

*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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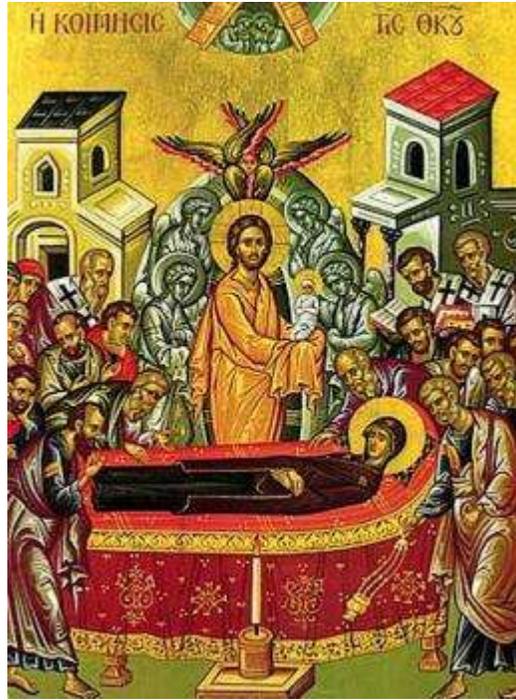
Sunday August 14th, 2016

نقل عيد رقاد والدة الإله

Transfer of the Feast of the Dormition of the Theotokos
Sixth Sunday after Pentecost

Saturday Service: Vespers at 6 PM

Sunday Services: Matins 9:30 AM, Divine Liturgy 10:30 AM



نقل عيد رقاد والدة الإله

Transfer of the Feast of the Dormition of the Theotokos

Today's Liturgy Inserts

تغييرات في القداس

First Antiphon

Shout with joy to God, all the earth, give thanks unto the Lord and call upon His Name. Declare His works among the nations.

Through the intercessions of the Theotokos, O Savior, save us.

In the city of our God, in His holy mountain, His place hath been made in peace, and His dwelling in Zion.

Through the intercessions of the Theotokos, O Savior, save us.

Glory... Both now...

Through the intercessions of the Theotokos, O Savior, save us.

Second Antiphon

The Lord loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwelling of Jacob. Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God.

Save us, O Son of God, Who art risen from the dead; who sing to Thee. Alleluia.

God hath laid her foundation unto eternity. We have thought, O God, of Thy mercy in the midst of Thy people.

Save us, O Son of God, Who art risen from the dead; who sing to Thee. Alleluia.

The most-high hath hallowed His tabernacle.

Glory... Both now... O, only begotten Son and Word of God...

Save us, O Son of God, Who art risen from the dead; who sing to Thee. Alleluia.

الانتيفونا الأولى

هَلِّلُوا اللَّهَ يَا جَمِيعَ الْأَرْضِ، اعْتَرَفُوا لَهُ. سَبِّحُوا لِاسْمِهِ.
بِشَفَاعَاتِ وَالِدَةِ الْإِلَهِ يَا مُخْلِصُ خَلصْنَا.
في مدينة ربّ القوّات. في مدينة الهنا. صار موضعهُ بسلاّمٍ
ومسكنهُ في صهيون.

بِشَفَاعَاتِ وَالِدَةِ الْإِلَهِ يَا مُخْلِصُ خَلصْنَا.
المجد للأب والإبن والروح القدس الآن وكل أوان وإلى
دهر الداهرين آمين.
بِشَفَاعَاتِ وَالِدَةِ الْإِلَهِ يَا مُخْلِصُ خَلصْنَا.

الانتيفونا الثانية

يحبُّ الربُّ ابواب صهيون أكثر من جميع مساكن يعقوب. قد
قيلت فيك الامجاد يا مدينة الله.

**خَلصْنَا يَا ابْنَ اللَّهِ. يَا مَنْ هُوَ عَجِيبٌ فِي قَدِيسِيهِ. مَرْتَلِينَ
لَكَ هَلْلُويَا.**

الله اسسها الى الابد. لقد قدّس العليُّ مسكنهُ
**خَلصْنَا يَا ابْنَ اللَّهِ. يَا مَنْ هُوَ عَجِيبٌ فِي قَدِيسِيهِ. مَرْتَلِينَ
لَكَ هَلْلُويَا.**

يا كلمة الله الابن الوحيد... الخ
**خَلصْنَا يَا ابْنَ اللَّهِ. يَا مَنْ هُوَ عَجِيبٌ فِي قَدِيسِيهِ. مَرْتَلِينَ
لَكَ هَلْلُويَا.**

الانتيفونا الثالثة

مستعدُّ قلبي يا الله مستعدُّ قلبي. بماذا اكافئُ الربَّ عن كل
ما اعطاني. كأس الخلاص اتناول. واسم الرب ادعو.

في ميلادكِ حفظتِ البتولية... الخ

Third Antiphon

Ready is my heart, O God, ready is my heart; I will sing and chant in my glory. What shall I render to the Lord for all that He hath given me? I will receive the cup of salvation, and call upon the Name of the Lord.

In thy birth-giving, O Theotokos... etc.

(Now sing the Apolytikion of the Dormition.)

الايصوديكون

هَلُمَّ نَسْجُدُ وَنَرْكَعُ لِلْمَسِيحِ مَلِكِنَا وَإِلَهِنَا. خَلَّصْنَا 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 (باللحن السابع)

حَطَمْتَ بِصَلِيبِكَ الْمَوْتَ وَفَتَحْتَ لِلصَّيْفِ الْفِرْدَوْسَ، وَحَوَّلْتَ نَوْحَ حَامِلَاتِ الطَّيِّبِ، وَأَمَرْتَ رُسُلَكَ أَنْ يَكْرِزُوا، بِأَنَّكَ قَدْ قُمْتَ أَيُّهَا الْمَسِيحُ إِلَهُ، مَانِحاً الْعَالَمَ الرَّحْمَةَ الْعُظْمَى.

8Troparion of the Ressurrection (Tone

Thou didst shatter death by Thy Cross, Thou didst open paradise to the thief; Thou didst turn the sadness of the ointment-bearing women into joy. And didst bid Thine Apostles proclaim a warning, that Thou hast risen O Christ, granting to the world the great mercy.

طروبارية لعيد رقاد السيدة

إِنَّ وَالِدَةَ إِلَهٍ تِي لَا تَعْفَلُ فِي الشَّفَاعَاتِ. وَالرَّجَاءُ الْغَيْرُ الْمَرْدُودِ فِي النَّجْدَاتِ، لَمْ يَضْبُطْهَا قَبْرٌ وَلَا مَوْتُ. لَكِنْ بِمَا أَنَّهَا أُمُّ الْحَيَاةِ نَقَلَهَا إِلَى الْحَيَاةِ ابْنُهَا الَّذِي حَلَّ فِي مَسْتَوْدِعِهَا الدَّائِمِ الْبَتُولِيَّةِ.

