

Dear Parishioners

Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came into this world to liberate us from Satan and the power of evil. Jesus did this by his own obedience and death on the cross. Jesus has won the victory but the war is still on between God and Satan for our hearts and minds. The following article which appeared on the Catholic Exchange website on June 26, explains how the gifts of the Holy Spirit empower us to fight for our freedom.

With my prayers
Father Conley

Spiritual Warfare & The Church: *Equipped to Conquer* by Venatius Oforka

The Church is the Body of Christ, instituted by Christ as a means of assisting souls to be saved. Christ Himself is the head of this Body, and all the baptized are the members. It was founded to continue the mission of Christ, the hope of the sinking world and of battered humanity. It is for this reason that the Catholic Church describes the Church of Christ on earth as a Church militant. It should be a warring Church indeed, a Church at battle with all the spiritual dark forces in the heavenly places in order to liberate souls held captive and to lead them to salvation.

The Church is constituted to resist the efforts of the enemy to distract many from the righteous path and conduct them away from salvation, which Christ won for them with His blood. Its task is, no doubt, intimidating — fighting against forces that are invisible, more knowledgeable, wiser, more astute, more patient, more persevering, and, above all, more powerful. It is for this reason that the Lord did not send the early disciples into battle immediately after His Resurrection, nor at the time of His Ascension into heaven, but said to them: “Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised” (Acts 1:4, NIV). He acknowledged the complex and challenging nature of the mission. As a result, He did not send the early Church into the battlefield before she was adequately equipped to engage her powerful and intelligent enemies in combat.

The Church would become His battle-ax and continue the war against the dark forces. So, the Lord needed to vest the Church with the essential powers and authority through the anointing of the Holy Spirit to make her battle ready. With this configuration, the Master made the status of the Church dwarf the intimidating nature of the spiritual forces of darkness. The enemy could then be powerful, knowledgeable, wise, astute, patient, and persevering, but the empowerment of the Church through the Pentecost outpouring has made her more powerful, more knowledgeable, wiser, more astute, more patient, and more persevering than the evil one. And on Pentecost the Apostles' hands were anointed for war and their arms prepared for battle (cf. Ps. 144:1). The powers

inherited by the Church are obviously enormous. Now, all who are baptized into the death and Resurrection of Christ, as members of His sacred Body, have a share in this divine empowerment. These are, put in another way, the authority of those who believe in Christ Jesus.

It was on this wealth of authority that the early Church fed. In the early Church, great manifestations of the Holy Spirit were experienced. There were very many conversions. True testimonies of healing, miracles, and other divine manifestations followed the ministry of believers and confirmed that Christ was the head of His Body, the Church. They shed their blood and did not shrink from the threat of death in their determination to accomplish and defend the mission the Master entrusted to them: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations . . . teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you” (Matt. 28:19–20). They were overwhelmingly persecuted but were never intimidated. The storm they experienced was very tough, but their light kept on burning. They never gave up. The more they were persecuted, the more passionate their zest for the missionary mandate became. They drank copiously from the well of their authority as believers and thrived as the Master expected.

When one would think that these early believers would break, they prayed the more for more infilling with the power of the Holy Spirit. They asked God for the confirmation of His word with signs and wonders. God answered their prayers generously.

He blessed their efforts and perseverance abundantly. These holy men and women, who planted the seed of the gospel with their sweat and blood, took over many nations that were previously completely pagan territories and succeeded in incarnating the gospel in these cultures. So many of them had language and cultural barriers, religious and climatic oppositions, yet they were able to capture territories for the Master. The phenomena of those days proved the word of God to be truly “living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword” (Heb. 4:12). The powers given to the Church were adequately utilized by the believers of these early centuries, and the result was phenomenal.

The events of this early period were not simply because the Church was at her nascent stage and needed to be established with such evidence of great manifestations, as some theologians would like to argue. If that were the case, then the power of the word of God was limited to that period, and the authority of the Church to conquer evil was not intended to go beyond this early period. This would mean that from the onset, the life span of the Church was meant to be brief. This would have been unfortunate. If the word of God had come to us lame, could there have been any ground for us to call confidently upon the name of God or even believe in Him? Should we have had any reason to abandon the

religion of our ancestors for the Christian religion? No one should, therefore, take God for a liar.

