

# *Triumph of the Heart*

MY GUARDIAN ANGEL

*Family of Mary*

*2019 (I) / No. 87*

*“We ask the Lord today for the grace of hearkening to the voice of our guardian angel, of this ambassador of God who is beside us in his name and supports us by his help.”*

*Pope Francis, October 2, 2015*

## *Our Best Friend*

*T*he Church teaches that every person, whether baptized or not, a believer or non-believer, receives an angel from God who has the responsibility of accompanying and protecting that person on their path of sanctification. Nearly none of us have the grace of seeing these heavenly companions who, as our best friends, are always at our side. Those who have been given a glimpse into the invisible reality can help us redirect our attention to the Guardian Angels in order to better love them and effectively use their help. Therefore, in this edition of *Triumph of the Heart*, we want to deepen our knowledge of the angels through the experiences of the mystics.

Although we encounter the angels frequently during the Advent and Christmas seasons, our Church remembers the Guardian Angels particularly during the month of September and on their feast, October 2. Jesus Himself refers to them when He speaks to His disciples about these wonderful spiritual beings, *“See that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that their angels in heaven always look upon the face of my heavenly Father.”* A few years after this lesson, St. Peter experienced this real-

ity for himself: the Acts of the Apostles gives an impressive account of how an angel came to him the night before his execution, freed him from his chains and led him out of the prison past the four guard posts without being seen. Historical facts confirm that this is not just a legend.

The Guardian Angel is an expression of God’s loving care with which He continually surrounds us. The angel desires and is allowed to serve his entrusted one and yet perfectly respects his freedom. The deeper the attitude of trust from the side of the person toward his angel and the more the angel is called upon, the more he is able to help the person entrusted to him and give him a share in his own gifts.

One of our heavenly companion’s tasks is to protect us, body and soul, from danger. We pray in Psalm 91, *“For he commands his angels with regard to you, to guard you wherever you go.”* Additionally, he offers God our prayers, adores the Creator with us and prays for us. St. John saw in an apocalyptic vision how an angel approached the golden altar before the throne of God and burnt incense so that *“the prayers of the holy ones went up before God.”*

In difficult situations, our Guardian Angel incites us to be merciful and to solve differences with forgiveness and goodness since, in that way, we imitate God's love more perfectly. Just as the angels cooperated in creation and all the events of salvation, so too they are entrusted with the task of realizing together with us humans the request of the Our Father, "*thy kingdom come.*" That means, however, enduring a spiritual battle which St. Paul writes about in his letter to the Ephesians: "*For our struggle is not with flesh and blood but with the principalities, with the powers, with the world rulers of this present darkness, with the evil spirits in the heavens.*"

Thanks to the divine inspirations they transmit to us, the Guardian Angels are irreplaceable

and unsurpassable helpers in the spiritual battle. The great Desert Fathers were masters of recognizing the source of their thoughts and determining whether they were inspired by good or evil. Today, only a few have mastered the art of discerning the spirits, although precisely this discernment is so important in order to cooperate effectively in the realization of the kingdom of God here on earth. Therefore, let us turn more frequently to our Guardian Angel so that he can teach us to live according to the will of God and His commandments. An angel's voice is gentle and not forceful. Whoever trustingly turns to him, however, will be amazed at how readily his heavenly companion helps him and, through this, learn always better to listen to this life-long best friend.

## The Rosebush in Bloom

The life of St. Lidwina of Schiedam (1380-1433) from the Netherlands, tells one of the most touching stories of expiation for the unity of the Church (see Triumph of the Heart #27), and of the faithful, ever present companionship of her Guardian Angel through her illness, pain and darkness. In the winter of 1395, fifteen-year-old Lidwina fell while ice skating and broke a rib. A cyst which had formed over the wounded area burst open, and soon Lidwina's body was covered with bad smelling abscesses; worms even came out of some of them. Her right arm was so decayed that only a single muscle attached it to her body, which seemed to be split in two. In this way, she coredeemingly expiated for thirty-eight years the evil and abuses in the Church which, at the time of the Western Schism (1378-1417), was also divided for thirty-eight years with two and then even three "incumbent" popes.

"*What kind of life is that?*" some might think. Yes, it was very difficult in the first four years for the young, joyful Dutch girl to say yes to

increasing illness, loneliness, misjudgment from the others and anguish in her soul.

"Lidwina", meaning "the one weeping from suffering", often cried bitterly until her confessor gave her the wise advice of seeking consolation by meditating on Jesus' suffering. What at first only called forth resistance in the sick girl, soon became her deepest desire—to suffer with and for Christ Crucified. It became so strong that she said, "*Even if a single Hail Mary could heal me, I would not pray it!*"

Lidwina received wonderful, heavenly consolations. Along with visions and ecstasies, her vivid contact with the angels is well attested, especially her unity with her Guardian Angel. He visited her every day; he was her confidant and, at the same time, her best friend. Lidwina even knew the Guardian Angels of her confessor and spiritual director, her relatives and many priests, as well as common people and nobility from the area and from out of the country who hurried to her bedside to ask for help and enlightened advice.

Lidwina's Guardian Angel appeared to her under different aspects. Sometimes he would appear as a young noble man, but always he would appear in radiant clarity. Sometimes he was so bright that she thought a thousand suns would not be able to produce a glow as brilliant as her Guardian Angel. Always, he had a Cross on his forehead.

Once, he encouraged her, "*Lidwina, will you continue suffering this fever in order to free your relatives in Purgatory?*"

"*I am ready to suffer,*" she replied, "*for even forty years more, until my last breath, if it means that a single sinner would convert or a single poor soul find redemption.*"

Often, when she meditated on the Passion of Christ, although illness constantly bound to her straw mattress, she was suddenly transported by

her Guardian Angel to Palestine where she was given to participate in the suffering and death of her beloved Lord on Calvary. Her companion often led her in spirit to the various holy places which she was able to name and impeccably describe. On all these mysterious "journeys", her Guardian Angel always took her by the hand and guided her; they even went into Purgatory and to the magnificent fields of Paradise where roses, lilies and fragrant flowers of every kind grew and bloomed.

