



LIGHT & LIFE

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Fr. Dismas Sayre, O.P., *Director* May-June 2026, Vol 79, No 3 Western Dominican Province

A Well-Ordered Marian Devotion

Every religious order that I know of has some kind of particular Marian devotion, or even some history with Our Lady. The Dominicans, through St. Dominic, famously received her Rosary to preach the Good News, and Bl. Reginald of Orleans had the vision wherein she gave us, the Dominicans, her scapular (the one part of our habit besides the rosary that is blessed). The Order of the Servants of Mary (Servites) have a touching devotion to Our Lady of Sorrows, and a beautiful shrine near us here in Portland, Oregon, dedicated to her. The Congregation of the Passion of Jesus Christ (Passionists) have their loving devotion to Our Lady of Perpetual Help. And of course, the Carmelites and Our Lady of Mt. Carmel and her famous Brown Scapular. This is a healthy rivalry we religious orders have, in loving Our Lord and His Blessed Mother, under her various titles. Of course, we Dominicans are her favorites, and no, I will not be taking questions or comments about that statement (I kid – kind of).



Image: *Francisco Zurburán, Curación Milagrosa del Beato Reginaldo de Orleans (Miraculous Healing of Blessed Reginald of Orleans)*, by Wikimedia Commons, CC-BY SA 4.0 License.

One of the mottoes of the Dominican Order is *Laudare, Benedicere, Prædicare*, meaning “To Praise, To Bless, To Preach.” Okay, but to praise, bless, and preach what exactly? Well, this particular motto echoes the first Eucharistic Preface of Masses of the Blessed Virgin Mary, both now and in the older Rite, which begins:

It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation, always and everywhere to give You thanks, Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God, and to praise, bless, and glorify Your name (on the Solemnity of the Motherhood / on the feast day / on the nativity / in veneration) of the Blessed ever-Virgin Mary.

Yes, we see here a great part of the Dominican charism, which, while preaching the Risen Christ in the flesh, and glorifying His Holy Name, we likewise venerate and honor His Most Holy Mother. The Dominican charism is at once liturgical and devotional, with its spiritual fruit shared through sound and doctrinal holy preaching, using in great part her Rosary to preach that Jesus Christ indeed was born of the Virgin Mary, suffered, died, and rose again, all in the flesh and humanity He received from the Blessed Virgin Mary, all in union and devotion to the Holy See. That’s a lot to take in, but it is for us Dominicans integrally central to who we are and aspire to be.

In many ways, then, our mission is even *more* critical now, with sound doctrinal teaching having lacked throughout the world the last few decades, and Marian devotion having plummeted in certain regions due to terrible misinterpretations of the documents and the intent of the Second Vatican Council fathers with respect to Mary. We Dominicans were not looking for more work, but the Lord of the Harvest has given us a giant bag of seed and told us to go plant, and that’s what we plan to do.

While the harvest is the Lord’s, it is we who labor in the fields of the Lord. But you, my fellow Rosarians, have your own part in your own particular preaching, by word, encouragement, and example. You hold Our Lady’s

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THEOLOGY FOR THE LAITY

The Angels - Baltimore Catechism

By Fr. Dismas Sayre, O.P.

Continuing with the Baltimore Catechism lessons:

36 Q. Were the angels created for any other purpose?

A. The angels were also created to assist before the throne of God and to minister unto Him; they have often been sent as messengers from God to man; and are also appointed our guardians.

The duties of the angels are many. Some remain always in Heaven with God; some are sent to earth to be our guardians and to remain with us. Each of us has an angel to take care of us. He is with us night and day, and offers our prayers and good works to God. He prays for us, exhorts us to do good and avoid evil; and he protects us from dangers spiritual and temporal. How unfortunate then must one be to cause him to return to Heaven with sad complaints to God; such as: "The one whom I have in charge will not obey Thy laws or use the grace Thou sendest him: with all my efforts to save him, he continues to do wrong." He will be doubly sad when he sees other angels returning with good reports and receiving new graces for those whom God has committed to their care. If you love your guardian angel, never impose on him the painful duty of bringing to God the report of your evil doings.

