



**A Sermon for the Feast of St Michael and All Angels**  
**Sept 29, 2024**



*Archangel Michael.*

**Rev. Barbara Bond**  
**New Life Episcopal Church, Uniontown, OH**

Genesis 28:10-17, Revelation 12:7-12, John 1:47-51

Welcome to the Feast Day of St. Michael and All Angels! Given the uncertainties in our society today, it is comforting to know that angels are all around us.

The angels in our texts today are serious angels, especially as portrayed in our second reading from Revelation, which begins, “And war broke out in heaven.” St. Michael and his angels warred against the Evil One, the Deceiver of the World, and threw him down to earth, along with all his bad angels. It does explain why we have so much evil in our world, doesn't it? We've been dealing with those bad angels ever since.

The Archangel Michael is frequently pictured with sword and armor. St. Michael is ready for battle. The first time I preached about the archangels, back in Idaho in 1996, my parishioners asked me if I had seen the new movie named “Michael.” Perhaps you remember it, from 28 years ago. The actor, John Travolta, plays St. Michael with much humor and down-to-earth adventure. This version of Michael especially liked battle. Spotting a bull in a nearby field, Michael yelled, “Battle!” and ran at the bull, both angel and beast with heads lowered. The bull ended up looking a little dazed, and Michael, well, he was delighted to be back in fighting form! He also had a battle in a local bar. This is Michael according to Hollywood, not Michael according to the Book of Revelation, but Michael's success in battle is similar.

The Old Testament gives us many stories about angels as intermediaries between God and humanity. In our reading from Genesis, Jacob dreams of angels ascending and descending a staircase, or ladder, an actual pathway between heaven and earth. The old camp song, “We are climbing Jacob's ladder” expresses the idea that we can ascend the ladder, too.

This ladder is a lovely symbol of angelic movement. We can see angels of mercy in human form every day – angel-like humans who act out God's love to those around them. These every-day angels are indeed intermediaries of God's love on earth.

The tradition of angels includes their attributes in graphic form – for instance, angels are swift, and therefore they are shown with wings. Angels are present to us, especially guardian angels, and so they are shown guarding over children, or perhaps in the passenger seat of your car. Angels are bringers of

light, of love, of announcements. Our four archangels bring their specific attributes: Michael is the Protector; Gabriel brings announcements; Raphael brings healing; Uriel lights the way to the next world.

I'm thinking of Biblical stories of angelic intervention. Abraham and Sarah meet three angels in the desert, where the message is about the promise of a son. That same son, Isaac, is nearly sacrificed – Abraham ties up his son on a sacrificial altar and is just about to slit his son's throat when an angel appears, stays Abraham's hand, and produces a substitute, a ram caught in a nearby bush. Isaac's son Jacob sees a wonderful vision of angels on a staircase, but he also has a major tussle with an angel, an indictment of Jacob's tricky ways, which results in Jacob receiving a new name, Israel. All these angel stories represent messages from God.

For Christianity, the biggest message came when Gabriel appeared to Mary, told her about her impending motherhood, and asked her assent. Famously, Mary said yes. An angel brought her the news, and the angel secured her compliance in the biggest story of God's arrival among us.

In our Gospel reading, Jesus recasts the Jacob story. Jesus himself becomes the link, the staircase – a human-like angel, perhaps. He took on human form and enabled our ascent up that staircase, to divine communion.

We can see Jesus as a human-like angel, descending the cosmic staircase. Next week we celebrate St. Francis of Assisi, who was an angel-like human. Francis' angelic life brought him up that cosmic staircase. And somewhere on the staircase, these two meet: Christ, the human-like angel, and Francis, the angel-like human, at some cosmic crossover point, showing us that Christ does enter into human life, into Francis and us, and accompany us to higher places, bringing us to our better selves.

Angels are our intermediaries, showing us a better way to live.  
Do you know the old camp song? Join me in singing its truth:

We are climbing Jacob's ladder...soldiers of the cross.  
Every round goes higher, higher...soldiers of the cross.  
Sinner, do you love your Jesus?...soldiers of the cross.  
If you love Him, why not serve him...soldiers of the cross.