
“Could you not watch one hour with Me?”

This law is universal. We find it wherever we look:

To get a driver license we (1) study first, then (2) we have to submit ourselves to a test, and only then (3) get the license.

Married couples (1) first know each other, then (2) submit themselves to a deeper test in the engagement before (3) they enter into marriage;

In a similar fashion candidates to the religious life or to the priesthood must (1) first gain an initial knowledge of the goal, and (2) only after many trials and a growth in knowledge can they (3) attain their goal. The negative experiences of falls along the way even confirm the importance of this threefold process: initial light, growth by trial, achievement of the goal. As priests looking back to our seminary days, we may realize times where we lost our goal orientation for a time. In that period of darkness negligence or even falls did not help us grow towards the goal. We had to recall our first love and strive anew towards the goal with greater fidelity. In this way only can one achieve the desired goal.

There are no short cuts around fidelity in trials. Every other path leads not to the goal but to shipwreck.

4. Dear brothers in the Priesthood!

The journey of the “wise men”, the three holy Kings under the leadership of the angelic guidance tells us: The life with the holy angels does not exclude or dispense us from trials, but with the help of their light and strengthening, we have the assurance of achieving the goal, if only we are willed to persevere. The perfection of God’s servants are forged in the furnace of trials. However, the joy of the three holy Kings should encourage us to practice the virtues required on the way: faith and humility, childlike simplicity and confidence. Then the Lord will handle the rest as a good Father who loves His children more than they love Him.

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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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Association of Priests In Opus Angelorum®

The life with the angels (cf. Mt 2:1-12)

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Dear Brothers in the Priesthood!

It is natural to think that a life with the holy angels is an anticipation of heaven on earth. Are they not in heaven? Are they not much more powerful than we men? Can they not help us out in any need? Does not God even control their fallen brethren through them? We are right when we think so, but hereby we do not look at the conditions of our life and don't consider our natural needs! The way in which God led the “wise men from the East” to the crib of the newborn King of Israel through the angelic guidance of a star is a lesson for our spiritual life, “propter instructionem nostrum” comments St. Thomas Aq. (*In Mt*, ch. II, lect. 3). It can also serve us as an example of life with the holy angels.

1. The Call

The “wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, saying, ‘Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we have seen his star in the East, and have come to worship him’.” (Mt 2:1-2). The holy Kings saw “His star”. They understood this experience as a call from Him, the “King of the Jews”.

a) Attentiveness

When the Kings *sighted* this star, that certainly was a moving experience for them. But the mere physical sighting of a star does not explain their experience, unless we include their faith which interpreted its meaning in terms of a new born king. There is always a natural and supernatural element in all man’s perceptions. In this sense, it is most true that grace presupposes nature, and so all communication with God – this side of immediate contact and vision of GOD – involves natural phenomena, which by divine, providential intervention receive a supernatural quality making supernatural knowledge, contact and communion with GOD possible.

This is the first lesson God wants to grant us through the holy Kings: The wise men saw the physical star and saw “behind” it a spiritual message for them as persons. Therefore, let’s look deeper, seek the spiritual meaning or the divine intention in the events of life. Have always this prayer in mind: “Speak, Lord, for Thy servant is listening” (1 Sam 3:10), then reflect upon, discern the will of God and live the ordinary life in an extraordinary way.

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b) Obedience

The kings “have seen ... and *have come* to worship him”. They understood the meaning of the apparition of the star: there “has been born the king of the Jews”. They must have understood much more about the dignity of this king of the Jews, for they came to “worship” him, (in Greek: *proskynesai*). Only by their gifts and adoration may we discern how much they understood. It is reasonable to assume, though, that their understanding grew with their progress towards the Child. For example, they could not have been oblivious to the consternation that the message caused in Jerusalem among those who did not hope for a new divinely proclaimed king.

