

The Authority of the Good Shepherd: Overcoming Evil

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The Authority of Jesus 9-13

One of the things that most struck people about Jesus was, precisely, his authority. The New Testament gives numerous accounts where the authority of his person, his words and his deeds are noted with amazement. Whether it is the response of his disciples, in leaving all to follow him, or the response of a dead person, in coming to life again, the authority of Jesus stands out clearly. As Mark reports:

“When Jesus finished these words, the crowds were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as their scribes.” (Mk 7:28-29)

The authority of his person was expressed not just in word but also in deed. Jesus’ mission involved not just teaching and preaching, not just training leadership, but a great deal of authoritative and visible overcoming of evil in the lives of the afflicted. A lot of the “work” that Jesus did was the work of healing the sick and freeing the demoniacally afflicted. He was not only a teacher and prophetic preacher but also a healer and exorcist. After Jesus delivered the man in the synagogue who cried out with a loud voice, impelled by the “spirit of an unclean demon” the crowd was amazed.

“And when the demon had thrown him down in the midst, he came out of him, having done him no harm.³⁶ And they were all amazed and said to one another, “What is this word? For with authority and power he commands the unclean spirits, and they come out.”³⁷ And reports of him went out into every place in the surrounding region. (Luke 4:35-37)

In the preaching of Peter recounted in the Acts of the Apostles, Peter proclaims Jesus as the one, anointed “how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. (Acts 10:38)

One of the most striking signs of his authority was in the forgiveness of sins. The Jewish leaders were shocked that Jesus would claim to be able to forgive sins, since only God could forgive sins. As a response, specifically to validate his claim to be able to forgive sins, Jesus healed the paralytic.

(Mt. 9: 1-8)

The response of the people was again, amazement at the authority manifested in Jesus.

“When the crowds saw this they were struck with awe and glorified God who had given such authority to human beings.” (Mt. 9: 8) Jesus’ authority also was manifested in his fulfillment of prophecy, whether it be the rich fabric of Old Testament prophecy concerning the Messiah, or the immediately preparative prophecy of John the Baptist, which pointed to Jesus as simultaneously, lamb of God, judge, and baptizer in the Spirit, or the prophecy of Jesus himself concerning, the destruction of the temple, his death, his resurrection and sending of the Spirit.

The Transmission of Authority

Jesus clearly entrusted the continuation of his mission, in all its dimensions, to his disciples, first of all to his apostles and their successors, and their collaborators in orders, and then to the entire church. We must briefly note the various “commissions” which witness to the transmission of the mission, particularly as it relates to our main focus, the authority of Jesus in overcoming the demonic, in the context of evangelization. *“He appointed twelve whom he also named apostles that they might be with him and he might send them forth to preach and to have authority to drive out demons.”* (Mk 3:14-15)

“He summoned the Twelve and began to send them out two by two and gave them authority over unclean spirits...So they went off and preached repentance. They drove out many demons, and they anointed with oil many who were sick and cured them.” (Mk 6:7, 12-13)

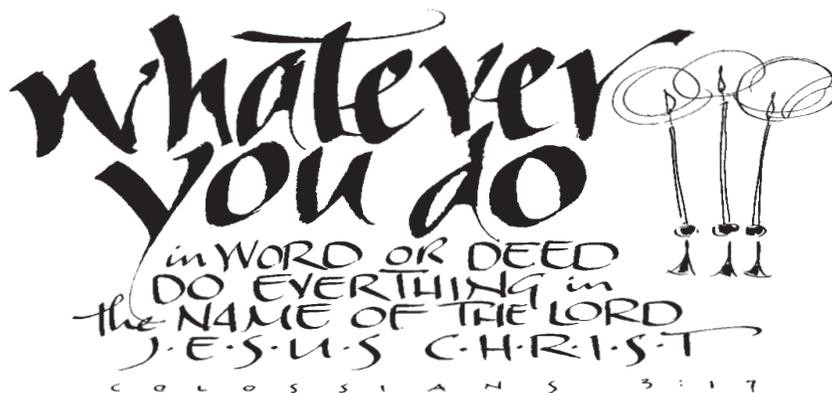
In all the words and deeds of Jesus what we are seeing is the coming of salvation to the human race and the overcoming of the effects of sin and the demonic. The amazing power to forgive sins is also transmitted.

