

Faith On Fire!

Catholic Charismatic
Renewal Center
Diocese of Erie



Reflections on 'The Greater Things'

OCTOBER—NOVEMBER 2022
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"Amen, Amen, I say to you, whoever believes in me will do the works that I do, and will do greater things than these, because I am going to the Father." (John 14:12)

Exorcist Diary #196: Priests Cursed by Witches Msgr. Stephen Rossetti



"The Exorcism of the Garasenes Demoniac", Sebastian Bourdon, 1653

"Sarah's" mother was a high-ranking satanic priestess who introduced her daughter to the practice of witchcraft when she was very young. Sarah said each week six witches gathered to curse priests and the bishops by name. They sat around an effigy of the priest and ritually cursed him. She added that there were many covens in her area and all were weekly cursing different priests.

In her 20's, Sarah had been practicing witchcraft for twenty years and it was taking its toll. She couldn't sleep. She had horrible dreams. She had no energy. She was mentally and emotionally a wreck. She wanted out and sought help from a priest exorcist. He welcomed her and prayed over her weekly for a year. It turns out she had been fully possessed but, finally, she was freed.

While practicing witchcraft, Sarah did not realize that the person who was first and foremost cursed by her rituals was herself. She did not know that their "powers" really came from the actions of demons. She unwittingly had been a servant of Satan. Upon liberation, she was very grateful to God for freeing her.

The Exorcist shared that one of the most powerful interventions during the sessions was the rosary. He said, "It was like throwing petrol on a fire"-- the demons howled in agony. Likely the Virgin Mother's holiness, as the perfect woman and mother, was particularly odious to those demons who promoted a distorted and evil image of both.

Priests (or anyone) living a solid Christian life of sacraments and virtue are largely protected from the curse of a witch, although some harassment is possible. We exorcists just assume we are being regularly cursed. If one steps out from under the Church's protection and/or strays into sin, the curses can more easily take root and cause havoc.

The number of people practicing witchcraft in our country is rising exponentially. The number of priests is dropping. There are spiritually difficult times ahead. But, in the final analysis, all the witches in the world are powerless in the presence of Christ.

TAKE A DRIVE WITH ME Jaci Phillips, PhD

There was a time over 20 years ago when something happened that was upsetting and difficult. It became a consuming spiritual battle.

One day the Holy Spirit made me aware that my thoughts were being consumed by thinking nearly constantly about the details of the situation. The Holy Spirit gave me immediate awareness that this kind of preoccupation was not of God. This was the enemy using a situation that truly was bad to get me to focus on the situation instead on HIM, the only one who had any real power in the situation.

Ok. But *seeing* the problem is different than *changing*. Honestly, the thoughts were so automatic that I didn't know *how to stop* thinking about it after I recognized it. Again, with the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, I remembered that praise and worship was spiritual warfare in the Bible. It occurred to me that putting on worship music and praising God might help me in this battle.

So I set out the next morning to contend for victory with this issue that had been plaguing my mind. As I was traveling that day, I had to drive from 12th and Greengarden all the way up to West Grandview. Ready for the battle for my thoughts and attention, I put on some worship music and resolved that I was going to focus on worshipping God instead of thinking about the situation. I recall this drive up Greengarden so well even though it is so many years later. It was a good lesson in spiritual warfare.

As I left 12th Street and headed South, I put on a worship song that I loved and sang along. I thought... *'well this is easy enough!'* But, as I reached the tracks at around 16th street, I did a mental check... *My thoughts were back to obsessing!* Hmmm... Ok. Let's refocus and try again. The light at 26th Street provided me with another good

portunity for a check. **Yay!** I was on track and focusing on the words of the song and on God. *'I think I got this!'* Just a few short blocks away, the 'STOP' sign at 29th brought to my awareness that *I was again thinking about the offending topic!* This was definitely harder than I anticipated. And so it continued... Light at 32nd Street? Good again—Nothing but praise in my head. 38th Street? *Nope.* Once again my thoughts had slingshot back to the obsessive thoughts.

