



The Armor of Faith
Topic Summary: Spiritual Warfare
Part XIV: Defense of the Soul



Public Domain

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. In addition to being my lovely wife, as well as my blessing, Sharon is a youth and adult formation catechist; and we are also blessed to have on our panel, Donna Mae, who 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 am simply here to ask questions because I have an awful lot to learn – something of which my lovely wife reminds me often. 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 as well as their petitions for the blessings of Your great mercy.

Dear Lord, we lift up our hearts to ask for Your protection of Donna and enable her to accomplish her work, which she is doing with great love and devotion for You and Our Blessed Mother.

Dear Lord, we pray especially today for our nation. As political forces work to divide us and corruption weaves its way, we pray You will help every heart understand that we are all children of Your creation and that we are all called to join hearts, hands, and efforts so we may work together to help accomplish Your will, which Saint Faustina reminds us, is love and mercy itself.

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. We ask that you include the word “prayer” in the subject line so that we will give it priority and ensure we capture it and get it placed in 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 the course of our daily prayers.

We would like to remind you that you can listen to all of our shows on demand through any device with an audio component 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, Apple PodCasts, Spotify, and CastBox, among a host of 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 you to assist us in our 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 trust 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:

Media Context and Truth

Last time, as I spoke of the importance of understanding context, a story was unfolding. The initial media headline, through a variety of media outlets, began with, “Pope Endorses Civil Unions....” The headline of one outlet was, “Pope supports gay weddings in his documentary in Rome.” (Kubrick)

In one media publication, *USA Today*, the headline was, “Pope Francis endorsed same-sex civil unions. What does this mean for LGBTQ rights in the US?” As the article opens, the author shares quotes taken from the documentary, “Francesco.” The segment reads:

“Homosexual people have the right to be in a family. They are children of God,” Francis said in an interview for the documentary "Francesco." “What we have to have is a civil union law; that way they are legally covered.” (Bote)

The presentation of the Pope's quotes gives the impression that they were said together and perhaps connected as one resolving the other. We could interpret this as the Pope saying that civil union law legally covers homosexual rights to family. While this is the impression the media gives and indeed, what many who responded from different sides understood; the question we should have is whether this is what the Pope really meant or intended to message? These are his words, but are we hearing the full context in the media by which we may perceive understand the Pope's intent?

The article continues:

Catholics, as a whole, generally are among one of the more accepting sects of Christianity when it comes to same-sex unions. A Pew survey found that more than half of Catholics in the United States, along with Mainline Protestants and Orthodox Christians, support same-sex marriage. (Bote)

Suddenly, we jumped from the legal coverage of “civil unions” to “same-sex marriage.” That is a big leap from addressing the legalities of things such as common property, inheritance, medical powers of attorney, and government benefits; to the vocational responsibilities of the sacrament of marriage as blessed by God; but such leaps are easy for those with political agendas.

The author continued:

For LGBTQ advocates, Pope Francis' message was not just an endorsement of same-sex civil unions — a stance that he has, indeed, tacitly taken before. It's also approval of same-sex parents having the privilege of raising families. (Bote)

Wait, there is a difference between being “in” a family, such as we all are with our parents as well as extended family members and the “privilege of raising families,” so what did the Pope mean? What is he messaging to us about church teaching? How are we to understand this?

It isn't until towards the end of the article that we see these words:

However, Francis has repeatedly condemned same-sex marriage during his time as Pope — emphasizing the Catholic dictum of marriage remaining between a man and a woman in multiple statements. (Bote)

Wait, if the Pope has “repeatedly condemned same-sex marriage,” did he just flip-flop? There are a whole host of contextual questions we should have about how these statements of the Pope are being represented in the media. Given a lack of context, we are all left with assumptions and speculation, but do we have the full context from which to discern truth?

Last time, I mentioned that I usually find it is best to wait a couple of days, as additional context is brought forth through various sources; some accidentally and some by someone who exercises prudent due diligence. Five days later, Catholic News Service's Rome Bureau Chief, Cindy Wooden, wrote:

When Pope Francis said gay people have a right to be in a family and that gay couples needed some form of civil law to protect their rights, he was not saying that gay couples should have a right to adopt children. (Wooden)

Wooden continued to explain:

In his documentary “Francesco,” director Evgeny Afineevsky presented the statements as if Pope Francis had said them one right after the other; the director used the quotes immediately following a story about a gay couple with children.

Wooden later clarified:

In the interview with Alazraki, Pope Francis paraphrased his earlier responses, saying, “Homosexual persons have a right to be in the family and the parents have a right to recognize this son as homosexual, this daughter as homosexual. Nobody should be thrown out or be made miserable over it.” (Wooden)

The context of the conversation changes the perception. It says nothing about the Pope giving his “approval of same-sex parents having the privilege of raising families.” The context was the Pope's advice to parents with children who express same sex attraction.

