

2020 St. George Church Staff and Organizations

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Assistant Pastor

Rev. Thomas Underwood (610) 515-5916

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Peter Attar (610) 462-7688

Altar Boy Captain

George Khallouf (484) 554-0889

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Bachar Issa, Hala Atiyeh, Fouad Salloum

Nour Salloum, Dima Botros

March 29, 2020

Tone 8 / Eothion 8

Forth Sunday of Great Lent

*Today we commemorate: John Climacus, Author of "The Ladder"
Martyr Mark, bishop of Arethusa, Martyr Cyril the deacon of Heliopolis
and those with them; Martyrs Jonah and Barachisios of Persia and those with them;
Eustathios the Confessor, bishop of Bithynia*

Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great

RESURRECTIONAL APOLYTIKION IN TONE EIGHT

From the heights Thou didst descend, O compassionate One, and Thou didst submit to the three-day burial, that Thou might deliver us from passion; Thou art our life and our Resurrection, O Lord, glory to Thee.

APOLYTIKION OF ST. JOHN CLIMACUS IN TONE EIGHT

The barren wilderness thou didst make fertile with the streams of thy tears; and by thy deep sighing thou hast given fruit through thy struggles a hundredfold. Accordingly, thou hast become a star for the universe, sparkling with miracles. Therefore, O righteous Father John Climacus, intercede with Christ God to save our souls.

• *Now sing the apolytikion of the patron saint or feast of the temple.*

KONTAKION FOR SUNDAYS IN GREAT LENT (AND AKATHIST SATURDAY) IN TONE EIGHT

To thee, the Champion Leader, do I offer thanks of victory, O Theotokos, thou who hast delivered me from terror; but as thou that hast that power invincible, O Theotokos, thou alone can set me free: from all forms of danger free me and deliver me, that I may cry unto thee: Hail, O Bride without bridegroom.

THE EPISTLE

*The Lord will give strength to His people. The Lord will bless His people with peace.
The Reading from the Epistle of St. Paul to the Hebrews. (6:13-20)*

BRETHREN, when God made a promise to Abraham, since He had no one greater by whom to swear, He swore by Himself, saying, “Surely I will bless you and multiply you.” And thus Abraham, having patiently endured, obtained the promise. Men indeed swear by one greater than themselves, and in all their disputes an oath is final for confirmation. So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of His purpose, He interposed with an oath. So that through two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible that God should prove false, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to seize the hope set before us. We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner shrine behind the curtain, where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.

THE GOSPEL

The Reading from the Holy Gospel according to St. Mark. (9:17-31)

AT THAT TIME, a man came to Jesus, kneeling down and saying unto him, “Teacher, I brought my son to you, for he has a dumb spirit. And wherever it seizes him, it dashes him down; and he foams and grinds his teeth and becomes rigid; and I asked Thy Disciples to cast it out, and they were not able.” And Jesus answered them, “O faithless generation, how long am I to be with you? How long am I to bear with you? Bring him to Me.” And they brought the boy to Him; and when the spirit saw Jesus, immediately it convulsed the boy, and he fell on the ground and rolled about, foaming at the mouth. And Jesus asked his father, “How long has he had this?” And he said, “From childhood. And it has often cast him into the fire and into the water, to destroy him; but if Thou canst do anything, have pity on us and help us.” And Jesus said to him, “If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes.” Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, “Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!” And when Jesus saw that a crowd came running together, he rebuked the un-

clean spirit, saying to it, “You dumb and deaf spirit, I command you, come out of him, and never enter him again.” And after crying out and convulsing him terribly, it came out, and the boy was like a corpse; so that most of them said, “He is dead.” But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose. And when Jesus had entered the house, His Disciples asked Him privately, “Why could we not cast it out?” And Jesus said to them, “This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer and fasting.” They went on from there and passed through Galilee. And Jesus would not have anyone know it; for He was teaching His Disciples, saying to them, “The Son of man will be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill Him; and after He is killed, He will rise on the third day.”

• *The Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great continues as usual.*

ST. BASIL LITURGY MEGALYNARION

In thee rejoiceth, O full of grace, all creation: the angelic hosts, and the race of men, O hallowed Temple and noetic paradise, glory of Virgins, of whom God was incarnate and became a little child, even our God Who is before all the ages; for He made thy womb a throne, and thy body He made more spacious than the heavens. In thee rejoiceth, O full of grace, all creation; and it glorifieth thee.

THE DISMISSAL

Holy Bread

The Holy Bread is offered before the Altar of God:

For Good Health, Well Being and Blessings

Archbishop Paul Yazigi and Archbishop Youhanna Ibrahim; Metropolitan Joseph; Fr. Anthony, Kh. Minerva and Hope Sabbagh; Fay, Lisa and Dawn Moses; Fr. Joshua, Kh. Tammy and Family; Fr. Joseph, Kh. Mary and Family; Deacon Peter, Christina and Family; Haddad, Sabbagh, Yazigi, Zaghtiti Families; Fr. James; Brother Nectarios; Jayah Family; Morra Family; Theresa; parishioners, godchildren, clergy, nuns, monks; George, Hiyam, Simon, Melissa, Yasmin, Dominic, Audriana Tabchi; Leo, Rehab, Naomi and Jericho Martin; Neph, Resam and Nephtali Andujar; Souha Hadeed; Sam Wehbey; Georgette, Jason,

