



# SAINT ANTHONY MARONITE CHURCH

*A Parish Family of the Eparchy of St. Maron of Brooklyn, NY*

كنيسة مار أنطونيوس المارونية

Sunday, November 5, 2017

الأحد، 5 تشرين الثاني 2017

145 Amesbury St \* Lawrence, MA 01841

Phone: 978.685.7233 \* Fax: 978.688.4475

email: [rectory@stanthonylawrence.org](mailto:rectory@stanthonylawrence.org) \* Website: [www.stanthonylawrence.org](http://www.stanthonylawrence.org)

## OFFICE HOURS

M-TH: 9 AM - 4PM

Friday: Office is Closed

Saturdays: By Appointment

## LITURGIES

*Daily Liturgies:*

M & W: 9 AM

T & TH: 7 PM

*Weekend Liturgies:*

*Saturday*

Vigil Liturgy @ 4 PM

*Sunday Liturgies:*

8:30 AM - Arabic

9:30 AM - English

11:30 AM - English & Arabic

## HOLY DAYS OF OBLIGATION

Vigil Liturgy @ 7 PM

Feast Day @ 9 AM

## Sacraments of

### Baptism & Confirmation

1 month in advance with the Pastor

### Sacrament of Matrimony

Couples should make arrangements  
six months prior to the wedding date

### Sacrament of

### Reconciliation

One hour Before Thursday &

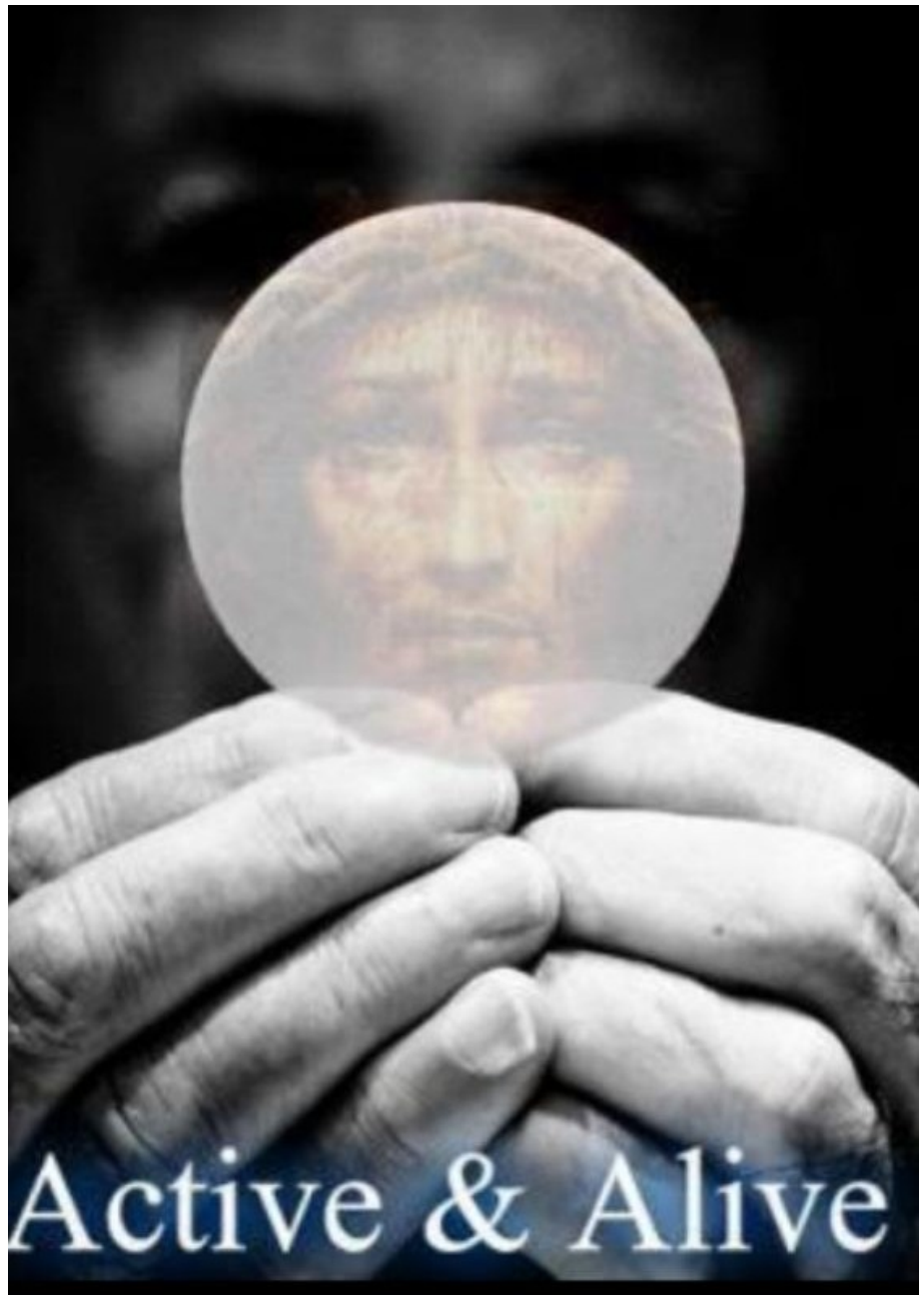
Saturday Liturgies,

or by appointment

### Anointing of the Sick

Please notify the Rectory if a  
member of your family is ill,  
hospitalized, or unable to come to  
Church and would like to receive  
communion at home

## OPENING OF LITURGICAL YEAR



Please refer to our website for more  
Sacrament Celebrations Guidelines

Facebook: Saint Anthony Maronite Church Lawrence, MA



### Meet our staff:

Clergy

*Father Elie Mikhael, Pastor*  
[pastor@stanthonylawrence.org](mailto:pastor@stanthonylawrence.org)

*Father Joseph Abisaad,*  
*Parochial Vicar*

Phone: 978-685-7233

Emergency Contact:  
 Fr. Elie Mikhael  
 305.807.9087

Fr. Joseph Abi Saad  
 978.457.5889

*Sub-Deacon James T. Demers*  
*Sub-Deacon Nadim B. Daou*

### Secretary:

*Mrs. Susan Fuccillo*  
 978.685-7233

