

# Elements of Devotion to the Flame of Love of the Immaculate Heart of Mary

## Satan's Attacks

### Characteristics of Satan's Attacks

- Satan brutally attacked Elizabeth; he hates this devotion
  - We can expect he will do the same to us so let's examine what he did to her
- Always about self
  - Exalting self
  - Hating self
  - Preserving self
  - Preoccupied with self
  - Self centric
  - Drawing away from God – human centric
  - Appeals to good . . . built around self – II Cor 11:14
    - A Short Story of Anti-Christ - Vladimir Soloviev
- Multi-faceted
  - Hits on several ways at once and sometimes in opposite directions
  - Produces confusion

## Characteristics of Satan's Attacks

- Subtle – often the real attack is buried under a superficial one
  - Matt 4:1-4 – not hunger but vanity
    - Satan focuses on the man while Jesus' response is focused on God
  - Matt 4:5-7 – not scripture or false faith but vanity
    - Satan focuses on the man while Jesus' response is focused on God
  - Matt 4:8-10 - Satan focuses on the man while Jesus' response is focused on God
- Pre-occupation with defending self leads to fear, anxiety, upset
  - Classic signs for spiritual discernment
  - Humility frees us from concern about self – no fear, anxiety, or upset
  - Humility is our ultimate shield against Satan because there is no self
    - James 1:13-15

## Satan's Attacks On Elizabeth

- Let's see if we can identify these characteristics in Elizabeth's descriptions of Satan's attacks
- p8: Jesus: "Renounce yourself."
  - . . . . The Evil One came with his big smile: "Don't be discouraged. You are not so old. Take it easy. Dress well. Enjoy yourself. And if you have a chance, get married! This would not be shameful. You will have a home and will belong to someone. Your conscience will be at peace because you have completed your work as a mother."
    - Lust of the eyes, lust of the flesh, and the pride of life – I John 2:15-16
    - Appeals to what seems good:
      - Motherhood
      - Confidence we have done our job
      - Wanting to belong, be special, be loved
      - All about us!

## Temptation On What Appears To Be Right

- p38: When I did leave the church, the Evil One accompanied me. He began to speak with me in a quite human manner. “Go back to your family! Don’t stand out from the others! Do you not see that what you are doing exhausts you and drains your life? All your life has been a battle; now you should rest. Life is so short. Why do you pressure yourself so much? Why do you want to give your foolish thoughts to others? Do not think that you will call attention to yourself. This attention would flatter you. Stop and reflect and you will see that I am right. When you finally understand, you will thank me for sparing you the trouble.”
  - Put family first (before God)
  - Don’t stand out – don’t exalt yourself - peer pressure
  - Don’t draw attention to yourself
  - Satan will use people in the Church – some of our greatest attacks

## Temptation On What Appears To Be Right

- p76: When I came to the altar, the devil began to tempt me, disturbing me with his disgusting thoughts. Later, during the holy hours, he tried to come close to me with his flatteries. He said that I am unique, that the life I lead is not for any human being, and that he does not wish me any harm. He just wants me to live a normal life. People are going to think that I am an eccentric bigot. That I am foolish because my dress, my food, my enjoyments, and the way I treat others is not like other people.
  - Again pressure to not be different – our being “more righteous” is being judgmental – Wis 2:12-16

## Anxiety And Worthlessness

- p77: The following day, the Evil One used his tortures to disturb my peace. When I implored the Lord to give me understanding so I could see His Holy Will, the fury of Satan increased to such a degree that I was horrified. It was daytime and his terrifying presence, while I was kneeling at the altar, produced an overwhelming shaking in me. A new thought pierced me: “Do you know that this is pure imagination? When someone, in their life, has never been able to do something that is worthwhile, they try to get attention. Look at the great artists, the wise men, the inventors of technology. See all that man has produced by his own strength. You see, you are incapable of doing these things; that is what provoked your thoughts, these awkward confusions.”
  - Classic Satan – disturbing peace
  - Worthlessness

