

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 SABA**, Archbishop
of New York and Metropolitan of all North America

Pastor, V. Rev. Fr. George Baalbaki

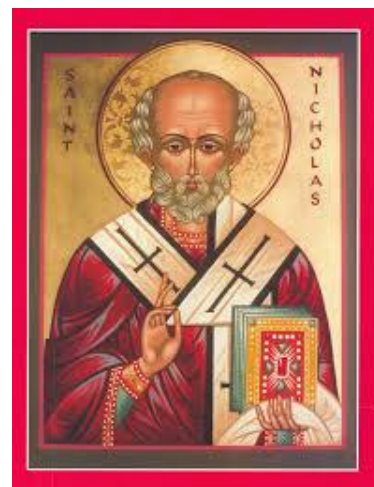
(586) 214-4428 revbaalbaki@yahoo.com

Sub-Dn. **Ilyan Baalbaki**

Sub-Dn. **Tariq Rantisi**

Parish Council Chairman: **Salim Qaru**

Parish Council Vice Chairman: **Azar Azar**



Sunday, December 31, 2023
Sunday before Theophany of Christ

January 6th is the Great Feast of Theophany

عيد الظهور الالهي (الغطاس)

We will have evening service on **Friday, January 5th at 6PM**

Service of Water Blessing will take place after service.

House Blessing Starts on Monday, January 8th.

As the tradition of our Orthodox Church, V. Rev. Fr. George Baalbaki will start his visitation for house blessings on Monday, January 8th. If you would like the priest to bless your home, please call the church office 415-648-5200 or Fr. George's cellphone: 586-214-4428 to schedule a visit.



THE EPISTLE: Timothy (4:5-8)

Timothy, my son, always be steady, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. For I am already on the point of being sacrificed; the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, and I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved His appearing.

الرسالة : تيموثاوس

يا ولدي تيموثاوس، تَبَقِّظْ في كُلِّ شَيْءٍ واحْتَمِلِ المَشَقَّاتِ، واعْمَلْ عَمَلَ المُبَشِّرِ، وَأَوْفِ خِدْمَتَكَ. أَمَّا أَنَا فَقَدْ أَرِيقُ السَّكِبَ عَلَيَّ وَوَقُفْتُ أَحْزَالِي قَدْ اقْتَرَبَ. وَقَدْ جَاهَدْتُ الجِهَادَ الحَسَنَ، وَأَتَمَمْتُ شَوْطِي، وَحَفِظْتُ الإِيمَانَ. وَإِنَّمَا يَبْقَى مَحْفُوظًا لِي إِكْلِيلُ العَدْلِ الَّذِي يَجْزِينِي بِهِ فِي ذَلِكَ اليَوْمِ الرَّبُّ، الدَّيَّانُ العَادِلُ، لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ فَقَطْ، بَلْ جَمِيعَ الَّذِينَ يُحِبُّونَ ظُهُورَهُ أَيْضًا.

THE GOSPEL: Mark. (1:1-8)

The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. As it is written in Isaiah the prophet, "Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, who shall prepare thy way; the voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight." John the Baptizer appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And there went out to him all the country of Judea, and all the people of Jerusalem; and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. Now John was clothed with camel's hair, and had a leather girdle around his waist, and ate locusts and wild honey. And he preached, saying, "After me comes He Who is mightier than I, the strap of Whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. I have baptized you with water; but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

