

## September 29 – St Michael and All Angels

On the Feast of Michael and all Angels, popularly called Michaelmas, we give thanks for the many ways in which God's loving care watches over us, both directly and indirectly, and we are reminded that the richness and variety of God's creation far exceeds our knowledge of it. The Holy Scriptures often speak of created intelligences other than humans who worship God in heaven and act as His messengers and agents on earth. We are not told much about them, and it is not clear how much of what we are told is figurative. Jesus speaks of them as rejoicing over penitent sinners (Lk 15:10). Elsewhere, in a statement that has been variously understood (Mt 18:10), He warns against misleading a child, because their angels behold the face of God. (Acts 12:15 may refer to a related idea.)

In the Hebrew Scriptures, it is occasionally reported that someone saw a man who spoke to him with authority, and who he then realized was no mere man, but a messenger of God. Thus we have a belief in super-human rational created beings, either resembling men in appearance or taking human appearance when they are to communicate with us. They are referred to as "messengers of God," or simply as "messengers." The word for a messenger in Hebrew is *malach*, in Greek, *angelos*, from which we get our word "angel." By the time of Christ, Jewish popular belief included many specifics about angels, with names for many of them. There were thought to be four archangels, named Michael, Gabriel, Raphael, and Uriel. An alternative tradition has seven archangels (see Tobit 12:15 and 1 Enoch 20). Michael (the name means "Who is like God?") is said to be the captain of the heavenly armies. He is mentioned in the Scriptures in Daniel 10:13,31; 12:1 (where he is said to be the prince of the people of Israel); in Jude 9 (where he is said to have disputed with the devil about the body of Moses); and in Revelation 12:7 (where he is said to have led the heavenly armies against those of the great dragon). He is generally pictured in full armor, carrying a lance, and with his foot on the neck of a dragon. (Pictures of the Martyr George are often similar, but only Michael has wings.)

Gabriel (the name means "God is my champion") is thought of as the special bearer of messages from God to men. He appears in Daniel 8:16; 9:21 as an explainer of some of Daniel's visions. According to the first chapter of Luke, he announced the forthcoming births of John the Baptist and of our Lord to Zachariah and the Virgin Mary respectively. Raphael (the name means "God heals") is mentioned in the Apocrypha, in the book of Tobit, where, disguised as a man, he accompanies the young man Tobias on a quest, enables him to accomplish it, and gives him a remedy for the blindness of his aged father. Uriel (the name means "God is my light").

Collect: Everlasting God, you have ordained and constituted in a wonderful order the ministries of angels and mortals: mercifully grant that, as your holy angels always serve and worship you in heaven, so by your appointment 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, forever and ever. Amen.

Reading: A reading from the book of Genesis (28:10-17) Jacob left Beer-sheba and went towards Haran. He came to a certain place and stayed there for the night, because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones of the place, he put it under his head and lay down in that place. And he dreamed that there was a ladder set up on the earth, the top of it reaching to heaven; and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. And the LORD stood beside him\* and said, 'I

am the LORD, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and to your offspring; and your offspring shall be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread abroad to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south; and all the families of the earth shall be blessed in you and in your offspring. Know that I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.’ Then Jacob woke from his sleep and said, ‘Surely the LORD is in this place—and I did not know it!’ And he was afraid, and said, ‘How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.’

Psalm: 103

- 1 Bless the Lord, O my soul,\*  
and all that is within me, bless his holy Name.
- 2 Bless the Lord, O my soul,\*  
and forget not all his benefits.
- 3 He forgives all your sins\*  
and heals all your infirmities;
- 4 He redeems your life from the grave\*  
and crowns you with mercy and loving kindness;
- 5 He satisfies you with good things,\*  
and your youth is renewed like an eagle’s.
- 6 The Lord executes righteousness\*  
and judgment for all who are oppressed.
- 7 He made his ways known to Moses\*  
and his works to the children of Israel.
- 8 The Lord is full of compassion and mercy,\*  
slow to anger and of great kindness.
- 9 He will not always accuse us,\*  
nor will he keep his anger forever.
- 10 He has not dealt with us according to our sins,\*  
nor rewarded us according to our wickedness.
- 11 For as the heavens are high above the earth,\*  
so is his mercy great upon those who fear him.
- 12 As far as the east is from the west,\*  
so far has he removed our sins from us.
- 13 As a father cares for his children,\*  
so does the Lord care for those who fear him.
- 14 For he himself knows whereof we are made;\*  
he remembers that we are but dust.
- 15 Our days are like the grass;\*  
we flourish like a flower of the field;
- 16 When the wind goes over it, it is gone,\*  
and its place shall know it no more.
- 17 But the merciful goodness of the Lord endures for ever on those who fear him,\*  
and his righteousness on children’s children;

- 18 On those who keep his covenant \*  
and remember his commandments and do them.
- 19 The Lord has set his throne in heaven, \*  
and his kingship has dominion over all.
- 20 Bless the Lord, you angels of his, you mighty ones who do his bidding, \*  
and hearken to the voice of his word.
- 21 Bless the Lord, all you his hosts, \*  
you ministers of his who do his will.
- 22 Bless the Lord, all you works of his, in all places of his dominion; \*  
bless the Lord, O my soul.

Reading: A reading from the Revelation of John (12:7-12) And war broke out in heaven; Michael and his angels fought against the dragon. The dragon and his angels fought back, but they were defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. The great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. Then I heard a loud voice in heaven, proclaiming, ‘Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Messiah, for the accuser of our comrades has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God. But they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they did not cling to life even in the face of death. Rejoice then, you heavens and those who dwell in them! But woe to the earth and the sea, for the devil has come down to you with great wrath, because he knows that his time is short!’

Gospel: John 1:47-51 When Jesus saw Nathanael coming towards him, he said of him, ‘Here is truly an Israelite in whom there is no deceit!’ Nathanael asked him, ‘Where did you come to know me?’ Jesus answered, ‘I saw you under the fig tree before Philip called you.’ Nathanael replied, ‘Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!’ Jesus answered, ‘Do you believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than these.’ And he said to him, ‘Very truly, I tell you, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.’