



Angels in the Liturgy



Angels in the Liturgy

- In her liturgy, the Church joins with the angels to adore the thrice-holy God. She invokes their assistance. (CCC 335)
- In the book of Revelation, Saint John describes the heavenly liturgy

If the angels rejoice at the conversion of a sinner, so do they also rejoice when we participate in the Mass, the Divine Office, or any other liturgical service

Every Mass offered on earth, whether at a cathedral or a simple mission outpost, in the presence of thousands or the priest alone, is in essence **a perfect and true foretaste** of the heavenly worship

This is the worship of Heaven!

After this I had a vision of a great multitude, which no one could count, from every nation, race, people, and tongue. They stood before the throne and before the Lamb, wearing white robes and holding palm branches* in their hands. They cried out in a loud voice: “Salvation comes from* our God, who is seated on the throne, and from the Lamb.” **All the angels stood around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures. They prostrated themselves before the throne, worshiped God, and exclaimed: “Amen. Blessing and glory, wisdom and thanksgiving, honor, power, and might be to our God forever and ever. Amen.”** (Revelation 7:9-12)

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- When we attend Mass, we are being lifted up...
 - Like Moses on Sinai
 - Prophets meeting Him in “high places”
 - Devout Jews spoke of “going up to Jerusalem ...
 - **We too are ascending the mountain of the Lord**
 - **We are going mystically up to Calvary**
 - **We are going to the meeting place of earth and Heaven**
 - **We are entering into the presence of Divine Mercy**
- Commonly believed that each parish church has its own angel
 - To watch over the church
 - Adore the Eucharistic Jesus
 - Welcome the faithful who enter to pray
 - Affirm and influence each person’s guardian angel
- St. Faustina suggested we greet the angel whenever we pass by church
 - *When I was riding on the train, I saw an Angel standing on every church we passed, but surrounded by a light which was paler than that of the spirit who was accompanying me on the journey, and each of these spirits who were guarding the churches bowed his head to the spirit who was near me (The Angles in the Diary of Saint Faustina Kowalska by Father Titus Kieninger)*

Perhaps we should
spend time
engaging in prayer
with our parish
angel

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- In the Tradition of the Church, many liturgical norms have been tied to our understanding of angels
 - In early Church, Gloria, which was prayed while Catechumens were present, was in made in union with the lower choir of angels
 - When only the baptized remained, the Eucharistic prayers invoked the higher choirs of angels especially during the Holy, Holy, Holy
- Angels of sacrifice takes what the faithful offer here below and present it in heaven before the throne of God
 - In the present Roman canon (the first Eucharistic prayer), the celebrant invokes the ministry of the angels after the Consecration, asking that the gifts may be carried by the Angel to God's altar in heaven, and that those who will receive the Holy Eucharist may be filled with all the graces and blessings
- We are never a small community
 - Our celebration of the Liturgy is cosmic
 - We are united to not only to Heaven's worship, but every other Mass occurring around the world!
 - We can never be a community that is turned inward toward itself
- Angels inspire and enlighten us to see the invisible Reality behind the visible signs and gestures
 - Reverence, awe, and fascinated wonder must characterize our communion in love with Christ!

We are called to lay down all enmities
before approaching the altar with the
gifts of our heart

At the consecration of the Mass he had seen a whole host of angels encircling the altar and bowing their heads to the ground like "soldiers in the presence of their king. (St. John Chrysostom)

During 6th century Egyptian Liturgy, at the kiss of peace, the deacon would announce – Have your hearts in heaven. If anyone has had any dispute with his neighbor, let him be reconciled. ..For the Father of men, His only Son and the Holy Spirit are present, watching our actions and examining or thoughts; and the angels are moving among us and mingling with us.

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- Active participation in Mass
 - All baptized men and women have a role in the Mass
 - More than simply reciting responses or joining in the hymns or even adopting a common posture
 - Our role is to unite ourselves to God the Son in His obedience to and trust in His Heavenly Father
 - We offer Jesus as He is the only acceptable gift, the only one who can atone for my sins and those of the whole world
 - With Him, I offer You everything that I am – I give you my body and soul so that I may be changed into Him and You may see Him in me!
- As we come forward to receive Jesus, we can prepare for His coming with four simple steps
 - An act of faith – Jesus, I believe that You are really here before me
 - An act of love – Jesus, I love you because You are all good and deserving of all my love
 - An act of desire – I want to receive You in Holy Communion, the Gift You have chosen
 - An invitation – Please come into my heart, my life, and everything I am and I do

The angels cannot offer this as we do since they do not share in our human nature.



Hidden Jesus, Eternal Love, our Source of Life, ... before creating heaven and earth, You carried us in the depths of Your Heart...I do not envy the Seraphim their fire, for I have a greater gift deposited in my heart. They admire You in rapture, but Your Blood mingles with mine. Love is heaven given us already here on earth. Oh, why do You hide in faith? Love tears away the veil. (St. Faustina)

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- Saint Gertrude the Great (1256-1302) left a marvelous testimony of her gratitude to the angels and how she sought to give them thanks
 - As the Feast of St. Michael approached, St. Gertrude prepared herself for Holy Communion by meditating on the care which the Angels had of her, by the Divine command, notwithstanding her unworthiness; and as she desired to render some return to them, she offered in their honor the life giving Body and Blood of Jesus in the Most Holy Sacrament, saying: “I offer Thee this most august Sacrament, O most loving Lord, for Thy eternal glory, in honor of the princes of the kingdom, and for the increase for their felicity and beatitude.” Then Our Lord drew this oblation to Himself in an ineffable manner, **thereby causing the greatest joy to these angel spirits, who appeared even as if they had never before experienced such blessedness and super-abounded in delights.** Then each of the choirs of Angels, according to their rank, inclined respectfully before St. Gertrude, saying: **“Thou has indeed honored us by the oblation, and we will therefore guard thee with special care,”** the Guardian Angels adding, **“We will guard thee night and day with ineffable joy, and will prepare thee for thy Spouse with the utmost vigilance.”**

We cannot ask that the angels receive communion, for that is not God's plan for them, but we can ask Our Lord to give them an increase in love and glory because of the Communion that they are helping us to receive worthily.

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Divine Office & Other Sacraments

- To pray the Divine Office well, in order to sing the Psalms and praise the Lord, our voices must be united to the community around us, but with the voices of the Angels
- That is why in the Church Liturgy, great use is made of Psalm 103 – Bless the Lord, O you his angels, you mighty ones who do his word hearkening to the voice of his word! Bless the Lord, all his hosts, his ministers that do his will!” (v 20-21)
- Early Church Fathers said there was “an angel of baptism, who takes special care of the catechumen, intervenes in the sanctification of the baptismal water, is present at the solemn moment when the sacrament is conferred, and afterwards takes the baptized under his special protection for the rest of the lifetime of the baptized person.”
- St. Cyril & St. Ambrose speaks of the angels around the newly baptized – The angels dance around you in chorus, saying, “Who is this who comes up in white garments and leaning on her beloved?”
- Father Vagaggini reminds us – If there is joy among the angels of God over one sinner who does penance, who can deny their joy at the birth of a sinner into divine life?



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Questions?

