

The Elizabethan



The Newsletter of St. Elizabeth Episcopal Church Burien, Washington

June 2016

From Fr. John:

On angels (Part One): *Twice now, at our Adult Formation classes, questions about angels have come up and I promised to provide answers that you all could spend some time with. This little essay may inspire more questions, which is fine, but I do hope it also offers something helpful. Do let me know!*

While driving on the freeway one day, a friend of mine asked his young daughter this question: "What do you think angels are all about?" What she said was, "Angels are all about God." That's one of the best short answers I've ever heard! The Church teaches that the doctrine of angels is twofold. On one hand, angels are "about God" transcendentally, the countless throngs of angels serving and worshiping God as if "around God." On the hand, angels are "about God" immanently. That is to say, the meaning of angels is not about themselves, their meaning is ultimately "about God." They disclose God's good news of redemption and salvation in ways that we can perceive and then pass on to others.

So what are they? Angels are created beings of spirit with no physical body and are invisible to the eye. Consequently, we don't actually see angels, so much as we perceive them. They are a different order of creation. Think of it this way: creation is replete with hierarchies. Physics is the study of the most minute elements of nature, followed by chemistry that studies the interactions of molecules. Biology looks at collections of cells that have something recognizable as life and various branches of psychology look at forms of life that have access to what we recognize as consciousness. (Theology is, of course, the queen of all sciences, but that's for another essay!)

Beings that have more than one cell are more numerous than beings with multiple cells that have become organs. And there are more beings with organs than there are beings with organs who can think, hold memories and are self-aware. Still fewer beings have all of that but also recognize themselves and others to be manifestations of Divine life and love. We can think of each of these as orders of being.

There's no reason to assume that hierarchies of orders of being absolutely come to an end with humanity. In fact, it stands to reason, despite the furrowed brows of some of our Protestant brothers and sisters, that there are orders of spiritual being on beyond humans and other creatures with self-awareness. The brilliant Anglican theologian, Fr. John MacQuarrie, pointed out that "how such higher beings might be constituted or what kind of experience they might have, we cannot know and it would be idle to speculate [because] if in these higher beings there is some really novel form of experience beyond the range of our own, we would be unable to form any idea of it, just as a cat would be unable to know what our human experience is like."

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In the 5th c. C.E., Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite laid out what is still among the most influential angelic hierarchies for Roman Catholics and Anglicans, called *De Coelesti Hierarchia* (On the Celestial Hierarchy). The nine-fold *Celestial Hierarchy* puts the seraphim as the order of spiritual beings closest to the God-head, the Holy Trinity. Seraphim appear first in the Book of Isaiah where the prophet describes each of the seraphim in his vision hovering about God's throne room as having six wings—two that they used for flight, two that covered their faces and two that covered their feet (“feet” being a euphemism for their genitals).

These fiery, flying serpents praise God continuously and we join our voices with theirs as we sing with them, “holy, holy, holy LORD, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory.” The voices of these dragons shake the doorposts and thresholds of the temple, and fill it with smoke, which, by the way, is part of the reason that Anglicans love incense! And, if you remember, it was a seraph who wounded St. Francis with the stigmata. No sweet dimply babies here!

Still in the first sphere of heavenly beings are the “cherubim”—the second rank of heavenly beings and then, because three is a holy number, come the “thrones.” These beings are the holy manifestations of God's justice and supreme authority. In the second sphere of three come the ranks of “dominions, virtues and powers.” Finally, in the third sphere, we get to the principalities and then, seven ranks away from God, come the archangels, followed by the angels—the “messengers” of God—that include the guardian angel appointed to each one of us. The number of angels is said to be beyond our imagination, which is perhaps more awe-inspiring than the construct of nine orders, which really must be understood as speculative even if it is scripturally and traditionally sound.

