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July Summer Edition

First Year Celebration

Can you believe it?

The Shofar has been in business for a year already! We have been pleased to bring to you various content about what is going on in the Charismatic Old Catholic Church throughout the year.

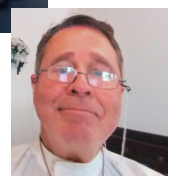
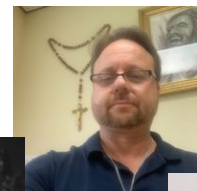
We would like to take the time to thank our contributors who have provided us with their words of faith and instruction.

In the coming year we would ask the readership to also send in Praise Reports of the positive ways that God is moving in your ministries.

Many of our readers are looking for ways to expand their ministries and just seeing the success of others is always inspiring!

Send those reports into the editor at
revjohngeinzer@gmail.com

A BIG THANKS!



Holy Spirit of Hope Church & Day Care News



Our flagship CHILD DAY CARE, Rev Martha's baby, is suffering from low number of children. She had it licensed in 2016 for 48 children and achieved the State of Texas' highest rating. Covid brought the population down to 8 children make it impossible to afford the care givers. We don't want to close it as it is a great ministry. Martha has been quite successful in winning grants which are non-sustainable. So, we request all our brothers and sisters to pray fervently for more kids. Thank you very much!

Church ministry is expanding. We now have the following new programs:

CHURCH 21st ANNIVERSARY on Pentecost Sunday was excitingly motivating. Rev Mother Elizabeth Ornelas, Rev Father Eugene Solera, Msgr David Brown and Rev Deacon Eduardo Ornelas joined Abp Robert for a stimulating concellebrated Mass. The crowd was aroar! Ms Sarita Ornelas gifted the tasty cake.

CHRISTIAN'S YOUTH ROOM is open to after-schoolers/church youth equipped with board games, pool table, air hockey, corn hole, TV, WiFi, and a music system. This was prepared and furnished by the Jesse & Valerie Cortez family, specifically young Christian.

GUEST PASTORS have been invited. Fr Pastor David Morrison of Desert Rain Community Chaparral, NM will speak at our Summer Holy Motivation Nite July 15th. Rev David & Dcn Sharon from St Cecilia in Palm Springs, CA come to share their type of ministry July 16th English Mass.

CLERGY Fr Eugene Solera, Filipino Priest, will rejoin HSoH clergy staff July 11th. Welcoming celebration being planned. Fr-Elect Eduardo Ornelas under training for MDiv and ordination in August.

Holy Spirit of Hope Church & Day Care News (cont')

SUMMER FUN PROGRAMS The Victor & Mary Ramirez family are providing exciting Saturday summer evening programs. We enjoyed movie nite featuring Nacho Libre and also Loteria (Mexican Bingo) with Margaritas – real fun!! More programs coming.



BIBLE STUDY continues Thursdays at 6pm as inspired by the George and Leti Arellano family.

WALK TO EMMAUS retreat at Sacramento Methodist Assembly near Cloudcroft will be attended by: Dcn Jesse to attend August 17-20; Leti Arellano, Nancy Placencia and Valerie Cortez to attend September 7-10.

SACRAMENTS provide our perfect opportunity for evangelizing. Every Saturday the church is full of families attending children's baptisms. We celebrate the BEST Quinceañeras and Weddings in town! We're concentrating our First Communion invitation to people of all ages. Catechism vacation until October. Catechism is by the Arellanos.

SERVICE TO THOSE MOST IN NEED We provide Texas Dept of Family & Protective Services (DFPS) foster and adopted children initiatives under Nancy Placencia family.

NEW CHURCH SERVICE We're inviting all young at heart to discuss a relevant service for the new generation. How do we reach them with the same Gospel but relevant to their ears.

God bless us all!

Robert Ortega

A PICTURE OF PERFECT FAITH



**The Right Reverend Ted Kerr,
Bishop of Brazil and Auxiliary
Bishop U.S. East Central Diocese**

I took a trip once to Cabo San Lucas, Mexico. I got up one morning, strolled around the hotel property, and began to use my simple point-and-click camera to take a few photos. As it turns out, the landscape, the lighting, and the weather all conspired to produce a most beau-

