

Annual Mass for Homeschoolers – September 10, 2020 – Very Rev. Bryan W. Jerabek, J.C.L.
Cathedral of St. Paul, Birmingham, AL – Votive Mass of the Holy Angels, 10:00am – 750 words

A warm welcome to all our homeschooling families for this annual Mass at the beginning of a new school year. I especially wish to recognize any new homeschooling families – whether you made the switch to homeschooling due to the pandemic or other considerations, we offer our support, and I hope you see that you are in wonderful company with so many others who have chosen this very traditional path. Our new bishop also sends his greetings and regrets that he could not be here today; he is very supportive of you all and looks forward to meeting you and celebrating this Mass annually starting next year. I will see him later today and will tell him of your prayers and good wishes.

In the creed each Sunday and Holy Day, we profess our faith in the “one God” who is “maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible”. Yes – we recognize that a part of his marvelous creation is invisible. Now in your science classes – especially biology – you study the part of creation that is visible. The universe around us can be perceived, discovered, observed, measured, and ranked in countless ways. We divide things into kingdoms, genus, species. And we find new things all the time. I read on the internet that there are almost nine million different known species of living creatures in the universe. And that does not include the whole array of non-living creatures.

What science classes cannot tell us is about a much larger part of God’s creation: the domain of the invisible – heaven, hell, and the angels. We only know about these things because God revealed them to us. If he had not, we could have perhaps have only guessed about them – not known for sure. Today, in this Mass, we wish to honor that invisible part of creation known as the angelic host, in particular. We know we each have a guardian angel given specially to us by the Lord. Now scientists estimate that there have been about 113 billion human persons since the beginning of time. And how many more people will there be, before the Lord returns? That is a huge number of guardian angels alone!

But then we learn that these invisible, intelligent, spiritual creatures known as angels are innumerable. In fact, there are nine “choirs” or groupings of them total. The lowest of these is known simply as “angels”, and from these come our guardian angels – so we can deduce that there are billions and billions just in this lowest ranking. But then there are the other eight choirs: the archangels (scripture says that there are seven – but we only know of three: Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael), the princes or principalities, the powers, the virtues, the dominions or dominations, the thrones, the cherubim, and the seraphim; each group has its purpose. Only the Lord knows how many there are total in this huge, invisible part of creation.

Our faith further teaches us that besides our guardian angels and the many other good angels that are continually round about us, there are the bad angels, also – the demons, the fallen angels who had rebelled against God. They, too, prowl around – as the scripture says, “like roaring lions” – trying to deceive us. Their leader is known as the devil, Lucifer, or Satan – a powerful angel who was so full of pride that he thought he, a mere creature, could be like God. Because of his mortal sin he forever tries to lead us, the children of the true God, astray. He is a miserable and wretched angel, and the old saying is “misery loves company”; he and all the demons want to keep us from true happiness.

But the good angels defend and help us: to worship God rightly, to fight temptation and avoid sin, to illuminate our path to heaven. They are invisible, but we should never forget them. In fact, we should pray to them daily, not only to seek their assistance, but to avoid becoming blind to their companionship. I know many of you pray to your guardian angel; we also pray to St. Michael the Archangel at the end of Masses here at St. Paul’s. We cannot see the angels here and

now, but we will see them most clearly in heaven. My hope, as you begin this new school year, is that you will learn more about the angels and increasingly appreciate their invisible but real presence with you on the way to heaven.