Kensey, Joann, Janice Awad; Eyad, Jennifer, Eyan and Zayn Alraei; Joann and Daymyne Layne; Halim and Family; Georges Saba and Family; Silva, Issa, Reine Saba; Adele Alraei and Family; Zakieh Hanna; Robir, Nabel, Michael and their Families; Najeb, Rami, Zakeih, Simon, Rif, Youseff, Mariann; Saneh; Georgette and Family; Daed; Abed and Jaklin Makhoul; Elias, Sabah Makhoul; Bill, Maryann, Bowie Lohr; George and Mary Makdesi; Hala Sabbagh; George and Jesse Nakkoul; Eyad, Jennifer, Eyan and Zayn Alraei; Badiha Daher; Nick and Aida Daher; Faisal and Nadia Daher; Bashar Hanna and Family; Georges Bitar and Family; Layal Hanna and Family; Mona, Wail, Heather, Mitchell, Mallory, Abeer, Elyssa and Eyanne; Albert, Shadia, Christian, Michael and Alexia Bitar; The Saba Family; Afeef and Naify Hanna.

In Loving Memory

Metropolitan Philip; Bishop Antoun; Father George; David Moses; Fr. George Sayef; Sister Theofono; Salim and Namnoume Haddad; Issa and Jamileh Sabbagh; Richard, Marge, Betty, George, Levinia, Nawal, Watfa, Manera, Jameel, Badih; Tom Makoul; George and Hal Morrash; Elias Awad; Nakhle Awad; Issa, Bedra and Sameer Saba; Abraham, Adla and Mary Awad; Georges Daher, Hanna, Najeb, Zaki, Atina, Katour, Mona, Dalal, Adib, Samira, Salim, Jamileh, Mona, Leh, Layla, Awil, Loudy, Zakieh, Rimon, Mikhael; Daed; Georges, Tony Hanna; Atiyeh Moussa; Thomas Makhoul; Michael Awad; Steven Makdesi; Hanna Nakkoul; Rafaat Alraei; Jamileh Abboud, Hanna, George, Samar Daher; Rahmeh, Wajih Hanna; Alfred Hanna; Michael and Badih Bitar; Bassam, Khalil, Nizha Bitar; Elias Saba.

Eternal Candle Sponsors

Fay, Lisa and Dawn Moses

IN LOVING MEMORY OF

David Moses

Special donations to the Church

We acknowledge families and friends who have honored dear ones with monetary gifts given in the spirit of loving kindness.

- \$ Fr. Anthony, Kh. Minerva and Hope Sabbagh to the Church in loving memory of Fr. George Sayef; Sister Theofono; Salim and Namnoume Haddad; Issa and Jamileh Sabbagh; Richard, Marge, Betty, George, Levinia, Nawal, Watfa, Manera, Jameel, Badih; Tom Makoul; George and Hal Morrash; for the good health of Fr. Anthony, Kh. Minerva and Hope; Fr. Joshua, Kh. Tammy and Family; Fr. Joseph, Kh. Mary and Family; Deacon Peter, Christina and Family; Haddad, Sabbagh, Yazigi, Zaghtiti Families; Fr. James; Brother Nectarios; Jayah Family; Morra Family; Theresa; parishioners, god-children, clergy, nuns, monks; for peace and health for the world.
- \$ Georgette Awad to the Church for the good health of Georgette, Jason, Kensey, Joann, Janice Awad; Eyad, Jennifer, Eyan and Zayn Alraei; Joann and Daymyne Layne; Halim and Family; Georges Saba and Family; Silva, Issa, Reine Saba; Adele Alraei and Family; in loving memory of Elias Awad; Nakhle Awad; Issa, Bedra and Sameer Saba; Abraham, Adla and Mary Awad; Georges Daher; Elias Saba.
- \$ Zakieh Hanna in loving memory of Hanna, Najeb, Zaki, Atina, Katour, Mona, Dalal, Adib, Samira, Salim, Jamileh, Mona, Leh, Layla, Awil, Lody, Zahieh, Rimon, Mikhael; for the good health of Robir, Nabel, Michael and their Families; Najeb, Rami, Zakieh, Simon, Rif, Yoseff, Maryann, Saneh, Georgette and Family; Daed.
- \$ Zakieh Hanna in loving memory of Georges, Tony Hanna, Atiyeh Moussa.
- \$ Abed and Jaklin Makhoul in loving memory of Thomas Makhoul; Michael Awad; for the good health of Elias, Sabah Makhoul; Bill; Maryann, Bowie Lohr.
- \$ George and Mary Makdesi in loving memory of Steven Makdesi.
- \$ Eyad and Jennifer Alraei and Family for the good health of Badiha Daher, Georgette Awad; in loving memory of Elias Awad; Rafaat Alraei.
- \$ Faisal and Nadia Daher; Bashar Hanna and Family for the good health of Faisal and Nadia Daher; Bashar Hanna and Family; in loving memory of

Jamileh Abboud; Hanna, George, Samar Daher; Rahmeh, Wajih Hanna.

\$ The Bitar Family for the good health of Mona, Wail, Heather, Mitchell, Mallory, Abeer, Elyssa and Eyanna; Albert, Shadia, Christian, Michael and Alexia Bitar; in loving memory of Michael and Badih Bitar.

\$ Georges Bitar and Family in loving memory of Bassam, Khalil, Nizha Bitar; Elias Saba.

\$ The Saba Family in loving memory of Elias Saba.

\$ Afeef and Naify Hanna to the Church in loving memory of Alfred Hanna.

Special announcement during coronavirus epidemic

- All Liturgical services will be served with only clergy, servers and chanters. (No liturgical service can total more than 10 persons)
- This protects our church as we comply with directives from the Archdiocese.

