
“Could you not watch one hour with Me?”

God is also, till the present moment, “upholding the universe by his word of power” (Heb 1:3). Christ, the Word of the Father, Who from all eternity is always with the Father, shows the way to the true life; He is the Way, and no one comes to the Father – also no angel – except through Him, the Son (cf. Jn 14:6). He is the door (cf. Jn 10:9) to the true and eternal life, also for all angels, “whether thrones or dominions or principalities or authorities”; this list of angelic choirs stands for all. Also this remains true for all angels, for those who adhere Him in loving adoration and for the fallen angels who are also compelled to acknowledge and “obey Him” (Mk 1:27) because of His authority over them.

b) The faithful servants of Christ

Then the Catechism mentions three characteristics which refer, at least in the strict sense, only to the holy angels:

“Because they ‘always behold the face of my Father who is in heaven’ (Mt 18:10) they are the ‘mighty ones who *do his word, hearkening to the voice of his word*’ (Ps 103:20).” (CCC 329)

Further,

“They belong to him still more because he has made them *messengers of his saving plan*: ‘Are they not *all ministering spirits sent forth to serve*, for the sake of those who are to obtain salvation?’ (Heb 1:14)” (CCC 331).

They will remain faithful forever, and so be with Him, “‘When the Son of man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him...’ (Mt 25:31)” (CCC 331).

From the time of paradise itself the help of the Holy Angels was necessary to mankind; it became even more so after the fall, and in a certain sense even more so again after Christ’s Ascension, since the Apocalypse points out that the devil pursues the Children of the Woman with increased fury after the exaltation of the Son of God (cf. Apoc 12,17). Since they too are ministers of Christ’s grace, we need their ministry and help to attain salvation.

4. Dear Brothers in the Priesthood

Every single day, we are invited to lift up our eyes and heart to this marvelous world of God. They are already filled with the eternal bliss of the beatific vision. They follow their Lord and God and descend down to us at every celebration of the holy Mass, the celebration of the Incarnation and Death, the Resurrection and Ascension of our Lord. May they fill us, each day anew, with greater and greater devotion and gratitude, faith and love towards Jesus.

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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®

Reading the Catechism ... (I)

Vol. XVII, August 2011

Dear Brothers in the Priesthood!

We are about to start our meditations on the angels in the New Testament. The Holy Father in his post-synodal letter on the “Word of the Lord”, 2010, explained to us the unity of Sacred Scripture. We are familiar with the rule to interpret the Old Testament in light of the New Testament. The holy Gospels describe to us the life of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God Who became man! The fact that God has descended among His creatures, evidently must influence the ministry of the angels. Before we immerse ourselves into New Testament sources, we want to hear first what the Church tells us about the angels under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

1. The Angels in the Gospels

The angels in the Old Testament were principally mediators between God and man. In one of the first references, an angel appeared to Hagar, the handmaid of Abraham, in the desert; his approach is tender and he consoles her with a promise (cf. Gen 16). Recall too our last meditations where we considered “the angel who talked with (in)” the prophet Zachariah and accompanied him constantly.

After our Lord’s death, the angels were sent immediately to instruct the disciples and remind them of the words Jesus had told them: “They saw a young man ..., dressed in a white robe... he said to them, ‘Do not be amazed; you seek Jesus of Nazareth... He has risen,... go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him, as he told you’ (Mk 16:5.7). This activity is similar to that of the angels in the Old Testament, though now the references is mainly the Son of God who became man: Now they direct the people to the Church, to Christ and through Him to God.

In the Gospels, we will see, the angels are very much centered on Christ. They had committed themselves to Him in their trial. And ever since Adam and Eve they had been expecting his coming. Now, they adore and serve Him, they surround Him constantly as in heaven. They also lead men to Him, for their salvation, but much more so for His and His Father’s glory! And in this way, they become models for us.

2. The basic truths about the pure spirits

In order to appreciate and understand better the revealed truth about the angels, let us consider their being and mission, their presence and tasks in the light of the teaching of the Church, for “*the primary setting for scriptural interpretation is the life of the*

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Church” (Benedict XVI, *Verbum Domini*, 29.2). We find it summarized in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, which is an “absolutely secure criteria - un criterio assolutamente sicuro” (Benedict XVI, June 10, 2010) of our faith. The principal doctrine on the good angels is found in the numbers 328-336, and 350-352, on the fallen ones in 391-395 and 414-415; beyond these, there are about 70 other references in the Catechism on the angels.

a) The angels’ being

The existence of the angels, these pure “spiritual, non-corporeal beings”, is “a truth of faith” because of “the witness of Scripture” and “the unanimity of Tradition”:

“The existence of the spiritual, non-corporeal beings that Sacred Scripture usually calls ‘angels’ is a truth of faith. The witness of Scripture is as clear as the unanimity of Tradition” (CCC 328).

As pure, created spirits their nature is completely simple and undivided. In consequence, when an angel acts, he acts with all his being. Let’s see, how the Church put it:

“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*; if you seek the name of their office, it is *angel*: from what they are, *spirit*, from what they do, *angel*.’ (In Ps 103,1.15)” (CCC 329).

“With their *whole beings* the angels are servants and messengers of God” (CCC 329).

It is important to underline this totality in their service; they serve “with their whole being”. Whatever an angel does, he does it somehow totally, radically. There is nothing partial in their actions. This applies equally to the obedience of the good angels as well as to the hated and rebellion of the fallen spirits. This marks their person and personality.

“As purely spiritual creatures angels have intelligence and will: they are personal (cf. Pius XII, *Humani generis*: DS 3891) and immortal (cf. Lk 20:36) creatures, surpassing in perfection all visible creatures, as the splendor of their glory bears witness (cf. Dan 10:9-12)” (CCC 330).

Herewith, the Church teaches clearly that every angel is a distinct, individual person with his own capacity to understand and make his own free choice. They are immortal spiritual persons, which reflect God’s glory better than we and all lower creatures.

b) The angels’ irrevocable decisions

We are familiar with the principle “*agere sequitur esse* – the action follows the being”; something can only act with what it has or according to its nature. One characteristic of the spirit is that it is constantly in action. It means for the angels that they live constantly and totally awake, so that they also are firm in their decisions; their choices are “irrevocable”. Let’s hear the Church:

“Scripture speaks of a sin of these angels (cf. 2 Pt 2:4). This ‘fall’ consists in the free choice of these created spirits, who radically and irrevocably rejected God and his reign...” (CCC 392; cf. 311 and 391).

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It follows that with the trial of the angels there was a permanent division and separation in the angelic ranks. That was very painful for every one, for God (to speak in an anthropomorphic way), for us and for angels themselves.

“The Church is the goal of all things, and God permitted such painful upheavals as the angels’ fall and man’s sin only as occasions and means for displaying all the power of his arm and the whole measure of the love he wanted to give the world” (CCC 760).

God remains steadfast in His plan, which is a plan of total love and kindness, of incomprehensible generosity and goodness, a plan born in the depth of His “good Heart”. He did not change and will not change His plan on account of some creatures, even though by nature they were very perfect and numerous. God in his own eternal simplicity and goodness was not the object of the angelic trial (cf. St. Thomas Aq., *Summa Theologiae*, p. I, q. 63, a. 3), but His plan of love founded upon the Incarnation of the Word was and is the corner stone. Later, for men too, it will constitute a stumbling block for many under a new formality:

“The first announcement of the Eucharist divided the disciples, just as the announcement of the Passion scandalized them... The Eucharist and the Cross are stumbling blocks. It is the same mystery and it never ceases to be an occasion of division. ‘Will you also go away?’ (Jn 6:67): the Lord’s question echoes through the ages, as a loving invitation ...” (CCC 1336).

3. Christ as the center of the angels

The “free choice” in favor or against “God and his reign” reveals, that all angels are to be seen as centered in *Christ*, for Christ is the focal point of the reign of God. It is accomplished in and through Him.

a) The center of the angelic world

This is what the *Catechism* states clearly:

“Christ is the centre of the angelic world... They belong to him because they were created *through* and *for* him: ‘for in him all things were created in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or authorities - all things were created through him and for him’ (Col 1:16)...” (CCC 331).

The angels are all “his angels” not just during His life-time on earth, but generally and in an absolute sense. The angels were created “through and for” Christ. The Church reaches out to beginning and end. That is, therefore, true for all pure spirits, because also “the devil and the other demons were indeed created naturally good by God” (CCC 391), also they were destined to help build this reign. This is simply true for all creatures, for all were created through the Word and according to no other image than His:

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God; all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made” (Jn 1,1-3).

Therefore, “by the word of God heavens existed long ago” (2 Pet 3:5), so that “by faith we understand that the world was created by the word of God” (Heb 11:3).