

*The Self-Ruled Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese
Of North America*

*The Diocese of Eagle River and the Northwest
Antiochian Orthodox Church of the Annunciation*

كنيسة البشارة الأرثوذكسية الأنطاكية

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Sunday February 21st, 2016

Tone 5 / Eothinon 5

Sunday Services:

Vespers on Saturday 6:00 PM, Sunday Matins 9:30 AM

أحد الفريسي والعشار

Sunday of the Pharisee and the Publican

Today's Liturgy Inserts

تغييرات في القداس

الايصوذيكون

هَلُمَّ نَسْجُدُ وَنَرَكُعْ لِلْمَسِيحِ مَلِكِنَا وَإِلَهِنَا. خَلِّصْنَا يَا ابْنَ اللَّهِ، يَا مَنْ قَامَ مِنْ بَيْنِ الْأَمْوَاتِ لِنُرْتَلِ لَكَ هَلْلُويَا.

Entrance Hymn (Tone 2)

Come, let us worship and fall down before Christ. Save us, O Son of God, Who art risen from the dead; who sing to Thee. Alleluia.

طروبارية القيامة (بالحن الخامس)

لِنُسَبِّحْ نَحْنُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَنَسْجُدُ لِلْكَلِمَةِ، الْمُسَاوِي لِلآبِ وَالرُّوحِ فِي الْأَزَلِيَّةِ وَعَدَمِ الْإِبْتِدَاءِ، الْمَوْلُودِ مِنْ الْعَذْرَاءِ لِحَلَاصِنَا، لِأَنَّهُ سَرَّ بِالْجَسَدِ أَنْ يَغْلُوَ عَلَى الصَّلِيبِ، وَيَحْتَمِلَ الْمَوْتَ، وَيُنْهَضَ الْمَوْتَى بِقِيَامَتِهِ الْمَجِيدَةِ.

Troparion of the Ressurrection (Tone 5)

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.

Troparion for the Patron Saint of the Church

قنّداق الفريسي والعشار على (الحن الرابع)

لِنَهْرُبَنَّ مِنْ كَلَامِ الْفَرِيسِيِّ الْمُتَشَامِخِ. وَلِنَتَعَلَّمَ تَوَاضِعَ الْعَشَّارِ بِالتَّنْهَدَاتِ هَاتِفِينَ إِلَى الْمُخْلِصِ: إِرْحَمْنَا أَيُّهَا الْحَسَنُ الْمُصَالِحَةَ وَحَدِّكَ.

Kontakion for the Pharisee and Publican in (Tone 4)

Let us flee from the boasting of the Pharisee and learn the heights of humility from the publican's words. Let us cry out in repentance: O Saviour of the world be gracious to Thy servants.

الرسالة لأحد الفريسي والعشار

Epistle for the Sunday of the Pharisee and Publican

Make vows to the Lord thy God, and perform them.

In Judah God is known; His Name is great in Israel.

The Reading from the Second Epistle of St. Paul to St. Timothy (3:10-15)

Timothy my son, you have observed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, my persecutions, and my sufferings; and what befell me at Antioch, at Iconium, and at Lystra. What persecutions I endured; yet from them all, the Lord rescued me. Indeed all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, while evil men and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceivers and deceived. But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been

صَلُّوا وَأَوْفُوا الرَّبَّ إِلَهَنَا

اللَّهُ مَعْرُوفٌ فِي أَرْضِ يَهُودَا

فصل من رسالة القديس بولس الرسول الثانية إلى تيموثاوس (3: 10-15)

يَا وَلَدِي تِيمُوثَاوَسَ إِنَّكَ قَدْ اسْتَقْرَيْتَ تَعْلِيمِي وَسِيرَتِي وَقَصْدِي وَإِيمَانِي وَأَنَاتِي وَمَحَبَّتِي وَصَبْرِي * وَأَضْطِهَادَاتِي وَالْأَمِي، وَمَا أَصَابَنِي فِي إِنْطَاكِيَّةِ وَأَيْفُونِيَّةِ وَلِسْتَرَةَ. وَأَيَّةَ اضْطِهَادَاتٍ احْتَمَلْتُ! وَقَدْ أَنْقَذَنِي الرَّبُّ مِنْ جَمِيعِهَا * وَجَمِيعَ الَّذِينَ يُرِيدُونَ أَنْ يَعِيشُوا بِالتَّقْوَى فِي الْمَسِيحِ يَسُوعَ يُضْطَهَدُونَ * أَمَّا الْأَشْرَارُ وَالْمَعْوُونَ مِنَ النَّاسِ فَيَزْدَادُونَ شَرًّا مُضِلِّينَ وَضَالِّينَ * فَاسْتَمِرِّي أَنْتِ عَلَى مَا تَعَلَّمْتَهُ وَأَيَقَنْتِ بِهِ، عَالِمًا مِمَّنْ تَعَلَّمْتِ * وَأَنَّكَ مُنْذُ الطِّفْلِ تَعْرِفُ الْكُتُبَ الْمُقَدَّسَةَ الْقَادِرَةَ أَنْ تُصِيرَكَ حَكِيمًا لِلْحَلَاصِ بِالْإِيمَانِ بِالْمَسِيحِ يَسُوعَ *

acquainted with the sacred writings which are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

الإنجيل لأحد الفريسي والعشار

Gospel for the Sunday of the Pharisee and Publican

The Reading from the Holy Gospel according to St. Luke. (18:10-14)

The Lord spoke this parable: “Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, ‘God, I thank Thee that I am not like other men, extortionists, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.’ But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me a sinner!’ I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for every one who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted.”

