

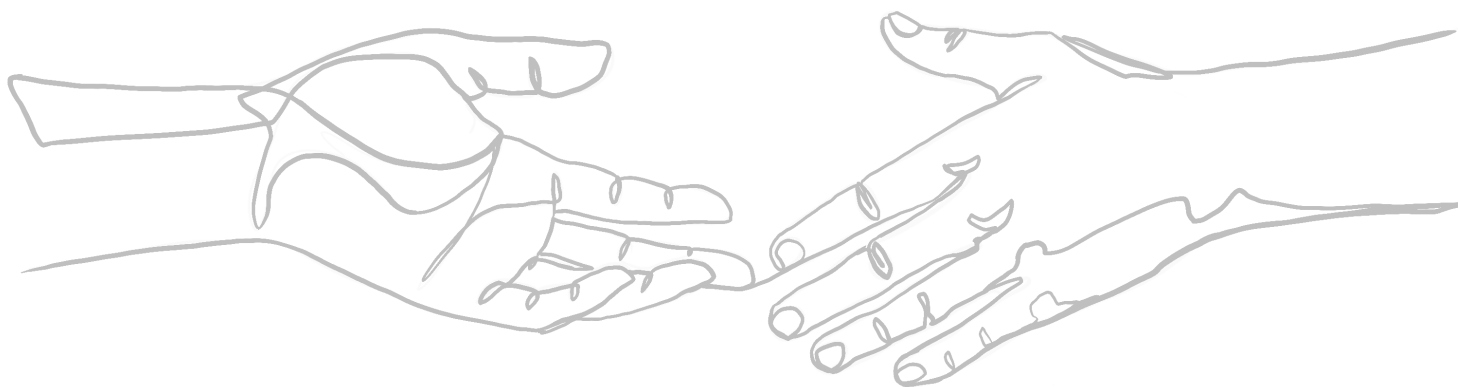


DIAKONIA

A National Ministry of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America

REFLECTIONS FROM TODAY'S READING | *Luke 6:31-36*

Fr. George Parsenios (HCHC '96)



“Love your enemies...”

The most amazing miracles of our Christian faith might not be the ones we think of first. Our minds are drawn to those stunning marvels that violated the laws of nature, as when Jesus walked on water or multiplied loaves and fishes in the wilderness. Today's Gospel reading, though, reveals another kind of miracle that is every bit as stunning and every bit as rare. This type of wonder might not overcome the laws of physics. Rather, it overcomes the norms of human habits and the conventions of human behavior. Jesus tells us to love our enemies and to give to those who cannot return the favor. This teaching is difficult! Obeying it requires a divine power to be at work in our lives, a power no less miraculous than walking on water. Everyone understands that you should

help your friends and not your enemies. Likewise, we all know how to give in order to get something in return. But Jesus shows the world a very different way. After all, he did not die for us because we deserved it, or because we were good. He did not die for us because we could give him anything in return. He died for us because he loves us, period. To be a Christian is to show this same love to the world and to share it, even with those who do not deserve it and who cannot repay it. We cannot do this on our own, but only with a divine power active in our lives. If we wish to follow Christ's teaching in today's Gospel, we must become people of prayer and fasting, in order to make space in our hearts for God's miraculous love and for this generosity to be observed in all we do and say.

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Diakonia is made possible by a generous grant from Leadership 100

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FROM THE ORIGINAL GREEK: Schisma (Σχίσμα)

What does “Schism” mean?

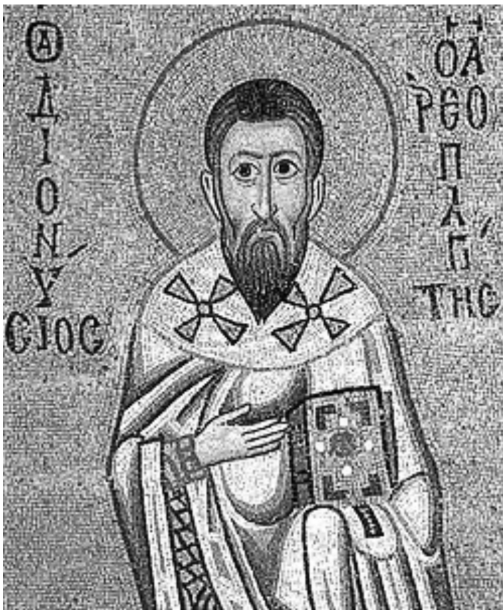
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The word “schism” is commonly used to describe a religious division, but it does not have an inherently religious meaning. The word comes from the Greek verb **schizō**, which has both a

