



## I Believe in Angels

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The Lord is aware of the challenges you face. He knows you, He loves you, and I promise, He will send angels to help you.

Brothers and sisters, I believe in angels, and I would like to share with you my experiences with them. In doing so, I hope and pray that we will recognize the importance of angels in our lives.

Here are Elder Jeffrey R. Holland's words from a past general conference: "When we speak of those who are instruments in the hand of God, we are reminded that not all angels are from the other side of the veil. Some of them we walk with and talk with—here, now, every day. Some of them reside in our own neighborhoods. ... Indeed heaven never seems closer than when we see the love of God manifested in the kindness and devotion of people so good and so pure that *angelic* is the only word that comes to mind" ("The Ministry of Angels," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2008, 30).

It is about angels on this side of the veil that I want to talk. The angels that walk among us in our everyday lives are powerful reminders of God's love for us.

The first angels that I will mention are the two sister missionaries who taught me the gospel when I was a young man: Sister Vilma Molina and Sister Ivonete Rivitti. My younger sister and I were invited to a Church activity where we met these two angels. I never imagined how much that simple activity would change my life.

My parents and siblings were not interested in learning more about the Church at that time. They were not even willing to have the missionaries in our home, so I took the missionary lessons in a Church building. That small room in the chapel became my “sacred grove.”

One month after these angels introduced me to the gospel, I was baptized. I was 16 years old. Unfortunately, I don't have a picture of that sacred event, but I do have a picture of my sister and me at the time we participated in that activity. I may need to clarify who is who in this picture. I am the taller one on the right.

As you can imagine, remaining active in the Church was challenging for a teenager whose lifestyle had just changed and whose family was not taking the same path.

As I was trying to adjust to my new life, a new culture, and new friends, I felt out of place. I felt alone and discouraged many times. I knew the Church was true, but I had a hard time feeling part of it. While uncomfortable and uncertain as I tried to fit into my new religion, I found the courage to participate in a three-day youth conference, which I thought would help me make new friends. This is when I met another saving angel, named Mônica Brandão.

She was new in the area, having moved from another part of Brazil. She quickly got my attention and, luckily for me, accepted me as a friend. I guess she looked at me more from the inside than the outside.

Because she befriended me, I was introduced to her friends, who then became my friends as we enjoyed many youth activities I attended later. Those activities were so critical to my integration into this new life.

These good friends made a big difference, but not having the gospel taught in my home with a supportive family still put my ongoing conversion process at risk. My gospel interactions in the Church became even more crucial to my growing conversion. Then two additional angels were sent by the Lord to help.

One of them was Leda Vettori, my early-morning seminary teacher. Through her accepting love and inspiring classes, she gave me a daily dose of the “good word of God” (Moroni 6:4), which was so needed throughout my day. This helped me to gain the spiritual strength to keep going.

Another angel sent to help me was the Young Men president, Marco Antônio Fusco. He was also assigned to be my senior home teaching companion. Despite my lack of experience and different appearance, he gave me assignments to teach in our priests quorum meetings and home teaching visits. He gave me the chance to act and to learn and not just be an observer of the gospel. He trusted me, more than I trusted myself.

Thanks to all these angels, and many others I encountered during those important early years, I received enough strength to remain on the covenant path as I gained a spiritual witness of the truth.

And by the way, that young angel girl, Mônica? After we both served missions, she became my wife.

I don't think it was a coincidence that good friends, Church responsibilities, and nurturing by the good word of God were part of that process. President Gordon B. Hinckley wisely taught: "It is not an easy thing to make the transition incident to joining this Church. It means cutting old ties. It means leaving friends. It may mean setting aside cherished beliefs. It may require a change of habits and a suppression of appetites. In so many cases it means loneliness and even fear of the unknown. There must be nurturing and strengthening during this difficult season of a convert's life" ("There Must Be Messengers," *Ensign*, Oct. 1987, 5).

Later he also taught, "Every one of them needs three things: a friend, a responsibility, and nurturing with 'the good word of God'" ("Converts and Young Men," *Ensign*, May 1997, 47).

Why am I sharing these experiences with you?

First, it is to send a message to those going through a similar process right now. Maybe you are a new convert, or coming back to the Church after wandering around for a while, or just someone struggling to fit in. Please, please, do not give up on your efforts to be part of this big family. It is the true Church of Jesus Christ!

When it comes to your happiness and salvation, it is always worth the effort to keep trying. It is worth the effort to adjust your lifestyle and traditions. The Lord is aware of the challenges you face. He knows you, He loves you, and I promise, He will send angels to help you.

In His own words the Savior said: "I will go before your face. I will be on your right hand and on your left, and my Spirit shall be in your [heart], and mine angels round about you, to bear you up" (Doctrine and Covenants 84:88).

My second purpose for sharing these experiences is to send a message to all members of the Church—to all of us. We should remember that it is not easy for new converts, returning friends, and those with a different lifestyle to instantly fit in. The Lord is aware of the challenges they face, and He is looking for angels willing to help. The Lord is always looking for willing volunteers to be angels in others' lives.

Brothers and sisters, would you be willing to be an instrument in the Lord's hands? Would you be willing to be one of these angels? To be an emissary, sent from God, from this side of the veil, for someone He is worried about? He needs you. They need you.

Of course, we can always count on our missionaries. They are always there, the first ones to enlist for this angelic job. But they are not enough.

If you look around carefully, you will find many in need of an angel's help. These people may not be wearing white shirts, dresses, or any standard Sunday attire. They may be sitting alone, toward the back of the chapel or classroom, sometimes feeling as if they are invisible. Maybe their hairstyle is a little extreme or their vocabulary is different, but they are there, and they are trying.

Some may be wondering, "Should I keep coming back? Should I keep trying?" Others may be wondering if one day they will feel accepted and loved. Angels are needed, right now; angels who are willing to leave their comfort zone to embrace them; "[people who are] so good and so pure that *angelic* is the only word that comes to mind [to describe them]" (Jeffrey R. Holland, "The Ministry of Angels," 30).

Brothers and sisters, I believe in angels! We are all here today, a giant army of angels set apart for these latter days, to minister to others as extensions of the hands of a loving Creator. I promise that if we are willing to serve, the Lord will give us opportunities to be ministering angels. He knows who needs angelic help, and He will put them in our path. The Lord puts those who need angelic help in our path daily.

I am so grateful for the many angels that the Lord has put in my path throughout my life. They were needed. I am also grateful for His gospel that helps us to change and gives us the chance to be better.

This is a gospel of love, a gospel of ministering. Of this I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.