

In Jesus' name. **Amen.**

Dearly Beloved,

On this feast day of St. Michael's and All Holy Angels Day,  
we are presented with a text that showcases the ministry of the Word.

Isaiah 6 is the account of Isaiah's call into the prophetic ministry.

This scene takes place in the heavenly temple, but has very earthly realities.

While it might seem like worlds away from us, the truth is

that what is taking place in this earthly temple, this house of God, has very heavenly realities.

And though we cannot see the realities, we have God's Word to verify it.

*We read as follows in Jesus' name:*

---

And one [seraph] called to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory!"

And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke. And I said: "Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!"

Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a burning coal that he had taken with tongs from the altar. And he touched my mouth and said: "Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for." (ESV)

*This is Your Word, heavenly Father; **sanctify us in the truth, Your Word is Truth.** Amen* (John 17:17)

---

The Lord is preparing us to be in His completely revealed glory someday.

Entering on the scene, the glory and holiness of the Lord is immediately evident.

He is high and lifted up; even the train of His robe takes up the whole space.

The angels, despite today's celebration, are not the focal point but instead,  
these, like all faithful ministers, point us to the Lord.

They, in every way, are shown to honor and serve the Lord as their principal concern,  
with all fear, love, and trust, and in so fearing, loving and trusting then to serve God's people.

Even as awesome as these beings are, their demeanor in God's presence is humble and reverent;  
they cover their faces and feet before Him who is the source of their holiness.

They sing antiphonally (they sing back and forth to each other) words of continual praise,  
praise that is not quieted by doubts or uneasiness,

but sung boldly and confidently so that the foundations of the temple shake.

They sing, "**Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory!**"

And it is their spirited song that shakes us out of our awe and wonder, as it did Isaiah.

Isaiah was brought back to the reality that he was exactly the opposite, he was unholy.

He expressed this with his confession, "**Woe is me! For I am lost;**

**for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips.**"

Though Isaiah was a believer already, the guilt of his sin still clung to him and caused him fear.

He forsook all pride, all thoughts of his own innocence or self-righteousness.

People loved by God, This is what happens when we recognize we are in the presence of holiness.

It causes us to examine ourselves and gives us immediate shame and guilt,

just as you would showing up to a very formal event in nothing but swimwear.  
It's like that because you recognize that God can see right through you.  
He knows your hypocrisy. He knows the thoughts behind the words you say.  
He is not fooled by your justifications for disobeying His commandments.  
He knows when you obey Him simply because you are afraid of punishment,  
instead of because of your *fear, love, and trust in Him above all things*.

And notice that Isaiah does not imagine that he is any better than those he dwells among.  
It would do no good to try to compare himself with them. Failure is failure.  
“**Be holy as I, the Lord your God, am holy,**” does not mean, “Be holier than other sinners.”  
But the same sin lurking in his heart and expressing itself through his unclean lips,  
is the same sin lurking in our hearts and expressing itself through our unclean lips and hands.

Each of us, from our conception, has this unholiness corrupting our lives and bodies.  
Even the youngest among us, *even Vivienne*, cannot be mistaken for a holy cherub or seraph.  
Though they look so innocent and perfect, we must not mistake their civil righteousness/  
worldly innocence for spiritual holiness; There is uncleanness that lies hidden in the heart.

How can we know this?  
Simply from experience we see that we need not teach an infant to seek revenge, or to lie,  
or to hit in anger, or to disobey.  
And as the Lord has revealed to us that **the wages of sin is death**,<sup>Romans6:23</sup>  
to our great sorrow and grief occasionally we suffer their deaths.  
But what is more, and even more sure, is the Word which we hear from Christ, like in today's Gospel;  
there we heard Jesus speak about the fact that children need to be brought to Him,  
and that they can indeed fall into sin, which is not simply to say that they sin, but even to fall away.  
This sin that we see even from our beginning continues to grow and express itself in our lives,  
in our unclean thoughts, words, and actions.

It is on account of both the inbred sin of our hearts, as well as the sins that we perpetrate,  
that we grieve and have shame as we consider our unholiness in the presence of God.  
So it is on this account that when we come into this house of God and gather before His presence  
that we never presume to do it based upon our own goodness, or more realistically, ungoodness.  
It is on this account that when we come into this house of God that we do so in great humility,  
and, like Isaiah, each one of us confesses our own uncleanness and bears it all before God.

And it is on this account that our Lord sent His **malach**, His angel, His messenger to Isaiah.  
The Lord wouldn't allow Isaiah to wallow in his guilt and shame.  
As Isaiah stood there in self-examination, self-condemnation, considering what he deserved,  
a seraph came to him with a burning coal in his hand and a vital message upon his lips.

The Lord hadn't brought Isaiah to scenes of heaven to send him away in judgment and condemnation.  
He brought him there to comfort him, to embolden him, and to call him into His service.  
Isaiah would need that comfort and emboldening, because, as the Lord had said,  
Isaiah would be preaching to people who would not listen to him,  
to a people who would refuse to confess their sins and thus refuse their Savior,

to a people who would not see the spiritual realities happening around them,  
thinking that they had no need for such a One.

To comfort Isaiah, the Lord sent the angel with the altar's coal with which to touch his unclean lips,  
and with the words of absolution, to calm his terrified soul.

To embolden him, the same: the angel came with the altar's coal and words of Absolution.

That this act and word were powerful is seen in Isaiah's immediate response to the Lord's question:

**"Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?"**

**"Here I am! Send me,"** and then sought more information about his task.

People loved by God,

Neither does the Lord bring you here, to His house, to be in His presence,  
in order to send you away in judgment and condemnation.

He brings you here to comfort you & embolden you for the holy callings  
that He has bestowed upon you.

And for this, He sends His messengers, not celestial spirits, but fellow sinner/saints.

They bear with them the call and authority also given to the seraph and to Isaiah,  
to bring the holy gifts from the altar of the Lord and administer them to His people, and  
to speak God's word of absolution to those who confess and repent of their sins.

These ministers bear with them the water and the Word to wash away sins, to cleanse what is unclean.

They bear with them, not just a coal, but the very sacrifice of the altar of God, crucified and living,  
namely the body and blood of the Lamb that was slain there, Jesus Christ your Lord.

As these earthly/heavenly gifts, touch your unclean lips, the guilt of your lips, heart, and hands  
is taken away, and God's good will toward you is confirmed in His forgiveness.

*They comfort you by His Holy Absolution and strengthen you with His Sacraments  
that your joy may be full.*

People loved by God,

Here in this place, we come in reverence and awe, in humility and faith to be in God's presence.

And here, with emboldened hearts and lips, cleansed by Christ, we join with the angels & archangels  
singing their heavenly song, **"Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth,**

***heaven and earth are full of Your glory.***

And then join with them the song of the Palm Sunday pilgrims, **"Hosanna"**, that is **"Save now,"**  
***in the highest. Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.***

So wonderful is this salvation that Peter writes even **the angels long to look into this mystery.**<sup>1Peter1:12</sup>

Consider His grace then to have the opportunity to come into God's most holy presence  
to stand before His throne, and in the presence of His holy altar week after week.

And week after week He cleanses you from all your sin and declares you holy  
with your guilt taken away and your sins atoned for by the blood of Christ.

**Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost,**

**as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, forevermore. Amen.**

*Soli Deo Gloria*