**10 9 16*”THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK”***

***“Brethren, working together with Him, then, we entreat you not to accept the grace of God in vain.”***

St. Paul on this Third Sunday of Luke tells us about how much dignity and honor God has given to mankind. He has not called us to be slaves but to be masters. He infinitely respects our freedom and our capabilities. He does not impose His will on us but accepts whatever we decide. Even when He miraculously heals us, he takes no credit for it and attributes the result to us. Note, that when Jesus healed the blind man, the leper, or the woman with the issue of blood, He told them all; ***“Go your way, your faith has made you well.”***

You see, my beloved, the Lord wants us to take part in our own salvation, not because He is a task-master or wants to control our lives, but rather because He loves us. True love for a person can only exist if we give that person absolute freedom to love us back. This is true with our marriages, with our children, and with our fellow human beings. The greatest gift we can give someone is freedom, for then, both we and they can truly love. And if we truly love, we become like God.

In this way, then, we begin to understand what ***“working together with Him”*** means. Our Lord, in His love for mankind gives us everything we need to be righteous, but it is up to us to become righteous. He has given us the power to obtain every virtue, but we also must incline ourselves toward virtue. Even when we fail, He raises us up again and does not cease to do all things until *He* ***“has brought us back to heaven and has endowed us with His kingdom which is to come”*** *(*Anaphora- St. Chrysostom’s Divine Liturgy*).* All we must do is love the One who loves us. St. John makes it very clear how we love Him- that is- when we keep His commandments (Jn 14:21). Those very commandments are not imposed rules, but rather gifts that give us life. He commands us not so that we follow orders but rather so that we can have life and share in His life! We only have to accept the gift with a grateful and obedient attitude. How astounding and infinite is the love of God for human beings! How sublime and unfathomable is His humility!

Beloved in Christ Jesus, the Orthodox Spiritual life is a marvelous adventure. We have been given all the tools we need to enter into a journey that will lead us into joy; into the depths of love; and to a glory that we cannot now even imagine. We enter into this adventure by loving our God and by committing with all of our hearts to pleasing Him . We enter on this journey by loving Him and remembering Him with every breath. We love Him by treating others as He has treated us- with infinite respect, building them up even when they do not “deserve it”, and by attributing nothing to our own selves but everything to others. Let each one of us commit to entering into this marvelous adventure, not tomorrow, or the next day, but now. For ***“behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation.”***