

+St. John the Evangelist Orthodox Church

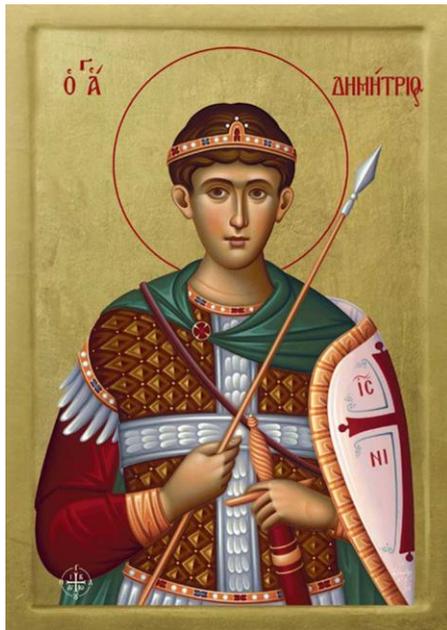
Antiochian Archdiocese of North America
Metropolitan Saba of New York and all North America
V. Rev. Fr. Nicholas Borzghol, Pastor
Dn. Nicholas Adranly

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

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 26, 2025

GREAT-MARTYR DEMETRIOS THE MYRRH-STREAMING & SIXTH SUNDAY OF LUKE

COMMEMORATION OF THE GREAT EARTHQUAKE IN CONSTANTINOPLE IN 740;
VENERABLE-MARTYR JOASAPH OF DIONYSIOU MONASTERY ON ATHOS



On October 26 in the Holy Orthodox Church, we commemorate the holy, glorious, and right-victorious Great-Martyr Demetrios, the Wonderworker and Myrrh-Streaming.

His father was the military commander of Salonica, and, when he died, the Emperor Maximian made Demetrios commander in his place. In doing this, the Emperor, an opponent of Christ, particularly recommended him to persecute and exterminate the Christians in Salonica. Demetrios not only disobeyed the Emperor, but he openly confessed and preached Christ the Lord in the city. Demetrios even proclaimed openly before the Emperor that he was a Christian, and, furthermore, denounced the Emperor's idolatry. The enraged Emperor cast him into prison. Knowing what awaited him, Demetrios gave his goods to his faithful servant, Lupus, to give away to the poor, and went off to prison, glad that suffering for Christ was to be his lot. After several days, the Emperor sent soldiers to the prison to kill Demetrios. They came upon the saint of God at prayer, and ran him through with their spears. Christians secretly took his body and gave it burial, and there flowed from it myrrh by which many of the sick were healed. Demetrios entered the heavenly mansions in 306.

On this day, we remember the great and terrible earthquake in Constantinople in 740. This was a terrifying and long-lasting disaster in the time of Leo the Isaurian, the first of the iconoclast emperors. The people realized that this was God's punishment for their sins, and entreated the most holy Mother of God and St. Demetrios with great penitence, until God had mercy and ended the earthquake.

On this day, we also commemorate the Venerable-martyr Joasaph of Dionysiou monastery on Athos.

THE EPISTLE

The righteous shall rejoice in the Lord.

O God, hear my prayer.

The Reading from the Second Epistle of St. Paul to St. Timothy. (2:1-10)

Timothy, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus; and what you have heard from me before many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No soldier on service gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to satisfy the one who enlisted him. An athlete is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules. It is the hard-working farmer who ought to have the first share of the crops. Think over what I say, for the Lord will grant you understanding in everything. Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, descended from David, as preached in my gospel, the gospel for which I am suffering and wearing fetters like a criminal. But the word of God is not fettered. Therefore, I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain salvation in Christ Jesus with its eternal glory.

يُفْرَحُ الصِّدِّيقُ بِالرَّبِّ. اِسْتَمِعْ يَا اللهُ لِصَوْتِي.

