



# +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, OCTOBER 06, 2024**

**TONE 6 / EOTHINON 4; FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST  
& THIRD SUNDAY OF LUKE**

**THE HOLY AND GLORIOUS APOSTLE THOMAS**

INNOCENT, APOSTLE TO THE AMERICAS; VENERABLE KENDEAS OF CYPRUS

## Holy Apostle Thomas



On October 6 in the Holy Orthodox Church, we commemorate the holy Apostle Thomas.

Thomas was also called “The Twin,” one of the original Twelve Apostles. Through his doubt in the Resurrection of Christ the Lord, a new proof was given of that wonderful and saving event. The Lord said to Thomas: Reach hither thy finger, and behold My hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into My side: and be not faithless, but believing. And Thomas replied: My Lord and my God (John 20:27-28). After the descent of the Holy Spirit, when the apostles cast lots to see where they would each go to preach, the lot fell to Thomas to go

to India. Thomas converted many to the Christian Faith, and established the Church there, appointing priests and bishops. Before his martyric death, he and the other apostles were miraculously brought to Jerusalem for the burial of the Most-holy Theotokos. Arriving too late, he wept bitterly, and the tomb of the Holy Most-pure One was opened at his request. The Theotokos’ body was not found in the tomb: the Lord had taken His Mother to His heavenly habitation. Thus, in his tardiness Thomas revealed to us the wondrous glorification of the Mother of God, just as he had once confirmed faith in the Resurrection of the Lord by his unbelief.

## THE EPISTLE

*O Lord, save Thy people and bless Thine inheritance. Unto Thee will I cry, O my God.*

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

Brethren, seeing that it is the God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, the same also shone in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the exceeding greatness of power is from God, and not from us. We are pressed on every way, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; smitten down, but not destroyed; always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our body. For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus’ sake, that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our mortal flesh. So, then, death is working in us, but life in you. But having in us the same spirit of faith, according to that which is written, “I believed, and therefore I spoke,” we also believe, and therefore we also speak, knowing that the One who raised up the Lord Jesus will also raise us up through Jesus, and will make us stand together with you. For all things are for your sakes, that the grace, which is multiplied through the thanksgiving of many, may abound to the glory of God.

## الرسالة

خَلِّصْ يَا رَبُّ شَعْبَكَ وَبَارِكْ مِيرَاتِكَ .  
إِلَيْكَ يَا رَبُّ أَصْرُخُ إِلَهِي .

فَصَلِّ مِنْ رِسَالَةِ الْقَدِيسِ بُولُسِ الرَّسُولِ الثَّانِيَةِ إِلَى أَهْلِ كورنثوس .

