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“Could you not watch one hour with Me?”

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holy man in God’s work and to reveal to him His will. She had not the courage to tell him herself, what only God could have done with and in her.

To her, mother and mediator of the Divine Redeemer and, with Him, of all graces, St. Joseph owed the apparition of the angel who freed him, at the last moment, from his darkness and the error through the revelation of the “mystery hidden for ages in God” (Eph 3:9):

“Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit” (Mt 1:20).  
We have to stop a while to ponder the meaning of this moment.

- At the opening of the gospel, and of the entire New Testament, according the actual order of the books, we are shown a man who can be seen as representative of so many: Joseph was a man longing to please God, but finding himself wrapped in darkness, wherein it is easy for man to err, he was about to make a decision that would have been contrary to his assigned role in God’s plan.

- *He is helped by an angel of God*, a messenger from heaven, who brings him light to see and find his God for whom he yearns so badly: Do not be afraid: God is most close to you, here and now, in your life, in your neighbor; all is prepared by God’s fatherly Providence, prepared “from the Holy Spirit”.

The faith in God’s active presence frees man from fear and any form of insecurity. Faith saves us, if it is active in confidence and sheltering us in God’s omnipotence. This is what we see first in this opening section of the gospel: “the faith of Mary meets the faith of Joseph” (RC 4) through the mediation of the angel.

#### 4. Dear Brothers in the Priesthood

Advent invites us to join this community of Saints: through the instruction of the angel and with the faith and zeal of St. Joseph let us go to find God with Our Lady!

Many graces from the Divine Infant for your apostolate in the coming year,

Fr. Titus Kieninger ORC

### ASSOCIATION OF PRIESTS IN THE WORK OF THE HOLY ANGELS®

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CHRIST’S PRIESTS UNITED WITH THE HOLY ANGELS IN THE CHURCH

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“Could you not watch one hour with Me?”

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## Association of Priests In Opus Angelorum®

“Mary was found to be with child” (Mt 1:18-20)

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### Dear Brothers in the Priesthood!

The holy angels “stand behind” the evangelists as servants of the Holy Spirit. Their inspirations helped them write the life of Jesus. We know “all that the inspired authors, or sacred writers, affirm should be regarded as affirmed by the Holy Spirit” (Vatican II, *Dei Verbum* 11). Not only the source, but also the message of the Gospel of St. Matthew encourage us to meditate on the angels in this gospel.

#### 1. The angels in the gospel of St. Matthew

The major part of the Church Fathers and theologians associate the Living Being with the face of man to St. Matthew, while to the other evangelists those with the face of animals. They assign a number of reasons for this discernment (we saw them in the last letter). We may additionally observe the many references to angels. Let us first give an overview before we reflect on the single references.

St. Matthew describes various moments of the presence of the angels during the life of Jesus: 1) the annunciation of the Incarnation to St. Joseph and his call to and from Egypt (1:20-24; 2:13-15, 19-22); 2) the guidance of the three holy Kings (2:2,9-12) to the Christ Child; 3) the temptations of the “devil”(a fallen angel) in the desert and the service of the good angels to Jesus (4:1-11; cf. 13:19,25,39); 4) and the annunciation of His resurrection (28:2-7). This yields a great picture: We find the angels in the first and last Chapter of this gospel, in relation to the beginning of life and to its end, with regard to birth, death and resurrection.

Further, the teaching of Jesus shows us that the angels are present and active in all situations of human life: at disposition in spiritual battle (4:11), and physical suffering (26:53), to children (18:10) and adults (26:53). They can act through physical appearance (28:2-7) or in a dream (1:20; 2:12,19,22); they will be with men at the end of history (13:39-42, 49-50), with Christ when he comes again (24:31; 25:31) and with the Saints in heaven through all eternity (22:30).

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CHRIST’S PRIESTS UNITED WITH THE HOLY ANGELS IN THE CHURCH

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## 2. The annunciation to St. Joseph

St. Matthew starts his gospel directly with the “genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham”, ending with “Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called Christ” (1:1-2 and 16). Then he promised to describe “the birth of Jesus Christ (which) took place in this way.” In the process he describes two significant “surrounding events”, one very hidden event that took place months before Christ’s birth (1:18-25) and one spectacular event, which probably happened months after Christ’s birth, namely, the visit of “wise men from the East” that had the terrible consequence of the massacre of innocent children in and around Bethlehem (2:1-18).

