

St. Therese Catholic Church

Spiritual Warfare
Session 4

November 14, 2023

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 **St. Therese Parish**

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

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Goals for This Session

1. Explain the basic purpose of minor and major exorcisms
2. Examine the characteristics of a good exorcist and the work he does
3. Explore the insights that the Gospel of Mark provides to help us understand the nature of exorcisms
4. Identify ways in which we expose ourselves to the devil's power

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What is an exorcism?

- **Exorcism:** An adjuration (solemn appeal) in which the devil is either commanded to depart from a possessed person or forbidden to harm someone (Modern Catholic Dictionary).
- It is a specific form of prayer that the Church utilizes to disrupt the devil's activity and to help those who have fallen under his power (Lampert, 45).
- The Church asks publicly and authoritatively in the name of Jesus Christ that a person or object be protected against the power of the Evil One and withdrawn from his dominion (CCC 1673).

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What is an exorcism?

- Our culture tends to sensationalize and create a fascination with evil. Think of Halloween!
- **Key:** In the ministry of exorcism, the focus is always on what God is doing to help the person who is afflicted by evil (Lampert, 46).
- As a Catholic, we should be far more fascinated with God and His power than the Evil One and his empty show.
- Exorcism is from Greek *exorkismos*, which means to bind with an oath (or drive away by adjuration).

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What is an exorcism?

- “It is a prayer that shows the afflicted the face of God. It is an act of mercy that unleashes God’s love against the attacks of the devil, bringing healing and peace to those afflicted by the evil one, allowing them to be reconciled to God.” (Lambert, 46-47)
- In short, the ministry of exorcism is a ministry of mercy and charity.
- Our Lord gave a lens through which to understand his ministry in the synagogue at Nazareth when he said, “He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind” (Lk 4:18).

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Minor Exorcism

- **Minor exorcism:** When God is requested to expel a demon or offer deliverance from evil and sin.
- Minor exorcisms are normally reserved for priests, prayers of deliverance (asking for divine assistance) are used by the laity.
- Examples of minor exorcisms include prayers of deliverance and prayers for those preparing for Baptism (infants and RCIA).
- Exorcisms can be **deprecative** (invoking God's power and protection) or **imperative** in character (a direct command or acting with authority - "I absolve you from your sins." Imperative exorcisms are used by priests (authority of the Church), deliverance prayers should remain within the area of deprecative prayer.

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A Deprecative Minor Exorcism

- O God of heaven, God of earth,
God of angels, God of archangels,
God of patriarchs, God of prophets,
God of apostles, God of virgins,
God of all the Saints:
- O God, you have power to give life after death,
rest after toil;
there is no other God but you,
Creator of all things seen and unseen.

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A Deprecative Minor Exorcism

- O God, you desire that all mankind be saved, and so loved the world that you gave your only-begotten Son to bring to naught the works of the Devil.
- We humbly entreat your glorious majesty to deliver your servant *N.*, from all the power, the snares, the deceits and wickedness of all the spirits of Hell, and to keep him (her) in safety.
- We beseech you, O Lord, send forth your Spirit of truth, whom your Son promised to his disciples; as once you cast down the Devil like lightning from the heavens,

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A Deprecative Minor Exorcism

- So now send forth the Paraclete from above to drive far away the accuser and oppressor of mankind and to protect us against all that would harm us.
- We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

~Manual of Minor Exorcisms, 47 – 48.

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An Imperative Minor Exorcism

- I command you, Satan, enemy of man's salvation, acknowledge the righteousness and goodness of God the Father, who justly condemned your arrogance and enmity;
- Depart from this servant of God, *N.*, whom the Lord has made in his own likeness, endowed with his gifts and adopted as a child of his mercy.
- I command you, Satan, prince of this world, acknowledge the power and might of Jesus Christ, who conquered you in the wilderness, overcame you in the garden, robbed you of your prey upon the Cross and rising from the tomb

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An Imperative Minor Exorcism

- bore off your prize to the kingdom of light: depart from *N.*, whom God has created, whom Christ by his birth made his brother (sister) and by his death won for himself by his own blood.
- I command you, Satan, deceiver of mankind, acknowledge the Spirit of truth and grace, who banishes your snares and confounds your lies:
- depart from *N.*, whom God has created, who is sealed with the heavenly seal of the Holy Spirit; leave forever this man (woman) whom God has anointed to be a temple of his Holy Spirit.

