



## From Deacon Mark Miller's Desk

They have ranks – like the military. Most weeks, we're introduced to some of these ranks in the Preface of the Mass when Father prays, "And so, with Angels and Archangels, with thrones and Dominions, and with all the hosts and Powers of heaven" – these are just some of angels! Who knew that being an angel could be so complicated?

### The Angels

The first beings God "made" are the angels. The Catechism teaches: "As purely spiritual creatures, angels have intelligence and will: they are personal and immortal creatures ..." [330]. There are nine "orders of angels, usually called "choirs" and are arranged in spheres.

#### First Sphere

- **Seraphim** - highest angelic class; caretakers of God's throne; continuously shout praises: "Holy, holy, holy ...". We imitate their prayer in our song at the end of the Preface.
- **Cherubim** – guard the way to the Tree of Life [in Genesis]; guard the Throne of God
- **Thrones** - elders who listen to the will of God; present the prayers of men.

#### Second Sphere

- **Dominions** - regulate the duties of lower angels
- **Virtues** - signs and miracles occur in the world through them
- **Powers** – supervise movements of heavenly bodies; ensure the cosmos remains in order; warrior angels who oppose evil spirits.

#### Third Sphere

- **Principalities** - guide and protect nations or groups of peoples and institutions; preside over the bands of angels.
- **Archangels** – messenger or envoy; only angels we know by name [Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael]; the Book of Tobit says there are seven archangels.
- **Angles** - most concerned with the affairs of men; Within the category of the angels, there are many different kinds, with other functions. The angels

are sent as messengers to humanity. Personal guardian angels come from this group.

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## **Guardian Angels**

The idea of Guardian Angels is well-documented in the Old Testament, where they are described as God's ministers who carried out specific jobs and, sometimes, given particular tasks involving men and their affairs.

- They carried out God's wrath against the cities of the plain [Gen 18-19]
- Delivered Lot from danger [Gen 19]
- God promised Moses, "my angel shall go before you" [Ex 32:34]
- God pledged to Tobias that "he will command His angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways" [Ps 91:11]
- Angeles are guides and intercessors [Job 33:23-26]
- Angeles are assigned to specific countries [Dan 10:13]

Guardian Angels are found throughout the New Testament. Matthew 18:10 says, "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." The Book of Revelations tells us that Guardian Angels work on behalf of persons [2:1-29] and communities [3:1-22]. An angel came to comfort Christ in the garden, and an angel delivered Peter out of prison.

St. Jerome was the first theologian to recognize Guardian Angels in the 5<sup>th</sup> century. He states, "how great the dignity of the soul since each one has from his birth an angel commissioned to guard it." It wouldn't be until the 12<sup>th</sup> century that Church teaching would confirm that every soul was assigned a Guardian Angel the moment God placed the soul in a body. A special feast honoring Guardian Angels was added in the 15<sup>th</sup> century.

Don't be lulled into thinking that Guardian Angels are old-fashioned or outdated. On the Feast of the Holy Guardian Angel in 2014, Pope Francis told those gathered for daily Mass to be like children who pay attention to their "traveling companion." "No one journeys alone, and no one should think that they are alone."