

St. Therese Catholic Church

Spiritual Warfare
Session 3

October 17, 2023

1

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Overview

Spiritual Warfare	
Session I	Spiritual Warfare (Sacred Scripture and Tradition)
Session II	Angels and Fallen Angels (devil and demons)
Session III	Extraordinary Activity of the Devil (signs and influence)
Session IV	Church's Response (Exorcism and Openings to Evil)
Session V	Church's Response (Exorcism and Church Protocols)
Session VI	Ordinary Activity of Devil and Christ's Protection

2

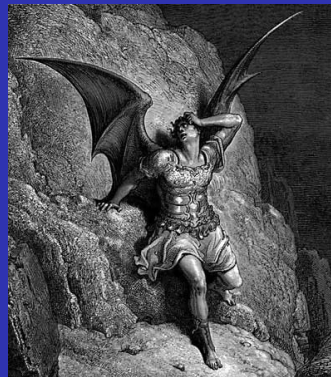
Goals for This Session

1. Provide an overview of the extraordinary activity of the devil in terms of his tactics to oppose the coming of the Kingdom of God.
2. Provide a definition of extraordinary diabolical activity, including the origin and signs of such activity.
3. To look at the Church's response to the devil's extraordinary activity.
4. As always, we'll look at these things in light of the teaching of the Church.

3

Overview

- Remember the devil's motto: "Anything but God." He does everything he can to oppose the coming of the kingdom of God.
- Fr. Gabriele Amorth says that the main goal of the devil is "to distance us from God, from the sacraments, and from everything that is good" (31).
- Fr. Lampert says he does this by specialized attacks against us that fall under the categories of **infestation, vexation, obsession, and possession** (31).



4

Demonic Infestation

- Demonic infestation is the presence of evil in a location, object, or animal (31).
- It is caused when something of an evil nature has occurred in a particular place or when one has brought some item associated with the occult into the home (31).
- **Key:** The devil causes disturbances and nuisances in places, houses, and objects.
- Let's look at some **origins** of diabolical infestation and possible options for **reparation**.


5

Demonic Infestation

Origins of Diabolical Infestation	
Curses against the place	Suicides
Séances held in the dwelling	Abortions occurred there (intercessory prayer is needed)
Rituals or rites performed by practitioners of magic who lived in the house	Rites or evocation or devotion to the devil performed there
Heinous crimes	Holy things or objects have been profaned there

Source: <https://catholicexchange.com/the-extraordinary-actions-of-the-devil/>

6


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Demonic Infestation

Signs of Diabolical infestation	
Unexplained noises such as footsteps, voices, laughter, doors and windows opening and closing'	Pictures falling off walls
Lights and other electronic devices turning on and off for no reason	Furniture moving pr objects like chairs/blankets levitating in the air
Objects disappearing from one location and appearing in another	Seeing shadowy figures and objects
~Fr. Lampert, Exorcism, 32	

Key: A rigorous investigation should be undertaken to determine the cause of a manifestation upon a place. A natural causation should be ruled out.

7

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Demonic Infestation

Signs of Diabolical infestation	
Loud sounds of chains or irons	Pets suddenly terrified and run away without any explanation
Voices, screams, yelling, shouting	Music or odd noises
Sudden gusts of wind in environments without any other airflow	Sudden, intense, untraceable odors of excrement, sulfur, rotting flesh, or incense
Source: https://catholicexchange.com/vexation-obsession-possession-the-extraordinary-ways-the-devil-attacks/	

Key: A rigorous investigation should be undertaken to determine the cause of a manifestation upon a place. A natural causation should be ruled out.

8



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Demonic Infestation

- In all these cases, reparation is needed: blessing, exorcism of place, or Mass.
- With the blessing of a house or building, a blessing using some type of specialized deliverance prayers should be used.
- If it is an animal (Mk. 5:13) or object, Fr. Lampert offers a prayer to God asking to break the connection with the demonic (34).
- In cases where an object is associated with magic, it should always be destroyed. A prayer is said over the object, it is blessed with holy water and then burned (34).

