

Purification of Our Souls Seventh Week in Ordinary Time Tuesday, February 26, 2019 **Sir 2:1-11; Mk 9:30-37** (There is an opportunity to let go of oneself and to find something totally unexpected, namely, the divine identity being offered to us.)

“For in fire gold and silver are tested, and worthy people in the crucible of humiliation.”

This is from the Book of Sirach, and it is, in a way, foreshadowing Jesus’ comments in the gospel about the Son of Man. As we grow up on this planet we tend to form an identity; first and foremost **we identify with our bodies**, as Sigmund Freud said the ego is a body ego. Ego means a sense of identity. The first thing we identify with is our bodies. But as the Sufis point out, it is not only our bodies we identify with and own, **but we also own our feelings, our passions, our aversions, our likes, our dislikes, our convictions, our opinions**, and so on and so on.

Now none of this is bad, but **none of it is really who we are either**. So gradually the lower has to fall away so that we can embrace the higher. And ultimately the higher, the highest is the Son of God. **We are all created in the image of the Son of God to become one with the Son of God, and thus know the Father and experience the love of God in the Spirit, to actually share in the very life of God**. But we don’t realize to what extent **we obstruct this, because we are so full of ourselves**. This is why the mystics talk about the purgative way; it means **purging away ourselves, the stuff that’s in the way of God filling us**.

So in Sirach the idea is that there is a kind of purgation; just as the purification of gold and silver, so there’s the **purification of our own souls**. And the crucible is, in this particular text, humiliation because in **humiliation** the person we think we are is devastated. And that is an opportunity to let go of it, although some may not use that opportunity correctly and in fact embrace it all the more strongly, and along with it the pain of humiliation and become extremely negative and depressed. And I’ve met such people. But there is **an opportunity to let go of**

oneself and to find something totally unexpected, namely, **the divine identity being offered to us**. It's much lighter than the ordinary heaviness of human awareness. But it is always available because it's **God's plan for us to embrace it and to become one with him**.

Now for some reason this plan of God required **Jesus** to completely give up his divinity and to pour himself into our humanity in a type of exchange, so that **in his humanity he could pour that out too in total self-giving, which he did on the cross**. And **this enables all of us to empty ourselves and therefore receive this great gift of God**, which is already present on our altars in the body, the blood, the soul, and the divinity of Christ in the Eucharist. And God's prayer, if you want to say that, **God's prayer is that the reality of our communion in the Eucharist become a conscious companion at all times**.