



## GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AUSTRALIA

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

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#### SUNDAY 21 AUGUST 2016 “FOCUS YOUR MIND ON CHRIST”

**EPISTLE** **The Reading is from St Paul’s Letter to the Corinthians [3:9-17]** For we are God’s fellow workers; you are God’s field, you are God’s building. According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it. For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one’s work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one’s work, of what sort it is. If anyone’s work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire. Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are.

**EXPLANATION:** Those who pass on Christ’s teachings help God build His Church, which is made up of those who believe the Gospel and try to live by it. They are God’s “**fellow workers**”. Just as the Apostles worked together with God in spreading the Gospel, so too, we as God’s fellow workers co-operate with Him to teach everyone to do God’s will. “**You are God’s**

**building**” refers to the Church as an organic whole. [3:9] St Paul **laid the foundations** of God’s Church by teaching the Corinthians the basic truths about salvation through Christ. He is the **“wise master builder”**. Another of God’s workers will follow to add to that knowledge – a process which continues in each generation. But let each worker that follows **“take heed how he builds it”**, that is, how he adds to this knowledge and teaching because each of God’s workers is answerable to Him and must be sure that he is teaching and guiding according to the truth, so that the resulting Church (God’s building) will be strong. [3:10] The Church can stand only on the **“foundations”** (truths) that our Lord Jesus Christ taught. Only Orthodoxy, has preserved the truths taught by Christ and has the authority of Christ to decide theological issues when it comes together in an Ecumenical Synod with the grace of the Holy Spirit. [3:11] St Paul says, that those whose faith is based solidly on truth are like **“gold “** and **“silver”** which are purified under **“fire”** and become malleable, allowing God to mould them in His image. However, **wood, hay** and **straw** are easily burnt and are readily consumed by fire and represent those whose faith is vulnerable to destruction by life’s difficult moments. [3:12-13] The **“reward”** is unlimited in its potential and will depend upon each person’s faith and love for Christ. [3:14-15] Each baptized and chrismated person is **“the temple of God”** in which the Holy Spirit dwells. God does not look kindly on those who weaken his holy temple by causing divisions. [3:16-17]

**GOSPEL** **The Reading is from St Matthew** [14:22-34]  
**Immediately Jesus made His disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side, while He sent the multitudes away. And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray. Now when evening came, He was alone there. But the boat was now in the middle of the sea, tossed by the waves, for the wind was**

contrary. Now in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went to them, walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out for fear. But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, "Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid." And Peter answered Him and said, "Lord if it is You, command me to come to You on the water." So He said, "Come." And when Peter had come down out of the boat, he walked on the water to go to Jesus. But when he saw that the wind was boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink he cried out, saying, "Lord, save me!" And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and caught him, and said to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased. Then those who were in the boat came and worshipped Him, saying, "Truly You are the Son of God." When they had crossed over, they came to the land of Gennesaret.

**EXPLANATION:** The miracle of "walking on water" implies the divinity of Jesus the Messiah because He holds dominion over nature. He "**made His disciples get into the boat**", because they did not want to leave Him alone and wanted to be with Him at all times. He **sends the multitude away** because of His great humility. He did not want to boast about His powers and also He wanted to be alone to pray in an undistracted manner. **[14:22]** He permits the disciples to be caught in a storm, so that they might learn to endure trials bravely and that they might know His power. The boat was out in the very middle of the sea so that their fear would be greater. **[14:23-24]** Jesus did not appear to His disciples immediately to calm the storm, **but at the fourth watch**, teaching us not to ask for a swift solution to our misfortunes but to endure them bravely. The night was divided into 4 parts by soldiers who stood guard in shifts, each "watch" lasting 3 hours. So then, sometime after the 9<sup>th</sup> hour of the night, the Lord appeared to them as God, walking on the

water. But they thought He was a phantom, so extraordinary and strange was the sight. For they did not recognize Him by figure, because it was night and because of fear. He first strengthens their resolve by saying: "It is I Who can do all things; take courage – **"do not be afraid."** [14:25-27] As Peter had the most fervent love for Christ, he desires immediately, before the others, to be near Him. For he believes that not only Jesus Himself walks on the water, but that He will grant this to Him as well. [14:28] **"Come"** is the call of Christ in the midst of turmoil. He will always be with His people, all we need to do is ask, **"Bid me to come to You, O' Lord"**, as did St Peter. He will bestow such abundant grace upon the repentant sinner and all his anxieties and fears will disappear. But as soon as Peter lost his courage and became afraid of the wind he began to sink. For when his faith weakened, he went down. The Lord did this so that Peter would not become puffed up, and to console the other disciples who perhaps envied him. [14:29-30] Although Peter showed lack of faith by crying out to Jesus to save him, Jesus immediately comes to his aid. How clearly the Lord answers prayer – including this, the shortest prayer in the Bible. The often repeated liturgical prayer, "Lord have mercy", is the same prayer; the Jesus Prayer. Jesus says to Peter, **"Why did you doubt?"** Why did you waiver from your faith? Peter is not denying the faith, but he hesitates and weakens because he has taken his eyes off Christ and focused on the storm. But because of Peter's repentance, Christ drew him out of the abyss of denial and saved him. [14:31-32] Those in the boat were also delivered from fear, for **"the wind ceased"**, and this is the first time that the apostles confess faith in Jesus – they confess His divinity by saying, **"Truly You are the Son of God"** [14:33] The spiritual meaning of this miracle is that in our lives we are battered by many "waves" (that is, troubled by many temptations) and unless we constantly focus our mind on Christ, we will drown in the sea of adversity.