

Editor's Note: *Catholic Family News* is pleased to present a new series of articles by our longtime friend and contributor Fr. Ladis J. Cizik. Over the course of the Lenten season, Fr. Cizik will offer reflections and exhortations centered around the theme of *The Spiritual Combat* by Dom Lorenzo Scupoli and the Message of Fatima. Look for a new article on each Sunday of Lent, including Passion (Fifth) Sunday.

First Week of Lent: St. Michael the Archangel

"And there was a great battle in heaven, Michael and his angels fought with the dragon, and the dragon fought and his angels: And they prevailed not, neither was their place found any more in heaven. And that great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, who is called the devil and satan, who seduceth the whole world; and he was cast unto the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying: Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ: because the accuser of our brethren is cast forth, who accused them before our God day and night."

— [Apocalypse 12:7-10](#)



Commentary on Sacred Scripture

St. John the Apostle, writing in chapter 12 of his Book of the Apocalypse about the great

conflict at the end of time, makes reference to the very first 'Spiritual Combat' which took place in Heaven at the beginning of time.

Regarding the end of time, and speaking of the Antichrist, the Book of Daniel says:

"But at that time shall Michael rise up, the great prince, who standeth for the children of thy people: and a time shall come such as never was from the time that nations began even until that time. And at that time shall thy people be saved, every one that shall be found written in the book. And many of those that sleep in the dust of the earth, shall awake: some unto life everlasting, and others unto reproach, to see it always" ([Dan. 12:1-2](#)).

St. Michael the Archangel will protect the faithful remnant of the Church at the end of time who fight to do the Will of God. *We may be at that time.*

In Hebrew, St. Michael's name means, "Who is like God?" Michael's name was the war-cry of the good angels in the primordial celestial battle against satan and his evil followers. Those fallen angels who followed satan made themselves out to be as gods, and they were banished from Heaven forever. Those who disregard the Will of God to follow their own will, as did satan and his minions, are also destined to be sentenced forever to the unquenchable fires of hell, never to experience the eternal happiness of Heaven.



Scupoli's Spiritual Combat

In 1589, Dom Lorenzo Scupoli, a priest of the Theatine Congregation, wrote the classic book entitled *The Spiritual Combat* (full text available [here](#)) to instruct us on how to overcome the wickedness and snares of the devil. The evil one wants to prevent us from enjoying Heaven, which he has already lost. The Angels are much more intelligent than us, yet many of them chose to oppose the Divine Will of Almighty God and were sentenced to hell for all eternity. No one, not even an Angel, is smarter than God. To the question, "Who is like God?" Scupoli makes it clear that we are *not* God's equal. He tells us that unlike the mind of evildoers, "confidence in God" and "distrust of one's self" are "absolutely necessary" for the faithful. Heaven is attainable but will not be won without a battle which includes the "proper use of the faculties of body and mind" and "the duty of prayer" (chapter 1).

To acquire distrust of self, Scupoli directs that we "must meditate on our own weaknesses" and "beg God with great humility and fervor" for the "eminent virtue which must come from Him alone." He adds: "We must gradually accustom ourselves to distrust our own strength, to dread the illusions of our own mind, the strong tendency of our nature to sin, and the overwhelming number of enemies that surround us." We are advised: "As often as we commit a fault, we must examine ourselves in order to discover our vulnerable points. God permits us to fall only that we may gain a deeper insight into ourselves. Without this, we cannot hope to obtain distrust of self which is rooted in humility and the knowledge of our own weakness" (chapter 2).

In regard to confidence or trust in God, we are to ask God for it "with great humility." We are then to "contemplate with an ardent faith the immense power and infinite wisdom of the Supreme Being." Scupoli says that we must turn to God with "complete confidence." We should recall, based on "the Holy Scriptures, the witnesses of truth, in a thousand different places—that no one who puts his trust in God will be defeated" (chapter 3).

