



DIAKONIA

A National Ministry of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America

REFLECTIONS FROM TODAY'S READING | *Matthew 4:18-23*

“Be Fishers of Men...”

Fr. George Parsenios

When Jesus calls his disciples in today's Gospel reading, he teaches us something very important about our own life as disciples. At first, his comment about the disciples becoming “fishers of men” seems like a clever play on words. They are fishermen, devoted to gathering fish, but they will now become “fishers of men,” devoted to gathering people into the Church. This play on words is more than casual. It teaches us that our service to Jesus does not mean that we must acquire some new skill or personality. Jesus calls us as we are and then uses the abilities we already have to serve him. A fisherman who knows how to collect fish will now use those skills to gather people. If you are a carpenter, you can use those skills to repair the stairs at your church. If you know how to cook, you can use that skill to provide hospitality in the Church. If you understand finance, you can provide valuable service to the Church in its investment, fundraising or financial planning. But something important should be noted. While we use the skills we already have, we now use them in a new way. A person schooled in business doesn't turn the Church into a business, but rather “baptizes” his business acumen to serve the mission of spreading the Gospel. The person with a lovely singing voice doesn't perform in the choir or at the chanter's stand like an entertainer in a concert, but she baptizes her skills, adapting them to serve the mission of humbly leading the church in prayer. Let us each baptize whatever personal ability or talent we have so that, like the first disciples, we are transformed from fishermen into fishers of men.



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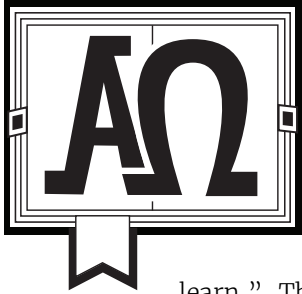
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FROM THE ORIGINAL GREEK: *Mathētēs* (Μαθητής) What is a “disciple” ?

Fr. George Parsenios



The closest followers of Jesus are called “disciples,” where the Greek word for disciple is *μαθητής*/*mathētēs*. *Mathētēs* derives from the ancient Greek verb *manthano* (*mathaino* in Modern Greek), which means “to study” or “to learn.” The most literal sense, therefore, of *mathētēs* is “student,” and the disciples are Jesus’ students. In modern English, because of the unique history of the language, words derived from the Greek root “*math*” are mostly

confined to the study of numbers, as in “mathematics.” In antiquity, however, the word covered all forms of study (as in “polymath”), and it was especially important for describing the intimate relationship between a philosopher and his followers. A *mathētēs* of a philosopher did not simply learn lessons from a teacher like we do in school. The *mathētēs* was supposed to imitate his teacher ethically, as well as transmitting the doctrines of his teacher. It is in this sense that Jesus’ followers are his disciples. They imitate Jesus when they carry their cross as he did (Matt 16:24), and they are required to pass on what they have learned (Luke 9:2). We are also disciples ourselves, so we must go and do likewise.



Icon of the Triumph of Holy Icons provided by Theologic with permission

THIS WEEK’S LOOK AT CHURCH HISTORY The Restoration of Icons

Ben Malian, MTS

Today the Orthodox Church commemorates Patriarch Methodios of Constantinople (+846), a confessor of the faith and defender of holy icons. Born near the turn of the ninth century, Methodios came of age during the second period of iconoclasm under the reign of Emperor Leo V. Twice, Methodios was arrested and imprisoned by imperial authorities as an “iconodule,” or someone who supported the pious veneration of holy images.

When Emperor Leo’s grandson, Michael III, assumed the throne as an infant in 842, his mother and regent, the Empress Theodora, began to arrange for the restoration of icons. As a highly educated and influential iconodule, Methodios was chosen by her to serve as the new Patriarch of Constantinople.

On March 11th, 843, a newly enthroned Patriarch Methodios led a procession of clergy from the church of Blachernae on the walls of Constantinople to Hagia Sophia, where they were greeted by Empress Theodora and the young Emperor Michael. This momentous occasion, with St. Methodios at its center, is commemorated annually during the first week of Lent as the Triumph of Orthodoxy.



OUR CHURCH:

Our Spiritual Home

Fr. Jim Kordaris

Home is safe and familiar. It is where we belong. Our Orthodox Christian Church is our spiritual home. It is a place of prayer, comfort, spiritual healing, and celebration. We are at home in the fragrance of incense, the sound of hymns and prayers, the physical touch of kneeling, bowing and making the sign of the cross, and the taste of Holy Communion and antidoron (the blessed bread). You may have been brought to the Orthodox Church on your 40th day, or the Orthodox Church may have been the destination of your spiritual journey. For all, it is our spiritual home.

One Orthodox Christian author writes about the *Ekklesia* (the Church), “This *Ekklesia* exists when the dispersed, divided, self-preoccupied people unite and become a family, where people see one another as brothers and sisters with God as their common father, and try to share whatever they have and whatever they are, and be united in heart and soul” (P. Faros in *Functional and Dysfunctional Christianity*).

Church is not so much a place as it is what we are together. Our Church is where we turn for comfort, support, and healing. It is where we make true Christian friends that last a lifetime. As Saint Paul writes to the Ephesians, “So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God” (Ephesians 2:19).

We enter our spiritual home not to be entertained, but to be a part of a community of believers. We receive Jesus Christ in Holy Communion. As we pray, worship and serve together, we become His Body. To be a member of the Body of Christ requires our presence and our engagement with one another. We grow spiritually as a family. From our spiritual home we are sent out as “*phosphoroi*”—bearers of His light in the world, setting an example by our mutual understanding and love.

“...in the Church we live eternal life starting from now. We do not simply await the life to come, but we experience and enjoy it from the present. The Kingdom of God, according to the Fathers, is not life beyond the grave but communion with God...”

—Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos



TAKE THE NEXT STEP TODAY

Reconnect. Participate. Serve. Let your life in Christ be renewed—and become a bearer of His light in the world.



Just For Kids!

(...and the young at heart)

Second Sunday of Matthew The Fishers of Men Maze

Can you guide the fisherman through the maze? Watch out for wrong turns and follow the right path as he journeys from his boat to Christ. Along the way, remember Jesus' words from today's Gospel reading: "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men." Let this maze remind us that following Jesus leads to true life!

