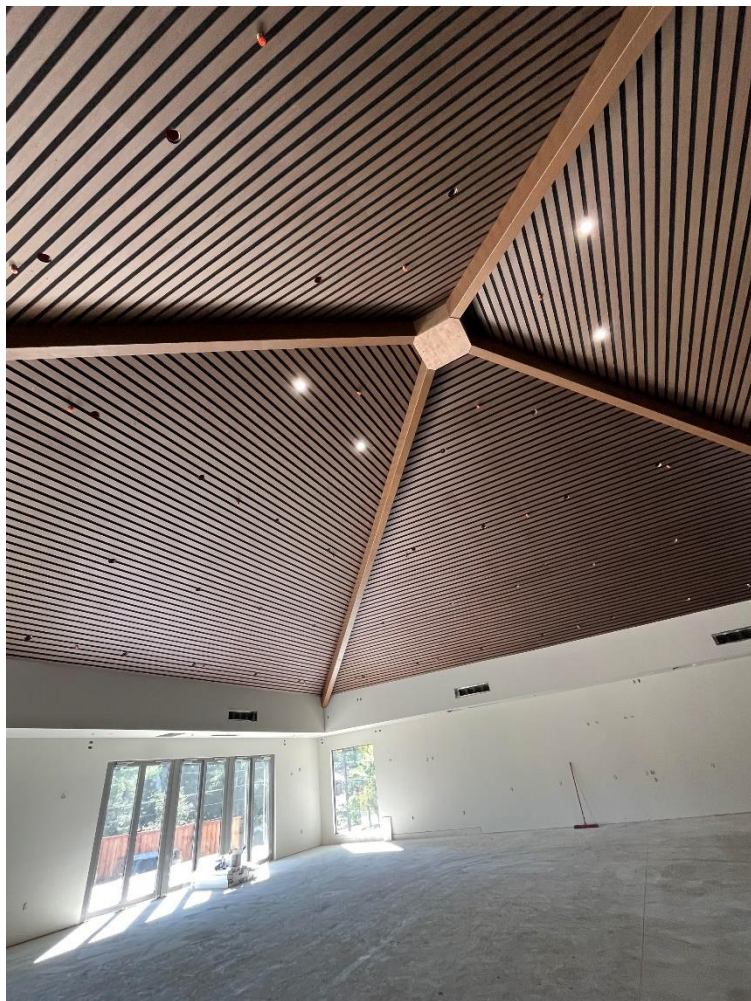
- Hierarchical Divine Liturgy

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

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





**Fellowship Hall Update - Hall is closed to parishioners after church due to safety concerns and work proceeding during the next two weekends. Please do not try to enter the hall.**

We have made great progress since our last update and are excitedly talking about the final stages of the project. The lighting fixtures and sprinkler heads are complete, and 4 chandeliers are on the way and will be installed next week. Final HVAC work is being completed with grille installation and air balancing. The floor is being prepped this week for installation and should be installed in a couple weeks. We are closing in on finalizing the kitchen equipment and work spaces.

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 \$100 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 \$950,000 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 \$50,000 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.

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

Friend

\$1,000-4,999

Saleem & Samya Abudawood  
Jack Ajlumi  
Richard and Joyce Ayoob  
Anthony and Kimberly Bailey  
William and Judith Bosl  
Challenger Enterprises  
Daryl & Katherine Dudum  
J.D. and Jessie Dudum  
F&M Bank  
Fadi and Rana Feghali  
Alex and Helen Ghantous  
Khalil and Leila Hakeem  
Ronald Issac  
JDO Dakota Ventures  
Ronald and Ruth Jeha  
Mary Karadsheh  
Maha Kuri-Peterson  
Brandon Laidlaw  
Lieman Properties  
MCC Realty  
Azmi and Melanie Madanat  
Chris and Eva Malki  
Margaret Mas  
Siham Mitry  
Myers Restaurant Supply

