

St. Therese Catholic Church

Spiritual Warfare
Session 6

December 5, 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. Explain the ordinary activity of the devil
2. Explore the 7 Deadly Sins to help understand the 'structure' of vice that the devil wants to push us into
3. Examine how we can resist the devil's ordinary activity in our ordinary lives
4. Renew our trust in Christ's protection and grace

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The Ordinary Activity of the Devil

- As Catholics rooted in Christ and His Church, we should be much more concerned with the devil's ordinary activity.
- The devil is very subtle (cf. Gen. 3:1 – most cunning)
 - Devil influences us rather than directly controls
 - Cannot easily distinguish between devil's influence and our own choices, habits
 - That's the devil's deliberate strategy – we unwittingly cooperate with his work
- **Key:** It is critical to develop a discerning spirit (who is speaking to me, where is he leading me) as the devil's goal is to separate us from God and lead us into ruin.

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The Devil's Plan of Attack

- Fr. Lampert identifies four stages of the devil's ordinary attack:

Devil's Toolbox	
Deception	The Father of Lies (Jn 8:44)
Division	Tries to divide to weaken
Diversion	Distracts you from the present moment
Discouragement	Tries to sap your energy and enthusiasm for God
Doubt	Casts doubt through subtle questions
Delay	Put off the most important things

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The Devil's Plan of Attack

- We can link these stages with the "7 deadly sins" or "7 deadly vices"
 - The character-shaping habits that lead us away from God
 - There is an inner order to these vices – one leads to another
 - They are gateway sins that give birth to other sins, much like lower-level drugs can lead to more serious drugs.



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Stage 1: Deception

- The Devil is the “father of lies.”
- Recall Genesis 3
- Serpent convinces Eve and Adam (who is there with her) that God:
 - Lied about consequences of eating fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil
 - Withheld his divinity



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Stage 1: Deception

- In our own lives, the devil deceives us so that we “repeat” his fall.
- Convinces us that God is indifferent, not all powerful, not good, not real.
- Once God is ignored, distrusted, or rejected, then we make ourselves “the law and measure of all things” (Lampert 120). *We* determine “good and evil.”
- Eve “saw that the tree was good for food, was pleasing to the eyes, and desirable for gaining wisdom.”
 - Eve takes it upon herself to makes this judgment about the tree in spite of the command from God.

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Stage 1: Deception

Here are some common lies that the devil proposes.

1. I am unworthy of love.
2. God could never love me.
3. I have to earn God's love.
4. God does not keep his promises; I can't trust him.
5. If people knew the real me, they wouldn't like me.
6. I can never change. I'm never going to get better.
7. I don't matter. No one needs me. I am not important.
8. I am a mistake. I am worthless. I am a failure.
9. I am stupid. I am bad. I am dirty.
10. I have to be perfect. God will only love me when I am perfect.
11. God cannot forgive me. God can't help me.
12. I am all alone. God doesn't care about me or has abandoned me. I have to do everything by myself. It's all up to me.

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Stage 2: Division

- We were made for communion with God and others.
- Once we are deceived, the devil tries to divide us from God, each other, and our selves. (Lampert, 121)
- **Genesis 4:** Cain murders his brother Abel out of envy.



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Stage 2: Division

“[The devil] can suggest that we compare ourselves to others, usually to the extent that we overestimate the abilities of others and underestimate our own, so that we look bad in comparison.

He sets us up against one another with the likes of anger, resentment, contempt, greed, and avarice. He can stir up impatience, so that we become agitated and dissatisfied.”
(Lampert, 121)

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Stage 3: Diversion

- Once we are divided from others, our God-given desire to love Him and our neighbor *should* prompt us to snap out of the devil’s deception.
- To stop this, the devil presents us with many lesser goods in the world to distract us from the path of love.
 - Can be very subtle and many times we aren’t even aware we’re not on the right path. (Lampert, 122)
- Devil encourages us to think that we can and should do whatever we want, to chase our shallow desires wherever they lead.

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Stage 3: Diversion



The Prodigal Son (David Teniers, the Younger)

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Stage 3: Diversion

- The result of this diversion from our journey to God is “a world of busyness and distraction whereby we always have to be doing something or engaged in some meaningless activity. It is a world of noise that drowns out the voice of God, and the only voice we hear is our own.” (Lampert, 123)



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Stage 4: Discouragement

- *Acedia*: From the Greek meaning “lack of care.” It is an affliction of the soul that attacks desire – our desire for the good.
- The end goal of the devil’s ordinary activity and “the most dangerous threat to the spiritual life and our journey to God.” (Lampert, 124)
- A lack of joy or tiredness in the spiritual life.
- With *acedia*, everything to do with our spiritual life seems pointless, and we turn away to other things.

