



Messengers from a loving God

The Angels

Joy of heavenly angels

St Michael defender of the unborn

The angelic secret of John XXIII

Guardian angels and St Josemaria Escriva

St Faustina's angelic encounters



DEAR READERS

It is a pleasure to welcome you to the fourth quarterly edition of "The Angels" Messengers from a Loving God magazine. Thank you for all your letters, emails and positive feedback, especially after the live show with Father Mitch Packwa on EWTN. I am glad to hear that the magazine helps you keep in touch with the angels and live in the presence of God.

The Angels Messengers from a Loving God

A Catholic Quarterly Magazine on Holy Angels

Publisher: The Congregation of Saint Michael the Archangel – Poland

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ISSN 2081-5077

Many of you ask, "Why are the angels so little honoured?" The answer is that most people make very little effort to increase their knowledge about the angels even though they are aware of their existence.

To honor and love them, we must first know them. We would be inflamed with real love for them if we understood their dignity; their close relationship with God; their excellence and power; and the affection and concern they have for us. The Church has always practised and encouraged devotion to the Holy Angels. Although they are invisible, they accompany us all the time. We need the angels because they are near to God. They model for us how to grow closer and closer to God. These spiritual beings are also powerful intercessors for our needs.

We turn to Saint Michael the Archangel, because he fulfilled God's will faithfully.

Like the angels once were, we too are on trial. We, like the angels and

St. Michael, have to remain humble in submitting our wills to the will of God. That is why a real devotion to the Holy Angels consists in seeking to imitate them. To imitate the angels means: to walk in the presence of God in the semi-darkness of our faith; to do God's will; to give thanks to God and to praise Him for his glory and love; to hate sin; to sing to God in our hearts and with our voices; to adore His Holy Name.

I kindly ask you to let others know about our magazine and help us distribute it all over the world. The CSMA and I pray for all the readers and helpers

I would be interested to hear by letter or email any testimonies on how the angels have helped you in your life. Please contact the office or the coordinator's whose details can be found on www.catholicangelsmagazine.com and www.kjb24.pl

Father Piotr Prusakiewicz CSMA

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Blessed Pope John XXIII's secret of how to influence other people

Pope John XXIII is said to be one of the greatest advocates of angels and their presence in the faithful's lives. Looking at pilgrims gathered in St. Peter's Square in Rome, he used to think about the numerous heavenly hosts of Guardian Angels who assisted the crowds. From his early childhood the Pope prayed to his Guardian Angel five times a day and felt they were both in a heartfelt relationship with each other.

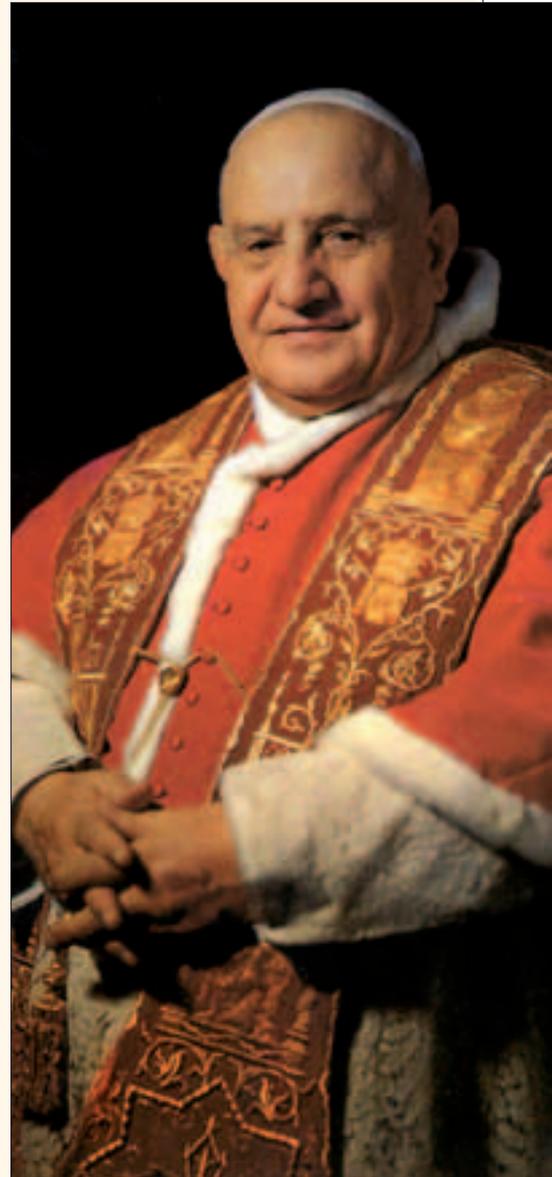
He strongly believed that our heavenly advisers intercede for us, help in our problems as well as protect us from perilous situations. Moreover, the Pope admitted that his guardian angel told him to summon the Council. His advisers often heard him saying "My good angel suggested me that...", "My good angel told me that..." or even "My good angel woke me up this morning..." Pope John XXIII also asked his guardian angel to help him say the breviary more carefully and piously.

Pope John XXIII wrote, "Whenever I am to visit some VIP to talk about the Holy See's issues, I ask my Guardian Angel to speak to the Guardian Angel of my guest so that the latter takes a positive attitude towards our conversation." That secret was given to him by Pope Pius XI, when the would-be pope worked as a nuncio in

Bulgaria, Greece and Turkey: "If you are to negotiate with a person, who does not accept your arguments, ask your Guardian Angels for help. If both Guardian Angels agree with each other, your conversation will appear easy. My Guardian Angel reaches to my guests' minds and makes them friendly towards me."

Pope John XXIII's encouragement to honour our Guardian Angels is still relevant today. Therefore, let's often say: "My Guardian Angel, take care of my concentration today. Please, take away forgetfulness, help me in discouragement, give me peace, cheerfulness and mental discipline (...). May angels get into each house to announce our care of social agreement, brotherly love and peace between nations. Amen."

Father **Piotr Prusakiewicz** CSMA



Holiness amidst the world

Don't we greet and speak sincerely and openly before all of those people whom we love? Therefore we should do the same before Jesus, Mary and Joseph and our Guardian Angel and do this many times.

These beautiful words were said by the founder of Opus Dei, St Josemaria Escriva, who was born on 9 January 1902 in Barbastro (Spain). He acquired his ardent devotion to the Guardian Angels from his family. Here is one of the first prayers his mother taught him:

*My Guardian Angel,
sweet companion,
do not leave my side either
by night or day.
If you should leave me,
where would I be?
My Guardian Angel,
intercede for me before God*

The Work of God (*Opus Dei* in the original Latin), was founded by Father Escriva as a result of Divine inspiration on the Feast of the Holy Angels, 2 October 1928. Put simply, it provides a road to Christian perfection by means of three simple rules for growth in holiness. First, by means of one's daily work. Second, by one's own sanctification through work done well and third, by the sanctification of others resulting from our own honest and diligent work.

Father Escriva experienced direct angelic intervention during his life. In

1931, whilst walking in the street, he saw three young people, one of whom jumped up at him, shouting – “I will show you!” He raised his hands in such a way that Father Escriva expected to receive a blow. But, one of the only two other people present in the street at the time said in a masterful tone – “Don't hit him.” Later the first young man spoke, mocking Father Escriva, calling him “Donkey! Donkey!” This was a term by which the saint referred to himself only in prayer and in confession. A close colleague had said that Father Escriva attributed this attack to the action of the Devil and of his Guardian Angel's defence of him.

Trust in your Guardian Angel. Treat him as your friend – which he is – and he in turn will render you thousands of services in your ordinary, everyday affairs.

Saint Josemaria had an immense trust that his work would progress more swiftly through the intervention of the angels. During a retreat in 1932 he wrote: “I called the Holy Archangels, our Patrons, Saints Michael, Gabriel and Raphael. I am so convinced that calling on three such significant persons in the Kingdom of Heaven must be pleasing to the Triune God (God existing as three persons) and will result in a hastening of the progress of the work.”

On a particular day when his watch stopped he asked his Guardian Angel's help and ... it started ticking again. From that moment he began to call his Guardian Angel – “watchmaker.” There were many such small angelic interventions in the saint's life.

Get used to recommending to each person that you meet that his / her own Guardian Angel can help them be good, faithful and joyful so that at the favourable time they will be able to accept the eternal embrace of the love of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit and our Blessed Lady.

During the Spanish Civil war, when the Communists held power, sudden raids on houses were often conducted in order to search out and murder members of the clergy. On one particular day, a police patrol arrived in a square and ordered the concierges of each building to open the doors so that they could conduct house-to-house searches. The concierge of the building in which the saint was hiding, did not open the door and the police patrol simply passed on without demanding entrance. An eye-witness testified that this was yet another instance of angelic intervention.



■ St Josemaria Escriva

In situations that appeared entirely hopeless from a human point of view, the saint frequently relied on angelic intervention and encouraged everyone to do the same.

... our Guardian Angel continually accompanies us as an extraordinary witness. It will be he who will recall all of our tenderness to the Lord at the time of judgement over the period of our entire lifetime. Additionally, at times when we experience horrific condemnation from the evil one and feel entirely despairing, our angel will recall all our heart's most deeply concealed impulses which we may have forgotten – these proofs of love given to God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

Piotr Paweł Orłowski

Holy angels in my life

I was brought up in the Church of England, consequently the only angels that I had heard about were the ones mentioned in the Bible. I became a Roman Catholic at the age of 21 but, I am sad to say, angels were still not in my life. Over the next few years I did hear about a Guardian Angel and thought that was a good idea but I didn't take this information very seriously and certainly didn't connect 'having a Guardian Angel' as applying to myself. This situation went on for more years than I care to mention.

Gradually I began to learn about angels, as if the Lord was opening my mind little by little to accept the reality of angels. I read books about angels, went to a retreat given by Fr. Peter Prusakiewicz about angels and talked to lots of people. Now, of course, I wonder how I ever managed to survive without them! They are as much a part of my life as the very air I breathe.

I read Janice Connell's book 'Angel Power' and began to realise just how many angels we have waiting to help us. There are far more angels than people and they are very happy when we ask them for help. We have St. Michael and his host of angels to look after us and keep us safe. We have St. Gabriel and his host of angels to take messages and greet people. We have St Raphael, the Lord's Physician and his host of angels to look after us when we

are ill and to be by our side when in hospital and so much more.

I never leave my house without asking the holy angels to protect it whilst I am gone. Every morning I ask the holy angels to protect my children, friends and family. If any of them are going to have an operation I ask St. Raphael to care for them and the holy angels to protect them and guide the hands of the surgeons/doctors/ nurses etc. If I am going to meet anyone new I ask the holy angels to go ahead of me to surround the person so that we start on a friendly footing. When any of my family are going for interviews or difficult meetings I ask the holy angels to go ahead and prepare the way.

The most awesome time for me is when I am before the Blessed Sacrament and realise that my Guardian Angel can see the Face of God and me at the same time. That is how close we are to the Almighty.

