

St. Therese Catholic Church

Spiritual Warfare
Session I

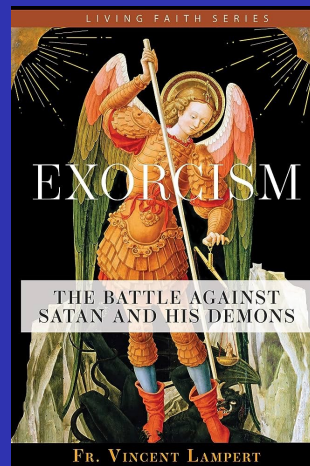
September 19, 2023

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Course Book

- *Exorcism: The Battle Against Satan and his Demons*
- **Author:** Fr. Vincent Lampert
- Published in 2020
- Presentation of authentic Catholic teaching on the devil, his plan against humanity, and Christ's victory over sin and death, a victory that the Church proclaims and lives.



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Overview

Spiritual Warfare	
Session I	Spiritual Warfare (Sacred Scripture and Tradition)
Session II	Angels and Fallen Angels (devil and demons)
Session III	Extraordinary Activity of the Devil (signs and influence)
Session IV	Church's Response (Exorcism and Openings to Evil)
Session V	Church's Response (Exorcism and Church Protocols)
Session VI	Ordinary Activity of Devil and Christ's Protection

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Goals for Today

- Introduce this discussion by highlighting its special importance today
- Demonstrate the prevalence of the belief in a spiritual world and spiritual battle in human culture – with the exception of modern American culture
- Give a summary of the Scriptural picture of spiritual combat
- Trace how Catholic Tradition and recent papal teaching develop this Scriptural vision

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Expectations

- An iceberg is nice image for our discussion.
- Icebergs float on the ocean with only about 10% of their mass appearing above the ocean; the remaining 90% is concealed beneath the waves.
- We will just scratch the surface with our topic of spiritual warfare.



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Introduction

- The devil does everything in his power to destroy the Church because he knows that if the Church is eliminated then we will get lost and stray from the path that God has laid out for us (1).
- **1 Peter 5:8:** *Be sober and vigilant. Your opponent the devil is prowling around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.*
 - **Key:** In giving advice to early Christian community, Peter exhorts them to submit to God, cast their worries on him, and be vigilant against the wiles of the devil. Peter, the chief shepherd, assumes the devil's mission is to devour or destroy human beings.

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Introduction

- People are always fascinated by the devil. What is needed is a greater fascination with God (1).
- **Note:** Give a talk on God and a few people show up. Give a talk on the devil and you often get hundreds. Our fallen human nature is fascinated (and frightened) with the devil.
- **Key:** It is spiritual fruitful to have discussions about the reality of the battle between good and evil or the Kingdom of God and the kingdom of the evil one in a way that is thoughtful, measured (not sensational), and educational to help equip the faithful with the spiritual tools needed for experiencing Christ's victory of sin and death.

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Introduction: Cultural Shifts

- A 2019 Pew Research Center survey reported that 51 percent of millennials no longer identify themselves as Christians, and four out of ten millennials no longer identify with any religion (5).
- Human beings are naturally religious, i.e., made in the image and likeness of God. We are "wired" for worship. Paul, while in Athens, noticed all the pagan altars and even one which was inscribed, "*to an unknown God.*" (Acts 17:22-23).
- Despite our modern materialism, the inclination to worship remains. Look at totalitarian regimes that make the State or the Leader into a god, extreme environmentalists who view the earth as divine, or the widespread worship of money, fame, and health.

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Call to be an Exorcist

- One is either in a relationship with God or with something else (6).
- With the eclipse of God, we are experiencing a resurgence in the practice of magic and things centering on the occult. The danger we face is the fact that when a person no longer believes in God, they are at risk for believing anything and everything (6).
- **Key:** The human heart is built for worship. When misdirected away from God, it becomes vulnerable to worshipping anything and everything.
- In short, as religious beings, we are built for love and worship. If we don't worship God, we will substitute something or someone for him.

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Call to be an Exorcist

- The idols of our day are not the wood and stone or Greek gods of antiquity, but are much more sophisticated and subtle.
 - **Approval:** Being approved by others; slave to the opinions of others; make ourselves into what others want us to be;
 - **Power:** Feeling of superiority through money, good looks, status, and popularity;
 - **Control:** In order to feel safe, we need things to go according to our plan. Control brings a sense of security;
 - **Pleasure:** A life sensual pleasure, comforts, a life of leisure, alcohol, drugs, etc.

