



The Armor of Faith
Topic Summary: Spiritual Warfare
Part V: Know Your Environment



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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 was our only cradle Catholic on the team until we were blessed to have Donna Mae join our panel. Donna Mae is the artist who sculpted the statue of Our Lady of America which was carried by our youth and blessed by Saint John Paul II at the 1993 Word Youth Day.

Of course, as everyone knows by now, I'm simply here to ask questions because if I didn't, they would have to have someone else do it. Of course, I don't want to give them any ideas, so, let's move right along. 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.

We pray especially today for Peg as she battles in the ICU to recover from several injuries. We also pray for Mike, who continues to suffer from seizures. We pray Your healing hand shall rest upon them, as well as Your hand of comfort; that You will guide the hearts and hands of their care givers, and that Your hand of comfort shall also rest upon all who love and care for them.

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:

First Responder Hearts

Last week, I had the blessing to participate in training involving several volunteer fire departments to prepare them for fighting liquid gas fires such as may be associated with propane, natural gas, or other forms of flammable liquid gas contained in storage tanks and pipelines. This live fire training enables firefighters to experience the teamwork required to approach liquid gas storage and transport devices with the objective to prevent what is called a “Boiling Liquid Expanding Vapor Explosion” or BLEVE for short. Obviously, this is a very dangerous process.

As I participated in the training, I noticed that we had a very diverse group in terms of age, gender, and ethnicity working together to approach the danger others would flee. It also caused me to think of those who are currently engaged in the destruction of our major cities using the excuse of so called “peaceful protest.” The former endeavors to save lives and restore the peace while the latter destroys public and private property, livelihoods, and in some cases, even lives.

Our main stream and political social media encourage the violence in our streets by spinning a political narrative designed to sow conflict and separate communities from their first responders; those who place themselves in danger to care for the safety of others. Bottom line,

the work of first responders such as our firefighters, law enforcement, EMTs (Emergency Medical Technicians), National Guard, and military is difficult and dangerous enough without having to face “peaceful protesters” hurling commercial grade fireworks, rocks, bottles, and other projectiles at them. (firehouse.com) Keep in mind, not all of our first responders are paid, there are those, such as the teams I had the pleasure with which to train, who are unpaid volunteers.

I had to ask myself, why is it we do not have more “first responder” hearts in our society? We might find that if we did, we would become a problem solving society which works together for the benefit of all rather than one consumed by constant struggles over political power.

During previous episodes, I mentioned the need for prayer to help bring peace to our day. We must pray that the Holy Spirit will touch hearts and turn them away from evil behaviors and towards the behaviors by which the greatest commandments might be fulfilled. We must also pray that we are granted the wisdom, courage, and strength, by which to encourage one another, in positive ways, towards the fulfillment of these commandments.

What are the greatest commandments? When Jesus was asked about the greatest commandment, as we are told in Matthew 22:36-40, He responded, “*You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment.*” Then, without prompting, He continued, “*The second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.*” Jesus, then explains, “*The whole law and the prophets depend on these two commandments.*”

Saint Paul tells us in Galatians 5:13-15:

13 For you were called for freedom, brothers. But do not use this freedom as an opportunity for the flesh; rather, serve one another through love. 14 For the whole law is fulfilled in one statement, namely, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” 15 But if you go on biting and devouring one another, beware that you are not consumed by one another.

Are the first responders with whom I trained perfect? No, especially not me, but as they endeavor to respond to and remove the danger which threatens their fellow children of God, of which we are all, they use their talents to fulfill the law of which Saint Peter speaks. They provide an example which we should all consider, even if our talents do not lead us to be first responders ourselves. Still, we can seek to have the first responder courage to care for those who surround us.

While this was a training event and safety for all involved was of great concern, it was still hazardous. We faced more than the flames, we also faced the heat of the day while in heavy protective clothing and breathing through compressed air tanks on our backs. As we worked to carry and control the water hoses and operate as a team, it did not take long to become drenched with perspiration. One of those training was overcome through dehydration, and suddenly a training event required real world attention. The training of those present kicked in to successfully render the aid required to help their teammate recover.

Not everyone is granted the gifts by which to face the dangers to which first responders run, but we must remember, God has created within each of us some talent by which we may help accomplish His will, which Saint Faustina reminds us is Love and Mercy itself. The question for each of us then, is have we discerned that gift and have we discerned the purpose to which God desires we put it so that His will may be done.

Why Catholics Do What We Do:

Saints – Part IX:

More American saints....

St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, S.C.

Feast day: January 4 Founder of the Sisters of Charity of St. Joseph. Considered founder of the Catholic School system in the US.

On August 28, 1774 Elizabeth Ann Bayley was born into this world. She grew up in New York and was raised in an upper class society. Even though she was raised in wealth, she lived a quiet and often lonely life. Reading was her solace and she read everything she could. Her favorite book was the Holy Bible and she spent her whole life studying it.

When she turned 20 years old, she married William Seton. He was a wealthy man and she loved him dearly. They were very happy in their marriage. To this marriage, five children were born.

