**11 6 16**

**“Thought for the Week”**

Beloved in Christ Jesus, in this Sunday’s epistle St. Paul gives all of us who strive to live lives according to our Orthodox traditions a most crucial warning. He had a great zeal for God, but it was without “knowledge.” What is important to recognize is this “knowledge” that St. Paul was lacking was not an intellectual knowledge of doctrines, history, or worship. He clearly knew more than any of his other co-religionists. What St. Paul lacked was a knowledge of knowing our Lord Jesus Christ. Without knowing Jesus we cannot know God. It was a lack of knowledge of how much our Christ loves us. That He comes to us not simply when we keep a set of facts or rules, but rather He comes to us when we love Him and love others. This knowledge takes us out of the realm of intellect and moves us into the realm of love. It is within this relationship of love that salvation itself takes place. As we constantly keep images of the faces of our loved ones- our spouses, our children, and our grandchildren always before our eyes- so must we keep the face of Jesus always directly in front of us. St. Paul writes- ***“For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”(2Co 4:6)***

Therefore my dear ones, all of our efforts at understanding our Faith, our doctrines, our Divine Liturgy must aim directly and fervently toward one goal- to truly love Jesus. If we love Him we will strive to keep His commandments. If we love Him, we will strive to love all of those around us. If we love Him, the Holy Spirit will come to dwell deep in our hearts and teach all things. The magnificent thing about our Holy Church, is that this love has already been given to us in our Baptism, in our Liturgy, in the Faith of the Holy Fathers. But we must make it our own, not simply in intellectual knowledge- but rather in word, in thought, and in deed.

Therefore, beloved, let each one of us strive with all of our strength to learn more about the Holy Orthodox Faith, through her history, her doctrines, and her worship. We should do all of this, but with one goal in mind- to enter into the love of our Lord Jesus Christ. Let us always keep His face before our eyes. Let us strive, as St. Paul writes- ***“to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you*** *(we)* ***may be filled with all the fullness of God.” (Eph 3:19 NKJ).*** To Him is due all glory, honor, and worship. Amen.