



# Thoughts on the Journey

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Attending an all-girl Catholic boarding school in high school, there were times when we had to adapt. I particularly enjoyed art and theatre and looked forward to participating in the many productions during my years at Immaculate Conception Academy. In my Junior year, it was decided that we would do a production of *Fiddler on the Roof*. Based on my stature, I knew my best chance for landing a part was one of the older women, either Golde, the wife of Tevye or Yente, the matchmaker.

After school one day, Mr. Lynn, the English teacher, began the auditions. Many of the girls filled the auditorium in hopes of getting a part in the play. Two days later, Mr. Lynn called all of us hopefuls back to the auditorium to announce his decisions about who had what part. He reminded us that, even though we may not have a character part in the play, there is always stage crew, makeup, lighting and the number of behind the scenes parts that are important to the production. As he began to call the approximate 12 parts, it took no time at all before I learned that the two parts I was interested in had already been decided. Before he announced the very last character, I resigned myself that I would be on stage crew. Even though I was feeling the rise of disappointment for not getting a part, I was still happy to be part of the play. Then, all of the sudden, I heard Mr. Lynn call my name followed by, “you will take the part of Tevye.” Needless to say, I wasn’t expecting that at all.

Playing the part of Tevye, a dairyman, who was a strong patriarch steeped in Jewish tradition, put me outside my comfort zone and I knew I had my work cut out for me in studying Tevye’s character. I must have watched the movie twenty times in the hopes of capturing the strong male character. In my study of Tevye, what stood out the most to me, was the importance of tradition in his life and how difficult it was for him to break from that tradition.

In this week’s gospel from Matthew, the Pharisees were attempting to trip-up Jesus. They chose among themselves, a scholar of the law who posed this question to our Lord, “Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?” Jesus answered him,

**“ You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. The second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”**

There is nothing new in Jesus’ answer. In Jewish writings long before Jesus’ time, these two commandments summarized the whole of the law in Deuteronomy and also Leviticus dealing with right conduct toward others. Jesus wasn’t there to abolish the law, but rather to uphold the law. The difference lied in the understanding of the law. The Jewish understanding was that everyone was to love God; that was undisputed. But in their tradition, love was based on a sliding scale. Those who were not in the inner circles of the community, like sinners, Samaritans, Gentiles, tax collectors, and outcasts, were to be loved less and some not loved at all. These laws encouraged people to set up a system of discrimination and they held tightly to these traditions missing the spirit of the law to “love your neighbor”. Jesus, on the other hand does not separate love for God from love of neighbor and taught us to love all people in spite of our differences.

Like Tevye, who held tightly to tradition to a fault, we can miss the importance of “love” in our dealings with people. We can profess to love God, but if we fail to love our neighbor, we sorely damage our relationship with God. To love as we are called to love, means abandoning judgement, loving our enemies, serving humanity, speaking in kindness, compassion, and mercy. Jesus came to show us the way. We don’t have to look too far to see that we need more love in our world. What are we willing to let go of in order to love more?