يا إخوة، إِنَّ اللَّهَ الَّذِي أَمَرَ أَنْ يُشْرِقَ مِنْ ظِلْمَةِ نَوْرٍ، هُوَ الَّذِي أَشْرَقَ فِي قُلُوبِنَا لِإِنَارَةِ مَعْرِفَةِ مَجْدِ اللَّهِ فِي وَجْهِ يَسُوعَ الْمَسِيحِ. وَلَنَا هَذَا الْكَنْزُ فِي أَنْبِيَةِ خَزَفِيَّةٍ، لِيَكُونَ فَضْلُ الْقُوَّةِ لِلَّهِ لَا مِثْلًا. مُتَضَائِقِينَ فِي كُلِّ شَيْءٍ، وَلَكِنْ غَيْرِ مُنْحَصِرِينَ. وَمُتَحِيرِينَ، وَلَكِنْ غَيْرِ يَائِسِينَ. وَمُضْطَهَدِينَ، وَلَكِنْ غَيْرِ مَخْذُولِينَ. وَمَطْرُوحِينَ، وَلَكِنْ غَيْرِ هَالِكِينَ. حَامِلِينَ فِي الْجَسَدِ كُلِّ حِينٍ إِمَاتَةَ الرَّبِّ يَسُوعَ، لِتُظَهَرَ حَيَاةُ يَسُوعَ أَيْضًا فِي أَجْسَادِنَا. لِأَنَّ نَحْنُ الْأَحْيَاءُ نُسَلِّمُ دَائِمًا إِلَى الْمَوْتِ مِنْ أَجْلِ يَسُوعَ، لِتُظَهَرَ حَيَاةُ الْمَسِيحِ أَيْضًا فِي أَجْسَادِنَا الْمَائِتَةِ. فَالْمَوْتُ إِذَنْ يُجْزَى فِينَا، وَالْحَيَاةُ فَيْكُمْ. فَإِذْ فِينَا رُوحُ الْإِيمَانِ بِعَيْنِهِ، عَلَى حَسَبِ مَا كُتِبَ "إِنِّي آمَنْتُ، وَإِلِذَلِكَ تَكَلَّمْتُ"، فَنَحْنُ أَيْضًا نُوْمِنُ وَإِلِذَلِكَ نَتَكَلَّمُ. عَالِمِينَ أَنَّ الَّذِي أَقَامَ الرَّبُّ يَسُوعَ سَيُقِيمُنَا نَحْنُ أَيْضًا بِيَسُوعَ فَتَنْتَصِبُ مَعَكُمْ. لِأَنَّ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ هُوَ مِنْ أَجْلِكُمْ، لِكَيْ تَتَكَاثَرَ النِّعْمَةُ بِشُكْرِ الْأَكْثَرِينَ، فَتَزْدَادَ لِمَجْدِ اللَّهِ.

## THE GOSPEL

**The Reading from the Holy Gospel according to St. Luke. (7:11-16)**

At that time, Jesus went to a city called Nain, and many of His disciples and a great crowd went with Him. As He drew near to the gate of the city, behold, a man who had died was being carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow; and a large crowd from the city was with her. And when the Lord saw her, He had compassion on her and said to her, "Do not weep." And He came and touched the bier, and the bearers stood still. And Jesus said, "Young man, I say to you: arise." And the dead man sat up, and began to speak. And Jesus gave him to his mother. Fear seized them all; and they glorified God, saying, "A great prophet has arisen among us!" and "God has visited His people!"

## الإنجيل

فَصَلِّ شَرِيفٌ مِنْ بَشَارَةِ الْقَدِيسِ لُوقَا الْإِنْجِيلِيِّ الْبَشِيرِ وَالتَّلْمِيزِ الطَّاهِرِ .

فِي ذَلِكَ الزَّمَانِ، كَانَ يَسُوعُ مُنْطَلِقًا إِلَى مَدِينَةٍ اسْمُهَا نَايْنُ، وَكَانَ كَثِيرُونَ مِنْ تَلَامِيذِهِ وَجَمْعٌ غَفِيرٌ مُنْطَلِقِينَ مَعَهُ. فَلَمَّا قَرَّبَ مِنْ بَابِ الْمَدِينَةِ، إِذَا مَيْتٌ مَحْمُولٌ، وَهُوَ ابْنٌ وَحِيدٌ لِأُمِّهِ، وَكَانَتْ أَرْمَلَةً، وَكَانَ مَعَهَا جَمْعٌ كَثِيرٌ مِنَ الْمَدِينَةِ. فَلَمَّا رَأَاهَا الرَّبُّ، تَحَنَّنَ عَلَيْهَا وَقَالَ لَهَا: "لَا تَبْكِي." وَدَنَا، وَلَمَسَ النَّعْشَ فَوَقَّفَ الْحَامِلُونَ. فَقَالَ: "أَيُّهَا الشَّابُّ، لَكَ أَقُولُ قُمْ." فَاسْتَوَى الْمَيْتُ، وَبَدَأَ يَتَكَلَّمُ، فَسَلَّمَهُ إِلَى أُمِّهِ. فَأَحْذَ الْجَمِيعَ خَوْفًا، وَمَجَّدُوا اللَّهَ قَائِلِينَ: "لَقَدْ قَامَ فِينَا نَبِيٌّ عَظِيمٌ، وَافْتَقَدَ اللَّهُ شَعْبَهُ."

