**2017 11 26 2017 THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK**

***“There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all”* Ephesians. (4:4-6)**

St. Paul in this beautiful Epistle is speaking about the Holy Church. It is far too often that the Church is thought of as some kind of organization for believers to come together and share or learn a common set of beliefs and doctrines. The Church is not an organization- it is rather a living breathing organism. It is the living Body of Christ that brings many different persons into unity. Now, we must ask, and what is the body of Christ?

St. John Chrysostom observes most beautifully; ***“They are the faithful throughout the world- in the present, in the past and in the future.”*** We are one with all of those Orthodox Christian believers who have gone before us, and have preserved our faith for us. We are one with our parents and grandparents who have gone before us. Their presence with us cannot be destroyed by death but rather death is destroyed in the One Body-for it has been raised from the dead. This One Body is given life by the one Spirit- the Holy Spirit who lives and dwells in the Church.

We are one with those who are present with us now in the Church. Our Bishops and Priests, our fellow parishioners, and all Orthodox believers throughout the world. When we go to Syria, Russia, Greece, Serbia, or Romania, and enter into a Church, we know that we are one. Language, culture, and personality cannot obscure our oneness. If we were able to travel back in time 1000 years, 1500 years, or even to the very first century and enter into a church we would know that we are one, for time cannot obscure our oneness.

And, finally, we are one with those who in the future will believe in Christ, be baptized into his life and live out this life in the One Faith. This Faith is not simply a set of doctrines but a way of life. It is the way of meekness and humility. It is an ethos. It is, more than anything, the way of love. It is incumbent on us to preserve this faith and this life so that those who will come after can indeed enter into it.

Finally, my beloved in Christ Jesus, we must ask how do we become the Body of Christ? St. Paul answers this quite clearly; “***For we, though many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread.”*** (1Co 10:17 NKJ***).*** This holy Eucharist which we celebrate with great joy is not simply our communion with God but it is communion with all believers past, present, and future. This Holy Communion establishes our Church, establishes our oneness, and gives us the life of the Spirit. This is the great mystery of our Church. Amen.