Apolytikion of the Dormition of the Theotokos

Verily, the Theotokos, who is ever watchful in intercessions, who is never rejected, neither tomb nor death could control. But being the Mother of Life, He Who dwelt in her ever-Virgin womb did translate her to life.

قنداق لعيد رقاد السيدة (بالحن الثاني)

انَّ والدةَ الإلهِ التي لا تَعْفَلُ في الشفاعاتِ والرجاءِ غيرَ المردودِ في النجّاتِ لم يَضْبُطْها قَبْرٌ ولا مَوْتٌ. لكنَّ بما أنَّها أُمُّ الحِياةِ نَقَلْها إلى الحِياةِ الذي حلَّ في مُسْتَوْدَعِها الدائمِ البتوليةِ.

Kontakion of the Dormition of Christ (Tone 2)

Verily, the Theotokos, who is ever watchful in intercessions, who is never rejected, neither tomb nor death could control. But being the Mother of Life, He Who dwelt in her ever-Virgin womb did translate her to life.

الرسالة لعيد الرقاد

Epistle For the Dormition

My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior.

He hath regarded the lowliness of His servant.

**The Reading from the Epistle of St. Paul to the *
*Philippians. (2:5-11)**

Brethren, have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, Who, though He was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross. Therefore, God has highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the Name which is above every name, that at the Name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

تَعْظِمُ نَفْسِي لِلرَّبِّ، وَتَبْتَهِجُ رُوحِي بِاللَّهِ مُخْلِصِي.
لَأَنَّهُ نَظَرَ إِلَى تَوَاضُعِ أَمَّتِهِ.

*فَصَلِّ مِنْ رِسَالَةِ الْقَدِيسِ بُولَسِ الرَّسُولِ إِلَى أَهْلِ فِيلِيبِّي
*(2:5-11)

يا اخوةُ لِيَكُنْ فِيقُمْ الْفِكْرَ الَّذِي فِي الْمَسِيحِ يَسُوعَ أَيْضاً*
الَّذِي إِذْ هُوَ فِي صُورَةِ اللَّهِ لَمْ يَكُنْ يَعْتَدُ مَسَاوَاتِهِ لِلَّهِ
اِخْتِلاَساً* لَكِنَّهُ أَخْلَى ذَاتَهُ أَخْذاً صُورَةَ عَبْدٍ صَائِراً فِي شَبهِ
البشرِ وموجوداً كبشرٍ في الهيئةِ* فَوَضَعَ نَفْسَهُ وَصَارَ
يُطِيعُ حَتَّى الْمَوْتِ مَوْتِ الصَّلِيبِ* فَذَلِكَ رَفَعَهُ اللَّهُ وَوَهَبَهُ
اسماً يَفُوقُ كُلَّ اسْمٍ* لَكِي تَجْتَنُوا بِاسْمِ يَسُوعَ كُلَّ رُكْبَةٍ مِمَّا
فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا عَلَى الْأَرْضِ وَمَا تَحْتَ الْأَرْضِ*
وَيَعْتَرِفُ كُلُّ لِسَانٍ أَنَّ يَسُوعَ الْمَسِيحَ رَبُّ لِمَجْدِ اللَّهِ الْآبِ.

الأنجيل لعيد الرقاد

Gospel For the Dormition

**The Reading from the Holy Gospel according *
*to St. Luke. (10:38-42; 11:27-28)**

At that time, Jesus entered a certain village; and a woman named Martha received Him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to His teaching. But Martha was distracted with much serving; and she went to Him and said, "Lord, dost Thou not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to help me." But the Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things; one thing is needful. Mary has chosen the good portion, which shall not be taken away from her." As He said this, a woman in the crowd raised her voice and said to Him, "Blessed is the womb that bore Thee, and the breasts that Thou didst suck!" But He said, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!"

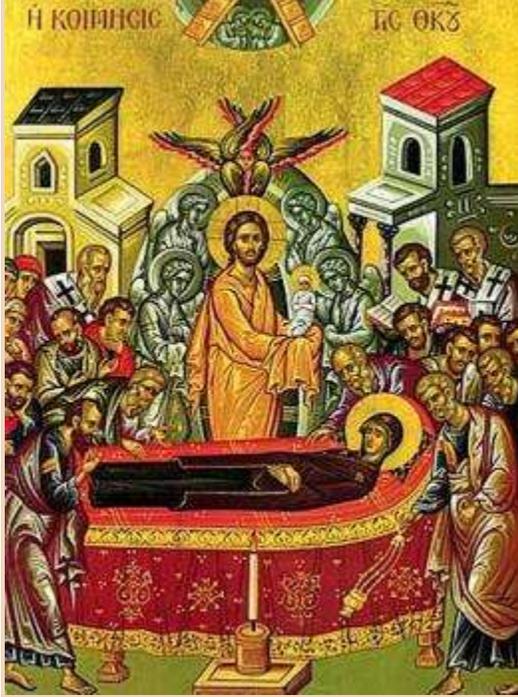
*فصلٌ شريفٌ من بشارَةِ القديسِ لوقا الإنجيليِّ البشِيرِ
والتلميذِ الطاهرِ (10:38-42; 11:27-28) *.
في ذلكَ الزمانِ دَخَلَ يسوعُ قَرْيَةً فَقَبِلَتْهُ امْرَأَةٌ اسْمُهَا مَرْتَا
في بيتِها * وكانت لهذهِ أُختٌ تُسَمَّى مريمَ. فجلست هذه عند
قدمي يسوع تسمعُ كلامَهُ * وكانت مَرْتَا مرتبِكَةً في خدمةٍ
كثيرةٍ. فوقفت وقالت يا ربُّ أما يعنِيكَ أَنَّ أُختي قد تركتني
أخذُمُ وَحْدِي. فقلْ لها تساعِدُنِي * فأجاب يسوع وقال لها
مَرْتَا مَرْتَا إِنَّكَ مُهْتَمَةٌ ومضطربةٌ في أمورٍ كثيرةٍ. وإنما
الحاجةُ إلى واحدٍ * فاختارت مريمُ النصيبَ الصالحَ الذي
لا يُنزعُ منها * وفيما هو يتكلَّمُ بهذا رَفَعَتِ امْرَأَةٌ من الجمعِ
صوتَها وقالت له طوبى للبطنِ الذي حَمَلَكَ والثديين اللذين
رَضَعْتَهُمَا * فقال بل طوبى للذين يسمعون كلمةَ الله
ويحفظونها.

