

Red-Shirted Messengers of God
 St. Michael's and All Angels, Lincoln Park
 September 20, 2026
 The Rt. Rev. Dr. Bonnie A. Perry

May the God who creates us, redeems us, and sustains us, be with us this day, and remain with us always. Amen.

Good Morning!

You know what I love about St. Michael's? Everywhere I go, if you are there, I know! You all show up. And you show up proud, your red shirts are legendary, at least in my mind. Whether it is for an ordination of someone you love, like when your very own Rob Cheleman when he was ordained to the diaconate, or when you attend a diocesan event, or sometimes even Diocesan Convention your red shirts are an outward visible sign of God's inward spiritual grace acting in your lives. Your presence out in the world is sacramental: an outward visible sign of God's inward spiritual presence. In a world that is hard, that presence, pointing to something beyond yourself, your presence matters. More, I think than you can understand.

St. Michael and All Angels. Angels. Angels. The Greek word for messengers of God, '*angelos*'. This morning's readings celebrating the feast of St. Michael and All Angels give us a couple of fairly far-flung examples of angels. Let's look at the reading with Jacob: a twin, born to Rebekah and Isaac. Remember? Isaac, son of Abraham and Sarah, the opening salvo of God's promise to Abraham that his descendants would be as numerous as the stars. Now Isaac, grown his wife Rebekah, gives birth to twins: Esau and Jacob. Esau, born first is said to have come out of his mother's womb with his twin brother's hand grasping his little baby ankle. Jacob, hanging onto his older brother almost making it look as if he is trying to push past him and travel down the birth canal first.

Esau, likes to hunt. Jacob likes to plot and plan, some would say scheme. Esau, low-key and easygoing is his father's favorite. Mostly because Esau hunts amazing game that he brings home for his elderly father to eat. Jacob is perhaps the first mama's boy recorded in scripture. Rebekah and Jacob, plot and plan for Jacob to receive his Isaac's blessing and for all intents and purposes, disinherit his older brother Esau. And of the two, from a cursory reading of scripture it appears that God favors Jacob, over Esau. I don't know what to do with this exactly, except to say, the good news for us, the flawed, frail people that we are, well God can seemingly work with and through anyone, regardless of our character defects.

Our story today picks up with Jacob quickly getting out of town because Esau has not taken kindly to Jacob stealing his father's blessing. While Jacob travels, he lays down to sleep for the night. While sleeping he dreams. In his dreams he sees that he is positioned at the foot of the stairway to heaven. In his dreams he sees angels, messengers of God, ascending and descending from heaven to earth and back again on a ladder of some sort. Up and down the angels go, from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven they go. Then having prepared the way for God, The lord appears at the top of the stairway upon which the angels have been traveling. The Lord says, to Jacob and all who have ears, "*I am with you now...Your*

descendants will be like the dust of the earth and spread everywhere...I will bless you. I will protect you," (Genesis 28:15).

Jacob wakes from the dream, changed forever. He marks the place for he is filled with awe, and says, *"This sacred place is awesome. It's none other than God's house and the entrance to heaven,"* (Genesis 28: 17).

Jacob marks the place, calls it Bethel, *house of God*, so all will know that access to God is here and God acts.

What does this have to do with us? What does this have to do with [you] the good people of St. Michael's and All Angels?

This. In a chaotic world that may feel as if it is one continuous wave of difficult events after another: we have a war we started in Iran, putting civilians and military people in harms way, here in our own country people with brown skin are being apprehended off our streets with no due process, no due process of law, in our country that has guaranteed people on our soil for 250 years due process, now as we are approaching a mid-term election in a very swing state with polarity and apprehension, with all of this happening, we need more angels. We need more messengers of God, who will point the way to God, and reminds us God has acted and God will act.

That is where you, my red-shirted friends of St. Michaels and All Angels and all the people of good will come into play. Whether you are sitting down in church or standing up in City Hall, you are bearing witness to God's message to us all. I've seen you all do it before. You will need to do it again and again, both in our church and in the public square.

Though we may feel small, we point the way for God's call. We mark the spot where God enters our world. And lets us all know that we are not alone. That we are made in God's image, baptized in water and sealed with the power of God's spirit and marked as Christ's own forever. We do not need to have all the answers, or for that matter any answers, all we need do is offer God's message, "I have acted in the world before, I will act in the world again, I will protect you everywhere you go."

Jacob, ran in fear, and slept in exhaustion, and still messengers of God appeared in his dreams and reminded him of his call and God's love.

May the people of St. Michael's and all of us, baptized with Christ, be messengers of God's grace and love. God's welcome and care. In the midst of it all, in our waking and in our sleeping, our coming out and our going in, that God is with us all, always. Amen.