**2017 3 5**

**“Thought for the Week”**

***“And all these, though well attested by their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had foreseen something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect.”***

On this Sunday of Orthodoxy, St. Paul tells us how we are saved. We are saved together as the body of Christ- as the Church. The idea of an individualistic salvation is contrary to the very fabric of what it means to believe in our Lord Jesus Christ. Salvation is not “just me and Jesus” as so many believe, but ***“There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.” (Eph 4:4-6 NKJ)***

My beloved in Christ Jesus, we are totally dependent on each other- we need each other. Even the weakest members of the body are absolutely necessary. The point here is not to judge some as strong and some as weak but rather we must strive to love one another and unite with one another that the real power of God may be manifest. God does not work on a group as individuals but rather He works on persons in communion. We have the honor of being connected to and in communion with David and Samuel and the Prophets. We are a part of St. Paul and St. Peter. We have the same faith as St. Simeon and St. Anthony. We are one with them.

And what is it that makes us the One Body of our Lord? Only two things can make us the body of Christ. First is love for Him and second is love for each other. We must love our Lord with all of our hearts and desire to please Him with all of our actions. Nothing pleases Him more than when we sacrifice our own comfort and own desires for others. Nothing pleases Him more than when our deepest desire is that others are honored even before ourselves. This is what today’s Epistle is all about. All of those blessed and righteous Saints of the Old Testament who gave their lives and their blood to remain faithful to our God will not precede us into the Kingdom of Heaven. We will all be crowned together because we are one Body. One body cannot be crowned multiple times but once. And the amazing thing is, is those righteous and blessed souls would not want it any other way. They are waiting for us, hoping for us, and helping us every way to obtain the salvation which God so desires for us. This is why we pray to our Saints, and this is why we must pray for each other. Apart from each other we cannot be saved. It is the body of Jesus that saves us.

Therefore beloved in Christ Jesus, let us each pray first for those who are a part of us. Let us lift them up to the throne of God in our prayers. Let love transcend all differences of opinion and especially of agenda in the Church (we will indeed have our differences, but should never have our own agenda). Next, let us pray for every human being on the face of this earth, regardless of their faith, creed, or color. Let us pray that all evil and harm will flee far from everyone we know and from those that we don’t know; from those who love us and for those who hate us. Let us pray for those who have different political or economic views from us and for those who are on the same wave length. Let us pray that they precede us into the Kingdom of Heaven and thus we will be crowned together with them- a crown of blessedness and life that will lead us into eternity- together. Amen.