George Najjar  
Samer Nassar  
Dn George and Jane Nassief  
Ramzi and Marina Nassoura  
Ziad & Charlene 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 Kebab Shop Restaurant  
John and Jan Theodosy  
Samir and Abla Toubassy  
In Memory of Dwight Underhill  
Robert and Katrina Waddell  
George and Afaf Wahbeh  
Nabil and Souhila Wakileh  
William Wood Architects  
Hala Yowakeem  
Samir and Nadia Zeidan

Builder  
\$100-999

George E. Adranly  
Felice and Eric Ajluni  
Howard & Marilyn Ashcraft  
Eman Baalbaki  
Tania & Daniel Bajada  
Randy and Barbara Bray  
Ken Bullock Ins & Fin Services  
Robert and Renee Crawford  
Mary Cubeisy  
Dn. John and Irena Dibs  
Herb & Tania DeGroot  
Tony Dudum  
Fuad and Mary Farradj  
Naim & Nadia Frangieh  
John & Dina Freij  
Fairouz Freij  
Fred and Sue Gedeon  
Sandra Gedeon  
Benjamin and Ashley Geleris  
Zzane & Irene Guajardo  
Julianna Greensides  
Bahij & Yardena Hanhan  
Raymond Hilal  
Mounir and Muna Hobaika  
Angela Husary  
Jack's Restaurant  
Carol Jeha  
Samir Juha  
Andreas Kamlot  
Rima Kashou  
Norma Khalil  
Elia Khalilieh  
Elizabeth Kreta  
Mary Lodge

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  
William and Jida Nasser  
Maureen Nelson  
Mark Nicola  
Michelle Nicola  
Pacer Physical Therapy  
Jacob Ritter  
Alexis Robbins  
Rocco's Restaurant & Pizza  
Neezar Samara  
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

Rev: May 14, 2025

## St. John Financial Snapshot

Year to Date Actual Finances as of 04/30/2025

INCOME	2025 Year To Date	% of Total Income	2024 Year to Date	
Membership Pledges	\$ 50,196	21%	\$ 54,739	-\$5K difference vs. YTD 2024. -\$10K difference vs. 2025 Budget.
Tray Collections	\$ 5,983	2%	\$ 5,116	
Preschool Contribution	\$ 149,281	62%	\$ 83,109	
Crab Feed and Festival	\$ 21,011	9%	\$ 22,149	
Ladies Contribution	\$ 5,000	2%	\$ -	Related to prior year. Add'l \$5K expected in December 2025.
Other**	\$ 8,041	3%	\$ 7,606	
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>\$ 239,512</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>\$ 172,719</b>	
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$ 194,453</b>		<b>\$ 134,028</b>	
<b>YTD Net Income</b>	<b>\$ 45,059</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>\$ 38,692</b>	

\*\*Other includes bookstore, candles, flowers, palms, coffee hour, memorials, weddings, baptisms, weddings, prior year pledges

Building Fund Balance                      \$        764,123.51

Those who wish to see the full financial summary should contact Parish Council  
Treasurer Andrew Thayer

## **Between Reality and the Ideal**

*By His Eminence Metropolitan Saba (Isper)*

What I like about Christianity is that it is ideal and realistic at the same time. It is ideal to the extent that it makes a person, if he wants, a heavenly being, an angel on earth; and realistic in its care for him, if he seeks the ideal, so that he can achieve it. It rejects sin and fights it on principle, and pledges to the person, who is weak before it, a healing method that will rid him of it. It nurtures him until he is strengthened in spirit, supports him so that he does not fall, and if he does, Christianity strengthens him so that he can rise from his fall and start again.

The ideal of Christianity is derived from the word “example,” meaning it offers the presence of a teacher, a role model, a clear standard which the believer strives, with God's grace, to imitate. The ideal is not a utopia, a dream, that is impossible to reach or unworkable. The person of Christ Himself is the ideal, role model, and example. It believes that the Word of God was incarnated and became a human being to give humans the ability to reach His likeness. He became a perfect human being in every aspect, a real human being like us in every aspect, except for sin.