فَصَلِّ مِنْ رِسَالَةِ الْقَدِيسِ بُولْسِ الرَّسُولِ الثَّانِيَةِ إِلَى تِيموثَاوَسَ. (2:1-10)

يا ولدي تيموثاوس، تقوّ في النعمة التي في المسيح يسوع. وما سمعته مني لدى شهود كثيرين، استودعه أناساً أمناء أكفاء لأن يعلموا آخرين أيضاً. احتمل المشقات كجندٍ صالح ليسوع المسيح. ليس أحد يتجنّد فيرتبك بهوم الحياة، وذلك ليرضي الذي جنده. وأيضاً، إن كان أحد يجاهد، فلا ينال الإكليل ما لم يجاهد جهاداً شرعياً. ويجب أن الحارث الذي يتعب أن يشترك في الأثمار أولاً. إفهم ما أقول. فليؤتك الربُّ فهماً في كلِّ شيءٍ. أذكر أن يسوع المسيح، الذي من نسل داود، قد قام من بين الأموات على حسب إنجيلي. الذي احتمل فيه المشقات حتى القيود كمجرم، إلا أن كلمة الله لا تُقيّد. فلذلك أنا أصبر على كلِّ شيءٍ من أجل المختارين، لكي يحصلوا هم أيضاً على الخلاص الذي في المسيح يسوع، مع المجد الأبديّ.

THE GOSPEL

The Reading from the Holy Gospel according to St. Luke. (8:26-39)

At that time, Jesus arrived at the country of the Gadarenes, which is opposite Galilee. And as He stepped out on land, there met Him a man from the city who had demons; for a long time he had worn no clothes, and he lived not in a house but among the tombs. When he saw Jesus, he cried out and fell down before him, and said with a loud voice, "What hast Thou to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beseech Thee, do not torment me." For Jesus had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. [For many a time it had seized him; he was kept under guard, and bound with chains and fetters, but he broke the bonds and was driven by the demon into the desert.] Jesus then asked him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Legion"; for many demons had entered him. And they begged Jesus not to command them to depart into the abyss. Now a large herd of swine was feeding there on the hillside; and they begged Jesus to let them enter these. So, He gave them leave. Then the demons came out of the man and entered the swine, and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and was drowned. When the herdsmen saw what had happened, they fled, and told it in the city and in the country. Then people went out to see what had happened, and they came to Jesus, and found the man from whom the demons had gone, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind; and they were afraid.

And those who had seen it told them how he who had been possessed with demons was healed. Then all the people of the surrounding country of the Gadarenes asked Jesus to depart from them; for they were seized with great fear; so He got into the boat and returned. The man from whom the demons had gone begged that he might be with Jesus; but Jesus sent him away, saying, "Return to your home, and declare all that God has done for you." And he went away, proclaiming throughout the whole city all that Jesus had done for him.

فَصَلِّ شَرِيفٌ مِنْ بَشَارَةِ الْقَدِيسِ لَوْقَا الْإِنْجِيلِيِّ الْبَشِيرِ وَالتَّلْمِيزِ الطَّاهِرِ. (8:26-39)

في ذلك الزمان، أتى يسوع إلى كورة الجرجسيين، فاستقبله رجلٌ من المدينة به شياطينٌ منذُ زمانٍ طويلٍ، ولم يكن يلبس ثوباً ولا يأوي إلى بيتٍ، بل إلى القبور. فلما رأى يسوع، صاح وخرّ له، وقال بصوتٍ عظيمٍ: "ما لي ولك يا يسوع ابن الله العليّ؟ أطلبُ إليك ألا تُعذّبني". فإنه أمرَ الروحَ النجس أن يخرج من الإنسان، لأنه كان قد اختطفه منذُ زمانٍ طويلٍ، وكان يُربط بسلاسل، ويحبس بقيود، فيقطع الربط ويساق من الشيطان إلى البراري. فسأله يسوع قائلاً: "ما اسمك؟" فقال له: "لجيون"، لأن شياطين كثيرين كانوا قد دخلوا فيه. وطلبوا إليه أن لا يأمرهم بالذهاب إلى الهاوية. وكان هناك قطيع خنازير كثيرة ترعى في الجبل. فطلبوا إليه أن يأذن لهم بالدخول فيها، فأذن لهم. فخرج الشياطين من الإنسان، ودخلوا في الخنازير. فوثب القطيع عن الجرف إلى البحيرة فاخنتق. فلما رأى الرعاة ما حدث، هربوا وأخبروا في المدينة وفي الحقول. فخرجوا ليرؤوا ما حدث وأتوا إلى يسوع، فوجدوا الإنسان الذي خرجت منه الشياطين جالساً عند قدمي يسوع لابساً صحيح العقل، فخافوا. وأخبرهم الناظرون أيضاً كيف أبرئ المجنون. فسأله جميع جمهور كورة الجرجسيين أن ينصرف عنهم لأنه اعتراهم خوفٌ عظيمٌ. فدخل السفينة ورجع. فسأله الرجل الذي خرجت منه الشياطين أن يكون معه. فصرفه يسوع قائلاً: "ارجع إلى بيتك وحدث بما صنع الله إليك". فذهب وهو ينادي في المدينة كلها بما صنع إليه يسوع.

