Have you also been deceived?

As we draw closer to Good Friday, the daily readings show an increasing antagonism among the chief priests and Pharisees against Jesus. They send guards to arrest Jesus, but they come back empty handed. The guards listened to what Jesus had to say and were convinced he was authentic. “Never before has anyone spoken like this man” (John 7:46). I am reminded of the woman at the well in Samaria, Jesus speaks the truth to her, and it is a life changing encounter. She is redeemed and goes out to tell others the good news. The guards are likewise amazed at Jesus and want to share the good news rather than suppress it.

The Pharisees, on the other hand, are fit to be tied. They question the guards: “Have you also been deceived” (7:47)? Sadly, it is the Pharisees who have been duped. Duped by the devil. Deception is one of the primary tools of the devil. The devil makes what is truly good look burdensome, difficult, and something that we want to avoid at all costs. Conversely, something that is bad for us, is twisted in such a way that it looks good, it is appealing to us.

The Pharisees and chief priests are full of pride. They believe they know better than Jesus and they are willing to commit evil in order to suppress the goodness of Jesus. The devil never fights fairly. Satan hides in the shadows so he can move more subtly and stealthily. The chief priests and the Pharisees actually think they are doing something positive as they plot to kill Jesus. Think about how the devil has deceived you. What evil has he convinced you is a good?

Jesus teaches us how to overcome the devil’s deceptions. Jesus Christ is the way, the truth and the life. (John 14:6) We can look back to the start of lent when Jesus was tempted in the desert (Matthew 4:1-11). Jesus sees through the lies and deceptions of the devil.

The devil tempted Jesus to think selfishly so he would turn stones into bread. Jesus explains us that every word that comes forth from the mouth of God gives life (Matthew 4:4). Jesus thinks sacrificially and so should we. What can I do to help others? How can I unite a little sacrifice on my part to the larger sacrifice of Jesus that good can come out of suffering?

With the closing of schools, with self-quarantining, with limiting our daily activities we are experiencing lent very differently this year. Let us embrace this opportunity to pray, to fast, and to help others through charitable works.

As the coronavirus spreads and we find ourselves more isolated, we are called to draw ever closer to Christ. As we do this, we should not be surprised if the devil tries a little harder to deceive us. Jesus comes to unite us with the Father. The devil sews seeds of division. Jesus challenges us to be our best. The devil discourages. Jesus directs us. The devil diverts us.

“Never before has anyone spoken like this man” (John 4:46). Let us recall how Jesus taught us to pray the Lord’s Prayer. As we conclude the Our Father we pray, “lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.” This may also be translated as “Do not bring us to the time of trial but rescue us from the evil one.” Help us Lord. “Do not give the evil one more room to maneuver than we can bear... Rescue us, free us!” (Cameli 168, Benedict XVI Jesus of Nazareth 164-165).

Source: Cameli, Louis - The Devil You Don't Know: Recognizing and Resisting Evil in Everyday Life (Ave Maria Press)