



26th SUNDAY of ORDINARY TIME ***YEAR C – September 29, 2019***

You have heard it said that Jesus knows how to comfort those who are disturbed and disturb those who are too comfortable. Picking up where we left off last weekend, the Scriptures once again offer some harsh but honest words.

The prophet Amos rails against the rich who ignore the needs of the poor (Amos 6:1A. 4-7). He says their wanton revelry shall be done away with and they will have to give an account of their stewardship. There is no spin zone when we stand before God. He doesn't need a jury that can be swayed from the truth by a clever lawyer. God reads the human heart and he knows all our motives (the good ones and the bad ones). He even knows when we choose evil under the appearance of good and that's when paragraph 1735 in the Catholic Catechism comes into play.

The parable of the rich man and Lazarus in the gospel (Luke 16:19-31) challenges a culture of consumerism and greed. Do we really need everything we want, or should we help others after we have everything we need? Why is there so much suffering on earth?

My brother Frank, who is a Vincentian priest, sent me an e-mail a couple years ago. It tells a story about a woman who is part of a bible study group in her church. The group was reflecting on the book of Malachi in the Old Testament. They were studying Chapter 3 and came across a verse that said of God, "He will sit as a refiner, purifier silver."

No one in the group had ever experienced the process of refining silver, so she volunteered to get in touch with a silver smith and report back to the group at their next meeting. She made an appointment with a silver smith to watch him at work. She didn't mention anything about her reason for wanting to do that.

As she watched him, he held a piece of silver over the fire to heat it up. He explained that in refining silver, you must hold it in the middle of the fire where the flames are the hottest so you can burn away all the impurities. You must stay there the whole time holding the silver, with your eyes fixed on what is happening because if you leave the silver in the flames too long it will be destroyed.

The woman was silent for a moment and then she asked him, "How do you know when the silver is fully refined?" He smiled at her and said, "Oh that's easy, when I see my image in it, then it's free of all impurities."

That story is especially meaningful to those who find themselves in the hottest part of "flames" right now – the "flames" of suffering. To know that God has his eyes fixed on those he is refining and that he cannot be distracted is most comforting. Sometimes the process takes a long, long time. So, how do you know when it's all finished. It's finished when Jesus can see himself in us.

Listen to our Lord in the quiet moments of your day. If you are presently disturbed, he will comfort you. If you are presently too comfortable, he will disturb you. He won't give up until he sees himself in you, in me, in all of us. Planet earth is a dimension of human life on the way to Heaven. It includes pain and suffering. It may actually be a part of Purgatory.