Youth Month in our Archdiocese!!

October is here and we are about to start *Youth Month* across our Antiochian Archdiocese. During the month of October, we give our teens more opportunities to serve in Church, including: Epistle reading, taking the collections, serving as ushers, and other additional activities in serving the parish community.

October is also a time for us, clergy and parishioners, to share our love and concern for the youth of our parish. Let us take a moment to thank a teenager for being present in Church. Thank them for their good works. Let them know that they are welcome and wanted in our parish!



Upcoming Youth Readers:

<u>Date</u>	<u>English Epistle</u>	<u>Arabic Epistle</u>	<u>Sermonette</u>
Oct 26	Nour Khalileh	Malak Khalileh	TBD

Christmas Volunteering

The joy of the season is upon us! ✨ Our church is preparing for the grand opening/ Christmas party, and we'd love your helping hands and hearts. Every bit of help makes a difference. If you would like to be part of this committee, please contact Rania Kashou or David Hanna. Let's come together in the spirit of fellowship and make this a joyful celebration of Christ's birth! ❤️🌲

Upcoming Events

Saturday October 25th	Vespers at 5:30 pm
November 16th	Prison Ministry Card Writing Workshop at coffee hour

Coffee Hour

Oct 26th	Siham Mitry for the 6th month memorial in honor of Donna Potter
-----------------	---

Holy Oblations

This week, Holy Oblations are offered by:

- † St. John Parish Family for the good health of **Nick Nicola, Sandy Dudum, George Messih, Fairouz Freij, 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 **Blanche Manneh**. 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!

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



INTERNATIONAL ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN CHARITIES

IOCC FOOD & WINE TOUR

Hosted by the IOCC Metropolitan Committee of Northern California and St George Orthodox Cathedral

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 2, 2025

VESPERS: 4:00 PM • RECEPTION: 5:00 – 8:00 PM

Come experience a tasting menu & wine pours from around the world and learn about IOCC's latest emergency programs

ST GEORGE ORTHODOX CATHEDRAL

1617 Southgate Ave | Daly City, CA 94015

- Tickets: \$60 through Oct. 15, includes food and unlimited wine pours
\$70 after Oct. 15, includes food and wine
\$50 includes food only
\$35 students
\$25 children 6–12 (*free 5 and under*)

Tickets and sponsorships at iocc.org/bayarea



All Night Vigil

"With fiery lips the Cherubim sing Thy praise, O Christ God; and with incorporeal mouths the Choir of the Archangels never falleth silent from glorifying Thee. "

