**About the Angels**. In the Name of the +Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Today is the Feast of St Michael and All Angels … so to start with … why not just … All Angels … why St Michael to start with … and then the rest. And why a saint anyway ? Sainthood or some other kind of veneration is normally something bestowed by the particular faith … Christian or otherwise … on the person.

Just so you see why we wear coloured robes, we wear red for saint’s days, cos normally to be worthy of sainthood, one needed to either have been an Apostle, which invariably met with certain death, or in later Christian life, one was martyred and hence the raising to the status of sainthood was something that was left to the Greek and Roman churches. And from this, we have been bequeathed on average, in excess of three saint’s days per day, each and every year, such as today, which is also the Feast day of St Francis of Assis … among others. So given the seasonal colour representing the blood of saints spilled, to fulfil this aspect alone would mean we’d be wearing red robes all year round.

So invoking the help of the authority Wikipedia, let’s have a look at the word Archangel and see who we have.

The term [*archangel*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Archangel) itself as a word is not found in the [Hebrew Bible](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hebrew_Bible) nor the Christian [Old Testament](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Old_Testament), however in the [Greek New Testament](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greek_New_Testament) the term *archangel* occurs in [1 Thessalonians](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1_Thessalonians) 4:16 and the [Epistle of Jude](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Epistle_of_Jude) 1:9, where it is used of [Michael](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michael_%28archangel%29), who in [Daniel](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Book_of_Daniel) 10:13 is called 'one of the chief princes,' and 'the great prince'. In the [Septuagint](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Septuagint) this is rendered "the great angel” … hence we get the word Archangel, and as is so often the case, tradition plays a role here too, where Michael has firstly been accorded the role of chief among the Archangels, and secondly, along with Raphael and Gabriel, has been raised to sainthood.

The idea of seven archangels is most explicitly stated in the [deuterocanonical](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deuterocanonical) [Book of Tobit](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Book_of_Tobit) when [Raphael](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Raphael_%28archangel%29) reveals himself, declaring: "I am Raphael, one of the seven angels who stand in the glorious presence of the Lord, ready to serve him." (Tobit 12:15) The other two archangels mentioned by name in the Bible are [Michael](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michael) and [Gabriel](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gabriel).

The earliest specific Christian references are in the late 5th to early 6th century BCE: [Pseudo-Dionysius](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pseudo-Dionysius) gives them as Michael, Gabriel, Raphael, Uriel, [Camael](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Camael), [Jophiel](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jophiel), and [Zadkiel](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zadkiel). In most [Protestant](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Protestant) Christian [oral traditions](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oral_tradition) only Michael and [Gabriel](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gabriel) are referred to as "archangels", which echoes the most mainstream [Muslim](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Muslim) view, whereas Roman Catholic Christian traditions also include [Raphael](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Raphael_%28archangel%29) to complete a group of three. After all, he did announce himself.

Now let’s think back to where we started … talking about their names, and you’ll see why they are referred to as Holy. All their names end in … EL. Raphael, Michael etc. Remember how about six weeks ago, we discussed the Holy Order of Melchizedek ? At the laying on of hands, by a bishop on a candidate to the priesthood, the bishop says … You are now forever a priest in the Order of Melchizedek. (Ps 110 v 4). In Genesis 14:18 we read that Melchizedek offers bread and wine as a sacrifice … and it’s this sacrifice that distinguishes the Sacramental side … the priest … who offers sacrifice, from the Reformist side … with Ministers or Pastors, who offer a memorial. “Do this in memory of me” makes both views equally valid, in the eyes of their followers and others as well.

Christ therefore fulfilled the prophecy of Ps 110:4, that he would be a priest "after the order of Melchizedek" at the [Last Supper](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Last_Supper), when he broke and shared bread and the cup with his [disciples](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Twelve_Apostles).

According to the writer of Hebrews (7:13-17) which we think is a Pauline letter, Jesus is considered a priest in the Order ofMelchizedek because, like Melchizedek, Jesus was not a descendant of Aaron, and thus would not qualify for the Jewish priesthood under the Law of Moses. Remember … if you were in Aaron’s line, and a 25-yr old male … you either got married or became a priest.

The name Melchizedek means King of Righteousness, and he is the first person to be given the title of priest in the Hebrew bible, so he is also the first person to be both a priest and a king. Stay with me.

So back to our Angels. Their names all end in el. El Elohim which refers to god … though it can refer to any god. Importantly, all our angelic hosts end in el … Michael, Gabriel etc. However, this is where is gets tricky, cos if as we are told via tradition that the concept of hell arose because one of God’s holy angels decided to go his own way, then how come Lucifer didn’t end in … EL ? It’s possible he was not of sufficient angelic rank to warrant such a title, although in the Book of Enoch, [Ramiel](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ramiel) is described as one of the leaders of the 200 [Grigori](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Watcher_%28angel%29#Grigori), the fallen angels, so we get our EL name given back.

And remember … in Jewish verbiage, many of these names are utterly interchangeable, Jesus and Joshua being a prefect example. It really makes it hard for us in a modern-day western world to work with these ancient languages, most of which did not have the concept of vowels as we know them … you put them in yourself. So are the names Lucifer and Ramiel as names … interchangeable ? I doubt it, but maybe, cos the rules as we know them are different.

So now … back to the Angels. Not all church groups agree on who these seven are. As an example, in the [Coptic Orthodox](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coptic_Orthodox) tradition the seven archangels are named as Michael, Gabriel, Raphael, [Suriel](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Suriel), [Zadkiel](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zadkiel), [Sarathiel](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sarathiel), and [Ananiel](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ananiel), and in the Anglican traditions, there are three or four archangels in the [calendar](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Calendar_of_saints_%28Episcopal_Church_in_the_United_States_of_America%29) for September 29, the feast of St Michael and All Angels (also called [Michaelmas](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michaelmas)), namely Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael,[[16]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seven_Archangels#cite_note-16) and often also Uriel, and the Eastern Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox churches add [Selaphiel](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selaphiel), [Jegudiel](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jegudiel), and Raguel.

Some strands of the [Eastern Orthodox Church](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eastern_Orthodox_Church), recognize as authoritative the book [2 Esdras](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2_Esdras), which mentions Uriel. The Eastern Orthodox Church and Eastern Catholic Churches of the Byzantine tradition, venerate seven archangels and sometimes an eighth. Michael, Gabriel, Raphael, Uriel … those four seem to be common in all traditions and are mentioned clearly by name, and then add … Selaphiel (Salathiel), Jegudiel (Jehudiel), Barachiel who is also well noted, and to confuse us all … we have an eighth, Jerahmeel (Jeremiel) so you can see that not all in the Christian faith agree on what we should all agree on.

The question for us is what we should do in recognising and honouring these angelic beings, for we hold the Trinity as being the all-important, all powerful. As we say in out texts today.

The angels of the Lord have specific roles to play, and the word Angel itself gives us a clue … because the word angel means messenger. So it was that the angel of the Lord sat on the rock in the tomb, and told the two Mary’s that Jesus had done as He said he would … he is risen, and has gone on and the disciples could find him in Galilee.

Now … I want you to go and find your BIG bible, and find a map of old Judea … Galilee is up north, almost to Syria, with the locality of Nazareth well down in its south … like in say Brisbane, and the gold Coast is south. Contrast this with Jerusalem which is well down to the south of Israel, near the Dead Sea, and east of Gaza. In today’s speed world, three hours by hi-speed highway at 100kph. Think where you can be on an open highway at 100kph. Now convert that to donkey-speed.

So the good news is that Christ is alive … sadly, the bad news is you’ve got a three day route march ahead of you to catch up with Him.

So while messages from God were often delivered by Angels … let’s see what else some of these angels traditionally do

* **Saint Michael** is an archangel, a spiritual warrior in the battle of good versus evil. He is considered the leader of the angelic hosts, for his name translates to “as of God”, and he’s a champion of justice, a healer of the sick, and the guardian of the Church, and so **Michael** is usually depicted with a sword, a banner, or the scales of justice, and is often shown vanquishing Satan in the form of a dragon.
* **Raphael** who’s name means God Heals is an [archangel](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Archangel) responsible for healing in the traditions of most [Abrahamic religions](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abrahamic_religions), and in [Christianity](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christianity), and as well as naming himself in making an announcement, Raphael is generally associated with an unnamed angel mentioned in the [Gospel of John](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_John), who stirs the water at the healing [pool of Bethesda](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pool_of_Bethesda). In Hebrew, the word “rophe” means 'to heal’. Archangel Raphael not only helps in healing individuals, but also helps healers in their healing practice, which is why in the Liberal Catholic movement, we call on his help as well. Raphael is an important figure in the [Book of Tobit](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Book_of_Tobit), which is accepted as canonical by [Catholics](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Catholics), [Eastern Orthodox](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eastern_Orthodox), [Oriental Orthodox](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oriental_Orthodoxy) and many [Anglicans](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anglicans).
* **Gabriel** in particular was known to make big announcements, so is often depicted with a trumpet … a real attention grabber. Gabriel means "God is my strength" or "Might of God". Gabriel is the herald of the mysteries of God, especially the Incarnation of God and all other mysteries related to it, and his name means 'God is my strength'. One of the two archangels specifically named in the Bible in both the Old and New Testament, Gabriel is often portrayed holding a trumpet and here’s an interesting twist … it’s considered likely that Gabriel is the only female archangel … though I’m not sure that angelic gender is a something to worry about.

As the patron of communications, Archangel Gabriel is the messenger angel, acting as a messenger of God.

* Uriel. In modern angelology … there’s a new word for today … Uriel is identified variously as a seraph which is the highest order of angels, a cherub, regent of the sun, flame of God, angel of the divine presence, presider over Tartarus (hell), archangel of salvation, and, in later scriptures, identified with Phanuel ("face of God").

So … is that enough for today ? You can spend time yourself looking up what the others do, because to start with, you’ll have to do what Christianity has not quite yet done … and that’s research all the books and decide who the last three really are.

So now … what’s all this got to do with today’s Intent of Spiritual Progress ? Let us turn to Ephesians, that marvellous letter of Paul to the Ephesians: chapter three, verses 16-19. "That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God" ([Ephesians 3](http://www.bible-sermons.org.uk/bible/Ephesians_3/), 16-19).

Knowing the angels and what they do helps us to climb this ladder of progress in ourselves, in our spirits, as we unfold within ourselves these aspects … these rungs on the ladder of progress.

* Strengthened by His mighty spirit, leading to … so that Christ dwells in our hearts by faith;
* Being grounded in love, we might perceive the breadth, length, depth and height of the love of God, as Paul referred to in Romans 8 v 38, and
* To gain a perception of the love of God and of His Son, Christ Our Lord, as we say in the final Benediction … that which passes all understanding.

And any one who can assist us to know and to grow in such a way is to be venerated. So today, we give thanks to our angelic hosts, to our Angel of our Eucharist who resides with us in our tabernacle … in this case, the ciborium right here in front, and via St Michael, we give thanks for the wisdom and service they all provide to our Lord. And us on our respective journeys.

Let’s all say …