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Call to be an Exorcist

- Fr. Lampert was appointed as the exorcist of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis in 2005 where he was appointed about one of a dozen exorcists. Today, the number has grown to about 125 (8).
- In his early days of ministry, he would receive about 100 inquiries annually from people who believed they were dealing with the demonic. Currently, he receives more than 1800 calls, emails, and letters a year from people all over the country and even other parts of the world who are seeking help from the Church (11).
- Given the high volume of people who reach out to him, Fr. Lampert has an assistant who is the first line of contact. In our Archdiocese, we have an appointed exorcist and a ministry calls *Jesus Heals* that is the first point of contact for the exorcist.

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A Spiritual World

- As strange or far-fetched as it sounds to many today, the idea that human beings share a world with spiritual powers, and that many of these are set against us, was a common feature of pre-Modern Western culture and is still prevalent in non-Western cultures today.
- Presuming a spiritual world in contact with the physical brought with it an awareness that some spirits were vicious, set against human beings. Many cultures developed prayers and rituals (exorcisms) to protect or ward off these evil spirits.
- It is widely held even by those outside the Church that exorcisms performed by Catholic priests are especially powerful.

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Spiritual Warfare in Scripture

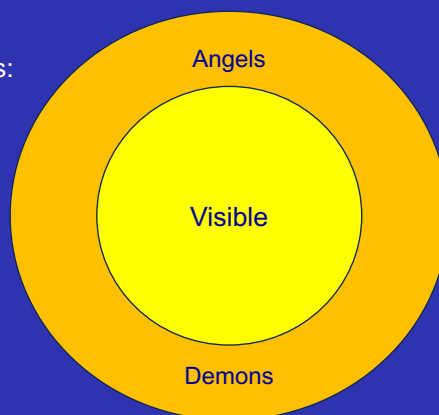
- Like much of the non-modern Western world, Scripture takes for granted the existence of good and evil spirits.
- Unlike other cultures, however, from the light of God's revelation, Scripture clarifies who and what they are and how to combat them.
- In fact, Scripture is structured around this combat in four important moments or stages:
 - In the Garden of Eden
 - The Combat of Christ
 - The Combat of the Church
 - The Final Victory

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A Spiritual World

- I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things:
- **Visible**
 - Plants
 - Animals
 - Humans
- **Invisible**
 - Angels
 - Demons



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Sacred Scripture: The Serpent and the Fall

- In the opening verses of Genesis, chapter 3 we are introduced to a mysterious entity: the serpent, who engages Eve in a discussion over just what God has commanded regarding the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil.
- There is no initial explanation of who this creature is or his motives - only later in Scripture is the Serpent clearly identified as the Devil.
- The Serpent suggests God is a liar, withholding something and that what they want – to be God or like gods – is possible if they eat.
- He proves persuasive. Eve and Adam “who was with her” make the fateful choice to eat what was forbidden.

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Sacred Scripture: The Serpent and the Fall

Five things to note about the Serpent that are instructive for understanding the nature of Catholic Spiritual Combat:

1. He is a creature. The Serpent is not an equal rival to God;
2. He “succeeds” by lying. Lies and deception are the Devil’s specialty. As Christ says “he is a liar and the father of lies.” (John 8:44);
3. His lies are effective because they misdirect and twist our deepest God-given desire;
4. He appears to have achieved his motives of the ruin and destruction of God’s creation – especially mankind. Again, Christ also says, “He was a murderer from the beginning” (John 8:44) and as we saw from St. Peter, the devil is “like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour”;
5. He cannot “succeed” without Adam and Eve’s consent.

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Sacred Scripture: The Serpent and the Fall

- After the disobedience of Adam and Eve, the harmony of God's good and ordered creation is broken:
 - **With God:** They hide themselves from God (Gn. 3:8)
 - **With each other:** They shield themselves from each other (Gn. 3:7), Man blames woman for the sin (Gn. 3:12)
 - **With the serpent:** Enmity between the offspring (Gn. 3:15)
 - **With creation:** Ground is cursed and bears thistles (Gn. 3:17-18)
 - **Within human heart:** After eating, knows good and evil (Gn. 3:22)

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Biblical Worldview (Summary)

- God, in his infinite wisdom, goodness, and love, created all that is visible and invisible. As human beings, we are the pinnacle of visible creation and as such, stewards of God in the created order.
- With the original rebellion of our first parents, they and their descendants experience brokenness with God, one another, the created order, and within themselves.
- Additionally, the ancient serpent or the devil, strives to usurp God's rightful rule as King through lies, deceit, and temptation. He is, in short, an opportunist who exploits human weakness, ignorance, and sin for his own purposes and kingdom.

