



DIAKONIA

A National Ministry of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America

REFLECTIONS FROM TODAY'S READING | *1 Corinthians 16:13-24*

Fr. George Parsenios (HCHC '96)

“Be mature in faith”

In today's epistle reading, St. Paul urges the Corinthians to “stand firm in faith, be courageous, be strong.” One of these admonitions deserves special attention, not only for its importance in Paul's letter, but for its importance today as well. It is the word translated as “be courageous.” The Greek word is *ἀνδρίζεσθε/andrizesthe*, which is based on the Greek word for “man,” *ἀνὴρ/anêr*. By using this word, Paul is not just urging the Corinthians to show manly courage, but more important, to show mature courage. In chapter 3, Paul already had exhorted the Corinthians to be more mature in their faith, lamenting that he had to teach them simply, as though giving milk to babies. And he referred to his own maturation in faith when he said that he acted like a child when he was a child, but when he became a man (*anêr*), he put aside childish ways. By concluding his letter with this same word, he urges the Corinthians to mature from their childish approach to their faith. We, too, must develop a mature faith, which means at least two things. First, we must learn deeply the tenets of our faith. Many of us approach our careers with a mature level of professional seriousness, but when it comes to our faith we remain oddly content to rely on the simple formulations we learned in Sunday School, even though we have access to libraries of books and podcasts could help us learn more. Second, mature faith means more than just knowing doctrines. Our faith is not just what we think, but what we do. As adults, we manage our money, but how much does our faith impact our finances? As adults, we manage our families, but how much does our faith define our families? Let all of us, men and women, strive ever more for a mature faith.



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FROM THE ORIGINAL GREEK: *kathedra* (καθέδρα)

What does “cathedral” mean?

Fr. George Parsenios (HCHC '96)



A cathedral is the chief church of any region, serving as the ecclesiastical center of a bishop in his diocese. Why, though, is a cathedral such an important church and one so closely tied to the bishop?

The name “cathedral” derives from the Greek term *καθέδρα/kathedra*, made up two Greek words. The word *κατά/kata* means “down,” and the term *ἔδρα/hedra* means “chair.” At the most basic level, therefore, a *kathedra* is simply a place to “sit

down,” literally a “chair.” To make the matter even more interesting, our English word “chair” is derived from the Old French shortening of Greek *kathedra*, which was borrowed first into Latin and evolved further in Latin’s daughter languages in Europe. In Christian usage, however, a *kathedra*, is not just any seat: it is the throne of the bishop that is situated behind the altar within the apse of every church. The *kathedra* is reserved exclusively for the presiding hierarch. The primary church in any bishop’s region, therefore, is called his cathedral.



*Primatial concelebration (6/19/2016),
by Dimitrios Panagos. Flickr.*

THIS WEEK’S LOOK AT CHURCH HISTORY

The Holy and Great Council: 10 Years later

In adherence to his centuries-old role as First-Throne beyond national boundaries, as well as his traditional responsibility as facilitator of Orthodox conciliarity and unity, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew convened the Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church in Crete in June 2016 for the sake of presenting a common witness in the contemporary world.

The Council was the culmination of efforts that began in the early twentieth century and developed through decades of Pan-Orthodox conferences and preparation. By January 2016, the agenda had been unanimously approved by all autocephalous Orthodox Churches.

Gathering during the Feast of Pentecost, the Council represented the most significant pan-Orthodox assembly of the modern era. It addressed important topics affecting the life and mission of the Church, including the Orthodox witness in today's world, the Orthodox diaspora, marriage, fasting, and relations with other Christians. Although some Churches did not ultimately participate, the Council proceeded and issued official documents, a Message, and an Encyclical to the faithful throughout the world, encouraging unity, spiritual renewal, and faithful Christian witness.

Ten years later, the Council remains a historic milestone and a notable expression of Orthodox conciliarity in the contemporary age.

SEPTEMBER 1: THE DAY OF PROTECTION OF THE ENVIRONMENT

Stewardship As Creation Care

Excerpted from a longer article by Rev. Dr. John Chryssavgis



When we think of the term stewardship, we frequently consider only matters related to financial support. The prevalent rendering of the term ***oikonomia*** as “stewardship” or “economy” is not very illuminating as it provides both a linguistic as well as conceptual reduction of this critical and originally scriptural word. In so doing, however, we have narrowed the scope of the Bible’s teaching and neglected the depth of our Church’s tradition about our place and role in the world, indeed at a time when such knowledge is more vital and critical than ever before.

If we turn to the Church Fathers, we see that they attribute the highest importance to ***oikonomia*** (stewardship or economy), which in their eyes implied a broader and more inclusive concept of revelation and salvation, identified with God’s vision and desire to save the whole world. For our great theological teachers and spiritual masters, economy in fact refers to our very salvation by the all-embracing love of God for all humankind and to the universal compassion of the Creator for all creation. Somewhere along the line, we unfortunately shrunk the theme of “stewardship” to purely monetary terms that primarily include making contributions to philanthropic organizations – probably as a result of a narrow interpretation of scripture, and possibly as a result of the rigid focus of modern society.

All of this invariably affects not just our understanding of the moral obligation that we have toward one another as human beings, but also inevitably distorts the worldview that shapes our moral responsibility toward creation. By limiting our attention to divine commandments for human compassion, we have invariably excised from scripture the clear mandate to creation care. Yet, these two dimensions of Christian

life are integrally interrelated; one cannot envisage human progress without ecological preservation. The way we treat God’s creation in nature essentially reflects the way we respect human beings created “in the image and likeness of God.” The reality is that we should respond to nature with the same tenderness that we are called to respond to people. All of our spiritual activities are ultimately measured by their impact on the natural creation; just as all of our ecological choices are finally evaluated by their effect on the poor.



FAITH IN ACTION

This week, care for God’s creation through one intentional act of environmental stewardship, remembering that the way you treat the natural world reflects your love for God and your respect for every person created in His image.



SEPTEMBER 1

Happy New Year!

Well, *Liturgical New Year*! Did you know the Orthodox Church begins its calendar on September 1? It marks the beginning of the Church's cycle of worship, feasts, fasts, and Scripture readings. How cool is that!? In order to prepare, take some time to draw or write some Liturgical New Year's Resolutions (or goals) based around your walk of faith! Maybe you want to pray more or get to know your patron saint better. Whatever the goal is, hang this in your room and work on it throughout the year!

Just For Kids!

(...and the young at heart)