**November
7th
Friday, 7pm**



Synaxis of the Holy Archangels

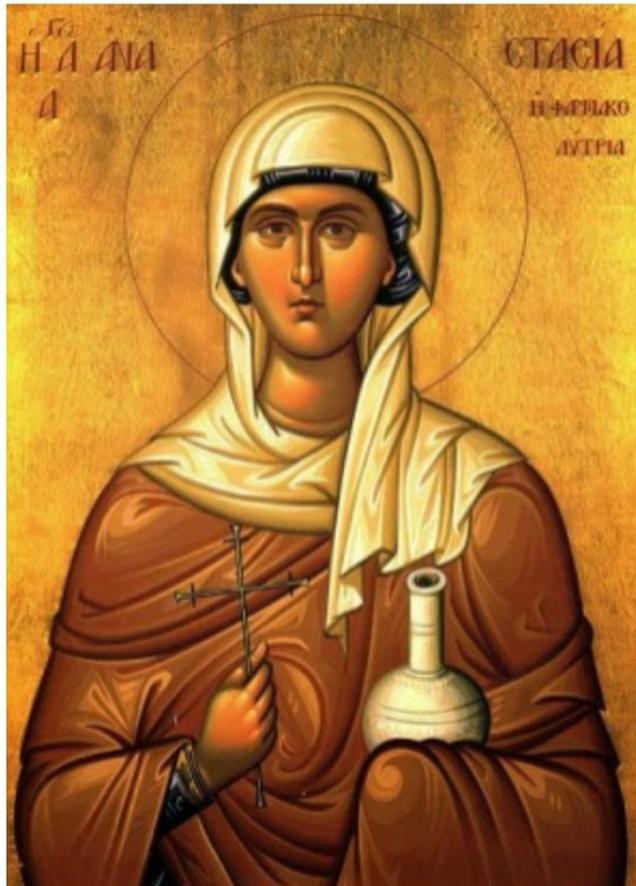
4593 Central Way,
Fairfield, CA 94534

St. Timothy
Antiochian
Orthodox Church

**VESPERS, LITY, ORTHROS
AND LITURGY**

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**

SUNDAY FUNDAY

DAVE & BUSTER'S

AFTER
LITURGY

NOVEMBER 9TH

2075 Diamond Blvd Ste.
H180, Concord, CA 94520



USE OUR
ST. JOHN LINK

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

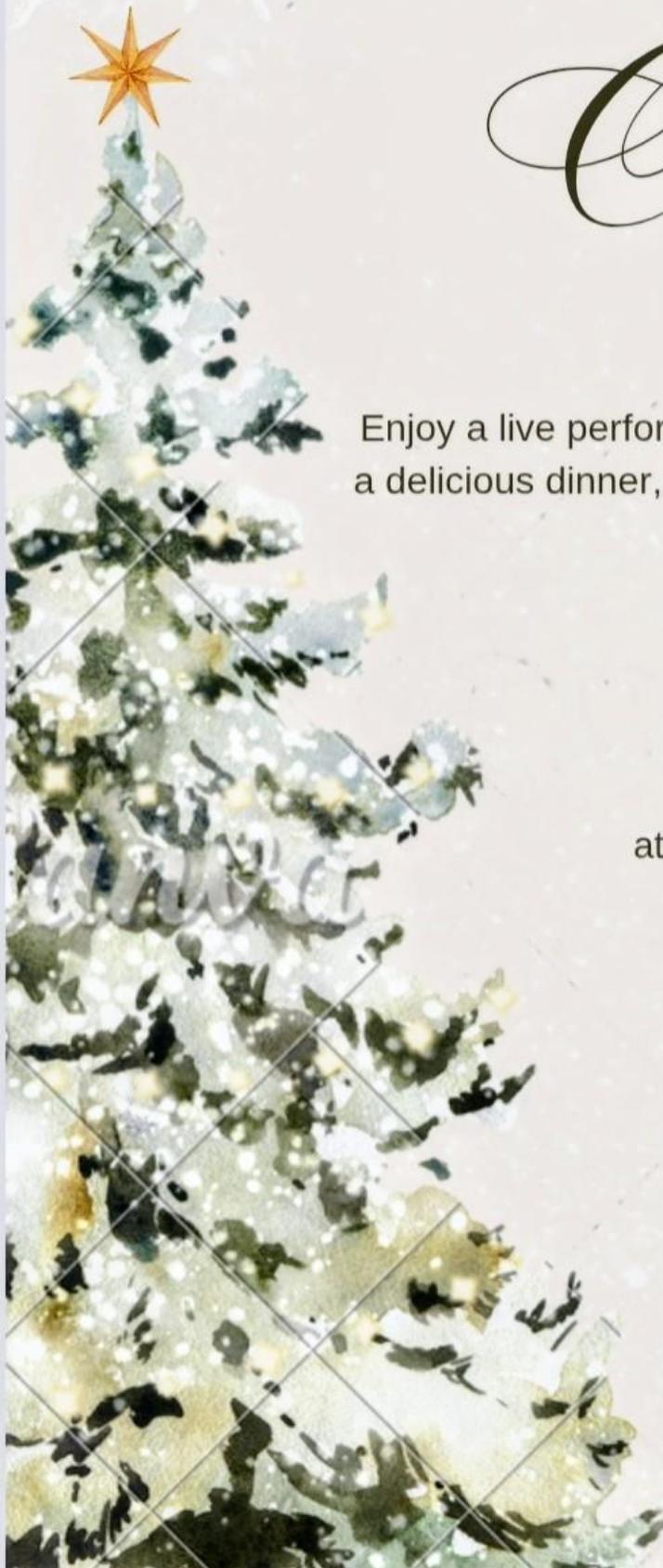
Followed by dancing

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

14
SUNDAY

DECEMBER

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





Krispy Kreme Digital Dozens to Support St. John Church



grouprai.se/krispykreme60225o



\$15
per order



50%
donated back

A Bishop's Scribbles

By Metropolitan Saba (Isper)

This title may surprise many. This article was written to convey the suffering of the bishop who seeks the face of God and the sanctification of his people. It aims to shed light on the suffering of the Church in the East—a Church that, together with her people, lives under harsh conditions, leading the faithful to look upon the Church as a lifeline of salvation. Yet, amid this suffering, they have come to demand from the Church more than she can bear. The article is, in essence, an indirect call for us to intensify our prayers for our Church.

Most believers are used to relating to their pastor in only one direction — he gives and they receive. They expect his hand to remain always extended toward them, carrying whatever they think they need or desire. To them, he exists to fulfill their requests. They often treat him like a “superhuman” or someone who must not make mistakes, get tired, or need rest! Why, they think, should he even have to worry about food or drink? They forget that he is a human being, and that he too needs to feel a living spiritual and emotional connection with his flock and with others. In fact, such connection is not a luxury, it is essential for him to continue his ministry and fruitful service.

For a pastor to endure being forgotten by his people, he would have to be an angel in a body without human limits. But if he is a man with a sensitive conscience and a tender heart, living his priestly calling in sincerity and truth, then he can only accept carrying his cross daily, fixing his eyes on the Lord and seeking from Him alone true comfort and consolation.

The needs of God's people are many and varied — spiritual, social, material, psychological. That is why the role of faithful believers, who are conscious of their responsibility, is indispensable. How can a pastor meet all these needs when so many expect only to be embraced, but few ever embrace him?