The Church Fathers have said about His earthly birth: “God (the Word) became man, so that man might become God.” The true Christian seeks to imitate his Master in everything. The Holy Fathers teach us to think, before embarking on any action: If Christ were in my place, how would He act? Thus, the believer imitates, as much as possible, His example. Many followed this path and were sanctified and exalted, becoming angels in human bodies. Some are well-known, even saints whose fragrance spread throughout the world. Many of them – perhaps most – are unknown or known within a small area. Therefore, after Pentecost, the Church celebrates a special Sunday feast for All Saints, “whether men or women, known or unknown” (*The Horologion*, or *The Book of the Hours*).

Christianity's realism lies in the rich, militant, spiritual approach accumulated by the work of the Holy Spirit in it over the centuries. This approach is based on the believer's progression through the stages of the Gospel, based primarily on sound, personalized guidance. The most important books in this field are available to everyone. But to live what is stated in them, and for the believer to gain the ability to apply it, requires someone to personally lead and guide. Father Andrei Skrima

wrote in an introduction about the book “The Ladder of Divine Ascent” (a didactic, ascetical, and spiritual book, considered essential in the Orthodox Church): “This book is not for reading.” By this, he meant this to live by it, not just to learn from it. This book is lived with help from an experienced guide. It is not enough to read about a spiritual teacher until you truly walk the path of his teaching.

The personal dimension of guidance is essential in Christianity. The general recipe for all believers is the Gospel. Living and applying it depends on each person’s ability, circumstances, personality, character, and upbringing. Not all human beings are the same internally. Someone who grew up in a pious and devout home environment is different from someone who grew up in something completely different. Whoever has a sin ingrained in him since childhood will not be treated in the same way as someone who has never experienced this sin.

Then there is the growth in our life in Christ. Not everyone is at the same spiritual level. People are advanced, beginning, and somewhere in between. “When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became a man, I gave up childish ways” (1 Corinthians 13:11).

*Bustan al-Ruhbaan (The Garden of Monks)* tells the following story: The order of the monks in the Egyptian desert at that time required sleeping on a mat without a pillow. A new monastic student came to them from a wealthy background. The abbot allowed him to use a stone as a pillow. One of the brothers complained, so the abbot asked him: “How were you sleeping at home, my son?” He answered: “On the floor with my brothers in the same room. The abbot said to him: “So, you did not make a major concession in the monastery. As for that brother, about whom you complained, he was in his house, sleeping on a bed, with a soft mattress underneath it, and an ostrich feather pillow. Do you think he could bear our austerity all at once?”

There is reality and there is the ideal, and what is in between is the path on which the Christian strives throughout his life. The fruit of virtue is not a goal in itself. Loving God is the goal, and the fruit is a natural product of it. Your ultimate goal is to keep striving toward perfection, whether you reach it or not. The great spiritual teacher, St. John Climacus, said: “God will not hold you accountable for the number of virtues you have attained, but for the sincere effort you have made to achieve



this or that virtue.” In another place, he says something shocking at first glance: “The drops of sweat of your struggle are more valuable in the eyes of God than the water of baptism.”

Perhaps the pastoral realism of Christianity is most evident in the absence of a clear and conclusive legal definition that determines for the believer what to do in both general and specific situations. There is no teaching, gentle or rigid, that soothes the conscience. You are constantly inspired by the Spirit of God, the Spirit of true understanding, to illuminate your path, so you know how to walk and act in the face of countless situations that may come your way.

