

"Do everything you can to take some wisdom
for your soul from what you read, and emulate it."

H.E. Metropolitan JOSEPH



ST. NICHOLAS
ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX
CHURCH



كنيسة القديس نيقولاوس
الانطاكية الأرثوذكسية

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Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Antioch and all the East

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Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America

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The Reverend Father Mark Wyatt قدس الأب مارك ويّات
Pastor of St. Nicholas Antiochian Orthodox Church

Formerly: The Syrian Greek Orthodox Church of St. Nicholas of Canada
Founded in 1899 by St. Raphael (Hawaweeny) Bishop of Brooklyn

80 de Castelnau Est, Montreal, QC, H2R 1P2

514-270-9788 office@stnicholasmtl.org

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SUNDAY BULLETIN: AUGUST 27, 2017 A.D.



For Metropolitan Boulos,
Archbishop John, and for
their quick release from
captivity and safe return,
let us pray to the Lord.

THE HOLY EPISTLE (1 Corinthians 15:1-11) Brethren, I would remind you in what terms I preached to you the Gospel, which you received, in which you stand, by which you are saved, if you hold it fast—unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that He was buried, that He rose on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the Twelve. Then He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. Then He appeared to James, then to all the Apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared also to me. For I am the least of the Apostles, unfit to be called an Apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God, which is with me. Whether then it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed.

وَأَعْرَفَكُمْ بِهَا الْإِخْوَةَ بِالْإِنْجِيلِ الَّذِي بَشَرْتُمْ بِهِ وَقَبِلْتُمُوهُ وَتَقَوْمُونَ فِيهِ وَبِهِ أَيْضًا تَخْلُصُونَ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَذْكُرُونَ أَيُّ كَلَامٍ بَشَرْتُمْ بِهِ. إِلَّا إِذَا كُنْتُمْ قَدْ آمَنْتُمْ عَبَثًا! فَإِنِّي سَلَّمْتُ إِلَيْكُمْ فِي الْأَوَّلِ مَا قَبِلْتُهُ أَنَا أَيْضًا: أَنَّ الْمَسِيحَ مَاتَ مِنْ أَجْلِ خَطَايَانَا حَسَبَ الْكُتُبِ وَأَنَّهُ دُونَ وَأَنَّهُ قَامَ فِي الْيَوْمِ الثَّلَاثِ حَسَبَ الْكُتُبِ وَأَنَّهُ ظَهَرَ لِيَصِفَا ثُمَّ لِلْإِثْنَيْ عَشَرَ. وَبَعْدَ ذَلِكَ ظَهَرَ دَفْعَةً وَاحِدَةً لَأَكْثَرَ مِنْ خَمْسِمِئَةِ أَخٍ كَثْرَتُهُمْ بَاقٍ إِلَى الْآنِ. وَلَكِنَّ بَعْضَهُمْ قَدْ رَفَدُوا. وَبَعْدَ ذَلِكَ ظَهَرَ لِيَعْقُوبَ ثُمَّ لِلرُّسُلِ أَجْمَعِينَ. وَأَخِرَ الْكُلِّ كَأَنَّهُ لِسْفِطٍ ظَهَرَ لِي أَنَا. لِأَنِّي أَصْغَرُ الرُّسُلِ أَنَا الَّذِي لَسْتُ أَهْلًا لِأَنْ أُدْعَى رَسُولًا لِأَنِّي اضْطَهَدْتُ كَنِيسَةَ اللَّهِ. وَلَكِنْ بِنِعْمَةِ اللَّهِ أَنَا مَا أَنَا وَبِنِعْمَتِهِ الْمُعْطَاةُ لِي لَمْ تَكُنْ بَاطِلَةً بَلْ أَنَا تَعَبْتُ أَكْثَرَ مِنْهُمْ جَمِيعِهِمْ. وَلَكِنْ لَا أَنَا بَلْ نِعْمَةُ اللَّهِ الَّتِي مَعِي. فَسَوَاءٌ أَنَا أَمْ أَوْلَيْكَ هَكَذَا نَكِرُزُ وَهَكَذَا آمَنْتُمْ.

THE HOLY GOSPEL (St. Matthew 19:16-26) At that time, a young man came up to Jesus, kneeling and saying, "Good Teacher, what good deed must I do, to have eternal life?" And He said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. If you would enter life, keep the commandments." He said to Him, "Which?" And Jesus said, "You shall not kill, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not bear false witness, honor your father and mother, and you shall love your neighbor as yourself." The young man said to Him, "All these I have observed; what do I still lack?" Jesus said to him, "If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me." When the young man heard this, he went away sorrowful; for he had great possessions. And Jesus said to his disciples, "Truly, I say to you, it will be hard for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." When the disciples heard this they were greatly astonished, saying, "Who then can be saved?" But Jesus looked at them and said to them, "With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

