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“Could you not watch one hour with Me?”

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**a) The angels are “light”**

The angels manifest themselves as “beings of light”. In many biblical descriptions the angels appear “like lightning” and with “raiment white as snow” (Mt 28:2-3; cf. Acts 1:11; 12:7). The physical light of their apparitions is symbolic of the spiritual light in which they live and which they communicate. But like “light” is their invisible nature as “spiritual, non-corporeal beings” (CCC 328), the beauty of the angelic perfection, “surpassing ... all visible creatures, as the splendor of their glory bears witness” (CCC 330).

**b) The angels bring “light” and strength**

Also the effect of their work in human life means “light”. The presence and action of the holy angel and the clarity of his message about the Will of God caused in St. Joseph’s soul “light”: in his emotions or in his heart the serenity of peace; in his dark mind the comprehension of God’s presence and work; and with this, for his will, strength, courage, great joy and unshakable firmness in accomplishing God’s will (cf. *Consecration to the Guardian Angel*). How often St. Joseph may have joined Our Lady in her great song of thanksgiving: “God my Savior has looked with favor on his lowly servant... the Almighty has done great things for me” (Lk 1:48-49).

**4. Dear Brothers in the Priesthood**

We all were once “darkness, but now (we) are light in the Lord; walk as children of light” (Eph 5:8). In how many ways we are called to a mission like that of St. Joseph, namely to love Our Lady, right after God, above all things, and to care for the Church and its members like for her. May the holy angels help us like him in so many regards! May we be found faithful and worthy like him. May we be taken care, at the end of our life, by God’s Son, Our Lord Jesus, Who cared for His father Joseph at his end.

Fr. Titus Kieninger ORC

Two books of our interest:

Stephen J. ROSSETTI, *Why Priests are Happy. A Study of the Psychological and Spiritual Health of Priests*, Ave Maria Press, Notre Dame, Indiana 2011.

Brett A. BRANNEN, *To save a Thousand Souls. A Guide for discerning a Vocation to Diocesan Priesthood*, www.vianneyvocations.com.

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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

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Association of Priests  
In Opus Angelorum®

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**Dear Brothers in the Priesthood!**

The very first page of the New Testament introduces us direct and powerfully into the *Communion of Saints*. God becomes man and enters human history in collaboration of the entire creation, also of the spiritual angelic world. Yet, the world of grace, the supernatural order, surpasses, indeed, elevates the central figure, man. To achieve salvation, we need help. The holy angels are “sent forth to serve, for the sake of those who are to obtain salvation” (Hb 1:14). The life of St. Joseph, the closest to Mary and Jesus, the Son of God, shows this. We saw in the last letter: how, when he thought he would have to withdraw himself from Mary, an angel brought him light. He said:

“Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit; she will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins. All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel (which means, God with us).’When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took his wife, but knew her not until she had borne a son; and he called his name Jesus.” (Mt 1:19-25)

**1. The “light” of the message**

We considered what an enigma it was for St. Joseph to see Mary with child. It was an angel who revealed to him her mysterious motherhood: It was a Divine work. What she had conceived was “of the Holy Spirit;” and the fruit a son, Jesus, who “will save his people from their sins”.

**a) The revelation of the mystery of God**

This explanation, the Messiah so close, goes far beyond all puzzling of St. Joseph, although it was foretold in the past. The angel explains not just the origin of the pregnancy, but knows and communicates much about the child: it will be a male, and the very son of God. This is God’s work! The angel of the Lord took away a thick curtain before the eyes of St. Joseph and opened his view into heaven, up to the mystery of the Triune God.

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Theologians say, God’s Trinitarian mystery was unknown till Christ. “The only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known” (Jn 1:18). But the angel seems to presuppose that St. Joseph understands of whom he was speaking: it “is of the Holy Spirit,” and her “son” will be the One who “will save his people from their sins”. St. Joseph, knows of course too, that no one “can forgive sins but God alone” (Mk 2:7)! Did he already know to distinguish different Persons in God? Of course, it need not be: since a man’s spirit is one in person with the individual himself (cf. 1 Cor 2,11), Joseph could easily have acknowledged the divine (holy) spirit without thinking it *personally* distinct from God!

### **b) The call into God’s plan**

The other part of the angel’s message is, that God will bow down to mankind and free it from the slavery of sin. What is further overwhelming in this plan of God is that it shall take place ‘right here’, in his house, and even this: he himself, “Joseph, son of David,” is to be involved as responsible husband of Mary, the Mother of this Divine Redeemer! “Joseph ... do not fear to take Mary your wife!” And, “You shall call his name Jesus.” St. Joseph knew of his call, till now, just through the High Priest. This seems to have allowed him still, to consider “to divorce her quietly”, even if she was already his wife (cf. Cornelius a Lapide, *In Matth*, ch. I, v.16 and 18; see the English edition: *The Great Commentary of Cornelius Lapide – The Holy Gospel according to Saint Matthew*, vol. I, Loreto Publications, Fitzwilliam, NH, 2008, page 12-22 and 25-34). But now, the angel sheds divine light about the child and Its mother, and even he, Joseph, shall be integrally included in this plan. He shall be “father” to Him with authority, and name Him!

## **2. Criteria of discernment**

The message is heavy! Can a man, so humble as St. Joseph, believe it? The Angel communicated with St. Joseph almost in a distinguished clear a message.

### **a) The “unity with the whole Scripture” (CCC 112)**

Taken in isolation this scriptural text is difficult to decipher, whether “St. Matthew recalls for the reader, or, as some think, the angel (recalled) for Joseph, the prophesy of Isaiah (7:14)” (cf. Cornelius a Lapide, *ibid.*, pg. 38). It may be the angel, like the Holy Spirit, merely wants to “bring to remembrance all that” what was already said (cf. Jn 14:26; Mt 28:6: “as He said”). St. Joseph was certainly familiar with it. But will the simple remembrance of it convince him that this prophecy comes true right now and here? Will a word from an angel not make it easier to bring the past and present together and believe this message? “All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: ‘Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and his name shall be

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called Emmanuel’ (which means, God with us)”. The old prophesy confirms the truthfulness of the message.

### **b) The dignity corresponding to God’s Holiness**

There is another sign which is significant for St. Joseph and shall be for all future generations. It is the role which this pure and kind, loving and humble woman, this holy creature has in this plan of God: “*That* which is conceived *in her*,” Mary, whom St. Joseph knows better than anyone else on earth, “is of the Holy Spirit; *she* will bear a son, ... (who) will save his people from their sins”. In the eyes of St. Joseph, she is the holiest among all women. If any of them should be chosen to be the Mother of the Messiah, then she. For no one more than she corresponds to the dignity of God’s holiness! This fills him with joy and frees him from all blocking doubts and hesitations.

### **c) “You will know them by their fruits” (Mt 7:16, 20)**

The Holy Father Benedict XVI called the mystery of the Incarnation “an unprecedented and humanly inconceivable novelty” (VD 11). We doubt, that St. Joseph would ever have thought to be called so close to the Messiah, even if he prayed earnestly for his coming. However, the release from his interior struggle was total. The light which the message of the angel brought into his soul was so bright, that he could clearly recognize the divine origin of this message. Anxiety changed to peace and the dark enigma to clear light: “Do not fear to take Mary your wife...” These words brought freedom to this man of fear of the Lord, joy and security.

Further, and principally, they gave him strength to change from thoughts of flight to faithful and doubtless adherence to the plan of God, to an obedience of faith, which was the secret strength of his wife in the past months, and which now really met with her faith: “When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took his wife, ... and he called his name Jesus”. This reminds us of the Lord’s request to Moses with regard to the angel: “Give heed to him and hearken to his voice, do not rebel against him, for he will not pardon your transgression; for my name is in him” (Ex 23:21). A similar reaction we will find later with the apostles, when the Angel of the Lord freed them from prison and told them: “‘Go and stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this Life.’ And when they heard this, they entered the temple at daybreak and taught.” (Acts 5:20-21).

## **3. The angels are and bring light**

If we look back to this opening chapter of the New Testament, we have quite an introductory view: man’s natural limitations as creature; the supernatural Incarnation of the Son of God; the holy angels as mediators between God and men, and man’s elevation into union with God.