فصلٌ شريفٌ من بشارَةِ القديسِ لوقا الإنجيليِّ البشيرِ والتلميذِ الطاهرِ (18:10-14)

قال الربُّ هذا المثل. إنسانانِ صَعِدَا إلى الهيكلِ ليُصَلِّيَا أحدهُما فريسيٌّ والآخرُ عشارٌ * فكانَ الفريسيُّ واقفاً يُصَلِّي في نفسه هكذا اللهمَّ إنِّي أشكركَ لأنِّي لستُ كسائرِ الناسِ الخَطَفَةِ الظالمينَ الفاسقينَ ولا مثلَ هذا العشارِ * فإني أصومُ في الأسبوعِ مرَّتينِ وأعطيُّ كلَّ ما هو لي * أمَّا العشارُ فوقفَ عن بُعدٍ ولم يُرِدْ أن يرفعَ عينيه إلى السماءِ بل كانَ يَقْرَعُ صدرَه قائلاً اللهمَّ ارحمني أنا الخاطيءُ * أقولُ لكم إنَّ هذا نَزَلَ إلى بيته مُبرِّراً دونَ ذاك. لأنَّ كلَّ مَنْ رَفَعَ نفسه اتَّضَعَ ومن وَضَعَ نفسه ارتَفَعَ *

❖ Church Announcements

- ❖ **All Orthodox Singles:** if you are Orthodox and single visit this website: www.orthodoxandsingle.com
- ❖ **Blessing of Homes:** Father is going around blessing homes. Please, call or email Father to schedule a time to bless your home. Father will continue blessing homes until Lent starts.
- ❖ **Teens Basketball Team:** Fr. George would like to form a basketball team for teens to compete against other churches. Would you like to join our team? Please talk to Mary Basmajian.

St. Anthony Ukrainian Orthodox Church in Edmonton: Youth Workshop: “Relationships, Sexuality & Marriage” – March 4 & 5

The Youth Workshop begins Friday, March 4, at 6:00 PM. Registration starts at 5:30 PM followed by prayers and supper, bowling at Ed’s Rec Room, and an optional sleepover at St. Anthony’s.

Chaperones will be in attendance. The Workshop continues Saturday, March 5, from 8:00 AM until 12 noon. (See attached poster for more details.)

Cost for the Youth Workshop is \$20/person. Youth are encouraged to attend the afternoon adult session and may do so at no additional cost.

Adult Workshop: "Growing Inside to Go Outside" – March 5

The Adult Workshop begins at 1:00 PM on Saturday, March 5, with a Moleben of Thanksgiving. The workshop consists of three sessions.

- 1:30 PM – "How to be a True Orthodox Christian"
- 3:00 PM – "How the Orthodox Church Looks to the Outside World"
- 5:00 PM – Vespers
- 5:45 PM – Supper
- 7:00 PM – "Our Freedom to Bring the Church of Christ to Everyone"

Cost: \$35/participant

All sessions will be held at St. Anthony's parish, 6103 172nd Street, Edmonton. (Note: Bowling for the Youth Workshop on Friday, March 4, is at Ed's Rec Room.) Registration will be accepted until February 29.

- ❖ **Feast of the Annunciation will be celebrated on March 24 and 25th. We will have a Potluck at the end of Liturgy on Friday. Please, bring a dish to share. Fish is permitted.**
- ❖ **Upcoming Services: Please see attached schedule. We are emailing a very detailed calendar for March and April.**
- ❖ **The Police Department of Calgary:** Fr. Michel and Fr. George met with a representative of Calgary Police Department. The Police Department would like to meet with the new immigrants to talk about issues that may face as new comers to Calgary. The first meeting will be at the Maronite Church on March 5th at 4 PM. They would like to come and have another meeting at our church. Please let Fr. George know if you are interested to attend such a meeting.
- ❖ **Orthodoxy Sunday:** March 20th at 6 PM at St. Vladimir Ukrainian Orthodox Church. We will be celebrating together with all the Orthodox Churches in Calgary. See schedule of other services during Lent. **The Orthodox Churches of Calgary will be at our church on April 10th for Vespers and a potluck dinner.**
- ❖ **Services at other Churches during Lent:** March 27th = St. Peter, April 3rd = St. Simeon Serbian Church, April 10th = Annunciation, April 17th = St. Demetrious Greek Church.
- ❖ **Orthodox Men Retreat:** April 8th – 10th. All men are invited to attend. See Sam Salloum to register.
- ❖ **Attention all members:** Please, sign up to offer the Holy Bread for your good health and for the health of your family. Choose a Sunday and see one of the ladies officers. Also, we should sponsor coffee hour after Liturgy, **keep it light.** Every family is asked to pick up a Sunday.
- ❖ **Parish Life Conference:** Plan on attending the PLC this year. Make it part of your vacation. It is going to be in Phoenix, Arizona from June 28th to July 3rd. Visit www.antiochianevents.com/la.html

❖ **Retreat at our church:** **Mark your calendar. We are going to have a retreat on April 2nd open to all our members and local churches given by Fr. Gregory Horton. The theme is: “Facing Life and Death: The Cross and Resurrection of Jesus Christ”. All members are encouraged to take time and attend this retreat.**

The Orthodox Priest: An Icon of Christ

by Fr. Alister Anderson (from antiochian.org)

In this holy season you could have a child ask you, “why was Jesus born as a boy? Why couldn’t St. Mary have had a baby girl to be our saviour?” How would you answer these questions? I would say this because the Bible says it: God wanted to be born of St. Mary as a baby boy because it was His intention to be a perfect man. God made that choice. God can do and will do what He wants to do.

