

# 4<sup>th</sup> SUNDAY OF LENT

## St. John 3:14-21

The Devil is real. He exists. He is not a symbol, he is not a myth, he is not a synonym we use for evil. He is real—as real as you and I. Our Lord called him “Satan” from the Greek word “*satanos*” meaning “chaos”. He is the antithesis of God, who is order.

From the very beginning Satan has caused chaos in the order of creation. In the Garden of Eden he sought to destroy the order of things by telling Eve that she should not worship God but that she should become like God (see *Gen. 3:5*). Why serve when you can be served? And so chaos was brought amidst order and death entered the world. Since that time Satan has brought chaos to creation and has infested man with lies.

There is the lie that says you do not have time to pray. In a world obsessed with being busy, where to be stressed is a mark of success, many relegate prayer to last place, if it is even given a place at all. The Devil has set this trap for us by telling us that we don't have time to pray. But that is because the Devil fears those who pray, so he does everything to prevent us from praying. The first step on the path to losing your soul is to give up praying, because then the Devil has you all to himself. It is why Our Lord pleaded with us to pray always (*cf. Eph. 6:18*), and as He said to His apostles in the Garden of Gethsemane the night before He died, “Get up and pray that you may not come into the time of trial” (*Lk. 22:46*). Above all else, pray the Mass, the holy sacrifice of Our Lord offered to His father for our salvation. And pray the holy Rosary, because the Devil hates the Rosary and it is one of the most powerful weapons any Christian possesses. And pray short prayers like “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner”, or “Jesus, Mary, I love You. Save souls”, or “Mary,

Mother of God, pray for us sinners". These prayers are sometimes called "arrow prayers" because they are shot like an arrow in time of need.

Then there is the lie that we are not good enough. This, especially today, is one of the great temptations with which the Devil lures us. In a world of social media we can spend our life comparing ourselves to the achievements of others and we feel less because they seem to be or to have so much more than us. For mothers and fathers, this is a temptation too, because you may compare yourself to other parents. You look at others and you think, "how do they get so much done" or "they seem to have it all together". And so we believe that we are less than we are and that God must not love us as much as He loves them. Against this lie, however, is the reality that we, each of us, is created in the image and likeness of God. So we should remember what Our Lord said to St. Paul when he felt overwhelmed, "My grace is enough for you, for power is made perfect in weakness" (II *Cor.* 12:9). If that doesn't help you, then think of St. Peter when Our Lord called to him to get out of the boat and walk across the water to Him. As he got out of the boat and he had his eyes set on Our Lord he was able to walk on water. It was only when he felt the force of the wind and the waves around him and he looked away from Christ that he began to sink (see *Mt.* 14:28-33). So keep your eyes fixed on Our Lord and He will bring you through whatever storms surround you.

Another lie the Devil tells us is that we should worry constantly and be anxious about everything. Why? Because it distracts us from what is truly important. When we worry about a thousand things that are going on in our lives we lose sight of the one thing that we should concern ourselves with, and that is our immortal soul. Our Lord said, "Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell" (*Mt.* 10:28). It does not mean that we can easily forget about the bills we have to pay and maybe can't afford, or the work we have to do and whether we will ever get it done, or our sick child or a dying parent. Instead it means we

place these in perspective and we place our trust in God. It may not turn out the way we want in this life, but we believe, that somehow, God knows what He is doing.

Then there is the lie that says we have all the time in the world. So while the Devil tells us to be anxious, to fret and to worry, he also tells us that there is no need to be concerned with our souls now, because there will be plenty of time for that later. So we put off our prayers, we skip Mass for this week, we hold off making our confession, and we hold on to those sins we love for just a little bit longer. But Our Lord said to us, "Keep awake therefore, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. But understand this: if the owner of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into. Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect" (*Mt. 24:42-44*).

Then there is the lie that what we have done can never be forgiven. The Devil poisons our minds and says that the sins we have committed will never be forgiven by God and we have sealed our own fate. The consequence of this lie is that we lose hope, we give up the struggle, and we abandon ourselves to despair and so fall into the grasp of Satan. But we are taught by St. Paul to protect ourselves from such deceit. He says, "let us... put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation" (*1 Thess. 5:8*). We have all committed terrible sins in our lives, but if we have true sorrow for those sins, if we repent of those things we have done and confess them, then we can be assured of the unbounded mercy of God which is given to all those who know the horrid depths of our sins so that we may rise to the glorious heights of salvation.

In this season of Lent, we should see more clearly the spiritual warfare we must undertake and the fight we must make. Do not be swayed by the lies of the Devil but keep your eyes firmly on Our Lord. Today as the Church marks

Laetare Sunday with these rose coloured vestments, a lightening of the violet of Lent as a mark that Easter is approaching, we should remember that next week the violet vestments will return and, more than that, that the statues here will be veiled and hidden from us as we enter into the final two weeks of Lent which we call Passiontide. It is, for us, a reminder of our own lives: that there are moments of light which come upon us quickly and give us relief but which can just quickly turn into darkness. But our eyes are set on what is to come at the end of it all. But while we can be certain that Easter will come for us, we should not make the same presumption that heaven will come for us. So we must fight. We must fight against the Devil, we must fight against our own sinfulness, and we must fight for our salvation.

As it says in the book of Deuteronomy: "Today you are drawing near to do battle against your enemies. Do not lose heart, or be afraid, or panic, or be in dread of them; for it is the Lord your God who goes with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to give you victory" (*Dt. 20:3-4*).