

ST. MARY & ST. VERENA



COPTIC ORTHODOX CHURCH



THE MISSION
November 2020
Volume 24 - Issue 277



5401 Fairmont Blvd. Yorba Linda, Ca. 92886 www.saintverena.org Diocese of Los Angeles, Southern California & Hawaii

THE MISSION

A monthly newsletter published by

St. Mary & St. Verena Coptic Orthodox Church 5401 Fairmont Blvd. Yorba Linda, Ca 92886

Served by Fr. Joseph Boules Fr. Andrew Hanna Archdcn. Jacob Abdelmalak

Mailing Address PO Box 2035 Yorba Linda, CA 92885

This is a free newsletter distributed through your generous support and contributions.

If you know anyone who would like to receive this newsletter, please e-mail us the mailing address.

REGULAR WEEKLY SCHEDULE

To register to attend a liturgy, please visit:

https://coc-services.com/ smsvservicerequest.html

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Schedule & Contents 2 English Article 3-7 Announcements & Photos 8-12 Arabic Article 13-15 Schedule changes are posted at www.saintverena.org

St. Mary & St. Verena Coptic Orthodox Church (714) 777-8373 Fax www.saintverena.org frjoseph@saintverena.org frandrew@saintverena.org Please consider donating via PayPal on our church website







THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

by Fr. Louka Sidarous

In the teachings of Christ, to Him be the glory, He drew the attention of His children to the Kingdom of the Heavens. He made clear that the person who follows Christ will accept to lose all things to gain the Kingdom. He will give everything up, but not give up his clinging to the Kingdom. In the parable that we heard now, about the unjust steward, this worldly steward who did unjust things, he looked to the future. What will he do? Christ, to Him be the glory, said, "Look at this worldly man. Look at how he thought about his future." When he is kicked out of his stewardship, where will he go? Shouldn't you think about the future?

The Christian person, if he loses the Kingdom, what does he have left? All the strife and struggle, all the fasting, prayers, everything, what is it for? It is for the sake of the Kingdom. It is for the sake of the Kingdom! If you tell me, "Describe this kingdom," I would say, "Believe me, it cannot be described using human expressions." Why? Because it is not of the world. It is not a kingdom of the world, but the Kingdom of Heaven. Do you wish to look at the Kingdom or know it? Lift up your heart to the heavenly things. You will have a taste of the Kingdom of Heaven. Of course, no one can describe the Kingdom other than those who have tasted it. Where is the Kingdom? What did Christ say? He said, "The kingdom of God is within you" (Luke 17:21). You want to know the Kingdom? Go within yourself. Aren't you the temple of God? Didn't God found His Kingdom within you? Are we not called sons and heirs of the Kingdom? Yes, the Kingdom is within you.

I desire to taste this divine grace, the grace of the Kingdom. I would say, "Believe me. It is within you." St. Paul went up to the third heaven and saw things that are inexpressible (2 Corinthians I2). When he had to try to speak about it, he said, "What no eye has seen nor ear heard or entered into the heart or thought of man." Do you want to taste that which has not been

described? You will find it within you. Doesn't God sometimes grace someone with an inner consolation that is inexpressible? Believe me, yes. Someone will be standing praying or at liturgy and have inner spiritual reactions and feels things that cannot be uttered or spoken about. He tastes the joy that cannot be expressed within himself. If you ask him, "How? Describe it to me." He will tell you, "I can't." Any of this kind of consolation is not a human one. This is why the Spirit that dwells in you is called the Spirit, the Comforter. He will make you feel the Kingdom.

What did this man do? He planned for the future. You might say, "How can I plan for the future?" Make the Kingdom of God constantly in your mind. Do not let it leave your mind. Think about it: we are here, living on earth, will the days of our living on earth be so long? 100 years? What are 100 years? That is small amount of days. 100 years times 365 days is 36,500 days. The days pass by quickly. What will come after these short days? What is there? There will be the Kingdom. There will be the reward. There will be the indescribable glory. There will be immeasurable joy. There will be grace. There will be being with Christ with no separation at all.

