**2017 2 26**

**“Thought for the Week”**

***“Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It is before his own master that he stands or falls. And he will be upheld, for the Master is able to make him stand.”***

On this Sunday of the Forgiveness, also known as Cheesfare, the Holy Church places before us an attitude which we must nurture if we are to bear fruit this Lent and in the Christian life in general. If we realize how much our humble Lord is pushed away from us if we enter into judgement on our fellow human beings, then we would flee from judging others as we would from a raging fire. The Holy Scripture tells us that God resists (or opposes) the proud, but gives grace to the humble. We must, then, absolutely refuse to judge our neighbor. The minute we feel like judging another person, let us cut this feeling off at the root and examine our own conscience.

Judgement of others is clearly one of the most destructive enemies of the spiritual life. Why is this so? There are three major reasons why judging others is destructive to our souls. First, when we judge others we take our eyes off of our own sins. It is much easier to judge others than to really take a good look at our own character. If we are distracted by this kind of attitude then we can really never put an effort into progressing in our own virtue. If we are blind to our own sins, how can we even begin to correct them? And, alternatively, if we look carefully at our own sins, it will be hard to see the sins of others.

Second, when we judge others we are often jumping to conclusions and frequently are basing our judgement on wrong or deceptive facts. Do we know what formative experiences this person has undergone which might have led him or her to sin? Do we know how hard they resisted? Do we know how many tears they shed after they fell into sin? Even if we have the facts correct, we are making assumptions about their whole character. It is one thing to say “he got mad” and yet quite another to say “he is an angry person”. We are making a judgment about his entire character. Who alone knows what is in a person beside God? There is an instructive story of a monk who had judged one of his fellow monk’s character. The man whom he had judged died and an angel brought his soul to the judgmental monk and asked him, “you are the judge- should this man go to heaven to be with God or should he be cast into the hell-fire and suffer eternally?” The old monk was frightened and realized he had no right to judge any other human being. Only God can judge.

Lastly, and most importantly, when we judge others, we depart from love. Love covers a multitude of sins- it does not condemn. Love wishes to heal a person. When we see someone who is dying of lung cancer, do we say “see you got what you deserved for your bad habits”, or do we do everything we can to help and comfort that person? If a person has a wound, do we pour salt on it, or healing balm. When we tell others of a person’s sin, do we not only harm ourselves and the person we are talking about, but do we not harm the people we tell this to? To cover someone’s sins means we look at how many good things he has done, not the bad. If they continue to do bad things, We try to change their behavior by loving them with hope and with joy.

Therefore my beloved in Christ Jesus, this Lent, let us eliminate all judgment from our hearts. Let us not say a bad word about anyone. The minute we feel judgment against another creeping stealthily into our hearts, let us violently reject it by focusing on our own sins. Let us draw close to God by feeling unworthy of the great love he has for us. He loves us in spite of all of our ugliness, all of our foul pride, and all of our mistakes. The incredible thing is- if we humble ourselves in this way, our Master will indeed make even us worthy “to stand” before Him -without “spot or wrinkle or any such thing.” Amen.