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“Could you not watch one hour with Me?”

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whom you see today, you shall never see again. The Lord will fight for you, and you have only to be still’.” (Ex 14:13-14)

Similarly, God told Jehoshaphat when “the men of Ammon and Moab and Mount Seir” set out against Israel for battle. The king lead Judah to prayer. God told them through the prophet: “Fear not, ... for the battle is not yours but God’s. Tomorrow go down against them; ... You will not need to fight in this battle; take your position, stand still, and see the victory of the Lord on your behalf...” and they went praying: “Give thanks to the Lord, for his steadfast love endures for ever.” God caused the enemies to fight against each other so that “they all helped to destroy one another.” And “When Judah came to the watchtower of the wilderness, they looked toward the multitude; and behold, they were dead bodies lying on the ground; none had escaped. ... Then they returned, every man ... to the house of the Lord” (2 Chron 20:1-32).

Just as the king in this story turned to God for help, so too did St. Michael in the battle with the devil: ‘The Lord rebuke you’.” (Jude 1:9) This is the lesson, St. Faustina received: “Jesus ... said, I am pleased with what you are doing. ... Satan gained nothing by tempting you, because you did not enter into conversation with him” (D. 1499; contrary to Eve in Gen 3!).

#### 4. Dear Brothers in the Priesthood!

We still have much to learn from St. Mark on this topic, for today, the devil is more arrogant and rapacious than ever and people open more doors for him. Let us not fall into his net nor allow those entrusted to our care fall into his snares, neither by fear nor through curiosity. We know the devil will not give up easily and we know that the battle will get worse for St. John wrote: “The whole earth followed the beast with wonder... they worshiped the beast, saying, ‘Who is like the beast, and who can fight against it?’” (Ap 13:3-4) Still we are confident, for it is the Lord who will fight him, and those He gives authority over him.

Fr. Titus Kieninger ORC

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

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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®

Jesus and Spiritual Combat (cf. Mk 1:23)

Vol. XX, August 2014

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### Dear Brothers in the Priesthood!

We started our reflections about the angels in St. Mark and saw, right at the beginning, Jesus “in the desert..., tempted by Satan; ... and the angels ministered to him” (Mk 1:12-13). Jesus stands right before us as the center of the good and fallen angels. From there he started to preach the Gospel: “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the gospel’.” (Mk 1:14-15) Thus in Capernaum Jesus “entered the synagogue and taught” and the people “were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority, and not as the scribes” (Mk 1:21-22).

St. Mark also immediately links the authority of Christ’s word to the verification by miracles. For, in the synagogue, an unclean spirit confronted Him, but Jesus commanded him and he obeyed! Let us look at this situation more closely.

#### 1. The confrontation of light and darkness

The situation is this: Jesus is the Son of God, eternal with the Father and the Holy Spirit. He became man. After 30 years He began preaching to Israel the coming of the Kingdom of heaven! This is “good news!” (Mk 1:15) for all creatures are created for His greater glory and for the participation in God’s beauty and goodness and even holiness. Although He generally ‘hid’ His divine nature “behind” His human nature, the purpose of His coming was to free man from the slavery of sin and then to make us “partakers of the divine nature” (2 Pet 1:4; cf. CCC 460).

#### a) What is an “unclean spirit”?

Now, when Jesus started to proclaim this light in the synagogue of Capernaum, there was “a man with an unclean spirit.” We don’t learn anything about the man, or about how the devil took hold of him. What does “unclean spirit” mean? Purity in spiritual creatures means their transparency to God’s idea of them and His will for them; it means they live for what they were made for and thus are transparent towards God’s holiness, perfection and beauty. “Uncleanness,” then, on the spiritual level can only mean a form of opposition to God’s will, a “choice against God,” or refusing “to serve God and his plan” (CCC 414; cf. 311, 392, 760). St. Thomas quotes Pseudo-Chrysostom saying: This spirit “is called unclean on account of his impiousness and far removal from God, and because he employs himself in all unclean and wicked works” (*Catena aurea*, to Mk 1:23). Impurity or “uncleanness” means that a creature which was created by God and

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for God (cf. Col 1:16), obstinately lives for its own ideas and will. While this begins in the intellect and will, ... the impure intentions extends also to material creatures insofar as these become objects of this spirit's rebellions activity.

### **b) A declaration of war**

This unclean spirit, under whose prodding, that man rose in opposition to the preaching and presence of Jesus, cried out, “What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth?” (Mk 1:24). Surprisingly, St. Mark alone presents this confrontation with the fallen angels right at the beginning of his gospel so directly. Here the opposition between two kingdoms is quickly brought into sharp contrast.

