



DIAKONIA

A National Ministry of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America

REFLECTIONS FROM TODAY'S READING - *Luke 19:1-10*

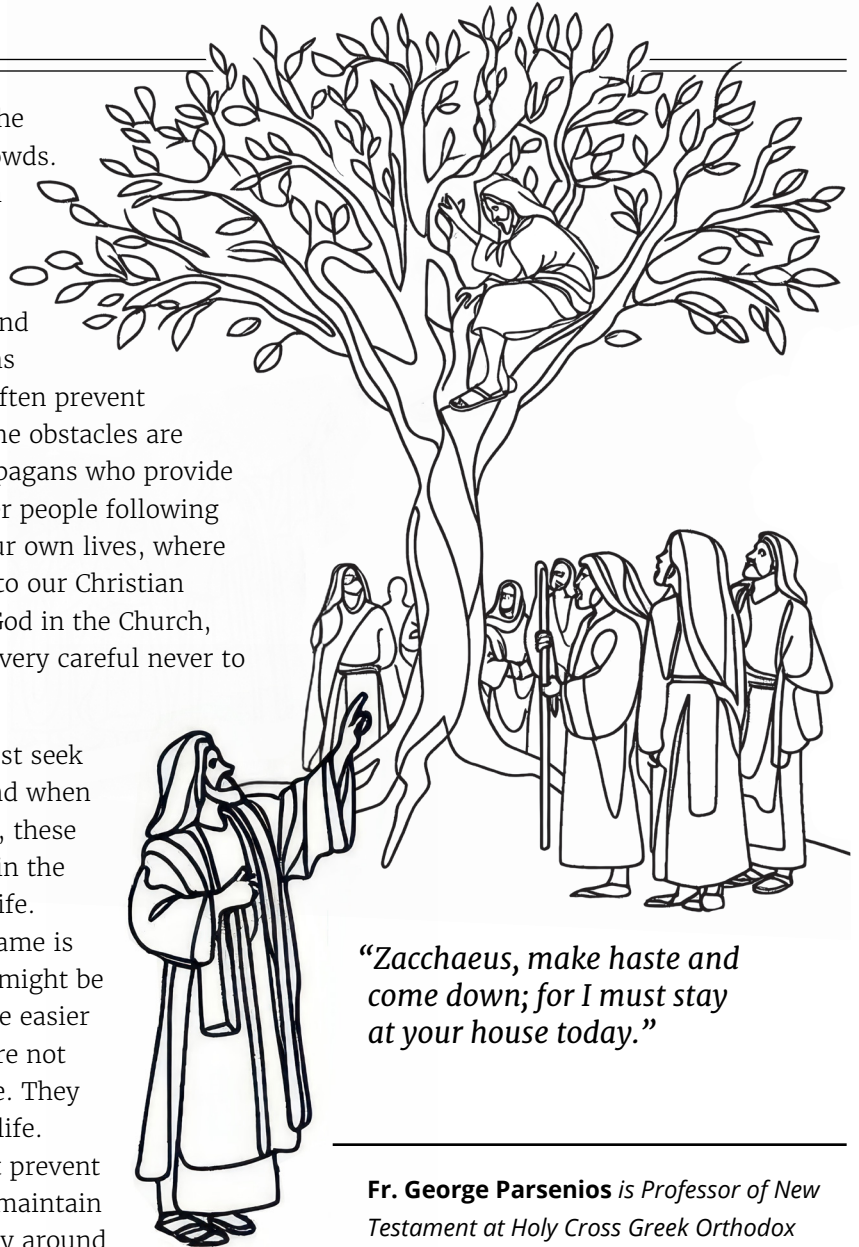
Can You See Jesus?

Fr. George Parsenios

When Zacchaeus seeks to greet Jesus, he must climb a tree to see over the crowds. He must overcome an obstacle. Such obstacles are common in the Gospels.