strong and a weak sense. The strong sense refers to violent acts that split a thing in two, as when a storm at sea “slices” a boat in half or an axe “tears apart” a piece of wood. The weaker sense is used by Greek writers to describe less violent things, as when the Nile “divides” Egypt into two parts. The

stronger sense is much more common in biblical usage. Jesus says, for instance, that putting new wine into old wineskins will “rip apart” the wineskins, and that the veil in the temple is “ripped” from top to bottom at the crucifixion. The term takes on our common sense of describing religious division when St. Paul refers to the schisms dividing the Church in Corinth (1 Cor 1:10; 11:18). Schism is distinguished from heresy by the Church Fathers, because heresy involves false teaching, while a schism is a division in the Church over politics or personalities that does not necessarily involve a deviation from true belief.



11th Century mosaic of St. Dionysios. Hosios Loukas Monastery, Greece. Public Domain.

THIS WEEK’S LOOK AT CHURCH HISTORY

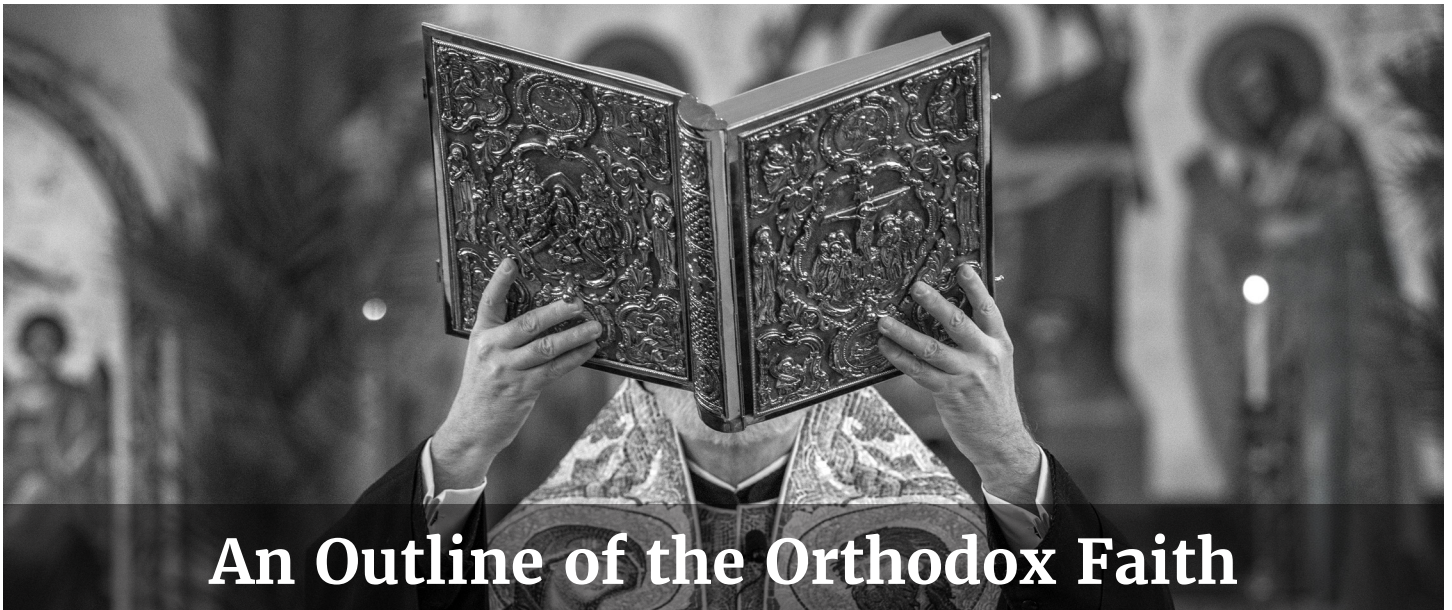
St. Dionysios the Aeropagite

Ben Malian, MTS-Holy Cross 2026

Few figures in Church history have been more influential yet personally elusive as St. Dionysios the Aeropagite, whose feast day is celebrated October 3rd. Following St. Paul’s famous oration before “the philosophers” in Athens, we are told “some men joined him and believed, among them Dionysios the Areopagite” (Acts 17:34). Church tradition maintains that Dionysios, a judge in the Areopagus—the open-air law court just beneath the Acropolis—soon became Athens’ first bishop.

Centuries later, some remarkably sophisticated theological texts began circulating under the name of Dionysios the Aeropagite. While doctrinal debates divided the Christian East, the Dionysian corpus seemingly provided an ancient and authoritative source of right belief, one whose adoption subsequently influenced both Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic theology.

Since the 15th Century, however, scholars have been split regarding the authenticity of the Dionysian corpus. It is certain, nevertheless, that the Orthodox Church has been thoroughly enriched by these texts, whether they are the theological legacy of Athens’ patron saint or the works of a forever faceless, though evidently faithful, 5th century author.



An Outline of the Orthodox Faith