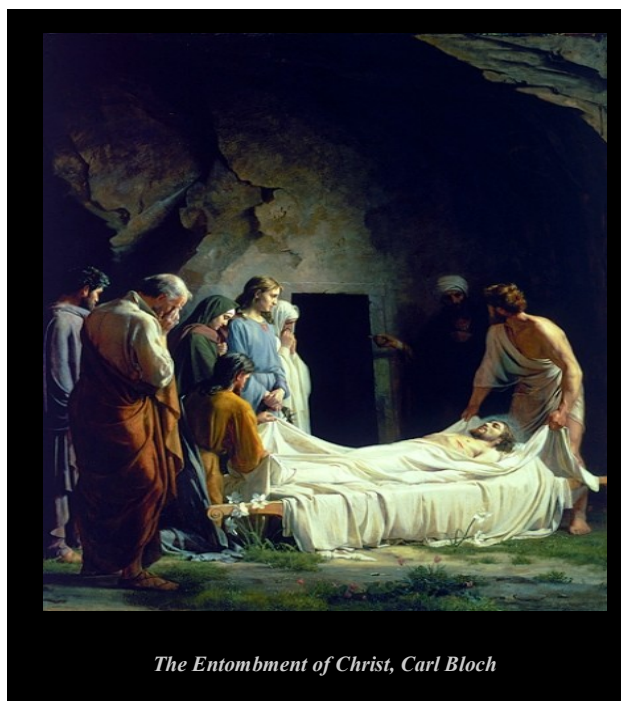
**“SO THEY
TOOK
THE
BODY OF
JESUS...
AND LAID
(HIM)
THERE.”
(JOHN
19:40, 42)**

tiful set of pictures! When I returned home, I uploaded the photos to the hotel page on TripAdvisor.com and watched a mini-explosion of social media views and positive comments on my trip album in the days and weeks to come. One of the photos in particular was quite stunning; it was nearly perfect in every way. (I readily admit that it was God’s awesome creation, and not my amateur photography skills, that produced those amazing images!)

In relation to Good Friday, we see that an inspired literary artist has painted a picture of Jesus Christ lying in the tomb (John 19:38-42). The reader may be inclined to view the passage simply as an explanation of what happened after Jesus died on the cross or merely as a proof-text of evidence that Jesus was truly dead prior to his post-resurrection appearances. But the picture that emerges is more profound than that. This scene of the tomb, and of Jesus’ dead body, is a picture of faith.

We are told in the Book of Hebrews that Jesus is “the founder and perfecter of our faith.” (12:2) When Jesus died, he placed his entire being into the hands of the Father. He didn’t just place his hopes and dreams, or his struggles and defeats, into the hands of the Father as you or I would. He shut his eyes for the last time, took his last breath, and then exercised faith that the Father would raise him from the dead!

You see, the picture of Jesus’ body lying dead in the tomb is a picture of perfect faith— faith in the Father’s love for us and in His power to overcome our most awesome challenges, even death itself.



The Entombment of Christ, Carl Bloch

Cloudcroft will be attended by: Dcn

WORSHIP TECHNOLOGY

with Deacon Mark



The Brick n Mortar Church
Developing Our Worship Team



Shalom everyone,

As we are midway through 2023, the latest invention known to man has finally arrived and is now beginning its takeover of Human Intelligence: A.I. or Artificial Intelligence. This Beast of the Earth, A.I., should not surprise us. It's been the subject of many SciFi books (I. Robot), TV Shows (Star Trek), and Movies (2001: A Space Odyssey, Terminator). One that comes to mind (any of us true Trekkies can easily recall) is the 1967 Star Trek Episode: "The Changeling". In this classic episode, our beloved Enterprise Crew encounters the Nomad space probe, which according to the plot, was launched from Earth during the early 21st century (Ironical huh?). Its mission was to explore the galaxy and seek out new life, but Nomad had been reported destroyed. To show how A.I. could potentially affect the future, you might recall that the Crew encounters all kinds of craziness, including memory erasing, killing a few crew members in red shirts (as expected), and even Mr. Spock's Vulcan mind-meld. True to Roddenberry's vision of Humanity, technology is won over by Human Intelligence (H.I.). Kirk arrives and again confronts the probe, questioning it about its mission. When Nomad declares that its directive to sterilize imperfections allows no exceptions, Kirk points out that Nomad itself is imperfect, since it has mistaken Captain Kirk for its true creator Jackson Roykirk. He then claims that Nomad has committed two other errors, by not discovering its own mistake, and by not sterilizing itself as imperfect. Nomad realizes that he is imperfect and therefore destroys himself. I guess Gene's vision of having no Jesus in Kirk's time (or any other time) left Nomad no Personal Saviour who died for imperfections. Go figure....

A.I. is here to "help" mankind

Nonetheless, A.I. is here. It is nothing more than software developed to "help" mankind... but this "help" does come with trade-offs.... Hopefully not Nomad's Trade-offs...

