

كنيسة مار نقولا الأنطاكية الأرثوذكسية

St. Nicholas Orthodox Church  
Weekly Bulletin

Antiochian Archdiocese of North America  
Diocese of Los Angeles and the West

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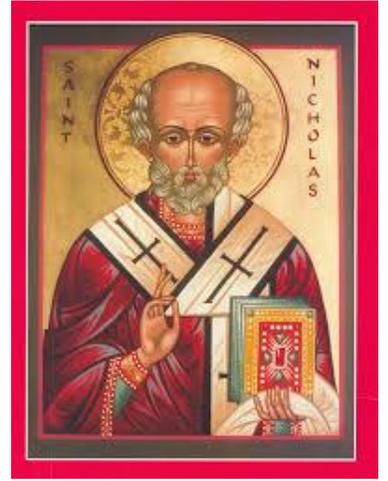
Pastor Emeritus, V. Rev. Fr. Gregory Ofiesh

Sub-Dn. Michel Khoury

Sub-Dn. Ilyan Baalbaki

Parish Council Chairman: Maher Shami

Sunday, September 10<sup>th</sup>, 2017



**THE EPISTLE: St. Paul to the Galatians. (6:11-18)**

Brethren, see with what large letters I am writing to you with my own hand. It is those who want to make a good showing in the flesh that would compel you to be circumcised and only in order that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ. For even those who receive circumcision do not themselves keep the Law, but they desire to have you circumcised that they may glory in your flesh. But far be it from me to glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me and I to the world. For neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation. Peace and mercy be upon all, who walk by this rule, upon the Israel of God. Henceforth let no man trouble me; for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brethren. Amen.

الرسالة: غلاطية ٦ : ١١-١٨

يا إخوة، انظروا ما أعظم الكتابات التي كتبتها إليكم بيدي. إنّ كلّ الذين يريدون أن يُرضوا بحسب الجسد يُلزمونكم أن تختنوا، وإنّما ذلك لئلا يُضطهدوا من أجل صليب المسيح، لأنّ الذين يختنون هم أنفسهم لا يحفظون الناموس بل إنّما يريدون أن تختنوا ليفتخروا بأجسادكم. أمّا أنا فحاشى لي إن أفتخر إلا بصليب ربنا يسوع المسيح الذي به صُلب العالم لي وأنا صُلبت للعالم؛ لأنّه في المسيح يسوع ليس الختان بشيء ولا القلف بل الخليقة الجديدة. وكلّ الذين يسلكون بحسب هذا القانون فعليهم سلام ورحمة، وعلى إسرائيل الله. فلا يجلب عليّ أحدُ أتعابًا في ما بعد فإنّي حامل في جسدي سِماتِ الربّ يسوع. نعمة ربنا يسوع المسيح مع روحكم أيّها الإخوة، آمين.

**THE GOSPEL: St. John. (3:13-17)**

The Lord said, "No one has ascended into heaven but He who descended from heaven, the Son of man. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. For God sent His Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through Him."

الإنجيل: يوحنا ٣ : ١٣-١٧

قال الربّ: لم يصعد أحد إلى السماء إلا الذي نزل من السماء، ابن البشر الذي هو في السماء. وكما رفع موسى الحيّة في البريّة، هكذا ينبغي أن يُرفع ابن البشر لكيلا يهلك كلّ من يؤمن به بل تكون له الحياة الأبدية، لأنّه هكذا أحبّ الله العالم حتّى بذل ابنه الوحيد لكيلا يهلك كلّ من يؤمن به بل تكون له الحياة الأبدية. فإنّه لم يرسل الله ابنه الوحيد إلى العالم ليدين العالم بل ليخلص به العالم.

### *Altar Candle Offering:*

- ❖ By **Nadia Shatara** in loving memory of **Elias Shatara** and **Butrous Nazzal**. God Bless and may their memory be eternal!
- ❖ By **Bergette Rantisi** and children **Andrew, Melissa,** and **Brianna Rantisi** for the good health of husband and father **Osama Rantisi** for his birthday. God Bless and many years!
- ❖ *Sponsors for Sunday's are needed. Please make checks payable to **St. Nicholas Church** in the amount of \$25.00 or more. Thank you!*

### *Congratulations:*

- ❖ To **Krystle (Rantisi) Azar** and **Steve Azar** for the baptism of their baby boy **Dominic**.
- ❖ To **Stefanie (Mendez) Dahdah** and **Fouad Dahdah** for their recent wedding.