Now suppose a little later an adult person asked you, “Why don’t the Orthodox Christian Churches allow women to be ordained as deacons, priests or bishops?” The Church of England just voted to permit women to be ordained to the sacred ministry. Many other Christian denominations have been ordaining women to the ministry for many years. The question is answered in the Christmas story recorded in the Bible. God took the form of a man when by the power of His Holy Spirit He was born of the Virgin Mary, the Theotokos. That provides our Orthodox Christian Churches’ answer. Only a man can be ordained as a deacon, priest or bishop because Jesus the perfect Man chose only men to be His disciples and apostles. God made that choice. God can do and will do what He wants to do.

Sadly many people do not believe that the Christmas story about the Incarnation and Holy **Nativity** is true. They don’t believe that God became man in Jesus Christ. Quite naturally then, they don’t believe that God made the choice to become a man and not a woman. Unfortunately no Biblical, rational or historical answer can be given to those who choose not to believe. Many Christian people, however, need some kind of rational explanation in order to discuss God’s Incarnation as a man with other Christians or with their feminist or “politically correct” friends. Fortunately our Orthodox Christian Churches have experienced and preserved some rational theological reasons why only men can be ordained to the Sacred Ministry. I want to present three of the most compelling reasons.

We need to understand them in order to be faithful to our Biblical Doctrine and Holy Tradition. We need to believe in these reasons in order to continue worshipping in the same way Jesus Christ told our ancestors to worship God for our salvation. We need to hold fast to these reasons in order to resist the devil’s unrelenting attempts to destroy our faith in Christ and the Orthodox Church He founded.

The first reason for a male priesthood has to do with the foundation and tradition of the Christian religion. When Christ was living in human flesh, He deliberately selected twelve men to be His Apostles. These men were the beginning of a priesthood of men who were prepared to follow Him as the ordained leaders of His Church down through the centuries to this moment. The Christian churches that chose to remain within the apostolic and catholic tradition have therefore only ordained men to be bishops, priests and deacons. Now, some two thousand years later, in the supposedly greater wisdom of our twentieth century many leaders have decided that all the Christian churches should allow the ordination of women. They claim to know the mind of Christ in arguing that it was for sociological, political and economic reasons that Jesus decided not to select and ordain women to be among His disciples. The arrogant presumption of those people who say that they know what Jesus had to do or had not to do, hardly deserves an answer, but we can try to do so anyway. Christ is God and He will do what He wants to do and when He wants to do it. God did what He did because what He does is always right and the best for us. To argue that Jesus did not ordain women because women were not considered worthy enough and would be a liability to His ministry in a male-dominated culture is illogical. It begs the question. After all Christ is God and He could have brought women into the apostolic ministry at that time if He thought it was necessary He did not think it was necessary because He chose not to do it. Instead He honored His Virgin Mother to be the Theotokos, our God-bearer, thereby elevating her to be first among the saints. Through St. Mary Jesus has raised the status of all women everywhere and for all time. They were no longer to be regarded as chattel but to be treated as being equally precious as men in the eyes of God. Christ hallowed the state of marriage which was much abused in those days to the detriment of women.

He taught the spiritual equality of men and women and blessed that equality by saying, “for this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife and they shall be one flesh.” But while Christ taught that men and women are equal in their human nature, they are blessedly and entirely different in their human function. I intend to say more about their human function in a moment.

Those people who advocate the ordination of women to the Sacred Ministry of our Orthodox Church disregard history — both church history and Holy Tradition — and they misinterpret the Bible. They want us to believe that the Bible allows the ordination of women. While they claim that there is no specific verse in the Bible prohibiting women from being ordained, we Orthodox Christians know that you can not argue justifiably that point from mere scriptural silence. There are many specific things about which the Bible is silent. There are many things the Bible does not explicitly prohibit but which we know we should not do. It is obvious in the study of church history that the idea of female priests never developed in the religious and spiritual experience of our Christian ancestors. They struggled desperately against all those pagan religions which had a plethora and panoply of male and female gods and goddesses. Our Christian ancestors saw that priestesses were frequently involved in the performance of fertility rites which glorified sexual deviance and promiscuity They knew that such obsession with sex was destructive of morality and the life and safety of the human family. They knew this because they understood the Holy

Scriptures proclaimed by the Hebrew prophets and God Himself through Jesus Christ. What we must remember is that while the Bible may not contain a verse specifically prohibiting women to be ordained, it does contain much specific teaching about the necessity for a male priesthood. There is no indication whatsoever that any women were part of the ordained ministry in the time of the apostles. There is, however, in the Bible, St. Paul's teaching that women should not lead in the worship of the church.