❖ Church Announcements

- ❖ **The Feast of the Dormition:** The Feast is celebrated this Sunday. A Pot Luck luncheon is shared. Please bring a dish with you to share. Happy Feast Day to all.
- ❖ **Sponsoring Families from Syria:** Our Antiochian Orthodox Churches in Montreal can help us bring our families from Syria, please see Father for more information.
- ❖ **Sunday School Registration:** Registration for Sunday School will be in August. It is \$20 per child. Please, see Mary Basmajian or Khouryia.
- ❖ **Wednesday Vespers and Bible Study:** starting in September, we will go back to every Wednesday Vespers followed by Bible study.
- ❖ **Friday Family Nights:** Starting in September we will go back to having family nights on the First and the third Fridays of the month. We will have Vespers at 7 PM followed by fun evening activities for the entire church family.

- ❖ **Orthodox Women's Retreat**: from Friday September 16 to Sunday, September 18th, 2016. Fr. Michael Gillis is the retreat master. The topic is: "Seeing the World as an Icon". Contact Ghada Ziadeh 403-240-2549 ziadehe@telus.net. I encourage our ladies to make every effort to attend this retreat. It will be spiritually beneficial. Participants travel from all over North America to attend and it is here in our own city! Don't miss this opportunity to pray and learn about your faith with your sisters in Christ.
 - ❖ **Giving back to God**: Our church depends on your generous giving back to God for all His blessings in your life. **Please, give generously and regularly and God will bless you back a 100 times.** Make sure you support your church even during the summer, the bills don't stop during the summer. **Give a percentage of your income.** Write your name on the envelope for a receipt.
 - ❖ **Blessing of your home**: If your home has not been blessed this year, please make an appointment with Fr. George Dahdouh to bless your home.
 - ❖ **Missing Sunday Liturgy**: Attending Sunday Liturgy should be part of our regular life as a family, we should not miss church unless we are really sick. Make attending church every Sunday an important part of your family life. **The family that worships together, stays together.**
 - ❖ **In an Emergency**: If you go to the hospital or have a scheduled surgery, please call Fr. Dahdouh at 403/993-7945 anytime day or night 24 hours 7 days a week.
 - ❖ **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.
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The Dormition of the Most-Holy Theotokos (August 15)



Liturgically, the most important Feast of the Theotokos is that of her Dormition or Falling-Asleep. Prior to this Feast there is a strict two-week fast, beginning on August 1, which is broken only by the Feast of the Transfiguration on August 6. This Feast possesses two distinct aspects inseparably linked in the mind of the believer. On the one hand, there is death and burial and, on the other, resurrection and the assumption of the Mother of God. As part of the Inner Tradition of the Church, this event was mystery that was not designed for the ears of the outside world, but which was revealed to the faithful within the Church.

True believers know that insofar as the son of God assumed human nature in the womb of the Virgin, She who was the means of His Incarnation was resurrected and taken up into Heaven in the Divine Glory of Her Son. Arise, O Lord, and go to Thy resting place, Thou and the ark of Thy might (Ps. 132:8). The Son transported His Mother to the eternity of the life to come, for being the Mother of Life, she was translated to life by the One Who dwelt in her virginal womb (from the Kontakion of the Feast).

Thus, if every year we commemorate the anniversaries of the deaths of the Saints the Martyrs, Apostles, Venerable Mothers and Fathers, Sainted Hierarchs, etc. so much the more we commemorate the death of the Most-Holy Theotokos who did not see the corruption of the grave common to all humanity. And not only did her soul ascend to heaven, but her body also. As she was a perfect example of that obedience which all Christians are called upon to exercise, and as she alone was the Mother of God, her body did not see the natural corruption which follows death, but was raised from the dead and carried to the glory of the King of All in the heavenly mansions.

According to the Inner Tradition of the Church, the Dormition of the Most-Holy Theotokos took place in the following manner: Having reached an advanced age, the Most-Pure One wished to leave the body and

go to God as soon as possible, since the one unceasing desire of her soul had always been to see the sweet face of her son sitting at the right hand of the Father in Heaven. Many tears she shed as she prayed to the Lord to take her from this present vale of sorrows.

The All-Chaste One lived in the house of St. John the Divine on Zion and often she went to the Mount of Olives, which was nearby, offering there in solitude her fervent prayer to her Son. Once, as she was praying alone on the Mount, the Archangel Gabriel appeared to her and announced that soon (after three days) she would depart and be with Christ. The Archangel told her that she should not be troubled, but should receive his words with joy as she was being called to immortal life and to the eternal King of Glory.

As a sign of the triumph of the Mother of God over death that bodily death would not have power over her, just as spiritual death had not had dominion over her, and that she would merely fall asleep for a short time and then, as if waking from sleep, she would rise and shake off death like sleep from the eyes and would see in the light of the Lord's face the immortal life and glory to which she would go with shouts of joy and spiritual happiness the Archangel handed the Most-Holy Virgin a branch from Paradise. The Most-Blessed Mother of God was filled with unspeakable joy and, falling down on her knees, she fervently thanked her Creator.

Before her departure from this life, the Most-Pure Lady wanted to see the Holy Apostles who were already scattered all over the world for the preaching of the Gospel. On her knees she prayed that this might be possible and that at the hour of her death she might not see the Prince of Darkness and his terrible servants, but that her son and God Himself would fulfill His promise and come and receive her soul into His holy hands. As she knelt, the olive trees growing on the Mountain bent, as if they were animate, and when the Pure Theotokos rose, they straightened themselves out again, honoring her as the Mother of God.

Returning home, the Most-Blessed Lady showed the branch from Paradise to St. John and told him to carry it before her bed. Then she began to make preparations for her burial. St. John sent word to St. James, first Bishop of Jerusalem and the brother of the Lord, and also to all other relatives and neighbors, informing them of the imminent decease of the Mother of God. In turn St. James informed all the Christians living in Jerusalem and the surrounding towns. With weeping they came to the home of the Pure Virgin to await her death.

As the multitude was gathered at the home of the Theotokos, suddenly there was heard a loud noise, like thunder, and a cloud encircled the house of St. John the Divine. At the command of God, angels seized the Apostles who were scattered to the ends of the earth and, bringing them on clouds to Jerusalem, placed them on Zion before the door of the house. St. John greeted them and told them of the speedy departure of the Most-Holy Mother of God. Later the Apostle Paul, accompanied by his close disciples, Dionysius the Areopagite, Hierotheus and Timothy, as well as the Seventy Apostles arrived at the home.

On the fifteenth day of the month of August, as all were awaiting the final hour, there suddenly shone in the room an ineffable light of Divine Glory which dimmed the lamps that had been lit in the house. The inhabitants saw the roof of the room opened and the glory of the Lord descending from Heaven Christ the King of Glory Himself with the hosts of angels and archangels, with all the heavenly powers, with the holy Fathers and Prophets who of old had prophesied about the Holy Virgin, and all the righteous souls, approached His Immaculate Mother.

