

HOMILY OF HIS EXCELLENCY ARCHBISHOP CHRISTOPHE PIERRE
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SAINT TURIBIUS CHAPEL
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MEMORIAL OF THE GUARDIAN ANGELS
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My Dear Friends,

Today, we celebrate the memorial of the Guardian Angels. Angels exist. The *Catechism* (328) teaches that “the existence of the spiritual, non-corporeal beings that Sacred Scripture usually calls ‘angels’ is a truth of faith.” From birth until death, God has sent his angels to protect us, to intercede for us, and to shepherd us along the path to life. How much God must love us that He has set his angels over us to watch over us and guide us along the way!

The existence of angels and of the Guardian Angels helps us understand our vocation as priests and future priests. First, an angel is a creature who stands before God and who is oriented toward God with his whole being. Angels exist principally for God – to offer Him worship or to carry out some mission, like protecting those whom God loves. Their lives and mission are oriented toward God. The priest too must orient his life toward God and toward those whom God loves, interceding for the holy People of God, protecting them from harm, and guiding them along the way of truth. In leading divine worship, the priest orients himself and the People of God toward the Father, offering praise, sacrifice, and adoration to the Father, bringing before His face the needs of the People.

Second, angels are God’s messengers. They bring God’s message to the men and women of our day. Because they are with God and commune with him, they can be close to us. This is especially true of our Guardian Angel, who speaks to us of what God wants for us and who reveals to us things in our life that are sometimes concealed and hidden. Angels accompany us, touching our lives on God’s behalf, so that we may find the path that leads to life and return from ways that deprive us of happiness. Priests too must be heralds of the Good News to the faithful, accompanying them, revealing to them the mysteries of God, and guiding them along the right path, and touching the souls of even the most hard-hearted people.

The other day, we celebrated the Archangels. Some angels have specific missions. Michael protects and defends God’s holy people. Gabriel was the joyful messenger of the Incarnation at the Annunciation. Raphael was a messenger of God’s mercy and healing. The priest too must protect and defend the People of God from error and falsehood rather than harm them through his own weakness and evil desires. He must be a joyful herald of the Good News rather than a megaphone of condemnation. He must bring healing – offering vision to the people as a remedy for spiritual blindness and healing to the soul through the sacrament of reconciliation.

The Fathers of the Church often referred to the bishop as an “angel” and to the extent that priests are co-workers with the bishop, we can benefit from the analogy. Why did they call him an angel? His function, as the prayer of the Guardian Angel says, is *to light, to guard, to rule, and to guide* the children of God. These words capture well the mission of the bishop and priests. Undoubtedly, they are tied to the virtues of *fortitude, justice, prudence, and temperance*.

The bishop or priest “*lights*” or enlightens, through his teaching and example; this demands that he act, using the virtue of *fortitude*. His mission is to lead the community, with the heart of the Good Shepherd, firm in truth and love, always seeking the glory of God and the salvation of souls.

The bishop or priest *guards*; here he must act with *justice*. He guards the “Holy Church, the spouse of Christ” and the Body of Christ, of which each baptized person is a member. He procures their true good, giving special attention to those members who are weakest in the faith, and even the sheep that are still outside the fold. He guards the deposit of faith, helping the flock walk safely in the path of truth.

He *rules* the Church with the virtue of *prudence* that comes from being with his sheep – “in front, in the middle, and behind them” – offering his example, listening to their voices and prudently discerning, fostering communion, confronting challenges, and contributing to the search for solutions without neglecting the truth.

Finally, he *guides* and governs, practicing the virtue of *temperance*, directing and accompanying the life of the Church with a spirit of humility, patience and love; promoting initiatives that contribute to the vitality of the faith, while being vigilant, like a shepherd, over the forms of pastoral activity and the use of Church goods.

Yes, Guardian Angels are not just for children, they are for priests and future priests too! They instruct us about our life and ministry, enlightening us about our vocation; guarding us from the snares of the evil one; and shepherds and guides us toward an authentic encounter with God. Although we are bodily creatures, we can be like them orienting our lives and those of others toward God by bringing them the Good News of salvation. Thus, it would be good for us – sophisticated as we imagine ourselves to be – to nurture our relationship with our Guardian Angel.

Although I will return to Washington today, I depart knowing that you are being watched over and protected by your Guardian Angels and by Father Beseau and his staff, whom I know will also enlighten you, guard you, rule you, and guide you. May God bless you all.