



# SAINT ANTHONY MARONITE CHURCH

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

## كنيسة مار أنطونيوس المارونية

Sunday, October 8, 2017

الأحد، 8 تشرين الأول 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*

*Please refer to our website for more Sacrament Celebrations Guidelines*

FOR GOD DID NOT APPOINT  
US TO WRATH, BUT TO  
OBTAIN SALVATION THROUGH  
OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST,  
WHO DIED FOR US, THAT  
WHETHER WE WAKE OR  
SLEEP, WE SHOULD LIVE  
TOGETHER WITH HIM.

1 Thessalonians 5:9-10 (NKJV)

**Facebook: Saint Anthony Maronite Church Lawrence, MA**



# Liturgies Intentions



## 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)

## 4th Sunday After Holy Cross - زمن الصليب المقدس - الأحد الرابع

Saturday, October 7	4:00 PM	<i>Special Intentions.</i>
Sunday, October 8	8:30AM	<i>Special Intentions.</i>
	9:30AM	<i>40 Day Anniversary for the soul of Anastasia Navaretta, By Leslie Hassan, and her family.</i>
	11:30 AM	<i>For:+ Romanos Nammour, By his wife, Marie, their children and their families.</i>  <i>For:+ Romel, Abdo, and Yousfieh Charabati, By the family.</i>

## 4th Week of Holy Cross - الأسبوع الرابع من زمن الصليب

Monday, October 9 @ 9 AM - <i>St James, Ap</i>	<i>For Good Health of Saadallah Azzi By the Pastor</i>
Tuesday, October 10 @ 7 PM	<i>Special Intentions.</i>
Wednesday, October 11 @ 9AM- <i>Pope St John XXIII</i>	<i>Romanos Nammour by the Pastor</i>
Thursday, October 12 @ 7 PM - <i>St Edno</i>	<i>For the well-being of Elaine Ahearn, By Raymond and Jennie Mansour.</i>
Friday, October 13	NO LITURGY, OFFICE CLOSED

## 5th Sunday After Holy Cross - زمن الصليب المقدس - الأحد الخامس

Saturday, October 14	4:00 PM	<i>Special Intentions.</i>
Sunday, October 15	8:30AM	<i>Deceased Family of Abdel -Hay by the Family</i>
	9:30AM	<i>Special Intentions.</i>
	11:30 AM	<i>First Anniversary for:+ Zakia Geha, and her husband, Elias Geha, By her children, Ibrahim Geha, Leila Ata, and families.</i>



October 1, 2017

Sunday Collection	\$ 2,214.00
Candles	\$ 158.00
Fuel	\$ 766.00
<b>Total Deposit</b>	<b>\$ 3,138.00</b>



**Left Sanctuary Lamp**

This week's Sanctuary Lamp will burn  
*For the soul of Romanos Nammour,*  
*Offered by Tony and Hitaf Nammour.*

**Right Sanctuary Lamp**

This week's Sanctuary Lamp will burn  
*For the soul of Romanos Nammour,*  
*Offered by Tony and Hitaf Nammour.*

**Guidelines:**

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

- ◆ Guidelines & Registration Form
- ◆ Church Donations: \$100
- ◆ Priest Donation: Free Will

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

- ◆ Guidelines & Check List Forms
- ◆ Church Donations: \$250
- ◆ Priest Donation: Free Will

**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

# ALTAR SERVERS

<u>Date</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Altar Servers</u>
Saturday, October 7	4:00 PM	Youssef Chahine Jacob Godfrey
Sunday, October 8	8:30 AM	Volunteers
Sunday, October 8	9:30 AM	Max Sheehan Noah Hassan
Sunday, October 8 11:30 AM		Anthony Chaya, Christopher Bou Saada Jonathan Merheb, Michael Merheb

<u>Date</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Altar Servers</u>
Saturday, October 14	4:00 PM	Youssef Chahine Fadi Chahine
Sunday, October 15	8:30 AM	Volunteers
Sunday, October 15	9:30 AM	Mark Bejjani Michael Bejjani
Sunday, October 15 11:30 AM		Anthony Chamoun, Giorgio Abounasr Joseph Chahine, Rudy Bouraphael



## Lectors

<u>Date</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Lectors</u>
Saturday, October 7	4:00 PM	Christine Ryan
Sunday, October 8	8:30 AM	Volunteer
Sunday, October 8	9:30 AM	Elaine Ferris
Sunday, October 8 11:30 AM		English: Elias Azzi Arabic: Sleiman Ramy

<u>Date</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Lectors</u>
Saturday, October 14	4:00 PM	Joel Habib
Sunday, October 15	8:30 AM	Volunteer
Sunday, October 15	9:30 AM	Sub-Deacon Jim Demers
Sunday, October 15 11:30 AM		English: Marie Charabati Arabic: Claudine Raad

# PARISH MINISTRIES & NEWS

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION - SUNDAY SCHOOL

This past Sunday, October 1, was the deadline on Sunday School registration. Our classes are bursting at the seams and I am so excited to see so many of our youth learning about their church and our faith. Thank you to all of the families that have registered this year.