Within the Church

We wish God's blessings to our parishioners and friends of St. George Church on their special day. Please keep your church office informed of birthdays, anniversaries and special family events (610) 439-1232. Best wishes for a wonderful Birthday/Anniversary and a year filled with good health and happiness.

Happy Birthday

3/30 Assy Yacoub	4/4 Hiyam Tabchi
James Frank Alotta	Rawad Albassit
3/31 Vilma Abraham	Joseph Mamari
4/1 Samantha Hanna	Daniella Makdesi
Christine Youwakim	Mia Khuzam
Julian Khuzam	Lorita Moussa
4/2 Michael J. Makoul	Sarena Skaf
Souad Al-Haddad	Kate Assad
4/3 Jacklyn Barakat	Reham Daher
Fadia Assad	

Happy Anniversary

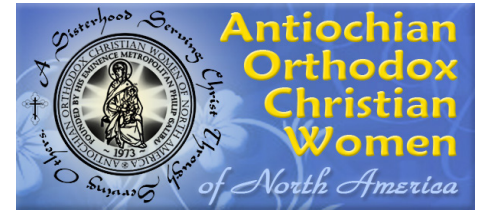
3/30/1975 Nakhle & Georgette Awad

Thought for the day

“Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”
Phil 4:6-7

March is Antiochian Women's Month

March is recognized by our Archdiocese as Antiochian Women's Month. "Antiochian Orthodox Christian Women of North America" has been an official organization of our Archdiocese for over 30 years. March is dedicated and set aside for the participation of Orthodox women in church life. The organization is open to all Antiochian Orthodox women, a sisterhood of women committed to serve our Lord, faith, parishes and Archdiocese. They serve in the spirit of Christian leadership, fostering love and service through charitable acts and creating fellowship and understanding through faith and traditions. They look forward to their journey of faith and work together and welcome more interested women. Meetings are held the second Tuesday of the month at 7 p.m. During Lent, the next meeting will be held Tuesday, April 10 at 6 pm.



Got questions? We've got answers

You can submit questions for Father Anthony concerning the church and faith or questions for the Administrative Committee concerning the operations of our church. Questions and answers will be replied to in this bulletin. Place your question in a special box located in the church hall. We're waiting to hear from you.

WHAT DOES THE CHURCH HAVE TO SAY?

“Master, I have brought unto thee my son, which hath a dumb spirit.” (Mark 9:17-31)

Dear brethren, today's gospel reading tells us that a father brought his child to Christ to be cured of his sickness saying, “Master, I have brought you my child. He suffers and is in pain. You are my last hope. Please make him well.” Christ inquired how long the child had suffered. The father answered, “paedeothen”—that is, from childhood.

Today's sermon is about our children. The sermon is timely. It is very necessary because our children are, these days, near destruction. They face dangers from all directions. It is not my intention to repeat the events and situations we all know and speak about. After all, as a popular proverb says, “a village in view needs towards it no guide.” Everyone now relives the tragedies through the newspapers, periodicals, radio, television, and by other news media.

What does the Church say concerning children? Or rather, does the Church have the right to speak about children? We have received many letters from parents who read this column begging us to write something about children. The time has come to write, not to the children, but to the parents. Regarding the second question, we insist that the Church has all the right to speak about children.

What is the Church? It is the Great Mother of Christians which gives rebirth, feeds, and instructs (or paedagoges) the believer for and to salvation. Basil the Great calls the Church “Mother of all and the nurse.” How come? The womb of the Church is the holy font where we regenerate ourselves and through it come into the world of true life. The Church is the nurse—*trophos*—which feeds us with Holy Communion. The Body and Blood of the Lord is the heavenly manna, the divine food that remains eternal. The divine word—*the kerygma*—is the “living water” which comes from the Holy Spirit, irrigating and watering the souls of men. It is the affectionate mother, the mother who covers, who loves, who warms, who becomes the consolation and balm for the sick, the naked and those who go astray.

But before the child goes to Church, he first goes home, to his parents. Children are not born like animals. We have two proofs of that. The first is from Scriptures; the difference in the creation of the animals and of man. The animals and the rest of the creatures were created through the order of God. As for man, God being especially concerned paid extraordinary attention in his creation. He first created the body and afterwards blew into him the breath of life. “And God said, let us make man in our image, after our likeness . . . and the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul” (Gen. 1:26-27). The second proof is from the natural birth. When an animal is born, it is armed or equipped with all the means to face life and natural enemies. Man is born naked and unable to face life alone, thereby in need of protection. Most of the animals live to the age of a young man, that is about twenty years, then they die leaving no trace. Man is born and he looks

toward heaven. His life does not end at the gravestone, but continues in the bosom of eternal life. "God created man for incorruption," the Scriptures say. Animals have no meaning of the future and for this reason do not understand death and its meaning. They live for the moment and care for the moment. Man thinks. He remembers the past and from its experience builds the future. Until the infant can think, that is reaches maturity, he needs direct help and assistance. First of all, he needs his mother's help, then afterwards his father's. There is no better picture in life and no more beautiful one than the picture of a mother who embraces her child in her arms and transplants, by her maternal milk, life and immortality to her child. The mother supplies him with food and the father begins to breed, groom and educate him. The Greek word for food is "*trophē*," and education is "*anatrophi*." The food—*trophē*—is concerned with development and bodily health of the child. The breeding—*anatrophi*—concerning the formation of the soul and the education of character is equally important. If the child lacks in health of his soul and in the formation of his character, having only strong muscles, he becomes the means and tool of destruction. The child becomes a wild beast, who lives not in the forest, but in the city. We have many such young people today, who burn banks, homes, overturn cars, kill and do other evil things. They are healthy in body, but sick in character.

