

Don't fall for trap: The devil is real, should never be engaged

written by Catholic News Service |



Christians must acknowledge the reality of the devil acting around them and remain steadfast in resisting his temptations, Pope Francis said.

“Never dialogue with the devil,” the pope told visitors at his general audience Sept. 25. “When he comes with temptation — ‘this would be nice, that would be nice’ — stop yourself. Lift your heart to the Lord, pray to Our Lady and send him away.”

After canceling his scheduled appointments Sept. 23 due to what the Vatican described as a “mild flu-like condition,” Pope Francis held his general audience outdoors as planned. He rode through St. Peter’s Square in the popemobile to greet the faithful and shook hands with bishops and others after his speech.

Reflecting on the Gospel reading from St. Matthew in which Jesus is led into the wilderness by the Holy Spirit to be tempted by the devil, Pope Francis noted that modern technology, in addition to its positive elements, provides “countless means to give an opportunity to the devil” to enter people’s lives, “and many fall in the trap.”

“Think of online pornography, behind which there is a flourishing market: this is a very widespread phenomenon which Christians should beware of and strongly reject,” he said. “Any cell phone has access to this brutality, to this language of the devil — online pornography.”

The pope said contemporary society is “witnessing a strange phenomenon regarding the devil,” since “at a cultural level, it is held that he simply does not exist.”

Rather than be understood as a real agent of diabolic activity, the devil today is often viewed as a “metaphor” and enters people’s lives through “superstition,” as reflected in the secularized world “teeming with magicians, occultism, spiritualism, astrologers, sellers of spells and amulets, and unfortunately with real satanic sects.”

Yet “the strongest proof of the existence of Satan is found not in sinners or the possessed, but in the saints,” he said. “It is in the lives of the saints that the devil is forced to come out into the open, to cast himself ‘against the light.’”

All the saints testify to some degree of their struggle with the devil, the pope said, “and one cannot honestly assume that they were all deluded or mere victims of the prejudices of their time.

He encouraged Christians to look to Jesus’ example in resisting temptation by “striking with the word of God” and being firm in keeping their distance from the devil.

To approach the devil, to ask him “How are you?” is foolish, the pope said; “it ruins you.”

“With the devil one does not dialogue; one sends him away, (keeps him at a) distance,” he said. “And all of us have had the experience of how the devil approaches us with some temptation against the Ten Commandments. When we feel this, stop — distance! Do not approach the dog tied to its chain.”