**There is NO Sunday school Sunday October 8.**

Sunday, October 15th, there will be a general meeting for all parents, The meeting will take place in the church, at 10:45. This is an opportunity to ask questions regarding the Sunday School program. I will also have information regarding the Christmas Pageant and rehearsals. The Pageant will be held on December 17 during the 9:30 liturgy.

Students in grade 4 & 5 will be serving the 9:30 liturgy on Sunday, October 22. More information will be given to the students when we return to Sunday School on Sunday, October 15.

If you have any questions please feel free to contact me at [ccd@stanthonylawrence.org](mailto:ccd@stanthonylawrence.org)  
Susan Veilleux, Director, ccd

Rosary Group  
Wednesday  
October 10th  
@ 6PM



## Bible Study

everyone is welcome

**TUESDAY, OCTOBER 10TH, 7 PM - ENGLISH**  
**WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 11TH, 7 PM - ARABIC**

**مواعيد السهرات الأنجيلية:**

باللغة الأنكليزية: يوم الثلاثاء 10 تشرين الأول الساعة 7:00 مساء.  
باللغة العربية: يوم الأربعاء 11 تشرين الأول الساعة 7:00 مساء.

## K of M Children's Choir



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

**Our calendar:**

October 21st, November 11th & November 18th

## MYO SCHEDULE 2017-2018

- ◆ October 27th - Faith Formation
- ◆ November 12 - Faith Formation/  
Community Service
- ◆ December 1st - Faith Formation
- ◆ December 17th - MYO Christmas Party

Looking forward to Seeing you there!  
Old and new members are encouraged to attend,  
ages 14-18

~Dates are Subject to change~

## KNIGHTS OF MARY SCHEDULE



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

\*Dates are Subject to change\*

2017
October 14
October 21
October 28
November 4
November 11
November 18
December 2
Christmas Recital
December 17
January 6
January 13
January 20

## The Family of Saint Charbel

Thursday, October 19th

- ◆ 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 19 تشرين الأول:**

6:30 مساء: صلاة المسبحة

7:00 مساء: ألقداص الأهي

7:30 مساء: مشاركة روحية

## LOCAL VIRTUS SESSIONS

To all Volunteers, Helpers and Workers at St Anthony Parish, it is a MUST to comply with the Ethics Code, Rules and Regulations of Our Maronite Eparchy.

10/12/2017 6:30 PM Saint Michael (North Andover)

10/12/2017 6:30 PM Saint Lucy (Methuen)

10/19/2017 6:30 PM Saint Michael (North Andover)

**certificate must be presented to the Office  
no Later than October 14.**



KNIGHTS  
OF COLUMBUS

Next Meeting:  
Tuesday, October 10th



## Patriarch Rahi's Visit to Boston

زيارة غبطة أبينا البطريرك بشارة الراعي الى رعية سيده الأرز في مدينة بوسطن - الجمعة 27 تشرين الأول

**Friday October 27**

**5:00 p.m.:** Divine Liturgy at Our Lady of the Cedars Parish. All are welcome.

**7:30 p.m.:** Dinner at the Sheraton Four Points Hotel in Norwood, Mass. For tickets contact the Parish at 617- 522 - 0225.

### PARISH COUNCIL

Our Thanks and gratitude are expressed to the members of the Parish council, who were assets to our church in the past years.

We take this opportunity to welcome the newly appointed members of the Parish Council:

*Alice Sader*

*Carla Khoder*

*Danny Azzi*

*Fred Corey*

*Tony Ata*

*Bassima Abou Jaoude*

*Elaine Daher*

*Daoud Ramey*

*Robert Owaida*

*Tony Nammour*

May the Holy Spirit enlighten and guide you to enrich our parish with all His Gifts and for the up building of our blessed community.

### POPE PRAYER INTENTIONS OCTOBER 2017

#### Workers and Unemployed:

That all workers may receive respect and protection of their rights, and that the unemployed may receive the opportunity to contribute to the common good.

شرح إنجيل القديس متى 24: 45- 51

البطريرك بشارة الراعي

1. تُعتبر ساعة الموت، التي يجهلها كل إنسان، في وقتها وكيفيةها، موعد انتظار لمجيء الرب. لا بمعنى أن الله يخطف حياة الإنسان، بل ان الله يأتي لينقل إليه روح هذا الإنسان عند موته. ولذا نصلي في الليتورجيا المارونية: "أرسل يا رب ملائكتك ليحملوا إليك روح أختنا وأختنا".

هكذا نفهم من التشبيه الذي استعمله الرب يسوع فيقول بالنسبة "للكويل الأمين الحكيم": "طوبى له عندما يجيء سيده فيجده فاعلاً هكذا". وعن الكويل الخائن ثقة سيده: "يجيء سيده في يوم لا ينتظره، وفي ساعة لا يعرفها، ويجعل نصيبه مع الأشرار" (الآيات 46، 50، 51).

2. انتظار مجيء الرب هو التزام بواجب الوكالة المتنوع الذي يشمل: أ- حماية حياتنا وحياة غيرنا من الانغماس في الخطيئة والشر، وتجميلها بالقيم الروحية والأخلاقية والإنسانية والاجتماعية. ففي موعد مجيء الرب نرد له أمانة الحياة مجملّة، كي تستحق مشاركتة في الحياة الإلهية الأبدية.

ب- ويشمل واجبات الحياة الزوجية، وهي التزام كل من الزوج والزوجة في إسعاد الواحد الآخر، وتأمين خيره الشخصي، وفي الاحترام المتبادل، وحفظ كرامة الآخر وحقوقه وقدسيتة حياته.

ج- ويشمل واجبات الوالدين تجاه أولادهم، بإعطائهم الحياة هبة من الله، كما يريداه؛ وجعلهم يدركون أنهم أبناء الله وبناته. ولذا، من واجبه تربيتهم على الإيمان والصلاة، والسهر على ممارستهم الدينية في يوم الرب، والمشاركة في الأسرار المقدسة ولا سيما القربان والتوبة. ومن واجب الوالدين أن يكونوا المثال في كل ذلك لأولادهم.

د- ويشمل واجب الوكالة المسؤولين عن الشأن العام، السياسيين والإداريين والقضائيين والعسكريين. فعلى عاقبتهم يقع واجب تأمين خير المواطنين العام، والمحافظة على الدولة ومؤسساتها بتفعيلها وحمايتها من الفساد، وحماية المال العام من الهدر والسرقة والرشوة والتهرب من دفع الضرائب. إنه واجب التشريع واتخاذ القرارات الإجرائية، والقيام بالوظيفة الإدارية بتجرد وتفان وإخلاص، والذود عن الوطن، والشعب والسيادة بتضحيات العسكريين وسهرهم وتقانيهم.

3. إن كل هؤلاء الذين يقع عليهم هذا الواجب المتنوع، يسمي الرب يسوع كل واحد وواحدة منهم "وكيلاً"، شرط أن يكون "أميناً وحكيماً".

الأمانة هي لله وللذين نلتزم بخدمتهم، وللواجب الذي قبلناه وارتضينا به. والحكمة هي التصرف الذي يجعل الكويل مدرّكاً دائماً أنه موكل. وليس هو السيد المطلق الذي يقرر على هواه ووفق رغباته. فينظر في ممارسة واجباته من منظار الله، وفقاً لروحانية الطوباوي الأخ اسطفان وشعاره "الله يراني". الكويل الحكيم هو من يستلم قراراته وواجباته من الله، ويقول في نفسه: "لو كان الله مكاني، فكيف يتصرف ويعمل ويقرر؟".



SAINT GEORGE MARONITE CATHOLIC CHURCH  
DOVER, NH

Hosts its 13<sup>th</sup> Annual

# Hafli

**SATURDAY, OCTOBER 21, 2017**

**STARTING AT 8 P.M.**

**AT SAINT ANTHONY MARONITE CHURCH**

**145 AMESBURY STREET, LAWRENCE, MA 01841**

\$40 Adults

\$20 Children under 12

Andre Keedy & Ensemble

DJ Rikon

Mezza, Full Dinner, Desserts, Coffee

Cash Bar

For Reservation Contact:

