

*Fr. Perozich comments —*

*This Lenten reflection is not novel, rather it is a refresher of the theology that we already know.*

*It serves as a reminder that man is drawn into a battle far greater than he can comprehend, one of the spirit world, where evil attacks humanity as a way of retaliating against God and the good.*

*(I recommend viewing the movie Nefarious which explains the battle that the demons wage against God, against the good, and against man.)*

*Man is too weak to respond alone. He needs heavenly power of the angels guided by St. Michael to defend him in the battle.*

*This article follows a previous one on the Gift of Tears, that is the gift of compunction, which stings man for his sins so that he feel deep sorrow, repent, and repair the damage done by them.*

*From the Ambrosian hymns is a call for the gift of compunction:*

*Now days of grace with mercy flow.  
O Lord, the GIFT OF TEARS bestow,  
to wash our stains in every part,  
whilst heavenly fire consumes the heart.*

## **Lent, evil, and Saint Michael the Archangel**

*In our efforts to be faithful, to be valiant soldiers in our struggle with “the spiritual forces of evil,” we can ask for no better protector.*

[March 19, 2025 John M. Grondelski, Ph.D.](#)

*Statue of the Archangel Michael (us.fotolia.com/scaliger)*

Our Lenten focus on **conversion** and the **old Confiteor** takes us this week to “blessed Michael, the Archangel.”

The Bible speaks of **three Archangels: Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael. Michael is always prominently featured as**



**at war with Satan, as the leader of the “heavenly hosts” that vanquishes the devil and his minions.** We should learn two things from that Biblical testimony.

**First, that there are angels.** There was a certain fashion in some theological circles, especially in the 1970s/1980s, to downplay the reality of the angels and to write off the devil as a “symbol” of evil. This is nonsense.

**St. Augustine defined evil as “the absence of good.”** Evil is not something. Evil is a nothing that should not be there. Evil is the absence of what ought to exist. But while “nothings” can hurt, they cannot act. You need **agents who cause nothings, who do evil. That’s persons—and angels (and devils) are persons.**

“There are more things in heaven and on earth than are dreamed of in your philosophy,” Hamlet reminds us, riffing on [1 Corinthians 2:9](#). And generations of popes and theologians have

reminded us that **the devil's greatest trick is getting people to think he doesn't exist.**

**Evil has been part of the drama of creation from its beginning, even before the material world.** Not because God made it or that it is material, but because **personal beings choose to do evil—to destroy themselves (which is what nothingness is)—in the name of false freedom and autonomy.**

That was Lucifer's temptation. It was Adam's and Eve's. It is ours.

**The second thing we should learn from what the Bible tells us about St. Michael the Archangel is that the moral life is a struggle with temptation and evil.** St. Michael is presented from the start as a warrior, as he who "fought against the dragon" (Rev 12:7) and prevailed. It is why the **Leonine Prayer to St. Michael at the end of Mass, which is making a comeback in many places, invokes the Archangel to "defend us in battle."** Indeed, St. Michael tells the devil that "the Lord rebuke you!" (Jude 9). Which is why St. Michael is usually depicted with a sword.

The idea of the spiritual life as spiritual warfare is not limited to St. Michael. It is a standard theme in Biblical theology. **While we are warned against the triple temptation of the world, the flesh, and the devil, St. Paul makes clear that our spiritual warfare is not "against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms" (Eph 6:12).**

Generations of Christians would have found nothing particularly groundbreaking in all of this. One wonders, however, whether a certain **"functional pacificism" has infected religious—including Catholic—thinking that downplays the reality of spiritual warfare.**

**Good and evil are unalterably opposed. There can be no “détente,” no “peaceful coexistence” between them.** It’s not that God could have worked out some “truce” with his rebellious creatures, taking a “live and let live” approach. No, **either good will prevail or evil will prevail: there is no middle ground.**

Our minds are built that way: if good and evil could “coexist” (as some callow bumper stickers urge), you would have to ask “Why? Isn’t good better than evil?” And, to the last question, your response could not just be “So what?” Because the very fact we recognize self-evidently that good “is better than” evil and “better” is to be preferred to “worse,” we come back to the very first principle of all human action: **“Good is to be done, evil is to be avoided.”**

Not because God arbitrarily affixed labels to some things as “good” and some as “evil,” but because they are irreconcilable. And, for the same reason, **modern ideas of “freedom” or “choice” that treat good choices and evil choices as equally valid or legitimate, fail completely. Such thinking fails to reckon with what is wrought through the non-being of evil.**

**So, in invoking St. Michael, we ask him to restore to us a healthy “sense of sin,”** an awareness so many popes have lamented is on the wane in modern culture. **That healthy consciousness is not a morbid guilt complex, but one that recognizes that Christ, through His Passion, Death, and Resurrection, has made the ultimate victory of good —of God!—inevitable.** It’s why St. Paul urges us to “work out our salvation in fear and trembling,” (Phil 2:12)—not because God is unfaithful, but we can be and so often are.

And so, in our efforts to be faithful, to be valiant soldiers in our struggle with “the spiritual forces of evil,” we can ask for no better protector than St. Michael the Archangel.

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