The parents direct their interests only as to how their children will be strong bodily. Therefore, the parents are the initiative sources of the child's progress. This, Gregory of Nyssa, from his personal family experience, had in mind when he said, "From the family's fireplace men take the fire of holiness, and the home is the factory (or the shop) of virtue." St. Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "You are God's building" (I Cor. 3:9). If all the Christians are the edifice of God, young age is the foundation of the whole building. No architect, engineer or logical man builds a building on a decayed foundation, because with the first rattling, the edifice or building falls; "and great was the fall of it" (Matt. 7:24-27). The foundation of the building is Christ. "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ."

Faith to God is first. We must teach our children, *not* how to become materially rich, but how to become good men—not "*efporoi*" (rich), but "*estropoi*," with good manners. The example of parents is the greatest teacher. The small children not only accept and learn what they hear, but what they see is imprinted in their minds also and they imitate likewise.

After his family life, especially here in America, a child enters church life. We cannot say anything about school life, because even that typical and dry prayer was thrown out from public schools. According to the expression of a moralist, the school has become a focal point of revolution and of anarchy. The student has ceased to be a person, but rather a number. There is no personal interest for the student. Children of the first and second grade smoke without any shame in front of their teachers, that is, teachers who are unbalanced and without moral foundations. For this reason the Church's responsibility is doubled. The priest is a priest, but he is also the teacher of religion. What did the father in today's gospel do? He took his sick child and brought him to Jesus Christ. The parents of today's society should do the same, leading their children to the Church. The Church is a private clinic and a sanatorium without salary. It happens that when a child goes to church a conversion and some kind of an alteration takes place by the right hand of the Highest. A child goes into the Church and leaves as another. The Church is the treasury of divine grace that she grants to her children through her sacraments. The parents who bring their children to the "courts of the Lord" are blessed, while the parents who do not are unfortunate, and their children still more unfortunate. Instead of leading their children to church every Sunday, the parents lead them to other places. Such parents will mourn tomorrow because of their negligence to their children, and their mourning will be too late.

We have to understand once and for all that children without Christ are available or susceptible to any kind of crime. Therefore, it still remains for you to bring your children to the Church, exactly as the father in the gospel brought his child to Jesus Christ. Amen.

A note about “Building our bridge to the future”

Thank you for your interest in St. George’s finances. The Parish Council’s number one priority for the beginning of 2020 has been financial transparency. We are happy to answer any questions you have by email, phone or meeting by request. Many projects are underway to improve operations and bring our community even closer together. Contact us today to find out how you can be a part of Building Our Bridge to The Future by contributing your ideas, time and talents.



Your Brothers and Sisters in Christ,
The St. George Church Parish Council

Monthly financial reports available

St. George Church monthly financial reports are available in the church hall and electronically. Please visit www.stgeorgeallentown.com. and complete a request form to receive a report by email.

Volunteer needed for Excel instruction

Do you know how to use Excel? If so, a volunteer is needed to instruct an Orthodox college student in this program. A timeframe would be coordinated with the church office and instruction would be held at the church. If interested or for more information, call the church office (610) 439-1232.

During Lent, collect coins for “Food for Hungry People”

Coin collection boxes are available in the church hall for the Antiochian Orthodox Archdiocese’s 46th annual appeal for “Food for Hungry People.” Through your generosity, over \$6.1 million has been distributed to the hungry poor in the United States and abroad. Every year, we are able to help more people. Please pick up a collection box today.

Persevering in fearsome situations

by Fr. George Morelli

When encountering fearsome situations some people have an automatic appraisal that they must flee from them at all costs and that they should continue to keep such dangers in mind – and even “keep dwelling on the possibility of such events occurring” again. This is described by clinical cognitive psychologist Albert Ellis, (1962) as being “terribly concerned about” them. Another possible common reaction is to ‘freeze in place.’ Granted, there are some dangerous events in which it may, in fact, be appropriate to flee or freeze. To run and call attention from someone threatening harm would be functional in some situations; naturalists, however, would advise that when coming upon a harmful animal in the wild many times it is best to immediately stop, and not move to prevent calling attention to yourself. Most common everyday situations are not this extreme, and for our well-being it behooves us to deal with them.

When I was in post-graduate clinical training under Ellis, I was instructed in the technique of performing a public “shame exercise” and then teaching the technique and encourage its use by patients who were adversely affected with fear in their daily lives. One example suggested (and that I practiced) was to go into a large department store and shout out the time of day every 10 seconds while riding up and down the escalator for a few minutes. I quickly learned that I could get through such shameful and potentially fearsome situations. The “shame exercises” given to patients as psychotherapy ‘homework’ are related to their particular feared circumstances. To this day, I tell patients that they are capable of carrying fears with them as they journey through their various life activities.

Such counsel was not lost on some of our brave military individuals. Former U.S. Navy aviator, POW and Silver Star recipient John McCain has said: “We are taught to understand, correctly, that courage is not the absence of fear, but the capacity for action despite our fears. Courage is fear holding on a minute longer.” World War II General George S Patton, commented: “If we take the generally accepted definition of bravery as a quality which knows no fear, I have never seen a brave man. All men are frightened.” He further went on to say: “The time to take counsel of your fears is before you make an important battle decision. That’s the time to listen to every fear you can imagine. When

you have collected all the facts and fears and made your decision, turn off all your fears and go ahead!”

A spiritual perception when confronting life’s vicissitudes can aid us in persevering in fearsome situations. The Buddhist tradition would have us focus on detaching ourselves from our attachments: “From what is dear, grief is born, from what is dear, fear is born. For someone freed from what is dear there is no grief – so why fear? (Dhammapada 212). Judeo-Christian teachings would encourage us to see God accompanying us in frightening times. As we read in Psalm 90 1-5, “He that dwelleth in the aid of the most High, shall abide under the protection of the God of Jacob. He shall say to the Lord: Thou art my protector, and my refuge: my God, in him will I trust. For he hath delivered me from the snare of the hunters: and from the sharp word. He will overshadow thee with his shoulders: and under his wings thou shalt trust. His truth shall compass thee with a shield: thou shalt not be afraid of the terror of the night.” Thus, as Eastern Church Father, St. John Karpathos summarizes, “With our whole soul we must trust in God: as one of our Fathers said, ‘Entrust yourself to the Lord, and all will be entrusted to you.’” (Philokalia I, p. 308). While carrying our fears with us we can be assured that God is accompanying us as well, as our buckler, our shield, our protector.

“If you can believe, everything is possible for the believer”

by Kinda Rabih

Translated by Father Anthony Sabbagh

We are in the fourth Sunday of Lent and the third Sunday before Easter. On this day, the Church holds a commemoration for the righteous monk, John of the Ladder of Ascent or of Sinai.

The timing of this commemoration, along with the security decisions we are passing through today, to close churches and prevent the gathering of believers for their safety from the pandemic, may be a motivation and condolence to us.

Consider the life of this saint who lived 40 years separated from the world, in prayer and worship of the Lord, without entering a church building. Despite

this, he gained holiness after a long course of life and gave us his book “The Ladder of Virtues” a sacred legacy for all generations. This book consists of 30 steps and each step talks about one of the virtues that guide us to the path of salvation and holiness.

From the life of this ascetic saint, we see that the Lord God works in us everywhere and in time and is not bounded by times, place, or structures made with human hands. Our prayer and the practice of our faith transcends material boundaries. Our contact with God in prayer and worship and our meetings with one another are not prevented by distress, persecution, disease or death. “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Severity, distress, persecution, hunger, nakedness, danger, or sword?” (Romans 8:35) If the world closes its doors completely, the Lord’s eyes and ears will always be open to us. God is able to make us a church for Him wherever we are and whenever we meet, whether in the body or outside the body, through our faith and prayers – even if we are isolated from the whole world.

Therefore, my brothers and sisters, our present days are subjected to many evil attacks. Chief among them is this epidemic that dominates the whole world. All of these evil attacks will not be expelled or excluded from the earth and those who dwell in it, unless a person exerts a great effort and is armed with strong faith, atoning himself and uniting with God in prayer and reverence. Let us imitate Saint John the ascetic, who was sanctified after 40 years of struggle, fatigue and isolation from the world. Let us imitate his unshakeable faith.

And now we are in a global war, in which a war equals the strong with the weak, the rich with the poor, and the great powers with the least in one rank, and all human weapons have vanished and have no benefit. When war is cosmic, there is no defender and warrior in it other than the creator of the universe itself. God wanted to allow us to go through this experience, so that we make the asceticism of Saint John of Sinai. It is a way to contemplate, to live on and repent of our sins. We return to God as we rise up and go up on the scale of virtues one by one, so that we reach the summit of the life of holiness and salvation.

"إن كنت تستطيع أن تؤمن بكل شيء مستطاع للمؤمن".

لقد أصبحنا في الأحد الرابع من الصوم، وهو الأحد الثالث قبل الفصح. وفي هذا اليوم تقيم الكنيسة تذكراً للقديس البار الراهب يوحنا السلمي أو السينائي.

قد يكون موعد هذا التذكار مع ما نمر به في أيامنا هذه من قرارات أمنية لإغلاق الكنائس ومنع تجمع المؤمنين حفاظاً على سلامتهم من الوباء المتفشي، دافعاً وتعزيةً لنا.

إذا تأملنا في حياة هذا القديس الذي عاش أربعين عاماً متوحداً في عبادة الرب والصلاة دون أن يدخل بناءً حجريةً للكنيسة. وبالرغم من هذا نال القداسة بعد مسيرة حياة طويلة وترك لنا كتاب "سلم الفضائل" إرثاً مقدساً لجميع الأجيال. هذا الكتاب المؤلف من ثلاثين درجة وكل درجة تحدثنا عن فضيلة من الفضائل التي ترشدنا إلى درب الخلاص والقداسة.

فمن حياة هذا القديس المتوحد نرى أن الرب الإله يعمل فينا في كل مكان وزمان ولا تحده الأزمنة والأوقات ولا الهياكل المصنوعة بأيدٍ بشرية. إن صلاتنا وممارسة إيماننا تتخطى الحدود المادية. إن تواصلنا مع الله في الصلاة والعبادة واجتماعاتنا مع بعضنا لا تمنعه شدة ولا اضطهاد ولا مرض ولا موت.

"مَنْ سَيَفْصِلُنَا عَنْ مَحَبَّةِ الْمَسِيحِ؟ أَشِدَّةٌ أَمْ ضَيْقٌ أَمْ اضْطِهَادٌ أَمْ جُوعٌ أَمْ عُرْيٌ أَمْ خَطَرٌ أَمْ سَيْفٌ؟" (رو 8: 35) فإن أغلق العالم أبوابه كلها تبقى عيننا الرب وأذناه مفتوحتين لنا دائماً. فالله قادر أن يجعلنا كنيسة له حيثما نكون وكلمنا نجتمع، أفي الجسد أم خارج الجسد، من خلال إيماننا وصلواتنا حتى ولو كنا منعزلين عن العالم كله.

لذلك يا أخوتي إن إيماننا الحالية تتعرض لهجماتٍ شريرةٍ كثيرة. وعلى رأسها هذا الوباء المسيطر على العالم كله. فكل هذه الهجمات الشريرة لن تُخَرِّجَ أو تُطْرَدَ من الأرض والساكنين فيها ما لم يبذل الإنسان جهداً كبيراً ويتسلح بإيمان قوي ويكفر بذاته ويتحد بالله بالصلاة والخشوع. فلنتمثل بالقديس يوحنا السلمي الذي نال القداسة بعد جهادٍ وتعبٍ وانعزالٍ عن العالم أربعين سنةً. فلنقتد بإيمانه الذي لم يتزعزع البتة.

وها نحن الآن في حرب كونية، حربٍ تساوى فيها القوي مع الضعيف والغني مع الفقير والدول الكبرى مع الصغرى في مرتبة واحدة، وتلاشت فيها كل أسلحة البشر ولم يعد لها منفعة. عندما تكون الحرب كونيّة لا يوجد فيها مدافع ومحارب سوى خالق الكون نفسه. لقد أراد الله السماح لنا أن نمرّ في هذه التجربة، فلنجعل من سلم القديس يوحنا السينائي طريقاً نتأمله ونسير عليه ونحياه ونتوب عن خطايانا ونرجع إلى الله حتى نسمو ونصعد على سلم الفضائل درجة بعد درجة فنصل إلى قمة حياة القداسة والخلاص.... أمين
Kinda Rabih

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على أحدها لقب أسد بسبب غضبه الوحشي وشِدَّتِهِ المتفدَّة، وآخر يدعى أفعى بسبب السمِّ القاتل الذي يقتل مباشرة، وآخر أيضاً كالفنذ أو النعامه بسبب دهائه وخبثه".

دهاء؟ بطبيعة الحال. والمفارقة أيضاً بالنسبة إلى المزمور ٩٠، وكمثال واضح على الهجوم الشيطاني: هو المزمور الوحيد الذي استخدم إبليس إحدى آياته في تجربة السيد: «إن كنت ابن الله فاطرح نفسك إلى أسفل، لأنه مكتوب: أنه يوصي ملائكته بك، فعلى أيديهم يحملونك كيلا تصدم بحجر رجلك» (متى ٤: ٦)! لم يكمل إبليس الآية التالية من المزمور لأن فيها نبوءة ضده، إذ سوف يدوسه المسيح فعلاً تحت قدميه: «تطأ الأفعى والثعبان وتدوس الأسد والتنين». نذكر عند الساعة السادسة إذاً، مع أن السيد معلق على الصليب، غير أنه سيدوس إبليس «الحية القديمة». نرى فيه انتصار المسيح على إبليس ومؤامراته، وإبليس كُنِّيَ هنا بأسماء عدَّة، فهو الصياد الذي يضع فخاً في طريق المؤمنين، ويأتي بالوباء الخطر (بل هو نفسه الوباء الخطر!)، وهو سهم يطير في النهار، وهو هول الليل، وهلاك يفسد في الظهيرة، وهو الأسد والصل والشبل والثعبان، ولكنه مع هذا كله، قد سحق السيد رأسه لأجل خلاصنا نحن (كنيستته).

هو مزمور يعطي الطمأنينة لكل مناً، وينزع عنا كل خوف من أية مؤامرة شيطانية، ويعزز الثقة بأن الله سيعطي نصرته لنا ولكنيستته. هو مزمور يصلح إذاً للصلاة في كل أن.

الاشتراك في النشرة الاسبوعية بالبريد الإلكتروني

إذا أردت الاشتراك في «نشرة كنيستنا» لتصلك على بريدك الإلكتروني كل أسبوع قبل يوم الأحد، أينما كنت في العالم، فما عليك سوى أن تدخل إلى صفحة الكنيسة www.stgeorgeallentown.com أو متابعتنا عبر التواصل الاجتماعي (الفيسبوك):

حضرة الله، عبر خروج الوالد من التخبط ومبادرته نحو الطبيب؛ أما المرهم الثاني فهو الصلاة، حيث يرفع المعذب (أو والده) إلى الطبيب حيثيات واقعه الأليم ليسكب نوره عليه؛ بينما المرهم الثالث هو دخول الوالد مغامرة الإيمان والاتكال على الله، ولو بدأ باعتراف مؤلم كهذا: «أؤمن يا سيّد، فأعزّ عدم إيماني»؛ أما المرهم الرابع فهو الثبات في الإصغاء إلى كلمة الله وقبولها من دون ريب، حتّى ولو ظهر أنّها أدت بالواقع إلى حال أسوأ، كما حدث للصبيّ إذ «صرخ وصرعه (الروح) شديداً وخرج فصار كميّ»؛ وأخيراً، المرهم الخامس، وهو أن يأخذ المرء من الآن فصاعداً باليد الممدودة إليه لينهض من جديد ويبقى معافى.

