Sunday, November 29, 2026 | Thirteenth Sunday of Luke

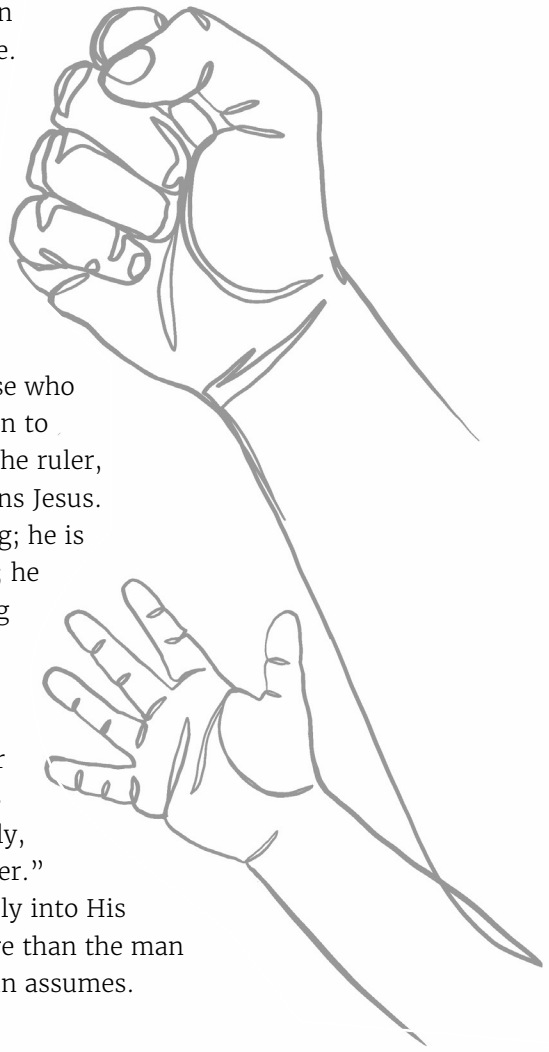
DIAKONIA

A National Ministry of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America

REFLECTIONS FROM TODAY'S READING | *Luke 18:18-27*

Fr. George Parsenios (HCHC '96)

"Why do you call me good?"



When a passage of the Bible confuses us, we can often find clarity by examining the context of the passage. This is certainly the case with today's Gospel reading. When the rich ruler greeted Jesus by calling him "good teacher," Jesus said, "Why do you call me good; God alone is good." Why did Jesus say this? When he said that the term "good" applies only to God, he seemed to say that he himself was NOT God. The context of our passage can help explain why Jesus rebuffs the rich ruler in this way. This event is recounted right after the scene where Jesus said that the kingdom of God belongs to those who are as innocent as children, and Christ invited the children to come to him. The children present a stark contrast with the ruler, whose arrogant presumption we clearly see as he questions Jesus. They are children; he is a mature adult. They own nothing; he is extremely wealthy. They approach mildly and innocently; he questions Jesus aggressively. Most important, they belong to the kingdom of heaven; the rich ruler still lacks what is required to enter the kingdom. This contrast between the blessing of the children and the questioning by the ruler shows us that the rich youth is not an honest seeker after the kingdom, but a self-satisfied person who thinks he understands everything God requires. Most importantly, he sees Jesus as only a man, as just another " good teacher." Jesus rebuffs the man in order to help him see more deeply into His identity. He pushes the man to see that God requires more than the man presumes, and that Jesus is someone greater than the man assumes.

