
“Could you not watch one hour with Me?”

the faithful are not to venerate any other spirit by name except the three revealed in Scripture. When again, in the 15th century, an image of Our Lady appeared in Rome with names of other angels than the three biblical ones, order was given to take them off (cf. Benedict XIV, *Doctrine of Beatification*, Bk IV, p. II, ch. 30 “On the Angels and their cult”). In this latter document no distinction is made concerning how the names had come to be known. In our days, the Church continues to apply this discipline prudently and says concretely:

“The practice of assigning names to the Holy Angels should be discouraged, except in the cases of Gabriel, Raphael and Michael whose names are contained in Holy Scripture.” (Congregation of Divine Worship, *Directorium on popular piety and the liturgy*, 2001, # 217)

d) Calling upon them according to their task

It is generally accepted, that God in His desire to honor the rational creatures through their participation in His government of the other creatures entrusted all material world to the holy Angels (cf. St. Thomas Aq., *Summa Theol.*, p. I, q. 110, a. 1) and that also “the whole life of the Church benefits from the mysterious and powerful help of angels” (CCC 334). Therefore, and according to biblical suggestions, there is no hindrance to call upon the angels’ help according to their tasks and man’s needs; one can ask help from “the Angel who heals,” which probably would be St. Raphael, or from “the angel who gives strength” who strengthened Jesus in Gethsemane (cf. Lk 22:43; J. Danielou found in the Fathers of the Church the “Angel of peace,” “Angel of penance,” “Angel of prayer,” in: *The Angels and their Mission*, 76ff.).

4. Dear Brothers in the Priesthood!

In the *Catechism* we can read: “The Church venerates the angels who help her on her earthly pilgrimage and protect every human being” (CCC 352). We can and should make the souls entrusted to us aware of the presence of the holy angels, our powerful, heavenly helpers. But let us also instruct them in the right way to turn to these spiritual friends and brothers so that they benefit from them and have peace.

Fr. Titus Kieninger ORC

Obs.: Would you like to register for the retreat in Holly, MI: November 9th to 13th, 2015?

ASSOCIATION OF PRIESTS IN OPUS ANGELORUM®

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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®

The *name* of the angel was Gabriel (cf. Lk 1:26)

XXI, July/Aug. 2015

Dear Brothers in the Priesthood!

In this most significant message from heaven, the annunciation of the Incarnation, God lets us know expressly that it was transmitted by an Angel, still more concretely by Gabriel.

We still meet people who bring up some questions like these: Can some one tell us the name of an angel? Can we know the name of our Guardian Angel? Can we ourselves ask our Guardian Angel to reveal his name to us? Or, at least, can we give our Guardian Angel a name ourselves?

Let us use this opportunity of the first chapter of St. Luke’s gospel to reflect about these questions.

1. What are the Angels?

The Church teaches clearly that the angels are good creatures, “ministering spirits, sent to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation” (Heb 1:14).

a) The angels are pure spirits

The angels, of course, were created in the image and likeness of God. “As purely spiritual creatures angels have intelligence and will: they are personal and immortal creatures, surpassing in perfection all visible creatures, as the splendour of their glory bears witness.” (CCC 330) Therefore, being naturally more perfect than man, and having already achieved their supernatural perfection in glory, they reveal in a more perfect way the divine perfections.

Since Christ has promised to give the faithful upon their entrance into heaven, a “new name” known to themselves and God alone (Ap 2:17), which “signifies the Christian’s spiritual rebirth” according to the comment of the Jerusalem Bible. We may reasonably conclude that the angels’ supernatural perfection in glory affects them so deeply that this can also be expressed with getting a “new name”.

b) Among themselves rather seen than described

This, however, does not refer to what corresponds to the “name” we use among men in our human language. In the course of salvation history – on the level of Sacred Scripture – God has deigned to identify three angels by name, St. Michael, St. Gabriel and St. Raphael. These three names, however, as St. Gregory points out do not so much identify the angels in their individual personalities, but rather “denote the service they are empowered to perform”, their ministry in be-

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half of men: “You should be aware that the word ‘angel’ denotes a function rather than a nature. Those holy spirits of heaven have indeed always been spirits. They can only be called angels when they deliver some message.” (Hom. 34; in *Liturgy of the Hours*, Office of Readings on September 29, 2nd reading). And the Church too tells us today: “Angel” is a generic description of an office, namely the task of transmitting messages or executing some tasks. “St. Augustine says: ‘Angel’ is the name of their office, not of their nature. If you seek the name of their nature, it is ‘spirit’” (CCC 329).

Therefore, affirms St. Gregory, “in that holy city, where perfect knowledge flows from the vision of almighty God, those who have no names may easily be known” (Hom. 34): God sees them in their essence and they “see” each other directly and therefore do not need names for that these “descriptive images” that words or names are and which we men need for communication of spiritual realities.