What this tells us is: Announcing God's coming to men is tantamount to a declaration of war to end the enemy's reign on earth! Light does not combine with darkness; truth has no communion with lies. The unclean spirit cried out. Jesus allowed him to manifest himself, so that now by deeds be made manifest: The Kingdom of heaven is at hand, you should really convert from sin to holiness, from your own will to God's will, from slavery to the enemy of God to friendship with God.

## **2. The disturbing unclean spirit**

St. Mark records the outcry of the “unclean spirit” who made three distinct statements. His shouting or crying out was not just about getting attention. It reveals fear if not even despair.

### **a) What between You and us?**

The spirit first said: “What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth?” – The unclean spirit's decision against God's Will was an expression of his pride whose prototype we find described in the prophet Isaiah: “I will ascend to heaven; above the stars of God I will set my throne on high; I will sit on the mount of assembly in the far north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will make myself like the Most High.” (Is 14:13-14). He wanted to “be like God” (Gen 3:5), as he promised Eve in paradise. Usurping God's rights and authority allows one to appear like God, who alone, by right, is subject to none.

“In fact,” writes Cardinal Léon-Joseph Suenens in his very recommendable study *Renewal and the Powers of Darkness* (Darton, London 1983, # 5), “it has to be avoided to imagine Satan as a type of Anti-God, as if there would exist two absolute Beings.” The infinite Triune God is alone subsistent in Himself, and anything else that exists is a limited creature. It owes its being God the creator and bears the imprint of God's image in its nature. In consequence, any rational creature which looks at itself, is reminded of God. It finds an indelible link with God which only its annihilation would eliminate. God however loves what He created and does not want to destroy it.

### **b) Have you come to destroy us?**

That already brings up the answer to the second phrase the unclean spirit cried out: “Have you come to destroy us?” – God does not destroy (deprive of existence) anyone He created, even if they have rebelled against Him. God is love

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and loves all He created, and this creative will He never surrenders. This is what Pope Benedict XVI refers to very carefully when he said in his encyclical letter on hope: “Some recent theologians are of the opinion that the fire which both burns and saves is Christ himself, the Judge and Saviour. The encounter with him is the decisive act of judgement.” (*Spe salvi*, # 47) God as Creator is the reference point for all creatures. Not one is independent from Him. Therefore, the Pope added: “Before his gaze all falsehood melts away. This encounter with him, as it burns us, transforms and frees us, allowing us to become truly ourselves” (ibid.), but those who set themselves against Him, who do not accept the change necessary for them will burn before Him for ever. The devils know very well that God will not destroy them, but show them their error, which is worse. He will expose their false works to the light and thus destroy their delusions.

### **c) You, “the Holy One of God”**

Then the “unclean spirit” said: “I know who you are, the Holy One of God.” As we know, the devil is not trustworthy. However, this observation makes clear what he tried to hide before: “God is the issue,” comments Pope Benedict XVI (*Jesus of Nazareth*, vol. I, ch. 2; p.29), about which the temptations by the devil in the desert revolve, and so is it here: All the enmity of the fallen spirits is ultimately directed against God. Therefore, their great insecurity and fear about Jesus and his mission. Their apparently open affirmation is simply aimed at provoking Jesus to make a clear affirmation regarding his own identity, something which He refused to do in the desert and continues to do so here.

## **3. The spiritual combat**

### **a) Jesus' reaction**

How did Jesus react to this disturber of His teaching? He did not give him any “space.” He was decisive, sovereign, curt and commanding, without entering into any discussion, without referring to any of the devil's observations. St. Mark tells us: “But Jesus rebuked him, saying, ‘Be silent, and come out of him!’” – And in fact, “The unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying with a loud voice came out of him” (Mk 1:26).

There is no communication between light and darkness. And as light reveals filth, so God's presence manifests the unclean spirits for what they are. In fact, not only is this demon expelled in the midst of convulsions, but that same day (evening) Jesus “cast out many demons; and [again] he would not permit the demons to speak” (Mk 1:34). There is no question of dialogue or compromise, but clear order instead.

### **b) Questioning – a new teaching?**

All who were present were amazed and “questioned among themselves, saying, ‘What is this? A new teaching! With authority he commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him’.” (Mk 1:27) Even as Jesus did not give too much attention to the evil spirit, so too did He want the people to pay little attention to them. Let us recall that “Moses said to the people, ‘Fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will work for you today; for the Egyptians