

Fourth Sunday in Lent
March 14, 2021
Year of the Eucharist and Parish (Sermon #10)

The great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. (Revelations 12:9)

This week, our reflection on angels continues as we look at the Fallen Angels, Satan and his minions. In their moment of creation, the angels were subjected to a trial—a test—a choice was demanded of them. Lucifer/Satan and, by his example many other angels, became fascinated with their own beauty. This act of pride—of self—caused them to reject the very source of that beauty. The hatred for all that God had created, formed by the love-of-self, brought chaos, disarray and darkness into God’s “divine neatness.” The anger, the fury, of Satan and his minions far surpasses that of the most vicious or violent found in all other of God’s creatures. The primary focus of all this hatred is God and man.

Throughout our lifetime, we have been presented with images of Satan. As children, from cartoons, we had the depiction of the white-robed angel with a golden halo standing on one shoulder, ever guiding us to good. On the other shoulder, stood the little red devil with horns and a pitchfork, urging the not-so-good. As we’ve grown, movies like the “Exorcist” released in 1973, have presented a far different image. He is seen as an ugly creature with horns like a ram and bat wings. Demons have been presented as ugly little creatures, violently attacking from all sides. In truth, the devil and his minions, like all the angels, were magnificent, beautiful spirit creatures. The Church fathers tell us: “*The devil and the other demons were indeed created naturally good by God, but they became evil by their own doing*” (CCC 391)¹. This did not change with the fall.

Satan comes to us in beauty, with a friendly face, outstretched arms and a gentle voice. His God-given power and intelligence, though not equal to God, has not diminished. By his ability to reach into our memories, he can know our fears, our failures and our successes and use these to present temptation. He will awaken our senses to the things of this world to persuade and coax us to question ourselves and our faith. He comes to us with reassurance, consolation, reminding us of forgotten passions and short-lived joys. Yet, still, as in the Garden, filled with empty, vain promises and lies. I Peter tells us: “*Your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, goes about seeking whom he may devour.*”

This need not be a source of fear and desperation for us. St. Chrysostom provided: “*the devil does not tempt man for just as long as he likes, but for as long as God allows.*” The all-powerful God, in his mercy and love, has provided us with ways to overcome. Through the Church and the Sacraments, our free-will is strengthened for our defense. By our own prayers and the prayers of the family and friends that surround us, we can call on our guardian angels, the Holy Spirit and all the saints in heaven to aid us in this on-going battle against the forces of Satan and the temptations of this world. Through study of Sacred Scripture and the traditions of the Church, we can stand strong in our faith.

¹ CCC: Catechism of the Catholic Church