When Lidwina returned to her little room from such "outings", her friends always noticed how radiant she was and that she was surrounded by a wonderful, delicate fragrance. Her hand, which the angel had held, especially emanated a glorious scent.

Main source: Johannes Brugman and P. Meijer OP, *Das Leben der hl. Lidwina*

Three or four times a year, Lidwina was shown a rosebush in Paradise which was small at first but, with time, grew and became always larger—a descriptive symbol of her expiatory vocation for the Church. Her Guardian Angel helped her understand that her vocation would be fulfilled when all the buds of the bush had blossomed into roses. That is why she was often asked, "Lidwina, have all the roses bloomed?" Yet her answer was always, "Many have not yet." Then, three months before her death she exclaimed, "I see the bush filled out and all the rose buds have bloomed. I will soon rise up from this valley of tears." She was right! During the Easter Octave 1433, she died at the age of fifty-three. The decay and all the wounds and abscesses disappeared from her body, which was now fully intact and exuded a pleasant scent.

# Heaven Touched the Earth

When the twenty-four-year-old farm-girl, Catherine Laboure, started her novitiate with the Sisters of Charity in the Rue du Bac in Paris on April 21, 1830, nobody in the motherhouse, especially the modest novice herself, could have suspected that Our Lady would appear to her just three months later. Only toward the end of her life did the quiet “Saint of the Miraculous Medal” write down her encounters with the Immaculata, including the first one on the summer night between July 18-19, which we recount here. In it, the Guardian Angel plays an important role. The visionary writes: “*At eleven-thirty, I heard someone calling my name, ‘Sister, sister, sister.’*” Catherine awoke and drew back the curtain around her bed which separated her from the rest of the dormitory. She saw a beautiful child standing before her, dressed in white and radiating brightly. “*This child of four or five years said to me, ‘Get up quickly and come to the chapel, the Blessed Virgin is waiting for you there.’ At once the thought struck me, someone will hear me. The child answered, ‘Do not be afraid. It is eleven-thirty, everyone is asleep. Come, I am waiting for you.’*” Catherine dressed quickly and followed the child who preceded on her left-hand

The Blessed Virgin explained to Catherine how she should conduct herself with her confessor and, above all, how to bear her suffering in a good way. She pointed with her left hand to the foot of the altar, and told Catherine to go there, kneel down and open her heart. She would receive all the consolation she needed.

“*I could not say how long I stayed with her,*” the novice admitted after the apparition had returned to heaven. Catherine stood up and realized that her little guide was there where he was standing before. “*‘She is gone,’ he said,*

side through the hallways and staircases. The child was surrounded with rays of light, and Catherine was astounded that the candles were lit wherever they went. Her surprise was even greater at the threshold of the chapel when the door opened on its own, the child scarcely having touched it with the tip of his finger. “*The climax was seeing all the torches and tapers burning. It reminded me of Midnight Mass. I did not see the Blessed Virgin. The child led me into the sanctuary where I knelt down next to the priest’s chair. There he remained the whole time. ... About midnight, I heard a noise like the rustling of a silk dress.*” That same moment, her little guide announced to her, “*Here is the Blessed Virgin.*” The figure seated herself in the chair, but Catherine hesitated to believe that it was really Our Lady. Her radiant companion spoke, no longer as a child, but as a grown man, and in the firmest tone, “*This is the Blessed Virgin!*” Catherine looked at Our Lady and flung herself toward her, and falling on her knees at the altar step, rested her hands in her lap. Many years later she was to write with ecstatic remembrance of this moment, “*it was the sweetest of my life. I cannot say what I felt.*”

*and we left the chapel and went back upstairs to the dormitory. The lights in the hall were still lit and the child was to my left. I believe that this child was my Guardian Angel, who showed himself that he might take me to see the Blessed Virgin, for I had often prayed to him to obtain this favor for me. He was dressed in white, and shone with a mysterious light that was more resplendent than light itself. He appeared to be four or five years old. Having returned to my bed, I heard the clock strike two. I slept no more that night.”*

# With Cloak and Pilgrim's Staff

*The life and works of the Bavarian mystic Mechthild Thaller-Schonwerth (1868-1919) are still widely unknown. Yet the experiences of this "Confidant of the Angels", as she is rightly known, give us a deep insight into the world and the service of our Holy Guardian Angels.*

Mechthild was born in Munich, Germany on Good Friday. Her mother nearly died in childbirth, something she never forgave the innocent child. Her mother's lack of love caused the little girl to have a deep devotion to the Crucified Lord; and at the age of four, Mechthild started seeing her Guardian Angel.

Later, God gave her another invisible guide: *"My second angel was an Archangel. He is loving, but very stern. He will strengthen me according to God's will and remain with me until I die."* This Archangel, like Mechthild's enlightened confessor who recognized the life of grace in the girl, prepared her for the approaching suffering with astonishing seriousness.

Knowing that she was called to the married state, just seventeen years old, she wedded a man who soon turned out to be a ruthless tyrant and,

after fourteen years of marriage, brought home another lover. Childless, tormented by her husband and overburdened with household chores, Mechthild had a physical collapse and suffered great pain for the rest of her life.

In return, however, God gave this spirited, well-educated woman an array of spiritual gifts. She had an intense relationship with the angels; consequently, she became a spiritual mother for priests and the Poor Souls, an experienced spiritual director for numerous laity and religious as well as the saintly Mother Superior of the Franciscans of Siessen.

Mechthild had visions and invisibly bore the wounds of Jesus on her body. Following a severe phlebitis, she was finally able to pass to her much-desired eternal home on November 30, 1919, at the age of fifty-one.

## Two consolers for the consoler

In her vocation as a counselor and a consoler, the gifted woman "worked" primarily with her Archangel, whom she called "Gabriel's companion". *"I send him to my spiritual children and ask him to help them."*

One of these spiritual children later testified, *"The Archangel appeared to Mechthild wearing different garments. If he came in light green, then it meant lesser difficulties; if he appeared in dark green, then greater suffering was on the way; if he was adorned in priestly vestments, like an alb with a stole crossed*

*over his chest, then he had a great grace to announce to her. In the evening, he often came in a brown cloak with a pilgrim's staff; that was the sign that he was picking her up."* But where were they going? On a mystical "outing" in bilocation.

