



+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
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SUNDAY, MAY 25, 2025

TONE 5 / EOTHINON 8

**SIXTH SUNDAY OF PASCHA: SUNDAY OF THE BLIND MAN
& THIRD DISCOVERY OF THE FORERUNNER'S HONORABLE HEAD**

MARTYR CELESTINE OF ROME; HIEROMARTYR THERAPON, BISHOP OF CYPRUS

Sunday of the Blind Man

On May 25 in the Holy Orthodox Church, we commemorate the Martyr Celestine of Rome; and the Hieromartyr Therapon, Bishop of Cyprus. On this day, we commemorate the third discovery of the honorable head of the Forerunner and Baptist John.

In the year 820, the honorable head was once again found in the city of Emesa during a time of unrest at Constantinople. It was transferred to Komana during the Saracen raids and hidden in the ground during a period of iconoclastic persecution. When the veneration of icons was restored, Patriarch Ignatius (847-857) saw in a vision the place where the head of St. John was hidden. The patriarch communicated this to the emperor, who sent a delegation to Komana to recover the head. Afterwards the head was again transferred to Constantinople, and on May 25, 850 it was placed in a church at the court.



On this day, the sixth Sunday of Pascha, we celebrate the miracle wrought by our Lord and God and Savior Jesus Christ upon the man who was blind from his birth. The Savior met this man, born blind and incurable after every human effort, while leaving the Temple on the Sabbath. Saints John Chrysostom, Basil the Great and Irenaeus teach that the man was born without eyeballs. Jesus spat into the dirt, made clay, rubbed it in his eye sockets and told him to wash in the pool of Siloam, a famous water spring in Jerusalem. The Savior did not send him there because his eye sockets were filled with clay, nor did the pool have healing power, but instead to test his faith and obedience. Jesus fashioned the eyes of the blind man from the dirt as God fashioned man from the dirt. The blind man proclaimed that Jesus healed him, but this confession caused him to be cast out by the enemies of the truth. Even his own parents would not defend him. However, the blind man followed Jesus from that moment forward.

THE EPISTLE

The righteous shall rejoice in the Lord.

O God, hear my voice.

The Reading from the Second Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians. (4:6-15)

Brethren, it is the God Who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," Who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, to show that the transcendent power belongs to God and not to us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. While we live we are always being given up to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So, death is at work in us, but life in you. Since we have the same spirit of faith as he had who wrote, "I believed, and so I spoke," we too believe, and so we speak, knowing that He Who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into His presence. For it is all for your sake, so that as grace extends to more and more people it may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God.

اسْتَمِعْ يَا الله لَصَوْتِي. يَفْرَحُ الصِّدِّيقُ بِالرَّبِّ.

(15-6:4) فَصَلِّ مِنْ رِسَالَةِ الْقَدِيسِ بُولُسَ الرَّسُولِ الثَّانِيَةِ إِلَى أَهْلِ كُورِنْثُوسَ.

