



## GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AUSTRALIA

### PARISH OF THE ANNUNCIATION OF OUR LADY, “EVANGELISMOS”

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### SUNDAY 5 APRIL 2020 – 5<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY OF LENT

#### SUNDAY OF ST MARY OF EGYPT

The Church dedicates this Sunday to her memory to remind us of the virtue of repentance. If we are to receive Christ’s precious Body and Blood during the Holy Week of Easter we must be truly sorry for all the sins we have committed and promise not to continue in our old ways. This is possible through the Holy Sacraments of Confession and Holy Communion.

**EPISTLE: The Reading is from St Paul’s letter to the Hebrews [9:11-14] But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation. Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God.**

**EXPLANATION:** Christ is High Priest of the New Counsel, of the “good things yet to come”; life in the eternal kingdom. Unlike the limited effectiveness of the service of the Levitical priests, Christ’s priesthood and the exercise of it are forever. His “tabernacle” is a perfect heavenly tabernacle, not made by human hands, but a tabernacle superior upon which He voluntarily agrees to be sacrificed for the sins of the world to heal our corrupt humanity and to restore us to our proper relationship with God. **(9:11)** Christ had no sins of His own for which to atone; His work was on behalf of all human beings who became His brothers in the Incarnation. And His sacrifice does not have to be repeated as was the case with Levitical priests each year. Christ’s sacrifice was “once and for all men and for all times”. Similarly, during Lent we must take up our sacrifices by good works, by observing the Commandments, fasting and prayer and caring for the poor. The blood of Christ not only purifies our body, but also cleanses our conscience and the passions which defile our soul. “Dead works” such as Levitical rites of “sprinkling of ashes of a heifer” (animal sacrifice) are ineffective for the purpose of spiritual purification as was the belief at that time. The conscience (or soul) is purified only with the offering of the blood of Christ, Who ministers to all who are in need. **(9:12)**

**GOSPEL:** The Reading is from the Gospel of St Mark [10:32-45]  
Now they were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was going before them; and they were amazed. And as they followed they were afraid. Then He took the twelve aside again and began to tell them the things that would happen to Him. “Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and to the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death and deliver Him to the Gentiles; and

they will mock Him, and scourge Him, and spit on Him, and kill Him. And the third day He will rise again.” Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to Him, saying, “Teacher, we want You to do for us whatever we ask.” And He said to them, “What do you want Me to do for you?” They said to Him, “Grant us that we may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on Your left, in Your glory.” But Jesus said to them, “You do not know what you ask. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?” They said to Him, “We are able.” So Jesus said to them, ‘You will indeed drink the cup that I drink, and with the baptism I am baptized with you will be baptized; but to sit on My right hand and on My left is not Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it is prepared.’ And when the ten heard it, they began to be greatly displeased with James and John. But Jesus called them to Himself and said to them, ‘You know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.’”

**EXPLANATION:** Why does Jesus foretell the things that will happen to Him? He does this to prepare and calm the minds of the disciples, so that having heard of these beforehand they would more easily endure them, and not be overwhelmed all at once in their anguish. He also foretold these things so that they would know that He suffered for them of His own free will. He consoles them, however, that He will rise on the third day. **(10:32-34)** James and John thought that Jesus was “going up to Jerusalem” to become ruler of an earthly kingdom, and after

that He would suffer and be killed. That's why they asked Him to sit at His right hand and His left. This is why the Lord rebukes them for asking for something foolish. **"You know not what you ask."** You are asking for an earthly throne, but my kingdom is not of this world. You are craving honour and glory but I am calling you to suffering and death. **"Cup"** means the toils, struggles and sufferings that Christ will undergo. **"Baptism"** here refers to His death and Resurrection. James and John do not grasp this now but in time they will understand (that is, after Pentecost). **(10:35-38)** Therefore, they said they can also **"drink the cup"**. Jesus then replied that they would indeed meet both these realities in future persecutions and to the death and Resurrection of Baptism. That is, martyrdom will be yours, and you will die for Truth's sake, but if there is one who, along with martyrdom, exceeds you in every virtue, he shall precede you in honour. A place of honour in the eternal kingdom will be given by the Father to **"those for whom it is prepared"**. That is, not by God's arbitrary choice but according to a believer's sacrifice and suffering for Christ and the kingdom. **(10:39)** Jesus explains to them that the Romans grasp for honours and desire the chief places. **"For the Roman princes lord it over others"** in a tyrannical and domineering manner. But He says, it is not so with my disciples, **"instead let him who would be great be a servant to all men"**. The example of this is near at hand; for the Son of Man Himself did not come to be served but to serve, and what is even greater, He came to give His life as ransom for many. The perfect man is the perfect servant. **"Ransom"** is the price paid for the release of someone held captive. In this case, humanity is released from the bondage of sin and death by Christ's redemptive sacrifice on the Cross.