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“Could you not watch one hour with Me?”

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### 3. A fruitful cooperation

St. Joseph’s cooperation with the angel is a great light for us: the angelic order was lucid and precise; St. Joseph’s responding obedience, prompt and exact: “He *rose* and *took* the child and his mother by night, and *departed* to Egypt, and *remained* there until the death of Herod” (Mt 2:14-15). The situation was agitated, but in their hearts peace reigned, for God proved to have all in His hands. He knows the dangers, He calls attention “just in time” and provides in the angel the necessary and sufficient help.

The exemplary cooperation of St. Joseph with the holy angel made it easy for Mary. Similarly will it be for the faithful: When the priest is humble and obeys joyfully, when the priest requires from them only what is God’s will, and third, when the priest helps them to a Marian purity of heart (yes, also through the frequent confession of even “venial sins”, a practice which is still “strongly recommended by the Church”, CCC 1458), then it will be also much easier for the people to follow their priest like Mary followed St. Joseph.

### 4. Dear Brothers in the Priesthood!

Our Lady supported St. Joseph not just by her willingness to obey him, but also through her constant intercession for him. As for him, so she prays also for us! Let us surrender ourselves in consecration to her, especially in this month of May, dedicated to her. But may we also ask the faithful to pray for us. For we have to lead them through the battle of this life to their eternal home. You might want to consider starting the Movement “Adoration, Reparation, Spiritual Motherhood for Priests” recommended by the Congregation for the Clergy (cf. Circular Letter of January 2008, or directly [www.clerus.org](http://www.clerus.org)).

Fr. Titus Kieninger ORC

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

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“Could you not watch one hour with Me?”

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## Association of Priests In Opus Angelorum®

“Rise, take..., flee and remain there” (Mt 2:13)

Vol. XVIII, May 2012

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### Dear Brothers in the Priesthood!

We promised to look still closer at the angel’s message to St. Joseph. “But,” you may ask: “Is there more to see? Have we not all read this section of the holy Gospel often enough? Do we not know it almost by heart? Should we, therefore, not turn to the next page or text referring to the holy angels?”

The prayer-life gives us the answer, for by its very nature, prayer should be, at least, meditative. And we say the *Our Father* daily. Such a spirit of meditation is the main purpose of our monthly reflection, where we hope to draw out with older treasures, also new insights. Therefore, let us pause and watch closely, listen attentively to this text, heeding especially the words of the angel, the orders he gave St. Joseph:

“Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there till I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him.” (Mt 2:13).

### 1. The unity of the Word of God

The angel surprised St. Joseph with a threatening message: “Rise, take ... and flee...”.

Benedict XVI recalls the different senses of the Word of God in Sacred Scripture, namely: the literal sense because “the *divine Word* is truly expressed in *human words*” (*Verbum Domini* 11); and the spiritual sense because the real author is the Holy Spirit and His intention (cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church* ## 115-117).

#### a) The literal sense

There is the holy family in Bethlehem, as the prophet foretold (cf. Mt 2:6 and Mic 5:2); there passed “wise men” through Jerusalem and asked for a new-born Child which would be the King of the Jews. With the help of his knowledgeable counselors, the actual king indicated them the place and wanted them to return and inform him about the precise identity and location of the child. His false intention, along with the lie that he too wanted to “come and worship him”, (Mt 2:8) caused the heaven to interfere and not let the wise men return to Jerusalem. Then Herod’s bad intention was manifest, he decided to kill every male child with two years and younger. The only way to escape death was to flee. The angel urged St. Joseph to do this.

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

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**b) The spiritual sense**

The evangelist himself indicated a deeper meaning of this event: He points to the past, when the Chosen People lived in Egypt and under God’s miraculous guidance and help was led from there to the promised land: “This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, ‘Out of Egypt have I called my son’ [Hos 11:1; Ex 4:22]” (Mt 2:15). “The *spiritual sense* ... is subdivided into three senses which deal with the contents of the faith, with the moral life and with our eschatological aspiration” (VD 37): 1) the allegorical or typological sense referring to the prefigurations of Christ in the Old Testament (cf. VD 40-41); 2) the **moral sense** of the “events reported in Scripture” (CCC 117) which ought to lead us to act justly in the present; and 3) the anagogical sense viewing “realities and events in terms of their eternal significance, leading us toward our true homeland” (ibid.).

From this perspective we can view the angel’s four petitions from different vantage points: in the past, in the proper words of Jesus, and, in a sense, telling us how to move forward to heaven.