يَا إِخْوَةُ، إِنَّ اللهَ الَّذِي أَمَرَ أَنْ يُشْرَقَ مِنْ ظُلْمَةٍ نَوْرٌ، هُوَ الَّذِي أَشْرَقَ فِي قُلُوبِنَا لِإِنَارَةِ مَعْرِفَةِ مَجْدِ اللهِ فِي وَجْهِهِ مُتَضَاعِفِينَ فِي كُلِّ شَيْءٍ، وَلَكِنْ غَيْرَ . وَلَنَا هَذَا الْكَزْزُ فِي آيَةٍ خَزَفِيَّةٍ، لِيَكُونَ فَضْلُ الْقُوَّةِ لِلَّهِ لَا مِنَّا. يَسُوعُ الْمَسِيحُ وَمُضْطَهَّدِينَ، وَلَكِنْ غَيْرَ مَخْذُولِينَ. وَمَطْرُوحِينَ، وَلَكِنْ غَيْرَ . مُنَحْصَرِينَ. وَمُتَحَيِّرِينَ، وَلَكِنْ غَيْرَ يَائِسِينَ . لَأَنَّا نَحْنُ الْأَحْيَاءُ . حَامِلِينَ فِي الْجَسَدِ كُلَّ حِينٍ إِمَاتَةَ الرَّبِّ يَسُوعَ، لِنُظْهِرَ حَيَاةَ يَسُوعَ أَيْضاً فِي أَجْسَادِنَا. هَالِكِينَ قَالَمَوْتُ إِذَنْ يُجْرَى فِينَا، . نُسَلِّمُ دَائِماً إِلَى الْمَوْتِ مِنْ أَجْلِ يَسُوعَ، لِنُظْهِرَ حَيَاةَ الْمَسِيحِ أَيْضاً فِي أَجْسَادِنَا الْمَائِتَةِ فَإِذَا فِينَا رُوحُ الْإِيمَانِ بِعَيْنِهِ، عَلَى حَسَبِ مَا كُتِبَ "إِنِّي آمَنْتُ، وَلِذَلِكَ تَكَلَّمْتُ"، فَتَحْنُ أَيْضاً نَوْمُنُ . وَالْحَيَاةُ فَيْكُمْ لِأَنَّ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ هُوَ مِنْ . عَالَمِينَ أَنَّ الَّذِي أَقَامَ الرَّبُّ يَسُوعَ سَيُقِيمُنَا نَحْنُ أَيْضاً بِيَسُوعَ فَتَنْتَصِبُ مَعَكُمْ. وَلِذَلِكَ نَتَكَلَّمُ أَجْلَكُمْ، لِكَيْ تَتَكَثَّرَ النِّعْمَةُ بِشُكْرِ الْأَكْثَرِينَ، فَتَزْدَادَ لِمَجْدِ اللهِ.

THE GOSPEL

The Reading from the Holy Gospel according to St. John. (9:1-38)

At that time, when Jesus was passing, he saw a man blind from his birth. And His disciples asked Him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" Jesus answered, "It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be made manifest in him. I must work the works of Him who sent Me, while it is day; night comes, when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." As he said this, he spat on the ground and made clay of the spittle and anointed the man's eyes with the clay, saying to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam," which means "Sent." So he went and washed and came back seeing. The neighbors and those who had seen him before as a beggar, said, "Is not this the man who used to sit and beg?" Some said, "It is he;" others said, "No, but he is like him." He said, "I am the man." They said to him, "Then how were your eyes opened?" He answered, "The man called Jesus made clay and anointed my eyes and said to me, 'Go to Siloam and wash'; so I went and washed and received my sight." They said to him, "Where is he?" He said, "I do not know." They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind. Now it was a Sabbath day when Jesus made the clay and opened his eyes. The Pharisees again asked him how he had received his sight. And he said to them, "He put clay on my eyes, and I washed, and I see." Some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, for He does not keep the Sabbath." But others said, "How can a man who is a sinner do such signs?" There was a division among them. So they again said to the blind man, "What do you say about Him, since He has opened your eyes?" He said, "He is a prophet." The Jews did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight, until they called the parents of the man who had received his sight, and asked them, "Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?" His parents answered, "We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; but how he now sees we do not know, nor do we know who opened his eyes. Ask him; he is of age, he will speak for himself." His parents said this because they feared the Jews, for the Jews had already agreed that if anyone should confess him to

be Christ, he was to be put out of the synagogue. Therefore, his parents said, "He is of age, ask him." So for the second time they called the man who had been blind, and said to him, "Give God the praise; we know that this man is a sinner." He answered, "Whether he is a sinner, I do not know; one thing I know, that though I was blind, now I see." They said to him, "What did He do to you? How did He open your eyes?" He answered them, "I have told you already, and you would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you too want to become His disciples?" And they reviled him, saying, "You are His disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where He comes from." The man answered, "Why, this is a marvel! You do not know where He comes from, and yet He opened my eyes. We know that God does not listen to sinners, but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does His will, God listens to him. Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a man born blind. If this man were not from God, He could do nothing." They answered him, "You were born in utter sin, and would you teach us?" And they cast him out. Jesus heard that they had cast him out, and having found him He said, "Do you believe in the Son of God?" He answered, "And who is He, Sir, that I may believe in Him?" Jesus said to him, "You have seen Him, and it is He who speaks to you." He said, "Lord, I believe." And he worshiped Him

فصل شريف من بشارة القديس يوحنا الإنجيلي البشير والتلميذ الطاهر. (1:9-38)

