

Homily Outline for the 26th Sunday in Ordinary Time - Cycle B
Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception
September 29, 2024

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- I. The [Invictus Games](#) were founded by Prince Harry of England in 2014 following a visit to the [U.S. Warrior Games](#) in 2013. Both the Invictus Games and the U.S. Warrior Games involve injured servicemen and women.
 - A. The Warrior Games were founded by the United States Department of Defense as an annual adaptive-sports competition highlighting the exceptional physical skills and mental toughness of wounded, ill and injured active-duty and veteran service members.
 - B. The word “*Invictus*” means “unconquered”, chosen to celebrate the unconquered human spirit of those who refuse to be defeated by their wounds.
- II. Today’s Gospel from Saint Mark (Mk 9:38-43, 45, 47-48) mentions two words that we do not use in everyday conversation.
 - A. The first is “demon.”
 1. John said to Jesus, “Teacher, we saw someone driving out demons in your name.”
 2. In [Scripture](#) and in [Catholic](#) theology, *demon* has come to mean much the same as *devil* and refers to one of the evil spirits or fallen angels.
 3. The [precise distinction](#) between the two terms in ecclesiastical usage may be seen in the phrase used in the decree of the Fourth Lateran Council, which spoke of “the devil and the other demons, that is, all are demons, and the chief of the demons is called the devil. This distinction is observed in the [New Testament](#), where *devil* in almost every instance refers to Satan himself, while his subordinate angels are described, in accordance with the Greek, as *demons*.

4. Although our liturgy for today is the 26th Sunday of the liturgical year, September 29th is ordinarily the feast day of the Archangels, Saints Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael.

a) Pope Saint Gregory the Great [taught](#) that, while angels are spirits, the word “angel” describes their function as messengers. “Those who deliver messages of lesser importance are called angels; and those who proclaim messages of supreme importance are called archangels. Some angels are given proper names to denote the service they are empowered to perform. . . . Thus, Michael means ‘Who is like God’; Gabriel is ‘The Strength of God’; and Raphael is ‘God’s Remedy.’

b) “Whenever some act of wondrous power must be performed, Michael is sent, so that his action and his name may make it clear that no one can do what God does by his superior power. So also our ancient foe desired in his pride to be like God, saying: ‘I will ascend into heaven; I will exalt my throne above the stars of heaven; I will be like the Most High.’ He will be allowed to remain in power until the end of the world when he will be destroyed in the final punishment. Then, he will fight with the archangel Michael, as we are told by John: ‘A battle was fought with Michael the archangel.’

c) “So too Gabriel, who is called God’s strength, was sent to Mary. He came to announce the One who appeared as a humble man to quell the cosmic powers. Thus God’s strength announced the coming of the Lord of the heavenly powers, mighty in battle.

d) “Raphael means, as I have said, God’s remedy, for when he touched Tobit’s eyes in order to cure him, he banished the darkness of his blindness. Thus, since he is to heal, he is rightly called God’s remedy.:

B. The other word unusual word in today’s Gospel is “*Gehenna*.”

1. “*Gehenna*” is a symbolic word for “hell.”

2. In the Old Testament, [Gehenna](#) was the name of the valley below Jerusalem, where children were sacrificed and where idolatry was practiced [II Kings 23:10; Jeremiah 19:6] and where later garbage, the entrails and internal organs of an animal used as food were burned.

3. In the New Testament, *Gehenna* became known as a place where the wicked are punished after death. It was a place of decay and burning rubbish which represents a place or state of pain and torment.
4. Today, the word we use for this place of eternal punishment is "hell."

C. This Wednesday, October 2nd, is the feast day of our Guardian Angels.

1. We read in Psalm 91: "*He has given his angels charge over you to guard you in all your ways.*"
2. St. Bernard wrote, "These words should fill you with respect, inspire devotion and instill confidence; respect for the presence of angels, devotion because of their loving service, and confidence because of their protection. And so the angels are here; they are at your side, they are with you, present on your behalf. They are here to protect you and to serve you. . . . So let us be devoted and grateful to such great protectors; let us return their love and honor them as much as we can and should. . . . We should then . . . show our affection for the angels, for one day they will be our co-heirs just as here below they are our guardians and trustees appointed and set over us by the Father. . . . Even though we are children and have a long, a very long and dangerous way to go, with such protectors what have we to fear? They who keep us in all our ways cannot be overpowered or led astray, much less lead us astray. They are loyal, prudent, powerful. Why then are we afraid? We have only to follow them, stay close to them, and we shall dwell under the protection of God's heaven."

D. With our Guardian Angels to protect us on our journey to Jesus, who saves us from the fires of hell, we will be *invictus*, that is, "unconquered" by the devil and his demons.

E. We should begin each day with the Guardian Angel Prayer: "Angel of God, my guardian dear, to whom God's love commits me here, ever this day be at my side, to light and guard, to rule and guide. Amen."

III. May God give us this grace. Amen.