

## Does the Church Still Believe in Angels?

**The Book of Judges and books throughout the Bible refer to angels who come to the aid of Israel. Is this a myth? What does the Church teach about angels today? Let's review the Catechism:**

"I BELIEVE IN GOD THE FATHER ALMIGHTY, CREATOR OF HEAVEN AND EARTH"

Paragraph 5. Heaven and Earth

325 The Apostles' Creed professes that God is "creator of heaven and earth". The Nicene Creed makes it explicit that this profession includes "all that is, seen and unseen".

326 The Scriptural expression "heaven and earth" means all that exists, creation in its entirety. It also indicates the bond, deep within creation, that both unites heaven and earth and distinguishes the one from the other: "the earth" is the world of men, while "heaven" or "the heavens" can designate both the firmament and God's own "place" - "our Father in heaven" and consequently the "heaven" too which is eschatological glory. Finally, "heaven" refers to the saints and the "place" of the spiritual creatures, the angels, who surround God.<sup>186</sup>

327 The profession of faith of the Fourth Lateran Council (1215) affirms that God "from the beginning of time made at once (simul) out of nothing both orders of creatures, the spiritual and the corporeal, that is, the angelic and the earthly, and then (deinde) the human creature, who as it were shares in both orders, being composed of spirit and body."<sup>187</sup>

### I. THE ANGELS

The existence of angels - a truth of faith

328 The existence of the spiritual, non-corporeal beings that Sacred Scripture usually calls "angels" is a truth of faith. The witness of Scripture is as clear as the unanimity of Tradition.

Who are they?

329 St. Augustine says: "'Angel' is the name of their office, not of their nature. If you seek the name of their nature, it is 'spirit'; if you seek the name of their office, it is 'angel': from what they are, 'spirit', from what they do, 'angel.'"<sup>188</sup> With their whole beings the angels are servants and messengers of God. Because they "always behold the face of my Father who is in heaven" they are the "mighty ones who do his word, hearkening to the voice of his word".<sup>189</sup>

330 As purely spiritual creatures angels have intelligence and will: they are personal and immortal creatures, surpassing in perfection all visible creatures,

as the splendor of their glory bears witness.<sup>190</sup>

Christ "with all his angels"

331 Christ is the center of the angelic world. They are his angels: "When the Son of man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him. . . "191 They belong to him because they were created through and for him: "for in him all things were created in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or authorities - all things were created through him and for him."<sup>192</sup> They belong to him still more because he has made them messengers of his saving plan: "Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to serve, for the sake of those who are to obtain salvation?"<sup>193</sup>

332 Angels have been present since creation and throughout the history of salvation, announcing this salvation from afar or near and serving the accomplishment of the divine plan: they closed the earthly paradise; protected Lot; saved Hagar and her child; stayed Abraham's hand; communicated the law by their ministry; led the People of God; announced births and callings; and assisted the prophets, just to cite a few examples.<sup>194</sup> Finally, the angel Gabriel announced the birth of the Precursor and that of Jesus himself.<sup>195</sup>

333 From the Incarnation to the Ascension, the life of the Word incarnate is surrounded by the adoration and service of angels. When God "brings the first-born into the world, he says: 'Let all God's angels worship him.'"<sup>196</sup> Their song of praise at the birth of Christ has not ceased resounding in the Church's praise: "Glory to God in the highest!"<sup>197</sup> They protect Jesus in his infancy, serve him in the desert, strengthen him in his agony in the garden, when he could have been saved by them from the hands of his enemies as Israel had been.<sup>198</sup> Again, it is the angels who "evangelize" by proclaiming the Good News of Christ's Incarnation and Resurrection.<sup>199</sup> They will be present at Christ's return, which they will announce, to serve at his judgment.<sup>200</sup>

The angels in the life of the Church

334 In the meantime, the whole life of the Church benefits from the mysterious and powerful help of angels.<sup>201</sup>

335 In her liturgy, the Church joins with the angels to adore the thrice-holy God. She invokes their assistance (in the funeral liturgy's *In Paradisum* *deducant te angeli*. . . ["May the angels lead you into Paradise. . ."]). Moreover, in the "Cherubic Hymn" of the Byzantine Liturgy, she celebrates the memory of certain angels more particularly (St. Michael, St. Gabriel, St. Raphael, and the guardian angels).

336 From its beginning until death, human life is surrounded by their watchful care and intercession.<sup>202</sup> "Beside each believer stands an angel as protector and shepherd leading him to life."<sup>203</sup> Already here on earth the Christian life shares by faith in the blessed company of angels and men united in God.