

St Michael and All Angels,
29 September 2019
Parish of St. John the Baptist, North
Sydney, Nova Scotia

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Genesis 28:10-17; Psalm 103:19-22;
Revelation 12:7-12; John 1:47-51

Collect Prayer

Eternal God,
you have ordained and constituted in a
wonderful order
the ministries of angels and mortals.
Grant that as your holy angels stand
before you in heaven,
so at your command
they may help and defend us here on
earth,
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy
Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.
Amen.

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In the name of the One True God, Holy
and Undivided: +Father, Son and Holy
Spirit.

Today is the Feast Day of St. Michael and
All Angels. The meaning of the word



“angel” is “messenger.” And, the function of an angel is to deliver divine messages.

Traditionally speaking, angels may be seen or they may be invisible. Sometimes they take on human forms; sometimes non-human forms. And, as you know, angels are often shown with wings. The beautiful stained glass windows that surround us reflect this. I found three angels in our windows with wings. (There might be more than three.) Take a look after church and see if you can find them. The wings on the angel remind us that there is life beyond this world as we



know it. There is life beyond time and space. The angels in our windows are depicted with dazzling brightness, wearing white robes with a bit of gold. Angels are bearers of the light of God’s presence. They bring messages that are ultimately about good news. And, often they remind us to “be not afraid.”

And, when it comes to archangels, archangels are messengers of God delivering a message of extreme importance. The presence of the Archangel Michael indicates that God’s superior power is being manifest, present in a specific way, such as during the battle we hear described in the Revelation of John. We hear that it is the Archangel Michael who powerfully protects us, the People of God, from earthly evils.

It is Michael's protection that delivers us to God's eternal peace at the end of our life's struggle, according to the account in Revelation. This is to say that *we are delivered to salvation because of God's power*. This is the work of God to restore us; and, *it is God's kingdom under the authority of Jesus who keeps us*. Ultimately, this is good news.

This good news is because of God's love for all of creation. God's love is stronger than fear. God's love is stronger than death. God's love *is more powerful than death, stronger than the grave. It cannot be drowned by oceans of floods; it cannot be bought, no matter what is offered* (Song of Solomon 8:6,7 CEB.)

Because of the strength of God's love, we are freed by Christ's saving grace to love with our very lives as God's-Kingdom-people. We may rejoice in the love expressed by those around us. Just look around you today and think for a moment of the love that we feel present in this place...how it is reflected from each of us to the other...God's love in action...shining forth from our hearts. It is stronger than anything else. It is invisible. We cannot see it. Yet, we know it's here.



It is just like God's messengers who, though are not necessarily seen, their message is delivered all the same.

Love is like this, too. We cannot see the love, so much as we feel it. This is what it means to live by faith. We trust that there is more to life than what we see with our eyes.

This is also like what we profess in the words of the Nicene Creed. God is the Master Creator of “all that is seen and unseen.”

As much as this Feast Day of St. Michael and All Angels is about the Archangel Michael and all of God’s messengers. It is also a day when we celebrate God’s ordering of all of creation, of “all that is seen and unseen.”

The Psalmist ponders the wonderful ordering of God’s created order, all that is seen and unseen this way:

When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers,

The moon and the stars, which You have ordained,

Who are we that You are mindful of us,

Who are we that You visit us?

For You have made us a little lower than the angels,

And You have crowned us with glory and honor.

You have made us to have dominion over the works of Your hands;

You have put all things under our feet,

All sheep and oxen—

Even the beasts of the field,

The birds of the air,

And the fish of the sea

That pass through the paths of the seas.

O Lord, our Lord,

How excellent is Your name in all the earth! (Psalm 8:3-9 NKJV)

This is an amazing thing. God makes us a little lower than the order of angels. God crowns us with glory and honour. God makes us to be responsible for all of God's works. God makes us to be God's partners – this, after all, is God's desire for us. This is all because God loves what God makes. And, God does not make junk.

God's love is more powerful than death, stronger than the grave. It cannot be drowned by oceans of floods; it cannot be bought, no matter what is offered.

By living into God's love, we acknowledge that God creates and places in order all that is – the incredible diversity of life – all that is "seen and unseen." When we understand this, we realize what Jesuit Pierre Teilhard de Chardin explains this way:

"We are not physical beings having a spiritual experience; we are spiritual beings having a physical experience."

We are spiritual beings having a physical experience.

This is exactly what Jacob comes to realize in the Book of Genesis. When God's messengers appear in a dream, Jacob comes to realize that what he thought was ordinary, was actually holy.

Jacob dreams of God's holy messengers ascending and descending on the staircase connecting heaven and earth. In other words, Jacob experiences a moment when he realizes that God's kingdom intersects with this world. This experience leads Jacob to know God's abiding presence, God's protection, God's care...this is God's promise to him. And, Jacob commits to a life in relationship with the Lord God. *How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.*

What is true for Jacob, is also true for us. God abides with us. God protects and cares for us. And, wherever we are, we, too, may realize that we are on Holy Ground. It's just like this holy place where we are right now, with angels in the windows and the altar of the Lord that we gather around. Holy Ground. Our homes, our work places, our hospital beds, our hiking trails, our schools, our camps, our waterways, our parks, our streets. Holy Ground if only we will see it. If only we will trust that it is...because God has ordered everything to reflect holiness.

When we understand that we are on holy ground, we are ready to hear Jesus words to Nathanael...and to us *"...You will see greater things than these! I assure you that you will see*

heaven open and God's angels going up to heaven and down to earth on the Human One" (John 1:47-51, CEB).

Thanks be to God! Amen.