[rectory@stanthonylawrence.org](mailto:rectory@stanthonylawrence.org)

### Parish Ministries

- ♦ Religious Education  
[ccd@stanthonylawrence.org](mailto:ccd@stanthonylawrence.org)
- ♦ Publishing: Bulletin  
[bulletin@stanthonylawrence.org](mailto:bulletin@stanthonylawrence.org)

♦ Choirs (English, Arabic & Syriac)

♦ Kids Choir

♦ Knights of the Altar

♦ Knights of Mary

♦ Maronite Youth : MYO

♦ Maronite Young Adults  
 (Coming Soon)

♦ Bereavement Ministry

♦ Cenacle of the Rosary  
 (Thursdays @ 6PM)

♦ Cenacle of Divine Mercy  
 (Sundays Before the Liturgies)

♦ Sacristan (s)

## OPENING OF THE NEW LITURGICAL YEAR

### Liturgies Intentions

## SUNDAY OF THE CONSECRATION OF THE CHURCH

افتتاح السنة الطقسية - أحد تقديس البيعة

Saturday, November 4	4:00 PM	For: +Peter, Emily, and William Dewan, By Robert and Dianne Dewan.
Sunday, November 5	8:30AM	For: + The souls of the Deceased Members of the Bou-Habib and Alphonse Families, By Elias and Guita Bou -Habib and Family.
	9:30AM	In Honor and Memory of all Veterans.
	11:30 AM	For: + Hanan Merheb, By Wissam Merheb and Family.

### Week of Consecration of Church أسبوع تقديس البيعة

Monday, November 6 @ 9 AM – <i>St Longinus</i>	For Helen Yameen by the Pastor
Tuesday, November 7 @ 7 PM	For: +Al Abraham Jr. & Stephanie Abraham, by their Family 7PM– Bible Study (English)
Wednesday, November 8 9AM-Liturgy	For: +Lee Marcinuck by the Pastor 7PM– Bible Study (Arabic)
Thursday, November 9 @ 7PM– Liturgy	In Honor of Mia Abou Ezzi by the Pas- tor
Friday, November 10	Office Closed

## SUNDAY OF THE RENEWAL OF THE CHURCH

أحد تجديد البيعة

Saturday, November 11	4:00 PM	For Good Health of Maryann Hatem by the Pastor
Sunday, November 12	8:30AM	Special Intentions
	9:30AM	For: + Ibrahim and Saide Kassas, By their son, George, Kassas, and Family.
	11:30 AM	For: + Maroun Mouawad, By his wife, Habouba, his children and their family.



