

Can you tell me something about the devil? I read in an Examination of Conscience that it is a sin to use horoscopes, tarot cards, or ouija boards. But what if it is just for fun?

This is incredibly serious. The first thing we need to do is acknowledge two things about Satan. First, the devil is real. Second, he hates you. Now, I know that this may sound like I am being a little bit too dramatic. After all, does the Devil really hate us? Can he really hurt anyone? Don't take it from me, listen to God, "I shall show you whom to fear. Be afraid of the one who after killing has the power to cast into Gehenna; yes, I tell you, be afraid of that one" (Luke 12:5). Jinkies!! Even Jesus tells us to fear the devil. This warning is repeated throughout the New Testament. St. Paul tells us that our battle is not with flesh and blood, "but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Ephesians 6:12).

With these warnings, we really should not just shrug off talk about the devil as old-fashioned or a joke. At the very same time, do not give in to despair. This is equally serious. We sometimes see "God vs. Satan" as some kind of battle where Jesus and Lucifer square off toe-to-toe. Nothing could be further from the truth. Jesus is God. Satan is a creature. There is no contest. We know that simply praying the name "Jesus" causes the devil to flee. In fact, St. Cyril of Jerusalem, writing in the 300's, taught that when Christians make the Sign of the Cross, demons flee, "for when they see the Cross, they are reminded of the Crucified; they are afraid of Him". The devil is not afraid of you, but he is afraid of Jesus. Because of this, a Christian can simultaneously "fear" the devil as well as walk in the confidence of God's power.

God created the devil. Rather, God created spiritual beings known as "angels". They were created good. God did not make the devil bad; demons chose evil when they chose to rebel. For this reason, we don't say that demons are essentially evil. They were not created evil, they chose it. All of God's angels were made wonderfully beautiful and incredibly intelligent. God poured much of His goodness and light into them. In choosing to rebel against God, the demons have cut themselves off from the source of truth and goodness and light. They are powerful, intelligent, and dangerous.

It is for this last reason that we are to stay far away from magic. Not because things like witchcraft, ouija boards, or tarot cards are "silly". We stay away from them because they are dangerous. In addition, they indicate a desire for power that contradicts the "honor, respect, and loving fear we owe to God alone" (CCC 2116). In a sense, their use is idolatry.

One might argue that they are involved in magic, "but only white magic". For the Christian, there is no distinction between "white" or "black" magic; their one source for power is Satan. (This is even true in wicca, where practitioners may not even believe in Satan).

Another argument is that a person only uses ouija boards or reads their horoscope "for fun". When it comes to ouija boards, some statistics report that over 80 percent of demonic possession happen through the medium of a ouija

board. This can be true even if only used “as a game”. As far as horoscopes are concerned, I know that most of us see them as they often are: silly fortune-cookie-esque sayings. This may be true, and glancing over one’s horoscope might be nothing more than a mildly entertaining joke you share with your co-workers on a coffee break. But we validate their existence when we pay attention to them. Even more seriously, they may de-sensitize our consciences to real demonic influences through exposure. Bottom line: we are Christian and we are called to be different.

If you have already had exposure to magic, the occult, or ouija boards, please seek out the Sacrament of Confession as soon as possible. Confession is the most powerful form of exorcism in existence. I invite you to lay every sin before Jesus in Confession and let Him heal you. And then forget about it. Because of the power of Jesus, you will know freedom and the new life that only Jesus can give. “So submit yourselves to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you” (James 4:7-8).