

ALLISON REGINA GLIOT, FSP

In Aeternum | Book One



The Curse He Chose

BOOK ONE OF THE IN AETERNUM TRILOGY

The Curse He Chose

By Allison Regina Gliot, FSP



Pauline
BOOKS & MEDIA
BOSTON

Library of Congress Control Number: 2023951955

ISBN 0-8198-3166-2

ISBN 978-0-8198-3166-8

The Scripture quotations contained herein, except on page 183, are from the *New Revised Standard Version Bible: Catholic Edition, Anglicized Text*, copyright © 1989, Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

The Scripture quotation found on page 183 is taken from the *New American Bible*, revised edition © 2010, 1991, 1986, 1970 Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Washington, D.C., and is used by permission of the copyright owner. All rights reserved. No part of the *New American Bible* may be reproduced in any form without permission in writing from the copyright owner.

Cover art and design by Ryan McQuade

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher.

“P” and PAULINE are registered trademarks of the Daughters of St. Paul.

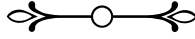
Copyright © 2025, Daughters of St. Paul

Published by Pauline Books & Media, 50 Saint Paul’s Avenue, Boston, MA 02130-3491

Printed in the U.S.A.

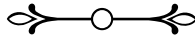
www.pauline.org

Pauline Books & Media is the publishing house of the Daughters of St. Paul, an international congregation of women religious serving the Church with the communications media.



Death inevitably follows birth,
and everything born dissolves in decay.

—SAINT GREGORY OF NYSSA





AUTHOR'S NOTE

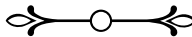
This book deals with some tough topics. But I'm guessing you sometimes wish your real-life problems were as nice and neat as these.

Whatever you're facing, you don't have to do it alone. If you're going through something, need help, or just want to talk, there are people who want to support you. Reach out to someone you trust, contact your local parish, or get in touch with trained professionals who provide anonymous assistance:

For the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline, call or text 988 (U.S.A. and Canada).

Visit findahelpline.com to connect with an organization that best suits your situation.

Whether you need that information or not, keep it just in case—for yourself, for a friend, or for a random stranger God might place in your path someday.



It is the Lord who goes before you. He will be with you; he will not fail you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed.

—DEUTERONOMY 31:8



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Turns out, writing a book is a lot more work than you'd think. It takes a whole team, and the author is only one small part. Which means some gratitude is in order. A *huge* thank you to:

My family and friends, who read my earliest drafts. Special shoutout to my best friend Kate, whose expertise as a military nurse made all the gory details disgustingly accurate.

My professors at the Catholic University of America, who gave me a foundation on which to build Catholic fiction (and might be amused to know I'm using my theology degree to write about vampires).

My beta readers, who gave such valuable feedback and truly made this book better.

Pat and Sister Christina Miriam, the first editors at Pauline Books & Media to believe in my manuscript and help me make it faithful to Church teaching in every way possible. And Christa, my last editor, who wins the award for most encouraging person ever.

Ryan, for bringing this series to life with such amazing and thoughtful cover art.

The whole Pauline Books & Media team, especially my dear sisters in religious life (who got on board with the idea of Catholic vampire books *way* faster than I was expecting).

Jesus—my inspiration, co-author, cheerleader, editor, husband, Savior, and friend. When I say I wouldn't be able to do anything without him, I really mean it.

And you. Thanks for sticking around to share this adventure with me. Whether you loved this book or want to throw it at a wall, please know of my prayers for you. May you be always near to the God who never stops pursuing us in love.



FACT OR FICTION?

The Curse He Chose blends real Catholic beliefs with a myriad of fictional legends about vampires and the author's own creative license. However, even fiction carries seeds of the truth. See for yourself what is real about Christopher and Elizabeth's story and where the fictional elements come from:

The undead

Fiction, but...

