



# +St. John the Evangelist Orthodox Church

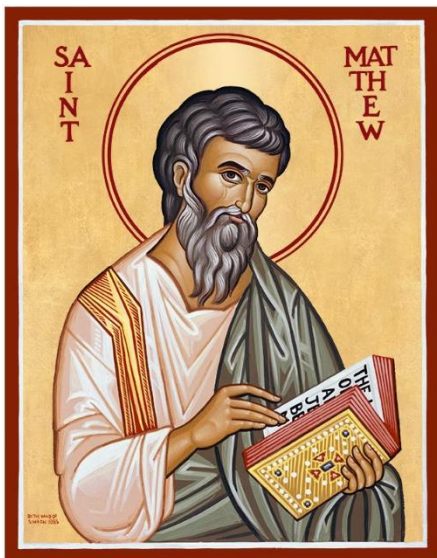
Antiochian Archdiocese of North America  
Metropolitan Saba of New York and all North America  
V. Rev. Fr. Nicholas Borzghol, Pastor  
Dn. Nicholas Adranly

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**SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 16, 2025**

## **THE HOLY APOSTLE AND EVANGELIST MATTHEW**

MARTYR EPHYGENIA OF ETHIOPIA, DISCIPLE OF ST. MATTHEW; FULVIAN, PRINCE OF ETHIOPIA



On November 16 in the Holy Orthodox Church, we commemorate the holy Apostle and Evangelist Matthew.

On this day, we also commemorate the Martyr Ephygenia of Ethiopia, disciple of St. Matthew; and Fulvian, prince of Ethiopia.

He was the son of Alphaeus, and a tax collector when the Lord saw him in Capernaum and said: "Follow Me. And he arose, and followed Him (Matthew 9:9)." After that, Matthew received the Lord in his home and thus provided the occasion for the Lord to express several great truths about His coming to earth. After receiving the Holy Spirit, Matthew preached the Gospel to the Parthians, Medes and Ethiopians. Matthew baptized the wife and the son of the prince of Ethiopia, at which the prince became greatly enraged and dispatched a guard to bring Matthew to him for trial. The soldiers returned to the prince saying that they had heard Matthew's voice, but could not see him with their eyes. The prince then sent a second guard. When this guard approached the apostle, he shone with a heavenly light so powerful that the soldiers could not look at him; filled with fear, they threw down their weapons and returned. The prince then went himself. Matthew radiated such light that the prince was instantly blinded. However, the holy apostle had a compassionate heart; he prayed to God, and the prince was given back his sight. Unfortunately, he arrested Matthew and subjected him to cruel tortures. Eventually, after Matthew's death, the prince repented, was baptized, taking the name "Matthew," and served as a priest, giving up his princely wealth. Matthew the Apostle wrote his Gospel in the Aramaic language. It was soon translated into Greek and the Greek text has come down to us, while the Aramaic text has been lost.

## **THE EPISTLE**

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

### **The Reading from the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians. (4:9-16)**

Brethren, I think that God has exhibited us Apostles as last of all, like men sentenced to death; because we have become a spectacle to the world, to angels and to men. We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are wise in Christ. We are weak, but you are strong. You are held in honor, but we in disrepute. To the present hour we hunger and thirst, we are ill-clad and buffeted and homeless, and we labor, working with our own hands. When reviled, we bless; when persecuted, we endure; when slandered, we try to conciliate; we have become, and are now, as the refuse of the world, the scourge of all things. I do not write this to make you ashamed, but to admonish you as my beloved children. Though you have countless guides in Christ, you do not have many fathers. I became your father in Christ Jesus through the Gospel. I urge you, then, be imitators of me.

فِي كُلِّ الْأَرْضِ حَرَجَ صَوْتُهُ.  
السَّمَاوَاتُ تُذَيِّعُ مَجْدَ اللَّهِ.

### **فَصَلِّ مِنْ رِسَالَةِ الْقَدِيسِ بُولُسَ الرَّسُولِ الْأُولَى إِلَى أَهْلِ كُورِنْثُوسَ. (4:9-16)**

يَا إِخْوَةَ، إِنَّ اللَّهَ أَبْرَزَنَا نَحْنُ الرُّسُلَ آخِرِي النَّاسِ، كَأَنَّا مَجْعُولُونَ لِلْمَوْتِ. لَأَنَّا قَدْ صِرْنَا مَشْهُدًا لِلْعَالَمِ وَالْمَلَائِكَةِ وَالْبَشَرِ. نَحْنُ جُهَالٌ مِنْ أَجْلِ الْمَسِيحِ، أَمَّا أَنْتُمْ فَحُكَمَاءُ فِي الْمَسِيحِ. نَحْنُ ضِعَفَاءُ، وَأَنْتُمْ أَقْوِيَاءُ. أَنْتُمْ مُكْرَمُونَ، وَنَحْنُ مُهَانُونَ. وَإِلَى هَذِهِ السَّاعَةِ، نَحْنُ نَجُوعُ وَنَعْطَشُ وَنَعْرَى وَنُلْطَمُ وَلَا قَرَارَ لَنَا. وَنَتَعَبُ عَامِلِينَ. نُشْتَمُ فَنُبَارِكُ، نُضْطَهُدُ فَنُحْتَمِلُ. يُشْنَعُ عَلَيْنَا فَنَتَضَرَّعُ. قَدْ صِرْنَا كَأَفْذَارِ الْعَالَمِ وَكَأَوْسَاخٍ يَسْتَحْبِثُهَا الْجَمِيعُ إِلَى الْآنِ. وَلَسْتُ لِأَحْجَلِكُمْ أَكْتُبُ هَذَا، وَإِنَّمَا أَعْظُكُمُ كَأَوْلَادِي الْأَحِبَّاءِ. لِأَنَّهُ وَلَوْ كَانَ لَكُمْ رَبُّوهُ مِنَ الْمُرْشِدِينَ فِي الْمَسِيحِ، لَيْسَ لَكُمْ آبَاءٌ كَثِيرُونَ. لِأَنِّي أَنَا وَلَدْتُكُمْ فِي الْمَسِيحِ يَسُوعَ بِالْإِنْجِيلِ. فَأَطْلُبُ إِلَيْكُمْ أَنْ تَكُونُوا مُقْتَدِينَ بِي.