Now, how do we know that the angels offer our prayers and good works to God? We know it from the beautiful story of Tobias, told in the Holy Scripture. (Tobias). This holy man loved and feared God. He lived at a time when his people were persecuted by a most cruel king, who wished to force them to give up the true God and worship idols, but many of these good people suffered death rather than deny God and obey the wicked king. When they were put to death, their bodies were left lying on the ground, to be devoured by birds of prey or wild animals. Anyone caught burying them was to be put to death by the king's servants. Tobias used to carry the dead bodies of these holy martyrs into his house and bury them at night.

One day when he returned very tired he lay down by the wall of his house to rest, and, while lying there, some dirt fell into his eyes and he became blind. This Tobias had a young son whose name was also Tobias; and as he himself was now blind and poor, he wished to send his son into a certain city, at a good distance off, to collect some money that he had formerly loaned to a friend. As the young man did not know the way, his father sent him out to look for a guide. Young Tobias went out and found a beautiful young man to be his guide and he consented, and he brought Tobias to the distant city. As they were on their way they sat down by the bank of a river. Tobias went into the water near the edge, and soon a great fish rushed at him. Tobias called to his guide. The guide told him to take hold of the fish and drag it out upon the shore. There they killed it, and kept part of its flesh for food and

part for medicine. Then they went on to the city, got the money and returned. The guide told young Tobias to rub the part of the fish he had taken for medicine upon his father's eyes. He did so, and immediately his father's eyes were cured and he saw. Then both the father and son were so delighted with this young guide, that they offered to give him half of all they had. He refused to take it and then told them he was the angel Raphael sent from God to be the guide of this good man's son. He told the old Tobias how he (the angel) had carried up to God his prayers and good works while he was burying the dead. When they heard he was an angel they fell down and revered him, being very much afraid. From this beautiful history we know that the angels carry our prayers and good works to God. Again we learn from the Holy Scripture (Gen. 28) in the history of another good man almost the same thing. The patriarch Jacob was on a journey, and being tired, he lay down to rest with his head upon a stone. As he lay there he had a vision in which he saw a great ladder reaching up from earth to Heaven. At the top he saw Almighty God standing, and on the ladder itself angels ascending and descending. Now the holy Fathers of the Church tell us this is what is really taking place; the angels are always going down and up from God to man, though not on a ladder and not visibly as they appeared to Jacob. Besides the guardian angel for each person, there are also guardian angels for each city and for each nation.

Again (Gen. 19) angels appeared to Lot to warn him about the destruction of the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrha. Angels appeared also to the shepherds on the night Our Lord was born (Luke 2). The catechism says angels have no bodies—how, then, could they appear? They took bodies made of some very light substance which would make them visible, and appeared just like beautiful young men, clad in flowing garments, as you frequently see them represented in pictures. Angels were sometimes sent to punish men for their sins, as the angel who killed in one night 185,000 men in the army of the wicked king, Sennacherib, who blasphemed God, and was endeavoring to destroy Jerusalem, God's city. (4 Kgs. 19).

But here is a difficulty. If God Himself watches over us and sees all things, why should the angels guard us? It is on account of God's goodness to us; though it is not necessary. He does not wish us to have any excuse for being bad, so He gives us each a special heavenly servant to watch and assist us by his prayers. If a friend received us into his house and did all he could for us himself, we should certainly be satisfied, but if he gave us a special servant, though it would not be necessary, he would show us great respect and kindness. Moreover whatever the angels do for us, we might say God Himself does, for the angels are only obeying His commands.

The Angelic Host by Name

It is a shame that the liturgical reformers consolidated the three feasts of the different holy Archangels into one, which essentially becomes “St. Michael and His Companions,” since it now falls on the older feast of St. Michael the Archangel, and the only option for a Mass reading that mentions a specific archangel is for St. Michael. St. Michael’s feast fell on September 29th because of the date of the dedication of a renowned church in his honor.

St. Gabriel the Archangel used to fall on the day before the Annunciation (i.e., March 24th), a very fitting day indeed. St. Raphael, whose story is explained above in the Baltimore Catechism, had his own feast day on October 24th, although that was only extended to the universal Church in 1921, so he had a relatively short stay on the calendar, being removed in 1969. “Tobias” is generally now referred to as “Tobit,” so you will see that more so than the older name. St. Raphael was considered by many commentators to be the angel at the healing pool of Bethesda in John 5. In spite of this relative shortchange liturgically, St. Raphael has traditionally been invoked for pilgrims and for the sick.

