Spirituality
Pencil Preaching



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"I do not ask that you take them out of the world but that you keep them from the Evil One" (John 17:16).

*Acts 20:28-38; Jn 17:11b-19*

What does evil look like? We seldom hear the word outside of religious conversations, as though in our modern world the idea of some malevolent force at work in society is an outdated, prescientific myth.

Yet, we also witness the power of arrogance and lies to corrupt social cohesion and institutional integrity. We watch as our politicians take the global financial system to the brink to score media points. We see corporate greed and public apathy denying that our lifestyles of consumption and waste are destroying the planet. What collective spirit is at work to blind us to truth and common sense? Is this not evil turning us against one another and paralyzing us as we hurtle toward self-destruction?

We have seen the erosion of ethical standards in the financial services industry on whom the integrity of global commerce depends, and this can wreak havoc in a system that holds the investments and savings of most ordinary people. Dark money has corrupted the political process that is supposed to regulate financial management and the trillions of dollars whirling around the globe electronically every hour of every day.

Jesus warns his disciples that their mission to transform human culture with justice and love will be resisted at every step by those who benefit from inequality and exploitation. In his farewell address at Miletus, Paul warns the church that after he departs, “savage wolves” will ravage the flock. Did he foresee the “Wolf of Wall Street”?

The Holy Spirit is at work in the world, inviting us to move history toward God's ultimate plan of a beloved community, but because free, human cooperation is part of the plan, other spirits will also attack the process. When the desire for wealth and power infect human beings, truth and justice are often the first casualties. Murder and mayhem follow in social violence and senseless wars, and the most innocent are its first victims.

There is also great good in the world seeking to hold the high ground against evil. We pray to be among those with courage who work each day for fairness and generosity. Pope Francis' challenge to steer the course of history away from violence and greed toward fairness and responsibility has awakened both hope and resistance.

We live in momentous times, and every one of us has a chance to choose life and the common good. We pray for a full measure of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Only with the Spirit and our commitment together will we advance God's plan for the world.