
“Could you not watch one hour with Me?”

b) The “Work of the Holy Angels” as help for Priests

Jesus was tempted by Satan, but also served by the angels. We can see a parallel to it when we hear today of the “Confraternity of Priests of the Holy Cross in the ‘Opus Angelorum’ (as) a clerical, particular community of the Work of the Holy Angels under the terms of CIC, canons 278 and 302... joined to the Order of the Holy Cross in accordance with CIC, can. 677 § 2” (Statutes of the Confraternity, 2011, art. 1). This is stated even more clearly: “The OA views itself as a militant community together with the holy Angels under the protective mantle of MARY for the strengthening of the Holy Church, for the support of the priestly state and consecrated souls...” (art. 3). “The priestly members of the OA place their ministry in the local Church under the guidance and special protection of the holy Angels. With their help they strive for holiness in their state of life...” (Art. 5)

4. Dear Brothers in the Priesthood!

The enemy does not ask permission to tempt us; he makes full use of the liberty foreseen by Divine Providence. That same divine wisdom provides us with the very sufficient help of the angels; we are expected to avail ourselves of the angels’ assistance by calling on them and collaborating with them. Did not the Pope do so himself in that “Angelus” discourse:

“Let us invoke them [the holy angels] frequently, so that they may sustain us in our commitment to follow Jesus to the point of identifying with him. Let us ask them, especially today, to watch over me and my collaborators in the Roman Curia ...; Mary, Queen of Angels, pray for us!” (Benedict XVI, *ibid.*)

Fr. Titus Kieninger ORC

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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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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®**

Jesus with Satan and the angels (cf. Mt 4:1-11)

Vol. XVIII, July 2012

Dear Brothers in the Priesthood!

In the letter to the Hebrews we read: “We have not a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sinning” (Heb 4:15). This High Priest, of course, is our Lord Jesus Christ. We know from the holy Gospels, that after the solemn beginning of His public mission at the Jordan, “Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil... and angels came and ministered to him” (Mt 4:1.11)

1. A high priest - tested in every respect

It is evidently the Will of GOD that Jesus was confronted with the tempter. It’s part of His redemptive priestly mission.

a) Christ’s universal mission

He finds Himself alone out in the desert, between light and darkness, between the holy angels and fallen spirits (cf. Gen 1:2.4-5) albeit St. Matthew mentions the service of the Holy Angels posterior to the temptations by the devil (cf. Mt. 4,11; in the temptations themselves, we can see a certain parallel to the temptation of man in paradise, cf. Gen 3:1.15 and 24). St. Mark, though, underscores the lengthy duration of the trial: “And he was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered to him.” (Mk 1:13)

b) The expiatory dimension

The devil’s intention behind the different temptations is “to be like God”. He starts each attempt with the phrase: “If you are the Son of God...”. Then he approaches in three different ways: through bread, power and distorted cult (Mt 4:3.6.9).

The Catechism comments: “These attacks ... recapitulate the temptations of Adam in Paradise” (CCC 538). There, Adam and Eve were deceived by the lie: “The tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise” (Gen 3:6).

Jesus also wanted to make reparation for the sins and infidelity “of Israel in the desert” (CCC 538) through the stay of 40 days, each day for one year. As

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Egypt is considered the dwelling-place of the devils (cf. Tb 8:3) and the Promised Land a symbol of the heavenly communion with God, so the march through the desert for 40 years is symbol for man’s earthly life. Into this story Jesus entered when he was led by the Holy Spirit into the desert and to the confrontation with the devil.

“Jesus has to enter into the drama of human existence, for that belongs to the core of his mission; he has to penetrate it completely, down to its uttermost depths, in order to find the ‘lost sheep,’ to bear it on his shoulders, and to bring it home.” (Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth*, ch. 2, pg. 26).

e) Christ’s victory over the tempter of mankind

Therefore, there is a “salvific meaning of this mysterious event” (CCC 539). At the beginning of His public life, Jesus expresses the real intention of His mission: to take up the spiritual battle with the devil and defeat him. And he did.

