

Homily – CTSA Mass

March 2, 2018

Our readings today are somber, but they remind us that God's work in our world and through our lives is often hidden. We recognize God's actions in the events of today through faith.

In our first reading older brothers consider killing their younger brother, but instead sell him into slavery while enjoying their lunch! Why do they do this? Joseph was the eleventh of the twelve children of the patriarch Jacob. Jacob showed special love for Joseph, and that led to jealousy and hatred in the others. Joseph also had dreams that he shared with his family – how they would someday bow down and show him homage! Moreover, he apparently was a tattler who told about his older brothers' misdeeds. Then on the fateful day Jacob sends Joseph to check on his brothers who are tending the family's sheep! Yes, this is a dysfunctional family. Nothing justifies the actions of the brothers. However, we know how the story ends – God is at work through these foolish and terrible actions. Joseph will eventually save the whole family from starvation during a famine. But it is a long story, and God is well hidden in the details. That is the way God usually works.

In the gospel Jesus' aims a powerful parable at the religious leaders who sought to kill him. He says that the kingdom of God will be given to those who will **produce its fruit**. The fruits of the kingdom are compassion, mercy, justice, peace, harmony, unity. That is our daily challenge -- to allow the word of God to take deep root in our lives so that we will bear good fruit and build up the kingdom of God.

We live in difficult times for people of faith. Walking in God's ways is countercultural. The ways of the world are to seek power, possessions, pleasure -- by whatever means! Daily we face an exaggerated individualism, a tendency to justify every kind of evil, an atmosphere of mistrust and falsehoods that divides, alienates, and polarizes us into camps and tribes, building walls rather than bridges. The kingdom of God, on the other hand, is one where everyone is respected because he or she is created in God's own image. The kingdom of God is a place of love and concern for the poor, the brokenhearted, the captive, the neglected, the immigrant, the stranger, those who mourn.

God needs us to be his eyes, ears, mouth, and arms in order to bring the kingdom to fulfillment. Have courage! Be confident! God's Holy Spirit is with us, within us! Let God act through us in faith!