In the letters to the Ephesians and Corinthians, St. Paul speaks of the ordained man as being a **presbyter**, which means an older man or elder or ruler. He believes that only men should lead or rule in the Christian family. He believes that equal rulership with men would eventually cause confusion in the human family as well as in the church by preventing singleness of purpose in decision-making. There is, however, no argument from St. Paul about the fact that women have the right to rule in the political and vocational order. There have always been queens and princesses, and now there are female prime ministers and presidents. Women are active now in all the professional vocations and in all the trades known to mankind. We Christians who advocate only a male priesthood as being the only valid apostolic ministry of the Church do not in any way deny that women have equal rights and opportunities to work. We believe that women should be paid commensurately with men for their labor and skill. But certain leaders deprecate the male priesthood as being a bastion of male chauvinism and a violation of civil and equal rights for women. Nonsense! The Church is not a secular institution governed by democratic processes. The Church is a spiritual organism and not just a secular organization. She is a spiritual and supernatural monarchy with God as Her king and supreme judge. We Orthodox Christians declare that while men and women are equal in the eyes of God and under the secular law, they are very different in their human nature because God has created them for different functions. A bishop, priest and deacon have a specific function within the family of the Church. To ordain women to the sacred ministry would only confuse and destroy that function. In terms of human function a woman can no more be a priest than a man can be a mother.

What has happened in many protestant churches since the Reformation has been the supplanting of the doctrine of Apostolic Succession by the protestant idea of the priesthood of all believers. Protestant churches have no problem with ordaining women because they believe that all the people in the church are ministers to one another. But to say that all people are priests before God is to deny the apostolic and Biblical teaching that there are certain men in every time and place who will be selected by the consent of the people and given Grace by God to carry out special functions for the Church. God gave this function to men. Men did not, nor could they secure it for themselves.

There is a second reason why we Orthodox Christians have only a male priesthood. It rests on the fact that we have always had a catholic and apostolic understanding of the priesthood and not just that of a protestant ministry. We have a priesthood of all believers like the protestants because we do minister individually to each other through our love and prayers and mutual support. But our Orthodox priesthood goes far beyond a protestant ministry. We have a **sacerdotal** priesthood. Bishops and priests are not

only **presbyters** as I said earlier, they are also individually a **sacerdos**. Sacerdos is a Latin word which means “an offerer of God’s gifts.” An Orthodox priest therefore is one who offers God’s gifts to His people as well as being set aside as being the people’s gift to God. We believe that God comes to us in a very special way through the sacraments. We believe that only a priest who has been given the authority by the Church through Christ can administer those sacraments. Only a priest and a bishop have the function and the authority to consecrate the elements of bread and wine to become the Body and Blood of Christ. Only the priest and the bishop have the function and the authority to bless water and oil in Holy Baptism and Holy Unction and to sanctify material objects for devotional and spiritual purposes. Only a priest and a bishop have the function and the authority to absolve people from their sins. Only a priest or bishop who is a man can exercise this function and authority because Christ ordained only men to have this kind of function. No protestant minister, male or female, claims or even wants to be a sacerdos and a part of a sacerdotal ministry.

Now there is a third compelling reason for the male priesthood. Orthodox Christians believe that their bishops, priests and deacons are **Ikons of Christ** and therefore must be male because Jesus Christ is male. To understand this we must think about what an Ikon is. An Ikon is a religious symbol, but yet much more than a symbol. It is an instrument of Divine reality. It is a picture and a vision for the eyes which conveys a spiritual reality to the worshipper. We can say that an Ikon is an image of the Divine, but we must say at the same time that an Ikon has no divine power of its own. That would make an Ikon an idol and idols belong to pagan worship. An Ikon has the spiritual function to help us receive into our souls the spiritual awareness of what it depicts. For example; when we look at an Ikon depicting the crucifixion, the Ikon helps us to participate more spiritually in the wonder of Christ’s love for us and the efficacious power of His sacrifice on the cross. Looking at an Ikon in our worship is the most direct way we can visually represent Christ’s atoning death for the forgiveness of our sins. Looking at an Ikon strengthens the spiritual reality of our worship.

The same thing should happen when we look at our clergy. When we are at worship our priest or bishop becomes an **Ikon of Christ**. Christ is God but He is also a fully perfect human man. That means that a priest, as His Ikon or most true symbol, must also be a man. A priest must be male because Jesus is a man. In the Incarnation God became man not woman. The male priesthood is a supernatural concept. In that sense it is a mystery just as the Incarnation or Resurrection is a mystery. Reason and logic cannot fully explain it, or define it, or detract from the truth of it, any more than you and I can explain it as being the way of God.

We can say that God has no particular sex, male or female. But in the Revelation of God through Christ, God chose to become a man because He wanted to take to Himself a bride which is the Church, the Family of God. In like manner, God also chose men to represent Him as the head of the human Church family. God decided that the function of consecrating, blessing and absolving is the role of man to do in our human existence on earth. Men have not made this their role. God made it men’s role. As individuals we believe God’s Word about this or we choose not to. But as members of the family of Orthodox Christian Churches we have no choice. The Church belongs to God and God has made His choice. God will do what He wants to

do and what He wants is always right and best for us. God has chosen and blessed us with a male priesthood. Let us rejoice and be glad and thankful for it.

