



**GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AUSTRALIA**

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

59 CARR ST, WEST PERTH WA 6005 PARISH PRIEST: FATHER EMMANUEL STAMATIOU

MOB: 0419 961 313 EMAIL: [stamatem@iinet.net.au](mailto:stamatem@iinet.net.au)

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**SUNDAY 17 DECEMBER 2017**

**“WORLDLY ENTANGLEMENTS, POOR EXCUSES”**

**EPISTLE The Reading is from St Paul’s Letter to the Colossians**

**[3:4-11]**

**When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth; fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire and covetousness, which is idolatry. Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them. But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him, where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all.**

**EXPLANATION:** When Christ **appears** at the Second Coming, those who have received Christ’s exalted resurrection in life in baptism will be manifested in **glory** along with Him, for they are united with Him.

Baptism incorporates us into Christ so that, all that He is, we are also. Christ died, so we die. Christ was raised and we are co-raised with Him. Christ sits at the right hand of God and, in Him, so do we. **(3:4)** Therefore we should **put to death** (mortify) our passions and sinful behaviour. Our hearts are to find rest and satisfaction in God alone. To be totally consumed by **greed** is to make possessions our true god which is **idolatry**. For he who has given his heart over to greed rather than the living God is an **idolater**. **(3:5)** And those who live a pagan lifestyle with **fornication, uncleanness** (sexual sins), **gluttony, evil desire** and **greed** will bring about the **wrath of God**. **(3:6)** They used to live this way, **walking** in these sins, but no more. Now they have a new life in Christ. There can be no going back. **(3:7)** Even sins such as **anger** (wrath), **indignation, malice, reviling** and **verbal obscenities** must all cease and be **put off**. **(3:8)** They must no longer **lie** to one another, using one another. This was part of the “**old man**”, that is, the former life, with all its evil practices and false ways which were **stripped off** in baptism. **(3:9)** Through that Sacramental Mystery of Baptism, they put on the **new man**, the new self (even as they put on new garments after their baptism). Through this they were continually and progressively being **renewed** – that is, brand new, fresh, unused. The new man grows from one stage of perfection to another, becoming the **image** of Jesus Christ and throughout eternity remaining the image of **Him Who created him**. It is through this that we come to an intimate **real-knowledge** of our Creator. St Paul says here that we were originally created in God’s image to know Him and share in His joy. Sin obscured this image and ruined this fellowship, but now, through Christ, this image is being restored so that we can walk with God and know Him once again. In this baptismal renewal, we have all **put on the new man**. **(3:10)** In this new creation, all earthly categories and divisions have been transcended. People of all kinds are equally given this new life. Thus in this new creation there are no longer any racial divisions such as Greek and Jew. The only

abiding reality is Christ – He is all and in all and everything and the only thing that matters. (3:11)

**GOSPEL**      **The Reading is from St Luke [14:16-24]**

***Then He said to him, “A certain man gave a great supper and invited many, and sent his servant at supper time to say to those who were invited. ‘Come for all things are now ready.’ But they all with accord began to make excuses. The first said to him, ‘I have bought a piece of ground, and I must go and see it. I ask you to have me excused.’ And another said, ‘I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to test them. I ask you to have me excused.’ Still another said, ‘I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.’ So that servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house, being angry, said to his servant, ‘Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in here the poor and the maimed and the lame and the blind.’ And the servant said, ‘Master, it is done as you commanded, and still there is room.’ Then the master said to the servant, ‘Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.’ For I say to you that none of those men who were invited shall taste my supper.”***

**EXPLANATION:**

This parable summarizes the history of salvation. **A certain man** (God, the Father) **made a great supper** (the divine economy of the Incarnation which finds its fullest expression in the Eucharist and its fullness in the world to come) **(14:16)**, **sent His servant** (the Son of God who assumed the form of a servant and became man) at **supper time** (the time when iniquity had reached its peak in the world), **to say to them that were called** (the children of Israel who were called through the law and the prophets) **“come for all things**

**are now ready” (14:17)** (the coming of the Messiah, the coming of Salvation). **But with one accord they began to make excuses** (the Jews refused to accept Jesus as their Saviour and were found unworthy of the supper). **(14:18)** So, the invited guests were to be replaced by the **poor**, the **maimed**, the **lame**, the **blind** (the Jewish outcasts) in the **streets and lanes** of the city and those on the **highways and hedges** (the Gentiles who are outside the Hebrew nation) and **compel them** to accept this messianic banquet (God’s plan with salvation). That is, to warn them of the dangers of not accepting God’s invitation, which will lead to eternal condemnation. God’s desire to fill His **house**, His kingdom of heaven, will not be frustrated. **(14:19-23)** For those who have rejected God’s grace will have no part of His kingdom. That is, **none of those men who were invited shall taste my supper. (14:24)** The warning refers to the Last Judgment. In many ways we are also guilty of the same rejection as the Jews. We are all invited to the kingdom which God has prepared for us before the foundation of the world. But we are not worthy of this “supper”; some of us because of useless philosophical musings, others because of material things, and yet others because of pleasures of the flesh. We put bodily health and social interests before spiritual health; worldly learning before the knowledge of God; earthly treasures before the riches of God; future material security before preparation for eternal life; luxury and self-indulgences before care of others. And we, like the Jews of old, make excuses and fashion our righteousness to suit our priorities. We can arrange our affairs so that we can respond to the Lord’s graciousness, but instead we contemptuously disregard the generosity of the host, who loves us and cares for us. The invitation and the response illustrates man’s neglect of what is of infinitely greater value to him – salvation and eternal life with God, than his earthly perishable concerns.