

The Patrons of the Legion

6. The Heavenly Powers, Mary's Legion of Angels

(From the Legion of Mary *Handbook*, pages 141-143)

“Regina Angelorum! Queen of the Angels! What enchantment, what a foretaste of heaven it is to think thus of Mary our mother ceaselessly accompanied by legions of angels!” (Pope John XXIII)

“Mary is the general of the armies of God. The angels form the most glorious troops of her who is terrible as an army set in battle array!” (Boudon: The Angels.)

From the first, the angels were invoked in the Legion prayers. The form followed was:

St. Michael, Archangel pray for us.
Our Holy Guardian Angels, pray for us.

In this one must suppose that the Legion was guided, for the closeness of the angels' relation to the Legion was not then so clearly seen. As time went on, the appropriateness of the recourse to the angels became more and more evident. It was realised that the angels are a heavenly counterpart of the legionary campaign. This alliance has different aspects. Every legionary, active and auxiliary, has a guardian angel who fights blow for blow at his side. In a sense that battle means more to the angel than to the legionary, for the angel perceives vividly the issues at stake: God's glory and the value of the immortal soul. So the interest of the angel is most intense, and his support unflinching. But all the other angels are likewise concerned in this warfare. For instance all those for whom the Legion works have their guardian angels who lend their help.

In addition, the entire angelic army hastens to the scene. For our battle is part of the main struggle which from the first they have maintained against Satan and his minions.

An impressive place is assigned to the angels in both the Old and the New Testaments where there are several hundred references to them. They are represented as paralleling the human warfare and as having an intimate protective office in regard to men. They intervene at important junctures. The phrase constantly recurs: “God sent his angel.” All the nine choirs of angels have guardianship of some kind: over individuals, places, cities, countries; over nature; and some even over their fellow-angels. Scripture shows that even heathen kingdoms have their guardian angels. (Dan 4:10, 20, 10:13) The choirs are named as being: Angels, Archangels, Cherubim, Seraphim, Powers, Principalities, Thrones, Virtues and Dominations.

The position is, accordingly, that the angels aid as a body as well as individually, playing a part analogous to that of an airforce in relation to a surface army.

It was finally seen that the existing angelic invocation was not expressive of this universal protective role of the angels. It was decided:

- (a) that it should be recast to a better form;
- (b) that the word "Legion" should be linked with the angels. Our Lord himself had applied it to the angels, hallowing the word by thus taking it on his lips. When menaced by his enemies, he said: "Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels?" (Mt 26:53)
- (c) that the name of Mary should be introduced into the invocation. She is Queen of the Angels. She is truly the Commander of the Angelic Legion and it would be a new grace to our Legion to salute her under that deeply significant title.

Prolonged discussion throughout the Legion resulted in the adoption on 19 August, 1962, of the following form of invocation:

"All ye heavenly Powers, Mary's Legion of Angels, pray for us."

The memorial of the Guardian Angels occurs on 2 October.

There is an association, called the Philangeli, which specialises in spreading knowledge of the angels and devotion to them. Its principal centre is: Philangeli, Hon. General Secretary, Salvatorians, 129 Spencer Road, Harrow Weald, Middlesex HA3 7BJ, England.

"Our Lady's queenship of the angels must not be taken as a term of honour only. Her royal office is a participation in that of Christ and he has absolute universal dominion over creation. Theologians have not yet explained all the modes of Our Lady's joint rule with Christ the King. But it is clear that her royalty is a principle of action and that the effects of this action reach out to the confines of the visible and invisible universe. She rules the good spirits and controls the bad. Through her is made that indissoluble alliance of human and angelic society by which all creation will be led to its true end, the glory of the Trinity. Her queenship is our shield, for our mother and protectress has the power to command angels to help us. For her it means active partnership with her son in the loosening and destruction of satan's empire over men." (Dr. Michael O'Carroll, C.S.Sp.)