## **THE GOSPEL**

### **The Reading from the Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew. (9:9-13)**

At that time, as Jesus passed on from there, He saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax office; and He said to him, "Follow Me." And he rose and followed Him. And as He sat at table in the house, behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and sat down with Jesus and His disciples. And when the Pharisees saw this, they said to His disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" But when Jesus heard it, He said, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. Go and learn what this means, 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.' For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

### **فَصَلِّ مِنْ بَشَارَةِ الْقَدِيسِ مَتَّى الْإِنْجِيلِيِّ الْبَشِيرِ وَالتَّلْمِيزِ الطَّاهِرِ. (9:9-13)**

فِي ذَلِكَ الزَّمَانِ، فِيمَا يَسُوعُ مُجْتَازٌ رَأَى إِنْسَانًا جَالِسًا عَلَى مَائِدَةِ الْجَبَايَةِ اسْمُهُ مَتَّى، فَقَالَ لَهُ: "اتَّبِعْنِي". فَقَامَ فَلَمَّا نَظَرَ. وَفِيمَا كَانَ مَتَكِّنًا فِي الْبَيْتِ إِذَا بَعْشَارِينَ كَثِيرِينَ وَخَطَاةٍ جَائُوا وَاتَّكَأُوا مَعَ يَسُوعَ وَتَلَامِيذِهِ. وَتَبِعَهُ الْفَرِيسِيُّونَ قَالُوا لِتَلَامِيذِهِ: "لِمَاذَا مَعْلَمُكُمْ يَأْكُلُ مَعَ الْعَشَّارِينَ وَالْخَطَاةِ؟" فَلَمَّا سَمِعَ يَسُوعُ قَالَ: "لَا يَحْتَاجُ فَادْهَبُوا وَعَلِّمُوا مَا هُوَ إِنِّي أُرِيدُ رَحْمَةً لَا ذَبِيحَةً. لِأَنِّي لَمْ آتِ لِأَدْعُو. الْأَصِحَّاءُ إِلَى طَبِيبٍ لَكِنْ ذَوُو الْأَسْقَامِ صِدِّيقِينَ بَلْ خَطَاةً إِلَى التَّوْبَةِ."

### Upcoming Events

November 16th	Prison Ministry Card Writing Workshop at coffee hour
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### Coffee Hour

Nov 16th	Luis and Joan Henriquez
Nov 23rd	Nawal Khalil

### Holy Oblations

This week, Holy Oblations are offered by:

- † St. John Parish Family for the good health of **Nick Nicola, Sandy Dudum, George Messih, George Adranly, Fred Addas, Henriette Hilal, Souhad Halaka, George Cawog, Rocky Dudum** and **Norma Khalil**. Many years!
- † St. John Parish Family for the good health of **Sam Nassab**. Many years!
- † St. John Parish Family for the good health of **Sue Gideon**. Many years!
- † St. John Parish Family for the good health of **Hala (Sandra) Mitry**. Many years!
- † St. John Parish Family for the good health of **Fairouz Freij**. Many years!
- † St. John Parish Family for the good health of **Elias Freij**. Many years!
- † St. John Parish Family for the good health of **Michael Shuheiber, Michael Munakash, Michelle Nicola, Michael Najjar, Michael Yowakeem, Gabriel Feghali, Gabriel Geleris, Jabra Shuhaiber, Ayla Raphaela Guajardo** and all those who are named after St. Michael and St. Gabriel on their name's day Nov. 8<sup>th</sup>. 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 Kawar, Mason Kawar, Jonathan Juha, Maron Juha and Zaiden Karanikola

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

You could use this QR code for your donation



### November 23 Thanksgiving Basket,

Raffle 6 tickets for \$12. Please start bringing your gourmet items in the following 3 Sundays to give us enough time to make the best of a beautiful basket and maybe more. Please give your items to Rima.

### Dave & Buster's Campaign

Our Dave & Buster's campaign got extended so we can maximize on our return. We are currently at \$700.00 How it works:

1. Place an order using St. John link.
2. 50% of each Dave & Buster's Power Card purchased is donated back to the organization.
3. Visit any Dave & Buster's location to pick up your Power Card and start playing!