So we may draw a further lesson: We must often respond to and follow the call without fully understanding it. When we consider the adventure of the three, we may even say: The more worthwhile the object is, the more challenging it is, the greater the risk we have to take to achieve the goal. In terms of worldly wisdom, we can say, you get what you pay for! To follow the divine call is the greatest challenge; it seems the greatest of all risks; it includes the greatest promises. Cardinal Dolan recalled the observation of Bl. JohnPaul II: “If something is not worth dying for, it’s not worth living for.” (9th of Febr. 2012)

The greater we perceive the goodness of the goal to be, the more we are inclined to risk all, even when we do not know all the details. “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life” (Jn. 6:68). Other examples confirm this request in the life with the holy angels (cf. e.g. St. Joseph, Mt 2:13-15 and St Peter, Acts 12:7-9).

2. The star disappeared and appeared again

Such strict obedience is hard and requires real strength, discipline, fortitude, but it gives also a sense of security, for we know Him in whom we have placed our trust. It is discussed among the theologians, if the star just appeared in the East, or if it accompanied them on their journey: “it preceded them into Judea (although this is considered doubtful by some)” (St. Thomas Aq., *Summa Theol.*, III, 36, 7). But at least now, when the kings arrived in Jerusalem, the star disappeared. They were left without further indication as to what they should do.

a) Natural Insecurity and supernatural faith

The kings, who started out from afar and who had traveled a long time just following the guidance of that star, upon its disappearance must have thought, either to be already at the end of their journey or to be lost. They became more insecure, when they discovered, that no one in Jerusalem could give them an answer to their question, “Where is he who has been born king of the Jews?” The star disappeared, people did not know anything: Were we deceived? Did we misunderstand the message? What went wrong? Should we return? While they pondered their situation, did not make a quick decision, but kept still. Word reached King Herod. He “summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star appeared” (Mt 2:7).

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This very dramatic moment in this heavenly stimulated search is of a deep source of instruction.

First it gives us the lesson of human insecurity: we have to realize, the way to heaven leads much beyond human understanding, and no one can proceed except through real, sincere and firm **faith** in the guiding hands of God, convinced: “He does not loose control over my life!”

Or with Mother Gabriele’s word: “Whoever is sheltered in God and a captive of His loving power, cannot but fall from the one hand of God into the other!” (Maxim, Oct. 24)

Second, God requests **humility** in the sense that He wants to lead us on the way to heaven not just in extraordinary ways or through angels in visible appearance, but even through ordinary persons and events.

b) Exposed to higher forces

The way of the holy Kings contains still a third lesson which the circumstances reveal: King Herod could tell them the place where they can find this newborn king. He even “sent them to Bethlehem. Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him bring me word, that I too may come and worship him” (Mt 2:8). Of course, they were happy to have received this clear answer and started out again. Much more so were they happy, “when they saw the star” again, “they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy”. They did not know King Herod, but in the guidance through the star they had already confidence. They did not need to discover the false intention of Herod by themselves either, as God provided the necessary protection against the evil through His angels. He warned them “in a dream not to return to Herod” (Mt 2:12).

The third lesson, then, is this: In moments of darkness man should renew his faith in God, make an ever deeper act of hope and surrender himself confidently to God, who never abandons any of His children, although He may guide them in obscure and incomprehensible ways. Even if we stumble into the hands of the devil, the orientation we receive is this: “Run, run in all carefreeness towards God as if towards a splendid light; you should truly be a child. Recall: Against the simplicity of a child all infernal powers are powerless” (Maxim, July 26).

Childlike simplicity and confidence protected the three in the “devil’s kitchen”, and led them “into the house [where] they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh” (Mt 2:11).

3. The law of our way

Looking back to this dramatic journey of the wise men, we find therein the general law for spiritual life: God, who “first loved us” (1 Jn 4:19), (1) *illuminates* man with a call to a new future. In order to follow it, man needs to let go of the present and (2) be *purified* from the past. By doing so (3) he will come to the desired *goal* as did the kings who, finally, found the Child King.