## Love Your Neighbor

**October** – (Youth Month) SOYO Special Olympics

This ministry is sponsored by the North American Council of Teen SOYO and is the second longest running program of Special Olympics Pennsylvania, serving over 340 Special Olympics athletes, coaches, and staff each season. It is the premier SOYO outreach program, now in its 38th year of service. Each year SOYO teens raise the funds on Special Olympics Awareness Day.

## 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!

### **Sun. October 6<sup>th</sup>**

Epistle Reader: Isla Guajardo

### **Sun. October 13<sup>th</sup>:**

Epistle Reader: Tania Juha

Sermonette: Tania Juha

### **Sun. October 20<sup>th</sup>:**

Epistle reader: TBD

### **Sun. October 27<sup>th</sup>:**

Epistle Reader: TBD

Ushers/ Tray Passers: All the teens



## **A Big Thank You To All Who Made This Year's Festival A Success!**

Our sincere thanks to all those who *labored, donated, and supported* the 28<sup>th</sup> annual Middle Eastern Festival. It was a real community in action under the Almighty God. May the Lord pour His blessing upon all of you.

## **Silent Auction for Gala**

We just finished a very successful festival and we are hitting the ground running with our fundraising Gala in a few weeks. To have two big fundraisers back-to-back is a lot of work but very rewarding. We are collecting Silent auction items. We are confident with everyone's effort we are going to collect items for our silent auction. NO ITEM IS TOO SMALL.

Examples of items:

- Memorabilia
- Artwork
- Gift baskets (theme ones, arabic, kids, wine, beauty etc.)
- Spa
- Photography session
- Cooking classes
- Gift cards
- Museum tickets
- Golf lessons

Please text or call Rania Kashou as she is collecting items: 415-722-0774

## **General Parish Meeting**

Dear parishioners,

We would like to call for a special general parish meeting on Sunday October 27<sup>th</sup> after the Divine liturgy. The purpose of the meeting is to entertain the idea of getting a second loan to finish our Fellowship Hall. In Christ,

Fr. Nicholas Borzghol

## **Upcoming Events**

<b>Every Sunday at 7pm</b>	St. Anastasia Fellowship Meeting.
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## **Coffee Hours**

<b>October 6<sup>th</sup></b>	Raif and Sonia Rihani in memory of Sonia's brother Yousef.
<b>October 13<sup>th</sup></b>	Sponsor Needed
<b>October 20<sup>th</sup></b>	Sponsor Needed
<b>October 27<sup>th</sup></b>	Sponsor Needed
<b>November 3<sup>rd</sup></b>	The Najjar Family in 40-day memory of Aida Najjar.

## Memorial Service

**Sunday, October 6<sup>th</sup>** - One week memorial service for the handmaiden of God Aida Najjar, offered by Fady and Jumana Najjar and children. May her memory be eternal!

### Holy Oblations

This week, Holy Oblations are offered by:

- † St. John Parish Family for the good health of **Nick Nicola, George Messih, Henriette Hilal** and **Aida Youakeem**. Many years!
- † St. John Parish Family for the good health of **Sam Nassab**. Many years!
- † St. John Parish Family for the good health of **Fairouz Freij**. Many years!
- † Rocky and Nada Dudum for the good health of **Sandy Dudum Bennett**. Many years!
- † St. John Parish family in memory of **Karen Mashi**. May her memory be eternal!

### Candles for the altar table and in front of the icons of Christ and the Theotokos offered by:

- † Ibrahim Fasheh in memory of Hanada Fasheh for one full year. May her memory be eternal!