Wooden also points out that the statements made by the Pope were cut from three different segments of an interview and put together such that they imply something the Pope did not link together as he presented his opinion. Wooden shared the Pope's quote about civil unions in greater context.

[The Pope said,] “I’ve always defended doctrine. And it is curious about the law on homosexual marriage — it is a contradiction to speak of homosexual marriage. But what we have to create is a civil union law, that way they are legally covered. I defended that,” he said, referring to his efforts to support an alternative to legalizing gay marriage that would still protect the rights of gay couples when it came to matters like inheritance, health care decisions and visitation when one is ill.

So, it is clear that the Pope was taken out of context. It is clear that those who did so went running with their own agendas; some to seize the ground of public opinion, some to praise the Pope, and others to take the Pope to task and express outrage; but the reaction was to what was taken out of context. Even bishops found themselves trying to reassure their flocks based upon the false context presented by the media rather than obtaining and presenting the true context by which to explain the intent of the Pope's words.

Unfortunately, even though I found greater context which reveals the media manipulation, I do not have the full context to tell you either, for the Pope has made many statements, both before

and after assuming the responsibilities of the chair of Peter. Some point out that the Pope could clear all this up with some simple clarification, but as I share my words with you little more than a week later, I am unaware that he has done so. Until his clarification comes, we are all left with assumptions and speculation. This is how gossip sows confusion, which the evil one uses to create doubt. This is but one example of how the evil one uses the media as an avenue of attack.

Perhaps the lesson here is that before we swing into full outrage mode, we should endeavor to learn as much relevant context as possible. I know that is a challenge, because life moves quickly and most of us do not have the time or resources by which to investigate, but if we are confused, let us ask the Holy Spirit to help us discover truth.

It may sound as if I am trying to defend the Pope or dig the Pope out of a hole he dug for himself, but I have a much greater concern, which is the Pope's silence about the way his statements were portrayed. The Pope's lack of clarity should concern us all. His silence fans the flames set by media deception – and it is deception when context is manipulated. I join with the youth in Saint Peter's Square who held the banner which read, “Holy Father, we ask for clarity on same sex unions.” (McLean)

Until we receive clarity, I should remind everyone of the section of the Catechism of the Catholic Church which addresses this issue. It is Part Three, Section Two, Chapter Two, Article 6, “The Sixth Commandment.” specifically paragraphs 2331 through 2400.

As the Pope considers his response, we can expect that anyone who sits in the chair of Peter will be under heavy spiritual attack as a means by which the evil one may scatter the flock. We must pray, then, for our Pope and all our clergy, that our Lord shall protect them as they are sent forth as teachers, ministers, and leaders of the faithful; that our Lord will protect them and help them preach with clarity as we engage the spiritual battle; and that our Lord will help us in our own understanding as well as help us recognize the wolves who roam among us in the clothing of sheep so that we may turn away from them and follow the voice of our Good Shepherd.

And now, to turn to a positive note!

Why Catholics Do What We Do:

Saints – Part XVIII:

Blessed Father Stanley Rother

Martyr, Missionary to Guatemala

On March 27, 1935, in Okarche, Oklahoma, Stanley Francis was born the first of five children to Franz and Gertrude Rother (pronounced ROW-ther). Like other American saints we have mentioned, young Stanley entered into a family that held great devotions to faith, family and farming. As the eldest of the children, Stanley took it upon himself to set examples of faithful living for his younger brothers and sister, Betty Mae, Jim and Tom. There was another baby sister, but she died as an infant.

By all accounts, the growing of this family was as normal as anyone could imagine. The family lived a short distance to the Catholic church in their neighborhood and all the children attended Catholic school from Kindergarten through high school graduation. The children participated in school and extra curricular activities like all the other kids and, just like all the others, they had farming chores to do as well.

As the eldest child, Stanley worked on the farm with his father. His mother guided him in his faith and he learned to love Our Blessed Lady and was a member of a club dedicated to her. As a family, they gathered each evening to pray the rosary and Stanley was known to have loved this devotional time.

When graduation from high school came about, Stanley, who was expected to take over the family farm announced that he wanted to be a priest. His parents were not surprised with this desire and his father quipped, that he should have taken Latin in school. He did not know at the time how prophetic he was.

In the summer of 1953, Mr. and Mrs. Rother drove their son to St. John's Seminary in San Antonio. This was a preparatory program for young men who were to enter the priesthood formation from high school. During this same summer, the parents drove their daughter, Betty Mae, to Wichita where she entered a convent, Adorers of the Blood of Christ Mother House. Upon entering, Betty took on the name of Sister Marita.

