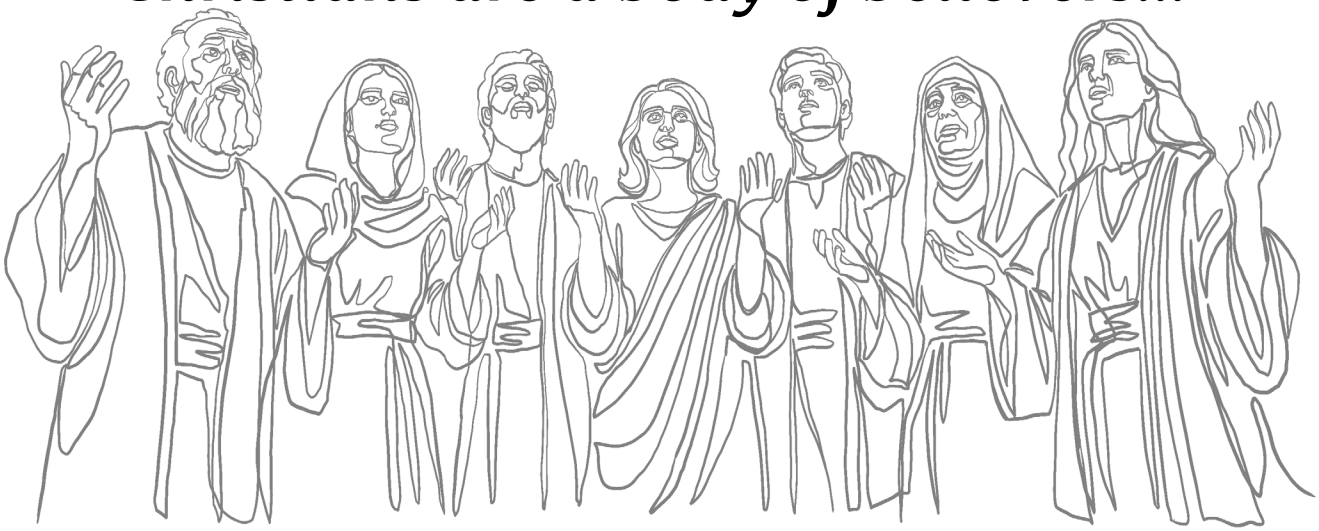
DIAKONIA

A National Ministry of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America

REFLECTIONS FROM TODAY'S READING | ***Romans 12:6-14***

"Christians are a body of believers..."



Fr. George Parsenios (HCHC '96)

In an age of "Internet Orthodoxy," many people try to live the Christian life without joining an actual Church community. In today's epistle reading, however, St. Paul teaches that the Christian life requires us to join a fellowship of believers. We see this in three different ways. First, no single person possesses every Christian virtue. Today's reading opens by explaining that each one of us receives a different gift in proportion to God's grace. Some people excel at serving their neighbors humbly, while others serve as leaders with gifts for exhortation and encouragement. One person may "be constant in prayer," while another person has the gift of teaching. No single person has all these gifts. If we follow Christ by ourselves, then we follow him incompletely. Second, even if a single person were blessed and skilled enough to accomplish everything necessary, how would he have the time? In the Long Rules #7, St. Basil the Great recognizes that devotion to one task invariably means neglect of others. If a person is fully devoted to teaching, how can he at the same time be available to show hospitality? How can one person be constant in prayer while also exhorting others or giving aid to those in need? Each day has only so many hours. If we are to accomplish all that is required, then we must work collectively, not individually. Finally, many Christian virtues require a neighbor to practice them. How can we show hospitality if we never encounter other people? How can we forgive our neighbor if there is no one around us to cause offense? Even monasteries base individual effort in collective striving. Monks and nuns each have different gifts, and like the rest of us they must exercise those gifts in community, not in isolation.

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

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FROM THE ORIGINAL GREEK: Synkatabasis (Συγκατάβασις)

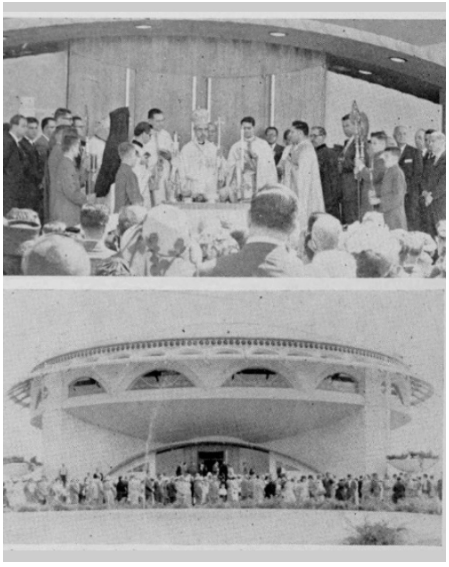
What does "Condescension" mean?

Fr. George Parsenios (HCHC '96)

Condescension is generally seen as a bad thing, because it usually implies that a person is patronizing others by treating them as lower or less important. It is surprising, therefore, that our liturgical texts regularly say that God has "condescended" to his people. The Greek term translated into English as "condescension" is ***συγκατάβασις*** (***synkatabasis***). To the Church Fathers, ***synkatabasis*** is not an insult, but an expression of God's overwhelming love, especially in the Incarnation of Christ. The prefix syn means "with," and ***katabasis*** means "descent." God, therefore, does not stand separate and apart from our weakness. Rather, when Jesus Christ appeared on earth, God "descended" and he was "with us." As we ourselves spread the Gospel, we must imitate this divine condescension and "become all things to all people" (1 Corinthians 9:22). There is only one Gospel, but human beings are all different. No physician treats every patient the same way, and no teacher teaches all students the same way. For the Church Fathers, God is the wise teacher and skilled physician who "condescends" differently to every human being. We must do likewise. ***Synkatabasis***, therefore, is not condescension in the arrogant sense. It is God's loving method to bring the proper spiritual cure to each spiritual illness.

