Battle with the Devil - Arm Yourself!

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# A Personal Experience of the Work of the Devil

Some 30 years ago, I was working for the Shepherds of Good Hope in their soup kitchen and emergency men’s shelter. Well-founded rumours began to circulate that a group of the young men had fallen into practices of satanic ritual. It seems that they wanted to draw into their circle a young woman who was on staff with the Shepherds. When the extent of the possible demonic activity was discovered, the management decided to call in an elderly priest who had worked in the missions in Latin America. He was known for his ministry targeting demonic disturbance. (Remainder of the story given verbally …)

The Catholic Church views the battle against the devil as ongoing. During a May 24, 1987 visit to the Sanctuary of Saint Michael the Archangel, Pope St. John Paul II said: "The battle against the devil, which is the principal task of Saint Michael the archangel, is still being fought today, because the devil is still alive and active in the world. The evil that surrounds us today, the disorders that plague our society, man's inconsistency and brokenness, are not only the results of original sin, but also the result of Satan's pervasive and dark action."

# Who is the Devil and His Cohort in our Christian Faith?

In mainstream Christianity, the Devil (or Satan) is a fallen angel who rebelled against God. Satan was expelled from Heaven and sent to Earth. The devil is often identified as the serpent in the Garden of Eden, whose persuasions led to the two corresponding Christian doctrines: the Original Sin and its cure, the Redemption of Jesus Christ.[[1]](#footnote-1)

CCC 391[[2]](#footnote-2) Behind the disobedient choice of our first parents lurks a seductive voice, opposed to God, which makes them fall into death out of envy. Scripture and the Church's Tradition see in this being a fallen angel, called "Satan" or the "devil". The Church teaches that Satan was at first a good angel, made by God: "The devil and the other demons were indeed created naturally good by God, but they became evil by their own doing."

CCC 395 The power of Satan is, nonetheless, not infinite. He is only a creature, powerful from the fact that he is pure spirit, but still a creature. He cannot prevent the building up of God's reign. Although Satan may act in the world out of hatred for God and his kingdom in Christ Jesus, and although his action may cause grave injuries - of a spiritual nature and, indirectly, even of a physical nature- to each man and to society, the action is permitted by divine providence which with strength and gentleness guides human and cosmic history. It is a great mystery that providence should permit diabolical activity, but "we know that in everything God works for good with those who love him."

# Who are Their Primary Targets?

In the Christian worldview, Satan is the adversary of both God and the believers.

CCC 2852 "A murderer from the beginning, . . . a liar and the father of lies," Satan is "the deceiver of the whole world." Through him sin and death entered the world and by his definitive defeat all creation will be "freed from the corruption of sin and death." Now "we know that anyone born of God does not sin, but He who was born of God keeps him, and the evil one does not touch him. We know that we are of God, and the whole world is in the power of the evil one."

CCC 414 Satan or the devil and the other demons are fallen angels who have freely refused to serve God and his plan. Their choice against God is definitive. They try to associate human beings in their revolt against God.

# What are His Principal Weapons?

CCC 2113 Idolatry not only refers to false pagan worship. It remains a constant temptation to faith. Idolatry consists in divinizing what is not God. Man commits idolatry whenever he honors and reveres a creature in place of God, whether this be gods or demons (for example, satanism), power, pleasure, race, ancestors, the state, money, etc.

CCC 2116 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.

CCC 2119 Tempting God consists in putting his goodness and almighty power to the test by word or deed. Thus Satan tried to induce Jesus to throw himself down from the Temple and, by this gesture, force God to act. The challenge contained in such tempting of God wounds the respect and trust we owe our Creator and Lord. It always harbors doubt about his love, his providence, and his power.

The New Testament includes numerous instances of demonic possession. Satan himself is said to have entered Judas Iscariot before Judas's betrayal. (Luke 22:3) Jesus encounters those who are possessed and casts out the evil spirit(s). A person may have one demon or multiple demons inhabiting their body. Jesus encountered a man filled with numerous demons in Mark 5:1-20.