Now, in this blog, we will introduce the Worship Software Solutions which we could use to enhance the Worship Experience... but have not yet been corrupted by A.I.

As we do in all of the Blogs, we will simply be revisiting our two Post-Covid worship Models: The classic Brick and Mortar Church and The new Virtual Church.

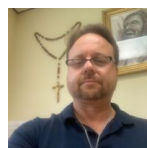
In our next Issue of the Shofar, we will explore more in depth the Worship Software Solutions for Brick and Mortar Mass. This will be a simple, but thorough application of each Software App as to how it can help your Parishioners grow closer to Christ. That Issue's topic will transition into the following Issues' Topic because some of Brick n Mortar Software Solutions have overlap in our Virtual Parishes.

In that Issue, we will explore Internet-based Worship Software Solutions that also help us get greater "Reach", as two of our Virtual Parishes are already discovering.

I'm very excited to finally get to these topics (Friendly Reminder: we did play with some of these concepts on Day 2 over the 2020 Winter Synod.)

But until then, Live Long and Prosper!

Yours in Christ, Deacon Mark



Deacon Mark can be reached at Catholicmrk@gmail.com Cell/text: 954-501-4899



WE ALL HAVE THEM!



**Monsignor
Harold (Hal)
Ellis West,
O.S.S.T., O.S.L.,
S.T.A., S.T.B.,
S.T.M., M.Div.**

Fr. Hal is a Priest, Chancellor and Vicar General for the State of Florida of the Archdiocese of the Southeastern States and Missionary Dependencies. Order of the Most Holy Mary Theotokos in the Evangelical Orthodox Catholic Church in America and Shofar contributor.

There is a cute story making its rounds in social media. It is about a priest who was speaking to a class of children in his parish. He asked, "Does anyone know why I wear this collar?" A little boy raised his hand and said, "Because it kills fleas and ticks for up to thirty days." After having a good chuckle over reading this story and having the vision of an innocent little boy eagerly responding to the priest's question, I began to ponder on what hidden lesson might be found in this story.

The first thing I thought of was that one should be careful when posing such questions to children as you **WILL** get an answer! So, be prepared. Then, I thought of the question itself. I reflected on my thoughts and feelings when I don the collar or vest for mass. Praying as I prepare to take on the symbols of

my office, I sometimes find myself saying to God, "Are you sure one of us hasn't made a mistake?" Then it dawned on me that the humor from the story comes from the boys perception of what that white collar was. He probably saw flea collars on a commercial or on his own pet and that was his understanding of what that collar was for. The humor is drawn from his inaccurate notion that the priest must have fleas, ticks, or other pests that he needs protection from. Of course, (one would hope) the priest is not suffering from an infestation of fleas nor other pests. And, the collar, vestments, and other symbols of our faith we wear or carry around have no magical powers to destroy pests of any kind.

However, they should serve to remind us of the infestation of pests we all have, Not the living creatures who bite and sting our flesh but the pests that we have inherited through our sinful nature. Things that bite and sting at our soul. The damage they can do is that which accumulates over time. There is no spray or lotion that will keep them away. No medicine or ointment that will relieve the mental or physical pain they may manifest in us. A pain we may fail to notice or may become aware of long after damage has been done.

You see, the vestments and symbols of faith remind us to be conscious of avoiding the "Top Ten list of sins" God gave to Moses. When we pray the general confession, we ask

for forgiveness for "things we have done and things we have left undone". Most of us, when contemplating our failings before praying the Confession stop at the things we have done. If we haven't murdered anyone, stolen anything, or anything else that is on the top ten list, we are in pretty good shape, right? The second part is more difficult. Do we really contemplate the things we leave undone? Do we remember to bring before God all those "little" sins that we dismiss as not worth fretting over? Do we realize that Satan uses the little pests to stand in the way of the things we should do or to convince us that those little sins are not worth mentioning. Yet, sin is sin. Sin and spiritual failures of all kinds are not pleasing to God and tend to become little barriers that can prevent us from that close relationship with Him we strive to work for every day.

Brothers and Sisters in Christ, let us be ever mindful of the little pests. God sees them and when we bear our souls before Him in confessing all failings he hears and forgives. The Devil, on the other hand, loses another tool from his toolbox. More wedges that are between you and the relationship with God you desire will fall away.

Blessings,
Fr. Hal

Unmasking Spiritual Warfare: Discerning its Impact on Society



Fr Stephen McBride, DMin is an ordained priest in the Charismatic Old Catholic Church and a PRN Chaplain.

Stephen and his wife are currently planting a church, the Light of Christ Community Church in Bedford KY.

