For Personal Reflection

?

1. Do I believe in angels?
2. What role do angels play in the Scriptures?
3. Why does God send angels to us, at least, according to St. Francis de Sales?
4. Why, according to St. Francis de Sales, should we have great devotion to the angels?
5. What qualities does the Salesian tradition find most descriptive of the angels?
6. How can the example of the angels help me in my efforts to be the kind of human being that God wants me to be?

Further Reading

Francis de Sales. Introduction to the Devout Life. Various editions

Spiritual Conferences. St. Francis de Sales. Abbot Gasquet and Dom Mackey, OSB, editor. Newman Press, 1962.

Pulpit and Pew: A Study in Salesian Preaching. Vincent Kerns, MSFS. 1976, S. F. S. Printing School.

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Angels...

SALESIAN PERSPECTIVES

...of Our Own

In Part II of his Introduction to the Devout Life, Francis de Sales outlines "various instructions for elevating the soul to God…" and giving us the grace and the courage to transform our good intentions into good deeds.

Francis includes in these twenty-one chapters: prayer, meditation, recalling the presence of God, preparing the day, morning and evening exercises, the examination of conscience, the celebration of Eucharist, the reception of Communion, hearing Scripture, experiencing Reconciliation, honoring the saints...and having a devotion to angels.

"There is no creature, however flawed or unfaithful who is without an angel ever present to afford protection and encouragement."

The host of angels in general. Our guardian angels in particular. "They are commissioned to help us by their inspirations, to defend us in perils, to reprove us when we err, to stimulate us in the pursuit of virtue. (Conferences, III, p.42)

"We, all of us, owe great love, service and honor to these angel spirits. They are always looking out for our welfare: they never think it beneath them to help us. There is no creature, however flawed or unfaithful who is without an angel ever present to afford protection and encouragement. If we are lax, they excite a love of virtue in our hearts, strengthening us, gaining us the power and courage we need to practice it. If we are depressed or in trouble, they are all around us to gladden us or encourage us to be patient." (Pulpit and Pew, p. 248)

"Let us have a great devotion to our good angels. Let us serve them, honor them. Let us correspond faithfully with their inspirations; let us console and gladden them by living better lives…"

Angels are given to us by God to encourage us in our daily efforts to grow in holiness. They "bring each of us inspirations suitable to our state and stage of life." (*Ibid*) They help us to emulate their example of fidelity to the will of God.

Their assistance should inspire us to make some return to these spiritual guardians and companions. Francis suggested that "since we received so many blessings through their ministry, let us see what we can do to please them, to console and gladden them, in return for all their favors. We could do no better than to copy their wholehearted resolve to love and serve God, not merely in the here and now but for all eternity." (*Ibid*, p. 249)

In addition to all their encouragement, support, protection and assistance, perhaps the greatest gift that the angels offer to us is their example of a virtue close to the heart of Francis de Sales: humility.

"The humility of the angels should capture our admiration when we consider to what lowly offices they stoop in the service of human beings...The glorious archangel and his followers realized that they were nothing in comparison to God. They made such an act of humility that they dedicated themselves for ever to God's service, the fulfillment of God's desires in all things, both high and low." (*Ibid*)

For Francis de Sales, the lesson is clear. "We can do nothing without our Lord, who bids us to learn from him — not to create the world, not to make all things visible, not to perform miracles, not the raise the dead — but to be gentle and humble of heart." (*Ibid*)

"We, all of us, owe great love, service and honor to these angel spirits. They are always looking out for our welfare…"

Francis' advice? "Let us have a great devotion to our good angels. Let us serve them, honor them. Let us correspond faithfully with their inspirations; let us console and gladden them by living better lives, by loving God more. Let us try to imitate their own humility and tenacity in the love and service of God. Let us imitate the sincerity of their love for God and their neighbors. If we resemble them in life by imitating their virtues, we shall be doing something that is extremely pleasing to God and to the angels, and we shall become worthy to attain that glory everlasting to which the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are leading us, to swell the angelic hymns of praise."