

29. September 2023



The battle
Feast of the Holy Archangels

Rev 12:7-12

And now war broke out in heaven, when Michael with his angels attacked the dragon. The dragon fought back with his angels, but they were defeated and driven out of heaven. The great dragon, the primeval serpent, known as the devil or Satan, who had led all the world astray, was hurled down to the earth and his angels were hurled down with him. Then I heard a voice shout from heaven, 'Salvation and power and empire for ever have been won by our God, and all authority for his Christ, now that the accuser, who accused our brothers day and night before our God, has been brought down. They have triumphed over him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word to which they bore witness, because even in the face of death they did not cling to life. So let the heavens rejoice and all who live there; but for you, earth and sea, disaster is coming - because the devil has gone down to you in a rage, knowing that he has little time left.'

Today's text is particularly suitable for taking a closer look at some aspects of spiritual warfare! Ephesians 6 makes it clear to us that spiritual warfare - in this case against the devil - is not against flesh and blood, *"but against the principalities and the ruling forces who are masters of the darkness in this world, the spirits of evil in the heavens"* (Eph 6:12).

At the same time, it must always be remembered that this battle does not have an open outcome, but that it is a matter of putting the Lord's victory into practice in our lives: *"Salvation and power and empire for ever have been won by our God..."*. But it is also true: *"for you, earth and sea, disaster is coming - because the devil has gone down to you in a rage, knowing that he has little time left."*

God leaves this battle to us, and it pleases Him when the mighty angels are defeated by the men in whom Christ dwells! That is why He has also given His disciples the authority to cast out demons (*cf. Lk 9:1*) - and this does not only apply to priests! We can all, in the way the Lord has entrusted us with it, help to make the demons lose their power and give way!

First of all, let us remember that this is a spiritual battle that must be fought by spiritual means! We are not dealing with a fair opponent, but with an opponent who tries to exploit every weakness we have! Nevertheless, and for this very reason, we must take care that we deal with our opponent in the right way and do not allow ourselves to be tempted to become exuberant, to insult or mock the devil - as Luther did, for example!

There is a very important hint in the Epistle of Judas that can be referred to the dealings of the holy archangel Michael with the devil:

“Not even the archangel Michael, when he was engaged in argument with the devil about the corpse of Moses, dared to denounce him in the language of abuse; all he said was, ‘May the Lord rebuke you’” (Jude 1:9)

Even with the devil, we must not forget that he was originally a good creation, but his nature has been perverted! His deeds and intentions are fundamentally evil! It is he and his demons who blaspheme and mock! Therefore it is important that we do not go to this level of confrontation! Certainly we should not love the devil and we should not have false compassion for him, but despise and reject all his works! But let us follow the holy archangel who says: *“May the Lord rebuke you”*! If we were to engage in blasphemy, etc., we would enter the spiritual plane of demons and would already be influenced by them!

This is all the more true when we are dealing with people who have let themselves be influenced by evil! The great distinction between sin and sinners must be observed here, which the Church has always taught us! Sin must be rejected, but the sinner must be loved! When we begin to despise man - not only his evil and unworthy deeds, but also himself - then we also enter into the environment of the demonic spirit!

Let us take a concrete example from the present stage of the Church!

We all suffer from the constant revelations of suspected or actual sexual misconduct by clerics! No doubt they are evil deeds, some even criminal, but at least morally reprehensible! However, it would be wrong and profoundly unjust to take all priests as a kind of "clan", so to speak, and to call them with bad names! Most priests have done nothing wrong!

Even in the case of those who have become guilty, a careful distinction must be made, for example, between those who have struggled with their sinful inclinations, always went to confession and sought help, and those who were indifferent to their inclinations, or even justified them against the teachings of Scripture and the Church!

If we are simply accusers, then it can easily happen that we become "accusers of our brothers" (*cf. Rev 12:10*), i.e. we fall into the accusatory attitude of the devil and thus take over his way of dealing with other people's guilt! But Christ overthrew the accuser through His blood, i.e. through the forgiveness of sins!

If we want to be a support in the present spiritual battle of the church, we must be careful to fight the battle very wisely and not to let ourselves be indirectly influenced by the spirit of the adversary! Let us take as an example the way in which the angels fight! The call of the Archangel Michael: "*Who is like God?*" defends the glory of God against the pride of the fallen angels!

Let us try to be focused on God in spiritual battle, to argue objectively and not to emotionally go to a level that weakens us! This is especially true in the present serious conflicts about the course of the church!

Factual arguments are needed! Insults as well as mockery and derision, poured out on people, or taking on the spirit of the accuser, these are already infiltrations of that spirit which should actually be fought!