

## 2020 St. George Church Staff and Organizations

### Pastor

The Very Rev. Anthony G. Sabbagh (610) 653-6405

### Assistant Pastor

Rev. Joseph Landino (408) 219-2871

### Assistant Pastor

Rev. Thomas Underwood (610) 515-5916

### Deacon

Peter Attar (610) 462-7688

### Altar Boy Captain

George Khallouf (484) 554-0889

### Parish Council

The Very Rev. Anthony G. Sabbagh, Chairman

Dave Davis, President

Victor Hanna, Vice President

Albert Bitar, Treasurer; Esper Hanna, Vice Treasurer

Reema Richie, Secretary

Abe Assad, Corresponding Secretary

Dima Butros, Ass't. Corresponding Secretary

Kenneth Abboud Dr. Sami Moussa

Fred Davis Dr. George Nassoor

Elias Gharzouzi

### Office Administrator

Donna Becker

### Custodian

Adnan Sabbagh

### Building/Planning

The Very Rev. Anthony G. Sabbagh, Pastor

Rev. Joseph Landino, Ass't. Pastor

Dave Davis, Chair

George Nassoor, Co-Chair

### Choir

#### Members:

Jouhayna Al-Amm Hanna Sayegh *chanter*

Kate Assad Marwan Sabbagh *chanter*

Christina Attar Karsten Boyer *chanter*

George Nassoor Anthony Davis

Naoumy Sabbagh Kh. Minerva Sabbagh

David T. Davis Nour Salloum

Delores Edwards

### Ladies Altar Society

Ebtisam Moussa, President

Souha Hadeed, Vice President

Hiyam Tabchi, Treasurer

Wafaa Rabi, Corresponding Secretary

Suzanne Zoudeh, Recording Secretary

### Children's Relief Fund

Kh. Minerva Sabbagh

### Sunday School

Sharon Barber-Lui, Director

Maggie Abboud Kh. Mary Landino

Reema Richie Rita Mamari

Christina Attar Julia Marques

Dima Hanna Zaneh Khuzam

Jaklin Sabbagh Rehab Martin

Abe & Fadia Assad

### Teen SOYO

The Very Rev. Anthony G. Sabbagh, Pastor

Spiritual Advisor:

Rev. Joseph Landino

Head Lay Advisor:

Khouria Mary Landino

Assistant Lay Advisors:

Khalil Yacoub Simone Dergham

Karsten Boyer Salma Zaoudeh

Abe & Fadia Assad

Matthew & Anna Maria Kochan

Junior Lay Advisor:

Ryan Attar

Teen SOYO Officers:

Gabriella Landino, President

Katerina Landino, Vice President

Joy Sabbagh, Treasurer

Alexis Barhoum, Recording Secretary

John Assad, Corresponding Secretary

Thomas Shetayh, Elie Saba, Historian

### Musical Band

Ibrahim El-Moreef Vivian Abboud

### Homeless Dinner Ministry

Naife Khalouf, Coordinator

Members of Teen SOYO

### Bookstore

Kh. Minerva Sabbagh Salma Zaoudeh

### Website

Elie Jabbour George Issa

### Facebook

Hope Sabbagh

### Charitable Ministries

The Very Rev. Anthony G. Sabbagh

Nasser Sabbagh, Naife Khalouf

Bachar Issa, Hala Atiyeh, Fouad Salloum

Nour Salloum, Dima Botros

May 24, 2020

Tone 5 / Eothinon 8

# *Sixth Sunday of Pascha* *Sunday of the Blind Man*

*Today we commemorate: Venerable Stylites Simeon the Younger of the Mountain of Wonders and Nikitas of Pereyaslavl-Zalesski; Martyr Meletios the General of Galatia; Venerable Vincent of Lerins*

## *Divine Liturgy*

### THE FIRST ANTIPHON

Verse: Shout with joy to God, all the earth; sing to His Name, give glory to His praises.

*Refrain: Through the intercessions of the Theotokos, O Savior, save us.*

Verse: Say to God: How awesome are Thy works; let all the earth worship Thee, and sing to Thee. Let it sing a song to Thy Name, O Most High. (Refrain)

Glory... Both now... (Refrain)

### THE SECOND ANTIPHON

Verse: May God have mercy upon us, and bless us, and may He cause His face to shine upon us, and have mercy upon us.

*Refrain: Save us, O Son of God, Who art risen from the dead; who sing to Thee. Alleluia.*

Verse: That Thy way may be known upon earth, Thy salvation among all nations; let the people give thanks to Thee, O God, let all the people give thanks to Thee. (Refrain)

Verse: May God bless us, and may all the ends of the earth fear Him. (Refrain)

Glory... Both now... O, only begotten Son and Word of God...

## THE THIRD ANTIPHON

Verse: Let God arise, and let His enemies be scattered, and let those who hate Him flee from before His face.

Refrain: Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down death by death; and upon those in the tombs, bestowing life!

Verse: As smoke vanishes, so let them vanish, as wax melts before the fire. (Refrain)

Verse: So let sinners perish before the face of God, and let the righteous be glad. (Refrain)

Verse: This is the day which the Lord hath made; let us rejoice and be glad in it. (Refrain)

## THE EISODIKON (ENTRANCE HYMN) OF PASCHA

In the gathering places bless ye God the Lord, from the springs of Israel. Save us, O Son of God, Who art risen from the dead, who sing to Thee: Alleluia.

- Now sing these apolytikia in the following order.

## RESURRECTIONAL APOLYTIKION IN TONE FIVE

Let us believers praise and worship the Word; coeternal with the Father and the Spirit, born of the Virgin for our salvation. For, He took pleasure in ascending the Cross in the flesh to suffer death; and to raise the dead by His glorious Resurrection.

- Now sing the apolytikion of the patron saint or feast of the temple.

