

ALL ABOUT THE ANGELS

“See that you despise not one of these little ones: for I say to you, that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father who is in heaven.”

—Matthew 18:10

ALL ABOUT THE ANGELS

by

Father Paul O'Sullivan, O.P.
[E. D. M.]

*“ . . . he hath given his angels
charge over thee, and in their
hands shall they bear thee up, lest
perhaps thou dash thy foot against
a stone.”*

—Matthew 4:6

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CUM PERMISSU SUPERIORUM

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A truly beautiful book—

*It opens up a new and glorious world to
its readers;*

*It gives them a happiness and joy they
never had before;*

*It is a book for all, priests and people,
young and old.*

APOSTOLIC NUNCIATURE
LIBSON, PORTUGAL

Dear Father Paul O'Sullivan,

Many thanks for sending me the beautiful little book on the Angels which you have just published.

It comes at a most opportune moment, for in the present state of unrest and suffering in the world no better remedy can be found than the all-powerful protection of God's glorious Angels.

The doctrine of Holy Church on these Blessed Spirits in most consoling and should be thoroughly understood by all Christians.

The Angels are our best friends, and you tell your readers all about them in a manner so clear and interesting that the perusal of your book will certainly awaken a great love for and confidence in these glorious Princes of Heaven. In return, the Angels will obtain for us many graces and deliver us from many evils.

I remain with the highest esteem,

Yours very sincerely,

✠ *Peter Ciriaci, Apostolic Nuncio*

1 September 1945

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

All About the Angels is one of the best-loved books of Fr. Paul O'Sullivan, O.P. All of Fr. O'Sullivan's works, in fact, have been favorites of Catholic readers for many years.

These books used to be published in Portugal, starting in the 1940's, and we found them to be very popular in the 1970's when we were importing them from there. In the meantime, however, the Portuguese publisher has ceased publishing these books, and St. Martin Apostolate in Dublin, a Dominican organization, has been distributing them.

We are very pleased to have been given permission to republish Fr. O'Sullivan's books. They are short, easy to understand and full of beautiful and encouraging stories from our Catholic heritage. They are conceived and written to help us live our Catholic Faith on an everyday basis in a full, rich, rewarding manner, so that we may reap both the happiness and peace in this world and the eternal salvation of our souls in the next that come from doing God's holy will. Fr. O'Sullivan was obviously convinced that it was not so hard to become a saint—if we will only make use of the means Christ has put at our disposal in the Catholic Religion—and he has set out to show us the way.

We hope that *All About the Angels* will be more popular than ever in this new edition. And we trust that

it will increase faith in and devotion to the blessed angelic spirits, present invisibly all around us—the Angels, who are ever eager to help us and to lead us to our heavenly home.

—The Publishers
January 12, 1990

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Foreword

WHY IGNORE OUR BEST FRIENDS?

“Make friends with the angels” is the advice which the great Pope, St. Leo, gives every Christian and it is advice that everyone should follow.

If we make friends with the angels—and nothing is easier—we shall receive innumerable and great favors which otherwise we shall never obtain. Our angel friends, too, will shield and protect us from countless dangers, evils, sickness and accidents which, without their help, we could not possibly avoid. In a word, these all-powerful and loving protectors will secure for us a degree of happiness that, without their assistance, we could not hope for in this vale of tears!

Another reason we should make friends with the angels is that they are our dearest and best friends. A good friend, a friend who is able and always ready to help us, a friend to whom we can have recourse in all our troubles and sorrows, is one of the greatest blessings God can give us. Our human hearts thirst for love and sympathy.

Among men we rarely or never find such a friend, but this is not so with the angels. They are most desirous to be our friends and they love us with all the intensity of their angelic natures. Since they are all-powerful and generous, we can have the fullest confidence in their help and friendship.

The one friendship on this Earth that gives us any idea of the love of the angels is the affection of a mother. This is the purest, the most generous, the strongest of all human loves. The mother loves her children with an unbounded affection.

God has placed in the mother's heart an instinct of love so great that it almost borders on the supernatural. She forgets herself and thinks only of her children. She works for them, sacrifices herself for them, and gives them her all. If one of them should fall sick or be plunged into some great sorrow, to that one she devotes a more special gentleness and a more loving care.