After greeting Her Son, the Virgin surrendered her pure soul into His hands. She felt no pain whatever, for the end was as if she had fallen into a sweet sleep. At once there began angelic singing and with triumphant songs the heavenly hosts accompanied the soul of the Mother of God as she went in the arms of the Lord to the dwellings on High.

After her demise, the Holy Apostles bore the Most-Pure Body of the Mother of God to the Garden of Gethsemane, where she was placed in a tomb. The Holy Apostles stayed by the tomb of the Most-Pure One without leaving the Garden for three full days, singing psalms day and night. In addition, for all this time there was heard in the air the wonderful singing of the heavenly hosts praising God and blessing His Immaculate Mother.

By God's special arrangement, one of the Apostles, St. Thomas, was not present at the glorious burial of the body of the Immaculate Mother and he only arrived at Gethsemane on the third day. Grieving that he had not been granted the last greeting and blessing of the Most-Pure One, Thomas wept bitterly. Taking pity on him, the Apostles decided to open the tomb so that he might at least see the dead body of the Blessed Mother. But when the tomb was opened, the body of the Mother of God was not there, but only the burial clothes, giving off a wonderful fragrance!

With weeping and reverence the Holy Apostles kissed the burial clothes, praying that the Lord would reveal to them where the body of the All-Pure One had disappeared to. Later, after having eaten a meal in the Garden, the Apostles suddenly heard angelic singing. Looking up, they saw standing in the air the Immaculate Mother of God surrounded by a multitude of angels. She was enveloped in an ineffable light and she said to them: Rejoice, for I am with you always! Filled with joy, instead of the usual Lord Jesus Christ, help us! the Apostles cried: Most Holy Mother of God, help us! From that time they taught the Holy Church to believe that the Immaculate Mother of God on the third day after her burial was raised by her Son and taken with her body to Heaven.

Thus, the Lord, by His special Providence, delayed the arrival of St. Thomas until the day of the Falling-asleep of the Mother of God so that the tomb might be opened for him, so that the Church, in this way, might believe in the resurrection of the Mother of God, just as previously through the same Apostle's unbelief the Church had come to believe in the resurrection of Christ. Thus were accomplished the Falling-

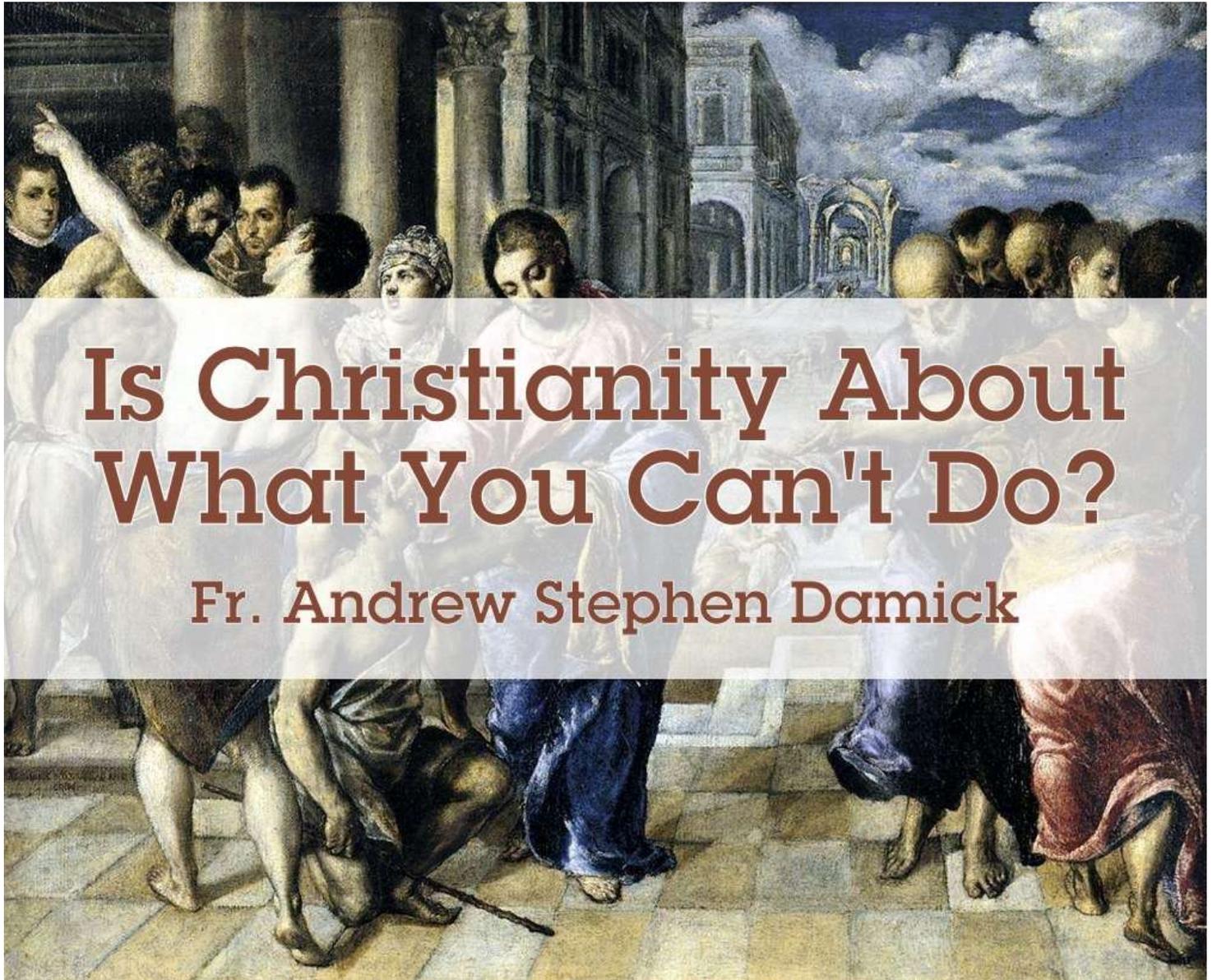
asleep of our Most-Blessed Lady the Mother of God, the burial of her undefiled body, her glorious resurrection and the triumphant assurance regarding her ascension to heaven in the flesh.

Troparion of the Feast (Tone 1)

In giving birth, you preserved your virginity! In falling asleep you did not forsake the world, O Theotokos! You were translated to life, O Mother of Life, and by your prayers you deliver our souls from death!

Kontakion of the Feast (Tone 2)

Neither the tomb, nor death, could hold the Theotokos, who is constant in prayer and our firm hope in her intercessions. For being the Mother of Life, she was translated to life by the One who dwelt in her virginal womb!



Is Christianity About What You Can't Do?

