

كنيسة مار نقولا الأنطاكية الأرثوذكسية

St. Nicholas Orthodox Church

Antiochian Archdiocese of North America

Diocese of Los Angeles and the West

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His Eminence **Metropolitan JOSEPH**, Archbishop
of New York and Metropolitan of all North America

Pastor, V. Rev. **Fr. George Baalbaki**

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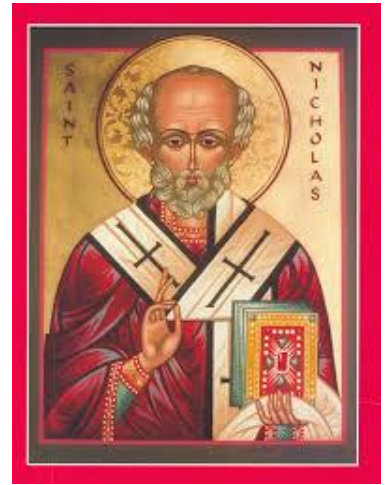
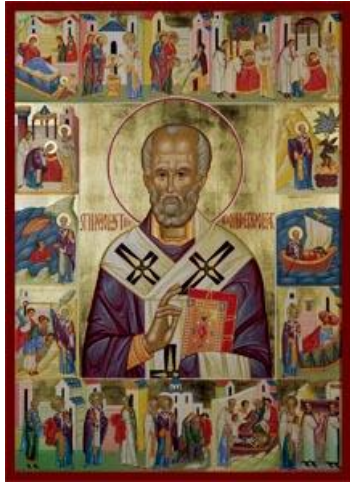
Pastor Emeritus, V. Rev. Fr. **Gregory Ofiesh**

Sub-Dn. **Michel Khoury**

Sub-Dn. **Ilyan Baalbaki**

Parish Council Chairman: **Ramzi Srouji**

Parish Council Vice Chairman: **Salim Qaru**



Sunday, August 23, 2020

IMPORTANT NOTICE: Based on the ongoing situation regarding COVID-19 (Coronavirus), all Church social events and gatherings are postponed until further notice. **Church is not open to the public.** Please watch the livestream of the service on our social media.

Youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCrDWWPWreLZpVhzVGZkjDIA>

We pray for the good health, well-being, and safety of everyone in these hard times. God bless!

COMMUNION: As you know, it is very important in our faith to regularly take Communion. Many of us have not had the blessing of taking it since the pandemic started. For those who'd like to take it, Communion will be available this Sunday and every Sunday, **AFTER CHURCH BY APPOINTMENT ONLY.** Please call Father George at 586 214 4428 to set up your appointment. God bless!

BEIRUT, LEBANON: Our hearts are with the victims of the explosion in Beirut. We pray for the speedy recovery of those injured and for the mercy of those who have lost their lives. Our Archdiocese and the churches in Beirut have been hit hard by the explosion.

Our beloved Metropolitan JOSEPH is asking for all the help you are able to provide. To make donations, please mail a check here to St. Nicholas earmarked with "For Beirut" in the memo or make a donation on our website. We will send a donation on top of all of the donations we collect through our Archdiocese to Beirut. God bless.

We'd like to sincerely thank all those who responded quickly to the humanitarian needs of our people in Lebanon. Your generosity is truly appreciated. So far, we've raised around \$7,000 but our goal is to raise \$10,000. Our website is still open and you can still mail checks. Thank you in advance. God bless you and your families.

THE EPISTLE: St. Paul to the Corinthians. (9:2-12)

Brethren, you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord. This is my defense to those who would examine me. Do we not have the right to our food and drink? Do we not have the right to be accompanied by a wife, as the other apostles and the brothers of the Lord and Cephas? Or is it only Barnabas and I who have no right to refrain from working for a living? Who serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard without eating any of its fruit? Who tends a flock without getting some of the milk? Do I say this on human authority? Does not the law say the same? For it is written in the Law of Moses, "You shall not muzzle an ox when it is treading out the grain." Is it for oxen that God is concerned? Does he not speak entirely for our sake? It was written for our sake, because the plowman should plow in hope and the thresher thresh in hope of a share in the crop. If we have sown spiritual good among you, is it too much if we reap your material benefits? If others share this rightful claim upon you, do not we still more? Nevertheless, we have not made use of this right, but we endure anything rather than put an obstacle in the way of the Gospel of Christ.

