

PRICE

Jorgensen, T. N.

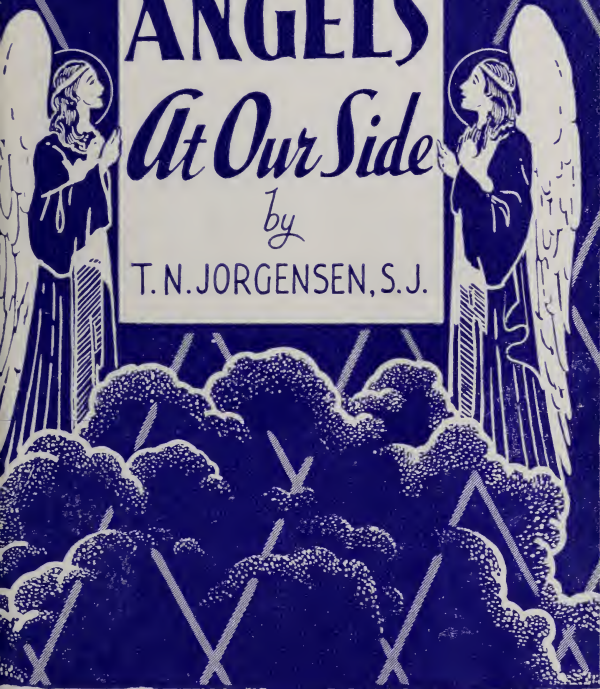
ADS 5765

# ANGELS

## *At Our Side*

*by*

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*THE QUEEN'S WORK*

3742 West Pine Boulevard

ST. LOUIS, MO.

Imprimi potest :

Samueí Horine, S. J

Praep. Prov. Missouriianae

Nihil obstat :

F. J. Holweck

Censor Librorum

Imprimatur :

✠ Joannes J. Glennon

Archiepiscopus Sti. Ludovici

Sti. Ludovici, die 12, Januarii, 1937

Second edition, August 1937

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# Angels at Our Side

“**N**O ONE ever, I believe, has met with such an ovation as was given to me today.”

Queen Victoria was scarcely exaggerating the glory of that day of diamond jubilee. And yet, if her guardian angel was not thinking of the sobering verses of Kipling's "Recessional," at least he must have smiled a bit as he considered how trivial was all this glitter and tinsel of the glory of the queen whom he guarded on earth compared with the real triumph in which he himself had shared when his Queen, Mary the Virgin, celebrated her coronation in heaven.

Ah, there was a triumph indeed; there an army whose power would not soon be taxed to its feeble utmost to subdue a little Boer rebellion. In the ranks of Prince Michael there marched millions, and every one of them perfect!

## Each of Us

The mighty hosts of Xerxes and of Genghis Khan; the still mightier hosts of modern armies, with their gas, long-range artillery, elusive submarines and far-flying bombing planes—all these pale before the wonder of the angelic hosts of Mary. For these heavenly hosts are free of the inertia of human mind and body—free from doubt and the need of the slow processes of reasoning, free from need of heavy arms and

armor and all encumbrances of time and space. These angelic hosts enter the conflict with the untrammelled power that is theirs by right of their nature as pure spirits and by right of their elevation by grace to union with God in the Beatific Vision.

And though we may not be conscious of it, these heavenly knights are taking an even more important part in our lives today than our own tireless hearts.

This is no army of a past long dead in all but memory. Nor is it of the transient today, which fades as we grasp it; nor yet of the vague tomorrow, slow to come, quick to depart. This army is of the eternal Now, ever at its peak of perfection. Unerring in intellect, unwearying in endeavor, unhesitating in will, unfaltering in love, what help and hope these warriors bring to our earth, what a giant part they play in our lives! For each of us has an angel guardian ever at his side, aiding him with a power limited only by the strange ingratitude and neglect which cause us to rest content with a great ignorance of this wondrous gift of God. In spite of our ignorance or unbelief his help is great; but read of him, pray to him, listen to him, and his power will manifest itself a thousand times more efficaciously.

### Babies?

For much of the power of our guardian angel depends upon our ready recourse to him, our prompt obedience to his counsel,

our firm confidence in his assistance. Our ability to draw from this great source of power will be small indeed if we think of devotion to our angel as merely a little haphazard addition to our spiritual diet.

Nor can you reach forth and grasp his dynamic energy if you have learned to look on prayer to the angels as a pleasant diversion for some little-girl saint weary of her dolls and jacks. If the image that springs up in your mind at the word "angel" is of a little pink baby with wings, you won't get far in releasing the heavenly powers that God has sent to you. The angels are not little; they have neither size nor color nor wings, except in the symbolic sense that they are not subject to the laws of gravity. And least of all should you think of as babies those creatures who, long before all other armies existed, lived and fought the great battle of the prehistoric past.

### The Battle of Battles

Read, if you will, of the battles of the ancient powers, battles of today and tomorrow, battles for land, or wealth, or power, but with all your reading don't forget the most surprising and important combat of all, the battle of the angels, good and bad, who have resumed on our earth, with our souls the prize, the bitter conflict whose first stage saw Lucifer bow to Michael and fall "like lightning from heaven."

"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 "God spared not the angels that sinned, but delivered them, drawn down by infernal ropes . . ." Or as Isaias writes: "How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, who didst rise in the morning? How art thou fallen to earth that . . . saidst in thy heart, 'I will exalt my throne above the stars of God . . . I will be like the Most High?'"

### His Job

A gigantic battle; and, more than that, a battle still continued and of the utmost concern to us. For Satan, driven from heaven, now seeks to vent his hatred upon us, God's children, by destroying our souls. If men only studied and learned more of this unrelenting warfare between the good and the fallen angels, who seek our souls, they would lead far different lives. They would tremble to accept offices and honors which they now strive for but which might place them in the proximate occasion of falling under Satan's cruel servitude.

And on the other hand they would show the delightful confidence in the presence of their guardians that Guy de Fontgaland, the saintly eleven-year-old French boy, who has become so widely popular since his death a few years ago, showed when he said to his mother, "Why be afraid? You're forgetting that I have

Jesus in my heart and my guardian at my side. And an angel guardian— Well, he guards! He knows his job!”

Why do even good people like Guy's mother keep forgetting? Surely the activity of the angels has a magnitude, an importance, a suspense great enough to capture and hold our attention. Satan has been flung forever from heaven but is not yet chained immovably in hell. In the fleeting moment before the half-closed gates clang forever shut, he roams the surface of our globe stalking his prey.

### To Our Defense

The test of the angels is over, and the good angels who triumphed are rewarded, among other ways, by being allowed to assist us in our trial. The fallen spirits are punished the more; for, by tempting us, they only feed their devouring envy. The heavy gate is closing, but in the moment given them the demons scour the world with a ferocious hatred that surpasses the last desperate frenzy of a wild animal being forced into a cage. But whenever the cruel Satanic claws seek to sink their poisoned points into our hearts, there springs to our defense a white-armored Michael to parry the blow.

The power and the wisdom of an angel are remarkable reflections of God's very own and surpass anything that we can imagine. The Apostle John, at the end of his long life, a life full of glorious sights

and graces given to no other man, was so overcome by the beauty of an angel who appeared to him that he knelt down to adore. In like manner did Abraham err in the vale of Mambre by taking an angel for God.

### A Matter of Power

We know of the dazzling angel who appeared to Daniel and spoke with a voice like the voice of a multitude. We read in the Mass for the eighth of May that the sea was convulsed and the earth trembled when the Archangel Michael descended from heaven. The ninetieth Psalm sings triumphantly, "A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand, but it [evil] shall not come nigh thee . . . For He hath given His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways." We recall that one angel slew one hundred and eighty-five thousand Assyrians in a single night. We remember the greater task which was given the angel who brought the last of the plagues to the proud Pharaoh and in one night killed "every firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh, who sat on the throne, unto the firstborn of the captive woman that was in the prison, and all the firstborn of cattle."

But despite all these intelligible facts, the power of a single angel rises far above our human comprehension; much more does the battle of the thousands around us surpass our understanding.



But though, as long as this life lasts, our knowledge will ever fall far short of the reality, still we can by prayerful reflection learn much about the angels. They are pure spirits and so are one step closer to God than we, in that by their very nature they have not, and need not, bodies. They are neither large nor small; their extension in space is not a matter of physical displacement but of power.

### **They Cannot Perish**

In a way we are present in a place as far as we can reach, be it by putting out an arm to reach by touch or by lifting our eyes to reach by sight. The presence of the angels is measured by their power, and this, as we have just seen, is great. To recall but a few more lines of Scripture, taken from the Apocalypse: "I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth . . . And the angel took the censer, and filled it with the fire of the altar and cast it on the earth, and there were thunders and voices and lightnings, and a great earthquake. . . . And the fourth angel sounded the trumpet . . . and the third part of the sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars. . . . And I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud, and a rainbow was on his head, and his face was as the sun. . . . And he cried with a loud voice as when a lion roareth."

Little pink babies! Save for its use to

suggest angelic innocence, the idea of angels resembling babies at all is grotesquely fanciful.

And as the power of the angels is great, so is it ever at its full activity. As spirits, they can never do anything by halves, but give the full energy of their intellect and will to every act. Nor do they learn as man learns, for the angelic mind starts with fullness of knowledge. But like Christ, who grew "in grace and age and wisdom," the angels can grow in experimental knowledge, that is, they can apply their infused knowledge to new objects. And though they had a beginning, the angels cannot perish nor be subject to our laws of time.

### Long Ago

The angel who is at your side now, as you read this, was the same grand creature in the dim ages of the past when our world was young. And down through all the intervening years, with his unwavering, unwearying, intense interest and understanding and love, he has added to the experimental knowledge that is at your service today.

He smiled his love for you when God commanded that Eve should awaken from Adam's side as Adam slept in the Garden of Eden. Even before that, he had proved faithful to God and flashed his sword in Michael's defense when Lucifer's hosts rebelled. With God, and in God, he saw the

gates of Eden swing shut behind the guilty Adam. He saw the soul of Cain grow black as the blood of Abel poured forth. He prayed before the Throne of Light as Noah's ark rode the mountain-high waves in the dark night of the flood. He watched as the builders of the tower of Babel, of the pyramids, of the great Jewish temples were born, lived, and departed. Nightly, with his brothers, he strewed the manna in the desert for the wandering Jews; and in later years, nightly, with his brothers, he adored the true Bread of Life resting in a thousand different tabernacles. Little pink babies with wings? What hoary patriarchal seer on earth ever had an experience that could compare with these?

And now, after all these hundreds, thousands of years of patient preparation, he has been assigned to you, his own most special charge during the hour of your life on earth. Even if he were no more gifted than you, with a nature no better than yours, still you would trust the constancy and assurance which come from being tried and found faithful; the wisdom which only the experience of so many years with God could give.

### We Begin to Wonder

This gift of God is so stupendous, so glorious! And yet we can go through life ignoring it, looking on it as if it were a dream or a mad fancy. The material world around us is more dreamlike, a lesser

reality, since it is the more transient. The joys of a dream are of little worth, because they are gone the moment we wake up and begin the more controlled life of the day. And the joys of this worldly day are gone the moment we meet death and begin the immensely more conscious, longer enduring life of heaven or hell. The acts of our angel, the helps which he gives us, are in the spiritual, the supernatural life, a life of the most intense reality. Yet we treat our guardian as a dream and fret about the shadowy things of the material world as though these were of greater value.

When we become conscious of the potent gifts of our angel guardians, we begin to wonder just how they use these powers in helping us. Because of their intimate union with God in the Beatific Vision, their pleasure always rests in doing His will. This they accomplish by guiding us along the difficult but satisfying path of virtue. The catechism of the Council of Trent gives a pleasing comparison of the office of our guardian angels with that of the tutors whom parents of the time secured for their children when they sent them on a foreign journey.

“To angels is committed, by the providence of God, the office of guarding the human race . . . For as parents, if their children have occasion to travel a dangerous way infested by robbers, appoint persons to guard and assist them in case of attack, so has our Heavenly Father placed angels over us in our journey to heaven.”

## Divine Forethought

The loving forethought of the earthly parent spending anxious hours in prayer and planning as he chooses the guardian to accompany his young child on a dangerous trip is not equal to the wisdom and love of the Heavenly Father, who gives us our angelic guides. Of course God could have given us His help directly, but it is a mark of greater goodness that He wishes to share His powers of administration, as well as His other gifts, with the creatures He has made. And just as He has given priests the power of being the visible administrators of the infinite merits of Christ, so has he ordained that the angels be the invisible bearers of His graces.

Both the sacred Scriptures and the living Church teach us that it is the joyous task of our guardian angels to shield us from corporal and spiritual dangers; to encourage us in our spiritual progress; to ward off the attacks of the evil spirits; to offer our prayers, made more pleasing to God by union with their own, to our common Father; to assist us in the hour of our death and bear our souls to heaven.

### How Talk to Them

Of all these duties the illumining of our minds is the most direct and most constant effort of their guardianship. The fact that the human race is kept in mental equilibrium St. Thomas ascribes to this unceasing watchfulness of the good spirits.

A study of spiritism and demonology shows that the surrendering of the mind to the influence of the evil spirits is a short cut both to insanity and turpitude. It is not hard to understand, then, that the opposite of this surrender to evil — a ready obedience to the prompting of our holy guardians — is the surest way to wisdom as well as sanctity. Because God implanted in our very nature esteem for truth and virtue, and because truth and virtue are infinitely more desirable in themselves than are their opposites—deceit and sin—it is an unquestioned fact that if one but thought of the right motives and understood them clearly, one could easily overcome every temptation.

Sin conquers us by getting us off guard, by concealing its own offensive rottenness with the alluring cloak of pleasure. Our minds are so limited that when they are preoccupied with the emotional delight or humiliation accompanying an action, they forget the deeper aspects of that action such as God's viewpoint, the later effects on ourselves, the great price we shall pay for the enjoyment of a small pleasure, the great loss we incur when we avoid a passing pain.

It is the task of the good angels to suggest these deeper aspects to us. And hence the essential sanity of the human race. But we can reject these suggestions; and we so often do. And the guardian angels, not knowing our secret thoughts

unless we reveal them, are hampered. The most common means of confiding our thoughts to them is through prayer. But prayer is so often forgotten in the stress of temptation. Hence the many sins and miseries of our race.

### The Perfect Home

For it is we, not our angels, who fail. Enjoying the Beatific Vision, they already have the gifts which we shall possess in heaven, one of these gifts being continual intense activity without weariness, without the slightest disturbance of the perfect repose brought by the love and possession of God. There is no reason, then, for our angel ever to weaken or waver in his efforts in our conflict; rather there is every reason why he should be constant. He confirmed himself in constancy by his fidelity at the time of the great trial, when Lucifer fell. His burning love for God spurs him on in our service, for God has decreed that he should express this love by helping us. His great devotion to Mary his queen urges him on to help us, her children. The sacred duty and the keen pleasure of completing the triumph over Satan will not permit him to look on idly. The thrones left vacant by the rebellion of that archfiend and his fellow demons are not to remain vacant forever. Empty places in the court of God? If any retinue should be perfect, surely the heavenly retinue should be so. Or, to change the comparison, heaven is the per-

fect happy home. And what home is complete whose table or fireside gapes with an empty chair? No. There shall be no unfrequented paths in the gardens of paradise, no idle instruments in the heavenly orchestra. The world will assuredly continue to exist until all the places vacated by the fallen angels are filled by human souls raised to that great estate by God's graces. And it is the constant effort of our guardians to raise us to one of those places within their own ranks.

### The Object of Their Struggle

But the devils, filled with anger against anything that God loves, hate us the more because we are to occupy the thrones which they lost. With intensified bitterness they attempt, in every possible way, to resist Michael and his followers. It is a desperate battle that rages between Lucifer's renegades and the faithful cohorts of Mary. On our own fields the surging hordes of demons and angels do battle. Our hearts are the citadels for which the struggling hosts are contending. Even if we were no more than mere unconcerned spectators of this combat, its thrilling magnitude and tireless intensity would make us interested in learning all we could about the personnel of the two forces, their manner of offense, their powers, their aims. But we are more than spectators. Indeed, we are the very reason of the struggle. Our will, our weak, vacillating human will is the object of conten-



tion, like a fire whose flames are whipped by a wind between two great mountains of gunpowder. Our will is the releasing cause, the small button which, turned to the left or the right, lets loose the powers of Satan or of Michael.

This thought of our wills being the cause which puts greater than human forces into irresistible motion is important for a true appreciation of the place the angels have in our lives. For, as the sacraments are the door to the infinite merits of Christ, so our little wills can be the "Open Sesame" to the great riches which the mighty angels of heaven are given for us. But should we rebel, our wills become the hapless cause which, Pandora-like, unleash unto our own destruction the wild hatred and wickedness of Satan.

### Causes in the Moral Sphere

There is something very startling and fascinating about the releasing of causes. A man presses a button with the slightest effort of his little finger, and millions of tons of water stored up in a huge reservoir go crashing down the side of a mountain. Stalin, sitting in an easy chair in some hidden Russian home, signs his name to a document, and soon a thousand communists are shouting on the steps of the Capitol in Washington, a million pamphlets are clattering up the streets of every borough of New York.

But perhaps the most fascinating thing

about causes released is that they can be made to operate even in the moral sphere. In the Herculean struggle between good and evil, between Michael and Satan, we have the awesome but thrilling power of being the ones who can release their energies. We can picture the surprise and dismay of an angel who comes from God laden with potent graces, only to be met by a stubborn human will which says no. And if the little human will says no, the answer to those potent graces is no. We can also see Satan, so like a roaring lion made more fierce and clever by centuries of battle, ready to tear to shreds the beautiful robe of sanctifying grace, only to find that he is stopped in midair, so to speak, by some little school girl's "No, I think not." The answer to these evil energies, then, is no. Against all the powerful intensity of a pure spirit, against all the malice of the eternally damned, against all the accumulated experience of centuries, against all his confidence born of millions of conflicts won, the answer to his suggestions still remains, "No, I think not."

### Ignatius of Loyola

The bad angels as well as the good angels have a nature superior to ours. The good angels have learned much during the centuries of the progress of this world; so have the devils. But in the affairs of this world the power and knowledge of the good angels are mainly potential factors, awaiting the command and permission of

human wills. A temptation comes; we decide lightly with a yes or a no. The pleasure or pain that results from the decision is experienced and quickly forgotten. But our yes or no is a releasing cause far greater than the shot fired at Concord, for its sounds are heard and its effects felt, not only around the world, but in the depths of hell and on the topmost heights of heaven.

Which seems to raise the question of the discernment of spirits. For if we are going to release a mighty flood of energies, we want to know ahead of time whether it is to be the golden flood of grace or the black flood of sin. St. Ignatius of Loyola, who, for all his poetic idealism, was of a scientific turn of mind, spent much time and effort analyzing the methods of the spirits, good and bad, who sought to rule his heart. Moreover, he had a deep devotion to the angels and their queen and in high degree the gift of prayer. So his comments on the discernment of spirits are of very great value. One learns from him that it is common for the devil to hamper holy people in their practice of virtue by filling their minds with specious doubts and disturbing sophistries, thus driving from their hearts the true joy and spiritual gladness given them by God and the good angels.

### **The Test-Tube Age**

But even without the authority of Ignatius we could guess that a demon coming from

hell, where there is neither hope nor love, would spread distrust, unrest, error, fear, despair and hatred, and sow discord and strife between man and man in family, state, and nation and between nations; whereas the good angels bring hope, trust, love, peaceful union and most satisfying friendships.

Knowing this, one has but to glance casually at any daily paper to realize that Satan is very active today. We must not forget that the widespread materialistic, independent, selfish, nationalistic spirit of the day is fertile soil for Satanic seeds. For man's morbid tendency to rest content with physical delights and endeavors reduces him to a level where his spiritual vision is lost, the loving suggestions of his guardian unheard or unheeded, and his soul perilously exposed to the unleashed malice of Satan.

