

Feast of Saints Michael, Gabriel and Raphael, Archangels

Homily of Bishop John Barres

St. Agnes Cathedral

September 29, 2021

Today we celebrate the Feast of the Archangels, Saints Michael, Gabriel and Raphael. These biblical messengers signify God's transcendence and loving care. **(Ordo)**

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, sections 332-333, illumines our understanding of the role of Archangels and Angels. It reads:

332 Angels have been present since creation and throughout the history of salvation, announcing this salvation from afar or near and serving the accomplishment of the divine plan: they closed the earthly paradise; protected Lot; saved Hagar and her child; stayed Abraham's hand; communicated the law by their ministry; led the People of God; announced births and callings; and assisted the prophets, just to cite a few examples.¹⁹⁴ Finally, the angel Gabriel announced the birth of the Precursor and that of Jesus himself.¹⁹⁵

333 From the Incarnation to the Ascension, the life of the Word incarnate is surrounded by the adoration and service of angels. When God "brings the firstborn into the world, he says: 'Let all God's angels worship him.'"¹⁹⁶ Their song of praise at the birth of Christ has not ceased resounding in the Church's praise: "Glory to God in the highest!"¹⁹⁷ They protect Jesus in his infancy, serve him in the desert, strengthen him in his agony in the garden, when he could have been saved by them from the hands of his enemies as Israel had been.¹⁹⁸ Again, it is the angels who "evangelize" by proclaiming the Good News of Christ's Incarnation and Resurrection.¹⁹⁹ They will be present at Christ's return, which they will announce, to serve at his judgement.²⁰⁰

We call on the angels and archangels every day and every hour and we call on them in a special way liturgically during the Preface of every Mass to help us to praise the glory of God. **(Conversations with God, volume 7, 166)**

In St. Thomas Aquinas' *Panis Angelicus*, he calls the Eucharist the "Bread of Angels."

We pray to the Father in the Roman Canon: “In humble prayer we ask you, almighty God: command that these gifts be borne by the hands of your holy Angel to your altar on high in the sight of your divine majesty, so that all of us, who through the participation at the altar receive the most holy Body and Blood of your Son may be filled with every grace and heavenly blessing.”

St. Michael is prominent in the Book of Revelation in his apocalyptic fight against “the huge dragon, the ancient serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan.” He intercedes for us in our decisive rejection of evil, sin and self-destruction and our full and total embrace of holiness and light.

St. Gabriel appears in the Book of Daniel and again in the Gospel of Luke, where he bears tidings of hope to Zechariah and then to Our Lady. Tradition also identifies Gabriel as the angel who appeared to Joseph and to the shepherds, and the comforter of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. In Gabriel, God’s strength is manifested as tenderness: “Do not be afraid,” he tells Mary (Lk 1:30). And to the shepherds: “I proclaim to you good news of great joy.” (September 2021 **Magnificat**, p. 396)

St. Raphael accompanies and protects the young Tobias in the Book of Tobit in the Old Testament. He is an intercessor for those discerning their particular vocation and call to holiness and mission in life. He is considered the patron of travelers as well as the patron of those of us travelling through life discerning the road to holiness and the path to Eternal Life.

Mary, Queen of Angels, pray for us!

St. Joseph, guided by Angels in his service to the Holy Family, pray for us!

St. Michael, pray for us and protect us from evil!

St. Gabriel, pray for us and help us to always say yes to God’s will!

St. Raphael, pray for us and help us to discern the path to holiness and Eternal Life!