



Pastor's Column

St. Peter Catholic Church

February 11, 2018 ~ Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Angels

The word “angel” is derived from the Latin *angelus*, which means “messenger.” It is a title given to a class of spiritual beings to denote their function (both St. Augustine and St. Gregory the Great discuss this terminology at length in their writings). They are “angels” insofar as they hold a privileged office as God’s messengers; they are “spirits” by nature.

As purely spiritual beings, angels have intelligence and will. Their primary service to God is praise and adoration, which we find in the Prophet Isaiah (chapter 6) and in the Book of Revelation (chapter 4): “Holy holy holy!” The angels gave glory to God at the announcement to the shepherds in the night when Jesus Christ was born: “Glory to God in the highest!” (Lk 2:14). In giving glory to God – in their service of praise and adoration – they also evangelize.

Angels also guard and protect us with their prayers of intercession. Those angels which are assigned to specific human beings are Guardian Angels.

The “chief” angels are those named in Sacred Scripture, so named because their ministry is of particular importance – important enough for them to be singled out in the inspired writings of Sacred Scripture: St. Michael, St. Gabriel, and St. Raphael.

There once was an angel named Lucifer. In his pride, Lucifer refused to participate in God’s ultimate plan for Creation and the salvation of humanity in the Incarnation; after all, why should the angels bow down and worship a mere man, even if that Man were God-Incarnate? This anyway was Lucifer’s thinking, and in his pride and refusal to participate in God’s plan, Lucifer and those angels that sided with him fell from grace, so that Lucifer now is the devil (or Satan), and the fallen angels are now demons.

There is a hierarchy of angelic beings, a reality that is confirmed by Sacred Scripture (insofar as seraphim and cherubim are mentioned, as well as the three great archangels along with countless other angels). This hierarchy, confirmed in Sacred Scripture, is celebrated in the liturgy of the Mass; in many of the Prefaces for the Eucharistic Prayer, there are several references to the various choirs of angels (e.g. Preface I of the Sundays in Ordinary Time: “...And so, with Angels and Archangels, with Thrones and Dominions, and with all the hosts and Powers of Heaven....”

We can be constantly mindful of the reality, the ministry, and the power of angels when we pray to them for their intercession and protection. A popular prayer is the Guardian Angel prayer:



*Angel of God, my guardian dear,
to whom God's love commits me here,
ever this day be at my side,
to light and guard, to rule and guide.*

Amen.