I've just starting getting into the TV genre of crime shows. My Spanish instructor recommended I watch shows based in Latin America and Spain. And it just so happens that her favorite ones are all criminal shows.

After years of avoiding CSI and various police shows, now I’m full on into the brutal world of the tequila cartel business! I’m watching Monarca now in which the main character, Ana María, struggles to clean up her family’s tequila empire as it threatens to crumble under corruption and secrets. There is all of the evil plotting, violence and murder. Family feuds. Rich vs. poor.

Episode after episode, news story after news story, parable after parable, we cannot seem to stop the narrative of greed, jealousy, pain and violence that has been with us since our very first human ancestors.

It can be difficult to have hope in these circumstances. Yet amazingly, our God always maintains hope in us. I am reminded of Saint Paul’s words in 2 Timothy 2:13: “Even if we are faithless, God remains faithful for God cannot deny Godself.”

And so in the parable, after every beating, stoning and murder, God (represented by the landowner in today’s Gospel) continues to send messengers – messengers such as the prophets, saints, holy women and men, to help guide us, model for us a behavior that places love, mercy and right relationship first. But we know what happens to these messengers. We kill the messenger.

I have done this more times then I’d like to remember. There was that time when Comcast overcharged me and I wrangled for months to reverse it and finally let loose a holy fury of words to a customer service agent. It was not his fault. He was simply the messenger. I did at least have the presence of mind to apologize. And to his credit, he accepted my apology and sympathized with me.

It’s a whole lot easier some days to unload our frustration and fear on the next person or situation that happens by, waiting for that one innocuous thing to give us permission to treat them poorly – ignoring them as they walk by, referring to something that is embarrassing or hurtful to them, harshly judging them or outright attacking them.

This period of Lent, in part, is a time to examine our hearts more deeply … and to tend to the sources of the pain, discontent and fear within us. It is a time to be aware of ourselves and how we impact others, especially when we unconsciously and consciously fling our own fears and hurts on others.

It is also a time to remember that God is right by our side, embracing us even as we struggle to embrace our own fear and pain. God is still sending us messengers to walk with us, to help carry the burden, to model ways to be free. May we put down our stones of fear, and free ourselves to embrace the abundant mercy and love that God has for each of us.

-Julie Vieira, IHM