Take marital relationships, for example. There is no specific teaching regarding how spouses should deal with each other in all aspects. The concept of married life is clear in Christianity. But how it is lived, the extent of each partner’s tolerance, the method of encompassing love that accommodates the other’s flaws, and many other questions become the subject of research and dialogue. These require frank openness between the spouses, under the care of their spiritual father, who helps them practically to succeed and overcome their failures through continuous personal spiritual care. Care that acknowledges existing weakness transcends and strengthens the person. It does not exempt from the obligations of repentance for what the Church considers a human weakness, which it treats until the person is cured. There are many behavioral issues, or issues within the science of ethics, that are not subjects of definitive decision in Christianity as much as they are subjects of dialogue, prayer, and inspiration from above.

Christians do not have any justification that can completely clear their consciences. You are called to confront the spiritual forces of evil in all their forms in this fallen world by arming yourself with the gospel, seeking divine guidance and advice from spiritual fathers, and strengthening yourself with your brothers and sisters in the Lord. If you make a mistake, nurture a life of repentance in yourself, making amends for what you did, renew your life, and direct it towards deeper and deeper spiritual maturity and awareness.

Saint Ephraim the Syrian defines the Church as “the community of penitents,” that is, those who walk in this community. As a Christian, you cannot neglect repentance for a single day. You walk in it, rising in its spirit, day by day, toward the full stature

of Christ. Christianity is not a static religion in the sense of being satisfied with so-called religious duties. It is a path on which you are always moving toward the peak. It is a dynamic faith, if you prefer, because it does not stop you at a certain level of transcendence, maturity, and holiness, but rather opens the horizons wider before you to the Absolute, to God, so that you imitate Him and live up to His example. If you truly love your Lord, you will throw yourself into His arms, not looking for peace of mind, but rather, desiring to live in His care. You walk, without stopping, with Him and to Him, being satisfied with Him alone, and finding yourself in Him.

## ما بين الواقع والمثال المتروبوليت سابا (اسبر)

يعجبني في المسيحية أنها مثالية وواقعية في آن. هي مثالية إلى الحد الذي تجعل فيه الإنسان، إن أراد، كائناً سماوياً، ملاكاً على الأرض؛ وواقعية في رعايتها له، إن ابتغى المثال، كي يتوصل إلى تحقيقه. فهي ترفض الخطيئة وتحاربها من حيث المبدأ، وتتعهّد الإنسان، الضعيف أمامها، بمنهج شفائي يخلّصه منها. ترعاه حتّى يتقوّ بالروح، وتسندّه حتّى لا يقع، وإذا ما فعل، تشدّده ليقوم من سقطته، ويبدأ من جديد.

مثالية المسيحية مشتقة من كلمة "مثال"، بمعنى وجود معلّم، قدوة، مستوى واضح، يسعى المؤمن، جهده، بنعمة الله، للتمثّل به. ليست مثاليتها يوتوبيا، أو حلمًا، أو مثلاً يستحيل الوصول إليه، وغير قابل للتطبيق. شخص المسيح ذاته هو نموذجها، وقدوتها، ومثالها. وهي تؤمن بأن كلمة الله تجسّد، وصار إنساناً، حتّى يمنح البشر القدرة على الوصول إلى مثاله. صار إنساناً كاملاً في كلّ شيء، إنساناً حقيقياً مشابهاً لنا في كلّ شيء، ما عدا الخطيئة.

قال آباء الكنيسة في ميلاده الأرضي: "صار الإله (الكلمة) إنساناً، لكي يصير الإنسان إلهاً". يسعى المسيحي الحقّ إلى أن يتشبه بسيّده في كلّ شيء. يعلّمنا الآباء الروحيون أن نفكر، قبل الشروع في عمل ما: في ما لو كان المسيح في مكاني، تراه كيف كان يتصرّف؟ هكذا يتشبه المؤمن، ما أمكنه، بمثاله. كثيرون سلكوا هذا السبيل، وتقّدسوا، وسَمّوا، فصاروا ملائكة في جسم بشري. كثيرون منهم معروفون، وهم القديسون الذين فاح عطرهم في العالم. وكثيرون منهم، وقد يكونون الأكثرية، مجهولون، أو معروفون ضمن بيئة ضيقة. لذلك تقيم الكنيسة بعد عيد العنصرة، عيداً خاصاً لجميع القديسين "رجالاً كانوا أم نساءً، معلومين أم مجهولين" (كتاب السواعي الكبير).