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- † 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 and Maron Juha

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

You could use this QR code for your donation



ST. JOHN ORTHODOX CHURCH

# FUNDRAISING GALA

TICKETS AT \$250 PER PERSON

OCT. 26 | 5:30 PM

HOLY TRINITY SERBIAN CHURCH

1700 SCHOOL ST

MORAGA , CA 94556

FOR THE BENEFIT OF OUR  
FELLOWSHIP HALL

## Fellowship Hall News

### Fundraising Committee Update:

So close - yet so far, but how far are we from hall completion?

When we started the construction of the project, we did so knowing that we had about \$2 Million in the building fund, and had secured a \$2.5 Million equity loan from the bank. We undertook a very ambitious plan to raise another \$2.5 Million that would bring us to the approximately \$7 million hall project. (Contract was \$6.8 M - not including kitchen equipment and amenities) We knew that if we did not raise the needed funds, we would need to slow or halt construction. To date, we have raised about one-third of our goal (a bit over \$800,000), and have also added some additional funds from the overall church budget. We have paid the contractor (Petra Construction) about \$5.3M, and are stopping all invoices until more funding can be obtained.

However - that does not mean we are stopping all work! Construction work will continue on the following parts of the project: Completion of the tile siding of the hall, completion of the pavers on the plaza, completion of the concrete stairs from the parking lot to the plaza and the plaza to the lower plaza, completion of the new exit stairwell from the church, grading of the preschool playground, and the fencing around that playground. It is anticipated that this work will be completed before the festival.

The Parish Council, building committee and fundraising committee, along with other interested members of the community are working together to determine next steps forward for closing the funding gap and completing the project. There are several ideas being explored, such as loans from parishioners, a loan from a bank, and a fundraising gala. More information will be forthcoming as soon as it is available, and of course, any loan taken with a bank will be brought to the entire parish for approval.

As always if you have any questions, concerns, or ideas, please see Steve Kreta - Building Committee Chair, Raif Rihani - Parish Council Chair, David Hanna - Fundraising Committee Chair, or Father Nicholas.

### **See's CANDIES**

St John Orthodox Church Storefront



Help Us  
Reach Our Goal!



### See's Candies

Who doesn't love chocolate? Please order your See's Candies. 20% of the proceeds will support our building fund.

- Own a business and need to gift?
- Any gift?
- Easter chocolate??
- SEE'S just because it's SEE'S??

ANYONE can purchase!! Please scan the QR code, find the link on our Facebook, or ask anyone in the fundraising committee .

**LORE**  
COFFEE ROASTERS



**10% FROM ALL SALES  
GOES TO YOUR PARISH!**

**SCAN ME TO ORDER  
OR USE**

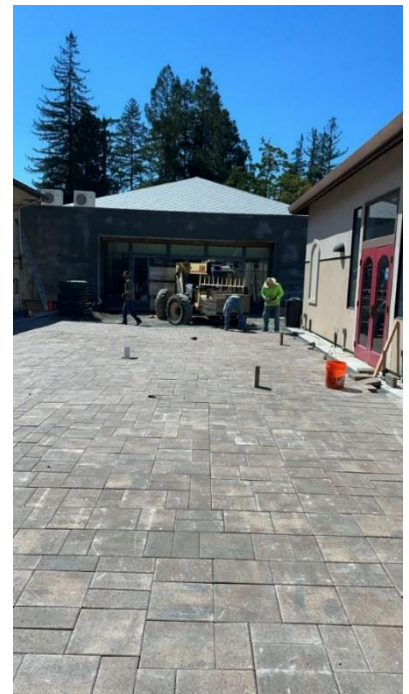
[www.loreroasters.com/94563StJohn](http://www.loreroasters.com/94563StJohn)

Lore Coffee Roasters is a specialty coffee roastery owned and operated by two Orthodox families in Bonners Ferry, Idaho.

We focus on sourcing and roasting the highest quality coffee from all over the earth, striving to glorify Christ by treating our craft with respect and serving excellent coffee!