الرسالة: ١ كورنثوس ٩: ٢-١٢

يا إخوة إنَّ ختم رسالتي هو أنتم في الربِّ، وهذا هو احتجاجي عند الذين يفحصونني. أعلِّنا لا سلطان لنا أن نأكل ونشرب؟ أعلِّنا لا سلطان لنا أن نجول بامرأةٍ أختٍ كسائر الرسل وإخوة الربِّ وصفاً؟ أم أنا وبرنابا وحدنا لا سلطان لنا أن لا نشغل؟ من يتجنَّد قطَّ والنفقة على نفسه؟ من يغرس كرماً ولا يأكل من ثمره؟ أو من يرعى قطيعاً ولا يأكل من لبن القطيع؟ أعلِّي أنكم بهذا بحسب البشرية، أم ليس الناموس أيضاً يقول هذا؟ فإنَّه قد كُتب في ناموس موسى: لا تكُم ثوراً دارساً. أعلِّ الله تهمَّه الثيران، أو قال ذلك من أجلنا لا محالة؟ بل إنَّما كُتب من أجلنا. لأنَّه ينبغي للحارث أن يحرث على الرجاء وللدارس على الرجاء أن يكون شريكاً في الرجاء. إنَّ كُنَّا نحن قد زرنا لكم الروحيات، أفليكون عظيمًا أن نحصد منكم الجسديات؟ إن كان آخرون يشتركون في السلطان عليكم أفلنأكل نحن أولى؟ لكنَّا لم نستعمل هذا السلطان بل نحتمل كلَّ شيءٍ لئلاَّ نُسبب تعويقاً ما لبشارة المسيح.

THE GOSPEL: St. Matthew. (18:23-35)

The Lord spoke this parable: "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants. When he began the reckoning, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents; and as he could not pay, his lord ordered him to be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made. So the servant fell on his knees, imploring him, 'Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.' And out of pity for him the lord of that servant released him and forgave him the debt. But that same servant, as he went out, came upon one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii; and seizing him by the throat he said, 'Pay what you owe.' So his fellow servant fell down and besought him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you.' He refused and went and put him in prison until he should pay the debt. When his fellow servants saw what had taken place, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their lord all that had taken place. Then his lord summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you besought me; and should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?' And in anger his lord delivered him to the jailers, until he should pay all his debt. So also My heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart."

الإنجيل: متى ١٨: ٢٣-٣٥

قال الربُّ هذا المثل: يشبه ملكوت السماوات إنساناً ملكاً أراد أن يحاسب عبيده. فلمَّا بدأ بالمحاسبة أحضر إليه واحد عليه عشرة آلاف وزنة، وإذ لم يكن له ما يُوفي، أمر سيِّده بأن يُباع هو وامراته وأولاده وكلَّ ما له ويوفي عنه. فخرَّ ذلك العبد ساجداً له قائلاً: تمهَّل عليَّ فأوفيك كلَّ ما لك. فرقَّ سيِّد ذلك العبد وأطلقه وترك له الدين. وبعدما خرج ذلك العبد وجد عبداً من رفقائه مديوناً له بمئة دينار فأمسكه وأخذ يخنقه قائلاً: أوفني ما لي عليك. فخرَّ ذلك العبد على قدميه وطلب إليه قائلاً: تمهَّل عليَّ فأوفيك كلَّ ما لك، فأبى ومضى وطرحه في السجن حتَّى يوفي الدين. فلمَّا رأى رفاقؤه ما كان حزنوا جداً وجأؤوا فأعلموا سيِّدهم بكلَّ ما كان. حينئذٍ دعاه سيِّده وقال: أيُّها العبد الشرير كلَّ ما كان عليك تركته لك لأنَّك طلبتَ إليَّ. أفما كان ينبغي لك أن ترحم أيضاً رفيقك كما رحمتُك أنا؟ وغضب سيِّده ودفعه إلى المعذِّبين حتَّى يوفي جميع ما له عليه. فهكذا أباي السماوي يصنع بكم إن لم تتركوا من قلوبكم كلَّ واحد لأخيه زلاته.

