Spirituality
Pencil Preaching





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“Teacher, when will this happen?” (Luke 21:7).

Daniel 2:31-45: Luke 21; Luke 21:5-11

Today’s first reading from the Book of Daniel reminds us how many common expressions come from the Bible. “The handwriting on the wall” and “feet of clay” both come from Daniel, one of the late apocalyptic texts written to show that history has been foretold by the prophets. As successive ancient superpowers came to prominence, the authors dismiss them as mere “chaff blowing in the wind,” another vivid expression.

A familiar biblical phrase comes to mind in noting that Pope Francis' historic visit to Japan and condemnation of nuclear weapons did not merit even a mention from the major news sites today. The pope was "a voice in the wilderness" when he said this in Hiroshima:

"*Future generations will rise to condemn our failure if we spoke of peace but did not act to bring it about among the peoples of the earth. How can we speak of peace even as we build terrifying new weapons of war? How can we speak about peace even as we justify illegitimate actions by speeches filled with discrimination and hate?*" (See full story on ncronline.org site.)

As the world plunges further into what the pope has frequently called an ongoing "piecemeal World War III," global leaders give empty speeches while more and more conflicts grow, creating chaos and uprooting thousands of refugees from their homelands.

In today's Gospel, Jesus shocks his disciples when he says that the massive temple in Jerusalem would be destroyed. What for many was the most secure and sacred structure on earth, literally the House of God, was destined to be a flattened war zone, a preview of what in fact happened when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem in 70 CE as Luke was composing his Gospel.

Yet, Jesus also reassures his followers that their hope does not lie in material security but in their faith. God is both eternal Sovereign and Lord of history, and what human folly causes God can salvage good from for those who remain faithful. This is not to say that we will be spared suffering, only that redemption is the direction history is being directed by God, who always has the final say.

The pope rightly invokes the future as our judge. We are accountable to future generations who will look back on us and ask what we were doing as signs of calamity gathered and threatened the world. Were we shopping? Will the human family emerge to steady a faltering world, to banish demagogues and restore sanity, to restore fairness and compassion as the only way forward? Will the unborn be born to praise us for our courage? Will we be condemned by the survivors of our feckless inaction and short-sightedness?

There are prophets and heroes in our midst trying to build a different future, and each one of us must take up our share of the work if we are to succeed. Discipleship demands no less of us than this, to "fight the good fight, finish the course and keep

the faith (2 Tim 4:7).

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