



DIOCESE OF THE MISSOURI VALLEY TRADITIONAL ANGLICAN CHURCH

Anglican Church in America

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Beloved in Christ,

It is once more the time to make our final preparations for the celebration of Our Lord's Nativity according to the flesh. All kinds of special decorations may be part of this celebration: Advent wreaths, Christmas wreaths, Christmas trees, Nativity scenes, various depictions of angels, and many others. And all of these can be used as a way to focus our attention on the work of Jesus to remake the world and to remake us in particular. The language of the well-known hymn helps us to focus on one aspect of this:

*Joy to the world, the Lord is come!
Let earth receive her King;
Let every heart prepare Him room
And heaven and nature sing
And heaven and nature sing
And heaven, and heaven, and nature sing*

*Joy to the world, the Savior reigns!
Let men their songs employ;
While fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains
Repeat the sounding joy
Repeat the sounding joy
Repeat, repeat, the sounding joy*

*No more let sins and sorrows grow
Nor thorns infest the ground;
He comes to make His blessings flow
Far as the curse is found
Far as the curse is found
Far as, far as, the curse is found*

*He rules the world with truth and grace
And makes the nations prove
The glories of His righteousness
And wonders of His love
And wonders of His love
And wonders, wonders, of His love*

Connected to this, I want to focus our attention on the role of the angels and the theme of the joining of heaven and earth. The angels who appeared to the shepherds in the fields near Bethlehem show the union between

heaven and earth and the resetting of Creation. We have probably all heard, in great detail, about the so-called “Great Reset” that the globalist oligarchs are demanding and implementing. Christians know that their designs are wicked, a path to misery and tyranny. The creation of a “new humanity,” with the use of “artificial intelligence,” the implementation of “transhumanism,” is sheer idolatry led by demons. The demands are what the demons have always desired and worked to produce: the destruction of the family, the destruction of children and childhood innocence, the dissolution of holy matrimony, the corruption of friendship, the elimination of all aspects of godly culture, all moral standards which flow from the heart of God out into His Creation, fallen though it is. But we can rejoice that this blueprint for the destruction, corruption, spoiling of all goodness and beauty and truth *cannot win* in the end. God will not allow the gates of hell to be victorious (Matt. 16:18). The degradation of all that is true, all that is real and in accord with our true nature as given by God, will not succeed in putting out the Light. All the wondrous reflections of God’s Own life as the Holy Trinity, reflected in and refracted through the lives of His saints, will triumph.

Just as the demons lead the cacophony of ugliness and degradation which is attempting to eradicate all vestiges of goodness among us, so God sends His holy angels to guide and protect us and to act as temporary overseers of the Creation until we take their places as nurturers of the New Creation. The role of the angels is especially prominent at the beginning of the Gospel narratives.

The angel Gabriel appears to Mary to call her to virginal Motherhood, made full of Life Himself by the Word of God, the Holy Spirit “overshadowing” her (with the same word used to describe the Glory Cloud over the top of the Ark of the Covenant in the Most Holy Place), and her willing acceptance of this calling. An angel appears to Joseph to tell him to take Mary as his wife, and Joseph obeys. It is again by angelic activity that Joseph is warned to flee from Israel to escape from Herod. Later they told him to go home. In the meanwhile the angel Gabriel also appears to Zechariah to announce the conception of John. It is by angelic testimony that the shepherds hear of the birth of the divine Messiah. The entire host, the vast army of angelic forces (Ps. 103:20-21; 148:2 for example), filled the sky like the uncountable stars of the sky that they oversee. So the first Christmas song was heard.

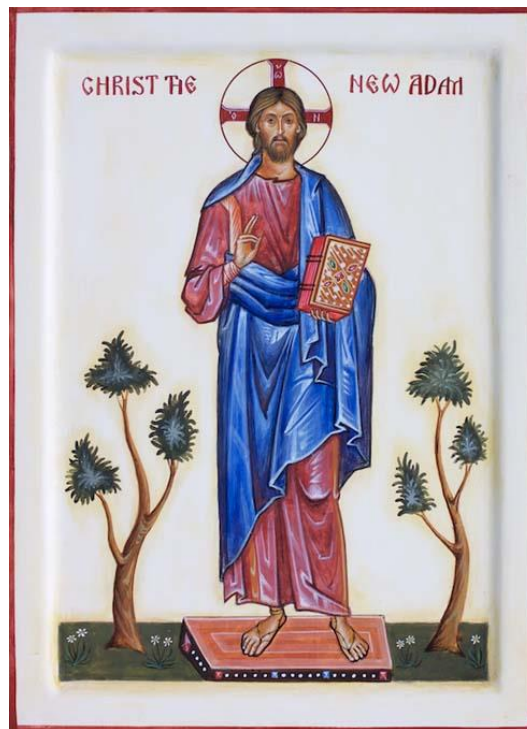
The message of the angels is part and parcel of God’s whole message of the Nativity of God Himself as Man. For angels live in heaven, in the Presence of Yahweh. They surround Him as His armies in the same way a king is surrounded courtiers, retainers, and troops. Angels attend Him constantly. They adore Him in the same way the priests and Levites were continuously in the Temple praising God. These angels are always ready to do whatever He commands. When angels appear, they come on a heavenly mission to do God’s work and will.