THIS WEEK'S LOOK AT CHURCH HISTORY

Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church, WI



Clipping from the September 1961 issue of the Orthodox Observer.

Ben Malian, MTS-Holy Cross

On July 2nd, 1961, Archbishop Iakovos of North and South America celebrated the first Divine Liturgy at Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church in Wauwatosa, Wisconsin. Like many other mid-century Orthodox communities, Milwaukee's Annunciation parish—one of the nation's oldest, established in 1904—transitioned from its original, 1914 church building located downtown to a new home in the city's western suburbs. What made this move especially unique, however, was the new church's architect: Frank Lloyd Wright.

A Wisconsin native, Wright designed just five religious buildings across a seventy-year architectural career. Reportedly aided by his wife, who was raised as an Orthodox Christian in Montenegro, Wright reimagined the Byzantine "cross-in-square" motif for Annunciation—the church's dual-level, wholly circular nave is capped by a 106-foot-wide dome.

One of Wright's last major commissions, planning for Annunciation began in 1956. In fact, Wright did not live to see his "little St. Sophia" finished, passing away in 1959 at the age of ninety-one. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1974, Annunciation remains an active place of worship serving Milwaukee's Greek Orthodox community.

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THE DIVINE LITURGY:

An Overview Part II

Fr. Thomas FitzGerald, ThD

In the early Church, only those who were baptized were permitted to remain for this most solemn part of the Liturgy. The Great Entrance with the gifts marks the beginning of this part of the Liturgy, as the offering of bread and wine is brought by the priest from the preparation table, through the nave, to the altar table.

Before the offering can proceed, however, we are called upon to love one another so that "with one mind we may confess" our faith. In the early Church, the kiss of peace was exchanged at this point. After the symbolic kiss of peace, we join together in professing our faith through the words of the Creed.

Only then can we offer our gifts of bread and wine to the Father as Jesus directed us to do in His memory. This offering is one of great joy, for through it we remember the mighty actions of God from whom we have received the gift of salvation. We invoke the Holy Spirit upon ourselves and upon our offering, asking God that the bread and wine become for us the body and blood of Jesus Christ. Through our thanksgiving and remembrance, the Holy Spirit reveals the presence of the Risen Christ in our midst. The priest comes out from the altar through the holy doors with the Chalice, inviting the congregation to draw near with "reverence of God, with faith, and with love." Our sharing in the Eucharist (Holy Communion) not only expresses our fellowship with one another, but also our unity with God in His Kingdom. We approach the Holy Gifts and receive the Eucharistic bread and wine from the common chalice. The priest distributes Holy Communion by means of a communion spoon. Since Holy Communion is an expression of our Faith, reception of the Holy Gifts is open only to those who are baptized, chrismated, and practicing members of the Orthodox Church.

The Liturgy comes to an end with the prayer of thanksgiving and the benediction. At the conclusion of the eucharist, the congregation comes forward to receive a portion of the liturgical bread, the "*andidoron*," which is the part that remains from the offering.

ACTION ITEM

In the Divine Liturgy, intentionally pray the words as your priest says, "Let us love one another, that with one mind we may confess," and silently ask God to help you grow in love for every person standing around you before the Creed is recited.

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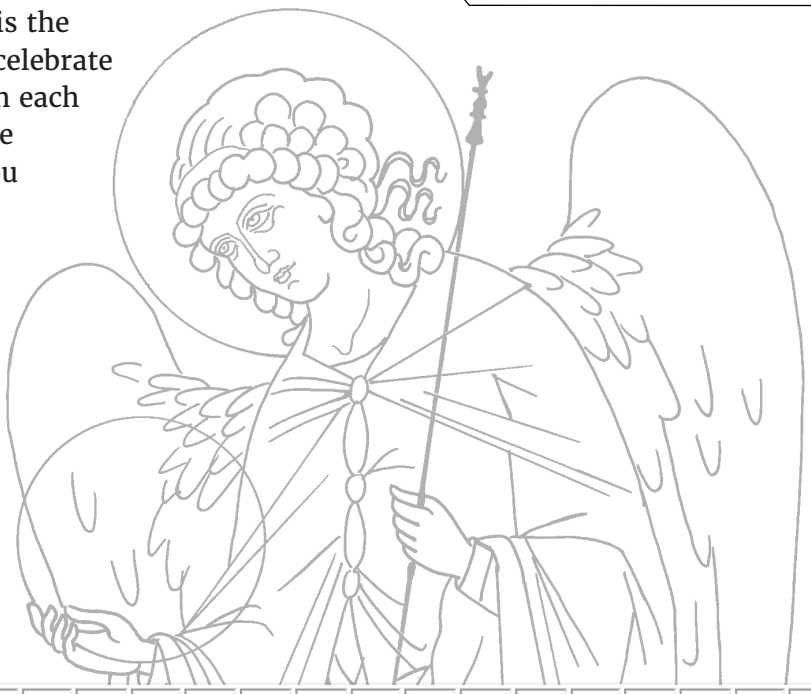
WORD SEARCH

Cryptogram

Just For Kids!

(...and the young at heart)

Put your decoding skills to the test! Hidden inside this cryptogram is the name of someone who we will celebrate tomorrow. Use the key to match each number to a specific letter. Once you crack the code, see what you can learn about them!



Cryptogram Key

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z
25	8	11	4	21	20	6	14	2	3	24	18	9	26	22	16	19	17	10	23	5	1	15	7	13	12

Secret Message:

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