

NOVENA REFLECTION



**Before the Feast
of St Michael the Archangel**

A. D. 2021

Novena Reflection Day 1 (Sep 20)

This year, we, Michaelite Fathers, celebrate the Jubilee Year of the 100th anniversary of the canonical approval of the Congregation of Saint Michael the Archangel. We are thanksgiving for the gift of the Michaelite religious family and for our personal vocation. We would like to invite all of you to whom God has sent us as Michaelite to join with us and to worship the Holy Trinity together with Saint Michael the Archangel during this novena before the Solemnity of the Holy Archangels: Michael, Gabriel and Raphael.

In our reflections we will draw on the thoughts of Blessed Fr. Bronisław Markiewicz, who chose the Archangel Michael as the patron of the work, which, inspired by the Holy Spirit, he brought to existence – Congregations of St. Michael the Archangel. During this novena we will use the reflections prepared by one of the Michaelite Fathers Dr Rafał Kaminski CSMA.

The very word patron comes from the Latin word pater – father – and means a guardian, protector of people as well as certain places and an advocate in various matters before God. His intercession concerns both spiritual and material matters. Therefore, the patron is more than a spiritual role model. Above all, he is the one who acts, supporting those who search for his help. Therefore, intercession and action are the main features of support.

According to the testimony of prophet Daniel, Saint John the Evangelist, Saint Augustine and others – writes Fr. Markiewicz in the Spiritual Exercises – Saint Michael the Archangel is in heaven the prince and commander of all the heavenly hosts, as well as the leader in the Kingdom of Heaven, and on earth he is the great prince of God's people and protector of the Holy Church.

Choosing St. Michael, the blessed founder had great hopes for him. He understood that the patron is not only the one to be venerated, but also someone who you can always count on. In this practical vision of the devotion to the Archangel, he shows the specific task he performs towards people entrusted to him. He spoke about it this way:

He dedicates a separate guardian angel to each soul. He watches over each and protects it in the fight against powers of hell, he is a sure guide for those who err; comfort and refreshment for the fallen; protector and comforter of the afflicted; a brave slayer of hellish spirits and scandalisers living on earth; he is the friend and protector of people descending from this world, and even after leaving this earth, he leads them to heaven and presents them to the throne of God.

The need for veneration and devotion to Saint Michael the Archangel is an answer, explained Bl. Bronisław, to the intensification of evil in those times. He judged them as a period of fierce battle of infernal powers, audacious and cunning opposition to God and even a heroic battle between good and evil. It sounds familiar even today.

Should not the devotion of Saint Michael the Archangel be renewed today then? Let us choose him again as our patron. *Turn with special devotion and in a very personal way to St. Michael, commander of the army of heaven and the conqueror of evil angels, who, after the Blessed Virgin Mary, takes first place in Heaven and also, right after Her, has the greatest impact on the fate of the world.*

Let us accept the above encouragements of blessed Fr. Bronislaw and make it happen in our lives.

Novena Reflection Day 2 (Sept 21)

In that hour the disciples came to Jesus, saying, “Who then is greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven?” Jesus called a little child to himself and set him in the middle of them and said, “Most certainly I tell you, unless you turn and become as little children, you will in no way enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. Whoever therefore humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven. See that you don’t despise one of these little ones, for I tell you that in heaven their angels always see the face of my Father who is in heaven.

(Matthew 18:1-4.10)

On the second day of the novena, let us reflect on the nature and mission of angels. Just as God created man and all other creatures on earth, he also created angels. Angel and man are a separate kind. The angel is pure spirit. His whole nature is immortal. Man, however, consists of an immortal soul and a material, mortal body. An angel is not subject to growth or disappearance, while man, according to his nature, is subject to both laws. *One should know* – as St. Gregory the Great wrote in his homily – *that the name angel does not describe the nature, but the task.* Angelus – means sent. The angel is therefore a messenger of God. Those that herald minor matters are called angels, and those who announce the most important events in the history of salvation are archangels.

The above division due to the functions fulfilled is consistent with what the Holy Bible tells us. Each of the nine angel choirs presented there fulfills the role assigned to them by the Creator. So then:

- around God's throne in heaven, the angels of the three highest choirs glorify the God with joy: Seraphim – angels of love; Cherubim – angels of wisdom and power of word; Thrones – angels of life from God and to God.
- three other choirs are divided among the creation: Dominions – they mediate in the distribution of spiritual gifts and in the final time they will help the victory of God's justice; Powers – watch over the laws of nature and God's covenant with man; Virtues – inform creation and manage parts of the earth and the elements, building blocks of the world, as well as communities and a single man with his abilities and pursuit of virtue.
- the work of salvation on earth is assisted by three choirs closest to man: Principalities – they increase faith, hope and love, and strengthen the saving action of the Church; Archangels – great warriors and special servants of Mary; Angels – which also include Guardian Angels. They are not a separate choir, because the office of the Guardian Angel is an honour. God allows all angels to hold this office once, so that even the highest Seraphim can be a Guardian Angel.

This is how we briefly described the nature and mission of heavenly spirits called angels. Individual choirs of angels are well known to those devoted to St. Michael, who often pray the Chaplet to St. Michael and choir of Angels. Encouraging the pious practice of this prayer, mention should be made of the promises that Saint Michael the Archangel made to Antonina d'Astanc. Devotion to him and the choirs of angels pleads special graces for the Church. Zealous prayer of the Chaplet ensures: that prayers presented in the spirit of faith will be listened; the company of angels from individual choirs while receiving Holy Communion, their constant protection in the way of life, and after death, the release from purgatory for the worshipers and their families.

This is also our encouragement to take care of the Holy Church and our own salvation by cultivating and spreading of this devotion. Experience confirms the effectiveness of the devotion to Archangel Michael, and persistent dedication becomes a source of many favours for believers in Christ, both in this life and in eternity.

Novena Reflection Day 3 (Sep 22)

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. When he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was hungry afterward. The tempter came and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.” But he answered, “It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of God’s mouth.’” Then the devil took him into the holy city. He set him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written, ‘He will command his angels concerning you,’ and, ‘On their hands they will bear you up, so that you don’t dash your foot against a stone.’” Jesus said to him, “Again, it is written, ‘You shall not test the Lord, your God.’”

Again, the devil took him to an exceedingly high mountain, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. He said to him, “I will give you all of these things, if you will fall down and worship me.” Then Jesus said to him, “Get behind me, Satan! For it is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God, and you shall serve him only.’” Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and served him.

Matthew 4:1-11

When considering the subject of spirits, it is impossible to ignore the Prince of Darkness – called Lucifer or Satan. Not to worship him, however, but to warn against Him and His malicious actions. St. Paul writes in the Letter to the Ephesians: *For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world's rulers of the darkness of this age, and against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.* (Eph 6:12).

Satan's greatest victory would be to dormant our vigilance and put the fact of his real existence between fairy tales told to naughty children. Pope Paul VI pointed this out, saying that the danger of Satan's attack lies in the fact that he does not want to reveal his actions and tries to hush his existence, and make faith in his existence ridicule.

The Church's teaching regarding the existence of Satan refers to the Holy Scriptures, which say that human life is threatened by wise and free beings who try to trick him into sin. It will occur only when someone voluntarily gives in to temptation. The influence of Satan cannot deprive human being of salvation. Satan can only work through temptation.

So how do you distinguish Satan's promptings from the voice of a good angel? In other words – how to discern spirits?

Everyone should always be a listening student. We must learn how to listen to God. Peace of heart is essential. If someone is full of internal disorder and external pursuit

of material goods, he or she will not hear the inner voice of conscience, but only the encouragement of the evil spirit to follow the greed, abuse, and internal anxiety. God speaks to us through the Word that we accept by listening or reading. He speaks to our heart in Holy Communion, in silent reflection and meditation. God speaks to us through His angels. He does not shout, but like with the prophet Elijah, He speaks in a light breeze. That's why we hear his voice inside, not outside. We can hear a good angel if we are calm and able to receive an inner voice. Experience teaches us how to distinguish the voice of Satan from the voice of a good angel. A good spirit always points to God, His Word, and His Commandments. It reminds us of the promises we have made to him.

The evil one does the opposite. He shows great concern for our self, cares for our desires, comforts, for our benefits that we can achieve, influences that we can gain or lose. He changes the perception of what is false, to what is true.

The goodness is called evil, and the evil is called good. He is persistently trying to be listen to. In our daily examination of conscience, we should ask which spirit we have listened to. Good or bad? How will we know it?

The Gospel will answer us: You will know by the fruits (cf. Mt 7:16). What we do with the prompting of an evil spirit can sometimes appear at the beginning as something good. However, at the end, the fruit of this action is not good. The effect is evil. This must be anticipated when

analysing the whole situation. Inspirations of a good spirit from beginning to end brings goodness. The effect, like its cause, is good.

St. Ignatius of Loyola, whose spirituality was also used by Bl. Bronisław Markiewicz wrote in his exercises: *Man was created to worship God, our Lord, to show Him honour and serve Him, and thus save his soul. Other things on the surface of the earth were created for man and to help him in achieving the purpose for which he was created* (Spiritual Exercises, 23). This is the foundation of Christian life.

Let us ask God that we would be able to listen to the inspirations of good spirits and let them help us to use the goods of this world in freedom, to worship, show honour and serve the Triune God, following the example of Saint Michael the Archangel.

Novena Reflection Day 4 (Sep 23)

When he was at the place, he said to them, “Pray that you don’t enter into temptation.” He was withdrawn from them about a stone’s throw, and he knelt down and prayed, saying, “Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done.” An angel from heaven appeared to him, strengthening him. Being in agony he prayed more earnestly. His sweat became like great drops of blood falling on the ground. When he rose from his prayer, he came to the disciples, and found them sleeping because of grief, and said to them, “Why do you sleep? Rise and pray that you may not enter into temptation.” While he was still speaking, a crowd appeared. He who was called Judas, one of the twelve, was leading them. He came near to Jesus to kiss him. But Jesus said to him, “Judas, do you betray the Son of Man with a kiss?” When those who were around him saw what was about to happen, they said to him, “Lord, shall we strike with the sword?” A certain one of them struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his right ear. But Jesus answered, “Let me at least do this”—and he touched his ear and healed him. Jesus said to the chief priests, captains of the temple, and elders, who had come against him, “Have you come out as against a robber, with swords and clubs? When I was with you in the temple daily, you didn’t stretch out your hands against me. But this is your hour, and the power of darkness.”

Luke 22:40-53

In the stance of Saint Michael, the Archangel, the blessed priest Bronisław Markiewicz particularly distinguished two virtues: humility and purity. Characterising Saint Michael's action as a constant battle against pride, he wrote: *This Archangel fights the dragon and his angels – the father of pride and the leader of the proud, because the devil began with pride. Pride, therefore, the Knight of the Lord's Cause, knocked down to hell. As we know, he knocked Satan down to hell with a modest, humble and adoring at the same time: Who is like God. He made it not with His own power but with God's own power. One of the eighteenth-century painters beautifully showed this Christian truth in the picture from Feretron. It presents St. Michael with the sword raised and the shield with the cross on it. The body and face do not express any effort, because the power that overwhelms Satan comes from the cross.*

Pointing to the humility of Saint Michael, bl. Fr. Markiewicz places him not elsewhere, but just under the cross of Christ, saying: *Let us stand with him, wielding the victorious banner of the Cross of Christ and remember that under this banner, moving forward and fighting, we will successfully overcome all ambushes and assaults of the evil spirit trying to scandalise us.* Association of St. Michael with the cross of Christ results from the motive of remuneration and submission to God.

Archangel Michael was the first angel who made this expiatory act for the sin of pride of Satan. But this act was imperfect and could not give God full satisfaction. Only

Christ, the God-Man nailed to the cross, humbled himself by becoming a servant and through humble obedience to God's will, through what he suffered, he fully recompensed God the Father. Therefore, only in Christ, in his humbleness and victory on the cross lies the secret of our victory over death and Satan. Hence humility is needed in our lives, because *only in the virtue of humility is the strength to endure all hardships. The patronage of Saint Michael and the company of Angels is to help us in this spiritual work; Because all suffering and persecution cannot destroy those – says Fr. Markiewicz – who go under the cross of Christ, where St. Michael leads his hosts.*

True followers of Christ do not regard their sufferings as a malicious twist of fate. They claim, that if God allowed their crosses in their lives, He wants to say something very important to them, give something very wonderful, deliver them from even worse and more serious misfortunes.

Therefore, let us ask God with the prayer of Fr. Markiewicz, which he noted in his breviary: *Therefore, I am begging you, Heavenly Father, for mercy from all suffering. I am asking you this through the Passion and Death of Jesus Christ and through the intercession of His Mother and Saint Michael. Amen.*

Novena Reflection Day 5 (Sep 24)

In the year that king Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted; and his train filled the temple. Above him stood the Seraphim. Each one had six wings. With two he covered his face. With two he covered his feet. With two he flew. One called to another, and said, "Holy, holy, holy, is Lord of Armies! The whole earth is full of his glory!" The foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke. Then I said, "Woe is me! For I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell among a people of unclean lips: for my eyes have seen the King, Yahweh of Armies!" Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar.

Isaiah 6:1-8

*Human soars over earthly things with two wings: simplicity and purity – writes Thomas á Kempis. Simplicity should characterise the intention and purity – the feelings. Simplicity directs towards God; purity reaches Him and relishes in Him. Therefore, *blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God* (Mt 5:8).*

It is obvious that angels who adore the Lord Day and night and see His face must remain before him with impeccable and undivided heart.

This totality is possible thanks to the evangelical virtue of chastity, which in its deepest essence is directed towards God – the Fullness of Love.

Virtues of Saint Michael – writes Bl. Markiewicz – *are humility, chastity and zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of souls.* It may seem unclear to us: talking about chastity regarding spiritual, non-physical beings, because we generally associate it with physicality. Fr. Bronislaw himself indicates this in his prayer regarding the Mother of God: *Mary, You surpass the angels themselves with Your virgin, immaculate beauty, because angels do not feel the body.*

On the body level, the relation between purity and Saint Michael, who is a spirit, has no real justification. However, we can conclude that the theological correctness of such relationships results from the deepest essence of the virtue of chastity, i.e., from the undivided choice and clinging to God in love, because, as Fr. Bronisław mentioned: *Saint Michael only knows the divine slogan, i.e. the slogan of love. Saint Michael, as a spirit, offered his whole being to God. His slogan: Who's like God! expresses the power of bond with God with an eternal dimension, and the virtue of chastity... teaches to live as God and His angels live.*

In relation to man Bl. Fr. Markiewicz combines the virtue of chastity with the virtue of temperance, which he calls the most difficult of virtues.

In one place he explains: *Shyness, honesty and modesty are temperance in the proper sense (...). Temperance is to lead man*

to full love; it remains in the same relationship to love, as cause is to effect. Through temperance man is to control his drives, passions and bad inclinations.

Sexuality is a gift from the Creator himself. It was created and recognized by Him, together with all human nature, as a *very good*. The Creator Himself makes us see this gift positively. It expresses the vocation of man to reciprocity, and thus to love and mutual gift from himself. Finally, the body calls men and women to fulfill their basic vocation, which is fertility. We must free ourselves from looking at matters of human sexuality, as the Jesuit Father Józef Augustyn claims, as something forbidden by God, which must be stolen from him at the price of sin. However, this gift should be presented above all as a gift given and at the same time entrusted by the Creator to shape the fullness of humanity.

Let us pray, through the intercession of Saint Michael the Archangel, to God, our best Father, that He would help us grow in humility, chastity and zeal for His glory and salvation of our souls.

Novena Reflection Day 6 (Sep 25)

I mention of you in my prayers that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your hearts[a] enlightened, that you may know what is the hope of his calling, and what are the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to that working of the strength of his might which he worked in Christ, when he raised him from the dead and made him to sit at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule, authority, power, dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in that which is to come. He put all things in subjection under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things for the assembly, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all. You were made alive when you were dead in transgressions and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the children of disobedience. We are also all once lived among them in the lusts of our flesh, doing the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. But God, being rich in mercy, for his great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved. *Ephesians 1:17–2:5*

When investigating the role and place of angels in the spirituality of Father Markiewicz, we should first refer to the *Notes of the internal life*, which give us a picture of his approach towards angels from the early years of the priesthood. Notes on this subject appear in Father Markiewicz writing in autumn 1866 (he was at the last year of seminary studies).

On September 4, Fr. Markiewicz asks the inhabitants of heaven for help that his life choices be worthy of the Crucified Love of Christ.

On September 13, aware of his weaknesses and incompetence in contemplating the cross, he calls the Holy Mother and angels to help him in the fervour of his desire:

Jesus, I want to go with You to the cross. I am weak, save me, have mercy. Virgin and Mother, Mother and Virgin, holy Patrons, all the saints of God, Saint Michael, my guardian angel – all the angelic hosts, come with your Help.

In the later years of the priesthood, Bl. Fr. Markiewicz mentions angels on the pages of *Notes*, most often in the context of the cross. It clearly shows the influence of the Ignatian spirituality.

The most information about his devotion to angels is provided by the twenty-year stay of Fr. Markiewicz in Miejsce Piastowe; when, after years of searching and having completed his novitiate in Turin, and after being

enriched with the spirituality of St. John Bosco, he returned to his native land – Poland.

In articles devoted to Saint Michael the Archangel, the blessed explains the theological basis of the devotion to St. Michael and gives the reasons for his own decision of choosing him as the patron. He refers to the Holy Scriptures, Traditions, shows the cult of Saint Michael in the Eastern and Western Churches, and above all shows that *Saint Michael is the main patron of the Catholic Church, and as such he has the right to great adoration and devotion in all Christian nations, but we are particularly obliged to do so. All Galicia worships St. Michael as its Patron, because on the eve of his ceremony, Lviv, the capital city of the country, experienced his help in severe oppression several times* (PiP 5 (1902) No. 9, p. 67).

Ks. Markiewicz was aware that St. Michael is a patron whose existence is supported by the Holy Bible, Church Traditions and special devotion in the Polish nation. Faithfulness to the Holy Father, and thus faithfulness to the Church, was also a decisive motive. Those factors upheld Fr. Markiewicz's convictions of the rightness of the chosen path. *It is therefore appropriate – he writes in one of his articles – in present times to turn with special devotion and in a very personal way to St. Michael, commander of the army of heaven and the conqueror of evil angels, who, after the Blessed Virgin Mary takes first place in Heaven and also, right after Her, has the greatest impact on the fate of the world. Our victory ultimately rests in their hands.*

St. Michael after the Blessed Virgin is the first power in heaven and on earth (PiP, 4 (1901) No. 4, p. 31).

What this unusual appeal to St. Michael meant in the spirituality of Blessed Bronisław? How did he understand imitating this patron in his life? St. Michael was for father Markiewicz an example of admiration and praise of God. He was the fire of love that overcame Satan's disobedience and rebellion.

Blessed Markiewicz throughout his life learned humility at the foot of the cross and adored Him together with the angels. No wonder that he calls Saint Michael the ensign-bearer of salvation who holds the victorious banner of Christ's Cross in his hands.

It is worth noting that he writes the most about it in 1902. This year brought the founder of the Michaelite Congregations very specific crosses in the form of extreme poverty of abandoned children and in misunderstanding of his works. At the beginning of the priestly path, he called angels with St. Archangel Michael to contemplate the cross together, and now, in the depth of his suffering, he felt its taste, speaking "Who is like God" hoping against hope.

One cannot ignore the fact that Fr. Markiewicz, choosing St. Michael as the patron of his works, remained still the spiritual son of Fr. Don Bosco, from whom he took the idea of "*temperance and work*".

Temperance and work have now become the archangel's sword with which he fought against the evil that surrounds him in the world of human labour and morality. That is why in the article entitled *St. Michael the Archangel* he states that it is best to praise him with temperance and work, i.e., especially restraining pride and sensual greed, and working not only for own salvation, but also for the salvation of others (PiP 4 (1901) No. 4, p. 30).

At the centre of the spirituality of blessed Markiewicz stood the "Who is like God" principle, which in the earlier years of his priesthood was expressed in words borrowed from Saint Ignatius: *Everything for the greater glory of God*, and during his stay in Turin was closed in the motto: *God above everything – above the interests of the Congregation, homeland, family and my own*. The devotion to angels, especially St. Michael the Archangel, in the spirituality of Blessed Fr. Markiewicz, was mediating and supporting him in becoming "the fire of love" and in pronouncing the archangel's call "Who is like God" in every situation of life, both in success and in humiliation, as well as in a constant fight against evil with a sword of temperance and work. This dedication to the patron integrated in the spirituality of Blessed Markiewicz the contemplation of God with active apostolic zeal.

Novena Reflection Day 7 (Sep 26)

Now in the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man whose name was Joseph, of David's house. The virgin's name was Mary. Having come in, the angel said to her, "Rejoice, you highly favoured one! The Lord is with you. Blessed are you among women!" But when she saw him, she was greatly troubled at the saying, and considered what kind of salutation this might be. The angel said to her, "Don't be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. Behold, you will conceive in your womb and give birth to a son, and shall name him 'Jesus.' He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever. There will be no end to his Kingdom." Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, seeing I am a virgin?" The angel answered her, "The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore, also the holy one who is born from you will be called the Son of God. Behold, Elizabeth your relative also has conceived a son in her old age; and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. For nothing spoken by God is impossible." Mary said, "Behold, the servant of the Lord; let it be done to me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

Luke 1: 26-38

Some archangels have their proper names that conceal the kind of service that is entrusted to them. So Michael means: “Who’s like God”, Gabriel: “God is my strength”, Rafael: “God heals”. There is a fourth Archangel less known to us, appearing three times in the Old Testament. His name is Uriel, which means “God is light”.

Today we want to focus on Gabriel, the archangel who was sent to Mary to announce her the joy that she will conceive and give birth to a son whom she will name Jesus (Lk 1:31). In the Old Testament, in the book of the prophet Daniel, Gabriel appears as the one announcing the messianic era (cf. Dan 9: 21-27).

In the Annunciation, this message is fulfilled. Just as Daniel was the chosen and beloved man in the Old Testament, so in the New Testament Mary is the chosen and most beloved one, as evidenced by the title full of grace. Appearing in Nazareth, the archangel greets Mary with words expressing deepest respect for the future Mother of God. In Semitic culture, where a woman was treated like a slave, depriving her of all dignity and respect, this behaviour of Gabriel was something surprising and incomprehensible. Moreover, the high priests were allowed, and only once a year, to enter a place considered to be *holy of holies*, in order to apologize to God for the sins of Israel in a penitential act. But here in the Annunciation scene God meets man.

In the person of a woman, He talks like with an equal and raises her to the dignity of His Son's Mother – Mother of God. With a greeting, the evangelist puts the Greek word *chaire* in Gabriel's mouth, which expresses encouragement for joy. The word *rejoice* is characteristic of Messianic prophecy about the coming of the Kingdom of the Lord.

In the further part of the dialogue, we hear a beautiful phrase spoken by Gabriel to Mary: *the Lord is with you*. He talks about God's protection and help for His Son's Chosen Mother. God, as a loving Father, could not leave Mary alone, including her special participation in the work of the world's redemption. So, the words *The Lord is with You* are not just for comfort but they are a statement of God's reality. This real presence of God in the life of the Son of Mary – Jesus, will be repeated many times in the Gospel pages, precisely by God's messengers – angels.

In the same way during the liturgy, as a concerned Father, God speaks to us through the mouth of the priest, with the words spoken at the Annunciation: *The Lord be with you!* The Lord wants to be among us when we pray for his glory, thanksgiving for the gifts of creation and life, redemption and salvation. In addition, the prayer of thanksgiving carries healing power and raises our hearts and thoughts upwards. Hence the encouragement to use this form of prayer as often as possible because the Lord makes himself present in it in a special way with all his might.

St. Luke, describing the scene of the Annunciation, says that Gabriel entered Mary's house, and after the conversation he left her.

These two words indicate that the angel did not appear to Mary unexpectedly but was her guest.

God wants to be a guest, not an intruder in our hearts. In the Revelation of John, we read: *Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, then I will come into him, and will dine with him, and he with me.* (Rev 3:20).

God wants to enter our hearts as someone expected and invited and fill them with joy in the Holy Spirit. So what can we do to make God an awaited guest of our soul? Mary's attitude in the scene of the Annunciation is expectation with a pure, prayerful heart that listens to God's will.

Let this be the best answer for us. And let Archangel Gabriel, continually proclaiming God's power, be for us, during difficult times of our life, a herald of the Good News, that *nothing is impossible for God* (Lk 1:37).

Novena Reflection Day 8 (Sep 27)

When the wedding celebration was ended, Tobit called his son Tobias and said to him: “I will now declare the whole truth to you and will conceal nothing from you. Already I have declared it to you when I said, ‘It is good to conceal the secret of a king, but to reveal with due honour the works of God.’ So now when you and Sarah prayed, it was I who brought and read the record of your prayer before the glory of the Lord, and likewise whenever you would bury the dead. And that time when you did not hesitate to get up and leave your dinner to go and bury the dead, I was sent to you to test you. And at the same time God sent me to heal you and Sarah your daughter-in-law. I am Raphael, one of the seven angels who stand ready and enter before the glory of the Lord.”