The happiness would not last long, however. William's father died a few years after the marriage. The passing of his father left the young couple responsible for younger brothers and sisters as well as the family business.

Not long after taking on all the responsibilities of the family, young William fell ill. As his health declined, Elizabeth elected to pack him up and set sail for Italy. Doctors recommended this trip as a way to improve him. During this trip, William was to consult with business friends who would advise him on how to improve the business ventures which were failing.

Sadly, William's life was cut short by tuberculosis. Elizabeth was heart broken. Her only consolation was that in his ill health, William turned to God and died with visions of Heaven. Elizabeth had never parted from her faith and her devotion was intensified as she cared for her dying husband.

While in Italy, Elizabeth was introduced to the Catholic Church. The Italians who were around her were enchanted by her kindness and enjoyed spending time with her. They welcomed her into their homes and into their faith. Elizabeth was gently guided in learning the faith and fell in love with the teachings.

Learning that the body and blood of Christ was truly present in communion caused Elizabeth to make the full conversion. She longed to receive Jesus into herself completely.

Another strong calling to the Catholic Church for Elizabeth was the Blessed Virgin Mary. As a very small child, Elizabeth's own mother died, leaving her to live a very lonely childhood. Now she had learned from her Italian friends that The Blessed Virgin Mary desired to be her mother and she was delighted.

Elizabeth asked the Blessed Virgin to help her in her faith journey and in 1805 she became a Catholic.

Soon after her conversion, Elizabeth returned to America. With the death of her husband and the total failures of the family businesses, she was forced to seek employment to support her children and herself. She found a job in Baltimore, Maryland where she opened the first free Catholic school. She taught classes and was loved by children and other teachers alike. During the time of teaching, Elizabeth met other young women who joined her in practicing the Catholic faith. The women decided to start an order for women who would be dedicated to God and to teaching children the Catholic faith.

On March 25, 1809, Elizabeth and her companions took vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, that would be binding for one year. Since she also had small children from her marriage, provisions were made so that she could continue to care for her children. This was an important concession as the normal procedure for those who enter an order do so without children they are responsible for. At this time, she became known as Mother Seton.

In 1812, the Rule of the Sisterhood would be formally ratified. It was based upon the Rule of St. Vincent de Paul that was written for his Daughters of Charity in France.

These were some busy ladies. While running the Catholic school and establishing the Order of the Sisters of Charity, the women also opened two orphanages and another school. Today, there are six groups of sisters who trace their origins to Mother Seton.

Mother Seton, like her husband, contracted tuberculosis. During the final years of her life, Elizabeth felt God calling her home and delighted in thinking of this. At the age of 46, in 1821, Mother Seton died. She had only been a Catholic for 16 years and spent her life teaching others to love God and the Blessed Mother as wholeheartedly as she did.

On March 17, 1963 Elizabeth was beatified by Pope John XXIII. On September 14, 1975 she was canonized by Pope Paul VI.

We have talked about saints who were the first of something in the line of American Saints. Elizabeth Ann Bayley Seton was the very first native born American to be canonized.

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 , 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 161.

Discussion:

During the course of our last discussion, we addressed several areas where knowing ourselves requires assessment of relationships, spiritual weapons, resources, and training. Some might ask, but some of these things are outside of ourselves, so how is this an assessment of ourselves? We must remember, what is outside of us may still influence us; therefore, these things we discussed during our last two episodes are part of what makes us who we are.

We also mentioned the importance of honesty with ourselves. If we are not honest as to our strengths, weaknesses, and status of our abilities, we may reach for an empty weapon when we need the magazines full. We must recognize when our spiritual stores are depleted and we need refueling and rearmament. We must also recognize that the spiritual supply depot when our spiritual resources are low is the Church Christ built upon Peter, and the ultimate hospital for our soul is the Sacred Heart of our Lord.

I should also point out that even during times of peace, soldiers train for what they must be prepared to do on the battlefield. We must not be complacent in our training, and we must remember, one of the most important elements towards establishing an effective training plan is to know ourselves. We must also remember that when we complete a training cycle, we must evaluate the effectiveness of our efforts, revise our training plan, then, begin a new cycle.

As we mentioned last time, we hope you will find Armor of Faith Radio a resource to which you can turn to assist you in your spiritual and self-improvement training.

Today, our discussion turns to a related concept, which is to know our environment. Associated with this concept is something called situational awareness. The terrain of spiritual warfare is not the same as what we find in the physical world, for the terrain where the evil one seeks to engage us is through the spiritual terrain of our knowledge, values, and behaviors which influence the choices we make.

(Question 1: In the military, we assess terrain as to what is favorable to our operations and objectives as well as what presents obstacles to our ability to maneuver and see the enemy. As we extrapolate this concept to the spiritual realm, what is some of the spiritual terrain we should assess?)

