

+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, SEPTEMBER 20, 2026; TONE 7 / EOTHINON 5

AFTER-FEAST OF THE ELEVATION OF THE HOLY CROSS

GREAT-MARTYR EUSTATHIOS AND HIS FAMILY; VENERABLE-MARTYR HILARION OF ST. ANNE SKETE ON ATHOS

=====



On September 20 in the Holy Orthodox Church, we commemorate holy Great-martyr Eustathios, Theopiste his wife, and their two sons Agapios and Theopistos. Eustathios, before his baptism, was an illustrious Roman general named Placidus in the second century. While hunting in the country one day, he was converted to the Faith of Christ through the apparition of an uncommonly majestic stag, between whose antlers he saw the Cross of Christ, and through which the Lord spoke to him with a human voice. Upon returning home, he learned that his wife Tatiana had also had a similar vision. They sought out the Christian Bishop and were baptized, Placidus receiving the name Eustathios, and Tatiana the name Theopiste; their two sons were baptized Agapios and Theopistos. The family was then subjected to such trials as Job endured. When the family refused to sacrifice to the idols—a public sacrifice from which no Roman general could be absent—the Emperor Hadrian had them put into a large bronze device in the shape of a bull, which was heated with fire until they died. When their holy bodies were removed, they were found to be without harm. The martyrs suffered in the year 126.

=====

THE EPISTLE

The Lord will give strength to His people.

Ascribe to the Lord, O sons of God, ascribe to the Lord glory and honor.

The Reading from the Epistle of St. Paul to the Galatians. (2:16-20)

Brethren, knowing that a person is not justified by the works of the Law, but through faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by faith in Christ, and not by the works of the Law; for by the works of the Law shall no flesh be justified. But if, while we sought to be justified in Christ, we ourselves also were found sinners, is Christ then a minister of sin? God forbid! For if I build up again those things which I destroyed, I prove myself a transgressor. For I through the law died to the law, that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself up for me.

الرَّبُّ يُعْطِي قُوَّةَ لِسْعِهِ.

قَدِّمُوا لِلرَّبِّ يَا أَبْنَاءَ اللَّهِ. قَدِّمُوا لِلرَّبِّ مَجْدًا وَكَرَامَةً.

فَصْلٌ مِنْ رِسَالَةِ الْقَدِّيسِ بُولُسِ الرَّسُولِ إِلَى أَهْلِ غَلَاطِيَّةِ. (20-16:2)

يَا إِخْوَةُ، إِذْ نَعْلَمُ أَنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ لَا يُبَرِّرُ بِأَعْمَالِ النَّامُوسِ، بَلْ إِنَّمَا بِالْإِيمَانِ بِيَسُوعَ الْمَسِيحِ، آمَنَّا نَحْنُ أَيْضاً بِيَسُوعَ الْمَسِيحِ لِكَيْ نُبَرَّرَ بِالْإِيمَانِ بِالْمَسِيحِ لَا بِأَعْمَالِ النَّامُوسِ، إِذْ لَا يُبَرِّرُ بِأَعْمَالِ النَّامُوسِ أَحَدٌ مِنْ ذَوِي الْجَسَدِ. فَإِنْ كُنَّا وَنَحْنُ طَالِبُونَ التَّبَرُّيرَ بِالْمَسِيحِ وَجَدْنَا نَحْنُ أَيْضاً خُطَاةً، أَفَيَكُونُ الْمَسِيحُ إِذَنْ خَادِماً لِلْخَطِيئَةِ؟ حَاشَى. فَإِنِّي إِنْ عُدْتُ أَبْنِي مَا قَدْ هَدَمْتُ، أَجْعَلُ نَفْسِي مُتَعَدِّياً. لِأَنِّي بِالنَّامُوسِ مُتُّ لِلنَّامُوسِ لِكَيْ أَحْيَا لِلَّهِ. مَعَ الْمَسِيحِ صُلِبْتُ، فَأَحْيَا، لَا أَنَا، بَلِ الْمَسِيحُ يَحْيَا فِيَّ. وَمَا لِي مِنَ الْحَيَاةِ فِي الْجَسَدِ، أَنَا أَحْيَا فِي إِيمَانِ ابْنِ اللَّهِ الَّذِي أَحَبَّنِي، وَبَذَلَ نَفْسَهُ عَلَيَّ.

