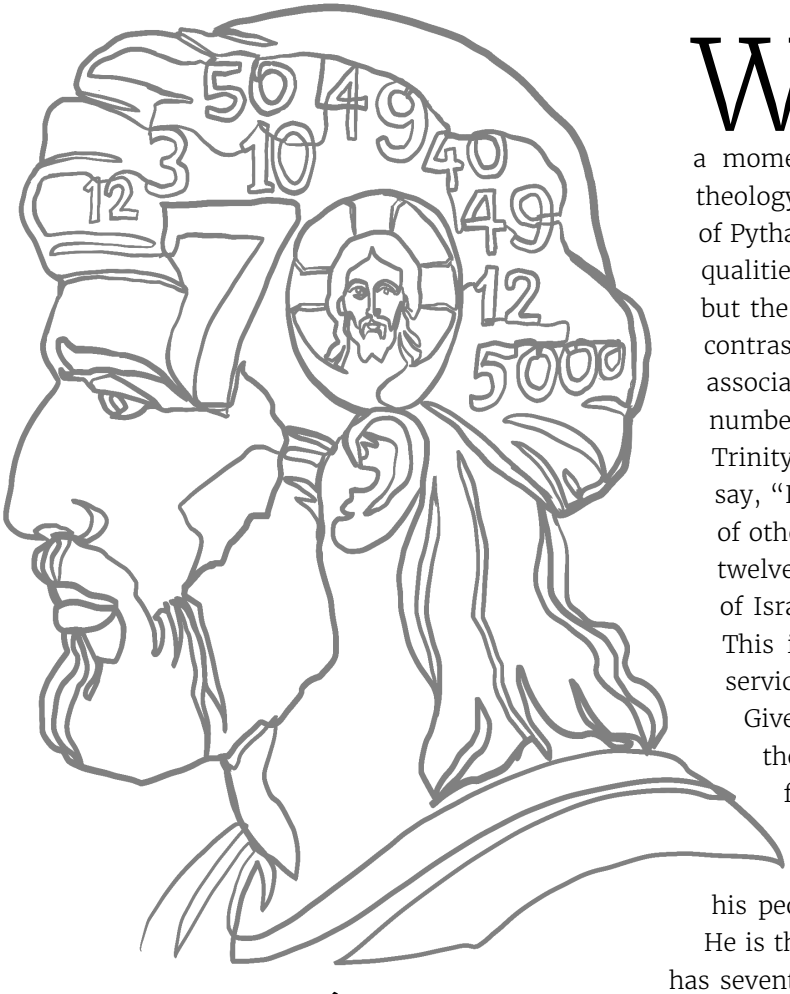
DIAKONIA

A National Ministry of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America

REFLECTIONS FROM TODAY'S READING | *Luke 10:16-21*

Fr. George Parsenios (HCHC '96)



"What's in a number?"

Why are there seventy apostles mentioned in today's Gospel reading? The number 70 is not random, and we do well to reflect on its significance for a moment. Numbers, after all, are important in Christian theology and liturgy, but not like they are in the philosophy of Pythagoras. Pythagoras believed that numbers had mystical qualities, and that numbers were not just abstract concepts but the physical building blocks of reality. For Christians, by contrast, certain numbers are important because they are associated with principal moments of divine revelation. The number three, for example, can signify our belief in the Holy Trinity. For this reason, in our liturgical life we very often say, "Lord, have mercy" three times, and we perform a host of other ceremonial actions three times as well. The number twelve is equally important, because there were twelve tribes of Israel, and there were twelve original disciples of Christ. This is why we say, "Lord, have mercy" twelve times in services like Orthros, Great Compline, and many others. Given the importance of these other numbers, what is the significance of the number 70? Two key issues are foremost. First, Moses had a council of seventy elders around him when he led the people of Israel (Numbers 11:16–17). God promised that he would raise up for his people a prophet like Moses, and Jesus is that prophet. He is the "New Moses." If Moses had seventy advisors, Jesus has seventy as well. With a different emphasis, Genesis 10 lists seventy descendants of Noah which means that the world is divided into seventy different nations of people. When Jesus sent out seventy apostles, he symbolized that he was sending his emissaries to every nation of the earth. The seventy of today's Gospel, therefore, is a very important and noteworthy number.

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

Diakonia *is made possible by a generous grant from* ***Leadership 100***

Scan for today's service text

bit.ly/parishtexts

FROM THE ORIGINAL GREEK: Apologia (Ἀπολογία)

What does "Apology" mean?

