

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**

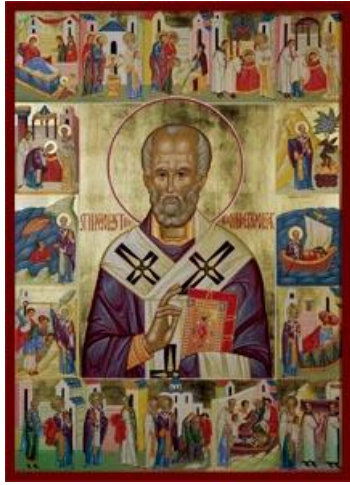
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Parish Council Chairman: **Azar Azar**

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Sunday, September 5, 2021

Prophet Zachariah, father of the Forerunner

IMPORTANT NOTICE:

CHURCH IS OPEN! If you plan to attend, please make sure to wear a mask when you walk inside. Please don't attend if you're feeling sick. We pray for the good health, well-being, and safety of everyone. God bless!

THE EPISTLE: 1 Corinthians. (9:2-12)

Brethren, the seal of my apostleship are you in the Lord. My defense to those who would examine me is this: Do we have no authority regarding what to eat and what to drink? Do we have no authority to lead about a wife, who is a sister, as the rest of the apostles, even as the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas? Or is it only Barnabas and I who have no authority to refrain from working? Which soldier ever served at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat the fruit thereof? Or who shepherds a flock and does not eat from the milk of the flock? Do I speak of these things according to human nature? Or does not the Law say the same also? For it is written in the Law of Moses: "Thou shalt not muzzle an ox which treads out the grain." Is it for oxen that God cares, or does He say it altogether for our sakes? Indeed, for our sakes it was written: because he who plows ought to plow in hope, and he who threshes in hope, so that the same might partake in hope. If we have sown in you spiritual things, is it a great matter if we should reap your carnal things? If others are partakers of this authority over you, are we not even more? Nevertheless, we have not made use of this authority, but we endure all things, in order that we may cause no hindrance to the gospel of Christ.

إِكُورِنْثُوس.

يَا إِخْوَةَ، إِنَّ خَاتَمَ رِسَالَتِي هُوَ أَنْتُمْ فِي الرَّبِّ. وَهَذَا هُوَ احْتِجَاجِي عِنْدَ الَّذِينَ يَفْحَصُونَنِي. أَلَعَلَّنَا لَا سُلْطَانَ لَنَا أَنْ نَأْكُلَ وَنَشْرَبَ؟ أَلَعَلَّنَا لَا سُلْطَانَ لَنَا أَنْ نَجُولَ بِامْرَأَةٍ أُخْتِ كَسَائِرِ الرُّسُلِ، وَإِخْوَةَ الرَّبِّ وَصَفَا؟ أَمْ أَنَا وَبِرْنَابَا وَحَدْنَا لَا سُلْطَانَ لَنَا أَنْ لَا نَسْتَعْمَلَ؟ مَنْ يَتَجَدَّدُ قَطُّ وَالنَّفَقَةُ عَلَى نَفْسِهِ؟ مَنْ يَغْرِسُ كَرْمًا وَلَا يَأْكُلُ مِنْ ثَمَرِهِ؟ أَوْ مَنْ يَرْعَى قَطِيعًا وَلَا يَأْكُلُ مِنْ لَبَنِ الْقَطِيعِ؟ أَلَعَلِّي أَتَكَلَّمُ بِهَذَا بِحَسَبِ الْبَشَرِيَّةِ؟ أَمْ لَيْسَ النَّامُوسُ أَيْضًا يَقُولُ هَذَا؟ فَإِنَّهُ كُتِبَ فِي نَامُوسِ مُوسَى "لَا تَكُمُ ثَوْرًا دَارِسًا". أَلَعَلَّ اللَّهَ تُهَمُّهُ الثَّيْرَانِ؟ أَمْ قَالَ ذَلِكَ مِنْ أَجْلِنَا لَا مُحَالَةً؟ بَلْ إِنَّمَا كُتِبَ مِنْ أَجْلِنَا لِأَنَّهُ يَنْبَغِي لِلْحَارِثِ أَنْ يَحْرُثَ عَلَى الرَّجَاءِ، وَلِلدَّارِسِ عَلَى الرَّجَاءِ أَنْ يَكُونَ شَرِيكًا فِي الرَّجَاءِ. إِنَّ كُنَّا نَحْنُ قَدْ زَرَعْنَا لَكُمْ الرُّوحِيَّاتِ، أَفَيَكُونُ عَظِيمًا أَنْ نَحْصِدَ مِنْكُمْ الْجَسَدِيَّاتِ؟ إِنْ كَانَ آخَرُونَ يَشْتَرِكُونَ فِي السُّلْطَانِ عَلَيْكُمْ، أَفَلَسْنَا نَحْنُ أَوْلَى؟ لَكِنَّا لَمْ نَسْتَعْمِلْ هَذَا السُّلْطَانَ، بَلْ نَحْتَمِلُ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ لِنَلَّا نُسَبِّبَ تَعْوِيقًا مَا لِيُشَارَةَ الْمَسِيحِ.