I was visiting someone who was ill. It was the first time that I had ever seen him in my life because he lived very far from me. He asked to see me. He was in his last couple of hours, but was completely conscience and aware. After I sat and spoke with him, we opened the Bible, we prayed, and he said, "I would like to sit with you for a few minutes alone." So, I said, "Okay." I sent everyone out of the room, closed the door, and sat down. He told me, "Abouna, I love Christ very, very, very much and am very deeply desire to see and meet Him. I am counting the seconds to leave this body." It was the first time in my life to hear words like these. I see so many people who are departing, but it was the first time in my life to see a person who had this level of desire and longing to meet Christ. He said, "I love Jesus very, very, very much. I wish... and I am counting the seconds. Yes, my wife and children are pained, but I am not afraid of death at all. Not a millionth of my feelings have an element of fear of death. I yearn to meet Christ." I said to myself, "What is this blessed soul?"

If a person has determined their destination and path, he will not be confused. He is going on a trip and knows the end of it. It's true. Before we leave our house, we say, "I am going to such and such a place." Before I leave my house, I say, "I am going to church." That's it. I have decided the direction I am going in and my path. That is why I am telling you the children of God are apparent. What does that mean? They are as clear as daylight! Why? Because they are walking towards the goal. That's it. When someone who lives in Sidi Bishr and

says, "I am going to Mahatet El Raml," you see him walking in the same direction. If you see him walking towards Abu Qir, then you will ask him, "Where are you going?" He'll say, "I am going to Mahatet el Raml." You will tell him, "You are wrong. You're going in the opposite direction." "I'm walking. Won't I get there?" "No, because you are going in the wrong direction. If you don't change your direction, it will be impossible for you to get there."

In the journey of life that we are living, what is in your mind? What is preoccupying your mind? What is your goal? What station do you want to reach? The Kingdom of God. I want to go to Heaven. There is only one path. There is only one path. Jesus said, "I am the Way." You see someone who is walking outside of Christ and he says, "God-willing, I am going to Heaven." No, you are going the wrong way. There are a million ways to think and live. Isaiah the prophet said, "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way" (Isaiah 53:6). We have all seen our own way as the best lifestyle, but these are bad ways. This means that we have leanings towards something which is a diversion from the path. We are distancing ourselves. "We have turned, every one, to his own way." But, He [Christ] said, "I am the Way." What way? The One that leads to eternal life. What does it look like? It is rugged, has a narrow door, and is difficult. That's not important if it is rugged or narrow. Where does it lead to? Eternal life. There are other ways? What do they look like? They are comfortable, wide, good, but are perishing. What is the end of them? Perdition. No, I don't want this way. Choose the narrow way. Strive to enter by the narrow door. Why? Because it leads to eternal life. Lose everything, but do not lose your eternal life. "For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?" (Mark 8:36). He will have lost his soul and eternal life.

The more the goal of eternal life is clear in your mind and daily life, the more you will draw closer to Christ. He, Himself, will bring you closer. Why? Because you are walking everyday in the way, in the same path. So, you are getting closer to the goal. Take heed of the other ways. Take extreme caution! Ask, "Where will this way lead me?" There are many ways. There are ways of stubbornness, where someone stubbornly clings to something. He is very stubborn. Where will that lead you? Or a path of pride and self-conceit. Where will that way lead me? Or someone who is preoccupied with the lusts of the world and the body. Where will that lead me? Or preoccupied with money or so may other things. There are a million things that can preoccupy us. But, there is another person, as he rests his head at night on his pillow, there is only one thing on his mind: his eternal life, his reaching the harbor of salvation in peace. You find him asking

daily, "Lord, what shall I do? Tell me the way that I can be saved. Open before me the door of living according to Your commandments."

Believe me, you find that grace places before you daily opportunities that will not come back. Opportunities. Opportunities for what? To gain the Kingdom, to win for yourself a good portion that will never perish. Grace places things in front of you and pushes you towards them. Sometimes, you will find a drive inside of you pushing you to stand up and pray. It is good to respond to this inner spiritual motivation. The Spirit intercedes for us! There is someone standing in front of you and fighting with you and the Spirit tells you, "whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two" (Matthew 5:41). The saints were obedient to this voice. St. Paul said to King Agrippa, "Therefore, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision (Acts 26:19). This voice came to me and I cannot be disobedient." When the Spirit pushes you — and He always does — to do a good work, helping, charity, humility, and reaching out to every person in tribulation, what should you do? Do not let the opportunity slip away. He is giving you an opportunity. He is giving you these things in your daily life so that He can encourage you and crown you!