When materialistic science was enthroned, it became of a sudden very unpopular to believe in anything which could not be analyzed in a test-tube or made to serve the physical comfort of man. Because they are spirits and of heaven, the good angels found themselves banished from the daily lives of men so engrossed in the lesser life of the mind and body that they forgot or denied the existence of the soul. It is only within recent times, with the utter collapse of the attempt of materialistic science to bring peace and happiness, that people began to weary of following these windy pied pipers into dank caves and began to emerge again into the sunlight of the spirit, to waken once

more to the glory of the Mystical Body, the love of the Virgin Mother, the friendship of the angels.

### The Return

This emergence has been slow. Satan is not going to let us turn to the light of God without a struggle. The seers of materialism are forever indulging in a disturbing and meaningless howl. The venom of the Protestant tradition of minimizing all that is most consoling in our faith still runs in our blood and makes us sluggish, whereas the quality of our gifts should naturally make us surge forward with very joy.

And even when we think we have been weaned away from evil, and we crave the spiritual, Satan would still attempt to win us by a false spiritism. He would pass himself off as an angel of light or as a departed fellow soul. He would substitute inane, even immoral, messages and empty tablerappings for the real participation in the knowledge and love and power of God which our guardian angels offer. And the depths of our blindness is shown by the fact that Satan often succeeds in thus deceiving us; that people slow to pray to their guardians will accept the impostures and deceits of spiritualists and devils.

And as we have been fooled by materialism and spiritism, so have we been entrapped by the other trends of our age: The so-called independence of spirit which boasts of freedom and democracy but which is so easily perverted into independence of divine authority and carries us into slavery — the

slavery of the dictatorship of pagan states and the slavery of sin; the selfishness which makes us slaves of our lower selves; the nationalism which not only does not add to our inherited patriotism but defiles it with hatred for other countries; the strange logic of the communist, who claims that because a half-hearted love of God brought us but half of the peace on earth He intended for us, even that half-hearted love should be abandoned instead of perfected—all these deceptions Satan has carefully fostered through the years. He will use them now to their utmost for our destruction. He is clever and he will not miss any opportunity.

The lifelong hatred of Rome that was Hannibal's pales into insignificance beside the implacable hatred of men that is Satan's. The vile deceit of Iago, which led to the horrible downfall of the noble Othello, was but an hour's joke compared to the unwavering insidiousness of Satan's intrigues against us.

### Satan's Power

It is good, when we have so bitter an enemy, to recognize his activity and not to expect to overcome him without a studied struggle aided by fervent prayer. But it is bad to credit Satan with more power than he actually has. His actual power is terrible enough; to forget his limitations would lead us to despair.

It is true that the devils hate us because they see us occupying the thrones which they have lost. It is true that this hatred

is always unabating because it is based on their eternal hatred of God. It is true that Peter tells us that Satan goes about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour, and that those who sin are Satan's true slaves. St. Paul calls him the "god of this world," and Christ refers to him as "prince of this world." It is true that original sin brought us under Satan's sway. But we find his power greatly curtailed or even completely futile when we use the graces which our Redeemer won for us.

It is not in an idle gesture that the Church blesses palms on the Sunday before Easter. It is a token of Christ's triumph over the prince of death. No longer is Satan the powerful one of pre-Christian days. Nor is he with us always by special appointment and command as is our guardian, but only at times and with permission, and with definite limitations set by God. Therefore, while we can safely let our love and trust in our guardians grow greater every day of our lives—and we should do all we can to foster this growth—we should not let our fear of Satan become unbounded.

### Danger Reversed

Our first American-born saint, St. Rose of Lima, found herself frequently harassed by the assaults of the devil. He was permitted to strike and illtreat her, but Rose laughed at his attacks and drove him from her by calling on Christ to help her. She would even defy Satan, bidding him torment her body as much as God permitted. "As for my soul," she said, "you cannot harm it;

it is under the protection of my divine Spouse."

This attitude is quite in keeping with the instructions of St. Ignatius, who writes, "It is the nature of our enemy to become powerless and to lose courage when the person shows a dauntless front to his temptations, acting in a way diametrically opposed to them. On the other hand, if the person commences to fear and to lose courage in sustaining temptation, there is no beast so fierce on the face of the earth as the enemy of our human nature in prosecuting with intense malice his wicked designs."

So, while we must recognize Satan's power and be on the watch and place our trust in Christ and our guardian, we must not let fear of him disturb our peace and good judgment. It was an exaggerated idea of his power that led the medieval witch-baiters to deplorable excesses of cruelty. The danger today is reversed. Today we forget his existence altogether and so forget to guard against him. Although our guardian has advantages that Satan does not possess, our good angel's task is not an easy one. There are a thousand varieties of mortal sin, and, if Satan fools us into any one of them, we are his slaves. Our guardian angel must be one thousand perfect; even if he wins against Satan nine hundred and ninety-nine times, he has failed.

