

Sermon on Angels 2009

It was during the most challenging time in my life, I felt the devil tugging at me, trying to lure me to a point of no return. And just then, I felt a chill down my spine, hope in my heart, and the courage to make a decision to change. What happened, what changed inside of me, which caused me to take the right path—I didn't know it then, but I know now, that it was my guardian angel.

Today is the feast of the synaxis, or gathering of the Archangels. Angels are Bodiless beings, purely spirits, created by God before man. They are superior in nature and intelligence to man; and, like man, they have understanding and free will. Some of them are even appointed to guard the faithful (guardian angels). Angels are grouped in nine orders (*tagmata*) as follows: Angels; Archangels; Principalities; Powers; Virtues; Dominations; Thrones; Cherubim and Seraphim.

Angels minister to God in heaven, and are His messengers here on earth.

In the Orthodox worship, every Monday is dedicated to the angels.

Angels are ministers to God. God created angels out of nothing into being. They are brought to perfection through the word. They have no need of marriage—they are immortal. Angels differ in brightness and position to God. They are incredibly swift. Angels are guardians by nature. Each Country, the Old Testament tells us, has a guardian angel. WE know the story that Lucifer, the Devil, was an angel who fell. Today, Angels are no longer able to fall into sin, and satan is not able to created new Angels.

We should always remember to pray to our guardian angel, who protects us, especially in times of distress. In the Proevangelion of James, an apocryphal book of the New Testament, Ioakim and Anna pray for a child, and an Angel appears before them and gives them

the good news that they will bear a child, the Virgin Mary. At Baptism we receive our guardian angel and at marriage, the priest asks the Lord to give the newly married couple an angel to go before them all the days of their life. An Angel lights the path in our lives so we can walk in the light and avoid evil obstacles. Angels are so prominent in the Church that they guard the doors that are used to enter the altar through the iconostasion, the Archangel Michael is on your left, and Archangel Gabriel on your right. The archangel Gabriel was given the responsibility to guard the entrance into the Kingdom of heaven. If you notice, we go out through the north door, Michael, and we re-enter the altar through the south door with the Archangel Gabriel who protects the entrance into the altar, which represents the Kingdom of heaven. Gabriel was the one who gave the good news to Zacharius that Elizabeth would bear St. John the Baptist. He told Ioakim and Anna that they would bear the Virgin Mary, and of course the Archangel Gabriel gave the great tidings to Mary at the Annunciation, that she would bear a Son, Jesus, the Savior of the universe. The Archangel Michael also played a pivotal role in the history of salvation. It was he who gave courage and strength to the other angels after Lucifer, a former angel, fell. He made sure that no other angel fell afterwards.

The word angel comes from the Greek word, *Angelos*, which means messenger. The message that these angels brought was one from God to His people. Are angels still talking to us, but what are they saying? Communicating with angels, or more specifically, our guardian angels, is similar to talking with another person. When you meet someone for the first time, you begin a conversation. The more you talk to the person, the more you find out about him or her. I meet a lot of people at wedding receptions, and I have to confess that I often have a hard time having a conversation because the music is so loud and there are so many distractions. I usually have to go to a quieter place, somewhere that I can hear and be heard, and then I can have a conversation. I also notice that the more conversations I have

with someone, the more I know about them and they know about me. It's the same with angels.

I said earlier that I did not know that it was my guardian angel who helped me over 20 years ago. But after I learned a little bit about guardian angels, I began to talk to mine, asking for help when I need it. I talk to my guardian angel regularly and know when my angel is present. I literally feel my angel around me, comforting me, protecting me. And as strange as it may sound, I even hug my guardian angel. I can honestly say that I never feel alone any more. I also know my guardian angel's name, It's Nicholas. If we forget about our guardian angels, we limit the amount of help they can give us, for unaware of their presence and not aware of the help they can provide by simply asking for their protection. This is why if we are godparents, we should remember to give icons to our baptized children—to remind them of their guardian angels.

Today we remember angels, but in fact, we should never forget them. They have been created to assist God and God's people—they are here for us. I pray that everyone develops a relationship with their guardian angel, so that they never feel alone anymore, and have a great advocate and protector against every evil attack. And, it's okay to hug your guardian angel—he wants you to—trust me. Amen