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Speak of the Devil – Having the “Rite” Take on the Demonic

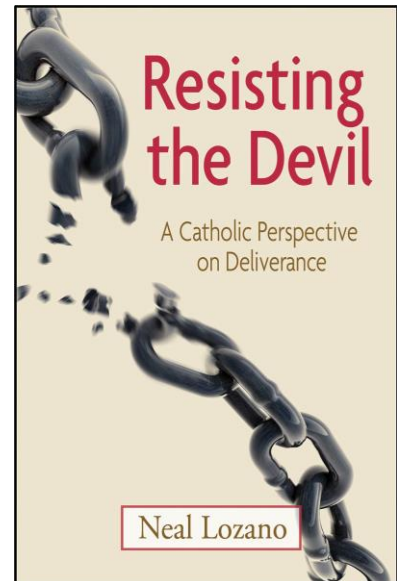
HUNTINGTON, Indiana, February 4, 2011 – Given people’s continued fascination with exorcism, now embodied in the latest of a long line of films about it (“The Rite”, starring Anthony Hopkins), many still get their “facts” about the diabolical from Hollywood rather than the Catholic Church. But long before a person is gripped by demonic possession, he may grapple with a particular sin or personal problem, or despair, or succumb to recurring guilt or obsession.

In the spiritual realm, there is a wide range of demonic activity: on one end of the spectrum is temptation – on the other, demonic possession. Temptation not resisted leads to sin, unhealed sin may lead to compulsion, then later demonic influence – and all of it unchecked leads to further spiritual and psychological bondage affecting all aspects of a person’s life.

“One in five young adults suffers from a personality disorder strong enough to be considered a mental illness,” cites Neal Lozano, from a December 2008 Associated Press article. In Lozano’s latest book, **Resisting the Devil: A Catholic Perspective on Deliverance** (Our Sunday Visitor, 2009, 176 pp, \$16.95), he explores the sometimes unseemly connection between personality disorder, mental illness, and demonic influence. Lozano travels worldwide presenting training seminars and conferences on deliverance to help people recapture their spiritual freedom. “With such large numbers of people affected, many people – including many Catholics – are emotionally and psychologically troubled. Many stop returning to Christ for healing, avoiding repentance, sacraments, and confession.”

It’s when they become estranged from God that real trouble begins.

“This is when sin becomes compulsive, and victory may not be found through prayer or the sacraments,” says Lozano. “For many at this juncture, the excuses developed through distorted reasoning begin to sound like good justifications. ‘Why should I tell my sins to a priest when I



can go directly to God?’ they may say, or they support sin by thinking, ‘If I am not harming anyone...’”

Soon their discomfort becomes a huge gulf, Lozano says, and in their isolation they don’t know how to return to God. “What began as a struggle grows into an enslavement in a swamp of darkness ... and it has a perpetrator: Satan.”

This isolation breeds another form of interior imprisonment: fear. “Fear is the language of the devil,” says Lozano, “and distracts us from trust in Jesus for healing and help. Fear makes us believe the lie that there is no help for us apart from ourselves.” When the normal practices of Catholic life and devotion do not dislodge this lie, says Lozano, people need assurance that God – through His Church – still has a provision.

“God has given us both exorcism and deliverance as special weapons for spiritual warfare,” says Lozano, “and neither is well understood.”

Resisting the Devil clarifies the ‘blurred, ill-defined’ distinctions between exorcism and deliverance. Used only in extreme cases of spiritual bondage, exorcism necessitates a priest to do battle with Satan on a possessed person’s behalf. Deliverance, on the other hand, is the effort – through prayer, counsel and spiritual direction – to take hold of the authority one has been given through Christ to see beyond Satan’s lies, and break free of the particular oppression that afflicts him.

“Because a person suffering demonic influence can often be helped through deliverance (prior to actual demonic possession), the need for exorcism should be rare,” says Lozano.

In **Resisting the Devil**, Lozano shows:

- how to recognize the activity of evil spirits;
- how deliverance from spiritual bondage can be gentle and effective;
- ways deliverance differs from exorcism;
- testimonies of those who have been freed from demonic influence through deliverance – without exorcism.

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