في ذلك الزمان، فيما يسوع مُجتاز، رأى إنساناً أعمى منذ مولده. فسأله تلاميذه قائلين: يا رب، من أخطأ ينبغي لي. أهذا أم أبواه حتى ولد أعمى؟ أجاب يسوع: لا هذا أخطأ ولا أبواه، لكن لنظهر أعمال الله فيه أن أعمال أعمال الذي أرسلني ما دام نهاراً. يأتي ليل حيث لا يستطيع أحد أن يعمل. ما دمت في العالم، قال هذا، وتقل على الأرض، وصنع من ثقلته طيناً، وطلّى بالطين عيني الأعمى، وقال فأنا نور العالم. له: اذهب واغتسل في بركة سلوام (الذي تفسيره المرسل). فمضى واغتسل وعاد بصيراً. فالجيران والذين كانوا يرونه من قبل أنه كان أعمى قالوا: أليس هذا هو الذي كان يجلس ويستعطي؟ فقال بعضهم هذا هو، فقالوا له: كيف انفتحت عيناك؟ أجاب ذاك: "وآخرون قالوا: إنه يشبهه". وأما هو فكان يقول: "إني أنا هو" فمضيت. وقال: إنسان يقال له يسوع، صنع طيناً وطلّى عيني وقال لي "اذهب إلى بركة سلوام واغتسل واغتسلت، فأبصرت. فقالوا له: أين ذاك؟ فقال: لا أعلم. فأتوا به، أي بالذي كان قبلاً أعمى إلى الفريسيين. وكان حين صنع يسوع الطين وفتح عيني يوم سبت. فسأله الفريسيون أيضاً، كيف أبصر؟ فقال لهم: جعل علي عيني طيناً ثم اغتسلت، فأنا الآن أبصر. فقال قوم من الفريسيين: هذا الإنسان ليس من الله، لأنه لا يحفظ السبت. آخرون قالوا: كيف يقدّر إنسان خاطئ أن يعمل مثل هذه الآيات؟ فوقع بينهم شقاق. فقالوا أيضاً للأعمى: ماذا تقول أنت عنه من حيث إنه فتح عينيك؟ فقال: إنه نبي. ولم يصدق اليهود عنه أنه كان أعمى فأبصر حتى دَعَوْا أبوي الذي أبصر وسألوهم قائلين: أهذا هو ابنكما الذي تقولان إنه ولد أعمى؟ فكيف أبصر الآن؟ أجابهم أبواه وقالوا: نحن نعلم أن هذا ولدنا، وأنه ولد أعمى، وأما كيف أبصر الآن فلا نعلم، أو من فتح عيني، فنحن لا نعلم، هو كامل السن فاسألوه، فهو يتكلم عن نفسه. قال أبواه هذا، لأنهما كانا يخافان من اليهود، لأن اليهود كانوا قد تعاهدوا أنه إن اعترف أحد بأنه المسيح، يخرج من "فَدَعَوْا ثَانِيَةً الإنسان الذي كان أعمى وقالوا له: أعط. المجمع. فلذلك قال أبواه، "هو كامل السن، فاسألوه مجداً لله، فأنا نعلم أن هذا الإنسان خاطئ. فأجاب ذاك وقال: أخطئ هو لا أعلم، إنما أعلم شيئاً واحداً، أنني كنت أعمى، والآن أنا أبصر. فقالوا له أيضاً: ماذا صنع بك؟ كيف فتح عينيك؟ أجابهم: قد أخبرتكم فلم تسمعوا، فماذا تريدون أن تسمعوا أيضاً؟ أعلّكم أنتم أيضاً تريدون أن تصيروا له تلاميذ؟ فشتّموه وقالوا له: أنت تلميذ ذاك، وأما نحن فأنا تلاميذ موسى، ونحن نعلم أن الله قد كلم موسى، فأما هذا، فلا نعلم من أين هو. أجاب الرجل وقال لهم: إن في هذا عجباً أنكم ما تعلمون من أين هو وقد فتح عيني، ونحن نعلم أن الله لا يسمع للخطاة، ولكن إذا أحد اتقى الله وعمل مشيئته، فله يستجيب. منذ الدهر لم يسمع أن أحدًا فتح عيني مولود أعمى. فلو لم يكن هذا من الله، لم يقدّر أن يفعل شيئاً. أجابوه وقالوا له: إنك في الخطايا قد ولدت بجملتنا، أفأنت تعلمنا؟ فأخرجوه خارجاً. وسمع يسوع أنهم أخرجوه خارجاً، فوجده وقال له: أتؤمن أنت بابن الله. فأجاب ذاك، وقال: فمن هو يا سيد لأؤمن به؟ فقال له يسوع: قد رأيته والذي يتكلم معك هو هو. فقال له: قد آمننت يا رب، وسجد له.

