Angels: Signals of God’s Active Presence

By Sister Christine Hilliard, CSJ
This is a wall in a small, one room building a few feet east of the Spirituality Building at St. Joseph Center in Orange, CA. At one time the building was the gardener’s shed and then it was repurposed into a music room where lessons were taught by Sr. Eva. In the late 1980’s, as the Center for Spiritual Development was being created, the small building was again repurposed as an additional meeting space for CSD.

Sr. Madaleva Williams, CSJ, created these images of three divine messengers, commonly known as angels. She outlined the figures on the inside west wall of the building. Notably, she did not work on a “flat canvas”! Much like the character of angels, she moved in, around and over the recessed parts of the wall so that, rather than confining them to an enclosed framed space, they overflow into the space that is beyond confinement. **There are no limits to the extent of their sacred activity!**

The angel on the left is Rafael (meaning “God heals”) who figures prominently in the Book of Tobit. There he is the answer to Tobit’s prayer as well as Sarah’s, the daughter of Tobit’s distant relative. He was sent from “the glorious presence of Almighty God” (Tobit 3:16-17) to heal Tobit’s blindness and to arrange the marriage of Sarah to Tobit’s son. (It’s a great story! I recommend reading it.) Next to Rafael is Michael, holding the handle of a flaming sword. His name means “who is like God?” When Michael appears in the Bible from the Book of Daniel to the Book of Revelation, he is watching over and protecting God’s people. On the right hand side is Gabriel whose name means “God is strong.” In the Book of Daniel he interprets some visions for Daniel and in Luke he was entrusted with birth announcements (John the Baptist and Jesus) and interacting with the recipients. Gabriel is holding a lily, typically a symbol for Mary.

These angels are facing in different directions. **Just as their service is not confined to a one dimensional flat surface of existence, their ministry is not restricted to only one direction. When God sends help, there are no boundaries!**

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**To Ponder**

In these extraordinarily challenging times, for what help from God are you asking? For which divine messenger or assistant are you looking? What do you do to stay alert to God’s messengers?

When have you or someone you know encountered angels, extensions of God’s...
Prayer

Gracious God, you choose not to act alone even though you could. Rather, you invite your creatures to join you in bringing together, protecting, healing and celebrating your abiding presence within all creation. You entrust your divine energy to them as ambassadors of your deep caring for us. Thank you. Simply and always, thank you for being God among us through so many “heavenly messengers.” Amen.

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