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Biblical Worldview (Summary)

- In this fallen world, human beings are in a battle, a battle that Christ has already won by his Passion, Death, and Resurrection.
- We fight this battle by Christ's grace and the truth that he has revealed against the powers of darkness. The battle is fierce and arduous, but God's goodness and grace shine through us via lives of prayer, receiving the sacraments, the saints, and suffering.
- In short, we have nothing to fear and can remain confident that Christ, who lives in us via baptism and a life of faith, hope, and charity, is and will be victorious in this age and the age to come, i.e., wedding feast of the Lamb (Rev. 19:9).

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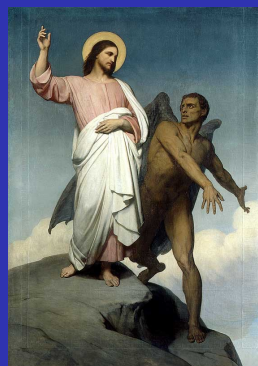
Sacred Scripture: Overview



Genesis 2



Genesis 3



Jesus in the desert

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Sacred Scripture: Overview



Christ's Death
and Resurrection



Rev. 12: Woman
and Dragon



Rev. 19: Wedding Feast of
the Lamb

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Spiritual Combat

- **Catholic Catechism 407:** The doctrine of original sin, closely connected with that of redemption by Christ, provides lucid discernment of man's situation and activity in the world.
- By our first parents' sin, the devil has acquired a certain domination over man, even though man remains free.
- Original sin entails "captivity under the power of him who thenceforth had the power of death, that is, the devil". Ignorance of the fact that man has a wounded nature inclined to evil gives rise to serious errors in the areas of education, politics, social action and morals.

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Spiritual Combat

- **Catholic Catechism 409:** This dramatic situation of "the whole world [which] is in the power of the evil one" makes man's life a battle:
 - The whole of man's history has been the story of our combat with the powers of evil, stretching, so our Lord tells us, from the very dawn of history until the last day. Finding himself in the midst of the battlefield man has to struggle to do what is right, and it is at great cost to himself, and aided by God's grace, that he succeeds in achieving his own inner integrity.
- **Key:** The Catechism rests upon the same assumption as Sacred Scripture, i.e., that the original rebellion of our first parents creates an environment of brokenness and a certain captivity under the devil and powers of darkness. Hence, we are in need of a divine rescue operation.

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Catholic Catechism

- But *why did God not prevent the first man from sinning?* St. Leo the Great responds, "Christ's inexpressible grace gave us blessings better than those the demon's envy had taken away."
- And St. Thomas Aquinas wrote, "There is nothing to prevent human nature's being raised up to something greater, even after sin; God permits evil in order to draw forth some greater good."
- Thus St. Paul says, 'Where sin increased, grace abounded all the more'; and the Exultet sings, 'O happy fault, . . . which gained for us so great a Redeemer!'" (CCC 412)

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D-Day

- June 6, 1944
- Operation Overlord commanded more than 5,000 ships with troops
- 156,000 troops stormed Normandy's beaches
- More than 4,000 troops lost their lives
- **Goal:** Gain a foothold in Europe.



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Sacred Scripture: Gospels

- Mark presents a kind of "D-Day" landing wherein the Kingdom of God breaks in through Jesus Christ through a series of miracles:
 - Cure of Demonic (power over evil/demons)
 - Simon's Mother-in-law (power over sickness)
 - Cleansing Leper (power over disease)
 - Healing Paralytic (power paralysis/sin)
- **Key:** Mark presents Christ's authority over all that is not of God (demons, sickness, disease, paralysis, sin, etc.). He came to heal the brokenness in people's lives.

