



The world of angelology is fascinating and enigmatic. Since ancient times, angels have been the subject of devotion, study, and debate within Christianity. However, one mystery generates great curiosity: Why does the Catholic Church officially recognize only three archangels—Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael—when several traditions mention up to seven names? Who are these other four “forbidden” archangels? Why are they not part of official doctrine?

This article will explore the identity of these seven archangels, their presence in deuterocanonical and apocryphal texts, why the Church restricts their veneration, and the spiritual relevance of these topics in our Christian life.

The Three Archangels Recognized by the Catholic Church

The Church, based on Sacred Scripture, only mentions three archangels by name:

Saint Michael: The Warrior of God

Saint Michael, whose name means “Who is like God?”, is the leader of the heavenly armies and the defender of God’s people against the forces of evil. His role is recorded in Revelation 12:7-9: *“Then war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back, but they were not strong enough...”*

Saint Michael is the protector of the Church and is invoked in the famous prayer of Pope Leo XIII to combat the devil.

Saint Gabriel: The Messenger of God

The Archangel Gabriel is known as the great divine communicator. He is mentioned in the Book of Daniel and, most notably, in the Gospel of Luke when he announces to the Virgin Mary the Incarnation of the Word: *“In the sixth month, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee...”* (Luke 1:26).

Gabriel is the angel of revelation and is associated with the transmission of divine messages.

Saint Raphael: The Healer of God

The Archangel Raphael appears in the Book of Tobit under the identity of a man who guides



and protects young Tobias on his journey. His name means “God heals,” and his role is that of a healer of both body and soul: *“I am Raphael, one of the seven angels who stand before the Lord and have access to His glory.”* (Tobit 12:15).

These three archangels have been venerated for centuries within the Catholic Church. But what about the other four archangels mentioned in apocryphal and deuterocanonical texts?

The Other Four “Forbidden” Archangels

In early Judeo-Christian tradition and some non-canonical texts, four other archangels are mentioned, completing the number seven along with Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael. Let’s explore who they are and why they have not been officially recognized by the Church:

1. Uriel: The Light of God

The name Uriel means “Fire of God” or “God is my light.” He is mentioned in apocryphal texts such as the Book of Enoch and the Apocalypse of Esdras. In Eastern Christian iconography, Uriel is the bearer of divine wisdom and is sometimes associated with the flame of knowledge.

Why doesn’t the Church recognize him? His cult was popular in antiquity, but the Church, at the Council of Rome in 745, excluded him to prevent doctrinal confusion and deviations.

2. Raguel: The Avenger of God

Raguel is mentioned in the Book of Enoch as the angel of divine justice, punishing fallen angels. His name means “Friend of God.”

The Church does not recognize him because his role does not appear in canonical texts and because he was associated with esoteric doctrines in antiquity.

3. Sariel: The Commander of Angels

Sariel, whose name means “Order of God,” is mentioned in some traditions as the angel of death. In the Book of Enoch, he is associated with the punishment of demons and the supervision of the earthly world.



Due to his strong connection to apocalyptic literature, the Church decided not to include him in official doctrine.

4. Remiel: The Angel of Hope

Remiel is another archangel mentioned in the Book of Enoch, described as the guide of righteous souls to Paradise. His name means “Mercy of God.”

Like the others, the Church chose not to recognize him due to a lack of evidence in Sacred Scripture.

Why Does the Church Only Recognize Three Archangels?

1. Protection Against Confusion and Doctrinal Deviations

In ancient times, the veneration of angels with non-biblical names led to certain erroneous practices. At the Council of Rome in 745, Pope Zachary forbade the worship of angels whose names were not explicitly mentioned in the Bible. This was done to avoid heresies such as Gnosticism or excessive angel worship.

2. Foundation in Sacred Scripture

The Church bases its doctrine on divine Revelation contained in the Bible. Since only Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael are named in canonical texts, the Church cannot affirm the existence of the other archangels with certainty.

3. Caution Against Apocryphal Speculation

Apocryphal and deuterocanonical books contain many angelological references, but the Church has carefully discerned which texts are part of the inspired canon. Many of these writings contain symbolic and allegorical elements that could lead to erroneous interpretations.



Spiritual Relevance and Application in Daily Life

Knowledge of the archangels should not remain mere theological curiosity. We can learn practical lessons from these powerful divine messengers:

- **From Saint Michael:** We learn to fight evil with firmness and prayer.
- **From Saint Gabriel:** We remember the importance of listening to God’s voice and accepting His will.
- **From Saint Raphael:** We are inspired to seek both physical and spiritual healing.

And although the other four archangels are not officially recognized, we can reflect on their attributes to strengthen our relationship with God: Uriel’s light, Raguel’s justice, Sariel’s obedience, and Remiel’s mercy.

Conclusion

The mystery of the seven archangels reminds us that the spiritual world is vast and that the Church, in its wisdom, has carefully discerned which names should be venerated. Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael are the only officially recognized archangels because their missions are clearly established in Sacred Scripture.

However, knowing the history of the other four archangels helps us better understand the rich angelological tradition and invites us to live a more conscious and profound faith. Ultimately, our goal is not to obsess over angels but to draw closer to God, who has sent them to guide and protect us.

May the holy angels of God always accompany us on our path to holiness. **Saint Michael, Saint Gabriel, and Saint Raphael, pray for us!** ☐