

Some of you may remember the time when Hollywood produced movies that were flattering towards Christians in general, or the Catholic Church specifically. Here's a list of a few famous ones: *The Ten Commandments*, *Jesus of Nazareth*, *The Song of Bernadette*, *A Man for All Seasons*, *The Bell's of St. Mary*, *Boy's Town*, *The Sound of Music*, *Trouble with Angels*, *The Mission* and so on. In the more recent decades though, independent studios, not Hollywood make content that portray Jesus, the saints, or the Church in a positive light (e.g. *The Chosen*, the new *Cabrini* movie, *The Passion of the Christ*).

However, there is one topic that still fascinates Hollywood and mainstream entertainment; movies about demonic possession. From the original *The Exorcist* in 1973 to *The Pope's Exorcist* (2023) and the many others in between, it seems as if curiosity with the darkness is a bigger box office draw than being drawn to the Light. Yet it does show the insatiable human desire to be drawn to the supernatural, that there is something more going on in this life than just the physical, material creation.

Hopefully, some wider acknowledgment and belief in demons and demonic activity leads people to the Deliverer of such evil and errors. Jesus said in the Gospel this weekend ***"Now is the time of judgment on this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out."*** The "ruler of this world" that the Lord is referring to is Satan and Jesus has come to cast out Satan's lies, power, and influence over us. Recent popes including Pope Francis have made reference to the early 20th century apocalyptic book *"The Lord of the World"* which describes in part how the Evil One is still trying to lead people away from Christ until the end of the world occurs.

None of us likes to think of ourselves as easily deceived or able to be duped, we are probably confident in our own ability to get to the truth of things and respond freely to it. We want to read more than one news source to get multiple, independent opinions. You may have that friend or loved one who thinks there is a conspiracy theory behind everything, perhaps questioning basic things like whether the U.S. landed on the moon or if the earth is round! Or some may think that most of the problems in the world are the result of the machinations of a handful of elite individuals, behind closed doors with nefarious plans for humanity. I think we are right to be skeptical of such skeptics.

My father, who spent his career working for the government in the Treasury Department and then the D.E.A. used to roll his eyes at those types of conspiracy theories saying, *"The governments and human beings are too incompetent for that."* Yet, unrelated to moon landings, Jesus and the Church reminds us that there is a great, evil intelligence working against all humans, Satan and his fallen angels. We're no match for demons and can spot their deceptions by how the result of their influence is to get us to doubt the Lord *"did God really say...?"*.

St. Teresa of Avila said that the Devil is like a rabid dog on a chain, he can't hurt us unless we approach him. The Son of God came into the world to reveal the lies of Satan and give us the grace our fallen nature needs to love as we should. The Archdiocesan exorcist used to tell us seminarians: *"Don't give the devil more than his due, but give the devil his due."* Without the power of the Holy Spirit within us though, we are no match for the "ruler of this world."

In Christ,

Fr. Mike

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now the ruler of this world will be driven out."***