

In the Name of the Father, and of the ✠ Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

The book of Tobit is not Holy Scripture. There is no guarantee that it is inspired by the Holy Spirit, nor that it is inerrant, infallible, or never contradicts itself. Among us the Apocrypha is seldom read during the Divine Service, although it at times lends itself to the sung Propers like the Introit, Gradual and Alleluia verses.

The name “Raphael” means “God has healed” in the Hebrew language. In Exodus 15 God uses the same general words as a Name for Himself: “I AM the God who heals you”, transliterated into English as “Jehovah Raphah”. But the name “Raphael” occurs nowhere in Holy Scripture. Two archangels are named in Holy Scripture, Michael and Gabriel. Raphael isn’t mentioned.

Because of the name Raphael, taken from the Apocryphal Tobit, there is a tradition in the church that the angel who stirred the healing waters in the account by St. John read today was Raphael. The Scriptures, of course, don’t name the angel.

In the Apocrypha, Raphael is named in Tobit and in I Enoch. In Tobit he hears the prayers of holy men and brings them before God, one of seven holy angels who do so. In I Enoch Raphael is the archangel who heals the earth when it was defiled by the sin of the fallen angels.

In modern liturgical calendars the commemoration of Raphael has been rolled into the Feast of St. Michael and All Angels, a Vatican II innovation. Historically the Western Church observed the Feast of St. Michael, Archangel, separately, with

the Feast of Holy Guardian Angels on October 2nd, the Feast of Gabriel, Archangel on March 24th, and the Feast of St. Raphael on this day, the 24th of October. Although the *Lutheran Service Book* combines the Feasts, Zion has never followed the dictates of the second Vatican Council.

That said, the Scripture clearly teaches that there are Archangels, and that an angel “went down at a certain time into the pool and stirred up the water”. The result of that stirring was that whoever stepped in first was healed.

The word “angel” simply means “messenger”. In the Old Testament the word “angel” is often used where “messenger” would be more appropriate. “The Angel of the Lord” in the Old Testament is a theophany of the Second Person of the Holy Trinity.

Gabriel appears twice to Daniel during the exile, as does Michael. An angel narrates several heavenly visions Zechariah. Prophetic and “apocalyptic” Books in the Old Testament feature heightened angelic activity.

In the New Testament, in the account of the Begetting and then the Incarnation of Christ, the Apostle explains: “when He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says: ‘Let all the angels of God worship Him.’ And of the angels He says: ‘Who makes His angels spirits And His ministers a flame of fire.’ But to the Son He says: ‘Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; A scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your Kingdom.’”

We can’t be sure that there was a Tobit, or that there is an Archangel Raphael. But we can be certain there are angels and Archangels, creatures of God, sinless, created spirit-beings who

never sinned, who do the Lord's bidding, who effect the Lord's will. And we can be sure that God Heals. The account of the Sheep Gate pool, Bethesda, makes this certain. Many are the accounts of Holy Scripture in which God heals the sick, raises the dead, and forgives sins, which is the greatest of healings. For it is the only healing that lasts unto eternity.

Thanks be to God, the angels protect you. That's why you pray "Let Thy holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me." The Lord Himself reveals that the little ones have angels in heaven that behold the face of God.

And in His mercy, in His great love for you, the Lord dispatches angels that a hedge of them go before and behind you for your protection, as we see in the first chapter of the Book of Job, and in Psalm 91, which the devil wrongly quoted as he failed in his attempts to cause the Incarnate Christ to sin.

But no angel has redeemed you. No angel has died for your sins. Christ alone has done that. It is the Holy Spirit that called you, and brought you to the healing pool of the Baptismal Font, where what Christ won for you is made yours. It is Christ that the angels worship, as we see when the heavens were torn open at His Holy Birth, and the angels proclaimed *Gloria in Excelsis Deo!*

It is Christ who died and rose for you. It is Christ who ascended into heaven and is seated at the Right Hand of the Father, on the celestial throne in the midst of heaven surrounded by the angels who worship Him without end. Saint Paul writes that angels are present with us here, in this Divine Service, in this Holy Mass. Thanks be to God for that.

But more than that, Christ is present here, in this Divine Service, in this Holy Mass, as He places His Body with bread and His Blood with wine for you to eat and drink that your sins be forgiven. Here, this day, at this altar He is *Jehova Raphah*, the LORD Who Heals, the God who heals you that you be forgiven, strengthened, and kept steadfast until that day when you who are eternally healed by Christ join the holy angels in heaven around His throne.

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