

SUPERSTITION and the FIRST COMMANDMENT

KNOW YOUR FAITH SERIES

In conversation with a parishioner, I was once asked if it is ok to have a horseshoe hanging behind the door at the entrance of his house and a little red horn that looks like a red pepper, hanging in his car's rear view mirror. He had been told by a woman that it was not proper for a Catholic to display those items. He wanted to know my opinion.

Rather than giving a black and white answer, I asked him: "Why do you have them? What do they represent to you?"

He explained: "I put those particular objects as good luck, for protection against misfortune, accidents or curses. But I am Catholic. I keep a picture of St. Anthony in my wallet...here, I show you..."

I could not help smiling at the sincerity of the man. I realized that this good man was just misinformed, and needed to be redirected.

So, I said to him: "Tell me, if you buy a brand new car, and need to learn about the fancy knobs and push buttons on the dashboard, where do you go and get the manual? Certainly not from a hardware store, but directly from the car dealership where you bought the car.

Similarly, if you seek protection and peace in your life, you need to know who can truly provide protection and peace: I am speaking about the One who made you, your Creator, the One and only Almighty God.

No need to resort to a dead object hanging in your car's mirror or behind the door of your house.

The woman who spoke to you is correct, because if you believe that the good luck charms have power to protect you, it means that you choose to depend on them, rather than on God, and that you see them as gods. That is called SUPERSTITION, which is attributing to material objects the power that only God has. That is why SUPERSTITION is a SIN against the First Commandment: "I am the Lord your God. You shall have NO OTHER GODS BEFORE ME."

You and I depend on God for everything we need to live, because we come from God who loves us unconditionally. Everything else that tries to take His place is false, and leads to misery.

References: In the Bible see Book of Leviticus 19:31
Exodus 20:2-5
Catechism of the Catholic Church, CCC # 2110-2111