
“Could you not watch one hour with Me?”

body). Saint Paul recalls this love, when He speaks of “the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me” (Gal 2:20). Jesus taught the apostles love by words, and still more by His example, especially when He made Himself their servant, washing their feet (cf. Jn 13:4-15). He expected them to follow Him in His love, - “A servant is not greater than his master” (Jn 13:16). Therefore, He invited them to watch and pray with Him (cf. Mt 26:38) and share in His death-agony. But Peter failed with the others, as they had not yet received the Holy Spirit ...

b) A hidden desire of the Angels

The Son of God became man for man’s salvation. This was foretold throughout the entire Old Testament where His coming was also prefigured by Abel, by the paschal Lamb and by the Servant of God (Gen 4; Ex 12; Is 53) etc. That is the reason, why Jesus said to Peter: “How then should the scriptures be fulfilled?”

The holy angels in their love are attentive for any order as the supreme law of their love for God. The Saints interpret for us the angels’ love for the glory and honor of God and their deep union with Him. The Little Flower, for example, has the Angel of the Divine Countenance exclaim to the Christ Child in one of her plays: “Alas, Why am I an angel, Incapable of suffering?... / Jesus, by a sweet exchange, I would like to die for You!” (The Plays of Saint Thérèse of Lisieux, [The angels at the Crib of Jesus] Washington, DC 2008, p. 116; cf. p. 130; St. Faustina, Diary, # 1804 and 116).

4. Dear Brothers in the Priesthood!

God’s thoughts are not ours. He is greater than our understanding. Love transcends justice. Out of love, Jesus justified us before the Father, His love is strong as death (cf. Cant 8:6). It is in this love that angels and men meet in Christ; it is the cross that “fashioned men into Angels” (St. John Chrysostom, Hom. 54 on Mt 16; cf. CCC 336). Let us ask them to lead us towards Christ Crucified.

Fr. Titus Kieninger ORC

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

ASSOCIATION OF PRIESTS
IN THE WORK OF THE HOLY ANGELS®

13800 Gratiot Ave. Detroit, MI 48205 USA www.opusangelorum.org
Tel (313) 527-1739 Fax (313) 527-1729 frtitus@opusangelorum.org

Rector: Fr. Ludwig M. Oppl, ORC ©2014 Order of the Holy Cross

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®

More than twelve legions of angels?” (Mt 26:53)

Vol. XX, April 2014

“Dear Brothers in the Priesthood!

St. Matthew leads us after the explanation of the Last Judgment into the last days of Jesus’ life on earth. He starts with these words: “When Jesus had finished all these sayings, he said to his disciples, ‘You know that after two days the Passover is coming, and the Son of man will be delivered up to be crucified.’” (Mt 26:1-2) In short, we can say He was going to practice in a singular way what He said to everyone in a common way: He will feed the hungry with the Eucharistic Bread of His Body, visit the prisoners of vices and sins and welcome the strangers from all over the world into His kingdom. This is the key to understand Jesus’ answer to Peter in the Garden. When Judas betrayed Jesus, Peter drew the sword in defense, but Jesus held him back and said: “Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then should the scriptures be fulfilled, that it must be so?” (Mt 26:53-54).

1. I will not call for the angels’ help

It is not the will of the Father in Heaven that Jesus asks for *this* help of the angels, nor is it the Will of the Son. He became man “to give his life as a ransom for many” (Mt 20:28).

a) What happened?

Every Thursday, when we recall the institution of the holy Priesthood and the Eucharistic presence of Jesus, we are also invited to follow Jesus into the Garden of Gethsemane, “watch and pray with Me.” There pass before us, again and again, the dramatic scenes ... including the betrayal of Judas and the reaction of Peter. Peter, always ahead of all, wanted to fight. Jesus reacted firmly and decisively: “Put your sword back into its place; for all who take the sword will perish by the sword” (26, 52). Then, however, with an astonishing calm, He takes His time for the other lesson; He wanted to make it clear to him, that He could find much better help in twelve legions of angels, but how would His mission be fulfilled?

b) An apparent exclusion of the angels

We believe that “From the Incarnation to the Ascension, the life of the Word incarnate is surrounded by the adoration and service of angels” (*Catechism*, # 333). We can be sure that all the holy angels were anxious to accompany their

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

“Could you not watch one hour with Me?”

Lord in His life on earth. Had they not promised Him their faithful adherence in their trial? Why then were they not called in this critical moment?

Before we try to answer this question, let us recall how this same question in a different form has already arisen on other occasions.