Fr. Andrew Stephen Damick

Seventh Sunday after Pentecost / Seventh Sunday of Matthew, August 7, 2016

Romans 15:1-7; Matthew 9:27-35

Rev. Fr. Andrew Stephen Damick

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, one God. Amen.

There are many things which make Christian life unattractive, both to people who have never been church-goers and to lapsed or ex-Christians. There are the more unserious reasons, such as preferring to sleep in on Sunday

morning or scheduling lesser activities for Sunday. Then there are others which are a bit more serious, such as having come to the philosophical conclusion that there is no God.

But the one I would like to talk about today is a little more subtle: In Christian life, you *have* to do certain things, or you are *not allowed* to do others. The objection is that Christianity means a loss of freedom.

It is true that certain kinds of churches do preach a loss of freedom. Calvinists preach that you are either damned or saved from even before your conception in your mother's womb, and there's nothing you can do about it. Lutherans teach that there is a certain "bondage of the will" that incapacitates man. Certain churches are so widely renowned for their emphasis on guilt that it's something of a stereotype. And many pastors prefer to spend much of their preaching moralizing, commenting on the moral evils around them, condemning those who engage in immorality.

All of this has created a general impression in our society, a "cultural theology" which teaches that being a Christian means that you *must* be a certain way or that you *must not* do certain things. There is emphasis on the rules, whether they are the rules of morality or a divine law mandating who gets saved and who doesn't. The popularity of this theology among so many Christians has led to a feeling that Christian life is about "dos and don'ts," that God is a perfect Judge Who sits in Heaven, waiting for an opportunity to damn you, or perhaps that He already has damned you and there's nothing you can do about it. (This, by the way, is usually the "God" the atheists don't believe in.)

In the time of today's Gospel reading, there was a similar cultural feeling about theology. Jewish theological discussion was dominated by the Pharisees, who were obsessed with "dos and don'ts." In the Gospel reading today, after Jesus heals two blind men and a demon-possessed man, the Pharisees, who had painted Jesus as a law-breaker, actually accused Him of casting out demons in the name of "the prince of demons." Being called a law-breaker, that is, a sinner, was one of the worst things that could be said about you publicly. There were rules!

And if you've ever taken a look at the precepts of the Mosaic Law, many of which are contained in the *Book of Leviticus*, then you know that it was pretty confining. Eat this. Don't eat that. Prepare food just so. Get ritually cleansed after handling Scripture. And so on.

Many in our own time feel the same way about *Christianity*, that it's about confinement. They may *hate* church, be deeply annoyed by it, or at least not want *too* much of it. For a lot of people, this is the reason why they no longer go, why they've never gone, or why they don't go too often. It may be what's in a young person's mind as his parents make him go. But he won't go any more once he gets out of the house.

So how can this be? How is it that what is supposed to be the Good News has turned into something so hateful, so annoying, so un-motivating? Why is it that when people encounter the name of Jesus, the meaning it communicates to them is a condemning, confining God?

One thing we should remember is that Orthodox Christianity is truly different from all other Christian groups. The difference is not just in worship “style.” And you can’t become Orthodox by being a Baptist and adding a few icons, nor can you be Orthodox by being Roman Catholic and disavowing the Pope. Orthodoxy is not a “version” of Christianity. It is Christianity. We believe it is *the* Christianity. Orthodoxy is the very definition of what it has meant to be Christian since Christ rose from the dead. This is the original, and the others, while similar in many ways, are different in certain critical ones. So what we’re talking about today is one of those critical differences.

For most Christians living here in the West, the Christian life really is about satisfying *legal* categories, about things you *must* of necessity do, or things you *must not* do. All of this religious stuff is therefore supposed to appease a “God” who is angry because his honor has been offended by our sin. But that is not what the Orthodox Christian faith teaches. The Orthodox Church teaches, as it has always taught, that mankind is *free*.

You are free. From the point of view of the Church, you really can do whatever you want. You are free. You do not *have* to come to church. You do not *have* to live a moral life. You do not *have* to accept certain beliefs as true. You are not confined. You are free.

God loves you, so He has set you free. He could have forced you to obey Him, but He didn’t. He could have damned you or saved you whether you wanted it or not, but He didn’t. He could have created us to be like robots who automatically do what is right. But He didn’t. He could have forced us to come to church. But He didn’t. He set us free.

Now, you may be thinking, “All right! I’m staying home next Sunday!” Or you may be thinking, “But, Father, what about all those exhortations to live a certain way, to participate in the sacraments, and so on?”

In Galatians 3, Paul writes that the time of the Mosaic Law had passed, that the Law was simply a “custodian” until faith in Jesus Christ came, that we are now no longer under the custodian. Now, he says, we are “sons of God.”

As sons and daughters of the Almighty God, we are given the freedom to leave the house at any time. We do not *have* to be here. We do not *have* to obey Him. He won’t make us. Instead, our heavenly Father is offering us something. He is offering us a place for our souls to live. He is offering us a share in His life, the divine life of the

Holy Trinity, that perfect love. Through spiritual adoption, Christ becomes our brother. But the doors are not locked. We can leave at any time.

Love always sets you free. Someone who loves you does not force himself on you. Someone who loves you does not make you do anything. Someone who loves you invites and inspires you, hoping that you will respond to the invitation.

Obedience that is compelled is not true obedience but rather slavery. Our Father would never do that, and anyone claiming to speak for God who compels obedience is really speaking only for himself. This is why there should never be “piety police” in church, people who shame you when you don’t engage in the piety they would prefer. There has always been diversity in piety within the Church. This is normal, and this is good.

Second, and more importantly, those who take it upon themselves to “police” others’ piety are violating our basic theology—they are trying to take away the freedom of those around them. The same is true for those who take God’s role upon themselves and set themselves up as judges of other people’s morality. Piety and morality need to be taught, of course, but only by those whose job it is—teachers to students, parents to children, and pastors to their flock.

Now, if your family is anything like mine, at some point when you defied your parents, your father said to you, “As long as live under my roof, you’re going to obey my rules.” The same is true with God our Father. He has set the tone for our house. Here in the Church, God is the Father, not any one of us. We are free to do what we want if we want to leave the Church. But if we want to be in the house of God, the Kingdom of God, then we freely choose to obey Him.

Yes, we freely choose to be here. We have no obligation to be here. You did not have to be a Christian. I did not have to be a priest. You did not have to come to church this morning. But here we are, because we want something. We are here because we are seeking God. We are here because there is an emptiness, a longing in our hearts that can be satisfied only through divine communion.

Here, we learn to be moral, not because it’s a set of rules someone is *making* us follow, but because this is what is in the divine manual on how to become more like Jesus Christ. It’s a method, and it works. If you want the results, you follow the method.

