



The Armor of Faith
Topic Summary: Our Lady of America
Part II: Private Revelation and Devotion



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Introduction

[Greeting:] → Welcome to “The Armor of Faith,” a show where we hope to bring our listeners closer to the Word of God and the blessings we receive through living in the fullness of the Catholic faith. My name is Doug and I will be your host as we discuss the blessings of the Church Christ built upon Peter.

I am joined today by my panel: [names]

Helen is a lay-Dominican with a love for music ministry. The Dominicans, I always mention, are also known as the Order of Preachers. Sharon is still our only cradle Catholic on the team, and, as everyone knows by now, I am simply here to ask questions because, what would an answer be without a question? I don't know the answer to that, so that is why I present the question. See how this works? Anyway, to answer my questions, correct my pronunciation, and make sure I know which century I am talking about is why we have our panelists, so welcome to our panelists as well as to our listeners.

Let us open with a prayer:

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Heavenly Father, we lift up our hearts in thanks and praise for this opportunity to open and share your Holy Word this day. We pray that You are with us and all our listeners as we share with one another the blessings of faith. We pray You will grant us wisdom and understanding as we seek to learn Your Holy Truth.

Dear Lord, we also lift up the prayers in our prayer basket. You know what is written on each one and you know the hearts of those who offer their thanks and praise and their petitions for the blessings of Your great mercy.

Dear Lord, we pray especially today for the healing of our nation. Political forces, both within and without, tear at us. We pray, dear Lord, that You will help every heart see that we are all children of Your creation and that You call us to approach one another with charity and love.

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit we pray. Amen.

If you would like to add your prayers to our prayer basket, send us an email at armoroffaithradio@gmail.com. Please include the word “prayer” in the subject line so that we will give it priority and capture it for our prayer basket. Just so you know, Sharon and I lift up our prayers with those in the Armor of Faith Radio prayer basket during our daily prayers.

If you haven't discovered, yet, you can listen to us on any device where you can connect to the Internet, including your smartphone. In addition to wcatradio.com/armoroffaith, we are available through a number of streaming services, such as iHeart Radio, Spreaker, iTunes, and CastBox, among others. Simply search for “Armor of Faith Radio” and select the episode you desire. We will be happy to keep you company wherever you are and wherever you are waiting.

We would also like to ask your assistance in evangelization. By sharing the URL for our show, you can help us spread knowledge of our faith. All you need to do is share the URL, wcatradio.com/armoroffaith via email or social media and tell family and friends as well. Several of the streaming services through which we are available on demand also have share options, so we invite you to join the evangelization and help us spread the good news of the Gospel and our faith in Jesus Christ. You can also help us by selecting the follow or subscribe option associated with the service through which you listen to our show.

Current Day Commentary:

It is impossible to ignore what is happening in our streets. It is also impossible to ignore that an injustice has been politically hijacked and that big ideological money, and likely foreign money, is behind the hijacking. As I have been watching this unfold via social and commercial media, it is also obvious that our media are complicit with the orchestration because they are reporting the politics and not the true and full human story of the livelihoods and lives lost, nor are they concerned about who is behind the agitators. They are only presenting the smokescreen of political talking points.

I watched as one CNN reporter tried to portray a crowd as peaceful as a bottle was thrown at him. He tried to dismiss it, but as he continued to talk, another object came flying in. I watched as an MSNBC reporter delivered the “peaceful protest” talking point while fires blazed in the background. I watched as a reporter for an Australian news channel also tried to present the “peaceful protest” talking points as I watched protesters in the background throwing objects at police. What these reporters are attempting to do is set the stage for the talking point that police are over-reacting against “peaceful” demonstrators. Yes, there are legitimate and peaceful protests, but the media is complicit in the hijacking of such protests because they are not shining the spotlight on those who have hijacked legitimate protest and turned it into violence.

Of course, the videos shared on social media often lack needed context, but it becomes heartbreaking to watch an African-American business owner scream at the crowd that it is his business they are destroying, or a homeless person cry out as agitators use his personal belongings to fuel a bonfire, or an elderly couple beaten in front of their business.

