

# Daily Prayer

*St Michael and All Angels*

*Wednesday, September 29, 2021*

*We enter into a time of quiet. We offer to God our selves and in the silence know that God embraces us as God's very own. We offer our hopes and our concerns through our prayers and in the silence listen for God. Today we hold in our prayers the ordinary moments in life—the trials and the joys.*

*We begin by saying*

Bless the Lord, all you his hosts,  
you ministers of his who do his will.

*Psalms 103.21*

## The First Reading

Jacob left Beer-sheba and went towards Haran. He came to a certain place and stayed there for the night, because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones of the place, he put it under his head and lay down in that place. And he dreamed that there was a ladder set up on the earth, the top of it reaching to heaven; and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. And the Lord stood beside him and said, 'I am the Lord, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and to your offspring; and your offspring shall be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread abroad to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south; and all the families of the earth shall be blessed in you and in your offspring. Know that I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.' Then Jacob woke from his sleep and said, 'Surely the Lord is in this place—and I did not know

it!' And he was afraid, and said, 'How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.'

*Genesis 28.10-17*

## **The Psalm**

The Lord has established his throne in heaven, ♦  
and his kingdom has dominion over all.

Bless the Lord, you angels of his, ♦  
you mighty ones who do his bidding  
and hearken to the voice of his word.

Bless the Lord, all you his hosts, ♦  
you ministers of his who do his will.

Bless the Lord, all you works of his,  
in all places of his dominion; ♦  
bless the Lord, O my soul.

*Psalm 103.19-22*

## **The Gospel Reading**

When Jesus saw Nathanael coming towards him, he said of him, 'Here is truly an Israelite in whom there is no deceit!' Nathanael asked him, 'Where did you come to know me?' Jesus answered, 'I saw you under the fig tree before Philip called you.' Nathanael replied, 'Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!' Jesus answered, 'Do you believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than these.' And he said to him, 'Very truly, I tell you, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.'

*John 1.47-51*

*We continue with the reflection that follows. In silence, we ask what the reading has to say to us today. Is there something in the reflection that draws us more deeply into the reading? What does God have to say to us? What do we have to ask God?*

## **The Reflection**

*Nate Wall*

Jacob startles from a dream while fleeing his murderous brother. Jesus pulls the rug out from under a would-be disciple named Nathanael. The Psalmist refuses to pray alone.

What do those three episodes have in common?

Angels.

Modern believers have a funny relationship with angels.

On the one hand, many of us are drawn to angels as a consoling symbol. They represent some kind of care beyond our own. For a time in the late nineties, any gift given by my mom, my aunts or their friends had at least a seventy percent chance of being a Willow Tree angel figurine. Any gift shop shows there's a market for angels.

On the other hand, for about three hundred years, Western educated types have viewed angels as an outmoded superstition. At one time, the story goes, the idea of angels filled gaps in our knowledge of the world. Now, after microscopes and Newton's math and the mapping of the genome, we call the world's invisible forces by other names: germs and gravity and genes. Even university-based Christian theologians mostly stopped writing, speaking and thinking about angels. Why? Angels seemed embarrassing. *Because*—and notice the logic here—angels seem *unnecessary*.

If you've got laws of physics and subatomic particles, and if you buy into the existence of an almighty creator God, what use is there for angels?

Well, the problem with that question is that it begs the question.

Dismissing angels as unnecessary assumes we live in a world of tidy forces operating with bureaucratic efficiency, a Marie-Kondoesque cosmos stripped to its bare essentials.

But in the Scriptures angels appear as a sign of divine excess. Angels are *more* than we'd expect or perceive or imagine. That's the point of them. (Or at least, that's part of the point of them.)

When Jacob, Abraham's swindler grandson, is on the lam from the brother he cheated out of inheritance, he crashes out of doors one night, at an apparently random spot, and dreams. In his dream he sees a ladder full of angels (the Hebrew word is *mal'akhim*, "messengers"), conveying up and down over him, and realizes that even if he's put distance between himself and his brother, he hasn't outrun the God of his fathers. This nothing of a place turns out to be Grand Central Station, a hub connecting heaven and earth. When Jacob wakes, the place looks different to him. His life looks different. Jacob is not *alone*—and now he knows it. He has company. Much more is happening than he perceived—a more that lives just beyond the range of normal sight. And angels are at the heart of that more.