In the unseen realms of the spiritual realm, a battle rages—a battle that extends its influence on the visible world we inhabit. Spiritual warfare, although invisible to the naked eye, manifests itself in various aspects of society. From the over-sexualization of children to the LGBTQ+ movement,

WHAT LEADERS IN THE CHURCH MUST DO TO COMBAT SPIRITUAL WARFARE

the declining church attendance, the removal of God from public spaces, and the rise of materialistic values, it is evident that the spiri-

tual realm exerts a profound impact on our lives. In this article, we will explore these signs of spiritual warfare and examine the need for spiritual discernment amidst a society increasingly focused on self-gratification rather than serving God.

The Over-Sexualization of Children:

A clear indicator of spiritual warfare is the alarming over-

sexualization of children. The pervasive presence of explicit content, objectification, and the erosion of innocence reflects a deliberate attack on the values that safeguard the well-being and spiritual development of our youth. We must protect and guide our children, fostering an environment that nurtures their spiritual growth and shields them from harmful influences. Matthew 18:6 reminds us of the severity of causing little ones to stumble.

The LGBTQ+ Movement and Shifting Beliefs:

The rise of the LGBTQ+ movement is another arena in which spiritual warfare unfolds. As societal norms shift, traditional beliefs and scriptural teachings on human sexuality and gender identity are increasingly questioned or disregarded. While responding with compassion and love, believers are called to remain steadfast in their commitment to God's truth, even when it clashes with popular opinion and worldly views. Romans 1:26-27 provides guidance on God's design for human relationships.

The Falling Away from the Church:

A troubling sign of spiritual warfare is the declining church attendance and the increasing number of individuals distancing themselves from organized religion. As spiritual forces sow doubt, apathy, and distractions, people are drawn away from the church community. To combat this, believers must discern the influence of spiritual warfare and work towards nurturing vibrant, welcoming, and relevant church communities. Hebrews 10:25 emphasizes the importance of gathering together for worship and fellowship.

The Removal of God and the Rise of Secular Beliefs:

The gradual removal of God from public spaces and the growing embrace of secular beliefs are evidence of spiritual warfare's impact on society. The devaluation of faith and the prioritization of secularism erode the moral foundations that guide our actions and decisions. As believers, we are called to boldly proclaim our faith, advocate for religious freedom, and stand firm in our convictions. Proverbs 14:34 reminds us of the consequences of turning away from righteousness.

Materialism Overload and the Pursuit of Self-Gratification:

Spiritual warfare manifests itself through the allure of materialism, fostering a society focused on self-gratification and worldly possessions. The pursuit of wealth and possessions can draw us away from God's purpose for our lives. To counteract this, believers must resist the temptation to prioritize material wealth above spiritual growth and find contentment in the blessings God provides. Matthew 6:24 reminds us of the incompatibility of serving both God and money.

What Leaders of the Church Must Do to Combat Spiritual Warfare:

In the face of spiritual warfare's impact on society, leaders of the church play a crucial role in combating its negative effects. Here are key actions they must take:

1. Teach and Equip:

Church leaders must prioritize teaching and equipping their congregations with a deep understanding of spiritual warfare. They should provide biblical teachings on the topic, emphasizing the power of prayer, the

-continued on the next page-

Unmasking Spiritual Warfare: (cont')

authority of Scripture, and the importance of cultivating a personal relationship with God. By equipping believers with spiritual armor, leaders empower them to stand firm against the schemes of the enemy.

2. Foster Discipleship and Community:

Leaders must cultivate an environment of discipleship and community within their congregations. They should encourage believers to engage in small groups, mentorship relationships, and accountability partnerships. These connections provide support, encouragement, and spiritual growth opportunities that help believers withstand the influence of spiritual warfare.

3. Emphasize Prayer and Intercession:

Church leaders should lead by example in prioritizing prayer and intercession. They should create opportunities for corporate prayer, interceding for the spiritual well-being of their communities and society at large. By teaching the power of prayer, leaders inspire believers to engage in spiritual warfare through fervent and consistent intercession.

4. Teach Discernment and Truth:

Leaders must equip their congregations with discernment to recognize the tactics of spiritual warfare. They should teach believers to evaluate cultural trends, ideologies, and teachings through the lens of Scripture. By promoting biblical literacy and critical thinking, leaders empower individuals to discern truth from deception, combating the in-

fluence of spiritual warfare in society.

5. Promote Unity and Love:

Church leaders must foster an atmosphere of unity and love within their congregations. This can be done by choosing not to celebrate sin and at the same time encouraging believers to embrace diversity, practice forgiveness, and extend grace, leaders create a counter-cultural community that reflects the love of Christ. This unity acts as a powerful deterrent against the divisive and destructive effects of spiritual warfare.

