

My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

This weekend we find ourselves surrounded by the Holy Angels. What do I mean? On Saturday, September 29th, we celebrated the Feast of the Holy Archangels – Saints Michael, Gabriel and Raphael. On Tuesday, October 2nd, we celebrate the Memorial of all the Holy Guardian Angels. This is a great opportunity for us to reflect on the nature of creation and of ourselves.

When God created, He chose to create both corporeal (bodily) and non-corporeal (without bodies) beings. The corporeal, or physical, world we see all around us all the time. In fact, we couldn't "see," at least not with our eyes, if it wasn't physical. The physical universe speaks to us of God's glory (see Psalm 19). The beauty of a sunrise or sunset, wonder of the stars on a cloudless night, the beauty of a laughing child all speak to the wonder and glory and beauty of God! God made the physical universe, and He made it good (see Genesis 1). Note, too, that we are the only bodily AND spiritual beings that God made. As humans, we share in both realms – we have the weakness and brokenness of our bodies (that eventually will die and corrupt... before God raises them on the Last Day, and makes them new), but we also have a soul which can choose and love. God made us to love Him, in both our bodies and our souls.

God also created non-corporeal beings. These beings are pure spirit, and have been from the beginning (hence, they were NEVER human). We call them angels, though technically, the word "angel" says the function, not the nature of these spiritual beings; the word "angel" means "messenger." Certainly, we see how the three Archangels (especially Gabriel!) were messengers, as we read about them in the book of Tobit, the prophet Daniel, the Gospel of Luke, the book of Revelation and elsewhere. But there are more – many, many more – angels than the ones we read about in the Bible.

When we look at the angels, we have to remember that as purely spiritual beings, they "work" differently than us. Their intellects are far superior to any human intellect. They act at the speed of thought, not encumbered by their bodies. And, this is important, when they make a choice, they don't hem and haw about it – they choose, and that choice, from the depths of their being, is irrevocable. We hear about the Fall of the Angels (in the Book of Revelation and in our Catholic Tradition). They chose not to serve God, not to follow Him, and by that choice, they never could repent, nor would they ever have the slightest inclination to want to. These are the demons, and tradition, based on Scripture, says that one third of the angels fell, choosing "not God." These demons are smarter than you or me, stronger than you or me, and want nothing more than our eternal destruction. We can't beat them. We can't outthink them. Of ourselves, we are defenseless against them.

The good news, though, is that God loves us and has put a limit on how far these fallen angels can go. They are on a leash, as it were, and they cannot break free. The other good news is that God has given each of us a Guardian Angel to watch over us and protect us, to help us to get to eternal life. As the demons can never repent, neither can the Angels – they have chosen God and will *never* choose not God! (This is important... imagine having your greatest ally suddenly one day decide that he'd rather not serve God anymore. We would be sitting ducks!) God assigned your Guardian Angel to you to help you. He is not ever going to be "reassigned." His greatest desire is to spend eternity with you in the presence of God. If God commanded your Guardian Angel, he could destroy the entire physical universe in a heartbeat. That's the powerhouse God has given to each of us to protect us and guide us.

So why do we struggle so, if we have such a powerful supporter? The angels, like God, refuse to infringe on our free will. They will be there to help us, to guard us, to give us counsel in following God ... but they will never *make us* do anything. He cannot, will not force us to follow God, to be holy. This means that we need to spend time in prayer, in recollection, in quiet listening to God speaking through our Holy Angel.

An important thing to know: while the angels serve us, they are not *our* servants. They do not come and go at our beck and call, but at God's. They serve us because they serve God. This is important, so that we do not think that we have authority over our Guardian Angels. So don't "name" your Guardian Angel. You don't have the authority to do that. You have authority to name your children, your pets, even your cars if you want, because you have proper authority over them. You and I do NOT have authority over our angels. True, we can ask them to go on mission, to carry messages, etc., but when we do that, we make a request not a command. They work with us, but are not subject to us.

I also would caution you that there are many inaccurate depictions of angels out there. Be careful what you read and believe. For authentic teachings and stories about the Holy Angels, check out www.opusangelorum.org/english.html. Under the "Holy Angels" section, there are teachings, Q and A and stories. I pray that each of us will cultivate a closer relationship with our angels, and so grow closer to God.