Anglicans, Orthodox and Roman Catholics all recognize three archangels: Michael, Raphael and Gabriel. Their names have meanings related to their activity and all archangel's names end with the “el” suffix. “El” is a reference to God, which is combined with the first half of the name to indicate each individual archangel's specific ministry. Michael means “who is like God,” and he is considered the first Angel that God created, thus he leads all the Archangels and is in charge of protection, courage, strength, truth and integrity. We first hear of Michael by name in the Hebrew book of Daniel, where the prophet refers to him as a great prince among angels. This is a title that Michael shares only with his angelic brother, Lucifer (which means “Light-bearer”), with whom he battled and overcame in the Revelation to John. The other term used for Lucifer is actually a title. The *ha-satan*, meaning “the accuser,” was unnamed in the Book of Job, but sat on God's heavenly council and is no equal to God's agent, Michael, let alone to the Almighty God.

Raphael means “Healer of God” and we learn a good deal about him in the Book of Tobit, which is found in Roman, Orthodox and Anglican Bibles, but rarely in Protestant Bibles. Raphael guided Tobit (also called Tobias) on his travels and taught him how to make balms and ointments from fish that cured Tobit's father's blindness and drove a demon away from Tobit and his new wife.

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St. Elizabeth

Fund Raising - Where Shopping & Giving Unite!!

We now have some additional options for donating to St. Elizabeth while shopping!!

You are now able to link your rewards card/number to St. Elizabeth! Whenever you use your rewards card/number when shopping, you will be helping St. Elizabeth earn a donation. Every little bit helps!!

If you have a rewards card/number, you can sign up on-line with the following organizations through the following links:

Bartells – www.escrip.com/merchants/identity/bcaringcard

Amazon Smiles - smile.amazon.com

Fred Meyers - <https://www.fredmeyer.com/communityrewards>

Boeing Employee Individual Giving Program – contact your HR or Boeing Total Access

If you need help accessing/signing up on the retail websites, feel free to contact Christine Ramirez or Linda Knutson.

Exploring St. Elizabeth's...

In 1952, the Reverend H.A. Bernagan became St. Elizabeth's first full-time vicar. When he died in 1959, books from his library were used to start St. Elizabeth's library. Today we use the library more as a meeting room than as a parish resource for education and Christian formation...which I think is sad. The library is open for all of us. Anyone can check out a book using the red sign out log. We use the honor system and there are no late fees!

If you are new to our tradition, you might find *Your Faith, Your Life: An Introduction to the Episcopal Church* by Jennifer Gamber very helpful. From the book's cover: This "everything-you-need-to-know" guide for newcomers to the Episcopal Church is written and designed to provide accessible and user-friendly reading, with an easy-going look and style that's packed full of substance.

Another favorite of mine is *Glimpses of Grace: Daily Thoughts and Reflections* by Madeleine L'Engle with Carole Chase. You may know her as the author of *A Wrinkle in Time* and other young adult books. But, did you know she was a member of the Cathedral Church of John the Divine in New York City. This book is a collection of passages, from her many books, organized into daily readings.

If you have books or DVD's that you would like to donate to our library, please check with Father John. If you would like to help tidy up the library or recommend a book check with Sue Tierney.

We do not expand our worth to God because of our possessions or our deeds. We are valued by God because we are. We cannot gain more worth or lose our worth. God loves us. Period.

Landscaping.....

If you have some interest, ideas, and/or energy for the landscape around St. Elizabeth, please come to a meeting on Thursday, June 9th at 4pm at the church. We will brainstorm about possibilities and priorities. If you can't attend at that time but have some ideas you want to share, call Carolyn Terry @ 509-230-4986

Potluck on May 22nd

We had a great time at Sunday's Potluck. Thanks to all who joined us and a special thanks to all of you who brought the yummy food. Awesome set up and clean up crew...couldn't have done it without you!

Mark your calendar...our next Potluck is Sunday, July 31, 2016.

The Elizabethan

The Elizabethan is published monthly by St. Elizabeth Episcopal Church. The deadline for articles is the fourth Friday of each month.

