

St. Therese Catholic Church

Spiritual Warfare
Session 2

October 3, 2023

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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 This Session

1. Provide an overview of the Catholic understanding of angels: their nature(s); their vocation; their various roles in creation and salvation (the celestial hierarchy);
 2. Examine Catholic teaching concerning Satan/the Devil: his origin; the nature of his fall; and his motives;
 3. Explore the “psychology” of demons and their relationship with us;
- As always, we’ll look at these things in light of the teaching of the Church.

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Thinking about Angels

- Angels and demons are revealed truths that invite us to a better understanding of God and our relationship with Him.
- Thinking about angels is largely speculative – since the Reformation and then Enlightenment angelology has been mocked for this;
- Thinking about angels is worthwhile for at least **three** reasons:
 1. Thinking about angels helps us better know ourselves as spiritual beings;
 2. As a component of creation, contemplating them is a way of giving glory to God;
 3. Because they play a role in God’s plan of salvation, we can better understand their role in our lives of faith. Additionally, it is especially important to know something of angels to grasp how fallen angels operate.

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Angels

- “Angel” is the name of an office, not a nature (St. Augustine).
- Angel comes from Greek *ángelos*, *angelus* in Latin which means “messenger” – but not just any messenger.
- An *ángelos* speaks in the name of the one sending the message and therefore the one sending the message speaks almost directly through the *ángelos*.
- As we will see, the spiritual beings we call angels are not all messengers.



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Creation of the Angels

- Scripture gives no account of the creation of the angels.
- St. Augustine read the opening of Genesis 1 – “Let there be light...” as symbolizing the creation of the angelic order and the Light’s separation from Darkness as the judgment and fall of the Devil and his demons.
- What’s certain is that the angels existed prior to creation of humans – and given their role in governing and guiding the processes of the universe. They either pre-exist or were created at the same moment as the material universe.
- It is thought that there are many, many more angels than physical beings.

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Angels in Sacred Scripture

- Angels are mentioned over 250 times in the Bible. Only **four** angels are mentioned by name in the Bible:
 - **Michael** is mentioned five times: Daniel 10:13, 21; Jude 9; Rev. 12:7
 - **Gabriel** is mentioned four times: Daniel 8:16; 9:21; Lk 1:19, 26
 - **Raphael** is mentioned in the Book of Tobit 12:11-15.
- The Bible also mentions the devil or Satan over 50 times.
- Angels fight (Michael), give messages (Gabriel), and heal (Raphael). We also see an angel guide and protect the people of Israel in the desert (Ex. 23:20-33).

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Preface of Guardian Angels

- It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation, always and everywhere to give you thanks, Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God, and to praise you without end in your Archangels and Angels.
- For the honor we pay the angelic creatures in whom you delight redounds to your own surpassing glory, and by their great dignity and splendor you show how infinitely great you are, to be exalted above all things, through Christ our Lord.
- Through him the multitude of Angels extols your majesty, and we are united with them in exultant adoration, as with one voice of praise we acclaim: Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of hosts...

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Nature of Angels (All of them)

- Angels are purely spiritual beings and therefore have no body. Without a body, angels are not male or female.
- Because they have no body, each individual angel is its own species (matter being the basis of differentiation of things with the same common nature) – so, the difference of one angel from another is more like the difference of a cat from a dog, or a mollusk from a chimpanzee, than the difference between any of us.
- In other words, each angel as its own distinct species is akin to a snowflake or a fingerprint (entirely unique).



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Nature of Angels (All of them)

- Because they have no body, angels are naturally immortal and undergo no maturation. They are 'complete' in the 'moment' of their creation and they do not procreate.
- God created the vast number and hierarchy of angels in a single instant. Angels are not born, but rather created by God.
- Because they have no body, angels relate to space-time in ways very different from us. We move from place to place bound by place. Angels, however, are present wherever their will is acting. Hence, they can appear and disappear instantaneously.
- Because we are material beings, we are located in place. The place 'contains' us. As pure spiritual beings (with no body), angels do not exist in time or in a certain place.

