Sunday, October 25, 2026 | Sixth Sunday of Luke

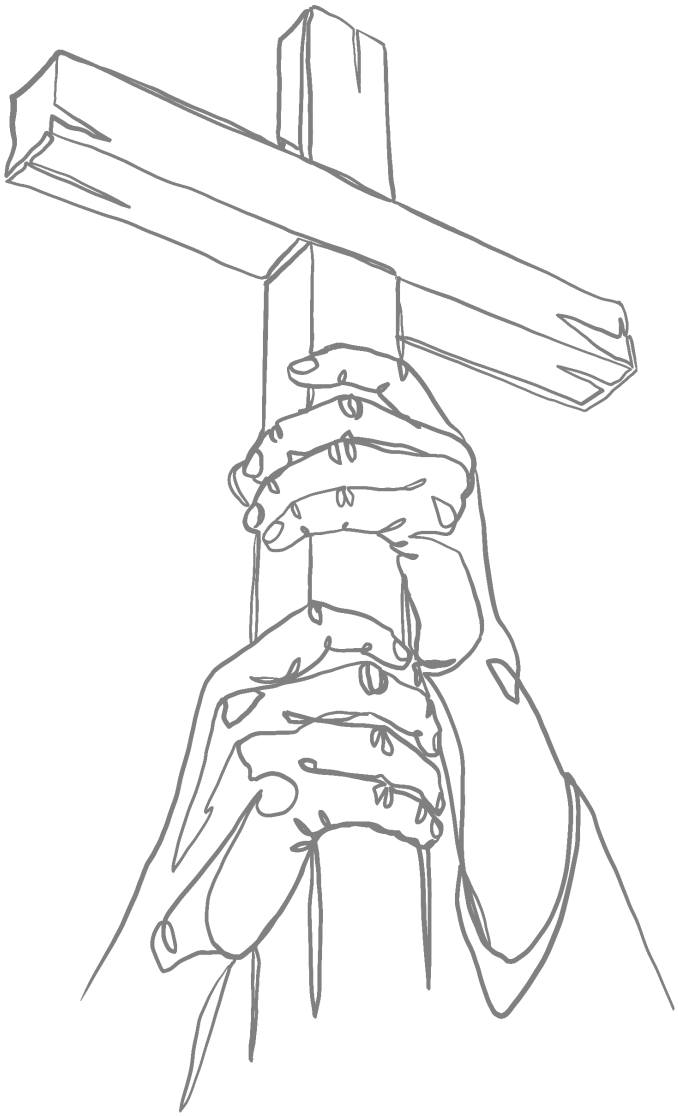
DIAKONIA

A National Ministry of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America

REFLECTIONS FROM TODAY'S READING | ***Galatians 2:16-20***

Fr. George Parsenios (HCHC '96)

"Actions Speak Louder than Words."



When Abraham Lincoln honors the Union soldiers who died at Gettysburg, he says, "The world will little note, nor long remember what we *say* here, but it can never forget what they *did* here." Actions speak louder than words. St. Paul makes the same point today when he says, "I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me." Paul's letters and his preaching are filled with eloquent words that explain how to live the new life in Christ. But St. Paul's most eloquent explanation of how to follow the Gospel was written on his own self and articulated by his actions. His actions explained the Gospel and provided a model for others to follow. Tomorrow, on October 26, we commemorate St. Demetrios the Great Martyr; as we do, we should recall that St. John Chrysostom said that the actions of the saints were more convincing explanations of the Gospel than any sermon could ever be. Chrysostom explains this by imagining people wondering whether the water in a bath is too hot to enter. People standing beside the bath may talk endlessly about how hot the water might be, but the most convincing person is the one who dips his toe into the water. His actions tell the tale. If this example is true, then even more are the martyrs eloquent evangelists, because they testify to Christ not merely with a toe or even a limb, but with their entire selves. Their actions are a masterful and convincing sermon on what it means to follow Christ. Like St. Paul, the martyrs were crucified with Christ, and so when we look at them, we see an image of Christ. We, too, must not merely call ourselves Christians in words, but preach Christ in our actions.

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bit.ly/parishtexts

FROM THE ORIGINAL GREEK: Antichristos (Ἀντίχριστος)

What does "Antichrist" mean?

Fr. George Parsenios (HCHC '96)

For all the attention it has received in the popular imagination, the word "Antichrist" appears only a few times in the New Testament, and in two books only: the First Letter of John (2:18, 22; 4:3) and the Second Letter of John (7). Regardless of what most people imagine, the word never appears in the Book of Revelation, despite that book's focus on the end times. The term ***antichristos*** has both an obvious meaning and a less obvious meaning. The obvious meaning comes from interpreting the prefix ***anti***- to mean "against." Understood in this way, the Antichrist is an enemy who opposes Christ. That is a perfectly acceptable understanding of the word, but it is too narrow, inasmuch as the Greek term ***anti*** can also mean "in place of" (as in the Greek word for "vice-president," ***antiproedros***). The Antichrist, in this way of thinking, is not merely a figure opposed to the true Christ, but one who would stand even in place of the true Christ. Thus, he can only be a false Christ. The Antichrist, therefore, is "against Christ" because he is a pretend Christ.

Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem, Easter 1910. Public Domain.

THIS WEEK'S LOOK AT CHURCH HISTORY

The Liturgy of St. James

Ben Malian, MTS-Holy Cross 2026

The Feast of St. James (October 23rd) provides an annual opportunity for Orthodox Christians to celebrate the Divine Liturgy in a manner that differs from the more familiar rhythms of the liturgies of St. John Chrysostom and St. Basil the Great. Attributed to the Apostle James, Brother of our Lord, the Liturgy of St. James developed in the ancient Church of Jerusalem and reflects many early liturgical customs that have since been adapted or omitted altogether by the Orthodox Church over the centuries.

Some noticeable differences in the Liturgy of St. James include a true "small entrance" during which the congregation enters from the narthex into the nave led by the celebrants, who remain on the solea praying *versus populum* ("toward the people") instead of *ad orientem* ("to the East"), often before a specially erected altar table. Later, following the richly detailed anaphora, the laity come forward to receive communion in both "kinds"—i.e. the Body "in the hand" and the Blood directly from the chalice—a manner of communing traditionally reserved for the clergy.

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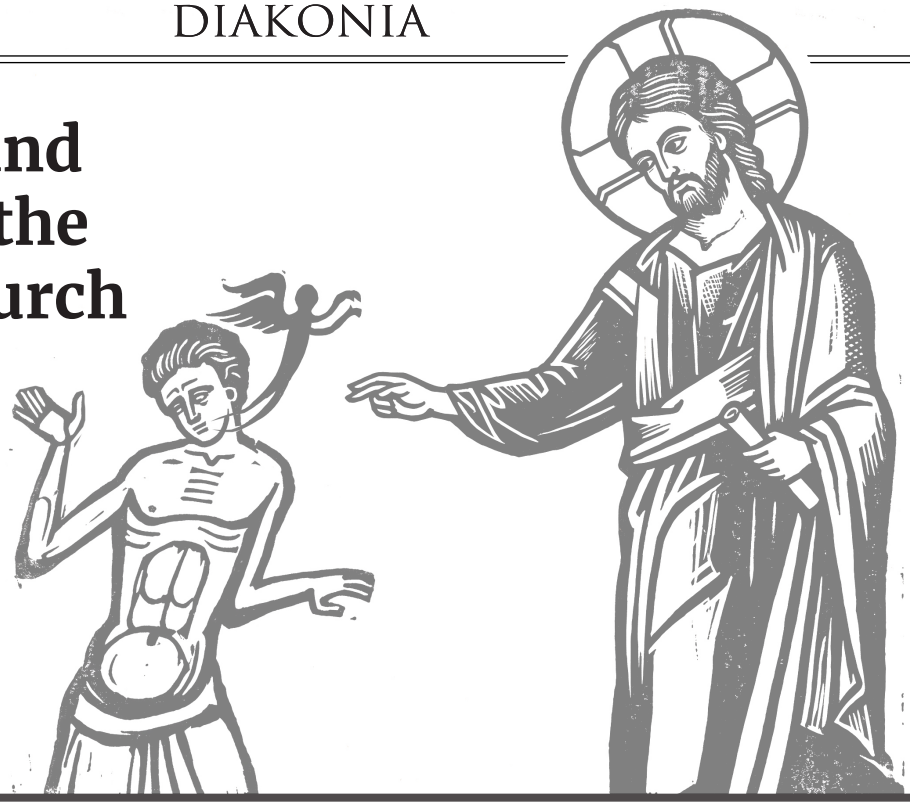
Satan, Evil, and Exorcism in the Orthodox Church



To understand exorcism in the Orthodox Church, one must first understand the Orthodox teaching on evil and Satan. According to the Church Fathers, Satan was created by God as a free angel who chose to rebel against God's will. He became evil through his own choices. Satan is viewed as a real, personal force that opposes God, promotes deception, and seeks to draw humanity away from divine truth. Although he recognizes God's existence and power, he continually works to corrupt and disorder creation. We believe that evil is not inherent in the world. Creation is good, but evil resides in the rebellious powers opposed to God. Ultimately, Satan and all evil will be defeated through Christ's victory over death and the final renewal of creation.

The Orthodox Church has long recognized the reality of demonic influence and has prayers and rites to combat evil. Exorcism is commonly associated with Baptism, where candidates renounce Satan and unite themselves to Christ. The prayers invoke God's power to expel evil spirits and reject every form of deception, idolatry, falsehood, and impurity associated with the devil.

The Church also addresses evil through prayers related to *vaskania*, commonly known as the evil eye. Traditionally, this refers to the destructive effects of jealousy and envy directed toward another person or blessing. While the Church rejects superstitious and magical interpretations of the evil eye as incompatible with divine providence, it recognizes envy as a genuine spiritual problem. Consequently, prayers against *vaskania* seek God's protection from the harmful effects of jealousy while avoiding magical practices or folk rituals.

The New Testament records numerous instances of Christ and the Apostles healing and delivering people from demonic influence. The Orthodox Church views its prayers of exorcism as a continuation of this ministry. Through prayer, fasting, repentance, and faith in Christ, believers seek freedom from spiritual oppression and the power of evil.

Orthodox prayer books contain seven well-known exorcism prayers: three by Saint Basil the Great and four by Saint John Chrysostom. These prayers ask God, in the name of Jesus Christ, to liberate those suffering from demonic affliction or other spiritual maladies. While exorcism remains part of Orthodox practice, the Church teaches that it must always be used with caution, discernment, and pastoral care, emphasizing God's healing grace rather than sensationalism.

Based on a longer article by Rev. George C. Papademetriou, Ph.D. found on goarch.org (https://bit.ly/4hhHC3A)

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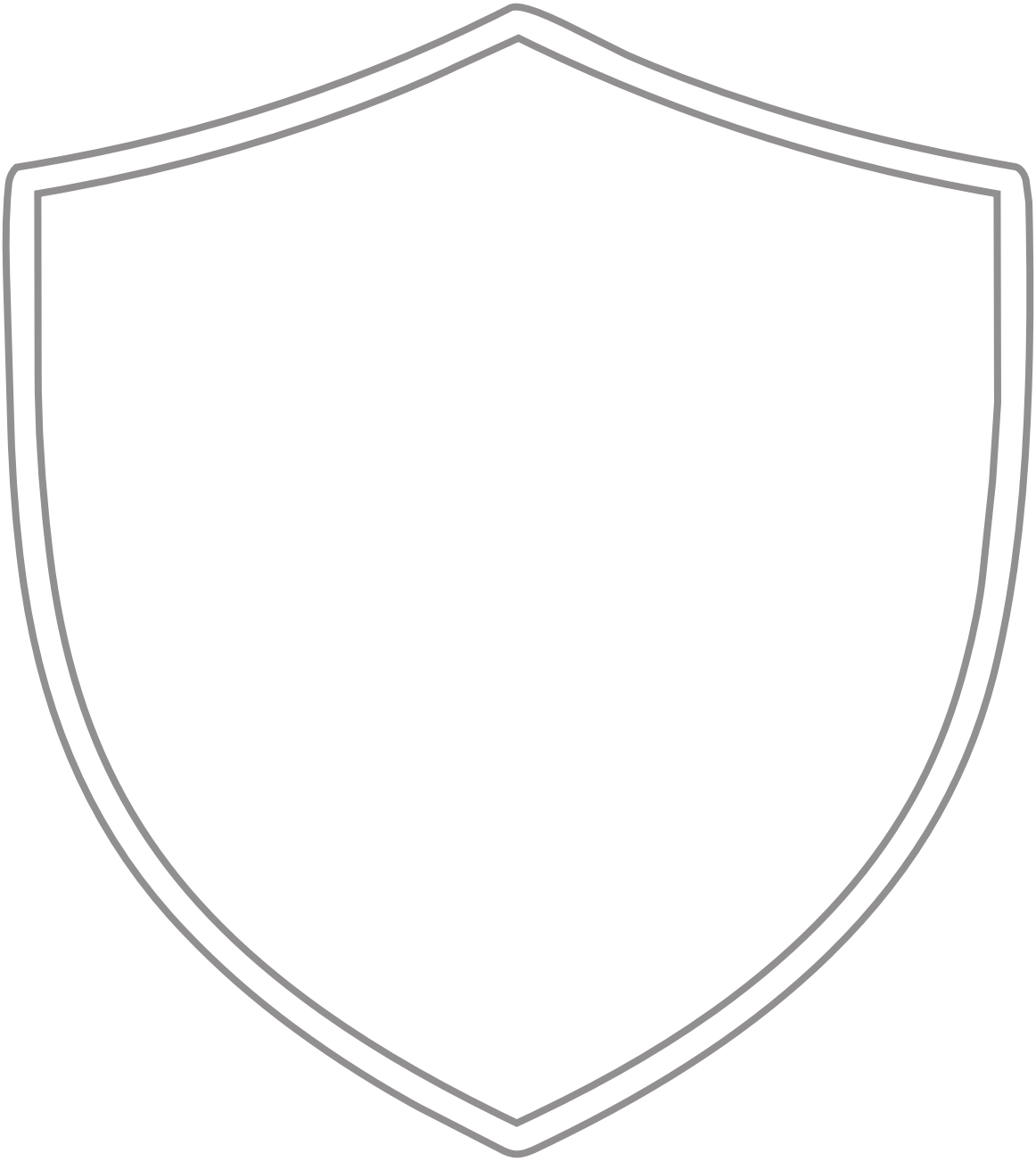
Just For Kids!
(...and the young at heart)

DESIGN A SHIELD

St. Demetrios

St. Demetrios the Myrrh-streaming was a soldier, and although he served in the Roman army, he remained devoted to Christ and boldly shared the Gospel with others. During a time of persecution, St. Demetrios was imprisoned and martyred for his faith. The Church honors him as a great martyr and defender of the faith, celebrating his feast day tomorrow, October 26. Just as St. Demetrios was known for his courage and faith, we are called to be spiritual warriors for Christ, too! To prepare yourself, decorate your own shield you would use to defend the faith. Be creative!



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