“And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, ‘Receive the holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained.’” (John. 20:22-23)

And this good news of salvation, which not only announces but makes effective, is to be extended to all na-

tions by each generation of the disciples of Jesus, until the end of the age.

“Then Jesus approached and said to them, ‘All power in



heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age.” (Mt 28: 18-20)

The mission was to carry on the full range of Jesus’ work, and was to consist of authoritative words and deeds. It was to be the most important mission that anyone could ever undertake, because it was to determine the eternal destinies of every human being.

“He said to them, ‘Go into the whole world and proclaim the gospel to every creature. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved; whoever does not believe will be condemned. These signs will accompany those who believe: in my name they will drive out demons, they will speak new languages. They will pick up serpents [with their hands], and if they drink any deadly thing, it will not harm them. They will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.’

So then the Lord Jesus, after he spoke to them, was taken up into heaven and took his seat at the right hand of God. But they went forth and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the word through accompanying signs.” (Mark 16:15-20)

We see in the Acts of the Apostles the continuation of Jesus’ mission in all its dimensions. We see Jesus continuing to work through his disciples, preaching and teaching, healing the sick and expelling demonic spirits, forgiving sins and bestowing the Spirit. As Pope Paul VI said in *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, the earliest history of the Church, the first witness to what the transmission of the mission of Jesus meant in practice, as recounted in Acts, has a certain “privileged” and “exemplary” character which will leave its mark on all subsequent ages of the Church.² In times of renewal, the Church and its saints and reformers have looked again at the Gospels and the Acts for vision and inspiration, and we are again in such a time. We will examine here only one aspect of this continuing dimension of Jesus’ mission, that of freeing those oppressed by the work of the Evil One.

Setting the Captives Free: Jesus’ Work of Defeating the Demonic

Jesus knew that he was in combat not just with human sin and weakness but the power of the devil. He knew that the actions, decisions and words of his enemies were influenced by a demonic power that wanted to keep the human race in bondage to fear, sin and death. He clearly identified the motivation and strategy of the devil.

“Why do you not understand what I am saying? Because you cannot bear to hear my word. You belong to your father the devil and you willingly carry out your father’s desires. He was a murderer from the beginning and does not stand in truth, because there is not truth in him. When he tells a lie, he speaks in character because he is a liar and the father of lies. But because I speak the truth, you do not believe me. Can any of you charge me with sin? If I am telling the truth, why do you not believe me? Whoever belongs to God hears the words of God; for this reason you do not listen, because you do not belong to God.” (John. 8:43-47)

The inspired writer of Hebrews strikingly describes the mission of Jesus.

“Now, since the children share in blood and flesh, he likewise shared in them, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and free those who through fear of death had been subject to slavery all their life.” (Hebrews 2:14-15)

John starkly describes the mission of Jesus: “Indeed, the Son of God was revealed to destroy the works of the devil.” (1 John. 3:8b)

The “biblical world view,” the structure of reality revealed to us by God, is that “the whole world is under the power of the evil one.” (1 John. 5:19b)

This is the world view with which Jesus operated, that the apostles shared and that the Church institutionalized in her approach to preparing converts for full entry into the Church. It is a world view that needs to be recovered to successfully respond to the collapse of Christendom and the ascendancy of an aggressively secularist international culture, that has opened itself to demonic influence.

The Exorcisms of the Catechumenate

The biblical world view communicated by the scripture concerning the situation of people apart from Christ was confirmed through experience. The experience of Jesus and the early Church was that people living life in the “world” subject to the disordered desires of fallen nature became subject also to demonic influence as well as the social pressure of a pagan culture. The process of bringing people into the early Church took into account the need to deal with these realities. The preaching and teaching of Jesus, the healing and exorcisms, the for

¹ This isn’t the place for an extensive exegesis of Mark 16. For our purposes we will simply point out that the signs spoken of here are not necessarily to be performed by every disciple, or “at will.” The charisms spoken of here are to be understood in light of the broader teaching on charisms found specifically in 1 Cor. 13, and Romans 12. Nor is the comment about “handling serpents” to be understood as the basis of a regular practice (not to mention forming denominations specializing in such things) but rather as an illustration of the power of God

giveness of sins and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit continued in the early Church and became structured in some important respects in the development of the Catechumenate.

The Catechumenate was designed to help new converts to Christianity come to both understand and experience what life in Christ really meant.³ It meant not just learning the truths of the faith, although that certainly was an essential part of it, but also thoroughly turning away from serious sin and renouncing any influence of the devil in one's life, in preparation for what Chrysostom called the "holy and awesome rites of initiation."⁴ It was assumed – and confirmed by repeated experience – that people living outside the protection of the Christian community came to the community with varying degrees of disordered thinking and living, including the influence of the demonic, which they had opened to through various rebellions against God's law which oftentimes included significant immorality, idolatry and possibly occult practices. The Church knew that people would not be able to successfully live the Christian life unless these various levels of disorder were dealt with and healed.

Since "the world, the flesh and the devil" work together, as it were, it is not always possible to definitively distinguish one from the other, nor is it always necessary to do so. And yet the link between the inclination to sin inherent in our fallen nature, and the actual committing of sin, is seen in both scripture and throughout the spiritual tradition of the Church, as giving an opening to the demonic to "build on" the sin or weakness and turn it into an oppression, obsession or some form of "slavery." "Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun set on your anger, and do not leave room for the devil." (Eph. 4: 26-27)

It's rather sobering to reflect on the implications of this passage as it pertains to the life of the Church today. In just this one area – of anger – how much room has been given to the devil to work in countless lives?

The purpose of the Catechumenate was to help the new convert definitively turn away from sin and be freed from the work of the demonic that may have become "nested" in their souls through such sin, and gradually, over a period of time, bring about a healing of the soul that would enable the new Christian to truly live the life of Christ and experience the freedom and joy that Christ promises.

3 I am grateful to Professor Scott Sollom from Franciscan University Steubenville for advice on this section. 4 St. John Chrysostom, *Baptismal Instructions*, ed. P.W. Harkings (Ancient Christian Writers, 31) Westminster, Maryland, and London, 1963; 11:23. Cited in: Edward Yarnold, S.J., *The Awe-Inspiring Rites of Initiation: The Origins of the R.C.I.A.* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1994) p. 57.

The first exorcisms in, for example, the 4th century Catechumenate, happened early in the process, upon initial enrollment. After a period of instruction, if the candidate decided to go forward definitively toward baptism, and if the community agreed, they were elected or chosen, and entered a more intensive period of preparation. Before baptism, which usually happened at Easter but could also happen at Pentecost, there was an intensive period (sometimes coinciding with the ⁶ weeks of Lent) where the daily meetings of the catechumens seemed to involve almost daily exorcisms. Textual evidence indicates that the task of becoming free of the influence of the demonic was seen to happen gradually over time. "Demons are generally expelled from a man only gradually; as faith grows, the area occupied by the devil contracts."⁵

The scrutinies, where the life of the catechumen was examined to make sure their faith was sincere and their freedom from serious sin and the influence of the demonic was secure, involved additional exorcisms as well as inquiries into the moral quality of the catechumen's life. Some evidence indicates that when there were no longer any "manifestations" in response to the exorcisms ("turning pale, gnashing the teeth, foaming at the mouth, shaking, weeping") the freedom from demonic influence was thought to be complete.⁶

Our modern Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults attempts to recover many of the aspects of the early Catechumenate, including exorcisms and scrutinies but is often implemented in many places in a rather weakened, ritualized form that lacks spiritual power and pastoral effectiveness.

The Situation Today

How do the "biblical world view" and the institutional response of the early Church in the development of the Catechumenate apply to our situation today? What's the relevance of all this to the life and ministry of priests today?