أمّا واقعيتها، فتكمن في المنهج الروحي، الجهادي، الغني، الذي راكمه عمل الروح القدس فيها، على مرّ القرون. يقوم هذا المنهج على تدبّر المؤمن في مراقبي الإنجيل، بالإرشاد السليم، القائم أساساً على الإرشاد الشخصي. أمّهات الكتب في هذا المجال

موجودة ومتوفرة أمام الجميع. ولكنّ عيش ما ورد فيها، ووصول المؤمن إلى اكتساب المقدرة على تطبيقها، يحتاج إلى من يقوده ويرشده شخصياً فيها. كتب الأب أندريه سكرىما، في بدء مقدمة كتاب "السلم إلى الله" (وهو كتاب تعليمي، نسكي، روحي، يُعتبر من الكتب القاعدية في الكنيسة الأرثوذكسية): "هذا الكتاب ليس للمطالعة". وأراد بذلك أنّه للعيش لا للتثقف؛ وعيشه يتم بواسطة مرشد مختير. لا يكفي أن تقرأ لمعلّم روحي، حتّى تسير، حقّاً، في طريق تعليمه.

البعد الشخصي في الإرشاد أساسي في المسيحية. فالوصفة العامة، لجميع المؤمنين، هي الإنجيل. وأمّا عيش الإنجيل وتطبيقه، فيكون بحسب قدرة كلّ شخص، وظروفه، وشخصيته، وطباعه، ونشأته. فليس جميع البشر متماثلين في حياتهم الداخلية. من نشأ في بيئة بيتية تقية ومجاهدة، يختلف عمّن نشأ في بيئة مغايرة تماماً؛ ومن ترسّخت فيه خطيئة ما منذ الصغر، لا يُداوى بالطريقة ذاتها، التي تُعطى لمن كان متحرّراً من هذه الخطيئة.

ثم هناك النمو في الحياة التي في المسيح. فليس الجميع بالمستوى الروحي ذاته. يوجد متقدّمون، ومبتدئون، وما بين الاثنين. "لما كنتُ طفلاً كنتُ أتكلّم كالطفل وأدرك كالطفل وأفكر كالطفل. ولما صرْتُ رجلاً أبطلتُ ما هو للطفل" (١ كو ١٣/١١).

يروى بستان الرهبان القصّة التالية: كان نظام الإخوة في صحراء مصر آنذاك، يفترض النوم على حصير دون مخدّة. أتاهم طالب رهبنة جديد، وكان من وسط غني ومتنعم. فسمح له الأب الرئيس أن يستعمل حجراً بمثابة مخدّة. فتذمّر أحد الإخوة، فسأله الرئيس: "كيف كنت تنام في بيتك يا بني؟" أجابه: "على الأرض مع إخوتي في الغرفة نفسها." فقال له: "إذن لم تجد تنازلاً كبيراً في الدير؟ أمّا ذاك الأخ، الذي تشتكي عليه، فكان، في بيته، ينام على سرير، وتحتة فراش وثير، ومخدّة من ريش النعام. أتراه يتحمّل تقشّفنا دفعةً واحدة؟"

يوجد الواقع ويوجد المثال، وما بينهما هو الطريق الذي يستنفذه المسيحي طوال حياته. ليست ثمرة الفضيلة هدفاً بحدّ ذاتها. محبة الله هي الهدف، والثمرة نتاج طبيعي لها. هدفك الأخير أن تبقى ساعياً نحو الكمال، وصلت إلى الكمال أم لم تصل. يقول المعلّم الروحي العظيم يوحنا السلمي: "لن يحاسبك الله على عدد الفضائل

التي حزتها، بل على الجهد الصادق الذي بذلته، حتّى تبلغ هذه الفضيلة أو تلك." وفي مكان آخر يقول، كلاماً صادمًا للوهلة الأولى: إنّ قطرات عَرَق جهادك أثمن، في نظر الله، من ماء المعمودية.