THE GOSPEL

The Reading from the Holy Gospel according to St. Mark. (8:34-9:1)

The Lord said, "If any man would come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever would save his life will lose it; and whoever loses his life for My sake and the Gospel's will save it. For what does it profit a man, to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul? For what can a man give in return for his soul? For whoever is ashamed of Me and of My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of man also be ashamed, when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels." And He said to them, "Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the Kingdom of God come with power."

فَصْلٌ شَرِيفٌ مِنْ بَشَارَةِ الْقَدِّيسِ مَرْقُسِ الْإِنْجِيلِيِّ الْبَشِيرِ وَالتَّلْمِيزِ الطَّاهِرِ. (1:9-34:8)

قَالَ الرَّبُّ: "مَنْ أَرَادَ أَنْ يَتَّبِعَنِي، فَلْيَكْفُرْ بِنَفْسِهِ وَيَحْمِلْ صَلِيبَهُ وَيَتَّبِعْنِي. لِأَنَّ مَنْ أَرَادَ أَنْ يُخَلِّصَ نَفْسَهُ يُهْلِكُهَا، وَمَنْ أَهْلَكَ نَفْسَهُ مِنْ أَجْلِي وَمِنْ أَجْلِ الْإِنْجِيلِ يُخَلِّصُهَا. فَإِنَّهُ مَاذَا يَنْتَفِعُ الْإِنْسَانُ لَوْ رَجَحَ الْعَالَمَ كُلَّهُ وَخَسِرَ نَفْسَهُ؟ أَمْ مَاذَا يُعْطِي الْإِنْسَانُ فِدَاءً عَنْ نَفْسِهِ؟ لِأَنَّ مَنْ يَسْتَحْيَ بِي وَبِكَلَامِي فِي هَذَا الْجِيلِ الْفَاسِقِ الْخَاطِئِ، يَسْتَحْيَ بِهِ ابْنُ الْبَشَرِ مَتَى أَتَى فِي مَجْدٍ أَبِيهِ مَعَ الْمَلَائِكَةِ الْقَدِّيسِينَ." وَقَالَ لَهُمْ: "الْحَقُّ أَقُولُ لَكُمْ، إِنْ قَوْمًا مِنَ الْقَائِمِينَ هَهُنَا لَا يَذُوقُونَ الْمَوْتَ، حَتَّى يَرَوْا مَلَكُوتَ اللَّهِ قَدْ أَتَى بِقُوَّةٍ."

Coffee Hour

Sept 20 th	Khalil Mounzer in memory of Carlos Suarez
Sept 27 th	Festival!
Oct 4 th	For the good health of the Dudum family and in memory of John, Misadeh, Audie, and Mary Dudum
Oct 11 th	Samar Adranly for the good health of George Adranly
Oct 18 th	Fady and Joumana Najjar in memory of Michel and Aida Najjar
Oct 25 th	Charlene Nassoura
Nov 1 st	Paula Kassouf in memory of Samir Kassouf (10 year memorial)

Upcoming Events

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 Addes, Henriette Hilal, Souhad Halaka, George Cawog, Rocky Dudum** and **Norma Khalil**. Many years!
- † St. John Parish Family for the good health of **Violet Jaber**. Many years!
- † The Nino family in memory of **Maramize Nino**. May her memory be eternal!
- † Khalil Mounzer in memory of **Carlos Suarez**. May his memory be eternal!
- † Afaf Wahbeh in memory of **Seliman Manusour**. May his memory be eternal!
- † Lisa Hanna for the good health of **David Hanna** following his knee surgery. Many years!
- † Charlene for the good health of **Ziad, Nicole, Charlene** and **Elaina** on the occasions of their birthdays, and the good health of **Clair Abdo**. Many years!
- † Cherlene in memory of **Blanche** and **Elias Nassoura, Robert Abdo** and **Alvera** and **Bill Hand**. May their memory be eternal!
- † The Dudum family in memory of **John, Misadeh, Audie, and Mary Dudum**. May their memory be eternal, and many years to the Dudums!
- † Jim and Aileen Jaber and family in memory of beloved son and brother **Christopher Jaber** (6 Months). May his memory be eternal
- † St. John parish family for the good health of **Fred Addas** on his 100th. birthday. 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, Luke and Timothy Ernst, Maron Juha and Zaiden Karanikola

