

Homily – Sept. 29, 2020 - Feast Of Archangels Michael, Gabriel and Raphael

By Fr. Virgil Petermeier, osc

Today we celebrate the archangels. Gabriel, whose name means God is my strength. He is best known as a messenger of Good news. For our Muslim sisters and brothers, Jibreel, is the greatest angel, equated with Holy Spirit. Raphael means God has healed. The name Michael is a question, "Who is like God?" From ancient times believers see Michael as a protector from evil, conqueror of Satan. Surrounded by God's strength, healing and protection, no wonder that one of the most frequent consoling statements in the scriptures is "Be not afraid – Fear not." Yet, how often we become anxious! For the times our trust in God is lacking, we call out . . . Lord Have mercy.

"Amen, amen, I say to you, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man." Jesus is saying, "Listen carefully, I am with you as God's strength and Good News, as God's healer, and as God's protector. The Glory of God radiates from me."

As followers of Jesus, the Christ, we too can radiate the light of those same saving Divine elements within us. Not reflect, but **RADIATE**, because God is in us. This was a striking distinction which Brian Pusateri made during our recollection day last Saturday in order to correct an incomplete perception about ourselves as God's women and men, who often say, "I must reflect the light of God." Reflecting is bouncing back something from outside of me. That, too, is true. But more essential is our belief that God from within us is trying to radiate loving strength, Good News, and healing protection. To put all this angelic talk into another perspective, we can say that along with Jesus all of us are to be myriads of radiations of God's presence which help one another be aware that God is in us all.

Now let's step beyond us human beings and become aware of the myriads of archangels, large and small, that remind us of God's strength, healing goodness and protection. Today, as we become ever more urbanized, people warn us of suffering a deficiency of nature's healing, as we spend so much time in virtual forests of cement and glass.

Fortunately, nature's forests can be healing and restorative archangels for us. Our mighty Mississippi is an archangel of God's strong currents and flow of love. Lake Superior is an archangel of the vastness and depth of God. As I am still acquainting myself with Arizona, I am struck in the morning by the mockingbirds whose varied voices remind me of God's beauty in sound and song. Actually, they are God's voice. The cacti of various shapes, thorns and hairiness remind me of God's incredible strength and resilience in the awful heat. The mountains serve as archangels of God's strength and beauty.

So, back to us – reminded today by God-strong Michael, God-news Gabriel and God-healing Raphael, we may ask, "When do I radiate God's strength, healing and goodness of God?" As Jesus said so emphatically, "Amen, amen, I say to you, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man."