

MICHAELMAS 2019
SERMON – SAINT JOSEPH PARISH
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REV. 12.7 ST. MATT. 18.1

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Angels...they protect and guide us...they carry out tasks on God's behalf...they serve as intermediaries between God and mankind.

Holy Scripture is our best source of knowledge about angels. They appear from the beginning to the end, from the Book of Genesis to the Book of Revelation. They have been interacting with human beings all along.

Today is the Feast of Saint Michael and All Angels. He is called the "Prince" of all of the angels. In the Hebrew Bible his role as advocate for the Jews became so prevalent his name was invoked in Jewish liturgy. We continue to acknowledge the role angels play in our lives when we join with them at every Mass in singing, ***"Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord, God of Hosts. Heaven and Earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the Highest."***

During a house blessing we ask God to send his holy Angel (Michael) from heaven to "guard, cherish, protect, visit and defend all who live in this house." And it is Michael who according to the Book of Revelation led the angelic army in defeating Satan.

The word angel comes from the Greek word ***angelos*** and means ***messenger***. One of their tasks is to be God's messengers to people. Their appearance must be extraordinary. Their first thing they say to people is, "Don't be afraid!"

Mary was startled by Gabriel's sudden and unexpected appearance. He says to Mary, "Calm down, Mary. I'm bringing you Good News!" The Good News he brought to Mary was a birth announcement like no other. It was the message the world needed to hear. She would give birth to Jesus and he would be called Emmanuel, God with us. God walked among us so we could learn to walk with him in heaven.

Angels announced the birth of Jesus to shepherds watching their sheep. They sang the hymn of praise we continue to sing with them at Mass...***"Glory to God in the Highest, and on earth, peace and goodwill to all people."***

Angels came to comfort Jesus as he prayed in the Garden the night before he died. After the Resurrection an angel appeared to Mary Magdalene and the others and said, "Don't be afraid. We have Good News! Jesus has risen." Because Jesus rose from the dead, so will we. That is Good News indeed! And after Jesus ascended back into heaven, angels told the Disciples not to worry. They would see him again and so will we!

In today's Gospel, Jesus tells us that every child has an angel in heaven watching over him. When I was a little boy I trusted my guardian angel to help me finish my prayers if I fell asleep. Now I know not to wait until bedtime to say my night prayers...and my guardian angel is still there by my side.

Jesus tells us not to despise any "little one." That serves as both an instruction and a warning. All of us, especially parents, are to treat children well, and to teach them about God's love. We must never intentionally harm them or cause them to turn away from God. And children know they can turn to their parents for help. Jesus wants us to trust God like children trust their own parents because we are God's children and we have angels watching over us too.

Angels are God's messengers and can take any form he desires to accomplish his wishes. Let's spend some time this week thinking about people who brought us messages that changed our lives. Think of the people who have been positive role models for us and have brought us "Good News." Think of the people whose actions taught us about God's love and how to love others. Remember the stranger who did something kind for us. Could that stranger have been an angel? Let's take every opportunity to be kind to strangers ourselves.

Today we celebrate the Feast of Saint Michael and All Angels. Angels are still very much around us, busy doing God's work, just as we are busy doing his work as well. Michael and all of the Angels are here to help, defend and protect us whenever we need them... whenever God sends them our way.

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