Mrs. Chyrl Butler 603-767-1416

Mr. Elie Merheb (Tobacco Empire) 603-894-4142

Mr. Wissam Merheb 978-853-5145

Mrs. Mounira Daher 603-235-0801



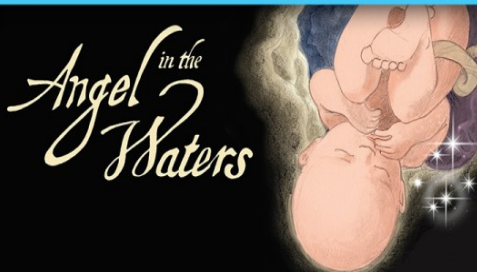
KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS

## Catholic Citizenship Essay Contest

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 **October 29th**. For more information they can contact Christian Hbaiter at 978-857-4815.

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

FORMED PICK OF THE WEEK



**Parish Code: N3CCNK**

<https://formed.org/>

[watch/593ac0021ccf198c29ce3c21](https://formed.org/watch/593ac0021ccf198c29ce3c21)



SAINT GEORGE MARONITE CATHOLIC CHURCH

DOVER, NEW HAMPSHIRE

### 2017 Ad Book Price List

Page Size 5½ x 8½

Outside Back Cover	\$ 1,200
Inside Front Cover	\$ 1,000
Inside Back Cover	\$ 1,000
Full Page	\$ 500
Half Page	\$ 250
Quarter Page	\$ 100
Eighth Page	\$ 50

Ad Size: \_\_\_\_\_ / Check # \_\_\_\_\_ / Amount \$ \_\_\_\_\_

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Web Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Do the Sponsor authorize Saint George Maronite Catholic Church to "cut and paste" information from their website to place in the ad?

Yes  No

Please return this form with your contribution by **October 10, 2017** to:

Saint George Maronite Church  
PO Box 2210  
Dover, NH 03821

**Thank you in advance for your patronage!**

St. Anthony Council #16204 presents

# Men's Retreat

## FELLOWSHIP & PRAYER

RETREAT FEE: \$15

EMAIL [KofC16204@gmail.com](mailto:KofC16204@gmail.com) TO REGISTER

St. Anthony's Maronite Catholic Church

145 AMESBURY STREET LAWRENCE MA 01841

OCTOBER *14th* 2017  
8:30AM-5:00PM

Registration Closes September 30th



IN DEFENSE  
OF CHRISTIANS

**IDC SUMMIT 2017:  
AMERICAN LEADERSHIP  
AND SECURING THE**

**FUTURE OF CHRISTIANS  
IN THE MIDDLE EAST**

**October 24-26 Washington, D.C.**

*Take Action along with hundreds of advocates from across the country to protect and preserve Christians and other religious minorities in the Middle East.*

### SUMMIT LOCATION

JW Marriott - 1331 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW -  
Washington, DC 20004-1796  
Credentials Pick Up Begins  
Tuesday, October 24, 2017 at 1:00 pm

### HIGHLIGHTS

- ◆ Press Conference at the National Press Club
- ◆ Ecumenical Prayer Service: Bridging East and West
- ◆ Policy and Awareness Symposium— Experts and Leaders from Around the World
- ◆ Grassroots Mobilization
- ◆ Meet with dozens of Members of Congress and Administration officials

*\*Free student registration.*

**FOURTH ANNUAL  
October 25, 2017**

*IDC Solidarity Dinner for Christians in the Middle East*

For more information, to donate or register, please visit:  
[https://indefenseofchristians.org/idc-2017-summit/  
#general\\_info](https://indefenseofchristians.org/idc-2017-summit/#general_info)

Questions? Email Ziad Saab at [ziad2020@yahoo.com](mailto:ziad2020@yahoo.com)

Thessalonians 5,1-11

4th Sunday of the Holy Cross

تساونيقى 11-1:5

Concerning the times and the seasons, brothers and sisters, you do not need to have anything written to you. For you yourselves know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. When they say, 'There is peace and security', then sudden destruction will come upon them, as labour pains come upon a pregnant woman, and there will be no escape! But you, beloved, are not in darkness, for that day to surprise you like a thief; for you are all children of light and children of the day; we are not of the night or of darkness. So then, let us not fall asleep as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober; for those who sleep sleep at night, and those who are drunk get drunk at night. But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, and put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. For God has destined us not for wrath but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep we may live with him. Therefore encourage one another and build up each other, as indeed you are doing.

