30th Sunday In Ordinary Time, Oct. 30, 2013

Not so long ago, a hard nosed business man climbed to the pinnacle of business glory by becoming president of a major railroad company. He had all the perks of power and was catered to in all kinds of ways. Over his long career he interacted with countless numbers of people. Then he retired and eventually died. After his death, his chauffer said, “Only nine people attended his funeral.”

The gospel today is about inflated ego which allowed the Pharisee to “thank God he was not like the rest of men.”

Shakesphere wrote of such egotistical arrogance. He described such egotists as having “a glassy essence,” in other words, being hollow on the inside:

“…dressed in a little brief authority,

Mostly ignorant of what he’s most assured,

his glassy essence like an angry ape,

plays such fantastic tricks before high heaven,

as makes the angels weep!”

…from Measure For Measure

And then there is Humpty Dumpty:

Who sat on a wall,

Who had a great fall,

And all the kings horses,

And all the king's men,

Couldn't put Humpty back together again.

Poor Humpty, riding so high!

But his essence was glass and how quickly he shattered!

In recent years in childhood development there has been great emphasis on Self Esteem. And that is good IF there is also a balancing with humility and compassion for others.

But without those modifiers self esteem can result in some self inflated brats.

Hitler and Stalin probably had lots of self esteem!

Self esteem and humility require a balance. God does not make junk. But we all come into this world wounded, some more than others. A murderer was executed in Tucson Wednesday morning. As a child he was abused by two step fathers and thrown out of the house as though he were garbage, at age thirteen. Treated like junk, he later treated his victims as junk.

The human condition for ALL of us is a shared woundedness. When we admit this we can join the human drama and have compassion for ourselves and for others. We don't stand above it or beyond it.

Pope Francis has been transparent in owning his own woundedness: "I am a sinner." He proclaims. "And this is not a figure of speech." he adds. No it is a reality for him, and you, and me. So we stand together on the ground, not perched alone on a high above wall, like Humpty Dumpty.

Pope Francis places himself in the midst of the wounded and proclaims:

"I see clearly what the Church needs most today is the ability to heal wounds and to warm the hearts of the faithful….I see the Church as a field hospital after battle."

Quite to the contrary, the Pharisee in today's gospel saw the church as a platform to preen himself and declare his superiority.

Today, whenever we talk about THOSE MIGRANTS, OR THOSE HOMOSESXUALS, OR THOSE PEOPLE, we are separating ourselves from others who share our human condition.

Then we change from being a Publican into being a Pharisee.

BREAKFAST QUESTION: Where is my woundedness?

PERSONAL REFLECTION: Where and how do I experience healing