

Three (plus one?) Archangels

Reflection by Fr. Peter Schuessler, SDS

Some people find it hard to believe in angels while others believe in them with all their heart. There are many kinds of angels. In this case, the Archangels are mentioned in most faith traditions: Jewish, Christian, and Muslim as well as other religious families, and each angel usually represents some aspect of God. In the Roman Catholic tradition, there are three Archangels: Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael, whose feast day is celebrated on September 29th. In addition, there is another angel who is often regarded with similar importance, so let's consider what all four can teach us.



Let us begin with the **Archangel Michael**. He is probably the most popular of all angels, considered chief among Archangels and a “Warrior of God,” who serves as the protector of the oppressed. Michael reminds us to strengthen our prayer life and to deepen our relationship with God by keeping our eyes open for situations of injustice where others are being treated unfairly or not respected for their human dignity. Like Michael, may we be “warriors” for the cause of peace and justice in our world today.

The **Archangel Gabriel** is also a well-known figure in the Bible. This angel’s special mission was to reveal God’s will to humankind. Gabriel is often depicted with a lily for purity or with a trumpet as a call to awake and listen to divine guidance. All of Gabriel’s announcements from God contain the message to not be afraid and to trust in God’s will. Thus, Gabriel invites us to listen for the many ways God speaks to us and to trust in carrying out whatever God asks us to do in our lives for the sake of the Kingdom.

The **Archangel Raphael** plays a prominent role in the Old Testament book of Tobit. He is a powerful healer and guide known as “God Heals.” Raphael reminds us that there are many ways our brothers and sisters can be ill, whether that be in body, mind, or in the spirit. We are called to do our best to accompany them, and to offer whatever we may have to help them in their struggle to be well.

Finally, I would like to briefly mention a mostly unknown Archangel, but one who has a place in Judeo-Christian church. The **Archangel Uriel** is one of the four angels who stands at God’s throne. He is attributed with the power of light, the “Fire of God” who illuminates darkness. Uriel reminds us to always live in the light of God’s love. Like him, may we all strive to reveal God’s glory shining throughout creation.

God Bless,

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Fr. Peter has served as USA Provincial, Vicar Provincial and Formation Director. Currently he is semi-retired, continuing spiritual direction and serving in various capacities. Additionally, he has been invited to Rome to be part of a special commission exploring the identity and mission of the Salvatorians.