

Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> September 2024 St Michael and All angels.  
Benefice Holy Communion, Gilling

Today we give thanks for the angels. Have you ever seen one, or felt one? Many people have. I met a man once in hospital who when he was going under for an operation, he met an angel. When I asked him how he knew it was an angel he said it was tall! So, there we are angels are tall!!

Our word “angel” comes from the Greek ‘*aggelos*,’ meaning “messenger.” Angels come from God, sometimes with specific messages for specific people, sometimes simply with the message of love. Angelic messages can come through other people and through the natural world. Angels appear in about half the books of the Bible and are mentioned over 300 times. Of the named archangels, we generally are told there are four.

So, this morning we have our four guardian angels who have flown in especially...!!!! I will introduce each one who has a beautiful

self-portrait showing their true selves, rather than their disguised human form

Michael is the leader; he is referred to as the angel of righteousness and is noted for his mercy and is also a warrior battling evil. Michael means ‘Who is like God? Is anyone? No one is, and yet we can be, showing, imperfectly, that God is our strength and our healer. With Michael helping us and protecting us, we too contend against evil and all that thwarts God’s purposes.

Gabriel is the heavenly messenger, a special angel of Christ. Gabriel means ‘God is my strength’. Mary says to him when she receives her message that she will be the mother of Jesus she answers, ‘how can this be?’ Gabriel reminds Mary, and us, that we’re not on our own; that

when we feel bewildered and helpless about ourselves, the world's problems, and entirely unconvinced about our own capacity to meet them, God is our strength, too and, with Gabriel we announce the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ.

Raphael means 'God is my healer', and he reminds us that our vocation is to be agents of God's healing and reconciliation in the world. We don't have to look far to find brokenness - whether we look within or without. God's action in redemption is to draw back to himself a creation estranged through sin, lost, and broken and hurting when it moves away from the love and purpose for which it was made and with Raphael we bear witness to the healing and mercy of God. .

Archangel Uriel is known as the angel of wisdom. He shines the light of God's truth into the darkness of confusion. Uriel means "God is my light" or "fire of God." Uriel is prominently featured in what are referred to as the 'apocryphal' texts like the Book of Enoch and 2 Esdras, where he acts as a guide and revealer of divine truths. He is not mentioned in the canonical texts, but he is recognised in the Roman Catholic, Orthodox and Anglican churches.

In both Scripture and tradition, angels also fulfil the function of gateway - or bridge - between heaven and earth. Jacob's ladder, of course, is the most striking visual image of their movement between the realms, but whatever words or images we use to describe angels, they serve to remind us that we live within their care and protection. Every one of us is protected by an angel who holds us in the heart of God. Suffering can't be avoided, but if we can hear the still small voice inside us and sense enfolding wings around us, we can find our way through such times and trials: As it says in Psalm 91, "For

God will give holy angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways.”

Thanks be to God. Amen.

Liturgy for the Feast of St. Michael and All Angels

*An adult should light a big candle and say: Light and peace, in Jesus Christ our Lord.*

*Adult continues: When God called the Israelites out of Egypt, an angel led the way as a pillar of fire in the night. Later, when the people were lost in the wilderness, God rained down manna for them to eat and gave them grain from heaven. So, people ate the bread of angels.*

*Children (with arms outstretched, palms up): God was with them.*

*Adult: As we share this communion bread and wine together,*

*Children (with arms crossed, hands on opposite shoulders as though hugging themselves): God is with us.*

*Adult: As the guardian angel Raphael guided Tobias and Sarah on their journey,*

*Children (arms outstretched): God was with them.*

*Adult: As our own Guardian Angels comfort, protect, and guide us,*

*Children (arms crossed): God is with us.*

*Adult: And now may God bless us and keep us.*

*Children: Amen.*

*Adult: May God send holy angels to be our guardians and guides.*

*Children: Amen.*

*Adult: May God's holy angels' dwell in our hearts and be our companions always.*

*Children: Amen.*