“Jesus is the new Adam who remained faithful, where the first Adam had given in to temptation.

Jesus fulfills Israel's vocation perfectly, in contrast to those who had once provoked God during the forty years in the desert, Christ reveals himself as God's Servant, totally obedient to the divine will. In this, Jesus is the devil's conqueror: he ‘binds the strong man’ to take back his plunder. (cf. Ps 95:10; Mk 3:27) Jesus' victory over the tempter in the desert anticipates victory at the Passion, the supreme act of obedience of his filial love for the Father.” (CCC 539)

In this, Christ called us to share in His mission and to perpetuate it throughout the ages, till He comes again (cf. Jn 21:22).

2. The participation in the one priesthood of Christ

We know very well, dear Brother priests, that we are not social workers, nor entertainers of an assembly. We are bound with Christ’s mission, to the Word and to the Cross, which is the bridge between the Creator and the creatures. Moreover, we should also see our spiritual trials and temptation in this light of our priestly mission and draw strength from Christ’s example and victory.

As Christ’s ministers we have to fight the demonic foe as Christ, our master did: “Go... cast out demons” (Mt 10:5.8). Jesus did not hide this, “behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. Beware of men; for they will deliver you up to councils...” (Mt 10:17). He told Peter very frankly: "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you” (Luke 22:31-32).

St. Paul received the same lesson so that he foretold “imprisonment and afflictions” for himself (Acts 20:23) and “fierce wolves” for “the elders of the church” in Ephesus and their community. They should be alert: “Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overse-

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ers, to care for the church of God which he obtained with the blood of his own Son (Acts 20:28-31).

The confrontation with the tempter belongs to the shepherd’s care of the sheep (cf. “*Pasce agnos meos - Tend my sheep*”, Jn 21:16). The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep! (cf. Jn 10:11). Of course, the priest should not go around looking for trouble (temptations and trial): at the same time, he should know, that if he is a faithful minister, they are part of his mission. Only the hireling flees the spiritual battle, when the good of the flock is at stake. For example, one of the ‘extra burdens’ for a confessor can be expiatorially bearing the temptations of his penitents, so that strengthened by his collaboration in the battle, they may victoriously rise above their habitual sins.

3. “angels came and ministered to him”

The disciples came back from their first mission saying: “Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!” (Lk 10:17) Jesus confirmed: “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven”, because “I have given you authority to tread upon serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing shall hurt you.” However, he pointed out clearly to them, “(do) not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you; but rejoice that your names are written in heaven” (Lk 10:18-20).

a) “The antithesis of Satan”

That nothing should hurt them reminds us of Psalm 91:11-13:

“He will give his angels charge of you to guard you in all your ways. On their hands they will bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone.

You will tread on the lion and the adder, the young lion and the serpent you will trample under foot.”

In the desert of this world, priests should not trust in their own power; they are still poor sons of Adam and bear the treasure of the priesthood “in earthen vessels” (2 Cor 4:7). But yes, they are protected by God and His heavenly servants, the holy angels. Pope Benedict made significant observations on this Gospel at the Prayer of the “Angelus” on the first Sunday of Lent:

“... In the succinct account, angels, luminous and mysterious figures, the Gospel were we to leave out these beings sent by God, who announce and are a sign of his presence among us.” (March 1, 2009). appear almost fleetingly before this dark, tenebrous figure who dares to tempt the Lord. Angels, the Gospel says, ‘ministered’ to Jesus (Mk 1:13); they are the antithesis of Satan. ‘Angel’ means ‘messenger’. Throughout the Old Testament we find these figures who help and guide human beings on God’s behalf. ... we would be removing an important part of the Gospel were we to leave out these beings sent by God, who announce and are a sign of his presence among us.” (March 1, 2009).

Consequently, we would also leave out an important part of our life when we would not ask them to be a part of it.