**9 18 16*”THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK”***

***“I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ Who lives in me”***

 St. Paul on this Sunday after the elevation of the cross tells us what we have been given as Christians and also how we are to live. Each one of us as Christians has been given a marvelous and powerful gift- it is the gift to live life in its fullness, in its completeness. It is a life of freedom; free from all fear and from sin. It is a life that nothing can touch. This life beloved was given to us by the church in Holy Baptism. This is what St. Paul means when he says “I have been crucified with Christ.” He says the same exact thing in Romans, even more explicit- “***Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life….. that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.***

Yes my dear ones in Christ Jesus, we are no longer slaves- that is, unless we return to slavery voluntarily. We are free unless we give up our freedom. We are fully alive, unless we choose to die. Our lives must live out our Baptism. We must carry the dying of Jesus deep within our bodies- that is we must die to our own will that the will of God might set us free. Every time we choose to humble ourselves in front of others, we taste this freedom. Every time we reject the judgement of others we are crucified with Christ. Every time we forgive someone-unilaterally- even if he does not “deserve” forgiveness- it is Christ Himself who lives in us and forgives. Every time we sacrifice our own desires for those of our family or friends we die to sin and it shall have no power over us.

 To be justified by faith in Jesus Christ is not a legal transaction; it has nothing to do with the “faith vs works” controversy. It is living a life of love, humility, and sacrifice. It is the crucified Christ, living in us, pouring out His love in our hearts. This love then spills forth-in all of our words and deeds- to each whom we encounter. To be justified by faith in Jesus Christ means to live out the great gift that has already been given to each one of us in our Holy Baptism. Amen.