

**27 September 2020**  
**Feast of St Michael and All Angels**

How many Michael's, Michaela's or Michelle's do we have with use this morning, any Mickey's or Mick's, and by the way I'm not referring to the slang word for Roman Catholics used when I was growing up, the Micks as they were called. To all of you Happy Feast Day. I wonder how many of you know the origin of the name Michael.

The folk song of the 1960's, "Michael Rowed the Boat Ashore Alleluia" recalls the tradition of Michael the Archangel as the receiver of the souls of the dead. But he is also remembered and honored as the captain of the hosts of Heaven. When there was a war in Heaven between the forces of evil (the devils/Satan and the fallen Angels), Michael, the messenger of God, rallied the forces of light to throw the usurper Lucifer and all his cronies into the darkness and cold.

As the story has been handed down through the ages Michael and his Angels fought against the dragon (the devil) with his Angels, eventually with the goodies winning the battle and the evil ones having no longer any place in Heaven. This account is described in our second reading this morning in Revelations.

"The great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world - he was thrown down to the earth and his Angels were thrown down with him."

Two other Angels are mentioned by name in the Bible, there is Gabriel, "titled the Hero of God" and who announced to Mary that she would conceive and bear the Messiah, and the second one Raphael entitled "God's Healer" who healed Tobit's blindness.

The word Angels comes from both the Greek and Hebrew meaning a messenger of God. The English word angels is derived from the Latin angels. So, to all those Michael's, Michelle's and Mickey's your name signifies "a messenger of God".

Throughout Scripture there are numerous references to Angels as being bearers of God's specific commands and greetings. They are understood as leaders and the voice of God. Alongside this tradition is humanities earlier thinking which associated Angels with stars or heavenly beings. I remember my Granny telling me she would one day hopefully join the Angels, the stars in the sky watching down and caring for us. In the book of Job, we read of the Angels who were witnesses to the creations;

"When the morning stars sang together, and all the suns shouted for joy". Job 38: 7 And in Revelation 9: 1

"And the fifth Angels blew his trumpet and I saw a star fallen from Heaven to earth."

Finally, tradition has it that besides being messengers of God, Michael has a special function as Guardian Angel of Israel. Well, all very interesting you may say.

How does it relate to 20<sup>th</sup> Century Australia? Reading the Bishop's latest news to clergy Fr. Alex Ross, from St Agnes Glen Huntly speaks about the St Agnes Angels who provide regular food relief and other supports to students and send post cards pf hope. Another colleague speaks about the internet as his guardian angel at this time.

We know, don't we, that Angels are not floating around up there? At least we can't see them, and I must confess that if I ever did make it to Heaven (and that's a pretty dubious proposition) I do not think it would be a good idea for me to floating around dressed in white playing a harp. That is not

my idea of Heaven.

However, Angels are still part of the Churches theology and teaching. In the Eucharistic Prayer we recite these words:

"Therefore, with Angels and Archangels, with Apostles and Prophets, with holy men and women of every age we proclaim Your great and glorious name."

While recognizing Angels as part of mythology, and a poetic expression of a means of connecting God with humanity they provide for us a focus, and as our first reading from the book of Daniel describes a visionary glimpse into heavenly places where there are countless myriads of throngs of Angels. They are a way of giving us a picture of "the majesty and glory of God's presence". They are a way of pointing beyond ourselves to the awesome nature of God's love and beauty. AS I have said on numerous occasions each time I travel into the outback and sit back at night with a good port around an open fire and ponder the heavens, the majesty and grandeur of the creation and our smallest part in it, is mind boggling to say the least. How can anyone say all this is an accident of history or similar expressions.

The words from John's Gospel for today convey the picture of God's glory and majesty:

"Truly, truly I say to you, you will see Heaven opened and the Angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man".

At the same time the tradition of Michael and all Angels helps us to clearly focus on the forces of good and the forces of evil and the call for us to be messengers of God, messengers of good. What St Paul challenges us to fight the principalities of darkness and evil. We know that there is much good in the world, and that we often forget this, but we are also aware of much evil. Much of our media concentrates on the latter while we need to search for the acts of generosity and hope.

I suggest evil flourishes where good men and women are corrupted, remain silent, refuse to be outspoken or are seduced by the system that devalues and dehumanizes our humanity and discriminates against those defined as outsiders.

Let me suggest 4 attributes that the idea of angels help to focus and reflect upon;

1. Empathy -feeling the pain, disappointments and joys of others.
2. Self-Control, regulating and controlling our own impulses
3. A set of moral principles that guide our behavior
4. The use of our intellect /reason.

They are all gifts of God or as St Paul describes them in Galatians the fruits of the spirit, love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

Christians are called to be Disciples (Angels) of God and to reflect in their own lives and their relationships to others the person of God as seen in Jesus. In the Parable stories we have been reading over the past weeks we have heard what it means to be a Disciple. Compassionate, forgiving, generous, inclusive, and open to the mysteries of God and his creation. Not easy stuff for any of us, requiring all of us to be on our guard, to be part of the world around us and yet messengers of God's love. The message is simple. To live as a pointer to God is to be compassionate, is to be inclusive, is to be forgiving, is to be just and is to be merciful.



That is our role as messengers and Angels of God. Often, we talk about our Guardian Angel – one who keeps a watching eye. Surely our roles as messengers of God is to be a Guardian Angel watching and speaking for good over evil. Think about who you could be a Guardian Angels for today and in the days ahead. Think about over the coming months of how we as a parish can be a guardian angel{s} as we prepare to welcome Father Gregory as our vicar and to prepare for a renewed sense of mission.

Amen.