## **Tania's Sermonette for Youth Month**

The Gospel we hear today is not just a story about something Jesus did long ago; it is a revelation of how God still acts in our lives right now. It shows us who God is, how He responds to our suffering, and how we are called to reflect His heart in the world.

This passage teaches us first that God sees the suffering that we think no one notices. There are times in life when we may feel invisible. When we are weighed down by grief, stress, anxiety, or disappointment, and we assume no one understands what we are going through. Many of us walk into church every Sunday, carrying pain that we don't speak about. Yet this Gospel reminds us that God never overlooks us. Even when we are silent, even when we are unsure how to pray, God sees us with perfect clarity. You do not need to be strong to be seen by God. You do not need the right words or a perfect prayer. God notices you even when others do not.

Second, this Gospel reveals that God's first response to our pain is not judgment or criticism, it is compassion. Many people carry the false belief that God only helps those who have their lives together. But in this story, Jesus is moved with compassion before anyone asks Him to act. That means God is not waiting for us to earn His help. He is not distant or emotionally detached. Instead, He is deeply involved in our suffering and feels our pain even more than we do. When you're hurting, God is not disappointed in you, He is drawn toward you.

Third, the Gospel shows that God is not interested in merely fixing problems, He restores lives. When Jesus acted, He did not just stop the funeral. He restored the future of the widow who had lost everything. God is not satisfied with giving us temporary comfort. He wants to rebuild the parts of our lives that have collapsed. He wants to return joy, purpose, relationships, faith, and hope back into our lives.

Finally, this Gospel challenges us to allow Jesus to interrupt the direction we are going. When hurt becomes familiar, we can get used to walking in hopelessness. We can start believing that nothing will ever change, and we can carry our pain like a procession to the grave. But in the Gospel when Jesus touches the funeral bier, the procession stops. In the same way, Jesus wants to interrupt the hopeless stories we keep telling ourselves. Faith often begins at the moment when we allow Jesus to stop our despair and speak a new word over our lives. He challenges our belief that we are stuck and invites us to imagine that resurrection is still possible.

The message of this Gospel is profoundly hopeful: no situation is too hopeless, no life is too broken, and no story is beyond God's reach. The Gospel does not deny the reality of suffering, but it declares that suffering does not have the final word. Jesus meets us in the very places we are ready to give up, and when He speaks, even the things we thought were dead can rise again.

So today, let this Gospel assure you that God sees you, God has compassion on you, God is not afraid of your pain, and God can restore what has been lost. Let it challenge you to become a person of compassion who brings hope to others. And let it remind you that when Jesus shows up, despair does not win, death does not get the last word, and everything can change. Amen.



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Dear parishioners,

We ordered these items to continue beautifying our church. Your donations towards these items are greatly appreciated.

\$20, \$50, \$100 or more are accepted.

God bless you all!

	1	Orthodox Bishop's Chair – Hand-Carved Wood with Icon	\$1,350.00
	1	Hand-Carved Wood Chanter Psalter Stand with Cross Top	\$1,975.00
Subtotal			\$3,325.00
Shipping			\$122.62
Total			USD <b>\$3,447.62</b>

The Bishop's chair has been donated by Raif and Sonia Rihani and family



# **Dave & Buster's Power Cards to Support St. John Church**



**50% Donated Back**



**December 31**



<https://grouprai.se/davebusters59958s>



**THURSDAY, OCTOBER 30TH 2025, 3 PM ET**

Media contact: Shahd Khaled [shahd@arabfilm.us](mailto:shahd@arabfilm.us) or (415) 564.1100

This is not the public information number. Please do not publish it.



# **Five Oscar Submissions and a 4K Remastered Classic Lead this Year's Arab Film Festival Program in San Francisco**

## **2025 Arab Film Festival**

**November 6 - November 15, 2025**

*North America's Oldest and Largest Festival Celebrating*

*Arab Cinema returns for its 29th annual edition*

The Arab Film and Media Institute (AFMI) is pleased to announce the full program for the 2025 Arab Film Festival, running November 6 - November 15, 2025 with a hybrid program of in-person and virtual events.

**The 29th edition of the Arab Film Festival includes 5 movies chosen by their countries to represent them at the 98th Oscars:** *Palestine 36* (Palestine), *The Voice of Hind Rajab* (Tunisia), *All That's Left of You* (Jordan), *Happy Birthday* (Egypt), and *Calle Málaga* (Morocco).

This year Palestine, Tunisia, and Jordan chose all movies directed by women and telling the stories of Palestinian people to represent them at the 98th Oscars.

*The Voice of Hind Rajab* is being hailed as the defining movie of the decade. It won the Grand Jury Prize and received a 23 minutes and 50 second standing ovation at the Venice Film Festival, the longest in the history of the festival. It also shattered records at the San Sebastián Film Festival where it won the Audience Award with the festival's highest score.

*Palestine 36* premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF) where it received a 15-minute standing ovation.