As John Paul II put it in *Novo Millennio Ineunte* the Church finds itself in the midst of a radical transformation of the social environment in which she lives. Just as the conversion of Constantine was a watershed event for the life of the Church which radically changed the political, legal and sociological situation in which the Church found itself, and led to the growth of "Christendom," so too does what we may call the "apostasy of Christendom" denote a watershed moment for the Church, the implications of which are only beginning to be understood. ⁵ "Even in countries evangelized many centuries ago, the reality of a 'Christian society' which,

7 John Paul II, *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, 40.

amid all the frailties which have always marked human life, measured itself explicitly on Gospel values, is now gone. Today we must courageously face a situation which is becoming increasingly diversified and demanding, in the context of 'globalization' and of the consequent new and uncertain mingling of peoples and cultures."⁷

The encounter with the manifestly supernatural, whether in healing or confrontation with the demonic, has always seemed to be more common beyond the boundaries of Christendom in the "mission territories," and in some ways that is still the case today.

In our work in Africa, for example, we often find practicing Catholics still involved with the demonic as they commonly have recourse to "witchdoctors" or tribal shamans as they try to protect themselves from evil, obtain favors, or injure an enemy. It would not be an exaggeration to say that many millions of Catholics in Africa have recourse to different forms of sorcery, spells, amulets, worship-fetishes and other practices in an attempt to make contact with a power or protect themselves from an evil spell or curse that their Catholic faith has not yet effectively helped them to do. In helping such Catholics, including priests and nuns, to a fuller relationship with Christ it is not uncommon to encounter demonic manifestations such as those de-

scribed as sometimes accompanying the exorcisms and scrutinies of the 4th century Catechumenate. Africans know that demonic power is real. They see its effect on people on a daily basis.

The same is true in our work in many of the territories of the former Soviet Union that lived for years under a vicious, programmatic atheism that instilled fear and deeply wounded personalities. Living under such a system inflicts profound psychological and spiritual wounds. Some of the strongest demonic manifestations I've ever seen occurred at a conference in Poland where many priests and seminarians were present. Many acknowledged that they had recourse to fortune tellers and other occult practitioners in an attempt to gain power or influence or be successful in love, or get even with enemies or insure their future prosperity or achievement. In many countries seminary formation still is almost exclusively academic with the spiritual,

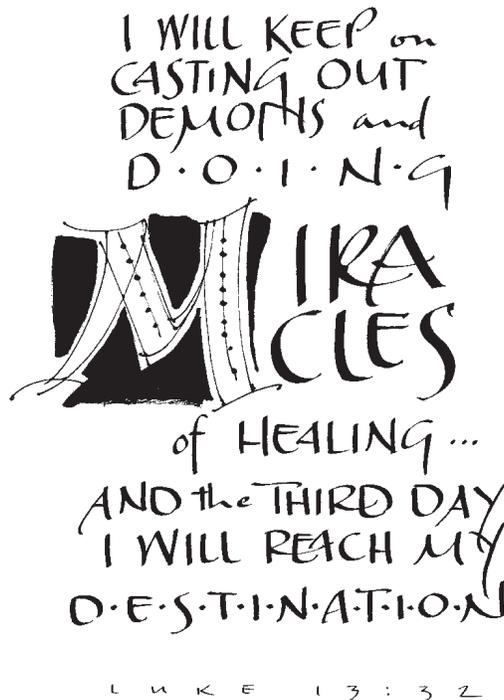
interpersonal, and evangelization dimensions sorely neglected, with tragic results.

I believe we still have much to learn about the continuing evolution of contemporary seminary training by reflecting on the model offered us in Jesus' formation of his future priests, which closely linked the building of relationship with Jesus and one another, and the close interconnection between teaching and "putting into practice" in supervised ministry of a very specific type. I believe we also have much to learn about seminary training today as we reflect upon the significant transformation envisioned and accomplished in the

early Catechumenate. In some ways seminaries today also have to fulfill the function of a Catechumenate in their need to bring about a healing of soul that frees the seminarian for a significant sacramental encounter with God, and the ability to live in some significant measure the freedom characteristic of the sons and daughters of God, living and ministering in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Even though "mission territories" seem to be places where the demonic (and the powerful action of the Holy Spirit) is encountered more apparently, it is also the case that almost all of Christendom is returning to the status of "mission territories." We are increasingly as a Church living as a minority in a

