
“Could you not watch one hour with Me?”

broken pieces did you take up?” And they said to him, “Seven.” And he said to them,

“Do you not yet understand?” (Mk 8:16-21)

It is as if Jesus Himself is asking: How long, how much should I really speak? Do My words have any effect?

c) And here we have to add the words: “The servant is not greater than his Master.” (Jn 15:20) So, if it happened to Jesus, why should it not happen to the priest also? Is it not a part of the priest’s imitation of Christ, when his words seem to be worthless? We see this also with the angels who in heaven “always behold the face of my Father” (Mt 18:10), and in Him see His Word, the Son, who nourish themselves through the contemplation. They, much more than we, want to share their bliss and joy, and, what a cross we impose on them, we, the priests and consecrated souls and missionaries! How long will they be obliged to be silent? How little times they are permitted to inspire some thoughts, and how often are these thoughts grasped, understood and really put into practice?

4. Dear Brothers in the Priesthood

We realize where the ministry of the word has its root in union with God, and how sublime it is. Let us try to immerse ourselves daily, faithfully into the Word made flesh, Jesus, the Son of the Father. And let us not look for success nor be calculating in our ministry. Let’s try our best and simply do what we are sent to do. Let’s not trust in our efforts, but in God Who sent us: “I have put my words in your mouth” (Jer 1:9), then “go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation” (Mk 16:15), and “do not be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say; for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour; for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you” (Mt 10:19f).

Fr. Titus Kieninger ORC

O Mary, Mother of Jesus Christ and Mother of priests, ... guard priests in your heart and in the Church, give to the Father for His glory, the priests of His Son, obtain for the Order of Presbyters the full measure of gifts, accept from the beginning those who have been called, protect their growth, O Mother of Priests. Amen! (Bl. John Paul II, *Pastores dabo vobis*, 82).

ASSOCIATION OF PRIESTS IN THE WORK OF THE HOLY ANGELS®

13800 Gratiot Ave. Detroit, MI 48205 USA www.opusangelorum.org

Tel (313) 527-1739 Fax (313) 527-1729 frtitus@opusangelorum.org

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Director: Father Wolfgang Seitz, ORC © 2011 Order of the Holy Cross

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®

My words are spirit and life (cf. Jo 6:63)

Vol. XVII, June 2011

Dear Brothers in the Priesthood!

Through years, we meditated on the angels in Sacred Scripture. Before we start with the New Testament, it might be fitting to touch a point which is part of the priestly life, the question: Does the word of a priest have any validity or relevance in the world today? And if it does (it does!) – how can he compete with the flood of words which fill the world, which, notwithstanding their insubstantiality, are formulated professionally and often with much wit. Is the priest’s word somewhat “impotent” by comparison? Do the small results of his sermons, the apparently little changes of the people through his ministry not tell him to keep quiet?

1. Part of the priestly spiritual battle

Part of the priestly ministry is the ministry of the word. And it is important, because, through the preaching, people come to know, to believe, to call upon the name of God and “who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved” (Rom 10:13f).

a) In many occasions his word is requested, and it should always be an uplifting word that leads to God. This forces the priest to live more linked with God and dis-linked from the world and its thousand distractions, to be zealous in prayer and meditation, because only “out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks” (Mt 12:34). Bl. John Paul II once put it in this way: “It is undeniable that the priest’s life is fully ‘taken up’ by the hunger for the Gospel and for faith, hope and love for God and his mystery, a hunger which is more or less consciously present in the People of God entrusted to him” (*Pastores dabo vobis*, 28). If the priest lives a life sincerely dedicated to God, he will be on fire and expects a certain zeal and love for God from his parishioners, too.

b) There are those who have some difficulty in preaching. They need more time to prepare a sermon; they have difficulty writing every week another column in the parish-bulletin. Often, and humanly speaking a priest would like a corresponding echo from the people, a response to his effort, in order to encourage him and assure him that he is getting a message across. Criticism, appropriate or inappropriate, discourages him and he gives up. There are priests who never preach. Is this the right reaction?

c) We do not need to seek all the reasons on the side of the priests. When Jesus spoke about the preaching, as a sowing of the seed, He distinguished on the part of the soil, which represents the hearts of listeners, various situations which were not favorable for the development of the seed. “Some seeds fell along the path, ... Other seeds fell on

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rocky ground... upon thorns... on good soil” (Mt 13:3-9) – situations which are different and found throughout the entire history.

d) To such natural expectations and situations comes still the “false friend” who might, just at the “right moment” instigate critical thoughts in the mind of the priest accusing the people of “laziness” or of the “simulation” of religious interest. “Don’t kill yourself!” is another instigated thought, or “They don’t appreciate your efforts, because they don’t care what you say!”, and “All is in vain, why do you put so much work into it?”; “Don’t you see that your words are worthless, be wordless!” All such tempest of thoughts might be just interior and be part of the priestly spiritual battle. And God allows the enemy to put the priests through such tests. Indirectly, the devil does a good service to the priests in this way: he helps to purify them from any sort of vanity, from the desire of immediate reward, from the hidden wish of success or from the very human desire to please the others.

