**2017 1 22**

**“Thought for the Week”**

**“set the believers an example in speech and conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.”**

 In the Epistle of this week the blessed St. Paul is telling us how we are to live as Christians. Our Faith is intimately tied to our actions. That is if we love our Lord Jesus, we will want to please him with all of our hearts and by what is in our hearts. And just as our Lord gave us an example to follow, we must also give others an example. We are the presence of Christ in this world. Christ wishes to save all men, therefore the way we live our lives should point out this way to all whom we meet. This way is the way of love, faith, and purity.

 The way of love must exist in our families and also, as important, in our congregations. Our Lord told us clearly ***"By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."*** (Joh 13:35 NKJ) This means that everything in our churches must be guided first by this principle. We should strive to make our church services beautiful. However, beauty does not base itself simply on knowing the music or perfect liturgics or our church architecture. Beauty is a reflection of our love for our Lord and therefore our love for each other. If our prayers come from this source then the music and the liturgics and the church building will be beautiful. Let us dissolve all rancor and all judgement in our congregations with love and forgiveness. Let us be patient with one another. As our churches are fragrant with incense, let us strive to fill the atmosphere that we breathe in our churches with love.

 True love cannot exist in our churches without faith. The two are intimately and inseparably connected. They work together and one comes from the other. ***For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love.*** (Gal 5:6 NKJ) Our faith must base itself in our trust of God. We must know that He is in charge of our church. Therefore it is not our agenda nor our plans which are crucial but His agenda and His plans. Let us work hard but trust God in all things. Sometimes He works through those who are strong and knowledgeable and often through the weak and ignorant. Every faithful soul in our congregation is crucial to our churches. When something unexpected or unplanned happens let us trust that He will use it for our glory. Even if it is an obviously bad situation, our Lord in His mysterious way can use it for our good. “***And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.*** (Rom 8:28 NKJ)

 Last, but not least, the way of faith and love must be manifest in our striving to live pure and holy lives. Let us live all week to prepare ourselves to receive the Pure One. We should live from Sunday to Sunday- from Eucharist to Eucharist. If we are to receive Him, we must make a clean place for Him inside of ourselves. Let us clean this room of all clutter and dust. Let us sweep up all pride, anger, all impatience, all carnal thoughts and cast them into the trash. We can only do this through fasting and prayer. If we fall down during the week, let us immediately turn back to the Lord with confidence in His forgiveness-recognizing our weaknesses. Then let us start again, redoubling our efforts with hope and trust in Him. Central to these efforts is to never, ever feel ourselves to be righteous-but always to truly consider others better than ourselves. If we humble ourselves in this way, the Holy Spirit will come to us as we pray, the Holy Spirit will strengthen our Faith, the Holy Spirit will make our love fervent for one another, and the Holy Spirit will purify us. This is the example to others that God will make of us if we turn toward Him with all of our hearts. Amen.