



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

Please look at our website to find this and other parish resources: www.evangelismos.com.au

SUNDAY 25 MARCH 2018

FEAST DAY OF THE ANNUNCIATION OF THE MOTHER OF GOD

For almost 400 years the Orthodox Christians of Asia Minor and the Balkans suffered and were oppressed by the Ottoman Turks. In 1821 Bishop Germanos of Patras, Greece raised the Cross of Jesus Christ and proclaimed freedom for all Greek Orthodox Christians. The Feast Day of the Annunciation was chosen as the official start of the Revolution to show all the world that the Christians of Greece wanted to be free.

THE EPISTLE The Reading is from St Paul’s letter to the Hebrews [2:11-18] For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying: “I will declare Your name to My brethren; in the midst of the assembly I will sing praise to You.” And again: “I will put My trust in Him.” And again: “Here am I and the children whom God has given Me.” Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. For indeed He does not give aid to angels, but He does give aid to the seed of Abraham.

Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted.

EXPLANATION: Christ and mankind are “**all of one**”. That is, He voluntarily took on human nature and became exactly as we are, capable of feeling pain and suffering and even death itself, but incapable of sin. He took on human form because the curse of the law of death was placed on all mankind as a consequence of the Fall, and only Christ Himself, Who also in the beginning made all things out of nothing could remove this “ancestral curse”, renew humanity and reconcile man with God. The Word, perceived that corruption could not be abolished otherwise than through death, but He is Divine and Immortal. Therefore, He assumed a body capable of death in order that through His death and Resurrection He might thereafter put an end to corruption for all others as well. For the human race would have perished utterly had not the Lord and Saviour of all come amongst us to put an end to death. Christ destroyed the devil’s power by overcoming the devil’s strongest weapon – death itself and opened the path to Salvation. He set us free from the bondage of sin and death (**2:11-15**). Although Christ was in no way subject to blameworthy passions (ie. sinful passions) He voluntarily assumed all our natural and blameless passions including hunger, thirst, tiredness, labour, tears, fear of death, agony, etc, which through the consequences of the Fall are not themselves sins. Why? Because His human will was always in perfect harmony with His divine will. Although Jesus is like us in His human nature we do not become like Him in his divine nature. Christ is one Person, yet has two natures. His divine nature is united with His human nature – without change, confusion or division. That is, when He took on flesh, neither the

divine nature became human, nor did the human nature lose its distinct attributes. The divine nature performs all things divine and the human nature performs all things human. The two natures never separated, so when Christ did what was divine, His human nature followed, and when the human nature acted, His divine nature co-operated. eg. In the Garden of Gethsemene, Christ expresses fear of death according to His human nature, but as God He transforms the fear at once into boldness and invites death to come. The union of the divine and human natures in Christ is a mystery which transcends the intellect and no language is capable of describing it. Precisely how the natures are united remains concealed from human understanding. **(2:16-18)**

GOSPEL The Reading is from the Gospel of St Luke [1:24-38] Now after those days his wife Elizabeth conceived; and she hid herself five months saying, "Thus the Lord has dealt with me, in the days when He looked on me, to take away my reproach among people." Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And having come in, the angel said to her, "Rejoice, highly favoured one, the Lord is with you, blessed are you among women!" But when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and considered what manner of greeting this was. Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have favour with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. "And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end." Then Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I do not know a man?" And the angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and

the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God. “Now indeed, Elizabeth your relative has also conceived a son in her old age; and this is now the sixth month for her who was called barren. For with God nothing will be impossible.” Then Mary said, “Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word.” And the angel departed from her.

EXPLANATION: Women, during this period were “**reproached**” as being unfavoured by God if they could not have children. Elizabeth was overcome with joy when she conceived John the Baptist late in life. God had “**taken away her reproach among people**”.(1:24-25) The Archangel Gabriel was sent by God to “a virgin, whose name was Mary”. Mary is greeted with an exalted salutation because, in her destiny to be the mother of Christ, she is the most blessed woman of all time. Her whole life was filled with humility and love for God. Christ waited some 1500 years from the lineage of Abraham to find a woman worthy of becoming His mother and for one who could intercede for our salvation. (1:26-28) After this, as in the customary way of human weakness, she was upset by the angelic vision and by the unusual greeting. Gabriel immediately consoled her, “**Do not be afraid, Mary**”. (1:29-32) But Mary asked, “**how can this be**”, since I have determined to live out my life in the chaste state of virginity? The angel answered, “**The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you**” That is, in **coming** upon the Virgin **and overshadowing her** the Holy Spirit : (1) purified her of all stain of sin, including original sin so that Jesus would not be born with the stain of original sin, and (2) by His operation alone, He created in her womb the Holy and venerable body of our Redeemer. (1:34-35) Through her own free will she accepted God’s invitation with great humility and love as a “**servant of God** “. As the Mother of God, we pray to her to intercede for us to her Son for our salvation.