R. Fenlon – Wales



Sacra di San Michele

Sacra di San Michele is a Sanctuary situated in Italy. It is the third of the three most famous sanctuaries of St Michael the Archangel

The first, oldest and most famous place in the west honouring St Michael the Archangel is the sanctuary Monte Sant Angelo erected on Gargano in the 5th century.

The second is Mont Saint Michel in France. In 708 or 709 AD,

a promontory of the Normandy coast in France, was consecrated to the archangel. The sanctuary was called Mont Saint-Michel au péril de la mer due to the phenomenon of high and low tides which made the place very dangerous.

This article is about the third most famous abbey devoted to St Michael. Sacra di San Michele is a religious complex on Mount Pirchiriano, situated on the south side of the Susa Valley in northern Italy.

According to historical sources, in Roman times a military stronghold existed on the current location of the abbey. After the fall of Rome the Lombards built a fortress there against Frankish invasions. The abbey was established approximately between 966-999AD. The building was constructed by the hermit St Giovanni Vincenzo, who was particularly devoted to St Michael. Having collected the building materials he found that they were miraculously transported to the top of the mountain. St Giovanni realised that the archangel wanted him to build the church on Mount Pirchiriano. The other above-mentioned famous sanctuaries of St Michael are also built in inaccessible mountain tops and caves. The monastery fell into decline and was suppressed in 1622

by Pope Gregory XV; it remained abandoned till 1835. Antonio Rosmini was asked to restore it and reinstate a religious community at the abbey.

The abbey, which for much of its history came under the Benedictine rule is now entrusted to the Rosminions.

The church, whose construction took many years to complete, is characterized by the unusual position of the façade, which is at a lower level than the floor of the church's interior. Byzantine influences are recognizable in the niches, columns and arches.

The 41m high façade gives access to the Scalone del Morti ("Stairway of the Dead"), flanked by arches, niches and tombs in which, until recent times, skeletons of dead monks were visible (hence the name). At the top of the steps is the marble Porta dello Zodiaco, a masterwork of 12th century sculpture. Access to the church itself is by a Romanesque portal in grey and green stone, built in the early 11th century. The church has a nave and two aisles and features elements from both the Gothic and Romanesque styles of architecture.

The complex includes the ruins of the 12th to 15th century monastery, which had five floors. It ends with the Torre della Bell'Alda ("Tower of



Photo: Paolo Bellioso, Arch. Sacra di San Michele, Paolfr. Rosminiani.



Photo: Paolo Bellio, Arch. Sacra di San Michele Padri Rosminiani.

the Beautiful Alda”). The so-called “Monks’ Sepulchre” is probably the remains of a chapel reproducing, in its octagonal plan, the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem. Pilgrims are welcomed by a 520 cm-high figure of St Michael, whose wings are 180 cm-long: “St Michael is seen defeating the evil one and my sculpture is showing this to our world that does not care about peace. The sculpture itself consists of two parts: one of them is St Michael standing on the very rock the abbey was built on; in the other part there are wings of a beaten angel of evil staying in darkness at the foot of the rock. The archangel is Guardian of the Divine Kingdom, which opens symbolically behind the figure’s back”, says Paul de Doss-Moroder, the sculptor. The Stairway of the Dead begins in complete darkness but gradually the stairs lead to a bright space. The moment of transition occurs

when passing the Gate of Zodiac: one leaves darkness and sins behind and enters into a new life transfused with Divine Light. The abbey with its architectural details, medieval sculptures, frescoes and paintings of the 16th century are suffused with Christian spiritual richness. Clemente Rebora, an Italian poet from the 18th century, wrote that the Sacra had become a saint’s mountain thanks to St Michael, the Right Hand of God and Prince of the Heavenly Hosts. One of the chroniclers of the 9th century wrote: “what we know from many fragments of the Bible is that St Michael not only leads the hosts in heaven but also intervenes in human issues on earth as well. He took a liking to three places: Gargano Mountain, Mont Saint-Michel and Sacra di San Michele, situated among mountain tops, places ultimately suitable for the contemplation of God.”

It is difficult to say what particularly delights pilgrims. It could be the centuries-old history, the architectural variety, the mystical atmosphere or even the fascinating scenery. But there can be no doubt that the material and spiritual dimension of the place is steeped in religious meaning.

Taken from:

- www.sacradisanmichele.com
- Barbara Debernardi, “Il sentiero dei principi. Raggiungere la Sacra di San Michele attraverso I boschi” (from: “Panorami. Vallata alpine”, 2000, n 1).
- “La luce sorgente e simbolo della creazione” (from: *Tracce per un alfabeto medioevale. Guida alla lettura di alcuni simboli nell’arte valsusina* (“Quaderni del Des Ambrois”, 2004, n 2).
- “Alla Sacra di San Michele” (from: “In cordata verso il cielo. Itinerari sacri in Valle di Susa”, “Quaderni del Des Ambrois”, 2004, n 3).

St Michael in PNG

A conversation with Michaelite Father **Zdzisław Kruczek** a missionary in Papua New Guinea about “baptising” old beliefs, the new enlistment of young Melanesian monks and a moving prayer to St Michael the Archangel.

For nearly 35 years, you have been a missionary in Papua New Guinea, a country that chose St Michael the Archangel as patron.

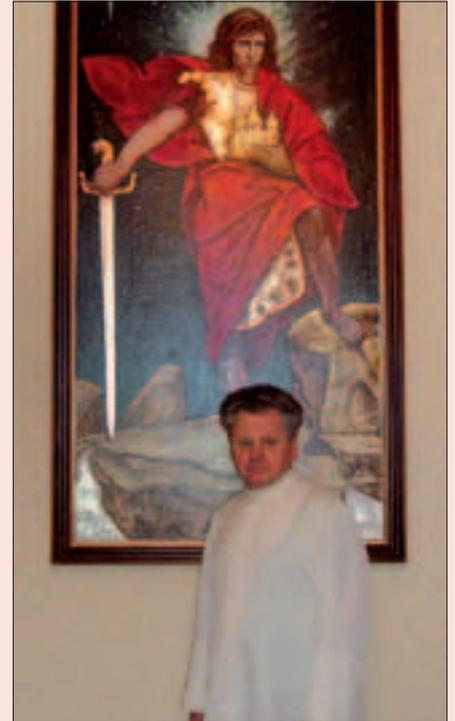
Yes, it is an unusual story. Papua New Guinea (PNG) gained independence relatively recently in 1975. Soon afterwards, the newly formed Conference of Catholic Bishops of PNG and the Solomon Islands met to decide who should be the patron of this very young country. The Port Moresby Archbishop Herman ToPaivu suggested Saint Michael the Archangel. There were two reasons. The first one, which we could call theological-pastoral, relates to the deeply rooted belief of Papua New Guineans in the souls of their ancestors and in real (not of this earth) spirits that can be good or bad. St Michael the Archangel is considered to be a good spirit and this may help to find a link connecting old beliefs to Christianity. The intention was to “baptise” often superstitious beliefs. The second premise was historical. In 1882 Missionaries of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus arrived from France on the Melanesian island of Matupit. The next day they climbed over a hill to Nodup and there on September 29th, on the feast day of St Michael, celebrated the first Mass, thus initiating the evangelisation of the territories that are now Papua New Guinea. These were convincing arguments, so in 1978 Pope John Paul II agreed to the PNG bishops’ petition.

Do the Papuans love their Patron and is reverence to him alive today?

The feast of St Michael the Archangel is celebrated here. There are St Michael’s churches and chapels. Pope Leo XIII’s prayer has already been translated into the local *Tok Pisin* language. The combative character fits the valiant mentality of the local faithful. It is prayed at the end of Mass in some parishes.

Papua New Guineans often compose texts themselves and sing them in their language. In one of their prayers they ask St Michael the Archangel to protect the faithful, as he protected the first missionaries in PNG. It reads as follows,

*Saint Michael,
Our country’s Patron
and advocate before God,
You protected the first missionaries
Who left their homelands
And you brought them to us,
To share the Good News with us.
We pray therefore to You, asking
That You protect our souls and bodies.
Help us when the devil tempts us
And sets traps for us.
Protect the Catholic Church
and make it a strong bedrock.
Help return to God those
Who left and betrayed him.
Be with us on our way to heaven,
so that with all the angels and saints
We may be able to worship God
For ever and ever.
Amen*



I was recently at a meeting of PNG religious communities. A Polish Pallottine Father asked for my help: “I work in a parish where one church is dedicated to St Michael. His feast is approaching. Do you have any materials?” I said that I did and I sent him the prayers, texts and the Litany to St Michael in *Tok Pisin*. This is how it spreads. You have to devote time to prepare and translate texts. It is a large field of action for the Michaelites.

It is true, and honestly speaking, we do all we can. Currently we look after three parishes and we manage a seminary. We cannot hide our joy at the fact that in January 2011, if it is God’s will, the first Papua New Guinean deacon - Peter Kaupa will be ordained a Michaelite priest. The next ones are

Angels our protectors

Angels not only serve God, but they are also sent to serve people. God's warriors are sent to rescue and save human life. An angel stops Abraham from dealing a mortal blow to Isaac, saves Hagar and her son from dying in the desert, saves the lives of young men thrown into a fiery furnace, saves Daniel in the lion's den, warns Joseph to go to Egypt, frees Peter from his chains. We can imagine angels like commandos sent on a mission, to rescue man from oppression.

Even in the face of vigorous interference angels do not retreat. So when Lot and his family were too slow getting ready to leave Sodom which was destined to be destroyed by sulphur rain and fire, two angels *took him, his wife and two daughters by the hands – as God took pity on them – and they pulled them and walked them out of the city (Gen 19,16).*

The Old Testament shows in several instances where angels look after humans – rescuing them from dying of thirst, bringing food, healing them and saving those unjustly sentenced to death.

Rescue from dying of thirst

We know well the story of the angel who appeared to Hagar and her son Ishmael, dying of thirst in the desert (**Gen 21, 19**).

Abraham's wife Sarah thought that she was infertile and as

result she gave him Hagar her Egyptian servant as a concubine, so he could have offspring with her. However, in jealousy, Sarah started to humiliate her slave. Pregnant Hagar finally decided to escape. That is when the first intervention of a heavenly messenger took place. The Angel of God found Hagar by a stream in the desert on the road to Shur and told her: *'Return to your mistress and humbly accept her authority.'* Then the Angel of God announced: *'I will multiply your descendants so much that it will not be possible to count them.'*

When Sarah became pregnant and gave birth to Isaac, she started feeling increased animosity towards Ishmael and ordered Abraham to expel him and his mother. While the banished woman was wandering in the Negev desert, she was left without water near Beersheba and left Ishmael under a bush. She again met the God's Angel, who said to her: *'Do not fear, for God heard the*

studying at the seminary, familiarising themselves with the charisma of blessed Fr. Bronislaw Markiewicz and enlisting under St Michael the Archangel's banner. This responsibility will rest on their shoulders in the future.

A priest I know told me that at the Port Moresby airport tourists are welcomed by an enormous sign: "Welcome to Paradise!" Is Papua New Guinea really a paradise?

The Papua New Guineans were overwhelmed by their new-found freedom, they celebrated for a long time and the future looked good.

But it did not take long for the country to be afflicted by terrible corruption, stealing and tribal fights. You have to remember that in Papua New Guinea things often happen that make one's blood curdle. Seeing his country's slow descent towards evil, Bernard M. Narokobi, a politician, parliamentarian and sober Christian who died 18 months ago, composed a prayer to St Michael, asking for safety and peace in Papua New Guinea. He seeks through prayer, for better understanding and in the knowledge that human "wisdom" alone cannot help the Papua New Guineans and instead should turn to the country's patron. In one of the invocations he says:

*Unite our people from
mountain to mountain,
Shore to shore an isle to isle
This lovely, lily like land of ours
So full of beauty and wealth
So threatened with blood and stealth
Stand up St Michael, stand up!
If this poignant call is answered,
we will be closer to paradise.*

This is our wish too and many thanks for the conversation.

Interviewed by:
Ewelina Faszczewska

► *moans of the boy lying there. Get up, pick up the boy and take him by the hand, for I will make him into a great nation.' Then God opened her eyes and she saw a well with water; she went and filled a (goatskin) flask with water and gave it to the boy to drink. God protected the boy as he grew up. He lived in the desert and became an archer. He lived in the Paran desert and his mother got him a wife from the land of Egypt.*

Hagar was only a slave forced to have intercourse with Abraham. She gave Abraham a son Ishmael, but Isaac, Sarah's son was Abraham's promised son and heir. Although God chose Isaac, he also looked after Ishmael and his mother and what is more, gave birth to a great nation.

Food provided by angels

We also read in the Bible about events when angels provided people with food, often rescuing them from death by starvation. For example, an angel took the prophet Habakkuk as he was preparing food for harvesters and in one instant transferred him from Judea to Babylon, to the edge of the lion pit where another prophet was imprisoned and he said: *'Daniel, Daniel! Take the food that God sends you!'* (Dn 14,37).

Angels provided manna to the Hebrews during their 40-year journey to the land of Canaan (Ex 16): every morning except on the Sabbath when *there was double the amount that they would gather each day* (Ex 16.5). The Bible adds that it was grainy and delicate like frost, it looked like coriander seeds, white or yellowish and tasted like pancakes with honey: it was ground in manual

grinders or crushed in a mortar, cooked or baked. This simple food was a special sign for the Israelites that the Lord was guiding them on their travels through the desert. Here God himself helps his people, so "common manna" attains the name "bread from heaven" (compare Ex 16,4, Ps 77,24) and "bread of strong men" which in Septuagint's translation is called "angel's bread" (Ps 77,25; Ws 16,20).

Food provision is not always linked to extreme situations such as starvation. Sometimes it is help provided in difficult circumstances. Thus an angel heartens the Prophet Elijah who in desperation lay under a juniper, was totally discouraged, falling into apathy. Today we would say that he was deeply depressed. *He lay down and fell asleep. And an angel, nudging him, said: 'Get up and eat.' Elijah saw a pancake and a jar of water. So getting up, he ate and drank and lay down again. God's Angel returned for a second time and nudging him said: 'Get up and eat, for you have a long journey ahead of you!' Then, getting up, he ate and drank. Next, nourished by this food he walked forty days and forty nights to God's mountain (Kings 19, 4-8).* The angel rouses Elijah from his depression, sending him on a journey and offering him food. Elijah obediently receives the food and this is a presage of a different food, which in Jesus' time will be named openly. Here it is the food of angels literally speaking and Jesus will say about this food: *'Your forefathers ate manna in the desert and they died. Who eats this bread will live forever.'* This food was life-giving for Elijah and literally also a pilgrim's food. Elijah experiences in the desert the power of this food - a presage of the food of the New Covenant.

Rescue for those sentenced to death

Daniel was one of the Old Testament's significant prophets. He belonged to the first group of Jewish exiles seized by Babylon during King Joachim's reign. His life and works as an outstanding leader and prophet span all the period of Babylonian captivity, a full seventy years (from approximately 606 BC to the beginning of the reign of the Persian King Cyrus, approximately 536 BC). Daniel was captured as a young teenager. Later we see him as an experienced, older man of God who carries out a key function at the court of his oriental rulers. The King of Babylon made Daniel a high level minister, who thanks to his wisdom and justice was the most respected minister in the country. Other ministers, however, denounced Daniel for breaking royal law by praying to the only God of the Israelites, a crime punished with death. King Darius ordered Daniel to be thrown into a den full of hungry lions. Surprisingly enough, the lions did not harm Daniel at all. All night they were gentle and docile like lambs. Daniel explained to the king why this happened: *'My God sent his angel and he closed the lion's mouths: they did not harm me, as He acknowledged that I was innocent.'* (Dn 6,23).

A dozen or so years earlier, angels displayed even more spectacular power over the forces of nature when they protected from certain death three Jewish youths, whom King Nebuchadnezzar ordered to be thrown into a hot

oven because they refused to bow to a golden statue. Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego (young Daniel's friends) were tied by their torturers with their own clothes and thrown into a hot oven that had been heated seven times hotter than usual. The three youths, who trusted God completely, walked among the flames untouched by them, while the king's servants continuously heated the oven with kerosene, tar, oakum and brushwood. Flames rose forty nine

youths unanimously adored God in a hymn which the Church has introduced into its liturgy.

An angel who heals

'Father, how much should I give him?' – young Tobias asks his father after his return from Media. 'I will not be disadvantaged if I give him half of my possessions that he brought

– by warm faeces from a swallow's nest. We also hear this same Raphael when he provides marriage guidance to young Tobias and when he reminds him that gratitude towards God is more important than all his human obligations and feelings (Tb 12, 17.80.20).

The abovementioned incidences of angelic interference were spectacular and exceptional. We need to remember, however, the more discrete protection of angels that we experience every day. The Church teaches that each one of us has an invisible guardian, who protects our soul and body.

Psalms 91 depicts the angels' role with regards to men saying: *Because he ordered his angels to protect you on all your paths. They will carry you in their arms so that you do not hurt your foot against a stone. You will be able to step on snakes and vipers, and you will be able to trample a lion and a dragon (Ps 91, 11-12).*

According to St. Robert Bellarmino, Doctor of the Church, these words should be interpreted both literally and metaphorically. Angels protect people from physical dangers and look after their spiritual needs. The Bible certifies that angels are interested in all people's concerns and in all that relates to man's journey to the eternal homeland.

Somebody once wrote that the words of the Roman poet Terentius could be applied to angels and even be fulfilled: *We are men's friends and nothing that is human is indifferent to us!* The liberation of nature's forces, animal attacks, people's passions, intrigues, conspiracies, wars, all can be the object of decisive angels' interference, if the fate of God's friends is at stake.

feet above the oven and burnt those Chaldeans beside it: *But the Angel of the Lord descended to the oven with Azariah and his companions and removed the flames from the oven, bringing a refreshing breeze to its centre, so that the fire did not touch them at all and did not cause pain or harm (Dn 3,49-50).* Overjoyed by God's miraculous help through the mediation of an angel, the

with me. He has delivered me in good health, he liberated my wife and brought money with me and healed you. So what should I give him as payment?' (Tb 12,2-3).

Young Tobias' words depict vividly all the material and spiritual blessings received from the Archangel Raphael. In the Book of Tobias we see Raphael as a young travel companion who heals old Tobias' eyes, hurt in an accident



Roman Zajac

St Michael the Archangel in defence of the unborn



The coming of Jesus, the Son of God in the person of a small child brought joy to the world. The first to experience this, despite her initial trepidation, was Mother Mary. “My soul exults...” – she said to her kinswoman. And Elizabeth, a woman with experience of life’s trials, had already been aware of something as “the child in her womb had leapt with joy” - he being the future prophet by the Jordan. This joyful atmosphere pervaded the hearts of the relatives and friends gathered around the cradle of the one who was to proclaim the Lord’s coming, which was to explore with extraordinary power in the angels’ message addressed to the shepherds: “I bring you tidings of great joy!” Would they whose hearts were then burdened with the sadness of sin and evil deeds be that night able to remain indifferent?

Also, the coming of Jesus, the Son of God in the person of a small child filled the world with light. For “the people that walked in darkness had seen a great light.” It is interesting that Simeon understood this truth most clearly by some inner vision borne of faith. An understanding that

in this little one was hidden redemption for all mankind and for all time. Would they who preferred the deeds of darkness be able to agree so easily for that light to be able to shine with its full strength?

Further, the coming of Jesus, the Son of God, in the person of a small child was a revelation of life. It was revealed and gave power to those who trust it, to accept anew the gift of God as a child. That the shepherds glorified and praised God for all they had heard and seen is the first sign of a new and different experience of life. In T.S. Eliot’s famous poem ‘Journey of the Magi’ about the wanderings of the wise men from the east who wished to worship the new born King, it says that they are entirely exhausted, recalling the palaces and women they left behind, but would be prepared to endure the same hardship again. Why? Because they had found a new reason for living. How could they who did not believe that “He is the life” and refused the Holy Family shelter in their homes, remain unmoved by the transforming joy expressed by the witnesses of Christ’s birth?

Satan is called the prince of darkness, sunk in a limitless abyss of sadness and each collaboration with him brings with it some form of death. It is even hard to imagine the extent of this terrible rage at the very thought of the Incarnation of the Son of God. He let loose a whole machinery of evil, starting with the indifference of inhabitants of the small town known by the lovely name of the House of Bread (Bethlehem) and ending with the bloody rage of Herod which gave rise to the murder of innocent children. And all this in order to swallow up joy, extinguish light and destroy life.

Escaping under cover of darkness, exiles in a strange country, living among strangers demanded great courage but no price was too great in order to save life.

God looks with the eyes of a child

I once saw a card with a picture of a small child with the inscription: “God looks with the eyes of a child.”



Maybe God the Father sees His Son in each of these innocent children? After all, children bring joy and renewed energy and light into our lives. This should not surprise us, but on the other hand should not lead us into a false sense of security, aware that Satan is the sworn enemy of every life from its very conception. He will do anything to annihilate it. He sets whole organisations in motion, clouds our vision, turns our thinking upside down and employs new collaborators. Those who undertake the battle to defend life must have great courage.

I know one woman who, when she realised that her daughter intended to abort her child, went into her daughter's room, knelt down and said "If you go to the hospital I will not get up off my knees until I die." The young girl gave birth to a son who is now finishing his music studies. A few years ago the magazine 'Fronda' published the moving testimony of a woman from Zytobierz, who, so upset by the news that her sister-in-law was going to hospital the next morning to have an abortion,

ran out of the house in her dressing gown. She changed trams, running blindly until eventually catching up with Oksana on the staircase to her flat and begging "Don't do it! I had a terrible dream; a child's own mother wants to kill it. Don't go to the hospital, please ..." a tearful Oksana replied "I won't go." Today this child, now growing up, is her greatest joy.

To stand on the side of life in order to actively defend it requires both great courage and determination. Formed in 1981, Human Life International, now the largest pro-life organisation in the world, uniting defenders of life, faith and the family, has most recently taken up an international campaign of prayer through the intercession of St Michael the Archangel to rescue the lives of children from the point of conception and also to convert those who carry out and who support abortions. Fr Thomas J. Euteneuer, the president of Human Life International wrote a letter, saying: "Catholics who wish to act in defence of life, will naturally turn to St Michael the Archangel, prince of the heavenly armies, in the battle against the powers of the culture of death. Pope Leo XIII wrote a wonderful prayer to St Michael and recommended that it be said after Holy Mass. Pope Pius XI asked the faithful to recite the prayer for a return of religious freedom in the Soviet Union, which was generally united with Our Lady of Fatima's plea for the conversion of Russia, whose 'errors' were spreading throughout the world. As the Soviet Union was the first country to legalise the killing of unborn children it is easy to recognise the continuation of the errors of atheist communism in the present day abortion industry."

We notice an increasing number of parishes and individuals who turn to the prayer to Saint Michael at the end of Mass, despite the fact that since 1956 it has become optional. Pope John Paul II in 1994 personally encouraged the faithful to recite this prayer, in order to "obtain assistance in the battle with the power of darkness and against the spirit of this world."

The Human Life International organisation is convinced that invoking the intercession of St Michael the Archangel is essential for the Church to attain the victory over the attacks of Satan which are so characteristic of the modern world directed against innocent human life. That is why I ask you to join us in saying this prayer to St Michael the Archangel for respect for human life from conception to natural death as well as for the conversion of abortionists.

Lastly, Fr Thomas J. Euteneuer addresses a plea for signatures to a petition asking for a return of the prayer to St Michael at the end of Mass to be reinstated as a general practice in the Church. With the Holy Father's consent this would allow Catholics throughout the world to unite in a powerful prayer for victory over the greatest evils of our time, the slaughter of almost two billion innocent children, whose blood calls out to heaven.

"The battle against the culture of death is above all a spiritual battle" stresses Fr Euteneuer and "Human Life International believes that, with the help of St Michael it will be possible to convert abortionists of the whole world and direct them to end their cooperation with evil."

Father **Krzysztof Poświęta** CSMA

Jacob's fight with the Angel

I have five questions about the part in the Old Testament where Jacob fights with an angel. Why did the angel "attack" Jacob and fight with him? What was the fight for? Why was the angel not able to overcome a man in a fight? How is it possible that a man forced him to give his blessing? Are Angels more powerful than men?

A. R. – Poland

In the **Book of Genesis (32, 25-31)** we read that at the River Jabbok Jacob was attacked by a mysterious being resembling a human who fought with him all night until sunrise. Initially the identity of this being is a mystery. Somebody fights with Jacob who does not want to give his name and who is not human. Some commentators postulated an incorrect hypothesis trying to prove that Jacob fought with Satan or stating that the basis for this story should be sought in a local legend about a demon who lives in the river and who demanded payment from those wanting to cross to the opposite bank. According to the rabbinic explanation of Ham bar Hanin, Jacob's opponent on the Jabbok River was Esau's personal Advocate and Guardian Angel, whom God allowed to attack Jacob and hurt him in revenge for the evil that he had inflicted on his brother (**Genesis Rabba 77,3**). Origen however believed that two spiritual beings

fought with Jacob: a dark, enemy force who fought against Jacob and God's power – helping Jacob.

When we follow the narration, however, there is no doubt that Jacob interprets his experience at the River Jabbok as a meeting with God. This is supported by the following words: *he named the place Penuel, saying: 'Although I saw God face to face, I saved my life' (Gen 32,31)*. The term *Elohim* is used here, which in the Bible refers to God and His messengers. The Patriarch thinks that he fought with God, but he could just as well have fought with another being from the Lord's circle. This is how the prophet Hosea understood it, writing about Jacob: *at the peak of his strength, he even fought with God. Fighting with an angel, he won, cried and begged for his mercy – he met him in Betel and there spoke with Him (Hos 12, 4-5)*. Therefore this episode is widely called Jacob's fight with the Angel. This is totally in accordance with biblical thinking. A fight with a spirit sent by God is in fact a fight with God himself. We are dealing here with a certain exchange, so characteristic of texts where a figure described as the Angel of God appears.

Mystical night

Jacob's fight with a supernatural being described in the Book of Genesis is an event so mysterious

that literal interpretation is set aside to seek a deeper meaning. Some people regard Jacob's night-time mysterious occurrence as a mystical experience. They believe that Jacob prayed intensely, as if "opposing God", and this caused – as it happens to mystics – physical bodily changes, in this case a limp. This is the interpretation of the Catechism of the Catholic Church. *Before Jacob faces his brother Esau, he fights all night with "somebody" mysterious who does not want to give his name but blesses him before leaving at dawn. The spiritual tradition of the Church saw in this description a symbol of prayer as a battle of faith and the victory of perseverance.*

Meeting oneself

Other commentators focus on psychological analysis. According to the advocates of this approach the narrator wanted to show the main hero's internal battle with himself and with his – not always positive – past. Jacob had to face the dark side of his nature before he met his brother for the second time. Psychologists also interpret Jacob's adventure as a fight with a figure of Esau that in his psyche had grown to gigantic proportions.

To improve our understanding, let us look at the context of this story. Let us remember the life events of the Patriarch Jacob, son of Isaac. After twenty years spent in Padan Aram



in spite of his attempts at placating his brother, Esau is approaching with 400 armed men. Then the patriarch divides his camp into two, probably thinking that if Esau defeats one, the other one might survive.

God “summons to a duel”

He has a lot to lose: his children, wives, material goods. It would seem that he has lost faith in his protective angels, whom he saw so recently. On the last night before the meeting with his brother, Jacob decides to cross the River Jabbok, taking the proverbial step backwards, as if wanting to escape from Esau to the other side. And just then someone attacks him unexpectedly and the struggle lasts till sunrise. *His opponent seeing that he cannot defeat him, touched his hip joint and dislocated it while fighting with him. Finally he said: ‘Let go, as dawn is coming!’ Jacob responded: ‘I will not let go until you bless me!’ (Gen 32, 25-27).*

Since Jacob realises that he is dealing with someone unusual, he makes a condition: a blessing, that is a strengthening of his life possibilities, the provision of strength that might ensure his survival at the approaching meeting with Esau.

...and saves

Did the angel representing God “lose”? This seems to be apparent from the text, which suggests that he “could not overcome” Jacob and was forced to give his blessing. The thing is that Jacob had the blessing from the beginning, only he did not realise it (it was hidden from him, so he fought desperately). Jacob ►

Jacob travels with two wives, two concubines, eleven male descendants, an unknown number of daughters, slaves, goats, sheep, camels and donkeys to his native land which he left as an escapee and as an exile. At its boundary he is welcomed by God’s angels. Earlier, at the start of his exile when he travelled in the opposite direction (to Charan) he dreamt about angels on a ladder ascending and descending. Now when he greets his land, God’s messengers appear again. The first time Jacob saw the angels in a dream. This time he sees them while totally conscious. He calls the meeting place with the angels “Manachim” which means “two camps.” The first is Jacob’s camp, the second one – the

angels.’ The meeting with the angels is mentioned laconically and almost in passing. Next we read that Jacob sends his envoys to Esau, whose land he wishes to enter. He also tries to soothe his brother’s anger by sending presents (33, 13-20). He is afraid of his anger, because during twenty years in exile he lived in the shadow of his deception. Jacob, persuaded by his mother Rebecca, deceived his father Isaac into giving him the blessing destined for the firstborn son Esau. It is not surprising that Esau hated his brother (Gen 27,41) and Jacob had to escape (Gen 27,42). After he escaped from his brother, he was alone. Now he returns as a married man and a father. But his worst fears come true – he learns that

▶ won, because God allowed him to win. His plea for mercy, protection and forgiveness was answered. He admittedly was the winner (or rather he survived the struggle), but he does not seem to deserve the credit for it. His delivery is not due to his own efforts (like crossing the river at night or sending presents to Esau), but rather due to his meeting with God and God's promise to him. By winning, he became a new man. He was no longer Jacob who deceived to obtain the blessing, but somebody strong, chosen to be God's prince.

New name

The most important message from what happened during Jacob's night-time fight is not only his contradictory win (or rather survival in spite of the unusual closeness to God), but rather God showing him a new mission, symbolised by the change in his name: *'From now on, you will not be called Jacob, but Israel, because you fought with God and with men and you won.'* Then Jacob said: *'Tell me please, what is your name?'* But he said: *'Why do you ask me for my name?' – and he blessed him in that place (Gen 32, 29-30).*

In the Bible (and in the Middle East) the only person entitled to give or change someone's name was the ruler (parents also named their child). It was bestowed by somebody who occupied a higher position in the community – to someone who was his subordinate (starting in **Gen 2, 20**).

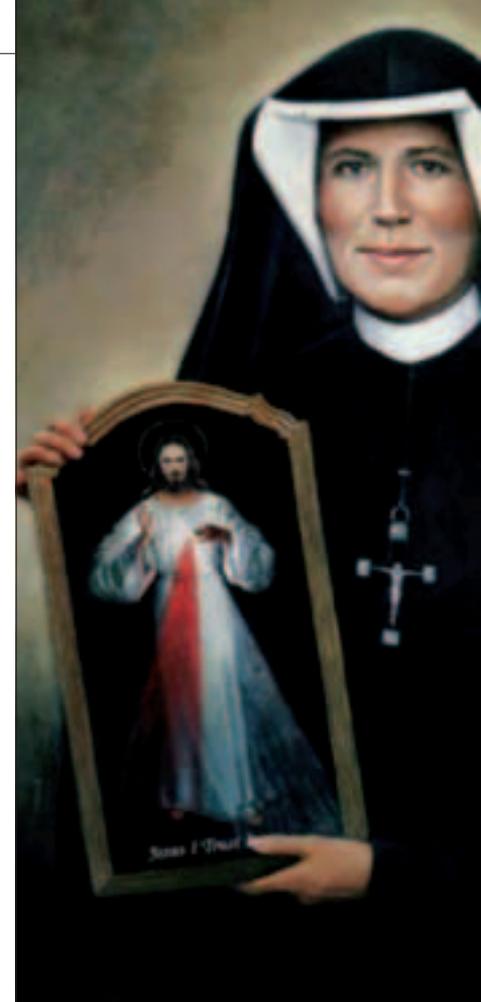
God takes Jacob's old name, which labelled the person who dishonestly and by trickery obtained a blessing belonging to someone else, and with his name he takes away his past, as it were granting the patriarch a "pardon" for the sins of his youth.

Jacob receives a new name (and this symbolises a new life): Israel, he who fought but was not defeated. The meaning of the name Israel is based on wordplay, joining the verb *srh* (to fight) with the word *'el* (God). According to the narrator the name would indicate the one who fought with God. This is the popular, but not correct etymology of the expression Israel. The explanation of verse 29b completes the meaning of this name: Jacob as Israel not only fought with God, but also with men and he persevered in this fight and won. As the story does not refer to any fight with other men, then surely – as the direct context shows – these words refer to Esau. Therefore it not only confers a new name on Jacob, but also the promise – Israel both in a fight with God and with men will be victorious.