## THE KONTAKION OF PASCHA IN TONE EIGHT

Though Thou didst descend into the grave, O Immortal One, yet didst Thou destroy the power of Hades, and didst arise as victor, O Christ God, calling to the myrrh-bearing women, Rejoice, and giving peace unto Thine Apostles, O Thou Who dost grant resurrection to the fallen.

## THE EPISTLE

*Thou, O Lord, shalt keep us and preserve us.*

*Save me, O Lord, for the godly man hath disappeared.*

*The Reading from the Acts of the Apostles. (16:16-34)*

IN THOSE DAYS, as we Apostles were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a slave girl who had a spirit of divination and brought her owners much gain by soothsaying. She followed Paul and us, crying, "These men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to you the way of salvation." And this she did for many days. But Paul was annoyed, and turned and said to the spirit, "I charge you in the Name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." And it came out that very hour. But when her owners saw that their hope of gain was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the market place before the rulers; and when they had brought them to the magistrates they said, "These men are Jews and they are disturbing our city. They advocate customs which it is not lawful for us Romans to accept or practice." The crowd joined in attacking them; and the magistrates tore the garments off them and gave orders to beat them with rods. And when they had inflicted many blows upon them, they threw them into prison, charging the jailer to keep them safely. Having received this charge, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks. But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken. And immediately all the doors were opened and every one's fetters were unfastened. When the jailer woke and saw that the prison doors were open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped. But Paul cried with a loud voice, "Do not harm yourself, for we are all here." And he called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas, and brought them out and said, "Men, what must I do to be saved?" And they said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household." And they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their wounds, and he was baptized at once, with all his family. Then he brought them up into his house, and set food before them; and he rejoiced with all his household that he had believed in God.

## THE GOSPEL

*The Reading from the Holy Gospel according to St. John. (9:1-38)*

AT THAT TIME, when Jesus was passing, He saw a man blind from his birth. And His Disciples asked Him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” Jesus answered, “It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be made manifest in him. I must work the works of Him Who sent me, while it is day; night comes, when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.” As He said this, he spat on the ground and made clay of the spittle and anointed the man’s eyes with the clay, saying to him, “Go, wash in the pool of Siloam” [which means Sent]. So he went and washed and came back seeing. The neighbors and those who had seen him before as a beggar, said, “Is not this the man who used to sit and beg?” Some said, “It is he”; others said, “No, but he is like him.” He said, “I am the man.” They said to him, “Then how were your eyes opened?” He answered, “The man called Jesus made clay and anointed my eyes and said to me, ‘Go to Siloam and wash’; so I went and washed and received my sight.” They said to him, “Where is He?” He said, “I do not know.” They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind. Now it was a Sabbath day when Jesus made the clay and opened his eyes. The Pharisees again asked him how he had received his sight. And he said to them, “He put clay on my eyes, and I washed, and I see.” Some of the Pharisees said, “This man is not from God, for He does not keep the Sabbath.” But others said, “How can a man who is a sinner do such signs?” There was a division among them. So they again said to the blind man, “What do you say about Him, since He has opened your eyes?” He said, “He is a prophet.” The Jews did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight, until they called the parents of the man who had received his sight, and asked them, “Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?” His parents answered, “We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; but how he now sees we do not know, nor do we know who opened his eyes. Ask him; he is of age, he will speak for himself.” His parents said this because they feared the Jews, for the Jews had already agreed that if anyone should confess Him to be Christ, he was to be put out of the synagogue. Therefore his parents said, “He is of age, ask

him.” So for the second time they called the man who had been blind, and said to him, “Give God the praise; we know that this man is a sinner.” He answered, “Whether He is a sinner, I do not know; one thing I know, that though I was blind, now I see.” They said to him, “What did He do to you? How did He open your eyes?” He answered them, “I have told you already, and you would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you too want to become His disciples?” And they reviled him, saying, “You are His disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where He comes from.” The man answered, “Why, this is a marvel! You do not know where He comes from, and yet He opened my eyes. We know that God does not listen to sinners, but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does His will, God listens to him. Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a man born blind. If this man were not from God, He could do nothing.” They answered him, “You were born in utter sin, and would you teach us?” And they cast him out. Jesus heard that they had cast him out, and having found him He said, “Do you believe in the Son of God?” He answered, “And Who is He, Sir, that I may believe in Him?” Jesus said to him, “You have seen Him, and it is He who speaks to you.” He said, “Lord, I believe”; and he worshiped Him.

## MEGALYNARION FOR PASCHA IN TONE ONE

The Angel cried unto her that is full of grace: O pure Virgin, rejoice, and again I say, rejoice; for thy Son hath arisen from the grave on the third day. Shine, shine, O new Jerusalem, for the glory of the Lord hath arisen upon thee; dance now and be glad, O Zion, and do thou exult, O pure Theotokos, in the arising of Him Whom thou didst bear.

## KOINONIKON (COMMUNION HYMN) OF PASCHA IN TONE EIGHT

Receive ye the body of Christ; taste ye the Fountain of immortality.

- Instead of “We have seen the true light,” sing “Christ is Risen” once.

## 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; Fay, Lisa and Dawn Moses; Abed and Jaklin Makhoul; Elias, Sabah Makhoul; Bill, Maryann, Bowie Lohr; George and Mary Makdesi; Hala Sabbagh; George and Jesse Nakkoul; Badiha Daher; Nick and Aida Daher; Faisal and Nadia Daher; Bashar Hanna and Family; Georges Bitar 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; Thomas Makhoul; Michael Awad; Steven Makdesi; Jamileh Abboud, Hanna, George, Samar Daher; Rahmeh, Wajih Hanna; Alfred Hanna; Michael and Badih Bitar; Bassam, Khalil, Nizha Bitar.

