**8 21 16*"THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK"***

***“For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.”***

Beloved in Christ Jesus, this week’s epistle from our beloved St. Paul tells us the entire purpose and reason that He has built His Church. He likens the Church to a building. When we see a beautiful building, do we first think of all of the laborers who laid the bricks, or do we think of the Architect, who designed it and oversaw its construction? We must know that our Church belongs to God, it is not simply a human organization. He is the Architect and every detail He has designed. The Divine Liturgy, the Holy Scripture, the Troparia, the Prayers, the Icons, the Incense- all of these God has designed so that we may draw near to Him-to unite in Him with one heart and one mind.

If a building is split into two or more parts, it is useless. Therefore we must make sure that the building is one- that is we must be united in faith and love. We must flee from quarrels and dissensions like we would flee from Hell itself- for they will destroy God’s building. We must also be attached firmly and immovably to the foundation. If a building is not fixed to its foundation, the slightest tremor will cause it to fall down. Our foundation, beloved is Jesus Christ. He is the first, and the last, and the middle of the Church. He transcends all organizational concerns, all financial concerns, and all other petty concerns that we frequently have contentions over in our churches.

The word “Antichrist” which causes so much fear and concern in Christian hearts is very often misunderstood. The Antichrist is not someone who is “against” Christ, but rather, is someone or something that tries to “replace” our Lord. In our time, this spirit is indeed powerful, and we must reject it in every aspect of our lives. We can reject this spirit, first and foremost, by committing ourselves to the Vespers/Orthros/Divine Liturgy cycle of our church. As we commit ourselves to these beautiful services, we attach ourselves firmly to our One and only foundation. We begin to live in Him and He in us.

We can reject this spirit by making Sundays and the major Feast days the very center of our temporal lives. Nothing in our control should interfere with our presence at these Liturgies. Let us review and know at the beginning of each month what these feasts are. Let us anticipate them with great joy- we must live from feast to feast; from Sunday to Sunday- for in this way His life is ours and ours belongs to Him.

Finally, my loved ones in Christ Jesus, let us reject the spirit of the antichrist, by rejecting anything that causes us to break the bond of love between ourselves and any other human being- especially the spirit of self-centeredness. It is only by taking the focus off of ourselves, and placing it on our brother or sister that we can truly begin to love them. We can reject this spirit of self-centeredness by rejecting a high opinion of ourselves, by never judging others, and by lowering ourselves so that others may be lifted up.

In this way, beloved, we will build on the foundation with “gold, silver, and precious stones”, which can never be taken away from us. Our own “building” which is the temple of our souls will begin to shine like the stars of heaven-with the fire and light of the Holy Spirit. Our hearts will begin to “burn within us.” Then nothing, absolutely nothing will be able to shake the foundation on which we firmly stand. Amen.