The angle threw a grey cloak over her and off she went with him to the Western Front during the First World War, for example, where Mechthild, just like St. Anna Schaffer, spent many nights on the battle field or in the infirmary caring for the wounded. Some of them even recognized her

when they returned home. She also went to Belgium to move dying sinners to conversion.

Another time, the angel led her into a church where the tabernacle had been broken into and the consecrated Hosts had been scattered and trampled. *“I was allowed to gather with my Archangel the slivers of the Holy Hosts which were still laying on the floor and some of which were stuck to the shoes of the evil-doers, and then do expiation before the tabernacle.”*

Naturally, both angels also consoled Mechthild in her suffering. *“I took refuge today with the angels. I saw my Guardian Angel in radiant glory before me. He bowed over my bed and said to me, ‘You are not alone. See, I guard you day and night ... dry your tears and bring your prayers before the Lord. My brother,*

*Gabriel’s companion, is with you again too; he brings you much strength to endure much bitterness. ... Take courage!’”*

The angel never tired of exhorting Mechthild to patiently accept out of love for God what the angels as pure spirits cannot do, namely suffer. *“Thank God for it rather than complain! Bear all pain united with Jesus’ suffering and death. ... How happy and enviable you are because you can and may carry so much.”* The Archangel Raphael, the powerful Angel of Consolation, let her know, *“How great is the value of suffering! No human being can truly grasp it, just as no human being can grasp the loftiness and grandeur of a priest’s dignity. ... This understanding is also reserved for the beatitude of eternity.”*

Once, Mechthild was admonished by the Archangel, *“Strive that all you think and do begins and ends in God.’* When I said I found it difficult because it requires constant vigilance, I received the answer, *‘For God’s sake, nothing should be too difficult for you. ... Liberate your heart from everything worldly, and God will live in it. Give your Creator and Lord your whole heart, and He gives you all His love!’”*

## *Defender of the priesthood*

Mechthild Thaller was shown that not only people have a Guardian Angel, but also dioceses, parishes, monasteries, convents and seminaries each have their own powerful sentinel.

One day, the angel of the local seminary came to Mechthild. *“He belonged to the choir of ‘Thrones’ and is an overwhelming majesty, full of high dignity, full of holy earnestness. He requested me to remember the seminary daily in my prayers and suffering: ‘Nobody thinks of me, nobody calls on me, and yet God has given me such power!’”*

Mechthild’s Archangel, on the other hand, warned already at the beginning of the twentieth century, *“Currently, the Devil is working se-*

*cretly and hiddenly for the deception of souls; he’s working on loosening the morals and convictions of Faith in future priests. ... Poison has been injected into them without them even realizing it ... and the Devil will be more successful than in the time of the Reformation.”*

Sometimes, the “Companion of the Angels” was allowed to see her spiritual director’s lofty angel, like when he came to visit her with a fellow priest friend.

*“The angel appeared so authoritative and glorious that I was fully dazzled. ... In his left hand he held a scepter, the right was empty and always ready to support, guide and bless my director.”*

Translated from: Friedrich von Lama,  
Ein Büchlein von den Engeln,  
Stein am Rhein 2003

# The Angel's Shoes

Servant of God Giuseppina Berettoni (1875-1927) spent most of her life in Rome. A woman of deep faith, she prayed intensely for the conversion of “big fish”, was an expiation soul for priests and lived an untiring apostolate for the poor. She was known by the needy throughout the city for her charity although she only had the bare necessities for herself.

The pious, good-hearted sisters Maria and Teresa Borzelli, who owned a laundry-mat on the via Ripetta, knew this all too well. From the first day these two Romans’ hospitably took the

It was 1906, when the doorbell rang once again at the Borzelli sisters’ apartment. An ashamed, poor old woman stood at the door. Giuseppina, who was just on her way out to go into town, patiently listened, as she often did, to the sad story of the sick, elderly visitor. Her eye caught a glimpse of her swollen, enflamed feet inside her tattered and worn shoes.

Without hesitation, Giuseppina took off her own shoes and politely offered them to the needy woman, assuring her that she had another pair, even though that was not really the case. After the grateful old woman had departed, Giuseppina had to calm down Maria Borzelli who was upset over her generosity with no limits. Giuseppina was certain, *“I will not have to buy new shoes because my heavenly groom will surely not leave me barefoot.”* Providence will provide.

Since there was no visible sign of “when” that might be, Giuseppina put on her slippers so that she could finally head into town and run some errands. Just then, insistent ringing announced the next visitor. Teresa, the younger and more tolerant of the two sisters, opened the door.

Waiting outside was a well-dressed young man who gallantly handed her a package wrapped in a fine silk cloth with an elegant, hand-written

twenty-seven-year-old Giuseppina into their apartment, a day did not pass from 1902-1907 in which somebody did not knock at their door looking for help.

Over the course of years though, it simply became too much. Although Giuseppina, whom they considered a holy soul and consoler, helped them out in the shop, she was away most of the time assisting the orphans and homeless, teaching catechism in the parish to prepare children for First Holy Communion or often, even in bilocation, visiting the sick, imprisoned and dying.

address: “Ms. Giuseppina Berettoni c/o the Borzelli Sisters”.

*“I did not order anything,”* Giuseppina told him.

The young man replied with a radiant smile, *“They are shoes. You do not have to pay for them.”*

*“But I didn’t order any, and I am not expecting a gift,”* Giuseppina resisted.

Yet with calm certainty, the stranger replied, *“They were sent to you from a place where orders aren’t necessary.”*

Puzzled, Giuseppina dared a last objection, *“These shoes surely won’t fit me. One has to try them on first.”*

The young man’s response was quick and final, *“The one who sent them knows everything about you, even your shoe size!”* And quick as the wind, the unusual messenger hurried down the stairs. Giuseppina opened the box and saw a pair of light brown leather shoes with decorative straps which buttoned at the side. What first-class craftsmanship! Teresa could not contain herself and exclaimed, *“They certainly come from heaven,”* while helping Giuseppina try them on. They fit perfectly. Giuseppina wondered no more. Divine Providence had made itself visible



many times in her life through such surprises. Were these shoes not too elegant for her modest appearance, though?

That same evening, she went to see her spiritual director, Fr. Alberto Blat, who diffused her concern with a single phrase, “*But you*

*need shoes. So, keep them on and use them to continue the path of your apostolate! And besides,*” the otherwise very serious Dominican added, “*isn’t it possible that once in a while the Lord enjoys dressing his bride who has given up everything for Him?*”

Translated from: Lia Carina Alimandi, *Un Esempio di Solidarietà Cristiana*, Editore Mario Ponzio 1988

## A Second Curé of Ars

“*I have a second Curé of Ars in my parish!*” said the Cardinal of Paris, Léon-Adolphe Amette, about his contemporary Fr. Johann Eduard Lamy (1853-1931).

The son of a humble farmer, Johann Eduard was born in 1853, in the little French village of Pailly, close to Paris. Since he shared a room with his sister, she witnessed how her brother “*spent the whole night in prayer kneeling erect on a stool in front of an image of the Immaculate Conception. ... I did not wake up a single time without finding my brother in that position.*” Therefore, it is not surprising that he felt a calling to the priesthood on the day of his First Holy Communion. Yet since the family lost everything

they owned in a fire, training at the seminary for Eduard was out of the question. At the age of twenty-two, he was drafted for the military where he lost his right eye forever. Nevertheless, the Oblates of St. Francis de Sales made it possible for him to receive theological training in return for him spending fifteen years helping to care for the boys entrusted to them. When he was finally ordained a priest in 1886 at the age of thirty-three, he became an even more self-offered shepherd for the souls of these boys. “*I frequently heard 250 to 280 confessions one after the other—day and night,*” he later reported. It brought forth fruit: twenty-three priests came out of the group during the time he looked after them.

His first parish, La Courneuve near Paris, was a meeting point for street people.

Fr. Lamy soon became known as the Pastor of the Poor, well beyond his village. People came great distances to participate in his Holy Masses or to make their confessions to him. Along with the needy, he was especially concerned with the boys and girls living in an institution. It is no wonder that heaven had to stand by him with such a work load! Not only did Our Lady appear over and over again to Fr. Lamy to strengthen and guide him, but the angels and saints were also his helpful com-

panions. His friend, philosopher Count Dr. Biver, wrote, “*All Father’s closer acquaintances could tell at some point that he spoke to invisible beings; and, with few exceptions, they also heard the voices of his heavenly companions.*” Dr. Biver witnessed such a conversation for the first time on November 19, 1927. He had accompanied Fr. Lamy to his bedroom, and went to lay down in the room next door. “*It must have been only two or three minutes before I heard through the relatively thin door the friendly conversation in the adjoining room. There*

were three men's voices which were clear and easily distinguishable in the complete silence of the night. The rare event quickly made me very curious since I was immediately aware of its great significance.

"On the way to church the next morning, I said, 'Father, after you wished me a good night last evening, I heard you still speaking

*T*here are many stories to tell about Fr. Lamy's Guardian Angels. The residents of the area remembered one of these events for a long time. Once, he was hurrying home from the shrine "Our Lady of the Forest", which he had built at Our Lady's request. He had his head bowed to keep from being blinded by the sun.

"Since I was practically blind anyways, I didn't see anything that was on the path in front of me. Suddenly a bicyclist appeared before me, not more than an arm's length away. In an instant, at the next turn of the wheel, he should have thrown me to the ground.

Then behold, an angel grabbed the bicycle by the front and back wheels and, together

*T*he "Second Curé of Ars" was often called to the wounded soldiers during the First World War. Sometimes there were more than eighty wagons of seriously injured men. Fr. Lamy especially experienced the powerful help

The pilgrim church "Our Lady of the Forest" (Notre Dame de Bois) close to Pailly. Countless votive offerings testify to the graces which pilgrims have received at this site. Many healings of body and soul took place through Fr. Lamy's intercession. Known as a miracle worker, he was also a sought-after shepherd of souls.

## *An apostle of the Holy Angels*

*F*r. Lamy could speak from his own experience about the angels as holy protectors of families, cities, provinces and states, and he did it frequently because he urgently wanted to promote their veneration.

"We do not attribute the recognition to

and noticed other voices as well. Were they your Guardian Angels'?"

"Smiling, he responded, 'It is possible, because they are my consolation in the evening.'

"As I continued to question him, Fr. Lamy finally had to admit that I had heard the voices of his angels."

with the rider, placed them carefully in the ditch on the side of the road. Weight doesn't make any difference for an angel.

"The guy stared at the heavenly athlete and me with such bewildered eyes that I did all that I could to keep from laughing.

"As I walked passed him and tipped my hat at the angel, a second bicyclist came racing toward us at full speed. The first one called out to him, 'There's two of them, there's two of them!' I assume he meant the angel and me. Our Lady had the great goodness of entrusting me to the protection of my heavenly friend, which, with my bad eyes, proved to be very helpful."

of his Guardian Angel on these occasions. "He enlightened my conscious as bright as day. And so, I could rapidly give absolution along with burying the dead, celebrating Holy Mass and God knows what all else I still had to do."

our protector spirits as they deserve, and we do not pray enough to them. If only we would take more advantage of them! They consider us to be their needy brothers, and therefore their goodness towards us is inexhaustible. No friend is as faithful as your angel! And what

*a memory he has! He remembers everything. Here on earth, they share with somebody what they have to say, and then they disappear again. How little we are in comparison to them! Our Guardian Angels frequently shield us from accidents. Therefore, we should entrust ourselves completely to their protection. But if we are not in a state of grace, then he is powerless. However, if we are faithful to the Lord, our angel is given a free hand with us. He is always at our side, but we do not implore him enough with our requests.*

*“I never saw angels with wings; they*

*always appeared as youthful boys. Their goodwill towards us is even reflected in their faces. Actually, it would not take much and we would be able to see them. It is as if a thin membrane separates us from them. As for me, I often have been supported in extraordinary ways by my Guardian Angel. When I was tired, I was even carried from one place to another without even realizing it. I only had to say, ‘Oh God, I’m so tired!’ If I happened to be at the furthest end of my parish, then it frequently occurred that I inexplicably was carried back to St. Lucy’s Square in front of the rectory.”*

*W*hen the exhausted shepherd of souls went to Paris on December 1, 1931, to visit a poor sick person, the seventy-eight-year-old suffered a stroke and died a few minutes later in the presence of his friends, the Biver Family. We

have Count Dr. Paul Biver to thank for this holy priest’s biography with all its quotes and stories which he personally gathered “*in thousands of conversations*” and closely examined for their authenticity.

Translated from: Dr. Paul Biver, Pater Lamy, ein Apostel und Mystiker für die Welt von morgen. Seewen 1994

## *In the Service of Divine Mercy*

*S*t. Faustina Kowalska (1905-1938) always did her job as the “Secretary of Mercy” together with her Guardian Angel. Already as a novice, he showed her for whom she should pray in a special way for mercy: for the Poor Souls in Purgatory; and, later on, he often reminded her to pray for the dying. Through her extraordinarily faithful correspondence to be merciful “*in prayer, word and deed,*” she, of course, also drew the particular hatred of Satan. Once, a great multitude of demons blocked her path with terrible threats: “*She has snatched away everything we have*

*worked for over so many years!’ ... Seeing their great hatred for me, I immediately asked my Guardian Angel for help.”* St. Faustina testified, to our consolation, “*At once the bright and radiant figure of my Guardian Angel appeared and said to me, ‘Do not fear ... without His permission these spirits will do you no harm.’ Immediately the evil spirits vanished, and the faithful Guardian Angel accompanied me, in a visible manner; right to the very house. His look was modest and peaceful, and a flame of fire sparkled from his forehead.”* (Diary 418-419)

*Y*et St. Faustina had not only her personal Guardian Angel at her side; the further she progressed on her way of always deeper unity with

the Lord and His will, the more other angels also stood by her in different situations. A Seraph brought her Holy Communion thirteen days in a

row when she was sick in bed (see # 1676). Another time, in the autumn of 1937, a Cherub guarded her at the convent door where St. Faustina was working when revolutionaries from Cracow, who were against the Church, threatened the convent. When she recognized the danger she was in, she went to the chapel and asked the Lord for protection. *“Then I heard these words: ‘My daughter, the moment you went to the gate I set a Cherub over it to guard it. Be at peace.’ After returning from my conversation with the Lord, I saw a little white cloud and, in it, a Cherub with his hands joined. His gaze was like lightning, and I understood how the fire of God’s love burns in that look.”* (# 1271) Let us trust that God will always send us, too, a “competent” helper and assistant corresponding to our vocation and tasks!

Sr. Faustina’s report of an astonishingly lofty angel which God gave her as a constant companion alongside her Guardian Angel is very impressive: *“One day, when I was at adoration, and my spirit seemed to be dying for Him, and I could no longer hold back my tears, I saw a spirit of great beauty who spoke these words to me: ‘Don’t cry—says the Lord.’ After a moment I asked, ‘Who are you?’ He answered me, ‘I am one of the seven spirits who stand before the throne of God day and night and give Him ceaseless praise.’ ... This spirit is very beautiful, and his beauty comes from close union with God. This spirit does not leave me for a single moment, but accompanies me*

*everywhere.*

*“On the following day during Holy Mass, before the Elevation, this spirit began to sing these words: ‘Holy, Holy, Holy.’ His voice was like that of a thousand voices; it is impossible to put it into words. Suddenly my spirit was united with God.”* (# 471-472)

This angel was also with her a few months later in the spring of 1936, when St. Faustina had to go to Warsaw; she was suffering a great interior struggle. God had given her the consoling words, *“Do not fear anything. I am always with you.”* How did He prove how close He is? *“Then I saw one of the seven spirits near me, radiant as at other times, under a form of light. I constantly saw him beside me when I was riding on the train. ... When I entered the convent gate at Warsaw, the spirit disappeared.”* (# 630)

Even if we do not know the one who accompanies us, an angel is always with us.

An angel of God told St. Faustina, who was once anguished in body and soul, that his constant, invisible presence and attention sees everything we do: *“I heard an angel who sang out my whole life history and everything it comprised. I was surprised, but also strengthened.”* (# 1202)

*“I thanked God for His goodness, that He gives us angels for companions. Oh, how little people reflect on the fact that they always have beside them such a guest, and at the same time a witness to everything!”* (# 630)

# *I Saw My Angel*

*The German Jesuit Fr. Johann Baptist Reus went to Brazil as a missionary in 1900, at the age of thirty-two. That same year and in the same country, Cecy Cony was born.*

*At the age of five, she received the grace of experiencing her Guardian Angel's advice and help. Fr. Reus, an experienced mystic himself, met Cecy after she had joined the Franciscans and taken the name Sr. Maria Antonia. He took over her spiritual direction and gave her the task of writing down her childhood memories, the source of the following accounts.*

Cecy grew up in the sheltered environment of a wealthy, believing Brazilian family. Her father's preferential love and the good instructions of her nanny, Acacia, formed the fine conscience of the child very early. Cecy repented with tears even little mistakes against obedience or love because, out of compassion, she desired only to please Jesus suffering on the Cross.

She was five years old when God gave her the grace of experiencing her Guardian Angel, who accompanied and instructed her for thirty years. She wrote in her memoirs that she did not see him with her bodily eyes nor hear him with her ears, but she saw and heard him in a spiritual way which was no less real and left a great clarity in her soul.

In 1905, Cecy dressed up for Mardi Gras like all the other children and went with Acacia to the marketplace where children and adults were en-

joying themselves in their costumes. "Suddenly, somebody appeared with a horrible mask. I remember his glaring eyes to this day. He approached me and took me by the hand. I nearly died of fright. Gripped by his big hand, I went a few steps with him. Then I was aware of an angel, like I had seen him once in a picture, without seeing anything with my eyes but so clear and real as I saw the big masked figure at my side.

"I immediately thought that Jesus had sent him to stay with me and bring me home. And oddly, at the same time, the one with the mask gave me a shove and disappeared; I suddenly didn't see him anymore. After the laming shock, a gentle tranquility and peace followed with trust in the 'new' friend Jesus had sent me." Accompanied by her "new friend", Cecy returned home.

## *Silently enduring injustice*

After that, her "new friend" taught her true love; he often expected sacrifices that were truly heroic for a child. It happened one afternoon, for example, that Cecy went as usual with her governess and some of the neighborhood children

to the dairy to drink some fresh milk. The children each brought their own glass. On this particular day, the playmates were fighting with each other because Chiquita, her friend, wanted to drink from Cecy's glass, but Cecy would not give it to her.

During the struggle, the glass fell to the ground and broke.

Upset, Chiquita ran to the governess and cried, “Cecy intentionally threw the glass on the ground and broke it.” Understandably, Acacia scolded, “You ill-mannered little girl! Now you don’t have a glass and you will not have any milk; you can just watch how the other children drink theirs.”

Cecy was outraged and indignant. In the first moment, she would have loved to take Chiquita’s glass and do the same thing as she had done to

Cecy’s—but her Guardian Angel intervened. “He hindered my plan in the same way as he had hindered me recently when I wanted to steal a peach. He taught me that it is nasty to seek revenge in a lowly way; but he also showed me that poor Chiquita had made two very grave mistakes: she broke my glass on purpose and she lied. I have only the presence of my Guardian Angel to thank that I didn’t defend myself before Acacia, because I had incomparably more respect for him than for any other authority.”

## Sacrifices for Our Lady

We know from the visionary children of Fatima what a great effect little sacrifices made in love have for the salvation of souls. After twelve-year-old Cecy decided to make sacrifices out of love for Our Lady, in order to prepare herself to join the Marian Congregation, her Guardian Angel lovingly helped her. One day, the little girl who loved to snack wanted to take another piece of candy, “when my holy angel’s hand prevented me from doing so. I looked at his face and saw the seriousness I knew so well. I immediately dumped the entire contents of the bag back in the big container. In the same moment, my angel’s incomparable beatitude radiated upon me.” This look meant more to Cecy than anything in the world.

Another time, her Guardian Angel softly pushed her to give a begging woman everything

she had brought with her to eat on an excursion. Consequently, she appeared before the other children with an empty basket, it was again the loving glance of her angel which helped her to silently accept the humiliation of being laughed at by the others, even when she admitted, “Nobody knew how much it cost me.”

Once, a demon in the form of a young man wanted something more from her at a dance but her angel came to her aid and saved her from the violence of the drunkard. He kept her from telling a lie to her own advantage, and encouraged her to stand up for Jesus in front of the group of soldiers. Especially when Cecy came in contact with the poor, her angel compelled her to generosity not sparing the young girl who, each time, had to sacrifice everything she had for the needy.

## Victor in the spiritual battle

Under the firm and loving hand of her angel and accompanied by a good spiritual director, Cecy grew into a mature woman. Although until this time she had never doubted her calling to consecrated life, the twenty-year-old started having fights in this regard which she did not know

how to explain. Especially the thought of having to leave her beloved father if she joined a convent seemed to be an insurmountable obstacle to her. “To find diversion in my fights, I participated more than usual in worldly pleasures and going out. I did not find the desired distraction,

*however. On the contrary, my soul felt a strong resistance.” There was great enthusiasm for the gambling that took place on Sundays, and Cecy allowed herself to be caught up in it. “Softly, very softly, a friend’s hand rested on my shoulder. All at once everything became unpleasant to me. My soul desired anew its ideal. From that moment forward, I often felt that way. Whenever I happened to find a certain satisfaction and joy in worldly distractions, my holy friend stepped in.”*

In this way, she learned the emptiness of everything worldly and struggled her way through to

the decision she had made on the day of her First Holy Communion, namely, wanting to belong completely to God.

At the age of twenty-six, Cecy joined the Franciscans in Sao Leopoldo and received the name Sr. Maria Antonia two years later. She worked as a gifted teacher in the motherhouse until heavy spiritual fights started in 1935. She stopped feeling her Guardian Angel’s presence, and the expiatory suffering increased from year to year until the strength of the thirty-eight-year-old was finally exhausted. In the night of April 24-25, 1939, she laid her soul back into God’s hands.

Translated from: Erinnerungen von Sr. Maria Antonia, Ich sah meinen Engel, Kanisiusverlag

Although she has not yet been canonized, the religious sister is venerated as a saint in her homeland, Brazil, because shortly after her writings were published miracles started occurring.

# “Send Me Your Guardian Angel”

*The book with this title, written by Fr. Alessio Parente, is well worth reading. Fr. Alessio had the privilege of accompanying Padre Pio, and he did this with great love, developing a close relationship with him. He collected many reports, testimonies and experiences from Padre Pio’s life. In this collection, the importance of the Guardian Angel in his life and apostolate becomes evident. This article is timely since this year we celebrate the 50th anniversary of his death and 100th anniversary of stigmatization.*

One could say that the most significant figures in Padre Pio’s life were Jesus, Mary and his Guardian Angel. Confreres, friends and spiritual children varied, they came and went, but his Guardian Angel was always there. Padre Pio called his angel “*the companion of my infancy*”, and

recounts how this friendship dated back to his childhood. The angelic friend remained by his side throughout his youth, became a confidant as he matured and was a support as he grew older. Padre Pio related to his angel in an astonishingly simple and refreshingly familiar manner.

In 1912, Padre Pio’s confessor, Fr. Agostino, had an original idea. To test the sanctity of the twenty-four-year-old, he decided to write to him in a language which the young confrere and student did not speak. Padre Pio started corresponding with his confessor in Greek and French. He passed the test. For health reasons, he was living in Pietrelcina at the time under the spiritual direction of the local parish priest, Don Salvatore Pannullo, who declared under oath that Padre Pio translated a letter written by his confessor in Greek without a problem. “*He explained the contents to me literally. When I asked him how he could read and explain it, as he did not know even the Greek alphabet, he replied, ‘You all know how! My Guardian Angel explained it to me.’*”

The unusual teacher’s help went so far that Padre Pio could also write in foreign languages. Among his published letters, as a matter-of-fact, there are some which were dictated to him by his Guardian Angel; some of them were even written in French.

