



GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AUSTRALIA

PARISH OF THE ANNUNCIATION OF OUR LADY, “EVANGELISMOS”

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SUNDAY 17 JANUARY 2016 – THE TEN CLEANSED LEPERS

EPISTLE The Reading is from Hebrews [13:17-21]

Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you. Pray for us; for we are confident that we have a good conscience, in all things desiring to live honourably. But I especially urge you to do this, that I may restore to you the sooner. Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

EXPLANATION: The Hebrew Christians were urged to follow the faith of their superiors, because it was they who preached the word

of God to them. Now they are told to obey them and submit themselves to them. Priests and spiritual leaders must be respected and obeyed, a reference to “spiritual fatherhood” in the Church. These leaders have an appointment according to the will of God and are entrusted with the care of the flock. All the ranks of priesthood are responsible before God **“as the ones who must give account”** of their ministry at the judgment. The priest may, in some cases, be unworthy in his own life, but if he does not depart from the faith, he is to be followed in matters of faith. The Lord Himself said, “The Scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses’s seat: all therefore whatsoever they tell you observe, do: but do not do after their works.” (Matthew 23:2) St John Chrysostom writes, “Let those who rule you also hear, and not only those who are under their rule, that the subjects ought to be obedient, so also the rulers ought to be watchful and sober.” It is the obedience of the subjects that causes priests to do their work with joy. It is not profitable to the disobedient subject to cause them grief, for they too are held accountable for their actions. **(13:17)** St Paul then asks the Jews to pray for him so that he may be able to proclaim the word of the Gospel effectively. The reason for asking their prayers and further evidence of his love for them is that he wishes to be with them. Their prayers can hasten his being restored to them because the Jews believed that he had forsaken Moses and the Law and were infuriated with him and sought to have him killed. **(13:18-19)** He then reminds both Jews and Christians that God has established peace between Jew and Gentile and made them one in Christ, and as a prayer that there be no divisions among Hebrew Christians when it comes to Christianity. And **“through the blood of the everlasting covenant”**, through His suffering, death on the Cross and Resurrection, Jesus restored man to the condition he was before the fall and inaugurates a new everlasting covenant. The

everlasting covenant makes us **complete** as we cooperate with God (synergy) in all things and progress toward sainthood. (13:20-21)

GOSPEL The Reading is from St Luke [17:12-19]

Then as He entered a certain village, there met Him ten men who were lepers, who stood afar off. And they lifted up their voices and said, *“Jesus, master, have mercy on us!”* So when He saw them, He said to them, *“Go, show yourselves to the priests.”* And so it was that as they went, they were cleansed. And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, returned, and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell down on his face at His feet, giving Him thanks. And he was a Samaritan. So Jesus answered and said, *“Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine? Were there not any found who returned to give glory to God except this foreigner?”* And He said to him, *“Arise, go your way. Your faith has made you well.”*

EXPLANATION: Leprosy was one of the most wretched and hopeless diseases at that time. The person would slowly become a mass of ulcerated malodorous growths. Since it was contagious, the leper was isolated from society. This is why the ten lepers, who were probably part of a leper colony **“stood as a distance”** when they called out to Jesus. (17:12) Another one of the symptoms of leprosy was that the voice became merely a hoarse whisper. This is why they **“lifted up their voices”** when they cried out to Jesus. They called Him **“Master”**, which means that they believed He had the power to heal them. That is, they came to Him with faith. (17:13)

Jesus did not heal the ten lepers immediately. He saw fit to test their faith. So he made them walk the road of obedience by telling them to first **“go and show yourselves to the priests”**. Not only was Jesus testing their faith, but He was also following the prescription of Jewish law which required any leper who was cured of his leprosy to go to the priest in the temple to secure a certificate of healing. Only then was he allowed to return to his family and town's people. But how could they go to the priests looking as they did? Yet they went. They went on faith. Sometimes God answers our prayers on condition that we exercise our faith. Instead of turning away disappointed, these ten lepers did as Jesus commanded them. And as a consequence of their faith the miracle happened. **“As they went they were cleansed.” (17:14)** We can imagine the indescribable joy they must have felt when they realized they had been healed. One would think they would have rushed back to thank Jesus for delivering them from this dreadful disease. But only one, a Samaritan (a Gentile despised by Jews) came back to thank Him. The nine who were Israelites showed themselves to be ungrateful. God's blessings are all too easily taken for granted or forgotten. **(17:15-19)** This miracle also signifies the common salvation that came to the whole human race. For the ten lepers represent all of human nature, and that nature was leprous with wickedness, ulcerated with the ugliness of sin, standing afar off from God. And although Jesus was quick to show mercy, took on flesh, tasted death, and healed the whole leprous nature of man, the Jews showed themselves ungrateful; and did not return from the path of their vain foolishness to give glory to God Who saved them. They did not confess the incarnate and crucified Lord of glory. But the foreign and accursed people of the Gentiles recognized the One Who makes clean, and believed and glorified Him as the Son of God, Our Lord and Saviour.