وَإِذَا وَاحِدٌ تَقَدَّمَ وَقَالَ لَهُ: «أَيُّهَا الْمَعْلَمُ الصَّالِحُ أَيُّ صِلَاحٍ أَعْمَلُ لَتَكُونَ لِي الْحَيَاةَ الْأَبَدِيَّةَ؟» فَقَالَ لَهُ: «لِمَاذَا تَدْعُونِي صَالِحًا؟ لَيْسَ أَحَدٌ صَالِحًا إِلَّا وَاحِدٌ وَهُوَ اللَّهُ. وَلَكِنْ إِنْ أَرَدْتَ أَنْ تَدْخُلَ الْحَيَاةَ فَاحْفَظِ الْوَصَايَا.» قَالَ لَهُ: «أَيُّهُ الْوَصَايَا؟» فَقَالَ يَسُوعُ: «لَا تَقْتُلْ. لَا تَزْنِ. لَا تَسْرِقْ. لَا تَشْهَدْ بِالزُّورِ. أَكْرِمِ أَبَاكَ وَأُمَّكَ وَأَجِبْ قَرِيبَكَ كَنَفْسِكَ.» قَالَ لَهُ الشَّابُّ: «هَذِهِ كُلُّهَا حَفِظْتُهَا مِنْذُ حَدَاتِي. فَمَاذَا يُعْوزُنِي بَعْدُ؟» قَالَ لَهُ يَسُوعُ: «إِنْ أَرَدْتَ أَنْ تَكُونَ كَامِلًا فَادْهَبْ وَبِعْ أَمْلاكَكَ وَأَعْطِ الْفُقَرَاءَ فَيَكُونَ لَكَ كَنْزٌ فِي السَّمَاءِ وَتَبَعَالِ اتَّبِعْنِي.» فَلَمَّا سَمِعَ الشَّابُّ الْكَلِمَةَ مَضَى حَزِينًا لِأَنَّهُ كَانَ ذَا أَمْوَالٍ كَثِيرَةٍ. فَقَالَ يَسُوعُ لِتَلَامِيذِهِ: «الْحَقُّ أَقُولُ لَكُمْ: إِنَّهُ يَعْسُرُ أَنْ يَدْخُلَ غَنِيٌّ إِلَى مَلَكُوتِ السَّمَاوَاتِ. وَأَقُولُ لَكُمْ أَيْضًا: إِنْ مَرُورَ جَمَلٍ مِنْ ثَقَبِ إِبْرَةٍ أَيْسَرُ مِنْ أَنْ يَدْخُلَ غَنِيٌّ إِلَى مَلَكُوتِ اللَّهِ.» فَلَمَّا سَمِعَ تَلَامِيذُهُ بَهْتُوا جِدًّا قَائِلِينَ: «إِذَا مَنْ يَسْتَطِيعُ أَنْ يَخْلُصَ؟» فَنَظَرَ إِلَيْهِمْ يَسُوعُ وَقَالَ: «هَذَا عِنْدَ النَّاسِ غَيْرُ مُسْتَطَاعٍ وَلَكِنْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ كُلُّ شَيْءٍ مُسْتَطَاعٌ.»

Congratulations to our 2017 Raffle winners: Amal Abouassaly (\$10,000), Nadim Zakem (\$2,000), Charles Thoun (\$2,000), Paul Jabara (\$1,000), Nicholas Zakaib (\$500), Michael David (\$500), Litho Quebec (\$500), Gerry Shadeed (\$500), George Tabah (\$250), Marina Tabah (\$250). We would like to thank Paul Massad & Sylvia Mefrige for chairing the event; Christine Guerrera & her committee for organizing the meal; and to all who purchased a ticket to support our Church.

— DEMONS —

By: H.E. Metropolitan SABA Esber of Horan & Jabal Al-Arab, Syria.

There is a strong tendency toward denying the devil and not regarding him as an existent being. Some people, especially those regarded as intellectuals, believe that the devil is a human creation and that evil fundamentally only exists in man and not outside him. But those of this inclination do not sufficiently explain the reason for the inclination toward evil in man and they do not give a clear answer to the constantly-raised question, "Where does limited man get this terribly destructive boundless capacity for evil?"

This is all normal if those who deny the devil's existence are nonbelievers, but it seems in recent times that some preachers and teachers have come to deny the devil or they erase him and his effect on the life of believers. They are motivated in this either by personal conviction, forgetting that they belong to an integrated system of faith, or out of a desire to remove fear of him from the consciousness of the faithful. The influence of worldly thinking has started to invade the Church and what we are talking about right now is just one sign of that invasion.

This tendency is countered by another tendency toward blaming all the causes of evil on the devil, exculpating man from any personal responsibility for it, and neglecting effort toward explaining actual evils and identifying their various causes. What does the Christian faith say about these two contrary tendencies?

Demons, according to the Christian faith, are living, bodiless beings. They were originally angels who rejected God, so they fell from His presence and became enemies to Him and to anyone who follows Him.

Divine revelation does not disclose to us how and why the demons fell. The Bible merely hints at a great catastrophe at the dawn of creation, before the creation of the visible world and after the creation of the angels, about which we only know the consequences and results. Some angels placed themselves in a position of opposing God, so they fell and became enemies of all that is good and holy. "And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer. So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him" (Revelation 12:7-9).

In the Revelation of John it likewise says, "A great star fell from heaven, burning like a torch, and it fell on a third of the rivers and on the springs of water" (Revelation 8:10).

