
“Could you not watch one hour with Me?”

a) All is grace

If Joshua represents the people of God, then we understand the help of the angel easier. Was it not the free choice of God to selected Israel from among all people on earth, just “because the Lord loves you” (Dt 7:6-8; cf. Jn 15:16). The angels vested Joshua with priestly garments just as God made His people a priestly nation (cf. Ex 19:6). It may not be easy to accept this total dependence on God’s grace, but did not St. Paul ask us rather pointedly: “What have you that you did not receive?” (1Cor 4:7); and do we not often pray in the first Eucharistic Prayer: “*intra quorum nos consortium, non aestimatur meriti, sed veniae, quaesumus, largitur admitte* – Do not consider what we truly deserve, but grant us your forgiveness” (Roman Canon)?

b) ... but with man’s cooperation

However, God’s generosity does not take away man’s freedom, his free choice (cf. CCC 311) nor consequently his obedient cooperation: “If you will walk in my ways and keep my charge” – when we were ordained we were willing to embrace the cross and drink the chalice God would foresee for us (cf Mt 20:22f). We felt honored by the Bishop’s word: “Place your life under the mystery of the Cross!” And when we struggle, notwithstanding our best will, with “a messenger of Satan”, then we should continue confident that God’s love is greater than our weakness (cf *JJo* 3:20), His “grace is sufficient for” us, and His “power is made perfect in weakness” (2Cor 12:9). The withering trial of time may nibble away at the freshness of our consent to the words the bishop at ordination, but the promise God made Joshua can refresh them in us: “I will give you the right of access among those who are standing here.” It refers to the angels and means according the old tradition, that the priests are accepted into the ranks of the angels. What a powerful, consoling light for such dark moments!

4. Dear Brothers in the Priesthood!

Let us ask for forgiveness, especially in the sacrament of Penance, and trust in the infinite mercy of God. Let us also intercede and beg God’s mercy for others. Let us ask the souls entrusted to our care, not to gossip any more, but to pray instead; not to spread criticisms but to effectively help instead; not to accuse like the devil and condemn but to offer sacrifice so that all may be saved.

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**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

“Could you not watch one hour with Me?”



**Association of Priests
in Opus Angelorum®**

I will give you access among those standing here (cf. Zac 3:7) Vol. XVII, April 2011

Dear Brothers in the Priesthood!

On occasion of the visions of the prophet Zacariaia we reflected about the communication between angels and men. We ended up finding ourselves to be servants of God alongside the angels and, in the measure of our cooperation with grace, becoming more and more like them. The next vision is a sober, humbling reality check. The prophet beholds “Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord.” He is depicted in his iniquities, symbolized by “filthy garments”. However, these were taken from him and in their place, he was clothed “with rich apparel”. Supposing that he will cooperate with the grace, God assures him, the “Lord of hosts: If you will walk in my ways and keep my charge, then you shall rule my house and have charge of my courts, and I will give you the right of access among those who are standing here” (Zac 3,1.3-4.7). Let us take a closer look at what God wanted to show us through what he revealed to the prophet.

1. The judgment

After the lesson on contemplative prayer which facilitates our communication with the holy angel, we might anticipate certain spiritual flights into heavenly realities. The vision, however, that follows takes us back down to man and his life. The clarity of contemplation and the familiarity with the pure spirits allow to see and understand more clearly the realities of this world, and especially offering insights into our own soul. Recall: “When the Counselor comes, he will convince the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment” (Jo 16:8).

Before the tribunal

The high priest Joshua was shown “standing before the angel of the Lord”. According the footnote in the Jerusalem Bible, he represents the Jewish people. Then, just few verses later, he is said to represent the future priesthood. For his part, Cornelius Lapede hold that he even stands for Christ.

And there was “Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him” (Zac 3,1). When an individual is truly resolved to progress in spiritual life and tries to grow closer and closter to God, then, at the very latest, the devil “wakes up” and gets “nervous”. He fears to lose that soul whom he first tried to win through attraction and seduction. This tactic failing, he starts to cause her troubles and makes her life difficult. He points out all that has not been in conformity with God’s will in her life, first to dis-

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courage her, then, also by way of accusation – as in this text – before God to achieve her condemnation. He is “the accuser of our brethren..., who accuses them day and night before our God” (Rev 12:10). In his accusations, he brings up many lies, he the “liar and the father of lies”, in whom “is no truth” (Jo 8:44); if his accusations are not pure inventions, then he at least exaggerates greatly the facts on which he may base them.

b) Who is without sin may ...