For centuries, there have been stories and legends about vampires from around the world. These tales differ greatly in their details but share common characteristics of evil or demonic creatures that sustain themselves on human blood. What are we to make of this? Could there *really* be such a thing as undead monsters that prowl the night in search of human victims?

No. At least, not the way the legends traditionally describe them. Stories of the undead resonate with us because, in some respects, there *are* people who go through life without really living it. There are also those who prey on and abuse others. Vampire myths speak to a healthy fear of evil, and evil is very real. It takes the form of sin, which hurts both us and those around us. It is also embodied in demons—Satan and the other fallen angels who rejected God and his plan and now seek to destroy life and goodness.

Demons know how precious we are to God, so they have a particular interest in leading us astray. One of the ways they do this is through the occult—superstitious practices that promise knowledge, power, or special abilities by invoking the demonic or any supernatural power aside from God. Participating in occult practices opens us to evil and allows demons to influence us in dangerous, unhealthy ways. This is why the Catholic Church warns against involvement in the occult and instead encourages us to trust our loving God with all our needs—and why, if you have questions about what the occult consists of or have been involved in it in any capacity, you should speak to a priest for clarification and guidance. Generally, stopping the practice, going to Confession, and receiving the Eucharist regularly is the best way to heal from the spiritual consequences of participating in the occult.

Vampire stories may not literally be true, but they speak to the very real struggles we face against sin and evil in all its manifestations.

Prayers can protect against evil

Fact

One feature that appears often in vampire lore is the power of prayers and exorcisms to ward off or defeat vampires. In reality, our prayers *do* have very real effects. Every time we pray, we are communicating with God and inviting his presence into a situation. We receive grace from the simple act of saying a prayer—whether it is a recited prayer, a passage of Scripture, or an improvised prayer that comes from the heart. Although we cannot always see the consequences of our prayers or hear God speak to us directly, we know that he listens to every prayer and answers each of them in his own

way. This is especially true when we are faced with some evil or danger. God never leaves us to fight our battles alone.

Praying with Scripture or the name of Jesus are strong prayers because God's Word and God's name both contain the presence of God—we are not just reading about God or talking about God, he is really *with* us in a mysterious way. This is why Bibles are treated with reverence and one of the Ten Commandments tells us not to take the Lord's name in vain (see Exodus 20:7). When we pray to the saints, as in the Hail Mary, we are asking them to intercede for us and bring our needs to God. Certain saints are especially turned to for help against evil and darkness: Mary, the Mother of God, who crushed the head of the serpent (Satan); Saint Joseph, her husband, who bears the titles "Terror of Demons" and "Protector of the Church"; and Saint Michael the Archangel, who leads God's armies against Satan, to name just a few.

Vampires' aversion to holy ground and objects

Fiction, but...

A common theme in many vampire tales is vampires' inability to withstand consecrated ground or religious objects such as crucifixes and holy water. This is because vampires are traditionally considered evil creatures, often portrayed as being in league with demons or possessed by demons. Things that have been consecrated or blessed belong to God and are in some way imbued with his grace. Evil is powerless in the face of God and his grace, which is why priests use holy water, the cross, and blessings during exorcisms. It is also why the evil vampires in this story have difficulty confronting consecrated things and prayers, but Christopher does not.

Side-effects of becoming a vampire

Fiction, but...

There is no general agreement in vampire legends as to how, exactly, one becomes a vampire and how this changes a person. Different tales address the topic very differently. The vampires in this story are portrayed primarily as rejecting what it means to be human. The subsequent side-effects of becoming a vampire are all consequences of their denying their true identity in God as human beings.

They are called undead, not because they are reanimated corpses (as in many traditional vampire tales), but because they have spurned the things that make us truly alive. Their “immortality” is just a prolonged half-life because they have rejected the possibility of dying and finding new life in God through the resurrection of Jesus (the true immortality that God offers us for eternity). They also reject the use of names because our names are integrally tied to our identity, putting us in relationship with other people and with God, who always calls us by name (see Isaiah 43:1). Instead, they call each other by titles that denote what they do instead of who they are, defining themselves and others in a degrading, utilitarian way. By refusing to use names, they shun all meaningful relationships and reject God’s desire that we be known and loved just for being who we are.

