

[Spirituality](#)
[Pencil Preaching](#)



by Pat Marrin

[View Author Profile](#)
[patrickjmarrin@gmail.com.](mailto:patrickjmarrin@gmail.com)

[**Join the Conversation**](#)

Send your thoughts to *Letters to the Editor*. [Learn more](#)

September 10, 2020

[Share on Facebook](#)[Share on Twitter](#)[Email to a friend](#)[Print](#)



“Can a blind person guide a blind person?” (Luke 6:39).

1 Cor 9:16-19, 22b-27; Luke 6:39-42

September 11 will always be indelibly imprinted on the American psyche because of the attacks on New York and the Pentagon. Even as it recedes in time, the personal and political impact will continue to define families of the victims and the nation’s foreign policy and domestic budgets. It has been difficult to talk about, as NCR found out in covering the catastrophe, when even asking “why” was considered impertinent and unpatriotic.

By targeting the symbols of the U.S. military and financial systems, the attacks drew the country into two retaliatory wars over two decades that have cost thousands of lives and trillions of dollars and reshaped the American democracy as a national security and surveillance state. The event was both an awakening and a plunge into shadow that has made it harder to see a path forward in a world Pope Francis has noted is now in a continuous state of war.

Jesus came as the Light of the World and preached a Gospel meant to give sight to the blind. In today’s scripture, he tells his disciples that they cannot restore anyone else’s sight without first removing the blinders from their own eyes. Once regarded as a beacon of diplomacy and negotiated peace, the United States has devolved into a nation awash in guns and as the number one purveyor of advanced weapons of

war in the world. And when was the last time the US Catholic bishops issued a noteworthy and prophetic document on war and peace?

St. Paul writes to the church at Corinth of his desire to be all things to all people on all issues. Yet, like the prophet Jeremiah, he had to preach the Gospel in season and out, and “woe to me if I do not preach it!” Nor could he diminish the challenge of the cross to appeal to those who wanted only the resurrection. His Apostleship was a long-haul path of suffering and rejection for the sake of Christ crucified.

Wars, like environmental crises, impact the poor far more than others, and the suffering of over 68 million refugees in camps and on the move in an unwelcoming world goes unreported beneath the headlines about the pandemic and political campaigns. But the Gospel must be preached to those in despair and proclaimed to those who cause this, profit from it or use it for political gain.

It was a blind man on the side of the road named Bartimaeus who taught us what we must pray for first. When Jesus asked him what he wanted, he said, “Lord, I want to see.” If we can see what is, we will know how to challenge and alleviate it.

Advertisement