

## PASTORAL COUNCIL

### Thoughts For Reflection

February 7, 2016

#### *Superstition vs Supernaturalism*

There are a good number of Christians—especially Catholics, I have to say—whose devotional practices verge on the superstitious. If a Catholic is living like the devil but wears the brown scapular because the Blessed Virgin promises that anyone who wears it will be delivered from hell, he's being superstitious. If someone thinks just because they pray this novena or go through the motions to win that indulgence (but they are not properly disposed spiritually) that it will have an automatic benefit, they're being superstitious.

It is easy to think that the opposite of being superstitious is to be materialistic and dismissive of everything supernatural. Untrue. The true balance to superstition is... supernaturalism. The truly supernatural view is based on the foundational belief that the grace of God is working in our world and through our lives. It allows for and expects miracles. It understands that God's grace comes to us especially through the sacraments, that we draw closer to him through sacramental. But it rejects any magical interpretation, and always involves the human reason and human will in the interaction between this world and the next.

God's working in the world always flows from and is oriented to his primary interaction—the incarnation of His son in human flesh. All supernatural works of God in the world flow from and return to Jesus Christ—Son of God and Son of Mary.

Supernaturalism... is God's grace coming to us through the natural world. In superstition we try to impose our will. In supernaturalism we try to conform to God's will. In superstition we do something to get our way. In supernaturalism God does something to change us to his way. This is why when we do bring our prayer requests to God, we always include the prayer, "According to your will."

The devotions of the Church are given to us to provide the words and ways for our love of God to be expressed. They provide a method and system for our contrition, our submission to the Divine Will, and a way to draw closer to Christ. They must be accompanied by true conversion of heart, genuine contrition, true devotion, and an unwavering trust in God, in whom we live and move and have our being.

*Abbreviated from Fr. Longenecker, National Catholic Register*