

Grace Notes in Miniature

Friday, November 6th, 2020

Dear Friends:

The month of November, ending the Church year as it does, can seem to add to the gloom of what can be a grey season. We watch the trees become stripped of their coloured finery and the earth starts to look dull and sad. Traditionally, this month has been observed as the time to pray for the Holy Souls in Purgatory. And so we

pray warmly: Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord; And let perpetual light shine upon them. May they rest in peace. Amen. O Lord, who art ever merciful and bounteous with Thy gifts, look down upon the suffering souls in purgatory. Remember not their offenses and negligences, but be mindful of Thy loving mercy, which is from all eternity. Cleanse them of their sins and fulfill their ardent desires that they may be made worthy to behold Thee face to face in Thy glory. May they soon be united with Thee and hear those blessed words which will call them to their heavenly home: "Come, blessed of My Father, take possession of the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

It has always intrigued me that some of the most beautiful music composed has been requiem Masses. In the movie Amadeus we saw Mozart composing a requiem for his father as he, himself, was dying. Here is a portion of Gabriel Fauré's Requiem op 48 VII. In Paradisum: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6-i1ESIRKdA> "In paradisum" are the opening Latin words of the song of farewell often sung at the end of a funeral Mass:

"May the angels lead you into paradise; may the martyrs receive you at your arrival and lead you to the holy city Jerusalem. May choirs of angels receive you and with Lazarus, once (a) poor (man), may you have eternal rest." The belief in entrusting the person who has died to the care of angels has translated over the centuries into the depiction of angels on grave markers and memorials. Section 330 of the Catechism of the Catholic Church tells us that angels are entirely spiritual beings, having no form so sculptors turned to scripture for clues on how to depict them. The winged faces that adorn many headstones of the late 1700's and early 1800's were meant to represent the immortal souls of the deceased. Carvers used a generic face and sometimes added features to resemble the



deceased. Then the Victorian cherub face replaced the soul, as a symbol of innocence and immortality. Cherubs appear in the Bible's book of Genesis, and are ranked among the highest orders of angels; after Adam and Eve were banished from the garden of Eden, God stationed a cherub holding a flaming sword to guard the entrance. The archangel Michael, considered the defender against evil in spiritual battles, is shown wearing armour and holding a



Daily Prayer to Guardian Angel

Angel of God
My guardian dear
To Whom His love
Commits me here
Ever this day
Be at my side
To light and guard
To rule and guide.
Amen.



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sword. In cemetery art, he often holds an inverted torch (to symbolise the extinguished life) in his right hand and a palm branch in his left- a Christian symbol of eternal life and triumph over death. Gabriel is depicted with a horn to signify the trumpet of Judgment Day. Guardian angels always point towards heaven, and some angels are shown writing the person's good deeds in the Book of Life.

Angels are a part of the spirituality of all three Abrahamic traditions – Judaism, Islam and Christianity – and are a strong part of their stories. In Jewish tradition, seven angels or archangels correspond to days of the week: Michael (Sunday), Gabriel (Monday), Uriel (Tuesday), Raphael (Wednesday), Selaphiel (Thursday), Raguel or Jegudiel (Friday), and Barachiel (Saturday); the first four are commonly known to us as Christians. In Islam, Gabriel (Jibril) revealed God's words to Muhammad and Michael (Mikail) is in charge of the angels who carry the laws of nature. As Catholics we treasure our relationships with our guardian angels; perhaps it is the grandparents (and older teachers) who are teaching our children prayers such as the one printed above which are a strong part of our faith tradition. David Dayler, well-known and loved by many of us here in HCDSB, wrote a book for grandparents, and recognises the gift they have to offer our children in passing on

David Dayler



Four corners
to my bed,
Four angels
round my head,
One to watch
and two to pray,
One to keep
all fear away.

some less-remembered prayers, devotions and traditions of our faith. As a grandmother myself, I find that my children do rely on me a fair bit to be an anchor for their children's faith. Do you remember this one at the left? I also recall nights around the campfire as a Brownie and Girl Guide singing lustily, "All night, all day, angels watchin' over me". Here's a lively – rather more melodic rendition to enjoy:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3CQ7I3XaS1k>

A different table blessing:

Almighty God, our creator, we unite with the choir of angels to sing your praises daily. And today, we give you thanks for giving the angels to us, as messengers of your mysteries and as protectors of our bodies and souls. Grant us to share this meal in peace, joy, and thanksgiving, being always mindful of the unflinching protection of our guardian angels. We ask you this, through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

(*Table Blessings: Mealtimes Prayers Throughout the Year* by Brother Victor-Antoine d'Avila-Latourrette, Ave Maria Press, 1994)

Praying that you may never move (or drive) faster than your guardian angel can fly!

Gillian