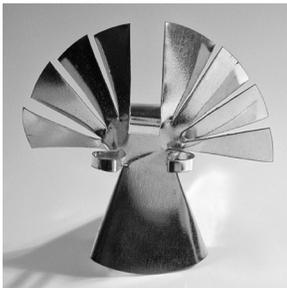


About the Author

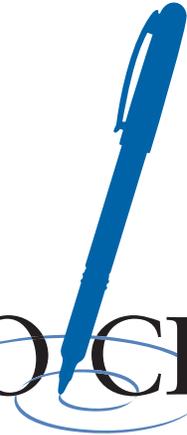
A proud graduate of Texas A&M, Fr. Reynolds enjoyed a pre-ordination career that included the Navy as well as work as a county agricultural agent. His ordained career was spent in small-town ministries in the Diocese of West Texas, often serving more than one congregation at a time. He continues his angel ministry in his new home in Lufkin, Texas, where he also does supply work at St. Cyprian's and volunteer work at Hospice in the Pines.



About Vintage Voice

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VINTAGE VOICE



Herald Angels

By the Rev. Max M. Reynolds

Sometimes ministry can sneak up on you when you least expect it. My ministry snuck up on me in 1995, soon after my wife and I took a trip to New Mexico and visited a church in Ruidoso that happened to be hosting an arts and crafts fair in its parking lot. Of all the items on display, the one that really called to me was made by taking a coffee can lid and snipping several short cuts toward the center of the metal lid, then bending the resulting pieces into a pretty angel shape. This angel's asking price was 50 cents, and so I bought it and took it back home to Kerrville, Texas. But instead of hanging it up and admiring it, I flattened it back into its original round shape so that I could figure out how it had been made.

"I can do that," I decided. And just like that, I began making angels. Only mine are a little smaller than the coffee can lid original, and I have switched to a material that is thinner and therefore easier to cut and bend than coffee cans. Cheaper, too. I couldn't possibly drink (or pay for) enough coffee to keep me stocked with lids from coffee cans.

Local roofers call my new preferred material "tin caps" — metal disks that are about two inches in diameter and serve as anchors for nails when securing tar paper. I can pick up a 50 lb. box of tin caps at the local lumber yard for not much money and make 3,000 angels.

I can make an angel in about 45 seconds. Each one requires exactly 12 cuts with a tin snip and seven bends with a pair of needle nose pliers. The base for each angel (which ends up looking like a long robe) takes up almost half of every tin cap; two bends give the base stability and two more take the sharpness off the base's pointy ends. The two arms are the smallest pieces after I have made my cuts; I take my pliers and roll each slender arm inward toward the "body." The head is the next-smallest piece; again I take my pliers and roll the head down almost till it meets the arms. The wings may be the easiest and the most fun, once you get the hang of them. The fun comes when you separate each wing into four segments (which causes them to catch the light and give some

visual flash and finish to each angel). Sometimes the simple cutting action of the tin snips torques each wing segment *just* exactly the right way to catch the light. No fussing really is required. Like grace, their beauty simply happens.

I have made approximately 90,000 of them this way and counting. And so far, I haven't sold a single one (but that may be because the whole point is to give them all away)! In Kerrville, before I moved to another part of the state and another diocese — I was averaging making and giving away 350 angels every week in the two area hospitals (the regional medical center and a V.A. facility). I also left angels every place I shopped and with just about every person I encountered for any reason during my day. (No one has ever refused: they take an angel, they smile; I smile; it's like a light turns on inside of them.)

In Kerrville, I'm not known as Fr. Reynolds, I'm the "Angel Man." My angel ministry became *their* angel ministry. If somebody knew of anybody who needed an angel, I would hear about it. If any roofing work was being done in the greater Kerrville area, someone always scoured the worksite afterwards and brought me any tin cap leavings that the roofers may have dropped during their high-perched, high-speed hammering. I've received thousands upon thousands of such leavings — so many that I've often wondered whether some of the roofers were dropping tin caps "accidentally" on purpose!

Somewhere along the way, I connected with the Military Family Network, an independent, non-governmental organization that marshals all kinds of support and resources for military families. Over the years, I sent almost 4,000 angels to their headquarters in Pittsburgh — to be given to military men and women being deployed overseas. Then in October 2012, they flew me to their network's convention in Washington, D.C. and asked me to sit in a booth, make angels and talk to as many of the 30,000 people who attended as possible. We made and gave away 3,500 in only three days.

My two favorite thank-you notes both come from soldiers in Afghanistan. One told of transforming Afghan desert scruff into Christmas trees by decorating them with lots of little metal angels that had been repurposed with paperclip hangers. Another told of soldiers in one unit who had flattened out their angels in order to carry them in their pockets while on patrol.

When exactly did my angel-making hobby — which I undertook only to get my bored and idle hands active again — turn into ministry? I can't tell you exactly. I was too busy and blessed and grateful to notice. But I do know that making angels sustained me during a loss I could not have borne otherwise: the death of my wife of 46 years in 2008. Making angels has opened me up to more people and opened more people up to *me* than I ever would have thought possible in retirement.

If you can't find a satisfying ministry in retirement, maybe it's because you've placed your definition of ministry in a box. Or maybe you've already found your ministry and just haven't acknowledged it. Think about it. Look around. And listen. Herald angels may be calling to you. Hearken — even if your messenger is made of tin and hanging in a craft booth in a parish parking lot. *May you have a blessed Advent and a merry Christmas.*



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