**The allegorical or typological sense** - We find in former angelic apparitions a command similar to that directed to Joseph in behalf of Jesus. For example, the angel said to Hagar in the desert: “Return to your mistress, and submit to her... I will so greatly multiply your descendants...’” (Gen 16:9). Or, in view of the redemption, “angels urged Lot, saying, ‘Arise, take your wife and your two daughters ... Flee for your life’” (Gen 19:15,17). And even pointing out to the Eucharistic presence of Jesus, an “angel said [to the prophet Elijah], ‘Arise and eat, else the journey will be too great for you.’ And he *arose*, and *ate and drank*, and *went* in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights *to Horeb* the mount of God” (1 Kg 19:7-8).

**The moral sense** – It is amazing to see in the New Testament a parallel to the angel’s guidance of St. Joseph, namely in the general rule of the imitation of Christ: “Jesus told his disciples, ‘If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me’” (Mt 16:24). This is a clear rule of how to “act in life”.

**The anagogical sense** – Coming up from Egypt to the Promise Land – only possible through the Pascal Sacrifice – is the model for all conversion from the slavery to sin and the new life in the promised Land of grace, flowing with milk and honey, consolations and every good thing. Who follows the allegorical indication and the moral orientation of Jesus will reach the final goal of life, he will pass an eternity with God! This we can even see as the goal of all: *Rise* from the old man, *take* what you have in the present and *flee* into the future where you may stay – and dwell, *stay* there for ever.

In this way, the similitude of the angel’s order to the Lord’s petition is not mere chance, but the design of the Holy Spirit! Or may, perhaps, both come together in a fundamental principle in life?

**2. The four steps**

Let’s now look into one by one. “**Rise!**” – St. Joseph was *literally* called in the middle of the night. He was not given time to ask anything. *Morally* it includes the call to “renounce” one’s self as the beginning: Get up from sleep, get up from sin, get up from the world, from weaknesses, doubts, laziness .... Forget to ask for your own desire, “What do you like?” The angel did not give time, like “tomorrow”. He needed the response “now!” - Card. Francis X. N. Van Thuan recalls: “I was arrested at 2 pm... I left the house in my cassock, with a rosary in my pocket” – and nothing more (*Testimony of Hope*, ch. 2). Heaven is our final goal. The moment of departure might come unexpectedly!

“**Take the child and his mother**” – St. Joseph did not have many material goods, less so while in Bethlehem. So he could get up, even at night, and quickly follow the heavenly command. But he had to ask this same from others, from his beloved! The child could continue his sleep – just as Jesus will sleep later in the boat on the agitated sea (cf. Mk 4:37f), - but “his mother”? God expected from her holy submission to Joseph. Of course, she too desired to be submitted to her God-given husband. Faith and trust in God’s providence made prompt obedience easier for her than it was for St. Joseph to ask it from her.

And what an angelic counsel for us: “Take Jesus and Mary!” Go, but most surely with them, and never without them! He has the power, and she preserves purity! Did Jesus not appoint “twelve, to *be with him*” (Mk 3:14)? This is the Church’s intention: “we intend in a very particular way to entrust all priests to Mary” through “a movement of prayer, placing 24 hour continuous Eucharistic adoration at the center” (cf. *Congregatio pro Clericis*, Dec.8, 2007; www.clerus.org). Now, behind Mary all the laity should stand: “Let everyone be involved” (Ib., *Explanatory note*, 2). Some may think, that this might really be difficult to ask from the laity, kind of like imposing an unpleasant obedience. However, many already have the promptitude of Mary, and educating the rest to a deep Marian devotion is one of the greatest gifts we could offer them.

“**Flee to Egypt**” – St. Joseph should “rush” away from the imminent life-threatening danger, “for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him”. The angel explained the reason as we can see often (see above 2.b). But, Egypt is further away than the next city! The angel indicates far away, where they have no relatives, no communication, where they will be all by themselves. – Flight is often a theme in Sacred Scripture, together with the admonition not to question, not to look back, not to conform to the world: “Jesus sent out, charging them,... [but] When they persecute you in one town, flee to the next” (Mt 10:5,23) and “... **Remain there till I tell you**” – that is, till the danger has passed. And God will indicate that moment, because he watches over us! We may not get a palpable angelic message at each step of the journey. For most decisions we need prayer, calling on the angels and prudent reflection. Nevertheless, we will never be without the heavenly angels present and with us.