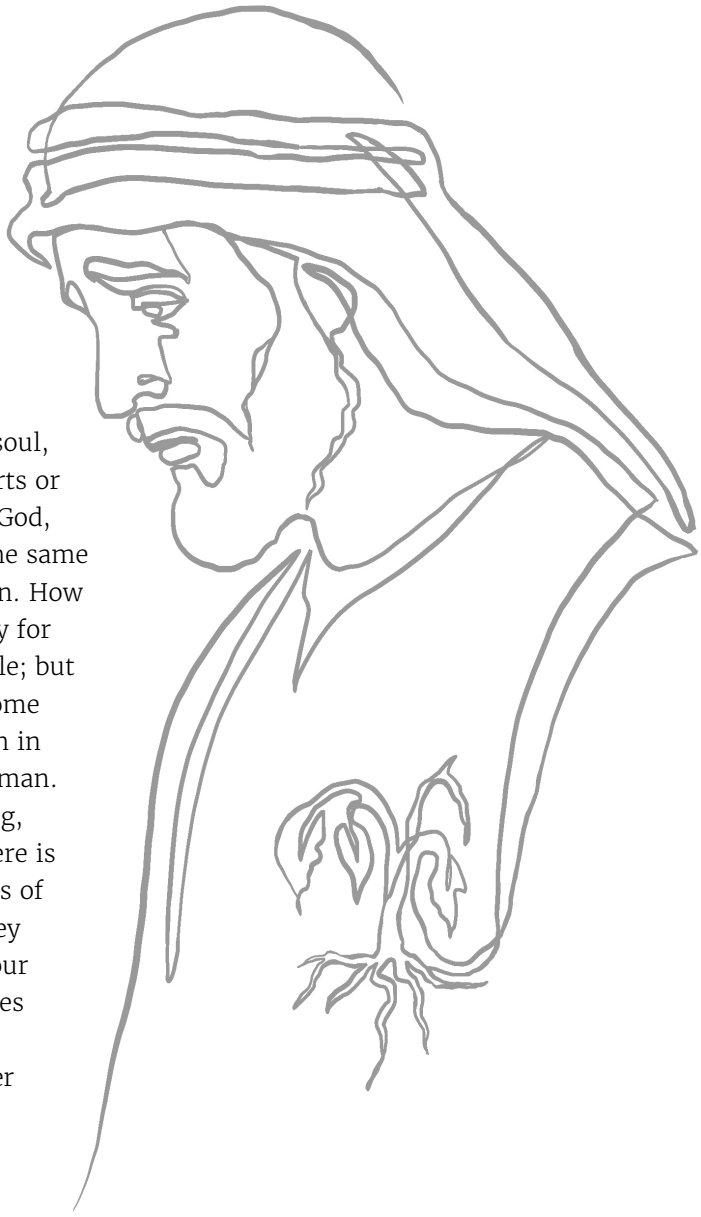
DIAKONIA

A National Ministry of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America

REFLECTIONS FROM TODAY'S READING | *Luke 12:16-21*

Fr. George Parsenios (HCHC '96)

"The fool says, 'There is no God'"



Our soul is spiritual and it requires spiritual food to thrive. Too many of us starve our souls into silent lethargy, behaving like the rich man in today's Gospel reading. The rich man amassed great piles of wealth and then said, "Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; take your ease, eat, drink, be merry." When he supplied nothing but earthly food to his spiritual soul, the rich man discounted any reality beyond physical comforts or fleshly pleasures. He might have stated that he believed in God, but in his heart he said, "There is no God." Are we doing the same thing? Consider how we approach the raising of our children. How much care do we put into their spiritual formation? We pray for them with great anxiety when they face some earthly trouble; but how often do we display this same anxiety for them to become strong Orthodox Christians? Our mouths might profess faith in God, but in our hearts we might behave much like the rich man. God addresses the man as a "fool" in today's Gospel reading, because the Psalms tell us, "The fool says in his heart, 'There is no God'" (Psalm 14:1; 53:1). Let us, therefore, shift the focus of our lives. Instead of denying our souls the spiritual food they require, let us deny our stomachs through fasting, so that our souls might have the spiritual calm and discipline that comes from ascetical effort. And let us deny our eyes and ears the endless streams of entertainment we fill them with, in order to feed our souls with the calm that comes from silence. And let us thus love the Lord our God with all our heart and all our soul and all our mind.