We've launched our new website and we're excited to introduce you to our new look

[www.stanthonylawrence.org](http://www.stanthonylawrence.org)



# ONLINE GIVING

*Is now available in association with*

 myEoffering

[www.stanthonylawrence.org](http://www.stanthonylawrence.org)

## WHAT IS myEoffering?

myEoffering is a service we've teamed up with to give you the ability to send your offerings online in the same way that many of you already pay bills and purchase products. We chose to use myEoffering because they are part of a trusted, Christian family-owned company, who have been serving the needs of churches for nearly 100 years. Their product is solid, secure, easy, and convenient.

## WHY SHOULD I USE myEoffering?

Many of you already pay for most of your purchases electronically, whether online or with a credit or debit card. So we have decided to offer this service as a convenience to you - you can stop writing checks or having to remember to bring cash every Sunday. Simply log in to our service and set up your offering. You can set the donations to match your pay periods, and even send your one-time donations to the special offerings we may have from time-to-time. This new service allows you to give any amount, at any time, from home or on the road, with your computer or even your mobile device. Now you can control how and when you give your tithes.

## HOW DOES IT HELP?

Online giving is the future. In the lifetime of our young people, we will see electronic payments overshadow traditional methods of paper payments. In order to position ourselves to continue doing the work of God in the future and to make it as convenient as possible to be a cheerful giver to God's work, we have decided to offer online giving to you. In addition to easier access to giving and more engagement with young stewards, online offering has many benefits for the church. It allows us to more easily track contributions for budgeting. It saves us from manually tracking those contributions every week. It saves us from large fees on check processing and allows us to more accurately forecast expenditures and needs.

## HOW DO I SIGN UP?

Signing up is as simple as going to our church website listed above and look for the green computer mouse icon. That button will take you to the myEoffering page for our church. Simply sign up and begin giving online today! Or scan the code to the right with your mobile device to get started now.



SCAN THIS  
CODE WITH  
YOUR MOBILE  
DEVICE NOW



# PARISH MINISTRIES & NEWS

## Religious Education - Sunday School

Next Sunday November 12 grade 7 & 8 students will be serving at the 9:30 liturgy. We are looking forward to these young ladies and gentlemen greeting us and serving at our liturgy.

Our students are working hard in their classes. In addition to their regular studies they are also preparing for the upcoming Christmas Pageant. We encourage you, as a family, to practice singing Christmas Carols with your child in preparation of this upcoming event.

Stay tuned the CCD program is bringing back the very popular Christmas ornaments that we sold last year. This year we will be featuring new ornaments including St Rafka and also of our very own church!!! Sale will be starting soon.

Contact me with any questions or concerns at [ccd@stanthonylawrence.org](mailto:ccd@stanthonylawrence.org)  
Susan Veilleux, Director, CCD

## Daughters' Meeting

Monthly Meeting on  
**Monday, November 6th at 12:00 NOON**  
at Saint Anthony's Church Hall.

Please contact Elaine Ferris at 978-682-2112  
with any questions.

## Bible Study

everyone is welcome

**TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 7TH, 7 PM - ENGLISH**  
**WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 8TH, 7 PM - ARABIC**

مواعيد السهرات الأنجيلية:

باللغة الأنكليزية: الثلاثاء 7 تشرين الثاني الساعة 7 مساء.

باللغة العربية: الأربعاء 8 تشرين الثاني الساعة 7 مساء.