- We already noted their mysterious passivity in Paradise: It seems that a free hand was given to the fallen angels, as no good angel is mentioned who could have alerted, instructed and exhorted the innocent parents towards obedience to God; only afterwards - what a horror! -, only afterwards they appear to mark the consequences of sin (cf. Gen 3:23-24; Circular II,2; 1996).

- Similarly we were astonished that “Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil,” and that only “then”, that is when “the devil left him, and behold, angels came and ministered to him” (Mt 4:1 and 11; cf. Circ. XVIII,7; 2012).

- In Gethsemane it is Jesus Himself who confesses that He could ask for even twelve legions of Angels, “but how then should the scriptures be fulfilled, that it must be so?” (v. 54) – There are two ways to approach the understanding that here the holy Angels are not actively present in this moment of the life of Jesus: one is the mystery of union in love; the other is the expiatory love of the Son of God.

2. The supreme law is the mystery of love

a) The mystery of love of God

We can look at the mystery of love from very different angles. With respect to creaturely happiness we can think of three causes of happiness.

There exists a happiness that accompanies the proper use of the fitting means, which correspond both to one’s nature and the final goal. Hence, a glass of fresh water can make a thirsty man happy; and faithful spouses can make one another happy in marriage. Each of this is a temporal, limited happiness.

Eternal union with God, then, is the ultimate and definitive fullness of man’s every wish. The eternal bliss of the beatific vision of the infinite Beauty, Goodness and Truth of God exceed every created expectation.

Alongside these two kinds of happiness, we can distinguish another formality of happiness which is proper to personal love. Love tends towards union with the beloved good. Initially the concern is for one’s own enrichment. As this love matures, however, one desires more and more the well-being of the Beloved. This is a perfection of love which reflects the perfection of Divine Love and is concerned to contribute to the *other* person’s happiness. Jesus declared: “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35). Moreover, if we do not love God in this fashion, we will never see His Face.

Such selfless love of God is the trademark of the angels in Glory.

b) Love wants the same thing

We may recall here the lesson Benedict XVI gave the Church on love, although referring mainly to man’s love of God:

“Could you not watch one hour with Me?”

“Acknowledgment of the living God is one path towards love, and the “yes” of our will to his will unites our intellect, will and sentiments in the all-embracing act of love. ... *Idem velle atque idem nolle* (Sallust)—to want the same thing, and to reject the same thing—was recognized by antiquity as the authentic content of love: the one becomes similar to the other, and this leads to a community of will and thought. ... God's will is no longer for me an alien will, something imposed on me from without by the commandments, but it is now my own will ...” (Benedict XVI, *Deus caritas est*, 17).

The holy Angels in the glory of heaven do not care for anything more than this one thing: that God’s holy Will be done, and herewith they are like Jesus and Mary (cf. Mt 26:39.42.44; Lk 1:38). On the level of this perfect love of God, one does not care in the first place *what* the beloved wants; one does not pay attention how *easy or difficult* it is, if it is *important or insignificant* what the beloved needs or wishes. Love does not look *where* the Beloved wants one to go or *when* it shall be, *with whom* one needs to deal or if there is nothing at all to be done. What *alone matters* is the union with the beloved, in our case even with the Beloved God who allows His creatures to be united with Him. To turn one’s attention to anything else would mean to turn one’s blissful look away from God and lose out, as St. Peter experienced, when trying to walk upon the water (cf. Mt 14:30).

c) St. Michael’s choice

St. Michael showed this highest love in the test of the Angels: he pointed to God’s grandeur, and not to any thing further: Who is like GOD! As if to say: Who can give Him a counsel (Job 38-42; Rom 11:34)? Does He not know much better than any of His creatures what is good and best for all? And with this indication, he abstained from any further reflection and opted for the total surrender and adoration of God in His Infinity.

3. The Mystery of God’s Will

It is evident that at this moment in Gethsemane which we are considering, we meet the will of Jesus surrendering to the Father’s Will for the sake of sinful mankind: To redeem men He needed to offer Himself to the Father in expiation and out of love. Jesus willed that the holy angels not intervene which was a mystery for the angels. But through their union with His Will in love they find their full satisfaction in being where their Beloved is (cf. Jn 12:26).

a) The Will of GOD

Jesus tried to explain His will and love to the apostles while He was with them, the love of the Father who “makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good ...” (Mt 5:45), and His own love for each lost sheep, which having been found, caused Him greater joy “than over the ninety-nine that never went astray” (Mt 18:13), for He “came not to call the righteous, but sinners” (Mt 9:13). Jesus taught the apostles God’s love for the poor and needy (in soul more than in