THANK YOU: We would like to give a very special thank you to our Ladies Auxiliary for all the time, energy, money, and hard work they put into the food catering. Their efforts will go a long way to help our people back in Lebanon. We received an overwhelming number of orders this week for the Katayef so we will be making them again in the next couple weeks. Please stay tuned!

To the Faithful of St. Nicholas Church: These past few months have been unprecedented in the history of our parish. While we have not been physically present in church, we have, thanks to Clemence Batarse and her team, still been able to participate in the Divine Liturgy on Sunday through Live Streaming. As of this time, we do not know when we can return to “normal.” We want to thank those who have continued to be current on their pledge. We still have our financial responsibilities and your support enables us to meet our obligations. The most convenient way to send your donation is through Online Giving. Go to our website: stnicholas-sf.com and you will see “**Click here to donate online**” or mail a check to the church office. May our Lord continue to watch over you and your loved ones, protect us and keep us safe from every adversary.

Metropolitan Anthony: Mercy and Justice

Today’s gospel is about mercy, and it seems to us so often from the experience we have of our earthly relationships that the gap between justice and mercy is almost unbridgeable. It seems that the two are in contradiction. Don't we always fall into the trap of being unjust when we try to be merciful and so hard when we try to observe mercy. Did not one of the great writers of the past say that a judge is at the same time below the level of man and above the level of man: above – because he has a power which is superhuman to judge and to condemn, below – because it is not given him to have mercy.

And yet Holy Scripture teaches us that in God justice and mercy have met. But the justice which we find in God is so different from the kind of justice which we try to apply. For us to observe justice is to pass a right judgement and then either to revoke it or to pardon but without being able within ourselves to reconcile compassion and severity. So often when we want to be just, severe, we must force our heart to be silent. Such is not the way of God. Christ says in the Gospel that our justice must be beyond the justice of Scribes and Pharisees, beyond the people who try to be righteous before God, who try to be spotless before Him.

What is God’s justice? We can see it in the Old Testament and the New Testament in a way which at times may frighten us, that the justice of God consists first of all – and this is perhaps the most frightening example Christ gives us – in recognizing for everybody the right to be himself even if he is in the wrong, even if he follows evil ways. Oh, it does not mean that we can come to terms with evil, accept the ways of it, but we must learn to distinguish, as God does, between an evil deed and a person, between the sickness unto death of a person wounded by sin and possessed of evil, and a person whom God has willed and loved into the world and for whom He proved ready to live and to die. God knows how to distinguish. One of the most frightening and striking examples of it can be found in the very beginning of human history when Cain murders his brother Abel and then feels that not only God’s rejection but man's hatred will hunt him down. And the Lord says to him, ‘I will put My seal on thy forehead and no one will kill you.’ And by doing this God recognizes that He has given freedom, a frightening freedom to man and that He is to guarantee the freedom and even its misuse – but not only that.

If that was the case, then God would be responsible for all the evil of the world and we could condemn Him for all the suffering that is ours, for all the horror that has been in human history. But there is one more thing God does. He takes upon Himself all the consequences of deliberate or foolish human choices. He takes them upon Himself and carries the consequences upon His

shoulders. Christ's incarnation, the incarnation of the Son of God, the life, the suffering, the death, the dereliction upon the Cross, the descent into hell of Christ, the Son of the Living God become the Son of Man, are different manners in which God covers, takes upon Himself the consequences of human evil and evil in the world. His justice consists in accepting the other one on his own terms but also in paying the cost of human folly and human evil.

