



■ On the Occasion of the Commemoration of the Holy Archangels (8 November)

## Our Guardian Angel: Our Good Elder Brother\*

**S**t. Cyril of Philea (1015-2 December 1111) was once visited by a monastic acquaintance of his who had great faith in the Saint and who told him the following:

“Abba, while resting in my cell, I was meditating on my sins and mourning, now over their magnitude, now over my lack of repentance. Suddenly, I was overcome by unbounded and unconstrained weeping, which accompanied me in all my works. The tears moistened my face to such an extent that for two days and nights I did not remember to take food. In the meantime, my heart became excessively heated, I lamented bitterly and plaintively, while at the same time I felt a sweetness and ineffable delight, joined with sorrow and inexpressible joy, now giving thanks to God, now offering prayers and supplications, and then again sending up thanks and glorification beyond measure.

“Finding myself in this condition and dwelling on my sins, I turned to my Guardian Angel and said to him:

“All-holy Angel, I charge thee in the name of God, Who formed us from non-being into being, so as to serve Him according to the strength that He hath given us (me as spirit covered by flesh, without, however, dying therein, and thee as an immortal spirit not covered by flesh), I beseech thee, do thou protect me more heedfully and strenuously. Because, as thou seest, I am perishing; and because I have lived a vain and useless life, thou art also found to be guarding me in vain.”

“Having spoken these words three times, I became weary and sat down. My mind was deeply calm and quiet, and meditating on God.

“Then I went into ecstasy and saw the following: a delicate and snow-white hand came and gave me a light slap on my right cheek. But that hand was so sweet-scented, that my face was fragrant for a

week. At the moment when it slapped me, I saw that hand up to the wrist. All that week I had no appetite for bodily food.

“How, then, am I to regard what happened to me: was it from God or from the demons? For, my mind is in doubt...”

St. Cyril, by the gift of discernment with which he was richly endowed, gave this explanation:

“Our Heavenly Father has entrusted us to our Guardian Angel.... He is like our elder brother, who watches over us and protects us. When, however, we charge Him to ‘protect us more,’ he gives us a light slap of love and admonition, as if saying to us: ‘Exhort your own self; or, rather, command yourself to avoid pitfalls, because I am not the cause of them!’

“The same thing happened to you, my brother: the hand which appeared was not demonic. This is evident from the fact that it was gentle, whiter than the snow, and fragrant, as well as from the change which you underwent in not desiring food for a week. For, demonic changes do not bring about calmness in the senses of soul and body, nor do they have the power to lead them to supernatural states; on the contrary, indeed, they lead from the natural to the unnatural, because when demons are the guides, those who are guided by them become demons as well, from whom may the Lord deliver us!”



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\*Source: *Άγιος Κυπριανός*, No. 260 (May-June 1994), pp. 279-280.