

### GOD CREATED HEAVEN

**Catechism 325** The Apostles' Creed professes that God is "creator of heaven and earth". The Nicene Creed makes it explicit that this profession includes "all that is, seen and unseen".

**326** The Scriptural expression "heaven and earth" means all that exists, creation in its entirety. It also indicates the bond, deep within creation, that both unites heaven and earth and distinguishes the one from the other: "the earth" is the world of men, while "heaven" or "the heavens" can designate both the firmament and God's own "place" - "our Father in heaven" and consequently the "heaven" too which is eschatological glory. Finally, "heaven" refers to the saints and the "place" of the spiritual creatures, the angels, who surround God.

**329** 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.'"<sup>188</sup> 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".<sup>189</sup>

**330** 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.

**332** Angels have been present since creation and throughout the history of salvation, announcing this salvation from afar or near and serving the accomplishment of the divine plan: they closed the earthly paradise; protected Lot; saved Hagar and her child; stayed Abraham's hand; communicated the law by their ministry; led the People of God; announced births and callings; and assisted the prophets, just to cite a few examples.<sup>194</sup> Finally, the angel Gabriel announced the birth of the Precursor and that of Jesus himself.

**333** From the Incarnation to the Ascension, the life of the Word incarnate is surrounded by the adoration and service of angels. When God "brings the firstborn into the world, he says: 'Let all God's angels worship him.'"<sup>196</sup> Their song of praise at the birth of Christ has not ceased resounding in the Church's praise: "Glory to God in the highest!"<sup>197</sup> They protect Jesus in his infancy, serve him in the desert, strengthen him in his agony in the garden, when he could have been saved by them from the hands of his enemies as Israel had been.<sup>198</sup> Again, it is the angels who "evangelize" by proclaiming the Good News of Christ's Incarnation and Resurrection.<sup>199</sup> They will be present at Christ's return, which they will announce, to serve at his judgement.<sup>200</sup>

### ANGELS IN THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH

**334** In the meantime, the whole life of the Church benefits from the mysterious and powerful help of angels.

**335** In her liturgy, the Church joins with the angels to adore the thrice-holy God. She invokes their assistance (in the funeral liturgy's *In Paradisum deducant te angeli*. . . ["May the angels lead you into Paradise. . ."]). Moreover, in the "Cherubic Hymn" of the Byzantine Liturgy, she celebrates the memory of certain angels more particularly (St. Michael, St. Gabriel, St. Raphael, and the guardian angels).

**336** From its beginning until death, human life is surrounded by their watchful care and intercession.<sup>202</sup> "Beside each believer stands an angel as protector and shepherd leading him to life."<sup>203</sup> Already here on earth the Christian life shares by faith in the blessed company of angels and men united in God.

## OUR PRIESTLY DUTY

### Lumen Gentium 34

For besides intimately linking them to His life and His mission, He also gives them a sharing in His priestly function of offering spiritual worship for the glory of God and the salvation of men. . . For all their works, prayers and apostolic endeavors, their ordinary married and family life, their daily occupations, their physical and mental relaxation, if carried out in the Spirit, and even the hardships of life, if patiently borne—all these become "**spiritual sacrifices** acceptable to God through Jesus Christ".(199) Together with the offering of the Lord's body, [our spiritual sacrifices] are most fittingly offered in the celebration of the Eucharist. Thus, as those everywhere who adore in holy activity, the laity consecrate the world itself to God.

