

Published on *National Catholic Reporter* (<https://www.ncronline.org>)

April 11, 2014 at 8:31am

'The devil exists' and doesn't want you to follow Jesus, pope warns

by Cindy Wooden by Catholic News Service

The Francis Chronicles

Vatican City — A lot of people, even Catholics, think that talking about the devil is completely old-fashioned, but anyone who wants to follow Jesus needs to know that Satan exists and will keep putting up obstacles to faith, Pope Francis said.

"The prince of this world -- the devil -- doesn't want our holiness, he doesn't want us to follow Christ," the pope said Friday during his homily at Mass in the Domus Sanctae Marthae, where he lives.

"Maybe some of you might say: 'But, Father, you're so old-fashioned speaking of the devil in the 21st century!' " the pope said. "But, look, the devil exists. The devil exists even in the 21st century. And we shouldn't be naive, should we?"

The devil tempted Jesus and he will tempt those who try to follow Jesus, the pope said. "We, too, are objects of the demon's attacks because the evil spirit doesn't want our holiness, he doesn't want Christian witness, he doesn't want us to be disciples of Jesus."

Pope Francis said the devil's form of tempting people has three phases, "and we must know what they are in order to avoid falling into his trap."

"Temptation begins small, but it grows," the pope said. Then it "infects another, it is transmitted to another" and, finally, it includes self-justification so the person who gives in to temptation and sin doesn't feel so bad about it.

When Jesus preached in the synagogue, the pope said, "immediately his enemies belittle him, saying, 'But

this is the son of Joseph, the carpenter, the son of Mary. He never went to university. What authority does he have? He never studied!"

The temptation of belittling Jesus began to spread and more and more people expressed opposition to Jesus," the pope said. Then, to justify their attitudes, the priest says, "Don't you know that it's better that one man die to save the people?"

Pope Francis told those at the morning Mass that the sin of gossip follows the same pattern. One is jealous of another and feels a need to share it, and then that person shares the gossip with another and it goes on. "And we're all tempted to gossip. Well, maybe one of you is a saint and isn't tempted, but I have been tempted to gossip. It's a daily temptation."

The only way to overcome temptation is to follow Jesus more closely because he defeated the devil, Pope Francis said.

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