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7 Deadly Vices

- With Lampert’s mentioning of *acedia*, it seems appropriate to quickly look at what are called the 7 Deadly Vices or Sins
- Seven dispositions produced by disordered loves
- Helpful for examination of conscience
- Reveal ‘structure’ of sin and vice
 - Vices interconnected
 - Habitual sinning causes vices, which cause more habitual sinning (downward spiral).

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7 Deadly Vices

Pride	Disordered love of own excellence
Wrath	Anger at good of others compared to self
Envy	Sadness at good of others compared to self
Greed	Disordered love of external goods
Gluttony	Disordered love of pleasure of eating/drinking
Lust	Disordered love of pleasure of sex
Sloth/Acedia	Sadness about our spiritual good

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Pride

- Pride is “the disordered love of my own excellence” (Bonino, 203)
- “Pride is the beginning (cause) of sin” (Sirach 10:13)
 - All sin is disobedience, and disobedience comes from a kind of Pride (my will is more important than God’s)
 - All sin feeds my disordered love of self (my good is what I ultimately aim at when I sin).
- Devil leads us into Pride in *very* subtle ways – even if we’re praying, receiving the sacraments, we can become spiritually proud.

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Envy and Wrath

- When we're fixated on *our* excellence, we cannot celebrate the excellence of others.
- When proud, we respond to others' excellence by:
 - **Wrath:** Desire for vengeance due to another's good being a hindrance to my own excellence (Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, II.2, Q 84, art. 4)
 - **Envy:** Sadness about another's good as being a hindrance to my own excellence.
- Put simply, others are seen as threats to my own greatness. This attitude can 'hide' under low self-esteem.

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Forms of Wrath and Envy

- "You have heard that it was said to your ancestors, 'You shall not kill; and whoever kills will be liable to judgment.' But I say to you, whoever is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment, and whoever says to his brother, 'Raqa,' will be answerable to the Sanhedrin, and whoever says, 'You fool,' will be liable to fiery Gehenna" (Matthew 5:21-22)
- The wrath that sometimes leads to violence can also lead to disparagement, insults, gossip – any attempt to bring someone down or refusing to see their goodness.

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Greed

- Greed is an inordinate desire for external goods because they are *wrongly* thought to provide satisfaction and security.
- Greed easily follows envy, wrath
- The goods that others possess become objects of our desire:
 - We envy their happiness, and then we think their happiness is because of their house, their car, their job.
 - Or, wrathfully, we want better stuff than others to demonstrate our superiority (that's a kind of wrath).
- With greed, we delude ourselves into thinking that wealth translates to moral goodness.

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Greed

- One of Jesus' great concerns was the worship of Mammon (wealth, property):
 - “No one can serve two masters. He will either hate one and love the other, or be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.” (Matthew 6:24)
- Christ knows that the moment we fool ourselves into thinking that we could be satisfied by material possessions, we will not stop trying to get more.



Key: We were made for God, only he can satisfy us.

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Gluttony and Lust

- Gluttony and Lust involve disordered love of bodily goods.
- Gluttony is a disordered love of 1) the pleasures that comes from eating/drinking and 2) self-preservation
 - Quantity is not the only measure of gluttony
 - Gluttony can include the dainty eater or the foody, too
 - One who hoards food or even obsesses over their health are kinds of gluttons.

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Gluttony and Lust

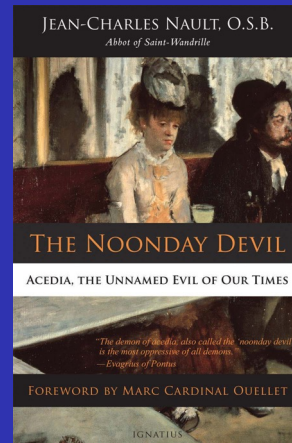
- Lust is a disordered love of 1) the pleasures that come from sex and 2) the preservation of the species
 - The disorder of lust is in turning others into objects
 - Lust blinds one from the beauty of a person, a person who is created out of love and for love.
 - God wills that our sexuality is ordered toward unity (bonding) and procreation (babies).
 - Sexual activities such as fornication, adultery, pornography, and self-impurity deviate from the truth of free, total, and life-giving love.

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Sloth/Acedia

- As noted, acedia is a kind of spiritual joylessness.
- Manifests in both boredom, laziness but also frantic activity and a need for endless change.
 - We're lazy about our spiritual life, and often fill the time with endless minor tasks/distractions, changes of scenery, new endeavors that go nowhere.
- Acedia leads those to stagnate in their spiritual life. Resist spiritual complacency!