hostile and aggressive secularist culture. We can expect as we live in societies that are increasingly turning away from Christ to encounter more and more people both within and without the Church who through false teaching or immorality or contact with the occult have become subject to the influence of the demonic. Our evangelization, our catechesis and our pastoral care will more and more have to take this into account. This is already becoming apparent. In "Catholic Italy" there is virtually an epidemic of turning to the occult which has brought in its wake a demand for the help that the authority of Christ in overcoming the demonic can bring. The diocesan appointed exorcists in Italy are calling out for many more to be trained in this ministry.⁸ And last year, to headlines around the world, a Pontifical Roman University began to offer a course on the demonic, which is being repeated again this year. In one of our of courses on Pastoral Counseling at Sacred Heart Semi-



nary in the Archdiocese Detroit the Archdiocesan exorcist comes in for a class session to share his experience with the seminarians. But more is needed than adding another class, as useful as that may be. Our whole way of living, transmitting the faith and training leaders for Christian life in a radically changing intellectual, social and spiritual environment has to recover the lessons of the first evangelization as contained in the Gospels and Acts and as later institutionalized in the Catechumenate. Much of the New Testament scriptural teaching on the demonic is “preventative” in nature, advice on how to remain free of demonic influence. The Catechumenate is “remedial” in nature, designed to free people who have already been infected by demonic activity. It’s obvious that many, many Catholics live their lives in a way, ignorant of or heedless of the biblical wisdom given to resist demonic influence and need “remedial” help. As we have already noted, how many indeed, have “let the sun go down” on their anger and left “room for the devil” (Eph. 4: 26-27)? And what about all the other areas where openings to the demonic are commonly found? What about the unforgiveness, the envy, the jealousy, the irrational hostility, the fear, the evil lies, the lust, the secret addictions, the blasphemies, the occult practices, the despair, and so on, that so often plague the lives of Catholics? In some ways much of the Church is in need of going through the Catechumenate or a renewal of the Catechumenate, with its instruction, pastoral counseling, healing, deliverance and blessings, in order to more fruitfully encounter Christ in the sacraments and participate in some real measure in the glorious freedom of the sons and daughters of God.

Ordinary Pastoral Care and the Demonic

When we talk about the demonic and exorcisms we tend to think of the phenomenon of possession, where the person afflicted is totally under the control of the demonic. We think of movies like *The Exorcist* or the more recent *The Exorcism of Emily Rose*. We think of diocesan exorcists and official and solemn exorcisms to deliver people from the state of satanic possession. We find it puzzling, confusing and downright frightening. We don’t think of ourselves as being qualified for (or interested in) such ministry. But the influence of the demonic, at least so far in our culture, is not ordinarily by way of strict possession and yet can significantly be holding people back from real shepherds freedom in Christ. In some ways the dramatic images of exorcism that we often think of when we

picture the work of the demonic can distract us from the more common and ordinary working of spirits that affect the daily life of ordinary people and can be significantly helped by non-sensational pastoral preaching, teaching and prayer. Let me in these concluding paragraphs attempt to list a number of ways in which I see the demonic at work in the ordinary lives of people in our culture and how priests in their important role of mediating the care of the Good Shepherd can bring the authority of Christ to bear on the situation. So many today, even in our parishes, are harried, like sheep without without shepherds.

Confronting the “doctrine of demons.”

Demons are interested in insinuating false understandings of reality into the Church. They do so by working through human agents, false teachers or “plausible liars” as some translations put it.

“Now the Spirit explicitly says that in the last times some will turn away from the faith by paying attention to deceitful spirits and demonic instructions through the hypocrisy of liars with branded consciences.” (1 Tim. 4:1-2)

Undoubtedly, false teachings, demonically inspired, have played a major role in the apostasy we are currently living through. Those who encourage others to immorality, who deny the truth about Jesus, about his second coming, and about the reality of the final judgment are particularly singled out by scripture as being worthy of condemnation. (2 Peter 2:1-22, 3:1-4, 1 Jn. 2: 18-23, 3: 4-10, 4: 1-6). How many people have been seriously led astray and had their lives, marriages and other relationships destroyed because some authority figure told them “that’s no big deal” when it really was!