† Elevation of the Cross:



Flowers donated in loving memory of Stephen and Pauline Belevich, by Nick Nicola Jr. and Family

=====

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

You could use this QR code for your donation



Announcements

IOCC FOOD & WINE TOUR

Sunday November 1. This year, our parish is hosting the 34th annual IOCC Food & Wine Tour, one of IOCC's biggest fundraising events of the year. If you are interested in volunteering, please contact Larissa Geleris by email lkgeleris@gmail.com or text 925-323-4924

Love your Neighbor: September – Archdiocese collection for Seminarian Fund

Each year in the Fall, the Archdiocese asks parishes to take a collection to help support the Antiochian Orthodox students studying at the seminaries in our country, including St Vladimir's, St Tikhon's and Holy Cross Seminary.

Donations for Heritage Booth at Festival

During the past few Festivals, there were multiple inquiries about purchasing used Middle Eastern items/ souvenirs at the Heritage Booth. We would like to gather unwanted items from our parish. If you have anything to donate, please contact Dn. Nicholas Adranly at 510-207-1796 for more information.

Festival Volunteers Needed

Our Annual Food Festival is just around the corner on Saturday, September 26, and Sunday, September 27! Whether you can volunteer for a few hours or a full shift, every helping hand makes a difference. The more hands we have, the lighter the work—and the more enjoyable the weekend will be! There are **500+ volunteer slots** for the weekend. It's a wonderful opportunity to serve alongside one another, build friendships, and support our church community. Please consider signing up using the link:

<https://m.signupgenius.com/#/!showSignUp/60B0C4FA8A729A0F94-64807921-copy?useFullSite=false>

Thank you in advance for your generosity and willingness to serve. We can't wait to see everyone there! God bless you all!

🌲 Save the Date! 🌲

Mark your calendars! Our Annual Christmas Party is scheduled for Saturday, December 12. More info to follow.

We Love St John's Youth Group!



What a great gathering of our St. John's youth (pre-teens/ younger teens).

They prayed at vespers, learned our faith through bible study and discussion, broke bread together, played together in the spirit of fellowship.

What a fun night on Saturday, September 12th. Nineteen of them were there!

Big thanks to Kristen Kavar who spearheaded this event. Many thanks also to the parents who drove their children to our church.

More to come soon...

Advertisement Form for 2026 Festival Ad Book

32nd Annual Middle Eastern Festival

Sponsored by St. John the Evangelist Orthodox Church

Festival Location: St. John the Evangelist Orthodox Church Grounds,
501 Moraga Way, Orinda, CA 94563

Dates: Saturday, September 26th & Sunday, September 27th

Advertiser: _____
Contact: _____
Address: _____
Phone: _____ Email: _____

Advertisement (circle one)

Premium Page AD	Full Page AD	1/2 Page AD	1/4 Page AD
\$500 Plus	\$250	\$130	\$75

Note: If you wish to include a logo or special typeface, it's best to email it.

The 2026 Middle Eastern Festival will feature the finest Middle Eastern entertainment, delicious food, exotic desserts, live music, folk dancing, bazaar, Middle Eastern heritage exhibits, children's games & activities, and more.

The Festival Book, given to attendees, will include advertisements from local businesses and community supporters;

On behalf of the parishioners of St. John the Evangelist Orthodox Church and members of the 2026 Festival Committee, we thank you for your support.

Checks payable to St. John Church Festival.
Earmark 2026 Festival Mail to:

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

Email: st.john.evangelist.orinda@gmail.com

The Cross in Our Life, Part One
By His Eminence Metropolitan Saba (Isper)

The Cross of the World and Its Gifts

Blessed Augustine says: “I know three categories: One saves through the cross, another is saved through the cross, and the third is condemned by the cross.” Christ alone belongs to the first category. The rest of us belong to one of the other two.