The two of them were shaken; they fell face down, for they were afraid. But he said to them, “Do not be afraid; peace be with you. Bless God forevermore. As for me, when I was with you, I was not acting on my own will, but by the will of God. Bless him each and every day; sing his praises. Although you were watching me, I really did not eat or drink anything—but what you saw was a vision. So now get up from the ground and acknowledge God. See, I am ascending to him who sent me. Write down all these things that have happened to you.” And he ascended. Then they stood up and could see him no more.

They kept blessing God and singing his praises, and they acknowledged God for these marvellous deeds of his, when an angel of God had appeared to them.

Tobias 12:11-22

On the Feast of Archangels, next to Saint Michael and Gabriel, we also remember the Saint Raphael. The only biblical book that teaches us about him is a charming and sublime tale from the third or second century BC – the Book of Tobit in Old Testament.

It contains a story about an Israeli family of the Naphtali tribe, in captivity in Nineveh, the capital of Assyria. Tobit, the head of the family, was a wealthy, respected and pious man. During the persecution of the Jews, he buried the abandoned corpses of the murdered, with which he fell into disfavour with the Assyrian king. Moreover, the tragedy came into his life. He lost not only his property but also his sight. His wife, burdened with concern for supporting the family, treated him with reluctance. The sick Tobit sent his son, young Tobit, to Rages, to his friend Gabael, to bring the money deposited with him.

The second plot leads to Ekbatana, to the home of Raquel, whose daughter Sara lost seven husbands in turn as a result of the sinister action of the demon Asmodeus.

Both figures: Tobias the father and Sarah, in their despair asked God to die (see Tb 3: 6. 13-15). In response to their prayer, Rafael is sent to heal both.

At the beginning of his mission he appears in human form, taking the common name of Azariah. He offers himself to young Tobit as the guide and companion for the road from Nineveh to Reya in Media. On the river Tigris Rafael saves him from a big fish and, after breaking it, instructs him to take bile, heart and liver out of it. Upon arriving in Ekbatana, he advises him to marry Sarah, Rael's daughter, whom he frees from the evil spirit. We find here a beautiful scene in which Tobit asks his future wife to pray together, asking God for deliverance and blessing.

After marriage, Tobit asks Rafael to go to Gabael to collect the debt. The Archangel advises young Tobit to go home, and upon his return, to smear his father's eyes with the bile of the fish, so that he can regain his sight.

When, finally, the overjoyed father and son want generously reward St. Raphael the Archangel (known to them as Azariah) and show him sincere gratitude, the guest introduces himself to them as follows: I am Raphael, one of the seven angels who stand ready and enter before the glory of the Lord (Tb 12:15).

This is how the charming story of Saint Rafael and the happy family of Tobit ends. It can be included among the great didactic literature of the Middle East.

That was where the cult of St. Raphael the Archangel developed and from there later came to the West. Quite vague beginnings of this western devotion date back to the

time of Pope Sergius (687–701). In the fifteenth century, Rafael's patronage over travellers is clearly visible. This cult developed in the following centuries. From 1969 he is remembered together with the Archangels Michael and Gabriel on September 29.

Let good God our Father always send us Saint Raphael – the patron of travelling and sick, that he may protect us from all adversities and lead us to the place where the Lord has appointed us.

Novena Reflection Day 9 (Sep 28)

Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and said about him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit!" Nathanael said to him, "How do you know me?" Jesus answered him, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you." Nathanael answered him, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are King of Israel!" Jesus answered him, "Because I told you, 'I saw you underneath the fig tree,' do you believe? You will see greater things than these!" He said to him, "Most certainly, I tell you all, hereafter you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man."

Jn 1: 47-51

The devotion of St. Michael the Archangel finds its full expression above all in the holy liturgy, which the Council calls *the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; at the same time it is the font from which all her power flows* (SC 10).

Therefore, following the encouragement of the Council Fathers, let us experience tomorrow's feast of Archangels, in a special way through conscious, active and fruitful participation in the Eucharistic liturgy.

Let's look at the prayers that that we will hear at tomorrow's ceremony. It determines the proper content of the entire liturgy of the Holy Mass.

Collect, or prayer over the gathered people in its content comes from admiration for God's Providence, which assigns tasks to people and angels. He assigns the job to the angels of caring for people and surrounding them with the glory of God's throne (cf. Rev 5: 11; 7: 11). It ends with a request for angels to help us in our lives.

Prayer over the gifts comes like the previous text from the oldest surviving sacramentaries. It expresses the request that God accept our sacrifice, which we are commencing through the intercession of angels. Thus, it emphasizes our sense of unworthiness.

The prayer after Communion was written much later, but it is in no way inferior with its profound theological content to ancient liturgical texts. It became a biblical prayer.

Its essence is based on a passage from the Book of King's (1 Kings 19). Just as Elijah, fed on a flatbread, went forty days and nights to Mount Horeb, so we, fortified with Eucharistic Bread, are spiritually strengthened to walk through difficulties of life. Angels show the source of food in both cases.