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Angelic Knowledge and Will

- Angels are *persons*. Each has a unique personality. Like us, angels are intellectual beings seeking and grasping Truth and possess a will which seeks and grasps the Good through choice.
- Because Angels are pure spirits, their knowledge and will are much more powerful than ours.
 - They have a perfect knowledge of God as Creator.
 - They know other creatures 'directly' from what God shares of His knowledge.
 - They don't need to take time to 'think things through' or try to figure out what's true amid a lot of sense-data (no discursive reasoning).
 - They cannot be *naturally* mistaken because they know objects entirely.
 - Their will moves to its object instantly and firmly – angels don't waffle or flip-flop.

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Limits of Angelic Knowledge

- Despite the strength of an angelic mind, angels are *not* omniscient. They do not know particular events in history (or are they able to predict the future or graces that God will give to human beings), unless God wills that knowledge for a particular angel.
- They are not able to read our minds and heart entirely.
 - BUT they can instantly know the physical effects of our thought or mood (facial expression, etc.) and *possibly* the cerebral state of our brain at a given moment – which gives the appearance to us that they can read our mind. In other words, they can *infer* our thoughts or mood through effects. They are, in short, *excellent* observers.
- Only God knows the innermost center of our minds and hearts both as their Creator and as the supreme object of their longing.
- In their natural state, angels lack supernatural knowledge of God himself and the mysteries of salvation.

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The Angelic Vocation and Adventure

- God calls angels to progress willingly beyond their natural state to a supernatural participation in his triune life (divinization) – to be sons of God.
 - Humans are also called to this supernatural participation (divinization).
 - It is likely that the angel gains some preliminary knowledge of what their role will be when this offer is made – which gives the demons some knowledge of God's plans and the role they *could have* played.
- God offers angels grace and asks for an act of faith. Their natural knowledge of God, however perfect from our point of view, cannot prepare them to “cast off into the deep” of God's *infinitely greater* life.

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The Angelic Vocation and Adventure

- The decision for or against God occurs primordially and is the act from which all their subsequent acts flow.
 - There are no neutral angels who have not yet made their definitive choice. At the moment of creation, every angel freely chooses whether to accept or reject their mission, a choice forever locked into their will without remorse. The CCC 393 says, “There is no repentance for the angels after their fall, just as there is no repentance for men after death.”
 - Angels cannot ‘change their mind’ because their wills are so powerfully fixed on their object. In other words, holy angels always remain fixed on God and fallen angels remain fixed on “anything but God.” Holy angels rejoice in serving God, while fallen angels remain fixed on rebelling against God and therefore will never repent.
 - **Key:** Angels were created in perfection and therefore lacked nothing in terms of knowing their mission from God.

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The Angelic Vocation and Adventure

- We can say therefore that there are at least three ‘moments’ in an angel’s personal history:
 - 1) The moment of natural happiness – knowing and loving God as the Creator;
 - 2) The moment of supernatural calling – choosing for or against sharing in God’s life;
 - 3) The moment of ministration – taking up their specific governance of the world or pursuing its ruin.
- These ‘moments’ may be near instantaneous from our point of view.

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Angelic Hierarchy

- The angels exist in a hierarchy based upon their nature and elevated by grace (among those who accept God’s call)
- Traditionally, this hierarchy is made up of Nine “Choirs” named from Scripture, organized in three groups of three choirs (triads)
- The choirs and the triads are ordered according to their place and role in God’s creation – those at the top are ‘nearest’ to God, those at the bottom ‘nearest’ to human beings.



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Angelic Hierarchy

- The idea of an angelic hierarchy existed in Judaism prior to the birth of Jesus.
- Its terms are based on relatively scant Scriptural references and took centuries to take a fixed form.
- But, we can say that the idea of a spiritual hierarchy seems fitting when the physical world is hierarchically arranged
 - Example: Chemical substance > Molecules > Atoms > Sub-atomic particles
 - Example: Organism > Organ System > Organ > Tissue > Cell



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Triad 1: Seraphim, Cherubim, Thrones



Seraphim

Contemplate God in Himself before throne
Isaiah 6:1-7



Cherubim

Contemplate God in His Providence
Revelation 4-6



Thrones (Ophanim)

Provide access to God
Chariots of God

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Triad 1: Seraphim, Cherubim, Thrones

- The first or highest triad directly worships God and contemplates God's providential design for Creation.
- Especially, the Thrones communicate this knowledge to the Dominions of the second Triad.
- The first or highest triad of angels possess the most universal and full knowledge of God and the mysteries of salvation.



