**7 9 17*"THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK"***

***“if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.”***

Beloved in our Lord, St. Paul’s statement in Romans 10, if understood with the mind of the Church, is fundamental to our faith as Christians. There are those both outside and inside of the Church who have erred in interpreting this verse. They, indeed, have a “zeal without knowledge.” What are these errors.

If we only understand this from a human and verbal standpoint it seems that our salvation is very simple, easy, and rather instant. For some outside of the church this verse means that all we must do is confess or say that Jesus is Lord and state our belief that He rose from the dead, and we will be saved. Our mental believing of these things are all that are needed for we are saved by “faith alone.” Faith then becomes a mental concept that we accept and salvation is totally dependent on our “faith.” It is completely divorced from the actual (not imputed) state of our heart.

Alternatively, there are some inside of the church who understand that to truly believe and confess rightly, they must do things. That is they must fast, they must keep their prayer rule, they must do good deeds and strive for virtue. Even then, they are uncertain of their salvation, because they understand salvation to be from God alone. Of course all of these things are correct, however, by themselves, they are missing an essential unifying and crucial element which will indeed bring salvation to us- Love.

It is the love of God which saves us- not our own “personal faith” and neither our own “works.” Our Lord’s compassion and forgiveness have no limits. His love for us defies all rational boundaries. Even when we reject Him, He makes excuses for us (“they know not what they do.”) He will do anything and everything to save us. All we must do is soften our hearts and open them in purity to receive this love. In our prayers we must soften our hearts by trembling in awe before such love. In our actions, we must soften our hearts by humbling ourselves and forgiving others. There is nothing that softens the heart more than humility and forgiveness. When we do these things for the sake of the One who loves us, divine and healing grace flows into our souls and we are lifted up to heaven. We must soften our hearts by avoiding and fleeing from any thought or deed which would disappoint His love. When we take the Holy Communion we have no confidence in ourselves or our own worthiness, but we have absolute confidence in the One who loves us. We must soften our hearts by striving for purity both in our words, thoughts, and deeds. As we purify our hearts, they begin to beat with love once again. The heart will be healed and we will see God and know Him. We will begin to love again- and in this manner our “confession” and our faith will save us. Amen.