@LORECOFFEEROASTERS

**BRINGING YOU INTO THE STORY BEHIND GOOD COFFEE.**



His Eminence  
The Most Reverend  
Metropolitan SABA



Archbishop of New York  
and Metropolitan of  
All North America

**ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN ARCHDIOCESE  
OF NORTH AMERICA**

**Prot. no.:** 512/2024

**TO BE READ FROM THE PULPIT**

October, 2024

“The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore, ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.” (Matthew 9:37-38)

Beloved Clergy and Faithful of our Archdiocese:

Greetings in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

The month of October in our God-protected Antiochian Archdiocese is designed as “Youth Month and Seminary Month.” This is intended to bring awareness to the importance of the pastoral and theological training initiative of our Archdiocese.

This year’s records of our Archdiocese show more than 25 students enrolled in three seminaries whose training supply our churches with priesthood candidates, choir directors, youth workers and Christian education leaders.

Your generous donations today in support of our seminarians and these institutions will ensure that our parishes will continue to be supplied with exemplary priests equipped to serve the needs of our parishioners, and competent staffing that will be able to perpetuate their vigorous programs. These men are preparing for the holy labors of baptizing our infants, marrying our young people, preaching the gospel, laying to eternal rest our loved ones, granting solace to those in distress, and offering guidance to those in need of direction. In other words, we are supporting them as they prepare to support all of us in our journey to the Kingdom of Heaven.

We are grateful for your invaluable and innumerable initiatives in providing financial and moral support over the many past decades toward this worthy cause, and for subsidizing the vital educational programs of these institutions, and the needs of our seminarians.

*“The disciples were first called Christians in Antioch” (Acts 11: 26)*

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(201) 871-1355 T Archdiocese@antiochian.org (201) 871-7954 F

Also, we appreciate the hand-on training and the financial support offered to our students by the following parishes this year: St. Anthony, Bergenfield; St. George, Allentown; St. George, Little Falls; St. George, Boston; St. George, Worcester; St. Ignatius, Florida; St. Mary, Brooklyn; St. Mary, Wilkes-Barre; St. Mary, Yonkers; St. Nicholas, Bridgeport; St. Nicholas, Brooklyn; St. Paul, Emmaus; St. Philip, Souderton; and St. Stephen, South Plainfield.

Recent studies have shown that we are facing a shortage of clergy in the coming years. We need your generous financial support to educate as many priestly candidates and their families as possible to work in the Vineyard of our Savior. May the Lord reward you accordingly for your emotional and financial support in his name and to his glory. Your thoughtfulness has made you worthy recipients of the spiritual dividends of the fruits produced through the labor of these schools and the priests they have trained.

Your Father in Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "T. Saba". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "T" and a period after the name.

+**SABA**

Archbishop of New York and Metropolitan of all North America

*"The disciples were first called Christians in Antioch" (Acts 11: 26)*

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**SAVE  
THE DATE**

*Ukrainian refugee Danilo (not his real name) and his family found support from an IOCC cash-assistance program when they arrived in Poland.*

# IOCC FOOD & WINE TOUR

Hosted by the IOCC Metropolitan Committee of Northern California and Ascension Cathedral

**NOVEMBER 3, 2024**

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**

**ASCENSION GREEK ORTHODOX CATHEDRAL**

4700 Lincoln Avenue | Oakland, CA 94602

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](https://iocc.org/bayarea)



## شذرات مشرقية، الجزء الثاني

المتروبوليت سابا (اسبر)

تكمن ميزة المسيحية الشرقية في أنها، بقدر ما تتحسس لاستقامة الإيمان، وتدقق في صياغة قوانينه وحفظها، فإنها لا تقونن الحياة المسيحية، بل تفتح، من أجل عيشها على الصعيد الشخصي، المدى واسعاً أمام التعليم العام المنبثق من العقيدة، والقائل بتطبيق الوصايا الإلهية، وفق ما يؤول إلى خلاص المؤمن، بإرشاد أبيه الروحي، وذلك، بحسب وضعه وقدرته وظرفه والمستوى الروحي الذي بلغه.

