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# EVICT THE TENANTS!

So many images to share with you for this one! The first is from a talk I heard by Babsie Bleasdel. It's the image of a landlord — or landlady — evicting tenants.

It's a pretty harsh image, and it brought to mind another harsh image — the scene where Jesus used a whip to drive the money-changers out of the temple because they were defiling His Father's house (Jn 2:12-22).

Babsie, of course, was talking about a different temple, the living temple of the body. “Do you not know,” asks St. Paul, “that you are the Temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells within you?” (1 Cor 3:16-17).

What defiles this temple of God that dwells within? The unwanted tenants that occupy our hearts. “Out of the heart,” the Lord tells us, “come evil intentions, murder, adultery, fornication, theft, false witness, slander. These are what defile a person” (Mt 15:18).

Babsie explained that we all, at times, entertain some pretty undesirable guests in our hearts. We may not have consciously invited them, may not even know they’re there; but they have taken up residence and are unwilling to leave on their own. They are defiling the temple, and we need to get rid of them — to clean house, so to speak.

How do we evict them? We choose the whip that is best-suited for the type of tenants we’re dealing with. Let me give you another image that may help.

### *Who’s on the Throne?*

Christ told us that the Kingdom of God is within us (Lk 17:21). As in every kingdom, there’s a king, seated on a throne. Your heart is the kingdom. Who’s on the throne? If it’s not Jesus Christ, you have some evicting to do. As the lyrics of an old hymn express it, “Cast all false idols from the throne. The Lord is God and He alone.”

What’s an idol? Anything, or anyone, that you have allowed to become more important than God. It can even be something good — your job, your appearance, your social life, sporting



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events, even religious activities — anything that you’ve become so attached or addicted to that you are neglecting your responsibilities to other people and failing to keep God at the center of your life.

How do you cast these idols from the throne? It may be that all that is needed is an extension of “taking off your shoes.” Just close your eyes and imagine entering your heart. See the throne, and try to discern who or what is sitting there.

If nothing specific comes to mind, ask the Lord to help: “Lord, if there’s anyone or anything that I’ve allowed to become so important that it’s pushed You off the throne, get rid of it. Come into the temple of my heart with Your whip and drive out anything that is not of You.”

### *The World, the Flesh, and the Devil*

At other times, we may need a stronger cleansing of the temple. You may have heard that the temptations that beset us often come from the world, the flesh, or the devil — or sometimes all three.

- ***The World*** Looking into our hearts, we may find that the throne has been occupied by secular attitudes, ideas, values, concerns, or ambitions fostered by the world around us.
- ***The Flesh*** On a deeper level, we may discover that Christ has been pushed off the throne by needs,

attachments, self-centered desires, or resentments that stem from our own human weakness — what the Church calls *concupiscence*, our inclination to sin.

- ***The Devil*** Deeper still, there may be evil spirits that have found an entryway. The cartoon portrayals of a little red devil whispering in one ear and a little bright angel whispering in the other reflect a real battle raging around or within us much of the time.

And so, St. Paul exhorts us, “Put on the armor of God so that you may be able to stand firm against the tactics of the devil. For our struggle is not with flesh and blood but with the principalities, with the powers, with the world rulers of this present darkness, with the evil spirits in the heavens” (Eph 6:11-12).

Am I suggesting you might be “possessed?” No! That you need an exorcist? No! Evil spirits try to confuse us, influence us, exhaust us, and draw us away from God in all sorts of ways. In most situations, it’s not a matter of a spirit taking control of you; it’s more comparable to being surrounded by a swarm of nasty mosquitoes that irritate and distract you so that you just can’t function as well.

We’ll come back to how to get rid of the “mosquitoes,” but first let’s look at some examples of how “the world, the flesh, and the devil” often work together to occupy our hearts in a way that can gradually draw us away from God and even cripple us spiritually.



