

**MICHAELMAS/XV TRINITY 2014**  
**SERMON - SAINT JOSEPH PARISH**  
**FATHER CRAIG LOONEY**  
**REV. 12.7 ST. MATT. 18.1**

✠

What do angels look like? If the year is 1947 and we are in Hollywood...they might look like Cary Grant.

*The Bishop's Wife* is one of my all-time favorite movies. Despite its title...the movie is more of a romantic comedy. David Niven plays the role of Bishop Henry Brougham. Unable to figure out a way to raise the money to build a great cathedral, he prays for guidance.

Bishop Henry's obsession with building the cathedral has hurt his relationship with his wife Julia, played by Loretta Young, and their young daughter. They feel neglected and on their own as Christmas approaches.

Enter an angel named Dudley...and you guessed it...he looks like Cary Grant. Dudley makes his true identity known only to the bishop, who initially doesn't believe him. Dudley then does what the bishop should be doing...he takes Julia and her daughter ice-skating.

Dudley visits the likeable and agnostic Professor Wutheridge...who really enjoys his evening glass of sherry. With a wave of his hand, Dudley makes certain the professor's glass is always full...who doesn't seem to suffer any ill effects from multiple glasses of sherry. Dudley then convinces the wealthier members of the parish to give their money to feed the hungry and buy clothes for the needy.

Dudley realizes he is falling in love with Julia...and decides it's time to leave. But first he redecorates the Christmas tree in just a few seconds and then dictates to a typewriter Bishop Henry's new Christmas sermon, which it magically types out at warp speed. Before he leaves, Bishop Henry asks Dudley why he sabotaged his plans for the new cathedral. Dudley reminds the bishop what he prayed for was guidance, not a building.

With that Dudley leaves and erases all memories of his visit. At Christmas Midnight Mass, Bishop Henry delivers the sermon he thinks he has written...not about materialistic things...but about compassion and love for others. And there is the professor listening intently to his message. Miracles do happen.

What do angels **really** look like? We read about angels interacting with human beings throughout Scripture. The word angel comes from the Greek word *angelos*...messenger. Angels bring us messages from God.

In the Book of Genesis they appear as three weary travelers who stop and have lunch with Abraham and Sarah. They bring them a message of hope...God has heard them...even in their old age...they will have a baby.

Isaiah writes about his wonderful vision of heaven, which we hope to experience for ourselves some day. He sees angels singing "*Holy, Holy, Holy! Lord God of hosts. Heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest.*" We sing that too.

When Gabriel brought the news to Mary she was pregnant, he first had to tell her to calm down and to not be afraid. The sudden appearance of angels must be startling...for Gabriel to have said that to Mary.

Luke tells us when Jesus was born angels brought the message to shepherds and sang "*Glory to God in the Highest, and on earth, peace and goodwill to all people...*" We sing that too.

And in Matthew, Jesus gives a stern warning to anyone who might do harm to a child, or through deliberate mean-spirited words or actions cause someone to lose their Faith...or leave the Church.

On this Feast of Saint Michael and All Angels...Michaelmas...we celebrate God's gift of angels who bring us messages of hope and who protect us. Many icons depict Michael the Archangel...in full battle gear...sword in hand...ready to fight on our behalf. And it is Michael's name a priest invokes when he blesses a house.

What do angels look like? They can and do take any form God wishes for them to carry out the missions he assigns them. They might even look like the next person we meet. They might be the person who was especially kind or helpful to us. They might be the person who brought us a message that renewed our hope and trust in God and our love for others.

We too are messengers of hope. That is something we should remind ourselves of...each time we look in the mirror.

✠