Failed for us, that is; but not failed entirely. The nine hundred and ninety-nine successful times have all been gains for the



world at large. In the combined results achieved by the whole army of guardians, we see a most consoling and impressive sight. Each angel guides his charge faithfully day and night, year after year. In the course of only one lifetime, then, innumerable sins are avoided. Consider how many more sins have been kept at bay by the guardian angels of any group, let us say the students of one Catholic school. And then multiply this number of guardian angels until they embrace all who live in the world today and all their ancestors, and we see our golden avalanche of grace. Our world is disturbed, blundering, wicked. But consider how much worse it would be if all the men who play important parts in its history did not have their guardians to restrain, as far as possible, their evil impulses.

### Today

When we examine the world today, we are inclined at first to pessimism. We see the Church ignored or persecuted in so many lands. Russia, Spain, France, Italy, Mexico, and all these countries where the Church seemed strongest, have seen it suffer both contempt and persecution within the last century. Where, then, are the angels? Where is their power, their eager and intelligent defense of us their wards? Is Satan turning the tide of battle after all, bringing confusion into the ranks of Michael?

How blind we are! Deny it as we will, we are still thinking of the angels as being little pink babies with wings, or at least as

men with bodies. But they are spirits, pure spirits, and they fight for the spirit primarily. Sufferings, contradictions, humiliations are among the greatest gifts that can be given our souls during their earthly sojourn. The prayerful study of the life of Christ, of the Virgin Mary, of any of the saints, will show us how much more effectively and surely sorrow sanctifies than pleasure. The reasons for this are not hard to discover, but it is not our place to discuss them here; the recalling of the fact suffices. God would allow all the grand cathedrals in the world to be destroyed if thus one act of love or contrition would be made. For buildings are material, the act is spiritual. Size, color, texture, all these mean nothing to a spirit. Spirits have a supreme disregard for material things except in so far as these material things are used as means for advancement in spiritual growth. The angels are spirits, pure spirits. Individuals, yes, with personal loves and aversions, with individual wills and intellects, but spirits still. And when we would judge the success of Michael or Satan, we must judge according to spiritual standards. If sorrow sanctifies—and sorrow is more common than pleasure — assuredly Michael still has the upper hand.

And yet the sad truth is that what the angels have accomplished for us is but a small part of the good which God intended that they do and which they are so eager to do if we would only let them. What must we do to gain the full benefit of this wonderful privilege of having a guardian?

## Inspirations

We must seek to develop a consciousness of his abiding presence, of his eagerness to use his great powers in our behalf. It will take time and effort to develop this consciousness, as it does to develop any habit of mind, but prayer and the appropriate reading will suggest many means. The Church offers help by mentioning the angels frequently in her prayers. And in memory of the divine command to Moses, to fashion two cherubim of beaten gold to stand at either side of the Ark of the Covenant, the Church has in her sanctuaries statues of the angels to remind us of their presence. Then, too, as she has dedicated May of each year and Saturday of each week to foster devotion to the Queen of Angels, so has she set aside October of each year and Tuesday of each week as times of special devotion to the angels themselves. Some prayer or practice at these times, in union with the whole Church, will remind us of the consoling doctrine of the Communion of Saints, and will also foster in us devotion to our guardians.

If we come to look upon our good thoughts as inspirations from our angel, we shall be more ready to carry them out. If we look upon our trials as salutary punishments brought by our wise guardian to help us in our struggle against sin and its consequences, we shall accept these trials more joyously and to greater gain.

That our angels do inspire and chastise us we know certainly. You probably know

the story of the dramatic appearance of the angel on Hadrian's tomb during the pontifical reign of Gregory the Great. At that time Rome was stricken with a terrible pestilence. After having ordered penitential exercises, the Pope led a procession to the Church of St. Mary Major and took from there the picture of Our Lady. While litanies were sung, the picture was carried devoutly through the city. The sick became well, the air cleared, the pestilence left the city. As the procession passed the tomb of Hadrian, an angel was seen on its summit sheathing his sword, while an invisible choir sang the beautiful canticle "Regina Coeli, laetare! Alleluia.

#### In Time of Need

The example of the saints, perhaps especially of those saints who, like St. Frances of Rome, often found their guardians visibly present in time of great need, will suggest to us ways of increasing our devotion to our angels. We learn that the saints remembered their guardians frequently, thanked them often, trusted them unreservedly, loved them fervently. It is this consciousness of his delightful presence, this facility in remembering to call on him promptly for help in moments of stress, this assurance of the efficacious power of his response that makes our guardian the tower of strength that God intends him to be. Faithfulness in addressing some daily prayer to him helps us to remember his presence; reading about his nature or about the help which the saints have received

from their guardians increases our confidence; speaking to him in lonely and troubled hours with childlike trustfulness is an effective means of obtaining and retaining and enjoying his friendship.