If you want to be like Jesus Christ and want to live with Him forever, then you love Him with all your heart and rearrange your whole life around Him, bit by bit. If you want to be transformed into a saint, you come to church as

often as you can, because here the divine energy of God works on us in a way we just can't get elsewhere. If you want to know true peace and true joy and true healing, then you enter into the house of God and engage yourself in the power of what is happening.

And in doing all this, we discover *true* freedom. This is not the “freedom” of getting something for free, like the free gift you get when you open a new credit card. This is not the freedom of being given a license to do anything you want. Rather, this is the freedom of being filled with divine energy and power from on high: being made capable of perfect love, powerful enough to know perfect peace, and strong enough to know unending joy.

This is freedom for virtue, for holiness and for eternal life. Just as those two blind men were made capable of seeing, and that dumb demoniac was made capable of speaking, so we are made capable when our freedom meets the freedom of God Himself.

To the God Who loves us in His own freedom, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, be all glory, honor and worship, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

فصل شريف من بشارة القديس لوقا

(لو 10 : 38 – 42 : 27 – 28).

الأصحاح الثامن

38 فِي ذَلِكَ الزَّمَانِ، دَخَلَ يُسُوعُ قَرْيَةً، فَقَبِلَتْهُ امْرَأَةٌ اسْمُهَا مَرْثَا فِي بَيْتِهَا. 39 وَكَانَتْ لِهَذِهِ أُخْتُ تُدْعَى مَرْيَمَ، الَّتِي جَلَسَتْ عِنْدَ قَدَمَيْ يُسُوعَ وَكَانَتْ تَسْمَعُ كَلَامَهُ. 40 وَأَمَّا مَرْثَا فَكَانَتْ مُرْتَبِكَةً فِي خِدْمَةِ كَثِيرَةٍ. فَوَقَفَتْ وَقَالَتْ: «يَا رَبُّ، أَمَّا ثِبَالِي بِأَنَّ أُخْتِي قَدْ تَرَكَتْنِي أَخْدُمُ وَحْدِي؟ فَقُلْ لَهَا أَنْ تُعِينَنِي!» 41 فَأَجَابَ يُسُوعُ وَقَالَ لَهَا: «مَرْثَا، مَرْثَا، أَنْتِ تَهْتَمِينَ وَتَضْطَرِّبِينَ لِأَجْلِ أُمُورٍ كَثِيرَةٍ، 42 وَلَكِنَّ الْحَاجَةَ إِلَيَّ وَاحِدٍ. فَاخْتَارْتِ مَرْيَمَ النَّصِيبَ الصَّالِحَ الَّذِي لَنْ يُنْزَعَ مِنْهَا».

الأصحاح الحادي عشر

27 «وَفِيمَا هُوَ يَتَكَلَّمُ بِهَذَا، رَفَعَتِ امْرَأَةٌ صَوْتَهَا مِنَ الْجَمْعِ وَقَالَتْ لَهُ: «طُوبَى لِلْبَطْنِ الَّذِي حَمَلَكَ وَالثَدَّيْنِ اللَّذَيْنِ رَضِعْتَهُمَا».

28 أَمَّا هُوَ فَقَالَ: «بَلْ طُوبَى لِلَّذِينَ يَسْمَعُونَ كَلَامَ اللَّهِ وَيَحْفَظُونَهُ».

عيد رقاد سيّدتنا والدة الإله الفاتحة القداسة وانتقالها الى السماء:

ثمة كتابات تُنسب إلى القديس يوحنا الإنجيلي والقديس مليتون أسقف صرّة والقديس ديونيسيوس الأريوباغي تشير إلى انتقال مريم، والدة الإله. هذه تعود إلى حدود القرن الخامس للميلاد. وهناك عظات تتحدّث عن رقاد وانتقال والدة

الإله لدى قديسين أمثال أندراوس الكريتي ويوحنا الدمشقي وجرمانوس القسطنطيني وثيودوروس الستوديتي وغريغوريوس بالاماس. العناصر الأساسية للعيد معبر عنها بوضوح في الخدمة الليتورجية.

والدة الإله ذقت الموت، رقدت، وأودعت القبر، لكنها لم تعرف فسادًا لأنّها انتقلت إلى السماء. في كاشما سحر العيد مخاطبها على هذا النحو: "أمّا في ميلادك فحبل بغير زرع، وأمّا في رقائك فموت بغير فساد". وفي الأودية التاسعة من صلاة السحر نقول: "إن المولد بتولي والموت قد صار عربونًا للحياة".

من جهة أخرى، في صلاة الغروب، في برصومية على يا رب إليك صرخت "أن ينبوع الحياة قد وضعت في قبر واللحد قد صار سلّمًا مصعدًا إلى السماء". هكذا انتقلت من حياة إلى حياة (الغروب. قطعة الليتين). انتقلت من الأرض إلى السماء، وكان انتقالها بتمجيد وبحالٍ تفوق الوصف على يديّ ابنها وسيدها (الغروب. قطعة الأبوستيخن).

كلّ الأرض والسماء معنيّة برقادها. لذلك نشدّد "أن السلطات والكراسي والرئاسات والأرباب والقوّات والشروبيم والسارافيم المرهوبين يمجدون رقائك. وبيتهج الأرضيون مزبّنين بمجدك الإلهي، وتسجد الملوك مع رؤساء الملائكة والملائكة يرنمون...". (برصومية على يا رب إليك صرخت. صلاة الغروب). كذلك في صلاة السحر أن رقادها كان حدثًا كونيًا إذ "انتقلت برقائك الموقر إلى الحياة الخالدة محفوفة بالملائكة والرئاسات والرسل والأنبياء وسائر الخليقة" (صلاة السحر. قطعة الإينوس الثالثة) من هنا مخاطبتنا لها باعتبارها الطاهرة الحيّة على الدوام مع ابنها اللابس الحياة (قطعة المجد والآن على يا رب إليك صرخت. صلاة الغروب). بهذا صار لها من حيث هذه المعية، دور مشارك في خلاص البشرية.

رقادها جعلها مساهمة في خلاص العالم على أوسع نطاق. في إحدى طروباريات الأودية التاسعة نعبر عن هذا المعطى الجديد بالكلمات التالية: "يا والدة الإله بما أنك منطلقة إلى الأقدار السماويّة نحو ابنك فأنت تخلصين ميراثك دائمًا".

في هذا السياق، الذي حدّدته الخدمة الليتورجية، كتب القديس غريغوريوس بالاماس يقول: "اليوم نحتفل برقادها أو انتقالها المقدّس إلى حياةٍ أخرى. فإذ هي دون الملائكة قليلاً، لمواتيتها، فإنّها، بدنوها من إله الكل، قد سمّت على الملائكة ورؤساء الملائكة وكلّ القوات السماويّة الأرفع منها".

