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St. Catherine's Newsletter

Assumption Greek
Orthodox Church

June, 2011



2011 Junior Olympics



Athletes, coaches and parents participated in the Metropolis of Chicago Junior Olympics over Memorial Day Weekend. Our athletes competed in: bowling, soccer, swimming, track and field, and



Ask Father.....

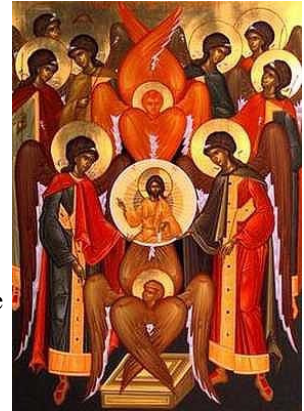
by Very Rev. Fr. Timothy Bakakos

“What is the difference between *saints* and *angels*? And how does our Orthodox Church look at angels in relation to us?

The question of our interaction with saints is something that we are all probably pretty familiar with. From an early age, we hear stories and are given examples of holy men and women who have lived pious and saintly lives, and upon their death, our Holy Orthodox Church declares them *blessed* and *holy*, and canonizes them as *saints*, and are united with God in Heaven.

In the Holy Scriptures (the Bible), the word *saint* is used to refer to those who have been set apart (selected) for the service of God, and consecrated for His purposes. As such, all members of the Church are called, regardless of their personal holiness or sinfulness. Yes, that includes you and me!

Saints are **not** thought of as perfect or infallible, and it is only because of their work of Christ in them that the Church praises these people and bestows the term “sainthood” upon them. We are most familiar with saints because we generally are given the name of a saint at the time of our baptism. And from that time forward, we are called to look upon that Saint, in whose name we have been baptized, as our *Patron Saint*.



Angels, however, are different. They are in a category that our Orthodox Church classifies them as *spiritual beings*. They are **not** physical beings in the same way as we look at saints. Saint John of Damascus puts it this way, "**God is Himself the Maker and Creator of the angels; for He brought them out of nothing into being and created them after His own image. They are an incorporeal race, a sort of spirit or immaterial fire, even as the divine David says that ' His angels are spirits, and His ministers a flame of fire'.**"

Angels go back as far as even before the world was created. Angels were among the first part of God's creation, even before He created man. And it was the angels who assisted God in many events that we know: In the time of the New Testament, an angel informed Zachariah of the conception of the Forerunner and the Virgin Mary the Theotokos of the birth of Jesus. It was angels who announced the good news to the shepherds at the birth of Jesus and prevented the Magi from returning to Herod. Angels served Jesus after His temptation in the wilderness and appeared to strengthen Him in the Garden of Gethsemane. It was angels who informed the Myrrhbearing Women about His Resurrection. Angels also informed the Apostles of His second coming as the time of His Ascension into Heaven. Angels repeatedly helped the Apostles throughout their ministry. They also freed Peter from prison and instructed Cornelius. And angels also told Saint Paul to appear before Caesar. Angels are the foundation of the revelations given by John in his Book of the Revelation.

Angels are active spirits with intelligence, will and knowledge. They serve God to carry out His will and glorify Him. The angels are bodiless and invisible to our physical eyes. They have no bodily needs or desires and passions, no cares about food, drink, clothes or shelter, nor do they possess the impulse and cravings for procreation. They neither marry nor are given in marriage. They have no worries about the future, and no fear of death. And, even though God created them *before* man, they are neither aged nor aging, but rather eternally youthful, beautiful and strong. They have no anxiety about their salvation and no struggle for immortality, being already immortal. And unlike men, they are not faltering between good and evil, being already good and holy as when God created them. However, please know....not all angels are holy. Some angels chose to follow Satan instead of God. These bad angels, called demons, seek to destroy us and for this reason we ask for the help of God's angels in spiritual battle against the powers of evil.

Finally, let me give you some final information about the *Order of Angels*. The Tradition of the Orthodox Church teaches us that there is a Heavenly Hierarchy of angels. The angelic world is divided into nine ranks made up of three hierarchies with three ranks each.

1. Thrones, Cherubims, and Seraphim - those closest to God.

The ***Seraphim*** (means flaming) are aflame with love for God and kindle others to such love. They are closest to God.

