

Did you know...

If you stand in the middle of the chapel under the dome, you will see the most amazing icon. It is an icon of the Divine Liturgy. Angels circle the dome with censers and fans reflecting the reality of their participation in the life of the Church.

At every Divine Liturgy, *a multitude of the heavenly host* (Luke 2:13) is present, glorifying God as once they did in Bethlehem. The story is told of the holy Bishop Niphon that during the Great Entrance he saw a multitude of angels accompanying the priest, 'joyfully singing ineffable hymns. And when the priest placed the precious Gifts on the Holy Table, the angels covered the Altar with their wings. Then two Cherubim came and stood on the celebrant's right and two Seraphim on his left.'



During the Holy Anaphora, 'angels stand around the priest, all the ranks of the heavenly powers sing praises in a loud voice, and the space around the altar is filled in honour of the One (Christ our Master) who is being sacrificed.'

At the Divine Liturgy, mysteries are performed which the holy angels *long to look into* (1Pet 1:12). They are present as ministers and servants, but only the priest can celebrate the divine mystagogy: 'When the pure and worthy priest...enters the sanctuary to celebrate the Divine Liturgy, he is invisibly surrounded by a great host of bodiless and divine angels, who serve him throughout the Divine Liturgy with great reverence. But although the holy angels serve the priest at the Divine Liturgy, they themselves are not able to celebrate the Liturgy on their own without a priest... So the priest is like some major dignitary of the King's while the angels are like His soldiers and servants.'

When we sing the Thrice-Holy Hymn, we sing together with the angels. We participate in the choir of angels, we sing with the Seraphim. That is why St John Chrysostom urges us: 'Consider who that are who sing with you and that should be enough to move you to vigilance. It should be sufficient when you remember that, while being clothed in the body and bound up with flesh, you have been accounted worthy to hymn the Lord, who is common to all, together with the bodiless powers.'

Heaven and earth together move forward towards the Altar. All creation, both visible and invisible, is gathered together in one place and keeps festival, praising the Lord.

Excerpted from *The Divine Liturgy: A Commentary in the Light of the Fathers* by Hieromonk Gregorios

Our Church family is so blessed to have the icon of the Divine Liturgy directly beneath the dome in the chapel. The angels process and serve Jesus Christ, our God who is both the celebrant and the sacrifice, the gift and the giver, 'ever slain sanctifying those who take part in Him.' (Canon of Preparation for Holy Communion)

May the Holy Angels have mercy on us.

Did you know...



Just as every Orthodox Christian is assigned a Guardian Angel at Baptism, so too the newly Consecrated (baptized) Holy Altar will receive an Angel who will for all time guard and protect it.

"The [guardian] angel will not retreat from us, unless we drive him away by our evil deeds. As the smoke drives bees away, and stench the doves, even so our stinking sin drives away from us the angel who protects our life." - Saint Basil the Great

Angels are among the first part of God's creation. *"When the stars were made, all My angels praised Me with a loud voice"* (Job 38:7, LXX). The Fathers believe that the angels were created long before the visible world. Saint John of Damascus tells us: "God is Himself the Maker and Creator of the angels; for He brought them out of nothing into being and created them after His own image. They are an incorporeal race, a sort of spirit or immaterial fire, even as the divine David says that *'His angels are spirits, and His ministers a flame of fire'* (Ps 103:6).

Angels have interacted with man since his creation. A Cherubim with a flaming sword was placed at the gates of Eden after Adam and Eve were expelled from the garden. In the time of the New Testament an angel informed Zachariah of the conception of the Forerunner. Archangel Gabriel announced to the most Holy Theotokos, *"Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb."* Luke 1:42 Angels announced the good news to the shepherds at the birth of Jesus and prevented the Magi from returning to Herod. Angels served Jesus after His temptation in the wilderness and appeared to strengthen Him in the Garden of Gethsemane. It was angels who informed the Myrrhbearing Women about His Resurrection. Angels informed the Apostles of His second coming as the time of His ascension into heaven. Angels help the apostles. They freed Peter from prison and instructed Cornelius. They told Paul to appear before Caesar. Angels are the foundation of the revelations given by John in his book of the Revelation.

"An angel, then, is an intelligent essence, in perpetual motion, with free will, incorporeal, ministering to God, having obtained by grace an immortal nature. The Creator alone knows the form and limitation of the angelic essence; but all that we can understand is that it is incorporeal and immaterial. For all that is compared with god, Who alone is incomparable, we find to be dense and material. For in reality only the Deity is immaterial and incorporeal." Saint John of Damascus.