THE GOSPEL: 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, out of pity for imploring him, 'Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.' And 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."

مَتَّى

قَالَ الرَّبُّ هَذَا الْمَثَلُ: يُشَبِّهُهُ مَلَكُوتُ السَّمَاوَاتِ إِنْسَانًا مَلِكًا أَرَادَ أَنْ يُحَاسِبَ عَبِيدَهُ. فَلَمَّا بَدَأَ بِالْمَحَاسِبَةِ، أَحْضَرَ إِلَيْهِ وَاحِدًا عَلَيْهِ عَشْرَةُ آلَافٍ وَزْنَةَ. وَإِذْ لَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ مَا يُوفِي، أَمَرَ سَيِّدُهُ أَنْ يُبَاعَ هُوَ وَامْرَأَتُهُ وَأَوْلَادُهُ وَكُلُّ مَا لَهُ وَيُوفَى عَنْهُ. فَخَرَّ ذَلِكَ الْعَبْدُ سَاجِدًا لَهُ قَائِلًا: تَمَهَّلْ عَلَيَّ فَأُوفِيكَ كُلَّ مَا لَكَ. فَرَّقَ سَيِّدُ ذَلِكَ الْعَبْدِ وَأَطْلَقَهُ، وَتَرَكَ لَهُ الدِّينَ. وَبَعْدَ مَا خَرَجَ ذَلِكَ الْعَبْدُ، وَجَدَ عَبْدًا مِنْ رُفَقَائِهِ مَدْيُونًا لَهُ بِمِئَةِ دِينَارٍ، فَامْسَكَهُ وَأَخَذَ يَحْنُقُهُ قَائِلًا: أَوْفِنِي مَا لِي عَلَيْكَ. فَخَرَّ ذَلِكَ الْعَبْدُ عَلَى قَدَمَيْهِ، وَطَلَّبَ إِلَيْهِ قَائِلًا: تَمَهَّلْ عَلَيَّ، فَأُوفِيكَ كُلَّ مَا لَكَ. فَأَبَى، وَمَضَى وَطَرَحَهُ فِي السَّجْنِ حَتَّى يُوفِيَ الدِّينَ. فَلَمَّا رَأَى رُفَقَاؤُهُ مَا كَانَ، حَزَنُوا جِدًّا وَجَاءُوا فَأَعْلَمُوا سَيِّدَهُمْ بِكُلِّ مَا كَانَ. حِينَئِذٍ دَعَاهُ سَيِّدُهُ وَقَالَ لَهُ: أَيُّهَا الْعَبْدُ الشَّرِيرُ! كُلُّ مَا كَانَ عَلَيْكَ تَرَكْتُهُ لَكَ لِأَنَّكَ طَلَبْتَ إِلَيَّ. أَفَمَا كَانَ يَنْبَغِي لَكَ أَنْ تَرْحَمَ أَنْتَ أَيْضًا رَفِيقَكَ كَمَا رَحِمْتُكَ أَنَا؟ وَغَضِبَ سَيِّدُهُ، وَدَفَعَهُ إِلَى الْمَعْذِبِينَ حَتَّى يُوفِيَ جَمِيعَ مَا لَهُ عَلَيْهِ. فَهَكَذَا أَبِي السَّمَاوِيُّ يَصْنَعُ بِكُمْ إِنْ لَمْ تَتْرَكُوا مِنْ قُلُوبِكُمْ كُلِّ وَاحِدٍ لِأَخِيهِ زَلَّاتِهِ.

