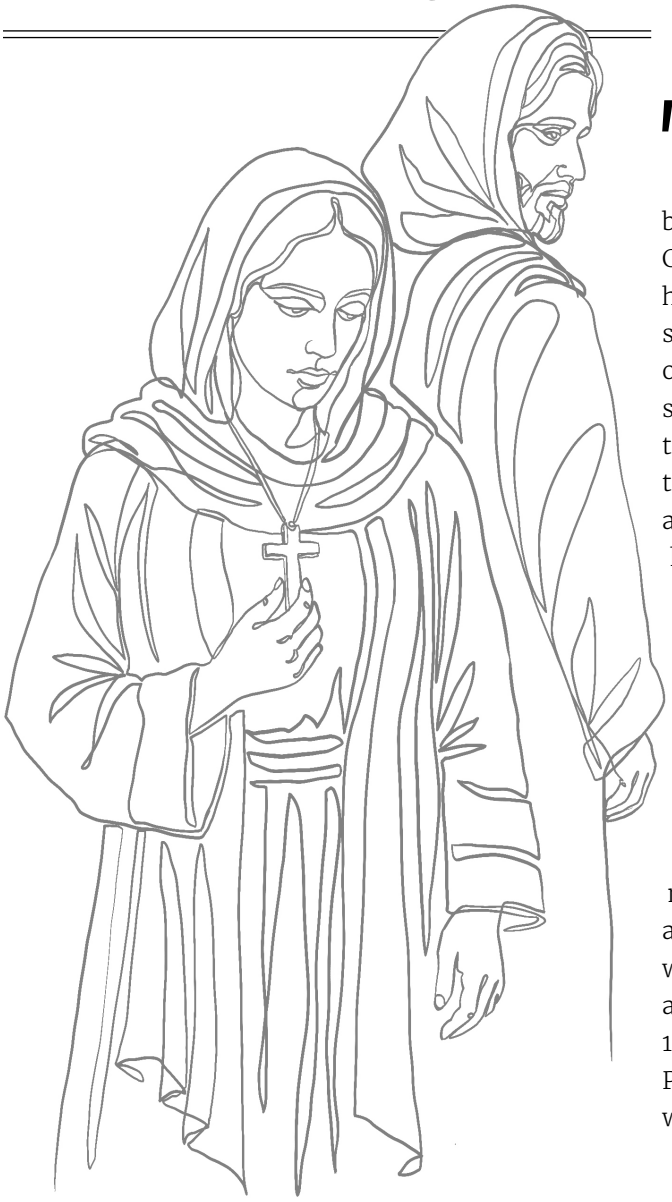
DIAKONIA

A National Ministry of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America

REFLECTIONS FROM TODAY'S READING | ***Galatians 3:23-29; 4:1-5***

"Putting on Christ in Baptism"



Fr. George Parsenios (HCHC '96)

Today's reading from St. Paul's letter to the Galatians contains a phrase that we chant during every baptism in the Orthodox Church: "All you who have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." To "put on Christ" means to wear Christ as a garment. How does that happen, and what does it mean for us? The Bible regularly speaks of wearing certain virtues like a garment. The people of God put on righteousness (Psalm 131:9) or they put on strength (Proverbs 31:25). To put on a virtue in this sense means to manifest that virtue; i.e., to put on righteousness means to be righteous. What, then, does it mean to "put on" Christ? At a minimum, it means to imitate Christ. St. Paul elsewhere urges his readers to "put on the Lord Jesus" after he has exhorted them to avoid licentiousness, quarreling, jealousy, and other vices (Romans 13:14). To put on Christ in this context seems to be an ethical commandment to act virtuously instead of sinfully. Our current passage, however, shows that Paul means much more than this. He does not exhort the Galatians to put on Christ in a time to come. He is stating that they have already put on Christ through baptism. And, if putting on righteousness means to be righteous, then putting on Christ means to be Christ. Christians do not merely imitate Jesus. They are joined bodily to Jesus. St. Paul announces, "It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me." He says elsewhere, "You are the body of Christ and individually members of it" (1 Cor 12:27). Because this is true, we all must take to heart what St Paul urged the Corinthians to do: "Glorify God in your body, which belongs to God" (1 Cor 6:20).

