

<https://www.churchmilitant.com/news/article/part-two-essential-lessons-in-spiritual-warfare>

Introduction

As a man in my 60s, I have witnessed a complete turnaround in the course of my life surrounding all things associated with the Devil. When I first started university in the 1970s, even though my school was Catholic, the reality of the Devil was ignored. Most professors, even in the theology department, did not talk about him, as if he did not exist.

[Deliverance Prayers for the Laity](#)

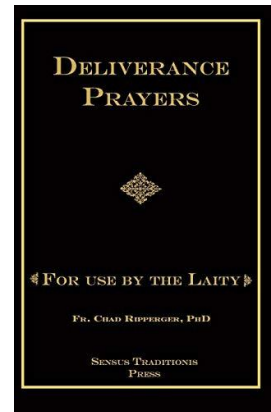
Similarly, 40 years ago, most dioceses throughout the world did not have priest-exorcists, despite canon laws recommending them. If, by chance, someone should inquire at a chancery about having a loved one exorcised, they were likely disregarded or dismissed. If anything was done at all, it was probably to refer the inquirer to a secular psychologist.

Denying the reality of the evil one, given the proliferation of his malign machinations, is currently harder to do. Although, many older priests persist in pretending the devil does not exist, both to their own detriment, and that of their parishioners.

But, thankfully, dioceses are restoring the important position of the priest-exorcist, and more priests are being trained for this much-needed ministry to meet the growing number of individuals suffering from demonic influence.

Jumping on the trend, I've compiled 12 lessons useful for religious and laypeople to help thwart the evil one in their day-to-day life. The first four lessons are found below, and the remaining eight will be published in subsequent articles.

To complement these lessons for lay people, I recommend Fr. Chad Ripperger's [book](#) *Deliverance Prayers for the Laity*. This little book is a Godsend, putting prayers at one's fingertips that are proven to send the Devil packing.



Lesson One

Humanity has been engaged in spiritual warfare since the very beginning of time. Recall the story of Eve in the Garden of Eden, wherein she succumbed to Satan's lies.

Adam and Eve

In the story of the fall of man in Genesis, the Devil [lied](#) to Eve from his perch on the tree of knowledge of good and evil: "You certainly will not die! God knows well that when you eat ... your eyes will be opened, and you will be like gods, who know good and evil."

The Devil was, for the most part, truthful in his conversation with Eve; he did not utter any bald-faced lies. He twisted the truth just a tiny bit to get Eve to disobey God's command. The world's first man and woman did not die! But, because of their disobedience, they were permanently banished from the garden and from God's presence. Adam and Eve and their progeny were condemned to eke out their existence in a fallen world simply because Eve succumbed to the subtle lies of the tempter and Adam followed her lead.

Most people can readily recognize a bald-faced lie. But the Devil is never a blatant liar. He's a subtle liar. He twists the truth just enough to sway us. Because of his subtlety, many fall for his deceptions just as Adam and Eve did in the garden.



Summary: Always keep in mind that the Devil is a subtle liar. Never, ever, believe the half-truths and small deceptions he whispers to you. There will be severe consequences if you do.

Lesson Two

Don't assume that you will have a day in the course of your life in which you will not engage in spiritual warfare. Unlike you and me, the Devil never sleeps. As a noncorporeal spiritual being, the Devil does not need to sleep and can make mischief 24/7.

As most of you probably know from experience, when you're asleep, the Devil has a way of getting into your head, maligning your dreams, and taking away your peace. The best way to prevent this from happening is to ask your guardian angel to be present when you're asleep and stand guard for you. This works splendidly!

Put your guardian angel in charge of your mind and heart.

So we always need to be on alert, even when we are sleeping (in a manner of speaking). And if you should have a bad encounter with a demonic spirit while you are slumbering, upon waking, just say a Hail Mary out loud. This prayer, said out loud and devoutly, will cleanse your head from any residue of evil that has passed through it at night — and the Devil is known to reel from the name of the Holy Mother.

