

Hobo Plague Suit (999 words)

by Brian Trepanier

Angels first appearing moments after retiring Pope Benedict XVI's papal ring was destroyed was no coincidence. No one from the Church knew, at the time, a dead Pope's soul was tasked with being gatekeeper of Heaven's "soul corral for new arrivals" until the next Pope died and replaced him. When Pope John Paul II's dead soul heard the chime of his successor's ring being destroyed, he had every reason to believe he was being replaced and left his post to finally begin eternity with his 72 virgins. When the Church realized the grave error of its ways, they sent the Chamberlain into retired Pope Benedict XVI's bedroom to crush the sleeping Pope's skull with the traditional silver hammer and send him to his afterlife duties as gatekeeper.

With the Pope's death, the gates were once again closed and no more angels passed through. However, it was estimated thousands of angels, maybe even hundreds of thousands, maybe more, had already passed through and were trapped.

The angels looked like people except they lacked genitals. They had wings like a seabird, more like the kind for gliding rather than flapping, that folded behind their backs, but no one ever saw an angel fly, glide, or even make an attempt.

An angel also had about as much sense as a bird, but ate with the appetite of 20 men. Two or three angels could eat everything in a bakery, including stock room items. A small group would eat an orchard of fruit overnight, and by all estimates, there were thousands of such voracious groups.

Initially, people were fascinated by the angels and revered their very presence, but it only took a few short days before opinions changed. The angels got in the way, contributed nothing yet

kept eating up dwindling resources like a plague of locusts. They were becoming filthy from rummaging through trash looking for stuff to eat, and they hissed like cobras if anyone tried to shoo them away.

People stopped thinking about them as angels, started calling them “long-haired stinking bums and hobos”.

By consuming entire crops, the hobos were a very real threat to very real people. Left to their own devices, the brain-dead zombie horde of hobos would eat the human race to a slow death by starvation. The hobos were vegetarian, they had no teeth, but the human race could not survive by meat alone.

The people petitioned the Church’s courts with the “Hobo Plague Suit” for the right to kill the living dead hobos and send them back to Heaven from where they came.

Always sensible, the Church recognized the threat and allowed people the right to “cleanse hobos”. Cleansing hobos, it was decreed, would not be considered killing because the hobos were already dead. Hobos were soulless beings because they were nothing but a soul, and a soul cannot have its own soul. The hobos were dead souls that stumbled back into the world from which they had already graduated. They were dead when they arrived, and they could be returned in the same condition without fear of Heavenly retribution.

As it turned out, the only way to cleanse hobos was to smash in their skulls with a Church blessed silver hammer. Unfortunately, only the Chamberlain who had crushed the Pope’s skull, in this case, Cardinal Pat Maxwell, could bless the silver hammers needed to cleanse the hobos.

This presented a logistics problem.

Getting enough specially blessed silver hammers into the hands of the people in time to effectively defend against the hungry hordes of undead hobos would be impossible.

It was decided a new industry would be created. This industry involved the capture of hobos in the wild to sell them to one of the Church's hobo cleansing plants that would be opened around the world. Bigger operations meant less silver hammers to be blessed and distributed, which would leave more blessed time for the Church to oversee the control of plant operations.

By turning the cleansing of hobos into a systematic assembly line industry, the Church would have been ridding the world of the hobo plague while bringing desperately needed work to the people. The speed at which people worked together to get everything up and running to begin the industrial cleansing of hobos was going great.

And then the hobos started crapping out cherubs.

For all the food the hobos ate, one would have expected they would crap out something useful that could have at least been tilled into the soil and used as fertilizer.

But they didn't.

Instead, the hobos crapped out cherubs, cute little chubby angel babies with tiny wings and rosy cheeks.

Reports soon poured in graphing a global spike in babies being stillborn. It was hastily determined cherubs must be souls intended for babies. Had the hobo crapped out the cherub in the afterlife, a baby would have been born alive. Having been crapped out in this world, however, a cherub could only grow into a hungry full-size hobo and a baby would die in the womb for lack of a soul to claim it.

When a cherub was freshly crapped out, its head was like an overripe melon, easily squashed beneath a boot. But once a cherub started feeding, it only took a few hours for it to eat its way to being a full-size hobo, and then the only way to cleanse it was like any other filthy undead hobo: by caving in its skull with a blessed silver hammer.

To learn of these cherubs, to comprehend what it meant to the food supply of all living things on the planet that the undead hobos were increasing in numbers by crapping out angel turds, that in and of itself was disturbing enough.

But the sudden truth that struck crippling and immediate terror into the hearts of all people was that the toothless vegetarian hobos which people were so sure they had under control were crapping out cherubs with teeth.

Hungry fast-growing cherubs with meat-eating teeth.

The End

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