He is the One who places before you the naked, the hungry, the thirsty, and the imprisoned. He pushes you and says, "Why don't you reach out your hand?" What does this mean? You will see this later. Later, He will stand and tell you, "Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry and you gave Me food" (Matthew 25:34-35). Lord, You are the One who placed this hungry person in my path and granted for me to give him. The pleasure of Christ and the pleasure of the Spirit is to encourage you to act. He is the One who gives you the talent and the grace. Then, He goes back and credits the good to you. He says, "I was hungry and you gave Me food." Was I born with something to give? I tell Him, " from Your own hand we have given to You" (1 Chronicles 29:14). It's from His hand! But, He says, "Will I forget this favor that you have given Me food?" You ask Him, "Lord when did we see You hungry, thirsty, or sick? When was that?" He says, "Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me." The saints who practiced these virtues were very aware. They saw Christ in the poor, the weak, the thirsty, and the naked. They saw Him and were not mistaken. They truly saw Him and honored Christ in them. They saw Christ.

This is why I am telling you: forget everything and remember only one thing. Remember that you are called to the Kingdom and that your name is written in Heaven. These are the words of Christ. Can imagine the apostles when they had

returned, after they performed many signs and wonders and healed the sick, and it says they, "returned with joy, saying, 'Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name.' And He said to them, 'I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy... Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you" -this is not important, "but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven" (Luke 10:17-20). Your name is written in Heaven! Do not lose it! Your name is written in Heaven! These are the words of Christ! This is why I am saying take heart! Take heart so that you may arrive in peace. Keep the commandments in your daily life, not just in your mind. The rich young man said, "I have kept all these things from my youth in my mind," but there was no fulfillment of them. So, He told him, "You are missing one thing. You need to do one thing." What is it? "Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow Me." But he was sad at this word, and went away sorrowful for he had great possessions (Mark 10:21-22).

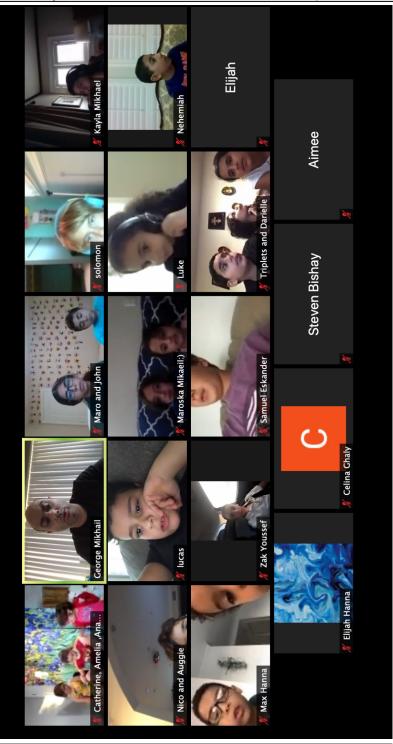
Keep the commandments! Do not mentally keep them, but do them. Keep them as a way of life. The commandments are very comfortable in daily life. One of the ways that the devil deceives us is that he makes the commandment seem difficult. The devil does this. He makes it seem very difficult to let go of my right or love the one who has wronged me or the rest of the commandments. The devil makes them difficult and makes it seem impossible. No, they are not impossible. Believe me, no. St. John the Beloved, when he loved Christ with all his heart said, "His commandments are not burdensome" (I John 5:3). What more do you want? The commandments are not burdensome. Jesus, the Lord of glory Himself, said, "Take My yoke upon you. My yoke is easy and My burden is light" (Matthew 11:29-30). The yoke of Christ is easy. Doing the commandments in our daily lives gives rest to the heart. When someone gives up his right or reconciles with his brother, his heart is at rest. What about when he is fighting or cuts him off? He lives in misery. Such a difference! The commandments of Christ ensure for people a nice life. His heart is at rest and his soul is pure without blemish when he spends his days living the commandments of Christ.

