



## GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AUSTRALIA

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

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### SUNDAY 2 JULY 2017 – 4<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY OF MATTHEW

#### **EPISTLE The Reading is from St Paul’s Letter to the Hebrews [9:1-7]**

Then indeed even the first *covenant* had ordinances of divine service and the earthly sanctuary. For a tabernacle was prepared: the first *part*, in which *was* the lamp stand, the table, and the showbread, which is called the sanctuary; and behind the second veil, the part of the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of All, which had the golden censer and the ark of the covenant overlaid on all sides with gold, in which *were* the golden pot that had the manna, Aaron’s rod that budded, and the tablets of the covenant; and above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat. Of these things we cannot now speak in detail. Now when these things had been thus prepared, the priests always went into the first part of the tabernacle, performing *the services*. But into the second part the high priest *went* alone once a year, not without blood, which he offered for himself and *for* the people’s sins *committed* in ignorance;

**EXPLANATION:** These verses give a description of the “earthly” Mosaic tabernacle, which is a copy of the heavenly altar. “Divine Services” means simply worship in an earthly place. **(9:1)** The

“tabernacle” in the wilderness was a figure of the dwelling place that God prepared for Himself, so that He could dwell among men. Similarly in the New Testament, the All-Holy Virgin Mary’s womb was prepared to be Christ’s tabernacle, the very dwelling place of God. The tabernacle was a single tent with two veils inside dividing it into two parts. The first part contained the candle stick or lamp stand of pure gold with seven branches and the showbread (12 loaves representing the 12 tribes of Israel). This was called the “Sanctuary”. **(9:2)** The second veil or part separated the sanctuary from the “Holy of Holies” which contained the Ark of the Covenant in which the relics of Israel were placed – the golden censor, the golden pot containing the manna, Aaron’s rod that budded and the Tablets of the Law, the Commandments written on stone by the finger of God. **((9:3-4)** God is enthroned upon the cherubim. Hence God’s throne in Israel’s midst, the “mercy” seat which is a sort of a lid cover placed over or upon the ark. It has a cherubim on each side and their wings overshadow the mercy seat. They are called “of glory” or of God, since the space between them was the place where God promised to meet Moses and commune with Him, and after the establishment of the priesthood, with Aaron and his successors. The Apostle says, “we cannot now speak in detail” about these things. That is, it is not time now to speak about these things in particular detail. In the Old Testament, God could not be represented or depicted because divine nature is unknowable. The Second Commandment prohibits all imagery. However, when the Son becomes man the human nature of God the Son can be depicted and is imaged. **(9:5)** While priests entered the sanctuary daily, only the high priest could enter through the second veil into the Most Holy Place and only once a year, on the Day of Atonement. He entered with the animal blood of the atonement sacrifice, which was first for his sins and then for the sins of the people. This annual sacrifice reveals the imperfect temporary status of the Old Covenant, for: 1) only one man can enter God’s

presence, 2) that man cannot enter continually, 3) he must enter occasionally to repeat the sacrifice for sins, a sacrifice good only for a limited time, 4) the sacrifice deals entirely with materials from his age, which are imperfect and impermanent – it cannot begin a participation in the age to come, the “time of reformation”, it deals mainly with the outer man, it is superficial and cannot purify man’s heart and mind, let alone restore fallen human nature. Christ, in contrast to the Old Testament high priest is High Priest of the New Covenant. He enters the heavenly sanctuary “once for all”. His sacrifice covers all sins, by all people for all time and with His blood heals our corrupt humanity and restores us to our proper relationship to God.

**GOSPEL The Reading is from the Gospel of St Matthew [8:5-13]**

**Now when Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to Him pleading with Him, saying, “Lord, my servant is lying at home paralysed, dreadfully tormented.” And Jesus said to him, “I will come and heal him.” The centurion answered and said, “Lord, I am not worthy that You should come under my roof. But only speak a word, and my servant will be healed. For I also am a man under authority, having soldiers under me. And I say to this one, “Go,” and he goes; and to another, “Come,” and he comes; and to my servant, “Do this,” and he does it. When Jesus heard it, He marvelled, and said to those who followed, “Assuredly, I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel. And I say to you that many will come from the east and west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. But the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” Then Jesus said to the centurion, “Go your way; and as you have believed, so let it be done for you.” And his servant was healed that same hour.**

## **EXPLANATION:**

A **“centurion”** commanded 100 men in a Roman legion. The man is a Gentile. Jesus is the Saviour of all; for Him ethnic and social distinctions are void. **(8:5)** Jesus is ready to deal graciously with a Gentile and even to go to his home which was considered unclean for Jews to fraternize with Gentiles. The centurion recognizes Jesus’ authority, calling Him **“Lord”**. Although the centurion has authority over men, he understands that only Jesus has authority over disease. He acknowledges Jesus as **“Lord”** and expresses his deep unworthiness before Christ. He demonstrated both faith in Christ and humility which attracts God’s grace. He firmly believed that all Jesus had to do is speak the Word and his servant would be healed. Jesus marvels at the great and supernatural faith of the centurion, because he understood that Christ, the Lord is everywhere in all places and that by word alone he could do all things. **(8:7-10)** Jesus praises the centurion, a Gentile, and lifts him up as a model of faith. He nullifies the ethnic supremacy of the Jews saying that many from other nations will share the heavenly blessings with the Jewish Patriarchs. The centurion’s faith in Christ places him also in the Kingdom of Heaven. The **“sons of the kingdom”** are Jews, who had a sense of racial superiority as the chosen people of God. By saying **“outer darkness”**, Jesus shows that there is also an **“inner darkness”** which is less severe. For in hell there are varying degrees of punishment. **(8:11-12)** By healing the servant by His Word alone, Jesus showed that He spoke the Truth, that he is the Messiah, whom the Jews rejected and they would be cast into outer darkness because they stubbornly refused to follow Him. **(8:13)**