

# Entertaining Angels



## LESSON 3: The Angels and Prophecy

### Suggested Responses

1. Fear is often a great motivator. A healthy fear of the angels' power would make the prophets want never to disappoint such a creature. It is also a reminder of the infinitely greater power of God, who created the angels and the entire human race. The intimidating presence of the angels puts matters in perspective. The "fear of the Lord" should be primary. Compared to the Lord's power, all earthly opponents and all the powers of hell are like nothing.
2. In Zechariah, the angels appear as "the word of the Lord" (1:1,7), an authoritative and reliable message from God, far greater than the patriarchs and prophets. The messengers arrive on horseback (1:8), signifying their swiftness. They "patrol" the earth, like guardians (1:10-11). They are intercessors, raising their voices to God in prayer for the world (1:12). They are consolers, bearing a message of hope and comfort from God himself (1:13-17). They are also like doctors, who show God's people the root causes of their current problems (1:18-21). Through Zechariah's oracles, God reveals that his holy angels are serving mankind in many ways. Thus, God reassures his people, letting us know that we are never alone and never powerless. The angels are communicating God's word to us, watching out for us, interceding for us, consoling us, and showing us the way to healing.
3. In the ancient Liturgy of St. James, the priest says: "The Lord will bless us, and make us worthy with the pure touchings of our fingers to take the live coal, and place it upon the mouths of the faithful for the purification and renewal of their souls and bodies, now and always. Then, O taste and see that the Lord is good!" When we receive Holy Communion with the proper dispositions (in the state of grace, with no unforgiven mortal sins), the sacrament cleanses us of all our venial sins and strengthens us for our own mission in the world. Like many of the Church Fathers, St. Ephrem (fourth century) emphasizes that we have been given a gift greater than the gifts given to the prophets: "The seraph did not bring the living coal near with his fingers. It only came close to Isaiah's mouth; he did not take hold of it or eat it.

But the Lord has given it to us both to hold and to eat.” This should inspire us to great gratitude, repentance of any sin, and a firm purpose of amendment in our life as we prepare for Holy Communion.

4. As we have seen in our other lessons, angels are pure spirits and heaven is a spiritual realm. These heavenly realities cannot be described accurately in human language, which was developed to describe the things of earthly, human experience. God can reveal the divine to us. But, because of our limitations, it is a labor-intensive process.
5. Ever since the fall, we live in fear of the unknown. And, ever since the fall, the spiritual realm is foreign and strange to us. We fear great power because we know it by its earthly corruptions. We are, moreover, intimidated by goodness and holiness, as we are sinners. Angels frighten us because they surpass our knowledge and defy our imagination; they possess tremendous, superhuman power; and they have virtues of purity that we most certainly lack.
6. God has made spiritual beings, both angels and humans, so that they may love one another and love God in one another. In this expansive loving, they are most like God, in whose image they have been created. “And his gifts were that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ” (Ephesians 4:11-12). God reveals himself to us through the life of his Church, which is both heavenly and earthly, including both angels and saints.