أَمَّا الْأَزْمِنَةُ وَالْأَوْقَاتُ، أَيُّهَا الْإِخْوَةَ، فَلَا حَاجَةَ بِكُمْ أَنْ يُكْتَبَ إِلَيْكُمْ فِي شَأْنِهَا؛ لِأَنَّكُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ جَيِّدًا أَنَّ يَوْمَ الرَّبِّ يَأْتِي كَالسَّارِقِ لَيْلًا. فَحِينَ يَقُولُونَ: سَلَامٌ وَأَمْنٌ! حِينَئِذٍ يَدْهَمُهُمُ الْهَلَاكُ دَهْمَ الْمَخَاضِ لِلْحَبْلِ، وَلَا يُفْلِتُونَ. أَمَّا أَنْتُمْ، أَيُّهَا الْإِخْوَةَ، فَلَسْتُمْ فِي ظِلْمَةٍ لِيُفَاجِئَكُمْ ذَلِكَ الْيَوْمَ كَالسَّارِقِ. فَأَنْتُمْ كُلُّكُمْ أَبْنَاءُ النُّورِ، وَأَبْنَاءُ النَّهَارِ؛ وَلَسْنَا أَبْنَاءَ اللَّيْلِ وَلَا أَبْنَاءَ الظُّلْمَةِ. إِذَا فَلَا تَنْمُ كَسَائِرِ النَّاسِ، بَلْ لِنَسْهَرُ وَنَصْحُ؛ لِأَنَّ الَّذِينَ يَنَامُونَ فِي اللَّيْلِ يَنَامُونَ، وَالَّذِينَ يَسْكُرُونَ فِي اللَّيْلِ يَسْكُرُونَ. أَمَّا نَحْنُ أَبْنَاءُ النَّهَارِ، فَلِنَصْحُ لِابْسِينِ دَرَعِ الْإِيمَانِ وَالْمَحَبَّةِ، وَوَأَضْعِينِ خُوْدَةَ رَجَاءِ الْخَلَّاصِ. فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَمْ يَجْعَلْنَا لِلْغَضَبِ، بَلْ لِإِحْرَازِ الْخَلَّاصِ بِرَبَّنَا يَسُوعَ الْمَسِيحِ، الَّذِي مَاتَ مِنْ أَجْلِنَا، لِنَحْيَا مَعَهُ سَاهِرِينَ كُنَّا أَمْ نَائِمِينَ. فَلِذَلِكَ شَجَّعُوا بَعْضُكُمْ بَعْضًا، وَلَيِّبِنِ الْوَاحِدَ الْآخَرَ، كَمَا أَنْتُمْ فَاعِلُونَ.

Matthew 24,45-51

الأحد الرابع من زمن الصليب المقدس

متى 51-45:24

'Who then is the faithful and wise slave, whom his master has put in charge of his household, to give the other slaves their allowance of food at the proper time? Blessed is that slave whom his master will find at work when he arrives. Truly I tell you, he will put that one in charge of all his possessions. But if that wicked slave says to himself, "My master is delayed", and he begins to beat his fellow-slaves, and eats and drinks with drunkards, the master of that slave will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour that he does not know. He will cut him in pieces and put him with the hypocrites, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

«مَنْ هُوَ الْعَبْدُ الْأَمِينُ الْحَكِيمُ الَّذِي أَقَامَهُ سَيِّدُهُ عَلَى أَهْلِ بَيْتِهِ، لِيُعْطِيَهُمُ الطَّعَامَ فِي حِينِهِ؟ طُوبَى لِذَلِكَ الْعَبْدِ الَّذِي يَجِيءُ سَيِّدُهُ فَيَجِدُهُ فَاعِلًا هَكَذَا! الْحَقُّ أَقُولُ لَكُمْ: إِنَّهُ يُقِيمُهُ عَلَى جَمِيعِ مُمْتَلَكَاتِهِ. وَلَكِنْ إِنْ قَالَ ذَلِكَ الْعَبْدُ السَّرِيرُ فِي قَلْبِهِ: سَيَتَأَخَّرُ سَيِّدِي! وَبَدَأَ يَضْرِبُ رِفَاقَهُ، وَيَأْكُلُ وَيَشْرَبُ مَعَ السَّكَّارِينَ، يَجِيءُ سَيِّدُ ذَلِكَ الْعَبْدِ فِي يَوْمٍ لَا يَنْتَظِرُهُ، وَفِي سَاعَةٍ لَا يَعْرِفُهَا، فَيَقْصِلُهُ، وَيَجْعَلُ نَصِيبَهُ مَعَ الْمُرَائِينَ. هُنَاكَ يَكُونُ الْبُكَاءُ وَصْرِيْفُ الْأَسْنَانِ.

