

## *Reflections* Lawrence P. Grayson

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### **The Devil In Our Lives**

“The Christian life is a constant battle... against the devil, the prince of evil,” Pope Francis stated in his recent apostolic exhortation, *Gaudete et Exultate*. In this call for holiness, the pope warns that in our struggle against evil in today’s world “we should not think of the devil as a myth, a representation, a symbol, a figure of speech or an idea.” Rather, the devil is “a personal being who assails us.” Francis cites Pope Paul VI, who described the devil as “a living spiritual being, perverted and perverting. A terrible reality, mysterious and frightful.”

Yet, regardless of the papal declaration, a recent Gallup poll found that 27 percent of adults living in the America do not believe in the devil and another 12 percent are not sure if he exists. If people dismiss the existence of the devil, they are not prepared to resist him and, as the pope says, “he takes advantage of it to destroy our lives, our families and our communities.”

If the devil exists, where is his influence seen in America today? Almost everywhere. Immorality continues to infiltrate and dominate great segments of society. The nation is awash in pornography, contraception, casual sex, cohabitation, and abortion, and we are inundated with licentious television shows, movies and art. Marriage has been redefined, homosexual behavior is acceptable, gender is becoming a choice, euthanasia is growing, and sexual abusers and predators seem to abound in all walks of life.

Within the past few months, a U.S. Senator, a movie star, a Hollywood mogul, a late-night television host, and a prominent newscaster were among many others accused of sexually harassing women. Each summer, thousands of people attend the Burning Man Festival in Nevada’s Black Rock Desert, where they can express themselves without bound, including engaging in orgies of “love in all forms.” In late October 2017, the National Park Service withdrew its initial approval for the placement of a 45-foot tall statue of a nude woman on the National Mall; the reason given was that it would likely damage the Mall’s turf and soil – nothing was said about the statue’s appropriateness for the millions of children and families who visit the site annually. In March, the Los Angeles City Council reached an agreement to permanently maintain the Playboy Mansion, the legendary venue for hedonistic parties, debauchery, and gatherings of self-indulgent celebrities. With even monuments being created to depravity, the moral culture of America is becoming reminiscent of that of ancient Rome.

While many people do not believe in the devil, there are others who worship him. For the past two Christmas seasons, a teacher in Boca Raton, Florida, has put up a large Satanic pentagram in a public park near a crèche. It was accompanied with quotes like: "In Satan We Trust" and "One Nation Under Anti-Christ." In January 2017, when the time came to remove the display, a group of Satanists carried the pentagram to the Nativity scene chanting "Hail Satan!" Last October, a group of devil-worshippers demanded that the Boston City Council allow them to perform a Satanic invocation at a council meeting. The request was denied only on the grounds that Satanism is not a recognized religion.

The march toward moral licentiousness across the nation is relentless. Its supporters are fiercely determined to impose their agenda on everyone, regardless of the religious beliefs and traditional moral principles of others. Its opponents, in contrast, are too tolerant, too complacent, for it is

easier to ignore an evil than to confront it. Many people take a position such as: as long as it doesn't affect me, I really don't care what others do; or, we should be tolerant of others and not judge their actions; or, I am only one person, there is nothing I can do.

But each accommodation of a moral wrong makes it easier to allow an even greater evil. The acceptance of sexual freedom was followed by the consent of homosexual behavior, which led to same-sex unions and then gay marriage. Now there are calls to decriminalize and recognize polygamy. As each incursion on traditional morality is given legal status or accepted by society, the intense pressure of public opinion and accusations of bigotry and unlawful discrimination are being brought to bear against those who wish to maintain orthodox religious beliefs and practices.

While man's fallen nature and personal choices should not be dismissed for their effect on the state of morality in the world today, neither should the influence of malevolent spiritual beings. Yes, the devil is real. In driving God from public consciousness, America is creating a culture without absolute standards of right or wrong, decency or indecency, moral or immoral. It is becoming a society that condones casual sex; that no longer values families as the bedrock of society; that treats pregnancy as an impediment; that considers persons with physical or mental impairments and the very elderly as dispensable.

People who believe in God cannot be complacent while the forces of libertine progressivism overwhelm society, whether one considers these advances the result of societal narcissism or satanic influence. While action to change society is necessary, alone it will not be effective. To combat evil, prayer is essential.

Pope Francis, in *Gaudete et Exultate*, presents a way to proceed: "For this spiritual combat, we can count on the powerful weapons that the Lord has given us: faith-filled prayer, meditation on the word of God, the celebration of Mass, Eucharistic adoration, sacramental Reconciliation, works of charity, community life, missionary outreach." And we should not ignore Mary, Mother of God. In a January homily, the pope said that where Mary is "the devil does not enter... Let's make the Mother the guest of our daily life... Let's entrust all to her every day."

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