
“Could you not watch one hour with Me?”

plishment of his saving mission to men” (CCC 351), so much so that the “whole life of the Church benefits from the mysterious and powerful help of angels” (CCC 334). What greater help for the best fulfillment of his ministry can the priest find than the assistance of the angels. Whenever he perceives his own limitations, and it is often, or any kind of inhibiting presence of the enemy, the Church recalls this consoling truth: “From its beginning until death, human life is surrounded by their watchful care and intercession” (CCC 336), and, “Beside each believer stands an angel as protector and shepherd leading him to life.” Therefore, even when life seems like a desert and Satan goes about roaring like a wild lion, nevertheless Christ won the battle and through His victory, “already here on earth the Christian life shares by faith in the blessed company of angels and men united in God” (CCC 336). Through the presence of the angels, their humility and peace, their fire and zeal and their joy enkindle in our priestly heart always again optimism and hope.

4. Dear Brothers in the Priesthood!

The power of evil, which is a sordid reality, is overcome by vigilant faith and prayer. The only sober view of reality is shared with us by St. Mark in his almost shocking beginning to his gospel: Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and following the example of Jesus and his constant orientation, “Take heed, watch” (Mk 13:33), we will be able to fulfill our priestly mission victoriously, even against the attacks of the fallen spirits, because there are also the holy angels who assure us: “I am your fellow-servant and the fellow-servant of all your brothers who have in themselves the witness of Jesus” (Ap 19:10). May we all be found at the end as “a good and faithful servant” (Mt 25:23).

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. Opl, 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®

Tempted by Satan and ministered by the angels (cf. Mk 1:13) Vol. XX, 7 / 2014

Dear Brothers in the Priesthood!

In our meditations on the angels in the gospels we now come to the gospel of St. Mark. He refers only a few times to the holy angels; more often he speaks about the presence of their fallen brothers. John Hardon observed that “there are more exorcisms performed by Jesus in the Gospel of St. Mark than in all other books of the whole Bible put together” (*Meditations on the Angels*, 2006, 78). Tradition attributes to the evangelist St. Mark the Lion from the four Living Beings (cf. Ez 1 and Ap 4:7). In his gospel, St. Mark presents Christ as the Strongest in the spiritual world as the lion is considered the strongest animal. As we proceed we will verify this.

1. Jesus enters the arena

St. Mark does not relate anything about the childhood of Jesus.

a) Jesus in the desert

The evangelist opens his “gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God” (Mk 1:1) directly with “John the baptizer” as a “voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord” (1:3). He said: “I have baptized you with water; but he (who comes after him) will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.” And “In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan.” And immediately, “when he came up out of the water,” He was revealed and confirmed “from heaven, ‘Thou art my beloved Son; with thee I am well pleased’.” (Mk 1:8-11) In a second moment, St. Mark relates: “The Spirit immediately drove him out into the desert. And he was in the desert forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered to him” (Mk 1:12-13). Thereafter followed the public mission: “Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, ‘The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the gospel’.” (Mk 1:14-15)

b) Significant parallels

Striking is the observation that St. Mark (as St. John) opens his gospel with the same word with which the Old Testament begins, “The beginning of – in

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

“Could you not watch one hour with Me?”

the beginning” (Gen 1:1)! There can easily be seen some parallels: The Spirit drove Jesus out into the wilderness, just as “in the beginning ... the Spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters ...and the earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep” (Gen 1:2). – And as Jesus was “tempted by Satan” and “the angels ministered to him” there for “forty days” (Mk 1:12-13), so seems to have taken place a battle also at that very beginning of creation, for “there was light”, but “God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness” (Gen 1:3-4); this was understood by some fathers of the Church like St. Augustine as the separation of the good and fallen angels. – At that time, the trial of the angels took place; now it is man’s turn for the battle. Jesus just invites them by preaching. Then He expects man’s decision, to repent and believe.