Fr. Scupoli encourages us to fight against evil by trusting in God, as he writes: "His assistance is always present for those who fight His battles, though He may sometimes permit them to be wounded. Persevere to the end. Victory depends on this. There is a swift and effective remedy for the wounds of anyone who fights for God's cause and who places his entire trust in Him. When he least expects it, he will see his enemy at his feet" (chapter 6). The remedy for our wounds, our sins, is the Sacrament of Confession.

The Holy Season of Lent especially calls us, as soldiers of Christ, to heal our spiritual injuries quickly and get back onto the battlefield to fight the good fight. As St. Paul said: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith" ([2 Tim. 4:7](#)).



The Message of Fatima

Trust in God and keeping the Faith are integral parts of the Fatima Message. In the [first apparition of the Angel](#) to the three shepherd children (Lucia, Francisco, and Jacinta) in 1916, he taught them the following prayer, known to many as the 'Battle Prayer' (BATL): "My God, I **B**elieve, I **A**dore, I **T**rust, and I **L**ove Thee. I ask pardon for all those who do not **B**elieve, do not **A**dore, do not **T**rust, and do not **L**ove Thee." In reciting this prayer, we are courageously standing up against the false belief of the fallen angels who thought that they were as gods.

The faithful of Portugal believe that it was St. Michael the Archangel who appeared to the three children in 1916. This is because during his second apparition to the children, he revealed himself as Guardian Angel of Portugal, who is historically linked by the Portuguese people to St. Michael. At another time, the Angel referred to himself as "the Angel of Peace."

The Angel admonished the three little shepherds, as he might do to any one of us: "What are

you doing? Pray, pray a great deal! The Holy Hearts of Jesus and Mary have designs of mercy on you. Offer prayers and sacrifices constantly to the Most High.”

On our part, during this Lent, we may especially wish to pray the [Traditional Fatima Stations of the Cross](#) calling to mind meditations from Sacred Scripture, the Traditional Latin Mass, and the Message of Fatima to assist us in our prayers. [Understanding Fatima's Stations of the Cross](#), based upon the history and origins of the outdoor Way of the Cross near the homes of the three shepherd children, can shed light on the message of peace that comes through prayer. The Stations of the Cross are a spiritual weapon to bring us closer to God.

As World War I was raging (1914-1918), the Angel encouraged the three Portuguese shepherds to engage in ‘spiritual combat’ which would lead to peace with these words: “Make of everything you can as a sacrifice and offer it to God as an act of reparation for the sins by which He is offended, and in supplication for the conversion of sinners. In this way, you will draw peace upon your country. I am its Guardian Angel, the Angel of Portugal. Above all, accept and bear with submission the sufferings which the Lord will send you.”

Later, the Third Part of the Secret of Fatima (the [Third Secret](#)) was entrusted to the three shepherd children (Lucia, Francisco, and Jacinta) on July 13, 1917. They beheld an Angel with a flaming sword ready to strike the earth, crying out in a loud voice: “Penance! Penance! Penance!” The sword gave out flames like it would set the world on fire – but they died out in contact with the splendor that Our Lady radiated towards him from Her right hand. We would all be wise to heed the Angel’s command and to increase the number of penances which we perform in reparation for sin and for the conversion of sinners, as Our Lady of Fatima also requested. Already, it seems, the world is now feeling, at the very least, the tip of the sword. The flames of atheistic Communism seem to be engulfing our country and the world, even as these words are being written.



Cave of Saint Michael the Archangel in the Gargano Mountains of Italy

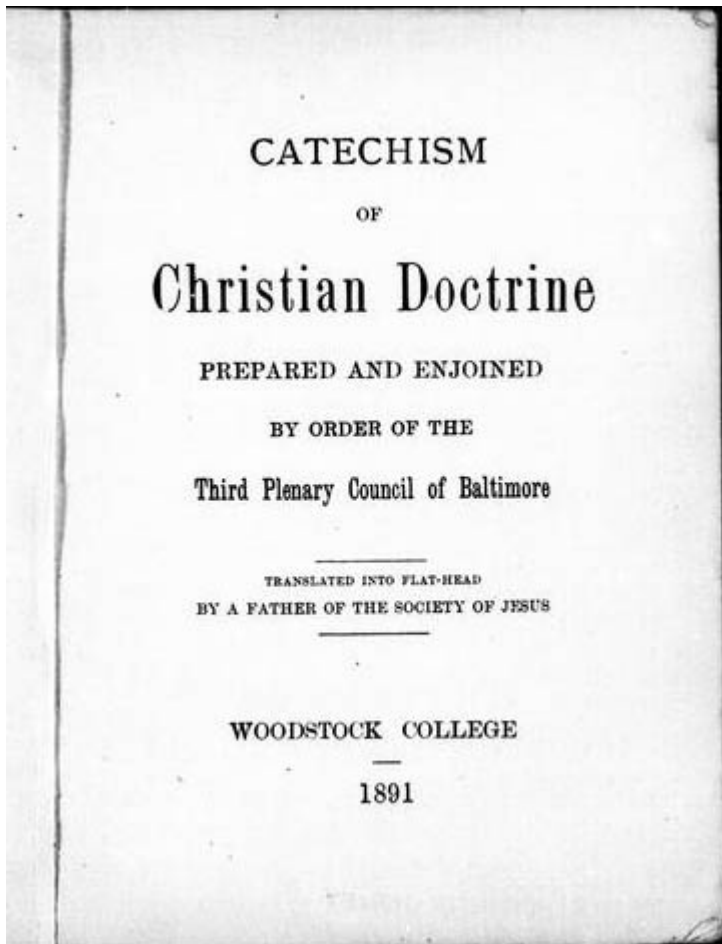
Padre Pio and Saint Michael

In 1917, as Our Lady of Fatima was bringing a message of peace to the three shepherd children, and as World War I continued its bloody course, Padre Pio made a pilgrimage to the revered [Cave of Saint Michael the Archangel](#) in the Gargano Mountains of Italy. The Cave was not far from his friary in San Giovanni Rotondo, also in the same mountain range. The Sanctuary of Saint Michael was and is an ideal place to pray for peace in the midst of a world at war. The Cave is also referred to as *Monte Sant'Angelo* and is the first church in the West dedicated to Saint Michael.

It is held that St. Michael the Archangel appeared in this Cave, set up a church inside with an Altar in A.D. 493, and declared to the local bishop: "It is not necessary that you dedicate this church that I myself have consecrated with my presence." Stones from St. Michael's Cave have been used to successfully treat both physical and spiritual maladies.

Padre Pio would often send penitents to Saint Michael's Cave to pray for the protection of this heavenly warrior for the salvation of their souls. He [encouraged devotion to St. Michael](#) because "you will need the help of St. Michael living in this world." Padre Pio would also

develop a great devotion to Our Lady of Fatima, placing statues of Her at San Giovanni Rotondo in Our Lady of Grace Capuchin Friary and in the Home for the Relief of Suffering.



Baltimore Catechism

The traditional 1891 Baltimore Catechism (#3), "[Lesson 4, On Creation](#)", teaches us about the existence and role of Angels, including the following:

Q. 219. Were the angels created for any other purpose?

A. The angels were also created to assist before the throne of God and to minister to Him; they also have been sent as messengers from God to man; and are also appointed as our guardians.

Q. 221. Mention some Archangels and what they did.

A. The Archangel Michael drove satan out of heaven; the Archangel Gabriel announced to the Blessed Virgin that She was to become the Mother of God. The Archangel Raphael guided and protected Tobias.

Q. 226. Were the angels, as God created them, good and happy?

A. The angels, as God created them, were good and happy.

Q. 227. Did all of the angels remain good and happy?

A. All of the angels did not remain good and happy; many of them sinned and were cast into hell, and these are called devils or bad angels.

Q. 229. What was the devil's name before he fell, and why was he cast out of heaven?

A. Before he fell, satan, or the devil, was called Lucifer, or light-bearer, a name which indicates great beauty. He was cast out of heaven because through pride he rebelled against God.

Q. 230. How do the bad angels act toward us?

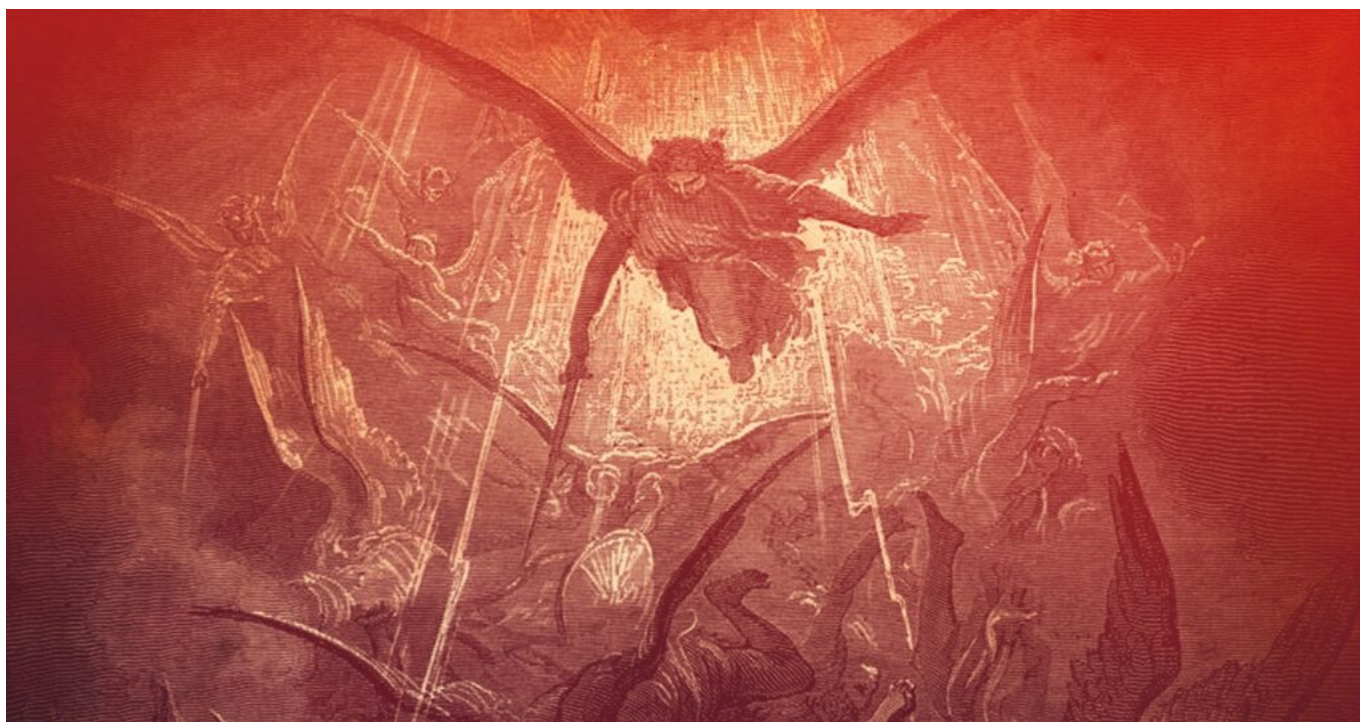
A. The bad angels try by every means to lead us into sin. The efforts they make are called temptations of the devil.

Q. 231. Why does the devil tempt us?

A. The devil tempts us because he hates goodness, and does not wish us to enjoy the happiness which he himself has lost.

Q. 232. Can we by our own power overcome the temptations of the devil?

A. We cannot by our own power overcome the temptations of the devil, because the devil is wiser than we are; for being an Angel, he is more intelligent, and he did not lose his intelligence by falling into sin any more than we do now. Therefore, to overcome his temptations we need the help of God.



Demonic Vision of Pope Leo XIII

On October 13, 1884, exactly 33 years before the Miracle of the Sun at Fatima, after concluding the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, Pope Leo XIII was overcome by a horrific vision that involved satan. He then collapsed at the foot of the altar, as if he were dead. It is said that he heard the guttural voice of the devil challenging Jesus in the tabernacle by claiming that he could destroy the Church were he given more power and time. The awesome voice of Christ responded by granting satan more power and a period of one-hundred years that was requested (perhaps the [Book of Job](#) may provide some insight into this type of exchange; where satan was given permission to afflict Job). There is an account that says that Pope Leo XIII also saw at this time St. Michael the Archangel casting satan into hell.

