



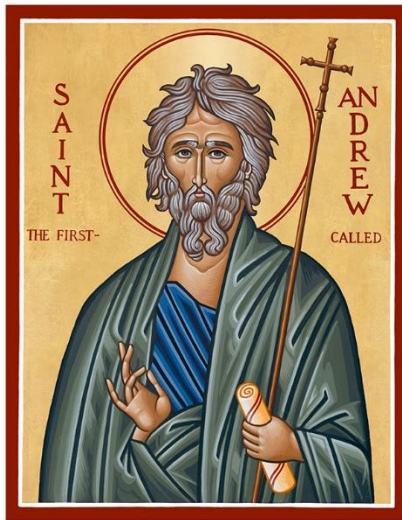
+St. John the Evangelist Orthodox Church

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

501 Moraga Way, Orinda, California 925-258-4255
www.stjohnorinda.org email: stjohn.evangelist.orinda@gmail.com

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 30, 2025. THE HOLY APOSTLE ANDREW THE FIRST-CALLED. HAVE A BLESSED THANKSGIVING!

FRUMENTIOS, ARCHBISHOP AND ENLIGHTENER OF ETHIOPIA; ALEXANDER, BISHOP OF METHYMNA



On November 30 in the Holy Orthodox Church, we commemorate the holy, glorious, and all-laudable Apostle Andrew the First-Called.

He was the son of Jonah and brother of Peter, born in Bethsaida and a fisherman by trade. At first he was a disciple of John the Baptist, but when the Forerunner pointed to the Lord Jesus, saying, "Behold the Lamb of God!" (John 1:36), Andrew left his first teacher and became the first apostle to follow Christ. Then, Andrew brought his brother Peter to the Lord. Following the descent of the Holy Spirit, it fell by lot to Andrew to preach the Gospel in Byzantium and Thrace, then in the lands along the Danube and in Russia around the Black

Sea, and finally in Epirus, Greece and the Peloponnesos. In Patras, he performed many miracles in the name of Christ, and won many over to the Lord. Among the new faithful were the brother and wife of the Proconsul Aegeates. Angered at this, Aegeates subjected Andrew to torture and then crucified him. Then the apostle prayed to God and an extraordinary light encompassed him, which lasted for half an hour. When it disappeared, the apostle gave up his holy soul to God in 62. On this day, we also commemorate Frumentios, archbishop and enlightener of Ethiopia; and Alexander, bishop of Methymna.

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.

الرَّبُّ يُعْطِي قُوَّةً لِسَعْيِهِ. فِي كُلِّ الْأَرْضِ خَرَجَ صَوْتُهُ.
السَّمَاوَاتُ تُذِيعُ مَجْدَ اللَّهِ.

فَصْلٌ مِنْ رِسَالَةِ الْقَدِيسِ بُولُسِ الرَّسُولِ الْأُولَى إِلَى أَهْلِ كُورِنْثُوسَ. (9:4-16)

يَا إِخْوَةُ، إِنَّ اللَّهَ أَبْرَزَنَا نَحْنُ الرُّسُلُ آخِرِي النَّاسِ، كَأَنَّا مَجْعُولُونَ لِمَوْتِ. 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 نَجُوعٌ وَنَعْطَشُ وَنَعْرَى وَنُلْطَمُ وَلَا قَرَارَ لَنَا. وَنَتَّعِبُ عَامِلِينَ. نُشْتَمُ فَنُبَارِكُ، نُضْطَهَدُ فَتَحْتَمِلُ. يُشْنَعُ عَلَيْنَا فَتَنْصَرَّعُ. قَدْ صِرْنَا كَأَقْذَارِ الْعَالَمِ وَكَأَوْسَاخٍ يَسْتَحْزِبُهَا الْجَمِيعُ إِلَى الْآنِ. وَلَسْتُ لِأَخْجِلْكُمْ أَكْتُبُ هَذَا، وَإِنَّمَا أَعْظُكُمْ كَأَوْلَادِي الْأَحِبَّاءِ. لِأَنَّهُ وَلَوْ كَانَ لَكُمْ رِبُوءٌ مِنَ الْمُرْشِدِينَ فِي الْمَسِيحِ، لَيْسَ لَكُمْ آبَاءٌ كَثِيرُونَ. لَأَتِي أَنَا وَلَدْتُكُمْ فِي الْمَسِيحِ يَسُوعَ بِالْإِنْجِيلِ. فَأَطْلُبُ إِلَيْكُمْ أَنْ تَكُونُوا مُقْتَدِينَ بِي.

THE GOSPEL

The Reading from the Holy Gospel according to St. John. (1:35-51)

At that time John was standing with two of his disciples; and he looked at Jesus as He walked, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God!" The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. Jesus turned, and saw them following, and said to them, "What do you seek?" And they said to Him, "Rabbi" (which means Teacher), "where art Thou staying?" He said to them, "Come and see." They came and saw where He was staying; and they stayed with Him that day, for it was about the tenth hour. One of the two who heard John speak, and followed Him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first found his brother Simon, and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which means Christ). He brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him, and said, "So you are Simon the son of Jonah? You shall be called Cephas" (which means Peter). The next day, Jesus decided to go to Galilee. And He found Philip and said to him, "Follow Me." Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip found Nathaniel, and said to him, "We have found Him of Whom Moses in the Law and also the Prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." Nathaniel said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see." Jesus saw Nathanael coming to Him, and said of him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!" Nathaniel said to Him, "How do you know me?" Jesus answered him, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you." Nathaniel answered Him, "Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God! Thou art the King of Israel!" Jesus answered him, "Because I said to you, I saw you under the fig tree, do you believe? You shall see greater things than these." And He said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man."

فَصْلٌ شَرِيفٌ مِنْ بَشَارَةِ الْقَدِيسِ يوحنا الْإِنْجِيلِيِّ الْبَشِيرِ وَالتِّلْمِيزِ الطَّاهِرِ. (1:35-51)


فِي ذَلِكَ الزَّمَانِ، كَانَ يوحنا وَاثْنَانِ هُوَ وَاقِفًا هُوَ وَاثْنَانِ مِنْ تَلَامِيذِهِ، فَنَظَرَ إِلَى يَسُوعَ مَاشِيًا فَقَالَ: هَذَا حَمَلُ اللَّهِ، فَسَمِعَ التِّلْمِيزَانِ كَلَامَهُ فَتَبِعَا يَسُوعَ، فَالْتَفَتَ يَسُوعُ فَأَبْصَرَهُمَا يَتْبَعَانِهِ، فَقَالَ لَهُمَا: مَاذَا تَطْلُبَانِ؟ فَقَالَا لَهُ: رَابِي (الَّذِي تَفْسِيرُهُ يَا مُعَلِّمُ) أَيْنَ تَمْكُثُ؟ فَقَالَ لَهُمَا: تَعَالِيَا وَانْظُرَا. فَاتَيَا وَنَظَرَا أَيْنَ كَانَ يَمْكُثُ، وَمَكَّثَا عِنْدَهُ ذَلِكَ الْيَوْمَ، وَكَانَ نَحْوَ السَّاعَةِ الْعَاشِرَةِ، وَكَانَ أَنْدَرَاوُسُ أَخُو سِمْعَانَ بَطْرَسَ وَاحِدًا مِنَ الْإِثْنَيْنِ الَّذِينَ سَمِعَا يوحنا وَتَبِعَا يَسُوعَ. فَهَذَا وَجَدَ أَوَّلًا سِمْعَانَ أَخَاهُ فَقَالَ لَهُ: قَدْ وَجَدْنَا مَسِيحًا الَّذِي تَفْسِيرُهُ الْمَسِيحُ، وَجَاءَ بِهِ إِلَى يَسُوعَ. فَنَظَرَ

