

The Importance of What is Unseen



When listening to the beginning of a sermon on Michael and All Angels Day, (September 29), I was reminded of the importance in our lives of what we do not see with our eyes. We sometimes say or hear others say, “I will only believe it, if I see it”. Yet we all believe, and need to believe, in some things we do not see. We catch a train by going to the empty station before the time we are told it will arrive. We use our phones to send emails to people overseas or next door, believing the emails will go but not seeing them go. And so on.

As Christians, to believe in what we cannot see is vital to our lives. We cannot see God. We may have seen paintings of God, but what are they? We do have written evidence of the life of Jesus, but our belief in God’s existence and love for us is something more, it guides and shapes our whole lives.

In the Nicene Creed we say, “We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.” In this creed we affirm our belief in a God who is the maker of all, “seen and unseen.”

We know what is seen, but what is meant by ‘unseen’ in this context? There are emotions or feelings such as love, fear and joy, that we do not see, but we do see their expressions in our own acts and those of others. Angels are also unseen by us, and I wish to focus on them. We read about angels, particularly in the Bible, and their relationships with God and humans. They love and obey God, take messages from God to people, and at times protect or care for

people.

In the Rule of our Community, The Sisters of the Church, our founder, Mother Emily, placed us under the patronage of Michael, (pictured on the front of this reflection), and the angels. She did this because she saw the lives of the angels, “pointing us to a life both of worship and active ministry, of mingled adoration and action”. Like the unseen angels, we are called to love our God, and express that love in our relationships with all God’s creation, human and non-human. This is, of course, the calling of all Christians.

In Revelation 12, we are told of a battle between Michael and his angels and the Devil or Satan and his angels, which is for us, an unseen conflict by unseen beings, basically between good and evil. We know about conflicts in our own lives between good and evil. In the story of Michael’s life, he defeated the Devil but did not kill him. Instead, the Devil and his angels were thrown down from heaven to earth. Here on earth, the Devil was conquered by the power of Jesus’ death on the cross, described as, “the blood of the Lamb”, but again not destroyed. In a sense, an unseen victory over the Devil and evil, has already been achieved, but there is still work for us to do.

Michael could have killed the Devil with his spear, and God could have controlled our world by eliminating evil from it, but this did not happen. Evil, pain, fear and suffering, seen and unseen, along with our free will to choose good and evil, are part of human life on earth. God helps us to work through these difficult times and so to grow in God’s love. In Jesus’ life, he struggled before accepting to undergo a horrible death by crucifixion, that in the end brought new life, resurrection, redemption and hope for all.

Returning to the lives of worship and active ministry of Michael and his angels, these two activities can be linked together in various ways. One way is when we believe God our creator, although unseen, is present in some form in all creation, human and non-human. Then, I suggest, that we worship God not only in hymns and prayers, but also whenever we appreciate and minister to any part of God’s creation that we see.

In our relationships with nature, we worship our unseen God, when we give thanks for and enjoy the beauty of nature, and when we serve nature. In the ABM Season of Creation which ended on October 4, the feast day of St Francis

of Assisi, patron saint of ecology, we are urged to work at healing nature. We can do this by recycling when we can, using more solar and wind power, and working with nature by planting more trees, caring for animals and plants facing extinction, and conserving land, etc.. The unseen worship of God and seen active ministry merge.

Then there are the many people of the world, those we meet each day, as well as those we do not know even exist. Do we respect and reverence them, and ourselves, because we all are God's creation, and God's unseen presence is in us all? Jesus taught his followers to pray, "Our Father...", so all people are children of God, our brothers and sisters we are to love and care about. I feel drawn to try to smile at people I pass in the street. Some smile back at me, others do not. We also are called to listen to, and help those in distress when we can. Again, worship of God and active ministry merge.

When we respect, reverence, love and serve all God's creation, human and non-human, we are surely following the example of the unseen angels, worshipping and ministering to our unseen God who loves us and is present in all of us, the seen and unseen.

*Sister Helen CSC
October 2025*