Victorious weakness

The existence of the chosen nation is at stake in Jacob's struggles and his night-time fight is the test of the forefather's strength and thus an announcement of all of Israel's fate. However, victory and the blessing were linked to Jacob being rendered physically disabled. As a result of this fight he became from a human perspective a person with a disability. Only then (by the power of God and His blessing), he was able to face the problem with which he struggled and from which he escaped during all his life – his twin brother Esau. Only after this struggle, broken in his human strength, supported only by God's blessing, was he able to meet and make peace with his brother.

Roman Zajac



Our worship and adoration must be reserved for God alone but we can venerate the angels and saints. Angels don't draw attention to themselves. They are invisible and want to draw our attention to Jesus. They say compliments to God in their names: Saint Michael means "Who is like God", Saint Raphael signifies "God heals", Saint Gabriel means "strength of God." Always God. God is in the centre.

There are over seventy places in the Diary of Saint Faustina where the angels are mentioned. She was aware of the presence of the angels and thankful to God for them.

She wrote in the Diary: *In my communing with the angels I thanked God for His goodness, that He gives us angels for companions. Oh, how little people reflect on the fact that they always*

Encounters with the Angels

have beside them such a guest and at the same time a witness to everything (Diary 1200).

She kept in mind that the angels stand in front of God and praise Him. That is why she added her prayer to the prayer of the angels, especially the prayer of praise. *O eternal*

God with the angels I sing to You: Holy. I live for your glory alone (1231). *I offer you O Lord all the adoration and thanksgiving of the saints and of all the choirs of angels and I unite myself in a special way with your Mother* (220).

To follow the example of Saint Faustina we should ask the angels to support us in our prayer. We often feel distracted in the morning, in the evening or before the Holy Mass. That is why we may ask them for their help in our prayer. They will be with us, help us to concentrate and they will carry our prayers to God.

The Angels and the Eucharist

Saint Faustina wrote in the Diary a beautiful sentence about the angels and the Eucharist:

If the angels were capable of envy, they would envy us two things: one is receiving Holy Communion and the other is suffering (1804).

As a religious sister she would go daily to church for the Mass and Holy Communion. But during her stay in the hospital in Cracow in 1936, she became weak and wasn't able to go to the chapel. And what happened? The angel brought her Holy Communion:

In the evening, the sisters who were to look after me came and said 'Tomorrow you will not receive the Lord, because you are very tired.' Faustina wrote: *This hurt me very much but I said with great calmness, 'Very well', and resigning myself totally to the will of the Lord. In the morning I made my meditation and prepared for Holy Communion even though I was not to receive the Lord Jesus. When my love and desire had reached a high degree, I saw at my bedside a Seraph who gave me Holy Communion, saying these words 'Behold the Lord of Angels.'* This was repeated for thirteen days. *The Seraph was surrounded by a great light, the divinity and love of God being reflected in him. He wore a golden robe and over it, a transparent surplice and a transparent stole. The chalice was crystal, covered with a transparent veil. As soon as he gave me the Lord, he disappeared* (1676).

The angel gave her Holy Communion but he didn't hear her confession:

Once, when a certain doubt rose within me shortly before the Holy Communion, I said to the Seraph: 'Could you perhaps hear my confession?' And he answered me 'No spirit in heaven has that power' (1677). We all know very well that only the priests have such a power.

What do the angels look like?

Saint Faustina had a very intimate relationship with her Guardian Angel. She saw him at her side in many circumstances of her life. She saw him praying and contemplating.

When we took our seats on the train from Warsaw to Cracow, once again I saw my Guardian Angel at my side. He was absorbed in prayer and in contemplating God and I followed him with my thoughts. The next morning I saw my Guardian Angel, who accompanied me throughout the journey as far as Warsaw. He disappeared when we entered the convent gate (490).

She described the differences between the angels whom she saw:

Then I saw one of the seven spirits near me, radiant as at other times, under a form of light. I constantly saw ▶

► *him beside me when I was riding on the train. I saw an angel standing on every church we passed, but surrounded by a light which was paler than that of the spirit accompanying me on the journey, and each of these spirits who were guarding the churches bowed his head to the spirit who was near me (630).*

Angels ask for prayer

There are some places in the Diary where Saint Faustina's Guardian Angel asked her for prayer, especially for the dying.

My Guardian Angel told me to pray for a certain soul and in the morning I learned that it was a man whose agony had begun that very moment. The Lord Jesus makes it known to me in a special way when someone is in need of my prayer. I especially know when my prayer is needed by a dying soul. This happens more often now than it did in the past (820).

When I went to the garden one afternoon, my Guardian Angel said to me 'Pray for the dying' and so I began at once to pray the rosary with the gardeners for the dying. After the rosary, we said various prayers for the dying. After the prayers, the workers began to chat among themselves. In spite of the noise they were making themselves, I heard these words in my soul: 'Pray for me' but as I could not understand these words very well, I moved a few steps away from the wards, trying to think who it could be who was asking me to pray for them. Then I heard the words: 'I am Sister...' This sister was in Warsaw while I was, at the time, in Vilnius. 'Pray for me until I tell you to stop, I am dying.' Immediately, I began to pray fervently for her. I kept praying from three o'clock

until five. At five I heard the words 'Thank you' and I understood that she had died (314).

Her Guardian Angel as a defender

Saint Faustina wrote about her experiences when the angels defended her during the Devil's attacks:

I fell asleep as soon as I lay down, but at about eleven o'clock Satan shook my bed. I awoke instantly and I started to pray peacefully to my Guardian Angel. (...) I kept praying the rosary all the while and toward dawn these beings vanished and I was able to get some sleep. When I entered the chapel in the morning I heard a voice in my soul. 'You are united to Me, fear nothing. But know, my child, that Satan hates you, he hates every soul, but he burns with a particular hatred for you because you have snatched so many souls from his dominion' (412).

Seeing their great hatred for me, I immediately asked my Guardian Angel for help, and at once the bright and radiant figure of my Guardian Angel appeared and said to me: 'Do not fear, spouse of my Lord, without His permission these spirits will do you no harm.' Immediately the evil spirits vanished and the faithful Guardian Angel accompanied me, in a visible manner, right to the very house. His look was modest and peaceful and a flame of fire sparkled from his forehead (419).

Saint Michael and Saint Faustina

The most brilliant of the angels mentioned in the Bible is St. Michael. The Holy Church gives to

him the highest place amongst the angels. She refers to him as "Prince of the heavenly hosts." He is considered to be the Guardian Angel of Jesus Christ. Saint Michael was the protector and defender of God's chosen people. Now he is the defender of the Church.

We know from the Diary that Saint Michael was the defender of Saint Sister Faustina. She described her experience in the following 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 (706).

In another moment of her life she confessed: *I have great reverence for Saint Michael the Archangel, he had no example to follow in doing the will of God, and yet he fulfilled God's will faithfully (667).*

Do we need visions of the angels?

Saint Faustina had visions and apparitions of the angels. But we should not seek visions or appearances of angels. If someone sees angels, it does not mean that he has more faith than we do. If, for some reason, God wants you to see an angel or a vision, then you will. It is not something we should worry about. It will happen if it is meant to. In fact seeking after visions can open up a person to the power of Satan because he can imitate visions and give false revelations.

Father **Piotr Prusakiewicz** CSMA

Angels and the Eucharist



One important mystical aspect of the angels is their attitude towards the Eucharist. The angelic hosts come to the world in order to honour Christ in the Blessed Eucharist. They come to honour Christ, who in accordance with the promise he gave his disciples: *know that I am with you always; yes, to the end of time* (**Matthew 28:20**) – descends during the sacrifice of the Mass and is present in the Eucharist in the form of bread and wine by means of transubstantiation. The bread and wine retain their outward form, although their substance (in other words that of which they are actually formed) becomes changed, becoming Christ in substance, thus making possible his Real Presence among all the faithful on earth. And, although this Act makes a demand of faith of us (that is, to believe in the Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament), the angels and saints possess an ability to detect the Real Presence hidden in these outward forms.

The Eucharist is also known as “the bread of angels.” Not in the sense that angels consume it, angels having no digestive systems, instead being of pure intellect, moved by Light.

Their spiritual nature however permits them to recognise the Real Presence of Christ, which is their Light and Motivation. This is why it is quite appropriate and possible for the angelic hosts to be present on the earth, to worship and adore their Lord in this form in which He

revealed Himself for the benefit of His earthly believers (*Hoc est enim Corpus Meum, quod pro vobis tradetur – Hic est enim Calix Sanguinis Mei Novi et Aeterni Testamenti, qui pro vobis et pro multis effundetur*).

After all, even the canon of the Mass stresses this unity of Heaven and Earth during the Mass thanks to the angels, evident from the words: “All powerful and ever living God, we humbly ask you to command your holy angel to take this offering to your altar in heaven for as we receive it from this altar may it become for us the Body and Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ and grant us light, happiness and peace” (*Supplices to rogamus, omnipotens Deus : jube haec preferri per manus sancti Angeli tui in sublime altare tuum, in conspectu divinae maiestatis tuae; ut, quotquot ex hac altaris participatione sacrosanctum Filii tui Corpus et Sanguinem sumpserimus, omni benedictione caelesti et gratia repleamur*).

St Thomas of Aquin explains that the priest is not asking for the sacramental form to be taken up to heaven. But makes this request for the mystical body (i.e. the Church) pointing to the fact that in order for the Angel to assist in God’s Holy Mysteries on earth in the Sacrament he has presented the prayers of the priest and people as shown in the text from the Book of Revelation “and so from the angel’s hand the smoke of the incense went up in the presence of God and with it the prayers of the saints” (**Rev. 8:4**).

Turning towards the people i.e. the saints, we should stress, that instances do actually occur, of angels bringing human beings the Holy Eucharist, such as in the instance of St Gerard Majella.

One day when the young Gerard was praying before a statue of the Madonna and Child, the Child handed Gerard a piece of beautiful white bread. The boy could not contain his joy but treated this vision as an encouragement to receive the Holy Eucharist. He hurried to church, where, during Mass he went to the altar together with the rest of the faithful to receive Communion. The priest thinking that Gerard was still too young to receive Communion missed him out. Gerard was very upset. However, on that same night, while he prayed in his room God fulfilled the request of his young fervent heart, granting the grace promised in the earlier otherworldly vision. St Michael the Archangel came in person with the Blessed Sacrament and gave Gerard communion, giving rise to an unspeakable joy for the boy, a great veneration for the Eucharistic Jesus and gratitude to St Michael.

Taking account of all of this we should remember that in the adoration of the Blessed Sacrament during Holy Mass, we the faithful constitute one community together with the invisible host of angels who are also worshipping God with us (**Rev. 22:8**).

Jakub Szymański

Saint Faustina and humility

I would like to say three words to the soul that is determined to strive for sanctity and to derive fruit, that is to say, benefit from confession. One of these words is humility. A soul does not benefit as it should from the sacrament of confession if it is not humble. Pride keeps us in darkness. (St Faustina Diary par.113).

Jesus is the light that lets us see every blemish in our heart. Those who live with him would never say: *I have no sin to confess*. Only those, who live in darkness, will say this. When it is dark no one can see themselves clearly. That means the conscience has died. It is worth going to the confessional and beginning the confession with the words: *There is something wrong with me, because I believe I have no sins*. When one has an active and sensitive conscience, it is easy to understand one's sins as wounds made to our inner selves. Then you do not even need a prayer book to examine your conscience. It is enough to look at Christ's cross.

