

# Encouragement Encouragement

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## *Messengers – Angels of God*

THE HOST APOSTOLATE  
[WWW.THEHOSTAPOSTOLATE.ORG](http://WWW.THEHOSTAPOSTOLATE.ORG)

14, GOATBECK TERRACE,  
LANGLEY MOOR,  
COUNTY DURHAM DH7 8JJ

[thehostapostolate@gmail.com](mailto:thehostapostolate@gmail.com)

At this time of year, as we start Advent, a celebration of the birth of Jesus as Saviour and Redeemer, we are also brought face to face with the reality of the Heavenly Kingdom – those who are called to serve God Most High. Jesus came as a fulfilment of the promise made to mankind, of a Saviour who would take us out of the dominion of darkness into light. God the Creator plans all things perfectly in order to show His total love for all His creatures. Yes, **all** His creatures which includes those that have a very specific rôle to play in His Kingdom.

Angels – the word comes from the Latin Angelus, but taken from the Greek – Angelos or messenger. We have to look no further than the Annunciation to find a reference to Gabriel (Power of God). In the whole of the Nativity angels have a very significant part to play, from revealing to Joseph that he should take Mary as his wife – to appearing to the shepherds to tell them to pay their respects and singing a jubilant song to God, to telling Joseph to take the Child and his Mother to go to Egypt, then back home to Nazareth. There are so many references to angels that it is incredible how little attention we pay to who or what they are...

Jesus makes several references to their rôle in the Kingdom – “The angels in Heaven see the face of my Father, and “but anyone who disowns Me in the presence of human beings will be disowned in the presence of God’s Angels” (Luke 12; 8-9). And, of course they ministered to Jesus in His Agony in the Garden and announced His Resurrection. There are equally many references to Angels in the Old Testament, The Acts of the Apostles, and Letters, too many to mention here, but perhaps only those with which we have a special connection.

Why is it special, because we mention them by reference during the Gloria, and in the prayers before the Consecration at Mass. ‘And so, with the Angels and Archangels, Thrones and Dominations, and with all the Powers of Heaven we sing the hymn of Glory’.



This leads to the ‘Holy, Holy, Holy’, the Sanctus, which again has its roots in the Old Testament and is taken from Isaiah (6-3), who saw in vision Angels before the Throne of God. (Also in Revelation 4-8 by St. John).

The Angels thus are with us as we pray our way through the Mass and in more ways than one, are with us as we celebrate and reflect on what we are doing. The Angels are pure beings who convey to us not only the messages of God, but also the Truth of God, and His total Lord-ship over all that He created, in love for those He also loved completely.

Approaching Christmas we see the Crib in various situations and little girls and boys dressed cutely as angels with wings and ‘Slipping Haloes’ and we all smile and rejoice and indeed there is nothing fundamentally wrong with that as grandad and grandma wipe away the odd tear with oohs and aahs. But there is a great danger of over-sentimentalising the reality and purpose of God’s plan in all that He has created so perfectly.

Today we also have the real danger of power and prominence, at the other extreme, being given to angels as almost superior, or more important than God Himself, in the New Age material that abounds in our time. The double danger of this is not only that this presentation is utterly false but it tends to lead us away from the very purpose of the Beings, Messengers themselves. In the end they are either disrespected or relegated to the sphere of ‘sweet’...

If we do this we undermine their real purpose.

St. John Paul II says this in a homily on angels (July 1986). “If one wishes to get rid of angels one must radically revise Sacred Scripture. The whole of Tradition (accepted Truth, not customs) is unanimous on this point. The Church’s Creed is basically an echo of what St. Paul writes ‘For in Him, Christ, all things were created in Heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether Thrones or

“Once in our world a stable had something in it that was bigger than the whole world” C.S. Lewis

Dominations or Principalities or Authorities. All things were created through Him and for Him, (Col. 1-15). Christ is the centre of the Universe and all that was created echoes the purpose of creation”.

The Angels, Messengers of God, are essential to our understanding of God’s purpose. Each angel is a unique being, a spirit whose obedience to the will of God is absolute. They cannot be replicated and each is different and has an individual purpose to convey something to us of great importance. As well as this they are grouped into different ‘Choirs’, or groups with a distinctive function. So-called ‘Guardian Angels’ are a gift to each person and who guard us in all our trials and tribulations. I think one day we will be astonished at what they have done for us- the many prevented accidents, the intuitions, the ‘coincidences’. I have personally found them useful in communicating with each other and asking them to convey messages to those of my friends – easier than a mobile. (Smile!).

We are familiar with the named Archangels who have a known and delegated rôle to play in the Kingdom of God. Michael, which stands for Mica – El, meaning ‘Who is like unto God’ and whose purpose is to be a great protector and defender of Truth and the People of God, often depicted with a sword. There is Gabriel, in Hebrew meaning ‘God is my strongman’, who is a major communicator and informer, a true messenger and how many times is he mentioned? Then there is Raphael, so prominent in the book of Tobit – a good read. The word means Rafa –El, ‘God heals’ and is an instrument of God’s Healing Grace. He is also sometimes known as the inspirer of travellers. We celebrate the Feast of the Archangels specifically on the 29<sup>th</sup> September. Throughout the Old and New Testament the angels play a significant part in conveying God’s purpose and an illustration of it. The angels led the people of God into the desert. We also commend the dead to them to lead them/us into Paradise, ‘May the Choir of Angels lead you into Paradise’, which is sung or said at a funeral service. They remind us that we are *both* spirit and flesh. Pope Francis said “I believe in angels, they were not imaginary; he said it was only pride stopping people hearing their voices. Do not rebel: No one walks alone and none of us can think that he is alone”. When therefore we look on the Advent and Christmas Liturgy in both Word and Sacrament let us reflect on the wonder of all of

God’s creation and rejoice in His Glory and magnificence in the creatures He made.

Thought: Advent family game: name some of the Angels and where they are mentioned – how many times and why? Search the Bible...

Halina Holman



### **Pope Francis and Advent**

“For the great human family it is necessary to renew always the common horizon toward which we are journeying. The horizon of hope! This is the horizon that makes a good journey. The time of Advent that we begin again today returns us to the horizon of hope, a hope that does not disappoint because it is founded on the Word of God. A hope that does not disappoint, simply because the Lord never disappoints! He is faithful!” Advent, is a new journey of the People of God with Jesus Christ, our Shepherd, who guides us in history towards the completion of the Kingdom of God. Let us rediscover the beauty of being together along the way: the Church, with her vocation and mission, and the whole of humanity, the people, the civilizations, the cultures, all together on the paths of time.

‘Let us warm ourselves on the fire of Hope’

2013 Vatican

### **Prayer Intention**

In Advent and Christmas we are reminded of the innocence of children: can we pray especially for the Pope’s Intention in December:

‘That the scandal of child soldiers may be eliminated the world over’

### **Feasts in December**

3<sup>rd</sup> Saint Francis Xavier,

4<sup>th</sup> **Second Sunday of Advent**

6<sup>th</sup> Saint Nicholas, 7<sup>th</sup> Saint Ambrose

8<sup>th</sup> **The Immaculate Conception of Our Lady**

11<sup>th</sup> **Third Sunday of Advent**

12<sup>th</sup> **Our Lady of Guadalupe**

14<sup>th</sup> Saint John of the Cross

18<sup>th</sup> **Fourth Sunday of Advent**

25<sup>th</sup> **Christmas Day**

26<sup>th</sup> Saint Stephen, 28<sup>th</sup> The Holy Innocents

29<sup>th</sup> Saint Thomas á Becket, 30<sup>th</sup> Holy Family