### *Holy Bread of Oblation:*

- ❖ By **Bergette Rantisi** and children **Andrew, Melissa,** and **Brianna Rantisi** for the good health of husband and father **Osama Rantisi** for his birthday. God Bless and many years!

### **SAVE THE DATE:**

- ❖ **September 20<sup>th</sup>: St. Nicholas TEEN SOYO meeting.** Wednesday, September 20<sup>th</sup> @ 6PM. Teen SOYO meeting at 2006 Hull Avenue. Redwood City, CA 94061
- ❖ **September 30<sup>th</sup> & October 1<sup>st</sup>: St. Nicholas Church Annual Food Festival.** Food, Dancing, Hookah, Raffle to win a CAR! A lot of items are needed for our festival. We would appreciate your generosity to donate and help us with purchases. Thank you for your continuous support.  
**We need your help:** Preparations for the Annual Church Food Festival have begun. We need all the help we can get so we can make it as successful as possible. We will be starting at 9:00 am during all these days. Everybody is welcome. If you have any questions, please contact Khourye Eman Baalbaki or Gladys Maalouf. We will be making:
  - ❖ **September 25<sup>th</sup>:** Kaak
  - ❖ **September 27<sup>th</sup>, 28<sup>th</sup>, 29<sup>th</sup>, 30<sup>th</sup>, & October 1<sup>st</sup>:** Grape leaves, stuffed zucchini, & eggplant.
- ❖ **October 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2017 @ 5:00 pm. St. Nicholas proudly presents: A Ballroom Dance Show:** Our first Ballroom Dance Show on October 22<sup>nd</sup> including: dinner, DJ, raffle, and contest by HAT. So ladies get out your best HAT and let's have some fun. Donation: \$50.00  
For further information please contact **Gladys Maalouf @ 415-832-0316.**

### **CHURCH FOOD FESTIVALS:**

- ❖ Church of the Redeemer (Los Altos Hills, Fr. Samer Yousif ): **September 9<sup>th</sup> & 10<sup>th</sup>**
- ❖ Holy Virgin Mary (West Sacramento, Fr. Paul Baba): **September 16<sup>th</sup> & 17<sup>th</sup>**
- ❖ St. John the Evangelist (Orinda, Fr. Nicholas Borzghol): **September 23<sup>rd</sup> & 24<sup>th</sup>**
- ❖ **St. Nicholas Church (San Francisco, Fr. George Baalbaki): September 31<sup>st</sup> & October 1<sup>st</sup>**

### **Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh: Sunday before Exaltation of the Cross**

In today's Gospel we are told that God did not send His Only-Begotten Son into the world to judge the world but to save the world. The Living God became a true and living man, shared with us all our human destiny, our creatureliness, the situation of a fallen world, all its sufferings including the tragedy of death which implies the tragic loss of consciousness of His communion with the Father: My God, My God, why hath Thou forsaken Me?.. And we are saved by His life and by His death, we are saved by His words, O Father, forgive them because they don't know what they are doing O Father™. But do such words apply to us who know, who should know O Father? Haven't we heard the Gospel? Do we not know what happened to Christ because of our

sinfulness? Are we not aware that the words spoken by Christ apply to all of us? **ἄνθρωποι** and yet, with a difference.

Saint Seraphim of Sarov said to one of his visitors, Yes, be sure of God's forgiveness, be sure that God will respond to your prayer; but remember one thing: the price He had to pay to have power to forgive, and don't ask Him lightly for forgiveness, don't bring unworthy prayers unto Him, because it is His death that pleads our forgiveness. And we cannot, without a response from our deepest self turn to God and ask forgiveness at the cost of His death, if we bring nothing, nothing at all but our desire to be free of the burden that crushes us. And if we ask ourselves what can we bring **ἄνθρωποι** we can bring first of all our gratitude. Our gratitude for that love which alone can save; a love so great that He accepted not only our human destiny, but to loose communion with the Father in order to identify Himself with us in all ways and respects, He, the Son of God, left God-less upon the Cross, and pleading for us that we may be forgiven...