الإنجيل : مرقس

بَدْءُ إِنْجِيلِ يَسُوعَ الْمَسِيحِ ابْنِ اللَّهِ كَمَا هُوَ مَكْتُوبٌ فِي الْأَنْبِيَاءِ "هَاءَنْذَا مُرْسِلٌ مَلَائِكِي أَمَامَ وَجْهِكَ يُهَيِّئُ طَرِيقَكَ قُدَّامَكَ. صَوْتُ صَارِخٍ فِي الْبَرِّيَّةِ: أَعِدُّوا طَرِيقَ الرَّبِّ وَاجْعَلُوا سُبُلَهُ قَوِيْمَةً." كَانَ يُوْحَنَّا يُعَمِّدُ فِي الْبَرِّيَّةِ وَيَكْرُرُ بِمَعْمُودِيَّةِ التَّوْبَةِ لِغُفْرَانِ الْخَطَايَا. وَكَانَ يَخْرُجُ إِلَيْهِ جَمِيعُ أَهْلِ بَلَدِ الْيَهُودِيَّةِ وَأُورُشَلِيمَ فَيَعْتَمِدُونَ مِنْهُ فِي نَهْرِ الْأُرْدُنِّ، مُعْتَرِفِينَ بِخَطَايَاهُمْ. وَكَانَ يُوْحَنَّا يَلْبَسُ وَبَرَّ الْإِبِلِ وَعَلَى حَقْوِيهِ مَنَاطِقَةٌ مِنْ جِلْدٍ، وَيَأْكُلُ جَرَادًا وَعَسَلًا بَرِّيًّا. وَكَانَ يَكْرُرُ قَائِلًا: إِنَّهُ يَأْتِي بَعْدِي مَنْ هُوَ أَقْوَى مِنِّي، وَأَنَا لَا أَسْتَحِقُّ أَنْ أُنْحَنِيَ وَأَحْلَ سَيْرَ جِذَائِهِ. أَنَا عَمَدْتُكُمْ بِالْمَاءِ، وَأَمَّا هُوَ فَيَعَمِدُكُمْ بِالرُّوحِ الْقُدُسِّ.

ALTAR CANDLES قناديل الهيكل



Offered by **St. Nicholas Church** for the speedy recovery of **Eisa Azar**.

God Bless and Many Years!



Offered by **St. Nicholas Church** for the good health of all who are named *Hanna, John or Johnny* on the occasion of the Names's Day after St. John the Baptist especially: **Hanna Azar, Hanna Ghattas, Hanna Shami, Hanna Khoury, Hanna Khoury, Deacon John Dibs, John Fashho, Johnny Katout, Johnny Khoury, John Lahlouh, John Rizqallah, John Saba, John Abdallah Shami, Johnny Shami, Johnny Awwad, John Siner, Dr. Elias Hanna, Ibrahim & Somaya Hanna and the Entire Hanna Family. God Bless and Many Years!** Also in loving memory of **Abdallah Hanna Shami, Hanna Salim Shnoudi, Hanna Najib Batshon, Hanna Skef, John Saleh, Hanna Shami, Hanna George Karkar, Hanna Qaqundah, John Thome, and Deacon John Tershay.**

May their memory be eternal!

Holy Bread of Oblation

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND EVENTS:

2024 PARISH LIFE CONFERENCE: PLC will be held at the Westin in Tucson, AZ from July 3-7th, hosted by Holy Resurrection Church. To register, please visit

<https://www.antiochianevents.org/events/diocese-of-los-angeles-and-the-west-3/>

TREE OF LIFE: If you would like to purchase a Leaf with your name or a loved one's name engraved to hang on the Tree, please contact the Church office (415) 648-5200.

Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh

AFTER CHRISTMAS

In imagination we think ourselves 2000 years back. What wonder should fill us: a week, and the world has become different. The world that had been for thousands of years like the lost sheep was now the sheep found, taken upon His shoulders by the Son of God become the son of man. The unbridgeable gap that sin had created between God and man was now at least incipiently bridged; God had entered into history, God Himself had become man. God had taken flesh and all things visible, what we perceive in our blindness as dead, inert matter, could in His body recognise itself in glory. Something absolutely new had occurred; the world was no longer the same.

Moreover, there is another aspect to the Incarnation. God had become man, but God in Christ had spoken words of truth, that was decisive, that gradually like yeast dropped into dough was to change the world; God had revealed to us the greatness of man. Christ becoming man was evidence, is and will remain forever evidence, that man is so vast, so deep, so mysteriously deep, that he can not only contain the divine presence as a temple, but unite himself with God, become

partaker of the divine nature, as St. Peter puts it in his Epistle. And again that man is great, and that however far we fall away from our vocation, however unworthy we may become of it, God will never re-establish with us a relationship which is less than that of His fatherhood and our condition of sons and daughters of the Most High. The prodigal son was asking his father to receive him as a hireling now that he was unworthy of being called a son; but the father did not accept it. When the son made his confession, the father stopped him before he could even pronounce those words, because God does not accept our debasement, we are no slaves and no hirelings. Has not Christ said to His disciples, "I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know the will of his master, and lo, I have told you everything."

