

□ Reading time: 3 min.

The devil's temptation does not produce its devastating consequences if our human will, with God's help, strives to resist it. We, in fact, are free to accept or reject the devil's suggestions. And God, for his part, among the various aids, gives us the possibility of knowing how to distinguish between what he suggests to us and what the devil suggests to us.

Pope Francis' catechesis offers us the opportunity to reflect on the ordinary activity of the devil. It corresponds to temptation and involves everyone, no one excluded. His extraordinary activity, such as vexation or possession, certainly impresses with its manifestations, but it is the ordinary type that is the most dangerous diabolic activity because it seeks to lead us to the definitive and absolute prospect of eternal suffering. The *Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church* at No. 74 is clear: 'They try to associate human beings with their revolt against God.'

To this end, Satan and the demons study in depth the weaknesses of each of us by acting through temptation on our psychic sphere with the intention of altering the judgement of our intellect and obtaining the consent of our will. To tempt us, they use two powerful allies: the 'flesh' and the 'world'.

The flesh is our human nature that was wounded by original sin and remains vulnerable even after baptism, because it is inclined to evil by what traditional language refers to as concupiscence. The world is not simply the environment in which we live or the human race in general, but, as the evangelist John writes, those who, with varying degrees of consciousness, live separated from God, forming the group of those who, in effect, serve the 'prince of this world', that is, Satan, spreading sin in society.

As the Pope reminded us, the world, including the technological means created and managed by man, continually presents us with opportunities for sin, instigating us to do the opposite of what Jesus taught us.

So it is that the devil, through the world, suggests scandals and bad example, corrupt shows, refined and immoral pleasures and amusements to us as lovable and imitable.

And at the same time he sows discord, stirs up wars, creates divisions, confuses

minds even through ideologies clothed in false humanitarianism. Today, he uses the powerful means of social communication, media and social media, to orient and condition humanity's thinking against God, separating it from his Love.

A temptation with which Satan has always undermined human beings, and which Pope Francis pointed out in his catechesis, is that of esotericism, occultism, witchcraft and Satanism. Satan strives to make people believe that through these practices one can obtain spiritual elevation, extraordinary powers, self-realisation and the fulfilment of one's desires and happiness. In reality, it is exactly the opposite.

By adhering to magic and occult practices human beings treads the path indicated by Satan, as they grow more and more in their desire to want to become like God, taking up the ancient challenge of the rebellious angels, and deceptively putting themselves in the place of God. Their downfall at that point is inevitable.

In conclusion, it must never be forgotten that the devilish temptation does not produce its devastating consequences if our human will, with God's help, strives to resist it.

We, in fact, are free to accept or reject the devil's suggestions.

And God, for his part, among the various aids, gives us the ability to know how to distinguish between what he suggests to us and what the devil suggests to us. St Paul in his letter to the Ephesians teaches us how to repel the devil: 'Put on the whole armour of God, so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil' (Eph 6:11) and then adds 'be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his power' (Eph 6:10).

We must be vigilant in prayer, assiduous in the Sacraments of Penance and the Eucharist, frequently spending time with Jesus in Eucharistic adoration. In particular, we must cultivate a true Marian devotion, lovingly praying the Rosary and, united with Our Lady, perform our daily duties well in a spirit of faith and love for all. If then, through lack of vigilance or otherwise, temptation should sometimes prevail and we should fall into sin, we must not lose hope. The Lord is always ready to forgive his children who, sincerely repentant, knock at the door of his mercy. To this end, he instituted the sacrament of Confession, which, let us remember, not only serves to forgive sins, but is also a means of bringing about the ongoing conversion that we need.

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