### a) “... found to be with child” - the mystery of the Incarnation

The first narration starts in this way:

“When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child of the Holy Spirit; and her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. But as he considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, ‘Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit ...’” (1:18-20).

This narration is very particular, today we would say, very private and confidential. Blessed John Paul II observed in his “Apostolic Exhortation *Redemptoris Custos – On the Person and Mission of St. Joseph*”, (RC), 1989, 3: “There is a strict parallel between the ‘annunciation’ in Matthew’s text and the one in Luke. The divine messenger introduces Joseph to the mystery of Mary’s motherhood”. St. Gabriel had visited Mary to reveal her God’s plan and take back her consent. St. Joseph had already given his consent to care for Mary, even in the most pure and total, exclusive and virginal way. But now he found *Mary with child*, this caused him difficulty. He did not know what was occurring, and nobody was telling him anything; the clearer it became that Mary was with child, the more kind she became towards him.

Some take for granted that he would have been familiar with God’s plan. Therefore, he would have been tempted to withdraw himself from Mary, and herewith also from God, out of “reverence to the Divine Maternity” (E.H.Thompson, *The Life and Glories of St. Joseph*, (1888), TAN, Rockford 1980,196): The “awe and reverence he felt at the presence of an Incarnate God,” and, we have to add, his glance at himself, “was more powerful in him than the love and tenderness he bore his spouse” (ibid., 199f.; cf. 200-202). But did he really know what was happening?

“She was found to be with child,” says the evangelist in a very sober way. What causes normally great joy to parents, disturbed St. Joseph because both,

he and Our Lady, promised a virginal life and lived it (cf. St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, p. III, q. 29, a. 1; cf. J.J.Davis, *A Thomistic Josephology*, (Diss.), Montreal 1967, 33-123).

### b) The spiritual battle of St. Joseph

St. Joseph desired and prayed for the coming of the Messiah, as also Our Lady did. But would both of them ever have dared to expect that God wants to become man right now and even here, through her and with their cooperation?

St. Joseph, “being a just man,” wanted to obey the law of God. And the law determined: “If a man commits adultery with the wife of his neighbor, both the adulterer and the adulteress shall be put to death” (Lev 20:10).

He also had moral certainty of the fidelity of such a holy woman as Mary. Nevertheless, the fact was more and more evident that she was with child, which, in any case, was not from him to whom she is “betrothed”.

Consequently, if the suspicion were to be confirmed, and he could not deny its strange origin, it would require him to denounce her and expose her to be put to death, a thought which brought him close to despair.

Only God knows why he put St. Joseph through such a terrible interior struggle: Being closest to Him through His most holy mother, and yet in darkness about the truth. He did not need the purification from sin. He did not look at himself and sin by “refusal to hear the word... and thus being closed to God who calls us to communion with himself” (Benedict XVI, *Verbum Domini*, (= VD), 26). He was not moved by false humility as we know from former Saints like Moses (cf. *Ex* 3:10,13; 4:1,10,13), Isaiah (cf. *Is* 6:5) or Jeremiah (cf. *Ier* 1:6 ). St. Joseph was consumed by the care for Mary: for God’s sake he took over the responsibility for her. Her kindness and love was for him a great source of joy. However, there is this mystery of “God’s initiative, which human beings, with our own reason and imagination, could never have dreamt of.

We are speaking of an unprecedented and humanly inconceivable novelty: ‘the word became flesh and dwelt among us’ (*Jn* 1:14a)” (VD 11; cf. 29). It was still unknown to him. This holy and virginal woman with child was incomprehensible for him and caused him terrible interior confusion, or what we call today a “dark night of spirit”. It grew to the point that he, the just man, “resolved to divorce her quietly”, because he did not want “to put her to shame” and expose her to the punishment of death.

### 3. The light of the angelic message

Our Lady was introduced to the Mystery of the Incarnation by an angel. When she saw St. Joseph confronted with her pregnancy and perceived his growing interior struggle with it, she must have implored, and ever more earnestly, her Lord and God, so close to her, and the angel and asked to introduce also this