Room for Rent is Needed

There is a wonderful Medical Resident moving to Oakland to start work at Highland Hospital. He and his family are active members at St Mark's Church in Irvine, CA.

They are asking for help in finding a room or apartment to rent 10-20 minute drive to the hospital.

If you have any suggestions, or know of someone looking for a roommate, please contact:

Mary Farradj (925) 437-0872.

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

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

May 28th	Evening Divine Liturgy for the feast of the Ascension at 6:00 PM
June 1st	Memorial service for Anwar Nassar by Samir Nassar and family In memory of his brother. May his memory be eternal!
June 8th	40 days memorial service by Siham Mitry and family in memory of Donna Mitry Potter . May her memory be eternal!
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

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!
- † 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!
- † St. John Parish Family for the good health of **Fred Addas**. 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

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A NIGHT
with
THE STARS

"A masterpiece"
- AVERAGE BALL ATTENDANT

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"FOOD WAS TO DIE FOR!"
- *Wilted Lentils*

FEATURING: DJ, OPEN BAR, STUNNING DECORATIONS, DANCING, THREE-COURSE DINNER,
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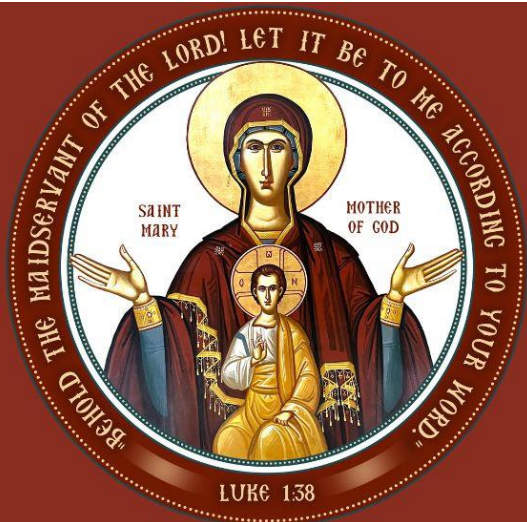
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DIOCESE OF LOS ANGELES & THE WEST PARISH LIFE CONFERENCE

JUNE 25 - 29, 2025

HOSTED BY:

ST. NICHOLAS ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX
CHURCH, SAN FRANCISCO

WWW.LAPLC.ORG

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)