وعلى الصعيد السياسي، لا تحدد الكنيسة الشرقية، والأرثوذكسية بخاصة، التوجه السياسي، بالمعنى الدقيق والمباشر، لأبنائها. فهي تكتفي فقط بتزويدهم بالتعليم المسيحي، وإغنائهم بالروحانية الأصيلة، التي تجد لها تجسيدا مسيحياً، بالشكل الذي يتناسب وكل مجتمع وشعب وظرف وحرب.

ماذا يعني هذا الكلام واقعياً؟ لنأخذ بعض الأمثلة. لا تحلل المسيحية الشرقية العنف والقتل في أيّ ظرف كان. بمعنى أنها لا تقول بتبرير القتل في حالات خاصة وعدم اعتباره خطيئة، وهي، في الوقت ذاته، لا تمنع أبناءها من اتباع ضميرهم الروحي عندما يناديهم إلى مقاومة الشرّ بكلّ أشكاله. وإن اضطرّ المؤمن إلى القتل فيه، فعليه الاستشفاء من العنف الذي اضطرّ إليه. وذلك لكي لا يعتاده سبيلاً لحلّ أيّ مشكلة تصادفه. هذا ما يُعرف مسيحياً بالتوبة، وفي علم النفس المعاصر بالاستشفاء.

لا تشرّع، لك، المسيحية الأبواب لممارسة القوة، وأنت مرتاح الضمير، بل تعزوه إلى حالة السقوط التي تحيا فيها، والتي قد تضطرّك، في أوضاع معينة، إلى الاختيار بين أهون الشرّين.

تتوجه المسيحية الشرقية، خاصة، بالأحرى، إلى داخل الإنسان. تؤمن بأنّ المعركة العظمى روحية وساحتها الإنسان الداخلي. متى عرف المؤمن الخير من الشرّ، على صعيده الذاتي الداخلي، استطاع اختيار كيفية التعبير عن محاربة الشرّ، على الصعيد الخارجي.

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في حالة الإجهاض، مثلاً. لا تحلل الكنيسة الشرقية قتل الجنين، ولا تفتي به، مبررة إياه، بالاستناد إلى ذرائع طبية أو إلى المصلحة الفضلى. وهي لا تقول، بمبدأ أفضلية الأم على الطفل، بشكل مطلق، حتى عندما يقول الطب بحتمية موت أحد الطرفين: الأم أو الطفل. بل تترك الخيار للوالدين للتشاور مع أبيهم الروحي، ومن ثم اتخاذ القرار الذي يروونه مناسباً. ومن ثمّ الدخول في مرحلة الاستشفاء الروحي.

يهدف الاستشفاء أو التوبة، الذي يخضعان له، من ضمن ما يهدف إليه، إلى ألا يحلل الإنسان، لنفسه، القتل براحة ضمير تحت أيّ ظرف.

أعرف كاهناً شاباً، دمشقياً، أكدّ الطب بأنّ الجنين، الذي تحمله زوجته، سيكون مشوّهاً، ونصحهما الأطباء بإجهاضه، وكان طفلهما الأوّل. لكنّهما، بعد الصلاة والمشورة الروحية، رفضا الإجهاض، وقرّرا الاحتفاظ بالجنين، ورعايته، ولو كلفهما معاناة قاسية جداً، يوظّفانها في تقديس حياتهما. فكان أن أتتهما طفلة جميلة سالمة النفس والعقل والجسد.

تعالج الكنيسة الشرقية مشاكل المؤمنين شخصياً، لا بتعميم ديني عامّ، مكتوب بروح قانونية شرائعية. وهي، على هدي روحانيّتها، المتفهمّة لمكانة الإنسان في المخطط الإلهي، والتي ترنو إلى خلاص الإنسان والعالم، تتحسّس، بالرحمة، الحكمة الإنجيليّة القائلة: "جعل السبب للإنسان وليس الإنسان للسبب."