Father Alister Anderson is attached to Sts. Peter & Paul Church in Bethesda, Maryland.

SUCCESSFUL PEOPLE

Read every day 

Compliment 

Embrace Change 

Forgive others 

Talk about ideas 

Continuously learn 

Accept responsibility for their failures 

Have a sense of gratitude 

Set goals and develop life plans 

UNSUCCESSFUL PEOPLE

Watch TV every day 

Criticize 

Fear change 

Hold a grudge 

Talk about people 

Think they know it all 

Blame others for their failures 

Have a sense of entitlement 

Never set goals 



The Godparents: The institution of godparents (sponsors) is one that dates back to the first century of the Christian Church. Anyone approaching baptism, be they infant or adult, was required to have a godparent. In the case of an infant, it is the godparent that speaks for the child, answering the questions posed by the priest during the baptismal service. But it doesn't stop there! The godparent is charged by the Church with the duty to make sure the newly baptized is instructed in the teachings of the Church, remains a frequent communicant within the Church and remains active in the Church. In the case of a child, it is to the godparents that the parents entrust their child, knowing that the godparent will remain actively supporting the child within the life of the Church. Should something happen to the parents, it is traditionally the godparent who will make sure the child continues to be taken to church, and remains Orthodox.

Because of the awesome responsibility of godparents, it is all the more important that great care be taken when choosing someone who will take on this role. The Church does not allow anyone to become a godparent who is not Orthodox, for how can one who is not himself a pious, active Orthodox Christian give witness to living a life immersed in the Orthodox faith? The godparent must therefore be a person of high moral character, and able to inspire the newly baptized to fulfill their baptismal vows.

When the newly baptized approaches the holy chalice for the first three consecutive Sundays following baptism, it is the godparent who accompanies them to receive the Holy Mysteries. The godparent must, therefore, be someone who himself/herself is a frequent communicant. Additionally, the godparent must be someone who is active in the life of the Church, supporting the Church with their tithe, keeping the fasts, and otherwise living in all piety and holiness.

The person chosen to act as a godparent must be someone willing to honor their commitment to the newly baptized for a lifetime, and willing to help nourish the spiritual life and development of the child throughout their life. Thus, it is a very bad idea to pick someone as a godparent simply because they are a good friend. Godparents are duty bound to continue giving support to their godchild, even into adulthood. They must be someone who will remember to honor their godson or goddaughter on special occasions, such as a birthday or namesday. They should be a part of the godchild's life during the great feasts of the Church, such as Pascha or Nativity. They should commemorate the anniversary of their godchild's baptism by giving them a Christian gift, such as a Bible, prayer book, or icon.

Everything should be done to strengthen the bond between the godparent and the godchild throughout the ensuing years. They can take each other out to a restaurant for dinner, or receive communion together when possible (if living in different cities). Time should be allotted to cultivate a unique spiritual bond, and the godparent should assist the godchild's parents whenever possible – especially when doing so enhances the godchild's commitment to their Orthodox faith.

Because baptism has been called Illumination, and brings us out of the darkness of sin and into the light of Christ, the role of the godparent is critical. The godparent must ensure that the Light of Christ continues to shine in the soul of the godchild. Thus, this role as godparent is an awesome responsibility, and is not to be considered a one-day event. If you've been asked to be a godparent, but are unwilling to see this as a lifelong vocation, please decline the honor.

Abbot Tryphon

“My son, always strive to be simple and kind. Do not have one thing in your heart and another thing on your tongue, for this is a ruse and a lie.” - St. Nilus of Mount Sinai

دخول الكنيسة

لدخول بيت الله أصوله. وهذه سنتني بأن نُظهر شيئاً منها في هذه السطور. أول ما ينبغي لنا ذكره أنّ لكل كنيسة من كنائسنا قديساً نستشفعه (مريم، جاورجيوس، بطرس وبولس، وغيرهم) أو حدثاً خلاصياً نحيا عليه (ميلاد الرب، التجلي، القيامة...). على مدخل الكنيسة الغربي الذي ندخل الكنيسة منه، نضع إيقونة صاحب البيت. هذه تقف على الباب تستقبل الداخلين. ما يُطلب من المؤمن أن يسجد على الباب إكراماً لله فيما يردد قول المزمور: «أما أنا، فبكثره رحمتك أدخل بيتك، وأسجد نحو هيكل قدسك بخوفك» (5: 7). ما من أحد، مهما بلغ برّه وتقواه، يمكنه أن يدخل بيت الله، بل رحمة الله هي التي تفتح لنا أبوابه. وحركة السجود تصحبها المخافة، أي الوعي أنّ هذا البيت هو بيت الله الذي لا يُدنى منه. ثمّ يتقدّم المؤمن، ويقبل صاحب البيت، شخصاً كان أو حدثاً.