Therefore Christian tradition calls the leader of this rebellion "Lucifer," which means "light-bearer," meaning that he was an angel and fell because he transformed by his personal will from his natural state to an unnatural state. He placed himself against God and fell from good to evil.

Denying the existence, activity and influence of the devil is incompatible with the Gospel. The Lord Jesus' teaching is very clear in this matter. He called him "the ruler of this world" (John 14:30) and He confronted him personally during the temptation after His baptism and forty days of fasting (cf. Matthew 4: 1-11, Luke 4:1-13). He likewise spoke frankly of him in the parable of the sower, "The field is the world, the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom, but the tares are the sons of the wicked one. The enemy who sowed them is the devil, the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels" (Matthew 13:38-39).

We will limit ourselves to two citations from the Apostle Paul. "Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places" (Ephesians 6:11-12). "Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light" (2 Corinthians 11:14).

The word "Satan" in its Hebrew and Greek roots means a number of things, all of which relate to evil: the adversary, because he is the enemy of man; the recalcitrant, because he resists God and His will; the divider, because he is behind every schism and division; the swindler, because he defrauds man in order to cause him to fall into sin in countless ways. In the Gospel, Christ calls him "a liar and the father of lies" (John 8:44).

The question many people ask is, **"Why do we not see the devil or confront him personally?"** The Christian response is very simple: he doesn't need to reveal himself to humans. Instead, it is enough for him to beckon them or to suggest an idea to them so that they can easily respond to it. Here response in the sense of human weakness spiritually, not that they invite the devil into their homes personally. Nevertheless, we know from the experiences of great spiritual figures that they confronted him personally and that he opposed and fought them. This is because he could not defeat them with thoughts and suggestions.

(Continued from previous page) — All this does not mean that ordinary people do not experience the devil's presence and activity around them and in them. This is because any one of us is capable of observing himself spiritually, of noticing an invisible power that pushes him toward evil, either completely or partially. **Decide to give an amount of money to a person in need who deserves it, then notice how many thoughts come to you, pushing you to reduce the amount, from the moment that you make the decision until you carry it out!**

It remains a live question, **what is the attitude that we should take towards the devil?** The Eastern Christian spiritual tradition in particular advises on the one hand that we do not exaggerate his role and on the other hand that we do not take him and his activities lightly. Likewise, we should not use him as an excuse not to look for personal, individual and social causes that lead to evil and misery or for natural causes that lead to disasters, plagues and diseases.

Exaggerating the devil's role and avoiding personal responsibility for the evil that besets us contributes to the growth of the tendency to deny his existence and puts man in a position of being unable to resist him. Likewise, taking the devil and his influence lightly places us unconsciously under his influence and authority. In such a case, he guides us without our being aware.

Our spiritual tradition also advises us not to use him as an excuse to exculpate ourselves from our personal responsibility for the evil that is around us. We believe that man, after the fall of Adam and Eve, became subject to the evil that dominated him. However, we also believe that through Christ risen from the dead we are no longer under the direct authority of the evil one, so long as we do not renounce Christ and our baptism and willingly give ourselves over to the devil.

So the Christian must confront the evil that is within him and strive earnestly to be rid of it, replacing it with the good that is opposite to it. Our spiritual heritage says that it is not enough to uproot evil from the soul, but rather calls for replacing it with the corresponding virtue. Therefore a person's effort to purify and elevate his soul is based on taking care to acquire the virtues. The relationship is positive in this regard: to the extent that you are filled with love for God and the virtues, the evil within you is lessened.

Our world will remain a battleground between the victorious power of God and the powers of the demons until the last day. We face this struggle first of all within ourselves and on a personal level. The Lord taught us with the parable of the sower, where the wheat and the tares will be separated on the last day. The great spiritual figures attribute every evil in the world to themselves, believing that if they were purified in the necessary manner then things in this world would be better. A contemporary theologian has said, **"The problem is not that everyone isn't a Christian. It's that not all Christians are saints."** This is how believers deal with the evil one.

+ SYNAXARION +

On August 27 in the Holy Orthodox Church, we commemorate our righteous father Pimen the Great of Egypt. Pimen was born in Egypt and a great ascetic there in the fifth century. As a boy, he visited the most renowned spiritual men and, from them, gathered tangible knowledge as a bee gathers honey from flowers. Pimen once begged the elder Paul to take him to St. Paisius. Seeing Pimen, Paisius said to Paul: "This child will save many; the hand of God is with him." In time, Pimen was tonsured a monk and attracted two of his brothers to the monastic life as well. In their monastery, governed by Abba Anubis (Pimen's eldest brother), the monastics spent four hours of working with their hands, four hours of sleep and four hours of reading the Psalter. During the day, from morning until noon, they spent in alternating work and prayer; from noon until Vespers they spent reading and, in the afternoon, they prepared supper for themselves, the only meal of the day, and that usually consisted of some vegetables. Pimen said, "We ate that which was given to us. No one ever said: 'Give me something else or I do not want that.'" In this manner, we spent our entire life in silence and peace." Pimen died peacefully at an old age. By his intercessions, O Christ God, have mercy upon us. Amen.