**2017 2 12**

**“Thought for the Week”**

***“But he who is united to the Lord becomes one spirit with Him. Shun immorality.”***

On this Sunday of the Prodigal Son the theme of both the Gospel and the Epistle is the absolute key to the Christian life-and that is *repentance.*  Repentance is so often misunderstood in our modern era. When sin is understood as an external standard- a rule which we have broken-then repentance will be understood as feeling sorry for this sin and a commitment not to sin anymore. We tend to focus on our own sins, in our pride, as if we expected more of ourselves. This kind of understanding has some truth to it but it is very incomplete and legalistic, and in some ways incorrect.

Repentance must first of all be seen as the work of God. When God’s grace comes into our hearts-and we freely accept this grace- then our hearts become aware of the ugliness and filth of our sins. They are ugly and filthy, because they have taken us away from the One who loves us purely and perfectly. We are so proud and He is so humble. We don’t love Him and yet He loves us more. When the light of Christ comes into us we can see clearly our own state and we also experience the incredible love of God. We wake up to spiritual things. We become alert. St. Paul writes in Ephesians: *"Awake, you who sleep, Arise from the dead, And Christ will give you light."15 See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise.16 redeeming the time, because the days are evil.* When we immerse ourselves in materialism, when we constantly function on the level of pride in our relationships with others, then we cannot see the spiritual things for our souls are asleep- they are dead.

So we see that Repentance, then, is a return to our God as His grace draws us near to Him. We shun immorality because we know who we are and we know who our God is. We know we are Kings and Queens and we do not want to act like slaves. We fear disappointing Him and more than anything we fear pushing the One who gives us life away from us. We fear to hurt and disappoint His burning love for us. It is this love that gives us life in all its fullness. It is this love that gives us beauty and completeness. Repentance is a feeling of unworthiness, yet great confidence in our Lord who desires that all men be saved.

 So my beloved in Christ Jesus, let us indeed repent in this way. Let us draw near to God in our hearts and in our minds. Let us seek to please Him with all of our strength and all of our souls. Let us receive His grace, for it is only by His grace that we can repent. If we draw near to our God with sincerity and conviction, He will never reject us. If we draw near to our God with humility, feeling unworthy to even be called His son or daughter, He will not wait for us to return but will run out to meets us on the road. He will put the best robe on us and a royal ring. He will indeed fill our hearts with His grace. Let us now end with one of the prayers of confession:

*O Lord our God, the Salvation of thy servants, gracious, bountiful and long-suffering, who repentest thee concerning our evil deeds, and desires not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should turn from his wickedness and live: Show thy mercy upon thy Servant, and grant unto him an image of repentance, forgivenss of sins, and deliverance, pardoning his every transgression, whether voluntary or involuntary. Reconcile and unite him unto thy Holy Church, through Jesus Christ our Lord…..*