A paralytic must be let through a roof by his friends because of the crowds (Mark 2), and blind Bartimaeus is driven away by Jesus' companions before Jesus notices him (Mark 10). Obstacles often prevent people from seeing Jesus, and in many cases, the obstacles are created by other disciples. It isn't outsiders or pagans who provide the obstacles. The obstacles are created by other people following Jesus. How many times has this been true in our own lives, where the other people in our Churches are obstacles to our Christian progress. They do not seem to help us to find God in the Church, but rather, seem to drive us away. We must be very careful never to be obstacles to one another.

We all make mistakes, and when we do, we must seek forgiveness. Others will also make mistakes, and when they apologize, we must forgive them. After all, these little problems that we have with other people in the Church are not distractions from our spiritual life. They are the essence of our spiritual life. The same is true of our families. We often imagine that we might be better people if this or that family member were easier to deal with. But again, these difficult people are not distractions or deviations from our spiritual life. They provide an opportunity to engage our spiritual life. These human obstacles are like the crowds that prevent Zacchaeus and others from seeing Jesus. If we maintain our focus on the Lord, we will always find a way around them for spiritual growth.



“Zacchaeus, make haste and come down; for I must stay at your house today.”

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Diakonia is made possible by a generous grant from **Leadership 100**

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FROM THE ORIGINAL GREEK: ὑποκριτής What is a “Hypocrite?”

Fr. George Parsenios



Jesus often calls his opponents “hypocrites” for practicing their piety in public, and for drawing attention to themselves as they pray. The word “hypocrite” (ὑποκριτής) is the Greek word for

“actor.” The Pharisees are trying to “act” pious and “act” charitable. Their focus is on their appearance in public. The struggles of Jesus with these opponents are included in the Gospels, not because we are unlike the Pharisees, but because we have the unfortunate

potential to be just like them. The very things that are designed to make us more humble, the very acts of repentance and self-denial that are supposed to make us more open to God and more loving to one another can make us more self-centered. We may think, for example, that, if we want to be humble, we must try to appear humble. But this, too, can be a way of drawing attention to ourselves. The truly humble person doesn’t stand out as being more humble than others. He doesn’t stand out at all. Real humility has a way of making a person appear relatively ordinary, just like everyone else. As we approach the period of Great Lent, we must seek ways to practice our piety and our charity with zeal and enthusiasm—and in secret.

THIS WEEK IN CHURCH HISTORY

Moving a Church into the Future

In the early 1910s, Greek Orthodox Christians in Canton, Ohio built a spiritual home for their faith and traditions. Their modest brick church, completed in 1914, became a gathering place filled with the familiar elements of their Greek Orthodox faith and culture. Over the decades, the community grew and a larger church was needed.

Rather than build a new church, parish leaders made the unusual decision to move the entire church building to a larger site. In 1958, construction workers cut the church building in half, braced each section, and transported the two sections of the church across the city in a 26-day procession that locals recall with wonder. The two halves of the church were reassembled and expanded on the new site. In 1959, the church reopened its well-worn doors in the new location. Today, Saint Haralambos Church stands as a spiritual and cultural home for the Orthodox Christians of Canton and a monument to the determination of a community who carried their faith—and their church—into the future.





FAITH IN ACTION

How Your Parish can Fight Human Trafficking



Our Orthodox faith teaches that every person is made in God’s image, and human trafficking is a modern slavery that destroys lives and dignity. The Archdiocese, through the FREEDOM Ministry and global partners, stands united to educate, prevent, and protect.

ANSWERING CHRIST’S CALL

From Awareness to Action

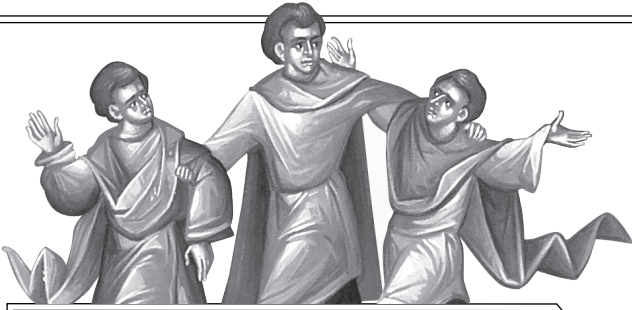
Every statistic hides a real story. Survivors and those at-risk face poverty, isolation, and fear. Their words urge us to listen with compassion, notice warning signs, and respond with Christ-centered love. Small acts of understanding can offer hope and freedom.

