

Scripture Reading

A Reading from the Letter of St. Paul to the Ephesians (*Ephesians 6:10-13*)

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power. Put on the full armour of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armour of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. The Word of the Lord. R. Thanks be to God.

Reflection – Our Real Enemies are not of Flesh and Blood

The cause of the fall of mankind – the Ancient Serpent. After the fall of our first parents, Adam and Eve into sin through temptation by the ancient serpent, the Deceiver or Satan, God immediately took action and declared to the Serpent: *I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and Hers; He will crush your head, and you will strike His heel.*" (*cf. Genesis 3:15*). Effectively to secure the salvation of His children and to reinstate them to their rightful inheritance, God declared the start of a spiritual war against Satan and his fallen angels. Our real enemy are Satan and the demons working through their human agents.

Satan works undercover through deception, and dresses up evil to look good and attractive. Satan hides himself, works undercover and tries very hard, with great success, to deceive the world that he does not exist. Once the world is convinced that he does not exist then they will let down their guards against him, becoming easy prey for him. Satan employs great intelligence and cunning in his dirty work of tempting God's children. Just as he presented evil as good to Adam and Eve, he will always dress up sin as something attractive and good. For example, sins like sexual promiscuity, abortion, euthanasia, homosexual acts are presented under attractive labels such as "choice", "freedom", "mercy" and "alternative lifestyle", etc. Without a conscience formed in God's divine truths and laws, it is difficult to see through the lies and falsehoods of Satan. Through the cunning deception and corruption of Satan, many minds are not able to discern the difference between good and evil. Thus, sin is not recognised as sin.

Satan leverages on our weaknesses and feelings. Satan knows our weaknesses and uses them to his advantage. To the soul weak in humility, Satan will present prideful thoughts and suggestions. To the one not strong in charity, Satan will always remind him of his self-interest and rights. To the one not strong in trust of God, Satan will try to introduce fear and despair in the face of difficulties and adversities. With great cunning, he will leverage on our sentimentality, our ignorance, our pride and selfishness in his great efforts to make us trip and fall into sin.

We open the door to evil through our pride and self-love. The devil presents temptation to us through our senses and introduces wilful and prideful suggestions and falsehoods into our mind. How strong we are to overcome temptation depends on how well guarded our mind is by holy truth, and our heart by holy love and humility, and the strength of our self-control over our senses and feelings. The more our soul is burdened under sin, the more influence Satan has over us. Jesus says: *everyone who sins is a slave to sin* (*cf. John 8:34*). Sin enslaves. Forgiveness by God gives real freedom. Sincere repentance through the Sacrament of Confession breaks bondages due to sins. Confession is even more powerful than exorcism as it is not a mere casting out of evil but a total renewal of the soul which is purified and refilled with sanctifying grace, making it pure and holy. What happens in Confession when a soul come to God in true repentance is no small miracle.

A powerful and effective weapon against evil: prayer, fasting and Sacraments. Jesus says: *Pray that you will not fall into temptation* (*cf. Matthew 26:41, Luke 22:40*). When we pray we put ourselves into the presence of God and open our heart to receive His graces. In prayer the influence that evil has over us becomes weaker. Even at the name of Jesus, all knees must bend (*cf. Philippians 2:10*) and that includes the evil spirits as well. Once we kneel down in humble submission to God we restore the rightful authority God has over us. If we do not pray, it will be easy for us to lose our faith. St Paul says: *pray unceasingly* (*cf. 1 Thessalonians 5:17*). The Sacraments are very powerful help in our fight against evil. Frequent Confession is really a necessity in our spiritual life. Through giving us actual graces Holy Communion helps us fight against temptation and vices. Through adding on sanctifying grace, Holy Communion helps us to increase our holiness. Fasting coupled with prayers e.g. rosary is a powerful weapon against evil as those involved in exorcism ministry will readily testify.

Conversation with Jesus

Precious Lord, I know I am under testing and temptation till my last day on earth. You allow the tempting of Satan and his demons in order to test my faith in and love for You. Faith and love unproven is mere sentiment and useless. Form my mind in Your divine truths. Your eternal truths and Word will be my safeguard and shield against the lies and falsehoods of the Evil One who will always present sin as good. May You open the eyes of all Your children to recognise sin as sin, and have the discernment always to choose good over evil. Strengthen all hearts in holy love and humility so that we are fortified against the wiles of the Evil One. Mary, Mother of Salvation, pray for us. Thank You, Jesus. Praise You, Jesus.