"The world is finally catching up to what our community has always known: Arab filmmakers are reshaping global cinema. From powerful Oscar contenders to timeless classics like *Cairo Station*, this year's festival reflects the full breadth of our storytelling as we honor both the future and the foundations of Arab cinema. We are honored to screen so many powerful and moving films at the 2025 Arab Film Festival: each is an act of cultural resilience and a bridge across borders."

The 2025 Arab Film Festival will run throughout the San Francisco Bay Area at the AMC Kabuki 8 (San Francisco), Roxie Theater (San Francisco), Alamo Drafthouse Valley Fair (San Jose) and the New Parkway Theater (Oakland). The program spans 10 days, presenting over 58 films from 28 countries, 27 directed by women.

The Arab Film and Media Institute (AFMI), the organization behind the Arab Film Festival, has also partnered with The Criterion Collection and The Roxie Theatre in San Francisco for **a special remastered, 4K screening of the Arab film classic *Cairo Station*.**

The Arab Film Festival has become an annual must-go event for those looking to see the best of Arab Cinema. The 2025 program also includes other award winning films such as *The Little Sister* (winner of the Queer Palm and Best Actress Awards at Cannes), and *Once Upon a Time in Gaza* (winner of the Best Director Award at Cannes - Un Certain Regard).

**The 29th edition of the Arab Film Festival (AFF2025) will open on Thursday November 6th in San Francisco with Annemarie Jacir's *PALESTINE 36*, Palestine's entry to the 2026 Oscars.**

Opening Night special guests: Dina Shihabi, Nicholas Monsour, JC Kalache and Adam Habib

**Acclaimed Irish director Jim Sheridan leads this year's Festival Jury, which also includes** Khalid Abdalla, Hussain Amarshi, Karim Amer, Yareli Arizmendi, Aida Begić, Adam Habib, J.C Kalache, Nicholas Monsour, Amara Rizk, Nadim Safieddine, David Shafei, Dina Shihabi, and Ramin Zahed.

## **PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS**

### **Official Entries to the Oscars at AFF2025**

#### **OPENING NIGHT FILM: *Palestine 36* - Palestine's Submission to the 98th Academy Awards**

Directed by Annemarie Jacir, 2025, 115 mins

Palestine, France, Qatar, KSA, UK, Denmark, Jordan, Norway, US, Sweden, Australia

In 1936, as the British Empire tightens its grip on Palestine, Yusuf is caught between his village home and his work in Jerusalem. Amidst an anti-colonial revolt, and Jewish refugees fleeing persecution from Europe, all sides converge in a decisive moment for the entire region.

#### ***The Voice of Hind Rajab* - Tunisia's Submission to the 98th Academy Awards**

Directed by Kaouther Ben Hania, 2025, 81 mins

Tunisia, France

Executive Producers: Brad Pitt, Joaquin Phoenix, Rooney Mara, Alfonso Cuarón



January 29, 2024. Red Crescent volunteers receive an emergency call. A 6-year old girl is trapped in a car under fire in Gaza, pleading for rescue. While trying to keep her on the line, they do everything they can to get an ambulance to her. Her name was Hind Rajab.

***All That's Left of You* - Jordan's Submission to the 98th Academy Awards**

Directed by Cherien Dabis, 2025, 145 mins

Jordan, Palestine, State of, Germany, Cyprus, Greece, Qatar, Saudi Arabia

Executive Producers: Javier Bardem, Mark Ruffalo

*All That's Left of You* won Best film + Audience Award at the San Francisco Film Festival and the Audience Award at the Sydney Film Festival. Javier Barden and Mark Ruffalo are Executive Producers.

After a Palestinian teen gets swept up into a West Bank protest, his mother recounts the family story of hope, courage and relentless struggle that led to this fateful moment.

***Happy Birthday* - Egypt's Submission to the 98th Academy Awards**

Directed by Sarah Goher, 2025, 91 mins

Egypt

Winner: TRIBECA Best International Narrative Feature, Best International Script, and Nora Ephron Award

Eight-year-old maid Toha goes to great lengths to ensure that her best friend Nelly, the daughter of her wealthy employer, has a successful birthday party in this poignant debut feature exploring classism in modern-day Cairo.

***Calle Málaga* - Morocco's Submission to the 98th Academy Awards**

Directed by Maryam Touzani, 2025, 116 mins

Morocco, Spain

*Calle Málaga* won the Armani Beauty Audience Award (Venezia Spotlight) at the Venice Film Festival, and it stars Carmen Maura, one of Spain's most famous actresses.

Maria Angeles, a 79 year-old Spanish woman, lives alone in Tangier, Morocco, and enjoys her daily routine. However, her life is turned upside down when her daughter arrives from Madrid to sell the apartment in which she has always lived. Determined to stay, she does everything she can to get her home and her belongings back and, unexpectedly, rediscovers love and sensuality.

**SPECIAL PRESENTATION: Cairo Station (Remastered. 4K)**

***Cairo Station* - Morocco's Submission to the 98th Academy Awards**

Directed by Youssef Chahine, 1958, 77 mins

Egypt

Qinawi, a physically challenged peddler who makes his living selling newspapers in the central Cairo train station, is obsessed with Hanuma, an attractive young woman who sells drinks. While she jokes with him about a possible relationship, she is actually in love with Abu Siri, a strong and respected porter at the station who is struggling to unionize his fellow workers to combat their boss' exploitative and abusive treatment.

