



DIAKONIA

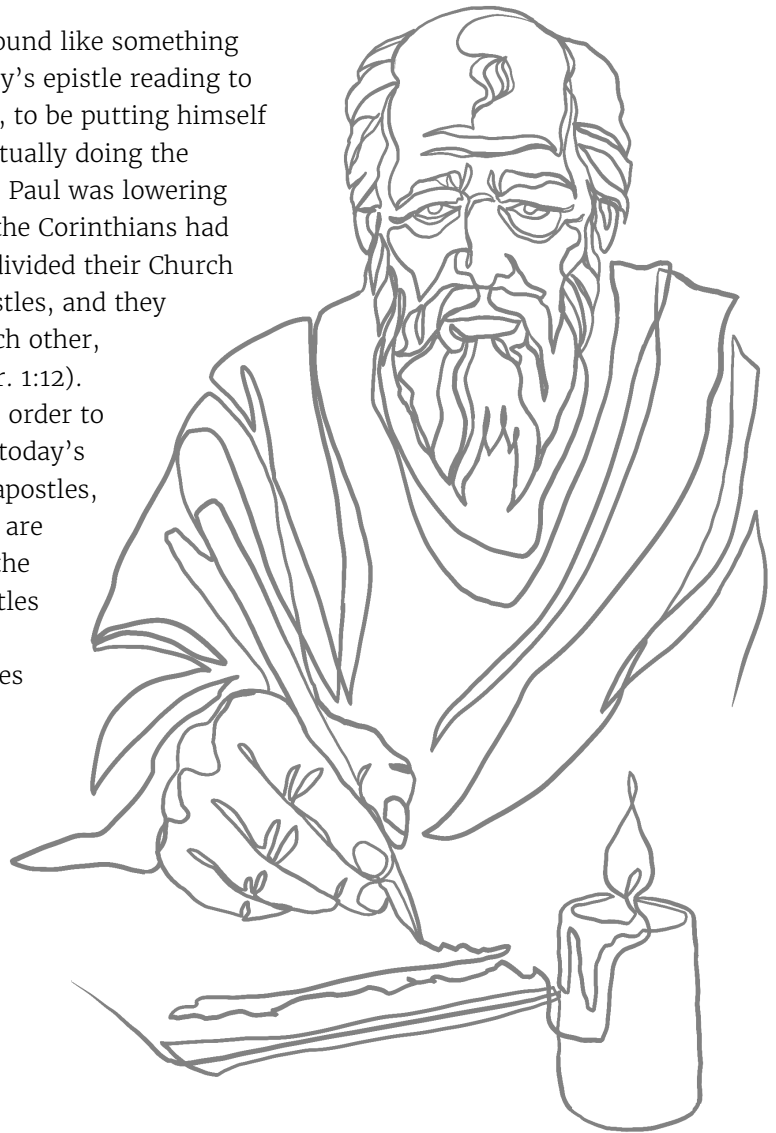
A National Ministry of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America

REFLECTIONS FROM TODAY'S READING | *1 Corinthians 4:9-16*

Fr. George Parsenios (HCHC '96)

“Be imitators of me...”

The phrase lands strangely on our ears. It doesn't sound like something an apostle should say. When St. Paul tells us in today's epistle reading to imitate him, he seems to be singing his own praises, to be putting himself on a pedestal. But he only seems to do this. He is actually doing the opposite. Far from elevating himself over others, St. Paul was lowering himself in order to correct the mistaken views that the Corinthians had regarding apostolic authority. The Corinthians had divided their Church into different factions associated with different apostles, and they defined their warring parties by boasting against each other, “I am of Paul! I am of Peter! I am of Apollos!” (1 Cor. 1:12). Paul wrote the first four chapters of 1 Corinthians in order to respond to this divisive and confused behavior, and today's epistle reading is the climax of that argument. The apostles, he says, “are last of all people,” but the Corinthians are using apostolic connections to become first among the believers in Corinth. They invoke the names of apostles but do not live like apostles. With more than a little sarcasm, Paul separates the experience of the apostles even further from the behavior of the Corinthians by saying, “We are weak, but you are strong. You are held in honor, but we in disrepute.” The apostles do not elevate themselves arrogantly over others, but they bless when reviled, they endure when persecuted and they forgive when slandered. To be truly associated with the apostles, the Corinthians need to imitate the apostolic example. It is against this backdrop that Paul's teaching can be understood more clearly. Far from arrogantly elevating himself, he is teaching a lesson in humility when he says, “be imitators of me.”



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FROM THE ORIGINAL GREEK: *erêmitês* (ἐρημίτης)

What does “hermit” mean?

Fr. George Parsenios (HCHC '96)

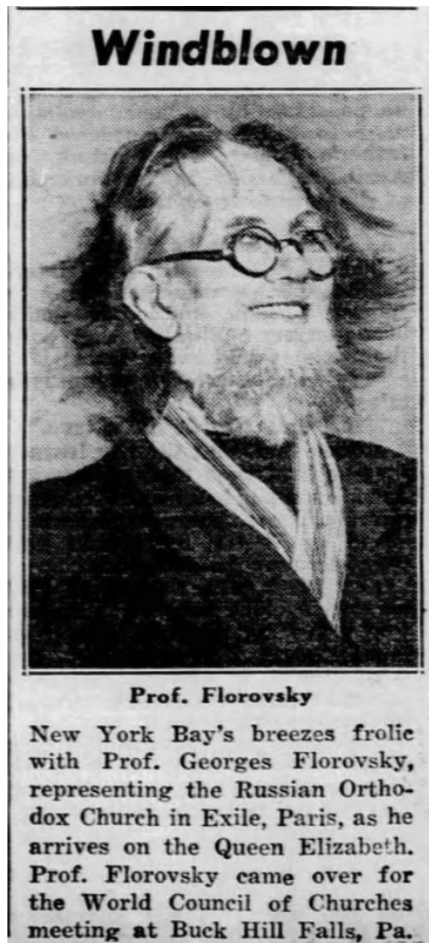


Someone who lives alone is called in English a “hermit,” but the word “hermit” actually has a very specific meaning related to Christian monasticism. Our term “hermit” derives from the