Fr. George Parsenios (HCHC '96)

The Greek term ***apologia*** means something very different from what we imply today by the word "apology." When we apologize for something in English, we express regret for having done it. The Greek sense of "apology" is not an expression of regret, but the opposite. An apology is a defense, an affirmation. Plato and Xenophon gave the title "Apology" to the speech that Socrates delivered to the Athenian jury that convicted him of impiety and sentenced him to death. In keeping with this ancient sense of the word, Christians have long referred to the defense of their faith as "apologetics." ***Apologia*** appears in this usage in the New Testament, as in 1 Peter 3:15: "Always be prepared to make a defense (apologia) to anyone who calls you to account for the hope that is in you." St. Paul also speaks before the governor in Acts 24:10 by saying, "I make my apology," when he responds to accusations about his faith. St. Justin Martyr (150 AD) is recognized as the first dedicated Christian apologist. He wrote two extensive works (*First* and *Second Apologies*) to defend Christianity against its pagan detractors, as well as his *Dialogue with Trypho* to counter Jewish criticism.

St. John of Kronstadt, c. 1890. Public Domain.

THIS WEEK'S LOOK AT CHURCH HISTORY

St. John of Kronstadt

Ben Malian, MTS-Holy Cross 2026

Archpriest John Ilyich Sergiyev, better known as St. John of Kronstadt (d. 10/31/1908), was a leading light of the Orthodox Church in the early 20th Century. A powerful preacher, service-minded pastor, and celebrated wonderworker, he was a married priest serving St. Andrew's Cathedral in Kronstadt, the gritty naval community off St. Petersburg's coast.

There, Fr. John initiated a spiritual revival rooted in the frequent practice of confession and communion. He also opened the "House of Industry," a multi-faceted social relief organization which routinely aided thousands of poor and vulnerable Russians. His spiritual memoir composed during these years, ***My Life in Christ***, is still considered a classic of its genre.

Fr. John's idiosyncrasies lent him an undeniable charisma. He earned the reputation of a holy man throughout Russia, the Orthodox East, and, eventually, the wider world. In 1894, he was summoned to the deathbed of Tsar Alexander III, cementing thereafter his close personal relationship with the Royal Family. Even young St. Silouan, before embarking for Mt. Athos, ventured to Kronstadt to receive this holy man's blessing.

Diakonia *is made possible by a generous grant from* ***Leadership 100*** | ***L100.org***

THE EUCHARIST:

Holy Communion

Father Steven Tsichlis, MDiv-Holy Cross 1978

In the Liturgy of the Eucharist, the Lord Jesus gives us everything, giving Himself completely to us. The Word of God not only became flesh for us centuries ago in a far-away country; the Word of God becomes food and drink for us now at every celebration of the Liturgy. The word that best expresses this mystery of God's total offering of Himself to us in love is ***communion***. This is the word that best contains the truth that, in and through Jesus, God wants not only to teach us, instruct us and inspire us, but He wants to become one with us. God desires to be fully and completely united with us so that we will be bound together with Him in a love that will stretch into eternity. This is what St. Paul means when he speaks of life "in Christ" (Galatians 1:22 and 2:20; 1 Corinthians 15:22; Romans 8:1).

Living a Eucharistic Life is living with gratitude as the basic stance to the life we have been given. Ultimately, the Liturgy summarizes the life we are called to live in communion with God and is, among other things, a school for Christian living. Within the Liturgy we come to know God, the world, and ourselves through Christ in the Holy Spirit, because the Liturgy communicates the meaning and purpose of life and helps us to understand and internalize both the tragedy of the human condition as well as the limitless expanse and potential of the new life in Christ offered freely to everyone.

Living in a Eucharistic way has everything to do with seeing life as a gift, a gift for which we are forever grateful. It is, after all, not happy people who are grateful, but grateful people who are happy. There should never be a Liturgy that we attend in which we do not come away with this insight for living. There should never be a time that we attend Liturgy when there is not a movement of our heart: from a hardened heart to a grateful heart, from a heart of stone to a heart of flesh, from a heart often filled with resentment or anger or self-righteousness to a heart filled with gratitude, compassion, faith, hope, and love.

FAITH IN ACTION

As you receive Christ in Holy Communion, let your heart move from gratitude to action, bringing His love, compassion, and hope into someone's life this week.

