

Fr. Romeo Evangelista's Homily  
August 18, 2019  
20<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time (C)

Jesus in our Gospel today and even in our readings is trying to remind all of us that the purpose of his coming is to test the hearts of people and for us to distinguish the good from the evil one.

Christ becomes a "sign of contradiction", that is, people are divided over him – whether they are for him or against him. He cannot be ignored; one cannot remain neutral; one must take a stand. Since the world has values contrary to Christ's, division results between those who accept Christ and those who reject him. His good news is bad news for those who refuse him.

While Jesus is at times seen as "my sweet Lord", his teaching and demand are far from sweet. They are "salt" that sets hearts on fire. It is true that Jesus comforts those who are afflicted, but he also "afflicts" those who are comfortable to remove them from their comfort zones.

Bible scholar Scott Hahn, a Lutheran who became a Catholic convert, narrated an exchange he had with a professed atheist. He was talking about the philosophical proofs for the existence of God when the atheist spoke up and said, "Professor Hahn, if God did not exist, we would invent Him anyway". For that atheist, God was just an invention of the human mind, an infantile projection of human insecurity, of man's inability to cope with the mysteries of life.

In response, Scott Hahn remarked, "If God does exist, we would invent atheism anyway". Why would we invent atheism? Because we do not want a demanding God. We do not want a God who will challenge us. We do not want a God who will tell us things that we do not want to hear. If ever we would invent a God, it would have to be a convenient God, a God who will never make me feel uncomfortable, and a God who will never bring me out of my comfort zone. This is the God of atheism. And that is no God at all.

My dear friends, today's Gospel is an indication that the God of Christianity could not have been an invention. If Jesus was just an invention, why invent a God who will disturb you to the core of your being? But this is just precisely what Jesus expresses to be His mission.

Jesus came not just to make us feel good. He came to make us good. And after being good, only then shall we genuinely feel good about ourselves. Being good entails a decisive choice of the good over the bad. That will entail purification, purgation, a dying to one's self. And because we believe in a true God, He will never stop reaching out to us, even sometimes disturbing us to show His presence.

Sometimes God will disturb us so that we may be able to have the better choices in our Christian lives.