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إذا اضطررت إلى استخدام القوة في مواجهة الشرّ حتى توقفه، أو تمنعه، أو تحرّر الآخرين منه، فأنت، كمؤمن، تعي أنّك لجأت إليه، مضطراً، من أجل تخليص الآخرين منه. آنذاك، تُقبّل إليه تضحيةً منك بنفسك، من أجل الآخرين، وأنت عازم، إن بقيت حياً بعد زواله، على الدخول في مرحلة الاستشفاء الروحي. آنذاك تكون شاهداً لإيمانك وشهيداً للمحبّة.

## **Eastern Remnants, Part Two**

*By Metropolitan Saba (Isper)*

The advantage of Eastern Christianity lies in the fact that -- as much as it is sensitive to the integrity of faith and meticulous in formulating and preserving its teachings -- it does not codify Christian life, but rather, for its implementation on a personal level, opens up a wide scope of general education emanating from the doctrine. It calls for the application of the divine commandments, in accordance with what leads to the salvation of the believer, under the guidance of his spiritual father, according to his situation, ability, circumstance, and the spiritual level he has reached.

On the political level, the Eastern Church, and the Orthodox Church in particular, does not determine the political orientation, in the precise and direct sense, for its children. It is satisfied only with providing them with Christian education, and enriching them with authentic spirituality, which finds a Christian embodiment in a manner that suits each society, people, and circumstance, even in the face of war.

What does this mean in practice? Let us take some examples. Eastern Christianity does not permit violence and killing under any circumstances. In other words, it does not justify killing in special cases and does not excuse the sin. At the same time, it does not prevent its children from following their spiritual conscience when it calls them to resist evil in all its forms. If a believer is forced to kill, he must seek healing from the violence to which he was forced to resort. This is so that he does not become accustomed to using violence to solve any problem he encounters. This is what is known in Christianity as repentance, and in contemporary psychology as healing.

Christianity does not open the doors for you to exercise power while you have a clear conscience, but rather attributes the exercise of power to the state of fallenness in which you live, which may force you, in certain situations, to choose between the lesser of two evils.

Eastern Christianity, in particular, rather addresses the interior of man. It believes that the great battle is spiritual and its arena is the inner man. When the believer

knows good from evil on his inner, subjective level, he can choose how to fight against evil on the external level.

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In the case of abortion, for example, the Eastern Church does not permit the killing of the fetus, nor does it issue a ruling on it, justifying the act based on medical pretexts or the best interest. It does not say, in absolute principle, that the mother is better than the child, even when medical practice finds that the death of one of the parties, mother or child, could be inevitable. Rather, it leaves the determination to the parents to consult with their spiritual father, and then make the necessary decision. Then, they enter the stage of spiritual healing.

Their healing and repentance aim, among other things, to ensure that a person does not, under any circumstances, permit killing with a clear conscience.

I know a young priest from Damascus whose doctors confirmed that the fetus his wife was carrying would be deformed, and the doctors advised the pair to abort it. It was their first child. But after prayer and spiritual counsel, they refused to abort it and decided to keep the fetus and care for it, even if it led to very severe suffering which they would use to sanctify their lives. And so, they had a beautiful baby girl born to them, healthy in spirit, mind and body.

The Eastern Church deals with the problems of the faithful personally, not with a general religious generalization written in a legalistic and canonistic spirit. Guided by its spirituality, which understands the place of man in the divine plan, and which aspires to the salvation of man and the world, it feels, with mercy, the evangelical wisdom that says: "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath" (Mark 2:27).

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If you must resort to the use of force to stop evil, or free others from it, then you, as a believer, realize that you have resorted to it under duress. Then, you accept it as a sacrifice of yourself for the sake of others, and you are compelled, if you live after the evil disappears, to enter the stage of spiritual healing. Then you will be a witness to your faith and a martyr to love.