

## **A Call to Spiritual Warfare: Remembering Our Baptismal Power**

This week I've been forced to reflect on what I know in my bones but have let atrophy during my years in the Lutheran church. For months I've been listening to colleagues, friends, and strangers interpret the news and our current reality. Disbelief, disappointment, and disorienting information have escalated and overwhelmed our senses—and our sanity.

I believe this overwhelming occurs because at every turn, the word that best describes the implications of our government's decisions since January (for our country, our world, and the most vulnerable among us) is evil.

This past week, in several conversations with colleagues, each has introduced the word “evil” into our engagement. In one call with a colleague I hadn't spoken to in years—a cradle Lutheran, lover of liturgy, with a sharp discerning eye—she said, “This evil is not about flesh and blood. This evil is about powers and principalities.”

Imagine my joy to hear a Lutheran someone, anyone, point to a truth that many avoid, have suspicions about, or simply don't know how to address: we are in a battle that requires spiritual warfare.

We are witnessing systemic, overt, public evil that operates without shame. While many are called to advocate, protest, and fight for human rights in legislatures, town squares, and city streets, we who are baptized are called to something additional and foundational: to affirm our baptism daily and denounce the devil and all forces that defy God through prayer and intercession.

Some of you may have witnessed this—each time I have the honor of leading the affirmation of baptism, I listen carefully to the assembly's response. When I hear voices that are shy and hesitant, I ask that we repeat our responses with bold confidence and fervor:

“Do you renounce the devil and all forces that defy God?”

“I RENOUNCE THEM!”

This is not mere liturgical recitation. This is spiritual warfare—the good fight of faith that we are equipped and called to engage.

A Reminder: Prayer is both a balm for healing and a weapon against forces that thrive on distraction and despair. These forces count on God's people not knowing their power—power that was announced and claimed at the moment of baptism.

I believe the Spirit is inviting, urging us to live and lead with intentional, prayerful resistance.

Pick a day. Pick an hour. Organize with your church, your family, your friends, and pray together. Name the evil that surrounds you and us—all that doesn't make rational sense, that disturbs your spirit, that threatens to strip away life abundant and destroy what God has made holy in your life, in our country, and in the world.

The Spirit is calling us to remember who we are and whose we are. The hour is urgent, but we are not without power or hope.

*God of justice and mercy, You have marked us as Your own in baptism and called us to renounce all that defies Your love. Grant us courage to name the evil we witness, wisdom to discern the spirits, and strength to stand against the powers and principalities that seek to destroy Your creation.*

*In a time when demonic powers are bold and public, remind us that Your power is stronger. When evil appears systematic and overwhelming, help us remember that Your love is more systematic still—woven into the very fabric of creation, poured out in Christ, and alive in us through Your Spirit.*

*Unite us in prayer, O God. Make us bold in our renunciation of evil and fervent in our commitment to life abundant for all. We ask this in the name of Jesus, who has already conquered death and the grave. Amen.*

The call is clear. Our baptism has already equipped us for this fight. Let us pray... with God's help and in Jesus' name.



Rev. Leila M. Ortiz  
Bishop, Metro D.C. Synod