After the Seraphim, are the many-eyed ***Cherubim*** (means Great understanding) who are radiant with the knowledge of the mysteries of God and the depths of His Wisdom. Through the cherubim wisdom is sent down to others and spiritual enlightenment is given to see God and gain knowledge of Him.

- Next are the **Thrones**. On them God intellectually resides. Residing on them God makes His righteous judgment, according to the word of David: "***Thou hast sat upon a throne, O Thou that judges righteousness.***" (Ps 9:4). They serve His justice, glorifying it and pouring out the power of justice onto the thrones of earthly judges, helping kings and masters to bring forthright judgment.

2. Dominions Virtues and Powers

- The **Dominions** dominate the rest of the angels. They send down power for good and honest governing and wise management to authorities on the earth set up by God. Further, they teach how to control the senses, how to control our desires and passions, how to enslave the flesh to the spirit, and how to rule over one's will and be above all temptations.
- The **Virtues (Authorities)** work miracles and send down the grace of miracle-working to those worthy of such grace so they may work miracles. They help people laboring and those overburdened by troubles, and they bear the infirmities of the weak. They also strengthen every man in patience.
- The **Powers** have power over the devil, to restrain the demons, to repulse the temptations brought upon people by them. They help those wrestling with passions and vices to cast out evil thoughts.

3. Angels, Archangels, and Principalities - those closest to Man

- The **Principalities** direct the lower angels. They are entrusted with the management of the universe and the keeping of all the kingdoms and principdoms, of lands, and all peoples, races and nations. They raise worthy people to various honorable offices and direct them so that they take power for the sake of spreading God's holy glory, and for the sake of the benefit of their neighbors.
- The **Archangels** are the heralds of good news. They reveal prophecies, knowledge, and understanding of God's will which they receive from the higher orders of angels and announce to the lower order. They strengthen the people in faith, enlightening their mind with the light of knowledge of the Holy Gospel, and revealing the mysteries of devout faith.
- The **Angels** are the lowest of all the orders and the closest to man. They announce the lesser mysteries and intentions of God and teach people to live virtuously and righteously before God. They are appointed to guard each of us who believe.

All of the heavenly orders listed above are usually lumped into one category and referred to as "angels". Although they have different names according to their situation and grace given by God (such as seraphim, cherubim, thrones and the rest of the orders), they are all generally referred to as angels.

A few angels are given specific names, such as Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael. And it is a fact that the Orthodox Church does believe in the existence of ***Guardian Angels***, and we are assigned one at our birth. While all of the heavenly angels are holy, only three have been called "saint": Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael.† The early Church venerated these angels—gave them honor, invoked their names, and asked for their intercession. Over time and in practice, the three have become recognized as "saints."

My dear young people, as we faithfully live and grow through the Orthodox way of life, we draw closer to God when we follow the examples of both the saints and angels. It is a great gift of the mercy and love of God for us that we, who are sinful, impure, fallible, and weak, are allowed to be His servants, as are the angels. Jesus calls upon us to use the stories and lives of both the saints and angels to better show us the road to happiness and eternal life with God. It is a great gift of the mercy and love of God for us that our Lord Jesus Christ became Incarnate – for He identified Himself completely with us by sharing fully in our human nature. He reserved that gift for us. He did not do this for the angels!



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SUMMER HOURS
MATINS — 8:00 AM
DIVINE LITURGY—9:30 AM

We're on the web!
www.assumptionchicago.org

The St. Catherine's Newsletter was created in 2007 by a Sunday School student. It serves to inform, educate, and entertain the children of the Assumption Greek Orthodox Church community. All are welcome and encouraged to contribute to the newsletter. If you are interested in writing an article, sending in a self written piece of work, or just for more information... PLEASE CONTACT: Very Rev. Fr. Timothy Bakakas — FrTimothy@assumptionchicago.org or Dr. Evie Maggos — demags@aol.com



MAIL TO:

Spotlight on Sunday Church School



Above: At the Lenten Retreat children learned about the Beatitudes. Below left, Christen Massouras receives an award from His Eminence Metropolitan Iakovos for her Oratorical Festival essay which won 2nd place. Below right, children delighted the parish with a Mother's Day presentation at the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy.

