

Spiritual Warfare and Discernment of Spirits:

Attacks Upon the Devotion to “Our Lady of America®”

Part I:

Our Obligation to Seek the Truth in *All* Matters Concerning “Our Lady of America®”

Beloved daughter, there is so much untruth in the truth that is sought. Truth comes from Him who has been sent by my Son, the Spirit who is Truth. Pray continuously to be guided by this Spirit who is the true enlightenment. Many are those who seek truth from spirits who are false and lead only to a greater ignorance and a worse destruction. The Divine Spirit abides in my Son Jesus and is sent by Him. All other spirits are only true in Him, the Third Person of the Holy Trinity. (Complete Diary, “Our Lady of America®” to Sr. Mildred Mary (Ephrem) Neuzil, pg. 43, only available from the Our Lady of America® Center in Fostoria, OH.)

Many are concerned about the confusion and controversy in the public with respect to the devotion to Our Lady of America® and its promotion from two different centers with two different versions of the Diary, conflict over copyright and trademark, and a huge campaign to defame the remaining sister of the contemplative group to which the visionary belonged.

First of all, we must realize that all of us have **an obligation to seek the truth and that truth cannot be obtained without hearing both sides of a story and without reviewing ALL the information and ALL the facts.** *People can twist the truth but facts don't lie; they are what they are.* Also important in seeking the truth with respect to the devotion to Our Lady of America® is the need for a whole new investigation into what really happened to this little group of contemplative sisters who are so intimately and essentially tied to the mission and message of Our Lady of America® in a way no one else is. Equally important is the **issue of Canon Law and whether it was properly applied in the case of these sisters,** for Canon Law is written to guarantee justice and charity to members of the Church when there are disputes. It should provide due process and an appeal process to ensure that justice is served and charity maintained. Was it?

Another point to remember **is that anything said about Sr. Joseph Therese (Patricia Ann) Fuller, the remaining sister being defamed, would also have to be said about the visionary herself, Sr. Mildred Mary (Ephrem) Neuzil, and the foundress of Our Lady of Nativity Cloister, Sr. Mary Florecita Bidart, that “little trinity of victim souls” who chose**

to remain faithful to their vocation and to the essence of the religious life and the contemplative life as they understood it, even in the face of great misunderstanding and persecution. Sister Mildred mentions this in a December 6, 1955 letter to Father Leibold, her spiritual director, and later bishop and archbishop.

Sister Florecita has had much to suffer. As you mentioned before Father, great works always are accomplished only under misunderstanding and suffering. Most painful of all is the persecution meted out by otherwise good Religious.

In an April 27, 1955 letter to Sister Ephrem, Father Leibold referred to an article in *Time Magazine* on the importance of cloistered souls.

It might be noted that *Time Magazine*, which is about as secular in its thinking as any publication can be, yet that reaches millions all over the world, in a recent issue featured the life of our American Sisters and brought out how the Maryknoll Sisters amidst all their activity and calls for help in the whole world, have set aside a little group of cloistered souls to give them the ammunition for their world wide battles against paganism. It is really well done and coming from such a source should convince some who might think otherwise.

Rooted in this primacy of prayer, without which no ministry can bear its proper fruit, these three cloistered souls shared a common fate in God's Will and a common compassion in suffering for this cause of Our Lady's for the salvation of souls and the repair of the Church, a Church so in need of being cleansed from false teaching and that old heresy that the end justifies the means. **The Church has always taught, and the whole Pro-Life movement depends on this truth, that you cannot have a good end if you use evil means to get to that end.** The end does NOT justify the means.

When you have division, confusion, deception, persecution, lust for power, fame, glory and money, the twisting of truth and facts, manipulation of those in authority, the devil has gotten in. God does not, cannot, work like this. Who brought the devil in? When? And how? And why? We must ask these questions if we are to free the devotion for God's glory and God's purpose.