Summary: The Devil never sleeps. Don't forget before you slumber to put your guardian angel in charge of your mind and heart. He will be present for you and fight in your stead.

Lesson 3

Don't think that as you grow in age, wisdom and holiness, that demonic attacks will become less frequent. In fact, the opposite is true. As you grow closer to Christ and you move closer to death, the evil one will ramp up the attacks he uses against you. If you read closely the lives of the saints, you will see that as they progressed in holiness, so did the evil one ramp up his attacks against them.

Moreover, don't think for one minute that the Blessed Mother, who was conceived without sin, did not have to do spiritual battle every day of her life in this fallen world. As the Mother of God, she was attacked each and every day of her life by horrendous assaults from the evil one.

The venerable [Maria of Ágreda](#), in her [diary](#), *The Mystical City of God*, recorded how Mary, fully human like any of us, battled regularly with the evil one and his minions:

The dragon, though seeing her courage and constancy and though feeling the force of the divine assistance, knew nothing of the hidden wisdom and prudence of our sovereign Queen. Nevertheless, he persisted in his pride and besieged the City of God in diverse ways and [with] several kinds of warfare. The astute enemy during this warfare often changed his engines of war, but his machinery was like the sting of a weak hornet against a diamond or an adamant wall.

Mary was an expert at battling the evil one. Always call on Mary to help you when you are under attack and suffering from oppression. Remember, you do not have to fight your battles alone. Mary, our Blessed Mother, will always avail herself to aid you in your spiritual battles.

Summary: It's a fallacy to think that holy people never get attacked by the evil one. Actually, they get it worse. The difference is they have developed the skills to fight off their attackers. Keep learning skills needed to thwart the evil one; remember to call on Our Blessed Mother to assist you.

Lesson Four

As you grow older and grow in holiness, the Devil will mix it up and change the temptations that come your way. You can count on this!

When you're young, the tempter often uses temptations of the flesh to get you to sin. This is an easy ploy to get a young man to fall.

Many a young man mistakenly thinks that if he gets a handle on the temptations of the flesh, he will have it easy for the remainder of his life. But as time passes and the young man matures, he grows in grace and holiness, putting temptations of the flesh behind him. The Devil invariably comes up with a new temptation to make him fall into despair and sin.

Let me explain. Three years ago now, just after my mother's death, I went through a horrible trial. And please don't laugh; I went through a period of uncontrolled itchiness. These attacks would happen at night when I tried to sleep.

The first time it happened, as I could not stop scratching, I thought that I was having some sort of allergic reaction. I thought that I had come into contact with some plant or something that was causing the itchiness.

So to combat what I thought was an allergic reaction, I got out of bed, took a shower, and put on fresh bedclothes. But the scratching continued that night all the same, and I got little sleep.

The following night, doubly exhausted because of the sleepless one the night before, I went to bed early, but once in bed, the uncontrollable itchiness resumed. This time, still thinking that the scratching was some sort of allergic reaction, I got out of bed, and instead of showering, I remade the bed with fresh linens. Sadly, this did nothing. Despite the fresh sheets, the itchiness resumed, and night two of the assault was virtually sleepless.

The Devil comes up with a new temptation to make a man fall into despair and sin.

The third night, I was seriously sleep deprived and exhausted. I was hopeful that I had the itch licked. I took a shower and even remade the bed with fresh sheets. These precautions made no difference. As soon as I laid down, the feeling of things crawling on me resumed. Three days into this trial, my arms and chest were all scratched up, as if I had fallen into a bed of brambles.

This third night, instead of taking any additional showers or changing sheets, I simply got out of bed and prayed a Rosary. After the Rosary was completed, the urge to scratch had subsided, and I was able to fall asleep. But, halfway through this third night, I was reawakened — the creepy crawlers had returned.

As the earlier Rosary was effective in combating the attack, I got out of bed and prayed another Rosary. Like the Rosary I recited earlier, it also worked to stop the torment. I was able, after the prayers were said, to fall asleep and finally get a good night's sleep.

