

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 Beatitude **Patriarch JOHN X**, Patriarch
of Antioch and All of East

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

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Sub-Dn. **Ilyan Baalbaki**

Sub-Dn. **Tariq Rantisi**

Parish Council Chairman: **Salim Qaru**

Parish Council Vice Chairman: **Azar Azar**

Sunday, January 15, 2023

House Blessings

As the tradition of our Orthodox Church, V. Rev. Fr. George Baalbaki will start his visitation for house blessings on Monday, January 9th. You will receive a phone call from the Church Office for scheduling. If you would like to schedule, please call the church office or Fr. George's cellphone: 586 214-4428

MEMORIAL SERVICES:

- ✠ One Year Memorial Service for the Handmaiden of God, **Leila Ghandour Khoury** will be held this **Sunday, January 15th**, offered by her family. *May Her Memory be Eternal!*
- ✠ Forty Days Memorial Service for the Servant of God, **Mansour Kawkab** will be held on **Sunday, January 29th**, offered by his family. *May His Memory be Eternal!*

THE EPISTLE: Colossians (3:4-11)

Brethren, when Christ, Who is our life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: fornication, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. On account of these, the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience. In these you once walked, when you lived in them. But now put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and foul talk from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old nature with its practices and have put on the new nature, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its Creator. Here there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free man, but Christ is all, and in all.

الرسالة: كولوسي

يا إخوة، متى ظهر المسيح الذي هو حياتنا، فأنتم أيضاً تظهرون حينئذ معه في المجد. فأميتوا أعضائكم التي على الأرض: الزنى، والنجاسة، والهوى، والشهوة الرديئة، والطمع الذي هو عبادة وثن. لأنكم لأجل هذه يأتي غضب الله على أبناء العصيان. وفي هذه أنتم أيضاً سلكتم حيناً إذ كنتم عايشين فيها. أما الآن، فأنتم أيضاً أطرحوا الكل: الغضب، والسخط، والخبث، والتجديف، والكلام القبيح من أفواهكم. ولا يكذب بعضكم بعضاً، بل اخلعوا الإنسان العتيق مع أعماله. وألبسوا الإنسان الجديد الذي يتجدد للمعرفة على صورة خالقه. حيث ليس يوناني ولا يهودي، لا ختان ولا قلف، لا بربري ولا اسكيثي، لا عبد ولا حر، بل المسيح هو كل شيء وفي الجميع.

THE GOSPEL: Luke (17:12-19)

At that time, as Jesus entered a village, He was met by ten lepers, who stood at a distance and lifted up their voices and said, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us." When He saw them He said to

them, "Go and show yourselves to the priests." And as they went they were cleansed. Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice; and he fell on his face at Jesus' feet, giving Him thanks. Now he was a Samaritan. Then Jesus said, "Were not ten cleansed? Where are the nine? Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?" And He said to him, "Rise and go your way; your faith has made you well."

الإنجيل: لوقا

فِي ذَلِكَ الزَّمان، فِيمَا يَسُوعُ دَاخِلُ إِلَى قَرْيَةٍ اسْتَقْبَلَهُ عَشْرَةُ رِجَالٍ بُرْصٍ وَوَقَفُوا مِنْ بَعِيدٍ، وَرَفَعُوا أَصْوَاتَهُمْ قَائِلِينَ: يَا يَسُوعُ الْمُعَلِّمُ ارْحَمْنَا. فَلَمَّا رَأَاهُمْ قَالَ لَهُمْ امْضُوا وَأَرُوا الْكَهَنَةَ أَنْفُسَكُمْ. وَفِيمَا هُمْ مُنْطَلِقُونَ طَهَّرُوا. وَإِنَّ وَاحِدًا مِنْهُمْ، لَمَّا رَأَى أَنَّهُ قَدْ بَرِيَ، رَجَعَ يُمَجِّدُ اللَّهَ بِصَوْتٍ عَظِيمٍ. وَخَرَّ عَلَى وَجْهِهِ عِنْدَ قَدَمَيْهِ شَاكِرًا لَهُ وَكَانَ سَامِرِيًّا، فَأَجَابَ يَسُوعُ وَقَالَ، أَلَيْسَ الْعَشْرَةُ قَدْ طَهَّرُوا قَائِلِينَ أَلَمْ يُوجَدْ مَنْ يَرْجِعْ لِيُخْبِرَ اللَّهَ إِلَّا هَذَا الْأَجْنَبِيُّ؟ وَقَالَ لَهُ، قُمْ وَامْضِ، إِيْمَانُكَ قَدْ خَلَّصَكَ.