ما يجري عادةً، بعد هذا الطقس الودّي، أنّ المؤمن يأخذ مكاناً لنفسه في «البيت». ولكنّ الأصل، الذي حجبهُ أنّ الكثيرين يبنوا باتوا يأتون إلى الكنيسة متأخرين، أن يدخل المؤمن صحن الكنيسة توّاً. هذا يذكر بسرّ المعمودية الذي أخذه كلّ متّاً طفلاً (إذ لا يدخل الكنيسة سوى المعمّدين). خيرُ ذكرى نستحضرها، كلّما دخلنا الكنيسة، أنّ الله تبنّانا بنعمته. الابن له صدر البيت. يعبر المؤمن عن هذا الوعي بتقدّمه إلى أمام الإيقونسطاس (حامل الإيقونات)، ليكمل التسليم على حسب الأصول. يبدأ بثلاث سجّات أمام الباب الملوكي، ثمّ باثنتين أمام إيقونة الرب يسوع يتبعهما تقبيل وسجدة ثالثة. ثمّ ينتقل إلى إيقونة العذراء والدة الإله، ويفعل الترتيب الذي فعله أمام إيقونة الرب. وبعدها، ينتقل إلى إيقونة النبي السابق، يسجد مرّةً، يقبل، ويسجد من جديد. ويفعل الأمر عينه أمام إيقونة صاحب الكنيسة. لهذه السجّات صلوات خاصّة يرددها الكهنة، بصوت منخفض، في خدمة تسمّى «أخذ الكيرون»، أي الإذن. وهذا ما ترغب الكنيسة لنا في أن نفعله جميعاً. من هذه الصلوات الأربع التي يُفترض أن نحفظها عن ظهر قلب، سنختار صلاةً تقال أمام إيقونة الرب: «لصورتك الطاهرة نسجد، أيّها الصالح، طالبين غفران الخطايا، أيّها المسيح الإله، لأنك قبلت أن ترتفع بالجسد على الصليب طوعاً، لتنجّي الذين خلقتهم من عبودية العدو. لذلك نهتف إليك بشكر: لقد ملأت الكلّ فرحاً، يا مخلصنا، إذ أتيت لتخلص العالم».

بعد أن يُنهي المؤمن هذا الطقس المنتظر أن يفعله قبل بدء الخدمة الإلهية، يسجد، من جديد، ثلاث مرّات أمام الباب الملوكي، ليذلّ على أنّ الله الأب هو البداية والنهاية. ثمّ يختار مكانه.

هذا في الشكل. ولكنّ المؤمن، في تنفيذه هذا الشكل، يقول ما يفترضه الجوهر الذي يتضمّنه هذا الشكل، أي يقول، بثقة تُفعله، إنّه يطلب إلى الله أن يُصالحه. الجميل، في هذا الطلب، هو أنّ الكنيسة، أي الربّ وقديسيه هنا، يبدون يرغبون في هذه المصالحة أكثر بكثير ممّا تتصوّر. وهذه رغبة داعمة. نحن نعتبر أنّنا، إن مشينا، نصل بقدمينا إلى أيّ مكان نقصده. وهذا، إن كنّا خارج الكنيسة، اعتبار صحيح. أمّا في الكنيسة، فمنذ دخولنا إيّاها، يحملنا الملائكة والقديسون. قلنا ما يعني أنّنا ندخل بيت الربّ بالرحمة. هذا، ملائكة الله وقديسوه يُريدونه أن يتمّ لنا. ولذلك، منذ لحظة الدخول، يدعموننا سرّياً. تصوّر أنّك، كلّما وصلت إلى مدخل كنيسة، تتبادل مع القديس صاحبها أطيب القبلات! تريدك الكنيسة أن تشعر، منذ أن تصل إلى باب بيت الله، بأنّك محمول، مدعوم، مقبول. هنا أنت في البيت، في بيت أبيك، في بيتك.

لكنّ هذه العطية، لنستحقّها، ينتظر الله وكنيستهُ أن نكون في سلام مع الناس الذين نُعايشهم. هذه المصالحة لا تقبل أيّ تبرير يمنعها، أو يؤخرها. هل تقبل أنت، إن دخلت كنيسة الله، أن يقول لك الله أو قديسوه (أو أحد إخوتك في الرعية): «لسنا في مزاج يسمح لنا باستقبالك الآن. فعُد في وقتٍ آخر»؟! أنت تنتظر أن تُقبل دائماً. والله ينتظر أن تُصالح الناس دائماً، أي أن تندفع أنت إلى مُصالحتهم، أن تحملهم، إن أمكن، إلى أن يقبلوك بتواضع الواعي أنّه، في كنيسة الله، يُعطى، دائماً، ما لا يستحقّه.

هذا الدخول هو أعلى عطية أعطيناها في هذه الحياة. ليس، في الكون كلّهُ، ما يستدعي الفرخ يفوق أن نقبل أنفسنا في حضن الله. هذا يستحقّ أن نحيا من أجله، وأن نأتي، في غير حال، منه وإليه!

هناك نوعان من المجد الباطل: المجد الذي يتعلّق بزينة الأجساد وفخامة اللباس، وهذا ما يسمّيه الآباء المجد الباطل الدنيوي. أما النوع الآخر فيحارب الذين تميّزوا بالفضيلة، ويأتي معه الزهو والخبث اللذان يستعملهما العدو لسلب الغنى الروحي وتبديده.

تُعالج هذه العيوب جميعا بتنمية الشعور برغبة الشرف (المجد) الآتي من فوق، ومَن يرغب فيه يعرف انه لا يستحقه. وتعالج أيضا بالإصرار على البقاء في أدنى درجات الوضع البشري، مع القناعة بأننا نستحقّ هذا الواقع. وتُعالج هذه العيوب أيضا باعتبار أن مجد الله أفضل من مجدنا كما قال المزمور: «لا لنا يارب لا لنا بل لاسمك أعطِ المجد» (مزمور ١١٣: ٩).

