

**HOMILY OF HIS EXCELLENCY ARCHBISHOP CHRISTOPHE PIERRE**  
**APOSTOLIC NUNCIO TO THE UNITED STATES**  
**FEAST OF THE ARCHANGELS MICHAEL, GABRIEL, AND RAPHAEL**  
**ST. MICHAEL CHURCH**  
**ELIZABETH, NEW JERSEY**  
**SEPTEMBER 29, 2022**

My Dear Friends in Christ,

As the Apostolic Nuncio, the personal representative of the Holy Father to the United States, I greet you in the name of Pope Francis and express his heartfelt and prayerful best wishes as you celebrate your patronal feast, assuring you of His Holiness' spiritual closeness to you and your families. I thank Fr Dieuseul Adain for his invitation to be with you.

In the Gospel today, Jesus, in his dialogue with Nathanael, describes a two-fold activity of angels: "ascending and descending on the Son of Man." They "ascend" to serve the Lord and "descend" to serve us on behalf of God. This double-service was mentioned in the Opening Prayer as we asked God to "graciously grant that our life on earth may be defended by those who watch over us [descending] as they minister perpetually to you in heaven [ascending]." As we contemplate their double-work, we ask their intercession that we may learn how to ascend and descend with them in praise of God and in service of others.

The Archangel's first activity is to praise God. "*Praise him, all you angels,*" the Psalmist says (Ps 148:2). The angels desire to help us to learn how to praise God with them. In today's Responsorial Psalm, "*In the sight of the angels, I will sing your praises, Lord!*" With a watchful gaze, they want to help us to proclaim both now and in eternity, "*I will give thanks to you, O Lord, with all my heart, for you have heard the words of my mouth; in the presence of the angels, I will sing your praise; I will worship at your holy temple and give thanks to your name.*"

How much different our world would be if, instead of complaining, gossiping, or descending into negativity, we sang the praises of God!!!? The angels and archangels join with us in one unending hymn of praise at each Mass as the whole Church cries out: "Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God of Hosts!" On a Feast Day, like today, we also use the words of the angelic host when we sing, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace to people of God will."

This feast helps us to recognize that we are not alone. That God has given us invisible helpers to bring us Good News, to heal us, and to protect us. While each of us has a Guardian Angel, and the Feast of the Guardian Angels is just a few days away, we have Archangels such as Gabriel, Raphael, and Michael who watch over us in particular ways. The angels and archangels help us as a Church to praise and thank God with all our being, especially in the sacred liturgy.

The Archangels descend upon us to bring us God's assistance. The Archangel Gabriel brought Zechariah and Mary God's word. Gabriel greeted Mary with joy and asked her, on God's behalf, to be the Mother of the Redeemer. He had the privilege of "ascending" to God to bring Him the news that she consented to being the Mother of His Son. Gabriel's name means "God is my strength." He seeks to strengthen us to not be afraid and to respond to God's call with a generous Yes. Gabriel reminds the whole Church of the need to exercise her prophetic voice but also to announce the Good News.

Raphael brought accompanied young Tobias on his journey. His name means “God is my remedy.” He brings the healing medicine of God. While he helped heal Tobit of his cataracts and healed Raguel by casting out the demon, Asmodeus, Raphael also assists us by interceding for us to cure us of our spiritual blindness and guides us away from all those things that hinder us on our spiritual journey.

Saint Michael, the most famous of the Archangels, brings the Church protection. His name means “He is who like God.” He strives to defend us from all evil that renders us dissimilar to God who is thrice-holy. He appears in the Book of Daniel and again in the Book of Revelation. He defends God’s people and hurls the Evil One into the abyss. Saint Michael helps us to reign by serving, protecting us and reminding us of the need to serve God rather than our own interests. He prompts us to be courageous in protecting the weakest and most vulnerable members of our society.

However, we must remember that our true Champion, our true defender, is Christ Himself. In the Book of Revelation, we are reminded: *They defeated him by the Blood of the Lamb*. Christ is the true Victor, and it was through the outpouring of His Blood that we have been redeemed. Only the Lamb who was slain was worthy to open the seals on the Book of Life.

Saint Thomas Aquinas, known as the Angelic Doctor, considered the question: “Whether Christ is the Head of the angels.” He answered affirmatively, based on the words of Saint Paul: *You are filled with Christ, who is the head of all principalities and powers*. (cf. Col 2:10) Saint Thomas starts from a traditional premise: angels and men belong to one and the same spiritual society, one and the same Church; they commune in one charity, while waiting to commune in one and the same beatitude. This reminds us not only of the nature of the Church but of our destiny in singing the praises of God in heaven.

He explains: “Where there is one body, we must allow that there is one head. Now a multitude ordained to one end, with distinct acts and duties, may be metaphorically called one body. But it is manifest that both men and angels are ordained to one end, which is the glory of the Divine fruition.” (*ST III*, q. 8, art. 4)

Jesus Christ is the one Head of the one Body that is the Church because of the fullness of grace that resides in Him, because His humanity and Divinity are united in His Person. This helps us to celebrate this feast as a parish. While we give thanks to God for the help of the Archangels, we are also able to celebrate the fact that we have a great Champion in Christ and that He has called us to be part of this Church and part of this parish family.

Just as each of the Archangels has a distinctive role in the Body, so too we can consider our talents, gifts and call and how we might put them in the service of the Lord and the Church. How is God calling you to serve? God came down to earth so that we might go up to heaven. The Archangels teach us that if we serve the Lord well, according to our state in life, especially by serving the weak, the sick, the vulnerable, and those who are spiritually-impooverished, then we will “ascend” and, with them, will sing the praises of God forever: *In the presence of the angels, I will sing your praise; I will worship at your holy temple and give thanks to your name*.