Through trial and error, I learned that spiritual trials are best treated through spiritual remedies. So much for taking extra showers, changing bed sheets and painting myself pink with calamine lotion.

In subsequent weeks, I beefed up my prayer regimen. In time, I made it clear through my additional night prayers that if the Devil sent me an attack of the creepy crawlers, I would simply get out of bed and pray another Rosary. The extra Rosaries, I learned, were counterproductive to the Devil's plans and effective in battling his attacks.

Keep in mind that once you conquer one temptation, another one will follow, as night follows day. Realizing this will allow you to keep your balance spiritually.

Summary: Don't assume that there will be a time in your life when you will not be tempted. The Devil is wily and will tempt you in various ways. As you grow in holiness and grace, the temptations will not go away and will increase in kind and intensity.

Lesson Five

We are living in a time when many people are under the influence of demons. This leads them to commit horrendous sins, including murdering their own children through abortion and sexual sins that include adultery and sodomy. They also lie, steal, cheat and disregard the sanctity of the Sabbath.

The prevalence of these sins is evident in the rising crime rates; for example, nearly 700 people have been [killed](#) in Chicago in the past year alone. This grim statistic does not even account for the unborn lives lost to abortion.

What this shows is that people have lost, or have not been taught, strategies to defeat the devil. So keep in mind that a big part of winning in spiritual warfare is to always be on guard.

As you run errands on a weekend afternoon, remind yourself that some people you might encounter are extremely dangerous, both spiritually and physically. They have let evil reign in their hearts and given free rein of their lives to the Devil.

But there are effective ways to protect yourself against both the Devil, who never sleeps, and his followers — let me explain.

Not too long ago, I was in a post office waiting in line to post my packages. A man close behind me in line let loose with the demon within him. He began cursing me while others in line quickly stepped back. I simply pulled out my rosary and prayed my beads out loud. The man continued with his tirade, but I didn't let it take away my peace or equilibrium. After posting my packages, I left — as simple as that.

Others in the post office were visibly disturbed by what they saw and heard, but because of my training in spiritual warfare, I knew better. I knew no evil spirit could hurt a man armed with the rosary and devoted to praying it regularly.

Mary has always lived up to her promise of protection for me.

The Devil, or the people he controls, cannot hold sway over us when we are in a state of grace — when our armor against such attacks is strong. Strive always to be in a state of grace, to be holy, and the Devil will keep his distance.

Also, wear the brown scapular with devotion and become [enrolled](#) in the Confraternity of Our Lady of Mount Carmel — that way, you can enjoy all the graces and spiritual privileges associated with the scapular. Centuries ago, our Blessed Mother appeared to St. Simon Stock, promising her motherly care and protection to all who wear her brown scapular. I have been a member of the confraternity for years, and I never go out of the house without wearing my scapular. As a man in my sixties, I can assure you that Mary has always lived up to her promise of protection for me.

Summary: Remember to stay in the state of grace, and you will be ready for battle. Keep a rosary ready in your pocket. Wear Our Lady's brown scapular. As [sacramentals](#), the rosary and the brown scapular are both powerful weapons that clerics and laymen can wield against evil spirits.

Lesson Six

Of all the tools the exorcist has at his disposal to free someone from the power of the evil one, the [Rosary](#) is the preeminent one. The famous Roman exorcist Fr. Gabriele Amorth (now deceased)

recounted that during an exorcism, "Satan told me, through the possessed person, 'Every Hail Mary of the Rosary is a blow to the head for me; if Christians knew the power of the Rosary, it would be the end of me!'"

Father Amorth's experience makes it clear that all Christians would do well to pray the Rosary often and with devotion to defeat the Devil.

Recall, too, how our Blessed Mother gave the Rosary to St. Dominic centuries ago as a means for him to fight the rampant heresy that he encountered each day in his travels. In a similar fashion, we can use the Rosary as our tool to fight the heretics and evil people we encounter in the course of our day-to-day lives. **The Rosary is the weapon for these times.**

Many saints since have testified to the Rosary's power. Sister Lucia of Fatima said, "There is no problem, I tell you, no matter how difficult it is, that we cannot solve by the prayer of the holy Rosary." Saint Pio of Pietrelcina declared, "The Rosary is the weapon for these times."

And if you or a member of your family are under serious spiritual assault, the more Rosaries prayed, the better. Anyone serious about spiritual warfare will pray at least one Rosary a day.

The recitation of the holy Rosary is so powerful that it is considered one of the strongest exorcising prayers. During one exorcism, the evil one declared, "It is our courage, our ruin, our defeat."

Summary: Remember that exorcists recognize the Rosary as their number one tool. All people of faith need to be proficient and reverent in praying the Rosary and pondering its mysteries. It's powerfully effective in breaking the hold of the evil one upon people.

Lesson Seven

For us as disciples, it's really important to develop the capacity to recognize the voice of God, as compared to the voices of others. A mature disciple knows the voice of the Shepherd compared to the voice of the evil one or one of his minions. God's voice gives joy to a man's heart, whereas the voice of the evil one chills the heart and leaves him with foreboding feelings.

God will never tell a man to do something that is contrary to His law found in Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition. Keep this in mind when assessing voices that you hear in your head or from those people you encounter.

Many times, in the confessional or in spiritual direction, an individual will come to me all worked up as they struggle with some errant idea he has in his head. For example, "Father, in my head, I don't see a problem with moving in with my boyfriend. What do you think?"

Today, compared to prior generations, many people are quick to do whatever pops into their heads instead of stepping back and considering what Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition tell them about a course of action. These days, people forget that the evil one, the father of all lies, likes to plant sinful ideas in people's heads to get them to sin.

In centuries past, no penitent would dare expect St. Jean Vianney to approve of an action that was condemned by God through the Catholic Church or in the Bible. But today, it has become commonplace for people to presume that God's Word does not apply to them and that they are above keeping God's commandments.

For us as disciples, it's important to remind ourselves that God's Sacred Word needs to be followed at all times and that under no circumstances are we above keeping God's law.

When He speaks to us, God's voice gives us joy, hope and peace. Always remember this! The Devil's voice, on the other hand, gives rise to disquiet, distemper and distrust. Those are the three D's the Devil bequeaths upon a man. If you feel any of these things in your heart, it's always a good idea to get down on your knees and pray to immediately put the Devil at bay.

Summary: It's important to discern the voice of God as opposed to what competing voices of the world are saying to us. To discern the difference between the voice of God — the Holy Spirit — as compared to other spirits and lost souls, remember God gives us joy and peace, and the devil bequeaths the three D's.

Lesson Eight

When talking about the discernment of spirits, it's important to talk about what spirits or souls can make things go bump in the night. It's key to making a determination as to whether the noise you hear in the dark is caused by an evil spirit trying to scare you, or a soul in Purgatory seeking to get your attention.

Souls in Purgatory can, at times, disturb our sleep by making things go bump in the night. It's a reminder for us to pray for them. Part of spiritual warfare is to pray for the release of souls from Purgatory.

In my own home, I am visited almost daily by deceased loved ones seeking my attention and prayers. These souls like to keep me on my toes and praying for them. They open the drawers in my kitchen, adjust the arms on my grandfather's clock, tinker with appliance settings or rattle dishes in the kitchen sink.

When these things first started happening, it sort of scared me. But I could tell the soul's actions were not harmful and even playful; the knives from the kitchen drawers did not start flying through the room, so that was an indication of their good intentions.

When these things happen, I am reminded to offer up a prayer for a poor soul in Purgatory, and I recommend that you do the same. Remember, when they get to Heaven, they will pray for you, making you a stronger spiritual warrior.

Summary: Be sensitive to the nudges that souls in Purgatory may be giving you as reminders to pray for them. Don't be afraid of their reminders; rather, pray for them, rejoicing that they, in turn, will pray for you!