



DIAKONIA

A National Ministry of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America

REFLECTIONS FROM TODAY'S READING - *John 1:1-17*

“The Word Became Flesh...”

Fr. George Parsenios



As we celebrate Christ's Resurrection, today's Gospel reading reminds us of his birth when it says, "The Word became flesh" (John 1:14). Easter and Christmas are the two great poles of the liturgical year. Most of the Autumn season leads to Christmas, and the entire Spring leads up to Easter. And, just like the separate poles of the globe, Christmas and Easter seem like opposites in many ways. One focuses on birth, the other on rising from the dead. One is celebrated in the icy cold of Winter, the other in the warm sunlight of early Spring. The two feasts seem so very different, but they are actually closely connected. We observe, for instance, a 40-day fast before both Christmas and Easter. In both feasts, we see God renewing and remaking his creation. Saint Paul says that those who are in Christ are a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17), and the birth and resurrection of Christ are the beginning and the end of this new creation as the curse of Adam is reversed. Adam was created directly by God with no earthly Father, and the world is recreated in the birth of Christ who also has no earthly Father. Adam's curse of death is finally removed in the Resurrection. The world begins to be made anew in Christmas, and this work of renewal is brought to completion at Pascha. What remains for us now is to live like people made anew. When insulted, we must forgive. When tempted, we must resist. When filled with all good things, we must share with those in need. In these ways, we proclaim the message of our Lord to a world waiting for Christ's renewal, and we announce together with all creation: *Χριστὸς Ἀνέστη!* **Christ is Risen!**

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FROM THE ORIGINAL GREEK: *monogenes* (μονογενής)

What is “Only-begotten?”

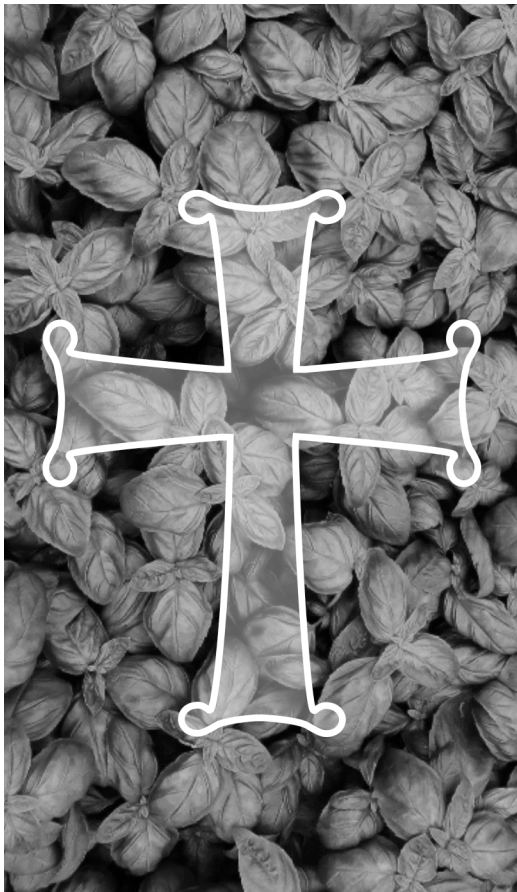
Fr. George Parsenios



The term *μονογενής/monogenes* is made up of two Greek words. *Mono* means “only” and *genes* means “begotten” or “born,” stemming from the Greek verb *gennaō*, which means “I give birth.” The term is applied to Christ throughout

the Christian tradition—in the New Testament, in the Nicene Creed and in the Divine Liturgy—and its purpose is to emphasize that Christ is truly God. In the Creed we say that Christ

was “begotten, not created,” and this phrase points to the importance of saying that Christ is “begotten.” We beget things that are like us, and we create things that are different from us. A bird creates a nest but begets another bird. A human being creates a car but begets a human baby. God created the world, which is different from God. But the Son of God is not a creature. The Son of God is begotten of the Father. To say that Christ is begotten of the Father, therefore, is to say that Christ is God. This term is applied to Christ several times in the New Testament, and defines his relationship to the Father, a relationship which he alone shares, rendering him “only-begotten.”



