GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AUSTRALIA

PARISH OF THE ANNUNCIATION OF OUR LADY, "EVANGELISMOS"

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SUNDAY 28 FEBRUARY 2016

THIRD SUNDAY BEFORE LENT – SUNDAY OF THE PRODIGAL SON

THE EPISTLE **The Reading is from the First Epistle of St Paul to the Corinthians [Cor 6: 12-20] All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any. Foods for the stomach and the stomach for foods, but God will destroy both it and them. Now the body is not for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. And God both raised up the Lord and will also raise us up by His power. Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot? Certainly not! Or do you not know that he who is joined to a harlot is one body with her? For "the two", He says, "shall become one flesh". But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him. Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.**

EXPLANATION: By His atoning sacrifice, Christ cleansed all creation, making it lawful to eat anything Christians wish. However, they should not be ruled by the passion of gluttony and become slaves of the stomach. The stomach and food are perishable and meant to

serve man. We should be in control of them, not allow them to control us. The spiritual discipline of fasting is a tool to help us to learn to control our passions. **[6:12-14]** Through the Sacrament of Marriage, "two become one flesh". But Christ is also involved in the relationship rendering it holy. Therefore, a Christian, who is involved in an illicit sexual relationship creates an unholy alliance, which brings shame to the Church, as well as himself. Through Baptism we are united with Christ. Fornication is a sin which joins Christ to harlots. Therefore we must keep our bodies pure because they are members of Christ and the Holy Spirit dwells in them through Chrismation. They are temples of the Holy Spirit. **[6:19-20]**

THE GOSPEL **The Reading is from St Luke 15: 11-32** **Then He said: "A certain man had two sons. And the younger of them said to his father, "Father, give me the portion of goods that falls to me." So he divided to them his livelihood. And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, journeyed to a far country, and there wasted his possessions with prodigal living. But when he had spent all, there arose a severe famine in that land, and he began to be in want. Then he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the swine ate, and no one gave him anything. But when he came to himself, he said, "How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger. I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants." And he arose and came to his father. But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him. And the son said to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight, and I am no longer worthy to be called your son." But the father said to his servants, "Bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet. And bring the fatted calf here and kill it, and let us eat and be merry; for this my son was dead and is alive; he was lost and is found." And they began to be merry. Now his older son was in the field. And as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. So**

he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. And he said to him, "Your brother has come, and because he has received him safe and sound, your father has killed the fatted calf." But he was angry and would not go in. Therefore his father came out and pleaded with him. So he answered and said to his father, "Lo, these many years I have been serving you; I never transgressed your commandments at any time and yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might make merry with my friends. But as soon as this son of yours came, who has devoured your livelihood with harlots, you killed the fatted calf for him." And he said to him, "Son, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours. It was right that we should make merry and be glad, for your brother was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found."

EXPLANATION The father fulfils the request of the son out of profound respect for his freedom. The son asks the father for what is his, failing to see that "his" is the father's gift. Similarly, God also gives freely to those who ask Him, even though the recipient may misuse the gifts. **[15:12-13]** The son prepares for his new life, leaving nothing behind – a complete break from his father's house to a far distant land so that he will not have any remembrance of his family and of his father's love and care and wastes his possessions with reckless living. This signifies what happens when we forget about God and adopt an ungodly way of life. **[15:14}** The "severe" or mighty famine really describes the state of his soul. Empty, spiritually and morally, he has nothing to sustain him. **[15:15-19]** On reaching the depths of emptiness he came to his senses and decides to return to his father. Here is the beginning of humility and repentance. The son realizes he is not worthy to be called his son and does not deserve forgiveness. **[15:20-21]** The father never ceased looking for the return of his son, just as God always longs for the return of every sinner to His forgiving embrace. The Lord who knows the depths of our hearts, on seeing that we seek to come to Him, does not wait, but runs out to meet us, to clothe our spiritual nakedness and to help us to walk in accordance with the Gospel. **[15:22-24]** The father does not censure the son, but celebrates his home-coming as one who was dead and now lives. The son's restoration shows the nature of

God's justice. He forgives the sins of those who repent and does not hold their past against them. **[15:25-32]** The older son shows a Pharisaic attitude of self-righteousness and contempt for his brother.

SATURDAY 5 MARCH 2016 – PSYCHOSABBATON (SATURDAY OF SOULS) On this day our prayers are offered for those who have departed as a sign of our love and respect for them. We pray for those who have passed away and are now awaiting the final judgment day. Memorial Services for the dead may be offered at any time. However, the Church has designated two Saturdays of the year for special prayer services for the dead, the first on the 3rd Saturday before Meatfare week and the second 9 days after the Ascension of Our Lord on the Saturday before Pentecost. The Church teaches that our prayers help the deceased in some way (even the condemned). We do not know how much. We pray for the souls of the dead because the Church – the Body of Christ – is one and we should never deny any member of the Church the help of intercessory prayer. With good works and Memorial Services we help especially those who have repented the last minute of their death, but did not have a chance to do good works on earth. These acts of goodness and Memorial Services attract God's mercy. Therefore, the faithful should prepare koliva and bring them to Church on this holy and special day together with a legible list of the Christian names of their departed ones which the priest will read out.

1. **The Triodion Period** is the period between the Sunday of the Pharisee and the Publican and Cheese-fare Sunday.

2. The **Triodion liturgical book** is a book which contains the variable portions of the Liturgy and other hymns, prayers and services. It begins on the fourth Sunday before Great Lent, the Sunday of the Pharisee and the Publican, and ends on Saturday of Holy Week. The name derives from the fact that during this season the Canons contain only 3 odes instead of the usual 9. The canon is a series of 9 hymns, "odes", used at the Orthros (Matins). The 9 odes vary so as to correspond with the theme of the particular feast.