6. Engage in Outreach and Mission:

Church leaders should encourage their congregations to actively engage in outreach and mission work. By spreading the message of hope, redemption, and the transformative power of Christ, believers become agents of change in a society influenced by spiritual warfare. Leaders can organize and support initiatives that address social issues, meet the needs of the vulnerable, and bring the light of the Gospel to those in darkness.

7. Seek the Guidance of the Holy Spirit:

Above all, church leaders must seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit in their decision-making, preaching, and shepherding. Through prayer and reliance on the Spirit's wisdom, leaders can discern the specific strategies and actions necessary to combat spiritual warfare effectively. They should model a life surrendered to the Spirit's lead-

ing and encourage their congregations to do the same.

By actively engaging in these actions, church leaders can strengthen their congregations, equip believers, and effectively combat the negative effects of spiritual warfare. Through teaching, discipleship, prayer, discernment, unity, outreach, and reliance on the Holy Spirit, leaders become instrumental in leading their communities towards victory and transformation in the midst of spiritual battles.

Conclusion:

In a world grappling with spiritual warfare, it is essential for believers to recognize the signs and actively engage in spiritual discernment. The over-sexualization of children, the LGBTQ+ movement, the declining church attendance, the removal of God from public spaces, and the rise of materialistic values are all indicators that society is being influenced by invisible spiritual forces.

Scripture provides guidance and wisdom to navigate these challenges. By prayer, humility, and a commitment to living out our faith, we can counteract the negative effects of spiritual warfare. We must actively guard against compromise, diligently study the Bible, seek the guidance



The Benefits of Christian Counseling: What is Your Religion?



Monsignor
David A.
Brown DD,
DDPC, re-
sides in Hunt-
ington Texas

Why in the world would anyone seek out a Christian counselor? Well, because religion and spirituality are both associated with significant corporeal and non-corporeal well-being. Engaging in religious/spiritual systems and seeking spiritual advice for mental health challenges and additional life concerns is very beneficial.

WHY IN THE WORLD WOULD ANYONE SEEK OUT A CHRISTIAN COUNSELOR?

The world would say, "The belief in and worship of a god or gods, or any such system of belief and worship, is a religion." Or religion is an assortment of social-cultural

structures, including chosen behaviors and practices, morals, beliefs, worldviews, texts, sanctified places, prophecies, ethics, or organizations.

I do not hold to such sterilized and grandiose concepts and words. Let us see what the Bible says about religion. Original Word: θρησκεία, ας, ῆ. Part of Speech: Noun, Feminine. Transliteration: thréskeia. Phonetic Spelling: (thrace-ki'-ah) Definition: religion. Usage: (underlying sense: reverence or worship of the

God or gods), worship as expressed in ritual acts, religion.

Now when the congregation was broken up, many of the Jews and religious proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas: who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God. (Acts 13:43)

Which knew me from the beginning, if they would testify, that after the most straitest sect of our religion, I lived a Pharisee. (Acts 26:5)

For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it: And profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers. (Galatians 1:13 – 14)

Therefore, our Christian religion is centered on how the Holy Spirit has taught us to live and know our God through Jesus Christ. Knowing we can only be righteous through the blood of Jesus Christ and live a blessed life with our shepherd's guidance.

The world has a strange way of looking at spirituality. Spirituality for the world is a broad concept of believing in something beyond the self. It strives to answer questions about the meaning of life, how people are connected, truths about the universe, and other mysteries of human existence. The trouble is that they cannot find the answer in all the science and philosophy books in the world.

Paul describes the body after the resurrection as a spiritual body (soma psuchikon). He contrasts it with the natural (psychical body, soma pneumatikon). Our present natural body has, for its life principle, the soul (psuche). However, the resurrection body is adapted and subordinated to the spirit (pneuma). The apostle does not argue for a literal and material

identity of that future body with the present one but thinks of it as the counterpart of the present animal organism so conditioned as to be adapted to a state of existence that lies wholly within the sphere of the spirit. Against his Corinthian readers, he argues that a state of non-existence cannot succeed in the resurrection, nor is he willing to admit a mere etherealized state. There must be a body, but between it and our present body, there is a similar difference between the first and second Adam. The present body and the first Adam were dominated by the soul (psuche), but as the second Adam became a life-giving spirit, so will the resurrection body be spiritual.