I sometimes wonder: what image do believers really have of their pastor? Many are astonished to discover that he is, in fact, human — that he needs human connection, if not also spiritual companionship. In their minds, they place him on a very high pedestal — yet they leave him there alone, excusing themselves from striving for that same holiness to which he and they are equally called.

At the same time, they show him little mercy for any action, behavior, or even word that displeases them. Their measure is not whether his ministry aligns with the Gospel. What matters to them is that he didn't fulfill their request, even if he tried his best and went beyond his strength.

Saint Tikhon of Zadonsk described this painful reality from his own experience:

“If a priest guards himself from sin, they call him rigid;
if he grieves over his sin, they call him gloomy;
if he gives alms, they call him a hypocrite;
if he prays much, they call him an extremist;
if he is insulted and forgives, they call him weak;
if he gives generously to the poor, they call him a fool.”

A Romanian metropolitan, whose diocese numbers just over a million people, once confided to me that his greatest suffering lies in how to shepherd his flock according to the demands of the Gospel, when many of them do not want that Gospel, and sometimes even ask him to do what contradicts it.

His words reminded me of the great Saint Isaac the Syrian, who in the seventh century was appointed bishop of Nineveh. Two men once came before him, quarreling over a field. He told them, “The Gospel says so-and-so.” One of them replied, “What do I have to do with the Gospel? I just want my rights.” At that, the bishop said, “Then what am I doing here? I have no work except the Gospel.” He left the episcopate for the desert, where he became one of the greatest spiritual saints.

Another deep pain for a bishop comes when his flock shows no interest in renewing their lives, purifying their hearts, or growing spiritually, and they are content to remain as they are. For what is the bishop's role, if not to sanctify the lives of his people and help them walk that path? His primary service is to nurture everything that leads them to progress in living their Christian faith.

Saint Tikhon of Zadonsk served his spiritually and materially poor diocese with selfless devotion. He tried with all the wisdom and strength God gave him to lift up his people spiritually. Yet he wrote in his notes about the preacher he had invited to teach them: “In vain does the poor preacher wear out his voice.” His illness – the reason he gave the Russian Holy Synod when asking to be relieved of his episcopal duties – was no doubt the result of deep suffering among a people unprepared to

live the ways of the Gospel and unwilling to learn. He spent the rest of his life in a monastery, devoted to prayer, contemplation, and charity.