2. The names according their offices

The Catechism continues in the same paragraph: “With their whole beings the angels are servants and messengers of God” (CCC 329). Etymologically, in the OT the term angel simply meant a ‘messenger’ or a ‘legate’. By the time of the NT the word ‘angel’ had come to stand for the purely spiritual creatures of God, especially the holy angels. Thus, it is correct to say that Seraphim and Cherubim are angels, not because they are messengers, but because they are spirits created by God and exercise some ministry in behalf of mankind.

a) Names which indicate the offices

In the case of the three angels we know by name in Holy Scripture, their name indicates specifically some aspect of their ministry. St. John Paul explained: “It is appropriate to note that the Church honors the *figures of three angels* with a liturgical cult; these are called by name in Sacred Scripture” (*Catechesis*, Aug. 6, 1986). The Holy Father says: “*Gabriel*: ... his name means: ‘my power is God’ or ‘power of God’, as if to say that the culmination of creation, the Incarnation is the supreme sign of the omnipotent Father” (Ibid.). He makes a similar reference to St. Michael and Raphael and concludes: “If we reflect well, we see that each one of these figures ... reflects in a particular way the truth contained in the *question* posed by the author of the *Letter to the Hebrews*: ‘Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to serve, for the sake of those who are to possess salvation?’ (Heb 1:14)” (Ibid.; cf. Benedict XVI, Sept. 29, 2007). Their names refer to their activities. Since, therefore, each angel is a ministering spirit, with a particular ministry, each could be designated by specific quality. That specific, individual indicator would be their ministerial ‘name’.

b) Known offices without names

All angels have offices, not just the three known by name. So Joshua saw once how “a man stood before him with his drawn sword in his hand; and Joshua ... said to him, ‘Are you for us, or for our adversaries?’ And he said, ‘No; I, the

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commander of the army of the LORD have now come’.” (Jos 5:13-14) St. John wrote: “I heard the angel of water say...” (Ap 16:5) and he speaks of “the angel who has power over fire” (Ap 14:18). Therefore angels can be distinguished and determined according to their tasks, in much the same way the three archangels are designated by ‘power’, ‘medicine’ and an exclamation concerning the greatness of god.

Ancient Hebrew mysticism and writings identified other angelic spirits also by name. Such writings, like *Hennoch* and the *Book of Jubilees*, enjoyed considerable esteem in the early Church, and are even considered to be sacred texts by the Ethiopian Orthodox Church.

3. Can we know the names of other angels?

a) The angels we know by name in S. Scripture

It is a fact, that only three holy angels are mentioned by name in Holy Scripture. Two of these identified themselves: St. Raphael (Tob 12:15; cf. 3:17) and St. Gabriel (Lk 1:19; cf. 1:26; Dan 8:16; 9:21); the third, St. Michael was made known to Daniel by St. Gabriel (cf. Dan 10:13,21; 12:1). After that, at least, he was known to the people of God, and so to the sacred authors (cf. Jud 1:9; Ap 12:7). It is easily overseen in this question and yet not insignificant, that in S. Scripture various names of fallen angels are mentioned (e. g. Lev 16:8-10; Tob 3:8; Job 40:15-32; Is 34:14; Mk 3:22; Lk 10:18 and more).

b) Angels refused to tell their name

Beyond this, in the course of salvation history, when men besought the name of an angel sent to minister and instruct them (Jacob in his combat, in Gen 32:29; Manoah, the father of Samson in Jdg 13:18) the angels were reticent and refused to discover their individual identity, even though poor men had reasons which justified the question (e.g. Manoah: “when your words come true, we may honor you?” Jdg 13:17). It seems that this was a precautionary measure, taken to insure that the exclusive divine cult be offered to Yahweh alone, as man’s proclivity to idolatry was only too well known. There might still be other reasons for.

c) The secure guidance of the Church

The experience of the Church begins in apostolic times with St. Paul warning against spiritual genealogies, which promote “speculation rather than the divine economy which is in faith” (1 Tm 1:14). And again, he warned the faithful against Satan presenting himself as an “angel of light in order to deceive the elect” (2 Cor 11:14). These prudential judgments in time found concrete disciplinary expression in canons of a few councils in the medieval Church (Council of Rome (Lateran Synod) under Pope Zacharias in 745, and a Council convoked by Charles the Great in Aachen in 789 (ch. 16) [G. Tavard, *Die Engel*, Freiburg 1968, 58]. In that era it was apparent that a practice had arisen in certain places to call upon other spirits by name, whereby there was strong evidence of demonic infestation involved. For these reasons, since those times the Church has observed the discipline, that beyond the three angelic names revealed in Scripture,