## A Toxic Mix

- p86: Meanwhile, Satan wanted to overpower my soul with all of his forces. He said: “At last, I am about to conquer you. Did I not tell you that only you would be so foolish to accept this and spread your impious and inhumane thoughts to others. Why do you not pay attention? I always told you that only I want your good, but you are committed to follow your foolish ideas. I hope that you will start being reasonable. Finally, this lesson has torn away the veil over your foolish thoughts. Tell me. Why do you want, at a total sacrifice, to be superior to the rest of mortals?”
  - Multi-pronged attack
    - Why impious? - Intimate with God rather than keep Him at a distance – false religion
    - Why inhumane? - Sacrifice and continence rather than indulgence – secular humanism
    - Going beyond what we see others do is vanity and we should conform

## Reversing Good And Evil

- p93: On another occasion, Satan tempted me terribly. I could hardly keep my thoughts on God. He argued: "Don't try so hard. You will gain nothing that way. You see that you have no protector. You continue to foolishly make efforts only because of your stubbornness."

In the middle of these terrible vexations, I asked the Holy Spirit: "Spirit of Understanding, of Strength, of Wisdom, descend upon me and take possession of me." The Evil One shouted in the depth of my soul: "Your strength, wisdom and understanding are only in your freedom. Why do you not use your human rights? You are not bad. You are only terribly stubborn. Be strong and aim to free yourself from this foolishness. Be convinced that you will never attain your end. All will end in unending shame. After so many failures, be reasonable. Live a quiet, tranquil life. Why be a martyr? You will receive no reward."

- Distractions
- Making us think our good is evil - we are stubborn
- Fear of embarrassment - vanity

## False Freedom

- SEVEN FUNDAMENTAL TENETS OF THE SATANIC TEMPLE

- I - One should strive to act with compassion and empathy toward all creatures in accordance with reason.
- II - The struggle for justice is an ongoing and necessary pursuit that should prevail over laws and institutions.
- III - One's body is inviolable, subject to one's own will alone.
- IV - The freedoms of others should be respected, including the freedom to offend. To willfully and unjustly encroach upon the freedoms of another is to forgo one's own.
- V - Beliefs should conform to one's best scientific understanding of the world. One should take care never to distort scientific facts to fit one's beliefs.
- VI - People are fallible. If one makes a mistake, one should do one's best to rectify it and resolve any harm that might have been caused.
- VII - Every tenet is a guiding principle designed to inspire nobility in action and thought. The spirit of compassion, wisdom, and justice should always prevail over the written or spoken word.
- Does this sound so bad? It's all human centric

- True Freedom – Gal 5:13-16

## Intense Self Doubt

- p118: The Evil One raised new doubts in my soul. “You see, this priest cannot understand your confused thoughts. He is very intelligent. Nevertheless, he cannot grasp your tangled explanations. Are you still forcing yourself to suffer because of them? Only a disturbed person can believe this. Why do you keep trying?”
  - Endless barrage of discouragement
  - Bullying put down
  - Is being religious a mental illness?
    - Self sacrifice would be considered crazy
- p120: During the day, the Evil One laughed mockingly: “Listen, listen, I wanted to open your eyes to make you set aside your foolishness. Enough of this fasting and nighttime vigils! Leave it all behind. It makes no sense at all.”
  - More mocking – feeling wrong to be on the untrodden path

## Keeping Us Off Balance

- p127: Satan again troubled my soul. In every way, he wanted me to abandon the way of life that I began when the Flame of Love of the Blessed Virgin spread the effect of its grace over me. This outpouring gives so much strength that I can constantly keep my spiritual balance in spite of my superhuman struggles. Now, Satan used another strategy against me. He brought out my weaknesses and with his smooth talk he tried to confuse me. “Whoever has received such a great mission cannot be idle. Go and give your message everywhere. Only in that way, will it spread. Do not keep it for yourself because you would be committing a sin. Why do you not believe? Why do you have no confidence and act like a coward? Spread this message! Announce it everywhere so people find out about it and believe in it.”
- . . . .
- With all my strength, I wanted to control myself and, with the Lord’s help, to reject these flattering temptations of the Evil One. Later, Satan again made me conscious of my failures. “You are incredulous and suspicious. Why do you go backwards? Why not give yourself to spreading the petition? You, coward, are worthy of nothing!”

