

Reflection: The Guardian Angels — Memorial, 2nd October, 2020



oday's Feast of the Guardian Angels, was first instituted by Pope Leo X, in 1518, for the Diocese of Rodez, in the South of France. Pope Clement X in 1670, extended the celebration to the whole Church and fixed the date as 2nd October. So today marks the 350th anniversary of the feast being celebrated by the whole Church on this date.



enerally, we understand Christian doctrine of the Guardian Angels to be that: *"Each human person is attended, from conception until death, by his own very special angel who is set over him."* St Gregory of Nyssa says that, *"After our nature fell into sin, God did not withhold his providence..."* Instead, *"...he appointed an angel with an incorporeal nature to help in the life of each person."*



salm 91, verse eleven says, ***For he shall give his angels charge over thee: to keep thee in all thy ways*** — St Bernard of Clairvaux, commenting on this text concerning the Guardian Angels, exhorts us in these words: *"What reverence this saying should instil in you, what **devotion** it should stir up, what **trust** should it inspire. **Reverence** for their presence, **devotion** on account of their loving care, **trust** in their protection. They are present, and present to you, not merely accompanying you but watching over you. They are present in order to protect you, in order to help you. Nevertheless, though it is [God] who gave them this charge, we should not be ungrateful to them, for they obey with such love and help us in such great need."*



e hear in today's Gospel passage one of the "proof-texts" for the existence of the Guardian Angels, that: *"in heaven their angels always behold the face of my Father who is in heaven."* As is the mission of the Guardian Angels, this Gospel passage is focussed on our conversion and the virtue of humility - *"unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven."* Accepting help requires humility. It is an act of humility that we ask our Guardian Angels to help us, recognising that some things are beyond our powers to achieve. God has willed in his Providence, that we should resort in our needs to the means he has provided for us, which gives him glory by our use of them.



ecoming like a child means being open to the wonders of God's creation - children dawdle, for instance, in order to take in the world that they are newly experiencing. They are curious to know more. They are simple and sensitive to their surroundings. So should we be. Reverence, devotion and trust, are the virtues that the child ought to display with their parents, and they are the virtues we should exhibit towards God. Yet, since God our Father, has given us these Guardians to care for us, then we should also be thankful to them for their care which they carry out toward us. To foster our reverence of, devotion to and trust in the Holy Angels, the *St. Gregory's Prayer Book*, has some prayers we can use in this regard, including one we should all say each day: *Angel of God, my Guardian dear, to whom God's love commits me here, ever this day be at my side, to light and guard, to rule and guide. Amen.*