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Scan for today's service text

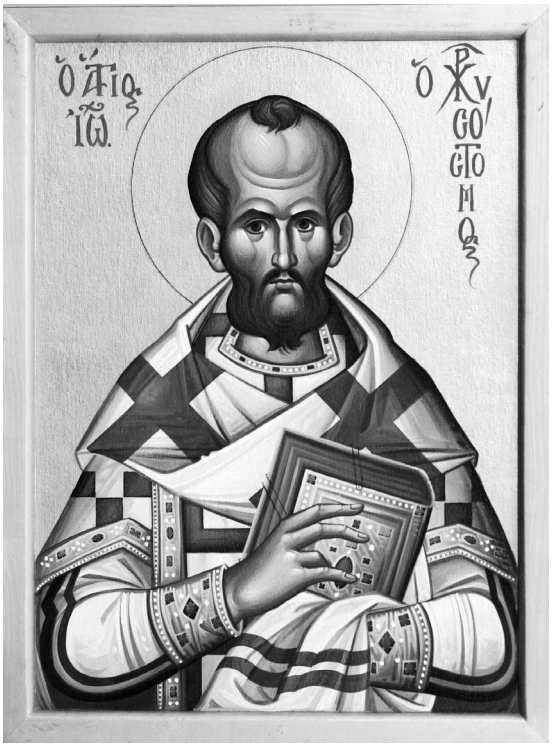
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FROM THE ORIGINAL GREEK: scandal (σκάνδαλον)

What does "Scandal" mean?

Fr. George Parsenios (HCHC '96)

The English term "scandal" refers to a situation that offends our moral sensibilities. The word is derived directly from Greek ***σκάνδαλον/ skandalon***. But the Greek term is more difficult to define. Because the word is rare outside the Bible, translators rely on the context in which it appears in order to understand it. St. Paul says, for instance, that the cross of Christ is a skandalon to Jews who cannot accept a crucified savior (1 Corinthians 1:23). The Gospel of John says that consuming the body and blood of Christ in Communion "scandalizes," since this sounds like cannibalism (John 6:61). A few interpreters look to these examples in order to translate term ***skandalon*** somewhat vaguely as "cause of offense." Other translators are more specific. They note that a word related to ***skandalon*** means the stick in a trap which, when touched, closes the trap. Starting from this sense of stumbling over a wooden stick, these translators render skandalon as "stumbling block." Other translations have been proposed but are highly unlikely. If scholars cannot agree on a specific translation, however, they do agree on the general sense of ***skandalon*** as an obstacle to following God's will.



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THIS WEEK'S LOOK AT CHURCH HISTORY

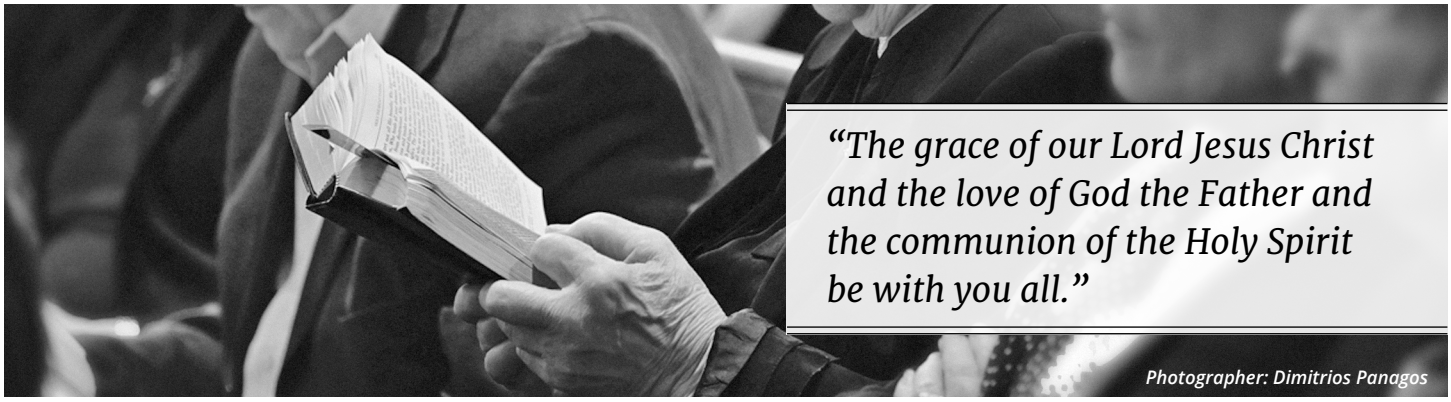
Who was Saint John Chrysostom?

St. John Chrysostom (347-407 AD), the 4th century Patriarch of Constantinople, a saint and Father of the Church, is revered as a preacher, teacher and liturgist. Known for his preaching, he was given the title ***Χρυσόστομος***, which means "man with the golden mouth." During his sermons, his congregation often burst into applause. Eloquent and uncompromising, he spoke out against political and clerical corruption, the conspicuous consumption of the wealthy, and for the needs of the poor. Preaching that "feeding the hungry is a greater work than raising the dead," he initiated ministry to Constantinople's poor, with the Church providing meals for thousands every day. More than 600 of his homilies have survived. The Liturgy that bears his name has changed in several details over the centuries, but the central prayer of the Eucharistic anaphora – prayer of gratitude and offering – goes back to him. He died in 407 while in exile for his preaching against the excesses and corruption of the imperial court. His final words were "Glory to God for everything!"

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Praying the Bible in the Liturgy

Fr. Steven Tsichlis



Orthodox Christians are not merely to read the Bible; we are also to pray the Bible. This takes place most clearly and completely in the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom. There are two readings from the New Testament during the Liturgy – an Epistle reading from one of the Letters of the apostles; and a Gospel reading from one of the four evangelists. We also pray the Lord's Prayer and sing verses from the Book of Psalms. In the priest's blessing, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God the Father and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all," we hear St. Paul's final farewell to the Church in Corinth (2 Corinthians 13:13). In the choir's singing of "Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God of Sabaoth, heaven and earth are full of Your glory," we hear the song of the angelic cherubim first heard by the Old Testament prophet Isaiah in the Temple in Jerusalem (Isaiah 6:1–5). The prayers of the Liturgy are full of biblical imagery and shot through with hundreds of Biblical quotes. In fact, the late French Orthodox theologian, Paul Evdokimov (1902–1970), once calculated that there are 98 quotations from the Old Testament and 114 quotations from the New Testament woven into the prayers of the Liturgy. The language of the Liturgy is the language of the Bible. To come to Liturgy attentively is to learn to pray the Bible.

"...there are 98 quotations from the Old Testament and 114 quotations from the New Testament woven into the prayers of the Liturgy."

In addition, the priesthood, the vestments, the altar, the tabernacle, the oil lamps, the incense, and so many more of the Church's structures for worship are taken directly from the Old Testament, particularly from the books of Exodus, Leviticus and the Psalms. As the New Testament Letter to the Hebrews teaches, all of these ancient elements of worship in the Temple and the synagogue which we still use to this day in the Liturgy, have now been brought to fulfillment in the life and teaching, crucifixion and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, always pointing to Him.

MAKE IT REAL

Listen carefully for the biblical elements of the Liturgy—whether the Lord's Prayer, a Psalm verse, the Trisagion Hymn, the priest's blessing, or the Gospel reading—and pray it again during your personal prayer, living the Liturgy into your daily life.

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Just For Kids!

(...and the young at heart)

WORD SCRAMBLE

Feeding the 5,000

Unscramble each word related to the miracle of the Feeding of the 5,000. Be sure to listen to your priest read the Gospel because every word can be heard there! If you get stuck, use your bulletin or Orthodox Study Bible to re-read Matthew 14:14-22.

1. BARED _____
2. SJSEU _____
3. ETVFSHUAONDI _____
4. IEFGNED _____
5. SSIILEDPC _____
6. SLDBEES _____
7. OBAT _____
8. OTW _____
9. SFHI _____
10. SFAIESTID _____

ANSWER KEY:
1. BREAD, 2. JESUS, 3. FIVETHOUSAND, 4. FEEDING, 5. DISCIPLES, 6. BLESSED, 7. BOAT, 8. TWO, 9. FISH, 10. SATISFIED

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