To accept a feeble theological apology in defense of the Christians' failures to exploit the power in the authority bequeathed the Church would be escapist. The achievements of these fiery men and women of God were rather because of their conviction about the message they received, their commitment to disseminating it, their determination to live in accordance with its dictates, their readiness to feed the sheep of the Master according to the Master's stipulations, and their consistent engagement in the spiritual battle aimed at populating heaven. They took Jesus and His injunctions very seriously. They were ready to do anything legitimate, sacrifice anything, for the mission they received on trust as the truest of values. The Christians of today have therefore so much to learn from these brethren of theirs, if they are to thrive in this generation. Since it is essentially the same Church that lives on today, the same effect will be produced if the actions the early Christians took are taken today. The past challenges the present. It is time that the Church in this generation rediscovers the secrets of the success of these men and women who came before and now, marked with the mark of victory, rest in glory.

If our generation must be won for God, and if the Church must still be relevant today as the moral conscience of the world, the Church must repossess the intense zeal of the early Church, her audacious courage, her uncompromising faith, and her unflinching fidelity; she must master above all the art of intercession. This means that the Church must return to her roots. Christians must rediscover their origin and true identity. When we reclaim the wisdom of the early Church, the missionary fire will be lit again and the flame of conversions and re-conversions will burn brightly. The Church is never meant to be a cold room, but it appears presently that many flies are buzzing in and around the churches comfortably because of the coldness of decay in them. Of course, it is only on a cold stove that flies can perch. When the zeal of the apostles and the first-century Christians fully resurrects, every fly must either die or take flight.

Editor's note: This article is adapted from a chapter in [The Art of Spiritual Warfare](#).

Last Sunday in my homily I mentioned that just as we know we can always go to Jesus the Lamb of God to receive mercy, we should also pray to the Holy Spirit for "free re-fills" of His fire and grace. The article below from the *Word Among Us* explains how the Holy Spirit re-fills us through the sacraments.

AMAZING OPPORTUNITY FOR OUR PARISH!
An anonymous parishioner has pledged to match donations to our Well Fund up to the amount of \$61,250, which is half of the cost of the project. As of this week we have raised \$46,552.00.

So, if we can raise just \$14,948.00 more, the entire cost of the well project will be covered without us having to deplete our savings. Please, if you haven't contributed to the fund yet or can contribute a bit more, your donation will be doubled in value. As our generous donor put it, "Let's get this project done!"

THE WILD GOOSE: Discovering a Deeper Relationship with the Holy Spirit Twice a month on Thursday evenings from 6:30-8:45 in the hall. Dinner included. Cost is \$10. Join fellow parishioners for learning, discussion, prayer & praise about the Holy Spirit! Sessions continue on 7/12, 7/26, 8/9, 8/23. It doesn't matter if you can't attend every session. Each night will have its own graces. You can sign up in the foyer or by contacting Fr. Conley at 301-870-2220 ext 13 or frconley@comcast.net

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MASS INTENTIONS FOR THIS WEEK:

SUN: 8am Maurice Long, Sr., 10am Elise Mire

12N: Parishioners, **MON:** 8am Janet Joy Brillantes-Villegas, **TUES:** 8am Donald Pobst, **WED:** 8am Benjamin M. Edelen, **THURS:** 8am Maurice Long, Sr., **FRI:** 9:30am Mary T. Edelen, **SAT:** 9am Rev. Arnold DePorter, 4pm Devin Wilson.

PLEASE REMEMBER IN YOUR DAILY

PRAYERS: Stephen Balenger, Mary Bowes, Bill Branick, Deacon Gene Burroughs, Brenda Callahan, Frances Card, Joe Cross, Agnes Curtis, Chuck Davis, James S. Dorsey, Kendall Farrell, George Fassel, Arlene Gandolfi, Martha Gehring, James Gibson, Judy Istvan-Windsor, Irma Johnson, Regina Kijesky, Marie Knobel, Lillian Komar, Susie Logan, Jim Middleton, Mary Emma Middleton, Larry Miller, Joseph Mona, Wayne Mullings, Ryan Myers, Joseph Quade, Mary Reeves, Sylvene Savoy, William Leon Savoy, Edna Sweeney, Eva Washington, Beth Weise, Tim Welch, Brice Zimmer.

OFFERTORY COLLECTION LAST WEEKEND:

\$9,817.50. The unidentified donations totaled \$488.50. We received \$637.75 for our school support.