

# A warning against doubting devil's reality

By Father Paul Cuddy  
Courier Columnist

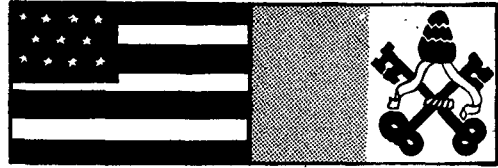
**Question:** Is there really a devil?

**Answer:** Some years ago, when the fad among progressive clergy was to contest or deny many Catholic doctrines, an extraordinary sermon was given at Guardian Angels Church in Henrietta. On October 2, the feast of the Guardian Angels, a cleric announced to the congregation that there are no angels. The congregation could not believe his message and Father John Klentjes, who was the pastor at the time, nearly had a stroke.

**Question:** But the question posed is this: Is there really a devil?

**Answer:** The Bible is clear about angels and devils.

A book which should be read by all Catholics concerned about catechetics and theology is *The Ratzinger Report*. The book consists of a 1985 interview given by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger to an Italian journalist, Vittorio Messori. The inter-



## ON THE RIGHT SIDE

view, entitled "The State of the Church Today," covers many important theological subjects such as the priesthood, bishops, Vatican II, morality, women in the church, liturgy and the Bible. In the chapter entitled "Some Last Things," Cardinal Ratzinger talks about the devil.

"No other topic unleashes such a storm of indignation among the mass-media of secularized society as the devil," he said. "In a general audience given in June, 1972, Pope Paul VI said, 'The evil which exists in the world is the result and effect of an attack upon us and our society by a dark and hostile agent, the devil.' Evil is not

only a privation but a living, spiritual, corrupt and corrupting being. A terrible reality, mysterious and frightening. The testimony of both the Bible and the church tells us that people refuse to acknowledge his existence; or they make of him a self-subsistent principle not originating in God, unlike all creatures; or he is explained away as a pseudo-reality, a fantastic personification of the unknown grounds of the evil within us."

Cardinal Ratzinger continued, "After adducing a series of biblical quotations in support of his statement, Paul VI continued: 'We know that this dark and destructive being really exists and is still active; the malicious seducer who knows how to penetrate us through the senses, the imagination, desire, utopian logic or disordered social contracts in order to spread error.'" (p. 136).

The movie "The Exorcist" created much interest in the devil. The present cult of devil worship concerns many of us. In my collection of religious articles and

books, I have 21 cassettes containing talks by Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen. One of my favorites is his talk on the devil.

Archbishop Sheen said that the frequent picture of the devil with a cheery smile, horns and a red suit is a simpleton's idea. He said that the devil is a horrible and vicious person.

When you finish listening to the archbishop you will have a theological and psychological idea of the spirit of evil. Anyone wanting a cassette can have one by sending \$3 — plus \$1 for handling — to me at 10 Lewis Street, Auburn, New York, 13021.

*The Ratzinger Report* should be in most public libraries, bookstores and in the library of many priests. Father McBrien does not approve of Cardinal Ratzinger, but after all he hardly approves of the pope.

Those involved in adult education or in catechetics, or even if they want a personal overview of contemporary Catholic theology, should have a copy of the book.

# Bread, fish symbolized Eucharist to early Christians

By Father Albert Shamon  
Courier columnist

Sunday's readings: (R3) Matthew 14:13-21; (R1) Isaiah 55:1-3; (R2) Romans 8:35, 37-39.

God's great gift to us is our free will. He will never violate it. God never forces us to do anything we don't want to do. He sought Mary's consent before making her the mother of the Son of God. For love is not love unless it is freely given. So the Gospel is an invitation.

Thus in the short passage of Isaiah, God invites us four times to come to Himself. "Come ... to the water" — be baptized. "Come ... eat, come ... drink" — be nourished by the Eucharist. "Come ... listen, that you may have life" — have faith, believe in Me.

In the Gospel, the crowds heed His invitation. They listen and they follow him. They hunger and they thirst, and He rewards them by giving them bread and fish — a symbol of the bread that will give them eternal life.

