



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

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**SUNDAY 6 JANUARY 2019 – THE FEAST DAY OF
EPIPHANY (THEOPHANY)**

**EPISTLE The Reading is from Paul the Apostle to Titus
[2:11-14, 3:4-7]**

For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works..... But when the kindness and the love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour, that having been justified by His grace

we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

EXPLANATION:

Here St Paul emphasizes that Our Lord Jesus Christ will return in all His glory to judge the living and the dead and that we must purify our souls in anticipation of the age to come by, **“denying ungodliness and worldly lusts and live soberly, righteously and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ.” (2:11-14)**. St Paul speaks of Jesus as the embodiment of God’s grace. Through Christ, God’s reign of grace, mercy, pardon and peace extends to all the world. **Grace** is the uncreated energy of God, the gift of the Holy Spirit through which He gives His gifts to man in tender mercy and good will. It is a formative power, the rule of life of the age to come, requiring our determined participation. **(2:11)** To belong to God is to become godlike. To be ransomed or **“owned”** by God **(2:14)** is not simply a legal or static condition, but a life in communion with God, a blessed, victorious struggle. Thus we must discipline ourselves and make a concerned effort to resist the passions of this self-indulgent age and to live piously in the present age with our hearts always looking to the horizon for the appearance of Christ who will come in the royal glory of the Father to reign forever. The One who will come in glory is the very One who **“gave Himself”** for us, dying on the Cross, **“that He might redeem us from all lawlessness”** and from the moral chaos that characterizes this age. Formerly, we were in bondage to our sins, but Christ’s death set us free. In baptism, Christ **cleansed us for Himself** so that we belong to Him, as His people for His own possession. Formerly we were zealous for sin, indulging every passion without restraint, but now we are zealous only for good works. St Paul next gives a series of general admonitions that Titus must pass

to all his flock and to remind them to submit to **rulers** and **local authorities**, to **slander** no one and not be **quarrelsome**. We were once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, but through God's kindness to us through the "**washing of regeneration**" (baptism) and "**renewal in the Holy Spirit**" (Chrismation) we received a spiritual rebirth, a life of constant renewal and ongoing transformation of our minds and attitudes. It is through this baptism experience that God saved us, separating us from our old sinful lives and putting into our hearts the life-giving power that one day we will give birth to a new world – a rite of passage to eternal life with Christ. **(3:5-7)**

GOSPEL The Reading is from St Matthew [3:13-17]

Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him. And John *tried* to prevent Him, saying, "I need to be baptized by You, and are You coming to me?" But Jesus answered and said to him, "*Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfil all righteousness.*" Then he allowed Him. When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. And suddenly a voice *came* from heaven, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

EXPLANATION:

Here St Matthew explains the Baptism of Jesus. Baptism is "purification" or cleansing of original sin. Christ said that "unless a man is baptised with water and the Holy Spirit he shall not enter the

Kingdom of Heaven". Jesus did not need purification. But by making the purification of humanity His own, he would wash away the sin of humanity, grant regeneration and reveal the mystery of the Holy Trinity. Thus his baptism was necessary for the fulfilment of all God's righteousness. St Gregory of Nyssa says, "Jesus enters the filthy (sinful) waters of the world and when He comes out, brings up (purifies) the entire world with Him." Jesus is pure, yet He is baptised in order to wash us, and to show us that if we intend to be baptised we must first be cleansed. Otherwise we might stain our baptism, being easily sullied afterwards because of our evil habits. John forbade Him so that those who saw the baptism would not think that Christ was being baptised unto repentance like one of the multitude. Saying, "It is I that needs to be baptised by You." The forerunner was in need of cleansing by the Lord, for he was descended from Adam and he too carried with him the stain of disobedience. But when Christ took flesh, He cleansed all mankind. **(3:13-14)** And Jesus answered, "Let it be so now". **Permit it now**, for there will be time for us to have the glory that is befitting, even if we do not appear in such glory now. **For thus it is fitting for us to fulfil all righteousness.** "Righteousness" means the law. That is, I have fulfilled all other requirements of the law. **(3:15)** And when He came up from the water the **heavens were opened up**. Adam had closed the heavens, but through Christ they were opened and the Holy Spirit comes in the form of a **dove** to anoint the Messiah, the Son of God at the beginning of the new creation. Jesus does not become the Son of God this day; rather, in His baptism the eternal Son of God is revealed to all humanity. The Holy Spirit always rests on Him. The feast day of Epiphany (a manifestation or revelation) or Theophany (a manifestation of God) commemorates this day and points to the age to come. The baptism of Jesus reveals the great mystery of the Holy Trinity. The Father speaks, the Holy Spirit descends and the Son is baptised and anointed. **(3:16-17)**