

Sunday 27 September 2026

St Michael and All Angels (transferred from 29 September)

Collect:

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 is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Readings for this week:

Genesis 28:10-17; Psalm 103:19-22; Revelation 12:7-12; John 1:47-51

Angels are a significant force in the Hebrew Bible, who also have a major impact in the New Testament. The snippet of Psalm 103 set for the Feast of St Michael and All Angels reminds us that they do the bidding of God. For all their fearsome power, they are under the dominion of God, they are bound to the divine as messengers and as agents of God's work. Their otherworldly power has attracted them to artists throughout the generations, although the images created have often reduced them to genteel young men with oversized bird or butterfly wings. Art has rendered them safe, proffering placid messengers gazing lovingly at pious madonnas. Perhaps it is only the Cuzco school of South American painting, which combined both Hispanic Baroque and indigenous imagery, that comes close to depicting the awesome, nature of the angelic host, matching the martial imagery we find in Revelation 12.

There is a reason an appearing angel usually opens with the greeting 'Do not be afraid' – angels are representatives of the omnipotent God whose power is limitless. They are not tame beasts. When Jacob wakes from his dream of angels ascending and descending between earth and heaven his reaction is both fear and awe. Later he experiences the power of God firsthand through an angel, who wrestles with him and puts his hip out of joint. In our Gospel reading, Jesus references Jacob's dream of the angelic ladder, reminding Nathanael of God's close interaction with creation. However, now both the ladder that links heaven with earth and the one who the angels were created to serve is standing before Nathanael. In Jesus the true messenger and the true power of God is to be found.

Lord of heaven,
in this eucharist you have brought us near
to an innumerable company of angels
and to the spirits of the saints made perfect:
as in this food of our earthly pilgrimage
we have shared their fellowship,
so may we come to share their joy in heaven;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Readings for next week:

Isaiah 5:1-7; Psalm 80:9-17; Philippians 3:4b-14; Matthew 21:33-46

Eighteenth Sunday after Trinity