The Five Cycles in Orthodox Worship

The Great Cycle of Life.

The life of an Orthodox Christian can be seen as being composed of five cycles. There is, first of all, the great cycle of life, which embraces the whole life of a man from birth to death, and which consists in liturgical actions which are not repeated, occurring only once in a person's lifetime. These are Holy Baptism, Holy Chrismation, and the Burial Service. In addition, there also belongs in this great cycle the Sacraments or Sacramental Blessings which bestow special grace for a particular office or vocation with the community. These are Holy Matrimony, the Monastic Tonsure and Holy Orders.

The Daily Cycle.

Another major cycle which involves the entire life of an Orthodox Christian is the daily cycle of prayers and praises offered by the Church, once every twenty-four hours. These services express our remembrance of events which happened at certain hours and contain petitions relevant to these memories.

In antiquity the day was considered to begin at sunset and thus was divided according to the following order. Night began at 6:00 p.m. (according to our reckoning) and was divided into four parts (called watches the time of changing guards): Evening (6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.); Midnight (9:00 p.m. to 12:00 midnight); Cock-crow (12:00 midnight to 3:00 a.m.); and Morning (3:00 a.m. to 6:00 a.m.). Day began at 6:00 a.m. (our reckoning) and it, too, was divided into four watches (or hours). First Hour (6:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m.); Third Hour (9:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon); Sixth Hour (12:00 noon to 3:00 p.m.); and Ninth Hour (3:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.).

Following this ancient pattern, Orthodox Christians begin each portion of the day with common prayer, which has resulted in the following eight Services, customarily divided into three groups: Ninth Hour, Vespers, and Compline; Nocturns (Midnight Service), Matins, and First Hour; Third and Sixth Hours. In addition to this daily pattern, in certain monasteries during certain periods of fasting, each of the Hours is followed by an intermediate Office called the Interhour. Also included in the daily cycle are the Offices for the Blessing of the Table and the Morning and Evening Prayers.

The Divine Liturgy is often included in this daily cycle, normally being served after the Sixth Hour (although, during Fast Periods it is celebrated after Vespers). Often treated as part of the daily cycle, the Divine Liturgy is not prescribed to be celebrated every day (as it is in many cathedrals and monasteries) and in a theological and mystical sense actually stands outside of chronological time since it also serves as a point of contact with the eternal, where its participants (by virtue of their partaking of the Holy Eucharist) are transported to a point outside of time where there is no past, present or future, but only the eternal Now [The Festal Menaion, trans. Mother Mary and Archimandrite Kallistos Ware, p. 40]. On days when the Divine Liturgy is not celebrated, the Service of the Typical Psalms is celebrated in its place after the Sixth Hour (it also sometimes precedes the Liturgy), thus forming part of the third group of Daily Services with the Third and Sixth Hours.

In addition to these two cycles, there are also three others: The Weekly Cycle of the Eight Tones (Octoechos), the Annual Cycle of Movable Feasts (dependent upon Pascha), and the Annual Cycle of Fixed Feasts, beginning on the first day of the Church Year September 1. These three cycles are combined and superimposed on each other, giving the Liturgical Year a constant and unfailing variety.

The Weekly Cycle.

Each day of the Weekly Cycle is dedicated to certain special memorials. Sunday is dedicated to Christ's Resurrection; Monday honors the Holy Bodiless Powers (Angels, Archangels, etc.); Tuesday is dedicated to the prophets and especially the greatest of the Prophets, St. John the Forerunner and Baptist of the Lord; Wednesday is consecrated to the Cross and recalls Judas' betrayal; Thursday honors the Holy Apostles and Hierarchs, especially St. Nicholas, Bishop of Myra in Lycia; Friday is also consecrated to the Cross and recalls the day of the Crucifixion; Saturday is dedicated to All Saints, especially the Mother of God, and to the memory of all those who have departed this life in the hope of resurrection and eternal life.

Each week of the Weekly Cycle is centered around the Eight Tones (the basis for Orthodox Church music) and each Week has its appointed Tone. On Saturday Evening of Bright Week (the Eve of St. Thomas Sunday), the cycle of Tones begins with Tone One and, week by week, the sequence continues through the successive Tones, One to Eight, changing to a new Tone every Saturday Evening, throughout the year.

The Annual Cycle of Movable Feasts.

The yearly cycle of Movable Feasts is that centered around Holy Pascha and is called movable because, being linked with the Feast of Feasts, it shifts from year to year as Pascha itself falls on a different date each year. The Feasts which comprise this cycle are Palm Sunday (the Sunday before Pascha), Holy Ascension (the fortieth day after Pascha) and Holy Pentecost (the Descent of the Holy Spirit the fiftieth day after Pascha).

The Annual Cycle of Fixed Feasts.

Each day of the year is dedicated to the memory of particular events or Saints and these memorials always fall on the same Calendar date each year. Thus, in honor of each event or Saint(s), special hymns have been composed which are added to the usual hymns and prayers of the day.

The Great Feasts.