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Sacred Scripture: Gospels

- **1 John 3:8:** Indeed, the Son of God was revealed to destroy the works of the devil.
- Matthew and Luke present Jesus battling with the devil in the desert early in his ministry (Mt 4:1-11; Lk 4:1-13).
- In Luke's Gospel, the evil one begins with physical temptation via bread (sensual gratification – gluttony, lust), then moves to idolatry (power and riches - avarice), and finally to testing God (ostentatious display - pride and vainglory).
- **Key:** At the outset of his ministry, our Lord battles the evil one and defeats him in this initial battle through reliance upon God's Word and keeping the Father at center of his Person and mission.

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Sacred Scripture: Gospels

- Mark's Gospel, presumes that Christ has come to do battle with demonic or unclean spirits.
 - Jesus casts out unclean spirit in the synagogue (Mark 1:21-28)
 - Jesus heals the Gerasene Demoniac (Mark 5:1-20)
 - Jesus heals the Syrophenician Woman's daughter (Mark 7:24-30)
 - Jesus heals a boy with a mute spirit (Mark 9:14-29)

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Sacred Scripture: The Paschal Mystery

- In Luke’s Gospel, the Passion of Christ is explicitly framed as his confrontation with the power of Darkness (Luke 22:53).
- The Passion truly begins when Satan “enters” Judas and he goes to betray Jesus (Lk 22:3).
- Christ does not die simply for the “forgiveness of our sins” as if he’s balancing a ledger, but to rectify what was broken by Sin itself and wrest us from the Devil: *“No one can enter a strong man’s [the Devil’s] house to plunder his property [liberate humankind] unless he first ties up the strong man”* (Mark 3:27).

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Sacred Scripture: The Paschal Mystery



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Sacred Scripture: St. Paul

- The Good News according to St. Paul is that Christ has decisively defeated these evil spirits:
- **Ephesians 1: 21:** Christ has been raised “far above every principality, authority, power, and dominion...”
- **Philippians 2: 9-10:**
 - God greatly exalted him
 - And bestowed on him the name
 - That is above every other name,
 - That at the name of Jesus
 - Every knee should bend,
 - Of those in heaven and on earth and under the earth

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Sacred Scripture: St. Paul

- The Good News about Jesus is Good News for us because we share in his triumph:
 - **Col. 1:13:** He delivered us from the power of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.
 - **1 Thess. 5:5:** For you are all children of light and children of the day. We are not of the night of darkness.
- **Key:** St. Paul *presumes* that Christians are in a spiritual battle and therefore encourages Christians to protect themselves with all the spiritual weapons provided by Christ.

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Sacred Scripture: St. Paul

- **Rom. 8:37-39:** In all these things [the persecutions of the present age] we conquer overwhelmingly through him who loved us [Christ]. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor present things, nor future things, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.
- **Key:** While St. Paul acknowledges we are in a spiritual battle, he is absolutely confident in Christ's victory, a victory that we are invited to share in today and always.

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Sacred Scripture: St. Paul

- But, we must make this triumph our own and so we too join the combat:
 - **Eph. 6:12:** *"For our struggle is not with flesh and blood but with the principalities, with the powers, with the world rulers of this present darkness, with the evil spirits in the heavens."*
- Speaking about the thorn in the flesh, St. Paul says it was given to him, an angel of Satan, to beat me, to keep me from being too elated (2 Cor. 12:7). In other words, Christ's strength shines through our weaknesses.

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Sacred Scripture: St. Paul

- **Ephesians 6:10-17:** Put on the full armor of God so that you may stand firm against the tactics of the devil.

Armor	Meaning
Gird your loins	Truth
Breastplate	Righteousness
Feet shod	Gospel of peace
Shield	Faith
Helmet	Salvation
Sword	Word of God

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Sacred Scripture: Revelation

- Whereas St. Paul's focus is primarily on the personal scale of spiritual combat, the Book of Revelation shows the vast scope of it.
- The conflicts and drama of human history and the Church are a part of a much larger conflict between God and the fallen angels.



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Sacred Scripture: Revelation

- Chapter 12 presents a battle of a woman and a dragon (serpent)
 - Verses 1-6: Battle between a woman with child and a dragon. The woman gives birth to the child (destined to rule) and then flees from the dragon for a fixed amount of time.
 - Verses 7-13: War between Michael and his angels against the dragon. Michael casts the dragon out of heaven, who then pursues the woman who had given birth to the child.
 - Verses 14-18: Returns to the battle between the dragon and the woman. In failing to defeat the woman, the dragon waged war against the woman's offspring.