وفي عظة للقديس ثيودوروس الستوديتي في رقاد والدة الإله هذه الالتماعات: "إذ نحمل على ظهورنا ثوب الفضائل نحتفل بعيد دفن وعبور الكليّة القداسة إلى السماء. فإن السماء على الأرض، لما اتّشحت بثوب الخلود، انتقلت اليوم إلى الخدر السماويّ الأبدّي. اليوم والدة الإله، التي أطبقت عينيّها الجسديتين، تقدّم لنا أنوارًا مقدّسة مشعّة، كانت، إلى عهدٍ قريب، غير مألوفة، وهي السهر على العالم والضراعة من أجله أمام وجه الله. اليوم، وقد أضحت خالدة، ترفع يديها إلى الربّ من أجل خلاص العالم. لأنّها سمت إلى القمم، فإنّها، كحمامة نقيّة، لا تكف عن الذود عنا ههنا. أمّا وقد ارتفعت إلى السماء فإنّها تطرد الأبالسة لأنّها صلاة الشفاعة، من جهّتنا، لدى الله. الموت، قبلاً، بسط سلطانه من

خلال أمنا حواء، لكنّه، حالما مسّ ابنتها المغبوبة، مات بموتها لأنه انقلب من ذاك الذي استمدّت منه والدة الإله قوّتها. والدة الإله، وأقول رقدت لا انطفأت، لأنها منذ أن عبرت إلى السماء لم تكف، هناك، عن الذود عن الجنس البشريّ. بأي كلمات نصف سرّك؟ فإنّ الذهن ينحني، واللسان يستبين عاجزاً لأنّ مجد هذا السرّ يفوق كلّ ذهن. لا شيء يضاھيه ويتيح لنا أن نفسّره على نحو أو على آخر: كلّ ما هو منك يتخطّانا. فقد عدّلت ما للطبيعة بميلادك الذي لا يوصف.

من سبق أن سمع بعذراء تحبل بغير زرع؟ يا للعجب! هذه الأم التي تلد هي، أيضاً، عذراء عفيفة، فإنّ من يولد منها هو الله. هذا الأمر وحده يجعلها مختلفة عن الجميع. لذا تقبلين، عن حق، في رقائك المحيّي، خلود النفس والجسد (...)

هل سبق لنا أن سمعنا عن وفاة كالوفاة التي أهلت لها والدة الإله؟ كم ذلك عادل لأنّه لا أعلى من التي هي أعلى من الكل؟ إن نفسي تندهش متى ارتحل عقلي إلى رحيلك الفاجر، أيتها العذراء! نفسي تعجب إذ تهذ في رقائك العجيب! لساني يُعتقل متى تكلمت على قيامتك السريّة؟ من تُراه، في الحقيقة، أهلاً لسرد كلّ عجائبك؟ أيّ ذهن، مهما سما يقدر، وأيّ لسان مهما كان فصيحاً، يحيط بقيمة أفعالك ويعرض ويقيم أسرار مجدك وعيدك ومدحك؟

كلّ لسان ينضب ويهن إن حاول، لأنك تفوقين وتسمين بغير قياس، على القمم السماوية الشاهقة، وبهاء نورك أكثر ألفاً من الشمس، وقد حزت على ما يزيد عظمة عن الملائكة وكلّ القوّات الروحيّة غير المتجسّمة". هذه المعاني الفائقة لوالدة الإله، وخصوصاً لرقادها، وردت في التراث على نحو قصصيّ.

فقد قيل إن الرّب يسوع أعلم والدة الإله برقادها، بملاك، قبل حدوثه بثلاثة أيام. هذا ملأها فرحاً لأنّها اشتهدت أن تصعد إلى ابنها وإلهها. لذلك توجّهت إلى جبل الزيتون لتصلّي في سكون، كما كانت عادت. وقد ورد أنّها لما بلغت القمّة خضعت لها الأشجار. بعد ذلك عادت لترتب أمرها وأذاعت على النسوة اللواتي أتين إليها خبر ارتحالها إلى السماء. وإثباتاً لذلك استودعتن غصن النخيل، رمز الغلبة وعدم الفساد، الذي زوّدها به الملاك. وإذ حزنت لخبر فراقها أكّدت لهن أنّها ولو رحلت إلى السماء فإنّها لن تكف عن الذود عنهن وعن كلّ العالم، بصلاتها.

هذا وقد ذُكر أن البيت امتلأ غيماً سماويّاً، أحضر الرسل من أطراف الأرض. الكنيسة كلّها، بأشخاص الرسل، انوجدت، سريّاً، احتفاءً بجنّازة والدة الإله. وإلى جوق الرسل انضمّ الأساقفة القديسون نظير القديس إبروثاوس الأثنائي، المعيد له في 4 تشرين الأول، وديونيسيوس الأريوباغي، المعيد له في 3 تشرين الأول، وتيموثاوس الأفسسي، المعيد له في 22 كانون الثاني. الرسول بولس كان أيضاً، حاضراً.

وبحسب القديس يوحنا الدمشقي، حضر عدد من أنبياء العهد القديم. وقيل إن حنّة، أم والدة الإله، مع إليصابات وإبراهيم وإسحق ويعقوب وداود كانوا حاضرين.

رقدت والدة الإله بسلام واستقرّت، أبهى من كلّ نور، بين يديّ ابنها وإلهها الذي ظهر بمعية رئيس الملائكة ميخائيل وجوق من الملائكة. تمّ رقادها بلا ألم وبلا قلق، كما كان وضعها لإبنتها دون أوجاع. تداخلت أصوات الملائكة بأصوات

البشر إكرامًا لرقادها. تنقّى الهواء بصعود نفسها وتقدّست الأرض باقتبال جسدها. وقد استعاد العديد من المرضى عافيتهم. حسد اليهود وحقدهم جرى التعبير عنه بإثارة زعمائهم قومًا للتعرّض للمحمل الذي سجيت عليه والدة الإله. وإذ تجاسر كاهن اسمه، التراث يلفونياس على الدنو منها انقطعت يداه. لكنّه تاب وآمن واستعاد اليدين بنعمة الله. وآخرون ضربوا بالعمى آمنوا بالرّب يسوع وجرى شفأؤهم.

جرى دفن والدة الإله في بستان الجثسمانية. هناك أقام الرسل مع الملائكة في الصلاة ثلاثة أيّام. توما الرسول، تدبيرًا، لم يحضر الجنازة. وصل إلى جثسماني في اليوم الثالث وقد استبدّ به حزن عميق. كان يرغب في أن يلقي نظرة أخيرة على والدة الإله راقدة ليتبرّك منها. ولأجل إصراره قرّر الرسل فتح الضريح ليتسنّى لتوما أن يُكرّم الجسد المقدّس. فلما رفعوا الحجر الذي يسد المدخل استبدّ بهم الدهش لأن الجسد كان قد اختفى. وحده الكفن الذي اشتمل والدة الإله كان هناك وقد اتخذ شكل الجسد. كان هذا دليلاً على انتقال والدة الإله إلى السماء، إلى حميميّة.