Virtue of humility

Confession is so important for our interior life, because it fosters the virtue of humility, which is the key virtue for those seeking perfection in discipleship. It is hard work,

embarrassing work, and yes, humiliating work recalling our sins, owning up to them and admitting them to another human being. It is a real exercise in humility, and therein lies its value.

One seminarian told his rector that a turning point in his life came when he heard a retreat leader say: The theme of contemporary self-help is "I'm OK – you're OK!" *The theme of a contemporary self-help retreat will be: "I'm an ass- you're an ass!"*

So much contemporary pseudo-spirituality is built around a faulty understanding of the principle "God loves me just the way I am." Well, yes he does, but he loves me so much that he does not want me to remain just the way I am.

He is constantly calling forth the good, the light, the truth he sees in me to conquer the evil, the darkness, the shame that is also there. And the sacrament of penance is one of the most powerful ways he accomplishes that. But it takes humility to admit that we do indeed have evil, darkness and hate within...but we can not be perfect unless we are humble.

When those of you into exercise know a particular muscle, bone or section of your body is weak, flabby or injured, you do specific exercise to strengthen that area. Well, our "humble muscle" is weak and the sacrament of penance can strengthen it.

The soul meets the God of mercy

In a church in Belarus on the main altar is hung a painting of Christ as the Man of Sorrows. Many years ago it hung on a side wall. An old woman, who had poor eyesight, entered the church. She wanted to go to confession and asked where the priest in the confessional was. Young boys, as young boys are, made fun of her "Here, he is" they said and showed her the painting. The old woman approached the painting, she only noticed the figure with a head rested on the shoulder. She thought it must have been the priest, so she knelt and made her confession - to Jesus.

A parish priest sitting opposite was looking at the scene. He was so moved that the next day he had the painting of Christ as the Man of Sorrow put on the main altar. In the sacrament of penance we meet the Live Christ – a priest is only a representative of Christ's true presence.

When you approach the confessional, know this – said Jesus to St Faustina – that I Myself am waiting there for you. I am only hidden by the priest, but I Myself act in your soul. Here the misery of the soul meets the God of mercy (Diary par. 1602)

In the sacrament of penance Jesus the Doctor treats our wounds



Photo: Fr. Mieczysław Kuzel CSMA

■ Reliquary of Saint Faustina

of selfishness, arrogance, conceit and gives us His Mercy, leading us to be merciful to others. The faith that Christ is presenting in the sacrament of penance lets us experience the miracle of forgiveness. But, only he who believes himself to be a sinner, can perceive the miracle of forgiveness and experience God's Mercy.

God's forgiveness gave St. Faustina power to forgive others. **You give me strength always to move forward (...) and to have love in my heart for those from whom I suffer adversities and contempt** (Diary par. 1620). It does not mean that St Faustina did not experience difficulties in forgiving, did not experience the burden of meeting boastful, conceited or bad-mannered people. **O my Jesus, you know what efforts are needed to live sincerely and unaffectedly with those from whom our nature flees, or with those who, deliberately or not, have made**

us suffer. Humanly speaking, this is impossible (Diary par. 766).

I felt a strong grip

Forgiveness frees the human heart. A well-known modern writer Henri Nouwen, wrote of how one day he was knocked down by a car and sent to hospital. *"You have to be operated on immediately"*, said the doctor. *"But you must know that the operation is complicated and we cannot foresee its consequences."* I knew I may not have that long to survive; and at that moment I felt a strong grip around my neck. I knew those were all the people whom I had not forgiven or did not have enough courage to ask for forgiveness. I asked my friend standing next to me to take a piece of paper. I then dictated some names to him. If I do not survive, find those people and ask them for forgiveness, also tell them I forgive them... At that moment the strong grip loosened. I was ready to be operated on.

Gerald Jampolsky, author of a well-known book *'Forgiveness – the Greatest Healer'* wrote: *"Forgiveness gives me a sense of personal freedom, hope, peace and happiness which I get in no other way."* He also said: *"Forgiveness is the shortest route to God."*

A couple were celebrating their sixty-fifth wedding anniversary. At the reception they were asked their secret. "Well," the husband replied, *"when we got married, our parish priest told us that every night before we went to bed, we should kneel down next to each other at the side of the bed, say the Our Father together, then apologise to one another for any hurt we may have caused the other that*

day. No matter how tired, how angry or how upset we were, we were never to go to bed without saying 'I'm sorry' if we knew we had hurt the other."

Snares laid at my feet

If someone causes you trouble, think what good you can do for the person who caused you to suffer, said Jesus to St Faustina (Diary. 1760). When she noticed she did not feel love towards those who were her enemies and was worried because of this, Jesus told her: It is not always within your power to control your feelings. You will recognize that you have love if, after having experienced annoyance and contradiction, you do not lose your peace, but pray for those who have made you suffer and wish them well (Diary. 1628).

St Faustina's struggle in the field of love of enemies was heroic... She said: **O my Jesus, when someone is unkind and unpleasant toward us, it is difficult enough to bear this kind of suffering. But this is very little in comparison to another suffering which I cannot bear; namely, that which I experience when someone exhibits kindness towards me and then lays snares at my feet at every step I take. What great willpower is necessary to love such a soul for God's sake. Many a time one has to be heroic in loving such a soul as God demands** (Diary.1241).

That is true. It is not always easy or pleasant to follow Jesus, but it is the only way to make a man free. As someone once said: *"No one promised us an easy journey, but we were promised a good final destination."*

Father **Krzysztof Poświata** (CSMA)

Pope John Paul II views on the angels

General Audience: July 30, 1986

1 (...) According to Sacred Scripture the angels, inasmuch as they are purely spiritual creatures, are presented for our reflection as a special realization of the “image of God”, the most perfect Spirit, as Jesus himself reminds the Samaritan woman in the words: “God is spirit” (Jn 4:24). From this point of view the angels are creatures closest to the divine exemplar. The *name* given to them by Sacred Scripture indicates that what counts most in Revelation is the truth concerning the *tasks of the angels in regard to man*: angel (*angelus*) in fact means “messenger” The Hebrew *malak*, used in the Old Testament, signifies more precisely “delegate” or “ambassador.” The angels, spiritual creatures, have a function of mediation and of ministry in the relationships between God and man. Under this aspect the Letter to the Hebrews says that Christ has been given a “name”, and therefore a ministry of mediation, far superior to that of the angels (cf. Heb 1:4).

2 The Old Testament emphasizes especially the special participation of the *glory* which the creator receives as a tribute of praise on the

part of the created world. The Psalms are in a special way the interpreters of this voice, when, for example, they proclaim “Praise the Lord from the heavens, praise him in the heights! Praise him all his angels...” (Ps 148:1-2). Similarly in Psalm 102 (103): “Bless the Lord, O you his angels, you mighty ones who do his word, hearkening to the voice of his word!” (Ps 102 [103]:20). This last verse of Psalm 102 indicates that the angels *take part*, in a way proper to themselves, in God’s government of creation, as “the mighty ones who do his word” according to the plan established by Divine Providence. To the angels in particular is entrusted a special care and solicitude for people, whose requests and prayers they present to God as, mentioned, for example, in the Book of Tobit (Cf. especially Tob 3:17 and 12:12). Psalm 90 proclaims: “For to his angels he has given command about you... upon their hands they shall bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone” (cf. Ps 90-[91]:11-12). Following the Book of Daniel it can be said that the tasks of angels as ambassadors of the living God extend not only to individual human beings and to those who have special duties, but also to entire nations (Dan 10:13-21).



The organs still remain silent. The bells have not begun to peal, but the newly blessed paschal candle has been placed by the altar. It is the liturgy of Easter. One of the most beautiful prayers of the church begins with a call of joy. Man calls heaven and earth to rejoice but first turns to the angel of God: *Rejoice, heavenly powers! Sing choirs of angels! Exalt all creation around God’s throne! Jesus Christ, our King is risen! Sound the trumpet of salvation! Rejoice, earth, in shining splendour radiant in the brightness of your King!*

Here we are reminded of another joyful hymn, *Glory to God in the highest and peace on earth to those who are God’s friends*. These are the words by which the angels praise God on Christmas Eve. Their proclamation is



The 'Gloria' and 'Exultet'

– the sung expression of the joy of people and of angels

Glory to God in the highest and peace on earth to those who are God's friends. These are the words by which the angels praise God on Christmas Eve. Their proclamation is directed to the astounded shepherds and to us all. The Christmas and Easter messages speak of the same light. On the Christmas night we thank the Lord Jesus that he wished to come among us in human form. On Easter night we praise the Risen One that he conquered death and so opened the way for our eternal life in heaven.

directed to the astounded shepherds and to us all.

The paschal liturgy (attributed to St Ambrose) is sung only once a year on the vigil of Easter. The hymn of the angels at Bethlehem is heard somewhat more often - *Glory to God in the highest* are words used each Sunday except in Lent, Advent and at funerals. The song of the angels is short, three verses of text from St Luke's Gospel. However there is a further part to the prayer used in the liturgy of the mass, a human addition to the angelic song. The paschal message contains a much more extensive text. Whilst the angels concentrate on the essentials – praising God, man feels the need to talk more. This is understandable as the angels greatly surpass us intellectually and in the ability to recognise what is important. We need to work hard to make sense of

that night when heaven and earth, divine and human affairs unite.

The Christmas and Easter messages speak of the same light. Old Simeon, when he recognised Jesus, called out: *Now master let your servant depart in peace, according to your promise, because my eyes have seen the salvation which you have prepared for all the nations..., a light to enlighten the pagans and the glory of your people Israel.* The message of Easter proclaims *Rejoice, O earth in shining splendour, radiant in the brightness of your King! Christ has conquered! Glory fills you! Darkness vanished forever!*

The joy of men and angels

At the Easter Vigil, the 'Exultet' hymn is followed by the liturgy of

the word. The poetic narrative of creation of the word, the story of the crossing of the Red Sea by the Israelites, the story of their wanderings in the desert, moving psalms and finally the hymn of the angels at the grotto in Bethlehem. This always strikes me as an exceptional moment when, after the previous two days' clank of wooden clappers, at the 'Gloria' we hear the pleasing sound of the organ, of big and small bells. It is not a paradox that at the Easter Vigil the 'Gloria' sounds its most solemn, festive and beautiful. On the Christmas night we thank the Lord Jesus that he wished to come among us in human form. We thank Mary, that she had trustfully replied to the angel *I am the handmaid of the Lord.* On Easter night we praise the Risen One that he conquered death and so opened the way for our eternal life in heaven. ▶

- We became aware that we together with the angels and the whole company of heaven form the Church – the mystical body of Christ.

