
“Could you not watch one hour with Me?”

b) Angel to man

An act of consecration establishes a stronger bond and opens the doors for a more fecund reciprocal exchange. The graces the Church has one ask of his angelic Guardian refer to all stages of the spiritual life. It starts with the awareness of the spiritual battle and one’s own weaknesses: “*protect me against my own weakness and against the attacks of the wicked spirits*”. Then, man needs to constantly understand and apply the will of God, both in terms of the general Commandments and Word of God, and also in terms of discerning the Will of God here and now in so many decisions. Therefore he asks: “*enlighten my mind and my heart so that I may always know and accomplish the will of God*”. Finally, as the *holy* angel is always focused in God, so man asks him for that one most necessary matter, namely to “*lead me to union with God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.*”

4. Dear Brothers in the Priesthood!

The church concludes the entire treatise on the angels in the *Catechism* with the marvelous statement: “Already here on earth the Christian life shares by faith in the blessed company of angels and men united in God” (CCC 336). We ought to build up this companionship by cultivating a personal relationship with our own Guardian Angel. As observed, this can be intensified through an act of consecration to the Guardian Angel and even to all the holy angels. Its habitual observation will remove the obstacles to a deeper and more intense spiritual contact with the angels and therefore to the souls entrusted to our pastoral care. On the annual priest-retreat we will have the opportunity to explain this possibility granted through the Church in a more detailed way.

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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®**

“*Their angels always behold the face of my Father*” (Mt 18:10,1) Vol. XIX, June, 2013

Dear Brothers in the Priesthood!

The month of June is dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. The very personal love of God in Jesus grants us – for the many dimensions of daily life – a special helper, who is like an older and faithful brother. We refer, of course, to our Guardian Angel. Our Lord assures us in Psalm 91: “He will give his angels charge of you to *guard* you in all your ways” (Ps 91:11). Jesus Himself affirmed this, when He said: “See that you do not despise one of these little ones; for I tell you that in heaven their angels always behold the face of my Father who is in heaven” (Mt 18:10). Let us dedicate some reflections on this gift in our next text on the angels in the gospel of St. Matthew.

1. Guardian Angel – a special grace of God

The Church understands this affirmation of Jesus in St. Matthew as the revelation of Guardian Angelship.

a) The doctrine

This phrase is interpreted for us in the Catechism: “From its beginning until death, human life is surrounded by their [angels] watchful care and intercession (cf. Mt 18:10)” (CCC 336). This belief is first justified with reference to this phrase of Jesus in St. Matthew; further, the Church added other references, including the one in the Book of Tobit: “Lk 16:22; Pss 34:7; 91:10-13; Job 33:23-24; Zech 1:12; Tob 12:12”. This is the teaching and belief in the personal “Guardian Angel.” In continuation the Catechism cites St. Basil’s clear affirmation: “Beside each believer stands an angel as protector and shepherd leading him to life” (St. BASIL, *Adv. Eunomium* III, I).

The *Directory on Popular Piety and the Liturgy* from 2001, published by the CONGREGATION FOR DIVINE WORSHIP, teaches this doctrine, confirmatively states:

*“Popular piety encompasses many forms of devotion to the **Guardian Angels**. St. Basil the Great (†378) taught that ‘each and every member of the faithful has a Guardian Angel to protect, guard and guide them through life.’ The Church is, of course, careful in her teaching. It affirms this only, because... this ancient teaching was consolidated by biblical and patristic sources and lies behind many forms of piety. St. Bernard of Clairvaux*

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(†1153) was a great master and a notable promoter of devotion to the Guardian Angels. For him, they were a proof ‘that heaven denies us nothing that assists us’ and hence, ‘these celestial spirits have been placed at our side to protect us, instruct us and to guide us’.” (Directory, n. 216).

b) The celebration

“During the liturgical year, the Church ... commemorates them on specific days: ... October 2nd (the Guardian Angels)” (Directory, 215; cf. CCC 335). The proper liturgical texts for this *memoria obligatoria* are quite rich. The gospel is our text from Matthew (18:1-5,10), while in the first reading from Exodus God’s assurance to Moses is applied to the Guardian Angel:

“Behold, I send an angel before you, to guard you on the way and to bring you to the place which I have prepared. 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. But if you hearken attentively to his voice and do all that I say, then I will be an enemy to your enemies and an adversary to your adversaries.” (Ex 23:20-22)

Much can be deduced from this text about the task of the angels and about man’s need to cooperate towards the implementation of God’s plan for us in the world (cf. Circular Letters 4-6, 1997).

2. Guardian Angels - for whom?

Jesus refers concretely to the children’s angels, but in the process He stipulates that only those who become like little children shall enter heaven. All such souls stand in need of angelic assistance. Moreover, the above text from Exodus includes angelic help for the entire nation, therefore, for individuals of all ages.

a) The angels of “these little ones”

Still, the need of angelic protection, at least externally, is more evident with children than with adults. Parents realize that they cannot oversee their children at every moment, especially when they start to leave home, for example for school. We need to remind them of the consoling truth about the ever present angelic help; they will be grateful to know that their children have a holy protector, an angel who “always behold(s) the face of my Father who is in heaven”!

Mother Gabriele Bitterlich recalled her Angel’s such help when she was about four years old: Her brother and his friends had locked her in a wood shed. She was too small and could not reach the door knob to let herself out. Suddenly a large holy Angel stood visibly before her. He drew back the bolt and opened the door. She commented: “The good Angel remained my silent secret with many hidden heart-to-heart talks. I saw him very often and frequently asked him for advice. Time and again he visibly and miraculously assisted me.” (see also Joan W. Anderson, *An Angel to watch over me. True Stories of Children’s Encounters with Angels*, Ballantine Books, New York 1996).

“Could you not watch one hour with Me?”

b) The greater needs of adults

Adults are in greater control of their bodies, but not totally, they also experience the physical help of their Guardian Angel. However, their greater dangers and needs are those of the soul, be they psychological in nature, such as depression or solitude; or be they spiritual such as temptations or heretical theories. In his commentary to Psalm 91, Saint Bernard interprets the angelic protection, lest we “dash [our] foot against a stone” in regard to the Ten Commandments and “the lion and the adder, the young lion and the serpent” as references to the devil.

Here we need to make two observations: First, how important it is that the good angel beholds “the face of my Father who is in heaven,” namely that he focuses on the last goal of human life and leads us to it. Second, such guidance requires of man humility, docility - the attitude of a child - which Jesus himself indicated as crucial to salvation: “Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven” (Mt 18:3).

3. Link between angel and man through consecration

Jesus asks that children be respected and points to their angels. He sees a link between angel and man. The Prayer authorized by the Church for *Opus Angelorum* and by means of which the faithful may consecrate themselves to the Guardian Angel refers expressly to this text. Let us first see the text:

“You, my good Guardian Angel, who continually behold the face of our Father in heaven (cf. Mt 18,10),

God entrusted me to you from the very beginning of my life.

I thank you with all my heart for your loving care.

I commit myself to you and promise you my love and fidelity.

I beg you:

protect me against my own weakness and against the attacks of the wicked spirits;

enlighten my mind and my heart so that I may always know and accomplish the will of God; and

lead me to union with God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.”

a) Man to the angel

In this Consecration-Prayer the Church wants man to express his faith in the gift of the Guardian Angel: “*God entrusted me to you from the very beginning of my life.*” Then, she elicits a corresponding act of gratitude, which may well express the sheer gift of faith, and personal experiences of the angel’s help in the individual’s own life: “*I thank you with all my heart for your loving care.*” This gratitude inspires also trust in future help which is expressed with these words: “*I commit myself to you*”. The awareness that the angel’s presence and help is integrated into the divine plan of providence makes one aware of one’s need to collaborate, and so anchors and justifies the promise of love and fidelity: “*and promise you my love and fidelity*”.