Fr. Alessio Parente wrote, “Being at Padre Pio’s side for almost six years ... passing through the crowd with him, as I did every day, I often heard it said, ‘Padre, as I will not be able to come to see you again, what should I do if I

*need your prayers?’* And Padre Pio would reply, ‘*If you cannot come, send me your Guardian Angel. He can take a message from you to me and I will assist you as much as I can.*’ The words, ‘*Send me your Guardian Angel*’, were regularly heard from Padre Pio’s lips.”

“One day, at about 2:30 in the afternoon, I was sitting by his side on the veranda near his room. Padre Pio was praying his rosary and there was such a peace and calm around him that I felt encouraged to approach him to ask some questions. During those years, I used to receive many letters from people asking me to seek Padre Pio’s advice on a problem of some sort. I opened a letter and, turning to Padre Pio said, ‘*Father, Mrs. B.R. seeks your counsel...*’

“To my surprise, I did not receive an answer from him but, rather, a scolding, ‘*Don’t you see that I am very busy?*’

“‘*Strange*’, I thought. ‘*He is sitting there with just a rosary in his hands and he says he is busy.*’

“While I remained silent, thinking it was not true that he was busy, Padre Pio turned to me and said, ‘*Didn’t you see all those Guardian Angels going back and forth from my spiritual children bringing messages from them?*’



“Not surprised at his words I retorted, *‘Father, I have not seen even one Guardian Angel, but I believe you because you tell people every day to send them.’* Then they talked about the letter, and Padre Pio showed great patience.”

“The unending procession of Guardian Angels to Padre Pio did not cease with the setting sun. On the contrary; at night time, I would help him to lie down for his short rest and then, positioning myself on the armchair in his room, wait for Padre Pellegrino to come on duty and assist him. Whilst waiting, I always heard Padre Pio reciting the rosary, but very often, I heard him disrupt the

“*F*ilomena Ventrella, a spiritual daughter of Padre Pio, participated in his Holy Mass every morning. *‘I was running a little late,’* she recounted, *‘and was afraid I wouldn’t make it on time.’* So I said, *‘Guardian Angel, go to Padre Pio and tell him he should wait a moment before he celebrates; and to prove that you do this favor for me, take away his calotte, his little skullcap.’*

“When I came into the church, I saw Padre Pio at the steps in front of the altar, ready to start Holy Mass. Afterwards, he said in the sacristy, *‘My dear daughter, I can’t find my calotte.’* I recalled what I had said to my Guardian Angel and told Padre Pio. He looked at me as if to say, *‘Do you believe now?’* He looked further and found his calotte in his hood.”

One night two girls from San Giovanni Rotondo were talking together at a sleep over about how everyone could send his Guardian Angel to Padre Pio with whatever message they wanted. *“I am going to send my Guardian Angel to Padre Pio to ask him to cure my Uncle Fred,”* the other replied, *‘I am going to send my Guardian Angel to Padre Pio to ask him to cure my cousin,’* and so it went.

“The next morning after Mass, they went to get Padre Pio’s blessing. He pretended to be angry saying, *‘You kept me awake all night. First you*

recitation with disjointed sentences like, *‘Tell her that I will storm Heaven for her sake,’* or *‘Tell him that I will knock at the heart of Jesus for this grace,’* or *‘Tell her that Our Lady will not refuse her this grace.’* These and other similar remarks were quite usual, but I never heard any questions!

“I realized later that Padre Pio was giving answers to the various Guardian Angels, when a few people wrote to me saying that, for some reason, they had sent their Guardian Angels to him and, almost immediately, they received the favor they requested.”

*sent me your Guardian Angel to cure your Uncle Fred,’* he said pointing to the culprit, *‘and then you sent yours asking that your cousin be cured,’* he said to the other. *‘And you kept it up all night long,’* he continued, *‘I didn’t get any sleep!’”*

“In the early months of 1946, Zi’ Orazio, as everybody called Padre Pio’s father, fell down the stairs in the house of Mary Pyle, Padre Pio’s first spiritual daughter. He was really very lucky that he was not killed by the fall. When he complained afterwards to Padre Pio about some of the pain he suffered, Padre Pio said to him, *‘Instead, thank your Guardian Angel who placed a cushion on every step!’”*

“Only today do I really understand how meaningful are Padre Pio’s words, *‘Send me your Guardian Angel!’* Yes, Padre Pio also opened my eyes. Before I met him, the Guardian Angel was an abstract being for me, something that did not have to do with the reality of my life. When I realized that many messages were exchanged between Padre Pio and his spiritual children through the help of their Guardian Angels, I discovered the one next to me. Perhaps we are not such an incredible couple as Padre Pio and his, but when I need something, I send my Guardian Angel to Padre Pio like he taught us to do while he was still with us here on earth.”

Source: Fr. Alessio Parente, *Send Me Your Guardian Angel*, Editions Carlo Tozza, 1984

# In the Mountains of Tyrol

*Dear Reader, in the following pages, three of our sisters tell about experiences with Guardian Angels in the life of their families. Sr. Francesca from the famous Ziller Valley in Austria tells her story first.*

*M*y mother, Anna Anfang, grew up in a deeply faithful, farming family in Hintertux, at the end of the Ziller Valley. There were eleven children; and, at a young age they all had to help diligently with the work. One of the children's jobs during the summer was to carry lunch up the mountain to the farmhands who were cutting fresh grass for hay at elevations over 6,000 feet, sometimes even above rocky cliffs. With tears in her eyes, Mother often recounted what happened on one of these trips:

It was the middle of the summer. Our mother, little Anna who was six years old, and her twelve-year-old sister Theresia had their turn to bring lunch to the farmhands on the mountain. But the night before, their father had told them, "*Tomorrow, on the mountain, do not go near the cliffs. Wait on the path; I will come and get you!*"

Anna, the younger of the two, carried the milk can while Theresia had the basket with all the food on her back. Before they headed out, their mother blessed them with holy water. Then they marched off. On their way, they ran into one of their aunts who warned them, "*Children, pray earnestly to your Guardian Angels today! There was a lot of rain yesterday and the rocks are going to be loose. The danger of a rock*

*O*f course, the terrible rumble of the rock slide could be heard in the village below, and their mother prayed incessantly at home. Their father, on the other hand, who had been high up in the mountain meadows since early in the morning cutting the grass, witnessed everything as it unfolded. Dismayed, he ran down the mountain with the grim expectation of finding his children

*slide is very high. Come, let us pray to the Guardian Angels right away, so that nothing happens to you."*

The three of them prayed the Guardian Angel prayer together; and, after their aunt made the sign of the Cross on their foreheads, the girls headed up the mountain.