## MYO SCHEDULE 2017-2018

- ◆ November 12 - Faith Formation/  
Community Service
- ◆ December 1st - Faith Formation
- ◆ December 17th - MYO Christmas Party

Old and new members are encouraged to attend,  
Grades 9-12~Dates are Subject to change~

## The Family of Saint Charbel

**Thursday, November 16th**

- ◆ 6:30 PM - Rosary of Saint Charbel
- ◆ 7:00 PM - Divine Liturgy
- ◆ 7:30 PM - 8:30 PM - Sharing the Word of God

عائلة مار شربل: الخميس 16 تشرين الأول:

6:30 مساء: صلاة المسبحة

7:00 مساء: القداس الإلهي

7:30 مساء: مشاركة روحية

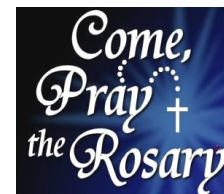


## KNIGHTS OF MARY SCHEDULE

All Events run from  
5PM - 7PM  
After 4PM Liturgy



2017 - 2018
November 11
December 2 Christmas Recital
December 17
January 6
January 20



Rosary Group  
Every Wednesday @ 6PM

## K of M Children's Choir



Practices will be held from  
5:00PM - 6:30PM

Our calendar:  
November 4th & November 18th



KNIGHTS  
OF COLUMBUS

Next Meeting:  
Tuesday, November 14th

STAY TUNED  
FOR OUR  
UPCOMING MEETING





# Christmas Liturgical & Social Celebrations

## CHRISTMAS WEEKEND LITURGIES

Saturday, December 23rd - 4 PM

Sunday, December 24th

- ♦ 11:30 AM, English & Arabic

Christmas Novena - تساعية الميلاد

- ♦ DECEMBER 15-23 Following the Divine Liturgy

Christmas Liturgies - قدايس عيد الميلاد المجيد

Sunday, December 24th

- ♦ 4 PM, Vigil Liturgy
- ♦ 12AM - MIDNIGHT

Monday, December 25th

- ♦ 11:30 AM, English & Arabic

New Year's Weekend - قدايس عيد راس السنة الجديدة

Saturday, December 30th - 4PM

Sunday, December 31st

- ♦ 8:30 AM, Arabic
- ♦ 9:30 AM, English
- ♦ 11:30 AM, English & Arabic

Monday, January 1, 2018 - 5 PM Liturgy.



### Men's Christmas Party!

Friday December 8, 2017

Tickets are now on sale. Contact  
Rodney Pica @ 603.489.8363 or  
Jason Azzi @ 413.364.3333  
To purchase your ticket



### Women's Christmas Party

Sunday, December 10th @ 4 PM

Tickets are on sale Contact:

Lori Corey @ 978-273-3594

Mounira Daher @ 603-235-0801

**Children's Christmas Party**  
After the  
9:30 AM Liturgy  
**Sunday, December 17th**



Stay Tuned for more details on  
the 2017 Giving Tree  
offering. A list of items  
will be forthcoming.

## CHRISTMAS CONCERT

Please join us for a free

featuring

SAINT ANTHONY CHOIRS

along with the

CHILDREN CHOIR

Saturday December 2, 2017

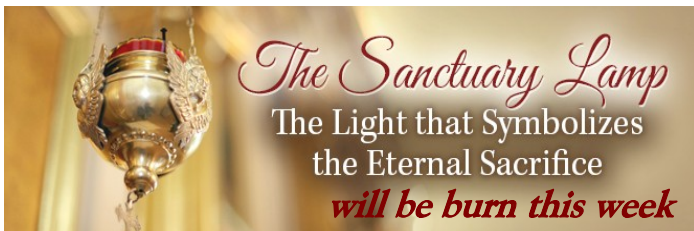
7pm the Sanctuary





October 29, 2017

Sunday Collection	\$ 2,620.00
Candles	\$ 81.00
Sunday Coffee Hour	\$ 2.00
<b>Total Deposit</b>	<b>\$ 2,703.00</b>



**Left Sanctuary Lamp**

*In Loving Memory of Peter Emily, and William Dewan,  
Offered by Robert and Dianne Dewan.*

**Right Sanctuary Lamp**

*In Loving Memory of Peter Emily, and William Dewan,  
Offered by Robert and Dianne Dewan.*

**Guidelines:**

**Baptismal Guidelines:** *(Check our Website)*

♦ **Guidelines & Registration Form**

**Marriage Guidelines:** *(Check our Website)*

♦ **Guidelines & Check List Forms**

**Banquet Hall Guidelines:**

- ♦ **Contract Form** *(Check our Website)*
- ♦ **Banquet Hall Usage Donations:**
- 1. **\$500** (For 6 Hours)
- 2. **\$250** For Registered & Active parishioners *(with contribution history)*
- 3. **Security Deposit \$250** *(Returned after the event, if no Damages)*
- 4. **Cleaning Donations: \$100**

