

Homily

March 18, 2022

Gn. 37: 3-4, 12-13, 17-28

Mt. 21: 33-46

Gail Addis

We are very familiar with today's readings. The story of Joseph occupies a large part of the book of Genesis. The vineyard parable is really the history of the Israelite people and is directed to the religious leaders and elders. They have failed to understand the responsibility entrusted to them to shepherd God's people with integrity, love, and justice. Because of Jesus' confrontation they want to do away with him but are prevented from doing so because Jesus is popular with the crowds.

Entwined in these stories are many themes that could capture our reflection: favoritism, revenge, anger, resentment, jealousy, fear and pride. Feelings and attitudes like these, if not brought into conscious awareness and dealt with, can become part of what we call our shadow. The shadow is those parts of our personality we don't want to claim because they challenge the self-image we have constructed and present to the world, so we look good and are acceptable.

Shadows can be personal, communal, national.

In the first reading, Joseph's shadow may have been that he liked being treated special by his father and neither of them could see that this favoritism was estranging them from the other family members, preventing connections.

The brothers couldn't see that their jealousy was leading them to resentment and hatred even to the point of wanting to kill Joseph. They couldn't look at their shadow and so their hearts were closed to their brother thus, preventing connections.

In the Gospel, the religious leaders felt threatened by Jesus' message of God's mercy and unconditional love and who was acceptable. His message of an inclusive kingdom and beloved community made them fearful. Who would they be if they couldn't control people with rules and regulations and could say who belonged and who didn't?

Their pride or fear of loss of power did not allow them to look at their shadow and do a reality check that could enable them to turn from their ways and choose life. They refuse to open their hearts and be vulnerable to the truth Jesus offers preventing connections with Jesus and the people they were to serve.

We started Lent recalling that we are stardust, part of everything that exists. Judy Cannato reminds us in Quantum Grace p.47-48: "Connection is the fundamental nature of reality. We cannot choose not to be connected; we can only attend to the quality of the connections we experience. We know God's desire is that we choose life. To choose life is to choose love. To choose love is to choose connection."

This is only the second week of Lent. Let us have the courage to look at our shadow side that may be in the way of our connections with one another and the larger community outside ourselves.

Whatever shadow we find, we can ask God's help to be converted and to choose life. Let us not forget, that at the end of the day, no matter our failings or limitations, God still says to us, you are my beloved and in you I take delight.