

Commentary on the Gospel for Tue, Oct 2nd 2018

Memorial of the Guardian Angels

I grew up in a Catholic family and went to a wonderful Catholic grade school, administered by the Sisters of Mercy, in a marvelous Jesuit parish. I learned the daily prayer to my Guardian Angel very early and it became a part of my night prayers, at my bedside each night.

Angel of God, my guardian dear,

To whom his love commits me here,

Ever this day be at my side,

To light and guard to rule and guide. Amen

I remember that my sense was that my angel was there to watch over me. I felt guilty if I did something wrong - knowing my angel had seen it. I grew into a sense that my angel was there to guard me and protect me. We'd often pray to our guardian angels when we were going off on a trip.

I don't know when I began to let go of thinking about and praying to my guardian angel. It might have been as I learned to pray to Jesus and Mary, more directly. It might have been when I got more "sophisticated" in understanding how the Hebrew awe before a transcendent God led to a way of talking about God, quite directly: the voice of God, the hand of God, under the shadow of God's wing, the messenger of God.

It's only been recently, after reading how clearly Pope Francis has spoken about Guardian Angels, that I began to reclaim my guardian angel. I felt ashamed and embarrassed that I had simply abandoned this gift from God - at the very least a powerful symbol of God's loving, protective, guiding presence with me - and at its deepest - a real guardian angel, personally assigned to me - to be someone with whom I could be in relationship, as part of this created universe, given to me to help me and "guard me in all of my ways."

I feel bad that, for a lot of my adult years, I simply acted like I didn't need a guardian angel or acted as if I didn't believe it at all. My recovery from my arrogance comes as I age and feel the desire to acknowledge both God's gift and my need for that gift. I know our God loves me and is with me all the time. I feel the presence of Jesus and the Holy Spirit at many times in my daily life. But, it is nice to know that God - in God's marvelous providence - also assigned a guardian to me, to care for me - whether I'm attentive to or grateful for the gift at all.

Becoming re-aquainted with my angel is something I've done fairly "behind the scenes." There isn't really a "movement" to recognize our guardian angels, again, well, except for Pope Francis.

For me, it has been helped by remembering the Hebrew tradition of images to describe God's intimacy.

Re-recognizing my angel, and getting comfortable with the help, hasn't hurt my relationship with Jesus. It certainly doesn't replace it. It's more like feeling "a hand on my shoulder," "a reminder of what the right thing to do is in this situation," "a wise line from what I learned from my mom or dad, just popping into my head," or "a feeling of peace in the face of doing something that takes a little boldness or courage." It takes some renewed imagination that all of God's grace is not "compartmentalized." I can more easily imagine that all of God's loving grace, presence and ways of giving me/us the gift of the Holy Spirit are all "coordinated." So, how I say "thank you" doesn't matter. I'm grateful for God's help, whether I say, "Thank you, loving Father," "Thank you dear Jesus," "Bless you, Spirit of Life," or "Thanks for the reminder, guardian angel."

It may not help everyone in the same way. But, as some of the saints have said, I've grown to look forward to the day, that, after I enjoy the embrace of our Lord at the banquet, I'll look forward to catching up with my guardian angel, who'll remind me of all the jams I was helped out of, and all the blessings that came in ways I simply took for granted. I'll say "thank you" and really be grateful.

Dear Guardian Angel, my angel of God, Sign and Servant of God's love, Daily Guide and Protector, continue to be at my side, each day, to accompany me and help me to be faithful to the way of companionship with Jesus.

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