لعل واقعية المسيحية الرعائية، أكثر ما تتجلى، في عدم وجود تحديد قانوني باتّ وقاطع، يقرّر للمؤمن ماذا يفعل، تحديداً، في وضع معيّن، وأمام حالة ما يصادفها أو تصادفه. ما من تعليم، عامّ أو خاصّ، يريح الضمير، على غرار إفتاء ضميري. أنت أمام استلهامدائم لروح الله، روح الفهم الحقّ، لكي ينير دربك، فتعرف كيف تسلك وتتصرّف أمام حالات، لا يمكن عدّها، قد تعترضك.

خذ العلاقة الزوجية مثلاً: ما من تعليم محدّد بخصوص كيفية تعامل الزوجين مع بعضهما، في كلّ المناحي. مفهوم الحياة الزوجية واضح مسيحياً. لكن كيفية عيشه، ومدى تحمّل كلّ شريك، وطريقة الحبّ الحاضن، التي تستوعب عيوب الآخر، وغيرها من الأسئلة الكثيرة، تصبح مدار بحث وحوار. هذه تحتاج إلى انفتاح صريح بين الزوجين، برعاية مرشدهما الروحي، الذي يساعدتهما، عملياً، على تخطّي سقطاتهما وتجاوزها، عبر رعاية شخصية روحية متواصلة. رعاية تقبل الضعف القائم، وتنطلق منه، لتتجاوز الشخص وتقويه. وهي لا تعفي من فروض التوبة ممّا تعتبره الكنيسة ضعفاً بشرياً، تدأويه حتّى تشفي الإنسان منه. كثيرة هي القضايا المسلكية، أو المعتبرة ضمن علم الأخلاق، التي ليست محلّ بتّ قطعي في المسيحية، بقدر ما هي مدار حوار وصلاة واستلها من فوق.

ما من مبرّر، يريح ضميرك كلياً، يمكن اللجوء إليه مسيحياً. أنت مدعو إلى مواجهة قوى الشرّ الروحية، التي تتجسّد بأشكال لا تُحصى، في هذا العالم الساقط، بالتسلّح بإنجيلك، واستدرار الإرشاد الإلهي، وطلب المشورة من الكبار روحياً، والتقويّ بإخوتك في الربّ. وإذا ما أخطأت، تغذّي حياة التوبة في شخصك، مكفّراً عمّا فعلت، ومجدّداً حياتك، وموجّهاً نحو نضج ووعي روحيين، أرسخ وأعمق.

يعرّف القدّيس أفرام السوري الكنيسة بـ "جماعة التائبين"، أي السائرين فيها. مسيحياً لا يمكنك إهمال التوبة يوماً واحداً. فأنت تسير فيها، مرتقياً بروحها، يوماً فيوماً، نحو البلوغ إلى الملء قامة المسيح. ليست المسيحية ديانة ساكنة، بمعنى

الاكتفاء بما يُسمّى واجبات دينيّة. هي طريق تسير فيه على الدوام نحو الذرى. هي ديانة ديناميكيّة، إن أردت، لأنّها لا توقفك عند حدّ معيّن من السمو والنضج والقداسة، بل تفتح الأمداء أمامك واسعة إلى المطلق، إلى الله، حتّى تتشبه به، وترقى إلى مثاله. إن أحببت ربّك بصدق، ترعى ذاتك بين يديه، غير باحث عن راحة الضمير، بقدر ما تبغي العيش في كنفه. تسير، دون توقف، معه وإليه، مكثفياً به وحده، وواجداً ذاتك فيه.