

24. October 2025
THE LIVES OF THE SAINTS
Saint Raphael, Archangel
“True friends”

According to the traditional calendar, today is the feast day of St. Raphael the Archangel. Describing an angel is undoubtedly much more difficult than describing the life of a saint. The latter are usually well documented and more accessible to us. Nevertheless, we should strive to become more familiar with our friends in heaven—without letting our imaginations run away with us.

Angels are often discussed in esoteric circles. However, without clear discernment of spirits, it is easy for our imagination to suggest illusory ideas about angels that do not correspond to reality—or even to be deceived by the devil. We cannot overlook the fact that demons still possess an angelic nature and are therefore endowed with an intelligence superior to ours, making it easy for them to mislead those who are not firmly rooted in the true faith. Therefore, before discussing the Archangel Saint Raphael, it is important to review what the Church teaches us about these beings. This will provide us with the criteria to better recognize faithful angels.

The Fourth Lateran Council and the First Vatican Council establish a distinction between spiritual and corporeal creatures, placing angels in the former group. Unlike human nature, which is both spiritual and corporeal, angelic nature is purely spiritual—that is, free from all corporeality. Sacred Scripture expressly refers to angels as spirits. As spiritual beings, angels possess understanding and free will. Because of their purely spiritual nature, the knowledge and will of angels are far more perfect than those of humans. However, as creatures of God, they remain inferior to Him in both knowledge and will.

Angels frequently appear in Sacred Scripture as messengers of God. In the Book of Tobit (12:7–18), the Archangel Raphael says the following:

“It is good to guard the secret of a king, but gloriously to reveal the works of God. Do good, and evil will not overtake you. Prayer is good when accompanied by fasting, almsgiving, and righteousness. A little with righteousness is better than much with wrongdoing. It is better to

give alms than to treasure up gold. For almsgiving delivers from death, and it will purge away every sin. Those who perform deeds of charity and of righteousness will have fulness of life; but those who commit sin are the enemies of their own lives. "I will not conceal anything from you. I have said, 'It is good to guard the secret of a king, but gloriously to reveal the works of God.' And so, when you and your daughter-in-law Sarah prayed, I brought a reminder of your prayer before the Holy One; and when you buried the dead, I was likewise present with you. When you did not hesitate to rise and leave your dinner in order to go and lay out the dead, your good deed was not hidden from me, but I was with you. So now God sent me to heal you and your daughter-in-law Sarah. They were both alarmed; and they fell upon their faces, for they were afraid.

But he said to them, "Do not be afraid; you will be safe. But praise God for ever. For I did not come as a favor on my part, but by the will of our God. Therefore praise him for ever."

This passage reveals much about the Archangel Raphael, for he himself bears witness to it.

1. He instructs people, telling them what they need to know from God and how to act in order to please Him. This includes giving alms, praying, fasting, and protecting themselves from sin.
2. Raphael presented the prayers of Tobit and Sarah, as well as their good work of burying the dead, before the Throne of God. He was sent to test their faithfulness to God.
3. He testifies that he does not act out of his own benevolence, but on God's behalf to bring healing.
4. He exhorts us to bless and sing to God.

These points, drawn from St. Raphael's own words, summarize the mission of a Holy Archangel. As the Church teaches us, angels come to protect us on our journey to God, to instruct us, and to accompany us.

Thus, we have a sure criterion for distinguishing authentic veneration of angels from deception. Angels always act on God's behalf and will never lead us to anything other than what God has already revealed. Their great joy is to proclaim God's goodness and to help humanity on its way to Him. Being messengers of God, they never desire that we remain focused on their person. As the Archangel Raphael insists: *"For I did not come as a favor on my part, but by the will of our God."*

Therefore, we can turn with complete confidence to the holy angels—such as the Archangel Saint Raphael—and be certain that they are excellent companions on the path to God, full of love and humility. By their example, they teach us how we should behave before God, reminding us that, as Christians, we act on His behalf and not to draw attention to ourselves. The more intimate our friendship with the holy angels, the more we will adopt their attitude and learn both from their words and from their way of being.

Saint Raphael, pray for us that we may willingly and gratefully accept the help that the holy angels offer us, so that we may rejoice in you and together delight in God and He in us.

Meditation on today's reading: <https://en.elijamission.net/2023/10/27/>