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Triad 1: Seraphim, Cherubim, Thrones

- **Seraphim:**
 - "...each of them had six wings: with two they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they hovered. One cried out to the other: 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts! All earth is filled with his glory'" (Is 6:2-3)
 - Their name means "burning ones" as they burn with the love of God
 - Scripture: Isaiah 6:2-6
- **Cherubim:**
 - Guardians of Eden, the Ark of the Covenant, and attendants of God's chariot in the vision of Ezekiel
 - Their name means "Fullness of Wisdom"
 - Appear frequently in Scripture
- **Thrones:**
 - Few clues about its role, often identified with the many-eyed 'wheels' in Ezekiel's vision of God's chariot
 - Scripture: Col 1:16

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Triad 2: Dominions, Virtues, Powers

- The second or middle triad contemplates God's plan as it is known and taught by the first Triad.
- Arrange for the execution of this plan by lower orders.
- They are especially associated with the governance of the material universe.

THE SECOND TRIAD
Fulfills God's providential plans for the universe

DOMINIONS
Dominions are Angels of Leadership. They regulate the duties of the angels, making known the commands of God.

VIRTUES
Virtues are known as the Spirits of Motion and control the elements. They govern all nature. The virtues receive their orders from the dominions and "run" the universe.

POWERS
Powers are Warrior Angels against evil defending the cosmos and humans. They fight against evil spirits who attempt to wreak chaos through human beings.

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Triad 2: Dominions, Virtues, Powers

- **Dominions/Dominations:**
 - Angels of Leadership who make known the commands of God.
 - Possess knowledge of "universal causes" – *perhaps* we could say they are the overseers of the laws of nature.
 - Scripture: Dan 7:27, Col 1:16
- **Virtues/Authorities:**
 - Thought to govern the elements, planets, custodians of the physical universe; receiving commands from dominions and "run the universe"
 - Scripture: 1 Pet 3:22, Eph 1:21, 1 Cor 15:24
- **Powers:**
 - Warrior angels who restrain the fallen angels; defend cosmos and humans
 - Scripture: Dan 3:61, Eph 3:10, 6:12

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Triad 3: Principalities, Archangels, Angels



THE THIRD TRIAD

Directly order human affairs



PRINCIPALITIES

The principalities care for earthly principalities, that is, cities and nations and kingdoms.



ARCHANGELS

Archangels are generally taken to mean "chief or leading angel" and regarded as the "Messengers of the Lord". There are only three acknowledged archangels by the Church: Gabriel, Michael, and Raphael.



ANGELS

Angels are the closest to the material world and human beings. They deliver the prayers to God and God's answers and other messages to humans.

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Triad 3: Principalities, Archangels, Angels

- The third or bottom triad contemplate the divine plan as communicated from the second triad and executes it in particulars.
- These angels are the most 'familiar' to us, being especially concerned with human life.
- The Fathers of the Church saw an abundant number of occasions in which these angels were active:
 - The revelation of God in the Old Testament;
 - The events of Christ's life (the angelic host at the nativity, attending Christ in his Ascension, etc.)

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Triad 3: Principalities, Archangels, Angels

- **Principalities:**
 - Oversee and guide groups of people like nations, cities, and institutions
 - Scripture: Eph 3:10
- **Archangels:**
 - Perhaps like the special forces of the angelic host, entrusted with the most important missions to human beings.
 - We know the names of three: Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael
 - Scripture: 1 Thes 4:16, Jude 1:9, Rev. 12:7
- **Angels:**
 - The angels charged with direct protection of people and virtually innumerable other purposes
 - God assigns a guardian angel to each human being

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Angelic Hierarchy

- The angels are *not* passive instruments in God's hand. He entrusts his design to their free actions.
- The primary action of the angels is to communicate their knowledge of God's design to the order beneath them, adapting it to fit the intellect of that lower rank.
 - Angels are first and foremost teachers of other angels!
- As the knowledge cascades down from the higher to the lower ranks, the angels freely take up their specific role in the governance of the world.