قناديل الهيكل ALTAR CANDLES

- Offered by **Afaf Dudum** in Loving memory of **Thomas Dudum** on the special occasion of his heavenly birthday on January 14th. *May his memory be eternal!*
- Offered by **Khader and Lisa Atwan** in Loving memory of **Basima Jaghab Atwan** on the special occasion of her heavenly birthday on January 13th. *May her memory be eternal!*
- Offered by **Ibtisam, Shukri, Betty and Shereen Hanhan** for the continued good health and well-being of **Basil Hanhan** on the special occasion of his birthday. *God Bless and Many Years!*
- Offered by **St. Nicholas Church** for the good health of all those named Anthony, Antoun, Antoinette, after *Saint Anthony*, especially: **Tony Batshon, Tony Karam, Anthony Batarse, Anthony R. Batarse, Antoinette Mufarreh, Andoni Tannous, Antoinett Tamey Dudum, and Antoun Halteh**. *God bless and many years! Also in loving memory of Anthony Abdallah Shami. May his memory be eternal!*

Holy Bread of Oblation is Offered by:

✠ **David Hanhan and his family**, in loving memory of his mother **Afdokia Hanhan** and his son **Joseph David Hanhan**.
May Their Memories Be Eternal!

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND EVENTS:

SPECIAL ANTIOCHIAN ARCHDIOCESE CONVENTION: January 12th-13th, 2023.

ST NICHOLAS CHURCH LADIES MEETING: This Sunday, January 15th, following Service, we will have a ladies meeting in the hall. Join us, all ladies are welcome!

GENERAL PARISH MEETING & INSTALLATION OF THE COUNCIL MEMBERS: January 22, 2023.

ST. NICHOLAS CHURCH VALENTINE'S DAY PARTY: Saturday, February 11, 2023.
Save the date! More details to follow.

Metropolitan Anthony Surozh
SERMON ON GRATITUDE

Ten lepers came to the Lord; ten men who were ritually unclean and therefore, ritually rejected by their community, unable to attend the common worship of the Temple, unable to come near the habitations of men; and unclean also in the eyes of men because their sickness could be transmitted to others: others could become impure, others could be sick unto death.

They came to Christ and stood afar off because they knew that they had no right to come near, to touch Him as had done the woman who had an issue of blood and who had been healed. From afar off they cried for mercy, and the Lord healed them; He sent them to the priests in order to be ritually cleansed. Ten of them went, and nine never came back. One of them, discovering on his way that he was healed, let go of every other concern but his gratitude to Him that had restored him to wholeness. He came back and thanked the Lord, and the Gospel tells us that this man was a Samaritan, a man who was outside of the Hebrew community, a man who had no rights within the people of Israel, a man who was not only a stranger, but a reject.

Why is it - and Christ Himself asks the question - why is it that nine of them never thought of returning? Because they felt that now that they were clean they were restored to the wholeness of the people of Israel; they needed nothing more, they had everything. The Samaritan knew that he had been cleansed, healed, made whole without having any right to this love of God and this act of Christ.

Isn't it true that gratitude springs up in our hearts more powerfully, more gloriously when what we receive is undeserved, when it is a miracle of divine and human love? When we think that we deserve something and receive it, we receive it as our due; so did the nine Jews. But the Samaritan knew he had no right to the mercy of God, no right to this miracle of healing, and his heart was filled with gratitude.

Does this not apply to us? Indeed, it does! Indeed it does so sadly, because all of us do feel that we have a right: a right to human concern, to human love, a right to everything which the earth and human relationships can give, ultimately, a right for God's care and love for us. And therefore, when we receive a gift we are superficially grateful, we say a perfunctory 'thank you'; but it does not transform our relationship, either to God or to those who have been merciful to us. We receive it as our due, and we are grateful to those who were instrumental in conveying to us what 'naturally' we had a right to have.

The first Beatitude speaks to us in that respect very clearly: Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of God.....Who are the poor in spirit? It is not those who are simply poor; poverty does not call out the great virtues simply by itself; the poor in spirit are those who in their heart and mind, in their whole self, know that they possess nothing which is not a gift, and deserve nothing of what gratuitously is given to us. Let us reflect one moment on this.

We did not come into being of our own volition; God brought us into being, and not by command, by an act of power. He brought us into being by an act of love, He loved us into existence. By doing this, He says to us: I love you! Without you, the world which I have created would be incomplete in my eyes; but also, I have faith in you that you will not betray my trust. I put my hope in all the good there is in you; My love will never falter, My faith and hope in you will remain unshaken - respond to them! The wonder is that however little we believe in God, God believes in us. Is not this a marvel, a wonder? And we exist only because of this faith of God in us, because of this hope and love He has vested in us.

