

## PRECAUTIONS - 10

### *Against the Devil*

*10. The one who aspires to perfection should use three precautions to be delivered from the devil, one's second enemy. It should be noted that among the many wiles of the devil to deceive spiritual persons, the most common is deceiving them **under the appearance of good rather than of evil**, for the devil already knows that they will scarcely choose a recognized evil. **Thus, you should always be suspicious of what appears good, especially when not obliged by obedience.** To do the right thing, and be safe in such a matter, you ought to take the proper counsel.*

According to St. John, devil plays a vital role in deceiving those on the road to perfection. He will try to crush them, torture, and discourage them. That is what St. Paul reminds those who suffer such attacks: “We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body” (II Cor 4.8-10). The most powerful weapon devil uses against those who aspire after perfection of love is to tempt them against hope. The devil believes in God, but he has no God. The Lord is not his God. To be at enmity with life is to have nothing to live for. To live forever without life is to have lasting death; but it is living and wakeful death without the consolation of forgiveness. Now the very essence of death is the absence of hope, that is devil’s goal. The damned have confirmed themselves in the belief that they cannot hope in God. We sometimes think of the damned as men who think of only themselves as good, since all sin flows from pride that refuses to love. But the pride of those who live as if they believed they were better than anyone else is rooted in a secret failure to believe in their own goodness and ultimately fulfilling devil’s designs. If I can see clear enough to realize that I am good because God has willed me to be good, I will at the same time be able to see more clearly the goodness of other men and of God.

Deceiving through temptation against hope is to use what is visible to the eyes. Devil deceives us through information we gather from very shallow and substandard type of sources. Unless we try to get ourselves informed through divine grace and presence, we could be easily deceived by theories that are in circulation especially in this modern world through exaggerated bad mass media and wrong books. Anything that is

contrary to the teaching of the Catholic Church comes from the evil one, who tries to put into our mind ideas and thoughts against our faith that seem not harmful at all. Devil tries all the tricks to lead us astray and show us that evil is truth leading us to commit sin. Holy people will never think of choosing recognized evil; that is why devil will try his best to distract and attract one towards evil by means of deception. When distractions and disturbances of the understanding are excessive, the devil is their author.

A careful reading of the New Testament indicates that Jesus understood himself as the one through whom Satan's definitive defeat would be realized. A major element of Jesus's mission consisted in doing battle with the forces of evil. He performed his exorcisms, therefore, as part of a dramatic struggle with demonic forces that reached its climax in Jesus' crucifixion, but resurrected in obedience to his Father.

### **Obedience is the weapon**

A very practical suggestion on the part of St. John to combat the evil one obedience is the weapon. That is why he recommends that we regard every superior with respect not dwelling on his character, mode of behavior, ability, or any other methods of procedure. If we consider that a superior is weak and distracted and act on them, our obedience will be deceptive as the devil certainly takes advantage of such factors to lead us astray.

According to St. John, among the powers of evil, devil stands out as a subtle and powerful strategist. His hateful jealousy towards God's people cannot remain unmoved in the face of the soul that is about to escape him definitively and very soon through the grace of God. The one who obeys the superior as though God, has a noticeably clear chance to escape the evil of the devil. To stop the progress of the soul and paralyze its action, the devil will enlist both persons and things. The Devil will turn everything to his profit, the passions of people as well as their good desires, so also the law of nature, which he will disturb to create agitation and trouble, contradiction, and persecution. For example the Book of Job, the lives of the Saints, the Toledo prison cell of St. John, the trials of the Cure of Ars, and those strange trials of founders of religious orders underwent, expose to us the secret and powerful trickery of the devil. The power of the devil can be experienced by mystics who are on the path to attaining perfection in their spiritual life. St. Teresa writes: "This is what happens when we perform excessive penances to make ourselves believe that, because of what we are doing, we are more penitent than others. If we conceal our penances from our confessor or superior, or if we are told to give them up and do not obey, that is a clear case of temptation. Always try to obey, however much it may hurt you to do



so, for that is the greatest possible perfection.” (*Way of Perfection* 39,iii). Obedience to the superior keeps the subject free from the wild temptations of the devil.

St. John insists that the only chance for a soul to escape the powerful intervention of the devil is to obey the superior. This type of obedience should be free from any personal gains. Obedience to superior is divine.

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