The Marist Way of Fighting the Battles of the Lord under the Banner of Mary – Part 8

"[J. C. Colin] greatly approved of getting rid of the Devil in times of temptation with a few forceful words."

A Founder Acts, Section 247, #1, page 156

I want to conclude by offering some practical advice. We want to avoid two extremes. Msgr. Rossetti pointed out that we do not want to look for the Devil under every rock. Then he good-naturedly chuckled and said, "Well, maybe under every other rock!" In other words, we do not want to be obsessed with Satan and the threat he poses so that this is constantly on our minds, robbing us of peace and joy that are gifts of the Holy Spirit. Instead, we follow Mary's lead in handling humanity's ancient nemesis, Satan and his minions.

As I mentioned before, we will all be tested in more subtle but effective ways that can lead to our downfall. Mimicking God as the Devil wants to do, he prefers to be *as if hidden and unknown in the world,* believing he can be far more effective. That should sound familiar to Marists.[1]

As I had mentioned previously, Jesus had rebuked Peter for trying to persuade him to forego going to Jerusalem to be crucified. "Get behind me, Satan," was Jesus response.[2] Those thoughts came from Peter. They were his words and gestures. It sounded and looked like Peter. Yet, Jesus discerned another voice speaking through Peter.

The reality is the Devil can inspire thoughts that will advance his agenda, which will always lead to our detriment. That means we should be alert when we are considering sinful actions. Before doing anything, ask where that thought could have come from. With practice, you can distinguish your thoughts from those that originate from below. The same applies when distinguishing your thoughts from those that come from above. Those are the ones we should obey![3]

---

[1] "As if hidden and unknown in the world" describes God's preferred method in engaging with the world. God's grace usually is expressed in efforts that begin small, by people who may not be the "movers and shakers" of society, who are the least likely to be chosen for leadership by those who are wise in the ways of the world. Abraham, David, Paul, Jean-Claude Colin, and, of course, Mary are examples of how God will choose the least likely to do great things but always through God's grace and our cooperation. That is the meaning of Jesus' parable comparing the Kingdom of God to a mustard seed. God's grace favors beginning in ways that are small, under the radar, as if hidden and unknown in the world.

[2] Mt. 16:23. Note that when Jesus was tempted in the desert, he rebuked Satan by saying, "Get behind me, Satan."

[3] Neither Satan nor demons can read our minds. Only God can. However, Satan spies on our minds. He can put sinful thoughts in our minds. All of us have had the experience of a thought coming into our minds out of nowhere or out of the blue. If they are good thoughts, we can say they come from God. However, if they are sinful, they most likely come from the Devil. Acknowledging these sinful thoughts is not sinful. Entertaining them and acting on them is. God permits this because all of us will be put to the test, as were Adam and Eve, and Jesus himself.

Msgr. Rossetti listed five common demonic messages that should give us reason to pause when we become aware of them: "There is no hope for you. You are an awful person. God does not care about you. You are mine. You are going to hell."[4]

The Devil is happy to generate such thoughts and enflame the accompanying emotions. Should they be our own, he is thrilled to affirm them. That is why the Devil's typical *modus operandi* is to be *as if hidden and unknown in the world*, believing he can be far more effective this way with no one the wiser. Sounding just like us in our thoughts, his blends into ours, making the two almost indistinguishable. That tactic suits his purposes perfectly.

Knowing that there is a thief on the prowl looking for the ruination of souls, what can we do to be responsible protectors of our souls and a Good Shepherd to our families and loved ones? First, we must do a security check. That means looking for weaknesses that make us vulnerable to the Devil, robbing us of the pearl of great price, which is God reigning in our lives. That security check should include what Msgr. Rossetti identifies the three main ways we open the door to demonic influences: stop practicing the faith, commit serious sins, and start practicing the occult.[5]

How can we strengthen the security of our souls?[6] Msgr. Rossetti recommends regular reception of the sacraments, especially the Eucharist and Regular Confession, daily prayer, staying connected to others (reducing isolation), letting go of inner anger, and forgiving those who wronged you, and being grateful. As a Marist, I encourage saying the rosary. In other words, engage in religious practices that come with being a faithful Catholic or those requirements of being members in good standing for those who belong to other Christian churches.