Articles, calendar items and ideas may be mailed or emailed to the addresses below or left in *The Elizabethan* box in the Parish Office.

St. Elizabeth Episcopal Church

Street 1005 SW 152nd Street

Address: Burien, WA 98166

Mailing PO Box 66579

Address: Burien, WA 98166

Phone: (206) 243-6844

Email: info@stelizburien.comcastbiz.net

Website: www.stelizabethburien.org



Rector: Father John Forman

Sr. Warden: Sue Tierney

Jr. Warden: Gwynne Taylor

Treasurer: Linda Knutson

Office Administrator: Christine Ramirez

Elizabethan Editor: Christine Ramirez

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Gabriel means “Strength of God.” She is the only archangel depicted as female in art and literature and is considered a powerful and high-ranking archangel. Gabriel brought important messages to Zechariah and Elizabeth, and Mary and Joseph of the impending births of their sons, John the Baptist and Jesus of Nazareth. Gabriel is also mentioned in the Book of Daniel, though not as either a female nor as an archangel. There are also references to Gabriel in the non-canonical Book of Enoch that tells us that Uriel, Raphael, and Gabriel were present before God to testify on behalf of Humankind.

Anglicans and the Orthodox churches have maintained a fourth archangel, no longer recognized by the Roman Catholics; Uriel. His name means “God is my Light” and he is found in the Second Book of Esdras in the Biblical apocrypha. The Anglican intercessional prayer to Saint Uriel the Archangel reads: “Oh holy Saint Uriel, intercede for us that our hearts may burn with the fire of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Assist us in co-operating with the graces of our confirmation that the gifts of the Holy Spirit may bear much fruit in our souls. Obtain for us the grace to use the sword of truth to pare away all that is not in conformity to the most adorable Will of God in our lives, that we may fully participate in the army of the Church.”

While we are free to pray to the archangels, we do not worship them. God created them at the very beginning with the words, “Let there be light!” They are intimately bound with creation and our own understanding of stewardship. Their presence and assistance can help as we learn to love ourselves, our neighbors, our enemies and all of creation. As we come to the Eucharistic table, we “join our voices with angels and archangels and all the company of heaven” as we sing “Holy, Holy, Holy!” And then as we leave the table to enjoy a few moments of fellowship before heading out to spread the love of God, keep in mind what St. Augustine once wrote:

“Every visible thing in this world is put under the charge of an angel.” Imagine. Even if this does not fit your own personal theology and piety, give yourself just a moment to consider “what if?” and see if the world around you doesn’t light up just a little bit.

Next time: *We’ll explore some of the ways that angels open our eyes to the sacramentality of our everyday lives in the next installment. Stay tuned and keep watch for your own guardian angel! See you in church. Fr. John*

Coffee on Sunday mornings

Here is a model for improving our offerings of hospitality to worshippers and guests on Sunday. At the same time we will be connecting with each other through the service of giving.

Needed for each Sunday would be two teams or pairs of people working together.

The FIRST TEAM would bring or buy the food and set it out. Following that they would set up tables and chairs, make the coffee and organize condiments.

The SECOND TEAM would clear the St. John room of food and put the folding chairs back in the rack in the hall. Also, clean up coffee pots and kitchen.

As to amount of food, less is better. Grocery store pastries or cookies can be purchased for \$15 to \$20. If some team wants to celebrate a church calendar day, a birthday, graduation or other special event, more could be provided.

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St. Elizabeth Episcopal Church

PO Box 66579

Burien, Washington 98166-0579



ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Our Food Cupboard is well loved and well used.

Some additional ideas for items are bags of rice or beans, canned soups, canned vegetables, canned fruits, peanut butter, toothpaste, toilet paper or paper towels, cereal, condiments, and of course the usual—any kind of canned meats, top ramen and mac-n-cheese. Sorry to say this, but the healthier foods are not taken very quickly. **A great big thank you to those that regularly contribute!!!!**

