

Lenten Reflection

March 27, 2020

Our readings today, seething with blindness and contempt, continue the movement of Jesus toward Calvary. The taunting verses from the Book of Wisdom sound familiar to us because they are the backdrop of the Crucifixion scene. The description is of Jesus, the Just One, but it fits anyone who speaks truth to power.

The wickedness of these conspirators has blinded them. Unable to realize any connection to a greater whole, they have no sensitivity to love. They are totally oblivious to the “hidden counsels of God” located in their hearts. They are only conscious of and intending to harm others for their own benefit.

They find Jesus obnoxious because he, by his very being and presence, sets them apart from him. Their rage is further triggered by his claim of being the Son of God. The truth incurs wrath.

Megan McKenna remarks, “True holiness and goodness provoke evil to show its true colors and be revealed for what it is: an aberration of all that is human.” Evil causes blindness: an inability to grasp truth, an inability to see or hear or love. The wicked ones, inhabit a shrunken world of narrow expectations, characterized by superficiality. They are incapable of perceiving the truth that is in front of them.

The Gospel begins with the backdrop of intrigue and the climate of hate already in motion. Jesus, living in the shadow of hate, conspiracy and murder, does not go to the festival with the other disciples. But when Jesus does go to Jerusalem, he goes secretly. Jesus is observed speaking to the people. They wonder why the authorities don’t arrest him. These think they know him. They do not come with open hearts to receive Jesus. They listen but do not hear, nor do they take a stand with Him.

In response to them, Jesus says, “Yet I did not come on my own but the One who sent me ... is true ...” The authorities want to arrest him but no one lays a finger on him because his hour has not yet come. Blinded by fixed rules and regulations that distort the law of Moses, they are unable to see the law being fulfilled before their eyes. They say “we know where he is from” but are blind to their own disconnection from the law; they can’t envision the reality to which Jesus points.

As we live in the chaos of our own world, what are we seeing or hearing?

Can you hear? The sounds of the barren hillsides and fields of Guatemala which no longer provide food for her families.

Can you hear? The pleading of the migrants living in Juarez, without shelter or food, fearing for their lives.

Can you hear? The concentrated silence of prisoners locked away for years for something they did not commit.

Can you hear? The cries of mothers whose husbands and children who have disappeared.

Can you hear? The cries of the sick and elderly as they struggle to choose between medicine or the rent?

Can you hear the people of the world, of person struggling to survive COVID-19?

Can you hear? It is the silence in the councils of great nations when difficult subjects are left unmentioned?

Can you hear? It is the silence of the ordinary person who thinks that these things have nothing to do with them, therefore do nothing to help.

Adapted from Amnesty International

What are we invited to see or hear at the time of social distancing? How does the Holy One invite us to compassionate love?

-Judith Bonini, IHM