Voices of Sisters
Spirituality



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As I packed my briefcase to leave the office and head out to give an evening presentation, a work colleague alerted me that the weather for travel might be challenging. "They're predicting heavy rains and possibly even a tornado," she said. "So be careful. Are you sure you should be driving this evening?"

I looked out the window and saw rain but it didn't look that forceful. Cars driving by had their wipers going, but pedestrians with umbrellas seemed to be walking along without distress. "Is the weather going to be all that bad?" I asked. "I'm heading north only 50 minutes' drive away, which is the opposite direction from the storm, so I should be OK." Then seeing the crestfallen face of the co-worker because I was dismissing her alert, I joked, "Well, I'll see you tomorrow unless you see a little red car swirling around in a tornado."

Not amused, she said, "And if there really is a tornado, you heard it here first, so be careful. But here's a question for you: Who would you like your house to fall on? You know, like Dorothy in *The Wizard of Oz*. Her house from Kansas landed on the Wicked Witch of the East and killed her. That caused the Munchkins great joy because the witch could no longer terrorize them."

"What a great question," I respond. "This year, 2019, is the 80th anniversary of "The Wizard of Oz" movie — is that why you mentioned this?" She shook her head no. "Well, I'll have to think about who or what I want my house to fall on," I said. "And if the trip ahead is an uneventful drive to the event and back, there'll be plenty of time to ponder such an important question."

So the trip got underway; most of the travel *was* uneventful despite serious rain for several minutes at a time, and I did think about my colleague's question. Hmmm, who *would* I want my house to fall on? Immediately, I recalled "The Wizard of Oz" movie scene when Dorothy was surrounded by delighted Munchkins after her house killed the Wicked Witch of the East; her sister, the more evil Wicked Witch of the West had arrived and was menacing everyone with threats. Not to be intimidated, Glinda, the Good Witch, waved her wand dismissively and said, "Be gone before somebody drops a house on *you,* too."

For starters, I'd want my house to fall on priests who've molested people and the clergy higher-ups who've sheltered these abusers. Many of those persons are dead now and can't harm anyone else, but we're nowhere close to the worldwide truth

about this horrible situation.

A corollary to that would be wanting my house to fall on anyone who feels that aborting a fetal heartbeat isn't murder.

Those were easy. So who else would I want my house to fall on? A pretty long list actually:

1. *People who cause violence* to others, including robbers, murderers, sex traffickers, terrorists, domestic abusers and gang members. Keep your hands (and knives and guns) to yourself. If you need mental help, it's there for you.
2. *World dictators* who imprison their citizens with false promises and broken ideologies, creating a contrived dependence on themselves and stifling the human spirit.
3. *Bullies*. No, you don't get your own way all the time. Yes, you get your way some of the time. That's worked out in relationships of the give-and-take in life.
4. *Drunk drivers*. How many innocent lives have you snuffed out for no reason other than you chose to drive your car when you were in no condition to do so?
5. *Cancer*. In my hospital CEO days, I remember a conversation with an oncologist who said, "Cancer is an umbrella term for 500 different diseases and it's complicated whether or not effective treatments and chemo regimens are in the right combination to help a patient." The world can do without cancer.

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6. *Disease and injury in general*. How many persons are incapacitated in rehab facilities due to debilitating strokes, car accidents, athletic injuries, brain diseases, amputations, military conflict injuries, burns and the like? How many persons have been robbed of normalcy due to Alzheimer's and dementia?
7. *Conflict starters* on the world stage, like religious fanaticism or territorial warmongers. Believe what you want but keep out of our daily life.
8. *Discriminators* for any reason, including of race, of physical or mental abilities, of religious beliefs and the like. As my mom used to say when I bossed younger siblings, "Who died and left you in charge?"
9. *Disrespecters of Earth*, including those who deny global warming. We need continually improved fuel economy, continually improved building efficiencies,

and more natural energies, like wind power and solar power.

10. *Internet shoppers* who are killing stores as we know them. Retail establishments struggle to meet customer needs and I for one still appreciate an actual store in which you can shop, i.e., look around, compare products, touch items and select what you want.
11. *Robo callers*. What right do you have to call my phone number when you're just being a nuisance?
12. *Politicians who get nothing done* while in office but don't hesitate to feather their own re-election nests.

So if my house fell on all of those, what would we have left? We'd have daily life in which positive and encouraging news would be the focus because there wouldn't be violence, crime, wars or conflicts to report. People worldwide would have a better chance of self-actualizing and achieving their potential.

We would look at each other with accepting eyes. We would respect each other. We would safeguard our Earth. We wouldn't need community meetings about how to stop the gun violence by young people. And Sears wouldn't go out of business.

[Nancy Linenkugel has been a member of the Sisters of St. Francis, Sylvania, Ohio, since 1968 and writes blogs for her community's website. She is an alumna of Xavier University's Master of Health Services Administration program and serves as its director. She was president and CEO of Providence Hospital and Providence Health System from 1986 to 2001.]