Widely regarded as one of the greatest works in Arab and world cinema, *Cairo Station* premiered at the 1958 Berlin International Film Festival and remains a cornerstone of Egyptian neorealism. Restored in 4K by Janus Films/The Criterion Collection, this special screening offers audiences a rare chance to experience Chahine's masterpiece as it was meant to be seen—on the big screen, in all its emotional and visual intensity.

**AFF2025** opens at the AMC Kabuki 8 in San Francisco with ***Palestine 36***, Palestine's entry to the 2026 Oscars. **For the full schedule please visit [arabfilmfestival.org](https://arabfilmfestival.org)**

### **TICKET & PASS INFORMATION**

General admission tickets for virtual screenings, Q&A's and panels range from complementary to \$8. In-person admission is \$20, \$18 for students, seniors or low income people. Special presentations, such as opening night, range from \$28 - \$100. Virtual-only passes are \$60, Festival passes are \$180 and VIP passes are \$250. For more information, visit the ticketing page at [arabfilmfestival.org](https://arabfilmfestival.org)

### **About the Arab Film Festival (AFF)**

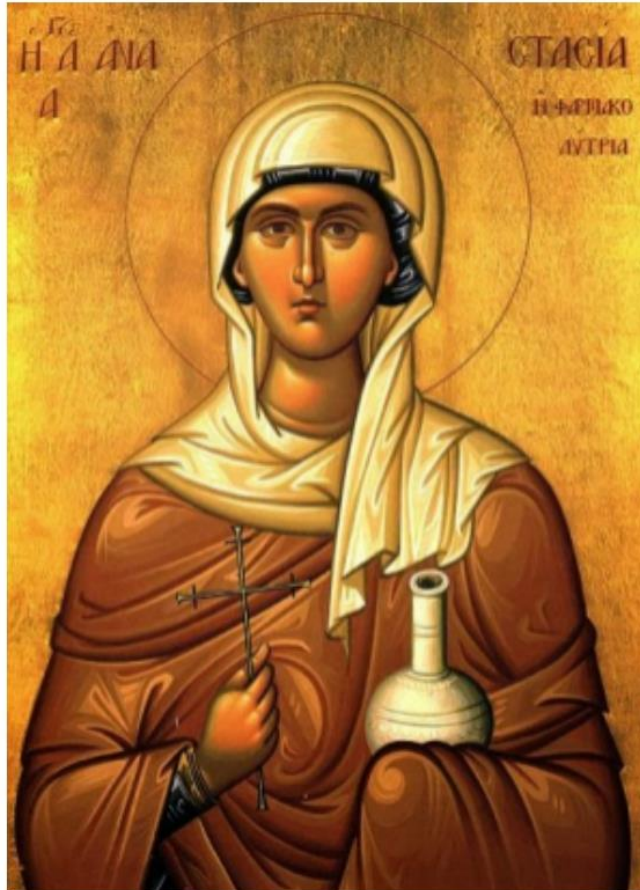
The flagship event of the Arab Film and Media Institute, the Arab Film Festival is the largest and longest running independent festival of its kind in North America. Launched in 1996, the festival's mission is to present the best of contemporary films that illuminate the richness of Arab culture through authentic narratives and images, providing insight into the beauty and complexity of the Arab world. The 29th edition takes place November 6 - 15, 2025. Check [arabfilmfestival.org](https://arabfilmfestival.org) for the latest updates.

### **About the Arab Film and Media Institute (AFMI)**

The Arab Film and Media Institute (AFMI) is the first organization of its kind outside the Arab world, a unique ecosystem to find, nurture and develop Arab film and media projects. It was rebranded from the Arab Film Festival in 2017 to fulfill its broader mandate to empower local Arab talent to tell their communities' stories in their own voices. AFMI is built upon four programming pillars: Exhibitions, Education, Creators and Industry. For more information about AFMI, please visit [arabfilmminstitute.org](https://arabfilmminstitute.org)

# St. Anastasia's Fellowship

A Support Group For Those Struggling With Or Affected By  
Substance Abuse



**1st and 3rd Sunday:  
6pm meeting; 7pm Readers Paraklesis**

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

**Please Contact:  
John: (925) 383-0222  
Joseph: (310) 227-9848**



Get ready to jingle and mingle!

# *Christmas*

## FORMAL

Enjoy a live performance by Waseem and his band,  
a delicious dinner, and celebration of Christmas and  
the hall grand opening

6TH DECEMBER, 2025

at 4:45pm Ribbon cutting and prayer

5 o'clock for cocktails

6 o'clock for dinner

Followed by dancing

ST. JOHN BANQUET HALL

501 Moraga Way, Orinda

Tickets \$110 per adult  
\$40 per child(13 or younger)

Purchase by Nov.21  
Rania Kashou 415.722.0774





# Christmas Event

DECORATE THE TRUNK OF  
YOUR CAR FOR ALL TO ENJOY

30

SUNDAY

NOVEMBER

AFTER LITURGY

BRING A TREAT TO PASS TO  
ALL THE KIDS  
(IF IT RAINS THIS EVENT  
WILL BE MOVED INSIDE)