When Jesus teases Nathanael, telling him the would-be disciple he wasn't as alone as he thought during his afternoon siesta, he calls back to the tale of Jacob's dream. He—Jesus—is the "son of man," hub of heaven and earth, the place where angels descend and ascend. Before our reading, Nathanael had dismissed Jesus: *This guy is from podunk Nazareth, he'd said, and Nazareth is just another name for Nowhere.* Here again, though, there's more to Jesus than Nathanael expects. Even when Jesus is alone, he's much more than alone. And angels are at the heart of that *more*.

And so when the Psalmist prays,

*Bless the Lord, O you his angels,  
you mighty ones who do his bidding,  
obedient to his spoken word*

he is simply letting himself be caught up in that same more. Having called his own soul—his inmost self—to bathe God in praise, he finds his own voice inadequate. He addresses himself to the invisible company of angels, just beyond the range of normal sight. *Pray with me*, he says, *lift my small prayers on your choral voices.*

What it's like to experience a moment—like this one, right now—as if Jacob, Jesus and the Psalmist show us what's really true? It might feel a little like these lyrics from the Canadian band Hey Rosetta!:

*When you come to you're kinda floating.  
The air is full; it's like it's holding you.*

*Here it is; it's invisible.*

*There are no words for it;*

*I know you feel it though.*

*You feel it lifting up, you feel the weights come off  
and every cell of blood, suddenly moves as one.*

*We were denied so much, all their religion.*

*All for a science that I never understood.*

*They took away my trust, maybe I gave it up—  
just an adolescent shrug, postured as I drop the gloves.*

*Yeah, but that was years ago. I missed so many miracles  
livin' with my eyelids shut, but now I swear that they're opened up.*

*Now I swear they're opened up.*

Pandemic loneliness hasn't left us. At this stage of things, most of my go-to distractions have worn thin. Zoom calls sometimes take the edge off—though sometimes they exacerbate it. But today, on the

feast day of St. Michael and *all* angels, we're given an open door into an odd, wondrous divine gift: God's excessive gift of *company*.

What if even now you're accompanied by creatures almost never seen, messengers running divine errands, connecting your little patch of earth with God's own heaven?

Jacob invites us to wonder. Jesus hints that wherever heaven and earth meet, we'll find him at the crossroads. And the Psalmist leads us to whisper to the unseen congregation we celebrate today,

*Would you pray with me?*

*I want to bless the Lord,*

*but I can't do it alone.*

*When the time is right, we conclude our time of silence with the canticle*

## **The Canticle ~ A Song of the New Creation**

*I will make a way in the wilderness,  
and rivers in the desert.*

'I am the Lord, your Holy One, ♦  
the Creator of Israel, your King.'

Thus says the Lord, who makes a way in the sea, ♦  
a path in the mighty waters,

'Remember not the former things, ♦  
nor consider the things of old.

'Behold, I am doing a new thing; ♦  
now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?

'I will make a way in the wilderness  
and rivers in the desert, ♦  
to give drink to my chosen people,

'The people whom I formed for myself, ♦  
that they might declare my praise.'

Glory to the Father and to the Son  
and to the Holy Spirit;  
as it was in the beginning is now  
and shall be for ever. Amen.

*I will make a way in the wilderness,  
and rivers in the desert.*

*Luke 1,46-55*

*We continue in prayer for those people and situations that we hold up before God (The Intercessions)  
and continue with the concluding collect, the Lord's prayer and the closing sentences.*

## **The Intercessions**

For the whole People of God, that each one may be a true and faithful servant of Christ, let us pray to the Lord.

**Lord, have mercy.**

For those drawing near to the light of faith, that the Lord will bring them to true knowledge of himself, let us pray to the Lord.

**Lord, have mercy.**

For our families and friends, that the Lord will give them joy and satisfaction in all that they do, let us pray to the Lord.

**Lord, have mercy.**

For those who are lonely, sick, hungry, persecuted, or ignored, that the Lord will comfort and sustain them, let us pray to the Lord.

**Lord, have mercy.**

For our country, that the Lord will help us to contribute to its true growth and well-being, let us pray to the Lord.

**Lord, have mercy.**

For the whole human family, that we may live together in justice and peace, let us pray to the Lord.

**Lord, have mercy.**

*Our prayers conclude*

Eternal God,  
you have ordained and constituted in a wonderful order  
the ministries of angels and mortals.  
Grant that as your holy angels stand before you in heaven,  
so at your command  
they may help and defend us here on earth;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord,  
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever.

*[let us pray as our Saviour taught us,]*

Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come,  
your will be done,  
on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins,  
as we forgive those who sin against us.  
Save us from the time of trial,  
and deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power,  
and the glory are yours,  
now and for ever. Amen

*We conclude*

Let us pursue all that makes for peace  
and builds up our common life.  
Amen.



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