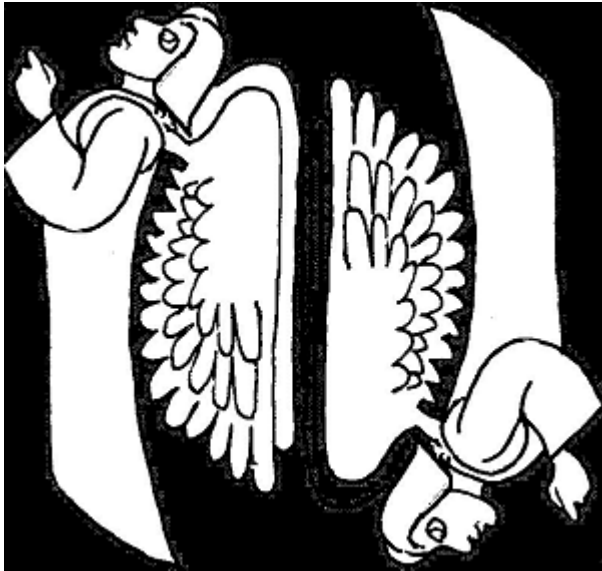


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by Pat Marrin

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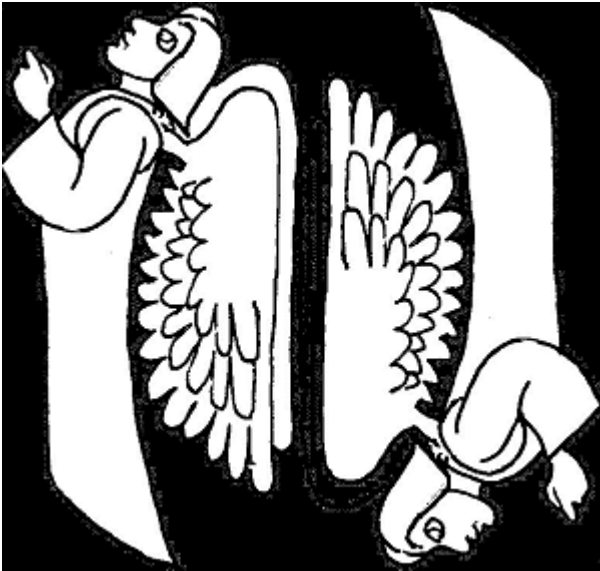
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“There is no duplicity in him” (John 1:47).

Dn 7:9-10, 13-14; John 1:47-51

In popular art, angels have been reduced to cute babies with wings and halos. In the Bible, they are beings powerful enough to break into the time-space continuum like sonic booms to deliver history-changing ultimatums. Their presence routes armies and commands kings to obey the divine will. It takes an archangel to invite a teenage girl to conceive, carry and give birth to God in human flesh. Michael, Raphael and Gabriel are the interface between eternity and time, Creator and creation, reflecting the divine image and likeness into everything that exists. Simple, silent stones hold the same glory that moves star-gazing shepherds to awe and wonder.

Charles de Gaulle saw World War II as the confrontation between the angel of German National Socialism and the angel of French liberty, two colossal, collective and cultural forces battling for the soul of Europe. St. Paul’s vision of the emerging Cosmic Christ pitted historical and ideological movements vying for control of human destiny, forces he called Thrones, Dominations and Powers, angels of death versus the Crucified and Risen Christ ushering in the Beloved Community.

In today’s Gospel, Jesus stuns a skeptical Nathaniel by revealing that he has seen him at prayer under a fig tree meditating on Jacob’s dream of angels ascending and descending on a ladder between heaven and earth uniting divinity to humanity.

Nathaniel realizes that the man from Galilee he is speaking to is that unity, God incarnate before him. Where angels have touched earth, sacred ground remains.

Patriarchs and prophets have wrestled with God there and redirected history by recording their encounters with the divine.

We celebrate archangels but also the more accessible angels children know, without sisters telling them, that really come and sit next to them in their desks or kneel beside their beds with them when they pray. It is true they provide a direct line to God because children's faith is pure and they take prayer seriously, entrusting to these winged couriers their hopes and fears for ordinary blessings families need in hard times.

Angels remind us that God is everywhere, in all things, a listening and loving God, bending circumstance and chance to answer dreams and provide everything we need. Emily Dickens was right: "Hope is the thing with feathers." Angels move around us like the breath of love that can comfort a child or move history through peril to peace.

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