

## A Reflection for Michaelmas 2025

***Bless the Lord, you angels of his***

*The Lord has set his throne in heaven,  
and his kingship has dominion over all.  
Bless the Lord, you angels of his, you  
mighty ones who do his bidding, and  
hearken to the voice of his word.*

*Bless the Lord, all you his hosts, you  
ministers of his who do his will. Bless  
the Lord, all you works of his, in all  
places of his dominion; bless the Lord,  
O my soul.*

Psalm 103.19-22



The angels are God's *messengers*: that is what the word '*angelos*' means in Greek. They carry the message of God – the '*euangelion*', or '*Good News*', which is the Greek word for the *Gospel*: we could say that the angels, by their very nature, are the *bearers of good news*. It is why, in the Christmas Gospel, the angel brings '*good news of great joy for all the people*' (Luke 2.10). But this is not all that the angels do. Directly after alerting the shepherds to this message of hope and of joy, a whole '*multitude of the heavenly host*' joins the angel, '*praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favours!"*' (Luke 2.13-14). More important even than the message which they carry is this constant and continual *praise of God*. It is that which is the real preoccupation of the angels and their primary activity.

It is not a surprise, then, that the echo of the songs of the angels fills our own prayers, especially those which we offer at the *Holy Eucharist* (the *good* thank-offering, like the *good news*, using the same Greek basis). We are following the example of the angels when we say or sing the *Gloria* at the start of the Liturgy (which means the *work* – or offering – of the *people*). But the resonance is most obvious and strongest in the middle of the Eucharistic Prayer, where our own voices are joined with those of the angels and archangels, in their unending song of praise:

*Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts,  
heaven and earth are full of your glory, Hosanna in the highest.*

*Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.  
Hosanna in the highest.*

This hymn combines two Biblical texts, from Isaiah 6.3 and Matthew 21.9, the first of which contains the *prayer of the angels*, and the second of which relates it to *Jesus Christ* himself, whose own offering of his body and blood is the means of our salvation, and the cause of all the worship and praise in the first place. There is a third use here of the Greek word-stem *eu*, meaning ‘good’, in ‘*eulogemenos*’, that is, *blessed* is he – ‘well-spoken of’. Notice how all of this terminology emphasises *goodness*: there are no shadows or anxieties or fears in the place where God dwells. It is always and only ever *good*. This is why the angels always begin their greetings by saying, ‘*Do not be afraid*’ (e.g. Matthew 1.20; Luke 1.13, 30; 2.10). Instead, what they speak is a kind of *blessing*.

One of the things we celebrate at Michaelmas, the Festival of St Michael *and All Angels*, is this constant offering of worship and praise to God, this activity of continual blessing and the mediation of goodness. It is why, in the words of the Psalm, the angels *bless the Lord*, and do so again and again; they do so, until our own voices are caught up with theirs so that we, too, bless the Lord, and join this *hymn of praise*. It is what we believe we were *made for*; it is our fundamental purpose and function – to *worship God and give him glory*, to be filled with this goodness and blessing. It is why our prayers and praises in church are structured as they are, deliberately echoing the words and prayers of the angels, that our own prayers may become one with the prayers of heaven, and our praises here on earth be joined with those above, a tangible *foretaste*, but more than just a foretaste, a genuine *participation* in the life of the close companions of God. This combination of unending praise and worship as our primary purpose, and the mediation of help and consolation in the face of the perils of the world, is exemplified in the Collect Prayer for Michaelmas. May it lead us into an ever clearer vision of the Glory of God, and more fervent and fulsome worship and honour and praise.

*Everlasting God, you have ordained and constituted the ministries of angels and mortals in a wonderful order: grant that as your holy angels always serve you in heaven, so, at your command, they may help and defend us on earth; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.*