

Pope Francis: 'Look Out Because the Devil Is Present'

Many believe Pope Francis has ushered in a new era of the Catholic Church, but his views on the devil are said to be old school.

According to *The Washington Post*, "Francis' teachings on Satan are already regarded as the most old school of any pope since at least Paul VI, whose papacy in the 1960s and 1970s fully embraced the notion of hellish forces plotting to deliver mankind unto damnation."

Theologians and Vatican insiders say the newest pope has dwelled on Satan in his sermons and speeches more than his predecessors have and he has "sought to rekindle the devil's image as a supernatural entity with the forces of evil at his beck and call," according to the *Post*.

In what many called an impromptu act of cleansing, Francis laid hands last year on a man in a wheelchair who claimed to be possessed by demons. A few months later he praised the International Association of Exorcists for "helping people who suffer and are in need of liberation."

" 'But Father, how old-fashioned you are to speak about the devil in the 21st century,' " he said last month while presiding over Mass at the Vatican's chapel in St. Martha's House, quoting those who have noted his mentions of the devil. He added, "Look out because the devil is present."

Pope Francis—the first non-European pope in nearly 1,300 years—is from Latin America, "where mystical views of Satan still hold sway in broad areas of the region," the *Post* notes. As the cardinal of Buenos Aires, he was known for stark warnings against "the tempter" and "the father of lies."

The Catholic Church has always talked about the existence of the devil, but clergy—particularly in the United States and Western Europe—have spoken about him more in allegorical terms in the last several decades.

The Vatican last week held a six-day course to train about 200 Roman Catholic priests from more than 30 countries in how to cast out evil from people afflicted by the devil, *The Telegraph* reports.

The conference, “Exorcism and Prayers of Liberation,” met in Rome and also attracted “psychiatrists, sociologists, doctors and criminologists in what the Church called a ‘multi-disciplinary’ approach to exorcisms,” according to the U.K. newspaper.

“Exploring the theme of demonic possession does not mean causing general paranoia, but creating awareness of the existence of the devil and of the possibility of possession,” Fr. Cesar Truqui, a priest and exorcist from Switzerland, told Vatican Radio. “It happens rarely but you can fight it with God, with prayer, with Marian devotion.”

But not everyone believes the Church’s teachings on Satan are a good thing. Some theologians say the pope is undermining his reputation as a leader by focusing on old-school interpretations of the devil.

“He is opening the door to superstition,” Vito Mancuso, a Catholic theologian and writer, told the *Post*.

One senior bishop in Vatican City anonymously told the paper, “Pope Francis never stops talking about the Devil; it’s constant. Had Pope Benedict done this, the media would have clobbered him.”