

Homily: 4th Sunday Cycle B: 2024: Dt. 18: 15-20; Ps. 95; 1 Corth 7: 32-35; Mk. 1: 21-28

“The Reality of the Fallen Angels and How to Best Deal with Them”

Jesus by His Incarnation, Life on earth, and especially through His Passion, Death and Resurrection has defeated the Kingdom of darkness: the power of satan, sin and death. We see the beginning of this today as Jesus casts out the unclean spirit from the man in the synagogue - a foreshadowing of his definitive victory on the Cross.

1. **Do we realize there is a spiritual battle going on in the supernatural world for our souls (lives)? Remember my homily last weekend of viewing everything in light of eternity.** The powers of darkness are real. Satan is the chief of the angels who rebelled against God before the human race was created, and he and the other rebellious angels (1/3? - book of Revelation) were driven out of Heaven by St. Michael and the other good angels with God's power. Satan and the other rebellious angels ended up in the place we call Hell – it was by their free and definitive choice. We might dismiss that as a pious fable, but the Bible and the Church has always affirmed the existence of the devils. If you want to read a fascinating book on this topic, which is a fictional account but has some deep insights into the workings of the spiritual underworld, check out C.S. Lewis's *The Screwtape Letters* in which one senior devil is training a junior devil in how to tempt human beings and get them away from God. **It is both humorous and brilliant in its insights.** After all, if we don't believe the devils are real, they already have a foot in the door of our soul since our guard will be down. Besides denying their existence, the other **extreme reaction** is to be obsessed with the devils which is the tendency of little kids. **Neither reaction is what we are called to as Catholics.** Given the devils are real, as the Church affirms, **how do we deal with them?** Not to focus on them anymore than we need to, but by looking at Jesus when we are tempted, as St. Therese recommended, we will resist the evil ones. If you sense the temptation of the evil ones in your mind, heart and soul or he brings up memories of sin in your imagination (esp. e.g., sins of impurity): **LOOK AT JESUS!** And receive the **Sacraments** of the Church with faith and make use of the **sacramentals** of the Church (holy water, blessed metals, etc.) -

not as magic charms but with deep faith. **Many of the saints said we should always have something blessed on our person, be it a metal or a rosary or a scapular. The devils hate them!** And let me know if any of you want to be enrolled in the Brown Scapular of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel - particularly helpful.

2. **Tell the devils to get lost and say as Jesus said today, “Be quiet and get out of here.”** If we try to look the devils and temptations in the face and dally with them, they will overcome us. **Remember the devils are smarter than us;** after all, they are fallen angelic spirits who were created by God with a superior intelligence to the human race. But their intelligence is warped by their **pride**, and so the way we overcome them is by humbly rooting our life in Jesus who they must bow before in obedience. **The devils are also so afraid of the Blessed Virgin Mary because of her humility and obedience;** so, when we turn to her in filial love, she protects us from the snares of the evil ones and leads us closer to Jesus under her mantle of motherly love. **What about possession?** *This is a still rather rare phenomenon, although it is tragically becoming more prevalent today because increasingly more people, esp. young ppl, are turning their backs on the Faith and are messing around with the occult world, and thus invite the devils in: be it thru black magic, ouija boards, fortune tellers, etc. That’s not harmless “fun” as some foolish people think. Stay away from that occult stuff at all costs, and if you ever messed with those things in your life, be sure to mention it in the* **Sacrament of Confession ASAP** – as it is an opening to the powers of darkness to enter your soul. Also, persistent sexual sin, and esp. being involved in the grave evil of abortion can open one to obsession or actual possession from the evil spirits. **Obsession:** is when a human is not actually possessed by a fallen angel(s)/evil spirit(s) but is constantly harassed by the powers of darkness. *Using Sacramentals, striving to live in the State of Grace going forward by confessing your mortal sins with a purpose of amendment, and a blessing(s) from a priest can often free one from that terrible dynamic.* However, for most people the normal way the devils try to ensnare us is with the daily temptation to sin and do our will instead of God’s holy will – and to get us away from God over time.

3. **Why does God allow the devils to tempt us to do evil?** Because He uses their own designs against them. Witness the Crucifixion of Jesus: the greatest evil ever committed turned into the greatest good. Think of the capital sins: *If we resist pride and self-will, we grow in humility and self-giving love. If we resist giving into anger, we grow in patience. If we resist giving into impurity, we grow in the virtue of chastity. If we resist giving into gluttony, we grow in temperance. If we resist giving into greed, we grow in generosity toward others and holy detachment from this passing world. If we turn away from jealousy and envy, we come to see the gifts of others and God's image in them, and so on.* That is the reason God permits the devils to tempt us: to give us the opportunity to grow in the opposite virtue which forms us more in holiness into the image of Christ. Temptation resisted builds our soul in virtue – just like exercise gets us in shape physically. Also, one of the best tools of the spiritual life when we are really tempted to do evil *is to offer those temptations for others* in the world who at that moment are also tempted to give into those sins. Thus, instead of us being ensnared by the false glamour of sin and evil, we are offering it to God to help bring about the conversion of someone else as well, in God. **We are defeating the devils at their own game and growing in charity at the same time.** But only in Christ - *if we try to take on the devils with our own limited human resources, we will fall all the time, because they trick us into thinking sin will make us happy, like satan did with the first human beings.* **Don't listen to the devils** as they want to lead us into spiritual darkness through sinning: *first venial and then mortal* – hoping to get us to despair and into Hell eventually. Jesus will save us from all that spiritual darkness - if we let Him work & trust in the help of the Church's sacramental life and through the intercession of Mary and the saints.

Recommended Reading:

Angels & Devils. Joan Carroll Cruz. TAN books. 1999.
 The Catechism of the Catholic Church. Paragraphs 391-412 & 538-540; 550
 An Exorcist Explains the Demonic. Fr. Gabriele Amorth Sophia Press. 2016
 An Exorcist Tells His Story. Fr. Gabriele Amorth. Ignatius Press. 1999.
 An Exorcist: More Stories. Fr. Gabriele Amorth. Ignatius Press. 2002.
 The Devil: And How To Resist Him. Gerald Vann, O.P. Sophia Press. 1997.
 Diary of an American Exorcist. Msgr. Stephen Rossetti. Sophia Press. 2021.