

*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**

3107-40<sup>th</sup> Street SW, Calgary, AB T3E 3J9

Rev. Fr. George Dahdouh, D.Min. Priest.

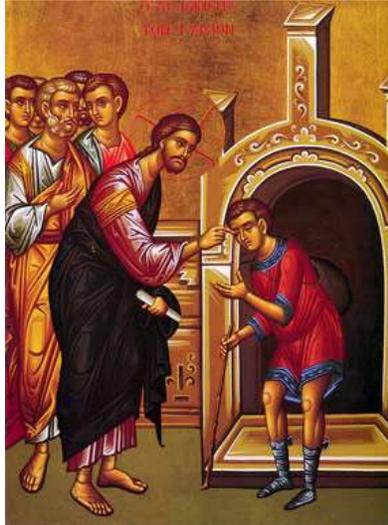
Tel: Cell (403) 993-7945

Email: [frdahdouh@sbcglobal.net](mailto:frdahdouh@sbcglobal.net)

**Sunday June 5th, 2016**

**أحد الأعمى**

**Sunday of the Blind Man**



**Vespers on Saturday (is canceled for the summer)**

**Sunday Services:**

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

**أحد الأعمى**

**Sunday of the Blind Man**

المسيح قام! حقاً قام!

CHRIST is Risen! Indeed He is Risen!

المسيح قام من بين الأموات, ووطىء

الموت بالموت, ووهب الحياة للذين في القبور!! ووطىء

Christ is Risen from the dead, trampling down death by death, and upon those in the tombs bestowing life!

### Changes in the Liturgy

تغييرات في القداس

#### First Antiphon

Shout with joy to God, all the earth. Sing to His name; give glory to His praises.

**Through the intercessions of the Theotokos, O Saviour save us.**

Say to God: "How awesome are thy works." Let all the earth worship Thee, and sing to Thee. Let it sing a song to Thy Name, O Most High.

**Through the intercessions of the Theotokos, O Saviour save us.**

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. Now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

**Through the intercessions of the Theotokos, O Saviour save us.**

#### Second Antiphon

May God have mercy upon us, and bless us, and may He cause His face to shine upon us, and have mercy upon us.

**Save us, O Son of God, who art risen from the dead, who sing to thee, Alleluia.**

#### الانتيفونة الأولى

هللوا لله يا جميع الأرض، رتلوا لاسمِهِ أعطوا مجداً لتسبحتِهِ.

**بشفاعاتِ والدَةِ الإلهِ يا مخلصُ خلصنا.**

قولوا لله ما أرهَبَ أعمالك، كلُّ مَنْ في الأرض يسجدونَ لك ويرتلونَ لاسمِكَ أيها العلي.

**بشفاعاتِ والدَةِ الإلهِ يا مخلصُ خلصنا.**

المجد للآب والابن والروح القدس الآن وكل أوان وإلى دهر الداهرين آمين.

**بشفاعاتِ والدَةِ الإلهِ يا مخلصُ خلصنا.**

#### الانتيفونا الثانية

ليترأف الله علينا وبياركنا، وليضئ بوجهه علينا ويرحمنا.

**خلصنا يا ابن الله يا من قام من بين الأموات لترتل لك هللوا يا.**

لثُعرف في الأرض طريقك وفي جميع الأمم خلاصك.

**خلصنا يا ابن الله يا من قام من بين الأموات لترتل لك هللوا يا.**

<p>That thy way may be known upon earth, thy salvation among all nations. Let the peoples give thanks to Thee, O God; let all the peoples give thanks to Thee.</p> <p><b>Save us, O Son of God, who art risen from the dead, who sing to thee, Alleluia.</b></p> <p>May God bless us, and may all the ends of the earth fear Him.</p> <p><b>Save us, O Son of God, who art risen from the dead, who sing to thee, Alleluia.</b></p> <p>Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. Now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.</p> <p><b>O only-begotten Son, etc.</b></p>	<p>تعترف لك الشعوب يا الله تعترف لك.  <b>خلصنا يا ابن الله يا من قام من بين الأموات لنرتل لك هلوليا.</b>  المجدُّ للآبِ والإبْنِ والروح القدس، الآنَ وكلَّ أوانٍ وإلى دهر الداهرينَ، آمين.  ... يا كلمةَ اللهِ الابنِ الوحيدِ</p>
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<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Third Antiphon</b></p> <p>Let God arise, and let his enemies be scattered, and let those who hate Him flee from his face.  <b>Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down death by death, and upon those in the tombs, bestowing life.</b></p> <p>As smoke vanishes, let them vanish; as wax melts before the fire.  <b>Christ is risen, etc.</b></p> <p>So let the sinners perish before God, and let the righteous be glad.  <b>Christ is risen, etc.</b></p> <p>This is the day which the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.  <b>Christ is risen, etc.</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>الانتيفونا الثالثة</b></p> <p>ليقم الله ويتبدد جميع أعدائه ويهرب مبغضوه من أمام وجهه.  <b>المسيح قام من بين الأموات، ووطئ الموت بالموت، ووهب الحياة للذين في القبور.</b>  كما يباد الدخان يبادون وكما يذوب الشمع من أمام وجه النار.  <b>...المسيح قام من بين الأموات</b>  كذلك تهلك الخطاة من أمام وجه الله والصدِّيقون يفرحون ويتهللون أمام الله ويتتعمون بالسرور.  <b>...المسيح قام من بين الأموات</b>  هذا هو اليوم الذي صنعه الرب لنفرح ونتهلل به.  <b>...المسيح قام من بين الأموات</b></p>
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<p style="text-align: center;"><b>الايصوديكون (بالحن الثاني)</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">في المجامع باركوا الله، الربَّ من ينابيع إسرائيل. خالصنا يا ابنَ الله، يا مَنْ قامَ من بين الأمواتِ، لنرتل لكَّ هلوليا!</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Entrance Hymn (Tone Two)</b></p>
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In the gathering places, bless ye God the Lord from the springs of Israel.  
Save us O Son of God, Who art Risen from the dead, who sing to thee: Alleluia!

**طروبارية الفصح (بالحن الخامس)**

المسيح قام من بين الأموات، ووطئ الموت بالموت، ووهب الحياة للذين في القبور!

**Paschal Troparion (Tone Five)**

Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down death by death, and upon those in the tombs, bestowing life! (3x)

**طروبارية القيامة (بالحن الخامس)**

لِنُسَبِّحْ نَحْنُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَنَسْجُدُ لِلْكَلِمَةِ. الْمَسَاوِي لِلآبِ وَالرُّوحِ فِي الْإِزْلِيَّةِ وَعَدَمِ الْإِبْتِدَاءِ. الْمَوْلُودِ مِنَ الْعِذْرَاءِ لِخَلَاصِنَا . لِأَنَّهُ سَرٌّ وَارْتَضَى بِالْجَسَدِ أَنْ يعلَوْ عَلَى الصَّلِيبِ. وَيَحْتَمِلُ الْمَوْتَ وَيَنْهَضُ الْمَوْتَى بِقِيَامَتِهِ الْمَجِيدَةِ.

**Troparion of the Resurrection (Tone Five)**

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.

**Troperia of the Patron Saint**

**القنطاق (بالحن الثامن)**

ولئن كنت نزلت إلى قبرٍ يا مَنْ لا يموت. إلا أنك حطمت قوَّةَ الجحيم وقُمتَ غالباً أيها المسيح الإله. وللنسوة الحاملاتِ الطيبِ قلتِ افرحنَ ولرُسُلكِ وهبتِ السلام. يا مانحَ الواقعينَ القيام.

