**Wednesday Morning Prayer**

# MICHAEL AND ALL ANGELS

### (29 SEP OT)

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" [Digression: *angelion* means "message, news" and *euangelion* means "good news = goodspell = gospel," from which we get our word "evangelist" used to mean a preacher of the Good News of salvation, and, more narrowly, one of the four Gospel-writers: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.]

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). Sometimes each archangel is associated with one of the seven planets of the Ptolemaic system (the moon, Mercury, Venus, the Sun, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn). Michael is associated with Saturn and Uriel with the Sun. The other pairings I forget, but I believe that you will find a list in the long narrative poem called "The Golden Legend," by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. (I believe that a pairing is also offered in the opening chapters of the *Proof of the Apostolic Preaching*, by Irenaeus of Lyons, but I have not the work at hand.)

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" -- compare with "Uriah", which means "the LORD is my light") is mentioned in 4 Esdras.

It is thought by many scholars that the seven lamps of Revelation 4:5 are an image suggested by (among many other things) the idea of seven archangels.

What is the value to us of remembering the Holy Angels? Well, since they appear to excel us in both knowledge and power, they remind us that, even among created things, we humans are not the top of the heap. Since it is the common belief that demons are angels who have chosen to disobey God and to be His enemies rather than His willing servants, they remind us that the higher we are the lower we can fall. The greater our natural gifts and talents, the greater the damage if we turn them to bad ends. The more we have been given, the more will be expected of us. And, in the picture of God sending His angels to help and defend us, we are reminded that apparently God, instead of doing good things directly, often prefers to do them through His willing servants, enabling those who have accepted His love to show their love for one another.

### Everything You Never Wanted to Know about Angels

The major post-New-Testament source for Christian ideas about angels is a writer (probably a fifth-century Syrian monk) who signed himself "Dionysius the Areopagite." His writings were taken to be those of a convert of the Apostle Paul, mentioned in Acts 17:34. Accordingly, when he wrote on angels (or any other theological subject), he was assumed to know what he was talking about. His writings had a considerable influence on the portrayal of angels in art and in the popular imagination.

**The Preparation**

Presider O Lord, open our lips

**All And our mouth shall proclaim your praise**

Presider Pour your love into our hearts, O God

**All Through the Holy Spirit you have given to us**

**Glory to God, source of all being,**

**Eternal word and Holy Spirit:**

**As it was in the beginning, is now,**

**And shall be forever. Amen.**

**Alleluia!**

**The Opening Prayer**

Presider The night has passed and the day lies open before us;

Let us pray with one heart and mind

*Silence is kept*

A we rejoice in the gift of this new day,

So may the light of your presence O God,

Set our hearts on fire with love for you

Now and forever. Amen

**The Word of God**

**8**    
1 O Lord our Governor, \*  
how exalted is your Name in all the world!  
  
2 Out of the mouths of infants and children \*  
your majesty is praised above the heavens.  
  
3 You have set up a stronghold against your adversaries, \*  
to quell the enemy and the avenger.  
  
4 When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, \*  
the moon and the stars you have set in their courses,  
  
5 What is man that you should be mindful of him? \*  
the son of man that you should seek him out?  
  
6 You have made him but little lower than the angels; \*  
you adorn him with glory and honor;  
  
7 You give him mastery over the works of your hands; \*  
you put all things under his feet:  
  
8 All sheep and oxen, \*  
even the wild beasts of the field,  
  
9 The birds of the air, the fish of the sea, \*  
and whatsoever walks in the paths of the sea.  
  
10 O Lord our Governor, \*  
how exalted is your Name in all the world!

**Reading Of The Gospel**

Gospel Reader: The Lord be with you.

**All: And also with you.**

Gospel Reader: The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Mark.

**All: Glory to you, Lord Jesus Christ.**

And if anyone says to you at that time, “Look! Here is the Messiah!” or “Look! There he is!”—do not believe it. False messiahs and false prophets will appear and produce signs and omens, to lead astray, if possible, the elect. But be alert; I have already told you everything.

‘But in those days, after that suffering,  
the sun will be darkened,  
   and the moon will not give its light,  
and the stars will be falling from heaven,  
   and the powers in the heavens will be shaken.  
Then they will see “the Son of Man coming in clouds” with great power and glory. Then he will send out the angels, and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.

Gospel Reader: The Gospel of Christ.

**All: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.**

Gospel Canticle

Refrain: **You have looked with favour upon your lowly servant:**

**From this day, all generations will call her blessed.**

**Magnificat**

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,

my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,

for he has looked with favor on his humble servant.

From this day all generations will call me blessed,

the Almighty has done great things for me,

and holy is his Name.

He has mercy on those who fear Him

in every generation.

He has shown the strength of his arm,

he has scattered the proud in their conceit.

He has cast down the mighty from their thrones,

and has lifted up the humble.

He has filled the hungry with good things,

and the rich he has sent away empty.

He has come to the help of his servant Israel

for he has remembered his promise of mercy,

the promise he made to our fathers,

to Abraham and his children for ever.

**Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,**

**as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be for ever.**

**Amen**

Refrain: **You have looked with favour upon your lowly servant:**

**From this day, all generations will call her blessed.**

**The Litany**

Presider Let us give glory to God on high,

Who from his fullness have received grace upon grace.

For the holy Church of God throughout the world,

That with one heart we may rejoice in the word made flesh,

Let us pray in the Spirit

**All God of love, hear our prayer**

Presider For good will in the hearts of all; and on earth peace,

Let us pray in the Spirit

**All God of love, hear our prayer**

Presider For the poor, the outcast and the homeless,

The lonely and the unloved, Let us pray in the Spirit

**All God of love, hear our prayer**

Presider For all who have gone before us,

Whose hope was in the Word made flesh, Let us pray in the Spirit

**All God of love, hear our prayer**

Presider (Any individual prayers…)

**God of love, hear our prayer**

Presider With the blessed Virgin Mary,

Saint John and all the host of heaven,

let our voices rise to praise God’s glory

**All God of love, hear our prayer**

**The Collect**

Presider Almighty God,

Who wonderfully created us in your own image

And yet more wonderfully restored us

In your Son Jesus Christ:

Grant that, as he came to share our human nature,

So we may be partakers of his divine glory;

Who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,

One God, now and forever. Amen.

Presider As Our Saviour Christ taught us we are bold to say:

**All Our Father in heaven,**

**hallowed be your name,**

**your kingdom come,**

**your will be done,**

**on earth as in heaven.**

**Give us today our daily bread.**

**Forgive us our sins**

**as we forgive those who sin against us.**

**Lead us not into temptation**

**but deliver us from evil.**

**For the kingdom, the power,**

**and the glory are yours**

**now and for ever.**

**Amen.**

**Closing Responses**

The Blessing

**All The Lord bless us and preserve us from all evil,**

**And keep us in eternal life. Amen.**

Presider Let us bless the Lord

**All Thanks be to God.**