
“Could you not watch one hour with Me?”

he sat down and in this form he could speak as happened on many occasions before – just recall the angel who came to Gideon “and sat under the oak at Ophrah” (Judges 6:11). This takes into account our human nature as he had to address human beings.

But then is said that “his appearance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow”. This indicates his heavenly origin: The angel comes from God, and God is light and darkness is not in Him. Also, by that, “the glory of resurrection is signified,” says St. Thomas (ibid.), the victory over the darkness and sin; and “nothing unclean” can come near Him (Ap 21:27). Further it signifies the angel’s illuminative mission towards man, introducing him into the mysterious light of God and His work.

It tells us, finally, about the angel himself, about his union with God who “is like ... fire” (Heb 12:29). Everything about him, all that we can observe regarding him, is transparent to God, for his interior shines through and appears exteriorly in “his raiment white as snow”.

This inspires holy fear and great joy to those who seek God, as these women did. But “the guards trembled and became like dead men,” - those who are indifferent, lukewarm or hostile to God can bear neither His light nor that of the holy angels.

4. Dear Brothers in the Priesthood!

Jesus’ prediction came true, He restored the temple the Jews destroyed. And He wanted the angels to give testimony. They manifested their celestial origin and thus made their testimony trustworthy. We are sent by the same Jesus with the same message as the angels! Therefore, also like the angels we should give testimony first through our life. We should let people perceive that we are coming from heaven (that is, are sent by God!) with celestial message and the graces of eternal redemption.

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. Oppl, 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®

The Angel of the Resurrection, I (Mt 28:1-8)

Vol. XX, May 2014

Dear Brothers in the Priesthood!

In our meditations on the angels in the Gospel of St. Matthew we reach the chapter about the last days of our Lord’s life on earth. This evangelist offers the most extensive description of the presence of the holy Angels at the Resurrection of Our Lord, saying what the angel did and how he appeared, and second, what he said. Let’s look to the first part.

Now after the sabbath, toward the dawn of the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the sepulcher. And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone, and sat upon it. His appearance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow. And for fear of him the guards trembled and became like dead men. But the angel said to the women, “...” So they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. (Mt 28:1-8)

1. The angelic Messenger of the Risen Lord

In our Lord’s passion, St. Matthew recalls how Jesus presented us the holy angels as persons fully submitted to the Will of the Father; His will constitutes the highest law for them (see last letter). Now, the life of Christ and His mission is fulfilled: He gave His life for the ransom of many and took it up again to complete His victory: He rose from the dead, as He had foretold on more than one occasion. Does it not pertain to His victory that He first present Himself as risen to the Father giving Him honor and glory, adoration and submission, precisely those things which rational creatures had refused by their sins. He had to present Himself to the Father with the satisfaction He gained for men by the offering of His life. That suggests one reason, why He Himself did not make the first announcement of His resurrection to His disciples, but sent an angel first, one of those who serve Him (cf. Mt 4:11).

Another reason for having an angel first announce His resurrection is because they, the pure spirits, were the first to witness the resurrection. Moreover, in their glorified state they could also fully appreciate it, whereas for man it was evidently difficult to fully grasp the resurrection. In this annunciation the angels were certainly fitting collaborators.

A further reason to entrust a good angel with this proclamation can be under-

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stood in terms of the defeat of the fallen angels: “For this purpose, the Son of God appeared, that he might destroy the works of the devil.” (1 Jn 3:8): Christ’s victory was also the holy angels’ victory: their original choice to serve the Son of God made man in all humility, is finally vindicated in a definitive way by Christ’s resurrection! Up to this point, those angels who remained faithful to God in their trial and withstood the leader of the rebellion were considered foolish, dull and like failures. But now their “foolishness” is manifest as prudence and wisdom, whereas the apparently “wise” ones now have to hear their judgment and final defeat proclaimed by their former fellow spirits, since, as we noted, God confided to them the great announcement of their Lord’s victory!

2. The “voice” of the “great earthquake”

The evangelist recalls: “Behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven.”

We are familiar with the angels as messengers even in the life of Jesus; so also towards Our Lady and St. Joseph, the Shepherds on the fields near Bethlehem and the holy Kings in guiding a star from afar etc. They descend to announce and explain, to warn and serve and strengthen (cf. CCC 333). Now, after the resurrection they are sent to announce again, not to the fearful apostles, but to the more courageous women. In this moment, the angel acted differently than on the other occasions. While the angels, until now, were *respectful* as towards Our Lady, *discrete* as towards the three holy Kings, and *almost silently speaking* as towards St. Joseph, here the coming of the angel is accompanied by an earthquake. What might have been the reason for this? It can be interpreted in various ways.

a) The jubilation of the groaning creation

When God Himself came down on “Mount Sinai”, the “Lord descended upon it in fire; and the smoke of it went up like the smoke of a kiln, and *the whole mountain quaked greatly*. And as the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him in thunder” (Ex 19:18f; cf. Heb 12:18-19). Or closer, just three days before, on the highpoint of Our Lord’s offering to the Father on the Cross, the evangelist recalls: “from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour ... and *the earth shook, and the rocks were split*; the tombs also were opened” (Mt 27:45,51-52).

Now St. Jerome thinks “that something was mentioned concerning Christ’s humanity, for that reason, it was needful that something be mentioned concerning His divinity; wherefore, when the tomb is treated, which pertains to His humanity, it is said that an earthquake occurred, to indicate that such a Man who had died could not be held beneath the earth” (St. Thomas Aq., *In Matthew* 28:2; transl. by Paul M. Kimball, 2012, s.l., p. 952). His body is not submitted any longer to the physical laws, but free of them. It indicates the transfiguration of His body at the resurrection, it “had ‘become spiritual’ and ‘glorified,’ and therefore no longer subject to the usual limitations of material beings and of a

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human body” (St. John Paul II., Catechesis, January 25, 1989). Herewith the curse which weighed down upon the material world is lifted, which was caused by man’s sin in paradise (cf. Gen 3:17). The material creation was waiting “with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God” (Rom 8:19), and now had come the time when God starts to “make all things new” (Ap 21:5). This causes the earth to shake, thus loosing the old structure and, as it were in jubilation, prepares for the new world, the new creation.

b) The earth in service of heaven

On the other hand, when we “say that the great earthquake ... was *occasioned* by the angel’s descent from heaven” (J. Hardon, *Meditations on the Angels*, Bardstown, KY 2006, 91), then various reasons can be given for that:

It might have been to wake up the sleeping guards, so that they saw the angel and trembled “for fear of him ... and became like dead men”.

It should be expressed that “the earth could not withstand an angel” (Thomas, *ibid.*), so that it was shaken to express the power of the angels. And further, the earth announces with its noise, as with a horn, the coming of an important messenger so that all people pay attention to what he will have to say.

3. The angel “came, rolled back the stone, sat upon it”

The evangelist then directs the attention to the angel himself.

a) The angel came

He tells that the angel “came and rolled back the stone, and sat upon it”. The angel shows no rush or anxiety or fear, but calm and peace; he manifests heavenly sovereignty, the divine victory. It is impressive how he came close.

- He “rolled back the stone”; he did this as if it were an ordinary and small task, although the women were wondering who could do that for them (cf. Mk 16:3). It shows, in fact, the angel’s “phenomenal power over the material world” (Hardon, *ibid.*, 91). It also demonstrates that the stone has lost its significance; it does not separate anymore, nor is there any need to protect what is healthy from what will decompose, for the One the stone closed inside had already left, and the stone could not hinder Him. “Christ had already risen: for as He went out from the closed womb, so he went out from the sealed tomb” (Thomas, *ibid.*).

- The gesture of the Angel underlines this fact: He “sat upon” the stone. It is the position of the rest after a victory, of peace after a battle, the peace which Jesus will soon give His apostles. Further, the angel manifests the patience of God, who waits for the time man is looking for Him so that He can give him His grace and love. “Sit” is also the position of teaching and sharing wisdom, and here it is the angel to tell “Mary Magdalene and the other Mary” when they had arrived the greatest news and joyful notice: “Christ is risen” and you are redeemed! Now the gates of Heaven stand open again.

b) “His appearance was like lightning”

It is clear that the angel had assumed a human form, a human body with which