

# Angels on High



Oct 2013

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With the New Age popularisation of an ancient Judeo-Christian tradition, it's time to bust some myths about angels...

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***This Month...***

- Tu 1 St Therese of Lisieux
- We 2 Guardian Angels
- Fr 4 St Francis of Assisi
- Su 6 **Ord Time 27  
Faith**
- Mo 7 Our Lady of the Rosary
- Su 13 **Ord Time 28  
Ten Lepers**
- Tu 15 St Teresa of Avila
- Fr 18 St Luke
- Su 20 **Ord Time 29  
Pray Always**
- Th 24 St Anthony Claret
- Su 27 **Ord Time 30  
Needing God**
- Th 31 Halloween

Over the last two decades, Angels have become very popular in New Age spirituality. With TV shows like *Supernatural*, and films like *Constantine* and *Legion*, as well as numerous books, the secular world seems very much enamoured with angels and their not-so-nice counter parts, demons.



**The word ‘Angel’ is from the Greek, “aggelos,” and means “messenger”**

Authors: Kiara and Francine Pirola

*Print version*

What is a Catholic to make of all this? What exactly are angels? Do they really exist and how do they work in the world? We thought we'd put to bed some common myths about angels, archangels, guardian angels and share some interesting stories from people who have had real, tangible experiences with their Guardian Angel.

## From the Catechism

**“As purely spiritual creatures angels have intelligence and will: they are personal and immortal creatures, surpassing in perfection all visible creatures, as the splendor of their glory bears witness” (CCC, 330; Dan 10:9-12)**



*Print version*

# What are Angels and where do they come from?

Tradition tells us that God's creative outpouring in creation not only fashioned the physical world with its physical beings, but also created beings that were pure spirit. Called 'angels' these beings do not have a physical body or gender and exist outside of space and time. They are a bridge between the physical world and the spiritual world.

## Myth #1 We become angels in heaven

Whilst this is an oft-repeated myth, our loved ones who pass on do not become angels when they die and go to heaven. They are human souls living in the light and joy of the presence of God in heaven with the angels. These souls in heaven are able to intercede for us and in that way act powerfully here on earth, but they are not angels.

## Myth #2 Angels are cute, chubby, cherubs with wings

Unfortunately, many powerful aspects of Christianity have become 'domesticated' in the 19th and 20th Century, angels among them. They are often portrayed as chubby, winged toddlers or dainty, slim adolescent girls.

If you look to the Old Testament stories, any time someone encountered an angel, they were overwhelmed in terror and awe. Angels are less like cherubs and more like large, brawny, spiritual, secret service agents, or if you want, the winged warriors often depicted in Byzantine Icons. Their role is to protect us from spiritual dangers (and in some instances, physical dangers too).

Angels don't necessarily need wings either. They are spiritual beings and so their nature is what is called in theology 'sublime' meaning they can occupy any part of space and time, and therefore 'fly' between locations.



# Archangels

Orthodox tradition speaks of seven archangels while in Catholic tradition; only three are commonly spoken of.

- 1. Gabriel** is God's herald, announcing good news, such as during his appearance before Mary as a young girl. "*Hail Mary, full of grace! The Lord is with you!*" (Luke 1:28). He also appears to Daniel (Chapters 8 and 9). Pope St. Gregory the Great wrote: "*He [Gabriel] came to announce the One who appeared as a humble man to quell the cosmic powers. Thus God's strength announced the coming of the Lord of the heavenly powers, mighty in battle*" (excerpt from Hom. 34, 8-9).





