



The Holy See

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HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS

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[Multimedia]

The First Reading, taken from the Book of Revelation, begins with a strong word: “War broke out in Heaven”. And then it explains how this war was. It is the final war, the last war, the war of the end. It is the war between the Angels of God commanded by St Michael against Satan, the ancient serpent, the devil. This is the final one and everything ends there, only the Lord’s eternal peace remains with all his children who were faithful. However, throughout history this war has been waged every day, *every day*: it is waged in the heart of men and women, in the hearts of Christians and of non-Christians.... It is the war between good and evil, where we must choose what we want, good or evil. But the strategy of war, the methods of war of these two enemies are totally opposite.

In the initial prayer, in the Collect, we asked for the grace to be defended by the Archangel Michael against the “snares” of the demon, of the devil. And *snares* are one of the strategies of the devil. He is a sower of snares. A seed of life, a seed of unity never falls from his hands — snares always snares: it is his method, to sow snares. Let us pray to the Lord to safeguard us from this.

Then, in the First Reading, we heard about another strategy, another way of waging war, Satan who seduces. He is a seducer; he is one that sows snares and is a seducer, and he seduces with fascination, with demonic fascination, leading one to believe everything. He sells skillfully with this fascination, he sells well, but in the end he pays poorly! It is his method. We think of the first time that this lord appears in the Gospel; it is in a dialogue with Jesus. Jesus was praying and fasting for 40 days in the desert, and at the end he was rather tired and hungry. And [Satan] comes; he moves slowly as a serpent, and makes three proposals to Jesus: “If you are God, the Son of God, there are stones there, if you are hungry, turn them into bread”; “If you are the Son of God, why are you so tired? Come with me to the terrace of the Temple and throw yourself down, and people

will see this miracle and without effort you will be recognized as the Son of God”; the devil tries to seduce Him and, in the end, as he had not succeeded in seducing Him, he makes the last proposal: “Let’s speak clearly, I will give you all the power of the world, but you must adore me. Let’s make a deal”.

These are the three steps of the strategy of the ancient serpent, of the demon: first, to have things, in this case bread, riches, riches that lead one gradually to corruption, and this issue of corruption is not a fairy tale! It is everywhere. Corruption is everywhere: for two pence many people sell their soul, sell their happiness, sell their life, sell everything. That is the first step: money, riches. Then, when they have it, they feel important. The second step: vanity. What the devil said to Jesus: “Let’s go on the terrace of the Temple, throw yourself down, and make a great spectacle!” — to live for vanity. The third step: power, pride, arrogance: “I will give you all the power of the world; you will be the one who commands”.

This also always happens to us all in small things: we are too attached to riches, we are pleased when we are praised, like the peacock. And many people become ridiculous, so many people. Vanity makes one become ridiculous. Now, in the end, when one has power, one thinks one is God, and this is the great sin.

This is our struggle, and therefore today let us ask the Lord that, through the intercession of the Archangel Michael, we may be protected from the snares, the fascination, the seductions of this ancient serpent called Satan.

In your work, you have a somewhat difficult task, because there is always opposition and you must put things right and you often need to avoid offenses or crimes. Pray often so that, with the intercession of St Michael the Archangel, the Lord may safeguard you from giving in to every temptation, from every temptation to corruption for money, for riches, from vanity and arrogance. And, like Jesus, the more humble, the more humble your service is, the more fruitful and the more useful it will be for us all.

The humility of Jesus and, how do we see Jesus’ humility — and I shall end saying this, so as not to be too long — how do we see Jesus’ humility? If we take the account of the temptation of Jesus, we never find his own words. Jesus does not answer with his own words; he answers in the words of Scripture, all three times. This is what he teaches us. One cannot dialogue with the devil, and this helps so much when temptation comes: I will not speak to you; only through the Word of the Lord.

May the Lord help us in this daily struggle, but not for ourselves; the struggle is for the service, because you are men and women on duty; whose duty it is to render a service to society, a service to others, a service to make goodness grow in the world.

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