



21. March 2025

MEDITATIONS FOR LENT

“The Armour of God”

Let us recall the central theme of our Lenten meditations: to become better disciples of the Lord.

In the light of the discernment of spirits (*discretio*), we have analysed the existential crisis of the Church and pointed out the serious aberrations of the world. Consequently, we have noted that in this "emergency situation" the faithful must assume in a special way their responsibility to follow the Lord and thus to serve the Bride of Christ and her mission. This inevitably leads us into a spiritual battle which does not only concern our personal sphere, but is our contribution to the "battle of the Lamb" in which we are called to take our place in His army under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

In order to be prepared for combat, we have begun to study the spiritual armour that St Paul presents to us in the Letter to the Ephesians. We mentioned it yesterday and saw that the enemies we face are *"the principalities, the powers, the world rulers of this present darkness, the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places"* (Eph 6:12).

The Apostle then insists again that we put on the armour of God:

"Take the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand" (Eph 6:13).

This is therefore spiritual resistance to demons in the name of Jesus. Believers are not at their mercy, powerless in the face of what they do; they must fight against them. We must not allow 'principalities and powers' to divert us from our way and our mission, but we must stand firm and continue to do what we are called to do. In this way we grow stronger with every struggle, while the spirits of evil are weakened.

In the Gospel we see how the demons had to retreat from Jesus, and we know that after His resurrection He gave His disciples the power to cast them out (Mk 16:17). But the spiritual battle is not limited to the expulsion of these spirits from those tormented by

them - with the physical signs that often accompany it - but the demons influence the believers in various ways. Their influence is particularly devastating through false doctrine. This is why, in the face of ecclesial disorientation, Saint Paul's advice is particularly relevant: "*Stand therefore, having girded your loins with truth*" (Eph 6:14a).

Only when we live in the truth, both doctrinally and personally, are we armed and ready for battle. If we listen to false doctrine, or if our lives are not in harmony with God's law in the moral realm, we can no longer fight the battle with the protection of spiritual armour. We leave open doors through which the enemy can enter. It is therefore urgent that we close them, either by ridding ourselves of the error we have allowed to enter our minds, or by returning to the right path in the moral realm through repentance, forgiveness and a change of life.

We see, then, that if we are to enter the spiritual battle, it is imperative that we are girded with the truth. Otherwise, the battle is lost before it has even begun.

Some time ago, before a group of believers who were determined to fight the anti-Christian influence in the world and in the Church, I described the four pillars on which we must build in order to stand firm in the battle. I would like to make a few points about the first of these pillars, which is sound doctrine:

In this spiritual battle, we must "gird our loins with truth" (cf. Eph 6:14). This truth is the Lord Himself! We must therefore remain faithful to His Word and to the authentic teaching of the Church. It is these that must permeate the reality of people. Hand in hand with fidelity to the Truth, we must live in the grace of God and earnestly strive to conform fully to His instructions. Every other notion, idea or speculation, from wherever it may come, must be rejected with the "shield of faith" (cf. Eph 6:16)!

We must also be aware of the attitude we must adopt in the struggle against the spirits of evil, lest we fall into a subtle trap. Because it is a spiritual battle, it must be fought with spiritual weapons. We are not up against a fair and honest opponent who 'plays by the rules', but one who will seek to exploit any weakness he finds in us. However, and precisely because of this, we must meet our adversary with the right attitude and beware of falling into the presumption of insulting or ridiculing the devil. To do so would be to put ourselves on the same level as him.

In this regard, we find an important indication in the Letter of St. Jude, which shows us how St. Michael confronts the Devil: “*When the archangel Michael, contending with the devil, disputed about the body of Moses, he did not presume to pronounce a reviling judgment upon him, but said, “The Lord rebuke you.”*” (Jn 1:9).

Even in the confrontation with the devil himself, we must not forget that he is an originally good creature who has unfortunately perverted his own nature. His actions and intentions are now abysmally evil! It is he and his demons who slander and mock! So it is important that we do not put ourselves on this level of contention.

Certainly we must not love the devil or feel false pity for him, but despise and reject all his works. But we must always do this with the attitude of the Archangel Michael, who exclaims: “*The Lord rebuke you*”.