"In dangers, in doubts, in difficulties, think of Mary, call upon Mary. Let not her name depart from your lips, never suffer it to leave your heart. And that you may obtain the assistance of her prayer, neglect not to walk in her footsteps. With her for guide, you shall never go astray; while invoking her, you shall never lose heart; so long as she is in your mind, you are safe from deception; while she holds your hand, you cannot fall; under her protection you have nothing to fear; if she walks before you, you shall not grow weary; if she shows you favor, you shall reach the goal." --Saint Bernard of Clairvaux, Father and Doctor of the Church





## HEALTHY AND UNHEALTHY FEAR OF GOD

As a theologian, priest, and preacher, I often get asked: “Why isn’t the church preaching more fear of God anymore? Why aren’t we preaching more about the dangers of going to hell? Why aren’t we preaching more about God’s anger and hellfire?”

It’s not hard to answer that. We aren’t preaching a lot about fear because to do so, unless we are extremely careful in our message, is simply wrong. Admittedly fear can cause people to change their behavior, but so can intimidation and brainwashing. Just because something is effective doesn’t mean it is right. Fear of God may only be preached within a context of love.

Scripture itself seemingly gives us a mixed message: On the one hand, it tells us that “fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom”, even as it tells us that virtually every time God appears in human history, the first words from God are always: “Don’t be afraid!” That phrase, coming from the mouth of God or from the mouth of God’s messenger, appears more than 300 times in scripture. The first words we will hear every time God appears in our lives are: “Don’t be afraid!” So we must be careful when we preach fear of God. Fear of punishment is not the real message we hear when God enters our lives.

Then how is fear of God the beginning of wisdom? In our relationship with God, just as in our relationships with each other, there are both healthy and unhealthy fears. What’s a healthy fear?

Healthy fear is love’s fear: When we love someone our love will contain a number of healthy fears, a number of areas within which we will be healthily cautious and reticent: We will fear being disrespectful, fear despoiling the gift, fear being selfish, fear being irreverent. All healthy love contains the fear of not letting the other person be fully free. Reverence, awe, and respect are a form of fear. But that kind of fear is not to be confused with being frightened, intimidated, or dreading some kind of punishment. Metaphorically, love’s fear is the fear that God challenges Moses with before the burning bush: Take off your shoes because the ground you are standing on is holy ground!

How are we to understand fear of God as the beginning of wisdom? We are wise and on the right path when we stand before the mystery of God (and of love) with our shoes off, namely, in reverence, in awe, in respect, in unknowing, without undue pride, humble before an infinity that dwarfs us, and open to let that great mystery shape us for its own eternal purposes. But that is far different, almost the antithesis, of the fear we experience when we are frightened of someone or something that threatens us because the person or thing is perceived as being mercilessly exacting or as being arbitrary and punitive.

There is too a healthy fear of God that’s felt in our fear of violating what’s good, true, and beautiful in this world. Some religions call this a fear before the “law of karma”. Jesus, for his part, invites us to this kind of holy fear when he warns us that the measure we measure out is the measure that will be given back to us. There’s a moral structure inherent in the universe, within life, and within each of us. Everything has a moral contour that needs to be respected. It’s healthy to be afraid of violating any goodness, truth, or beauty.

We need to preach this kind of healthy fear rather than that God needs to be feared because of the punishment he might eventually deal out in some legalistic and exacting fashion. Whenever we preach this kind of fear, of a God who deals out hellfire, we are almost always also preaching a God who isn’t very intelligent, compassionate, understanding, or forgiving. A God who is to be feared for his punitive threats is a God with whom we will never find a warm intimacy. Threat has no place within love, except if it is a holy fear of doing something that will disrespect and despoil. To preach hellfire can be effective as a tactic to help change behavior, but it is wrong in terms of the Gospel.

Fear is a gift. It is also one of the deepest, life-preserving instincts within you. Without fear, you won’t live very long. But fear is a complex, multi-faced phenomenon. Some fears help you stay alive, while others deform and imprison you. There are things in life that you need to fear. A playground bully or the arbitrary tyrant can kill you, even if they are all wrong. Lots of things can kill you, and they merit fear.

But God is not one of those things. God is neither a playground bully nor an arbitrary tyrant. God is love and a perpetual invitation to intimacy. There is a lot to be feared in this, but nothing of which to be afraid.

*By Ronald Rolheiser*