Many of those we evangelize, catechize and pastor have “strongholds of Satan” erected in their minds through such false teaching, directly taught by false teachers, or “imbibed” through the culture.

The ministry of the Word is an important element of the spiritual warfare we are engaged in. Many people can significantly be set free from demonic influence by the word of God taught and preached in the power of the Holy Spirit. The truth will set people free from various types of bondages. People can be slaves to sin and deceived by demons without being aware of it until the truth is spoken. (John. 8: 31-59)

The battle is fought in a significant way by the Word of God.

“For though we live in the world we are not carrying on a worldly war, for the weapons of our warfare are not worldly but have divine power to destroy strongholds.

8 The exorcist for the Diocese of Rome has written a book about his experiences, which has been translated into English. Fr. Gabriele Amorth, *An Exorcist Tells His Story*, (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1999).

We destroy arguments and every proud obstacle to the knowledge of God and take every thought captive to obey Christ, being ready to punish every disobedience, when your obedience is complete.” (2 Cor. 10:3-6)

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The Word though is an authoritative Word and must be spoken with authority, not the forced authority of the actor, or the formulaic eloquence of the homiletics class, but the authentic authority of someone living in close union with Christ, and sharing his mind and heart, animated by his Spirit.

When some itinerant Jewish exorcists, seeing the power in Jesus’ name, tried to cast out demonic spirits in his name, “the evil spirit said to them in reply, ‘Jesus I recognize, Paul I know, but who are you?’ The person with the evil spirit then sprang at them and subdued them all. He so overpowered them that they fled naked and wounded from that house. When this became known to all the Jews and Greeks who lived in Ephesus, fear fell upon them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was held in great esteem. Many of those who had become believers came forward and openly acknowledged their former practices. Moreover, a large number of those who had practiced magic collected their books and burned them in public. They calculated their value and found it to be fifty thousand silver pieces. Thus did the word of the Lord continue to spread with influence and power.” (Acts 19:13-20)

Simple Prayer for Deliverance from Demonic Influence

Many people who are attempting to live a Christian life, either life-long Church members, or people entering the Church, have areas of bondage in their life that hold them back from the freedom and joy of life in Christ. Some of these bondages can be dealt with in some

manner through preaching and teaching, some through counsel and advice, both within and without the confessional, but some benefit greatly from simple prayer for inner healing and deliverance.

Some fears have a demonic “touch” to them, either through false beliefs or through an actual wounding of the will or blinding of the mind or freezing of the emotions that can be greatly helped through prayer that applies the saving love and power of Christ to the soul of the individual afflicted.

“Now, since the children share in blood and flesh, he likewise shared in them, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and free those who through fear of death had been subject to slavery all their life.” (Hebrews 2:14-15) Many, who are locked in fear, and not able to freely love God and their neighbor, have been greatly helped through prayer of this sort.

Another common bondage that blocks many from responding to the good news is unforgiveness. There are many roots to such unforgiveness but sometimes simple prayer is helpful in releasing such bondages.

In our current cultural situation bondage to sexual disorders of various kinds have become quite common. Because of the prevalence of pornographic material easily accessible through the internet people who previously would have been reluctant to take the public risks of obtaining pornography outside of the privacy of their homes, are no longer protected by “social pressure.”

These kinds of secret bondages can greatly compromise the mission of the Church. It is very hard for people enslaved to sexual disorder to clearly preach and teach with authority, in the power of the Spirit. This is particularly serious when it affects Church leadership, as it clearly has. It’s important for those who share in Christ’s mission in a special way, as priests, to be able to say with Jesus, that “the ruler of the world is coming” but “he has no power over me.” (John. 14:30)

Strong bondages or resistances to Christ can have been planted in the soul through involvement in occult activity. Even without being aware of it people who have “dabbled” in occult practices can have allowed a demonic influence to touch their soul in a way that cripples their ability to hear and respond to the good news, or to live a life of holiness and service.