لكنّ يسوع كانت تنتظره مهمة أخرى، وهي أن يداوي معاونيه الذين أخفقوا بشكل مروّع في رسالتهم. بالحقيقة، كان انكسار تلاميذه كبيراً أمام الجمع، لا بل أمام ذواتهم، خصوصاً بعد أن سبق فراوا نعمة الله الفاعلة فيهم، وبواسطتهم بالأقوال والأفعال. لربّما ظنّوا أنّ النعمة تعمل بشكل آلي. لكنّ يسوع ردّهم إلى المربع الأوّل من مسيرة تلمذتهم: أن يتبعوه هو، أي أن يقدّموا ذواتهم بالفعل إلى معلّمهم، فلا يتبجّحوا بالنعمة المعطاة لهم، ولا يستقلّوا عن معطيها بحجّة ضرورات الخدمة، ولا ينسوا الأساس الذي تقوم عليه علاقتهم به. فأبجديّة التلمذة تبدأ بما كشفه جوابه القاطع عن سؤالهم، في عطاء الجسد بالصوم وعطاء النفس بالصلاة: «هذا الجنس لا يمكن أن يخرج بشيء إلا بالصلاة والصوم» (مرقس ٩: ٢٩). فهكذا يصونون علاقتهم به ويحفظون النعمة المعطاة لهم؛ وهكذا ينتصرون على ذواتهم وعلى أشكال الشرّ في العالم؛ وهكذا يغلبون الشرير وكلّ الأعبية.

هذا كلّه كان رأس جبل الجليد المنظور سواء من قبل التلاميذ أو من الجموع. أما بالنسبة إلى يسوع، فالمسألة لم تنته هنا، فهي أعمق بكثير. أمامه مسيرة مضيئة، وهي شفاء الإنسانية كلّها، وهو على استعداد لتلقّي كلّ الصفعات التي يكيلها له الشيطان أو الانسان من أجل خلاص هذا الأخير. أليس هذا ما كشفه بقوله: «ابن الانسان يسلم إلى أيدي الناس فيقتلونه وبعد أن يقتل يقوم في اليوم الثالث» (مرقس ٩: ٣١)؟

فهل يسوع غريب بعد اليوم عن واقعنا العامّ وواقعنا الشخصي المتمثّل بعجزنا، أو عدم إيماننا أو آلامنا؟ هل نستحقّ منه اليوم أن يُسمعنا صراخه العابر للأجيال: «أيّها الجيل غير المؤمن، إلى متى أكون معكم؟ إلى متى أحتملكم؟» هل نعترف باتّضاع ونطلب باستعطاف: «إن كنت تستطيع شيئاً فتحنّ علينا وأعنا... أو من يا سيّد، فأعزّ عدم إيماني»؟ هل نبادر إلى أن نسأله، بعد انكسارنا، أن يعلمنا كيف لا نخذله ولا

نخذل أنفسنا ولا كنيسةنا بعد اليوم: «لماذا لم نقدر نحن على أن نخرجه؟» (مرقس ٩: ١٩؛ ٢٢ و ٢٨)؟

ليست خيبة الأمل هي ما دفعت يسوع إلى الخروج «من هناك» وأن «يجتازوا الجليل» من دون «أن يعلم أحد» (مرقس ٩: ٣٠). فهو يتابع عمله حتّى النهاية، حتّى يكتمل في كلّ واحد منّا. وهذا يتابعه حتّى يومنا الحاضر، خصوصاً في الظروف الحاضرة! هيّا بنا إذا نلاقي يسوع كما نحن. فلنكشّف له عجزنا ومعاناتنا؛ فلنقبل انتهاره إيانا ودعوته إلينا؛ فليصلح ما اعوجّ في الجسد والروح والخدمة؛ فليعلمنا سبيل الإيمان والتلمذة؛ فليحتملنا قليلاً بعد، فأبنا نصرخ إليه في محنتنا، مع الكنيسة كلّها، والإنسانية جمعاء: «ربّي، أنت هنا، فاقبل صوت تضرّعي، واعترافي وضعفي؛ تلطف على أبائي وإخوتي وأترابي؛ انظر بعين الرحمة والإشفاق على جبلتك؛ قدنا إلى الإيمان الثابت بك؛ علمنا أن نكون معاونين لك مخلصين؛ أنهضنا من اكتفائيتنا وألمنا؛ بارك بيمينك عمل يديك؛ أعطنا أن نسبح اسمك في كلّ أن وفي أيّ ظرف؛ فأنت الكلّ في الكلّ». آمين.

سلوان

متروبوليت جبيل والبترون وما يليهما
(جبل لبنان)

الساكن في عون العليّ

لقد كان المزمور التسعون دائماً من بين المزامير الأكثر تفضيلاً لدى المسيحيين، هي حقيقة تتجلّى بوضوح لكونه المزمور الافتتاحي لخدمة الجنّاز في الكنيسة الأرثوذكسية، عبر مرافقة النفس المؤمنة بالغبطة في «السبيل الذي تسير فيه». هو أيضاً واحداً من المزامير القليلة التي وقع اختيار جميع المسيحيين عليها في العصور القديمة من أجل الصلوات اليوميّة. على ذلك، ظهر المسيحيون أقلّ يقيناً بشأن أيّ وقت من اليوم يجب أن يُصلى فيه المزمور، ذلك بأنّ فيه إشارات متناقضة لفترات من اليوم، كالليل والظهيرة: «فلا تخش من هول الليل، ولا من سهم يطير في النهار، ولا من أمر يسري في الظلام، ولا من وقعة وشيطان تصادفه عند الظهيرة».

بسبب الإشارات فيه إلى ضوء النهار والظهيرة، اختاره المسيحيون في الشرق لصلاة الساعة السادسة (١٢ ظهراً)، وهو التقليد السائد حتّى اليوم. وفق القديس

الأحد الرابع من الصوم البارّ يوحنا السلميّ

الأصمّ أنا أمرك بأن اخرج منه ولا تُعدّ تدخل فيه. فصرخ وخبطه كثيرًا وخرج منه، فصار كالصوت حتى قال كثيرون إنه قد مات. فأخذ يسوع بيده وأنهضه فقام. ولما دخل بيتًا سأله تلاميذه على انفراد: لماذا لم نستطع نحن أن نُخرجه؟ فقال لهم: إن هذا الجنس لا يمكن أن يخرج إلا بالصلاة والصوم. ولما خرجوا من هناك اجتازوا في الجليل ولم يُرد أن يدري أحد، فإنه كان يُعلم تلاميذه ويقول لهم: إن ابن البشر يُسلم إلى أيدي الناس فيقتلونه، وبعد أن يُقتل يقوم في اليوم الثالث.