Orthodoxy teaches that God's saving revelation in Jesus Christ is preserved in the living Tradition of the Church through the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Holy Scripture stands at the center of this Tradition as the written witness to God's revelation, while Holy Tradition encompasses the Church's ongoing life and experience under the Spirit's direction.

Orthodox Christians believe in one Triune God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Creation is the work of the Holy Trinity. The world was brought into being by God's wisdom, power, and will. God the Father is the source of creation, while the Son perfects it and the Holy Spirit gives it life. Jesus Christ is truly God and truly man. As the eternal Son of God, He was begotten of the Father before all time and is consubstantial with Him. He fully shares human nature, except for sin. To deny His divinity or humanity is to deny His incarnation and humanity's salvation. The Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father, as affirmed in the Nicene Creed.

The Church was founded by Jesus Christ for our salvation. We share one faith and partake of the same sacraments. We are called to lead lives worthy of God. Orthodox clergy trace an unbroken succession back to the Apostles.

Orthodoxy emphasizes seven sacraments: Baptism, Chrismation (Confirmation), Holy Eucharist, Confession, Ordination, Marriage, and Holy Unction. Baptism is entry into the Church, and Chrismation completes it. In the Eucharist, we receive the true Body and Blood of Christ for forgiveness of sins and eternal life. Through Confession, Christ forgives sincerely repented sins. Ordination conveys divine grace through a bishop's prayer and laying on of hands. Marriage sanctifies the union of husband and wife. Holy Unction brings healing by anointing with blessed oil.

At death, the body returns to the earth. The soul remains conscious and undergoes the Particular Judgment. Our final destiny is revealed at the General Judgment. During the Intermediate State, souls experience a foretaste of blessing or punishment. We honor the saints and seek their intercessions. We venerate icons and relics, directing honor not to the objects themselves but to the holy persons they represent.

Based on a longer article titled, "An Outline of the Orthodox Faith," found on goarch.org (<https://bit.ly/3Td6zUJ>)



FOR REFLECTION

Do my worship, prayer, and daily choices show that I truly believe that Jesus Christ is present and active in His Church and in my life?