9



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Demonic Infestation

- Fr. Lampert's prayer of blessing: "Good and gracious God, I ask you to drive away and cast out from under this roof the presence of any and all evil spirits. Command them to depart and to never return again.
- Protect and safeguard this family who call upon your Holy Name. By your Cross you have conquered Satan and his angels. May this family always delight in your Divine help. Amen."
- When blessing a house, Fr. Lampert says, "God, I ask your blessing on this room. Fill it with your presence and banish from it any presence of evil. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen." (footnote, 34).

10



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Restless Spirits

- A restless spirit is the soul of one who has died. To be clear, we cannot choose of our own accord to continue being present in this world. God alone can permit that, and his reasons are known to him alone (32).
- Fr. Lampert says that 0.01% of the time spiritual infestation is from loved ones who God is permitting to reach out to us for prayer and nothing more (32).
- **Key:** When it is a demon infesting a location, people have a sense of fear. When it is a restless spirit, fear is not present (32).

11



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Restless Spirits

- **St. Thomas:** “According to the disposition of Divine providence (God’s will), separated souls sometimes come forth from their abode and appear to men...”
- In other words, God permits some souls in purgatory to contact the living to ask for prayers as they prepare for heaven.
- **Note:** Seances, mediumships, Ouija boards, and all the various rituals humans have built up to call the dead back are forbidden. Such practices are dangerous and an insult to God.
- Instead, we draw close to our beloved dead through prayer, fasting, and gestures of remembrance like visits to a cemetery.

12



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Restless Spirits

- From Fr. Lampert's experience, once a restless spirit receives prayers that it needs, closure comes about, and it no longer manifests (33).
- Examples given include a divorced husband seeking forgiveness from an ex-spouse or a family murdered on a previous spot of a new development needing prayers.
- **Key:** Regarding restless spirit, something unresolved needs attention.

13



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Demonic Vexation

- Demonic vexations are physical attacks that a person experiences (34).
- One who is being attacked physically by a demon will exhibit on the body cuts, burns, scrapes, bruises, swellings, and in some cases incisions of letters that appear on the skin that persist for some time and then disappear (34).
- Vexation can also affect a person's health, causing sickness without any apparent cause (34).

14



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Demonic Vexation

- **Key:** The cause of this particular type of extraordinary activity on the part of the devil is due to a curse or a person's lack of virtue and commitment to God (34).
- Additionally, it may be that the openings are created behavior against God's commands such as frequenting psychics, mediums, fortunetellers, brujas, curanderos, and dabbling in magic that includes spells and curses (35).
- In cases of vexation, exorcism prayers should be offered and the afflicted person must express a desire to grow in faith and virtue or renounce whatever they may have done to have caused the attacks (35).

15




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Demonic Vexation

- Example prayer by priest for **breaking the curses** of the occult:
 - I bind in the Most Precious Blood of Jesus any and all evil curses, pacts, spells, seals, hexes, triggers, trances, vows, demonic blessings, voodoo, or any other demonic bondages against N. or myself, or any of our loved ones or any of our possessions;
 - I bind them all and break them in the Name of the Father and of the Son + and of the Holy Spirit (Thrice).


16

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Demonic Oppression

- **Demonic vexation** is something that those may bring upon themselves or that which is imposed by someone else (35).
- **Demonic oppression** is when God permits holy men and women to undergo siege by the devil as a form of spiritual purification (36).
- **Key:** In God's mysterious providence, he allows the actions of demons to purify those areas that still need to be turned over to God (36).

17

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Demonic Oppression

Examples of Oppression	
Job as permitted to be afflicted by the devil as a way to show his fidelity to God.	St. Padre Pio had to battle with demonic attacks throughout his life. He was thrown out of bed and dragged out of the room many times.
While Job did not understand, he never cursed God.	God permitted these attacks against Padre Pio that allowed him to grow in holiness and virtue. Remaining steadfast to God, Padre Pio became a shining light bringing countless souls to Christ (37).

18



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Demonic Oppression

- St. John Vianney provides another example of demonic oppression. Satan threw everything he had at St. John Vianney for 35 years. At night Vianney heard taunts, harrowing voices, evil singing, or shouting.
- Vianney was physically dragged from his bed one night wherein his bed caught on fire. Oftentimes, these attacks came at night to prevent him from getting any sleep or when a “big sinner” was coming into town to confess his or her sins.
- Satan used these “last resort” attacks given that the daily temptations that we struggle with did not do anything to the saint.