While the reporters stand in the foreground, what I watch is the background. I watched multiple instances of agitators direct movement of crowds, destruction, looting, and confrontations with police. Clearly, the money needs to be followed which funded the positioning of literally pallets of materiel that were dropped on protest routes which agitators and rioters turned into weapons and tools of destruction. The fact that these pallets and caches of incendiary materials appeared suddenly in multiple cities along protest routes indicates the national orchestration and money behind the agitation operation, but the news media is not talking about that. That is why it is clear the media is complicit because of what they are not reporting as they try to romanticize the riots as simply “social justice warrior” protests. Exactly where is the social justice as the lives of African-American, elderly, and other small business owners are being torched? I could go on.

I saw a clip on YouTube® where Tucker Carlson tried to make the case that this is not a race war, but a class war. He is so wrong. It is an ideological war with front organizations being used to fan the flames towards ideological objectives. Tucker is right, though, this is not about solving problems of injustice, this is about power and manipulation to achieve power. Those who are outraged at the injustice are being used by the ideologues for ideological objectives.

As you have heard me reference during previous episodes, I am a military man and I was once a Subject Matter Expert on Civil Disturbance Operations for the Army. Civil Disturbances include the full spectrum from peaceful civil events to the carnage of natural disasters and man made violence. I watched in the past how front organizations were used by the former Soviet Union to stir chaos in the West to achieve Marxist objectives and I clearly see these tactics in progress now. The question is, who is funding the Marxists to drive the violence? Of course, the media does not care about that story because they are part of the political organization and weaponry.

You might wonder, why do I bring this up on a show which focuses on faith formation? The answer is, we must be aware of the signs of our times and the hearts which are targeted. The target of the political media and the social media propagandists are our youth. They want the hearts and minds of our children and young adults; for if you capture the youth, you turn generations.

If you are a parent, you must be aware and recognize the tactics of ideological manipulation. Remember what I have said before, it is not about whether the left or right are right or wrong, it is a matter of whether we understand what God asks of us. If we do not know God and help our children know God, we leave ourselves and our children vulnerable to the tyranny of the ideologues. This is a time to be very close with your children, help them understand your love, God's love, as well as the times and days.

If you are not a parent, you are still a member of a family, especially the brothers and sisters of Christ. Make no mistake, when extremist ideologies, whether left or right, come to power, the Church becomes a target. Our faith will be tested. If we do not know our faith, we may save our life in this world for a time, but we must also ask ourselves, at what cost to the next?

More than ever, we must join together in prayer. As the violence hopefully subsides, we must also be there to help clean up the communities and care for the innocent who may no longer have jobs or even homes. We must pray for the grieving and our actions must reflect the charity

and love which Christ asks of us. We must ask God how we may become instruments of His peace.

Why Catholics Do What We Do:

Spring – Part VII:

Spring is still here and we are continuing the task of cleaning our souls. Because of the nature of this particular commandment, if you have little ears listening, you may want to put us on pause and listen to us without little ears present so that you can assess what you believe is an age appropriate explanation.

So, here we go. Let's talk a little about the sixth commandment.

Exodus 20:14 tells us:

You shall not commit adultery.

Deuteronomy 5:18 reads:

You shall not commit adultery.

Today's traditional teaching says:

You shall not commit adultery.

Just what does this mean? As a child I heard a lot, “this is only for adults, so we won't talk about this now.” Hmm. As I became a catechist, I chose to teach that this is for everyone from teenage to adult. No, I have not taught this to elementary children as I still believe this is above their knowledge base. However, if we deny teaching this to our teens, we deny them the knowledge that will help them make good decisions about their bodies, and sexual conduct.

So let's look at some questions we can ponder as we prepare for the wonderful Sacrament of Reconciliation.

- 1) Have I participated in sexual activity outside of marriage?
- 2) Have I practiced acts of sexual self pleasure?
- 3) Have I participated in homosexual activity?
- 4) Do I respect persons of the opposite sex or do I think of them as objects?
- 5) Do I control my thoughts and imaginations?
- 6) Do I entertain impure thoughts?

