

HOW angels LEAD US TO JESUS

The role of God's messengers in our Catholic faith

» *Lee Danesco*



After Pope Benedict XVI broke his wrist last July, he joked, "Unfortunately, my own guardian angel did not prevent my injury, certainly following superior orders." Even though he could make light of his own injury, the pope would agree with Lee Danesco that angels are not fluff. Take a look at how she teaches about the role of angels in our lives. ∞ N70

Even though their images cheerfully adorn everything from t-shirts to letterhead, angels are definitively not fluff. To the contrary, angels are a "truth of faith" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 328). Angels are part of both Scripture and tradition. They are not simply fantasies.

As teachers and catechists, our challenge is to explain the role of angels to children. I turn to the Scriptures of Advent and Christmas for guidance. In the activity below, I encourage learners to use the readings of the season to shine light on the work done by angels, work that leads us to Jesus.

Who did what?

Lead a guessing game that connects famous people to their work. Prepare five flash cards, each bearing the name of a famous person.

Examples:

Thomas Edison
Hillary Clinton
Tiger Woods

As you hold up each name, ask learners to identify what work each person does or did.

Example:

Tiger Woods—Golf Pro

Discuss briefly what we learn about a person by knowing his or her occupation.

Biblical who's who

Expand on the concept of linking persons to their jobs. This time, shift the focus to Bible characters. Direct learners to work in pairs.

Give each pair a large index card on which to write the names of five Old and New Testament characters (exceptions: God, Jesus, Holy Spirit).

Examples:

Isaiah
Eve
Matthew

Ask your learners to pass completed cards to another group. Then ask each pair to read the names of the characters on the card they have received. Ask them to identify the role each character played in God's plan for salvation. As they do, they should write that "occupation" after the character's name.

Example: Isaiah—prophet

Discuss the results of this activity. Stress the person and work connection.

The work of angels

Against this backdrop, ask learners this pivotal question: What job do you think angels do?

Give learners time to discuss this question in pairs. Record their responses on a white board.

Read Luke 1:19: "I am Gabriel, who stands before God. I was sent to speak to you and to announce to you this good news." Compare the

angel's description of his own work to learners' answers.

Together, work toward understanding the explanation found in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*: "With their whole beings, the angels are servants and messengers of God" (329).

Messages for us

Scripture teaches us that the job of angels is often to serve God by bringing his messages to people like Zechariah (Lk 1:8-14), Mary (Lk 1:26-35), and the shepherds near Bethlehem (Lk 2:8-14). In this concluding exercise, learners consider how the work of angels also has meaning for us.

In advance, copy these five messages announced by the angels to the shepherds in Luke 2:8-14. Copy one message per paper strip and create enough strips to provide one message per pair. (Some pairs will have the same message.)

- "Do not be afraid."
- "I proclaim good news of great joy that will be for all the people."
- "Today in the city of David a savior has been born for you who is Messiah and Lord."
- "This will be a sign for you: You will find an infant wrapped in swaddling

clothes and lying in a manger."

- "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests."

Distribute the message strips. Instruct pairs to read their message. Then they are to work together to determine what the message means—both to the shepherds and to us. Ask for volunteers to share their findings with the entire group.

Use your shared discussion to establish that the work of the angels was to bring an amazing message from God to the shepherds near Bethlehem, a message that led them to Jesus. Discover together that today, as clearly as on that first Christmas, it remains the work of angels, through Scripture, to announce the coming of the Savior, encourage our faith, call us to worship, and lead us to Jesus.

And that's not fluff. RTU



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Angel search

Angels are not simply marvels of the Nativity scene, to be examined once a year. Rather, they are constant and active participants in salvation history appearing throughout Scripture. Encourage your learners to expand their understanding of the role of angels in our Catholic faith. Use this angel search or similar searches you create yourself throughout the year.

Direct learners to discover the presence and identify the work of angels in each of these passages from the New Testament in the left-hand column below (teacher and catechist hints are in right-hand column).

Search for	Discover angels at work
Matthew 2:19-20	With Joseph
Luke 22:43	During the agony in the garden
Mark 1:12-13	When Jesus is tempted
Matthew 28:2-6	At the tomb

Share your findings.