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Angelic Governance

- Angelic governance of the world is very difficult for our modern, scientific, materialist bias. Even Thomas Aquinas says that it is not theologically necessary – God could have created a self-governed material universe.
- BUT there's no contradiction in saying that the free acts of angels are behind what we can study and know according to the sciences.
 - Quantum indeterminacy and entanglement, systems biology, and emergence all suggest that the world can't be reduced to a closed system of matter-in-motion.
- It is fitting for the personal God to entrust the whole range of objects and forces in creation to personal beings. It redounds to His glory!

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A Note on the Hierarchy

- The Church discourages excessive personal curiosity about angels and their hierarchy and expressly forbids any effort to know the names of angels other than those that have been revealed in Scripture. It does this for two reasons:
 - Excessive concern with the ins and outs of the angelic hierarchy can lead to Gnosticism, a focus on the world of spirits to the neglect of the Incarnate Christ. He alone is our salvation and he is Lord of the angels too.
 - We have no way of ascertaining the names of angels other than asking them to tell us and we have no way of knowing whether whoever speaks is a holy angel or not. Seeking the names of angels is opening a huge door to demons even if you mean well.
- **Key:** We should remain focused on Christ, who is enthroned above the angels.

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The Nature of the Fallen Angels

- Everything that has been said about angelic nature applies to the Devil and the fallen angels. Like angels, they do not move from place to place like we do, but rather are present wherever their will is acting.
- They have great powers of intellect and will – so great that their choices are irrevocable.
- We do not typically rank the demons according to a hierarchy, but their natural ranks persist in some mode after their fall.
 - Lower ranks of demons *willingly submit* to higher ranks so as to be more effective in their evil.

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The Devil

- The devil is not a mere personification or symbol of evil.
- The Devil goes by a number of names:
 - Devil from *diabolos* = “slanderer”, “adversary”
 - “Satan” = “Accuser”
 - Lucifer = “Light-bearer”
- The majority in the Catholic tradition considers the Devil to be from the highest ranks of angels, most likely *the* highest angel.



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The Devil

- It is due to his high rank that:
 - The Devil incites other, lesser angels to imitate and join him in his fall – though likely far fewer than became Holy because “what is contrary to nature is rare” (Thomas Aquinas).
 - He has titles like ‘Prince of the World’ (John 14:30) and ‘god of this age’ (2 Cor 4:4) – it is possible he would have had these titles even without his fall.
- The Devil is akin to a moral black hole, once a bright beautiful Star, he collapses inward and the force of his choice draws others into his grasp.



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The Devil's Fall

- It is worth asking why the Devil fell into sin, especially since as the highest angel he was naturally closest to God.
- St. Thomas Aquinas notes that the Devil naturally had the least *inclination* to sin.
- However, as the highest angel, he had the greatest *occasion* for the sin of Pride due to the scope of his power and greatness.
- Pride is “the disordered love of my own excellence” not because it is good, but because it’s *mine* (Bonino, 203). Because the Devil was the greatest of creatures, his excellence presented him with the greatest lure of self-love and his power of will meant that his choice was swift and irrevocable.

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The Devil's Pride

- St. Augustine referred to sin itself as being 'turned in on the self' and Pride represents the most extreme form of this inward turn and the Devil as the chief instance of this inward turn.
- The Devil and demons have a special contempt/envy toward human beings due to the Incarnation. The truth that God became flesh out of perfect humility and love in order rescue us from sin is repulsive to the Devil and his demons.



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The Devil's Desire

- Because of his love of his own excellence, the Devil wants to be *absolutely* independent, to "be an end unto himself", in short to be *like God* (without God). Therefore, when God summoned him to supernatural life, the Devil refused. Why?
 - Because God's life is infinitely beyond that of every creature. It can only be received in faith. The Devil could not accept something unknown, outside of his control.
 - Further, the offer was made to all angels regardless of rank as well as human beings, which certainly offended the Devil's pride.