## Eternal Candle Sponsor

*Fay, Lisa and Dawn Moses*

IN LOVING MEMORY OF

*David Moses*

## Sponsor the Eternal Light or a Seven-Day Candle

Looking for a tangible way to remember a departed loved one or pray for the good health of a friend or relative, or recognize a special occasion? Consider a one-week sponsorship of the Eternal Light or a Seven-Day Candle that will burn continuously in the House of God asking Him to make your prayers acceptable to his holy Majesty, that His love, mercy and peace will surround and sustain those whom you are praying for in this life and the life to come.

- The sponsor's name and who is to be mentioned and prayed for will also be printed in this bulletin for the week selected.
- A donation of \$10 or more per week should accompany sponsor's request.
- Please see our website at [www.stgeorgeallentown.com](http://www.stgeorgeallentown.com) to sponsor a week or call the church office weekdays at (610) 439-1232.

## Homeless Dinner Sponsors

We thank the following for sponsoring a Homeless Dinner.

*Leo & Rehab (Tabchi) Martin*

FOR THE GOOD HEALTH OF

*Our Daughter, Naomi on her Fifth Birthday*

*Our Son, Jericho*

*&*

*Our Nephew, Nephtali on his Second Birthday*

*Happy Birthday to Naomi & Nephtali!*

Homeless dinners are offered to the poor in our community at the Salvation Army in Allentown and served by our Teen SOYO members. Contributions are always welcome. For more information, please contact Naife Khalouf, coordinator, at (610) 432-6101.

## Thought for the day

“Be strong and of a good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them: for the This Diocese IS a family, more than anything else. We are a family born of the water and the Spirit. Through Baptism and Chrismation, we receive the Gift of the Holy Spirit that unites us all beyond the power of human blood.”

+ His Eminence, Metropolitan JOSEPH

## 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.

## 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.

- \$ Abed and Jaklin Makhoul in loving memory of Thomas Makhoul; Michael Awad; for good health of Elias, Sabah Makhoul; Bill; Maryann, Bowie Lohr.
- \$ George and Mary Makdesi in loving memory of Steven Makdesi.
- \$ 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 Eyanne; 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.
- \$ Afeef and Naify Hanna to the Church in loving memory of Alfred Hanna.

### *Sixth Sunday after Easter*

## “LICTER EXPEDI VIRGAS AND VERBERA”

**“He rejoiced, and so did all his family, that He had become a believer in God” (Acts 16:16–34).**

Dear brethren, in order to fully understand today’s epistle reading, we should explain the whole chapter as well as the historical background. St. Paul was in Troas. The city was very famous from Homer’s era. Troas was the end of the East and beginning of the West. Two different worlds were united there: the world of Asia and the world of Europe. Alexander the Great, the young King of Macedonia, brought through Troas the gifts of Europe, the Greek language and philosophy to the East, as far as India. When he arrived in Troas, he came forth from his ship in full armor and offered a sacrifice to his hero Achilles. It is said that Caesar of Rome wanted to transfer the Empire’s capital from Rome to Troas in order for the capital to be the link of the two worlds.

So our hero, St. Paul, was in Troas with his two disciples, Silas

and Timothy. There he met Luke for the first time. He was thinking of where to go; to the seacoast of Asia Minor or to Bithynia; but whereas man cannot give an answer, the Spirit of God provides one in his manner and dissolves the doubts. During the night a vision appeared to Paul. The vision was of a man from Macedonia, standing there pleading with him. “Come over into Macedonia and help us,” the man said. The explanation of the vision was given by the Apostle. “For we concluded that God had called us to tell them the Good News.” “Come Over” to help us, is sound to our ears, of the voices of many people from the many corners of the earth. The people are asking for help, they ask for the Good News.

The day Paul left Troas for Philippi was a great day in the history of mankind. Why? Because for the first time the Christian sermon was being extended beyond the borders of the East. Until then the sermon was preached mostly in the synagogues. Now the sermon would be preached to the philosophers of Athens.

The first city Paul came to was Philippi. This famous city’s original name was Krenidae, due to the many curing fountains which were there. But Philip, the father of Alexander the Great, enlarged the city both militarily and economically. For this reason he gave the city his name, a popular custom of the ancient world. There was no synagogue because of the few Jews living there, but there were enough to permit the formation of a council. Even though the Jews had no synagogue, they had an enclosed place of prayer, probably a fenced grove called a “proseuche.” There Paul erected his pulpit “and began to talk to the women who had come to the meeting.” The first person who believed in Paul’s sermon was a rich lady from Thyatira, a merchant in expensive purple, named Lydia. Behold what the great theologian and Paulologist says about the Christian women. “The women were the last ones to remain by the Cross, and they were the first at the empty tomb. The gospels have a sad story of hypocrisy, hatred, persecution, calumny, treason and cowardly flight to tell, but these things are never told about women. The men are in the spotlight as the heralds of the Gospel, as the great missionaries and the representatives of religion. But where would Christianity be today without the Christian woman in her role as mother, wife, sister, and the dispenser of charity in a thousand different kinds of misery?

The second step of St. Paul was to heal an unfortunate slave from an evil spirit. She was said to have a pythonic spirit, or she was a “pythia,” one of the oracles that was under the protection of Apollo, who was the god of divination. We can compare her to today’s fortune tellers who predict many things, and some of them

can come true. As we have said before, Satan uses them to complete his plans. "There is nothing surprising about that; Satan himself masquerades as an angel of Light" (II Cor. 11:14). But there exists one difference between today's fortune tellers and that slave. While those of today are rich and keep the money they gain from that profession for themselves, that unfortunate slave was a source of income for her masters. She was very poor, having one pair of slippers and a cheap cloth to cover her nakedness, with which she was satisfied. She had duties without any rights. How many such slaves exist all over the world who await the sermon of Paul? The curing action of St. Paul: "In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, I order you to come out of her," provoked the wrath of her master. They seized Paul and Silas and forcibly led them to the city square before the town officials. The apostles were arrested. The judges did not ask much about their status, but sentenced them summarily to be "beaten with rods." Lector, Expedi Virgas, ad Verbera (untie the rods, flog the prisoners). Wounded and bleeding, in pain and affliction, they were thrown in jail. And we continuously complain about our old model car, about our old furniture, and because our church's carpet is not wall to wall.

Paul was bound in prison, but free in Christ. Here is the real freedom; to be in jail, and to feel free in Christ. "About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God. The prisoners listened to them." This may have been their prayer:

"When the Lord brought back the captivity of Sion, We became like men comforted. Then was our mouth filled with gladness: And our tongues with joy. Then shall they say among the Gentiles, The Lord hath done great things for them (Psalm 125:1).

A great earthquake occurred after the prayer. Sometimes God makes a storm His messenger, or an angel, or fire; but this night an earthquake was the herald of His will. The prison was dissolved. The doors were opened. The chains fell from the apostles' hands. The guard of the prison was ready to commit suicide, but Paul stopped him saying, "Don't injure yourself, we are all here." The jailer understood that this sign was great and beyond the limits of rational reasoning and natural laws. He asked advice for his salvation, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" Only the hardened and the corrupted see the signs of God and refuse to comprehend them and refuse to come to realize themselves and to repent. The answer Paul gave him is the same one he gives us, "Commit yourself to the Lord Jesus Christ, and you and your family will be saved." Salvation is not a matter of time, but is the internal intention of the man.

Salvation is already "prepared" and awaits any man. Before his baptism the jailer washed the wounds of the apostles. He was then baptized with his family and afterwards provided the apostles with a good meal. "And the whole family rejoiced." The door of salvation remains open. O man, what do you expect?

## 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

5/24 Christian Botros  
Tina Dalessandro  
Amanda Awad  
5/25 Manwella Dergham  
5/26 Majed Dergham  
Sami Rabih  
George Khouli  
5/27 Albert Charlie Jr.  
Richard Carlson  
5/28 Alayna Issa  
Nesreen Hanna  
5/29 Nadia Daher  
5/30 Suzan Khannoura

### Happy Anniversary

5/24/86 Tami & Nicola Skaf  
5/24/08 Michael & Vivian Kaplan  
5/25/05 Joseph & Dana Mauro  
5/25/13 Assy & Raymonda Yacoub  
5/26/01 George & Kimberlyh Jarrah  
5/27/78 George & Kathy Nassoor  
5/28/95 Victor & Fairouz Koury  
5/28/05 Ziad & Catherine Hanna  
5/28/06 Albert & Shadia Bitar  
5/28/17 Neph & Resam Andujar  
5/30/09 George & Antoinette Saliby  
5/30/09 Feras & Jehane Saadeh

# Go Forth...

## SUNDAY OF THE MAN BORN BLIND

**“Believe in the Lord Jesus, and You Will Be Saved”**

Today’s Epistle tells us the story of Paul and Silas in the city of Philippi, in Macedonia. It is an account that has several important lessons for us.

First, let us note that Paul would not accept the advertising that was offered by the spirit of divination possessing the slave girl who followed after him and Silas calling out: “These men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to you the way of salvation”. He cast the spirit out of the woman, for although the message was correct, the source was wrong. He would not allow the Gospel to be compromised by association with occultism.

This is a message that is well pondered upon in these days when so many people are consulting astrologers, mediums and diviners instead of putting their trust in the One Living God, who has created everything and who holds everything in His hands. We need to separate ourselves from these things which do not bring people to God, but rather draw them to philosophies, movements, groups and people whose version of the Gospel is quite different from that proclaimed by our Lord Jesus and His Apostles.

Second, let us note the faith that Paul and Silas had in the Lord’s provision when they

were arrested and chained in prison. They kept right on praying and singing hymns to



God, drawing the attention of the jailer, who seems to have been quite impressed by this unusual behaviour on the part of his prisoners. When the fortuitous earthquake broke the chains and opened the prison doors, we note that the two Servants of God did not rush out to claim their freedom, but instead showed concern for the jailer who, like a good Roman soldier was bound to give up his life, having lost the prisoners which the state had placed in his charge.

This concern, following the extraordinary example of faith the jailer had witnessed, brought him right to the point of conversion to the Lord, who inspired such actions and attitudes on the part of His Ser-

vants. He fell down on his knees before Paul and Silas and asked with trembling voice: “Men, what must I do to be saved?” The answer came right away, with great conviction: “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household”.

Let us further note that salvation was a gift offered not only to an individual, but rather to a whole group - the jailer and his **household**.

This meant his family and servants. Are we blessed by the faith and trust we have found in

God? Then let us prayerfully claim and offer prayerfully this wonderful gift to our family and friends. Yes, it is theirs as well, because of the faith we have been given. It is wrong to force it upon people, but the Holy Spirit will give us the grace, the wisdom and the means to help our people receive the gift in His own good time.

Let us also note the certainty that Paul’s and Silas’ words convey. They do not say: “You **may** be saved” or “If you do certain things then you ought to be saved”. They say “You **will** be saved”. God loves us - He truly does. He does not want us to remain in ignorance about the way to salvation. He wants us to be secure in the knowledge that faith in Jesus Christ will bring about our salvation, no matter if our experience of our fallings and failings tends to make us feel that we are no nearer salvation than when we first decided to put our trust in Christ. God wants us to know that. He loves us and is bringing us to salvation.

May this knowledge bring us joy and encouragement to keep on following the Lord each and every day of our lives.

Commentary by Very Reverend Dr. Ihor G. Kutash, Montreal, Quebec.

## PEACE

When the Lord said to the apostles, ‘My peace I give unto you’, He added ‘not as the world gives’ (John 14:27).

He did not, that is to say, give peace in a simple, conventional manner, as people do when they greet one another with the words ‘Peace to you’, or as the Shunammite woman did when she said ‘Peace be with you’ (cf. 2 Kgs. 4:23.LXX). Nor did Christ mean the peace that Elisha had in mind when he told Gehazi to say to the Shunammite,

‘Is there peace with you?’ (cf. 2 Kgs. 4:26. LXX) In other words, is there peace with your husband, is there peace with your son? No, Christ’s peace is the peace which transcends every intellect (cf. Phil. 4:7), and which God gives to those who love Him with all their soul, because of the dangers and battles they have been through. In the same spirit the Lord also said, ‘In Me you have peace’, and added, ‘In the world you will experience affliction; but have courage, for I have overcome the world’ (John 16:33). By this He meant that though a person may experience many afflictions and dangers at the hands of demons and other men, these will be as nothing if he possesses the Lord’s peace.

Again He said, ‘Be at peace with one another’ (Mark 9:50). The Lord said all these things to them in advance because they were going to fight and suffer for His sake. In a similar way each of us faithful is attacked and led astray by the passions; but if he is at peace with God and with his neighbour he overcomes them all. These passions are the ‘world’ which St John the Theologian told us to hate (cf. 1 John 2:15), meaning that we are to hate, not God’s creatures, but worldly desires. The soul is at peace with God when it is at peace with itself and has become wholly deiform. It is also at peace with God when it is at peace with all men, even if it suffers terrible things at their hands. Because of its forbearance it is not perturbed, but bears all things (cf. 1 Cor. 13:7), wishes good to all, loves all, both for God’s sake and for the sake of their own nature. It grieves for unbelievers because they are destroying themselves, as our Lord and the apostles grieved for them. It prays for the faithful and labours on their behalf, and in this way its own thoughts are filled with peace and it lives in a state of noetic contemplation and pure prayer to God. To Him be glory through all the ages. Amen.

**AN OFFERING FROM <THE PHILOKALIA>  
VOL. 3**

©O.Ι.Δ.Α., 2 Lakeshore Boulevard, PO Box 35, Grand Isle, VT 05458-0035

Phone: (802) 372-4361, email: oida@aol.com

**Go Forth...and teach all nations.** (Matthew 28:19)

## محنة الرسل

«قد كلمتكم بهذا كيلا تعثروا. سيخرجونكم من المجامع بل تأتي ساعة يظنّ فيها كلّ من يقتلكم أنّه يقدم عبادة لله» (يوحنا ١٦: ٢-١).

هذا ما قاله يسوع لتلاميذه في الخطبة الوداعية الثانية في إنجيل يوحنا، قبل الدخول إلى اورشليم لإتمام عمله الخلاصي. كان الربّ حريصًا على إظهار المحنة التي سيتعرّض لها الرسل بعد ذهابه عنهم، كيلا يعثروا بل يثبتوا في إيمانهم. ابتدأت بوادر هذه المحنة حقيقةً بعد قبض اليهود على يسوع الذي واجه الصلب وحيدًا. حينذاك توارى الرسل عن الأنظار، بطرس أنكر المسيح، أصابهم الخوف أمام أول محنة فتبدّدوا كالخراف التي لا راعي لها. هذا الوضع المتأزم سرعان ما تبدّل، فقد زال خوف الرسل بعد أن رأوا الربّ قائمًا. ظهر لهم أربعين يومًا، وقبل أن يرتفع عنهم، وعدهم بإرسال الروح القدس المعزّي. بقي الرسل في اورشليم على كلمة الربّ إلى أن حلّ عليهم الروح القدس في اليوم الخمسين، وامتألاً الجميع منه. حينئذٍ زال خوفهم وابتدأوا يبشرون بقيامة الربّ يسوع بمجاهرة. هذه البشري كانت سبب محنتهم واضطهادهم على حدّ ما تشير إليه هذه الآية: «وأوصوهم بالألا يتكلّموا باسم يسوع» (أعمال ٥: ٤٠).

يخبرنا القديس لوقا البشير، في الإصحاحين الرابع والخامس من أعمال الرسل، عن بدء المحن التي تعرّضت لها الجماعة المسيحية الأولى، بعد أن ألقى اليهود الأيادي على بطرس ويوحنا: «وبينما هما يخاطبان الشعب أقبل عليهما الكهنة وقائد جند الهيكل واعتقلوهما وسجنوهما» (أعمال ٤: ٣). في المرّة الثانية، اعتقلوا كلّ الرسل ووضعوهم في حبس العامّة (أعمال ٥: ١٧-١٨). هذان الاعتقالان هما بداية سلسلة من الاضطهادات التي ستطال كلّ من يعلن قيامة المسيح ويبشّر بها.

ما كان ردّ فعل الرسل؟ كيف تصرّفت الجماعة المسيحية الأولى في ظلّ هذه المحن؟ في الاعتقال الأول لم يخف بطرس ويوحنا ولم يتراجعا عن تعليمهما، بل وقفا بشجاعة أمام مجمع اليهود مجاهرين بقيامة يسوع. لم يفقدا رجاءهما بكلمة الربّ يسوع لما قال: «فحين يُسَلّمونكم، لا تهتمّوا كيف تتكلّمون أو ماذا تقولون. فلستم أنتم المتكلّمين، بل روح أبيكم هو الذي يتكلّم فيكم» (متّى ١٠: ١٩-٢٠)، بل حافظا على إيمانهما بالربّ. «ولمّا أطلقا عادا إلى جماعتهم ورفعوا كلهم بنفس واحدة أصوات الشكر والتسبيح إلى الله» (أعمال ٤: ٢٣-٢٤). في الاعتقال الثاني ثبت الرسل على إيمانهم بالربّ، ولم يهابوا السجن فأتى ملاك الربّ وفتح أبواب السجن وأخرجهم فعادوا إلى الهيكل وجعلوا يعلمون ويبشرون (أعمال ٥: ١٩-٢١).

رغم حنق المجمع اليهودي عليهم وتهديده لهم. وبعد إطلاقهم ثانية، عاد الرسل فرحين لأنهم حُسبوا مستأهلين أن يُهانوا من أجل اسم يسوع (أعمال ٥: ٤١).

تتبدّى لنا في هذين المشهدين محنة الرسل والاضطهاد الذي عانوه بسبب تبشيرهم باسم يسوع. لكنهم لم يحسبوا للحظة هذا الاضطهاد حملًا ثقيلًا يصعب احتماله، إنّما تقبلوه بطول أناة وفرح.

كيف استطاع، أولئك الذين تركوا الربّ يسوع بعد أن أسلم وصلب، أن يتخطّوا خوفهم ويصبحوا مبشّري المسكونة ومدشّني الطريق أمام الناس لياتوا إلى يسوع؟ عرف الرسل أنّ المحنة الحقيقية تأتي من عدم نشر رسالة الخلاص في كلّ المسكونة. لم يخافوا ممّن يقتل أجسادهم، بل ممّن يقتل سعيهم لنشر بشري الخلاص في العالم. لذا وضعوا رجاءهم في الربّ وأطاعوا كلمته: «إذهبوا وتلمذوا كلّ الأمم» (متّى ٢٨: ١٩).

إلى جانب هذا الرجاء العظيم، كان تعاضد الرسل في ما بينهم وتعاضد الجماعة المسيحية الأولى معهم دافعًا كبيرًا لهم للاستمرار بمهمتهم البشارية. تبرز لنا أشكال هذا التعاضد في مطلع سفر أعمال الرسل لما اقتبل ثلاثة آلاف شخص المعمودية، بعد خطبة الرسول بطرس الأولى «وجميع الذي آمنوا كانوا معًا، وكان عندهم كلّ شيء مشتركًا» (أعمال ٢: ٤٤). تعاضدوا في كلّ شيء، في التعليم والصلوات وكسر الخبز والأموال والأملك والمقتنيات. حتّى في الاضطهاد اشتركوا جميعهم.

نشهد اليوم في بلادنا محنةً صعبة، صحّية واجتماعية واقتصادية. دعوتنا أوّلًا إلى أن نتخطّى هذه المحنة من دون الوقوع في الخوف واليأس تمامًا كما فعل الرسل. قال الربّ لتلاميذه «لا أترككم يتامى بل آتي اليكم» (يوحنا ١٤: ١٨). لن يتركنا الربّ طالما أنّنا نطلبه ونضع رجاءنا عليه. نحن المؤمنون، نترجّى، قبل كلّ شيء، الحياة الأبدية. بكلام آخر، نترجّى خلاص نفوسنا والباقي كلّه يزداد لنا (متّى ٦: ٣٣). نحيا على هذا الرجاء، بكلّ كياننا، عبر الصلاة الدائمة التي نرفعها إلى أبينا السماوي، محمّلينها بالأمان والآم إخواننا وكلّ العالم، تمامًا كما فعلت الجماعة المسيحية الأولى «بنفس واحدة». أسمى أنواع التعاضد والمحبة، يبدأ من هذه الصلاة، ومنها ينطلق في خدمة الإخوة الضعفاء لبسمة جراحهم وتخفيف وطأة المحنة عليهم. هكذا نصير، كما الرسل، شاهدين لبشري الخلاص في كلّ العالم عبر حياتنا، فيتعرّى بسيرتنا الكثيرون.



سلوان  
متربوليت جبيل والبترون وما يليهما  
(جبل لبنان)

### الرسالة: أعمال الرسل ١٦: ١٦-٣٤

في تلك الأيام، فيما نحن الرسل منطلقون إلى الصلاة، استقبلتنا جارية بها روح عرافة، وكانت تُكسب مواليتها كسباً جزئياً بعرافتها. فطفقت تمشي في إثر بولس وإثرنا وتصيح قائلة: هؤلاء الرجال هم عبيدُ الله العليّ وهم يُبشرونكم بطريق الخلاص. وصنعت ذلك أياماً كثيرة، فتضجّر بولس والتفت إلى الروح وقال: إني أمرُك باسم يسوع المسيح أن تخرج منها، فخرج في تلك الساعة. فلما رأى مواليتها أنه قد خرج رجاء مكسبهم قبضوا على بولس وسيلا وجرّواهما إلى السوق عند الحُكّام، وقدّمواهما إلى الولاة قائلين: إن هذين الرجلين يُبلبلان مدينتنا وهما يهوديان، ويُناديان بعبادات لا يجوز لنا قبولها ولا العمل بها إذ نحن رومانيون. فقام عليهما الجمع معاً ومزّق الولاة ثيابهما وأمروا بأن يُضربا بالعصي. ولما أثنوهما بالجراح ألقواهما في السجن وأوصوا السجان بأن يحرسهما بضبط. وهو إذ أوصي بمثل تلك الوصية ألقاهما في السجن الداخلي وضبط أرجلهما في المقطرة. وعند نصف الليل كان بولس وسيلا يُصليان ويسبحان الله والمحوسون يسمعونهما، فحدثت بغتة زلزلة عظيمة حتى تزعزعت أسس السجن، فانفتحت في الحال الأبواب كلها وانفكّت قيود الجميع. فلما استيقظ السجان ورأى أبواب السجن أنها مفتوحة استلّ السيف وهمّ أن يقتل نفسه لظنه أنّ المحبوسين قد هربوا. فناداه بولس بصوت عالٍ قائلاً: لا تعمل بنفسك سوءاً فإننا جميعنا ههنا. فطلب مصباحاً ووثب إلى داخل وخرّ لبولس وسيلا وهو مرتعد. ثم خرج بهما وقال: يا سيدي، ماذا ينبغي لي أن أصنع لكي أخلص؟ فقالا: آمن بالرب يسوع المسيح فتخلص أنت وأهل بيتك. وكلماه هو وجميع من في بيته بكلمة الرب. فأخذهما في تلك الساعة من الليل وغسل جراحهما واعتمد من وقته هو وذووه أجمعون. ثم أصدعهما إلى بيته وقدم لهما مائدة وابتهج مع جميع أهل بيته إذ كان قد آمن بالله.

### الإنجيل: يوحنا ٩: ١-٣٨

في ذلك الزمان فيما يسوع مجتاز رأى إنساناً أعمى منذ مولده. فسأله تلاميذه قائلين: يا رب، من أخطأ أهذا أم أبواه حتى وُلد أعمى؟ أجاب يسوع: لا هذا أخطأ ولا أبواه، لكن لتظهر أعمال الله فيه. ينبغي لي أن أعمل أعمال الذي أرسلني ما دام نهاراً، يأتي ليل حين لا يستطيع

أحد أن يعمل. ما دمتُ في العالم فأنا نور العالم. قال هذا وتفل على الأرض وصنع من تفلته طينا وطلّى بالطين عينيّ الأعمى وقال له: اذهب واغتسل في بركة سلوام (الذي تفسيره المرسل). فمضى واغتسل وعاد بصيراً. فالجيران والذين كانوا يرونه من قبل أنه كان أعمى قالوا: أليس هذا هو الذي كان يجلس ويستعطي؟ فقال بعضهم: هذا هو، وآخرون قالوا: إنّه يشبهه. وأمّا هو فكان يقول: إني أنا هو. فقالوا له: كيف انفتحت عيناك؟ أجاب ذلك وقال: إنسان يُقال له يسوع صنع طيناً وطلّى عينيّ، وقال لي اذهب إلى بركة سلوام واغتسل، فمضيتُ واغتسلت فأبصرتُ. فقالوا له: أين ذلك؟ فقال لهم: لا أعلم. فأتوا به، أي بالذي كان قبلاً أعمى، إلى الفرّيسيّين. وكان حين صنع يسوع الطين وفتح عينيه يوم سبت. فسأله الفرّيسيّون أيضاً كيف أبصر، فقال لهم: جعل على عينيّ طيناً ثم اغتسلتُ فأنا الآن أبصر. فقال قوم من الفرّيسيّين: هذا الإنسان ليس من الله لأنّه لا يحفظ السبت. آخرون قالوا: كيف يقدر إنسان خاطئ على أن يعمل مثل هذه الآيات؟ فوقع بينهم شقاق. فقالوا أيضاً للأعمى: ماذا تقول أنت عنه من حيث إنه فتح عينيك؟ فقال: إنّه نبيّ. ولم يصدّق اليهود عنه أنّه كان أعمى فأبصر حتى دعوا أبوي الذي أبصر وسألوهما قائلين: أهذا هو ابنكما الذي تقولان إنه وُلد أعمى، فكيف أبصر الآن؟ أجابهم أبواه وقالوا: نحن نعلم أنّ هذا ولدنا وأنه وُلد أعمى، وأمّا كيف أبصر الآن فلا نعلم، أو من فتح عينيه فنحن لا نعلم، هو كامل السنّ فاسألوه فهو يتكلّم عن نفسه. قال أبواه هذا لأنّهما كانا يخافان من اليهود لأنّ اليهود كانوا قد تعاهدوا أنّه إن اعترف أحد بأنّه المسيح يُخرج من المجمع. فلذلك قال أبواه هو كامل السنّ فاسألوه. فدعوا ثانية الإنسان الذي كان أعمى وقالوا له: أعط مجداً لله، فإننا نعلم أنّ هذا الإنسان خاطئ. فأجاب ذلك وقال: أخاطئ هو لا أعلم، إنّما أعلم شيئاً واحداً أنّي كنتُ أعمى والآن أنا أبصر. فقالوا له أيضاً: ماذا صنع بك؟ كيف فتح عينيك؟ أجابهم قد أخبرتكم فلم تسمعوا، فماذا تريدون أن تسمعوا أيضاً؟ أعلّمكم أنتم أيضاً تريدون أن تصيروا له تلاميذ؟ فاشتموه وقالوا له: أنت تلميذ ذلك. وأمّا نحن فإننا تلاميذ موسى ونحن نعلم أنّ الله قد كلّم موسى. فأما هذا فلا نعلم من أين هو. أجاب الرجل وقال لهم: إنّ في هذا عجباً أنكم ما تعلمون من أين هو وقد فتح عينيّ، ونحن نعلم أنّ الله لا يسمع للخطاة، ولكن إذا أحد اتقى الله وعمل مشيئته فله يستجيب. منذ الدهر لم يُسمع أنّ أحداً فتح عينيّ مولود أعمى. فلو لم يكن هذا من الله لم يقدر على أن يفعل شيئاً. أجابوه وقالوا له: إنك في الخطايا قد وُلدت بجملتك. أفأنت تُعلّمنا؟ فأخرجوه خارجاً. وسمع يسوع أنّهم أخرجوه خارجاً، فوجده وقال له: أتؤمن أنت بابن الله؟ فأجاب ذلك وقال: فمن هو يا سيّد لأؤمن به؟ فقال له يسوع: قد رأيته، والذي يتكلّم معك هو هو. فقال له: قد آمنْتُ يا رب، وسجد له.

من طالع حادثة شفاء الأعمى منذ مولده، وكانت له بصيرة الإيمان، أدرك كيف يشرق نور المسيح في ليل العالم، وأدرك أنّ يسوع يعمل باستمرار حتى يبيد الظلام من قلوبنا. هذا أكده يسوع بطرائق ثلاث مختلفة.

