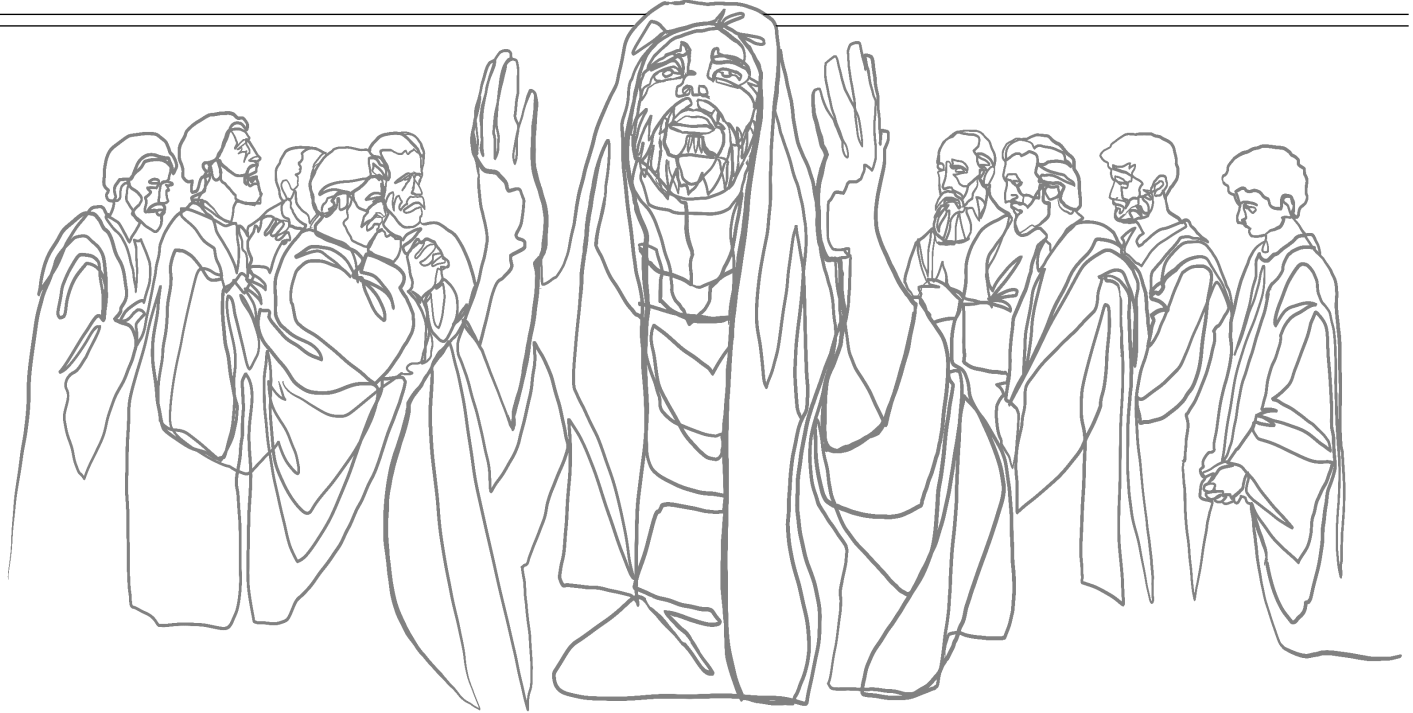




DIAKONIA

A National Ministry of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America



REFLECTIONS FROM TODAY'S READING - *John 17:1-13* | Fr. George Parsenios

Today's Gospel reading from John 17 is the concluding section of the long Farewell Discourse that Jesus delivers in John 13-17. Two things deserve attention from this discourse. First, Jesus bids farewell to his disciples in the same way that Old Testament patriarchs do prior to their deaths. Moses and others consoled their followers, offered commandments to live by, and reminded their followers of God's plans. Jesus follows this pattern closely. Second, the farewell of Jesus differs from other biblical farewells in that Jesus stresses his continuing presence even more than his departure. Even as he bids them farewell, he emphasizes that he is going nowhere. He washes the disciples' feet, so they "have a part with him" (John 13). They are united to him like branches are to a vine (John 15:5). Even as

they suffer and are hated by the world, their suffering unites them to Jesus, and they will be supported by the Holy Spirit as they suffer (John 15:20). All this recalls Jesus' teaching that as long as we eat his flesh and drink his blood, we abide in him and he abides in us (John 6:54). Even though he says that he is no longer in the world, he still promises to be with us until the end of the age (Matthew 28:20). But the continuing presence of Jesus is not confined to our life on earth. He tells his disciples in John 14:3, "I go and prepare a place for you; I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also." Christ remains with us on earth, while also preparing us to dwell with him forever in heavenly joy. Let us strive ever more to live this heavenly life on earth.

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Diakonia is made possible by a generous grant from Leadership 100

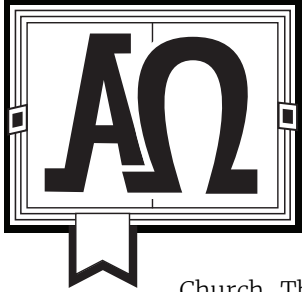
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FROM THE ORIGINAL GREEK: *Episkopos* (Επίσκοπος) What does “Bishop” mean?

