

## What is an angel?

Who are they? St. Augustine says: “‘Angel’ is the name of their office, not of their nature. If you seek the name of their nature, it is ‘spirit’; if you seek the name of their office, it is ‘angel’” (Enarr. in Ps., 103, 1, 15). With their whole beings the angels are servants and messengers of God. Because they “always behold the face of my Father who is in heaven” they are the “mighty ones who do his word, hearkening to the voice of his word” (Ps 103:20).

09/29/2015

*On their hands the Angels will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone. Matthew 4:6.*

## **1. Is the existence of angels a truth of faith? Who are the angels?**

The existence of the spiritual, non-corporeal beings that Sacred Scripture usually calls “angels” is a truth of faith. The witness of Scripture is as clear as the unanimity of Tradition.

Who are they? St. Augustine says: “‘Angel’ is the name of their office, not of their nature. If you seek the name of their nature, it is ‘spirit’; if you seek the name of their office, it is ‘angel’” (Enarr. in Ps., 103, 1, 15). With their whole beings the angels are servants and messengers of God.

Because they “always behold the face of my Father who is in heaven” they are the “mighty ones who do his word, hearkening to the voice of his word” (Ps 103:20).

The angels were created by God, by a free decision of his divine Will. Angels have intelligence and will. They surpass in perfection all visible creatures.

*Catechism of the Catholic Church,*  
nos. 328-330

### ***Contemplating the mystery***

Through the communion of the saints, all Christians receive grace from every Mass that is celebrated, regardless of whether there is an attendance of thousands of persons, or whether it is only a boy with his mind on other things who is there to serve. In either case, heaven and earth join with the angels of the Lord to sing: *Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus...*

Holy, Holy, Holy... I adore and praise with the angels – it is not difficult, because I know that, as I celebrate the holy Mass, they surround me, adoring the Blessed Trinity.

*Christ is Passing By*, no. 89

Christian tradition describes the guardian angels as powerful friends, placed by God alongside each of us, to accompany us on our way. And that is why he invites us to make friends with them and get them to help us.

*Christ is Passing By*, no. 63

.....

## **2. What is the Angels' mission in the history of mankind's salvation?**

Angels have been present since creation and throughout the history of salvation, announcing this

salvation from afar or near and serving the accomplishment of the divine plan: they closed the earthly paradise; stayed Abraham's hand; led the People of God; announced births and callings; and assisted the prophets,

The Angels were especially present from the time for the Incarnation of the Son of God. The angel Gabriel announced the birth of the Precursor to Zachary, and the conception of Jesus himself by the work of the Holy Spirit, and his birth, to Mary.

From the Incarnation to the Ascension, the life of the Word incarnate is surrounded by the adoration and service of angels. Their song of praise at the birth of Christ has not ceased resounding in the Church's praise: "Glory to God in the highest!" They protect Jesus in his infancy, serve him in the desert, strengthen him in his agony in the

garden; again, it is the angels who announce Christ's Resurrection. They will be present at Christ's return, which they will announce, to serve at his judgment. "The Son of Man will send his Angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all evildoers, and throw them into the furnace of fire; there men will weep and gnash their teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father" (Matthew 13: 41-43).

*Catechism of the Catholic Church,*  
nos. 332-333

### ***Contemplating the mystery***

Let us be men and women of peace, men and women of justice, doers of good, and our Lord will not be our judge, but our friend, our brother, our love. May his angels go with us on our joyful way through the world. "Before the birth of our redeemer," St Gregory the Great writes, "we had

lost the friendship of the angels. Original sin and our daily sins had kept us away from their bright purity... But ever since the moment we acknowledged our King, the angels have recognized us as their fellow citizens. And seeing that the King of Heaven wished to take on our earthly flesh, the angels no longer shun our misery. They do not dare consider as inferior to their own this nature which they adore in the person of the King of Heaven; there it is, raised up above them; they have now no difficulty in regarding man as a companion.”

*Christ is Passing By*, no. 187

A Christian's faith does not diminish his spirit or limit the noble impulses of his soul – rather it makes them grow with the realization of their true and authentic meaning. We do not exist in order to pursue just any happiness. We have been called to

penetrate the intimacy of God's own life, to know and love God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, and to love also – in that same love of the one God in three divine Persons – the angels and all men.

This is the great boldness of the Christian faith: to proclaim the value and dignity of human nature and to affirm that we have been created to achieve the dignity of children of God, through the grace that raises us up to a supernatural level. An incredible boldness it would be, were it not founded on the promise of salvation given us by God the Father, confirmed by the blood of Christ, and reaffirmed and made possible by the constant action of the Holy Spirit.

*Christ is Passing By*, no. 133

Our Lord comes without any fanfare. No one knows about him. On earth only Mary and Joseph share in the divine adventure. And then the



shepherds who received the message from the angels. And later on, the wise men from the East. They were the only witnesses of this transcendental event which unites heaven and earth, God and man.

*Christ is Passing By*, no. 18

---

### **3. Are all angels good?**

Behind the disobedient choice of our first parents lurks a seductive voice, opposed to God, which makes them fall into death out of envy. Scripture and the Church's Tradition see in this being a fallen angel, called "Satan" or the "devil". The Church teaches that Satan was at first a good angel, made by God: "The devil and the other demons were indeed created naturally good by God, but they became evil by their own doing" (Lateran Council IV, 1215: DS 800).

Scripture speaks of a sin of these angels. This “fall” consists in the free choice of these created spirits, who radically and irrevocably rejected God and his reign. We find a reflection of that rebellion in the tempter’s words to our first parents: “You will be like God” (Gen 3:5). The devil “has sinned from the beginning”; he is “a liar and the father of lies” (Jn 8:44). It is the irrevocable character of their choice, and not a defect in the infinite divine mercy, that makes the angels’ sin unforgivable. “There is no repentance for the angels after their fall, just as there is no repentance for men after death.”

*Catechism of the Catholic Church,*  
nos. 393-393

### ***Contemplating the mystery***

The devil, with twisted intention, quoted the Old Testament: God will send his angels to protect the just

man wherever he goes. But Jesus refuses to tempt his Father; he restores true meaning to this passage from the Bible. And, as a reward for his fidelity, when the time comes, ministers of God the Father appear and wait upon him. It's worth thinking about the method Satan uses with our Lord Jesus Christ: he argues with texts from the sacred books, twisting and distorting their meaning in a blasphemous way. Jesus doesn't let himself be deceived: the Word made flesh well knows that the divine word is written for the salvation of men – not our confusion and downfall. So, we can conclude that anyone who is united to Jesus Christ through Love will never be deceived by manipulation of holy Scripture, for he knows that it is typical of the devil to try to confuse the Christian conscience, juggling with the very words of eternal wisdom, trying to turn light into darkness.

*Christ is Passing By*, no. 63

You false apostle of paradoxes, see what you have done: because Christ is on your lips but not in your deeds; because you attract with a light which you yourself lack; because there is no warmth of charity in you, and you claim to be concerned about outsiders while all the time you are neglecting your own; because you are a liar, and the devil is the father of lies. And so, you are working for the devil, causing bewilderment to those who follow the Master, and even though you may triumph frequently here on earth, woe to you on that day which is approaching when our friend Death will come, and you shall see the anger of the Judge whom you have never deceived. Paradoxes, no, Lord: paradoxes? Never!

*The Forge*, no. 1019

---

#### **4. What power does the devil have?**

The power of Satan is not infinite. He is only a creature, powerful from the fact that he is pure spirit, but still a creature. He cannot prevent the building up of God's reign. Although Satan may act in the world out of hatred for God and his kingdom in Christ Jesus, and although his action may cause grave injuries – of a spiritual nature and, indirectly, even of a physical nature – to each man and to society, the action is permitted by divine providence which with strength and gentleness guides human and cosmic history. It is a great mystery that providence should permit diabolical activity, but “we know that in everything God works for good with those who love him” (Rom 8:28)

*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 395

### ***Contemplating the mystery***

“The devil doesn’t seem to be very clever”, you told me. “I can’t understand how he can be so stupid: he always uses the same deceits, the same falsehoods...”

You are absolutely right. But we men are less clever, and we do not learn from the experience of others... And satan counts on all that in order to tempt us.

*Furrow*, no. 150

“I could behave better, show more decision and spread around more enthusiasm... Why don’t I?” Because – forgive my frankness – you are a buffoon. The devil knows full well that one of the worst-guarded doors of the soul is that of human foolishness: vanity. That is where he

attacks with all his might: pseudo-sentimental memories, the hysterical form of a black-sheep complex, the unfounded impression of a lack of freedom... What are you waiting for in order to follow the Master's injunction: "Watch and pray, for you know not the day nor the hour?"

*Furrow*, no. 164

Obstacles...? Sometimes they may be present. But at times you just invent them out of cowardice or love of comfort. How cleverly the devil makes those excuses for not working look plausible! He knows full well that sloth is the mother of all vices.

*Furrow*, no. 505

We must decide. It's wrong to have two candles lighted — one to St Michael and another to the devil. We must snuff out the devil's candle: we must spend our life completely in the service of the Lord. If our desire for

holiness is sincere, if we are docile enough to place ourselves in God's hands, everything will go well. For he is always ready to give us his grace, especially at a time like this — grace for a new conversion, a step forward in our lives as Christians.

*Christ is Passing By*, no. 59

---

## **5. How do the angels help in the life of the Church, and how do they help each of us?**

The whole life of the Church benefits from the mysterious and powerful help of angels. In her liturgy, the Church joins with the angels to adore the thrice-holy God. She invokes their assistance (in the funeral liturgy's "May the angels lead you into Paradise. . ."), (...) in the "Cherubic Hymn" of the Byzantine Liturgy; [and] she celebrates the



memory of certain angels more particularly (St. Michael, St. Gabriel, St. Raphael, and the guardian angels).

From its beginning until death, human life is surrounded by their watchful care and intercession.

“Beside each believer stands an angel as protector and shepherd leading him to life” (St. Basil, Adv. Eunomium III, I: PG 29,656B). Already here on earth the Christian life shares by faith in the blessed company of angels and men united in God.

*Catechism of the Catholic Church,*  
nos. 334-336

### ***Contemplating the mystery***

Drink at the clear fountain of the Acts of the Apostles. In the twelfth chapter, Peter, freed from prison by the ministry of Angels, comes to the house of the mother of Mark. Those inside will not believe the girl, who

says that Peter is at the door.  
'*Angelus ejus est!* It must be his  
Angel!' they said. See on what  
intimate terms the early Christians  
were with their guardian Angels.  
And you?

*The Way*, no. 570

The Guardian Angel always  
accompanies us as our principal  
witness. It is he who, at your  
particular judgement, will remember  
the kind deeds you performed for  
Our Lord throughout your life.  
Furthermore, when you feel lost,  
before the terrible accusations of the  
enemy, your Angel will present those  
intimate desires of your heart –  
which perhaps you yourself might  
have forgotten – those proofs of love  
which you might have had for God  
the Father, God the Son, God the Holy  
Spirit. That is why you must never  
forget your Guardian Angel, and that

Prince of Heaven shall not abandon you now, or at that decisive moment.

*Furrow*, no. 693

We have no right to claim that the Angels should obey us... but we can be absolutely sure that the Holy Angels hear us always.

*The Forge*, no. 339

Whenever you are in need of anything, or are facing difficulties, whether great or small, invoke your Guardian Angel, asking him to sort the matter out with Jesus, or to do the particular service you may require.

*The Forge*, no. 339

We must learn to speak to the angels. Turn to them now, tell your guardian angel that these spiritual waters of Lent will not flow off your soul but will go deep, because you are sorry.

Ask them to take up to the Lord your good will, which, by the grace of God, has grown out of your wretchedness like a lily grown on a dunghill. Holy angels, our guardians: “defend us in battle so that we do not perish at the final judgment.”

*Christ is Passing By*, no. 63

I ask Our Lord that, during our stay on this earth of ours, we may never be parted from our divine travelling companion. To ensure this, let us also become firmer friends of the Holy Guardian Angels. We all need a lot of company, company from Heaven and company on earth. Have great devotion to the Holy Angels!

Friendship is a very human thing, but it is also very much a thing of God; just as our life is both human and divine. Don't you remember what Our Lord says? 'I no longer call you servants, but friends.' He teaches us to have a lot of confidence in those

friends of God who are already in Heaven, and also in the people who are living with us on this earth, including those who seem to be far from the Lord, so as to attract them to the right path.

*Friends of God*, no. 315

---

pdf | document generated  
automatically from [https://opusdei.org/  
en-lk/article/what-is-an-angel-2/](https://opusdei.org/en-lk/article/what-is-an-angel-2/)  
(07/31/2025)