
“Could you not watch one hour with Me?”

“From its beginning until death, human life is surrounded by their watchful care and intercession (cf. Mt 18:10; Lk 16:22; Ps 34:7; 91:10-13; Job 33:23-24; Zech 1:12; Tob 12:12). ‘Beside each believer stands an angel as protector and shepherd leading him to life.’ (St. Basil)” (CCC 336).

And once more: “The angels ... protect every human being” (CCC 352). This doctrine pertains to the *Good News* the Church announces to all mankind: Heaven is closer to each one of us than we think, for a heavenly Guardian and Guide stands by our side. No one is left alone anywhere in this world. God stands close by us also through our Angel: “My Name is in him!” In this ministry our angels exercise “watchful care and intercession”. Positively speaking, he acts as “shepherd leading” to the eternal life, according to the Will of God which is difficult to know in the circumstances of life. He is simultaneously a “protector” and defense against evil and dangers and, in these terms the Catechism refers to the personal Guardian Angel, in whose honor the Church celebrates memorial throughout the World on October 2nd. In harmony with the sublime goal of the entire Church (cf. CCC 1) and with the high ideal for each single person, all being “called to holiness” (CCC 2013-14), the Church concludes the treatise on the angels with this deep and concrete affirmation: “Already here on earth the Christian life shares by faith in the blessed company of angels and men united in God” (CCC 336).

4. Dear Brothers in the Priesthood

How vast is the panoramic vision which opens before our eyes through these words, “already here on earth”; already here and now we are living in communion with the inhabitants of heaven, our powerful holy friends, brothers in Christ, helpers and leaders. Should we not constantly pray:

Lord, enlighten our hearts so that we become more sensitive to Your angels’ presence at our side/among us. who solicitously direct our thought to You! By heeding their guiding light and admonitions we fulfill more faithfully and accurately Your holy Will. Lord, unite us even more intimately to our angelic companion whom You placed at our side, so that Your glory may shine more brilliantly through our life towards those whom we have been called to serve. Amen.

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“Could you not watch one hour with Me?”



Association of Priests In Opus Angelorum®

Reading the Catechism (II)

Vol. XVII, September 2011

Dear Brothers in the Priesthood!

There is still a large part of the teaching on the Angels in the *Catechism* which we did not yet mention. We saw in the first paragraphs the angels’ creation, their characteristics as pure spirits and their definitive choice for or against God’s plan, with Christ as the “center of the angelic world”. In a second part the *Catechism* refers to their presence in history, in the Old Testament, during the Life of Jesus as described in the gospels, and in the time of the Church up till the Lord’s second coming. Let’s read these sections.

1. The presence of the holy angels in the time of the Old and New Testament

“Angels have been present since creation and throughout the history of salvation”, says the opening phrase of this section, “announcing this salvation from afar or near and serving the accomplishment of the divine plan” (CCC 332).

a) The angels’ activities in the Old Testament

We were able to verify this truth extensively in our past meditations on the angels in the Old Testament. Looking back in the light of this paragraph, we are impressed with just how much God wanted the angels to participate in His work. He wants them to participate in His power and joy in calling man, the rational of the creatures below them, to the same beatitude in heaven which they already enjoy in the presence of the Triune God.

The Catechism refers to nine events in which the holy angels somehow interacted in the life of man, and these are given just as “a few examples”:

“They closed the earthly paradise; protected Lot; saved Hagar and her child; stayed Abraham’s hand; communicated the law by their ministry; led the People of God; announced births and callings; and assisted the prophets, just to cite a few examples (cf. Job 38:7 where angels are called ‘sons of God’; Gen 3:24; 19; 21:17; 22:11; Acts 7:53; Ex 23:20-23; Judg 13; 6:11-24; Is 6:6; 1 Kings 19:5). Finally, the angel Gabriel announced the birth of the Precursor and that of Jesus himself (cf. Lk 1:11, 26).” (CCC 332)

It is very instructive to note the variety of their mission: “announcing, serving, they closed the paradise; protected; saved; stayed Abraham’s hand; communicated the law; led; announced; assisted”. By way of synthesis we may state: in every moment of human life, in all situations concerning his salvation and final destiny, man can count on the presence and active help of the angels.

In some cases, individuals were praying to God; in answer God sent the angels to their aid. But in almost all cases mentioned here, the angels were unexpectedly sent by God to those who seek Him and lived a righteous life.