Fr. George Parsenios *is Professor of New Testament at Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology.* ***www.hchc.edu***

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Scan for today's service text

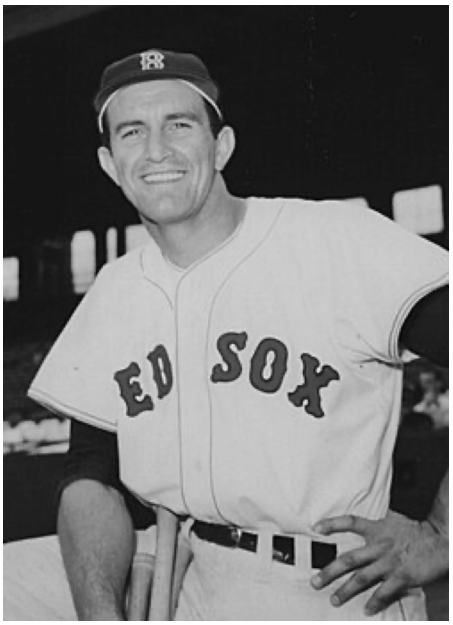
bit.ly/parishtexts

FROM THE ORIGINAL GREEK: kêrygma (Κήρυγμα)

What does "Proclamation" mean?

Fr. George Parsenios (HCHC '96)

The Greek term ***κήρυγμα/ kerygma*** refers to the public proclamation of a herald or messenger, and is the word used to describe the preaching of the Gospel in the New Testament. When John the Baptist begins his ministry, he proclaims the Gospel (Mark 1:7) just as Jesus does (Mark 1:14), and just as Christians do in imitation of the Lord (Mark 3:14). St. Basil the Great establishes an important distinction between the public proclamation in the kêrygma, and the silent, internal teaching of the Church known only by those who are already Christians, which he calls our private dogmata/dogmas (On the Holy Spirit, 66). St. Basil insists that these unwritten and secret dogmata have the same force as the public proclamation in the kêrygma. These private teachings include things like praying while facing East or blessing the waters used for baptism. The kerygma contains everything necessary for drawing people to Christ, but the private dogmata contain further information that is necessary for a full sacramental, liturgical and ascetical life. These unwritten and esoteric teachings, he maintained, are not necessary to come to faith, but they are essential for growing in faith.



Aristotle George "Harry" Agganis. Public Domain.

THIS WEEK'S LOOK AT CHURCH HISTORY

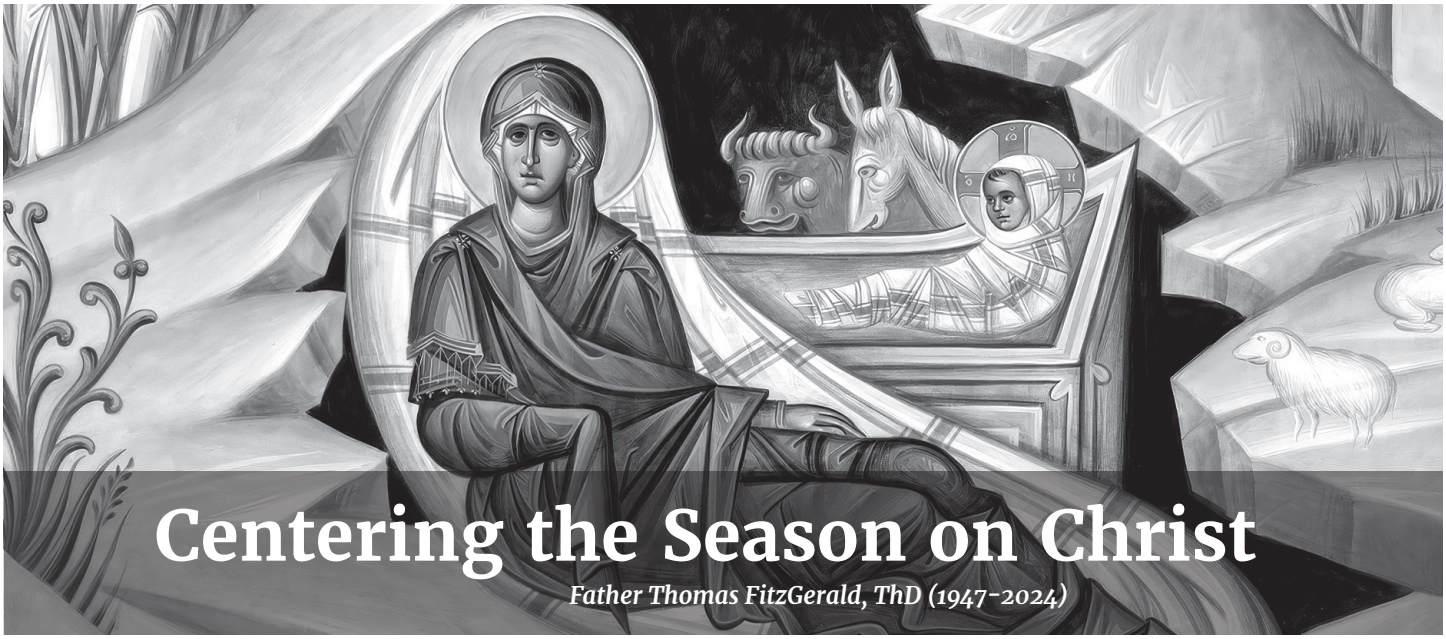
Harry "The Golden Greek" Agganis

Harry "The Golden Greek" Agganis, a celebrated professional athlete and devout Orthodox Christian, tragically passed away at the age of 26 on June 27th, 1955. Born the child of Spartan immigrants, Agganis grew up in Lynn, Massachusetts, and attended the parish of St. George. A gifted football and baseball player, Agganis stayed close to home to play for Boston University, where he became an All-American and national sensation.

Turning down $50,000 to play football for the Cleveland Browns, Agganis elected to play baseball for the hometown Boston Red Sox. Faith and family were essential to Agganis, who was known to always light a candle in St. George's prior to each Red Sox home game.

After fighting off a bout of pneumonia, Agganis died suddenly of a pulmonary embolism. His funeral drew crowds of mourners numbering in the tens of thousands. In an unprecedented move, Archbishop Michael instructed all Greek Orthodox parishes in the Western Hemisphere to observe the 40-day memorial. "The Golden Greek" was later inducted into the College Football Hall of Fame in 1974.

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Centering the Season on Christ

Father Thomas FitzGerald, ThD (1947–2024)

What shall we offer you, O Christ? Who for our sake appeared on earth as a human? Every creature made by you offers you thanksgiving. The angels offer you a hymn, The heavens, a star, The magi, gifts, The shepherds, their wonder, The earth, its cave, The wilderness, a manger, And we offer to you, a Virgin Mother.

—Orthodox Christian Vesperal Hymn

The story of the birth of Christ and its true significance is often clouded by the commercialism of the season. There is a very frenzied pace to these days which can so easily depersonalize us and dampen the true joy of the season. The stores tempt us for weeks on end to buy this thing or buy that thing. Some of us prefer to speak of the 'Holiday Season' rather than of Christmas. Many schools have forbidden the remembrance of Christ's birth in the classroom. Yes, throughout our society, many fail to remember that the coming of Christ is truly at the heart of the Christmas celebrations.

What can we do? Let us remember that the season celebrates the love of God revealed in the coming of Christ. For those with faith, the colored lights, the green trees, the wreaths and the flowers are symbols of the joy of Christmas. Let us celebrate the joy of Christ's coming!

Let us share the love of God with others. Christ has come to bear witness to the Father's love for us. We too can share this love with others, especially with the poor and less fortunate among us. We can be sensitive to those who cannot easily celebrate because of a loss in their lives. Let us be the ambassadors of God who share His care and philanthropy.

Let us seek the Lord with an open heart as the shepherds and wise men did. This means that we find opportunities for prayer and meditation, for reading the Scriptures related to Christ's coming. This means that we can make Christmas a special day by participating in the Divine Liturgy and by receiving Holy Communion with reverence for God, with faith and with love.

Nativity of Christ icon from Saint Nicholas Church and National Shrine, New York, NY.

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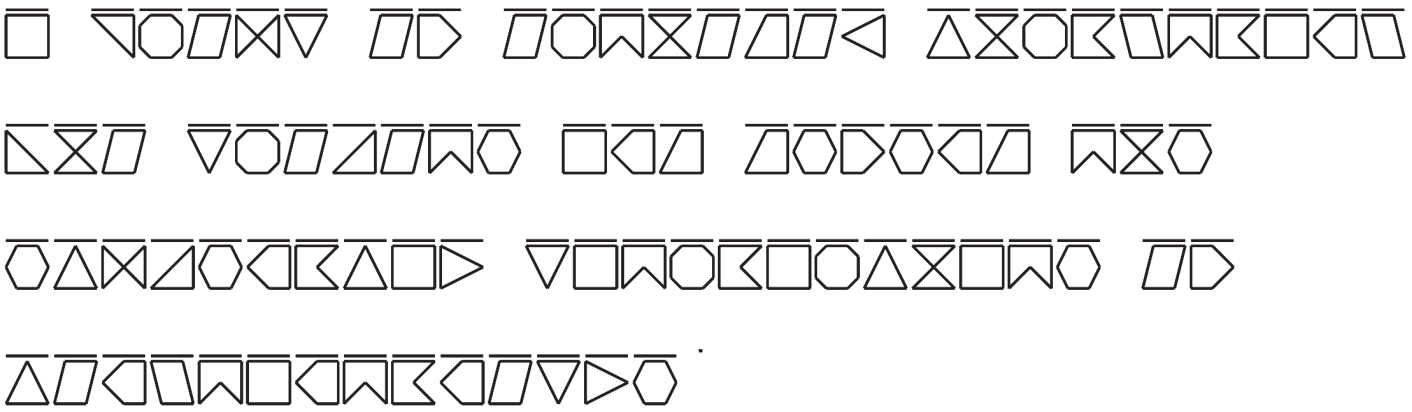
SECRET CODE GENERATOR

Archons/St. Andrew

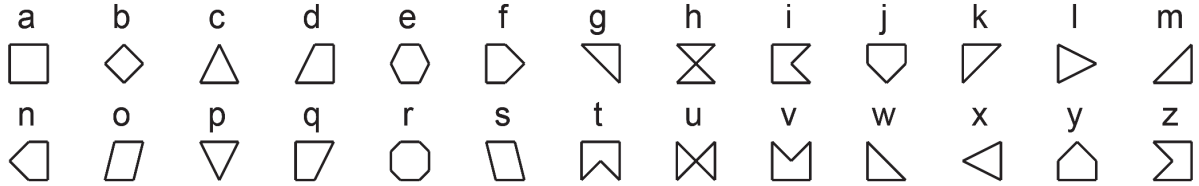
Just For Kids!
(...and the young at heart)

St. Andrew the First-Called, celebrated tomorrow, is an important saint in the Orthodox Church. He was the very first disciple called by Jesus to follow Him. After meeting Christ, Saint Andrew was so excited that he told his brother Peter, "We have found the Messiah!" He spent the rest of his life sharing the Good News of Jesus with others. St. Andrew is also known as the Patron Saint of the Archons of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. ***Just as St. Andrew followed Christ with courage and helped bring people to Him, the Archons do the same. Curious as to what their mission is? Solve the code to find out!***

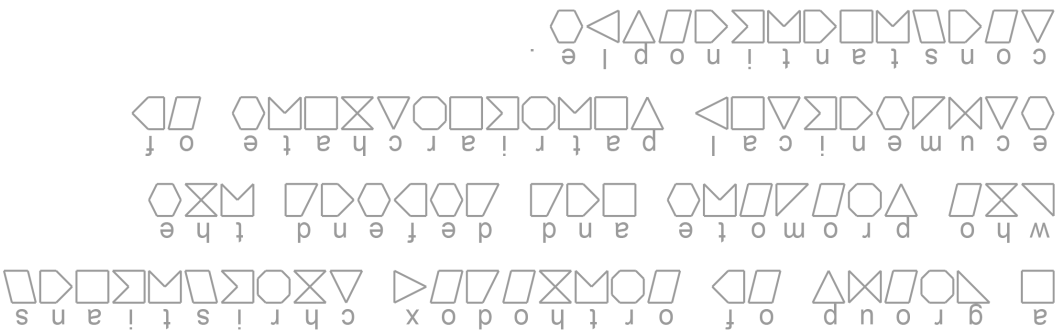
DECODE THE MESSAGE:



CODE KEY:



ANSWER KEY:



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