Our Lady of America is calling us to return to Faith and Purity, which implies that many of us lost these precious gifts over the years. Let's look at Faith. Faith builds on reason and does not contradict it, though it can transcend it, but Faith and reason demand a level of common sense. Faith also demands an understanding of spiritual warfare and discernment of the spirits, good or bad, which are always known by their fruits. Faith demands knowing the ways of God in absolute contrast to the ways of Satan. Scripture tells us all battles stem from that original battle of Lucifer standing against God in which Lucifer, in his pride, refused to serve and chose a life of disobedience to the Will of God. Henceforth he seeks to turn all other creatures away from God, too. He was thrust to earth and has become the Prince of this world with a great deal of power over temporal affairs. Recall the three temptations of Jesus and the promises of Satan for wealth and power and

glory in this temporal, material world, for that is all he can offer, precisely because his power is limited and ends in time. Since he can offer nothing truly inward, eternal or lasting, his ways always lead to self-destruction. A proper understanding of Our Lady of America®'s message calls us to our true wealth and glory, the interior life, the Divine Indwelling who gives us eternal life and the happiness that never ends, Eternal Love, not necessarily money, power or position. In fact, often God gives the opposite precisely to keep the person truly free, free for Himself and free from these alluring and fleeting mirages.

God does not need anyone but chooses to use us so He might share His own glory with us. Without the beatific vision, we cannot see His Face, so He humbly comes to us in lowly souls, annihilates them almost to nothingness so that He alone will fill them up and make Himself so clearly visible in them that everyone will know it is He, and it is His work that they do. They are victim souls and this is their holiness. His ways are Truth for He is Truth, the Alpha and Omega of everything. He is Justice for He alone knows the whole truth and knows the inmost secrets of every heart; nothing can be hidden from Him. He is Goodness because He is the source of all goodness; He cannot be the source of evil, though He might allow evil to bring greater good from it. He is Unity because He is One with the community of the Trinity. Although He has made the universe with all its enormous detail and wonders, He is simple for He is always One with Himself and there can be no falsehood or duplicity, no lies, deception or contradiction. God is all Truth, all Holiness, all Goodness, all Beauty. He is I Am Who Am.

Satan, on the other hand, is everything opposite. Being pure spirit, he is far more intelligent than man. Having made his choice not to serve God, he brought separation into his own being by breaking his communion with the source of his being. We know him as the Master Liar, the accuser, the epitome of trickery who can make the most evil things look "good", but he is everything but good. Since the human mind is inferior to that of an angel, albeit a fallen angel, it can be more easily manipulated. Choice comes from the will. Since the human will is made to choose good, how does it then choose evil? The will has to be tricked by the mind to think evil is good so that the will can embrace the evil as "good"; hence, truth is constantly twisted and manipulated to an evil end. Heresy and false teaching are the identifying features of Satan. Fraud of every kind, hypocrisy, attacks upon the innocent in pursuit of power, spiritual blindness, every impurity of body, mind and heart, are his earmarks. Our pride, like Satan's, is the root of our sins and leads to disobedience to God's Will and God's ways and toward envy of others as well, especially those humble souls whom God prefers over the proud. Many say money is the root of all sin in the secular world and that the power money brings is so often the source of corruption and politics. Is any large gift of money ever without strings? It is always enlightening to follow the money, even within the Church. Only that Sacred Humanity can bring us eternal life, eternal truth and lasting happiness and goodness, for He unites us to the source of it all and holds us in communion with that Most Holy Trinity. Only HIS gifts are truly free. If Satan were to appear to us as He really is, we would run from him, frightened by his utter

horror and violence. Is it any wonder, then, that he uses the glamorous people of this world, false Messiah types, to do his work for him, a “strike force” of pretenders who deceive, move into a situation, take over and then try to destroy the unsuspecting guileless ones they seek to replace? Jesus, the true Messiah, lays down his divine glory to pick up the lowly and the poor, us wretched sinners, and lifts us up, up into His own heavenly glory in contrast.