## Keeping Us Off Balance

- If Satan so wants us to abandon the way, how powerful it must be against him!
- Self-sufficiency
  - How dangerous to make us think we can do this work on our own
  - How easy it is to be puffed up when God starts working wonders in us
  - Humility, humility, humility (St. Teresa of Avila)
- Then thrashing in the other direction with self-doubt
  - The way dogs kill
- Keeping us off balance
- We keep our eyes straight ahead on the love God has for us
  - Like controlling a fish-tailing car!

## Keeping Us Off Balance

- p134: While I attended Holy Mass, Satan burst suddenly into my soul. He confused my thoughts first with his flattering talk, and then with his cruelties. At the elevation of the most Holy Body and Blood of the Lord, he was terribly enraged and attacked with force: "Be a martyr and sacrifice your life like your Beloved! He took His life, why do you not do the same? Throw your life away. You will be a martyr, and losing your life will once and for all end all your atrocious torments. You have to sacrifice your life somehow. Sacrifice it willingly."
  - More thrashing from side to side

## God Allows Us To Be Targeted

- p145: she [Mary] related with what crazed rage Satan torments even those whom he suspects that her Flame of Love enlightens.
  - Mary: “We permit him to use all kinds of temptations against those who want to put into practice the Flame of Love, my Holy Cause.”
  - You've got a target on your back - that will only work for good
    - Have unending trust in God's love for us
    - Do we not believe that the Corona virus is somehow wrapped in God's love?
    - Likewise, weren't Job's torments even though they came from Satan?
    - What would have happened to the Church if not for the persecution that followed the martyrdom of Stephen - Acts 8:1
    - Never, ever doubt God's love for us - Rom 8:28 is followed by 31-32. It will hold us firm through the greatest storm – WCG experience
    - God loves me and, by His grace, I love Him and not much else matters - Peace

## More Multi-dimensional Attacks

- p194: On the same day, the Evil One, with irritating boldness, interrupted the silence of my soul. With his infernal violence, he attacked me and shook my soul: “I am obliged to admit and even to recognize that the Cause entrusted to you is true. Nevertheless, I can assure you that you will never be able to suffer enough to bring about its progress. First, because you are buried in false humility, you do not take a single step. And even if you did, you would just repeat your failures. Also, your confessor does not like you, so do not hope to gain anything through him. You must advance without him. Do you think you will make progress by your austere life? You are mistaken. If extraordinary, external signs accompanied your human effort, it would be different. However, as you are now, no one will believe you. I cannot understand why you are sacrificing your life. Nothing of value will come about.”

## More Multi-dimensional Attacks

- Again, so many different angles at once:
  - It's true but you'll fail
  - Your humility is false
  - You're not liked
  - Note how he slips in rebellion against authority rather than submission
  - Doubting our spirituality because we are not a wonder worker
  - What we do doesn't matter
    - Remember Jesus' words to Elizabeth:
      - p66 . . . Do not allow yourselves to be convinced and do not make others believe that everything is meaningless. Everything has meaning!

## Doubting And Forgetting God

- p251: I will describe in a few words these attacks which the Evil One used to make me falter: "You believe that the foolishness you have invented is true. This great delusion has upset you and has made you forget that all is your pure invention. Recognize this and correct it. You are committing a sin by pursuing this type of life which is contrary to human dignity. Even your Beloved has abandoned you. Do not consider yourself as worthy of life or death. The only thing that is assured is your damnation and that of all those who agree with you. Yes, you are responsible for them because you led them into evil by your continual lies."
  - Doubt
  - Secular humanism again – our life is contrary to human dignity
  - Doubt of God's love for us
  - Guilt

## Satan Will Hit But We Will Win

- Satan will hit us and hit us hard – just like he hit Elizabeth
- That is one of God's gifts to us – think Job, think Elizabeth
- However hard he hits us, keep our eyes fixed on God's love for us
- Look at the crucifix - Num 21:8-9 – that is our beacon
  - Anchors us amidst confusion and being thrashed from side to side
- God loves us
- By His grace, we love Him
- Nothing else really matters