

ST. MICHAEL
AND THE
ANGELS



CREATION

ST. MICHAEL AND THE ANGELS

A MONTH WITH
ST. MICHAEL AND THE HOLY ANGELS

Compiled from Approved Sources

“And there was a great battle in heaven, Michael and his angels fought with the dragon, and the dragon fought and his angels: And they prevailed not, neither was their place found any more in heaven. And that great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, who seduceth the whole world; and he was cast unto the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.” Apocalypse 12:7-9

TAN Books
Charlotte, North Carolina

Formerly titled *The Precious Blood and the Angels*.

Published in 1977 by Marian Publications, South Bend, Indiana, under the title *The Precious Blood and the Angels*.

First published in 1983 by TAN Books.

Retypeset in 2008 by TAN Books.

Library of Congress Catalog Card No.: 82-62040

ISBN: 978-0-89555-196-2

Printed and bound in the United States of America.

TAN Books
Charlotte, North Carolina
www.TANBooks.com
2012

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TRIUMPH OF THE CROSS

Introduction

Glory to the Blood of Jesus!

In his book entitled, "The Precious Blood," Father Faber presents the story of the Precious Blood in the picture of a "Procession" which shows us the Blood of Christ going out from the eternal Mind of God, circulating in time and ascending again to Heaven, after having taken on Its way, each one of those creatures of God who owe to It its own beauty and happiness.

"The first visibility of the invisible God," writes Father Faber, "was but an instantaneous flash, and there lay outspread the broad world of angels, throbbing with light, and teeming with innumerable and yet colossal life. The brightness that silvered them was the reflection of Infinite Beauty. From It and because of It they came. Out of It they drew their marvelous diversity of graces. Their sanctities were but mantles made of Its royal texture. They beautified their natures in Its supernatural streams. It seemed as if here the Procession halted for a moment; or perhaps it was only that the sudden flash of light looked like a momentary halt. The new creatures of God, the first created minds, the primal offspring of the Uncreated Mind, were bidden to fall in, and accompany the great Procession. Oh, it was fearful that first sight outside the immense serenity of God! Then, truly, too truly, there was a halt, as if homage and obedience were refused. There is a gleam as if of intolerable battle, and a coruscation of archangelic weapons, and Michael's wacry echoing, the

first created cry, among the everlasting mountains. A third of that creation of purest light, has, it is maintained, refused to adore the Incarnate Word, and is flung speedily into the dread abyss, and the ranks close in, and the unfallen light now beams more resplendently with its thinner array than ever it beamed before the fallen fell; and onward the Procession moves.”

In this brilliant expose, the eminent writer on the Precious Blood, with a few masterful strokes sums up the history of the angels. “Each angel,” he goes on to say, “perhaps had thousands of beautiful graces. To many of them, we on earth could give no name if we beheld them. But they were all wonderful, all instinct with supernatural holiness and spiritual magnificence. Yet there was not a single grace in any angel which was not God’s free gift, and which has not also its type and counterpart in the Precious Blood. The Precious Blood would have redeemed them, had they needed to be redeemed or were allowed to be redeemed.”

These beautiful lines justify us in seeing an intimate connection between the Precious Blood and the heavenly spirits. As each day of the month of September—



which is especially dedicated to the veneration of the angels—we consider their glorious prerogatives, may the knowledge we gather from the meditation unfold before the eyes of our soul, new visions of clearer light, greater love and deeper joy. “The path of the just as a shining light goeth forward and increaseth even to perfect day.”

(*Psalms* 1, 5:18).

First Day

Devotion to the Angels is a Mark of Predestination

St. Alphonsus Liguori is often quoted as saying that “devotion to St. Michael and the holy angels is a mark of predestination.” This reason alone was certainly sufficient to induce us not to neglect their veneration. On the contrary, we should earnestly strive to cultivate their friendship, in which we shall indeed be blessed, for no earthly friends can compare with them in goodness, in power and in love. St. Denis who wrote most inspiringly of the holy angels, took delight in assuming the title “Philangelus,” that is “Friend of the Angels.” Let us take to heart the advice of Pope St. Leo the Great, “Make friends with the holy angels” and we shall find in them most loving companions in our earthly exile, our champions against the malice and rage of the devils, our advocates at the judgment seat of God, and our amiable companions in bliss and glory throughout the endless eternity.

But why are the angels so little honored? The answer is that most people, even though aware of their existence, take very little trouble to increase their knowledge, and give the angels no more than a passing thought. To honor and love them, we must first know them. Were we to understand their dignity, their perfections, their close relations with God, their excellence and power, we should be drawn to venerate them and rejoice in the

glory which their companionship confers upon us. Were we to remember, furthermore, the affection they bear us and the care with which they guard our souls, we should be inflamed with real love for them.