19



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Demonic Obsessions

- Demonic obsessions are mental attacks that devil use to influence a person’s external and internal senses (38).
- By impacting our imaginations, the devil can cause a person to see visions that are intended to cause fear, to entice one to commit sin, and to distract from the practice of virtue (38).
- A person experiencing obsession can have nightmares, hallucinations, obscene and blasphemous thoughts, and be fixated on things that pertain to the demonic (39).

20



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Demonic Obsessions

- **Fr. Francesco Bamonte:** With demonic obsessions, the devil communicates obsessive thoughts or images that are absurd to the victim's mind (i.e., the imagination and memory) but which they are not able to ward off.
- In these cases the person feels tormented by a fixed idea or an image that seems to really be his own. Only abandoning oneself to God helps the afflicted to not succumb to this submersion, and exorcism is sometimes necessary to liberate a person from the exterior or interior violence.

Source: <https://catholicexchange.com/the-extraordinary-actions-of-the-devil/>

21



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Demonic Obsessions

- **Fr. Bamonte:** "Diabolical obsession is different than personal obsessions such as excess handwashing, or obsessive thoughts such as "Did I leave the stove on?" These are related to anxiety, not the diabolical. Exorcists rely on the medical advice of mental-health professionals to help them distinguish between human anxiety and diabolical attacks.
- Discerning obsessions can be difficult because of the absence of physical signs or manifestations that usually accompany oppression and possession. . . . Like physicians who study the efficacy or inefficacy of a medical treatment to arrive at a correct diagnosis, priests may apply the same idea in evaluating diabolical obsessions."

Source: <https://catholicexchange.com/the-extraordinary-actions-of-the-devil/>

22



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Demonic Obsessions

- People suffering from obsession can feel as they are going insane. Oftentimes they become more and more depressed, sad, desperate, suicidal mentally exhausted, and may have inclinations to harm others (39).
- Given obsession deals with one's mental capacities, in the ministry of exorcism it is the most difficult extraordinary activity of the devil to assess (39).
- Therefore, people afflicted with obsession need a tandem approach and should see both a mental health professional as well as a priest for pastoral care (39).

23




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Demonic Possession

- Demonic possession is the action whereby the devil or some other evil spirit takes control of a person's body, treating that body as if it were his own (39).
- Fr. Lampert makes the distinction between the actions of the persons and those of the demon. For example, when a person possessed curses a priest, it is the action of the demon.
- **Key:** When one is possessed, the evil spirit will move a person's tongue in order to speak, their feet in order to walk, their hands in order to write, attack, or offer obscene gestures. Those suffering from demonic possession may lose all or part of their consciousness as to what is taking place (39).

24

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Demonic Possession

- The tradition of the Church has maintained four criteria in evaluating the validity of cases of demonic possession (40).

Criteria for Evaluating Cases of Demonic Possession	
The ability to speak and understand language otherwise unknown to the individual	Having elevated perception with knowledge otherwise unknown to the individual
Exhibiting superhuman strength beyond the normal capacity of the individual	A strong resistance to anything of a sacred nature such as a Bible, being in a sacred place, being shown a crucifix, or being blessed with holy water or a relic

~Lampert, *Exorcism*, 40.

25

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Demonic Possession

Symptoms of the Demonic Possession	
Bodily contortions, whereby the demon is revealing itself, such as the arching of the back	A change in the temperature of the room whereby it becomes much colder, demonstrating their distance from God
A change in the person's voice as it become much deeper and louder in order to instill fear	Uncontrollable laughter or screaming, also done to cause fear
A change in physical appearance, such as foaming at the mouth and the eyes rolled in the back of the head whereby demon demonstrates his power	Hissing and the resemblance of the movement of a snake, demonstrating they are fallen creatures.
Extremely foul odors as the demon reveals its wretched and vile character	In some cases, levitation, whereby the demon is trying to amaze his audience.

~Lampert, *Exorcism*, 40-41.