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Woman Clothed with the Sun
Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception

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Sacred Scripture: Revelation

- **Chs. 13-19:** After his expulsion from heaven, the Dragon calls forth the two Beasts representing the Roman Empire (or worldly power more generally) and false Prophets (who encourage the worship of the Emperor/Worldly Power). The conflict shifts to these two beasts in various symbols, who are finally defeated by Christ and cast into the lake of fire.
- **Ch 20:** The Dragon is chained in the abyss for a “thousand years”. After the thousand years, the dragon will be released from his prison and deceive the nations to wage war on the Church. But, the Devil is to be defeated and thrown into the lake of fire.

Key: All symbolism aside, the message is clear: though the Church is persecuted and in conflict with earthly and spiritual powers, Christ is victorious and this victory will be final.

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Church Council

- Since the end of the apostolic era, the Church has continued to proclaim Christ's victory over the Devil:
- [The Holy Roman Church] firmly professes and preaches that never has anyone, conceived by a man and a woman, been liberated from the Devil's dominion except by faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the mediator between God and humanity, who was conceived without sin, was born and died.
- He alone by his death overthrew the enemy of the human race, cancelling our sins, and unlocked the entrance to the heavenly kingdom, which was the first man by his sin had locked against himself and all his posterity.

~Council of Florence (Ecumenical, 1431-1445), Session 3

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Church Council

- Even in the modern era, the Church professes these truths:
- Now God, in order to establish peace or the communion of sinful human beings with Himself, as well as to fashion them into a fraternal community, did ordain to intervene in human history in a way both new and finally sending His Son, clothed in our flesh, in order that through Him He might snatch men from the power of darkness and Satan (cf. Col. 1:13; Acts 10:38) and reconcile the world to Himself in Him (cf. 2 Cor. 5:19).
~*Ad Gentes*, 3.
- But whatever truth and grace are to be found among the nations, as a sort of secret presence of God, He frees from all taint of evil and restores to Christ its maker, who overthrows the devil's domain and wards off the manifold malice of vice.
~*Ad Gentes*, 9.

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Pope Leo XIII

- **Pope Leo XIII:** The race of man, after its miserable fall from God, the Creator and the Giver of heavenly gifts, "through the envy of the devil," separated into two diverse and opposite parts, of which the one steadfastly contends for truth and virtue, the other of those things which are contrary to virtue and to truth. The one is the kingdom of God on earth, namely, the true Church of Jesus Christ; and those who desire from their heart to be united with it, so as to gain salvation, must of necessity serve God and His only-begotten Son with their whole mind and with an entire will.
- The other is the kingdom of Satan, in whose possession and control are all whosoever follow the fatal example of their leader and of our first parents, those who refuse to obey the divine and eternal law, and who have many aims of their own in contempt of God, and many aims also against God (*Humanum Genus*, 1).

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Characteristics of Kingdoms

Kingdom of God	Kingdom of Evil One
Truth and life	Lies and Death
Holiness and grace	Depravity and vileness
Justice, love, and peace	Injustice, hatred, and conflict
Nine orders of angels	Demons
Communion and self-giving	Isolation and self-centered
Eternal	Temporary

~Preface of Christ the King, Roman Missal

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Pope Francis

- Among recent popes, Francis has been especially vocal about the existence of the Devil and the need to combat him:
 - "...we should not think of the devil as a myth, a representation, a symbol, a figure of speech or an idea. This mistake would lead us to let down our guard, to grow careless and end up more vulnerable.
 - The devil does not need to possess us. He poisons us with the venom of hatred, desolation, envy and vice. When we let down our guard, he takes advantage of it to destroy our lives, our families and our communities. "Like a roaring lion, he prowls around, looking for someone to devour" (1 Pet 5:8)."
~*Gaudete et Exultate*, 161

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Pope Francis

- God’s word invites us clearly to “stand against the wiles of the devil” (Eph 6:11) and to “quench all the flaming darts of the evil one” (Eph 6:16). These expressions are not melodramatic, precisely because our path towards holiness is a constant battle.
- For this spiritual combat, we can count on the powerful weapons that the Lord has given us: faith-filled prayer, meditation on the word of God, the celebration of Mass, Eucharistic adoration, sacramental Reconciliation, works of charity, community life, missionary outreach. If we become careless, the false promises of evil will easily seduce us.
~*Gaudete et Exultate*, 162

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Next Time
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