- Knowledge of what God asks of us
 - ➔ Communicated through His angels, prophets, and His Holy Son
 - ➔ The Decalogue (Exodus 20:1-17, Deuteronomy 5:6-21)
 - ➔ The two greatest commandments (Matthew 22:36-40)
 - ➔ As explained in scripture
 - ➔ As taught by the Church Christ built upon Peter (Matthew 16:18-19)
- Our Values
 - ➔ As formed by what God asks of us
 - ➔ As influenced by those who teach us
 - ➔ As influenced by our experiences (both good and bad)

- ➔ As influenced by the good, evil, trials, and challenges which surround us
 - ➔ As influenced by the “values grooming” of the world (both good and evil)
 - Behaviors
 - ➔ Deadly behaviors (aka Seven Deadly Sins)
 - Pride
 - Lust
 - Over Indulgence
 - Greed
 - Sloth
 - Anger
 - Envy
 - ➔ Lively virtues
 - Humility
 - Chastity
 - Temperance
 - Generosity
 - Diligence
 - Meekness
 - Kindness
 - ➔ Cardinal virtues
 - Prudence
 - Justice
 - Fortitude
 - Temperance
 - ➔ Theological Virtues
 - Faith
 - Hope
 - Charity
 - ➔ As exercised by our choices (morality or immorality)
 - ➔ As exercised by our ministry and caring for others
 - ➔ As exercised by the harm which ripples from what we do or fail to do
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(Question 2: While the realm of spiritual warfare begins outside of this world, its consequences may manifest themselves in terms of our physical existence. **In what ways are this possible?)**

- Our relationships
 - How we address God's will for us
 - ➔ Our choices to act or fail to act
 - ➔ The good or harm which ripples from our actions or omissions
-

(Question 3: As we engage the spiritual environment of our society, we navigate a variety of means by which we are influenced and we may influence others. **What are some of these realms of influence upon our direction?)**

- Influencing Organizations
 - ➔ Family
 - ➔ Religious
 - ➔ Ministry
 - ➔ Academic
 - Scientific
 - History
 - Humanities
 - Literature
 - ➔ Political
 - ➔ Professional
 - ➔ Governmental (Legal Considerations)
- Media and Methods of Messaging
 - ➔ Print
 - ➔ Art
 - ➔ Audio
 - ➔ Video
 - ➔ Social Forums and Media
- Legalities
 - ➔ God's Law
 - ➔ Canon Law
 - ➔ Civil Law
 - ➔ Political Correctness
 - Political culture
 - Cancel culture

(Question 4: Aligned with knowing our environment we must also be aware of our situational surroundings. This is also known as Situational Awareness. **What should we consider in terms of our spiritual situational awareness?)**

- Our ability to perceive what is dangerous to our soul → Warning flags
- Our ability to assess the magnitude of danger
- Our ability to confront the danger (fight plan)
- Our ability to flee from the danger (exit plan)
- Don't assume away the danger
- Avoid complacency → overconfidence
- Beware of distraction
- Beware of deception
- Lens of our mood and desires

Quotes:

Saint Padre Pio on Spiritual Warfare

- Jesus permits the spiritual combat as a purification, not as a punishment. The trial is not unto death but unto salvation
- Let us always keep before our eyes the fact that here on earth we are on a battlefield and that in paradise we shall receive the crown of victory; that this is a testing-ground and the prize will be awarded up above; that we are now in a land of exile while our true homeland is Heaven to which we must continually aspire.
- In darkness, at times of tribulation and distress of the spirit, Jesus is with you. In such a state you see nothing but darkness, but I can assure you on God's behalf that the light of the Lord is all around you and pervades your spirit. . . You see yourself forsaken and I assure you that Jesus is holding you tighter than ever to His divine Heart.
- Jesus is always with you, even when you don't feel his presence. He is never so close to you as he is during your spiritual battles. He is always there, close to you, encouraging you to fight the good fight; he is there to ward off the enemy's blows so you won't be hurt.

Final Thoughts:

During our discussion today, we addressed assessment of our spiritual environment; the realms of influence upon our spiritual values, behaviors, and decision making; the need for our spiritual situational awareness; and how the spiritual terrain may influence our physical world as well as the battle for our place for eternity. While there are those who would lead us to believe that political correctness should be our guide, we must ask ourselves, how do the unwritten and ever shifting rules of such *ad hominem* logic provide us a clear path to what is right and just, or more importantly, our salvation?

As we assess our spiritual environment and endeavor to maintain our spiritual situational awareness, we can expect that the evil one will do whatever He can to confuse and confound us. If we study the Word of our Lord, if we look to the example of His life and the wisdom of His teaching, if we ask the Holy Spirit to be our guide; He will lead us to the favorable spiritual terrain which best enables us to help accomplish the will of God.

It is a concept of warfare that we do not want to engage the fight on ground favorable to the enemy. As we assess our environment, we are better able to seek the ground which is favorable to us. Let us always be wary of our surroundings and let us look for the opportunities to which God leads us, for if we rely in His wisdom, the evil one shall be at the disadvantage.

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 the spiritual warfare experienced by Saint Faustina and the lessons she learned from Jesus.

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: Spiritual Warfare – Part VI: What Jesus Taught Saint Faustina

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