



## 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)

Please look at our website to find this and other parish resources: [www.evangelismos.com.au](http://www.evangelismos.com.au)

### SUNDAY 29 DECEMBER 2019 – SUNDAY AFTER THE NATIVITY

#### **EPISTLE The Reading is from St Paul’s Letter to the Galatians**

**[1:11-19] But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man, For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ. For you have heard of my former conduct in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it. And I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries in my own nation, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers. But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother’s womb and called me through His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood, not did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went to Arabia, and returned again to Damascus. Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter and remained with him fifteen days. But I saw none of the other apostles except James, the Lord’s brother.**

**EXPLANATION:** The remark that this gospel is neither “**according to man**” nor “**from man**”, serves to rebut the opponents’ accusations that it has no divine authority but is merely a teaching advocated by one group of Christians without official status. **(1:11)** Paul explains to the Galatians that not only was God the ultimate source of the gospel, but also Christ Himself served as the channel by which it was conveyed to Paul; there was no human intermediary. Apostolic tradition is grounded in divine **revelation** from Jesus Christ. Just as the Twelve received the gospel directly from Christ, so did Paul. He entered their unity in consensus and mutual submission. **(1:12)** Although he persecuted the Christians and tried to destroy the church because of his Pharisaic zeal in Judaism, he explains that people are not called by God in accordance by former conduct, but by God’s grace. **(1:13-14)** Paul cannot determine the reason why God decided to reveal His Son in him. It was God’s will that Paul preach to the Gentiles, and that is all Paul needed to know. The decision had been made long ago while he was still “**in his mother’s womb**”. He was “**set apart**” for the purpose even before he was born. God’s sudden and unexpected move to appoint Paul an apostle to the church he was persecuting was a unilateral and incomprehensible action on God’s part. **(1:15-16)** Paul insists that after his call by God, through grace, he did not consult with any human authorities (“**flesh and blood**”), regarding the gospel, not even the apostles in Jerusalem. **(1:17)** As a true apostle, he submitted himself to the church and her apostles rather than elevating himself. He understood that he must teach the same gospel as the other apostles. **(1:18)**

**GOSPEL    The Reading is from St Matthew [2:13-23]    Now**  
when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, 'Arise, take the young Child and His mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I bring you word; for Herod will seek the young Child to destroy Him.' When he arose, he took the young Child and His mother by night and departed for Egypt, and was there until the death of Herod, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, "Out of Egypt I called My Son". Then Herod, when he saw that he was deceived by the wise men, was exceedingly angry; and he sent forth and put to death all the male children who were in Bethlehem and in all its districts from two years old and under, according to the time which he had determined from the wise men. Then was fulfilled what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying: A voice was heard in Ramah, Lamentation, weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, Refusing to be comforted, Because they are no more." Now when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying, "Arise, take the young Child and His mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the young Child's life are dead." Then he arose, took the young Child and His mother, and came into the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archlaus was reigning over Judea instead of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. And being warned by God in a dream, he turned aside into the region of Galilee. And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, 'He shall be called a Nazarene.'

**EXPLANATION:** The precious death of the innocent young infants signifies that through the merit of humility one comes to the glory of martyrdom, and that unless one has turned and become as a little child, one will not be able to give one's life for Christ. The fact that Jesus Himself was taken by His parents into Egypt, confirms that He was truly man. For if He had fallen into the hands of Herod and had not been slain, it would have seemed that He had been made flesh only in appearance. He flees into Egypt to sanctify even this place by His presence. We also must flee and not hesitate to turn away from the ferocity and wickedness of evil men. All persecutions brought against the Church would be avenged by God in its proper time and when these persecutors had been given their just deserts, peace would be restored to the Church; and just as Jesus and his parents returned to Israel when Herod dies, so the saints who had been hiding because of persecutions would return to their places when God intervened. The prophet Jeremiah pictures Rachel, wife of Jacob in the city of Ramah who had long been dead, weeping even in her tomb for the slaughter of the infants. (2:13-23) But, we should not mourn the death of the "Holy Innocents" because they are as the saints in heaven and have been introduced into the joy of the Lord to be crowned as His forever.

All who have been privileged to visit the Church of the Nativity in the holy City of Bethlehem have seen the burial tombs on many of these young innocents, deep below the grotto where Jesus was born. Each year on 29th December, the Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Jerusalem conducts special services in memory of the death of over 14,000 young male infants two years and under who died at the hands of Herod, an insane tyrant.