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“Could you not watch one hour with Me?”

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28:9-10). – It seems that Jesus was all this time standing close by so that the women would meet Him as soon as they left the angel. Evidently, He had watched them and waited till He would be able to present Himself to them in person and tell them what He had said at the beginning of His public life to the first disciples: “Come and see” (Jn 1:39).

There seems to have been no question who He was: Either He Himself made it clear or the angelic instruction lead them to identify Him immediately – as St. John will say later, on the shore: “It is the Lord!” The Lord confirmed all that the angels had told them: He repeated it: “Then Jesus said to them, ‘Do not be afraid; go and tell my brethren to go to Galilee, and there they will see me.’” (Mt 28:9-10). Nothing more is added, as no word would be able to describe their joy and love for the One they knew and trusted through the last years and from Whom they received so many graces. God alone knows the depth of these hearts, so that only silence can express it. Such silence, however, should not be overheard. It is the strongest invitation to follow these women, their zeal, dedication, fearless risks, love and searching ... Only in such contemplative union, Pope Francis tells us, will be recovered the zeal of evangelization: “The primary reason for evangelization is the love of Jesus which we have received” (cf. *Gaudium evangelii*, # 264).

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

We don’t know how often the angel has already stood before *us* or was sitting at the side of the tabernacle, not an empty one, but one where the resurrected, Eucharistic Jesus dwells, and waits, looking for a happy encounter with us in order to speak to our heart, to inspire thoughts and awake acts of faith and love, thus filling us with spiritual joy and giving courage to announce to all the world: He lives for He is risen! Other times, it is the Lord Himself who tells us: I am here for you! Go, and tell it also to others. May the Lord and His angel find in us docile and faithful coworkers, and may the people find through us the Lord.

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](http://www.opusangelorum.org)  
Tel (313) 527-1739 Fax (313) 527-1729 [frtitus@opusangelorum.org](mailto: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®

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

Vol. XX, June 2014

### Dear Brothers in the Priesthood!

Let us once more join Mary Magdalene in the Garden where she met the Angel of the Resurrection. He revealed the victory of His Risen Lord through the earthquake and powerful appearance on one side and his calm behavior on the other side. In reaction to him, “the guards trembled and became like dead men” while the women “departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples” (Mt 28:4). John Hardon comments: “The difference between the terror of the guards and the simple directive of the angel to the women is a startling contrast between the internal dread of those estranged from God and those who are in His divine friendship” (*Meditations on the Angels*, 92). Not to the guards, but to the women who came to care for the body of Jesus, did the angel turn. He first sought to free them from their fear, which overcame them as a natural reaction of any one who encounters another being who is greater, higher or better. Then the angel said to the women,

“Do not be afraid; for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead, and behold, he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him. Lo, I have told you.” So they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. (Mt 28:1-8)

#### 1. “I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified.”

The angel manifests first his goodness with these words “Do not be afraid”, “as though he were saying: ‘You have no reason to fear, because you love Christ.’” (St. Thomas Aq., *Commentary on St. Matthew*, 28,5, transl. by Paul M. Kimball, 2012, s.l., p. 954; cf. Pope Francis, *The Joy of the Gospel*, 23). Beyond this kindness, the angel reveals his familiarity with men, because he tells the women why they were coming here: “I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified.” This reminds us of the very first apparition of an angel in Sacred Scripture: the angel who went to meet Hagar “by a spring of water in the wilderness,” addressing her by name, “Hagar, maid of Sarai, ...” (Gen 16:7ff). The angels are “all ministering spirits sent forth to serve, for the sake of those who are to obtain salvation” (Heb 1:14). Although the angels “do not know our thoughts, except by divine revelation; or by a sign” like “by gestures of the

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body” (St. Thomas, *ibid.*), they observe men attentively in their service, they “read” the gestures and countenance, actions and reactions; they perceive their emotions and passions, fear and joys; they listen to their conversations and so, here, the angel knows that they seek “Jesus who was crucified”.

