

### **What was the reward of the angels who remained faithful?**

*They were confirmed in grace, and in the possession of everlasting happiness.*

Those angels who remained faithful to God, and preserved the grace and holiness in which they had been created, were, as a reward for their faithfulness, confirmed in grace and glory; that is, God, without destroying their liberty, confirmed their wills forever in the love of him, so that they were incapable of sinning, or of losing their original holiness and justice. In the very instant that they were so confirmed in grace, they saw, by the light of glory, the infinite beauty of God, face to face; they were at once filled, and, as it were, consumed, with love for God; they were lost and immersed in that boundless ocean of God's goodness; they forgot themselves, as it were, passing over into God and dissolving into Him. The Lord communicated Himself really to them, giving Himself up to each one of them, in a manner most sweet and intimate. Each one of the angels in heaven, then, possesses God whole and entire, for God has given Himself up to each one as he did to all of them together; so that every angel enjoys and possesses God as completely as if God belonged to him alone. Thus, they are all immersed in this immense ocean of happiness and delights. Being made partakers of the divine nature, they enjoy true, immense, and incomprehensible happiness. They have retained, it is true, their own nature, but they have assumed a certain admirable and almost divine form, so as to seem to be gods rather than angels. And what fills up the measure of their happiness is to be sure that it will last for all eternity, because they are forever inseparably united to Almighty God. And this unspeakable happiness they gained by their faithfulness to God. Their happiness will one day be our own, if we remain faithful to God to the end of our life.

### **What are the good angels doing for us?**

- 1. The good angels present our prayers to God.*
- 2. They make the will of God known to us.*
- 3. They perform miracles for our benefit.*
- 4. They are guardians of the Church and of each one of us.*

#### **THE GOOD ANGELS PRESENT OUR PRAYERS TO GOD.**

There is a great king. He beholds a child among the lowest of the people. He orders at once a prince of his court to take it under his protection, to bring it up with care, and watch over it day and night. I see this charity of the king and cannot help saying to myself: Behold a sovereign, who has the heart of a father for that child! His extraordinary goodness to the child shows that he destines it to one of the first places in his kingdom. This is a touching image of what God does for us by the ministry of his angels. God is not content with sending us his Son and his Holy Spirit; no, the whole heavenly court is to contribute towards our happiness. He, therefore, sends his holy angels to serve us; for, such is the good office which they fill near us, according to the teaching of St. Paul. "Are they not all ministering spirits," says this great apostle, "sent to minister for them who shall receive the inheritance of salvation?" (Heb. i, 14.) Now, what is man that God should take such care of him, and give him, for his governors, the sublime princes of his heavenly court, the assistants of his throne? What is man but a worm of the earth, a slave to his passions? Must an angel, a creature so noble, so pure and so holy, attend on him? "wonderful condescension! excess of goodness and love!" cries out St. Bernard. (Serm. 12 in Ps. xc.)

“He hath given his angels charge over thee.” (Ps. xc, 11.) Consider seriously and weigh every part of this mystery. Who is He that has given this charge? The Lord of angels, whom they obey. The supreme majesty of God has laid a command upon the angels, and his own angels, those sublime, those happy spirits, who approach so near his divine Majesty, his own domestics: and it is the care of thee that, by this sacred command, he has intrusted to them. What art thou? Is not man rottenness, corruption, and the food of worms? But what dost thou think he has commanded them concerning thee? *“That they guard thee, that they keep thee in all thy ways.”* Nor do they loiter; they even *“bear thee up in their hands”* as it were, *“lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.”* Assuredly, amongst the adorable dispensations of divine mercy in favor of men, it is not the least that he has been pleased to give us his own angels as our guardians and companions in this valley of tears, where the enemies of our salvation do all in their power to prevent us from obtaining in heaven the places which the rebellious angels forfeited through pride. The good angels understand, far better than we do, all the dangers that threaten our salvation; they understand, far better than we do, all that God has done to save us; they love us most tenderly; they share in that most compassionate love with which the heart of Jesus is burning for us. They know that we are destined soon to be their companions in eternal bliss; that we are at present, by grace and divine adoption, their brethren, their dear fellow-members in God, dear to him who is their God and our God, and precious in his sight, having been purchased by him at the infinite price of his passion and death. They love us, then, as their fellow citizens, who are destined to fill the vacant places, and to repair the ruin caused among them by the apostate angels. They show us their love, in many ways, throughout our whole life, nay, even after our death; they show their love, by complying most punctually with the command which God has given them to take care of our salvation. Knowing that nothing renders us more powerful against our enemies, and secures our everlasting happiness better, than prayer, they inspire us with love for prayer; they urge us often to have recourse to prayer, especially in temptation and afflictions; they assist us in prayer, in order that we may perform it well. And, oh! how happy are the angels when they can carry up our prayers to the throne of God, and bring-down for us God’s blessings! Behold, says St. John, “an angel came and stood before the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given him much incense, that he should offer of the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar, which is before the throne of God. And the smoke of the incense of the prayers of the saints ascended up before God, from the hand of the angel.” (Apoc. viii, 3, 4.) How happy we are to have with God such devoted friends! They are not satisfied with bearing our prayers to the throne of God, they also carry there all our good works, such as: charity exercised to the poor and the sick; alms given in secret to poor bashful families; all our mortifications great and small; they even collect all our good desires and thoughts, to present them before God; and ah! who can tell with what joy they offer to God the tears of true contrition for sin, the sufferings endured with humility and patience for the love of God! The Angel Raphael said to Tobias that he had treasured up his alms, his abstinences, and his prayers, like so much heavenly perfume, and presented them to God: “When thou didst pray with tears ... I offered thy prayer to the Lord.” (Tobias xii, 12;)

#### THE GOOD ANGELS MAKE THE WILL OF GOD KNOWN TO US.

Nothing gives greater pleasure to the angels than to do God’s holy will, and to make God’s holy will known to men. They have the greatest desire that we should become like unto them, by doing God’s will; and our dear Savior has taught us to pray that we may do the will of God as the angels do it: “Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” Now, whenever the will of God is not sufficiently made known to us, and we pray to God that we may know it, he will direct us by our guardian angel to do what is

pleasing to him. An angel of the Lord told the Blessed Virgin Mary that God wished her to become the Mother of his Son. An angel also told St. Joseph that God wished him to take the Infant Jesus and his Mother, and fly into Egypt. (Matt. ii, 13.) It is particularly in the ten commandments that God has made his will known; yet these commandments God gave to Moses through an angel. There is a young man. He is doubtful about his vocation to the priesthood; he feels uncertain whether it is God's will that he should become a priest, and serve him in that holy state. Let him pray, every day, for some time, to his guardian angel to know the will of God in so important an affair, and the Lord will not fail to direct him through his angel. There is a young woman. She feels inclined to become a nun, but is not certain whether God calls her to the religious state. Let her say, every day, one Hail Mary in honor of her guardian angel, and this good angel will direct her to a good priest, or otherwise make known to her the state of life to which God has called her.

#### THE GOOD ANGELS PERFORM MIRACLES FOR US.

The Angel Raphael associated himself with the youthful Tobias when about to start on a long journey, to be his safe guide in all the dangers of the road. In like manner, our guardian angel associates himself with us at our very entrance into this world, and never abandons us during the whole course of our life. It is impossible, without a special revelation, to know all the dangers from which he rescues us. Who can tell all the dangers that surround our childhood, the vicissitudes that attend our youth and our more advanced age, on account of sickness; the pursuits in which we engage, sudden reverses, or sad, unforeseen accidents? Each one of us remembers many occasions in which he escaped death by an unexpected and almost miraculous interposition of Providence. We often read or hear of people who, in obedience to a certain interior impulse, left the house in which they were, and no sooner had they done so, than the house fell to pieces; of others, who quitted the place which they had occupied, and had just time enough to escape death; of others, who changed their route while travelling, and thus avoided the danger of a highway robber; of others, who stopped all on a sudden, as if by chance, and upon looking around, found themselves standing on the brink of a precipice. Now, to whom was this protection due? Assuredly to the good angels, whose loving eyes are ever watchful and attentive. "The angel of the Lord shall encamp round about them that fear him, and shall deliver them." (Ps. xxxiii, 8.) The angels encamp round about us, says St. Ambrose, because, by going in advance of us, they induce us to follow their footsteps, and to avoid impending dangers. Witness young Tobias, who says of the Angel Raphael: "He conducted me and brought me safe back. He delivered me from being devoured by the fish; thee, also, he hath made to see the light of heaven; he chased the evil spirit from the wife whom he caused me to have; he gave joy to her parents; and we are filled with all good things through him." (Tob. xii.) Witness St. Peter, who was delivered from his chains by an angel. (Acts, xii.) "An angel of the Lord, also, by night, opened the doors of the prison, and led the apostles out." (Acts v, 19.) An angel relieved and comforted Agar in her despair. (Gen. xvi, 8.) "The angels of the Lord delivered Lot and his family from the burning of Sodom" (Gen. xxii, 19); and the three children from the flames (Dan. iii, 49); Daniel from the lions (Dan. vi, 22). An angel saved St. Paul, and all who were with him, from shipwreck. (Acts xxvii, 23.) Who is not astonished at these miraculous deeds performed by the angels in favor of men?

#### THE GOOD ANGELS ARE GUARDIANS OF THE CHURCH, AND OF EACH ONE OF US.

The devils, with implacable hatred and malice, study to effect our eternal ruin, both by stratagems and open assaults. God is pleased to oppose to their efforts his good angels, by making them our defenders. No sooner had Lucifer and his adherents set up the standard of revolt against God, than St. Michael and

all the good angels entered upon a war against them, and, executing the sentence which God had passed upon them, expelled them from their blessed abodes. As the devil is the sworn enemy of God's holy Church, St. Michael is her special protector against his assaults and stratagems. In this quality he was the defender of the Jewish synagogue, as we learn from Daniel (xii). He was always so acknowledged by the Hebrews. This holy archangel has ever been honored in the Catholic Church under the same title as her guardian under God, and as the protector of the faithful. According to tradition, he appeared to Constantin, and said to him: "It was I who, when thou didst battle against the impiety of tyrants, rendered thine arms victorious." Would it not be appropriate to apply to the apparition of Labarum these words of holy liturgy: "Sed explicat victor crucem Michael, salutis signifier."?

Still later, it was with the aid of the valiant archangel that St. Leo arrested, at the gates of Rome, those hordes of barbarians that filled Europe and Africa with terror. It was again he, St. Michael, that St. Gregory the Great saw, over the tower of Adrian, replacing his sword in its scabbard, after having stayed the scourge that then desolated the Eternal City. When Boniface, urged forward by the Spirit of God, threw himself upon the plains of Germany, to win back to Jesus Christ that rebellious and ferocious people, it was in the name and under the protection of St. Michael that he overcame every obstacle, and that he established the kingdom of Jesus Christ. When the Saracens threatened the States of the Church, Leo IV announced that he had won a brilliant victory over them by the aid of St. Michael. To express his gratitude, and to hand it down to future generations, he had erected a temple in honor of the chief of the heavenly hosts in the capital of Christendom. It is said of this special guardian and protector of the Church that, in the persecution of Antichrist, he will powerfully stand up in her defense: "At that time shall Michael rise up, the great prince who standeth for the children of thy people." (Dan. xi, 1.) God is pleased to employ the zeal and charity of the good angels and their leader to oppose the malicious assaults of the devil.

As guardians of each one of us, the angels watch with tender care over the preservation of our body, our health, and our life, which are exposed to so many dangers. They take still greater care of our immortal souls, and of our spiritual interests; they teach us, put good thoughts into our minds, show us the dangers prepared for us, encourage and sustain us in our temptations, reprove us for our faults, and draw us by gentle inspirations to perform our duties, and to return to God, if we should have lost him by grievous sins. They assist us, especially at the hour of death, conduct our souls to purgatory, console them there, and finally lead them into heaven. Most assuredly, among the most precious gifts of God's mercy to men, we should reckon that communion, or spiritual intercourse, which the Lord has established between us and the holy angels, and the command which he has given to these blessed spirits to take care of each one of us: "He hath given his angels charge over thee to keep thee in all thy ways." (Ps. xc, 11.)

### **What is our duty towards the guardian angels?**

*We should often think of them, place confidence in them, and pray to them.*

We owe to our guardian angels reverence, confidence and gratitude. It is God himself who commands us to show reverence for our guardian angels. "Behold," said our Lord to Moses, "I will send my angel who shall go before thee, and keep thee in thy journey, and bring thee into the place that I have prepared. Take notice of him and hear his voice, and do not think him one to be contemned, for my name is in him." (Exod. xxiii, 21.) Of such excellence and dignity is the guardian angel, that he is the vivid expression of the Divinity. He is the first ray of God's beauty, the first work of his hands, the first

production of his omnipotence, the first masterpiece of his wisdom. St. John, upon seeing him, fell prostrate to adore him, thinking he was the Son of God himself. St. Anselm assures us that, if an angel could make himself visible in all his glory in place of the sun, the light of the latter would altogether disappear in the light and splendor of the angel. The majesty of a mortal king impresses respect on all those who approach him: with what reverence, then, should we not be filled in the presence of this prince of heaven! Now, the best manner of showing this reverence in presence of our guardian angels is, as the catechism says, often to think of them, often to remember their presence. "Wherever you may be," says St. Bernard, "in the church, at home, on a journey, in public or private places, your angel is near you. Do not do before him what you would not dare to do before me."

