

From this Corner  
A Lenten Devotion  
**GIVING THE DEVIL HIS DUE**  
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I don't know how you feel about the devil, but you have to admit he does a nice piece of work. I have to admit that in my formative years I do not remember much talk of this adversarial character. It seems the theological underpinnings of my faith were much more of grace than of sin. Probably just as well. At the time the only connection I could make was with the figure on some of the tools and products in my father's shop. The line was called "Red Devil" and had this figure in a red jumpsuit with horns and a pointy tail. It would have been hard to have taken him seriously. At the very least he was easily dismissed.

By way of confession, I have to admit that it has taken me a long time to take the devil seriously, although I started noticing the evidence of his existence just as soon as I was deployed by the Church to be a pastoral leader. The evidence appeared whenever God's people tried to be responsive to the full implications of the gospel. The more serious we became the more resistance there was to forward movement. Coincidence? No more so, I think, than Matthew sharing that no sooner did Jesus emerge from his baptismal waters that he was "tempted by the devil." (Matthew 4)

My conclusion about this is that whatever or whomever you might think the devil is his main agenda is to keep us from doing God's agenda. It is not so much that he has a complex program. It is simply that he is hell bent on keeping God's agenda as frustrated as possible.

So, it is my contention that this Lent we need to give the devil his due. He is one cunning, manipulate, and often effective character in salvation history. So the next time the kingdom building, the proclaiming of the gospel, the winning disciples for Jesus Christ, the working for God's justice seems to break down, we might want to rethink our theology for a minute and use Jesus' formula for such times. He said "get behind me,

Satan!” (Matthew 16:23) It seems Jesus gave the devil his due. Rightly so, because it is when we forget his presence that we become most frustrated and least effective, and he is at his devilish best.