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“Could you not watch one hour with Me?”

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their decision against God. In their anger over themselves, they do not turn towards God in humility and repentance. Rather they now also direct their hatred against themselves, intensely wishing, if it were possible, not to exist. They would that they could extinguish themselves, as “in those days men will seek death and will not find it; they will long to die, and death will fly from them” (Ap 9:6). Therefore, they live forever with this inextinguishable hatred of themselves and of God for having proposed a way of salvation which they are forever resolved to loath.

**b) What an eternity**

Hell is everlasting – since the condemned (angels and men) never repent, their suffering never ends. In one sense, the pain of hell is infinite if we consider in terms of what the damned have lost: an everlasting share in the infinite Goodness of God. Their suffering is therefore, most intense and exhausting because this truth utterly fills their mind and the very capacity of their will.

The damned have no peace, no rest, no joy, no hope for a change. There is no room for any exceptions, not even by resignation or acceptance, rather they ‘live’ in constant and total rebellion against God and hatred of themselves.

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

Before the vastness of eternity, our earthly life dwindles practically to nothingness. At the same time it gains the greatest spiritual importance in this light: in the brief “second” of our life here on earth we decide our everlasting destiny for the next life, which will never end. How much value should we give each minute and how seriously should we ponder how we want to use it! The choices are love or hate, goodness or evil, a blessing or a curse,...

And even more concretely just one mortal sin: “God predestines no one to go to hell; for this, a willful turning away from God (a mortal sin) is necessary, and persistence in it until the end.” (CCC 1037) Let us profit now while the time of grace is still offered; let us open ourselves for grace, for moments of silence and pay heed to corrections by others!

Fr. Titus Kieninger, ORC

Mark your calendar for the retreat in Holly, MI: Nov 10-14, 2014

ASSOCIATION OF PRIESTS

IN THE WORK OF THE HOLY ANGELS®

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CHRIST’S PRIESTS UNITED WITH THE HOLY ANGELS IN THE CHURCH

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“Could you not watch one hour with Me?”

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Association of Priests  
In Opus Angelorum®

“...eternal fire prepared for the devil” (Mt 25:41, 2)

Vol. XX, March 2014

**Dear Brothers in the Priesthood!**

In the description of the last judgment which we consider here once more, Jesus mentioned eternity three times. He spoke first about “the *eternal* fire prepared for the devil and his angels” (Mt 25:41), then about the destiny of men, which is either the “*eternal* punishment”, namely of those who did not love and serve Him in their neighbors, or the “*eternal* life”, namely of the righteous (Mt 25:46). The life we are moving towards is thus in any case “eternal”. It can be a life with God in glory in union with the angels and saints or a life without God together with the devils’ and his angels’ suffering. We quoted in the last letter St. John Chrysostom who said: “Let us not shun sermons on hell, so that we may escape hell.” Due to the uniqueness of this earthly life (cf. Hb 9:27) and its irreversible consequences, let us reflect once more about this future and thus become more aware of the seriousness of our existence and this passing life.

**1. The meaning of “eternal”**

Let us first clarify the term here used speaking of the “eternal life” as we know it only through some shadows.

**a) Three different types of being**

To understand “eternity” we may recall the three different types of beings:

We see around us beings which enter into existence and leave it again. If they have life, then we call it “mortal”. – These are all beings with an essence lower than that of man, and even we belong to them according to our body and physical life, which moves towards death.

Then there are those beings which enter into existence, but never exit it as it is the case of the pure spirits; we call them immortal, and thus being without end or “eternal”. – We find this life already in the human soul, and more so with the pure spirits.

And, of course, there is the One Being, God, who never entered into existence and never will leave it, but always is and was and will be. He exists ever, always, eternally. He is without beginning and without end. One example from many in Sacred Scripture refers to this aspect:

“LORD, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations. Before ... thou hadst formed the earth..., from everlasting to everlasting thou art

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God. ... For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, or as a watch in the night. Thou dost sweep men away; they are like a dream, like grass which is renewed in the morning; in the morning it flourishes and is renewed; in the evening it fades and withers.” (Ps 90:1-6)

### **b) Eternal fire, punishment and life**

The very fact of a Last Judgment indicates that all rational creatures (angels and men) are both subordinate to God and will be called to a reckoning. Their everlasting destiny depends upon their own free choice, whether they chose to cooperate with God’s grace or to obey his law or not. Upon their individual choice depends their destiny, whether in happiness with God or in painful damnation. Their “eternity” is marked by their freely chosen relationships. In their test or, in the case of us men, during life on earth, they chose with whom they want to live eternally. There are the essential spiritual realities of eternal life and eternal damnation, wherein the unceasing continuation in that state is also articulated. In eternal life, day after day, there will be no fluctuation, no increase, no decrease. For good and bad it is a constant, perpetual state of relative fullness, that is to say each will have the fullness of happiness or pain of which they are capable, “eternal fire and punishment”, or “eternal life”.

### **2. “... the eternal fire prepared for the devil”**

All spiritual creatures are related to God, both as their creator, as well as their goal; due to their spiritual nature they are immediately ordered to him, whereas every non spiritual faculty has its natural object somewhere within creation.

#### **a) The lasting character of the angels’ decisions**

The fallen angels rejected God’s entire “plan” of salvation in a most radical, all embracing fashion. In virtue of the totality of this choice and their sheer lucidity (they knew exactly what they were choosing and all the consequences) the angels’ choice was naturally irrevocable. There is no argument that was not considered. Given his pure immortality, there is also no place for fear affecting or modifying the angels’ choices. Therefore any disagreement with God turns pure spirits away from the infinite God and his economy of salvation.

In the case of man – during this life – there is always some aspect of an argument, which he failed to consider, while making a choice. This area of ignorance leaves space open for a revision of one point of view and choice. The parable of the Prodigal Son illustrates this well: “But when he came to himself he said, ‘How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough ...! I will arise and go to my father...’ ... His father saw him and had compassion, and ran and embraced him” (Lk 15:17-18,20).

This does not happen with pure spirits. The simplicity of their spiritual nature, the clearness of their intellect and the fullness of freedom with which they decide and oppose themselves to God do not allow them to repent and revise their first choice. Their decisions are permanent, irrevocable (cf. CCC 392).

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### **b) The pain about the loss**

At Judgment each will receive what they have earned. Both the good and the bad, reward and punishment are everlasting.

A while back, I visited a physician. At the end of the visit he led me to a wall which was full of diplomas, certificates and recognitions. You could see how much joy they gave him, independent of the dates. A similar lasting experience, although a negative one, was shared with me by a friend. He had written out the numbers for the next drawing of the lottery; in the last minute he changed one number as they then would reflect his birthday. The result was: If he would not have changed this one number in the last minute, he would have gained the great price of 15 Million dollars. He could almost not forgive himself for having set such value on his birthday: It did not add nor take away anything of himself or his fame, but how such a jackpot would have meant! The more he thought of the possibilities which such an amount of money would have given him, the more he was upset with himself for having changed his original number. Thereafter he never wanted to hear about the Lottery any more, and yet he could not forget that window of opportunity which he himself had closed!

### **3. The hate of self as the never consuming fire in hell**

#### **a) Not you, o God, but we are guilty!**

The foregoing true anecdote gives us an idea about the angels’ state in hell:

They freely turned their back on God’s plan, a divine lottery ticket for every lasting happiness, if you will. They separated themselves from the infinitely loving Father, the Creator and owner of everything. He is the fullness of all that exists, of all that is good. In His love he is willing and even eager to share everything with every one, just as the father in the parable said to his elder son: “Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours” (Lk 15:31).

The ‘privative’ cause of the pain in hell is God’s goodness, a share in which they lost (cf. Benedict XVI, *Spe salvi*, 47). The active cause of their pain is their own will. And the more they know God, the greater is their pain over the loss, the “deeper” is their hell. They recognize clearly that they have no one to blame except themselves since they alone decided and insisted on their option. The horror of it is, that even in their despairing bitterness they do not want to repent or change anything.

The example of Judas Iscariot may help us understand them. When he saw what his betrayal of Jesus caused, he regretted it in a way, went back to the Jewish authorities, and threw their money at their feet. He recognized what he himself did, but he did not repent. Jesus had offered him His friendship even at the moment of the betrayal (cf. Mt 26:50)! But, being absorbed in himself and his fault, he did not wish to return to Jesus and ask for mercy, rather he went away and killed himself (cf. Mt 27:5). His despair points in the direction of the hateful spite and despair of the rebellious angels in their inflexible adherence to