***4 3 16***

***THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK***

***“For we have not a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but One Who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”***

On this Sunday of the Life-giving Cross, St. Paul tells us of the unfathomable mercy of our God who became truly one of us in every respect except that He did not sin. This statement has profound implications for each one of us, beloved.

 Let us first start out from a purely human and practical standpoint. How often are we alienated or distanced by those who just don’t seem to understand us? Whether they be relatives or not, they cannot relate to nor forgive our weaknesses and they do not rejoice in our strengths. In this setting, a personal relationship that can deepen is impossible. And think about the opposite, those spouses, friends, or relatives who are totally interested in whom we are- and to help us in both our weaknesses and strengths-how very close do we grow to them?

 Beloved, we have a God that in every respect understands our humanity. He has experienced hunger, lack of sleep, sadness, abandonment, disloyalty, fear, sadness, and tears. He knows our weakness and faults yet does not judge us. He only wants to make us better. He is the only One that has the capability to give us the power to overcome our weaknesses. He is willing even to give His own life, that we may live. We must only draw near to Him and enter into His very life. This is our calling as Christians- to live and become truly human; to love without any taint, to help with no hint of self-gratification, and to make others better by loving and interceding for them with all of our strength. True love is always directed outward-towards the other. This is who our God is for “God is love” as the beloved Apostle says.

This is why we should have great confidence and come boldly before Him, for we will never be rejected. The throne to which we draw near is not the throne of judgement, but of grace. It is the throne of forgiveness and healing. It is the throne where we will find the cure for every weakness. It is the throne that can give us the power to love. We all must, with confidence, draw near to this throne and live in the power of God by every ounce of our own will. The throne of God is here with us-in our Holy Church. The cure is available if we are willing to accept it now, for now is our time of need. *“Now he sits granting pardon, but when the end is come, then he rises up to judgement. For it is said, “Arise, O God, judge the earth.” (St. John Chrysostom).* Let us not neglect for one moment what He is offering us. But, let us be *“transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.” (Rom 12:2).* Let us rejoice in so great and inheritance and may we all enter into the joy of our Lord this Holy Pascha. Amen.