Again, the proclamation in Christ and by Him that what matters supremely is every person, that He lives and dies for every one of us, that it is not collective units that matter, but each of us. Each of us, tells us the Book of Revelation, possesses for God a name, a name which will be revealed to us at the end of time, but a name which no one can know but God and he who receives it, because this name is our relationship to God, unique, unrepeatable. Each of us is unique for Him. What a wonder! The ancient world knew of nations and races, it knew of slaves and owners, it knew of categories of people, exactly in the same way in which the modern world that is gradually becoming not only secular but pagan, distinguishes categories and types and groups; God knows only living men and women.

And then a new justice was introduced, or rather proclaimed by Him, not the distributive and retributive justice of the law, another justice. When Christ says to us, "let your justice be beyond that of the scribes and pharisees," He speaks of the way in which God treats each of us. He accepts each of us as we are. He accepts good and evil, He rejoices in the good, and He dies because of and for the sake of what is evil. And that is what God calls us to remember, and how He calls us to be and to behave - not only within our Christian circle but in the whole world, to look at every person with that kind of justice; not judging and condemning, but seeing in each person the beauty which God has impressed upon it and which we call "the image of God in man". Venerate this beauty, work for this beauty to shine in all glory, dispelling what is evil and dark and making it possible, by the recognition of beauty in each other, for this beauty to become reality and to conquer.

He has taught us also about love which the ancient world did not know, and the modern world, like the old one, is so afraid of: A love that accepted to be vulnerable, helpless, giving, sacrificial; a love that gives without counting, a love that gives not only what it possesses, but itself. That is what the Gospel, that is what the Incarnation brought into the world, and this has remained in the world. Christ said that "the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness cannot comprehend it," but it cannot put it out either. And this light shines and shall shine, but it will conquer only if we undertake to be its heralds and the doers of these commandments of justice and of love, if we accept God's vision of the world and bring to it our faith, that is, our certainty and our hope, which is the only power that can help others to start anew; but to start anew they must see newness in us. The world has become incipiently new by the union of God with man, when the Word became flesh; it is for us to be a revelation of this newness, the resplendence and shining of God in the darkness or the dusk of this world.

May God grant us courage and love and greatness of heart to be His messengers and His witnesses, and may the blessing of the Lord be upon you by His grace and love towards mankind always, now and forever and world without end.

الوقوف أمام حقيقة الله وحقيقتنا

في حياة القديس يوحنا المعمدان، أتى استعلان سرّ الثالوث باعتماد يسوع في نهر الأردن بعد كلامه على سرّ التجسد الإلهي وخلص الإنسان في بدء كرازته العلنية: «يأتي بعدي من هو أقوى منّي الذي لست أهلك أن أنحني وأحلّ سيور حذائه. أنا عمّدكم بالماء وأمّا هو فسيعمّدكم بالروح القدس» (مرقس ١: ٧-٨). فكيف عبّر المعمدان عن هذا السرّ لأتباعه في الإيمان؟ أولاً، أنّ يسوع هو «أقوى» من يوحنا. بالفعل، فالثاني يهتئ الطريق للأول، يعلن عن قدومه ويفصح عن هويته. وبينما الثاني هو مجرد صوت، كان الأول هو الكلمة؛ وبينما عمّل الثاني هو مجرد تهيئة وعبور، كان الأول هو الغاية والقصد؛ وبينما خدمة الثاني مرحليّة، كانت خدمة الأول نهائيّة؛ وبينما اقتصرت مهمّة الثاني على أمة اليهود، كانت مهمّة الأول شاملة للبشريّة كلّها؛ وبينما يعمّد الثاني بالماء، يعمّد الأول بالروح القدس. بكلمة واحدة، اقتصرت معطيات يوحنا على شقّ الطريق حتّى نصل إلى باب السماء، أمّا الولوج إلى داخله فهذا عمل يسوع وعطيته وهبته.

ثانياً، أنّه يصعب عليه أن يشرح سرّ التجسد. استعمل المعمدان تشبيهاً من الحياة اليوميّة، حيث يقوم العبد بمساعدة سيّده على انتعال الحذاء أو نزعه. فصوره العبد تنطبق على يوحنا بداعي خدمته ابن الله، أمّا صورة أن يحلّ سيور حذاء يسوع فتتطبق على صعوبة تفسير اتّحاد الطبيعتين البشريّة والإلهيّة في شخص المسيح، إذ هو كعبد (أي كإنسان) لا يستطيع أن يقتحم سرّ سيّده (ابن الله). فهو يعلن سرّ التجسد الإلهي، سرّ اتّحاد الطبيعتين في شخص يسوع، الإله التام والإنسان التام، يعلن سرّاً انكشف له وقبّله وخدمه ولكن لا يعدو كونه سرّاً يفوق الإدراك.