**Kontakion of Pascha (Tone Eight)**

O Immortal One, when Thou didst descend into the tomb, Thou didst destroy the power of Hades; and Thou didst rise victorious, O Christ God. Thou hast said to the ointment bearing women: Rejoice! And Thou gavest peace to Thy Disciples, O Bestower of Resurrection to those who had fallen.

**الرسالة لأحد الأعمى**

**Epistle of the Sunday of the Blind Man**

*Thou, O Lord, shalt keep us and preserve us.*

*أنت يارب تحفظنا وتسترنا!*

*Save me, O Lord, for the godly man hath disappeared.*

*خلصني يارب فان البار قد فني!*

*\* (16:16-34) فصل من أعمال الرسل القديسين الأظهر \**

## The Reading from the Acts of the Apostles.

(16:16-34)

In those days, as we Apostles were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a slave girl who had a spirit of divination and brought her owners much gain by soothsaying. She followed Paul and us, crying, "These men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to you the way of salvation." And this she did for many days. But Paul was annoyed, and turned and said to the spirit, "I charge you in the Name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." And it came out that very hour. But when her owners saw that their hope of gain was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the market place before the rulers; and when they had brought them to the magistrates they said, "These men are Jews and they are disturbing our city. They advocate customs which it is not lawful for us Romans to accept or practice." The crowd joined in attacking them; and the magistrates tore the garments off them and gave orders to beat them with rods. And when they had inflicted many blows upon them, they threw them into prison, charging the jailer to keep them safely. Having received this charge, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks. But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken. And immediately all the doors were opened and every one's fetters were unfastened. When the jailer woke and saw that the prison doors were open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself,

في تلك الأيام فيما نحن الرسل منطلقون إلى الصلاة استقبلتنا جارية بها روح عرافة، وكانت تكسب مواليتها كسبا جزيلا بعرافتها\* فطفقت تمشي في إثر بولس وإثرنا وتصيح قائلة هؤلاء الرجال هم عبيد الله العلي وهم يبشرونكم بطريق الخلاص\* وصنعت ذلك أياما كثيرة فتضجر بولس والتفت إلى الروح وقال إني أمرك باسم يسوع المسيح أن تخرج منها، فخرج في تلك الساعة\* فلما رأى مواليتها انه قد خرج رجاء مكسبهم قبضوا على بولس وسيلا وجروهما الى السوق عند الحكام\* وقدموهما إلى الولاة قائلين إن هذين الرجلين يببلان مدينتنا وهما يهوديان\* ويناديان بعبادات لا يجوز لنا قبولها ولا العمل بها إذ نحن رومانيون\* فقام عليهما الجمع معا ومزق الولاة ثيابهما وأمروا أن يضربا بالعصي\* ولما أثنوهما بالجراح ألقوهما في السجن وأوصوا السجن بأن يحرسهما بضبط\* وهو إذ أوصي بمثل تلك الوصية ألقاهما في السجن الداخلي وضبط أرجلهما في المقطرة\* وعند نصف الليل كان بولس وسيلا يصليان ويسبحان الله والمحوسون يسمعونهما\* فحدثت بغتة زلزلة عظيمة حتى تزعزعت أسس السجن، فانفتحت في الحال الأبواب كلها وانفتحت قيود الجميع\* فلما استيقظ السجن ورأى أبواب السجن أنها مفتوحة استل السيف وهم أن يقتل نفسه لظنه أن المحوسين قد هربوا\* فناداه بولس بصوت عال قائلا لا تعمل بنفسك سوءا فإننا جميعنا هنا\* فطلب مصباحا ووثب إلى داخل وخر لبولس وسيلا وهو مرتعد\* ثم خرج بهما وقال يا سيدي ماذا ينبغي لي أن أصنع لكي اخلص\* فقالا آمن بالرب يسوع المسيح فتخلص أنت وأهل بيتك\* وكلماه هو وجميع من في بيته بكلمة الرب\* فأخذهما في تلك الساعة من الليل وغسل جراحهما واعتمد من وقته وذووه أجمعون ثم اصعدهما إلى بيته وقدم لهما مادة وابتهج مع جميع أهل بيته إذ كان قد آمن بالله.

supposing that the prisoners had escaped. But Paul cried with a loud voice, "Do not harm yourself, for we are all here." And he called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas, and brought them out and said, "Men, what must I do to be saved?" And they said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household." And they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their wounds, and he was baptized at once, with all his family. Then he brought them up into his house, and set food before them; and he rejoiced with all his household that he had believed in God.

### الإنجيل لأحد الأعمى

## Gospel of the Sunday of the Blind Man

The Reading is from the Holy Gospel according to St. John (9:1-38).

At that time, when Jesus was passing, he saw a man blind from his birth. And his disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" Jesus answered, "It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be made manifest in him. I must work the works of him who sent me, while it is day; night comes, when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." As he said this, he spat on the ground and made clay of the spittle and anointed the man's eyes with the clay, saying to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam (which means Sent). So he went and washed and came back seeing. The neighbors and those who had seen him before as a beggar, said, "Is not this the man who used to sit and beg?" Some said, "It is he"; others said, "No, but he is like him." He said, "I am the man." They said to

فصل شريف من بشارة القديس يوحنا الإنجيلي البشير، التلميذ \*  
(9:1-38) الطاهر

في ذلك الزمان فيما يسوع مجتاز رأى إنساناً أعمى منذ مَوْلِدِهِ \*  
فسأله تلاميذه قائلين يارب من أخطأ أم أبواه حتى وُلِدَ  
أعمى \* أجاب يسوع لا هذا أخطأ ولا أبواه لكن لتظهر أعمال الله  
فيه \* ينبغي لي أن اعمل أعمال الذي أرسلني ما دام نهاراً، يأتي  
ليل حين لا يستطيع أحد أن يعمل \* ما دُمْتُ في العالم فأنا نور  
العالم \* قال هذا وتقل على الأرض وصنع من تفلته طيناً وطفى  
بالطين عيني الأعمى \* وقال له اذهب واغتسل في بركة سلوام  
(الذي تفسيره المرسل). فمضى واغتسل وعاد بصيراً \*  
فالجيران والذين كانوا يرونه من قبل أنه كان أعمى قالوا أليس  
هذا هو الذي كان يجلس ويستعطي. فقال بعضهم هذا هو \*  
وآخرون قالوا إنه يُشبههُ وأما هو فكان يقول إني أنا هو \* فقالوا  
له كيف انفتحت عيناك \* أجاب ذلك وقال إنسان يقال له يسوع  
صنع طيناً وطفى عيني وقال لي اذهب إلى بركة سلوام واغتسل،  
فمضيت واغتسلت فأبصرت \* فقالوا له أين ذلك. فقال لا اعلم \*  
فأتوا به أي بالذي كان قبلاً أعمى إلى الفريسيين \* وكان حين

him, "then how were your eyes opened?" He answered, "The man called Jesus made clay and anointed my eyes and said to me, 'Go to Siloam and wash'; so I went and washed and received my sight." They said to him, "Where is he?" He said, "I do not know."

They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind. Now it was a sabbath day when Jesus made the clay and opened his eyes. The Pharisees again asked him how he had received his sight. And he said to them, "he put clay on my eyes, and I washed, and I see." Some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, for he does not keep the sabbath." But others said, "How can a man who is a sinner do such signs?" There was a division among them. So they again said to the blind man, "What do you say about him, since he has opened your eyes?" He said, "He is a prophet."

The Jews did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight, until they called the parents of the man who had received his sight, and asked them, "Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?" His parents answered, "We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; but how he now sees we do not know. Ask him; he is of age, he will speak for himself." His parents said this because they feared the Jews, for the Jews had already agreed that if any one should confess him to be Christ, he was to be put out of the synagogue. Therefore, his parents said, "He is of age, ask him." So for the second time they called the man who had been blind, and said to him, "Give God the praise; we know that this man is a sinner." He answered, "Whether he is a sinner, I do not know; one thing I know, that though I was blind, now I see." They said to him, "What did he do to you?"