The cross stands before every human being. There is no one who does not have one cross or more. As long as death is present, crosses will remain part of our personal lives. Because this present world is passing away, and because our own existence is passing away with it, we experience pain, anguish, and sorrow. This is because we bind our feelings—which form part of our very being—to the image of this transitory world.

We therefore face one of two choices: either to flee from the cross and avoid it, or to confront it with courage, faith, and acceptance. Fleeing only increases the cross’s weight; it does nothing more than change its name. In reality, it means exchanging one cross for another—one that may appear lighter to the person fleeing, but that is, in truth, heavier than the cross from which he fled. Confronting the cross, on the other hand, means accepting it willingly at the beginning of the journey—even if not yet joyfully—and seeking to discover its meaning and its role in forming and shaping the person who bears it.

Before Christ, the cross was an instrument of death; through Christ, it became a source of life. Pain and suffering once led to despair, and despair is spiritual death. In Christ, however, they have become a path toward liberation and the discovery of true life—a life that transcends the familiar conditions of this temporal existence. Every Sunday morning we proclaim: “Through the Cross, joy has come into all the world.” Did not the Cross precede the Resurrection and the life that burst forth from the tomb?

Our contemporary way of life may hinder our encounter with true life. A person often stands before the beautiful gifts of this world, becomes immersed in them, and confines himself to the desire to possess them, without noticing what lies beyond them—or even the One who gave them. Their brilliance entices him to acquire more and more, until, with time, he becomes their captive. His life thus

passes within a narrow framework devoted solely to satisfying the desires of this earthly life.

This beautiful world in which we live is a gift from God—or, at least, this is how we ought to regard it. Just as we care for a gift, receive it with joy and delight, strive to preserve it, and feel gratitude toward the one who gave it to us, so too must we care for this world, preserve it, and remain constantly grateful to God for it.

In reality, our “beautiful planet has been transformed into a slaughterhouse,” as Saint Justin Popović expressed it, because of humanity’s greed and selfish appetite for exploiting its resources in a deadly pursuit of profit and consumption.

When we receive a gift from someone, we ought first to look toward the person who gave it, rather than allowing our eyes to remain fixed on the gift itself. Consumer society has weakened the spirit of gratitude in modern man while cultivating his desire to possess. His gaze has thus become fixed solely upon the product. Little by little, and without noticing it—often even unintentionally—he becomes enslaved to the gift.

Health is a gift. The beauty of nature is a gift. Clean air is a gift. Family is a gift. Work and productivity are gifts. Income is a gift. Wholesome recreation is a gift. Friends are gifts—and the list goes on. How numerous are God’s gifts to us! But are we aware of them? Do we receive them with joy and thanksgiving, drawing ever closer to their Giver? Do they lead us to Him?

Naturally, a healthy person loves the giver personally for who he is and not merely because of his gift. Likewise, a Christian loves God for who He is, not merely for His gifts. The wise person does not stop at the gift as though it were the ultimate reality. He knows that it will eventually pass away and that the joy it gives is temporary, having its season before its radiance fades. He therefore turns toward the Giver—the everlasting and ever-present source of every gift—namely, God.

In truth, every gift entails a certain cross. This cross reveals to us that none of these gifts constitutes the final and ultimate reality. Herein lies the true cross of the gifts of our world: the cross that arises from the alternation between receiving a gift and losing it. Not all our dreams are fulfilled, nor are they fulfilled whenever we desire. Thus, our lives move between success and failure, eagerness and weariness, joy and sorrow. What we desire may be fulfilled entirely or only partially; conversely, we

may lose it in part or altogether. This cross is especially painful for those who have not learned gratitude, who have not yet understood the meaning of true life, and who continue to confine it within the limits of this earthly existence.

The absence or loss of a gift leads us to ask why. Its loss also makes us more aware of its place and role in our lives. The more important and essential the lost gift is, the greater and higher the possibility of spiritual growth for the person who has lost it.

In my youth, I was deeply moved by a virtuous woman who fell asleep in the Lord many years ago. She spent a year and a half in the hospital and underwent several successive operations. Her husband divorced her while she was hospitalized, and she had no children. She suffered greatly and her heavy cross moved her to question the meaning of all that had happened to her. With the help of her spiritual father and faithful friends, she discovered that she was being called to a noble mission. She dedicated her life to nursing education at a time when no nursing schools existed, and also to teaching a pure spiritual theology, which was rare in those days.

