



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 1 JULY 2018

SUNDAY OF THE GERGESENE DEMONIACS

EPISTLE The Reading is from St Paul’s First Letter to the Corinthians [1Cor 12:27 – 13:8] Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually. And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles? Do all have gifts of healings? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? But earnestly desire the best gifts. And yet I show you a more excellent way. Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing. Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, endures all things. Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away.

EXPLANATION: Following the example of the physical body, the individual members of the spiritual Body of Christ, the Church, should be neither conceited about nor embarrassed by their individual functions but should use their gifts from God with love, working always for the good of the entire Church. Just as the entire

physical body suffers if one of its parts is in pain, and rejoices if one of its members has occasion, as through healing or accomplishment, so too, the entire Body of Christ should share the sufferings and joys of each of its individual members. **(12:27)** All spiritual gifts contribute to the quality of life and work of the Church, but some are more crucial to its existence than others. There is a hierarchy of honour in the Church. The bishops set the pace for the rest of the Church to follow and to function at the optimum level. The priests provide access to the Sacraments, the tools that help us begin and continue our path to Christ. Next in order of importance because of their vital functions are prophets who proclaim the message of God, then teachers who pass on an understanding of the Will and Word of God. Only then come workers of miracles, then those who have the gifts of healing, then those who help others, then administrators. Notice that while all gifts from God are valuable to the Church, those that top the list are the ones having to do with helping others in their spiritual life, which is eternal, rather than those having to do with the physical aspects of life. **(12:28-30)** But seen with all the gifts in place and operative there is something even **more excellent**. It is the love of God, the true sign of the presence of the Holy Spirit. **(12:31)** Love is the ultimate of God's many gifts. Man's ability to speak in all languages of heaven and earth but does not love God and his neighbour is as useless as **"sounding brass or a clanging cymbal"**. He produces nothing but dull and empty sounds which benefit no one. **(13:1)** Love outshines **prophecy** and **all faiths**. It is by far of greater value than the miraculous ability to **remove mountains**. The love of God and neighbour requires faith. Faith that expresses itself in an attempt to be Christ-like leads to love, which leads to the Kingdom. But faith without good works is useless for the kingdom. Without good works man cannot be saved. (James 2:14-26) Satan has faith (knowledge) that God is the Creator, that Jesus is the Son of God and Saviour of mankind, yet his faith led not to love but to rebellion and to a continued all-out effort to cause as many as possible to fall from grace with him. Only through continual spiritual growth in the image of Christ, with the grace of the Holy Spirit, can faith progress to love. **(13:2)** Jesus urges us that even if we give all we have to the **poor**, and even if we give our lives for others, such selfless acts done without love **profits us nothing**. These sacrifices and gestures are empty and useless unless motivated by love and will not be recognized by God. Charity motivated by a desire to be well thought of by the community or good deeds inspired by fear of not participating in the kingdom of life to come are not remembered by God. God commands not merely the deed but wants the heart of the giver to be entwined with His gift. He wants us to grieve with the needy. **(13:3)** How do we know if we are acting with love? St Paul offers a definition of love as follows: (1) **long suffering**: does not strike back in anger when

insulted or treated unjustly, is patient and forgiving; (2) is **kind** and gentle, especially with those who hurt it; (3) does not **envy**, is not jealous of what others have; (4) is **humble**, does not parade itself, put itself on display; (5) is not **puffed up**, arrogant, proud, egotistical; (6) does not **act rudely**, brashly, mean-spirited, insulting others; (7) is not **selfish**, seek his own way; (8) is not easily **provoked** or angered or ready to take offence; (9) thinks **no evil**, does not keep score on others or plan revenge; (10) does not rejoice in iniquity, but **rejoices in truth**; (11) **bears all things** – handles the burdensome, trusts in God no matter what and keeps his hope on God, looking up without despair and puts up with everything. **(13:4-7)** True love embraces all these qualities it **never fails**. Though everything comes to an end, including prophecies, the ability to communicate in tongues and the imperfect knowledge of the world, which will not be necessary in the fullness of God's Kingdom of Heaven, true love continues eternally. **(13:8)**

GOSPEL **The Reading is from the Gospel of St Matthew [8:28-34, 9:1]** **When He had come to the other side, to the country of the Gergesenes, there met Him two demon-possessed men, coming out of the tombs, exceedingly fierce, so that no one could pass that way. And suddenly they cried out, saying, "What have we to do with You, Jesus, You Son of God? Have You come here to torment us before the time? Now a good way off from them there was a herd of many swine feeding. So the demons begged Him, saying, "If You cast us out, permit us to go away into the herd of swine. And He said to them, "Go". So when they had come out, they went into the herd of swine. And suddenly the whole herd of swine ran violently down the steep place into the sea, and perished in the water. Then those who kept them fled; and they went away into the city and told everything, including what had happened to the demon-possessed men. And behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus. And when they saw Him, they begged Him to depart from their region. So He got into a boat, crossed over, and came to His own city.**

EXPLANATION: Jesus and His disciples left Capernaum which was their **own city** and which served as their headquarters and travelled across the Sea of Galilee to the other side, to the country of the Gergesenes by a small boat. Jesus calmed the storm and His disciples were amazed that even the winds and sea obeyed Him. There they met two men, coming out of the tombs, possessed with demons. They were mentally deranged, aggressive and self-destructive. They dwelt amongst the tombs either because demons wish to inspire the belief that the souls of those who have died become demons or because they were forced to leave the village which was a great distance away. Jesus came alone towards them, since no one dared to

bring them to Him. **(8:28)** The demons in them recognize Jesus as the **Son of God**. They know they have nothing in common with Him, for Jesus seeks man's salvation, whereas they seek to destroy mankind because of their envy that man has been raised to the heavenly heights where they were prior to the fall and expulsion from heaven. But Jesus' presence torments them, disturbs them. They consider it torment to be prevented from harming men. They are surprised that their power is being terminated **before the time** of the Last Judgment. They thought that Christ, not enduring their great wickedness and because they know Jesus rescues people from the devil's control that He would not wait for the time of their punishment. But this is not so; for the demons are permitted to contend with us until the end of the world. **(8:29)** The demons asked Jesus that if He has decided to cast them out of the men, then at least allow them to go into the herd of swine. They asked this so that they could drown the swine, and thus the owners would be grieved and would not welcome Christ. Jesus granted the demons their request in order to show how great is their bitterness towards men, and that if they had the power, and were not prevented as they are by God, they would do far worse things to us than they did for the swine. **(8:30-31)** The demons entering the **swine** (which were unclean for the Jews), is a sign of the reality of the demoniacs' healing. Jesus' sovereign power is not only over physical infirmity, but also over mental illness. It shows us the incomparable value of human beings, whose salvation is worth every sacrifice. Seeing that their herd of swine perished violently into the sea, the swine herders and village people begged Jesus to leave because they were grieved and thought something worse would befall them. That is, they were disturbed because Jesus was interfering with their business. They were afraid that He would cut down their profits. So they asked Him to leave. Even today people don't want Christ in their life because He stirs their conscience and makes them feel guilty. To sinners Christ comes as a **"Tormentor"**. But Christ disturbs us in order to heal us; to remind us that we cannot find rest nor peace in our lives as long as other people are suffering. And if we don't repent we will also hear that frightful word, **"Go"** into everlasting fire which was prepared for the devil and his followers; just as he did when he drove out the demons from the two demoniacs. And when we ask Jesus to leave, He leaves. He got into the boat and crossed over to Capernaum – to His own city. **(9:1)** And when He leaves we are left without light, love, hope or meaning. We live in the stench and quagmire of our sins. But to the day we die Jesus will be disturbing us in our sins through guilt, not so much to punish us, but to awaken us to His forgiving love and salvation which passes all understanding. For He is the Divine Healer of our souls.