After about an hour, the girls were traversing the middle of a steep slope when they suddenly heard a loud thunder and the violent tumbling of rocks. Anna ran to Theresia, held on tightly to the basket on her back and did not let go of the milk can. The two of them were so frightened they were frozen in place in the middle of the narrow path. Everything happened so fast. There was nowhere to run, no tree close by to hide behind as the boulders crashed to the left and right of them or raced by and giant chunks of stone flew over their heads in great arches. This went on for several minutes before, suddenly, everything was still. As if through a miracle, the girls were standing in the middle of a huge rockslide, and they did not have a scratch on them. Only a little rock had hit Theresia in the chest, but she was not hurt. They both cried in shock, but they were also thankful that their Guardian Angels had protected them so well.

buried under the rocks. When he saw his daughters standing there unharmed, however, and since everything happened at noon, the time at which the Angelus had always been prayed in Tyrol, our grandfather promised right then and there, "*No matter where I am or what I am doing, from this day forward I will pray the Angelus every day at noon—in great thankfulness for*

*the incredible protection which my family just received!” My grandfather was faithful to this promise for the rest of his life. “When we were working in the field and the Angelus bells rang*

*at noon, he always put down his scythe or rake and led the ‘Angel of the Lord’ out loud,” my mother recalled. And she continued this vow in our own family.*

## Our Slippery Rescue

*D*agmar Gotsche from Berlin visited her daughter, Sr. Maria Rosa, in July 2018. Our sister took advantage of the opportunity to ask her mother about an unforgettable experience they had once on a bicycle, so that she could recount it more precisely to you, dear readers.

“Like on every solemnity, my Mom wanted to go on January 6, 1992, with the three of us children to Holy Mass for the Feast of the Epiphany. She had me, four years old at the time, like always in the child seat on the front of the bike and my two-year-old sister, Tabea, at the back. Julia, our big sister who was seven, rode ahead on her own bike on the three-kilometer trek to the church.

The winter was cold with a lot of snow, but this morning things started to thaw leaving the roads dangerously slippery. We arrived at the stretch which, as far as Berlin goes, was a steep downhill street leading up to a heavily traveled main road which we had to cross. That meant, of course, stopping at the intersection. But how, with ice under the slushy snow!? Mom just hadn’t thought about it. Only when her speed continually increased on the way down did she realize the dangerous predicament we were in. I can only remember that she cried out, ‘Guardian Angels!’

“Later, Mom often recounted, ‘At first, I did

*not try to brake at all, because that would have been a disaster. I broke out in a cold sweat, and my only concern was the children. Yet, when at full speed, we were practically at the intersection, I suddenly felt a strange assistance; I cannot describe it any other way. In a split second, somebody brought my bicycle to a halt with invisible power, even though there was nobody around! After I easily dismounted from my bike, it seemed to me that this person just went away.’*

“Julia was already down at the main road watching for us with great concern. What she saw is no less astonishing: ‘Suddenly, there was a man standing there. He stopped Mom’s bike with a firm hand. No sooner had Mom dismounted, however, than the man disappeared just as instantaneously as he had appeared. There was no chance to exchange a word with him.’

“Praising and thanking God, yet still with a racing heart, Mom pushed her bike the rest of the way to the church. Only now, after we had been rescued, did she really understand how careless she had been. So, from that moment on, she often consciously sent her Guardian Angel ahead of us to keep our path clear when we traveled.”

# The Eyes of Children

One afternoon in July 2015, in our monastery with Perpetual Adoration in Civitella, Italy, Sr. Simone Maria, received an unusual phone call from her sister. Anna, a nurse, has been happily married for six years, and she lives with her husband and their three children on an idyllic farm in Schmirn Valley, Austria.

“Emotional, Anna explained to me what had just taken place a few hours earlier. Like every week, the neighbor and her two-year-old son, Philip, picked up Anna and her daughter, Emma, to go to a Mothers’ meeting together. Afterwards, on the way home, not quite two-year-old Emma begged that Philip be allowed stay and play with her. The answer was, ‘No!’ In front of their farm, Anna climbed out, lifted Emma out of the car, took the car seat out, said thank you and closed the car door. Then it happened!

“Unnoticed, Emma had bolted in these few seconds behind the car and, lively as she is, was able to open the back door on Philip’s side. In that moment—the car started to drive away—Anna saw that Emma would be pulled along, but all she could do was scream. Shocked by her mother’s screams and, at the same time, the hard braking of

the car, Emma started to cry. Yet, she was standing there as if nothing had happened. Amazing! The car should have dragged her along or at least pulled her over! When my sister, beside herself with fright, took Emma in her arms, the little one’s tears quickly disappeared. Later, after waking up from her nap, the first thing she said was, ‘*Mommy, there was an angel there.*’

“Anna thought that she hadn’t heard her correctly and asked, ‘*Emma, where was an angel?*’  
“*There at the car.*’

“My sister was deeply moved because she had not told her daughter anything about Guardian Angels yet, thinking that two years old was still too young. She just prays the Guardian Angel prayer out loud each night at the children’s bedside. When my communicative, busy little niece continued to speak about ‘the angel at the car’ the next day—actually, she did it for the next two or three weeks—Anna enquired: ‘*Yeah? What did the angel do?*’ With her hands, Emma touched Anna’s shoulders to demonstrate how she had been held back. When my sister told me about it on the telephone, she cried because she was so touched that her child had seen a Guardian Angel.”