إِلَيْهِ يَسُوعُ وَقَالَ: أَنْتَ سَمْعَانُ بْنُ يُونَا، أَنْتَ تُدْعَى صَفَا الَّذِي تَفْسِيرُهُ بَطْرُسُ. وَفِي الْغَدِ أَرَادَ يَسُوعُ الْخُرُوجَ إِلَى الْجَلِيلِ، فَوَجَدَ فِيلِبَّسَ فَقَالَ لَهُ: اتَّبِعْنِي، وَكَانَ فِيلِبُّسُ مِنْ بَيْتِ صَيْدَا مِنْ مَدِينَةِ أُندَرَاوَسَ وَبَطْرُسَ. فَوَجَدَ فِيلِبُّسُ نَثْنَائِيلَ فَقَالَ لَهُ: إِنَّ الَّذِي كَتَبَ عَنْهُ مُوسَى فِي النَّامُوسِ وَالْأَنْبِيَاءِ قَدْ وَجَدْنَاهُ وَهُوَ يَسُوعُ بْنُ يَوْسُفَ الَّذِي مِنَ النَّاصِرَةِ، فَقَالَ لَهُ نَثْنَائِيلُ: أَمِنْ النَّاصِرَةِ يُمَكِّنُ أَنْ يَكُونَ شَيْءٌ صَالِحٌ؟ فَقَالَ لَهُ فِيلِبُّسُ: تَعَالِ وَانْظُرْ. فَرَأَى يَسُوعُ نَثْنَائِيلَ مُقْبِلًا إِلَيْهِ فَقَالَ عَنْهُ: هَذَا إِسْرَائِيلِيُّ حَقًّا لَا غِشٍّ فِيهِ. فَقَالَ لَهُ نَثْنَائِيلُ: مِنْ أَيْنَ تَعْرِفُنِي؟ أَجَابَ يَسُوعُ وَقَالَ لَهُ: قَبْلَ أَنْ يَدْعُوكَ فِيلِبُّسُ وَأَنْتَ تَحْتَ التِّينَةِ رَأَيْتُكَ. أَجَابَ نَثْنَائِيلُ وَقَالَ: يَا مَعْلَمُ، أَنْتَ ابْنُ اللَّهِ، أَنْتَ مَلِكُ إِسْرَائِيلَ. أَجَابَ يَسُوعُ وَقَالَ لَهُ: الْأَنْتَنِي قُلْتُ لَكَ إِنِّي رَأَيْتُكَ تَحْتَ التِّينَةِ آمَنْتَ؟ إِنَّكَ سَتُعَايِنُ أَعْظَمَ مِنْ هَذَا. وَقَالَ لَهُ: الْحَقُّ الْحَقُّ أَقُولُ لَكُمْ، إِنَّكُمْ مِنَ الْآنَ تَرَوْنَ السَّمَاءَ مَفْتُوحَةً، وَمَلَائِكَةُ اللَّهِ يَصْعَدُونَ وَيَنْزِلُونَ عَلَى ابْنِ الْبَشَرِ.

Upcoming Events

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Coffee Hour

Nov 30th	Nick and Kristen Kavar and family for the good health of Giana Kavar on her birthday
December 7 th	 Borbara pudding- Fairouz Freij, good health of Issam and family, Rania Shuhaiber and family
December 14th	Rose's Bake Sale
December 21st	Luis and Joan

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.

Thank You for Donating Towards the Bishops Chair and Chanter's Stand

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

The chanter's stand is donated by George Theodosi and family!

Jolly Cars: Information Needed

We are looking forward to our Jolly Cars event on November 30th! Please use [this link](#) to let us know if you will be there and if you plan to decorate your car so that we can be prepared for the right number of kids and cars.

Christmas Bake Sale

The Christmas bake sale will be held on December 14th

Crab Feed

This year we are proud to have our 44th Annual Crab Feed at our NEW St. John Hall. Saturday February 7th, 2026. Please SAVE THE DATE, and let us celebrate together to make it as successful as possible

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!

Upcoming Community Events for Families

Below you will see a list of some community events that we've planned with coordination from other Orthodox churches in the bay -- hopefully we'll see you there!

- ***Thanksgiving Food Pantry Support: Saturday November 22nd - 8 - 10 AM***

Resurrection Greek Orthodox Church's Church Hall: 20104 Center Street Castro Valley, 94546

Let's come together to serve the community by helping bag and hand out food for those in need. This is a great way to give the children an opportunity to participate in service and charity during this important time. There is no age restriction and my girls loved helping set-up and give out food. If you can't make it this week, they host the food pantry the 2nd and 4th Saturday of each month. Read more about this fabulous program here: <https://www.resurrectiongoc.com/pages/food-pantry>

- ***Jolly Cars: NEW DATE: Sunday, November 30th: Following Liturgy around 12:15***

St. John the Evangelist: 501 Moraga Way, Orinda, CA 94563

This kid-centered event will be a lovely afternoon of crafts, snacks, and all around jolliness.

*SAVE the Date:

- ***Day Trip/Pilgrimage to Holy Assumption Monastery: Saturday, January 17th***

[Holy Assumption Monastery](#): 1519 Washington St., Calistoga

Let's gather for a day at the monastery together, for a chance to meet Mother Macrina and the sisters, attend a service, have lunch, and participate in some activities for the children. More information, including the times we will be there, forthcoming.

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 **Bradley Youakim**. Many years!
- † Siham Mitry and family in memory **Donna Potter**. May her memory be eternal!
- † Nick and Kristen Kavar and family for the good health of **Giana Kavar** on her birthday. Many years!
- † Siham Mitry for the good health of her granddaughter **Madeline and Toby Solis** on the recent birth of their twin children **Ava and Noah**.
- † St. John Parish Family for the good health of **Kathy Adranly, Catherine Jaber, Kristen Kavar, Catherine Milanoff, Katherine Dudum, Cristina Berro, Katie Najjar, Katrina Nino, and Katarena Borzghol** on the occasion of their name's day. 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



Poinsettia plants to adorn the Royal Doors in Loving Memory of: Nick Sr. And Helen Nicola offered by Nick Jr., Ron Nicola and Georgianna Rishwain and families

† St. John Parish Family for the good health of Fr. Andrew Andrews, Andrew Thayer, Andrew Freij, Andre Jildeh and all who are named after St. Andrew the apostle on his feast day. Many years!	
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St. John Orthodox Church
501 Moraga Way
Orinda, CA 94563

You could use this QR code for your donation





An Invitation

"Christianity is not a matter of persuading people of particular ideas, but of inviting them to share in the greatness of Christ. So pray that I may never fall into the trap of impressing people with clever speech, but instead I may learn to speak with humility, desiring only to impress people with Christ himself."

- Saint Ignatius of Antioch

The Ribbon & The Cross Is An Invitation To Become Part Of A Ministry

An Invitation Not Recognition

When you become part of the Order of Saint Ignatius of Antioch, you become part of a ministry. The Order is not a club that you join. It is not a secular status symbol for recognition. The Cross and the Ribbon that Order supporters wear is an invitation to become part of a ministry. It serves as an invitation to share with one another in the greatness of Christ by giving in a manner that is unconditional and quiet. Supporting the Order's projects, Archdiocese Departments and numerous programs as one group, with Christ in our minds and hearts, should be how we *invite* the world to become part the Order's ministry.

Initiate the Questions of What? & How?

When those supporting the Order wear their ribbon and cross, it is meant to initiate others to inquire about the Order and how they can help strengthen its ministry. When people see the red ribbon and Cross that we wear, it helps begin the conversation to share what the Order does and provide the initial welcome to help expand its ministry. It provides an opportunity to ask, "What does the Order do and how can I help?"

The Order Provides A Lesson In Giving

When you give to the Order of Saint Ignatius of Antioch, you are giving in a way we are all called to give ... unconditionally. Your gift is not individually recognized. You are not able to designate your gift to a specific need you select. You are giving without recognition, without conditions, without direct gratitude of the Order's recipients. This is the manner in which a "true gift" is made. A gift made in the way Christ directs us.

The Order Teaches Us How To Give

... the Order is teaching us how to share, the Order is teaching us how to give, the Order is teaching us how to sacrifice, and how to reach out for Orthodox and non-Orthodox alike. This is the miracle of The Order of Saint Ignatius of Antioch."

- His Eminence Metropolitan Philip of thrice blessed memory, Founder of the Order of St. Ignatius of Antioch



The Order of
Saint Ignatius
of Antioch

Let no man's place, or dignity, or riches, puff him up; and let no man's low condition or poverty abase him. For the chief points are faith towards God, hope towards Christ, the enjoyment of those good things for which we look, and love towards God and our neighbor.

- Saint Ignatius of Antioch

Selfless

... the Order is teaching us how to share, the Order is teaching us how to give, the Order is teaching us how to sacrifice, and how to reach out for Orthodox and non-Orthodox alike. This is the miracle of The Order of Saint Ignatius of Antioch."

-His Eminence Metropolitan Philip of thrice blessed memory,
Founder of the Order of St. Ignatius of Antioch

Your gift is selfless. You help support the Order's ministry without recognition or conditions. There are no banquets, plaques or special awards given in your honor. Your gift is given unconditionally to support the Orthodox Faith in North America, the Spiritual strengthening of our youth and to care for our beloved clergy in their Golden years.

\$98.22	Administrative Expense
\$294.64	Youth Programs & Camp Scholarships
\$15.04	Project Mexico
\$15.04	IOCC
\$21.32	Projects & Grants
\$7.52	SOYO Special Olympics
\$6.40	Clergy Symposium & Convention Support
\$15.49	Seminarian Assistance
\$116.54	Archdiocese Departments
\$18.80	Parish Development & Missions
\$97.75	Missions & Evangelism
\$15.03	Archdiocese House of Studies
\$75.19	Internet Ministry
\$203.02	Retired Clergy Fund

How Your Annual Gift Is Allocated

Based On A \$1,000 Knight &/or Dame
Commander Level Annual Gift

61.41%

Of Annual Order Gifts

29.46%

Youth Programs & Camp Scholarships

20.30%

Retired Clergy Fund

11.65%

Missions & Evangelism & Parish Development

*Only 9.82% In Administrative Expense

**Based On Fiscal Year 2024



The Order of
Saint Ignatius
of Antioch

Let no man's place, or dignity, or riches, puff him up; and let no man's low condition or poverty abase him. For the chief points are faith towards God, hope towards Christ, the enjoyment of those good things for which we look, and love towards God and our neighbor.
- Saint Ignatius of Antioch



Help the Church Send More Missionaries!

Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church Evangelism Committee invites you to join the Bay Area Walk4Missions at 1:30pm on March 15th 2026.

We will be meeting at 999 Brotherhood Way in San Francisco.

Christ's disciples walked thousands of miles to bring the good news to people around the world. The Trek4Mission is being held to raise awareness and support for Orthodox missionaries and the work of the Orthodox Christian Mission Center. We plan to walk **"the measured mile trail"** around Lake Merced, and are asking other communities, and their youth groups to join with us. Mark the date on your calendars and plan to join us for the Divine Liturgy, Procession of the Holy Cross and a hosted lunch with a presentation on Missions before the Walk begins around 1:30. **Signing up is easy!**

1. **Go to** the Trek website using the info below
2. **Click** the START OR JOIN A TEAM BUTTON
3. **Find** the Bay Area Walk for Missions team
4. **Create** an account or **Login** and join!
5. **Enjoy** the fun, fellowship and prayer!



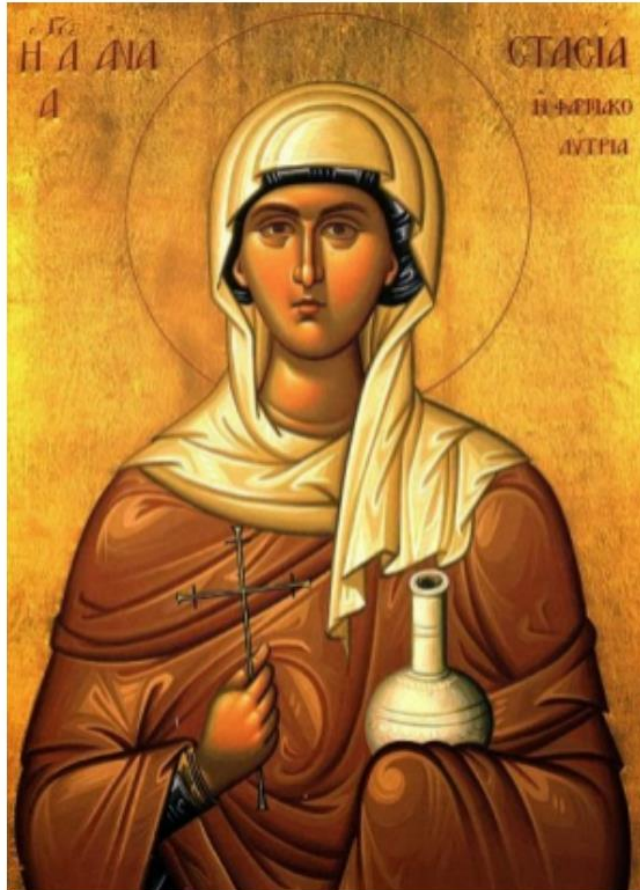
LET'S GET WALKING

www.ocmc.org/Trek4Missions



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**



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



50% Donated Back



December 31



<https://grouprai.se/davebusters59958s>



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



Let Us Give Thanks and Rejoice

By His Eminence Metropolitan Saba (Isper)

Gratitude, my dear friends, is a quintessential Christian virtue. A person who appreciates God's grace and understands the importance of His blessings in their life is always grateful. The Holy Scriptures repeatedly urge us to always give thanks without ever growing weary of it. Grateful persons rejoice in what they have, whether much or little. They are content with what they have, whether great or small. They are satisfied with what they possess and calmly seek better things, without fuss, without agitation, without inner turmoil. They are filled with their Lord and look to Him first and foremost, and from Him they draw every other gift. As long as God, the source of life, is with them, they never feel lacking.

When we grumble, when we complain, when we are not satisfied with what we have, and when we are troubled because we want more, we are expressing, indirectly, that we have not yet had enough of our Lord, and that we have not yet grasped, as we should, the purpose of the Christian life.

Our era, my dear friends, is a consumerist era par excellence. As you know, it compels us to work harder to earn more money so that we can spend more. The cycle continues in a closed loop, and we remain in a frantic pursuit of more work, more earnings, more spending, and so on. But the real tragedy lies in the fact that the further we progress on this economic journey, the more possessions we feel we need, and so we remain dissatisfied, constantly demanding, forgetting even to appreciate what we have and what we possess.

Joy has become rare in these troubled times. Moments of delight may be available from time to time, but true joy is far away. Why? Because the desire for what we need – or what we think we need – is stronger than the joy of enjoying what we have.

In one of his letters, the Evangelist John warns us that everything in this world is driven by the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life (1 John 2:16). The Apostle Paul urges believers to beware of and avoid these desires (Gal. 5:19-21). Why? Because the desires of this world are endless, never truly satisfying, and

consequently, they drive us to constantly seek them. Experience teaches us that the disappointment that follows is immeasurably greater than the pleasure of indulging in them. The pursuit of desires leads from one disappointment to another.

The fountain of life is within us, yet we go, as the prophet Jeremiah says, to dig broken cisterns that cannot hold water (2:13). We have "the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6), yet we neglect it and pursue a glittering allure that captivates our hearts and deceives us with the illusion of attaining fulfillment. We forget what He has given us and forget this ever-flowing, inexhaustible fountain, and instead seek polluted waters in different places.

The tragedy of our modern world is that it makes us forget gratitude, and consequently, all the blessings we enjoy. Our world constantly tries to open our eyes to new, deceptive, and illusory things, making us believe they are essential and indispensable. This is why the wise, guided by the Gospel, rejoice in what they have and thank God for it. We enjoy good health, but we only appreciate it when we fall ill! We can see. Isn't sight a blessing? We only truly appreciate it when we see a blind person! We can walk. Well, that too is a blessing. But we don't give thanks for it, nor do we recognize its value, until we see a disabled person! There are countless things in our lives that should make us give thanks joyfully and gratefully, and we must truly see them.

One of our contemporary spiritual fathers said, "If we were to give thanks for everything, we would have no time to complain." Complaining means not being thankful, not being grateful, and not being content with the good things the Lord has given us. It also means that we are not satisfied with our Lord and that we are not content with our situation.

Someone might ask: Should we be content with what we have and not strive for better? Doesn't a Christian have the right to be ambitious? Don't we, as Christians, have the right to ask for the best? Yes, certainly. We have all these rights, but with a spirit of gratitude, a spirit of contentment and joy, a spirit of thankfulness for what we have. We ask for the best quietly, not noisily. We ask for the best knowing that the very best is to be in the Lord's presence, and from there, by the Lord's grace, we improve not only ourselves but the whole world around us. This is not only a

right, but also our duty. It is our duty to make our world a reflection of the Kingdom of Heaven. But if we are always angry, always complaining, always resentful, always sad, always restless, always agitated, how can we improve ourselves and improve our world?

Once there was a priest thrown into solitary confinement during the days of communist religious persecution in Russia. He spent many years in his solitary cell. There was only a small window at the top of the room through which light entered. Every day, he would recite a prayer of thanksgiving, which he had written on the walls of his cell. It was a prayer overflowing with gratitude to God, thanking Him that there were people who could see the light of heaven and rejoice, that there were people who could hear the birds chirping and rejoice, that there were people who could eat and drink whatever they wanted and rejoice. He, deprived of everything, thought of others who had been given what they needed, and he rejoiced for them and thanked God for giving it to them. Where are we in relation to such a contemporary example?

This example encourages us to rise to the required Christian spiritual level, and teaches us to give thanks at all times, not just with our lips, but with our hearts.

Let us learn well and remember today that true joy is found in Christ. "I bring you good news of great joy: to you a Savior has been born" (Luke 2:10-11). Does not the Gospel begin with this good news? Let us not forget, beloved, that the greatest joy is within us; we only need to open our eyes and see it. May God perpetuate joy in your lives, in your hearts, and in your homes, always. Amen.

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بقلم المتربوليت سابا (اسبر)

الشُّكْرُ، يا أَحِبَّةَ، فضيلةٌ مسيحيةٌ بامتياز. والإنسان الذي يشعر بقيمة نعمة الله، ويعي أهمية بركته في حياته، هو إنسانٌ شكورٌ في كلِّ حين. ويطالبنا الكتاب المقدَّس، مراراً وتكراراً، بأن نقدِّم الشكرَ في كلِّ حين، غيرَ متعبين منه. الإنسانُ الشَّكورُ إنسانٌ فرِحَ بما عنده، أكان كثيراً أم قليلاً. إنَّه إنسانٌ راضٍ عمَّا حصَّله، أكانَ عظيماً أم بسيطاً. هو إنسانٌ مُكتَفٍ بما عنده، ويطلبُ الأفضلَ بهدوءٍ، من دون صَحَبٍ، من دون قلاقل، من دون احتياجاتٍ داخلي. إنَّه إنسانٌ شَبَّعان من ربِّه، ويتطلَّعُ إليه أوَّلاً وقبل أيِّ شيءٍ آخر، ومنه يستمدُّ كلَّ عطيةٍ أخرى. طالما أن الله، مصدرُ الحياةِ معه، فإنَّه لا يشعرُ بالنُّقصانِ أبداً.

عندما نتذمَّر، عندما نتشكَّى، ولا نرضى بما عندنا، ونضطرب لأننا نريد المزيد، فإننا نعبرُ، بطريقة غير مباشرة، عن أنَّنا لم نكتفِ من ربِّنا بعد، وأنَّنا لم ندرك، كما ينبغي، غاية الحياة المسيحية بعد.

عصرنا هذا، أيُّها الأحبَّة، عصرٌ استهلاكيٌّ بامتياز. وكما تعلمون، يجعلنا نعمل كثيراً لكي نحصلَ على مدخولٍ ماليٍّ أكثر، لكي نصرفَ أكثر؛ وهكذا دواليك، تبقى الدائرة تدورُ مغلقةً، ونبقى في سعيٍّ محمومٍ نحو العملِ أكثر، لنحصلَ أكثر، لنصرفَ أكثر. لكنَّ الطامة الكبرى تكمن في أنَّنا كلَّما تقدَّمنا في مسيرتنا الاقتصادية هذه، نشعرُ بأنَّنا نحتاج إلى الأكثر، ولذلك نبقى في عدم الرضى، ونستمر في الطلب، وننسى حتى أن نفرحَ بما حصلناه، وبما صارَ عندنا.

صار الفرحُ، في هذا الرّمن الرّديء، نادراً. قد تكون أويقات البهجة متوفرة من حين إلى آخر، لكنّ الفرح بعيد. لماذا؟ لأنّ المطالبة بما نحن بحاجةٍ إليه، أو هكذا نظن، لهو أقوى من فرح التمتع بما حصلنا عليه.

نَبّهنا الإنجيلي يوحنا، في إحدى رسائله، إلى أن كل ما في هذا العالم، هو شهوة العين وشهوة الجسد وتعظم المعيشة (١ يو ٢: ١٦). ويحث الرسول بولس المؤمنين على أن يتجنّبوا هذه الشهوات ويحذروها، (غلا ٥: ١٩-٢١) لماذا؟ لأنّ شهوات هذه الدّنيا لا تنتهي، كونها لا تُشبعنا، وتالياً، تجعلنا نجدّ في طلبها باستمرار. والواقع يعلمنا، بالخبرة، أن الخيبة التي تليها، أقوى من لذة التمتع بها، بما لا يقاس. طلب الشهوات يقود الإنسان من خيبة إلى أخرى.

نبتع الحياة عندنا ونحن نذهب، كما يقول إرمياء النبي، لنحفّر آباراً مشقّة لا تضبط الماء (أر ٢: ١٣). عندنا "الطريقُ والحقُّ والحياة" (يو ١٤: ٦)، ومع ذلك نهمله ونسعى وراء بريق يأخذ باللبابنا، ويخدعنا بوهم الحصول على الملء. ننسى ما أعطانا وننسى هذا النّبع الذي يفيض باستمرارٍ ولا ينضب أبداً، ونطلب مياهاً ملوثةً من هنا وهناك.

تكمّن تجربةُ عالمنا المعاصر، في أنه يُنسى الشُّكر، وتالياً، كلّ النِّعم التي نحن فيها. يحاول عالمنا، بشتى الطرق، أن يفتحَ عيوننا دائماً على أمورٍ جديدة، خادعة ووهمية. يجعلنا نظنّها أموراً لازمةً لا نستطيع الاستغناء عنها. من هنا الحكيم السائر على هدي الإنجيل، يفرح بما عنده ويشكرُ الله عليه. نحنُ بصحةٍ جيدة لا نقدرُها إلا عندما نمرض! نحن نرى. أو ليس النظر نعمة؟! لا نقدرُها إلا عندما نرى ضريراً! نحن نمشي. حسناً هذه نعمة أيضاً. لكننا لا نشكر عليها ولا نعرف قيمتها إلا عندما نرى إنساناً مُقعداً! هناك أمورٌ كثيرة، أكثر من أن تُعدّ، في حياتنا تجعلنا نشكرُ ونشكرُ بفرحٍ وامتنان، وعلينا أن نبصرها جيّداً.

يقول أحد آبائنا الروحيين المعاصرين: "لو شكر الإنسان على كل شيء، لما وجد وقتاً للتذمّر". التذمّر يعني عدم الشكر، وعدم الامتنان، وعدم الاكتفاء بما أعطانا الرب من الصالحات. كما يعني أننا لم نشبع من ربنا، وأننا غير راضين عما نحن فيه.

قد يقول قائل: أنقبل بما عندنا ولا نسعى إلى الأحسن؟ ألا يحق للمسيحي أن يكون طموحاً؟ ألا يحق لنا، مسيحيين، أن نطلب الأفضل؟ بلى بالتأكيد. يحق لنا هذا كله ولكن بروح الشكر، بروح الرضى والابتهاج، بروح الامتنان لما عندنا. نحن نطلب الأفضل بهدوء، لا بصخب، نطلب الأفضل ونعلم أن أفضل الأفضل هو أن نكون في كنف الرب، ومن هناك وبنعمة الرب نحسن، لا أنفسنا فقط، بل كل العالم الذي حولنا. هذا ليس حق فقط، بل هو واجب علينا. واجبنا أن نجعل عالمنا صورة عن ملكوت السموات. ولكن إن كنا في الغضب دوماً، في التذمّر دوماً، في السخط، في الحزن، في القلقة، في الاضطراب، كيف لنا أن نحسن أنفسنا ونحسن عالمنا؟

قضى أحد الكهنة، الذين ألقوا في زنزانه فريضة، أيام الاضطهاد الديني الشيوعي في روسيا، سنوات طويلة، في زنزانه المنفردة تلك؛ لم يكن فيها سوى طاقة صغيرة في أعلى الغرفة، يدخل منها النور. وكان يردد يومياً، صلاة شكر، كتبها على جدران زنزانه، صلاة مفعمة بالامتنان للرب، يشكر الله فيها لأن ثمة أناس يرون نور السماء ويفرحون، ولأن ثمة أناس غيره يسمعون زقزقة العصافير ويفرحون، ولأن ثمة أناس يأكلون ما يريدون ويشربون ما يريدون ويفرحون... كان يفكر، وهو المحروم من كل شيء - كان يفكر بالآخرين، الذين أعطي لهم ما يحتاجونه، ويفرح لهم ويشكر الله لأنه أعطاهم هذا. أين نحن من شهادة معاصرة كهذه؟!

مثاله هذا يشجّعنا على أن نرتفع إلى المستوى الروحيّ المسيحيّ المطلوب، ويعلمنا أن نشكر في كلّ حين، لا من الشفاه فقط، بل من القلب.

فلنتعلّم جيداً ولننتكّر اليوم، أنّ الفرح يكون بالمسيح. "إني أبشركم بفرح عظيم، وُلدَ لكم مخلصٌ" (لوقا ٢: ١٠-١١). ألا يبدأ الإنجيل بهذه البشرى!! فلا ننسَ أيُّها الأحبة أنّ الفرح الأعظم هو عندنا، علينا فقط أن نفتح أعيننا ونراه. أدامَ الله الفرح في حياتكم، وفي قلوبكم، وفي بيوتكم، دوماً، آمين.