

In the name of ✠ Jesus.

Once upon a time, not long ago, angels were everywhere in pop culture—angel figurines and dolls, angel TV programs. Maybe I'm just out of touch, but I don't see it anymore. Do you? The popularity of angels seems to have fizzled in pop culture.

But don't worry. Pop culture's disinterest doesn't mean that angels have gone away. They're still around, still ministering, still battling for right, still fighting for us, not that we know this by our own observations or investigations. We know it because our Rock tells us so in His word: that He sends these messengers to us, these ministering spirits to us, for our good, to serve us. It is His will: *"Bless the LORD, O you his angels, you mighty ones who do his word, obeying the voice of his word! Bless the LORD, all his hosts, his ministers, who do his will! Bless the LORD, all his works, in all places of his dominion. Bless the LORD, O my soul!"*

Indeed, the angels bless the Lord — Isaiah's heavenly vision gives us a glimpse of their praises. Before the Holy Trinity, the Lord God of Angel Armies, the cherubim and seraphim — angels — sing out their never-ending song of praise: *"Holy Father, Holy Son, Holy Spirit, O Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of Your glory!"* And marvelously, we get to join in their song week after week.

Or remember how one angel messenger announced to shepherds the Good news of great joy — the world's savior, your savior, Christ the Lord, was born in Bethlehem — and then the angel host appeared to them, singing: *"Glory to God in the highest."* We join in those praises, too! Marvelous!

Or consider how we are told of the awesome winged creatures before God's throne in Revelation singing, *"Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power,"* or the whole heavenly host, *"myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands,"* singing, *"Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!"* We get to join in that song, too. How marvelous is all that?

These, of course, are the good angels whom we just confessed as we prayed that God has *"ordained and constituted the service of angels and men in a wonderful order."* These angels are mighty creatures, and they are many. And although Moses does not mention them in the creation story, they are creatures, it seems to me probably created early in the six days, for the Lord tells us that they were singing for joy when the bases of the earth were sunk, its cornerstone laid (Job 38). Men, on the other hand, the pinnacle of God's creation, were made at the end of the six days.

And though it's true that man's strength is weaker than the angels, that is no indicator that man's place in the created order is lesser than the angels. Quite the contrary. Men are weaker than horses, too, and yet man has been given dominion over them. Truly, according to the created order, man is greater than angels, for angels are among us as those who serve.

As Jesus told us today, angels are given to serve children foremost, the little ones who like Maria Magdalena are washed and forgiven, given the Holy Spirit, and come to "*believe in [Him].*" Indeed, angels protect and serve all those who will inherit salvation, all who are made the dwelling place of the Lord by baptism and faith, who take refuge in the Lord, for, the Psalmist says, "*He will command His angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways.*" Angels serve the dying especially also. Jesus tells us, "*The poor man (Lazarus) died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's side.*" And so we too sing, "*Lord, let at last Thine angels come; to Abram's bosom bear me home, that I may die unfearing.*"

Angels help us and serve us now by engaging mankind's ancient enemy in battle, for we have a powerful enemy in that wily serpent, that deceiver and murderer. His wiles are too much for us – if they were for sinless Eve before the fall, they are certainly too much for us after the fall. His strength is too much for us, too, post fall. The Lord therefore set Michael and the holy angels to do battle with Satan, and they defeated him in the heavenly places, so that the song of victory is sung there: "*Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down.*"

But he has been thrown down to earth, and he remains a powerful foe here on earth, who attacks us with His accusations. For us still, "*the fight is fierce, the warfare long,*" "*for the devil has come down to [us] in great wrath, because he knows that his time is short!*" No one who by baptism bears the name of Christ is spared. Cast out of Maria this morning, the devil's attacks on her from the outside began. Maria's "*mighty and lifelong enemy*" has begun already to whisper his accusations in her ear, as he does in ours all the time.

But she is here with us in the holy ark of Christendom. Look up and see the hull of that ark. Here is where Satan's whispering accusations are drowned out by the distant triumph song that steals on our ears. Here is where we hear of Satan's defeat, conquered by the blood of the Lamb. Here is where we are assured that the serpent's head has been crushed by the Seed of Woman. Here we get to hear promises: "*Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel,*" and fulfillment: "*unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord*"; promises: "*they have pierced my hands and feet*

... they divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots,” and fulfillment: “And they crucified him and divided his garments among them, casting lots for them, to decide what each should take”; promises: “you will not abandon my soul to Sheol, or let your holy one see corruption,” and fulfillment: “You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen; he is not here. See the place where they laid him”; promises: “God has gone up with a shout, the LORD with the sound of a trumpet,” and fulfillment: “This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven”; and more promises yet to be fulfilled: “For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. ... For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.”

Here angels and archangels gather with us to rehearse the Good News message of the Son, the message of salvation, spoken to us by these holy messengers of God — for that’s what the name angel means, and our hearts are made brave again, and our arms made strong, and we are bold to say: *Sin, disturb my soul no longer; Satan, ... drop your ugly accusation; Death, you cannot end my gladness. I belong to Christ. I am baptized into Him. His blood has justified me. His death has paid the price for my sin. His resurrection thwarts your condemnations.”*

It’s this angelic message heard here and not the fleeting message carried on the fickle winds of pop culture that will sustain us in the cosmic battle. Which is why, I assume, you are here: to be comforted with this message of victory, and boldly to join with angels and archangels and all the company of heaven in the heavenly song of victory over our enemies for *“we are more than conquerors through [Christ Jesus, the Lamb] who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, **nor angels** nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”* God grant you this comfort ...

In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.