A very interesting composition is the Preface of Angels, which significantly expands the image of the world of heavenly spirits.

The first sentence and part of the second, which are: *to praise you without end in your Archangels and Angels. For the honour we pay the angelic creatures in whom you delight*

redounds to your own surpassing glory... shows us the figure of an angel in the light of Old Testament. The Bible, whenever it depicts the appearance of an angel, also speaks of great fear and the conviction that the man has to die. The reason for this fear is that the angels are reflections of the glory of the Creator. None of the living can see Him and remain alive. One of the angels' mission is to reveal God's perfection. The following part also clearly shows the expressive function of Angels: *by their great dignity and splendour you show how infinitely great you are, to be exalted above all things.* One must admire the brevity, clarity and precision of thought. It contains the quintessence of angelological considerations of biblists and theologians. A brief statement that acknowledging the perfection of angels is a way to recognise and glorify God is one of the most beautiful and important justifications for the existence of devotion to angels in the liturgy of the Church.

The novena in honour of the Holy Archangels: Michael, Rafael and Gabriel are coming to an end. Tomorrow we will celebrate with participation in the Eucharistic Sacrifice. The presence and care of angels does not end with the end of the novena, however.

Hence the encouragement that we continue to use the powerful intercession of Saint Michael, Gabriel and Rafael, and gazing at the angel's holiness and zeal for the glory of God, by imitating them, become ourselves one flame of love burning before the throne of God. Amen.

The Feast Day Reflection

Why we need Saint Michael the Archangel?

Thomas Aquinas wrote that angels had such a great wish to help people that we cannot even imagine. St Michael wants to help us for free, for nothing, but he acts like a gentleman, he respects our free will. Only when we call on him, does he act with exceptional power and wisdom.

Why do we need St Michael? First of all for a spiritual battle. We are at war. We don't sail on a cruiser but on a battleship. We're not tourists, we are pilgrims. We came from God and go home, to heaven, to God. Angels are to protect us on our way home because we have an enemy. It is Satan and the other fallen angels. Look at the statue of St Michael. It is a copy of the one from the miraculous grotto in Gargano, Italy. This statue is a victory monument. Look, the evil spirit is defeated under the foot of St Michael. He was defeated; he is defeated and will be defeated by St Michael. St Michael encourages us to make friends with him because he wants to give us his strength to become a winner.

At the beginning, a group of angels rebelled against God. Their leader was Lucifer with his calling "I won't serve". They are in a state of hell. They are losers forever and now they do everything to entice people. They are jealous of us, of our dignity.

They don't want us to get places in heaven. They lost their place in heaven by their own conscious and purely voluntary decision.

Good and bad angels

Christ tells us about Satan and hell, explaining his methods of activity. Moreover, Jesus is tempted but He overcomes all the temptations. Christ is victorious and invites us to be victorious too. He reminds us like He reminded the Apostles: "Stay awake and pray not to be put to the test" (Matt 26:41). He also teaches us the Lord's Prayer with two important requests: "And lead us not into temptation" which means "grant us strength to fight a temptation" and "deliver us from evil". We say these requests in plural form. It means that we pray for ourselves and for others. In the Catechism of the Catholic Church, we find the words "Devil" and "Satan" written with a capital letter. These are the names of a mysterious being rebelling against God. So, the world of evil spirits consists of Satan/Devil and other fallen angels called demons. Demons are always in plural; they belong to the kingdom ruled by Satan; they are at his disposal and take his orders. Lateran Council IV stated that demons were created by God as good angels, good by nature but, they become evil by their own decision.

The Devil exists

This is the reason we need to remember that we are at war. St Faustina wrote that she began the day with a fight and

she ended it with a fight. As the Word of God says: “Keep sober and alert, because your enemy the Devil is on the prowl like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour” (1 Peter 5:8). On the one hand, we cannot exaggerate the significance of the Devil and his activity. Yes, he exists. Yes, he acts but, he was defeated. On the other hand, we cannot ignore him at all. What we need is common sense and a healthy balance.

Be courageous

Christ gives us a proper perspective: “Be courageous: I have conquered the world” (John 16:33). Don’t be afraid of sin, hell and Satan because it is Christ who triumphs. We read in the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC, 395): “The power of Satan is, nonetheless, not infinite. He is only a creature, powerful from the fact that he is pure spirit, but still a creature. He cannot prevent the building up of God’s reign. Although Satan may act in the world out of hatred for God and his kingdom in Christ Jesus, and although his action may cause grave injuries – of a spiritual nature and, indirectly, even of a physical nature – to each man and to society, the action is permitted by divine providence which with strength and gentleness guides human and cosmic history.

It is a great mystery that providence should permit diabolical activity, but ‘we know that in everything God works for good with those who love him’” (Rom 8: 28).

Mystery of God

The word 'mystery' is significant in this passage. Both activity and the silence of God is a mystery. It is also a mystery why God allows Satan to act within the world. He could have sent him to another planet. Some Fathers of the Church say that God keeps Satan in the world to rebuke him because a man, so little and fragile in comparison to an evil spirit, can defeat him by the power of God.