Among the feasts of the Church Year, a place of special honor belongs to the Feast of Feasts, Holy Pascha. Next in importance come the Twelve Great Feasts, which can be divided into two groups: Feasts of the Lord and Feasts of the Mother of God.

Great Feasts of the Lord:

1. The Universal Exaltation (or Elevation) of the Life-creating Cross (Sept. 14)
2. The Nativity of Our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ (Christmas Dec. 25)
3. The Theophany (or Epiphany) of Our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ (Jan. 6)
4. The Entrance of Our Lord Jesus Christ into Jerusalem (Palm Sunday Sunday before Pascha)
5. The Ascension of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (40 days after Pascha)
6. The Descent of the Holy Spirit (Holy Pentecost 50 days after Pascha)
7. The Transfiguration of Our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ (Aug. 6)

Great Feasts of the Mother of God:

1. The Nativity of the Most-Holy Theotokos (Sept. 8)
2. The Entrance (or Presentation) of the Theotokos into the Temple (Nov. 21)
3. The Meeting of Our Lord Jesus Christ in the Temple (Feb. 2)
4. The Annunciation to the Most-Holy Theotokos (Mar. 25)
5. The Falling-Asleep (or Dormition) of the Most-Holy Theotokos (Aug. 15)

All of the Feasts listed above, with the exception of Palm Sunday and Holy Pentecost are preceded by a period of preparation known as the Forefeast. In addition, The Nativity of Christ and the Dormition are preceded by a special fasting period (the Nativity Fast begins on November 15 and the Dormition Fast begins on August 1). Three of the Feasts are followed, on the next day, by a distinctive commemoration known as a Synaxis: The Nativity of Christ is followed, on Dec. 26 by the Synaxis of the Most-Holy Theotokos; the Theophany is followed, on Jan. 7 by the Synaxis of St. John the Baptist; and the Annunciation is followed, on Mar. 26 by the Synaxis of the Archangel Gabriel. In addition, all except one (Palm Sunday) are followed by a festal period called the Afterfeast, during which the prior Feast is continually observed. The last day of the Afterfeast the actual close of the Feast is called the Leavetaking.

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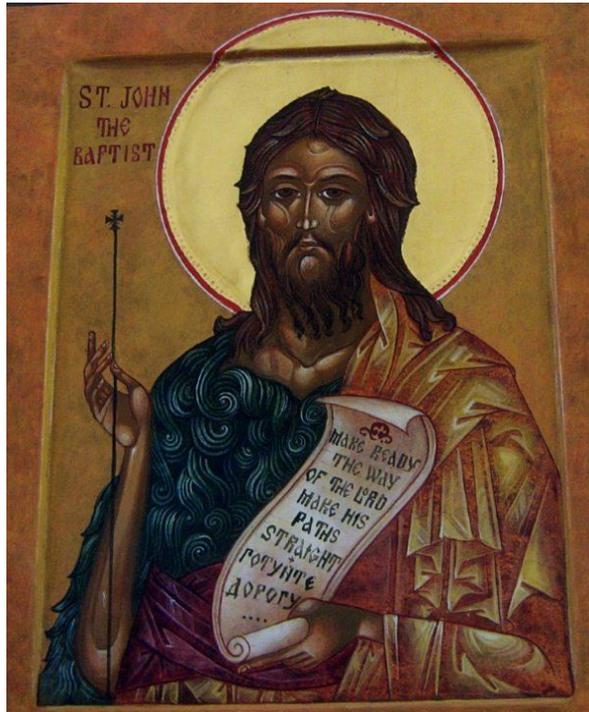
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Antiochian Orthodox
Church of the
Annunciation –
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Contact: Sam Salloum

St. Mary's Romanian
Orthodox Parish –
Fr. Michael Lupu;
Contacts: Dennis Lipon,
Daniel Cojocariu

St. Vladimir's Ukrainian
Orthodox Congregation –
Fr. Taras Krochak and
Fr. Timothy Charpko
Contacts: Glen Tacey, Ihor
Triska, Dan Zukiwsky



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Serbian Orthodox
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Fr. Obrad Filipovic

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Fr. Peter Rougas

St. Peter the Aleut OCA
Church – Fr. Phillip
Eriksson
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Sessions:

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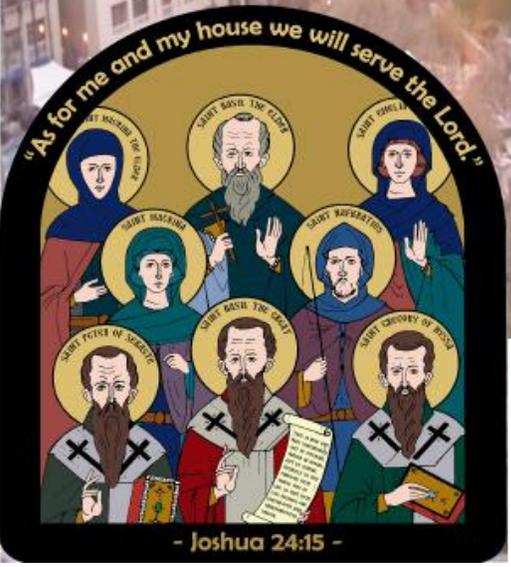
The true Orthodox way of thought has always been historical, has always included the past, but has never been enslaved by it. For, the strength of the Church is not in the past, present, or future, but in Christ.



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