Join religion with psychotherapy, and the counselee will have more positive traits, such as gratitude and optimism, which are linked to fewer feelings of anxiety. Religion and spirituality are both associated with more significant mental and physical well-being.

Christian counseling is effective for spiritual enrichment, strengthening one's relationship with God, and overcoming or managing mental health issues like anxiety disorders. It also helps individuals enhance positive traits and a sense of purpose in life. Overall, investing in spiritual growth adds tremendous advantages to a person's life, and a Christian counselor may assist in developing spiritual well-being.

One analysis found that combining a client's religion into psychotherapy is just as (if not more) helpful in treating anxiety than "secular treatments" for clientele with a chosen belief system. Religion offers a set of principles that a Christian counselor can use to help someone change their destructive ruminating thoughts. This way, therapy centering on religion can help people reduce their anxious thoughts and behaviors. Clergy members can be helpful in helping a person in managing depres-



The Benefits of Christian Counseling: (cont')

sion or anxiety to an extent, but if symptoms endure or reach a certain severity, professional Christian psychologists or a Doctor in Pastoral Counseling should be contacted.

Remember that Christian Counseling has various subcategories, so it is vital to recognize the counseling type they are seeking. Suppose they are looking for Bible or Pastoral counseling, and you feel you cannot help given with psychosis or comorbidity. In that case, they should contact a Bishop in the church or institution that can give them the correct information.

Sometimes things are beyond our scope, and we must be aware of the supernatural and the need for the Holy Spirit's power. We all understand what angels, demons, and ghosts are in general; nonetheless, most of us would labor to explain the variations between these beings described in every culture and all periods of history. In times past, Christians would have known the variances and understood the value of distinguishing between angels, demons, or ghosts.

As Christian belief has deteriorated, in general, and as contemporary rationalism has criticized the inkling that there are spiritual authenticities beyond the material world, we have mainly come to favor angels, demons, and ghosts as simple allegories and, over time, we have begun to mix those allegories.

Let us not subject all dynamics of mental health to psychology. There are times psychology is useless. But many stories from the early history of exorcisms appear to affect people who experience mental illnesses. It makes sense since the medical community's experience of mental illness is relatively recent. Less mature societies needed to explain some of the more strange behaviors demonstrated by those suffering from mental illnesses, and demonic possession offered an answer.

Unfortunately, suppose a mentally ill person displays the classic symptoms of demonic possession. In that case, attempts to perform an exorcism may feed their behaviors and keep them from getting real help from a professional.

Remember, a person should be given a thorough mental and physical evaluation before an exorcism.

Modern pop culture has only furthered the confusion. Television shows and movies: In both film and literature, angels and demons seem all too human (conversely, humans may be portrayed as angelic or demonic). At the same time, ghosts appear as demonic, more often than not.

Let us examine the traditional understanding of these spiritual entities:

The angels were formed by God, and with the formation of the angels, time started. In a metaphor, Saint Augustine says that time is measured by the beating of angels' wings. This is merely an alternative way of saying that time and Creation are tied together. God is steadfast, but His Creation changes through time.

When angels are dispatched to us, they select a human form—though not, as many TV shows and movies declare, by "possessing" a human being. While the bodies they assume are material, they continue living only so long as the angels are with us. When an angel no longer requires a human presence, his "body" terminates its existence.

We call those defiant angels demons or devils. They maintain the strengths that are the portion of their nature as spiritual beings. Instead of representing as messengers to humanity, bringing the good news and shielding us from spiritual and physical damage, demons' efforts to escort us away from the true path of God. They desire us to obey them in their defiance of God. They desire us to sin and, having sinned, to reject repentance. If they win, they will have won a soul for hell.

Spirit possession is an extraordinary or altered state of mindfulness and associated behaviors ostensibly caused by manipulating a human body by spirits, ghosts, demons, or gods.

From its beginning, Christianity has held that possession derives from the Devil, i.e., Satan, his lesser demons, and the fallen angels. In the battle relating Satan and Heaven, Satan is assumed to engage in "spiritual assaults," including demonic possession, against human beings by using paranormal works to harm them physically or psychologically. Prayer for release, benedictions upon the man or woman's house or body, sacraments, and exorcisms are generally used to thrust the demon out of the person.

Some theologians, such as Ángel Manuel Rodríguez, say that mediums, like the ones mentioned in Leviticus 20:27, were controlled by demons. One more possible case of demonic possession in the Old Testament includes the false prophets that King Ahab trusted before recapturing Ramoth-Gilead in 1 Kings 22. They were termed as being empowered by a deceiving spirit.

The New Testament mentions several episodes in which Jesus drove out demons from persons. While most Christians believe that demonic possession is a forced affliction, some biblical verses have been explained as indicating that possession can be deliberate. For example, Alfred Plummer writes that when Devil entered Judas Iscariot in John 13:27,

The Benefits of Christian Counseling: (cont')

Judas had continually agreed to Satan's suggestions to betray Jesus and had wholly submitted to him.

The New Testament indicates that demons can possess people but that the demons respond and submit to Jesus Christ's authority:

In the synagogue, a demon, an evil spirit, possessed a man. Now in the synagogue, there was a man who had a spirit of an unclean demon. And he cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Let us alone! What have we to do with You, Jesus of Nazareth? Did You come to destroy us? I know who You are—the Holy One of God!" (Luke 4:33-35) It also suggested that demons can possess animals, as in the exorcism of the Gerasene demoniac.

Catholic doctrine states that angels are non-corporeal, spiritual beings with intelligence and will. Fallen angels, or demons, can "demonically possess" individuals without the victim's knowledge or consent, leaving them morally blameless.

The Catholic Encyclopedia articulates that there is only one clear case of demonic possession in the Old Testament, of King Saul being tormented by an "evil spirit" (1 Samuel 16:14), but this depends on interpreting the Hebrew word "rûah" as implying a personal influence which it may not, so even this example is described as "not very certain." In addition, Saul was only described to be tormented rather than possessed, and he was relieved from these torments by having David play the lyre for him.

Catholic exorcists differentiate between "ordinary" Satanic/demonic activity or influence (mundane everyday temptations) and "extraordinary" Satanic/demonic activity, which can take six different forms, ranging from complete control by Satan or demons to voluntary submission:

1. Possession, in which Satan or demons take full possession of a person's body without their consent. This possession usually comes from a person's actions, actions that lead to an increased susceptibility to Satan's influence.
2. Obsession, which includes sudden attacks of irrationally obsessive thoughts, usually culminating in suicidal ideation, and which typically influences dreams.
3. Oppression, in which there is no loss of consciousness or involuntary action, such as in the biblical Book of Job, in which Satan tormented Job through a series of misfortunes in business, material possessions, family, and health.
4. External physical pain caused by Satan or demons.
5. Infestation, which affects houses, objects/things, or animals; and
6. Subjection, in which a person voluntarily submits to Satan or demons.

In the Roman Ritual, actual demonic or Satanic possession has been characterized since the Middle Ages by the following four typical characteristics:

1. Manifestation of superhuman strength.
2. They were speaking in tongues or languages that the victim could not know.
3. The revelation of knowledge, distant or hidden that the victim cannot know.
4. Blasphemous rage, obscene hand gestures, using profanity, and an aversion to holy symbols, names, relics, or places.

The New Catholic Encyclopedia states that Ecclesiastical authorities are reluctant to admit diabolical possession in most cases because many can be explained by physical or mental illness alone. Therefore, medical and psychological examinations are necessary before a major exorcism. The standard that must be met is moral certitude (De exorcismis, 16). For an exorcist to be morally certain, or beyond a reasonable doubt, that he is dealing with a genuine case of demonic possession, there must be no other reasonable explanation for the phenomena in question.

Official Catholic doctrine affirms that demonic possession can occur as distinguished from mental illness. However, it stresses that cases of mental illness should not be misdiagnosed as a demonic influence. Catholic exorcisms can occur only under the authority of a bishop and following strict rules; a simple exorcism also occurs during baptism. Ghosts are one of the many autograph symbols of Halloween, along with skeletons, carved pumpkins (jack-o-lanterns), and a general preoccupation with pain and death. The Bible does have something to say about ghosts and their relationship with Jesus' ministry. In the King James translation, the Old Testament refers to ghosts eleven times. In comparison, the New Testament refers to them one hundred and thirty-four times. Most New Testament references are derived from the Greek word *pneuma* (Strong's Concordance #G4151), which roughly means "spirit." The KJV spuriously refers to God's spirit as the "holy ghost" (instead of the more correct "holy spirit") one hundred and thirty-four times.

Surprisingly, one reference to ghosts involves Jesus' disciples using the word to describe him. This event occurred

The Benefits of Christian Counseling: (cont')

when Christ sent his disciples, in a boat, to the other side of the Sea of Galilee. Sometime in the middle of the night, after he was done praying, he noticed the waves were tossing the disciples' boat. He then performed the incredible miracle of walking on water toward the ship. When the disciples saw him, they screamed in terror, "It is a ghost!" (Matthew 14:22 - 26).