To reverence, we must join confidence in our guardian angels. We should show confidence in their protection. If we had a friend who appeared to us the most enlightened, the most faithful, and the most powerful of all men, what confidence would we place in him! Now, such friends are the guardian angels, says St. Bernard: "They are wise, faithful and powerful." They cannot be deceived, drawing, as they do, their light from God himself. Much less can they deceive us. They are friends of tried fidelity. Their power is beyond conception. One of them alone can do more for our salvation than all the demons can do to ruin us. One of the chief duties towards the guardian angels which is neglected almost by all men, is the duty of gratitude for the numberless blessings, spiritual and temporal, which God bestows upon us by his holy angels. After the angel of the Hebrew people had divided the waters of the Red Sea, to make a dry passage for them, he continued to assist them, by the order of God, until he had introduced them into the land of promise. It is thus that our guardian angels act towards us. After we have escaped, by the waters of baptism, the powers of hell, these zealous and charitable protectors accompany us through the dreary desert of this life which we must traverse to arrive at the abode of eternal happiness. Sometimes, like a refreshing cloud, our guardian angels temper the ardor of our passions; sometimes, like a column of fire, they enlighten us in the night of sin. If necessary, they let fall the manna of heavenly consolations, to sweeten the bitter waters of penitence and afflictions of our lives. They make us hear the law of God, and endeavor to engrave it on the living table of our hearts. It is to the Lord, it is true, that we are indebted for all these blessings; for we would not have guardian angels, had not our dear Lord given them to us. "He hath given his angels charge over thee." Glory to God who gave them this command! But we owe, also, much to those who execute it, especially as they unite to their obedience an admirable charity. If they had a life to offer, and blood to shed, for our salvation, they would willingly give up all. Let us never be ungrateful towards such friends. How should we be grateful to them? By listening to their words and following their inspirations; by avoiding what would wound the sanctity of their presence; by practicing the virtues so dear to them: purity, humility, zeal, charity, and conformity to the will of God. "If thou wilt hear his voice," said the Lord to Moses, "and do all that I speak, I will be an enemy to thy enemies, and I will afflict them that afflict thee." (Exod. xxiii, 22.) Finally, we should also pray to our guardian angels. The good angels often intercede for us and obtain for us many graces through their prayers. The Patriarch Jacob entreated most earnestly the angel with whom he had wrestled, that he would give him his blessing (Gen. xxxii, 26); and on his death-bed he prayed the angel who had conducted and protected him, to bless his grandchildren, Ephraim and Manasses. (Gen. xlviii, 16.) The Prophet Daniel was informed in his visions how vigorously the guardian angel of Persia interposed in favor of that country, and what good offices St. Michael and other angels did for the Jews, in removing obstacles which retarded their return from the captivity. The Angel Gabriel told Daniel that he had exerted his efforts for this purpose in Persia twenty one days, and that St. Michael, the prince or guardian of the Jews, came to his help (Dan. x, 13), so that they conquered the

impediments. The Angel Gabriel added: "From the first year of Darius the Mede, I stood up that he might be strengthened and confirmed" (Dan. xi, 1), viz.: to promote the deliverance of God's people. The same prophet, speaking of the cruel persecution of Antiochus, says: "At that time Michael shall rise up, the great prince that standeth for the children of thy people." (Dan. xii, 1.) This implies that St. Michael would support the Machabees, and other defenders of God's people, whose protector he was, by standing up for them, that is, by praying for them.

The Prophet Zacharias was favored with a vision of angels, in the seventieth year of the desolation of Jerusalem. The prophet saw an angel (probably St. Michael), in the shape of a man, standing in a grove of myrtle trees; and several angels, the guardians of other princes, came to him and said: "We have walked through the earth, and behold, all the earth is inhabited, and is at rest." Then the angel made this prayer: "Lord of hosts! how long wilt thou not have mercy on Jerusalem and on the cities of Juda, with which thou hast been angry? This is now the seventieth year." (Zach. i, 12.) The Lord answered his prayer: he told the angel that he would return to Jerusalem in mercy, and that his house should be built in it. From these examples, and other passages of Holy Scripture, it is clear that the good angels pray for us. The Church has always invoked the holy angels and paid religious honor to them; and teaches that it is an article of faith that their patronage is piously invoked. Let us entertain a great devotion to our guardian angels. We read, in the lives of many saints, that their lively faith and tender devotion towards their guardian angels obtained for them the grace of seeing and conversing familiarly with them. We find this especially in the lives of St. Camillus, St. Philip Neri, St. Frances of Rome, St. Rose of Lima, St. Lidwina of Holland. If we recommend ourselves often to them, we shall experience their ardent charity, their wonderful protection, and the miraculous effects of their prayers on many occasions. The great Prophet Isaías had no sooner complained that his lips were defiled, than a seraph purified them with a burning coal from the altar. (Isa. vi.) If the blessings which God has bestowed upon everyone through his guardian angel were to be written down, they would fill a large volume. These blessings will become greater and far more numerous from the time that we begin to be more grateful and more devout to the guardian angel. Often repeat this prayer, indulgenced by Pius VI and Pius VII: "Holy angel, to whose care I am committed, enlighten, protect, direct, and govern me this day!"