



## GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AUSTRALIA

### PARISH OF THE ANNUNCIATION OF OUR LADY, "EVANGELISMOS"

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**SUNDAY 30 SEPTEMBER 2018**

**"LOVE YOUR ENEMIES"**

**EPISTLE The Reading is from St Paul's Second Letter to the Corinthians [9:6-11]**

But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. So let each one give as he purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work. As it is written: "*He has dispersed abroad, He has given to the poor; His righteousness endures forever.*" Now may He who supplies seed to the sower, and bread for food, supply and multiply the seed you have sown and increase the fruits of your righteousness, while you are enriched in everything for all liberally, which causes thanksgiving through us to God.

#### **EXPLANATION:**

Here St Paul urges the Corinthians to give their offering for the Christians in Jerusalem, who were in desperate need, as a demonstration of their love for Christ. He goes on to inform them of the blessings of almsgiving. To give so God's

work may be done and His people cared for is to plant **seeds of faith**, hope, love, courage and joy. The more seeds we plant (“**sow bountifully**”) the more of a harvest we can expect (“**reap bountifully**”). Therefore, in order to reap the harvest of this life and of the heavenly kingdom, let us use rightly all the things which God has given us, for all seed comes from God Himself and everything we accumulate in this world will be left behind. (**9:6**) Christ gave the ultimate – His life – willingly. Therefore those who have means should give joyfully so that Christ’s work may continue. (**9:7**) If we manage to give alms, our time and help to those who are in need, without expecting any type of recognition or reward on earth, God will bless our efforts. Through His **grace**, all our reasonable needs will be met and we will have an **abundance** from which to help others. If we realize that we do not need the biggest, the best, or the most of everything, we will always have a surplus from which to help others and give to God’s work. If we do not grow in this direction, we will never find the occasion to give because there is always something more to gather for ourselves. We can enjoy our possessions, seeing them as God’s generous gifts, and using them as much for others and for ourselves. We can possess them without allowing them to possess us. (**9:8**) Quoting Psalm 112.9, Paul reflects that when we give as a consequence of love and faith, God remembers. In the measure we give, so we receive, in this life and the next, because almsgiving is an indication of a purified heart and soul. However, there is no spiritual value if alms are given from ill-gotten gains. Almsgiving is a part of the Christ-like life, not a substitute for it. (**9:9**) And finally, Paul says that may God who supplies the seed to His people, who minister the seed to those in need, bless the good works, so that the

harvest is fruitful and great. Those who receive assistance are grateful that their sufferings are relieved because of God's grace and the good example of those who give generously encourages love, fellowship, prayer and spiritual growth among those looking on. "For your prayers and your alms have come up before God." (Acts 10:4) (**9:10-11**)

**GOSPEL**   **The Reading is from St Luke [6:31-36]**

**And just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise. But if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. And if you lend to those from whom you hope to receive back, what credit is that to you? For even sinners lend to sinners to receive as much back. But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil. Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful.**

**EXPLANATION:**

The apostles were about to be sent out to preach and many persecutors and plotters awaited them. If they became fearful of persecution and did not boldly preach Christ's teachings, the radiant sun of the Gospel would not have spread throughout the world. In anticipation of this, Jesus exhorts the apostles not to give way to defensive measures against their enemies, but instead to bravely endure all things, even insults and murderous plots. This is what He himself did on the Cross. To prove to the apostles that this commandment **to love one's enemies** is possible to keep, Jesus says, "if you want your enemies to be hard, unfeeling

and angry towards you, then be the same yourself to them. But if you want them to be kind and compassionate toward you, then you also must show kindness and forgiveness and not remember past wrongs. **(6:31-33)** Then He adds another compelling reason to keep this commandment; “if you only love those who love you, then you are no better than sinners, who do the same. But if you love those who do evil to you, you are like God, “Who is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil. “Who sends rain on the just and the unjust?” Which do you desire, to be like sinners or to be like God? Jesus asks us to go beyond the call of duty in forgiveness. Those who belong to the realm of God know that forgiveness has no limits – “Not seven times, but seventy times seven”. Jesus went all the way to the Cross for us. **(6:34-35)** How far are we willing to go for Christ in forgiveness and love for others? “Love” means to love that which is unlovable, otherwise it is no virtue at all. But how is it possible to love someone who dislikes you, insults you and wants to harm you? It is not possible unless one first loves God with his whole being. By doing good to your enemies you remove the bitterness from their hearts. Pray for them. No person can pray for another and still hate him. Seek to find in them those good qualities which undoubtedly exist in every man. Develop the capacity to forgive. Only the injured person can pour out the warm waters of forgiveness. **“Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful.”** **(6:36)** However wise, learned, noble a man may be, if he does not love his enemies, that is, love his fellow-beings, he has not attained to God, whereas a man who carries this love in his heart, then “he dwelleth in God, and God in him.” (John 6:56) Divine love does not dwell in him who does not love his enemies.