THIS WEEK'S LOOK AT CHURCH HISTORY

Finding the Cross of Jesus Christ

St. Helen discovered the True Cross of Christ under a fragrant herb we now call “basil.” Basil is derived from the Greek word (*βασιλεύς*) “basileus,” a title used for emperors, monarchs, and kings.

After Emperor Constantine the Great legalized Christianity, his mother, St. Helen, made a pilgrimage to the Holy Land to restore holy sites from Christ’s life and find the True Cross. She founded many churches with the help of St. Macarius, Patriarch of Jerusalem.

A Jewish man named Jude knew the Cross was buried beneath the temple of Venus. St Helen ordered the temple to be destroyed and the site excavated. They discovered Golgotha and the Lord’s Sepulchre. On May 3, 326 A.D., within the temple rubble and beneath the mound of basil, St. Helen found three crosses, four nails, and a wooden plaque with the Hebrew, Greek, and Latin inscription: “Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.” The Church celebrates the Finding of the Precious Cross on March 6.

VISIT: www.goarch.org/departments/religious/didyouknow

THE SERVICES OF HOLY WEEK

From Sweet Sadness to Great Joy.

In Holy Week we are eyewitnesses of the Passion of Jesus Christ. In Scripture, hymns, processions, and liturgy, we see the fulfillment of Messianic prophecies. *Charmolypti* (Χαρμολύπη) is the Greek word for the sweet sadness we feel during Holy Week in the suffering of Jesus and the anticipation of His Resurrection.



Bridegroom Services: Palm Sunday evening, Holy Monday and Holy Tuesday

In these evening services we witness the beginning of Jesus' suffering. The theme is vigilance as depicted in the parable of the Ten Virgins in the Gospel of Matthew. We are called to true repentance as seen in the woman who anointed Jesus with myrrh and washed His feet. On Tuesday evening we hear this in the hymn by St. Kassiani.



Holy Wednesday: The Sacrament of Holy Unction

On Wednesday, the Sacrament of Holy Unction is offered for the healing of soul and body and for the forgiveness of sins. At the conclusion, faithful come forward to be anointed.



Holy Thursday Morning: The Last Supper

On Holy Thursday morning, we are with Jesus and the twelve disciples in the upper room. We witness the Last Supper as Jesus establishes the Sacrament of Holy Communion.



Holy Thursday Evening: The Betrayal, Trial, and Crucifixion of Jesus

This service commemorates the suffering of Jesus. The twelve Gospel readings recount His betrayal, arrest, trial, crucifixion, and death. We process with the cross, chanting "Today is hung upon the Tree, He Who hung the land in the midst of the waters..."



Holy Friday Afternoon: The Descent from the Cross

We witness Joseph of Arimathea as he removes Christ's body from the cross, wraps it in clean linen, and carries it to his own unused tomb.



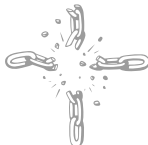
Holy Friday Evening: Lamentations and Procession

We recall the descent of Jesus into Hades to minister to those who died before Him. The lamentations before the tomb recall his suffering and death. The epitaphios is carried in procession.



Holy Saturday Morning

The myrrh bearing women come in devotion, becoming the first witnesses of the Resurrection. This joy is marked by the scattering of bay leaves and rose petals.



Holy Saturday Evening: Vigil and Midnight Resurrection

The church is dark. A single light emerges from the altar representing Christ's victory over death. As the light is passed from person to person, the Resurrection is proclaimed in word and song.