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An Imperative Minor Exorcism

- Go therefore Satan and never return, in the name of the Father + and of the Son + and of the Holy + Spirit;
- Go through the faith and the prayer of the Church; go through this sign of the holy + Cross of Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns forever and ever. Amen.

~*Manual of Minor Exorcisms*, 47 – 48.

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Major Exorcism

- **Major exorcism:** When the demon or evil spirits are addressed directly
- This form is directed "at the expulsion of demons or to liberation [of a person] from demonic possession" (CCC 1673).
- This rite can only be performed by a bishop or authorized priest and only when someone is truly possessed.
- **Key:** Major exorcisms are used when the presence of the devil is in the body of the possessed and the devil is able to exercise dominion over that body, while minor exorcisms are prayers used to break the influence of evil and sin in a person's life.

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The Exorcist

- Not every priest can or should be an exorcist. Additionally, there are requirements of temperament and preparation.
- **Temperament of an Exorcist**
 - “has piety, knowledge, prudence, and integrity of life” (Code of Canon Law)
 - “Needs to have a strong priestly identity
 - Be at ease in his priesthood
 - Not do this ministry full time – be connected to a parish
 - Possesses a good sense of humor” (Lampert, 48)
 - Strong and healthy skepticism regarding claims of extraordinary demonic activity (keep his curiosity in check)
 - Possess spirituality grounded in the sacramental life of the Church
 - Humble – it’s not about him; it’s about God!

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Preparation of an Exorcist

- Most exorcists trained through apprenticeship with older, more experienced exorcist
- There are also conferences, workshops, and associations for exorcists
- Each exorcist develops his own ‘style’ and techniques, outside of those strictly prescribed
- For instance, Fr. Carlos Martin often finds out who the demon’s nemesis in heaven is and will pray for the intercession of that saint or even use their relics

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The Bishop and the Exorcist

- Exorcists are appointed by their bishop for work within his diocese
 - There are no exorcists of the universal Church, though they can travel with permission
 - Some exorcists are temporary, some permanent
- As heir of the apostles, the bishop is the chief exorcist and authorized to delegate this authority to a priest.
- Priests should NOT perform exorcisms without this approval
 - In fact, sometimes exorcisms aren't successful because the demon won't recognize the authority of the priest working without episcopal approval.
 - Demons are, evidently, notoriously legalistic...we won't make any lawyer jokes at this point.

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The Work of an Exorcist

- Exorcists investigate alleged demonic activity and determine if the official rite of the Church needs to be utilized (50).
- While most people who contact the exorcist self-diagnose (I am possessed or he is possessed), the Church makes it clear that she is the one who will make this determination.
- In Fr. Lampert's experience, those who are not willing to follow the guidance and direction of the Church are not really dealing with the demonic (51).
- "There is no such thing as an emergency exorcism. It cannot be rushed. It involves a process." (51)

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Exorcists and Parish Priests

- Exorcists are specialists dealing with the truly extraordinary cases of possession.
- Parish priest is the first responder and the one to offer long-term spiritual care.
 - Most problems can be solved by his prayers, pastoral guidance, and regular sacramental life.
 - Even after an exorcism, this care is necessary and valuable.
 - Frequent confession is the most important tool to protect against evil.

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Confession

- And when it comes to the sacraments and defeating the devil, the number one weapon in our arsenal is the Sacrament of Penance. Fr. Gabriel Amorth, the chief exorcist of Rome, said the place to begin with anyone who believes they are up against the forces of evil is for that person to make a good confession (Lampert, 52).
- “When we confess our sins, we place them in the hands of God, and once we have given them over to God, the devil may no longer use them against us. Taking ownership of our sinful acts by confessing them deprives the devil of a foothold in our lives.” (Lampert, 53)

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Jesus' Exorcisms

- Looking at Jesus' exorcisms in the Gospel of Mark can teach us some of the essential points about demonic activity and the nature of exorcism.
- **Four Exorcisms**
 1. The man with the unclean spirit
 2. Gerasene demoniac
 3. Syrophenician woman
 4. Boy with a mute spirit

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Jesus' Exorcisms

- **Key:** Our look at the Scriptural accounts provides solid basis for the ministry of exorcism.
- Christ's shares his authority and power with his Church, which is the Body of Christ and the presence of Christ in the world today.
- Christ's authority and power over the Evil One and his fallen angels reveals that the "kingdom of heaven is at hand!" (Mt. 3:2).