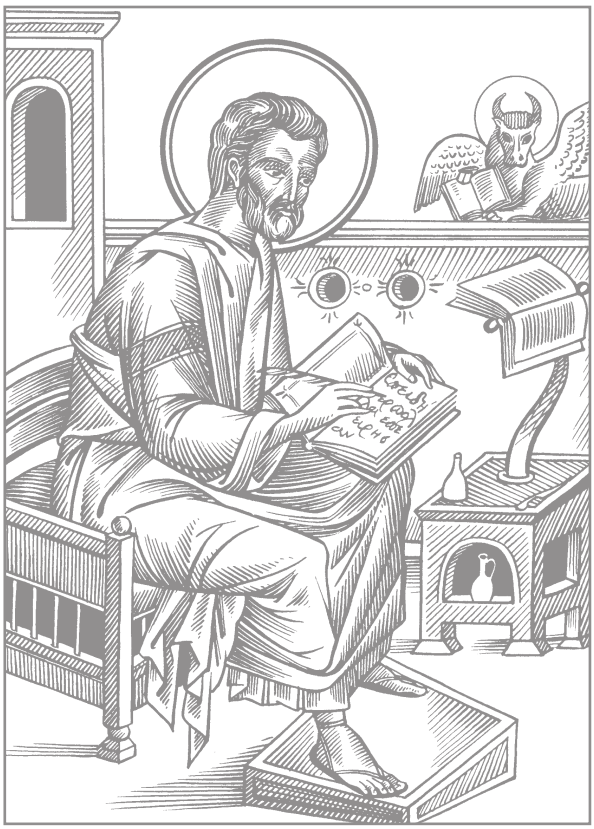
Diakonia *is made possible by a generous grant from* ***Leadership 100*** | ***L100.org***

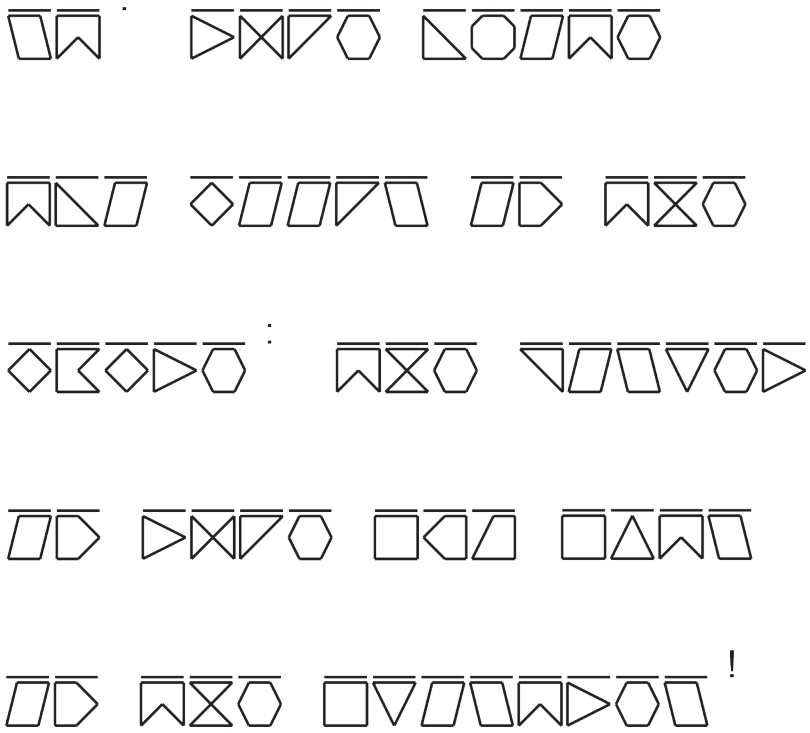
Just For Kids!
(...and the young at heart)

CRACK THE CODE

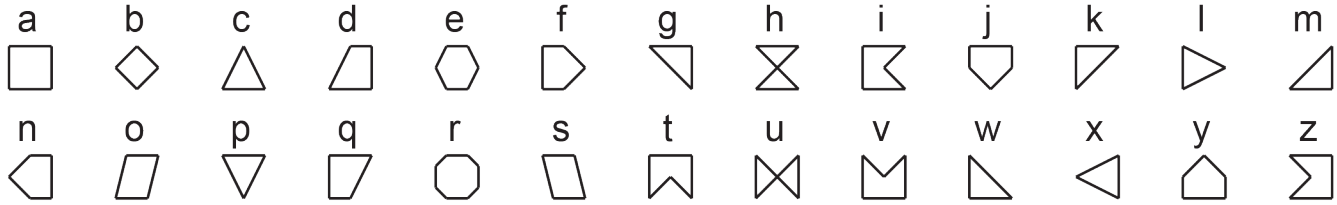
St. Luke the Evangelist

Today, we celebrate St. Luke the Evangelist who was a faithful follower of Christ. Can you crack the secret code and uncover a special fact about this beloved saint? Put your detective skills to work and see how much you can discover about St. Luke! Use the code key to match each symbol with the correct letter of the alphabet. Write the letters in the spaces provided to reveal the hidden fact about St Luke!





CODE KEY:



SECRET MESSAGE: *St. Luke wrote two books of the bible: The Gospel of Luke and The Acts of The Apostles!*

Diakonia *is made possible by a generous grant from* ***Leadership 100***