***2017 4 30***

***THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK***

***“In those days, when the disciples were increasing in number, the Hellenists murmured against the Hebrews because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution.”***

 On this third Sunday of Pascha, we begin to read in the book of Acts, about how our Church began to grow and organize. And immediately dissensions and divisions began to appear. Even though the Church is the Divine-Human, perfect Bride of Christ, she is still made up of members who have the freedom to choose divisions and controversy. The Church is perfect, all of her members are not. If we look carefully at this verse we will see that the division was primarily cultural. St. Chrysostom says that the Hellenists were also Jews but they were Greek-speaking Jews. So the division, here, was not even ethnic but rather tied to language/culture, and discrimination based on this.

 Oh, what a tragedy! We have the power and life of God as a possibility before us- a life which will carry us into eternity, and yet we cling to childish and foolish things. Our citizenship, my beloved, is in heaven. Our language consists of the words of the spirit. Let us never have division come in among us, for it does not come from our God. Human language and culture is not the critical issue. We are striving to be spiritual people, therefore let us cast off everything that distracts us from this quest.

 Finally my beloved in our gracious Lord, look at how the Apostles dealt with this problem that invaded the peace of the Church-and let us follow their example. They did not reprimand or cast off one side or the other. They ordained 7 men full of the Spirit and of wisdom. And please note that the Apostles did not choose these men but the people chose them. The Apostles however, gave them the Spirit through ordination, without which their wisdom and abilities would have been useless. As a Church we work in harmony and in symphony, not by force or despotism. We need wise human solutions to our human and fallen problems. We need to honor our leaders-the clergy and bishops- to reverence and be obedient to them as we are to Jesus Christ- for it is through them that we receive the Spirit. It is through them that we receive all spiritual gifts. And just as important, is that our clergy must use human wisdom and leadership by recognizing and using the talents, the expertise, the wisdom of the laity-who are the People of God. It is a symphony not a solo.

 So, beloved in Christ Jesus, let us follow the example that our Church has set for us. Wherever we see people trying to divide- let us gently correct them with love. Let us remind them of who we are- by telling them-“we don’t do this here.” Wherever there is gossip and murmuring, let us stop it immediately. Let the people reverence the clergy as their own fathers, and the clergy love and give (die to) themselves for the people as their own children. Such is the Church, the glorious Bride of Christ, without spot or wrinkle. Amen.