These spiritual practices have the same effect as homeowners and businesses that invest in video cameras or hire extra security guards to protect them from robbery or vandalism. Both are visible deterrents to anyone who might entertain the thought of committing those crimes.

The above-mentioned spiritual practices effectively deter those nefarious spirits who seek our destruction, especially through their more powerful weapons of possession, infestation, obsession, and vexation. Seeing that we are spiritually fortified, they will bring out "those big guns" somewhere else where, sadly, they stand the greater chance of success. However, the Devil will hang around, choosing any opportunity to do us harm, preferring to adopt the tactics of the Special Forces and blend in with our intellectual,

---

[4] Msgr. Stephen Rossetti – Spiritual Warfare Today, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I3p9tsIsHJg&list=PLW_4XnaIiYS2eZURXK77g6uA9AnZngOeP&index=11&t=1026s. 22:25.
[5] Ibid, 23:29
[6] Ibid, 30.48

emotional, and spiritual landscape. With that thought in mind, a Marist priest once told his congregation that he did not do exorcisms, fearing that the Devil would leave and say to him, "There's my good friend." It is easy to do the Devil's bidding without realizing it.

Fr. Colin and the early Marists accepted that the Devil is real and active. They took that for granted.[7] They also assumed that the Devil sought to undermine the success of founding the Society of Mary. After all, that is what Devils do. However, Fr. Colin never let himself be paralyzed with fear or fall into despair when faced with setbacks. He employed the spiritual practices Msgr. Rossetti recommends.

In addition, should he sense or fear that the Devil was trying to influence him, he would immediately turn to Mary and ask for her help, confident that there would be no contest between her and the Devil. That is how Fr. Colin dealt with temptations, the chief ones being to quit trying to found the Society of Mary or, in the face of obstacles, to give into hopelessness. Recognizing the Devil's influence, he quickly dismissed them with a few forceful words. Christ grants us his power to dispel similar temptations that may be demonically inspired.

Fr. Colin was not preoccupied with the Devil. He did not make it a focus of his preaching or writing to the neglect of the other truths of our faith. He took the machinations of the Devil in stride, acknowledging them, rejecting them, and moving on to do the work of Mary. That is what he focused upon, and so should we. A movie like *Nefarious* gives us a glimpse of how the Devil thinks and reminds us that he is consumed by his hatred of God, which includes us, who are made in his image and likeness. As I mentioned earlier, the Devil is a far superior compared to ourselves, but we are more than compensated because we have God on our side.

How does that reality play to our advantage? Well, let me quote Jesus himself who revealed to the exorcist Fr. Joseph how to battle the demonic? “I want you to enter the battle with iron clad determination. The thing that an adversary's army fears the most is to see a soul that faces the most dangerous battles with courage and fortitude and fears nothing. Know that the demons fear nothing more than a courageous soul who, clinging to me with its being and with a strong spirit, faces them hoping not to be wounded, but with a firm resolution of disarming them and exterminating them. The demons are frightened and terrified and would rather flee than face a courageous soul.” So there's your answer. Fear not![8]

I encourage you to employ Msgr. Rossetti's spiritual practices. Be alert for the five common demonic messages and be ready to counter them. Meditate on how Jesus dealt with the temptation in the desert.

[7] That is not a given for our times, which is the reason for these reflections.
[8] Fr. Joseph Iannuzzi, “God is attracted by our Wretchedness,” podcast

Cultivate and nurture your relationship with him so that you walk together through life as friends, though he will always be our Lord and Savior. I also encourage you to follow Fr. Colin's lead, which includes cultivating a relationship with the Mother of Jesus. Turn to her, no, run to her in your time of need. It increases the odds that should the Devil look your way, he will see "that lady in blue" standing behind you and move on.