### Throughout Life

Many a little child reared by a good Catholic mother has gained, by means of a prayer to his angel, courage to await sleep peacefully in the terrifying darkness which has descended upon the physical world about him. And if his growth in faith keeps pace with his growth in age, how often in adolescent years he turns to this same, now familiar friend when he feels the awakening of passion in his flesh. And often, in the prime of life, having dispersed the phantoms and fears of the world and of the flesh, he turns to his angel, with still deeper confidence, for help in the more bitter combat against the devil, who carries the war into his very soul. And toward the end of life, when the world is drifting away from him, when his body is relaxing in death, when, perhaps, even the devil is unable to penetrate the awful aloneness that must come just before death, his guardian angel is still at hand, prayerfully expectant, waiting to guide the liberated soul on its wonderful long-desired journey to the divine judge and heaven. It is in the lonely hours that mark every stage of life that the soul can best come to know its guardian friend. Once his presence is known and his power felt, it takes but a fleeting thought and a brief prayer to gain his ready assistance,

even in the midst of the greatest distractions and activities. There is no doubt that as the years bring us closer to that final bitter conflict between the Church and Satan, the need of devotion to our guardian angels becomes increasingly manifest.

The prophetic chapters of Daniel accurately describe the powerful, blasphemous domination of Satan and his followers over the earth in these latter days. Involuntarily we shudder when we think of the hapless lot of mortals who have ignored their good angels and think to repulse with their own unaided weakness the deadly intrigues of a spirit whose nature so far surpasses theirs. Even a casual perusal of St. John's Apocalypse will convince us that the last days will find the angels, good and bad, taking a more eager, a more visible, a more powerful part in our activities in preparation for Christ's second coming.

### The Supreme Exemplar

But have you ever really meditated on the angelic activity mentioned in the gospel story of Christ's first coming? When the time arrived for Christ to be born, God sent Gabriel to Zachary to announce that Elizabeth would bear a son, John the Baptist, who would be Christ's precursor; six months later Gabriel came to Mary to win her memorable fiat. An angel came to relieve Joseph's fears, telling him that Mary had conceived of the Holy Ghost. Angels called the shepherds to come and adore at the crib. Soon after that an angel warned

Joseph to flee into Egypt. We do not know what angelic visitations may have come to Christ during the thirty years of His hidden life; but we know that after His temptation at the beginning of His public life and after His agony in the Garden of Gethsemane, an angel came to minister to Him. An angel announced the Ascension to the holy women, and after the Ascension angels appeared to the Apostles and told them to wait and pray for the coming of the Holy Ghost.

Christ is our divine exemplar. He lived on earth that we might have a perfect model by which to guide our actions. The highest endeavors of thousands of the noblest souls the earth has seen since His coming have been to imitate His manner of action, His habits of thought. Knowing this, we look upon the study of the angels with a new eagerness. Seldom were they far from the thoughts of Christ.

During an hour of rest, when little children were flocking around Him, He said to the Apostles present, "He that shall scandalize one of these little ones that believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone should be hanged about his neck and that he should be drowned in the depth of the sea . . . 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." And in the stress of the Passion, when Judas has just betrayed Him, and Peter rashly thinks to protect Him with a too-ready sword, He

says, "Thinkest thou that I cannot ask my Father, and He will give me presently more than twelve legions of angels?"

### Forgetful of Malice?

We learn that the activities of Satan too are ever in His thoughts: "Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." And again: "This is the hour of the prince of darkness;" and, "The prince of this world is already judged;" and, "Now shall the prince of this world be cast out."

Christ's work was to redeem us from the slavery of Satan and his minions, to win for us the grace necessary to gain the empty places among the nine choirs of angels who are God's courtiers in the heavenly kingdom. Would He, then, easily forget either the malice of the fallen angels or the virtues of the faithful ones? He loved the holy angels because He knew that they were the masterpieces of His Father's handiwork, faithful mirrors of the divine perfections; He loved them because He knew the burning love and loyalty that every angel rendered to His mother, Queen of Angels.

If we would be Christlike, if we would gain more of the wonderful vision and strength that were His, we must remember the angels more frequently. Can you imagine that the thoughtful Christ, who, even in His hour of agony on the cross, so generously responded to the faith of Dismas, would neglect to show gratitude to the



angels who ministered to Him? Yet how seldom do we thank our guardian angel for the innumerable favors he undoubtedly does for us!

If we let our faith grow cold, if we thank our guardian but rarely, few will be the favors that we shall receive from him. But if we preserve a thankful heart toward him, we shall find that angelic help grows steadily more manifest. And it is such growth in the appreciation of spiritual things that is one of the most precious fruits of devotion to the angels.

### A Cultivated Friendship

A burning, lively faith should not be a novelty nor so difficult of appreciation to those who live in the grace of God. We who each Christmas see a helpless Babe lying in the straw and kneel in adoration with the Magi; we who on Good Friday see Christ bound, hustled from place to place in apparent helplessness, scourged and nailed to the cross, and see through all this confusing exterior to the God within it; we who so often kneel at the altar rail and receive Him under (what could be more surprising?) the form of a little wafer of unleavened bread which brings such untold strength into our souls — we indeed learned long ago that the eyes of the body are blind to spiritual things. But we have learned, too, that the eyes of the soul, through faith, discern supernatural truths with even greater cer-

titude than the eyes of the body discern physical truths.

Our need for a lively faith grows deeper every day. In many of us faith is a wretchedly weak shadow of what it should really be, a very vague shadow, when we realize that even the saints could not penetrate the distances which were so clear to Christ. Even the best bodily eyes are sadly limited in their own sphere of activity, the material world. Is it then to be wondered at that our soul, in its fallen state, is somewhat cut off from the vision of spiritual things? But we should not merely wonder; we should admit our shortcoming and try as much as we can to develop and strengthen our faith. And what more appealing and effective way presents itself for this end than the cultivating of friendship for our angel?