ثالثاً، أنّ سرّ الخلاص الذي تُشكّل المعموديّة يوحنا بالماء مقدّمة له إنّما يتمّ بمعموديّة يسوع بالروح القدس. فمعموديّة يوحنا تهيئ النفوس لاستقبال المسيح واقتبال عمله الخلاصيّ فيها، على أساس أن تبدي هذه النفوس حسن النية واستعداد القلب والإرادة الضروريّة للمضيّ في عيش الخلاص الذي تؤمن به. أمّا المعموديّة الروح القدس فتجدّد الإنسان وتقيمه من عتاقته إلى الجِدّة في الله، وتتحدّه بنعمته، فيصير هيكلًا للروح القدس، ويستنير ذهنه بوصايا الله، ويتّسع قلبه لمحبة الله والقريب. رابعاً، أنّ مهمّة المعمدان، وإن اكتملت من جهة التهيئة، ليست كافية بحدّ ذاتها. فالإشارة إلى أنّ جميع كورة اليهوديّة وأهل أورشليم قد خرجوا إليه واعتمدوا جميعهم منه في نهر الأردنّ معترفين بخطاياهم (مرقس ١: ٥) يُعتبر نجاحاً أوليّاً في كرازته، لكنّ يوحنا كان حريصاً على ألاّ يتبرّر أحد بهذه التهيئة، لا هو ولا الذين اعتمدوا منه، بل كان حريصاً كلّ الحرص على أن يبقى الانتباه والانتظار والاستعداد مشدوداً إلى المسيح الآتي.

تكلّلت كرازة يوحنا هذه باستعلان سرّ الثالوث القدّوس يوم اعتمد يسوع منه في الأردنّ. وكان محور هذا السرّ الإنسان الجديد المعتمد فيه والذي توجه إليه الأبّ بالمسرة وكان الروح القدس مستقرّاً عليه. هكذا تلقّينا، بالمعمدان، معرفة سرّ تجسد الابن الوحيد من أجل خلاصنا وسرّ الإله الواحد في ثلاثة أقانيم، وهما السرّان الأساسيان في إيماننا المسيحيّ، واللذين نعبر عنهما بطريقة ضمّ الأصابع في رسم إشارة الصليب، وتتجسّد أيضاً رمزيّتهما في مباركة الأسقف للمؤمنين بالشمعدانين، الواحد مع الشمعات الثلاث والآخر مع الشمعتين.

هذا هو «بدء إنجيل يسوع المسيح ابن الله» (مرقس ١: ١). في هذا البدء، وهو حاضر كلّ حين، أظهر الله لنا بالمعمدان حقيقته وحقيقتنا بأن، وأعطانا المعرفة التي تقودنا إلى الوقوف عند عتبة هذه الحقيقة المكشوفة لنا حتّى نتخذ منها موقفاً صريحاً. المعمدان دلّنا على المسيح المخلّص لنذهب إليه بعد أن اعوجّبت طريق حياتنا (مرقس ١: ٣)، فهل نعي هذه الحقيقة وما هو جوابنا الوجدانيّ عليها؟ أو هل نقبل أن يصير هذا البدء خاصّاً بنا، يوماً بعد يوم، حتّى تصير «سبل الربّ مستقيمة» فينا؟ أو هل ننشئ ونربّي على هذا الأساس الصالح والمتمين: أن «نعدّ طريق الربّ» وندلّ أبناءنا بالجسد والروح إلى المخلّص نفسه؟ أو هل نعمة المعموديّة فاعلة فينا بحيث يلهمنا مثال المعمدان في خدمتنا لنهيئ طريق الربّ في عالمنا؟ «الصوت الصارخ في البريّة» يهزّنا في رحم المعاناة ويشير علينا بمن يعيد جبلتنا وينير عالمنا، هلاًّ إذّا تلقّنا الدعوة وباركنا الله كلّ حين؟

+ سلوان متروبوليت جبيل والبترون وما يليهما



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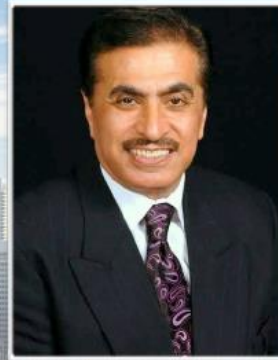


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