To determine if demons are involved, we suggest you thoroughly investigate. Many times, children of a young age have imaginary friends. It is their process of maturing to become sociable beings. When they become older, they outgrow their imaginary friends. Make sure your child does not see an apparition. If, after all your investigation, the "ghosts" proves to be accurate, then demons are likely.

"And the graves were opened, and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many." Those events were simultaneous with the death of Jesus Christ and the events that happened immediately after His death. (Matt 27:52, 53) Does scripture say that when people die, their spirit and soul immediately go to heaven or hell? The short answer is sort of. In Thessalonians, we will awake and meet in the clouds. People are called up from hell and the seas for the great white throne judgment. Those under the throne of God request God's vengeance. So if we sleep or are in heaven or hell, we need not worry about bothering anyone on earth. Demons have some restraints at this time but later will be allowed to rule the world. But even in that, we know those terrible demons that God chained in the abyss will remain there until they are thrown into the lake of fire.

In Matthew 12, Christ discussed a situation where a man had an unclean spirit (demon) leave him for a while. When the evil spirit could not find any place to go, he came back and found his "home" (the person he had possessed) "empty and clean." This means the person did not fill the void left by the spirit with something that would keep him out (e.g., God's spirit). Not only did the demon possess the man again, but seven of his evil friends also came with him! This illustrates how serious a problem such as "ghosts" can be.

In Matthew 17, the disciples came to Jesus saying they could not cast out demons ("ghosts") from a boy who would throw himself into fire and water (Matthew 17:14 - 21). This was because they lacked a sufficient amount of faith in God. Jesus stated that the possession was so severe that the unwanted guests could only be forced to leave by fasting and prayer.

If you discover you have such an unwanted spirit hanging around, find at least one or two others who are mature Christians. Get together with them and pray, in Jesus' name, that God removes the demon and have it never return. We, of our own power, cannot command demons (ghosts) to do anything. Jesus Christ, however, through his life and sacrifice, overcame all adversaries and nullified the works of the devil. His power, according to the Bible, can free us. Therefore, If any man among you seem to be religious and bridled not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain. Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction and to keep himself unspotted from the world. (James 1:26-27)

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From the Editor



*The Right Reverend John Geinzer, DMin, MDiv, MAEd...
John is a Chaplain at DAV Chapter 109 in sunny Titusville FL.,
Dean of the Saint Thomas Old Catholic Theological Seminary
and
Editor of this newsletter.*

*Dear Brothers and Sisters
in the Faith,*

This is an email that I received from one of our Brothers recently. Although it was not intended for publishing (with his permission) I would like to share these words of encouragement with the readership. This type of Good News is what I think we all need to hear. Often we question our personal calls, "God, what am I supposed to be doing with my ordination?" "Am I doing all YOU want me to be doing?"

Fr Stephen exemplifies walking the path of education, mentorship and now Apostleship as he takes what he has learned and goes out into the community to live the Good News of our dear Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Congratulations Stephen you do your namesake great honor!

Bishop John

Good afternoon, John!

I hope this message finds you in great spirits. I wanted to personally share some news with you. I have embarked on an inspiring journey of establishing a church in the countryside town of Bedford, Kentucky. This peaceful area, located about 45 minutes away from Agape Church, has become our new home. My wife and I were fortunate enough to acquire a magnificent piece of land and a charming house in this serene environment.

Currently, I have been serving as a PRN Chaplain at a nursing home in Bedford, tending to the spiritual needs of its residents, while still working a full time job.

Furthermore, I have initiated a Countryside Christian Initiative, aimed at fostering unity among community churches and their clergy. Together, we are discussing how we can collaboratively impact the community as a unified Body in Christ. It has come to my attention that many churches tend to remain isolated, refraining from cooperation. Some even view salvation as a competition, and my mission is to transform this mindset and dispel the stigma that plagues our community.

While my dedication to Agape Church remains unwavering, I am gradually preparing for an eventual transition to the newly planted church. We have chosen the name Light of Christ Community Church, symbolizing our vision of creating an embracing and nurturing environment for the entire community. Our goal is to provide individuals with an opportunity to flourish in their faith and encounter the profound love of

Christ. I have CC'd Bishop McCormick in this email, as I have discussed it prior with him and he has given his blessings on it.

I wanted to share this exhilarating news with you, and I kindly request the churches support and prayers as we embark on this transformative chapter.

Thank you for taking the time to read this message, and I eagerly await your response.

In Christ,

Rev. Fr. Stephen A. McBride+, DMin



ST STEPHEN PROTOMARTYR



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Contact editor to list your weekly celebration and to welcome our
brothers and sisters to join your local Worship!

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