

THE FRIENDS OF ANGELS

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ST Thomas reminds us of the following words of St Bernard: 'The first and chiefest contemplation is the marvelling of God's majesty'. We learn from St Ambrose that 'Glory is the shining Fact praised', and that the splendour of the Holy Trinity is the glory of God in himself. It therefore follows that man's end of life, which is the rendering of glory to God, is at once the most beneficial mode of ministering to his own happiness—and that of all others, since his relationship to God involves his relationship with all other men—and the greatest act of friendship he can render to his Creator. 'Charity', says St Thomas, 'inspires the soul with a sovereign love of him, who is supremely the object of love.' (Cf. St Thomas, *Q. Disp. de Boet. in Comm.*, a. 12.) He says also that 'Charity is friendship of man with God founded upon the fellowship of everlasting happiness', and also that 'Charity is friendship between man and God'. (II-II, 23, 1.) Christ who is God said to his disciples: 'Abide in my love' (John 15, 9) and 'I will not now call you servants, but I have called you friends'. (Id. 15.) He extended his invitation to mystical union still further: as the cells to the body, as the branches to the vine, so are the children of the Church likened in their intimate union with the Word made flesh; but he who came to restore to us the power to share in the divine nature, which we had lost by the fall of our first parents, also prayed: 'That they may be one, as thou, Father in me, and I in thee: that they also may be one in us.' (id. 16, 11 & 21.)

No truer act of charity can be conceived of than to help each other to attain so glorious an end as intimate union with the all-beautiful and all-wise: the Uncreated . . . with him who is perfect love. St Thomas expressly teaches that 'since the saints after death see the Word, the intercession of the heavenly hierarchy is of the utmost value to man', and Christ himself has taught us that 'there shall be joy before the angels of God upon one sinner doing penance'. (Luke 15, 10.)

‘When it is a question of dispensing the mysteries of God, then one angel can teach another by clarifying, illumining, and perfecting. And in this sense the angels do in some sort share in the active life as long as this world lasts, for they are occupied in ministering to the inferior creation.’ Now the holy angels, having once been tested, possess for ever the supreme joy of the beatific vision, and they cry: ‘Amen: Benediction, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving and honour, and power, and strength to our God for ever and ever, Amen.’ (Apoc. 7, 12.) Communion with these holy adorers of the Blessed Trinity will surely serve to initiate us ever more deeply and fully in that ‘clear knowledge of God with praise’—which is glory. Only one created being can be excepted when we affirm that the holy and angelic host are, of all God’s creations, most able profoundly to influence our minds and hearts to move towards that heaven on earth with its communion with the very source of joy—the Blessed Trinity.

‘Theologians agree that our Lady, since she is the Mother of the Incarnate Word, immeasurably exceeds by her grace, and therefore by her glory also (since glory in heaven is the fruit of grace on earth) the glory of all angels together.’ (*O Felix Culpa*, by Dom B. Webb, O.S.B.)

We have seen that to give glory to God is the highest act of love man can perform towards him, and it therefore follows that the highest acts of love that men and angels can perform for one another is to teach this sublimest art of how to give glory to God through ‘the shining Fact praised’.

What is love? We tend, as human beings, to find difficulty in disentangling the idea of love from something inextricably bound up with the senses, with which, however, love in essence has no necessary connection; that is to say, God is Spirit, and God is love, and angels are spirits whose sole functions, in direct service of God, are thinking and willing, or knowing and loving; yet, as God, they have ‘no passions, parts or feelings’. Far from being cold in their loving, however, they are spoken of in Scripture as flames of fire (Heb. 1, 7), and the highest choirs of all are referred to even by poets as ‘burning seraphim’, ‘flaming spirits of God’. Although the angels, above all the cherubim and seraphim,

'are not fiery substances' since they are pure spirit, 'fire well expresses the light of (their) knowledge and the fervour of (their) love'. (Husselein, s.J. *The Spirit World About Us*.) Père Boudon in his *Devotion to the Nine Choirs of Angels* tells us that 'St Denis, who wrote so lovingly of them, delights in assuming the title of *Philangelus*, that is to say, "The Friend of Angels".' A year or two ago a campaign was started of *Philangeli*, or 'Friends of Angels', with the object of marshalling by prayer and invocation *all* the holy angels against *all* the 'principalities and powers of darkness and spirits of wickedness in high places' (Ephes. 6, 12). Persecutors of the early Church, such as Nero and Diocletian, are outstripped by the enemies of the Church in our times: they were, in any case, ignorant pagans, whereas diabolically engendered mental and physical torments are perpetrated by those who have, in knowledge, been christianised. We have only to study both Old and New Testament accounts of angelic intervention in the affairs of men to realise that angels will often deal more emphatically with the enemies of God than Christian penitents might dare to do.

