



GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AUSTRALIA

PARISH OF THE ANNUNCIATION OF OUR LADY, “EVANGELISMOS”

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SUNDAY 2 OCTOBER 2016 – LOVE YOUR ENEMIES

EPISTLE The Reading is from St Paul’s Second Letter to the Corinthians [4:6-15]

For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us. We are hard pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed – always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus’ sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So then death is working in us, but life in you. And since we have the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, *“I believed and therefore I spoke”*, we also believe and therefore speak, knowing that He who raised up the Lord Jesus will also raise us up with Jesus, and will present us with you. For all things are for your sakes, that grace, having spread

through the many, may cause thanksgiving to abound to the glory of God.

EXPLANATION:

The Creator of all, Who caused light to shine from nothing commissioned Paul and the Apostles to bring knowledge of Him, through the life of His Son, to those who have receptive hearts. **(4:6)** The **“treasure”** is the light of God’s glory in Christ. The **“earthen vessels”** refer to our humanity. That is, man is created from the dust of the earth and those who teach the Gospel are earthen vessels which carry the Word of God. **(4:7)** Paul now reflects that even though every aspect of his life and ministry have been fraught with great difficulty, he is able to continue by remembering always that Christ lived and died to give man a way back to God. Those who really understand this truth carry on His work, in spite of the tribulations it may bring. **(4:8-10)** He had been beaten, stoned, put in stocks and driven out of cities. No one would willingly suffer as he had without having upheld the wonder of God. **(4:11-12)** Paul expresses his compulsion to teach the Gospel in spite of danger. The truth and power of the saving message of Jesus Christ cannot be restrained. Paul knows that death can come at any time. He does not seek it but does not fear guide his actions. He carries on, doing whatever is necessary to propagate the Gospel. His complete faith in the Resurrection of Christ assures him that there will be a universal Resurrection, after which all true Christians will be together **with Jesus. (4:13-14)**

GOSPEL The Reading is from St Luke [6:31-36]

And just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise. But if you love those who love you, what credit is

that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. And if you lend to those from whom you hope to receive back, what credit is that to you? For even sinners lend to sinners to receive as much back. But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil. Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful.

EXPLANATION:

The apostles were about to be sent out to preach and many persecutors and plotters awaited them. If they became fearful of persecution and did not boldly preach Christ's teachings, the radiant sun of the Gospel would not have spread throughout the world. In anticipation of this, Jesus exhorts the apostles not to give way to defensive measures against their enemies, but instead to bravely endure all things, even insults and murderous plots. This is what He Himself did on the Cross. To prove to the apostles that this commandment **to love one's enemies** is possible to keep, Jesus says, "If you want your enemies to be hard, unfeeling and angry towards you, then be the same yourself to them. But if you want to be kind and compassionate toward you, then you also must show kindness and forgiveness and not remember past wrongs. **(6:31-33)** Then He adds another compelling reason to keep this commandment, "if you only love those who love you, then you are no better than sinners, who do the same. But if you love those who do evil to you, you are like God, "Who is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil." "Who sends rain on the just and the unjust?" Which do you desire, to be like sinners or to be like

God? Jesus asks us to go beyond the call of duty in forgiveness. Those who belong to the realm of God know that forgiveness has no limits – “Not seven times, but seventy times seven”. Jesus went all the way to the Cross for us. **(6:34-35)** How far are we willing to go for Christ in forgiveness and love for others?” “Love” means to love that which is unlovable, otherwise it is no virtue at all. But how is it possible to love someone who dislikes you, insults you and wants to harm you? It is not possible unless one first loves God with his whole being. By doing good to your enemies you remove the bitterness from their hearts. Pray for them. No person can pray for another and still hate him. Seek to find in them those good qualities which undoubtedly exist in every man. Develop the capacity to forgive. Only the injured person can pour out the warm waters of forgiveness. **“Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful.” (6:36)** However wise, learned, noble a man may be, if he does not love his enemies, that is, love his fellow-beings, he has not attained to God, whereas a man who carries this love in his heart, then “he dwelleth in God, and God in him.” (John 6:56) Divine love does not dwell in him who does not love his enemies.