



## Wednesday Prayer

13<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost – Responding with goodness

***Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor. Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. Romans 12:9-12, 21***

We live in a time when we're bombarded with news. We hear about events all around the world on TV, where we not only see one story on the screen but other stories scrolling across the bottom. Our cell phones ping with notifications about the latest news events. Much of the news is about the evil in the world. Wars between or within nations, thefts, murders, racial injustice, problems with the deterioration of our environment, and people who exploit young people by trafficking them for sex.

Social media not only includes posts about this news, but also posts from our friends about how they respond, and how they think we should also respond. Our stress level escalates, we get defensive, anxious and angry, and are tempted to respond in any number of negative ways. Even positive events, like a peaceful protest to call for justice, can turn to perpetuating the cycle of evil. We're caught up in a culture of calling others out rather than calling them in to understanding, to listening, to genuine love for one another.

In this Sunday's passage, Paul reminds us as he reminded the church in Rome so many years ago, "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good." In the same way that evil can escalate, good can also escalate. As our children and youth return to school, both online and in person, they can become more vulnerable to those who want to exploit them. Praying for our children and youth for safety as they move through the world, providing safe places for youth to gather and grow connections with safe adults, educating youth and parents about healthy relationships and the signs of exploitation, and advocating for change to enhance safety for children in our communities are all examples of good that can overcome evil. Instead of becoming overwhelmed by or escalating evil, calm your thoughts and respond with good. The Holy Spirit will take our seeds of loving acts, no matter how small, and grow justice and mercy to overcome evil.

**God of justice and mercy, calm our hearts in the midst of the evil around us, and empower us to respond with goodness and genuine love. We pray that our offerings of prayer, education, action and advocacy might be your hand bringing hope and salvation to those who are vulnerable to injustice, especially the injustice of sex trafficking and exploitation. Amen.**

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