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Tobias and the Angel Raphael

Tobit 5:1–12:22 · Harvest · Adults

Tobit is a family story written for people living their faith as a minority, far from home. It moves from blindness, grief and a strained marriage to healing, a wedding and a houseful of praise, and God works almost entirely behind the scenes.

Context: Tobit is an Israelite exile in Nineveh. His faithfulness costs him: when he buries executed fellow Israelites, his property is seized and he has to flee (Tob 1:16–20). Later he is blinded and depends on his wife Anna's earnings. When she brings home a young goat given to her as a bonus, he accuses her of stealing it, and she answers him sharply (2:11–14). He prays to die (3:6). Far away in Ecbatana, Sarah has lost seven husbands on their wedding nights to the demon Asmodeus. Taunted by one of her father's maids, she is tempted to end her life, but for her father's sake she prays instead (3:7–15). On that same day God hears both prayers (3:16–17).

The story: Tobit sends his son Tobias to Media to recover money left with a relative. The guide Tobias hires, who calls himself Azariah, is the angel Raphael. A fish caught in the Tigris supplies the remedies. Tobias marries Sarah; on their wedding night he drives off the demon as the angel taught him, and the two of them pray before anything else, asking God's mercy and a shared life. Raguel, Sarah's father, has dug a grave just in case, then

fills it in with a prayer of thanks. The couple return, the fish's gall heals Tobit's eyes, and Raphael reveals himself and tells them to give thanks to God.

The Church's reading: the Catechism says Tobit bears moving witness to a high view of marriage and to the faithfulness and tenderness of spouses (CCC 1611), and it quotes Tobias and Sarah's prayer in its teaching on married love (CCC 2361). Angels surround every human life with their care (CCC 336), and the Church's liturgy honors Raphael by name (CCC 335). Burying the dead is a corporal work of mercy (CCC 2300; 2447).

For adult life:

Marriage: Tobias and Sarah begin by praying together. Many couples never pray aloud together; even one minute changes something.

Tobit and Anna are a faithful couple who still hurt each other under the strain of illness and money trouble. Scripture doesn't hide it, and it doesn't end their story there.

Caring for parents: Tobias's whole journey is an errand for his aging father and mother, the kind of support the Church asks of grown children (CCC 2218).

Despair: both Tobit and Sarah reach the point of wanting to die, and both bring that to God. If you are there, tell God, and tell someone you trust today.

Unseen help: we rarely recognize God's help while it is happening. Popular devotion honors St. Raphael as patron of travelers, of the sick and of those looking for a spouse (a devotion, not doctrine).

A real-life step: pray aloud with your spouse or a friend this week, even briefly, and do one work of mercy, such as attending a funeral or visiting someone who is grieving.

Song of praise • Tobit 13:1–18

Tobit 13 turns a family story into a hymn for a whole people in exile, ending in a vision of a rebuilt, shining Jerusalem that the Church reads as pointing toward the heavenly city (compare Rev 21). Every event, as the Catechism says, can become an occasion of thanksgiving (CCC 2638). (Tob 13:1–18)

Church teaching note

Church teaching: Tobit's witness to marriage (CCC 1611); Tobias and Sarah's prayer quoted in CCC 2361; angels' care (CCC 336); the Church's liturgy honors St. Raphael by name (CCC 335); burying the dead as a corporal work of mercy (CCC 2300, 2447); duties of grown children to aging parents (CCC 2218). St. Raphael as patron of travelers, the sick and those seeking a spouse is popular devotion, not doctrine. The title archangel for Raphael comes from the liturgy (feast of September 29); Scripture names only Michael as archangel (Jude 9).

Talk about it

1. Where have you seen God's help only in hindsight, the way Tobias did?
2. Tobit and Anna hurt each other under strain. What helps a marriage or family through seasons like that?
3. Tobias and Sarah prayed together first. What would it take for you to pray with someone close to you?
4. Catholic connection: read CCC 2361. Why does the Catechism use Tobias and Sarah's prayer when it teaches about married love?

Key verse: Tob 12:14. Look it up in your Bible.