

When Christ lives in us, Satan has no power to evict Him. He is like the big bad wolf, huffing and puffing to bring the house down. When we build our faith on the solid ground of Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition, Satan is powerless and will go on to easier pickings.

“I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. If a man does not abide in me, he is cast forth as a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire and burned. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you will, and it shall be done for you. By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be my disciples. As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you; abide in my love” (Jn 15:5-9).

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Good and Bad Angels

Angels are personal, spiritual and immortal creatures with intelligence and free will, who glorify God unceasingly, and who serve God as messengers of His saving plan. Angels, according to Saint Paul's *Epistle to the Hebrews*, are “*spirits whose work is service, sent to help those who will be the heirs of salvation*” (1:14). The word “angel” means messenger. They are God's messengers first of all, but their service is broader and is ideally portrayed in Saint Raphael, who accompanied the son of Tobit. “*Do not worry, my sister,*” Tobit assured his wife, . . . “*for a good angel will go with him. His journey will be successful, and he will come back safe and sound*” (Tob. 5:20-21). During the first centuries angels were represented as men.

Although the existence of an individual guardian angel for every soul is not a doctrine of faith, it is supported by Scripture (Ps. 91:11; Matt. 18:10) and has been commonly taught in the Church. Universal belief is that each person has a Guardian Angel, assigned by God to protect and intercede on his or her behalf. Guardian Angels are good spirits assigned to help us while always remaining in the presence of God (Mt 18:10).

Demons are also spirits. The chief or leader of demons is called the Devil, Satan, or the Evil One. Demons, like angels, do not have bodies, but sometimes take to themselves a body or the form of an animal, for example,

the form of a serpent or of wild goats living in the desert (Gen. 3:13-15; Is. 34:14).

Persons may be possessed by demons. A demon can gain control of a person and cause him to act in ways that are contrary to his will, even actions which might endanger his life. Demons try to entice men to sin and are opposed to the work of Christ, who drove them out of possessed persons (Mark 5:1-17; 9:16-26). They frequently live in groups and are accustomed to abide in desert places (Matt. 4:1; Luke 11:26).

Have you ever wondered if there is an evil counterpart to your Guardian Angel? Could there be a demon, assigned by the Evil One, who is responsible for the damnation of your soul? Noted Christian writer C. S. Lewis certainly thought so. Lewis is the author of the classic, *The Screwtape Letters*. Although a work of fiction, in which the characters and situations described sprang from Lewis' fertile imagination, in reality the issues dealt with are aspects of our everyday struggle for sanctity.

The book contains thirty-one letters from Screwtape to his nephew, Wormwood, who is Screwtape's subordinate in evil. Screwtape is an upper-level demon in the complex organization of hades. The letters are friendly advice from this experienced elder bureaucrat to an active, front-line tempter on how to subvert the soul of a young Christian trying to live out his everyday life.

Who among us has never wondered if there might not really be a tempter sitting on our shoulders whispering suggestions in our ear? The sole purpose of demons is to lure us away from the path of righteousness to the path of damnation.

According to Father John Hardon (RIP): "The devil's strategy is eminently logical. He first approaches us with a suggestion in the imagination; this can grow into a specious reason in the mind; if dwelled on, it influences the will by motivating us to do something that is actually bad but apparently good. Thus deceit, hiding the real evil, falsehood, and cunning are basic to the devil's technique. He never reveals his true intentions, but masks his purpose under various disguises. He adapts himself to people's temperaments and character, even to their tastes. If they are meek and submissive, he tries to seduce them along self-effacing lines. If they are bold and headstrong, he urges them to evil under an aggressive guise. If they are worldly and pleasure seeking, he will enter their door with temptations of the flesh. If they are prayerful and spiritual-minded, he will appear 'as an angel of light.' If they tend to be emotional, he adjusts his tactics to where his intended victims give least resistance to their passions. If they are intellectual, he will accommodate himself and tempt them to pride and sins of the mind.

"The devil is very active in the world today, warns the Church, when she sadly admits that for many people it borders on superstition even to talk about the evil spirit

as though he were anything else than a symbol. Yet, in our day as in the apostolic age, the devil is 'the treacherous and cunning enchanter, who finds his way into us by way of the senses, the imagination, lust, and utopian logic.' Those who take him lightly or smile at his existence are the easiest prey of what the apostle called 'the mystery of iniquity.'" (The Catholic Catechism, Doubleday, 1981, p.89-90).

What can be done in order to resist the temptations of the Devil? *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* offers this help: "*The Christian begins his day, his prayers, and his activities with the Sign of the Cross: 'in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.'* The baptized person dedicates the day to the glory of God and calls on the Savior's grace, which lets him act in the Spirit as a child of the Father. The sign of the cross strengthens us in temptations and difficulties" (§2157).

The most powerful help against evil is the sanctifying grace received during the proper reception of the sacraments instituted by Christ. The Sacrament of Reconciliation enables us to recognize Satan's attempts to subvert and strengthens our resolve. The Sacrament of Holy Eucharist is the most powerful weapon we have in the battle for holiness for, "*I can do all things in Him who strengthens me*" (Phil. 4:13).