And here love, sacrificial love and justice as we do not either understand or exercise it meet in a way which can frighten. To recognize in another person even when this person is endangering our integrity, our life, a human being whom we are called to take upon ourselves and carry and save, is something which few achieve. I have mentioned to a certain number of you the story of a woman of this parish who is now coming step by step to her death. When she was young she was taken to prison in the course of the Russian Revolution. She underwent interrogations, and one night when she had been interrogated for hours and hours and felt that she could no longer endure it, she felt that she must break the spell even if she must suffer for it, even if it meant punishment... and she turned to her interrogator ready to challenge, to insult him, but make an end to this endless torment. And suddenly she saw on the other side of the interrogation table a man pale, grey with tiredness, with anguish on his face because he was exhausted. And she suddenly saw him as a human being, not an enemy but one whom the cruel circumstances of human history had put on one side of the table while she was on the other. And having seen him a human being, she smiled at him. The interrogation did not come to an end. He smiled back, but he continued to interrogate her. But she was now beyond the power of being destroyed. She had seen a man; she would answer now with patience to a man and be gradually drawn to her tomb without hatred, without bitterness in an act of surrender.

This is a great example, but it is not taken from the Scriptures, which seems so often remote, nor from the lives of saints, which seem to be beyond us, but from the life of a woman who is one of us. Can't we understand that the first act of justice which may lead us to stern action unto salvation of the evildoer, is first of all to recognize in him the right, to hate in him the evil that possesses him, to hate in him all that is destruction in him, but to serve him, indeed to worship him, to serve him as we would serve our God, to serve him unto salvation. The distance between justice and mercy seems to be infinitely great in our lives. We must learn to discover what it means to love unto salvation and to be just with the crucified love of the living God, which He has left with us as our most precious and holy gift, the Church.

الرحمة والمحبة

تكلم يسوع كثيراً عن ملكوت السموات، وأول ما بشر به، كما يوحنا المعمدان، «توبوا فقد اقترب ملكوت السموات». ما معنى ملكوت الله؟ ما معنى أن يكون الله ملكاً على الناس؟

قال الرب «ملكوت الله في داخلكم» (لوقا ١٧: ٢١)، أي انه ليس في مكان معين ولا ينبغي أن تسيروا كثيراً حتى تجدوه. ادخلوا إلى نفوسكم تجدوا الرب هناك. وأخذ يسوع يحكي أمثلة عن الملكوت ويعطي تشابيه عنه.

في إنجيل اليوم قصّ الرب قصّة حول عبد كان مديوناً لسيده بعشرة آلاف وزنة، فجاء واسترحمه وترك له سيّده دينه. وعندما خرج مسروراً، التقى عبداً آخر كان مديوناً له بمبلغ قليل، فاسترحمه، ولكنه لم يرحمه وأرسله إلى السجن لكي يوفي الدين. لما علم سيّد هذا الرجل بالأمر، غضب على عبده وقال له: أما كان ينبغي لك أن ترحم رفيقك كما رحمتك أنا؟

كل إنسان رفيق لنا، المديون رفيق لنا أيضاً. أراد يسوع أن لا يكون بين الناس علاقة سيادة وعبودية «ليس عبد ولا حرّ، كلّكم واحد في المسيح يسوع» (غلاطية ٣: ٢٨). طبعاً الناس مديونون للناس بمال أو بغير مال. ويسوع يريد أن تكون علاقاتنا قائمة لا على القانون فقط بل على الرحمة. بالقانون يسجن الإنسان إنساناً آخر. بالرحمة يغفر الإنسان لإنسان آخر.

في العهد القديم كان القانون «العين بالعين، والسنّ بالسنّ»، وأقاموا المحاكم لتنفيذ القانون. اما سيدنا فقال ان لا ضرورة للمحاكم في ما بينكم إذ قال تلميذه بولس في الرسالة الأولى إلى أهل كورنثوس: «أجلّسوا المحتقرين في الكنيسة قضاة» (٦: ٤) حتى لا يذهب المؤمنون أمام الوثنيين للمحاكمة.

الله يعاملنا كما نعامل الناس. يرحمنا إذا كنا رحماء، ويعاقبنا ان كنا متسلّطين على الناس ومستبدين بهم. اذا تحدّثنا عن إنسان في المجالس نقتله. كل نميّة قتل. كل كشف لعيوب الناس قتل. من يخطئ فقد عزل نفسه عن الناس. وأنت لا تقل في نفسك انه أخطأ، فله من يحاسبه. أنت إذا أحببته يعود إلى الرب.

