
“Could you not watch one hour with Me?”

b) The Cross was the reason for His coming

That not just Peter, but all were equally shocked at their Master’s suffering, is evident from the fact that He spoke to all of His disciples and even to the multitude these three conditions of His imitation. The Cross was the reason for His coming; now He made it the earmark of His followers – and with the Eucharist – the stumbling block (cf. CCC 1336). He did not make Christianity easy; for He implied not only that there must be a voluntary renunciation of everything that hindered likeness with Him, but also there must be the suffering, shame, and death by the Cross. They might follow His tracks zealously as the Man of Sorrows. Fulton Sheen assures: “No disciple is called to the task that is untried. (Jesus) had taken the Cross first. Only those who were willing to be crucified with Him could be saved by the merits of His death and only those who bore a Cross could ever really understand Him” (Sheen, 185). They alone will receive the reward and be associated with the Angel when Christ comes with them in His glory, as promised them (v. 27).

4. Dear Brothers in the Priesthood!

The devil in his envy does not give up; he must be defeated. We know that the world has no answer for man’s deep questions. Hence, it is our holy duty to preach the full truth of Christ: He is the God-man and our Redeemer on the Cross. There He waits for us: He will come with his angels to grant us our reward! The Cross is the true instrument of hope, the door and way to our eternal life. The Holy Father concluded this first homily with these words: “My wish is that all of us, after these days of grace, will have the courage, yes, the courage, to walk in the presence of the Lord, with the Lord’s Cross; to build the Church on the Lord’s blood which was poured out on the Cross; and to profess the one glory: Christ crucified. And in this way, the Church will go forward.” (March 14, 2013) May we not disappoint him!

Fr. Titus Kieninger ORC

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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®**

“the only glory: Christ crucified” (Pope Francis, Mt 16:23) Vol. XIX, April, 2013

Dear Brothers in the Priesthood!

Our Holy Father Francis gave us in his first homily a comment on our next text of the Gospel on the angels. The text tells us how Peter listened to an inspiration of the fallen angel:

“From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. And Peter took him and began to rebuke him, saying, ‘God forbid, Lord! This shall never happen to you.’ But he turned and said to Peter, ‘Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me; for you do not think the things of God but those of man’” (Mt 16:21-23).

The Holy Father said about Peter’s reaction on the day after his election:

“The same Peter who professed Jesus Christ, now says to him: You are the Christ, the Son of the living God. I will follow you, but let us not speak of the Cross. That has nothing to do with it. I will follow you on other terms, but without the Cross. When we journey without the Cross, when we build without the Cross, when we profess Christ without the Cross, we are not disciples of the Lord, we are worldly: we may be bishops, priests, cardinals, popes, but not disciples of the Lord” (March 14, 2013).

1. What happened?

It is a dramatic moment. Jesus drew the disciples’ attention to their “little faith” and then asked them very directly: “Who do you say that I am?” (Mt 16:8-15).

a) The rock of the Church

Here, as often, Peter answers in the name of all, and not without special assistance from Heaven: “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” (v. 16). Jesus confirmed not only the answer, but also the special grace Peter received: “Blessed are you, Simon Barjona! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven” (v. 17).

Then Jesus made Peter the rock of His Church: “I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the powers of death shall not prevail against it” (v. 18).

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

b) The challenge of the Cross

Having set the foundation stone securely, Jesus began to show his disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, suffer and be killed. Peter still had ringing in his ears his nomination as well as the assurance of the indestructibility of the Church. The threat to the life of Jesus provoked all his natural energy: “God forbid, Lord! This shall never happen to you.” (v. 22). Jesus, however turned to him and said: “Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me; for you do not *think* the things of God but those of man” (v. 23).

2. The Confrontation

a) According to Peter “it is truly right and just...”

There can be many reasons which explain Peter’s reaction:

It might have been just the natural reaction against suffering when it threatens life. More so, when a beloved person suffers. And the person in question here is the Son of God who should be struck down by suffering and death!

Further, suffering and death are consequences of sin. But how far should the Most Holy and Innocent One be touched by it, the Anointed of God, the Messiah?

