

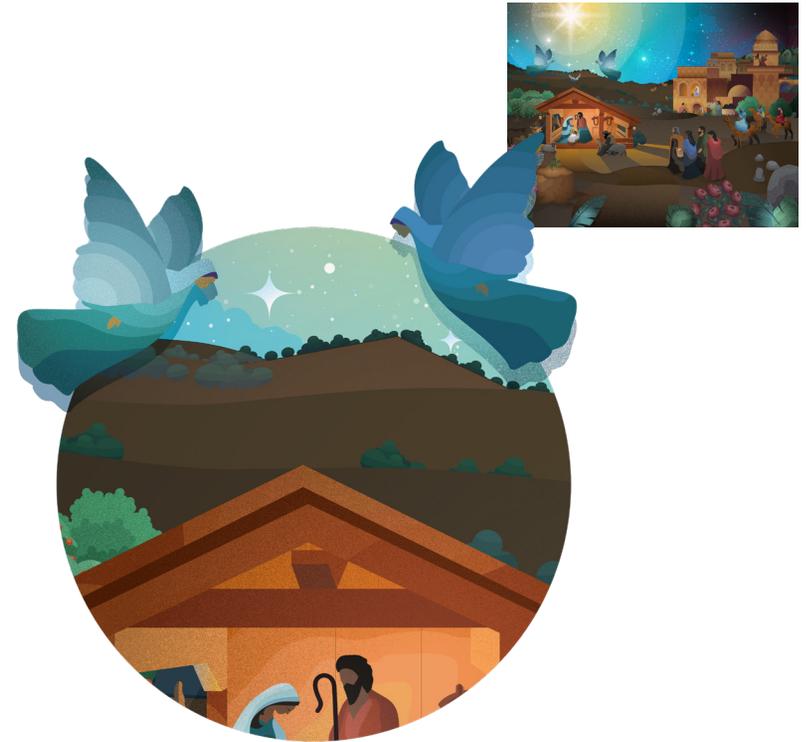
THURSDAY, DECEMBER 3

DO YOU SEE THE ANGELS?

Do you see the angels in the image? Are they easy or difficult to spot? Nestled between the star-scape and the manger, watching over and protecting the Holy Family, they call our attention to what is going on below. While perhaps when contemplating an image such as this one we know exactly where to look, how easily do we recognize and call upon angels in our daily lives?

Today we celebrate the feast of St. Francis Xavier, an early Jesuit and close companion of St. Ignatius of Loyola (the founder of the Society of Jesus) who is known for his missionary activity in Asia in the 17th century. While missionary accomplishments can be difficult to appreciate in our present-day understanding, his writings highlight that he understood his work as cross-cultural and sought to recognize that God was already present in all things — a central charism of the order. As he discovered a variety of languages, faiths and cultures, he also discovered how God was revealed in the beauty of their differences. Indeed, as we encounter difference in our own lives, this is one reason St. Francis Xavier can be a valuable intercessor for prayer.

More broadly, however, St. Francis Xavier is just one of a diverse community of individuals known as the Communion of Saints upon whom we can call as intercessors in prayer. The Communion of Saints refers not only to the well-known canonized saints, but also, all those holy men and women whose faith have shaped our own.



Over the course of Advent, we celebrate a variety of saints' feast days, each of whom highlight different ways of experiencing God and living out our call to discipleship.

Though the image of guardian angels over our shoulders can feel trite, knowing we are not alone, and remembering that there are others who have gone before us who have endured similar experiences, is a comforting source of support. As such, angels come to be a visual representation of the Communion of Saints, and a reminder of our ability to call on them for accompaniment. Indeed, how might you invoke the accompaniment of the Communion of Saints amid difficult situations such as when you are feeling overwhelmed or when a loved one is sick? How can the lives of the saints inform how we care for those we serve?

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