

OCTOBER | GUARDIAN ANGELS

Honoring the Angels

By Mary Regina Morrell

When I was growing up, I noticed how my mom displayed and treasured the many different gifts my dad gave her over the years. Among those gifts were a variety of painted and jeweled eggs. Their beauty shone in the remarkable designs and craftsmanship of their shells.

When I received an exceptionally lovely porcelain egg music box a few years ago, I believed all I needed to know about it was on the outside. To keep it safe, I placed it behind the glass doors of our hutch. For years it stood there with not much more than a casual glance from me.

One day, after a difficult situation caused me to wonder if my guardian angel had put in for a vacation, I stopped in front of the hutch and stared at the gilded egg. Something inside me said, "Open it." My first thought was sarcastic: "And how I am going to manage that without breaking it?" But upon closer inspection, I realized the egg was formed of two separate halves.

Removing the egg from the hutch, I gently pulled the halves apart. An enchanting guardian angel adorned with rhinestones was revealed. I was stunned. All these years and I didn't know there was an angel at the heart of this gift. At that point, I moved the egg to my desk as a reminder that even when I do not see or fully appreciate my guardian angel, my guardian angel is always with me.

ANGELS IN SACRED SCRIPTURE

Angels appear often in the Old Testament as God's messengers to the people of Israel. Abraham offered hospitality to three strangers and discovered he was entertaining angels (see Genesis 18:1-15). Later, an angel stopped Abraham from sacrificing his own son (see Genesis 22:1-19).

Abraham's grandson, Jacob, had a dream of a ladder where angels ascended and descended. He wrestled with an angel and was injured in the process (see Genesis 28:1-15; 32:23-33).

Angels saved Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego from the fiery furnace (see Daniel 3) and an angel was sent to close the mouths of the lions when Daniel was cast into the lions' den (see Daniel 6).

In the New Testament, the angel Gabriel announced to Mary that she would be the mother of the Son of God (see Luke 1:26-38). An angel came to strengthen Jesus as he prayed on the Mount of Olives (see Luke 22:39-46) and an angel appeared at the tomb after Jesus' Resurrection (see John 20:11-13). Angels also appeared to the disciples after Jesus ascended to Heaven (see Acts of the Apostles 1:6-12).

SACRED TRADITION

Catholic doctrine on the guardian angels is rooted in Sacred Scripture, but the Feast of the Holy Guardian Angels was not established until the 1600s. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states that "From its beginning until death, human life is surrounded by [the angels'] watchful care and intercession."²⁰² 'Beside each believer stands an angel as protector and shepherd leading him [or her] to life.' "²⁰³

Pope Francis, in his 2015 homily for the Feast of the Holy Guardian Angels, urged Catholics to be more aware of and more dependent on the care of our guardian angels. He invited us to ask ourselves, "How is my relationship with my guardian angel? Do I listen to him? Do I say good morning to him in the morning? Do I ask him: 'Watch over me when I sleep'? Do I speak with him? Do I ask his advice?" The pope concluded by stating, "We can answer this question today, each of us: How is my relationship with this angel that the Lord has sent to watch over me and accompany me on my journey, and who always sees the face of the Father who is in heaven?"

THE SAINTS SAY ...

"Go where we will, our angels are always with us."

—SAINT AUGUSTINE



"Even when alone be cheerful, remembering always that you are in the sight of the angels."

—ST. THÉRÈSE OF LISIEUX



"Make the holy angels your friends. No matter how weak we may be, how lowly our condition, or how great

the dangers which surround us, we have nothing to fear under the protection of these guardians."

—SAINT BERNARD

²⁰² Cf. Mt 18:10; Lk 16:22; Ps 34:7;91:10=13; Job 33:22-24; Zech 1:12; Tob 12:12.

²⁰³ St. Basil, *Adv. Eunomium* III, 1: PG 29, 656B.

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