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Sloth/Acedia

- Acedia is despair over our vocation to share in God's life.
- A "false humility that has become so common today: man does not want to believe that God is concerned about him, knows him, loves him, watches over him, is close to him." (Joseph Ratzinger)
- Acedia seems far from Pride – but recall the fall of the devil:
 - He knew perfectly of his own natural excellence (Pride) and because of it he refused God's call to "strike out into the deep" (Acedia)

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Despair

- The devil wants to draw us into the vices so that we end up like him – cut off from God in Pride and Despair.
- Despair is the sin against the Holy Spirit -the unforgivable sin because it is the *refusal* to receive God's love, forgiveness.
- The motive for this refusal might be a belief that we're too awful to be loved or a false conviction that we don't need God's love.



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Fending Off the Devil

- Fr. Lampert lists several important “best practices” to fend off the devil:
 - 1) Read Scripture
 - Words of Scripture powerful as prayers, rebukes
 - Jesus used Scripture to renounce the temptations of the devil in the desert (though the devil recited Scripture to Jesus, too)
 - The Story of Scripture reminds us of our dignity and vocation, warding off acedia.

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Fending Off the Devil

2) Practice Marian devotion and call on the saints for help

- Devil fears and avoids those who are holy
- Mary's fullness of grace makes her presence and name painful for demons
- She leads us to her Son
- Saints are those in whom Christ has been victorious over evil



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Fending Off the Devil

- Fix our heart on God and seek assistance when we stumble:

“The little bird [the soul] calls upon the angels and saints who rise like eagles before the consuming Fire [God], and since this is the object of the little bird's desire the eagles take pity on it, protecting and defending it, and putting to flight at the same time those vultures who want to devour it. These vultures are the demons whom the little bird doesn't fear, for it is not destined to be their prey but the prey of the Eagle (Christ) whom it contemplates in the center of the Sun of Love.”

~St. Therese, *Story of a Soul*, chapter 9

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Fending Off the Devil

3) Participate in the sacraments

- Sacraments like preventative and palliative medical care
- Don't accept a 'cultural Catholicism' – being Catholic by family or cultural inertia, only going through the motions (Lampert, 142)

4) Pray and fast

- Establish and build bond with God
- Short-circuit the cycle that leads us into sin – especially gluttony and lust
- Realize our dependence on God

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Fending Off the Devil


5) Call upon your Guardian Angel

- We are never left alone, we always have an ally
- Guardian Angel is more powerful than the devil because the Guardian Angel shares in God's own life supernaturally
- Just as demons influence us, pushing us into temptation, our guardian angel tries to lead us away from sin and toward God

6) Use sacramentals

- Crucifixes, holy water, Miraculous Medals, etc.
- Blessed objects prepare us to receive grace
- Show that the power of Christ lays claim to the things of the world

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Fending Off the Devil

- Additionally, a powerful weapon against the devil is the **virtue of humility**. The devil is full of pride and therefore, hates humility.
- Hence, the devil hates the Blessed Virgin Mary, who is the Queen of Humility. While she is the “most blessed among all women,” she is also the humblest of all God’s creatures on earth.
- Pray for humility and practice humility by choosing to put others before yourself (in conversations, giving compliments, offering gratitude for their gifts, etc.).

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Fending Off the Devil

- **Daily Examination of Conscience** helps foster self-reflection and God’s grace operating in my life and where I may be resisting Him.

Steps for Daily Examen	
Ask God for light.	Pause and acknowledge God’s presence.
Give thanks.	Best parts of your day and God’s gifts
Review the day	Who did I meet? What did I do?
Face your shortcomings (sins)	What are my sins and ask forgiveness
Look forward to tomorrow.	Ask God for His blessing for rest and graces need for tomorrow.

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Discernment of Spirits

“The style of the enemy — when we speak about the enemy, we are speaking about the devil, because the devil exists, he is there! — his style, we know — is to present himself in a devious, masked way: he starts from what is most dear to us and then, little by little, reels us in: evil enters secretly, without the person being aware of it.

The more we know ourselves, the more we can sense where the evil spirit enters from, his “passwords”, the entrance to our heart, which are the points to which we are most sensitive, so as to pay attention to them in the future. Each one of us has their more sensitive spots, the weakest spots in their personality: and the evil spirit enters from there, and leads us down the wrong path.”

~Pope Francis, Catechesis on Discernment

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Christ's Victory

- “The goal of discernment is to recognize the salvation God is working in my life.” – Pope Francis
- “I came that they might have life, and have it abundantly.” (John 10:10)
- The goal of the Catholic life is deep, abiding, and intimate communion with God in this life and the next. Our Lord is already victorious over the devil in His death and Resurrection and we are invited into that victory every day.



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Course Conclusion

1. What is something that really struck you from the course?
2. What will you take away from the course or put into practice in your life?

