



# The Little Portion

Franciscan Column  
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## Monsters Old and New

One of the things I remember from my childhood was watching what we used to call “monster movies.” My brother and I would look forward to staying up late at night to see Frankenstein’s monster ravage a town or a mummy return from the dead to extract vengeance on some archeologist who failed to heed the warnings on an ancient tomb. We enjoyed these movies because they scared us; however, in the end we went to bed knowing that good always conquers evil: Frankenstein’s monster was always defeated and the mummy’s curse was always nullified. Today’s “monster movies” are different. Although they may contain elements of the classics I watched as a child, the message they convey is not that good always triumphs over evil, but that both good and evil have a right to survive. I might go so far as to say that these modern “monster movies” regard evil as just another diversity issue.

The success of the Twilight saga is a good example. Vampires and werewolves are viewed as heroes instead of as creatures of the night. Even worse than that; these creatures are portrayed in a romantic way that captures the imagination of young girls thus warping their idea of true love and sacrifice. It is a classic example of evil disguising itself as good to confuse the innocent (2 Corinthians 11:14). Today there are a lot of young girls who look at these creatures not as things to be feared but as romantic images about which they might dream. I even saw a headline in USA Today asking if the undead could make good role models for our children. This extreme makeover of evil did not happen overnight, but evolved slowly as evil was incrementally presented as possessing more and more good qualities in books and in movies.

The idea that ghouls can have redeeming qualities is nothing more than a reflection of how our society views the relationship between good and evil. Instead of seeing them as opposites, we’ve come to see them as two halves of a greater whole. Like the symbol of the yin and yang, a mixture of good and evil is viewed as something necessary in order to achieve completeness. Hence, vampires and werewolves who do not embrace the extreme of total evil are viewed as heroes while those who do embrace evil are portrayed as villains. In case you think that this only applies to monsters, consider the popular show NCIS. The lead investigator and hero, Leroy Jethro Gibbs, routinely breaks the law in order to bring criminals to justice. He is the model of a man’s man who protects the innocent by taking matters into his own hands by breaking the very law he swore to uphold when he believes it serves a greater good. Although a belief like this may seem appropriate because it appears to explain why evil exists, it represents a false world view in which we are told that striving for extremes should be discouraged.

Being holy as God is holy is a condition for which we as Christians are commanded to strive (Matthew 5:45). We are told that this is our natural state because we were created in the image and likeness of God and everything He created was pronounced to be good (Genesis 1:31). This idea goes against the concept of evil having a legitimate place in our lives. Because being holy involves the exclusion of evil, it is considered extreme and the idea that it is not in our best interest is a message Satan has been pushing from the beginning of time. Remember how he convinced Eve to eat the forbidden fruit: "You certainly will not die! No, God knows well that the moment you eat of it your eyes will be opened and you will be like gods who know what is good and what is bad (Genesis 3:4-5)." He tricked her into believing that God was hiding something greater from her and that she and Adam would become God's peers if they disobeyed Him. In other words, the addition of evil somehow completed them. Time and time again, he used this tactic to trick humans into compromising their true nature for a counterfeit. The Israelites were convinced over and over again that following the ways of their neighbors was good politics. They incorporated the evil of the people around them in order to make themselves better neighbors. However, what it brought them was deportation and misery.

The message we hear today is no different than it was in Old Testament times. We are told that we will become better people by accepting, if not engaging in, practices that rob us of our true inheritance. Promiscuity, homosexuality, demonology and abortion are presented as acceptable lifestyle choices while traditional Christianity is portrayed as boorish and stifling. We must always keep in mind that a lie remains a lie no matter how many times it is presented as truth; and the real truth – that presented by Jesus Christ and taught by His One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church – is the only thing that sets us free and raises us to our true potential (John 8:32).

So what are we to do when so much of our society – even members of our own families – think that capitulation with evil is an acceptable alternative to living a holy life? How do we answer those who claim to be Christian while filling their minds with anti-Christian images, music and stories? Rest assured that Jesus Christ did establish His Kingdom and that He did secure Satan's defeat when He died upon the Cross for our sins. However, Satan has not given up and continues to fight, just like Hitler did after D-Day. We must tell those who are prematurely celebrating complete victory to keep their heads down and pay attention to what is going on around them. They can still be taken out. On the other hand, we must encourage those who are despondent at the continued existence of evil to keep fighting because the ultimate victory is not only assured, but is close at hand. Satan still has a few tricks up his sleeve and will stop at nothing to drag as many people as possible with him in total defeat. The best thing we can do is to keep up our guard.

We have to put ourselves on a wartime footing. Our war is not with flesh and blood, but with principalities and powers (Ephesians 6:12). We like to parade around saying that we are soldiers for Christ, but do we really know what it is like to sacrifice what we want or maybe what we need for the cause? Those who lived during World War II understood this concept because they were called upon to support the war effort by rationing everything from gasoline to meat so that the men on the front could have what they needed. They did this joyfully and as an act of patriotism. There are men and women today who give up family, fortunes and even their lives for the sake of the

Gospel. While most of us may not be called to missionary work or to shed our blood for Christ, we can support those sent by purging ourselves of those things that pull us away from a deeper relationship with our Heavenly Father. This is part of our Christian duty: to joyfully provide spiritual support for those fighting on the front lines. We cannot provide this support while clinging onto things that draw us away from Christ.

So where are you in all this? Are you sitting on the sidelines filling your mind with things that seem to make Jesus' victory a myth or are you striving to keep your body and soul ready to support those fighting on the front lines? Make no mistake; each of us may be called into battle at a moment's notice. Cassie Bernall went to Columbine High School on April 20, 1999 expecting a normal day. When she was asked at gunpoint whether she believed in God she replied that she believed Jesus Christ was her Savior and was immediately martyred for her faith. I leave you with a quote from St. Peter which I believe sums up how we are called to live: "Therefore, beloved, since you are forewarned, be on your guard not to be led into the error of the unprincipled and to fall from your own stability. But grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be glory now and to the day of eternity (2 Peter 3:17-18).

May the Peace of the Lord be always with you.