

Michaelmas / XVIII Trinity 2024

Sermon – Saint Joseph Parish

Father Craig Looney

Rev. 12.7-12 St. Matthew. 18.1-10

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Many of us went to Sunday school when we were children. We learned about Jesus, his disciples and sang songs like “*Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so.*” Sunday school and church is also where we first learned about angels.

When I was a little boy I had a favorite book, really a series of books, about a young boy named Sonny. He was about my age and lived in Africa. Sonny liked to wander off from his village and explore the forests and mountains and deserts around him. He often got himself into trouble when he encountered wild animals, or fell into fast-moving rivers.

But Sonny wasn’t alone in his misadventures. He had a guardian angel who was there watching over him, to save him from terrifying wild animals and rushing rivers. His guardian angels made certain Sonny returned home to his loving parents.

On of the first prayers I learned as a child goes like this...***Angel of God, my guardian dear, to whom God's love commits me here; ever this day be at my side, to light and to guard, to rule and to guide me. Amen.***

The stories about Sonny and this prayer instilled in me a firm belief in angels, and my own guardian angel, watching over me all day and all night. My mother once told me I shouldn’t wait until the last minute to say my bedtime prayers, but if I fall asleep before I had, my guardian angel would finish my prayers for me.

The Bible records angels interacting with human beings from the beginning. They were created by God to do his work and can appear in any form God desires. They might even be the stranger we encounter who needs our help, or the person sitting next to you.

The word angel comes from the Greek word ***angelos*** and means ***messenger***. Angels brought a message of hope and joy to shepherds watching their flocks in Bethlehem 2000 years ago. And the angels sang...***Glory to God in the Highest, and on earth, peace and goodwill to all people.***

Right before the Prayer of Consecration at Mass we join with all of the angels and archangels and the great Communion of Saints in heaven and say in words that come from Isaiah...***Holy, holy holy! Lord God of hosts. Heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest.***

Today is the Feast of Saint Michael and All Angels, commonly called Michaelmas. We are commemorating the angels who serve God heaven and are sent by him to help and protect us here on Earth and bring us messages of hope. The Lesson for the Epistle from the Book of Revelation is the story of Michael leading his angels into a decisive battle against Satan and his angels, who forever lose their place in heaven. Many icons depict Michael in full battle gear, sword in hand, ready to fight on our behalf.

That’s a rather different image of angels than the nice angel in a child’s storybook who helped Sonny and was kneeling next to a small boy saying his night prayers. Even when God chooses to have angels appear “like men”, they must appear different enough to startle people. The first words out of Gabriel’s mouth when he came to Mary with the message she was pregnant with Jesus was...***“Don’t be afraid...I’m bringing Good News!”***

In the Gospel, Jesus tells us that every child has an angel in heaven watching over him. He tells us not to despise any “little one.” That serves as a warning to those who might harm a child in any way...that his actions are plainly visible to the angels who serve God continually in heaven.

Angels are God’s messengers and they are here to serve God and to watch over us. People can be messengers too. Think about family, friends, teachers, priests, even total strangers, whose messages have changed our lives for the better. We can be messengers of hope to for a world hungry for peace and goodwill.

Today we thank God for the presence of Michael and All Angels, and especially for our guardian angels, who light and guard us, and rule and guide us, today, tonight and tomorrow, until we sing with them in heaven.

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