صنع يسوع الطينَ وفتح عينيه يومَ سبتٍ \* فسأله الفريسيون أيضاً كيف ابصر فقال لهم جعل على عيني طيناً ثم اغتسلتُ فأنا الآن ابصر \* فقال قومٌ من الفريسيين هذا الإنسان ليس من الله لأنه لا يحفظ السبت. آخرون قالوا كيف يقدر إنسانٌ خاطئٌ أن يعمل مثل هذه الآيات، فوقع بينهم شقاقٌ \* فقالوا أيضاً للأعمى ماذا تقول أنت عنه من حيث إنه فتح عينيك، فقال إنه نبيٌ \* ولم يصدق اليهودُ عنه أنه كان أعمى فأبصر حتى دعوا أبوي الذي ابصر \* وسألوهما قائلين أهذا هو ابكما الذي تقولان إنه ولد أعمى، فكيف ابصر الآن \* أجابهم أبواه وقالوا نحن نعلم أن هذا ولدنا وأنه ولد أعمى \* وأما كيف ابصر الان فلا نعلم أو من فتح عينيه فنحن لا نعلم، هو كامل السن فسألوه فهو يتكلم عن نفسه \* قال أبواه هذا لأنهما كانا يخافان من اليهود لان اليهود كانوا قد تعاهدوا أنه إن اعترف أحدٌ بأنه المسيح يُخرج من المجمع \* لذلك قال أبواه هو كامل السن فسألوه \* فدعوا ثانياً الإنسان الذي كان أعمى وقالوا له أعط مجداً لله . فإننا نعلم أن هذا الإنسان خاطئٌ \* فأجاب ذلك وقال أخاطئٌ هو لا اعلم إنما اعلم شيئاً واحداً أنني كنتُ أعمى والآن أبصر \* فقالوا له أيضاً ماذا صنع بك، كيف فتح عينيك \* أجابهم قد أخبرتكم فلم تسمعوا، فماذا تريدون أن تسمعوا أيضاً، ألعلمكم انتم أيضاً تريدون أن تصيروا له تلاميذ \* فشتموه وقالوا له أنت تلميذُ ذلك، فأما نحن فإننا تلاميذ موسى \* ونحن نعلم أن الله قد كلم موسى، فأما هذا فلا نعلم من أين هو \* أجاب الرجلُ وقال لهم إن في هذا عجباً أنكم ما تعلمون من أين هو وقد فتح عيني \* ونحن نعلم أن الله لا يسمع للخطاة، ولكن إذا أحدى اتقى الله وعمل مشيئةً فله يستجيب \* منذ الدهر لم يُسمع أن أحداً فتح عيني مولود أعمى \* فلو لم يكن هذا من الله لم يقدر أن يفعل شيئاً \* أجابوه وقالوا له إنك في الخطايا قد ولدت بجملتك، أفأنت تعلمنا، فأخرجوه خارجاً \* وسمع يسوع أنهم أخرجوه خارجاً، فوجده وقال له أتؤمن أنت بابن الله \* فاجاب ذلك وقال فمن هو يا سيدي لأؤمن به \* فقال له يسوع قد رأيته والذي يتكلم معك هو هو \* فقال له قد آمنْتُ ياربُ وسجد له.

How did he open your eyes?" He answered them, "I have told you already, and you would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you too want to become his disciples?" And they reviled him, saying, "You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from." The man answered, "Why this is a marvel! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes. We know that God does not listen to sinners, but if any one is a worshipper of God and does his will, God listens to him. Never since the world began has it been heard that any one opened the eyes of a man born blind. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing." They answered him, "You were born in utter sin, and would you teach us?" And they cast him out. Jesus heard that they had cast him out, and having found him, he said, "Do you believe in the Son of God?" He answered, "And who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?" Jesus said to him, "You have seen him, and it is he who speaks to you." He said, "Lord, I believe"; and he worshipped him.

### التعظيم لوالدة الإله (بالحن الأول)

إن الملاك هتف نحو الممتلئة نعمةً أيتها العذراء النقية افرحي. وأيضاً أقول إفرحي لأن ابنك قد قام من القبر في اليوم الثالث. استنيري استنيري يا أورشليم الجديدة. لأن مجد الرب أشرق عليك. افرحي الآن وتهللي يا صهيون، وأنت يا والدة الإله النقية اطربي بقيامة ولدك.

*Megalynarion (Tone One)*

The angel spake to her that is full of grace, saying, O pure Virgin, rejoice. And I say also, Rejoice. For thy son is risen from the tomb on the third day.

Shine, shine, O new Jerusalem; for the glory of the Lord hath risen upon thee. Rejoice and exult now, O Zion, and thou, O pure one; Theotokos, rejoice at the Resurrection of thy Son.

### الكنونيكون

جسد المسيح خذوا, والينبوع الذي لا يموت ذوقوا. هلولويا!

*Koinonikon (Communion Hymn)*

Receive ye the Body of Christ, and taste ye Him who is the Fountain of Immortality.

*Alleluia!*

وبدلاً من "قد نظرنا", نرتل "المسيح قام" (مرة واحدة)

Instead of "We have seen the true light", we sing "Christ is Risen" (Once)

## ❖ Church Announcements

- ❖ **One Year Memorial:** Today is the one year memorial for our sister and mother Jurieh Shaheen, may her memory be eternal.
- ❖ **Graduates:** All graduates from high school or universities, please give Fr. George your name and what you are graduating from so that on June 12<sup>th</sup> we can celebrate your successful story.
- ❖ **Sunday School Graduation:** Sunday School Graduation will be on June 12<sup>th</sup>. We will celebrate with food, activities, and handing out certificates to those who attended Sunday School regularly.
- ❖ **Looking Ahead:** Ascension is on June 9<sup>th</sup>: We will celebrate this great feast with services of Orthros & Liturgy on June 8<sup>th</sup> starting at 6.30 PM.

- ❖ **Who Takes Holy Communion:** Those who are in good standing with the Orthodox Church, have fasted from mid night, confessed their sins, are in peace with everyone, have their marriage blessed by the Church, don't live together without being married, have no physical relationship outside of marriage, have been faithful to their spouses. The unmarried to have kept themselves pure. If you have any questions ask Fr. Dahdouh.
- ❖ **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.
- ❖ **Young Adults:** June 12<sup>th</sup>, 2016 after Liturgy, we will have a meeting for all the young adults.
- ❖ **Welcoming Committee:** Fr. George Dahdouh is still working on forming a welcoming committee to rotate in welcoming people and monitoring the candles. Please, if you are interested let him know. He is looking for a team leader.
- ❖ **Etiquette in the Orthodox Church:** Please all adults and children: it is not our custom in the Orthodox Church to chew gum, have candy in our mouth, or cross our legs during the service. Parents of small children: children can stay for two hours without crackers or milk. If you have to feed a baby make sure his/her mouth are washed with water before approaching Holy Communion. Ladies: thank you in advance for not using lipstick when you take communion. If it happens that you put lipstick please don't touch the spoon. Thank you for following these instructions with love and humility.
- ❖ **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.**
- ❖ **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.**
- ❖ **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.
- ❖ **Summer Sacred Music Institute and Youth Music Ministry: July 13-17, 2016 at Antiochian Village, the Theme: Liturgy-The Work of the People. All choir members and youth are encouraged to attend.**
- ❖ **Food for The Hungry Boxes:** Please, bring back all your sacrificial savings from Lent for the poor so we can send them to the Archdiocese. Be generous and give to the poor.
- ❖ **Camp St. Innocent:** Mark your calendar! Camp St. Innocent will be held from August 21<sup>st</sup> to August 26<sup>th</sup>. We have additional scholarships so everyone can attend. It is for ages 7 to 18. If you like to volunteer or be a counselor, please see Father for an application or you can download it

from the website [www.campstinnocent.org](http://www.campstinnocent.org) All new families from Syria, there are funds to help your children attend the camp, please see Father.

- ❖ **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 Meaning of Memorial Services**

### **Praying for our Departed Loved Ones**

by Fr. Luke A. Veronis

At no matter what age of life we die, we always see death as a distortion of our existence. Death portrays a horrible tragedy because it is the fruit of evil in the world. We were not created to die. When Almighty God created the first man and woman in his own image and likeness, he meant for all humanity to live for eternity with Him. Since God has no end, He desired for His beloved creation to dwell in His infinite love forever. This is why, deep within each of us, we all sense an innate desire for life!

From this perspective, death is fearful, and something we despise. And yet, although we can see death as the greatest evil, St. Paul counsels us “not to mourn as those who do not have hope.” He advises us to never despair over the dead, because “if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.” (1 Thess 4:14)

Here is the essence of our Christian faith and the Good News we proclaim week after week. “Christ is Risen from the dead, **trampling down death by His own death**, and granting life to those in the tombs!”

For all of us who have believed in Christ and walked with Him in the newness of life here and now, death becomes but a doorway into a fuller union with Him. This is why St. Paul could say, “For me to live is Christ and to die is gain.” (Phil 1:21) The Apostle Paul goes on to say, “If we have been united [through baptism] in the likeness of Christ’s death, we also shall be [united] in the likeness of His resurrection. (Rom 6:4-5)

Today, I want to talk about the topic of death because I want to relate it to the Memorial Services we do so often at the end of our Sunday Divine Liturgies. We all have loved ones who have passed away, and as a Church we never forget them. At each Divine Liturgy, I remember all the faithful who have died and passed on. On their anniversaries, like the 40 day memorial that we offer today for Kosta Magaritidis, or the 17 year anniversary, which we also offer today for Kosma Hadjoclou, we remember the departed, and pray for them.

## ***Why? What is the purpose of our memorial service and why do we pray for the dead?***

To answer this question, I first want us to understand clearly how we, as Orthodox Christians, view death itself. Then, I will explain why we remember the dead continuously, and pray for them.

Although death is the culmination of evil in our world, for Christians our faith in Jesus Christ transforms death. For one who is united to our Lord here on earth, death is no longer a fearful and tragic conclusion of one's life. It is but an entranceway into a new beginning!

I remember a story my parents told me about their first travel abroad. My father and mother had only been married for half a year, and my mother was several months pregnant, when both got on a boat heading towards Greece, so that my father could study at the University of Athens. Both my parents remember vividly the scene of their farewell, as they leaned on the rail of the ship waving goodbye to tearful family and friends. Many mixed emotions passed through their minds as the ship slowly sailed away, and the figures of their loved ones got smaller and smaller in the horizon. During the long journey which followed, my parents became anxious about their separation from family, their pregnancy, and their new life in Athens.

When they arrived at the port of Piraeus many days later, however, their anxieties and concerns were washed away as other relatives and family friends **lovingly waited to receive them in their new country.**

Death itself may seem like an uncertain, even fearful journey, and yet as Christians we know who awaits us on the other side. Our Lord Jesus Christ is there, lovingly waiting, with His arms outstretched, ready to embrace us in deeper union with Himself, and welcome us into our eternal home.

**As Christians, we can face death with hope, knowing that our loving, all merciful and compassionate Lord awaits us! Divine love is greater than death. St. Paul even dares to say, "Death has been swallowed up in victory!" The victory of divine love.**

Well, this same love is central to understanding the role of the Memorial Service in the Orthodox Church. **We remember and pray for the dead because of God's divine love for us, and our sacred love for one another.** As the famous French writer and Catholic reformer Leon Bloy once wrote, "To say to a person 'I love you' is tantamount to saying 'you shall never die.'"

We express our love to our departed ones through our prayers to reaffirm that those who have died are not dead to us, nor to God. Our love for one another continues even after death. Metropolitan Anthony Bloom so beautifully explains, "A person bereaved must learn never to speak of the love relationship that existed before in the past tense. One should never say 'We loved one another.' We should always say 'We love each other.' If we allow our love to become a thing of the past, we have to recognize that we do not believe in the continuing life of the person that died."

St. Paul teaches, "Love never ends." The Church understands well this precept, and therefore, continues to pray for the dead always. Since love never ends, our prayers never end; our communion with the departed never end; our union with them through Christ never ends.

Our prayers for the dead reveal in a most beautiful way our understanding of the Church as the Body of Christ both here on earth and in heaven. We are one Church, which includes those struggling here on earth, together with those who now live in fuller union with God in paradise. Just as we pray for one another here on earth, we also pray for those who have departed. The Body of Christ is not just the members who we see each week in Church. The Church is also the saints who we see in the icons, and the beloved faithful who have died and live in Christ. That is why before each Divine Liturgy, when I am preparing the bread which will be used for Holy Communion, I offer prayers for each one of you by name, as well offer prayers for the names of many who have died. There is no separation in our prayers for the living and the dead. Divine love unites us all together, as one Church.

So we hold Memorial Services and pray for the dead because we love!

Now, I know some people will say, "OK, I understand we pray for the dead because our love for them never ends, but do our prayers actually help those who have died?"

Sincere prayer unites us to God, and when we pray for others, we believe our prayers can help others in their own union towards their Creator.

Fr. Thomas Fitzgerald, a professor at Holy Cross Theological School, writes, "Death alters but does not destroy the bond of love and faith which exists among all the members of the Church. Orthodoxy believes that through our prayers, ***those "who have fallen asleep in the faith and the hope of the Resurrection" continue to have opportunity to grow closer to God.*** Therefore, the Church prays constantly for her members who have died in Christ. We place our trust in the love of God and the power of mutual love and forgiveness. We pray that God will forgive the sins of the faithful departed, and that He will receive them into the company of Saints in the heavenly Kingdom."

Of course, some who have died have not lived a righteous life of faith and love in Christ Jesus. Even for such as these, we still pray with hope. We know that God's unfathomable mercy and love is immeasurably greater than any sin or shortcoming of a person, no matter how evil. ***Therefore, by turning to this ocean of love in prayer, we believe as Orthodox Christians that our prayers in some way, and this way may be a part of the mystery of God, our prayers bring in some way comfort and benefit to the person we pray for!***

Love compels us to pray for one another, with hope and with faith. And death can never stop this!

As a symbol of this hope we have for the dead, it is traditional for the family to bring a bowl of boiled wheat to the Church for the Memorial Service. This wheat, known as kollyva in Greek, reminds us of the words of our Lord Jesus Christ spoke, "Unless the grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much fruit." (Jn 12:24)

Death is not the end, and our Memorial Service concretely proclaims this fact!

## Forgiveness and Reconciliation: How to Forgive Others and Receive Forgiveness

by Hieromonk Jonah



### Q: What is forgiveness?

**Fr. Jonah:** To forgive means to restore a bond of love and communion when there has been a rupture. Sin ruptures our relationship with God and others, as also do offenses taken and given among people. When the bond is broken with other people, we tend to objectify them and judge them, not seeing them as persons, but only as objects of our anger and hurt. This is our sinful reaction. We categorize people in terms of their transgression against us. The longer we nurture the anger and alienation, the more deeply the resentment takes hold in our heart, and

the more it feeds on our soul. Resentment is a cancer that will destroy us if we don't forgive! It also leaks out and damages our relations with others when we slander and gossip about those who have offended us and try to draw others to our own side. Of course, no one should want to hear such things—but we do!

Forgiveness means overlooking the sin or transgression, and restoring a bond of love. It does not mean justifying the offensive action or accepting it as right, nor does it mean justifying one's own anger or sinful reaction. Forgiveness means laying aside our judgments of the other person and our own sinful reactions, and accepting others for who they are.

God's forgiveness of us and our sins against Him is unconditional and absolute. God does not reject us, objectify us, or bear anger or resentment against us. These are, I think, our projections onto God of our own issues and judgments against ourselves when we sin. God does not punish us. Rather, by alienating ourselves from God, we punish ourselves and ascribe this punishment to Him. We turn in on ourselves in anger and self-hatred, and thus shatter our personhood, cutting ourselves off from His love.

By asking God for forgiveness, we open ourselves to His love and acceptance, His grace and compassion. These were there already, but we neglected them. By confessing our sins, we surrender these areas of our

lives where we have justified our self-alienation from God. Repentance means not only turning away from sin, but also turning to God. Judas was remorseful for his sin—but hanged himself. We need not only to be remorseful, but also to open ourselves to God.

**Q: How are reconciliation and forgiveness related?**

**Fr. Jonah:** Reconciliation presupposes forgiveness. If we forgive someone, we need to be open to reconciliation, if possible. Reconciliation is forgiveness in action—the actual restoration of the interpersonal bond between two people, in mutual acceptance of each other for who each one is. Forgiveness and reconciliation can lead to a stronger bond than previously existed. Each time an offense occurs, we can learn more about both the other and ourselves. This can lead to a deeper knowledge and understanding of each by the other, and thus can also lead to a more authentic bond of intimacy. Reconciliation should always be the goal.

Sometimes we feel unable to reconcile—to put forgiveness into our actions and restore a relationship. If the person has severely abused us or our trust, it may not be wise to do so. Or perhaps the person is gone or dead. We can still forgive them, pray for them, and accept them—if only at a distance. We need to look at what is in ourselves that prevents us from reconciling—some fear or expectation of the other. But it is crucial to remember that forgiveness is only fulfilled in reconciliation.

An example of God’s forgiveness— and a model for our own—is the parable of the Prodigal Son. Think of the hurt of the father as the young son withdrew into the most selfish kind of rejection and rebellion. The father never ceased to love the son, and was watching and waiting for his return. When the son came to himself, and became aware of his own sin—but not of how much he had hurt his father—he returned. Still thinking only of himself and his own needs, he rehearses how he will ask his father to receive him and make him an employee. But his father doesn’t even let him finish his little rehearsed speech. He embraces the son and holds him to himself. He has a robe and ring brought, restoring him as son and heir. He kills the fatted calf as a sacrifice of thanksgiving to God. He neither demands nor wants an apology, nor does he permit any justification or even self-denigration on the part of his son. Rather, he forgives his son from the abundance of his love, casting away any resentment or bitterness, and accepts him for who he is—his beloved son.

This is how God forgives us! So we must forgive each other and be reconciled.

**Q: Why is it so hard to forgive those closest to us?**

**Fr. Jonah:** The deeper the bonds of love and intimacy, the sharper the pain of alienation through offenses. The more we truly know someone, the more cutting off the bond of love cuts to the core of who we are. We cannot define ourselves solely in an individualistic, autonomous manner. This is a falsehood, our own egocentrism. Who we are, as Christians, as persons, is a mystery hidden in Christ of our union with

one another. A husband and wife are one flesh in Christ. “My brother is my life,” said St. Silouan. There is a sacred bond of love in friendship, whether in the world or in a monastery. We must be very watchful so as to preserve that bond. But the greater the intimacy is, the greater is the likelihood of deep offenses occurring—because intimacy presupposes vulnerability. This, however, is an aspect of how we grow in knowledge of one another—constant forgiveness and reconciliation. We come to know and accept the other person for who they are. We hopefully begin to recognize our projections and expectations and drop them. Then, we come to know ourselves better through others.

Forgiveness is hard—but it is infinitely sweeter when we reconcile with someone we deeply love. It is hard because it makes us look at our selfishness, our judgment, our expectations, and ourselves. It also shatters the illusions and false objectifications that we have had of the other person, not to mention of the offense itself.

When we have old wounds, even from childhood, we are all the more likely to project onto others our ideas and expectations, which are even more distorted by the old resentments. This is delusion. Our old wounds and resentments may be completely unconscious. They may have been caused by an entirely different person. For example, we project our issues with our parents onto those with whom we develop a close bond. This is the normal dynamic not only of newly married couples, but also of employees with bosses, of students with teachers—and especially, of novices and monks or nuns with their abbot or abbess. When we transfer old unresolved issues onto someone, our idea of that person has very little to do with the person him- or herself. We dredge up old issues with them, and put all the energy of the old resentment into it. This, of course, can destroy relationships.

How do you get out of this? I’m not sure—other than by patience, perseverance, and unconditional love. You have to somehow break through the delusion and see who the person really is.

If we are repeatedly irritated by a person we are close to, it is not their problem, but rather our own. The irritation is our reaction. They are being who they are—and if we have not realized that yet, then we must simply accept them with their character flaws and all. The other person is responsible for his own sins. But I alone am responsible for my reactions.

We have to let go of our resentments of other people, and especially of those closest to us. First, we need to ask ourselves if we want to be angry, bitter, resentful, and unhappy. Then we must look at and take responsibility for our own reactions. We can only change ourselves. Then, we need to try to see the other for who he/she really is, with strengths and weaknesses, sins and foibles, and simply love him/her. This is the basis of forgiveness. Then, we must resolve not to let these things get in the way of that love. We also have to know ourselves. If we admit our own sins and shortcomings, how can we judge anyone else for their sins and failings? It is utter hypocrisy.

Letting go seems hard, but once we do it, we have the most freeing sense of having been liberated from slavery to these demons. First, we need to pray, and ask God to show us ourselves, and to help us to love and forgive. Next, we need to be quiet, and let God show us. He will! Then, we need to be watchful, so that we do not allow ourselves to nurse resentment and bitterness.

**Q: What about when I've forgiven, then see the person or hear of him or her, and the old hurt/anger returns afresh? Does this mean I haven't forgiven?**

**Fr. Jonah:** When we still have an angry reaction to someone, it means that we still have some resentment against them. Forgiveness comes in stages. We may be able to forgive partially, but the roots of the resentment are deep in our passions. So, we still have work to do. This is especially true when it is someone close to us, who really matters to our life. An offense can threaten a relationship that is part of our very identity, so the roots of our reactions can be very deep. Our forgiveness is relative to the degree to which we are free from our continued angry or hurt reaction. When we can love and accept someone without remembrance of the wrong, and without a reaction of anger and hurt, then we have truly forgiven. Another aspect of this is when we are projecting our expectations onto a person, and they continue to disappoint us. This should show us that our expectations are simply our own selfishness, and that we are failing to love the other unconditionally. We must take responsibility for our own anger and hurt, and simply let the person be him/herself.

**Q: If the other party refuses to acknowledge an offense or show any remorse for his or her part in the breach, what should I do?**

**Fr. Jonah:** The way of humility is to ask forgiveness, and in turn, at least internally, forgive the offender. It does no good to hold onto offenses and to remember wrongs. Let them know how important the relationship is to you. But then the ball is in their court. You cannot force anyone to forgiveness.

**Q: We often work through things verbally—yet we feel guilty when we discuss struggles or anger with another person. Is there a proper place for talking about a problem we're having, with a friend or confidant?**

**Fr. Jonah:** One role of a spiritual father or mother is to be able to help you work through your anger with someone. It is much easier to talk to your friends and acquaintances, but what that leads to is often a disaster: gossip and slander, selfjustification and blaming, seeking sympathy, judgment and condemnation. And soon the person whom you resent is excluded from the community. One should never use a group of friends to talk through resentments and bitterness; while they may support your position, they will seldom make you see or take responsibility for your own sin in the breach. Guilt in such a case is very healthy, because you have sinned. How seldom it is that we will admit our responsibility for our own reactions among our friends! If we have a close confidant, then perhaps we can talk it through with them. But they need to be impartial, and you must never try to justify yourself or force the other to judge the one who offended you.

**Q: How do we cultivate a spirit of forgiveness and reconciliation, so that offenses don't stick?**

**Fr. Jonah:** We can cultivate a spirit of forgiveness by “never allowing the sun to go down on our anger.” This is a fundamental monastic and Christian precept. If we allow a resentment to take root, it is our sin, no matter what the other person has done to us. Now, we are only human, and this is part of our fallenness. But, when we see it happening, we need to stop ourselves, recognize that we are no different and sin no less than the other, and forgive. Even to seventy times seven, day in and day out.

When someone says or does something to offend us, intentionally or unintentionally, we do not need to react in any way. We can simply take it in, and respond appropriately. This is the principle of nonreaction. It is based on the realization that our reactions are purely our own responsibility, and not caused by a provocation. The provocations will come, but we can choose to react or not, respond or not. There is a story in the desert fathers about a young novice who was told by his elder, “Go and yell at the rock.” So, for half a day, he went and yelled at a rock, insulted, berated, and cursed it. He went back to his elder, who told him, “Now, praise and flatter the rock.” So he went back and praised, flattered, and said nice things to the rock. He went back and his elder asked him, “How did the rock react when you praised it?” “It didn't,” he said. “How did it react when you screamed at it and cursed it?” “It didn't react,” he said. “So,” said the elder, “should you also be impervious to praise or calumny, and react to both in the same way, as did the rock.”

Much of the spiritual life is dedicated to one goal: complete self-mastery, especially in relation to control over one's reactions. The more mature we are, spiritually, the greater control we have over our reactions. In other words, we have to be watchful over our thoughts, and maintain a spirit of love and compassion. When our thoughts accuse others, and we begin to be upset, then we need to cut off the thoughts and recognize that they are temptations. They are more about me than about the other person. The more we let our thoughts against the other fester, the harder it will be to rid ourselves of them, and resentments will develop. The basic principle of non-reaction, not only in deed, but in thought and feeling, and maintaining a spirit of peace, is the key. With this underlying attitude, it becomes difficult to get us to take offense, and thus, there is seldom a need for forgiveness or reconciliation. This, however, is a mark of very great maturity, and few there are that possess it.

**Q: When I've had a serious disagreement with someone, and we have difficulty speaking comfortably to one another, what should I do?**

**Fr. Jonah:** If we have had a serious disagreement, and cannot speak comfortably with one another, then we need to humble ourselves and ask forgiveness for having offended the other. We have to take responsibility for our part. Then it is up to the other to forgive in return. Always return forgiveness when it is asked.

**Q: What are the roots of unforgiveness? What does it do to me if I harbor bitterness? What does it do to the other person? What are the corresponding healing virtues for this passion?**

**Fr. Jonah:** The roots of unforgiveness are pride, vainglory, arrogance, and conceit. If I refuse to forgive someone, it is my sin. I can no longer pray the Lord's Prayer without damning myself, nor approach the Chalice. We refuse to forgive because we feel justified in our resentment and bitterness. We cast all the blame and criticism on the other, and blind ourselves to the reality of our own faults. Thus we live in delusion. To harbor bitterness is unadulterated pride and conceit, and we alienate ourselves from Christ. Resentment and bitterness are cancer in the soul, which will destroy us if we do not forgive and become reconciled. Such bitterness is often the root of addictions, which are simply attempts to anesthetize the pain of our own self-condemnation. We torment ourselves with the remembrance of wrongs and wallow in our self-pity, thinking ourselves the innocent victims. Seldom is this the reality, except in some cases of abuse.

When we have rage built up within ourselves, which has been stored up perhaps for years, maybe as the result of abuse or victimization, the process becomes far more complex. It takes a long time to work through such rage, so that our reactions do not come out sideways.

Christ is the ultimate example of complete forgiveness, of non-reaction, and of authentic humility. He did not revile and curse His captors and tormentors, those who slandered Him, bore false witness against Him, even tortured and crucified Him. "As a sheep led to the slaughter, and as a blameless lamb is dumb, so He opened not His mouth." We have countless examples of Christian martyrs bearing all kinds of torments and sufferings for Christ's sake, in a spirit of forgiveness, peace, and reconciliation.

When we truly are innocent victims of someone else's sins, the only thing to do is to forgive them. If we harbor resentment, we repeatedly victimize ourselves with the sin of the other every time we remember their wrong and indulge in our resentment. Forgiveness is the only way to healing.

Sometimes people refuse to receive our forgiveness. To refuse forgiveness is pride and conceit, self-justification. If someone does not want to be forgiven— often because he cannot or will not forgive himself—our forgiveness and compassion is like "burning coals heaped on his head." So also is God's forgiveness of us: not to judge or condemn us, but to lead us to repentance.

The burning coal of love is torment when we refuse to accept forgiveness or forgive ourselves. We cannot accept love when we hate ourselves. But it is precisely this divine love which will heal us because it exposes our self-hatred. In self-hatred we are too ashamed to accept forgiveness, are closed in on ourselves, fearing that exposure of ourselves to ourselves. And so we act out. But if we can turn, repent, and begin to let in the love of God and of others, then that love can begin to transform our souls.

We can only fight against the spirit of pride, unforgiveness, and selfcondemnation with humility, love, and compassion. Humility does not mean bowing and scraping. Rather, it is being nakedly honest with oneself and others. We have to speak the truth in love; but we can only do this in the brutal honesty of humility,

seeing our own sins and realizing the other is no different from ourselves. We can address offenses, but if there is no love in our speech and attitude, there is no truth, only facts. And facts do not heal, only love and compassion.

**Q: What does real reconciliation look like? How come we see so few examples of this in action, in the Church, and so many instances of broken fellowship and relationships?**

**Fr. Jonah:** Real reconciliation means complete and authentic acceptance of one another, despite sins, offenses, and transgressions: an authentic bond between persons in a spirit of love and humility. There will always be sins and offenses. We must never allow ourselves to criticize and judge one another, because it is always hypocrisy. We only judge others because we see in them our own faults and insecurities mirrored back to us. But if we can live in mature forgiveness and communion with others, in humility accepting one another as God accepts us, then our communities and churches will be transparent—revealing the Kingdom of Heaven, filled with divine grace.

The sad reality of our churches and lives, marriages and friendships, is that we are fallen, broken, and passionate. We justify ourselves in arrogant conceit, and refuse to forgive or to see our own faults. So our communities shatter, marriages break up, and friendships end. Ultimately, this is because we put the gratification of our egos as the main criterion of relationships, rather than the humble and unconditional love of the other that is demanded by the Gospel.

**Q: How often is the lack of forgiveness at the heart of our parish battles, of our marriage problems, and of our problems with our kids?**

**Fr. Jonah:** Lack of forgiveness is the core of almost all our parish battles. Marriage problems and relationships with our kids also have lack of forgiveness at the core. Resentments build up and fester, we heap selfish expectations on one another and can't see one another for who we really are. So it's no wonder that relationships break down. To have a spirit of forgiveness means to be authentically open to one another, despite wrongs and sins. If we can do this, there is nothing that cannot be healed.