2. **Michael** is known to be a warrior angel who commands God's army. He is mentioned in the book of Jude (1:9) and in Revelations (12:8) where he is described as fighting a dragon (a symbol of evil). During a visit to the Sanctuary of Saint Michael the Archangel, John Paul II said, *"The battle against the devil . . . is the principal task of Saint Michael the archangel."*

### 3. **Raphael** means “God is my health”.

Raphael features strongly in the book of Tobit where he touches and heals Tobit of blindness and declares his identity:

*“I am Raphael, one of the seven angels who stand ready and enter before the glory of the Lord.”*(Tobit 12:15)

**St. Augustine says: “‘Angel’ is the name of their office, not of their nature. If you seek the name of their nature, it is ‘spirit’; if you seek the name of their office, it is ‘angel’: from what they are, ‘spirit,’ from what they do, ‘angel.’”** With their whole beings the angels are servants and messengers of God. Because they “always behold the face of my Father who is in heaven” they are the “mighty ones who do his word, hearkening to the voice of his word” (CCC 329; Mt 18:10)



Print version



# Guardian Angels

Billions of angels are given the personal charge of looking after their own human child of God. Every moment of our day, our guardian angels stand with us, protecting us and willing our well-being. *“From infancy to death human life is surrounded by their watchful care and intercession.”*

*“Beside each believer stands an angel as protector and shepherd leading him to life.”* Already here on earth the Christian life shares by faith in the blessed company of angels and men united in God.” (CCC, no. 336).



# A story...

It could have been a terrible, even fatal accident. As the horse bolted and veered to the left to avoid the fence post, I involuntarily slid to the right and into the nail studded post. My helmet-clad head cracked on the post as I fell on my knees. I was stunned and bruised but otherwise unhurt. There is no doubt in my mind that my guardian angel saved my life that day, though I did have words with him about intervening five minutes earlier when I made the fateful decision to get on the horse in first place!