2. “The words that I have spoken are spirit and life”

Is that all that can be said about the ministry of the word? In a word, every true human value presupposes “spirit” and “life” It is always good to go back to the sources, back to the beginning; that is where the light comes from. There we find Jesus being called the WORD of God. Let us look up to God.

a) There, in God and with the FATHER, we find the WORD, alive with infinite LOVE. In the Blessed Trinity, the Word comes forth from the Father: “The Word was with God, and the Word was God” (Jn 1:1). To show the existential unity of the Three Divine Persons, St John chooses the term “word” which, by its very nature, remains, first as thought (“*verbum mentis*”), in the thinker Himself, the Father, the One, infinite source of Divine BEING. But a thought can be shared through words, which helps to describe the Son on mission, His revelation of the Father through the assumption of the human nature in the Incarnation: “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth”, “the only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known” (Jn 1:14,18), and “all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you” (Jo 15:15; cf. 4:34). While He is constantly turned towards the Father, He is also turned towards us to whom He is sent.

b) This relationship or even dependence is freely willed in love! “The Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what He sees the Father doing; for whatever He does, that the Son does likewise. For the Father *loves* the Son, and shows him all that He himself is doing.” (Jn 5:19-20). The motive for the Incarnation, too, is love: “Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.” (Jn 15:13) Love is the secret of Their Oneness: “I and the Father are one.” (Jn 10:30). This LOVE, which is eternal in God as their relationship is eternal and personal, is the Holy Spirit. He “comes forth” from both, the Father and the Son, and is also sent in the Mission. The Father sends Him through the Son’s intercession or in His name (cf. Jn 14:26) and the Son promised to send Him from the Father, “the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the

Father, he will bear witness to me” (Jn 15:26).

c) Now, here, in this origin of reality, we see the Word placed between the Father and the Holy Spirit, between Life and Love! Life shines forth through the Word in Love. The word is embedded in life and love. – Then, the mission reveals us another aspect, almost like the final goal: It is the community dimension. Persons communicate through the word. The word allows them to share what is deep written in and through life into the souls. And again, through the word “love” can be expressed, as love moves the word to share: “God [the Father] so loved [in the Holy Spirit] the world that he ... sent the Son into the world” (Jn 3:16-17). How true, how total and existential we need to take the words of Jesus: “the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life” (Jn 6:63), and Simon Peter understood it, “Lord, ... You have the words of eternal life” (Jn 6:68).

3. In the Imitation of Christ

Saint Peter’s confession about the word of Jesus should be in the heart and on the lips of every priest.

a) Friendship with Jesus (cf. Jn 15:15) leads them to be where He is, before the tabernacle (cf. Jn 12:26; 17:24). But there he “ought first of all to develop a great personal familiarity with the word of God... to approach the word with a docile and prayerful heart so that it may deeply penetrate his thoughts and feelings and bring about a new outlook in him – ‘the mind of Christ’ (1 Cor 2:16)”, because he is “consecrated and sent to announce the Good News of the Kingdom to all, calling every person to the obedience of faith and leading believers to ...” (Benedict XVI, *Verbum Domini*, 80). There is no room for doubt: There are two arms by which the priest is constantly embraced by God and should embrace his Lord as well, the Eucharistic Lord and His word.

b) Looking at Jesus, the Master, the priest finds also the other part of the ministry of the Word. The Lord Himself was not always welcomed by the people, some asked Him directly to leave their territory (cf. Mc 5:17) or He Himself preferred to leave (cf. Mc 8:13). And such reaction is not only mentioned with regard to *foreign* people. We see Jesus sitting across the valley, looking over to *Jerusalem* and weeping: “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, killing the prophets and stoning those who are sent to you! How often would I have gathered your children together..., and you would not!” (Mt 23:37; cf. Lk 19:41-42). Once, in fact, He almost lost His patience with His *disciples*. Remember the time after the miraculous multiplication of the bread and the fish when,

Jesus said to them, “Why do you discuss the fact that you have no bread?

Do you not yet perceive or understand?

Are your hearts hardened?

Having eyes do you not see, and having ears do you not hear?

And do you not remember? When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you take up?” They said to him, “Twelve.” “And the seven for the four thousand, how many baskets full of