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The Man with the Unclean Spirit

- Our Lord performs an exorcism in a synagogue in Capernaum (Mk 1:21-28) as one of his first acts of ministry in the Gospel of Mark.
- He speaks with authority when he commanded the demons to depart from their victim. The demons know that he has authority over them and therefore, must obey his command.
- This scene reveals that demons act in clusters. When a person is possessed, it is normally the case that it is not one but many demons with one exorcising some power or many over the others (Lampert, 57).

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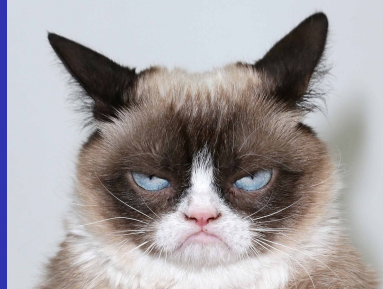
The Gerasene Demoniac

- The scene from Mark 5:1-20 reveals how isolation and brokenness is a key goal for demons (the possessed “lived among the tombs”). They thrive on removing us from the support we receive from a community.
- Those who are possessed sometimes reveal extraordinary human strength as the man broke the chains and shackles.
- Demons recognize Jesus’ identity – “What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God?” (5:7)
- When demons give their name, they are submitting to the authority of Christ (“My name is Legion; for we are many” – 2,000 demons).

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The Gerasene Demoniac

- It is possible for animals to be possessed as the unclean spirits entered the swine.
- The goal of exorcisms is to restore us to right relationship with God and one another as Jesus invited the man to move from isolation in the tombs to proclaim what God did for him in the context of community.



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The Syrophenician Woman

- The ministry of exorcism is a charity open to all people who approach the Church requesting an exorcism as we see Christ exorcizing a Gentile child (Mk 7:24-30).
- Exorcisms cannot be done against someone's will, but can be done for someone under the age of reason at the request of an authority figure.
- Because it is God's accomplishment, exorcisms require a profession of faith – the priest cannot be thought of as the wielder of special power. It is about God working in His Church.
- Exorcisms can take place at a distance.

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The Boy with a Mute Spirit

- Jesus' is concerned with father's lack of faith – exorcist brings God in as much as drives devil out (Mk 9:14-29).
 - Those seeking exorcism must commit themselves to a life of faith in Jesus Christ
- Jesus distinguishes between physical ailments and demonic possession – we must carefully do the same.
- Not all exorcisms are successful (Jesus' disciples tried and failed to help the boy). God drives evil out on his own time.
- Exorcists know they have successfully driven out a demon when it cries out in pain (as opposed to giving the illusion of a scream).
- Exorcisms require preparation on the part of the exorcist (prayer and fasting).

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Risky Behavior

- Living according to faith is the key to avoiding the snares of the devil. Faith provides a fortress from the onslaughts of the devil.
- A person who regularly attends Mass, prays, lives a life of virtue, and confesses when he or she sins has very little to fear from the devil's extraordinary activity.
- But, the western world has been shifting away from Christianity, and this has opened the door for the devil's influence.

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Risky Behavior

- The devil is a lot like a mob boss – once a person establishes a relation with evil, it is not in the person's power to break that relationship – it is only in God's power.
- “When power is gained, and special favors granted through the assistance of the devil and his angels, they will expect to be paid in full. The price demanded is our destruction through the loss of our soul.” (Lampert, 84)
- Fr. Lampert identifies 8 ways in which we directly or indirectly draw the devil in. These are sometimes called “openings.”

