



GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AUSTRALIA

PARISH OF THE ANNUNCIATION OF OUR LADY, “EVANGELISMOS”

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A CALL TO UNITY IN CHRIST

EPISTLE The Reading is from St Paul’s First Letter to the Corinthians [1:10-17] Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it has declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe’s household, that there are contentions among you. Now I say this, that each of you says, ‘I am of Paul’, or ‘I am of Apollos’, or ‘I am of Cephas’, or ‘I am of Christ’. Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, lest anyone should say that I had baptized in my own name. Yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas. Besides, I do not know whether I baptized any other. For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect.

EXPLANATION:

Here for the first time Paul rebukes the Corinthians, pleading with them in the name of the Lord to put away **divisions** and maintain unity in the Church. Through Baptism we are united with Christ – not the person who introduced us to Him, such

as Paul or Apollos or Cephas. Thus all Christians are connected through Christ and should be of one mind on matters having to do with Christian life. **[1:10-12]** He stresses that factionalism brings great harm to the Church, for it seeks to give to an apostle a place which only Christ should occupy. Since there is only one Saviour of mankind – Jesus Christ, the Son of God – all Christians should be living and teaching the same truths, “for God is not the author of confusion”. (1Cor 14:33) Beliefs and practices that were contrary to the teachings of the Gospel would have destroyed the Church of Corinth if they were not corrected, because they would cause permanent divisions. All who prefer to be followers of Christ should be united in the fullness of the truth of His Gospel. It is logical, therefore, to seek this truth in the life and teachings of the early Church, as contained in Holy Tradition and writings which have been preserved from those times. The many Christian denominations in existence serve to weaken the Church, robbing her of the power she would have if all were united in “one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism.” (Eph 4:5) Truth cannot be compromised. Orthodoxy holds that true unity (intercommunion) among Christians can come only from full agreement in matters of faith; the fullness of the teachings that Jesus handed down to the apostles, which the Orthodox Church considers itself to have “been enabled to preserve” with the grace of the Holy Spirit. **[1:13]** Although, Paul, himself baptized people such as Crispus, Gaius and the house of Stephanas and others, here he is simply emphasizing that he left to others the easier task of administering the rite of Baptism so that he was free to preach the gospel. The practice of the early church was to baptize entire families upon conversion of the parents. That is, parents, infants and children; a practice that corresponds with the Orthodox Tradition today because being a part of the Church from a very young age, with continual access to the Sacraments, allows for early and continual spiritual nourishment. As we do not refrain

from giving our children food until they understand the need of their bodies for vitamins and minerals, neither do we refrain from providing spiritual nourishment to them until they understand Christian theology. This, of course, presupposes that parents and/or godparents will teach their children about God, His love, and His promises as they are able to absorb the knowledge. Infants and children learn in mysterious ways, using all their senses. The faith is best taught through experience and by example and when they become adults they will give themselves to God in “spiritual baptism”. [1:14-15] Paul did not preach **“with wisdom of words”**, that is, philosophical thought. Such human wisdom by itself does not promote salvation or an understanding how God works in the world and what He wishes us to do. Paul preached with the inspiration of the Holy Spirit through the mystery of revelation, **“lest the Cross of Christ should be made on no effect.”** That is, being saved is the process by which the Cross transforms us with the power of God. [1:16-17]

GOSPEL **The Reading is from St Matthew [14:14-22]** And when Jesus went out He saw a great multitude; and He was moved with compassion for them, and healed their sick. When it was evening, His disciples came to Him saying, ‘This is a deserted place, and the hour is already late. Send the multitudes away, that they may go into the villages and buy themselves food. But Jesus said to them, **“They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat.”** And they said to Him, ‘We have here only five loaves and two fishes.’ He said, ‘Bring them here to Me.’ Then He commanded the multitudes to sit down on the grass. And He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, He blessed and broke and gave the loaves to the disciples, and the disciples gave to the multitudes. So they all ate and were filled, and they took up twelve baskets full of the fragments that remained. Now those who had eaten were about five thousand men, besides women and children. Immediately Jesus made His disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side; while He sent the multitudes away.

EXPLANATION:

The multitude shows their faith by following Jesus on foot without provisions out of the cities, to a deserted place, as He departed. **Moved with compassion**, shows Christ's power and authority extending to those who suffer. And as a reward for their faith they received healing. **[14:14]** As evening approached the multitude grew hungry and the disciples asked Jesus to send them away to go to their villages and buy food for themselves. **[14:18]** But Jesus said, **"You give them something to eat"**, knowing full well that there were 5000 men, besides women and children and all that the apostles had were 2 loaves and five fish. We learn from this that as Christians we have a responsibility to feed the poor and hungry, and to share our surplus with those who are in need. The Church fathers see in this miracle an image of the Eucharist, that Jesus is the 'Bread of Life' and whoever hungers for Christ and is baptized may receive spiritual nourishment, His Body and Blood, through the Sacrament of Holy Communion. **[14:16-18]** Jesus also teaches us that we must not sit down to eat until we have first given thanks to God. **"Looking up to heaven, He blessed and broke and gave the loaves to the disciples....."** **[14:19]** The striking thing is that Jesus did not leave the leftovers scattered around. He told His disciples to "Gather up the fragments left over, that nothing may be lost." (John 6:12) They collected 12 baskets full of leftovers. His power to feed the multitude did not tempt Him to presume to waste God's gift of precious food. Our modern "throw-away or disposable society" can learn something from the apostolic "gather-up society". Billions of dollars of edible food is thrown away each year while people starve in Third World countries, money is wasted on nuclear weapons and deadly missiles when there are many people and malnourished children in the world. **[14:20]**