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الأعمى والنور

أصرّ اليهود الا يُعترف ببسوع الناصريّ مسيحًا في شعبه. فقد صمّموا على إخراج أي يهوديٍّ من المجمع، من الأُمَّة، اذا اعترف ببسوع المسيح. أي انهم منذ البدء أدركوا انهم لو اعترفوا بالمسيح فإنما عليهم ان يغيروا شيئًا في أنفسهم، شيئًا في تفاسيرهم، شيئًا في مواقفهم. وهذا يكلفهم، يعرض أمتهم ألا تبقى متماسكة.

لو اعترفوا ببسوع مسيحًا لكانت الرسالة قد خرجت من إسرائيل إلى العالم، ولكانت الأمم قد دخلت في الميراث، وتنهار زعامة الفريسيين، ويصبح المسيح سيّدًا على الشعب، ولا يبقى الكهنة ورؤساء الكهنة والفريسيون قادة للشعب، وتصبح هناك كنيسة واحدة مؤلّفة من مسيحيين من أصل يهوديٍّ ومسيحيين من أصل وثني.

ولكي يُبعدوا هذا الخطر عنهم، أرادوا ان يزجّوا المسيح بالتهمة لكي يُبعدوا الناس عنه، فاتخذوها ذريعة أنه شفى الأعمى في يوم سبت، وكان هذا في نظرهم كُفْرًا لأن السبت مخصّص للرب ولا يُعمل فيه. اعتبروا الشفاء عملاً، اعتبروا كلّ عمل محرّم في الناموس مع أن الأعمال لم تكن كلّها محرّمة. فضلوا التمسك الحرفي بالشريعة على عمل الخير. وجدوا ذريعة، لا في شريعة موسى، بل في تفاسيرهم لشريعة موسى لكي ينقضّوا على يسوع ويُميتوه. ولذلك أخذوا يجادلون في أمر المريض الذي شُفي:

أأنت أعمى؟ من قال انك أعمى؟ أين الشهود على أنك أعمى؟ كانوا يرونه دائماً ويعرفون انه وُلد أعمى، ومع ذلك أرادوا أن ينفوا الأعجوبة، ليس لأنها لم تحصل، لكنهم قرروا مسبقًا ألا يعترفوا ببسوع صانع معجزات. الرجل الأعمى اعترف بذلك طبعًا لأنه شُفي. وأبواه اللذان كان مغضوبًا عليهما من اليهود اعترفا أيضًا بذلك.

يبين لنا الإنجيل أن من كان يُظنّ انه «مستنير» (أي اليهود) كان أعمى. كان اليهود هم العميان في حين ان الأعمى صار بصيرًا. انقلبت الآية: الذين ظلّوا أنفسهم في النور كانوا في الظلام لأنهم جعلوا أنفسهم ضد المسيح، والذي كان في الظلام صار في النور لأنه آمن بالمسيح. المسيح هو النور وكل من اتّبع المسيح يصبح في النور.

قد يكون الإنسان مسيحيًا، ومع ذلك يبقى أعمى، ليس لأن ديانته مظلمة، لكن لكونه لم يبقَ على ديانته. أظلم من جديد من بعد نور. السلوك السيء ظلام يدخل الينا من بعد النور ويجعلنا عميانًا. لذلك لا نفتخر بأننا مسيحيون، هذا لا يكفي. لنفتخر بأننا نطيع وصايا الله. القضية أن يستمرّ النور علينا، لا أن نأخذ النور منذ طفولتنا ونتوقف. الأمر كله ان نبقي على معموديتنا ونسلك سلوك المعمدين كأن النور يُعطى لنا كل يوم بالعمل الصالح. المعمودية تُجدّد لا بالماء ولكن بالعهد الذي قطعته على أنفسنا كل يوم في حضرة المسيح فنبقى على النور الذي تدفق على كل منّا في جرن المعمودية.

جورجيوس مطران جبيل والبترون وما يليهما (جبل لبنان)

وصعد إلى السماء...

«إني أصعد إلى أبي وأبيكم وإلهي وإلهكم»

(يوحنا ٢٠: ١٧)

بهذه الكلمات العجيبة، وصف الربّ القائم من بين الأموات سرّ قيامته لمريم المجدليّة، التي كان عليها نقلها إلى تلاميذه الذين كانوا «بنوحون ويبيكون» (مرقس ١٦: ١٠). خاف التلاميذ وتعجّبوا لدى سماعهم هذه البشرى التي تلقّوها بشكّ وعدم ثقة. لم يكن توما الوحيد الذي شكّ، بل كلهم شكوا، حتّى بطرس، الذي خرج من القبر مندھشًا فقد «مضى متعجبًا في نفسه مما كان» (لوقا ٢٤: ١٢). لكن، يبدو أن واحدًا فقط من الأحد عشر لم يشكّ: يوحنا، التلميذ الذي «كان يسوع يحبّه». وحده يوحنا تلقّف سرّ القبر الفارغ للحال: «ورأى قامن» (يوحنا ٢٠: ٨).

لم يتوقّع التلاميذ قيامة الربّ. ولا حتّى النسوة توقعن ذلك، بل ظنّوا بالغالب أن يكون جسده يرتاح ميتًا في القبر؛ فقد أتين القبر إلى «حيث وضعوه»، حاملات الخنوط الذي أعدده «ليأتين ويدهنه». جلّ ما كان يشغل بالهنّ السؤال: «من يُدحرج لنا الحجر عن باب القبر؟» (مرقس ١٦: ١-٣؛ لوقا ٢٤: ١).

تدمرت مريم المجدليّة بألم عندما لم تجد جسد السيّد في القبر: «إنهم أخذوا سيّدي ولست أعلم أين وضعوه» (يوحنا ٢٠: ١٣). كذلك هربت النسوة من القبر بخوف ورعدة عند بشارة الملاك «فخرجن سريعًا وهربن من القبر، لأن الرعدة والحيرة أخذتاها. ولم يقلن لأحد شيئًا لأنهنّ كنّ خائفات» (مرقس ١٦: ٨). وحتّى عندما تكلمن، لم يُصدّقهن أحد، كما حصل مع مريم المجدليّة التي رأت الربّ، وكما حصل مع التلميذين اللذين كانا يمشيان منطلقين إلى البريّة «وذهب هذان وأخبرا الباقيين، فلم يُصدّقوا ولا هذين» (مرقس ١٦: ١٣)، واللذين تعرفا عليه «عند كسر الخبز». و «أخيرًا ظهر للأحد عشر وهم متّكونون، ووبّخ عدم إيمانهم وقساوة قلوبهم، لأنهم لم يصدّقوا الذين نظروهم قد قام» (مرقس ١٦: ١٤).

«ونحن كنا نرجو أنه هو المزمع أن يفدي إسرائيل». بهذا الكلام تدمر تلميذًا عمّاوس لمرافقهما العجيب (لوقا ٢٤: ٢١)، ما يكشف لنا جزئيًا سرّ «عدم إيمان» التلاميذ. أخبار القيامة التي أتت بها النسوة لم تجلب لهما سوى «الحيرة والدهش». هما انتظرا نصرًا

أرضيًا «واضحًا» وغلبة مُبينة. التجربة التي استحوذت عليهما ومنعتهما من قبول «بشارة الصليب» جعلتهما يجادلان المخّص في كل مرة كان يحاول فيها كشف سرّه لهما. «أما كان ينبغي أن المسيح يتألم بهذا ويدخل إلى مجده؟». هذا كان لا يزال صعبًا عليهما قبله (لوقا ٢٤: ٢٦). حتّى في وقت سابق تحيّر التلاميذ فقالوا: «ماذا حدث حتى إنك مزعم أن تُظهر ذاتك لنا وليس للعالم؟» (يوحنا ١٤: ٢٢). استمرت حيرتهم حتى في يوم صعود الربّ حين سألوا: «يا رب، هل في هذا الوقت تزدد الملك إلى إسرائيل؟» (أعمال ١: ٦). لم يعرفوا بعد معنى قيامته، ولم يفهموا ما معنى أنه «يصعد» إلى الأب. لم تفتح أعينهم إلا لاحقًا عندما تمّ «موعد الأب» (أعمال ١: ٤).