And if we think further we have not only existence - we are alive, alive with the breath of God that makes us akin to Him, capable of knowing Him! And again, He has revealed Himself to us in so many ways, but ultimately in the Incarnation: God Himself has become man for us to see how much we are loved, and how great we are in His eyes, and indeed how great we are potentially in our humanity; we can all become by communion to Christ the sons and daughters of the Living God, partakers of the Divine nature. And to achieve this Christ has given us His life, His teaching, His death, the forgiveness He gave to those who crucified Him: Forgive them, Father, they don't know what they are doing! This applies to us also, all the time, day in, day out, of His Resurrection, and the manifestation of our human glory by His sitting at the right hand of God, Saint John Chrysostom says, If you want to know how great man is, look up to the throne of God - you will see Man enthroned at the right hand of glory!

Is not that enough for us to be grateful, to be grateful before any other particular gift is bestowed: the love of our closest, and of other people that care, the security of life, food, air, health! But we all take this for granted; we are not poor in spirit - we take it as our due; why should we be grateful that we are given what is our right? Why shouldn't God give us all that is His obligation to give. This is our attitude, we don't formulate it so crudely, but we live by it!

The Samaritan did not; he had no right to share anything that was the right of Israel - and he was given it! And his gratitude was aflame, aglow! Can we not learn something from him? And also, can we not realise how wonderful it would be if out of gratitude we lived in such a way as to give God joy, the joy of knowing that He has not created us in vain, that He does not believe in us in vain, that He has not put His trust in us in vain, that His love has been received, is now incarnate, not only in emotion, but in action! Saint Paul says, It is a greater joy to give than to receive; is that our attitude? If we are truly grateful for the gifts which are ours - how generously, how joyfully we would give to everyone around us in an act of love which would be our sharing in the love of God... And if we realised that all we have, in body, in soul, in circumstances of life, even in the tragedies of life, comes because God has sent us into the world as His messengers to bring divine presence at a cost, if necessary, of our lives - how grateful we would be, and how we would live in order that God should look at us, each of us, and say, Here is a disciple of Mine who has understood, and who lives accordingly!

Let us reflect on this; let us learn to live out of gratitude, out of the joy of being loved, out of our communion with God, but knowing that it is an act of gratuitous generosity, that we have no rights - and yet we possess all things. Saint Paul said that: I have nothing, and I possess all things. Each of us could be such a rich person in our utter poverty, rich with all the love and power and richness of God.

Let us reflect, and let us give God, in an act of gratitude not only spoken, not only dimly felt, but lived in every action of our life: let us give Him joy, and the certainty that He has not created us in vain, not lived and died for us in vain, that we are truly disciples who have understood and who want to live His Gospel.

توبة أهل بيت الله +

سلوان متروبوليت جبيل والبترون وما يليهما

في حادثة شفاء البرص العشرة، تقف عند مفترق طريق حياتك. فإحسانات الله إليك عديدة وموافقك منها متباينة. فكيف بالإمكان أن نطالع هذه الحادثة؟

أولاً، تقع مطالعة الحادثة ليتورجياً بعد احتفالنا بعيد الظهور الإلهي وتفتتح مسيرة الكنيسة المتبقيّة لها حتّى بداءة فترة الصوم الكبير، تلك الفترة التي تُعدّنا للاشتراك في آلام المسيح وقيامته. سطع نور الإله الحقيقي للبشر باعتماد يسوع في نهر الأردن، وبشّر به المعمدان أترابه وقاد إليه تلاميذه عندما عرّف عنه بأنّه «حمل الله الذي يرفع خطيئة العالم» (يوحنا ١: ٢٩). فمن ثراه دنا منه وتبعه؟

ثانياً، تقع هذه الحادثة في الشوط الأخير من كرازة يسوع العلنيّة. فالكشف الإلهي الذي تلقاه من كان يُفترض به أن يكون الحاضنة بامتياز للتدبير الإلهي قد تعرّى بشكل مريع في هذه الحادثة. لفت نظر يسوع أنّ واحداً فقط من البرص العشرة رجع إليه ليشكره، وهو سامريّ غريب الجنس، بينما غاب اليهود التسعة: «ألم يوجد من يرجع ليعطي مجداً لله غير هذا الغريب الجنس؟» (لوقا ١٧: ١٨). بالفعل، كانت هذه آخر كلمة شكر سيلقاها يسوع قبل دخوله أورشليم للمرّة الأخيرة. وكانت خلاصة الحادثة معبرة عمّا ستكون عليه الحال بالنسبة إلى يسوع في ملّة اليهود: مرفوض من «أهل البيت» الأولين، ومبروك من سواهم، من «أهل بيت الله» الآخرين!