Moreover, the Church has always practiced and encouraged devotion to the holy angels. All the ancient liturgies make mention of them and of the protection they grant to the faithful who invoke them. The early Fathers express the same doctrine. According to Origen these blessed spirits aid us in all our acts of religion by uniting their supplications to ours. They carry our petitions to God and bring back to us favors and benedictions. "The angels have care of us poor pilgrims," writes St. Augustine, "they have compassion on us and at God's command they hasten to our aid, so that we, too, may eventually arrive at our common fatherland."

Another reason, not the least important, why we should honor and love the angels, lies in the relationship existing between them and us; an affinity which is based on the same Precious Blood. As Father Faber clearly explains, "the angels needed no ransom; amid their almost countless graces there is no redeeming grace. But, there is not a grace in that sea of graces which could not have been merited for them by the Precious Blood. They, too, sing anthems in Its praise, though not the same anthems as the redeemed. Jesus is Head of the angels as well as men, and it is as Man that He is Head of the angels. Thus the whole of that marvellous world of glorious intelligence, profound gladness, gigantic power and beautiful holiness is a province of the empire of the Divine Redeemer.

Loving worshippers of this Sacred Price of our Redemption, let us be happy to join our voices to the angelic spirits in an everlasting song of praise of the Blood Divine which merited for us and could have merited for them unending joy and bliss in Heaven.

Blood of Jesus, Precious Blood,
Praise to Thee for all Thou art;

Fount of grace, the Godhead's shrine,
Source of glory, Blood Divine.
Blood that angel hosts adore,
Would that men would love Thee more,
Blood of Jesus, Sacred Blood,
Praise and thanks for all Thou art,
Home where all find peace and rest,
Be Thou known and loved and blest!



KING OF KINGS

Second Day

Nature and Function of the Angels

The power and the wisdom of God is not confined to the creation of man and of the material world. Beyond man, millions of creatures exist far more perfect than man, whose perfection varies according to their proximity to the ocean of all perfection. In this superior world, spirits are radiant as the celestial hierarchies of stars; there the angelic choirs shine, the splendor of God blazing in their midst.

“The angelic nature is a whole world of perfection in itself. And this at least we know, that angels are spiritual substances, incorruptible by nature, utterly separate from matter and entirely free from all those infirmities which compass us on every side. They are all brightness and beauty, and their loveliness surpasses all the united charms of earth. Their intelligence is godlike, says St. Thomas, for their knowledge extends to all truths of the natural order, as well as to a great number of the supernatural order. They are acquainted with all the secrets of nature and all that remains most hidden from the greatest minds that ever existed, is intimately known to them. They know without labor countless things at the same time and in an instant of time, unaccompanied with doubt or obscurity. They do not make use of discourse like men, nor comprehend the things they know after our manner—that is by reasoning from one thing to another; they understand everything at a glance, and this is why

they are styled emphatically, Intelligences." (Boudon).

They are agile and are often represented with wings to denote their swiftness. They can pass from place to place in the twinkling of an eye, without any intervening lapse of time. Their power and strength also are inconceivable. To sum up all their wonderful qualities, these bright spirits may be called pure and lustrous mirrors reflecting the infinite perfections of God.

The saintly Father Olier says that the angels taken all together represent the Immensity of God by their unlimited number and variety, whilst each choir and each angel in particular mirrors one of the divine attributes, such as God's love, His goodness, His strength, etc. Each angel by the very fact of his creation and existence, must first adore, honor and love a particular divine perfection; at the same time he is predestined to communicate to us something of that special character and grace with which he is endowed. "No two angels are alike; no two are equal. God's perfections are infinite and countless millions of angels reflect these perfections in a divinely marvelous way. No two men, no two women, are identically alike, but the difference between them is relatively slight, whereas the difference between two angels is vast, complete. Every angel is specifically different from the other as one species differs from another . . . The angels are unspeakably lovely, they have no shadow of imperfection, no defects. Nothing on this earth can possibly give us an idea of their resplendent glory. No painter, no poet, no artist ever conceived anything like them. They are living replicas of God's beauty."

Fra Angelico's pictures of the angels excel those of any other artist so that Michelangelo exclaimed on seeing them: "Angelico must have seen the angels in heaven; otherwise he could never have painted them as he has done." But even Angelico's pictures do not give us the faintest idea of the real angels. St. Bridget, who was favored by God with heavenly visions, tells us that were we to see an angel in all his beauty,



THE ARK OF THE COVENANT

we should be so ravished with delight at the sight, that we should die of love. When, therefore, the angels appear to men, they take a human form in order not to overawe or confound those who look at them.

But what is of paramount importance to us is that the holy angels seek in every possible way to share with us the immense ocean of love and happiness which they themselves enjoy. Their generosity knows no bounds. We have only to ask for their assistance and favors. Speaking of their ministry towards men, the Catechism declares. "To angels is committed by the Providence of God the office of guarding the human race and of protecting men from any serious harm." And Holy Writ confirms this statement: "He hath given his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. In their hands they shall bear thee up, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone." (*Psalms* 90:12).

Unfortunately, far from corresponding with their efforts for our welfare we constantly impede them by our sins and imperfections. Were we to know them better and love them more, and were we more docile to their constant inspirations, our happiness would be unspeakably great. It may be said that the angels are passionate lovers of men. They never cease to do us good, neglecting nothing to secure for us the inheritance of glory which has been purchased for us by the Precious Blood of Jesus. It is indeed an indescribable joy for them when they are certain that the merits of the redemption through the Divine Blood of Christ will not be lost on the souls committed to their care.

Third Day

The Empire of the Angels

As messengers of God and executors of His orders, the angels exercise a great empire over our souls and bodies and over the material world.

Concerning the power of the angels over the world, the Catechism of Perseverance teaches that “there are angels who impart motion to it. Material creatures inert of their own nature, are set in motion by spiritual creatures, as our bodies are by our souls. Such is the strength of the angels that one of them is sufficient to put the whole planetary system in motion and to carry the most enormous bodies wherever it desires with a rapidity that baffles all calculation.” According to St. Augustine, there are angels who preside over every visible thing and over each different species of creatures in the world, whether animate or inanimate. If God were to open our eyes and show us the angels under sensible forms, what wonders we should discover! Let us consider that all the comfort and benefit we derive from earth, air, water and fire, from the heavens from animals—in fact from every creature, comes to us through the agency of the holy angels, who are God’s faithful ministers.

St. Thomas incidentally gives us another proof of angelic strength. He teaches that each great star, planet and sun, every heavenly body, even the greatest, has its own Guardian angel to keep it in its course and to prevent any possible aberration. What prodigious

energy and power does not such control demand! It is true that the stars and heavenly bodies by the natural direction given them by God pursue their several courses; but these great worlds are material and, therefore, as the Angelic Doctor points out, are liable to decay and deterioration. To prevent disorder and confusion in the thousands of heavenly bodies whirling through space with inexpressible speed, God gives each one, in His all-wise Providence, an angel to keep it in its course and avert the dire calamities that would result were it to stray from its allotted orbit.

Few people think on this when on beautiful, starlit nights they gaze on the heavens and the myriads of stars. "The starry world," writes Father Faber, "is an overwhelming thing to think of . . . Mary's Son is the King of stars." How fitting it would be to salute the countless angels who guard these stars and who look down upon us with love and tenderness.

"Whenever we look abroad, we are reminded of those most gracious and holy Beings, the servants of the Holiest, who deign to minister to the heirs of salvation. Every breath of air and ray of light and heat, every beautiful prospect are, as it were the skirts of their garments, the waving of the robes of those whose faces see God in heaven." (Card. Newman).

But the special object of the angels' care is the human race which they are appointed to guard. In the opinion of St. Clement, St. Gregory the Great, Origen and other holy writers, every country, every city, town and village, and even every parish and family has a special Guardian angel. Believing this firmly, St. Francis Xavier invoked the Guardian angel of every country and city in which he preached the Holy Gospel, and when he left one place to preach elsewhere, he never failed to commend to the protection of the holy angels the new congregation he had won to the Faith.

So, too, altars, churches, dioceses and religious institutions have their own Guardian angels. Every church has special angels to guard it from desecration and

every altar has thousands of angels to adore the God of Heaven and earth concealed in the Most Blessed Sacrament.

According to the testimony of the learned historian, Baronius, angels protected the churches of Constantinople and the palace of the Emperor against the attacks of the Arians. The same historian relates that when the Saxons entered a church dedicated to St. Boniface, they were repelled by two angel-warriors, who appeared in wondrous beauty and strength.

Blessed Peter Faber, a renowned missionary of the Society of Jesus and the companion of St. Ignatius, its founder, brought many souls to God by his work of evangelization in Germany. While traveling through the diocese of his birth, he received innumerable consolations from the Guardian angels of several parishes. On repeated occasions he received most sensible proofs of their protection. Sometimes these holy angels preserved him from the fury of heretics; at other times they rendered souls more mild and tractable to receive from him the doctrine of salvation.

Lastly they guard each one of us. "Every man has a Guardian angel appointed to enlighten, defend and guide him during the whole course of his mortal life. This consoling truth is, next after dogmas expressly defined, one of the best founded in Scripture and Tradition." Even pagans seemed to have retained something of the original Tradition on that subject and one of the earliest Greek poems contains this remarkable passage:

Upon the thickly-peopled earth,
In ever ceaseless flow,
Full thrice ten thousand deathless beings
Pass lightly to and fro.
Keepers, unseen, of mortal men,
In airy vesture dight,
Their good and evil deeds they scan,
Stern champions of the right.

To this office of the Guardian angels of men we shall return in subsequent pages. Suffice it to say with Father Faber, that “all these marvels—of the broad world of angels—belong to the empire of the Precious Blood. There is not a corner of God’s creation, which is not more or less benefitted by the Precious Blood.” Let us then never cease to thank the Divine Blood with our whole hearts for all It means to angels and men.