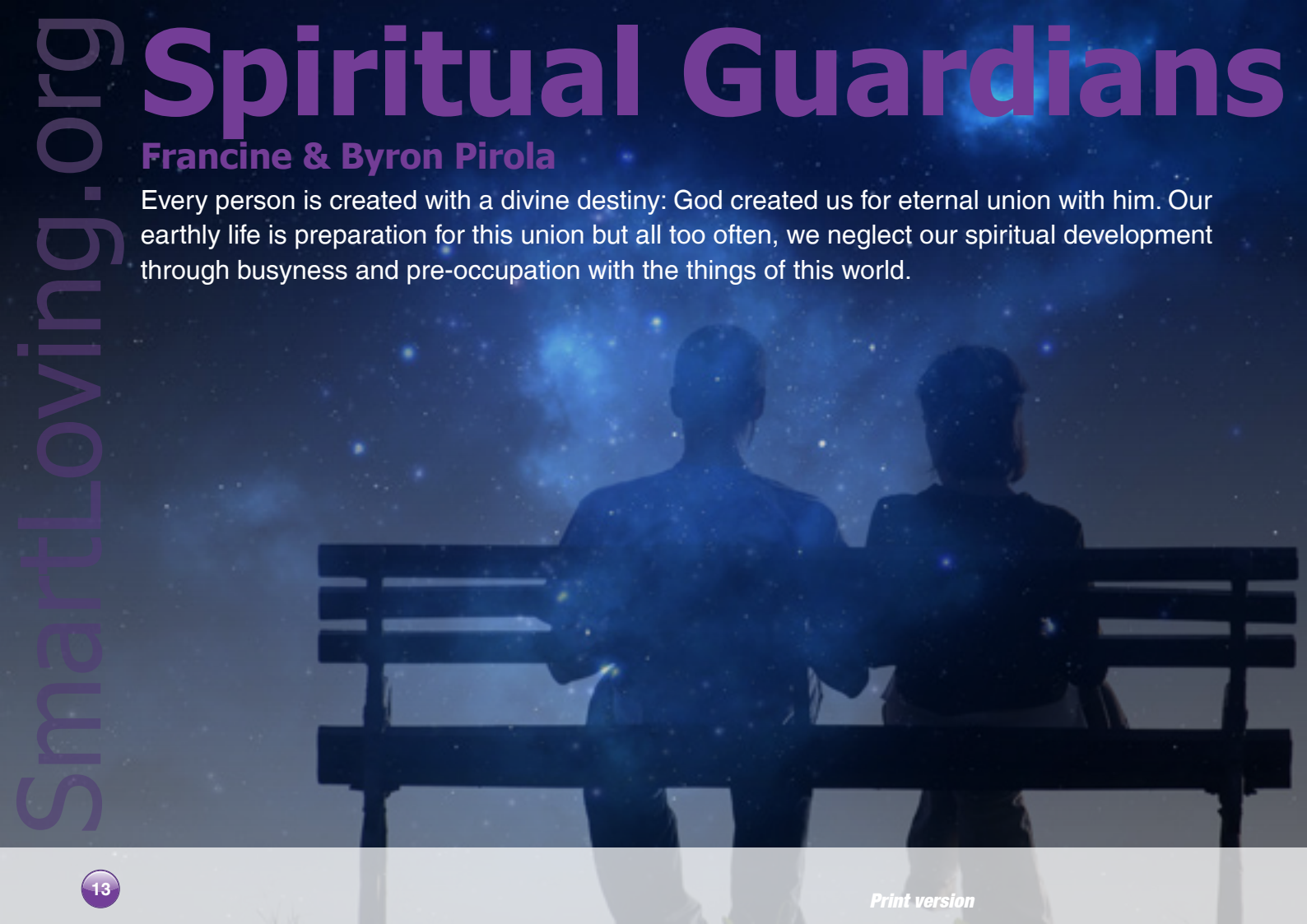
# Fallen Angels

One of the first 'angels' to appear in scriptures is the 'fallen angel', Satan, where he tempts Adam and Eve to disobey God (Gen 3). Also known as Lucifer (which means 'light') tradition holds that he was one of God's good angels, created naturally good by God as were all demons, but who have chosen to become evil through their free and irrevocable rejection of God and his reign. (CCC 391-393)

# Evangelical Angels

Talking to non-believers about Jesus can be daunting. Yet there are many who reject Christianity but are receptive to the notion of angels. Instead of beginning a conversation directly about Jesus, try asking your non-believing friend the question 'Do you believe angels?' Approaching the supernatural from this angle might be just the thing your listener needs to help him or her make the leap of faith a little bit less intimidating.





# Spiritual Guardians

**Francine & Byron Pirola**

Every person is created with a divine destiny: God created us for eternal union with him. Our earthly life is preparation for this union but all too often, we neglect our spiritual development through busyness and pre-occupation with the things of this world.

**Sarah was on a mission. Her husband had become ambivalent about attending Church and praying in the home. She felt increasingly anxious about the impact of his actions on their children, who often complained “why do we have to go to Mass if Dad doesn’t?” She felt resentful and abandoned in the task of raising their children in faith and her criticism and nagging intensified even as he became more obstinate in his resistance. In her haste to reform her husband, she didn’t realise that she was neglecting her own spiritual life.**

Some Christians fret and worry about their spouse’s lack of faith. In vain they try to nag, cajole and coax their spouse to attend church more often, pray more fervently, worship more piously and... be more like them! And usually, the harder they try, the more their spouse resists. Their lack of peace and presence causes their spouse to reject their project of reform.



*Print version*



The truth is, we cannot give that which we do not have, so our first responsibility is to develop our own spiritual life and to grow in virtue. This growth increases our capacity for love, making us a better spouse and connecting us with God's peace. It also allows our spouse the freedom to find their own expression of faith while encouraging them through our example, which becomes a point of attraction rather than an issue of obligation or guilt. Only then do they become true 'spiritual guardians' rather than 'spiritual dictators'.

- 1. On a scale of 0 (dead on arrival) to 10 (maxed out), how would you rate your spiritual health:**
  - a. Peace/serenity**
  - b. Prayer and devotion**
  - c. Growth in virtue**
  - d. Love for others**
  - e. Spiritual learning/education**
  - f. Right priorities**
- 2. Identify one growth area on which to focus and set yourself a spiritual goal for the coming week.**

## Angel Wings

With the end of the year approaching, including Halloween and Christmas we have developed a simple method of making very effective angel wings that you can make from things lying around the house which even the smallest child can get involved with.

## Angel Prayers

Angels are effective intercessors for us like the saints in heaven. Get spiritually in touch with the Archangels and guardian angels with these beautiful prayer cards.

## Baked Angel Food Cake

The perfect recipe for celebrating our angelic protectors! Check out our pinterest board for recipes and inspiration.