The Christian bears this cross of the world—and the cross of his own existence—not only with acceptance but also with a certain joy, because he knows that beyond this cross there is a life that does not perish. Through this faith, the Christian sees the world as crucified and dead to him. He also sees himself, together with all his inclinations, as crucified and dead to this present world. The believer works to improve this present world, even as it moves toward decay and death. He cultivates within it the seeds of the coming resurrection by striving toward his own personal resurrection and toward the resurrection of this world, which is the gift.

Throughout this journey of life, a person may discover, through tragedy and suffering, the meaning behind losing certain things that had seemed essential to him. Many times, however, he may also discover grace within their loss. He then gives thanks to God, because he would never have noticed the things that are truly more essential had he continued to enjoy those things that were taken from him.

Such was the experience of some who spent years in solitary confinement because of their faith. Amid the tragedy of what they endured, they experienced and tasted a divine grace that filled them with a profound peace — a peace they found themselves missing after they were released from prison. Their crosses refined their characters and made them more illumined, preparing them to fulfill an essential role later in life.

Read some of biographies of the Orthodox Romanian prisoners during the communist era. In this sense, the Romanian priest and theologian, Saint Dumitru Stăniloae, who was himself imprisoned because of his Christian faith, says that the world, together with our existence within it, is the cross that we must bear until the end of our earthly lives. We experience the transitory nature of this world as an unceasing cross. Yet through our Christian faith and the grace of God, we can live this cross in the hope of the Resurrection. For this reason, we bear it with joy.

All- Night Vigil For The Repose of St. John The Theologian



Great Vespers • Artoklasia • Orthros • Divine Liturgy

All faithful are welcome to join in prayer and worship

When

Friday, September 25, 2026
7:00PM-~1:00AM

Where

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

*Apostle of Christ, John
the Evangelist and
Theologian, you
became a mystic of
secrets of God, and
thundered to us the
secret dogmas of
wisdom.*

INTERNATIONAL ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN CHARITIES

IOCC FOOD & WINE TOUR

Hosted by St. John the Evangelist Antiochian Orthodox Church
& the IOCC Metropolitan Committee of Northern California

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 1, 2026

VESPERS: 4:00 P.M. • DINNER: 5:00 – 8:00 P.M.

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

ST. JOHN'S FELLOWSHIP HALL

501 Moraga Way | Orinda, CA 94563

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

Tickets and sponsorships at iocc.org/bayarea



ST. JOHN ORTHODOX CHURCH

MIDDLE EASTERN FOOD FESTIVAL



MUSIC



FOOD



CULTURE

CELEBRATING
32
YEARS

SEPTEMBER 26 - 27

501 MORAGA WAY, ORINDA, CA

SAT 11AM - 8PM | SUN NOON - 7PM

FREE ADMISSION

ORTHODOX
Thanksgiving
KIDS AND TEENS RETREAT

Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good;
His mercy endures forever.

— Psalm 107:1



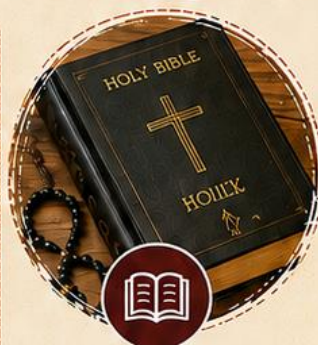
SUNDAY, NOV 15
1:30 PM – 5:00 PM



A fun and faith-filled afternoon for
kids and teens and their families to grow
closer to Christ and give thanks together!



WE WILL BE
MAKING
Holy Bread



BIBLE
STUDY



TEAM
BUILDING



DINNER
will be
PROVIDED

SUGGEST
\$40
DONATION 
per family

RSVP BY NOV. 1
— TO —
Rania Kashou
or
Irene Guajardo 

DONATIONS AND
VOLUNTEERS
ARE WELCOMED!



FAITH. FELLOWSHIP. THANKSGIVING.
Come grow in Christ and gratitude together! 

