



CONVENT OF
THE HOLY ANGELS

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THE HOLY ANGELS IN OUR LIVES

15

FOR EDIFICATION AND CONSOLATION

The Angels Cense, Anoint, and Guard the Elect of God*

A Wonderful Revelation



One morning, St Andrew the Fool for Christ (9th–10th century) was seated in a corner and listening as his spiritual son, Epiphanius, was reading an oration by St. Basil the Great.

As long as the reading continued, a fragrance like precious perfume filled the room. When the reading ended, the fragrance disappeared as well. Astonished, Epiphanius turned to the Saint:

“Please tell me, what was that sweet smell?”

The Saint, having seen the one who spread the fragrance, replied:

“Angels of the Lord had gathered here, my child. One of them, glorifying the words of the Holy Spirit, offered incense around us and rejoiced.”

Epiphanius' amazement and wonder only grew. Then the Saint continued more fully:

“There are three occasions when the Angels cense the elect of God:

- **F**irst, when they read the sacred books, the Angels surround them invisibly, eager to hear the words of the Holy Spirit.
- **S**econd, when they pray and converse with God, the Angels themselves pray alongside them with ardent longing.
- **T**hird, when they endure hardships, pain, and punishment for the love of God, the Angels anoint and cense them, and encourage them in their struggles for godliness.

“Concerning this last case, I will tell you the following story:

“Once, the apostate Julian, setting out to wage war against the Persians, went down to Daphne (a suburb of Antioch) to sacrifice to the false god Apollo. He desired to receive an oracle regarding the outcome of the war. Yet the demon who dwelt in the statue was unable to give an oracle, because the Relics of the Holy Hieromartyr Babylas and of the three children were present there.

“The apostate commanded the people of Antioch to remove the Relics without fear. Then they lifted up the coffin of the Saints and walked, chanting: *‘Let all who worship graven images be put to shame, who boast in their idols.’*

“When the emperor heard this, he was enraged and ordered that all who took part in the procession be arrested. Among them they seized a youth of fifteen years, named Theodore. He was brought before the emperor, who commanded that he be hung upon a wooden beam and his flesh torn. Thus suspended, he endured many torments. When evening came, they took him down and cast him into prison.

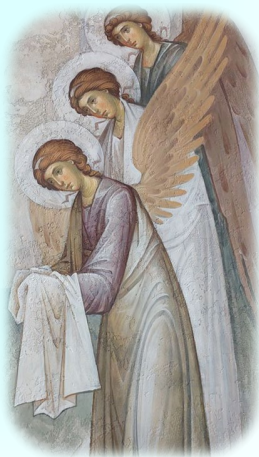
“He remained there for several days, until news arrived that the emperor had been slain in battle. Then Theodore was released and returned to his home.

““Beloved Theodore,’ his relatives and friends asked him, ‘what did you feel when you were torn while hanging upon the wood?’

“He answered them:

““At first I endured the pain with difficulty. But then four youths appeared before me, with beautiful faces and radiant white garments.

““One of them held a shining basin; another a golden vessel filled with myrrh, like



rose-oil; while the other two carried white linen cloths folded in fours.

“**T**he first poured the myrrh into the basin, and as it evaporated, with every breath I felt its fragrance spread through all my members and deaden the dreadful pains.

“**T**hen one soaked the cloth in the basin and laid it upon my face for a long time, so that by its sweetness I forgot the torments. When the first removed it, the other was ready and placed his own.

“**T**his continued until the executioners took me down from the wood. But then the Angels departed from me, and I was grieved, for I was deprived of that most delightful consolation. I wished that I might be tortured further...”



(*) *Appearances and Miracles of the Angels* (Oropos, Attica: Ekdosis Hieras Mones Parakletou, 1996), pp. 174-177. Translated from the Greek.