

# SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS CATHEDRAL

310 WEST 2<sup>ND</sup> STREET RENO, NEVADA 89503

## The Discernment of Spirits

1 John 4: 1-6

1 Beloved, do not trust every spirit but test the spirits to see whether they belong to God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. 2 This is how you can know the Spirit of God: every spirit that acknowledges Jesus Christ come in the flesh belongs to God, 3 and every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus does not belong to God. This is the spirit of the antichrist that, as you heard, is to come, but in fact is already in the world. 4 You belong to God, children, and you have conquered them, for the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world. 5 They belong to the world; accordingly, their teaching belongs to the world, and the world listens to them. 6 We belong to God, and anyone who knows God listens to us, while anyone who does not belong to God refuses to hear us. This is how we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of deceit.

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### What is a spirit?

328 The existence of the spiritual, non-corporeal beings that Sacred Scripture usually calls “angels” is a truth of faith. The witness of Scripture is as clear as the unanimity of Tradition.

329 St. Augustine says: “‘Angel’ is the name of their office, not of their nature. If you seek the name of their nature, it is ‘spirit’; if you seek the name of their office, it is ‘angel’: from what they are, ‘spirit’, from what they do, ‘angel.’” With their whole beings the angels are servants and messengers of God. Because they “always behold the face of my Father who is in heaven” they are the “mighty ones who do his word, hearkening to the voice of his word”.

330 As purely spiritual creatures angels have intelligence and will: they are personal and immortal creatures, surpassing in perfection all visible creatures, as the splendour of their glory bears witness.

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### Testing the semantic range of the Johannine use of the term *spirit*:

angel, thought, message, impulse, dream, disposition, feeling, attitude