

**DAILY SCRIPTURE
READINGS & MEDITATIONS
YEAR A**

By **DON SCHWAGER**
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MONDAY 2 OCTOBER 2023 – 26th Sunday of Ordinary Time

The Holy Guardian Angels, Memorial

Scripture: Matthew 18:1-5, 10

1 At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" 2 And calling to him a child, he put him in the midst of them, 3 and said, "Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. 4 Whoever humbles himself like this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. 5 "Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me; 10 "See that you do not despise one of these little ones; for I tell you that in heaven their angels always behold the face of my Father who is in heaven.

Their angels behold the Father in heaven

Meditation: Why does Jesus warn his disciples to "not despise the little ones?" God dwells with the lowly and regards them with compassion. His angels watch over them as guardians. *"For he will give his angels charge of you to guard you in all your ways"* (Psalm 91:11). God has not left us alone in our struggle *"to refuse evil and to choose good"* (Isaiah 7:15). The angels are his *"ministering spirits sent forth to serve, for the sake of those who are to obtain salvation"* (Hebrews 1:14).

The angels are God's messengers and protectors for us

Scripture is full of examples of how the angels serve as messengers and protectors. When Peter was chained in prison and kept under guard, an angel woke him in middle of the night, released his chains, and brought him safely out of prison, past several guards and through locked gates. When Peter realized he wasn't dreaming, he exclaimed: "Now I am sure that the Lord has sent his angel and rescued me" (Acts 12:11). When Daniel was thrown into a den of hungry lions, an angel protected him from harm (Daniel 6:22).

The angels show us that the universe is spiritual as well as material

John Chrysostom (347-407 AD), an early church father and renowned preacher, compared the guardian angels to the troops garrisoned in cities on the frontiers of the empire to defend it from the enemy. Basil the Great (329-379 AD) said, "Beside each believer stands an angel as protector and shepherd leading him to life." Angels ministered to Jesus after his temptation in the wilderness and during his agony in the Garden of Gethsemane (Luke 22:43). The angels will be present at Christ's return, which they will announce, to serve at his judgment (Matthew 25:31). The angels show us that this universe which God created is not just materialistic.

The devil seeks to destroy us

The fallen angels (Jude 6; 2 Peter 2:4; Revelations 12:9), described in Scripture as evil spirits or devils (Mark 5:13; Matthew 25:41), seek our destruction (see 1 Peter 5:8). If they cannot persuade us to disown our faith and loyalty to Christ, they will attempt to divert us from doing the will of God by distracting us with good things that weigh us down or make us indifferent towards the things of God.

God provides us with spiritual protection from the evil one

God gives us the help of his angelic hosts and he gives us spiritual weapons, the *shield of faith* and the *breastplate of righteousness* (see Ephesians 6:1-11), to resist the devil and his lies. Through the gift of the Holy Spirit, we, too, join with the angelic choirs of heaven in singing the praises of God. Do you thank the Lord for his guidance and protection?

"Lord Jesus, you are our refuge and strength. May I always know your guiding hand and the help of your angels in protecting me from all that is evil. Give me strength of will and courage to refuse what is evil and to choose what is good."

DAILY QUOTE FROM THE EARLY CHURCH FATHERS

Jesus, the Physician of souls, amputates vainglory

by Cyril of Alexandria (376-444 AD)

"The passion and lust of pride attacked some of the holy apostles. The mere argument about who of them was the greatest is the mark of an ambitious person, eager to stand at the head of the rest. Christ, who did not sleep, knows how to deliver. He saw this thought in the disciple's mind, springing up, in the words of Scripture (Hebrews 12:15), like some bitter plant. He saw the weeds, the work of the wicked sower. Before it grew up tall, struck its root down deep, grew strong, and took possession of the heart, he tears up the evil by the very root...

"In what way does the Physician of souls amputate pride's passion? How does he deliver the beloved disciple from being the prey of the enemy and from a thing hateful to God and man? "He took a child," it says, "and set it by him." He made the event a means of benefiting both the holy apostles themselves and us their successors. This illness, as a rule, preys upon all those who are in any respect superior to other people".(excerpt from COMMENTARY ON LUKE, HOMILY 54.2)