The joy of men and angels is best expressed in song and music. On the web page of the Polish Bishops' Commission on the Liturgy and Sacraments we find a recommendation for the 'Exultet' hymn to be sung by a lay person if necessary, so important is it that it should be sung. The 'Gloria' is treated differently. The hymn can be spoken. The Polish tradition preserved in Christmas

carols speaks of the singing of the heavenly ghosts – *Angels rejoice / sing to the heavens / Gloria, gloria, gloria / in excelsis Deo / On the arc of the rainbow / angels sang / let us glorify God, peace be with you.* What is interesting is that angels play and sing as much in carols from the 17th or 18th centuries as they do in those of the last century.

Joy expressed in song is evident also in Easter hymns – *On the dearest angels / go to the Blessed Virgin / to the Holy Mother! / Alleluia! / Greet her from me / and sing merrily:*

Queen of Paradise rejoice / Alleluia, Alleluia! Be glad and rejoice in heaven, intercede for us in need / so that we may reach that place also / and sing for eternity: Alleluia, Alleluia. The whole church is joyful today / call and sing piously / O Conqueror, Christ the Lord / Let us arise with you, Alleluia.

Both the 'Gloria' and 'Exultet' force us to consider the passing of time and eternity. When we hear the Christmas angels we almost immediately look forward – to Cana in Galilee, to Gethsemane, to Golgotha, to the empty tomb. At the manger in Bethlehem we consider time in human terms, in linear fashion, from birth to death.

This is the night when Jesus broke the chains

Things are rather different in the message of Easter:

This is the night when first you saved our fathers. You freed the people of Israel from their slavery and led them dry-shod through the sea.

This is the night when the pillar of fire destroyed the darkness of sin!

This is the night when Christians everywhere, are washed clean of sin and freed from all defilement, are restored to grace and grow together in holiness.

This is the night when Jesus Christ broke the chains of death and rose triumphant from the grave.

How will we refer to that same night, say, in the year 2226? We will only understand this text when we accept the perspective of eternity. And, if we do accept this perspective, we have then to set ourselves



St Michael the Archangel Testimony

a number of questions. Is that night one of light and joy for me? Have I accepted this light? Have I accompanied the angels to the manger and to Calvary? Have I met with the Risen Lord? Do I believe in my own resurrection?

One other important matter arises from the 'Gloria' and 'Exultet.' These messages remind us that the Lord God cares not only about our eternal life (in heaven) but that he is also interested in our present earthly life. He helps his people: In Egypt he guards the first born sons of the Israel from death, he leads the Hebrews through the Red Sea, protecting them from Pharaoh's army.

The power of this holy night dispels all evil, washes guilt away, restores lost innocence, brings mourners joy, it casts out hatred, brings us peace and humbles earthly pride.

It is not true that God has turned away from us. He is always with us, if we only allow him to be present, inviting him into our lives.

Therefore, let us repeat with trust the words of the joyful Easter hymns:

Accept this Easter candle, a flame divided but undimmed, a pillar of fire that glows to the honour of God. Let it mingle with the lights of heaven and continue burning brightly, to dispel the darkness of this night! May the Morning Star which never sets find this flame still burning, Christ, that Morning Star, who came back from the dead, and shed his peaceful light on all mankind, your Son who lives and reigns for ever and ever, Amen.

Bożena Diemjaniuk

My mother was a practising and a devout catholic all her life but had nevertheless always been terrified of dying and going to hell. This fear really took hold of her when she became ill and it kept on growing. Neither I nor anyone else could calm her fears for more than a short time. Always they would return.

A few days before Christmas 1991, my mother was told that she had a large tumour on her brain and that her condition was very serious. She went into the Manchester Royal Infirmary on 26 December for a scan. The tumour was much bigger than had been thought – without major brain surgery she would not live but there was grave concern whether she could survive such an operation. She was so, so frightened.

She was transformed

Then, on 27 December, mum had her "experience of St Michael" and she was transformed. This is her testimony in her own words, as she told it to me.

It was late at night. I was completely alone and it was dark and very quiet. I was very much on edge and, to

settle myself, I started to pray for all my old friends – people I had not seen for a while and, as I prayed, I pictured their faces before me. Suddenly, their faces changed and they became horrible, like gargoyles, or those terrible masks that people wear at Halloween. They were ugly, evil, sneering and leering at me and I was afraid. I knew it was the devil taunting me – and almost without thinking I said "Oh St Michael, protect me." – and, do you know, he came – he came right down to me. He didn't make a lot of noise – you know how a big bird makes a noise when it flaps its wings? – well, he didn't – I just heard the faintest sound like the softest of sighs – almost like a whisper – sss.., sss... – and there he was and I wasn't in the least bit frightened.

He was so strong and masculine

Oh, he was so beautiful – the most beautiful thing I have ever seen in my life. He was about 8ft tall, with ash blond hair (not golden) to just above his shoulders. He was wearing a full length cream coloured gown. The gown was edged at the neck with gold and the colour of the gown blended into peach at the hem. His feet were bare. ▶

▶ Although he was wearing a gown and had longish hair and was so beautiful, he was not at all feminine. He was so strong and so masculine – but with the most beautiful face I have ever seen in my life. Oh, he was beautiful. There are no words that could do him justice.

In his hand he held a magnificent sword, of a metal I had never seen before. The sword was enormous and it looked very heavy (it had a round guard on the handle) and yet he raised it as if it weighed no more than a feather. He wielded the sword from side to side and the evil faces all disappeared. He never smiled at me but he was not stern either, just very firm and so very strong and, all the time, his eyes were watching, as if scanning the horizon, on the alert to see where next he was needed and I felt he could see to the ends of the earth.

Calm and full of peace

He never spoke to me but, when the faces had gone, he gestured to me with his hand (to go) behind him and then he opened his beautiful wings slightly (the feathers of which were like the softest down imaginable, not at all prickly or hard and his wings were cream, edged with apricot) and he closed his wings around me and I knew I was safe. And then he went – but since that night, I have never been frightened and I have felt full of peace.

It was a wonderful experience and it was real. It really happened – I was not dreaming. I know that, if I ever need him again, he will come and, if anyone is ever in trouble or afraid – pray to (God, to send) St Michael and remember how he helped me. He will not let you down. He drove the devil



out of heaven and he stands in God's presence, ready to do His bidding.

Tears of joy

Following this experience my mum had no fear at all and she was able to place herself totally in God's hands. Her only tears now were tears of joy because she really believed that, whatever happened, whether she lived or died – it would be wonderful and she was ready for it. The morning of her operation (New Year's Eve), we went with her to the operating theatre. She needed no pre-medication, she was calm and full of peace – the peace that can only come from God – and she was happy; she smiled and waved to us as we left her.

She was not afraid

She survived the seven hour operation. I was with her when she came round. She woke up praising God and His Holy Mother! Despite the (technical) success of the operation, the brain tumour was found to be malignant and we were told there was nothing more to be done. Mum was dying of cancer. But, after her experience of St Michael, she never again in her life, knew fear. Almighty God, in His loving kindness and mercy had, in one moment, removed from my mum all fear, all terror, forever. Mum had her experience of St Michael on 27 December, 1991. She died on 9 April, 1992. I was with her every day during that time – she was not afraid. There was a peacefulness

and sweetness about her that had not been there before. Everyone who saw her came away enriched. Of course, there were times she was sad, sad at being parted from those that she loved so much – and then she did weep – but not from fear. She reached a point where she was able to say to me “I have always loved life and I’ve always lived it to the full. Now, I am dying and I am happier than I have ever been in my life.” I was privileged to be with my mum when she died – she smiled.

The truth touches people

My mother’s stories were notorious for “growing in the telling” – but this story never grew – because it is the truth – and the truth does not need to grow. And, it is the truth that touches people and so many have been touched by my mum’s experience and, please God, they will continue to be so.

It was only a week or so after my mum’s experience that there was a letter in the Catholic Universe from a lady called Hope Price, asking if anyone had had an “angel experience” as she felt called to write a book about these. My mum felt very strongly that the experience she had was not just for herself but that she was meant to share it with others – to encourage them, especially if they were afraid of anything, so we wrote to Hope and that’s how the story came to be in the book.

After my mum died, Hope rang me and asked if I would go on national television with her and tell mum’s story! It was quite a shock! My immediate response was “No Way!” but then Hope asked me what my mother would say....I knew then I would have to do it. My love for my mum and for my God was stronger and bigger than my

fear. So I went on the ‘This Morning’ programme presented by Richard and Judy. A chauffer-driven car was sent to my house in Macclesfield to take me there and return me home. It was quite an experience and turned out to be really enjoyable. Amazingly, I was not at all nervous but then, we (Hope and me) did pray together just before the cameras started!

Later still, I was asked to go on Radio 4 to tell the story and it was broadcast the following Christmas Day. I understand from other people that it is still repeated occasionally.

After that, mum’s story was printed in the Catholic papers, in several of the daily papers, in magazines and it began to travel further afield. I have had cuttings and letters from the USA, Australia and many European countries.

With God nothing is impossible

I mention all of this not to boast – about my mum or myself, but to show how amazing our God is and also to make clear that the spreading of this story is the work of God’s Holy Spirit. There is no way I could or would ever have done it. Even now, I sometimes stop and ask myself if it all really happened – how could something like that happen to ordinary people like us? The answer I know is because God is so good and nothing is impossible to Him and His ways are truly amazing.

I loved my mum very much; she was my best friend and my soul mate as well as my mum and it has given me great pleasure to remember and share something of her story with you.

Catherine Mossey
Macclesfield, Cheshire, England



“Never travel faster than your Guardian Angel can fly.”

“Without patience, we will learn less in life. We will see less. We will feel less. We will hear less. Ironically, rush and more usually mean less.”

“I am not sure exactly what heaven will be like, but I know that when we die and it comes time for God to judge us, he will not ask, ‘How many good things have you done in your life?’ rather he will ask, ‘How much love did you put into what you did?’”

Mother Teresa

Guardian Angel Prayer

Angel of God, my guardian dear,
To whom God’s love commits me here,
Ever this day be at my side,
To light and guard, to rule and guide.
Amen.

St Michael our greatest protector

One of the most famous Polish poets, Jan Twardowski, wrote this poem – a prayer to an angel:

*Angel on the old painting
Protecting children from the cold
Do not forget that we, adults
Are just children who grew too fast*

One of those who venerated Saint Michael the Archangel and the angels was Blessed Bronisław Markiewicz. He was a great priest, who gave his life to children and abandoned youths. His motto was, “I would like to gather millions of children and teenagers – from every country and race – feed and dress their bodies and their souls for free.”

As Father Markiewicz lived and worked in Miejsce Piastowe at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, he wanted to find a patron saint for the newly created convent that would be responsible for the upbringing of children and youths. It was a very difficult time for the Church, when Pope Leon XIII wrote *Humanum genus*, a papal encyclical about the spread of freemasonry. The Pope also had a shocking vision of the Church's future, which inspired him to write the prayer: “St. Michael, protect us in the fight...” In 1886 he sent it to all the bishops, requesting them to say it after every Mass. At the time, there were many processions in Rome, where people would carry flags with the Devil painted on them and

famous musicians would write songs to his glory.

Seeing all this, Father Markiewicz wrote: “We live in very sad times. The devil has never before been so persistent, clever and impudent in his fight against God and the Church like nowadays. His fight seems to be supernatural.” And he added: “As a consequence, we need to turn to St. Michael, the leader of God's army and the suppressor of the devil.”

