

## Why I Am Catholic... Angels.

Other denominations and faiths believe in angels, but we have the strongest and most fervent belief. Our dedication to and awareness of angels is very special.

We hear of angels numerous times in the Bible. The first mention of angels is in Gen 19:1. Two angels, sent by God, oversee the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. In Gen 48:16, Jacob (Israel) in blessing his sons makes reference to "The Angel who has delivered me from all harm." Psalm 91 reminds us: "For God commands the angels to guard you in all your ways." (vs. 9) Psalm 34 speaks of "The angel of the Lord, who encamps with them, delivers all who fear God." (vs. 8)

In the Book of Tobit, the angel Raphael appears, bringing an important message: "Take courage! God has healing in store for you; so take courage!" (Tob 5:10) The angel Gabriel appears to Mary with the news that changed the world (Lk 1:26-38) An angel frees the apostles from jail in Acts 5:19 and later St. Peter in Acts 12:7-11.

"The existence of the spiritual, non-corporeal beings that Sacred Scripture usually calls 'angels' is a truth of the faith." (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 328) St. Augustine says: "Angels 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'. . . ' With their whole beings the angels are *servants* and messengers of God." (329)

We are told that "they will be present at Christ's return, which they will announce, to serve at his judgment. . . In the meantime, the whole life of the Church benefits from the mysterious and powerful help of angels." (333-334) "From its beginning until death, human life is surrounded by their watchful care and intercession. 'Beside each believer stands an angel as protector and shepherd leading him to life.'" (336)

Many of the saints wrote extensively about angels, in particular St. Thomas Aquinas. Aquinas writes that there are three hierarchies and nine orders of angels. "(a) The highest hierarchy includes the orders of (in descending order of rank) Seraphim, Cherubim, Thrones. (b) The middle hierarchy includes (in descending order of rank) the orders of Dominations, Virtues, Powers. (c) The lowest hierarchy includes (in descending order of rank) Principalities, Archangels, Angels. This classification is commonly, but not unanimously, accepted by learned doctors." (Question 108, *Summa Theologica*)

Aquinas also writes that: "Each human being, without exception, has a guardian angel as long as he is a wayfarer, that is, during his whole earthly life. In heaven a man will have an angel companion to reign with him, but not a guardian; no guardian is needed when the guarded journey has been successfully completed. In hell, each man will have a fallen angel to punish him. Each human being has his guardian angel from the moment of his birth, and not, as some have taught, only from the moment of baptism. The guardian angel is a gift of divine providence. He never fails or forsakes his charge. Sometimes, in the workings of providence, a man must suffer trouble; this is not prevented by the guardian angel." (Question 113)

The Letter to the Hebrews reminds us that angels at times have disguised themselves in appearance and shown up at surprising times in surprising ways. "Do not neglect hospitality, for through it some have unknowingly entertained angels." (Heb 13:2) In the mass, we "join with the choirs of angels and the saints in singing their song of praise." May the angels lead us to Heaven.