



GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AUSTRALIA

PARISH OF THE ANNUNCIATION OF OUR LADY, "EVANGELISMOS"

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SUNDAY 21 APRIL 2019 – PALM SUNDAY

THE ENTRANCE OF OUR LORD INTO JERUSALEM

EPISTLE The Reading is from St Paul's letter to the Philippians [4:4-9]

Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice! Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand. Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God: and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy – meditate on these things. The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.

EXPLANATION:

Though St Paul was chained in prison when he wrote this letter to the Philippians, he did not curse and complain. Instead he sang hymns to God. He was unable to contain his joy and boundless and loving enthusiasm in the Lord. (4:4) He says, “Let

your forbearance be known to all men". That is, we should not attempt to force our will on others; to forgive and not return evil for evil. **"For the Lord draws near";** that is, leave all those who have wronged you to God's judgment and providence; and trust that all will be sorted out at the Second Coming. **(4:5)** Even in the midst of persecution, do not worry about anything. Offer your prayers and supplications with thanksgiving to God, Who knows how much you can stand and what you truly need. **(4:6)** Then you will not suffer anxiety and depression, but rather the peace of God will guard your hearts and souls. For this peace **"surpasses all mind"**, that is, all comprehension. This peace of God guards the soul and makes it fearless, even in the midst of turmoil and persecution. **(4:7)** Therefore, focus on all that is beautiful in life. **"Whatever is true, venerable, righteous, pure, lovely, etc."** Embrace the virtues, overcome the passions. Don't focus on the sins of men. This is not the path to Christ's kingdom. It is not here a case of **"positive thinking"**. Rather, it is striving to see life sacramentally as being crammed with the gifts of God and discerning God's glory in the world. **(4:8)** We should practise the virtues and we will enjoy the blessing of the **"God of Peace"** in our community. **(4:9)**

GOSPEL The Reading is from the Gospel of St John [12:1-18]
Then, six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus was who had been dead, whom He had raised from the dead. There they made Him a supper; and Martha served, but Lazarus was one of those who sat at the table with Him. Then Mary took a pound of very costly oil of spikenard, anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the oil. But one of His disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, who would betray Him, said, "Why was this fragrant oil not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?" This he said, not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the money box; and he used to take what was put in it. But Jesus said, "Let her alone; she has kept this for the day of My burial. For the poor you have with you always, but Me you do not

have always." Now a great many of the Jews knew that He was there; and they came, not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might also see Lazarus, whom He had raised from the dead. But the chief priests plotted to put Lazarus to death also, because on account of him many of the Jews went away and believed in Jesus. The next day a great multitude that had come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, took branches of palm trees and went out to meet Him, and cried out: "Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord! The King of Israel!" Then Jesus, when He had found a young donkey, sat on it; as it is written: "Fear not, daughter of Zion; behold, your King is coming, sitting on a donkey's colt." His disciples did not understand these things at first; but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things were written about Him and that they had done these things to Him. Therefore the people, who were with Him when He called Lazarus out of his tomb and raised him from the dead, bore witness. For this reason the people also met Him, because they heard that He had done this sign.

EXPLANATION:

Christ willed to come to the House of Lazarus in Bethany, despite the danger of being taken by the Jewish leaders to show that he would not be suffering unwillingly but of His own volition, that on the day of the Jewish Passover, He might show that He is the stainless sacrificial "**Lamb of God**". It was commanded that the paschal lamb, by whose blood the people of Israel were freed from slavery in Egypt should be selected five days before the feast of Passover. Similarly Jesus, rode into Jerusalem on a donkey 5 days prior to Passover on Palm Sunday. **(12:1)** Mary, Lazarus' sister, as an indication of her great love for Jesus, anointed Jesus' feet and wiped His feet with her hair. We too wipe Christ's feet and those of His brethren with our hair when we share some of what is superfluous to us to alleviate the wants of the needy. The "**fragrance**" of good deeds will then permeate throughout the entire Church of our lives. **(12:3)**

Judas Iscariot gave vent to his anger by scolding Mary for not selling the ointment and giving the money to the poor. St John the Evangelist says that Judas did not speak out of concern for the poor, but rather out of greed as he often stole money from the moneybag to which he was entrusted by Jesus as treasurer. But a greedy person has no loyalty. Being faithless and wicked and quick to forget the trust Jesus placed in him, he went on from theft to betrayal of Our Lord. Even now, those who are morally lost persecute the members of the Church and betray the confidence and trust the community has bestowed upon them. **(12:4-6)** But Jesus said, “**Let her alone**”, for He considers the anointing to be a symbol of preparation of His body for burial and that He would be with them for only a brief period, whereas the poor, for whom alms could be provided, would be taken care of in the future. **(12:7-8)** It was curiosity and not charity that brought the Jews to Jesus. News of the raising of Lazarus spread like wildfire. Let us do the opposite. Let us seek Him with love and humility and imitate His example. Let us strive with all the strength of our soul to reach Bethany, the home of the obedient soul in which Christ dwells. **(12:9)** The next day (5 days before the Passover) on Palm Sunday, the crowd who witnessed the Resurrection of Lazarus and others who heard of the great miracle met Jesus as He rode into Jerusalem on a young donkey. They believed that the Messiah had arrived and they welcomed Him with a spontaneous outpouring of joy at the thought of their imminent liberation from Rome. In this they were mistaken. Christ was indeed their Liberator, but not from the passing power of Rome, but from the shackles of their sins. **(12:12-14)** The “**daughter of Zion**” is the Church of the faithful, associated with the heavenly triumphant Church. **(12:15)** In time, Christ’s disciples would understand these things that He is the King of Glory and not an earthly king. That Christ is the Saviour of the world.