



GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AUSTRALIA

PARISH OF THE ANNUNCIATION OF OUR LADY, “EVANGELISMOS”

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FAITH MOVES MOUNTAINS

EPISTLE The Reading is from St Paul’s First Letter to the Corinthians [4:9-16]

For I think that God has displayed us, the apostles, last, as men condemned to death; for we have been made a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men. We are fools for Christ’s sake, but you are wise in Christ! We are weak, but you are strong! You are distinguished, but we are dishonoured! To the present hour we both hunger and thirst, and we are poorly clothed, and beaten, and homeless. And we labour, working with our own hands. Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we endure; being defamed, we entreat. We have been made as the filth of the world, the offscouring of all things until now. I do not write these things to shame you, but as my beloved children I warn you. For though you might have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet you do not have many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel. Therefore I urge you, imitate me.

EXPLANATION:

Here Paul contrasts the relative comfort of the Corinthian Christians with the persecuted, poverty-stricken and uncertain life of the apostles. Jesus said, ‘If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all’. (Mark 9:35) The apostles, in worldly terms appeared to be held in very low esteem. They were paraded and ridiculed in public, imprisoned and put to death. This was the cross that Jesus said one who follows Him must bear (Matt 16:24), which differs for each person. Those who accept this fact, however, will be first in the Kingdom of Heaven, unlike those who take the path of ease and comfort in this life. **(4:9)** The Corinthians were experiencing none of the difficulties of the Christian life because they were more concerned with pleasing the world rather than pleasing God. Even today, most of us worry about the impression we make on those around us. We don’t want to be seen doing anything that will lessen their esteem for us, yet we seem to forget that God is all-seeing, all-knowing. He knows everything we do, say, think – everywhere we are. Paul uses irony and sarcasm, such **“we are fools, we are weak, we are dishonoured”** to remind the Corinthians that although he who strives for knowledge of God’s Kingdom may be considered a fool by the world, he is the possessor of true wisdom. **(4:10)** However, as a **spiritual father** of the Christians of Corinth, Paul’s intention is not to shame them but to lovingly yet firmly correct and direct them, as a parent should. Therefore, he urges them to **imitate** him because he imitates Christ, not man. **(4:16)**

GOSPEL The Reading is from St Matthew [17:14-23]

And when they had come to the multitude, a man came to Him, kneeling down to Him and saying, "Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is an epileptic and suffers severely; for he often falls into the fire and often into the water. So I brought him to Your disciples, but they could not cure him." Then Jesus answered and said, "O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I bear with you? Bring him here to Me." And Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of him; and the child was cured from that very hour. Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, "Why could we not cast it out?" So Jesus said to them, "Because of your unbelief, for assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there', and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you. "However, this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting." Now while they were staying in Galilee, Jesus said to them, "The Son of Man is about to be betrayed into the hands of men, and they will kill Him, and the third day He will be raised up." And they were exceedingly sorrowful.

EXPLANATION:

It is clear that the father of this demon possessed boy is exceedingly faithless from the words which Christ spoke in reply to him, "**O' faithless generation**", and from the fact that the man himself blamed the disciples for not having the power to drive out the demon and cure his son. However, Christ rebuked him, saying, "**How long shall I endure**" such faithlessness? Do you see how the man has shifted the blame for his own lack of faith upon the disciples, saying that they were too weak to heal? Jesus, therefore, is shaming him for accusing the disciples by calling him "**faithless**" and "**perverse**". That is, it is not so much the fault of the weakness of the disciples as it is

his lack of faith, which, being great, has prevailed over the equal measure of their strength. Christ rebukes not only this man, but everyone who lacks faith, even the disciples and bystanders. By saying, **“how long shall I be with you?”** Christ shows that He longs for the Passion upon the Cross and His departure from those who do not have faith and do not believe that He is the Son of God. Christ also rebuked the boy, because it appears that he too, lacked faith and his lack of faith had given rise for the demon to enter him. The apostles were afraid that they had lost the grace to drive out demons that had been given to them; this is why they asked Jesus in private with great anxiety. But the Lord reproves them for being imperfect in faith, saying it is **“because of your unbelief”** that you could not have power over this demon. For if you had fervent, ardent faith, you would accomplish great things, even the power to move mountains. **(17:14-20) “This kind”** of demon is cast out by **prayer** and **fasting** because some demons are greater and more powerful in the order of evil and fervent faith, prayer and fasting is required to drive them out. Exorcisms require sincere faith, prayer and fasting, not only from those who are demonized, but also from those who would heal them. But nothing can withstand Jesus’ power who immediately rebuked the demon and it came out of the child and the child was cured. **(17:21)** And Jesus tells His disciples that they shall see even greater things, His death and Resurrection on the third day. He foretells the Passion so that no one would think that He suffered unwillingly, and also to train them so that they would not be shaken by the unexpected when it occurs. To the sorrow He weds the joy, that He will rise. **(17:22-23)**