### Close to Us

A ready recourse to our guardian angel tones up our whole spiritual life. We shall grow to realize that he is very much alive and active, a thousand times more so than ourselves. If we but remove the obstacles of indifference and doubt, the fruits of his activity will enrich our life with an abundance of glorious graces. We must not be discouraged by the misleading idea that the angels are vague, distant beings; that it takes too much study to know enough about them to gain their help.

It is true, though, that the more we

read about and study them, the more powerfully we shall be aided by them, because our prayer to them will grow more confident. Every prayer, however humble and halting, will reach them; and prayer to them is not hard. We merely have to say, "Dear angel, whom our loving Father has sent to guard me, please gain me light and strength to be pleasing to Him," and the common actions of our lives are raised to a higher plane. We have but to say, "Dear angel, help me," and temptations which enslaved us before are weakened. We have but to say, "Loving friend, sent by my thoughtful queen, be loyal to her and to me," and hours which threatened to be lonely or fearful or profitless promise endless fruit and merit.

### The Splendor to Come

If we constantly remember our guardian's presence, our lives will be lifted to the highest endeavors. He is such an obviously splendid token of God's assisting presence that doubt and discouragement will vanish as quickly from our hearts as they fled from the hearts of the soldiers of France when Joan of Arc stepped to the head of their long-despairing ranks. All the glory that was hers, all the confidence, the love, the heroic service that she won as she miraculously blazed a path of victory across the fields of France, she won because she was so obviously a messenger from God. When they saw her "Jesus-Mary" banner waving before them, the

soldiers knew that the all-powerful God had espoused their cause, and nothing could daunt them. Thus we too have a messenger from Jesus and Mary, a messenger even more glorious than the resplendent Joan astride her white charger, a messenger more surely proving that God has assumed our cause as His own.

And our guardian's Tabor will not fade rapidly into Calvary as did Joan's, not if we do not wish it. His is a help and friendship that can grow more powerful with each passing day. And more; if we grow to know and love him now, we are beginning a friendship that will stretch into eternity. These pure spirits are most remarkable manifestations of the infinite glory of God. We know of the splendor that will bless our bodies after the day of judgment, the splendor of the Resurrection with its gift of light, more bright and swift and subtle than the light radiating from the sun, penetrating all substances as readily as the sun's rays penetrate the purest crystal; a splendor, glorious, spiritualized, impassible, immortal! If the splendor of the Resurrection will be an endless source of joy to us in heaven, how much more will the brilliant beauty of the angels ravish us with delight!

### Through Them

And though by nature they are above us, still we shall be lifted up by grace to a plane enabling us to feel entirely at home in their exalted company. One of our race

is their great queen; the saints will be among the highest of their choirs, filling the thrones vacated by the fallen angels, even the throne of Lucifer; and all of us, rejoicing in the glory brought to our inferior human nature by the God-Man Christ, shall exult in a perfect and fitting and eternally glorious companionship with these angelic hosts.

But there is a crowning gem that will be ours through devotion to the angels. Just as any increase in love of Mary brings a corresponding spontaneous increase in love of Jesus—since all of Mary's virtue is but a finite reflection of the infinite lovable-ness that is His—so an increase of esteem and love for the angels necessarily brings a proportional increase of esteem and love for their queen, Mary, who reigns supreme over them.

Do we desire to win Him? How better than by loving her who is His mother and His chief delight? Do we desire to please her? How more effectively than by devotion to our guardians? For Mary is deeply and justly proud of every one of the soldiers in her loyal angelic army.

## PRAYER TO OUR GUARDIAN ANGEL

Dear Angel, loyal guardian sent by God,  
I place myself wholeheartedly within  
thy sheltering arms.

God is with you. Like Mary our Mother,  
like the Blessed Sacrament, you are an-  
other expression and reminder of His  
love for me—a personal, constant, lov-  
ing expression of it.

You are here to keep my soul attuned to  
the supernatural life around me, lest I  
be engulfed in and discouraged by the  
unsatisfying things of sense.

You are here to expose the wiles of Satan  
and the other spirits of evil who, to mock  
God, seek to destroy my soul.

You are here to bring me much needed  
grace, to teach me of the activity of the  
Holy Spirit, of love for your queen, my  
Mother, of the glory of the way of the  
cross, of the peace of the way of virtue,  
of hope in the merits of Christ, of joy in  
all the personal favors which God has  
granted me.

You are my oldest friend, bringing me  
celestial strength and wisdom and love.  
Your solicitous service surpasses a thou-  
sandfold all earthly strength and wis-  
dom and love. And you have served me  
every moment since my birth, and you  
will always serve me until my soul  
stands before God for its judgment.

Knowing this, beloved guardian, I cannot  
help but entrust myself unreservedly, de-  
votedly to you. It is my duty and my  
dearest pleasure. I surrender myself,  
body and soul, to your loving care. Keep  
me, guard me, guide me, teach me, love  
me as your own.

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