But there is something else which we can learn from today's second Lesson: the story of the woman taken in adultery. This woman had been sinning, freely, light-mindedly, without understanding, indeed as one of those who did not know what they were doing! And of a sudden she found herself face to face with the fact that sin means death. She was taken in the act, and the Old Testament proclaimed death unto her. She realised then what sin was. And she was brought to Christ by the crowd who wanted to apply the harshness of the old-testamental law to her, without mercy. And Christ saw that at that moment she had understood everything. She knew that sin meant death, an ultimate destruction in the eyes of the people of the Old Testament who died in separation from God because only in Christ do we find our way back to Him. There was no other way than the descent into the sheol, the place of the irremediable and eternal absence of God. She knew that everything was over, not only the things that happen in time, but all eternity had become darkness and death: if she only could return to temporary life, to have time to repent, to have time to live in a way that was worthy of God and of herself, **ἄνθρωποι** she would do it!

And this is what Christ saw in her, this is why He turned to the judges, the sinful men and women who were prepared to kill this woman for her sins while they did not realise their own sinfulness and that they were carrying death upon their shoulders because of them. **ἄνθρωποι** Let those of you who are without sin cast the first stone **ἄνθρωποι** **ἄνθρωποι** and no-one dared, because at that moment, these words so simple and so direct brought to their consciousness the fact, that, Yes **ἄνθρωποι** no one of them was without sin, and all had deserted God, renounced their dignity, had betrayed their vocation, and there was no other judgement about them than a death sentence: they could not pronounce it against this woman, because to pronounce it meant that they accepted it for themselves.

And Christ Who knew the hearts of those who were before Him, knew that this woman had gone through the gates of death, and could come back by a divine act that would resurrect her: yes, truly bring her back from an anticipated, but certain death. And He told her, Where are those who were condemning thee? Has no one done so? **ἄνθρωποι** No. **ἄνθρωποι** Neither do I condemn thee, go in peace, but sin no more!.. And these words she could indeed receive in her heart, those words indeed could become the law of her life, because now she knew in her body, in her soul, in her heart and mind, in all her being that sin was death. And she accepted forgiveness which meant life!

Where do we stand, each of us, when we come to confession, when we ask forgiveness from other people, when we are begged by others to forgive them **ἄνθρωποι** where do we stand? Are we aware that death is at work in us because of our God-lessness, our sinfulness, the fact that we have chosen? This woman did not know what she was doing, but we have the Gospel speaking to us, we have Christ speaking to us, we know all things: where do we stand?

Let us learn from her; and let us learn also from these men who came armed with stones, to stone the sinner, and realised that they were locked in the same tragedy of sin and death with her, and that they could not condemn her, because to condemn her meant to condemn themselves to the same death.

Are we aware of this when we refuse forgiveness? I am not speaking of the light-minded words of forgiveness which we pronounce so easily **ἄνθρωποι** but do we forgive from the depth of our heart? Can we say to God: Forgive as I forgive?

Let us stay with this thought, but also with the victorious joy that God has send His Son into the world not to judge it but to save it! That salvation is at hand! That it is for us to take it **ἄνθρωποι** and it is given gratuitously, as love is gratuitous and redeeming.

هكذا أحب الله العالم

في أيقونة الصليب التقليديّة نرى المسيح معلقاً على الصليب. عيناه المغلقتان تشيران إلى حقيقة الموت الجسديّ، ولكن رأسه المنحني قليلاً نحو والدة الإله يؤكّد أنّ «الحياة رقدت والجحيم تنهّد مرتعداً» (خدمة جناز المسيح). رقاد المخلص أصبح مدخلاً لنا إلى الحياة. ومنذ تلك اللحظة تنتقل جميعاً بالمسيح يسوع، وعلى مثال العذراء مريم «من الحياة إلى الحياة». وكأنّ السيّد في الأيقونة يتفوّه على الصليب بما تنشده الكنيسة في خدمة جناز المسيح: «يا أمّي إنّ الأرض حجبنتي بإرادتي، وأمّا بوابو الجحيم فارتعدوا لمشاهدتهم إياي... لأنّي قهرت الأعداء بالصليب بما أنّي إليه».

والصليب في الأيقونة ذو ثلاثة أصدعة: الصعيد الأفقيّ الأسفل، تحت قدمي يسوع يرمز إلى «عصا قوّة الربّ» (مزمور ١٠٩: ٢)، ميزان العدالة، صلة الوصل بين الملكوت والجحيم. لذلك فإنّ الخشبة السفلى تبدو منحنية قليلاً إلى أسفل «النور يضيء في الظلمة والظلمة لم تدركه... كان في العالم... والعالم لم يدركه» (يوحنا ١: ٥ و ١٠). المسيح يسوع أدين عنّا أمام عدل الأب فرفع عنّا صكّ المعصية «إلى خاصّته جاء وخاصّته لم تقبله وأمّا كلّ الذين قبلوه فأعطاهم سلطاناً أن يصيروا أولاد الله» (يوحنا ١: ١١-١٢).

