



## GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AUSTRALIA

### PARISH OF THE ANNUNCIATION OF OUR LADY “EVANGELISMOS”

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#### \* \* \* EPISTLE \* \* \*

The Reading is from St Paul’s Letter to the Ephesians [5:8-19] For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), finding out what is acceptable to the Lord. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret. But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light. Therefore He says: “Awake, you who asleep, Arise from the dead, And Christ will give you light.” See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.

#### \* \* \* EXPLANATION \* \* \*

Because the “wrath of God” will come upon sinners, we are urged by St Paul not to be like them otherwise we will also suffer this wrath. Prior to our Baptism, we too were in the darkness of ignorance, but now we have been illumined, we have become “children of light”, because Christ has shone on us in Holy Baptism. (5:8) Quoting a Christian Hymn (which was based on Isaiah 60:1), St Paul describes our Baptism as our having been raised from the dead, by Christ, our awakening like a sleeper from the sleep of sin and death. Christ, the Light now shines on us in our new life, making us “children of light”. It is for this reason that baptism is called “illumination”. (Heb 6:4) (5:14) In this new life, we bear the fruit of the light – that is, deeds reflecting all goodness, righteousness and Truth. Instead of the unfruitful works of darkness, we bear the fruit of a changed life so that others derive from us benefit and blessing. (5:19) Thus we prove, or learn by the experience of doing, what is well-pleasing to the Lord and we must live in active opposition to the darkness that surrounds us. (5:10) Not only are we not to co-share in their sins, but we should also expose them. That is, we must first confess our sins and repent of them – just as light exposes darkness. As darkness gives place to light (for whatever makes manifest or visible is light), so we are to reprove sin and persuade those in darkness to join us in arising from the dead and to shine with the Light of Christ. (5:11) But St Paul warns

us to pay attention to our lives, not to be heedless and unwise and to be watchful. He urges regular examination of our conscience and to keep our wits about us as we walk through the world, because the days are evil. That is, this age is full of temptation and difficulties and it hurries towards its final catastrophe. Therefore, as wise men, we are to redeem the time, using every opportunity to do good, doing the will of God. (5:15-17) We must not participate in drunkenness and fornication which results in dissipation (recklessness and frivolous activity) which sever all bonds with God. But rather we should seek the acquisition of the Holy Spirit (5:18) – through prayer, the sacraments, psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. With all of these we sing with our hearts to the Lord. We should always give thanks to God for all things and make our entire life a Eucharistic offering to God in the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ. That is, we are to live as His disciples, doing nothing in our own name, but in everything for the Glory of God. (5:19)

**\* \* \* GOSPEL \* \* \***

The Reading is from St Luke [18:18-27] Now a certain ruler asked Him, saying, “Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” So Jesus said to him, “Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is God. You know the commandment, ‘Do not commit adultery’, ‘Do not murder’, ‘Do not steal’, ‘Do not bear false witness’, ‘Honour your father and mother’.” And he said, “All these things I have kept from my youth.” So when Jesus heard these things, He said to him, “You still lack one thing. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come follow Me.” But when he heard this, he became very sorrowful, for he was very rich. And when Jesus saw that he became very sorrowful, He said, “How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God! For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.” And those who heard it said, “Who then can be saved?” But He said, “The things which are impossible with men are possible with God.”

**\* \* \* EXPLANATION \* \* \***

The rich young man is a lover of money, and he approaches Jesus eager to learn how he, along with his wealth, might inherit eternal life. He thought that Jesus could show him some way in which he could live forever enjoying his material possessions. But when the Lord told him that non-possession is what bestows eternal life he went away sorrowful. Although he boasted that he kept all the Commandments, Jesus reminded him of the First Commandment of God – “Thou shalt have no other Gods before me.” The young ruler worshipped the “God of Mammon” – the god of money. Only this “one thing” stood in the way of his reach for the kingdom, but that “one thing” was enough to make him lose it. Jesus was not condemning all possessions. There is no record that Jesus ever told Martha and Mary to sell their home in Bethany. Jesus saw that this young man had allowed his possessions to come

between him and God. Therefore, as a Good Physician, He prescribed the appropriate remedy – “Go and sell all that you have and come follow Me.” That is, if your possessions cause you to sin, then no matter how painful, cut them off. But he was held fast by the love of money, a passion that was stronger than his love for eternal life. Jesus extended the same invitation to the rich young man as He did to the Apostles – “Come follow Me”. If he had followed Jesus, we would be honouring his memory today as an apostle, but as it is, we don’t even know his name. This one thing that he still lacked was that he placed his love of possessions above his love for God. He believed that God belonged in the synagogue and had no business in the world of finance. The same applies in our lives today. We try and departmentalize God by saying that we shouldn’t mix religion with politics or business – each belongs in its own realm. But God knocks on every door of our life. If we keep all doors open to Him he will come in and give us Himself, Salvation, everything. Jesus did not say that it would be impossible for those with wealth to enter the kingdom of heaven, but that it would be difficult. That is, it is difficult for a rich man to part with his possessions and be saved. So much so that it becomes almost impossible. However, a rich man who keeps riches for himself is different to a steward who, as a trustee, holds wealth for the benefit of others. What Jesus is therefore saying is that “the rich man who is possessed by riches and is a slave to them and is held fast by them, and has no time for God, shall not be saved. But he who has riches, that is, who is master of riches, owing them without being owned by them, shall be saved with difficulty? That difficulty is because of human weakness. For it is impossible for us not to misuse what we have. Only with great difficulty do we escape the devil’s traps. But with God’s help, it is possible to be saved. If we use our wealth to help those in need we will be saved by those “friends” who will intercede for us for God’s mercy. Thus the impossible becomes possible. This rule also applies to the poor. Though his belongings are few, man’s attachment to his possessions is even greater when he owns little. And if it is the case that a poor man is attached to his possessions to the same degree as a rich man, then, at a minimum, the loss of the kingdom is the same for each. But those who have given up everything for the sake of the kingdom will receive not only tangible rewards in the life to come but eternal life.