What’s in a Name?

I’ve seen a fair number of religious goods, especially votive candles, with either the “Archangel Uriel” by himself, or accompanying the other archangels. There are other names sometimes given to other archangels, but these names come from either apocryphal texts (Uriel), or from later Jewish traditions. The Holy See, in the *Directory of Popular Piety and Liturgy*, has decreed that, “The practice of assigning names to the Holy Angels should be discouraged, except in the cases of Gabriel, Raphael and Michael whose names are contained in Holy Scripture” (217). While many saints have encouraged a devotion to our own particular Guardian Angel, they have tended to discourage naming them ourselves, for naming someone means having some kind of authority over them. For example, God, in giving Adam the power to name His creation, shows that He gave him a certain dominion over them. Parents or godparents are also the ones who give the names of their children or godchildren, properly speaking, due to their authority. Mary and Joseph gave the child Jesus His name, but even then, the Holy Name was revealed to them, and gave them a limited authority as His earthly parents.

Sometimes it seems that a guardian angel might “tell” his charge his own name, but even so, that should be discussed with one’s spiritual director or pastor, and would be considered a private revelation, so “for your own use only,” as it were.

The Devil Made Me Do It... or Did He?

Flip Wilson, an iconic African-American comedian, was famous for one of his skit personas, Geraldine Jones, who often blamed her own bad choices on the Devil, who apparently even made her buy a dress, and run her car into the side of a church. Of course, people laughed at such a caricature, but this caricature of a foible that goes all the way back to the Garden of Eden (Gen 3:13). I see no mention of a certain serpent “forcing” Eve to eat the forbidden fruit, just some old-fashioned “sweet talking” (Gen 3:1-5).

In that same statement on devotion to the Holy Angels from the previous decree, the Holy See notes that, “Popular devotion to the Holy Angels, which is legitimate and good,

can, however, also give rise to possible deviations: when, as sometimes can happen, the faithful are taken by the idea that the world is subject to demiurgical struggles, or an incessant battle between good and evil spirits, or Angels and demons, in which man is left at the mercy of superior forces and over which he is helpless; such cosmologies bear little relation to the true Gospel vision of the struggle to overcome the Devil, which requires moral commitment, a fundamental option for the Gospel, humility and prayer.” It evens calls blaming all bad things to the Evil One, or assigning all good things to one’s guardian angel as “childish.”

The best advice is to never put yourself in harm’s way by dealing with the Evil One or his fallen minions. Ignore any bad “advice” you may be seemingly “inspired” to follow, which almost certainly proceeds from our own appetites and tendencies. Does the Devil *really* need to help us fall? Strengthen yourself in your own battle with prayer, humility, and I would add, a regular sacramental life and good spiritual reading. Speaking of which, in several books by saints or learned folks who speak on spiritual combat, there is little to no mention of the fallen angels – it’s mostly on governing our own passions and dealing with sin when confronted with temptation.

We won’t go down the rabbit hole of demonic possession, but Holy Mother Church has always wisely counseled to first and foremost rule out any natural or psychological cause to one’s afflictions, especially obsessions or addictions. Demonic possession *is* real, but rare enough that the likelihood is extremely unlikely in any one individual.

The Angelic Host by Nature and Mission

“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.’” These words from St. Augustine highlight for us their very nature, as pure spiritual beings. The word ‘angel’ does not *per se*, exclude other beings. The Latin *angelus* comes from the Greek *aggelos*, meaning “one who is sent.” “Evangelist” adds the Greek *eu*, meaning “good,” and so we get “The messenger of good [news].” The Messiah in the Septuagint (Greek) version of Isaiah 9:6, which is often translated as “Wonderful Counselor,” is more literally in Greek, “the angel [messenger] of counsel.” Many theologians have speculated that the “angel” that is mentioned in the Roman Canon, the First Eucharistic Prayer is that same “angel,” that is, Jesus Christ Himself, the Messiah. The relevant part of that Eucharistic prayer is:

*In humble prayer we ask you, almighty God: **command that these gifts be borne by the hands of your holy Angel to your altar on high in the sight of your divine majesty, so that all of us who through this participation at the altar receive the most holy Body and Blood of your Son may be filled with every grace and heavenly blessing.***

Note the capital “A” in “Angel.” There are a lot of “messengers” and “sending” in the Mass. Even the word “Mass,” from the Latin *missa*, means “sent.” At the conclusion of Mass, we are all sent, we are all ‘angels’ in our mission, to share the Good News.

Now, we are *not* angels in the way “angel” is commonly understood, as those purely spiritual beings that God created.

Jesus Christ did *not* take an angelic nature unto Himself, but rather, a *human* nature. That human nature has a human soul. A human soul, while wholly spiritual, is incomplete, in a sense, without the body. This is why when we die, we are not “angels,” but souls awaiting our own resurrection on that final day, when we will see God in our own resurrected bodies, through our own eyes, as Christ Himself did. “Look at My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Touch Me and see, because a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you can see I have” (Luke 24: 39).

But what of the mentions of angels or spirits in Scripture seeming to eat or drink, as we see with Abraham welcoming the angels in Genesis 18? “Consequently, since all angels are not bodies, nor have they bodies naturally united with them, as is clear from what has been said, it follows that angels sometimes assume bodies” (St. Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologica, Ia, 51, 2). In other words, they temporarily assume a body unto themselves, but the body is not proper to them.

And as a final word, Hebrews 13:2 hints at that same apparition to Abraham, when it says, “Do not neglect hospitality, for through it some have unknowingly entertained angels.” But regardless if we see them or not, let us always keep them in mind as we pray, and call on their help.

SAVE THE DATE: **ROSARY PILGRIMAGE WEST 2027**

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ, prayer warriors one and all: I am pleased to announce our inaugural *Rosary Pilgrimage West*, Saturday, September 25, 2027, at Our Lady of Lavang, Happy Valley, OR (near our shrine in Portland).



Photo Credit: Catholic Archdiocese of Singapore

Our inaugural keynote speaker will be Fr. Lawrence Lew, OP, Promoter General of the Rosary for the Dominican Order, and well-known and loved for his appearances on EWTN, and his beautiful Catholic art and beauty books, focused on the Rosary and the Blessed Mother.

This will be an all-day event focused on Our Lady and Her Rosary, with the whole Dominican Order represented. Additional language tracks and speakers are being planned, as well as entertainment for all after the event. More details to follow.

Please pray for the success of this event, that it may be the glorious launch of a new Rosary movement, here in the Western US and beyond.

All to praise, bless, and glorify His Holy Name, in veneration of the Blessed ever-Virgin Mary!

A Well-Ordered Marian Devotion(Continued from page 1)
Rosary unabashedly and humbly, in imitation of the humble Handmaid of the Lord. You are prayer warriors, engaging this world through the spiritual arms of prayer and the Rosary.

And you, young people, who are discerning your own vocation, what will **you** do? Remember that the first vocation is to Holy Matrimony, given to our first parents; everything is in support of that. Even our own sacred mission, and Christ's, really, is to support that holy vocation: No family, No Church, No *world*. I want you married folks to remember that. We are here for YOU. Mirror the love of Christ for His Bride, the Church! No homily I give will reach as many people as your vocational witness.

Finally, we Dominicans are also looking for young people to join us in rebuilding that sacred and inviolable foundation of society and the whole world at large through the Sacraments, preaching, and devotion to the Blessed Mother. Is that you? Join us in this holy Confraternity for the salvation of souls, and if you are so called, join us in Our Lady's favorite Order [*This final statement has not necessarily been approved by the Holy See and solely reflects the opinions of the author. But he's right. -ed.*]



John Vianney Russell, OP, Anthony Maria Akerman, OP, Jordan Martin, OP.

Thank You for Your Prayerful Support!

We joyfully announce the Solemn Vows (for life), of three of our Dominican brothers, as well as the priestly ordination of five Dominican brothers. Your prayerful and financial support helped make this blessed day possible. Please continue to pray to the Lord of the Harvest for many good and holy vocations.

Our New Priests (below, L-R): **Luke Maria Lee, OP, Benedict Mary Bartsch, OP, John Paul Puschultz, OP, Francis Dominic Nguyen, OP, Philip Neri Gerlomes, OP.**