Forgetting their pasts is a final way of disowning their own identities. As human beings, our journeys are sacred. They reveal the unique way that God leads each of us through life. Even when our pasts involve painful twists and difficult detours, each step we take in life is important and precious to God. To deny where we came from makes it difficult to see where we are, or to understand where we are going. Thus, when vampires reject their memories, they are rejecting everything God has done in them up to that point, as well

as denying all hope for the future. And when Christopher finally begins to rediscover hope, he no longer has a reason to deny his long-rejected past . . . but that is a story for another day.

The Eucharist is truly the Body and Blood of Christ

Fact

As Catholics, we believe that during the Mass, the bread and wine blessed by the priest really and truly *become* the Body and Blood of Christ. This is because of Jesus' words at the Last Supper, where he took the bread and said, "Take, eat; this is my body" (Matthew 26:26), and then, taking the cup of wine, said, "Drink from it, all of you; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins" (Matthew 26:27). He asked us to do this in remembrance of him, and for over two thousand years the Church has faithfully carried out his wish during the Mass every time a priest consecrates the Eucharist.

Because the Eucharist really *is* Jesus, true God and true man, it has a special power to communicate grace to us, which is God's supernatural life. In traditional vampire stories, a vampire could never tolerate Jesus' Real Presence in the Eucharist; take, for example, Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (the foundation of most modern ideas of the vampire), where the Eucharist is instrumental in Dracula's downfall. The fact that Christopher is drawn to the Eucharist instead of terrified of it testifies to his inner conversion of heart and his deeper longing to be close to God.

Vampire mind control

Fiction, but...

Compulsion as it appears in this story is a work of fiction inspired by tales of vampires who use hypnotic abilities to

manipulate their victims. However, it was included intentionally because it speaks to the way sin and evil rob us of our freedom. God created us to have free will, the ability to choose and make our own decisions. He holds this freedom sacred and wants us to freely choose him and love him. He respects our freedom at all costs out of love for us, even if we choose to reject him.

Sin, on the other hand, destroys our freedom so that we are held prisoner by fear, bad habits, and our uncontrolled appetites. Jesus warns, "Very truly, I tell you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin" (John 8:34). Sin stops us from being able to listen to and love others, imprisoning us inside ourselves so that we cannot see things as they really are. And Satan uses this to his advantage. He shows his hatred for our freedom many times throughout the Bible, using tactics of fear and manipulation to entice us to turn away from God. We can also see his desire to enslave us in instances of demonic possession, both in the Bible and elsewhere. But Satan's power is nothing when compared to God. In fact, among the main types of miracles Jesus performs in the Gospels are exorcisms to free people from the influence of demons.

The vampiric power of compulsion reflects evil's disregard for the sacred freedom God has granted to each one of us. But, like evil, it has its limits. It cannot force someone to do something that they are entirely opposed to, and it loses its power in the face of God's mercy. This is because neither sin nor Satan can ever entirely steal our free will and God will always give us the grace to resist evil when we turn to him.

The Eucharist is a source of grace for all

Fact

The Eucharist is Jesus, who is the giver of all grace. Only baptized Catholics living in a state of grace (without mortal, or serious,

sin) may receive the Eucharist. This is because the Eucharist is the sacrament of communion and whoever receives the Eucharist professes to be in full communion with the Catholic Church and her teachings—especially belief in Jesus’ Real Presence in the Eucharist. When we say “Amen” before receiving the Eucharist, we are saying “yes” to everything the Eucharist is and agreeing to live as faithful members of the Body of Christ, the Church.