Father Markiewicz strongly believed that St. Michael was the greatest protector in the fight against the devil and the temptations that lure us away from God. He also believed that St. Michael could teach us humility and give us the ability to fight with spirit and inner power. But above all, he was the best example of everyday admiration of God's love and beauty. Who can be like God?

Be ready for the fight

Not so long ago a young man was blinded in an accident. He had to learn how to live again. His old friends abandoned him. But someone appeared to him, who helped him find Jesus. After a few years he said, “I was blind, but now I can see.” To see the miraculous things we need spiritual sight, the light of faith. The devil knows this and does everything to

blind people's minds and put out the light of faith. Sometimes people can be so blind! Blinded by their selfishness, conceit, jealousy, anger, hatred and their lust for material goods.

Not so long ago a book written by Rosa Alberoni: “Get rid of Christ” was published. The author analyses the process of removing Christ from the history of Christian Europe. At the end she says: “We have to come back to Christ and overcome our desire of glory, which is a problem in many societies. We have all been called to make it happen. If we don't do it, we will be destroyed by other civilisations.”

St. Michael is a great patron saint, because God is in the centre of his life. Let's ask him for his help! Some time ago in one of the newspapers I read: “A group of aggressive hooligans approached me in a dark alley. They were about to attack me when I asked God to send St. Michael to me. Then suddenly a very big guy came out of one of the buildings. My old friend... Michael. The hooligans walked away.”

His attitude shows us that we should consider our lives as a spiritual fight. “Be ready for the fight”, said St. Paul to the Ephesians. As someone so wittily said: “We do not get through our lives by cruise boat but by battle ship.” We face a battle for our lives, which we have to face up to and our patron saint is our example and will help make sure we win this battle. “Watch out” says the apostle, “Your enemy, the devil, is



like a roaring lion that stalks around, looking for new prey. Be strong in faith and oppose him!”

A Knight

Most of the paintings show St. Michael as a knight. His sword, shield, armour and helmet are symbols of his spiritual weapons. Let's ask ourselves a couple of questions: **What are our moral weapons like?**

Maybe we too often cast off the armour of God's love by living in sin? Bernanos in his novel, 'Diaries of a Village Priest' shows a priest who tries to convert a countess who rebelled against God. She became very bitter after the loss of her child and the priest tries to comfort her and bring her back to God. Finally, he wins her over, convincing her with one sentence: "Hell, is the inability to love."

Maybe our helmet of hope has shattered and we no longer believe that Christ has conquered the world? We give up so easily. That's why we can and we should take up the spiritual fight but we need to take it up as the winners. We are not made to fight but to win.

Do you remember that scene from 'Braveheart', when during the battle of Stirling, the main character, William Wallace, seeing the lack of hope in his fellow soldiers, encourages them to carry on fighting and because of that they win in a spectacular way. Many people take up the spiritual fight but they have lost even before they've begun. We are the winners because Jesus has won. "Thanks to my God, I can jump over the wall", says a psalmist. The participants of a hurdle race have to "throw their heart behind the hurdle." It means that before they jump, they have to be behind the hurdle in their heart

and mind. If they focus on the hurdle, don't trust themselves and approach it with fear, they will lose the race and fail. The first rule of the spiritual fight is to have faith in the victory.

The devil plays for the extra time. A Polish saying suggests: "Who waits for too long will be unfortunate." Sigfried Gran's story about three devils shows the importance of that warning. They told their master how they were going to seduce people and make them collapse.

The first one said: "I will tell people that God does not exist."

The master devil answered: "You will not gain much in that way. People have faith in God in their hearts and it is not that easy to get rid of it."

The second one said: "I will convince them that hell does not exist."

The master did not like that idea either: "You will not lure too many of them. Clever people know that there is bound to be justice."

The third one said humbly: "I will whisper in their ears that they can put everything off, wait for a better time and that there is nothing that they would have to do right away."

"Go for it", said the master, "You will lure many people and bring them to us."

We shouldn't put off our spiritual fight. We should make good resolutions and immediately go about changing our lives.

Maybe we feel that we can't defend our faith and the innocents with our weapon of the spoken word for various reasons. Perhaps someone is laughing at our religion and we feel too embarrassed to say anything or our religious knowledge is too limited to say anything constructive in the defence of Christ and the Church. But we can't give up!

Father **Krzysztof Poświata** CSMA

Meeting the angelic army

And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. (Luke 2, 8:9)

Poor shepherds were often hired to take care of a flock and protect it from thieves and wild animals. While watching over a flock of sheep near Bethlehem some shepherds experienced a deep religious shock when an angel appeared to them and announced the birth of the Messiah. They were immersed in a mysterious light which could be considered the light of truth. This light permeated them and everything around them so that nothing was hidden. When faced with God's glory the shepherds were afraid.

But the angel said to them: 'Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you. He is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger' (Luke 2, 10:12). The angel knew that the shepherds would be afraid, so he reassured them and helped them to understand and accept the message but still the uneducated shepherds

must have found the words unbelievable and difficult to comprehend. They were to become representatives of mankind, chosen by God to witness His Son's birth. The information given to them was precise, the Messiah, Saviour had been born in Bethlehem. There were three elements of the sign which were to confirm the angel's words: the infant, clothes and a manger. The shepherds believed the Divine messenger, but who would believe them? If they accepted the grace given to them, they could start a new life; but because of their lowly status they probably doubted this, as no doubt they would encounter the laughter and mockery of others. It seems significant that there is the Three Kings' festival in the Roman Catholic Church, but not a Shepherds' one.

Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favour rests' (Luke 2, 13:14). The angelic army that sang of the Divine glory appeared the best confirmation of the message. They announced peace to people of good will. Peace



was a gift for those who had pure hearts; they would be filled with harmony between God and His creature. *When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, 'Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that happened, which the Lord has told us about.' So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby who was lying in the manger. When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them (Luke 2, 15:18).* The shepherds divided themselves into two groups: one stayed in the fields to protect the flocks whilst the other hurried to Bethlehem to see the Child.

They were filled with joy. The same joy was in the heart of Mary after the annunciation. That's why she hurried up to Elisabeth.

Father Edward Staniek

How can we make the most of the presence of the angels in our life?

Firstly we should ask them to help us in our prayer. We often feel distracted in the morning, in the evening or before the Holy Mass. That is why we may ask them for their help in our prayer. They will be with us, help us to concentrate and they will carry our prayers to God.

Secondly we may ask them for their care and guidance when we go somewhere. When we find it difficult to agree with God's will because actually it means suffering, we are encouraged to ask the angels to come and strengthen us. One of them did so in the Garden of Olives and he strengthened Jesus.

Thirdly they may help us in having a good relationship with other people. In the morning we should pray to the Guardian Angels of the people whom by God's providence we will meet on this day. If you argue often with someone, pray to his and to your Guardian Angel so that they will help you to come to agreement.

What about the duty of my Guardian Angel when I die and my soul suffers in purgatory?

If my soul suffers in purgatory, my Guardian Angel will visit it and comfort it in the company of other angels. But in the meantime, he goes around inspiring and prompting my relatives, friends and other people here on earth to pray and to offer Masses for my release from Purgatory. He will not rest till the day when he introduces my soul into Paradise. There I will be sharing with him the blessed vision of God.

From what choir of what Hierarchy do our Guardian Angels come?

According to the holy writers, they are taken from the lowest angelic hierarchy. They are ordinarily chosen from the Choir of Angels, sometimes from that of the Archangels, and exceptionally from the choir of Principalities. These choirs are more directly in contact with manifested and earthly things than the others.

How do the angels move from one place to another?

Our mind, the closest thing to an angel, even without leaving the location occupied by our body, travels with the speed of a spirit. At this moment we can transfer our thoughts and our imagination from one place to another. What a man can do mentally only, an Angel can do by actually

transferring his own self and all his activity from one continent to another with the speed of thought. That is why we see the angels with wings which represents speed.

Do the angels know what we think about?

Although the angels cannot penetrate the inner sanctuary of human hearts which God has reserved for Himself, they do all they can to help us. However, it is in our power by an act of our free will to expose our intimate thoughts to our angelic companion. They don't know our thoughts, only God knows them. We may reveal our thoughts in our prayer to them.

What is more they can guess what we think because they are very intelligent, they know our past, they know what we thought about when faced with a similar situation.

Father **Peter Prusakiewicz** CSMA



Chaplet of St Michael

L. In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

A. *Amen*

L. O God, come to my assistance

A. *O Lord, make haste to help me*

Glory be to the Father, etc..

L. By the intercession of St Michael and the celestial Choir of Seraphim, may the Lord make us worthy to burn with the fire of perfect charity. Amen.

(1 Our Father, 3 Hail Mary)

2. By the intercession of St Michael and the celestial Choir of Cherubim, may the Lord vouchsafe to grant us grace to leave the ways of wickedness to run in the paths of Christian perfection. Amen.

(1 Our Father, 3 Hail Mary)

Prayer of Pope Leo XIII

Saint Michael the Archangel, defend us in battle, be our protection against the wickedness and snares of the devil. May God rebuke him, we humbly pray and do thou, O Prince of the Heavenly Host, by the Divine Power of God, cast into hell Satan and all the evil spirits who wander throughout the world seeking the ruin of souls. Amen.

3. By the intercession of St Michael and the celestial Choir of Thrones, may the Lord infuse into our hearts a true and sincere spirit of humility. Amen.

(1 Our Father, 3 Hail Mary)

4. By the intercession of St Michael and the celestial Choir of Dominions, may the Lord give us grace to govern our senses and subdue our unruly passions. Amen.

(1 Our Father, 3 Hail Mary)

5. By the intercession of St Michael and the celestial Choir of Powers, may the Lord vouchsafe to protect our souls against the snares and temptations of the devil. Amen.

(1 Our Father, 3 Hail Mary)

6. By the intercession of St Michael and the celestial Choir of Virtues, may the Lord deliver us from evil and suffer us not to fall into temptation. Amen.

(1 Our Father, 3 Hail Mary)

7. By the intercession of St Michael and the Celestial Choir of Principalities, may God fill our souls with a true spirit of obedience. Amen.

(1 Our Father, 3 Hail Mary)

8. By the intercession of St Michael and the celestial Choir of Archangels, may the Lord give us perseverance in faith and in all good works, in order that we gain the glory of Paradise. Amen.

(1 Our Father, 3 Hail Mary)

9. By the intercession of St Michael and the celestial Choir of Angels,



may the Lord grant us to be protected by them in this mortal life and conducted hereafter to eternal glory. Amen.

(1 Our Father, 3 Hail Mary)

1 Our Father
in honour of St Michael

1 Our Father
in honour of St Gabriel

1 Our Father
in honour of St Raphael

1 Our Father
in honour of our Guardian Angel

O glorious prince, St Michael, chief and commander of the heavenly hosts, guardian of souls, vanquisher of rebel spirits, servant in the house of the Divine King, and our admirable conductor, who shines with excellence and superhuman virtue, vouchsafe to deliver us from evil, who turn to you with confidence, and enable us by your gracious protection to serve God more and more faithfully every day. Amen.