

WEEK 4 “Years and scars” ST. MICHAEL AND ALL ANGELS, Book of Common Prayer, p. 244

OPENING INVITATION *Read aloud the prayer slowly. After a time of silence each person identifies a word or phrase that catches your attention.*

Everlasting God, you have ordained and constituted in a wonderful order the ministries of angels and mortals: Mercifully grant that, as your holy angels always serve and worship you in heaven, so by your appointment they may help and defend us here on earth; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

If technology and time permit, watch the accompanying video.

CONTEXT & HISTORY OF THE COLLECT *Take a few minutes to discuss the context of the prayer.*

Although we give Thomas Cranmer general credit for “writing” the first Book of Common Prayer (1549), he was more of a “compiler” or “editor.” Cranmer pulled together into a “common” source sacramentaries of the earlier Church. This prayer was composed for the dedication of a fifth century basilica and contained in the Gregorian Sacramentary (eighth century) and Sarum Missal.




Did you know:

- Angel is translated from the word meaning “herald” or messenger.”
- At Oxford University, the terms are designated by religious feasts: Michaelmas, Hilary, and Trinity.
- Michael and Gabriel are the only archangels mentioned in the Hebrew Scriptures.
- The Feast of St. Michael was the only such observance recognized by Luther and the Reformers (and Cranmer was married to the daughter of Philip Melanchthon, Luther’s personal secretary).

Many years ago there was with a group doing some late night “kibitzing.” Among them was George Garrett, a contemporary American author and poet. At the time George was the writer in residence at the University of Virginia, a position once held by William Faulkner. He was asked to share one of his poems: “Years and scars later, I finally learned that all angels travel under assumed names.” George Garret is saying that time and wisdom have taught him angels are discovered in the guise of others.

How does the context affect your understanding of the collect?

After allowing each person to share, take a moment in prayer and ask God to speak through the Word. Then read the collect again, together aloud, slowly. Now, let each person read over the collect silently while being on the lookout for three things to notice and perhaps share:

	Light bulb: This should be something that ‘shines’ from the passage—whatever impacts most or draws your attention.
	Question mark: Anything that is difficult to understand in the collect or a question that may be raised as a result.
	Arrow: A personal application from your life.

SCRIPTURE *Read aloud and consider these scriptural verses as they relate to the collect.*

Psalm 103. This psalm is filled with descriptive characteristics of God: forgiveness, healing, redemption, loving kindness, mercy, satisfaction, etc.

Ask each participant to name one quality that is the most compelling in their life. Depending on whether or not this sharing is superficial or intense, consider spending as much time as you can/need sharing/reflecting.

Genesis 28:10-17. This is the wonderful story of Jacob's ladder. Notice that the Lord tells Jacob: "I am the Lord, the God of Abraham your father, and the God of Isaac." The rabbinical tradition has a midrash (a saying or story that provides commentary on a text), "The scripture does not say 'the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.' It says 'the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.' Each of us has to discover God for ourselves."

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND CONVERSATION *These questions are only suggestions. Use one, all, or none. Create your own questions; let the group decide where the conversation might go.*

1. What memories, emotions, thoughts, etc. does the phrase "years and scars later" conjure up for you?
2. Who have been your angels under assumed names? What message did they bring you?
3. Share an instance in which you have realized, either at the time or later, you have acted as another's angel.
4. What lessons have "years and scars" taught you?
5. What will you do this week to discover God for yourself?

CLOSING *Pray the collect together as a group.*

Conclude with traditional version of the collect, Book of Common Prayer, p. 193

O Everlasting God, who hast ordained and constituted the ministries of angels and men in a wonderful order: Mercifully grant that, as thy holy angels always serve and worship thee in heaven, so by thy appointment they may help and defend us on earth; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.