It is believed that the [Leonine Prayers](#) recited after a Traditional Latin Low Mass were instituted by Pope Leo XIII in 1886 as a result of this demonic vision. Those prayers include the Prayer to St. Michael the Archangel to defend us in battle. It is recommended that all the faithful be united with St. Michael in the spiritual combat to overcome the presence of the evil one in our lives.



The Spiritual Combat in Our Time

One of the key maxims in Scupoli's [The Spiritual Combat](#) is "distrust of self." On the other hand, the 'satanic temple' proclaims, "Thyself is thy master", while espousing the third tenet of the 'church of satan': "One's body is inviolable, subject to one's own will alone" (evidence of the use of these wicked slogans is displayed in [this video](#) — **NOTICE: the video was produced by satanists**). These satanic statements are behind many of the sinful beliefs in our time, including the pro-abortion slogan of "My body, My Choice." [Abortion - A Doctrine of Demons](#) is a documentary exposing the connection between abortion and satanism.

All those who support abortion, in any way, especially politicians and judges who champion and protect laws promoting abortion, are in league with the devil, even if they claim to be Catholic. A woman does not have a God-given 'right to choose' to murder her unborn baby; such a thought is demonic. The Democratic political party has become the undisputed champion of 'abortion rights' and other deviant affronts to the laws of Almighty God, such that they are more aptly described as 'DEMONcrats.' Sadly, there are many who consider

themselves Catholics aligned with the Demoncratic Party.

The Message of Our Lady of Fatima — now over 103 years old, yet a message *for our times* — [says](#) that, “In Portugal, the dogma of the Faith will always be preserved etc.” This would indicate that the dogma of the Faith would one day, subsequent to 1917, be lost in other parts of the world. We are now at that time. Abortion is the loss of one of the most fundamental dogmas of the Faith: *Thou shalt not kill*. The Fifth Commandment prohibition against murder seems to have fallen by the wayside. Abortion, the murder of unborn children is now legalized in many countries throughout the world, including the United States of America. Even if the child is born alive in a botched abortion, it may be legally killed [thanks to Demoncratic politicians](#). Abortion is satanic.

Since Pope Leo XIII’s vision of the devil, now well over 136 years in the past, there does not seem to be substantial evidence of the Church’s ‘victory’ over satan. On the contrary, since that time we have seen the rise and proliferation of Modernism — “the synthesis of all heresies” (Pope St. Pius X, Encyclical [Pascendi](#), n. 39) — in the Church. We have endured the horrors of a clergy sex-abuse scandal that has scandalized millions upon millions of souls. Catholic churches and schools have been closing at an ever-increasing rate. Vocations to the priesthood and religious life have declined drastically in most parts of the world. And further, we have seen the widespread replacement of the God-centered Traditional Latin Mass (aka: the ‘Extraordinary Form’) with a man-centered *Novus Ordo* Mass (aka: the ‘Ordinary Form’): Mass facing God versus Mass facing the people. Mass attendance, overall, is at an all-time low. The Prayer to St. Michael the Archangel after the Mass is no longer required or widely said, except at the Traditional Latin Mass.

As distressing as the current times are, we will not surrender. We will never give up. We will “fight the good fight.” We will “keep the Faith.” We will “finish the course.” With confidence in God, while distrusting ourselves, we will follow the advice of Padre Pio, who said, “Pray, hope, and don’t worry,” as we turn to St. Michael the Archangel to defend us in battle, in our spiritual combat.



**This Week's Spiritual Weapon:
Prayer to Saint Michael the Archangel**

St. Michael the Archangel, defend us in battle; be our protection against the wickedness and snares of the devil. May God rebuke him, we humbly pray; and do thou, O Prince of the heavenly host, by the power of God, thrust into hell satan and all the evil spirits who prowl about the world seeking the ruin of souls. Amen.