We sometimes see a frail woman watch by the bedside of her sick child—eating little, resting little, consumed with a poignant anxiety—for ten, twenty or even thirty days, never complaining, and never faltering. When these days of anguish and bitterness are past, this almost superhuman effort, these long, weary vigils, seem to have cost her nothing. The mother's love sustained her. Yet, strong men who lose their sleep for two or three consecutive nights complain that they find it hard to work the following day.

If a poor frail mother—she may be young or old, rich or poor, full of weaknesses and imperfections—can rise to such a height of love and abnegation as this, what may we not expect from God's angels, who have no defects, no imperfections and who love us with all the mighty power of their glorious angelic natures?

The teaching of the Church about the angels is most beautiful and consoling, but unfortunately many Christians have scant knowledge of the great world of

the angels. They know little about these blessed spirits, love them little and seldom pray to them. Worst of all, *they do not realize their presence*. They show no confidence in them, and they do not call on them for help when dangers and difficulties press around.

As a result they forfeit a thousand blessings that they might easily enjoy and fall victim to a thousand accidents that they might easily have avoided.

HOW COMES IT THAT THE ANGELS ARE SO LITTLE KNOWN AND SO LITTLE LOVED?

Simply because many, whose duty it is to teach this most important doctrine are gravely negligent in fulfilling their obligation.

First of all, Christian mothers should instill deeply into the minds of their children a clear, vivid and abiding sense of the presence of their dear angels.

It is not sufficient to give them vague, hazy, insufficient notions of these blessed spirits, nor is it enough to teach them to say a short prayer at morning and night to their angel guardians.

They should devote much time and much attention to this all-important subject. Children must be taught constantly from their tenderest years to have a real love and friendship for their angels, to have boundless confidence in them. They must be accustomed to feel and realize the personal presence of their angels, to call on them in all their fears and troubles.

How much better this would be than that the children should have their heads filled with foolish fear of ghosts and hobgoblins as so frequently happens.

Mothers who impress on their children this great

lesson confer on them inestimable blessings during all the long years of their lives.

On the other hand, if they neglect this duty or make light of it, they do a great wrong to their dear ones for they deprive them of the best and most powerful friends.

Catechists, too, and teachers of the young in schools, colleges and convents are frequently remiss in teaching those in their charge all about the blessed angels. The minds of their pupils are developing, and the teaching of the mothers in the home, no matter how good it might have been, must be perfected and developed.

Professors of older students, boys and girls, are perhaps greater offenders. They rarely mention the subject of the angels in their classes. Why? Do not the angels exist? Are they not our best friends? Is there not much to be said about them?

Priests of course can do much to remedy the neglect of parents and teachers by preaching at times on the angels, by wise counsels in the confessional and by exhorting the faithful to read books on the angels.

Priests who do so receive most striking graces.

THE OBJECT OF THIS BOOK

There are few books published about the angels, and these few are mostly doctrinal and abstruse. They do not appeal to the general public and fail to create in the heart of the ordinary reader that love and trust which they ought to have in the angels.

It is so different in the case of the Saints. There

are innumerable books attractively written about these great servants of God which help us to know them, to love them and follow their example.

There are also pictures of all kinds, large and small, of the Saints which we hang on our walls, place on our work tables or use in our prayerbooks. We thus live, as it were, in the presence and company of the Saints.

Pictures of the angels are few and to a certain extent misleading because the angel is, as a rule, represented as guiding little children; whereas, adults should, with equal reason, be reminded of their angels and have suitable pictures of them.

In the Sacred Scriptures angels are pictured as helping Abraham and Jacob, Elias and Daniel, Agar and Judith, Peter and Paul—all adults.

The object of these pages is to awaken in the hearts of our readers a real love and friendship for the Holy Angels, an abiding confidence in them, and *above all* to make readers realize and feel vividly the presence of these loving spirits ever by their sides.

OUR PLAN

At the cost of inverting the natural order of our book, we will commence by relating some of the modern and best authenticated apparitions of angels. We do this, first of all, to stimulate the interest of our readers and secondly because many seem to think that angelic apparitions are a thing of the past.

We shall then, following the doctrine of St. Thomas, tell our readers all about the angels, who they are, what they are doing, where they are, how beautiful, how lovable, how powerful, how eager they are to help us and

what great advantages we gain by honoring and loving these great princes of Heaven.