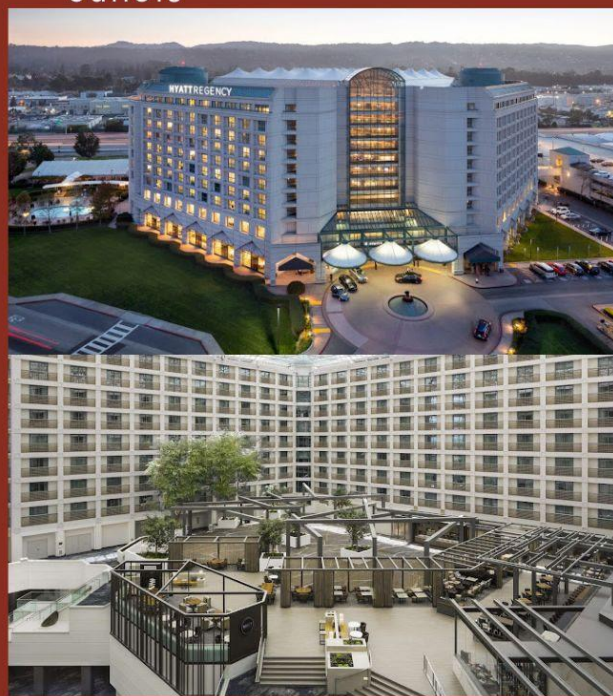
SUNDAY JUNE 29

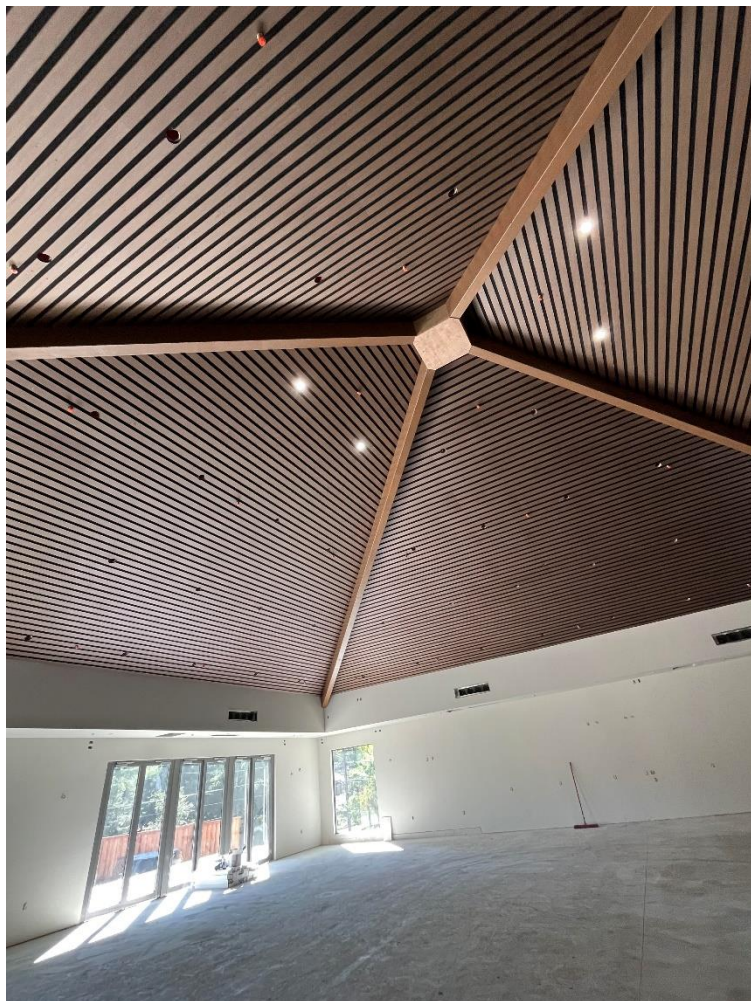
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Fellowship Hall Update - Hall is closed to parishioners after church due to safety concerns and work proceeding during the next two weekends. Please do not try to enter the hall.

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!

Christ is Risen!

The handmaiden of God Donna Potter entered into eternal life on April 30, 2025. She is the eldest daughter of Siham Mitry and is survived by:

Her husband Bryan Potter, her daughter and son-in-law Madeline and Toby Solis, her daughter Adrienne Potter, her son, daughter-in-law, and granddaughter Evan, Analisa and Camille Potter.

Her sisters, brother-in-law, and nephews: Hala Mitry, Naheda and Ron Willis, Lillian, Bronson, Mason, and Jason Burt.

She was preceded in death by her father Osama Mitry.

May her memory be eternal.

There will be a private funeral service.

An open house will be held on Saturday, May 3, 2025, from 1:00pm-4:00pm at Siham Mitry's house: 17208 Via Del Rey, San Lorenzo, CA 94580.

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 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	
Total Income	\$ 239,512	100%	\$ 172,719	
Total Expenses	\$ 194,453		\$ 134,028	
YTD Net Income	\$ 45,059	19%	\$ 38,692	

**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

FRIDAY, MAY 23, 2025

The Bus to Heaven

His Eminence Metropolitan Saba (Isper)

C.S. Lewis was a popular English writer who lived in the twentieth century. He came to Christ after atheism and his books became among the most widely read from the middle of the last century until now. He once wrote an imaginative, meaningful story called *The Great Divorce*. It goes like this: God sent a bus to hell inviting residents who would like to leave and go to heaven. The bus filled up quickly and drove those passengers toward heaven. But before arriving, the bus stopped at a rocky place. The driver asked the passengers to get off the bus and told them that they must walk a fair distance on the bumpy road to reach heaven. He also informed them that the beginning of the walk would be difficult, on their bare feet. He reassured them that if they embark, they will find themselves, after a short period of time, walking like those who have shoes on their feet.

