**7 10 16*"THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK"***

***“Timothy, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus…***..***Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus.”***

Beloved in our Lord, it is crucial that we recognize that St. Paul is not simply giving us some comforting words, but he is showing us spiritual and material reality. He is not trying to give us a way to deal with our troubles but a goal for which we must all strive for with every ounce of our strength. For if do this, we will live in a real way- and not in delusion. And yet, many (even some who call themselves Christian) accuse us as living in a false hope- as being deluded. They live and act as if the only realities in the world are the things they can see and touch. When these things are appear good and lovely, they strive for them with all of their strength. When these things lead to suffering, they consider them to be catastrophic, and strive to avoid them at all costs. And yet, where has this approach led our modern world? We seek beauty, and yet we have missed the beautiful relationships that are offered to us each moment of our lives. We seek to be popular and yet are so isolated. We love our technology, and yet we cannot love those who are close to us. We do everything we can to stay healthy, and yet we will get sick and die. The things that we can see and touch, where do they lead us? Who, I ask, is deluded???

But our blessed St. Paul shows us the way. He speaks out of real experience, and we, beloved, can take great comfort and confidence in what he tells us. He writes ***"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."*** It is only when we love God that we are truly able to love others and to receive their love. It is only when we love God that the true beauty and joy in this world are ours. If we love God, we begin to thank Him every minute of our lives. And as we give thanks, even our material gifts become spiritual. Everything in life takes its proper order if we live in this way. As we strive for this kind of love, all other things are added unto us-both material and spiritual.

And just as important, if not more, is how we view the unpleasant things that we will encounter in this world. We must first recognize that suffering does not come from God but is a reality of this sinful world, which is ruled by delusion, passions, and evil. Second, we must recognize that these things, although painful, can have no real power over us who belong to Christ, for our Lord said “***In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."*** The grace that is in our Lord Jesus, and which has been given to us through the cross, will turn any evil that approaches us into good. If we are patient in hope and with confidence in our Lord, the evil will be annihilated and we will progress in glory and in love, no matter what the external circumstances are. Indeed, if we suffer in hope, the Holy Spirit will be poured into our hearts, and the heavens will be opened to us. In this regard, the blessed Paul writes ***“but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope.Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us. (Rom 5:3-5 NKJ)***

This, my dear ones, is the spiritual reality that will destroy any delusion. Let us all ***“be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus”***, for in this we can never be deluded nor disappointed. Amen.