أمّا الصعيد العموديّ فينطلق من مغارة سوداء، من الجحيم، من مكان دفن آدم الأوّل حسب التراث، ويرتقي إلى السماء. والمصلوب مشدود على الخشبة حملاً مجنّحاً يرتقي الصليب سلماً إلهية من الجحيم إلى السموات: «لم يصعد أحد إلى السماء إلّا الذي نزل من السماء، ابن الإنسان الذي هو في السماء» (يوحنا ٣: ١٣) وحسب ما نقل بولس الرسول قول السيّد هذا: «الذي نزل هو الذي صعد أيضاً فوق جميع السموات لكي يملأ الكلّ» (أفسس ٤: ١٠)، وبه ننشئ نحن من جحيمنا ونرتقي إلى عرش الأب. الابن يمتلئ الحدّ الفاصل، ميدان المعركة، في عملية انفصال العالم عن الله واتّصاله بالله. ثمّ نرى في الأيقونة خلف الصليب أسوار أورشليم إذ إنّ المسيح صلّب خارج الأسوار ليظهر لنا أنّه «ليس لنا هنا مدينة باقية لكننا نطلب العتيدة» (عبرانيين ١٣: ١٤). ويذا المصلوب ممدودتان فوق أسوار المدينة تأكيداً للبعد الكوني للصليب: «قد بسطت كفيك يا مخلص فجمعت المتفرقات منذ القديم» (الأودية الثالثة من خدمة الجناز). عند أسفل الصليب إحدى نساء أورشليم وقائد المئة يمثّلان الإنسانيّة التي جمعت هكذا إلى الأب إذ دخل الابن، الكلمة الأزليّ ظلمة الموت «متسربلاً بالنور كالسربال».

وعن يمين المخلص تقف والدة الإله في ثوب أحمر قائم ثوب النفس العذريّة المتألّمة، وهي تشير إلى المصلوب وكأنّها ترى عبر الصليب، فجر القيامة: «إنّ التي ولدتك بغير زرع رأئك معلقاً على عود هتفت بمرارة.. لست احتمل مشاهدة صلبك ظلماً، فانهض مسرعاً لأشاهد قيامتك (خدمة أناجيل الألام). ويوحنا الحبيب يبدو منتصباً إلى يسار الصليب، ورأسه منحني قليلاً نحو المخلص، وعينه لا تتجهان إلى من يمتلئ أمام الأيقونة، بل إلى الداخل، إلى صحراء غير منظورة حيث تبع التلميذ سيّده في ألم التخلّي الإلهيّ مرتقباً فجر القيامة.

في الصليب، ابن الله الوحيد يأتي أمام عرش الأب «ابن الإنسان» مثلنا. آدم الثاني يتخذ على نفسه دينونة آدم الأوّل في معاناة الجثمانية: «الآن نفسي قد اضطربت... ولكن لأجل هذا أتيت إلى هذه الساعة» (يوحنا ١٢: ٢٧). المسيح يسوع يصبح بملء اختياره دينونة لأجلنا.

جاورجوس مطران جبيل والبترون

# 22nd Annual ST. NICHOLAS CHURCH MIDDLE EASTERN FESTIVAL

Sept. 30<sup>th</sup>  
12pm-10pm

Oct. 1<sup>st</sup>  
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Our 36th Annual



# Mediterranean Festival

Saturday, September 9 • 12 - 10 pm  
Sunday, September 10 • 12 - 8 pm

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**SEPTEMBER 16 & 17, 2017**

**Saturday: 11 am - 10 pm | Sunday: 12 pm - 7 pm**



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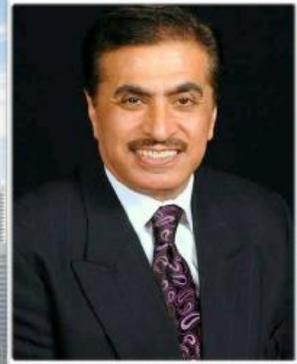


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