ففي تأكيده: «ما دمت في العالم فأنا نور العالم» (يوحنا ٩: ٥)، لا يقصد أنه كان نور العالم حتى صعد إلى السموات، وأنه من ثم يفقد العالم النور. نعرف أنّ يسوع حاضر بيننا على الدوام، حيث ترك جسده، أي الكنيسة، حاملة نور، بنعمة الروح القدس الفاعل فيها. وهذا ترجمه يسوع عندما أرسل تلاميذه ليبشروا المسكونة بنور قيامته وتعليمه وخلصه. وهذه الخبرة مستمرة منذ ذلك الحين ونحن معاونون فيها.

أما في تأكيده: «بأني ليل حين لا يستطيع أحد أن يعمل» (يوحنا ٩: ٤)، فلا يقصد به تعاقب الليالي. فخبرة الكنيسة عبر السهرانيات والصلوات الليلية خير دليل على كيفية استفادة أعضاء جسد المسيح من الجهاد الروحي الليلي، ليخزنوا في نواتهم طاقة ويعملوا عمل الله طيلة النهار. لعلّه يحذرنا هنا من ليل آخر، حين يفقد الملح طعمه: «الملح جيد. ولكن إذا صار الملح بلا ملوحة فيماذا تصلحونه؟ ليكن لكم في أنفسكم ملح» (مرقس ٩: ٥٠)، أو حين يفقد الإيمان على الأرض: «ولكن متى جاء ابن الإنسان ألعنه يجد الإيمان على الأرض؟» (لوقا ١٨: ٨). فالمقصود بالملح هو التمييز الذي يجب أن يواكب كل عمل ليكون على حسب قلب الله، وأن يكون عملنا مبنياً على أرضية الإيمان به ليصل إلى غايته التي حددها يسوع: «فلئضى نوركم هكذا قدام الناس لكي يروا أعمالكم الحسنة ويمجدوا أباكم الذي في السموات» (متى ٥: ١٦)! نعم، نور العالم هو أن يأتي الجميع إلى تمجيد الأب الذي أرسل يسوع وأنار به العالم. حاشى إذاً ألا يبقى لله شاهد في العالم!

وأخيراً، في تأكيده الثالث: «ينبغي أن أعمل أعمال الذي أرسلني ما دام نهار» (يوحنا ٩: ٤)، يطرح علينا يسوع صلب رسالته وأساسها. فهو مرسل لغاية محددة وهي خلاصنا، أي «لتظهر أعمال الله» فينا (يوحنا ٩: ٣). فمنذ تجسده لاح النور وصار نهاراً بعد ليل، ولن تكتمل رسالة يسوع إلا في مجيئه الثاني، حينما سيظهر حقيقة أعمال الله الكائنة فيه. ونحن نعاين عربونه منذ الآن في شهادة القديسين عبر العصور والأجيال.

في حادثة الأعمى، يتضح لنا أن ما يراه يسوع يختلف عما يراه التلاميذ بالعين المجردة، وعما نراه نحن في حالنا اليوم أيضاً. أمامنا شهادة الأعمى وقوة شكيمته غير الجارحة لأحد، بل المنيرة بتدرجها وصفائها وحقانيتها. فالأعمى ابتداءً بتوصيف الأحداث: «إنسان يُقال له يسوع صنع طيناً وطفى عيني، وقال لي: اذهب إلى بركة سلوام واغتسل. فمضيت واغتسلت فأبصرت»؛ ثم عبر عما يعتقد بمن شفاه: «إنه نبي»؛ وبعدها تحاشى الدخول في لعبة الحكم عليه وإدانته: «أخطئ هو؟ لست أعلم. إنما أعلم شيئاً واحداً: أنني كنت أعمى والآن أبصر»؛ وأخيراً، فسّر ما جرى على ضوء علاقة يسوع بالله: «نعلم أنّ الله لا يسمع للخطاة. ولكن إن كان أحد يتقي الله ويفعل مشيئته، فلماذا يسمع. منذ الدهر لم يُسمع أنّ أحداً فتح عيني مولود أعمى. لو لم يكن هذا من الله لم يقدر على أن يفعل شيئاً» (يوحنا ٩: ١١، ١٧، ٢٥، ٣١-٣٣). هكذا ظهر نور عمل الله على أرض الواقع، رغم ليل رفض قبول النور والحقيقة، أي يسوع. هنا يصح القول: «وهذه هي الدينونة: أنّ النور قد جاء إلى العالم، وأحبّ الناس الظلمة أكثر من النور، لأنّ أعمالهم كانت شريرة» (يوحنا ٣: ١٩).

نشكر الله أنّ مشروع إنارة العالم مستمر، رغم ما يتعرض له من تصدّ ورفض ومحاربة. هوذا الله يعمل عبر العميان الكثيرين، على مرّ العصور، الذين تعلموا أن يبصروه ويؤمنوا به ويسجدوا له ويشهدوا له، على مثال الأعمى منذ مولده (يوحنا ٩: ٣٧-٣٨). هذا المشروع مطروح علينا، وهو لا يحتاج إلى مناقصة ليرسي على فلان دون غيره، فالأمر ليس منافسة أو احتكاراً أو بطولة، بل خدمة متواضعة ترفع عن العالم أتعابه ليرتاح في نور المسيح ويُقبل إلى خدمته. مشروع إنارة العالم يطال الكل، خصوصاً الذين فقدوا أية إمكانية للرؤية. إليكم كيف أشار يسوع إلى من كانوا في زمانه من عداد فاقد المقتنين: «إنّ العشارين والزواني يسبقونكم إلى ملكوت الله» (متى ٢١: ٣١). إنها أجمل بشرى سطرها هؤلاء المحرومون من النور بإقبالهم إلى النور. فلا نستكنن إلى وضعنا إن ظننا أننا من أهل البر، ولا نياسن إن كنا خطاة، فنور المسيح ينير هؤلاء وأولئك سواسية ليصلوا إلى النور. هلاً أقبلنا إليه معاً لنكون «نور العالم» (متى ٥: ١٤)؟