



GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AUSTRALIA

PARISH OF THE ANNUNCIATION OF OUR LADY, “EVANGELISMOS”

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SUNDAY 29 NOVEMBER 2020 - RICHES OF ETERNAL LIFE

EPISTLE: The Reading is from St Paul’s Letter to the Ephesians [4:1-7] I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with long suffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, and in you all. But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ’s gift.

EXPLANATION: St Paul continued his oversight of churches in the area surrounding Ephesus while he was in prison. Letters and personal envoys were his means to encourage the Church in evangelism. The Christians had grown dispirited at the news of his imprisonment in Rome. But even in chains, he is still an ambassador for Christ and **encourages** them to **walk worthy** of their baptismal **calling**. He implores his hearers to realize what has been given to them, and to be in practice what they are in Christ. So he turns the focus of his letter from what God does for us to what we are to do in response. How you believe must affect how you live; belief must influence conduct. In baptism we were **called** to be saints, adopted sons and heirs of God so that we now dare to address the heavenly God as “Father”. **(4:1)** This life of holiness is characterized by St Paul as **humility, meekness, patience** and loving forbearance. **(4:2)** All of these virtues are needed if we are to **keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace**. These basic characteristics of Christians are the virtues which contribute to **unity**. Although we are many persons, we share one new nature. This **unity** is

not something we are called upon to produce ourselves, but it is the sovereign and unbreakable gift of the Holy Spirit to His Church. Unity is one of the characteristics of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. Our union with Christ's Body is due to the greatness of God, not ourselves. Even the cohesiveness of this body is God's work in the Spirit. The unity that binds us one to another is the very unity that unites the Father to the Son. The fallen and unredeemed world is characterized by disunity – wars, factions, hatred and mutual separation. So there is no place for quarrelling, xenophobia and wrath. Therefore, we must **endeavour to keep** this unity by a **bond of peace**. Peace of heart within and peace of relations between us binds together in a mutual **bond**. This bond is not oppressive, but liberating. For it not only unites us one to another, but unites all to Christ. By not breaking this bond and thus shattering the peace between us, we preserve the unity of the Church and walk worthy of our calling. **(4:3)** As an encouragement to help them maintain unity and not create divisions and factions within the Church, St Paul stresses that they all belong to **one Body** and have all received **one** and the same **Spirit**. In their local communities, there is a lot of diversity, with many different kinds of personalities. The Church encompasses all races, colours, political opinions and classes. This inevitably makes for tension within the Church as all these different types strive to live in peace. St Paul calls upon them to put their differences aside because they are all part of **one Body** and thus should have the same care that one limb of the human body has for the others. That is, if one limb suffers the whole Body is in pain. And as a human body is animated by a human spirit, so it is with the Body of Christ; all in the Body have received the same **Spirit** in their baptism. Thus all have the same divine life, the same access to the Father, whatever their different social stations in the world. Thought of **one Spirit** leads St Paul to think of the age to come, that one and common **hope** to which we are all called – for the sacramental gift of the Holy Spirit is our participation in the powers of the age to come. Despite our differences, we are all called to the one Kingdom, **one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism** which are indissolubly linked. We are buried with Christ in the baptismal font and are resurrected with Him to everlasting life, to participate in the glory of the **one God and Father of us all**. We not only share membership in the same Body, the same sacramental gift of the Spirit; not only the same heavenly destination and earthly experience of the Lord in His Church, but we also share in the same **Father** Who is **above all and through all and in you all**. That is, He is the source of life of each one and of all

the world. He is sovereign **above all** the world. He is **through all**, working His purposes in all creation. He is **in all**, the inner life of all who live. Since we all share the same life-giving Father, we are all brothers. With such things held in common, how can we not strive to walk together in peace? **(4:4-6)** But while the Church is one in essence, it is diverse in gifts and function. Unity does not mean uniformity. Each member is unique before God, with gifts and roles granted by Him for the maturity and stability of the Body. Though we are all one **each one of us** was given his own **grace** (his own task and function in the Body), **measured** out to us as **Christ's Gift** according to our capacity to receive it. These spiritual gifts are distributed by the Lord as part of the riches of His ascended glory and His Resurrection bounty to His people. **(4:7)**

GOSPEL: The Reading is from St Luke [18:18-27] Now a certain ruler asked Him, saying, "Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" So Jesus said to him, "*Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is God. You know the commandment, 'Do not commit adultery', 'Do not murder', 'Do not steal', 'Do not bear false witness', 'Honour your father and mother'.*" And he said, "All these things I have kept from my youth." So when Jesus heard these things, He said to him, "*You still lack one thing. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come follow Me.*" But when he heard this, he became very sorrowful, for he was very rich. And when Jesus saw that he became very sorrowful, He said, "How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God! For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." And those who heard it said, "Who then can be saved?" But He said, "*The things which are impossible with men are possible with God.*"

EXPLANATION: The rich young man is a lover of money, and he approaches Jesus eager to learn how he, along with his wealth, might inherit eternal life. He thought that Jesus could show him some way in which he could live forever enjoying his material possessions. But when the Lord told him that non-possession is what bestows eternal life he went away sorrowful. Although he boasted that he kept all the Commandments, Jesus reminded him of the First Commandment of God – "Thou shalt have no other Gods before me." The young ruler worshipped the "God of Mammon" – the god of money. Only this "**one thing**" stood in the way of his reach for the kingdom, but that "one thing" was enough to make him lose it. Jesus was not condemning all possessions. There is

no record that Jesus ever told Martha and Mary to sell their home in Bethany. Jesus saw that this young man had allowed his possessions to come between him and God. Therefore, as a Good Physician, He prescribed the appropriate remedy – **“Go and sell all that you have and come follow Me.”** That is, if your possessions cause you to sin, then no matter how painful, cut them off. But he was held fast by the love of money, a passion that was stronger than his love for eternal life. Jesus extended the same invitation to the rich young man as He did to the Apostles – **“Come follow Me”**. If he had followed Jesus, we would be honouring his memory today as an apostle, but as it is, we don’t even know his name. This one thing that he still lacked was that he placed his love of possessions above his love for God. He believed that God belonged in the synagogue and had no business in the world of finance. The same applies in our lives today. We try and departmentalize God by saying that we shouldn’t mix religion with politics or business – each belongs in its own realm. But God knocks on every door of our life. If we keep all doors open to Him he will come in and give us Himself, Salvation, everything. Jesus did not say that it would be impossible for those with wealth to enter the kingdom of heaven, but that it would be difficult. That is, it is difficult for a rich man to part with his possessions and be saved. So much so that it becomes almost impossible. However, a rich man who keeps riches for himself is different to a steward who, as a trustee, holds wealth for the benefit of others. What Jesus is therefore saying is that “the rich man who is possessed by riches and is a slave to them and is held fast by them, and has no time for God, shall not be saved. But he who has riches, that is, who is master of riches, owning them without being owned by them, shall be saved with difficulty? That difficulty is because of human weakness. For it is impossible for us not to misuse what we have. Only with great difficulty do we escape the devil’s traps. But with God’s help, it is possible to be saved. If we use our wealth to help those in need we will be saved by those “friends” who will intercede for us for God’s mercy. Thus the impossible becomes possible. This rule also applies to the poor. Though his belongings are few, man’s attachment to his possessions is even greater when he owns little. And if it is the case that a poor man is attached to his possessions to the same degree as a rich man, then, at a minimum, the loss of the kingdom is the same for each. But those who have given up everything for the sake of the kingdom will receive not only tangible rewards in the life to come but eternal life.