Sunday, June 28, 2026 | The Fourth Sunday of Matthew

DIAKONIA

A National Ministry of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America

REFLECTIONS FROM TODAY'S READING | ***Matthew 8:5-13***

"Seek the good of the city"

Fr. George Parsenios

The Roman centurion in today's Gospel reading shocks Jesus, because the centurion has more faith than anyone in Israel. Most modern readers are less shocked, because we do not understand what a Roman centurion was. A centurion was an army officer whose authority extended over 100 men (a century), which was a basic unit in the Roman military. Roman centurions were the tip of the Roman spear of occupation over the Jewish people. The Roman army was not only respected and feared; it was often violent and oppressive. Ancient inscriptions tell us, for instance, how Roman soldiers would force local civilians into carrying their packs or weapons. Jesus seems to have precisely this in mind when he says that, if someone forces you to walk one mile with him, you should walk two (Matthew 5:41). Centurions were the face of this oppressive force. Nor is the centurion in today's Gospel reading the only one who turns to Christ. Another centurion stands at the foot of the cross and confesses Jesus to be the Christ (Mark 15:39), and yet another one, named Cornelius, converts to Christianity under the guidance of St. Peter (Acts 10). There was no one more hostile in Judea than the Roman army, but three of its chief representatives were converted and followed Christ. We should cherish this truth in our current environment. We live in an age that is increasingly hostile to the Christian message. We cannot allow this opposition to quiet our witness or discourage our faith. Christianity entered a hostile world that killed the Savior. But he rose from death and converted that world. Let us face the world with confidence and zeal to go and do likewise.

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***

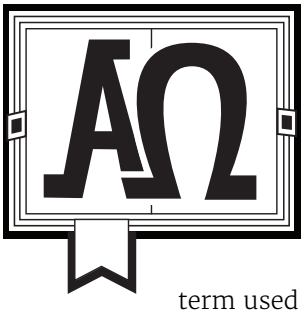
Scan for today's service text

bit.ly/parishtexts

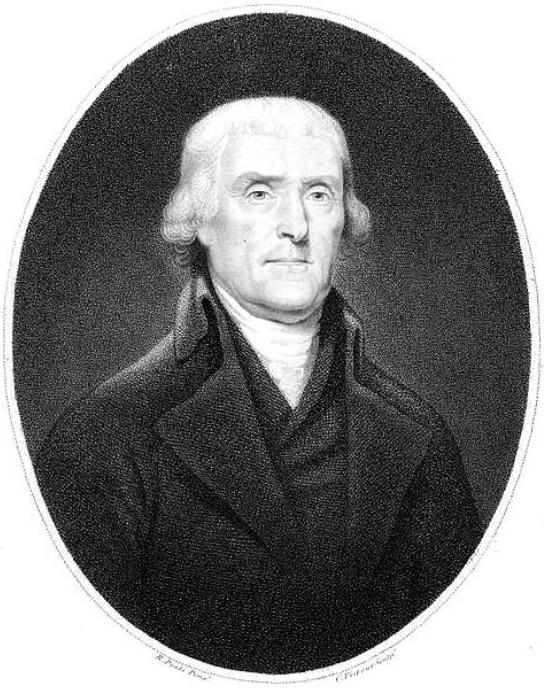
FROM THE ORIGINAL GREEK: Eucharist (εὐχαριστία)

What does "Eucharist" mean?

Fr. George Parsenios



The term ***εὐχαριστία/Eucharist*** has a very special place in Christian worship. The noun ***εὐχαριστία/Eucharist*** means "thanksgiving" and comes from the verb ***εὐχαριστῶ***, which means "I am thankful." The word ***εὐχαριστία/eucharist***/thanksgiving is a term used by the earliest Christians to refer to Holy Communion. We see this already in a first century document called the ***Didache*** (9:1) which was written roughly at the same time as some New Testament writings. Holy Communion is called the act of "thanksgiving" because Jesus presided over the Last Supper by "giving thanks" (Luke 22:17). When St. Paul describes the Eucharist in ancient Corinth by reciting what Jesus did at the Last Supper, he repeats Jesus' actions by saying, "when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body which is for you (1 Cor 11:23-24)." We continue to call Holy Communion "thanksgiving" because when we receive it, we express our thanks to God for sending his Son Jesus to reunite our fallen humanity to divine glory. In the Eucharist, therefore, we both experience union with God through partaking of the body and blood of Christ, and at the same time we return a thank-offering to the God who has wrought this great salvation for us.



