



## Evil

The reality of evil and its consequences have been recognized by the Church since its inception. St Thomas Aquinas refers to evil as “the absence of good”. The Catechism of the Catholic Church recognizes that an answer to the question: *why does evil exist?* is not an easy one, but is intrinsically linked to “ (God’s) call to a blessed life to which free creatures are invited to consent in advance, but from which, by a terrible mystery, they can also turn away in advance.” (309) The freedom to choose good invariably allows for the freedom to reject good. The Christian call is in part an answer to the question of evil. On the topic of evil, is there a place for discussing the devil or satan?

The word devil is derived from the Greek word *diabolos* meaning one who accuses or slanders. In Hebrew the corresponding word is *satan* meaning an adversary or one who plots against another or opposes. Satan can also refer to one who obstructs, and it is in this sense that the word is used by Jesus in admonishing Peter: “Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns.” (Matthew 16:23) The etymology of these words gives important insight into understanding the place of these terms in faith education.

If one recognizes the existence of evil in our world and understands evil as being in opposition to all that is good and of God, then this opposition can be appreciated as satanic. Simple caricatures of the devil do little to highlight the devastation of evil in our world. The power of unconditional love bestowed by a benevolent God should be taught in contrast to the opposing powers of hate, injustice and death. The devil and satan are very much real in our world and will always be found where there is opposition or obstruction to the redeeming love of Jesus.