**2017 12 17**

***“Thought for the Week”***

***“when Christ, Who is our life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.”***

In today’s Epistle St. Paul gives us a magnificent promise of what God has in store for those who love Him- that we will appear with Him in glory. This glory is hard for us to understand for it is not human glory. St. Paul tells us that “"Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him" (1Co 2:9 NKJ). This glory is an illumination of our hearts and our minds. This means that light will come into our souls and bodies. This light is not just an earthly light but comes from God. We will see things as they really are. We will have a deep understanding and wisdom. This glory will give us peace and the freedom to love and to be who we truly are. This glory will remove all fear from our hearts and all anxiety, hesitation, and conflict. This glory will be reflected in pure thoughts and feelings. This is the glory with which Adam and Eva were clothed in the garden, which was even visible from their bodies, as our holy fathers teach us.

This light, however was covered and snuffed out by egotism and by rebellion. We could no longer see the beauty around us and in us. We began to feel naked and vulnerable. In the darkness we began to prefer vane and temporary things to the priceless and eternal things. We even began to fight with those around us to grab these fleeting delicacies. Conflict, division, and despair became the norm. We began to seek glory in the honor of men and not from God. Hurt feelings and hurt egos causing further division were the result. We began to seek human and material solutions to our spiritual darkness to help us live more peacefully on this earth- and yet the darkness continued to increase. Death led us to further death- to darkness and emptiness.

My beloved in Christ Jesus, the meaning of this holy and joyful time that we now celebrate is that God, in his astounding love for human beings, could not leave us in darkness. The coming of our Lord to this earth has restored the light to us. Joy and Peace have come into the world. The light has been given to us and glory has once again become our inheritance. We have been illuminated, for indeed Holy Baptism is illumination. Our hearts have been restored to be able to love and our minds have become pure. Light has come into us- that is our Lord Jesus lives in us. We must only let this light shine and not cover it up. In this way we will see Him as He is. We will see Him in those around us-likeable and unlikeable. We will see Him when we sacrifice our own comfort and material possessions for others. We will see Him when we make peace with others-when we forgive. We will see Him when we struggle to purify ourselves- rejecting pride and vanity-when we humble ourselves and flee from the glory of human beings. Christ does not simply live in us- He is our very life. He gives us breath, and with every breath let us say- “Lord Jesus Christ, son of God, have mercy on me a sinner.” This is the glory that God has bestowed on us and will be ours forever. Beloved, let us rejoice and be exceedingly glad. Amen.