

There are many books by leading Orthodox theologians and scholars on all aspects of the Orthodox Church and this leaflet series provides some basic information in the hope that it might prompt further enquiry.

LEAFLETS IN THIS INTRODUCTION TO ORTHODOX CHRISTIANITY SERIES:

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All text in these leaflets is mine except where indicated, therefore any errors of fact or in grammar are mine. I should be grateful to have those errors pointed out so that corrections can be made.

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The Orthodox Church.....has preserved unadulterated the first and most ancient ecclesiastical tradition and teaching, has avoided innovations and personal interpretations of the Holy Scriptures and dogmas of the faith, and is administered according to the ancient synodical system under local bishops in collaboration with the faithful and successive groups of both local and broader episcopal synods, of which the highest is the Ecumenical Synod, that of the Orthodox worldwide. The basic administrative canons, the details of which are regulated according to local needs, have been determined by the seven ecumenical synods. The Church is not managed by regional states in which it resides, although it collaborates in good works when asked to do so.

Within the entire Orthodox Church there is absolute cooperation in goodwill and mutual respect. Perchance minor human problems are addressed successfully through the application of the evangelical spirit."

*Bartholomew, Patriarch of Constantinople, from
"Encountering the Mysytery."*

Orthodox Community of Archangel Michael
and Holy Piran, Cornwall.
www.orthodoxincornwall.org.uk

In the Archdiocese of Thyateira and Great Britain.
Exarchate of Western Europe and Ireland.
www.thyateira.org.uk

Ecumenical Patriarchate.
Οἰκουμενικὸν Πατριαρχεῖον.
www.ec-patr.org



Agia Sophia (Holy Wisdom) Constantinople.

Fr.N.05.24

Introduction to Orthodox Christianity: The Holy Angels.



O supreme leader of the heavenly hosts, although we are unworthy, we continually implore you to shelter us through your prayers under the shadow of the wings of your ethereal glory. Guard us who fall down and cry insistently. "O Holy Archangel Michael, deliver us from dangers, for you are the commander of the powers above."

Apoyitikion of Archangel Michael.



Icon of the Synaxis of the Angels –
8th October Feast.

The “Celestial Hierarchy” are recognised as nine:

The six-winged Seraphim.
The many-eyed Cherubim.
Thrones.
Dominions.
Virtues.
Powers.
Principalities.
Archangels.
Angels.

Angel comes from the Greek ἄγγελος (angelos), meaning ‘a messenger’ although our understanding and knowledge of angels shows them to be more than this.

From creation in the Old Testament book of Genesis, to the consummation in the New Testament book of the Revelation or Apocalypse, angels appear and play significant roles in God’s work.

Angels feature throughout our Orthodox life and from the Liturgy of Holy Baptism we find a text which emphasises a direct relationship and connection between an individual and a *radiant angel*:

Attach to their life a radiant Angel who will protect them from every plot of the enemy, from every adverse encounter, from the demon of the noon-day and from evil visions.

And later, from the prayers at the Blessing of the Baptismal Water:

The angelic powers minister unto you; the choirs of Archangels worship you; the many-eyed Cherubim and the six-winged Seraphim, as they stand round you and fly about you, cover their faces before your unapproachable glory.

(See Isaiah chapter 6)

Among the many references in the Holy Scriptures to the appearance of Angels, three most notable are Archangel Gabriel at the Annunciation to the Most Holy Theotokos the Blessed Virgin Mary, that she was to be the mother of Jesus the Christ and Incarnate God (Luke 1:26-39), the choir of Angels singing at his birth (Luke 2:8-10) and the Angel(s) at the empty tomb of the Crucified and Risen Christ. (Mark 16; Luke 24; John 20).

In these and other instances, whilst the Holy Angels have an incorporeal nature (ministering spirits), they can also be visible.

In the Holy Liturgies of the Church we will find the petition:

An angel of peace, a faithful guide, a guardian of our souls and bodies, let us ask of the Lord. Grant this, O Lord.

In the Divine Liturgy at the Entrance with the Book of the Holy Gospels:

Master, Lord our God, you have set orders and armies of Angels and Archangels in heaven to minister to your glory; grant that, with our entrance, holy Angels may enter, concelebrating with us, and with us glorifying your goodness. For to you belong all glory, honour and worship, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, now and for ever, and to the ages of ages.

In addition to other places of mention we find in the Dismissal: **“.....through the protection of the honoured, Bodiless Powers of heaven.....”**

So these bodiless powers created by God are constantly with us – individuals and when we are together in worship:

We thank you also for this liturgy which you have been pleased to accept from our hands, though there stand around you thousands of archangels and tens of thousands of angels, the Cherubim and the Seraphim, six-winged and many-eyed, soaring aloft upon their wings, singing, crying, shouting the triumphal hymn, and saying: Holy, holy, holy, Lord Sabaoth; heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the Highest.

A concluding word on the holy angels and the fallen angels:

. A particular characteristic of the nature of angels is that they are autonomous, which involves the ability to choose freely between good and evil. The proper use of this ability by the angels gained them sinlessness ‘by grace’, though we know not when because of the lack of information in Scripture. So the angels who displayed obedience to the divine will were rewarded with the crystallization of their will to do good; whereas those who, led astray by egotism, showed disobedience, fell away and became demons.

Saint Gregory Palamas.