TO PARTICIPATE PLEASE  
CONTACT: RANIA KASHOU





## St. John Financial Snapshot

Year to Date Actual Finances as of 10/31/2025

INCOME	2025 Year To Date	% of Total Income	2024 Year to Date	
Membership Pledges	\$ 135,875	25%	\$ 129,504	+\$6K difference vs. YTD 2024. -\$14K difference vs. 2025 Budget.
Tray Collections	\$ 12,279	2%	\$ 11,528	
Preschool Contribution	\$ 309,362	57%	\$ 231,995	
Crab Feed and Festival	\$ 59,605	11%	\$ 48,625	
Ladies Contribution	\$ 5,000	1%	\$ -	Related to prior year. Add'l \$5K expected in December 2025.
Other**	\$ 17,568	3%	\$ 17,520	
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>\$ 539,689</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>\$ 439,172</b>	
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$ 438,455</b>		<b>\$ 439,172</b>	
<b>YTD Net Income</b>	<b>\$ 101,233</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>\$ -</b>	

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

Building Fund Balance                   \$     356,233.97

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



## **On Artificial Living**

*By Metropolitan Saba (Isper)*

A couple once came to see me. They were constantly quarreling and blaming each other. As we spoke, it became clear that their problem was financial. Their spending far exceeded their income, forcing them to borrow money even though their income was not small compared to the average in our society.

I suggested a very simple solution: each of them should keep a small notebook and write down, every day, all their expenses. At the end of the month, they should sit together and categorize their spending—food, healthcare, communication, and so on. “After several months, you’ll know how much you truly need for each area of your life,” I told them. “You’ll also be able to distinguish between what is necessary and what is extra. Then you can set a fixed amount for each category. And if one month you must exceed a limit in one area, compensate by spending less in another, so you never fall into debt.”

They left relieved—but after the first month, they stopped. “We were shocked,” they told me later, “by how much we were spending, and we became afraid to continue budgeting.”

There are many couples like them. The strange thing in our society is that people are rarely taught, as children, the virtues of prudence and moderation in spending—and they seldom learn them as adults. So they end up being led by others, by the culture, and by the consumerist climate around them. Few truly lead themselves—living in a way that suits them, not others; choosing what benefits their soul, not what impresses their peers; and shaping their life according to what they see as good, not what others dictate.

Economically speaking, as inflation continues to weigh on most people, we see that rising prices seldom push them to reorganize their lives wisely and peacefully. They do not begin with simple steps like conserving energy in their homes. Instead, they live under constant tension, striving to appear wealthier than they are—even if it means borrowing and weighing themselves down with more debt. The result is more anxiety, more complaints, and more exhaustion.

Because the spiritual dimension of their lives is shallow, they find no true relief from their worries. So they throw themselves deeper into the same whirlwind of endless activity—believing that entertainment and distraction will free them from their stress and emptiness. But once the diversion ends, they return to the same anxiety and fatigue. And so the cycle repeats, grinding them down until their life is spent.

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Faced with the relentless grind of consumer society, which crushes people and drains their physical, spiritual, and material resources, we are in dire need, first and foremost, of courage and faith in God and in ourselves. Following that, we need to learn the art of moderation and managing our daily affairs in the best way possible, not merely the easy way.

Within every human being lies a desire to appear admirable before others. This desire may vary in intensity from one person to another, yet the need to exist in the eyes of others, rather than in our own, remains strong.

Do we notice how fashion constantly changes? Or how the images of celebrities shape our behavior? How much do these things push us toward a life of pretense—toward extravagant celebrations and “luxurious” weddings that exhaust us?

A wise woman once said to me, describing her family: “They don’t live for themselves—they live for others. They are enslaved by their desire to look good in others’ eyes, even falsely, and they pay for it with their happiness and health.”

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Today’s world leaves no room for our carelessness. Life has become profoundly consumerist, built on the illusion that happiness comes from shopping and spending. In truth, happiness is born from contentment with what is essential. Luxuries have never been a source of lasting joy; they are only brief moments of pleasure that fade quickly.

True happiness wells up from within—from the peace that comes through God’s presence in our lives; from a soul that knows the meaning of its existence; from one who has learned to distinguish between what is necessary and what is superfluous;

from one who wishes to live according to what truly suits him and not what others expect.

Such a person has the courage to live by their spiritual convictions rather than by social trends. In short, happiness belongs to the one who is secure enough to seek what is right and pleasing to God and conscience, even when it contradicts the customs of society.

The wise seek approval in the eyes of God, and then in their own—not in the opinions of others. They do not care if others look down on them for living simply, because their sense of worth comes not from human praise but from the joy of God's approval and the integrity of their soul.

We still resist the first step in the ladder of priorities—the call to simplicity—even though deep down everyone longs for it. The Gospel invites us again and again:

- “Give us this day our daily (essential) bread...” (Matt. 6:11)
- “Do not be anxious about what you will eat or drink...” (Matt. 6:25)
- “One thing is needful... Mary has chosen the good portion, which shall not be taken away from her...” (Luke 10:42)
- “Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you...” (Matt. 6:33)
- “Flee from the love of money, from the love of power, and from the pride of life...” (see 1 Tim. 6:10, 2 Tim. 2:22, 1 John 2:16)

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Do we ever ask ourselves, when we act extravagantly or live beyond our means, whether we are contradicting the Gospel? Or are we simply unaware, misusing the popular saying, “Everything has its time,” as our excuse?