ثالثاً، تقع هذه الحادثة على مفترق طريق حياة هؤلاء العشرة. من جهة، جمعهم رحم المعاناة والمرض والعزلة، وكان لهم صوت واحد ليشفع يسوع بهم. من جهة أخرى، كانت كلمة الربّ ذاتها إليهم بأن يروا أنفسهم للكهنه (لوقا ١٧: ١٤)، وكانت النعمة عينها التي منحهم الشفاء بالتساوي. توقّف التسعة عند العطية (الشفاء من البرص) فذهبوا في طريقهم، أمّا العاشر فالتفت إلى المعطي (الشافى من البرص) فعاد أدراجه إليه. أولئك عادوا إلى واقع حياتهم الطبيعيّة وكان شيئاً لم يكن، أمّا ذاك فبدت له حياته عطية جديدة وجب إعطاء الشكر لمن منحها إيّاها. أثمرت النعمة في حياة ذاك أضعافاً، بينما خنقتها اهتمامات أولئك في قلوبهم على الفور.

نعم، النور الظاهر في الأردنّ يتقدّم رويداً رويداً مع المسيح الكارز بين أترابه بالخلاص. هذا النور الذي شفى البرص العشرة، استقبله في قلبه واحد منهم فقط، وهو السامريّ الغريب الجنس، بينما أعرض عنه اليهود التسعة، وهم المعتبرون من «أهل البيت». المهمّ في حادثة شفاء البرص العشرة أنّ واحداً منهم انفتح قلبه على الإيمان بالمسيح، وعبر عن الفكر الصالح الذي اقتناه عبر مواقف ثلاثة ذات دلالات روحية أساسية: أولاً، أنّه قدّم قلبه لله، فعاد إليه بما اعتمل كيانه من توبة عميقة؛ ثانياً، أنّه سيّح الله ومجّده وشكره على عظمائه، فانفتحت عيناه على الإله الحيّ وليس فقط على قدرته وتدبيره؛ وثالثاً، أنّه سجد ليسوع امتناناً، من جهة، وإقراراً منه بعدم استحقاقه، من جهة أخرى. هذا بات من «أهل البيت»، من ذوي الذين يرسلهم يسوع إلينا: «قم وامض. إيمانك خلّصك» (لوقا ١٧: ١٩). الآن، أي بعد توبته، بات باستطاعته أن يعود إلى العالم، ولكن بهذا الإيمان والوجدان الحيّ. فمن هم «أهل بيت الله» الحقيقيّون؟ هم الذين يتوبون، فيجتازون مسافة البرص الروحيّ التي تبقيهم على مسافة من الله. فمن لم يكن قادراً على أن يعطي قلبه لله، على الأقلّ فليشكره ويفرح بأن هناك من يعطيه قلبه ويمجّده في حياته. ومن لم يكن قادراً على الشكر، على الأقلّ فلينظر واقع حاله، فإن وجد نفسه نتناً، فليلق بنتانته على أكتاف من بمقدوره أن يأخذها على عاتقه، تماماً كما نفعل، على سبيل التشبيه، بالزبالة التي نودعها مكبّ النفائات للتخلّص منها. فكما أنّ عامل النظافة موجود يومياً لرفع القمامة، هكذا هي الكنيسة أيضاً، لا بل الربّ نفسه «الرافع خطيئة العالم».

هذه درجات ثلاث من التوبة، فمن صعد أدراجها وحرص على تثبيت قدميه عليها بالممارسة اليومية، سمع من الربّ تشجيعاً وتبريكا للنهوض يوماً بعد يوم من برصنا الروحيّ إلى لقاء حيّ به يعيدنا إلى عالمنا مدّخرين بنعمته المحيية وكلمته: «قم وامض. إيمانك خلّصك»!



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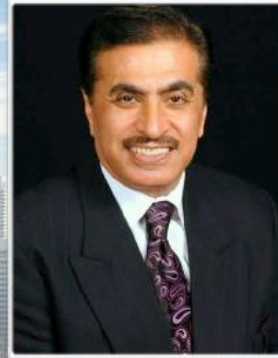


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