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“O Lord, you have probed me and you know me” (Psalm 139:1).

Job 38:1, 12-21; 40:3-5; Ps 139: Matt 18:1-5, 10

Today’s commemoration of Guardian Angels is a way to personify the deeper theme of God’s absolute knowledge of us within Creation. Because God is the source of everything, the “Ground of Being,” in the words of philosopher Paul Tillich, nothing exists apart from God’s knowledge and sustaining care.

The readings for today’s liturgy encompass the immensity and the intimacy of this truth. Job is overwhelmed by the voice of God out of the storm, reminding him that everything in heaven and on earth is the work of the Creator. Job, who has sought an explanation from God for his suffering, is silenced by this divine display of power compared to his insignificance.

Psalm 139 repeats this message in the most intimate terms. There is nothing about us that God has not probed. In today’s Gospel, Jesus reminds his disciples that little children, above all, are to be respected as a reflection of God’s care because “their angels in heaven always look upon the face of my heavenly Father.”

Angels (Greek for “messengers”) are intermediaries between heaven and earth, and they are a pure link to the divine in children because they are still innocent of pride and incapable of duplicity. We acknowledge their vulnerability and abhor the abuse of children. Their beauty is an aspect of our physical world that reminds us that

everything is sacred, especially each human person as an embodiment of the image of God.

This spiritual reality is inaccessible to science but evident in our experience of just how much human consciousness and our relationships exceed any analysis of just our bodies. Doctors can probe the structures and processes that sustain us with CT, PET or MRI scans, blood tests that monitor the chemical and molecular reactions that support physical life, but they still cannot fully explain a living human being from conception to the moment of death.

The eyes of faith invite us to celebrate God' intimate knowledge and care for us. Christian piety invites us to imagine this care in the form of spiritual guardians that guide us during our earthly sojourns, prompting and protecting us as we make decisions and deepen our response to God's grace in all our encounters and experiences.

An astute leader named Abraham Lincoln once encouraged us to follow the "better angels of our nature" by guiding our national life to end destructive divisions and build that "more perfect union" expressed in our founding documents. As we approach our national elections, no polls or computers will record the activity of angels, but we can still imagine how we, as guardians of one another and the social compact, can influence the outcome. We do this not only for ourselves, but as one way to fulfill the sacred duty Jesus gave his disciples to protect the future for the children entrusted to us.

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