Christopher is unable to receive the Eucharist because he has not assented to the fullness of the Catholic faith and agreed to live that commitment as a full member of the Church. But even before Christopher knows anything about the Eucharist, God manifests his grace through it by quelling Christopher’s hunger pangs in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament. Later, when Christopher begins to long for the Eucharist that he knows he is not ready to receive, this becomes an act of spiritual communion: a prayer of desire for Jesus in the Eucharist when one cannot physically take Communion. God responds by feeding Christopher through grace when he cannot yet be fed sacramentally, enabling Christopher to abstain from drinking blood.

God pours out graces on the entire world through the Eucharist, his Son physically present on earth. He enters the hearts of those who make prayers of spiritual communion in their desire to be united with him. Yet Jesus desires most of all that we be in full communion with him—body and soul—through going to Mass on Sundays and faithfully receiving the Eucharist: “Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day; for my flesh is true food and my blood is true drink. Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them” (John 6:54–56).



IN AETERNUM PRAYERS

A Prayer for God's Protection

Lord, be my light in darkness. Cover me with your protection and defend me from every evil. Forgive my sins and show me your mercy. Drive the demons of discouragement and despair far from me. Keep my loved ones safe and let me always walk with you. I make this prayer in Jesus' name. Amen.

A Prayer to Jesus in the Eucharist

Jesus, I believe you are truly present in the Eucharist: Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity. You hold nothing back from me. May I hold nothing back from you. Fill me with your own life when I receive Holy Communion so that I may live with you forever. Help me approach the Blessed Sacrament with wonder and reverence so that I never forget that it is you. Heal my mind of doubts and my heart of fears. Show me how to love you as boldly as you love me. Amen.

Saint Michael Prayer Against Evil

Saint Michael the Archangel, defend us in battle;
be our protection against the wickedness and snares
of the devil.

May God rebuke him, we humbly pray;
and do thou, O Prince of the heavenly host, by the power of God,
cast into hell Satan and all the evil spirits
who prowl about the world seeking the ruin of souls. Amen.

Praying with the Imagination

One powerful way to pray with Scripture is called Imaginative Prayer—a prayer through which you allow the Holy Spirit to guide your imagination. God gave us our imaginations, and he can guide them to help us discover him in deeper ways. Below is a passage Elizabeth used in her prayer, but you can use this method for any Scripture passage, especially stories from the Old and New Testament. (The life of Jesus is a good place to start!)

- ✦ Set aside at least fifteen minutes and find a place where you won't be disturbed. Avoid distractions by leaving your phone in another room for those fifteen minutes or by turning off your notifications.
- ✦ Take a moment to quiet yourself.
- ✦ Ask the Holy Spirit to inspire your imagination. Then read the passage slowly:

[Jesus] made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds. And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone,

but by this time the boat, battered by the waves, was far from the land, for the wind was against them. And early in the morning he came walking toward them on the sea. But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, saying, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out in fear. But immediately Jesus spoke to them and said, "Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid."

Peter answered him, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water." He said, "Come." So Peter got out of the boat, started walking on the water, and came toward Jesus. But when he noticed the strong wind, he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, "Lord, save me!" Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught him, saying to him, "You of little faith, why did you doubt?" When they got into the boat, the wind ceased. And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."

Matthew 14:22-33

- ✦ Take a few minutes to imagine the scene with all your senses. What do the waves and wind sound and feel like? How does the air taste? What do you smell? How do you visualize the boat and the sea? (Don't worry about being historically or geographically accurate; the point is to become immersed in the scene in whatever way God is inspiring you.)
- ✦ Place yourself into the role of someone interacting with Jesus. What perspective resonates the most with you right now? (Are you Peter, ready to jump out of the boat? The disciple who first thought Jesus was a ghost? A quiet bystander taking it all in? Or maybe you're there participating in the story as yourself.)

Read the passage again while imagining yourself in this role.