- 7) Do I dress modestly?
- 8) Have I committed adultery or fornication?
- 9) Do I deny my spouse his/her marriage rights?
- 10) Have I caused another person to have impure thoughts?
- 11) Have I read indecent publications or viewed indecent pictures?
- 12) Have I watched indecent films?
- 13) Have I used any method of contraception or artificial birth control in my marriage?
- 14) Is the sacramental act of my marriage open to the transmission of new life?

These are examples of questions we should ask ourselves as we conduct our self-examination in relation to the sixth commandment.

Have a blessed week All. Remember, you are loved dearly by God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit and yes, by us as well.

If you would like to learn more about Spring Cleaning of the Soul and Examination of Conscience, we invite you to follow the links in the reference section of the topic summary for this show. You can obtain the topic summary by visiting <https://wcatradio.com/armoroffaithstudyguides/> and look for episode 149.

Discussion:

While our intent within this series is to discuss the reported message of Our Lady of America, we cannot converse about such things without understanding the church's teaching on private revelation as well as private devotion.

As we grow in faith, our desire to live our faith grows and we may seek devotions by which to express our faith. We are not limited in the devotions we may exercise, but, it is essential that the devotions by which we express our faith are consistent with and reflect the will of God. Indeed, at this very moment, false prophets and wolves in the clothing of sheep endeavor to confuse and divide us as a means to separate us from our Creator. We must be wary and we must test the spirits as scripture tells us in 1 John 4:1, but neither do we want to turn away the light silent sound which speaks to our heart in truth. If ever we are confused, we must remember the One Jesus sent to remind us of all Jesus taught and who testifies to truth. (cf. John 14:26)

As we mentioned last time, the Congregation For The Doctrine Of The Faith published criteria for the discernment of private revelation considering the full context of both positive and negative indicators. We must also note the following statement in the Catechism of the Catholic Church:

(CCC:67)

“Guided by the Magisterium of the Church, the *sensus fidelium* knows how to discern and welcome in these revelations whatever constitutes an authentic call of Christ or his saints to the Church.

The most important element of this statement is the responsibility of the Magisterium to guide discernment of what is “an authentic call.” Of course, this discernment process can take time, and while the church investigates and discerns, controversy is sure to rise as the faithful discusses what has transpired.

We noted that even if the church approves a private revelation, we are not obligated to it as we are to the public revelation of the faith as documented in the Old and New Testaments. In the Catechism of the Catholic Church, we are told:

(CCC: 65)

"In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son." Christ, the Son of God made man, is the Father's one, perfect and unsurpassable Word. In him he has said everything; there will be no other word than this one. St. John of the Cross, among others, commented strikingly on Hebrews 1:1-2:

In giving us his Son, his only Word (for he possesses no other), he spoke everything to us at once in this sole Word - and he has no more to say. . . because what he spoke before to the prophets in parts, he has now spoken all at once by giving us the All Who is His Son. Any person questioning God or desiring some vision or revelation would be guilty not only of foolish behaviour but also of offending him, by not fixing his eyes entirely upon Christ and by living with the desire for some other novelty.

There will be no further Revelation

(Question 1: The statement, “There will be no further Revelation,” seems pretty definitive. What does this mean to us as we consider what is raised in “private revelation?” Why should we have any concern with it if it brings nothing new?)

(CCC: 66)

“The Christian economy, therefore, since it is the new and definitive Covenant, will never pass away; and no new public revelation is to be expected before the glorious manifestation of our Lord Jesus Christ." Yet even if Revelation is already complete, it has not been made completely explicit; it remains for Christian faith gradually to grasp its full significance over the course of the centuries.

