



## GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AUSTRALIA

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

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### SUNDAY 25 SEPTEMBER 2016 - “FISHERS OF MEN”

#### **EPISTLE** **The Reading is from St Paul’s Second Letter to the Corinthians**

**[1:21 – 2:4]** Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us is God, who also has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.

Moreover I call God as witness against my soul, that to spare you I came no more to Corinth. Not that we have dominion over your faith, but are fellow workers for your joy; for by faith you stand.

But I determined this within myself, that I would not come again to you in sorrow. For if I make you sorrowful, then who is he who makes me glad but the one who is made sorrowful by me?

And I wrote this very thing to you, lest, when I came, I should have sorrow over those from whom I ought to have joy, having confidence in you all that my joy is the joy of you all. For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote to you, with many tears, not that you should be grieved, but that you might know the love which I have so abundantly for you.

**EXPLANATION:** Firstly, we are reminded of the roots of Orthodox sacramental life. Being **established** in Christ (**2 Cor 1:21**) through baptism, we are **anointed** and **sealed** (**2 Cor 1:22**) in the **Spirit** through chrismation.

It is only through baptism and chrismation that we put on Christ and His Spirit is sent down upon us.

The real reason for Paul's change in itinerary is graciousness; to spare them a confrontation. Instead of confronting them, he writes to them. He writes with words of fatherly love. The purpose of church discipline is never for the leader to exercise **dominion** or harsh authority; rather it is to call for repentance, reconciliation with the Church, and renewal in the **joy (2 Cor 1:24)** of the Spirit.

True pastoral correction brings both agony for the overseer--**affliction, anguish of heart, many tears**--and abundant **love** to the one being disciplined. St Paul expresses his love for his spiritual children here, desiring only that through his words of love, they come to repentance.

**GOSPEL**      The Reading is from St Luke [5:1-11]      So it was, as the multitude pressed about Him to hear the word of God, that He stood by the Lake of Gennesaret, and saw two boats standing by the lake; but the fishermen had gone from them and were washing their nets. Then He got into one of the boats, which was Simon's, and asked him to put out a little from the land. And He sat down and taught the multitudes from the boat. When He had stopped speaking, He said to Simon, *"Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch."* But Simon answered and said to Him, *"Master, we have toiled all night and caught nothing; nevertheless at Your word I will let down the net."* And when they had done this, they caught a great number of fish, and their net was breaking. So they came and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink. When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees saying, *"Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!"* For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish which they had taken; and so also were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, *"Do not be afraid. From now on you will catch men."*

**So when they had brought their boats to land, they forsook all and followed Him.**

**EXPLANATION:** Jesus was preaching throughout Galilee and as the multitude got bigger he asked Simon Peter if He could stand in his boat to address the crowd at the shore of **Lake Gennesaret** (also known as the Sea of Galilee – 13 miles long, 7 miles wide). **(5:1-2)** Peter immediately obeyed Jesus and called Him “Master” and after the sermon finished Jesus wanted to repay Peter for his kindness and rewarded him with a large catch of fish. Peter kneels and confesses Jesus as “**Lord**”, showing profound awareness both of the divinity of Christ and of his own human sinfulness. **(3:3-6)** The first disciples, partners in fishing, were to become partners also in the work of mission and evangelism in the early church – “**fishers of men**”. **(5:7-11)** The reason why Peter did not catch any fish after toiling all night was because he was too close to the shore. Jesus said, “**Put out into the deep.**” These words are symbolic of the way we live. Too many of us skim the surface of life, we hug the shore. If we want to live, we must launch out into the deep, putting our faith in Christ. Truth is not always on the surface. Truth is deep. God is the inexhaustible depth and ground of all being. To reach Him we must let our nets down into deeper waters. We must penetrate the depths of our heart and seek Him in constant prayer. The Christian is one who is called to move out of the shallows of self-trust and into the depths of total relinquishment of his life to Christ as Lord and Master. Then he will float on the sea of faith, protected from wind and tide by the power of Our Lord. And Jesus tells Peter, “**do not be afraid**”. There are different kinds of fear – fear of facing the pressures of life, fear of death, fear of illnesses, fear of condemnation, etc. It robs life of meaning by keeping us worried and focussed on trivial things which often lead to despair. But fear of God is a healthy fear which is given to us for our protection. Jesus also tells us to fear hypocrisy – that is, “the leaven of the Pharisees” and the loss of God’s friendship. As Christians we accept fear as part of life, because we know that by accepting Jesus as Our Lord, we are no longer controlled by fear but have the power to overcome. God given faith has the power to destroy fear. As long as we keep our faith centred in God, worry and fear cannot remain. “When I am afraid I will trust in Thee.”

(Psalms 56:3) Attach your fear with prayer. Fear of the most devastating illness can be healed by prayer, which gives rise to courage in the sufferer. Also “perfect love casts out fear”. (1John 4:8) The more you love God, the more you trust Him and give yourself and your fears to Him. Commit yourselves and your families in to the hands of God and all your fears will disappear.