***3 6 16 THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK***

***“Brethren, food will not commend us to God. We are no worse off if we do not eat, and no better off if we do……Therefore, if food is a cause of my brother’s falling, I will never eat meat, lest I cause my brother to fall.”***

On this Sunday of Meatfare we hear St. Paul’s admonition about the true meaning of the fast which the Church has set before us. The reference to meat was related to the meat sacrificed to idols, which was sold in the ancient marketplaces. Christians that were advanced intellectually knew that idols were nothing and that eating the meat would have no effect upon them. However, St. Paul warns them that the weaker Christians might be led astray if they saw their stronger brethren doing this and might even be led into idolatry.

For us, beloved, this means that fasting in itself is of no value if we fast without the proper objective in mind. Of course, I am not disparaging fasting, because without proper fasting a spiritual life is really not possible. But please remember that it is only a tool, a medicine which must be used properly or it will do us no good, and perhaps can even harm us. Fasting must be used to purify our hearts of pride so that we can truly love God and love our fellow human beings. If we fast properly we cannot judge anyone else. If we fast properly, our attention will be taken off of ourselves and what we are doing and placed on our brothers and sisters.

If we love our brethren, how can we judge them? Our deepest and only desire will be that they be healthy. Let us not be trapped by our own agendas and ideas but truly seek the good of those around us. It does not matter how much knowledge we have for we can always learn from others by listening to them. It does not matter how intelligent we are, ***“for the foolishness of God is wiser than men.”*** It does not matter how externally righteous we are for our Lord justified the despised publican for his humility and opposed the vaunted Pharisee for his self-righteousness. Let us sacrifice our pride, our honor, and our stature for our brethren, who even though they appear weaker than we, are most likely much better off than ourselves. This life of sacrifice is what fasting is all about because it is only through sacrifice that we can truly love; and it is only through love that we can enter into the blessed Resurrection of our Lord. This is the objective of the Holy Fast set before us. Amen.