

Saint Michael and All Angels 2019 SSP

Genesis 28:10-17; Revelation 12:7-12; St. John 1:47-51

In the Name of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Not only does the Feast of Saint Michael and All Angels have awesome lessons from Holy Scripture, it has glorious hymns to sing. And rightly so. God has created a cosmos in which there really is no such thing as an inanimate object, permeated with spirits who freely serve him (and some who have chosen not to), a cosmos where free will and love characterize God's image and its reflection in creation.

Jesus said he saw Satan fall from his pinnacle, a scene also told in today's reading from the Revelation of Saint John. In this reading, we see that Michael drives Satan out of heaven – and then Satan and his unloving minions fall to the earth to continue their campaign. But subsequently we learn that Michael is the prince, the guardian angel, who sponsors and protects the People of God, Israel and the whole Church and communion of saints.

If you follow the Book of Revelation, Satan takes a third of the spirits into his rebellion. So if the Kingdom of God were a democracy, the good guys still have a super majority of two thirds. But it's a Kingdom, and Satan's cause against love is tired old news when shown up by the Gospel's Good News of Jesus Christ.

The angels are everywhere, which of course is where their Lord and Maker is. They are in the cosmos and the microcosmos, in the galaxies and the electrons. They worship at the throne of Godhead, and they are with us in daily decisions; and more. When we gather to worship and receive our Lord in the Mass, we do so with angels and archangels and all the company of heaven.

Michaelmas is a great way for us to begin a new season at Saint Stephens. All sorts of things are going on. The choir and the Sunday School and other activities are re-commencing. The Solemn Mass has resumed. And...the pledge campaign is underway, but before I get to some words about that, let's focus on the role of the grace of God and free will and the choice to love and serve the Lord.

The Collect for Saint Michael and All Angels speaks of the ministries of "angels and men (or mortals) in a wonderful order." So as we try to envision the presence and ministries of God's angels, let us at the same time think of the witness and work of God's people, right here at this church. It is a reflection of heaven and the created/redeemed order.

We start at the altar and see several presences and ministries at work there, just like the cherubim and seraphim worshiping at the heart of the Trinity. We see leaders and various participants, just as there are angelic powers and principalities carrying out God's will in the world.

One of the really good things I can see, even though I am new and only an interim priest, is the communion and fellowship among the people of the congregation here; and, stemming from that, the emerging sense of responsibility and leadership for our beloved Saint Stephen's future. All this is the right use of time and talent. It is something that will be critically important as Saint Stephen's presents itself in a self-description for prospective candidates, priests, one of whom will be Saint Stephen's next Rector.

So this requires not only time and talent. It required devout and constant prayer by every single one of you. Ultimately the Vestry, with the consent of the Bishop, will call the next Rector, we hope sometime in the spring. But before things get to that point, there is much

discernment to do at other levels. Discernment means spiritual insight. Spiritual insight requires prayer.

And the prayer needs the backing not only of your time and talent, but of your treasure. Our pledge campaign is underway now. I said some things on this score last week – I had to, because of the message of the Gospel last Sunday. But today, we need to say that we need every one of us to give to the support of Saint Stephen’s for the upcoming year. If ever there was a time to do so, this is it.

Pledging helps the vestry plan our budget responsibly. Pledging also represents good will, love for Christ through Saint Stephen’s, and prayer in action. We need more pledgers, and we hope that if you are one of them, you will consider increasing what you pledge.

It is not the flat amount that matters. Some of us have more means than others. What matters is the proportion of what we give. That is why Jesus commended the “widow’s mite” more than the large sums contributed by the wealthy. What the poor widow gave was all she had. Her proportion was bigger than anyone’s. Her heart was in it.

And that’s just what we need here. Lots of heart, lots of prayer and love and good will, in this effort. It’s a crucial part of Saint Stephen’s search for a new rector. So do please take this appeal to heart. Pray over it. Make your pledge. Do be one of the angels.

In the Name of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Ghost. Amen.