Next we will recall some of the beautiful stories of the angels which we find in the Scriptures, in the lives of the Martyrs and other Saints.

In the course of our book we quote striking and well-authenticated incidents from the lives of men and women, boys and girls living in the world like ourselves. These facts have a special value, as they go to show how ready the dear angels are to help, not only saints, but all who love them, no matter how modest these may be.

We humbly ask the dear angels to help us in this work of love.

Chapter 1

THE APPARITIONS OF THE ANGEL GUARDIAN OF PORTUGAL IN THE YEAR 1916

We cannot begin our little book on the angels better than by giving an accurate and authoritative account of the apparitions of the Guardian Angel of Portugal, in Fatima. These are perhaps the most striking and best authenticated angelic apparitions of modern times.

Portugal has received many and great blessings during the long years of her history. To mention a few: She was for many centuries one of the greatest Catholic nations in the world, we might perhaps say the greatest. She discovered and conquered half the present-known world in less than one hundred years, which was certainly a wonderful feat. But she did more. She Christianized her vast empire with a care and humanity that has never been surpassed. The best authorities bear witness to this fact, and the Church has fully recognized it by granting many notable privileges to the Catholics of Portugal, privileges which they still continue to enjoy.

A second great favor was the extraordinary devotion to the Blessed Sacrament which gives her a claim to the glorious title of “the Land of the Eucharist.”

A third outstanding grace bestowed on this favored country was the exceptional love and devotion to Our Blessed Lady which began with the first king of Portugal and was continued by his successors, who held themselves bound to insist on and maintain the solemn consecration of the realm to Mary Immaculate, whom they chose for their Patroness and Protectress. Later on, kings offered the royal crown to Mary, so that for long years the kings of

Portugal never wore the royal diadem.

The crowning grace, however, was reserved for our own days, when in May 1917 and the following five months, God's Holy Mother appeared in Fatima, establishing there one of the most glorious Marian sanctuaries in the world.

An outstanding feature of these apparitions and one that none other of her sanctuaries can claim is the appearance of the Angel Guardian of Portugal in 1916, the year preceding the apparitions.

The glorious Archangel appeared on three occasions and in three different places to the privileged children who were destined to see Our Lady. He taught them how to pray and sanctify themselves, assuring them that Jesus and Mary had special designs for them, thus preparing them for the coming of God's Holy Mother the following year, 1917.

The following is an exact account of these angelic apparitions.

THE FIRST VISION OF THE ANGEL

The eldest of the three children to whom Our Lady appeared, now known as Sister Lucy, tells us in

her own simple language how the Angel of Portugal appeared three times to her and her cousins, Jacinta and Francisco.

She did not remember the exact dates of these apparitions, for she says, "At that time I made no account of months or weeks or days." She was an uncultured little peasant girl.

"It was sometime in the Spring of 1916 that Jacinta, Francisco and I were minding our sheep in a place called Chousa Velha. It was in the morning and a light rain-like dew began to fall as we went up the side of the hill with our sheep, looking for a rock [or] some place where we could shelter ourselves from the rain. In the midst of an olive grove we found a cave, which we entered for the first time. When the rain had cleared off, we still lingered there some time, ate our lunch and said our Rosary. After this we began to play with some stones.

"Suddenly, though the day was very mild, a strong wind began to sway the branches of the tree and we glanced up to see the cause of it.

"We saw over the trees a light as white as snow and in the midst of it the form of a young man as brilliant as crystal when it is lit up by the light of the sun. As he approached us, we began to see his features clearly. We were surprised, absorbed by what we saw, but [we] said not a word.

"On coming near us he said, '*Don't be afraid, I am the Angel of Peace. Pray with me.*'

"Then kneeling on the ground, he bent his head low and we, moved by a supernatural inspiration, imitated him and repeated the words that we heard him say:

“‘*My God, I believe, I adore, I hope in Thee and I love Thee.*’

“‘*I ask Thee to pardon those who do not believe, adore, hope in and love Thee.*’

“After saying these words three times, he arose and said to us: ‘*Pray thus. The hearts of Jesus and Mary are listening to the voice of your supplications.*’ He then disappeared.

“The supernatural feeling that had taken possession of us was so intense that we did not even think of our own existence; we remained for a long time as the Angel had left us, repeating over and over the same prayer.

“We felt the presence of God so overpowering and so intimate in our souls that we did not even dare to speak of it among ourselves. Next day we still felt the same intense feeling of God’s presence, which only after the lapse of some time began to lessen. We did not think of speaking of the apparition nor did we make any agreement to keep it secret; the apparition itself seemed to impose silence on us; we did not say a word about it.

“Perhaps it made more impression on us as it was the first apparition which we had had.”

THE SECOND VISION OF THE ANGEL

“The second vision of the Angel was in the heat of summer. We went to pass the hour of the great heat of the day in the shade of some trees, in a place called Arneiro.

“Suddenly we saw the same Angel near us.

“He said: ‘*What are you doing? Pray. Pray much.*

“*The Hearts of Jesus and Mary have special designs of mercy on you. Offer constantly to the Most High prayers and sacrifices.*’

“‘*What sacrifices?*’ I asked.

“*Offer a sacrifice of everything you can in reparation for the sins which offend Him and in supplication for the conversion of sinners. Obtain for our country peace. I am the Guardian Angel of Portugal.*

“*Above all accept and bear with resignation the sufferings Our Lord will send you.*’

“These words of the Angel engraved themselves on our hearts like a light which made us see who God was, how He loved us and how He wished us to love Him. It made us understand the value of sacrifice, how pleasing it is to God and how He converts sinners by means of it.

“Therefore, from that moment we began to offer to God everything that mortified us or caused us pain, without seeking to do other penances, except indeed, to repeat for hours, prostrate on the earth, the prayer the Angel had taught us.”

THE THIRD VISION OF THE ANGEL

“The third vision was at the end of October or beginning of November, for as I have said, I did not in those days make account of days or weeks.

“This third vision took place in an olive grove called Pregueira belonging to my parents. We had said

our Rosary and the prayer that the Angel had taught us in the first vision.

“He now appeared to us with a Chalice in his hand and over it a Host from which drops of Blood fell into the Chalice.

“Leaving the Chalice and the Host suspended in the air, he prostrated himself on the earth and repeated the following prayer three times: *‘Most Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, I adore Thee profoundly and offer Thee the most Precious Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ, present in all the tabernacles of the world, in reparation for all the outrages, sacrileges, and indifference with which He is offended. And by the infinite merits of His most Sacred Heart and the Immaculate Heart of Mary I ask Thee for the conversion of poor sinners.’*

“He then arose and again took the Chalice. To me he gave the Host and to Jacinta and Francisco he gave what was in the Chalice, saying: *‘Take and drink the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, horribly outraged by ungrateful men. Make reparation for their crimes and console our God.’*

“Once more he prostrated himself on the earth and repeated three times the same prayer: *‘Most Holy Trinity, etc. . .’* and disappeared.

“Overcome by supernatural emotion, we imitated the Angel and did all that he had done. The feeling of the Divine Presence overcame us and, as it were, annihilated us completely. It seemed to deprive us of the use of our corporal senses for a long time. During these days we performed our material actions as if impelled by this supernatural force. The peace and happiness which we enjoyed were great and intimate, our souls were completely wrapt up in God. The physical weakness we felt was also great.

“The apparitions of Our Blessed Lady later on produced different effects on us. We enjoyed the same intimate joy, peace and happiness, but instead of physical prostration we felt a certain energy; instead of annihilation in the Presence of God, we felt exultation and joy. Instead of any difficulty in speaking, we felt an enthusiasm in communicating what we had seen and heard, though indeed, we felt a strong inspiration to keep some things secret.”

Our space does not allow of our entering more fully into the story of the beautiful lives of these dear little peasant children of Fatima, so highly honored by God’s Holy Mother. We merely wish to accentuate one fact and that is the amazing results produced in them by the Angel’s visits.

No master of the spiritual life could instill into their minds such lofty ideals, such heroic courage, such unbounded generosity in doing God’s Will. Let this be a lesson to us, for if we are devoted to our own dear angel guardian, he too will most certainly raise us up to a great height of sanctity and obtain for us the very greatest graces.

WHY DID THE ANGEL APPEAR IN PORTUGAL?

Although every country, every kingdom, and every province has its angel guardian, we know of no other nation in *modern* times whose angel has appeared as in [the case of] Portugal. Can we offer any explanation for this exceptional honor? Perhaps the answer lies in the fact that Portugal has had from the earliest times

a very special love for the angels, as the following facts go to show:

Her first king, Don Afonso Henriques, a man eminent not only for his military prowess but also for his truly Christian life, had a very marked love for the angels, notably for his angel guardian and for St. Michael, the prince of the heavenly host.

We find this devotion mentioned in some of the old Portuguese chronicles. The account runs as follows:

Some time after the king had taken the almost impregnable Moorish fortress of Santarem, the Moorish hosts, under the command of their monarch Albaraque, in person, made a formidable attack on the city in the hope of reconquering it. At the time king Afonso Henriques was suffering grievously from a wound in one of his legs so that he could not mount his horse. He insisted, however, on getting into a chariot and joining in the fight. It was a hazardous adventure because his death or capture would have been a serious blow to his soldiers and a source of encouragement to his enemies.

However, as events proved, he was under angelic protection. A legend says he saw an arm grasping a sword and also a wing, which showed him that an angel was with him.

This sword protected the person of the king and wrought dreadful havoc among the Moors, who fled in terror, leaving the Portuguese masters of the field. The Moorish captives taken in the battle declared that they too had seen the Angel.

In gratitude the king founded a military Order which he called the "Order of the Wing" in honor of St. Michael and the angels.

Many noble families belonged to this Order, and we have seen an image of a wing and an arm brandishing a sword, on the coat of arms of one of the old families.

We have further evidence of this devotion in the fact that Don Manuel I, one of the most remarkable of the Kings of Portugal, was also most devoted to the angels, so much so that he begged the Pope to sanction the feast of the Angel Guardian of Portugal and permit the Office and Mass to be said on the third Sunday of July. This feast is still celebrated. We have never heard that any other country celebrates a like feast.

Vasco da Gama, the renowned discoverer who found the maritime route to India, leaves another proof of the great confidence that the Portuguese had in the holy angels.

When starting on this memorable voyage to India, one of the most remarkable recorded in history, he called two of his ships after the angels, one *St. Gabriel*, because it was he who had brought to the world the great tidings of our Redemption—and the Admiral too, had the wish to carry the same news of salvation to the pagan lands he hoped to discover. He called the other ship *St. Raphael*, after the angel who accompanied the young Tobias on his long and dangerous journey. The Admiral rightly thought that he himself could have no better guide and protector on this perilous voyage than this patron of travellers.

In modern times the Portuguese, recalling this act of Vasco da Gama, have again named two of their vessels after the Archangels.

The King Cardinal Don Henrique cherished a marked love for the angels and built a church in their honor in Lisbon. The feast day was kept as a Holy Day of Obligation in the parish. A second church was erected in honor of St. Michael, and his feast was also observed as a Holy Day of Obligation.

In other churches of Lisbon and throughout the country we find still further traces of this same devotion.

Many of the Kings of Portugal and also the royal princes took the names of Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael in Baptism.

In some families the name of one of the angels is given as a second name to all the children. In one such family known to the writer, there was John Raphael, Mary Raphael, Thomas Raphael, James Raphael and Anne Raphael.

Luiz de Sousa, O.P., one of the foremost Portuguese writers, gives us the story of the conversion of the celebrated Frei Gil or Egidius of Santarem, by his angel guardian.

Egidius was a man of noble birth and of a devout Christian family. He himself, unfortunately, took to the study of the black arts and went to Paris in order *to facilitate this study*. On his way he was induced to sell his soul to the devil in exchange for great learning. This he did by a written bond. One night when working in his laboratory, a young man mounted on a horse dashed into the chamber and sternly rebuking him ordered him to desist at once from his diabolical practices. Egidius was terrified and at once obeyed. Some time after he was again tempted by the devil, who persuaded him

that this vision was merely the effect of an overheated imagination, and he resumed his studies.

The horseman once more appeared and, standing over him, struck him with his lance, leaving a mark on his chest, and in a voice of anger, such as he had never heard before, commanded him to renounce these *hellish arts* at once and forever.

Egidius, moved by this second apparition to the very depths of his soul, not only abandoned his evil ways but did salutary penance.

He returned to Portugal, where he joined the Dominican Order, in which he attained great sanctity.

The same chronicler cites another example of angelic visitation. One of the Fathers, eminent for holiness, by name Father Lawrence, was accosted one day, when making a journey on foot, by an angel who presented him with a box of relics which he had brought from a distant town recently taken by the Saracens and which he wished to save from desecration. These relics were for many centuries venerated in the Church of Guimarães in the north of Portugal.

These few incidents go to show how deeply ingrained was the love and devotion to the holy angels in Portugal. They furnish us with a possible reason why the Guardian Angel of the country appeared in Fatima, for the angels generously repay all the honor we show them.

ANGELIC APPARITIONS IN HUNGARY AND IN IRELAND

As we have already observed, we know of no other country except Portugal where the Angel Guardian

of the country has appeared in recent times, but the angels have appeared in remoter epochs in Hungary and in Ireland, both of which countries have also been very devoted to the angels.

Olibrio, King of Hungary. This king was deliberating on making war on the Tartars, trusting to a powerful army which he had at his disposal. A holy Bishop counselled him to pray fervently before deciding on hostilities. In answer to his sincere prayer, the Angel Guardian of the Kingdom appeared and warned him not to declare the war he had meditated on making, for said the Angel, "Your cause is not just and you will surely be defeated. Do not trust in your army, for the Angel Guardian of the Tartars will fight against you, and you will be beaten, and I cannot help you in what is not just."

The King very readily followed this advice and made peace with the Tartars, who gladly accepted his overtures, for in this his Angel helped him.

In deep gratitude the monarch celebrated magnificent festivities in honor of the Angel Guardian of the Kingdom and placed an image of the Angel over his crown.

Thenceforward it became the custom of the Kings of Hungary to ask God's help in all matters of moment through the intercession of the Angel Guardian of the Kingdom.

The King of Ireland and the Angel. The Venerable Bede mentions that one of the Kings of Ireland had great devotion to the holy angels and invoked them frequently with the greatest confidence.

Unfortunately, owing to the bad advice of a false counsellor, he became unpopular with his subjects who determined to revolt against him.

On learning this, the King was seriously disturbed and entertained grave fears for his life and kingdom. However his angel guardian appeared to him radiant with joy and bade him not to fear, for he said, "Owing to your great love for me and the other angels, we have obtained from God that your princes and subjects will remain loyal and faithful to you. But do you, on your part, dismiss your false counsellor and seek in all things to please our people."

The King gratefully did what the Angel had counselled him, with the happiest results.

These two incidents teach us how our angels, though they love us dearly, will not help us if we seek to do wrong. On the other hand, they are eager to give us every possible assistance when we seek for what is just. We should beware of speaking ill or doing harm to others, for their angels will defend them and avenge them.

Our Lord seems to call our attention to this fact when He warns us not to harm or scandalize children, for He says, "Their angels see the face of My Father."

St. Columba and the Angels. St. Columba, Abbot of Iona, was one of the greatest of the Irish Saints. He cherished a great love for the angels who constantly visited him. Before his birth an angel told his mother that she would bring forth a son who would take numberless souls to Heaven and who would be reckoned amongst the Prophets.

He was once falsely accused of a crime he had never committed. He boldly went to the synod convoked to condemn and punish him. When the great St. Brendan, who was present, saw him approach, he went to meet him, showing him every sign of reverence. The other members of the synod were surprised.

He replied, I saw a brilliant pillar of fire precede this man whom you have unjustly excommunicated, and I have seen angels walking by his side.

When living in the Isle of Hindba, an angel came three successive times to bid him consecrate Aeden King.

He saw the soul of Brito the monk, then the soul of a holy man called Diarmid, and later on, the soul of St. Brendan borne up to Heaven by angels.

The demons, furious at the good he did, attacked him fiercely, but he expelled them from the Island.

When praying in his cell, he suddenly called out: "Help, help," for he had seen a monk fall from a high tower. The Angel seized the falling monk before he reached the ground and so saved his life.

He sought out lonely places in the woods to pray where bands of angels surrounded him. When he died, his soul mounted to Heaven with innumerable angels.