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## “Could you not watch one hour with Me?”

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you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you” (Mt 7:7-8). Jesus even sees the possibility and, so requests: “You must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.” (Mt 5:48)

Being aware of what can take place in human life, we should direct souls mainly to God Who is the final goal, the beginning and end. “As long as you do not divert your face away from the Face of GOD, no devil will ever be able to harm you.” (Gabriele Bitterlich, *Maxim*, n. 218) The souls we direct will understand: Just as night ends with the rising of the sun, even so the influence of the enemy diminishes with the growing presence of God! Of course, since God is omnipresent, we are referring to the growing moral awareness of God’s presence in our lives. They may seek God initially out of fear, then however, they will discover the logic of love: The more we know God’s love and goodness, the less the devil can attract us with the pale beauty of the creatures, for “where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” (Mt 6:21). Consequently, after awakening in the soul the prudent vigilance, we have to lead them to “an increasing knowledge of God and love for God,” which is the main “purpose and goal” of the Work of the Holy Angels. And this goal we will achieve better through an “intimate collaboration with the holy Angels” (*Statutes of OA*, art. 4).

#### 4. Dear Brothers in the Priesthood!

How many questions and problems are daily brought to our attention. People expect solutions from us. Often we feel helpless. Maybe we should familiarize ourselves more with this perspective of Jesus: let’s widen our vision and see the hidden and related causes that surround the facts presented brought to our attention. Let’s consider the universal call to adore God, the purpose of man’s life – “You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.” (Mt 4:10) on the one side, – and the destructive intent of the hellish foe on the other side. Yes, many things and even apparently insignificant things can contribute to help people progress along the way towards the goal. Here is needed the discernment of prudence, the queen of all the moral virtues...

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## Association of Priests In Opus Angelorum®

The wide and narrow Gate (cf. Mt 7:13-14)

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#### Dear Brothers in the Priesthood!

Probably, not so much you the reader as I, the writer of these reflections, was surprised by the transition of focus we are observing in these meditations on the angels in the New Testament. The texts in the Old Testament, at least in the majority of the cases, lead us to understand something about the angels or their fallen brothers, the demons. Now in the gospels, we find the angels so strongly related to Christ that He seems to be our main focus although we meditate about His spiritual servants. It seems just as the *Catechism* says: “Christ is the center of the angelic world. They are his angels...” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 331).

This leads us more consciously from what they are to what they do. We can expect to be introduced and to see their role in the new economy.

#### 1. The perspective of Jesus

At the beginning of Jesus’ public life, He placed Himself in the line of men at the Jordan waiting to be baptized. There He was manifested as the Beloved Son of the Father with the Holy Spirit. This we read in chapter three of the holy gospel of St. Matthew. From the Jordan He went out into the desert, driven by the Holy Spirit. There He encountered the devil, the first enemy of God, the tempter of all times and main cause behind sin, which has led to our need of redemption.

#### a) Jesus pastoral activity

Then Jesus goes out to meet men. “Jesus began to preach, saying, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand’” (Mt 4:17). With this He announces the purpose of His coming.

Then, St. Matthew counts these steps: He *called* the apostles, and “immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed him” (Mt 4:22). “He went ... *preaching* the gospel of the kingdom and ... they brought him all the sick, those afflicted with various diseases and pains, *demoniacs*, epileptics, and paralytics, and he *healed* them.” (Mt 4:23-24) Jesus restored harmony in creation and showed that he has control over the devils.

This is the “world” in which we see Jesus. This is the environment in which

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Jesus lives and thinks: Heaven and hell, God and the devil, and man in the middle, as the one around whom the battle is being fought.

### **b) Jesus awareness**

Jesus concentrates on man, but does so in a way that shows that we cannot understand man perfectly if we fail to consider the world around him and those “behind” him: “By our first parents’ sin, the devil has acquired certain domination over man, even though man remains free.” (CCC 407) Jesus learned as man about the tempter in the desert, but He also knows as God or with the omniscience of His Divine nature about the fallen angels. He knows that they hate everything, God and themselves and every creature because they lost God (cf. CCC 395). Throughout human history they have tried especially to separate every human person from achieving true joy and fulfillment, which is only found in God. Whenever Jesus is confronted with evil spirits, He exercises His control over them; he does not permit them to speak. Many a time he simply commands that they leave immediately. They were there, but He took charge of them with Divine sovereignty. His pastoral care treats the root problems, like a physician who eliminates the virus so that the body may find peace.