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1. The Occult

- Occult comes from the Latin word *occltus* for “hidden” or “secret.”
- Includes witchcraft, superstition, idolatry, divination, psychics, mediums, astrology, palm reading, tea leaf reading, tarot cards, use of pendulums (for occult purposes), Santeria, Voodoo, potions, herbs, amulets, and crystals – Magic in general.
- The power of these practices comes from demons not nature.
- Violation of the 1st commandment: “You shall have no other gods before me.” They are a form of idolatry in that one puts his or her trust in something other than God. Deuteronomy 18:10-12 says that whoever does these things is an abomination to the Lord.

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2. The Entertainment Industry

- TV, movies, books, games, gadgets, horoscopes, ghost hunting, Halloween, Yoga, and Reiki.
- Some of this more harmful than others
 - Halloween, when celebrated in Catholic spirit is great;
 - *Harry Potter* is filled with Christian themes of friendship, virtue, and self-sacrifice
 - Great discernment and caution toward Yoga – can relax body and mind (see Servant of God Theotonius Amal Ganguly, archbishop of Dhaka, Bangladesh).
- The danger is the sheer abundance of these sources of entertainment and the way they can trivialize genuine dangers as mere entertainment
 - Halloween loses connection with All Saints and All Souls, glamorizes evil rather than mocks it
 - *Harry Potter* and other books bring *desire* for magic powers
 - Yoga mixes with New Age thought blurring distinction between Creator and creature

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3. Curses

- Literally, to curse is to call down evil on someone or something. It is the opposite of blessing.
- A blessing dedicates a person or thing to God's service and a gift (invokes divine favor on object blessed). As God is behind a blessing, so the devil is behind a curse - "to do harm to another with the help of the devil." (Lampert, 90)
- Curses create a focus on the presence of demons. Curses are growing in popularity along with practical magic.
- Curses are only effective when we are weak in our faith, i.e., if we leave openings for the devil to do his work.

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4. Dedication to Demons through Ritual

- Children under the age of reason (age 7) cannot bring evil into their life.
- If someone young is experiencing extraordinary demonic activity, this has been brought on by an adult with authority over the child. The adult would bear the culpability for what the child is experiencing (Lampert, 91).
- Children in these circumstances are never completely lost to God – the demon cannot control the intellect and will of a person. “These are reserved for God alone who is the Creator.”

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5. Abuse

- Abuse brings with it emotional wounds that may cause a person to seek help from the wrong sources.
- People sometimes seek power to heal these wounds from witches and wizards, making them vulnerable to demonic power. Evil cannot fix that which is broken.
- Demons never bring healing and the result is more pain and more wounds.

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6. Life of Habitual Sin

- The three guiding principles of today's society
 1. You may do as you wish
 2. No one has a right to command you
 3. You are the god of yourself.
- Many are lured into habitual sin through alcohol, drugs, sex, mammon, etc. Habitual sin leaves us especially open to the devil's power – whether ordinary or extraordinary.
- Confession is the first step to return to God.

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7. Inviting a Demon into Your Life

- People do this for any number of reasons
- Perhaps most common is desire for thrill of power
 - These seem to be especially challenging cases as many reject help from the Church.
- Some invite demons due to a misguided act of charity (to try to protect a loved one).
- Others because they are misguided in that they believe the devil is good and God is an oppressor.

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8. Unhealed Relationships

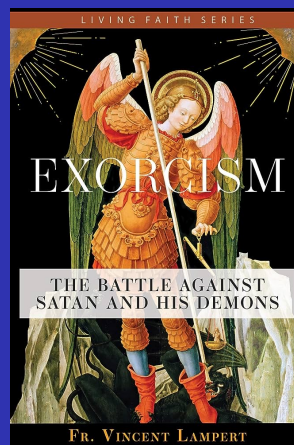
- We are made for communion with others and so the devil works to isolate us from one another.
- Broken relationships breed anger, resentment, bitterness, revenge – all of which are playing the devil's game. The devil loves when we are at odds with each other.
- In situations like this, we need to choose forgiveness and love, even when we cannot repair the relationship in this life. We can choose to become bitter or better. Bitter belongs to the devil. Better belongs to God (Lampert, 99).

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Next Time

Read and Download App

- Rite of Exorcism (Pages 69 – 78)
- American and Diocesan Protocol (101 – 117)
- If you are able, download the Catholic Exorcism app. It is from St. Michael Center for Spiritual Renewal (blue with shield and sword). It is free.



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