We certainly cannot affirm that we are without sin. We are so often unexpectedly exposed to very different situations that it needs heroic virtues never to lose patience, to never to raise our voice or to err in the tone. It is so easy to mention certain topics with the wrong person, in unfitting circumstances or in the wrong moment... It does not help to bring up distinctions between mortal and venial sins, between voluntary and involuntary sins, between light sins or just imperfections; wrong is wrong. Especially from a representative of God, people expect more than from the faithful or even unbelievers. In fact, precisely by their vocation and through the exercise of their duties, priests are supposed to become holy (cf. Vatican II, *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, 13).

c) Similarity to today

But, even if the priests commit many faults, we should also not forget how difficult it is for him to please everyone. He will be often accused without reason out of sheer animosity. Our Lord found himself once in such situation. He said: “John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, ‘He has a demon’; the Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Behold, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’” (Mt 11:18-19). Translating this in our time, a priest drew up the following list:

“The priest is always wrong:

If he speaks loudly during the homily, he howls;

 If he does not speak out loud, nobody understands anything.

If he has his own car, he is a capitalist and worldly;

 if he does not have his own car, he’s not in tune with the times.

If he regularly visits the families – he is never at home; and

 If he stays home, he never visits the families.

If he asks for donations, he only thinks of money, and

 If he does not organize events, there is no life in the parish.

If he shows interest in the others, he is a snooper;

 If he shows no interest, he is an egoist.

If he is young, he has no experience;

 If he is old, he is out of date.

If he dies, there is no one to substitute him!”

It shows, how easy it is to be in the “firing line” of gossiping people, remembering however, the promise of the Lord: “A servant is not greater than his master. If they

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persecuted me, they will persecute you; if they kept my word, they will keep yours also” (Jn 15:20).

2. “The Lord rebuke you, O Satan!”

Here, in the prophet Zacariah, it does not come to a trial according to the description of the prophet. Not a single point of accusation is mentioned. On the contrary, The Angel of the Lord turned directly towards the enemy of the Saints and “said to Satan, ‘The Lord rebuke you, O Satan! The Lord who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you!’” (Zac 3:2).

a) Love over justice

It surprises no one that God, who is omniscient, did not want to hear the accusations of the devil. It reminds us of the parable of the merciful Father, whom Jesus will reveal to the world some centuries later. There, when even the sinful son accused himself of his own sins – “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you” (Lk 15,21) -, the Father is so overwhelmed with joy that he immediately ordered the servants: “Bring...! Put on...! For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found” (Lk 15:22 e 24).

Justice, it seems, would require listening to all he had done, to request repentance and penance and offer only then a new chance. Here, however, love simply overcame justice. Indeed, God sees the depths of the heart. “Joshua was standing before the angel, clothed with filthy garments” (Zac 3:3), which clearly indicate his state of imperfections or even sins so that the devil seems to have had reasons for his accusations. However, after having rebuked the devil, the good “angel said to those who were standing before him, ‘Remove the filthy garments from him.’ And to him he said, ‘Behold, I have taken your iniquity away from you,’ [and, like the Father of the Prodigal son, I will clothe you with] ‘rich apparel’.” (Zac 3:4; cf. Rev 12:7ff)

God’s love is stronger than justice. Already in the Old Testament God assured forgiveness through the mediation of an angel. One of the Seraph flew to the prophet Isaiah, touched his mouth and said: “Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin forgiven” (Is 6:6-7).

b) The intercession of others

We come now to the only instance where the prophet actually does something. He does not raise a question; rather he intercedes and speaks up for the High Priest: “I said, ‘Let them put a clean turban on his head’.” And true enough, “they put a clean turban on his head and clothed him with garments” (Zac 3:5). Also an effective intercession is not new. We know Moses’ powerful intercession for all the Chosen People (for ex. Ex 32:32), and we have already encountered it elsewhere in this book (cf. Zac 1:12).

3. All involved

Satan was rebuked, the High Priest was freed from his iniquity, now he has to do his part: “If you will walk in my ways and keep my charge, then you shall rule my house and have charge of my courts, and I will give you the right of access among those who are standing here.” (Zac 3,7)