كل منا بحاجة إلى أمر واحد في هذه الدنيا، إلى أن يحبنا الناس، إلى أن يحبنا بالأقل واحد من الناس. وإذا لم يوجد واحد يحبنا، فنحن في حالة اختناق. ولهذا أنت الذي أسىء إليك، والذي اعتدي عليك، تكون هذا الإنسان الذي يغفر. هذا المُحب الذي اعتدي عليه قد لا يجد في الكون من يحبه الا ذاك الذي اعتدى عليه.

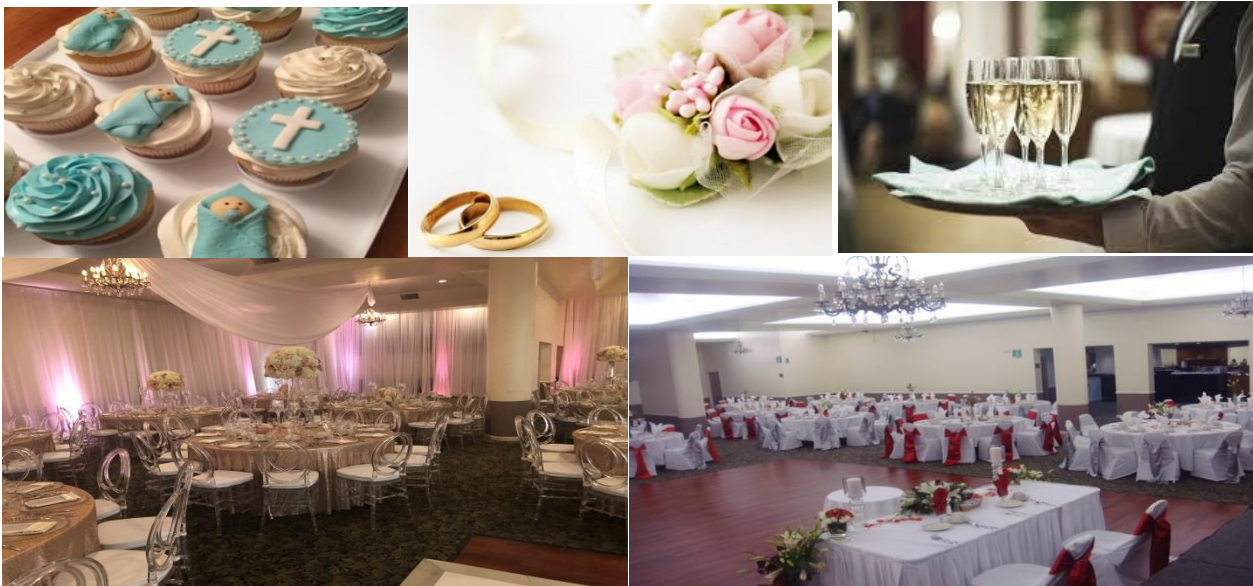
لماذا لا نغفر؟ لأننا كنّا لا ننتظر هذا الأمر السيء من هذا الإنسان بالذات. ولكن يجب ان نعلم ان كل إنسان قادر على كل خطيئة. هذا الذي كنّا نرجو منه الخير قد يُخبّينا. قد تأتي الخيبة من أي إنسان، بعيد أو قريب. ويجب ان نفهم ان أعزّ الناس إلينا قد يخطئون. اطلب فقط أن يحبهم الرب، واطلب لهم الشفاء ليعودوا ليس إليك بل إلى ربهم.

إذا كنّا رحماء على هذه الصورة، يبقى الناس في سلام. يعيش الناس بسلام اذا كانوا مع ربهم، إذا أحبهم الآخرون.

المطران جاورجيوس

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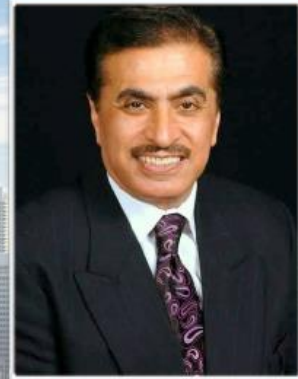
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