مريم "ابنة آدم" التي صارت أمًا للإله وأمًا للحياة ذاقت، إذًا، الموت. لكن موتها لم يكن مُذلاً بحال، فإنه بالموت، إذ انقلب للمسيح الذي اقتبله، طوعًا، لخلصنا، استحالت دينونة آدم "موتًا محيياً" ومبدأ وجود جديد. ولحد جثسماني، كالقبر المقدس، استبان خدرًا جرى في كليهما عرس عدم الفساد. لقد كان لائقًا، انسجامًا مع ما جرى للمسيح المخلص، أن تعبر والدة الإله بكلّ السبل التي سلكها المسيح ليمد القدّاسة في طبيعتنا. فبعدها تبعته في آلامه وعايته قيامته خبرت الموت. ولما انفصلت عن جسدها أنوجدت نفسها الكليّة النقاوة متحدة بالنور الإلهي.

أما جسدها فقد بقي قليلًا في الأرض ثم قام بنعمة المسيح الناهض من بين الأموات. هذا الجسد الروحاني اقتبل في السماء كهيكل للإله المتجسد، كعرش الله. إنه الجزء الأبرز من جسد المسيح، وكثيرًا ما مثله آباء الكنيسة بالكنيسة المقدّسة عينها، مسكن الله بين الناس وموضع حالنا الآتية ومصدر تأليهنّا.

من الحشا العفيف لمريم، والدة الإله، انفتح لنا ملكوت السموات. لذلك صار انتقالها إلى السماء سبب فرح لكلّ المؤمنين الذين تلقّوا بذلك الضمانة إن كلّ الطبيعة البشريّة، في شخص مريم، أضحت حاملة للمسيح ومدعوّة لأن تسكن في الله.

7 Quotes that Will Stop You from Holding On When You Should Let Go

WRITTEN BY MARC CHERNOFF

One of the hardest lessons in life is letting go – whether it's guilt, anger, love or loss. Change is never easy – you fight to hold on and you fight to let go. But letting go is oftentimes the healthiest path forward. It clears out toxic thoughts from the past and paves the way to make the most positive use of the present.

You've got to emotionally free yourself from some of the things that once meant a lot to you, so you can move beyond the past and the pain it brings you.

Again, it takes hard work to let go and refocus your thoughts, but it's worth every bit of effort you can muster.

The underlying key is to...

Rediscover the Peace that's Already Within You

The Greek philosopher Epictetus said it perfectly more than 2,000 years ago: "People are disturbed, not by things (that happen to them), but by the principles and opinions which they form concerning (those) things. When we are hindered, or disturbed, or grieved, let us never attribute it to others, but to ourselves – that is, to our own principles and opinions."

Modern behavioral science agrees too. American psychologist Albert Ellis has facilitated dozens of scientific studies proving that how people react to events is determined predominantly by their view of the events, not the events themselves.

Realize that, somewhere within us all, there does exist a supreme self who is eternally at peace. Because inner peace does not depend on external conditions — it's what remains when you've surrendered your ego and worries. The need for something to be different in this moment is nothing more than an egotistic worry, and [worries like this simply lead you in circles](#).

Peace of mind arrives anyplace and anytime, the moment you come to peace with what's on your mind. It happens when you let go of the need for things to be different than they are.

This, of course, is easier said than done, which is why I often reference these...

Quotes that Remind You to Let Go

Knowing that you need to let go and actually letting go are two very different things, and sometimes we need all the positive reinforcement we can get. As I've mentioned in previous posts, I frequently use quotes (and affirmations) to proactively remind myself NOT to hold on to the wrong things (ideas,

mindsets, etc.) Anytime I catch myself holding on, I pause and read the following quotes (taken from our book and blog archive). Then I take some fresh deep breaths...

1. Oftentimes letting go is simply changing the labels you place on a situation – it's looking at the same situation with fresh eyes and an open mind. Truth be told, there is absolutely nothing about your present circumstances that prevents you from making progress, one tiny, mindful step at a time.
2. Letting go isn't about having the courage to release the past – it's about having the wisdom and strength to embrace the present. It's not about forgetting – it's about remembering without fear. It's stepping forward, untethered, with a present mind and a lesson learned.
3. One of the most rewarding and important moments in life is the moment you finally find the courage to let go of what you can't change. When you let go of how it "should" be, you ignite the full potential of how it CAN be from this moment forward. Happiness, then, is ultimately letting go of what you think your life is supposed to be like right now and sincerely appreciating it for everything that it is, and making the very best of it.
4. Letting go doesn't mean you don't care about something or someone anymore. It's just realizing that the only thing you really have control over is your next action in this moment. In most cases, you can't calm the storm – and it's not worth trying. What you can do is calm yourself, and collect yourself, and the storm will pass.
5. To let go is to be thankful for the experiences that made you laugh, made you cry, and helped you learn and grow. It's the acceptance of everything you have, everything you once had, and the possibilities that lie ahead. It's all about finding the strength to embrace life's changes, to trust your intuition, to learn as you go, to realize that every experience has value, and to continue taking positive steps forward.
6. You don't have to have it all figured out to move forward. Just do the best you can until you know better. Once you know better, do better. Make gradual growth a daily ritual. This is how life-changing momentum is built. It feeds on itself, one small step at a time. Make an effort to begin, and as you start moving forward it takes less and less effort to sustain.
7. As you take the next step, and the next, your greatest defense against stress, frustration and defeat is your inherent ability to choose one thought over another. Remember this. If you look for reasons to be disheartened – if you look for reasons to give up and give in – you'll find plenty of them. Look instead for reasons to be positive, and see them everywhere. Then carry on.

Afterthoughts

A big part of letting go is renewing your faith in yourself. This faith means finding the willingness to live with uncertainty, to feel your way through life, to let your intuition guide you like a flashlight in the dark.

It's about standing firmly on your own two legs without the crutches you've been holding on to.

And YOU ARE strong enough!

So... What if, for today, you choose to believe that you have enough and you are enough? What if, for today, you choose to believe that you are strong enough, wise enough, kind enough, and loved enough to move forward? What if, as the sun sets on today, you choose to believe that the little bits of progress you made were more than enough for one day? And what if tomorrow, you choose to believe it all over again?

Make those choices.

Let go, and [choose yourself](#).

Your turn...

What are you holding on to that's holding you back? In what ways do you need to let go? What worries you about this?