***3 27 16***

***THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK***

***“Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to serve, for the sake of those who are to obtain salvation?”***

In the glow and blessedness of the feast we have just celebrated, we hear St. Paul’s epistle that puts into perspective the ministry of angels in relation to that of our Lord. There have been two grave mistakes that have been made with regard to the ministry of angels. Throughout Christian history there was a temptation to make angels the focus of the spiritual life. This was particularly true in some of the gnostic sects. Even today it has become very popular to focus on angels- people wear angel pins- without wearing the cross of Christ. This is a sort of universal spirituality that fits in well with many religions and therefore acceptable to the modern American ethos- we can mention angels but we cannot mention Jesus Christ. As an example of this, I was asked to give an invocation at the L.A. County Board of Supervisors meeting with the following guideline- Do not mention any name which would be associated with one particular religion (they gave the example “praying in the name of Jesus”); but you do not have to strip your prayer of “all spirituality.” Here we have the first error in regard to angels- that is, to make them our spiritual focus, apart from our (and their) Lord Jesus Christ.

The second, and I believe for most, the more serious error is to completely ignore the ministry of angels; to relegate it to some kind of childish or naïve spirituality. If this were true we would not have the Good News of our Lord Jesus Christ; for this Message was brought to earth by the Angels (Messengers in the Gk). It was The Archangel Gabriel that cried out to the Virgin, Hail, and that she would bear a son- the Son of God. Angels proclaimed the glory of God at His Nativity. And an angel proclaimed the Good News of the Resurrection-that the tomb was empty- to the myrrh-bearers.

The angels are not only sent to us to give us messages, but also to help us and protect us from all evil, as we work out our salvation on this earth. It is incredible that beings, who are so far above us spiritually, have been sent by God to serve us. They are so important to us that we are each assigned our own guardian angel by God in our Baptism. They guard us and are constantly praying for us, that we may preserve our souls in purity. They are constantly trying to lift us up to God. They are wounded when we fall, and they rejoice when we strive for holiness. Listen to our Orthodox Prayer to our guardian angel. ***“O Angel of Christ, holy guardian and protector of my soul and body, forgive me everything wherein I have offended thee every day of my life, and protect me from all influence and temptation of the evil one.”*** Beloved we must each make a place for our Guardian Angel by keeping our hearts pure and striving for holiness. We must be aware of the angelic presence, particularly during the Divine Liturgy, where they are present, in “the thousands” and the “ten-thousands.” This is a fearful and most blessed gift that has been given to us by God that we cannot neglect. Amen.