Everyone got off and happily went on their way toward heaven. But they soon began screaming and complaining about the rocky road, the thorns, and the sun. So, they started heading back to the bus one by one. Some of them had only walked a little, some walked a fair distance, and some others returned when they had almost reached heaven. Thus, the bus had to return to hell with all its passengers on board.

Isn't this the case with most, if not all people, especially in our current age? People want an easy and uncostly salvation. They want a consumerist salvation, just like the consumerist society in which they live. Humans have become unwilling to accept anything uncomfortable. They want a convenient religion that satisfies and comforts their consciences; a religion that fulfills their worldly lusts and desires; a religion that does not transform them and does not challenge them to advance and grow. The majority desire a religion that is based on a few simple duties in exchange for peace of mind, the satisfaction of worldly desires, and enchanting the heart with the promise of paradise in the next life.

Christ began His preaching with a call to repentance: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 4:17). To repent means to relinquish something and replace it with something better. However, giving up an ingrained habit, a burning desire, or a raging lust seems difficult for humans. Let us quickly review some of the reasons that make it difficult.

One reason is that when a believer's love for God does not reach the required level, repentance becomes arduous. The love of parents for their children drives them to sacrifice all that is precious and valuable without hesitation. Their children's well-being is more important than anything. Thus, love is the incentive and the motivation. When you love, you flow with joy and yearning.

A second reason is getting used to an easy lifestyle and unwillingness to exhaust oneself. Modern man is no longer physically tired, but instead psychologically and spiritually weary, especially in the meaninglessness of his life. Some data show that about 45-50% of prescriptions filled are sedatives and antidepressants. In some countries, they are the best-selling drugs. Lack of physical fatigue breeds an aversion to spiritual struggle. The latter requires standing, prostration, fasting, abstinence, etc. These contradict the nature of a comfortable lifestyle, or rather, a seemingly comfortable lifestyle that is much more agonizing than spiritual hardship.

A third reason is that people become accustomed to their misery. One of the perplexing aspects of humans is that they prefer the misery of their familiar state over aspired bliss because pursuit of this requires change and uprooting their situation. People may prefer hell over walking the "narrow path," even if it leads them to heaven. They are afraid, so they remain stuck in what they have, fearful of losing even that and not reaching for more. Settling for a life of misery pushes people toward resignation more than it encourages them to strive and rush to reject it and work to change it. Change carries the risk of success, failure, or stumbling. Humans today, with their great anxiety, desire guaranteed reassurance, even if it is illusory or deceptive.

If believers live in an environment that does not encourage creativity, initiative, courage, and adventure, the pursuit of "the abundant life" (John 10:10) becomes more difficult.

A fourth reason arises from man's fear of revealing and exposing his innermost self to a spiritual guide when seeking spiritual healing. Our desire to look our best before others hinders us from revealing our inner flaws and imperfections. We then compensate by grumbling and complaining, blaming our sins on various people and/or circumstances. People today fill themselves with tension, pain, loss, and sins of all kinds, becoming like drunkards

who treat their sobriety with more intoxicants. However, openness relaxes the soul and brings out all the snakes constantly slithering on the inside that poison life.

In so-called civilized societies, people frequently visit psychiatric clinics because there are no spiritual fathers. Relieving internal pain is a basic human need, and so you see people wandering in a desperate search for loyal friendship and a sincere, honest embrace. This is what the sacrament of repentance and confession is for us. But, as someone rightly described it, it is a "forgotten medicine."

A fifth reason is the love of sin. Man struggles in vain against his sin until he hates it. Returning to it means he still loves it, as Saint Isaac the Syrian says. Hating sin and feeling disgusted by it makes man humble, freeing himself of any arrogance, self-importance, or delusion in his own power. Then he opens himself to God's overwhelming mercy, confident that only his Lord can save him from his condition. Divine grace embraces him and frees him.

The Lord said, "Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many" (Matthew 7:13). He also said, "Come to Me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me; for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light" (Matthew 11:28-30).

Which one would you choose? Fatigue followed by endless joy, or wearying comfort which lasts forever?

باص الجنة المتروبوليت سابا (اسبر)

س. إس. لويس كاتب إنكليزي واسع الانتشار، عاش في القرن العشرين، وأتى إلى المسيح من بعد إلحاد، وصارت كتبه من أكثر الكتب انتشاراً، في أواسط القرن الماضي وحتى الآن. كتب، مرّة، قصّة، ذات مغزى، من مخيلته بعنوان "الطلاق الكبير". مفادها أنّ الله أرسل باصاً إلى جهنّم، يدعو من يريد من قاطنيها إلى مغادرتها، والذهاب إلى الجنة. امتلأ الباص بسرعة، وانطلق برّكابه إلى الجنة. لكنّه، وقبل وصوله إلى الجنة، توقف في مكان وعمر. طلب السائق من الرّكّاب النزول من الباص، وأخبرهم بوجود السير مسافة لا بأس بها في الطريق الوعر، لكي يصلوا إلى الجنة. كما أنّه طمأنهم إلى أنّ أوّل المسير سيكون شاقّاً على أرجلهم الحافية، لكنّهم إذا ما انطلقوا سيجدون أنفسهم، بعد وقت يسير، كمن يسير بأرجل تنتعل أحذيتها.

نزل الجميع وانطلقوا، فرحين، في طريقهم إلى الجنة. لكنّهم سرعان ما بدأوا يصرخون متذمّرين من حجارة الطريق، والشوك، والشمس. وهكذا بدأوا، واحداً بعد الآخر، يعودون أدراجهم إلى الباص. بعضهم لم يمش إلا قليلاً، وبعضهم مشى مسافة لا بأس بها، وآخرون عادوا من بعد أن كادوا يصلون. وهكذا اضطر الباص إلى العودة برّكابه جميعاً إلى جهنّم ثانية.

أليس هذا هو حال أكثر الناس، إن لم نقل غالبيتهم العظمى، خاصّة في هذا الزمن؟ يريد البشر الخلاص السهل، غير المكلف. يريدونه خلاصاً استهلاكياً، تماماً، على غرار مجتمعهم الاستهلاكي، الذي يعيشون فيه. بات البشر غير راغبين بما هو غير مريح. يريدون ديناً مريحاً يرضي ضمائرهم ويريحها، ويحقّق شهواتهم ورغباتهم الدنيويّة، ديناً لا يغيّرهم، ولا يطلب منهم الترقّي والنمو. ترغب الأكثرية بدين يقوم على بعض الواجبات البسيطة، مقابل تأمين راحة الضمير، وإشباع الرغبات الدنيويّة، ودغدغة القلب بوعد الجنة في الحياة الثانية.

بدأ المسيح بشرائه بالدعوة إلى التوبة: "توبوا، لأنّ ملكوت السموات اقترب" (مت ١٧/٤). تاب عن الشيء أي أقلع عنه واستبدله بما هو أحسن. لكن الإقلاع عن عادة

متأصلة، عن رغبة مشتعلة، عن شهوة مستعرة، يبدو مستصعباً عند البشر. فلنستعرض سريعاً بعضاً من أسباب صعوبتها.

واحد من الأسباب أن عدم وصول حبّ المؤمن للربّ إلى المستوى المطلوب، يهول عليه التوبة. حبّ الوالدين لأولادهم يجعلهم يضحّون بالغالي والنفيس دونما تفكير، أو أخذ وردّ. مصلحة الأولاد عندهم أهمّ وأثمن من أي شيء. المحبة هي المحرك والدافع إذاً. عندما تحبّ تندفع بفرح وشوق.

اعتیاد الحياة السهلة، وعدم الرغبة بإتباع الذات سبب ثان. لم يعد الإنسان المعاصر متعباً جسدياً في حياته. هو متعب أكثر، ولكن نفسياً وروحياً. متعب من عدم وجود معنى لحياته. ٤٥ إلى ٥٠ بالمئة من الوصفات الدوائية تُصرف في أدوية التهذئة والاكتئاب، حسب إحصائيات بعض البلدان. وهذه الأدوية هي الأكثر مبيعاً في معظم البلدان. عدم التعب الجسدي، يولّد نفوراً من الجهاد الروحي، الذي يتطلب وقوفاً، وسجوداً، وصوماً، وعقّة... إلخ، وهذه تتناقض وطبيعة الحياة السهلة، أو بالأحرى تبدو سهلة، لكنّها في الواقع أقسى من تعب الجسد بكثير.

