

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 mankind and to reinstate them to their rightful place of inheritance, God declared the start of a spiritual war against Satan and his fallen angels, led by His only Son, Jesus Christ and Mary, the Mother of Jesus.

How does Satan work? Matching God's greatest desire to save His children, Satan dedicates his entire time to bringing them to eternal damnation as his ultimate aim is to hurt God. In his arrogance Satan says: *I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High* (*Isaiah 14:14*). The Lord's response: *But you are brought down to the realm of the dead, to the depths of the pit* (*Isaiah 14:15*). Unlike God who is open and trustworthy, 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. St. Peter warns us: *Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour* (*1 Peter 5:8*).

Opening the door to evil. The devil presents temptation to us through our senses and introduces wilful and prideful suggestions into our minds. 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. Thus, Satan may instigate a spiritually vulnerable person to be his instrument to humiliate or hurt us but our response to this provocation will depend on the level of our love and humility. The more sin our soul is burdened under, the more influence Satan has over us. Jesus says: *everyone who sins is a slave to sin* (cf. *John 8:34*). Thus, we have been advised to avail often of the Sacrament of Confession. It is quite impossible not to sin while we are on this earth and this is precisely why our Lord instituted this sacrament (Confession) by which our soul will again be refilled with sanctifying grace, preparing us for heaven.

Our weapon: prayer 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 hearts to receive His graces. Once we submit ourselves to God 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 supreme natural order of the universe in our little worlds: we are creatures/children of God/Heavenly Father around whom revolves all universe, we are no longer mini-gods whose little worlds revolve around our self-interest and comfort. This temporary restoration of order has an effect not just on ourselves but others as well. The power of evil over us gained through our sinfulness is lessened and the rightful authority of God is strengthened. As we all come from one true God, the only source of all goodness and grace, a prayer or good deed affects every person on earth just as conversely a sin or an evil deed will have the reverse effect. That's why Jesus said: *pray unceasingly* (cf. *1 Thessalonians 5:17*).

Conversation with Jesus

Precious Lord, whatever I feel the fire of anger and vengeance at those who inflict harm and hurt on me, let me remember that my ultimate enemy is not the person through whom the evil is done but the enemy of my Salvation himself who desires no less than my eternal damnation. Let me fight back effectively through forgiveness, love and prayer for my human enemies who are the unfortunate instruments of the Deceiver. Help me be strong against temptation by having my soul in a state of grace, practising my faith and guarding my heart with holy love and my mind with holy truth. Mary, Protectress of the Faith, protect Your child. Thank You Jesus. Praise You Jesus.