**2017 8 27 *"THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK"***

***“Brethren, I would remind you in what terms I preached to you the Gospel, which you received, in which you stand, by which you are saved, if you hold it fast—unless you believed in vain.”***

St. Paul on this Twelfth Sunday of Matthew tells us how we are saved and how we can save others. We must not only receive the Gospel we must “stand” in the Gospel. To stand in the Gospel means to work hard to turn our hearts and our free will toward our God. God’s grace is only made effective through our choices, that is, our free will. God pours out his grace on every human being, but if we do not make it effective in our actions and in our desires, then this grace toward us is “in vain.” He infinitely respects our freedom and our capabilities. He does not impose His will on us but accepts whatever we decide.

You see, my beloved, the Lord wants us to take part in our own salvation because He loves us. True love for a person can only exist if we give that person absolute freedom to love us back. This is true with our marriages, with our children, and with our fellow human beings. Giving a person this freedom even means giving them the freedom to reject us and our love. God gave us this same freedom and we as human beings rejected Him. But God never stopped loving us. He persisted in trying to get us back In our Anaphora we pray ***“…and when we had fallen away, (Thou) didst raise us up again, and didst not cease to do all things until thou hadst brought us back to heaven, and hadst endowed us with Thy kingdom which is to come.”*** You see, true love never ends and it never rejects. It stands firm in hope, in freedom, and in great patience. Nothing will ever separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus. If God acts this way toward us, how then should we act toward those whom we love?

Beloved in our blessed Lord, we are indeed greatly grieved when we see those close to us, especially our children, rejecting the church, their faith, or our Godly way of life. We grieve because we know that they are harming themselves, and wish for something so much better for them. We must never condone or “support” their destructive choices, for this is not love but rather self-indulgence. But we must also never condemn nor judge them. Most important is that we must never give up. We must do all things- that is – we must pray hard, we must continue to offer loving and holy guidance, and we must stand firm in our own relationship with our Lord if we are to bring them back into the Kingdom. Even when it seems impossible we must always remember ***“that with God, all things are possible.”***  If we love our children, know that our Lord loves them even more. This is the Gospel in which we stand and which we hold fast. Amen.