



## 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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### ZACCHAEUS – REPENTANCE AND RESTITUTION

**EPISTLE** The Reading is from St Paul’s First Letter to the Hebrews  
**[7:26 – 8:2]**

For such a High Priest was fitting for us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens; who does not need daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the people’s, for this He did once for all when He offered up Himself. For the law appoints as high priests men who have weakness, but the word of the oath, which came after the law, appoints the Son who has been perfected forever. Now *this* is the main point of the things we are saying: We have such a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, a Minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle which the Lord erected, and not man.

#### **EXPLANATION:**

Man’s condition necessitated a High Priest far different from the Levitical Priests of the Old Law. This Priest is not only human as

they were, but He is perfectly so (Divine). His characteristics are given – **“holy”** (full of piety), **“harmless”** (free of any evil), **“undefiled”** (clean, both personally and ceremonially), **“separate from sinners”** (sinless). All of these qualities refer to Christ’s manhood, which was perfect. **(7:26)** Unlike the Levitical Priests, Christ had no sin of His own, so His offering was made on behalf of His fellow human being. He offered up Himself, the perfect priest and the perfect offering (victim). Being perfect, his offering was **“once and for all”**, whereas their offspring had to be repeated since none of their sacrifices were sufficient or perfect. **(7:27)** For such priests appointed by the Law are subject to weaknesses and limitations, but Christ has authority over all and is not subject to any limitations. **(7:28)** Our great High Priest Jesus Christ is present in heaven, being still both God and Man, having ascended into heaven with the human nature He had assumed. His high priestly office continues and He is **“seated”** at the right hand of the Father which indicates equality of honour. **(8:1)** Christ is the **“Minister”** or High Priest, the **“liturgist”** of the heavenly liturgy Who brings unto God the Father those who believe in Him by means of the mystery of the Holy Eucharist and thus perfecting them unto holiness by a service superior to the Levitical Law of bloody sacrifices and offerings of incense. The sanctuary in 8:2 is now contrasted with the tabernacle (“tent”) in which the Old Covenant sacrifices were made. Now the **“true tabernacle”** refers to the heavenly Holy of Holies which has been **“erected”** by God Himself, not by man, as was, of necessity, the earthly tabernacle. **(8:2)**

**GOSPEL The Reading is from St Luke [19:1-10]**

**Then Jesus entered and passed through Jericho. Now behold, *there was* a man named Zacchaeus who was a chief tax collector, and he was rich. And he sought to see who Jesus was, but could**

not because of the crowd, for he was of short stature. So he ran ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see Him, for He was going to pass that way. And when Jesus came to the place, He looked up and saw him, and said to him, *“Zacchaeus, make haste and come down, for today I must stay at your house.”* So he made haste and came down, and received Him joyfully. But when they saw it, they all complained saying, *“He has gone to be a guest with a man who is a sinner.”* Then Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, *“Look, Lord, I give half of my goods to the poor; and if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore fourfold.”* And Jesus said to him, *‘Today salvation has come to this house, because he also is a son of Abraham; for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.’”*

#### **EXPLANATION:**

Zacchaeus was a dishonest chief tax collector. He was shunned by his people as a collaborator and traitor, collecting taxes for the hated Romans. He had cut himself off from God and man. But despite his riches, he was restless, fed up with the kind of life he was living and desired to find God in Jesus; an encounter which changed the whole direction of his life. The crowd was an obstacle to Zacchaeus; it stood between him and Jesus. So he climbed above the crowd into a sycamore tree to see Him. Like Zacchaeus, we today will never see Jesus if we remain on the level we are. There are other trees we can climb; the trees of prayer, the Scriptures, the Liturgy, Holy Communion, repentance, restitution and service. From these trees not only will we see Jesus, but He will also see us as he saw Zacchaeus. And He will also say to us, **“Make haste and come down”**. That is, “come down away from your sinful nature”, repent and make restitution for the wrongs you have done and **“salvation will come to you”**. And He will abide in our heart, in our

mind and in our soul. For when the heart has been purified by the fruit of repentance, Christ will abide in us, in the house of our heart and soul. In this respect Zacchaeus is like many of us who have remained up in the tree of our own moral failure, hating ourselves for it, longing to be different but lacking the courage to come down. God sent Jesus into the world to invite us to come down. This is the great wonder of God's love that Zacchaeus experienced when he discovered that God was seeking him. He couldn't believe it. He expected Jesus to condemn him for his wickedness. Instead he heard Jesus call him by name and invited Himself to stay at his house. What does this mean but that the Master knows each one of us personally and by name. He knows those who are restless and have a great desire for God and draws near to those who seek Him. He does not wait for the sinner to repent, but takes the initiative as the good Shepherd to seek out the lost sheep. He did not come to invite the righteous but sinners to repentance. Who is righteous? Not one. That is, He did not come to invite people who are so self-satisfied and convinced of their goodness that they consider themselves better than others. He came to invite people who are very conscious of their sins and are desperately aware of their need for a Saviour. Zacchaeus was such a sinner. That is why Jesus invited Himself to his house. He knew he needed Jesus and was ready to accept the invitation. But it has to be a certain kind of house that can receive Jesus as a guest; a house of repentance and restitution for the wrongs; an honest attempt to undo the damage which we have done with our sins. Just as Zacchaeus says: - **“half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have defrauded any one of anything, I restore it fourfold.”** The heart must be cleansed of sin; it must be made pure by a sincere sorrow for our sins and by a determined turning away from them before Christ can come into our home and fill us with his loving presence. **(19:1-10)**