Keep the commandments of Christ and keep the Kingdom before your eyes. Tell Him, "Lord, please do not deprive me of the Kingdom." You are called to the Kingdom, to the eternal wedding, to being Christ forever and ever, to the indescribable glory, to the inheritance that does not decay or perish, stored up in Heaven.





Children's Hymns Class





St. Athanasius

"Don't let the desire to possess things take hold of you. For what do we gain by acquiring the things which we cannot take with us? Why not rather get the things which we can take away with us instead namely wisdom, justice, self-control, courage, understanding, love kindness to the poor, faith in Christ, freedom from wrath, and hospitality?"



St. Mary & St. Verena Church

offers her condolences to the families of the reposed:

Mrs. Angel Younan

sister of Mr. Fawzy Younan, husband of Mrs. Salwa Younan aunt of Dr. Nevein Costandy, wife of Mr. Sami Costandy aunt of Mr. Wael Younan, husband of Mrs. Sonya Younan

Mr. Rezk Abelmesih

father of Mr. Hany Ghobrial, husband of Mrs. Haidi Ghobrial

May the Lord repose their souls and comfort the families through the gifts of the Holy Spirit.



SCHEDULE A TOUR TODAY!

714-312-6641 - SAINTLUKEACADEMY.ORG



Tour Classrooms & Facility

MEET TEACHERS & STAFF

LEARN ABOUT ENROLLMENT DISCOUNTS

ACCEPTING AGES 18 MONTHS TO 5 YEARS
MONDAY - FRIDAY, 6:30AM - 6PM, FULL- & PART-TIME

حياة الشكر

لمثلث الرحمات قداسة البابا شنوده الثالث

لماذا نشكر

الذي يحيا حياة الشكر، هو إنسان نبيل، يشكر الجميل ولا ينساه.. لا ينسى مطلقا أي خير قدم إليه، ويعبر عن ذلك بعبارات من الشكر. فالشكر في قلبه، وعلى لسانه، لله وللناس. ولقد طوب السيد المسيح الرجل السامري – وكان واحدًا من عشرة شفاهم من البرص. ولكنه كان الوحيد الذي رجع إلى الرب (وخر على وجهه عند رجليه شاكرا) فأجاب الرب وقال (أليس العشرة قد طهروا؟ فأين التسعة ؟! ألم يوجد من يرجع ليعطى مجدا لله غير هذا الغريب الجنس؟! (لو 17 - 18-18).

إذن فأنت حينما تشكر، إنما تعطى مجدا لله، معترفا بإحساناته إليك..

فان كان الله صنع معك الخير عن طريق أحد من الناس. فأنت تشكر الله، وأيضا تشكر هذا الإنسان، لأنه كان واسطة طيبة في وصول خير الله إليك.. غالبية الناس يشكرون الله في صباح كل يوم، وفي آخره، وفي مناسبات مثل رأس السنة، والأعياد، وعلى أسباب هامة في حياتهم، ولكن حياة الشكر لها خواص تميزها، لعل في مقدمتها قول الرسول: (شاكرين في كل حين، على كل شيىء) (أف 5: 20)

إذن شكرنا لله ليس له مناسبات محددة، وإنما هو (في كل حين) ومادام هو كل حين، إذن هو يشمل الحياة كلها، وتنطبق عليها عبارة (حياة الشكر). ومثل هذا التعليم شرحه القديس في رسالته الأولى إلى أهل تسالونيكي. فقال (افرحوا كل حين. صلوا بلا انقطاع. اشكروا في كل شيء) (1تس 5: 16-81). من أجل هذا صلاة الشكر، تتقدم كل صلاة: كل طقس من طقوس الكنيسة، وكل قداس، يبدأ بصلاة الشكر. وقد وضعت لنا الكنيسة المقدسة صلاة الشكر في بدء كل صلاة من الصلوات السبع (في الأجبية) سواء كانت بالنهار أم بالليل. وهكذا نشكر الرب كل حين. عشية وباكر ووقت الظهر). وأيضا نقول مع المرتل في المزمور (في نصف الليل نهضت لأشكرك على أحكام عدلك) (مز 119). وبالإضافة إلى صلاة الشكر العامة، نقدم شكرا في تحاليل الساعات:

تحليل صلاة باكر نقول (نشكرك يا ملك الدهور، لأنك أجزتنا هذا الليل بسلام. وأتيت بنا إلى مبدأ النهار) إننا نشكره على حفظه لنا سالمين خلال الليل، ومنحه لنا يوم جديدا في الحياة.. تحليل الساعة الثالثة نقول (نشكرك لأنك أقمتنا للصلاة في هذه الساعة المقدسة التي فيها أفضت نعمة روحك القدوس بغنى على التلاميذ، خواصك القديسين ورسلك المكرمين الطوباويين، مثل ألسنة نار) ونحن نشكره لأنه منحنا أن نصلى في هذه الساعة.

تحليل الساعة السادسة (نشكرك يا ملكنا ضابط الكل ونمجدك. لأنك جعلت آلام ابنك الوحيد أوقات عزاء وصلاة).

تحليل الغروب نقول له (نشكرك يا مليكنا المتحنن، لأنك منحتنا أن نعبر هذا اليوم بسلام، وأتيت بنا إلى المساء شاكرين. وجعلتنا مستحقين أن ننظر النور إلى المساء) إن كل ساعة تمر بنا بخير، نشكر الله عليها.

إذن هو شكر باستمرار، سواء في مقدمة كل صلاة، أو في المناسبات.

الشبكر على كل شبيء

بل أن الكنيسة تبدأ بصلاة الشكر حتى عندما تصلى في جناز على شخص أنتقل من هذه الحياة، أيضا تبدأ بالشكر. يقول الرسول: (وكل ما عملتم بقول أو بفعل، فاعملوا الكل باسم الرب شاكرين الله) (كو 3: 17) أي في كل عمل شاكرين الله. وفي صلاة الشكر نقول: نشكرك على كل حال، ومن أجل كل حال، وفي كل حال. إذن ليس هو فقط كل حين، وإنما أيضًا على كل شيء. ذلك لأن الله يعمل معنا الخير باستمرار وقد قال الرسول (كل الأشياء تعمل معا للخير، للذين يحبون الله) (رو 8: 28) سواء في ذلك الخير الواضح، أو الأمور التي تبدو وكأنها ليست الخير ولكنها خير ونحن لا ندرى! لذلك وصف الله بأنه (صانع الخيرات).

إنه لا يصنع إلا خيرًا، ولذلك فالإنسان المؤمن بصفة الله هذه، يقبل كل ما يأتي من عند الله بفرح، ويقول في إيمان (كله للخير) ويشكر الله وتظهر له الأيام فيما بعد، أن هذا الأمر الذي يشك البعض في خيريته، كان للخير فعلا.. ولكن قد يسئل البعض ويقول: نحن نؤمن بلا شك أن كل ما يأتي من عند الله هو خيرا؟! نقول له: إن تصرفات الناس حيالنا: إن كانت خيرًا، ستصل إلينا خيرًا، ولكن.. إن لم تكن خيرًا، يحولها الله إلى خير، وتصل إلينا خيرًا في النهاية.. أخوة يوسف الصديق باعوه كعبد. وكان تصرفهم شرا في ذاته، وخيانة، وعدم محبة، وقسوة، وحسدا. ولكن الله حول ذلك الشر إلى خير، فصار يوسف (أبا لفرعون وسيدا لكل بيته) والثاني في الملكة.. وكان بقاؤه في مصر (لاستبقاء حياة) وهو نفسه قال لأخوته (أنتم قصدتم لي شرا، أما الله فقصد به خيرًا ليحيى شعبا كثيرًا) (تك 50 : 20).

أولاد الله دائما فرحون، يشكرون على كل شيء. وحينما يشكرونه، لا يفعلون ذلك كمجرد طاعة لوصية (اشكروا) كأمر مفروض عليهم!! كلا، فليس هذا هو الشكر الحقيقي. وليس الشكر هو مجرد ألفاظ تقال بدون اقتناع، كأداء لواجب.. بل يشكرون الله من كل القلب، وبكل الثقة. فهم واثقون تماما وبكل تأكيد، أن الله لا يسمح بأن يحدث لهم سوى الخير، كما ذكرنا أيضًا هنا في موقع الأنبا تكلا هيمانوت في أقسام أخرى. وأنه كضابط للكل يرقب كل الأمور الحادثة لهم، ويأخذ منها موقفا لصالحهم. لذلك هم يشكرونه على كل ما يحدث -أيًا