People generally treat a bishop more as a social or political figure than as a spiritual father watching over their salvation. They want him to provide for their material needs, not their spiritual ones. In our Eastern lands, where religion and society intertwine, they often expect him to approve whatever they desire, even if it contradicts the Gospel. If he refuses, he's labeled "strict" or "fanatical."

This places him in constant inner struggle: How far can his conscience go in accommodating people? Can he look the other way when they insist on imposing their will in matters of faith, twisting or wounding its essence? Has he fulfilled his duty if he guides them according to God's will and they still refuse to follow?

Some expect him to be a businessman, building projects, launching initiatives, managing investments. Others expect him to be a politician, and by "politics," they mean securing their own interests and influence. Some want him at their social events, presiding at grand banquets, engaging in all conversations except those that concern his true spiritual mission. Then they call him "charming" or "well-mannered."

But if he is truly a man of God — pure, prayerful, devoted to visiting his people, strictly faithful to the Gospel commandments — they say, "He belongs in a monastery, not a diocese," even if he gives his very body to the poor.

Our Christian people in the East have yet to move beyond the Ottoman-era idea of the "strong bishop" — the powerful community chief who, for four hundred years, acted as both governor and representative of his people before the civil authorities.

What most deeply isolates a pastor, however, is when he finds no response within his own diocese, when his flock shows indifference to his preaching, when they abandon their responsibilities toward the Church yet still expect him to produce wonders and achievements. For some to consider the diocese and its resources as the bishop's personal property shows a complete withdrawal from their faith commitment. But to expect every service and every solution to come from the bishop or priest alone is ignorant at best and tragic at worst.

Many are quick to criticize their pastors "for every little thing," whether fair or not, whether it concerns something that displeases them or simply doesn't benefit them

personally, while at the same time excusing themselves from any responsibility. They seem to think their only duty is to complain and attack. Worse still, they scrutinize every aspect of the bishop's personal life, his home, his spending, his daily habits. They watch him and judge him on how he lives, while only a few truly care for him, support him, and connect with him at a deeper level. Those who genuinely want him to be a man of God are fewer still.

And yet, they wonder why he sometimes feels alone in their midst.

خربشات أسقف المتروبوليت سابا (اسبر)

عنوانٌ قد يستغربه الكثيرون. هذه المقال كتب لينقل معاناة الأسقف الذي يطلب وجه الله وتقديس شعبه. وهي لتسليط الضوء على معاناة الكنيسة في المشرق هذه الكنيسة التي تعيش وشعبها تحت ظروف قاسية مما جعل الشعب ينظر الكنيسة كخشبة خلاص ومع المعاناة أضحوا يتطلبون من الكنيسة ما هو أكثر من طاقتها. المقال ما هو الا دعوة غير مباشرة من أجل أن نكثف الصلاة لكنيستنا.

إذ اعتاد معظم المؤمنين على التعاطي مع الراعي باتجاه وحيد؛ هو يعطي وهم يستقبلون. يريدون ليده أن تبقى ممدودةً باتجاههم، وحاملةً ما يعتقدونه، هم، اللازمَ لهم، أو ما يرغبون، هم، به. عندهم، هو موجود لتأمين مطالبهم. يتعاملون معه كـ "سوبر إنسان": لا يجوز أن يخطيء، ويتعب، ويرتاح!! ولماذا عليه، حتى، أن يفكر بالطعام والشراب!! ينسون أنه إنسان، ومن حقه، أن يشعر بتواصل روحي وجداني مع أبناء رعيته، ومع غيرهم. لا بل إن هذا التواصل حاجة أساسية ولازمة له، من أجل تأمين استمرار خدمته ونجاحها.

يحتاج الراعي إلى أن يكون ملاكاً بجسدٍ لا جسدي، حتى يتحمل نسيان رعيته له. أمّا إن كان ممّن يتمتّعون بضمير مرهف، وقلب حنون، ويعيش رسالته الكهنوتية، بكلّ صدق، فليس له إلا أن يرتضي حمل صليبه بشكل دائم، متطلّعا، أبداً، إلى ربّه، ملتمساً منه، ومنه وحده، التعزية الحقيقية.

