



Reflection from Fr. Garry Richmeier

In the movie "The Devil's Advocate," Al Pacino plays the devil and Keanu Reeves plays a lawyer to whom the devil appears in order to tempt him to do all kinds of bad things. The two characters have many conversations, and the devil tries to get Keanu to sell his soul completely, which will give the devil greater power. Just when it seems Keanu is going to completely sell his soul, he takes himself out of the picture so the devil can't use him anymore. He is then returned to his normal life, as if nothing had happened. But Pacino makes one more appearance in the movie, disguised as a reporter who wants to do a story about Keanu, depicting him as a hero, and Keanu agrees to it. The movie ends with Pacino saying in a menacing tone that vanity is his favorite tool.

In the gospel today, we hear about Jesus casting out demons. We might think that demons, as they are depicted in the bible, are kind of a quaint notion, possibly a way people of that time described phenomena that they didn't understand. With science and technology, we might pride ourselves as being able to better understand things that were once attributed to demons. But like Al Pacino disguising himself as a reporter at the end of the movie to continue his work, the demons we deal with aren't so obvious and identifiable.

If the devil appeared to any of us as a fiery red guy with horns, a pitchfork, we would know not to do anything he said. But the demons we struggle with and who make our lives hell, are much more subtle, and work behind the scenes. They usually appear as good things, which we have no problem trying to get. For example, patriotism and protecting one's country are generally highly valued. The human race has a long history of killing each other in service to this "good." This is what is presently happening in Israel and along our southern border. We value capitalism as the best economic system, and tout the freedom it gives people to achieve the American dream. Celebrating and defending this system seems to blind us from the fact that it leaves some people behind, and allows us to have no problem with the scandalous gap between the rich and the poor. Unfortunately, our demons don't show up as Al Pacino announcing himself as the devil.

In the bible, Jesus cast out demons in the same way he did everything else -- through love. Whether he was casting out demons, healing the sick, teaching, eating a meal with someone, or forgiving sins, it was God's perfect love flowing through him with which he did everything. If we are to cast out the demons which torture us, we will have to do the same. We will have to resist the temptation to run after what is only apparently good, and refocus our efforts to do what is truly good. And as Jesus showed us, that is always love.

Peace,

Fr. Garry