That bread is Himself, symbolized by the fish. The Greek word for fish is *ichthus*, which was a code word for Christians — an acrostic. The "i" stood for the first letter in Greek for the name of Jesus (*Iesous*). The "ch" stood for the first letters in Greek for the word Christ (*Christos*). The "th" stood for the first letter in Greek for God (*Theou*); the "u" for Son (*Uios*); and the "s" for Savior (*Soter*).

To the early Christians, *ichthus* meant *Iesous Christos, Theou Uios, Soter* — "Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior."



## A WORD FOR SUNDAY

Therefore, bread and fish together aptly symbolized the Eucharist for the early Christian: the bread, the Eucharistic bread; the fish, Jesus, Son of God, Savior, present under the appearance of bread.

In Matthew's account of the miracle, the emphasis is on the disciples. It is the disciples who bring the loaves to Jesus. Though Jesus blesses the loaves, it is the disciples who distribute them to the people. Matthew is concerned about emphasizing the ministry of the church, which is to feed the multitudes with the bread of life.

The Gospel teaches two things:

- First, it teaches us to be generous with God. The lad gave all he had, there were 12 baskets left over. Store the seed and it will not grow. Scatter the seed and it will swell into a harvest. Give and you shall receive.

- Secondly, it teaches us about the providence of God. Providence means to provide. As Abraham told Isaac, "God

will provide." And he will — as He did for the hungry crowds.

But you say that people die every day of starvation. The good suffer and the wicked prosper. Where is the Jesus who talked about feeding the birds of the air and clothing the lilies of the field? Who knows even the number of hairs on our head? God is there. His purpose is often fulfilled through suffering. The Portuguese have a saying: "God writes straight in crooked lines."

Remember the story about Joseph in the first book of the Bible? Joseph was goodness personified, yet his half brothers hated him. They sold him into slavery. Loyalty to virtue earned him more crosses — imprisonment. Yet in the end Joseph not only triumphed, but he saved God's chosen people. The cross can often be a blessing in disguise.

A short rhyme goes like this:

*He knows,  
He loves,  
He cares,  
Nothing this truth can dim,  
He gives His very best to those,  
Who leave the choice with Him.  
He only asks one thing from us: Trust.*

In order to get our trust, Our Lady asked at Medjugorje that every Thursday we read Matthew, 6:24-34.

# Dr. James Evans to head school

ROCHESTER — Dr. James H. Evans Jr., a scholar in black studies, was named president of Colgate Rochester Divinity School/Bexley Hall/Crozer Theological Seminary July 24. The appointment ended a seven-month search by seminary officials.

Dr. Evans, who will assume his duties as president at the end of August, is the first black person to head the seminary since it was established 173 years ago.

The announcement of Dr. Evans' appointment was made by Thomas S. Richards, chairman of the board of trustees. More than 200 candidates were considered for the post.

Dr. Evans has been a member of the divinity school faculty since 1979. A professor of theology and black church studies, he was appointed in 1984 to the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Chair and is currently serving as dean of the seminary's Black Church Studies Program.

Granville A. Seward, chairman of the search committee, said the committee found in Dr. Evans "that combination of vision, experience and skill that we have been seeking in our new president."

Dr. Evans succeeds the Rev. Larry L. Greenfield, who has been on sabbatical since announcing his resignation from the school about a year ago.

"I am honored to have been elected president of this divinity school to whose vision of theological leadership I have become committed," Dr. Evans said.

Renowned for his writings, Dr. Evans is author of *Black Theology: A Critical Assessment and Annotated Bibliography and Spiritual Empowerment in Afro-*

*American Literature: Frederick Douglass, Booker T. Washington, Rebecca Jackson, Richard Wright, and Toni Morrison.*

He is in the process of completing another book, *We Have Been Believers: Faith, Freedom and Black Theology*, and has also written numerous articles in academic and theological journals.

A native of Detroit, Dr. Evans earned a bachelor's degree from the University of Michigan in 1971 and a master of divinity degree from Yale University four years later. In 1979, he received a master of philosophy degree from Union Theological Seminary in New York City, and he earned a doctorate from the New York City seminary a year later.

He is married to Dr. Estella Norwood Evans, who chairs the social work department at Nazareth College. The couple has three children.

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