GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AUSTRALIA

PARISH OF THE ANNUNCIATION OF OUR LADY, "EVANGELISMOS"

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SUNDAY 4 JUNE 2017 – PENTECOST

During the Divine Liturgy, all Orthodox Christians take part in the beautiful service known as "The Service of Kneeling". The priest reads 3 prayers about the miracle of Pentecost. During each prayer the entire congregation kneels and prays also.

EPISTLE The Reading is from the Acts of the Apostles [2:1-11]

When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. And there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven. And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were confused, because everyone heard them speak in his own language. Then they were all amazed and marveled, saying to one another, 'Look, are not all these who speak Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each in our own language in which we were born? Parthians and Medes and Elamites, those dwelling in Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya adjoining Cyrene, visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs – we hear them speaking in our own tongues the wonderful works of God."

<u>EXPLANATION:</u> The **"mighty wind"** is the power of the Holy Spirit which brought divine inspiration to all who sat and waited in the upper room of the house. The **"tongues of fire"** are a manifestation of God's uncreated energy, the gift of the Holy Spirit which filled them with grace so that they began to speak in many different languages to the devout Jews, Arabs, Cretans, Egyptians, Persians, etc, who gathered outside the house, to enable the Word of God to be preached throughout the world. This fulfils the prophesy of St John the Baptist, that Christ would "baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire". (Luke 3:16) St Peter delivers the first sermon on this first "Pentecost" (which means 50 days after Christ's Resurrection), and over 3000 people repented, were baptized and became Christians.

<u>GOSPEL</u> <u>The Reading is from the Gospel of St John</u> [7:37-52, 8:12] On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water." But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified. Therefore many from the crowd, when they heard this saying, said, "Truly this is the Prophet." Others said, 'This is the Christ." But some said, "Will the Christ come out of Galilee? Has not the Scripture said that the Christ comes from the seed of David and from the town of Bethlehem, where David was?" So there was a division among the people because of Him. Now some of them wanted to take Him, but no one laid hands on Him. Then the officers came to the chief priests, and Pharisees, who said to them, 'Why have you not brought Him?" The officers answered, "No man ever spoke like this Man!" Then the Pharisees answered them, "Are you also deceived? Have any of the rulers or the Pharisees believed in Him? But this crowd that does not know the law is accursed." Nicodemus (he who came to Jesus by night, being one of them) said to them, "Does our law judge a man before it hears him and knows what he is doing?" They answered and said to him, 'Are you also from Galilee? Search and look, for no prophet has arisen out of

Galilee.".....Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life."

<u>EXPLANATION:</u> On the last day of the week of the Feast of Tabernacles, Jesus stood up in the temple and cried out, **"If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink"**. His message was an invitation to come and find life in Him, for water was an image of life. **(7:37)** The one who believed in Him would himself become a source of life to others, for **"from his belly"**, his innermost being, **"rivers of living water"** would **"flow"** out to the thirsty world around him. **"Living water"** is the gift of the Holy Spirit and the new life which springs forth by the power of the Spirit. **(7:38-39)** Many who heard Jesus concluded that He was a **"Prophet"**, others said He was indeed the Messiah Himself; whilst others did not believe because they thought that Jesus was from Galilee and the Scriptures foretold the Messiah would come from Bethlehem. **(7:40-43)** The Pharisees were convinced He was not the Messiah and ordered his arrest as a deceiver. But Jesus, being in control of His Own destiny was not yet ready to give Himself up. **(7:44)** The officers who heard him teach in the temple over the past week made arrest impossible, for His words had pierced their hearts and they had been led to believe. When questioned by the chief priests why they had not **"brought him"**, they answered, **"No man ever spoke like this Man",** that is, with such truth, wisdom and majestic authority. They all agreed that Jesus was a holy man and not to be opposed. **(7:45-46)** The reaction of the Pharisees was immediate. They questioned if the officers had also been deceived just like the common rabble who did not know the Law. **(7:47-49)** Nicodemus is part of that Sanhedrin who believed in Jesus but was afraid to openly declare Him. He secretly defends Jesus by reminding the chief priests that the Law requires a man to be heard and tried before a verdict is pronounced. **(7:50-51)** The Pharisees

then devised other cunning methods in their attempts to trap Jesus. One such method was the encounter of Christ and the women caught in **“the very act of adultery”**. The woman was apprehended, but where was the adulterous man? The Law was that both were to be stoned, but such harsh measures were not enforced. Yet they asked Jesus for a legal ruling on how to enforce the provisions of the Law. All of this points to a trap artificially set up for the specific purpose of trapping Jesus so that **“they might have something for accusing Him”**. It was, they thought, an impossible set of alternatives for Him. If He agreed that she should be stoned, she would be killed there and then, and responsibility for this act (which was technically illegal, for only the Romans had authority to put to death) could be laid at His feet. If He said that she should not be stoned, He would be contradicting God’s Law. They had Him now! **(8:1-5)** Jesus refused to dignify their request with an answer. He had nothing but contempt for such pretended zeal for God’s Law and instead He bent down and **“with His finger wrote on the ground”**. **(8:6)** But they continued to ask Him, and refused to be put-off or let the woman go. At length, Jesus acceded to their request, stood up only long enough to say, if the law says that adulterers should be stoned, then so be it, but **“let he who is without sin among you cast the first stone”**. And He stood down again and wrote on the ground. Speculation abounds as to what Jesus wrote, one theory being that He wrote the names of those accusers who were themselves guilty of adultery. It was a brilliant move. He did it in such a way as to make it impossible for sinners like them to carry out such a ruling. Being convicted by their own conscience they quickly dispersed. **(8:7-9)** When they had gone Jesus stood up and told her to sin no more. God forgives and does not condemn the repentant sinner. **(8:10-11)**