

“Let Your holy angel be with me that the evil foe may have no power over me. Amen.” Martin Luther encourages us to pray in this way both in the morning when we arise, and at night before we fall asleep. We pray, not for an entire legion of angels to guard us against the evil foe, but for only one; one guardian angel. And when we pray for God to send such an angel, we are simply praying for what He promises to give us: “*He will command His angels concerning you,*” writes the psalmist, “*to guard you in all your ways.*”

Christians love to hear stories about angels. And there are many. The Bible is rich with such accounts. From God’s angel shutting the mouths of the lions when Daniel was thrown into their den, to His angel rescuing Peter from his prison cell, to the multitude of angels singing, “*Glory to God in the highest!*” the night Jesus was born in Bethlehem – angels are found on many pages of Holy Scripture.

We are allowed the privilege, when September 29 falls on a Sunday, to celebrate that day in the Church Year: St. Michael and All Angels. Part of this privilege is to look more closely at Jesus’ words in St. Matthew 18:10: “*See that you do not despise one of these little ones. For I tell you that in heaven their angels always see the face of My Father who is in heaven.*”

“*Their angels,*” says Jesus. Not “the angels,” but “*their angels.*” The angels of the little ones. From this word of our Lord comes the teaching of the Church that God assigns, to His children baptized into Christ, a specific guardian angel.

What comfort for us to know that an angel is watching over our little ones, guarding them in the way that we pray: “That the evil foe may have no power over them.”

In Luther’s prayers for both morning and evening, we commend both our body and our soul into God’s care. His angel, sent as a guardian, protects God’s children from the evil foe, and also from all harm and danger to the body. I’m sure that most all of us could relate incidents when it was quite clear that an angel intervened to keep us and our little ones from great harm. But what we do not see are all the times, perhaps countless times, when God’s angel acted quickly to prevent harm, yet we were totally unaware of it.

And yet harm does come sometimes, and even death. And questions arise. “Why didn’t God’s angel act quickly this time? Did God take away His guardian angel from me? From my loved one?”

Sometimes, my friends, sometimes God’s angel is assigned the task of carrying God’s child into heaven. And as tears are being shed here, in heaven there is great rejoicing. I recall hearing that when Rev. Dr. Al Barry was president of our Lutheran Church Missouri Synod, he was at the bedside of his dying wife, and he related that she suddenly opened her eyes and exclaimed: “Oh, they’re beautiful!” and was then carried into heaven. Did God allow her to see her guardian angel, along with other angels, as she died? Perhaps. In heaven we can ask her. Until then we cannot be certain.

But of some things we can be certain. He does command His angels to guard you in all your ways. And your angel always sees the face of your Heavenly Father. Your angel? Yes, for you are God's precious child whether you are very young or very old. You have an angel assigned to you in your baptism. He is your bodyguard, but even more, your soul-guard.

Your angel guards you in the same way that Michael fought against the devil when war arose in heaven. With the sword of the Spirit – the Word of God, from which drips the blood of the Lamb of God. Your angel has no words of his own to speak, but only what God has already spoken in Holy Scripture. Your angel guards you against the evil foe by putting those Scriptures in your ears.

How many times were you tempted to do something else on a Sunday morning, but your angel intervened to bring you to where God's Word is proclaimed? How many times have you been tempted to sin, and God's angel intervened bringing to mind a verse from Holy Scripture? And how many times, after you fell into sin, didn't God's angel guard you from the evil foe by putting before you the good news of Jesus Christ that God forgives you of that very sin? That your baptism is still at work cleansing you with the blood of Christ? And that you are still God's precious child?

The evil foe is relentless in attacking with his lies and half-truths. But as God's angel shut the mouths of the lions for Daniel, so also His angel guards you against the roaring lion by shutting his mouth and opening your ears to what Jesus has done for you.

Your angel is not your Savior. Jesus, and no one else, suffered, died, and rose again for you. Jesus, and no one else, saves you from sin, death, and the devil. And in Scripture we are told that the angels in heaven are filled with amazement and awe that the Son of God became man, that He was willing to exchange His royal robes for our sinful rags, that He became sin for us, and that Jesus did this for every sinner.

Your guardian angel always beholds the face of the Heavenly Father. A face of pure love, for God is love. Is it any wonder, therefore, that the angels love nothing more than to guard you and your little ones against the evil foe so that you, too, will gaze upon the beautiful face of your loving God in heaven? Your angel sees His face now. Indeed, says Jesus, your angel *always beholds* His face. And though you cannot see God's face now, you can see the beauty and love of His face as it is reflected in the cross of Jesus. And nowhere is that cross seen more clearly than in your baptism and in the Holy Supper of your Lord's body and blood.

Jesus is serious about no one despising His little ones whose angels always behold the face of His Father in heaven. You and I are such *little ones*. We are little in strength against the evil foe. We are little and despised by the sinful world. But little ones like you are precious to your Lord. And to you He assigns His angel to guard you in all your ways.

One day your angel will be given the task of carrying you into heaven. And your loved ones here will rejoice that your prayer, morning and evening, was answered with a thundering Yes! "Let Your holy angel be with me that the evil foe may have no power over me." Amen, Amen, and Amen!