2. The decision

Jesus, the Son of God, became man. And the apostle John specifies: “The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil” (1Jn 3:8). St. Mark underscores this point, when he shows Jesus first confirmed from Heaven and then confronted with Satan in battle. He found Himself between light and darkness.

a) The desert

St. Matthew and St. Luke describe three temptations of the devil in the desert (cf. eg. Ratzinger/Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth*, vol. I, ch. 2; Circul. XVIII, July-August). St. Mark is silent about “how” Satan tempted Jesus. This also tells much about temptations, they occur in certain circumstances like in deserted places or in moments of loneliness like in the desert into which “the Spirit immediately drove him.” In the desert are found few people, if any at all. Silence and solitude are its characteristic. There is neither communion nor communication, and the wild beasts are a threat to life. Many temptations are unpredictable; they come out of the dark or from “no where”, as it were, and jump on man like “wild beasts;” he is then taken by surprise so that they can win over him. Therefore, it is important for us today to be close to Jesus and to take serious His warning at the conclusion of His life on earth, in the dark night of Gethsemane: “Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak’.” (Mt 26:41)

b) Always close to Jesus

To “watch” means being attentive, going slowly, checking carefully, testing and discerning what is good and what is evil, and especially where ideas or presented options tend to lead. Jesus counsels us to scrutinize the fruits, because “the tree is known by its fruit” (Mt 12:33). And the fruit which is expected here is repentance and faith (cf. Mk 1:14-15), and finally our assimilation to Jesus: He “came ... to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for

“Could you not watch one hour with Me?”

many” (Mk 10:45). He overcame the tempter, the devil who “prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking some one to devour” (1 Pet 5:8), For he conquered him as “the Lion of the tribe of Judah” (Ap 5:5) The angels who humbled themselves before the authority of GOD in their test followed the Son of God in the depth, into the desert, and adapted to His humility and “served”: “The angels ministered to him” (Mk 1:13). Their rebellious brothers rejected precisely this, saying at the beginning “I will not serve” (Jer 2:20). This clears the view for man: We are all called to “reach unity in faith and knowledge of the Son of God and form the perfect Man, fully mature with the fullness of Christ himself” (Eph 4,13). Surely, in this way we will “give no opportunity to the devil” (Eph 4:27).

3. The beginning of our priesthood

The beginning of the public ministry of Jesus directed our attention back to the beginning of the world. It may also point to the beginning of Christ’s public priestly ministry, and therefore by application to our own as well.

a) Three steps into the priesthood

We can associate the three steps of Jesus to the beginning of our ministry as well: The solemnity of our ordination with the people’s praise was followed (in many cases quickly enough) by temptations. Hence, it is fitting that Divine Providence should allow us to soon find ourselves with Jesus in the solitude of the desert: The Holy Spirit, through the ministry of His angels submitted us to a further purification of our intention to “serve” only and to dedicate ourselves just for the good of the others – both spiritual and temporal insofar as this reveals them the Love and Goodness of God. Our “Ego” had to die in the submission to the Will of God, so that our talents only more serve His glory and the salvation of souls. The resolution to “serve” selflessly was the sign of maturity, of the true life in Christ.

Jesus was lead by the Holy Spirit into the desert. Similarly, a priest’s life is guided by others. First, there is the Bishop who determines the parish; there, the pastor tells him what to do and assigns him to some parochial ministries. The pastor and the parochial program determine his schedule, and the people with their needs and requests occupy the “free time” of his calendar.

b) “... by faith in the blessed company of angels”

St. Mark mentions that Jesus was served by the angels. Hence, the priest does well to recall their presence in his life too, particularly in hours of temptations. They are also already aiding the people before they turn to the priest. And that which God expects from him, the angels do before he rises in the morning and still after he goes to bed at night, namely they “glorify God without ceasing and ... serve his saving plans for other creatures” (CCC 350). They “surround Christ their Lord” and “serve him especially in the accom-