**2017 12 3 2017 THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK**

 ***“Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of the time, because the days are evil.”* Ephesians. (5:8-19)**

St. Paul in this most important Epistle is warning us to be very careful how we walk- that is how we live our lives. He is urging us not to walk by the ways and times that are defined by this world, but rather that we should make the most of the time or “redeem” the time. We must understand that when he says “the days are evil” that it is not time itself that is evil for God created time to be good. But if we allow time to be defined by those who are far from God then the days indeed can become evil. There is a great fight in our time over definitions. Marriage is being redefined, gender is being redefined, and time itself is being redefined. The way we define a word becomes its reality.

For instance, how do we define our days? Do we live from paycheck to paycheck or from weekend to weekend? Do we live from superbowl to superbowl? Is Christmas primarily a time to indulge our children, grandchildren and each other with lavish gifts? Of course, we, who live in this world, do have to participate in the cycles of time in the world for practical purposes. But my beloved in Christ Jesus, time for us should not be defined by these cycles. How do we redeem the time? How do we restore our times to goodness?

For millennia in the Old and New Covenants time was given meaning by the feasts and fast cycles of the Church. The Church has a rhythm of prayer which defines the time. For example, we are now in the fasting period before the Nativity of our Lord. We are singing hymns in anticipation of this crucial event in our salvation. The time of the Nativity is not defined by black Friday or cyber Monday. Let us refuse to define Christmas by the need to buy gifts and by the orgy of materialism on December 25. Our time must be defined by our worship of the living God. Let us be overjoyed to shout Christ is born, Glorify Him! We exult now, for eternity and the eternal One has entered our time and again restored it to goodness. If we enter the worship cycles of the church, we have indeed “redeemed the time.” If we define our days by the Holy Saints that are commemorated each day we have turned the evil days into good!

My beloved in our Lord this is an urgent matter for all of us. We cannot simply roll over and allow the evil one to define the times and the seasons, for then all will be lost. Our days will be evil. We must enter the worship cycles of the Church if we are to make our days good. We must wake up each morning, look up the Saint or Feast of the Day and define this day by the holiness of the celebration. When a major feast is celebrated in the Church, if at all possible we should attend. If we must miss it, for good reason, then let us learn its troparion and sing it throughout the day, remembering the joy of the celebration. If we do this our whole perspective on life will change for our hearts and minds will be filled with holy and spiritual thoughts, instead of unholy and carnal thoughts. It will be easy to forgive and not to judge anyone, for the One who is forgiveness will come and dwell in us. We will begin to love others and not be infected with self-love and pride. We will find joy and peace instead of anxiety and depression. Enter into time as God has created it and we will enter into His Kingdom. This is what it means to “redeem” or “make the most” of the time that has been given to us. Amen.