The power of St Michael

St Michael the Archangel is an exceptional helper in a spiritual battle. We read in the Book of Revelation: "And now war broke out in heaven, when Michael with his angels attacked the dragon. The dragon fought back with his angels, but they were defeated and driven out of heaven. The great dragon, the primeval serpent, known as the Devil or Satan, who had led all the world astray, was hurled down to the earth and his angels were hurled down with him.

Then I heard a voice shout from heaven, 'Salvation and power and empire for ever have been won by our God, and all authority for his Christ, now that the accuser, who accused our brothers day and night before our God, has been brought down. They have triumphed over him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word to which they bore witness, because even in the face of death they did not cling to life'" (Rev 12:7-11).

St John wrote this text inspired by the Holy Spirit; he was then an old man living on the island of Patmos. He had private visions that became public ones that were written in the Bible. We're going to read them till the end of the world. What did St John see? He saw some ancient battle at the very beginning of the world. The battle did not take place on earth but in heaven. It was between two teams, two armies: St Michael and his angels and Satan and his angels. Leadership of St Michael and Satan is emphasised, they both had their angels. The battle was rather short, no rounds, no overtimes, no penalty kicks like in football matches. God uses St Michael and his angels to remove all fallen angels from heaven. They were hurled down to the earth, what does it mean? They live in the state of hell but it is open; that's why they have access to us, people, on earth. Hell will never be closed.

Satan takes seven demons to attack a soul

Hell is not a place you can lock. Satan wants as many people as possible to join him in hell. We need to be aware of that fact. He attacks people usually in their weakest points. And he does not act alone. Christ says he takes seven more demons, and they all attack a soul.

That is why when he tempts us it is worth calling St Michael. We can do it by the prayer of Pope Leo XIII, written after one of the visions he had in a chapel in St Peter's Basilica.

We're not sure what exactly Pope Leo XIII saw but we have his prayer that is well-known and said in various languages all over the world. Originally it was in Latin.

Triumph over evil

Let's look at the passage again: "They have triumphed over him by the blood of the Lamb." Yes, this is the blood of the Lamb which triumphed over evil. It washes our sins away and Christ feeds us with His blood when we receive Holy Communion. It is His blood, thanks to which we win over evil spirits. St Michael is a great protector in this spiritual battle. The experience of the saints proves this fact: St Faustina Kowalska, Bl Fr Bronisław Markiewicz, Joan of Arc, St John Vianney, St Padre Pio, and many, many more.

Let's come back to St Faustina Kowalska, the Apostle of Divine Mercy. She encountered St Michael the Archangel only once in her lifetime. It was on 29th September, St Michael's feast day in the Catholic Church. She recognised him. She did not write down his looks but his words: "On the Feast of Saint Michael the Archangel, I saw by my side that great Leader, who spoke these words to me: 'The Lord has ordered me to take special care of you.

Know that you are hated by evil; but do not fear – Who is like God!' And he disappeared. But I feel his presence and assistance" (Diary, 706).

We need to be aware of this: if we do something for God, we are hated by evil. Evil spirits want to interrupt and draw us away from doing God's will. But they cannot hurt the head, so they attack the heel, some weak points. We are defended. St Michael the Archangel takes special care of us. Our guardian angels take care of us on a daily basis. It is their regular job.

Do not be afraid

St Michael's care is extraordinary because this is his mission given to him by God himself. And he assures St Faustina: do not fear – Who is like God. Sometimes we are oversensitive or overwhelmed by fear, we may demonise reality. But St Michael says: “Do not be afraid.”

Then he disappears but she feels his presence and assistance. We want to feel the same. You're finishing reading this article, but St Michael stays by your side. If you invite him, he will let you experience his powerful, sweet and effective presence. You can always rely on him.

From **The Angels Magazine**
by *Fr Piotr Prusakiewicz CSMA*

The **Congregation of Saint Michael the Archangel (CSMA)**, in Latin *Congregatio Sancti Michaëlis Archangeli* and also known as the Michaelite Fathers, is a religious order of the Roman Catholic Church founded in 1897 by the Blessed Father Bronislaw Markiewicz, a Polish priest from Miejsce Piastowe, Poland.

On 29th September 1921, the Archbishop of Krakow, Adam Sapieha, issued the Decree formally establishing the Congregation. On 15th June 1966, the Congregation was affirmed by the Holy See.

The Congregation of Saint Michael the Archangel is one of the 23 officially recognised groups of the Salesian Family of Don Bosco. The Congregation now operates in several places and parishes around the world. According to the survey in 2010 they work in 52 houses and have nearly 400 members.

They run orphanages, schools and youth centres and work with unprivileged, handicapped, abandoned and poor children including missionary work in 15 countries such as Poland, Argentina, Paraguay, Italy, Germany, Belarus, Papua New Guinea, Australia, Austria and Canada, Aruba, Ukraine, the Dominican Republic, Porto Rico.

Michaelites Fathers spread the devotion to Saint Michael and the Holy Angels. They are the guardians of the shrine of Saint Michael the Archangel in Monte Sant'Angelo in Italy. The priests and brothers also run a publishing house so-called "Michalineum" and publish a bi-monthly magazine on "St Michael and the Angels" in Polish and in English.

BLESSED

BRONISLAW MARKIEWICZ (1842-1912)



