

Once a year...

Episcopal churches are authorized to stray from the lectionary readings.

On the feast day of the Parish's Patron Saint...

Today... on the Feast Day of Michael and All Angels.

we acknowledge Gabriel... *our* Archangel.

And revel in all the ways God watches over his people
and savor the richness God's blessings.

There *are* angels in your bible... worshipping God in heaven...

Acting as messengers... as God's agents... here on earth.

In Luke 15, Jesus proclaimed,

*There is joy in the presence of the angels of God
over one sinner who repents*

In Matthew 18, Jesus commanded us to care for children,

*Take care that you do not despise one of these little ones;
for, I tell you, in heaven their angels continually see
the face of my Father in heaven.*

We have the stories... the testimony... super-human beings,

Who take on human appearance so they can communicate with us.

The Greek word for *messenger* is an-gelos

Angels are the Messengers... of God

In the time of Christ, Jews believed in angels,

And they named four archangels: Michael, Gabriel, Raphael, and Uriel.

Michael... is the captain of the heavenly armies.

In the book of Daniel... he was called
A chief prince of the people of Israel

In the book of Jude... *in he argued with the devil*

and in Revelation...

He led God's armies against the Satan's forces... *and won...*

In paintings and other artwork...

Michael is pictured in full armor... carrying a lance...
 with his foot on the neck of a fallen dragon.

He is a symbol of faith fighting evil and proclaiming God's truth
 No wonder he's Patron saint of police, paramedics and military

Then there's the archangel *Raphael*

Now his name means "God heals."

In the book of Tobit, while disguised as a man,
 he accompanied young Tobias on a quest...

enabled him to succeed... and cured his aging father of blindness.

In John's gospel... Raphael stirred the water in Bethesda's healing pool.

He's the patron saint of doctors, nurses, medical workers...
 and travelers.

Vasco Da Gama sailed to India aboard the *St. Raphael*.

When they sailed to the Cape of Good Hope,
 they honored the archangel with a statue.

That statue of St. Raphael is now in the Naval Museum in Lisbon.

The archangel Uriel's name means... "God is my light"
And appears in the Apocrypha.

The prophet Ezra asked God a series of questions
and **Uriel** was sent by God... to help him find the answers.
Uriel focuses on wisdom and helps people learn more about God,
themselves, and others.

Our archangel... is Gabriel...
Whose name means "God is my champion"
A special messenger from God.
He appeared in the book of Daniel and explained Daniel's visions.
Daniel said...

*As he was speaking to me, I fell into a trance, face to the ground;
then he touched me and set me on my feet. He said, 'Listen,
and I will tell you what will take place later in the period of wrath;
for it refers to the appointed time of the end.*

In the next chapter, Daniel said,

*While I was speaking in prayer, the man Gabriel,
whom I had seen before in a vision,
came to me in swift flight at the time of the evening sacrifice.
He came and said to me,
'Daniel, I have now come out to give you wisdom and understanding.
At the beginning of your supplications a word went out,
and I have come to declare it, for you are greatly beloved.*

Gabriel's in the New Testament... in the first chapter of Luke.
He told Zechariah that his wife would give birth... to **John the Baptist!**

*'I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God,
and I have been sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news.*

A few verses later,
 God sent Gabriel to a young woman in a town called Nazareth.

‘Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you.’

And he told her she would conceive and bear a son and name him Jesus.
 She asked, how this could be, since she was a virgin, and the angel said

***The Holy Spirit will come upon you,
 and the power of the Most High will overshadow you;
 therefore the child to be born will be holy;
 he will be called Son of God.
 For nothing will be impossible with God.***

Gabriel is the patron saint of messengers...
 Clergy... Communications workers... postal workers...
 And... Television broadcasters.
 Fascinating... God would call me... a television broadcaster
 To the ***priesthood***... And send me to ***St. Gabriel!***
 Patron saint of clergy... ***and*** broadcasters!

Gabriel is usually portrayed in blue or white garments
 In the icon on the bulletin cover
 He holds a spear in his right hand
 And an X... the first letter of the Greek word for Christ... ***Kristos***...

Angels are drawn with wings... for spacelessness
 With swords of power and dazzling clothes for enlightenment
 Unfortunately, these images cause denial of their very existence...
 Thought of by many as mythical beasts like unicorns
 Rest assured... Angels really do exist... and they are real...

a fifth century monk defined nine orders of angels
 The lowest are angels... God's messengers and guardians of humanity.
 The highest are the seraphim... loving and praising God face to face...

After that come
 Cherubim
 Thrones
 Dominions
 Principalities
 Powers
 Virtues
 Archangels
 And finally... Angels

In our opening hymn... we sang...

*Ye watchers and ye holy ones,
 Bright seraphs, cherubim and thrones
 Raise the glad strain, Alleluia.
 Cry out, dominions, pryncedoms, powers,
 Virtues, archangels, angel choirs.
 Oh, praise Him! Oh, praise Him!
 Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia.*

We sang about the choirs of angels... in order!

Angels are in Paul's writing as well...

Christ is seated at the right hand of the Father,
 far above all... *principality and power, and might, and dominion*

Those are *orders of angels!*

For by the Son all things were created,
that are in heaven, and that are in earth,
visible and invisible,
whether they be *thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers*:
all things were created by him, and for him.

I am persuaded that neither death, nor life,
nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers...
shall be able to separate us from the love of God,
which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

God's Holy Angels...
greater than us in knowledge and power...
Remind us...
Among all created things... we are *not* the top of the heap.

In the picture of God sending angels to help and defend us...
We're reminded...
Instead of doing good things directly...
God prefers to do them...
through His willing servants...

and that includes St. Gabriel... and all of you!