Angels

Today we have two readings that tell us about Angels. Have any of you seen an Angel? I haven’t, but I have spoken to people who have. It is easy to dismiss those people as attention seekers or meddlers in the occult but wait a minute! In the Old Testament the term, ‘Angel of the Lord’ appears sixty times, and in the New Testament, the term, ‘Angel’ occurs 54 times, and in not one of those 114 accounts does the Bible mention a halo or two wings!

Now, think back to the Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe to the scene where Susan, Peter & Edmund are with the Professor seeking his advice about Lucy, fresh back from Narnia who they think is lying or mentally unwell. The Professor says, “Logic! Why don’t they teach Logic in these schools? There are only three possibilities. Either your sister is telling lies, or she is mad, or she is telling the truth.” And so it is with the Angels. Either the Bible is telling us lies, or the authors (that is ultimately God) are mad or Angels exist. Now I know that there are more than a few passages in the great tome that stretch our imagination, such as the talking donkey in the book of Numbers - Balaam is riding his donkey in the mountains when an angel arrives on the scene complete with sword of fire. At first, the angel is only visible to the donkey Balaam is riding. The donkey, taken by surprise, tries to avoid the angel by coming to a halt. Balaam punishes the donkey for refusing to move, whereupon it is miraculously given the power to speak to Balaam and it complaining about Balaam's treatment. Even that story has some credibility in my eyes – it is one of the 114 times that an angel is involved in the text.

Theologically, according to the Gospels, angels are spirit beings that serve God, particularly in connection with Jesus’ work of proclaiming and establishing the kingdom of God. They are important in the passages dealing with Jesus’ birth, the temptations in the wilderness, the coming of the Son of man where, in Jesus’ own teaching of the end of the age will see angels, in pairs going to the ends of the earth, separating the righteous from the wicked. Angels also take a part in the resurrection account.

If you still aren’t convinced, think about the conversation that Jesus had with the Sadducees when they asked him’ “Who will a widow of seven husbands be married to in heaven?” to which Jesus told them “You have the wrong idea about Heaven. In the Resurrection you are neither married nor given in marriage, but like angles in Heaven.” It is this matter of fact way of talking about angels that Jesus employed that makes their existence so certain.

Now, the big question, where do angels reside? Well in today’s reading there is a really interesting

Insight into this point. Did you notice that Jesus said to Nathanial, “You believe because I told you I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than that.” He then added, “Very truly I tell you, you will see ‘heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on’ the Son of Man.” If the angels need to go up before they come down, then this rather suggests that the starting point was here on earth.

Yes, angels are amongst us here on earth, and, according to the account of Abraham’s visitation at his tent, the angels took the form of normal looking people (in this case, men. So, perhaps we should be aware that angels are here with us today, in this building, worshipping with us. And an even bigger perhaps, we should take heed of the comment in Hebrews chapter 13, ‘Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that, some have entertained angels without knowing it’ – That’s why we have coffee after the service!