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- A 20 year-old college student, through books, the news media, movies, teachers, and discussions with friends, is exposed to secular ideas and anti-religious attitudes (*The World*). His prayer life begins to suffer, he stops going to Mass, and he begins questioning the authority of his parents and the teachings of the Church (*The Flesh*). Finding an entryway, spirits of confusion, self-centeredness, and rebellion enter his heart (*The Devil*). He's frustrated and unhappy, but doesn't know why.
- A young girl, growing up in a family environment of violence and rejection, experiences constant criticism, neglect, and physical abuse (*The World*). Feeling somehow to blame, she withdraws into herself, vowing that she will never be like them and never allow herself to be hurt again (*The Flesh*). Finding an entryway, spirits of insecurity, abandonment, and unforgiveness enter her heart (*The Devil*). She's feels isolated and unable to find meaningful relationships with others.
- A middle-aged, married man is exposed to sex-based TV, computer, and magazine ads and explicit sex scenes in movies and novels (*The World*). He finds himself giving in to impure thoughts and sexual fantasies and begins looking at pornography on his computer (*The Flesh*). Finding an entryway, spirits of lust, addiction, and despair come into his heart (*The Devil*). He wants to be free of this, but feels completely helpless.

A few years ago, I was given a really helpful book that makes it easy to recognize the kinds of entryways that spirits use to influence us. It's called *Unbound: A Practical Guide to Deliverance*, and it's written by Neal Lozano, a great Catholic teacher and writer.

Lozano shows how sneaky these uninvited guests can be, waiting for a door to open even a little so they can stick a foot in and get a toehold on our lives. And he provides very practical ways that we can get rid of these “mosquitoes” by identifying the doors we have opened and learning how to close them. It's well worth reading.

Another writer and spiritual director, Fr. George Kosicki, CSB, also teaches about the devious tactics of evil spirits, and he has a favorite “whip” or “battle technique” for getting rid of them. He calls it “Squashing the Bug.”

He explains that Satan and his cohorts know our weak points, so they use the same old “knapsack of tricks” over and over again to get us to yield to anger or fear or jealousy or self-pity or impurity, etc., etc. We need to first identify the trick being used and then turn to Mary.

“She is the one,” Fr. Kosicki says, “who crushes the head of the serpent with the heel of her offspring. As the heel, the humblest, lowest part of the Body of Christ, we, the children of Mary, experience the bite of Satan. But we can turn to our Mother to show us how to crush the head of Satan” (See Gen 3:15 and Rev 12:17).



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“How do we do it?” he asks. “With a laugh. With the joy of the victory that has been given to the Woman. We can turn to Mary with a laugh and say: ‘Mary, look at the old boy. He’s using the same old trick of anger. Step on his head, Mary. *Squash the bug!* Crush that serpent with your heel. The victory is yours, Mary, and is given to us, your offspring. *Squash the bug!*’”

Another “whip” that Fr. Kosicki recommends is the daily practice of taking authority over evil spirits in the name of Jesus — a kind of spiritual maintenance. I’ve adapted his authority prayer and included it here as a sample for you. You don’t have to use this exact wording, but can modify it in whatever way works for you. The only necessary ingredient is to take authority in the name of Jesus by the power of His Precious Blood.

### Authority Prayer

By Fr. George Kosicki and Vinny Flynn

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Thank You, Jesus for Your Eucharistic presence here and throughout the world. Thank You for Your passion, death, and resurrection, and Your victory over sin, death, and Satan. Thank You for giving the victory to Mary and, through her, to us.

In the name of Jesus Christ and by the power of His Precious Blood, I take authority over you, Satan, and all you other evil spirits in or around me or \_\_\_\_\_ . [*List names of family members,*

*friends, or others who come to mind.]*

I set the Blood of Jesus upon you, especially you spirits of \_\_\_\_\_. [*List whatever spirits come to mind*], and I order you to be gone, bound to Jesus, never more to interfere with our lives.

Lord, Jesus, we belong to You. Fill us with Your Holy Spirit. Fill us with Your mercy. Send Your angels to guard and guide, comfort and instruct us, so that we may love and serve You every moment of our lives.

[*Say the "Our Father" and conclude with, "For the kingdom and the power and the glory are Yours, now and always and forever. Amen."*]