كان- واثقين أنه لخيرهم. ولهذا ترتبط حياة الشكر بحياة الإيمان، كما سنرى عند حديثنا عن الفضائل المتعلقة بالشكر. والإنسان قد يشكر الله بالكلام، وقد يقدم له ذبائح الشكر، وذبائح سلامة (لا 3) أو يقدم له نذورًا.. وكما قال داود النبي (كأس الخلاص أخذ، وباسم الرب أدعو. أوفى نذوري قدام كل شعبه) (مز 116).

درجات من الشكر

والشكر في حياة أبناء الله على درجات: أقلها هو الشكر على المعجزات والمواهب الفائقة والنعم العظيمة، وعلى الخيرات الوافرة والواضحة، التي لا يشك أحد في خيريتها وفي عظم نفعها. وربما في غير ذلك قد لا يشكر البعض! وقد تمر عليهم النعم (البسيطة) مرورا عابرا. وخيرات أخرى قد يرونها طبيعية وعادية ولا تحتاج إلى شكر! وهناك شكر أعلى قيمة، وهو الشكر على القليل: قد يكون مستوى عاديا في حياة الشكر، أن يشكر إنسان على شفاء مريض من داء خطير كالسرطان مثلا. ولكن إن شكر على الشفاء من دور زكام أو برد، فانه يدل على أنه متعود في حياته على الشكر، سواء على الكثير أو القليل. إننا إن شكرنا على القليل، يقيمنا الله على الكثير. ولعله من فوائد الشكر، استمرار النعم وزيادتها. وفي هذا قال أحد الآباء: (ليست موهبة بلا زيادة، إلا التي بلا شكر).

هناك أيضا شكر على الخفيات، على ما لا يرى.. شكر من أجل الحروب والمتاعب، التي كان ممكنا أن تصل إلينا، ولم تصل. وذلك بسبب حفظ الله وعنايته. وشكر على عمل الله في رعايتنا والعناية بنا، وان كنا لا نرى ذلك، ولكننا نؤمن به تماما. لا شك أن الشيطان يبذل قصارى جهده من أجل ضررنا وإسقاطنا. فان كنا الآن بخير، فذلك لأن الله قد منع الضرر عنا، الضرر الذي لا نعرفه.. ونحن نشكر الله على هذا الحفظ. طبيعي أننا نشكر الله على الضيقات التي أنقذنا منها ولكن هناك ضيقات أوقفها في الطريق قبل أن تصل إلينا. إننا لا نعرفها، ولكن نشكر الله على حفظه لنا منها.. شكرنا على إنقاذه لنا من الضيقة، هذا أمر ناه. أما الشكر على حفظنا من الضيقة، فهو شكر على ما لا نراه. صدقوني، لو كشف الله لنا المصائب التي كنا معرضين لها، وحمانا الله منها، وأبعدها عنا لو كشف لنا ذلك، ما كانت حياتنا كلها تكفى للشكر. إننا نشكر على الأمور الخفية، التي هي في علم الله، والتي قد يسمح الله فنعرفها بعد حين، في وقتها، أو قد لا نعرفها على الإطلاق.. في كل ذلك يكون الشكر ممزوجا بالحب.

درجة أخرى وهى الشكر كل حين على كل شيء.

وفيها حياة الإنسان تكون كلها شكرا، على كل حال يعيش فيه، كما ذكرنا أيضًا هنا في موقع الأنبا تكلا هيمانوت في أقسام أخرى. . وقد شرحنا هذا الأمر. والشكر الدائم لا يحتاج إلى سبب واضح محدد، وما أكثر الأسباب.. ولكن يكفى أننا في رعاية الله، وأننا أبناء له، أيا كانت حالتنا. ويرتبط هذا الشعور بحياة التسليم. ولا يتوقف شكرنا مطلقًا على نوعية الحال الذي نحن فيه..



St. Mary & St. Verena Church 5401 Fairmont Blvd.

Yorba Linda, Ca. 92886 www.saintverena.org