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Very fitting, therefore, is the recapitulation we read in the “IN BRIEF” conclusion to angelology in the Catechism:

“Angels are spiritual creatures who glorify God without ceasing and who serve his saving plans for other creatures: ‘The angels work together for the benefit of us all.’” (CCC 350). (St. Thomas Aquinas, STh I, 114, 3, ad 3 – *ad omnia bona nostra cooperantur angeli*; in Farrell’s translation: “The angels take part in all our good works”, in: *My Way of Life*, 135).

b) The angel’s presence in the life of Jesus

In discussions the question often arises: “Did Jesus have a Guardian Angel? Was He served by angels? Did He need angelic protection like we do?” Recall the truth we already learned earlier, namely, that the good angels decided in favor of “God and his reign” (CCC 392). This decision included the willingness to serve the Son of God made man in his mission and in the building up His Church and Kingdom on earth. Not surprisingly, therefore the Catechism presents another long paragraph about the presence of the angels in the earthly life of Jesus:

“From the Incarnation to the Ascension, the life of the Word incarnate is surrounded by the adoration and service of angels. When God ‘brings the firstborn into the world, he says: > Let all God’s angels worship him <.’” (Heb 1:6). Their song of praise at the birth of Christ has not ceased resounding in the Church’s praise: ‘Glory to God in the highest!’ (Lk 2:14). They protect Jesus in his infancy, serve him in the desert, strengthen him in his agony in the garden, when he could have been saved by them from the hands of his enemies as Israel had been. (Cf. Mt 1:20; 2:13,19; 4:11; 26:53; Mk 1:13; Lk 22:43; 2 Macc 10:29-30; 11:8). Again, it is the angels who ‘evangelize’ by proclaiming the Good News of Christ’s Incarnation and Resurrection (cf. Lk 2:8-14; Mk 16:5-7). They will be present at Christ’s return (cf. Acts 1:10-11), which they will announce, to serve at his judgement (cf. Mt 13:41; 24:31; Lk 12:8-9)” (CCC 333).

From the beginning and to the end, from birth to death, indeed, from His Incarnation to His Ascension, when among men and when alone, when threatened by the enemy and when at peace at home. “Always and everywhere” are the heavenly servants with their Lord, on earth just as in heaven. “The angels surround Christ their Lord” (CCC 351).

However, the list of their activities can be divided in three parts:

1. Christ in His Divinity is adored and served and praised by the angels: “adoration and service, song of praise”;
2. Christ, by becoming like us in all things in the Incarnation, also accepted our natural weakness and so needed the angels’ protection, help and strength: “They protect Jesus in his infancy, serve him in the desert, strengthen him in his agony in the garden”. “In brief: They serve him especially in the accomplishment of his saving mission to men” (CCC 351).

And finally, they act as His messengers towards men, evangelizing, proclaiming the Good News and announcing His return. At His final coming they will be with Christ to serve at His judgment.

2. The Angels in the life of the Church

Between the Ascension and Christ’s second Coming, the angels are not on vacation. They are with their Lord, present in His Church. We read:

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“In the meantime, the whole life of the Church benefits from the mysterious and powerful help of angels (cf. Acts 5:18-20; 8:26-29; 10:3-8; 12:6-11; 27:23-25)” (CCC 334).

As they never left Jesus during His 33 years on earth, so they stay with Him in His Church till the end of time. And as they never took their “eyes” off Him, wherever He went and what ever He did, so the Church believes that “the whole life of the Church” lies under the watching and caring eyes of the angels, always ready to help where help is needed. Nothing is excluded! This is a great consolation for us priests, is it not? Given that our entire life is dedicated to the Kingdom of God, in all things we can count on the presence and help of the angels, whether it be administration and paperwork and in constructions; whether in the in preparation for a sermon, the administration of the sacraments; whether we pray privately or celebrate the holy Mass; whether we work or rest to recover our strength... their presence and help is assured. It is a mystery of faith, “mysterious”, and “powerful” for those who trust.

They are particularly present when we celebrate the Sacred Liturgy: “In her liturgy, the Church joins with the angels to adore the thrice-holy God” (CCC 335).

This is true for the entire liturgy, as the Fathers of the II Vatican Council stated:

“In the earthly liturgy we share in a foretaste of that heavenly liturgy which is celebrated in the Holy City of Jerusalem toward which we journey as pilgrims, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God, Minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle. With all the warriors of the heavenly army we sing a hymn of glory to the Lord” (SC 8; in CCC 1090).

And this truth obtains with still greater intensity in some particular moments and mysteries:

“The Church ... invokes their assistance (in the funeral liturgy’s *In Paradisum deducant te angeli...* [‘May the angels lead you into Paradise...’]). Moreover, in the ‘Cherubic Hymn’ of the Byzantine Liturgy, she celebrates the memory of certain angels more particularly (St. Michael, St. Gabriel, St. Raphael, and the guardian angels)” (CCC 335).

These cases of the angels’ presence in the Liturgy are just examples, which, in part, were taken out of the definitive and critical edition. This applies to the reference to the Roman Canon, the First Eucharistic Prayer, because the discussion still goes on, whether the angel mentioned there is one of the created spirits or whether it refers to Christ Himself. The other examples are taken, one from the Roman funeral liturgy, and one from the Byzantine Liturgy. They should stimulate a more intense awareness of the angelic help in liturgy and also generally in our “whole life” as it is said in the Summary: “The Church venerates the angels who help her on her earthly pilgrimage” (CCC 352).

3. The Angels in the personal life of the faithful

Thereafter the Catechism directs its attention to the angelic assistance in the lives of individual Christians. For God we are not indiscriminate numbers, but unique persons, each one with his proper dignity. This is especially underlined not by a footnote in some register in some officebook, but through the presence of a personal heavenly servant of God, placed in charge of this particular human person throughout its lifetime on earth. We read: