
“Could you not watch one hour with Me?”

“Be sober, be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking some one to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith” (1 Pe 5:8-9; and cf. St. Paul: “taking the shield of faith, with which you can quench all the flaming darts of the evil one”, Eph 6:16).

We are not mistaken when we recite the “Consecration to the Guardian Angel” to say: “I beg you: protect me against my own weakness and against the attacks of the wicked spirits”! Note, how we ask first to be protected against ourselves, because here lies the greater problem: “The humble are not surprised by their distress” (CCC 2733). He who considers himself free of foible or error, is accordingly blind and so in greatest danger: “If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us” (1Jn 1:8).

4. Dear Brothers in the Priesthood

Let’s repeat with St. Peter: You are the Son of the Living GOD – You alone have words of eternal life! Through adoration of our Eucharistic Lord, who especially there in the host is poor, silent and obedient, we withdraw ourselves from the devil’s influence, inspirations and instigations, and find the peace of heart. United with our heavenly Mother in her humility and purity and with the assistance of our obedient fellow-servants, the holy angels (cf. Rev 19:10), we may confidently aspire to discern between temptation and Divine call, and so remain faithful till the end.

Fr. Titus Kieninger ORC

PRIEST RETREAT Nov. 12—16 2012
Maryville Retreat Center - Holly, MI
\$250 (\$ 50 deposit sent to address below)
Fr. Titus Kieninger — Fr. Wolfgang Seitz
To register call: 313 527 1739

*If possible we would be grateful if you could register by the end of September
Thank you!*

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
Donations for our new “National Center of Opus Angelorum” gratefully accepted.
Director: Father Wolfgang Seitz, ORC ©2012 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®

Temptations yes, but how? (cf. Mt 4:1-11, II)

Vol. XVIII, August 2012

Dear Brothers in the Priesthood!

In the last month, we saw Jesus with Satan and the holy Angels. Jesus came to confront and destroy the works of the devil (cf. 1 Jn 3,8; St. Thomas, *Summa Theologiae*, p. III, q. 41, a. 1). To this end Jesus went out into the desert. It is useful for us to ponder more closely the temptations, both to see the devil’s strategy (so that we may recognize the “wolf in sheep’s clothing”, cf. Mt 7:15), and Christ’s enlightened reaction (so that we can become more faithful to Christ in our hours of temptations).

1. The reason of the temptations

The devil first wanted to test Jesus in such a way that he might discover his identity: “*If* you are the Son of God...” (Mt 4:3.6).

a) “God is the issue”

There are two sides to this, the devil’s main thrust of interest. “God is the issue,” says the Holy Father in his commentary on this incident in the life of Jesus (cf. *Jesus of Nazareth*, vol. I, 29). The Holy Father then poses to us the question: “Is HE real, reality itself, or isn’t He? Is HE good, or do we have to invent the good ourselves? The God question is the fundamental question, and it sets us down right at the crossroads of human existence. What must the Savior of the world do or not do?” (Ibid.)

At the same time, “the three temptations of Jesus ... address the question as to what truly matters in human life. At the heart of all temptations, as we see here, is the act of pushing God aside because we perceive him as secondary, if not actually superfluous and annoying, in comparison with all the apparently far more urgent matters that fill our lives. Constructing a world by our own lights, without reference to God, building on our own foundation; refusing to acknowledge the reality of anything beyond the political and material, while setting God aside as an illusion” (ibid., 28).

b) No false security

Such temptations might seem to be far from us, as we dedicate our whole life to God. But let’s not be too sure of that or feel too secure before the tricks of the enemy! It was not in vain that the Lord exhorted: “Watch – and pray!” (Mt 26:41). Not even sanctity is immunity against the assaults of the spiritual foe. Consider what St. Faustina had to say: “Despite the peace in my soul, I fight a continuous battle with the enemy of my soul. More and more, I am discovering

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

“Could you not watch one hour with Me?”

his traps, and the battle flares up anew. During interludes of calm, I exercise myself and keep watch, lest the enemy find me unprepared” (St. Faustina, *Diary*, 1287). An unjustified sense of security either blinds us or makes us feel so comfortable and relaxed, that we are not prepared for sudden attacks and so cannot offer immediate resistance.