This little trip up Greengarden really taught me some important things. The first thing is that the enemy is very pleased to get us to use up our limited mental real estate for things other than what God would desire us to focus on. Without realizing it, I had fallen into this mental habit of letting my thoughts just 'run wild.'

When we let our thoughts just go wherever they want, we have a definite tendency to think about bad or difficult or trying or sinful things. It's not 100% true all of the time, but when we have no discipline over our thought life, our thoughts tend to run us, which God did not intend.

"Take every thought captive." This

would not be an instruction in the Bible unless we have free will to *choose* what to think about. Jesus also made it clear that *some thoughts are sinful...* *"But I say, anyone who even looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart."* MT 5:28, NLT. Jesus sets a new standard. It's not enough that we don't commit sin with our bodies. He also expects that we keep a guard over our thoughts and bring them under submission. Why? Because He wants our hearts to be pure and what is in our minds reflects what is in our heart. While, it is good that we are not acting on 'bad' thoughts, our higher call, **if we are up to the challenge**, is that we are not double-minded; that we don't appear good outwardly while we are inwardly, in our hearts (minds), still entertaining sinful desires, distracted attention, or even obsessive thoughts.

I was not thinking of sinful actions. The sinful part is that, with definite assistance from the enemy, my mind was drawn completely away from God and onto the difficulties I was facing. I was not praying about them at those obsessive moments, which would have been helpful - I was just turning them over



Take A Drive—Continued from page 2

and over in my mind. *Not good.*

These obsessions also somehow made the problem seem bigger than God! Anytime we focus on a problem over and over, it has the opportunity to seem much bigger and bigger. There is also a temptation that “*I need to handle it*” instead of listening for *how God* wants me to handle it. **My thoughts were running amuck!** Here I was, a strong Spirit-filled Christian neuropsychologist, who often counseled other people about – ***How to not let your thoughts run your life!*** [HA!] Apparently I needed a brush-up in this area myself!

The truth is that this is an ongoing battle for most of us to one degree or another. I have continued to need *refresher courses* on a disciplined thought life as situations have happened throughout the years. I’m not talking about thinking about a situation in which you have some responsibility to think and pray about how to handle it. But there is a very fine balance between *that* and *obsessing!*

My drive up Greengarden taught me that our thoughts can literally be a second-to-second battle. It also reminded me of how automatic they can be and how we *must bring them into our awareness* in order to have any control over them. I think the Greengarden adventure was good because it allowed me to check- *from 30 seconds to 30 seconds*—how I was doing. When there is really something owning a big chunk of mental real estate that shouldn’t be, it will take your own twist on my drive up Greengarden to bring it under submission and ‘*take every thought captive.*’ Most people believe that we are just passive victims of our own thoughts happening to us without any consent, **but this isn’t true.** What IS true is that most Americans just let their thoughts run wild with very little consideration of developing discipline over what they think about.

Thoughts lead to emotions and emotions, in and of themselves, are not good or bad. They become good or bad depending on the direction they take, and our thoughts have much to do with this. No one sins without entering into temptation first. We *think* about sinning. We *entertain* thoughts that we shouldn’t. Mad? Let’s spend hours or days or weeks *thinking* about how *wrong* someone was and maybe how to get even. Lonely? How about if we obsess about how we don’t want to be alone instead of trusting God? Helpful? No! Not helpful. It pulls us from gratitude. Shame? While we should feel guilt or shame over something we did that was wrong, it is the devil who accuses our minds over and over and over after we have repent-

ed and confessed. Hurt? Ok. We all get hurt. Jesus did also. But if you find yourself re-living hurtful situations (not talking abuse or trauma—Professional is helpful here) long after they happened, the enemy has you in a place where you cannot know the healing that God is capable of and wants for us.

I pray that God teaching me on my drive up Greengarden helps you to recognize your own thoughts that are out of fellowship with the Holy Spirit and then to do battle. I pray that each of you experience discipline, healing, and freedom in your own battles to take obsessive thoughts captive and have control over your mental real estate. Given life, with all of its challenges, this is definitely not a one-time battle, but ongoing until the new habit is formed. It’s the challenge of always bringing our thoughts under the headship and obedience of Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit by conforming our thoughts to God. May God bless all of you on your *drives up Greengarden!*





2022
GREATER THINGS!
CONFERENCE
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Be not conformed but be transformed Rom 12:2

Fr Joe Freedy is a former quarterback, called to be a priest. President of Dry Bones ministries and former vocations director and assistant director of evangelization for the Diocese of Pittsburgh.

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THE GIRL WITH THE MISSING PUPILS

Michael H Brown—Spirit Daily (used with permission)

In the annals of miraculous healing, perhaps none stands out like what happened to a poor blind girl from Palermo, Italy, named Anna Maria Gemma DiGiorgio.

“I had no pupils in my eyes,” recounted Gemma in 1971. “I had no sight at all. When I was three months old, my mother took me to a very famous eye doctor in Palermo. He told her that, without pupils, I would never be able to see.”

No pupils? Dire indeed.

A life of darkness . . .

Some claimed she may have had pupils, but that her birth defect was so severe they were not recognized as such. In looking at photos, I couldn’t tell either way.

Whatever—in 1946, when the girl was seven, a nun took it upon herself to write the famous stigmatic priest Padre Pio on Anna’s behalf and received a note saying she should be brought to Padre Pio in San Giovanni Rotondo. I’ve been there. This is rather barren territory. A damp cold in the autumn and winter—austere like the monk was austere. Many thousands sought his counsel or healing effects.

That’s exactly what Gemma’s grandmother did: brought the girl to see the famous Capuchin, who heard the child’s first Confession and gave her Communion—then made the sign of the Cross on her eyes.

After the visit, Gemma was able to see. It’s a fact that’s beyond question, confirmed by amazed doctors.

Did she really lack pupils? Or was her entire eye one large pupil (making it seem that way)? We

know only that there was a severe defect and that although the physical defect remained unchanged, afterward Gemma was able to see normally.

More astounding still may be the thoroughly-documented cure of a construction worker named Giovanni Savino, severely injured on February 15, 1949, in a dynamite mishap while preparing to blast a boulder for a friary annex.

It was Giovanni’s routine to head for church each morning before setting off for work, and afterward, like many others, he would wait outside of the sacristy for the holy man’s blessing.

This day, when Giovanni asked for his anointing, Pio gave the workman a warm hug and said only, “Courage! I am praying to the Lord that you will not die.” What? Die?

One can imagine Giovanni’s upset. Pio was known as a prophet, one who usually was, if we can excuse the expression, dead-on.

Giovanni was petrified. “Padre Pio, what is going to happen to me?” he asked, in dread and earnest.

Pio answered with . . . silence. The following three mornings, when Giovanni went for his customary blessing, Pio said the same, upsetting thing.

And Giovanni reacted with the same fright and stupefaction. When the same ominous words were uttered on the fourth day, the worker had had enough and wondered aloud if they should call off work for the time being. The

crew, however, intent on its work, went ahead leveling the earth for the addition.

That afternoon, Giovanni and his partner placed a charge of dynamite under a boulder, lit the fuse, and then waited as it failed to detonate. What was wrong? After a short while, they went to find out, checking the charge—which blew up in Giovanni’s face.

The workman was in a bad way. A shower of rocks had felled him—embedded in his flesh. His face was scorched—much of his facial skin torn off. Most relevantly: where once there had been a right eye, there was now a pulpy mess. Dr. Guglielmo Sanguinetti, a physician, and Padre Raffaele, another Capuchin, as well as a Father Dominic Meyer, rushed to the injured man’s side. All three noted that among Savino’s numerous injuries, his right eye was entirely gone.

On this they concurred: the socket was empty. Other doctors confirmed the eye had been annihilated and Giovanni’s other badly damaged.

Like Gemma, it looked like Savino was also going to be totally blind . . .

Informed of the terrible event—that the devout Christian laborer, so diligent, and prayerful, had been robbed of his sight—Pio digested the news of blindness and replied succinctly and cryptically, “That is not for certain yet.”

It was three days before the workman came to, his head and face swathed in bandages. Who knows what went through his mind as he lay, pondering a dark future! Nurses tended to him. One

dismal day segued into the next. A tragic episode.

On the evening of his tenth day in the hospital, the blinded laborer was praying the Rosary when he smelled what he later called “the aroma of paradise,” a gorgeous, heavenly smell, as if someone with perfume or cologne was standing next to his bed. He felt, with a sixth sense, that it was Pio standing next to him.

“Give me back my sight, Padre Pio, or let me die!” pleaded Savino. “I cannot live like this!”

A week later, on February 25, 1949, at about one a.m., Savino felt a slap on the right side of his face—the side where the eye had been. “I asked, ‘Who touched me?’” testified the injured workman. “There was nobody. But again I smelled the aroma. It was beautiful.”

When later his ophthalmologist—an atheist—came to examine the remaining eye—shock. “To their amazement,” writes a biographer, “the doctors found that his shattered face was fully healed and covered with new skin.”

But what most amazed and elated Savino was the fact that he . . . had regained his vision. “I can see you!” he shouted to the specialist.

And indeed, as is medically documented, to his “utter astonishment,” the doctor saw that Savino had his right eye back.

He wasn’t seeing out of the badly damaged one—rather the one that had been turned to a bloody gel yet somehow was reconstituted. It left the doctors no doubt they had witnessed a miracle, according to a Protestant writer, Bernard Ruffin, who reviewed all the records.

Once released from the hospital, Giovanni naturally beat a path to the friary to thank Padre Pio. The mysterious monk, who fasted constantly, and often suffered for the infirm, said just, “If only you knew what this cost me!”

It’s tremendous to hear about those healed of diabetes or arthritis or even cancer leaving a person.

For a missing part of the body to be restored is another matter, entirely . . .



*Spirit-Filled
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**August 9
October 11**

Saint John's – Erie

Worship 6:15 Mass 6:30 Music by Harmony's House

upcoming events

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In honor of Our Lady

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Sacred Music beginning at 8:50 AM

Soloist, Jacqueline Phillip - Organist Corey Spacht

Celebrant: Rev. Jerry Priscaro

Praise and Adoration Holy Hour

First Monday's

6:30 - 7:30 PM at St. Agatha-Epiphany of the Lord Parish

353 Pine, Street, Meadville PA

Worship Team - Harmony's House

+++++

**Saint Francis Xavier Church 8-9pm
Thursdays (Except First)**

Spirit Filled - Healing Mass

October 11th

Worship 6:15 PM Mass 6:30 PM

St John's, 509 East 26th, Erie

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Greater Things Conference

Saturday - October 15th 9:00AM - 2:15PM

Our Lady Of Peace—Erie

Guest speaker, Fr. Joe Freedy
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in the afternoon
see flyer for details

Jesus, Son of God, in whom the fullness of the Divinity dwells, You call all the baptized to "put out into the deep," taking the path that leads to holiness. Waken in the hearts of young people the desire to be witnesses in the world of today to the power of your love. Fill them with your Spirit of fortitude and prudence, so that they may be able to discover the full truth about themselves and their own vocation. Our Savior, sent by the Father to reveal His merciful love, give to your Church the gift of young people who are ready to put out into the deep, to be the sign among their brothers of

Your presence which renews and saves. Holy Virgin, Mother of the Redeemer, sure guide on the way towards God and towards neighbor, You who pondered his word in the depth of your heart, sustain with your motherly intercession our families and our ecclesial communities, so that they may help adolescents and young people to answer generously the call of the Lord. Amen.

—John Paul II—

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The purpose of this newsletter is to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and to provide teaching, news, and calendar of events, which help to foster Catholic Charismatic Renewal throughout the Diocese of Erie.

This newsletter may be copied to put in churches or shared with others.

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