

Consecration to the Holy Angels

Contributed by Opus Angelorum
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O Holy Angels of God, here, in the presence of the Triune God and in the love of Jesus Christ, my Lord and Redeemer, I, N.N., a poor sinner, want to make a covenant with you, who are his servants, so that in union with you, I might work with humility and fortitude for the glory of God and the coming of his Kingdom. Therefore, I implore you to assist me, especially in the adoration of God and of the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar; in the contemplation of the word and the salvific works of God; in the imitation of Christ and in the love of his Cross in a spirit of expiation; in the faithful fulfillment of my mission within the Church, serving humbly after the example of Mary, my heavenly Mother, your Queen. And you, my good guardian angel, who continually behold the face of our Father in heaven, God entrusted me to you from the very beginning of my life. I thank you with all my heart for your loving care. I commit myself to you and promise you my love and fidelity. I beg you: protect me against my own weakness and against the attacks of the wicked spirits; enlighten my mind and my heart so that I may always know and accomplish the will of God; and lead me to union with God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen. The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith approved this Consecration prayer on May 31, 2000 for use in Opus Angelorum. Consecration to the holy angels is a special statement of devotion which is founded on the baptismal grace. The communion of the faithful in Christ comes through Baptism. This communion of grace in Christ is the foundation for the devotion and Consecration to the holy angels. The Second Vatican Council teaches: "In full consciousness of this communion of the whole Mystical Body of Jesus Christ, the Church in its pilgrim members...has honored with great respect the memory of the dead... The Church has always believed that the apostles and Christ's martyrs...are closely united with us in Christ; she has always venerated them, together with the Blessed Virgin Mary and the holy angels, with a special love, and has asked piously for the help of their intercession" (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium* 50).

This communion finds its perfect statement in the celebration of the liturgy, for "in her liturgy, the Church joins with the angels to adore the thrice-holy God" (Catechism of the Catholic Church 335; cf. Heb 12:22). "With all the warriors of the heavenly army we sing a hymn of glory to the Lord" (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 8), and "it is especially in the sacred liturgy that our union with the heavenly Church is best realized" (*Lumen Gentium* 50). This communion evidently also embraces the angels, for they, too, have Christ as their Head and are members of his Mystical Body (cf. Eph 1:20-23; Col 2:10; St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theol.* III. 8, 4, c). Divine Worship and Communion The Consecration to the angels aims at consolidating and cultivating this communion. In the Consecration prayer, we turn to the holy angels in order to make a covenant with them. In this covenant-relationship, we primarily wish to venerate God in union with the holy angels. Additionally, we also wish to honor the angels, giving them thanks and imploring their help for us and for the Church. Given that angels and men are both "fellow servants" of the Lord (cf. Rev 19:10; 22:9), we, too, in the measure of our modest forces, wish to contribute in collaboration with them to the coming of the Kingdom of God. Since this mission is common both to angels and men, devotion to the holy angels, by its very nature, gives impetus to the common praise of God and to a joint effort for the salvation of souls. Hence, in the history of the Church, there have been numerous confraternities in honor of the angels. Even though the members may be physically separated from one another, they live in the awareness of being united in spirit, for the Consecration is a covenant, and a covenant builds community. Consequently, we, too, wish to live this covenant in the community of the Work of the Holy Angels, giving one another support, help, and encouragement. The Consecration to the holy angels involves a serious obligation.

Therefore, it should only be made after an adequate preparation, and normally, it is combined with the admission into an ecclesiastically recognized association of the Opus Angelorum, as for example, into the Confraternity of the Guardian Angels. The Consecration to the holy angels has a twofold structure. In the first part, the spirituality of the Opus Angelorum is laid down as the governing principle for the covenant with the angels and our strivings. Only those who are determined to pursue this lofty goal should consider making this Consecration. In the second part, we address our own guardian angel within the scope of the mission entrusted to him by God, namely, the mission of educating and sanctifying his charge. This second part is also suited as a private Consecration to the guardian angel for those who seek to foster their union with him. In order that the prayer and the inherent covenant with the angels become fruitful in the spiritual life of the members of the Opus Angelorum, we now wish to reflect on the content of this Consecration and also to expound why the holy angels themselves earnestly want to enter into a covenant with us. Relation between Consecration and Covenant The Consecration to the holy angels as a covenant corresponds to the Biblical theology of the covenant: It is a sacred contract, a solemn promise, in which our mutual relations and obligations are stipulated and agreed upon. In Sacred Scripture the covenant existed above all between God and the people. Joshua mediated the renewal of this covenant. God promised blessing and salvation and the people, in turn, consented, saying: We will serve the Lord. Then Joshua said to the people: "You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen the Lord to serve him." And they said: "We are witnesses" (Josh 24:21-22, 24-25). Covenants were also established between the people and the king: the people made a covenant with David before Yahweh, and they anointed him king (cf. 1 Chron 11:1-3). Further, covenants were made between individuals: Jonathan made a covenant with David, because he loved him as his own soul (1 Sam 18:3). Later, David recalled their bond and referred the covenant ultimately to God: Deal kindly with your servant, for you (Jonathan) have brought your servant into a covenant of the Lord with you (1 Sam 20:8). The agreement established between Tobit and Raphael is also suggestive of a covenant with the angel, who willingly accompanied his son Tobias on his successful journey (cf. Tob 5:6, 15-17). Tobias, after returning from his journey, indicates, at least indirectly, the fruit of this covenant and says to his father: It would do no harm to give him half of the possessions brought back with me (Tob 12:2). The mutual relationship which arose from the covenant did not exhaust itself merely in the fulfillment of certain obligations, but also demanded friendship, love, and fidelity. In this covenant with the holy angels, we strive after

a more intimate union with them in love for God; in union with them, we also hope to be able to work more efficaciously for the glory of God and the coming of his kingdom. For "God willed the diversity of his creatures and their own particular goodness, their interdependence and their order" (Catechism of the Catholic Church 335).

Communion of Angels and Men We endeavor to live this sacred bond with the angels in a fourfold way: in adoration, in contemplation, in expiation, and in the apostolate. These are at the same time the four fundamental bearings of the spiritual life in the Work of the Holy Angels.

1) Assistance in the Adoration of God First of all, we hope for the holy angels' assistance, so that, as true worshipers of the Father (cf. Jn 4:23-24), we might reverently conduct our lives in the presence of God. In particular, we hope for their assistance in the celebration of the liturgy and in the adoration of the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar. We wish to strive to perform these exercises in a conscious communion with them. Pope John Paul II instructs, "The angels in heaven always see the face of my Father who is in Heaven" (Mt 18:10). "To see the face of the Father always" in this way is the highest manifestation of the adoration of God. One can say that this constitutes the "heavenly liturgy" carried out in the name of all the universe, with which the earthly liturgy of the Church is incessantly joined, especially in its culminating moments. Let it suffice here to record the act with which the Church, every day and every hour, in all the world, before the beginning of the Eucharist Prayer in the center of the Mass, makes appeal "to the Angels and Archangels" to sing the glory of the thrice-holy God, uniting herself thus to those first adorers of God, in the worship and the loving knowledge of the unspeakable mystery of his holiness (General Audience, August 6, 1986, emphasis mine). The perfection of this communion of prayer is represented already in the Book of Revelation when the twenty-four Elders, together with the angels, offer in the presence of the Lamb the sacrifice of praise, which are the prayers of the Church (cf. Rev 5:8-9). Through the Lamb, the heavenly and the earthly liturgy are truly joined into a single liturgy; heaven and earth are united in Christ's sacrifice of praise, Who has seated himself at the right hand of God in Heaven. This adoration of the Lamb is also accomplished in the Eucharistic adoration on earth, likewise in communion with the holy angels. Before the Incarnation, the angels sang God's praise in heaven. Even though they were utterly filled with pure and ardent love for God, their creaturely song of praise did not suffice to pay God due homage because his majesty is infinite. Only when the Word of the Father descended and became Flesh and as our High Priest raised his voice in praise of the Father, did a song of praise that was truly worthy of God ascend to heaven for the first time. The angels, too, descended in order to ascend again to heaven in the Gloria in excelsis Deo, in the praise of Christ. This was the beginning of the common, never-ending song of praise by angels and men united in Christ.

2) Assistance in the Contemplation of the Word of God The holy angels are instruments (ministers) and witnesses to the words and saving works of God in the history of salvation. They were, for example, present at the birth of Christ, at his crucifixion, resurrection and ascension. They communicate to us in the measure of our receptivity the light of these mysteries, which they perceive in a more perfect way than we do. How is this mediation of grace achieved in us? St. John of the Cross describes this ministry of the angels, saying: (The divine wisdom) descends from God through the first hierarchies unto the last, and from these last unto men. It is rightly and truly said in Scripture that all the works of the angels and the inspirations they impart are also accomplished or granted by God. For ordinarily these works and inspirations are derived from God by means of the angel... This communication is like a ray of sunlight shining through many windows places one after the other...(E)ach window communicates this light to the other with a certain modification according to its own quality (Dark Night, II, 12:3). This is why the communication of grace by the angels and saints always has a personal character. Thus, for example, the help rendered by St. Michael the Archangel has a different nuance than that of St. Gabriel the Archangel. The angels also contribute substantially to our progress and joy in the spiritual life. For through the light of meditation, which they communicate, spiritual joy comes to us; conversely, when we neglect meditation, this may give rise to aridity, desolation, and lethargy. St. Thomas explains the reason why: "It is written (Ps 38:4): 'In my meditation a fire shall flame out.' But spiritual fire causes devotion. Thus, meditation is the cause of devotion!" (Summa Theol. II-II. 82, 3, sc). Elsewhere, he shows that the task of all the angelic hierarchies consists in making us like unto Christ, by purging, illuminating, and leading us to union with God (cf. De Div. Nom. IV, 1 § 286). Thus, they help man to become configured to Christ. The more we ask for this grace and actively cooperate, the more efficacious their help will prove itself to be in our lives. The angels rejoice for Christ's sake when they can help a soul on its path to perfection. It is also a special joy for them personally, for as St. Thomas writes, The ministries of the holy angels are useful to the beatified angels inasmuch as these are a certain part of their beatitude, for it pertains to the very idea of perfection to pour this out over others. Their joy increases over the salvation of those who are saved through their ministry, as we have it in Lk 15:10: "There is joy among the angels of God over one sinner who repents" (Summa Theol. I.62, 9, 2m, and 3m).

3) Assistance in the Imitation of the Crucified Savior While the angels, by reason of their spiritual nature and heavenly beatitude, are far ahead of us in the first two fundamental bearings of adoration and contemplation, we have, in a certain way, an advantage over them in the imitation of the Crucified Lord. For the Son of God assumed our nature, and only man can participate in his redemptive suffering. Accordingly, St. Therese of the Child Jesus says that if the angels could envy us in some way, it would be our capacity to suffer for and with Jesus (see letters n. 83; poems n. 10) Just as the angels ministered to the Lord after the temptation in the desert (cf. Mk 1:14) and just as an angel offered the chalice of strength to Our Lord in his agony in the Garden at the commission of the Father (Lk 22:43), so we also may be confident that the Father will send us the angels as helpers and assistance in the hour when we are put to the test and have to carry the Cross. Though Mary and the angels intervene in our behalf even without our calling on them because they have this mission directly from God, it is still important that we ourselves should ask for this angelic help, last but not least, so as to be receptive to it. St. Alphonsus Liguori teaches that the grace of petition is the first grace which is bestowed upon us before all other graces. Further, petitioning makes man humble. The more humbly we beg for help, the more efficacious grace will be and the more copiously it will flow, for he who has will be given even more: This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles. The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him, and delivers them (Ps 33:7-8). In this third fundamental bearing of expiation, we learn the science of the Cross at the hand of

the angels, namely, that love which bears suffering is the greatest and most noble force and that this love alone can gather in the harvest for God and gain the victory for him. The angels are especially concerned that we offer our prayers and sacrifices on behalf of priests, since priests, by virtue of the power of their sacramental ordination, mediate far greater graces to the souls than the angels.

4) Assistance in the Mission and Office in the Church Each member of the Body of Christ has its own proper mission or task to fulfill for the welfare of the Church. Preeminent is the concern to proclaim and propagate the Kingdom of God. What St. Lawrence of Brindisi, Doctor of the Church, says concerning the duty of a preacher can also be applied to the duty of the faithful: "Preaching, therefore, is a duty that is apostolic, angelic, Christian, divine. ... It (the Word of God) is the source of faith, hope, charity..." (Office of Readings of July 21). We are to confess our faith in word and deed; the angel, in turn, will let his light shine and offer his help. Faith, as St. Paul underscores, comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes by the preaching of Christ (Rom 10:17). But this will not be realized without the light of the Spirit (cf. 1 Cor 12:3). The faithful have the duty to proclaim the Word of God. The proclamation, however, remains futile without the grace of illumination. Along these lines, St. Thomas teaches that the communication of the truths of faith comes principally "by the angels, by whom Divine things are revealed to men. Hence, the angels have some part in the enlightenment of faith" (Summa Theol. I.111, 1, 1m). St. Francis de Sales made this truth his own by invoking the angels of his listeners before every sermon for help. Consequently, he is known to have helped more than 70,000 individuals return to the Catholic faith. The mission of spreading the Kingdom of God is a joint work of angels and men, whereby man is the visible servant of Christ. The Christian confesses the faith by his words and his life. Even in the faithful and humble fulfillment of minor duties, after the example of Mary and at the hand of the holy angels, we can satisfy this duty. For it is not the many words that convince but the lived example. It is not so decisive what we do but how we do it, for it is Divine Love that will transform and save the world. Only where humility reigns can our fellow-servant, the angel, shed his light upon us and our neighbors, for the glorification of God and in witness of the truth. In this way, we can understand in a broader sense the word: Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven (Mt 5:16). When we consider that God's grace is made perfect in weakness, we will be able, like the holy Apostle Paul, to boast of our weaknesses, knowing that this is the way that leads to salvation (cf. 2 Cor 12:9). In the awareness of this frailty, we are more inclined to call on the holy angels for help. With this angelic help our work and mission will become a building stone for the Kingdom of God on earth.

Why the Holy Angels Want the Covenant The angels were not only created for their own sake but also for man's sake (cf. Col 1:16). At the beginning of creation, the holy angels assented to this plan of Divine wisdom in all humility, thereby becoming like unto the Son of God, Who came to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many (Mt 20:28). Moreover, they "accompanied him in the fulfillment of his salvific mission in regard to mankind" (John Paul II., General Audience of July 30, 1986). The principal reason, however, why they want to enter into a covenant with us lies in the Divine counsel to unite all things in and under Christ (cf. Eph 1:10 and Col 1:20). So it is a joy for the angels to make a covenant with us, and what great benefits will we enjoy when we are allowed to share in their love and Divine worship!

Special Bond with the Guardian Angel The guardian angel is a special gift of God's love. Were we given the opportunity to choose among all the holy angels a special companion and helper, we could not find a better companion than the one whom God in his infinite wisdom and love has already chosen for us. God alone knows the secret of our life. He alone, our Creator and Redeemer, knows all our strong points and weaknesses, our vocation and our trials, our Cross and the glory intended for us. Foreseeing all this, he chose our guardian angel from all eternity, him for us and us for him. The Lord tells us: Behold, I send my angel to guard you on the way and to bring you to the place which I have prepared (Ex 23:20, reading of the feast of the Guardian Angels). Thus, the guardian angel is for us the door to the world of the angels and in a certain sense a porter of heaven. Appointed by God for us, the words of St. Thomas, referred to in the Catechism of the Catholic Church, are particularly true of him: "The angels take part in all our good works" (Summa Theol. I.114, 3, 3m, cf. CCC 350). He is our best and most faithful friend, the only one who, besides Jesus and Mary, continuously accompanies and guards us throughout our whole life. His first solicitude, his first intercession is always for his charge, who is the "talent" entrusted to him, which he would like to return to the Lord with a hundredfold "profit" at the end of our life. Day and night, he is indefatigably concerned about our welfare and eternal salvation. He works unflinchingly to achieve our purification, illumination, and perfection. Concerning these three hierarchical activities of the angels, St. Bonaventure writes: "Purification leads to peace; illumination to truth; perfection to charity. Once the soul has perfectly achieved these three, this will make its beatitude; insofar, however, as it is now walking along this way, it will obtain the growth of its merits" (De Triplici Via, prologue 1). The guardian angel is a most fitting help against the evil spirits, who tempt and oppress us, for already at the beginning, our guardian angel, under the command of St. Michael the Archangel, had his share in the victory over the evil spirits. As a spiritual being, he can easily discern the tempter and drive him away in the force of grace. But when God permits the enemy to sift us like Job (1:12 2:6), like Peter (Lk 22:31) or like Paul (2 Cor 12:7-8), we are not deprived, for all that, of the strengthening assistance of the holy guardian angel. With his help, we are always able to remain faithful to God. How much we owe our guardian angel! Who could actually afford to pay him an adequate wage? Such faithful love can only be requited by fidelity, love, and trust. Therefore, we gladly commit ourselves to him and promise him our love and fidelity. When we are weak, he who continually beholds the face of our Father in heaven (Mt 18:10) is firmly and immutably anchored in God. He wishes to impart this firmness to us, in helping us, by means of the light of grace given to him, to believe more firmly in God, to trust more confidently in his help and to love God and our neighbors more selflessly. For all eternity we shall be united with our guardian angel in intimate friendship and reign with him in the Kingdom of God. Thus we can understand the words of St. Thomas Aquinas: "A guardian angel is assigned to each man as long as he is a wayfarer. When, however, he arrives at the end of life he no longer has a guardian angel; but in the kingdom he will have an angel to reign with him" (Summa Theol. I. 113, 4c).

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