**POPE PRAYER INTENTIONS ~ NOVEMBER 2017  
CHRISTIANS IN ASIA**



*That Christians in Asia, bearing witness to the Gospel in word and deed, may promote dialogue, peace, and mutual understanding, especially with those of other religions.*

# ALTAR SERVERS

<u>Date</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Altar Servers</u>
Saturday, November 4	4:00 PM	Jacob Godfrey Youssef Chahine
Sunday, November 5	8:30 AM	Volunteers
Sunday, November 5	9:30 AM	Antonio Hbaiter George Hbaiter
Sunday, November 5 11:30 AM		Elie Daou, George Chaya Samir Maroun, Steven Maroun

<u>Date</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Altar Servers</u>
Saturday, November 11	4:00 PM	Elias Saab Sharbel Saab
Sunday, November 12	8:30 AM	Volunteers
Sunday, November 12	9:30 AM	Anthony Hassan Logan Gabriel
Sunday, November 12 11:30 AM		Charbel Merheb, Jonathan Merheb Michael Merheb, Ryan El Khoury



## Lectors

<u>Date</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Lectors</u>
Saturday, November 4	4:00 PM	Dianne Dewan
Sunday, November 5	8:30 AM	Guita Bou-Habib
Sunday, November 5	9:30 AM	Jean Sarkis
Sunday, November 5 11:30 AM		English: George Saab Arabic: Gretta Merheb

<u>Date</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Lectors</u>
Saturday, November 11	4:00 PM	Lisa Abdallah
Sunday, November 12	8:30 AM	Hugette Sfeir
Sunday, November 12	9:30 AM	CCD Volunteers
Sunday, November 12 11:30 AM		English: Elias Azzi Arabic: Sleiman Ramy



Knights of  
Columbus



*Some photos from the Knights of Columbus Men's Retreat. Our gratitude to the 20 men who attended, as well as, our guest speakers: Father Patrick Armano, Father Lenny Faris, and Eric Alaimo.*



## News from Around the Way...



### Committee on International Justice and Peace

3211 FOURTH STREET NE • WASHINGTON DC 20017-1194 • 202-541-3160  
WEBSITE: WWW.USCCB.ORG/JPHD • FAX 202-541-3339

October 4, 2017

Your Eminence/Excellency,

In July, Cardinal Daniel DiNardo, President of our Conference, and I announced the designation of **Sunday, November 26, as A Day of Prayer for Persecuted Christians** that initiates "**Solidarity in Suffering**," a Week of Awareness and Education. The Solemnity of Christ the King is a fitting time to reflect on religious freedom and persecution.

USCCB is collaborating with the Knights of Columbus, Catholic Relief Services, CNEWA and Aid to the Church in Need on this project. I wanted simply to update you on resources that are now available to assist your parishes, schools and campus ministries in observing this Day of Prayer and Week of Awareness. These resources are available on the following webpage: [www.usccb.org/middle-east-Christians](http://www.usccb.org/middle-east-Christians)

- Homily Notes
- Intercessions
- Recommended Aid Agencies
- Prayer Card (in English and Spanish)
- Background on Catholic Churches in the Middle East
- Background on Christians of the Middle East
- Logos for Local Use (in English and Spanish)

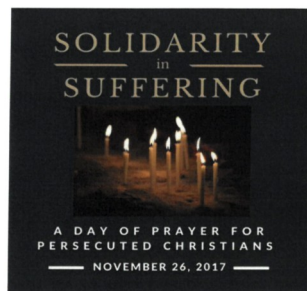
In addition, Catholic schools and parish religious education programs will also have access to educational materials produced in conjunction with "In RESPONSE to PERSECUTION: Findings of the Under Caesar's Sword Project on Global Christian Communities," produced by Notre Dame's Center for Ethics and Culture, the Religious Freedom Institute, and Aid to the Church in Need. These resources are also linked from the above page. For social media, we are using the hashtag: #SolidarityInSuffering.

As our Conference has said, "To focus attention on the plight of Christians and other minorities is not to ignore the suffering of others. Rather, by focusing on the most vulnerable members of society, we strengthen the entire fabric of society to protect the rights of all."

Fraternally yours in Christ,

*+ Oscar Cantu*

Most Reverend Oscar Cantu  
Bishop of Las Cruces  
Chairman, Committee on International Justice and Peace



#SolidarityInSuffering



Knights of Columbus are hosting a Catholic Citizenship Essay Contest for Grades 8-12. Knights of Mary 8th Graders and all MYO are

participating. This contest is also available to those who are not in these organizations. Please refer to the bulletin board in the foyer, there will be a poster and a packet for you to take. Submission are due on **November 26th**. For more information they can contact Christian Hbaiter at 978-857-4815.



**Formed | Your Faith Matters to Us!!**

<https://formed.org/watch/593ac0021ccf198c29ce3c21>

## Hebrews 9:1-12

## Sunday of the Consecration of Church

العبرانيين 12-1:9

Even the first covenant had regulations for worship and an earthly sanctuary. For a tent was constructed, the first one, in which were the lampstand, the table, and the bread of the Presence; this is called the Holy Place. Behind the second curtain was a tent called the Holy of Holies. In it stood the golden altar of incense and the ark of the covenant overlaid on all sides with gold, in which there were a golden urn holding the manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tablets of the covenant; above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy-seat. Of these things we cannot speak now in detail. Such preparations having been made, the priests go continually into the first tent to carry out their ritual duties; but only the high priest goes into the second, and he but once a year, and not without taking the blood that he offers for himself and for the sins committed unintentionally by the people. By this the Holy Spirit indicates that the way into the sanctuary has not yet been disclosed as long as the first tent is still standing. This is a symbol of the present time, during which gifts and sacrifices are offered that cannot perfect the conscience of the worshipper, but deal only with food and drink and various baptisms, regulations for the body imposed until the time comes to set things right. But when Christ came as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation), he entered once for all into the Holy Place, not with the blood of goats and calves, but with his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption.