26



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Demonic Possession

- **Key:** The exorcist is a trained skeptic. He is the last one to believe someone is possessed (42).
- Exorcists must arrive at moral certitude, meaning they must exhaust every other possible explanation for what is taking place in the life of the person and come to the point where they believe, beyond any reasonable doubt, that the person in front of them is truly possessed (42).
- The Church could cause great harm and prevent someone from getting the help they need either from their medical doctor or a mental health expert (42).

27




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Demonic Possession

- Genuine cases of demonic possession are rare – they are real – they do happen – but not very frequently (42).
- Perhaps only one out of every five thousand cases is true demonic possession. Most cases that Fr. Lampert has dealt with are related to infestation, vexation, and obsession (42).
- **Key:** Demonic possession is *not* contagious. A demon cannot jump out of one person's body and go freely into another. Demonic possession comes about when people open themselves up to the forces of evil, and this can be done directly or indirectly (42-43).

28


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Demonic Possession

Open up to evil directly	Open up to evil indirectly
One actively engages in activities that cultivate a relationship with evil spirits	One engages in activities that are meant just for fun or entertaining, but in reality create a connection with evil spirits
Witchcraft, Ouija boards, seances, astrology, magic, psychics, mediums, etc.	

Key: Any priest should be able to address infestation, vexation, and obsession. Demonic possession should be referred to the local bishop or the diocesan exorcist (43).

29

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Extraordinary Activity of the Demonic

Summary	
Demonic Infestation	The presence of evil in a location, object, or animal; demons acting directly on places.
Demonic Vexation	Physical attacks that a person experiences from a curses or because of lack of virtue or commitment to God; brought upon by themselves or someone else.
Demonic Obsession	Mental attacks by the devil to affect the external and internal senses. The devil exerts influence that affects a person's mental state, causing some kind of mental disturbance.
Demonic Possession	Demonic possession is the action whereby the devil or some other evil spirit takes control of a person's body, treating that body as if it were his own. It is very rare and not contagious.

30



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No Reason to Fear

- Fr. Gabriele Amorth, the well-known exorcist for the Diocese of Rome, offers a helpful reminder about the extraordinary activity of the devil.
- Simply put, the devil hates God and is in terror of Him and anything that even has the odor of sanctity. . . . The devil can greatly disturb a person who nurtures faith, but he does so unwillingly because he is “forced” to by the power of a spell.
- He prefers far and away to be involved with those who have distanced themselves from God. In these circumstances he is freer to act. Satan fears the sons of God, those seeking to conform their lives to Jesus: *“I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me”* (Gal 2:20).
- **Source:** <https://catholicexchange.com/the-extraordinary-actions-of-the-devil/>

31



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No Reason to Fear

- **Note:** Infestation, oppression, obsession, nor possession can actually cause a person to sin. Sin is a free choice of the individual person.
- Spiritually speaking, temptation, the ordinary activity of the devil, is much more effective and dangerous than the extraordinary activity of the devil.
- Catholics in a state of grace have lots of armor that protect them against the snares of the devil: baptism (Christ lives in them), the sacraments, and a life of virtuous faith rooted in daily prayer and acts of charity.

32

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No Reason to Fear

- In other words, the devil fears Christ and all heaven's powers that reside in the Christian by the presence of the Holy Spirit.
- **Key:** Christians should not fear the devil; they should be alert to him and wary of his activity, but they should recognize Christ's power over the devil, a power that is at work in them.
- As we will discuss later, Christians should be much more concerned with the devil's ordinary activity of deceit through proposing lies.
- A great defense, then, against the devil is to be fully conformed to the truth that God has revealed.

33

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No Reason to Fear

- **Luke 11:20-22:** But if it is by the finger of God that [I] drive out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.
- When a strong man fully armed guards his palace, his possessions are safe. But when one stronger than he attacks and overcomes him, he takes away the armor on which he relied and distributes the spoils.



Félix Joseph Barrias (1822 – 1907)

34

Next Time

Read

- What is an Exorcism and Gospel of Mark (Pages 45 – 67)
- Rite of Exorcism (Pages 69 – 78)

Possibly

- Playing the Devil's Game (Pages 79 - 99)