- ✦ What are you thinking and feeling as the events of the story unfold? What do you do and say? More importantly, what does Jesus do and say? How does he interact with you? (Your imagining might follow the passage closely, or the Lord may guide you in a different direction depending on what you—and Jesus*—do in the scene.)
- ✦ Let the scene play out between you and Jesus (and any other biblical figures present) until you realize the main point that God is showing you through the interaction. What is he inviting you to at this time? How do you want to respond? Express this to Jesus. (The result of your prayer might not always be warm, fuzzy feelings. If you are angry or sad or afraid or confused, share that openly with Jesus and see how he reacts; or, if your emotions are too overwhelming to process, take a break and return to the prayer later that day.)
- ✦ End your time of prayer by writing down Jesus' invitation in your prayer journal or on a scrap of paper that you can keep with you. Revisit it when you are struggling or need to be reminded of his presence.



GLOSSARY

absolution the forgiveness of sins during the sacrament of Reconciliation; through it, the repentant sinner is reconciled to God and the Church

Blessed Sacrament another term for the Eucharist, the Body and Blood of Christ; the Eucharist retains the appearance of bread and wine, but the substance of it is changed during the Mass so that it is no longer bread and wine, but Jesus himself

catechist a teacher of the faith; the term comes from the word “catechesis,” or instruction about Christian doctrine

Confession the sacrament through which God forgives sins and reconciles sinners with God and the Church; also known as the sacrament of Reconciliation or the sacrament of Penance

consecration the special act of blessing something, thereby setting it apart to be holy; the consecration of the Eucharist refers to the act during the Mass by which God transforms the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ when the priest prays the special words of consecration

liturgy the official public worship of the Church, such as the Mass and other sacraments; the two parts of the Mass are the Liturgy of the Word (centering on the proclamation of Scripture) and the Liturgy of the Eucharist (centering on the consecration of the Eucharist)

penance heartfelt repentance for sins committed, manifested outwardly by prayers or good works; in the sacrament of Confession, the priest asks the person to do a specific penance as a sign of his or her contrition

rectory the place where a priest lives and often where the parish offices are located

sacrament a visible sign given to us by Christ that produces invisible, spiritual effects; this is one of the most important ways God communicates his grace to us and intervenes directly in our lives; the seven sacraments are Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, Reconciliation, Anointing of the Sick, Matrimony, and Holy Orders

sacristan a person who helps set up for and clean up after the Mass and other liturgies

sacristy the room in a church where the sacred vessels, vestments (ceremonial clothes), and supplies needed for the Mass and other liturgies are kept

sanctuary the area around the altar and tabernacle, often set apart from the rest of the church by a step or a low railing called an altar rail; it is considered to be the most sacred part of a church because it is where the Mass takes place and where the Eucharist is reserved

sanctuary lamp a special candle located near the tabernacle in a church; it is always kept burning to indicate the presence of the Eucharist in the tabernacle

seal of Confession the grave duty of a priest to keep the content of a person's sacramental Confession absolutely secret

Sheol the land of the dead according to the biblical tradition; between his death and resurrection, Jesus freed the souls in Sheol and opened the gates of heaven

spiritual direction regular meetings with a trained spiritual director (such as a priest or spiritual counselor) to receive advice and guidance in deepening one's spiritual life and relationship with God

tabernacle the special box in a church where the Eucharist is kept; it is usually made of gold or another precious material and located within the sanctuary or in a separate chapel

vestibule the room at the entrance of a church where people gather before entering the main body of the church

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Sister Allison Regina Gliot, FSP, grew up in a military family moving all over the place. She's always loved reading stories of all types (the more fantastical the better!). She fell in love with Jesus while she was at university and became a Daughter of St. Paul after graduation so that she could spend the rest of her life with him. Since then, she's had lots of adventures, the most recent of which involves serving as an editor and author for Pauline Books & Media, the publishing house of the Daughters of St. Paul. She never thought she'd write vampire books—or any books, really. But she's loving every second of it. Connect with her on social media @sister_allison and find her other books at pauline.org/sister-allison.