This was certainly a summer of quickly reducing the size of their family. The last two children at home were saddened by this departure. They would miss their siblings because of love for them, but more importantly to the younger children, they were left with picking up the chores that were left behind by Stanley and Betty Mae. Fortunately, Stanley's classes allowed him time to return home during harvest season. His younger brother, Tom, was especially happy for this help.

His love for manual labor was very evident during his years in the seminary. Whenever something needed to be done or a repair was called for or a chore needed to be done, he was first to jump on board for the task. He much preferred to do the labor tasks than to do his book learning. He was seen as a person who preferred time for meditation and this is what he did during the tasks he took on. Needless to say, his studies suffered, especially his Latin.

He did so poorly in his studies that he was sent home after the first year at the seminary. Sister Clarissa Tenbrink, one of his elementary teachers, heard of this and quickly sent him words of encouragement. She reminded him of St. Jean-Baptiste-Marie Vianney who, like Stanley, struggled with studies and especially Latin. She told him to remain faithful to his prayer time, just as St. Vianney did and because of this he is now the patron of all priests.

Stanley was presented to his Bishop for counseling and held fast his desire to be a priest. The Bishop advised him to spend the summer studying Latin and to focus on his theology studies. At the end of summer, Stanley was admitted to Mount St. Mary's Seminary in Emmitsburg, Maryland. Here he completed his studies.

Stanley was ordained a priest on May 25, 1963 in Oklahoma City. Father Stanley Rother was 28 years old and the happiest he had ever been. At his ordination, his remembrance card held a quote of Fr. Stanley which would be a reflection of his entire priesthood. The quote was, “For myself I am a Christian. For the sake of others I am a Priest.”

After being a priest for five years, Fr. Stanley volunteered to go as a missionary to Guatemala. In 1968 he arrived and immediately fell in love with the country and its people. He earned a new name as well. He became Padre Francisco. This is taken from his Baptismal name and was necessary because the Guatemalan people had difficulty saying Fr. Stanley.

Padre Francisco was very happy living among the farming families of Guatemala. He loved their hard work and zeal for life. They were happy with him and he with them. He learned their language and even helped them learn to write it.

The country itself was in a bad way and little wars were occurring all around. Violence found its way into his small community one day in the late 1970's. Gradually, people began to disappear. This was a difficult time and it was sad for Padre Francisco to see his parishioners leave.

In July of 1981, early one afternoon, three men snuck into the grounds of St. James Church. They took Padre Francisco and beat him severely. Then they shot him in the head twice. Father was 46 years old when he died. He was the first American priest martyred during Guatemala's 36 year guerrilla war.

Fr. Stanley lived his life as an example to others. He embraced his call to holiness and died in the same fashion.

In December 2016, Fr. Stanley was declared a martyr. On September 23, 2017, 20,000 people gathered in the Oklahoma City's Cox Convention Center to witness a ceremony declaring the beatification of Fr. Stanley Francis Rother. Among those present were his sister, Sister Marita and his brother Tom and his wife Marti.

The feast day for Blessed Stanley Francis Rother is July 28, the day he was martyred in 1981. His cause for canonization is still pending.

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 Blessed Stanley Francis Rother, 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 170.

Discussion:

Last time, we outlined a variety of avenues through which we may undergo spiritual attack. Our ability to defend our soul begins with awareness, but one of our challenges is to discern truth. In

the realm of deception and duplicity, the enemy does not want us to see the threat. He wants us to believe that our faith is but a segment of our lives; one which we must compartmentalize and hide from public view; one which we may only practice in the confines of our home or parish. He does not want us to see that our faith is the foundation of our lives, our values, and the choices we make.

Our faith is what guides us on our daily journey. A truthful understanding of our faith is what enables us to make decisions which are right and just and which help accomplish the will of God, but this is not possible if we do not endeavor to know the fullness of our faith and ask the Holy Spirit to guide us in understanding.

Stealth is a military tactic by which the enemy attempts to sneak up on us. The enemy wants to get as close as possible before we detect his presence and before we can raise defenses. Through his stealth, the evil one attempts to make us believe we do not need to worry about his avenues of attack so that we will leave them open and unguarded such that he can ambush and seize our soul. No matter how well the enemy sneaks up on us, for evil to do its damage, it must reveal itself. The question is, are we prepared such that we may recognize his approach such that we may repel him or at least mitigate his harm?

Remember, the nature of spiritual warfare is different from physical warfare. While spiritual warfare may manifest itself in some physical forms, the ground upon which spiritual warfare is fought is the ground which influences our understanding and our decisions. The avenues of attack are the means by which the evil one deploys his tactics of deception, distraction, temptation, and doubt.

(Question 1: When we consider the objective of the enemy is to seduce us to bad decisions, we mentioned last time that our behaviors become avenues by which the evil one attacks. We pointed to the Seven Deadly Sins, or really behaviors which lead to sin, by which the enemy will tempt us. **What behaviors may we use to set defenses by which the enemy's attacks through temptation might be frustrated?)**

Seven Deadly Sins (Behaviors)

- Pride
- Gluttony (Over Indulgence)
- Greed
- Sloth (Laziness)
- Anger
- Envy
- Lust

Seven Lively Virtues

- Humility
- Temperance
- Generosity
- Diligence
- Meekness
- Kindness
- Chastity

(Question 2: A major avenue of attack by which our values are influenced is media. **What are some of the means by which we may defend against and blunt this attack while building our knowledge, seeking entertainment, and maintaining awareness of current events?)**

Defensive Measures

- Examine sources for:
 - ➔ Fair presentation of relevant and true facts and context
 - ➔ Deceptive editing of context
 - ➔ Omission of relevant facts and context
 - ➔ Reliance on *ad hominem* attacks to seduce us to outrage
 - ➔ Stated and/or hidden agendas in relation to faith and morals
 - ➔ Reputation for ideological and/or political bias and objectives
 - ➔ Ideological language and code words – flags!
 - ➔ Subliminal seductions
 - ➔ Evidence of “values grooming” away from what God asks of us
 - Limit time with distractions (relaxation vs obsession)
 - Consider value of the time spent with sources → contribution to living our faith
 - Avoid sources which glorify and/or seduce us to accept deadly behaviors
 - Study the Word of God
 - Pray to know and understand the fullness of our faith
 - Live what God asks of us
-

(Question 3: Last time, I mentioned that we are heavily influenced by our relationships. **How might we engage our relationships to reduce our vulnerabilities?)**

Positive engagement

- Look for means to engage positive energy in conversation
 - ➔ Employ active listening (a rather difficult skill when emotions are high)
 - ➔ Employ the power of questions to facilitate understanding
 - ➔ Compliment positive interaction
 - ➔ Work from common understanding and common ground
 - ➔ Console
 - ➔ Remember the objective is to preserve the opportunity for dialogue, not to win an argument
- Engage with meekness
- Engage with kindness
- Engage with humility
- Take a breath and seek distance should anger swell
- Ignore ridicule and insults → turn the other cheek (cf. Matthew 5:38-48)
- Distance from abusive relationships
- Look for gaps in perception and understanding → Communication is always the hardest piece

Quotes:

– *Saint John Vianney*

I tell you that you have less to suffer in following the cross than in serving the world and its pleasures.

– *Saint John Vianney*

When we are tempted by pride, we must immediately humble and abase ourselves before God. If we are tempted against the holy virtue of purity, we must try to mortify our bodies and all our senses and to be ever more vigilant of ourselves. If our temptation consists in a distaste for prayers, we must say even more prayers, with greater attention, and the more the Devil prompts us to give them up, the more we must increase their number.

– *Saint Ignatius of Loyola*

The strategy of our adversary can be compared to the tactics of a commander intent upon seizing and plundering a position he desires. The leader of an army will encamp, explore the fortifications and defenses of the fortress, and attack at the weakest point.

Final Thoughts:

I must confess, we did not have sufficient time today to cover all the means by which we may secure the avenues through which we may expect Satan's attacks. We must also recognize that knowing the measures and applying the measures are two different things. The first requires knowledge, but the second requires not only knowledge, but also training and practice.

When a soldier steps on the field of battle, the quality of their training will be a critical factor towards working together, dealing with the unexpected, and adjusting to achieve objectives. If we do not avail ourselves of quality and frequent training, we will experience deficiencies in battle.

We must not underestimate the enemy. He has trained his demons across generations with great discipline, which leaves us at a disadvantage. Still, let us remember, we do not fight alone unless we choose to leave ourselves isolated on the battlefield. Remember, we are not talking about a war fought on dirt, but in the heart and mind. Let us seek to train effectively so we may know not only how to put on the whole armor of God, but employ it to effectively “*stand firm against the tactics of the devil*” and “*resist on the evil day*” to hold the ground of our soul. (cf. Ephesians 6:10-17) And, even if we should fail or fall wounded, let us remember the ultimate hospital for the soul, the Sacred Heart of Our Lord and Savior.

Wrap Up: Well, our time has once more come to an end. We hope you will be able to join us next time as we turn our discussion to means by which we may maintain watch over and defend the avenues over which the evil one mounts his attacks.

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 XV: The Spiritual Catapult

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