How much careful discernment we need to gain that blessed spiritual sensitivity that helps us tell what is necessary from what is not, what benefits from what harms, what is essential from what is excessive!

How much courage and confidence we need to show our true selves, to live according to our convictions without shame, and to despise what contradicts our principles instead of feeling ashamed by them!

How much trust in ourselves and in our beliefs we need, so that we do not rush to imitate others out of fear of seeming lesser than they!

When will we realize that we grow in stature when we resist the tide of consumerism and rejoice in simple living, content with God's presence in our lives—and that we shrink when we chase after artificial living, which gives fleeting excitement but steals our lasting joy?

“Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things; but one thing is needful” (Luke 10:41–42).

## في العيش المتكلف بقلم المترولين سابا (اسبر)

قصدني زوجان يتخاضمان، باستمرار، ويشكوان بعضهما بعضاً. فاتضح، من حديثهما، أنّ المشكلة اقتصادية. فمصرفهما يفوق دخلهما بكثير، ما يضطرهما إلى الاستدانة؛ مع العلم أنّ دخلهما ليس بقليل، قياساً إلى الدخل العام السائد.

اقترحت عليهما حلاً بسيطاً جداً، يقوم على أن يقتني كلّ منهما دفترًا صغيراً، يسجل فيه، يوميّاً، كلّ مصاريفه. ويقومان، في نهاية الشهر، بعملٍ مشتركٍ، يصنّفان فيه ما صرفاه، ويؤبّانه في حقول مخصّصة لكلّ نوع منه: طعام، طبابة، اتصالات، إلخ. قلت لهما: هكذا ستعرفان، بعد عدّة أشهر، مقدار ما تحتاجانه، شهريّاً، لأيّ حقل من حقول معيشتكما. وكذلك ستستطيعان تمييز اللازم من النافل. ومن ثمّ تُلزمان أنفسكما بمبلغ محدّد لكلّ حقل. وإذا ما اضطررتما، مرّة، إلى اجتياز الحدّ المخصّص لأحد الحقول، تقتصدان المبلغ من حقل آخر، حتّى لا تقعا في العجز.

غادرتني مرتاحين، لكنّهما لم يتابعا تنفيذ الاقتراح، بعد الشهر الأول، وذلك، على حدّ قولهما، لأنّهما دُهِشا بكثرة المصاريف، فخافا المتابعة.

كم هم كثيرون أمثال هذين الزوجين! الغريب في أمر الناس، في مجتمعنا، أنّهم، في طفولتهم، لم ينشأوا على ثقافة التدبير والاقتصاد في النفقات، ولم يهتمّوا بتربية أنفسهم عليها، عندما كبّروا! لذا تراهم مَسوقين، في مجتمع الاستهلاك بخاصّة، من الآخرين والمجتمع والمناخ العامّ باستمرار. وقلّما تجد من يسوق نفسه حقّاً، فيعيش كما يناسبه هو لا الآخرين، ويتصرّف بما يُفيدة هو لا رفاقه، ويبني ذاته كما يرى الصالح له هو، لا كما يراه غيره.

فإذا أخذنا الناحية الاقتصادية، وقد بدأت تضغط على الكثيرين، نرى أنّ الغلاء المتزايد لا يقوّد الغالبية العظمى من الناس إلى تدبّر أمور معيشتهم، بالتي هي أحسن، وهم مرتاحون نفسياً. لا يبدؤون بترشيد استهلاك الطاقة انطلاقاً من بيوتهم حتّى. تراهم متوتّرين يسعون إلى الظهور بمظهرٍ معاكسٍ لإمكاناتهم الاقتصادية، ولو استدانوا، وراكموا على أنفسهم أثقالاً إضافية. فيحصدون المزيد من القلق والتذمّر والتشكي.

ولأنَّ البُعْدَ الروحيَّ لحياتهم ضحلٌّ، لا يجدون متنقِّساً لهم، من الهموم المعيشية، إلا المزيد من رعي أنفسهم في دوامة الحياة الطاحنة، التي يعانون منها، في ما يعتقدونه سبيلاً للترفيه والخروج من الروتين وضيق الروح، وهذا ما يعيدهم، بعد الانتهاء منه، إلى المزيد من القلق والهم والتدمر. وهكذا دواليك، يدخلون في دوامةٍ لا تنتهي، تطحنهم حتَّى يحينَّ أجلُّهم.

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أمام طاحون المجتمع الاستهلاكيّ، الذي يطحن البشر، ويمتصّ مقدّراتهم، الجسديّة والروحيّة والماديّة، كم نحن بحاجة، وقبل كلّ شيء، إلى الشجاعة والثقة بالله وبالذات. وتالياً تعلّم فن الترشيد وتدير شؤوننا اليومية بالطريقة الفضلى لا السائدة.

