

## Archangel Saint Raphael Patron of Our Parish

Archangel Raphael is mentioned in the book of Tobit as traveling companion of young Tobias. Raphael means 'God heals'. Raphael is introduced as one of the seven angels stand before God [Revelations 8:2]; three are popularly known: Gabriel, Michael and Raphael. Apocryphal book of Enoch gives names of the other Archangels as Uriel, Raguel, Sariel and Jerahmeel. The protective and healing mission of Raphael is described in the book of Tobit, which was written around 7 century BC. Book of Tobit tells the story of a good man named Tobit. Tobit's family was among the Israelites in Babylonian exile [present day Iraq]. He was charitable toward his suffering fellow-Israelites. Though an upright man, Tobit was struck with blindness and seemed to suffer without cause. Meanwhile, in another city a woman named Sarah afflicted by a demon, was praying to die because she had been married seven times and each husband died on the wedding night. God heard their prayers and sent his Angel Raphael to heal them from their distress.

Angel means God's messenger, an agent of God's benevolent care. Presence of Angels in Biblical events indicates that God shapes human history and his providential presence is experienced by those who remain faithful to him. In the story of Tobit Raphael functions as guide and protector who mediates with his prayer to bring healing to Tobit and Sarah. In the book of Tobit Raphael was disguised as a man and says his name [Tobit 5:13]: 'I am *Azariah*' means 'Yahweh has helped' and son of '*Hannaniah*' means 'Yahweh is merciful'. The names indicate both the function and source of Raphael's mission. Angelic presence of Raphael shows that God's healing grace is revealed gradually and often with testing. Righteous living is rewarded by God, at times with suffering. God's redeeming presence is always with us. God's grace surprises us just as he did for Tobit and Sarah who almost lost hope. Raphael commends Tobit's generosity and just conduct. As we celebrate the feast of St. Raphael, he inspires us to be faithful to God's commandments, encourages in us spirit of prayer; he provides comfort in sickness or death. Even if your life has taken a wrong turn, Raphael assures you that 'God bless you'! St. Raphael, Pray for Us.

*Father Jose*