- **Kindness Saves Lives:** You may not realize how much your words matter. A compliment instead of a cruel joke, an invitation instead of exclusion—those moments can keep someone from running into the arms of someone dangerous.
- **Bullying Breaks More Than Confidence:** It breaks safety. When people are mocked, left out, or shamed, they start believing lies that predators exploit: “You’re worthless. No one cares about you.” Be the voice that proves those lies wrong.
- **Loneliness Can Turn Into Danger:** If a friend suddenly has a “new older boyfriend,” disappears online, or seems to be getting gifts or money, they may be being groomed. Don’t shame them—ask questions and tell a trusted adult.
- **We All Have Struggles:** Some of us live with poverty, abuse, or fear at home. If you notice bruises, anxiety, or secrecy, don’t spread rumors. Offer a safe friendship and help them connect with someone who can protect them.
- **Social Media Isn’t Harmless:** Traffickers look for pain online. They comment, flatter, and slowly isolate people. Be careful what you share and check in on friends who seem to be posting desperate or revealing things.
- **You Don’t Have To Fix It—Just Notice:** If something feels wrong, it probably is. Telling a teacher, priest, or parent can save someone’s life, even if it feels awkward.
- **Everyone Deserves Respect:** No one should be treated like property, ignored, or used. When we protect each other’s dignity, we make our schools and youth groups holy ground.
- **Faith Makes Us Family:** We are brothers and sisters in Christ. When you protect someone weaker, comfort someone hurting, or speak up for someone targeted, you live out the Gospel more loudly than any sermon.



WHAT YOU CAN DO
 Learn more about human trafficking
 at bit.ly/freedom-ministry

DIAKONIA



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

Jesus traveled to many regions, cities, towns and villages to preach the Good News. In this puzzle below, find and circle the names of some of the places from the list provided.

HINT: Words can go left to right, up, down or diagonal—so look carefully in all directions!

- BETHANY
- BETHLEHEM
- BETHSAIDA
- CAESAREA
- PHILIPPI
- CANA
- CAPERNAUM
- DECAPOLIS
- EGYPT
- EPHRAIM
- GALILEE
- JERICHO
- JERUSALEM
- JORDAN RIVER
- JUDEA
- MAGDALA
- MOUNT OF OLIVES
- NAZARETH
- PEREA
- SAMARIA
- SIDON
- TYRE
- WILDERNESS

B	M	L	E	T	C	U	S	G	O	T	O	B	T	H	E
E	J	O	R	D	A	N	R	I	V	E	R	E	M	N	S
T	U	E	U	E	N	A	R	B	Y	V	I	T	A	L	S
H	D	L	R	N	A	Z	A	R	E	T	H	H	G	A	E
S	E	G	E	I	T	S	S	S	G	Y	O	L	D	I	N
A	A	C	J	A	C	O	N	I	Y	R	P	E	A	R	R
I	D	E	E	A	C	H	F	D	P	E	H	H	L	T	E
D	E	H	R	E	R	E	O	O	T	A	L	E	A	S	D
A	C	O	U	T	H	P	A	N	L	T	I	M	S	W	L
C	A	E	S	A	R	E	A	P	H	I	L	I	P	P	I
H	P	P	A	A	Y	R	I	H	A	V	V	E	C	O	W
M	O	H	L	E	M	E	S	O	H	E	T	E	R	A	V
E	L	R	E	L	E	A	D	T	H	R	O	U	S	G	H
O	I	A	M	U	T	G	R	A	B	E	T	H	A	N	Y
L	S	I	I	L	G	A	L	I	L	E	E	E	E	F	R
O	M	M	C	A	P	E	R	N	A	U	M	M	A	R	K