

ST MICHAEL, GABRIEL & RAPHAEL – 2021

Rev 12:7-12

Jn 1:47-51

What does an angel look like? Is it a fat little baby with blonde curly hair and blue eyes or as Hollywood portrays them as wearing ordinary clothes and doing extraordinary things? The New Age devotees used to have car stickers that read, 'Do not drive faster than your guardian angel can fly.'

Scripture describes angels as worshippers and servants of God who delivered his messages in person or through dreams. Jewish Tradition identifies 7 senior Archangels but names only three, Michael the warrior, Gabriel the messenger and strength of God and Raphael the healer.

St Michael features in the Book of Revelation as God's protagonist in the battle between good and evil being played out on earth. Evil creates disorder while God creates order out of chaos as the battle rages around us and within us.

No-one can escape this battle and we know that self-centredness leads to grabbing power and control so elevating self over God. We have no right to point the finger at others until, through God's grace and our determination, we give up our lust for control. The battle also rages within the Church as it grapples to recognise and proclaim God's truth. Evil wins when it persuades us that it does not exist. Change the language and evil disappears. Abortion becomes responsible decision making and euthanasia becomes end of life compassionate care. Evil hasn't really disappeared hides behind a veil of compassionate euphemisms.

The war against evil was won on the cross when the evil powers thought they had crushed Jesus. It is their delusion that has been crushed by his resurrection.

Our gospel reading connects us with Jacob's dream of a ladder reaching from earth to heaven upon which angels travel carrying God's messages to earth and returning with messages from earth. Jesus told Nathaniel that he, the Son of man, is the ladder who brings heaven and earth into unity.

The victory of the Cross, the new covenant between God and his Church sealed with the blood of Christ and confirmed through his resurrection has turned the world into a battlefield on which the decisive victory has been won. But it is also like a haunted house in which the evil still makes its presence felt. The mop up battles continue.

On this feast day, like Michael we are to resist evil wherever we can. Like Gabriel we are to proclaim and demonstrate the love of God and like Raphael we are to bring the healing of Jesus' victory to a ravaged world. So perhaps Hollywood is right – angels can look like you and me because we too are spiritual beings called to do God's work. Happy feast day, angels!

Msgr Harry Entwistle

Sept 29 2021

