

**Pope's Morning Homily: Examination of Conscience Prevents Evil Entering the Heart
Recollect in Silence, Guard and Keep Watch to Ensure Demons Stay Away**

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The Gospel of the day reminds us that the devil always comes back to us; he never stops tempting man. “The devil has patience,” Pope Francis said. “He never leaves that which he wants for himself,” that is, our souls:

“After the temptations, in the desert, when Jesus was tempted by the devil, in Luke’s version it says that the devil left Him for a time, but during the life of Jesus he returned again and again: when they put Him to the test, when they tried to trap Him, in the Passion, finally on the Cross. ‘But if you are the Son of God... but you come, you come from us, so we cannot believe.’ And we all know that these words touch the heart: ‘But can you do it? Let me see! No, you can’t.’ That’s how the devil even to the end [dealt] with Jesus... and likewise with us.”

We need to guard our hearts, where the Holy Spirit dwells, the Pope said, “so that other spirits do not enter. To guard the heart, as a house is guarded, with a key.” And then to watch the heart, like a sentinel: “How often,” he asked, “do wicked thoughts, wicked intentions, jealousy, envy enter in? So many things that enter in. But who has opened that door? Where do they enter from? If I do not realize [how much] enters into my heart, my heart becomes a piazza, where everything comes and goes. A heart without intimacy, a heart where the Lord cannot speak and cannot even be heard.”

“And Jesus says something else here – doesn’t He? – that sounds a little strange: ‘He who does not gather with me scatters.’ He uses the word ‘to gather.’ To have a gathering heart, a heart in which we know what happens, and here and there you can perform a practice as old as the Church, but good: the examination of conscience. Who of us, at night, at the end of the day, remains by himself, by herself, and asks the question: what happened today in my heart? What happened? What things have passed through my heart? If we don’t do this, we have truly failed to know how to watch and guard [our hearts] well.”

The examination of conscience “is a grace, because to guard our heart is to guard the Holy Spirit, Who is within us”:

“We know – Jesus says clearly – that the devil always returns. Even at the end of life, He, Jesus, gives us an example of this. And to guard, to watch, so that the demons don’t enter in, we must be able to gather ourselves, that is, to stand in silence before ourselves and before God, and at the end of the day ask ourselves: ‘What happened today in my heart? Did anyone I don’t know enter? Is the key in its place?’ And this will help us to defend ourselves from so much wickedness, even from that which we could do if these demons, who are very clever and at the end would cheat all of us, even if they enter.”