In a second moment, Pope Benedict XVI elaborated the question: “God or us” as a constant question and criteria of discernment: Constantly we need to examine and reaffirm the very foundations of the spiritual life, namely, our radical choice for God. Saint Augustine presents this drama in a radical, palpable form: “Two cities have been formed by two loves: the earthly by the love of self, even to the contempt of God; the heavenly by the love of God, even to the contempt of self” (*City of God*, 14, 28). The devil wants to put our Ego on the footstool, and how many opportunities are given in the priestly ministry to do so. In the temptations of Christ, he did not challenge the issue head on, rather and as an ‘angel of light’ he presented in the first two temptations easy solutions for setting up the city God, confident that the seed of self-love thus planted, would lead to its perversion. So often, the apostolate falsely engaged, ends up leading a priest away from our Lord.

Therefore, it is important for us, to analyze the three temptations of Jesus in the desert in order to gain a clear idea about the devil’s strategy to seduce us.

2. The temptations

First a few generally applicable observations.

a) Occasions for temptations

The tempter approached Jesus in the desert. “Going out into the desert often indicates the resolution to leave the “world” (cf. Rom 12:2; Rev 18:4). This being so, the tempter reacts by pursuing us, as he fears to lose influence over us. In another way we may also find ourselves in the “desert” when we are in a desolate state of soul. Such desolation may be the results from presumption which leads to a life of “lax ascetical practice, decreasing vigilance, carelessness of heart” (CCC 2733). In this latter case the enemy has “a easy job”, just as fire does with dry wood (cf. Lk 23:51). In each scenario, though, we have to be doubly on guard.

Further, Pope Benedict points out: “Moral posturing is part and parcel of temptation. It does not invite us directly to do evil – no, that would be far too blatant. It pretends to show us a better way...” (Benedict XVI, *ibid.* 28). The tempter is a pure spirit, far more intelligent than man. He is not so bold to ask direct obedience towards him, at least not at the beginning, nor will he provoke direct disobedience to our commitments. He may not need to “present himself” to us “as a theologian” or as “a great Scripture scholar” (*ibid.* 35); but as a good pedagogue and psychologist, he is able to well justify his wishes and present “reasonable suggestions” as if they would be coming from an “angel of light” (2Cor 11:14).

b) The temptations

He sought to challenge Jesus by referring to Him as “Son of God”. So too does he tempt us with reference to our priesthood. Some examples might serve:

“Could you not watch one hour with Me?”

“Aren’t you priest and work all your life for the people? Well, you have to look out for your own future too, your retirement! You don’t have family to take care of you when you are old! ... and even if you have to take from the parish-account... don’t be scrupulous, it’s Christian doctrine, they owe you a living wage!”

“Aren’t you priest for the people? Don’t drive this old car. The youth will look down on you, they won’t pay attention to your sermons. Get with it, get some decent clothes and a decent car; become one of them just as Jesus became one of us!”

At the same time the voice of conscience is not entirely silent: “The Son of man had no where to lay his head!” “This isn’t the logic of the saints, calling black, grey, and grey, white!” “You’ve been tricked by the arguments of the ‘good life’ before, but afterwards you are ashamed and hide yourself from God just like Adam, because deep down, you really know what is right and wrong! The desire and need for much interior rhetoric, evinces that you know your duty in truth.”...

c) The logic of temptations

The tempter approached Jesus in three different ways. Many are the graduated reflections beginning bread (bodily, sensual pleasure), and passing over the wish to please and awe to gain esteem and assure success, and finally ending in the decisive attitude of adoration. “Matthew’s sequence reflects the logic that intensifies from temptation to temptation” (*ibid.*, 29). St. Thomas said, the devil followed with Jesus the same order as in the temptation of the first man, going from “eating ... to vainglory ... to the extreme height of pride” and “he does not straight away tempt the spiritual man to grave sins, but he begins with lighter sins, so as gradually to lead him to those of greater magnitude” (*Summa Theol.*, III, 41, a.4c).

A priest who habitually satisfies his senses easily and flees the “desert” of renunciations, will seek refuge in specious arguments, frequently linked to his dignity and authority, thus abusing them. This process makes him more and more self-centered, spiritually vain; he listens less and less to his Superior, then to the co-workers, to confreres. Rebellion against God often does not need to be expressed because the conscience has become so deadened. Many wake up only after they have been disgraced or left the priesthood. Morally, the return to God is always possible, for his mercy is never ending; but great damage has evidently been done to the individual and to the Church.

3. “Be sober, be watchful”

The Lord warned the apostles clearly, and still, how deeply did Peter fall, notwithstanding his solemn promise: “Though they all fall away because of you, I will never fall away” (Mt 26:33; cf. similarly St. Thomas: Jn 11:16 and 20:25). Should Jesus’ warning, “The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak” (Mt 26:41) not be intended for us too? And such his observation – “Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe” (Jn 20:29) – not encourage us?

Later, in his humility the prince of the Apostles took it all to heart and warns us: