

## ST. MICHAEL AND ALL ANGELS

Daniel 10:10-14; 12:1-3; Revelation 12:7-12; Luke 10:17-20

*“Let Your holy angel be with me, that the wicked foe may have no power over me.”*

“Let Your holy angel be with me, that the wicked foe may have no power over me.” That is how Luther encourages us to pray in the morning and in the evening. But that was long ago, wasn't it, when people were superstitious and got all worked up about things like angels and demons, heaven and hell, and all that jazz? We're not so naïve anymore. We're not so backwards. We like our angels in country songs or on the WB or in Dan Brown drivel, but do we really think about angels all that much otherwise, unless somebody's getting their wings when a bell rings.

We do well never to forget about angels and demons, let alone heaven and hell. Angels and demons are as real today as they were when they warred in heaven after creation, when angels promised a coming Messiah and a Promised Land to Abraham, when Gabriel announced the coming birth of St. John the Baptist to Zechariah and of Jesus to Mary. And the demons that Jesus cast out of the possessed, they are still active seeking to lead Christian men, women, and children astray and headlong into the hell to which they've been sentenced.

We see angels and demons at work in our lessons today. In the first lesson, an angel brings a message of comfort to Daniel in exile and describes the warfare St. Michael will wage on God's beleaguered remnant's behalf. In the second lesson, we hear how St. Michael and the holy angels have warred against Satan and his evil angels, casting them down to the pits of hell after their rebellion against God soon after creation, and then celebrated Christ's victory over death and demons on the cross. In the Holy Gospel, we listen as the disciples return from proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ throughout Israel and recall that even demons submitted to them in Jesus' name, a power the Church still exercises whenever the gospel is preached and the Sacraments administered as healing medicine for the sinner and poison for the devil, declaring hell defeated and heaven, where our names are written, open for believers.

We don't think about it often, but when it comes to the Bible, we usually see angels doing one of a few things: bringing a message like Gabriel, rejoicing over sinners who repent, protecting the Church like Michael, or killing people like the angel of death. Being touched by an angel isn't always a good thing, therefore, if it's the angel of death. I don't think there's a Precious Moments angel of death, is there? They like to stick to the cute little pudgy baby angel thing. The fact of the matter, however, is that whatever the angels are doing, whenever they are at work, they are at work according to God's will and for the benefit of the Church.

Jesus speaks about angels in Matthew 18 in verse 10. He says, *“See that you do not despise one of these little ones. For I tell you that in heaven their angels always see the face of my Father who is in heaven.”* From this, we get the concept of guardian angels, that there are angels concerned specifically with each of us as Christians. What a comfort for us, knowing that not only has God given His own Son for our salvation, and not only does He provide our daily bread and preserve our lives, both temporal and spiritual, but He has appointed these ministering spirits to look after us. St. Paul applies the custom of his time of women wearing head coverings to the presence of angels watching over us, writing in 1 Corinthians 11:10, *“That is why a wife ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels.”*

Sometimes, though, people get the mistaken idea that angels are somehow higher than human beings in God's esteem, that they are greater beings, perhaps even more loved by God. This simply is not true. In fact, when the evil angels fell they were cast into hell, but when all mankind fell in Adam's fall, He sent His Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem us through His death and resurrection, and He wants all men to be saved through His Son, not wanting any to perish, but for all to come to faith. St. Peter in the first chapter of his first epistle calls the mystery of our salvation "*things into which angels long to look.*"

We see our salvation in action in our second lesson. After the angels cast Satan out of heaven, they proclaimed the victory of Christ won through His triumph on the cross, an instrument of torture and death turned into a trophy and tree of life. St. John writes:

*And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, "Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God. And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death."*

How blessed we are! Christ has triumphed. He has shut the accuser's mouth, so that when Satan seeks to accuse us of our sins—sins we indeed have committed—before the judgment seat of Christ, Christ replies, "I've crushed your head, you worthless serpent. And I've paid their punishment, you damned demon. They are mine. They are pardoned. Hell's gates will be closed for good when I return, and you, and not these, my repentant children, will be forever trapped behind them. Their sins are blotted out, sent away as far as the east is from the west, nailed to my cross and buried in my tomb. Their old man has been drowned. They are new men, new women, new children, born again through Baptism into my death and resurrection, having conquered with me through my blood, shed for them on the cross and poured into their mouths in the Sacrament. And to top it all off, as you and your evil angels seek to undo them, to rob them of their salvation, to break these branches off from the Vine, you will have to deal with my holy angels who see the face of God and have kicked your backsides back where you belong before. Snap and howl all you want, but unless my children of their own accord and through their own foolishness themselves wander into your jaws, these angels will break your fangs, even as I have tamed your tongue."

And so we pray, "Let Your holy angel be with me, that the wicked foe may have no power over me." There's nothing superstitious about it. No, it's the language of faith, a petition rooted in comforting truth. Let your holy angels be with us, dearest Jesus, and keep us ever in Your victory through Your blood. Amen.