THOMAS JEFFERSON.

THIS WEEK'S LOOK AT CHURCH HISTORY

Early American Philhellenism

Ben Malian, MTS

When the Greek War for Independence broke out on the Feast of the Annunciation in 1821, the United States of America was nearing the fiftieth anniversary of its unprecedented experiment in democratic self-governance. Many Greek revolutionaries were understandably captivated by the American struggle for independence and the almost mythic status of its leading figures.

In 1823, a remarkable exchange of correspondence occurred between Adamantios Koraes, one of the leading Greek intellectuals of the age, and Thomas Jefferson. Responding to Koraes' plea for American support, Jefferson wrote: *"No people sympathize more feelingly than ours with the sufferings of your countrymen, none offer more sincere and ardent prayers to heaven for their success: and nothing indeed but the fundamental principle of our government, never to entangle us with the broils of Europe, could restrain our generous youth from taking some part in this holy cause."*

While the U.S. never materially supported the Greek revolution, numerous American philhellenes were personally involved in the struggle, seeing it both as their Christian duty and more broadly as a humane endeavor.

Thomas Jefferson.NY Public Library, Public Domain

AN OFFERING

Doing Our Best For Christ

Photographer: Dimitrios Panagos

Fr. Jim Kordaris

There is a simple truth passed down through generations: "Do the best you can—where you are, with what you have, now." In the Orthodox Christian life, this is not merely good advice; it is a way of discipleship. We see it clearly in the Gospel when Christ feeds the five thousand. A young boy brings forward what little he has—five loaves and two fish. It seems insignificant. Yet because it is offered with sincerity, it becomes the beginning of a miracle.

Like the disciples, we are often tempted to think in terms of limits. We measure what we have—our time, our energy, our resources—and conclude that it is not enough. But Christ does not ask us for what we do not have. He asks a different question: "What do you have?" And then He invites us to bring it to Him.

In every Divine Liturgy, we live this same mystery. We bring bread and wine—simple gifts of the earth and of human labor—and offer them to God. Through the Holy Spirit, Christ returns them to us as His very Body and Blood. What we offer is small; what He gives is beyond measure. The same is true of our lives. When we offer ourselves—our efforts, our struggles, even our weaknesses—God receives them and transforms them.

We give with joy because we have already received everything from God. As Saint Paul reminds us, we give "as God has prospered us," trusting that generosity opens our hearts to deeper communion with Him. You cannot outgive God. Saint Gregory the Theologian teaches that everything we offer already belongs to Him. Yet He delights in our offering because it is an expression of love and trust.

You may feel that what you can offer is small. That is enough. Bring it to Christ anyway. Offer your time, your talents, your presence, and your prayers. Do the best you can—right now, right where you are—and leave the rest to Him.

TODAY, TAKE ONE CONCRETE STEP

Offer something intentionally to God—your time, your help to someone in need, your prayer from the heart—and place it in His hands. Watch how He multiplies it.

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

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

COLORING PAGE
Saints Peter and Paul

Saints Peter and Paul loved Jesus with all their hearts and helped share His love with the whole entire world! Peter was a fisherman, and Jesus called him while he was working by the sea. Peter left his nets to follow Jesus right away. Eventually, Jesus made him a leader of the Church. Paul started out not knowing Jesus, but when he met Him, his life changed forever! He traveled far and wide teaching others about Christ. He wrote many books of the Bible that we hear today! In this icon, Saints Peter and Paul are giving each other a big hug. This hug shows love, peace, and friendship! We celebrate them on June 29.

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