كَانَتْ لِلْعَهْدِ الْأَوَّلِ أَيْضًا شَعَائِرُ عِبَادَةٍ، وَبُنِيَ قُدُسٌ أَرْضِيٌّ. فَبُنِيَ الْمَسْكَنُ الْأَوَّلُ، وَهُوَ الَّذِي يُدْعَى «الْقُدُس»، وَكَانَ فِيهِ الْمَنَارَةُ، وَالْمَائِدَةُ، وَخُبْزُ التَّقْدِيمَةِ، وَوَرَاءَ الْحِجَابِ الثَّانِي بُنِيَ الْمَسْكَنُ الَّذِي يُدْعَى «قُدُسَ الْأَقْدَاسِ»، وَيَحْتَوِي مِجْمَرَةً ذَهَبِيَّةً لِلْبَخُورِ، وَتَابُوتَ الْعَهْدِ، مَعْشَى كُلِّهِ بِالذَّهَبِ، وَفِيهِ جَرَّةٌ مِنْ ذَهَبٍ تَحْتَوِي الْمَنَ، وَعَصَا هَارُونَ الَّتِي أَفْرَخَتْ، وَلَوْحَا الْعَهْدِ، وَفَوْقَ التَّابُوتِ كُرُوبَا الْمَجْدِ يُظَلِّلَانِ الْعِشَاءَ: أَشْيَاءٌ لَا مَجَالَ الْآنَ لِلْكَلامِ عَنْهَا بِالتَّفْصِيلِ. وَإِذْ بُنِيََتْ تِلْكَ الْأَشْيَاءُ عَلَى هَذَا التَّرْتِيبِ، كَانَ الْكَهَنَةُ يَدْخُلُونَ إِلَى الْمَسْكَنِ الْأَوَّلِ فِي كُلِّ وَقْتٍ، لِيَتِمُّوا الْعِبَادَةَ، أَمَّا الْمَسْكَنُ الثَّانِي فَكَانَ عَظِيمُ الْأَحْبَارِ يَدْخُلُ إِلَيْهِ وَاحِدَةً مَرَّةً وَاحِدَةً فِي السَّنَةِ، وَلَا يَدْخُلُ إِلَيْهِ إِلَّا وَمَعَهُ دَمٌ يُقَرِّبُهُ عَنْ نَفْسِهِ وَعَنْ جَهَالَاتِ الشَّعْبِ. وَبِهَذَا يُوضِحُ الرُّوحُ الْقُدُسُ أَنَّ الطَّرِيقَ إِلَى قُدُسِ الْأَقْدَاسِ لَمْ يَكُنْ بَعْدَ قَدْ كُشِفَ، مَا دَامَ الْمَسْكَنُ الْأَوَّلُ قَائِمًا. وَهَذَا رَمَزٌ إِلَى الْوَقْتِ الْحَاضِرِ، وَفِيهِ نُقَرَّبُ تَقَادِيمَ وَذَبَائِحَ، لَا يُمَكِّنُهَا أَنْ تَجْعَلَ مَنْ يُقَرِّبُهَا كَامِلًا مِنْ جِهَةِ الضَّمِيرِ. إِنَّهَا شَعَائِرُ جَسَدِيَّةٍ تَقْتَصِرُ عَلَى أَطْعَمَةٍ وَأَشْرَبَةٍ، وَأَنْوَاعِ شَتَّى مِنَ الْأَغْتِسَالِ، مَقْرُوضَةٍ إِلَى أَنْ يَأْتِيَ وَقْتُ الْإِصْلَاحِ. أَمَّا الْمَسِيحُ فَقَدْ ظَهَرَ عَظِيمَ أَحْبَارِ الْخَيْرَاتِ الْآتِيَةِ، وَاجْتَازَ الْمَسْكَنَ الْأَعْظَمَ وَالْأَكْمَلَ، غَيْرَ الْمَصْنُوعِ بِالْأَيْدِي، أَيْ لَيْسَ مِنْ هَذِهِ الْخَلِيقَةِ، فَدَخَلَ إِلَى قُدُسِ الْأَقْدَاسِ مَرَّةً وَاحِدَةً، لَا بِدَمِ الثِّيُوسِ وَالْعُجُولِ، بَلْ بِدَمِهِ هُوَ، فَحَقَّقَ لَنَا فِدَاءً أَبَدِيًّا.

## Matthew 16:13-20

## أحد تقديس البيعة

متى 20-13:16

When Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, 'Who do people say that the Son of Man is?' And they said, 'Some say John the Baptist, but others Elijah, and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.' He said to them, 'But who do you say that I am?' Simon Peter answered, 'You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.' And Jesus answered him, 'Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.' Then he sternly ordered the disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah.

جَاءَ يَسُوعُ إِلَى نَوَاحِي قَيْصَرِيَّةِ فِيلِيبُّسَ فَسَأَلَ تَلَامِيذَهُ قَائِلًا: «مَنْ يَقُولُ النَّاسُ إِنِّي أَنَا ابْنُ الْإِنْسَانِ؟». فَقَالُوا: «بَعْضُهُمْ يَقُولُونَ: يُوحَنَّا الْمَعْمَدَانُ؛ وَآخَرُونَ: إِيلِيَّا؛ وَغَيْرُهُمْ: إِرْمِيَا أَوْ أَحَدَ الْأَنْبِيَاءِ». «قَالَ لَهُمْ: «وَأَنْتُمْ مَنْ تَقُولُونَ إِنِّي أَنَا؟». فَأَجَابَ سِمْعَانُ بُطْرُسُ وَقَالَ: أَنْتَ هُوَ الْمَسِيحُ ابْنُ اللَّهِ الْحَيِّ!». «فَأَجَابَ يَسُوعُ وَقَالَ لَهُ: «طُوبَى لَكَ يَا سِمْعَانُ بْنُ يُونَا! لِأَنَّهُ لَا لَحْمَ وَلَا دَمَ أَظْهَرَ لَكَ ذَلِكَ، بَلْ أَبِي الَّذِي فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ. وَأَنَا أَيْضًا أَقُولُ لَكَ: أَنْتَ هُوَ بُطْرُسُ، أَيِ الصَّخْرَةِ، وَعَلَى هَذِهِ الصَّخْرَةِ سَأَبْنِي بَيْعَتِي، وَأَبْوَابُ الْجَحِيمِ لَنْ تَقْوَى عَلَيْهَا. سَأَعْطِيكَ مَفَاتِيحَ مَلَكُوتِ السَّمَاوَاتِ، فَكُلُّ مَا تَرَبِّطُهُ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ يَكُونُ مَرْبُوطًا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ، وَمَا تَحُلُّهُ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ يَكُونُ مَحْلُولًا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ». «حِينَئِذٍ أَوْصَى تَلَامِيذَهُ أَلَّا يَقُولُوا لِأَحَدٍ إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْمَسِيحُ.



