

31. October 2024  
On Spiritual Combat

Eph 6:10-18

*Finally, Bretheren, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we are not contending against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the equipment of the gospel of peace; besides all these, taking the shield of faith, with which you can quench all the flaming darts of the evil one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. Pray at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints.*

This is a subject that never loses its relevance, because the spiritual battle will last until the end, either until our last breath at the hour of our death, when the Lord will call us to our heavenly home, or until He returns in His glory... To avoid this battle would be to lose it beforehand. It is therefore very important that we face it consciously. This does not mean that we have to deal with the devil and his machinations all the time. It is enough to know that he exists, to know his intentions, and to put into practice what the Apostle tells us about how to resist his cunning attacks.

Certainly, this battle is also a burden, because who does not want to live at peace with God and with his neighbour? But at the same time it brings us ever closer to God, because we could not resist this enemy on our own and we need the Lord's help at all times. So this constant struggle brings us closer to God and can make our prayers truly supplicatory. If we put on the armour described in Ephesians, God will lead us to both greater vigilance and deeper faith. We will learn to deal with these attacks and to gain spiritual benefit from them.

To "*gird ourselves with truth*" means to live according to God's will, to follow His Son, and also to be honest with ourselves and others. Living in true righteousness is a 'breastplate' with which the darts of the evil one can hardly hit us.

In the same way, the devil will lose ground if we fight for the Gospel and others come to faith through our witness.

To use the 'shield of faith' is to hold fast to God and to all that He has entrusted to us as truth. This 'shield' also protects us from evil thoughts that come to us like poisoned arrows (these could be, for example, thoughts against faith, strong doubts, etc.).

When we wield the "*sword of the Word of God*", which separates truth from falsehood and shines light on our dark paths (cf. Ps 119:105), the darkness of the fallen angels will have to give way.

We see, then, that God uses the enmity of the evil one for the good of his faithful, who are called to resist and thus to consolidate themselves in the faith. Moreover, the Lord overcomes the powers of evil on earth through his own, for the Kingdom of God is to be extended, but the devil and his minions fight against it. So we have the honour of fighting in God's army as 'warriors of light'! On our side are the faithful angels, the saints in heaven and even the army of the blessed souls in purgatory. They will intercede for us!

Let us consciously live our faith and grow in love day by day; let us carry out the works that God entrusts to us, let us unite our sufferings to those of Christ, let us rise again and again after defeats, trusting in God's mercy.

In this way we will be able to persevere in this battle with God's grace. He is with us at all times and is always quick to come to our aid. But he also wants us to do our part, to show Him our love and loyalty.

Before concluding, I would like to mention the "Jesus Prayer" or "Prayer of the Heart", which I highly recommend to those who wish to deepen their prayer life and put into practice the words of St. Paul, who exhorts us to "pray at all times". Like the Holy Rosary, the 'prayer of the heart' is a wonderful prayer, very effective against the powers of darkness (To go deeper into this topic, we recommend listening to this conference by Br. Elias: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K8NmWQ1W0Ks>). Let us listen to the words of a 'Staretz', a spiritual master in Eastern Christianity:

"My children, for the love of God, I beseech you not to cease praying the prayer of our Christ, not even for an instant. Your lips must unceasingly invoke the name of Jesus who destroys the devil and all his machinations. Call upon our Christ without ceasing, and He will rush to your aid heartily. Just as iron cannot be touched or approached when it is red-

hot, so it is with the soul of the one who prays with fervour. Demons do not approach him... For how could they, if they approached him, they would be consumed by the divine fire contained in the name of Jesus. He who prays is enlightened; he who does not pray is darkened. Prayer gives us divine light. Therefore, everyone who prays well becomes light, and the Spirit of God dwells in him".