

# FRANCESCA OF ROME AND HER GUARDIAN ANGEL

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*Francesca, like other Christians of her time, was greatly influenced by the radical poverty of friars like Francis of Assisi. She and her sister-in-law ministered to Rome's sick and poor while also raising young families. Frances is also known for her guardian angel. She said she saw and talked with him daily.*



Francesca or Frances of Rome (1384-1440) and her sister-in-law, Vannoza, fed the poor, took in orphans, and sold their clothes and jewelry to care for the city's Plague victims. Their work was extraordinary, given the political, social and religious upheaval of 15<sup>th</sup> century Rome. Frances and Vannoza also maintained an active prayer life. They were devoted to their families and understood that their household duties brought them closer to God – albeit in a different way than their prayer and ministry.

Frances lost two young children, and said one of them returned to her with a guardian angel. The angel taught Frances “to discern the divine will in every little irksome worldly duty, in every trifling contradiction, as well as in great trials and on important occasions,” writes biographer Georgiana Fullerton. Frances said the angel radiated such light that she could read by it at night.

If this all seems too fanciful, think of Frances’ stories as simply her personal expression of faith. “[The role of guardian angels] is to represent individuals before God, to watch over them always, to aid their prayer and to present their souls to God at death,” the Franciscans write. “Devotion to the angels is, at base, an expression of faith in God's enduring love and providential care extended to each person day in and day out until life's end.”



“[Women like] Frances of Rome gathered like-minded women together to lead a life of service to the poor while being nourished by a given spirituality. ... These women can be understood as precursors of the active religious communities of women who would become a hallmark of the modern church.”

Lawrence Cunningham, *A Brief History of Saints*; others would say Frances’ true legacy is the growing number of small lay Christian communities like Sant’Egidio

**“You have hold of my right hand;  
With your counsel you guide me,  
And in the end you will receive me in glory.”**

*Psalm 73, which Frances is said to have found inscribed in gold one day after tending to her family*

“Is not love always a sacrifice? Look well into the cause of your troubles. What is your ground of complaint, my daughter? Is it the fulfillment of God's will or the failure of your hopes? Take courage, child; think only of pleasing God and ... be his faithful servant in whatever state he may place you.”

Frances’ confessor, when she complained that her father wanted her to marry

**“The angel has finished his task; he bids me to follow him.”**

*Frances’ last words*

“No evil shall befall you,  
nor shall affliction come near your tent,  
For to his angels he has given command about you,  
that they guard you in all your ways.  
Upon their hands they shall bear you up,  
lest you dash your foot against a stone.”

Psalm 91

**Frances’ feast day is March 9. The Feast of the Guardian Angels is October 2.**

# A GUARDIAN ANGEL? WHY NOT?

Author Selden Delaney, writing in 1952, questions why people of the 20<sup>th</sup> century found it hard to believe Frances saw and spoke with her guardian angel:

"There is no difficulty in believing that each one of us has a guardian angel; and there is no reason why we should not speak to our guardian angels more often than we do. The modern student is tempted to believe that Frances was in the habit of talking familiarly with her guardian angel and that thus there grew up the tradition that the angel was visible to her. One can imagine the tradition gradually becoming more embellished. ...

"No doubt it would add much to the picturesqueness and poetry of life if we could all have even occasional glimpses of our guardian angels; and most of us would welcome a slap on the cheek now and then to warn us that we were on the wrong track. However, there is nothing intrinsically impossible in the fact that such a saint as Frances of Rome was favored with a heavenly attendant who was always visible to her. ... Why should not Frances have such assistance?"



**"How great the dignity of the soul, since each one has from his birth an angel commissioned to guard it."**

*St. Jerome*

"Angels are spirits, but it is not because they are spirits that they are angels. They become angels when they are sent. For the name angel refers to their office, not their nature. You ask the name of this nature, it is spirit; you ask its office, it is that of an Angel, which is a messenger."

*St. Augustine*

**"Angel of God, my Guardian dear,  
To whom God's love commits me here,  
Ever this day be at my side,  
To light and guard, to rule and guide. Amen."**

*Traditional prayer to one's guardian angel*



"Angels serve to demonstrate – and exemplify – the wonderful workings of God in our lives. I've heard them called 'minions' but that sounds too small. I prefer *messenger* and *protector*. ... My belief in angels evidences my strong faith in a personal God who is acquainted not only with my Christmas list, but also with my worst sins, my best intentions and my largest dreams. It is God who gives his angels charge over me (see Psalm 91:11). That thought gives me wings."

*Carol Ann Morrow, writing for americancatholic.org*

**"The soul at its highest is found like God, but an angel gives a closer idea of Him. That is all an angel is: an idea of God."**

*Meister Eckhart*

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## QUESTIONS FOR CONTEMPLATION

1. Do you believe in guardian angels? Do you ever try to talk to yours? Are there things you believe on faith that others would dismiss as implausible?
2. Frances and her sister-in-law prayed at home, which their mother-in-law found odd. How do you react when someone prays in your presence, for example before a meal?
3. Do you have a friend, as Frances found in Vannoza, with whom you can share spiritual confidences? If you want such a friend, how could you find one?

## MORE INFORMATION

The story of the Guardian Angel Prayer: [www.americancatholic.org/messenger/Dec2004/prayers.asp](http://www.americancatholic.org/messenger/Dec2004/prayers.asp)  
The Community of Sant'Egidio: [www.santegidio.org](http://www.santegidio.org)