**STAYING IN THE CHURCH** *By Ronald Rolheiser*

A recent issue of *Sojourners* magazine (July, 1994), featured articles by two prominent American Roman Catholics, Rosemary Radford Ruether, a leading feminist, and Richard Rohr, the articulate young Franciscan founder of the Center for Action and Contemplation. Both had been asked to respond to this question: Why do you stay in the Church?

That, given the tensions within Catholicism today, is a good question.

Many people, especially people who have been as critical of some of the things happening inside of the Church as have Ruether and Rohr, have left the church, saying that they can no longer believe in, nor stay in, in an institution that has these flaws. Those participating in this exodus cite a bevy of reasons: the church's failure to practice justice within its own house, the church's failure to afford women full equality in structure, recent sexual scandals among the clergy, a history that has always contained elements of injustice, racism, and hypocrisy. "Why stay?" they ask, "surely this institution is not what Christ intended to mediate grace!"

But Ruether and Rohr are not two persons who think this way. Both make a strong and a clear option to stay with the church, despite its faults – and the reasons each gives for staying, to my mind, offer a valuable corrective for a generation of Catholics that can too easily lose its balance.

Ruether begins her response by giving a devastating critique of the church. By the time she is finished listing all that is wrong with Roman Catholicism as an institution, you are left wondering as to what's still left standing. In the face of all of that, she asks: "Why stay?"

So why does she stay? Because she still sees grace present in all of this and she says that the proper response to all that's wrong in the church is not to leave it, but to grow up. "I suspect that part of our dismay at recognizing the fallibility of the church is our reluctance to grow up, and the way in which certain kinds of ecclesial 'spirituality' operate as spiritual infantilization, rather than maturity in faith. We are shocked at clerical and corporate ecclesiastical evils a little the way children are shocked and demoralized to discover that their parents are fallible. We can depart in sorrow looking for another impeccable father (or mother), perhaps in an all-wise guru or a preacher of an inerrant Bible. Or we can grow up and become responsible for the Church of Christ. ... We can look steadily and without denial at the records of our corporate apostasy, not as the defeat of the gospel, but as the revelation of God's amazing power to deliver us from even the most monumental efforts to defeat God's grace."

Rohr takes a slightly different track, but is equally insightful. He, too, begins by admitting the church's faults. He quotes Romano Guardini in his contention that "the church has always been the cross that Christ is crucified on." He states that it is easy enough to create a good rationale for leaving the church and adds: "In fact, with the information I have acquired, I might even hurry you out the door."

But Rohr stays with the church, and he urges others to do so. Why? Because for him it is, in the end, the only institution that ultimately offers hope – and it does this despite its flaws: Those of us who are of sincere will are, he asserts, "trying to preach good news to many disparate groups in our world: youth who want both inspiration and structure, feminists who must know that they have an essential truth, patriarchs who need to be challenged but not dismissed, the simple who need reassurance, the broken who don't need more words but a healing touch, the seekers who need both depth and patience, the alienated who both need and fear 'home', gays and lesbians who need acceptance before agenda, males who need soul work, parents who need skills, the oppressed who need justice and solidarity, believers who need to believe again."

And, again Rohr's words, "where else but in the great mystery of church, the living Body of Christ, can all of these find a common hope?" The church has its faults but, outside of it, what have we got in a world that isn't working? Private choices? Ideology? Pluralism without purpose? Individuation without community? In the end, we are before the church like Peter was before Christ: "Where else can we go?"

But, valuable as these perspectives are, in the end, it is two words that provide for both Ruether and Rohr the sufficient reason for staying in the church – grace and forgiveness.