حاجات شعب الله كثيرة ومتنوعة؛ فيها الروحي والاجتماعي والمعيشي والنفسي ... ما يجعل دور المؤمنين، الواعين لمسؤوليتهم الإيمانية، لا غنى عنه. فكيف للراعي أن يحقق في شخصه كلّ هذه الأمور، وهو لا يرى إلا من يطالبه باحتضانه، فيما ما من أحد يحضنه هو.

أتساءل بين حين وآخر: ما هي صورة الراعي حقاً في أذهان المؤمنين؟ في الواقع، ثمة من يُدهش منهم، عندما يكتشفون أنه إنسان، وبحاجة إلى تواصل إنساني على الأقل، إن لم نقل روحياً!! فصورته في أذهانهم تصنّفه في مرتبة سامية جداً. ولكنهم يقيمونه وحده فيها، ويعفون أنفسهم منها، متناسين أنه وإياهم مدعوون إلى القداسة ذاتها.

وفي الوقت ذاته، لا يرحمونه إزاء أيّ تصرّف أو سلوك أو موقف أو حتّى كلمة لم تعجبهم. ليس المقياس، عندهم، مدى توافق رعايته مع الإنجيل! المهم، عندهم، أنّه لم يؤمّن لهم مطلبهم، حتّى لو حاول وبذل ما يفوق طاقته ولكنّه عجز.

وصف القديس تيوخون الزادونسكي هذه الحالة، منطلقاً من معاناته الشخصية، فقال: "إذا حفظ نفسه من الخطيئة قالوا إنّّه "متزمت!"؛ وإذا حزن على خطيئته قالوا إنّّه "سوداوي!" إذا وزّع الحسنات قالوا إنّّه: "مراء!"؛ وإذا استزاد من الصلاة، قالوا "من الغيورين،" إذا أهين وسامح، قالوا: "لا يقوى على الدفاع عن نفسه!" وإذا سخر على الفقراء، قالوا: إنّّه "أحمق مبدّد!"

أسرّ لي مطران روماني، تعدّ أبرشيّته ما يزيد قليلاً عن مليون نسمة، بأنّ معاناته العظمى تكمن في كفيّة رعاية المؤتمن عليهم، بحسب متطلّبات الإنجيل، في حين لا يريد ذلك كثر منهم، بل يطلبون منه أحياناً ما يخالف الإنجيل.

ذكرني كلامه بالقديس الكبير اسحق السوري، الذي أقيم أسقفاً على مدينة نينوى (العراق)، في القرن السابع. هذا أتى إليه رجلان متخاصمان حول حقل. قال لهما يقول الإنجيل كذا. فأجابه أحدهما مالي وللإنجيل، أنا أريد حقّي. فقال الأسقف ماذا أفعل هنا إذن؟ وليس لي عمل سوى الإنجيل! فهجر المطرانية إلى البرية حيث تنسك، وصار من أكبر القديسين الروحانيين.

أمّا عدم اهتمام الرعيّة بإصلاح حالها، وتطهير نفوسها، وبرودتها الروحية، واكتفائها بما هي عليه، فميدان آلام رويّة أخرى للراعي. ما هو عمل الأسقف إن لم يكن تقديس حياة أبنائه، ومساعدتهم على السير في هذا الطريق؟! تقوم الأولويّة في خدمته على رعاية كلّ ما من شأنه أن يؤدّي بهم إلى تقدّم في عيش إيمانهم المسيحيّ.

خدم القديس تيوخون الزادونسكي أبرشيّته الفقيرة، روحياً ومادياً، بتفانٍ، وحاول إنهاء شعبيها، روحياً، بكلّ ما منحه الله من حكمة وقوّة. لكنّه كتب في مذكّراته عن الواعظ، الذي استقدمه لكي يعلم الرعيّة: "عبثاً يُتعب الواعظ الفقير صوته." "ولا شكّ في أنّ مرضه، الذي احتجّ به، ليطلب من المجمع المقدّس الروسي إعفاه من خدمة الأسقفية، إنّما كان نتاج معاناته الأليمة، مع شعب لم يتحصّر بآداب الإنجيل، ولا يريد ذلك. فأكمل بقيّة حياته في أحد الأديرة، منصرفاً إلى حياة التأمل والصلاة وعمل الصدقات.