In his “Theological Commentary to The Message Of Fatima;” while he was prefect for the Congregation For The Doctrine Of The Faith, then Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger wrote:

The Flemish theologian E. Dhanis, an eminent scholar in this field, states succinctly that ecclesiastical approval of a private revelation has three elements: **the message contains nothing contrary to faith or morals; it is lawful to make it public; and the faithful are authorized to accept it with prudence** (E. Dhanis, *Sguardo su Fatima e bilancio di una discussione*, in *La Civiltà Cattolica* 104 [1953], II, 392-406, in particular 397). **Such a message can be a genuine help in understanding the Gospel and living it better at a particular moment in time; therefore it should not be disregarded. It is a help which is offered, but which one is not obliged to use.**

(Question 2: Last time, we mostly discussed the process by which the Church evaluates private revelation. Here, we see three parts to ecclesiastical approval. We also see a reference to the value of private revelation. **What is this value?**)

(Question 3: In this statement, we are told that private revelation should not be disregarded, but neither are we obliged to use it. **What is the distinction between these two possibilities of regarding, but not using? How can we regard something, but not use it?**)

In canon law, we are told the following:

(Canon 753)

Whether they teach individually, or in Episcopal Conferences, or gathered together in particular councils, Bishops in communion with the head and the members of the College, **while not infallible in their teaching**, are the **authentic instructors and teachers of the faith for Christ’s faithful entrusted to their care. The faithful are bound to adhere, with a religious submission of mind, to this authentic magisterium of their Bishops.**

(Canon 754)

All Christ’s faithful are obliged to observe the constitutions and decrees which lawful ecclesiastical authority issues for the purpose of proposing doctrine or of proscribing erroneous opinions; this is particularly the case of those published by the Roman Pontiff or by the College of Bishops.

(Question 4: So, a purported visionary reveals they received a request by our Blessed Mother or our Lord, but the bishop says they find no evidence of supernatural origin. **Who do we obey when the ecclesiastical authority says he “cannot approve or support public devotion” and does not support executing the request purported to be from Jesus or Mary? How do we resolve the conflict without disregarding what we are told is coming from Jesus or Mary?**)

(1 Samuel 15:22)

But Samuel said: “Does the Lord delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in

obedience to the Lord's command? *Obedience is better than sacrifice, to listen, better than the fat of rams.*

(Ecclesiastes 4:17)

Guard your step when you go to the house of God. Draw near for obedience, rather than for the fools' offering of sacrifice; for they know not how to keep from doing evil.

Of course, these are scriptures about obedience to God, but what about His appointed authorities?

(Deuteronomy 17:8-11)

8 If there is a case for judgment which proves too baffling for you to decide, in a matter of bloodshed or of law or of injury, matters of dispute within your gates, you shall then go up to the place which the LORD, your God, will choose, 9 to the levitical priests or to the judge who is in office at that time. They shall investigate the case and then announce to you the decision. 10 You shall act according to the decision they announce to you in the place which the LORD will choose, carefully observing everything as they instruct you. 11 You shall carry out the instruction they give you and the judgment they pronounce, without turning aside either to the right or left from the decision they announce to you.

And from the private revelation of Saint Margaret Mary Alcoque.

– Jesus to Saint Margaret Mary Alcoque

It is for this reason that I wish thee not only to do what thy Superiors shall direct, but also to do nothing that I shall order thee without their consent. Without obedience no one can please Me. (Philip, 53)

The reason why I am going into so much background as to how the Church treats private revelation is because we are discussing an unapproved private revelation. It is important that as we proceed in this discussion, that we do not disregard appropriate ecclesiastical authority. So, let's take a moment and review the guidance of Bishop Rhodes as outlined in the "Statement Regarding the Devotion to Our Lady of America." After laying out the conclusions of the investigation, the statement expresses the following finding.

Based on these findings, Bishop Rhoades came to the conclusion that "the visions and revelations themselves cannot be said to be of supernatural origin in the sense of objective occurrences (*non constat de supernaturalitate*); thus further, I cannot approve or support public devotion or cult." The bishops of the other five dioceses have read and also accept these findings and conclusions. (Rhodes, 3)

(Question 5: When an apparition is approved, it becomes easy to move forward in analysis and discussion. When it is not approved, we must be more careful that we are not following something we shouldn't. Given everything we have reviewed so far, what boundaries does this set for us as far as continuing our discussion Our Lady of America?)

Of course, we must consider the full context of the statement. I should point out that after the findings and instruction, it continues with the qualifying statement: “At the same time, it should be noted,” and then gives a short history of the medal being struck, prayers, and the publication of the “purported private revelation” in 1960 and again in 1971 with the approval of Archbishop Leibold, along with references to other events or actions allowed by other bishops. After listing the history of the “purported private revelation” and treatment by other bishops, Bishop Rhodes, as the ecclesiastical authority, issued the following guidance:

Given this history of prayers and religious articles being given approval by competent ecclesiastical authority, the use of such prayers religious articles may continue as a matter of private devotion, but not as a public devotion of the Church. Indeed, such private devotion would be consistent with the history of the United States of America being dedicated to Our Lady. (Rhodes, 4)

While Our Lady of Guadalupe is recognized as the Patroness of North, Central, and South America, Our Lady is the specific Patroness of the United States of America under her title as the Immaculate Virgin. As such, the faithful may indeed pray to Our Lady, the Immaculate Virgin, as the Patroness of America. At the same time, such private devotion should in no way imply approval or acceptance of purported revelations, visions, or locutions to attributed to Sister Mary Ephrem (Mildred) Neuzil other than as her own subjective inner religious experiences.

Quotes:

– *Pope Gregory the Great (No. 94; Gregory the Great, Homilia in Ezechielem I, 7, 8)*
The sacred Scriptures grow with the one who reads them

– *Pope Benedict XVI*

The Second Vatican Council notes three essential ways in which the Spirit guides in the Church, and therefore three ways in which the word grows: through the meditation and study of the faithful, through the deep understanding which comes from spiritual experience, and through the preaching of those who, in the succession of the episcopate, have received the sure charism of truth (*Dei Verbum*, 8).

– *Pope Benedict XVI*

The authority of private revelations is essentially different from that of the definitive public Revelation. The latter demands faith; in it in fact God himself speaks to us through human words and the mediation of the living community of the Church... Private revelation is a help to this faith, and shows its credibility precisely by leading me back to the definitive public Revelation.

(1 Thessalonians 5:19-2)

19 Do not quench the Spirit. 20 Do not despise prophetic utterances. 21 Test everything; retain what is good. 22 Refrain from every kind of evil.

Final Thoughts:

When I placed the discussion of Our Lady of America on our schedule, it was prior to the issuance of Bishop Rhodes findings and guidance. I did not learn of the guidance until we started working on the possibility of obtaining guest panelists familiar with the history of Our Lady of America.

Being a military man, I know full well that no plan survives first contact. You know the old joke, if you want to make God laugh, tell Him your plans. With love of Our Lady in our hearts, I was all set to help raise awareness of the requests of Our Lady of America, but I also learned a lesson; we must be careful that what we do is truly what God asks of us and there is a reason Christ established the Church He built upon Peter.

In our zeal, we may find ourselves following what we believe to be truth, only to discover error. In our caution, we may be ignoring the encouragement of Christ. We must remember, the Church is here to temper us so we do not scamper in the wrong direction. We must remember, Satan doesn't care how we miss the mark of what God asks of us, whether it is to the left or right; only that we do. So, we will proceed with our examination, keeping in mind the instruction of Bishop Rhodes; that this is a matter of private devotion based upon the subjective inner religious experiences of Sister Mary Ephrem (Mildred) Neuzil and not an apparition approved by the Church.

Wrap Up: Well, our time has come to an end. We hope you will be able to join us next week as we turn our discussion to some of the history associated with Our Lady of America.

Let us conclude with a prayer: Heavenly Father, we thank you for this opportunity to share the blessings of our trust and faith in You. We pray that as we go our separate ways, You will continue to walk with us and help us to see how we may put on the armor of **truth, righteousness, peace, faith, salvation**, and the **Word** of the gospel not only for the benefit of our lives, but also the lives of all who cross our path. In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, we pray. Amen.

Thank you all and God bless.

Next Session: Our Lady of America – Part III: Some History

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