المتلقّي الصّفات والشّافي منها

يشعر البعض أنّ صفعات كثيرة موجعة قد توالى عليه في الآونة الأخيرة، بوتيرة لم تسمح له بأن يتنفس الصعداء، فقد تنوّعت مصادرهما ومسبباتها، وخلفت وراءها معاناة لا تطاق. تجدك أمام حالة من التدمر والشكوى والضياع، وشعور بالخوف والقلق على الذات وعلى المصير. إنها تجربة قاسية، يصعب على الكثيرين تحملها، خصوصًا في غياب استعداد كافٍ وإيمان قويّ. إنجيل الأحد الرابع من الصوم يرسم لنا طريقًا للمداواة من هذه الصّفات المؤلمة والوصول إلى المعافاة التامة.

إذا تابعنا حادثة شفاء الابن الأخرس عن قرب، يمكننا أن نميّز خمس صفعات توالى. الصّفة الأولى هي عذاب الابن من «روح أخرس»؛ والثانية هي عجز التلاميذ عن مساعدته؛ والثالثة هي معاناة الوالد في رؤية ابنه معذبًا من دون علاج؛ والرابعة هي الحقيقة التي كشفها المسيح بصرخته بشأن «الجيل غير المؤمن»؛ والخامسة هي الجمع الذي تراكض، ربّما ليتفرّج على مجريات الحدث المثير للاهتمام (مرقس ٩: ١٧-٢٥).

فمن تلقى هذه الصّفات الخمس يا ثرى؟ إنه يسوع! فهو يحبّ خليقته والإنسان المخلوق على صورته، ويراه كيف يتخبّط في العذاب من دون أن يعرف تمامًا كيف يشفى. فكيف داواه يسوع؟ إليكم الخطوات الخمس التي يرسمها لنا الإنجيل. أولاً، يطلب أن يقدّم إليه الابن المعذب؛ ثم يدخل في حوار مع الوالد بشأن معرفة واقع ابنه؛ بعدها، يسير استعدادات الوالد بشأن إيمانه بشفاء ابنه؛ ثم يأمر الروح الأخرس بالخروج من الصبي؛ وأخيرًا، يتوجّه هذه الأفعال الأربعة بأن أمسك بيد الصبي المرمي على الأرض وساعده على النهوض والاستواء معافى (مرقس ٩: ٢٠-٢٧). لقد داوى يسوع الصّفات الخمس التي تلقّتها خليقته المعذبة باستعماله خمسة مراحل ردّ بواسطتها الجمال والعافية اللذين تستحقهما. طيب بكلّ مرهم أمرًا وعلم الإنسان العليل كيف يسلك طريق المعافاة حتى يصير صحيحًا. المرهم الأول هو الوقوف في

الرب يعطي قوة لشعبه. الرب يبارك شعبه بالسلام.

الرسالة: عبرانيين ٦: ١٣-٢٠

يا إخوة، إن الله لما وعد إبراهيم، إذ لم يمكن أن يُقسم بما هو أعظم منه، أقسم بنفسه قائلاً: لأباركك بركة وأكثرتك تكثيرًا. وذلك إذ تآتى نال الموعد. وإنما الناس يُقسّمون بما هو أعظم منهم، وتنقضي كلّ مشاجرة بينهم بالقسم للتثبيت. فلذلك لما شاء الله أن يزيد ورثة الموعد بيانًا، لعدم تحوّل عزمه، توسّط بالقسم، حتى نحصل بأمرين لا يتحوّلان ولا يمكن أن يُخلف الله فيهما، على تعزية قويّة نحن الذين التجأنا إلى التمسك بالرجاء الموضوع أمانًا، الذي هو لنا كمرساة للنفس أمينة راسخة تدخل إلى داخل الحجاب حيث دخل يسوع كسابق لنا، وقد صار على رتبة ملكيصادق رئيس كهنة إلى الأبد.

الإنجيل: مرقس ٩: ١٧-٣١

في ذلك الزمان دنا إلى يسوع إنسانٌ وسجد له قائلاً: يا معلّم، قد أتيتك بابني به روح أبكم، وحيثما أخذه يصصره فيزيد ويصرف بأسنانه ويبيس. وقد سألت تلاميذك أن يُخرجوه فلم يقدرُوا. فأجابه قائلاً: أيها الجيل غير المؤمن، إلى متى أكون عندكم؟ حتى متى أحتملكم؟ هلّم به إليّ. فأتوه به. فلما رآه للوقت صرعه الروح فسقط على الأرض يتمرّع ويُرّبد. فسأل أباه: منذ كم من الزمان أصابه هذا؟ فقال: منذ صباه، وكثيرًا ما ألقاه في النار وفي المياه ليهلكه. ولكن إن استطعت شيئًا فتحنن علينا وأغننا. فقال له يسوع: إن استطعت أن تؤمن فكلّ شيء مستطاع للمؤمن. فصاح أبو الصبي من ساعته بدموع وقال: إني أوّمن يا سيّد، فأغثّ عدم إيماني. فلما رأى يسوع أنّ الجمع يتبادرون إليه، انتهر الروح النجس قائلاً له: أيها الروح الأبكم