

Commentary on the Gospel for Mon, Sep 29th 2014

We celebrate today in the liturgy of the Eucharist, three angels who are not only archangels, but saints! Their names are somehow descriptive of what they are to do in the Hebrew and Christian scriptures. Michael, (El being the shorter form for the Hebrew name for God), is “like God” and in various passages wields God’s power. Gabriel is the messenger or speaking power of God. Raphael is the healing or protecting power of God. Gabriel is the only one whose name is directly mentioned in the Gospels, though there are several mentions of angels, one of which we hear in today’s Gospel of John. Gabriel is most noted for his vocational intervention with Mary of Nazareth. He delivers the message and waits for her human response.

In reading all of the citations concerning this triple activity of God, there is always a need for God’s intervention into the human experience, or the need for order. I wish the First Reading for today’s liturgy were from the Book of Tobit. Raphael, who is the patron saint of more occupations and does of good than the other two combined, does a remarkable healing from blindness. It is too complicated about which to write here, but take a little time on his feast day to help settle his place between two more famous Archangels and saints.

The Gospel chosen for today culminates the “call narratives” in John’s Gospel. Phillip has been found by Jesus and so goes off to find Nathanael who is sitting minding the fig tree’s business. Phillip declares the basic information about this Jesus. Nathaniel follows and finds that Jesus has seen him and knows him. Nathaniel then declares the basic response to the person and mission of Jesus. In a small way, this first chapter of John’s Gospel, including the first nineteen verses known as the Prologue, is a summary of what Jesus has come to do while on earth.

The last verse is a prediction of the glorification of Jesus by all of creation from someone like Nathaniel and up to the ancient of the holy one. They all will testify, acknowledge and worship Jesus within the Triune God.

Even my Guardian Angel, about whom Sr. Marie Donald told me I had one and I had better move over in my desk seat to give him a rest, will bow down and acclaim what Nathaniel is saying. At the Eucharist today all the saints and angels and our lowly communities join together in that one solemn “Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of all that is by Your creation.”

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