



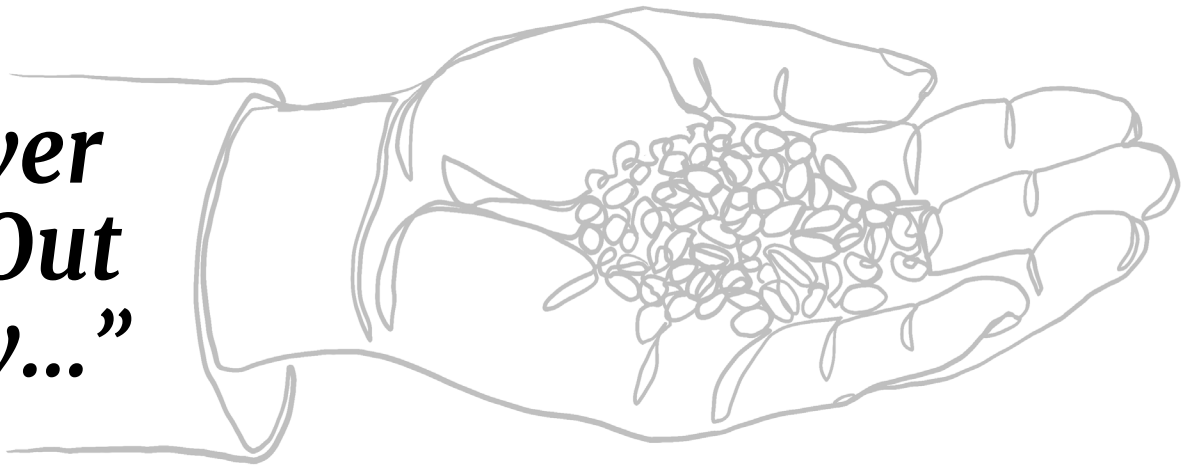
# DIAKONIA

*A National Ministry of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America*

REFLECTIONS FROM TODAY'S READING | *Luke 8:5-15*

Fr. George Parsenios (HCHC '96)

**“A Sower  
Went Out  
to Sow...”**



“**S**eeing they do not see, and hearing they do not understand.” Jesus applies this phrase to his opponents in today’s Gospel reading in order to explain why they heard all that he said and saw all that he did, but then they turned away from him in rejection instead of turning to him in faith. Pontius Pilate, for example, stared into the face of the living God and asked, “What is truth?” He saw. He heard. But he did not believe because his heart was closed to the truth. Seeing, he does not see. Hearing, he does not hear. Such hardness of heart does not apply only to Jesus’ opponents. Our own hearts can be hardened in a similar way: we might appear to be engaging with God and with the people around us, but our actions are empty. Think of how many times you sat in a divine service and were overcome with boredom or

indifference. We say the prayers and we hear their words, but the words mean nothing to us. Praying, we do not pray. Or, think of how many times we deal with members of our families and we say that we love them, but our actions show something else. Loving, we do not love. The same delusion might accompany our service to the Church and to others. We may appear to be performing selfless acts of service for the good of the Church, but all the while our real concern is to be thanked and honored profusely. Serving, we do not serve. To avoid these pitfalls, let us examine our hearts before we act, knowing that we will never be perfectly humble, but striving ever more to be authentic in our Christian faith.

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*Diakonia is made possible by a  
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FROM THE ORIGINAL GREEK: *Daimonion* (Δαιμόνιον)

## What does “Demon” mean?

Fr. George Parsenios (HCHC '96)



The English word “demon” refers specifically to evil spirits or forces, but it has no such negative connotation in pagan religion. Ancient Greeks believed in a sky full of deities, and they

gave the name *daimonion*—or the related term *daimôn*—to the less powerful gods.

Socrates even claimed that a special *daimôn* guided him in moral decisions. Even earlier, Hesiod wrote that “demons” served as personal overseers who brought benefit or harm to the people they supervised.

A fortunate person was said to possess *eudaimonia* which literally meant that he was guided by a “good demon.” When Jews and Christians spoke in the Bible about the gods of the Greeks, however, the term took on an utterly negative sense. For Christians and Jews, the Greek gods were evil forces that seduced people away from honoring the one true God. St. Paul famously reprimanded the Church in Corinth for participating in pagan sacrifices and cultic meals by saying, “You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons” (using *daimonia*, the plural of *daimonion*). Christians, therefore, believe that when pagans worship a *daimonon* and not the one true God, they honor an evil spirit.



17<sup>th</sup> Century Russian icon of the Seventh Ecumenical Council. Public Domain.

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### THIS WEEK'S LOOK AT CHURCH HISTORY

## The Seventh Ecumenical Council

Ben Malian, MTS-Holy Cross 2026

Today the Orthodox Church commemorates the Seventh Ecumenical Council, known also as the Second Council of Nicaea, which convened over several sessions from September 24<sup>th</sup> to October 13<sup>th</sup>, 787.

For decades at that time, imperial policy in the East had been “iconoclastic”: the veneration of icons was blanketly prohibited, and many were simply painted over or destroyed. More than 300 bishops gathered at the Council of Hieria in 754 to endorse imperial iconoclasm and affirm the sophisticated theological arguments of Emperor Constantine V.

Yet by 784, the shrewd Empress Irene and her handpicked Patriarch of Constantinople, St. Tarasios, began spearheading a council whose task would be to defend both the production and veneration of icons. Citing “the divinely inspired tradition of the catholic Church” and underscoring the vital significance of the doctrine of the Incarnation—namely, that icons “provide confirmation that the becoming man of the Word of God was real and not just imaginary”—the Definition promulgated at the Second Council of Nicaea in 787 remains today a remarkable summation of the Orthodox faith.



## OCTOBER IS DISABILITY AWARENESS MONTH: A Simple “Hi” Can Change Everything

**By Presvytera Melanie DiStefano,  
MDiv-Holy Cross**

As Orthodox Christians, we are called not only to believe the Gospel, but to live it. Christ reached out to those who felt overlooked, isolated, or marginalized, reminding us that every person is created in the image and likeness of God. During Disability Awareness Month, we reflect on how we can put our faith into action by creating a more welcoming and inclusive parish community.

The Greek Orthodox Archdiocese’s “Just Say...” campaign begins with a simple but powerful message: **“Just Say Hi.”** While it may seem small, a warm greeting can make a tremendous difference. A smile, eye contact, and a kind “hello” communicate something every person longs to hear: *You belong here.*

Hospitality means respecting one another’s dignity and personal space. Mobility devices, such as wheelchairs, walkers, or canes, are extensions of a person’s independence and should never be leaned on, moved, or handled without permission. Likewise, it is important to avoid touching or hugging someone without consent. Simple acts of respect create an environment where everyone feels valued and safe.

Thoughtful communication is another way we can show Christ’s love. When speaking with a person who is blind or has low vision, adding verbal context can be helpful. For example, rather than silently extending a hand, say, “I am extending my

hand to shake yours.” Clear communication allows everyone to participate more fully in fellowship and parish life.

For individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing, visual forms of communication can make meaningful connections possible. Facing the person when speaking, ensuring visibility for lip-reading, offering a friendly wave, or using a smartphone or notepad to exchange written messages are simple ways to foster connections.

This year’s campaign also encourages us to be comfortable using the word **“disability.”** The term is respectful and widely accepted. Most importantly, we should listen to and honor the preferences of each person. If someone uses a particular term to describe their diagnosis or disability try to respect that choice. When uncertain, it is perfectly acceptable to ask. A sincere question demonstrates a desire to understand.

Putting our faith into action does not require grand gestures. Often, it begins with a greeting, a respectful conversation, and a willingness to learn. By embracing every member of our community with Christ-like love, we ensure that our parish is a place where all are welcomed, valued, and able to fully participate in the life of the Church.



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For information on disability initiatives and support resources to help improve accessibility at your parish, visit:

[www.goarch.org/fully-human](http://www.goarch.org/fully-human) and  
[www.goarch.org/OBOA](http://www.goarch.org/OBOA)

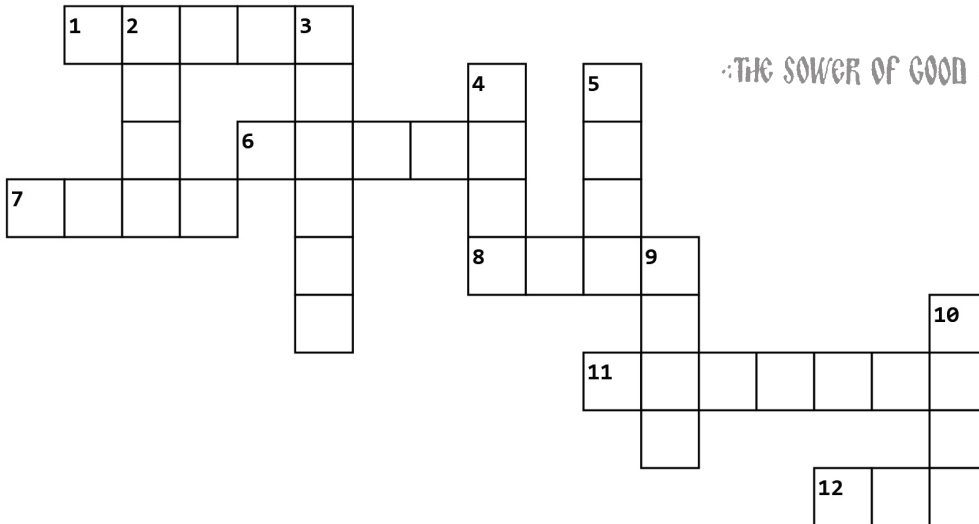


## CROSSWORD

# Parable of the Sower

Today's Gospel reading is found in the Book of Luke. In it, Jesus taught the Parable of the Sower to explain how people receive God's word in different ways. As you complete this crossword puzzle, think about the seeds, the different types of soil, and how we can prepare our hearts to grow in faith and bear good fruit for Christ! Read each clue carefully and fill in the crossword puzzle with the correct word. All the answers relate to the Parable of the Sower and can be found in Luke 8:5-15.

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



THE SOWER OF GOOD SEEDS:

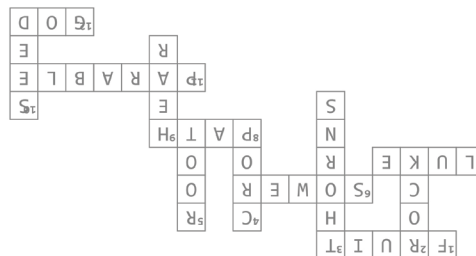


### Across

1. A person who understands the Word bears \_\_\_\_\_
6. The farmer who scattered the seeds
7. The Gospel writer of today is \_\_\_\_\_
8. The place where some seeds were eaten by birds
11. Jesus taught this lesson as a \_\_\_\_\_
12. The seed represents the word of \_\_\_\_\_

### Down

2. The seeds withered here with no moisture
3. What choked the growing plants?
4. What the good soil produced
5. The part of the plant that grows down into the earth
9. People should have ears to \_\_\_\_\_
10. What the sower planted



ANSWER KEY: