

MICHAELMAS/XVIII TRINITY 2018
SERMON - SAINT JOSEPH PARISH
FATHER CRAIG LOONEY
REV. 12.7-12 ST. MATT. 18.1-10

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What are the angels? What do they look like?
What do they do? Do they have emotions?

Most of us have the idea angels look like the cute cherubs or have the shape of human beings of extraordinary beauty with wings and halos found on Hallmark Christmas cards. They can and do take any form God requires them to take to complete their missions...and they share many of our emotions.

The Collect for Saint Michael and All Angels Day...*Michaelmas Day*...tells us angels were created by God to serve him in whatever capacity he needs them in heaven...and to support and defend us on earth.

Michael is first mentioned by name in Daniel...as the protector of the Jews...and an intermediary between God and his people.

We first read about angels in Genesis. Because of the disobedience of Adam and Eve...God put "living creatures" outside the Garden of Eden to keep anyone from entering.

Also in Genesis...the great Patriarch Jacob had a dream in which he saw a ladder connecting heaven and earth...and angels going up and down the ladder. In John's Gospel...Jesus calls himself the ladder connecting heaven and earth.

Both Isaiah and Saint John had visions of worship in heaven...of angels singing "*Holy, Holy, Holy! Lord God of hosts. Heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest.*" We sing the same hymn at every Mass today...joining with the angels in heaven in praising God.

The word angel comes from the Greek word *angelos*...*messenger*. Throughout Holy Scripture angels most often serve as God's messengers to people...delivering messages of hope and encouragement. In Genesis they appear as three weary travelers who stop and have lunch with Abraham and Sarah. They bring them a message of hope...God heard their prayers...even in their old age...they will have a baby.

Luke tells us Gabriel brought the news to Mary she was pregnant and would give birth to Jesus. The sudden appearance of angels startles people...Gabriel first had to tell Mary not to be afraid. Luke also 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 also sing this hymn at Mass.

Michael is called the Archangel...Chief of the Angels. Many icons depict Michael the Archangel...in full battle gear...sword in hand...ready to fight Satan on our behalf. Angels like human beings have free will. The Lesson from Revelation tells the story of Satan's rebellion against God...and Michael and his angels fighting and winning the battle. The Lesson closes with a warning for us to keep our guard up...because Satan "*...knows he has only a little time left*"...to try to get us to turn away from God.

In today's Gospel, Jesus tells us we must have childlike faith and trust in him. He also warns us not to harm children in any way..."*See that you don't despise any of these little ones. Their angels in heaven, I tell you, are always in the presence of my Father in heaven.*" We should also take this to mean we must not say or do anything that would cause someone new to the Church to lose his faith.

We might not see angels but they are active and present every day of our lives...from the moment we are born until the moment we die...and they are part of the welcoming committee to heaven for those who die believing in Christ.

The final prayer said at a Requiem Mass is called *In Paradisum...Into Paradise*..."*May the Angels lead us into Paradise; and the Martyrs receive us at your coming and bring us into the holy city Jerusalem. May the choirs of Angels receive us, and may we, with Lazarus once poor, have everlasting rest.*"

When we die we do not become angels any more than angels can become human beings. Angels are spiritual beings God sends our way day and night because of his love for us...as a children's prayer says..."*to always be at our side, to light and guard, to rule and guide...Amen*".

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