Peter may have felt the need to prove he wanted to assume the responsibility Jesus had just entrusted to him;

Jesus has just established his Church. Peter may fear, that with the death of Jesus all would be finished, and therefore he thinks this has to be avoided; he has to enter and defend him,

Or, his calling may have inflated and confused him as Fulton Sheen commented: “Peter (was) puffed up with the authority that had been given him...” (*Life of Christ*, 1958, 184); etc.

We are all moved by hope. Life should grow and develop. In the eyes of Peter, the Church can not be started and a few moments later be destroyed. Although Peter did not yet think of filled churches and large buildings, nor about great success in the eyes of the world, his reaction can be completely justified in terms of justice: “Give to God what belongs to God.” Give Him all glory and honor due Him as Our Creator and Lord. Who would dare oppose God? But, is not this precisely what Peter himself was doing: Did he not contradict the Lord? Did he not oppose himself to God’s thoughts? Did he not dare to speak up and contradict Him? Peter answered quickly; did he listen carefully? Should he not have asked first for an explanation instead of opposing directly?

b) Keep man away from God and God away from man

Even though these reasons are natural, Satan stands behind them, urging and manipulating Peter. It suffices to insist on the natural, the “reasonable” to set oneself against God and His supernatural plans.

Satan inspires us to seek paradise not in the life hereafter, but here and now below on earth, in a life free from suffering, from the Cross; this *will separate*

people from God, from striving for holiness and union with Christ, from the Church and the sacraments as the supernatural means of salvation.

Further, Satan wants to *keep God away from man* and Christ from the Cross: Precisely because of His holiness, God should not come close to man’s sinfulness and Christ should not come into contact with suffering and death. This would redeem man from sin and free him from the power of the fallen spirits. Therefore, this must be avoided, and Peter as the new leader would be the most efficacious instrument.

“Not to redeem was Satan’s mind; to have the crown without the Cross was Satan’s spirit.” And Peter, “in an unguarded moment ... had let Satan in his heart... and thought it was unworthy of Christ to suffer” (Sheen, 184f).

c) But, “you are not on the side of God”

When we listen again to Jesus, then we realize, that He speaks of a “must”. He came to fulfill the Will of His Father (cf. Heb 10:7). He came to fulfill what was foretold by Moses and all the prophets” (Lk 24:27). He came to redeem man from sin which can only be achieved by shedding His blood in expiation (cf. Heb 9:22). Bl. John Paul II asked once in His Catechesis on Jesus (August 31, 1988, # 8): Why is the Cross the highest power and wisdom of God? There is only one answer, he said: “God shows his love for us in that Christ died for us while we were yet sinners” (Rm 5:8; cf. Jn 15:13).

God is love. And as the sinner withholds freely, but unjustly, the love he owes God, so divine justice requires love triumphant through death in order to restore this love offended by the depth of sin. Who can understand this? Fulton Sheen remarks: “Only by Divine illumination did Peter or anyone else know Him to be the Son of God; but it took another Divine illumination for Peter or anyone else to know Him for the Redeemer” (Sheen, 185).

3. The Church of Christ

Jesus reacted to Peter’s answer immediately and in a vehement way: “Get behind me, Satan!” (Mt 16:23; cf. 4:10).

a) ... not the Redeemer Christ

Peter would accept the Divinity of Christ, but not the suffering Christ. “Peter would have a half Christ for the moment, the Divine Christ, but not the Redeemer Christ. But a half Christ was no Christ. He would have the Christ whose glory was announced at Bethlehem, but not the full-orbed Christ, Who would be a sacrifice for sins on the Cross” (Sheen, 184). Christ would not ascend the Cross, and men would not rise redeemed. In our Lord’s eyes “such thoughts [were] human, carnal, and even Satanic” (Sheen, 185). Therefore, Our Lord said: “Get behind me, Satan!” The vehemence of Christ’s reaction may be well indicated by Pope Francis in the quoted homily: “When we do not profess Jesus Christ, we profess the worldliness of the devil, a demonic worldliness,” that means, there is no middle way.