The *Philangeli* campaign, however, is not being set in motion only to call up reinforcements to assist in our wrestling against the devil and his legions; the swiftest way of overcoming evil is the wielding of the invincible weapon of love. 'Love is strong as death', whereas 'jealousy is hard as hell'. (*Canticles*.) It is beyond shadow of doubt that communion with the 'holy and angelic host' cannot fail to deepen our interior life, quicken our spiritual apprehensions, purify our senses, clarify our knowledge and strengthen our fidelity of purpose; leading us eventually to what has been described as 'that pure act . . . or complete adoration "too full for sound or foam".' We cannot expect the two highest choirs who are occupied with perpetual adoration of the blessed Trinity to engage in such reassuringly homely interludes as the superintending of Daniel's dinner by the simple process of transporting Habacuc by the hair of his head. Nor will the cherubim and seraphim participate in the charmingly domestic details, such as the journey of Tobias, the wedding of Sarah, the extracting of the gall of the fish that healed Tobias's blindness, and the incitement of the household dog

joyously to wag his tail—in all of which the great Archangel Raphael became so delightfully involved at God's behest. We can, however, strive to unite our prayers before the blessed Sacrament with the adoration of the cherubim and seraphim before the blessed Trinity. It is said that an angel taught the following prayer to the children of Fatima at our Lady's command: 'O my God, I believe, I adore, I hope and I love you; I beg pardon for all those who do not believe, nor adore, nor hope, nor love you'. Or again, they were to begin with: 'Most Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, I adore you profoundly . . .', and then they were to offer the blessed Sacrament present in all the tabernacles of the world praise in reparation for sin and the conversion of sinners.

A selection of prayers will be found in the *Philangeli* leaflet from which lay members are asked to choose one only, to offer daily for the intentions of the campaign: (a) the conversion of the world and the reign of Christ the King, with the help of all the holy angels; (b) the intentions of all the *Philangeli* for one another. Priests are not asked for vocal prayers, but for a *memento* for the above intentions in their daily Masses. Religious are asked for a daily intention for *Philangeli* in unison with some prayer that they already say. *Philangeli* have also a custom, though not a rule, of greeting the guardian angels of all whom they meet during each day.

Objections may be raised such as: 'I pray daily to my guardian angel already. Nothing more is needed.' Just as the Catholic and Universal Church has always encouraged the faithful to think in terms not only of 'God and my soul' but of 'God and my neighbour, and *all* mankind', so some may begin to feel the need of being more drawn to think in terms of 'the guardian angels of the universe, and everyone in it', rather than only of 'me and my guardian angel'.

Again, some may say: 'I go straight to God'. But Christ made use of the ministry of angels throughout his earthly life, from birth to death, in joy and mental agony, in fasting and temptation, in desertion and in triumph. He does so still in the life of his mystical body the Church: St Michael is called on to offer the incense of worship, in the Mass, and

the angelic chorus join the chorus of praise in the *Gloria in excelsis* and in the *Sanctus*. We can hardly afford to ignore the use of angels, since Christ did not dispense with them either in his sacred humanity or in his mystical body the Church.

It may be urged that there are so many associations. *Philangeli*, however, aims at mustering by prayer the nine choirs of angels, including *all* the guardian angels of *all* the orders, societies, associations, countries, provinces, etc., throughout the world. Actually this is not an association as yet. It is for new members to help to increase our numbers sufficiently to enable us to apply for recognition to the Holy Father. Thus far H.E. Cardinal Griffin has permitted our prayers on the leaflet for private use. Dominican Tertiaries should be specially attracted, it would seem, as 'Dogs of the Lord', bearing it in mind that the Third Order of St Dominic used to be called 'the Militia of Jesus Christ'. Many Tertiaries have joined the campaign. There is a committee; Fr Provincial, s.d.s., is President, Canon Arendzen chaplain, Fr Antoninus Maguire, o.p., Fr Clement Tigar, s.j., and Fr Xavier Howard, s.d.s., councillors. The Vice-President is Mrs Margaret Catherine Tyrer. *Philangeli* began with two members, but it quickly blossomed like the vine, and has now become a world movement, since it has touched all five continents.

The shortest prayer on the leaflet is one that even the busiest Catholic will scarcely wish to omit from his daily devotions. It is the indulgenced Angelic Trisagion:

'Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Hosts:

All earth is full of thy glory.

Glory be to the Father; glory be to the Son; glory be to the Holy Ghost.'

Intending members are welcome with or without offerings, but will they please send stamps to cover postage, and other expenses of *Philangeli*, to:

Miss Mary Angela Jeeves, Hon. Gen. Sec.,
Convent of Our Lady of Lourdes,
Oxhey Lane,
Hatch End, Middlesex.