يتعاطى الناس، عموماً، مع الأسقف، بصفته صاحب مركز اجتماعي أو سياسي، له مكانة عليا، أكثر ممّا يعاملونه أباً روحياً، مُقَاماً للسهر على خلاصهم. يريدونه أن يؤمّن احتياجاتهم المادّية لا الروحية. وفي بلداننا الشرقية، حيث لا ينفصل الديني عن الاجتماعي، يريدونه موافقاً لهم على ما يرغبون به، ولو كان مضاداً للإنجيل. وإلا كان بنظرهم متشدداً، أو متزمتاً.

هذا يجعله في مخاض ضميريّ دائم. فإلى أيّ حدّ يمكن لضميره أن يسايرهم، ويغضّ الطرف عن بعض تصرّفاتهم، خاصّة، عندما يفرضون مشيئتهم على قضايا إيمانيّة أساسية، فيحرفونها ويطعنونها في الصميم؟ أيكون قد بلّغ الأمانة إن وجههم بحسب مرضاة الربّ، ولم يستجيبوا؟

بينما يريده بعضهم رجل أعمال، بناءً، مُطلقاً لإنجازات، مستثمراً في الوقف، يراه آخرون رجل سياسة. والسياسة، في عرفهم، تثبت لوجودهم، وتحقيق لمنافعهم. بعضهم يطالبونه بتلبية ما يعتبرونه واجبات اجتماعية، ويرغبون برؤسه ولائمهم الفاخرة، ولو كان الحديث يطرق كلّ الميادين، إلا ما يختصّ برسائله الدينيّة أو الروحية. آنذاك يكون، في عرفهم، محدثاً لبقاً "يبيض الوجه".

أمّا أن يكون رجل الله، طاهراً، نقيّاً، رجل صلاة، وافتقاد، مُلزمًا نفسه بوصايا الإنجيل، فلا يعتبرونه وافياً بالمطلوب. يقولون: مكانه الدير لا الأبرشية، ولو وُزّع جسده على الفقراء. لم يخرج شعبنا المسيحيّ في الشرق من مفهوم المطران القبضاي، المدعوم أربعمئة سنة من النظام العثماني، الذي قام على أساس الملة، وجعل المطران بمثابة محافظ لطائفته، ومدبّر لشؤونها الزمنية أمام السلطات.

أمّا أكثر ما يُشعر الراعي بالغبّة الداخليّة، فهو أن لا يجد تجاوباً معه، في نطاق أبرشيّته. كأن لا يلاقي اهتماماً من رعيّته، سواء وعظ أم لا؛ أو أن يتحلّوا من مسؤولياتهم تجاه كنيستهم، ويطالبوه في الوقت ذاته، باجتراح الإنجازات والعجائب. أن يعتبر المؤمنون أنّ الأبرشيّة ومواردها مزرعة الأسقف الشخصية، لهو منتهى الانسحاب من التزامهم الإيماني، ولكن أن يجعلوا تأمين كلّ خدمة، على أكتاف الأسقف أو الكاهن، فهو منتهى الجهل، إن لم نقل توصيفاً واقعياً أقسى.

يكتفي الكثيرون بانتقاد رعاتهم "ع الطالع والنازل،" بما يصحّ ولا يصحّ، بما لا يعجبهم ولا يروونه نافعا لهم، وفي الوقت ذاته يعفون أنفسهم من كلّ مسؤوليّة. وكأنّ مسؤوليتهم تُختصر في الانتقاد والتهجّم! والأُنكى من هذا، أنّهم يتناولون حياته الشخصية في كلّ تفصيل، بدءاً ببيته وليس انتهاء بمصروفه. يراقبونه ويحاسبونه على أمور معيشتهم، وقلة منهم فقط، هي التي تهتمّ به حقّاً، لترعاه وتتواصل، في العمق، معه. أمّا الذين يريدونه رجل الله بامتياز فهم أقلّ من القلّة!

ومع ذلك يستغربون أن يختبر الغربة وهو في وسطهم.