ANNOUNCEMENTS & EVENTS:

- ❖ **ST. NICHOLAS CHURCH ANNUAL FESTIVAL RAFFLE TICKETS:** \$50 Per ticket. Please contact Elias Batshon (650) 580-7185
- ❖ **ST. NICHOLAS CHURCH ANNUAL FOOD FESTIVAL:** October 2nd and 3rd. More info to come.
- ❖ **ST. GEORGE ORTHODOX CATHEDRAL DALY CITY:** October 10th. More info to come.

ALTAR CANDLE OFFERING:

- ❖ Offered by Almaza Tannous and her children: Mike, Hani, Christine, Gihan, and their families, in loving memory of Margret Hanhan, Charles and Asal Tannous, and Josef Hanhan.

Memory Their Memory Be Eternal!

TREE OF LIFE:

We have updated our Tree of Life in the back of our Church. If you would like to donate an engraved Leaf to place on the Tree in memory of your loved one, please contact the Church office.



Metropolitan Anthony

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 judgment 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 answer now with patience to a man and be gradually drawn to her tomb without hatred, without

bitterness in an act of surrender.

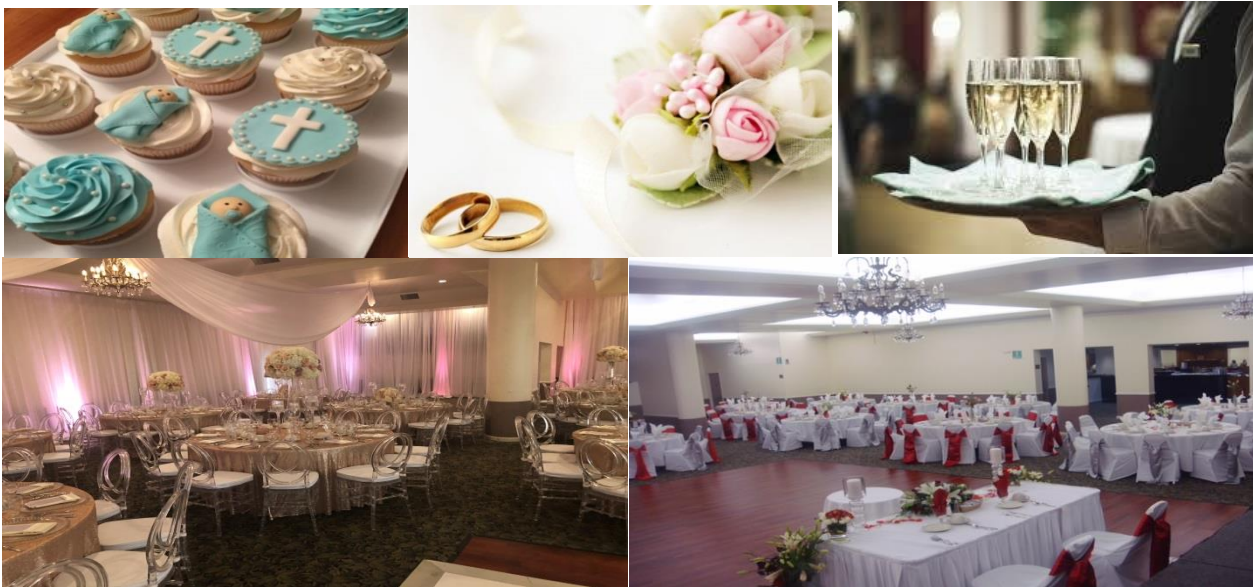
This is a great example, but it is not taken from the Scriptures, which seems so often remote, nor from the lives of saints, which seem to be beyond us, but from the life of a woman who is one of us. Can't we understand that the first act of justice which may lead us to stern action unto salvation of 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.

