

Ask, Father James:

I Like our Parish's prayers after Mass. Could you please help me understand devotion prayers to Angels?

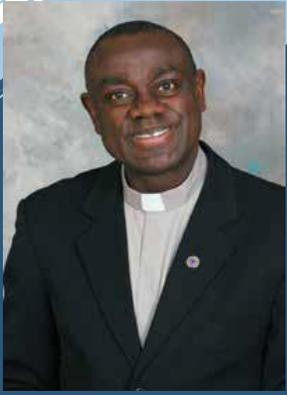
The Hebrew for Lord is "el" and it forms the endings of the names of the three archangels - Michael (who is like God), Gabriel (God is my strength) and Raphael (God is my healer). However, the cult of St. Michael the Archangel is by far the most popular in devotion to angels and major shrines and numerous churches and chapels around the world are dedicated to this angel who, according to the Book of Revelation, chapter 12, defeated Satan and his wicked minions. In the prayer to St. Michael the archangel, we ask that he defend us in battle and be our protection against the wickedness and snares of the devil.

There are myriads of angels and they are grouped into hierarchical orders called choirs. There are nine choirs of angels. The first choir, called simply the "angels," is followed by the Archangels, then the Virtues, the Powers, the Principalities, the Dominations, the Thrones, then the Cherubim and Seraphim. The angels are "appointed one to each person and represent God's personal care for each one of us. The angels are sent by God as "ministering spirits." Angels ministered to Jesus in the wilderness (Mark 1:13). Angels spend their freedom in service to humanity by taking part in God's work of human salvation. God "uses the ministry of the angels for the salvation of the human race. Jesus says; 'Their Angels continually behold the face of the Father' (Matthew 18:10) and "you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man" (John 1:51).

Scripture recorded a multiplicity of functions of angels: they acted as guardians and guides to the faithful, conveyed the souls of the blessed to heaven, battled devils, ministered to Christ, rejoiced for human redemption, and performed the celestial liturgy in perpetuity. Galatians 4:2 says angels are "guardians and tutors" and Hebrews 1:14 says; "Are not all angels ministering spirits, sent to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation?" The angels know "that we are destined to be future citizens of heaven with them, "and co-heirs of the bliss of heaven." They also know that humans will one day complete the angelic community and thus at each worship, the angels and humans performed the liturgy in concert. This is why we join these heavenly host in singing the Lord's praises at Mass - Holy! Holy! Holy!

This is why humans have always been fascinated by angels. Many people actually have a collection of angels and some people are drawn to the effusion of music-making angels and others pray to them unceasingly and all too often these days, it is the angels--not the Lord--who get all the credit. These people believe that "with angels around, they don't have to bother an Almighty God in order to get help. Nevertheless, there are some people who doubt the existence of angels, thinking of them as simply the product of the mythological world and they make mockery of angels by asking like the mediaeval did; if they exist, then how many angels can dance on a pinhead?

These people seem to be more interested in fallen angels, demons or devils. These people must



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realize that Satan is the father of lies, and fallen angels deceive. But good angels cannot deceive. Jesus himself clearly believed in angels and considered them warriors at his command. "Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels? (Matthew 26:53). This is no wonder the reason why many Christians believe they have the authority to command angels to do their bidding. We pray and invoke help of the angels like the early church did. The church in Jerusalem prayed for Peter when he was in prison (Acts 12:5). When Peter was delivered, he testified, "Now I know without a doubt that the Lord sent his angel and rescued me from Herod's clutches and from everything the Jewish people were anticipating" (Acts 12:11). Angels are called God's "holy angels." He sends them to us.

Please email your Faith Questions to Father James at: frjowolagba@gmail.com