اعتیاد الإنسان على شقائه سبب ثالث. من غرائب البشر أنّهم يفضّلون الشقاء اطمئناناً لما هم فيه، على الهناء المنشود، لأنّه يتطلب تغييراً واقتلاعاً لما اعتادوا عليه. هم يفضّلون جهنّم على السير في "الطريق الضيق"، ولو أوصلهم إلى الجنة. هم يخافون، فيقبعون في ما عندهم، خوفاً من خسارته، وعدم الحصول على المطلوب. يبدو أنّ الاستقرار في حياة شقاء، يدفع الإنسان نحو الاستكانة أكثر ممّا يشجّعه على السعي والاندفاع نحو رفضها، والعمل على تغييرها. يحمل التغيير مجازفة النجاح، أو الفشل، أو التعرّ. إنسان اليوم، لعظم قلقه، يريد اطمئناناً مضموناً، ولو كان وهمياً أو خداعاً.

وإذا ما عاش المؤمن في بيئة لا تشجّع على الإبداع والإقدام والشجاعة والمغامرة، يصبح السعي إلى "الحياة الأوفر" (يو ١٠/١٠) أكثر صعوبة.

أمّا السبب الرابع فينشأ من خوف الإنسان من كشف نفسه ودواخلها أمام مرشد روحي، طلباً لاستشفاء روحي. رغبتنا بالظهور بالمظهر الأحسن أمام الآخرين، تعيقنا

عن كشف ما بدواخلنا من عيوب وسيئات. فيكون التعويض بالتذمّر، والتشكي، وتوزيع الذنوب على هذا وذاك من الظروف والأشخاص. يترك إنسان اليوم داخله يمتلئ بالعصبية والألم والضيق والخطايا على أنواعها، فيصير كالسكران الذي يداوي صحوه بمزيد من المسكر. بينما الانفتاح يريحه، ويُخرج كلّ الأفاعي التي تتحرّك في داخله، لتجعل حياته أكثر سواداً.

في المجتمعات المدعوة متحضّرة يكثر الناس من التردّد على عيادات الأطباء النفسيين، لعدم توفر آباء رُوحيين. إخراج الأتعب الداخليّة حاجة أساسيّة للإنسان ولذلك تراه يتجوّل، عبثاً، هنا وهناك. ينشد صداقة وفيّة، واحتضاناً صادقاً نزيهاً. وهذا ما هو عليه سرّ التوبة والاعتراف عندنا. لكنّه، كما وصفه أحدهم بحقّ، "دواء منسيّ."

أمّا السبب الخامس فهو حبّ الخطيئة. عبثاً يقاوم الإنسان خطيئته ما لم يكرهها. عودته إليها تعني أنّه لا يزال يحبّها، على قول القديس اسحق السوري. كره الخطيئة والشعور بالاشمئزاز منها يجعلان الإنسان في حالة تواضع، وإخلاءٍ لذاته ممّا هو تكبر، واعتزاز بالنفس، ووهم بالقدرة الذاتيّة. آنذاك يفتح على رحمة الله الغامرة، واثقاً من أنّ ربّه وحده، هو القادر على تخليصه ممّا هو فيه، فتغمره النعمة الإلهيّة وتحرّره. قال الربّ "ادخلوا من الباب الضيّق. فما أوسع الباب وأسهل الطريق المؤدّية إلى الهلاك، وما أكثر الذين يسلكونها" (مت ١٣/٧). وقال أيضاً: "تعالوا إليّ يا جميع المتعبين والرازين تحت أثقالكم وأنا أريحكم. احملوا نيري وتعلّموا منّي تجدوا الراحة لنفوسكم، فأنا وديع ومتواضع القلب، ونيري هيّن وجَملي خفيف" (مت ٢٨/١١-٣٠).

أيّهما تختار؟ تعباً يعقبه فرح لا ينتهي، أم راحة مُتعبة تدوم إلى الأبد؟