# What Are Our Principal Defensive Arms?

CCC 540 Jesus' temptation reveals the way in which the Son of God is Messiah, contrary to the way Satan proposes to him and the way men wish to attribute to him. This is why Christ vanquished the Tempter for us: "For we have not a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sinning." By the solemn forty days of Lent the Church unites herself each year to the mystery of Jesus in the desert.

CCC 550 The coming of God's kingdom means the defeat of Satan's: "If it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you." Jesus' exorcisms free some individuals from the domination of demons. They anticipate Jesus' great victory over "the ruler of this world". The kingdom of God will be definitively established through Christ's cross: "God reigned from the wood."

CCC 566 The temptation in the desert shows Jesus, the humble Messiah, who triumphs over Satan by his total adherence to the plan of salvation willed by the Father.

CCC 2119 Jesus opposed Satan with the word of God: "You shall not put the LORD your God to the test."

The process of exorcism is used within the Catholic Church against the devil. The Catechism of the Catholic Church states that: "Jesus performed exorcisms and from him the Church has received the power and office of exorcizing".

## Ephesians 6, 10-17

## The Lord’s Prayer

CCC 2864 In the last petition, "but deliver us from evil," Christians pray to God with the Church to show forth the victory, already won by Christ, over the "ruler of this world," Satan, the angel personally opposed to God and to his plan of salvation.

* ***The Prayer to St. Michael[[3]](#footnote-3)***

The Prayer to Saint Michael usually refers to one specific Catholic prayer to Michael the Archangel, among the various prayers in existence that are addressed to him. This prayer was incorporated into the rubrics of the Low Mass of the Catholic Church from 1886 until 1964. In 1886, Pope Leo XIII added a Prayer to Saint Michael to the Leonine Prayers, which he had directed to be prayed after Low Mass two years earlier. Other prayers to Saint Michael have also been officially approved and printed on prayer cards.

God's help was sought for a satisfactory solution to the loss of the Pope's temporal sovereignty, which deprived him of the independence felt to be required for effective use of his spiritual authority.

The practice of reciting this and the other Leonine prayers after Mass was officially suppressed by the 26 September 1964 Instruction *Inter oecumenici* which came into effect on 7 March 1965.

According to an article in *Ephemerides Liturgicae*, Giovanni Nasalli Rocca Cardinal di Corneliano wrote in his *Litteris Pastoralibus pro Quadragesima* (Pastoral Letters for Lent) that according to Leo's private secretary, Rinaldo Angeli, Leo had seen a vision of demonic spirits who were congregating on the Eternal City (Rome); he wrote the Saint Michael prayer, and often said it, in response to the vision. Leo also personally wrote an exorcism prayer included in the Roman Ritual, and recommended that bishops and priests read these exorcisms often in their dioceses and parishes. He himself often recited them.

“Although this prayer is no longer recited at the end of Mass, I ask everyone not to forget it and to recite it to obtain help in the battle against the forces of darkness and against the spirit of this world.” — St. John Paul II, *Regina Caeli*, 24 April 1994

On 29 September 2018, Pope Francis asked Catholics everywhere to pray the Rosary each day during the following month of October and to conclude it with the ancient prayer "*Sub tuum praesidium*" and the Leonine prayer to Saint Michael. He asked them "to pray that the Holy Mother of God place the Church beneath her protective mantle: to preserve her from the attacks by the devil, the great accuser, and at the same time to make her more aware of the faults, the errors and the abuses committed in the present and in the past, and committed to combating without any hesitation, so that evil may not prevail".

As of 2019, at least 14 bishops in the United States requested the reintroduction of the Leonine Saint Michael prayer at the end of each Mass. Archbishop Prendergast for the Archdiocese of Ottawa has also made the request.

## Sacraments & Sacramentals

### Seven Sacraments

CCC 1086 "Accordingly, just as Christ was sent by the Father so also he sent the apostles, filled with the Holy Spirit. This he did so that they might preach the Gospel to every creature and proclaim that the Son of God by his death and resurrection had freed us from the power of Satan and from death and brought us into the Kingdom of his Father. But he also willed that the work of salvation which they preached should be set in train through the sacrifice and sacraments, around which the entire liturgical life revolves."

CCC 1237 Since Baptism signifies liberation from sin and from its instigator the devil, one or more exorcisms are pronounced over the candidate. The celebrant then anoints him with the oil of catechumens, or lays his hands on him, and he explicitly renounces Satan. Thus prepared, he is able to confess the faith of the Church, to which he will be "entrusted" by Baptism.

### Holy Water[[4]](#footnote-4)

Holy water is water that has been blessed by a member of the clergy. The use for cleansing prior to a baptism and spiritual cleansing is common in several religions, from Christianity to Sikhism. The use of holy water as a sacramental for protection against evil is common among Anglicans, Roman Catholics, and Eastern Christians.

Catholic saints have written about the power of holy water as a force that repels evil. Saint Teresa of Avila, a Doctor of the Church who reported visions of Jesus and Mary, was a strong believer in the power of holy water and wrote that she used it with success to repel evil and temptations. She wrote: "I know by frequent experience that there is nothing which puts the devils to flight like Holy water."

### St. Benedict Medal[[5]](#footnote-5)

The Saint Benedict Medal is a Christian sacramental medal containing symbols and text related to the life of Saint Benedict of Nursia, used by Roman Catholics, as well as Anglicans, Lutherans, Methodists and the Western Orthodox, in the Benedictine Christian tradition, especially votarists and oblates.

In widespread use after its formal approval by Pope Benedict XIV in the 18th century, the medal is used by Roman Catholics to ward off spiritual and physical dangers, especially those related to evil, poison, and temptation.

The medal’s symbolism ... Saint Benedict Medal, front.  
On the front of the medal is Saint Benedict holding a cross in his right hand, the object of his devotion, and in the left his rule for monasteries. In the back is a poisoned cup, in reference to the legend of Benedict, which explains that hostile monks attempted to poison him: the cup containing poisoned wine shattered when the saint made the sign of the cross over it (and a raven carried away a poisoned loaf of bread). Above the cup are the words *Crux sancti patris Benedicti* ("The Cross of [our] Holy Father Benedict"). Surrounding the figure of Saint Benedict are the words *Eius in obitu nostro praesentia muniamur!* ("May we be strengthened by his presence in the hour of our death"), since he was always regarded by the Benedictines as the patron of a happy death.  
  
On the back is a cross, containing the letters C S S M L - N D S M D, initials of the words *Crux sacra sit mihi lux! Non [Nunquam?] draco sit mihi dux!* ("May the holy cross be my light! May the dragon never be my overlord!"). The large C S P B stand for *Crux Sancti Patris Benedicti* ("The Cross of [our] Holy Father Benedict"). Surrounding the back of the medal are the letters V R S N S M V - S M Q L I V B, in reference to *Vade retro satana: Vade retro Satana! Nunquam suade mihi vana! Sunt mala quae libas. Ipse venena bibas!* ("Begone Satan! Never tempt me with your vanities! What you offer me is evil. Drink the poison yourself!") and finally, located at the top is the word *PAX* which means "peace".

Blessing of the medal  
Medals of Saint Benedict are sacramentals that may be blessed legitimately by any priest or deacon, not necessarily a Benedictine.

Formula … The medal is then sprinkled with holy water.



1. General References from Wikipedia – “Devil”, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Devil> - “Devil in Christianity”, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Devil_in_Christianity> – “Satan”, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Satan> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. CCC – Catechism of the Catholic Church [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Wikipedia – “Prayer to Saint Michael”, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prayer_to_Saint_Michael> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Wikipedia – “Holy Water”, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holy_water> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Wikipedia – “Saint Benedict Medal”, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint_Benedict_Medal> [↑](#footnote-ref-5)