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

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FROM THE ORIGINAL GREEK: Kenôsis (Κένωσις)

What does "Self-emptying" mean?

Fr. George Parsenios (HCHC '96)



One of the most important words for describing the Incarnation of Christ appears in Philippians 2:6, where St. Paul says that, when Jesus took on the form of a slave by becoming human flesh and dying on a cross, he "emptied himself," where "empty" is the Greek verb ***κενόω*** (***kenô***). The Incarnation, thus, is referred to by theologians as Christ's divine "self-emptying" or his ***κένωσις*** (***kenôsis***). This does not mean, of course, that Christ ceased to be God when he became human. The same Christ who took on human flesh can also identify himself by saying "I Am," the very phrase that God uses for his name when speaking to Moses from the burning bush (Ex. 3:14). But Christ does empty himself by dying on the cross in an act of ultimate humility. The notion of kenôsis operates in a slightly different sense elsewhere in the Bible, especially in the letters of St. Paul, where he urges people to preach the Gospel with integrity, lest they empty the Gospel of its power (1 Cor 1:17). Likewise, St. Paul says that Christian faith is emptied of its power if we still attempt to follow the Law of Moses (Rom 4:14).

THIS WEEK'S LOOK AT CHURCH HISTORY

Archons of the Ecumenical Patriarchate: Defending Religious Freedom

The Order of Saint Andrew, the Archons of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, was established in 1966 with the blessing of Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras. During the Sunday of Orthodoxy Divine Liturgy at Holy Trinity Cathedral in New York, Archbishop Iakovos conferred patriarchal ***offikia*** (offices) on thirty laymen. Pierre DeMets of Chicago, who advocated for the Order's founding, became its first Grand Commander.

An ***archon*** (***ἄρχων***) is literally "one who holds office." In ancient Greece, archons were chief magistrates; the Roman Empire governed through titled offikia. During the Christianization of the Empire, the Church adopted these titles and conferred them on individuals for religious responsibilities and promoting the faith. ***Offikia*** kept after the fall of Constantinople in 1453 were largely titles of duty.

Today, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew personally chooses the ***offikion*** bestowed on each Archon, at times reflecting a person's work. An Archon is expected to support the Church's ministries actively.

The Order of Saint Andrew's legacy is rich, helping recover some of the Ecumenical Patriarchate's confiscated properties and championing religious freedom through advocacy and international conferences. Established in 1986, the Order's Athenagoras Human Rights Award has honored defenders of human rights such as Mother Teresa, Elie Wiesel, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, President Jimmy Carter, and Yulia Navalnaya. In 2024, the Holy Eparchial Synod established Archon Sunday, honoring the Order on or near Saint Andrew's feast, November 30.

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It's Thanksgiving Every Sunday

By Fr. Jim Kordaris



Photo Credit: Dimitrios Panagos

From the article " Giving Thanks: Eucharistic Stewardship" Read the article here: https://bit.ly/4C2AD6M or scan the QR code.

The Holy Eucharist is called Holy Communion because it unites us as the Body of Christ. The word "eucharist" comes from the Greek word ***eucharistia*** (***εὐχαριστία***) for thanksgiving. When we celebrate the Divine Liturgy, we are giving thanks. The Eucharist—Holy Communion—is the focus of parish life. Through the Eucharist we are transformed from a human community into the Body of Christ.

In his book on the Eucharist, Fr. Alexander Schmemann explains that in the early Church, the Eucharistic sacrifice was offered by all the members of the church. Each person coming to the gathering of the Church brought everything they could spare for the needs of the Church. This is the Church that we as Orthodox Christians claim to be.

We read in Acts 2: "Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles. And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common; and they began selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need. Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved."

People often say, "I don't get anything out of liturgy"? The truth is that we don't come to church to get something, but to give ourselves to God. What we get in return is the presence of Jesus within us. As we come to know Jesus this way, we are drawn into the communion of the Church.

Through Holy Communion, we carry the fire of God's love within us. When we understand the true meaning of the Holy Eucharist, we bridge the gap between liturgy and life, between the love of Jesus on the cross and our daily lives, between our beautiful theology and practical stewardship. As Eucharistic Orthodox Christians, we see the world as God's gift. We offer the world back to God in thanksgiving with the words, "Thine own of Thine own we offer to Thee…."

FAITH IN ACTION

At the end of each day this week, thank God for His presence in your life.

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

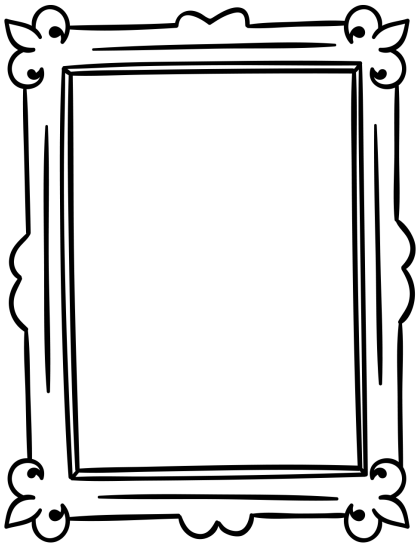
DRAWING SHEET

Thanksgiving

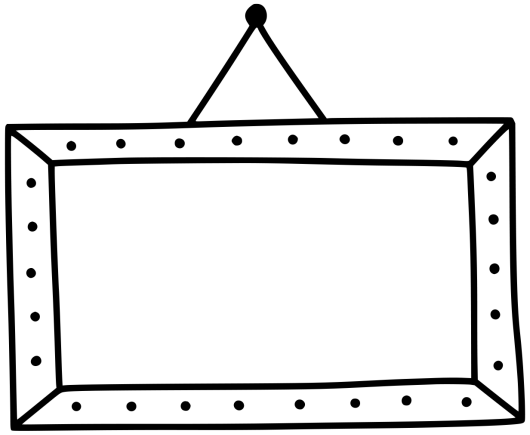
Thanksgiving is a special time to remember all the blessings God has given us and to thank Him. In the Orthodox Church, giving thanks is an important part of our faith! In fact, the word "Eucharist" means "thanksgiving." Every day, we can thank God for our family, friends, food, home, and His great love for us.

When we are thankful, we remember that everything we have comes from God. We can thank Him through prayer, by helping others, and by sharing with those in need. Even on difficult days, a thankful heart helps us grow closer to God. Use the frames below to draw some things you are thankful for. **Feel free to use our prompts or make some of your own!**

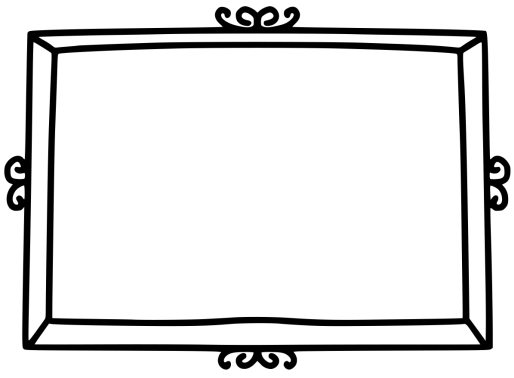
I AM THANKFUL FOR...



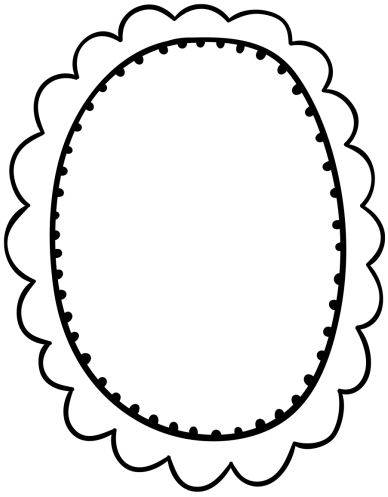
MY PRIEST



MY CHURCH



A MOMENT DURING DIVINE LITURGY



A SAINT

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