

Sermon: August 9, 2009

“Angels among us”

Do you believe in angels? ... the older I get, the more I do.
I think of the Christmas story ... the beautiful angels, singing, announcing Jesus’ birth!!
God’s voice ... God’s ambassadors.
How about “guardian angels”???

Every morning ... I walk out back ...and talk to my mom.
I ask her to guide me ... protect me ... help me not say anything “stupid” during my sermon.
I never believed much in “guardian angels” ... until I married a “Polish Catholic” 20 years ago ...
who talks to my mom, even tho’ she never met her!@!!

In many ways ----- angels are “the face of God.” Unusual faces, at times ... unexpected faces ...

In the first lesson for today ... Elijah is weary ... he’s sitting under a “broom tree” --- whatever that is.

He tells God he wants to die: I’m giving up ...I’m no better than anyone else ...

My guess is ---- we all feel like this, at times. I’m tired ... is it all worth it??? ... why am I here??

Well ---- an angel keeps coming back to Elijah:

Get up and eat!!

I don’t want to, replies Elijah.

Sorry, pal ----- I’m not giving up on you ... and I won’t let you give up on yourself!!

Angels are like that ... they keep coming back. Who might be your angel?

The waitress at the coffee shop? ...a friend down the block? ... your husband or wife? ...
that ordinary person who builds you up!!

Every morning I walk our dog along the forest preserve path. Once in a while ... Q will ride his bike with us.
An older man walks the same path. I’m thinking now of the song by Alabama ... “Angels among us” ... about
an old man in the woods, who guides a young boy home.

His name is John he walks one way ... I walk the other ... I could set my watch by his appearance ...
that’s how regular John is. He stops ... and pets mydog ... says “hi” to Q ... if Q is not there ... he asks
about him. All I know ----- John is his name ... he loves his family ... his wife is very sick.

John has “disappeared” ... haven’t seen him for a long time.

Even Q one morning asks me: “Where is your friend? ... he is your friend, right? ... we should invite him to
our house sometime ... I could show him my airplanes!!” ---- there are no “strangers” in Q’s world!!

I tell Q ---- I don’t know where John is.

I get a call from Colonial Chapel ----- yes, I know the drill ... someone has died without a church home ...
and I am on your short list!!

I walk into the funeral home ... about half-an-hour before the service starts ... to meet the family.

There is JOHN ----- standing next to the casket. This funeral is for his wife.

I look at John ... my eyes start to “water.”

John sees me. He cries.

“I didn’t know you are a minister.”

“John, you never asked.”

“I had no idea this is your family ... the service is for your wife ... my son Q and I have been
worried about you.”

My chance-encounters with John. The walks. The moments. And now a funeral.

This all reminds me when the “human spirit” is allowed to be pure ...
when it comes to life in its simplest forms: THERE ARE NO STRANGERS.

Each person we meet ... each twist in the road ----- there just might be an “angel.”
Angels: the face of God ----- God’s presence, God’s spirit, God’s goodness.

You and I ... we know what it’s like.

You walk out of the hospital ... your loved one is hurting ... and so are you.
You stand at the street corner ... waiting for the light to turn green. You are alone and sad.
A stranger is standing next to you: you look into his eyes he is hurting, too ... you can feel it.
You nod ... give him a soft smile ... he nods back.
An angel. A moment.

We live in a harsh, noisy world ... very divisive, too.
We can’t change the world but ----- we can “change the moment.”
We can use our spirit ... we can make a difference ---- one person, one moment at a time.

I think of Gladys this morning. In a way ... she is “sitting under a broom tree” ----- tired, waiting, longing for eternal rest. Angel after angel comes into her room ----- reminding her ... each day has worth, and dignity, and meaning.
Our friend Alan’s dad had his own “broom tree.” He had a niche ... a long niche ... and now he is in a kingdom of rest & peace & healing.

I saw John Trier yesterday ... most of you don’t know him ... he hasn’t been a “member” very long. He’s been in the hospital a long time ... it’s been quite a journey for him and his wife Anita.
I get into his room ... a nurse is working gently ... giving John a transfusion.
John looks at me: “Pastor ... I need COMMUNION!!”
I reach into my “Norm Van Lier” backpack (I feel Norm’s presence whenever I have it with me!!) ... and out pops my traveling “Communion kit.” John smiles.
I ask the nurse ... would you like to join us???? ----- she smiles ... YES!!

I look at John ... I look at the nurse ...
This morning I wonder: *WHO IS YOUR ANGEL TODAY?*

*Where is your broom tree?
The face of God ... where do you see it?*

ANGELS ... they are closer to us than we ever thought possible!

Don Borling
All Saints Lutheran Church
13350 LaGrange Road
Orland Park, IL 60462
August 9, 2009
www.allsaintsjoy.com allsaintsjoy@sbcglobal.net 708-448-2939