Fr. George Parsenios



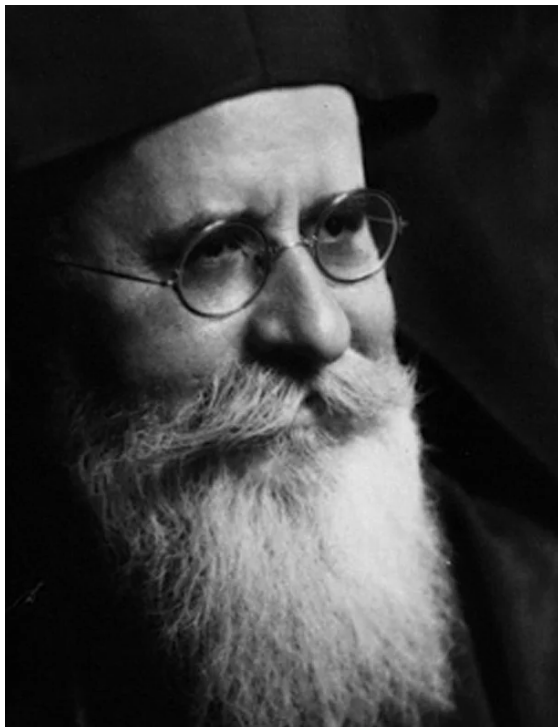
The English word “bishop” comes from the Greek word *ἐπίσκοπος/episkopos*. The Greek term “*epi*” means “over,” and the verb *skopeo* means “to see.” A bishop, therefore, is literally someone who “oversees” (*epi-skopos*) the life of the

Church. The term had a rich history in Ancient Greek. It could be applied to the captain of a ship, who oversaw the safety of his crew; or to various civic officials who oversaw the stability of their cities. The Greek translation of the Old Testament

refers to God himself as an *episkopos* who oversees the health of Israel with complete omniscience (Wis 1:6). In this same spirit, the New Testament refers to Christ as a shepherd and *episkopos* of his flock (1 Peter 2:25). Human bishops take the name *episkopos*, therefore, because they continue Christ’s work of overseeing the Church. When St. Paul bids farewell to the leaders of the Church in Ephesus, he reminds them that the Holy Spirit has made them each a shepherd and overseer (*episkopos*) of Christ’s flock (Acts 20:28). The term “archbishop” (*Αρχιεπίσκοπος*) adds to *episkopos* the prefix *ἀρχι-/arkhi-* which means “first, chief.” An archbishop, therefore, is the ruling or chief bishop over a given region.

THIS WEEK’S LOOK AT CHURCH HISTORY

The Birthday of the Archdiocese



The Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America celebrates its 104th year this month. It was established as the Archdiocese of North and South America on May 17, 1922, following two centuries of Orthodox Christian presence in the Americas and decades of grassroots efforts by Orthodox communities to organize and build churches. The earliest of these communities dates to 1768 in British colonial Florida. At the same time, Orthodox Christian families flourished in Spanish colonial New Orleans, with some later serving in the American revolutionary war. In the waves of immigration that followed the Civil War, thousands of Orthodox Christian immigrants established communities and built houses of worship across America under the guidance of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. As these communities grew in numbers and demand for clergymen increased, efforts to formalize the growing Orthodox Christian presence in America intensified. On May 17, 1922, the Ecumenical Patriarch established the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of North and South America and its constituent dioceses, as sees of the Great Church of Christ.

Archbishop Alexander was the first Archbishop of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America from 1922 - 1930. (Archives - Greek Orthodox Archdiocese)

THE SUNDAY OF The Fathers of the First Ecumenical Council



On the seventh Sunday after Easter, our Church commemorates the Fathers of the First Ecumenical Council in Nicaea. This was not simply a meeting of scholars, but a council of leaders who defended the truth about Jesus. These 318 Fathers stood united against false teaching, preserving the faith passed down from the Apostles. Their work continues to guide the Church—and each of us—toward salvation.

At the center of the conflict was Arius, a man who taught that Jesus was not fully God, but a created being. This teaching spread quickly and caused serious division. This was not a small disagreement. If Jesus is not truly God, then He cannot fully reconcile humanity to God. With courage, humility, and deep faith, they proclaimed together that Jesus is “of one essence with the Father,” fully divine and eternal. From this declaration came the Nicene Creed, which we still proclaim at every Divine Liturgy as a statement of our faith.

This feast speaks directly to our lives today. We live in a world filled with many ideas, beliefs, and distractions that can slowly lead us away from Jesus Christ. Like Arius, we can sometimes be tempted to shape our understanding of God based on our own preferences rather than the truth revealed to us. The Holy Fathers remind us to stay rooted in the faith of the Church, approaching God with humility and obedience.

Saint Constantine’s role in calling the Council also highlights the importance of unity. Unity in the Church is not based on ignoring differences, but on holding firmly to the truth in love. When we allow pride, judgment, or indifference to divide us, we weaken our witness as Christians. We are called to build unity by living faithfully and loving one another.

The icon of this Sunday shows Saint Constantine with the Holy Fathers, all gathered around the text of the Nicene Creed—the Symbol of Faith.

As you reflect on this day, ask yourself: Do I truly live according to what I believe? Does my life reflect my faith in Jesus Christ as true God?



PERSONAL ACTION ITEM

This week, slowly recite the Nicene Creed each day. Take time to think about each line and ask God to strengthen your faith and help you live according to His truth.



**Saints Constantine and Helen
Commemorated on May 21**

Just For Kids!

(...and the young at heart)

Ὁ ἅγιος
ΚΟΝΣΤΑΝΤΙΝΟΣ

Ἡ Ἁγία
ΕΛΕΝΗ
ΝΗ

