

Donnybrook

2 October 2021

The Guardian Angels

Welcome

Our word "angels" usually conjures up a distinct image from the artistic tradition: a somewhat androgynous human with wings, usually very decorated. When we open the Bible, however, the word has a much simpler meaning. The work is Hebrew is "malak" and in Greek "angelos." Both mean simply "messenger", someone doing a job on behalf of someone else.

Topic

As we can see from today's readings, the symbolism of the angels is important.

Steps

Our first reading from the book of Exodus reflects an ancient desire to be respectful of God. So, instead of saying God will be with and God with guide us, it says instead an angel of the Lord will be with us to guide us. We do believe, of course that God is with us always, as Jesus says in the very last words of Matthew's Gospel: I will be with you always to the end of the age. Our role as believers is to be attentive to that constant presence and to place our trust in God. It is easy, of course, when things are going well. It is different when things are difficult. Then, perhaps, we need to recall the words of St Paul in Romans 8, where he write:

For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:38-39)

The Gospel reading can help us too. The line that strikes me is: their angels in heaven are continually in the presence of my Father in heaven. In the ancient spiritual tradition, two affirmations were made of God. The first is the obvious one: God is always greater, beyond us, in technical terms, transcendent. The second is equally true: God is within each one of us, deep in our being, in technical terms, immanent. In the words of St Paul when he was in Athens: in God we live and move and have our being.

Conclusion

Perhaps it helps to remember this: God is present to us, always, everywhere, to everyone, fully. At the same time, God is within each one of us, always, everywhere, fully. When we pray our "job" is simply to attune ourselves to the constant real presence. Amen.