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THE DEADLY PREDICAMENT OF SIN

"Sin ... is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you."[1]



"Serpens erat callidior cunctis"[1]

A Meditation on Temptation and Vigilance

The image above — that of a serpent — is perhaps not simply the most graphic, but probably the most apposite depiction of the predicament of sin.

It is chilling.

Examine it carefully: the smooth involuted teeth, tapered to infinitely fine and absolutely unyielding points, bent in along polished surfaces that allow unwary prey to enter smoothly, effortlessly.

Once in, escape — if at all possible — is unimaginably painful: rending flesh, piercing, scoring, tearing; the teeth leave none unscathed who are caught within. They scar, maim and deform for life. Even if escape is quick, it is only at great cost and immense suffering. Yes, the image of a Python's skull is the most appropriate image for the lurking danger:

"Sin," we are warned, "is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you."[2]

We Cannot Toy with this Demon!

We cannot deceive ourselves that we are more clever, stronger, and capable of eluding it.

It is far stronger than we are.

As with all serpents, its jaws can only be *held shut*: once clamped down upon, the jaws do not possess the strength to easily *open* — but *once open*, they seize upon us with a ferocity and force that betrays the innocuous flicker of the slender forked tongue that intrigues us ... the closer it approaches.

We cannot allow it to. We **must** not allow it to!

Our greatest safety lies in distance — and vigilance. It does not suffice, and will avail us little, to simply avoid the actual sin *itself* — but as Holy Mother Church teaches, we must diligently avoid *"the **near occasion** of sin"* — the people, places, and things that are likely to *lead us* into sin.

The Trap

Perhaps that is why Satan is depicted as a Serpent in the Garden of Eden:

Sin is first and foremost a liar. Given that Satan is "the father of lies and a murderer from the beginning,"[3] *it is not surprising that our first parents, Adam and Eve, were first seduced into sin by the* ***lies*** *of the serpent, by the alluring deception that they could be like God.*

Sin is Always Alluring, Attractive

Were it not — and could we clearly see the destructive, fatal, even eternal consequences of sin — we would instantly flee from it, knowing it to be deadly.

Time and again we are warned that "the wages of sin is death"[4]. But let us be candid: the reality is that *we like to toy with sin* — to "sin … just a little".

However, since its consequence is death, the obvious question is inescapable: can we be "dead … *just a little*"?

Likewise, you are either alive to God (in a state of grace) — or you are not.

There is no middle ground.

The moral of the story? Next time you are mesmerized by something as sinuous and intriguing as a snake — it probably ***is*** a snake. And if something *appears* to be a sin, and your conscience screams at you that it *is* a sin — *then it unquestionably* ***is*** *a sin.* You can *pretend* otherwise, but once the venom numbs you to further sin

If you think that you can contend with the devil himself — giving him *just your little finger*, believing that he will not rip off your entire arm — and your immortal soul — then you are a fool.

Run! ***Flee sin*** and the near occasion of sin — lest it overtake you ... and devour you!

Scriptural References

1. Genesis 3.1
2. Genesis 4.7
3. Saint John 8.44
4. Romans 6.23

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