When angels appear at Jesus' birth, they come to bring heaven to earth. As they sing, "Glory to God in the Highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men," the song of heaven is manifested to earth in order to fill the earth and transform it. Jesus *is* the revealing of heaven. God become flesh, so it is fitting that *as* God He should be surrounded by the same angelic hosts which have always attended Him. This is, however, in one way *unprecedented*. Notice this: that absolutely nowhere else in Scripture do angelic choirs sing on earth. Heaven breaks into earth in a radical new way, as the New and Living Way Himself makes His appearance. This startling, unexpected, new event is designed to startle us into praise. It is intended to enlist us to join the chorus of this same angelic hymn as we gather around the Lord, Who is on His altar for us.

Throughout his Gospel, Matthew refers to "heaven" and "earth" (6:10; 16:19; 18:18-19; 28:2), sometimes using the phrase "heaven and earth" (5:18; 11:25; 28:18). Matthew emphasizes that Jesus restores proper order within the creation. Ultimately, the phrase "heaven and earth" goes back to Genesis 1:1 and 2:1-4. Because of Adam's sin, heaven and earth are out of sync, estranged, in a state of war. Earth turns away from heaven and defies the God of heaven. There's no longer harmony between the different parts of creation. Creation is corrupted by sin and death and influenced by demons. The dissonance that was introduced between heaven and earth disrupted the music of the spheres. The pulse of the creation went wrong, a kind of systemic sickness, as a terminal arrhythmia set in. However we want to express it, the creation's inherent goodness was spoiled, broken, out of sync with God, Who holds it in existence.

But God tears open the heavens and comes down. Jesus, the original blueprint for man, now also the Second and Last Adam, comes to make an outpost of heaven on earth. Heaven comes down so earth will be brought back into harmony with heaven, back to heavenly order. In and through God Incarnate, God's will is going to be done on earth as in heaven. Jesus is given all authority in heaven and on earth. In His name and by His authority, the sin that the Church binds on earth will be bound forever and what the Church opens will be set loose, made free from sin and so able to become complete, full, and genuine.



So all the dissonance, all the alienation, all the disjunction between heaven and earth changes at Christmas. Jesus brings heaven to earth, bringing the heavenly hosts with Him. He fills the earth with heaven's music and fills us with that music, too, to sing His praises in one delicious, harmonious movement of Life.

At the root of this, and the breaking in of the New Creation in Christ, is the maxim of St. Irenaeus: “He became what we are so that we might become what He is.” Or as St. Athanasius said: “He became man so that we might become god.” That doesn’t mean, of course, that we get turned into the uncreated, almighty God. Instead it’s echoing the language of Psalm 82 and saying that by grace, by God’s Presence and work, we are made like God the Son and conformed to His image. He is divine by nature, yet by grace we are made “partakers of the divine nature” (2 Pet. 1:4). That was, after all, God’s Plan all along. So the appearance of Christ to destroy the works of the devil (1 Jn. 3:8) means that He comes to restore harmony between earth and heaven by the elevation of man. Man is, for a little while, lower than the angels (Ps. 8:5; Heb. 2:7-9). But our role as stewards of the new creation will break out soon enough. With the coming of God in human flesh, the work of angels is nearly done. They appear in large numbers at the birth of Jesus because this is the time when they turn their authority over to the Son. One by one, the angels of Christmas throw those crowns down before the Lamb. As they cast their crowns before the incarnate Son, they cast them before *us*, so we can take our place beside the enthroned Son of David. And so all heaven and nature sing. Heaven and nature, made whole and right again, made fully *real* again, come into true harmony. The dissonance will evaporate. The covenant blessings will push out the curses of sin and death finally and forever. The full manifestation of God’s victory is inevitable.

No matter how the nations rage and the rulers take council together against the Lord and His Christ (Ps. 2), they will lose. All of creation will erupt with the songs of love and praise, and the song of men and angels will fill all things with beauty- the life of Jesus put into us in a way that is unimpeded, forever unfolding, always new and fresh. Life which is drawn ever more deeply and completely into God’s infinite truth, beauty and wonder lies before us.

This Nativity, as you again meditate on the sacred Mystery of Our Lord’s Incarnation, may you be richly blessed and drawn always further into His love and may your mouth be filled with His praise, the wonders of His love.

Yours in Christ our God,

+ *Patrick*