

Bishop Marcus Miller

Homily for 9/29/2002 Lutheran/Catholic Covenant Celebration Walsh University

When I was a boy I was taught a prayer by my parents that we said in the morning and the evening that ended with the words “Let thy holy angels have charge of us, that the wicked foe have no power over us.”

As a boy and as a teenager, I didn’t pay much attention to those words. In fact, I didn’t think much about angels at all. Sept 29 is the day the church commemorates the ministry of Michael and all angels, and it is good for us to ponder the ministry of angels as we conclude a wonderful day and go back to our homes and to our parishes and congregations and then carry on the work that has begun here.

“Let your holy angels have charge of us, that the wicked one have no power over us,” took on new meaning for me when I became a pastor and had responsibility with people for their lives of faith. More than once, people would leave my office and I would pray to myself those words, “Let your holy angels have charge of them, that the wicked foe have no power over them.” When I became a dad, and had responsibility for children, I prayed more than I ever imagined that I would pray as a teenager, “Let you holy angels have charge over them, that the wicked foe have no power over them.” And on this day that we commemorate and remember the ministry of angels, and that order of God’s creation we call the angels, we think about how it is that we and our parishes and congregations assemble with God’s people and join each week with the angels and archangels and the whole company of heaven, and sing, “Holy, holy, holy lord, God of power and might.”

The vocation of the angels is to praise God, and as a mirror of this order of creation in which we live, as human beings, our vocation likewise is to praise God. In Hebrew literature, there are four angels who stand, one at each side of God’s throne. Aerial brings the light of knowledge of God to people, Gabriel is the chief ambassador of God to humanity, Michael is the prince of the heavenly host, Raphael is the chief guardian angel. If you think about that, their vocations are a description of the Christian life. Praising God constantly. Seeking to announce God’s good news to any who will hear it and receive it. Seeking the protection of the weakest and the most vulnerable. Caring for the kingdom of God and the world and illuminating peoples’ lives with the truth of the gospel. That is the angels’ task, and that is ours, too, to which we have been called, and in which we are baptized in Christ.

It is a wonderful text that was read [today], from Luke 10. Those disciples sent off by Jesus in pairs, frightened at first to return, unbelieving at what they saw happen.



“Even the demons paid attention to us,” they said to Jesus. They were ecstatic over what they had done. And then Jesus’ words to them were clear: “Don’t rejoice in that, rejoice that your names are written in heaven.”

We could be ecstatic, and we ought to be ecstatic about what took place here today. This would not have been dreamed of by our parents or grandparents. We experienced something that brings joy to our hearts. I want to brag about this to my



colleagues at the Conference of Bishops next week, and I will, believe me. But how important it is for us to hear those words of Jesus, “Don’t rejoice even in this, rejoice that your names are written in heaven.” And everything we do, in all of our callings in life, we are called back always to the cross, and to the empty tomb....to the Christ in whom we are baptized, and whose life is ours by our baptism.

And so, we rejoice.

We rejoice in what we experienced today. We rejoice in friendships that have been renewed, and in new friendships that have been made. We rejoice in new courses of action that have been carved. And this evening as we assemble before we leave, we rejoice always mostly that our names are written in heaven. And that we will, one day, be neighbors in heaven with each other. Amen.