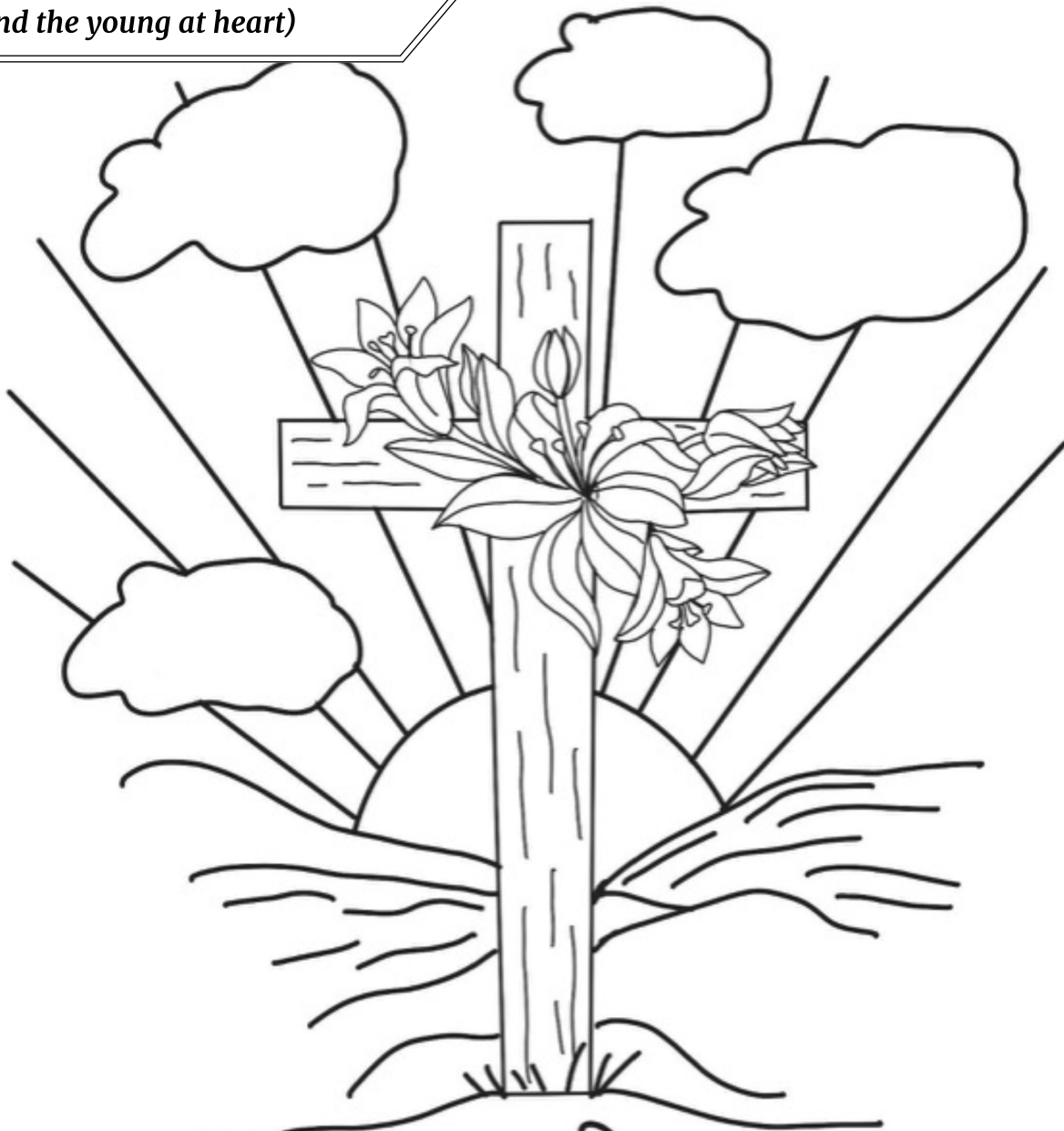


Easter Sunday Morning: Agape Vespers

The Gospel of the Resurrection is read in many languages as the Good News has reached all nations.



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



He is Risen

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