



GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AUSTRALIA

PARISH OF THE ANNUNCIATION OF OUR LADY, “EVANGELISMOS”

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SYNAXIS OF THE 12 APOSTLES

EPISTLE The Reading is from St Paul’s First Letter to the Corinthians [4:9-16]

For I think that God has displayed us, the apostles, last, as men condemned to death; for we have been made a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men. We are fools for Christ’s sake, but you are wise in Christ! We are weak, but you are strong! You are distinguished, but we are dishonoured! To the present hour we both hunger and thirst, and we are poorly clothed, and beaten, and homeless. And we labour, working with our own hands. Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we endure; being defamed, we entreat. We have been made as the filth of the world, the offscouring of all things until now. I do not write these things to shame you, but as my beloved children I warn you. For though you might have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet you do not have many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel. Therefore I urge you, imitate me.

EXPLANATION: Here Paul contrasts the relative comfort of the Corinthian Christians with the persecuted, poverty-stricken and uncertain life of the apostles. Jesus said, ‘If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all’. (Mark 9:35) The apostles, in worldly terms appeared to be held in very low esteem. They were paraded and ridiculed in public, imprisoned and put to death. This was the cross that Jesus said one who follows Him must bear (Matt 16:24), which differs for each person. Those who accept this fact, however, will be first in the Kingdom of Heaven, unlike those who take the path of ease and comfort in this life. **(4:9)** The Corinthians were experiencing none of the difficulties of the Christian life because they were more concerned with pleasing the world rather than pleasing God. Even today, most of us worry about the impression we make on those around us. We don’t want to be seen doing anything that will lessen their esteem for us, yet we seem to forget that God is all-seeing, all-knowing. He knows everything we do, say, think – everywhere we are. Paul uses irony and sarcasm, such **“we are fools, we are weak, we are dishonoured”** to remind the Corinthians that although he who strives for knowledge of God’s Kingdom may be considered a fool by the world, he is the possessor of true wisdom. **(4:10)** However, as a **spiritual father** of the Christians of Corinth, Paul’s intention is not to shame them but to lovingly yet firmly correct and direct them, as a parent should. Therefore, he urges them to **imitate** him because he imitates Christ, not man. **(4:16)**

GOSPEL The Reading is from St Matthew [9:36, 10:1-8]

But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd. And when He had called His twelve disciples to *Him*, He gave them power *over* unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease. Now the names of the twelve apostles are these: first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the *son* of Zebedee, and John his brother; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James the *son* of Alphaeus, and Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus; Simon the Cananite, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed Him. These twelve Jesus sent out and commanded them, saying: "Do not go into the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter a city of the Samaritans. But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as you go, preach, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.' Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons. Freely you have received, freely give.

EXPLANATION:

The Apostles are sent out to the world to prepare the people for the Heavenly Kingdom. They are sent out two by two in pairs as is recorded in the Gospel of St Mark. This gives an indication with whom each of the Apostles travelled. Before setting off Christ gave them the power over unclean spirits and to cast them out and to heal all kinds of sicknesses and diseases. In Baptism we are also empowered to tread over 'serpents and

scorpions and all the power of the enemy' referring to the power over evil and the dark forces so long as we hear the Word and are healed with the Sacraments of the Church. The Apostles mission is to preach and to heal unencumbered by worldly anxiety and worries. Their priority is to prepare the people for the heavenly kingdom. All things accomplished by them are the gifts of God for the salvation of the people.