

b) “... and Pray!”

“Where should we turn to in those days?” ask some. Watch for Me, “Pray!” says Jesus (cf. later, Mk 14:38), which is the second meaning of “watch,” namely “looking out for”. This admonition is now the invitation to what we saw before as concentration on God and on Him alone. Jesus turned here to His special friends, and tells them: Turn to the Father as I do and as I taught you to do. Turn also to Me. This invitation He extended explicitly to all of us as He said: “What I say to you I say to all” (Mk 13:37). We receive it from Jesus while we are still on our way: Turn to Me as I invited Peter on the stormy see “Come!” (Mt 14:29; cf. Mk 6:49-51) and as more will experience still later like Mary Magdalene or Thomas (cf. Jn 20:16,27f).

As we are lost with regard to the time of His Second Coming, we should not want to lose sight of Him in this moment; prayer can mean our “turning to Him,” directly, personally, “*ad os*” in adoration, face to face like an anticipation of the beatific vision. In “moments” of such prayer His life flows over into ours, His mind enlightens our intellect, His love awakes confidence within us. In this prayer we “meet” Him before His Second Coming, and He “is the Lord!” (Jn 21:7). In such prayer, He allows us in some way to anticipate “His day and hour.” In this prayer fear changes into trust, doubt into security and our helplessness into confident peace. In this prayer we meet the angels who went ahead of us to Him and are already with Him. In this prayer all friends of Christ join already together in adoring surrender, in praise and thanksgiving, in a union of heavenly joy.

4. Dear Brothers in the Priesthood!

We start soon the liturgical celebration of Jesus’ great love, His redeeming surrender to the Father. Let us accompany Him and also lead the souls entrusted to our care on this way to the Father through the conversion from sin to virtue, from self-love to the contemplation of God Himself. The more we succeed in this, the closer He can come and His day and hour will not take us by surprise.

Fr. Titus Kieninger

ORC

Date of our retreat this year: November 9 to 13th, 2015

ASSOCIATION OF PRIESTS

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**Association of Priests
In Opus Angelorum®**

“That hour no one knows, not even the angels” (Mk 13:32)

XXI, Feb./March 2015

Dear Brothers in the Priesthood!

It is important to our Lord that we be prepared for His Second Coming. He knows, much better than we, how decisive this moment will be for us. It will be the end of this temporality wherein we experience daily. From then on will be no repetition and no re-doing. Once in heaven, all will be perfect so that we will never get tired or disinterested, for God’s infinity opens up for us, his finite creatures. We will enter into an eternal morning, full of constant surprises which fill our limited heart again and again with joy. – There exists an alternative: it consists not in some other thing, but in the very *loss of all*, principally the absence of God; it is the yawning emptiness of hell.

Knowing this, Jesus continues solicitous so that we are prepared for that hour, the hour of His second and definitive coming.

1. Learn that we are on the way

Here he adds no further sign such as those mentioned before in society and on sun and moon (cf. Mk 13:14-25). He just wants to convince us that we are on the way towards a definitive end. The lesson of the common fig-tree before our eyes should convince us of this: “From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near.” Jesus spoke of being imminently close: “When you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, *at the very gates*.” And again: “Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away before all these things take place” (Mk 13:28-30).

It will be a very agitated time; there will be much confusion, and it will be a time of the deceiving angels – “False Christs and false prophets will arise” (Mk 13:22) – but also a time of the good angels, sent out to “gather his elect from the four winds” (Mk 13:27). There will be signs, but not yet the decisive moment. The signs should tell us, that we are in a process, and this does not allow to stand still, to accommodate in time as if it were eternal, to confuse our time with the eternity.

Jesus indicates this difference with these words: “Heaven and earth will pass away,” and that is all in this world which serves us in our physical body. “But my words will not pass away.” (Mk 13:31) Herewith, Jesus gives us an outlook into eternity, where ‘yesterday’ and ‘tomorrow’ no longer exist. Then we will enjoy

“Could you not watch one hour with Me?”

the unceasing present, the definitive form of existence, the perfect way of being! The great theologian and observer of our time, Romano Guardini, concludes his reflection about “the end”, saying:

“If we speak here of the nearness of the End, we do not mean nearness in the sense of time, but nearness as it pertains to the essence of the End, for the essence man’s existence is now nearing an absolute decision. Each and every consequence of that decision bears within it the greatest potentiality and the most extreme danger.” (R. Guardini, *The end of the Modern World. A Search for Orientation*, Sheed and Ward, New York, NY, 1956, 133).

What does he want to say then if all this does not tell us the moment it will happen? God wants to tell us this first: Behind the fig tree and all the other events is someone, it is He, and He determines that all tends to an end. And the second immense lesson behind this temporal insecurity, in this step out of our temporality into the unchangeable eternity, is the call to Him Who is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and end, the One who is out of time: His “words will not pass away”.

2. Of that day or that hour no one knows, not even the angels

Before we try to comprehend this, let us first stop for a moment “on the way” so to speak, namely with the holy angels. Jesus included them saying: “Of that day or that hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.” (Mk 13:32)

a) “... not even the angels in heaven”

All is about the Second Coming of Jesus “to judge the living and the dead.” But, beyond the signs which are just indications and not really the eschatological fact, we really don’t know when He will come, as said here, not day nor hour; nor do we know where or how He will come. What does this mean?

This situation recalls the trial of the Angels. It was revealed to them simply – just like we here – that God had the plan to become man (cf. CCC 414; cf. St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theol.*, p. I, q. 57, a. 5 ad 3). This was enough to ask them for the act of acceptance and submission, which some refused. It was not necessary to inform them about all the details, not when nor where nor how or through whom He planned to become man. They had not much to consider, so they looked at Him and themselves. Consequently, the purpose in the trial of the angels was that they recognize God’s infinite Majesty and Divine Sovereignty and accept their limited littleness and existential dependence upon Him and submit to Him. Those who failed to opt for this basic response of humble, trusting faith in God turned to the plan and started to discuss it although they did not know much more than its idea. This makes it still clearer that the critical point in the angels’ trial was simply the submission to God. St. Michael brought it to the point when he shouted out among them: “Who is like GOD!”

“Could you not watch one hour with Me?”

b) Like the angels

Now, with regard to the Second Coming of Christ we are in a situation like that of the angels: We are asked to pierce through the cluster of circumstances, which, while they evince the fact that the end is to come, do not in any way shed light on the moment, and so, to fix our gaze upon Christ and bow before Him in holy submission. Since we only know some indicative events which will occur beforehand but not the real time, there is not much to discuss, to suggest, or to question, but there remains the rather stark choice: Do I want to accept Him as He is and as He bids – where and when and how – like the good angels, or do I want to give up my interest in Him and turn away towards some creatures and to my Self as the fallen angels did?

Those angels who passed their trial, opting for the generous surrender to the One who by the very fact of our creation demonstrates His goodness and proves that we are called back to Him, those faithful, humble angels can help us stand our trial too in the fitting manner. They inspire thoughts which lead to the recognition of GOD as He is, and grant man no more value than he actually has as a creature. They possess the humility we need and thus are the best helpers in this most decisive situation.

Therefore, even if the angels also didn’t and don’t know the day and the hour of Jesus coming, they know how to dispose us for it. If we just turn to them and ask for their help, they will protect us from any unreasonable discussion, from any unjustified, impudent questions; they will present us Our Lady’s humility and St. Michael’s example of adoration and surrender. They are solicitous that Jesus’ counsel which He Himself added here may echo in our conscience and heart indefatigably: “Watch and pray!”

3. “Watch and pray!”

This is how Jesus continues. He says: “*Videte vigilate et orate*” (acc. to the Vulgate), “Take heed, watch and pray; for you do not know when the time will come. Watch therefore -- for you do not know when the master of the house will come, ... in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or in the morning ... And what I say to you I say to all: Watch.” (Mk 13:33.35.37)

a) “Watch ...”

Jesus repeats three times “Watch!” In the first sense we have to see it as the conclusion of this long conversation which Jesus had here “privately” with “Peter and James and John and Andrew,” sitting “on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple” (Mk 13:3; cf. 1:16-20,29). Related to all the “apocalyptic” description, this “watching” means “discern”, be careful, don’t trust easily and everyone for the “father of lies,” “the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world -- he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him” (Ap 12:9). And there are many “who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness ...” (Is 5:20).