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The Devil's Torment

- The primary source of the Devil's torment comes from the consequences of his sin:
 - He desires to be like God, but knows with his perfect natural angelic knowledge that he is absolutely dependent upon God.
 - He was made for the bliss of a supernatural destiny with God, but has rejected this destiny and lost the bliss.
 - Note the irony! The Devil could have been like God if he had been humble enough to accept God's grace and submit himself to God.

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The Psychology of Demons

- The fall and state of the Devil is mimicked in all the demons.
 - Though they are less than him in nature, they too follow him in pride, contempt, and envy.
- Demons *loathe* themselves and one another for the following reasons:
 - Fully aware of the consequences of their choice;
 - Fully aware that they are entirely responsible for their torment;
 - BUT they are completely fixed in their Pride;
 - They are at complete odds with reality and have lost fellowship with God;
 - That said, how could they not hate themselves?

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The City of Evil

- What “unites” demons is their hatred of God’s creation and the hierarchical relationships that belong to them by nature.
 - There is no loyalty or love between demons;
 - We can imagine that higher orders of demons view lower orders as mere tools; Satan views all demons as mere tools.
- The Devil is not a comic book supervillain.
 - He’s not trying to replace God (he knows he cannot do that);
 - He’s not trying to *rule* the world (he doesn’t care about the world);
 - Or be an object of worship *as an end in itself* (he does not care about our attention).

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The City of Evil

- **Key:** The goal of devil and his fallen angels try to *ruin* the world as much as they can by leading those who can still be saved into mimicking their rejection of God. The devil and his demons’ motto could very well be: “Anything but God.”
- **Focus on the Negative:** Habitual focus on sins, weaknesses, faults, what’s wrong with the Church and/or the world keeps your focus off of God and his grace. The effects of “habitual negative focus” leads to discouragement, sorrow, anger, bitterness, lack of peace, etc. At its worst, it leads to self-loathing (they want us to imitate their psychology – to feel about ourselves they way they do), which enables them to more easily get us to do what they want. The **remedy:** Stay focused on God and the Good News (as opposed to the bad news).
- **Fear Unknown:** Fixated on control, demons fear the unknown and therefore reject God’s grace and where He would lead them.

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The City of Evil

- A few words about tactics:
 - **Love Confusion:** Demons love confusion as it creates difficulty in seeing clearly (think of a storm).
 - **Fixed on Rebellion:** Demons are fixed on rebellion against God; their rebellion brings them pleasure just as indulging in an addiction brings pleasure (even if only temporarily) to an addict.
 - **Hatred for holy:** Demons not only have a hatred for God, but they have a hatred for the Blessed Virgin Mary (especially her humility), the saints, and the Church (including her sacraments, sacramentals, etc.). In short, they have a hatred for God and all things of God (including the instruments God's uses for growth in holiness).

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Demons and Us

- The Devil and his demons' attack on the Kingdom of God is not haphazard but coordinated on a cosmic, social, cultural, and (last of all) individual scale (Bonino, 289).
- He works to coordinate our personal sins to build "structures of sin" – *social situations and institutions that are contrary to divine goodness...the expression and effect of personal sins. They lead their victims to do evil in their turn. (Catechism of the Catholic Church, para. 1869)*
- But there is a limit! However powerful, no angel (Holy or Fallen) can compel us to do anything. In short, they cannot violate our free will.

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Demons and Us

- “As subtle as the enemy may be, his most ingenious malice can affect the soul only by way of a detour, just as one overcomes a city by poisoning its wells.
- He deceives the judgment, sullies the imagination, stirs up the flesh and the blood, makes use of our own contradictions with an infinite skill, leads our joys astray, deepens our sorrows, falsifies our acts and intentions in their secret relations, but when he has thus upset everything, he still has destroyed nothing. He must extract the ultimate consent from us, and he will not have it all without God speaking in His turn.” ~Georges Bernanos
- **Key:** The devil can work on the imagination and emotions, and play on our ignorance and weaknesses, but he cannot force the will.

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Angels and Demons



Good Angel?



Fallen Angel?

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Next Time

- The Extraordinary Activity of the Devil (Pages 31 -44)
 - Signs of the demonic
 - Various forms of demonic influence
- What is an Exorcism and Gospel of Mark (Pages 45 – 67)