كمال معنى القيامة يكمن في صعود المسيح المجيد.

لم يقم الرب لكي يعود إلى نظام الحياة الجسديّة السابق، لا ليحيا من جديد لكي يشارك تلاميذه والجموع في البشارة والعجائب. الآن، بعد قيامته هو لا يبقى معهم، ولكنّه صار «يظهر» لهم بطريقة عجيبة وسريّة، من وقت إلى آخر، طوال مدّة أربعين يومًا. هكذا يوضح القديس يوحنا الذهبي الفم: «هو لم يعدّ معهم دائمًا كما في سابق عهده قبل القيامة»، ويضيف «كان يأتي ومن ثمّ يختفي، ليقودهم بذلك إلى إدراك أسمى. هو لم يعدّ يسمح لهم بالاستمرار في علاقتهم السابقة به، ولكنّه حرص على جعلهم يدركون موضوعين أساسيين: الإيمان بحقيقة قيامته من بين الأموات؛ والإدراك بأنه، من الآن فصاعدًا، هو نفسه صار أعظم من البشر». صار ثمّة أمرٌ جديدٌ وغير اعتياديّ في شخصه الآن (يوحنا ٢١: ١-١٤). أو كما يوضح الذهبي الفم: «لم يعدّ حضوره مكشوفًا، ولكن نوعًا من الشهادة على حقيقة أنه موجود». لم يقم المسيح بنفس الطريقة التي أعيد بها إلى الحياة بعض الأشخاص الذي أقيموا قبله. بالنسبة إلى هؤلاء كانت قيامتهم وقتيّة، لأنهم عادوا إلى الحياة بنفس الجسد، عادوا عرضة للموت والفساد، أي عادوا إلى نظام الحياة السابق... قام المسيح إلى الأبد، ولن يعود إلى الموت من بعد. قام بجسد ممجّد لا يعرف الفساد. «يُزرع في فساد، ويُقام في عدم فساد. يُزرع في هوان، ويُقام في مجد. يُزرع في ضعف، ويُقام في قوّة. يُزرع جسمًا حيوانيًا ويُقام جسمًا روحانيًا» (١كورنثوس ١٥: ٤٢-٤٤). قام المسيح إلى حالة من الوجود جديدة أسمى من الأولى. لذلك بصعوده الآن إلى أبيه، هو «لا يذهب»، لا يغادرنا. هو يُصعد معه الأرض إلى السماء، يرتفع أعلى من أيّة سماء. «لم تظهر قوّة الله بالقيامة فقط، ولكن بأمر أعظم» يضيف الذهبي الفم، «لأن المسيح ارتفع إلى السماء، وجلس عن يمين الله» (مرقس ١٦: ١٩).

ومع المسيح تصعد طبيعة البشر أيضًا.

«نحن الذين بدوننا لسنا مستحقّين للأرض، رَفَعْنَا المسيح الآن إلى السماء» يؤكّد الذهبي الفم. «نحن الذين لم نكن مستحقّين سيادة الأرض، صعدنا إلى الملكوت العلوي، ارتقينا أعلى من السماوات، أُعطي لنا عرش الملك؛ طبيعتنا التي طردت قديمًا من الفردوس ووضعت الملائكة الحراس لمنعها من العودة، لم تُمنع الآن من الصعود إلى عرش الرب». رَفَعْنَا الله، كما يؤكد بولس الرسول: «وأقامنا معه، وأجلسنا معه في السماويات في المسيح يسوع» (أفسس ٢: ٦). «باكورة الراقدين» يجلس الآن في الأعالي. به تجتمع البشرية وتتحد. «تفرح الأرض بالسر، وتمتلئ السماوات بالسرور».

الصعود هو علامة العنصرة ورمز حلولها.

«صعد الرب إلى السماء وسيرسل الروح المعزي للعالم». سبق الرب وأخبر تلاميذه: «لأنه إن لم أنطلق لا يأتيكم المعزي» (يوحنا ١٦: ٧). لذلك، مواهب الروح هي «مواهب المصالحة»، وختم تمام الخلاص والاتحاد المطلق بالله. يكمن فرح الصعود في موعد الروح: «وفرحت تلاميذك بموعد الروح القدس». يعمل انتصار المسيح فينا بقوة الروح القدس. من خلال التجدد والتمجيد بالمسيح الصاعد إلى السماوات، صارت الطبيعة البشرية قابلة للروح القدس. وجود الكنيسة بذاتها هو ثمرة الصعود الإلهي. ففي الكنيسة حقًا تصعد الطبيعة البشرية إلى الأعالي الإلهية (أفسس ١: ٢٢).

الصعود هو علامة المجيء الثاني ورمزه.

«إن يسوع هذا الذي ارتفع عنكم إلى السماء سيأتي هكذا كما رأيتموه منطلقًا إلى السماء» (أعمال ١: ١١). سرّ العناية الإلهية يكمل في عودة الرب القائم من بين الأموات. ففي كمال الأزمنة تعلن قوّة ملكوت المسيح وتبسط على كل البشر المؤمنين، يجعلهم المسيح ورثة لملكوته: «وأنا أجعل لكم كما جعل لي أبي ملكوتًا، لتأكلوا وتشربوا على مائدتي في ملكوتي، وتجلسوا على كراس تدينون أسباط إسرائيل الاثني عشر» (لوقا ٢٢: ٢٩-٣٠)، و «مَنْ يَغلب فسأعطيه أن يجلس معي في عرشي، كما غلبت أنا أيضًا وجلست مع أبي في عرشه» (رؤيا ٣: ٢١).

في مواجهة هذا السموّ، يقف كلّ جسد صامتًا، يرتعد بالدّهش. «هو نزل بنفسه إلى أسفل دركات الدّلّ، وأصعد الإنسان إلى أرقى غلوّ المجد».

ما معنى الصعود في حياتنا المسيحية وكيف علينا التصرف إذن؟

«أنت أيها المسيحي، إذا كنت جسد المسيح، احمل الصليب، لأنه حمله أيضًا» (الذهبي الفم).

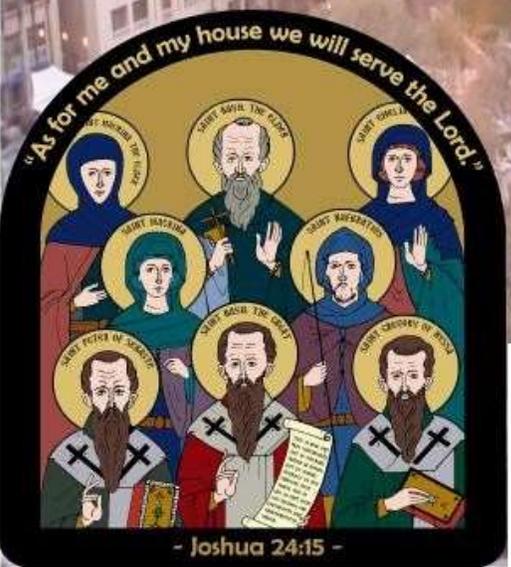
«بقوّة صليبيك أيها المسيح، ثبتّ قلبي، أيها المسيح، لكي أنشد وأمجّد صعودك المخلص».



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