

## Lent Reflections on the Stained-Glass Windows



**Angels**

**Saturday in the First Week of Lent**



## **Reading: Luke 2: 8-16**

In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid; for see - I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.' And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, 'Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favours!'

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, 'Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us'. So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger.

## **Commentary**

The final choir is that of the angels, the lowest of the ranks. This is more due to their interactions on earth than of their value or importance.

Angels are innumerable and include the heavenly choirs and the guardian angels. They are represented with wings to signify their role as a messenger; with flowing robes; and shining, peaceful faces that reflect the glory of God and the knowledge that God has won the battle with evil in Christ. Guardian angels are members of this choir, which is

closest to humans. We remember how angels came to Jesus's aid in the wilderness as He was tempted. They protect, guide, and pray for people in all aspects of human life.

In the Gospels we hear that angels shall be present at the end of time: "When the Son of man shall in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him" (*Matt 25:31*)

In the parables Jesus describes the end of time as like the harvest and where the reapers are the angels. "The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will collect out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all evildoers, and they will throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." (*Matt 13:41, 42*)

Most often though, in Christian art, they represent the harmony of heaven, shown by the praise and worship of the angels. The Christmas song of the angels echoes throughout the ages: 'Glory to God in the highest' – this was the worship of the angels – 'and on earth peace to people of good will.' – this was the human response.

In our window, one of the angels carries a thurible - a sign of heavenly worship. St John the Divine in his Revelation sees an angel with a golden censer whose incense mingles with the prayers of the saints before God.

Another angel holds out a musical score, as if inviting us to take part in the song of praise to God. The music shown is the opening of the tune to the hymn 'Angel voices ever singing'.

Angel-voices ever singing  
Round thy throne of light,  
Angel-harps for ever ringing,  
Rest not day or night;  
Thousands only live to bless thee  
And confess thee  
Lord of might.                      *Francis Pott 1832-1909*

## **Meditation**

Gregory of Nyssa in the 4<sup>th</sup> century, explained in a Christmas sermon that the whole of creation was the temple of the Creator, but that sin had come in and silenced praise. Humanity no longer joined the song of the angels. When Christ restored sinners, angels and humans once again united in their praise. Another great teacher of the Eastern church taught that singing was a sign that Christians had become angels!

Praise is an important part of our spiritual life. Give thanks and praise to God today. Delight in Him by singing or drawing, writing or dancing or playing an instrument, listening to music, looking at great art.....

## **Prayer**

For we know that thou rejoicest  
O'er each work of thine;  
Thou didst ears and hands and voices  
For thy praise design;  
Craftsmen's art and music's measure  
For thy pleasure  
All combine.