## **2. The two options for man**

Jesus does not hide His view of reality like a secret knowledge which is to be shared only with some “privileged people”.

### **a) Your Father’s sun rises on the evil and on the good**

What the first steps of Jesus in the public show: He made it explicit in the Sermon on the Mountain: “He went up on the mountain, ... sat down ... opened his mouth and taught them.” (Mt 5:1) God is looking out for you: “Your Father who is in heaven; ... He makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.” (Mt 5:45) Why did Jesus distinguish between evil and good, just and unjust? In His eyes exists the real possibility, that one or the other may not get to heaven and so be from God for all eternity. As “the true Light that enlightens every man was coming into the world” (Jn 1:9), He explains to all, that every one is called to make the free decision all by himself, and this includes the dangers and risks to fail before God: “God created us without us: but he did not will to save us without us.” (St. Augustine, in: CCC 1847).

### **b) Man between heaven and hell – his “freedom put to test” (CCC 396)**

As Jesus found Himself approached by the tempter in the desert, so all men have to reckon with the approach of the fallen angels: “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves” (Mt 7:15). The first “man, tempted by the devil, let his trust in his Creator die in his heart and abusing his freedom disobeyed God’s command.” (CCC 397) To underline the seriousness of man’s situation Jesus taught: “No one can serve two

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masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.” (Mt 6:24) To use well the “freedom put to test” (CCC 396) is all the more difficult, as the model (like e.g. the Saints) in whom one can place one’s trust and follow are “few”, “for the gate is *wide* and the way is *easy*, that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are *many*,” and, on the contrary, “the gate is *narrow* and the way is *hard*, that leads to life, and those who find it are *few*.” (Mt 7:13-14) There exists the serious possibility that one “will never enter the kingdom of heaven,” (Mt 5:20), and “shall be liable to the *hell of fire*,” (Mt 5:22; cf. 5:29-30) or that Jesus might have to say at the hour of judgment: “I never knew you; depart from Me, you evildoers.” (Mt 7:23)

### **3. As Christ in the desert: Watch and Pray!**

What is then our priestly task in this situation towards the faithful (and, of course, towards ourselves as well)? We have the duty to tell the souls entrusted to us (and also to our selves) with the clarity of Jesus: “Watch and pray!” (Mt 26:41).

#### **a) Watch!**

We need to begin with the conviction of faith, that life in this world is a decisive trial and test! Everybody is in route, and it will end either in heaven or hell. On this journey we are surrounded by good angels and tempted by the fallen ones, we have to teach the people the need of vigilance, the need of discernment, “Beware of false prophets”! They have to be taught, what is virtue and what is vice, and that the decision with its consequences is theirs. “Let what you say be simply ‘Yes’ or ‘No’; anything more than this comes from evil.” (Mt 5:37)

However, it would be an extreme position and a wrong idea to think, “that the world is subject ... to an incessant battle between ... Angels and demons, in which man is left at the mercy of superior forces and over which he is helpless”! The Church says that such a view has “little relation to the true Gospel vision of the struggle to overcome the Devil,” for the Word of God requires from man “moral commitment, a fundamental option for the Gospel, humility and prayer!” And to “ascribe all setbacks to the Devil and all success to the Guardian Angels,” would have “nothing or little to do with our progressive maturing on the journey towards Christ” (Congregation for Divine Worship, *Directory on popular Piety and the Liturgy*, n. 217).

#### **b) “Pray” and “Seek first His kingdom”**

In this same sermon, Jesus also invites his disciples to have great confidence: “I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, ... o men of little faith;” (Mt 6:25,30) “seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well.” (Mt 6:33) “Your Father who is in heaven ... knows what you need before you ask Him” (Mt 5:45; 6:8), “ask and it will be given you; seek, and