Greek word *ἐρημος/erêmos* which means “desert” or “wilderness,” because the

Egyptian desert was the home of the earliest Christian monks. To understand why the word “hermit” or “desert dweller” (*ἐρημίτης / erêmitês*) came to be applied to monks, we need to say a word about the history of Christian monasticism. Prior to the 4th century AD,

Christianity was an illegal religion, so Christians were barred from pursuing earthly glory and power. But when St. Constantine legalized the Christian faith, the cost of discipleship became cheaper, and being a Christian became a possible path to political prominence. The earliest monks followed the example of St. Anthony the Great by fleeing to the desert in order to reject what they saw as a compromised Christianity and to devote themselves exclusively to prayer and fasting. They were imitating Jesus who often retreated to the wilderness as a refuge for focused prayer (Luke 5:16). Because they inhabited the *erêmos*, or desert, they received the name of *erêmitês*, or “hermit.”



THIS WEEK'S LOOK AT CHURCH HISTORY

Fr. Georges Florovsky

Fr. Georges Florovsky, perhaps the foremost Orthodox theologian and churchmen of the 20th Century, reposed on August 11th, 1979. His life began in Odessa, Imperial Russia, in 1893. By 1920, he lived in permanent exile, mingling among the brightest minds of his generation amidst some of the most culturally stimulating locales: Sofia, Prague, Paris, and Belgrade, later New York, Boston, and Princeton.

Florovsky came to Paris in 1926 to teach at the newly-founded St. Sergius Institute. Over the next few decades, he earned the reputation of a serious contributor to the burgeoning ecumenical movement and a rigorous, discerning patristic scholar. He left Europe in 1948 to become Dean of St. Vladimir's Seminary in New York. He later held a full professorship in Church History at Harvard, teaching concurrently at Hellenic College-Holy Cross, before “retiring” to Princeton.

An obituary fondly remembered the idiosyncratic, single-minded but singularly admirable Fr. Florovsky as “a familiar figure at Princeton—a little white-bearded man in a beret and cassock, hustling along with a black attaché case bulging with scholarly papers.”

Fr. Florovsky's first visit to the U.S., New York Daily News, 4/8/1947.

The Feast of the Dormition

The Feast of the Dormition of the Theotokos—the Virgin Mary—is celebrated on August 15 and commemorates her dormition or "falling-asleep" and the assumption of her body into heaven. Holy Scriptures tell us that as Jesus was on the Cross, seeing His mother with John, His disciple, He said, "Woman, behold your son." Turning to John, He said, "Behold your mother," and from that hour, John brought her into his home.

At the time of Mary's death, the disciples, except for Thomas, returned to Jerusalem to see her. All, including the Apostle Paul, gathered at her bedside. Upon her death, Jesus descended and carried her soul into heaven. Her body was laid in a tomb near the Garden of Gethsemane. The Apostle Thomas arrived after three days, and desiring to see her body, found her tomb empty. Her bodily assumption was confirmed by an angel and by her appearance to the Apostles.

The Icon of the Dormition shows the Theotokos on her deathbed surrounded by the Apostles with Jesus in the center holding a small child clothed in white representing Mary's soul. Jesus is shown in his divine glory, with golden garments, angels above Him, and a mandorla around Him. Above are the gates of heaven, open to receive the Mother of God. The Dormition of the Theotokos is a feast of hope in the Resurrection of the body and life eternal.



Orthodox Christian Preparation and Celebration of the Feast of the Dormition

The preparation for the Feast of the Dormition begins on August 1. A strict fast is followed on most days (no meat, dairy, oil, or wine), with the exceptions of fish on the Feast of the Transfiguration (August 6) and the day of the Dormition. Oil and Wine are allowed on Saturdays and Sundays.



MAKING IT REAL IN YOUR LIFE

The Dormition reminds us that the Mother of God is alive in Jesus Christ and continues to pray for us. This week, seek her intercessions for a specific person in your life. Respond to the feast by not merely learning about it, but by exercising hope in God's saving power.



THIS OR THAT
Dormition Fast

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

	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3
Breakfast	Yogurt Parfait • Yogurt • Granola • Fruit • Honey	Oatmeal • Oats • Cinnamon • Brown Sugar • Blueberries	Cereal • Cheerios • 1% milk
Lunch	PB & J • Bread • Peanut Butter • Jelly	Turkey Sandwich • Bread • Turkey • Mayonaise • Cheese • Lettuce	Grilled Cheese • Bread • Butter • Cheese
Snack	Fruit • Sliced Apple • Almond Butter	Cheese • Cheese Stick	Charcuterie • Cheese • Crackers • Salami
Dinner	Tacos • Beef • Cheese • Lettuce • Salsa	Tacos • Shrimp • Salsa • Cabbage • Beans	Tacos • Beans • Cheese • Lettuce • Tomato
Dessert	Fudge • Chocolate • Condensed Milk • Vanilla	Sundae • Ice Cream • Chocolate Syrup • Sprinkles	Sorbet • Mango • Sugar • Water