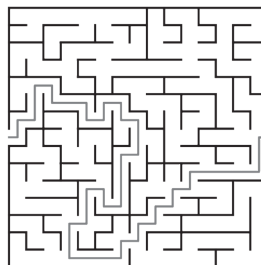
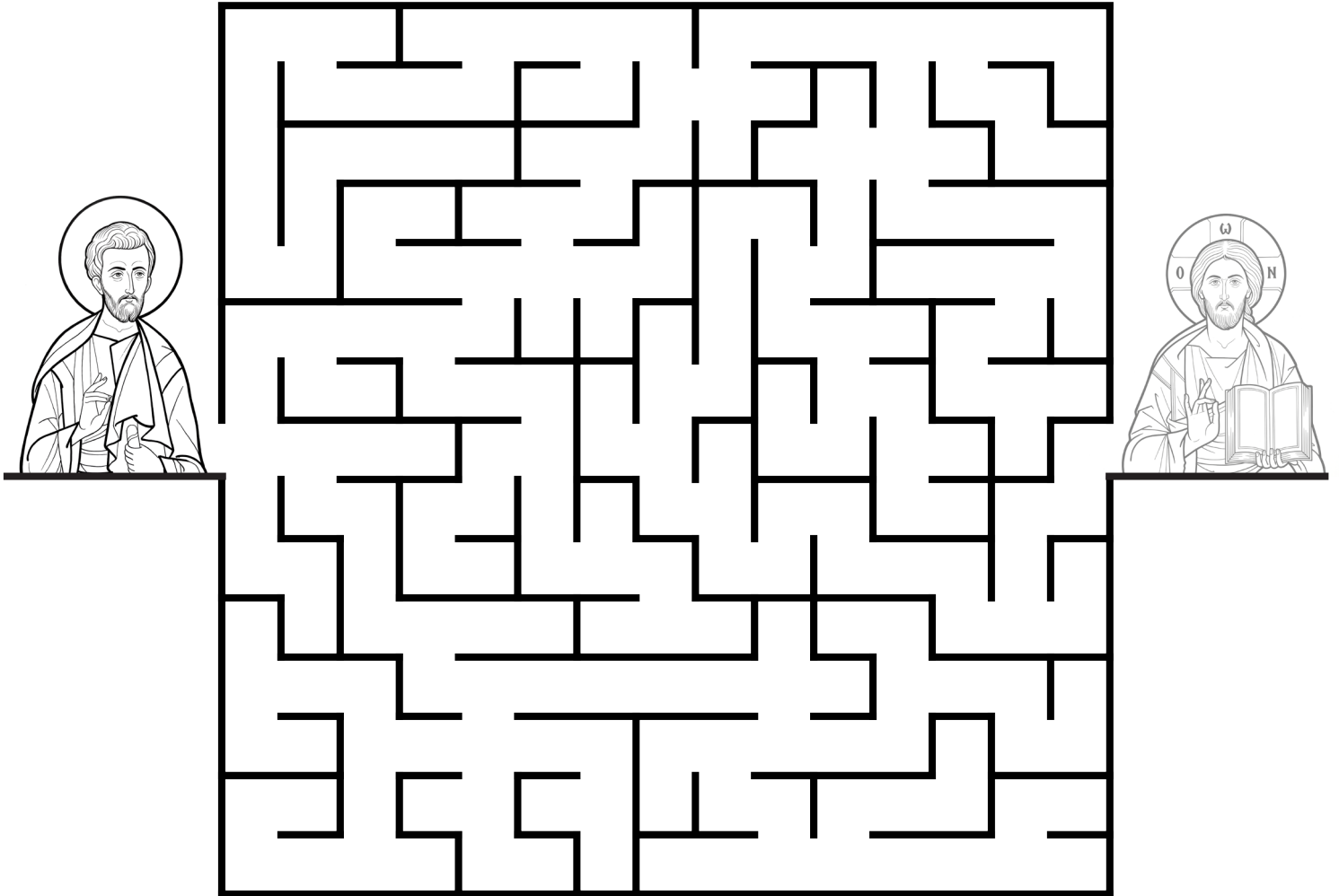


MAZE

St. James the Apostle

On Friday, we celebrate the feast of St. James the Apostle, son of Alphaeus. He was one of the 12 disciples of Christ who loved and followed Him with all his heart. In this maze, help St. James navigate the winding path as he journeys to follow Christ. Along the way, remember that we are also called to follow Jesus through faith, prayer, and obedience!

Just For Kids!
(...and the young at heart)



ANSWER KEY: