

specific invocation of the devil would clearly be a mortal sin. (Please note that just reading a horoscope in the newspaper or the message inside the fortune cookie, and having a laugh is not a mortal sin; however, taking such a horoscope seriously or paying for some astrologer's advice is.)

We believe, as St. John wrote, "God is love" (I John 4:16). God so loved the world that He gave His only Son that whoever believes in Him may not die but may have eternal life" (John 3:16). Jesus is the light of the world, shining through the darkness (John 1:4-5). He is the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6). To invoke Satan or any other power, to enter the darkness (the occult) for any assistance, or to attempt to usurp powers which belong to God alone is a defiance of the authority of Almighty God. To commit such acts is to turn away from God and place our own souls in jeopardy.

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The History of Tarot Cards

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Tarot cards probably originated in Italy in the 14th century since the earliest known explanation of their usage dates to 1391. The pack of cards, known as the Tarocco, is made up of 22 major enigmas, whose figures represent a synthesis of the mysteries of life; and 56 minor images incorporating 14 figures in four series (gold, clubs, swords and goblets). The 22 major enigmas correspond to the letters of the Hebrew alphabet and the number of hieroglyphs the ancient Jews used in divination. Each major enigma has an image with a particular meaning, e.g. Enigma I is the Minstrel, which signifies The Being, the spirit and creation; and Enigma XV is the Devil, which signifies magic, eloquence, commerce and mystery. Enigmas I through XI comprise the solar way — active, conscious, reflective and autonomous; while enigmas

XII through XXII denote the lunar way — passive, unconscious, intuitive and possessed. The four series of the 56 minor images have the following significance: gold signifies intellectual activity; clubs, government; swords, military career; and goblets, the priesthood. Practitioners of Tarot believe that these enigmas, images and series represent the sum of the knowledge of all sciences, particularly astrology, and in the permutations in "dealing the cards" are capable of revealing the future and solving all problems. While this author has no intention or desire of fully explaining the practice of Tarot, this brief overview does highlight that this practice is connected with the occult powers and seeks to reveal and control the future.

As Catholics, we remember that the first commandment states, "I am the Lord thy God. Thou shalt not have any gods before me." When asked what was the greatest commandment, our Lord Jesus Christ, repeating the precept found in Deuteronomy, said, "You shall love the Lord your God with your whole heart, with your whole soul, and with all of your strength" (Matt 22:37). While God can choose to reveal the future to His prophets or saints, we as individuals must always have trust in His divine providence. St. Paul reminds us, "We know that God makes all things work together for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His decree" (Rom 8:28). While we may have that passing curiosity of what will happen in the future, we anchor our lives in the Lord, trusting in His love and care.

To try to discover the future through tarot cards, palm reading, ouija board or some other form of fortunetelling, or to try to control the future through black magic, witchcraft or sorcery violates the first commandment. Keep in mind that fortunetelling is inherently linked with the practices of the occult. Sacred Scripture has many condemnations of these activities: In the Old Testament we find, "A man or a woman who acts as a medium or fortuneteller shall be put to death by stoning: they have no one but themselves to blame for their death" (Leviticus 20:27), and "Let there not be found among you anyone who immolates his son or daughter in the fire, nor a fortuneteller, soothsayer, charmer, diviner, or caster of spells, nor one who consults ghosts and spirits or seeks oracles from the dead. Anyone who does such things is an abomination to the Lord..." (Deut 18:10-12).

The New Testament also addresses this issue: In Acts of the Apostles, St. Paul at Philippi encountered a slave girl with a "clairvoyant spirit" who made money by fortunetelling; St. Paul exorcized her of that spirit (Acts 16:16ff). In other passages, we find condemnations of sorcery and occult practices in general: St. Paul condemned sorcery (Gal 5:19). In Acts of the Apostles, St. Paul rebuked Elymas, the magician, calling him "son of Satan and enemy of all that is right" (Acts 13:8ff), and St. Peter rebuked Simon Magus, a magician, who wanted to buy the powers of the Holy Spirit to make himself more powerful (Acts 8:9ff). In the Book of Revelation, Jesus declared,

"As for the cowards and traitors to the faith, the depraved and murderers, the fornicators and sorcerers, the idol-worshipers and deceivers of every sort-- their lot is the fiery pool of burning sulphur — the second death" (Rev 21:8).

Adhering to the revelation of Sacred Scripture, the Church has over the centuries formally condemned witches and witchcraft, and has judged fortunetelling, tarot card reading and the like as sinful. The *Didache* (*The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*, c. 80) warned, "You shall not practice magic." The Council of Ancyra (314) imposed a five-year penance on anyone who consulted a magician or fortuneteller. Early Irish canons penalized with excommunication anyone engaging in sorcery until forgiveness had been sought and penance performed.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* in discussing the first commandment repeats the condemnation of divination: "All forms of divination are to be rejected: recourse to Satan or demons, conjuring up the dead, or other practices falsely supposed to 'unveil' the future. Consulting horoscopes, astrology, palm reading, interpretation of omens and lots, the phenomena of clairvoyance, and recourse to mediums all conceal a desire for power over time, history, and, in the last analysis, other human beings, as well as a wish to conciliate hidden powers. They contradict the honor, respect, and loving fear that we owe to God alone" (No. 2116). Any practice which utilizes occult powers is condemned as contrary to true religion and is generally considered a mortal sin. Any