



“Galilee of the Gentiles, the people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and for those who sat in the region and shadow of death light has dawned.”

Among all creation, the light loves the most to shine upon the face of man. It enlightens all creation, and it is kind with it. It reveals its beauty, and it gives creative expression of thanksgiving towards its Creator and yet, upon the face of man, the light eagerly wishes to rest with humility. Its desire is not hidden but rather honest because, through its very nature, the light is always springing up from the eternal love. If it is not for man, the light would have been in eternal debt to life itself, never resplendent to its Creator. It is through man that light brings thanksgiving, because in his face, the face of the One who descended is revealed. And now the light can touch the one who is beyond words, incomprehensible. Now the light has discovered the joy of life. It shines in darkness searching for the face of man. In darkness, the light lightens every human vessel, no matter how broken that vessel might be. Because in every vessel, the light finds eternal joy, when resting upon it.

It was Hector who said on Friday that the short gospel on this Sunday reminds him of people who died. People he knew personally, it seems. He made a sign on Friday to show us how people who die become horizontal, by laying down. Yes, he said, it reminds him of people dying and of the resurrection, he added. The gospel of today, Hector thought, is about the death and resurrection of Jesus, in whom, all people who die, are embraced. Hector’s intervention was short, but it shed an abundance of light in the room and upon us.

The reflection continued and focused on the margins of our existence. At the margins dwell people who seem to be forgotten, yet it is the margins that bring about more faith in people. In China, a single mother said, in the city people work and study and are very busy. They don’t have time to think about God. In her year of study in university she met only one person who heard about the gospel. It is at the margins, in the countryside, where people live a simple life and have real faith. There are many Christians in the villages in China, she said. Many might not be able to read and write but they know about Jesus. Another volunteer from Africa agreed with her. It is not because they are ignorant that country people believe in God. At the margins simplicity of life has no heaviness. There is more life at the margins than at the centre, in the place where the king lives, who puts John the Baptist in prison today. We don’t know how it happened, but the reflection triggered an unexpected confession from a young volunteer who is a refugee. Somebody was reflecting on the kingdom of God as the place of forgiveness within

our heart. We enter the kingdom if we forgive. The single mother said she had a hard time with that, with forgiving. All the other people were trying to tell her that she can do it, it is the only way. She was honest with herself, she was convinced that forgiveness is a stumbling block for her, and she started disclosing the reasons. The people persisted in trying to convince her. "Let her speak", another young volunteer who just entered the room said. "She is just human... it is her pain that is talking now... It is ok..." In all this sudden abundance of interventions a young volunteer started confessing. The honesty of the single mother who was in pain because of the separation from her husband, helped the other young woman to speak. "I am pregnant", the young woman said suddenly. "I just found out recently. Only my doctor and the father of the baby knew about it until now. He is not in the country, and he does not want to do anything about the baby. I am so angry. I want the baby. It is a new life for me."

The confession continued, raising all kind of questions, trying to make sense of the joy and anger the young woman was experiencing at the same time, trying to live both the betrayal and the covenant of love with another human being, who is now her baby. She is a refugee, and she does not have the legal right to work yet. She has dreams, but even more fears now, and anger. She feels like she is in the darkness, yet she can see the beautiful light within. At this moment, the new volunteer who had just entered the room gave one of the most insightful and supportive words we have heard at the mission. At the end of it Eliana felt the need to applaud. We all joined her silently. She spoke about the faith and about God being the father of the orphans. And about how He is with them both at this time. She spoke as if she was inspired. Both volunteers were from Africa, one was Christian and the other one a Muslim.

"As you see your offspring like olive trees around your table, rejoice and be glad, chief shepherd, as you bring them to Christ.

In the Holy Spirit is an ocean of divine gifts, a wealth of glory, a great depth of judgments; He is identical in glory to the Father and the Son, and therefore to be worshiped." (third antiphon)

At the margins, where the community lives, too many times we come across darkness and death. We know firsthand what the darkness does to people. We know the seducing power of death and the paralysis that comes with that. The pain and the suffering. But it is at the margins that we hear and rejoice at the gift of life. The fragile gift of life in the baby mirrored by the fragile life of the mother. It is through this gift that the shadow of death is losing the depth of its abyss. When at the margins the vulnerable ones open up to the gift of life. Because those who saw the light, just like at Pascha, dared to approach it and passed it to each other and to all around them.

**Special Guest for 'Bridges'
series: Dr. Izzeldin Abuelaish**

Wednesday, January 17, 2024

6:30 p.m. at St. John's Mission



'I Shall Not Hate'

Dr. Izzeldin Abuelaish, MD, MPH, is a Palestinian medical doctor who was born and raised in Jabalia Refugee Camp in the Gaza Strip.

Currently a professor at the Dalla Lana School of Public Health at the University of Toronto, Dr. Abuelaish is described by an Israeli colleague as a “magical, secret bridge between Israelis and Palestinians.” He is author of the autobiographical *I Shall Not Hate: A Gaza Doctor's Journey*.

New bridges before lent- “Fr Nicolae Steinhardt” series



“A Christianity that is helpless and impotent is an heretical conception” ...Never did Christ ask us to be stupid...God asks us to be intelligent in order to understand the devil's trickeries.” (quote from “The diary of happiness” - on why we have to understand and pay attention to the political systems of our time)

Fr Nicolae Steinhardt was a Romanian political prisoner of the communist regime. He was baptized in prison. He became a monk after his release and he published a series of books, “The diary of happiness” being the most famous one. His journal from the time of his imprisonment was translated in several languages.

Wednesday 17 January, 2024

Dr. Izzeldin Abuelaish, MD, MPH, "I Shall Not Hate" (special guest)

Wednesday 24 January, 2024

Ilan Pappé (Israeli historian): video interview, extensive written work on the history of Israel and the Palestinians.

Wednesday 31st January, 2024

Fr Roberto - On the Archangel Gabriel

Wednesday February 7, 2024

Elena Kostyuchenko - "Why I love Russia" (interview)

Wednesday February 14th, 2024

Derek Finkle - On Harm Reduction

"I worked at a safe injection site. What I witnessed was disturbing | National Post

Wednesday February 21th, 2024 -

On silence - "We listen to the silence" by Enzo Bianchi

reflection on article published in La Repubblica - 23 October 2023

Necessary silence and authentic freedom

Wednesday February 28nd, 2024

With the Eyes of the Soul: The Life of St. Porphyrios

Wednesday March 6, 2024

Fr Nicolaie - On fr. Nicolae Steinhardt



Wednesday March 13, 2024 (just before the forgiveness Sunday)

Fr Roberto - On prayer

January 15-21

Tuesday	8:30 am 7:30 pm	Morning Prayer Psalms Study – via zoom	Wednesday	4:00 pm 6:30 pm 8:00pm	Vespers Bridges Compline
Thursday	8:30 am 12:30 pm 2:00 pm	Morning Prayer Noon Hours Jesus Prayer	Friday	7:00 am 12:30pm 2:00pm	Divine Liturgy Noon Hours Jesus Prayer
Saturday	9:00am	Morning Prayer	Sunday	7:00am 8:30am	Orthros Divine Liturgy

Monday: - 8am Divine Liturgy of St Basil

	<p>St Silouan Chapel at St John's Mission 155 Broadview Ave. Toronto, ON M4M 2E9 T: 416-466-1357 E: info@stjohnsmission.org W: stjohnsmission.org</p> <p>St Zoticos Orthodox Church at Good Neighbours Mission 193 Markham Rd Scarborough, ON M1J 3C3 T: 647-358-4105</p> <p>We are an apostolate of the ecumenical patriarchate "Mother Church of Christ's poor" under the Omophorion of Metropolitan Gregory of Nyssa</p>	
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St. Silouan Chapel, January 14, 2024

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