In all these areas where demonic activity sometimes enters the life of people, prayer for healing and deliverance should usually involve an invitation to the person prayed for to renounce his own complicity in the disorder and if sin is involved an invitation to clearly and sincerely repent should be given. To pray for someone

who doesn't want to take the steps to become free or stay free can be an exercise in futility. Although prayer and counsel can help the person begin to want to take the steps. Prayer for inner healing and deliverance is not magical, and doesn't need to be dramatic, but operates on the basic principles of the spiritual life. The strengthening of the will to remain free and practical wisdom about how to stay free are vitally important as well.⁹

Demonic Temptations

The witness of scripture and the entire spiritual tradition of the Church indicate that Satan and the demons play an active role in trying to draw people away from Christ and towards destruction. We need to apply in our own lives and teach our people to apply the profound wisdom contained in scripture (e.g. James 1: 12-15, 4: 7-10; Ephesians 6: 10-17) and tradition about the nature of demonic temptation and how to counter it. There is quite a lot of detailed teaching in the writings of many of the saints and doctors of the Church about the nature of temptation, including the demonic element in temptation, and means for countering it.¹⁰

A Lifestyle that Preserves and Deepens Freedom

Lest seven demons worse invade the soul of someone set free from sin and demonic influences a lifestyle that preserves and deepens spiritual freedom needs to be adopted. (Lk. 11:24-26) The wisdom of Francis De Sales in his Introduction to the Devout Life provides an admirable example of the kind of systematic wisdom of how to order one's life in every aspect to the will of God that the Church is very much in need of communicating much more widely.¹¹

Priests: Conformed to the Good Shepherd as He Frees the Oppressed

As Optatam Totius puts it: "The whole training of the students should have as its object to make them true shepherds of souls after the example of our Lord Jesus, Christ, teacher, priest, and shepherd."¹²

This theme, enunciated in a contemporary way at Vatican II, of the conformity of the seminarian/priest to the image of Christ the Good Shepherd figures prominently in many of the subsequent documents published on the training, life and ministry of priests. It figures prominently in Pastores Dabo Vobis,¹³ as well as in the proposed draft for the Fifth Edition of the Program of Priestly Formation of the US Bishops.

Such sacramental conformity to the authority of Christ as Shepherd and Head, is not just a conformity of theory or a conformity of imitation but a conformity of living union and participation with the living, risen Christ who

desires to work through the priest in all the ways in which he worked when he ministered during his earthly ministry. This working needs to include today Christ's ministry of setting the demonically influenced free. This is a ministry central to Christ's identity and most appropriate to the identity and ministry of the priest today. And it is most necessary, out of pastoral charity, for the good of the flock, present and future.

Like so many other of the ministries of the priest today, this ministry can be and needs to be shared with capable co-workers in the Gospel. The Biblical vision of ordained ministry is not that of the ordained minister doing all ministry himself, but of "equipping the saints for the work of ministry." The priest today needs to become competent in this aspect of ministry, but as in so many other areas, can't possibly do all the work involved himself.

Teams of trained and reliable laypeople need to be raised up to help in this ministry. The ordained priesthood needs to equip the priesthood of the baptized to become effective in their share in the ministry of Christ and the mission of the Church.

"And he gave some as apostles, others as prophets, others as evangelists, others as pastors and teachers, to equip the holy ones for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ..." (Eph. 4: 11-12)

The Context of the New Evangelization

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As Optatam Totius puts it: "The whole training of the students should have as its object to make them true

⁹ There is a growing literature which attempts to address the pastoral needs of those praying for others for deliverance from the influence of the demonic. Three that are written by Catholics that many find of help are: Fr. Michael Scanlan, T.O.R. and Randall Cirner, Deliverance from Evil Spirits: A Weapon for Spiritual Warfare, (Ann Arbor: Servant Books, 1980); Deliverance from Evil Spirits: A Practical Manual, Francis MacNutt (Grand Rapids: Chosen Books, 1995); Neal Lozano, Unbound: A Practical Guide to Deliverance, (Grand Rapids: Chosen Books, 2003). A more theological/pastoral treatment of the area is provided by Cardinal Suenens, with a forward by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger. Cardinal Leon-Joseph Suenens, Renewal and the Powers of Darkness, (Ann Arbor: Servant Books, 1983). An excellent study on the power of the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola to bring about significant inner healing and transformation, which includes "case studies", is the book by Fr. John Horn, S.J., Mystical Healing: The Psychological and Spiritual Power of the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises, (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1996).

¹⁰ See for example: John Cassian, The Conferences, VII, and VIII. The

the Church is very much in need of communicating shepherds of souls after the example of our Lord Jesus, Christ, teacher, priest, and shepherd.”¹²

This theme, enunciated in a contemporary way at Vatican II, of the conformity of the seminarian/priest to the image of Christ the Good Shepherd figures prominently in many of the subsequent documents published on the training, life and ministry of priests. It figures prominently in *Pastores Dabo Vobis*,¹³ as well as in the proposed draft for the Fifth Edition of the Program of Priestly Formation of the US Bishops.

Such sacramental conformity to the authority of Christ as Shepherd and Head, is not just a conformity of theory or a conformity of imitation but a conformity of living union and participation with the living, risen Christ who desires to work through the priest in all the ways in which he worked when he ministered during his earthly ministry. This working needs to include today Christ’s ministry of setting the demonically influenced free. This is a ministry central to Christ’s identity and most appropriate to the identity and ministry of the priest today. And it is most necessary, out of pastoral charity, for the good of the flock, present and future.

Like so many other of the ministries of the priest today, this ministry can be and needs to be shared with capable co-workers in the Gospel. The Biblical vision of ordained ministry is not that of the ordained minister doing all ministry himself, but of “equipping the saints for the work of ministry.” The priest today needs to become competent in this aspect of ministry, but as in so many other areas, can’t possibly do all the work involved himself.

Teams of trained and reliable laypeople need to be raised up to help in this ministry. The ordained priesthood needs to equip the priesthood of the baptized to become effective in their share in the ministry of Christ and the mission of the Church.

“And he gave some as apostles, others as prophets, others as evangelists, others as pastors and teachers, to equip the holy ones for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ...” (Eph. 4: 11-12)



The Context of the New Evangelization

I believe it is helpful to reflect on the authority of Christ in overcoming the demonic in the context of the New Evangelization. Paul VI, John Paul II, and now Benedict XVI all strongly stress the need for the **Church** to broaden its vision and realize that one of the major calls of the Spirit to the Church in our time is to a renewed effort of evangelization, even and especially in the declining Christian heartlands.

“I sense that the moment has come to commit all of the Church’s energies to a new evangelization and to the mission ad gentes. No believer in Christ, no institution of the Church, can avoid this supreme duty: to proclaim Christ to all peoples.”¹⁴

“Over the years, I have often repeated the summons to the new evangelization. I do so again now, especially in order to insist that we must rekindle in ourselves the impetus of the beginnings and allow ourselves to be filled with the ardor of the apostolic preaching which followed Pentecost. We must revive in ourselves the burning conviction of Paul, who cried out: ‘Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel’ (1 Cor 9:16)

This passion will not fail to stir in the Church a new sense of mission, which cannot be left to a group of ‘specialists’ but must involve the responsibility of all the members of the People of God. Those who have come into genuine contact with Christ cannot keep him for themselves; they must proclaim him. A new apostolic outreach is needed, which will be lived as the everyday commitment of Christian communities and groups.”¹⁵

As the situation of the Church changes in the world we are finding ourselves encountering circumstances that recall those of the early centuries where the Church was a sometimes persecuted minority surrounded by an aggressive, international pagan culture. We will again need, as the Pope’s tell us, to rediscover the secret of the early Church’s ability to endure suffering and emerge triumphant. We will need to recover the power of the Holy Spirit that animated the first Christians in carrying out the first evangelization. Part of that recovery will be a recovery of the power and authority of Christ in setting free those wounded and bound by the variegated influence of the demonic.

11 Many people find the style of Francis’ classic work to be difficult to penetrate. I’ve developed an audio album on Francis De Sales’ teaching (and albums on other saints as well) that many people find helpful as a “way in” to his wisdom. They are available at: www.renewalministries.net

12 Documents of Vatican II, *Optatam Totius*, 4.

13 John Paul II, *Pastores Dabo Vobis*

14 John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, 3.

15 John Paul II, *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, 40.

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