«عَلِّمُوهُمْ أَنْ يَحْفَظُوا جَمِيعَ مَا أُوصِيَتْكُمْ بِهِ» - مِنْ نُشْرَةِ رَعِيَّتِي

إنَّ تعميم التعليم وجعله مشاعاً لكلِّ من تلقى ما أوصى به الربُّ، يعني أنَّ الربَّ هو الموصي والموصى والوصية، وكلِّ ما عدا ذلك لا يدخل التعليم. المسيح هو الكتاب الحيّ والشفويّ والمكتوب. لا يمكنك أن تبدأ تعليمًا من دون أن تكون في حضرته. كن كيوحنا المعمدان الذي اقتحم العالم بالماء ليعمّد الناس، ولمّا جاءه الماء الحيّ راحت الوكالة بحضور الأصالة، إلّا أنَّ السيّد أراد ليوحنا أن يكمل ما بدأ به، ولو عاين خاتمة سعيه وشهد وعين وسمع: «هذا هو ابني الحبيب الذي به سررت». حين كتب بولس الرسول إلى تلميذه تيموثاوس: «أَحْفَظِ الْوَدِيعَةَ الصَّالِحَةَ بِالرُّوحِ الْقُدُسِ السَّاكِنِ فِيْنَا» (٢ تيموثاوس ١: ١٤). أي لا تدخل ما تسمعه بأذنك وما يلج قلبك، بل اذهب إلى الكلام الصالح الذي كانت تحفظه العذراء في قلبها، امض إلى الروح القدس الساكن فيك، وهو يضع الكلام على فمك، وهو الذي يسدّ خطواتك ويهديك. لا تكن فظًا في تعليمك فينفر عنك الناس، ولا تكن متسلطًا فيخافك المستمعون، بل كن كالنسيم الذي به تكلم الله مع النبيّ إيليا، وكن ناريًا كمركبته لا تعنيك أرض أو ملك، لأنّ مبتغاك هو وجه السيّد والوقوف في حضرته. كن على ثقة بأنّ التقليد الكنسيّ ما زال يواكب حركة الحياة. اذهب إليه بصدق لتكتشف ما تركه الآباء من كنوز، كتابة أو نمط حياة. لقد حفظوا ما حمّله لهم الآباء والتراث الكنسيّ، وهم إذ ينقلونه إلينا فلنحفظه ونعمل بهديه. كان يوحنا المعمدان يعرف أنّ الماء الذي يعمّد به ينقّصه الروح، إذ قال: سيأتي بعدي من يعمّدكم بالماء والروح، لأنّ معموديته تطال العمق الإنسانيّ، دواخل الإنسان. الماء يطهّر الجسد، لكنّ الماء والروح يصنعان منك خليفة جديدة لأنّك لست المسيح. لبس يوحنا المعمدان المسيح، فجاء قطع رأسه ذبيحة، قاطعًا باستقامة كلمة الحقّ. كلنا يوحنا في مائيتنا وسعيننا إلى أن يحركنا الروح شاهدين لحضور السيّد بيننا، في بيوتنا وفي مؤسساتنا وتالياً في خدمة الآخر.

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