The reference to “Jesus crucified” took the last fear from the women concerning the angel’s identity. He is a good angel, he is familiar with all that happens and refers to Jesus! He also does not hesitate to put his finger on the wound in their heart, the death of the Beloved Jesus. The angel revealed himself, generally, as familiar with men’s life and situation so that he can be called men’s friend and companion. The good angels care, comprehend and are faithful. Aware of this, it is significant to realize that the angel took the initiative, for the disciples had in a real sense “lost” their God in his death, for we may so describe this moment of their desolation, when they find themselves in the dark and do not know what to do or where to turn. The Angel takes the initiative like an experienced “elder brother”, all the more so by the grace of God and his mission.

### 2. “He is not here; for he has risen, as he said...”

Now, first, the angel shocks the women, disappoints them saying: “He is not here;” but immediately he clears the enigma and explains: “for he has risen”. And this is surely, after the annunciation of the Incarnation, the greatest news ever announced. The angel further bolsters his affirmation. First he refers to Jesus’ own words predicting His Passion, Death and Resurrection: “as he said”! They should now recall His prediction of the Passion and Resurrection, for “if his word and promise are revealed as true, then all his other words and promises possess the power of truth that does no pass away, as he himself had proclaimed: ‘Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away’ (Mt 24:35; ...)” (St. John Paul II., *Catechesis*, March 8, 1989). The angel is not inventing ideas and “preaching” his own thoughts, but transmits authentically the word of his Lord as we priests are constantly told to do. Fidelity is one of the first characteristics of the holy angels; they are witnesses; this is the basis for their trustworthiness and the reason why they merit obedience from men.

But the angel does not stop at requesting their faith in his witness and in the Lord’s words, he also points— like his master did during His public teaching — to the works (cf. Jn 5:36). The angel invited these women to convince themselves: “Come, see the place where he lay.” The stone was removed, now the women had free access to the tomb. And the tomb was empty! Magdalene did not find Jesus’ body where she herself had seen Nicodemus and the others place it. Now, she does not see his body there, and this could not be because someone had stolen Him (for they entered immediately after the stone was removed for the first time!), but because He had triumphed over death in the battle and had risen back to life by Himself.

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It is as if the angel would take them by the hand and lead them slowly into this new dimension of reality, the mystery of resurrected life. This is a frequently observed characteristic of the holy angels, namely that they explained all that can be explained, so that it is easier for the listeners to believe that which surpasses explanation (cf. Mt 1:20-22; 2:13).

### 3. “Then go quickly and tell his disciples...”

The angel did not wait till they had entered the tomb and confirmed his words, but immediately pronounced the mission assigned to them.

#### a) The missionary task

“Then go quickly,” the angel told the women, and “tell his disciples,” bring them the news! Be the first - or rather, after the angel -, the second missionaries with the good message of the resurrection. Be the new evangelizer, who once more – after Our Lady’s dialogue with St. Gabriel – repair the damage caused by the first conversation of a woman with the fallen angel. “Tell his disciples that (Jesus) – the New Adam -- has risen from the dead”! He is alive! – Of course, the women know what it means to be alive, but what does it mean for one who was dead, and who had died in such a cruel way? Surely, the angel, inspired confidence and not doubt, courage and not despair. But what should they understand with the fact that the body of Jesus is not here because “he has risen”?

Again, the angel did not pause and give them time to understand what goes beyond comprehension anyway. He continues: “Behold, he is going before you to Galilee”. Galilee was his and their homeland; far away from this busy city of Jerusalem where all the Jews come together (cf. Acts 2:9-11); in Galilee they would be in peace...

“There you will see him!” The angel first turned the women’s attention to the present empty tomb, which, however, can be understood only by knowing the past, “the place where he was laid”; now he turns their attention to the future: He assured them “You will see him!” It is a prophesy which will prove true just as the former Prophesy of the resurrection had come true at the very site where they stood.

And finally, the angel gives, as it were, his signature: he said “Lo, I have told you.” – This is a rare expression for an angel, speaking of himself, “I”; it is an authoritative tone as St. Gabriel emphasized towards Zechariah, saying: “I am Gabriel, who stand in the presence of God; and I was sent to speak to you” (Lk 1:19). The women, however, did not hesitate as Zechariah did. “They departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples.”

#### b) “Behold, Jesus met them”

Then, like an immediate reward, still before they were far or had even reached the disciples, they ran into Jesus: “And behold, Jesus met them and said, ‘Hail!’ And they came up and took hold of his feet and worshiped him” (Mt