Original sin resulted when our first parents were seduced by the lie of Satan and surrendered to his power, thus turning away from God’s truth and goodness and light of discernment. Hence, all of us heirs are born with the darkness, the weakness that is sin. Jesus says “man is darkness; God is light.” We call this dark side of ourselves concupiscence or those 7 deadly tendencies that lead to the 7 deadly sins of pride, covetousness, lust, anger, gluttony, envy and sloth, which are rooted deep in our human condition; they are the source of so many of our temptations. Since we human beings were created to be free like God, we were given intelligence and free will like His. But--to be free one must have choice, so temptation and attacks by Satan become a fact of life that presents itself to challenge our choice for God and truth or for Satan and his fundamental lie that we can be god. Some of us like to play god.

Scripture speaks of the battle for souls as a battle between Satan and Christ, between the Powers and the Principalities of the fallen angels and the Church of Jesus Christ, His living body. Pope Leo XIII wrote the beautiful prayer to St. Michael, who had defended God’s truth and honor against Lucifer in the battle of paradise, when he had a vision of Satan arguing with Christ that he could destroy the Church if given enough time. Christ supposedly gave him a hundred years. Many believe the 20th century with its world wars and communism and atheism; the effects of industrialization and technology; the over glorification of secular humanism and science; the New Age and One World Order false gospels; the atomic bomb and the nuclear threats; terrorism and the looming fear of annihilation; the division and disobedience within the Church; the loss of Faith and Purity and modesty in dress and manner; the disrespect and undermining of Christian marriage and Christian family life; the demeaning of consecrated virginity and priestly celibacy; and worst of all, the massive attack upon the very sanctity of life itself, has been *that hundred years*. Is it any wonder then that we identify our present society, the result of the 20th century, a society on the brink of self-destruction, as a “culture of death?”

But God never abandons us. His Son, His Spirit and His Mother are His special gifts to us. Our Lady, the theologians tell us, comes when there is great heresy and false teaching. She has been appearing around the world in unprecedented numbers in the last hundred years, a bulwark against Satan, calling us back to Faith and Purity, to communion with the God Who dwells within. This loving Mother has favored us here in America during this time, coming as a last resort as she says, calling us to that reform of life that means moving away from the ways and material values of the world and back to the interior life, sanctification from within, true spiritual values. It is not what we do that

makes us holy; it is what we allow God to do in and through us, what He does for us, that makes us holy. Many do holy things but never become holy, because their hearts are not in communion with the Will of God. The human will, human reason, human respect and human ways have led many to self-worship and spiritual blindness; divine wisdom cannot take root in their souls. Purity of heart is missing, and purity of Faith, which is Truth.

In a letter to Father Leibold, dated December 2, 1959, Sister Mildred speaks on Faith and the Divine Indwelling, holiness from within, God's gift to us.

The appearance of Our Lady of the Divine Indwelling is of course a call to every soul to become pure living temples of God. Her life was very simple like ours yet in what depths of holiness she lived. Our Mother spent her life in Him, the Divine Presence within her. It is her desire that we imitate her above all else in this. For He alone is our sanctification. But if ours is not a living faith, if we must feel before we truly believe, then the Divine Guest becomes a stranger to us. We shun Him, we make excuses for our bad manners, for our boorishness, because we have not made ourselves acquainted enough with His interest in us. Our Lord is Someone Who lived centuries ago, one Who somehow couldn't have much sympathy for our sorrows and our problems and our joys. We forget that He is the living Christ, as alive now as He was then. Our trouble is lack of faith. We do not make of Him our personal Friend, wholly and deeply interested in all our affairs. If we lived from within, in His love, we would lead much different lives from without. It is only when miracles of grace are worked inwardly that God, through us, will be able to work His miracles outwardly.

O God, may we turn inward, deeply inward, not to seek ourselves but to discover You, always there, waiting, waiting for our love. Hold us, Lord, hold us there within that sacred space You created in each of us for Yourself alone, and keep us safe from all evil in Your unchanging Triune Love. Amen. Amen.

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