**For I am suffering torment in these flames**

**THURSDAY MARCH 4 (Lk 16, 19-31)**

The Word of the Lord always puts man in contact with the voice of the damned, so that he is convinced that doing good, obeying the truth and justice, is the only way to reach eternal life. Thus the Book of Wisdom: *“Then shall the just one with great assurance confront his oppressors who set at nought his labors. Seeing this, they shall be shaken with dreadful fear, and amazed at the unlooked-for salvation. They shall say among themselves, rueful and groaning through anguish of spirit: "This is he whom once we held as a laughingstock and as a type for mockery, fools that we were! His life we accounted madness, and his death dishonored. See how he is accounted among the sons of God; how his lot is with the saints! We, then, have strayed from the way of truth, and the light of justice did not shine for us, and the sun did not rise for us. We had our fill of the ways of mischief and of ruin; we journeyed through impassable deserts, but the way of the LORD we knew not. What did our pride avail us? What have wealth and its boastfulness afforded us? All of them passed like a shadow and like a fleeting rumor; Like a ship traversing the heaving water, of which, when it has passed, no trace can be found, no path of its keel in the waves. Or like a bird flying through the air; no evidence of its course is to be found - But the fluid air, lashed by the beat of pinions, and cleft by the rushing force Of speeding wings, is traversed: and afterward no mark of passage can be found in it. Or as, when an arrow has been shot at a mark, the parted air straightway flows together again so that none discerns the way it went through - Even so we, once born, abruptly came to nought and held no sign of virtue to display, but were consumed in our wickedness." Yes, the hope of the wicked is like thistledown borne on the wind, and like fine, tempest-driven foam; Like smoke scattered by the wind, and like the passing memory of the nomad camping for a single day.” (Wis 5,1-14).*Even Jesus makes us aware of the despair of the damned in hell. It is enough to read his parable and one will know that they are truly in the fire that burns, but it does not consume the victim, rather it is as though he vivifies it in order to continue to burn it without ever failing. Fire is eternal and always new.

*"There was a rich man who dressed in purple garments and fine linen and dined sumptuously each day. And lying at his door was a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, who would gladly have eaten his fill of the scraps that fell from the rich man's table. Dogs even used to come and lick his sores. When the poor man died, he was carried away by angels to the bosom of Abraham. The rich man also died and was buried, and from the netherworld, where he was in torment, he raised his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side. And he cried out, 'Father Abraham, have pity on me. Send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am suffering torment in these flames.' Abraham replied, 'My child, remember that you received what was good during your lifetime while Lazarus likewise received what was bad; but now he is comforted here, whereas you are tormented. Moreover, between us and you a great chasm is established to prevent anyone from crossing who might wish to go from our side to yours or from your side to ours.' He said, 'Then I beg you, father, send him to my father's house, for I have five brothers, so that he may warn them, lest they too come to this place of torment.' But Abraham replied, 'They have Moses and the prophets. Let them listen to them.' He said, 'Oh no, father Abraham, but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.' Then Abraham said, 'If they will not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded if someone should rise from the dead.'"*

The parable of Jesus needs no comment. One believes in the Word of Jesus or One does not believe it. Sweetening his words or transforming hell into a timed purgatory is a true betrayal of revealed truth. We either believe in Jesus’ revelation or we don’t believe it. If we believe, we believe in our salvation. If we don’t believe, we don’t believe in our eternal perdition. Hell does not depend on our abolition or declaration of non-existence. It exists and those who do not live according to justice will perish in it.

Mother of the Redemption, Angels, Saints, make us believe in every Word of Jesus.