ثمّة توقُّ، في داخل كلّ إنسان، إلى الظهور أمام الآخرين بمظهرٍ يسترعي الإعجاب. قد يتفاوت هذا التوق في شدّته من إنسان إلى آخر، لكن هاجس أن نوجَد في عيون الآخرين، لا في عيوننا يبقى حاضراً.

هل ننتبه إلى تغيير الموضة المستمر، وإلى تأثير صور نجوم المجتمع علينا؟ وإلى أيّ حد يدفعنا هذا إلى حبّ العيش المتكّلف، والمناسبات الباذخة، والأعراس القاتلة؟

وصفت سيدة فاضلة أفراد عائلتها قائلة: إنهم لا يعيشون لأنفسهم، بل للآخرين. يقتلهم حبّ الظهور في عيون الآخرين، ولو كان ظهوراً كاذباً مخالفاً لحقيقتهم، ويدفعون ثمنه من سعادتهم وصحتهم!

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لم يعد الزمن يسمح لنا بترك أنفسنا على عفويّتها، واستبعاد تنظيم أمور الحياة عنّا. فالحياة المعاصرة استهلاكيّة بامتياز، وتقوم على ترسيخ القناعة بأنّ السعادة تكمن في ثقافة الصرف shopping، بينما هي تنشأ، في الحقيقة، من ثقافة الاكتفاء بما هو ضروري. لم تكن النوافل، مرّة، مصدراً للسعادة، بل بهجةً وقتيّةً، تزول بزوالها.



السعادة شعور ينبع من الداخل، من الطمأنينة الناجمة من حضور الله في حياتنا، ومن النفس التي وجدت معنى حياتها، والتي عرفت كيف تميز بين الضروريات والكماليات، والتي تعي بأنّها ترغب بالعيش كما يناسبها، لا كما يريد الآخرون لها.

والتي تمتلك الشجاعة الكافية، لكي تسلك في أمور معيشتها وفق قناعاتها الروحية، لا وفق الدارج في أعراف الآخرين. باختصار، السعادة يعيشها من كان واثقاً بنفسه، إلى درجة الشجاعة، التي تجعله يطلب ما يراه مفيداً له، ومُرضياً لضميره وقناعاته، وفق تعليم إنجيله؛ ولو خالف، في ذلك، المألوف في مجتمعه.

الإنسان الحكيم، هو الذي يرى صحّة سلوكه في عيون الله، وذاته تالياً، لا في عيون الآخرين. لا يهتمّ ما يقولون عنه كونه لا يجاريهم في أسلوب معيشتهم. هو لا يستمدّ وجوده من رضاهم عليه، بل من رضى ربّه وذاته.

ما زلنا نرفض الدرجة الأولى في سلّم الأولويات؛ أعني العيش ببساطة. ولو كان الجميع يتوق في داخله إليها. وعلى الرغم من أنّ الإنجيل يدعو إليها مراراً:

- "خبزنا الجوهري أعطنا اليوم ... " (متى ١١: ٦)
- "لا تهتمّوا بما تأكلون وبما تشربون ... " (متى ٢٥: ٦)
- "إنّما الحاجة إلى واحد... مريم اختارت النصيب الصالح، الذي لن يُنزع منها ... " (لوقا ١٠: ٤٢)
- "اطلبوا أولاً ملكوت الله وبرّه، والباقي يُزاد لكم ... " (متى ٣٣: ٦)
- "اهربوا من حبّ المال وحبّ السلطة وتعظّم المعيشة..." (انظر ١ تيموثاوس ٦: ١٠ ، ٢ تيموثاوس ٢: ٢٢ ، ١ يوحنا ٢: ١٦)

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أُترانا نسأل أنفسنا، أمام تصرّفٍ باذخ ومتكلّف وفي غير محلّه، إن كنّا نخالف الإنجيل، ونسير سيرة مناقضة له، أم أنّنا لا نعي هذا الأمر، متبنّين المبدأ السائد، والمناقض للإنجيل: "كلُّ شيء له وقته"؟

كم يلزمنا من التدقيق والفحص الصادق لضميرنا المؤمن، حتّى نقتني حسّ التمييز المبارك، الذي يجعلنا واعين لما يلزم ولما لا يلزم، لما يفيد ولما يؤذي، لما هو ضروري ولما هو كمالي!

كم يلزمنا من الشجاعة والثقة، لكي نُظهر أنفسنا على حقيقتها، وقناعاتنا دونما خجل، ونحتقر ونستخفّ بما يخالف مبادئنا، بدلاً من الخجل منها!

كم يلزمنا من الثقة بالذات وبالمبادئ التي نتبنّاها، بدلاً من المسارعة إلى تقليد الغير، لئلا نظهر دونهم!

متى نعي أنّنا نكبرُ عندما لا ننساق مع التيار الاستهلاكي، ونفرحُ بالعيش البسيط، مكتفين بحضور الله في حياتنا؛ وأنّنا نصغرُ عندما نركض وراء العيش المتكلّف، الذي يمنحنا شعوراً وقتيّاً بالبهجة، ليسرق منّا الفرح الحقيقي الدائم؟

"مرتا مرتا إنّك مهتمة ومضطربة بأمور كثيرة، وإنّما الحاجة إلى واحد" (لوقا ١٠ : ٤١-٤٢).