**2017 2 19**

**“Thought for the Week”**

***“And so by your knowledge this weak man is destroyed, the brother for whom Christ died. Thus, sinning against your brethren and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ.”***

On this Sunday of the Last Judgment, also known as meatfare, we now enter into the self-denial that is so crucial to our lives as Christians. The Epistle, on one level, is telling us that now it the time to leave eating meat. Now is the time to begin the reconciliation of all creation. The enmity between animals and human beings is now being destroyed for the Resurrection will destroy all enmity. Let us walk gently upon the earth and not harm, even a fly. Let us live harmoniously with every creature on this earth.

But on a much more important level, St. Paul is telling us that it is not whether we eat or whether we fast, which will commend us to God. The reconciliation between humans and nature is important, but it must follow from a much more important consideration. It is the reconciliation between ourselves and God from which all peace will flow. This reconciliation has already been accomplished for us on the Cross. When our Lord stretched out His blessed arms on the cross, He has brought all human beings into his embrace. He has brought us into one family and made us even more- one body. He died for each and every human that has ever lived or will ever live on the face of this earth. Some will indeed refuse to become a part of Him and some will reject His love. However, this is not for us to judge. If a brother or sister is weak we must not push them further away- even if we are “right”. If Christ acted “right” none of us would be saved. It is not a matter of right and wrong but a matter of love. This is the debt which we pray for forgiveness in the Lord’s Prayer. This is the “price” and the “ransom” that was paid on the cross. It is the debt of love. ***8 Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law. (Rom 13:8)***

Therefore if we truly know our Lord Jesus Christ, we will never let our knowledge or “being right” interfere with our desire to save our brother or sister. Sometimes we will have to be strict with others and set definite boundaries-even to the point of delivering them “over to satan for the destruction of the flesh.” At other times we must be lenient, welcoming, and completely forgiving. In all cases we must be certain that our actions toward another are based on one- and only one criterion- are we doing our best to truly love them and hence to save them? Are we dying to ourselves and our own egos in our attitude toward them, so that they might be saved? This is the crucial question. If we are uncertain, it is better to keep quiet and pray to our Lord, that both they and we might be reconciled to the King. It is our King who will judge. It is He Who will come to this earth in Glory, and before Whom all things will tremble. The River of Fire is His Divine Love, which wills that all men be saved. Let each of us participate in such a great salvation by denying ourselves and loving one another-even if it means the death of our own ego- and thus we will be saved- together- Amen.